Political Order and Civic Space in the Asia Pacific
A Multilevel Analysis of Trends, 1989-2020

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Replication materials for this report can be accessed at GitHub: https://github.com/scdenney/UNICEF-political-rule-civic-order

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V-Dem: https://www.v-dem.net/en/
ABS: http://www.asianbarometer.org/

Cover and background image courtesy of *Free vector world & country maps*: https://freevectormaps.com/world-maps/asia/WRLD-AS-01-0003?ref=atr.

Color palettes used in data visuals come from the 'wesanderson' R package: https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/wesanderson/wesanderson.pdf.

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Introduction and Executive Summary

What is the state of democracy today? The question of democratic backsliding and deconsolidation in Western Europe and the United States is a well-documented and actively debated topic (Foa and Mounk 2016; Alexander and Welzel 2017). What is the state of political rule and civic space among new(er) democracies and established autocracies in the Asia Pacific?

The purpose of this report is to assess the state of political rule and civil society in select countries in the Asia Pacific. The analysis in this report is multilevel and focuses on both political systems/institutions (e.g., how liberal democratic is a country) as well as the individual level (e.g., how supportive are citizens of a democratic political system), with simultaneous consideration where appropriate.

Using data from the Varieties of Democracy's country expert evaluations, this report identifies regime types and the degree to which liberal democracy and a robust civil society have been achieved in select Asia Pacific countries since the beginning of the "Third Wave" of democratization (1989-2019).

At the individual level, public opinion data from the most recent Asia Barometer (2014-2016) is used to identify a number of attitudes and preferences towards various characteristics of politics and society. Analysis also includes where public opinion and political institutions converge (or diverge) and where significant "youth" opinions differ from the overall population.

Lastly, using Varieties of Democracy's Pandemic Backsliding dataset from May 2020, this report explores the relationship between political order and how freedom-restricting emergency responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have been in the Asia Pacific.

At the system/institutional level, what is the state of liberal democracy and civil society in the Asia Pacific?

- The number of democratic political regimes 2019 is less than it was in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and there are still more autocracies than democracies, but most countries are trending towards greater democratic liberalization and robust civil society space, even if the regimes have not yet transitioned, exceptions such as Hong Kong aside. There are more democracies in the Asia Pacific today than there were in 1989.
- Unsurprisingly, democratic regimes score higher on liberal democracy measure, but robust civil societies can be found in both democratic and authoritarian regimes.

What do surveys tell us about the political culture of the Asia Pacific?

- Citizens in liberal democracies show the highest level of democratic values and regime preferences, but not all countries have political systems and public opinion that are congruent. Most liberal democracies also have populations supportive of democracy, but some countries have relatively democratic political systems and politically authoritarian populations.
- There are notable differences in opinion among youth cohorts (19-29-year-olds) in several countries. Some youth cohorts hold significantly less democratic political values than the population overall (e.g,. Thailand, Japan), while others have more democratic beliefs (e.g., China, Taiwan).
- Citizens of non-democratic political systems are more likely to have trust in other people (including politicians) and political institutions. Citizens in democracies are significantly less trusting and far more contentious.

What is the relationship between political system and COVID-19 response?

- COVID-19 emergency responses in democracies have either not violated democratic standards, or have violated them only a little. Most autocracies have enacted measures that restrict freedoms and violated democratic standards.
- There is a strong and negative correlation between the extent of liberal democracy and the pandemic response index and a moderately strong association with the robustness of civil society. Countries that are more liberal democratic or have robust civil societies have tended to violate democratic standards only a little (or not at all).

Methodology

This report makes use of system- and individual-level data. The purpose of the system-level data is to evaluate the status of political rule and the state of civic space in the Asia Pacific now and over time, according to expert evaluations. The individual-level data differs significantly in that it reflects the opinions of residents of the countries evaluated. These measures, taken together, provide both an elite and popular view of political order and civic space in the Asia Pacific. An overview of the data and methodology, including case selection, is provided in the subsections to follow.

System-level data: Varieties of Democracy

The data used to examine the state of political rule and civil society at the system level comes from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project, which uses country expert evaluators to assess various political and civic attributes of countries around the world. This study uses three variables from version 10 of the V-Dem dataset: "Regimes of the world," "Liberal democracy index," and "Core civil society index."

The regimes of the world variable is used to identity political regime types. Countries are classified as belonging to one of four regime types defined by "competitiveness of access to power (polyarchy) as well as liberal principles." The four types are identified and defined as follows (Coppedge et al. 2020: 266; emphasis added):

> **Closed autocracy:** No multiparty elections for the chief executive or the legislature.
>
> **Electoral autocracy:** De-jure multiparty elections for the chief executive and the legislature, but failing to achieve that elections are free and fair, or de-facto multiparty, or a minimum level of Dahl's institutional prerequisites of polyarchy as measured by V-Dem's Electoral Democracy Index.
>
> **Electoral democracy:** De-facto free and fair multiparty elections and a minimum level of [Robert] Dahl's institutional prerequisites for polyarchy as measured by V- Dem's Electoral Democracy Index… but either access to justice, or transparent law enforcement, or liberal principles of respect for personal liberties, rule of law, and judicial as well as legislative constraints on the executive not satisfied as measured by V-Dem's Liberal Component Index.
>
> **Liberal democracy:** De-facto free and fair multiparty elections and a minimum level of Dahl's institutional prerequisites for polyarchy as measured by V- Dem's Electoral Democracy Index… are guaranteed as well as access to justice, transparent law enforcement and the liberal principles of respect for personal liberties, rule of law, and judicial as well as legislative constraints on the executive satisfied as measured by V-Dem's Liberal Component Index.

The "liberal democracy index," which comprises part of the regime types definitions, is also examined independently as a main variable of interest. This index variable, with a value between 0 and 1, measures the extent to which the ideal of liberal democracy is achieved. It is more fully explained as such (Coppedge et al. 2020: 43):

> The liberal principle of democracy emphasizes the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. The liberal model takes a "negative" view of political power insofar as it judges the quality of democracy by the limits placed on government. This is achieved by constitutionally protected civil liberties, strong rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances that, together, limit the exercise of executive power. To make this a measure of liberal democracy, the index also takes the level of electoral democracy into account.

Lastly, the "core civil society" index is used as a measure of civil society's robustness on a scale of 0-1. The core civil society index focuses on civil society organizations (CSOs), which operate between the private sphere and the state, and are defined as groups such as labor unions, spiritual organizations, and general interest groups, among others. This variable is further defined as "a measure of a robust civil society, understood as one that enjoys autonomy from the state and in which citizens freely and actively pursue their political and civic goals, however conceived" (Coppedge et al. 2020: 287).

In addition to the three main variables identified above, this report also uses the "pandemic democratic violations index," a 0-1 measure of the extent to which government responses to COVID-19 have violated democratic standards and restricted individual freedoms or skewed a country's balance of power and checks on executive authority.

Individual-level data: Asian Barometer Survey

For individual-level measures, this report uses public opinion data from the fourth, and most recent, wave of the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) of democracy, governance, and development. This survey covers the period 2014-2016. More recent data would of course be desirable, but data of this sort is a product of cross-country collaboration and is not made available every year (data is collected approximately every five years).

In collaboration with partners at the United Nations (UN), relevant variables were identified from the ABS Core Questionnaire (2014), the purpose of which was to evaluate questionnaire items relevant to the study of political order and civic space. Six ABS categories were chosen:

1. Social capital (3 questions)
2. Institutional trust (9 questions)
3. Quality of government (3 questions)
4. Political participation (5 questions)
5. Democratic/authoritarian values (9 questions)
6. Regime preferences (4 questions)

For each category, questions were chosen based on data availability (across countries) and appropriateness. Reponses for all questions were ordered by varying levels (e.g., Strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). Assigning a value for each possible answer, summing the total, and then dividing by the total possible additive score, an index for each battery of questions was generated. The indices exclude missing variables, those who did not understand the question, could not choose, or declined to answer. Figure 1 lists all indices and the questions included. A more detailed overview of individual survey questions and coding scheme are provided in the Appendix.

Cases

Author-UN collaboration yielded a total of 19 countries in the Asia Pacific for which data insights are desired. All countries examined in this report are identified in Figure 2. Those countries listed with an asterisk (*) signify data availability at both the system- and individual-level, otherwise only system-level data were available. Hong Kong, although not an independent country, is treated as a semi-independent polity given its unique status under the Basic Law and referred to as a "country" in this report.

Figure 1 - Indices Created Using Asian Barometer Survey

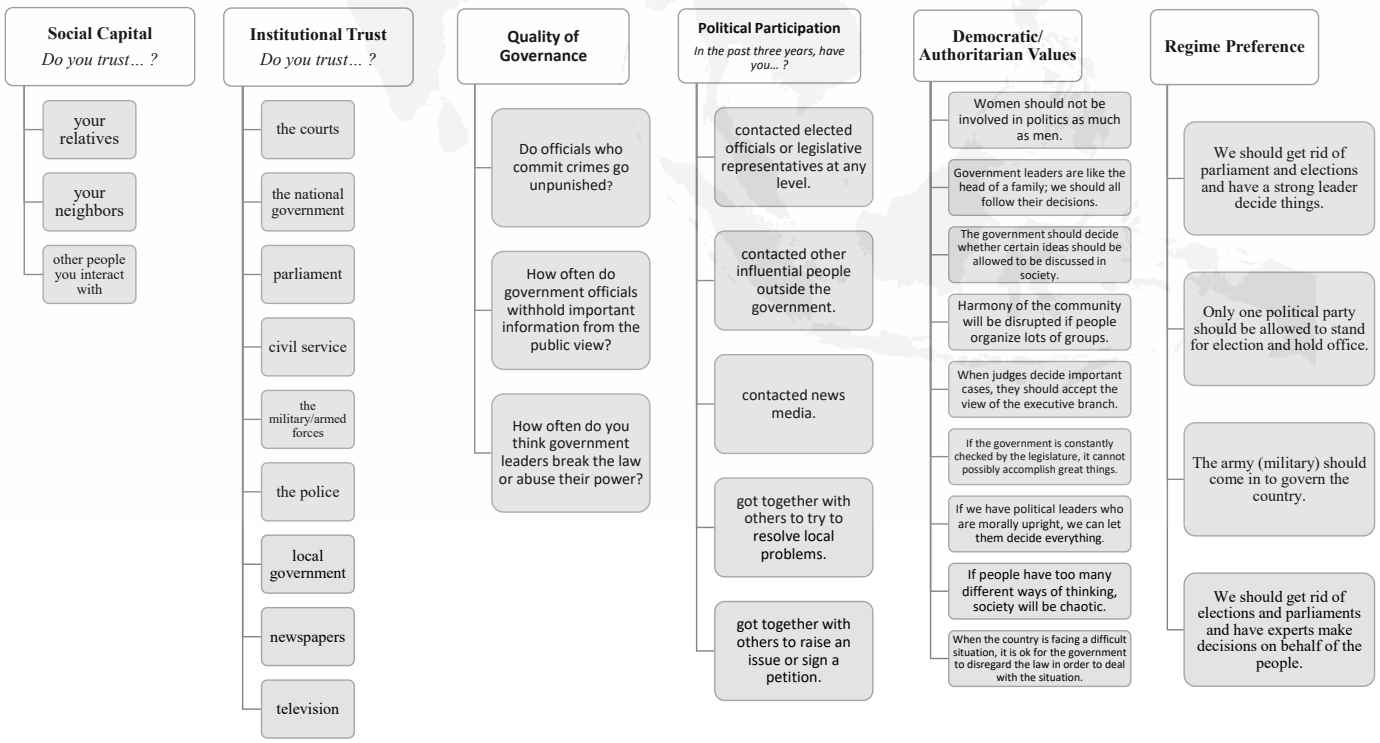


Figure 2 - Cases Constituting the Asia Pacific in this Report

Cases with asterik (*) have system- and individual-level data.

System-level Analysis

This section explores in detail system-level measures of political rule and civil society in the Asia Pacific after the "Third" Wave of democratization, 1989-2019 (Gunitsky 2018). This wave of democracies included several Asia Pacific countries (South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines). Subsequent waves (Post-Soviet, Color Revolutions, Arab Spring) had little or no impact on the state of political rule in the region. Despite evidence of creeping autocratization in the world (Lührmann et al. 2020), the post-Third Wave era still largely defines the region.

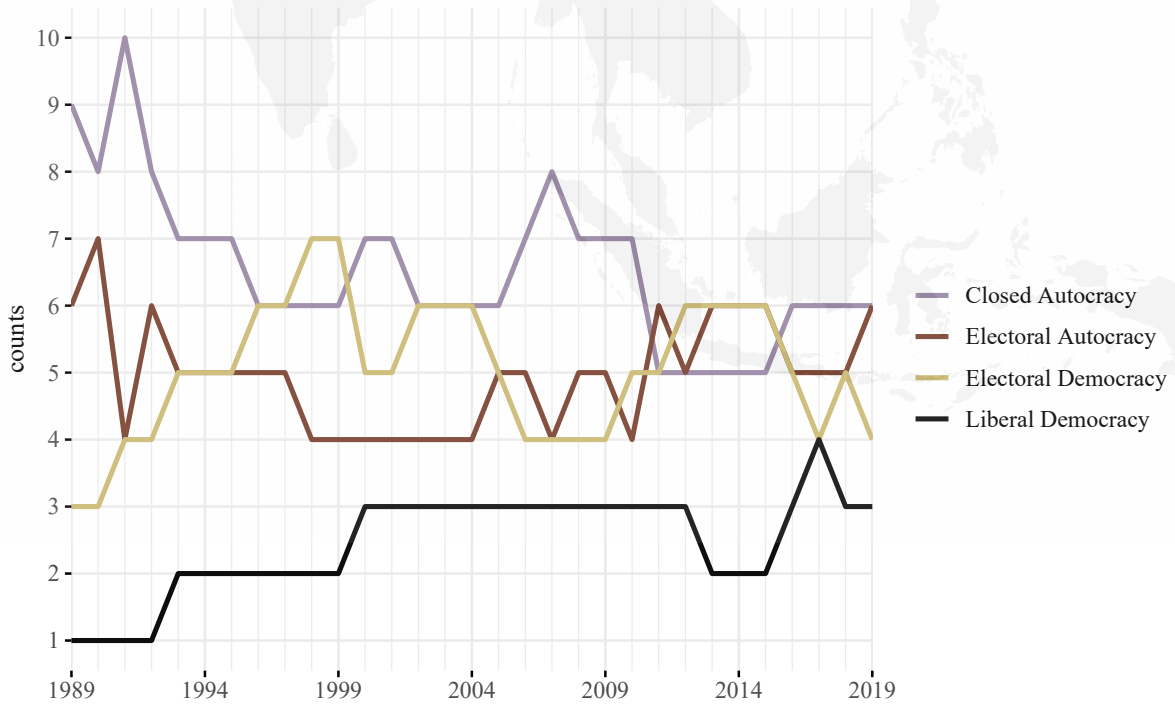
In fact, as Figure 3 shows, there are more democracies today (seven) than in 1989 (four), among the countries under consideration. Of the countries studied here, most are still authoritarian (12/19), and the number of electoral democracies today (four) is down from their peak of seven in 1998/9, but there are two more liberal democracies and far fewer autocracies today than in the early 1990s. Table 1 reviews all countries studied in this report by regime type in 2019.

Table 1 - Regime Types by Country, 2019

Closed Autocracy (6)	*China*
	Hong Kong
	Laos
	North Korea
	Thailand
	Vietnam
Electoral Autocracy (6)	*Burma/Myanmar*
	Cambodia
	Fiji
	Malaysia
	Philippines
	Singapore
Electoral Democracy (4)	*Indonesia*
	Mongolia
	Solomon Islands
	Vanuatu
Liberal Democracy (3)	*Japan*
	South Korea
	Taiwan

Source: Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

Figure 3 - Regime Types Since Third Wave of Democracy
Select Asia Pacific Countries, 1989-2019



Source: Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

It is unclear which way the region is trending. A look at liberal democracy and core civil society indices may provide a better picture of trends.

Figure 3 plots average V-Dem indices for liberal democracy and core civil society for the Asia Pacific region (higher scores mean more liberal democratic polity or more robust civil society). The core civil society index is substantively and consistently higher than the liberal democracy index, indicating that even in non-democratic polities, civil society may be relatively robust. Liberal democracy scores, however, are relatively low across time. Given that most countries studied here are autocratic, this is not surprising.

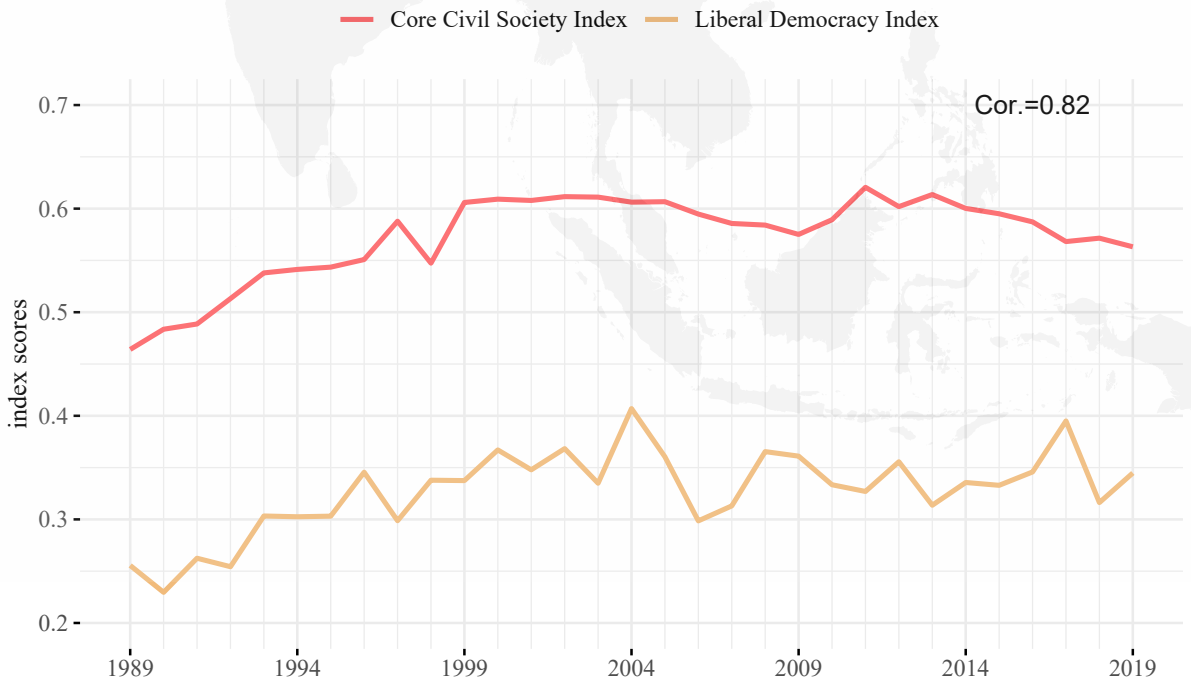
However, what is noted for both indices are upward trends from 1989 through the late 1990s and early 2000s, after which both indices level out until, for the civil society index, a downward trend begins around 2013. Despite the two indices being highly and positively correlated (.82), the liberal democracy index shows neither an upward nor downward trajectory since leveling out in the early 2000s. For the region overall, the main takeaway here is that political rule and civil society have remained relatively consistent since surging upwards following the "Third Wave" of democratization.

System-level: liberal democracy

If we break down liberal democracy scores by country, we can observe where advances have been made, where they have been lost, and where they have remained the same. Figure 5 plots scores for years 1989, 2004, and 2019 across all 19 cases studied here, grouped by 2019 regime type. Here, and elsewhere, the confidence ratings of the expert evaluations are omitted, mainly for purposes of presentation. The countries are listed in ascending order per group by 2019 value. As expected, democratic regimes score significantly higher than autocracies on the liberal democracy index. Among democracies in 2019, only Indonesia scores below .5. South Korea is the most liberal democratic, followed by Japan and Taiwan. North Korea, China, Laos, and Vietnam – all single party communist autocracies – are the least liberal democratic.

Since 1989, most countries have made substantial gains in realizing the ideal of liberal democracy. Mongolia, Taiwan, and South Korea have witnessed huge gains, while only a few countries have experienced notable decreases (the Philippines and, arguably, Thailand). Of course, the baseline in 1989 for many of these countries is quite low and many of the gains made are not substantive.

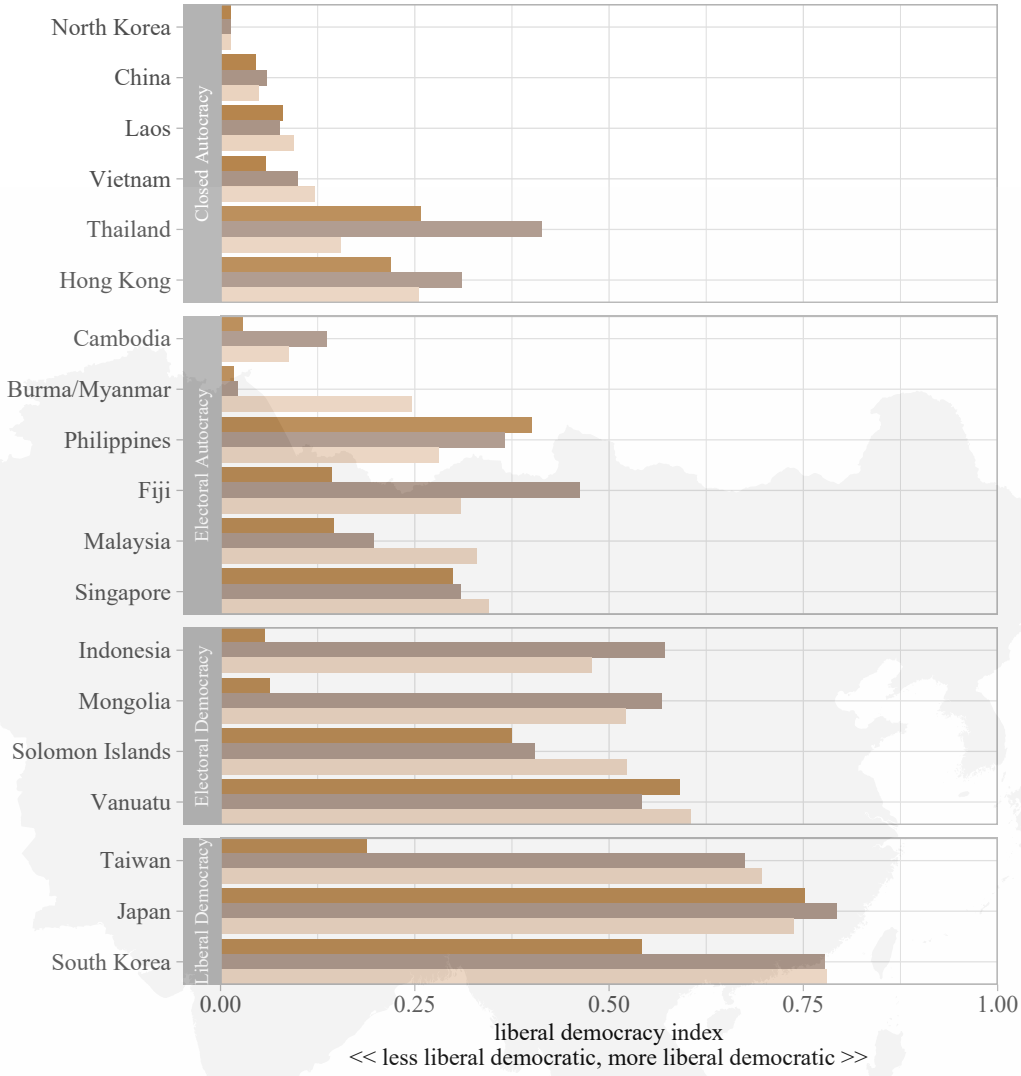
Figure 4 - Extent of Liberal Democracy and Robust Civil Society
Select Asia Pacific Countries, 1989-2019



Source: Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

Figure 5 - Liberal Democracy Scores, 1989-2019

Select Asia Pacific Countries, by 2019 Regime Type



Source: Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

Several countries also seem to be trend less liberal democratic from 2004 to 2019, such as Thailand, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Mongolia, although the losses for Indonesia and Mongolia (electoral democracies) are less than the non-democracies.

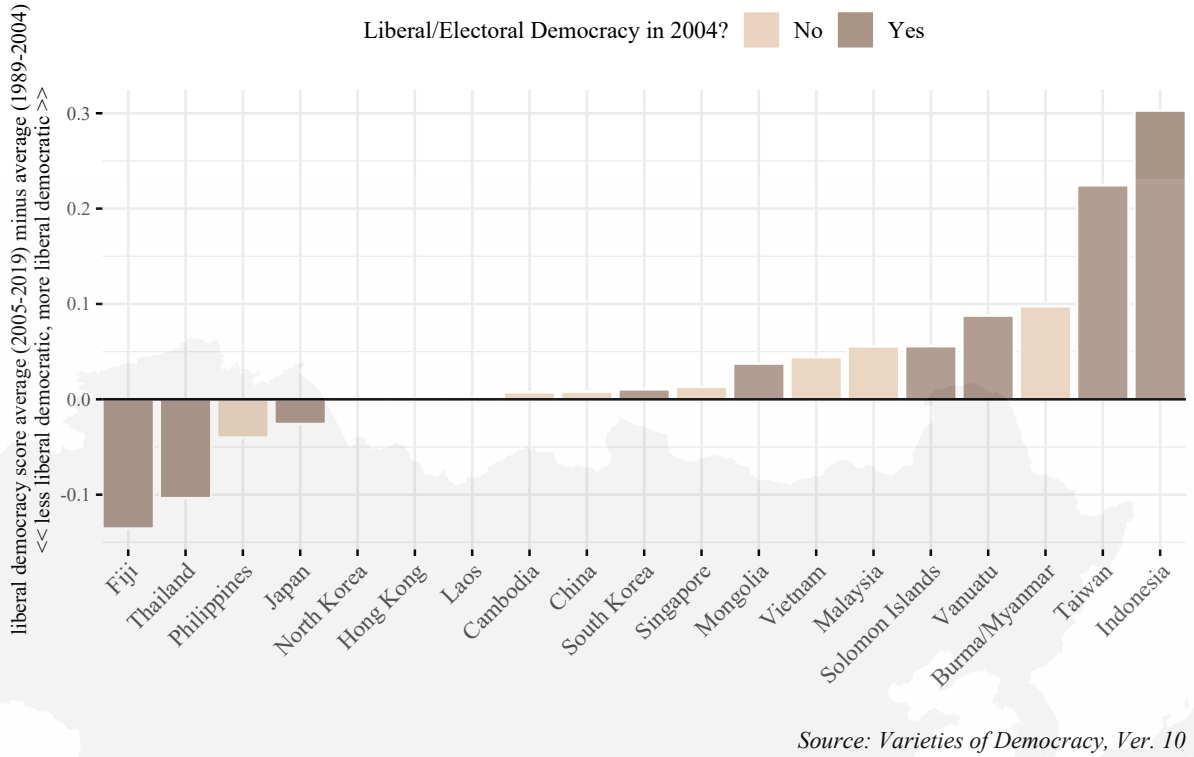
The liberal democratic scores by country and over time reflect what the overall score in Figure 3 suggests: a surge in liberal democratic norms and institutions from 1989 to 2004, followed by a leveling out.

To better capture recent trends by country, Figure 6 plots the difference in average liberal democracies scores between 2005-2019 and 1989-2004. Grouped by whether the country was a liberal or electoral democracy in 2004, we see that only four countries have been less liberal democratic in the past 15 years than they were in the initial 16 years.

Among those less liberal democratic on average, only Fiji and Thailand have experienced substantive decreases of greater than .10. Given their democratic status in 2004, the negative difference is notable. Except for Indonesia (.30) and Taiwan (.22), who witnessed sizeable increases in average liberal democracy scores, the increases in average scores are mainly minor. Burma/Myanmar (.09) especially and Vanuatu (.08), however, show significant and positive changes.

The overall finding by liberal democracy scores does not suggest there is democratic backsliding or creeping autocratization. What we see, rather, is relative stability in the state of political rule since the end of the post-Third Wave surge. Since, the early 2000s, ther has been little overall change in the extent to which select Asia Pacific countries realize the ideal of liberal democracy.

Figure 6 - Difference in Average Liberal Democracy Scores
Select Asia Pacific Countries, 1989-2019



Source: Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

System level: civil society

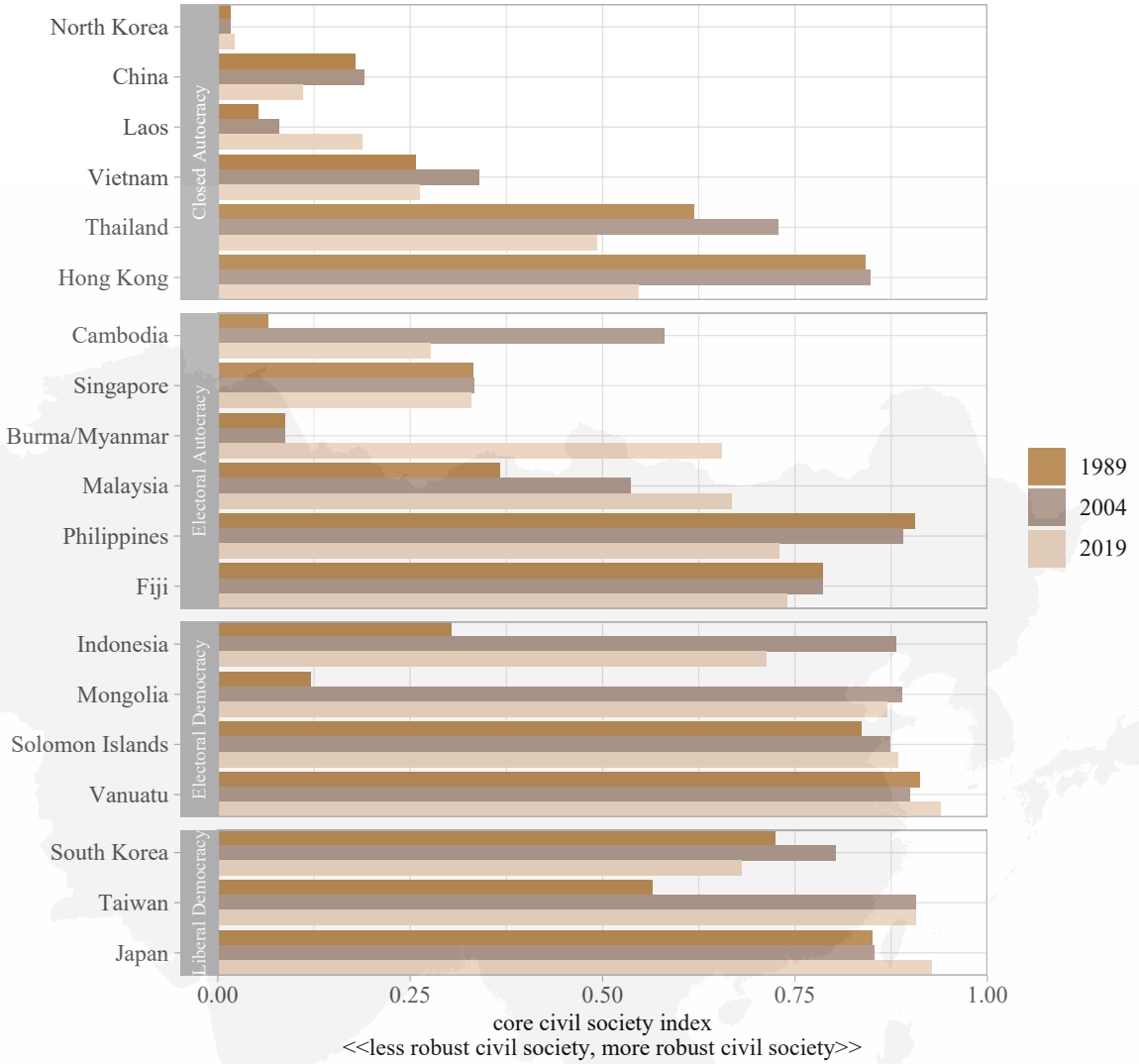
What about civic space? As noted above, the robustness of civil society is positively correlated with the extent to which liberal democracy is achieved, but the robustness of civil society is substantively higher. This warrants a closer look.

Figure 7 plots score civil society scores by country in 1989, 2004, and 2019, grouped by regime type in 2019 and listed in ascending order by 2019 core civil society value. Since 1989, all democracies, except for South Korea (minor decline), have witnessed gains in the robustness of their civil societies, and some (Indonesia, Mongolia, and Taiwan) have seen rather significant increases. As evidenced in Figure 4 above, since 2013 the overall average core civil society score has been trending downwards, and this is reflected in moderate-to-severe decreases in some countries, but overall civil society is relatively robust in the Asia Pacific.

Compared to the liberal democracy scores explored, core civil society numbers differ most prominently by the fact that even some autocracies have relatively robust civil societies. This is not to say that democracy does not matter – it clearly does. No democratic polity in 2019 registered a core civil society score below .6 and all but Indonesia and South Korea have scores greater than .75. However, many autocracies, such as Burma/Myanmar, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Fiji show core civil society scores well above the midpoint. Burma/Myanmar (+.57) and Malaysia (+.30), in particular, show substantive increases in civic space. The impact of ending the nearly five decades of military rule in 2011 on Burma/Myanmar's civic space is apparent.

There are some notable and substantive decreases in civic space. Thailand and Hong Kong stand out, and especially the latter. Given Beijing's crackdown on the political freedoms of Hong Kong residents, it is not a surprising finding, but the difference in the city-state's core civil society score between 2019 (.85) and 2004 (.55) is a striking -.30. Hong Kong is, without a doubt, undergoing a shirking of its civic space. Thailand's shrinking civic space may not make the headlines of international newspapers, but its decline over the period of 2004-2019 is equally severe (-.24).

Figure 7 - Core Civil Society Scores, 1989-2019
Select Asia Pacific Countries, by 2019 Regime Type

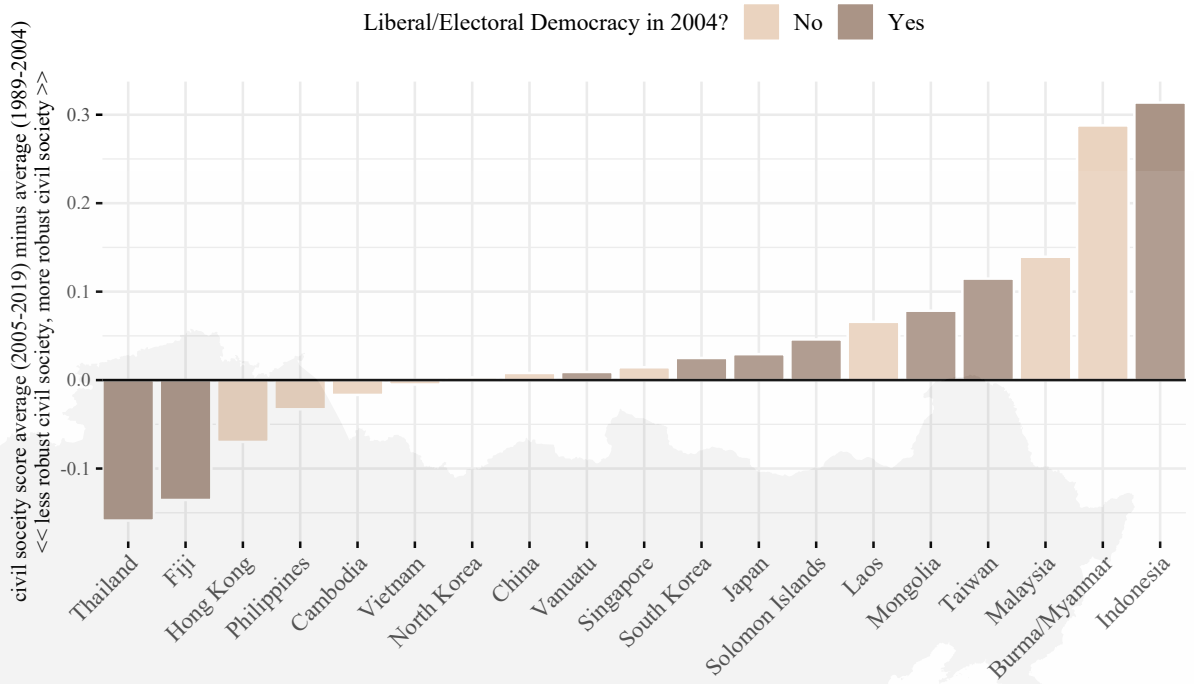


Source: Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

As it was done for the liberal democracy index, the difference in average scores between periods 2005-2019 and 1989-2004 are plotted for the core civil society scores (Figure 7) and grouped by whether the country was democratic in 2004. The results show notable average increases in Indonesia (+.31) and Burma/Myanmar (+.29), a change in civil society score also captured by the three-year snapshots in Figure 5. Given that Burma/Myanmar was not a democracy in 2004, the substantive and positive change in average score is noteworthy. Malaysia (.14) and Taiwan (.12) also saw notable increases. Given that Malaysia was an autocracy in 2004 and remains so in 2019, this should be viewed as an encouraging development – or perhaps a puzzle?

Decreases in average civil society scores are most evident for Thailand (-.16) and Fiji (-.14), which is not exactly surprising given that both countries transitioned from democracies in 2004 to autocracies today (see Table 1). The decrease for Hong Kong is not as great (-.07). Although the Chinese city-state observed a huge decline between single year observations in 2004 and 2019, the average over the period 2005-2019 masks this development and is evidence that Hong Kong's shrinking civil space is a more recent phenomenon – a closer look at the full data (not shown here) shows the biggest drops in core civil society scores occurs between the years 2014-2019.

Figure 8 - Difference in Average Core Civil Society Scores
Select Asia Pacific Countries, 1989-2019



Source: Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

Individual-level Analysis

The analysis to this point has focused on country expert evaluations, not that of ordinary residents of Asia Pacific countries. This section moves the analysis to a lower level of aggregation: the individual. Using indices generated from answers to items from six different batteries of questions (see Figure 1), this section explores the extent of social capital and trust in institutions, assessments of government quality, levels of political participation, democratic/authoritarian values, and regimes preferences. The weighted averages for each country are presented in Figures 9-14. To better organize, present, and analyze the individual-level findings, countries are grouped by V-Dem regime types at the time the survey was implemented between 2014-2016. Refer to the Appendix for a more detailed overview of questions used, additional summary statistics, and other information. Here, a summary of findings for each index is presented.

Social capital

Overall, social capital – defined by how much trust people place in others – is relatively high across all countries (Figure 9). There is little difference between residents in democracies (average of .63) and those in autocracies (.62). Japan is the most trusting (.68) and Cambodia and Burma/Myanmar the least trusting (.56). Among democracies, South Korea stands out as the least trusting, at .57.

Trust in institutions

Index scores for trust in various political and social institutions shows that residents of democratic countries have significantly less trust in institutions than those in autocratic regimes (Figure 10). Among electoral and democratic regimes, the average is .50. Between South Korea and Japan (the only two liberal democracies at the time), the average is even lower (.42). The average for all autocratic regimes is .56. What to make of this seemingly puzzling finding? Should residents of democracies not have more trust in political parties, local government, media, and related institutions? One could make the case that they should, however lower institutional trust may be reflective of "critical citizens" (cf. Norris 1999), the idea forwarded by political scientist Pippa Norris and others which explains why citizens of democratic polities may less than favorably evaluate mainstay institutions of social and political life. In short, democrats (small-d) are free to voice discontent (that is, in part, what defines them as democrats) and are thus more critical. There is also the concern of bias in the data due to social desirability or a lack of freedom. Respondents in authoritarian contexts may feel pressure to conform to, say, the party's position or may simply not feel free (enough) to voice their true preferences. This is not to say that the data from respondents in autocracies studied here concealed their true preferences, but it is to suggest that they might have done so.

Quality of governance

Similar to trust in institutions, country averages for the quality of governance index show that residents of autocracies are more likely to be of the opinion that government officials and other political leaders are held to account, do not withhold information from the public, and do not abuse their power (Figure 11). The average index score for all autocracies is .58 and .51 for democracies. The relatively high score for autocracies is, however, buoyed by the two city-states in the ABS samples: Hong Kong and Singapore. These polities, especially Singapore (which holds the highest index score at .74), are known for higher quality government – although this popular perspective will likely change dramatically in Hong Kong given recent developments, if it has not already. It is still notable that, the city-states aside, several democracies score considerably lower than their autocratic counterparts. Is this "critical citizens" or something else, perhaps even context- or time-specific? South Korea's survey was run in 2015, prior to the scandal that ousted President Park Geun-hye, so it remains an open question and worthy of closer investigation.

Political participation

The political participation index scores (Figure 12) show what has been a long-standing truth in political science research: individual or collective political action is costly (time, money, and energy) and thus rare. Aside from Thailand (.38) and Mongolia (.31), all other countries show a score of less than .30. We would expect Hong Kong, at .12, to be considerably higher today given recent protest. The same goes for South Korea, whose large-scale protests against political corruption in 2016 were attended by hundreds of thousands.

Democratic/authoritarian values

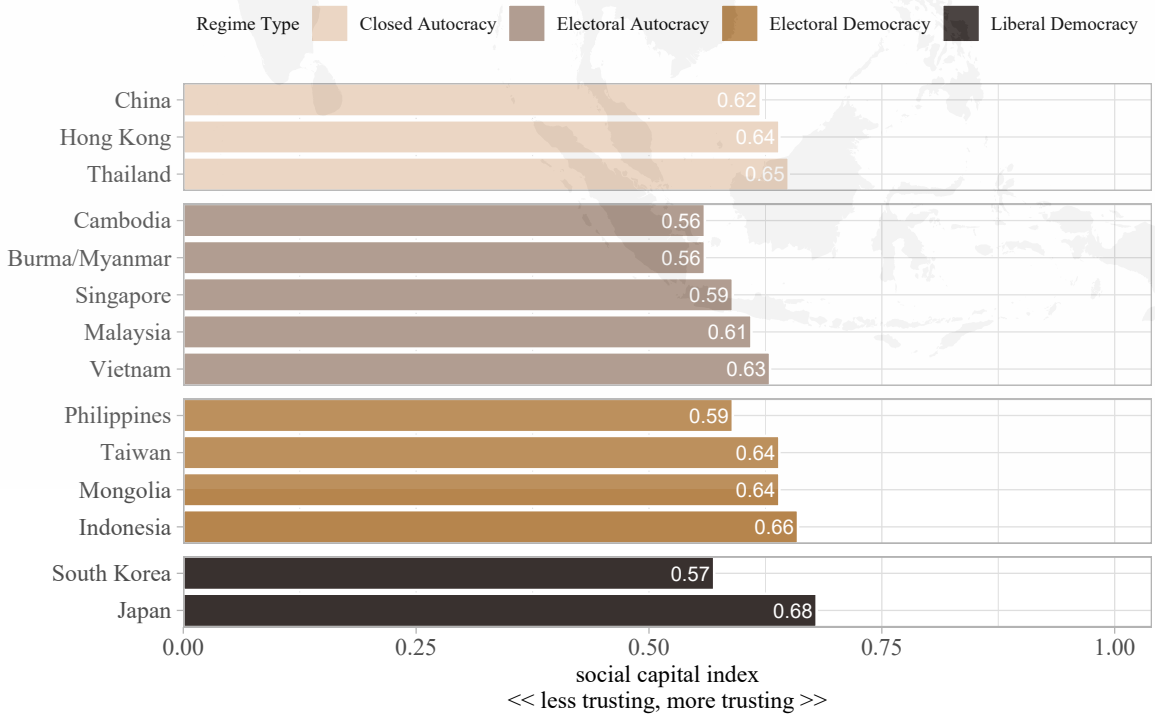
An index comprised of 9 items the from the ABS survey section on Democratic/Authoritarian values explores how opposed to or supportive of people are of authoritarian norms and rule, such as whether checks and balances should be done away with in order to make government "accomplish great things" or whether social pluralism makes things "chaotic" (higher scores indicate more democratic values). We would expect residents of democratic regimes to be more opposed, and by and large that is reflected in the data (Figure 13). Liberal democracies South Korea and Japan score .59 and .67, respectively, while Taiwan (counted as an electoral democracy at the time, but a liberal democracy today) comes in a .60. Interestingly, Hong Kong's .59 is equal to South Korea's and is significantly higher than the overall average of .50, despite having a closed autocratic political system; there would appear to be an incongruence between Hong Kong's political culture and its political system (explored more below). Besides China (.51), all other countries, even the electoral democracies (Taiwan excluded), have indices below the average.

Democratic legitimacy/preference for democracy

Lastly, the regime preference index, which measures opposition to authoritarian rule (Figure 14), shows results somewhat consistent with the democratic/authoritarian values index. Higher values represent greater opposition to authoritarian rule (e.g., opposition to single party rule or military government). Japan (.84) and South Korea (.77) again score the highest, followed closely by Singapore (.74), Taiwan (.73), Cambodia (.73), and Hong Kong (.75). It is hard to say whether those who oppose authoritarianism hold attitudes incongruent with their own political system, or whether they simply oppose "hard" autocracy, such as military rule. Cambodia and Singapore are electoral autocracies after all, so there is at least the veneer of a democratic system. For Cambodia, the collective trauma from the Khmer Rouge may explain the country's strong opposition to authoritarian rule. Respondents from Hong Kong, as before, show attitudes more in line with residents from liberal democracies, providing more evidence that there is a significant rift between the city-state's political system and its residents' political preferences.

Figure 9 - Social Capital

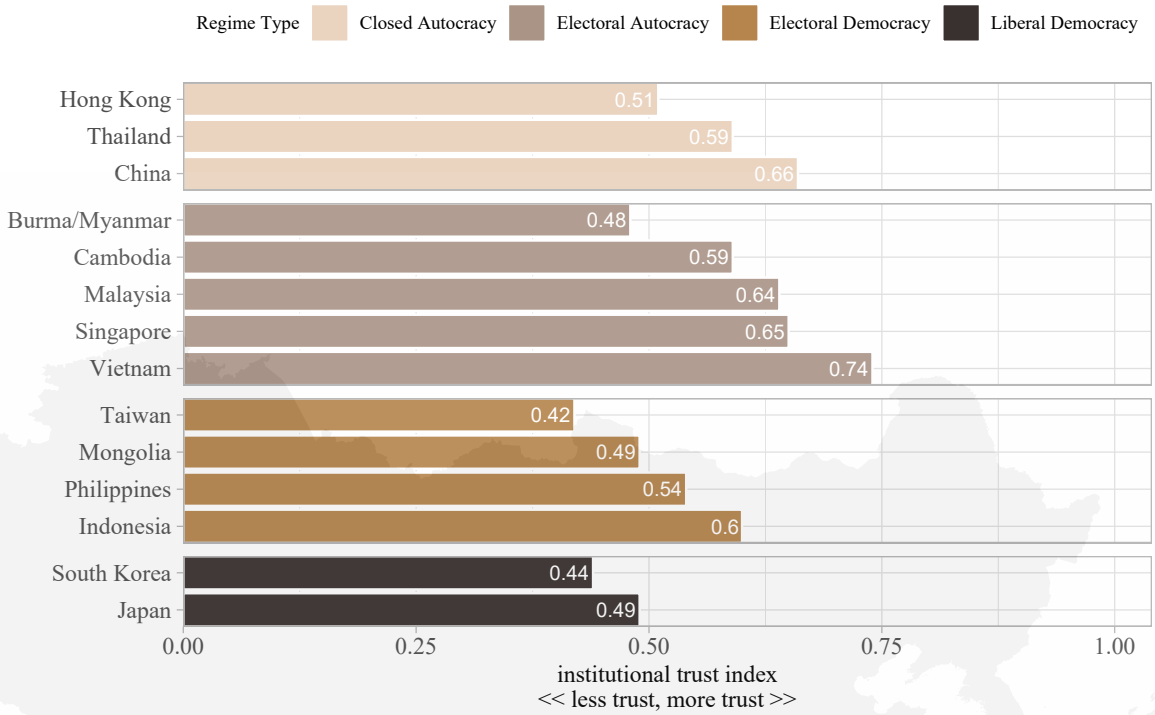
How much do people trust family, neighbors & others?



Sources: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

Figure 10 - Trust in Institutions

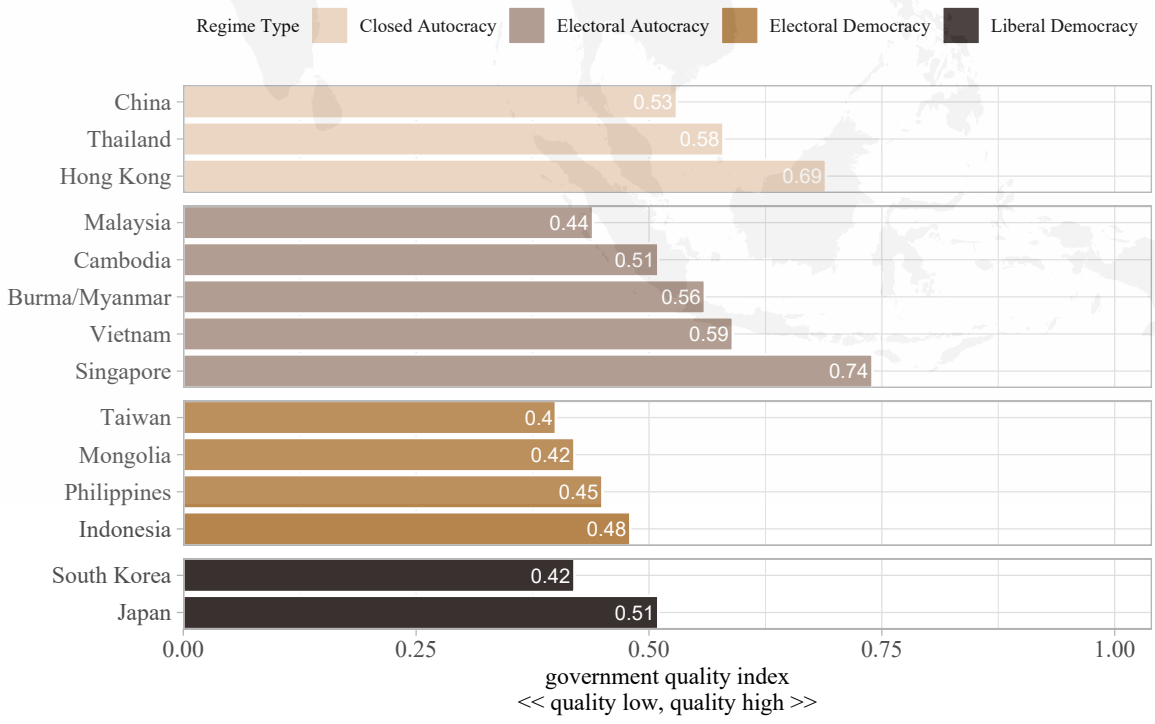
How trusted are political parties, local government, media, and related institutions?



Sources: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

Figure 11 - Quality of Governance

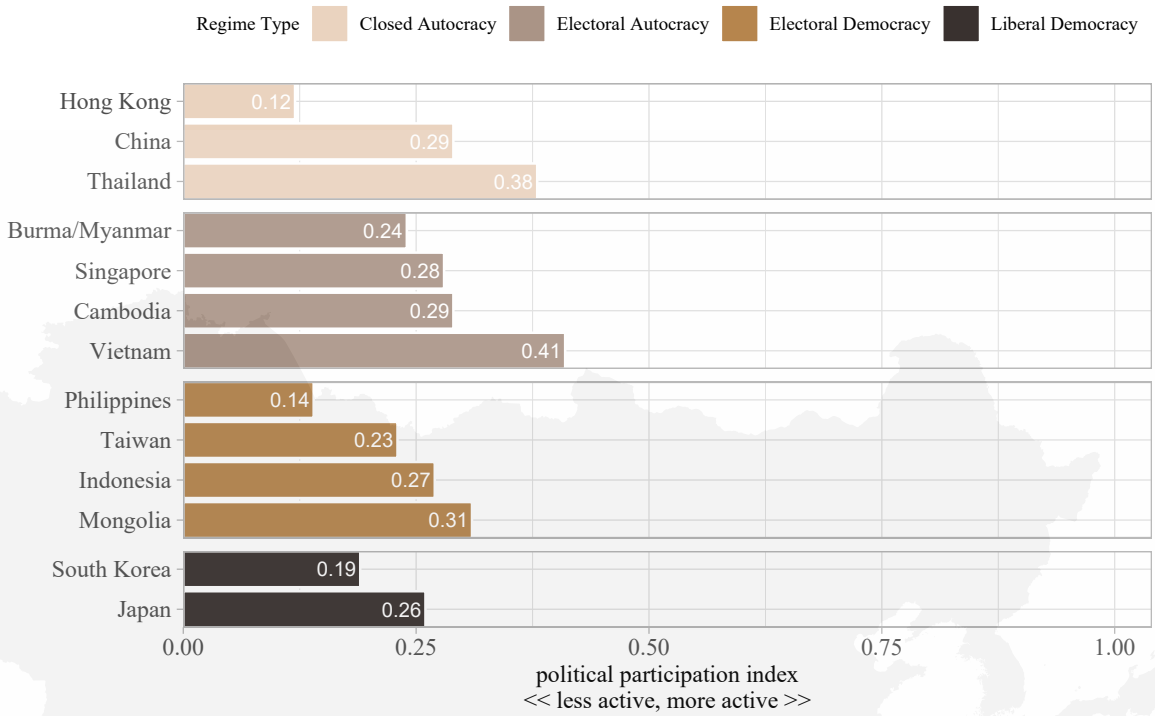
Do government leaders act responsibly?



Sources: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

Figure 12 - Political Participation

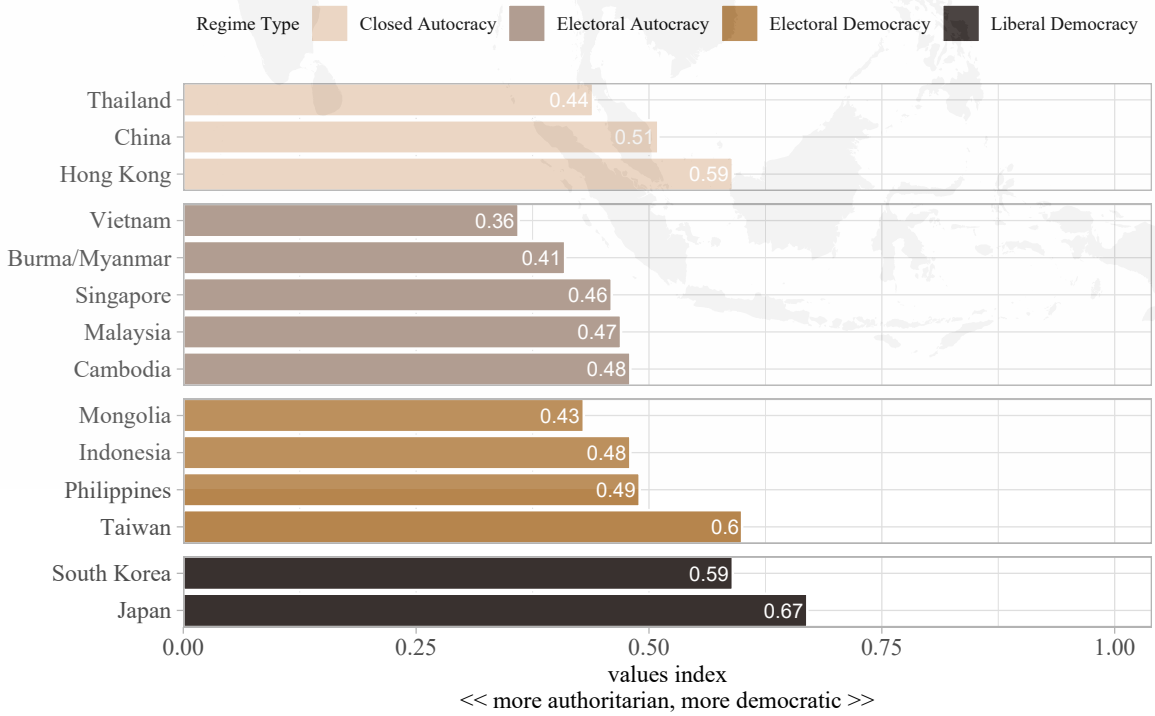
How politically active are people?



Sources: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

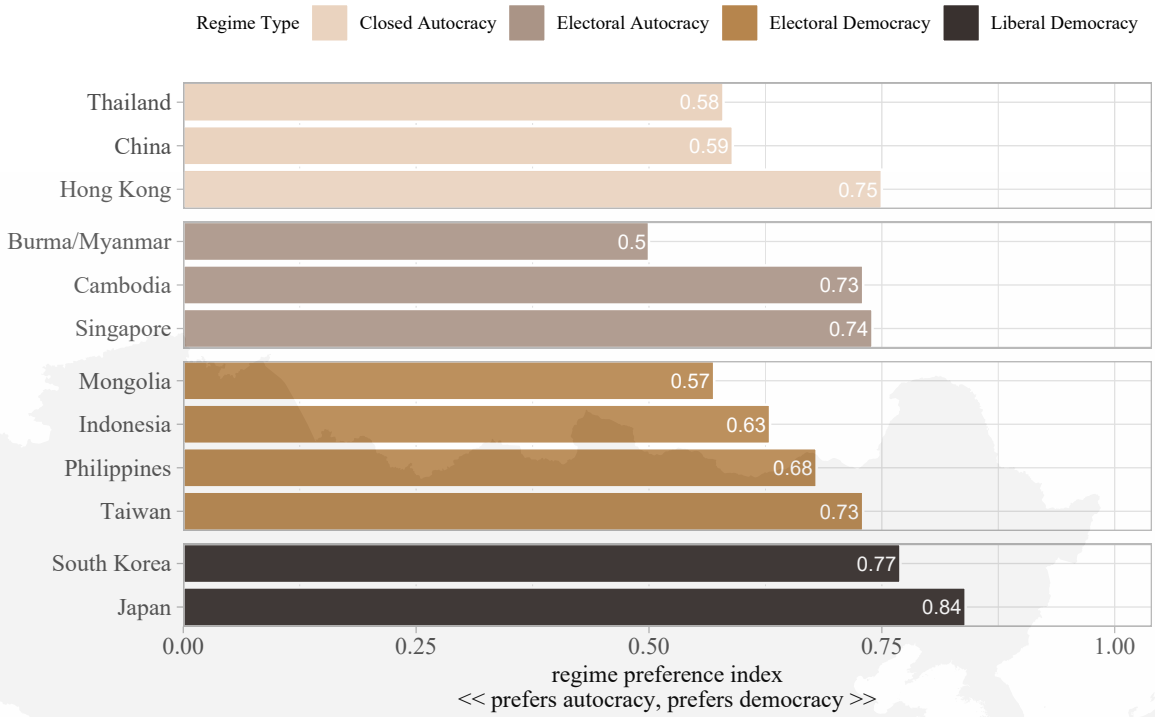
Figure 13 - Democratic/Authoritarian Values

How democratic or authoritarian are people's beliefs?



Sources: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

Figure 14 - Democratic Legitimacy/Preference for Democracy
What kind of political system is preferred?



Sources: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

Political Values and Good Governance

The analysis of Asia Barometer Survey data thus far has been based on averages across six indices. In this section, two aggregate indices are analyzed and adjusted by relevant socioeconomic, gender, and geographic controls, with an age dimension also included. Additionally, a closer look at institutional-public opinion (in)congruence is explored.

The first new variable, "political norms and values," is based on the sum of the democratic/authoritarian values and regime preference items and is the sum value of all items divided by the total additive score (the same index-creating method used above). This index, with a range of 0-1, evaluates how authoritarian or democratic the political values of respondents are. They are related to the original indices, but merely simplified.

The second, "trust and good governance," is the indexed sum of the social capital, institutional trust, and quality of governance items. This index measures the extent to which people trust others, institutions, and their governments. Tests of internal consistency and factor-based analysis support the creation of these news indices as specified here, although political participation is related to neither and is therefore excluded from further analysis.

Furthermore, a sub-objective of this report is to determine where there may be differences in "youth" opinion. Given survey constraints, this survey examines the opinions of late adolescents and young adults, defined as those 18-29 years of age.

Estimated values are generated based on ordinary least squares regression models, with the aggregate indices specified as the dependent/response variables. For ease of interpretation, the new indices are centered and scaled. Values per country are called, holding the other covariates at constant values. Control variables include age, education, gender, religion, marital status, geography (urban/non-urban), and socioeconomic status. Country fixed effects are also included. In addition to the main models, additional models for youth are also called. Country-level weights are applied in all models. More detail about variable construction can be read in the Appendix.

Political norms and values

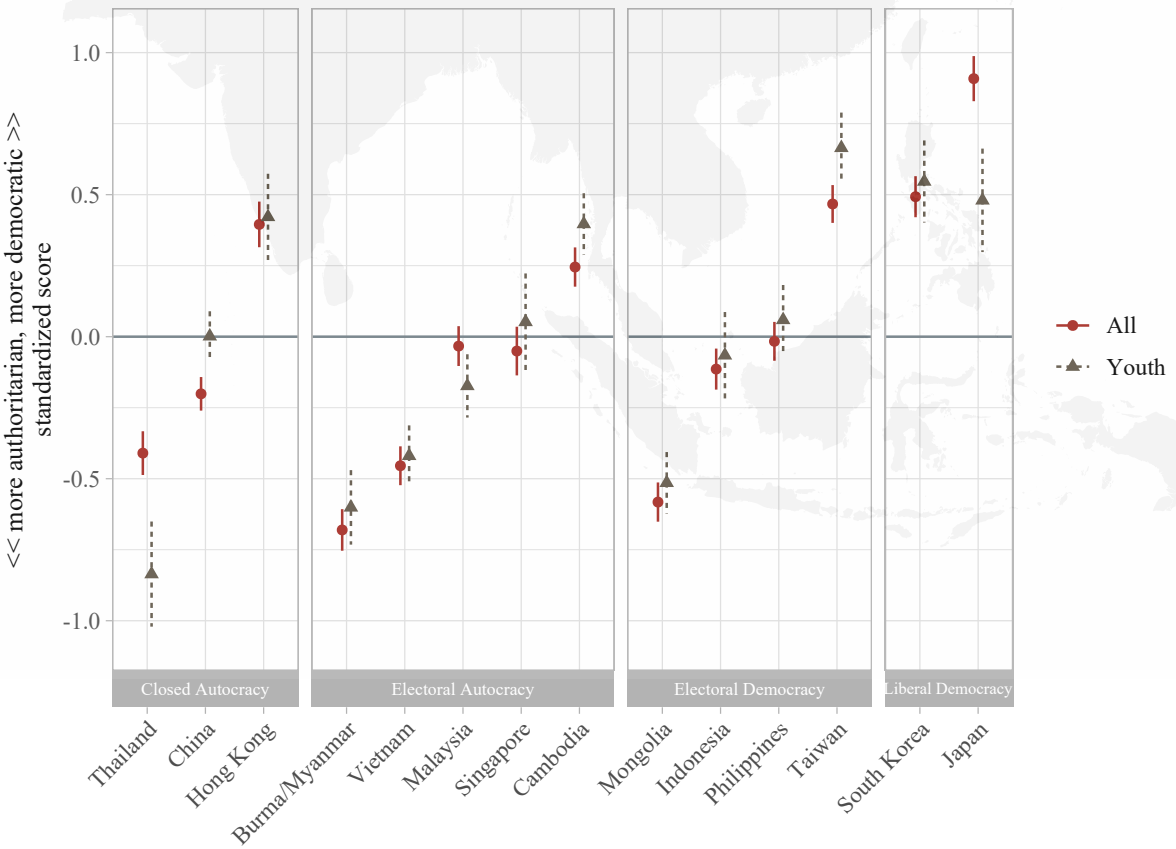
Figure 15 plots point estimates for the indexed and scaled "political norms and values" for the total populations ("all") and youth cohorts. The countries are, again, grouped by political regime type at the time of survey in order to ease interpretation (and locate system-public opinion incongruence). Values above the center point/mean (zero) can read as relatively pro-democracy, whereas those below can be read as relatively pro-autocracy. Those countries registering as relatively pro-democracy are Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Cambodia, and Hong Kong. Among this group of pro-democracy populations, there are significantly different youth opinions for Japan and Taiwan, although not in the same way. Japan's youth cohort is decidedly less pro-democracy than the estimate for the whole population, albeit nowhere near pro-autocracy (Japanese youth are as pro-democracy as the South Korean population – that is, very pro-democracy). Taiwanese youth, by contrast, are notably more democratic in opinion than the general population. Cambodian youth are somewhat more democratic than the general population, but not significantly so.

Several democracies straddle the mean (the Philippines and Indonesia), and there is one case of clear political system-public opinion divergence (Mongolia), where the population holds relatively authoritarian values, but reside in a democratic polity. Both Cambodia and Hong Kong have publics that hold opinion incongruent with their political systems, but opposite that of Mongolia. Their populations have democratic values within autocratic political systems.

Among countries scoring considerably below the center point, the point estimates for Thailand, Burma/Myanmar, Vietnam, and Mongolia stand out. In fact, the lower band of the estimate for Thailand's youth (at 95% confidence interval) is more than one standard deviation from the mean or approximately two standard deviations from Japan's general population. Thailand would appear to be trending authoritarian. China's general population score noticeably below zero, although there is evidence that Chinese youth have more democratic political values.

Figure 15 - Political Norms and Values Scale

Select Asia Pacific Countries, 2014-2016



Sources: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10
Youth is counted as respondents 18-29 years-old. Confidence intervals at 95%.

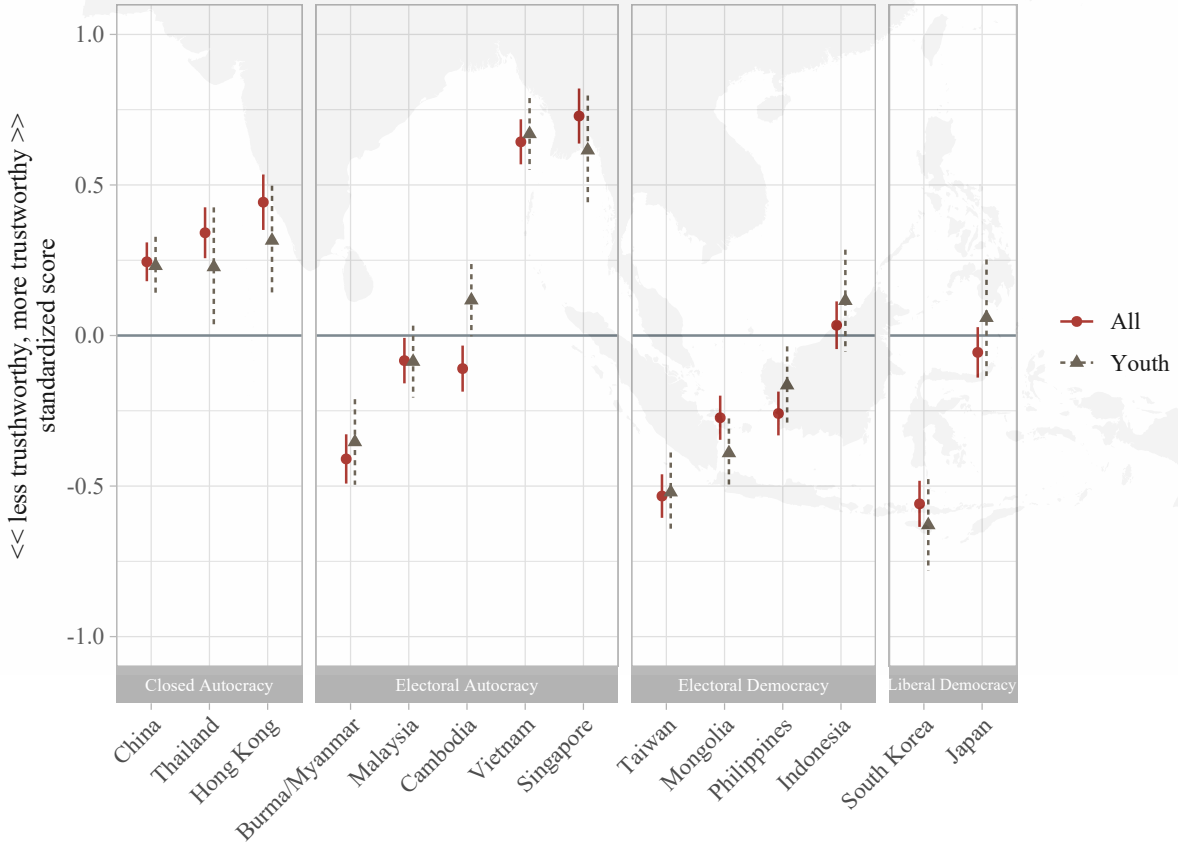
Trust and good governance

As explored in the previous section, trust (in people, institutions) and a belief that government officials/leaders are held to account are not necessarily traits that residents of democracies hold. On the contrary, in fact. Figure 16 plots point estimates for the scaled trust and good governance index by total population and youth. Interestingly, the only group of countries for whom point estimates are all above the mean of the index are the closed autocracies. All democracies are either at the mean (Japan and Indonesia) or well below it. Vietnam and Singapore stand out among electoral autocracies, and indeed among the entire sample of Asia Pacific countries, are those countries with populations most trustful of people and government officials. Only in the case of Cambodia do we observe a clear youth cohort opinion – those 18-29 in age are more trusting than the population overall.

How do we interpret this index, exactly? It is forwarded here that this index is a measure of social cohesion, or the lack of social contention and political criticism. The cases of Singapore and Hong Kong are probably worth exploring on their own, as these are societies not altogether authoritarian, either institutionally or in their political cultures, but overall, we see clearly that democratic societies tend towards the idea of social contention and distrust of authority. We will explore the relationship between political rule and social cohesion/contention more in the next sub-section.

Figure 16 - Trust and Good Governance Scale

Select Asia Pacific Countries, 2014-2016



Sources: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10
Youth is counted as respondents 18-29 years-old. Confidence intervals at 95%.

Institutional-cultural (in)congruence: political values

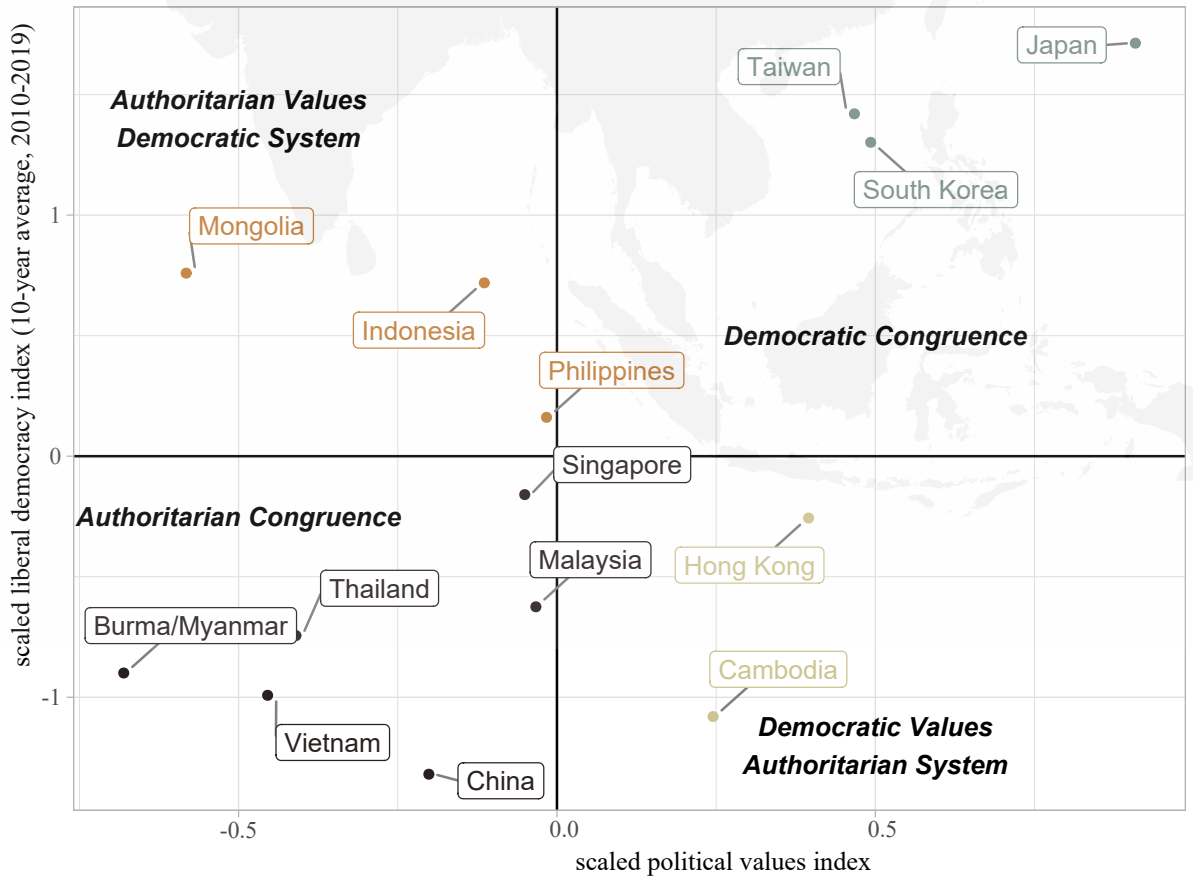
A finding noted throughout this report is the supposed disconnect, or incongruence, between political systems/institutions and political culture. In order to more closely examine where institutions and culture converge and where they diverge, the liberal democracy index is used again. In this case, the average liberal democracy score from the last 10 years (2010-2019) is plotted against the political values and trust and good governance indices – all variables standardized to faciliatate comparison.

Figure 17 explores institutional-public opinion convergence for political values. Among the four possible quadrants to which a country can belong, scoring above the mean on both measures (liberal democracy score and political values) is identified as countries with "democratic congruence." Scoring below the averages is then identified as "authoritarian congruence," and so on. One may read the position on the graph as indicating "more democratic institution" and "more democratic political culture," as the cut-off points are somewhat arbitrary, but for simplicity's sake they are written in absolute terms.

We see that Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have politically liberal systems and populations supportive of democratic values, norms, and rule. This is broadly consistent with the findings presented throughout this report. We also see that Hong Kong has a population supportive of democracy, but a political system incompatible with those beliefs. It should come as little surprise then that the city-state has been gripped by broad-based pro-democracy protests over the last several years. A country like Singapore is interesting in that the data here show that, despite being authoritarian, the city-state is not as authoritarian as Vietnam or China, and its population holds beliefs that are not entirely authoritarian (but neither are they democratic).

Figure 17 - Identifying Institutional-Public Opinion Congruence

Association Between Political Values & Liberal Democracy
Select Asia Pacific Countries



Sources: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

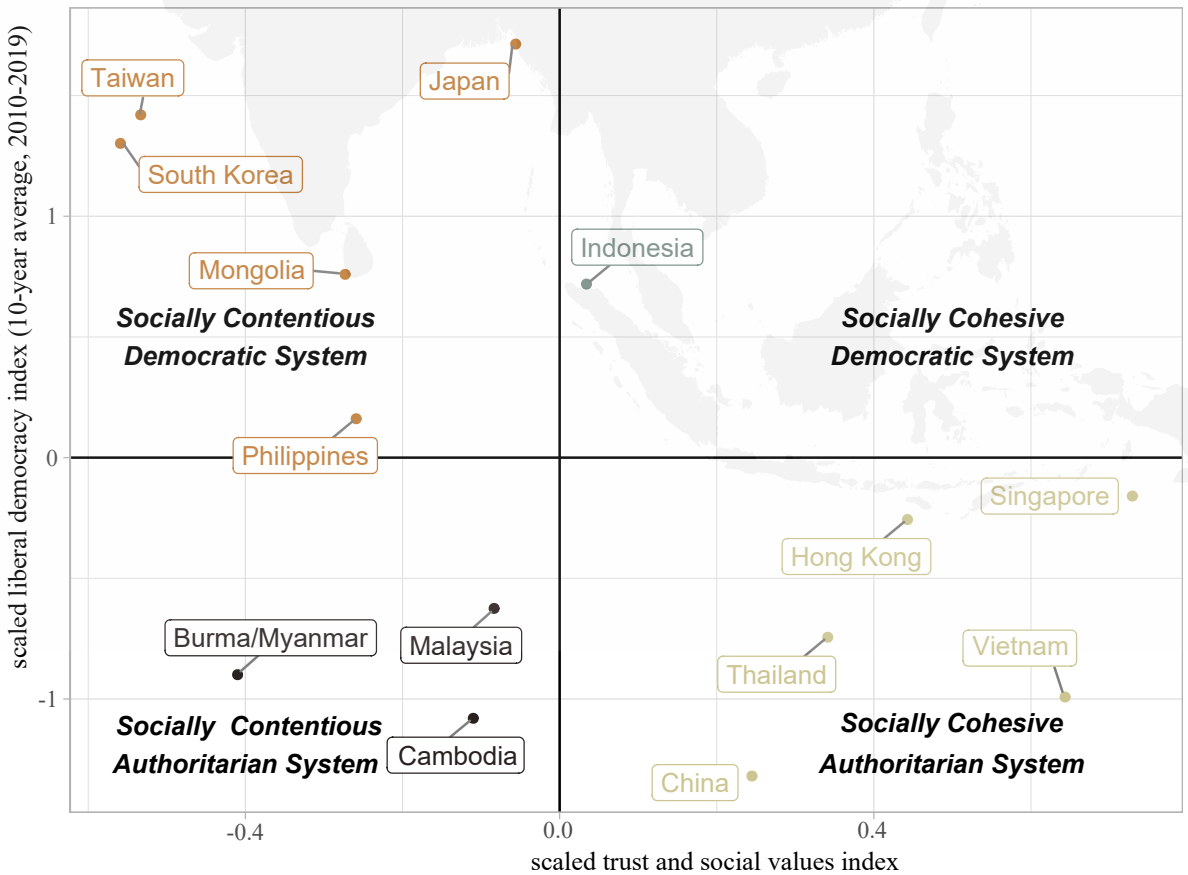
Institutional-cultural (in)congruence: trust and good governance

Figure 18 explores the relationship between the extent of liberal democracy (again, the standardized average score over the last 10 years) and the "trust and good governance" index. The data analyzed in this report has suggested that residents in democratic countries tend to hold more contentious attitudes – they are less trusting overall and less likely to think government officials are corruption-free. And, indeed, the relationship between liberal democracy scores and the trust and good governance index support the interpretation that democratic citizens are "critical citizens." In all cases except Indonesia, residents of relatively democratic countries hold "socially contentious" views.

Five out of the eight countries that score below the liberal democracy index mean also register socially cohesive politically cultures, where social capital and trust in political leaders is high. Hong Kong and Singapore stand out, however, as these countries have noticeably more democratic political institutions than China, Thailand, or Vietnam. That trend is almost certainly moving towards greater authoritarianism in Hong Kong, leaving Singapore as an exceptional case once again. Overall, we see here that residents of democracies tend toward contention and a critical social and political outlook, whereas those in autocracies express more socially cohesive views – more trusting and significantly less contentious.

Figure 18 - Identifying Institutional-Public Opinion Congruence

Association Between Trust and Good Governance & Liberal Democracy
Select Asia Pacific Countries



Sources: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10

Pandemic Backsliding

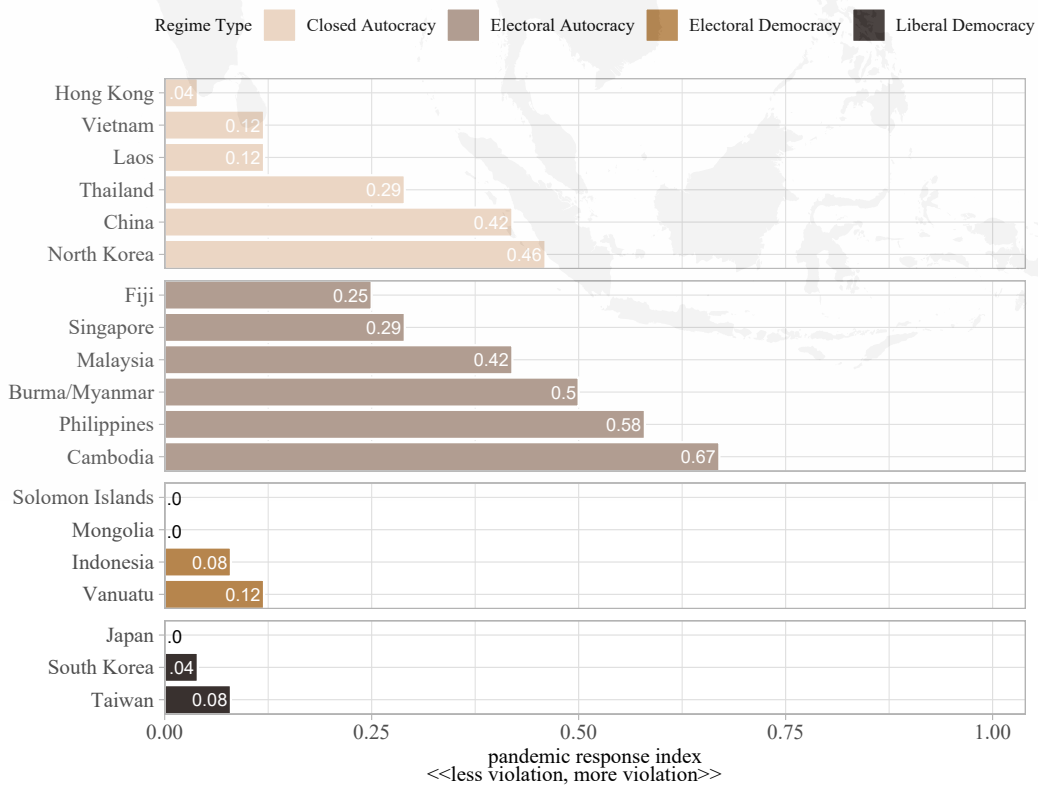
What is COVID-19's impact on political order and institutions? Using Varieties of Democracy's pandemic response index, this section explores the relationship between political order and civil society (regime type, extent of liberal democracy, and robustness of civil society) and the "pandemic response index." This novel V-Dem index measures "the degree to which democratic standards for emergency measures are violated by government responses to the Covid-19." These violations include "expansion of executive power without sunset clause and oversight," "discriminatory measures," "derogation of non-derogable rights," "restrictions of media freedom," "Arbitrary and abusive enforcement," and limitations on elections, legislatures, and judiciaries (Edgell et al. 2020: 5). The findings presented here are merely exploratory and should not be read as definitive.

First, Figure 19 shows pandemic response index scores for the 19 countries examined in this report, grouped by regime type in 2019. Given that democracies are defined by their institutional constraint on executive overreach or power abuse, it is not surprising to see that democracies have either violated zero democratic standards (Japan, Mongolia, and the Solomon Islands) or only minor violations, but it is nevertheless important to note. It is far from guaranteed that given a rare and exogenous shock democracies will respond appropriately. Autocracies, however, are violating democratic standards, and in some cases quite badly (Cambodia, the Philippines, Burma/Myanmar, North Korea, and China, at least).

There appears to be an association between regime type and pandemic response, with democracies implementing less freedom-restricting measures. To further explore this relation, liberal democracy and core civil society indices are plotted against the pandemic response index. For the liberal democracy and civil society indices, the 10-year average score (2010-2019) is computed. Both are negatively correlated with the pandemic response index. Figures 20 and 21 illustrate the negative associations, with polynomial (smooth) fits. There is a clearer fit between the pandemic response index and average liberal democracy score, but the association for the core civil society index is similar.

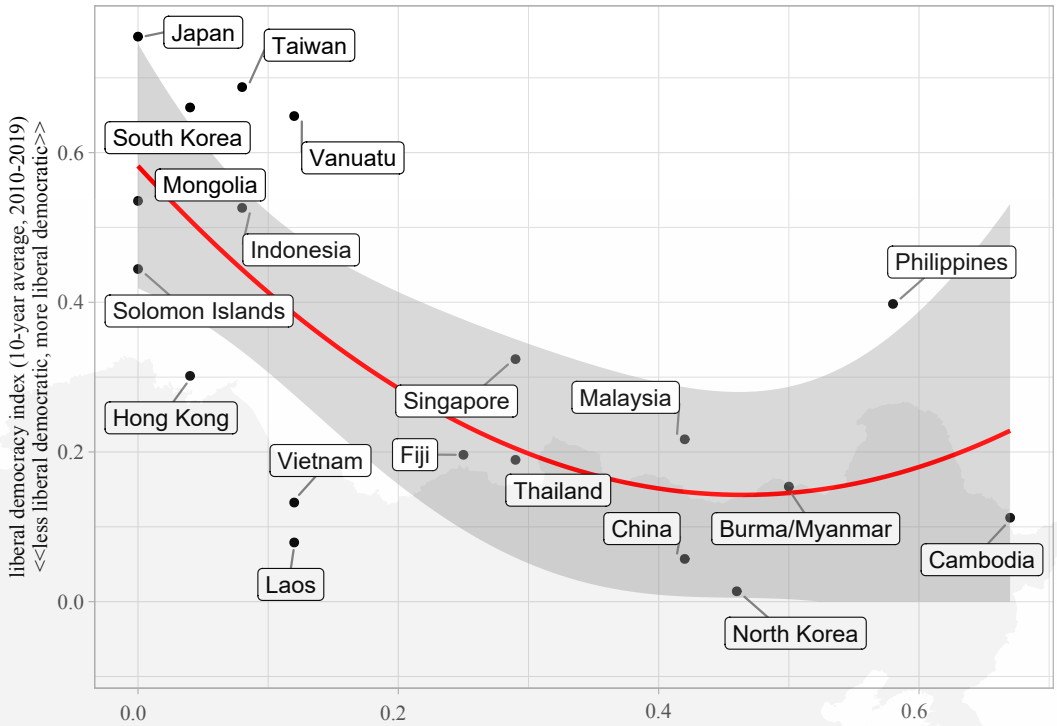
Figure 19 - COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Backsliding

Have democratic standards been violated?



Sources: Varieties of Democracy, Pandemic Backsliding, Ver. 2 (May 2020) & V-Dem, Ver. 10

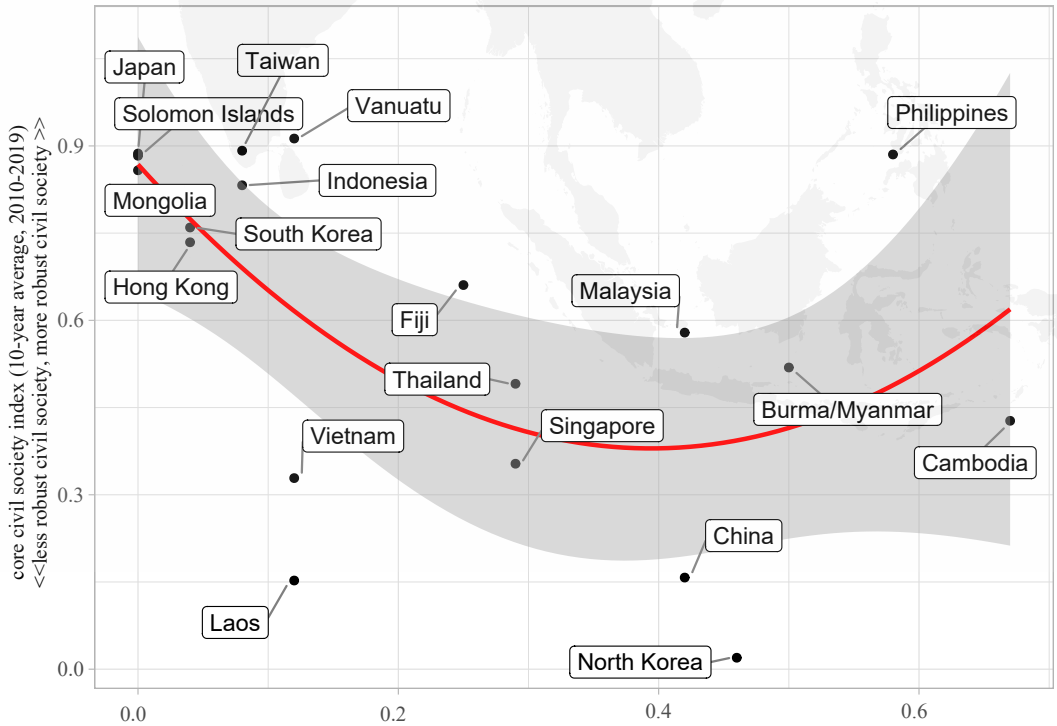
Figure 20 - Association Between Pandemic Response & Liberal Democracy Index
Select Asia Pacific Countries, 2020



<< less democratic violations, more democratic violations >>

Source: Varieties of Democracy, Pandemic Backsliding, Ver. 2 (May 2020) & V-Dem, Ver. 10
Second order (quadratic) polynomial fit

Figure 21 - Association Between Pandemic Response & Core Civil Society Index
Select Asia Pacific Countries, 2020



<< less democratic violations, more democratic violations >>

Source: Varieties of Democracy, Pandemic Backsliding, Ver. 2 (May 2020) & V-Dem, Ver. 10
Second order (quadratic) polynomial fit

Conclusion

The data and analysis presented in this report can be used as a guide for understanding the state of political rule and civil society in select Asia Pacific countries currently and over time. Since the surge in political liberalization and democratization and expansion of civil society from the end of the Third Wave of democratization through to the early 2000s, there has been little substantive change in the state of political rule and civic space. Even though there are more democracies today, most of the countries examined in this report are autocratic and have not progressed very far in realizing the ideal of liberal democracy. Furthermore, there is some evidence that civic space is shrinking, albeit slowly and from a relatively high baseline. Whether any of the trends identified in this report will continue is to be determined and should be closely monitored.

Using individual-level data, we find that the political cultures of the Asia Pacific countries examined often but not always align with their political systems/institutions. Some countries (e.g., Hong Kong) have relatively democratic political cultures but authoritarian political systems, while others (e.g., Mongolia) have more authoritarian political cultures but democratic political systems. These system-cultural mismatches warrant much closer examination than can be provided here. More evidence for the "critical citizens" thesis, that citizens of democracies tend to hold more contentious views of politics and society, is also presented. Almost no countries with politically liberal institutions have uncritical populations.

What might one do with this information? This report was not tasked with exploring how or why any one country is trending towards greater political liberalization or autocratization, or why civic space is opening or closing, although some notable events (e.g., protests in Hong Kong) warranted specific mention. The insights provided herein can be used to inform country- and/or region-level programming and reporting and for general knowledge dissemination. Based on the findings presented in this report, the following high-level questions are asked:

- What explains the democratic stall observed between 1989-2019? Is there a relationship between democratic backsliding elsewhere and the lack of further political liberalization in parts of the Asia Pacific?
- Does it matter that democratic citizens are less trustworthy of others and, especially, their government officials? Are the public opinion data from authoritarian countries reliable enough for questions such as these?
- How has (or will) China's revisionist aspirations impact political developments in the Asia Pacific? Hong Kong is clearly trending towards autocracy (at least at the system-level), and this is entirely or mainly explained by Beijing's willingness to violate the "one country, two systems" principle. Hong Kong's status is unique, but might other countries follow suit and move towards a mode of political rule more in line with China's?
- Might the influence of China's single party authoritarianism explain the stall in political liberalization, or is this better explained by other, country-specific problems or developments?

Some country-specific questions that are worthy of further exploration include, but are not limited to:

- Thailand and Fiji's political institutions and civil society were moving towards greater liberalization and robustness between 1989 and the early 2000s. Why did they reverse course? Data on the political norms and values of Thailand's youth indicate they are the least pro-democracy of all populations (and youth cohorts). What explains this?
- Japanese youth hold significantly less pro-democracy political norms and values compared to the national average. Does this matter? What might this say about the future of liberal democracy in the Asia Pacific? On the contrary, young Taiwanese are more pro-democracy than their national average. Compared to Japan, what might explain this divergence?
- The Philippines appears to be moving towards greater political autocratization and a less robust civil society. Some of this would seem to follow the rise of Rodrigo Duterte and his brand of populist authoritarianism. How are these developments related, and why do they mean for the future of the Philippines?

- Indonesia and Mongolia are relatively democratic polities with populations that hold political values incongruent with democracy. What explains this, and what might it mean for the political systems (which have shown some moderate liberal democratic decline) of these countries. Given the size of Indonesia, this is an important question that will go a long way in explaining what lies ahead politically for the Asia Pacific.

Lastly, using a novel dataset that identifies how much emergency response to the spread of COVID-19 have impacted substantive freedoms. The exploratory analysis indicates that democratic polities have enacted emergency decrees that only moderately violated democratic standards, or do not violate them at all. This is not a surprising finding, but it is noteworthy, as rare and exogenous shocks have the potential to motivate undemocratic responses. The finding on the relationship between emergency responses and political order shows, above all else, that democracy matters and should give the questions posted above true meaning and urgency.

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Appendix

Indices construction

Indices were created based on dividing the additive sum by the total possible values. Below are the possible answers (excluding missing variables and other non-answers) with the value assigned to them in parentheses. Only the answers are listed here. Consult Figure 1 in the Methodology section or the ABS questionnaire for more detail, including full wording of the questions.

Social capital (ABS 2014: 3):
- A great deal of trust (3)
- Quite a lot of trust (2)
- Not very much trust (1)
- None at all (0)

Institutional trust (ABS 2014: 2):
- A great deal of trust (3)
- Quite a lot of trust (2)
- Not very much trust (1)
- None at all (0)

Quality of governance (ABS 2014: 15):
- Strongly agree (3)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (1)
- Strongly disagree (0)

Political participation (ABS 2014: 9):
- I have done this more than once (3)
- I have done this once (2)
- I have not done this, but I might do it if something important happens in the future (1)
- I have not done this, and I would not do it regardless of the situation (0)

Democratic/Authoritarian values (ABS 2014: 20):
- Strongly agree (3)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (1)
- Strongly disagree (0)

Regime preferences (ABS 2014: 19):
- Strongly agree (3)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (1)
- Strongly disagree (0)

Demographic and socioeconomic variables

For modeling and estimated values (see Figures 15-18 and A1-A2) statistical controls were included for demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. These variables were constructed as follows (missing variables and non-answers were excluded):

- *Age cohorts* (categorical): Among the sample (18 years-old and older) age bins created at five-year intervals except for youngest (18-24) and oldest (60+) cohorts.

- *Female* (binary): If "female" = 1, else 0.

- *University* (binary): "some college" or greater = 1, else 0.

- *Religiosity* (binary): If "very religious" or "moderately religious" = 1, else 0.

- *Married*: If "married," "living as married," "Widowed/Separated/Married but separated/ not living with legal spouse," or "divorced" = 1, else 0 (*The point is to capture the experiences associated with this aspect of a life-cycle, not to measure whether one was married at the time of the survey.*)

- *Urban* (binary): If living in "capital or megacity (1 million population plus" or "regional center or other major cities (100,000 plus)" = 1, else 0.

- *Socioeconomic status (SES)* (continuous): 10-point scale from "lowest status (0)" to "highest status (10)" for where the respondent places their family.

Survey overview and country attributes

The fourth wave of the Asian Barometer survey took place across 13 countries from 2014-2016. Table A.1 below lists when the survey was run, how many were sampled, and whether survey weights were provided. Table A.2 reviews the attributes of the samples by demographic and socioeconomic variables for each country surveyed.

Table A.1. - Asian Barometer Survey: Overview by Country

Country	*Sample Size*	*Period of Survey*	*Weights*
Japan	1,081	Mar. 2016	Yes
Hong Kong	1,217	Feb. 2016 - Apr. 2016	Yes
South Korea	1,200	Oct. 2015 - Dec. 2015	No
China	4,068	Dec. 2014 - Jun. 2016	Yes
Mongolia	1,228	Jun. 2014 - Aug.2014	Yes
Philippines	1,200	Jul. 2014	Yes
Taiwan	1,657	Jun. 2014 - Nov. 2014	Yes
Thailand	1,200	Aug. 2014 - Oct. 2014	Yes
Indonesia	1,550	Jan. 2016	No
Singapore	1,039	Oct. 2014 - Dec. 2014	Yes
Vietnam	1,200	Sep. 2015 - Oct. 2015	Yes
Cambodia	1,200	Oct. 2015 - Nov. 2015	Yes
Malaysia	1,207	Sep. 2014 - Nov. 2014	Yes
Burma/Myanmar	1,620	Jan. 2015 - Mar. 2015	Yes

Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016)

Table A.2 - Asian Barometer Survey: Sample Attributes by Country (*weighted averages*)

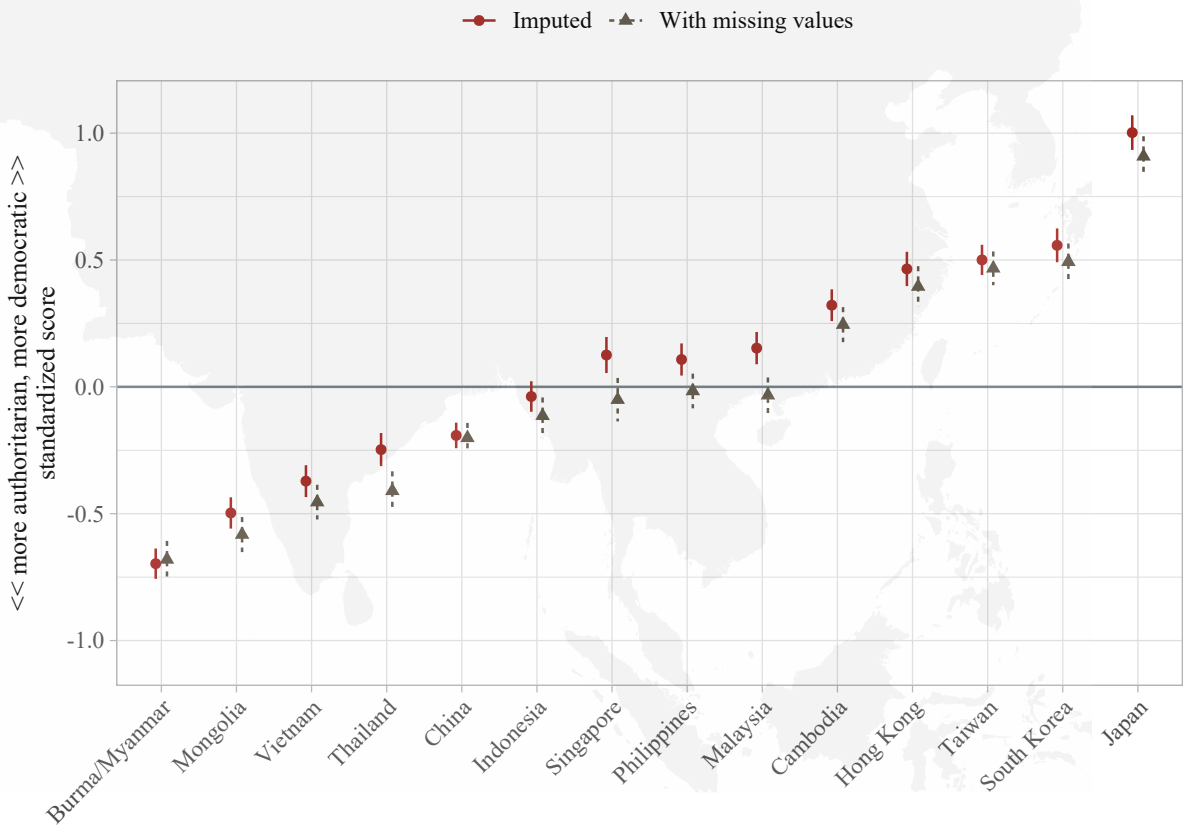
	Female	Age	Youth	University	Religiosity	Married	Urban	SES
Japan	0.52	53.14	0.12	0.41	0.35	0.82	0.68	5.23
Hong Kong	0.55	46.09	0.21	0.33	0.12	0.71	1	4.33
South Korea	0.5	45.73	0.18	0.42	0.21	0.76	0.9	5.68
China	0.49	43.79	0.23	0.31	0.07	0.85	0.21	5.13
Mongolia	0.52	38.46	0.33	0.44	0.47	0.75	0.78	5.3
Philippines	0.5	43.07	0.23	0.26	0.82	0.83	0.53	5.18
Taiwan	0.51	46.53	0.17	0.31	0.37	0.75	0.52	5.53
Thailand	0.53	45.55	0.13	0.16	0.49	0.81	0.21	5.62
Indonesia	0.5	44.63	0.15	0.1	0.91	0.9	0.39	5.97
Singapore	0.51	46.91	0.18	0.39	0.58	0.64	1	6.3
Vietnam	0.52	38.93	0.35	0.18	0.16	0.76	0.83	5.86
Cambodia	0.53	37.21	0.41	0.05	0.97	0.8	0.12	4.62
Malaysia	0.5	39.55	0.34	0.2	0.9	0.71	0.11	6.12
Burma/Myanmar	0.53	39.54	0.25	0.14	0.96	0.76	0.2	5.32

Except for Age and SES variables (continuous), all values are proportions. Youth is defined as the age cohort 18-24. Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Fourth Wave (2014-2016)

Robustness check: Imputing missing values

The non-response options in the Asian Barometer Survey ("don't understand the question," "can't choose," and "decline to answer") resulted in a considerable number of respondents providing non-response answers. These observations were removed from the data prior to analysis. Furthermore, in creating indices, instances where a respondent gave a non-response answer to any one of the questions included in the index meant the entire row was removed (and with it answers to other questions), thus increasing the number of omitted observations. Sample sizes were adequately large, so there were no statistical power concerns. However, in cases where a respondent provided an answer to some/most questions included in an index, but to not others, it is reasonable to ask how this might have biased averages and estimates. To partially address this concern, missing values were imputed using predictive mean matching, part of the "mice" package in R. Results, based on the data with imputed values, are not substantively different. Figures A.1-A.2 plot point estimates for the political norms and values and trust and good governance indices for the imputed and original (with missing values) data sets.

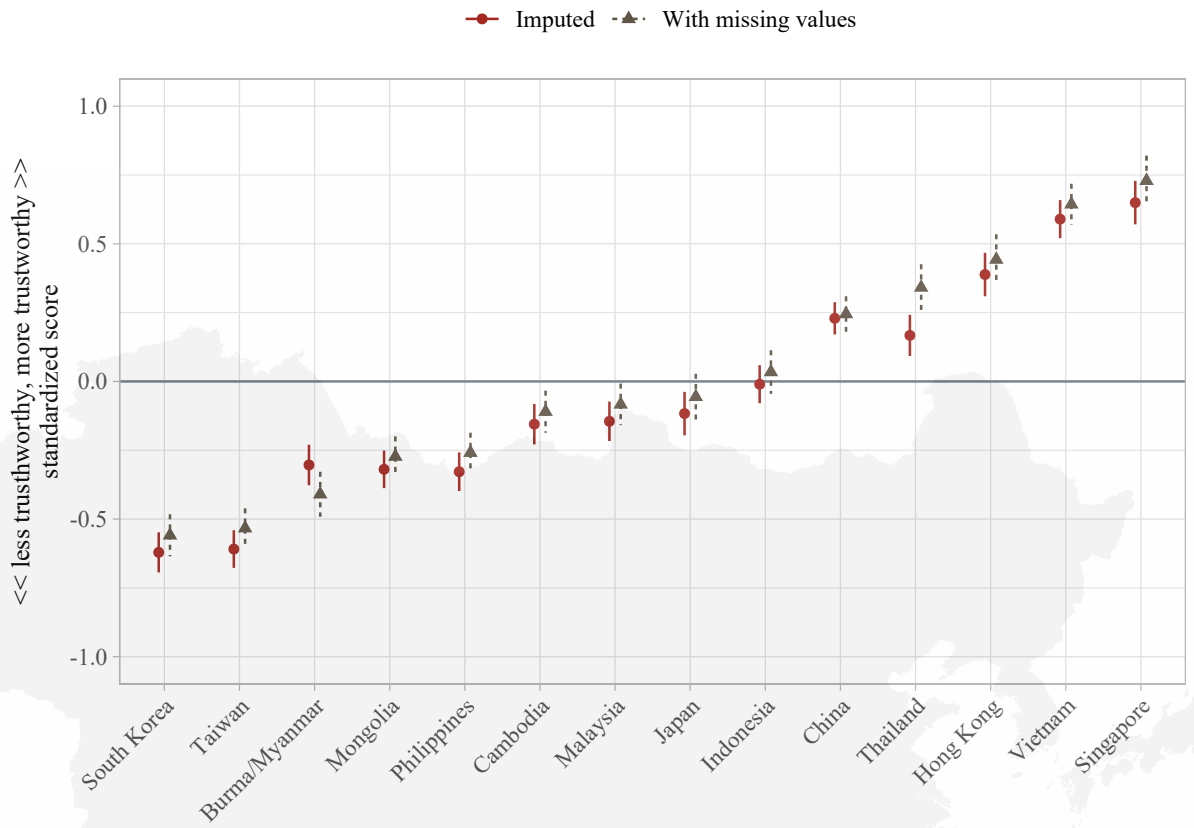
Figure A.1 - Imputed Values: Political Norms and Values Scale
Select Asia Pacific Countries, 2014-2016



Sources: Asian Barometer, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10
Confidence intervals at 95%.

Figure A.2 - Imputed Values: Trust and Good Governance Scale

Select Asia Pacific Countries, 2014-2016



Sources: Asian Barometer, Fourth Wave (2014-2016) & Varieties of Democracy, Ver. 10
Confidence intervals at 95%.