

Gender Analysis of Survey on Cambodia's Young and Older Generation: Family, Community, Political Knowledge and Attitudes, and Future Expectations

Un Leang, Saphon Somolireasmey and Sok Serey

Working Paper Series No. 117

September 2019

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CDRI
Cambodia Development Resource Institute

Phnom Penh, September 2019

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ISBN-13: 978-9924-500-14-8

Citation:

Un Leang, Saphon Somolireasmey and Sok Serey. 2019. *Gender Analysis of Survey on Cambodia's Young and Older Generation: Family, Community, Political Knowledge and Attitudes, and Future Expectations*. CDRI Working Paper Series No. 117. Phnom Penh: CDRI.

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Layout and cover design: Oum Chantha

Edited by: Susan Watkins

Printed and bound in Cambodia by Go Invent Media (GIM), Phnom Penh

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Acknowledgements

This paper was completed with the help of the team from the Governance Unit of CDRI. Their support is greatly appreciated. We would like to thank CDRI staff for providing logistical and administrative arrangements for the study team. We also very much appreciated the assistance provided by the Publishing Unit in language editing and layout for this report. Finally, we would like to thank CDRI for commissioning us to carry out this work.

Executive summary

Cambodia, following more than two decades of impressive economic performance and development, is fast becoming one of Asia's new tiger economies. Sustained robust GDP growth of over 7 percent has supported improvements in physical infrastructure (economic and social) and substantial poverty reduction.

This economic improvement, mostly made possible by rapid manufacturing (garment industry), construction and tourism growth, is paving the way for rapid urbanisation. The pace of urbanisation combined with demographic change, improved access to education, and widespread internet use is playing a significant role in shaping and changing perceptions, thoughts and behaviours, especially among women. This report attempts to observe these changes through a gendered analysis of a nationally representative survey, conducted by CDRI from October 2017 to January 2018, of 1,600 Cambodian citizens (aged 16 to 65 years) in 101 (72 rural, 29 urban) villages in five provinces and Phnom Penh (Eng et al. 2019). The survey questionnaire comprised 101 questions covering six sections: demographics, identity and values, trust and respect, outlook, political participation, and media. This report uses the survey responses as its sole primary data and classifies them into four main themes: family, attitudes towards community, political knowledge and attitudes, and future expectations. Each theme is divided into subthemes for detailed analysis, as follows:

- *Family*: generational gap, decision making in the family, decision making about marriage.
- *Attitudes towards community*: trust and caring about country, community participation.
- *Political knowledge and attitudes*: gender perspectives on leadership and social and political participation, concern about social issues and services.
- *Future expectations*: the country's future direction, individuals' future prospects.

The following techniques and methods were used to analyse the data:

- Women were not treated as a homogeneous group, but as equipped with seven different attributes: age, place of residence, level of education, marital status, type of employment, employment status, mobility and internet use. The aim was to observe whether or not women with different attributes have different perceptions towards certain issues.
- For place of residence, the survey question was open, but for this report responses were categorised into Phnom Penh residents and non-Phnom Penh residents.
- For level of education, the survey categories were 1) never attended school, 2) primary school, 3) secondary school, 4) high school, 5) vocational training, 6) university (tertiary education), 7) other, 8) no response. This nominal data was changed into basic education or lower, and higher than basic education.¹
- For marital status, the survey categories were 1) single (never been married), 2) married, 3) widow, 4) separated/divorced, 5) no response. These were converted into single and non-single.
- For type of employment, the survey categories were 1) self-employed (own business), 2) homemaker/family caretaker, 3) working in family business/farm, 4) paid government employee, 5) paid employee for non-profit organisation, 6) paid employee for a private business/for profit, 7) unemployed, 8) student, 9) no response. The report converted these into paid and non-paid employment.
- For mobility, the survey focused on migration, which was converted into mobility.

1 The reason for this is that the Cambodian Constitution defines basic education as nine years of schooling, but the mean years of schooling in Cambodia remains low, standing at 4.8 in 2017 (hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_the_me/country-notes/KHM.pdf).

SPSS was used for descriptive analysis and crosstab was applied to generate comparative data on the seven selected attributes across the four themes selected for study. Independent Sample T Test was applied to compare the mean scores of two independent groups on each variable, data allowing. Crosstabulation generated 567 tables, analysis of which was beyond the scope of this report. The following criteria were therefore used to reduce the number of tables:

- Relevance of the survey questions to the four themes selected for study.
- Percentage differences between the responses against each attribute. Data allowing, differences were ascertained with statistical testing; otherwise, a 10 percent difference was used as the threshold.
- Frequency with which the same or similar questions are raised, discussed and prioritised by government, scholars, research surveys and studies.

Overview of the results by theme

1. Family

Generation gap and decision making in the family: The majority of respondents recognise that their generation is different from other generations. This perception is supported by the fact that over 50 percent of survey respondents agreed it is acceptable for young people to disagree with their parents. Among female respondents, the higher percentages of perceived differences were found among Phnom Penh residents, those with higher than basic education and internet users.

The generation gap not only affects who should make the decision, but also what and why such decision must be made. Although parents still take responsibility for decision making, young people are increasingly perceived to be responsible for making their own life decisions such as on education, employment and marriage. Again, among female respondents, the higher percentages of perceived authority were found among Phnom Penh residents, those with higher than basic education and internet users.

Marriage: Marriage is highly valued and desired by most Cambodians as it represents the only acceptable and respectable step towards forming family relationships or entering parenthood. Since forming a family is basically through marriage, living together before marriage is not valued and considered unacceptable. However, this traditional way of forming a family and entering parenthood is being challenged, especially among young educated women and women living in Phnom Penh who seem more accepting of the possibility of couples cohabiting before marriage.

2. Attitudes towards community

Trust: The high level of distrust among Cambodians is largely the legacy of almost three decades of war and genocide, followed by corrupt practice in services delivery after the Khmer Rouge years (Baker and Milne 2019). Although there has been no independent study on the level of social trust in Cambodia, the survey results indicate a moderately high to high level of trust in social institutions such as schools and hospitals, the media, local institutions, the police and courts, and politicians, though to different degrees. Unexpectedly, only a small proportion of respondents reported they strongly trust development workers in their community, especially women who live in Phnom Penh and women with have higher than basic education. Notably, a high proportion of female respondents across all attributes stated they “somewhat trust/

somewhat distrust” development workers. This is cause for concern given that Cambodia has the second highest number of active NGOs per capita in the world (one NGO for every 10,000 people) (Domashneva 2013).

Caring about country and participation in community: Overall, about half of the respondents said they care about their community and country. The higher percentages were found among female respondents aged below 30 and Phnom Penh residents. Care does not necessarily translate into active community and social participation, however, especially among female respondents residing in Phnom Penh, those with higher than basic education and non-internet users. What is more interesting to observe is that the majority of those who participated in local events did not speak or ask questions even though the majority of female respondents across different attributes claimed that they were not afraid to do so.

3. Political knowledge and attitudes

Gendered perspectives on leadership and social and political participation: Traditionally, masculinity is strongly rooted in Cambodia and is respected by both male and female respondents as the privileged gender norm and behaviour. The main challenge that is difficult to address is not social discrimination against women, but women’s acceptance of being socially objectified. The survey results indicate that more female than male respondents accept that men make better political leaders than women. Similarly, more female than male respondents admitted feeling afraid to discuss political views offline, especially those aged above 30 and those with basic education or lower.

A very high proportion of male and female respondents voted in the national election, especially those who use the internet. More female (25.0 percent) than male respondents (16.7 percent), and more older (81.6 percent) than younger female respondents (23.7 percent), were likely to always vote for the same political party in national elections. This intention is consistent with the answers given by the majority of respondents whose vote is based on political party rather than the political candidate or other people’s influence. The high percentage of people who turn out to vote in national elections can be taken to indicate that Cambodians value their right to vote, realise that voting is both an important responsibility and important to democracy, and perceive that their vote matters for the country’s future.

Concern about social issues and services: Among 13 different national social issues and services,² both male and female respondents ranked infrastructure, education, health, economy and jobs, and environment as the most important issues requiring attention from the government.

4. Future expectations

The majority of male and female respondents believe the country is on the right track. This does not mean they perceive men and women will benefit equally, however. The percentage of female respondents concerned that their gender is an obstacle to their success is significantly higher than that of male respondents. Notably, among female respondents, more older women, non-Phnom Penh residents and those with basic education or lower consider their gender to be an obstacle to their success than younger women, Phnom Penh residents and those with higher than basic education.

2 Namely, infrastructure, education, health, economy and jobs, environment, poverty, landlessness and debt, crime and security, corruption, political party conflict, injustice, border issues, widening wealth inequality between the poor and the rich, and migration.

Concluding remarks

The survey results indicate that different attributes engender women into different persons, with different perceptions of and participation in socio-political issues. Therefore, any attempt to empower women and promote gender equality and equity that treats women as a homogeneous group will fall short of expectations. However, out of the seven selected attributes, only four –age, place of residence, level of education and internet use – play a significant role in influencing women’s perceptions of and participation in socio-political issues. The following summarises highlights from the findings and arising issues that warrant attention from agencies whose mission is to empower women and promote gender equality:

1. The hierarchy of traditional Cambodian society and conservative way of living are being challenged, especially by women below the age of 30, who have higher than basic education, live in Phnom Penh and use the internet
2. Hospitals and schools are the most trustworthy institutions in the view of 89.4 percent of male and 92.3 percent of female respondents. Local institutions, the media, the police and courts, and politicians are less trustworthy, but the level of trust remains substantially high. Importantly, only 3.8 percent of male and 2.8 percent of female respondents chose the statement “I have no confidence in any of these institutions or people”.
3. The survey also revealed a large grey area around the perceived trustworthiness of development workers, reported by almost half of female respondents.
4. That significant percentages of female Phnom Penh residents and young women do not care about their country should be cause for concern given that under 30-year-olds constitute about 60 percent of the population and the rapid pace of urbanisation in Cambodia.
5. Of those who claimed to care about their country, the majority had not participated in community social events and meetings; and the majority of those that had, did not ask any questions even though they claimed that they were not afraid to do so. Future studies should be curious about why people are reluctant to ask questions at local public meetings.
6. The perception that men make better leaders than women persists, even among women. Promoting women’s empowerment and gender equality is not just a matter of inviting men to change, but also about changing women’s self-perceptions of their worth and role in society. Women are not only oppressed by men, but also by their internalised oppression as a subordinate group. A higher proportion of female respondents agreed that men are better positioned as political leaders than women.
7. Majority of female and male respondents vote in national elections. More female (25.0 percent) than male respondents (16.7 percent) always vote for the same party. Interestingly, more older (81.6 percent) than younger (23.7 percent) women, and more women with basic education or lower (69.2 percent) than with higher than basic education (52.5) always vote for the same political party.
8. A substantial number of respondents believed that their vote would have a significant positive impact on the country’s future. Out of 13 social issues and services (infrastructure, education, health, economy and jobs, environment, poverty and landlessness and debt, crime and security, corruption, political party conflict, injustice, border issues, widening wealth inequality between the and the rich, and migration), male and female respondents viewed infrastructure, education, health, economy and jobs and the environment as the most important.

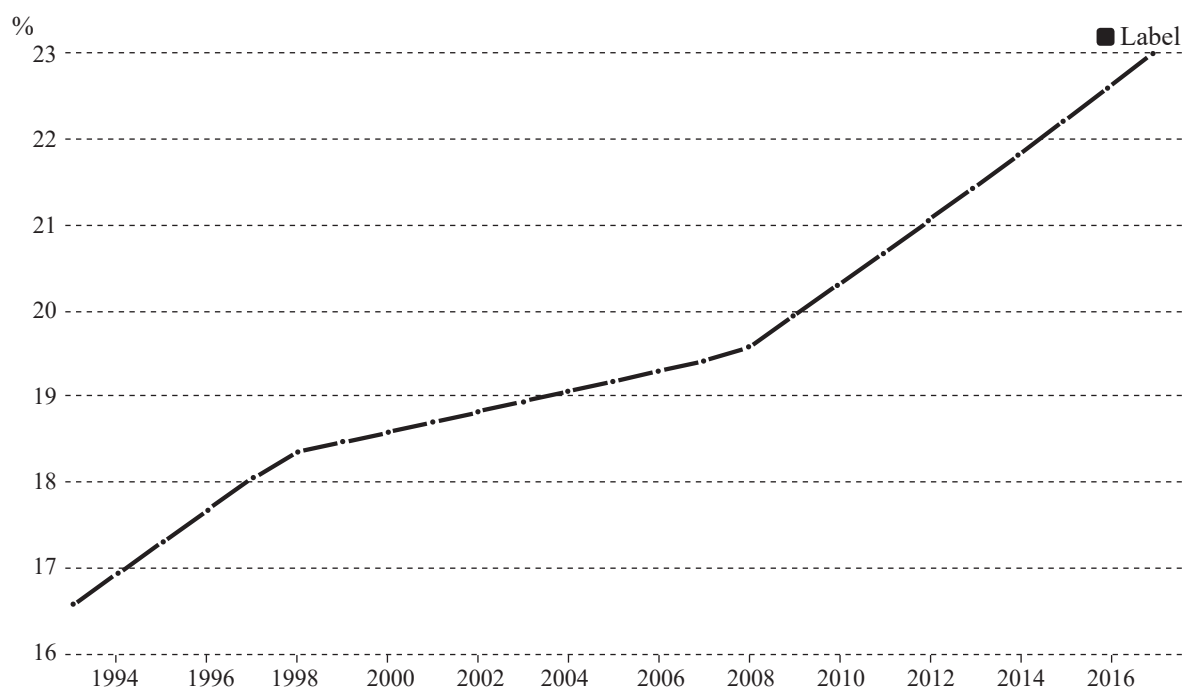
1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Since starting almost from scratch in the early-1990s after nearly 30 years of instability, Cambodia has made impressive rapid economic development, sustaining robust GDP growth of over 7 percent and scaling up and improving infrastructure (economic and social) for poverty reduction. GDP per capita increased more than fourfold from USD254 in 1993 to USD1,384 in 2017,³ while poverty incidence⁴ declined from just over 50 percent in 1993 to 32.8 percent in 2004 and 13.5 percent in 2014.⁵ In 2016 Cambodia was reclassified by the World Bank from low-income to lower-middle-income country status. On a macro level, although Cambodia is still a poor country, it is well on its way to becoming one of the new tiger economies of Asia (ADB 2016).⁶

Cambodia's consistent economic performance, mostly driven by rapid growth of manufacturing (garment industry), construction and tourism, is paving the way for rapid urbanisation (Figure 1). Currently, around 25 percent of the population lives in urban areas. However, this percentage is likely to grow as more young people migrate to urban areas either to further their education or seek employment. Youth rural-urban migration has multiple consequences for how they perceive and participate in community social events as well as for the flow of information and knowledge back to their place of origin.

Figure 1: Urban population growth, 1994–2016 (percent)



Source: World Bank (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?end=2017&locations=KH&start=1993&view=chart>)

3 World Bank. 2019. “World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files” (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=KH>).

4 Defined as the percentage of the population living on less than USD1.25 a day.

5 World Bank. 2019. “World Bank Cambodia: Overview” (www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview).

6 “Here Comes Cambodia: Asia’s New Tiger Economy” (www.adb.org/news/features/here-comes-cambodia-asia-s-new-tiger-economy).

There is no doubt that women, especially young women, contributed substantially to Cambodia's major economic improvement. As shown in Table 1, at the time of the first Cambodian census conducted after the civil war in 1998, almost 70 percent of the population were under the age of 30 and women far outnumbered men in the 15 to 30 age cohort. In 2015, the percentage of the population in this age range remained high, at 65.3 percent; and youth (those aged 15 to 30 years old) made up 33 percent of the total population of 15.6 million.

Table 1: Population of Cambodia by sex and five-year age group, and sex ratio, March 1998

Age group	Total	Male	Female	Sex ratio
Total	11,437,656	5,511,408	5,926,248	93.0
0–4	1,466,792	747,292	719,500	103.9
5–9	1,772,820	903,976	868,844	104.0
10–14	1,658,196	851,139	807,057	105.5
15–19	1,344,258	664,184	680,074	97.7
20–24	745,687	354,100	391,587	90.4
25–29	888,540	426,968	461,572	92.5
30–34	782,682	370,090	412,592	89.7
35–39	695,868	325,331	370,537	87.8
40–44	497,067	199,722	297,345	67.2
45–49	415,931	175,052	240,879	72.7
50–54	312,463	132,413	180,050	73.5
55–59	256,930	110,189	146,741	75.1
60–64	204,994	86,602	118,392	73.1
65–69	166,928	70,660	96,268	73.4
70–74	112,213	46,769	65,444	71.5
75+	116,287	46,921	69,366	67.6

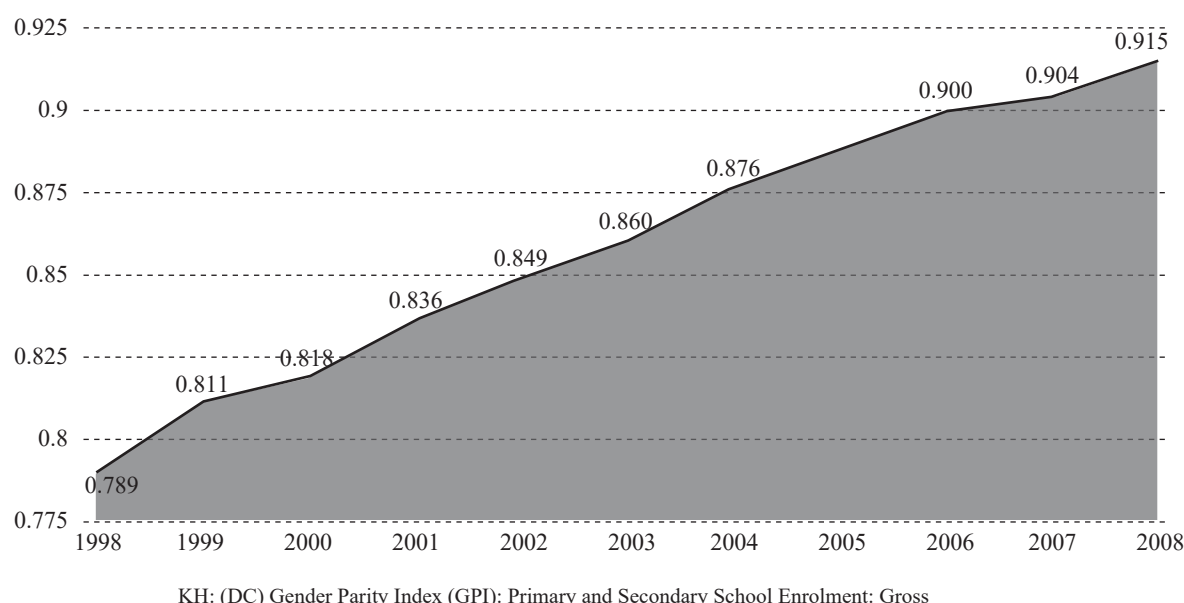
Source: Cambodia Population Census 1998

Improving the education system, especially higher education, also played a significant role in the country's socioeconomic development. During the period of rehabilitation and development, Cambodia made impressive achievements in improving access to education at all levels. Notably, the transition from elite to mass higher education is well underway, with steady increases in tertiary enrolment rates from around 1 percent in the early 1990s to almost 15 percent in 2018 (Un and Sok 2018). Widened access to education has translated into higher youth literacy (around 87 percent in 2008 and 91 percent in 2014 for the 15–24 age group)⁷ and greater gender parity in education (Figures 2).

Before the 1960s, few people and even fewer young women were able to access higher education, not many people were living in urban areas for work opportunities in industry or could travel to find work outside their community. And of course, virtually no one had access to social media, especially mobile phones and the internet, which today play a significant role in shaping human understanding. In 2017, mobile connections in Cambodia stood at 19.16 million, higher than the country's total population of 16 million. Following mobile operators' service expansion into rural areas, the number of internet users increased substantially from 10.8 million in 2016 to 12.5 million in 2017. At the same time, the number of Facebook users increased from 4.8 million to 7 million (Sok 2018). Almost all youth (96 percent) in Cambodia have a mobile phone (BBC 2014a).

⁷ World Bank (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.MA.ZS?contextual=max&locations=KH&view=chart>)

Figure 2: Gender parity index – Gross primary and secondary enrolment from 1998 to 2008



Source: CEIC Global Economic Data (www.ceicdata.com/en/cambodia/education-statistics/kh-gender-parity-index-gpi-primary-and-secondary-school-enrollment-gross-)

Although Cambodia is a matrilineal society and women play active roles in both family and social life, both foreign and Cambodian scholars observe that “Gender equality has never been part of Cambodian society and women are still often regarded as subordinate and dependent on their male family” (Baudinet 2018, 6) and “Cambodia has a strong tradition of enforcing cultural norms pertaining to women – how they should look, act or think” (Thon 2017, 32). However, since the 1990s, accelerating gender equality and the empowerment of women have topped the agenda of many development projects, especially those led by international and local NGOs. The leading local NGO is Gender and Development for Cambodia, which has been operating since 1997. Women’s empowerment and gender equality are also at the heart of government, as evident in the establishment of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs in 1993.

1.2. Scope and objectives of the study

This paper is a supplementary report of the qualitative data analysis and results for the nationally representative survey conducted by CDRI’s Governance Unit for the research study “Cambodia’s Young and Older Generation: Views on Generational Relations and Key Social and Political Issues” (Eng et al. 2019). It aims to examine the interactions and relations as well as the specific factors explaining differences and gaps between women with different attributes, and between men and women, on several key social and political themes.

1.3. Structure of the report

The rest of this report is organised into three sections. Section 2 explains the nature of the data and the method used to write this report. Section 3 presents and discusses the results. Section 4 concludes with a summary of the key findings and arising issues that warrant attention.

2. Data and method

2.1. Method

We used SPSS to perform and interpret descriptive analysis and applied crosstab procedure to produce comparative data for seven attributes (age, educational attainment, marital status, residence, employment, mobility and internet access) on four main themes: family, attitudes towards community, political knowledge and attitudes, and future expectations. Independent two-sample t-test was applied to compare the means of two independent groups (male and female or females with different attributes) on each given variable in order to determine the statistical significance, if any, of differences between the means.

2.2. Data and use of data

This study draws on primary data from a nationally representative survey, conducted by CDRI from October 2017 to January 2018, of 1,610 Cambodian citizens in 101 villages (72 rural, 29 urban) in five provinces and Phnom Penh (Eng et al. 2019). The survey sample frame comprised more female than male respondents (59.8 percent female, 40.2 percent male). Respondents were classified into two groups: young generation or youth (aged 16–30), and older generation or adult respondents (older than 30). The former constituted almost one quarter (24.9 percent) and the latter almost three quarters (75.1 percent) of the total number of respondents.

The survey questionnaire consisted of 101 questions divided into six sections covering demographics, identity and values, trust and respect, outlook, political participation, and media. The responses were classified into four main themes: family, attitudes towards community, political knowledge and attitudes, and future expectations. Each theme was divided into several subthemes, as follows:

- Family
 - Generation gap
 - Decision making in the family
 - Decision making about marriage
- Attitudes towards community
 - Trust
 - Caring about country
 - Community participation
- Political knowledge and attitudes
 - Gendered perspectives on leadership and social and political participation
 - Concern about social issues and services
- Future expectations
 - Direction the country is taking
 - Personal prospects

2.3. Data coding

Sex-disaggregated data is usually analysed under what is commonly known as gender analysis. Gender analysis generally focuses on the situation of women or women's perceptions of certain issues, assuming all women are the same. This study analyses gender-disaggregated data using cross-tabulation to explore the relationships between multiple variables. Specifically, it focuses on seven different attributes: age, residence (urban/rural), educational attainment, marital status, employment type, mobility and internet use. The aim is to examine whether or not women with different attributes have different perceptions about certain issues.

- For place of residence, the original answer by respondents of the survey question was open ended, but this study consolidated the data into two categories – Phnom Penh residents and non-Phnom Penh residents.
- For level of education, the survey categories were 1) never attended school, 2) primary school, 3) secondary school, 4) high school, 5) vocational training, 6) university or tertiary level, 7) other, 8) no response. For this report, nominal data was changed into basic education or lower, and higher than basic education.⁸
- For marital status, the survey categories were 1) single (never been married), 2) married, 3) widowed, 4) separated/divorced, 5) no response. This data was converted into single and non-single.
- For type of employment, the survey categories were 1) self-employed (own business), 2) homemaker/family caretaker, 3) working in family business/farm, 4) paid employee working for the government, 5) paid employee working for a non-profit organisation, 6) paid employee working for a private business/for profit, 7) unemployed, 8) student, 9) no response. This data was converted into paid and non-paid employment.
- For mobility, the survey focused on migration, but this was converted into mobility.

2.4. Data cleaning and analysis techniques

Crosstabulation of data on the seven selected attributes generated 567 tables, analysis of which was beyond the scope of this report. So, the following criteria were used to reduce the number of tables:

- Relevance of the survey questions to the four themes selected for study.
- Percentage differences between the responses against each attribute. Data allowing, differences were ascertained with statistical testing; otherwise, a 10 percent difference was used as the threshold.
- Frequency with which the same or similar questions are raised, discussed and prioritised by government, scholars, research surveys and studies.

3. Discussion of the results

This section is divided into four thematic subsections covering family, attitudes towards community, political knowledge and attitudes, and future expectations.

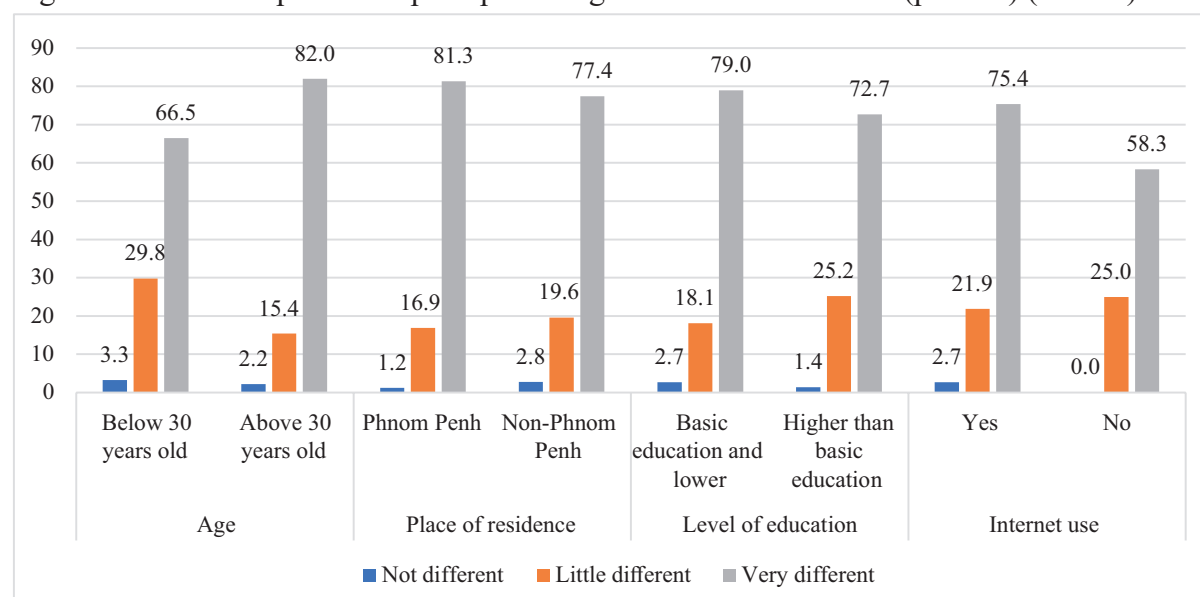
3.1. Family

3.1.1. Generational gap and decision making in the family

Demographic change due to the baby boom after the Khmer Rouge period combined with improvements in education, access to media and urban multi-cultural lifestyle has brought about a generational gap. The survey data presented in Figure 3 shows that the majority of female respondents perceive their generation to be very different from other generations. This perception is especially prevalent among the over 30 age group, Phnom Penh residents, those with a basic education or lower, and internet users. Whereas, in stark contrast, younger women, non-Phnom Penh residents, and those with higher than basic education perceive the generations to be a little different.

⁸ The reason for this is that the Cambodian Constitution defines basic education as nine years of schooling. The mean years of schooling in Cambodia remains very low, standing at 4.8 in 2017 (hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/KHM.pdf).

Figure 3: Female respondents' perception of generational differences (percent) (N=957)



Over 50 percent of female respondents agreed with the statement “It is acceptable for young people to disagree with their parents” (Figure 4). Notably, more female respondents with higher than basic education (71.9 percent), who live in Phnom Penh (69.3 percent) and have internet access (67.6 percent) agreed with this statement than those with basic education or lower (57.8 percent), who live outside Phnom Penh (57.9 percent) and do not have internet access (25.0 percent).

This generational gap not only affects who should make important life decisions, but also what and why such decisions would be made. Although parents still take responsibility for decision making, young people are increasingly perceived to be responsible for making their own life decisions. The degree of perceived authority over decision making is different from case to case, however. For instance, parental decision making about their children’s education remains significant, whereas parents are less involved in decision making about their children’s employment. That said, youth are increasingly perceived to be responsible for making their own education and employment choices.

Figure 5 shows female respondents’ answers to the question “Who should be in charge of making education and employment choices for young people?” For education, 69.9 percent of Phnom Penh residents, 68.3 percent of those with higher than basic education and 69.5 percent of internet users said that young people should be responsible for their own decision making. In comparison, 49.1 percent of non-Phnom Penh residents, 48.3 percent of those with basic or lower education, and 41.7 percent of non-internet users said such decisions should be made by parents.

Similarly, when it comes to employment, 86.1 percent of Phnom Penh residents, 89.2 percent of those with higher than basic education and 85.5 percent of internet users agreed that young people should make their own decision about their choice of employment. By contrast, only 69.7 percent of non-Phnom Penh residents, 69.7 percent of those with basic education or lower and 58.3 percent of non-internet users agreed such decisions should be made by youth themselves.

Figure 4: Percentage of female respondents' agreeing with the statement 'It is acceptable for youth to disagree with their parents' (N=957)

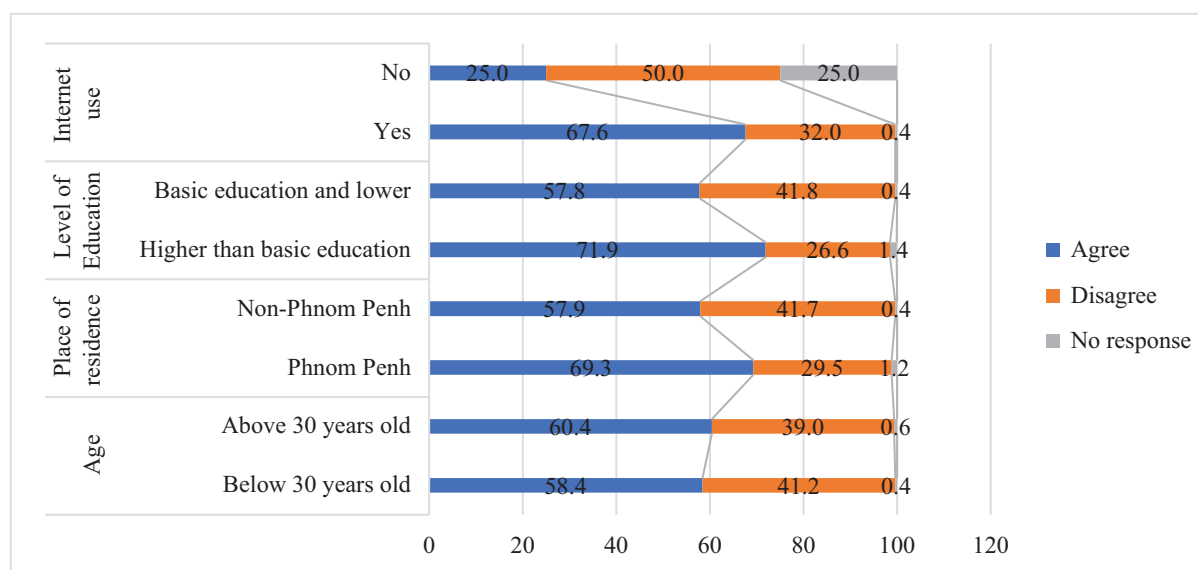
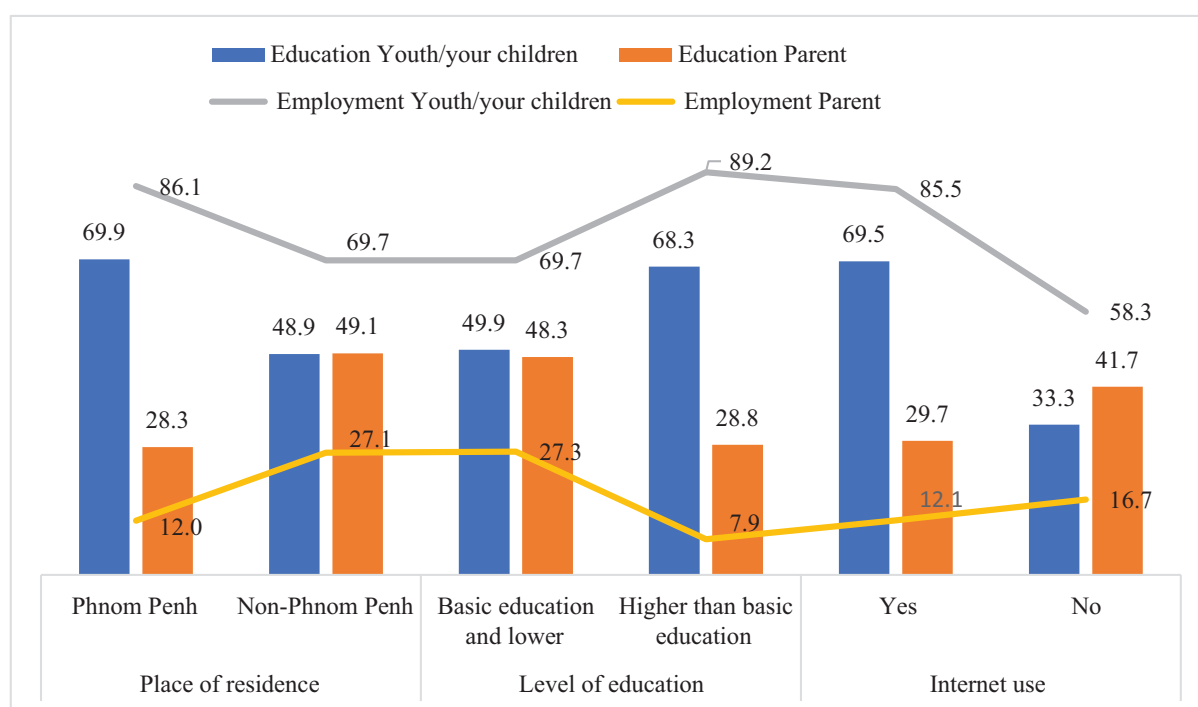


Figure 5: Female respondents' answers to 'Who should be in charge of making the employment and education choices for youth/your children?' (percent) (N=957)

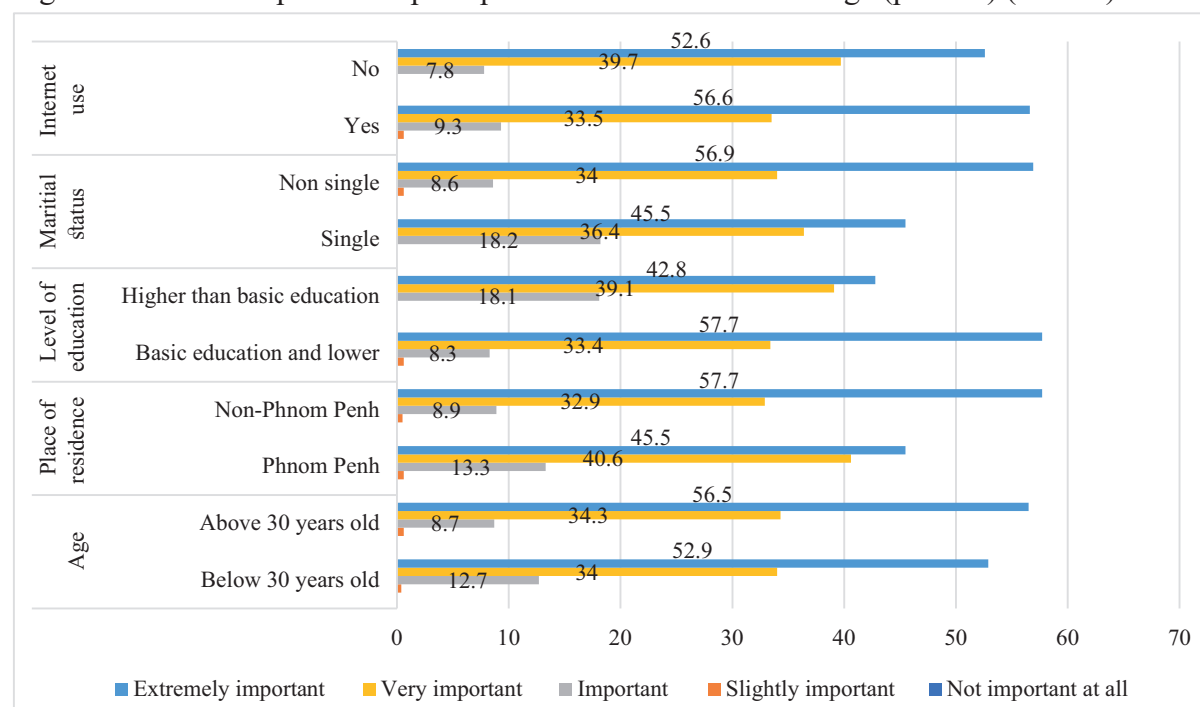


3.1.2. Marriage

Marriage is highly valued and desired in Cambodian society as it represents an acceptable and respectable step towards forming family relationships and entering parenthood. This pressures young Cambodians, especially girls and women, to follow a traditional lifestyle, regardless of their educational attainment, place of residence, marital status and internet use. As Figure 6 shows, almost all female respondents thought it very important to marry and have a family, while more than 50 percent considered it extremely important. Worth noting is that, according

to t-test analysis, non-Phnom Penh residents ($P\text{-value} = 0.001$) value marriage and having a family more than Phnom Penh residents. This perhaps reflects traditional Cambodian family and social life.

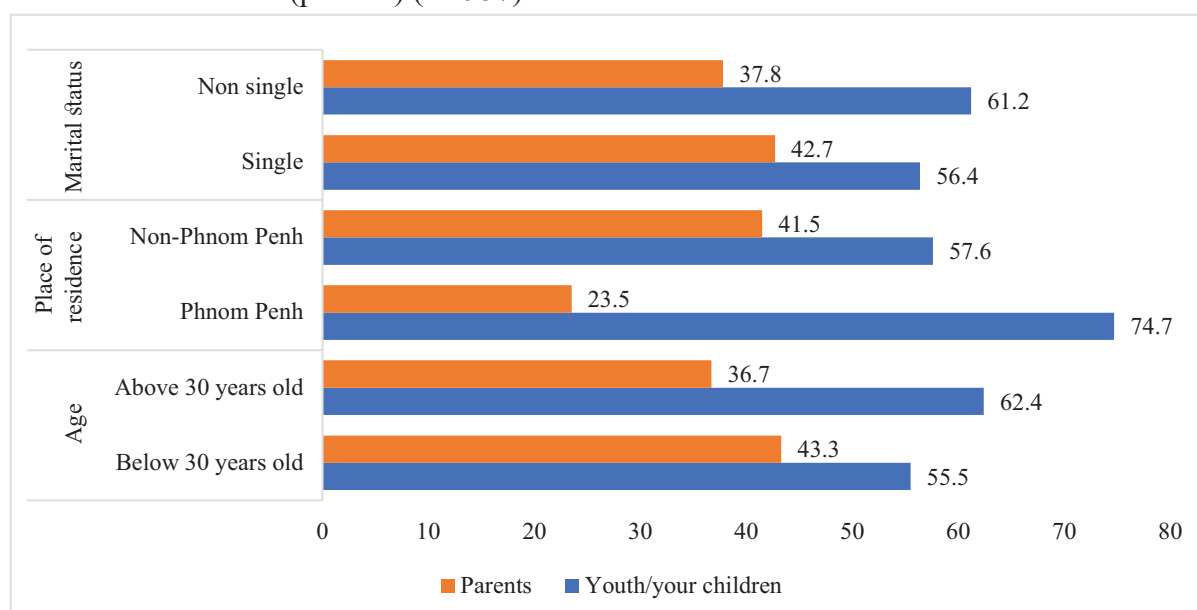
Figure 6: Female respondents' perceptions of the value of marriage (percent) (N=957)



Traditionally, parents look out for and introduce a suitable partner to their children and arrange the marriage. This practice is being challenged. As noted earlier, more and more young people are responsible for their own life decisions including marriage, though the percentage of parents who were perceived as the decision-making agent remains significantly high. Looking at Figure 7, of all female respondents, those aged above 30 (62.4 percent), married or cohabiting (61.2 percent), and residing in Phnom Penh (74.7 percent) were in favour of young people making their own marriage decision compared to their younger (55.5 percent), single (56.4 percent) and non-Phnom Penh resident (57.4 percent) counterparts.

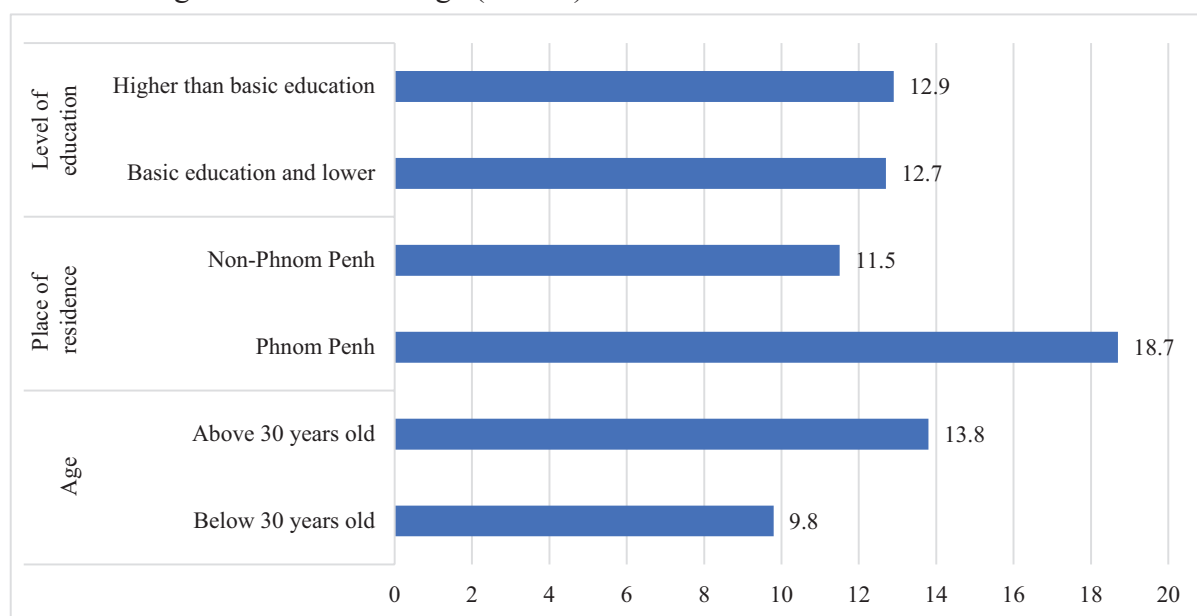
Since forming a family is done through marriage, living together before marriage is neither valued nor considered acceptable. Proving this situation, more than 80 percent of female respondents opined that couples should not live together before marriage. However, young educated people are increasingly challenging this tradition, and tend to find their romantic partner as they gain their independence and start to move outside the family circle and experience modern life (Saunders 2011). As Figure 8 shows, the percentage of respondents accepting the possibility of living together is low, at less than 20 percent. Among the female respondents who agreed with the idea of couples living together before marriage, Phnom Penh residents (18.7 percent) outnumbered non-Phnom Penh residents (11.5 percent); and, somewhat surprisingly, older women (13.8 percent) outnumbered younger women (9.8 percent).

Figure 7: Female respondents' answers to 'Who should be in charge of making the marriage decision?' (percent) (N=957)



This gives a small insight into how social change is happening alongside traditional practice. Although living together before marriage occurs, Baudinet (2018) notes that tension still exists across generations and society at large.

Figure 8: Percentage of female respondents agreeing it is acceptable for couples to live together before marriage (N=957)



3.2. Attitudes towards community

3.2.1. Trust

Using data from the Asia Barometer Survey (2003–06), which covers 29 Asian countries, Tokuda Fujii and Inoguchi (2010) found that Cambodians reported the lowest level of social trust. Many scholars such as Zucker (2013) and Scheer (2017) have attributed this to the impact of the Khmer Rouge. Although there has been no independent study on the level of social trust in Cambodia, the survey results suggest moderate to high levels of institutional trust.

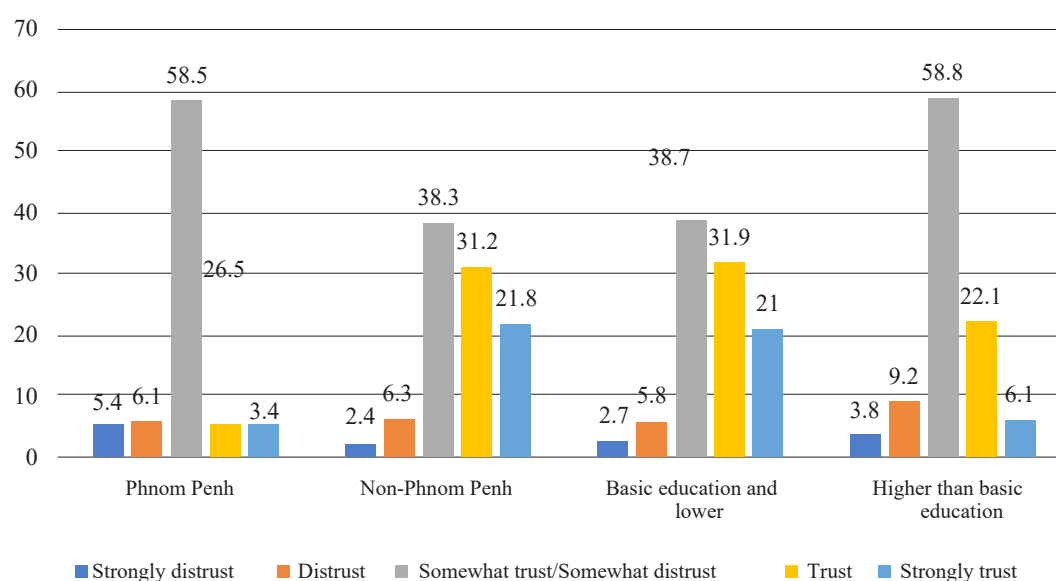
Table 2 gives the responses to the multiple-choice question “What or who do you think you can trust more?” Hospitals/schools were rated the most trustworthy by 89.4 percent of male and 92.3 percent of female respondents. Local institutions, the media, police/court, and politicians were rated less trustworthy; nonetheless, except for politicians, the level of trust in these institutions is substantially high. Notably, just 3.8 percent of male and 2.8 percent of female respondents selected the statement “I do not trust any of these institutions or people”.

Table 2: What or who do you trust most? (percent) (N=1,600)

	Male	Female
Media	77.5	75.6
Local institutions	87.5	88.7
Police/court	71.4	78.3
Hospitals/schools	89.4	92.3
Politicians	65.7	65.6
Do not trust any of these	3.8	2.8

Despite remarkable successes, Cambodia is still a developing country and relies on support from civil society institutions and international development partners. The positive impact of civil society institutions, especially NGOs, in Cambodia is undeniable. But, as many observers claim, their presence is not without controversy (Domashneva 2013). There may be some truth in this as surprisingly few female respondents, even better educated and Phnom Penh residents, said they strongly trusted the development workers in their community (Figure 9). Interestingly, a high proportion of female respondents across all attributes stated that they somewhat trust/somewhat distrust the people doing development work in their community.

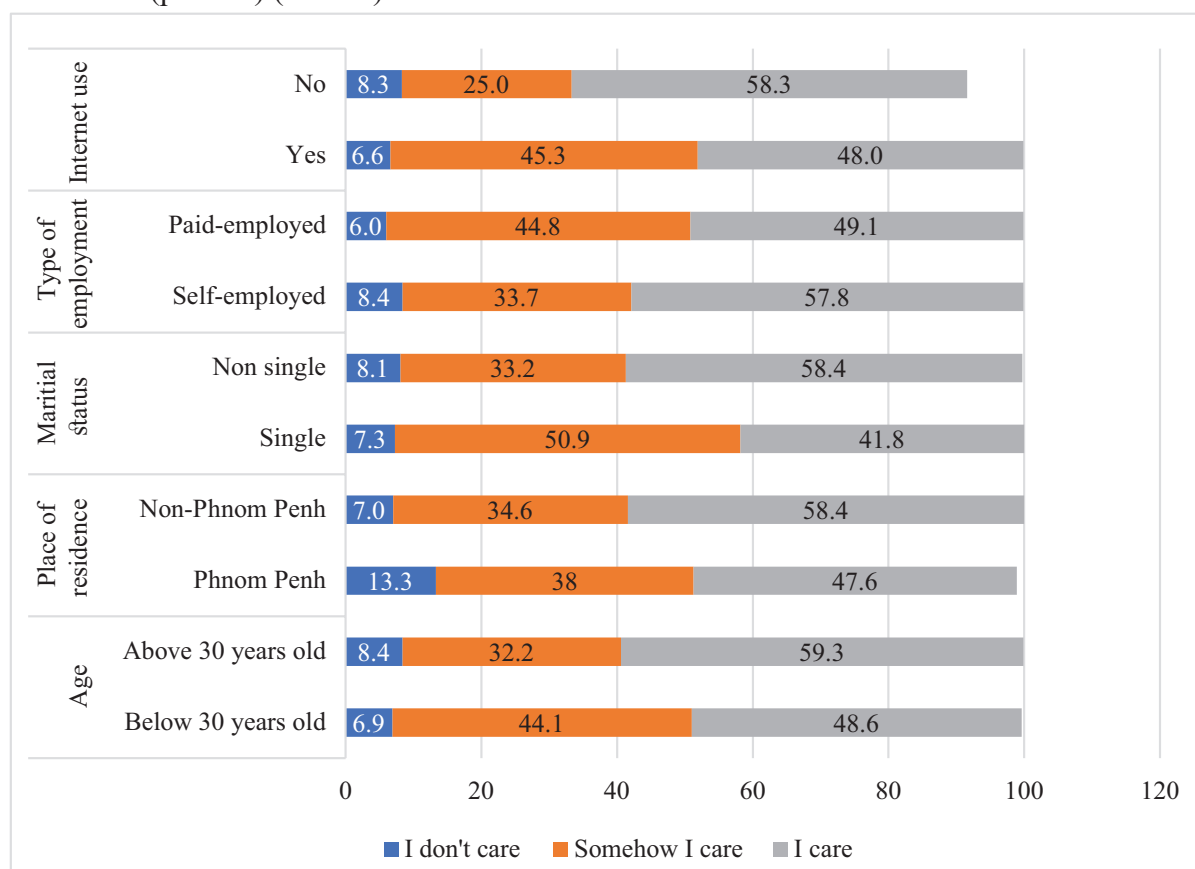
Figure 9: Female respondents’ level of trust in development workers in their community (percent) (N=957)



3.2.2. Caring about country and community participation

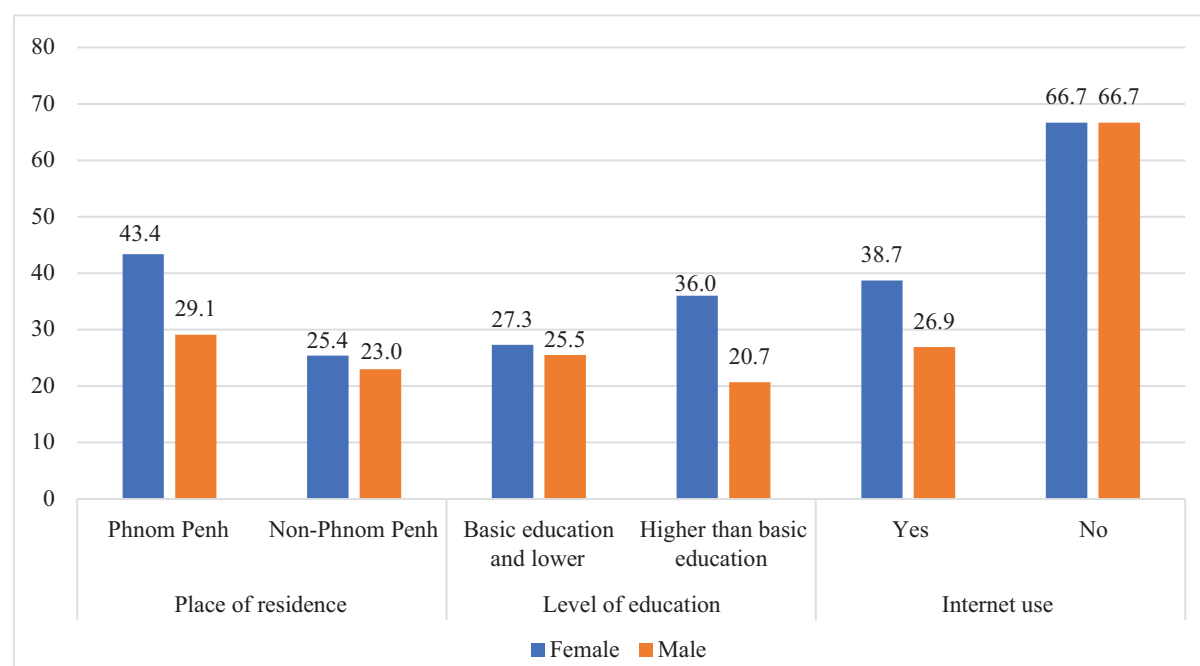
Figure 10 presents female respondents' answers to the question "How much do you care about your country?" Overall, just over half of them answered "I care". Disaggregation by attribute shows that more older women (59.3 percent) and non-Phnom Penh residents (58.4 percent) care about their country than younger women (48.6 percent) and Phnom Penh residents (47.6 percent).

Figure 10: Female respondents' answers to 'How much do you care about your country?' (percent) (N=957)



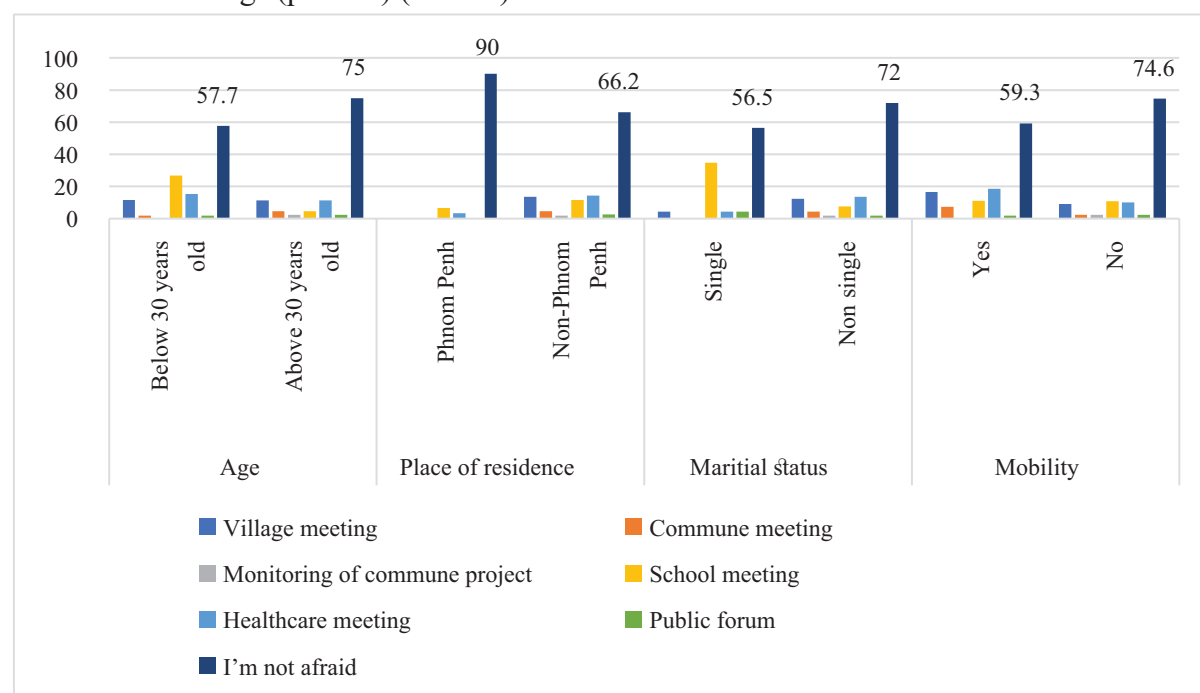
Care about community and country does not necessarily translate into active community participation, however. Figure 11 illustrates the level of participation in local meetings. Among all female respondents, 43.4 percent of Phnom Penh residents, 36.0 percent of those with higher than basic education and 66.7 percent of those without internet access have never participated in a local meeting. These percentages are much higher than for women living outside Phnom Penh (25.4 percent) and those with basic education (27.3 percent) and internet access (38.7 percent). Non-Phnom Penh residents and those with basic education or lower tend to participate more in local-level public meetings organised by authorities: 61.4 percent of female respondents who have lower than basic education and live outside Phnom Penh claimed to have participated in public events.

Figure 11: Percentage of female respondents having participated in local meetings (N=957)



An interesting observation is that, across different attributes, the majority of those who had participated in local events did not ask any questions. Yet the majority of female respondents claimed they were not afraid to ask questions (Figure 12). This finding is consistent with the observation of a BBC (2014b) report that young people are either not able or possibly reluctant to discuss important issues at commune level.

Figure 12: Female respondents' meeting attendance and willingness to speak at local meetings (percent) (N=957)



3.3. Political knowledge and attitudes

This section focuses on offline (as opposed to digital social media platforms) attitudes towards political leaders, expression of political views, as well as social and political participation.

3.3.1. Gender perspectives on leadership and social and political participation

The empowerment of women is strongly promoted in Cambodian society and significant behavioural change is observed, yet gender stereotypes and social norms and attitudes still pose barriers for women and women are still under-represented, especially in decision-making positions. Traditionally, masculinity is strongly rooted in Cambodian society and continues to be respected by both male and female respondents as the privileged gender norm and behaviour. The challenge that is most difficult to address is not social discrimination against women per se, but women's acceptance of being socially objectified and stereotyped (Saphon 2015, 9).

In the survey, a higher percentage of female than male respondents agreed that men make better political leaders than women. Figure 13 disaggregates the results by four attributes. Among female respondents, more older women (37.6 percent), non-Phnom Penh residents (37.2 percent), those with basic education or lower (36.7 percent), and married/cohabiting women (35.9 percent) held this view than younger women (23.3 percent), Phnom Penh residents (18.7 percent), those with higher than basic education (18.0 percent) and single women (19.3 percent).

Another interesting point is that across all attributes apart from internet users, more female than male respondents reported feeling afraid to discuss their political views offline (Figure 14).

Figure 13: Percentage of respondents' agreeing with the statement 'Men make better political leaders than women' (N=1,600)

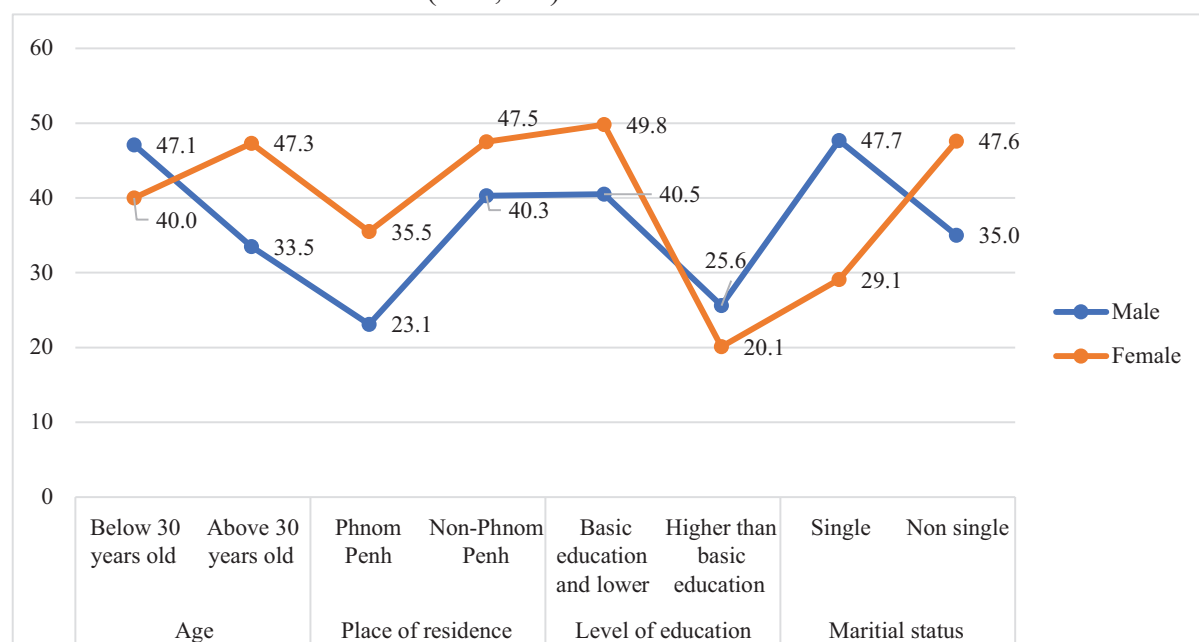
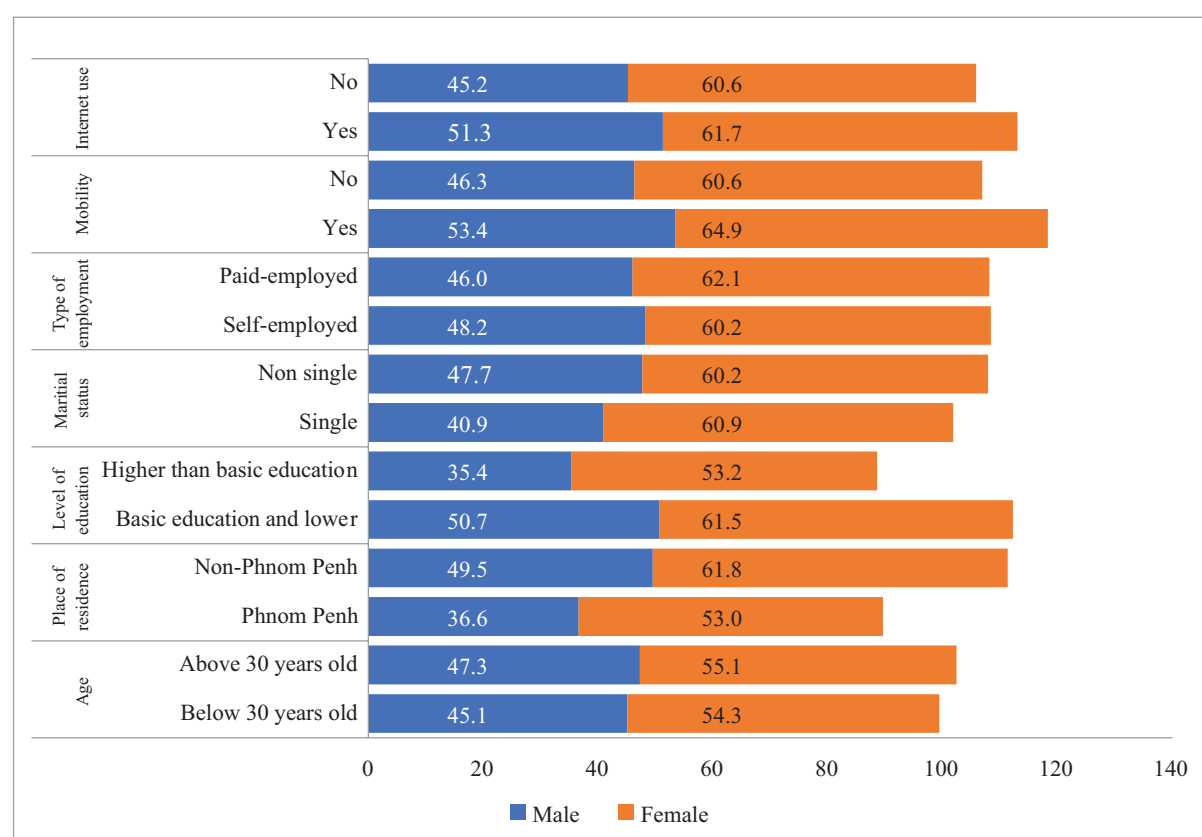


Figure 14: Percentage of respondents afraid to discuss their political views offline (N=1,600)



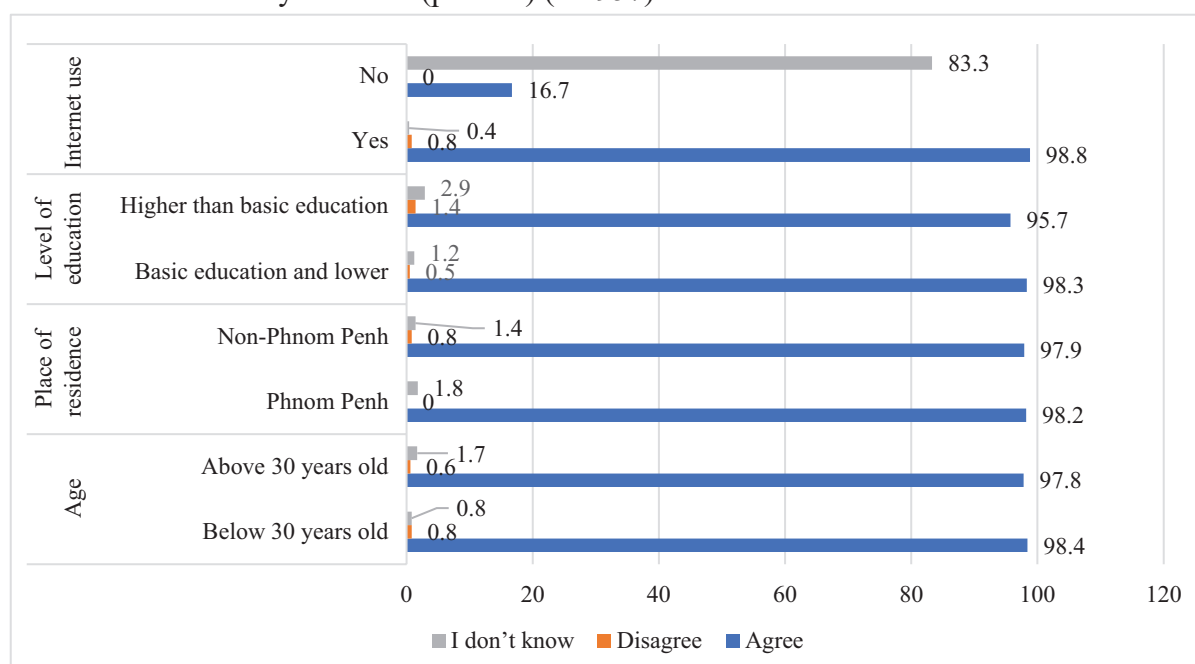
CDRI's research study "Cambodia's Young and Older Generation: Views on Generational Relations and Key Social and Political Issues" (Eng et al. 2019) reports that 75 percent of respondents believed women and men should be entitled to the same opportunities for tertiary education. Further, more than 90 percent of respondents valued people who have completed tertiary education. However, gender bias was still evident in their perceptions. Even a fair number of female respondents agreed that it is better for a boy than a girl to study at university; this view was most prevalent among women older than 30 (30.3 percent), non-Phnom Penh residents (28.1 percent), non-single (28.1 percent), and non-internet users (25.0 percent).

Table 3: Female respondents' agreeing with the statement 'It is better for a boy than a girl to study at university' (N=957)

	Age (%)		Place of residence (%)		Marital status (%)		Internet use (%)	
	< 30 years	> 30 years	Phnom Penh	Non-Phnom Penh	Single	Non-single	Yes	No
Agree	13.9	30.3	16.9	28.1	10.9	28.1	10.5	25.0
Disagree	85.7	69.5	82.5	71.8	89.1	71.7	89.5	66.7
No response	0.4	0.1	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	8.3

As Figure 15 shows, the majority of female respondents exercise their right to vote and are well aware of the significance of the impact of their vote on the country's future. In stark contrast, only 16.7 percent of those without internet access thought their vote mattered for the country's future direction.

Figure 15: Female respondents' agreeing with the statement 'My vote can have an impact on the country's future' (percent) (N=957)



The majority of older adults (94.3 percent of males, 92.4 percent of females) voted in the 2013 national election compared to less than half of younger adults (43.1 percent of males, 44.1 percent of females). Of those who voted, 71.5 percent use the internet (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Percentage of respondents who voted in the 2013 national election (N=1,600)

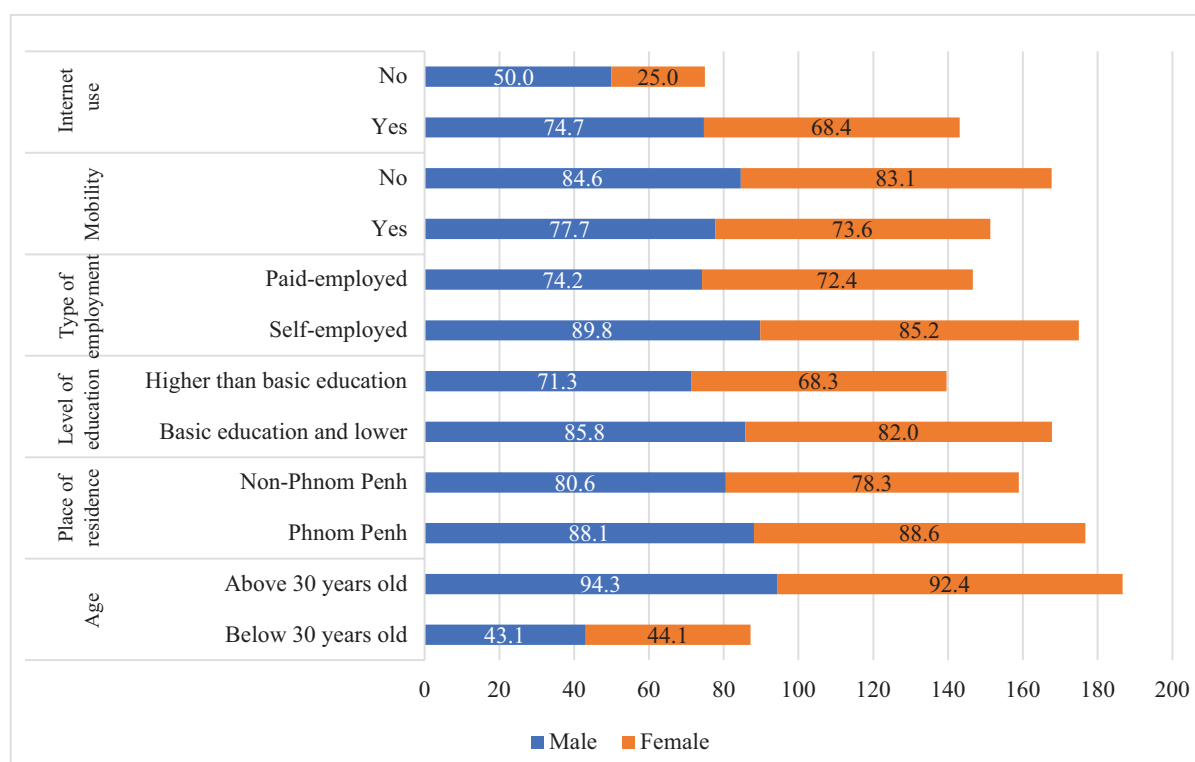


Table 4 provides some insight into respondents' voting intention. More female (25.0 percent) than male respondents (16.7 percent) were likely to always vote for the same political party. Interestingly, far more older (81.6 percent) than younger women (23.7 percent) always vote for the same party, as do women with basic education or lower (69.2 percent) compared to those with higher than basic education (52.5 percent). The intention to vote for the same party is consistent with the answer given by the majority of respondents, that they vote based on political party rather than on political candidate or other influence.

Table 4: Intention of voting for the same party (N=1,600)

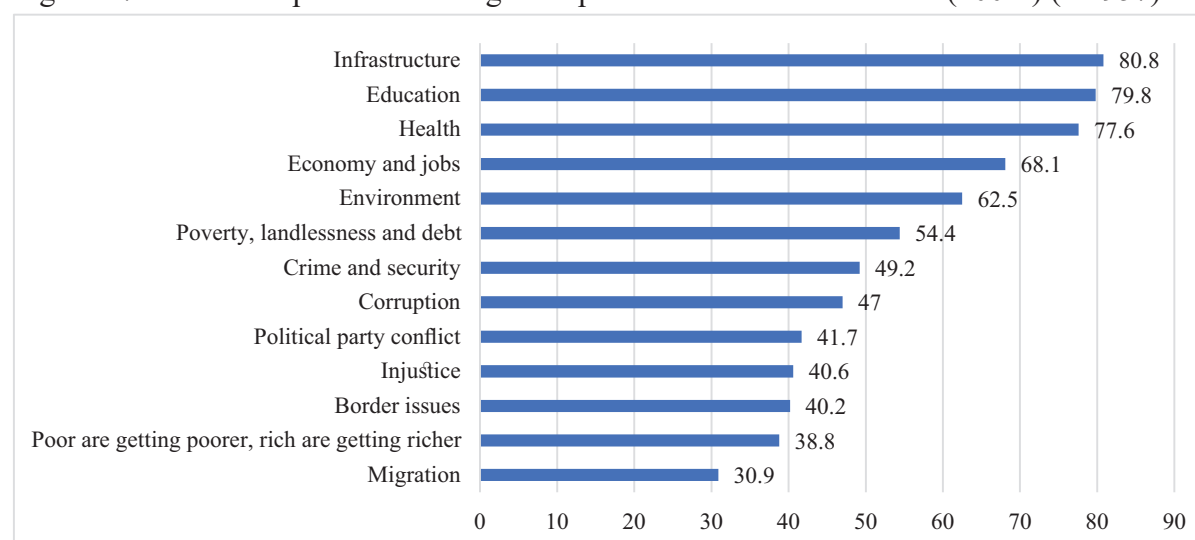
Sex	Age (%)		Educational attainment (%)	
	< 30 years	30 years +	Basic education or lower	Higher than basic education
Male	20.3	73.9	66.2	46.3
Female	23.7	81.6	69.2	52.5

3.3.2. Concern about social issues and services

Respondents were asked to rate the importance for Cambodia of 13 social issues and services. Overall, male and female respondents, regardless of age, residence, educational attainment, marital status and internet use, expressed similar concerns, though the degree of concern varied slightly. Among female respondents, infrastructure was ranked as the most important issue by 80.9 percent, followed by education (79.9 percent), health (77.3 percent), economy and jobs (68.1 percent), environment (62.6 percent), poverty, landlessness and debt (54.5 percent), crime and security (49.3 percent), corruption (47.1 percent), political party conflict (41.7 percent), injustice (40.6 percent), border issues (40.2 percent), widening wealth inequality between the poor and the rich (38.8 percent), and migration (31.0 percent) (Figure 17).

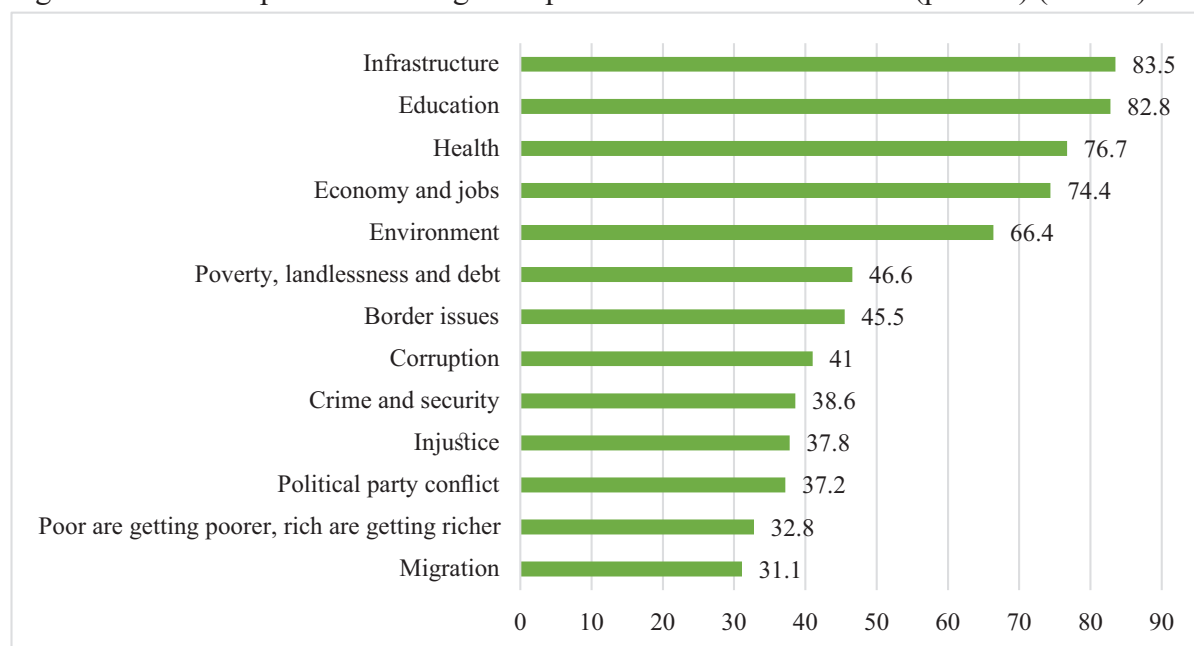
A similar pattern is found among male respondents, though the percentages are slightly different. Infrastructure was ranked as the most important issue for Cambodia by 83.5 percent, followed by education (83.0 percent), health (76.8 percent), economy and jobs (74.4 percent), environment (66.5 percent), poverty, landlessness and debt (46.6 percent), border issues (45.6 percent), corruption (41.0), crime and security (38.7 percent), injustice (37.8 percent), political party conflict (37.2 percent), widening wealth inequality between the poor and the rich (32.8) percent, and migration (31.1 percent) (Figure 18).

Figure 17: Female respondents' rating of important issues for Cambodia (100%) (N=957)



The finding is somewhat different from those of other reports. For example, a research team at the Asia Foundation monitoring Cambodia’s leading Facebook pages found crime to be the most important area of concern, closely followed by border disputes, with traffic accidents a distant third (BBC 2014b). Community life, safety and security were the main concerns of young people, followed by poverty, natural resources, land conflict and traffic accidents, but to a much lesser degree (BBC 2014a).

Figure 18: Male respondents’ rating of important issues for Cambodia (percent) (N=940)

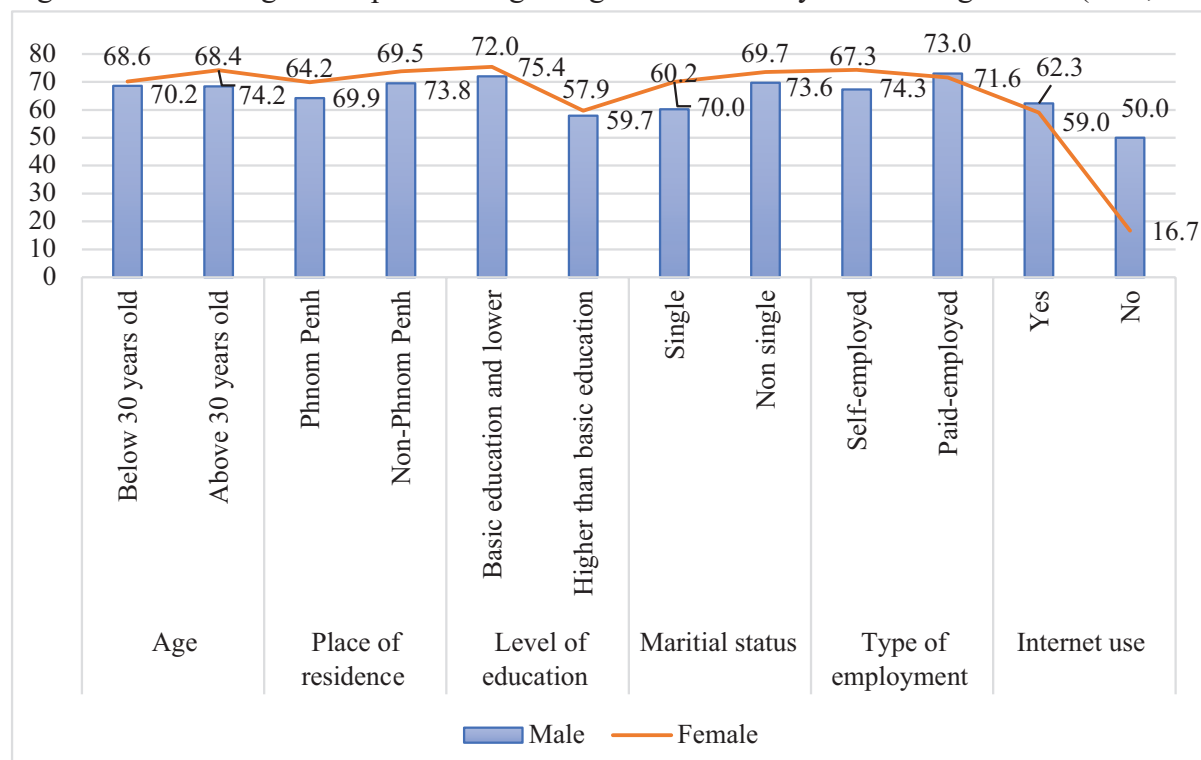


3.4. Future expectations

3.4.1. Direction the country is heading in

The survey results support the observation that most male and female respondents feel the country is on the right track, mainly referring to social and economic development. However, respondents with higher than basic education were less likely to hold this view than those with basic education or lower (Figure 19). For instance, 59.7 percent of female respondents with higher than basic education felt the country is on the right track compared to 72.0 percent of those with basic education or lower. The standout finding, however, is that only 16.7 percent of female respondents held this view compared to 59 percent of those who use internet.

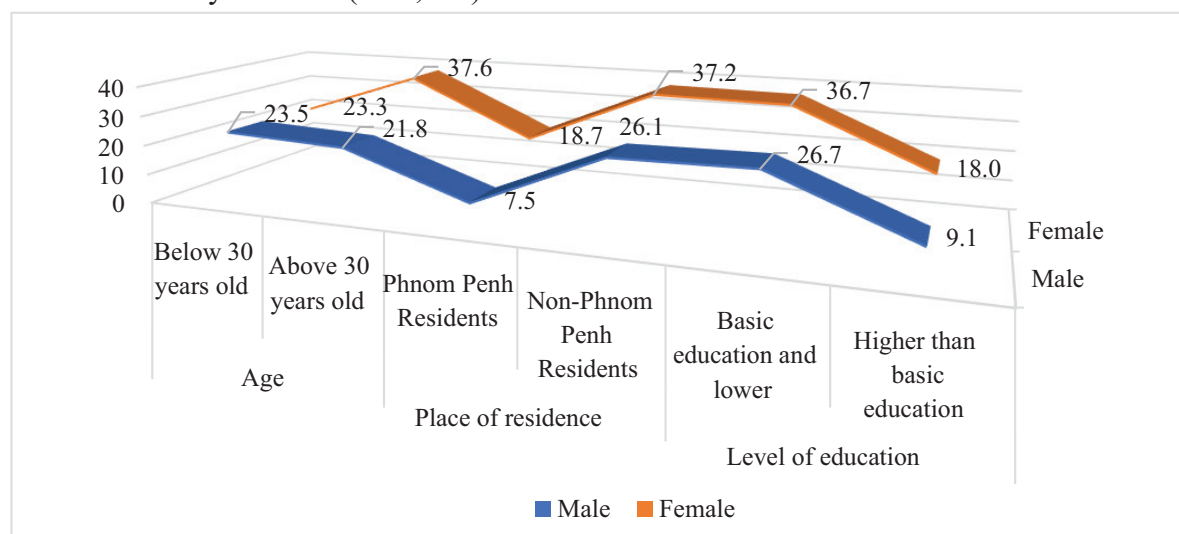
Figure 19: Percentage of respondents agreeing that the country is on the right track (N=1,600)



3.4.2. Individuals' future prospects

The fact that the majority of female and male respondents believe the country is on the right track towards socioeconomic development does not necessarily mean they expect to benefit equally. More female than male respondents raised the concern that their gender is an obstacle to their success in life. Figure 20 disaggregates responses by attribute. Among female respondents, older women, non-Phnom Penh residents and those with basic education or lower consider their gender more of an obstacle to success than younger women, Phnom Penh residents and those with higher than basic education.

Figure 20: Percentage of respondents' agreeing with the statement 'My gender is an obstacle to my success' (N=1,600)



4. Conclusion

Since the early 1990s, Cambodia's macroeconomic performance has been impressive, with robust annual GDP growth of more than 7 percent. GDP per capita increased more than fourfold from USD254 in 1993 to USD1,384 in 2017,⁹ and poverty decreased from just over 50 percent in 1993 to around 10 percent recently. Although there is much room for improvement in women's empowerment and gender equality in Cambodia, the situation of women in many aspects of life has improved markedly, not only for women themselves but also for their social participation. However, until recently, gender studies and analyses have either compared the situation of women over time or with the situation of men, and have generally treated women as a homogenous group.

This report has attempted to gain insight into the behaviour and beliefs of women across different attributes (age, educational attainment, marital status, place of residence, type of employment, mobility, and internet access). The results indicate that these traits and experiences influence women's perceptions of socio-political issues and participation. Therefore, any attempt to empower women and to promote gender equality and equity that treats women as a homogeneous group will fall short of expectations.

Of the seven attributes selected for study, we can conclude that age, place of residence, level of education and internet access significantly shape women's perceptions and socio-political participation. The following summarises to what extent these four attributes do so, with highlights from the findings and arising issues that warrant further attention presented in italics.

1. Family

- Young people are increasingly allowed to take responsibility for making their own life decisions. *Young women who have higher than basic education, live in Phnom Penh and use the internet are more likely to challenge the traditional hierarchy in Cambodian society and conservative way of living and thinking than those who have basic education or lower, live outside Phnom Penh and do not use the internet.*

2. Attitudes towards community

- The survey results suggest some positive signs of public confidence in civic institutions. *Hospitals/schools are perceived to be the most trustworthy institutions, though local institutions, the media, police/court and politicians are also seen as fairly trustworthy. Few respondents (3.8 percent of males, 2.8 percent of females) expressed having no confidence in any of these institutions and people.*
- Unexpectedly, the findings revealed a large grey area around the perceived trustworthiness of development workers, reported by almost half of female respondents. *This is cause for concern given that Cambodia has one of the highest numbers of active NGOs per capita in the world (one NGO for every 10,000 people).*
- The majority of female respondents either care or somewhat care about the country, though these sentiments apply more to older women and non-Phnom Penh residents than to younger women and Phnom Penh residents. *This issue deserves attention given that youth constitute about 60 percent of the population and the rapid pace of urbanisation in Cambodia.*

9 World Bank. 2019. "World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=KH>).

- Care about the country does not translate into active community participation. Even among those who participated in local meetings and claimed they were not afraid to speak up, the majority did not ask any questions. *Further study to explore people's reluctance to speak at public meetings would help improve the quality of civic participation.*
3. Political knowledge and attitudes
- Despite efforts to empower women and promote gender equality, the widespread perception that men make better leaders than women persists even among women, especially older women, those with basic education or lower, and non-internet users. More women than men find that their gender is an obstacle to their success, particularly older women, non-Phnom Penh residents and those with basic education or below. *Addressing gender equality is not just a matter of dealing with men's preconceived notions about women's place, but also women's self-perceptions about their worth and role in society. Women are not only oppressed by men, but also by their internalised oppression as a subordinate group.*
 - Most respondents exercise their right to vote and are aware of the significance of their vote for the country's future. *They believe government can address their concerns about various national social issues and services, the most important to them being infrastructure, education, health, economy and jobs, and environment.*
4. Future expectations
- The majority of respondents believe the country is on the right track, though markedly few women (16.7 percent) without internet access hold this view. *This points to the need to improve internet literacy and raise awareness and share information about certain social issues and services.*

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