

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*



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Summary report



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 – Summary report

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The data used in this report were collected by the Asian Barometer. Any questions related to the data or methodology should be addressed to the Asian Barometer: asianbarometer@ntu.edu.tw

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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Note on the countries/societies covered

The report *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* 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 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

Introduction

The report *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* is a collaboration between UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre and the Asian Barometer¹, and is based on data from Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) Wave 3, collected from 2010 to 2012. The report analyses the data from 12 East and South-East Asian societies — Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam — which comprise over 17,900 responses collected through face-to-face interviews. The appendix at the end of the report provides summaries of how sampling and data collection process was organized in each society. Further details on the methods and the original questionnaire can also be accessed at the ABS website.

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**.

The following introduces the key findings of the report and summary of recommendations. The presented findings are primarily derived from trends observed at the regional level. The full report also offers country-specific findings and more detailed observations into country data, which could not be shared in this summary report in full.

1 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, visit the website www.asianbarometer.org.

Background: Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia

- In Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, youth (under age 30) comprise an estimated average of 47% of the population.
- While ‘youth vote’ during elections is acknowledged as increasingly important and youth are asked to assume various duties of citizenship, their representation in formal politics remains limited in the region. Furthermore, there is currently little information available on how young people themselves in the region experience participation in democratic processes, which can provide a starting point for shaping effective policies to promote their meaningful and inclusive participation.
- Broader socio-economic trends as below 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 The region’s economic dynamism and traditions of family-based support — youth in the region tend to be economically more secure than their counterparts in other regions

2 Relatively high financial and educational standing of youth compared to older cohorts — better education may make youth more likely to appreciate the importance of participatory democracy and good governance

3 Expansion of Internet use — emerging as a key medium for mobilizing participation, sharing information and building social networks among youth

4 The changing media environment and the role of traditional news media worldwide — in the region, control of traditional media in many countries continues to create a level of bias in the content of the information being disseminated, while Internet is transforming the way politics-related information is shared and communicated among young people

- In the ABS survey, youth ranked the components of democracy in the following order of importance: **good governance (30.8 percent); social equity (27.4 percent); norms and procedures (22.7 percent); freedom and liberty (19 percent)**: generally speaking, youth in the region tend to 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.
- If democratic governance² 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. In this context, the study aimed to understand the extent to which youth are able and interested in politics by drawing from their perceptions, and attempted to gauge their potential to become active stakeholders.
- The societies covered in this study are very diverse in many respects: 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.

² UNDP’s approach to democratic governance derives from two significant frameworks: human development paradigm and human-rights based approach. See page 12 of full report for further information.

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

Disclaimer: Just for illustration. Not official UN statistics.

3 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).

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

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

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

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

8 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'.

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

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

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

12 CIA World Factbook.

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

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

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

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

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

18 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

19 World Press Freedom Index.

20 Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index, <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/>.

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

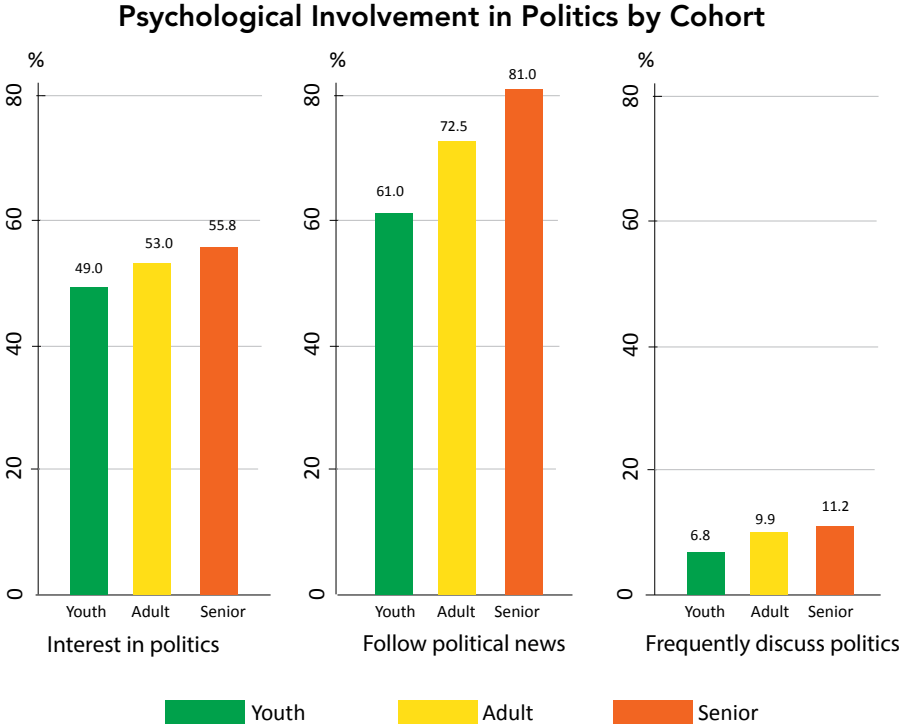
Key findings

SECTION 1 Youth and Politics: Interest and Involvement

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.



Though smaller number than older cohorts, still nearly half of all young people interviewed evinced an interest in politics and even more claimed that they 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.

East and South-East Asian youth tend to hold relatively low levels of social capital.

Social capital encourages cooperation among citizens in pursuit of common goals and has been measured through three comprising elements in the study — social trust; membership; and social network. While many youth in the region have large social networks in part supported by Internet use, in aggregate terms, they hold less social capital than older cohorts mainly due to their lower levels of social trust (23.8 percent stating that most people can be trusted vs. 30.4 percent and 35.2 percent for adults and seniors respectively) and membership in formal organizations (32.9 percent of youth claiming membership, compared to 47.9 percent and 49.1 percent for adults and seniors respectively).

In aggregate terms, youth with higher educational attainment (vs. lower), satisfactory level of income (vs. unsatisfactory), higher levels of social capital and Internet use (vs. lower), and residence in urban areas (vs. rural), respectively, have a higher level of psychological involvement in politics. Young men also show a higher level of psychological involvement in politics than young women.

Educational attainment and Internet use determined the starkest gap among all factors.

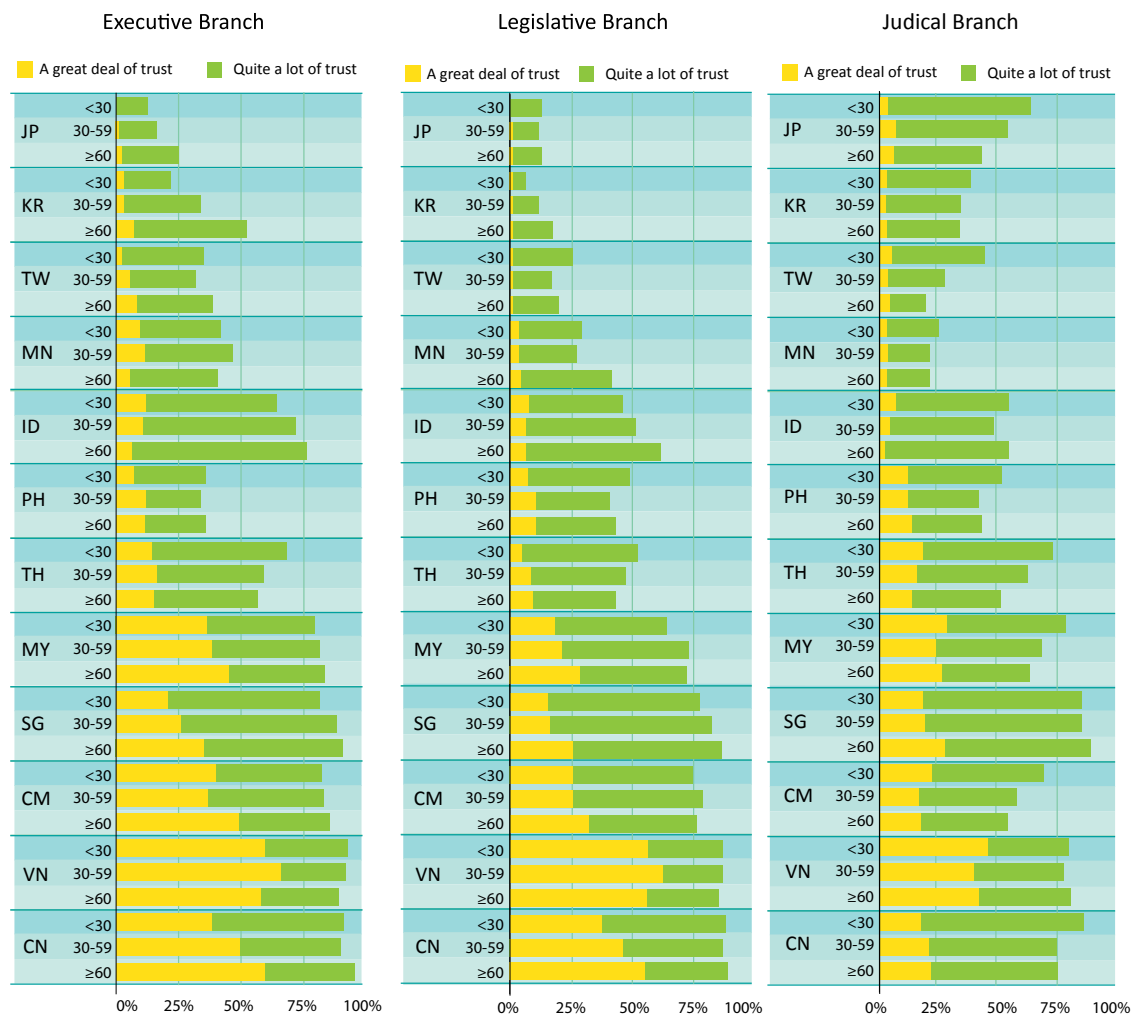
SECTION 2 Youth and Democratic Governance: Expectations, Trust and Performance

1. Trust in Institutions

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

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.

Trust in National Institutions by Cohort



Youth in East and South-East Asia critically assess the institutions in their societies²² — particularly in case of electoral institutions, more so than the older cohorts — while expressing disappointment in their performance. However, the data do not correspond with evidence-based rankings and performance indicators of government, and the paradoxical effect can be observed that in societies with more options for democratic choice and freedom to criticize government, citizens’ trust (including that of youth) in institutions in overall is relatively low.

It should also be noted that such approach to measuring trust only provides a snapshot of a particular moment which can be affected by sudden social and political events, and trust building is essentially a long-term process.

Low levels of institutional trust may reflect the emergence of a critical youth who lack confidence in the integrity of democratic processes, and at the same time remain committed to democratic governance.

Youth in the region, in accordance with other age cohorts, showed support for democracy irrespective of their level of trust in institutions in their societies. Higher level of trust in institutions on the other hand, proved to be correlated with (perception measure of) fairness of electoral processes in countries such as Malaysia, Cambodia and Viet Nam. This provides evidence of youth’s support for democratic processes that secure the inclusive participation of citizens, further to their considerable faith in democratic governance.

Which other components and aspects of good governance affect trust among youth in respective societal contexts and how their assessment of government performance influences their attitudes towards institutions and their political behaviour remains an area in need of further detailed study.

2. Quality of Governance

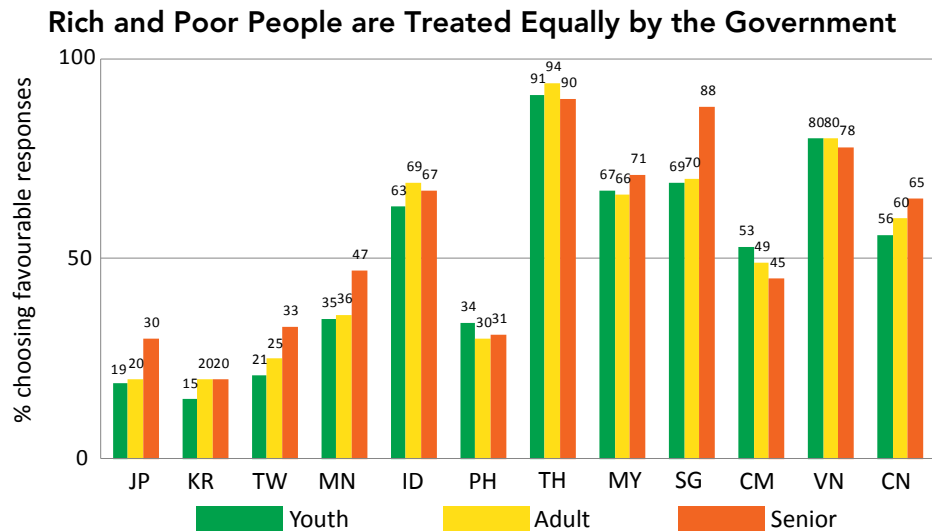
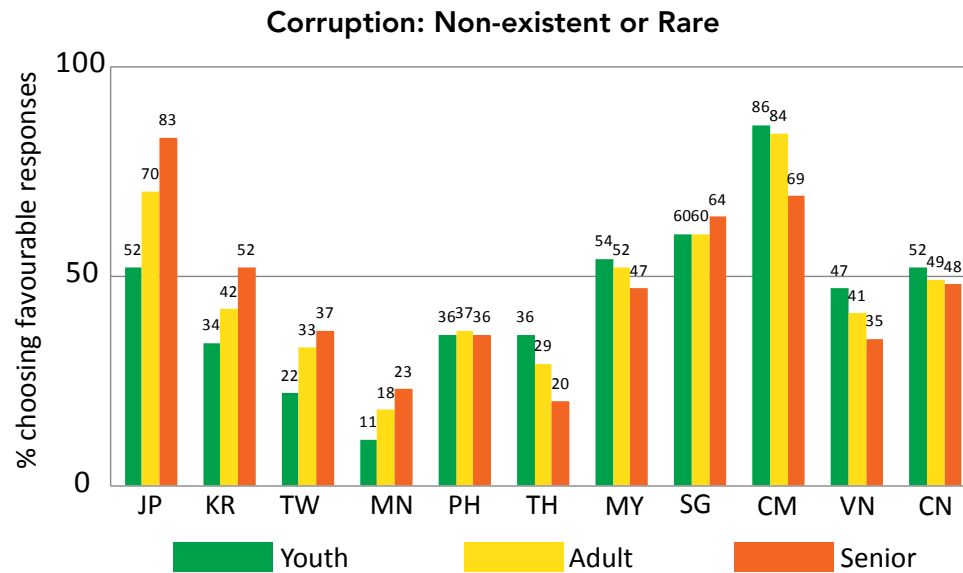
How do youth evaluate governance in East and South-East Asia?

Youth in East and South-East Asia have varying degrees of concern regarding quality of governance in their respective societies, including issues of justice, fairness and government responsiveness. Corruption also consistently emerges as one of the most serious issues.

Key aggregate trends shown in each measured components that reflect the quality of governance are as follows.

- **Rule of law** — In 8 of the 12 societies examined in the region, only a minority of youth expressed favourable evaluations of official respect for the law.
- **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’.
- **State responsiveness** — In 7 of the 12 societies studied, only minorities of young people consider their authorities ‘very’ or ‘largely’ responsive to their interests.
- **Regard for equality between the rich and the poor** — 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.

²² In figure ‘Trust in Institutions by Cohort’, ‘A great deal of trust’ represents a higher level of trust compared to ‘Quite a lot of trust’. The ABS survey asked the respondents to indicate their level of trust in various institutions, offering the response options ‘A great deal of trust’; ‘Quite a lot of trust’; ‘Not a lot of trust’; and ‘None at all’. Data for the figure can be viewed in Annex 3: Statistical tables (page 95) of full report.



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.

Such a result was observed in youth’s assessment of all 4 measured components that reflect the quality of governance.

In societies where variations show among segments of the youth population, youth with tertiary education, high levels of Internet use, and residence in urban areas, respectively, are more likely to be critical citizens.

These are segments of youth who tend to have greater access to information. This in part corroborates why authorities in a number of countries are imposing policies to curb access to information, mainly in fear that expressions of public discontent might lead to instability. 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.

SECTION 3 Youth as Democratic Citizens: Political Participation and Empowerment

1. Political Participation

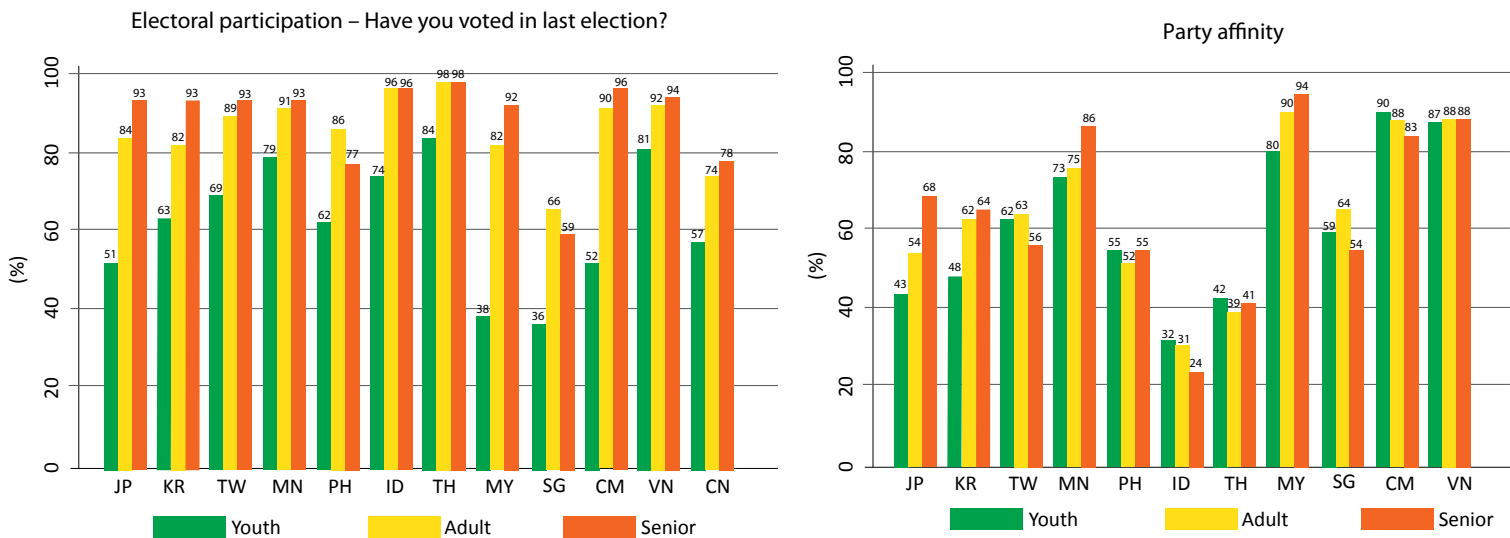
Do East and South-East Asian youth actively participate in politics?

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 in non-electoral participation such as lobbying and activism as much as older cohorts.

Youth in the region are not satisfied with expressing their voices through elections alone: They participate in politics in different ways than do their older cohorts. Building on their interests as such, institutional efforts should be made to encourage their participation in different forms.

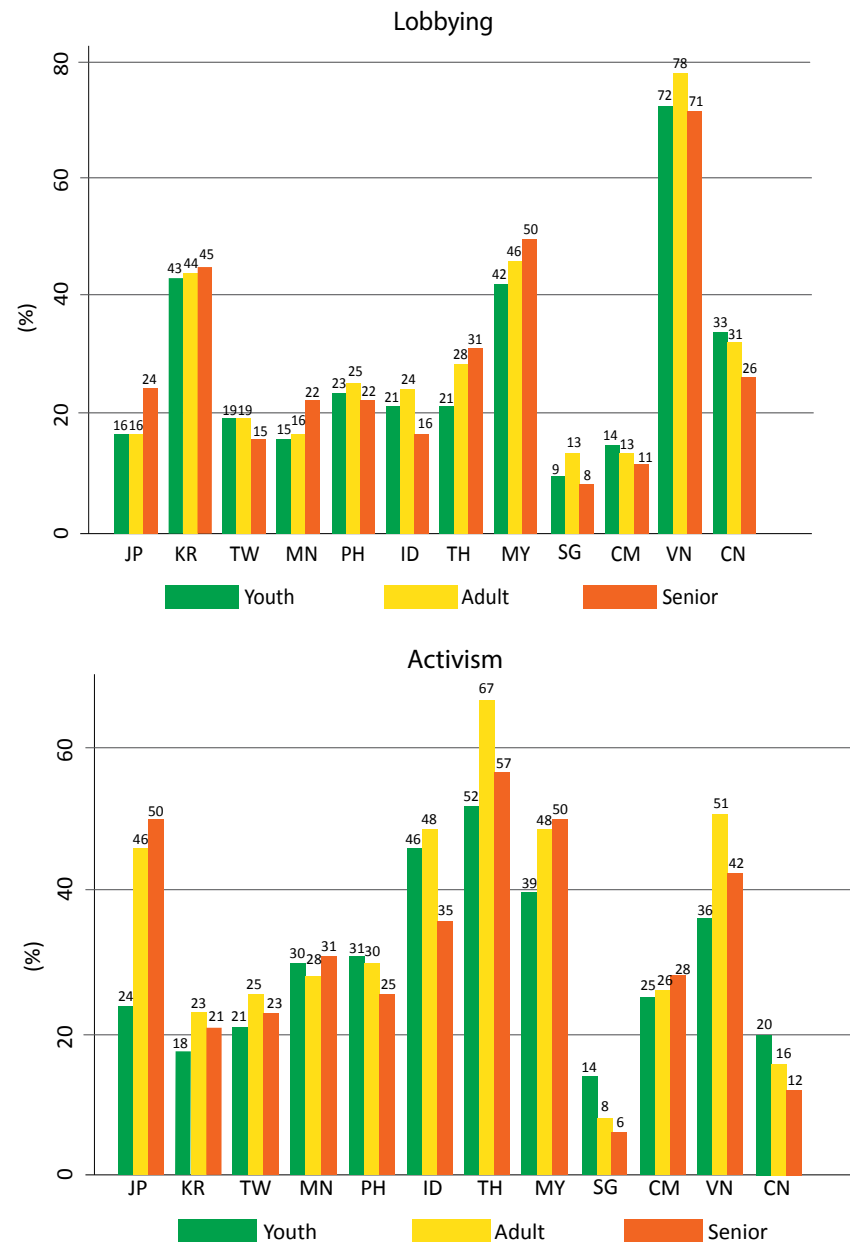
At the same time, addressing lower turnout²³ among youth should be recognized as a matter of urgency and an adequate policy mix should be devised in respective societies in order to raise youth's electoral participation. Overall, the challenge for democracy in the region lies in opening up new spaces and establishing innovative mechanisms for the constructive engagement of youth in the formal political process.

Electoral Participation and Party Affinity by Cohort



²³ The data for electoral participation were 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.

Lobbying and Activism by Cohort²⁴



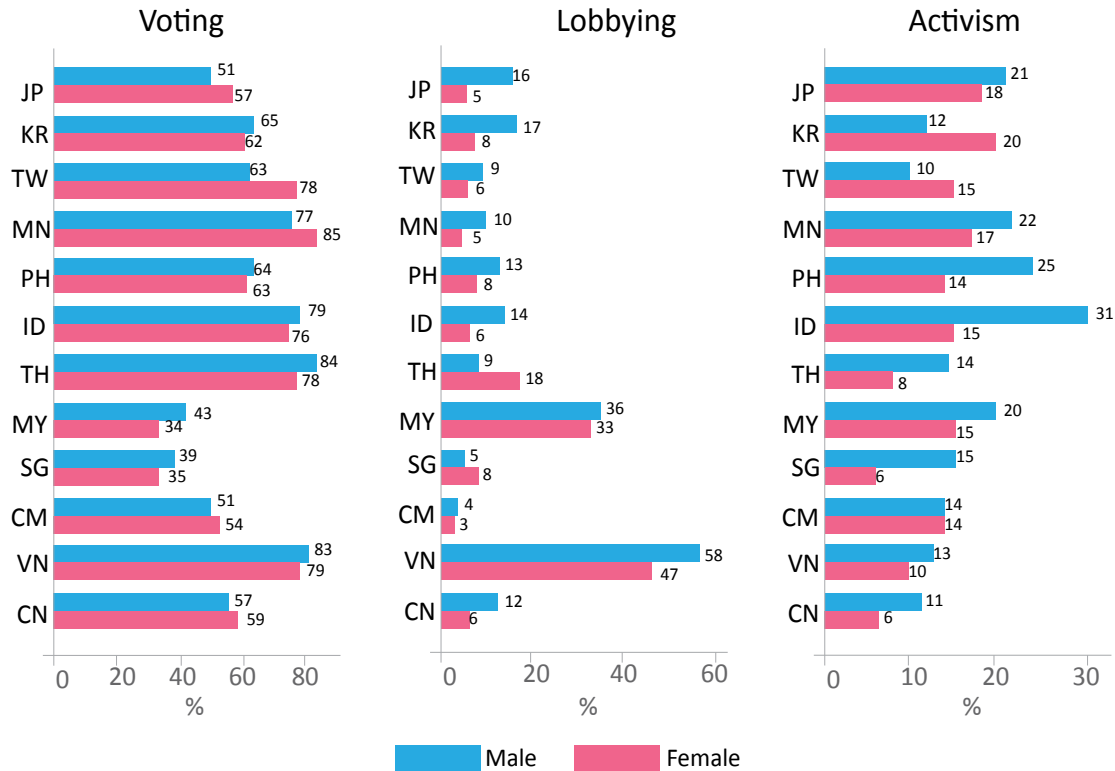
Young women are much less likely to engage in non-electoral participation than young men.

The preponderance of young men’s engagement in lobbying and activism is distinct compared to that of young women across the region, with the exception of only a few societies. Where processes are formally institutionalized and less associated with risks as with elections, women may be more encouraged or empowered to take part,

²⁴ 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. By the same token, ‘Activism’ was defined as one or more 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.

whereas other less formalized channels such as 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.

Political Participation among East and South-East Asian Youth by Gender



Information and communications technology is expanding the opportunities for youth to participate politically.

In overall, frequent Internet users showed a higher rate of engagement in lobbying and activism than infrequent Internet users. 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. As the correlation appears in most of the societies examined, there is good reason to believe that Internet use does in fact influence youth behaviour in terms of political participation and awareness. Noting that web platforms such as Facebook have become important communication channels among youth in many societies in the region, a more thorough examination of the content and types of discussion taking place online is needed, in order to better understand their relevance to political participation among youth, and to leverage Internet as an effective tool for promoting constructive civic engagement.

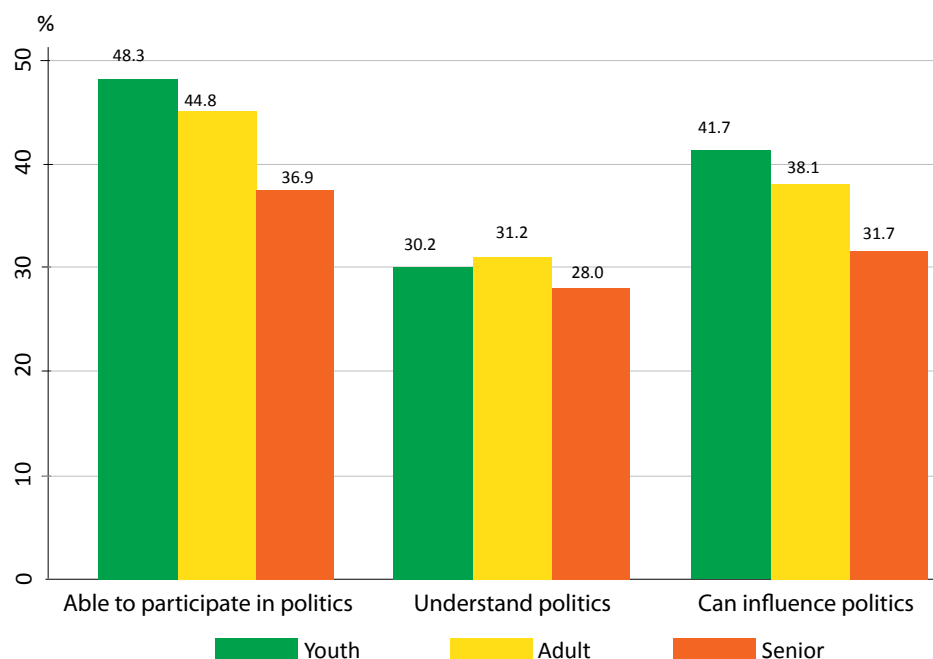
2. Sense of Empowerment

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.

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. Their lesser participation in areas such as voting and lesser psychological involvement in politics compared to older cohorts may therefore be a product of their current life-cycle stage, rather than being fundamentally linked to a lesser sense of empowerment. Effective measures are therefore needed to tap into their potential as active citizens, in recognition that they are yet to be involved in and influence politics to the level of their perceived efficacy as democratic citizens.

Sense of Empowerment by Cohort (average of all societies examined)



Education and experience of political participation help instil and foster a sense of empowerment.

Youth will come to value democratic politics only when they know they can effectively participate in the political sphere, and experience this in practice. While existing practices for participation, such as elections, lobbying and other various forms of activism, should be better geared to attracting the interest of youth, they should highlight the contributions young people can make through those processes. Civil society, governments and other stakeholders should also support creating concrete opportunities both online and offline to encourage youth to adopt active political roles. This may include spaces to practise their political skills such as debating or political lobbying, as well as volunteering opportunities in political campaigns and other occasions that serve social, environmental, or humanitarian causes for the benefit of the public.

Policy recommendations

1

Structural and regulatory changes — opening up new spaces and opportunities among the young for political involvement



- **Make a priority of enhancing youth democratic citizenship in youth policies**

- ◀ Set targets for greater engagement of youth and their participation
- ◀ Set youth empowerment strategies in results-oriented form, measurable in both quantitative and qualitative terms

- **Raise the level of electoral participation among youth**

- ◀ Reduce the voting age and decrease the passive voting age (minimum age requirement for being elected to legislative representative bodies)
- ◀ Make particular efforts to increase young women's participation and representation
 - 🗨 e.g. include young women in quota and target setting for increasing women's representation overall
- ◀ Reach out to first-time voters and increase the franchise of increasingly mobile voters
 - 🗨 e.g. ensure voting facilities are available in places frequented by young people including colleges, universities, shopping centres and workplaces

- **Establish official mechanisms to encourage young people to practise and exercise their political skills**

- ◀ Support youth parliaments or national youth councils and increase their substantial role in policy making and implementation processes
- ◀ Develop dedicated strategies within political parties and civil society to engage youth and to encourage them to participate in public activities

- **Establish enabling environments and spaces for engagement between governments and citizens for regular information sharing, with attention to engaging youth**

- ◀ Provide readily accessible channels for youth to express their concerns and have meaningful dialogues with authorities
 - 🗨 e.g. forums, public hearings, virtual town hall meetings, youth councils at local levels

- ◀ Leverage Internet as a powerful tool for promoting constructive civic engagement, while improving the enabling environment for the use of Internet to thrive
 - e.g. improve and leverage e-government functions to support interactive platforms for policy feedback
 - e.g. provide easily accessible and quality sources online on laws, policies, and related data and statistics

- **Support initiatives that move robust social networks into longer-lasting trust relationships as well as innovative avenues to involve young people more surely in the policy-making processes**

- e.g. innovative partnerships that marry traditional mechanisms of representation with informal, network-based, thematic campaigning organizations to address thematic issues of youth's concerns, such as employment, education, crime and the environment

- **Address the gap between young men and women in levels of political representation, participation and empowerment**

- ◀ Devote special attention to making political engagement relevant and accessible to young women
 - e.g. quotas (and other forms of affirmative action), mentoring and training of young female candidates, gender action plan within political parties taking account of the specific role of young women, and other measures to address the severe imbalances in formal politics
 - e.g. civic education targeted at awareness raising on the relevance of politics to young women's well-being

Capacity development — developing the requisite skills and competences of young people needed for effective participation in the political arena

- **Support effective education for democratic citizenship**

- ◀ Address three interrelated strands of social responsibility; democratic values and civic norms; and capacity building
- ◀ From elementary and secondary schools to institutions of higher education; should be gender-specific and context-appropriate; should outreach to minority communities and socially marginalized groups
- ◀ Inculcate in youth the attitude that political decisions ought to benefit all citizens, and create opportunities for their practical involvement accordingly

2



- **Increase active and direct outreach to young people by policy makers**

- ◀ Encourage them to become involved in policy making as stakeholders early on, which will gradually grow their attachment to political communities as well as sense of efficacy as citizens
- ◀ Target young women specifically in this process

- **Harness Internet and social media for capacity development of youth**

- ◀ Leverage these mediums to enhance youth's political skills and knowledge and to enable expression and exchange of political views
- ◀ To support this process, research further on how Internet and social media 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

3

Youth-specific research and data analysis — 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

- **Increase investment within youth policies in research focused on youth**

- **Disaggregate youth-related data collection, analysis and use by e.g. gender, geographic location, income level, educational attainment, to establish and inform tailored policies for different segments of youth population**

- **Strengthen collaboration with regional and sub-regional institutions to strengthen database at regional level and to facilitate comparative studies**



Published by the Asia-Pacific Regional Centre
United Nations Development Programme
Bangkok
Thailand

Design: Prang Priyatruk
Printer: Advanced Printing Service, Co., Ltd.
Copyright © UNDP, August 2014



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