

Wednesday, 12th of November 2025

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“Drons for Military and National Security Missions”

Dear Executive Editors/News Editors/News Editor-in-Chief,

We are pleased to present the results of the “Drons for Military and National Security Missions” conducted by NIDA Poll, the public opinion research center of the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA). The survey was conducted during 5 – 7 November 2025 among Thai citizens aged 18 years and over who had completed at least secondary education or its equivalent. The respondents were distributed across all regions, occupations, and income levels nationwide, comprising a total of 1,310 samples. The survey aimed to explore public opinions toward the use of drones in Thailand’s military and national-security missions. The sampling was conducted using a probability sampling method based on the Master Sample Database of NIDA Poll through a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected via telephone interviews, with a margin of error not exceeding ± 0.05 at a 97.0% confidence level.

According to the survey, when respondents were asked about their familiarity and use of drones, 78.47% indicated that they have heard about drones but have never used one, while 13.13% reported that they heard and had used drones, and 8.40% said they did not know about drones. Among those who stated that they heard and had used drones (a total of 172 respondents), 43.02% reported using drones for photography and data recording, followed by 29.07% for agricultural purposes, 20.35% for recreational use, 4.66% for surveying and inspection, and 1.16% each for military and security missions and mapping purposes. In addition, 0.58% cited other purposes, such as education.

When asking only those who reported being familiar with drones, whether they had used them or not (a total of 1,200 samples) on the following issues:

When focusing on respondents who were asked about the importance of drone using in Thailand’s military and national security missions, the results revealed that 80.50% considered it very important, 17.33% said slightly important, 1.50% stated slightly unimportant, 0.42% responded don’t know / no answer / unsure, and 0.25% considered it not important at all.

When asked about their opinions regarding the use of drones in Thailand’s military and national security missions, 91.08% of respondents agreed with such use. Additionally, 57.25% stated that drones help reducing risks to human lives,

51.50% believed drones enhance defense efficiency, 48.08% said drones improve striking missions, 21.50% saw them as leveraging technological advantages, and 16.42% believed Thailand should develop its own drones to reduce dependency on foreign technology. Meanwhile, 4.17% viewed drones as providing an unfair advantage over opponents, 3.08% expressed concern about overreliance on foreign technology, 2.58% noted that their use may violate international law through border incursions, Additionally, 1.00% disagreed with the military use of drones, 0.83% stated that it was not a gentleman's war, and 0.58% suggested that the budget should be spent on other priorities or that such actions may violate the rules of war, for example by attacking outside designated combat zones. Finally, 0.50% responded don't know / did not respond.

When asked about familiarity of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS), 48.50% of respondents reported being not familiar at all, 41.25% said they were somewhat familiar, 10.17% said they were well familiar, and 0.08% responded don't know / did not respond / were unsure.

Regarding responsibility in the event of a malfunction or error involving Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems in Thailand's military and national security missions, 43.92% believed that the Commander-in-Chief should be held responsible, followed by 38.92% who cited the system operator, 26.33% who pointed to the national leader, 24.58% who mentioned the Minister of Defense, 12.75% who named the system designers or coders, 11.50% who cited the manufacturing or distributing company, and 10.42% who identified politicians who approved the procurement budget. In addition, 9.00% said responded don't know / did not respond / were unsure, and 4.00% mentioned other views, such as that all parties involved should share joint responsibility.

Finally, when asked about their opinion on the use of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems in Thailand's military and national security missions, 51.33% said they strongly agreed, 22.42% somewhat agreed, 12.50% somewhat disagreed, 11.50% strongly disagreed, and 2.50% responded don't know / did not respond / were unsure.

Upon considering the general characteristics of the sample, it was found that 8.55% of the respondents had their domicile in Bangkok, 18.70% in the Central region, 17.79% in the Northern region, 33.28% in the Northeastern region, 13.82% in the Southern region, and 7.86% in the Eastern region.

Of the total sample, 47.94% were male and 52.06% were female.

In terms of age, 12.13% of the respondents were 18–25 years old, 17.79% were 26–35 years old, 17.94% were 36–45 years old, 26.34% were 46–59 years old, and 25.80% were 60 years and over.

Regarding religion, 95.73% were Buddhists, 2.98% were Muslims, and 1.29% were Christians and other religions.

Considering marital status, 37.10% of the respondents were single, 60.99% were married, and 1.91% were widowed, divorced, or separated.

In terms of education level, 29.85% had completed secondary school or equivalent, 12.75% held a diploma or equivalent, 48.01% held a bachelor's degree or equivalent, and 9.39% had education higher than a bachelor's degree.

As for occupation, 15.88% were government officials, employees, and state enterprise employees, 20.69% were private enterprise employees, 23.74% were business owners or self-employed, 6.72% were farmers or fishers, 9.99% were general workers or laborers, 19.01% were homemakers, retirees, or unemployed, and 3.97% were students or university students.

Lastly, regarding monthly income, 13.44% had no income, 0.61% earned not more than 5,000 baht, 9.69% earned 5,001–10,000 baht, 34.97% earned 10,001–20,000 baht, 15.11% earned 20,001–30,000 baht, 8.78% earned 30,001–40,000 baht, 4.35% earned 40,001–50,000 baht, 2.82% earned 50,001–60,000 baht, 0.92% earned 60,001–70,000 baht, 0.15% earned 70,001–80,000 baht, 1.60% earned 80,001 baht or more, and 7.56% did not specify their income.

1. Have you ever heard of or used a drone?

Familiarity and Use of Drones	Percentage
Yes, I've heard of drones but I've never used one.	78.47
Yes, I've heard of drones and I've used one before.	13.13
I have used a drone for... (totaling 172 samples)	
Photography / data recording	43.02
Agriculture	29.07
Recreation / hobby	20.35
Surveying / inspection	4.66
Military or national-security-related tasks	1.16
Mapping	1.16
Other purposes such as education	0.58
No, I haven't.	8.40
Total	100.00

2. In your view, how important are drones for military and national security missions?

Perceived importance of drones for military and national security missions	Percentage
Very important	80.50
Slightly important	17.33
Slightly unimportant	1.50
Very unimportant	0.25
Do not know / No response / Not sure	0.42
Total	100.00

Note: Only for respondents who know and have used drones, and those who know but have never used drones, totaling 1,200 samples.

3. What is your opinion on the use of drones in Thailand's military and national security missions, — such as surveillance and reconnaissance, strikes, logistics and transport, air-operations support, operations in hazardous environments, counterterrorism, humanitarian support, etc.?

Opinions about using drones in Thailand's military and national-security missions	Percentage
Agree with using drones for Thailand's military and national security missions	91.08
Reduce risks to human life	57.25
Improve effectiveness in defense and protection missions	51.50
Improve effectiveness in striking missions	48.08
Appropriate use of technological advantage	21.50
Thailand should develop and produce drones domestically to reduce dependence on foreign technology	16.42
An unfair advantage over opponents with less advanced technology	4.17
Thailand may become overly dependent on foreign technology	3.08
Risk of violating international law, such as accidental incursions into neighboring airspace	2.58
Disagree with using drones for Thailand's military and national security missions	1.00
Not a gentleman's war	0.83
Public budget should be allocated to other priorities instead	0.58
Risk of violating the laws of armed conflict, e.g., drone strikes outside declared combat zones	0.58
Do not know / No response	0.50

Note: 1) Only for respondents who know and have used drones, and those who know but have never used drones, totaling 1,200 samples.

2) Multiple answers are allowed.

4. Are you familiar with Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS)? (The use of AI to augment military equipment — such as tanks or drones — where there is no human control or command, and AI is to make decisions in place of humans in the battlefield.)

Awareness of LAWS	Percentage
Very unfamiliar	48.50
Somewhat familiar	41.25
Very familiar	10.17
Do not know / No response / Not sure	0.08
Total	100.00

Note: Only for respondents who know and have used drones, and those who know but have never used drones, totaling 1,200 samples.

5. If a LAWS is used in military and security missions and causes an error — such as attacks on civilians, surrendered soldiers, or friendly forces — who should be held responsible?

Attribution of responsibility for LAWS errors	Percentage
The commander-in-chief / armed forces leadership	43.92
The unit commander overseeing the LAWS	38.92
The head of government / national leader	26.33
The Minister of Defense	24.58
System designers or coders / data providers for the LAWS	12.75
The manufacturing and/or distributing company	11.50
Politicians who approved the procurement budget	10.42
Others such as all parties involved	4.00
Do not know / No response / Not sure	9.00

Note: 1) Only for respondents who know and have used drones, and those who know but have never used drones, totaling 1,200 samples.

2) Multiple answers are allowed.

6. Do you agree or disagree with the use of LAWS in military and national-security missions?

Support for using LAWS	Percentage
Strongly agree	51.33
Somewhat agree	22.42
Somewhat disagree	12.50
Strongly disagree	11.25
Don't know / No response / Not sure	2.50
Total	100.00

Note: Only for respondents who know and have used drones, and those who know but have never used drones, totaling 1,200 samples.

General Characteristics of the Sample

Table 1 illustrates numbers and percentages of survey respondents categorized by regions

Regions	Number	Percentage
Bangkok	112	8.55
Central region	245	18.70
Northern region	233	17.79
Northeastern region	436	33.28
Southern region	181	13.82
Eastern region	103	7.86
Total	1,310	100.00

Table 2 illustrates numbers and percentages of survey respondents categorized by genders

Genders	Number	Percentage
Male	628	47.94
Female	682	52.06
Total	1,310	100.00

Table 3 illustrates numbers and percentages of survey respondents categorized by ages

Ages	Number	Percentage
18-25 years old	159	12.13
26-35 years old	233	17.79
36-45 years old	235	17.94
46-59 years old	345	26.34
60 years old and over	338	25.80
Total	1,310	100.00

Table 4 illustrates numbers and percentages of survey respondents categorized by religions

Religions	Number	Percentage
Buddhists	1,254	95.73
Muslims	39	2.98
Christians and others	17	1.29
Total	1,310	100.00

General Characteristics of the Sample (Continued)

Table 5 illustrates numbers and percentages of survey respondents categorized by marriage status

Marriage Status	Number	Percentage
Single	486	37.10
Married	799	60.99
Widowed, divorced, or separated	25	1.91
Total	1,310	100.00

Table 6 illustrates numbers and percentages of survey respondents categorized by education levels

Education Levels	Number	Percentage
Secondary education or equivalent	391	29.85
Diploma or equivalent	167	12.75
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	629	48.01
Postgraduate degree or higher	123	9.39
Total	1,310	100.00

Table 7 illustrates numbers and percentages of survey respondents categorized by main occupations

Main occupations	Number	Percentage
Government officials / employees / state enterprise employees	208	15.88
Private enterprise employees	271	20.69
Business owners / self-employed	311	23.74
Farmers / fishers	88	6.72
General workers / laborers	131	9.99
Homemakers / retired / unemployed	249	19.01
Students / university students	52	3.97
Total	1,310	100.00

General Characteristics of the Sample (Continued)

Table 8 illustrates numbers and percentages of survey respondents categorized by monthly income

Monthly Income	Number	Percentage
Do not have any income	176	13.44
Not exceeding 5,000 Baht	8	0.61
5,001-10,000 Baht	127	9.69
10,001-20,000 Baht	458	34.97
20,001-30,000 Baht	198	15.11
30,001-40,000 Baht	115	8.78
40,001-50,000 Baht	57	4.35
50,001-60,000 Baht	37	2.82
60,001-70,000 Baht	12	0.92
70,001-80,000 Baht	2	0.15
80,001 Baht or higher	21	1.60
Not specified	99	7.56
Total	1,310	100.00