

# Cambodian Youth Policy Survey

What do young people think about  
key government policies affecting  
their lives?







# About the Cambodian Youth Policy Survey

## Why was this survey needed?

Youth are widely recognized as the foundations of a country's economy and society as well as its most valuable human resource. Experience from world contexts demonstrates that the ultimate success or failure of government policies often depends on how they affect this particular group of society.<sup>1</sup> In Cambodia, according to the 2019 Population Census, roughly two thirds of the population are below the age of 35 years. Those who are between 15 and 30 years are defined as youth by the Cambodian government and represent 28% of the total population.<sup>2</sup> While there exists a wide range of policies and strategies that aim to guide the development of youth and foster their full integration in the country's social, economic and political spheres, prevailing evidence indicates that, despite notable progress, turning these policy goals into reality remains a challenge.<sup>3</sup> Anecdotal observations have suggested that the challenges facing Cambodia's youth have only been magnified and exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, as is the ensuing economic slowdown and volatile political landscape.

This study aimed to employ a human-centered approach and apply the concept of **"listening to youth"**. This is to gain insights into Cambodia's youths, in particular seeking their immediate and long-term concerns and needs around healthcare, education, employment and civic engagement, as well as gauging their views on how successful government policies have been in addressing these challenges and aspirations.

Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- ▶ Measure youth's knowledge of major government's policies and strategies concerning youth's healthcare, education, employment and civic participation;
- ▶ Capture youth's experience and perceptions of the implementation of youth policies around the above-mentioned themes and learn what they anticipate from these policies in the future;
- ▶ Understand youth's needs and concerns associated with their education, finance, employment, health, and civic well-being; and
- ▶ Draw evidence-based implications for policies, programs, and interventions, taking into account the variations in experiences and views of youth from different gender, geographic and socio-economic backgrounds.

## How was the survey carried out and who took part in it?

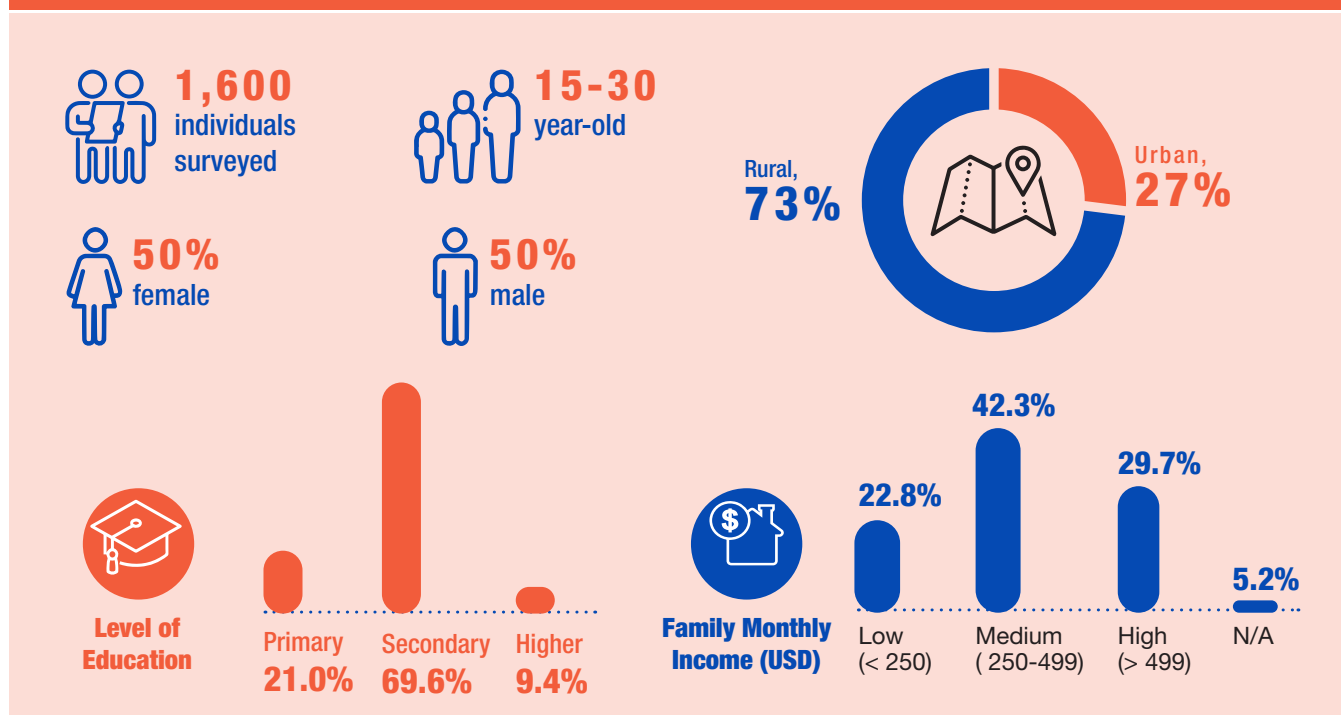
This study was based on a face-to-face survey of Cambodians, aged 15 to 30 years, conducted over 20 days in November and December 2021. The survey used the 2019 Population Census as a sampling frame and relied on a four-stage stratified random sampling to ensure the sample was nationally representative. In total 1,600 youths, 50% of whom identified themselves as female, in 200 villages across 25 provinces of Cambodia participated in the survey. The interviews took place in the respondents' homes, using Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI).

<sup>1</sup>The World Bank, World Bank Development Report: Development and the Next Generation (The World Bank, 2007); USAID, Youth in Development Policy: Realizing the Demographic Opportunity (Washington: USAID, 2012).

<sup>2</sup>Ministry of Planning, General Population Census of the Kingdom of Cambodia 2019 (Phnom Penh: Ministry of Planning, 2020).

<sup>3</sup>United Nations Country Team, Situation Analysis of Youth in Cambodia (Phnom Penh: UNCT, 2009); Kampuchean Action to Promote Education, Empowering Youth in Cambodia Today: Youth Situation Analysis (Phnom Penh: KAPE, 2014); OECD Development Centre, Youth Well-being Policy Review of Cambodia, EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project (Paris: OECD Development Centre, 2017).

## Profile of respondents



## What questions did the survey ask?

The National Policy on Youth Development (2011) provides the main conceptual framework for the structure and content of the questionnaire. The questionnaire focused on gathering experiences, perceptions and aspirations of Cambodian youth on a range of policy areas that have the most impact on them, in particular, education, healthcare, employment and civic participation. The survey questionnaire contained a total of 113 questions across 10 sections. On average, the interview took 35 minutes to complete.

## What were the key findings of the survey?

This summary report shares our key findings from the 2021 Cambodian Youth Policy Survey and our recommendations for the government, education institutions, civil society organizations, and other individuals and organizations interested in promoting the social, economic and political wellbeing of youth. More detailed findings, analysis and discussion, will be presented in a forthcoming full Technical Report.

## Policy Goals of the National Policy on Youth Development, 2011

**Overarching goal:** “Youth have opportunities to develop their potential to access education, employment, and health services and to participate in decision-making and to contribute to family, community, national, and global development.”

**Policy Goal 1:** Provide youth with opportunities to get equitable access to quality education and vocational training.

**Policy Goal 2:** Motivate youth to develop their sense of initiative, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

**Policy Goal 3:** Promote gender equity and equality among youth, and in particular create opportunities for and empower young females.

**Policy Goal 4:** Assist youth in their personal development in terms of physical strength, knowledge, morals, etc.

**Policy Goal 5:** Enable youth to share their perspectives, opinions, and decisions in their community and in the broader national development context.

**Policy Goal 6:** Mobilize efforts from all relevant ministries, institutions, development partners, civil society, communities, parents, or guardians towards youth development.

*RGC, National Policy on Youth Development, 2011.*



# Knowledge of youth policies and strategies

## Youths' awareness of key government's development strategies, in general, and youth policies, in particular, was low.

▶ Ninety per cent of those surveyed said they had never heard of the Rectangular Strategy IV. Nearly the same proportion (89%) said they had not heard of the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals. Eighty-four per cent said they had no knowledge of the National Strategic Development Plan.

- ▶ Only 15% said they had ever heard of the 2011 National Policy on Youth Development. And yet, when probed further, among these, just 5% correctly identified the key issues covered in the policy document.
- ▶ Similarly, only 15% said they were aware of the existence of the National Youth Development Council. Further analysis indicates that those who had heard of the key youth policies or the Youth Council tended to live in urban area, be better educated, be employed, and have a higher family income.

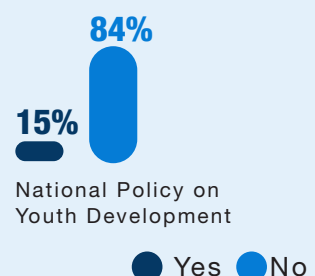
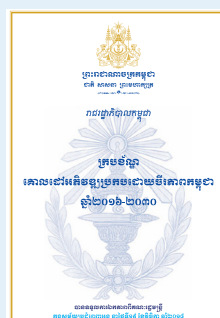
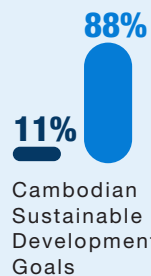
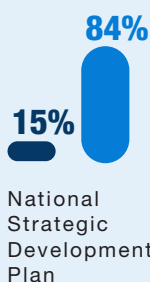
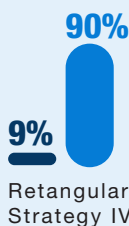
### Recommendations:

- The government should develop short-term and long-term plans to raise young people's awareness of key government policies and strategies that include approaches and initiatives to reach young citizens from diverse gender and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Civil society organizations, education institutions, and the media should form partnerships to increase youth's interest in and knowledge of government policies and

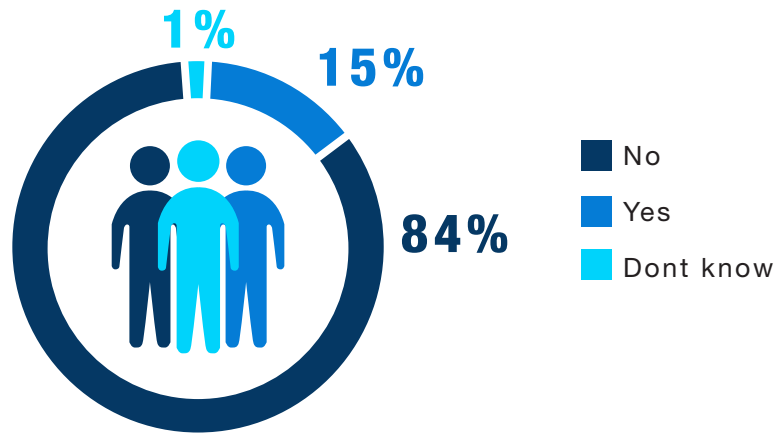
strategies concerning youth as well as the processes and outcomes of the implementation of these documents.

- Youth stakeholders, particularly the government and civil society organizations, should increase joint efforts to promote meaningful participation of young people in all stages of the policy process, (i.e. problem identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), to improve government transparency and accountability as well as youth ownership.

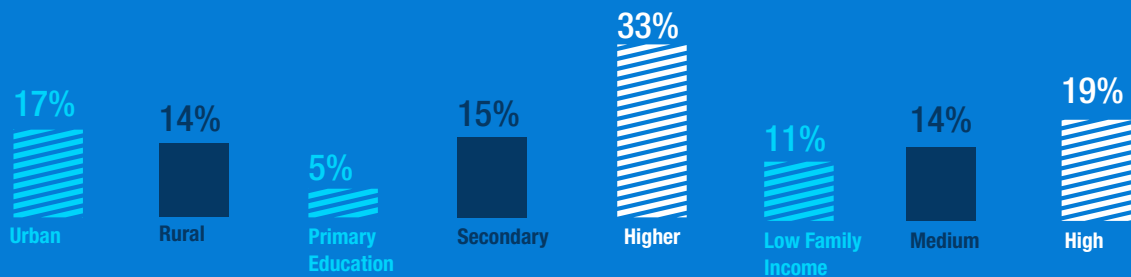
## Have you heard of the following documents ?



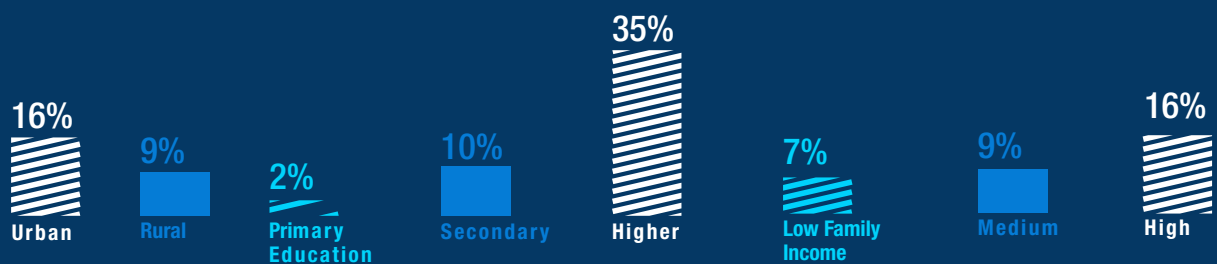
Have you ever heard of the National Youth Development Council?



Youth who said they had heard of the National Youth Development Council: by location, education, and family income



Youth who said they had heard of the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals: By location, education, and family income





# Healthcare

## **Healthcare expenses have risen for a sizable number of Cambodian youth.**

- ▶ Nearly one in four (24%) respondents reported that the amount they paid for their healthcare over the preceding year had either gone up a little or a lot. When analyzed by gender, female youth (30%) were more likely than male youth (18%) to report that the amount they paid for their healthcare had gone up over the past year.

## **A small number of youths were unable to afford their own healthcare services.**

- ▶ Fourteen per cent of survey participants reported having to delay medical treatment in the preceding year because they couldn't afford the cost of the treatment. Additional analysis reveals that female, rural, and low-income youth were, respectively, more likely to postpone their medical treatment than male, urban and high-income youth.

## **Small shares of youths experienced some forms of discrimination and harassments while obtaining public healthcare services.**

- ▶ Six per cent of respondents who received public healthcare services over the past three years reported having been discriminated against because of their gender identity (women, LGBTIQ+) or their marginalized status (poor, disability, ethnicity). A similar percentage said they were sexually harassed because of their gender identity or vulnerability.

## **Young Cambodians perceived that government efforts to strengthen health service provision for youth were insufficient.**

- ▶ Nearly four in ten (38%) of those surveyed were of the view that the goal of enhancing health service provision for youth, as set out in the 2011 National Policy on Youth Development, had been either only partially achieved or minimally achieved.

## **Poor services were seen as the most critical challenge facing public healthcare, followed by a lack of facility and human resources, and high costs.**

- ▶ Thirty per cent of respondents identified poor services—including corrupt and unequal services—as the most pressing issue facing the public healthcare system in the country. Meanwhile, 23% thought it was the lack of facilities and human resources, and 9% said it was the costs.

## **Recommendations:**

- The government should mobilize additional resources for healthcare through budget reallocations and improvement in the efficiency of health expenditure. At the same time, it should enhance financial systems for greater transparency and accountability.
- Increase efforts to ensure that healthcare services are responsive, accessible and affordable to everyone, including young, vulnerable people. Healthcare professionals should undertake compulsory courses on Code of Conducts and ethics as well as effective communication with patients.
- Strengthen the capacity of healthcare services, systems, and infrastructure and partner with the private sector to build high quality and more affordable healthcare systems, infrastructure and services in Cambodia.
- Adopt and implement citizens' charters that outline a commitment to non-discrimination or equal treatment in all public services in the country. For example, specifically reference non-discrimination on the basis of disability, race, ethnicity, gender, age, or race.

# Healthcare



**1 in 4** Said the amount they paid for their healthcare over the preceding year had increased.

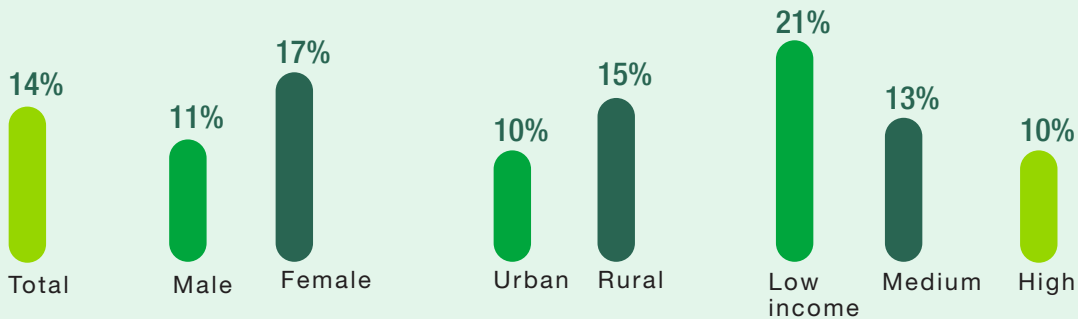
Percentage who said their healthcare's expenses had increased over the past year by gender



**14%**

Put off medical treatment in the preceding year because of the cost they would have to pay.

Percentage who put off medical treatment because of the cost they would have to pay by gender, geographical location, and family income



In your opinion, what is the most pressing issue facing the public healthcare system in Cambodia?



**30%** Poor services—including corrupt and unequal services

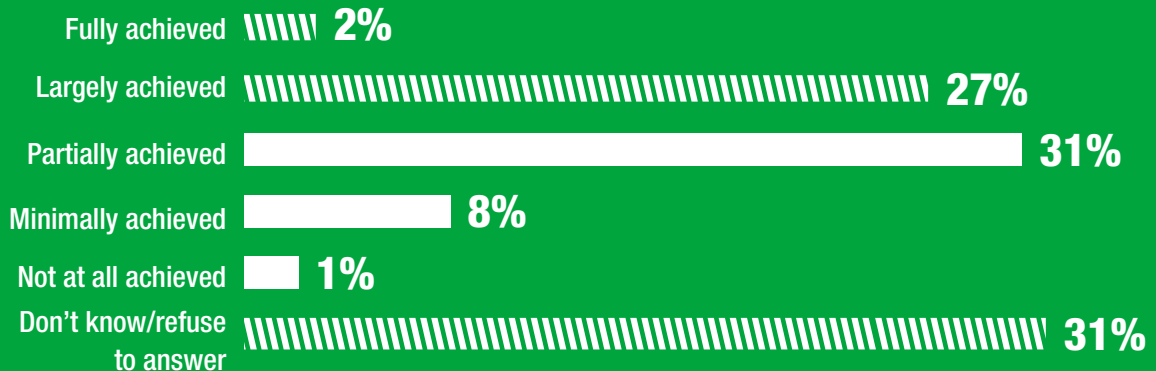


**23%** Lack of facility and human resources



**9%** Cost

One of the key objectives of the National Policy on Youth Development is to enhance health service provision for youth. To what extent do you think this objective has been achieved so far?







# Education

## **A small proportion of youths felt that they had been discriminated or harassed based on their gender identity or vulnerability at schools.**

- ▶ Nearly one in ten (9%) youths reported having been discriminated against because of their gender identity or vulnerability during their schooling time. A similar percentage said they had been sexually harassed because of their gender identity or vulnerability.

## **Young Cambodians understand the importance of higher education and training beyond high school, although they also thought these were expensive.**

- ▶ Half (50%) of the respondents were of the view that a vocational training qualification or university degree is necessary in order to participate in the society. However, 74% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “the education I want to achieve is beyond my financial means”.

## **Youths’ opinions were divided when it comes to their assessments of the government’s implementation of youth educational policies.**

- ▶ Forty-four per cent of youths thought that the goal of providing youth with a quality education, as prescribed in the 2011 National Policy on Youth Development, had been either fully or largely achieved. However, 32% believed that it had only been partially or minimally achieved, suggesting that the government had not done enough to promote quality education for youth.

## **Access and environment, costs, and teaching quality ranked as the three biggest problems facing public education, according to youths**

- ▶ Twenty-eight per cent of respondents considered access and environment as the most pressing issue facing public education. About 22% mentioned it was the cost, while 18% thought it was teaching quality.

## **Recommendations:**

- The government should commit more financial resources for the educational sector and ensure the efficient spending of that funding.
- Expand efforts to improve the availability and quality of education as well as young people’s equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities.
- The government should involve all education sector stakeholders (including youth and those in the private sector) in each step of the educational policy process, from planning and development to implementation.
- Policy makers and education institutions, both public and private, should find more ways to ensure that higher education and vocational training is affordable for young Cambodians wishing to further their education.
- Ensure that education works for every child through an inclusive and focused approach that responds to the education needs of children and young adults.
- Mobilize resources and efforts to improve school environments, infrastructure and learning tools, including ICT adoption and connectivity.
- Accelerate efforts to improve the capacity of individuals, particularly teachers, and institutions responsible for educating children.

## Education

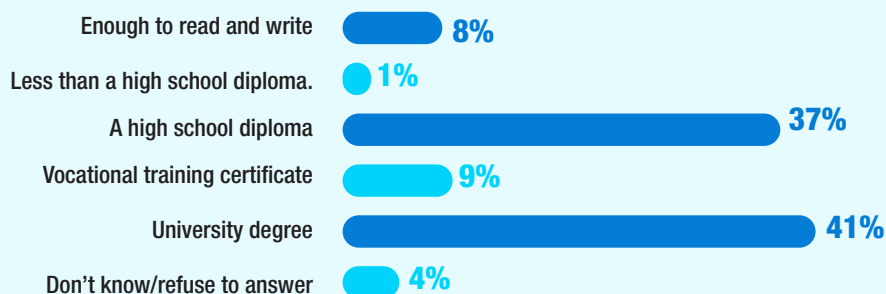


**9%** Reported having been discriminated because of their gender identity or vulnerability during their schooling time.



**10%** Reported having been harassed because of their gender identity or vulnerability during their schooling time.

How much education do you think a person needs in order to get along in this society?



To what extent do you agree with the statements: “The education I want to achieve is beyond my financial means.“?



In your opinion, what is the most pressing issue facing public education in the country?



**28%**  
Access and environment

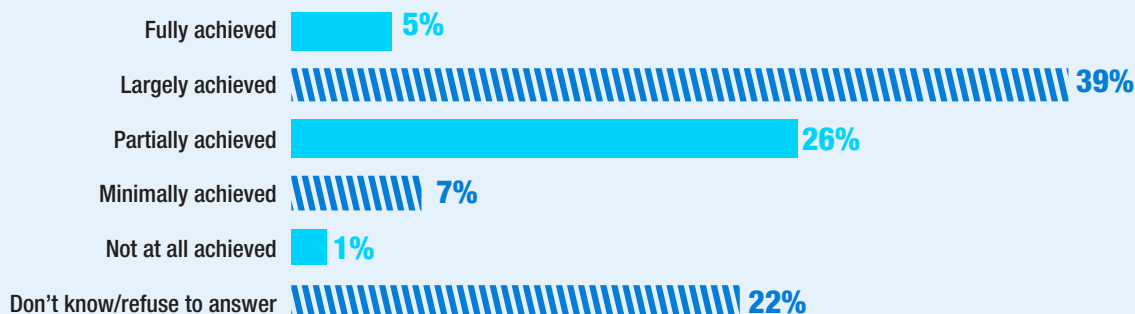


**22%**  
Cost



**18%**  
Teaching quality

One of the key objectives of the National Policy on Youth Development is to provide youth with opportunity to get quality education and vocational training. To what extent do you think this objective has been achieved so far?





# Employment

## **Relevant education and skills were viewed by Cambodian youth as the key to securing a job in the public sector, followed by personal connection and money, and on the job experience.**

- ▶ Seventy-four per cent of youth surveyed said having the right education and skillsets makes it easier to find a public-sector position. About one in ten (11%) said it was personal connection and money, and 7% cited on-the-job experience.

## **A small share of employed youth experienced discrimination or sexual harassment based on their gender identity or vulnerability in the workplace.**

- ▶ Among the employed youth who participated in the survey, nearly one in ten (9%) said they felt they were discriminated against on the basis of their gender identity or vulnerability in their work place. Meanwhile, 7% reported having been sexually harassed because of their gender attributes or vulnerability.

## **Many young people believed workplaces in Cambodia had not provided adequate job opportunities for youth with disability.**

- ▶ Half of the surveyed youth (50%) believed that workplaces in Cambodia did not offer sufficient job opportunity for youths with disability.

## **Lack of access to career information is a problem for a significant share of Cambodian youth**

- ▶ Seventy-three per cent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I don’t receive adequate information about jobs”.

## **Most youth were worried that they were ill-equipped to get a job.**

- ▶ Eighty-four per cent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I am worried that I lack the necessary skills to get any job”.

## **Most youth believed the toughest challenge for their generation was finding a high paying job.**

- ▶ Eighty-six per cent agreed with the proposition that the hardest challenge for their generation is finding a well-paid job.

## **A considerable proportion of youth felt that more could be done to promote youth employment in Cambodia.**

- ▶ When it came to this question, responses were significantly different: while 37% of respondents thought that the National Policy on Youth Development’s goal of promoting employment of youth had either been fully or largely achieved, a similar percentage (38%) said it had been either partially or minimally achieved.

## **The top three issues in the employment sector, according to the Cambodian youth, were low salaries, skill shortages and mismatches, and insufficient job opportunities.**

- ▶ About 38% of those surveyed identified low salaries as the most pressing problem in the field of employment. One in four (25%) thought it was skill shortages and mismatches. Around 17% stated that it was a lack of job opportunities.

## Recommendations:

The above findings suggest that both demand-side measures and supply-side measures are needed in order to promote youth employment in Cambodia:

### Supply side measures:

- Prioritize and expand investment in skill development, careers education, and guidance for young people in both full and part-time education.
- Enhance the employability of young people, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, by scaling up interventions to reduce school drop-outs and improve the link between school, training and the labor market.
- Increase youth access to high-quality education that equips them with fundamental employability skills in addition to technical and vocational knowledge.
- Develop an education and training system that enables young people to adapt to the rapidly changing nature of work brought on by technology and artificial intelligence.
- Tackle the financial challenges that prevent young people from accessing and/or completing education and training opportunities, for example, by putting in place support mechanism to help young students cope with financial difficulties.
- Design systems that aid young people in obtaining information about the labor market information and career choices, lower the cost of job search, and help in job matching.
- Strengthen private sector participation in skills

development and employment and implement programs that actively engage the labor market and specifically target at-risk adolescents.

- Improve access to education, skills development and life-long learning for youth with disabilities and enhance decent work opportunities in both the public and private sectors for this vulnerable group of people.
- Enhance the standard and applicability of education at all levels, ensuring learning and training match with the existing and predicted demands of the labor market. The government, the private sector and educational institutions should work more closely to increase the relevance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and tertiary education.

### Demand-side measures:

- The government should heighten efforts to bring in investments to broaden the economy and generate more jobs, particularly high-tech, skill-intensive jobs. Such efforts also require developing and delivering macroeconomic, fiscal, and industrial policies that emphasize strong pro-employment growth and job quality.
- Promote equal access to public sector positions for young people, by ensuring that recruitment, retention, and promotion of public officials are based on merit, fairness and open competition and an absence of discrimination. This requires adopting and implementing clear, open and transparent recruitment systems that enable the most appropriate candidate with the best the specific skills for the position to be selected.

## Employment

What makes it easier to find a job in the public sector?



11% Personal connection and money



74% the right education and skillsets



7% On-the-job experience

## Experience with harassment and discrimination at work—among employed youth



**9%**

Reported having been discriminated because of their gender identity or vulnerability at work.



**7%**

Reported having been harassed because of their gender identity or vulnerability at work.



**73%**

Said they did not receive enough information about jobs



**84%**

Worried they lacked skills to get any job



**86%**

Said the hardest challenge for their generation was finding a well-paid job



**1 in 2**

Thought workplaces in Cambodia did not offer sufficient job opportunity for youth with disability

## In your opinion, what is the most pressing issue concerning employment in the country?



Low salaries

**38%**



Skill shortages and mismatches

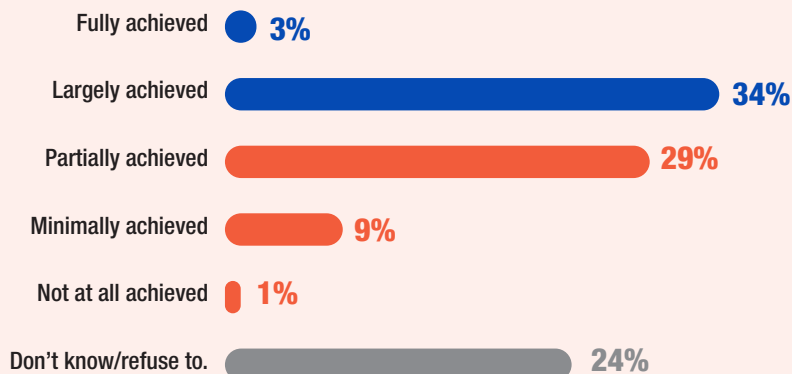
**25%**



Lack of job opportunities

**17%**

One of the key objectives of the National Policy on Youth Development is to promote employment amongst youth. To what extent do you think this objective has been achieved so far?





# Civic and political engagement

## **Awareness of the rights to participate in local governance was limited among youth.**

- ▶ Roughly half (51%) of young people surveyed were unaware that they have the right to participate in the formulation of commune/district development plans. Fifty-nine per cent had no knowledge that they have the right to attend monthly meeting, workshops or forums organized by local authorities. Nearly the same proportion (58%) had no idea they could monitor the implementation of the commune/district development plans.

## **The level of local community development's participation among young people was low.**

- ▶ Only 16% of youths have participated in the formulation of commune/district development plans. Roughly one in ten (11%) have attended monthly council meetings organized by local officials, while a mere 9% have taken part in the monitoring of the implementation of commune/district development plans.

## **The top three barriers that kept youth from engaging in the local civic activities include a lack of invitation, inadequate information and being too limited on time.**

- ▶ When asked what prevented them from doing so, 57% of the respondents said it was because they were not invited. Fifty-four per cent said it was because they had no information about the activities, while 46% cited being too busy as the main reason.

## **The level of political participation among young Cambodians was low.**

- ▶ Only one in ten youth have voiced their needs or issues to public officials. Just 4% have signed a petition, online or offline. Only 3% have donated money for a political cause. And just 5% have participated in protest activities. Roughly 12% have attended political campaigns or rallies.

## **Youth's interest in government and public affairs was low.**

- ▶ While 17% stated that they were interested or very interested in politics, 82% indicated that they were either not at all interested or only slightly interested

in politics. A cross-tabulation analysis shows that politically interested youth were more likely to be male, better educated, live in urban areas, and have a high family income

## **Poor knowledge about politics is the top reason preventing most youths from taking an interest in politics. A sizable number of youth found politics dangerous.**

- When these survey respondents were asked to provide their main reason for not taking an interest in politics, two thirds (66%) cited a lack of knowledge about politics. Being too young was cited by one third (34%) of this group of individuals, and interestingly, nearly one in five (18%) stated that the reason was because they found politics dangerous.

## **The majority of youth paid little attention to the news.**

- Roughly 57% of young people rarely (not even once a week) or practically never followed news about politics or the government. Thirty-seven per cent followed news related to these topics once or several times a week. Only 5% claimed to follow the news on a daily basis.

## **Only a small percentage of youth discussed politics at home or with friends.**

- Seventy-six per cent of young Cambodians surveyed rarely or never discussed political matters with family members or friends. About 19% said they occasionally discussed the topic, while just 5% said they engaged in the discussion frequently or on a regular basis.

## **Despite social media being an indispensable part of youth's everyday lives, only a small share of them used it to express their views about politics**

- ▶ One in five young people (21%) had expressed political views by posting, sharing or commenting on social media platforms. The vast majority (79%), however, never engaged in this online activity.

## **Most respondents agreed that young people should be given more leadership roles at all levels of government.**

- ▶ Eighty-four per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition that young people should be offered more leadership roles at both the national and subnational levels of government.

**Many youth felt that the government’s efforts to promote youth civic and political engagement remain insufficient.**

- ▶ One in four (25%) of youth respondents stated that the goal of enabling youth to fully participate in the country’s social and political development, as laid out in the National Policy on Youth Development, had been fully or largely achieved. Roughly 46% were of the view that it had been partially or minimally achieved. Meanwhile, 3% believed it had not been achieved at all.

**When it comes to civic political participation, the top three issues youth identified were, on the supply side, lack of opportunities (including an unfavorable political climate and a lack of mechanisms for participation), and, on the demand side, lack of knowledge about participation, and lack of capacity and resources to participate.**

- ▶ Nearly one in five (24%) of young Cambodians cited lack of opportunities to participate as the most critical challenge facing youth civic engagement. Twenty-one per cent thought it was insufficient knowledge about participation. Nearly 19% identified lack of capacity and resources to participate as the key issue.

## Recommendations:

Prominent literature on political participation has identified three key explanations for why people are not politically active: because they cannot, because they do not want to and because nobody asked them<sup>4</sup>. Findings from this survey also confirm this theory. In light of this, the following recommendations are proposed:

- The government should improve the legal, policy and political environments for youths to participate in the civic and political life of the country. This requires, among other tasks, upholding civil rights and liberties of young people, particularly freedom of speech, association and assembly as well as access to information. It also necessitates the review and revision of existing and draft legislations that are having or could have a potential impact on the legal and political environment for youths to participate, including the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations (LANGO), the draft Cybercrime Law, and the National Internet Gateway sub-decree. Public schools and higher education institutions should include a compulsory course on civic and political rights of citizens and students should be allowed to discuss and debate civic and political participation freely as the guaranteed by the Constitution.
- Create, institutionalize and support structures for young people’s participation and civic engagement. Some examples include supporting youth councils, student councils and unions, youth parliaments and co-management bodies and ensuring that

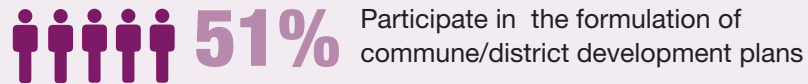
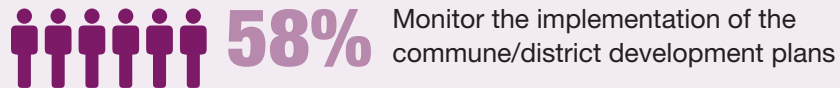
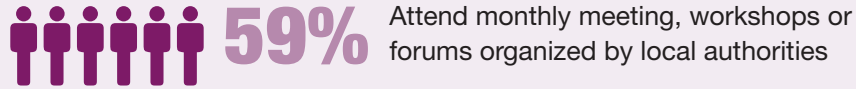
these bodies operate in a free, safe and inclusive environment.

- Strengthen young people’s capacities, networks and partnerships. One way this could be done is through designing and implementing formal and informal education and training programs that help young people to develop life-long interest, knowledge, skills and values necessary for civic and political engagement. Another way is through promoting and supporting youth-led grassroots movements, initiatives and networks.
- Develop, implement and support programs and initiatives aimed at fostering nation-wide youth volunteerism and community service.
- Civil society organizations should revisit their communication strategies and educational products to raise youth knowledge and interest in good governance, citizenship and political engagement. At the same time, they should broaden efforts to channel information about local and national development relevant to youth, particularly marginalized youths in subgroups such as LGBTIQ+, taking into account the differences in their characteristics and circumstances, including educational levels and the barriers facing that specific subgroup.
- Non-state organizations interested in improving the social, political and economic wellbeing of youth should continue to broaden the scope of their youth engagement work, particularly by helping to ensure that young people’s perspectives are taken into account in government policy and decision-making.

<sup>4</sup> Brady, H. E., Verba, S., & Schlozman, K. L. (1995). *Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation*. *American political science review*, 89(2), 271-294.

# Civic Engagement

Percentage of youth who were **unaware** that they had the right to:



Have you participated in the following activities?



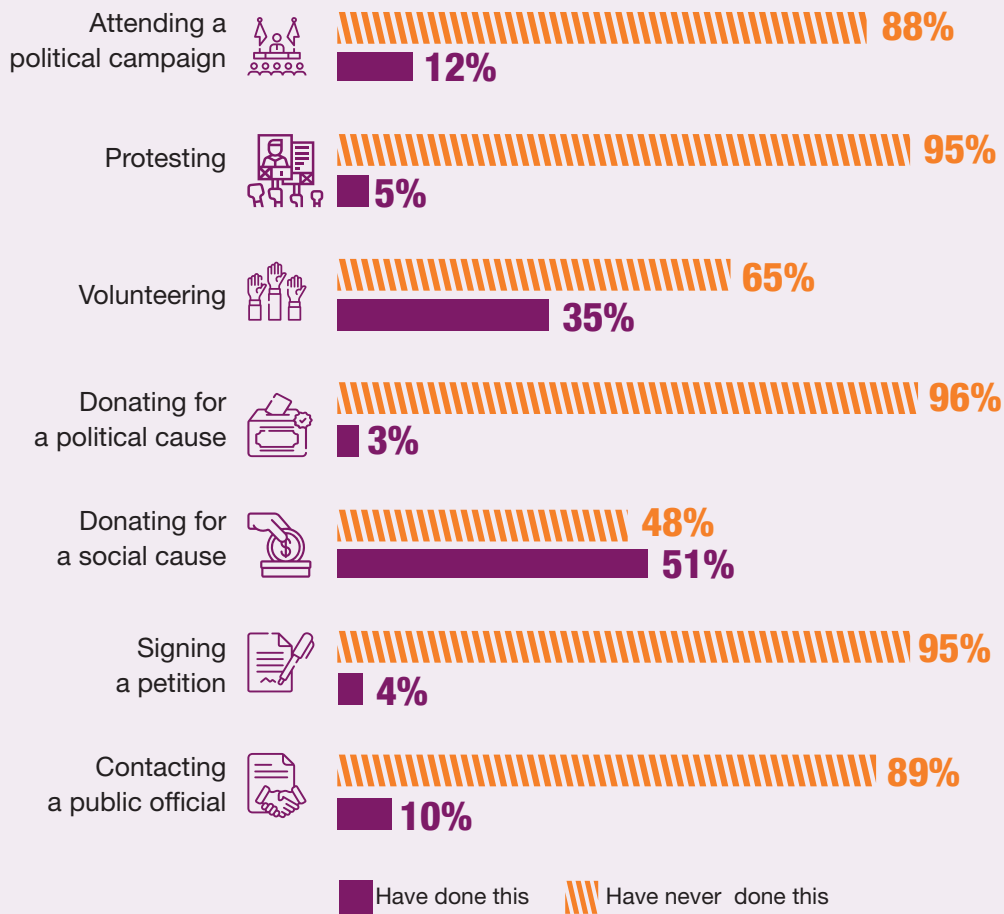
 Have done this      Have never done this

Top 3 reasons for not engaging in local civic and political activity

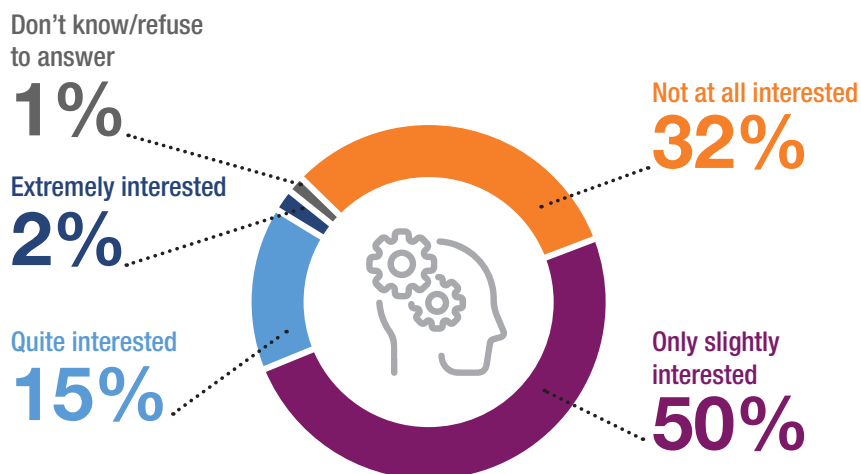




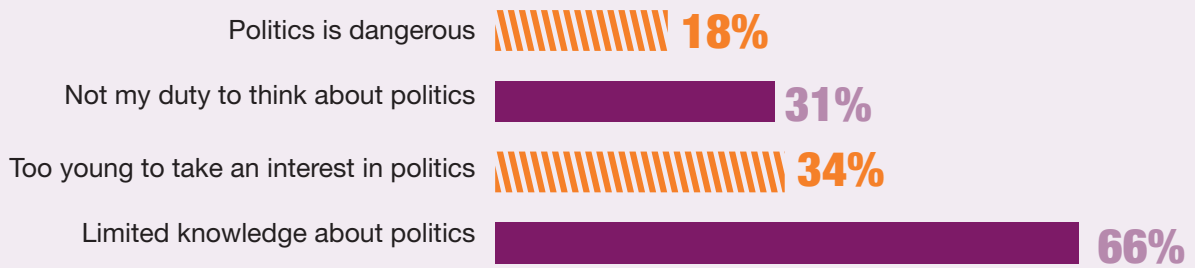
### Have you ever done the following activities?



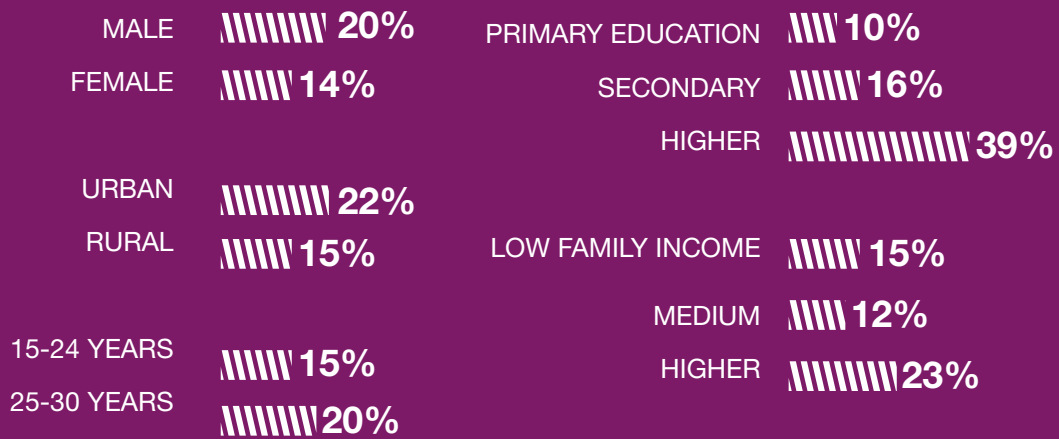
### How interested would you say you are in politics?



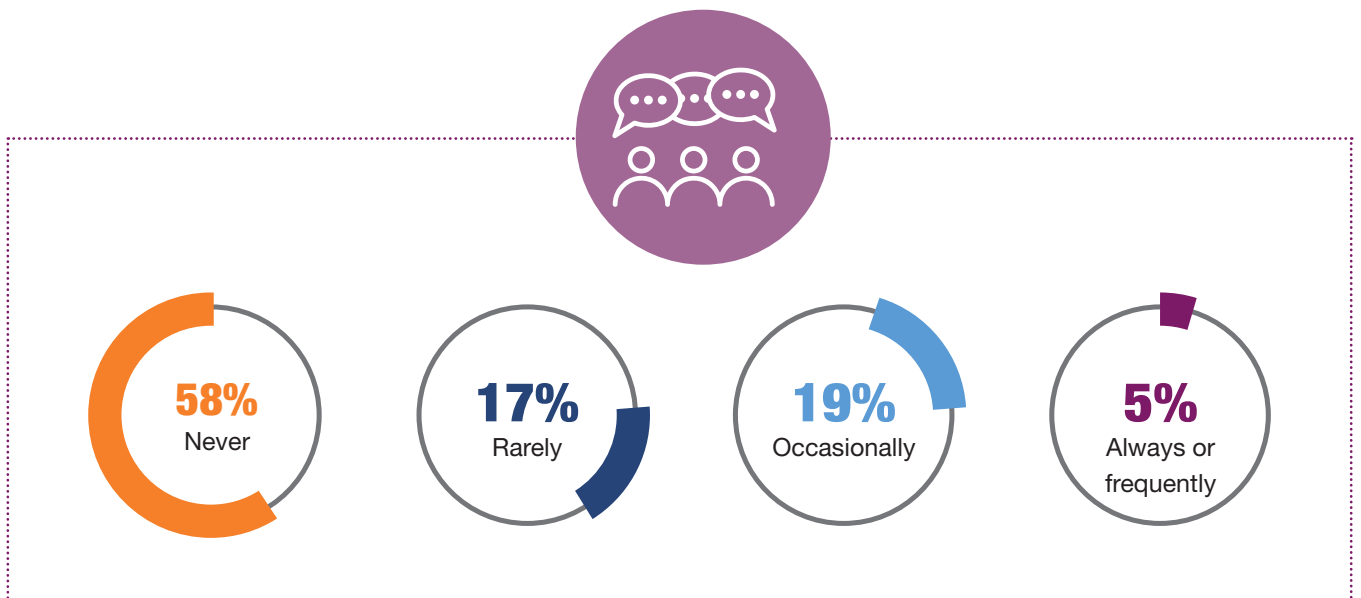
### Top 4 reasons given for 'not at all interested' or 'only slightly interested' in politics



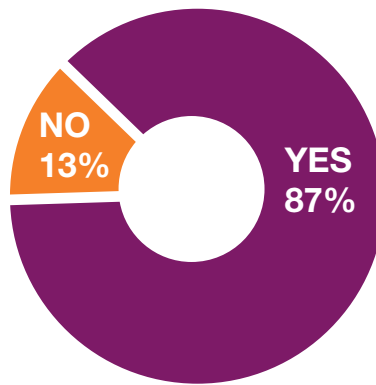
### Percentage who said they were "extremely" or 'quite' interested in politics: by demographic, socio-economic and geographical profiles



### How often do you discuss politics with family or friends?



Do you own a social media account?




Which of the following social media platforms do you use most often?

**f** 90%  
Facebook

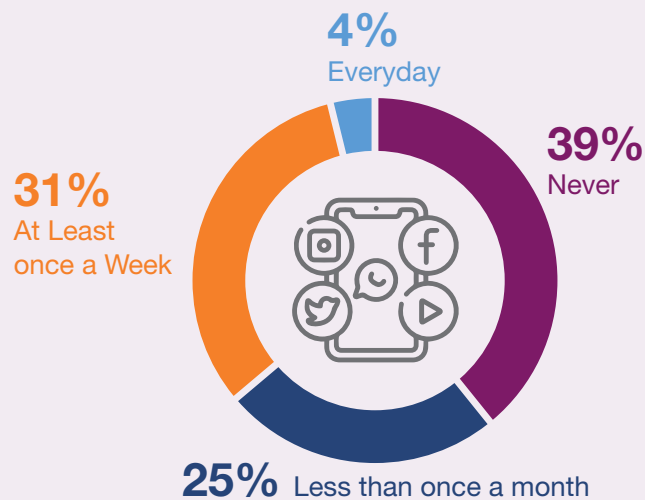
 4%  
YouTube

 0.4%  
Instagram

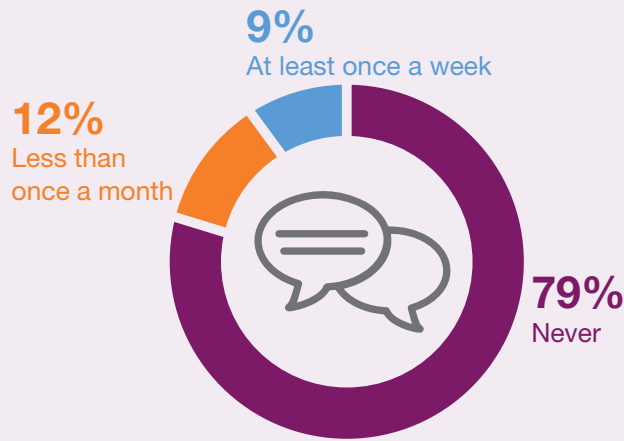
 4%  
Tik Tok

 2%  
Telegram

How often do you use social media to read or watch contents, comments or discussions on social or political issues ?



How often do you use social media to post, share, or comment about politics and government?



In your opinion, what is the most pressing issue concerning youth civic participation in the country?



**24%** Lack of opportunities to participate- including an unfavorable political climate



**21%** Lack of knowledge about participation



**19%** Lack of capacity and resources to participate



**84%** Agreed

To what extent do you agree/disagree that: “Young people should be offered more leadership roles at both national and subnational governments”?

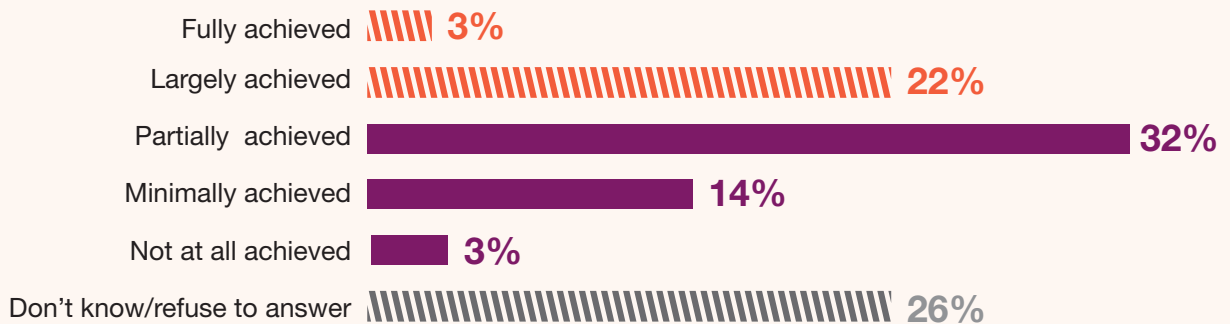


**9%** Neither Agreed Nor Disagreed



**4%** Disagreed

One of the key objectives of the National Policy on Youth Development is to enable youth to fully participate in the country’s development. To what extent do you think this objective has been achieved so far?





# Youth's economic situations and outlook on the future

## Youth were worried about meeting basic financial needs

- ▶ Seventy-eight per cent of young Cambodians were worried or very worried about not being able to pay medical costs for normal healthcare. A similar percentage (78%) were worried or very worried about not being able to maintain the standard of living they enjoyed. Around 62% were worried or very worried about not being able to pay for their normal monthly bills. Among students, nearly one third (31%) said they were worried or very worried about not having enough money to pay for their education.

## The majority of youth viewed their standard of living as improving. A significant minority, however, saw their standard of living threatened.

- ▶ Two third (67%) of respondents felt that their standard of living was better or much better compared to five years ago. The rest (33%), however, believed theirs had been either the same or gotten worse.

## A substantial majority of youth were not motivated to complain about public services

- ▶ When asked how likely they were to take action, such as contacting an official or reporting the issue on their social media account, if they were dissatisfied with a

public service, only one in four (25%) young people indicated that they were very likely or somewhat likely to do so, while the rest (74%) responded that they were not too likely or not at all likely to engage in the activity.

## Youth were optimistic that public services will change for the better in the next five years

- ▶ For example, nine in ten (90%) youth surveyed thought that healthcare, education and employment would become better or much better in the next five years.

## A sizable proportion of youth were less hopeful about the future when it comes to natural resources and environmental protection.

- ▶ The share of youth who were optimistic that natural resource protection would be better or much better in the next five years is relatively smaller (71%), with 24% believing that it would remain the same or become much worse.

## Curbing corruption topped the Cambodian youth's policy agenda for the next five years.

- ▶ Half (50%) of young Cambodians surveyed said reducing corruption should be a top policy priority for the next five years, followed by increasing employment (43%), reducing poverty (40%), and increasing the quality of education (38%).

## Recommendations:

- The government should double their efforts to build financial resilience and improve the financial well-being of youth such that it allows them to fulfil their basic financial needs. Some social groups within the youth cohorts deserve greater support compared to others, particularly women and rural youth.
- Develop indicators to track progress in the implementation of the National Policy on Youth Development:

- To facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of the policy, the government should consider implementing the following measures: (a) update specific short- and medium-term objectives for the NPYD policy, (b) develop solid indicators to assess whether and when those targets are met, and (c) conduct or give support for a comprehensive measurement of those indicators. Where resources are limited, it is important that the policy targets are prioritized.

- Measuring progress of the policy's implementation require building systems that can effectively generate, store and analyze data and evidence related to the youth situation in terms of employment, health, education, and civic engagement. The evidence and data, in turn, can assist in informing policy makers in developing new strategies and policies concerning youth or refining the existing ones.
- The government should step up its commitment and efforts to contain corruption and promote

good governance, including passing the Law on Access to Information, the Law on the Protection of Reporting Person, and the Law on the Protection of Expert, Victim and Witness, and ensuring that these laws meet an internationally acceptable standards.

- Build capacity and confidence as well as an enabling environment for youth to express their views about civic and political affairs, including public services, and ensure that their views are acted upon.

## Youth's Economic Situations and Outlook on the Future

How would you describe your current standard of living compared to five years ago?

 **67%** Gotten better

 **18%** Stayed the same

 **15%** Become worse



**78%**  
Worried about NOT being able to pay medical costs for their normal healthcare.



**62%**  
Worried about NOT having enough to pay for their normal monthly bills.



**78%**  
Worried about NOT being able to maintain the standard of living they enjoyed



Nearly **1 in 3 (31%)**  
Worried about NOT having enough to pay for their education.

If you are dissatisfied with public services you receive, how likely are you to personally take action on it, such as contact an official or agency or report the issue on your social media?



**59%**

Not at all likely

**15%**

Not too likely

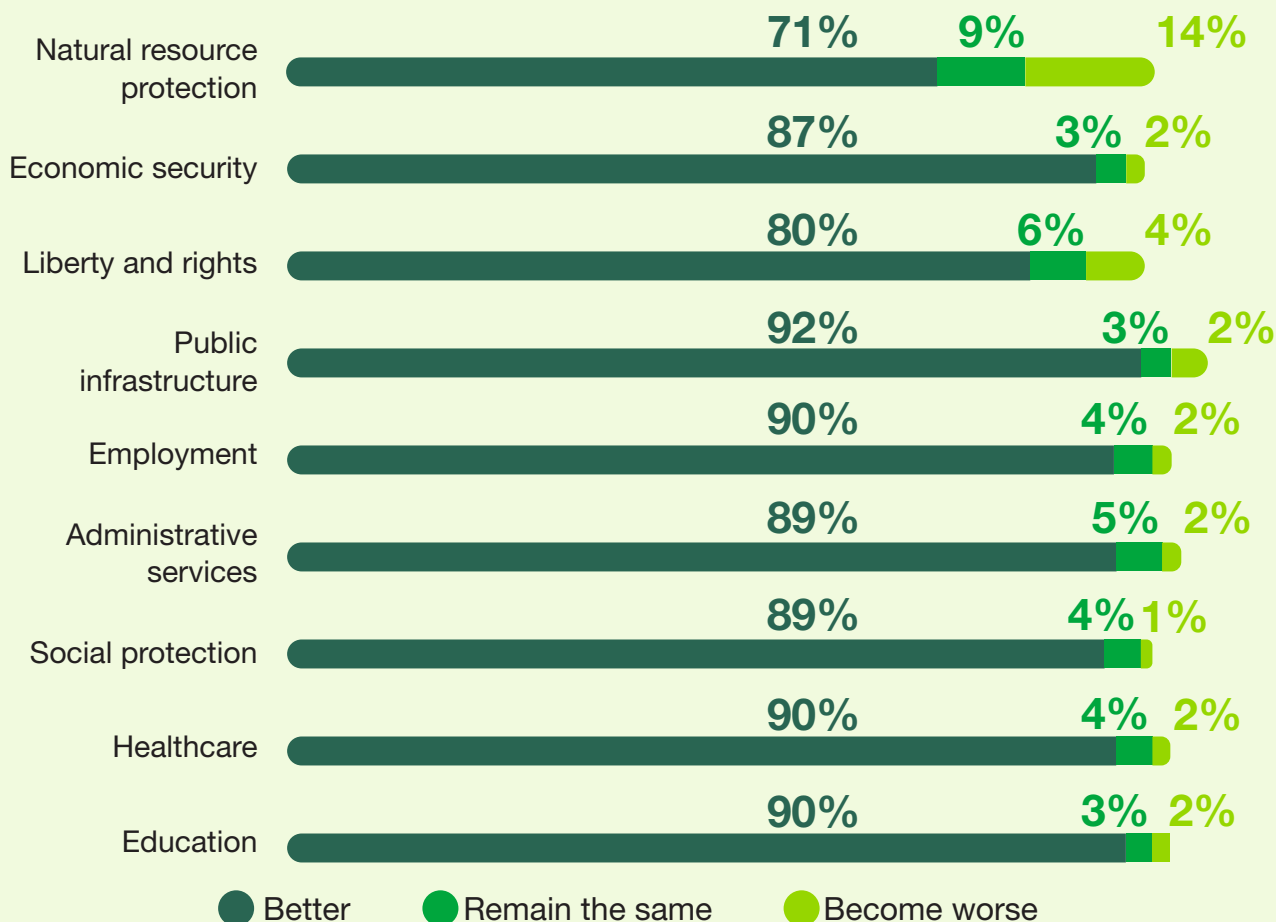
**19%**

Somewhat likely

**6%**

Very likely

## When you think about the future, how do you see the condition of the following aspects of life in the next five years?



## Top 3 actions the government should prioritize over the next 5 years



**50%** Reducing corruption



**43%** Increasing employment



**40%** Reducing poverty

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates the importance of listening to young people and Cambodia's next generation. Cambodia has no shortage of policy ideas and tools aimed at addressing youth issues and needs and promoting their social, economic and political development. Nevertheless, if young people feel the implementation of such policies continues

to be piecemeal or that they face challenges accessing necessary public services and benefits, then such policies will not be as effective as they should be. Ultimately, the government should reaffirm their commitment to translate youth policies into concrete actions and to realize the goal of promoting the full and active integration of youth into the social, economic and political sectors in Cambodia.



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This Summary Report was written by **Sereyvicheth Chunly, Ratha Kheng, Norin Im and Pisey Pech**. Please visit [www.ticambodia.org](http://www.ticambodia.org) to download this document.

**Transparency International Cambodia**

#13, Street 554, Sangkat Boeung Kak 1, Khan Tuol Kok, 120407, Phnom Penh Kingdom of Cambodia

Phone : (+855) 23 883 681 | (+855) 23 883 682

Website : [www.ticambodia.org](http://www.ticambodia.org)

Global Website : [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)

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**This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union (EU) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of Transparency International Cambodia (TI Cambodia) and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of EU and Sida.**