



A Comparative Survey of

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Democratic Citizenship and
Gender Differences
Among Youth in Asia

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Asian Barometer

A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

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Democratic Citizenship and Gender Differences Among Youth in Asia

Bridget Welsh and Alex Chang

Introduction

As we look at youth in Asia, one of the most important social cleavages is gender. How do young men and women compare with each other? Are young men more likely to be the drivers of political change, or is there increasing gender parity? Do in fact young women or men drive political change? This paper examines the gender gaps among youth in Asia, with special attention to issues of democratic citizenship, namely political attitudes toward involvement in politics, support for democracy, authoritarian/liberal democratic values, views of governance, demands for change, perspectives of gender equality and political participation. We use the Asia Barometer Survey (ABS) third wave, conducted in thirteen countries across the region from 2010 to 2012, to base our analysis. We then look at gender differences among youth, defined as below 30, and compare these differences with older generations, above 30.

Our findings suggest that gender remains an important difference in political behavior, but with regard to democratic citizenship, it is limited in scope. While there are exceptions in different countries, the most important differences have to do with direct involvement in politics, rather than attitudinal differences. An important exception to this is the gender gap towards perspectives of gender equality, where across the region there are differences on the political role of women and attitudes toward women. We also find that gender differences are narrower among younger people, suggesting increasing gender parity over time in political attitudes and behavior in Asia.

Gender Profile of Youth in Asia

Youth in the thirteen East Asian countries comprise 1.1 billion people, making up an average of 47.4% of the populations. Of these, 50.6% are men. The gender differential in terms of wider population is in societies that have practiced strict population control policies. In China, for example, male youth comprises 50.7% of the population of youth. While the numbers of young men and women in Asia are generally on par, there are important differences among them. These differences manifested themselves in the third wave ABS data in the areas of education, perception of income, internet use and religiosity.

First of all, there is a shrinking gender gap with regard to education, with young women finishing levels of education on par with male youth. Table 1 shows that while remains a difference between men and women in Indonesia and Cambodia, and some countries where more women are only finishing primary school such as the Philippines, the most pronounced finding is the higher share of women finishing tertiary education in East Asia. This was particularly evident in Mongolia, Japan, Thailand and Singapore and points to a male gender gap in the area of education.

Table 1: Reported Education Levels among Youth in Asia

	Male			Female		
	Primary	Secondary	University	Primary	Secondary	University
Japan	1.2	57.7	41.2	2.4	50.6	47.1
Korea	0.0	20.6	79.4	0.0	28.1	71.9
Mainland	9.8	63.8	26.4	6.7	68.7	24.6
Mongolia	17.1	40.1	42.8	6.6	39.4	54.0
Philippines	6.5	60.8	32.8	10.7	57.6	31.7
Taiwan	0.0	36.5	63.5	0.0	33.6	66.4
Thailand	15.3	58.2	26.5	13.5	48.7	37.8
Indonesia	23.9	62.0	14.1	27.6	61.6	10.8
Singapore	0.0	43.6	56.4	0.7	39.2	60.1
Vietnam	4.1	73.0	23.0	3.3	70.7	26.0
Cambodia	40.3	50.3	9.5	54.0	38.9	7.1
Malaysia	4.1	71.9	24.0	6.0	69.2	24.9

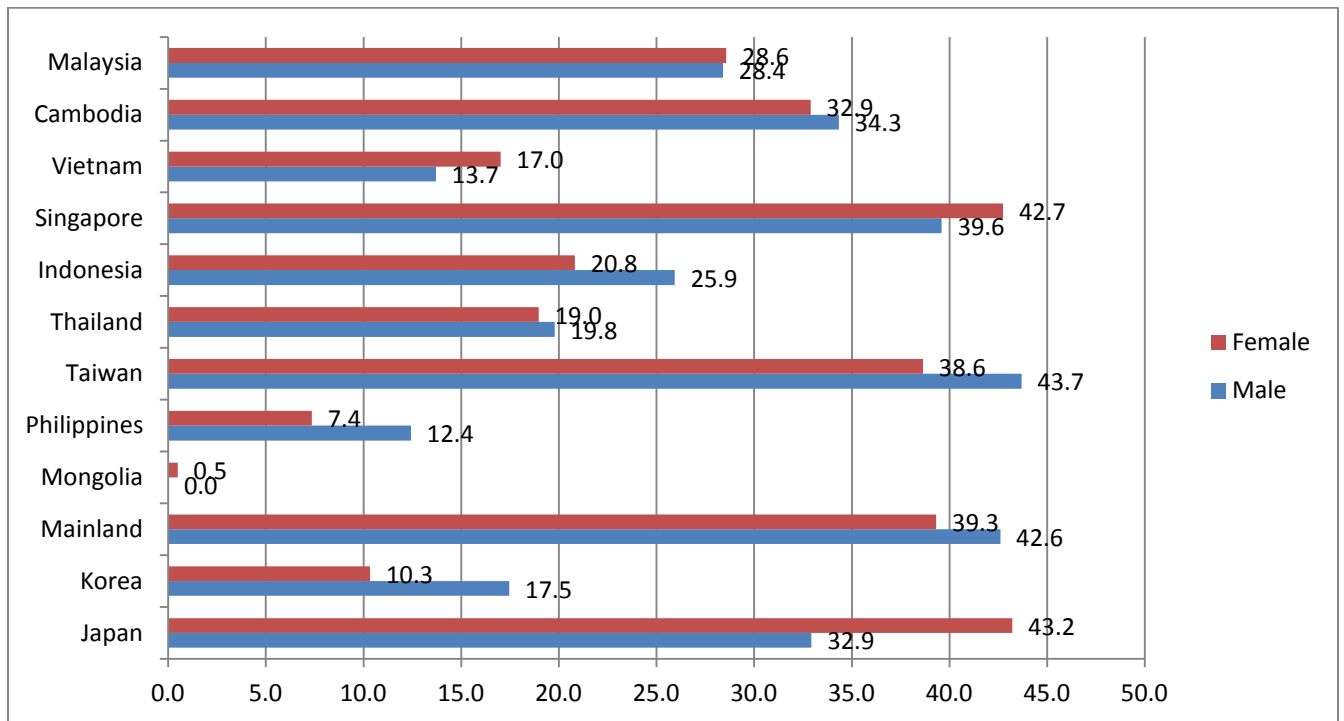
We also find that there are different patterns in East Asia in urbanization of youth. Studies have pointed to the outflows of men from villages, but we find that among youth this is only happening in some of the countries, such as Mongolia and Indonesia. In fact, in countries like Japan and Taiwan, the migration of women to cities is more prominent. The geographic distribution of youth also shows that the capital is not necessary the beacon as in the past, with many moving to smaller cities, notably in China.

Table 2: Urban-Rural Distribution of Youth by Gender

	Male				Female			
	Capital or megacity	Regional centre of other major cities	Small city or town	Village or countryside	Capital or megacity	Regional centre of other major cities	Small city or town	Village or countryside
Japan	7.1	27.1	42.4	23.5	8.2	25.9	51.8	14.1
Korea	59.5	36.6	3.1	0.8	55.1	36.0	6.7	2.3
Mainland	6.8	11.7	20.8	60.7	9.1	11.8	21.3	57.8
Mongolia	41.5	25.0	31.6	2.0	43.2	25.8	24.9	6.1
Philippines	19.4	66.1	14.5	0.0	21.0	65.4	12.7	1.0
Taiwan	19.8	37.5	30.2	12.5	20.9	34.3	30.6	14.2
Thailand	24.5	3.1	26.5	45.9	31.1	7.6	16.0	45.4
Indonesia	15.3	8.6	7.3	68.7	12.3	7.9	7.4	72.8
Singapore	96.4	0.0	3.6	-	97.9	0.7	1.4	-
Vietnam	7.3	14.5	12.1	66.1	15.5	16.2	10.8	57.4
Cambodia	12.9	7.0	80.1	-	11.1	5.3	83.6	-
Malaysia	1.2	13.5	28.1	57.3	2.2	12.4	33.0	52.4

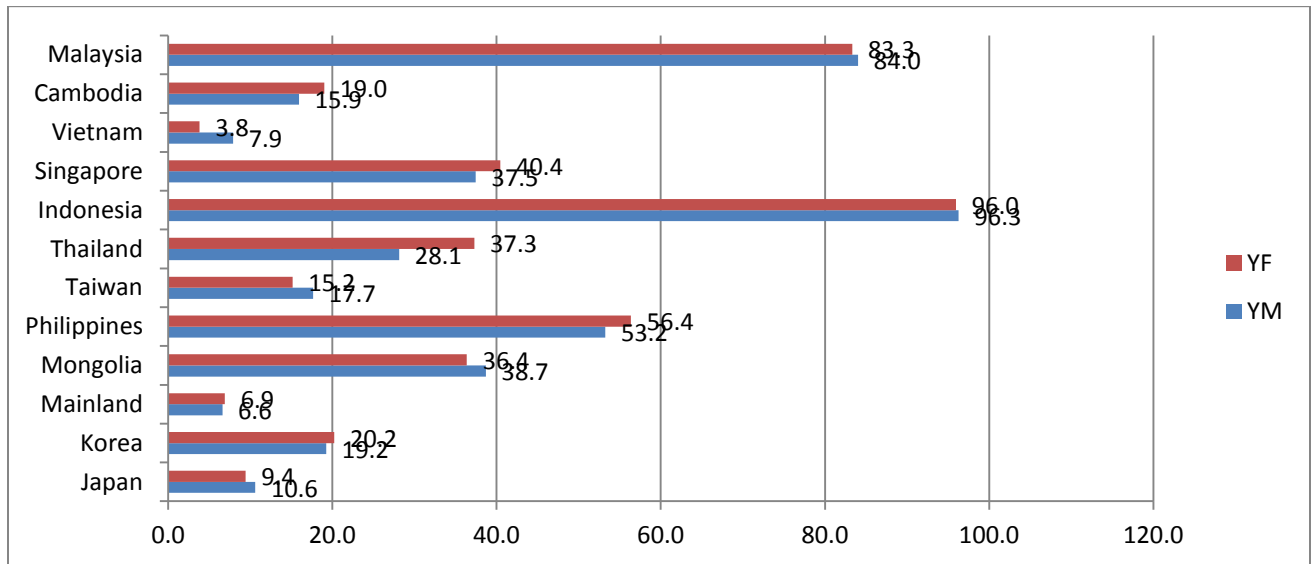
Generally in East Asia, youth have a negative view of whether their incomes cover their needs. What is interesting is that there is not a significant pattern of gender difference over perceived incomes. Chart 1 illustrates the share of young men and women perceive that their incomes as leading to “major” difficulties. In Japan, Singapore and Vietnam more young men perceive shortcoming in their income, while in the Philippines, Taiwan, and Korea the situation is the reverse. There are quite a few countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia, where there is gender parity on this issue. Young men do not necessarily perceive more shortcomings in their incomes compared to women.

Chart 1: Perceptions of Incomes with “Major Difficulties” Meeting Needs by Gender



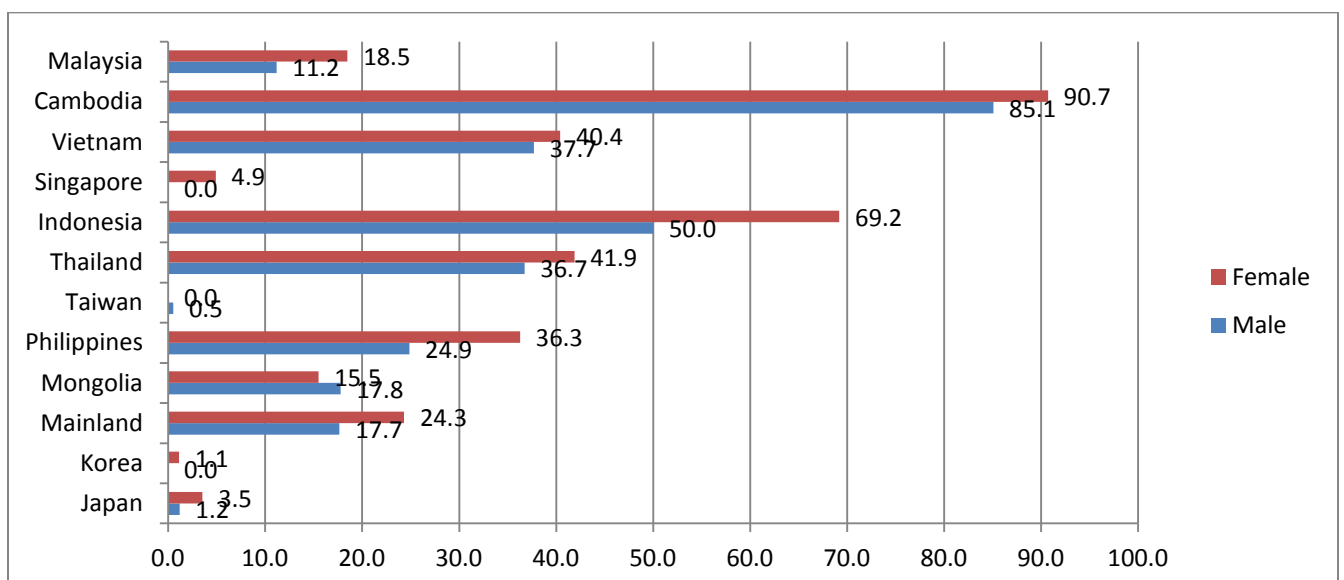
A sharper congruence between young men and women involves religiosity. Young men and women generally are less religious than older citizens, but the levels of religiosity across genders are essentially and consistently on par, as shown in Chart 2 detailing weekly practice of religion. The differences that do exist across countries have to do with religious type, with Islamic countries having higher levels of religiosity.

Chart 2: Religiosity Young Men and Women in Asia (weekly practice)



Where gender differences are prominent among young people in the region is in internet usage. Chart 3 below details the share of young men and women that have never used the internet. It reveals that there is a gender gap in internet use, with more women not using the internet. The gap is largest in more developing societies, such as Indonesia and the Philippines. There are important differences in the region as a whole, as the more developed countries show that internet use among young people is almost complete irrespective of gender, while in Cambodia and Indonesia the majority of young people still do not have access to the internet.

Chart 4: Internet Use among Young People by Gender



Democratic Citizenship: No Major Value Differences by Gender but a Male Democratic Incline

The gender profile suggests that many of the assumptions about young people with regard to education and urbanization need to be reassessed, and in many cases in terms of attitudes gender differences are narrow. It is in the practice of internet use where gaps emerge. This profile foreshadows the findings with regard to democratic citizenship and gender among young people. Generally, there are minimal differences in attitudes and more significant ones in behavior.

Table 3 provides an overview of the overall mean of young men and women for the issues of freedom, support for democracy, assessments of democratic governance, traditional values and interest. The mean is cumulative for all thirteen countries, with the third column capturing the difference between young men and women. Higher means, except in the case of support for democracy, signify less support for democratic citizenship.

Table 3: Attitudes toward Democratic Citizenship among Young People by Gender

	Young Male	Young Female	Difference
Speak Without Fear	2.8	2.84	-0.04
Able to Join Organization	2.85	2.88	-0.03
Government Responsive	2.55	2.52	0.03
Government Pays Attention due to Elections	2.8	2.74	0.06
Almost/Most Corrupt Local	2.48	2.49	-0.01
Almost/Most Corrupt National	2.46	2.47	-0.01
Support for Democracy			
-Democracy Always Preferable	24.92	21.33	3.59
-Authoritarian Rule Preferable	16.56	18.66	-2.1
-Doesn't Matter	58.52	60.01	-1.49
Support Economic Development over Democracy	2.32	2.26	0.06
Reducing Income Inequality over Freedom	2.46	2.37	0.09
Ability to Participate	2.47	2.37	0.1
Politics Too Complicated	2.24	2.13	0.11
Little Influence	2.39	2.34	0.05
Government Like Head Family	2.5	2.48	0.02
Government Should Decide Ideas	2.57	2.59	-0.02
Judges Consult Executive	2.48	2.54	-0.06
Too many ideas lead to Chaos	2.66	2.7	-0.04
Engage Difference with Coworkers	2.88	2.8	0.08
Interested in Politics	2.51	2.39	0.12
Follow News About Politics Often	3.58	3.41	0.17
Talk About Politics Frequently	1.75	1.68	0.07
System Government Needs Major Change	2.63	2.67	-0.04

No Power to Change Government	2.88	2.85	0.03
Democracy Best Form For Us	3.12	3.07	0.05

These findings point to a number of important observations. First of all, there is consistency in attitudes toward democratic citizenship among young and men women across a wide range of issues, from views of freedom to political efficacy. This consistency is the dominant pattern. The data does suggest sharper differences within individual countries, however, but the overall pattern is one of shared outlooks.

It is only in two areas there we find statistically important differences among young men and women. Young women generally see politics as “more complicated” compared to men. This response on political efficacy is a common gender difference found across the globe and it is thus not a surprise that it extends to young people as well in East Asia. Gender assessments of the overall findings of the 2006 and 2011 findings reinforce this pattern, as women feel less confident in their assessment of politics.

The second area where there are differences is with regard to views of democracy. More young men have outright support for democracy compared to young women. This corresponds to the view that more young women in East Asia support authoritarian rule and are more cynical towards whether the type of political system matters. Given these views, more young women also believe the system needs “major change” compared to men. This is a second important observation, young men are more inclined to support democracy than young women.

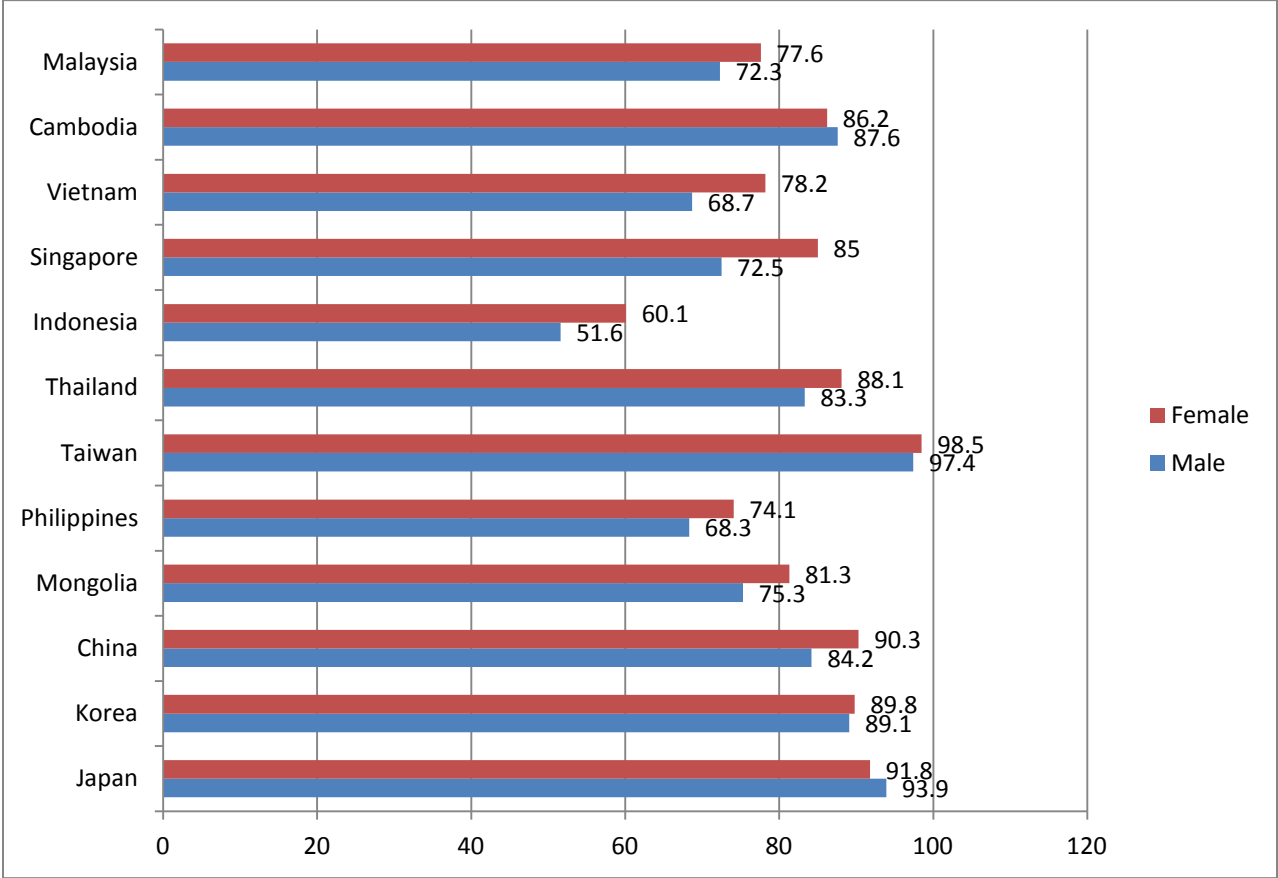
The third area where young men and women differ is in the area of following the news, with women less engaged with politics than men. This is also a broader difference found among men and women globally and in the Asia data across age cohorts. This is an important issue for democratic governance, in that women are less engaged politically while simultaneously more inclined towards authoritarianism.

Conflicting Views of Gender Equality

The attitudinal findings across gender suggest larger differences on the issue of gender equality. The ABS survey asked two questions about gender equality. The first asks about whether women should be able to participate in politics, while the second asks about whether a preference for a boy is appropriate. We find that among youth there are different views by gender, with women generally supporting gender equality to a greater degree.

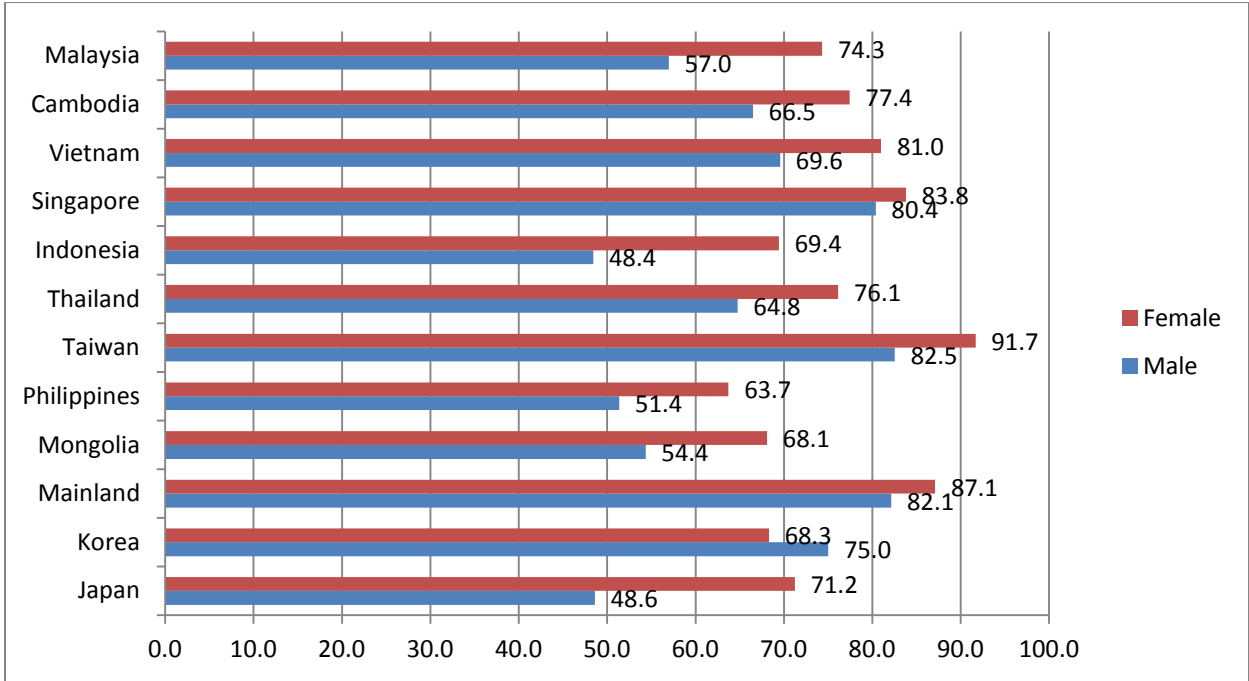
Chart 5 below shows the results from the ABS with regard to views of young people toward women’s participation in politics. Generally, youth support female involvement in politics in high numbers, with overwhelming majorities except in Indonesia. These numbers are higher than older citizens over the age of 30. There are significant gender differences on political gender equality, notably in Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, China, Malaysia and the Philippines. Only in Cambodia and Japan do young men support female participation in politics compared to young women, but these differences are marginal. Compared to the other issues in the study of democratic citizenship, this area is one of the most pronounced areas of gender attitudinal differences.

Chart 5: Youth Views of Whether Women Should Participate in Politics by Gender



The different gender outlooks toward gender equality extend into perspectives of whether to have a boy. Chart 6 shows these differences, mapping the share of individuals that have no preference toward a boy. The gaps in this arena are considerably wider than in politics. This is notable in Japan, Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaysia and Mongolia. This shows a consistent male bias within society.

Chart 6: Youth Views of Social Gender Equality (favoring no gender preference in births) by Gender



A Wider Gender Gap: Participatory Differences

The arena where gender differences become more pronounced is in political behavior. Studies of gender differences in political participation of the ABS data point to two major findings across generations. First, there are minimal gender differences in voting by gender. Rather, it is in other areas of electoral participation where gaps emerge, such as in persuading others to vote or attending a campaign rally. Second, there are fewer differences in electoral participation than non-electoral participation, as women are less likely to petition and protest, or contact officials. The focus on youth shows that there are some differences in the broader pattern, as gender differences among younger East Asia are less pervasive and, importantly, not concentrated to the same degree in non-electoral participation.

We find that young women are less directly engaged in politics compared to young men. Table 4 outlines some of these differences in three areas, persuading others to vote, protest and contacting officials. The results for persuading others to vote show that in electoral participation there is more inconsistency in the gender gap, with some instances such as in the Philippines and Vietnam women engage in persuasion more than men. These are countries that have active women’s movements and operating quotas to promote women’s political participation. In the majority of other countries, a gender gap exists. It is quite pronounced in China, Indonesia and Thailand.

Young men and women rarely protest, despite the prominence of public demonstrations in some countries such as Indonesia. Young men are however more likely across the region to engage in

protest. The gender gap is large in Indonesia, where protests often occur around religious organizations after Friday prayers that are gender segregated. The gender gap among young people involved in protest narrows when examining “more than once” protest, as those who choose to engage regularly though this mode comprise both men and women.

Table 4: Political Participation of Young Men and Women

	Did Not Persuade Vote		Never Protest		Contacted Officials	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Japan	3.61	3.57	84.7	92.9	90.6	95.2
Korea	4.4	1.8	81.4	90.8	n/a	n/a
Mainland	24.3	16.8	88.7	94.2	59.1	65.4
Mongolia	33.6	29.5	90.8	94.3	92.1	95.6
Philippines	15.8	17.2	87.6	91.2	81.7	83.9
Taiwan	5.2	12	90.6	92.5	91.1	91.7
Thailand	21.5	15.8	90.1	91.4	93.4	90.7
Indonesia	22.5	12.1	84.5	93.6	88.9	96
Singapore	9.4	3	95.4	92.9	94.4	97.2
Vietnam	13	6.9	42.4	51.7	81.3	76.6
Cambodia	6.5	3.5	96.4	94.9	93	95.6
Malaysia	7.7	6.7	62.9	67.9	91	94

The results with regard to contacting officials also reveal gender differences, with more men than women participating. Yet, there are two notable exceptions, the Philippines and China, where young women were more likely to contact officials compared to men. This suggests that country-specific conditions can narrow gender differences. Another observation is that the gender differences over contacting officials are quite small, especially when compared to the population at large.

Inter-Generation Gender Differences: A Narrowing Gap

Examining political behavior shows that gender differences do matter in Asia and that policies can be geared toward reducing differences. The ABS data does suggest that Asia is moving toward less gender differences, as attitudes and behavior of youth are evolving toward more gender parity.

Table 5 below captures older and young citizens, with the means for the attitudes towards democratic citizenship. We can assess whether the gender difference are indeed narrowing. On issues of political attitudes we find that gender differences of both young and older citizens are minor. There are marginally narrow differences among youth when compared to older citizens, but there were very minor gender gaps in the first place.

The data also suggests that both men and women are adopting more democratic attitudes. Younger East Asians feel freer to speak out, and are more involved in politics compared to older citizens. This

bodes well for democratic citizenship in the future. Yet, there is one area where this does not conform to the pattern, direct support for democracy. Less men and women state a preference for democracy, with the largest difference between younger and older East Asians among men This inter-generational change suggests that it is important to engage men as well as female youth on democracy, despite younger women having more support for authoritarianism.

Table 5: Attitudes toward Democratic Citizenship by Generation

	Young Male	Young Female	Older Male	Older Female	Difference Younger	Difference Older	Dem Change Male	Dem Change Female
Speak Without Fear	2.8	2.84	2.89	2.86	-0.04	0.03	0.09	0.02
Able to Join Organization	2.85	2.88	2.9	2.9	-0.03	0	0.05	0.02
Government Responsive	2.55	2.52	2.59	2.54	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.02
Government Pay Attention due to Elections	2.8	2.74	2.78	2.76	0.06	0.02	-0.02	0.02
Almost/Most Corrupt Local	2.48	2.49	2.6	2.6	-0.01	0	0.12	0.11
Almost/Most Corrupt National	2.46	2.47	2.59	2.55	-0.01	0.04	0.13	0.08
Support for Democracy								
-Democracy Always Preferable	4.92	1.33	7.42	6.4	3.59	1.02	-7.5	-4.93
-Authoritarian Rule Preferable	16.56	18.66	13.57	20.21	-2.1	-6.64	-2.99	1.55
-Doesn't Matter	58.52	60.01	69	63.39	-1.49	5.61	10.48	3.38
Support Economic Development over Democracy	2.32	2.26	2.37	2.22	0.06	0.15	0.05	-0.04
Reducing Income Inequality over Freedom	2.46	2.37	2.48	2.36	0.09	0.12	0.02	-0.01
Ability to Participate	2.47	2.37	2.43	2.23	0.1	0.2	-0.04	-0.14
Politics Too Complicated	2.24	2.13	2.25	2.09	0.11	0.16	0.01	-0.04
Little Influence	2.39	2.34	2.29	2.21	0.05	0.08	-0.1	-0.13
Government Like Head Family	2.5	2.48	2.51	2.49	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
Government Should Decide Ideas	2.57	2.59	2.58	2.56	-0.02	0.02	0.01	-0.03
Judges Consult Executive	2.48	2.54	2.31	2.41	-0.06	-0.1	-0.17	-0.13
Too many ideas lead to Chaos	2.66	2.7	2.68	2.77	-0.04	-0.09	0.02	0.07
Engage Difference with Coworkers	2.88	2.8	2.91	2.84	0.08	0.07	0.03	0.04
Interested in Politics	2.51	2.39	2.68	2.4	0.12	0.28	0.17	0.01
Follow News About Politics Often	3.58	3.41	4.05	3.71	0.17	0.34	0.47	0.3
Talk About Politics Frequently	1.75	1.68	1.81	1.68	0.07	0.13	0.06	0

System Government Needs Major Change	2.63	2.67	2.73	2.74	-0.04	-0.01	0.1	0.07
No Power to Change Government	2.88	2.85	2.84	2.78	0.03	0.06	-0.04	-0.07
Democracy Best Form For Us	3.12	3.07	3.17	3.12	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05

These two trends – more democratic change and narrower gender differences – extend into political participation, although not consistently. The results are detailed in Table 6 that shows the inter-generational differences. Along the three forms of political participation, youth are more likely to participate, although the differences are less pronounced over protest.

Table 6: Intergenerational Differences in Political Participation

	Contact Officials	Never Protest	Never Persuade Vote
YM	83.1	94	14.5
YF	85.9	96	12
OM	79.2	95	19.1
OF	87.4	96.5	14.4
Difference Young	-2.8	-2	2.5
Difference Older	-8.2	-1.5	4.7
Dem Change Male	3.9	-1	-4.6
Dem Change Female	-1.5	-0.5	-2.4

Tentative Conclusions

This first cut of gender differences among youth highlights that gender is an important cleavage for youth and democratic citizenship. While gender differences are less prominent in political attitudes they do emerge more significantly in political behavior. The data suggests that women are less democratically engaged compared to men. Yet changes over time among men and women, suggest there is a movement away from elements of democratic citizenship, notably direct support for democracy. There remain significant differences over gender equality. Yet, in looking at democratic citizenship, the issue of behavior is the most striking. As such, policies toward changing behavior are crucial to enhance democratic citizenship.

Appendix:

Gender Profile of the ABS Data for Youth (under 30)

	< 30 years of age		> 30 years of age	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Japan	50.0	50.0	47.1	52.9
Korea	59.6	40.5	48.0	52.0
Mainland	46.3	53.8	54.6	45.6
Mongolia	41.6	58.4	45.6	54.4
Philippines	47.6	52.4	51.2	48.8
Taiwan	58.9	41.1	50.8	49.2
Thailand	45.2	54.8	48.8	51.2
Indonesia	44.5	55.5	51.7	48.3
Singapore	43.5	56.5	52.2	47.8
Vietnam	45.5	54.6	57.7	42.3
Cambodia	47.1	52.9	51.6	48.4
Malaysia	48.0	52.0	50.2	49.8