Social & Economic Survey

Riverkids in collaboration with Raffles Institution

Dec 2013

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Riverkids Social Survey was conducted in December 2013 by Raffles Institution's students. They have been supporting Riverkids in conducting this survey for the last four years. Survey questions have been kept the same across each year in order to allow comparability of results year on year, with only small changes.

Survey items are designed to cover all aspects of life in Phnom Penh and include: household composition and finances; children – care, labour, leisure, and documentation; health including diseases, treatment; problematic behaviours in the community and family such as drug abuse; aspirations for the future; thoughts about Riverkids Foundation. Where possible, results have been compared against survey findings in previous years for comparability.

Summary

Overall, 749 households were surveyed, a large increase over the 371 surveyed in 2012. Household composition was similar to previous years, with those over 18 being mainly married, and of Khmer origin and half were educated to higher than grade six. Most families were from the provinces and had been in the area more than four years. Approximately a third was employed in the trade and service industry following the pattern reported in previous years. Most household members made under $50 per week. Most families did not have money left at the end of the month, but the majority of those that did chose to save it. A large proportion of households were in debt, with most owing money to a bank or a neighbour. The proportion that relied on local money lenders hovered around the same level as in 2012, which was a substantial decrease relative to 2011. Most households had a debt under $500.

Nearly all families ate more than twice a day; meals contained protein at least once a day for most families. The majority of families had children living with them; 12% of children did not live at home – reasons included living with relatives in the provinces or Phnom Penh and living at work. The mother was the main caregiver for children and most children had some form of registration document. Cases of child trafficking were known by some; reasons given included low income, lack of education, and being deceived by others.

As was the case in 2012, a high proportion of individuals reported having experienced a fever in the last month. Other common ailments were severe headaches and diarrhoea. The high prevalence of these conditions warrants further investigation. Having work rose in importance in terms of family aspirations, outpacing health and education.

Limitations

Surveys were carried out with households in the same area as 2012, as the survey is conducted within the four communities that Riverkids is supporting. Although we asked respondents if they had previously participated in a survey, it may be that a family member had and the 2013 respondent was unaware of this. We therefore cannot be sure of the exact comparability between 2012 and 2013 data; however, the sample suggests some large similarities in demographics and other characteristics suggesting that samples are similar and comparisons can be drawn. Respondents may not also wish to answer some sensitive questions such as family members who drink alcohol although they were able to refuse an answer and some respondents did elect to do this. There may also have been a response bias due to respondent knowledge that the survey was carried out on behalf of Riverkids and wishing to present a favourable opinion. This may be most apparent in the last question asking about the Riverkids organisation; efforts to avoid this in future surveys could be made by making the survey-givers anonymous until completion of the questionnaire.

# 1. Household Information and Demographics

In total, 749 households were interviewed from the communities in which Riverkids works, which is a large increase over the 371 households surveyed in 2012. Of the survey respondents, 21% respondents had participated in a previous Riverkids study in 2011. Respondents were first asked a series of general questions about the household composition as well as whether the person being interviewed participated in the study in the previous year.

In total, there were 749 households, listing a total of 2295 household members over age 18. This means that on average, each household contained three members over age 18, the same average as was found in 2012. Most of the adult household members were between 26 and 35 years of age.
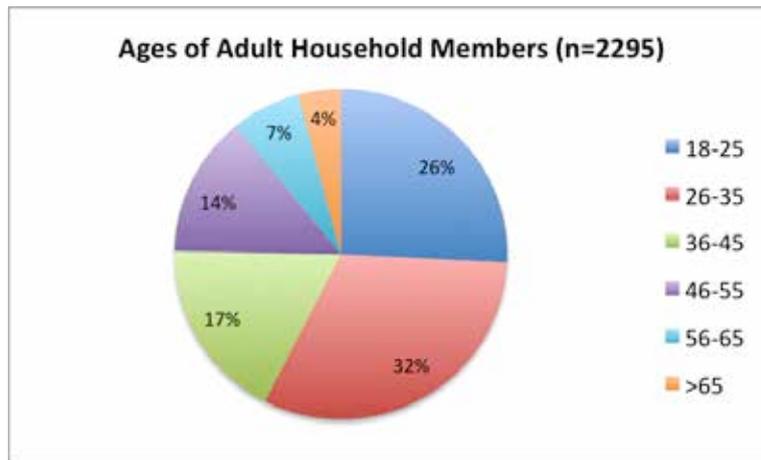

As in 2012, slightly more women were reported per household than men (55% female, 45% male); 0.1% of household members were listed as been as a gender of "other".

As in 2012, among those who answered the question on marital status, most were married (67%) whilst 25% had never married. 6% were widowed and 2% were divorced. Only one individual lived with a partner, while nine individuals were separated.
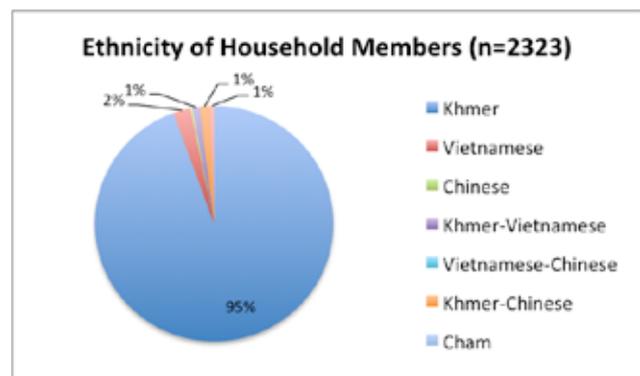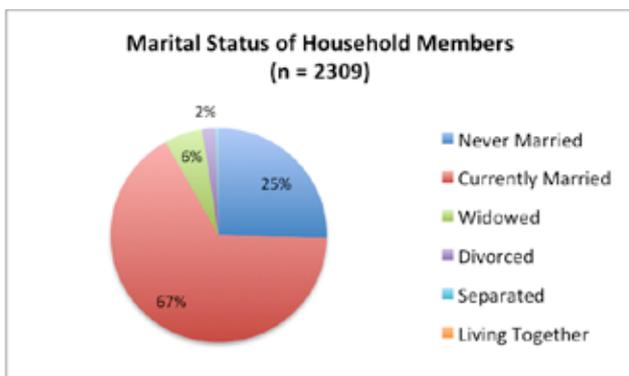

The vast majority of household members were Khmer (95%), similar to the high proportions reported in 2011 (87%) and 2012 (93%). Compared to 2012, there was a dramatic shift in the educational levels of those sampled for this questionnaire: only 7% reported having an education higher than grade six compared to 50% in 2012 and 42% in 2011. This change warrants investigation in order to determine whether it is an artefact of sampling or evidence of a real trend. As in 2012, 20% had no education.
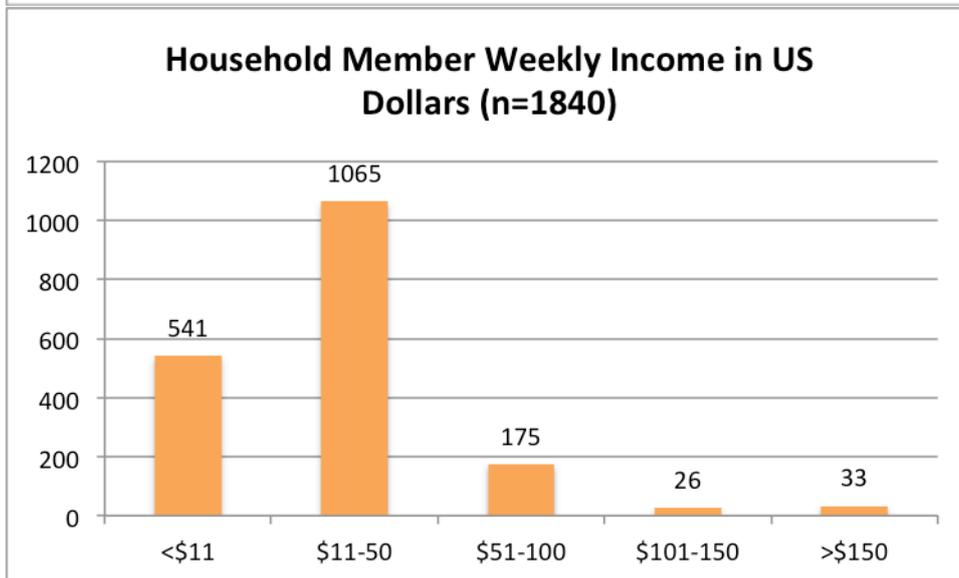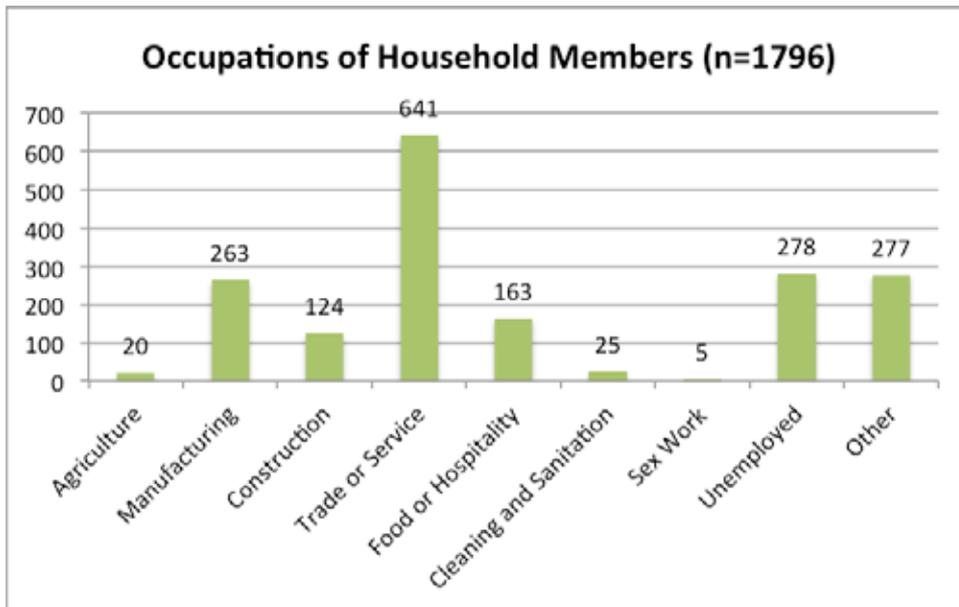
Respondent's Education Level (n=748)
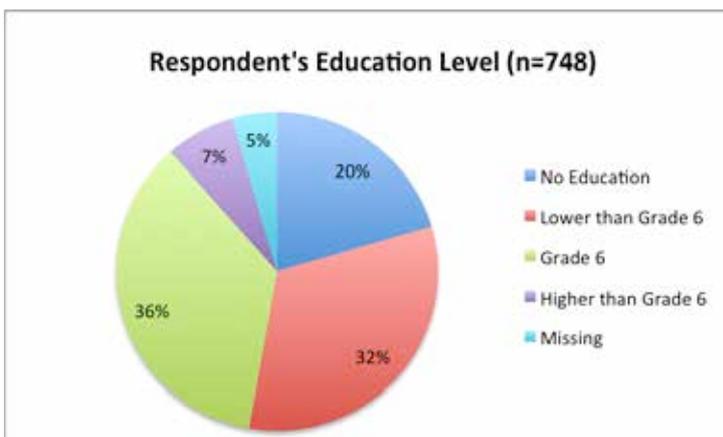
2. Migration

When discussing migration, 72% of families reported that they were from the provinces and ¼ of families had been in the area for more than four years, as was the case in 2012. With regard to the question about how long the family has been in Alexandra/Railway 2/K6, the responses were almost exactly the same proportions as 2012. The most commonly cited reason for moving was to find work, as was the case in 2012.

Where is the Family From? (n=749)

How Long has the Family been in Alexandra/ Railway 2/K6? (n=638)
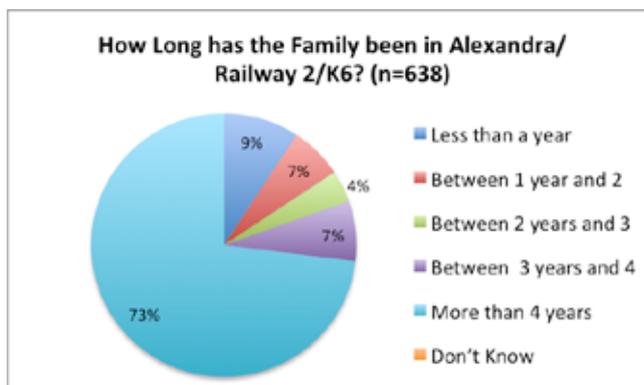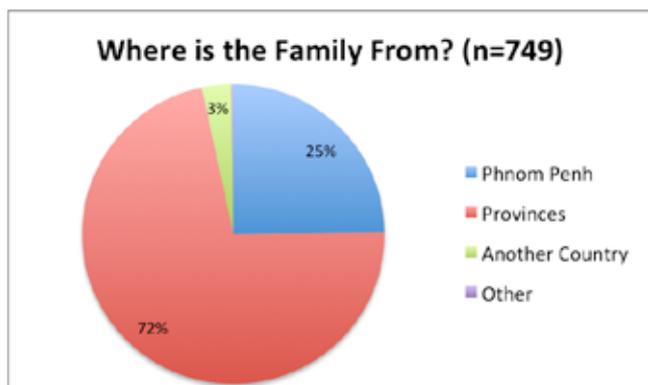
3. Money and Finances

Sixty-five percent of household members reported some form of economic activity in the last month, an increase from the 2012 figure of 59% percent. As was also the case in 2012, employment statuses were frequently trade/service and 'other' whilst several reported that they were unemployed, employed within the manufacturing, food and hospitality, or in construction industries. Only five household members reported sex work as their occupation. The vast majority of household members earned under $50 per week.

Occupations of Household Members (n=1796)

Agriculture	Manufacturing	Construction	Trade or Service	Food or Hospitality	Cleaning and Sanitation	Sex Work	Unemployed	Other
20	263	124	641	163	25	5	278	277

Household Member Weekly Income in US Dollars (n=1840)

| <$11	$11-50	$51-100	$101-150	>$150
541	1065	175	26	33

Overall, 59% of families reported paying rent for the home that they lived in, an increase over the 2012 figure of 55% and the 2011 figure of 48% but not as high as the 2010 figure of 69%. We cannot ascertain from the data whether the remainder of families own their own houses instead but this may be one possible explanation for those who do not pay rent. Future surveys might consider directly asking whether this is the case.

The vast majority of respondents indicated a weekly rent of under $26/week, but some households paid substantially more.

Weeky Rent in US Dollars (n=743)

<$26	$26-50	$51-100	>$100	Don't Know
544	72	75	10	42
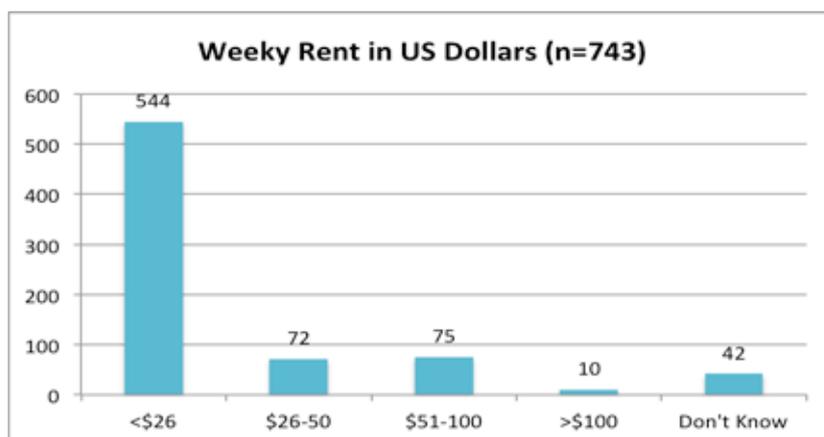
The majority of families were left with no money at the end of the month (66%), though this represents an improvement relative to 2012's statistic (76%). However, the percentage of families who had money at the end of each month (19%) was about the same as in 2012 (18%). Thus, it appears that there is an improvement trend, as in 2011 74% reported that they had no money at the end of each month. For the small proportion of families who did have money left over, the majority chose to save this money (76%). The 2012 and 2011 estimates for the same statistic were (83%) and (66%), respectively, suggesting a fluctuating but generally upward trend: future surveys will reveal whether there will be progress on this front.
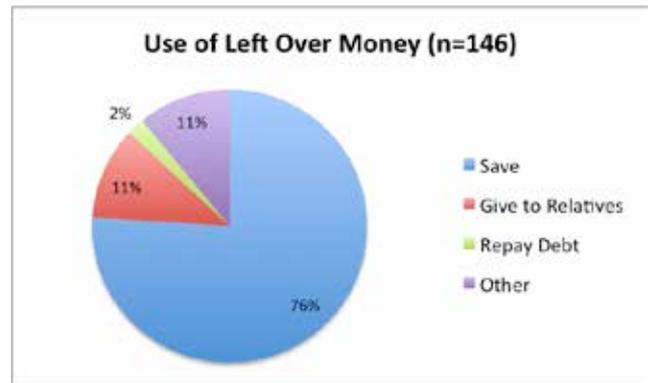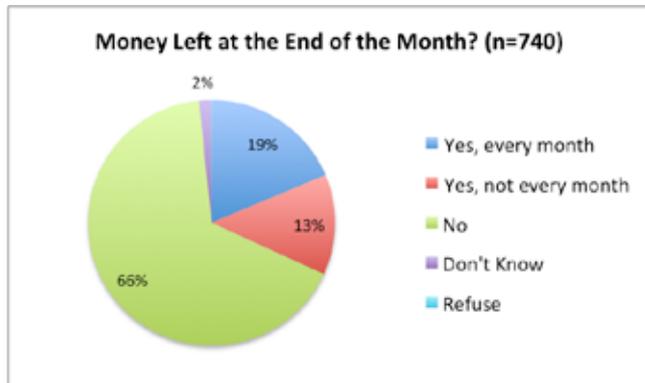

In spite of the focus on savings, 52% individuals reported that either they or other family members were in debt, though this represents a decrease from the 57% and 64% who reported such debt in 2012 and 2011, respectively. This may represent a sampling artifact or may suggest a trend towards a decrease in debt, possibly related to the increase in savings reported above.
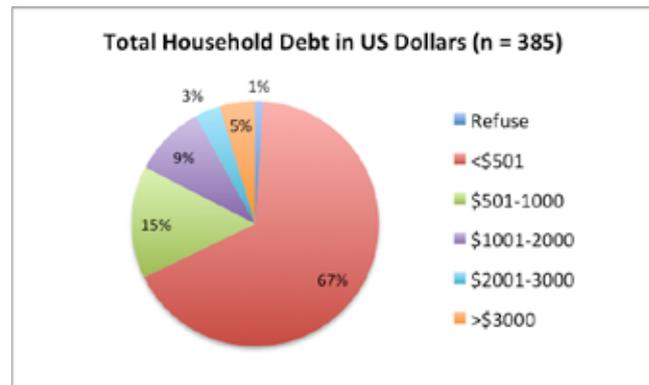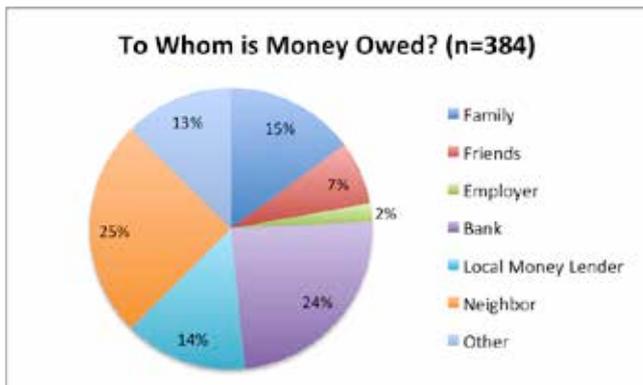

Families were also asked to whom they money was owed. Reported as a percentage of the total that answered this question, the most common was to owe money to a neighbour (25%), though this percentage was substantially lower than in 2012 (36%), returning to the same level as in 2011. In 2013, a larger proportion of individuals reported that money was borrowed from a bank (25% in 2013 vs. 18% in 2012). Local money lenders (14%) hovered around the same level as in 2012 (12%), which was a dramatic downward shift from 2010 (35%). The amount in debt to a neighbour decreased to 2011 levels (25%), which were lower in in 2012 (36%). Taken together, these figures would suggest that there are dynamic trends in terms of sources of financial support that should continue to be monitored. Total household debt ranged between 0 and $30,000, which is broader than the 0 - $10,000 range in 2012. Of those that reported owing something most owed under $501.

4. Living Conditions

Just under 2/3 of respondents (65%) reported that they had one room in their home: in 2012 the same statistic was 70%. In 2011, the figure was 61%.
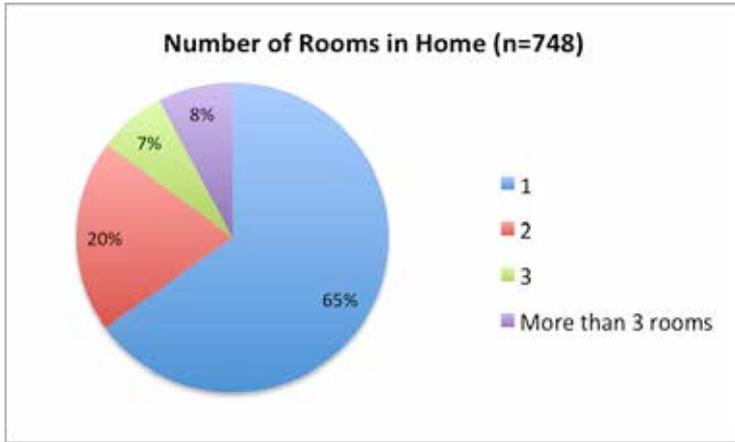

The percentage of families reporting that they ate three meals a day dropped to 43% from 58% in 2012 and 52% in 2011. While the majority of families ate at least twice per day, 3 families indicated that they did not eat at least once per day. Ninety-one percent (91%) of families indicated that at least one meal a day included protein such as egg, meat, fish or tofu. This continued the upward trend from 83% in 2011 to 88% in 2012.
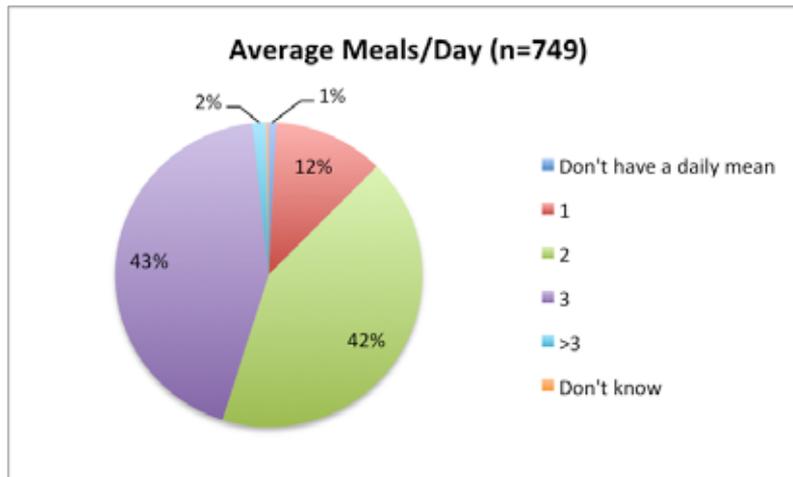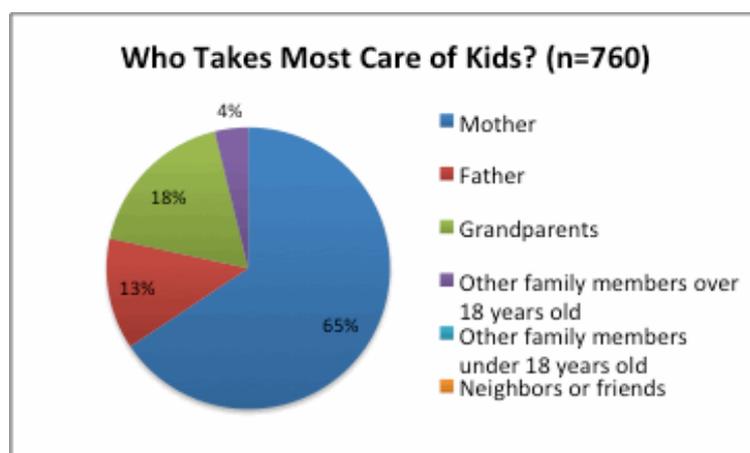
5. Children

Eighty-eight percent of respondents reported that either they, or another member of their household, had children, which was identical to the result in 2012. Of these, 84% reported that they children lived with them, which represents a drop from the 88% reported in 2012. This means that for 16%, the children did not live with them. Reasons for this included living with relatives in the provinces (28%) and living with relatives in Phnom Penh (21%). 'Other' reasons included having their own family or being unable to locate them (see chart).

Among the 113 households in which a child worked, respondents were asked for reasons for children working; these included the child having reached working age (46%), the family needing more income (43%) and parents being unable to pay for the child's education (5%). Of those respondents whose children worked, 51% said yes they were happy with the situation whilst 37% were unhappy and a further 11% had mixed feelings (the remaining 1% refused to say).
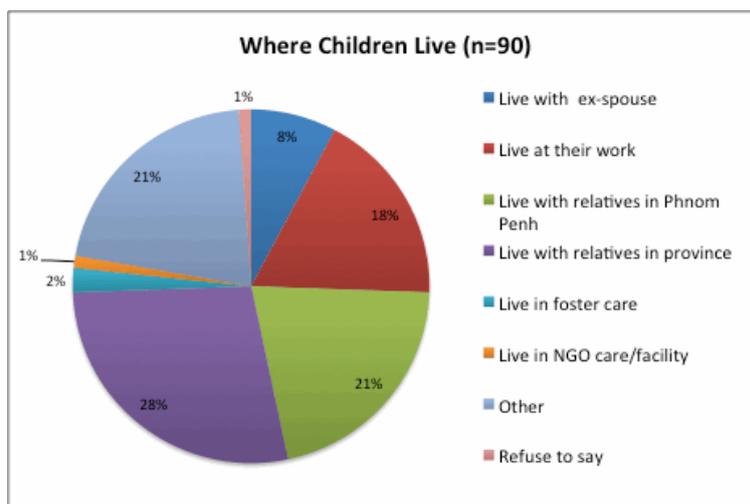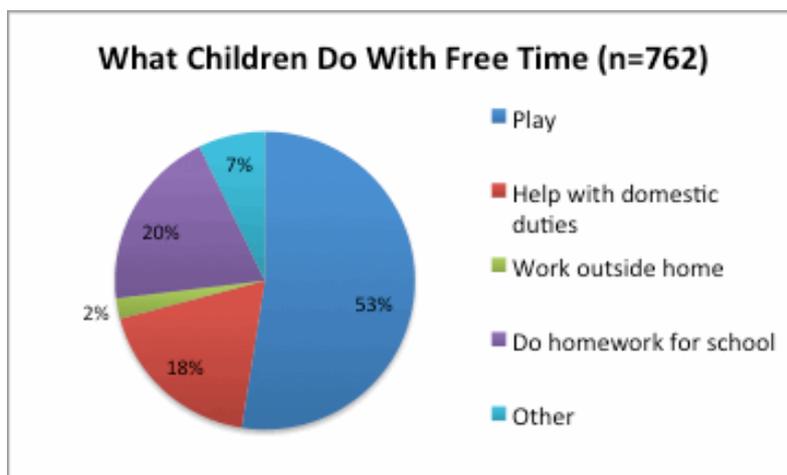

As was the case in 2012, the mother was reported as the primary caregiver to the children, though the proportion slipped from 73% in 2012 to 65% (n = 483) in 2013. The grandparents were once again the secondary caregivers (18%, n = 131), as they were in 2012, though it is worth noting that in 2011, fathers were the secondary caregivers. The reasons for this and how this impacts the family (e.g. allowing time for the father to work) would be worth exploring.
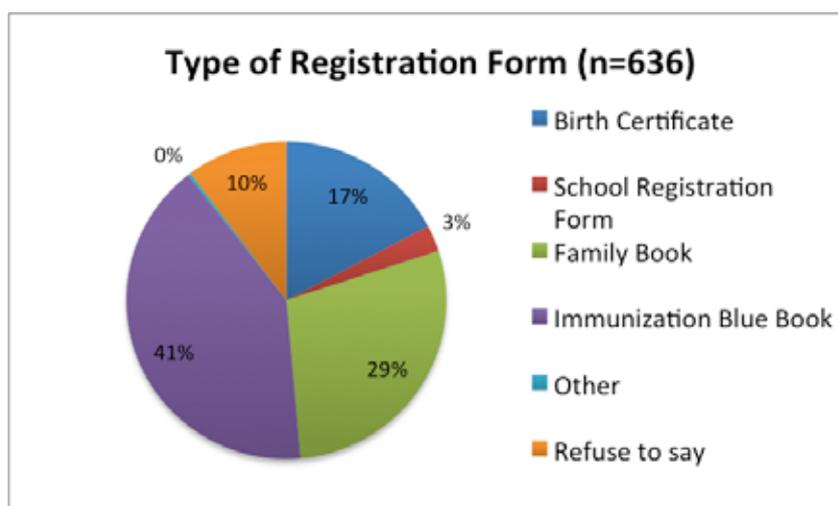

NB – categories are not exclusive and respondents can answer in more than one category.

When asked what the children in the household did in their spare time, the majority of respondents reported that they played (n = 400) followed by doing homework for school (n = 150) and helping out with domestic duties (n = 140). In 2012, helping out with domestic duties came in second place, followed by doing homework for school.

What Children Do With Free Time (n=762)

- Play — 53%
- Help with domestic duties — 18%
- Work outside home — 2%
- Do homework for school — 20%
- Other — 7%

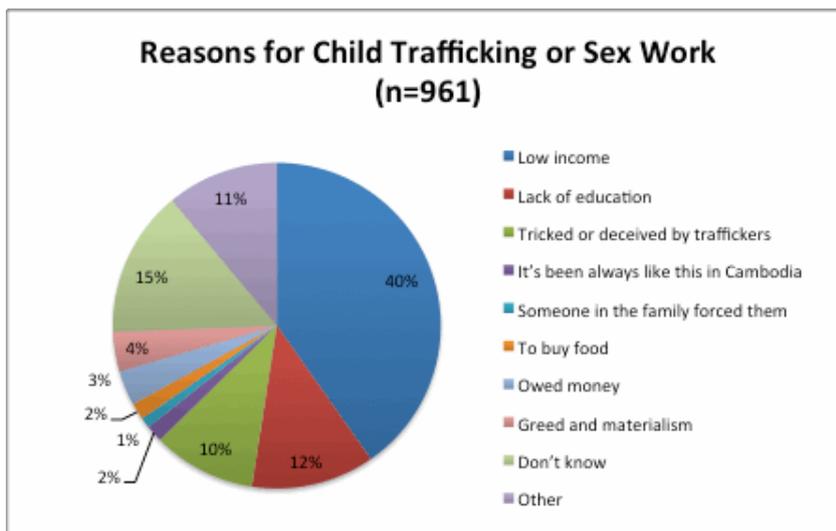NB – categories are not exclusive and respondents can answer in more than one category.

As was the case in 2012, in then vast majority of households, all of the children were reported to have registration documents (90%). In 6% of the sample, no children had registration documents, and in 3%, some of the children had registration documents. The most common registration document was an immunization blue book (n = 260), followed by the family book (n=182), and the birth certificate (n=110). This represents a potentially important shift from the findings in 2012 in which the most common document to possess was a birth certificate followed by the family book and then the immunization blue book.

Type of Registration Form (n=636)

- Birth Certificate — 17%
- School Registration Form — 3%
- Family Book — 29%
- Immunization Blue Book — 41%
- Other — 0%
- Refuse to say — 10%

NB – categories are not exclusive and respondents can answer in more than one category.

Among those who have children in the household without registration documents, the most common reason cited was that it is too expensive (49%), as was the case in 2012. Other reasons included thinking it was not necessary (8%) and the inability to get registration documents due to being a migrant (4%). The remaining responses fell into the "other" category.

When respondents were asked if they knew of cases of child trafficking or underage sex work in the neighbourhood, the majority responded in the negative (85%) although 12% reported that they did know of cases. The remainder said that they were unsure (didn't know). In 2012, 80% responded in the negative to this question. Among those who were aware of child trafficking or underage sex work in the neighbourhood, the majority (78%) were aware of under 5 cases, while 13% were aware of more than 10 cases. Reasons given by way of explanation for child trafficking or prostitution are highlighted in the figure below, with low income (n = 387) being the most prominent of the many reasons. . Unlike in 2012, where many the majority of people did not know the reason for child trafficking/prostitution, a wide variety of specific responses were given in 2013.

Reasons for Child Trafficking or Sex Work (n=961)

- Low income — 40%
- Lack of education — 12%
- Tricked or deceived by traffickers — 10%
- It's been always like this in Cambodia — 2%
- Someone in the family forced them — 1%
- To buy food — 2%
- Owed money — 3%
- Greed and materialism — 4%
- Don't know — 15%
- Other — 11%

NB – categories are not exclusive and respondents can answer in more than one category.

Four respondents (0.6%) reported that they had considered selling their child, a reduction relative to 2012 when seven respondents in total reported that they had considered selling their child. Twenty-three (3%) did not know and 7 (1%) refused to say: in 2012, 6 did not know and 3 refused to say. In both 2012 and 2013, the remainder reported that they had not considered selling their child.

As in 2012, two reasons given for considering selling their child included needing money in a crisis (3 respondents in 2012 and 2 in 2013), being forced to do so by another family member (2 respondents in 2012 and 6 in 2013). In 2012, one respondent indicated another reason, being unable to take care of their children.

Six respondents reported that someone in their extended family had sold a child, down from nine in 2012. Explanatory reasons given for this were that they could not take care of their children (2 respondents), they needed money in a crisis (2 respondents), and that they were tricked or deceived (1 respondent).

6. Social and Health

Participants were then asked to list the diseases that have happened at least once within the last month amongst the household members. More than one disease or ailment could be listed and respondents reported a range of ailments, including many of those not listed in the questionnaire.

Most respondents reported at least one illness or ailment; as was the case in 2012, the most common of these was fever (36% of all diseases reported in 2012, n = 352). Severe headaches, toothaches, and diarrhoea also featured prominently. Amongst those ailments not in the survey items but listed by respondents were sore throat, colds, coughs, stomach and intestinal problems, flu, blood pressure and heart related problems. Additional problems cited by a small number of participants included mental disease, gynaecological problems, and dermatological problems as well as general aches and pains including knee and back pain.

The 2012 survey also reported a high number of respondents that had reported a fever within the last month. This represents approximately 1/3 of all households surveyed and the fact that the trend was similar for 2013 suggests that 'fever' is a persistent problem. However, 'fever' is a symptom of a wide range of problems and could be related to comorbid conditions so it would be worth understanding both the causes and whether treatment and medical advice was sought for these together with some of the barriers to seeking advice (such as cost).
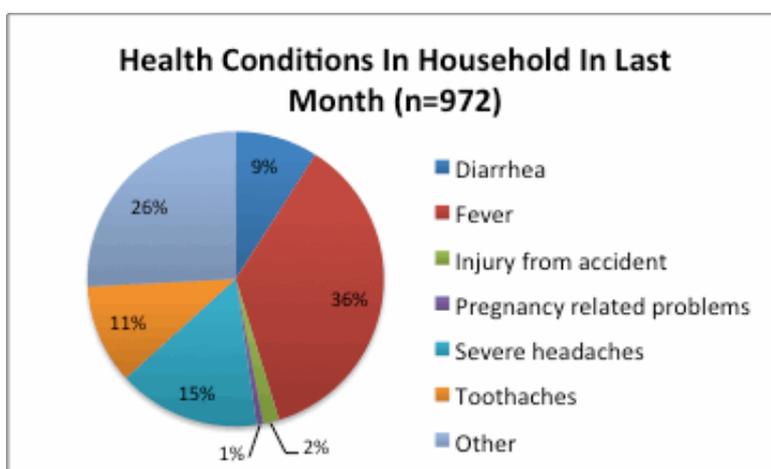

NB – categories are not exclusive and respondents can answer in more than one category.

For treatment, families usually bought medicine at the pharmacy (n = 398), or visited a private (n = 166) or public (n = 204) hospital-clinic. This is largely reflective of the results reported in 2012.
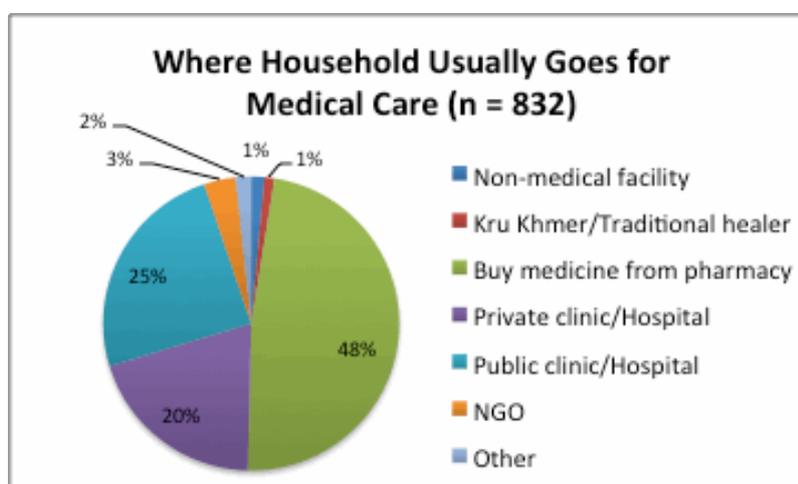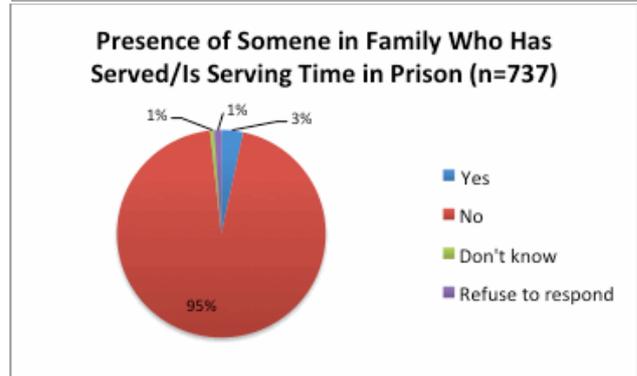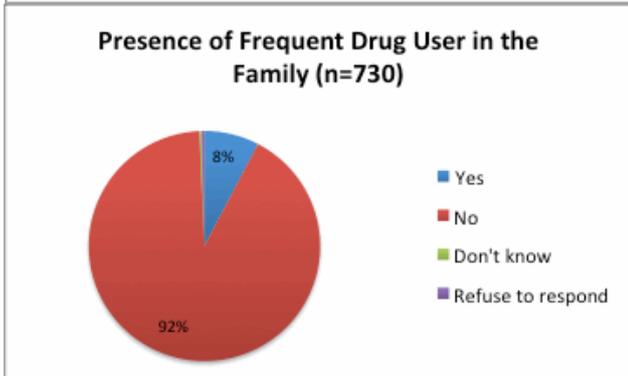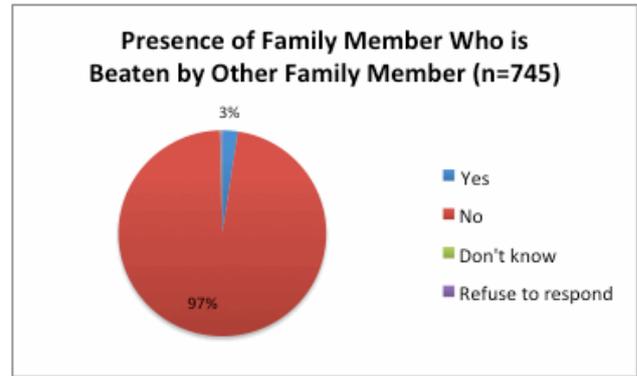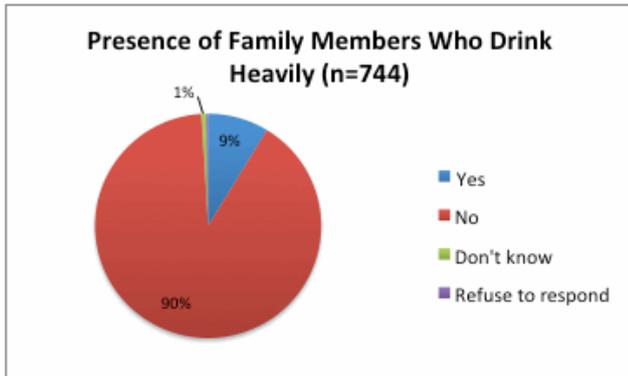

NB – categories are not exclusive and respondents can answer in more than one category.

Respondents were asked the number of people that they knew personally who had HIV, are sex workers or have behaviour-related problems such as alcohol or drug abuse. Figures for each of these are depicted in the figures that follow.
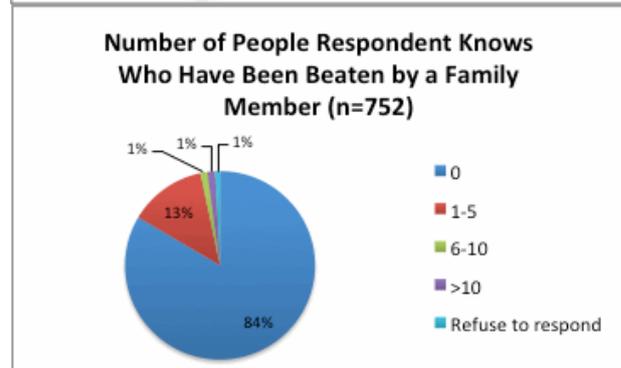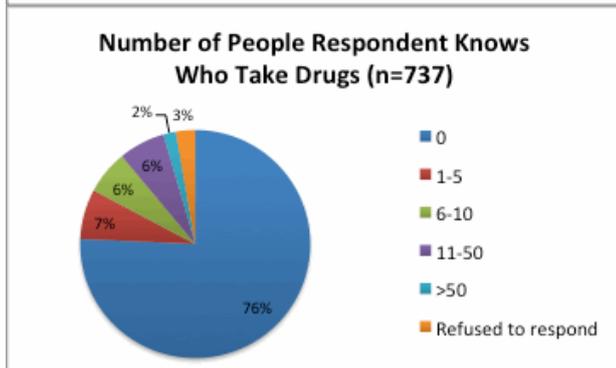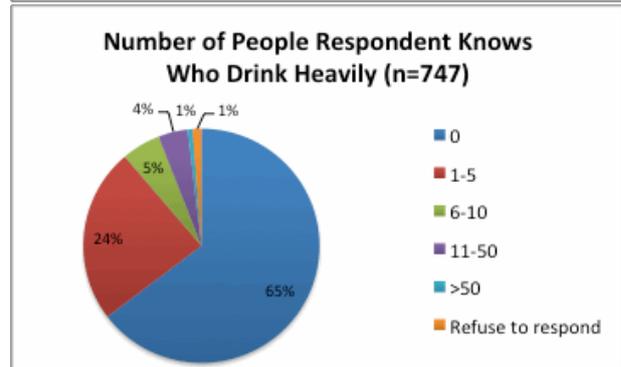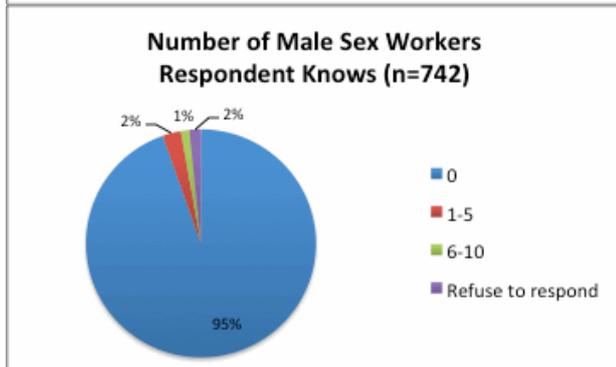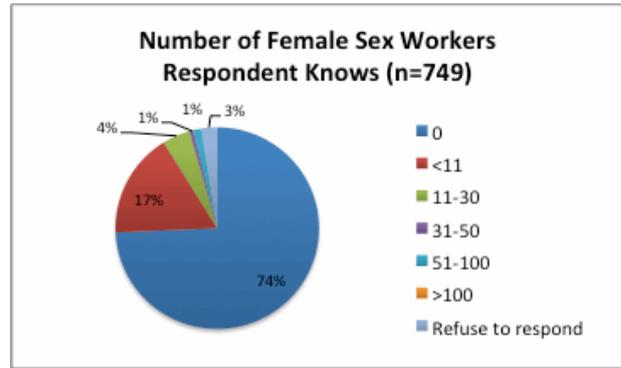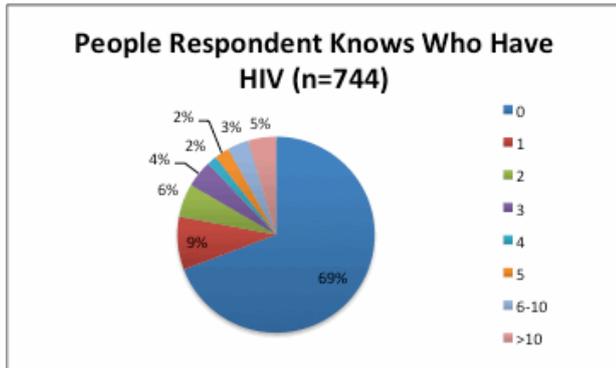
Examining the data, it is clear that the majority of respondents do not know anyone who falls into these categories. However, there are exceptions and some people are aware of several people in these situations, the most common of which is heavy drinking.

Respondents were queried about whether anyone in the family engaged in behaviour-related problems such as drinking, drug abuse or if anyone in the family was regularly beaten by another family member. The figures are given in the following charts. The proportions reported are small, but still substantial numbers of individuals and families are affected by these deleterious conditions. As can be seen, 9% (n = 65) of respondents reported that someone in the family drank alcohol until they passed out at least once a week, 3% (n = 18) are in household where a family member is beaten by another family member, 8% (n = 56) are in households where someone uses drugs, and 3% (n = 25) have a family member who has served or is serving time in prison. This may warrant further investigation into the effect that these circumstances have on the family and community.

Presence of Family Members Who Drink Heavily (n=744)

1%
9%
90%

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Refuse to respond

Presence of Family Member Who is Beaten by Other Family Member (n=745)

3%
97%

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Refuse to respond

Presence of Frequent Drug User in the Family (n=730)

8%
92%

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Refuse to respond

Presence of Somene in Family Who Has Served/Is Serving Time in Prison (n=737)

1% 1% 3%
95%

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Refuse to respond

7. Aspirations

Respondents were asked to identify and rank the top three things that were most important to them among having a steady job (work), family members being happy, health of family members, being out of debt and having savings, and children's education.

As was the case in 2012, most people cited work (having a steady job) as being 1st most important. Compared to 2012, work gained prominence as an aspiration of respondents. In both 2011 and 2012 the most important (in terms of having been ranked as one of the top three aspirations) aspects for families were children's education and the health of the family. In 2013, work eclipsed these aspirations. There was a dramatic shift in the importance of no debt/savings compared to 2012. In 2012, over 150 people indicated that no debt was among their top three aspirations, while in 2013, only 4 people identified not having debt as an aspiration. This may of course represent a sampling bias but the extent of the change raises questions about the perception of debt in this population.
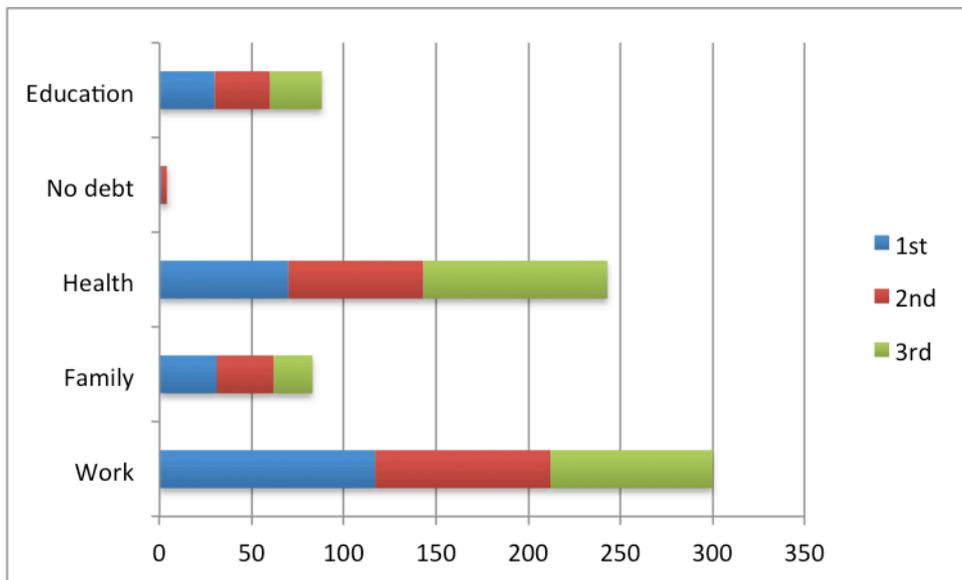
8. Understanding Riverkids

Forty-one percent of respondents reported having heard of Riverkids, while 59% had not. This represents a drop in knowledge about Riverkids compared with the 2012 survey, in which 51% had heard of the organisation. About one third of the people who had heard of Riverkids reported that a household member was a Riverkids client. There was only one negative comment. When asked what Riverkids represented to them: one respondent reported being fearful about sending her child to Riverkids due to an aggressive teacher. but all respondents emphasized the role in educating children and providing support to poor families..