# Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia

Exploring political attitudes
of East and South–East Asian youth
through the Asian Barometer Survey

**Youth and democratic citizenship in East and South-East Asia: Exploring the political attitudes of East and South-East Asian youth through the Asian Barometer Survey**

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# Foreword

Young people, who comprise approximately half of Asia's population, are both the present and future drivers of inclusive and sustainable development. They represent a reservoir of change for better governance, more creative solutions to public policy challenges and innovative approaches to decision making. In building democratic governance that is people-centered and human development oriented, they have an important role to play as equal stakeholders in society and participants in democratic processes.

Until now, however, there has been little concerted research into how young people in the region themselves experience participation in democratic processes. To address this gap, this report examines East and South-East Asian youth's perceptions and assessments of institutions and practices of governance in their societies, the extent of their interest and participation in politics, and their attitudes and beliefs with respect to their efficacy as democratic citizens. The report is a collaboration between UNDP and the Asian Barometer. It is based on the Asian Barometer Survey data, which provide unprecedented insights into the experiences youth have had in their political systems compared to experiences of older cohorts.

While countries and societies across Asia — including the 12 examined in this report — differ vastly in their structure of governance and demographic compositions, they share this common feature: Their youth present a critical factor in politics, exerting pressure on governments and increasingly playing a role as agents of change as they respond to new issues stemming from social and political transitions of their societies. Most significantly, young people, in all their diversity, should be viewed as active agents in their own right, interacting with governments and making substantive contributions to governance as democratic citizens.

Engaging and empowering youth has been one of the Secretary-General's priority agendas, and UN agencies have worked towards deepening the focus on youth in existing programmes, with guidance of the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Youth. UNDP has also recently launched its own Youth Strategy, setting the political empowerment of youth as one of its three key pillars, and has supported a number of initiatives in the region to support and work with young people in the political arena. This study is expected to be a useful source for country-specific studies and programming in the 12 East and South-East Asian countries and societies examined, as well as for further regional comparative studies in future. Though many questions still remain, we hope that the study provides a stepping stone for initiating discussions and deliberations on issues related to youth and democratic citizenship.

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# Acknowledgements

# Contents

# Note on the countries/societies covered

This report covers the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan (Province of China), the Kingdom of Thailand, and Viet Nam. Taiwan is to be understood as Province of China throughout the report, in accordance with official UN policy as stipulated in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 (Resolution on the Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations). In view of this, the report hereafter mainly uses the term 'society/societies' rather than 'country/countries' in order to ensure inclusivity and consistency in references to the territories where the survey has been conducted. In this light, the two sets of terms should be understood to be interchangeable where needed.

Fieldwork for the China survey was conducted in 25 provinces in mainland China, but excluded Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia and Hainan. Although the survey was also administered in Hong Kong, the report does not include Hong Kong as the timing of the survey did not allow its inclusion.

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| Cambodia | CM |
| China | CN |
| Indonesia | ID |
| Japan | JP |
| Korea (Republic of) | KR |
| Malaysia | MY |
| Mongolia | MN |
| Philippines | PH |
| Singapore | SG |
| Taiwan (Province of China) | TW |
| Thailand | TH |
| Viet Nam | VN |

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# Executive summary

This report addresses East and South-East Asian youth's sense of involvement and empowerment as democratic citizens, their assessments of institutions and quality of governance, and how they participate in politics and exercise their citizenship, compared with older age groups at both the national and regional levels. Based on survey data from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) Wave 3, collected through 2010–2012, the report emerges from a partnership between UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre and the Asian Barometer. The data comprise more than 17,900 responses collected from 12 East and South-East Asian societies: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Taiwan (Province of China), Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The report is divided into five sections. The first, **Youth and Politics: Interest and Involvement**, explores the extent to which youth are interested in politics and the factors determining their psychological involvement. The second section, **Youth and Democratic Governance: Expectations, Trust and Performance**, examines how youth perceive government performance in their respective societies, and how democratic governance is related to a relationship of trust between young people and the state. The third, **Youth as Democratic Citizens: Political Participation and Empowerment**, addresses the level and nature of political participation among East and South-East Asian youth, their reliance on different forms of political participation for expressing their democratic citizenship, and how much they think they can affect politics. Noting that youth is not a homogenous group, the study takes account of the variations among youth based on **gender, educational attainment, income sufficiency, area of residence (rural/ urban), and Internet use**, and examines how these factors are related to the themes of each chapter. The fourth section, **Conclusions and Policy Recommendations,** summarizes key findings and shares recommendations that merit consideration by policy makers and other stakeholders working towards promoting more constructive and sustainable roles young people can play in democratic governance processes. The fifth section includes **references and a methodological and statistical annex.**

Understanding the data that reflect the perceptions and experience of youth signals an effort to acknowledge their agency and capacity to exercise their citizenship, while providing a persuasive ground for devising measures that support their role as a positive force for transformative change.  In this context, the policy implications derived from the analyses aim to serve as initial evidence-based recommendations for governments, civil society, and development practitioners in their policy-making and programming for empowering youth and engaging them meaningfully in the political arena.

The overall conclusion is that in East and South-East Asia, youth have yet to become equal participants in political processes compared to the older cohorts, and have yet to fully realize their potential role as democratic citizens. Young people across the region represent a reservoir of change for better governance, more creative solutions to public policy challenges, and innovative approaches to decision making. At the same time, however, they face many obstacles, which are reflected in their attitudes, expectations and assessments of institutions and governance in their societies. The findings presented in this report indicate that, although the differences between individual societies are significant, in general terms, youth across the region display certain common features that exemplify their potential role as democratic citizens. They are not apathetic, with a significant number following the political developments in their societies with interest, and engaging in political activities in various forms. Broader socio-economic trends, such as the region's economic dynamism, the relatively high financial and educational standing

of youth compared to older cohorts, expansion of Internet use and the changing media landscape, are also shaping the political orientation of East and South-East Asian youth in ways that may be seen as conducive to incremental democratic change. At the same time, other developments threaten to turn youth away from political engagement, and therefore from exercising their democratic citizenship in a responsible and effective form. Importantly, institutions seemed to have failed to win the trust of young people in a number of societies, and many appear to be in danger of becoming disconnected from conventional political structures and processes. The gap between young men and women in levels of their political participation, involvement, and empowerment also remains significant.

Enabling and broadening young people's participation in political processes in East and South-East Asian societies entails three approaches. The first involves **opening up new spaces and opportunities for youth political involvement**. This involves a number of structural measures, including changes in the policy environment and regulatory frameworks that can make a difference in levels of young people's participation. The second approach entails **developing the requisite skills and competences among young people** needed for their effective participation in the political arena. These are tasks for both civic education and other informal mechanisms of political socialization and learning. Together, such measures may require dedicated institutional innovation and reform to make the wider political system more responsive to the voices and concerns of East and South-East Asian youth. Thirdly, **youth-specific research and data analysis** with respect to issues of democratic citizenship in the region can be enhanced as a complementary approach to increase the knowledge base for the various measures proposed.

Despite the visibility of certain general trends, the political realities in different societies in East and South-East Asia are very much determined by their specific historical, social, economic and cultural contexts. The recommendations included in this report therefore need to be adapted to any specific society or, an even more local context. While the recommendations provide interesting entry points that policy makers can take into account when engaging youth in democratic governance processes, they need to be discussed and further developed within the contexts of various societies, ideally in a participatory manner that includes the youth themselves.

# Introduction

# Introduction

The idea that this is the "Asian Century" has gained much currency. More than ever in recent history, societies across Asia are experiencing economic growth and relative political stability. At the same time, they are enjoying largely peaceful relations between each other and with the rest of the world. However, this progress, globally significant as it has been, has not come without its contradictions, costs and new challenges. One outstanding question, for example, is how adequate the prevailing political systems, structures of governance and forms of social contract will remain for the foreseeable future, and to what degree. Another closely related question is to what extent the unprecedented social and economic changes will affect the political landscape of the region. Societies in Asia have no doubt seen their share of conflict and suffering during the 20th Century, with all of the world's major military and ideological struggles playing themselves out on the Asian continent. So far, Asia has fared unexpectedly well in the 21st Century, but many societies are experiencing a certain unease over questions regarding the future.

Youth, that is, the generation of Asians in their late teens and twenties, will not only be called upon to answer some of these questions, but will be increasingly playing a role as actors of change. Nevertheless, few studies have so far investigated how this young cohort of Asians perceive their existing political systems, including the performance of their institutions, and what role they see for themselves in terms of exercising their democratic citizenship. This study attempts to provide more empirical evidence for these ongoing changes, and to explain some of the trends that may determine the future of governance in the continent, based on the findings of the Asian Barometer Survey conducted between 2010 and 2012.

Youth, if defined as people under the age of 30,[1] comprise about half of world's population as well as that of Asia. In the 12 East and South-East Asian societies addressed in this study,[2] youth comprise an estimated average 47.4 percent of the population.[3] This large number of youth indicates that the 'youth vote' will become increasingly important in elections, often even decisive in determining electoral outcomes.[4]

> " Youth will not only be called upon to answer some of these questions, but will be increasingly playing a role as actors of change. "

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1   For statistical consistency across regions, the United Nations defines 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, while acknowledging that youth can represent a more fluid category than this fixed age group would suggest. UNDP generally adopts this same definition in its youth-focused programming. But to ensure its responsiveness to diverse needs of youth in different country contexts, in operation remains flexible of the range that may extend to ages  25–29 or 30 years. In this vein, data collection and analysis regarding 'youth' in this report has adopted a flexible definition of youth, one that includes those aged under 30.

2   The Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan (Province of China), the Kingdom of Thailand, and Viet Nam. 'Taiwan' is to be understood as Province of China throughout the report, in accordance with the official UN stance as stipulated in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 (Resolution on the Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations).

3   See, e.g., Welsh et al. (2012).

4   In Malaysia, for example, the youth vote comprises 25 percent of the electorate and definitively shaped the results of the last three elections. A similar dynamic is reported in Cambodia and Indonesia, where youth make up 35 percent of the electorate. In 2011, younger voters in Singapore contributed to record

Youth are also asked to assume various duties of citizenship, including, in some societies, national military service. Likewise, they contribute large shares to taxes and national retirement programmes, all the more significantly in societies experiencing a youth bulge. Representation of youth in formal politics, however, remains limited; in case of East and South-East Asia, the proportion of youth among members of parliament is low and only a few societies — including Indonesia, the Philippines and Taiwan — have established youth parliaments.

Exclusion of youth from political processes can drive them towards protest movements as a means of expressing social and political grievances. Such youth-led movements are not a new phenomenon. There is however, a common theme running through the recent series of youth protests across the world that merits attention: Many young people are protesting with a deep sense of injustice and against growing inequality, which has been intensified by the global financial crisis and high unemployment. Importantly, many have lost faith in the capacity of their governments and political systems to improve the situation, and since they feel excluded from formal political processes, they have chosen to channel their political engagement through protest movements. It is true that, compared to the Middle East and Europe, Asia-Pacific countries show much lower unemployment rates, and the region has seen only a few minor examples of youth-led protests. In the context of recent youth uprisings, however, it is important to examine how and the extent to which young people in the region experience social injustice and political exclusion.

Within the United Nations system, working with youth has been set as one of five key priority areas for the Secretary-General's second-term agenda[5], and a System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP) has been established as a framework to guide youth programming for the UN system. Plans for the post-2015 development consultations also highlight ways that the voices of youth may be heard. Indeed, various initiatives and platforms are already engaging youth in the deliberations, including "The World We Want" North-East Asian Youth Conference which was held in January 2013 in the region. The process has revealed that youth consider good governance to be an important feature of their lives and a means to creating a better world. In the My World 2015 online survey, for example, 'an honest and responsive government' was rated among the top three 'important issues' for youth aged 16 to 30 years.



Credit: ©UNDP Seoul Policy Centre/2013

▲ The World We Want North-East Asian Youth Conference in January 2013, Seoul.

losses for the incumbent People's Action Party.

5   On 25 January 2012, in a statement to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General outlined the five imperatives of his second term: (1) sustainable development; (2) preventing conflicts and disasters, human rights abuses and development setbacks; (3) building a safer and more secure world, which includes standing strong on fundamental principles of democracy and human rights; (4) supporting nations in transition; and (5) working for women and young people.

Aiming to better represent the role of youth in global development, UNDP recently launched a Youth Strategy (April 2014) that emphasizes the importance of empowering youth and commits to enhancing youth participation in decision making and political processes. The Strategy is based on the conviction that development objectives will not be achieved in a sustainable manner without the active political participation of youth in guiding the development agenda. In Asia-Pacific, however, little information is currently available on how young people themselves experience participation in democratic processes, which can provide a starting point for shaping effective policies to promote their meaningful and inclusive participation. Existing scholarship on youth, particularly East and South-East Asian youth, has rarely approached young people as agents in their own right, who interact with governments and shape governance outcomes i.e. as active democratic citizens, rather than subjects of government action or a community to respond to[6]. A number of recent studies that investigated East and South-East Asian youth and politics have included analysis on their electoral participation (e.g. Tan et al., 2010) and surveys conducted to examine their political attitudes towards politics (e.g. UNDP, 2010), but little research has provided cross-society and cross-generational comparisons or a regional level analysis.

This report aims to fill this knowledge gap. It presents data-based analyses of East and South-East Asian youth's sense of political involvement and empowerment, their assessments of institutions and quality of governance, and the nature and extent of their participation in politics, compared to older age groups at both the national and regional levels. The study is a collaborative effort between UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre and the Asian Barometer,[7] and is based on survey data from the ABS Wave 3 Survey, collected from 2010 to 2012. The data analysed comprise more than 17,900 responses collected through face-to-face interviews from 12 East and South-East Asian societies: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Taiwan (Province of China), Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

*Understanding the data that reflect the perceptions and experience of youth signals an effort to acknowledge their agency and capacity to exercise their citizenship.*

Understanding the data that reflect the perceptions and experience of youth signals an effort to acknowledge their agency and capacity to exercise their citizenship, while providing a persuasive ground for devising measures that support their role as a positive force for transformative change. In this context, the policy implications derived from the analyses aim to serve as initial evidence-based recommendations for governments, civil society, and development practitioners in their policy making and programming for empowering youth and engaging them meaningfully in the political arena.

A caveat is in order, however. The societies covered in this study are very diverse in many respects. This includes their size, diversity, history, cultural characteristics, geographic and demographic features, and stage of economic and social development. The table on page

6   Welsh et al. (2012).

7   The Asian Barometer is an applied research programme surveying public opinion with respect to political values, democracy and governance around the region. The regional network encompasses research teams from 13 East Asian political systems (Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Viet Nam), and 5 South Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). It is headquartered in Taipei and co-hosted by the Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica and the Institute for the Advanced Studies of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University. For further information regarding the Asian Barometer, see here.

> The present study should be seen as an open invitation for others to conduct related research, to test the assumptions and conclusions presented herein, and to continue ask questions.

11 is intended provide a rough comparative overview of these country-level specifics in order to help the reader to contextualize the information provided in this report. The exact meaning and significance of the various data provided in this research have yet to be better understood through comparisons over longer periods of time, and through discussions with young people in the region themselves.

The present study should be seen as an open invitation for others to conduct related research, to test the assumptions and conclusions presented herein, and to continue to ask questions that aim at better defining the role of young people in terms of democratic citizenship in the societies concerned.

## Political theories of youth

Generational differences in political engagement have long been a subject in political science, although it has yet to be fully investigated in East and South-East Asia. Here, researchers have so far viewed youth though two different lenses.

On the one hand, they have been seen as disengaged from politics, often labelled apathetic and self-interested. These perceptions are grounded in studies of political participation in the English-speaking West that have found youth are less involved than older age cohorts in politics, from voting to other forms of engagement (Connery, 2008; Dalton, 2008; DFID-CSO Youth Working Group, 2010; Ellis et al., 2006; Fahmy, 2006; Goldstone et al., 2012; Hackett, 1997).

The second approach views youth as agents and drivers of change. This evokes the images of youth contributing to democratic transitions, through student protest over economic conditions. In recent years, youth have played important roles in the political changes taking place in the Middle East and Europe. It is not clear where East and South-East Asian youth will fall, but this report finds that youth can be described as both apathetic and engaged, depending on their life circumstances and societal contexts. Generally, however, the dynamic that emerges is that of an engaged and more critical youth when compared to earlier generations in East and South-East Asia, or when compared to patterns in other regions.

Scholars have identified two predominant approaches to understanding youth and generational differences.

The first is the lifecycle theory. According to this approach, individuals adopt different roles as they go through life, increasingly accepting more responsibilities and obligations until their senior years. These conditions affect the resources individuals have at their disposal, especially time, and shape their interests, which also affects their political engagement. Lifecycle theory posits that youth are disengaged because of their lack of social networks and incentives that shape political engagement, but at the same time have more time to invest in politics (Braungart and Braungart, 1986; Braungart, 1984; Lane, 1959).

A second approach, known as cohort theory, argues that respective generations engage in politics in the same way as a result of shared experience among the cohorts (Alwin and Krosnick, 1991; Goldstone, 1999). Pivotal social events usually shape the experience of the cohort, be it an economic crisis or growth, political turmoil or transition.

The report finds that, in East and South-East Asia, both approaches may be used to describe the shaping of political participation among youth and other generations. Since the ABS survey captures political attitudes at only one point of time, it does not allow for the opportunity to explore the two different approaches in detail. But it does offer insights into the dynamics of the youth cohort and their attitudes and perceptions towards citizenship, participation and democratic governance. The survey results also indicate that there is a cohort effect at play in East and South-East Asia, and that it is shaped by changes in technology in particular, mainly represented by expanded use of the Internet, though this phenomenon is not influencing youth evenly across the region.

In studying youth, it is important to take account of their unique experience, societal context and life conditions that shape their political engagement. These vary in different societies and among youth themselves.

# Methodology

The study is based on the ABS Wave 3 data collected from 2010 to 2012 in 13 East and South-East Asian societies: Cambodia; China; Hong Kong, China (SAR); Indonesia; Japan; the Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mongolia; the Philippines; Taiwan (Province of China); Singapore; Thailand; and Viet Nam. This report covers all of these societies except Hong Kong, since the timing of that survey did not allow its inclusion. The survey questionnaire included 161 items, which local research teams and international consultants administered through 60-minute face-to-face interviews. The samples, in keeping with research protocols developed by Global Barometer Surveys (GBS), were randomly selected among eligible voters in each participating country or territory. In total, more than 17,900 responses were collected and examined from the 12 societies featured in this report. Further details on the methods and the original questionnaire can be accessed at the ABS website (see here). An appendix at the end of this report also provides summaries of how the sampling and data collection process was organized in each society, and provides information about sample size, geographic scope and methodological adjustments for each society surveyed.

# Profile of youth in East and South-East Asia

**Factors examined for disaggregation of youth's profile**

- Educational attainment
- Area of residence (urban/rural)
- Internet use
- Gender
- Income sufficiency

This study differentiates between youth (younger than 30), adults (30–59 years) and seniors (60 years and older), focusing on the youth experience and ways in which they resemble or differ from older cohorts as democratic citizens.

In general, East and South-East Asian youth are undergoing rapid changes vis-à-vis their larger societies. Figure 1, below, presents two distinct patterns in East and South-East Asia: one in which the population is aging as a result of low birth rates and, in some cases, strict family planning policies; and another where the number of youth is increasing, creating a demographic youth bulge with profound impacts on political life. While the size of national youth populations in East and South-East Asia may vary, the importance of youth for politics remains constant, although often for different reasons, depending on whether the society is aging, or experiencing a youth bulge.

## Figure 1. Youth Population in East and South-East Asian Societies
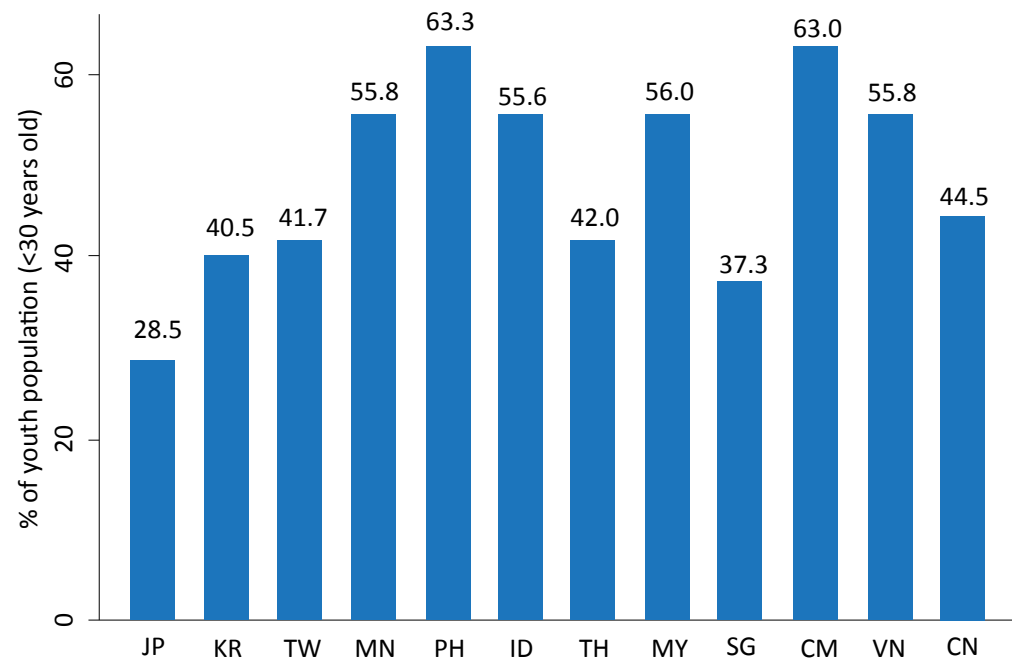


*Source: Latest census from each society*

In more youthful societies such as Cambodia, Malaysia and the Philippines, the sheer numbers of new political actors, including voters, present new challenges for political leaders. These youth need jobs and services, and they expect political representation. In older societies such as Japan and Singapore, youth will now have to contribute more to supporting the older citizenry, and with these greater contributions there will likely come new demands and expectations. Democratic citizenship is not static. It is constantly being negotiated, entailing new duties and obligations. In either dynamic — aging society or youth bulge — youth become increasingly important for democratic governance, shaping policies and otherwise exerting pressures on governments.

Youth are also undergoing other dramatic changes as they become more educated, more urbanized and more connected with each other as well as with the rest of the world through the use of information and communications technology (ICT), and in particular, social media and the Internet as a whole. For example, they are attaining more years of education than earlier generations, higher levels of literacy and a better knowledge of politics. The gaps and differences are apparent, however, across societies. For instance, whereas a large proportion of young people have completed tertiary education in more developed societies such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, the proportion is smaller in countries such as Cambodia and Indonesia, making for sharper educational divides among youth populations.

**Figure 2. Educational Attainment of East and South-East Asian Youth**
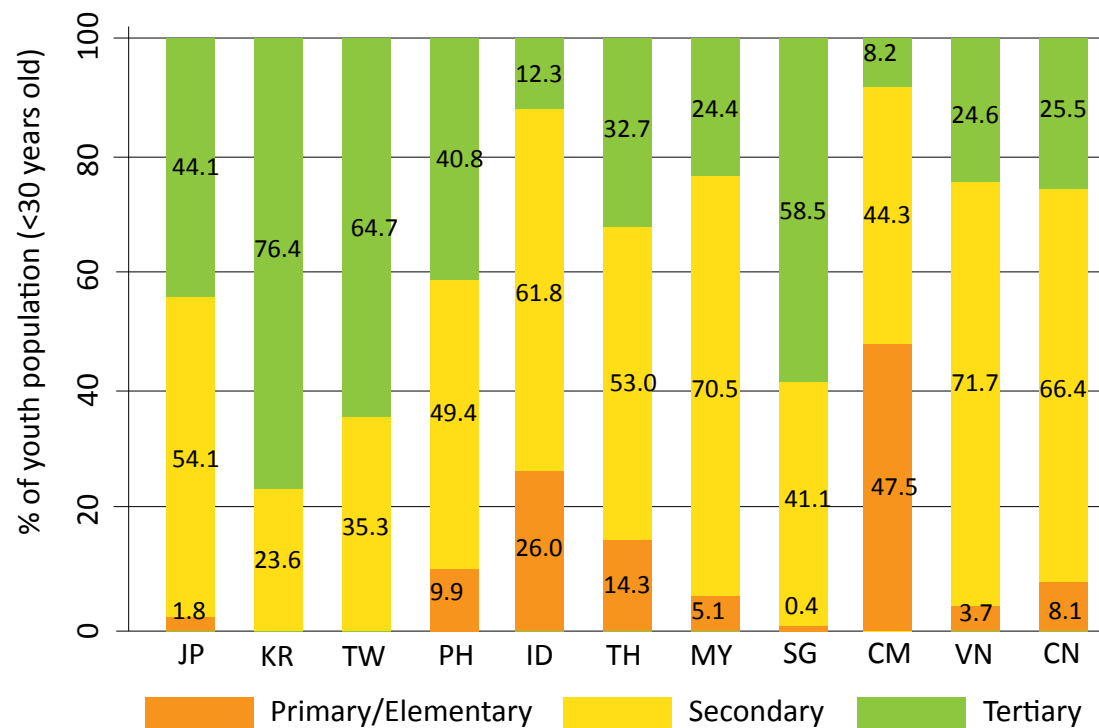


Source: Asian Barometer Survey (Wave 3)

A similar transformation is apparent with regard to urbanization, reflecting broader modernization trends in East and South-East Asia. For decades, young people across the region have migrated to cities in search of employment and new lifestyles. As a consequence of both population growth and increasing urbanization, societies in East and South-East Asia have generally become more modern and urbanized, with the result that youth as a cohort tend to experience a more urban lifestyle, compared to older generations in the region. As shown in Figure 3, the sharpest differences in urbanization appear between youth and seniors, especially in North-East Asian countries such as Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Studies differ in their assessments of the effects of urbanization on youth. Some point to greater alienation and disaffection, while others suggest instead that the urban experience deepens social capital and enhances opportunity.[8] Considerable variation in this regard can be attributed partly to cross-cutting social cleavages of class, ethnicity and gender, and distinctions must be made in characterizing the urban experience with respect to level of urbanization. While unable to factor in all of the above, the analyses in this report distinguish between rural and urban youth experiences, to determine the extent to which East and South-East Asia's increasing urbanization is contributing to different political attitudes and types of engagement among these two groups of youth.

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8   See Gale and Fahey (2005).

**Figure 3. Urban-Rural Overview of East and South-East Asian Youth**
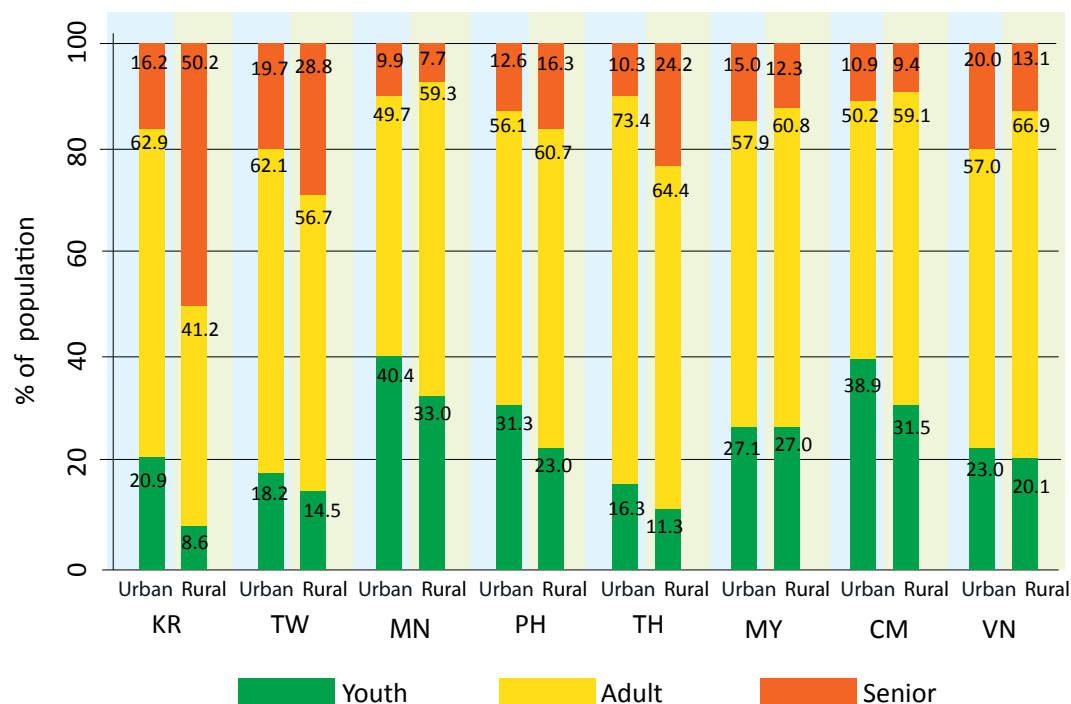


Source: Asian Barometer Survey (Wave 3)

The youth experience also varies markedly across the region in terms of access to Internet technology. Use of computers and the Internet was mainly confined to an elite population only a few decades ago or, in some societies, even just a few years ago. Now, many East and South-East Asians across the generations — the youth more so than other age groups — are connecting online on a daily basis, often through mobile phones, and actively using social media platforms such as Twitter, Weibo, Facebook and Instagram. Despite the comparatively low cost of Internet technology, however, a noticeable lag persists between Internet use in less developed societies such as Cambodia, Indonesia, and Viet Nam and their more developed counterparts (Figure 4).

## Figure 4. Internet Use by Cohort



Bar chart showing Internet use (%) by cohort (Youth, Adult, Senior) across countries:

| Country | Youth | Adult | Senior |
|---------|-------|-------|--------|
| JP | 97 | 88 | 38 |
| KR | 100 | 86 | 24 |
| TW | 100 | 75 | 38 |
| MN | 84 | 57 | 27 |
| PH | 71 | 38 | 23 |
| ID | 40 | 13 | 5 |
| TH | 61 | 29 | 8 |
| MY | 86 | 49 | 25 |
| SG | 97 | 86 | 26 |
| CM | 12 | 2 | 0 |
| VN | 59 | 43 | 23 |
| CN | 81 | 33 | 8 |
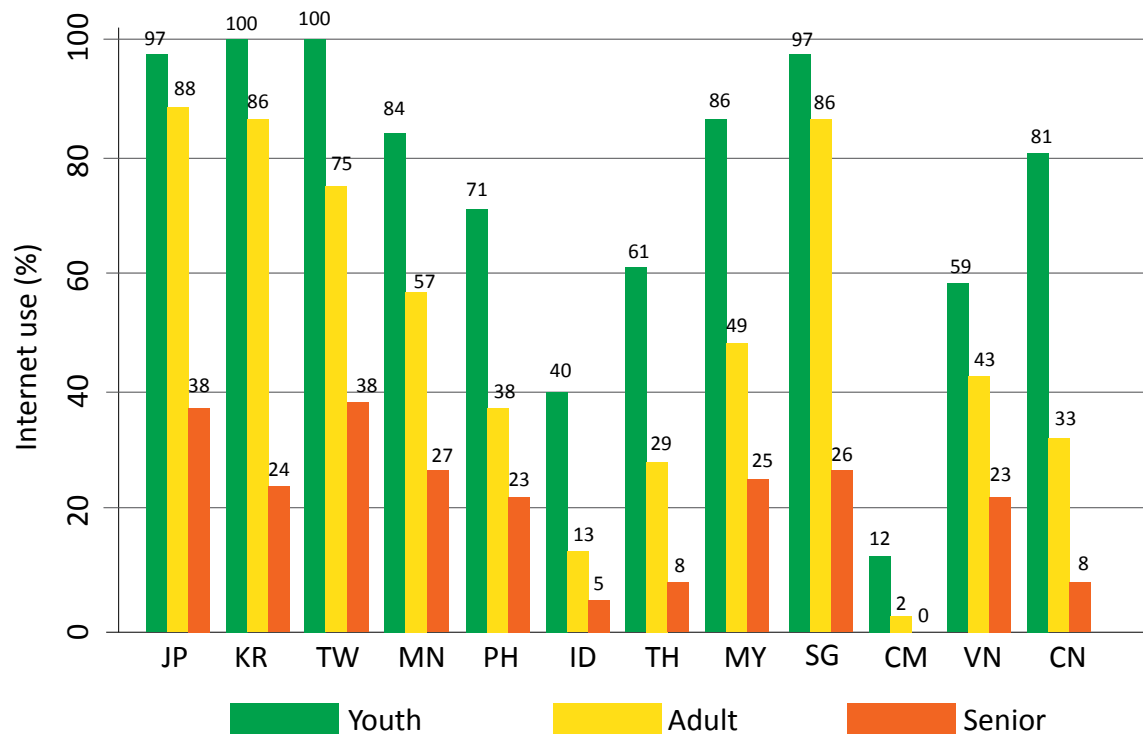
*Source: Asian Barometer Survey (Wave 3)*

The potential effects of Internet technology, and in particular social media, on politics and democratic discourse have been much discussed over the past years. Some scholars have proposed that the Internet generally creates more opportunities for democratic governance.[9] They point to its role in levelling the field in communications, for example, by providing channels to circumvent dominant state media in electoral politics, thereby facilitating both less constrained communication and political mobilization among citizens. Other studies highlight the role of the Internet in changing relationships between citizens and the state through e-government and net-citizen networks.[10]

At the same time, the Internet has also been perceived as a threat to the stability of societies and particular political systems, leading governments to restrict access or monitor its use for a variety of reasons. While this may be justified for reasons of maintaining public security and curbing the use of hate speech, it also sometimes takes the form of restraining the freedom of expression and information. The Internet has played a positive role in exposing corruption or as a channel for expressing criticism of misgovernance in a number of countries within the region, from China to Indonesia. The freedom of the Internet has thus become a hotly contested issue in some countries in the region, with states adopting different measures to control content, trying to regulate the technology and curtail its use.

9   See Howard and Hussain (2011).
10  See Howard and Hussain (2013).

The impact of Internet on political attitudes in Asia is less well understood. This report therefore aims to shed more light on its role and significance, especially with regard to the political expectations, interest, and engagement among the younger generation in East and South-East Asia. In light of the fact that youth tend to be more frequent Internet users, future researchers are encouraged to look further into differences in Internet use among different youth groups and explore the extent and nature of their political engagement accordingly, beyond what this report is able to cover. Future research should also focus on the specific role of social media and how these can be used as spaces for discussion, as mechanisms for policy makers to reach out to the public, and as a tool for mobilizing around political common interests. Such research will have to examine more than the mere extent of Internet use, and look more into the purposes and specifics of its use, which may be quite different in different social and geographic contexts.

Aside from differences in educational level, area of residence (urban/rural), and Internet use, this report considers two other important socio-economic cleavages within youth populations: gender and income sufficiency, differences that have proved especially salient. Both young women and young men face challenges shaped by distinct gender roles and socialization. Thus, as expected, differences in political attitudes are evident between genders, as are the respective extents and forms of political engagement. Another source of variation is income,[11] a measure of class differences within youth. Where possible, in countries with distinct and politicized ethnic communities, this study also took ethnic differences into account. From the outset, rather than treating youth as a single homogeneous entity, this study has aimed to appreciate the variations within youth populations, not only within individual countries, but also across a variety of socio-economic markers.

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11 In the ABS survey, income level, along with type of employment (blue vs. white collar) has been used as a proxy measure of class differences within youth. Income has been measured both in readily quantifiable terms of annual or monthly household income and in more subjective terms of perceived income sufficiency — i.e. whether the total income satisfactorily covers household needs. This report bases on the latter measurement and considers those whose income is perceived as enough to satisfactorily cover household needs to be 'economically secure'.

# East and South-East Asia in comparison: country data and global rankings

| | Cambodia | China | Indonesia | Japan | Korea (Rep) | Malaysia | Mongolia | Philippines | Singapore | Taiwan (China) | Thailand | Viet Nam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Population[12] (rank/value) | 69 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 26 | 43 | 138 | 12 | 115 | 52 | 20 | 14 |
| in millions | 15.1 | 1,385.6 | 249,8 | 127.1 | 49.2 | 29.7 | 2.8 | 98.4 | 5.4 | 23.2 | 67 | 91.7 |
| Under 14 | 31% | 18% | 29% | 13% | 15% | 27% | 27% | 35% | 16% | 16% | 18% | 23% |
| Life expectancy[14] (rank/value) | 147 | 97 | 117 | 1 | 26 | 66 | 134 | 112 | 4 | 31 | 76 | 71 |
| | 66 | 74.2 | 72 | 86.5 | 81 | 75.7 | 69 | 73 | 84 | 80.6 | 74.9 | 75 |
| Age at first marriage (m/f) | 24.90 | 26.50 | 25.70 | 30.5 | 32.2 | 28 | 26.2 | 28 | 30 | 31.9 | 27.40 | 26.2 |
| | 22 | 24.70 | 22.3 | 28.8 | 29.6 | 25.7 | 24.2 | 25.3 | 28.5 | 29.5 | 24.10 | 22.8 |
| Population density[15] | 84 | 145 | 136 | 350 | 515 | 89 | 2 | 324 | 7,589 | | 131 | 286 |
| Urbanization[15] | 20% | 53.7% | 50.7% | 91.3% | 91% | 72.8% | 68.5% | 48.8% | 100% | 78% | 34.1% | 31% |
| Fertility[16] (rank/value) | 78 | 157 | 115 | 184 | 191 | 75 | 82 | 61 | 194 | - | 158 | 141 |
| | 2.581 | 1.598 | 2.117 | 1.39 | 1.22 | 2.635 | 2.504 | 3.142 | 1.15 | 1.11 | 1.579 | 1.822 |
| Sex ratio[17] | 1.045 | 1.12 | 1.05 | 1.06 | 1.07 | 1.07 | 1.05 | 1.05 | 1.08 | 1.09 | 1.05 | 1.12 |
| (birth/under15) | 1.02 | 1.17 | 1.03 | 1.06 | 1.1 | 1.06 | 1.04 | 1.04 | 1.08 | 1.08 | 1.05 | 1.1 |
| Median age | 22.5 | 35.2 | 27.9 | 44.6 | 37.9 | 25.1 | 25.8 | 22.7 | 39.6 | 37.0 | 33.7 | 27.4 |
| HDI[18] (rank) | 138 | 101 | 121 | 10 | 12 | 64 | 108 | 114 | 18 | - | 103 | 127 |
| GDP/capita[19] (rank/value) | 147 | 93 | 125 | 22 | 27 | 59 | 121 | 130 | 3 | 16 | 92 | 134 |
| | 2,576 | 9,844 | 5,214 | 36,899 | 33,189 | 17,748 | 5,885 | 4,682 | 64,584 | 39,767 | 9,875 | 4,012 |
| Poverty (national/int'l)[20] | 30.1% | 13.4% | 12.5% | 16% | 15% | 3.8% | 35.2% | 10.9% | n.a. | 1.16% | 8.1% | 14.5% |
| | 18.6% | 11.8% | 16.2% | - | - | - | - | 18.4% | | - | 0.4% | 16.9% |
| Literacy (m/f)[21] | 82.8% | 97.5% | 94% | 99% | 99.9% | 95.4% | 96.9% | 95% | 96.6% | 99.62% | 94.9% | 96.1% |
| | 65.9% | 92.7% | 86.8% | 99% | 99.9% | 90.7% | 97.9% | 95.8% | 88.6% | 96.97% | 90.5% | 92% |
| Income inequality[22] | 37.9 | 47.0 | 34.0 | 38.1 | 31.3 | 46.2 | 36.5 | 43.0 | 48.1 | | 40.0 | 35.6 |
| Women labour[23] | 79% | 64% | 51% | 48% | 50% | 44% | 56% | 51% | 59% | - | 64% | 73% |
| Youth unemployed[24] (m/f) | 3% | - | 23% | 8% | 9% | 12% | 21% | 19% | 17% | - | 5% | 5% |
| | 4% | | 22% | 10% | 11% | 10% | 20% | 16% | 10% | | 4% | 4% |
| PISA[25] (rank/value) | | 3 | 54 | 6 | 1 | | | | | 21 | 47 | |
| | | 533 | 402 | 520 | 539 | | | | | 495 | 421 | |
| Ruling party since | 1991 | 1949 | 2009 coalition | 2012 | 2012 | 1974 coalition | 2012 | 2010 | 1963 | 2012 | 2011 | 1976 |
| Women in parliament[26] (rank/%) | 74 | 62 | 83 | 128 | 92 | 119 | 95 | 43 | 53 | 31* | 91 | 58 |
| | 20.3% | 23.4% | 18.6% | 8.1% | 15.7% | 10.4% | 14.9% | 27.3% | 25.3% | 30% | 15.8% | 24.3% |
| Voting age | 18 | 18 | 17 | 20 | 19 | 21 | 18 | 18 | 21 | 20 | 18 | 18 |
| Last turnout[27] | 68.49% | - | 70.99% | 59.32% | 54.26% | 84.84% | 65.24% | 60.70% | 93.18% | 74.72% | 75.03% | 99.51% |
| Press freedom[28] (rank) | 144 | 175 | 132 | 59 | 57 | 147 | 88 | 149 | 150 | 50 | 130 | 174 |
| Corruption (CPI)[29] (rank/value) | 160 | 80 | 114 | 18 | 46 | 53 | 83 | 94 | 5 | 36 | 102 | 116 |
| | 20 | 40 | 32 | 74 | 55 | 50 | 38 | 36 | 86 | 61 | 35 | 31 |
| Internet penetration/ Facebook users[30] | 5% | 44% | 29% | 79% | 84% | 65% | 16% | 36% | 73% | 76% | 35% | 39% |
| | 8% | 46% | 25% | 17% | 27% | 53% | 22% | 32% | 59% | 64% | 36% | 22% |
| Mobile phone subscribers | 126% | 89% | 112% | 109% | 110% | 139% | 105% | 101% | 148% | 126% | 125% | 145% |

*Disclaimer: Just for illustration. Not official UN statistics.*

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12   United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 'Total Population - Both Sexes'. *World population prospects*, the 2012 Revision (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, Population Estimates and Projections Section, 2012).

13   World Health Organization, *WHO life expectancy* (2013).

14   World Bank, 'Population divided by land area in square kilometers', http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST.

15   United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World urbanization prospects (*2011).

16   World Bank, 'Births per woman, a list' (2011).

17   A ratio greater than 1, e.g. 1.1, means there are 1.1 males for every 1 female (more males than females). CIA World Factbook, 'Sex Ratio'.

18   Nations Development Programme, 'The rise of the South: Human progress in a diverse world', in *The 2013 Human development report* (2013).

19   International Monetary Fund, *World economic outlook database* (April 2014).

20   Poverty headcount ratio of people with an income of less than $1.25 a day (PPP) (% of population), latest. http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty.

21   *CIA World Factbook.*

22   A Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality. *World Bank GINI index (2011).*

23   World Bank, 'Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+)', http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS.

24   Percent unemployed, ages 15–24, by gender', http://www.prb.org/DataFinder/Topic/Rankings.aspx?ind=298.

25   Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), www.pisa.oecd.org.

26   Inter-Parliamentary Union, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm (except Taiwan).

27   International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

28   World Press Freedom Index.

29   Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index, http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/.

30   Wearesocial.sg, data collected from US Census Bureau, InternetWorldStats, Facebook, ITU.

# Role of youth in strengthening democratic governance

Across the region, democracy, while generally and in principle accepted as the only legitimate form of government, has developed along very different historical trajectories and assumed a number of forms. Vastly different levels of pluralism and freedom of expression are apparent, as are widely varying degrees of participation and governance performance. Overall, however, the number of political systems where people are able to participate freely in the processes that affect their lives has increased. As a result, more young people in Asia than ever before have grown up in countries that conduct regular multi-party elections. While in the 1990s, doubts remained about whether democratic governance was compatible with Asian values and traditions, by now, the concept has arguably been firmly entrenched as part of what young people consider normal and expect from those holding political power in their countries. This study in part aims to determine to what extent this is the case in different societies and in what way this expectation of democratic governance interrelates with other expectations, including the good and proper use of public resources and the integrity and effectiveness of government performance.

Taking a slightly more forward-looking perspective, this also seeks to identify ways in which democratic governance can be strengthened through more political participation, rather than focusing on democracy as a purely abstract concept. Democratic governance is 'what citizens and their government do to make the rules of the political game acceptable and legitimate in the eyes of as many stakeholders as possible'.[31] Given that youth form a large stakeholder constituency in the societies under study, the ensuing chapters explore their understanding, perceptions and experiences regarding some key tenets of democratic governance.

The driving principles of UNDP's approach to democratic governance derive from two significant frameworks.

- The first is the **human development paradigm**, which shifts the focus of development economics from national-income accounting to people-centred policies. Politics matter for human development. Reducing poverty depends as much on whether poor people have political power as on their opportunities for economic progress. Democracy has proven to be the system of governance most capable of mediating and preventing conflict and of securing and sustaining well-being. By expanding people's choices with respect to how and by whom they are governed, democracy brings principles of participation and accountability to the process of human development.

- The second is the **human rights-based approach,** which emphasizes the principles of inclusiveness, participation and transparency.[32] Within this approach, arguably, the focus is on the relationship between the people and the state, between the rights and entitlements of the former, and the obligations and duties of the latter.[33]

In 2000, the Millennium Declaration reaffirmed the idea that, among those values essential to international relations in the 21st Century, "men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice" and "democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assures these rights."

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31 UNDP, *Making the state responsive: Experience with democratic governance assessments* (2011). Available here.

32 In 'Common Understanding on the Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation' (2003),  UN Agencies agreed that (1) All programmes of development cooperation, policies and technical assistance should further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. (2) Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process. (3) Development cooperation contributes to the development of the capacities of 'duty-bearers' to meet their obligations and/or of 'rights-holders' to claim their rights.

33 The general commitment of the UN and its member states to human rights and democracy in fact dates back much further. For instance, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 already included the following: "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures."

The 2005 World Summit Outcome also reaffirmed that:

> ... "good governance is essential for sustainable development; that sound economic policies, solid democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people and improved infrastructure are the basis for sustained economic growth, poverty eradication and employment creation; and that freedom, peace and security, domestic stability, respect for human rights, including the right to development, the rule of law, gender equality and market-oriented policies and an overall commitment to just and democratic societies are also essential and mutually reinforcing."

Thus governments provided official confirmation of an understanding prevalent among the development community, one articulated in numerous UNDP human development publications: Not only is there a conceptual link between development and democratic governance, development efforts must aim at improving the capabilities and performance of governance institutions to create a basis for sustainable, people-centred economic development.

In addition to the normative framework that underpins the approach to democratic governance, democratic governance therefore also serves as a vehicle to reach other results — here, the focus is on the procedural aspects. In other words, while it can be seen as an end in itself, it could also be understood as a means to other ends. Indeed, while "[c]onstitutional reforms, structural political reforms, reorganization, establishment of independent institutions, increased transparency, functioning and accessible judicial bodies, accountable public management, and an empowered and informed citizenry are all ends in themselves, [at the same time, they are also] crucial for sustainable progress in terms of poverty reduction, in particular as seen through a lens of equity and equality."[34]

UNDP's work on democratic governance is inspired by its mandate to address the various expressions of human poverty and to work for the advancement of the voiceless and disempowered. The UNDP point of departure is therefore not whether democratic governance contributes to economic growth or not, but to demonstrate that democratic governance is a vital ingredient of human development, as well as of genuine stability and human security. Recent country experiences and academic research have indicated that it is possible to achieve economic growth without democratic governance, but much experience and research alike also document that it is not possible — either conceptually or in practice — to seek and sustain comprehensive gains in human development as defined by UNDP without democratic governance. Human poverty, the flipside of human development, is the lack, not just of economic opportunities, but also of capacities, capabilities, rights and choices.

Brought together, these two complementary approaches are useful for exploring the role of youth and political participation as they stress the centrality of people in public processes; the role of institutions that enable democratic governance; and the inclusion and participation of all stakeholders for desirable development outcomes.

*These two complementary approaches are useful for exploring the role of youth and political participation as they stress the centrality of people in public processes; the role of institutions that enable democratic governance; and the inclusion and participation of all stakeholders for desirable development outcomes.*

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34 UNDP, 'Relinking the MDG Acceleration Framework with human rights and democratic governance', in *Accelerating achievement of MDGs by ways and means of economic and social rights* (2012).

# Youth and democratic citizenship

The central question of this study is the role that youth plays, or may come to play, in the larger context of an ideally inclusive political participation on the part of all stakeholders. It thus aims to understand the extent to which youth are able and interested in politics by drawing from their perceptions, and further attempts to gauge their potential to become active stakeholders.

To these ends, the notion of democratic citizenship provides a useful conceptual underpinning. If democratic governance is understood as a long-term process that demands the participation of all stakeholders, then stakeholders, as citizens, must become aware of democratic values such as liberty and equality, and ought to gain knowledge on democratic processes and public issues. They should also become active in public affairs, engaged with other citizens, and be psychologically attached to their communities. Democratic citizenship thus entails the following essential features:[35]

- **Participation** represents a prime criterion in defining the democratic citizen and his or her role within the political process. Participation should be understood to include but also extend beyond voting. It also involves engaging as citizens in voluntary groups and associations or other forms of participation such as petitions, protests or public debates.
- **Autonomy** refers to the citizen's role in being sufficiently attentive to government policies and public issues to exercise an informed participatory role. The citizen should participate in democratic deliberations and discuss politics with other citizens, try to understand the views of others, and ideally become capable of forming one's own informed opinions.
- **Allegiance** refers to the affection for one's national community, compassion for and solidarity with other fellow citizens, and a commitment to core democratic principles.

# The enablers of democratic governance

The quality, effectiveness and sustainability of democratic governance are linked, not only to the extent of stakeholder participation, but also the extent to which institutions are able to respond to and meet the demands and legitimate expectations of citizens.

One prerequisite for effective democratic citizenship is the existence of state institutions that are responsive, have the resources, technical ability and political incentives to respond to the needs and priorities of citizens. Such institutions must be representative and inclusive, both in terms of public administration, as well as from a political perspective. This includes political parties, parliaments, and fair electoral systems among others. At the same time, a vibrant civil society, including the media and non-state actors that perform a watchdog role, is vital to ensuring an effective system of checks and balances. Finally, the rule of law must prevail, where everyone, regardless of economic or social status, abides by existing rules and regulations in place.

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35 See Abowitz (2006) and Dalton (2008).

**Democratic Governance**

- People's human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, allowing them to live with dignity.
- People have a say in decisions that affect their lives.
- People can hold decision-makers accountable.
- Inclusive and fair rules, institutions and practices govern social interactions.
- Women are equal partners with men in private and public spheres of life and decision-making.
- People are free from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, gender or any other attributes.
- The needs of future generations are reflected in current policies.
- Economic and social policies are responsive to people's needs and aspirations.
- Economic and social policies aim at eradicating poverty and expanding the choices that all people have in their lives.

## How do youth in East and South-East Asia view democracy?

Given that youth represent future generations of policy makers, it is essential to know how they regard the political systems in which they live, as well as the features of the system they are satisfied with. In this context, the ABS survey investigated the views and understanding of youth on democracy, as compared to those of older citizens.[36]

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to choose one of four statements that they thought was the *most important* component of democracy. Among the possible choices were statements that described either: social equity,[37] norms and procedures,[38] good governance,[39] or freedom and liberty.[40]

Survey results indicated that East and South-East Asians, regardless of age cohort, ranked the components of democracy in the following order of importance: 'good governance' was the most important, followed by 'social equity', 'norms and procedures' and, lastly, 'freedom and liberty'.

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36 Democracy is the political process that secures political and civil freedoms and assures the right to participate, making democratic governance an intrinsically desirable goal. See *A guide to UNDP democratic governance practice* (UNDP, 2010). Understanding youth views of democracy therefore provides insight into their views of the principles of democratic governance, as well as their attitudes towards the political systems in which they live.

37 Social equity was associated in the ABS questionnaire with the following statements: (1) Government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor. (2) Basic necessities, like food, clothes and shelter, are provided for all. (3) Government ensures job opportunities for all. (4) People receive state aid if they are unemployed.

38 Norms and procedures corresponded to the following statements: (1) People choose the government leaders in free and fair election. (2) The legislature has oversight over the government. (3) Multiple parties compete fairly in the election. (4) The court protects the ordinary people from the abuse of government power.

39 The statements used to represent good government/governance included the following: (1) Government does not waste any public money. (2) Government provides people with quality public services. (3) Government ensures law and order. (4) Politics is clean and free of corruption.

40 Freedom and liberty was based on the statements as follows: (1) People are free to express their political views openly. (2) People are free to organize political groups. (3) Media is free to criticize the things government does. (4) People have the freedom to take part in protests and demonstrations.

**Figure 5. Understanding of Democracy among East and South-East Asian Youth**



Figure 5. Understanding of Democracy among East and South-East Asian Youth

| | ALL | JP | KR | TW | MN | PH | ID | TH | MY | SG | CM | VN | CN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Freedom and liberty | 19.0 | 13.8 | 19.7 | 18.3 | 29.0 | 26.1 | 17.0 | 13.1 | 15.4 | 15.8 | 22.6 | 4.6 | 12.3 |
| Norms and procedures | 22.7 | 14.3 | 19.7 | 24.2 | 21.4 | 21.9 | 23.8 | 17.5 | 26.1 | 23.1 | 27.0 | 17.6 | 27.6 |
| Social equity | 27.4 | 36.8 | 23.9 | 28.3 | 21.6 | 30.3 | 21.4 | 34.5 | 24.5 | 25.5 | 26.6 | 44.6 | 30.1 |
| Good governance | 30.8 | 35.1 | 36.6 | 29.1 | 28.0 | 21.6 | 37.7 | 34.9 | 34.0 | 35.6 | 23.7 | 33.2 | 30.0 |

Legend: Good governance · Social equity · Norms and procedures · Freedom and liberty

> "Youth in the region tend to value the outcomes of political systems slightly more than they do the underlying normative principles. However, the overall trend is to view all four of these components as essential for democracy."

Figure 5 shows specifically how youth perceptions, specifically, reflected this trend. Findings indicate that, generally speaking and in aggregate terms, they value the outcomes of political systems slightly more than they do the underlying normative principles. The results also show, however, that the overall trend is to view all four of these components as essential for democracy. This indicates that in reality these expectations are not mutually exclusive, but rather describe the various aspects of democracy, and what young people expect from it as a whole.

The following chapters unpack many of these concepts — related to both the processes and principles of democratic governance, as well as the outcomes that it enables — and the way in which youth perceive their roles and experiences in affecting changes to strengthen democratic governance and in exercising their democratic citizenship.

# Report outline

The report is divided into five sections.

'**Youth and Politics: Interest and Involvement**' explores the extent to which youth are interested in politics and factors determining their involvement. Being a democratic citizen presupposes 'psychological involvement' in one's political community. The section examines the determinants of youth's psychological involvement in politics and how East and South-East Asian youth with different socio-economic backgrounds differs in gravitating to political interests.

'**Youth and Democratic Governance: Expectations, Trust and Performance**' looks at how youth perceive the performance of governments in their respective societies and how democratic governance is related to a relationship of trust between young people and the state. How do East and South-East Asian youth evaluate their political systems? What determines the various prevailing levels of trust and satisfaction with government performance and responsiveness? This section investigates the extent to which East and South-East Asian youth trust their various political institutions, and how they assess prevailing governance in terms of the rule of law, perceptions of corruption, social and political equality and government responsiveness.

'**Youth as Democratic Citizens: Political Participation and Empowerment**' examines the nature and extent of political participation among East and South-East Asian youth, their reliance on different forms of political participation for expressing their democratic citizenship, and how much they believe they can affect politics. It also explores youth attitudes towards electoral and other forms of participation in the various societies. The findings regarding assessment of governance and political participation are complemented by an overview of the extent to which youth feel politically empowered across the region.

'**Conclusions and Policy Recommendations**' summarizes key findings and challenges that merit consideration by policy makers and other stakeholders who are interested in empowering youth as active democratic citizens, and who aim to promote more constructive and sustainable roles young people can play in democratic governance processes. This section also includes a number of issues that deserve further study and comparative analysis, and invites other researchers and policy experts to devote attention to such questions in future.

A fifth section includes the **references and an annex on statistical tables and the survey methodology** applied in each of the 12 societies under study.

# I

# Youth and Politics: Interest and Involvement

One prerequisite of democratic citizenship is that citizens have a basic interest and involvement in political matters and evaluate the performance of their political system accordingly. This section looks at how East and South-East Asian youth compare with older cohorts in terms of their interest and psychological involvement in politics, and analyses the socio-economic factors that influence the variations among youth.

# 1. Sense of Involvement

**To what extent do East and South-East Asian youth gravitate to political interests?**

- Compared to older cohorts, East and South-East Asian youth are less interested in politics and their level of attachment to politics is lower. However, they are not apathetic.
- East and South-East Asian youth tend to hold relatively low levels of social capital even while they are frequent Internet users and have large social networks.
- Among youth, different life circumstances characterized by gender, educational attainment, income sufficiency, area of residence, level of social capital and Internet use affect their level of psychological involvement in politics.

Civic engagement refers to a citizen's voluntary participation in public affairs[41]. Through interaction with government institutions, citizens jointly pursue common goals and democratic ideals. Each instance of civic engagement is a collective action, and its scope can range from actions of small groups to those involving the whole society. The issues for engagement vary, but they are often associated with conflicting policy standpoints that the government must resolve.

In East and South-East Asia, although many cases of civic engagement have resulted in critical social and political change, young people generally appear uninterested in participating more actively in public affairs than do older generations. While in some cases youth feel obliged to push for change and have taken the lead in protests against governments that lost their legitimacy, thereby bringing about democratic reforms, in many other societies they remain alienated from day-to-day politics. The differences may be attributed to the relative psychological involvement and interest youth have in their respective political systems.

The findings of this report show that East and South-East Asian youth are not apathetic. Half of the young people interviewed evince an interest in politics and even more claim they follow political news. In comparison with the older cohorts, however, they show lower rates overall in their psychological involvement in politics. This is related to the ways youth connect to society. They are less likely than older cohorts to be members of formal organizations, for example, and they also report low levels of social trust. On the other hand, they are more likely to have social networks.[42] These networks, however, have yet to translate into a more robust sense of political involvement.

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41 Putnam (2000).

42 The ABS measure of 'social network' is based on respondents' subjective evaluation of how much help respondents think they can get if needed. The question (Q29) reads, "If you have a difficult problem to manage, are there people outside your household you can ask for help?" ABS dichotomized the answer set into 'a lot/some' and 'a few/none' categories. The former indicates greater social network and the latter suggests relatively less.

The typically limited psychological involvement in politics among East and South-East Asian youth is not conducive to building healthy and vibrant democratic political systems. One cause of this relative detachment from politics may be their lack of knowledge in political matters: Youth may simply find it difficult to evaluate governance objectively due to their limited knowledge in governance issues, and may consequently either overestimate or underestimate government performance. The detachment might also be due to a sense of powerlessness or unawareness of how politics affects their daily lives, and what role they can play to influence political outcomes. In any event, understanding the causes of their detachment should establish the basis for any initiatives that aim to remedy the situation.

## Interest and involvement in politics

Citizens' psychological involvement[43] and interest in politics provides the drive and incentive for their engagement in politics. The ABS asked respondents whether they are interested in politics, whether they regularly obtain political news through different media, and whether they often talk about politics with family members, friends and colleagues. While the first question asks for a self-evaluation of political interest, the second and third investigated actual behaviour driven by that psychological involvement.

The finding shows that 49 percent of East and South-East Asian youth appear to be interested in politics, 61 percent regularly follow political news, but only 6 percent discuss politics with others. Although there are differences between individual societies, the percentages taken as a whole are lower than those among older cohorts, a result which confirms the conventional belief that psychological involvement in politics increases with age. The number of older people following political news is about 20 percentage points higher than that of younger people. In part, this dynamic simply reflects the position of youth in society: As people get older and have children themselves and become more engaged members of society and the economy, their daily lives are more likely to be affected by government policies, which is likely to increase their interest in politics. However, the findings show that still nearly half of all young people are interested in politics and even more follow the news, which is sufficient evidence to rebut any assumption that youth are apathetic citizens.

43 In behavioural research, 'enduring involvement' has been defined as an unobservable state of motivation, arousal or interest toward a recreational activity or associated product that is evoked by a particular stimulus or situation, and which has 'drive' properties. Involvement has generally been operationalized in quantitative research as a multidimensional construct using a series of profiles, rather than as a single score. Involvement profiles have been found to be an effective, but not a perfect predictor of behaviour in a variety of settings, because highly involved people are not necessarily active participants. There are differences between situational involvement and psychological involvement. Mannell and Kleiber (1997) described psychological involvement in terms of optimal experience and 'absorption in activities or settings'. Psychological involvement is generally measured in terms of positive mood states, lack of time pressure, and high levels of task focus. (Mark Havitz, University of Waterloo).

## Figure 6. Psychological Involvement in Politics by Cohort



**Interest in politics**
Youth: 49.0
Adult: 53.0
Senior: 55.8

**Follow political news**
Youth: 61.0
Adult: 72.5
Senior: 81.0

**Frequently discuss politics**
Youth: 6.8
Adult: 9.9
Senior: 11.2

Legend: Youth, Adult, Senior
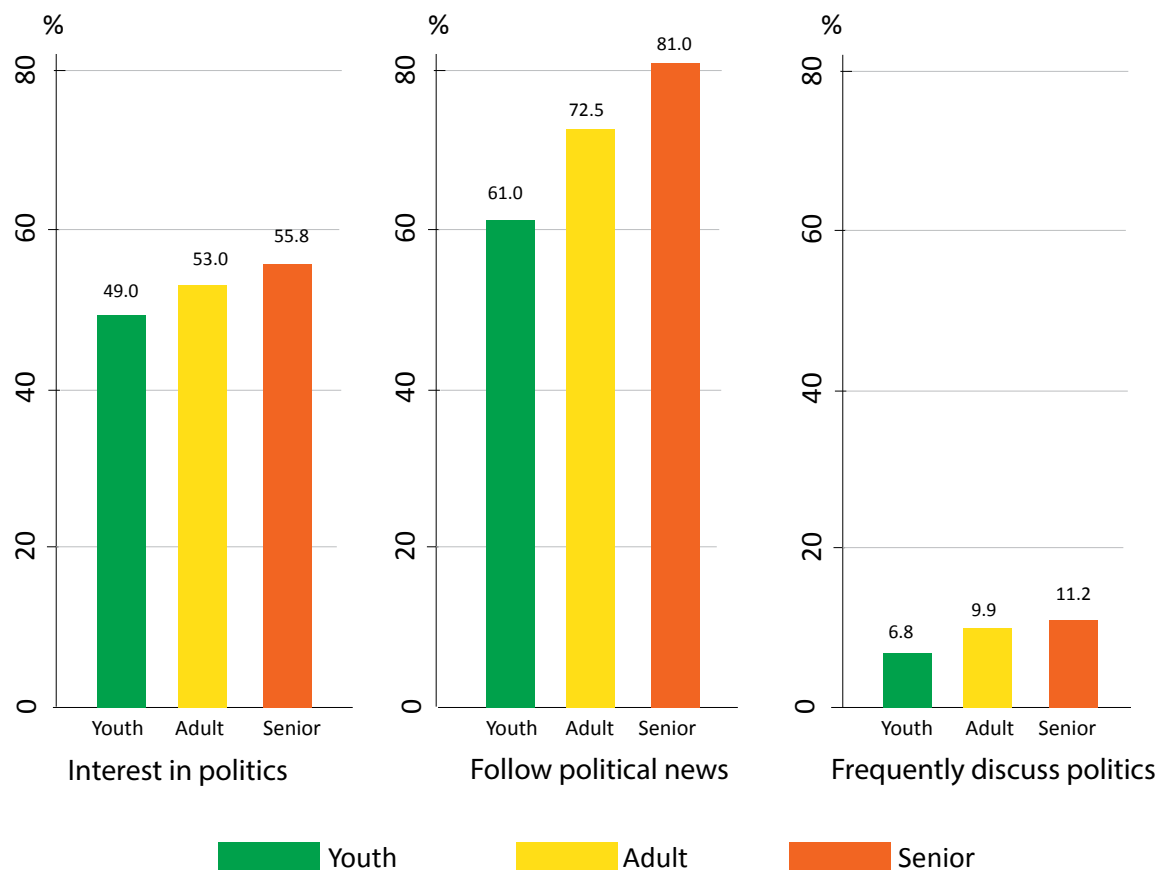
On the other hand, while many young people follow political news, politics does not appear to be a commensurately frequent topic of conversation, as demonstrated by the low percentage of youth engaging in discussion on politics on frequent terms. It should be noted, however, that there are considerable differences between the societies examined, and the reasons for such discrepancies may lie in the specific country contexts and in the cultural and political environments that shape them. In China and Thailand, for instance, young people are inclined to discuss politics even more than older cohorts. In other countries on the other hand, the fact that political matters are considered sensitive and controversial can produce responses that apparently suggest low levels of psychological involvement of citizens in politics. On the whole, it may be that young East and South-East Asians feel they lack understanding of political issues and relevant experience, and thus lack the confidence to discuss these issues. Additionally, there may well be a lack of empathy or connection with political issues as young people consider them removed from their daily concerns and personal interests. The reluctance may also be reinforced both by limited opportunities and a lack of available social spaces within which they can engage politically. In any case, open and critical discussion of politics is generally limited in contexts where youth are reluctant to create conflict and question authorities. Across the region, senior citizens also report relatively low levels of engagement in political discussions.

Likewise, across the region, young people consistently consume less political news compared with older cohorts, even though the absolute figures vary significantly between countries. In most societies, except for Thailand and Viet Nam, news consumption increases with age, and in some societies such as Cambodia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Singapore and Taiwan, youth are distinctively less likely to follow political news compared with older cohorts. In Cambodia, for example, only a quarter of the young people follow the news, compared to over half of seniors. Next to Indonesia and Singapore, Cambodia also shows the lowest average figure of news consumption across the population.

**Figure 7. Follow Political News by Cohort**
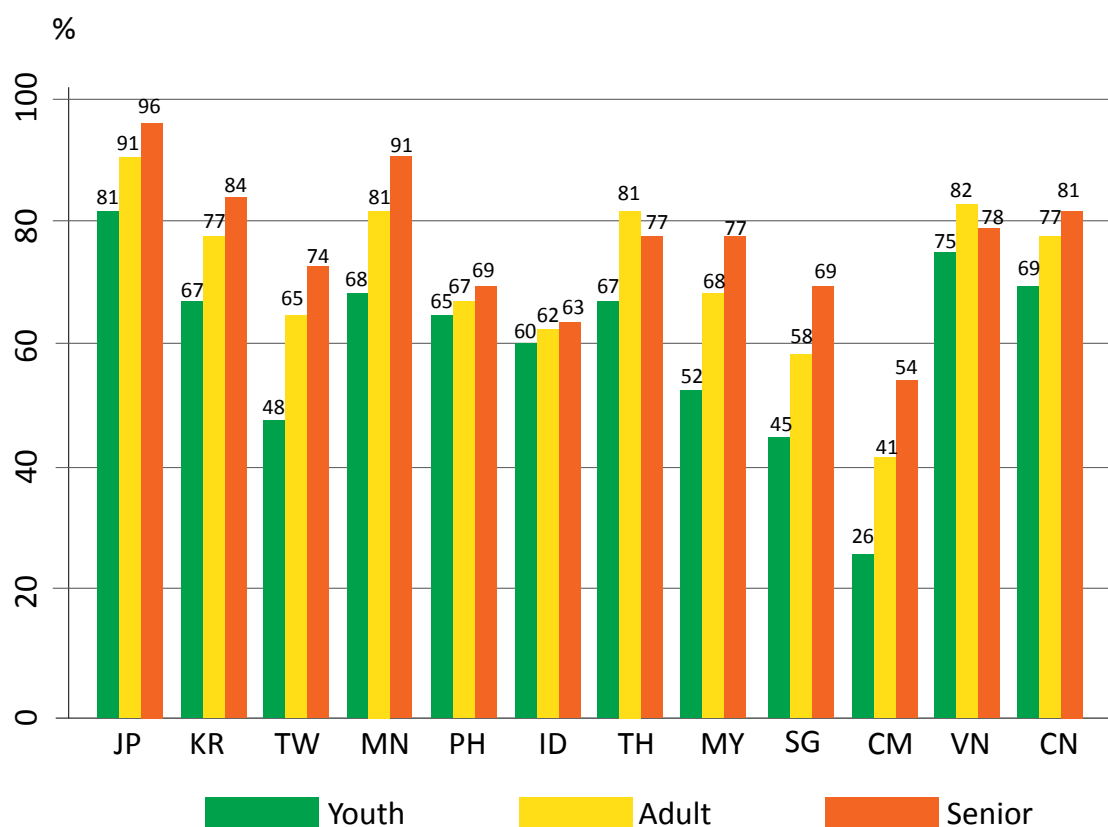
# Psychological Involvement of Chinese youth in politics

**Figure 8. Psychological Involvement of Chinese Youth in Politics**
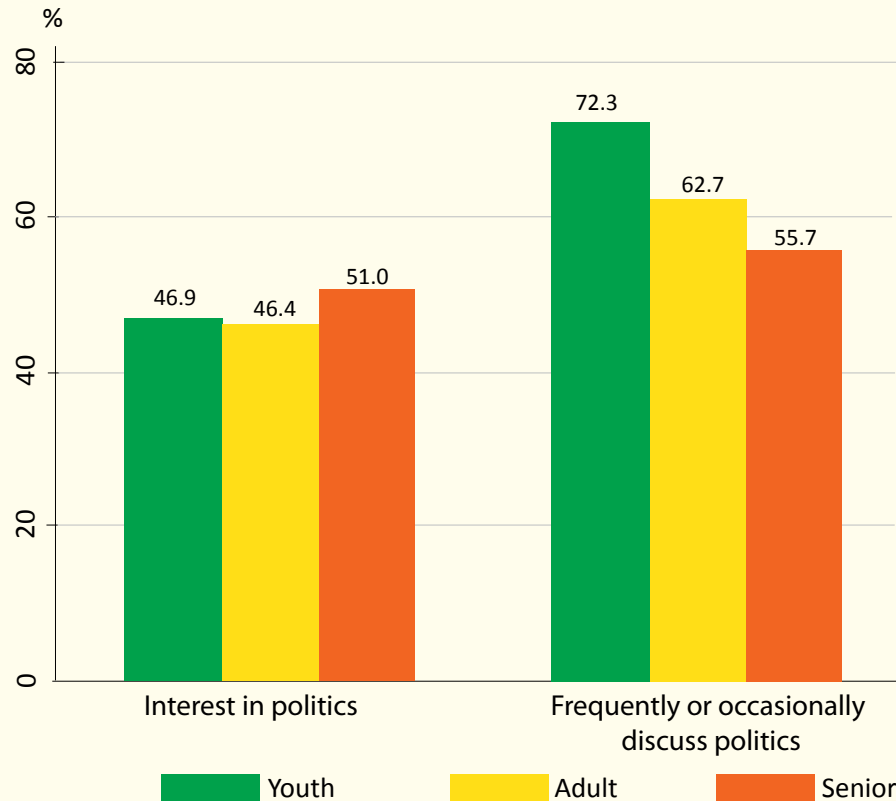


While East and South-East Asians in general are relatively uninterested in discussing politics with family members and friends, citizens in China showed a comparatively greater interest in political discussions. Among youth, about 47 percent are somewhat or very interested in politics, and more than 72 percent occasionally or frequently discuss political issues with their family members or friends. This data includes both of those who 'frequently' and 'occasionally' discuss politics, with the latter representing the significantly larger component. When compared with other cohorts, these rates demonstrate that Chinese youth are equally or more interested in politics than the older cohorts.

That is, Chinese youth seem to find it more interesting or acceptable and less risky to discuss politics with family and friends than older generations. With better education, greater economic resources, more diversified sources of information as well as significantly reduced levels of risk of drawing negative consequences from discussing politics compared with the older cohort, whose political experience was predominantly shaped in the 1960s and 1970s, Chinese youth now appear to be capable of preparing themselves for meaningful political participation.

# Psychological involvement of Indonesians in politics

**Figure 9. Psychological Involvement of Indonesians in Politics**
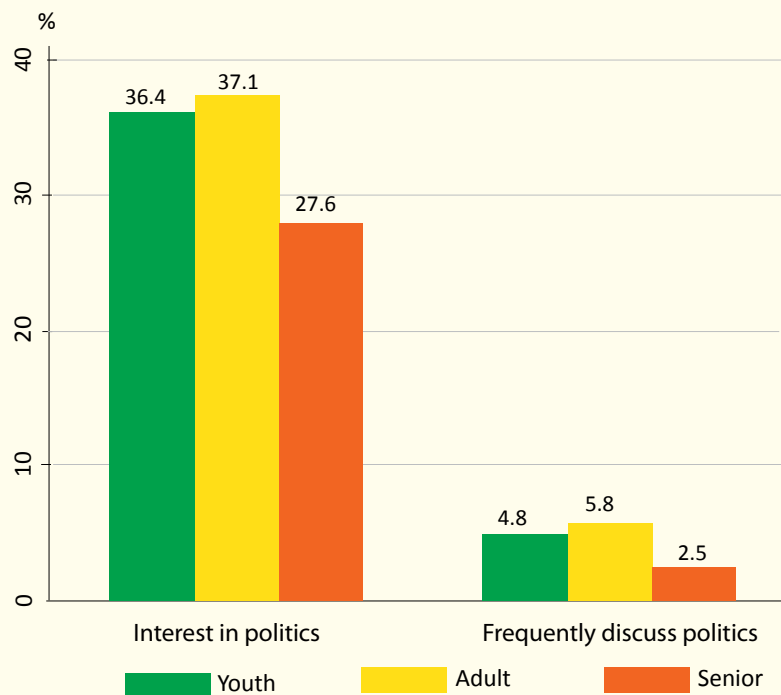


Indonesians in general show a lower level of psychological involvement in politics compared with people in other societies. Given that many of the changes that occurred in Indonesia in the late 1990s were driven by youth, the current relative disengagement of Indonesian youth is an issue that needs further exploration. Is it a result of dissatisfaction with the way the country is governed, or with the manner in which society has developed overall? Or is it because Indonesians, in particular the younger generation, feel they cannot affect change?

In Indonesia, levels of interest in politics and willingness to discuss politics show little variation between youth and the older generations. Overall, only about one third of Indonesians say they are interested in politics, which is much lower than the regional average of about 50 percent.

In addition, respondents across the three cohorts show little involvement in terms of discussing politics, reporting the lowest average figure in the region. At the same time, senior citizens' psychological involvement in politics is significantly lower according to both measures than that of either adults or youth. Despite being a country that has undergone a thorough democratization process and political changes in the past 15 years, and is considered by some as 'the most hopeful country among the newly democratized countries in Southeast Asia' (Smith, 2001), the high level of politically uninvolved citizens in Indonesia, where informed citizens are essential to regime stability, can be seen as a potential challenge to the further consolidation of democracy.

# Social capital

Psychological involvement in politics among citizens is in part shaped by social capital, i.e., the ways in which they connect to their societies. This concept explains how people dedicate themselves to establishing long-term and reliable relationships that provide mutual support as members of a community.[44]

Social capital can be further described as comprising three key elements: social trust, membership and social network, which work together to encourage cooperation among citizens in pursuit of common goals.[45] In societies with high levels of social capital, i.e. where social trust is high, and many citizens are members of associations and have large social networks, citizens tend to willingly contribute to common goods, and the cost of collective action becomes relatively low. With a view to determining relative scores of social capital in the surveyed societies, respondents were asked whether they think their fellow citizens are trustworthy, whether they are members of any organization, and whether they belong to a social network that can help solve problems.

It is important to keep in mind that measuring people's psychological involvement in politics is not the same as assessing their actual political engagement. Furthermore, psychological involvement cannot be measured directly, but must instead be inferred by gauging factors such as degree of interest in political news and membership in associations. Obviously, not every member has joined a party out of genuine political interest, and not everyone with a large social network is interested in the common good. However, past experience has shown that the indicators used here serve as good approximations for the underlying psychological attitudes and inclinations which must be present for political engagement and participation in democratic processes.

This study also does not investigate the various ways in which social capital is built or, conversely, lost over time. What leads to high levels of social capital is still disputed among scholars, and will likely be strongly correlated with the specific cultural and historical context of each society. A more thorough analysis would have to further distinguish and disaggregate the data collected. But to get a general understanding of youth attitudes and behaviours across the whole region, it made sense to look at the questions from an aggregate perspective.

**Social trust.** Only 23.8 percent of East and South-East Asian youth think most people can be trusted. What is significant is that this figure is lower than that of older cohorts (30.4 percent for adults and 35.2 percent for seniors). Both a significant generation gap and a broad shortfall in social trust are apparent across the 12 societies examined. Notable differences appeared between societies, however, with China registering the relatively highest social trust among youth at 49.3 percent, and Cambodia the lowest at 6.8 percent.

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44 Putnam et al. (1993).
45 Putnam (2000).

**Figure 10. Social Trust by Cohort (selected societies)**



Figure 10. Social Trust by Cohort (selected societies)

% of respondents who hold social trust

| | ALL | JP | ID | MY | CM | CN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Youth | 23.8 | 29.4 | 23.9 | 7.5 | 6.8 | 49.3 |
| Adult | 30.4 | 39.1 | 36.7 | 8.2 | 13.1 | 53.4 |
| Senior | 35.2 | 41.7 | 56.1 | 16.0 | 17.6 | 57.8 |
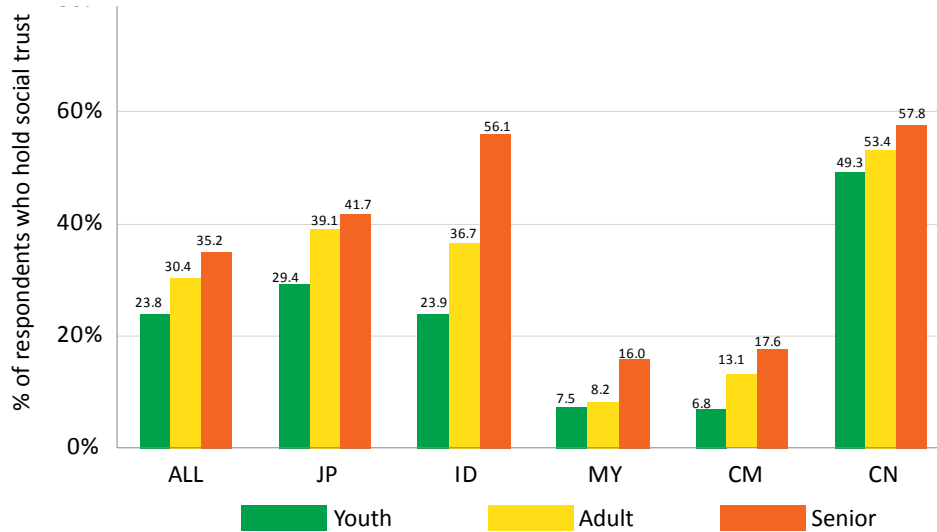
**Membership in formal organizations.** Responses regarding membership in associations such as political parties, sports clubs and religious organizations indicate that youth are less likely than the other age cohorts to subscribe. Overall, only 32.9 percent of youth claim such membership, as opposed to 47.9 percent for adults and 49.1 percent for seniors. In 9 of the 12 societies, youth participation in formal organizations is lower than older cohorts, except in Indonesia and Singapore, where generational gaps are marginal. What is interesting is that the trend to fewer memberships among youth in formal associations ranges from rich to poor, predominantly rural to urbanized, younger to older societies across the region. It also equally affects countries that have since long enjoyed freedom of association and political pluralism and countries dominated by a single political party and a history of curbing free political expression.

**Figure 11. Membership in Formal Organizations (selected societies)**



% of respondents who are member of formal organization

| | ALL | JP | KR | TW | MN | PH | TH | MY | CM | VN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Youth | 32.9 | 62.3 | 26.4 | 40.7 | 21.9 | 27.2 | 22.8 | 14.9 | 24.4 | 63.0 |
| Adult | 47.9 | 80.7 | 52.2 | 57.4 | 28.9 | 34.9 | 52.7 | 31.1 | 45.4 | 73.9 |
| Senior | 49.1 | 84.8 | 42.3 | 52.3 | 34.3 | 44.3 | 53.6 | 37.8 | 51.0 | 75.7 |
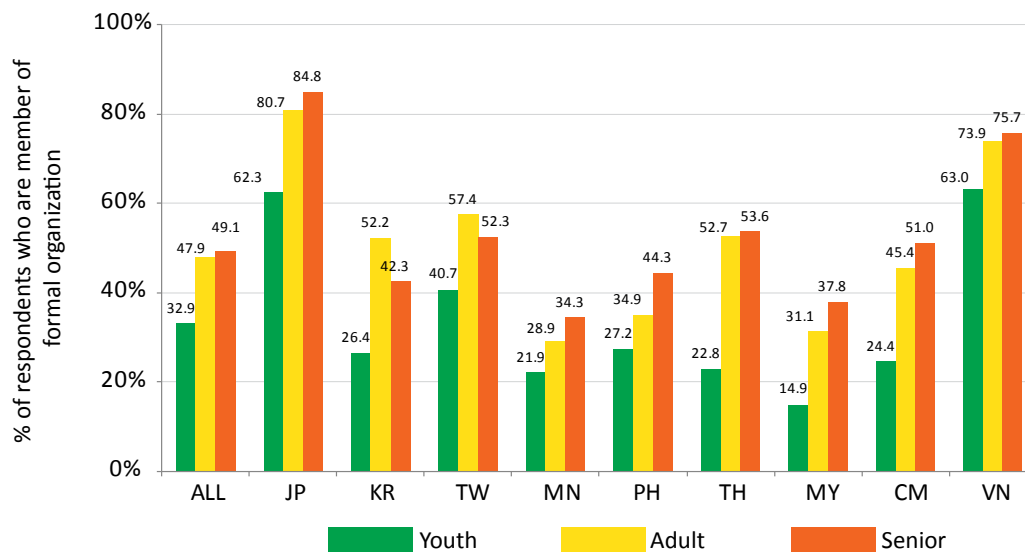
**Social networks.** With regard to social networks, the youth cohort in many societies shows a stark difference from the older cohorts in their level engagement. Across the board, greater numbers of youth had social networks than the older cohorts, and the percentage figure of youth that have social networks was highest in Taiwan. In some societies this may also be partially attributed to significantly higher levels of Internet use among youth in comparison with older cohorts, as shown in Figure 13. It may be that young people today commonly resort to the Internet to seek help and answers on the various problems they face in life, and also to connect with each other through social networking sites and channels. However, other data indicate that the frequency of Internet use may not be related to social capital or the sense of political empowerment (see below).

**Figure 12. Social Network by Cohort (selected societies)**
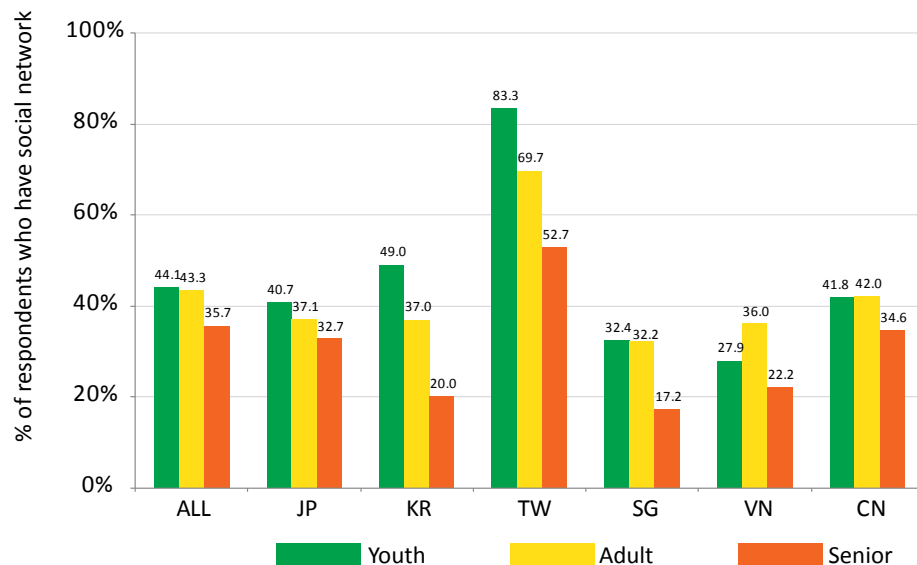


**Figure 13. Internet Use by Cohort across Societies**
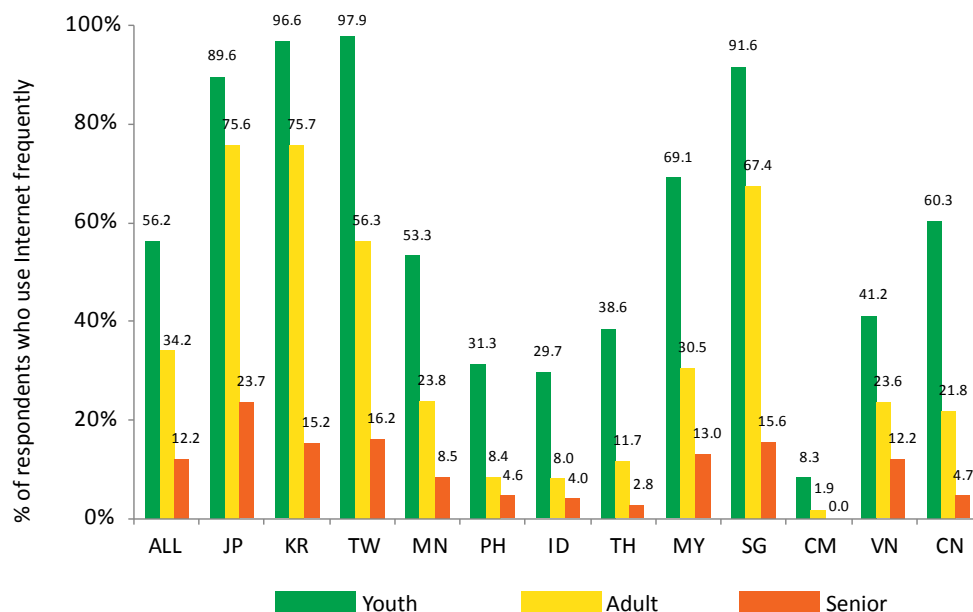
Considered together, Figures 10 and 13 indicate that the level of social trust does not increase automatically in correlation with frequent Internet use. Using the Internet is of course not synonymous with the use of and participation in social media, and it also does not necessarily mean that Internet is used to extend one's social networks and build social capital.

## Variations in psychological involvement in politics among youth

The findings with regard to social trust, memberships and social networks among East and South-East Asian youth reveal important variations. Certainly, analysis must take into account the obvious differences between societies including, among other factors, different levels of political pluralism, economic development, and social and cultural homogeneity. There are also interesting variations within the youth cohort, however, that show similar trends and phenomena across the region, marked by gender, education, economic security, area of residence (rural/urban), and social capital.

**Gender.** Gender is one of the important factors among youth in explaining variations in their psychological involvement in politics. The traditional culture of societies in East and South-East Asia is often described as paternalistic, hierarchical and male dominated. The domination of (older) men in politics is clearly in evidence when comparing the percentages of women in parliaments, as well as other leadership and decision-making positions. Gender gaps with regard to psychological involvement in politics were evident even in countries that have long since attempted to eliminate traditional stereotypes and have encouraged and enabled women to join the labour market. The gender gap in China with regard to following political news, for instance, was particularly noteworthy. This points to conditions in all three countries indicated in Figure 14, where young women have yet to gain full access to political news.

### Figure 14. Follow Political News by Gender (selected societies)
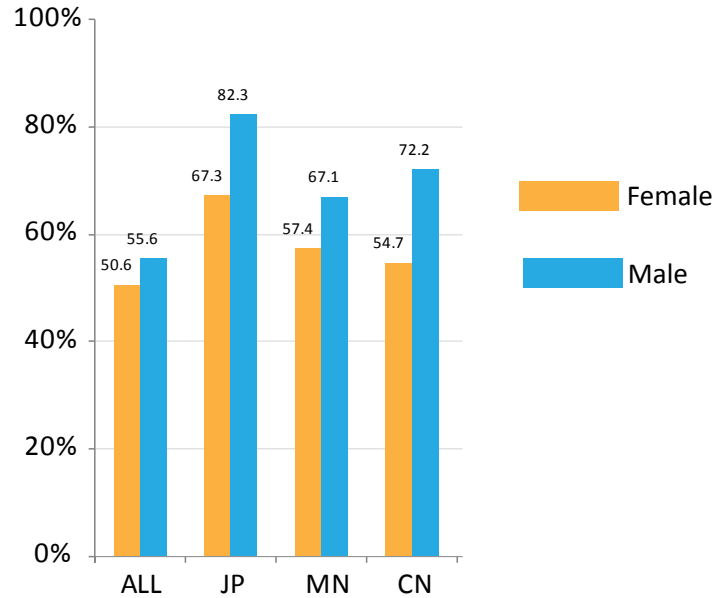
**Figure 15. Interest in Politics by Educational Attainment**
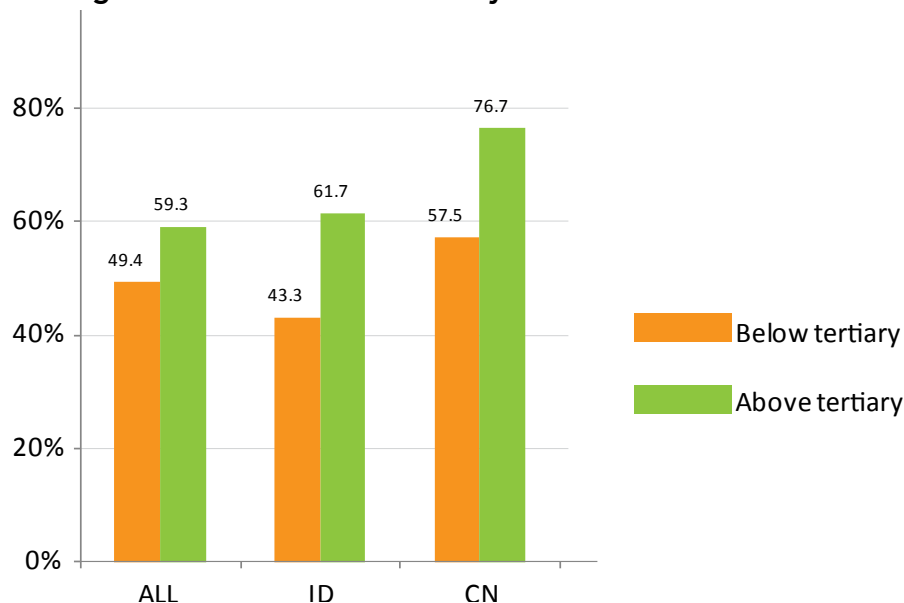


**Educational attainment**. Higher levels of education are proven to be associated with greater interest in politics, the gap between those with higher and lower level of education in their degrees of interest in politics recording as much as 10 percent. The gap was most significant in China and Indonesia, as demonstrated in Figure 15.

**Income sufficiency.** Economic standing is another factor that helps to explain the variations. East and South-East Asian youth who are satisfied with their family's economic status are more likely to follow political news than those who are unsatisfied (54.7 percent versus 50.0 percent). It is worth noting, however, that a significant number of less economically secure youth also follow political news. This allows for the possibility that economic insecurity among youth may provide important grounds for acquiring an interest in politics and potentially, becoming politically engaged, a hypothesis that merits the attention of policy makers.

**Figure 16. Follow Political News by Income Sufficiency (satisfaction) – selected societies**
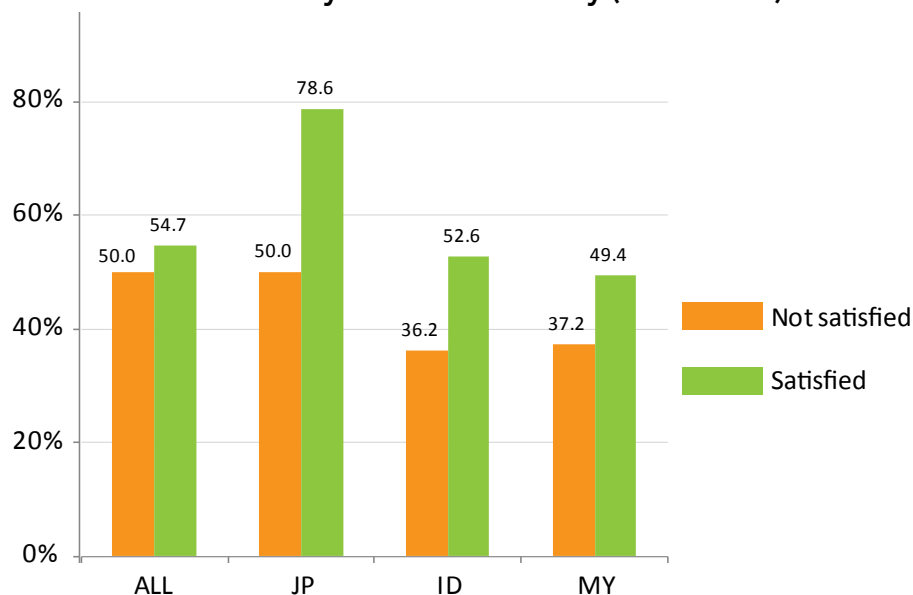
**Rural/urban divide**. Though not strongly, urban residence is another factor that positively correlates with citizens' level of political interest across the region. This may be because modern living environments, which tend to be more prevalent in cities, provide greater access to civic activities, so mechanisms of political socialization are much stronger. According to the data, 55.7 percent of East and South-East Asian youth who live in urban areas say that they follow political news, compared to 49.2 percent of rural youth. Rural/urban differences in this regard are most significant in China and the Philippines.

**Figure 17. Interest in Politics by Area of Residence (selected societies)**
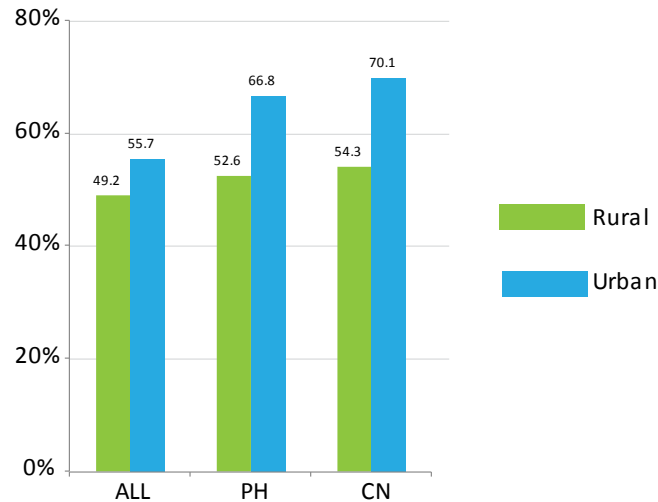


**Social capital and Internet use**. The research also indicates that higher levels of social capital and Internet use are correlated with greater psychological involvement in politics. Frequent Internet users turned out to have greater psychological involvement in politics than infrequent users, by margin of 9.7 percent. Out of the factors that comprise social capital, membership in associations produced the most significant margin (8.9 percent).

**Figure 18. Youth's Psychological Involvement in Politics by Level of Social Capital and Internet Use**
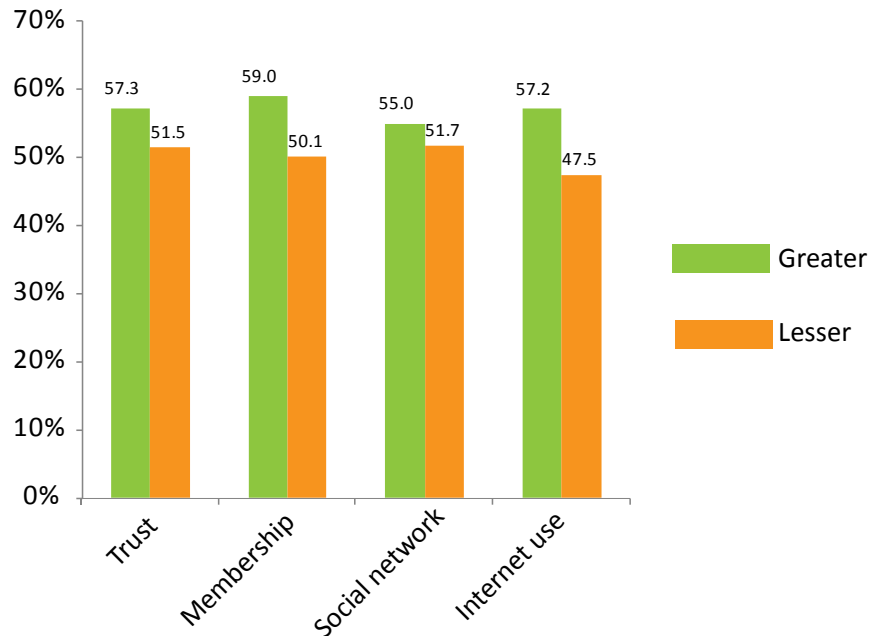
Taken together, gender, education, economic security, area of residence (rural/urban), social capital and Internet use all contribute to youth's increasing psychological involvement in politics. It is important to note, however, that young females display lower levels of interest in politics across the board.

## Women and political involvement

The issue of women's lesser psychological involvement in politics merits further exploration. This pattern of lesser interest is likely related to the fact that women, including young women, are less actively engaged politically than men, a phenomenon that also extends across generations. The fact that most societies included in this survey have relatively few women represented in parliament may be another indicator of this state of affairs (see the table on page 11 for comparative data).[46] The lesser participation of women in politics might in turn have a negative feedback on their lower levels of interest and involvement. The sharpest differences between men and women in terms of psychological involvement in politics are evident in China and Japan.

**Figure 19. Women and Political Involvement**
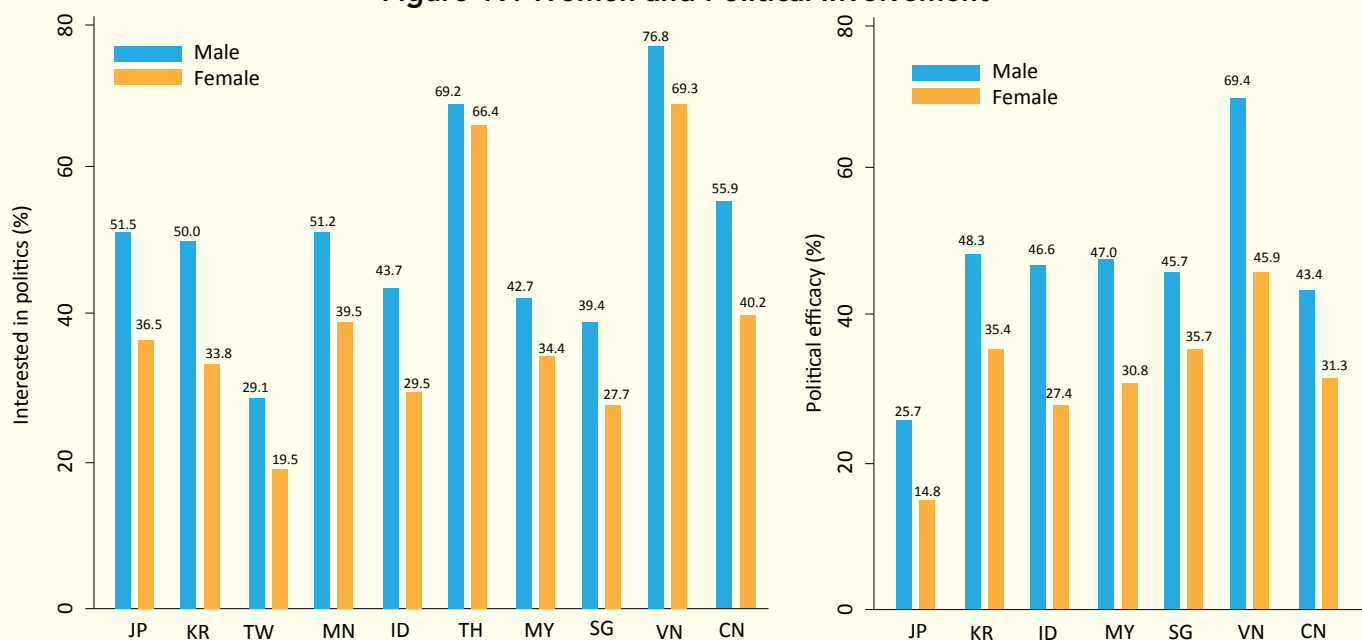


Part of the explanation on this may be that women tend to lack a sense of political efficacy; they feel they cannot have sufficient impact on politics to justify the effort. In Viet Nam, for example, a very significant gender difference is apparent among youth with regard to political efficacy, which is about 25 percentage points. One element of an explanation for this discrepancy may be that women have less social capital — they join fewer organizations and less frequently take part in robust networks. It may also have to do with traditional gender roles and stereotypes, which continue to determine how men and women tend to be socialized in East and South-East Asian countries, whereby women, much more than men, ought to adopt life choices focused on the private sphere of home and local community, whereas public affairs, including political engagement, are considered a male domain.[47]

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46 See also UNDP, *Gender equality in elected office in Asia Pacific: Six actions to expand women's empowerment* (2012).

47 Burns et al. (2001). See also UNDP, *Power, voice and rights - A turning point for gender equality in Asia and the Pacific* (Asia-Pacific Human Development Report, 2010).

*Credit: © Alejandro Boza/UNDP Cambodia*

▲ *Cambodian young people acting in a Loy9 drama, during which they can voice their demands. Loy9 is a BBC Media Action-UNDP multimedia initiative targeting young Cambodians (15-24 years), aimed at enhancing their knowledge and interest in politics and civic participation.*

*"Youth's relatively lower level of psychological involvement in politics should therefore not be equated with political apathy, but may rather be interpreted as unfulfilled potential to engage in politics. "*

## Policy considerations

The major findings from the survey data described in this section are that East and South-East Asian youth may, as a whole, tend to be less interested, less psychologically involved in politics, and also hold less social capital than older cohorts. Although the differences may not be very significant and are likely to be functions of numerous factors related to the specific local contexts, a general trend across the region can be discerned.

This can be seen as part of a socio-political pattern where youth feel relatively limited in terms of political involvement. At the same time, however, other signs suggest that many young people do take an interest in politics, as indicated, for example, by the number of youth who follow political news. Youth's relatively lower level of psychological involvement in politics should therefore not be equated with political apathy, but may rather be interpreted as unfulfilled potential to engage in politics. Furthermore, while their large social networks are increasingly Internet-based, youth membership in political organizations remains low. This suggests a potential that might be optimized by transforming the power of e-platforms and e-networks into measures that would increase political engagement and substantive action by youth.

In addition, a number of steps could be taken to enhance the political interest and psychological involvement of youth in politics. Currently, issues of public interest under discussion in public forums may not be perceived as relevant or interesting to youth. This could be due to the type of issues being discussed, or because they are presented in a way that fails to resonate with youth. Therefore, while there is a need to integrate youth issues and perspectives within national development strategies and sectoral policies that affect every member of society, the implications of these measures for youth should be stressed — both now and for the future, when these young people will themselves constitute the adult or senior cohorts in their societies.

Another area that merits further exploration is making politics more relevant to youth, especially to female youth. This approach could include efforts to increase voter turnout among first-time voters, which is known to be a crucial factor determining life-time political participation. The establishment of youth parliaments that directly work with policy makers, and dedicated participation platforms for youth in other formats, in particular at local levels of governance, should also be considered. This does not necessarily entail new platforms, but it does mean the explicit, targeted inclusion of youth in existing forums. Such efforts should also specifically target young women, aiming to overcome the large gender gap between males and females in their political involvement. Interventions to enhance women's interest in politics beginning with young women will have longer-term implications for reducing the gender gap in politics, both in terms of promoting their interest in such matters and developing their sense of political efficacy. (This will be further elaborated in chapters to follow.)

Creating the necessary political awareness from an early age can also be addressed through civic education[48], which can be incorporated in school curriculums and adjusted to the needs and interests of young people. For example, increased use of the Internet could help to improve the impact of civic education, as it has gradually become one of the key channels for sharing information about politics, for communication between the government and citizens, for the news media, and for building social networks among young people. Policy makers and civil society should use this medium to address the information and knowledge needs regarding politics and governance among youth, and use it as a powerful and constructive tool for promoting civic engagement.

Broad and inclusive citizen engagement is essential, if policies are to genuinely reflect the priorities of the people whose lives they affect. Given that youth comprise a large proportion of the population in many countries, their inclusion is not only an important objective in its own right, but also lays the groundwork for their future participation as they age. The ways in which they can be included and be led to participate are many, one of them being through harnessing new technologies.

While it is still a relatively new medium, Internet has transformed methods of collective action, particularly among young people, who use it as a significant medium of expression. Its potential should therefore be optimized, especially as an innovative way to reach out to youth with the intention of improving government performance and increasing its legitimacy. This could prove to be one important way of building social trust, which is not only essential for democratic governance but also recognized increasingly as a prerequisite for economic development. Initiatives that move robust social networks into longer-lasting trust relationships are one way to strengthen the social fabric for democratic citizenship.

In addition to the facilitative role of the Internet in the democratic process as a whole, there is also a need to improve the infrastructure and enabling environment required for it to thrive. A number of countries included in this study, however, apply stringent rules governing the use of the Internet in terms of expressing political opinions or sharing governance-related information, through measures such as site censorship and penalties for online comments deemed inappropriate or unlawful. These broader regulatory issues require due attention.

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48 Civic education, also known as citizen education or democracy education, can be broadly defined as the provision of information and learning experiences to equip and empower citizens to participate in democratic processes. This education can take very different forms, including classroom-based learning, informal training, experiential learning, and mass media campaigns. Civic education can target children or adults, in either developed or developing countries, and at the local, national or international levels. As such, civic education is an approach that employs a range of different methods, and is often used in combination with other participatory governance tools (Rietbergen-McCracken). For the past 15 years, UNDP has supported numerous civic education programmes around the world, and has also assisted in the development of civic education strategies. A summary of tools was compiled in the 2004 UNDP *Practical guidance note on civic education*.

# 2

## Youth and Democratic Governance: Expectations, Trust and Performance

The following section further explores the extent to which and the ways in which youth evaluate government performance. It also identifies which aspects of governance are most subject to critical assessment by youth in East and South-East Asia.

# 1. Trust in Institutions

## Do youth in East and South-East Asia trust political institutions?

- Levels of trust in public institutions among young people vary across the societies under study. Youth who live in more politically pluralistic societies, where more liberal legal frameworks exist for the freedom of expression, show lower levels of trust in political institutions and more particularly, in electoral institutions.
- The rural/urban divide and family income sufficiency affect the relative extent of trust among youth in institutions.
- Low levels of institutional trust may reflect the emergence of a critical youth who lack confidence in the integrity of democratic processes, but who at the same time remain committed to democratic governance.

One key element of democratic governance is the level of accountability that underpins public institutions. This is related to people's trust in political institutions. Political trust provides a measure of whether government actions or the political system win the support of ordinary citizens.[49] High degrees of political trust ensure the legitimacy of regimes, which then encounter fewer obstacles to effective governance. Conversely, low degrees of political trust among citizens may undermine democratic governance. For instance, citizens may withhold support for a regime where they believe it does not represent their best interests or is unable to deliver on tangible outcomes expected from it. This may lead to a gradual withdrawal from democratic processes, thereby further weakening the system as a whole.

At the same time, a high degree of trust can also indicate a lack of political choice and alternatives, and may be based on the absence of freedom of expression and possibilities to criticize government in the media and in the public sphere. Therefore, the paradoxical effect can be observed that in societies with more options for democratic choice and freedom to criticize government, citizens' general attitudes toward government performance may be relatively negative, and trust in the respective institutions correspondingly low.

The report findings also point to the possible emergence of a growing body of 'critical youth' in the region. Whereas these individuals may question the integrity of elected politicians and are sceptical about the performance of institutions in their societies, they do not withdraw their basic preference for democratic processes and means. Thus, youth in East and South-East Asia can be considered a reservoir for sustaining democracy and a force for improving governance and political systems.

> "Youth in East and South-East Asia can be considered a reservoir for sustaining democracy and a force for improving governance and political systems."

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49 See Norris (1999; 2011).

# Trust in national institutions

The ABS asks respondents to report their level of trust in political institutions, including the executive office, parliament, courts, civil service, military and the police[50]. East and South-East Asian youth report varying degrees of trust in the three main branches of government: the executive, legislative and judiciary. Trust in these institutions is relatively lower in more pluralistic societies[51] such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan. On the other hand, youth living in less pluralistic societies evince higher levels of trust. In particular, the proportions of respondents across all age groups expressing 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot'of trust in the executive and legislative branches in China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore and Malaysia were all remarkably high (more than 80 percent).

"Youth in the region critically assess governance and perceive an acute need for enhanced governance in their societies, while at the same time expressing disappointment in the performance of state institutions in this regard."

Compared with other less pluralistic societies, Thai youth express relatively lower trust (though still more than 50 percent) in the executive and legislature branches; among Filipino youth, the level is significantly lower for the executive. Trust in national institutions overall appears to be greater in politically less open societies. Furthermore, the responses of youth and older cohorts in politically less pluralistic societies almost equally indicate great trust in their national institutions, although fewer numbers of youth choose 'a great deal of trust' than do the older cohorts.

The findings indicate that the performance of key national institutions in pluralistic societies, where criticizing these institutions is common and entails few risks, generally does not measure up to the expectations of youth. Even in less open societies, youth, compared with other age cohorts, are relatively reserved about their trust in those institutions. In many of the societies under study, trust in legislative and executive institutions was visibly lower among young people than among older cohorts (with the notable exception of Thailand), while the reverse was the case with regard to the judicial branch, which was viewed more favourably among young people than among older generations. One interesting finding was that the judiciary ranked significantly higher than the executive and legislature in Japan and the Republic of Korea, but somewhat lower in Cambodia, China, Mongolia and Viet Nam.

Overall, these finding may be understood in connection with the earlier finding regarding the tendency among East and South-East Asian youth to associate democracy with good governance and the delivery of services, while at the same time expressing disappointment in the performance of state institutions in this regard. Youth in East and South-East Asia therefore critically assess governance and perceive an acute need for enhanced governance in their societies, while at the same time expressing disappointment in the performance of state institutions in this regard.

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50 The ABS survey offered the following response options for the respondents to indicate their level of trust in each institution: 'A great deal of trust'; 'Quite a lot of trust'; 'Not very much trust'; 'and None at all' . The options in the listed order represent the level of trust in descending order: i.e., 'A great deal of trust' represents a higher level of trust compared to 'Quite a lot of trust'.

51 For purposes of analysis, ABS categorizes societies in the following way: liberal democracy (Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan); electoral democracy (Mongolia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand); electoral authoritarianism (Malaysia, Singapore); and one-party authoritarianism (Cambodia, Viet Nam, China). This study does not aim to categorize different societies according to such labels, which in the UN context might be considered a failure of neutrality; rather it is left to the reader to assess the extent to which any political system, as only partially described here, should be considered liberal and democratic.

# Figure 20. Trust in National Institutions by Cohort[52]



Executive Branch — Legislative Branch — Judical Branch

Legend (each panel): A great deal of trust (yellow); Quite a lot of trust (green)

Cohorts shown for each society (JP, KR, TW, MN, ID, PH, TH, MY, SG, CM, VN, CN): <30, 30-59, ≥60

X-axis: 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%
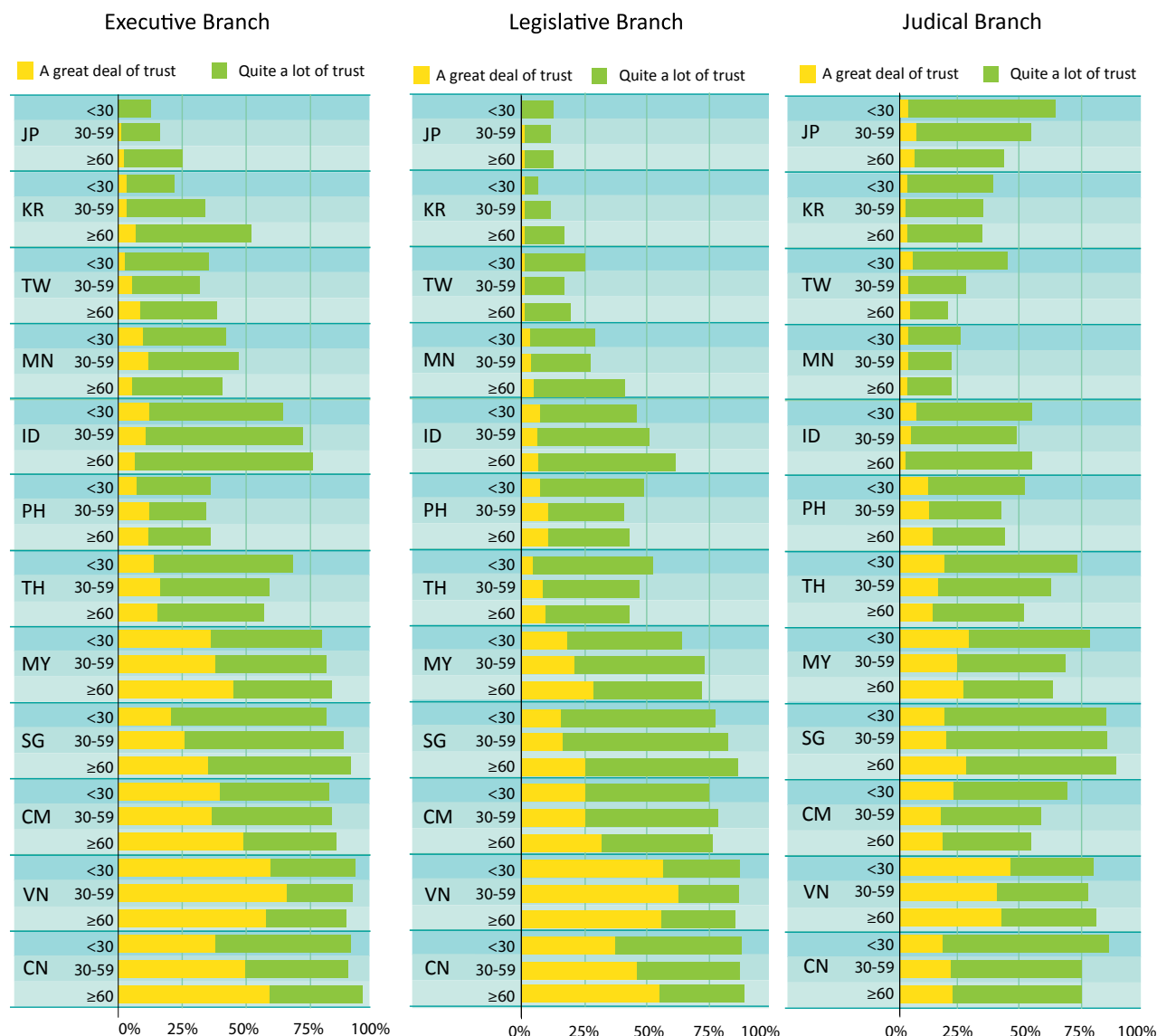
# Trust in public officials and executive agencies

In terms of trust in public officials (civil service, military and police), youth do not diverge much from other age cohorts. In most societies examined across the region, trust in public officials and state security agencies is higher than trust in elected national institutions. Generational differences are evident, however, in the Republic of Korea, where much fewer young adults than other age cohorts trust civil servants, the military and the police.

By contrast, in Cambodia and Viet Nam, young people have a higher level of trust in civil servants than do seniors. In general, trust in the military and police increases with age, although the difference between the generations is small. Despite the fact that several societies in the region have experienced military intervention in politics, these

52 Data for Figures 20-23 are provided in Annex 3: Statistical tables (pages 95 - 97).

experiences do not seem to have diminished people's trust in the military. Even in countries such as Indonesia, with a recent legacy of military rule, trust in the military remains high across generations, at 65 percent. The police also enjoy trust across the societies. Only in the Republic of Korea and Taiwan is the level of trust in police lower than 50 percent among youth. In China, the police are trusted by about 78 percent of young people, which makes it the least trusted of all public institutions examined in this study.

## Figure 21. Trust in Government Servants by Cohort
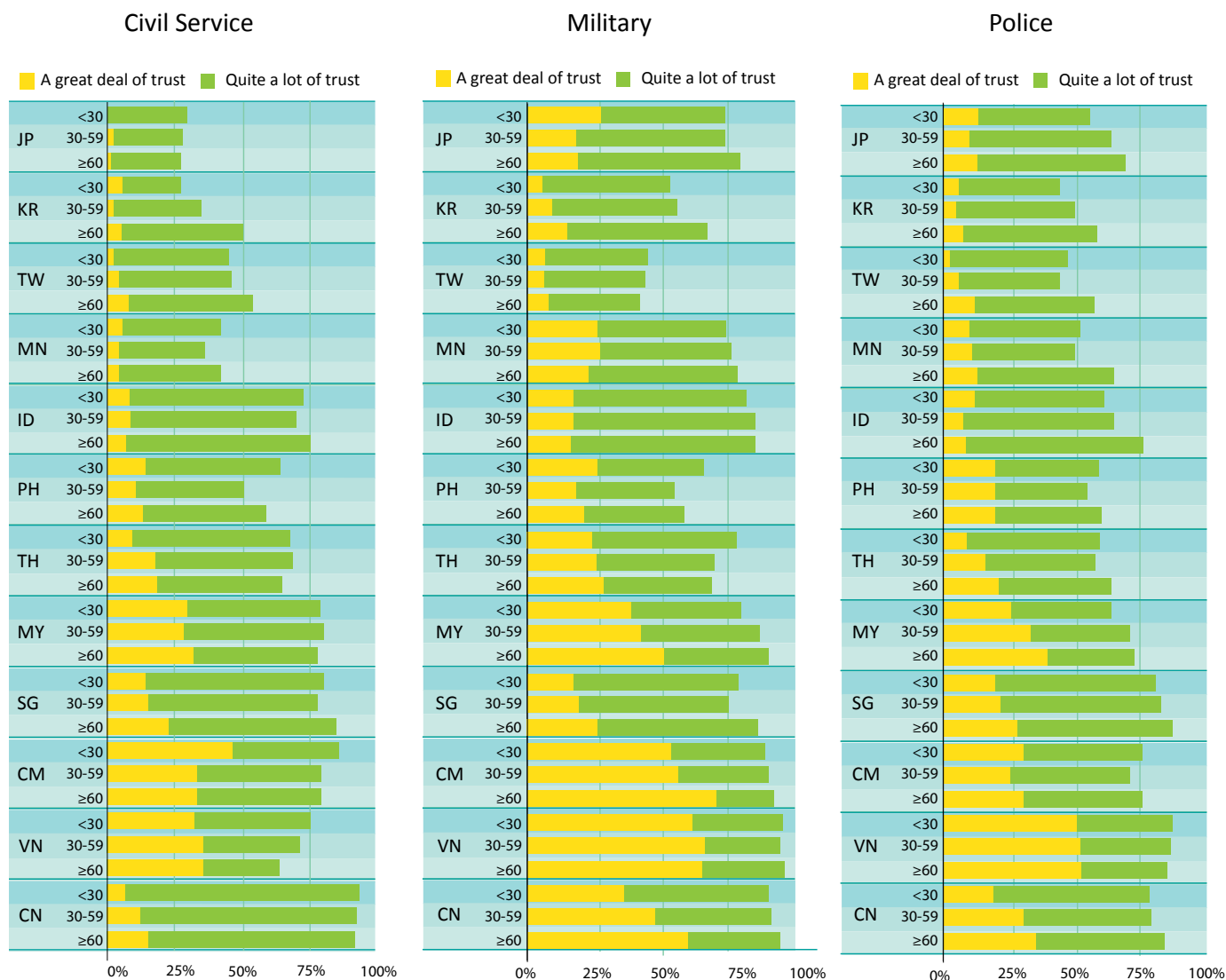


Explanations for the varying levels of trust in different institutions among different cohorts in East and South-East Asia lie beyond the scope of this study. Questions for further investigation, which should take into account the views of young people, include the following: To what extent is level of trust related to actual objective performance of institutions and other more empirical measures of their integrity? To what extent are these levels related to the possibility of criticizing such institutions in public and gaining information about them?

# Variations in institutional trust among East and South-East Asian Youth

In general, East and South-East Asian youth trust institutions somewhat less than do other age cohorts. They also diverge according to different life circumstances. In this regard, two factors stand out.

Across the region, youth in rural areas tend to show greater levels of institutional trust. Except for China, Indonesia and Thailand, rural youth respondents express slightly higher levels of institutional trust than their older cohorts in all the societies in this study. The contrast is starkest the Republic of Korea and the Philippines.



**Figure 22. Institutional Trust by Area of Residence**
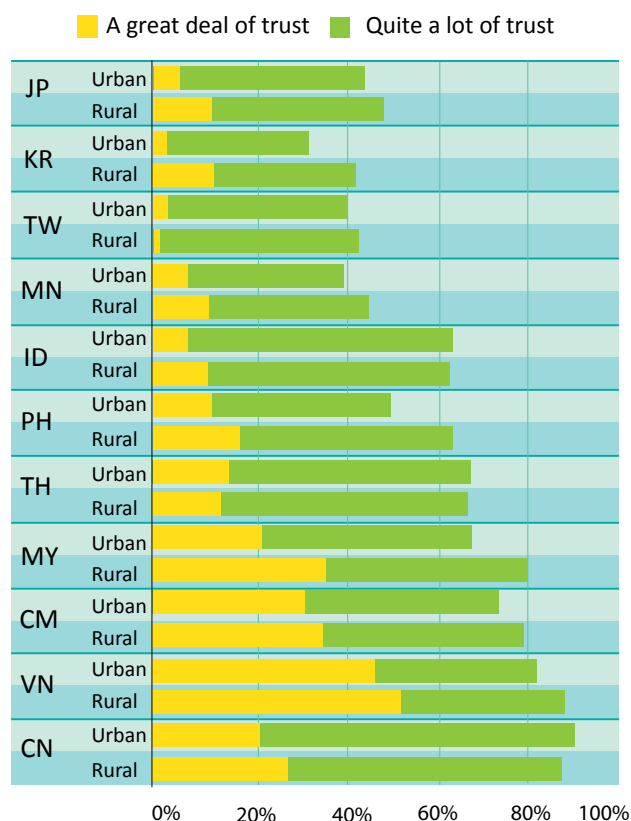


**Figure 23. Institutional Trust by Income Sufficiency**
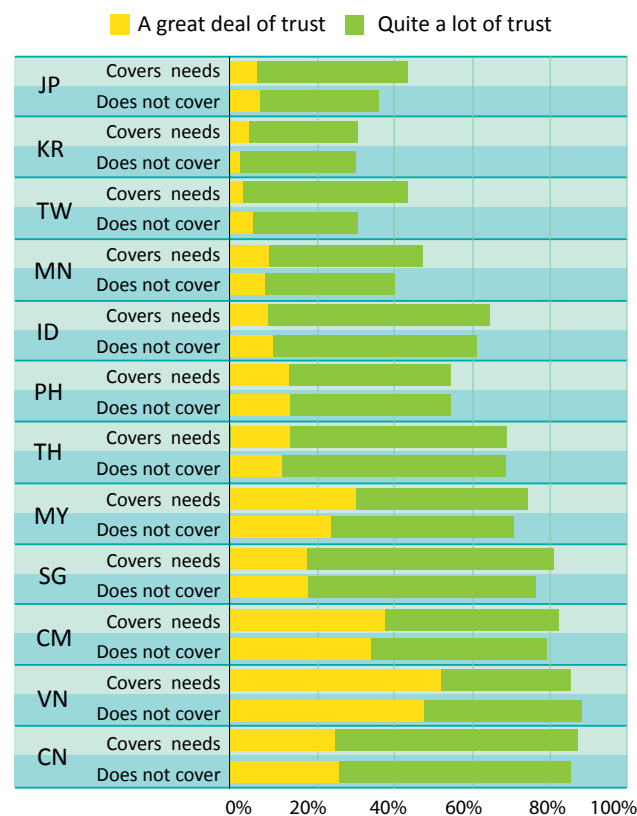
These urban/rural differences need to be better understood. Generally, the fact that youth in rural areas may be less exposed to alternative sources of information and media and criticism of institutions may help to explain why rural youth tend to be more trusting of political institutions. On the other hand, youth in rural areas may have more direct interaction with their local governments than their urban counterparts. Such proximity of interaction and greater hands-on knowledge of the institutions may make them less suspicious of those institutions.

The second notable factor is income sufficiency. Overall (the only exception being Viet Nam), respondents who believe their family income satisfactorily covers their basic needs tend to show higher levels of institutional trust than do their less affluent counterparts, though the differences were not marked. There may be starker differences when future surveys compare trust levels with actual income data, rather than with subjective assertions about whether basic needs are covered or not. Levels of socio-economic inequality is high in all societies under study, and in many, disparities have been rising in recent years. It is likely that such discrepancies in life circumstances have an impact on attitudes towards institutions and political processes, but they do not clearly emerge from the study presented in this report.

Credit: © Alejandro Boza/UNDP Cambodia

*A Cambodian youth checking his name from the voters' registration list.*

"There is likely to remain a significant cohort of citizens, including youth, who believe in the importance of the process of electing their representatives."

# Institutional trust and the democratic process

Across the 12 societies examined, different levels of institutional trust do not appear to affect people's preference for democracy — i.e. no clear positive relationship between institutional trust and support for democracy is found among either youth or other cohorts. On the other hand, enquiries regarding implementation of elections, a key component of democratic processes, reveal attitudinal differences in several societies. In Cambodia, Malaysia and Viet Nam, for example, people who regarded the last national elections as 'free and fair' tend to have higher levels of institutional trust than those who did not consider them free and fair. Interestingly, this effect does not differ significantly between the age cohorts, i.e. youth share similar views with older cohorts in associating trust in institutions with quality of electoral processes. It is possible, however, that the tensions and confrontations that followed the 2013 general elections in Cambodia and Malaysia may have dampened citizens' trust to some extent in the incumbent governments, since they were conducted after data collection for the present study was completed.

Nevertheless, the ABS data suggest that, despite such electoral problems, there is likely to remain a significant cohort of citizens, including youth, who believe in the importance of the process of electing their representatives.

## Figure 24. Institutional Trust and Democratic Process by Cohort (selected societies)
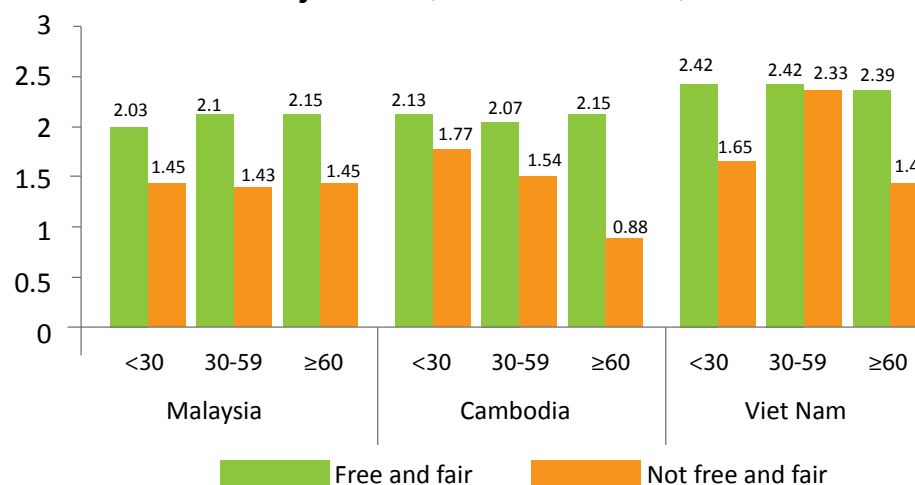


*Note: the figures on Y axis represent mean scores for institutional trust (1=not trust at all, 4=a great deal of trust)*

Though this report does not include an analysis of this data, ABS also asked youth whether they agree that "Democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government." Across the region, an average of 83 percent 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', suggesting that most youth, at least in principle, believe in democracy. The highest rates were observed in Taiwan (94 percent), Japan and Singapore (88 percent) and Thailand (87 percent). The lowest rates appear in Viet Nam, with 72 percent, and China, with 77 percent. These findings need to be understood in the context of each society, however, alongside the fact that democracy as a form of government may be variously understood as comprising different constitutive elements and features. In any case, taken together with the earlier finding that many youth comprehend democracy as being associated with good governance, these survey results reinforce the argument that East and South-East Asian youth maintain considerable faith in democratic governance, and provide evidence of significant support for democratic processes that secure the inclusive participation of citizens.

These findings also suggest that critical assessment of institutions among youth should therefore be understood in the light of these findings. Young people in different societies diverge in their critical assessment of different government branches and institutions, and the data provide grounds for further reflection regarding which components and aspects of good governance, in addition to free and fair elections, affect trust among youth in respective societal contexts. How their assessment of government performance affects their attitudes towards institutions and how it influences their political behaviour also remains an area in need of further detailed study.

> "The data provide grounds for further reflection regarding which components and aspects of good governance affect trust among youth in respective societal context as well as how their assessment of government performance influences their political behavior."

## Internet and institutional trust among Korean youth

**Figure 25. Institutional Trust among Korean Youth by Internet Use**



Legend: A great deal of trust; Quite a lot of trust
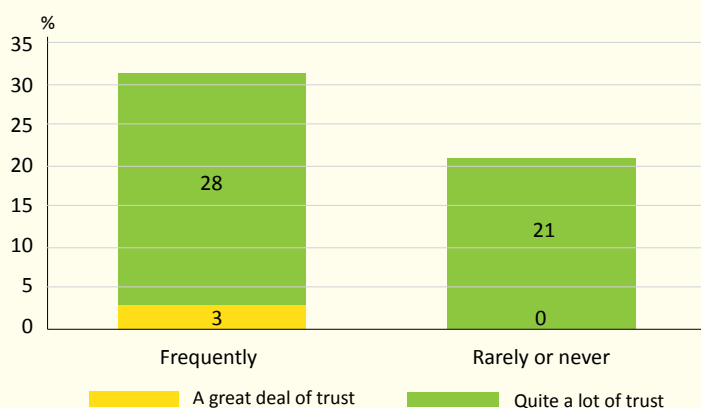
Access to information is critical in providing citizens with the means to understand their political systems. Traditionally, such information has been provided through personal exposure to political discussions in the home and in direct social contact, for example, through participation in rallies and political meetings. In recent decades, media has come to play an even more important role in this regard. In particular, in today's digital age, the Internet has emerged as an additional source of politics and governance-related information in many people's lives, especially in the more advanced economies, where Internet penetration tends to be highest. Compared to the mainstream media, furthermore, the Internet has become much more difficult to control, as people find ways to circumvent censorship and other control methods (Horner and Kovacs, 2012). It was therefore assumed that frequent Internet users would  trust institutions less than infrequent users, since it is more likely they will be exposed to a variety of opinions and information about the government, including those critical of the authorities. The survey data, however, showed no significant difference in youth's level of trust in institutions between frequent and infrequent Internet users in most of the societies. Only in the Republic of Korea, a significant gap existed between the two groups, with infrequent Internet users showing less trust in institutions than frequent Internet users.

To explain this apparent anomaly, it may be necessary to investigate precisely what 'Internet use' means in this context. The findings presented in the previous chapter indicate that a positive correlation exists between Internet use and psychological involvement of youth in politics. But perhaps the assumption that Internet use, as such, predetermines heightened political awareness and more interest in politics-related information may need further investigation in the specific context of each society.

Moreover, the prevalence of Internet censorship and, therefore, control by governments of the information to which society has access, could potentially lead to criticism and demands for change as well as low institutional trust. This must perhaps also be factored into this type of analysis.

## Policy considerations

In political science, it is sometimes assumed that low levels of trust in institutions present a threat to democratic process. Similarly, it is often assumed that democratic governance is impeded if youth become more cynical or disengaged from mainstream politics. In this context, youth are expected, like their older cohorts, to gain or lose institutional trust depending on the concrete results that the institutions can deliver — including free and fair conduct of elections — which may determine their attitudes towards democratic governance processes. While the data presented in this chapter in part affirm this expectation, the findings indicate that something more complex may be at work.

First, the findings indicate that youth tend to be more critical than other age cohorts in assessing institutions in their societies. Their level of trust in institutions is closely associated with the way in which they evaluate democratic processes in their countries, such as elections. Elections serve as an important channel for citizens to express political interests and demands, but even where electoral problems are an issue, faith in this avenue of representation tends to persist. Nevertheless, efforts to maintain the integrity of this process should be strengthened. This should include increased transparency, for instance through third-party monitoring.

However, increased transparency can also lead to increased criticism, which may further erode trust and confidence. This may partly explain why levels of trust reported in more open and more pluralistic societies are relatively low compared to societies where freedom of expression is more restricted. At the same time, level of trust does not appear to be directly related to the performance of the respective governments and systems as gauged, for example, by international indicators (see page 11). Are diminishing levels of trust therefore a prerequisite for more democratic governance, or are they a consequence of more open, pluralistic systems?

It should also be noted that trust is dynamic and often fragile. It may fluctuate in response to sudden events, such as fraudulent elections, political scandal or natural disasters. Data for this survey, for example, was gathered at a time where certain sample countries were in crisis. For instance, the Japan data were collected only months after the March 2011 tsunami and Fukushima disaster. These events had enormous implications for the credibility and standing of the government and the country's governance institutions. These factors should be taken into account in viewing the data, and should remind readers that this approach to measuring trust provides only a snapshot of what is essentially a long-term process.

# 2. Quality of Governance

## How do youth evaluate governance in East and South-East Asia?

- Youth in more advanced economies and more pluralistic societies are comparatively more critical of the quality of governance in their societies than are their older cohorts.
- Youth in different societies focus on weaknesses in their political systems from different perspectives, but corruption consistently emerges as one of the most serious issues.
- Where differences show, youth with tertiary education, high levels of Internet use, and residence in urban areas are more likely to be critical citizens.
- Youth in the region judge political systems according to perceptions of the substantive results they produce.

At a global level, trends suggest that citizens across the world appear to be losing confidence in state institutions. For example, researchers find that in many places political leaders as well as public officials are increasingly perceived as self-serving, law-breaking and corrupt.[53] Since political discontent weakens public trust and support which are essential for the legitimacy and viability of a political system, growing discontent and loss of trust poses a grave challenge to effective governance. In this context, the ABS addressed the following questions: In an atmosphere of general discontent globally, do young people in East and South-East Asia differ from their older cohorts when evaluating the quality of governance? Do youth with different life circumstances and social standing make different judgments regarding governance? The findings shed some light on the nature and extent of political discontent among youth and possible indicators for their aspirations for political reform. The questions focused on certain key tenets that facilitate (or impede) democratic governance: (1) rule of law, (2) corruption, (3) state responsiveness, and (4) social and political equality.

## Rule of law: Official respect for law

The ABS asked respondents how often they think government leaders break the law or abuse their power. In 8 of the 12 societies examined in the region, only a minority of youth expressed favourable evaluations[54] of official respect for the law. Most youth in Singapore expressed favourable evaluations, followed in descending order by Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam, Japan and Malaysia. Apart from Singapore and Cambodia, however, the aggregate figure still ranged around the 50 percent mark in other countries. Significantly lower averages were found in the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan and the Republic of Korea, with China and

*In 8 of the 12 societies examined in the region, only a minority of youth expressed favourable evaluations of official respect for the law.*

53 Pharr and Putnam (2000).
54 The responses 'Rarely' and 'Sometimes' were counted towards favourable evaluations.

Mongolia trailing behind. The low rate for China is interesting, since this is one of the countries where trust in institutions is among the highest (see previous chapter).

Youth in Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia, Singapore and Malaysia express lower evaluations than older cohorts, while those in Thailand, China and Cambodia provide higher assessments. Again, this is interesting, in that levels of trust among Thai youth in governance institutions also stood out as being higher than that of older generations (see previous chapter), whereas in China and Cambodia this effect was discernible only with regard to their judiciaries.

**Figure 26. Official Respect for Law by Cohort**
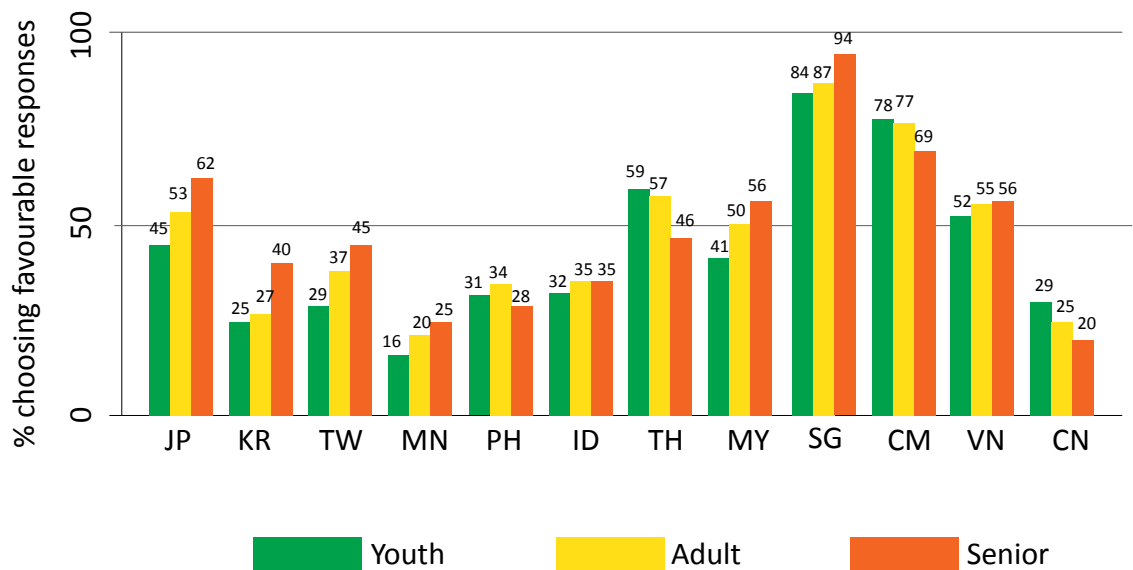


In some societies, variations among youth are correlated with their respective life circumstances and access to information about governance. In China, Mongolia and Taiwan, youth from less economically secure families and those with higher education respectively, tend to be more critical regarding official respect for law. Youth in Thailand and Viet Nam who are frequent Internet users and urbanites, respectively, tend to express more negative assessments. Despite these differences, however, the overall picture that emerges is one of youth who are more critical of officials than are the older cohorts, and more distinctively so in more pluralistic societies. On the other hand, the figures in about half of the surveyed societies show that far more than 50 percent of citizens across generations appear to have great doubts regarding the prevalence of official respect for law in their societies.

# Rule of law: Control of official impunity

Asked whether public officials who commit crimes or break the law are held accountable, fewer than 40 percent of youth in Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan responded that, in their view, this was the case.[55] This indicates that they believe that official wrongdoing enjoys a high degree of impunity, and this extends the negative perceptions of governance noted above, especially of those agencies responsible for enforcing the rule of law. It

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55 These findings are based on the survey question (108) "Do officials who commit crimes go unpunished?" The responses 'Always' and 'Most of the time' were taken to indicate a large degree of impunity, whereas responses of 'Sometimes' or 'Rarely' were counted as 'favourable responses', indicating favourable evaluations of control of official impunity.

was also in Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan that trust in the judiciary was lowest. By contrast, youth in Cambodia, China, Japan, Thailand and Viet Nam appear to be more confident that law-breaking officials are held to account, which also correlates to higher trust in their respective judicial systems. Still, the average in these countries is a bit above 50 percent in this regard, hardly testimony to overwhelming confidence in governmental accountability and integrity. Only in Singapore, where the number of positive responses clearly stands out, do citizens seem to display a high degree of satisfaction in this regard. What is also interesting in comparing these figures is that, while Mongolia and China share equally low assessments in terms of the assumed frequency of officials breaking the law (see previous section), only in China, and not in Mongolia, do larger numbers of people think that such officials are actually held to account.

The difference between age cohorts, compared with other societies, is notable in Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan. In these societies, youth are more sceptical about the control of official impunity, except among Filipino youth, who provide more favourable assessments than other cohorts. In the other societies, youth are generally in agreement with the older cohorts.

*"The findings nevertheless point to their awareness and concern regarding the issue, which does not diverge significantly from those of older cohorts."*

In Cambodia and Thailand, frequent Internet users tend to have more negative opinions regarding the control of official impunity. Factors such as education, rural residence and income sufficiency cause youth views to diverge in Cambodia, China and Mongolia. Overall, there are no significant differences across genders with regard to assessment on the rule of law.

It appears that youth in East and South-East Asia, as a group, are less critical of official impunity than they are of other governance issues. The findings nevertheless point to their awareness and concern regarding the issue, which does not diverge significantly from those of older cohorts.

## Figure 27. Control of Official Impunity by Cohort
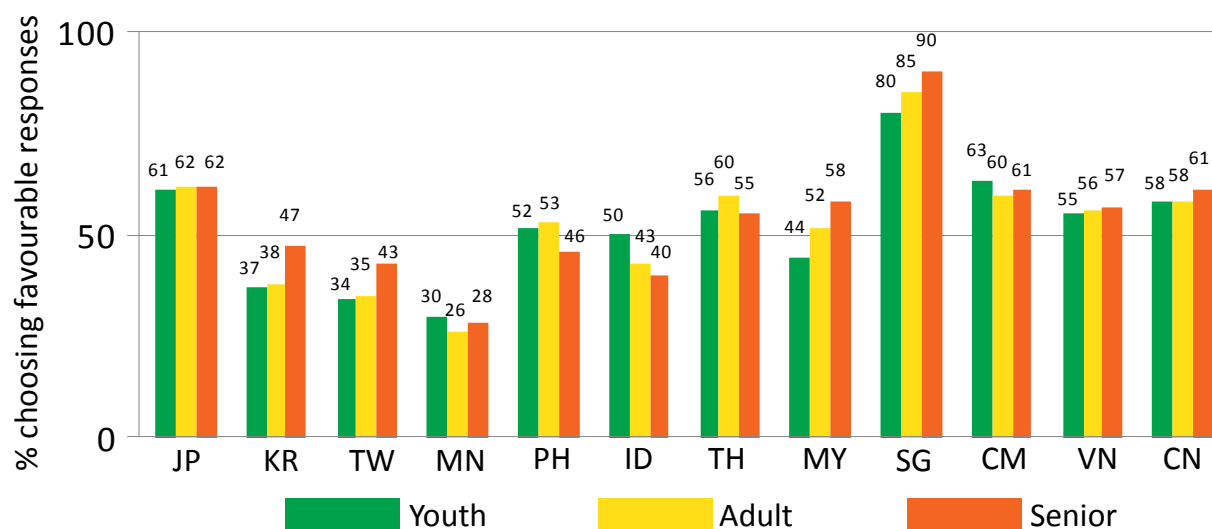
# Corruption

In most of the societies examined, only a minority or just slightly over half of young people answered 'hardly anyone is involved' or that 'not a lot of officials are corrupt', which were counted as positive responses with regard to control of corruption in their societies.[56] Youth in Singapore, however, express more confidence. In China, Japan, Malaysia and Thailand, more than 50 percent of youth indicated that corruption is effectively controlled. In all other societies, however, the overall responses rate less than 50 percent, some of them far less, suggesting that in many societies in East and South-East Asia, youth strongly perceive corruption as a widespread issue in their societies, which is not effectively controlled.

It is also noteworthy that in Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan, youth are more critical than older cohorts, whereas in Cambodia, China, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, they are less critical than seniors, though in some cases only marginally.

In most societies, notably, there is no significant divergence among youth perception of corruption based on their life circumstances. In China, however, those who use the Internet more than once a week tend to detect corruption in government more strongly compared with those who never or rarely use the Internet.

In general, young people in more open, pluralistic societies are less likely to provide positive evaluations of the control of corruption, whereas those living under more restrictive political systems are more likely than the preceding generations to give positive evaluations. This reflects the growth of a youth cohort in some societies of East and South-East Asia that is distinctly more critical than its older cohorts, a phenomenon more prevalent in relatively open and pluralistic societies that provide greater space to discuss politics.

**Figure 28. Corruption: Non-existent or Rare**



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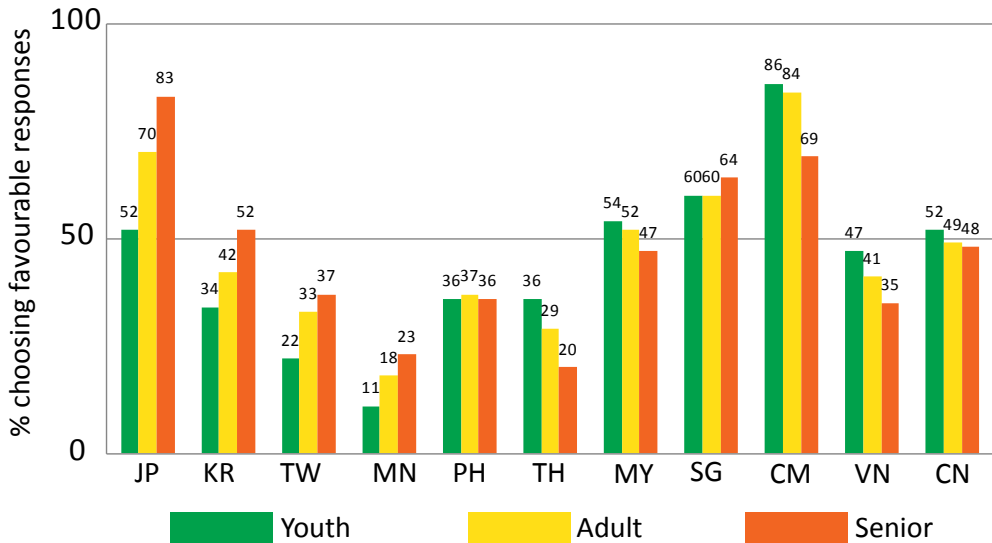
56 The ABS survey included separate items to measure corruption at the local/municipal and national levels. For corruption at the national level, respondents were asked how widespread they think corruption and bribe-taking are in the national government in their capital city. Corruption is conventionally defined as the exercise of public power for private gain.

# Political and social equality

Equality constitutes a core feature of democratic governance. The principles of equality before the law and non-discrimination refer to fundamental human rights. The ABS asked respondents whether they agree with the proposition 'Rich and poor people are treated equally by the government', aiming to gauge the perceived level of equality prevailing in the respective societies. This question addresses aspects of political equality, in terms of non-discrimination and equality before the law, together with aspects of social equality, given that the gap between rich and poor is significant and in most of the societies concerned, rising.

In Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan, only small minorities of people agreed with the statement that rich and poor people are treated equally, with youth generally being even more sceptical than the older cohorts. In societies that have tighter restrictions on freedom of expression, however, large majorities of people including youth agreed that the authorities treat the poor fairly. Thailand proved a distinct outlier in this respect, with more than 90 percent agreeing that rich and poor are treated equally, which does not correspond with socio-economic indicators such as the Gini Index, or with the fact that lack of equality in terms of treatment by the state has presented a recurring theme in the country's political debates for many years. Two patterns emerge: Significant criticism of government performance regarding political and social equality is more typical of youth in more affluent and pluralistic societies, while more favourable assessments of political and social equality tend to be more common in less open societies. However, this does not entirely explain the relatively high level of approval of government in this regard in Indonesia compared with, for instance, the Philippines. The figures also do not visibly correspond with actual inequality measures such as the Gini Index, Corruption Perception Index or the Freedom of the Press Index.

The findings indicate that citizens' perceptions of political and social equality sometimes run against objective assessments. In some societies with relatively low income inequality, equality is deemed poorly protected, while in societies with higher income inequality, citizens do not feel socially and politically disadvantaged.

Individual life circumstances have proven to affect the way youth assess social and political equality in some societies. In China, youth with tertiary education tend to be urban dwellers and frequent Internet users, and turned out to be relatively more critical on this item. Data on Viet Nam and Malaysia also show that critical youth emerge in urban areas and in correlation with Internet users.

**Figure 29. Rich and Poor People are Treated Equally by the Government**
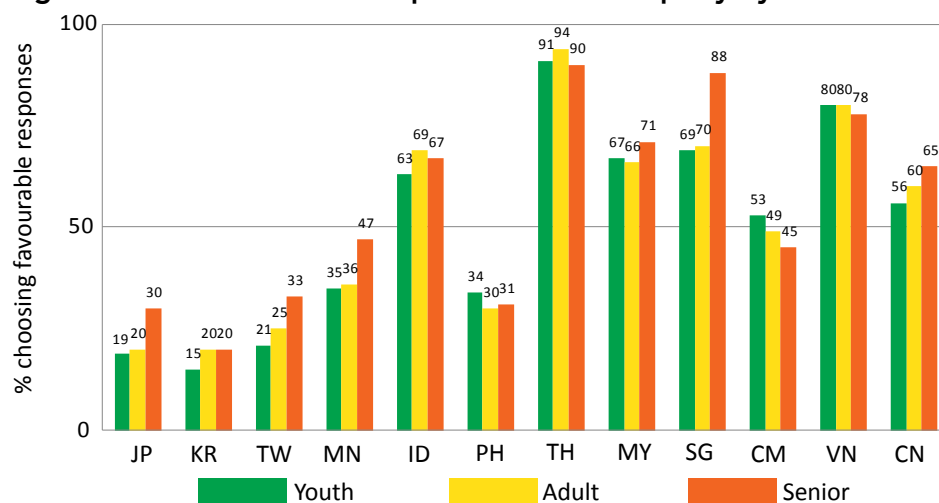


> Significant criticism of government performance regarding political and social equality is more typical of youth in more affluent and pluralistic societies, while more favourable assessments of political and social equality tend to be more common in less open societies.

## Government responsiveness

Beyond the perceptions related to the rule of law and equality, a third essential component of assessing democratic governance is whether the government can deliver what its citizens want and expect. This element is crucial, since young people whose expectations go unmet are those more likely to express their dissatisfaction via demonstrations, street protests and other forms of political mobilization. In recent years, they have also increasingly been using e-platforms to voice discontent. Sometimes, such expressions of discontent bring them into direct confrontation with authorities. In a previous chapter, it was shown that youth place high importance on the results and performance of governments. But the data collected in this survey do not indicate precisely what factors determine the level of satisfaction or trust in institutions.

**Figure 30. Government Responsiveness by Cohort**
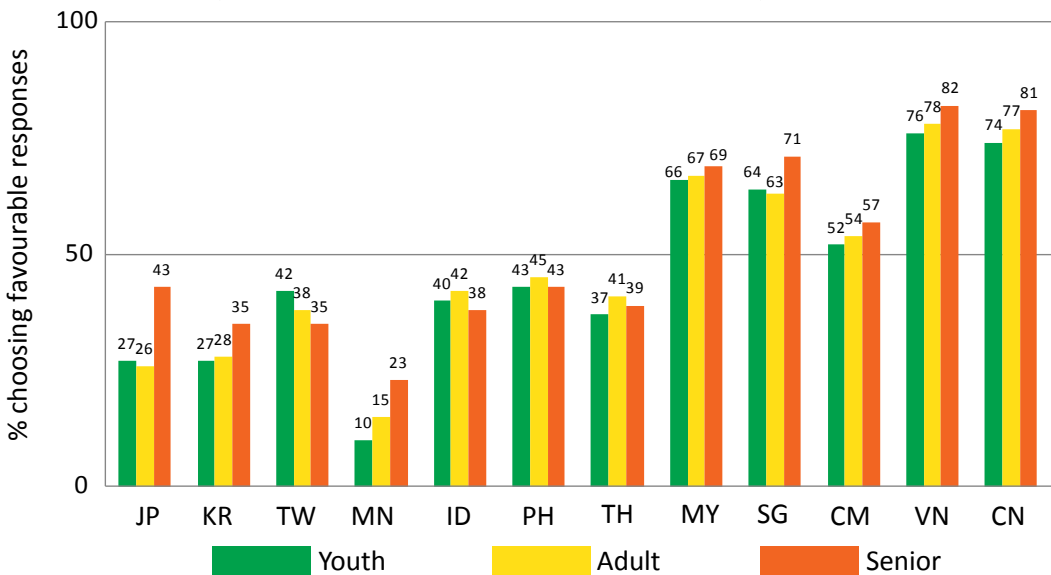


> In 7 of the 12 societies studied, only minorities of young people consider their authorities 'very' or 'largely' responsive to their interests.

In 7 of the 12 societies studied, only minorities of young people consider their authorities 'very' or 'largely' responsive to their interests.[57]

Government responsiveness is ranked less favourably in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Mongolia (where it was exceptionally low) than in other societies. In contrast, large majorities of youth in China, Malaysia, Singapore and Viet Nam, together with older cohorts, rate their authorities as largely responsive, which is shown in Cambodia, but to a lesser extent. It is unclear what these assessments are based on, as they do not correspond with other evidence-based rankings and performance indicators of government and social policy. What all of the societies have in common, where government responsiveness was assessed largely positively, is that a ruling party has been in place for at least the last 30 years, i.e. longer than the current youth generation has been alive. Is there a correlation between these two circumstances? Does political stability have an inverse causal effect on a society's perception

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57 These findings derive from responses to the survey question (113) "How well do you think the government responds to what people want?" Responses indicating that the government is 'very responsive' and 'largely responsive' were counted as favourable.

of government responsiveness? The findings of this study can only hint at answers to these questions, which must be subject to further research. It is also important that the expectations of citizens with respect to government responsiveness must be observed over time.

In most societies, it should be noted that there is no significant generational gap regarding this question — adults and seniors tend to be as sceptical as young people are about government capacity to respond to their needs. More often, youth views of government responsiveness vary according to the survey respondent's life circumstances. Family income sufficiency influences youth perceptions in the Republic of Korea and Singapore, with young adults from less economically secure families showing stronger tendencies to respond negatively. Youth with tertiary education in Mongolia and Taiwan are also more critical than the less educated. Young frequent Internet users in China, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam and young urbanites in the Philippines also tend to assess government responsiveness more negatively.

## Equality in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the issue of equality is highly politicized on the basis of social conditions, with ethnicity clearly a salient factor in national politics. Since the 1970s, the Malaysian government has implemented policies such as affirmative action in public education, designed to favour citizens of Malay origin or other indigenous peoples (*bumiputra*), who used to be very much disadvantaged and marginalized. These policies, at the outset broadly supported by the Chinese and Indian Malaysian minorities, have succeeded in creating a significant urban Malay middle class, but have increasingly been regarded as unjust by members of the sizeable Chinese and Indian Malaysian communities. Various policies, including enrolment in higher education, appear to benefit Malay Muslims more than other communities. Such policies have come to be seen, to some extent, as depriving youth from other ethnic backgrounds of equal opportunity.

The ABS asked Malaysians whether they think citizens from the various ethnic communities are treated equally by the government. Across the age cohorts, more than 75 percent of Malays agreed that all ethnic communities are treated equally by the government, with the figure being highest among the youngest cohort. Citizens who are not part of that ethnic majority, however, respond more negatively; in case of youth, only 54.3 percent of non-Malay youth believe that the government treats all ethnic communities equally, compared to 78.8 percent of Malay youth.



**Figure 31. Equality in Malaysia**

% choosing favourable responses

| | Non-Malay | Malay | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Youth | 54.3 | 78.8 | Youth |
| Adult | 62 | 77.3 | Adult |
| Senior | 66.7 | 76 | Senior |

Legend: ■ Youth  ■ Adult  ■ Senior

ABS results demonstrate that Malaysian youth in general are more dissatisfied with governance than are older citizens. Furthermore, ethnically non-Malay youth appear to have even less faith that the government will protect and treat them equally. Since the divergence between Malay and non-Malay youth appears to be significant in this regard, there may well be grounds for investigating the reasons for this gap in perceptions more thoroughly — and for providing opportunities to discuss and debate these matters openly and constructively to build broader ownership of government policy in this regard.

# Rural/urban differences among youth in China

The conventional wisdom suggests that rural residents, compared to their urban counterparts, are politically more conservative and thus more loyal to the ruling regime (Shi and Lu, 2004; Li, 2004). The report's analysis of the rural/urban divide in Chinese youth's critical views of their authorities confirms such arguments. Rural youth in China are much less critical of the government's performance regarding freedom of speech, corruption and bribe-taking, and appear to be more satisfied in terms of the government's responsiveness to their needs.

**Figure 32. Rural-Urban Divide among Chinese Youth**
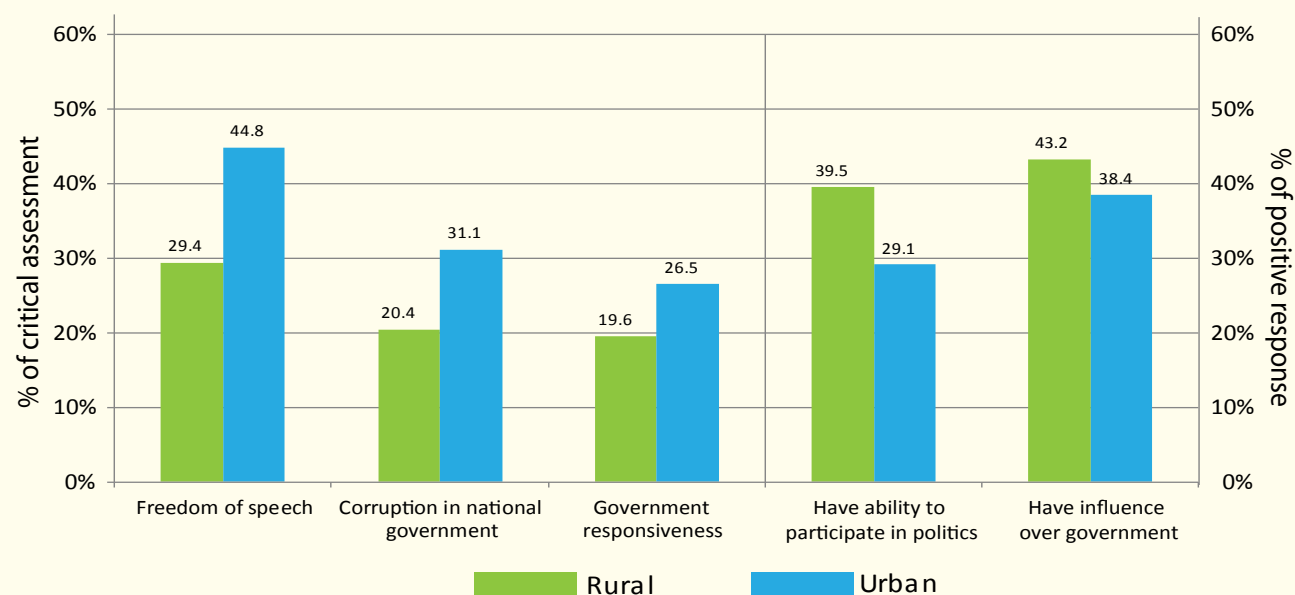


Nevertheless, the pattern is reversed when relative sense of political efficacy is examined, where young people are asked whether they feel they have an ability to participate in the democratic process and whether they think they have any influence over government decisions. Their responses indicate that rural young adults on average have greater confidence in their capacity to participate in politics and also report relatively greater confidence in having influence over government policies and decisions. This higher level of perceived political efficacy among rural youth is primarily driven by the distinct grassroots political dynamics in China, which differ significantly between rural and urban areas. Further to the relative novelty of conducting elections at the local level, this rural grassroots democracy does provide China's rural citizens with meaningful opportunities to observe or practise democratic politics. By contrast, the government more strictly constrains opportunities for urban citizens to participate in democratic activities. Mutually reinforcing feedback between political participation and sense of efficacy may help explain this unexpected rural/urban difference in political efficacy among young Chinese. Nevertheless, as more young Chinese leave rural communities to settle in urban China in pursuit of more education or work as migrant workers, they might lose the opportunity to participate in grassroots democratic processes. On the other hand, such demographic trends may contribute to rising expectations of greater individual political efficacy, at the same time contributing to the introduction of local elections in urban areas and creating a more open environment for political choice.

# Attitudes toward governance among youth in Mongolia

Compared with citizens in other societies included in this study, Mongolians in general express considerable dissatisfaction with governance, and Mongolian youth tend to be even more negative in this regard than are older citizens. Among youth, those with relatively higher educational attainments or who reside in urban areas are more critical about governance than their less educated or rural counterparts. In line with other findings referred to earlier in this report, this indicates that youth with access to information about government performance may tend to be critical evaluators.

**Figure 33. Assessing Governance by Educational Attainment and Area of Residence among Mongolian Youth**
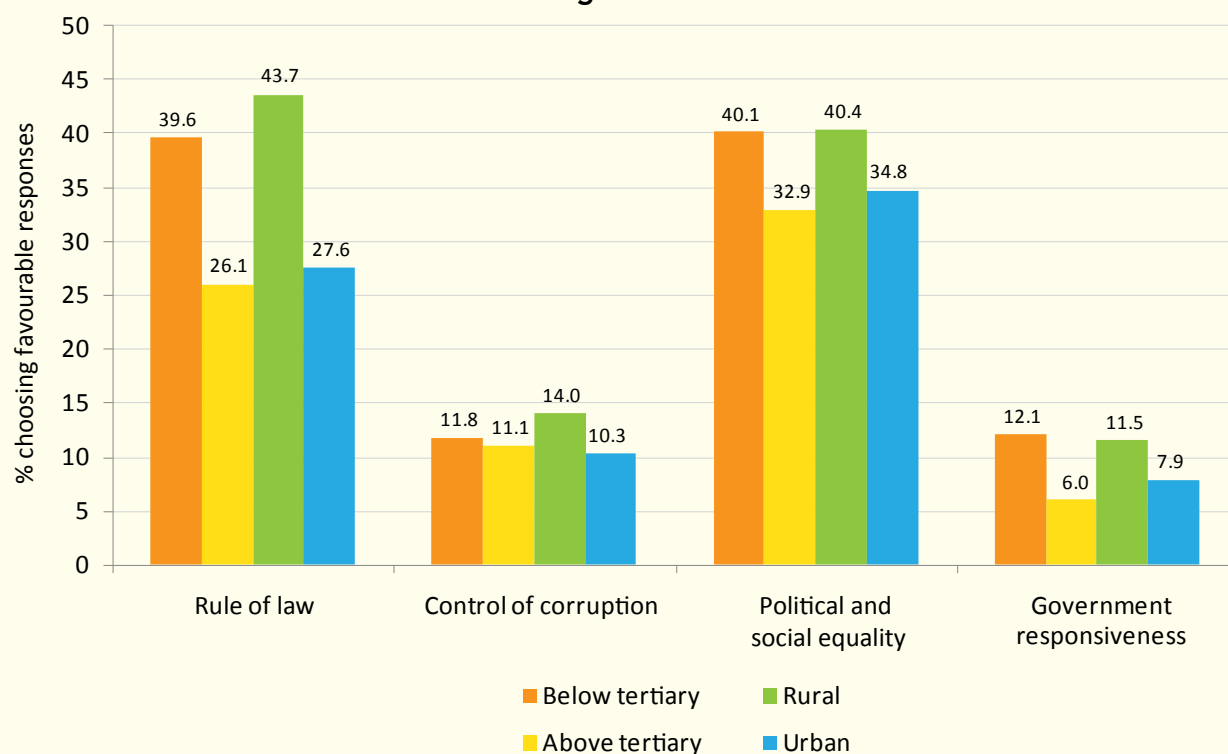


In terms of approval rates, control of corruption and government responsiveness rank lowest among all aspects of governance. In the areas of rule of law and government responsiveness, perceptions among higher-educated and urban youth were significantly lower than among lower-educated and rural youth.

As is the case in other country results in this study, these data must be interpreted within the socio-political context that prevailed when the survey was administered. In Mongolia, the 2009 presidential elections were followed by a political crisis during which a number of high-profile corruption cases further shook public confidence.

## Policy considerations

With rapid economic development in many countries leading to better education and greater financial security among the younger generation, youth in the region have come to hold higher expectations than older cohorts regarding standards of governance. Youth are often more critical than other age cohorts when evaluating components of good governance such as rule of law, corruption, equality and government responsiveness. It is not always clear what these perceptions are based on, as they only partially resonate with evidence-based indicators of the same issues, and feature some counter-intuitive results. For instance, in some of the more affluent and, arguably, well-governed countries, youth appears to have increasingly lost trust in authorities, and show diminishing confidence that mechanisms of accountability are effective. What the survey does point out, however, is that youth in East and South-East Asia do have varying degrees of concern regarding quality of governance in their respective societies, including issues of justice, fairness and government responsiveness. Perceptions of prevailing corruption within governments, in particular, seem to suggest the need to establish more effective mechanisms of official accountability. These challenges ought to be addressed in the process of policy making and overall efforts to improve governance.

Overall, life circumstances, including those of youth, are an important explanatory factor in predicting judgments regarding the integrity of government officials. In societies where variations show among segments of the youth population, for example, youth with tertiary education, frequent Internet use and residing in urban areas, respectively, more tend to have greater access to information, and are more likely to be critical citizens. Fearing that expressions of public discontent might lead to instability, authorities in a number of countries impose policies curbing access to information, justifying such measures as a means of maintaining social stability. From a long-term perspective, however, such policies will impede social progress to the extent that they prevent youth (and others) from effectively participating in political dialogue.

In the long run, more effective policies should aim to boost young people's confidence in their political system, in the fairness of their laws and in the ability and commitment of their institutions to implement them fairly and judiciously. One way to achieve this is by improving feedback mechanisms and promoting regular information sharing between governments and their citizens.

To this end, political authorities could help to establish enabling environments, whether online or offline, to provide effective avenues for feedback, whether critical or supportive, regarding the quality and effectiveness of governance. Such mechanisms already exist through various types of effort that aim to improve governance, especially at local levels, with measures such as participatory planning, social audits and citizen monitoring. These should be improved on to reach out to the youth more explicitly and innovatively, as well as to enable constructive two-way dialogues between authorities and the youth.

> "Youth in the region do have varying degrees of concern regarding quality of governance in their respective societies, including issues of justice, fairness and government responsiveness."

# 3

# Youth as Democratic Citizens: Political Participation and Empowerment

How do East and South-East Asian youth act to influence political outcomes? Are available channels and mechanisms effective? Do youth feel that they can affect politics? This section explores their sense of political efficacy and its exercise, as well as their sense of empowerment.

# 1. Political Participation

## Do East and South-East Asian youth actively participate in politics?

- East and South-East Asian youth are not apathetic. In general, they do participate in politics, although in different ways than do their older cohorts.
- East and South-East Asian youth in general feature lower rates of voter turnout and are less likely to identify with political parties compared to older cohorts. But in many societies they are engaging as much as older cohorts in non-electoral participation such as lobbying and activism.
- Information and communications technology is expanding opportunities for youth to participate politically.

In democratic political systems, policy makers are concerned to promote youth participation in politics. Some research has found that in older liberal democracies young people are likely to be apathetic, self-centred, uninterested in the needs of others and, overall, less concerned with politics.[58] The concern that emerges from this is that as the youth cohort ages and if such attitudes do not change, the value-based collective behaviour underpinning democratic systems may erode and thus jeopardize the long-term stability of democracy as such. Taking a different approach, the theory of life-cycles (see Introduction) suggests that youth become more active participants in politics as they age and acquire greater socio-economic stakes in the society.



Credit: © Mark S.Cogan/UNDP Thailand

*Thai students (Thai Youth Anti-Corruption Network) rally in Bangkok on International Anti-corruption Day. The Network comprises over 4,000 students from 90 universities across Thailand.*

This study finds that youth participation is strongly affected by the social and political context within which they live. The findings also indicate that political participation among East and South-East Asian youth is relatively high, compared with other age cohorts. Although to a lesser degree than older cohorts, youth vote in large numbers, according to the survey data, and participate in politics in a variety of other ways. Overall, the official figures on turnout in elections are relatively high in East and South-East Asia, and do not show the trends towards fatigue as is the case in a number of older democracies.

But the picture that emerges is uneven. The findings suggest, for example, that East and South-East Asian youth do not participate to the same extent in all forms of political activities. In some countries, poor governance performance and lack of response from authorities may alienate youth from politics, especially elections, inducing youth to opt instead

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58 O'Toole et al. (2003).

for other types of political engagement outside the traditional electoral arena. This differs from the attitudes of older cohorts: Youth in the region are not satisfied with expressing their voices through elections alone. On the whole, they are more likely than older cohorts to also engage in other forms of participation, including rallies, signing petitions or solving local problems at the grassroots level. Such behaviour in detail, however, varies significantly across the region.

It is generally believed that youth worldwide enjoy a great advantage in using information technology to access resources for political participation.[59] The findings confirm this assumption among East and South-East Asian youth. A synergy between technology and political participation may thus be creating new avenues for youth's political engagement.

*Youth in the region are not satisfied with expressing their voices through elections alone.*

## Electoral participation and party affinity

Empirical studies reveal that in many older democracies worldwide, voter turnout among young people is generally lower than it is for other age cohorts.[60] Another global phenomenon is that youth are also less likely to identify with any political party. East and South-East Asian youth are no exception to this general pattern. The ABS finds that youth across all societies engage in voting less than do other cohorts. The youth turnout rate[61] is generally 15–30 percent lower than that of older adults and senior citizens. While voting might be considered a civic obligation by older cohorts, youth in the region do not appear to hold a similar attitude.[62] Generational differences in voting were most striking in Malaysia and Singapore, where only a third of youth voted, compared to an overwhelming majority among older citizens. While in Singapore this could be a consequence of the fact that not all constituencies are contested due to the shape of constituencies and the electoral system in place, this is not the case in Malaysia, where a sharp divide is highlighted.

The lower participation rate reported by young people interviewed may also be due to the fact that the minimum voting age is higher in many countries than the minimum age of respondents included in this study. For instance, the low figures for Malaysia and Singapore may be partially explained by the fact that the voting age is 21 in those countries, whereas it is 20 in Japan and Taiwan and 19 in the Republic of Korea. Other factors that may affect turnout include the fact that young people are often working or studying in other places (whether inside their country or outside) than where they are registered and included in the electoral roll. While they may well want to cast their vote and participate, they are unable to do so due to circumstances that do not allow them to exercise their voting right effectively. Figures indicating a lower youth turnout should therefore not be taken one-dimensionally as evidence for lesser interest in participating in the democratic process. In fact, in overall, the turnout rate as reported is relatively high in many societies to the extent that it does not seem to represent serious fatigue towards electoral participation, though there is sufficient scope for encouragement.

59 Lyengar and Jackman (2003).
60 Russel et al. (2002)
61 As observed in survey data collected by responses to the question "Did you cast your vote in the last elections?", rather than from official voter turnout figures, as the latter were not consistently available from electoral authorities across the region. Actual turnout figures from the countries in the region do not correspond exactly to the findings included here.
62 In some countries included in this study, voting is obligatory.

Youth are also less likely to identify with political parties. Overall, percentages of young party identifiers are lower than those among older cohorts across the region. In Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, however, youth report slightly higher percentages of party identification than older cohorts, indicating that political parties in those societies have established links with young voters. For instance, major parties in Cambodia have succeeded in building strong youth wings to cultivate electoral support among youth. This in part reflects demographic realities in Cambodia, where most voters are younger than 35 years. Party affinity among young people brings youth to the polls. Aiming to encourage healthy political processes, such affiliations could be used to cultivate a public habit of exchanging ideas and debating on social and political issues. In practice, however, this is rarely the case.

### Figure 34. Electoral Participation and Party Affinity by Cohort

Electoral participation – Have you voted in last election?



Party affinity
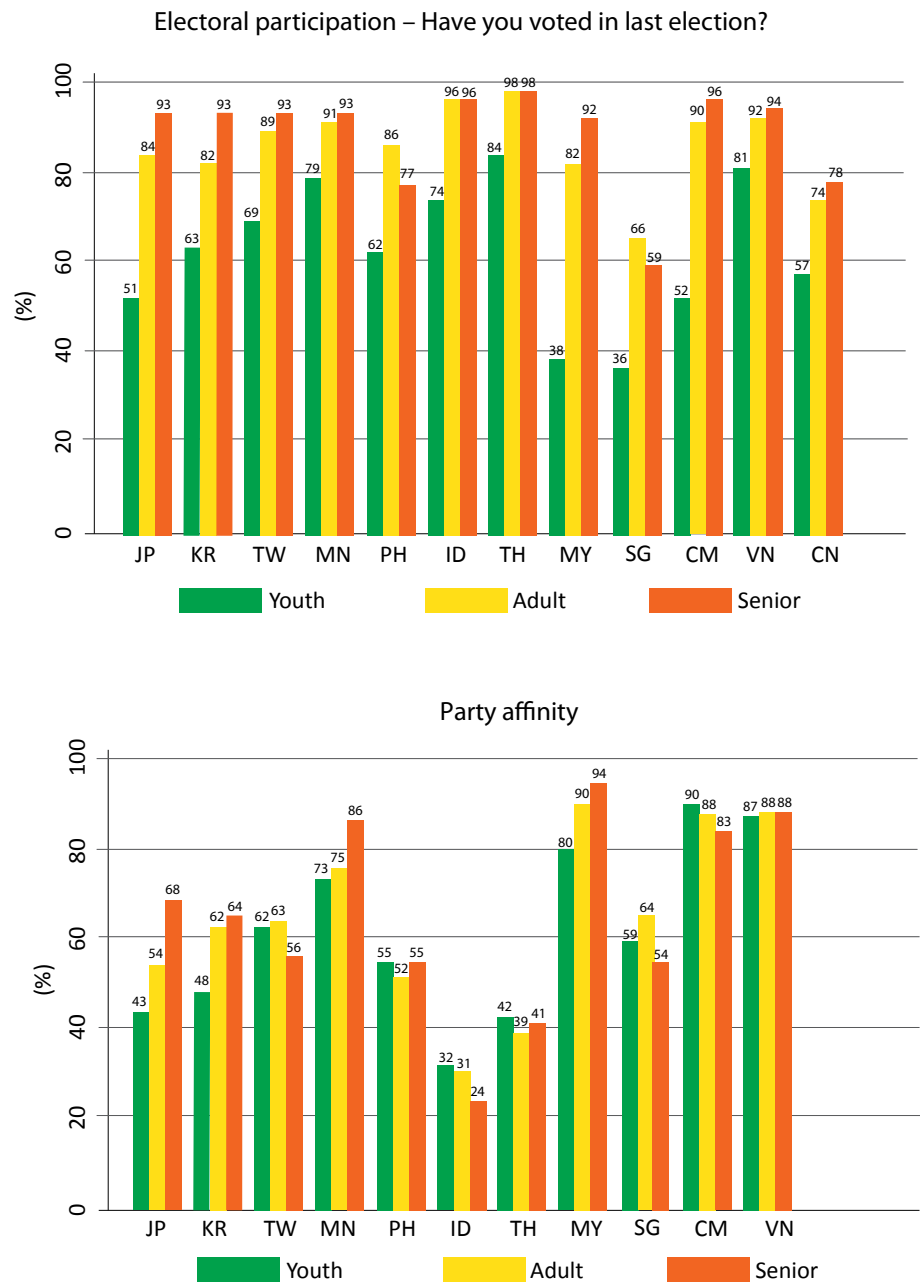
This suggests that political parties, as important components of representative democracy and the process of democratic governance, should more effectively incorporate the youth element within their formal organizations. In so doing, political parties could help youth to develop political skills and an interest in public affairs, while encouraging a more active exercise of their democratic citizenship. By reaching out to youth and mobilizing them, political parties can help significantly in increasing youth involvement in politics.

## Education and electoral participation in Cambodia and the Republic of Korea

The survey results suggest that, across societies, people who attain tertiary education are more likely to vote than their counterparts who have lower educational attainments. In the Republic of Korea, for example, respondents with higher level education (80.3 percent) are somewhat more likely to have voted in the most recent national elections than those with lower level of education (77.0 percent). At the same time, however, an opposite trend prevails in some societies. In Cambodia, for instance, only 31.1 percent of those with a high level of education reported that they voted in the most recent election (before February 2012), compared with 40.2 percent of their counterparts with a lower level of education.

While education and political participation are correlated positively in advanced democracies (Putnam, 2000), the relationship might be less likely in emerging democracies such as Cambodia. Determining the reasons for such discrepancies would however require more detailed research in each specific electoral context, and would have to be based on observations over longer periods than that of a single election.

**Figure 35. Electoral Participation by Educational Attainment among Youth in Cambodia and Republic of Korea**
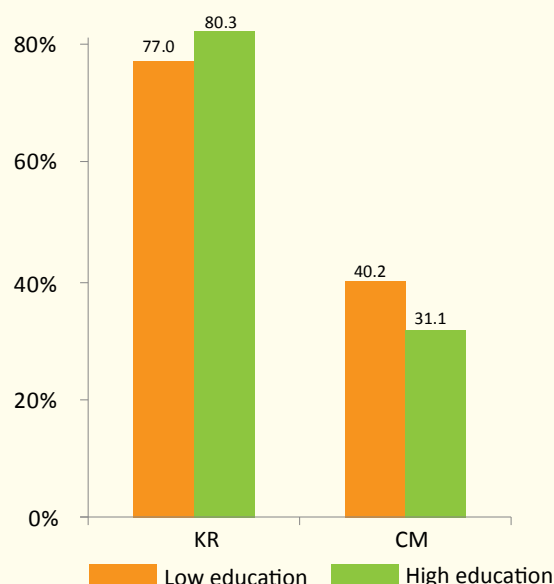


## Other forms of political participation

If East and South-East Asian youth are less likely to go to the polls than older cohorts, are they also less interested in participating in other forms of political activities?

Non-electoral political participation can take many forms. Various ways are available to contact state representatives directly to influence decisions and policies. More indirect means of expressing political opinions include joining protests or demonstrations. The ABS asked respondents whether they have contacted officials or influential people (summarized in the findings presented below as 'lobbying'),[63] or have attended a demonstration, signed petitions or

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63 For survey purposes, ABS defined 'lobbying' as one or more of the following activities: contacting elected officials or legislative representatives at any level; contacting officials at a higher level; contacting traditional leaders/community leaders; contacting other influential people outside the government; or contacting news media. Where respondents replied they had practised any one of the above approaches, they were counted as having engaged in lobbying.

have come together to solve local problems (which has been consolidated as 'activism' in the following pages).[64] In general, the level of engagement in forms of participation other than voting, compared to the rate for voting, is rather low across the region. With the exception of Thailand and Viet Nam, the percentages are below 50 percent among all cohorts. However, it was interesting to observe that, in relative terms, youth appear to find these forms of participation as attractive as older cohorts, in contrast to what seems to be the case with elections. That is, youth show as much proactivity as senior citizens for lobbying and activism, particularly in societies with less robust democratic traditions and lesser degrees of political pluralism.

For example, Chinese youth are more likely to contact officials or engage in petitioning than older cohorts, and are markedly readier than older groups to engage in lobbying and activism. This might be related to the well-established petitioning system (*xinfang*) in China, which has tended to function in place of elections as a means of voicing concerns. Nevertheless, this form of participation provides an important way for Chinese authorities to hear complaints and grievances at the local level. Viet Nam has a similar system, which may explain the country's high percentage of non-electoral participation.

Thai respondents show the highest percentage of participation in demonstrations across all age cohorts among all societies. Street protests have provided a means of voicing concerns to the authorities in Thailand, and they continue to be a major channel for expressing their opinions to the government. Street protests are also becoming more common in Malaysia, and involve a high rate of youth participation.

## Figure 36. Lobbying and Activism by Cohort

### Lobbying
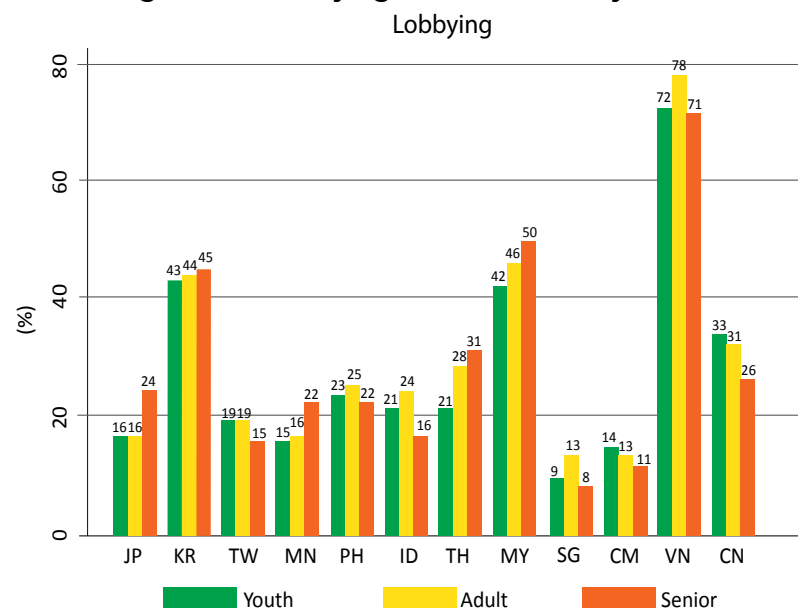


64 'Activism' was defined as one of the following activities: getting together with others to try to resolve local problems; getting together with others to raise an issue or sign a petition; or attending a demonstration or protest march. By the same token, if they had ever gathered with others, raised or signed a petition, or marched on the street, they were counted as having engaged in activism. The original survey questions also asked whether the respondents have used force or violence for a political cause, but, for reasons of consistency, these findings were later omitted from the results.

## Activism
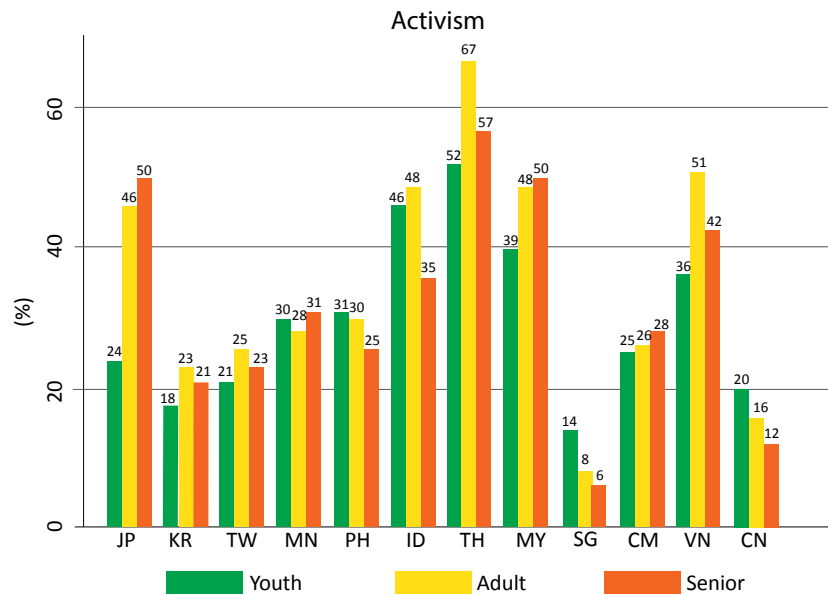


ABS findings suggest that East and South-East Asian youth do not consider voting to be the only important form of political participation. Under certain circumstances, other forms of participation might serve as more effective means for citizens, including youth, to communicate with authorities. This indicates that modalities of youth's political participation in the region are shaped by the contexts of their societies, and they are leveraging varied means and channels to affect political outcomes.

## Lobbying and activism in Singapore

The Government of Singapore is consistently rated one of the most efficient in the world (Worldwide Governance Indicators, World Bank). Singapore also performs very successfully in a number of other ranking and indicators. At the same time, it has been ruled by the same party since the 1960s and does not rank highly in terms of freedom of expression and media. Protests and civic unrest are very rare. Government performance as such helps to establish the context for youth engagement.

Findings of the study suggest that compared to other cohorts, young Singaporeans are less likely to lobby officials, with only 9 percent of them reporting that they had contacted an



*Credit: © Joyce Paul/UNDP*

elected official or legislative representative in the past 3 years. By contrast, 13 percent of adults responded positively to this item. On the other hand, young people were more likely to engage in political activism. For instance, 12 percent of respondents under 30 in Singapore stated they had got together with others to try to resolve local problems, which was the highest of any age cohort in Singapore but still lower than the average result in any other country in the region. Males were much more likely to engage in this form of activism than females. A similar pattern was evident with regard to the signing of petitions. However, only negligible numbers of respondents stated to have attended a protest or demonstration.

An aggregate analysis of responses to the various questions relating to lobbying and activism indicate that young people in Singapore are more likely to use certain forms of activism as an alternative to affect political outcomes. Compared with their older cohorts, young Singaporeans also vote less. This is partly because the minimum voting age is one of the highest in the region at 21 years. At the same time, relative to older cohorts, they are more willing to engage in other channels to express their political views. With the young generation attaining more education, the nature of youth engagement in politics is likely to change, vis-à-vis the emergence of a more critical youth. As the survey data convey, engaging in activism provides Singaporean youth with an increasingly important route to fulfil their aspiration as an active citizen of society. Whether they consider such means to be effective, is another matter, and has not been examined in this study.

## Variations in political participation among East and South-East Asian Youth

What factors cause youth to engage more (or less) in politics? Apart from the obvious differences of context in which political participation takes place across the 12 societies examined, a number of common factors appeared to play a role across the region in terms of explaining different forms and levels of youth participation.

**Educational attainment.** Except in Cambodia, Singapore and Taiwan, most youth with a tertiary education or higher participate in voting more often than those with primary/secondary education. More education also seems to encourage youth to contact officials directly and engage in other forms of activism. For instance, 58 percent of Indonesian youth with tertiary education reported having participated in protests or signed petitions, compared to 44 percent of youth with less than tertiary education.

**Internet use.** Frequent Internet users among youth tend to display lower levels of electoral participation across the region (except in Malaysia) but higher levels of participation in lobbying and activism. In Cambodia, for example, 29 percent of young frequent Internet users reported having contacted media and influential people for help, while 35 percent have signed petitions, participated in protests, or joined together with others to solve local problems, compared to only 12 percent and 24 percent, respectively, of infrequent Internet users. Although it is unclear from the data whether the frequent Internet users use the Internet itself for lobbying and activism, the finding may even suggest that youth, particularly those who frequently use the Internet, could be taking advantage of the channel to engage in

various forms of political activities, which can be in the form of submitting opinions in online forums, sharing information with peers, or gathering together with like-minded youth to undertake joint action. The correlation described here appears to hold in most of the societies examined, which range from wealthy, long-standing democracies to emerging democracies in developing nations, so there is good reason to believe that Internet use does in fact influence youth behaviour in terms of political participation and awareness according to the data. As has been highlighted, this is an area that merits further research for substantiation.

**Urban/rural divide and income sufficiency.** In contrast, no such general pattern emerges with respect to the rural/urban divide or income sufficiency. While in some societies (e.g. Japan, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea), urban youth are more likely to engage in political participation, in others (e.g. China, Mongolia, Taiwan, and Viet Nam) rural youth take the lead. Similarly, income sufficiency among youth does not conform to a regular pattern across societies with respect to their various expressions of political participation. In certain countries, however, economically secure youth are more likely to vote (e.g. China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea) and contact officials (e.g. the Malaysia and the Republic of Korea), and engage in activism (e.g. Indonesia and Japan).

Youth participation in politics is often triggered by certain national events and issues, which may be one explanation for the apparent differences across societies. In the event of such an occasion, sufficient family income might free up time for political participation — or, sap the motivation to participate, in other cases. 'Income sufficiency' may therefore represent contrary forces in different contexts.

**Gender.** Gender lies behind one of the most important cleavages in political participation. Gender differences are less distinct with electoral participation (except in Japan, Taiwan and Mongolia, where women's turnout appeared to have been significantly higher), but are rather clear in instances of non-electoral participation, especially in activities such as attending campaign rallies or lobbying government officials. In most countries in the region, men are two to three times more likely to engage in lobbying than women, with the notable exception of Thailand, where women tend to do this twice as often as men (18 percent versus 9 percent). In Singapore, women also outrank men in this regard (8 percent versus 5 percent). The preponderance of men in activism is also demonstrated across most of the societies, and Indonesia shows the biggest gap between men and women's engagement (31 percent versus 16 percent). The three exceptions to this trend are Republic of Korea (20 percent versus 12 percent) and Taiwan (15 percent versus 10 percent) where women outnumber men, and Cambodia, where women and men recorded same percentage figures (14 percent). A number of reasons might explain the discrepancies between men and women's non-electoral participation, but they are likely found in the specific national context in which men and women have to make decisions about whether, and in what ways, they participate in political processes.

"The reasons for these differences need further investigation, especially with a view to identifying entry points that could increase young women's political participation."

**Figure 37. Political Participation among East and South-East Asian Youth by Gender**



| | Voting | Lobbying | Activism |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Male / Female | Male / Female | Male / Female |
| JP | 51 / 57 | 16 / 5 | 21 / 18 |
| KR | 65 / 62 | 17 / 8 | 12 / 20 |
| TW | 63 / 78 | 9 / 6 | 10 / 15 |
| MN | 77 / 85 | 10 / 5 | 22 / 17 |
| PH | 64 / 63 | 13 / 8 | 25 / 14 |
| ID | 79 / 76 | 14 / 6 | 31 / 15 |
| TH | 84 / 78 | 9 / 18 | 14 / 8 |
| MY | 43 / 34 | 36 / 33 | 20 / 15 |
| SG | 39 / 35 | 5 / 8 | 15 / 6 |
| CM | 51 / 54 | 4 / 3 | 14 / 14 |
| VN | 83 / 79 | 58 / 47 | 13 / 10 |
| CN | 57 / 59 | 12 / 6 | 11 / 6 |
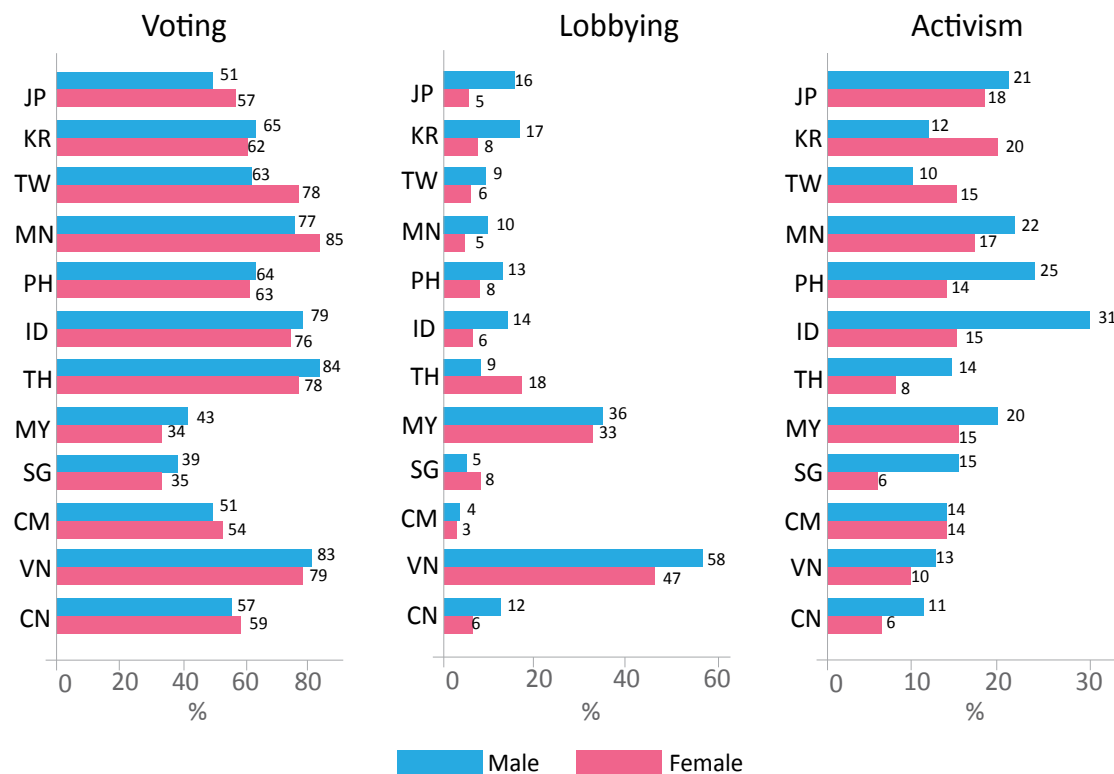
Given the relatively lesser gender difference in participation during elections, these data may also suggest that, where processes are formally institutionalized and less associated with risks, as with elections, women are more encouraged (or feel more empowered) to take part. Other less formalized channels such as ad-hoc campaigns or lobbying may not seem as easy for women to engage in a number of societies. The reasons for these differences need further investigation, especially with a view to identifying entry points that could increase young women's political participation. Certainly, official turnout statistics provided by electoral authorities should be disaggregated by gender in order to get a better picture of electoral participation among women.

## Political participation in Japan

Regardless of age, citizens of Japan, the oldest constitutional democracy in the region, tend to engage more in electoral activities than in alternative forms of participation. In this regard, Japan follows the same pattern that prevails throughout the region. The extent of citizens' participation in all types of engagement seems to increase with age, as shown in the figure below, with young people in Japan least likely to vote in elections, feel attached to a political party, contact or lobby elected representatives or government officials, or attend a demonstration or protest march. It should also be noted that, at 21 years, Japan has one of the highest minimum voting ages in the region. Although age and political participation are generally positively correlated in many democracies around the world (Braungart and Braungart, 1986), the large differences in degree of participation among the young and older cohorts deserve further reflection.

## Figure 38. Political Participation in Japan

%

| Category | Youth | Adult | Senior |
|---|---|---|---|
| Electoral participation | 51.4 | 83.8 | 93.0 |
| Party affinity | 43.3 | 53.8 | 68.2 |
| Lobbying | 16.4 | 16.3 | 23.5 |
| Activism | 23.7 | 45.5 | 49.8 |
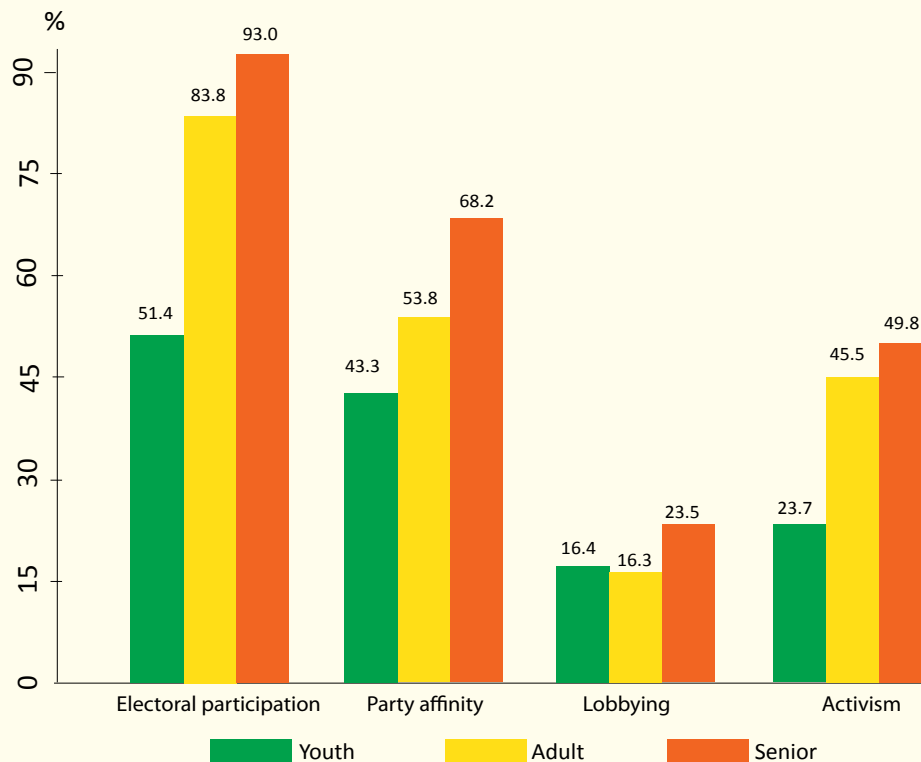
The survey data suggest that young Japanese may be alienated from politics, which may be due to disappointment with prevailing standards of governance. As mentioned earlier, young Japanese are less satisfied than are their older cohorts with the rule of law and control of corruption in their society. Given the importance that seniority holds in the society for ascending to high positions and acquiring the power to make decisions, youth might also feel powerless and thus easily become sceptical about their participation and capacity to contribute to significant social change, which may have led to further disengagement.

## Policy considerations

Low levels of political participation among youth are related to a number of issues, including lower voter turnout and rates of party identification, compared with older cohorts. Socio-economic and other contextual factors such as levels of education, Internet use and most significantly, gender underlie these differences.  In addressing these gaps, policy makers should consider a number of options.

An important first step would be to provide reliable statistical information on the basis of actual electoral statistics in order to understand and assess the problems in each society. Such analysis will need to closely examine possible circumstances that discourage young people from exercising their voting rights. Once some of the causes are better understood, campaigns to boost overall participation in electoral processes could benefit from good practices applied in other parts of the world. For instance,

political parties could be encouraged to establish more effective links with young voters, beyond the usual youth wings and tokenistic youth pledges. Incorporating youth within party organizations, including at leadership levels, fosters the development of political skills and interest in this age cohort. Other measures could include lowering the minimum voting age and making special efforts to increase turnout among first-time voters.

In addition, institutional efforts should be made to encourage political participation among youth in different forms, building on their interest as demonstrated by the data. To this end, policy makers and civil society organizations should provide accessible forums within which youth can express their concerns and make constructive contributions to policy challenges. Citizen forums at the local level, for example, should aim to increase the level of youth participation. Importantly, developing a habit of engaging in meaningful dialogues with young people in these ways and connecting them regularly with the authorities is both a reflection of and an essential basis for treating them as equally entitled stakeholders in political decision-making processes.

One urgent priority is addressing the fact that, in most societies in the region, young women participate less in politics, even where they have economic, social and educational statuses equivalent to those of young men. Further research into the factors underlying this situation in the various societies, and using the results to inform policy making, can provide the basis for increased participation and political efficacy among women. The structural impediments, including those related to traditional stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes, may need to be identified and addressed, keeping in mind the contextual specificity of each society. Greater engagement with young women, from both male and female policy makers and elected representatives, may also encourage their more robust political participation. At a global level, target setting, for example in the context of the Millennium Development Goals regarding women's participation in politics, may help to achieve concrete results in this regard.

As raised in previous chapters, the survey data show that the Internet is playing a key role in promoting the engagement of youth in political processes. On the one hand, the use of the Internet and other ICTs by youth is high and increasing in most societies — Facebook and similar web platforms, for example, have become important, even primary communication channels among youth in many societies in the region. While some of these interactions may be political in nature, a more thorough examination of the content and types of discussion taking place online is needed, if we are to truly understand their relevance to political participation among youth. Even where discussions are political in nature, there is no guarantee that those discussions will eventually encourage youth to take action either online or offline as active citizens. Similarly, while the Internet can help create or strengthen a culture of dialogue and debate, it needs to be borne in mind that these exchanges take place in a space devoid of real-life factors that can lead to variances.

Whatever the policy mix aimed at addressing lower turnout among youth, societies in the region should recognize this issue as a matter of urgency — as an essential element of democratic governance, and thus of stable political systems in future. Furthermore, social and political contexts matter. Effective implementation of the above-described strategies, therefore require tailor-made initiatives that approach youth within their respective social, economic, cultural and political environments, and determining what is both desirable and possible within those living contexts.

> "Whatever the policy mix aimed at addressing lower turnout among youth, societies in the region should recognize this issue as a matter of urgency — as an essential element of democratic governance, and thus of stable political systems in future."

# 2. Sense of empowerment

## Do East and South-East Asian youth think they can affect politics?

- Young people in East and South-East Asia tend to feel that they can affect politics and they have a greater sense of empowerment than do their older cohorts.
- Gender, rural/urban divide, and level of social network stand out as factors affecting youth's sense of empowerment.
- Education and experience of political participation help instil and foster a sense of empowerment.

The theory of life-cycles (see the Introduction) suggests that, compared to adults, youth in general, given their relative lack of experience and confidence in political engagement, tend to have lower estimations of their own empowerment in politics.[65]  The ABS data, however, show that East and South-East Asian youth generally do not conform to this conventional wisdom. The findings suggest that youth in the region have a stronger sense of political efficacy than do their older cohorts, and a greater sense of empowerment and confidence in their political roles. Lesser participation in areas such as voting and lesser psychological involvement in politics compared to adults may therefore be a product of their current life-cycle stage, rather than being fundamentally linked to a lesser sense of empowerment. That is, East and South-East Asian youth, many of whom that showed to hold critical opinions and express discontent towards governance, in fact believe they can make a difference in the political arena.

## Sense of empowerment

In assessing the respondents' sense of empowerment, the ABS asked them whether or not they agree with the following three propositions: "*I think I have the ability to participate in politics.*"; "*Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on.*"; "*People like me don't have any influence over what the government does.*"

The first two items are self-evaluations, and the third reveals how respondents understand their 'external political efficacy', that is, whether they think they can exert influence on the government if they participate in politics.

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65 Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Empowerment has legal, social, economic, political and psychological dimensions. Youth generally becomes legally empowered to play a part in politics and public affairs at the age of maturity, although there are differences in terms of voting ages which are sometimes higher than 18, and even more so the age of eligibility, which can be as high as 40 years for a number of political positions. However, legal empowerment alone is not sufficient to create a strong sense of political empowerment, which is the result of a number of other factors. A strong sense of empowerment can enhance the roles youth play as democratic citizens. To the extent that youth believe political participation is both possible and meaningful, they feel less distanced from politics and become more engaged.

In aggregate terms, 48.3 percent of youth in the surveyed societies think they are able to participate in politics, 30.2 percent think they can understand politics, and 41.7 percent believe they can influence politics. While these numbers do not represent the majority of youth, they do represent significant proportions of the youth population (they are for instance much higher than the proportional representation of youth in elected government institutions), indicating that a large proportion of youth in East and South-East Asia feel a high degree of political efficacy.

Five of the East and South-East Asian societies — Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan — share a similar pattern: Young adults consider themselves more capable of affecting politics than do older cohorts. The generational gaps were found to be statistically insignificant in the rest of the societies. Viet Nam alone showed an exceptional pattern, where a greater proportion of adult citizens than youth felt capable of affecting politics.

Beyond looking into age-related differences, variations across societies are considerable. The belief that one is able to affect politics ranged from as low as about 20 percent in Japan for all age cohorts to nearly 70 percent in Cambodia and Thailand. Cross-country variations can only be explained in terms of the different socio-economic contexts presented by each society within which youth's life experiences and political attitudes are shaped.

Taking this together with earlier findings, East and South-East Asian youth might not be as interested in politics as are their older counterparts, but they are generally more confident about their capacity to influence politics.

**Figure 39. Sense of Empowerment by Cohort (average of all societies examined)**
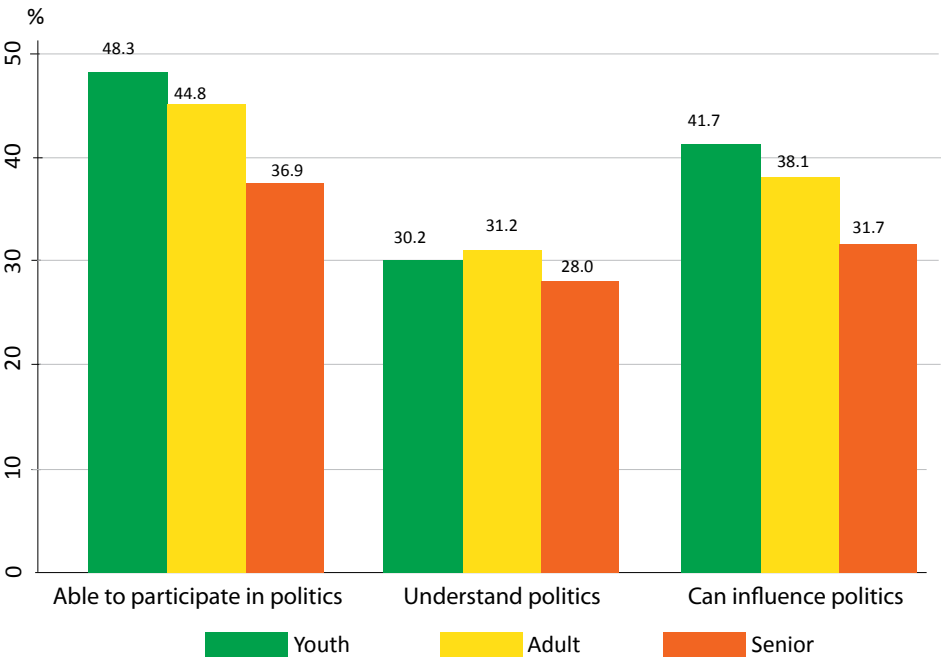
## Figure 40. Capacity for Affecting Politics by Cohort (selected societies)



Bar chart showing percentages by cohort (Youth, Adult, Senior):

| Society | Youth | Adult | Senior |
|---------|-------|-------|--------|
| KR | 42.1 | 34.8 | 20.0 |
| TW | 49.6 | 41.5 | 29.3 |
| MN | 61.5 | 52.9 | 49.7 |
| PH | 48.5 | 42.7 | 34.8 |
| ID | 37.1 | 30.0 | 25.7 |
| VN | 56.8 | 62.3 | 43.2 |
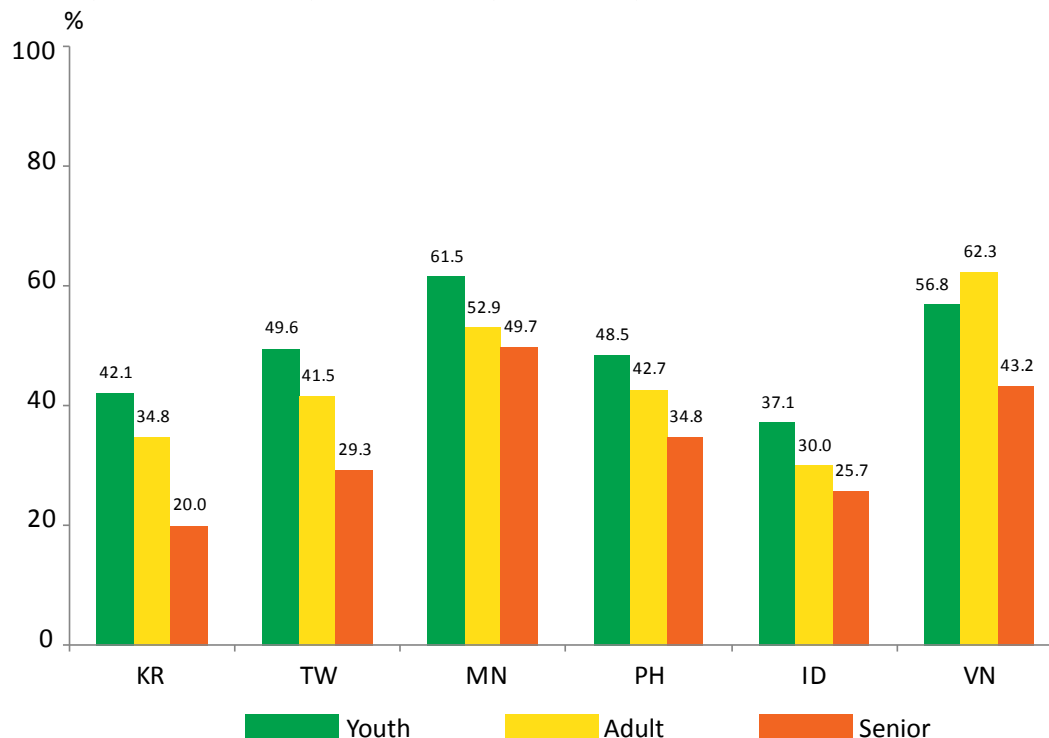
## Sense of empowerment among Chinese youth

Relatively few Chinese youth (26 percent) express strong confidence in their ability to understand political issues in China, but 41 percent believe they can actually influence government decisions and policies. The findings also indicate that Chinese youth are as interested in politics as their older cohorts, and most believe they are able to participate effectively as active citizens. This phenomenon might be understood in the context of the current pace of China's economic development, which is inducing dramatic social changes vis-à-vis greater citizen interest in, and demands for, consistent political accountability.

Together with a growing expectation among youth that successful governance should produce substantive results, these findings suggest that official policies will increasingly be assessed in terms of their ability to meet the expectations of an increasingly self-confident youth with a strong sense of political efficacy.

### Figure 41. Sense of Empowerment among Chinese Youth



Bar chart (Youth, Adult, Senior):

| Statement | Youth | Adult | Senior |
|-----------|-------|-------|--------|
| Sometimes politics and government seem too complicated for people like me: Disagree/Strongly disagree | 25.9 | 18.8 | 15.5 |
| People like me don't have any influence over the government: Disagree/Strongly disagree | 41.1 | 25.2 | 17.2 |
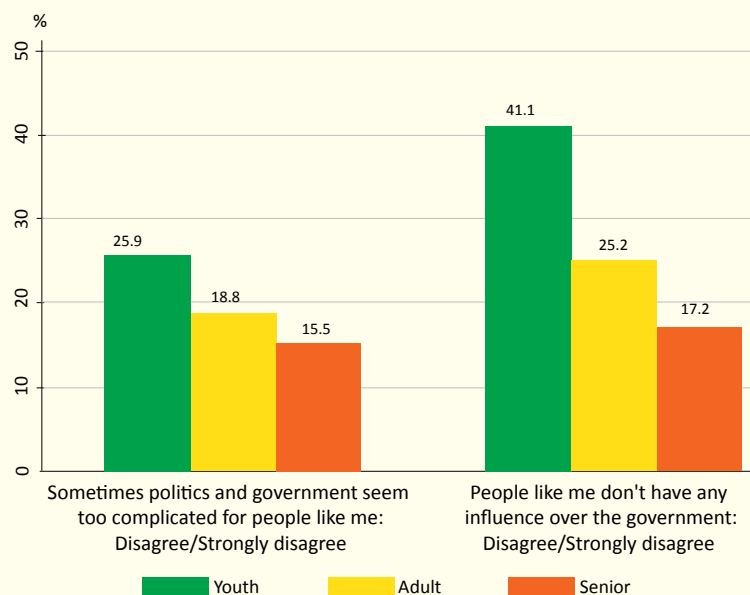
# Variations in sense of empowerment among East and South-East Asian youth

**Gender**. As remarked earlier, gender presents a significant factor in describing variations among different sub-categories of youth. Women have a relatively lesser sense of political efficacy, at 45.4 percent compared with 51.4 percent among male youth. Interestingly, the male/female gap is particularly distinct in Viet Nam. However, this is also because an especially great number of male respondents claimed a sense of political efficacy, and the level among women is still higher in Viet Nam than in most other societies under study. This gender gap in political efficacy indicates a need to devise strategies to better engage young women in politics in the region, and to support them in developing a stronger sense of empowerment.

**Figure 42. Sense of Empowerment among East and South-East Asian Youth by Gender (selected societies)**
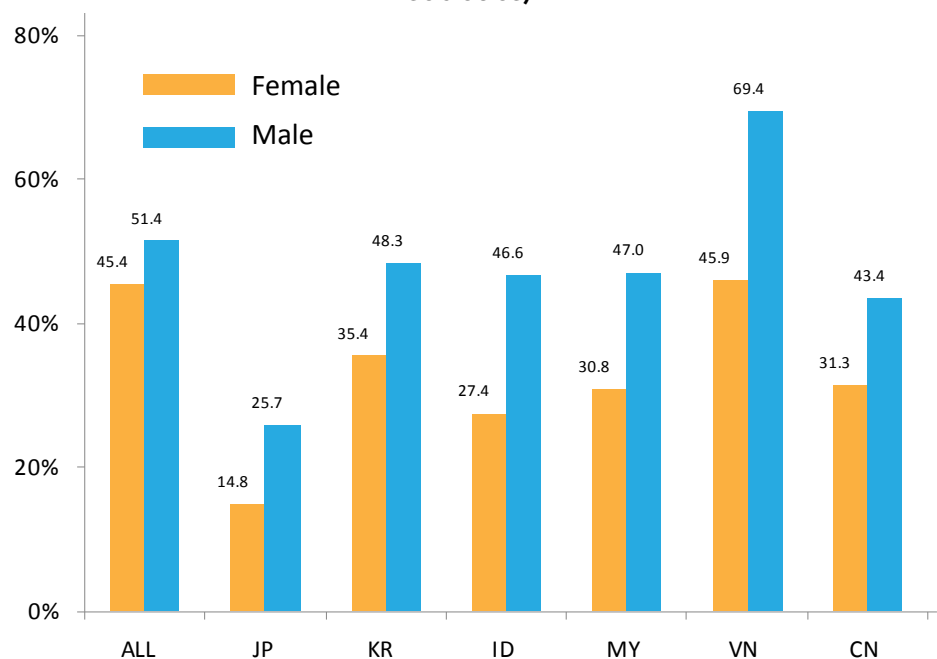


**Educational attainment**. Education also matters. There is a slightly positive correlation between educational attainment and political efficacy, although the gap between lower and higher education is not huge (3 percent). In China and Taiwan, however, the gaps appear significant. In China, higher levels of education correlate with the extent of political interest as well as with sense of political efficacy.

**Urban/rural divide**. Although urban youth in the region show a greater level of psychological involvement in politics than do their rural counterparts (see Chapter I), they report a lower level of political efficacy. Only 45.3 percent of urban youth think they are able to participate in politics, as opposed to 52.5 percent among rural youth. The gap is significant in China, Malaysia and Viet Nam, where rural youth are much more confident about their capability of affecting politics. Coupling this finding with that regarding political participation, relative confidence among rural youth might be related to their experience of actual political participation through lobbying and petitioning, or local elections in rural areas. Another possible explanation may be that more opportunities for participation present themselves at the local and rural level.

**Figure 43. Sense of Empowerment among East and South-East Asian Youth by Educational Attainment (selected societies)**



Legend: Below tertiary, Above tertiary

| | Below tertiary | Above tertiary |
|---|---|---|
| ALL | 47.0 | 50.3 |
| TW | 38.8 | 56.0 |
| CN | 33.9 | 42.5 |
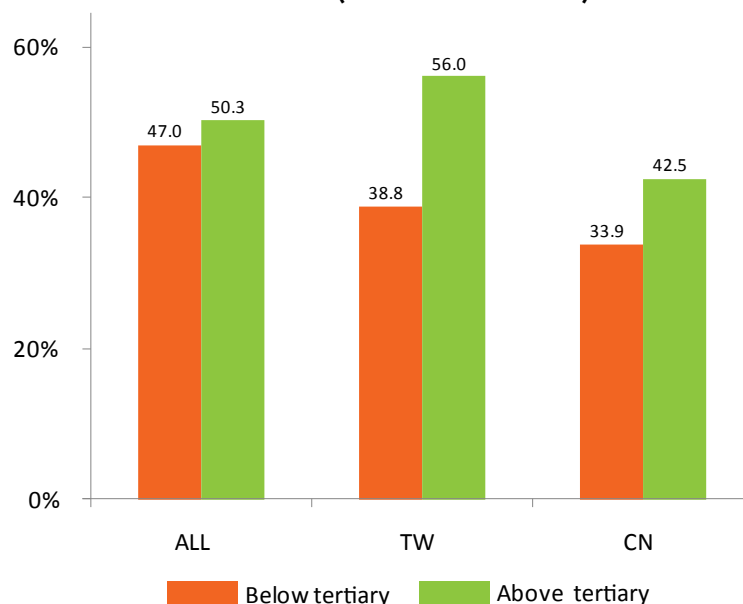
**Figure 44. Sense of Empowerment among East and South-East Asian Youth by Area of Residence (selected societies)**



Legend: Rural, Urban

| | Rural | Urban |
|---|---|---|
| ALL | 52.2 | 45.3 |
| MY | 45.4 | 30.9 |
| VN | 61.0 | 45.2 |
| CN | 40.6 | 33.0 |
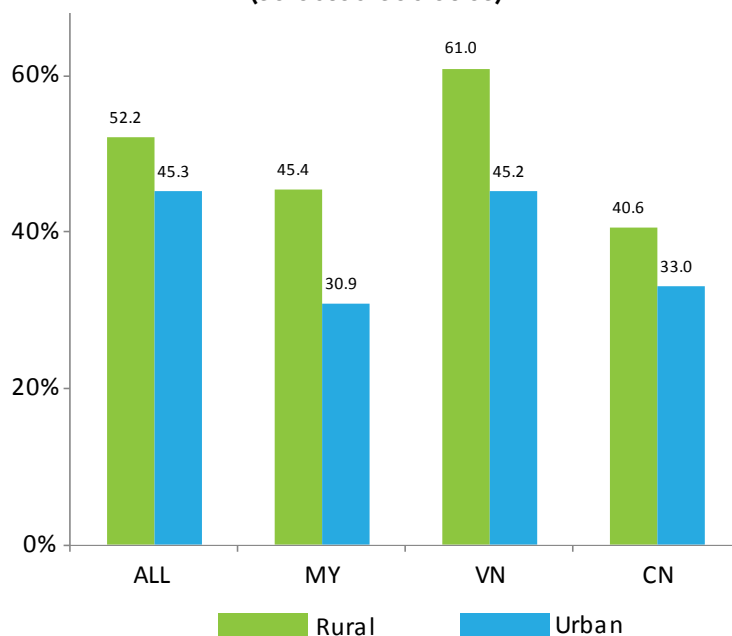
**Social capital.** Lastly, youth with large social networks tend to have a greater sense of empowerment. Other elements of social capital included in this study, i.e. trust, membership in associations, and Internet use, do not appear to have an impact on political efficacy. In fact, there is even an indication that higher Internet use is correlated with a lower sense of political empowerment, contrary to what could be expected from the findings highlighted in an earlier section. This may indicate that a real-life social connection with people may matter more in regard to political empowerment among youth than hours spent online.

## Figure 45. Sense of Empowerment among East and South-East Asian Youth by Level of Social Capital
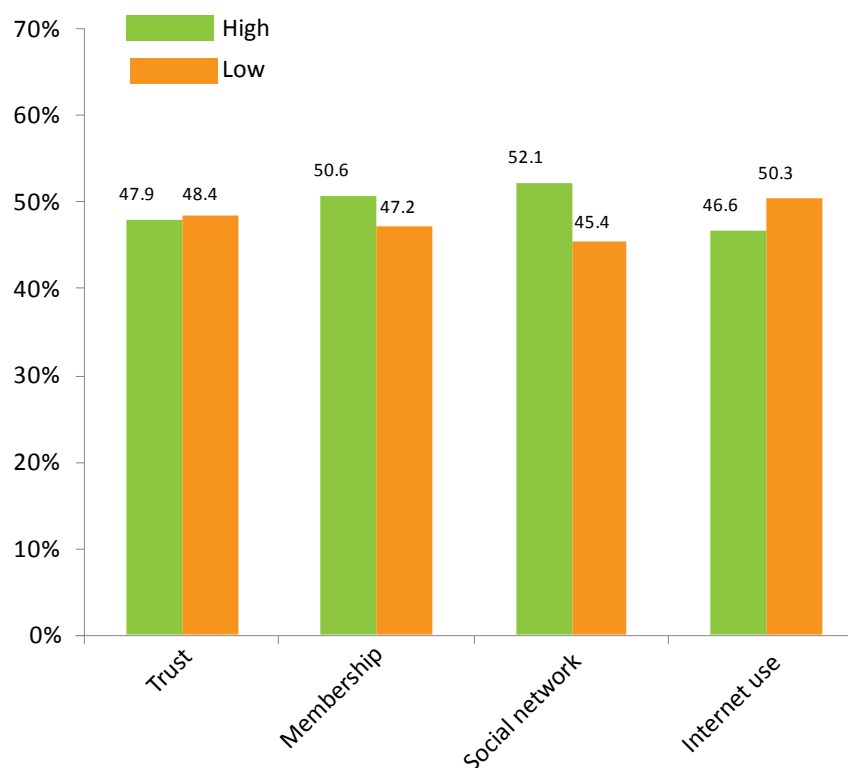


Legend:
- High (green)
- Low (orange)

| Category | High | Low |
|---|---|---|
| Trust | 47.9 | 48.4 |
| Membership | 50.6 | 47.2 |
| Social network | 52.1 | 45.4 |
| Internet use | 46.6 | 50.3 |

> "East and South-East Asian youth's greater confidence in political change and their potential role as democratic citizens could therefore be viewed as a resource to be tapped into and harnessed by policy makers."

The findings indicate that the sense of empowerment in some societies is correlated with psychological involvement in politics. Often, however, it is the actual exercise of that power, and the interaction with others, that increases confidence among youth in their capacity for effective political participation. For example, leveraging social networks for political engagement can contribute positively to a greater sense of political empowerment, which may be one possible explanation for the relation between the two. East and South-East Asian youth's greater confidence in political change and their potential role as democratic citizens could therefore be viewed as a resource to be tapped into and harnessed by policy makers.

## Sense of empowerment in Cambodia and Malaysia

The ABS asked similar questions aimed at assessing the sense of empowerment between age cohorts in Malaysia and Cambodia, and the results reported smaller generational gaps than those from China. Respondents in both countries share similar views in terms of freedom of association and their capacity to understand and influence politics, but they differ in the sense of their ability to participate in politics and the perception of freedom to express opinions in public. While in Cambodia almost equal percentages across cohorts respond positively to questions regarding freedom of speech and ability to participate in politics, Malaysians have relatively reserved attitudes toward their ability for political participation, even though they respond with higher percentages of positive answers on freedom of speech.

## Figure 46. Sense of Empowerment in Cambodia and Malaysia by Cohort

### Malaysia



| | Youth | Adult | Senior |
|---|---|---|---|
| Can speak without fear | 78.7 | 81.8 | 82.2 |
| Able to join organization | 83.3 | 83.5 | 86.1 |
| Able to participate in politics | 38.8 | 42.6 | 43.5 |
| Politics too complicated | 74.8 | 65.2 | 67.9 |
| Have little influence on politics | 65.3 | 63.7 | 63.0 |

### Cambodia



| | Youth | Adult | Senior |
|---|---|---|---|
| Can speak without fear | 67.4 | 68.3 | 70.8 |
| Able to join organization | 88.0 | 83.2 | 78.0 |
| Able to participate in politics | 67.9 | 70.3 | 68.4 |
| Politics too complicated | 84.5 | 82.7 | 84.6 |
| Have little influence on politics | 65.4 | 70.5 | 67.5 |

This result may be explained partly by how proactive Cambodian political parties have been in reaching out to citizens and drawing them towards political participation, which might have in turn positively affected the people's sense of empowerment. In Malaysia, on the other hand, ethnicity and religion, which not only concern individual identity, but at times are deemed sensitive political issues, may affect citizens' sense of political efficacy. The explanation might also need to be found in the historical context in which the two countries find themselves. Cambodia is still emerging from a period of genocide and brutal repression, and Cambodians may therefore have experienced the recent years as progress towards more open and participatory governance and increase of personal freedoms and capacities. In Malaysia, the lingering political crisis stands in contrast with many years of stable growth on the basis of a post-independence consensus, which may have been eroding in recent years.

## Policy considerations

Compared with their older cohorts, East and South-East Asian youth tend to report a relatively higher perception of political empowerment. Taking this together with previous findings regarding youth's lower-than-average participation in formal politics and lesser psychological involvement in politics compared to adults, the finding is noteworthy for policy makers: Youth tend to believe that they can influence politics, however, they are not as involved to the extent they actually do so.

Further investigation reveals two other significant issues. Firstly, the relatively higher senses of political efficacy might be related to better education among young adults, which improves the capacity to understand politics and, when given the opportunity, participate in political activities. Secondly, young females in the region are less interested in politics, and they also feel less empowered. These are important facts for policy makers to note when taking measures to increase political participation among youth.

Among both male and female youth, political empowerment can be enhanced by actual experience of political participation, which reinforces their belief that, if they participate, they can make a difference. On the one hand, existing practices for participation, such as elections, lobbying, and other various forms of activism, should be better geared to attracting the interest of youth, and to highlighting the contributions they can make through those processes. On the other hand, civil society and governments can create opportunities and support efforts that encourage youth to adopt active political roles by opening up spaces for actual youth engagement and harnessing their political skills such as debating or political lobbying. Youth can also be encouraged to volunteer for roles in political campaigns and other electoral processes, as well as in other forms of engagement in social, environmental or humanitarian causes for the benefit of the public.

"Youth will come to value democratic politics only when they know they can effectively participate in the political sphere, and experience this in practice."

To address the gender gap, all of the above should be made more gender sensitive. Measures can be applied at various levels of the political process, including elections, political party membership, and improvements to the support network that young women need to increase their political efficacy. Recent studies in this regard outline a great variety of ways to improve gender equality in elected office. These include, among other measures, mentoring and training potential female candidates; improving skills for debate and discussion; and increasing experience sharing through knowledge networks. The Internet can be used to facilitate these processes among young women in particular; the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics) can provide a valuable model here.[66]

Such concrete opportunities, which could be leveraged both online and offline, are likely to demonstrate that engagement with political processes can make a difference. Youth will come to value democratic politics only when they know they can effectively participate in the political sphere, and experience this in practice.

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66 UNDP, *Gender equality in elected office in Asia-Pacific: Six actions to expand women's empowerment* (2012).

# 4

**Conclusions
and policy
recommendations**

# Conclusions

In East and South-East Asia, youth have yet to become equal participants in political processes compared to the older cohorts, and have yet to realize their full potential role as democratic citizens. Young people across the region represent a reservoir of change for better governance, more creative solutions to present and future public policy challenges, and innovative approaches to decision making. Currently, however, many face obstacles, which are reflected in their attitudes, expectations and assessments of institutions and governance in their societies. The findings of this study indicate that in many parts of East and South-East Asia, perceptions have yet to shift at a societal level to view young people as fully fledged and equally entitled members of society — citizens who should be included on equal terms in decisions likely to affect them as the generation of the future.

The findings in this report indicate that, although individual societies differ from one another in significant ways, in general terms, youth across the region display **three common features** that characterize their **potential role as democratic citizens**:

**1** Contrary to popular perceptions, East and South-East Asian youth are not politically indifferent or disinterested. While they are in general less likely to participate in politics through traditional channels such as political parties and formal civic organizations, or through formal political processes such as voting and electoral campaigns, they are engaging in non-electoral participation such as lobbying or activism as much as older cohorts, and are more likely to leverage Internet and their informal social networks in this process.

**2** They are relatively knowledgeable and attentive to news and media reporting about government and politics, though a need for even access to information across all youth population has become apparent. Compared with older cohorts, East and South-East Asian youth also tend to have a greater sense of empowerment, which could be further enhanced by more targeted education in democratic citizenship and actual experience of exercising their influence. Better education can build confidence and the capacity to understand politics among young people and form their own opinions with which to subsequently influence policy discussions.

**3** Youth in East and South-East Asia are just as committed to democratic forms of government as are older cohorts. While they have a tendency to associate democracy with elements of good governance, they have higher expectations of the quality of governance than do their older cohorts. In short, they display a propensity to become critical citizens.

Furthermore, **four general socio-economic trends** are shaping the political orientation of East and South-East Asian youth in ways that may be seen as **conducive to incremental democratic change**.

**1** Given the East and South-East Asian region's economic dynamism and traditions of family-based social support, youth tend to be economically more secure than their counterparts in other global regions. This may be one reason why they appear to be less prone to take part in violent social movements or political protests. At the same time, they tend to focus on pragmatic issues such as jobs and career opportunities, with social status constituting another important incentive.

**2** With rapid economic development in the region, youth in East and South-East Asia tend to have better educational and financial standing than their older cohorts. Better education can be expected to make youth more likely to embrace participatory democracy as a preferred form of government, and to appreciate the importance of good governance and accountability.

**3** The Internet has rapidly emerged as a key medium for mobilizing participation, sharing information, and building social networks among youth in East and South-East Asia. The further expansion of Internet accessibility and connectivity has the potential to transform this generation of youth into an effective agent of political change. At the same time, more online interaction entails concomitant risks, both from those using the medium, and from those trying to control how it is used. Optimizing the role of the Internet towards youth's empowerment and enhanced political participation will require an effective mix of policies and incentives to steer this process in constructive directions.

**4** This is also closely linked to the role of traditional news media. While youth do follow politics through the traditional media, the media environment overall is undergoing fundamental changes worldwide. In the region, the traditional media continues to be controlled by governments or business corporations, or even political parties in some cases, which creates a level of bias in the content of the information being disseminated. The growth of the Internet and its use by young people in the region, however, will transform the manner in which politics-related information is communicated and shared among young people.

Conversely, **four other developments threaten to turn youth away** from political engagement, and therefore from exercising their democratic citizenship effectively and constructively:

**1** In many countries in East and South-East Asia, democratic institutions have failed to win the trust of youth, or have lost it over time. This is paradoxically the case even in well-governed, affluent societies that enjoy the highest standards of living not only in the region, but in the world. If youth lose trust in political institutions, they may become more cynical or disengaged from mainstream politics, thereby impeding democratic governance. Youth, like their senior cohorts, associate institutional trust with concrete results based on legitimate expectations and commitments. Indicators of good governance include control of corruption, positive economic performance,

fair treatment of all citizens, and electoral integrity. In all countries, policy makers and political leaders should take trust deficits as a serious reminder that improvements in governance are required in order to reconnect youth in a meaningful way to the political process and to regain their trust in government institutions.

**2** Two patterns emerge from the findings. Significant criticism of government performance with respect to (social and political) equality is more typical of youth in relatively pluralistic societies, while more favourable assessments of equality are common among youth in societies with more restrictions on freedom of expression. These perceptions and findings are not related to objective empirical measurements of equality, such as the Gini Index or poverty data, so it remains unclear what factors would explain these discrepancies in youth satisfaction with government responsiveness. A more thorough analysis taking account of country-specific contexts may therefore be required.

**3** Increasingly, youth in many countries in the region appear to be in danger of becoming disconnected from conventional political structures and processes such as political parties, elections and parliaments. In many East and South-East Asian societies, traditional mechanisms of representation, including informal community-based campaign organizations, seem to have lost their appeal among the younger population. In some countries, furthermore, the news media tend to package and present politics in ways that undermine youth interest in political affairs and their inclination to participate. In others, news media are highly biased and partisan, and fail to generate critical awareness and an inclination towards social dialogue and consensus among young people. The challenge for democracy in the region lies in opening up new spaces and establishing innovative mechanisms for the constructive engagement of youth in the formal political process.

**4** Where processes are formally institutionalized, as with elections, women appear to be more encouraged (or feel more empowered) to take part. However, women's turnout rates are generally lower than men's, and women continue to be seriously under-represented in political institutions and decision-making levels of government. Other less formalized channels such as ad hoc campaigns or lobbying may not seem as easy, safe or convenient for women to engage in, therefore show much less rate of their participation than men. The reasons for these discrepancies should be further investigated, and entry points should be identified for increasing young women's political participation, a fundamental aspect of the larger goal of inclusive democratic governance.

# Policy recommendations

Enabling and broadening young people's participation in the political process in East and South-East Asian societies may entail three sets of approaches.

- **Opening up new spaces and opportunities for youth political involvement** involves a number of structural measures, including changes in the policy environment and regulatory frameworks that can make a difference in the levels of youth participation.
- **Developing the requisite skills and competences among young people needed for their effective participation** in the political arena and democratic processes is equally important. These are tasks for both civic education and other informal mechanisms of political socialization and learning.
- Understanding the role of youth in democratic processes, their attitudes and expectations, and their role in shaping political outcomes requires **better youth-specific research and related data analysis**. Such research must focus on the dynamic changes occurring in youth attitudes and behaviour over time, as well as on the inter-generational aspects of setting policy agendas and allocating resources.

Together, such measures may require dedicated institutional innovation and reform to make the wider political system more responsive to the voices and concerns of East and South-East Asian youth.

The conclusions presented in the preceding section emerge from the data available to this study, and offer an important baseline in an area that, in this region, has so far been understudied. However, these conclusions also leave room for sharper, more contextual interpretations. Similarly, the recommendations presented here will need to be adapted to any specific country or even more local contexts. Some general trends are clear, but, as has been mentioned earlier, the political realities in different societies in East and South-East Asia are very much determined by their specific historical, social, economic and cultural contexts. The recommendations offered here therefore remain at a generic level. While they provide interesting entry points that policy makers can take into account when including youth in democratic governance processes, they would need to be discussed and further developed within the contexts of various societies, ideally in a participatory manner that includes youth themselves.

**1**   **Structural and regulatory changes.** In terms of the first approach — opening up new spaces and opportunities among the young for political involvement — this report proposes the following recommendations:

- **Youth policies,** where they exist, should **make a priority of enhancing youth democratic citizenship**, and should set targets for greater engagement and participation. Moreover,

youth should be engaged in developing and evaluating such policies. Such policies should be followed with youth empowerment strategies that are result-oriented and measurable in both quantitative and qualitative terms. For instance, in addition to looking at the numbers of youths sitting in parliaments or the number that cast their votes, qualitative factors such as their subjective sense of empowerment and trust in institutions should also be included.

● Another policy priority should involve **raising and maintaining a high level of electoral participation** among youth in East and South-East Asia.

◀ Strategies to boost voting turnout among youth should be developed, with one focus on enabling young adults to vote as early as possible, in particular by **reducing the voting age** in a number of countries. Strategies should also involve measures to reach out to first-time voters and to increase the franchise of increasingly mobile young voters, for instance by making registration easier and ensuring voting facilities are available in places frequented by young people, including colleges, universities, shopping centres, and workplaces. Other methods of increasing youth turnout could be designed, drawing from the considerable store of existing international good practices. Those who are in power will also need to adapt and reach out to youth — who they must recognize and appreciate as a significant electorate — in ways that resonate with them, both in terms of the issues being advocated and the manner in which this is being done.

◀ Another measure linked to the above could be to **decrease the passive voting age**, i.e. the minimum age requirement for being elected to at least one of the legislative representative bodies. Political participation enabled by serving as a young elected representative could have a number of positive effects on other young people's political engagement, both as voters and as agents of political processes. Here, particular efforts should be made to increase participation among young women, for example, by including young women in quota and target setting for increasing women's representation overall.

● In addition to efforts to raise youth participation and representation in mainstream institutions and political processes, **official mechanisms could be established that encourage young people to actually practise and exercise their political skills.** They would thereby gain experience in influencing political outcomes, thus enhancing their sense of empowerment and perceptions of their potential contributions, at the same time further developing their practical capacities.

◀ **Youth parliaments or national youth councils** have been successfully set up in a number of countries, and could serve as examples.[67] Such efforts should however not be seen as an alternative to increasing youth participation in mainstream institutions and should not become merely tokenistic, effectively avoiding deeper structural changes.

◀ **Civil society**, **including political parties, should develop dedicated strategies to engage youth** and encourage them to participate in public activities, which would not only provide opportunities to practise the political skills and knowledge they

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67 The Global Partnership for Youth in the UN Post-2015 Agenda also recommended that "at local and national levels Youth Councils should continue to play an important role in bringing together young people and decision makers and best practice of co-decision and co-management, appropriate to each body, needs to be further developed at all levels."

learn, but also to have a real influence and impact on party policy and outreach. The way to turn youth into active citizens is to provide them with the experience of being one.

● Governments should more generally help to **establish enabling environments and spaces for engagement**, whether online or offline, to provide effective mechanisms for regular information sharing between governments and citizens. These can serve as channels for feedback, whether critical or supportive, on the quality and effectiveness of governance. Another important focus area involves **building social trust**. Initiatives that move the existing robust social networks into longer-lasting trust relationships will strengthen the social fabric for democratic citizenship.

◀ Policy makers in countries, regions and localities of East and South-East Asia should **provide readily accessible channels for youths to express their concerns**. Moreover, such access should encourage meaningful dialogues between authorities and youth. Forums, public hearings and (virtual) town hall meetings could be designed in ways to attract more participation by youth. Local authorities might consider introducing youth forums and councils at local levels, which should be genuine in their intention of seeing youth opinions as important, and where relevant, incorporating them into policies. Young people need to be convinced that their views matter to policy makers and that their involvement can have an impact in shaping policy outcomes. Ideally, young people should consider themselves owners rather than only beneficiaries of policy-making processes, and should not see a qualitative difference between their role as democratic citizens and that of people belonging to older generations.

◀ Policy makers should help to **transform the Internet into a powerful tool for promoting effective and constructive civic engagement**. Government at all levels should upgrade their e-government services and functions and provide more interactive platforms for policy feedback and input. Such services and platforms must be tested and assessed as to their effectiveness, and must put the usability and convenience of citizens at the centre. This ought to be accompanied by access to multiple sources of information in cyberspace, which should remain free from official intervention. Overall, policies should assist with improving Internet infrastructure as a whole, while at the same time improving the enabling environment for the use of Internet to thrive. Governments can also positively affect the quality of information on the Internet by making efforts to provide better sources on laws and policies, opportunities for consultation and participation, official policy reports, data and statistics and feedback mechanism online.

◀ **New and innovative avenues** are needed to more surely involve young people in the policy-making processes. Such innovations should seek to bring together traditional mechanisms of representation with the type of informal, network-based and thematic campaigning organizations that address the concerns of young people in East and South-East Asia, such as employment, education, crime and the environment.

● **Gender** underlies one of the most important cleavages in political participation in East and South-East Asia. In order to address young women's significantly lesser

representation, participation and sense of empowerment in the region, special attention needs to be devoted to **making political engagement relevant and accessible to young women**. As mentioned above, a number of structural measures, such as quotas or other forms of affirmative action, may be required to address the most severe imbalances in formal politics. Other measures can include building young female politicians' capacity to campaign by establishing a mentoring system with other candidates, training young women as election monitors, or establishing a gender action plan within political parties, one that takes also into account the specific role of young women. In addition, civic education should address the imbalance between the interest of men and women in politics, making young women more aware of the importance of politics and the way it is related to their well-being.

**2** **Capacity development.** The second approach — developing the requisite skills and competences of young people needed for effective participation in the political arena — may benefit from the following policy measures:

- **Effective education for democratic citizenship** comprises three interrelated strands: social responsibility, democratic values and civic norms, and capacity building. Civic education should cultivate a sense of empowerment and emphasize the social responsibility of being a citizen within a political system, inculcating in youth the attitude that political decisions ought to benefit all citizens, and should not be reserved only for certain segments of society. The focus should be on promoting the benefits of being active citizens, in part by creating opportunities for practical involvement. Civic education should be provided in a context-appropriate manner, from elementary and secondary schools to institutions of higher education, should be gender-specific, and should reach out to minority communities and socially marginalized groups. Political engagement must not be seen as a luxury for the better-off, but rather as a path to achieve socially equitable solutions on the basis of social dialogue and consent.

- **Policy makers and politicians** can play an important role by **more actively and directly reaching out to young people.** Some who become politically engaged in their youth will themselves go on to become policy makers. Current political leaders and policies should encourage them to become involved now as stakeholders in the process of policy making, targeting young women specifically. In so doing, youth will gradually develop strong attachments to their political communities. These measures will together engender a sense of political efficacy in youth, empowering them as agents of change today and potential decision makers of tomorrow.

- Capacity development efforts could be undertaken by using the force and appeal of the **Internet and social media.** These mediums should be leveraged to enhance youth's political skills and knowledge and enable the expression and exchange of their political views. Future research should focus on the specific role of social media and how these can be used to provide spaces for discussion, as mechanisms for policy makers to reach out to young people, and as tools for mobilizing around common political interests. Such research should go beyond examining the quantitative level of Internet use, and look more into the purposes and specifics of its use, which may differ in different social and geographic contexts.

**3** **Research and policy analysis.** The third complementary approach — better youth-specific research and data analysis — mainly aims at increasing the understanding and knowledge base for the various measures proposed above, while serving to set goals and measure progress in terms of the effectiveness of policies applied.

● To address the gap in information and statistics regarding youth and democratic citizenship in East and South-East Asia, youth policies should include **increased investment in research focused on youth**. Increasing the information base and updating it on a regular basis will be a prerequisite to devising effective political processes and implementing appropriate policies that enable meaningful youth participation and contributions to national development. Furthermore, 'youth' does not comprise a homogenous group, and understanding their perceptions and attitudes means taking into account their demographic and socio-economic backgrounds. Data collection, analysis and use can therefore be disaggregated, for example by gender, geographic location (rural-urban), income and educational attainment, to establish and inform tailored policies and programmes. Strengthening collaboration with regional and sub-regional institutions, including academic institutions, should be explored as an effective way to move forward with this agenda, which could also strengthen the database at the regional level and facilitate comparative studies.

**5** **Annexes**

# Annex 1:
## References

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# Annex 2:
## Sampling, fieldwork methods and core questionnaire

The Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) grew out of the East Asian Barometer project, inaugurated in June 2000. ABS is based at National Taiwan University (NTU) and jointly sponsored by the Institute for the Advanced Studies of Humanities and Social Sciences at NTU and the Institute of Political Science of Academia Sinica. The third wave of surveys, conducted in 2010–2012, brought together 35 collaborating scholars from 13 Asian countries and territories and a number of international consultants. The survey included 13 East Asian societies (Cambodia; mainland China; Hong Kong, China [SAR]; Indonesia; Japan; the Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mongolia; the Philippines; Taiwan [Province of China]; Singapore; Thailand; and Viet Nam). This report covers all of the societies except Hong Kong, as the timing of that survey did not allow its inclusion.

The local research teams and the international consultants designed a 161-item core questionnaire in English, which was later translated into local languages. Between 2010 and 2012, the local teams administered the third wave of this survey based on the questionnaire. All ABS data were collected through 60-minute face-to-face interviews of randomly selected eligible voters in each participating country or territory. Further information on research methodology is available on the Survey website at

 http://www.asianbarometer.org/newenglish/introduction.

### Japan survey

Fieldwork for the Japan survey took place between 22 November and 31 December 2011. Data was gathered from face-to-face interviews with adults older than 20 years.

The population in 11 regions was stratified into cells according to gender and age. In total, 150 sampling points were selected. The survey sampled 5,407 individuals, of which 4,500 were new respondents and 907 respondents were from previous waves of the survey. The final effective sample was 1,880, giving a response rate of 34.8 percent. This low response rate was in large part attributable to the difficulty of conducting fieldwork following the unprecedented earthquake and tsunami disaster in March of the same year.

The questionnaire was designed based on the module questionnaire developed by the Asian Barometer Survey. The interview method was mainly face-to-face interviews. However, about one third of the questionnaires (separately printed) were left behind by the interviewer for the respondents to complete by themselves. Then the interviewer returned and finalized the interview process.

All field supervisors and interviewers received training prior to the survey. Interviewers' output was spot-tested to ensure quality.

## Republic of Korea survey

The Republic of Korea survey was conducted by Gallup Korea between 1 May and 19 May 2011. The survey population was defined as the general public aged 19 and older residing in Korean territory, except for the island of Jeju-do.

Sampling was conducted in four steps. In the first step, the sample size was determined by the largest administrative unit (*do*) and city size in proportion to the size of population. The Korean administrative district system identifies 7 large cities and 8 provinces (*do*). In the second stages, the final fieldwork locations were selected through multi-stage, stratified random sampling. At the first stage, the administrative units selected randomly were *dong*, *eup* and *myun*. Then, at each further stage to identify final fieldwork locations, the sampling locations were randomly selected. The urban districts (*ban*) and rural villages were identified as primary sampling units. In the third step, 6–8 households in each *ban* and 12–15 households in each village were randomly selected for interview. In this step, the households in market/shopping area were excluded. Finally, in the fourth step, if the selected household had more than 2 persons aged 19 years or more, the interviewers selected the person whose birthday comes first in the 12 months from the interviewing day.

If the interviewer failed to meet the respondent, where no one was at home or the adult selected was not at home, the interviewer was supposed to revisit the household at a different time. A total of 5,233 interviews were attempted. Of the 5,233 households chosen 1,231 face-to-face interviews were completed, registering a response rate of 16.8 percent.

Questionnaire design was based on the module questionnaire developed by the Asian Barometer Survey. Each interviewer attended a 1-day orientation, and had to finish 3 exercise interviews successfully. To ensure reliability, fieldwork supervisors checked the completed questionnaires daily, and 30 percent of the completed questionnaires were randomly selected by the Verification Team for independent validation. Logical errors were checked through cross-tabulation during data-processing verification.

The data was weighed by age and gender to reflect the 2010 Population and Housing Census published by Statistics Korea.

## Taiwan (Province of China) survey

The Taiwan survey was conducted between 16 January and 28 February 2010 by the Comparative Study of Democratization and Value Changes Project Office, National Taiwan University. The target population was defined as adults aged 20 years or older who had the right to vote. Taiwan was divided into 6 geographical areas and using the total number of people eligible to cast ballots in the 2008 presidential election, the total number of successful samples required in each geographical area was estimated.

Sampling was conducted in 3 stages according to the probability proportional to size (PPS) method. First, electoral constituencies were selected in each area according to the divisions in place for the 2008 Legislative Yuan elections. Then, four neighbourhoods or villages were selected in each of the 27 constituencies drawn in the first stage. In the third stage, 14 people in each neighbourhood or village were selected, on the basis of the feasibility of conducting

successful interviews. In total, 1,536 interviewees were selected for the survey. To replace respondents who could not be contacted or who refused to participate, 21 sets of alternate samples for each neighbourhood or village were created. In the first stage of interviews, a total of 1,592 successful samples were collected.

Testing showed that, though the gender composition of the sample set was consistent with the entire population (from the most recent 2009 statistics from the Department of Household Registration, Ministry of the Interior), age and educational structures were not. To achieve consistency, the raking method was used to weight the samples.

The questionnaire was designed based on the module questionnaire developed by the Asian Barometer Survey, and 142 field staff, overseen by 22 supervisors, were deployed to conduct the survey. The interviewers were trained in interview skills and coding, and supervisors attended 2 one-day trainings.

To test sampling reliability, a sample of 20 percent of the total number of successful interviews was retested.

## Mongolia survey

The Mongolia survey was conducted between 1 April and 7 June 2010 by the Academy of Political Education, a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan institution established in 1993.

The survey applied a 4-stage random sampling design. The primary sampling units were selected using a Probability Proportionate to Size interval from the list of provinces (*aimaks*) and cities of Mongolia, which are divided into 76 electoral districts. In the second stage, the number of counties or *soums* (in *aimaks*) and districts (in cities) was selected using a random selection procedure. In the third stage, a random starting point was chosen in each *soum* and households were selected at concrete intervals. Households in rural areas were divided into 2 groups, the *soum* centre and nomadic. In the fourth stage, individual respondents were chosen in each household using a Kish Grid table. A total of 1,210 interviews were collected.

The original English questionnaire was translated into Mongolian at the Academy and amended according to country specifics. A total of 51 field staffers (21 from the Academy) were deployed for this survey. All interviewers were given at minimum of 2 days training. Supervisors were also deployed to oversee the interviews. Supervisors evaluated 28 percent of all interviews, followed up on 24 percent of respondents, and spot-checked at least 30 percent of an interviewer's work.

Census-based population weights for gender and age were applied to the data to ensure that the figures were representative at the national level.

## Indonesia survey

The Indonesia survey was carried out between 9 May and 23 May 2011 by Lembaga Survei Indonesia. Data was gathered through interviews with voting-age adults (aged 17 or older). The original sample size of respondents was 1,550. Interviewers successfully conducted 1,226 interviews without substitution, at a respond rate of 79 percent; 324 substitutions were required.

Multistage Random Sampling was conducted to choose survey respondents. In the first stage, Indonesia was divided into 33 provinces. Based on population proportion in each province, 155 primary sampling units (villages) were randomly selected proportionally according to both population and proportion of urban to rural. In the next stage, the number of neighbourhoods was listed for each village and five were selected by random number table. In the third stage, all the households in each neighbourhood were listed and two selected from each through random number selection. Lastly, individual respondents were chosen by listing voting-age adults in each household and using Kish Grid to select one.

The original English version of the Asian Barometer Survey was translated into Bahasa Indonesia and pre-tested on 17 adults before being finalized. The minimum training time for supervisors and interviewers was 2 days prior to field implementation. A total of 182 field staff were deployed for the project. Supervisors observed at least 10 percent of the total interviews and made sure at least 50 percent of each interviewer's output was spot-checked and back-checked.

Statistical tests conducted to check the representativeness of the sample showed that weighting was not required.

## Philippines survey

The Philippines survey was conducted between 1 June and 31 July 2010 by Social Weather Stations, an independent no-stick, non-profit social research organization.

The Philippines was divided into four study areas for this survey: National Capital Region (NCR), Balance Luzon (outside NCR), Visayas and Mindanao. The sample size for each of the four study areas was 300 voting-age adults (aged 18 or older), bringing the total sample size to 1,200. Multi-stage sampling with probability proportion to population size (PPS) was used to select sample spots (*barangay*s). In the NCR, 60 barangays were distributed among the 17 NCR cities and municipalities so that each city/municipality was assigned a number of barangays roughly proportional to its population size. An additional provision was that each municipality had to receive at least one barangay. Barangays were then randomly selected from each municipality by PPS. In the rest of Philippines, each study area was further divided into regions, and using PPS, 10 provinces were allocated to Luzon, 5 to Visayas and 7 to Mindanao. Within each study area, 15 municipalities were allocated among the sample provinces, and sample municipalities were then selected from within each sample province with PPS, with the provision that each province must include at least 1 municipality. Then, 60 spots for all major areas were allocated among the sample provinces. The spots were distributed so that each province was assigned a number of spots roughly proportional to its

population size. Sample barangays within each sample municipality were selected with PPS.

Within each sample spot, 5 households were drawn by systematic interval sampling. In each household, a respondent was randomly selected using a probability respondent selection table. A respondent not contacted during the first attempt was visited for a second time. If the respondent remained unavailable, or in cases where there was no qualified probability respondent of a given gender, the interval sampling of households continued until 5 sample respondents were identified.

Language experts translated the English version of the questionnaire into Filipino, Iluko, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray and Marano. The interviewers were trained for two days, and were supervised for the first day for field deployment by their trained supervisors. A total of 114 field staff were deployed. Supervisors observed at least 10 percent of the interviews conducted, and at least 30 percent of each interviewer's output was spot-checked and back-checked. In addition, to yield representative figures at the national level, census-based population weights were applied to the survey data.

## Thailand survey

The survey in Thailand was conducted between 1 March and 31 March 2011 by King Prajadhipok's Institute (KPI). The survey covered all provinces in Thailand, which were divided into five regions: North, North-east, South, Central, and Greater Bangkok.

Multi-stage systematic random sampling was used to identify respondents. In the first stage, the number of districts per region was determined in proportion to the population of the region, and a list of districts per region was randomly selected. In the second stage, a list of villages in each district was randomly selected in proportion to the population in the selected district. The third stage of sampling determined the number of people to be surveyed according to the number of selected villages per region, and the households were identified using systematic sampling, with a skip number of 40. The team chose to oversample Bangkok. A list of reserve samples was also prepared ahead of the data collection process. This procedure yielded a total of 1,512 samples.

The Thailand-version questionnaire design was based on the module questionnaire developed by the Asian Barometer Survey. A total of 49 trained field staff, overseen by 7 supervisors, were deployed to conduct the interviews. Spot-checking was conducted to verify interviews.

Finally, samples were weighted according to gender, age and level of education.

## Malaysia survey

The Malaysian survey was conducted between 20 October and 18 November 2011. Respondents were adult citizens aged 17 or older. The total sample size was 1,214.

Sampling was conducted in several stages. First, the sampling areas were selected based upon the March 2008 electoral roll. The survey team selected a total of 240 sampling locations.

The pool of eligible respondents was proportionally divided by the states of residence of the individuals, and an appropriate number of locations were randomly selected from each state based on polling districts. Within each polling district, localities were randomly selected. Households within a locality were chosen using a 5-household skip pattern, i.e. every sixth household was sampled. In each locality, interviewers were required to fulfil a quota of 50 percent male and 50 percent female respondents. Finally, in each selected household, a respondent was randomly selected from among the eligible household members.

The core questionnaire prepared by the Asian Barometer Survey team was used for the Malaysia survey, and some additional questions were added to correspond to the Malaysian context. The English version of the questionnaire was translated into Malay, Chinese and Iban. The questionnaire was pre-tested through 27 test interviews before being finalized.

All supervisors, coordinators and interviewers underwent thorough training before conducting the survey. Supervisors observed interviewers, followed up and checked on the field interviewers, and reported to the project leader who monitored the study full-time. At least 30 percent of each interviewer's output was spot-checked for reliability. In all, 372 of the respondents interviewed were contacted for quality control inspection either by telephone or in person.

To verify representativeness, characteristics of the sample population were checked against the national population characteristics for gender, age and education level (from the most recent 2010 statistics from the Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, Department of Statistics). Age and ethnicity structures in the sample set were not found to be consistent with the entire population. To ensure consistency, the raking method was used to weight the samples.

## Singapore survey

The Singapore survey was conducted from 16 April to 15 August 2011 by QNA Research Labs. Data was collected through interviews of voting age adults (21 years of age or older).

Respondents were chosen through systematic household random sampling. In housing built by the Housing Development Board (HDB) of Singapore, 2-stage cluster sampling with stratification was conducted. First, HDB flats were randomly selected from each of the 33 districts in Singapore. Next, 5 households were randomly selected from each flat, and 1 respondent from each household was chosen based on 'next birthday'. The sample size for HDB housing was 900.

In private condominiums, 17 condominiums were selected from each of the 5 major areas of Singapore, and 1 household from each condominium was invited to participate. One respondent from each household was chosen based on 'next birthday'. The sample size was 85. Similarly, 3 land properties were selected from each area, and 1 household invited from each property, for a sample size of 15. Overall, 1,000 successful interviews with 2,427 households were conducted at a response rate of 41.2 percent.

The core questionnaire prepared by the Asian Barometer Survey team was used for the Singapore survey and translated into Chinese and Malay. Fifty trained interviewers and 10 trained supervisors in total were used for this survey. At least 80 percent of each interviewer's output was validated. To verify representativeness, characteristics of the sample population were checked against the national population characteristics of gender, age and education level (from Statistics Singapore). The sample set was found to be consistent with the entire population.

## Hong Kong, China (SAR) survey

Fieldwork for the Hong Kong, China (SAR) survey was conducted between 18 September and 30 November 2012. Data was gathered through face-to-face interviews of Hong Kong people aged 18 or older residing in permanent residential living quarters in built-up areas.

A sample list was obtained from the Census and Statistics Department based on the frame of quarters maintained by the Census and Statistics Department (Register of Quarters). A 2-stage stratified sample design was adopted, with the records in the frame of quarters first stratified by geographical area and type of quarters. Selection of sampling units, in the first stage, used systematic replicate sampling technique with fixed sampling intervals and non-repetitive random numbers. The use of replicated sampling was to facilitate the calculation of sampling errors and for subsequent adjustment, if required, in the sample size for the first stage. For the second stage, a household member aged 18 or older in households was randomly selected for the interview. The selection method was based on last birthday method. Overall, 1,207 successful samples were collected, giving a response rate of 52.6 percent.

The questionnaire was designed based on the module questionnaire developed by the Asian Barometer Survey. All field supervisors and interviewers received training prior to the survey. At least 15 percent of the questionnaires completed by each interviewer were checked by an independent quality control team.

Finally, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were checked against statistics from the 2011 Population Census of the Census and Statistics Department of the Hong Kong Government according to gender, age and level of education. Only the gender structure in the sample was consistent with that of the overall population. Samples were therefore weighted using the raking method according to age and level of education to achieve consistency with the overall population.

## Cambodia survey

The Cambodia survey was conducted between 29 February and 21 March 2012. Voting-age adults 18 years of age or older were interviewed during the survey, which covered 24 provinces and municipalities in Cambodia.

To maintain national representation, it was decided that 150 communes were needed as primary sampling units (PSUs), with the equal probability selection of 2 villages from each selected commune as the secondary sampling units (SSUs). Four households were selected per village for tertiary sampling units (TSUs) and 1 respondent per household as the fourth sampling units (FSUs).

In the first stage of sampling, communes were selected using the probability proportional to size method with linear systematic sampling and random start for which the communes were arranged by geographical codes. In the second stage, the method of simple random sampling without replacement was applied to select 2 villages from each commune. In the third stage, sample households were selected from the villages using linear systematic sampling. In the final stage, individual respondents were selected from each chosen household, through equal probability of sample selection using Kish Grid map.

The Khmer-version questionnaire was translated from the module questionnaire developed by the Asian Barometer Survey. A total of 25 field staff members (5 supervisors and 20 enumerators) were deployed to conduct the survey. Each group of 5 staff members covered 60 PSUs or 240 interviews. All interviewers underwent training and were made familiar with the survey before going into the field, and a one-day training was held for supervisors. During field work, supervisors observed initial interviews conducted by each interviewer, and conducted spot-checks to ensure reliability.

## Viet Nam survey

The Viet Nam survey was conducted between 20 September and 30 October 2010 by the Institute of Human Studies, and covered the entire country except the North-west divided into 7 major study areas: Red River Delta, North-east, North Central Coast, South Central Coast, Central Highlands, South-east, and Mekong Delta. Interviews were conducted of voting-age adults (18 years old and older). The sample size for the 7 study areas was 1,200 voting-age adults.

Multi-stage probability was used in the selection of sample spots. Using probability proportional to population size (PPS) of the region, sample provinces were allocated to each study area. The allocations were: 2 provinces in Red River Delta, 2 in North-east, 1 in North Central Coast, 1 in South Central Coast, 1 in Central Highlands, 1 in South-east and 2 in Mekong Delta. Then, using PPS again for each province, the number of districts allotted to each province was decided and districts randomly selected. In the third stage, PPS was used in each district to choose a total of 200 sample spots. Next, in the fourth stage, 9 households were chosen from each sample sport by random walk. Finally, the sample respondents were randomly chosen from among the eligible adults in each selected household using a probability respondent selection table.

The core questionnaire prepared by the Asian Barometer Survey team was used for the Viet Nam survey, and some questions were removed. The English version of the questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese.

All supervisors and interviewers underwent thorough training before conducting the survey.

Supervisors were given 2 days of training about the questionnaire and procedure. A total of 38 field personnel were deployed for the survey on a full-time basis. Supervisors observed interviewers, followed up and checked on the field interviews. Interviews were also spot-checked for reliability. To verify representativeness, characteristics of the sample population were checked against the national population characteristics for gender, age and education level (from the most recent 2009 statistics from the General Statistical Office, Ministry of Planning and Investment). The sample set was found to be inconsistent with the entire population, and the data was weighted to ensure consistency.

## China survey

Fieldwork for the China survey was carried out between 1 July and 31 October 2011 in 25 provinces in mainland China (excluding Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, and Hainan). Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with respondents older than 18 years.

The multi-stage sampling design was divided into two types. First, Shanghai was a special case, using a 3-stage systematic sampling design. Second, the 24 provinces and cities (4 large provinces — Guangdong, Liaoning, Henan, and Gansu — and 20 small provinces) used a 4-stage systematic sampling design. Double sampling at county and village/neighbourhood levels proceeded according to the framework used in the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), Institute of Social Science Survey, Peking University. The CFPS sampling frame acted as the household survey sampling frame, which is used to sample a certain number of households. Finally, in each sample household, an individual that met the survey requirements was randomly selected. On the basis of the above, 234 villages and neighbourhoods were sampled, giving a total of 5,308 samples that were contacted and 3,510 effective samples, a response rate of 66.1 percent.

All field supervisors and interviewers received training prior to the survey. Interviewers' output was spot-tested to ensure quality.

The survey administrators tested whether the sample was representative. Population characteristics considered were gender, age, urban/rural and region. Figures for the entire population came from China Statistical Yearbook 2011. The structures of gender and urban/rural in the sample set were consistent with the entire population. However, the age and locations of respondents in the sample set were not consistent with the entire population. To achieve consistency between the sample set and the entire population, the raking method was used to weight the samples. It was then verified that the structure of the sample set after weighting was consistent with the entire population.

# Annex 3:
## Statistical tables

**Figure 20. Trust in National Institutions by Cohort (page 37)**

| | | Executive Branch | | Legislative Branch | | Judicial Branch | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | A great deal of trust (%) | Quite a lot of trust (%) | A great deal of trust (%) | Quite a lot of trust (%) | A great deal of trust (%) | Quite a lot of trust (%) |
| JP | <30 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 12 | 3 | 63 |
| | 30-59 | 1 | 15 | 1 | 10 | 7 | 48 |
| | ≥60 | 2 | 23 | 1 | 11 | 6 | 38 |
| KR | <30 | 3 | 19 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 36 |
| | 30-59 | 3 | 31 | 1 | 10 | 2 | 33 |
| | ≥60 | 7 | 45 | 1 | 16 | 3 | 32 |
| TW | <30 | 2 | 33 | 1 | 24 | 5 | 40 |
| | 30-59 | 5 | 27 | 1 | 16 | 3 | 25 |
| | ≥60 | 8 | 31 | 1 | 19 | 4 | 17 |
| MN | <30 | 9 | 34 | 3 | 26 | 3 | 23 |
| | 30-59 | 11 | 36 | 3 | 24 | 3 | 19 |
| | ≥60 | 5 | 36 | 4 | 37 | 3 | 19 |
| ID | <30 | 12 | 53 | 7 | 39 | 7 | 48 |
| | 30-59 | 10 | 62 | 6 | 45 | 4 | 45 |
| | ≥60 | 6 | 70 | 6 | 56 | 2 | 53 |
| PH | <30 | 7 | 29 | 7 | 42 | 12 | 39 |
| | 30-59 | 12 | 22 | 10 | 30 | 12 | 29 |
| | ≥60 | 11 | 25 | 10 | 33 | 14 | 30 |
| TH | <30 | 14 | 54 | 4 | 48 | 19 | 54 |
| | 30-59 | 16 | 43 | 8 | 39 | 16 | 46 |
| | ≥60 | 15 | 42 | 9 | 34 | 14 | 38 |
| MY | <30 | 36 | 43 | 18 | 46 | 29 | 49 |
| | 30-59 | 38 | 43 | 21 | 52 | 25 | 44 |
| | ≥60 | 45 | 38 | 28 | 44 | 27 | 36 |
| SG | <30 | 20 | 61 | 15 | 62 | 19 | 65 |
| | 30-59 | 26 | 62 | 16 | 67 | 20 | 64 |
| | ≥60 | 35 | 56 | 25 | 62 | 28 | 60 |
| CM | <30 | 40 | 43 | 25 | 50 | 23 | 47 |
| | 30-59 | 37 | 47 | 25 | 53 | 17 | 42 |
| | ≥60 | 49 | 37 | 31 | 45 | 18 | 37 |
| VN | <30 | 61 | 33 | 57 | 31 | 46 | 33 |
| | 30-59 | 68 | 25 | 63 | 25 | 40 | 37 |
| | ≥60 | 59 | 31 | 56 | 30 | 42 | 38 |
| CN | <30 | 38 | 54 | 37 | 52 | 18 | 67 |
| | 30-59 | 49 | 42 | 46 | 42 | 22 | 53 |
| | ≥60 | 61 | 34 | 55 | 35 | 23 | 52 |

**Figure 21. Trust in Government Servants by Cohort (page 38)**

| | | Civil Service | | Military | | Police | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | A great deal of trust (%) | Quite a lot of trust (%) | A great deal of trust (%) | Quite a lot of trust (%) | A great deal of trust (%) | Quite a lot of trust (%) |
| JP | <30 | 0 | 30 | 25 | 49 | 12 | 43 |
| | 30-59 | 2 | 26 | 17 | 57 | 9 | 54 |
| | ≥60 | 1 | 26 | 18 | 61 | 12 | 57 |
| KR | <30 | 5 | 22 | 5 | 48 | 5 | 38 |
| | 30-59 | 2 | 32 | 8 | 48 | 4 | 45 |
| | ≥60 | 5 | 45 | 14 | 53 | 7 | 51 |
| TW | <30 | 2 | 43 | 6 | 39 | 2 | 44 |
| | 30-59 | 4 | 43 | 6 | 38 | 5 | 38 |
| | ≥60 | 7 | 47 | 7 | 35 | 11 | 45 |
| MN | <30 | 5 | 37 | 24 | 50 | 9 | 42 |
| | 30-59 | 4 | 32 | 25 | 51 | 10 | 39 |
| | ≥60 | 4 | 38 | 21 | 57 | 12 | 52 |
| ID | <30 | 8 | 65 | 16 | 65 | 11 | 49 |
| | 30-59 | 8 | 62 | 16 | 68 | 7 | 57 |
| | ≥60 | 6 | 69 | 15 | 69 | 8 | 68 |
| PH | <30 | 14 | 50 | 24 | 42 | 18 | 41 |
| | 30-59 | 10 | 40 | 17 | 37 | 18 | 36 |
| | ≥60 | 13 | 45 | 20 | 38 | 18 | 42 |
| TH | <30 | 9 | 59 | 22 | 56 | 8 | 51 |
| | 30-59 | 18 | 51 | 24 | 46 | 15 | 42 |
| | ≥60 | 19 | 46 | 26 | 43 | 19 | 44 |
| MY | <30 | 30 | 49 | 38 | 41 | 24 | 39 |
| | 30-59 | 28 | 52 | 42 | 44 | 31 | 40 |
| | ≥60 | 33 | 45 | 50 | 40 | 37 | 36 |
| SG | <30 | 14 | 66 | 16 | 62 | 18 | 63 |
| | 30-59 | 15 | 63 | 18 | 57 | 20 | 63 |
| | ≥60 | 23 | 62 | 24 | 61 | 26 | 62 |
| CM | <30 | 46 | 40 | 53 | 35 | 28 | 48 |
| | 30-59 | 34 | 45 | 56 | 34 | 24 | 47 |
| | ≥60 | 34 | 45 | 71 | 21 | 28 | 48 |
| VN | <30 | 33 | 42 | 62 | 33 | 50 | 38 |
| | 30-59 | 36 | 35 | 66 | 28 | 51 | 36 |
| | ≥60 | 36 | 28 | 65 | 31 | 51 | 34 |
| CN | <30 | 6 | 88 | 36 | 54 | 17 | 61 |
| | 30-59 | 12 | 81 | 47 | 44 | 28 | 51 |
| | ≥60 | 15 | 77 | 60 | 34 | 33 | 51 |

**Figure 22. Institutional Trust by Area of Residence (page 39)**

|  |  | A great deal of trust (%) | Quite a lot of trust (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| JP | Urban | 5 | 39 |
|  | Rural | 12 | 36 |
| KR | Urban | 3 | 29 |
|  | Rural | 12 | 30 |
| TW | Urban | 3 | 37 |
|  | Rural | 1 | 42 |
| MN | Urban | 6 | 33 |
|  | Rural | 11 | 34 |
| ID | Urban | 6 | 57 |
|  | Rural | 11 | 51 |
| PH | Urban | 12 | 38 |
|  | Rural | 17 | 46 |
| TH | Urban | 15 | 53 |
|  | Rural | 13 | 54 |
| MY | Urban | 21 | 47 |
|  | Rural | 36 | 44 |
| SG | Urban | 31 | 43 |
|  | Rural | 35 | 44 |
| CM | Urban | 47 | 35 |
|  | Rural | 54 | 34 |
| VN | Urban | 47 | 35 |
|  | Rural | 54 | 34 |
| CN | Urban | 21 | 68 |
|  | Rural | 28 | 59 |

**Figure 23. Institutional Trust by Income Sufficiency (page 39)**

|  |  | A great deal of trust (%) | Quite a lot of trust (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| JP | Urban | 6 | 37 |
|  | Rural | 7 | 30 |
| KR | Urban | 4 | 27 |
|  | Rural | 2 | 28 |
| TW | Urban | 3 | 40 |
|  | Rural | 5 | 26 |
| MN | Urban | 9 | 38 |
|  | Rural | 8 | 32 |
| ID | Urban | 9 | 56 |
|  | Rural | 10 | 51 |
| PH | Urban | 14 | 41 |
|  | Rural | 14 | 41 |
| TH | Urban | 14 | 54 |
|  | Rural | 12 | 56 |
| MY | Urban | 30 | 44 |
|  | Rural | 23 | 47 |
| SG | Urban | 17 | 64 |
|  | Rural | 17 | 59 |
| CM | Urban | 38 | 44 |
|  | Rural | 34 | 45 |
| VN | Urban | 52 | 33 |
|  | Rural | 48 | 40 |
| CN | Urban | 24 | 63 |
|  | Rural | 25 | 60 |

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