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# VOTER REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS IN CAMBODIA

## KEY FINDINGS FROM AN IFES PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY



JUNE 2012

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# **Voter Registration and Elections in Cambodia**

*Key Findings & Recommendations  
from an IFES Public Opinion Survey Conducted in January 2012*

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International Foundation for Electoral Systems

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS

### SURVEY SAMPLE SPECIFICATIONS

IFES conducted a nationally representative survey of voting-age adults in Cambodia through face-to-face interviews. The sample was designed to be nationally representative of Cambodia's adult population (18 years or older), resulting in an achieved sample of 1,752 respondents covering all 24 provinces of Cambodia. There were slight oversamples in 16 of the 367 communes that experienced recent flooding because a few questions focused on how the flooding impacted participation in the voter registration process.

### SURVEY, QUESTIONNAIRE AND REPORT SPECIFICATIONS

- The **survey questionnaire** was composed of 46 closed questions and 7 open-ended questions, plus demographics.
- The **sample size** of the survey is 1,752 respondents.
- The data was **weighted** by province in order to adjust for slight discrepancies in the total number of achieved interviews per province.
- **Sample sizes for key demographic segments:**
  - **Gender:** Male = 876; Female = 876
  - **Age groups:** 18-24 = 271; 25-34 = 492; 35-44 = 360; 45-54 = 363; 55-64 = 177; 65+= 90
  - **Education groups:** No education = 252; Primary = 854; Intermediate = 405; Secondary = 189; University = 52
  - **Residential density:** Urban = 214; Rural = 1538
  - **Monthly income levels:** \$0-\$100 USD = 523; \$101-\$200 USD = 710; \$201-\$300 USD = 321; \$301-\$400 USD = 112; \$401 USD and higher= 80
  - **Geographic Regions:** Plain Region= 857; Tonle Sap Lake Region= 570; Coastal Region= 126; Plateau and Mountain Region= 200
- The **margin of error** is  $\pm 2.34\%$ .

- **Fieldwork dates:** January 3-18, 2012.
- **Survey firm:** IFES contracted BMRS Asia (Cambodia) Ltd to implement the survey. The selection of this organization was done through a competitive bidding process. Oversight was provided by IFES' Applied Research Center (ARC).
- **Feedback:** This analytical report was developed by the IFES Applied Research Center. For any feedback or questions about data analysis or methodology, please contact Research Officer Lauren Serpe at [lserpe@ifes.org](mailto:lserpe@ifes.org) or Research Director Rakesh Sharma at [rsharma@ifes.org](mailto:rsharma@ifes.org). For any questions about IFES programming in Cambodia, please contact IFES Chief of Party Robert Patterson at [rpatterson@ifes.org](mailto:rpatterson@ifes.org) or Program Officer Jiv Sekhon at [jsekhon@ifes.org](mailto:jsekhon@ifes.org).

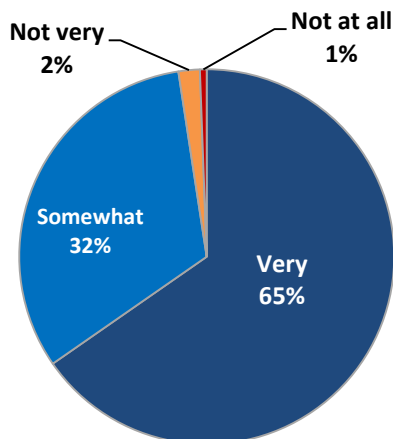
## KNOWLEDGE & OPINIONS ON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

*Most Cambodians are interested in elections, but do not feel they have much information on the election process in the country. Residents of urban areas, older Cambodians and men report higher levels of information on elections. Television, radio and word of mouth are the primary sources Cambodians use to learn about developments in their country. Regarding campaign finance issues, Cambodians are generally supportive of regulation and disclosure of money in election campaigns.*

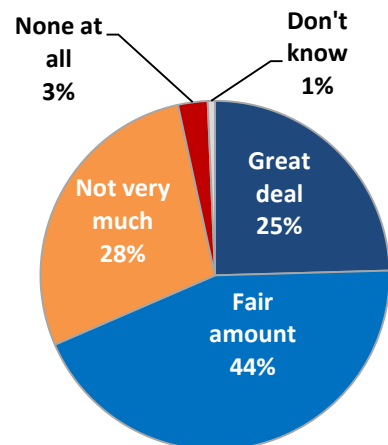
- **Cambodians Interested in Elections:** The majority of Cambodians express at least some interest in elections with 65% saying they are very interested and 32% saying they are somewhat interested. Only 3% say they have little or no interest in elections (Figure 1).
- **Low Levels of Information on Overall Election Process in Country:** Despite the interest in elections, majorities of Cambodians report having moderate or low levels of information on the election process overall. A quarter of Cambodians (25%) say they have a great deal of information on the election process in the country, while 44% say they have a fair amount of information and 28% say they do not have much information. Higher proportions of men report having a great deal of information on the election process in Cambodia than women (28% and 22%, respectively). Similarly, nearly double the percentage of urban residents report having a great deal of information on the election process in Cambodia than rural residents (43% and 22%, respectively). As age increases, reports of having a great deal of information increases as well (Figure 2).

In campaigns aiming to educate the public on the election process, knowledge should be raised amongst the entire voting public, but extra attention should be paid to reaching rural residents as well as women.

**Figure 1: "How interested are you in matters of elections?"**



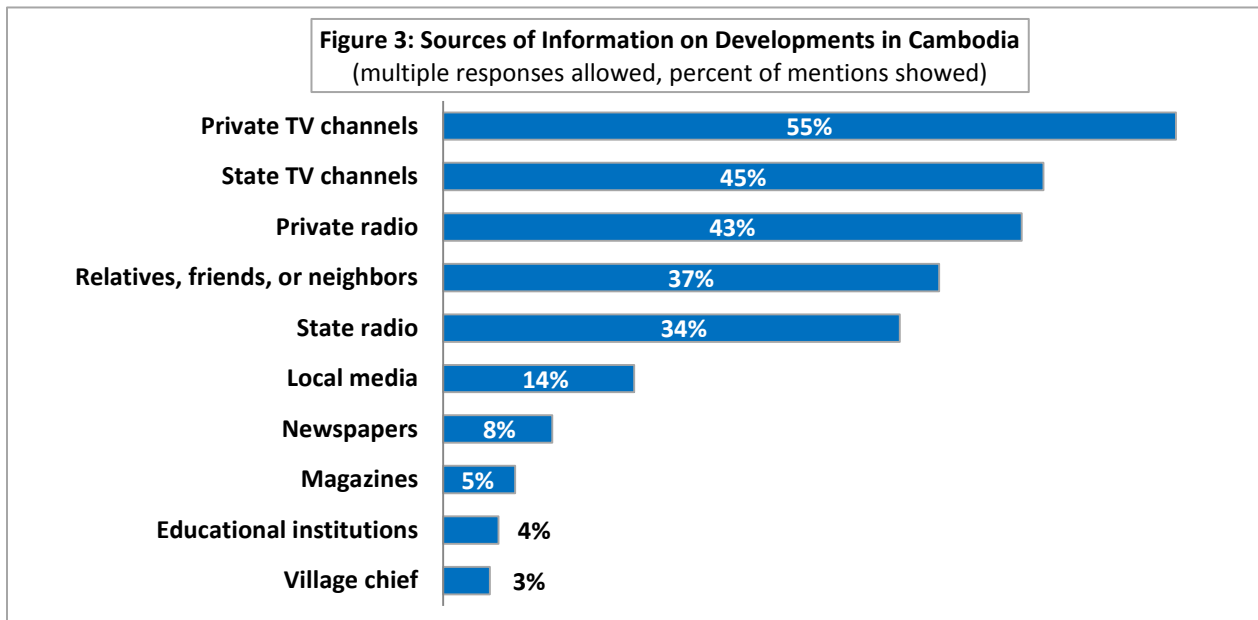
**Figure 2: "And how much information do you have about the election process in Cambodia?"**



- TV & Radio Primary Sources of Electoral Information:** Television and radio are the primary media sources of information Cambodians use to learn about developments in the country, yet Cambodians also mention gaining information from friends and family. Private TV channels, state TV channels, private radio stations, state radio, and friends and family are the most-mentioned sources of information. As would be expected, urban residents report higher media usage than rural residents. Information through informal means such as friends/family is reported in similar percentages for both urban and rural residents. Men generally express higher media usage than women, while a slightly higher percentage of women say they gather information from friends and family (Figure 3).

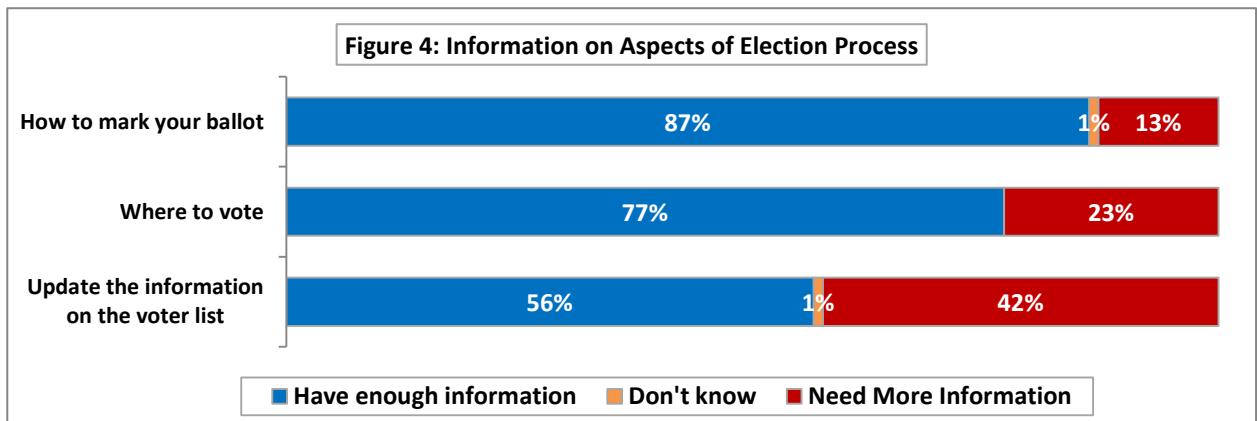
In future voter education efforts, employing more informal sources for information dissemination, in addition to popular media sources like TV and radio, would ensure reaching much of the voting-age population. The primary source of information on the voter registration update was the village chief (as seen in data below), further reinforcing the recommendation to utilize local face-to-face methods of information dissemination.

- Urban and rural residents can be reached best through TV and radio but special effort should be made in rural areas to promote face-to-face information dissemination.
- Men and women can both be reached through TV and radio, but encouraging face-to-face information dissemination would be helpful in reaching women as well.



- Voters Have Enough Information on Electoral Procedures:** Majorities of Cambodians indicate they have received enough information on key aspects of the electoral process, although to varying degrees. An overwhelming 87% indicated they had enough information on how to mark their ballot and 77% indicated the same for knowing where to vote. While still a slight majority, fewer Cambodians express having enough information on how to update information on the voter list (56%) and 42% indicate they needed more information on this process (Figure 4).

During the next voter registration update, information campaigns should be more widely distributed explaining the process, why to participate, where to participate, and how to update information on the voter list. This would help raise levels of knowledge amongst voters on these aspects of the electoral process.



- Support for Political Finance Regulations and Disclosure:** Cambodians are generally supportive of regulation and disclosure of money in election campaigns. They believe parties should be given funds to help them pay for campaigns, but the use of state resources should be banned and there should be limits on campaign expenditures. Eighty-two percent either strongly (46%) or somewhat (36%) agree parties should be given funds to run campaigns. At the same time, 79% percent of Cambodians also strongly (42%) or somewhat (37%) agree the use of state resources by political parties for their election campaigns should be banned. Additionally, an overwhelming 95% either strongly (65%) or somewhat (30%) agree that there should be limits on the amount of money spent in elections.
- Cambodians also express high support for public disclosure of campaign contributions. Seventy-three percent of Cambodians believe it is either very (34%) or somewhat (39%) important for candidates and parties to publicly disclose the money they receive for their campaigns.

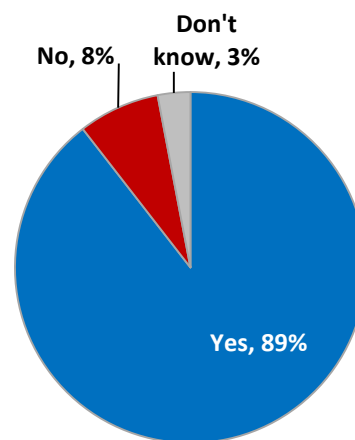


## EXPERIENCES WITH AND OPINIONS ON THE VOTER REGISTRATION UPDATE

*Most Cambodians heard about the voter registration update period, but less than half of these respondents feel they had a lot of information. Men, urban residents and older Cambodians report having higher levels of information on the update process, while village leaders, TV ads and radio ads were the most visible sources of this information. The information provided was viewed to be effective and provided with enough time for citizens to check their registration status. Participation in the process is also reported to be high: over three-quarters of Cambodians say they participated in the update process, either checking the list themselves, having someone check for them, or checking for others and themselves.*

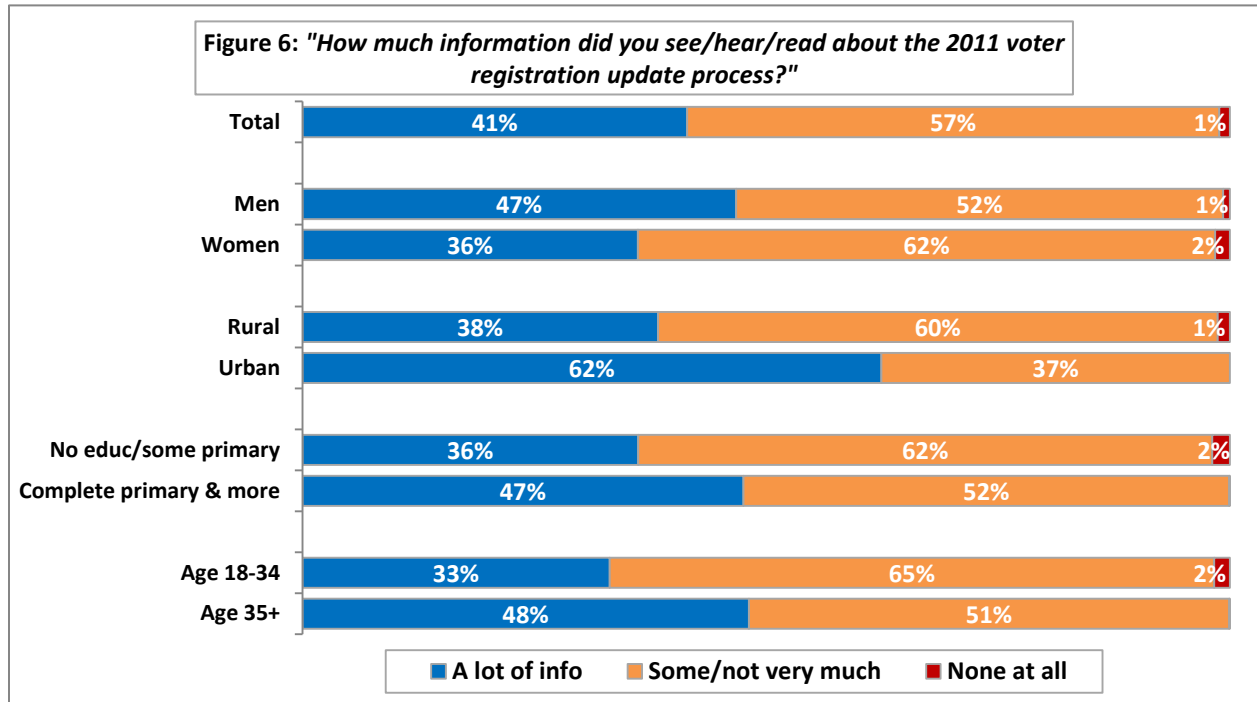
- **Majority of Cambodians Aware of the Voter Registration Update:** A majority (89%) of Cambodians say they heard or saw information about checking their name on the voter list in September and October 2011 (Figure 5).
- **Most Cambodians had Information on Voter List Update:** While most Cambodians feel they had some information about the voter list update process, the data shows that a minority of these respondents had a lot of information. Forty-one percent of Cambodians say they had a lot of information, 57% say they had a little/some information and only 1% say they had no information at all.

**Figure 5: "As you may have heard, voters were able to check their name on the voters list in September and October of this year so that the voter's list can be accurately updated. Did you hear, see or read any information on this process?"**



- When breaking down the data by key demographic variables, we find that more men report having a lot of information (47%) than women (36%) and nearly double the amount of urban residents (62%) than rural residents (38%) report having a lot of information.
- Respondents with no education or some primary education were less likely to say they had a lot of information than respondents with completed primary education and higher (36% and 47%, respectively). Similarly, younger respondents age 18-34 are less likely to report having a lot of information (33%) than respondents 35 and older (48%) (Figure 6).

In future information campaigns, attention should be paid on how to best target younger voters, less educated voters, women and rural residents.



- **Information Viewed as Effective & Timely:** Of those with at least some information on the voter registration update process, 42% believe it increased their knowledge of this process a lot, 42% believe it increased their knowledge a little and 16% say it did not change their knowledge. Ninety-four percent say they received the information with enough time to make plans to check their registration status, only 5% say they received information too late and 1% say they don't know.

  - Additionally, 85% of respondents say the information was very clear, while 13% say it was somewhat unclear and 1% says it was unclear.
  - Clarity of the information is reinforced when testing knowledge levels on the process with open-ended questions and examining correct and incorrect responses, majorities of respondents relay a high level of knowledge about where to check their names and the criteria to register.
- **Village Chief Main Source of Information on Voter Registration Update:** There were various sources of information on the voter registration update process in Cambodia. Most respondents who heard/saw/read about this information received it from their village leader/commune chief

(82%), followed by TV ads (58%) and radio ads (46%). Family and friends (24%), motorbikes with loudspeakers (20%) and street banners (17%) were also mentioned.

- **Voter List Perceived as Accurate:** Evaluating to what extent they believe the voter list is accurate and only includes eligible voters in Cambodia, 81% believe it is completely accurate, 11% say it has some inaccuracies, and 8% say they don't know.
- **Most Cambodians Report Participating in Voter Registration Update Process:** Over three-quarters of Cambodians report participating in the voter registration update process. Fifty-four percent say they checked their own registration status, 11% checked someone else's registration status, 14% say someone else checked their registration status and 22% did not check registration status for themselves or others.
  - Those who did not check their registration status or have someone check for them were asked why. The main reasons cited were they did not have time (46%) or they were not aware of the registration period/location (23%).

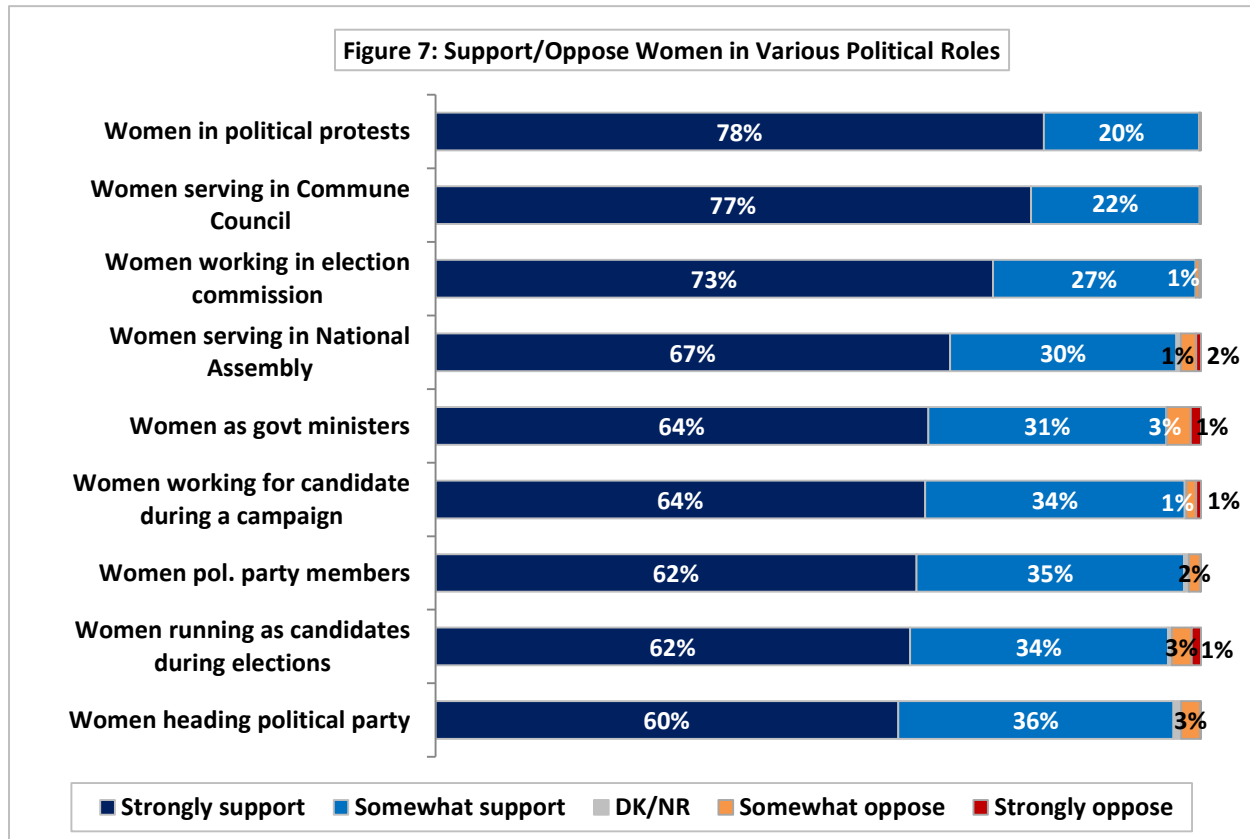
Given that lack of time and lack of awareness of the registration period were the top reasons why people did not check their status on the voter list, future registration processes should ensure the period for checking the lists is as convenient as possible and should improve awareness campaigns to further clarify the process.

- **Similar Participation in the Voter Registration Update in Communes with Flooding:** Forty-five percent of Cambodians in the areas that were flooded during the voter registration update period say the flooding impacted their ability to check their names. Still, a slightly higher proportion of those in flood areas say they checked their own registration status (59%) than those in areas not affected by flooding (52%).

## ATTITUDES & OPINIONS TOWARDS WOMEN IN POLITICS

Survey findings indicate there is support among both men and women for women's involvement in various political roles. The general concept of gender quotas is not well-known in Cambodia, yet there is support for their introduction in future elections. This is a positive finding for those who may be lobbying for the inclusion of gender quotas in future elections. The rationales given for supporting quotas surround the belief that women have equal rights as men, and that women are just as qualified as men, pointing to Cambodians' sensitivity to gender equality in terms of rights and abilities.

- High Levels of Support for Women in Political Roles:** Strong majorities of Cambodians say they support women in various political roles and there is little variation in opinion by gender. In fact, over six in 10 Cambodians *strongly* support women in various political roles such as women participating in political protests (78%), serving in the Commune Council (77%), working in the election commission (73%), serving in the National Assembly (67%), working for a candidate during a campaign (64%), joining political parties as members (62%), running as candidates during elections (62%) and heading a political party (60%) (Figure 7).



- **Knowledge of Gender Quotas is Low but Majorities of Cambodians Support Their Introduction:** Knowledge of the notion of gender quotas is low — 75% of Cambodians say they do not know about the notion of gender quotas.
  - Still, support for introducing gender quotas is fairly high — 60% of Cambodians would strongly support and 37% somewhat support the adoption of gender quotas in future elections.
  - Respondents' main reasons for supporting the introduction of gender quotas surround the belief that women should have the same rights as men (69%), women are just as qualified as men (59%), women should have a role in political life (20%) and women are better at representing women's needs (17%). Both men and women cite the same main reasons for supporting gender quotas, highlighting Cambodians' sensitivity to gender equality in terms of rights and abilities.

The data indicates there may be strong support for the introduction of gender quotas, however, the primary focus at present should be raising awareness of what gender quotas are: providing explanations of how gender quotas work in practice, their benefits for increasing women's representation in elected bodies, and the implications on gender equality.