

Situation of Thai Elderly's Media Exposure in 2022

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Experiences of exploitation via media among Thai elderly in 2022 – – – – –

In modern times, the media has advanced far and wide, from a time when only mass media professionals were needed to now when anyone can be a media personality. This has led to an abundance of information and its rapid global dissemination. People can use media to access to information to survive in society, create happiness, and improve their quality of life, including learning new languages and cultures to make a peaceful way of living together. However, there are also greater chances of being exposed to media that provides false information, or “fake news”, for example, by listening to distorted, inaccurate, misleading, provocative, or intimidating information. Suppose the recipients of such content believe such fake news. In that case, it will likely harm them and may have unanticipated repercussions on society as a whole, such as being tricked into purchasing low-quality goods, resulting in loss of property, or believing in the usefulness of dietary supplements, which is not only a waste of money but also harmful to health.

Some dietary supplements may cause weight loss when consumed in significant quantities. Information that comes with intimidation and deceit induces fear in the recipient such that they may agree to transfer funds or disclose their account information to the person threatening them. Listening to disinformation can amplify political slander, prejudice, and hatred of groups with differing political views to the point where a conflict arises, and force is used in confrontations between groups. It may not be too far-fetched to say that, as history has shown, “fake news” threatens every country and civilization regarding security, economy, politics, and spiritual values.

In the modern age with its constant changes in technology, systems, and new forms of communication, the Thai elderly are considered one of the most vulnerable groups at risk of being deceived through various media in the form of misinformation, which seems to affect not just the elderly themselves but also the people around them as well as their social networks. The 2022 survey of the Thais experiences with media deceptions helps highlight the risk of the elderly becoming victims of fake news and the factors that are likely to be influencing such risks.

Our research team from the Intelligent Centre for Elderly Media Literacy (ICEM) at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, has surveyed the situation of media usage by the Thai elderly in 2022 with the objective of determining the number, characteristics, and stories (or scenarios) of Thai elderly who were exploited through media, including media exposure factors that put them at risk of falling victim to scams from media usage by the Thai elderly in the past year. We used a questionnaire as a tool to collect data from 2,000 Thai elderly aged 60 years and over from 20 provinces across the country, namely Chiang Rai, Nan, Phayao, Phitsanulok, Nakhon Sawan, Loei, Yasothon,

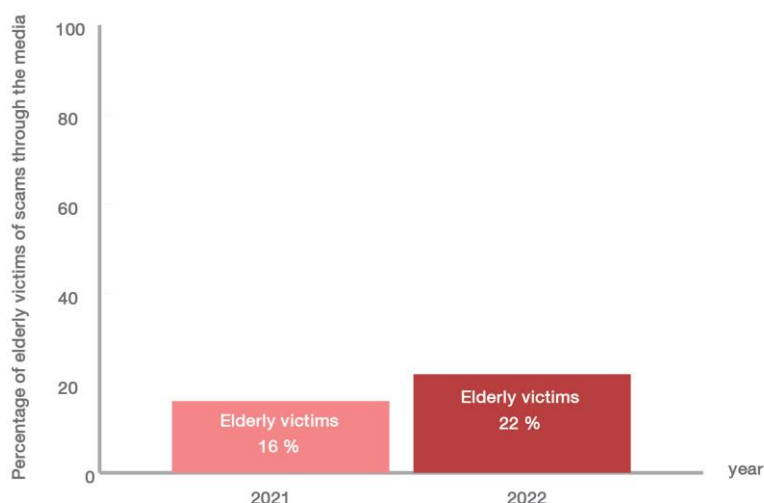
Ubon Ratchathani, Mahasarakham, Buriram, Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Rayong, Chanthaburi, Phetchaburi, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Trang, Surat Thani, Phatthalung, and Krabi.

Key findings – – – – –

The key findings of the study were divided into three parts: (i) the number and characteristics of Thai elderly who were deceived by the media, (ii) their risk of being deceived through media exposure, and (ii) the scenarios in which Thai elderly were frequently deceived via the media. The details are listed below.

Part 1: Number and characteristics of Thai elderly's exploitation through media – –

Figure 3-1 A comparison of the number of elderly victims of scams through the media between 2021 and 2022



The proportion of elderly individuals who realized they had become victims of schemes perpetrated via various media is on the rise. In 2022, 440 elderly people fell victim to scams out of a total of 2,000 respondents, representing 22% -- a 6% increase over the previous year. (In a 2021 study, 320 elderly people realized that they had been victims of scams through the media, or 16.0%.)

Figure 3-2 A comparison of exploited and non-exploited elderly by region

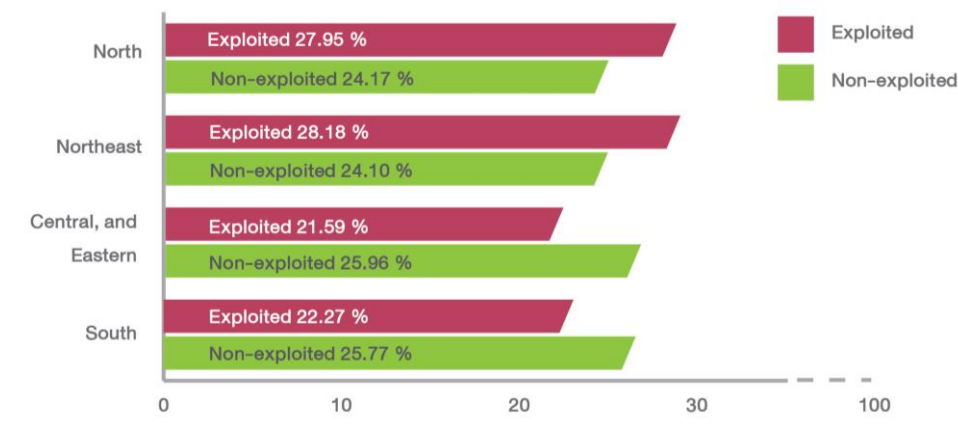


Figure 3-3 A comparison of exploited and non-exploited elderly between males and females

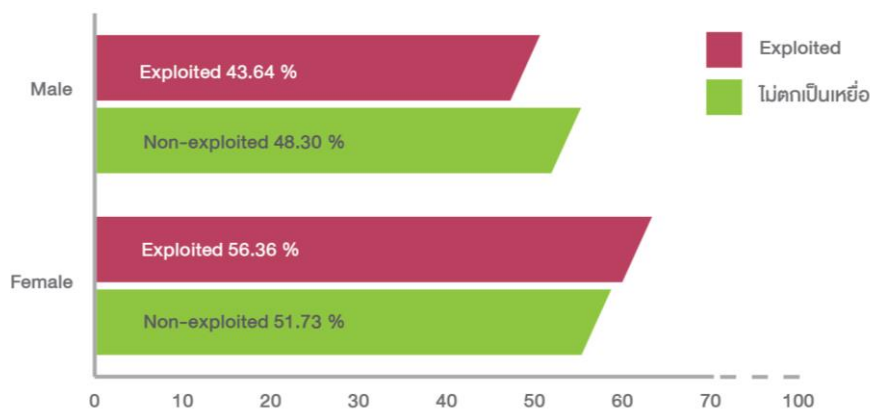


Figure 3-4 A comparison of exploited and non-exploited elderly by age

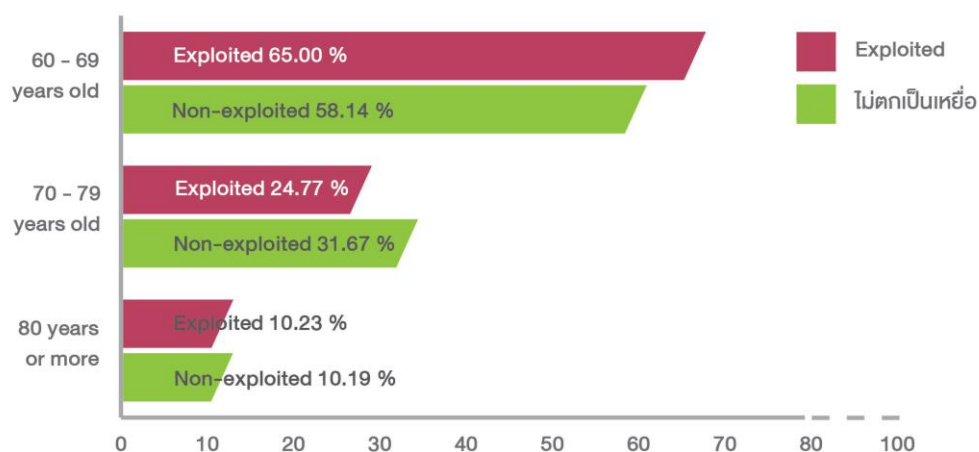


Figure 3-5 A comparison of exploited and non-exploited elderly by education

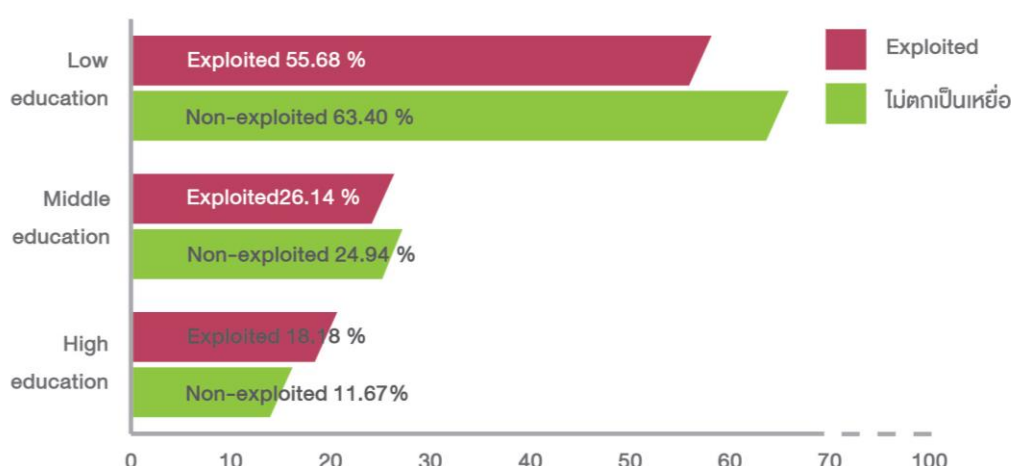
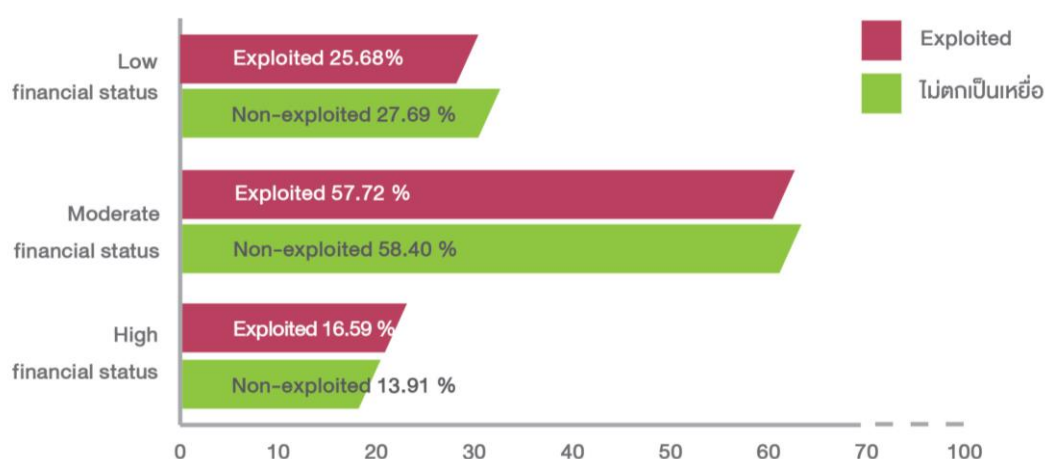


Figure 3-6 A comparison of exploited and non-exploited elderly by financial status

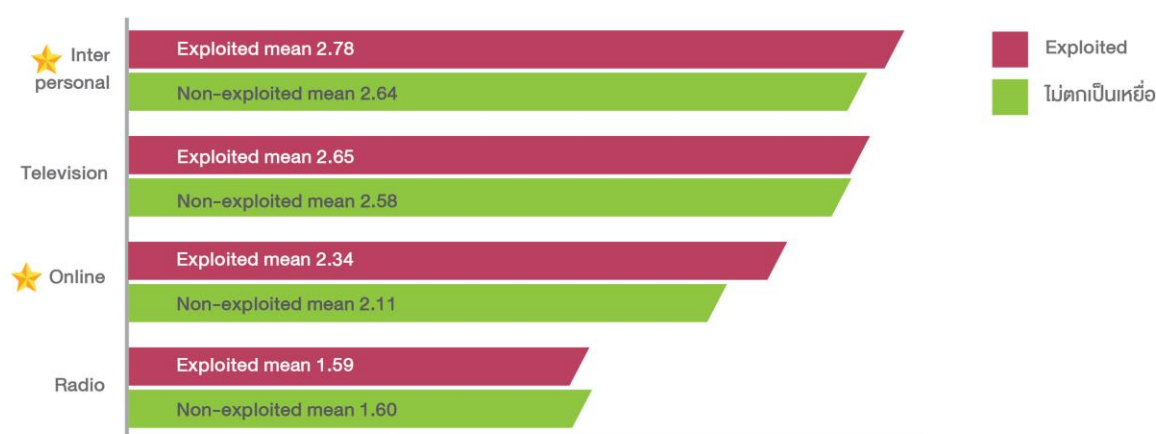


According to statistical data, there were more elderly female victims of exploitation via media (56.36%) than males (43.64%) aged 60–69 years old (65.00%), which differs in proportion from the middle age group (aged 70–79 years old) and senior age group (aged 80 years or more). Most of them had only primary education (having no education or attending primary school) (55.68%) and a moderate financial status (or enough income to cover expenses) (57.72%). As for the region of residence of the elderly, it was found that there were some differences, but this factor was not as clear as the age range and education level. The elderly residing in the Northeast and the North were more likely to have been victims of scams through the media than those living in the South, Central, and Eastern regions.

Part 2: Risk of being a victim through media exposure _ _ _ _ _

In the analysis of media exposure factors that increase the risk of falling victim to scams through various media, the research team used t-test statistics to examine differences in the exposure to: interpersonal media (media that can be used to interact with others, such as meeting with relatives, neighbors, vendors, or people they meet or talking on the phone); television; radio; and online media (interaction through information technologies). This also includes an analysis of media exposure to topics such as health, dharma virtues, food, agriculture, career, general news, politics, investment, entertainment, sports, and faith among victim and non-victim groups. The findings revealed by the analysis are as follows:

Figure 3-7 A comparison of media exposure between exploited and non-exploited elderly in 2022.



Note ★ There are statistically significant differences.

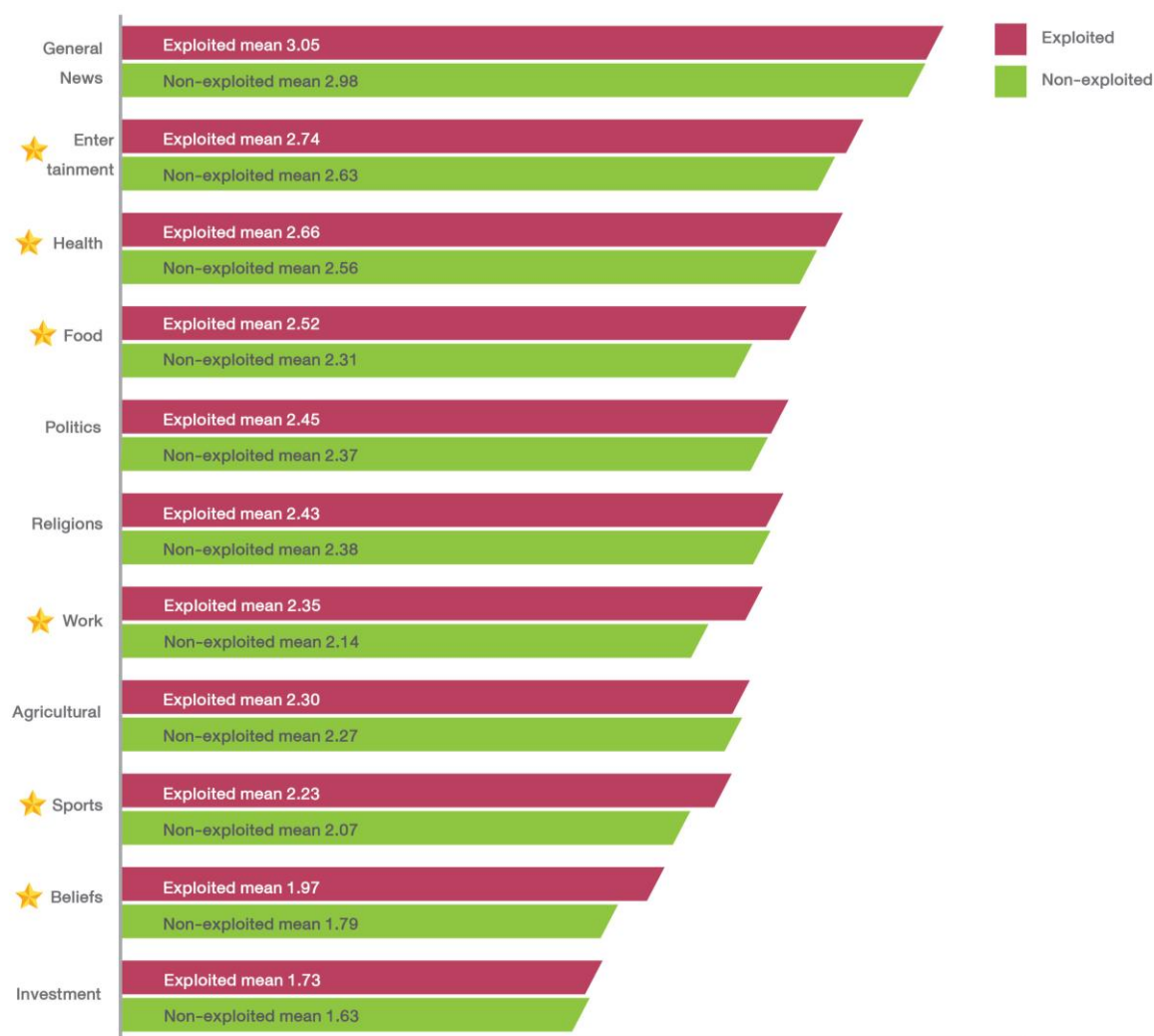
Media exposure that increased the risk of exploitation, including interpersonal media and online media

More elderly users of interpersonal media had experienced exploitation (mean = 2.78) than those who had not (mean = 2.64), with a statistical significance t-test P-Value of 0.002*.

More elderly users of online media had experienced exploitation (mean = 2.34) than those who had not (mean = 2.11) with a statistical significance t-test P-Value of 0.000*.

We found no statistically significant differences between elderly victims and non-victims of exploitation via television or radio.

Figure 3-8 A comparison of topics of media exposure between exploited and non-exploited elderly in 2022.



Note ★ There are statistically significant differences.

Topics of media exposure that increase the risk of victimization include entertainment, health, food, work, sports, and beliefs

More elderly who were exposed to media featuring health topics had suffered exploitation (mean = 2.66) than those who had not (mean = 2.56), with a statistical significance t-test P-Value of 0.000*.

More elderly who were exposed to media featuring food topics had suffered exploitation (mean = 2.52) than those who had not (mean = 2.31), with a statistical significance t-test P-Value of 0.000*.

More elderly who were exposed to media featuring occupation had suffered exploitation (mean = 2.35) than those who had not (mean = 2.14), with a statistical significance t-test P-Value of 0.000*.

More elderly who were exposed to media featuring entertainment topics had suffered exploitation (mean = 2.74) than those who had not (mean = 2.74), with a statistical significance t-test P-Value of 0.023*.

More elderly who were exposed to media featuring sports topics had suffered exploitation (mean = 2.23) than those who had not (mean = 2.07), with a statistical significance t-test P-Value of 0.001*.

More elderly who were exposed to media featuring topics on beliefs had suffered exploitation (mean = 1.97) than those who had not (mean = 1.97), with a statistical significance t-test P-Value of 0.000*.

No statistically significant differences were found in exploitation levels among elderly exposed to media featuring religions, agricultural, general news, politics, or investment topics.

Part 3: Media-produced scenarios that frequently target Thai elderly _ _ _ _ _

The research team asked the subjects about five scenarios in which the elderly are frequently victim of exploitation: (i) purchasing low-quality or overpriced goods; (ii) making merit by helping other people and animals; (iii) purchasing fake drugs or sham health care services; (iv) fraudulent disclosure of personal information; and (v) investment fraud. The findings disclosed by the analysis are as follows:

Table 3-1: Rank and percentage frequency of exploitation of Thai elderly in five scenarios in 2021 and 2022

Story	Tendency	2022		2021	
		Percentage	Rank	Percentage	Rank
Buying products		46.14	1	41.88	1
Making merits and helping people or animals		43.86	2	34.06	2
Buying drugs and healthcare products		30.23	3	29.06	3
Revealing personal data		13.86	4	3.75	5
Investment		9.32	5	20.31	4

The top five scenarios in which elderly Thais fell victim to media-based schemes in 2022 were ranked as follows: (i) purchasing low-quality or overpriced goods (46.14%); (ii) making merit by helping people and animals (43.88%), (iii) use of fake medicines and sham healthcare services (30.23%), (iv) deception designed to disclose personal information (13.86%), and (v) investment (9.32%).

A comparison of the proportion of elderly victims between 2021 and 2022 reveals the following interesting findings:

In 2022, 13.86% of the elderly were victims of deception designed to disclose personal information, which was nearly four times higher than in 2021, when 3.75% of the elderly were victims of such disclosure tactics.

In 2021, 34.06% of elderly were deceived into making merit and helping humans and animals; in 2022, that number increased to 43.88%.

The proportion of the elderly who purchased fake drugs or fell prey to sham healthcare services grew from 29.06% in 2021 to 30.23% in 2022.

In 2022, an increasing number of old people became victims of exploitation via media across the board. However, this trend reversed significantly in terms of investing (in 2021, 20.31% of the elderly became victims of investment, while in 2022, this number dropped to 9.32%).

Conclusion and recommendations _ _ _ _ _

Despite a decline in media exposure, it can be concluded from the results of this research that the Thai elderly are more likely to fall victim to media-based schemes than in the previous year. This indicates that “fake news” remains a threat to the elderly in Thailand and is becoming increasingly prevalent. The elderly who are most at risk of falling victim to exploitative information are women between the ages of 60 and 69. It was also found that the elderly with primary education and moderate financial status are more likely to fall prey to various media-based scams. In addition, elderly citizens of the Northeast and North experienced more exploitative via media than those in other regions of Thailand. Therefore, elderly people with the aforementioned characteristics need to be aware of the risk of such exploitation and develop suitable mitigation strategies.

Moreover, influential interpersonal and online media were found to be the most effective means by which the elderly could be exploited as these media have become increasingly important to Thai elderly in their everyday lives. Topics in the media that attracted the elderly’s interest the most and thereby raised the risk of their being exploited included entertainment health, food, work, sports, and belief. In addition, it was discovered that shopping, making merit, medicine and health, personal information, and investing were the scenarios in which Thai elders were most likely to fall prey to such scams.

It is a matter of fact that media exposure, regardless of media type or topic of interest, can raise the risk of becoming a victim of fraud among older Thais. Although the results of a survey on the effects of media use indicated that media exposure positively impacted the well-being of the elderly in many ways, they should be cautious about what information they trust from various media, as there is always the possibility that they may be deceived. In addition to the elderly, who must be constantly vigilant concerning these issues, it is the responsibility of family and society as a whole to devise mechanisms to guard against the dangers posed by fake news and fraudsters who target the elderly via various media. It is also a challenge for the media literacy network of the elderly in Thailand, which includes the Intelligent Center for Elderly Media Literacy, the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia at Mahidol University, to develop and disseminate media literacy knowledge to the elderly in Thailand across multiple sectors.