



A Comparative Survey of

*DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT*

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Youth Participation in East Asia

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## **Asian Barometer**

A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

# **Working Paper Series**

Jointly Published by

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# Youth Participation in East Asia

Alex C. H. Chang

The subject of youth participation in politics has been an ongoing concern since the early 1990s (Mulgan and Wilkinson 1995; Park 1998; White, Bruce, and Ritchie 2000; Henn, Weinstein and Wring 2002; Kimberlee 2002; Levine and Lopez 2002; Pacheco 2008; Bennett 1997; Iyengar and Jackman 2003). Researchers have demonstrated that young people are not sufficiently engaged in politics, apathetic, self-centered, and uninterested in the needs of others, less concerned with politics, less politically knowledgeable...etc (O'Toole et al. 2007). The decline in the political involvement of younger generations and the decreasing levels of youth participation not only endanger the democratic representativeness of today, but also jeopardize the democracy of tomorrow.

[Figure 1 Goes Here]

Although the dramatic decline in youth's political participation concerns governments of industrial democracies<sup>1</sup>, this topic has long been neglected in East Asia. While the overall turnouts do not have a significant change, surprisingly, statistics reveals a dramatic withdrawal of youngsters from voting in East Asia. According to the youth turnout rates derived from the Asian Barometer Wave II and Wave III Surveys, as demonstrated in Figure 1, most of East Asian countries have experienced a serious decline in their youth turnouts, except Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam. In Singapore, despite its compulsory voting, the youth turnout even had a

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<sup>1</sup> Levine and Lopez find that the electoral participation of Americans under the age of 25 has consistently declined since 1972. The Labor Government in 1997 also sought to re-engage the youth in society and politics through the New Deal for Young People.

40% drop from 63% to 38%.

[Figure 2 Goes Here]

Figure 2 further depicts the average turnout for youths and adults, respectively. In contrast with adults' electoral participation, youth participation in elections is generally lower than their adult counterparts in all East Asia countries. According to the ABS data, 87% of Asian adults voted in the last election, and 34.6% of them attended the campaign rally, in contrast with the youth's low voting turnout (65.2%) and campaign participation rate (25.6%). In general, the youth's electoral participation rate is generally 30%~40% lower than that of adults. The statistics above enables us to conclude that the declining youth turnout is not only belonging to advanced Western democracies, now it also troubles Eastern Asian countries.

This article aims to take an in-depth investigation on youth participation in politics in this area and to address the following questions: Are Asian youngsters today alienated from, apathetic to, and uninvolved in politics? If yes, why do they decline to engage in politics? If no, what does the decreasing youth voting rate tell us and how should we response to it? To avoid being limited in discussing declining electoral turnout, in addition to youth participation in formal electoral politics, we also examine informal participation such as contacting elected officials and mass media, signing a petition, attending a demonstration or protest march...etc. While the empirical data shows young people are less interested in electoral politics, it demonstrates that in terms of alternative forms of participation, the youth is no less than the older generation.

The second section sets out the arguments and basis for a broader understanding of youth participation, especially focusing on why young people are reluctant to engage in formal politics. Instead of simply viewing the young generation as a subset of the general population, we consider young people as a specific group with their

own particular circumstances and concerns. We divide the youth into four subsets: political alienation, electoral participants, and political activists. Such a configuration not only enables us to figure out why the youth do not participate in elections, but also provides explanation for the incentives behind young activists. The findings derived from the second section further provide suggestions for youth policies. Finally, the third section investigates public policies of industrial democracies, which deliberate on promoting youth's political engagement, especially voting, and discuss their pros and cons. We then conclude by providing feasible proposals for facilitating youth participation in politics.

### **Lifecycle and Youth Participation**

For scholars of conventional studies on youth political engagement, young people are a generation apart when it comes to political attitudes and to political participation rates. Empirical evidence demonstrates that not only do young people turn out in lower numbers to vote than do their older counterparts (Russell *et al.*, 2002), but they have a distinct lack of interest in, have relatively weak commitments to political parties, and are less likely than older people to be members of political organizations (Kimberlee, 2002; Park, 2000; Parry *et al.*, 1992). While the focus of the studies above is on European and American young people and their politics, as shown in the section above, this problem is by no means limited to advanced democracies.

Conventional studies simply attribute the generation difference in political participation to the lifecycle effects (Parry *et al.*, 1992; Verba and Nie, 1972). Scholars assert that unlike older people who have been socialized and hence have accumulative resources through life, as the newcomers of politics, young people are chronically politically apathetic, lack interests and connections with politics (Henn,

Weinstein, and Forrest 2005); less frequently follow political news and discuss politics; and show relatively weak commitments to political parties. As young people become older, socialized and educated, the cumulative voting eligibility in elections will enable them to be more experienced in the electoral and political processes (Quintelier 2007, 173).

[Figure 3 Goes Here]

Indeed, the theory of lifecycle effects provides a probable explanation for the low electoral turnouts of the youth. Nevertheless, this assertion is limited on a number of levels. First, it might oversimplify the difference in turnout rates by attributing it to generation effects. In fact, recent studies show that the youth are no less interested in politics than their predecessors (Quintelier 2007, 176). Similar empirical evidence can also be found in East Asia. As shown in Figure 3, while youth's political apathy in Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia does explain why young people are reluctant to vote in these countries, it is clear that in the rest Asian countries adults and youths do not significantly differ in the degrees of their political interests. In Indonesia the youth are even more interested in politics than the older generation.

[Figure 4 Goes Here]

In addition, the life-cycle theory critiques young people's lack of participation according to a very narrow conception of 'formal' politics – politics that is concerned with the formal institutions of government, the main political parties and traditional forms of political behavior such as voting in elections (Henn *et al.*, 2002). Despite its importance for the regulation of democratic systems, voting is not the only form of political participation. Numerous recent studies show that new forms of participation has diverted the youth from traditional forms of political engagement practiced by the older generation (Quintelier 2007, 165; Norris 2003, Bang 2005). A growing number of young people have enthusiastically joined consumer politics, petitioning,

demonstrations, protests and lobbying. Figure 4 compares generation difference in lobbying and participating self-help activities. Although adults are still more likely to engage in informal participation than youths (56% vs. 54%), the generation difference in the participation rate has been shrunk. It further shows that in China, Philippine, Indonesia, Mongolia, and Singapore, young people even more frequently participate in informal politics than the old people.

Together with empirical evidence, the preliminary analysis above provides following guidelines for further investigations. First of all, despite its invalid observation of youth's interests in politics, the lifecycle theory points out that young people have their individual lifestyles and have faced various 'start-up' problems that confront them. Recent research has pointed out the mistakes of recent quantitative analyses of youth studies. Instead of specifically distinguishing the youth from the rest sample, the quantitative analyses pull all generation together and derive their analytical statistics. Such an analysis implies that the youth have to be "like their predecessors", which apparently ignores the fundamental difference between the youth and the general population. Therefore, instead of being a subset of the general population, the youth should be viewed as a specific group with their own particular circumstances and concerns.

In addition, the narrow and adult-oriented conception of politics delimits conventional studies on the youth participation in politics (O'Toole et al. 2007, 45). Pleyers (2005) asserts that due to the influence from individualism and the disappointment with politics, democracy, and institutions, young people have developed less institutionalized and more individualized forms of participation. Thus, understanding the new forms and resources of participation is prerequisite. Last, but not the least, although voting is not the only form of electoral participation, youth's rejection of conventional political participation remains a crucial issue regarding

democracies. Thus, understanding the reasons behind young generation’s reluctance to vote is also important.

Based on the discussion above, we classify the youth into four groups along with whether they participate in formal and informal politics. For those who had hardly ever voted in elections and participated in informal politics, we identify them as political apathy. If young respondents only engage in formal electoral activities, we classify them as citizenship. If they do not participate in elections, but enthusiastically participate in informal politics, we define them as apolitical activists because instead of relying on representative politics, they exert the influence via informal approaches such as lobbying, petitioning, or demonstration. Finally, for those who not only participate in elections, but also lobby or/and protest, we identify them as skillful activists. By comparing the four different types of youngsters’ attitude toward politics, we can figure out why the youth abstain from voting and why activists engage in informal participation.

Table 1 Four Types of Youth Participation

Informal Participation Formal Participation	Non Active	Active
Hardly ever	Political Apathy	Apolitical Activists
Had participated	Citizenship	Skillful Activists

Based on the classification above, Figure 5 demonstrates the distribution of youth participation in East Asian countries. First of all, as shown above, in contrast with other types of regime, developed democracies generally have high proportion of youth population who are reluctant to vote. The alienation of the youth from mainstream politics might be due to their general disappointment with government

performance. No matter which party is in the office, the quality of governance is consistently low. For instance, in Feb 2009, the former Japanese Prime Minister Aso's approval rating was down to 19%, which resulted in the defeat of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the 45<sup>th</sup> general election. Although the Democratic Party of Japan replaced the LDP, Japanese citizens remained unsatisfied with Prime Minister Hatoyama and his administration. In May 2010, Hatoyama's cabinet had an embarrassing approval rating of 21 percent. Similarly, in Taiwan the KMT President Ma Yin-jeou defeated the DPP and retrieved the dominance in 2008. Nevertheless, his approval rating fell to 21% in September.

In contrast with developed democracy, the youth's electoral participation rates in developing countries seem higher, except Philippine in which the competitive and regular elections have been held since 1992, but the quality of governance has been consistently disappointed. Mongolia's high youth participation is mainly due to the new installation of democratic elections. For citizens who have been ruled under the Soviet Mongolia, the new inspiring democratic mechanism encourages them to participate in politics. The high youth turnout rates in Thailand and Indonesia are mainly because of the compulsory voting and proportional representation of the electoral systems, respectively. Finally, Figure 5 shows that hybrid regime and communist authoritarian regime have relatively great variation in their youth participation. While Cambodia and Vietnam enjoy high youth turnout because of the new installation of elections, China, Singapore, and Malaysia are troubled with youth's disengagement in electoral participation. Especially in Singapore, about 70% of young voters had hardly voted in elections.

### **Personal Backgrounds and Participation**

What makes the youth disengage with formal politics? Conventional studies

attribute the political alienation of the youth to their personal traits, such as education status, and incomes. Scholars generally agree that better educated citizens are more likely to engage in politics and to become involved in various political activities (Lake and Huckfeldt 1998, 567; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995; Park 1998). Nie, Verba, and Kim (1974) investigate a cross-national data of political participation and asset that educational levels play a determinant role behind the life effects. They find that after correcting for education, the activity score for the oldest age group rises, but that for the young people goes down. This is mainly due to the different roles the youth and the adult play in the society. As the youth are aging, their levels of education increase, as well as their engagement with political activities (Quintelier 2007). Similarly, employment and income are also important to citizenship (Pixley 1993; Park 1998). In contrast with the older generation who are equipped with full-time jobs and stable salaries, part-time salary and instable income concerns youngsters and might impede them from participating politics (Bessant 2005, 396).

[Figure 6 Goes Here]

Empirical evidence from Asian Barometer Survey presents a different story. As shown in Figure 6, firstly, we find that due to economic prosperity and compulsory education, in contrast with the older generation, youngsters actually enjoy higher education levels and household income. Nevertheless, economic abundance and high education level do not encourage Asian youngsters to participate in political activities, nor can these factors be applied to explain the variation in political participation among youngsters. While political apathists have lowest education level and apolitical activists have the highest household incomes, the rest groups of youngsters show not significant difference in education and income. In other words, the variation in the socio-economic background of the youth cannot explain why they are reluctant to vote.

## **Psychological Perspective**

Instead of relying on respondents' social-economic backgrounds, recent studies investigate the low political participation of the youth from a psychological perspective. Pirie and Worcester (2000) find that the youth alienation can be attributed to the decreasing relevance of political activities and organizations to their lives. Due to the rapid social change, in contrast with older generation, youngsters have to face more complicated and less structured political environment in their early age (Sloam 2007, 552). This thus leads to the awareness of self-determination and individualism which weakens the sense of common purpose and ownership, as well as the connection between individuals and states (Mulgan and Wilkinson 1995, 10). Thus, young people are uninterested in social and political issues (Wilkinson & Mulgan, 1995; Wilkinson, 1996; Hackett, 1997). Instead, they turn their foci on new issues like homelessness, the environment, health, education, war and international affairs, and gender (Park 1998; Henn 2005, 656).

Objectively, as shown in the previous section, Asian youngsters has equipped with high levels of education and wealth, which should enable them to engage in politics. However, subjectively, youngsters simply do not vote because they feel formal politics neither meets their concerns nor addresses their needs, or they do not think their votes will make any difference. Therefore, some of them isolate themselves from political environment and show disappointment and indifference toward politics. Other activists focus more on "life-politics", which is centered on the experiences of individuals and turn to alternative forms of political participation.

[Figure 7 Goes Here]

Figure 7 demonstrates the relationship between political participation of the youth and their empowerment. First of all, we find that young and old generations do

not significantly differ in the degree of political efficacy; the former, in fact, is even slightly higher than the later. In other word, in general the Asian youth neither subjectively perceive that they are less ready to participate in politics than the old generation, nor they think they cannot replace a unpopular government. Nevertheless, while looking into the youth population, we do find that subjective empowerment matters to the youth participation in electoral and informal activities. Non-activists and activists do not significantly differ in their subjective ability of understanding politics, but in their capability of engaging in politics. In contrast with those who do not engage in informal politics, active youngsters generally have high confidence on their ability to participate in politics and to influence policy outcome. Such a belief encourages them to devote to alternative forms of participation. Contrarily, although young apathists do not agree that politics is out of their knowledge, they are anxious with their abilities to participate in politics and to change an unpopular government. The feeling of political powerlessness hinders them from participating in political activities, including voting, of course, and pursuing political change.

[Figure 7 Goes Here]

Figure 7 demonstrates the distribution of the most important problem in respondents' countries. Due to the prevalence of Asian values, which prioritizes economic development, economic related issues concern the public the most. More than 60% of respondents replied wages, incomes, unemployment, poverty, inflation...etc as the most important issues in their countries. In other words, unlike Western studies on the youth population, which emphasizes the specific interests of the youth, our finding shows that Asian youths and adults do not significantly differ in their foci on public issues. Furthermore, while both youths and adults generally concentrate on economic issues, non-active and active youngsters have different foci on the pubic issues. In contrast with other youngsters, political apathists and electoral

participants are more concerned with environmental and infrastructural issues surrounding their daily life, but neglect political issues related to political parties, governance, corruption...etc. Contrarily, young activists focus more on issues related to governance and politics, including corrupting, government efficiency, political instability...etc. Apolitical activists especially focus on social issues such as crimes and social security. This finding is coincident with Beck (2001) and Farthing (2010). Due to the general under-development and cultural homogeneity of this area, Asian youth do not specially focus on new issues such as environment, nuclear powers, health...etc. Nevertheless, they internalize the old concerns as issues related to their own interests and political ambitions.

### **Perception of Institution and Participation**

Other scholars assert that the disconnection of young people from formal politics in terms of voting, party membership and conventional political activity reflects their grievance against political institutions, and their frustration and powerlessness regarding the politics. From the youth's perspective, old political structures are ill-equipped to deal with either individualized actions or global issues. Thus, the youth frame the old questions as new questions with new responses by embedding these concerns in a matrix of individual responses (Beck 2001; Farthing 2010, 198). Instead of following the formal political approach to express their opinions, the youth act for change.

[Figure 9 Goes Here]

Since the ABS covers 13 East Asian counties, the variation in regime types might significantly influence the youth's attitudes toward and perception of institutions, in Figure 9 we classify the 13 countries into four groups, developed democracy (Japan, Korea, and Taiwan), developing democracy (Mongolia, Philippine,

Thailand, and Indonesia), hybrid regime (Singapore, Cambodia, and Malaysia), and authoritarian regime (Vietnam and China). The figure depicts different kinds of youth's perception of elections and general trust in political institutions. First of all, in developed democratic regimes, our finding is similar to Beck (2001) and Farthing (2010), showing that in contrast with apathists and electoral participants, activists have relatively low trust in political institutions and tend to disbelieve that people are capable of holding the government responsible for its action. Due to their distrust in the deterioration, impotence, and corruption of political institutions, activists perceive that the government cannot understand and tackle their demands. Thus, they refuse to delegate their powers to representatives and to express their grievance via conventional institutionalized approaches. Instead, young activists directly exert personal influence via informal approaches, through which they will more efficiently achieve their goals.

In contrast with their counterpart in developed democracies, the activists in developing democracies and hybrid regimes have higher trust in political intuitions than non-activists. Did they trust political institutions, why do they not follow the institutional approaches to pursue their goals and to express their dissatisfaction? Hybrid and developing democratic regimes are generally featured with its uninstitutionalized political systems. While the uninstitutionalized structure inevitably results in high uncertainty, which leads to the increases in the information and transaction costs, it also provides a great deal of rents for activists, who seek to minimize their transaction cost and improve personal gains. For instance, rent seekers may lobby tax officials in order to lighten their tax burden. Vendors might also bribe the police for getting permissions or licenses. Although young activists might not really be able to get rents, nevertheless, the strong belief that they are capable of exerting their informal influence to improve individual wealth in such a political and

social circumstance encourages them to rationally support and trust the uninstitutionalized institutions.

In authoritarian regimes such as Vietnam and China, in contrast with other youngsters, Figure 9 shows that political apathists have the lowest support and trust for the institution. Despite the new installation of electoral mechanism, the local elections neither provide real choices for the electorate, nor do they possibly hold the disappointed communist government accountable for its policy. The frustration thus discourages their political involvement in both formal and informal political activities.

### **Social Capital and Participation**

In addition to the youth's psychological perception, scholars also investigate the low youth participation from the perspective of social network. They assert that social capital is the product of intentional activities, in which individuals connect each other by ongoing networks of social relationships (Lake and Huckfeldt 1998, 569). Through the intensive social network, social norms, values, virtues, and democratic attitudes are conveyed (Putnam, 1993). Thus, social capital has been proved to practice socialization effects (Putnam, 2000), to enhance mutual understanding among citizens, and to foster feelings of tolerance, generalized trust and norms of reciprocity (Stolle 2001; Mutz 2002). Recent studies indicate that people with abundant social capital tend to participate in social and political affairs and take collective actions for the common good (Putnam 2000; Putnam 1993; Lane 1959).

ABS measures social capital from four perspectives: it asked respondents to reply how many memberships of organizations or associations they have. Membership of associations and organizations provides chances for interacting with other people sharing similar interests, for cumulating social capital, and for developing trust in others (Boix and Posner 1998; Hooghe 2003). In addition, we

measure their reciprocal relationships by asking whether there are people respondents can ask for help and whether there are people come to them for help. Finally, we measure the neighborhood effect by asking them: *In your neighborhood or community, do people voice their interests and concerns in local affairs?* While the youth and the adult do not significantly differ in the last three dimensions, Figure 9 shows that the average membership of the adult is higher than that of young people. The right hand side of Figure 10 further presents a positive relationship between social capital and political participation. In contrast with other youngsters, political apathists have relatively few reciprocal relationships and memberships. Furthermore, because their neighbors and community members are less likely to voice their grievance, political apathists prefer to be acquiescent toward public affairs. On the contrary, we find that memberships of associations, strong reciprocal networks, and neighbors who are enthusiastic with local affairs not only encourage young activists to participate in electoral politics, but also drive them to exert their influence via informal political approaches.

### **Conclusion: Youth Policy for Participation**

Duo to the serious decline in youth turnout, to bring youngsters back to vote, Western democracies heavily rely on civil education to solve this problem (Farthing 2010, 183). The education aims to convey an understanding of and commitment to democratic systems of government, laws, and civic life, to build the capacity of clarifying and critically examining democratic values and principles, and to spread the knowledge, skills and values necessary for citizenship. While scholars generally doubt the efficacy of these indoctrinative and boring materials, we also think such a policy neither suits nor works in East Asia.

As discussed above, due to the rapid economic growth, compulsory education,

and the prevailing Asian values which emphasizes the importance of education, Asian youngsters initially own higher education level than the older generation. In addition, the education implies an adult-center belief and encourages the youth to “act like your parents”. The youth do not appreciate such a doctrinaire education. Instead, they might label it as “brainwashing”. For example, the plans to adopt Chinese civic education into the Hong Kong public school curriculum sparked protests among residents in July 2012. More than 90,000 people spoke out and demonstrated against introducing a "Moral and National Education" subject. In short, civil education policy neither directly addresses the fundamental problems of youth disengagement, nor does it respect the youth’s specialties and autonomy. Instead, its doctrinism might enlarge the generation gap and further ignite the conflicts between youths and adults.

To address the declining youth turnout, based on the discussion above and the empirical data from the ABS, we assert that government should deal with this problem from the perspective of youths, instead from the perspective of adults. First of all, fundamentally, the stereotype of youngsters should be removed. Youngsters are generally considered as apathetic, self-centered, less experienced and educated, and uninterested in the needs of others. Asian tradition encourages the youth to only focus on their studying and even warns them against involving politics. In sum, traditionally, “no politics for young men”! Such a hierarchical, adult-centered, discriminating, and unfair prejudgement should be abolished. In other words, it is not the youth who need to be reeducated, but the adult!

In addition, youth policies should directly cope with their feelings of alienation, powerlessness, frustration, and disappointment toward the politics. On the one hand, as emphasized above, young apathists believe that the government is too corrupt to understand and deal with people’s demands. Such a belief stops them from being contaminated. On the other hand, even though youngsters are interested in politics,

the fundamental “one man, one vote” principle of democracy discourages their participation because due to the minority status, they cannot make any change without cooperating with the adult politicians disgusted them. Together with the feelings of disappointment and powerlessness, youngsters are generally frustrated with politics.

Last, but not the least, the government should promote an easy and accessible approach for youth participation. Such an approach, at least, should satisfy the following three demands: First, it should ensure the youth to freely speak to and associate with other youngsters who share similar interests and hobbies. Figure 11 demonstrates the relationship between youth participation and their perception of freedoms. It clearly shows that in contrast with activists, non-activists perceive that freedoms of speech and association are relatively constrained. Second, it should encourage youngster to interact with other and foster them to cumulative social capital. Finally, it should be accessible for most of youngsters.

Based on the discussion above, we provide the following suggestions for future youth policies. First, funding and supporting participatory projects that could allow young people to pursue their own political forms. Instead of requiring the youth to follow the designated forms of political participation, government should encourage and inspire the youth to pursue their forms of participation and activities. The activities are not necessarily “political”, but “mutually beneficial”. By participating in such an activity, youngsters not only can help others, but also acquire self-fulfillment from their contributions. For instance, Australian Inspire Foundation’s ActNow project invites the direct involvement of young people to its online programs that contribute to a reduction in youth suicide. The project energizes the youth to get involved into a serious social problem: mental health of the youth. It not only provides special online courses for training young experts, but also let them to practically help youngsters in need and enables young volunteers to chat with each

other in order to share their experience. Through such an inspiring project, youngsters not only learn expertise about mental health, they can even make contributions and result in some real change. The feeling of self-fulfillment entangles the youth with the society, and further drives them to care more about other public issues.

Second, despite their minority status, the government should try to include the youth into the decision making process of youth policies and empower them to have more say in acts related to their own interests. First of all, the youth need to have their representatives in the legislature. Instead of having “young” representatives, the more important point is to have representatives who speak for the youth and to enable the youth to exert their influence in the legislative branch. In addition, we encourage the government to adopt power sharing structure, which emphasizes the consent of minorities. Although the youth might not be able to pass their own bills due to their minority status, the constitution may grant them veto power in youth related acts in order to protect their own rights. Such a constitutional configuration not only forces adult politicians to cooperate with the youth, but also maximize the influence of the youth in making youth policies.

Finally, we suggest the government to improve the infrastructure of the Internet and promote the electronic participation in politics, including online discussion, visual associations, and political chat rooms. Iyengar and Jackman (2003) find that despite the low youth participation rates in politics, they enjoy a massive advantage in surfing the Internet and using information technology. Therefore, they suggest a combination of politics and political participation and assert that it will enhance youth engagement in politics. Because of its low entry barrier, convenience, accessibility, the Internet could lower the cost of involvement, create new mechanisms for organizing associations, and convey information without the intervention from the government. Given the advantages above, the Internet can provide an ideal platform for

youngsters' political participation.

Indeed, empirical evidence did not indicate that the Internet plays an important role in transforming patterns of political participation. Nevertheless, no one can deny and ignore the continuing diffusion of the Internet. According to Gennaro and Dutton (2006), online political participation remains less common than offline political participation. They also find that online political participation was reinforcing and in some cases exacerbating existing social inequalities in offline politics. However, because they define online political participation as email MP and councilor, and looking for political information, their narrow definition of political participation, unfortunately, biases their findings and hence underestimates the influence of the Internet on the public, especially the youth. In addition, the data they apply is the 2005 Oxford Internet Survey, but the Internet has been changed dramatically, and the entry barrier of participation is even much lower than it was used to be. Nowadays, Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, and online chat rooms are all ready and have become the efficient channel for participating visual politics. By one clicks they can send their opinions to the Internet and broadcast them to the public. People now can even get access to the Internet anytime and anywhere via their mobile phone! Had Gennaro and Dutton broaden their definition of political participation and proceeded with their Internet survey today, the result would be completely different.

Despite its convenience, there are some basic points the government has to be aware of. First, the government has to keep in mind that the Internet is a two-edged sword. While it provides political information and encourages people to engage in and discuss politics, it also conveys people's frustration and the disappointment toward politics. Therefore, the government has to regularly collect information online, and has better reply the questions, requests, comments, and suggestions immediately if possible. In addition, to promote Internet usage, the government only has to take care

of its infrastructure, such as the bandwidth, the spread of broadband, the monthly fee, the accessibility of the wireless Internet...etc. In spite of any circumstance, the government has better leave the Internet to its users. Censoring the Internet is not only arduous, but useless. It might even ignite people's discontent with the government.

Figure 1 Declining Youth Turnout in East Asia

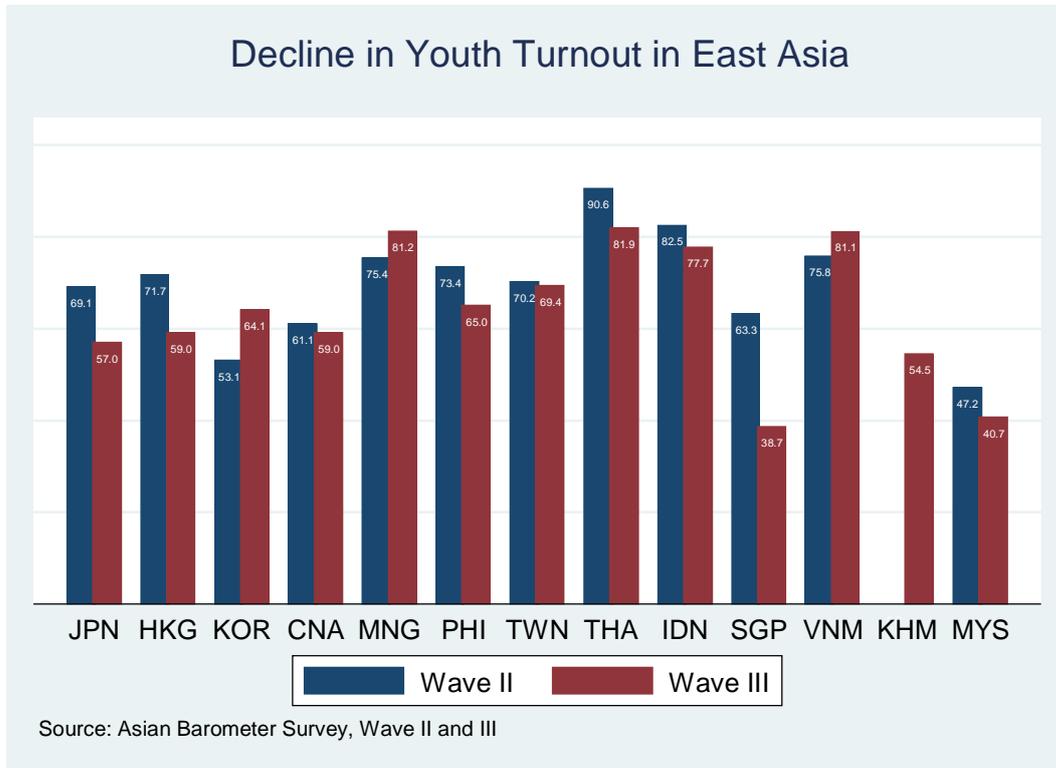


Figure 2. Average Turnout of Youth and Adult

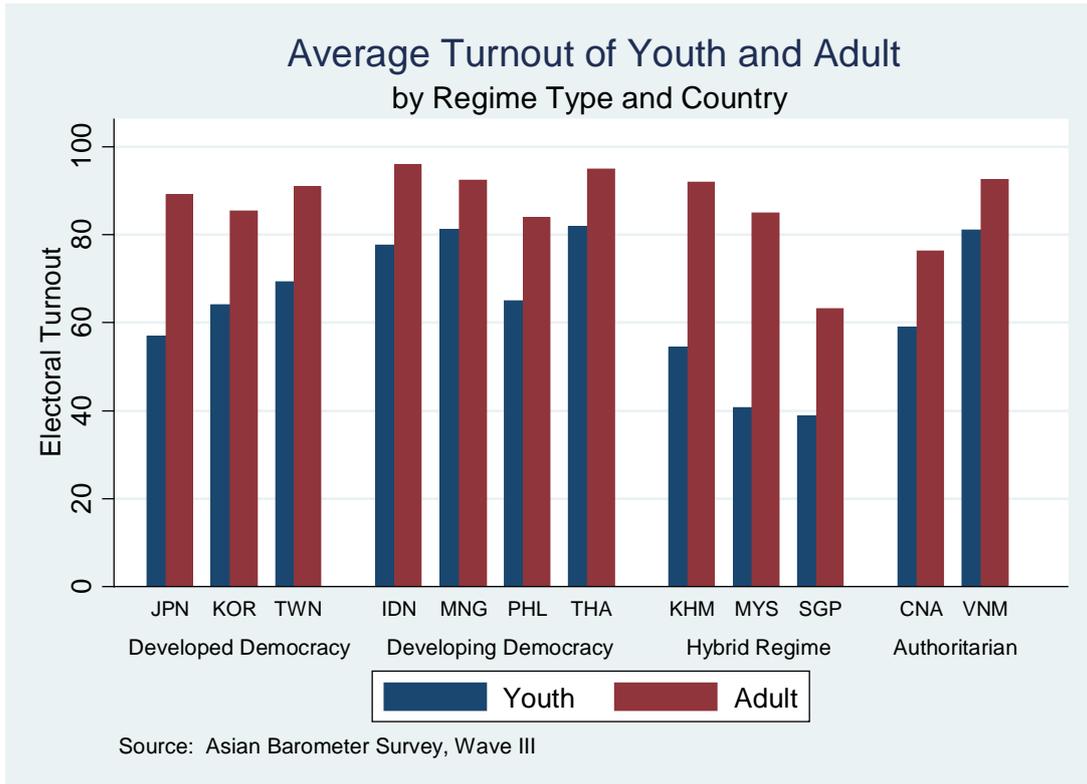


Figure 3 Political Interests of Youth and Adult

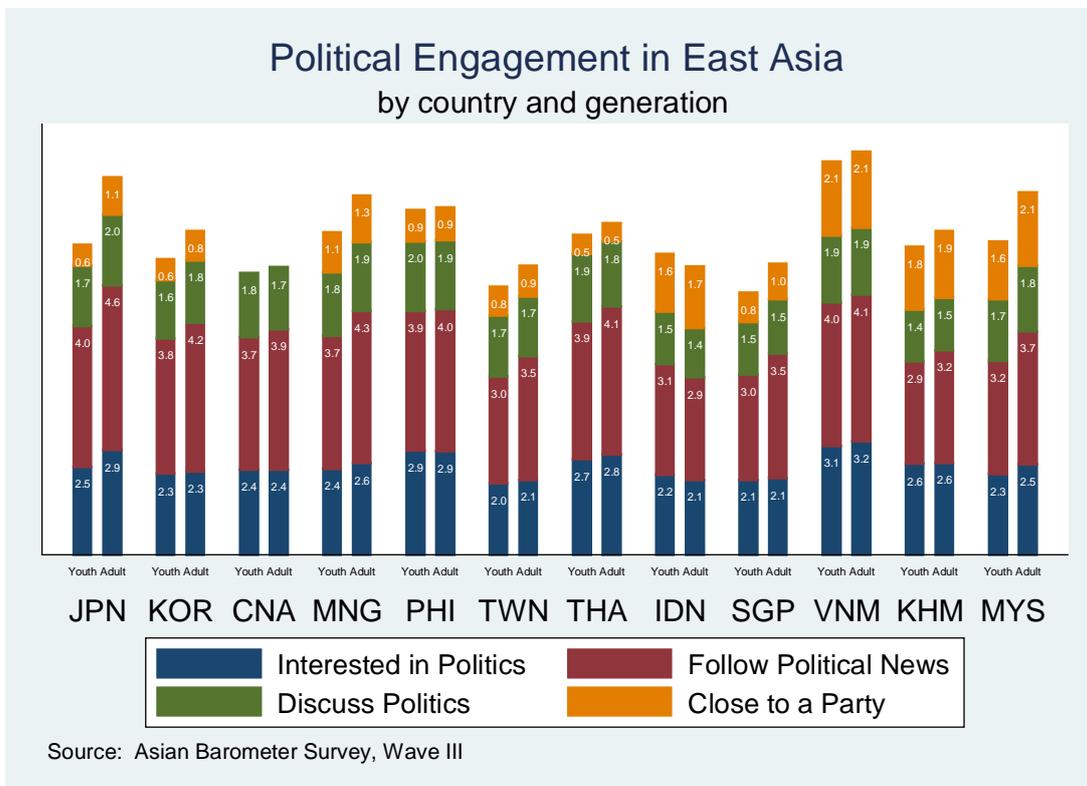
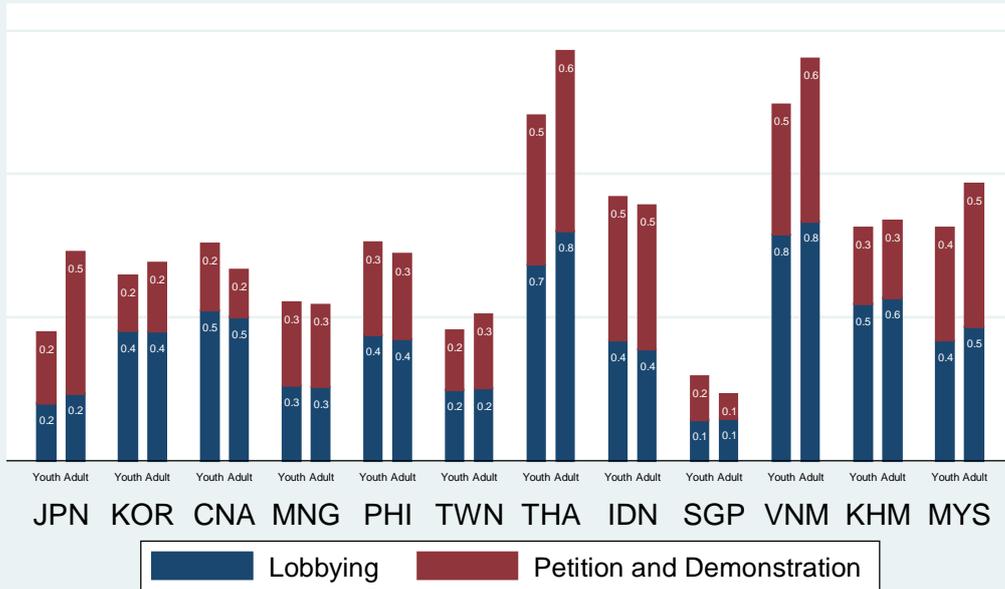


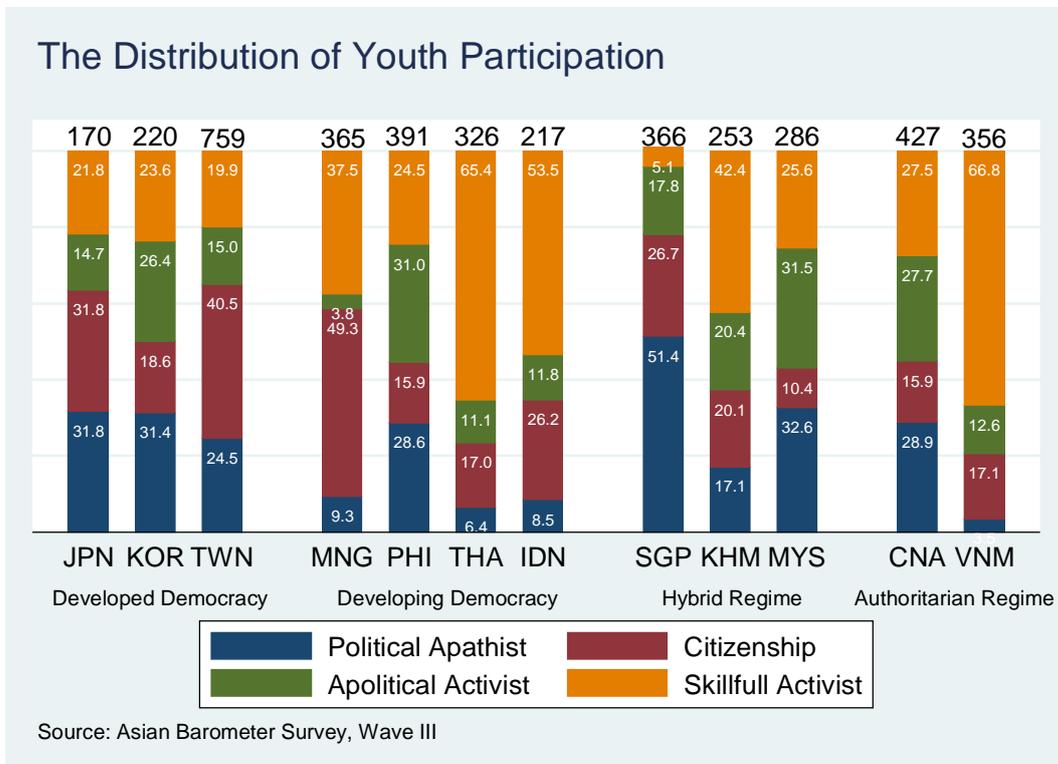
Figure 4 Alternative Forms of Participation of Youth and Adult

## Alternative Forms of Participation of Youth and Adults



Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Wave III

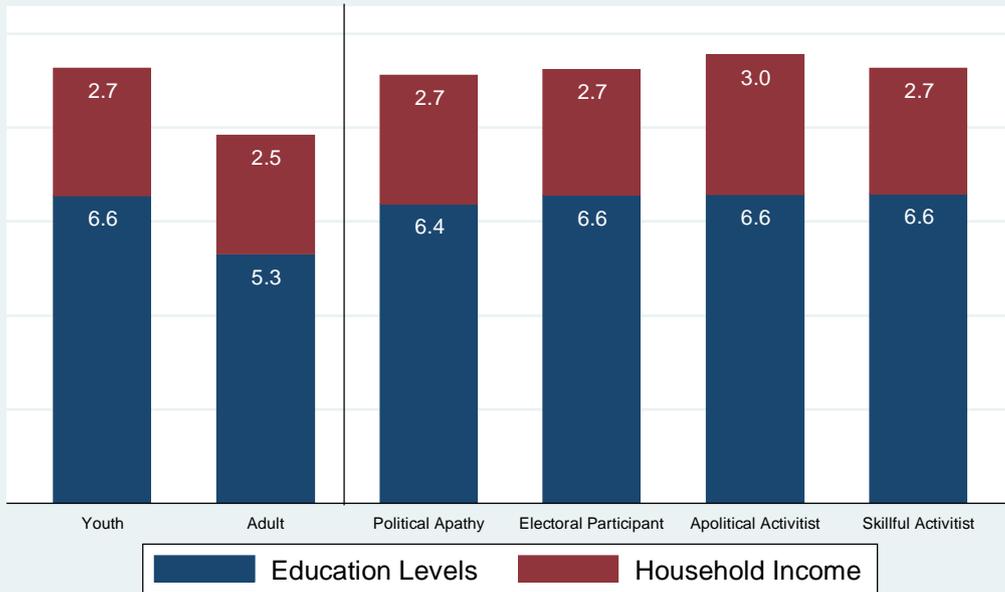
Figure 5 The Distribution of Youth Participation in East Asia



Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Wave III

Figure 6 Background Traits and Participation

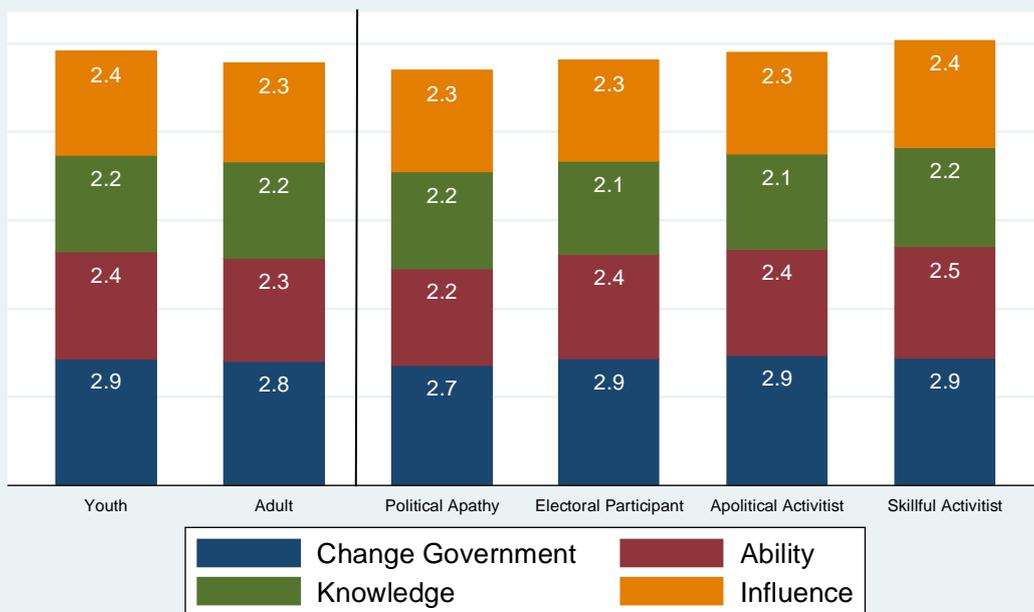
## Background Traits and Participation



Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Wave III

Figure 7 Political Efficacy and Youth Participation

## Political Empowerment of Youth and Adult



Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Wave III

Figure 8. Issues of Most Concern to the Youth

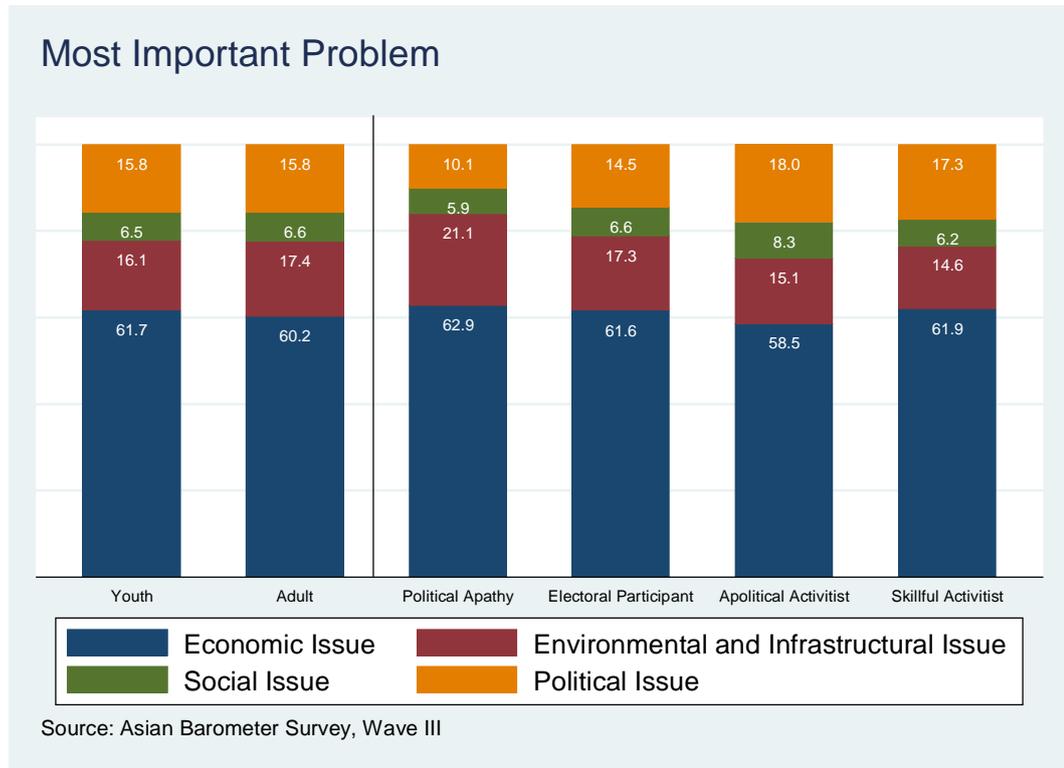


Figure 9 Youth's Perception of Election and Political Institution

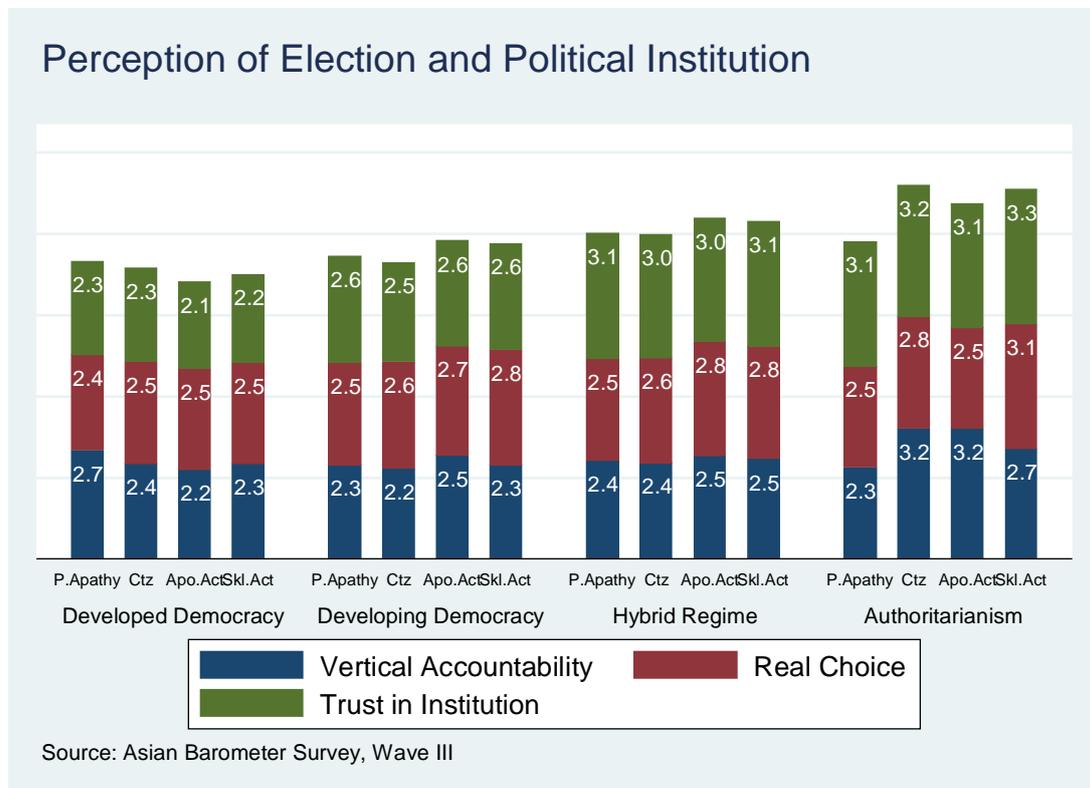


Figure 10 Social Capital and Youth Participation

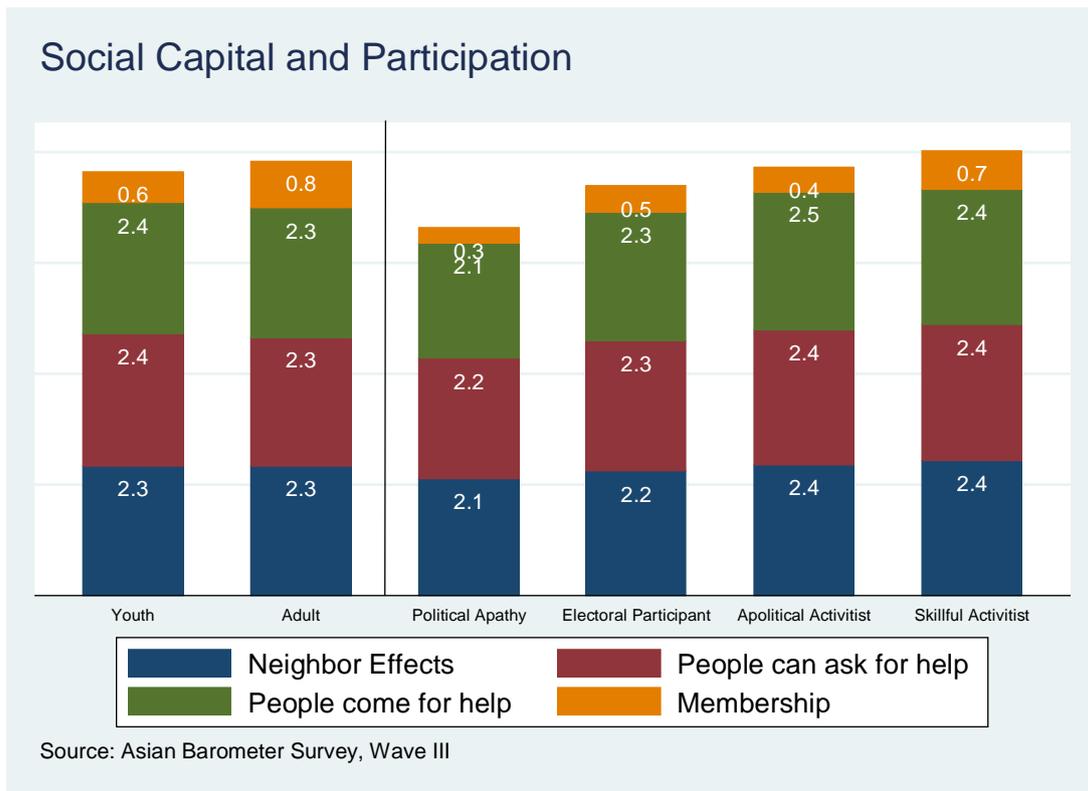
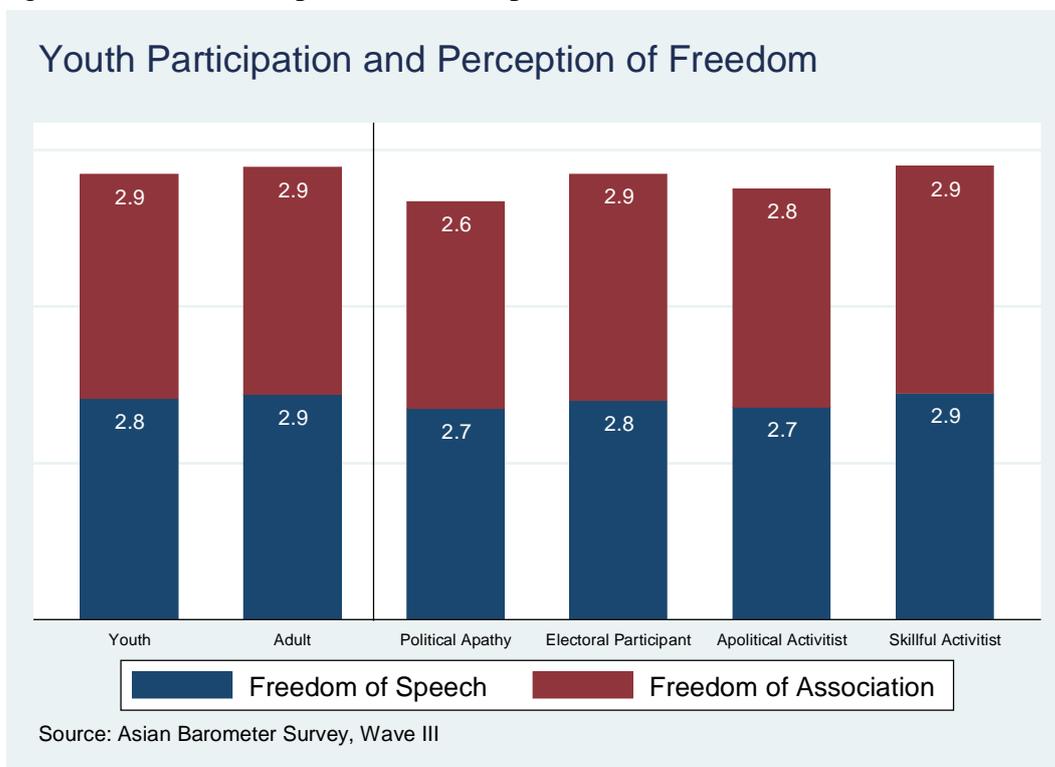


Figure 11 Youth Participation and Perception of Freedom



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