

Assessing the Socio-Economic and Political Impact of Cross-Border Trade Disruptions: A Study of the Thailand-Cambodia Border Regions

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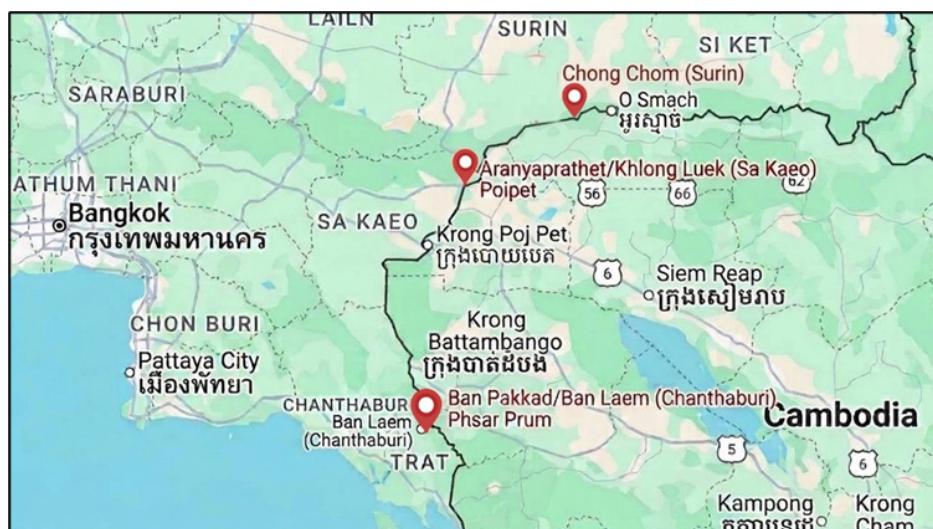
1. Executive Summary

This study examines local perceptions on the proposed reopening of Thailand–Cambodia land border crossings, focusing on public support, economic impacts, security concerns, confidence in peaceful coexistence, and preparedness for the reopening. The findings indicate that economic necessity creates a strong underlying rationale for reopening, but security perceptions, confidence, and the information environment remain critical constraints. Importantly, local communities generally distinguish between reopening being necessary and being urgent: they recognize the economic and practical importance of restoring cross-border connectivity, but do not necessarily support immediate or unconditional reopening.

Overall Findings

Overall, more than six in ten Thai respondents support the reopening of the border crossings, while the perceived necessity of reopening is relatively high but perceived urgency is lower. The economic consequences of closure are substantial, with estimated individual profit declines ranging from approximately 72% to 88%, equivalent to losses of around THB 19,000–61,000 per person per month depending on location. (In the town of Aranyaprathet, for instance, there are an estimated 93,000 registered Thai citizens from 35,000 households and roughly 12,000 Thai and Cambodian border traders per day in 2025, prior to the outbreak of the border conflict.) Communities are already adapting through reduced spending and savings (28%), taking additional jobs (23%), and seeking alternative locations or customers (18%), suggesting that prolonged closure **may gradually produce longer-term economic adaptation rather than temporary disruption.**

Figure 1. Locations Covered in Perception Study



However, economic considerations coexist with substantial concerns about security and social stability. **Fake news, disinformation, and mal-information are the leading concern**, reported by 80% of respondents with a mean score of **4.31**, followed closely by social issues and transactional crime (4.29). Also, confidence in Thailand's ability to monitor, fact-check, and debunk false information is relatively low (2.54), despite high confidence in military preparedness (4.90). This indicates a **significant gap between perceived physical-security preparedness and perceived information-security preparedness**.

Confidence in peaceful coexistence remains fragile. Thirty-five percent strongly disagree that Cambodians genuinely wish to coexist peacefully with Thailand, while a similar proportion strongly disagree that Thai and Cambodian communities can return to living peacefully together. Moreover, **91% expressed lack of confidence in Cambodia's ability to contribute to conflict resolution**, while confidence in Thai stakeholders is also limited, particularly among Thai interest groups and political actors.

Findings by Border Location

The four border locations demonstrate **substantial differences in readiness for reopening, indicating that a uniform reopening policy may not be appropriate**. **Chong Chom is clearly the most cautious location**: approximately 70% do not support reopening, nearly 90% prefer to keep the crossing closed, and 79% require additional conditions before reopening. By contrast, Khlong Luek is more commercial-oriented, while Ban Laem demonstrates comparatively stronger confidence in coexistence and local security institutions.

The economic impact also varies by location. Khlong Luek records the largest percentage decline in individual profit, whereas Chong Chom

experiences the largest absolute monetary loss. These differences suggest that reopening policy should be **location-sensitive**, combining economic recovery with locally appropriate security, immigration, communication, and confidence-building measures.

Further Analysis: Structural Equation Modeling

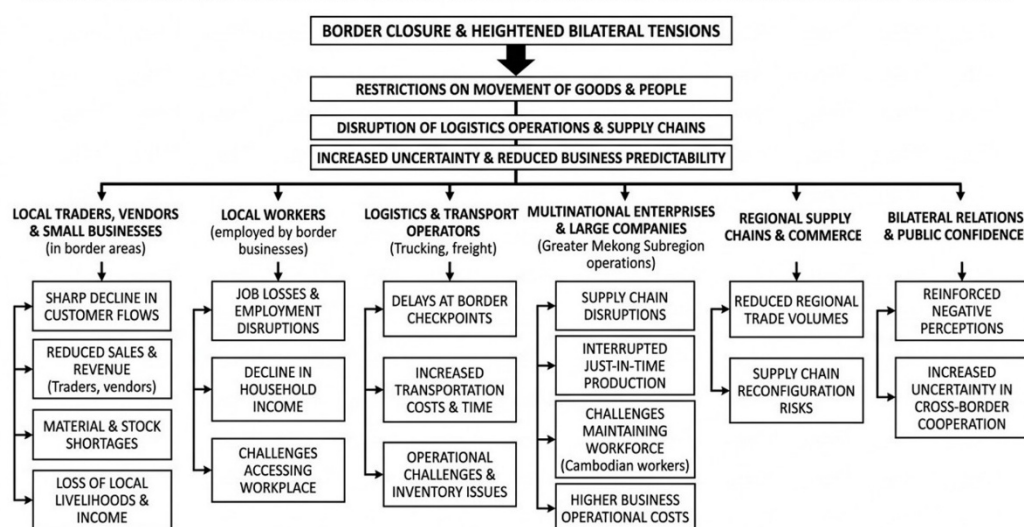
The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis provides further evidence that **support for reopening is not driven by economic necessity alone**. The model explains **96.2% of the variance in support for reopening (SUPREO)**, indicating substantial explanatory power.

The strongest total effects on support are **awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms** ($\beta = 0.636$, $p < 0.01$), **confidence in peaceful coexistence** ($\beta = 0.628$, $p < 0.01$), and **perceived necessity of reopening** ($\beta = 0.602$, $p < 0.01$). Awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms is strongly associated with **confidence in peaceful coexistence** ($\beta = 0.603$), while peaceful coexistence is associated with both greater **perceived necessity** ($\beta = 0.676$) and lower **perceived risk** ($\beta = -0.709$). Perceived risk, in turn, negatively affects reopening support.

The analysis also identifies the information environment as relevant: exposure to **algorithm-generated feeds (AIALGO)** is **positively associated with perceptions of peaceful coexistence** ($\beta = 0.522$) and **negatively associated with perceived risk** ($\beta = -0.370$), although it should **not** be interpreted as evidence of a direct causal effect on reopening support.

Figure 2. Supply Chain and Logistics Disruption resulting from the Thai-Cambodian Border Closure

SUPPLY CHAIN AND LOGISTICS DISRUPTIONS FROM THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER CLOSURE



Comparative Study

The comparative findings reveal a clear difference among **Thai locals, enterprises, and Cambodian locals**. Enterprises are relatively positive toward reopening, with a mean support score of **4.00**, while **75%** support reopening either in phases or all at once and **75%** require additional safeguards. **Their principal concerns are military/security issues and transactional crime (both 4.00), followed by fake news and disinformation (3.75).**

Cambodian respondents show stronger support for reopening (mean 4.48; 88% Top 2 Box) than Thai respondents (mean 3.57; 61% Top 2 Box). When Chong Chom is excluded to improve geographic comparability, Thai support rises to **4.19 (76% Top 2 Box)**. This suggests that **differences between the two countries' respondents are partly shaped by the specific border communities surveyed**, particularly the unusually cautious position of Chong Chom.

Overall, the evidence supports a phased and managed reopening strategy rather than an immediate, uniform reopening. The priority should be to restore economic connectivity while simultaneously strengthening security safeguards, immigration controls, public communication, information-disorder countermeasures, and community-level confidence-building. Most importantly, the SEM findings suggest that **building public understanding of the bilateral negotiation mechanisms and confidence in peaceful coexistence** may be as important as addressing the economic rationale for reopening.

2. Introduction

2.1 Project background

The Thailand–Cambodia border is an important gateway for cross-border trade, local commerce, employment, and regional supply chains. Over the years, border communities have become increasingly economically interconnected, with businesses, traders, workers, and local residents relying on the regular movement of goods and people across border checkpoints.

Recent border closures and heightened bilateral tensions have significantly disrupted this economic and social connectivity. While border restrictions may be necessary as part of security and diplomatic measures, prolonged closures can have wider implications for cross-border trade, logistics operations, local businesses, employment, and household incomes. The effects are particularly significant in communities whose livelihoods depend directly on cross-border economic activity.

For businesses operating across the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), predictability and continuity are critical to supply chain planning and management. Disruptions at major border crossings can increase transportation costs and delivery times, affect inventory planning, and create operational challenges for companies that rely on regular cross-border movements of goods and workers.

At the community level, the impact is more immediate. Traders, vendors, workers, and small business operators in border areas may experience substantial declines in income and customer traffic when cross-border activity is restricted. Businesses that employ Cambodian workers may also face challenges in maintaining their operations when the movement of workers is disrupted.

The situation also has an important dimension for bilateral relations. Prolonged restrictions can affect public confidence, increase uncertainty, and reinforce negative perceptions on both sides of the border. Concerns regarding border security, misinformation, and the handling of the dispute may further influence public reluctance to support the reopening of border crossings.

Against this backdrop, reliable evidence from border communities is important for informing both policy discussions and business planning. Understanding how local residents perceive the reopening of the border, the economic consequences of the closure, and the conditions they consider necessary for a safe and sustainable reopening can contribute to a more practical approach to bilateral normalization.

This study therefore focuses on three interconnected areas:

1. Economic and Business Impact

Border closures can disrupt cross-border trade, logistics, employment, and local business activity. The impact extends from businesses directly involved in border trade to local communities that depend on cross-border customers, workers, and supply chains.

2. Community and Livelihood Impact

Border communities are among those most directly affected by restrictions on cross-border movement. Changes in income, employment, customer flows, and daily economic activity provide an important indication of the wider cost of prolonged border disruption.

3. Public Confidence and Bilateral Relations

Public support for reopening does not depend solely on economic considerations. Perceptions of security, trust in the parties involved, confidence in the resolution process, and concerns about misinformation also shape attitudes toward reopening. These factors are relevant to the design of confidence-building measures and a sustainable reopening process.

The findings are intended to provide practical insights for government agencies, diplomatic stakeholders, business associations, and companies operating in the region as they consider options for restoring cross-border connectivity while maintaining appropriate security safeguards.

2.2 Project Objectives

The overall objective of this study is to provide evidence on the economic impact and public perceptions associated with the closure and potential reopening of Thailand–Cambodia border crossings.

Specific objectives are:

- 1) **To assess the economic impact of the border closure** on local residents, traders, vendors, entrepreneurs, and businesses operating in border communities.
- 2) **To examine the impact on cross-border business activity and supply chains**, including the operational challenges faced by companies affected by restrictions on cross-border movement.
- 3) **To assess changes in income, employment, and daily economic activities** among residents and workers affected by the border closure.
- 4) **To understand public perceptions of border reopening**, including the perceived necessity, timing, and preferred conditions for reopening.
- 5) **To assess public confidence and concerns related to border security, bilateral relations, information risks, and the resolution process.**
- 6) **To identify key factors associated with public support for reopening**, providing insights that may help inform a phased and appropriately managed reopening approach.

2.3 Research Methodology

This study uses a structured quantitative survey to capture the views and experiences of people living and working in communities located near key Thailand–Cambodia border crossings. The questionnaire was designed to be completed in approximately 30 minutes and included both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

A total of **102 respondents** were interviewed across four border areas: **Chong Chom, Khlong Luek (Aranyaprathet), Ban Laem, and Ban Phakkat**. Respondents were screened to ensure that they had sufficient experience living or working in the area and regular interaction with Cambodian people or cross-border activities.

A soft quota approach was used to ensure that the sample included respondents with different demographic and occupational backgrounds, including age, gender, education, and occupation. The sample composition is presented in Table 1.

In addition to the community survey, **four companies** were interviewed separately to provide a business perspective on the impact of border restrictions. These company-level insights are analyzed separately from the community survey and are intended to complement, rather than statistically represent, the views of the broader business community.

Table 1: Sample Size in the Survey

Demographic	Categories	N Size
By Location	Chong Chom	33
	Khlong Luek	33
	Ban Laem (Chantaburi)	17
	Ban Phakkat (Chantaburi)	19
By Age group	18-30	31
	31-45	31
	46 and above	40
By Education	M3 or below	64
	M6 / Vocational	25
	Bachelor's degree and above	13
By Occupation	Resident	37
	Authority	15
	Vendor	22
	Entrepreneur	15
	Supply chain	3
	Employer hired Cambodian workers	10
Total		102

The questionnaire consists of four sections:

- 1) Attitudes toward Border Reopening and Understanding of the Situation
- 2) Economic Impact of the Border Closure
- 3) Views on Peaceful Coexistence
- 4) Perceived Risks and Preparedness for Resolution

The analysis combines **descriptive statistics** with **Partial Least**

Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the relationships between key factors and public support for reopening the border.

Descriptive analysis is used to summarize respondents' views, experiences, and the economic impact of the border closure. PLS-SEM is used to identify the key factors associated with support for reopening and to assess the relative strength of relationships among the factors examined in the survey.

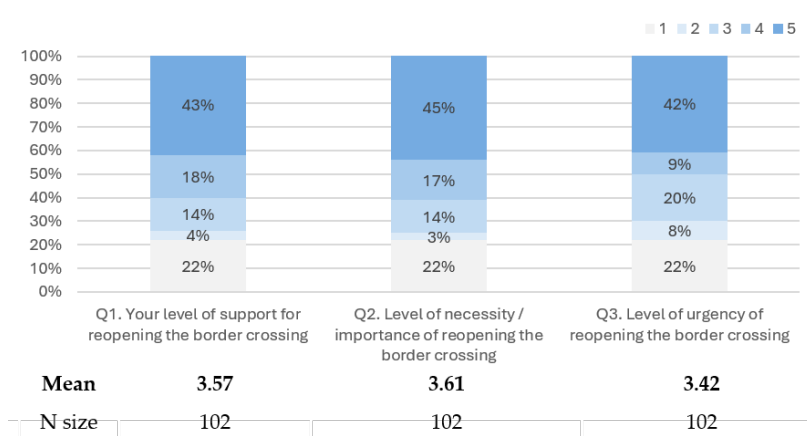
3. Findings

3.1 Overall Findings

Attitude towards reopening the border

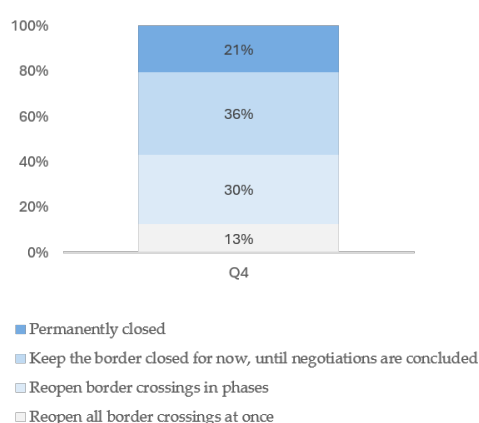
The survey indicates **broad but conditional support for reopening the Thailand–Cambodia border crossings**. More than six in ten respondents support reopening the crossings (**T2B: 61%**). Respondents also generally agree that reopening the border is necessary (**mean score: 3.62**), although they do not regard reopening as highly urgent (**mean score: 3.42**), as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Attitude towards Reopening Border



This suggests that border communities recognize the economic and practical importance of restoring cross-border connectivity, while remaining cautious about the timing and conditions for reopening. At the same time, **57% of respondents prefer to keep the crossings closed until bilateral negotiations are concluded or to keep them permanently closed**. Among respondents who were less supportive of reopening, **the main concerns relate to potential social unrest (43%), followed by national security concerns, including possible espionage (16%), and quality-of-life and personal safety concerns (11%), as shown in Figure 3.**

Figure 3. Preferred reopening approach

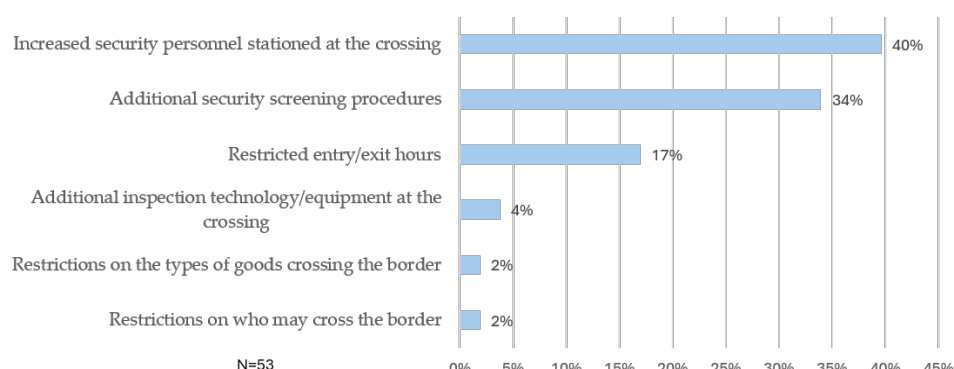


Reasons for Not Supporting the Reopening	n size
Unrest in society	16
National security issues e.g., spy	6
Quality of life e.g., safety in life and property, health	4
Hatred	3
Economic loss e.g., job competition, gambling	3
Crime	3
New wars and conflicts	2

Conditions for Reopening

If the border crossings are reopened, 43% of respondents prefer additional safeguards, including a stronger security presence at the crossings, enhanced screening procedures, and restrictions on opening hours, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Required Additional Conditions for Reopening



The findings therefore point toward a **managed or phased reopening approach**, rather than an immediate return to full border operations.

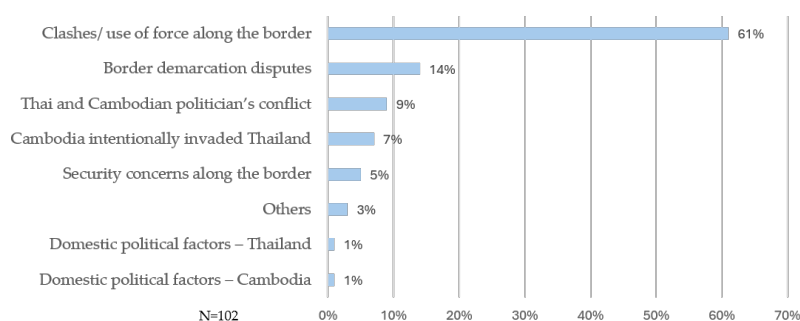
Among 81 local respondents asked about possible pilot arrangements, **83% prioritize reopening crossings for trade and the movement of goods**. By comparison, 9% prefer daily crossings for residents and labor movement, while 7% prioritize reopening for humanitarian purposes.

This strong preference for trade-related reopening suggests that **restoring economic connectivity may provide a practical starting point for a phased reopening**, while allowing authorities to maintain appropriate controls over other forms of cross-border movement.

Understanding of the current situation

Most respondents identify **border clashes as the main reason for the closure (61%)**, followed by border demarcation disputes (14%) and political tensions between Thai and Cambodian politicians (9%), as shown in Figure 5.

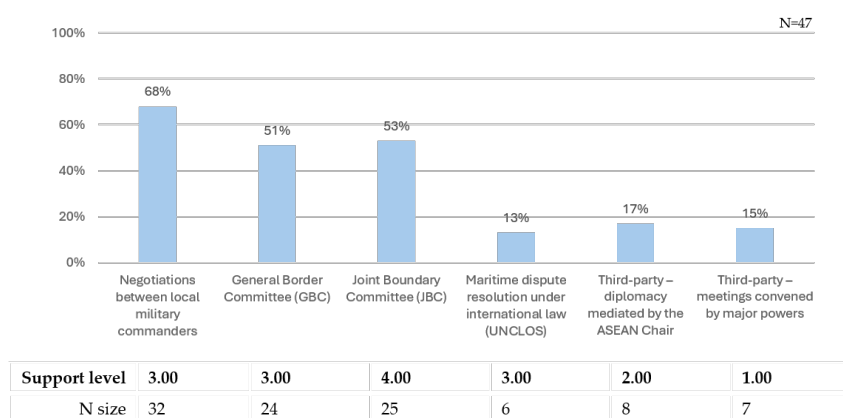
Figure 5. Main Reasons Leading to Border Closure



However, **54% of respondents are not aware of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms**. Among those who are aware of the negotiation mechanisms, discussions between **local military commanders** have the highest level of awareness (68%), with a support score of 3.34.

Awareness of the existence of **General Border Committee (GBC)**, **Joint Boundary Commission (JBC)** and **Regional Border Committee (RBC)** negotiation mechanisms is lower, at 53% and 51%, respectively. Support scores for these mechanisms are 3.60 for the JBC and 3.46 for the GBC, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Awareness and Support Level of Negotiation Mechanisms

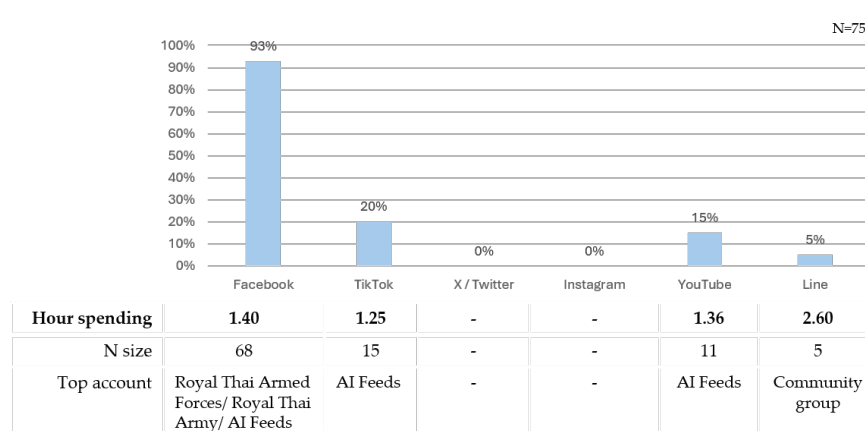


The relatively low awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms suggests a communication gap between the formal resolution process and border communities. Greater public understanding of the dialogue and confidence-building process may therefore be important in building support for a sustainable reopening.

Information Sources and the Changing Media Environment

Social media is the leading source of information on the Thailand-Cambodia situation, accounting for 42% of responses, followed by television (25%) and community leaders (16%), as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. News Media Channels



Among respondents who use social media for news, **Facebook is the dominant platform (93%)**, followed by TikTok (20%) and YouTube (15%). Average daily usage ranges from approximately 1.25 to 1.46 hours across these platforms.

The findings also indicate that many residents receive information indirectly through digital platforms. **One in three respondents relies primarily on algorithm-driven news feeds**, while one in four follows local news accounts. Only 13% obtain information directly from official government or authority accounts.

In addition, approximately **two in five respondents report being passively exposed to AI-generated news feeds**, while only one in five actively follow established news organizations or authoritative government accounts.

This creates an important **information-management challenge for both government and business stakeholders**. Official information may not necessarily reach communities directly, while algorithm-driven content can shape perceptions of the border situation. For a reopening process, **timely, trusted, and easily accessible public communication will therefore be an important part of maintaining confidence and managing misinformation risks**.

Economic impact

The border closure has had a **substantial impact on the economic position of surveyed residents**. Average monthly individual revenue declined from approximately **THB 122,703 before the closure to THB 25,545 after the closure**, representing a **96% decline**. Correlation analysis also indicates that changes in revenue significantly associated with the level of necessity of border reopening. The greater the decline in income, the stronger the perceived need to reopen the border crossings ($\beta = -0.346$, $p < .05$).

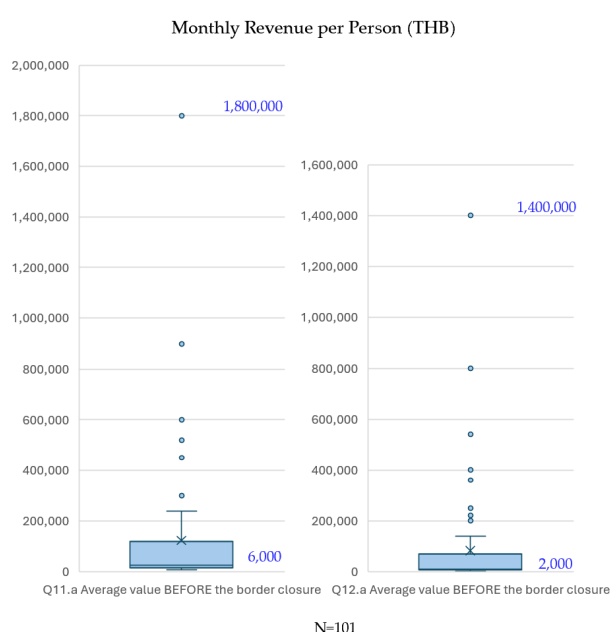
Average monthly individual expenses also declined, from **THB 81,247 to THB 24,044**, while average individual profit declined from approximately **THB 41,456 to THB 1,501**. This represents a decrease of approximately **THB 39,955 per person per month (or 96%) in average profit**, as shown in Table 2.

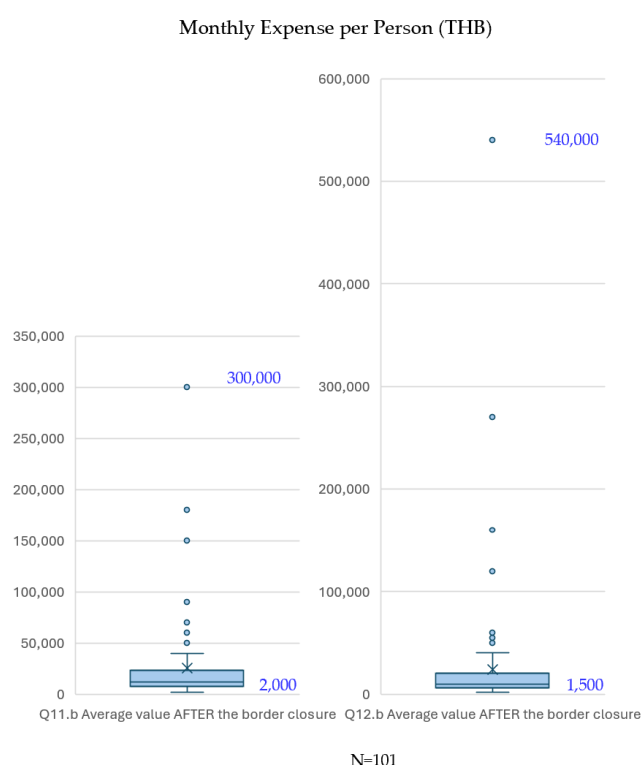
Table 2. Economic Impact on Individuals

(THB/ month/ person)	Individual revenue	Individual expense	Individual profit	% of individual profit change
BEFORE the border closure	122,703	81,247	41,456	
AFTER the border closure	25,545	24,044	1,501	
Changes in amount	-97,158	-57,203	-39,955	
Changes in percentage			-96%	-79%

As shown in Figure 8, maximum monthly earnings for locals reached THB 1.8 million prior to the border closure.

Figure 8. Monthly Revenue and Expense Per Person





The scale of the decline highlights that **border restrictions have affected not only cross-border trade but also the broader local economic ecosystem**, including customer flows, employment, and household purchasing power.

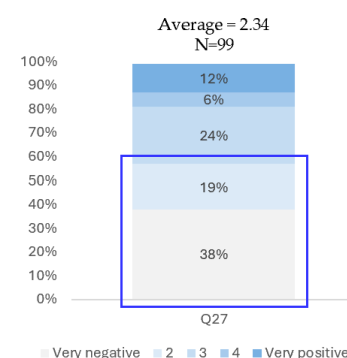
For businesses and investors, the findings reinforce the importance of **predictability and continuity in cross-border operations**. Prolonged disruption can affect not only immediate revenue but also workforce planning, customer relationships, inventory management, and supply chain decisions

Local Views on Entertainment Establishments

Respondents also expressed **predominantly negative views toward entertainment establishments located along the border**, with **57% recording a B2B negative rating and a mean score of 2.34**, as shown in Figure 9.

This finding suggests that the reopening discussion extends beyond the movement of goods and people. The type of commercial activity permitted along the border may also influence local perceptions of safety, community well-being, and the broader economic benefits of reopening.

Figure 9. Attitudes towards entertainment establishments



Peaceful coexistence

Public confidence in long-term peaceful coexistence remains relatively low. More than one in three respondents (35%) strongly disagree that Cambodians genuinely wish to coexist peacefully with Thailand (mean score: 2.73). A similar proportion (35%) strongly disagree that Thai and Cambodian communities can return to living peacefully together in the future (mean score: 2.83), as shown in Figure 10.

Confidence in the conflict-resolution capacity of both sides is also limited. **91% of respondents report having no confidence in Cambodia's ability to resolve the conflict**, while fewer than one in five express confidences in Thailand's conflict-resolution capability.

Among Thai stakeholders, **Thai interest groups** receive the lowest confidence rating (mean score: 1.50), followed by the **Thai Government and politicians** (mean score: 2.02), as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 10. Attitudes towards Peaceful Coexistence

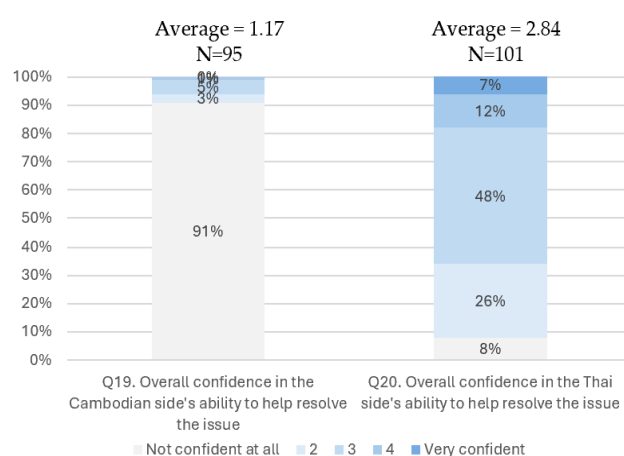
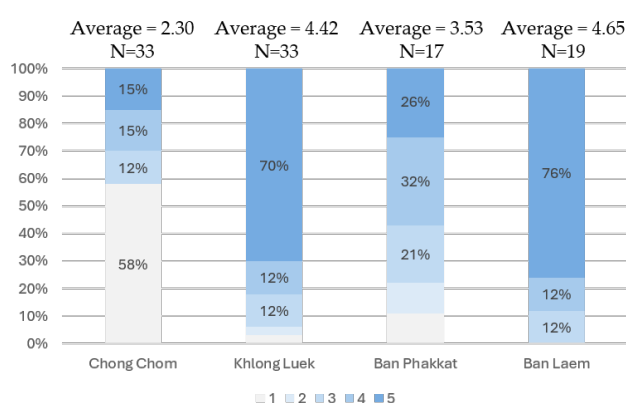
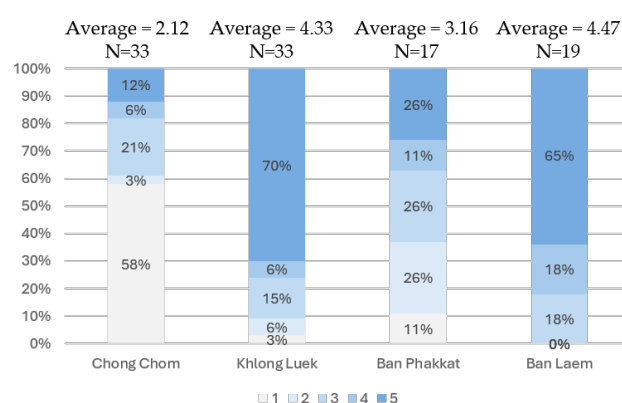


Figure 11. Confidence in Thai - Cambodian Resolution Capability



Q2. Level of necessity / importance of reopening the border crossing



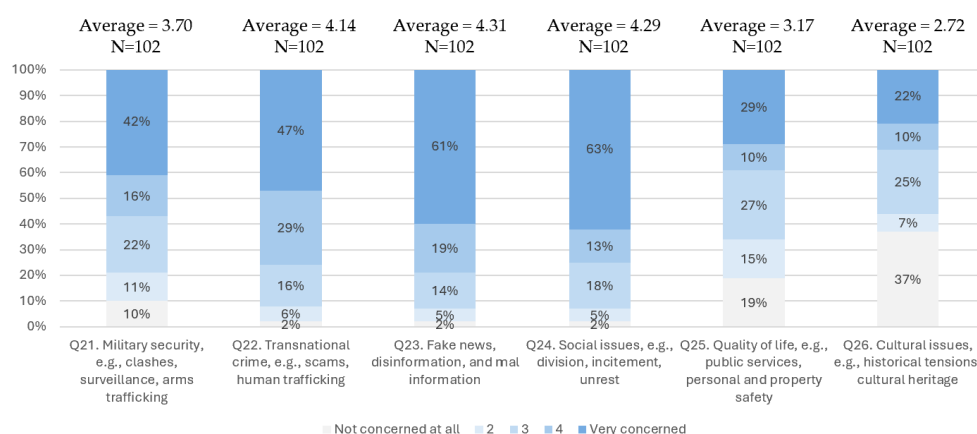
Q3. Level of urgency of reopening the border crossing

These findings suggest that **the challenge is not only reopening the physical border but also rebuilding confidence among communities affected by the conflict**. From a bilateral relations perspective, economic normalization may therefore need to proceed alongside measures that strengthen public confidence, communication, and mutual understanding.

Perceived risk and preparedness for resolution

The spread of fake news, disinformation, and malinformation is the most significant concern associated with reopening the border. **80% of respondents express concern about this issue**, with a high mean score of **4.31**. Social issues and transactional crime also receive high concern scores (**4.29**), as shown in Figure 12.

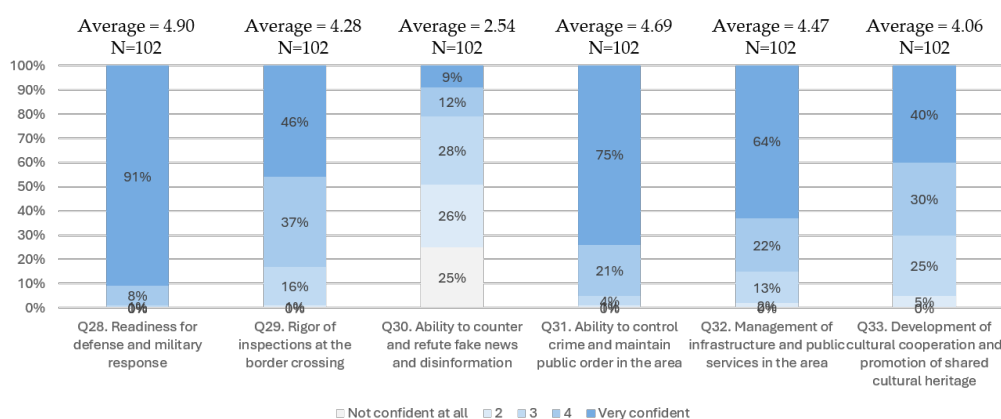
Figure 12. Issues of Concern on Border Reopening



The findings highlight that **information security is now closely linked to border security in the eyes of local communities**. Residents are concerned not only about physical security but also about how information and online narratives may affect social stability during the reopening process.

At the same time, respondents express the **lowest level of confidence in Thailand's preparedness to monitor, fact-check, and debunk false information**, with a mean score of **2.54**. Confidence in preparedness to address cultural and social issues is higher (**4.06**), while confidence in military preparedness is particularly high (**4.90**), with more than 90% of respondents expressing confidence, as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Confidence in Thai Government's Preparedness



This creates an important policy gap: **physical security is perceived as relatively strong, while information and public-communication capabilities are viewed as less prepared**. A reopening strategy that focuses primarily on physical security may therefore not fully address the concerns identified by local communities.

Measures Recommended by Local Communities

When asked what measures could improve public confidence and support peaceful coexistence, the most frequently mentioned priorities were shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Recommendations for Government on Peaceful Coexisting

Recommendations	n=102
Safety guarantee for locals	34%
Strict immigration measures	25%
Permanently closed border crossing	11%
Resolving border issues	9%
Economic measures to support the local livelihoods	8%
Relaxing border closure measures	4%
Measures to restrict Cambodians	4%
Preventing smuggling and transactional crime	3%
Information Operation counter measures	2%

The strongest priorities are **safety guarantees and stricter immigration controls**, indicating that residents place considerable emphasis on visible and credible safeguards.

At the same time, **economic support and resolution of the underlying border issues** also emerge as important considerations. This suggests that a sustainable normalization process will require a combination of **security measures, economic support, effective communication, and progress in bilateral dialogue**.

How Communities Are Adapting to the Prolonged Closure

While awaiting progress in bilateral negotiations, residents are adopting a range of strategies to manage the economic impact of the closure.

The most common responses are **reducing spending and increasing savings (28%)**, followed by taking additional jobs, including casual or agricultural work **(23%)**. Meanwhile, **20%** report taking no specific action, while 18% are considering relocating or finding new customers in other areas as shown in Table 4

Table 4. Adaptation to Prolonged Closure

Adaptation	n=100
Spend economically, saving	28%
Find a side job e.g., taking on odd jobs, agricultural work	23%
Do nothing	20%
Relocate to a new location and find new customers.	18%
Community reliance, Sufficiency Economy.	8%
Retired	1%
Be patient	1%
Increase the variety of products and services.	1%

These responses indicate that local communities are already adjusting to a prolonged period of disruption. However, several of the strategies—particularly taking additional work or relocating to find new customers—may represent **adaptation rather than sustainable economic recovery**.

For policymakers and business stakeholders, this highlights the importance of considering **local livelihood recovery as part of any broader border-normalization strategy**, particularly if restrictions remain in place for an extended period.

3.2 Findings by border location

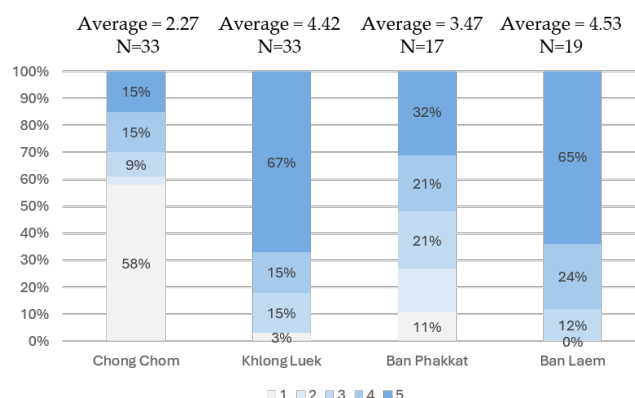
The survey reveals **substantial differences in attitudes and concerns across the four border locations**. While the overall findings indicate broad support for reopening, attitudes vary considerably by location, reflecting differences in local economic exposure, perceptions of security, cross-border interaction, and confidence in the resolution process.

Among the four locations, **Chong Chom stands out as the most cautious toward reopening**, while communities in Chanthaburi—particularly Ban Laem—show comparatively greater confidence in future coexistence and local security institutions.

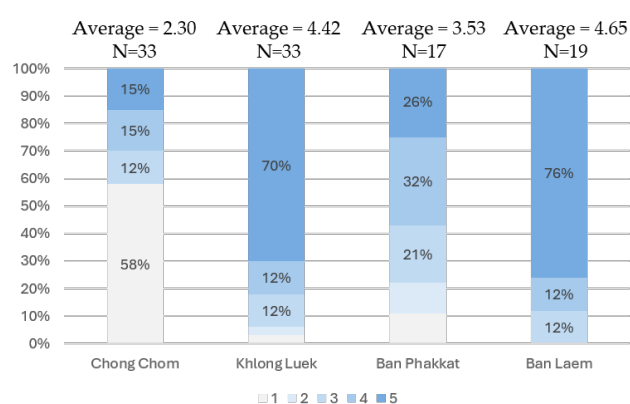
Attitude towards Reopening the Border

Chong Chom shows the strongest preference for maintaining the border closure. Approximately **70% of respondents in Chong Chom do not support reopening**, and almost 60% consider reopening neither necessary nor urgent, as shown in Figure 14.

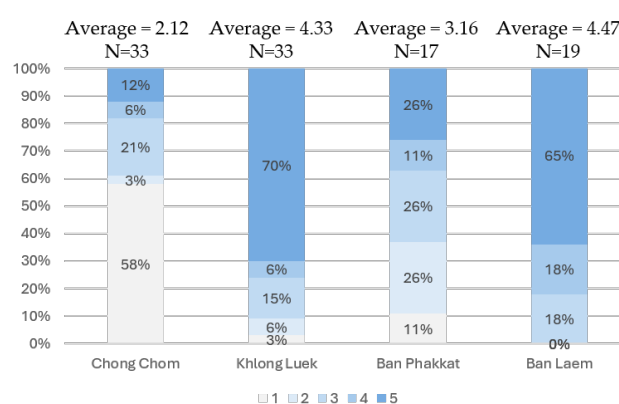
Figure 14. Level of Support for Border Reopening by Location



Q1. Level of support for reopening the border crossing



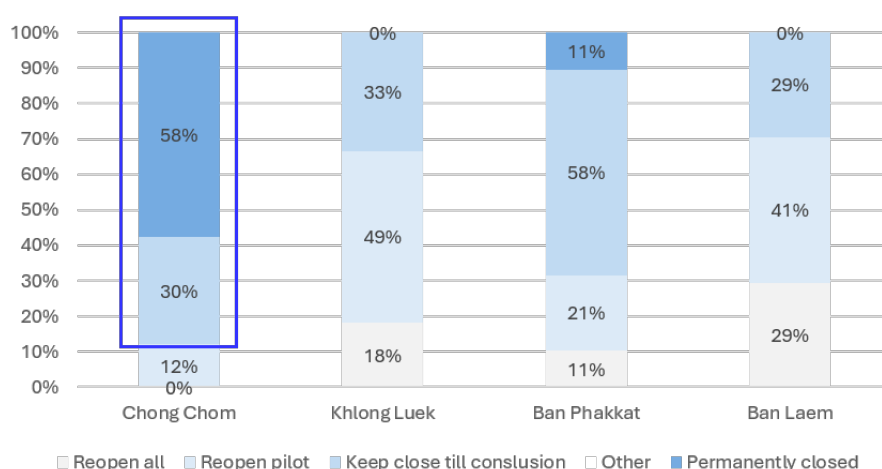
Q2. Level of necessity / importance of reopening the border crossing



Q3. Level of urgency of reopening the border crossing

Nearly 90% of Chong Chom respondents prefer to keep the border closed, with approximately two in three supporting permanent closure. Furthermore, 79% would require additional conditions before supporting reopening, as shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15. Preferred Reopening Approach by Location

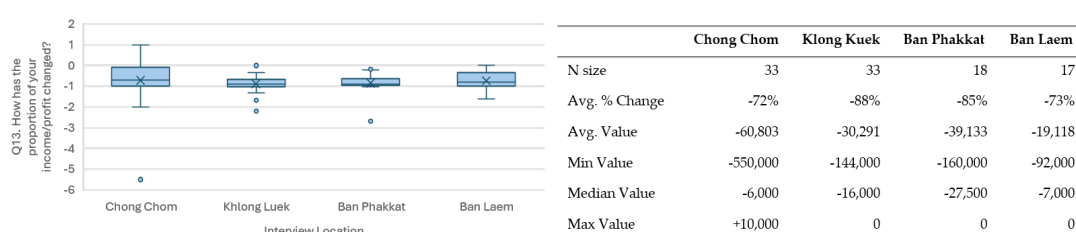


This contrasts with the broader survey findings of support for reopening and indicates that **local conditions and perceptions of risk matter significantly when considering border reopening**. For Chong Chom, any reopening strategy may therefore require stronger security assurances, clearer communication, and visible confidence-building measures before economic normalization can gain broader local acceptance.

Economic Impact

The economic impact of the border closure varies considerably across locations. The estimated decline in individual monthly profit ranges from approximately **72% to 88%**, equivalent to an estimated loss of around **THB 19,000–61,000 per person per month**, as shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Individual Economic Loss by Location



Khlong Luek, located adjacent to Poipet, records the largest percentage decline in individual profit, followed by Ban Phakkat, adjacent to Pailin. In absolute monetary terms, **Chong Chom records the largest individual loss**.

The variation across locations suggests that the economic consequences of the closure are shaped by the **degree and type of local dependence on cross-border economic activity**. While some areas experience a sharper percentage reduction in earnings, others face a larger absolute financial impact.

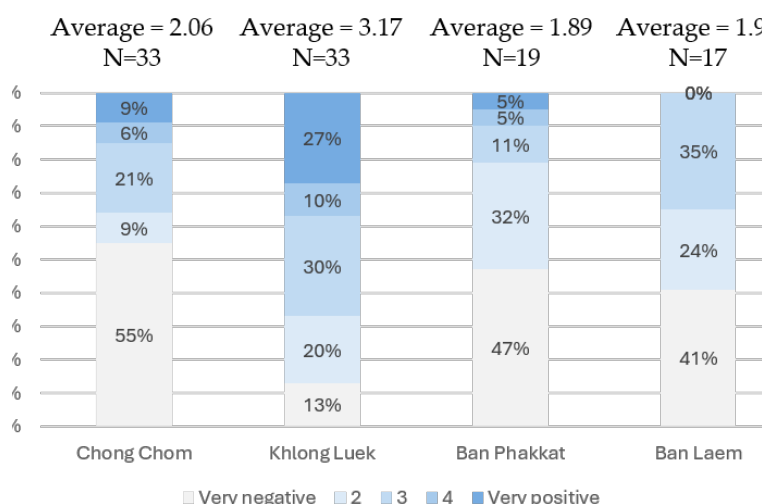
For business and policy stakeholders, this indicates that **the economic impact of border restrictions is not uniform across the frontier**. Measures to support affected communities may therefore need to reflect local economic structures rather than applying a single approach across all border areas.

Attitudes Toward Entertainment Establishments

Views toward entertainment establishments also differ by location. **Most border communities express negative views toward entertainment establishments**, while Khlong Luek is the notable exception.

The relatively more favorable perception in Khlong Luek may reflect the area's proximity to Poipet and its established cross-border commercial environment. Notably, **none of the respondents in Ban Laem expressed a positive view of entertainment establishments**, as shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Perception on Economic Impact from Casinos

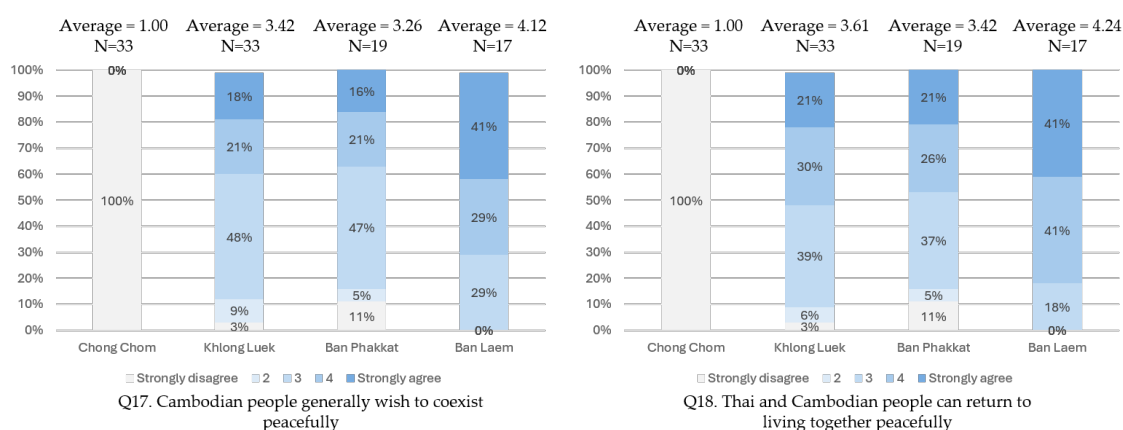


The findings suggest that any reopening strategy should distinguish between **trade-related economic activity and other forms of commercial activity**, particularly where community perceptions of safety and social impact differ.

Peaceful coexistence

Attitudes toward future Thai–Cambodian coexistence vary significantly across locations. **Chong Chom records the most negative outlook**, with all respondents strongly disagreeing with the possibility of peaceful coexistence in the future. In contrast, **Ban Laem records the highest confidence in the possibility of future peaceful coexistence among the four locations**, as shown in Figure 18.

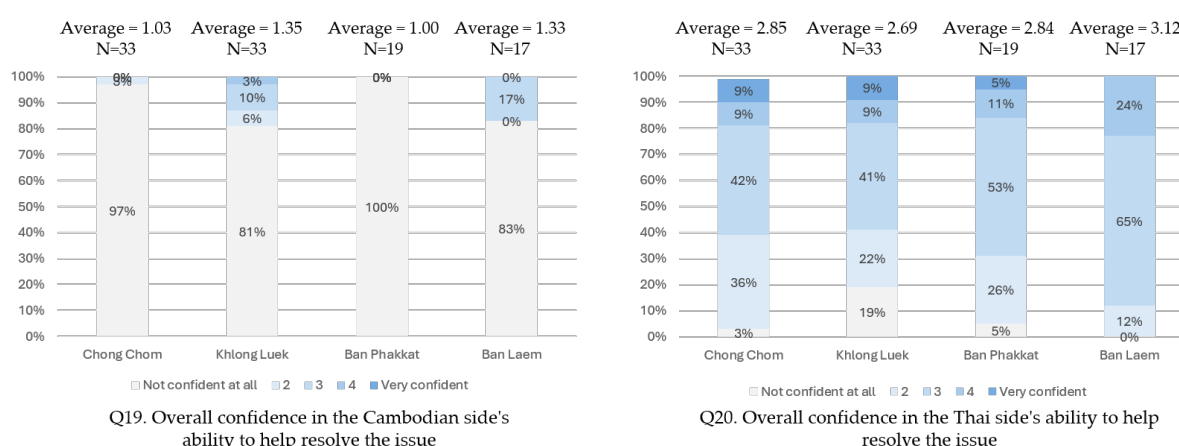
Figure 18. Confidence in Future Peaceful Coexistence



Confidence in Cambodia's ability to contribute to conflict resolution is also relatively lower in Chong Chom and Ban Phakkat than in the other locations.

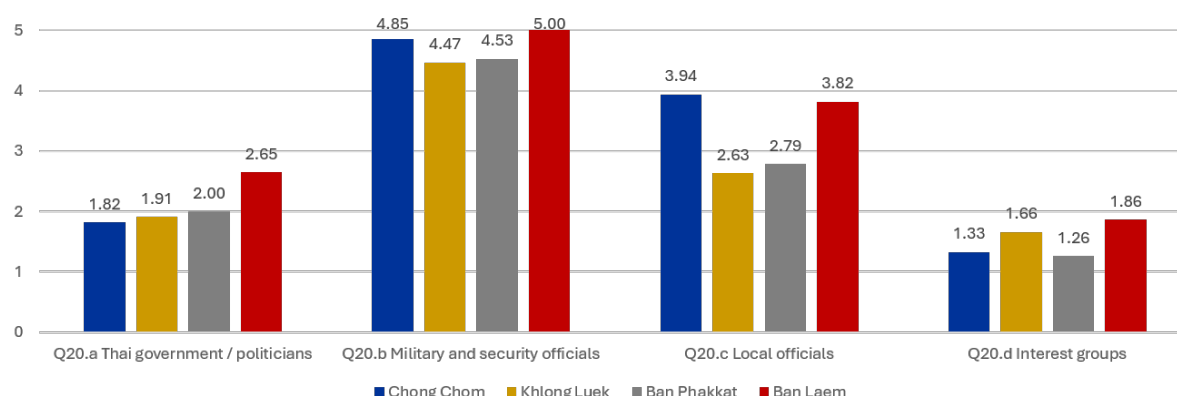
Across all locations, **confidence in the Cambodian side's ability to help resolve the conflict is lower than confidence in the Thai side.** However, confidence in Thai institutions varies considerably by stakeholder group, as seen in Figure 19.

Figure 19. Confidence in Thai and Cambodian Governments to Resolve the Situation



The largest variation is observed in confidence in local officials, suggesting that the role of local authorities may be particularly important in shaping community confidence in the border-management process, as seen in Figure 20.

Figure 20. Confidence in Thailand's Intention to Resolve the Situation



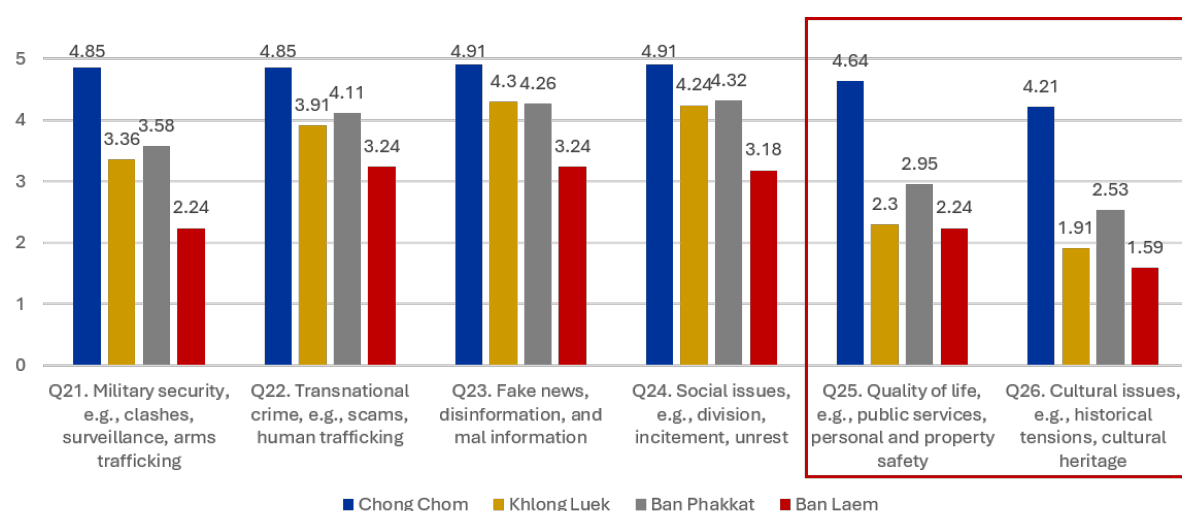
Military and security officials receive relatively high confidence across the border areas. **Ban Laem records the highest level of confidence, with 100% of respondents expressing strong confidence in military and security officials.**

This pattern suggests that **security institutions currently provide a stronger source of public confidence than civilian or political stakeholders**. For managed reopening, local authorities and other civilian agencies may therefore have an important role to play in translating security assurances into broader community confidence.

Perceived risk and preparedness

Chong Chom residents are the most sensitive to potential risks associated with reopening, particularly concerns related to fake news, disinformation, and social unrest, as shown in Figure 21. The largest differences between locations are observed in perceptions of quality-of-life and cultural risks. This indicates that surrounding reopening extends beyond border security and include issues related to everyday community conditions and social interaction.

Figure 21. Concerns about Reopening Border Crossings



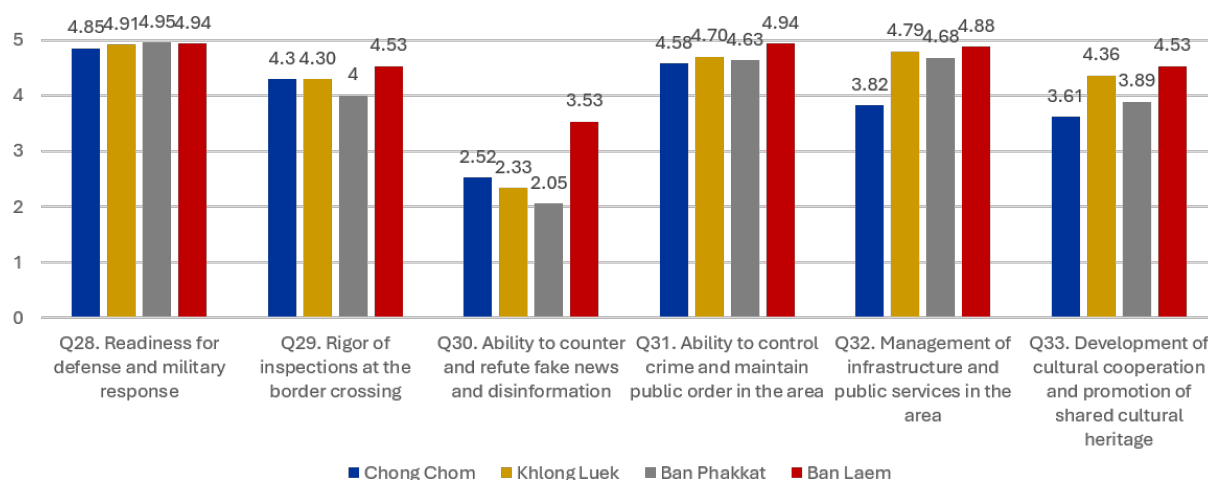
For Chong Chom in particular, **confidence-building measures addressing quality of life, community safety, and cultural or social concerns may be necessary alongside conventional border-security measures**.

This is an important distinction for policymakers: the same reopening arrangement may be perceived differently across locations depending on local concerns and previous experience with cross-border interaction.

Confidence in Government Preparedness

Overall confidence in the Thai government's preparedness for a potential reopening is relatively similar across the four locations, despite differences in perceived risks. However, **preparedness to address fake news and disinformation shows the greatest variation between locations**, as shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22. Confidence in the Thai Government's Preparedness and Measures



This suggests that while residents may have broadly similar expectations of government preparedness, their confidence in the government's ability to manage **information-related risks** varies considerably by location.

Given the importance of social media as a primary information source identified in the overall survey, this variation warrants particular attention in any future reopening communication strategy.

Local Recommendations for Border Reopening

Recommendations also differ substantially by location, reflecting the different levels of confidence and perceived risk across the border communities, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Recommendation for Border Reopening by Location

Recommendations	Chong Chom	Klong Luek	Ban Phakkat	Ban Laem
N Size	33	33	19	17
Information Operation counter measures	0%	3%	5%	0%
Resolving border issues	3%	12%	21%	0%
Strict immigration measures	15%	27%	37%	29%
Safety guarantee for locals	33%	30%	32%	47%
Preventing smuggling and transactional crime	0%	6%	0%	6%
Permanently closed border crossing	30%	3%	0%	0%
Relaxing border closure measures	0%	6%	5%	6%
Measures to restrict Cambodians	12%	0%	0%	0%
Economic measures to support the local livelihoods	6%	12%	0%	12%

The strongest differences are particularly visible in three areas.

First, Chong Chom shows a distinctly more cautious position. Permanent closure is recommended by **30% of respondents**, compared with only **3%** in Khlong Luek and none in Ban Phakkat or Ban Laem. Chong Chom also records the highest share calling for measures to restrict Cambodian nationals (**12%**).

Second, security and immigration controls are consistently important across locations. Strict immigration measures are cited by 15% of Chong Chom respondents, 27% in Khlong Luek, **37% in Ban Phakkat**, and 29% in Ban Laem.

Third, safety guarantees are the most consistently supported measure, particularly in Ban Laem, where **47% of respondents identify them as a priority**.

The location-level findings therefore point to the need for a **differentiated reopening strategy** rather than a uniform approach across all border crossings. Key Implication by Location can be summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Implications by Border Location

Location	Overall Position	Key Concern	Potential Policy Focus
Chong Chom	Most cautious toward reopening	Security, social unrest, information risks	Stronger security assurances, communication, and confidence-building before reopening
Khlong Luek	More economically oriented	Immigration and border management	Trade continuity with strengthened immigration and border controls
Ban Phakkat	Moderate support with security concerns	Immigration and unresolved border issues	Security safeguards alongside progress on bilateral issues
Ban Laem	Relatively higher confidence in coexistence	Safety and community security	Safety guarantees and managed economic reopening

Overall, the geographic findings indicate that **one border, one reopening policy may not fully reflect the realities of border communities**. Differences in economic exposure, security perceptions, and institutional confidence suggest that reopening arrangements could be **tailored to local conditions**, with clear safeguards and monitoring mechanisms.

For bilateral relations, the findings also highlight the potential value of **local-level confidence-building measures** alongside formal negotiation mechanisms. Rebuilding confidence at the community level may help create a more stable environment for gradual economic normalization.

3.3 Further Analysis

What Drives Support for Border Reopening?

To better understand what shapes public support for reopening the border crossings, a path analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted, as shown in Appendix 5.2. The analysis examines how awareness, perceptions of peaceful coexistence, perceived risks, government preparedness, and views on the necessity and urgency of reopening are connected to overall support for reopening.

The model explains **96.2% of the variation in respondents' support for reopening the border crossings (SUPREO)**, indicating that the factors included in the model collectively provide a strong explanation of differences in reopening support within the surveyed sample.

The analysis highlights three particularly important drivers of support for reopening:

- 1) **Awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms**
- 2) **Confidence in peaceful coexistence**
- 3) **Perceived necessity of reopening**

These factors have the strongest overall relationships with support for reopening when both direct and indirect relationships are considered.

1. Awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms

Awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms is the strongest overall driver of support for reopening, with a total effect of 0.636 ($p < 0.01$). It also has a strong positive relationship with perceptions of the necessity of reopening ($\beta = 0.428$, $p < 0.05$) and with confidence in peaceful coexistence ($\beta = 0.603$, $p < 0.01$).

This finding is particularly relevant given that more than half of surveyed residents were not aware of **the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms**. The analysis suggests that **greater awareness of the formal resolution process is associated with stronger confidence in coexistence and greater recognition of the need to reopen the border**.

For policymakers, this points to a clear communication opportunity: **public communication about bilateral negotiation mechanisms is not simply an information exercise; it can contribute to confidence-building and support for economic normalization.**

2. Confidence in Peaceful Coexistence

Confidence in peaceful coexistence is the second strongest overall driver of reopening support, with a total effect of **0.628** ($p < 0.01$). It has a strong positive relationship with the perceived necessity of reopening ($\beta = 0.676$, $p < 0.01$) and a positive relationship with the perceived urgency of reopening ($\beta = 0.350$, $p < 0.01$).

At the same time, confidence in peaceful coexistence is strongly associated with **lower perceived risk of reopening** ($\beta = -0.709$, $p < 0.01$).

Where residents have greater confidence that Thai and Cambodian communities can coexist peacefully, they tend to perceive fewer risks and attach greater importance and urgency to reopening.

From a bilateral-relations perspective, this highlights the importance of **confidence-building measures at the community level**, alongside formal diplomatic and security mechanisms.

3. Perceived Necessity of Reopening

The perceived necessity of reopening has a strong direct relationship with support for reopening, with $\beta = 0.602$ ($p < 0.01$).

This finding is consistent with the broader survey results: residents generally recognize the importance of reopening, even though many remain cautious about the timing.

The distinction between “**necessary**” and “**urgent**” is therefore important. The findings suggest that residents may recognize the economic and practical value of restoring border connectivity without necessarily believing that reopening should happen immediately.

4. Perceived Risk Can Reduce Support for Reopening

Perceived risk has a **negative relationship with both the perceived necessity of reopening** ($\beta = -0.048$, $p < 0.01$) and **overall support for reopening** ($\beta = -0.209$, $p < 0.05$). It also has a negative relationship with the perceived urgency of reopening ($\beta = -0.420$, $p < 0.01$).

The implication is straightforward: **the greater the perceived risk associated with reopening, the lower the willingness to support it.**

This is important because the survey identified fake news, disinformation, social issues, and transactional crime among the major concerns surrounding reopening. Risk management should therefore be viewed as part of the reopening strategy itself, rather than as a separate security issue.

5. Government Preparedness Matters, but Mainly Through Risk Reduction

Government preparedness has a negative relationship with perceived reopening risk ($\beta = -0.141$, $p < 0.01$).

This indicates that **greater confidence in government preparedness is associated with lower perceived risk**. However, its overall direct and indirect relationship with reopening support is relatively limited compared with awareness of negotiation mechanisms, peaceful coexistence, and the perceived necessity of reopening. The total effect on support is **0.053**.

This distinction is useful for policy interpretation. Government preparedness may not directly persuade residents to support reopening. Instead, its more important role may be to **reduce concerns and create the conditions under which reopening becomes acceptable**.

6. Digital Information Exposure Is Associated with Perceptions of Coexistence

Algorithm-generated feeds (AIALGO) show a positive relationship with perceptions of peaceful coexistence ($\beta = 0.522$, $p < 0.01$) and a negative relationship with perceived reopening risk ($\beta = -0.370$, $p < 0.01$).

However, the relationship between algorithm-generated feeds and overall support for reopening is not statistically significant through some of the identified pathways.

Therefore, the findings should **not** be interpreted as evidence that algorithm-driven content directly increases support for reopening. Rather, it suggests that the information environment may be associated with perceptions of coexistence and risk.

This reinforces the importance of **effective public communication and information management**, particularly because social media is already a major source of information for border communities.

7. Cross-Border Personal Connections Also Matter

Personal connectedness with acquaintances in Cambodia has a positive relationship with perceptions of peaceful coexistence ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.01$). Its total effect on reopening support is **0.259**, indicating a moderate relationship.

This suggests that **existing people-to-people connections may contribute to more positive perceptions of coexistence and, indirectly, greater acceptance of border reopening**.

For bilateral relations, this finding reinforces the value of maintaining legitimate cross-border social and economic connections as part of longer-term confidence-building.

Key Drivers of Support for Reopening

The total-effect analysis provides a clear ranking of the factors most strongly associated with support for reopening:

Table 7. Total Effect

No.	Factor	Total Effect	Interpretation
1	Awareness of negotiation mechanisms	0.636	Strongest overall driver
2	Peaceful coexistence	0.628	Strong relationship with reopening support
3	Necessity of reopening	0.602	Strong direct driver
4	Urgency of reopening	0.388	Moderate driver
5	Perceived risk	-0.373	Higher risk reduces support
6	Connectedness with Cambodia	0.259	Moderate positive relationship
7	Government preparedness	0.053	Relatively limited overall relationship

These results indicate that **support for reopening is shaped by more than economic necessity**. Public understanding of the bilateral resolution process, confidence in peaceful coexistence, and perceptions of risk are central to whether residents are prepared to support reopening.

Implications for Border Reopening

The analysis suggests three priorities for building public support for reopening:

First, improve public understanding of bilateral resolution mechanisms. Given that awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms is the strongest overall driver of reopening support, communication about the progress and mechanisms of bilateral dialogue should reach border communities more directly and consistently.

Second, strengthen confidence in peaceful coexistence. Economic normalization is unlikely to be sustainable without a degree of public confidence that cross-border communities can return to stable and peaceful interaction.

Third, reduce perceived risks through visible safeguards. Security arrangements, immigration controls, public-order measures, and credible mechanisms to address misinformation can help reduce the risks associated with reopening.

Taken together, the findings support a **phased and managed reopening approach** in which economic connectivity can be restored

progressively while security safeguards, public communication, and confidence-building measures are strengthened.

“Public support for reopening is driven not only by the economic need to reopen, but also by whether communities understand the bilateral resolution process, believe peaceful coexistence is possible, and feel that the risks of reopening can be effectively managed.

3.4 Comparative Findings

Thai locals and enterprises

The four enterprise interviews indicate a **more positive stance toward border reopening than that observed among local residents**. Enterprises give an average support score of **4.00**, with **50% supporting reopening**. The perceived necessity of reopening is rated at **3.25**, while the perceived urgency is lower, at **3.00**.

Three in four enterprises (75%) favor reopening either **in phases or all at once**, while the same proportion would support reopening only with **additional safeguards or conditions**.

This suggests that businesses generally recognize the value of restoring cross-border connectivity but also expect **clear operating conditions and risk-management measures** before normal business activity resumes.

Confidence in Coexistence and Conflict Resolution

Enterprises express relatively positive views regarding future coexistence. The average score is **3.75** for the view that Cambodians wish to coexist peacefully with Thailand and **3.50** for the possibility that Thai and Cambodian communities can return to living together peacefully.

However, confidence in the ability of both sides to contribute to resolving the Thailand–Cambodia dispute remains comparatively limited, with scores of **2.50 for Cambodia** and **2.75 for Thailand**.

This suggests that **business confidence in people-to-people coexistence is higher than confidence in the broader conflict-resolution process**.

Business Concerns and Preparedness

The enterprises’ main concerns regarding reopening are **military and security issues** and **transactional crime**, both receiving a score of **4.00**, followed by **fake news and disinformation** at **3.75**. Cultural issues are considered the least concerning, with a score of **2.30**.

In terms of government preparedness, enterprises express the highest confidence in **military and security readiness (3.75)** and **cultural cooperation after reopening (3.33)**.

However, confidence is lower in the government's ability to **control crime and maintain public order (2.50)**, as well as in **infrastructure and public-service management**.

This highlights an important distinction between **border security and the broader business operating environment**. While enterprises appear relatively confident in security preparedness, they remain more cautious about whether public-order, infrastructure, and service systems will be able to support a smooth reopening.

Views on Entertainment Establishments and Business Adaptation

Enterprises hold a relatively positive view of entertainment establishments, with an average score of 3.50, contrasting with the generally negative perception among residents.

For the government, enterprises recommend closer cooperation with Cambodia to establish clear bilateral agreements and commitments, supported by strict rules that remain sufficiently flexible to respond to changing conditions.

If the border closure continues, enterprises indicate that they would adapt by **seeking new business partners and alternative business opportunities**.

This indicates that businesses are already considering **alternative market and supply-chain arrangements**, which may have longer-term implications if border restrictions persist.

Thai and Cambodian local attitudes

The comparison between Thai and Cambodian respondents shows a **substantial difference in attitudes toward reopening the land border crossings**.

Cambodian respondents report a higher average support score of **4.48**, compared with **3.57 among Thai respondents**. Support at the **Top 2 Box (T2B)** level is **88% among Cambodian respondents**, compared with **61% among Thai respondents**.

However, the comparison should be interpreted in the context of the geographic coverage of the two surveys. **The Cambodian survey did not include communities directly adjacent to Chong Chom**, where Thai respondents recorded the lowest level of support for reopening and where the survey captured concerns associated with fatalities and damage to lives and property.

To provide a more comparable geographic comparison, Chong Chom can therefore be excluded from the Thai sample. Among Thai respondents in Khlong Luek, Ban Phakkat, and Ban Laem, which are the areas covered that are connected with Poipet and Pailin, the average support score rises to **4.19**, with **76% supporting reopening at the T2B level (n=69)**.

This comparison suggests that **the difference between Thai and Cambodian attitudes becomes narrower when comparing communities with more comparable cross-border economic and geographic exposure**.

Economic Impact: Thailand vs. Cambodia

The economic impact of the border closure is significant on both sides, although the **absolute financial impact is greater among the surveyed Thai respondents** as followed;

Table 8. Economic Impact Comparison between Thai and Cambodian Population

	Thailand			Cambodia		
USD1:THB33	Revenue	Expense	Profit	Revenue	Expense	Profit
Before (USD)	3,718	2,462	1,256	1,000	650	350
After (USD)	774	729	45	250	225	30
Changes (USD)	-2,944	-1,733	- 1,211	- 750	-425	-320
Changes (%)	-79%	-70%	-96%	- 75%	-65%	-92%

*Avg individual profit change = 80%

The comparison shows that **both Thai and Cambodian border communities experienced severe reductions in economic activity**. Thai respondents experienced a larger decline in absolute monetary terms, while the percentage decline in profit was also severe on both sides: **96% in Thailand compared with 92% in Cambodia**.

This finding is important because it demonstrates that the border closure has created **shared economic costs across both sides of the border**, even though the scale and structure of those losses differ.

What the Comparison Tells Us

The comparative findings point to **three important differences between business, Thai local, and Cambodian local perspectives**.

Table 9. Summary of Comparative Findings

Dimension	Thai Locals	Enterprises	Cambodian Locals
Support for reopening	Moderate	More positive	Highest
Perceived urgency	Relatively cautious	Cautious	Higher support
Economic impact	Very high absolute loss	Concern over business continuity	Very high relative impact
Security concerns	High	High	—
Confidence in coexistence	Relatively low	Relatively positive	More supportive of reopening
Priority for reopening	Security + safeguards	Business continuity + safeguards	Reopening of cross-border activity

Overall, the comparison suggests that **the economic rationale for reopening is shared across the border, but the level of confidence in reopening differs considerably.**

Cambodian respondents show the strongest support for reopening, while Thai respondents are more cautious, particularly in areas directly affected by the conflict. Businesses fall somewhere between these positions: they recognize the importance of restoring cross-border connectivity but expect **predictable rules, security safeguards, and a stable operating environment.**

Implication for Border Normalization

Taken together, the findings suggest that **economic interdependence provides a strong common interest in restoring cross-border connectivity, while security perceptions remain the principal constraint on normalization.**

For business stakeholders, prolonged closure creates incentives to **diversify suppliers, customers, routes, and business partners**, potentially reducing the economic dependence on traditional border channels over time.

For policymakers and bilateral stakeholders, this strengthens the case for a **phased and managed reopening strategy**, particularly one that: restores trade and goods movement where conditions permit; provides **visible security and immigration safeguards**; strengthens **public communication on bilateral negotiation mechanisms**; addresses **misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information**; maintains **flexible operating rules that can respond to changing security conditions**; and supports **local economic recovery on both sides of the border.**

The overarching message is that **the economic case for reopening is shared, but the political and security conditions for reopening are not perceived equally across locations or stakeholder groups.**

A successful normalization process will therefore need to combine **economic connectivity with credible security guarantees and confidence-building measures.**

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

The survey reveals a **clear but conditional economic rationale for reopening the Thailand–Cambodia border crossings.** More than three in five local respondents support reopening, and residents recognize that restoring cross-border connectivity is necessary. However, support for reopening does not translate into a strong sense of urgency. **Economic necessity is therefore not sufficient on its own to generate broad public confidence in immediate reopening.**

The economic impact of the border closure is substantial. Surveyed residents experienced a sharp decline in individual revenue and profit following the closure, with average monthly profit falling by approximately **80–96%, depending on the measure and comparison used.** The findings demonstrate that the border is not simply a point of entry and exit; it is an important part of the **local economic ecosystem supporting trade, employment, household income, and business activity.**

At the same time, **security and confidence remain the principal constraints on reopening.** More than half of respondents prefer to maintain the closure either until bilateral negotiations make further progress or permanently. Among those requiring conditions for reopening, the priorities are primarily related to **personal safety, stronger security presence, immigration controls, and more rigorous screening procedures.**

The survey also identifies an important **information gap.** While social media is the leading source of information on the Thailand–Cambodia situation, only **54% of respondents are aware of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms.** Awareness of negotiation mechanism at the local military level is considerably higher than awareness of the formal **Joint Boundary Commission (JBC) and General Border Committee (GBC) mechanisms.**

This gap matters because the path analysis indicates that **awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms is the strongest overall factor associated with support for reopening,** followed by confidence in peaceful coexistence and recognition of the necessity of reopening. The findings therefore suggest that **public communication about the bilateral resolution process can play a meaningful role in building confidence in normalization.**

Public confidence in peaceful coexistence remains relatively weak. Confidence in Cambodia's ability to contribute to conflict resolution is particularly low, while confidence in Thai political stakeholders is also limited. By contrast, military and security institutions receive comparatively stronger levels of confidence.

The information environment presents an additional challenge. **Fake news, disinformation, and mal-information are identified as the leading concerns associated with reopening**, while confidence in the government's ability to address these risks is among the lowest areas of perceived preparedness. This indicates that **information integrity should be treated as part of border management and public confidence-building, rather than solely as a communications issue.**

The findings also reveal substantial differences by location. **Chong Chom represents the most cautious community**, despite experiencing one of the highest economic impacts from the closure. Approximately one in three Chong Chom respondents recommends permanent closure, and the area records particularly low confidence in Cambodia and its government. This demonstrates that **economic exposure does not automatically translate into support for reopening** when security and trust concerns remain high.

In contrast, the enterprise group is more positive toward reopening and future Thai–Cambodian coexistence. Businesses, however, remain concerned about **security, transactional crime, public order, and the operating environment**. This suggests that the private sector's priority is not simply reopening the border, but **restoring predictable and secure conditions for cross-border business activity.**

The comparison with Cambodian border communities also shows strong support for reopening on the Cambodian side. **Both Thai and Cambodian communities have experienced significant economic losses**, although the absolute monetary loss reported by Thai respondents is substantially higher. The shared economic impact reinforces the importance of cross-border economic interdependence as a potential foundation for normalization.

Overall Conclusion

Taken together, the findings suggest that the central issue is **not whether border communities recognize the value of reopening—they largely do—but whether they have sufficient confidence in the security, information environment, and bilateral resolution process to support reopening at this stage.**

The evidence therefore supports a **managed and phased normalization approach**, rather than either an immediate return to full border operations or an indefinite closure.

The economic case for reopening is strong, but sustainable reopening requires security safeguards, public confidence, credible information, and continued progress in bilateral dialogue.”

1.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for government agencies, border authorities, business stakeholders, and relevant bilateral mechanisms.

Priority 1: Establish a Managed and Phased Reopening Framework

Rather than treating reopening as a single “open or closed” decision, the government should consider a **phased reopening framework** that allows economic connectivity to resume while maintaining appropriate security controls.

Recommended actions

1. Start with trade and goods movement as the first reopening phase. The survey shows strong local preference for reopening trade and cross-border goods crossings as a pilot arrangement. This provides a practical starting point because it addresses the immediate economic impact while allowing authorities to maintain tighter controls over other categories of cross-border movement.
2. Establish clear reopening criteria for each phase. Each phase should have clearly communicated conditions covering: security and public order; immigration and identity verification; border operating hours; trade and customs procedures; emergency response capacity; information and misinformation management; and local community readiness.

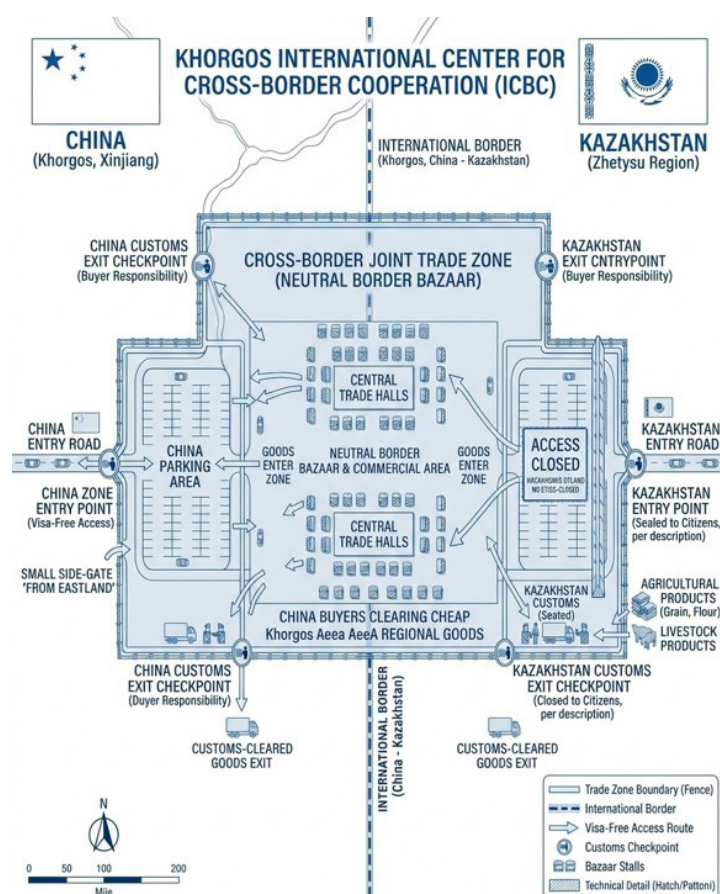
Alternatively, Thailand and Cambodia may consider establishing a temporary “specialized trade zones,” usually referred to as **Cross-Border Joint Trade Zones**,

Neutral Border Bazaars, or Binational Commercial Zones. Successful examples of such arrangements include the Khorgos International Center for Cross-Border Cooperation (China–Kazakhstan), the Ishkashim Border Market (Tajikistan–Afghanistan), the Pedernales / Dajabón Binational Markets (Dominican Republic–Haiti), and Sino-Myanmar Border Trade Zones.

In these arrangements, two neighboring nations designate a fenced, shared plot of land directly on or spanning the physical border. Citizens from both sides can enter this neutral zone without standard visas or passing immigration checks. The trade occurs inside the zone, and duty or customs checks are enforced only when a buyer attempts to take the purchased goods past the zone’s perimeter back into their home country’s internal territory.

As a trial, Thailand and Cambodia may consider setting up a “specialized trade zone” in the Aranyaprathet area (but away from conflict areas such as Ban Nong Chan), which was once the most active cross-border trading town between Thailand and Cambodia.

Figure 23. Khorgos International Center for Cross-Border Cooperation (ICBC)



Priority 2: Strengthen Border Security and Safety Guarantees

Security is the strongest condition attached to reopening in the local survey. The objective should therefore be to provide **visible, credible, and proportionate security measures** without creating unnecessary barriers to legitimate trade and travel.

Recommended actions

1. Strengthen the presence of relevant authorities at border checkpoints. Where appropriate, coordinate security, immigration, customs, public health, and local administrative personnel to ensure that reopening is supported by adequate operational capacity.
2. Enhance identity and immigration screening. Consider strengthened document verification, pre-arrival information where appropriate, and risk-based screening procedures for cross-border travelers.

3. Strengthen checkpoint screening capacity. Where justified by risk assessment, authorities may consider technologies such as biometric verification, walk-through metal detectors, and appropriate scanning equipment.

The principle should be “secure but efficient”: security measures should protect communities without unnecessarily increasing clearance times or disrupting legitimate commercial flows.

4. Establish clear protocols for crime, smuggling, and public-order incidents.

The enterprise survey identifies transactional crime and public order as significant concerns. A reopening framework should therefore include clear responsibilities and rapid-response procedures for incidents affecting residents, travelers, and businesses.

Priority 3: Build Public Confidence Through Better Local Communication

The survey indicates a significant gap between the formal bilateral process and public awareness at the border.

Recommended actions

1. Establish a regular public information mechanism on bilateral negotiations. Relevant Government agencies and local authorities should provide unified, regular, factual, and easy-to-understand updates on the status of negotiations, if any, including the roles of relevant bilateral mechanisms such as the GBC, JBC and RBC.

When information is available, communication should explain not only what is being negotiated, but also what the on-going negotiation means for border communities and businesses.

2. Use local communication channels, not only national channels. Information should be distributed through local government authorities; community leaders; local news organizations; community social-media groups; official government social-media accounts; and business and chamber networks.

This is particularly important because local and social media channels are major sources of information for border communities.

3. Establish a single, trusted source of border information. A coordinated official information channel could provide updates on checkpoint operating status; opening hours; security arrangements; immigration requirements; trade procedures; negotiation developments; verified incident information; and responses to circulating false information.

This would reduce uncertainty for both residents and businesses.

Priority 4: Strengthen Information Integrity and Counter Disinformation

This should be elevated to a **core recommendation**, rather than treated as a supporting communication activity, because fake news and disinformation are among the highest perceived risks to reopening.

Recommended actions

1. Establish a rapid-response information verification mechanism. Relevant agencies should coordinate monitoring, verification, fact-checking, and timely correction of false or misleading information relating to border security, incidents, negotiations, and reopening.
2. Work with local media and community networks. Government agencies should establish direct communication channels with trusted local media, community leaders, and local authorities so that verified information can reach communities quickly.
3. Coordinate with social-media platforms where appropriate. Authorities and relevant stakeholders should develop mechanisms for rapid escalation of verified false information that poses a material risk to public safety or social stability.

The objective should be information integrity, transparency, and public confidence, rather than broad restrictions on legitimate public discussion.

Priority 5: Adopt a Location-Specific Approach

The findings demonstrate that **border communities do not have a uniform view of reopening**.

Recommended actions

A differentiated approach should be considered for each border area:

Table 10. Location specific recommendations

Location	Suggested Priority
Chong Chom	Confidence-building, security assurance, community engagement, and information management before any expansion of reopening
Khlong Luek	Trade facilitation combined with strong immigration, security, and public-order measures
Ban Phakkat	Immigration controls, border-issue communication, and local confidence-building
Ban Laem	Safety guarantees and managed reopening, building on relatively stronger confidence in coexistence

This approach would allow the government to **match reopening arrangements with local conditions** rather than applying a single model across the entire border.

Priority 6: Establish a Joint Monitoring Mechanism for Reopening

The survey strongly supports the need for a mechanism that can demonstrate whether reopening is working in practice. A **Thailand–Cambodia Border Reopening Monitoring Framework** could track:

Security: number and type of border incidents; crime and smuggling cases; immigration violations; public-order incidents.

Economic: cross-border trade value; number of traders and travelers; checkpoint traffic; local business activity; employment recovery.

Public confidence: local satisfaction; perceived safety; confidence in government preparedness; confidence in peaceful coexistence.

Information environment: major misinformation narratives; response time for verified corrections; reach of official information; public awareness of negotiation developments.

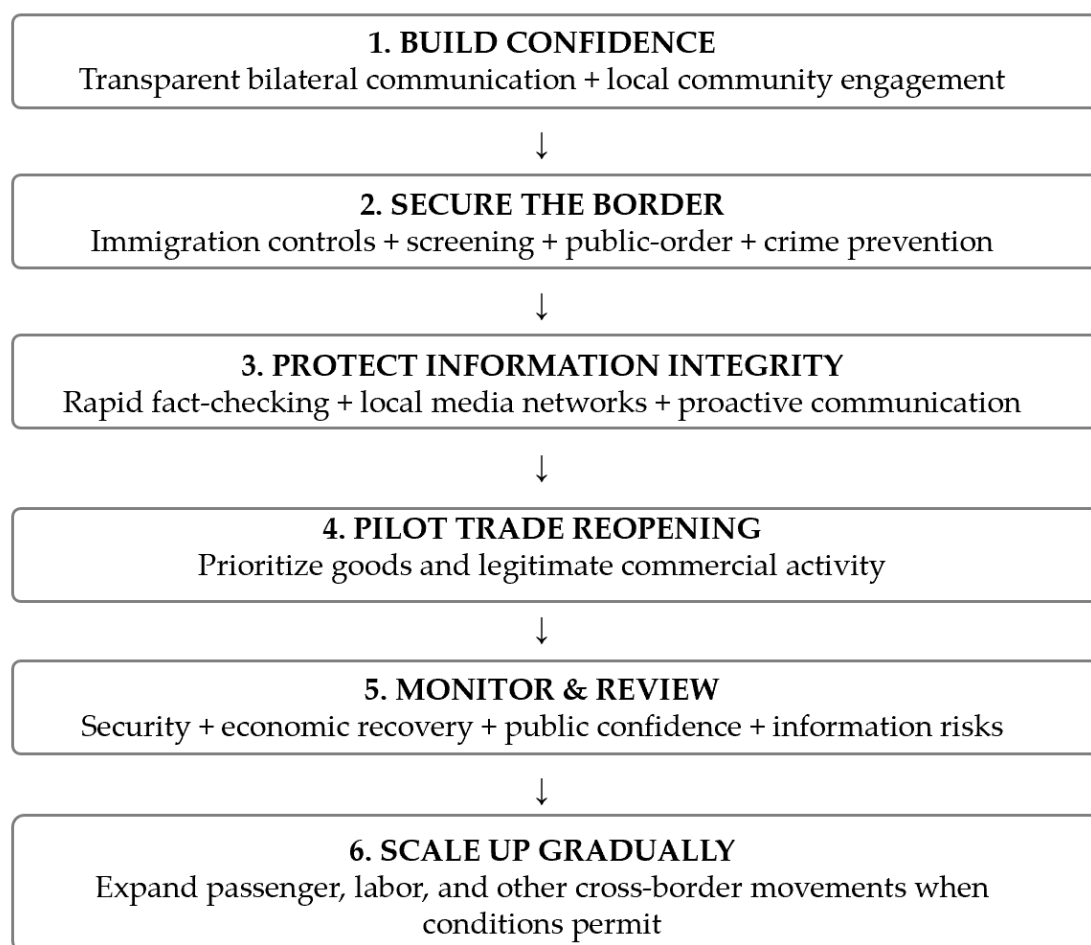
A **30-, 60-, or 90-day review** after each reopening phase could provide evidence for whether the next phase should proceed, be modified, or be temporarily paused.

This would give both governments and the private sector a **common evidence base for decision-making**, rather than relying solely on political sentiment or isolated incidents.

4.3 Recommended Strategic Framework

From border closure to managed normalization can be conceptualized as follows:

Figure 24. Strategic framework for managing normalization



“The objective should not be simply to “reopen the border,” but to restore cross-border connectivity in a way that is secure, predictable, trusted, and economically sustainable.”

5. Appendix

5.1 Operational Definition of Variables

The variables included in the analytical model were operationalized as either **single-item observed variables** or **latent constructs measured through multiple observed indicators**. The operational definitions, measurement approaches, and model specifications are presented below.

Variable	Observed Variable / Indicator Definition	Measurement
AIALGO	Q16c. Social media account used to follow news concerning the Thailand–Cambodia conflict	Single-item binary variable (0/1)
NEGAWA	Q15. Awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms (i.e. GBC, JBC and RBC) between Thailand and Cambodia	Single-item binary variable (0/1)
CONNEC	Q8. Frequency of contact with acquaintances	Single-item ordinal scale (5–1)
PEACOE	Q18. Perception that Thai and Cambodian people can return to living together peacefully	Single-item ordinal scale (5–1)
NECCES	Q2. Perceived necessity of reopening the border crossing	Single-item ordinal scale (5–1)
URGENT	Q3. Perceived urgency of reopening the border crossing	Single-item ordinal scale (5–1)
GVPREP	Q31. Ability to control crime and maintain public order in the area; Q32. Management of infrastructure and public services in the area; Q33. Development of cultural cooperation and promotion of shared cultural heritage	Reflective latent construct
PCRISK	Q21. Concern regarding military and security risks, e.g., clashes and surveillance; Q22. Concern regarding transnational crime, e.g., scams; Q23. Concern regarding fake news and disinformation; Q24. Concern regarding social issues, e.g., unrest and incitement; Q25. Concern regarding quality-of-life risks, e.g., personal and property safety; Q26. Concern regarding cultural issues, e.g., cultural heritage	Reflective latent construct
SUPREO	Q1. Level of support for reopening the border crossing	Single-item ordinal scale (5–1)

Measurement Coding

For binary variables, responses were coded as 0/1, with the coding direction defined according to the original questionnaire response categories.

For ordinal attitude measures, responses were coded using a **five-point scale**, with higher scores representing a higher level of the measured attribute. The exact coding direction should follow the questionnaire coding scheme used in the dataset.

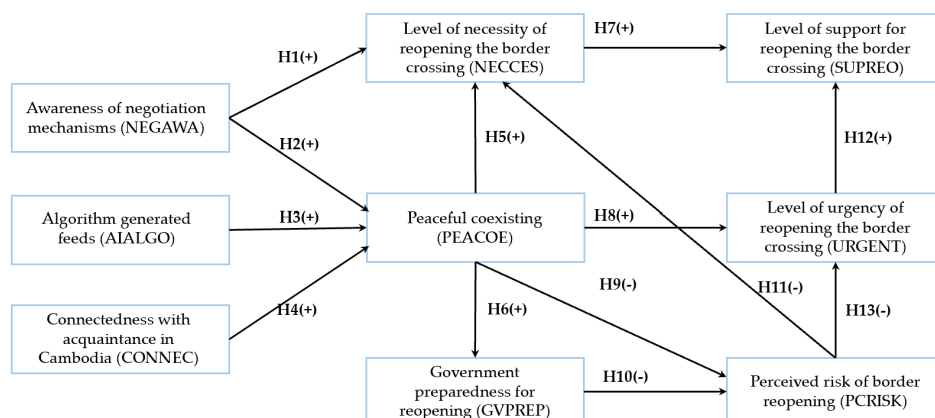
For the latent constructs **GVPREP** and **PCRISK**, multiple observed indicators were specified as **reflective indicators**, whereby the indicators are assumed to reflect the underlying latent construct.

5.2 Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to examine the relationships among the factors associated with public support for reopening the Thailand–Cambodia border crossings.

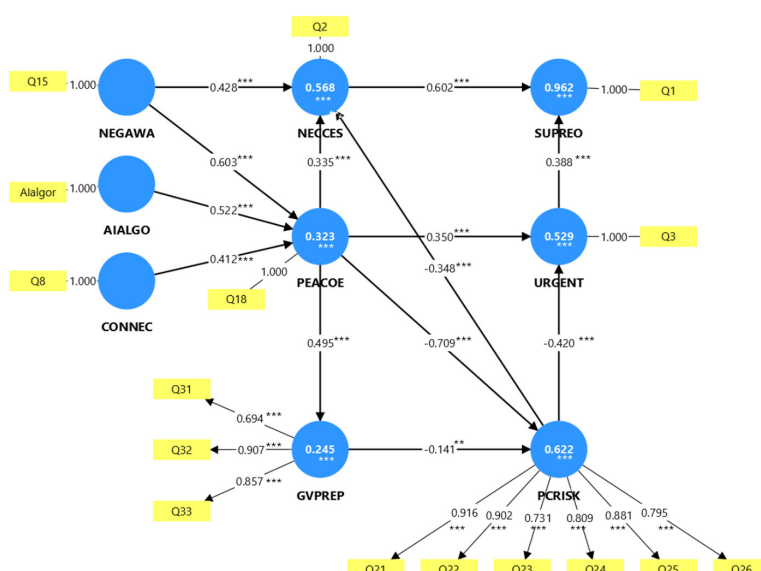
The structural model indicates a very high level of explanatory power for support for border reopening (SUPREO), with an R^2 of 0.962. This indicates that the predictors included in the model collectively account for approximately 96.2% of the variance in respondents' support for reopening the border crossings. The R^2 values for the other endogenous constructs indicate moderate explanatory power, as presented in Figure 25.

Figure 25. SEM Model



The structural model was assessed using path coefficients and bootstrapping results to determine the direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the relationships among the variables.

Figure 26. SEM Model Path Analysis



Key Structural Relationships

1. Awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms

Awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms (NEGAWA) is positively associated with the perceived necessity of reopening the border crossing (NECCES), with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.428$ ($p < 0.05$).

NEGAWA also shows a positive relationship with perceived peaceful coexistence (PEACOE), with $\beta = 0.603$ ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that respondents who are aware of the **existence of land border negotiation mechanisms** tends to report stronger confidence that Thai and Cambodian people can coexist peacefully in the future.

The model further indicates that NEGAWA has **indirect effects** on downstream variables through PEACOE and other mediating pathways. These indirect effects should be interpreted as evidence of an **indirect relationship through the specified mediating variables**, rather than as additional direct path coefficients.

2. Exposure to algorithm-driven information feeds

Exposure to algorithm-driven social-media feeds (AIALGO) has a positive relationship with perceived peaceful coexistence (PEACOE), with $\beta = 0.522$ ($p < 0.01$).

AIALGO also demonstrates indirect relationships with several downstream variables, including perceived necessity of reopening (NECCES), perceived risk (PCRISK), and government preparedness (GVPREP).

In particular, the relationship between AIALGO and PCRISK through PEACOE is negative. This suggests that respondents with greater exposure to the specified information feeds tend to report stronger perceptions of peaceful coexistence, which in turn are associated with lower perceived risks associated with reopening.

3. Connectedness with acquaintances in Cambodia

Connectedness with acquaintances in Cambodia (CONNEC) has a positive relationship with perceived peaceful coexistence (PEACOE), with $\beta = 0.412$ ($p < 0.01$).

CONNEC also demonstrates indirect relationships with perceived necessity of reopening, perceived risk, urgency of reopening, and government preparedness through the pathways specified in the structural model.

The overall pattern suggests that greater interpersonal connectedness across the border is associated with more positive perceptions of future coexistence and, through these relationships, greater support for reopening.

4. Perceived peaceful coexistence

Perceived peaceful coexistence (PEACOE) is one of the strongest relationships identified in the model.

PEACOE has a positive relationship with the perceived necessity of reopening the border crossing (NECCES), with $\beta = 0.676$ ($p < 0.01$).

PEACOE also has a positive relationship with perceived government preparedness (GVPREP), with $\beta = 0.495$ ($p < 0.01$).

At the same time, PEACOE has a strong negative relationship with perceived risk (PCRISK), with $\beta = -0.709$ ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that stronger perceptions of the possibility of peaceful coexistence are associated with substantially lower perceived risks associated with reopening the border.

PEACOE also has a positive relationship with urgency of reopening (URGENT), with $\beta = 0.350$ ($p < 0.01$).

Taken together, the model indicates that perceptions of future peaceful coexistence operate as an important pathway linking awareness, interpersonal connectedness, perceived risk, perceived necessity, and support for reopening.

5. Perceived necessity and urgency of reopening

Perceived necessity of reopening (NECCES) has a strong positive relationship with support for reopening (SUPREO), with $\beta = 0.602$ ($p < 0.01$).

Perceived urgency of reopening (URGENT) also has a positive relationship with SUPREO, with $\beta = 0.388$ ($p < 0.01$).

This indicates that respondents who perceive reopening as more necessary and more urgent are more likely to support reopening.

However, the stronger coefficient for NECCES compared with URGENT suggests that perceived necessity appears to be more closely associated with support for reopening than perceived urgency within the structural model.

This finding is particularly relevant to the survey's broader finding that residents generally recognize the economic and practical necessity of reopening, while not necessarily considering immediate reopening to be urgent.

6. Perceived risk of border reopening

Perceived risk (PCRISK) has a negative relationship with the perceived necessity of reopening (NECCES), with $\beta = -0.048$ ($p < 0.01$).

PCRISK also has a negative relationship with urgency of reopening (URGENT), with $\beta = -0.420$ ($p < 0.01$).

PCRISK has a further negative relationship with support for reopening (SUPREO), with the reported downstream effect of -0.209 ($p < 0.05$).

Overall, the model suggests that higher perceived risks—particularly security, crime, information, social, quality-of-life, and cultural risks—are associated with weaker support for reopening.

7. Government preparedness

Government preparedness (GVPREP) has a negative relationship with perceived risk (PCRISK), with $\beta = -0.141$ ($p < 0.01$).

This indicates that stronger perceptions of government preparedness are associated with lower perceived risks surrounding border reopening.

The model also identifies indirect pathways from GVPREP through perceived risk and subsequently through the perceived necessity and urgency of reopening.

Overall Effects on Support for Reopening

The total-effect analysis indicates that the strongest reported total effects on support for reopening the border crossing (SUPREO) are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Total Effect

Path analysis	Total Effect β
PEACOE -> PCRISK	-0.779***
NEGAWA -> NECCES	0.793***
PEACOE -> URGENT	0.678***
NEGAWA -> SUPREO	0.636***
PEACOE -> SUPREO	0.628***
PEACOE -> NECCES	0.606***
NEGAWA -> PEACOE	0.603***
NECCES -> SUPREO	0.602***
AIALGO -> PEACOE	0.522***

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, subject to confirmation from the bootstrap results. The total effect displayed only for those total effect (β) > 0.500

5.3 Measurement and Structural Model Assessment

The PLS-SEM model was evaluated in two stages: (1) assessment of the measurement model and (2) assessment of the structural model. Because the model contains both single-item and multi-item constructs, the measurement assessment was conducted according to the measurement specification of each construct.

For the multi-item reflective constructs, indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were assessed. Indicator reliability was examined using outer loadings, while internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity was examined using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT), which is recommended as a primary criterion for discriminant validity assessment in PLS-SEM.

The structural model was subsequently assessed using collinearity diagnostics, bootstrapped path coefficients, direct effects, indirect effects, total effects, coefficient of determination (R^2), and effect size (f^2). The interpretation of these criteria follows commonly applied PLS-SEM guidelines, while recognizing that statistical thresholds should be considered together with the theoretical specification and substantive context of the research model.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). An HTMT value below 0.85 represents a conservative criterion for discriminant validity, while values above 0.90 indicate potential discriminant validity concerns. All construct pairs demonstrated satisfactory discriminant validity. HTMT values range from 0.068 to 0.806

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was assessed using bootstrapping to examine the statistical significance of hypothesized relationships. Structural path coefficients (β) indicate the direction and standardized magnitude of the relationships between constructs, while p-values indicate whether the estimated relationships are statistically distinguishable from zero under the specified bootstrap procedure.

Direct effects, total indirect effects, specific indirect effects, and total effects were examined separately to identify both the immediate relationships and the mechanisms through which upstream variables are associated with support for border reopening.

Direct, Indirect and Total effect

Structural model assessment was conducted using direct, indirect, and total effects, together with the coefficient of determination (R^2) and effect size (f^2). Direct effects represent the estimated relationships between constructs, while indirect effects capture the influence transmitted through one or more mediating constructs. Total effects represent the combined influence of direct and indirect effects. Statistical significance was assessed using bootstrapping.

Direct effects

The direct effects indicate the estimated relationships between the constructs in the structural model. The results show that several hypothesized relationships are statistically significant.

Direct effect	β , p value
AIALGO -> PEACOE	0.522***
CONNEC -> PEACOE	0.412***
GVPREP -> PCRISK	-0.141**
NECCES -> SUPREO	0.602***
NEGAWA -> NECESS	0.428***
NEGAWA -> PEACOE	0.603***
PCRISK -> NECESS	-0.420***
PEACOE -> GVPREP	0.495***
PEACOE -> NECCES	0.335***
PEACOE -> PCRISK	-0.709***
PEACOE -> URGENT	0.350***
URGENT -> SUPREO	0.388***

Awareness of the existence of land border negotiation mechanisms (NEGAWA) has a positive and statistically significant effect on both **peaceful coexistence (PEACOE)** ($\beta = 0.603$) and the **perceived necessity of reopening the border crossing (NECCES)** ($\beta = 0.428$). Similarly, **connectedness with acquaintances in Cambodia (CONNEC)** positively affects PEACOE ($\beta = 0.412$), while **algorithm-generated feeds (AIALGO)** also show a positive association with PEACOE ($\beta = 0.522$).

Peaceful coexistence (PEACOE) has a strong positive relationship with NECCES ($\beta = 0.335$), government preparedness (GVPREP) ($\beta = 0.495$), and a strong negative relationship with perceived risk (PCRISK) ($\beta = -0.709$). GVPREP is negatively associated with PCRISK ($\beta = -0.141$), indicating that greater perceived government preparedness is associated with lower perceived risk.

Among the variables directly predicting support for reopening, **NECCES has the strongest direct effect on SUPREO** ($\beta = 0.602$), followed by URGENT ($\beta = 0.388$). In contrast, PCRISK negatively affects NECCES ($\beta = -0.420$), suggesting that greater perceived risks are associated with lower perceptions of the necessity of reopening.

Indirect effect

Indirect effects were assessed to determine whether the influence of an antecedent construct on an endogenous construct was transmitted

through one or more intervening constructs. The total indirect effect represents the combined effect transmitted through all indirect paths, whereas a specific indirect effect represents a particular mediation pathway.

Total indirect effect	β , p value
AIALGO -> GVPREP	0.259***
AIALGO -> NECCES	0.316***
AIALGO -> PCRISK	-0.407***
AIALGO -> SUPREO	0.328***
AIALGO -> URGENT	0.354**
CONNEC -> GVPREP	0.204***
CONNEC -> NECCES	0.250***
CONNEC -> PCRISK	-0.321***
CONNEC -> SUPREO	0.259***
CONNEC -> URGENT	0.280**
GVPREP -> NECCES	0.049**
GVPREP -> SUPREO	0.053**
GVPREP -> URGENT	0.059**
NEGAWA -> GVPREP	0.298***
NEGAWA -> PCRISK	-0.469***
NEGAWA -> SUPREO	0.636***
NEGAWA -> URGENT	0.408***
NEGAWA -> NECCES	0.365***
PCRISK -> SUPREO	-0.373***
PEACOE -> NECCES	0.271***
PEACOE -> PCRISK	-0.070***
PEACOE -> SUPREO	0.628***
PEACOE -> URGENT	0.327***

The indirect-effect analysis indicates that several variables influence support for border reopening through intervening constructs. Notably, **NEGAWA shows a positive indirect effect on SUPREO (0.636)**, while **PEACOE also demonstrates a substantial indirect effect on SUPREO (0.628)**. CONNEC has a positive indirect effect of 0.259, whereas PCRISK has a negative indirect effect of -0.373. These findings indicate that perceptions of negotiation mechanisms, peaceful coexistence, social connectedness, and perceived risk can influence reopening support through intermediate perceptions of necessity, urgency, government preparedness, and risk.

Total effect

Total effect	β , p value
AIALGO -> GVPREP	0.259***
AIALGO -> NECCES	0.316***
AIALGO -> PCRISK	-0.407***
AIALGO -> PEACOE	0.522***
AIALGO -> SUPREO	0.328***
AIALGO -> URGENT	0.354***
CONNEC -> GVPREP	0.204***
CONNEC -> NECCES	0.250***
CONNEC -> PCRISK	-0.321***
CONNEC -> PEACOE	0.412***
CONNEC -> SUPREO	0.259***
CONNEC -> URGENT	0.280***
GVPREP -> NECCES	0.049**
GVPREP -> PCRISK	-0.141**
GVPREP -> SUPREO	0.053**
GVPREP -> URGENT	0.059***
NECCES -> SUPREO	0.602***
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NEGAWA -> URGENT	0.408***
PCRISK -> NECCES	-0.348***
PCRISK -> SUPREO	-0.373***
PCRISK -> URGENT	-0.420***
PEACOE -> GVPREP	0.495**
PEACOE -> NECCES	0.606***
PEACOE -> PCRISK	-0.779***
PEACOE -> SUPREO	0.628***
PEACOE -> URGENT	0.678***
URGENT -> SUPREO	0.388***

Highest total effects on SUPREO

1. **NEGAWA** — **0.636** Awareness of the **existence of negotiation mechanisms**
2. **PEACOE** — **0.628** Belief in peaceful coexistence
3. **NECCES** — **0.602** Perceived necessity of reopening
4. **URGENT** — **0.388** Perceived urgency
5. **PCRISK** — **-0.373** Perceived risk
6. **CONNEC** — **0.259** Connectedness with acquaintances in Cambodia
7. **GVPREP** — **0.053** Government preparedness

The factors that have the highest positive influence on support for reopening are awareness of **existence of land border negotiation mechanisms**, belief in peaceful coexistence, and perceived necessity of reopening.

R-Square

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess the explanatory power of the structural model. As a general guideline, R^2 values of approximately 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 may be interpreted as weak, moderate, and substantial explanatory power, respectively. These thresholds are used as indicative benchmarks rather than strict cut-off criteria.

Attributes	R Square
GVPREP	0.245**
NECCES	0.568***
PCRISK	0.622***
PEACOE	0.323***
SUPREO	0.962***
URGENT	0.529***

SUPREO has an R^2 of 0.962, indicating that the structural model explains approximately 96.2% of the variance in respondents' support for reopening the border crossing.

Effect size

F-Square represented by 0.02 = small; 0.15 = medium; 0.35 = large

	F Square
AIAGLO -> PEACOE	0.086
CONNEC -> PEACOE	0.248
GVPREP -> PCRISK	0.040
NECESS -> SUPREO	0.759
NEGAWA -> NECCES	0.087
NEGAWA -> PEACOE	0.131
PCRISK -> NECCES	0.102
PCRISK -> URGENT	0.148
PEACOE -> GVPREP	0.324
PEACOE -> NECCES	0.102
PEACOE -> PCRISK	1.003
PEACOE -> URGENT	0.103
URGENT -> SUPREO	0.316

The f^2 results indicate that **perceived necessity of reopening (NECCES) has a large effect on support for reopening (SUPREO)** ($f^2 = 0.759$). **Peaceful coexistence (PEACOE) also demonstrates a very large effect on perceived reopening risk (PCRISK)** ($f^2 = 1.003$). Other relationships demonstrate predominantly small to medium effect size.

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