

CAMBODIA

A Survey of Livelihood Strategies and Expectations for the Future



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The Asia Foundation

Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

Cambodia: A Survey of Livelihood Strategies and Expectations for the Future

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1. Introduction

With this research, The Asia Foundation continues to provide analysis and insight into the remarkable economic, social, and political changes occurring today in Cambodia. The aim of this report, *Cambodia: A Survey of Livelihood Strategies and Expectations for the Future*, is to better understand the most recent social, political, and economic trends among various social groups in Cambodia, by canvassing their opinions of and expectations for economic improvement, social reform, and political choice, locally and nationally.

In recent years, The Asia Foundation has conducted a series of research projects exploring the country's contemporary social and political dynamics (Everett and Meisburger, 2014; Babović and Vuković, 2014; Babović and Vuković, 2015).¹ This body of work attempted to discern the impact that deep structural reforms taking place in both the economy and society were having across different socio-economic groups in Cambodia. The research we present here is an effort to further explore these issues.

The data for the research findings presented here was collected from July to September 2015. The nationally and regionally representative sample (for details, see chapter on methodology) was collected by Indochina Research, and the research framework, survey instrument, and analysis were the work of a team of consultants and Asia Foundation staff led by Dr. Marija Babović and Dr. Danilo Vuković.

2. Key Findings

Livelihoods of individuals and households

- There is a prevailing perception among respondents that livelihoods are improving, with rising incomes, rising overall living standards, and professional advancement. A subjective perception of upward social mobility was widely shared among respondents.
- The feelings and experiences of improving livelihoods are more prominent among younger, urban, and more educated segments of the population, living in households whose members have formal employment and consequently are able to provide greater well-being for their households.
- There are prominent income and social inequalities. Inequalities are present between men and women, between urban and rural areas, between more and less educated people, and between regions and individuals that enjoy employment in the primary labor market (more secure and better rewarded jobs requiring higher skills) and those who work in the secondary labor markets (informal, occasional, less skilled, and lower-paid jobs).

¹ Everett, Silas and Tim Meisburger (2014), *Democracy in Cambodia 2014. A Survey of the Cambodian Electorate*, Phnom Penh: The Asia Foundation; Babović, Marija and Danilo Vuković (2014) *Social Accountability in Cambodia*, JSRP Paper 19, London: LSE and The Asia Foundation; Babović, Marija and Danilo Vuković (2015), *Political competition and socio-economic drivers of political accountability in Cambodia*, unpublished paper.

- Despite the positive changes in livelihoods, a majority of households still face various forms of material deprivation. Only one-fifth of households in the sample showed no signs of deprivation in housing or material needs.
- Establishing or developing a private business is the most frequently identified strategy for improving livelihoods.
- The main obstacles perceived impeding the improvement of one's livelihood is lack of education, skills, and corruption. Respondents most often identify obstacles related to insufficient skills, poor education, corruption, poor infrastructure and access to market, and environmental risks (droughts, floods, etc.).
- Expectations for a better environment for successful livelihood strategies, however, are not directed toward government agencies, policy makers, or public institutions. The survey reveals a strong attitude of self-reliance among respondents, as their expectations for support are directed toward their immediate social networks – family, neighbors, and colleagues.

Assessment of the situation in the country

- In parallel to the general optimism that livelihoods are improving, findings suggest the general population finds that the country is generally headed in the right direction. Compared to the 2014 results, the survey finds a significant improvement in the general mood.
- The primary reasons for this positive assessment of development in the country are infrastructure development and economic development. However, these factors play a dominant role in negative assessments as well.
- Half of all respondents cite lack of economic and social development as the reason for their negative assessment of the country's direction. The second most prominent reason for negative assessments of the country's direction is deforestation.
- Respondents were able to identify numerous areas in which the national government has improved the situation in the country in the last two years. Most frequently mentioned are education and health care, protection of human and property rights, and the economy. Almost half of respondents say the government has improved education and health care.
- The areas of greatest dissatisfaction with the government were relations with Vietnam, management of natural resources, and the fight against corruption.
- When asked about changes for the better in their local communities, respondents emphasize improvements in infrastructure and in public services, and increased security. On the other hand, the most frequently cited negative developments in local communities are environmental degradation and corruption.
- In general, the state is seen to be the main driver of these changes, but there are areas where citizens and NGOs also contribute. For example, NGOs are seen as contributing mostly to the increase in political freedoms.

Political preferences and expectations

- The survey finds a feeling of increased freedom is prevailing among many, but not all, Cambodian citizens. A large majority of respondents claim that people in their locality can freely associate and express their political opinions. This feeling of freedom in Cambodia appears to be growing when compared to the 2014 survey.
- Cambodians are moderately interested in politics. While almost half of respondents claim they are not interested in politics, a large proportion are “somewhat” interested, and a very small proportion are “very” interested. These data confirm results obtained in 2014.
- A large majority follow local, provincial, and national news, as well as news from Asia and the world. While television and neighbors comprised the most prominent sources of information, a rising share of Cambodians appear to get their information from the Internet and particularly Facebook.
- However interested Cambodians appear to be interested in politics, they don’t seem to be discussing it: half of respondents say they don’t discuss politics at all. When they do discuss politics, traditional patterns prevail: they discuss it with people close to them – family members and neighbors.
- A majority of respondents approve of the work of both the CPP and the CNRP, with the CPP holding a marginal lead. When asked about the political future of Cambodia, respondents are split between CPP-led reforms and an election victory by the opposition.
- The survey findings suggest that Cambodians hold national and local elections as important. However, while half of respondents believe the next elections will be free and fair, close to half of the rest are unsure.
- Cambodian citizens are not acquainted with changes in the National Election Committee. Only one-quarter of respondents are aware that there have been changes in the National Election Committee.
- When making electoral choices for local elections, findings suggest that Cambodians draw on past achievements of the incumbent party in building the economy and infrastructure. At the national level, decision making becomes complex and reflects national and local issues, economics, but also issues of justice and fairness.

3. Methodology

This report is based on a nationally and regionally representative survey. The sample size was 3,000 interviews. The survey was conducted from July to September 2015, using a multi-stage cluster sample with the following stages:²

1. *Regional level* (purposive selection). Nine provinces were selected purposively for regional representation. Two provinces per region were chosen to represent the “Tonle Sap region,” the “mountainous region,” and the “coastal region.” For the “plain region,” three provinces were chosen, including the capital, Phnom Penh.
2. *Provincial level* (random selection). Three districts were selected to represent each province (one urban and two rural). Two communes were selected to represent each district. Two villages were selected to represent each commune. Allocation of respondents was proportional to population size at all levels.
3. *Systematic random selection of households*. A starting point was selected, after which the population in the area was divided by the number of interviews designated for that area, the result being the HH interval, which ensured that all households had an equal chance of being selected for an interview.
4. *Systematic random selection of household members*. The Kish grid was used to randomly select the respondent within each household.

The confidence level is 95% and the standard error at national level is $\pm 1.8\%$. The following table shows the standard error at the regional level:

Table 1. Standard error at regional level

Region	Sample size	Standard error
Coastal	214	$\pm 6.7\%$
Mountainous	343	$\pm 5.3\%$
Plain	1167	$\pm 2.9\%$
Phnom Penh	297	$\pm 5.7\%$
Tonle Sap	979	$\pm 3.1\%$

The sample was weighted to avoid bias. People between 18 and 24 years old were over-represented in the sample. A weighting variable was computed to compensate for this over-representation while running the analysis. Table 2 shows the distribution of age groups in the survey sample compared to the distribution of age groups in the national census of 2008, which functions as the basis for the weighting.

Table 2. Population structure in the survey sample and the national census of 2008 (%)

Age group	Phnom Penh		Plateau		Tonle Sap		Plain		Coastal Area	
	Survey	Census	Survey	Census	Survey	Census	Survey	Census	Survey	Census
18-24	29	31	37	25	48	26	40	23	29	25
25-34	26	27	22	26	17	24	16	24	24	23
35-44	20	17	18	21	12	20	14	21	20	21

² This part of the report is based on the inputs received from Indochina Research.

45-54	12	12	13	14	13	15	12	15	13	15
55+	12	12	9	15	11	15	18	18	14	15

Weights were calculated to align the survey results for each age group with the distribution of ages in the national census of 2008, using the formula:

$$\frac{\text{Proportion of age group from the census}}{\text{Proportion of age group from the survey}}$$

The ratio for each age group is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Weighting table

Age Group	Phnom Penh	Plateau	Tonle Sap	Plain	Coastal Area
18-24	0	0.67	0.55	0.57	0.88
25-34	0	1.14	1.44	1.48	0.97
35-44	0	1.12	1.7	1.45	1.04
45-54	0	1.11	1.2	1.22	1.16
55+	0	1.61	1.38	1.02	1.08

4. Livelihoods of individuals and households

Summary

There is a prevailing perception among respondents that livelihoods are improving, with rising incomes, rising overall living standards, professional advancement, as well as upward mobility on the social ladder. The feelings and experiences of improving livelihoods are more prominent among younger, urban, and more educated segments of the population, living in households whose members have formal employment and consequently are able to provide greater well-being for their households.

Within this context of positive changes, prominent inequalities still exist. Inequalities are present between men and women, between urban and rural areas, between more and less educated people, and between regions and individuals that enjoy employment in the primary labor market (more secure and better rewarded jobs requiring higher skills) and those who work in the secondary labor markets (informal, occasional, less skilled, and lower-paid jobs). Despite the positive changes in livelihoods, a majority of households still face various forms of material deprivation. Only one-fifth of households in the sample showed no signs of deprivation in housing or material needs.

Work, particularly in the form of establishing or developing a private business, is the most frequently identified strategy for improving livelihoods, and the factors most often perceived to be key to people's livelihood strategies are education and skills development, better information about the economy, less corruption, and the availability of loans on good terms. Expectations for a better environment for successful livelihood strategies, however, are not directed toward government agencies, policy makers, or public institutions. The survey reveals a strong attitude of self-reliance among respondents, as their expectations for support are directed toward their immediate social networks – family, neighbors, and colleagues.

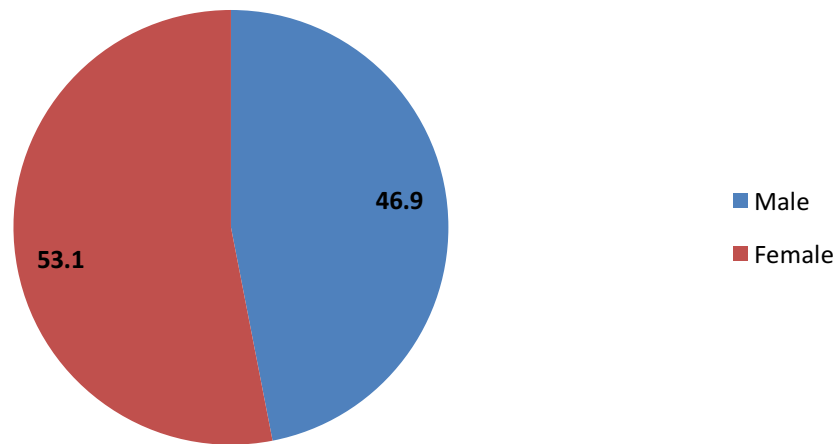
4.1 Resources and characteristics of individuals, households, and communities

Assets and resources available at the individual, household, and community level define the opportunities and constraints for people's livelihoods.

4.1.1 Individual resources and characteristics

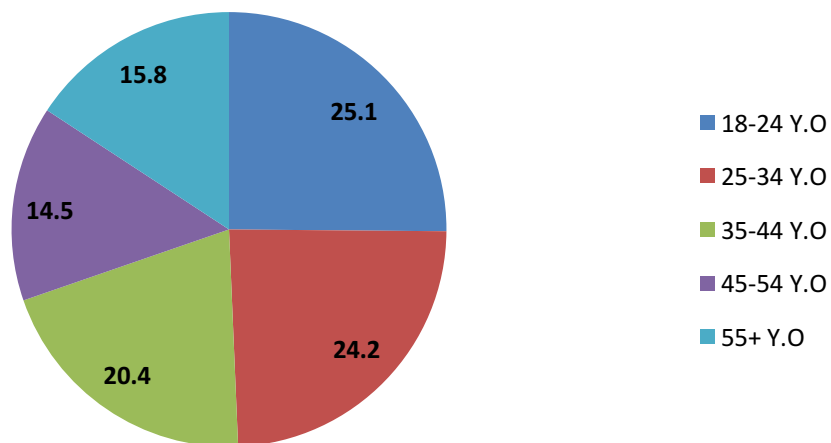
Among respondents, 53 percent were women and 47 percent were men.

Chart 1. Sex of respondent (%)



Among respondents, young people age 18-34 predominate.

Chart 2. Age of respondent (%)

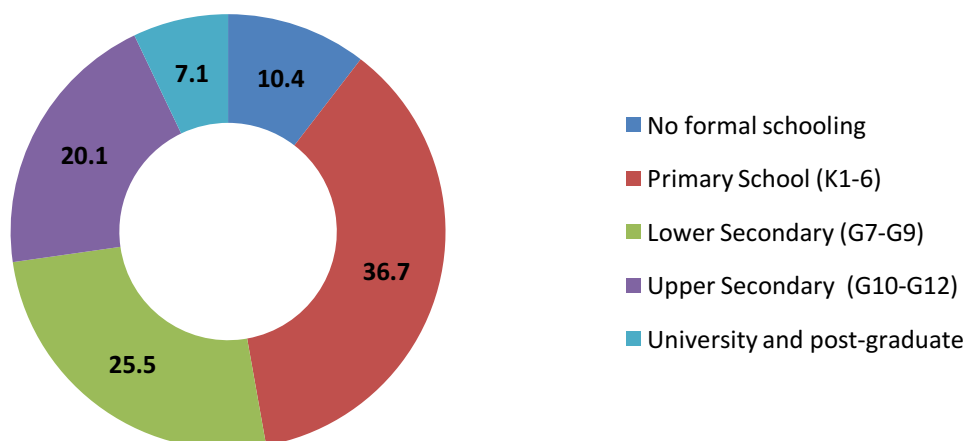


Education and literacy

Educational achievement is still low. At the time of the survey, 17% of respondents were attending school, with significant differences between male and female respondents (21% vs. 13%).

One of the key individual assets for achieving an adequate livelihood and level of well-being is education. Data on the educational profile of respondents indicates that two-thirds had not completed their secondary education (upper secondary school).

Chart 3. Highest level of school completed (%)



Educational achievement is dependent on numerous factors, but most significantly on financial resources. Significant differences in levels of education are apparent by geographical region (Phnom Penh does much better than the rest of the country), living area (urban does better than rural), gender (men do better than women) and age (younger cohorts do better than older). Lack of money was the most prominent reason for not continuing school for 60% of respondents who were not still in school at the time of the survey and who had not completed upper secondary school.

The overall rate of illiteracy is 18.6%, with significant differences between men and women, urban and rural areas, and different generations.

Table 4. Persons who cannot read or write, by gender, living area, and age (%)

		% who are illiterate
Gender ³	Women	26.5
	Men	15.5
Living area ⁴	Urban	15.7
	Rural	23.7
Age ⁵	18-24	11.1
	25-34	17.4
	35-44	26.4
	45-54	18.2
	55+	26.9

Work and employment

The vast majority of respondents are economically active, with the largest share self-employed or working in the family business. During the week preceding being surveyed, 67.8% of respondents were working. This includes any work for pay, in money or in kind, for salary or profit, for at least one

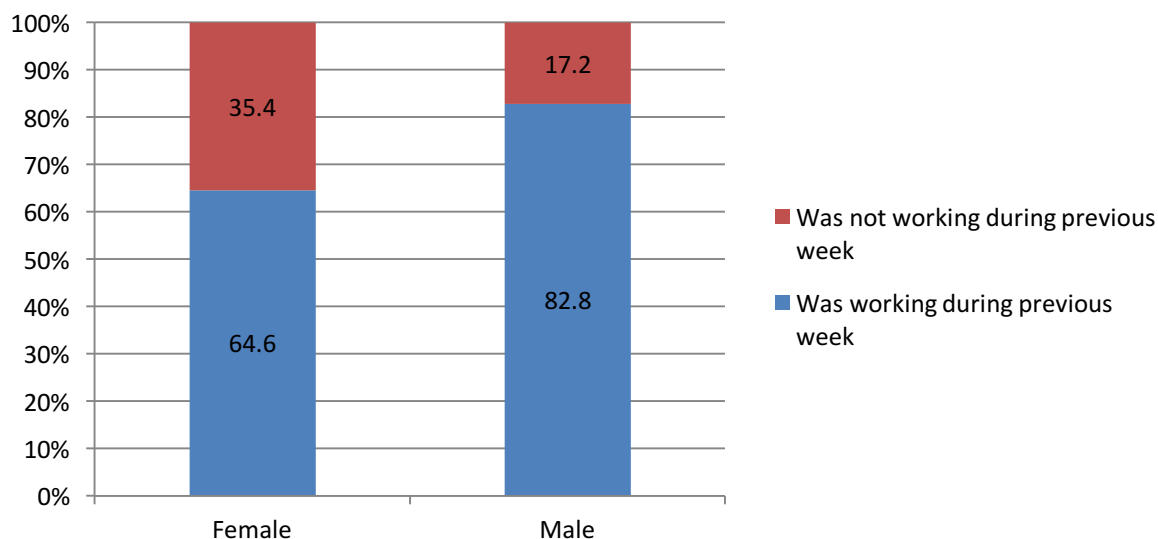
³ Chi-Square = 53.693, Cramer's V = 0.134, p = 0.000

⁴ Chi-Square = 1185.776, Cramer's V = 0.629, p = 0.000

⁵ Chi-Square = 165.257, Cramer's V = 0.235, p = 0.000

hour.⁶ Significant differences⁷ were recorded between men and women, as fewer women than men were working during the reference period.

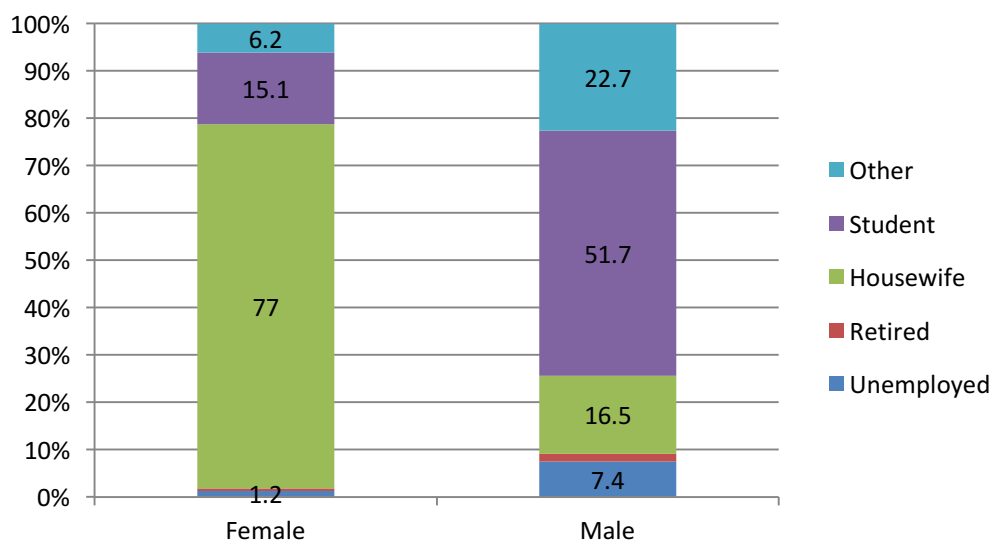
Chart 4. Rates of employment in the previous week, by gender (%)



n = 2999

For women, the most frequent reason for not working is being a housewife, while for men it is studying.

Chart 5. Status of non-working respondents (%)



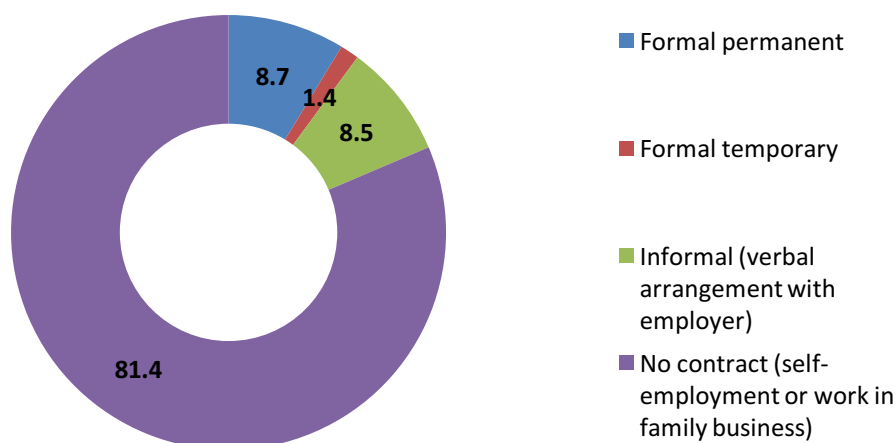
n = 806

The most prevalent form of employment is self-employment or work in the family business. Salaried work is relatively rare, and it occurs with almost equal frequency in formal and informal labor arrangements.

⁶ Definition is in line with the ILO definition of employment. Those who were temporarily absent from work due to illness, maternal leave, or holidays were also included in the working population.

⁷ Chi-Square= 126.755, Cramer's V= 0.206, p=0.000

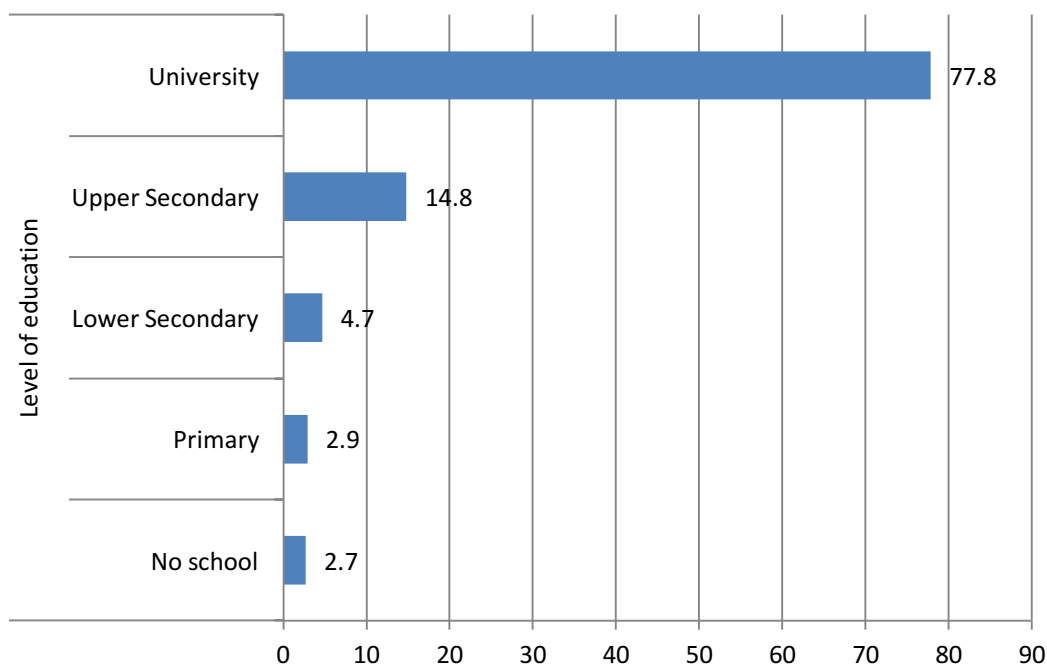
Chart 6. Employed respondents, by labor contract (%)



n = 2,195

Education is significant for the type of labor engagement. Among respondents with a university education, almost 77.8% are engaged in formal, salaried work, while for groups with lower levels of education, this form of employment is found in a minority of cases or only marginally.

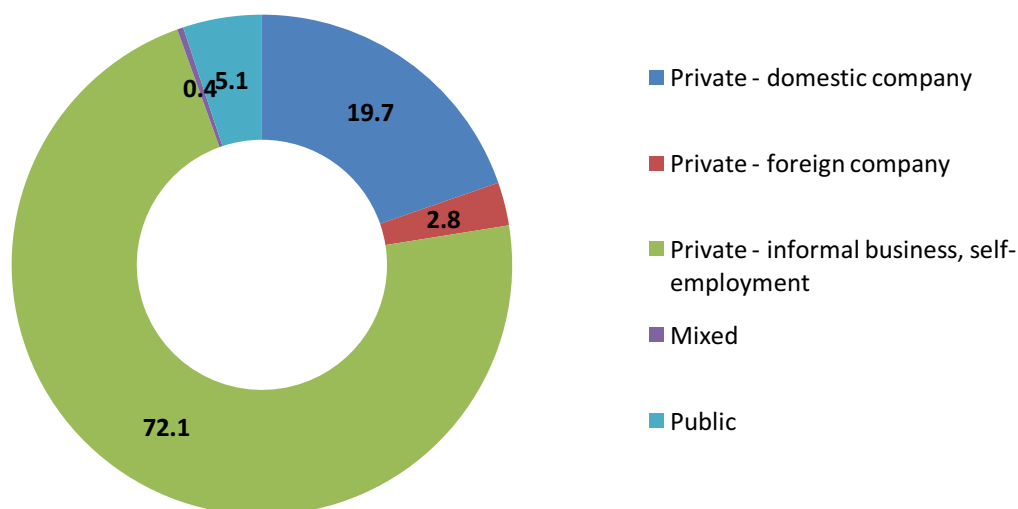
Chart 7. Share of formally employed among respondents with different level of education (%)



n = 2,195

The majority of labor takes place in private, informal businesses and informal self-employment. Some 70.6% of respondents have been working in this kind of labor arrangement. Only 19.9% work in private domestic companies, 2.8% in private foreign companies, and 6.4% in public enterprises.

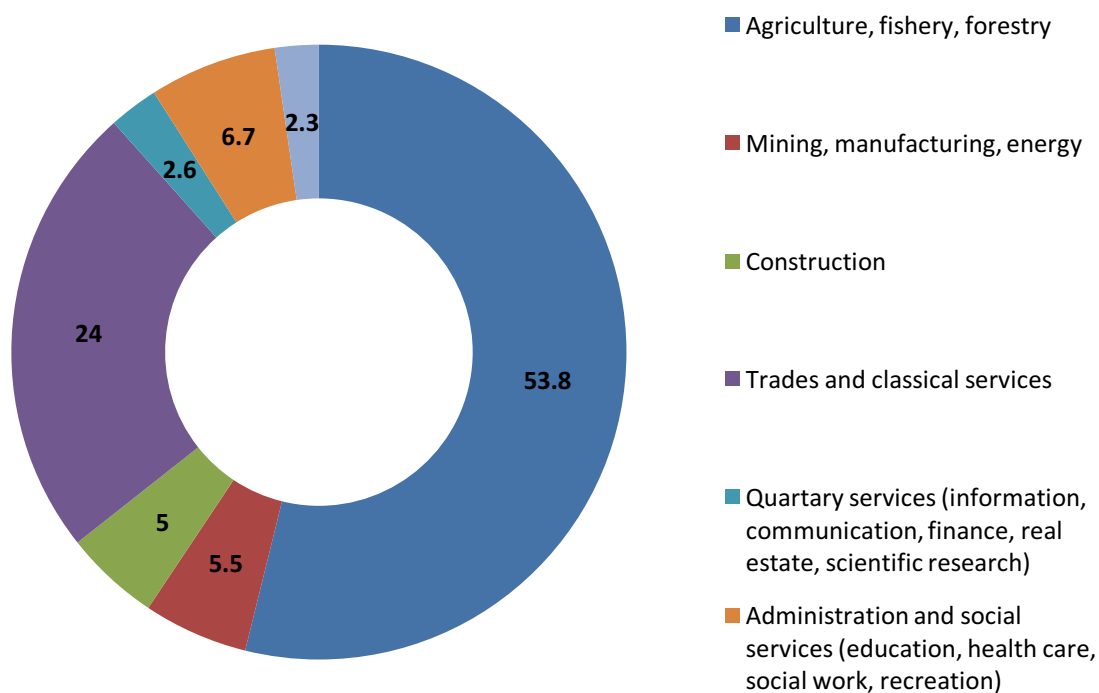
Chart 8. Employed respondents according to ownership sector (%)



n = 2,195

The majority of work takes place in agriculture, forestry, and fishing (53.8%), followed by trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles and classical services (24.0%). Manufacturing accounts for just 5.5% of employment together with mining and energy supply sectors, construction for 5.0%, while the rest is mostly distributed among various services in small percentages.

Chart 9. Main employment of respondents, by sector (%)



n = 2,195

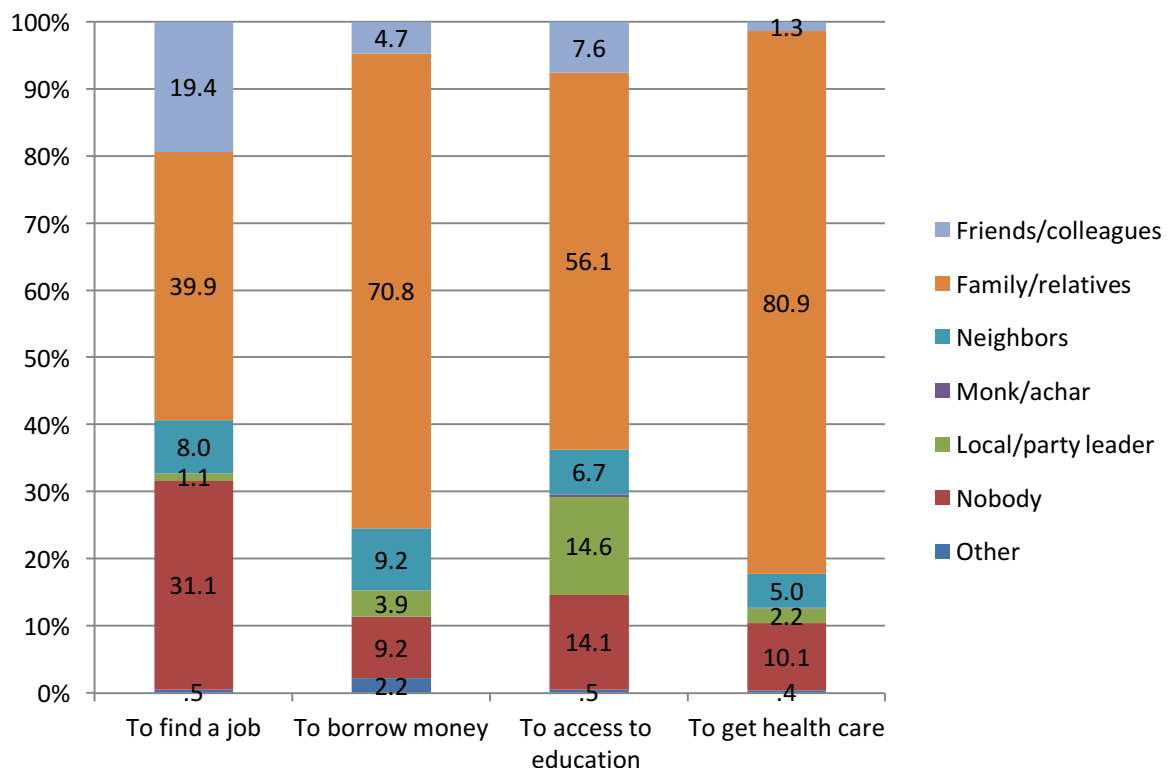
In addition to their main job, 14.8% of respondents have other work. This work is mainly in agriculture (in 51.6% of cases) construction (13.0%) and trade or repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (18.7%). Additional work in other industries is present only marginally (in 16.7% of cases, distributed among various services).

Social capital

Two forms of social capital were explored during the survey. The first is called “bridging” social capital, because it represents social connections with other people who help individuals to acquire otherwise unobtainable information, services, or other resources important to them. The second is called “linking” social capital, as it enables individuals with similar interests to join their efforts towards the same or similar objectives.

For bridging social capital, our survey shows respondents’ strong reliance on traditional social networks (family, relatives), except for access to jobs. Strong reliance on family is particularly evident in access to health care and financial support. Reliance on friends or colleagues, which is considered a more modern form of social capital, is highest in access to jobs.

Chart 10. Who is the person that can help you most when you need it? (%)



n = 3,000

The survey indicates a relatively low level of linking social capital. Only 14.9% of respondents are members of any kind of organization. Membership in organizations is generally very low.

Table 5. Are you member of any of the listed organizations?

Organization	Yes (%)	n
Mutual help organization (death association, kitchen/pot association, etc.)	4.9	146
Professional association (student, farmer, teacher, etc.)	1.5	46
Business/trade association	0.1	4
Political party	4.1	122
Trade union	0.7	22
Humanitarian association	2.4	72
Artistic, cultural, folklore, hobby	0.6	17
Sports/recreation	0.6	18

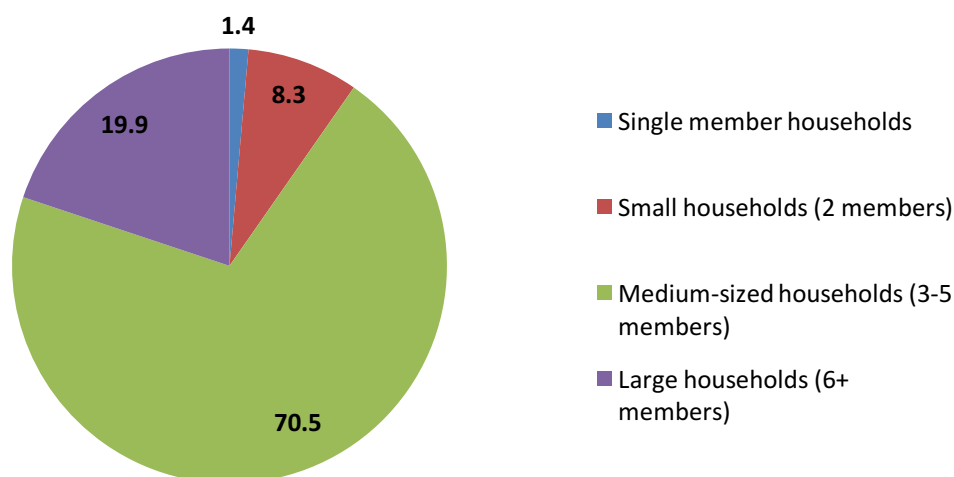
n = 3000

4.1.2 Household resources and characteristics

The household is defined primarily as a consumption unit in which members share living space and, at least partly, living costs. In a majority of cases, households are made up of families, but they can also include non-relatives who share accommodations and at least some consumption (e.g., meals). In our sample, only 2% of respondents lived in non-family households.

A majority of respondents (70.5%) live in medium-sized households (3-5 members). Only 1.4% live alone, and 19.9% live in large households with 6 or more members. There is no significant difference in the size of households between urban and rural areas in our sample. However, there are significant differences between regions, with a higher proportion of large households in plateau and in coastal areas than in other regions.

Chart 11. Size of households (%)

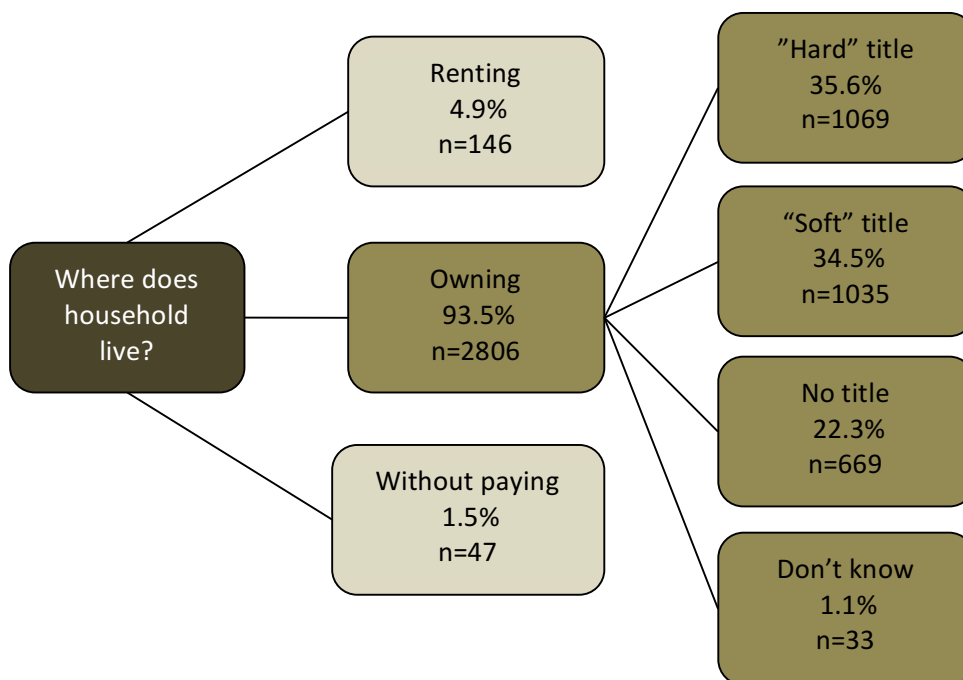


n = 3,000

Housing

The housing ownership situation is complex. Although 93.5% of respondents claim that their household lives in a house owned by one or more household members, only 35.6% claim they have so-called “hard” titles, which include ownership documents issued by the Ministry of Land, Urban Planning, and Construction. “Soft” titles are issued by the village or commune authority, and are considered to be less secure. It is important to note that 22.3% of households live in a house they consider to be family property with no legal documents.

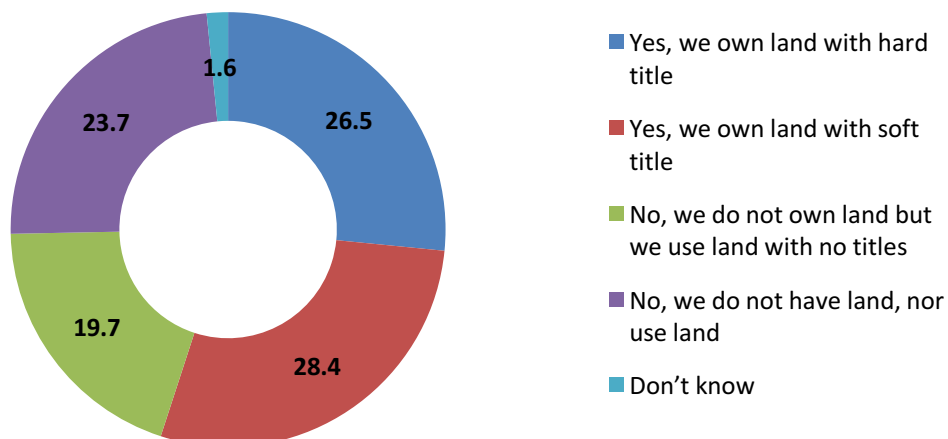
Chart 12. Housing status of households



Land

Households own small portions of land, often with insecure property rights. Land is an important asset, particularly given the large rural population with its strong economic focus on agriculture. Two-thirds of households in the sample live in rural areas (67.6%), and 67% of all households engage, at least to some extent, in agriculture (as main or additional work). Among all households in the sample, 26.5% have hard titles, 28.4% have soft titles, 19.7% use land to which they have no ownership rights, and 1.6% are unsure of their ownership status.

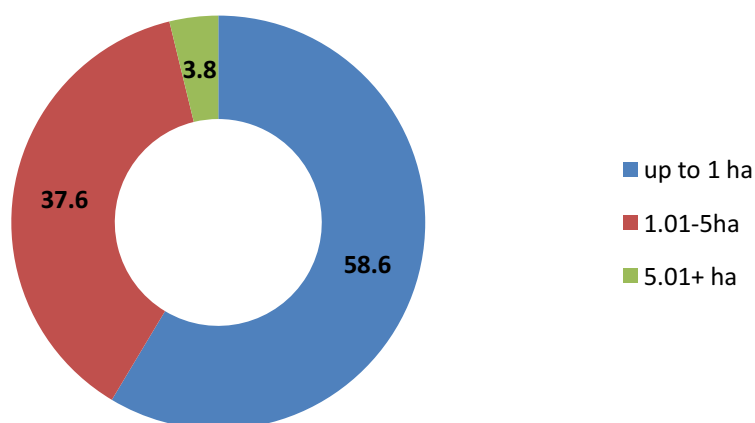
Chart 13. Do you or your household own land? (%)



n = 3,000

The average land area used for agriculture (including land not owned by the household) by all farming households is 1.7 ha. A majority of farming households have 1 ha of land or less.

Chart 14. What is the area of the land the household/family uses for agriculture? (%)



N=2241

A majority of farming households (74.6%) sell their surplus agricultural products on the the market. More than half of these households (51.8%) report that their income from this activity has increased in the last two years.

Means of transportation

A majority of households rely on motorcycles for transportation. A means of transportation is another important asset at the household level. A majority of households (71.8%) possess

motorcycles, 10.5% of households possess cars (often in combination with motorcycles), while 12% have only bicycles, and 5.7% have none of these means of transportation.

Table 6. Means of transportation possessed by the household

Means of transportation	% of households that have it
Household owns at least one car (it may also have motorcycles and bicycles).	8.9
Household owns a motorcycle (it may also have a bicycle, but not a car).	71.1
Household has only a bicycle.	14.1
Household has none of these three means of transportation.	5.9
Total	100

n = 3,000

There is significant difference between urban and rural households in the share of car owners. While 21.0% of urban households own at least one car, just 3.7% of rural households do.

Household income

Households (as defined at the beginning of this chapter) **combine different types of work, and they earn income from various sources, sometimes from several simultaneously.** Data on primary source of income⁸ indicate that the largest share of households rely primarily on farming, followed by the share of households whose primary source of income is employment or business, and then by small-scale self-employment or small, informal family businesses.

Table 7. Primary source of income in the household

	% of households
Farming	37.7
Employment in company, institution, NGO, small business	22.9
Small-scale self-employment (street vendors, cleaners, handicrafts)	20.4
Seasonal work in agriculture for other farmers in the country	4.5
Financial assistance from friends/relatives in the country	4.0
Private business run by household member, or family business	3.9
Financial assistance from friends/relatives abroad	3.4
Remittances from household member working and living abroad permanently or long term	1.3
Interest from savings accounts, dividends	0.6
Renting houses/apartments, offices (landlord)	0.6
Temporary or seasonal work abroad	0.5
Total	100

n = 3,000

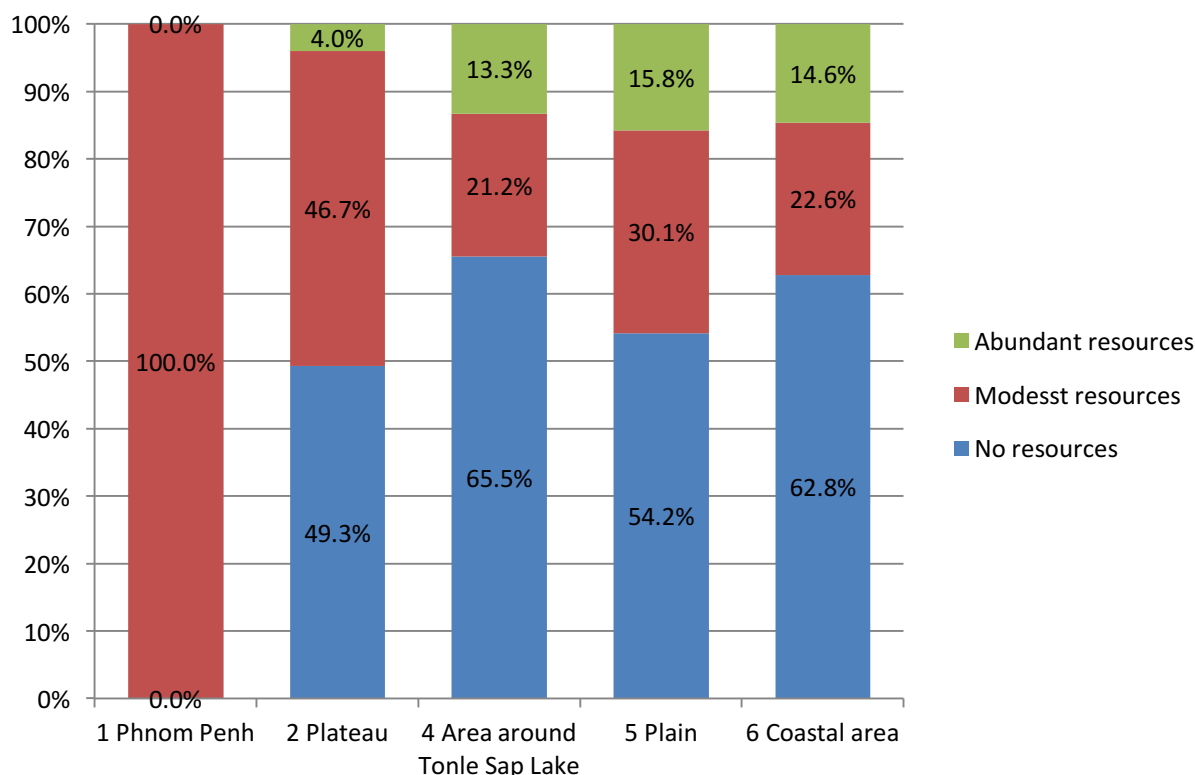
4.1.3 Community resources

A majority of respondents live in rural areas (69.7%). These rural areas differ significantly in the availability of economic resources. The index of economic abundance is composed of four important resources that can be drivers of local economic development: mines/quarries, factories, tourist destinations, and commercial plantations.

⁸ The “primary source of income” is the single source providing the highest share of total household income, regardless of the number of household members involved.

There is significant difference among and within rural regions in the availability of economic resources. Data presented in aggregate form show that the coastal region has the highest proportion of economically abundant rural communes, while the plains and Tonle Sap regions have the highest proportion of rural communes with no economic resources.

Chart 15. Proportion of rural communes with different levels of available economic resources, by region (%)⁹



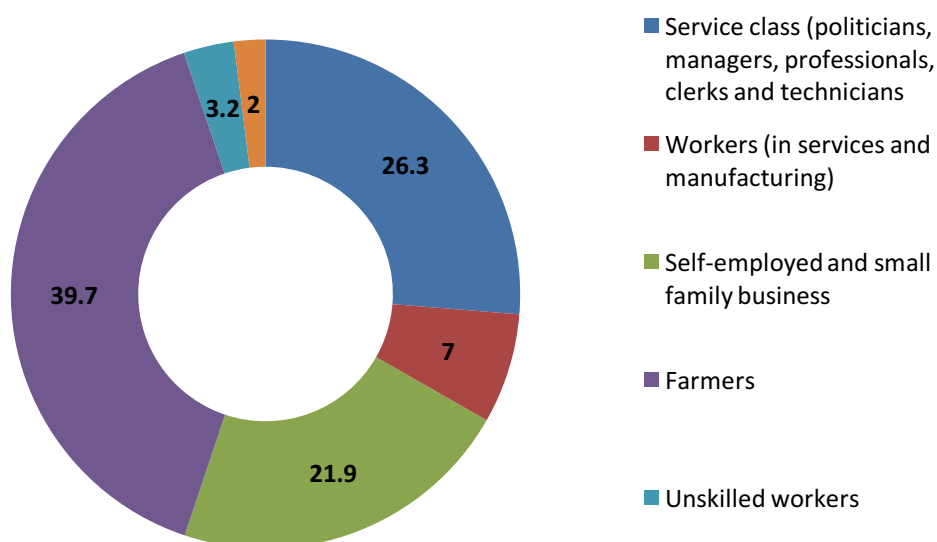
Chi-square=87.867, Cramer’s V= 0.145, p=0.000

4.1.4 Households’ socio-economic status and economic strategies

Data on socio-professional groups in Cambodia show that farmers predominate among traditional social structures. Groupings are defined here at the household level, not the individual level, because it is assumed that resources, values, and norms that are related to socio-professional position are shared by the household. (For example, income and assets are shared, but so are connections and opportunities based on someone’s position, as well as values and norms such as appreciation of education, or hard work, or independent work, etc.) Socio-economic status is assigned using the dominance principle, which assigns the social position of the household member with the highest status to the entire household.

⁹ Economic resources include: mines/quarries, factories, tourist destinations or attractions, and commercial plantations. Areas with “modest” resources are those that have 1-2 economic resources, while areas with “abundant” resources are those that have 3-4 economic resources.

Chart 16. Socio-economic groups (%)

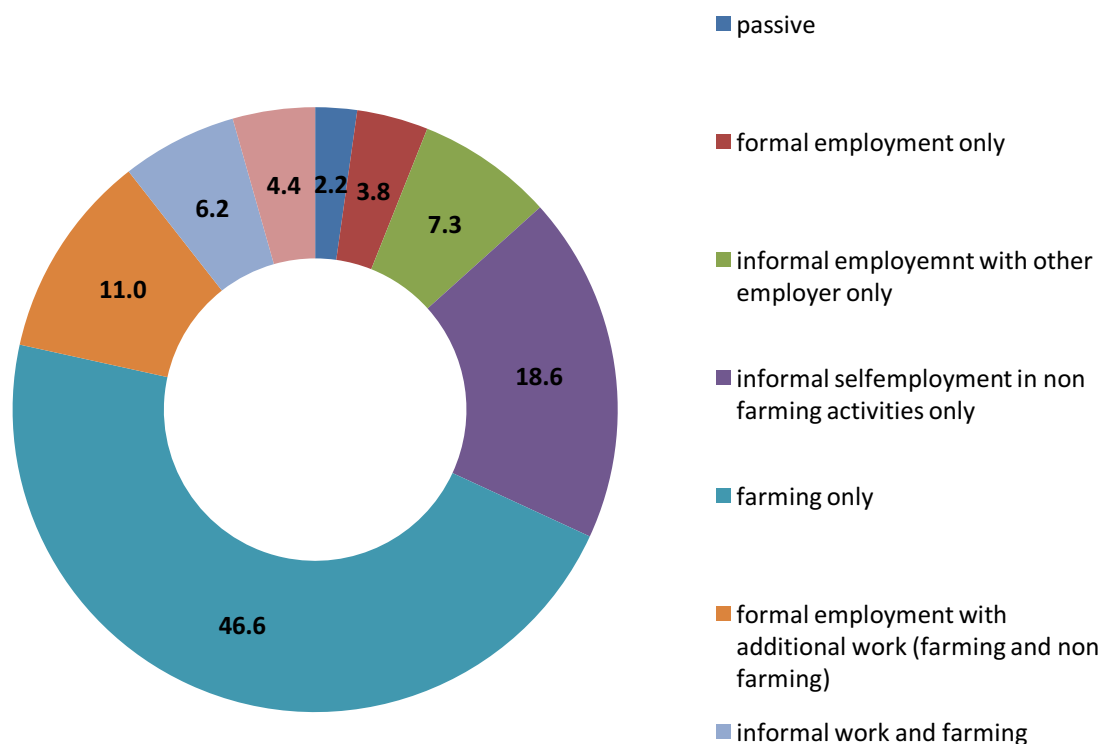


n = 3,000

Two socio-economic groups predominate: farmers, and middle or service class. Although some regions of Cambodia in recent years have become industrial zones with a high concentration of factories (particularly in the garment industry), data indicate that two big socio-professional groups still predominate: the service or middle class, and farmers. The service class includes various sub-groupings: some at the top of the social hierarchy, such as politicians at various levels, managers; but also professionals in the public and private sectors, clerks in public administration and business sector, and technicians). The category of farmers includes those who are fully engaged in subsistence farming with no surplus to sell on the market (22.6%), and those who are selling at least some surplus on the market (77.4%).

Economic strategies are defined at the household level as a combination of the main and additional economic activities of household members. “Passive” households are those in which no economic activity is recorded, whether formal, informal, or market or subsistence oriented. Households with formal employment as the only economic activity belong to the privileged population, and they are mostly households with university-educated members. (As indicated, over 70% of respondents with a university education work under a formal labor contract, while just 15% of respondents with an upper-secondary education enjoy such arrangements). A third strategy involves only informal salaried work, and it is mostly present among less-educated respondents in urban areas. Informal self-employment or family business is a frequent economic strategy among populations in urban settlements without higher levels of education. Farming is a typical economic strategy in rural areas. While these categories include only one type of household economic activity (regardless of how many members are involved in it), there are two strategies that combine different types of work. One is the combination of prestigious formal employment with any other form of work, including farming or informal, non-farming activities, while the second is the combination of informal work and farming.

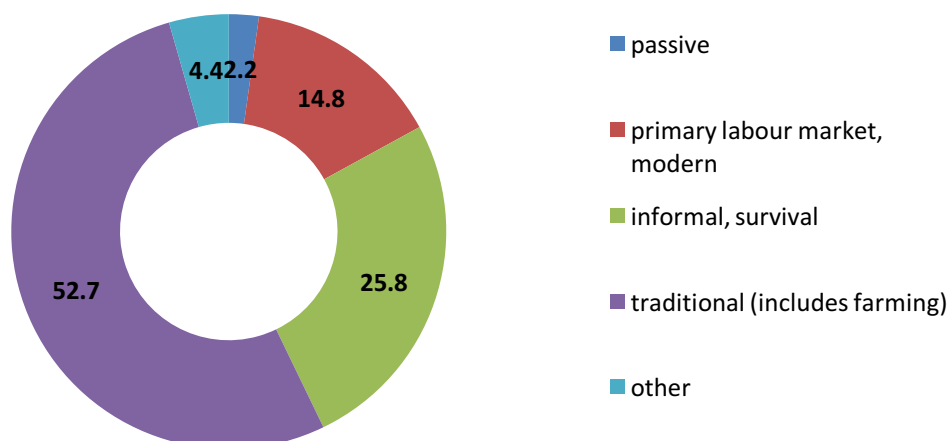
Chart 17. Household economic strategies (%)



n = 3,000

Basically, the economic strategies presented here can be grouped into four main categories that indicate which type of economic activity households rely on: (1) passive (no recorded economic activity, formal or informal, market or subsistence), (2) economic strategies related to engagement in the primary, modern labor market, (3) informal market strategies (work for employers without written contract, self-employment or family business without registered entity), which are mostly related to urban labor markets, and (4) traditional economic strategies, those that rely on farming as a sole or complementary activity.

Chart 18. Household economic strategies (%)

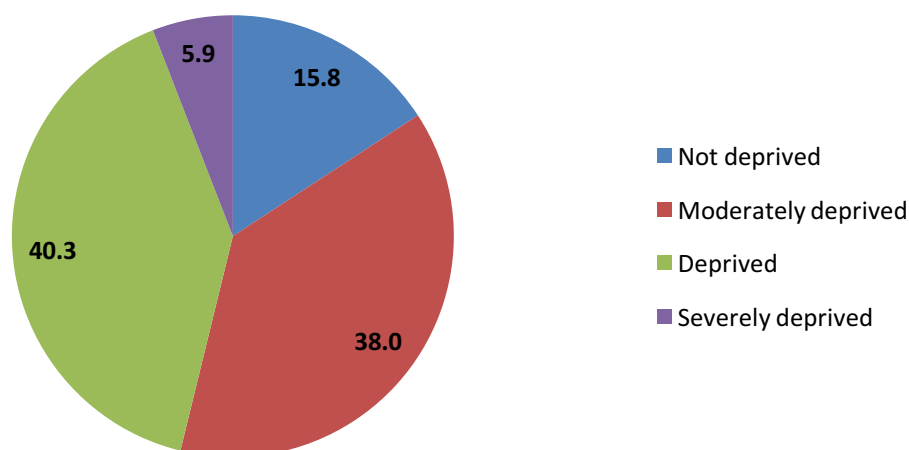


n = 3,000

4.1.5 Well-being of households and individuals

For the purpose of analysis of household well-being, a complex, composite index of material deprivation was constructed. It includes three components (also composite indices): deprivation in housing, deprivation in household appliances, and deprivation in needs satisfaction.¹⁰

Chart 19. Status of household according to material deprivation (%)



n = 3,000

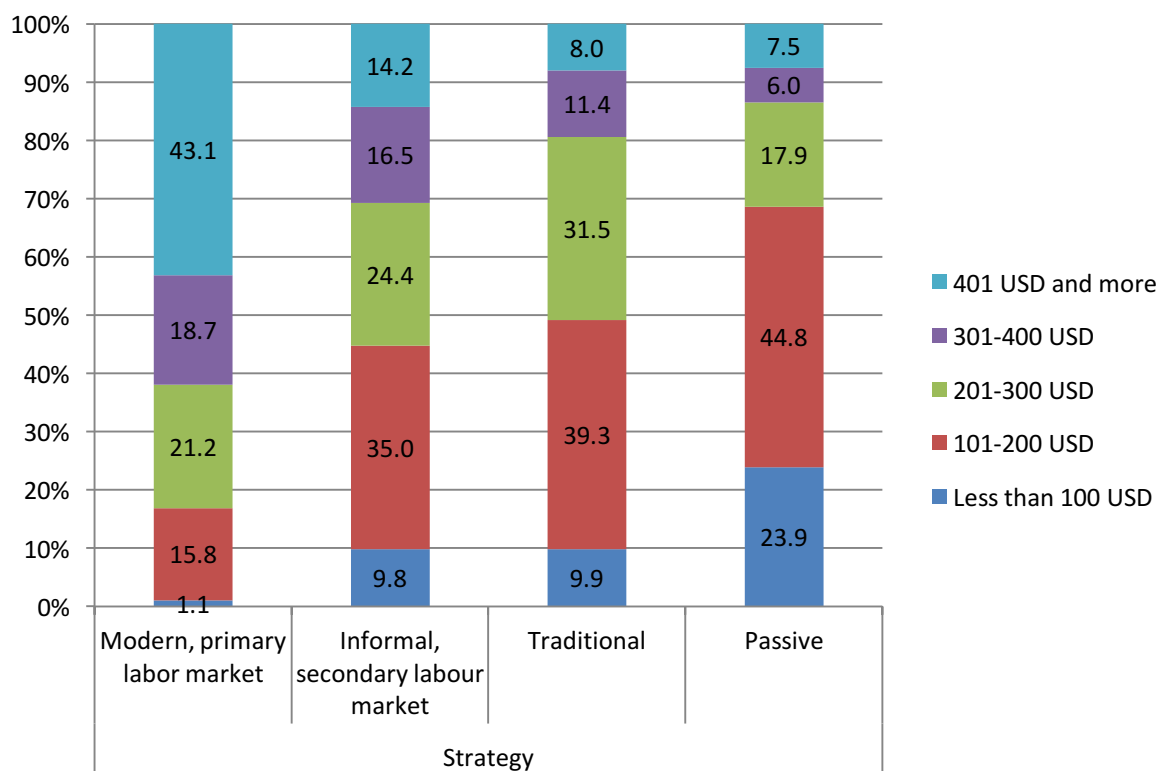
Material deprivation is significantly related to some of the socio-economic features of households, particularly geographic location, education, and economic strategy. According to the statistical analysis (binary logistic regression model 1 presented in annex 1):

¹⁰ “Deprivation” is a gap between available resources and needs. The concept is widely used in theory and policy to fight poverty and social exclusion. For example, in the EU standardized methodology for monitoring poverty and social exclusion, an index of material deprivation is used regularly across all member states.

- Households in rural areas are seven times more likely to be deprived than urban households.
- Households whose members have no education higher than primary school are three times more likely to be deprived than households that have at least one member with a university education.
- Households whose members have an upper-secondary education are two times more likely to be deprived than households where at least one member has a university education.
- Households with a traditional economic strategy are two times more likely to be deprived, and households with informal economic strategies are 1.5 times more likely to be deprived, than households with modern, primary labor-market strategies.

Income level is significantly related to the economic strategy of the household. Almost half of households with a modern, primary labor-market strategy are in the highest income category.

Chart 20. Households by economic strategy and monthly income level (%)



Chi-Square=451.288, Cramer's V=0.194, p=0.000

4.2 Changes in livelihoods

The survey focused on several aspects of people's livelihoods: changes in structure and level of income, changes in overall living standard, and subjective perceptions of relative position in the social hierarchy. In each of these dimensions, there is a prominent perception of change for the better.

4.2.1 Changes in income

According to survey findings, there are changes in both the structure and level of incomes. In regard to changes in the structure of incomes, there is an increase in the share of households that receive their main income from salaried work and self-employment, and a decrease in the share of households that receive their main income from farming.

Table 8. Changes in main source of income

Source of income	% of households that receive income from this source	
	2013 ¹¹	2015
Private business run by household member, or family business	4.9	5.4
Employment in company, institution, NGO, small business	21.2	22.6
Small-scale self-employment (street vendors, cleaners, handicrafts)	18.2	19.5
Farming	47.6	43.9
Seasonal work in agriculture for other farmers in the country	2.2	2.2
Temporary or seasonal work abroad	0.3	0.5
Renting houses/apartments, offices (landlord)	0.3	0.3
Remittances from household member working and living abroad, permanently or long term	1.1	1.2
Financial assistance from friends/relatives in the country	2.2	2.4
Financial assistance from friends/relatives abroad	1.5	1.7
Interest from savings accounts, dividends	0.4	0.4
Total	100	100

n = 3,000

Household income is increasing. There are also changes in the level of income from particular sources. Respondents generally report increases in income from almost all key sources: private business, salaried work, self-employment, farming, and work abroad or remittances. In total, for 73.3% of respondents, income has improved from at least one source. The greatest share of households reporting increased income is found among those earning incomes from private business or salaried employment.

¹¹ Respondents were asked to compare their income in 2015 with their income in 2013. Data for both years are part of the survey on livelihoods 2015.

Table 9. Growth in incomes from various sources

Source of income	% of households who perceive increase of income
Private business run by household member, or family business	73.1
Employment in company, institution, NGO, small business	71.7
Remittances from household member working and living abroad, permanently or long term	64.0
Small-scale self-employment (street vendors, cleaners, handicrafts)	63.7
Temporary or seasonal work abroad	58.9
Farming	54.0
Selling land, house, car, appliances	52.8
Interest from savings accounts, dividends	49.6
Financial assistance from friends/relatives in the country	47.9
Seasonal work in agriculture for other farmers in the country	47.1
Renting houses/apartments, offices (landlord)	42.7
Financial assistance from friends/relatives abroad	39.7
Scholarships	35.1

The increase in income is also noticeable in how respondents positioned their households in the various income categories in 2015 and 2013. The number of households in the lowest income category was halved in 2015, while the number in the highest category significantly increased. Changes occurred at the extremes, not in the middle.

Table 10. Monthly household income

Total household income	% of households			
	2013		2015	
	%	n	%	n
Less than 100 USD	16.0	481	9.1	274
101-200 USD	34.5	1034	34.8	1044
201-300 USD	27.2	816	27.5	826
301-400 USD	12.6	377	13.6	409
401 USD and above	9.8	293	14.9	447
Total	100	3001	100	3001

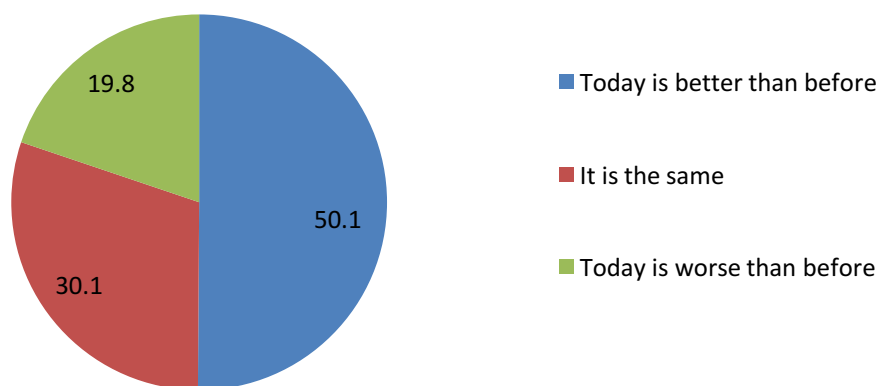
n = 3,000

4.2.2 Changes in living standard

More than half of respondents perceive an increase in their living standard during the last two years. Approximately one-third report no change, while just 19.8% say that their living standard has declined.

Chart 21. How would you compare your present living standard to two years ago? (%)

Perception of changes in living standard



n =3,000

Employment opportunities are the main factor in the improved living standards. The reason most frequently cited by respondents for a higher living standard was employment opportunities in their communities.

Table 11. Reasons for improvement of living standard

What contributed the most to the improvement?	Households who experienced improvement	
	% of answers	% of cases
Employment of household members in the living place	19.6	40.2
Starting a business	14.0	28.8
Job promotion or change to a better job	12.0	24.7
Employment of household member in another place in Cambodia	10.9	22.3
Better market access	8.0	16.5
Changes in the family (children left home, fewer expenses)	7.5	15.4
Increased agricultural production or better prices for agricultural products	5.9	12.2
Improvement of personal/family business due to new investment	5.2	10.7
Financial support from family members	4.9	10.0
Employment abroad	3.6	7.4
Other	8.2	16.9
Total	100	-

n = 1,505

Accidental factors led to declines in living standard. While reasons for improvement were mainly of a structural kind, such as better employment opportunities, reasons for a declining living standard were more of an accidental kind, such as sickness and death, a bad harvest or fishing season, floods, droughts, environmental hazards, and, less frequently, job loss or business failure.

Table 12. Reasons for decline in living standard

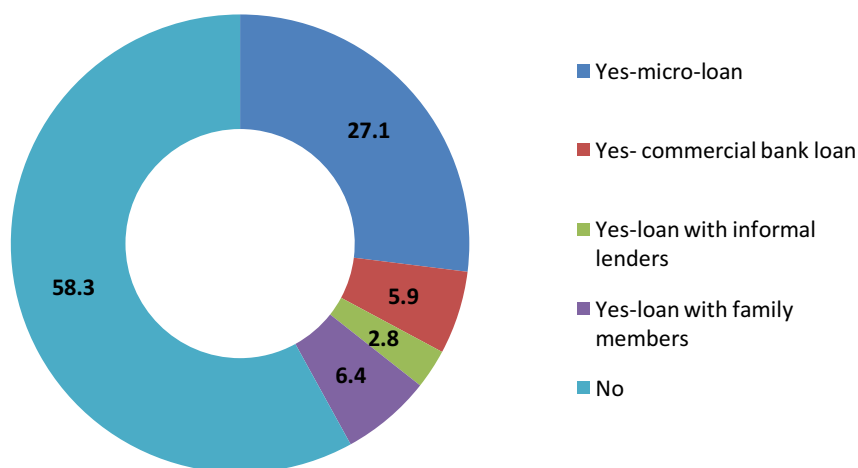
What contributed most to the decline?	Households that experienced a decline	
	% of answers	% of cases
Floods, droughts, environmental hazards, bad weather	24.7	46.6
Bad season in agriculture, fishery	13.6	25.5
Getting children, having more children	11.7	22.1
Sickness/disability of family member	10.8	20.4
Failed business	10.6	20.0
Loss of job or change to a worse job	9.0	17.0
Family members who were providers moved away	4.8	9.0
Death of household member	2.7	5.1
Other	12.0	22.6
Total	100	-

m = 596

Interestingly, higher income is an important factor in the perception of improvement, but not the only factor. Higher income was reported by 88% of respondents who claimed their living standard increased, but also by 70% of respondents who claimed their living standard decreased.

A large share of respondents has loans. Loans play an important role in the livelihoods of respondents. According to survey findings, 40% of respondents have some sort of loan. In almost half of cases (47%) the loan was invested in business or farming. In 17% of cases, the loan was invested in housing, and in the remaining 36% of cases the loan was for consumption.

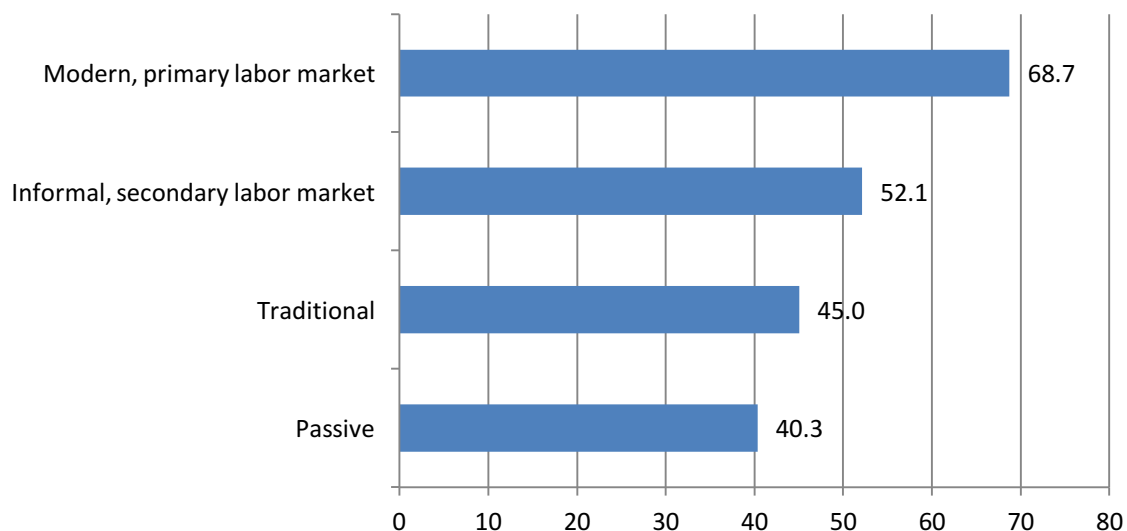
Chart 22. Does your household currently have any loans? (%)



n = 3000

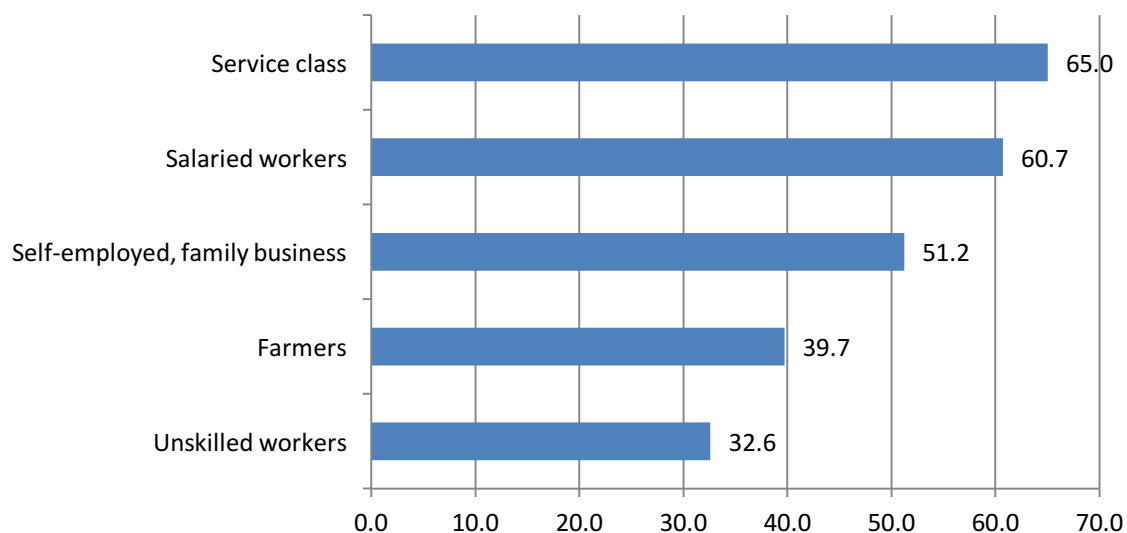
An increase in income is more frequent among higher socio-economic groups with modern livelihood strategies. The data clearly indicate that respondents more often report an increase in living standard if they live in households that employ modern, primary labor-market economic strategies, that belong to the service class, and that live in urban areas.

Chart 23. Share of respondents from households with different economic strategies who reported an increased living standard (%)

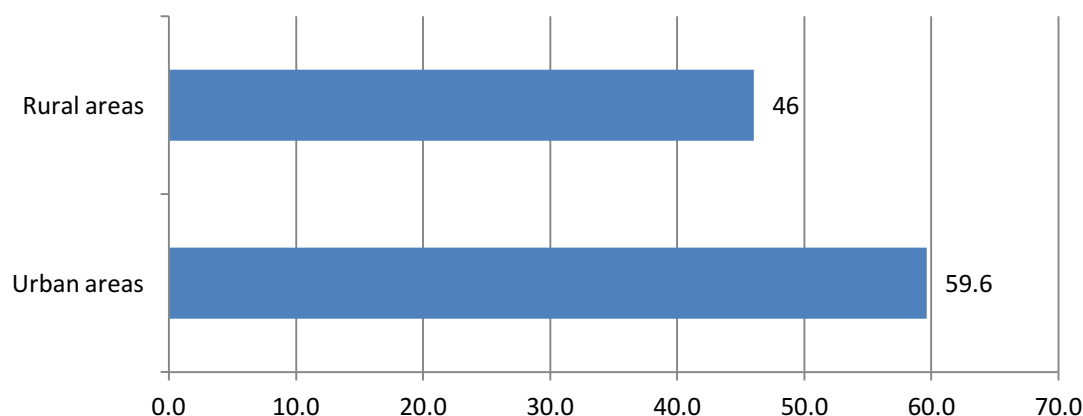


n = 3,000

Chart 24. Share of respondents from households with different socio-economic positions who reported an increased living standard (%)



n = 3,000

Chart 25. Share of respondents from households in rural and urban areas who reported an increased living standard (%)

n = 3,000

4.2.3 Changes in social rank

There is a widely shared, subjective perception of upward social mobility. Respondents were asked to locate themselves in one of five hierarchical positions on the social ladder at the present time, two years ago, and two years in the future. This measure of social mobility is purely subjective, but it adds to the picture of livelihood changes, because it entails a relational perception – how people position themselves in relative terms, in comparison to others, regardless of the absolute level of income or living standard. It also reflects a perception of social reputation, prestige. From the survey data, it is evident that people have experienced a subjective perception of upward mobility during the last two years. This perception of mobility is limited to advancement from bottom and lower-middle to the middle positions, and not to the higher social positions.

Table 13. Some people are ranked higher and some lower in our society. Where would you position your household? (Subjective social position)

Social ranking (1-5 with 1 as bottom, lowest rank)	%		
	Two years ago*	Present**	In two years***
5 Top	0.2	0.2	2.5
4 Upper middle	3.3	4.6	9.3
3 Middle	42.7	57.4	34.8
2 Lower middle	37.6	28.1	31.1
1 Bottom	16	9.8	2.8
Don't know	0.2	0	19.5
Total	100	100	100

*n = 2, 996; ** n = 3,000; *** n = 2,415

As can be seen in the preceding table, respondents expect or aspire to climb further on the social ladder in the next two years, with one-third expecting to join the upper-middle social rank.

4.3 People's aspirations and expectations

Employment is perceived as the best way to improve livelihoods. Expectations of improving livelihoods and aspirations to advance further on the social ladder, evident among a significant number of respondents, are backed by concrete plans for the future. According to survey findings, employment is perceived as the best way to improve livelihoods. As seen in the following table, starting a private business is the plan most frequently cited by respondents to improve their livelihoods, followed by various work strategies such as finding employment, engaging in additional work, moving to a better job, etc.

Education is a less important livelihood strategy than employment. It is important to bear in mind that respondents recognize the importance of education to work opportunities, as will be seen later. However, education requires resources that respondents often do not possess, as indicated by the reasons given for not continuing education (lack of money being the most frequent). Education also requires time, and delaying work for several years is something that many households cannot afford. Widespread deprivation probably keeps pressure on young people to enter the workforce early. Yet, as the survey findings indicate, a university education is one of the factors most likely to lead to engagement in the primary labor market, greater well-being, and a higher position on the social ladder.

Table 14. Plans for improvement of livelihoods

What do you plan to do over the next two years to improve your livelihood?	% of answers	% of cases
Start own business	27.5	46.6
Find employment	14.3	24.2
Find an additional job	13.0	22.0
Change job, find a better job	10.2	17.3
Invest in farming or business	8.6	14.5
Nothing can be done	7.3	12.3
Improve housing	5.8	9.8
Start or continue education	3.9	6.5
Migrate for work (within Cambodia or abroad)	3.6	6.1
Other	5.8	9.7
Total	100.0	–

n = 3,000

An important element in people's aspirations and expectations is their perception of obstacles and supporting factors, and of social actors who can obstruct their pursuit of better livelihoods, or facilitate that pursuit, through direct support or by providing more favorable institutional, infrastructural, or policy environments.

The main obstacles are lack of education and skills, and corruption. Respondents most often identify obstacles related to insufficient skills, poor education, corruption, poor infrastructure and access to market, and environmental risks (droughts, floods, etc.).

Table 15. What are the main obstacles that could prevent you from fulfilling your plans?

	% of answers	% of cases
Lack of skills, education	25.2	45.8
Corruption	13.9	25.2
Poor access to market of products and services	11.8	21.5
Natural obstacles	10.3	18.8
Poor infrastructure in the community	10.1	18.4
Poor employment prospects	7.4	13.4
Political instability, oppression	4.8	8.8
Insecure property rights	4.8	8.7
Administrative obstacles	4.6	8.4
Obstacles to access to natural resources	4.2	7.5
Lack of information	1.9	3.4
Other	0.9	1.6
Total	100	-

n = 2631

When asked who is most likely to impede their plans, respondents identify people from their immediate environment, predominantly family members and neighbors, which mirrors the greater reliance on these resources for individual livelihood strategies as shown in Chart 10 and Table 18. Other figures in the local community, including village chiefs and commune chiefs, are also sometimes mentioned. However, a substantial plurality of respondents believe that nobody is a potential threat to their plans for achieving a better livelihood.

Table 16. Who is most likely to impede your plans?

	% of answers	n
Family members	15.7	549
Neighbors	8.0	278
Commune chief	6.2	216
Village chief	5.3	184
Colleagues	4.9	171
National government	3.4	118
Boss/employer	3.4	184
Commune council	2.5	86
Provincial-level government	1.1	37
Foreign investors	0.5	17
District-level government	0.7	23
Police	0.6	21
Civil servants	0.4	13
Opposition leaders	0.2	8
Courts, judges	0.3	12
NGOs	0.2	6
Trade unions	0.3	12
Journalists, media	0.1	2
Nobody	46.3	1617
Other	0.2	6
Total	100	2631

Education is recognized as a factor in the improvement of livelihoods. Respondents most frequently recognize education and training as success factors in achieving better livelihoods, followed by advice and support in business, information on job opportunities, good loans, and less corruption.

Table 17. What would make it possible/easier for you to fulfill these plans?

	% of answers	% of cases
Additional education, training	17.0	35.0
Advice, information about job opportunities	9.0	18.4
Less corruption	9.9	20.3
Loans on good terms	10.9	22.4
Advice, support in business	7.2	14.8
Better links to market	7.4	15.2
More land for agriculture	6.9	14.2
Better education	4.9	10.0
More secure property rights	5.8	12.0
Better housing	3.9	8.0
Subsidies for agriculture	4.2	8.6
Better technology for production	2.6	5.3
Better access to natural resources	2.0	4.1
Less administration	1.2	2.5
Association with other producers, workers	1.4	3.0
Better health care	1.4	2.96
Other	4.2	8.7
Total	100	

n = 2,630

Respondents rely on themselves in their plans to improve their livelihoods. When asked who can make it possible or easier for them to fulfill their plans, respondents showed a strong orientation toward self-reliance (relying on their own resources, or family and neighbors) and low expectations for actors who are not part of their immediate social networks.

Table 18. Who can make it possible/easier for you to fulfill these plans? (Choose up to three)

	% of answers	n
Family members	43.1	1864
Neighbors	13.9	603
Colleagues	9.0	388
Village chief	4.3	188
Commune chief	4.5	193
Boss/employer	4.1	176
National government	3.4	147
NGOs	2.2	93
Commune council	1.5	64
Foreign investors	0.8	35
Provincial-level government	0.8	34
District-level government	0.8	35
Courts, judges	0.2	8
Police	0.2	9

Civil servants	0.2	8
Opposition leaders	0.2	10
Trade unions	0.1	6
Journalists, media	0.1	3
Monks, religious leader	0.1	4
Nobody	10.4	452
Other	0.2	7
Total	100	2631

These findings suggest that an overwhelming majority of respondents prefer to rely on individualized strategies to improve their livelihoods, rather than focusing on strategies to improve institutional policy for better services or infrastructure, whether at the local or national level.

5. Assessment of the situation in the country

Summary

There is a prevailing feeling of optimism in Cambodia, as a majority of the population says that things are generally going in the right direction. This result is especially important as it represents a sharp increase compared to the 2014 results. The primary reasons for this positive assessment of development in the country are infrastructure development and economic development. These factors play a dominant role in negative assessments as well. Half of all respondents cite lack of economic and social development as the reason for their negative assessment of the country's direction. The second most prominent reason for negative assessment of general trends is deforestation.

Respondents were able to identify numerous areas in which the national government has improved the situation in the country in the last two years. Most frequently mentioned are education and health care, protection of human and property rights, and the economy. Almost half of respondents say the government has improved education and health care. When they express dissatisfaction with the government, the reasons include international relations, the fight against corruption and poverty, and management of natural resources. The areas of greatest dissatisfaction with the government were relations with Vietnam (38.9%), management of natural resources (34.8%), and the fight against corruption (25.6%). To conclude, national(istic) sentiments and the economy are primary sources of dissatisfaction.

When asked about changes for the better in their local communities, respondents emphasize improvements in infrastructure and in public services, and increased security. On the other hand, the most frequently cited negative developments in local communities are environmental degradation and corruption.

In general, the state is seen to be the main driver of these changes, but there are areas where citizens and NGOs also contribute. For example, NGOs are seen as contributing mostly to the increase in political freedoms.

5.1 General trends in the country

The Cambodian population is more optimistic about the general direction of the country compared to a year ago. A majority of Cambodians think that things are going in the right direction (56.2%) There is also a sharp decline in the percentage who are dissatisfied, from 59% in 2014 to 27.7% in 2015. However, more respondents were undecided (16.6%, compared to 10% in 2014).

Table 19. Generally speaking, do you think things in Cambodia today are going in the right direction, or do you think they are going in the wrong direction?

Direction	% of respondents	
	2014*	2015
Right direction	32	56.2
Wrong direction	59	27.7
Don't know	10	16
Total	100	100

n=3, 000

*Source: The Asia Foundation, *Democracy in Cambodia*, 2014

Infrastructure development and economic development are the most important reasons for positive assessments of development in the country. Respondents identify more than one reason why they think the country is going in the right direction. Just over 71% of respondents cite the building of infrastructure, making this the single most important reason for the overall positive assessment of development in Cambodia. More than half cite economic development, around one-third cite peace and better social services, while one-quarter of respondents attribute their positive assessment to democratization. When we look at the total number of answers, infrastructure accounts for 27% and economic growth for 13% (first column of the table).

Table 20. Why do you say the country is going in the right direction?

Reasons	% of answers/cases		
	% of answers (2015)	% of answers (2014)	% of cases (2015)
Economic growth/getting better/development	21.9	21	57.5
Peace/war over/normalcy/free travel	13.9	17	36.5
Democracy/political liberalization/many parties/freedom	9.9	12	25.9
Building infrastructure/building roads/more schools/new wells/irrigation/new hospital	27.3	27	71.7
Education/health care/social services	11.5	12	30.1
Better than under Pol Pot	5.9	-	15.6
Government/rulers/leaders/ruling party	0.9	2	2.5
A lot of investment/foreign investment	3.2	3	8.3
Progress/general positive	5.4	2	14.2
Others	0.1	-	0.1

n=1687

Table 21. Why do you say the country is going in the wrong direction?

Reasons	% of answers/cases		
	% of answers (2015)	% of answers (2014)	% of cases (2015)
Deforestation	18.9	15	61.5
Underdevelopment/poor infrastructure	17.5	5	56.9
Poverty/unemployment/lack of food, clothing	14.4	12	46.7
Economy getting worse	11.3	12	36.8
Homelessness/begging/child laborers	10.0	14	32.6
Problems with Thailand	7.8	2	25.4
HIV/AIDS	5.1	-	16.6
Repression/fear/lack of freedom	3.8	9	12.4
Floods/droughts/water problems	3.6	3	11.8
Corruption	3.4	19	11.1
Problems with Vietnam	1.9	-	6.3
Conflict/violence/disputes/disorder	1.7	9	5.6
Crime	0.5	7	1.5
Crisis/general negative	0.1	2	0.4

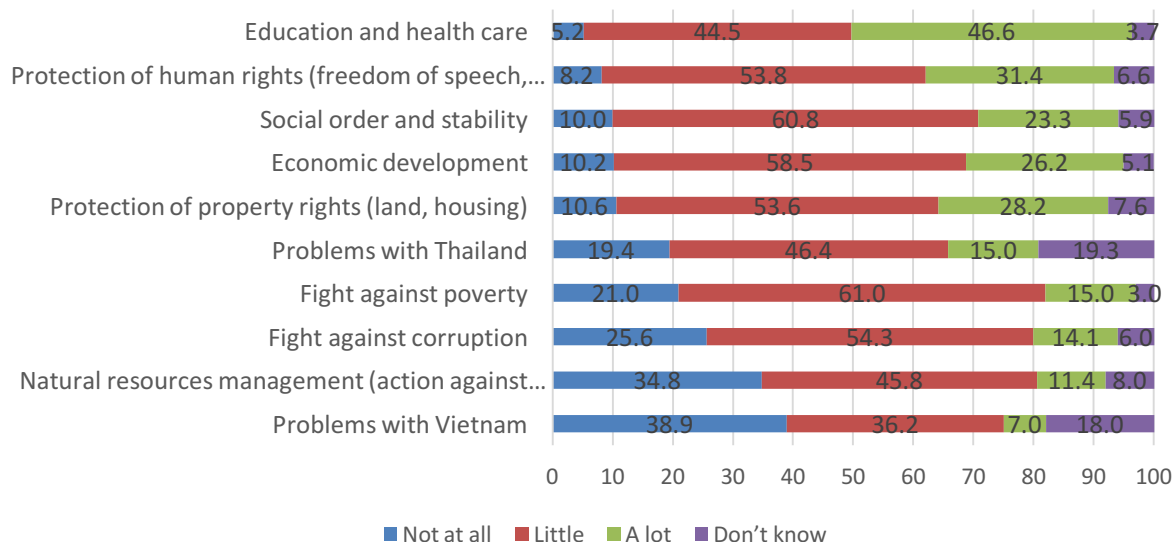
n=832

The most important reasons for negative assessments of the country's direction are deforestation and economic issues. The greatest number of negative assessments are related to socio-economic issues (53.2%), followed by deforestation (18.9%). Where multiple choices are allowed, almost two-thirds of respondents list deforestation as a reason why they believe things are going the wrong way; 56.9% cite underdevelopment and poor infrastructure; and 46.7% emphasize poverty.

There are differences between these results and the results of The Asia Foundation's 2014 survey. The present research records more frequent mention of underdevelopment and poor infrastructure than 2014 survey (17.5% compared to 5%) as a reason for negative assessments. On the other hand, while corruption was the most frequent answer in 2014 (19%), in this study corruption has fallen in significance (3.4%).

5.2 The work of the national government

Chart 26. How much has the national government improved the situation in the following areas in the past 2 years?



n=3, 000

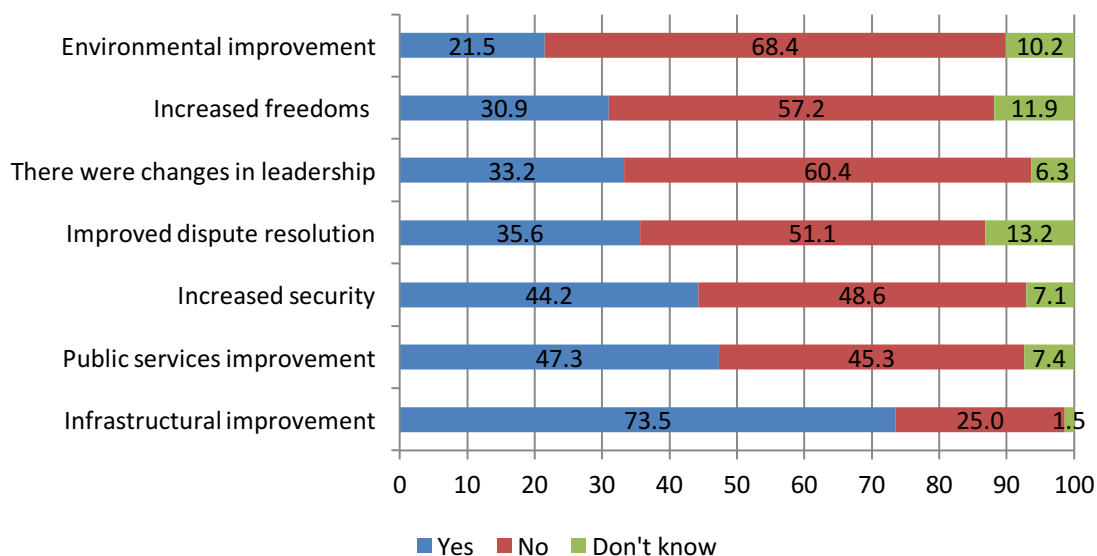
Cambodians are dissatisfied with the work of the government in the fields of international relations, the fight against corruption and poverty, and management of natural resources. The least improvement was assigned to relations with Vietnam (38.9%). Lack of improvement was also noted in the areas of management of natural resources (34.8%), the fight against corruption (25.6%), the fight against poverty (19.4%), and problems with Thailand (19.4%). It is noteworthy that more respondents were undecided when asked about international relations (18% with respect to relations with Vietnam, and 19.3% with respect to Thailand).

National(istic) sentiments and the economy are primary sources of dissatisfaction. Respondents are least impressed with the work of the government where their **national(istic) sentiments** (measured by the level of improvement in relations with Vietnam and Thailand) and **basic economic interests** (measured by the level of improvement in the fight against poverty and the management of natural resources) are at stake. In between stands dissatisfaction with corruption, and this attitude has its economic, political, and moral dimensions. This is the first time in this research that the issue of corruption has emerged as an important social and political issue.

5.3 Changes in local communities

Infrastructural developments are a major source of positive changes in local communities. Positive developments in local communities are mostly related to infrastructural developments (73.5% of respondents), improvement in public services (47.3%) and increased security (44.2%).

Chart 27. Has anything changed for the better in your local community during the last 2 years?



n=3,000

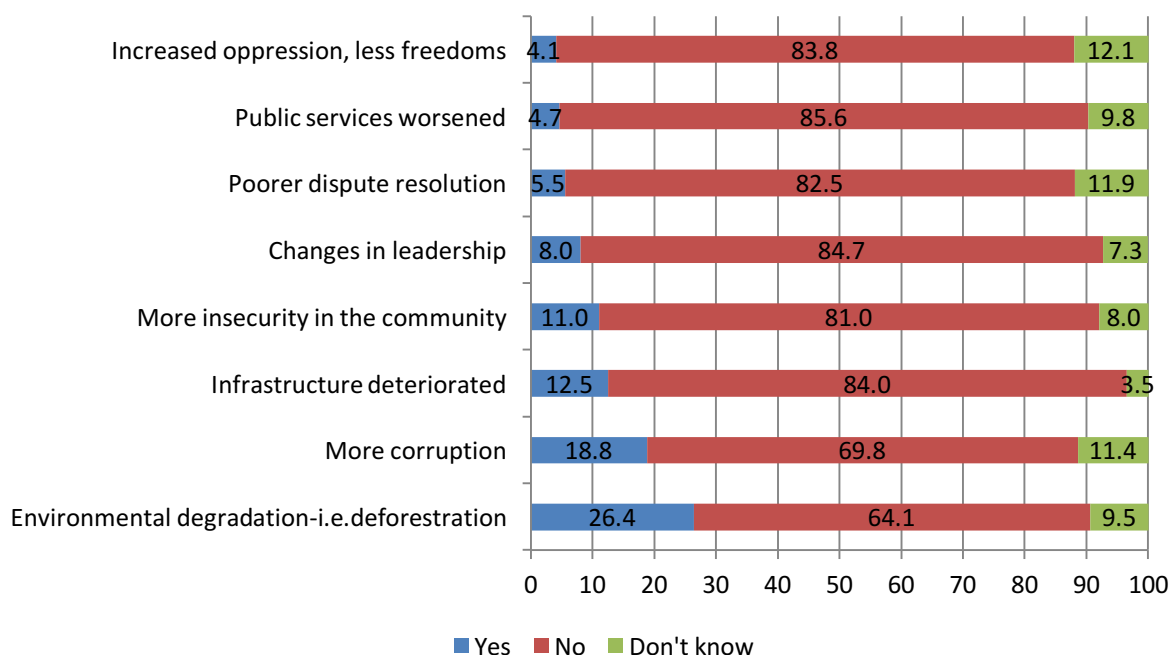
Lack of change was reported in the environment, local leadership, and freedoms. Respondents reported the fewest positive developments in the areas of environment protection (21.5%), increased freedoms (30.9%), changes in leadership (33.2%) (However, issues such as dispute resolution and public security are also subjects of widely shared dissatisfaction).

Table 22. Who caused or initiated these developments?

Area	%				N
	The state	NGO	Unplanned arrangement by people	Don't know	Total cases
Changes in leadership	48.8	-	47.7	1.6	999
Infrastructure improvement	76.2	4.5	16.6	1.0	2207
Environmental improvement	84.2	1.3	10.8	1.2	644
Public services improvement	87.1	6.9	3.2	0.5	1420
Increased security	87.2	6.1	5.3	0.6	1328
Increased freedoms	86.6	1.7	10.5	0.9	928
Improved dispute resolution	95.7	0.1	3.3	0.4	1069

The state is the main driver of these changes, but there are areas where citizens and NGOs also contribute. Respondents are quite decisive in praising the state for the positive changes in infrastructure, public services, increased security, etc. Significant intervention by citizens is recorded in the areas of infrastructural development and environmental protection. NGOs seem to be contributing mostly to public services, increased security and infrastructure improvement. Interestingly, positive changes in the local leadership are equally attributed to the state and unplanned arrangement by people.

Chart 28. Has anything changed for the worse in your local community during the last 2 years?



n=3,000

The most frequently cited negative developments in local communities are environmental degradation and corruption. There is rough unanimity with regards to all other issues, where more than 80% of respondents report no negative changes in their community.

Table 23. Who caused or initiated these developments?

	The state	Unplanned arrangement by the people	CPP	Don't know	Total cases
Increased oppression, less freedoms	87.8	0.7	7.8	2.8	123
Poorer dispute resolution	86.9	5.3	3.2	4.0	166
More corruption among civil servants	85.7	2.6	6.0	5.0	565
Public services were worsened	80.8	7.9	3.2	6.6	140
Changes in leadership	71.0	20.8	2.7	4.6	242
More insecurity in the community	48.8	17.3	1.1	17.3	331
Infrastructure deteriorated	45.4	48.3	1.6	2.1	375
Environmental degradation	38.0	38.8	14.0	4.9	793

Those who see negative changes in their communities believe the state is to blame. As expected, deteriorating infrastructure and environmental degradation are also viewed as consequences of the actions of citizens. There is a rather significant share of respondents (17.3%) who are undecided as to who is responsible for the increased insecurity.

6. Political preferences and expectations

Summary:

In addition to respondents' positive feelings about the direction of the economy, this research reveals a feeling of freedom that is prevailing among Cambodian citizens. A large majority of respondents claim that people in their locality can freely associate and express their political opinions. This feeling of freedom in Cambodia appears to be growing compared to 2014 data.

Cambodians are fairly interested in politics. While almost half of respondents claim they are not interested in politics, a large proportion are "somewhat" interested, and a very small proportion are "very" interested. These data confirm results obtained in 2014. A large majority follow local, provincial, and national news, as well as news from Asia and the world. While they mostly rely on established sources of information such as television and neighbors, there is a rising share who get their information from the Internet and particularly Facebook.

However interested they might be in politics, they don't seem to be discussing it: half of respondents say they don't discuss politics at all. When they do discuss politics, traditional patterns prevail: they discuss it with people close to them – family members and neighbors. When they don't, as is the case with the majority, respondents give a few common reasons. Some draw on traditional understandings of politics (that politics is for the leadership), some refer to the burdens of everyday life, but many also point to security concerns.

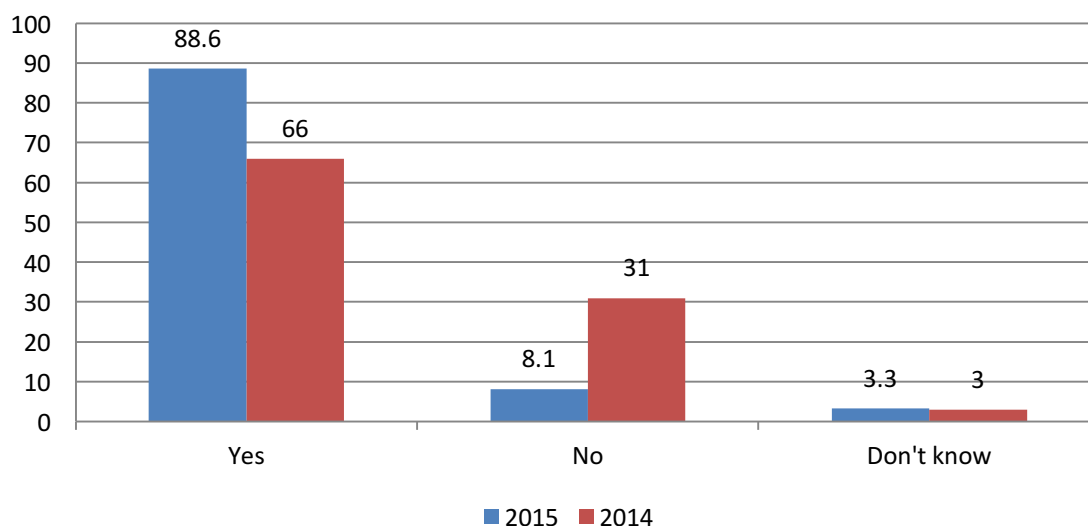
When asked about the political future of Cambodia, respondents are split between CPP-led reforms and an election victory by the opposition. The most frequent response is that the CPP will implement reforms while still in power, but this view is followed closely by the contradictory opinion that the opposition parties will win the elections and implement reforms. The scenario viewed as least probable is that the CPP will change its present leadership while it is still in power.

A majority of respondents approve of the work of both the CPP and the CNRP, with the CPP holding a marginal lead.

6.1 Political freedoms

In Cambodia, the feeling of freedom is prevailing. A large majority of respondents claim that people can freely associate in their locality (88.6%), with slightly fewer claiming that people feel free to express political opinions (79.5%). This is a significant improvement over the 2014 research.

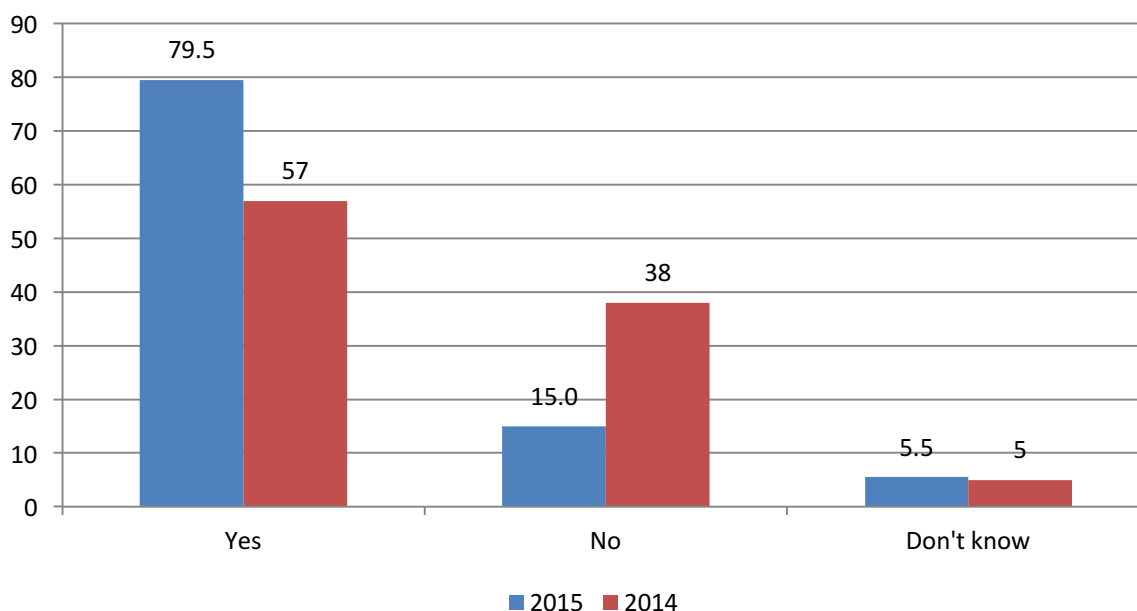
Chart 29. Can people associate freely in your locality? (%)



n=3,000

The feeling of freedom seems to be growing in Cambodia. Although fewer Cambodians believe there is freedom of expression than believe there is freedom of association, the proportion that believe there is freedom of expression has grown since 2014.

Chart 30. Do people feel free to express political opinions in the area where you live? (%)



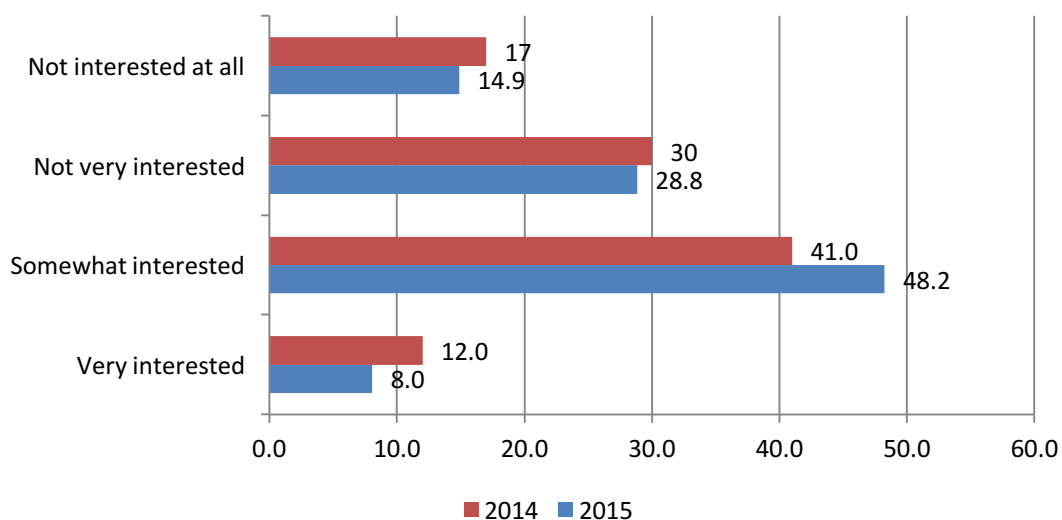
n=3,000

6.2 Interest in politics

At first glance, Cambodians don't seem interested in politics. Almost half of respondents claim they are not interested in politics. However, a large proportion are "somewhat" interested and a very

small proportion are “very” interested. These data confirm those from 2014. Men are more interested in politics than women.

Chart 31. How interested are you in politics? (%)



n=3,000

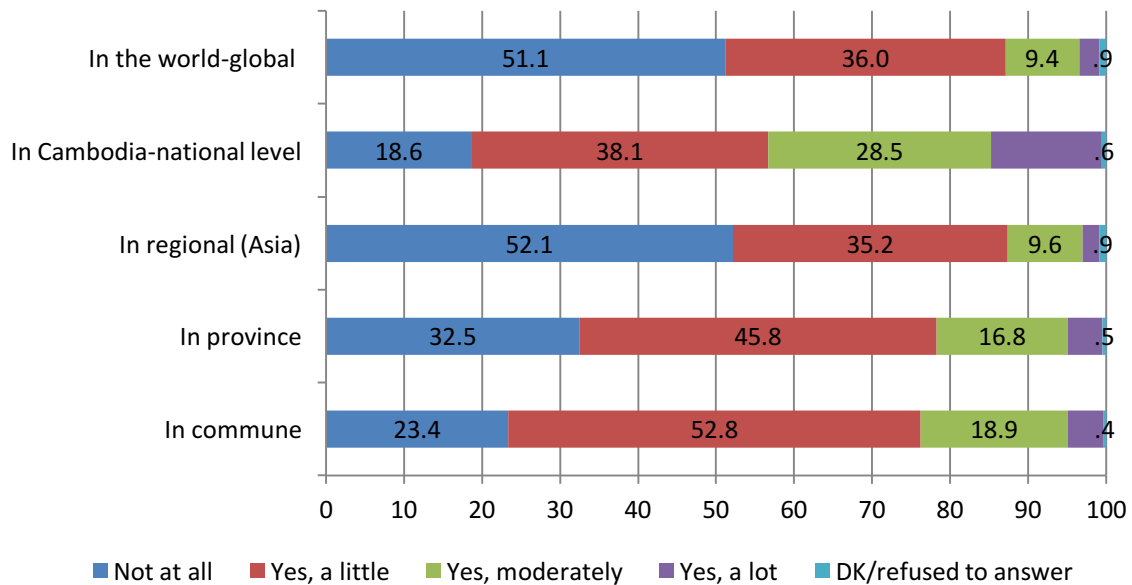
Table 24. How interested are you in politics? (Gender disaggregated, %)

Answer	Male	Female	Total
Very interested	9.7	6.5	8.0
Somewhat interested	53.6	43.5	48.0
Not very interested	25.1	32.2	28.8
Not interested at all	11.6	17.8	14.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Chi-Square=57.618, Cramer’s V=0.139, p=0.000, n=3000

National politics is of major interest to Cambodians, as 81.4% of respondents follow news and political events at the national level. Next in order of interest to the general population is local news, and then provincial. International politics is far less interesting, but still almost half of the population follows news and political events in Asia and the world.

Chart 32. Do you follow news and political events? (%)

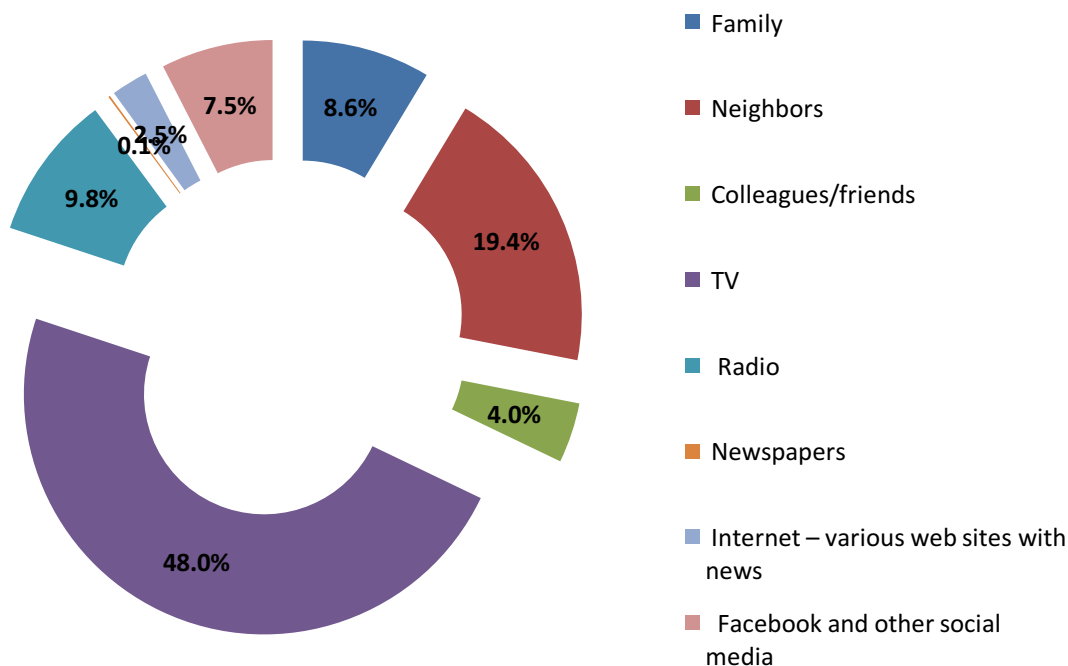


n=3,000

6.3 Following and discussing politics

The main sources of information are television, neighbors, and friends. Television is the main source of information for the largest share of the population. Close to half choose TV (48%). However, there is a significant number who rely on informal and traditional networks and sources of information: 19.4% point to neighbors and 4% point to colleagues and friends. Altogether, as many as 32% rely on other people as their main source of information. Also apparent here is the growing importance of the Internet, which 10% of the population rely on, including 7.5% who use Facebook and other social media as their main source of information.

Chart 33. Main source of information (%)



n=3,000

Discussing politics is not a widespread practice in Cambodia. Only 6.3% of respondents frequently discuss politics, with an additional 22.7% say they discuss politics occasionally. Men discuss politics far more frequently than women. More than half of female respondents do not discuss politics.

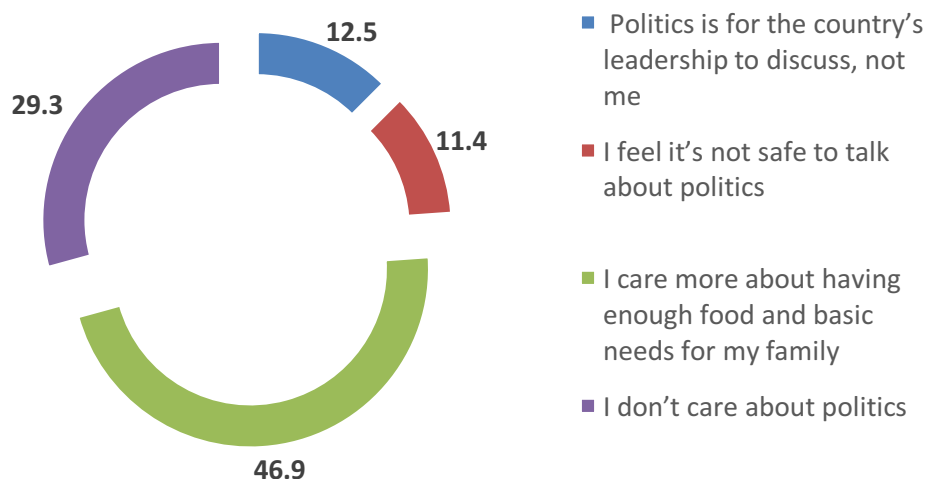
Table 25. Do you discuss politics with anyone? (Answer in %)

	Male	Female	Entire sample
No	38.9	54.7	47.3
Yes, rarely	24.8	22.8	23.7
Yes, sometimes	27.8	18.3	22.7
Yes, often	7.7	3.7	5.6
Yes, almost all the time	0.8	0.6	0.7

Chi-Square=92.489, Cramer's V=0.176, p=0.000, n=3000

If they do discuss politics, they discuss it with people they are close to. Here, traditional patterns prevail, as 46.0% of respondents discuss politics with family members, and 21.8% with neighbors. A modernizing trend can be observed, however, in the 26.7% who discuss politics with friends.

Chart 34. Why don't you discuss politics with anyone? (%)



n=1, 420

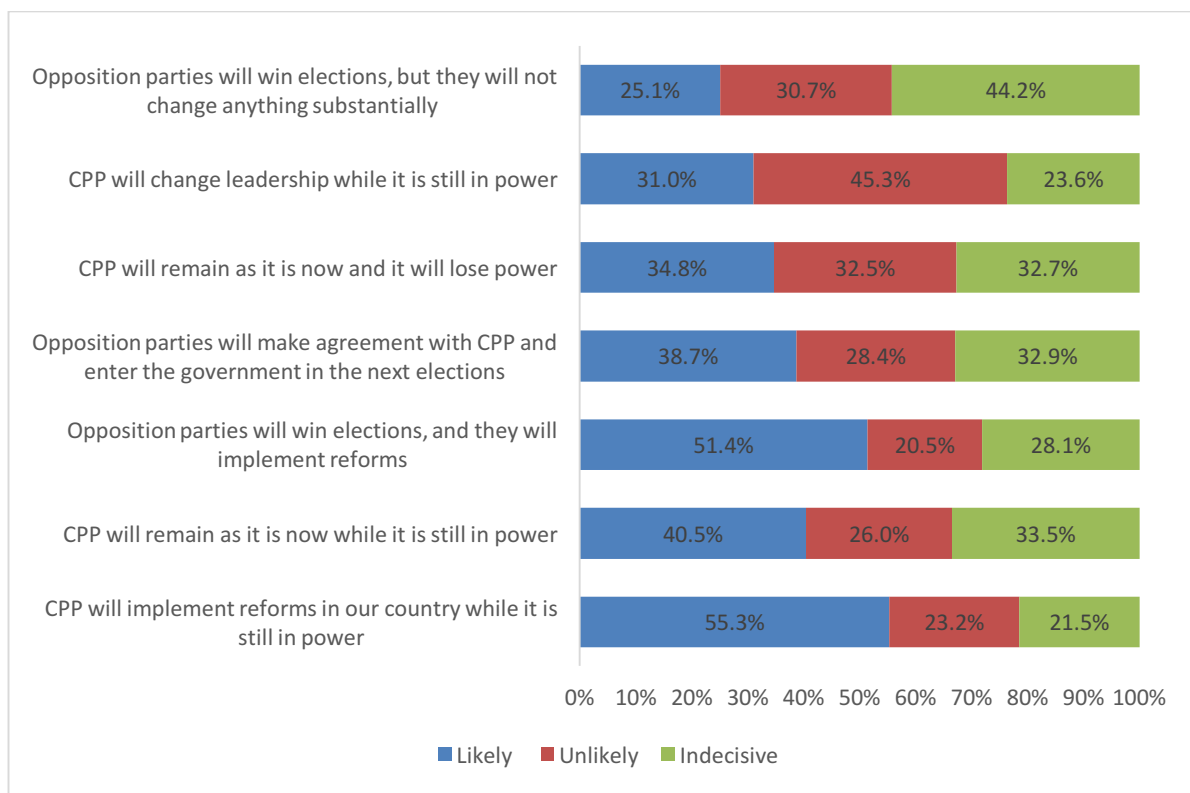
Lack of interest in politics and a focus on survival are the main reasons why people do not discuss politics. Among those who do not discuss politics, two reasons appear to be particularly important. The first is that they care more about having enough food and basic needs for their family (46.9%). The second is that they don't care about politics (29.3%). Two other reasons are also important, though to a lesser degree. One is that politics is for the country's leadership to discuss, not ordinary people (12.5%)., and the other is the view that talking about politics is not safe (11.4%)

6.4 Political scenarios and preferences

Assessments of the political future are split between CPP-led reforms and an election victory by the opposition. Two political scenarios are viewed by respondents as most likely, though they are contradictory. The first is that the CPP will implement reforms while still in power, with over half of respondents identifying this as the likely outcome (55.9%). On the other hand, just over half believe that opposition parties will win the elections and implement reforms (52.1%).

The scenarios believed least likely are that the CPP will remain in power and change leadership, and that opposition parties will win elections but not change anything substantially. When it comes to the first scenario, respondents do not expect any changes in the CPP leadership: just 31.03% believe that the CPP will change leadership while still in power, while 45.33% say no, making this the most unlikely scenario. Even fewer respondents (25.09%) expect that opposition parties will win the election but will not change anything substantially, though of note this scenario had the largest share of undecided respondents at 44.21%

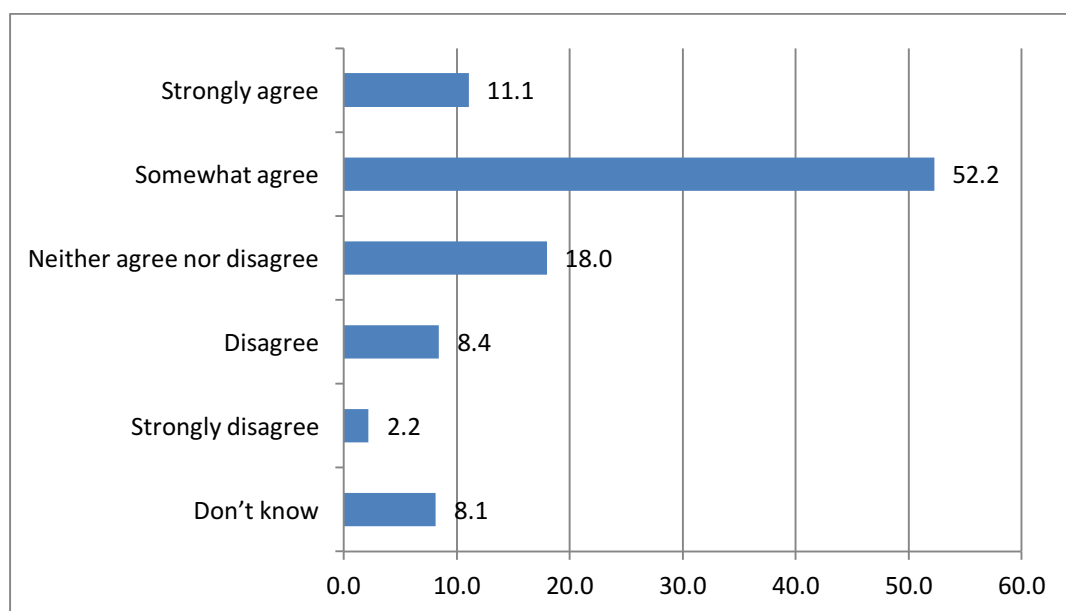
Chart 35. How likely are these scenarios? (%)



n=3, 000

A majority of respondents support the work of the CPP in Parliament during the last two years. More than half of the sample (52.2%) somewhat agree, while 11.1% strongly agree. There is a large share of undecided 26.1% and 10.6% disapprove of the work of the CPP.

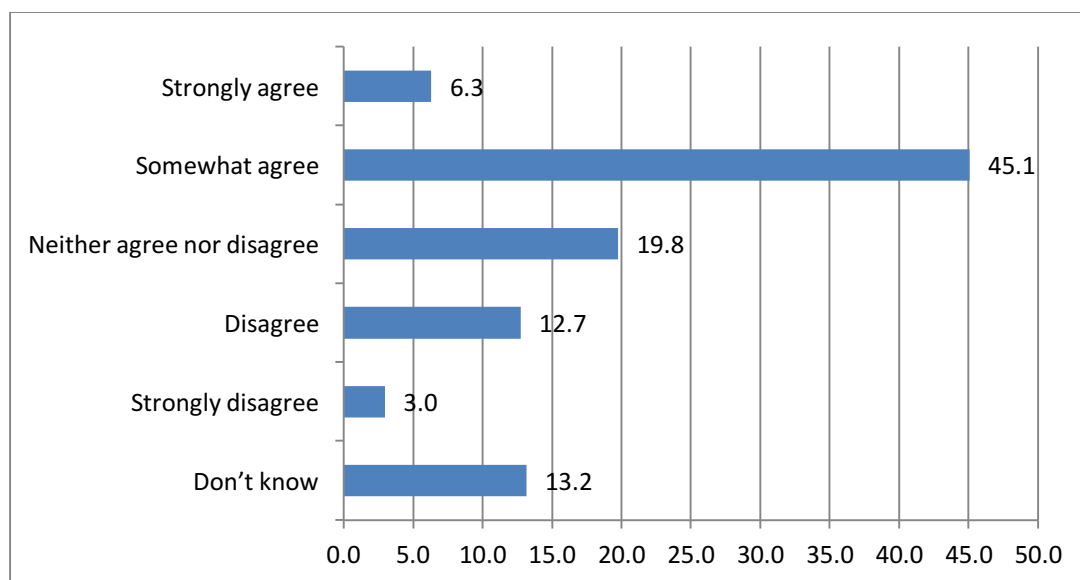
Chart 36. How would you rate the overall performance of the CPP since the 2013 election? (%)



n=3,000

A majority of respondents also support the work of the CNRP in the last two years. Almost half of respondents support the work of the CNRP (45.1%) but still fewer than support the CPP (63.3%) There is a large share of undecided (33%), while 15.7% disagree.

Chart 37. The CNRP has performed well in Parliament in the last year. (%)

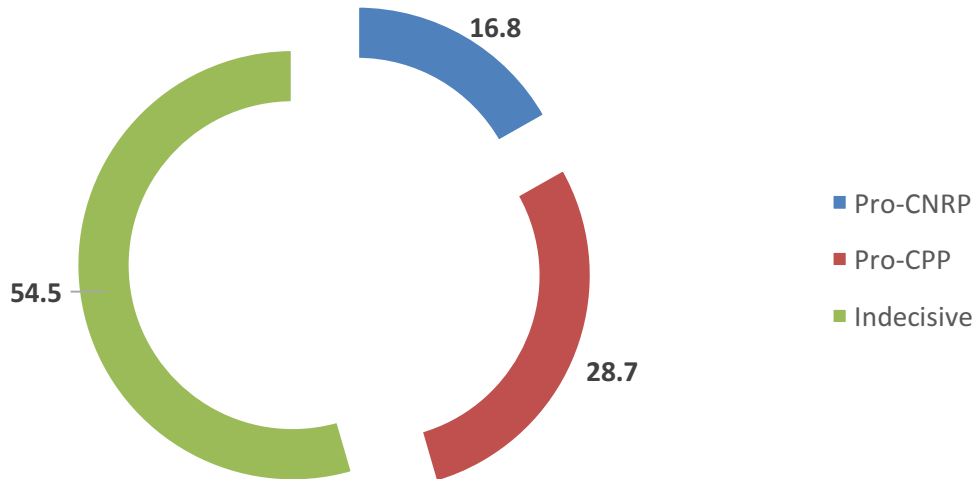


n=3,000

A third of the sample cautiously approves the work of both parties. When we cross-tabulate these findings, there is a rather large share, one-third of the sample, who tend to agree with the work of both the CPP and the CNRP. Therefore, we have constructed a new variable. Those who agree with the CPP, and disagree with the CNRP or are undecided about it, we call pro-CPP. Those who agree with

the CNRP, and disagree with the CPP or are undecided about it, we call pro-CNRP. This is a moderate definition of “support” for a party, as a strong definition would exclude the undecided. This is the proxy indicator of political preference that is used in this analysis. The distribution is as follows:

Chart 38. Respondents by political preference proxy indicator (%)



7. Election and voting patterns

Summary

Cambodian citizens are not acquainted with changes in the National Election Committee. Only one-quarter of respondents are aware that there have been changes in the National Election Committee. A majority of those who are aware of the changes say that there was a change in its composition. Male respondents are more interested in politics and know more about changes in the National Election Committee.

Respondents are not ready to directly question the fairness of the next elections. Half of respondents believe the next elections will be free and fair, but close to half are undecided and potentially skeptical. In spite of their skepticism, they find elections important – national more than local (95.4% compared to 88.7%). They are interested in the election, and contrary to the traditional electoral behavior, they make their own decisions how to vote. When making electoral choices for local elections, they reflect on past achievements in building the economy and infrastructure. At the national level, decision making becomes complex and reflects national and local issues, economics, but also issues of justice and fairness.

7.1 National Election Committee

Cambodian citizens are not acquainted with changes in the National Election Committee. Only one-quarter of respondents are aware that there have been changes in the National Election Committee.

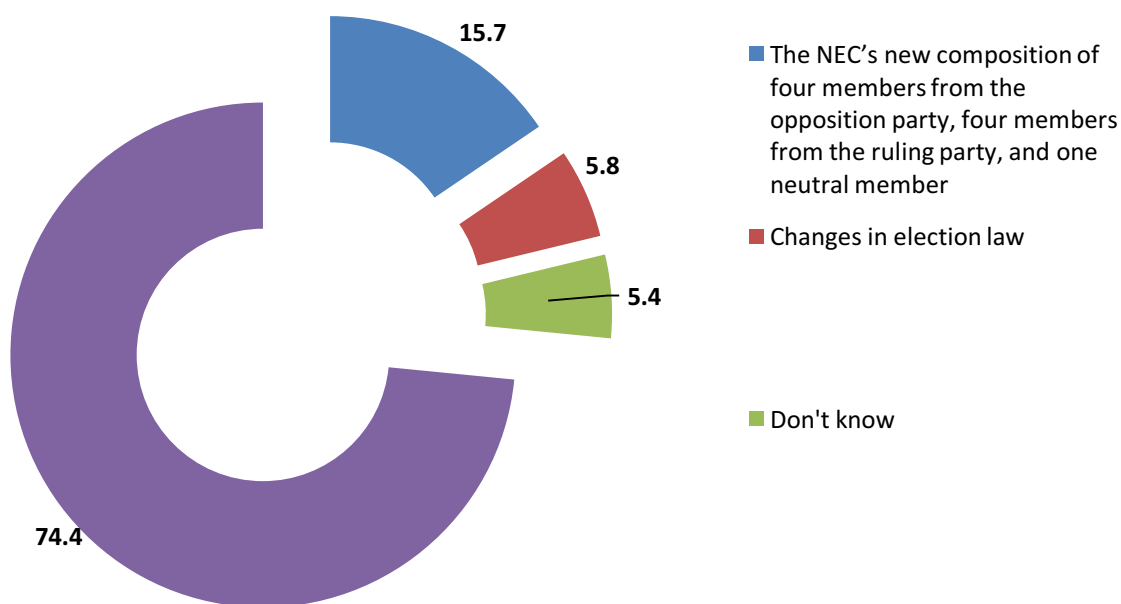
Table 26. Are you aware if there have been any changes in the National Election Committee?

Answer	Male	Female	Total
Yes	33.6	18.4	25.5
No	66.4	81.5	74.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Chi-Square=91.550, Cramer's V=0.175, p=0.000, n=3000

Of those who are aware that there have been changes, almost two-thirds know that there was a change in the composition of the National Election Committee.

Chart 39. What were the changes in the National Election Committee? (%)

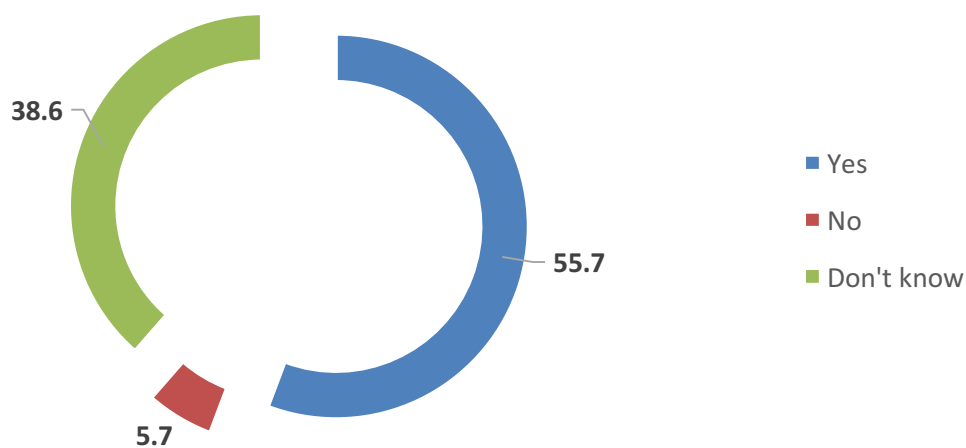


n=3000

7.2 Elections

Cambodians are ambivalent as to the fairness of the next elections. More than half of respondents believe the next elections will be free and fair. However, a large proportion, 38.6%, are undecided. Only 5.7% say they believe the next elections will not be more free and fair than in 2013.

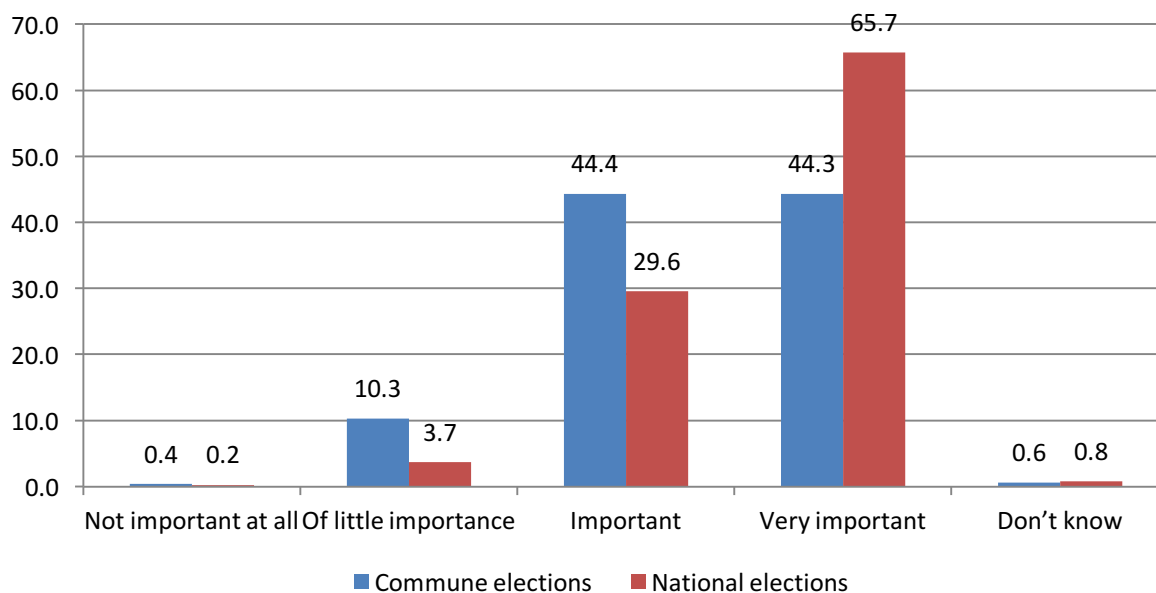
Chart 40. In your opinion, will the next elections (2018 national elections) be more free and fair than the elections in 2013? (%)



n=3,000

Elections are important to Cambodian citizens. This is particularly true of national elections, which almost two thirds of respondents (65.7%) say are very important to them. Less importance is placed on commune elections. 44.3% said that commune elections are very important to them.

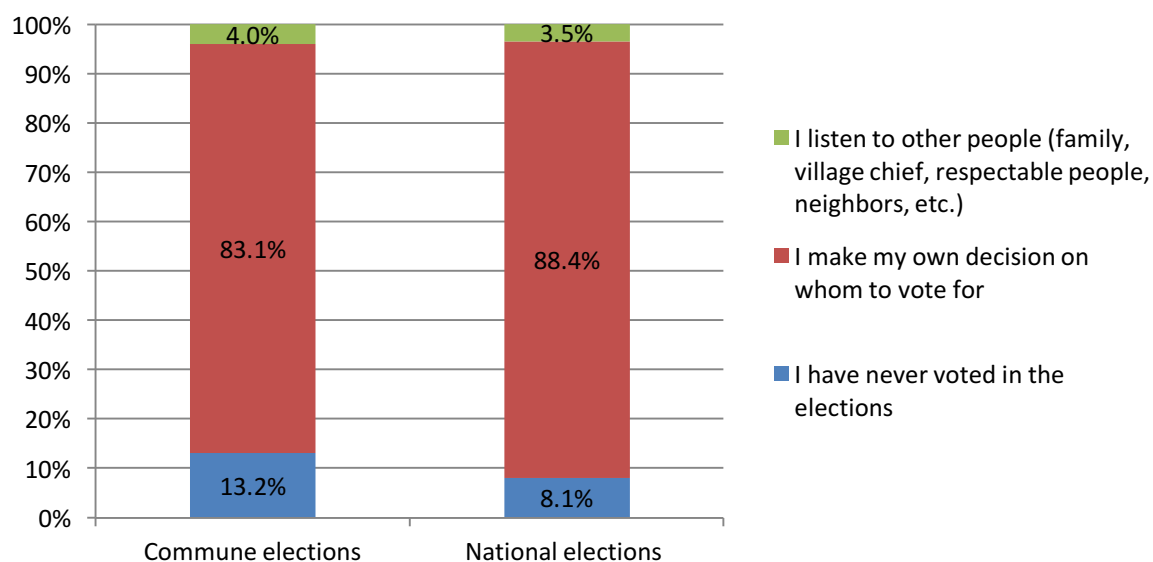
Chart 41. How important are elections to you? (%)



n=3,000

Citizens make their own decisions about how to vote in the elections. Very few respondents indicate that their vote is guided by others (I listen to what my family members say and I vote how they vote; I listen to what other people in my neighborhood say and I vote how they vote; I vote the way the village chief/commune council says to vote; etc.) and all these answers are represented as a single option.

Chart 42. How do you decide whom to vote for? (%)



n=3,000

Building the economy and infrastructure at the commune level appears to have a strong influence on stated voting preferences at the local level. The findings suggest that there is a set of considerations that strongly influence voting decisions at the commune level. These include the economic prosperity of the commune, past achievements (mainly defined by building new infrastructure), the interest of political actors and their interaction with people, and fairness and justice.

Table 27. What is most important to consider when you chose whom to vote for in the elections?
(Multiple responses)

	Commune elections		National elections	
	% of answers	% of cases	% of answers	% of cases
I judge based on the political platform or what a political party promises	9.8%	25.6%	9.1%	27.6%
I judge based on their interest and their interaction with people	14.8%	38.5%	10.7%	32.4%
I judge based on the economic prosperity of the commune (more jobs, less poverty)	19.0%	49.4%	16.9%	51.1%
I know them personally or I or my family are close to people who are the candidate(s)	3.0%	7.7%	5.2%	15.9%
I judge based on situation in country related to freedoms, oppression	6.7%	17.4%	8.3%	25.1%
I judge based on stability and peace in the country (peace in the country, relations with Vietnam, Thailand)	8.8%	23.0%	15.9%	48.0%
I judge based on fairness, justice in the country (equal chances, fair treatment, nondiscrimination by institutions, I	17.3%	45.1%	17.3%	52.2%
I judge based on the past achievements in my commune – built road, bridge, school, organized project, program	17.4%	45.3%	12.8%	38.8%
I judge based on personal benefits that I or my family got from them in the past – some favor, assistance (to find employment etc.	3.0%	7.8%	3.3%	10.1%
I judge based on gifts (scarfs, seasoning, clothing, etc.) they deliver during pre-election campaign	0.2%	0.6%	0.2%	0.5%

Decision-making logic at the national level seems to be a bit more complicated, and reflects both local and national issues. The most important factors are the economic prosperity of the commune, past achievements in the country, and justice and fairness.

Annex 1: Statistical models

Model 1: Binary logistic regression analysis

Dependent variable: material deprivation of household

Independent variables: living area, education of household members, region, household size, household economic strategies.

Dependent variable is dichotomous categorical variable for deprived households, while the reference category is *non-deprived* households.

		B	Sig	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	Q2A(1)_rural area	2.024	.000	7.567
	HH_education		.000	
	HH_education_no formal schooling and primary school	1.179	.000	3.251
	HH_education_lower secondary	1.154	.000	3.172
	HH_education_upper secondary	.634	.000	1.884
	Region ¹²		.000	
	Region(1) Phnom Penh	-.264	.129	.768
	Region(2) plateau	-.193	.313	.825
	Region(3) area around Tonle Sap Lake	1.231	.000	3.426
	Region(4) plain	.455	.008	1.576
	HH_size ¹³		.083	
	HH_size_2-5 members	-1.009	.139	.364
	HH_size_6+ members	-.787	.254	.455
	HH_strategies ¹⁴		.000	
	HH_strategies_passive	.015	.970	1.015
	HH_strategies_informal, survival	.341	.012	1.406
	HH_strategies_traditional (includes farming)	.776	.000	2.174
	Constant	.112	.871	1.118

¹² The reference category - coastal area.

¹³ The reference category - single-member households

¹⁴ The reference category - households with modern strategies.



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