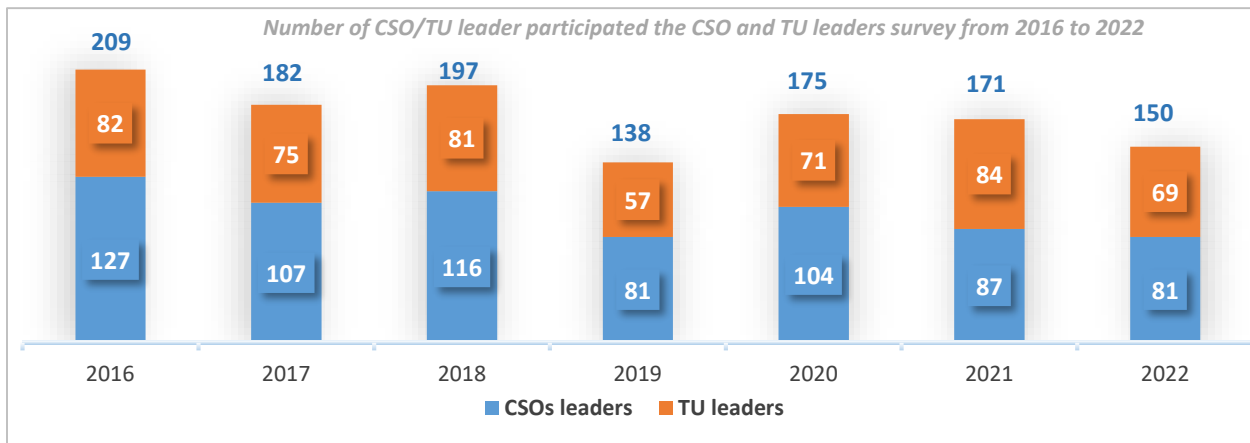




Fundamental Freedoms in Cambodia: Civic Leaders' Perceptions of Seven Year Trends

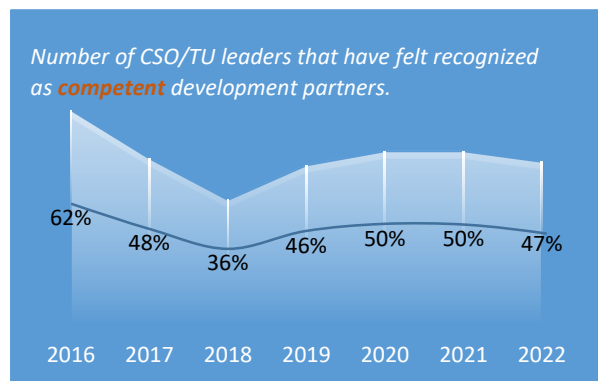
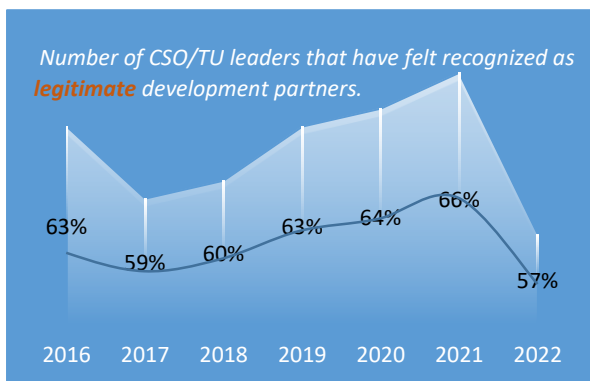
The Fundamental Freedoms Monitoring Project (FFMP) is a multi-year project that monitors the civil society space in Cambodia, specifically individuals' ability to exercise the freedoms of association, expression and assembly (fundamental freedoms). The FFMP is a joint initiative of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR), the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), the Solidarity Center, and the International Center for Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL).

A key feature of the FFMP has been understanding how civic leaders – civil society organization (CSO), and trade union and trade federation leaders (TU) – perceive their ability to exercise fundamental freedoms. To capture this information, surveys of CSO and TU leaders have been completed, with an average of 175 civic leaders taking part in the survey each year.¹



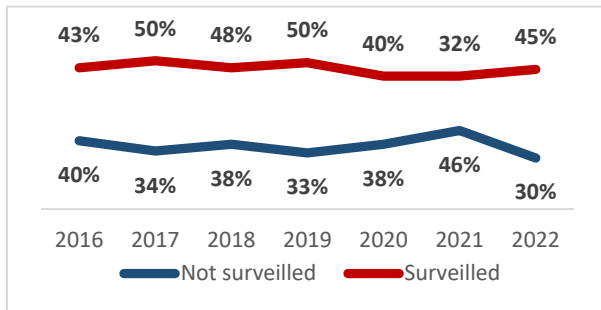
Key trends for CSO/TU leaders

In 2022, there was a **decrease** in the number of CSO/TU leaders that feel they are perceived as **legitimate** and **competent** development partners by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC).

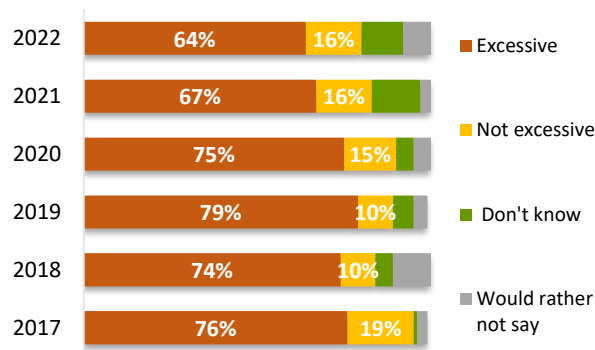


¹ 2016 covered April 2016-March 2017; 2017 covered April 2017-March 2018; 2018 covered April 2018-March 2019; 2019 covered April 2019-March 2020; and 2020 covered April 2020-December 2020; 2021 covered January 2021-December 2021; 2022 covered January 2022-December 2022.

The number of CSO/TU leaders reporting that the RGC **undertook surveillance of their activities** increased in 2022.



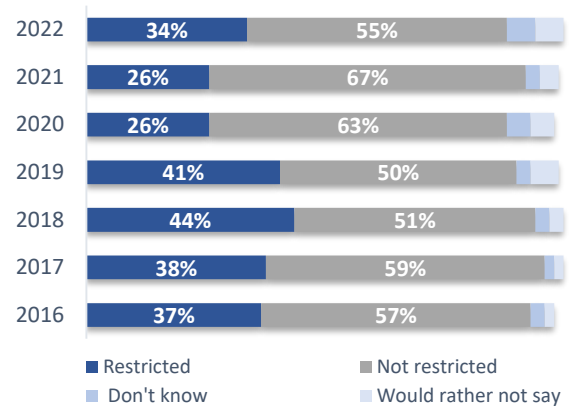
The percentage of CSO/TU leaders reporting excessive government monitoring in 2022 decreased slightly compared to prior years.



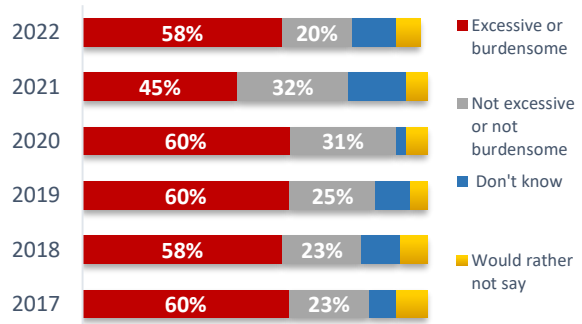
The percentage of CSO/TU leaders reporting that the formation of networks, coalitions, federations, and unions was restricted increased in 2022 (34% of the respondents stated it was restricted). Forming networks and coalitions are crucial for CSOs and TUs to create an enabling space to work together, ensuring that development is community-led and human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled. By doing so, they can pool resources and expertise when working towards a shared goal or finding a solution to a problem that affects multiple constituencies. Similarly, it is important for TUs to form networks to exchange information among trade unionists, and prepare common

² The category "free" is composed of the percentage of respondents who reported feeling "very free" or "somewhat free".

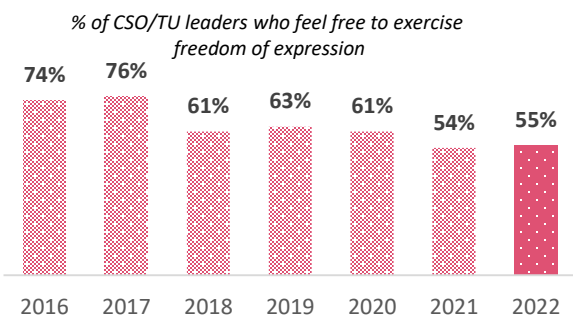
actions that can lead to organized demonstrations or to express solidarity.



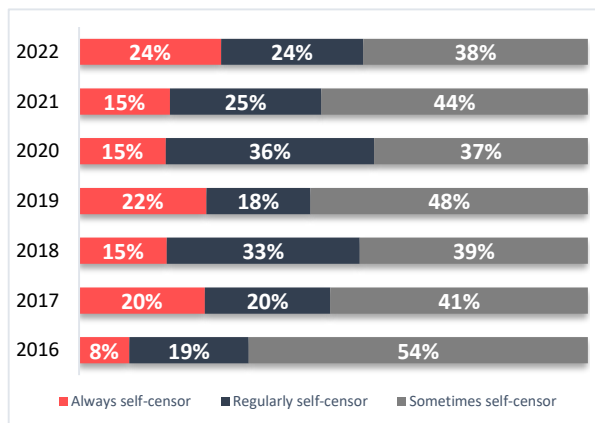
The number of CSO/TU leaders' responses indicating that **non-financial reporting requirements from the Government are excessive or burdensome** increased compared to 2021.



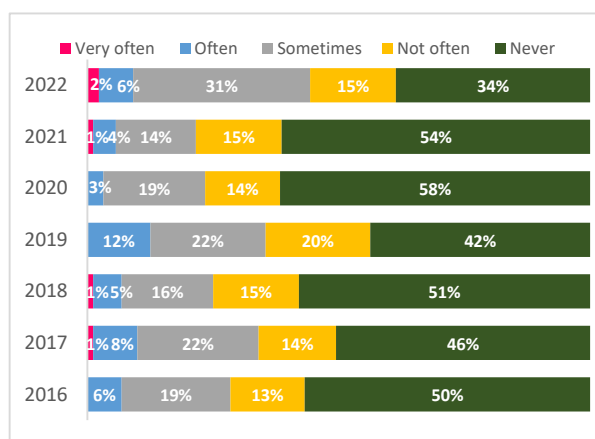
In 2022, the proportion of CSO/TU leaders who reported feeling "free"² to exercise freedom of expression remained almost unchanged when compared to 2021, but has steadily declined since 2018.



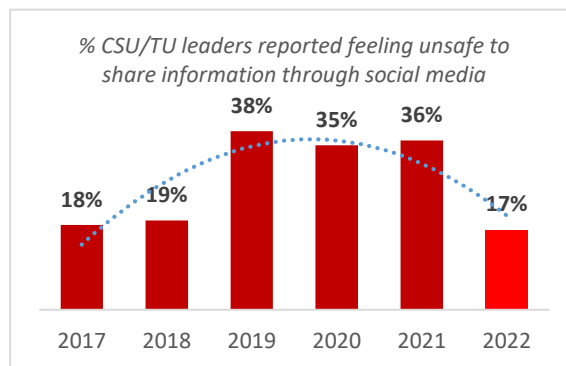
In 2022, 86% of respondents stated that they always, regularly or sometimes self-censor due to fear of reprisal from the RGC. This percentage has stayed relatively consistent over the course of the FFMP. However, the rate of “**always**” self-censoring has continued to increase, at 24% in 2022



The percentage of CSO/TU leaders reporting "very often" being involved in the **decision and law-making processes with the RGC increased by 1%**. The percentage of respondents stating “never” being involved in the decision-making process dropped to its lowest percentage since the beginning of the FFMP, showing that more CSOs and TUs are getting involved in this lawmaking process. However, the percentage of CSOs/TUs that often, remains quite low – with just 6% of the respondents in 2022, and only about 12%, in 2019.



The percentage of CSO/TU leaders who reported feeling unsafe to share information on social media platforms fell to 17% in 2022 after a clear upward trend in 2019 (when it reached its highest point with 38% of respondents, before dropping to 35% in 2020 and slightly rising again to 36% in 2021). In conclusion, notwithstanding the high percentage of individuals self-censoring, CSO/TU leaders might feel free to share information not deemed sensitive on social media.



In 2022, **20%** of CSO/TU leaders experienced being denied access to non-classified and/or non-sensitive information they had requested access to from the RGC, including laws, policies, and statistics. An Access to Information Law is needed as it will help ensure international standards and best practices surrounding access to information are met.

