Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA)

BRIEFING:
CAMBODIA HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION SURVEY FINDINGS 2026

SURVEY PERIOD: JUNE TO AUGUST 2026

September 2026

Conducted by:

AFWA Cambodia

- CATU (Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions)
- CCAWDU (Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Union)
- FTUWKC (Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia)
- FUFI (Federation Union of Free and Independent)
- INTUFE (Independent Trade Union Federation)

With

- CUMW (Collective Union of Movement of Worker)
- CITUFED (Cambodia Independent Trade Union Federation)
- FULI (Federation Union of Labor Influence)

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OVERVIEW

The 2026 Household Consumption Expenditure Survey provides evidence on the income, expenditure, consumption, and living conditions of garment workers and their households in Cambodia. Cambodian trade unions affiliated with the Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA), alongside other participating Cambodian trade union federations, conducted the survey among 422 workers employed in export-oriented garment factories. The survey is intended to inform Cambodian trade unions' deliberations on wages and workers' household needs.

Median monthly individual worker earnings are approximately US$300, compared with median monthly household expenditure of US$504. Individual worker earnings therefore equal about 60% of recorded household expenditure, a difference of US$204. The US$300 figure represents individual worker earnings, while US$504 represents household expenditure. The comparison shows how much recorded household expenditure equals one garment worker's earnings.

Median total family income is approximately US$550 per month. The US$46 difference between median family income and median household expenditure should not be interpreted as the amount a typical household saves each month, because these are separately calculated medians.

Approximately 75% of surveyed households report debt. Recorded expenditure reflects what households spend under their current circumstances and may be financed through current income, borrowing, savings, or other support. It does not necessarily reflect the full cost of meeting household needs adequately, as families may postpone or reduce spending on healthcare, education, food, or other necessities.

Estimated household food consumption is approximately 1,985 kilocalories per person per day. This provides an additional measure of household food consumption alongside expenditure.

Women account for 79% of respondents, making women garment workers' earnings and household circumstances central to the findings.

Food expenditure of US$225 accounts for approximately 45% of the reported median total expenditure, while non-food expenditure of US$279 accounts for approximately 55%.

Most surveyed households rely on more than one earner. Seventy-four percent report two or more earning members, while 26% report one earning member.

KEY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE INDICATORS

Monthly indicator	Median USD
Individual worker earnings	300
Total family income	550
Household food expenditure	225
Household non-food expenditure	279
Total household expenditure	504

Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

PURPOSE AND UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The survey examined consumption, expenditure, income, employment and living conditions among garment workers and their families. Fieldwork took place between June and August 2026 and covered 422 workers from 28 garment factories in Phnom Penh, Kandal, and Kampong Speu provinces.

The primary unit of analysis for consumption and expenditure is the worker's household. Individual information—including earnings, employment status, overtime, occupation, and demographic characteristics—provides context for understanding household economic circumstances.

The survey records reported consumption and expenditure under prevailing economic conditions. Assessing the cost of an adequate standard of living additionally requires examining needs that may remain unmet because of limited income, debt obligations, or restricted access to services.

The survey forms part of AFWA's broader living-wage research methodology, which examines household consumption, food and non-food needs, and the relationship between workers' wages and an adequate standard of living. For the detailed methodology, see Asia Floor Wage Alliance (2023), *Towards a Woman-Centred Living Wage Beyond Borders: The Asia Floor Wage Alliance's Methodology for Garment Workers*.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND SAMPLING

Participants were workers employed in export-oriented garment factories who had worked in a garment-producing factory for at least one year and could provide the household expenditure information required by the questionnaire.

The survey documentation employs a multi-stage stratified random sampling approach, with factory selection followed by worker selection within participating factories. Selection also considered gender, employment type, job role, and residential status.

This briefing presents findings on the surveyed workers and their households.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The structured interview schedule covered six areas:

- Worker demographic profile.
- Employment profile.
- Food consumption and expenditure.
- Non-food consumption and expenditure.
- Asset ownership.
- Housing and living conditions.

Food data included household expenditure and quantities consumed, allowing examination of spending patterns alongside consumption volumes and estimated calorie intake. The food schedule covered cereals; milk and dairy products; meat and eggs; vegetables and fruit; sugar and salt; oils; beverages; spices; and prepared meals.

Non-food expenditure covered clothing and footwear, education, health and medicines, household consumables, services, travel, entertainment, and housing-related costs. Recall periods varied by expenditure category.

FOOD CONSUMPTION

S.no	Categories	Number of Items	Recall Period[1]
1	Cereals	2	30 days
2	Milk and Milk Products	3	30 days
3	Meat and Eggs	12	30 days
4	Vegetables &Fruits	1	7 days
5	Sugar and Salt	3	30 days
6	Oils	2	30 days
7	Beverages	4	30 days
8	Spices	2	30 days
9	Cooked Meals	1	30 days

[1] *Recall period refers to the period for which the information was asked from the respondents. For instance the consumption and expenses for cereals were asked for a month so that the respondents give details for last month of the survey.*

NON-FOOD CONSUMPTION CATEGORIES

S no	Categories	Number of Items	Recall Period
1	Foot Wear and Clothing	2	365 days
2	Education	4	30 days
3	Health and Medicines	4	30 days
4	Household Consumables	11	30 days
5	Services	4	30 days
6	Travel	2	30 days
7	Entertainment	2	30 days
8	Housing Charges	5	30 days

PERSONAL PROFILE OF THE WORKER

The following panel of graphs (Figure 1) profiles the demographic composition of the 422 workers: gender, age, education, marital status, and whether they are migrants to the area or native residents.

GENDER

Women account for 79% of respondents and men for 21%. This is broadly consistent with other reports on the gender composition of Cambodia's garment, footwear and travel goods sector, where women account for approximately three-quarters to four-fifths of the workforce (ILO, 2024; Better Factories Cambodia, 2025; ILO, 2026). The household consumption patterns captured in the survey therefore predominantly reflect the circumstances of women garment workers and their families.

AGE

Reported age group	Share of respondents
Below 25	11%
25–35	35%
35–45	44%
45–55	9%
Above 55	1%

Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422

The two groups aged 25 to 45 account for approximately 79% of respondents.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment	Share of respondents
Completed elementary school	40%
Completed junior high school	27%
Literate without completing primary school	21%
Completed senior high school	10%
Recorded as illiterate	2%

Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422

Approximately 63% have not progressed beyond elementary-level education.

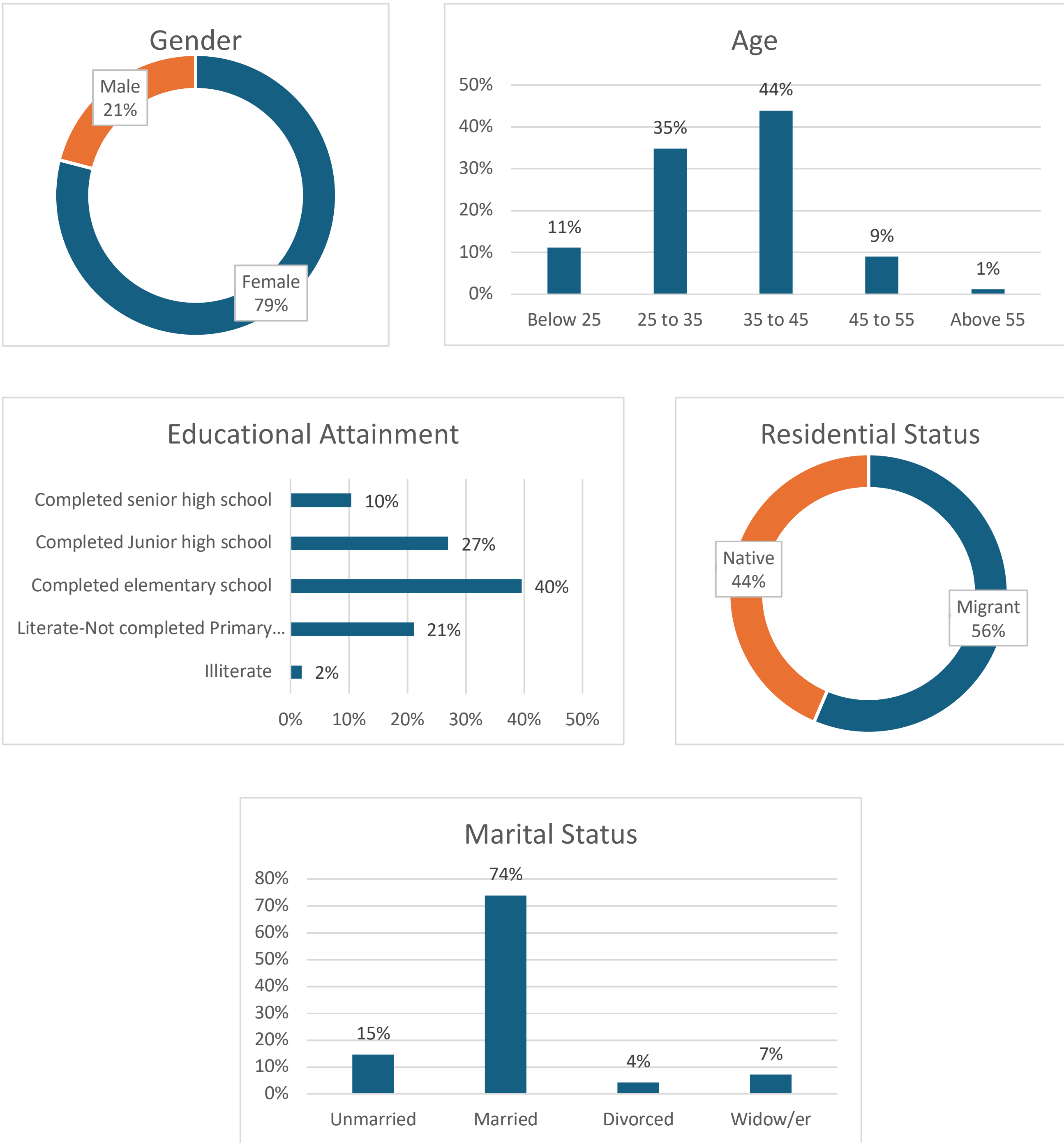
MARITAL STATUS

Approximately 74% of respondents are married, 15% are unmarried, 7% are widowed, and 4% are divorced.

RESIDENTIAL STATUS

Approximately 56% are classified as migrants and 44% as native residents. These categories provide a basis for further analysis of differences in housing, transport, and household financial arrangements; they do not, by themselves, establish those differences.

FIGURE 1: PERSONAL PROFILE OF THE WORKER



Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422.

HOUSEHOLD PROFILE

The following panel of figures (Figure 2) describes household circumstances of the 422 workers: family size, living arrangements, household income, and household debt. These findings provide context for interpreting household consumption and expenditure.

FAMILY SIZE AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

The most common household size is 4 to 6 persons (58% of respondents), followed by 2 to 4 persons (33%). Small households of fewer than 2 persons (3%) and large households of more than 6 (5%) are both uncommon. The large majority of workers (84%) report living with family, while 16% live apart from family. These figures underline the importance of examining consumption at the household level.

Household indicator	Median
Family size	4 people
Earners per household	2 people
Children per household	1 child

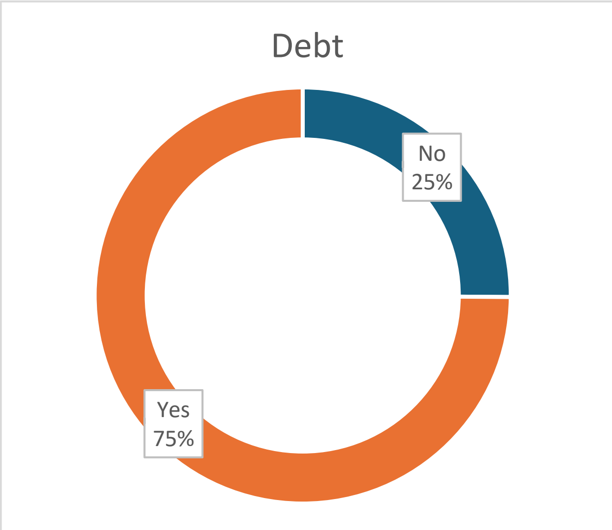
Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422

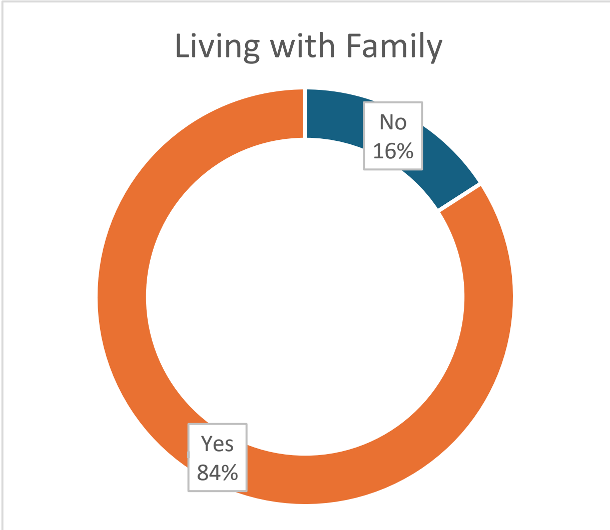
Most surveyed households rely on more than one earner: 63% report two earning members and 11% report three or more, while 26% report one earning member.

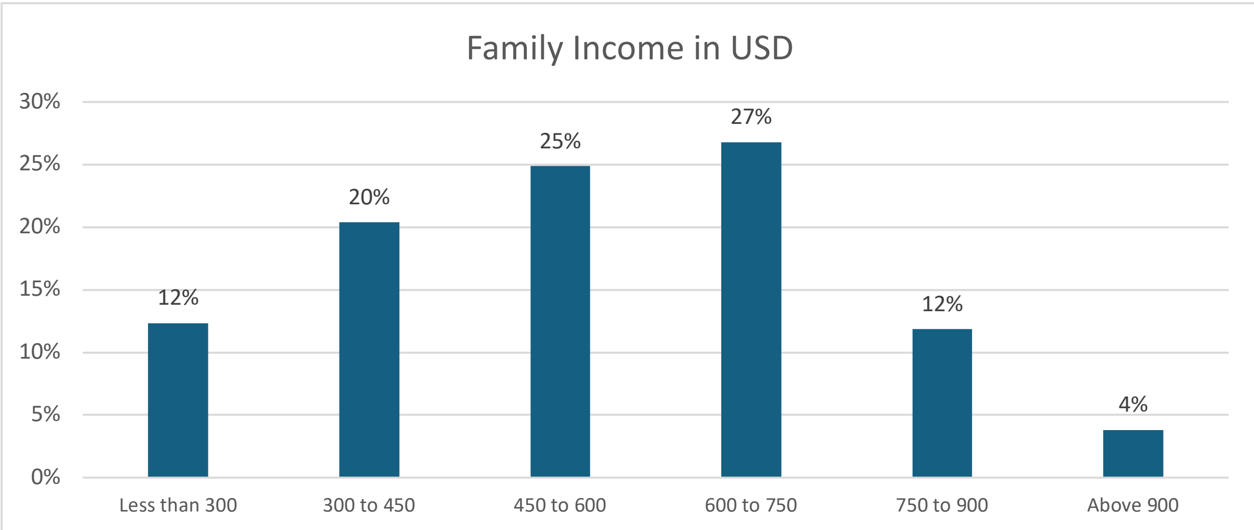
Number of earning members	Share of households
1	26%
2	63%
3	8%
4	3%
5	0%

Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422

FIGURE 2: HOUSEHOLD PROFILE OF THE WORKER







Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME (USD)

Household income is fairly evenly spread across the middle of the range, with a peak in the USD 600–750 band (27%), followed by USD 450–600 (25%) and USD 300–450 (20%). Households earning under USD 300 make up 12%, those earning USD 750–900 make up 12%, and only 4% earn above USD 900. Compared with the individual wage figures in the Employment Profile (mostly USD 250–350), this suggests household income is typically higher than one worker's earnings, consistent with the finding that 74% of surveyed households report two or more earning members.

Reported monthly family-income band	Share of respondents
Below US$300	12%
US$300–450	20%
US$450–600	25%
US$600–750	27%
US$750–900	12%
Above US$900	4%

Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422

DEBT

A substantial majority of households (75%) report carrying debt, against 25% that do not. Debt is therefore a widespread feature of the surveyed households' financial circumstances.

EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

The following panel of graphs (Figure 3) gives a descriptive picture of the employment conditions of the 422 surveyed workers: the type of contract they hold, the roles they perform, what they earn, whether they work to production targets, their access to social security, and their exposure to overtime.

CONTRACT TYPE

Workers were split between two contract categories: Fixed Duration Contracts (FDC) (19%) and Unspecified Duration Contracts (UDC) (81%). Four in five respondents hold open-ended contracts.

JOB ROLE

Tailors are the largest single role (41%), followed by a broad "Others" category (38%), then Checkers (10%), Cutters (6%) and Helpers (5%). Roles within the "Others" category are not broken out individually.

MONTHLY EARNINGS (USD)

Reported monthly earnings are concentrated between US$250 and US$350. Earnings cluster in the middle of the observed range: 40% earn USD 300–350 a month, 28% earn USD 250–300, and 14% earn under USD 250. Only 18% earn above USD 350 (13% in the USD 350–400 band and 5% above USD 400). Roughly four in five workers earn up to USD 350 per month.

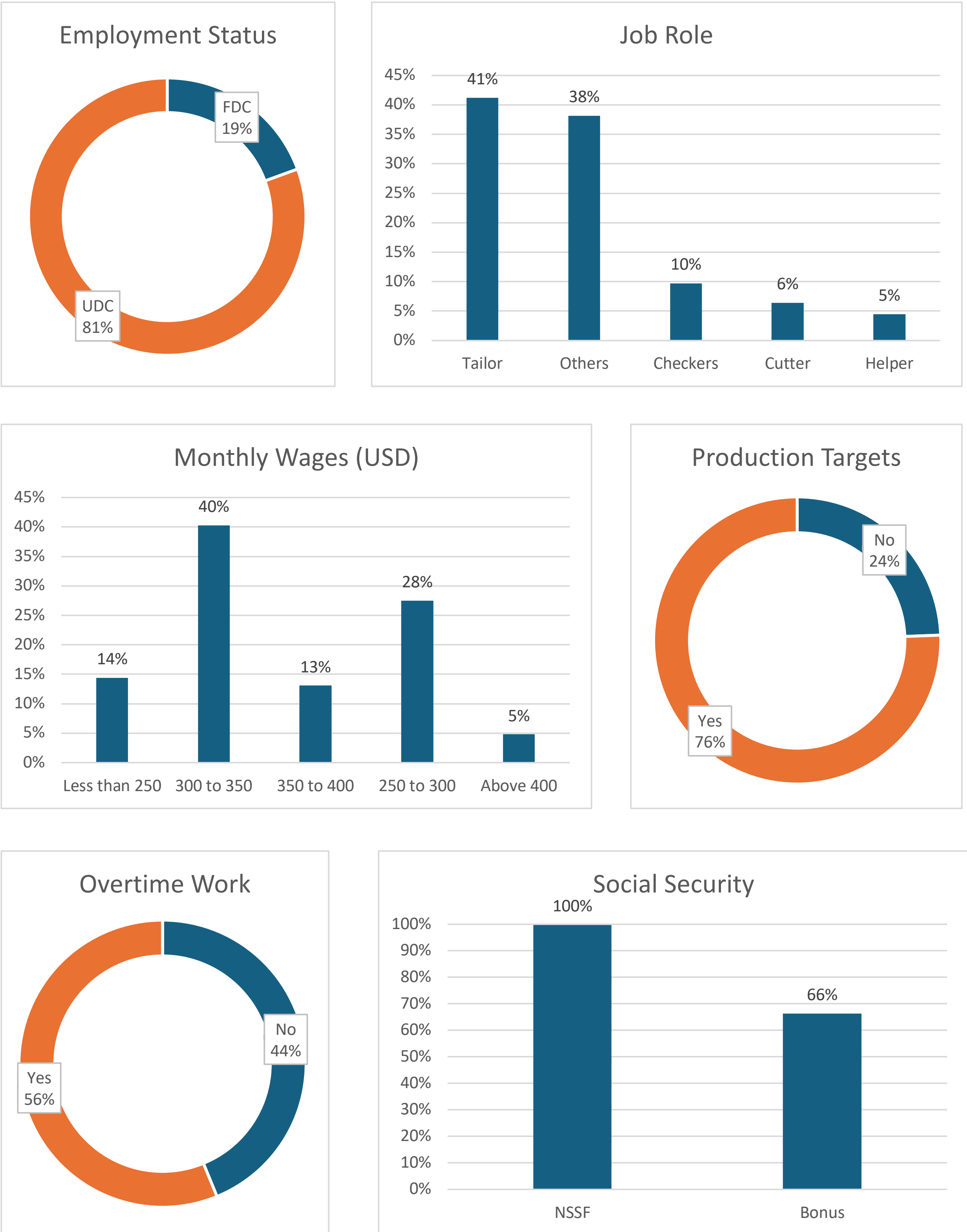
Reported monthly earnings band	Share of respondents
Less than US$250	14 %
US$250–300	28 %
US$300–350	40 %
US$350–400	13 %
Above US$400	5 %

Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422

PRODUCTION TARGETS, SOCIAL SECURITY, OVERTIME AND BONUS

Three-quarters of workers (76%) report being assigned production targets. Social security coverage is very high: about 99.8% report NSSF (National Social Security Fund) coverage, and two-thirds (66%) report receiving a bonus. Overtime work is reported by 56% of workers. These responses establish the prevalence of reported overtime; assessing its contribution to earnings requires information on hours, frequency and pay.

FIGURE 3: EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF THE WORKER



Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422.

FOOD CONSUMPTION

This section examines household food consumption, including estimated calorie consumption and associated expenditure.

Surveyed households reported estimated food consumption of 1,985 kilocalories per person per day, with food expenditure of USD 2.50 per person per day. Assessment of dietary adequacy requires consideration of household members' energy needs, dietary composition and the distribution of food within households.

Calories per person per day	Per capita Expenditure per day
1985 Kcal/day	**2.5 USD/day**

Cereals provide the largest single share of calories (32.7%), followed by meat (19.7%), vegetables and fruit (15.6%), and oils (14.8%). Meat accounts for the largest share of food spending (37.1%), followed by vegetables and fruit (29.3%) and cereals (12.2%). Cereals supply 32.7% of calories for 12.2% of food spending, while meat, vegetables and fruit together account for 66.4% of food spending. This comparison shows the different costs of obtaining calories from different food groups. Assessment of overall dietary quality also requires evidence on nutrient intake and dietary diversity.

Food category	Share of calories	Share of food spending
Cereals	32.7%	12.2%
Meat	19.7%	37.1%
Vegetables and fruit	15.6%	29.3%
Oils	14.8%	2.1%
Sugar and salt	6.5%	1.5%
Dairy products	6.4%	4.7%
Beverages	2.4%	7.3%
Spices	1.4%	3.4%
Cooked food	0.5%	2.4%

Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422

NON-FOOD CONSUMPTION

Non-food household expenditure is recorded across eight categories: household consumables, housing, health and medicines, travel, services, clothing and footwear, entertainment, and education.

Non-food category	Share of non-food spending
Household consumables	36.4%
Housing charges	21.6%
Health and medicines	12.2%
Travel	10.3%
Services	6.7%
Clothing and footwear	6.1%
Entertainment	6.1%
Education	0.6%

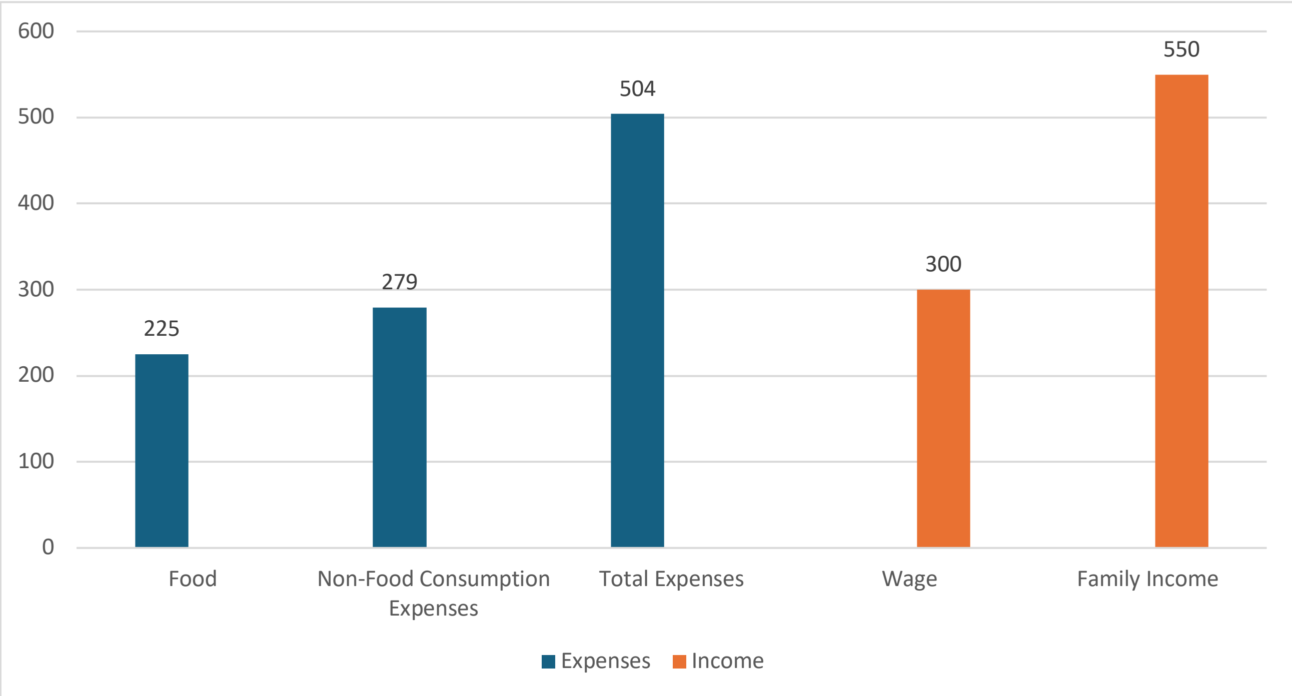
Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422

The graph shows the share of expenditure on the eight areas of non-food consumption among workers. More than one-third (36%) of non-food expenses are spent on consumables, which are basic items. This is followed by housing charges, which include rent, home loan EMI, water and electricity charges, etc.

WORKER EARNINGS AND HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE

Figure 4 brings together the central income and expenditure indicators. Median individual earnings are US$300, median family income is US$550, and median household expenditure is US$504. Individual earnings are therefore equivalent to approximately 60% of recorded household expenditure. These figures should be read alongside the household profile, where 74% of surveyed households report two or more earners and 75% report debt.

FIGURE 4: MEDIAN MONTHLY EXPENDITURE, WORKER EARNINGS AND FAMILY INCOME (USD)



Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2026, n422

IMPLICATIONS FOR WAGE DISCUSSIONS

The survey provides evidence for union-led wage discussions centered on the actual economic circumstances of garment workers and their households.

1. **Individual worker earnings equal about 60% of recorded household expenditure**
   Median individual earnings are approximately US$300 per month, compared with median household expenditure of US$504. The difference is about **USD 204 per month**. This comparison shows the distance between the earnings and expenditure.
2. **Households rely on income beyond one garment worker's earnings**
   Seventy-four percent of surveyed households report two or more earning members, and the median family income is US$550. These figures demonstrate the importance of multiple earners in meeting recorded household expenditure, but reliance on multiple earners is not universal.
3. **Recorded expenditure reflects available resources and may leave needs unmet**
   Recorded household expenditure of US$504 reflects what households currently spend under existing economic conditions. It does not necessarily represent the full cost of meeting household needs adequately. Households facing income constraints may reduce consumption, postpone expenditure, forgo services, or borrow in order to remain within available resources. Very low expenditure in categories such as education may therefore coexist with continuing household needs.
4. **Debt is an important indicator of household financial vulnerability**
   Approximately 75% of surveyed households report debt. This widespread borrowing provides important context for interpreting household income and expenditure.
5. **Overtime and bonuses are common among surveyed workers**
   Monthly earnings are approximately USD 300. The survey separately records 56% of workers reporting overtime and 66% reporting bonuses. Overtime involves additional working hours, while variable payments may change from month to month. These differences affect how reliably workers can meet household expenses.
6. **Calorie intake and dietary composition provide complementary information**
   Reported household food consumption is approximately 1,985 kilocalories per person per day. This provides an additional measure of household food consumption alongside expenditure. Cereals provide a relatively high share of calories at comparatively low cost, while meat, vegetables, and fruit account for much larger shares of household food expenditure.

CONCLUSION

The 2026 Cambodia Household Consumption Expenditure Survey provides evidence on the relationship between garment workers' earnings and their households' living conditions.

Median individual earnings are approximately US$300 per month, compared with household-expenditure and family-income medians of US$504 and US$550 respectively. Together with the median of two earners per household, these figures show that individual worker earnings need to be understood in relation to the wider household economy.

Debt reported by 75% of households, the prevalence of overtime and bonuses, and differences in household earning capacity all matter in assessing financial security. Estimated food consumption adds another dimension to understanding household economic conditions alongside expenditure.

For Cambodian trade unions, these findings provide an empirical basis for discussing wages, working time, household needs, and the resources required for an adequate standard of living.

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