

Results from rapid field survey

Demand for solar installation training surges amid Thailand's energy crisis

BRIEFING PAPER
MAY 2026



As electricity tariffs rise again and the government tells high-consumption users to go solar, a workforce survey from Phuket alone shows that **demand for solar installation training is already running three times above normal.**

Executive Summary

New Energy Nexus (NEX) Thailand supports clean energy entrepreneurs, solar installation SMEs, and training partners across the country. In April 2026, NEX Thailand conducted a rapid survey to assess the demand for solar installation training among workers in the Phuket region. The results were unlike anything the organization had recorded before.

“Interest ran at three times the level of comparable surveys we’ve conducted in other Thai provinces before the energy crisis.”

— Natcha Tulyasuwan, Country Manager at New Energy Nexus Thailand

Hotel technicians, electricians, farmers, unemployed tradespeople, and workers in their 50s planning a second career all responded within days. The data reflects a workforce already responding to sustained energy price pressure, and to a government that this week formally raised electricity tariffs and directed high-consuming households and businesses to install solar panels.

What is not yet in place is the certified installer and solar SME workforce needed to deliver that transition safely and at scale.



Context: A Tariff Rise, a Government Directive, and a Market Already Moving

On April 29, 2026, Thailand's National Energy Policy Council approved the first major restructuring of residential electricity pricing in over 20 years, taking effect from June 2026. Low-consumption households will see rates fall, while those consuming more than 400 units per month will face charges rising to over THB 5 per unit — with the government's explicit response being: install rooftop solar, backed by loans, tax deductions, and a net billing scheme that for the first time makes selling surplus power back to the grid economically viable at scale.¹ The restructuring applies to residential users only.

For Phuket's hotels, resorts, and commercial businesses — running air conditioning, pools, and kitchens around the clock — the pressure is economic rather than regulatory: sustained high tariffs and LNG-driven volatility, with no tiered relief in sight. Both tracks are feeding the same skills rush.

For Phuket, this lands squarely on the island's core industry. Hotels, resorts, restaurants, and retail businesses running air conditioning, pools, kitchens, and lighting around the clock consume far more than 500 units a month. When the tariff rise takes effect in May, the case for solar investment in Phuket becomes harder to defer.

This is not the first time Thai businesses have absorbed a shock of this kind. Thailand's LNG import bill surged 141% between 2021 and 2022 as global gas prices spiked following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.² Business electricity tariffs hit a record 5.69 baht per kilowatt-hour in early 2023—a 20.5% increase—while the government spent an estimated THB 75 billion in four months to cushion the impact.² The Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand accumulated THB 35.9 billion in losses during that period, a debt the current tariff increase is partly designed to recover.³ Workers and business owners in Phuket lived through that shock and are responding accordingly.





Findings: Three Times Normal Demand—Before the Tariff Takes Effect

NEX Thailand's solar training survey opened from April 18 to 28 and received 108 completed responses, at least three times the response rate of comparable surveys conducted by NEX in other Thai provinces. The survey closed on April 23, before the Energy Ministry's tiered tariff announcement. The rush was already underway.

The respondents were electricians, hotel technicians, construction tradespeople, farmers, unemployed workers, and civil servants. The most popular course selection—chosen by 37%—was “Becoming a Solar Cell Entrepreneur,” ahead of solar installation for home air conditioning (25%), battery assembly (20%), and solar-powered agricultural water systems (16%).

Nearly one in three respondents (32%) is currently unemployed, with the majority of that group selecting solar entrepreneurship or installation as their intended route back into work. A further 9% identified as tradespeople: electricians and technicians with foundational skills and a clear line of sight to the adjacent opportunity. Hotel and hospitality workers made up another visible cohort, directly reflecting Phuket's exposure to energy cost pressure.

The age profile also stood out. The average respondent age is 44. A substantial share are in their 50s and early 60s—experienced workers who saw their electricity bills spike in 2022 and 2023 and are now pursuing solar training as a deliberate next step. Several wrote in the open-response section about using solar skills to build a second career after retirement. One civil servant added unsolicited: “Please also teach battery assembly.” A freelancer in their mid-50s asked: “Is there already technology for solar cell EV chargers?” These are people reading a market, not a trend.

“The demand for solar training in Phuket tells us the energy price shock has already changed how people here think about their futures. Hotel technicians, electricians, people between jobs—they want to be qualified solar installers and solar entrepreneurs. The demand for training was running at least three times our normal survey response before May's tariff even took effect.”

— Natcha Tulyasuwan, Country Manager at New Energy Nexus Thailand

The Gap: A Market Being Pushed Toward Solar Without the Installers to Deliver It

Thailand has committed to increasing solar generation capacity from 3,193 megawatts in 2024 to more than 33,000 megawatts by 2037.⁴ Clean energy investment reached approximately USD 1.18 billion in 2024, a 73% increase on the prior year.⁵ The government's "Quick Big Win" energy initiative, launched in late 2025, prioritizes solar across households, agriculture, and public buildings, and rooftop solar applications rose 40% after permitting was streamlined.⁶ Today's tiered tariff announcement—with financial incentives attached—adds further momentum.

Panels and financing, however, are only part of the equation. Thailand faces a significant shortage of certified solar installers, solar engineering and procurement contractors, and maintenance technicians operating to consistent quality standards. A wave of unqualified entrants drawn by rising demand poses direct consumer protection risks; a poorly installed or unmaintained system will not deliver the savings the government is now promising consumers, and failures will damage market confidence at a critical moment.

The *New Energy Nexus Thailand Ecosystem Mapping* (2023) report identified this structural weakness clearly. Solar SMEs and installer businesses outside Bangkok operate with limited access to accreditation pathways, early-stage business support, and the financing arrangements needed to take on larger contracts.⁷ The venture capital landscape is concentrated in later-stage companies, leaving a funding gap at the stage where most solar installer businesses begin.⁷ The experienced workers responding to the Phuket survey have the motivation and, in many cases, the technical foundations—what they lack is a credential worth having and a support pathway that exists at the provincial level.

New Energy Nexus in the Philippines documented a near-identical dynamic in a parallel survey published this month: solar installer inquiries surged sixfold following that country's energy price shock, but actual installations rose far more slowly because the standards and workforce infrastructure were not positioned to absorb the demand.⁸ Thailand is at the forefront of the same curve.



“The government is telling high-consumption users—hotels, businesses, large households—to go solar, and backing that with financial incentives. A business in Phuket that acts on that advice today will struggle to find a certified installer who can guarantee quality work and a maintenance agreement. Thailand is directing demand into a market that is not yet built to handle it.”

— Natcha Tulyasuwan, Country Manager at New Energy Nexus Thailand

What Needs to Happen

The move to a tiered tariff with net billing and financial incentives is a substantive step. Three further actions are needed to convert that policy push into a functioning, trustworthy installer market:

- 1 Scale the national solar curriculum that already exists.** In 2025, NEX Thailand's SolarSTEP programme achieved a significant milestone: national approval of its Solar Entrepreneurship Curriculum by the Department of Skill Development under Thailand's Ministry of Labour.⁹ This is the foundation for a national certification standard for solar installers and solar SMEs. The priority now is expanding that framework—making it consistent across provinces, recognised by utilities and financial institutions offering solar loans, and accessible to the experienced tradespeople already seeking retraining.
- 2 Fast-track accreditation for provincial training providers.** The workers in Phuket who want to retrain are not travelling to Bangkok to do it. Provincial providers, including organisations like NEX Thailand, need formal recognition and resourcing to deliver accredited programmes locally. The New Energy Nexus Thailand Ecosystem Mapping identified the absence of clean energy business support outside major cities as a structural weakness that limits the sector's reach.⁷ Closing it is not a long-term aspiration; it is a near-term requirement given the pace of demand growth already visible in the survey data.
- 3 Build a solar maintenance workforce strategy alongside installation targets.** Thailand's 2037 solar plan measures megawatts installed. There is no equivalent framework for ensuring those systems remain operational and performing across their working life. Maintenance workforce planning—including certification, regional coverage, and quality assurance—needs to be embedded in the national strategy from the outset.

“Thailand has the policy direction, the market momentum, and, as the Phuket survey shows, a workforce ready to move. The Solar Entrepreneurship Curriculum, approved by the Ministry of Labour last year, gives us a foundation to build on. What we need now is for the government to expand that framework provincially, resource the training providers already operating on the ground, and treat solar workforce development as essential infrastructure—because that is what it is.”

— Natcha Tulyasuwan, Country Manager at New Energy Nexus Thailand



Our Methodology

NEX Thailand conducted this survey in April 2026 across the Phuket region. A total of 108 responses were received between April 18 and 28, 2026, representing a cross-section of workers and job-seekers, including hotel and hospitality staff, tradespeople, farmers, construction workers, and unemployed adults. The response rate was at least three times that recorded in comparable surveys conducted by NEX in other Thai provinces.

This is a real-time pulse from NEX Thailand's network, not a nationally representative market study. Percentage figures are indicative of direction and magnitude. The consistency of findings across occupations, age groups, and employment statuses provides a credible snapshot of current demand conditions in the province.

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Sources

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