



National Council for Sustainable Development
General Secretariat
Department of Climate Change



Ministry of Environment

Bulletin-Special Issue

A SUMMARY OF THE THIRD STUDY ON UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN CAMBODIA

"Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices"



Introduction

The study forms part of a series of knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) studies commissioned by the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD), through its Department of Climate Change (DCC) and working with the Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCA) Phase 3.

These series report and analyse Cambodians' understanding and engagement with issues around climate change. Conducted in 2010 (KAP1), 2015 (KAP2), and 2020 (KAP3), they aim to generate evidence of Cambodians' experience of changes in the weather and their environment to inform future communication strategies and government interventions.

The study (KAP3) took a mixed methods approach. The research team conducted a nationally representative survey with 1,560 people in Cambodia, across five regions (Phnom Penh, Plain, Mountain, Tonle Sap, and Coastal) provinces. In addition, it conducted qualitative research through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with community members (men, women, vulnerable groups, local influencers, and village chiefs), and key stakeholders such as representatives from the government ministries, senate, national assembly, media agencies, universities, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

KAP3 adopted a different questionnaire approach from the previous KAP studies to gain a robust understanding of communities' perceptions of climate change.¹ For example, respondents were asked to reflect on changes in the weather, the environment, and available resources they had experienced and any actions they had taken around these issues. Comparisons between KAP3 findings and those of previous KAP studies have been made where possible.

¹ The KAP3 study questionnaire used an approach wherein respondents were asked about changes they were noticing in their everyday lives such as changes in the weather, environment and resources rather than framing the entire survey around the concept of 'climate change', which was different to previous KAP surveys. This was based on previous research conducted by BBC Media Action that found it was clear that people were noticing changes in weather and resources but did not directly link it to climate change.

Life is getting better for most Cambodians over the last five years



Two-thirds of Cambodians (67%) felt that their lives had improved (men 70%, compared to 65% of women)



More than half of Cambodians (52%) reported an increase in their incomes (men 48%, compared to 44% of women)

Cambodians value good health and access to education above all



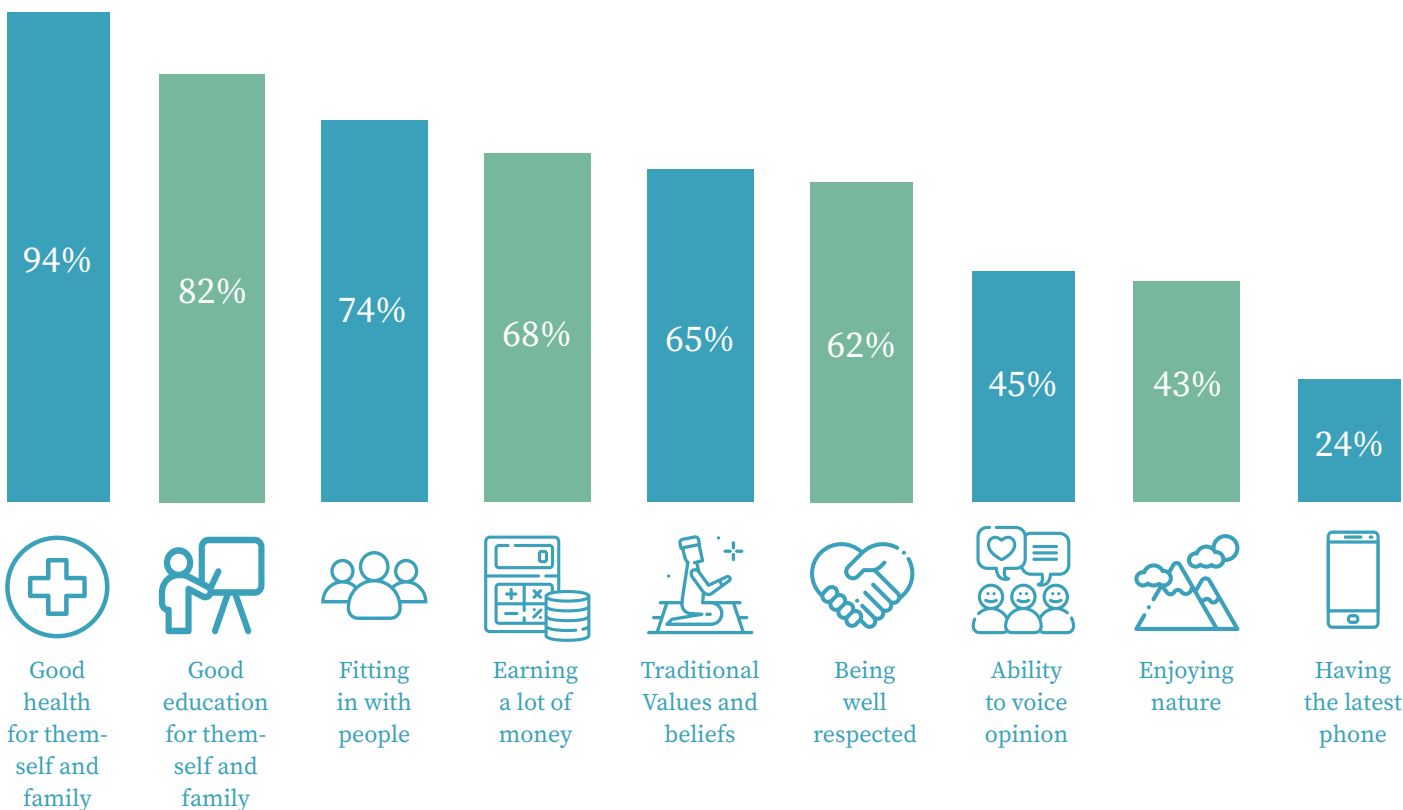
Women were more likely to worry about health, family's well-beings and children's education



Men were more concerned with sustaining the family's livelihood

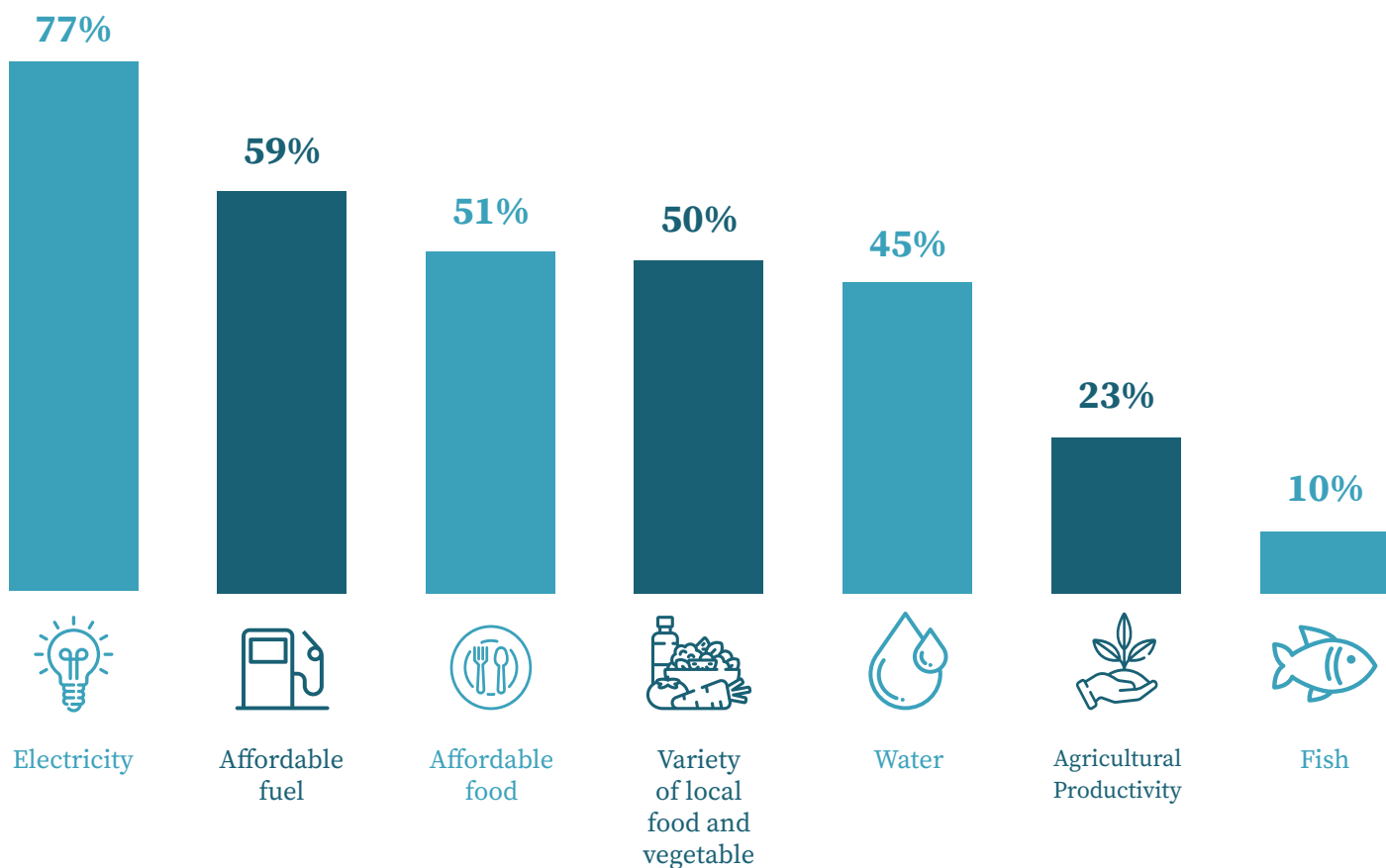
94% of Cambodians reported that keeping themselves and their families in good health was very important to them and 82% mentioned the education of themselves and their families.

Values that are very important for Cambodians

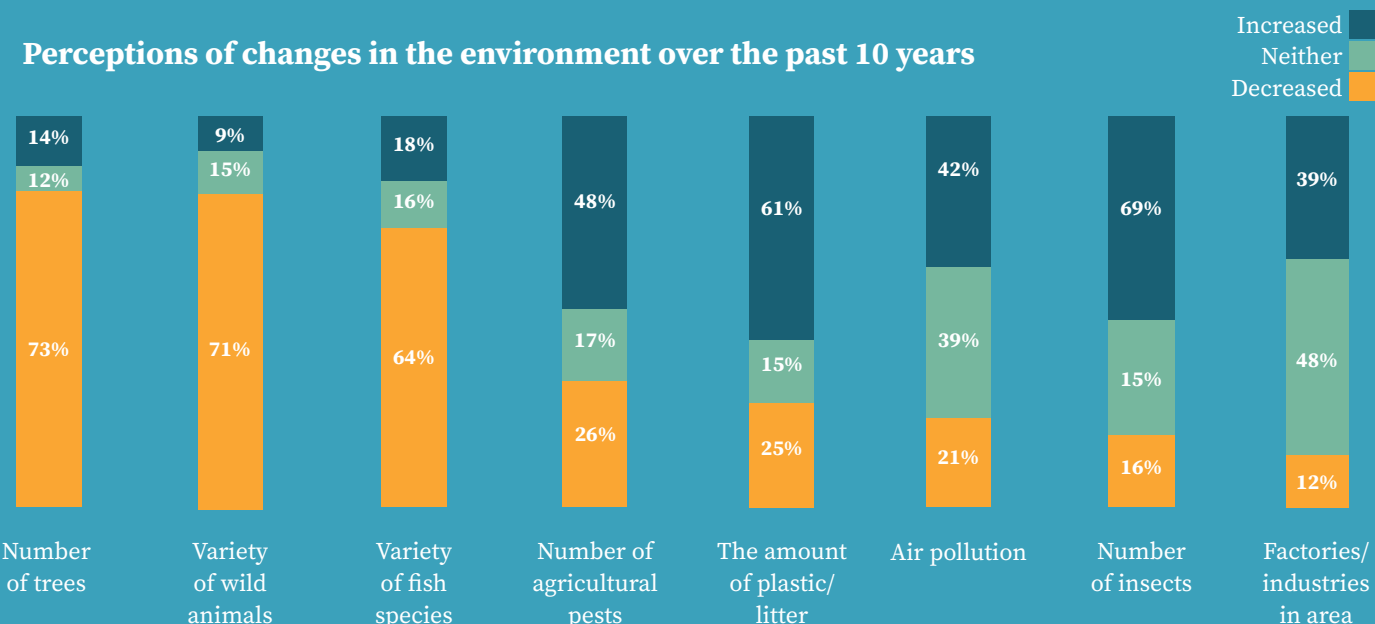


Cambodians were very aware of experiencing changes in the weather, the environment, and their access to resources

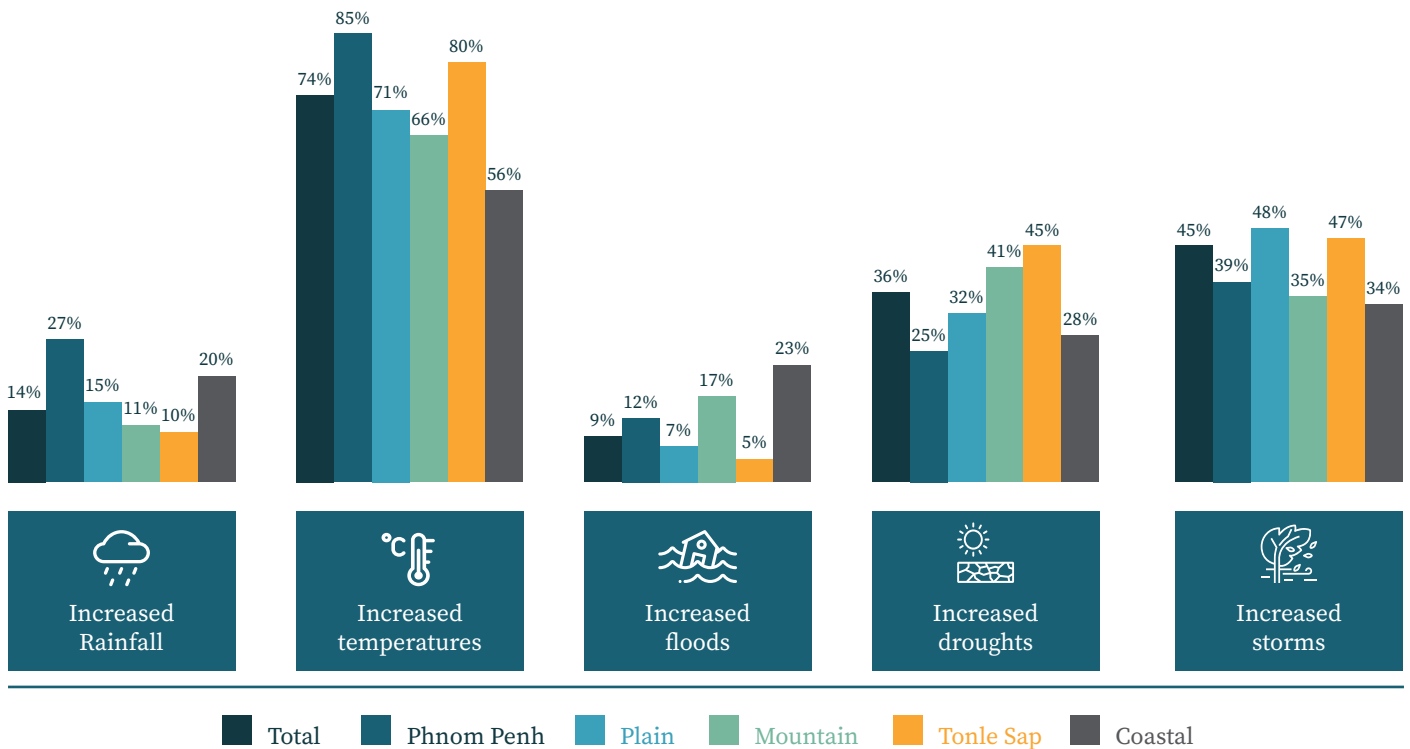
Perceptions of increases in resource availability over the past 10 years



Perceptions of changes in the environment over the past 10 years

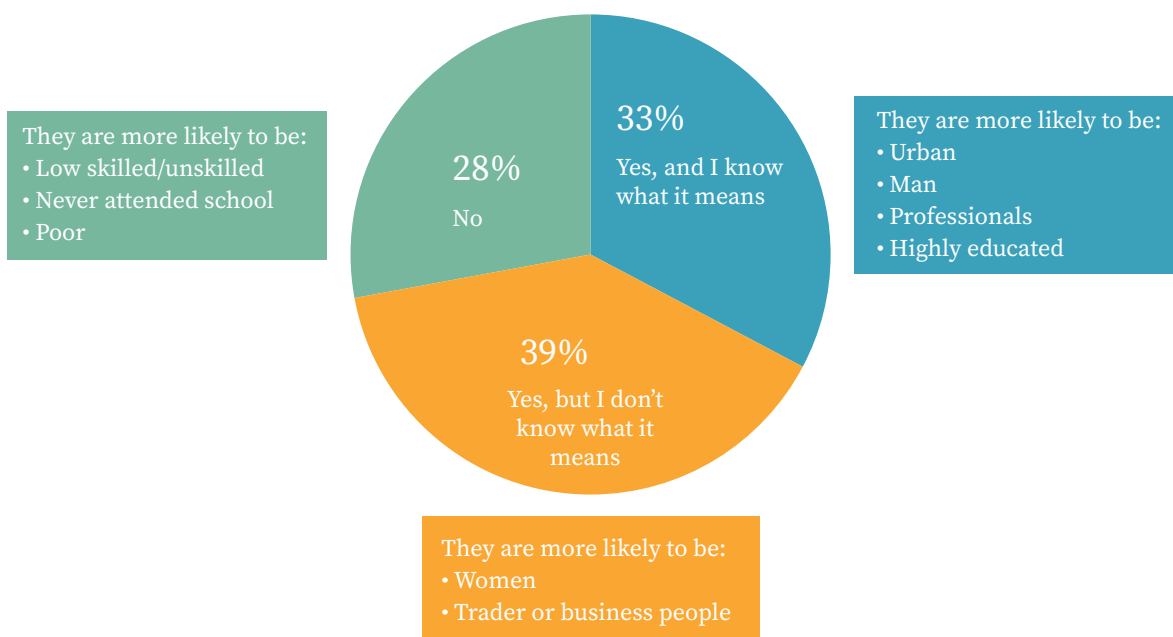


Perceptions of changes in weather patterns over the past 10 years by region



Cambodians have high awareness of the term ‘climate change’ but limited understanding of what the term means

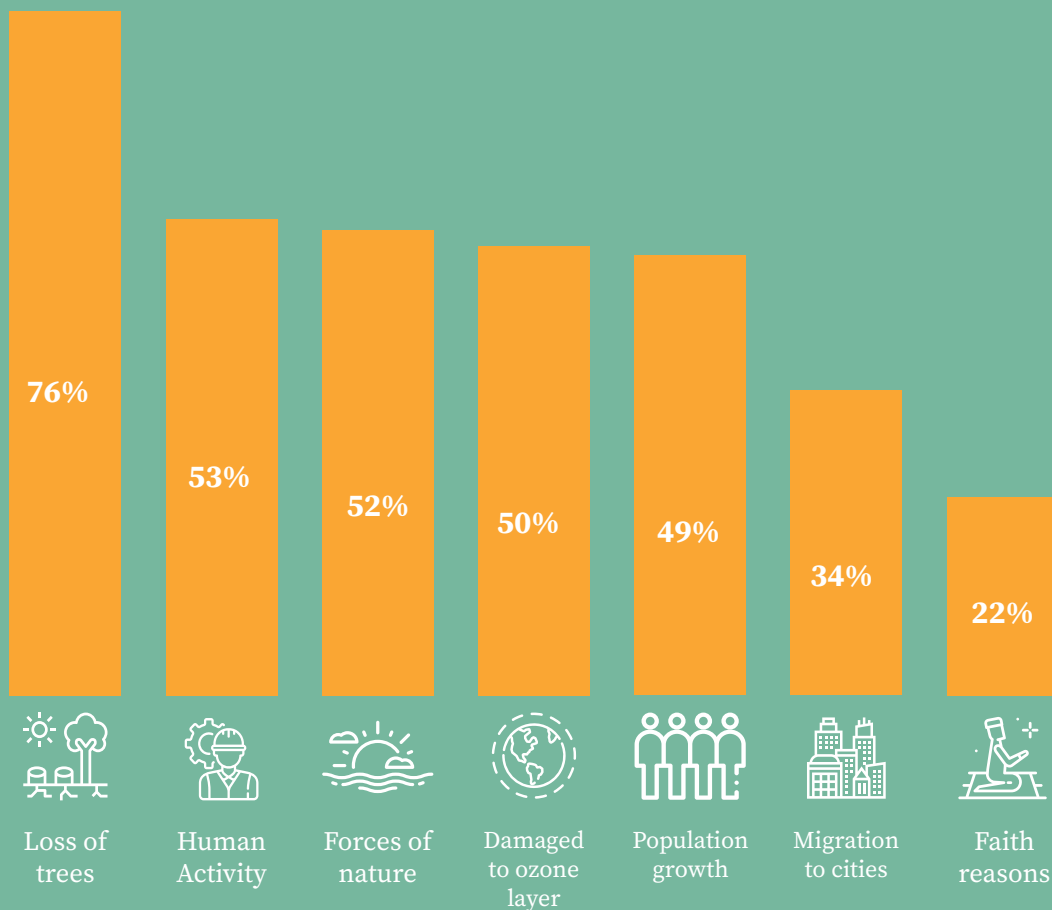
Nearly three-quarter (72%) of Cambodians have heard of the term ‘Climate Change’



Cambodians think climate change is happening in Cambodia and loss of trees is the most common driver of climate change

The vast majority (84%) of Cambodians thought that climate change is happening in Cambodia and 81% thought that climate change will affect Cambodia in the future.

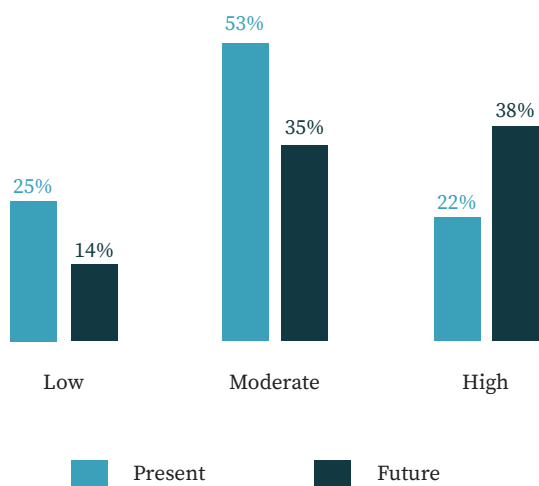
Perceived main causes of climate change



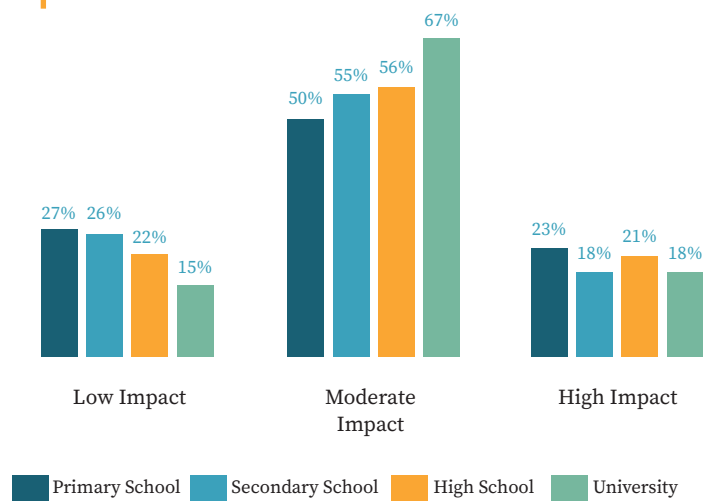
Over one third of people (38%) believed that their own actions contributed to climate change whereas 58% disagreed with this. The most action that respondents thought they are contributing to climate change was burning waste (mentioned by 33%). Interestingly, only 22% believed that cutting wood for cooking contributed to climate change – which is sharply at odds with respondents’ overwhelming perception that loss of trees is the most important factor behind climate change.

Impact of changes in the weather, environment, and resource availability is moderate but expected to increase

People feel impact now and felt it will get worse in the future



Current impact by education attainment



“Floods damage physical infrastructure such as dams, canals and roads, and destroy rice crops. Drought and rising temperatures, on the other hand, lead to a decrease in fish stocks.”
 — Male village chief, Prey Veng province

Changes in weather patterns and the availability of resources such as water, food and fuel disrupt Cambodian livelihoods, it is clear that people’s ability to generate income and to stay healthy were affected the most

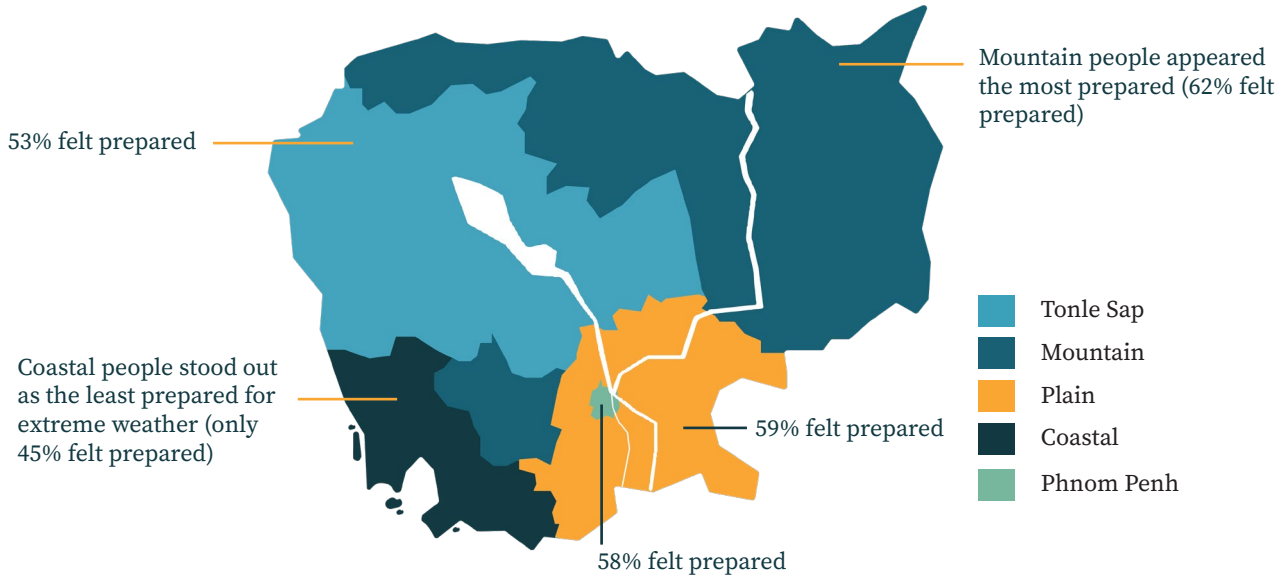


Four in five Cambodians (78%) also believed that keeping healthy was more difficult due to environmental changes - rural women (81% of whom reported this).

“During [the] dry season, some of us buy water for drinking and consumption within [the] household - and food as well, since we cannot harvest aquatic resources and grow vegetables on our own with inadequate water. Therefore, we have additional spending ... while we lack money and have irregular income.”
 — Men’s group FGD, Kampong Speu province

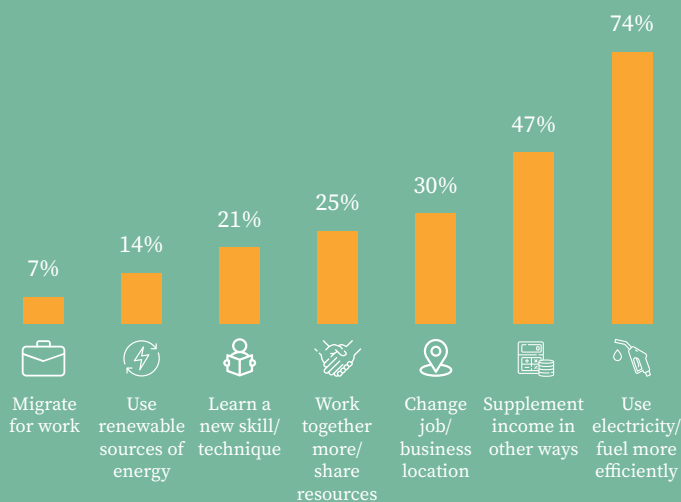
Cambodians showed moderate levels of preparedness for extreme weather events

- More than half (56%) of Cambodians claimed to be prepared for extreme weather such as storms, droughts or floods, etc.
- A sizeable proportion of Cambodians (44%) still felt unprepared for extreme weather



Cambodians are taking action and willing to make further adjustments to adapt to changes in weather, environment, and resource availability

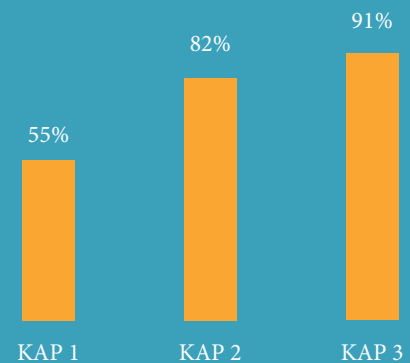
Activities people have made currently



- 91% of Cambodian have taken action in response to changes (93% of men and 89% of women, a statistically significant difference, albeit a minor one)
- When asked about willingness to make further adjustments to their livelihoods, 79% of Cambodians said they were willing to make changes

There has been an increase in respondents reporting that people in their communities are taking action

Respondents who report that people in their community are taking action



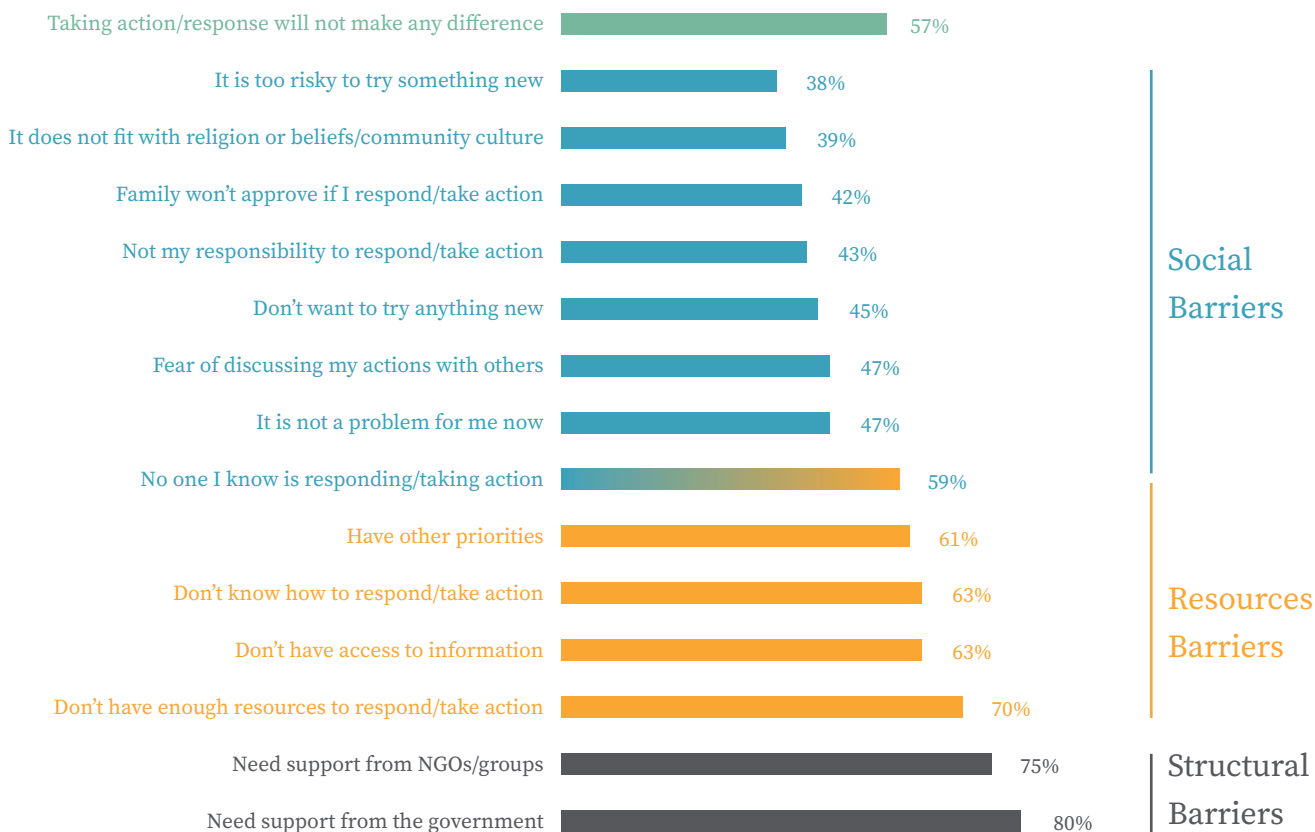
“In coping with heat, we take a bath more often, use fans and plant more trees. We also dug wells and ponds within the community to generate water during drought.”

— Men's group FGD, Kampong Speu province

- In KAP2, 83% of women reported that people in their communities were taking action (compared to 89% of women reported this in KAP3)

Institutional support and the lack of resources were the main barriers to Cambodians taking action in response to climate-related changes, followed by a set of social barriers

Barriers to respond/take action



“We do not take action due to a lack of experience as well as limited knowledge, resources, and capital to undertake any activities.”
 — Mixed gender FGD, Kampong Thom province

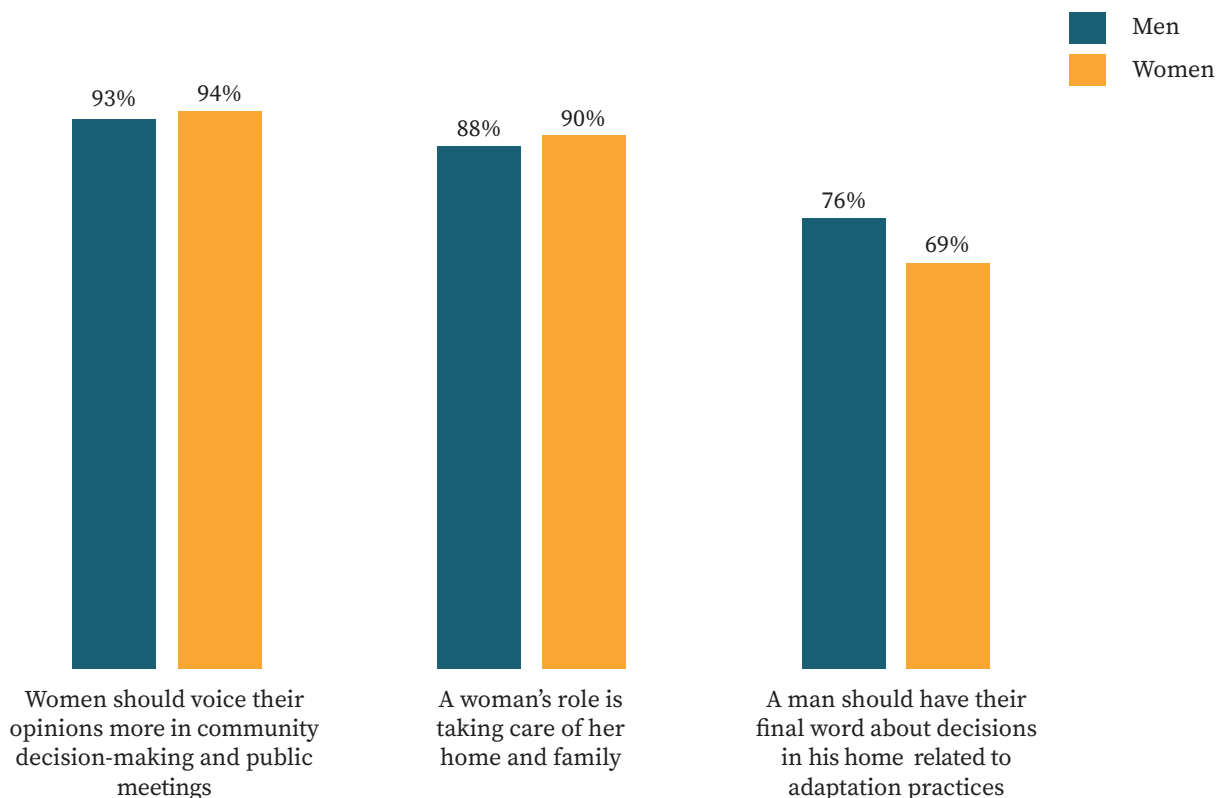
Keeping healthy and bringing good future for children were the most commonly cited motivations for taking action



The majority of Cambodians agreed that they would take action because they want a better future for their children (98%), want to be healthy (98%), need to do something to maintain their lifestyle (96%) or care about the environment (95%).

Cambodians are experiencing the similar changes in the weather, the environment, and the availability of resources, but the impacts of these changes can affect men and women differently due to the influence of gender roles and norms

Agreement with statements about gender roles



“Men can go to find construction work anywhere for additional incomes, yet women have household chores and take care of children, elderly parents and livestock.”
 — Women’s group FGD, Kampot province

 Nine in 10 respondents (89%) agreed that **a woman’s role is to take care of her home and family**

 Almost three-quarters (72%) of Cambodians agreed with the statement that **a man should have the final word about decisions in his home related to adaptation practices**

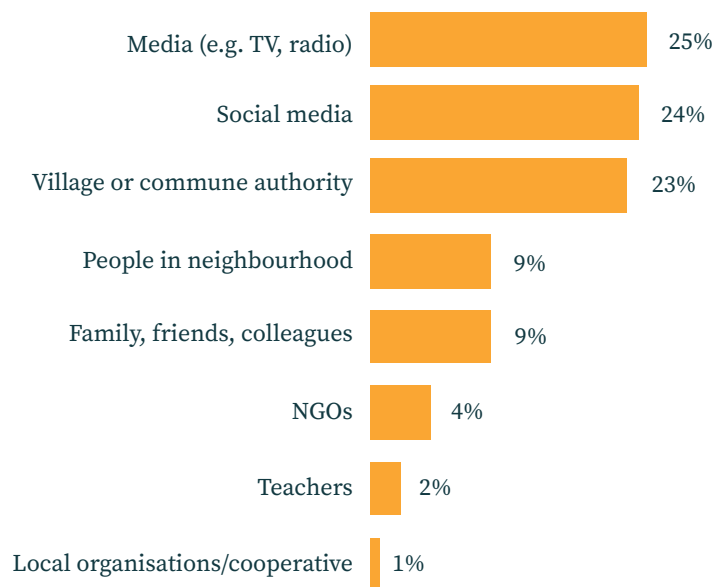
 The vast majority of Cambodians (93%) agreed that **women should voice their opinions more in community decision-making and public meetings**

“Men and women discuss [with] each other before making any decision, yet the last decision is made by [the] husband because he is generating income in the household. Furthermore, women cannot perform heavy tasks like men, such as bearing logs, sacks of rice and pumping water.”
 — Mixed gender FGD, Kampong Speu province

More than half of Cambodians (57%) thought they were well-informed on how to cope with changes in resource availability and weather patterns

Sources of information on climate change-related adaptations

Although media (e.g. TV, radio) was reported as Cambodians' most popular information source, people are slightly more likely to trust their village or commune authorities for information related to changes in the weather, environment and resource availability (80% reported this) than the media (73%).



Recommendations for climate change communication strategies

Build on people's key motivations for action. Highlight the benefits of taking action on their family's health and livelihoods, and their children's education.

Ignite discussion within and between communities to facilitate behaviour change and also engage decision makers and key influencers. Discussion is a key driver in behaviour change communication, yet most Cambodians are not discussing or sharing the actions they are taking with others.

Address the key long-term issues affecting Cambodians, such as drought and water shortages, to engage people in taking action – this will also help people to cope with rapid-onset disasters in future.

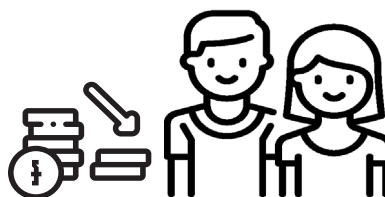
Help people to connect the dots when the term 'climate change' is used in communication strategies. Explain how changes in the weather, the environment and the availability of resources that affect their everyday lives are the result of climate change.

Increase awareness of weather and resource changes among the poorest and least educated people in Cambodia. They are the least likely to perceive the impacts of climate change on their lives at the moment, making them less likely to take action in some cases. They feel the least prepared for extreme weather events, even though their livelihoods are the most exposed to such events.

Priority groups for communication



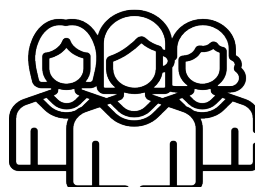
Farmers and fishermen: This group particularly struggled with access to water for agricultural activities and depleting fish stocks. However, they were motivated to take action and were trying to take steps, given how important natural resources, the weather and the environment are to their livelihoods and survival. This group trusted government and NGO measures taken in response to these issues. They could benefit from support to help them make the most of the actions they are already taking (such as saving money or taking up alternative livelihoods). They would welcome information on the most effective adaptations to adopt, and support to learn new skills or techniques.



Very poor and poor people: This group lacked knowledge about climate change and generally did not know what they can do to prepare for extreme weather. For them, even taking simple actions such as saving money or storing food was challenging as they struggled to access basic necessities. They also lacked motivation to act, had limited information and have not discussed these issues with others as they do not recognise their own vulnerability. This group would benefit from targeted outreach and information to help them understand more about the issues affecting them, as well as ideas for very simple, low-cost actions they could take to support themselves.



Young people (more educated and urban): This group disconnected from many of the impacts of climate change because they do not feel them directly. However, they were less inhibited by social barriers than older people, had good level of knowledge about climate change, engaged and were willing to take action. In addition, they were high users of mobile phones and internet. This group would benefit from understanding of the impacts of climate change experienced by other people across Cambodia. Encouraging them to recognise their roles in addressing climate change for Cambodia's future and to get involved in taking action would be crucial.



Women: This group lacked access to media, networks and knowledge about climate change because they have multiple responsibilities – often both household and agricultural – including looking after vulnerable groups such as the elderly and children. Deep-rooted gender norms prevent independent decision-making on responding to climate issues affecting their family. Therefore, they would benefit from equipping with information and knowledge networks in order to be empowered to take action and make decision.



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