

**Mongolian Tolerance and Intolerance Toward Different Cultures:
An Exploration Based on Analyses of Cross-National Survey Data**

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1. Introduction

Mongolia has witnessed the rise of ultranationalists who advocate exclusivism against foreign people and enterprises since the mid-2000s. Ultranationalist campaigns, which have been reported mainly by foreign media, have included demonstrations and attacks on foreign people, particularly Chinese, as well as on Mongolian citizens.¹ Although those groups insisted in 2013 that they had “changed their tactics,”² strong doubts remain about whether their violent stance and actions have been discarded.³

The real problem is whether Mongolian society, as a whole, is harsh or lenient regarding the outrage of exclusivism. There are arguments that support for such groups is rather low in Mongolia,⁴ that they do not represent Mongolians as a whole,⁵ and that they are just “remarkable” and so receive media attention, despite their low popularity.⁶ On the other hand, there are concerns that support from the public is growing,⁷ that prejudice is not uncommon among Mongolians,⁸ and that there seems to be a consensus regarding China’s imperialism, ‘evilness’ and intention on taking Mongolia.⁹

However, the empirical background of these discussions is not clear. It remains undetermined to what extent exclusivism is accepted or rejected among ordinary Mongolians. Moreover, the rise of far-right groups is not unique to Mongolia and can be observed in other societies all over the world. Therefore, it should be questioned whether exclusivism in Mongolia is a serious issue or a minor phenomenon based on a global perspective.

In this paper, I examine how tolerant or intolerant the Mongolians are to different cultures by using cross-national survey data. The following three research questions were addressed: first, do ordinary Mongolians show tolerant or intolerant attitudes toward people of different cultures to a greater extent than do other groups of people? Second, do ordinary Mongolians show tolerant or intolerant attitudes toward people of different cultures compared with people in other post-socialist countries (PSCs)? Third, what factors relate to tolerant or intolerant attitude toward people of different cultures? In order to tackle these questions, single-nation and cross-national analyses were conducted with a focus on ordinary Mongolians’ attitudes toward people of different cultural backgrounds.

2. Data and Variables in Focus

In this study, data from the Life in Transition Survey II (LiTS II) were analyzed. The survey was conducted in 2010 by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The survey focused on changes in life courses in countries in transition, namely Mongolia, the Former Soviet Republics except

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¹ Tania Branigan, “Mongolian Neo-Nazis: Anti-Chinese Sentiment Fuels Rise of Ultra-Nationalism,” *The Guardian*, August 2, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/02/mongolia-far-right>; and Chris Hogg, “Discontent Fuels Mongolia’s Far-Right Groups,” *BBC News*, September 6, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11141472>

² Palash Ghosh, “Mongolian Neo-Nazis Switch from Nationalism to Environmentalism by Attacking Foreign Mining Companies,” *International Business Times*, July 2, 2013, <http://www.ibtimes.com/mongolian-neo-nazis-switch-nationalism-environmentalism-attacking-foreign-mining-companies-1331817>

³ Carlos Barria, “Mongolia Neo-Nazis Announce a Change of Tack - Pollution Control,” *Reuters*, July 2, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/02/us-mongolia-rightwing-idUSBRE96108N20130702>; and Graham Land, “White Swastika: Mongolia’s Eco-Nazis,” *Asian Correspondent*, July 3, 2013, <http://asiancorrespondent.com/110130/white-swastika-mongolias-eco-nazis/>

⁴ Statement by the Mongolian historian and social scientist Nyam Puruv in Fenbo Wang and Chi Viet Giang, “Mongolian Nazis Provoke Chinese Resentment,” *DW*, September 15, 2010, <http://www.dw.de/mongolian-nazis-provoke-chinese-resentment/a-6008069>

⁵ Statement by Tal Liron, then a PhD candidate at the University of Chicago, in Barria, “Neo-Nazis Announce a Change of Tack.”

⁶ Land, “White Swastika.”

⁷ Statement by Enkhjargal Davaasuren, director of the National Centre Against Violence, in Branigan, “Mongolian Neo-Nazis.”

⁸ N. Graaf, “Rampant Racism a Growing Problem in Mongolia,” *DW*, April 17, 2012, <http://www.dw.de/rampant-racism-a-growing-problem-in-mongolia/a-15888287>.

⁹ Statement by Franck Billé of Cambridge University in Branigan, “Mongolian Neo-Nazis.”

Turkmenistan,¹⁰ and East and Central European Post-socialist countries. In each country, including Mongolia, around 1,000 respondents aged 18 or over were selected through multi-stage random sampling method.

LiTS II asked respondents questions regarding their attitude toward people of different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, q3.17 asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: (a) “People from other ethnic groups are enriching the cultural life of our country”; (b) “The presence of people from other ethnic groups is a cause of insecurity”; and (c) “The presence of people from other ethnic groups increases unemployment.” The response categories were “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “neither,” “agree,” “strongly agree,” “not applicable,” and “don’t know.” For the sake of simplicity, I excluded the last two categories from the analysis.

LiTS II also incorporated a question, q3.33, which showed respondents a list of various groups of people; respondents were asked to name all the groups they would not like to have as neighbors. The list is shown in Table 1. The list includes four groups of people of different cultures, which are italicized in the table. In this paper, these four items are referred to as the “four items on different cultures,” and were focused on during analysis. “Other” was not included in the analyses due to its unavailability in the dataset.

Table 1. List of the groups of people in q3.33

a. Families with children	i. Gypsies
b. Paedophiles	j. <i>People of a different religion</i>
c. Drug addicts	k. Poor people
d. <i>People of a different race</i>	l. Heavy drinkers
e. People who have AIDS	m. Unmarried couples living together
f. Elderly people	n. Jewish people
g. <i>Immigrants /foreign workers</i>	o. <i>People who speak a different language</i>
h. Homosexuals	p. Other (specify:)

Note: Italicized items are “the four items on different cultures.”

3. Results

3.1. Univariate Analyses of Mongolian Data

Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of responses to the three statements in q3.17. As the figure shows, a majority of respondents indicated a negative attitude toward other ethnic groups: the combined percentage of respondents who selected “strongly disagree” and “disagree” to the statement that people from other ethnic groups are enriching the cultural life of Mongolia exceeded 50%. Furthermore, more than two-thirds of the respondents affirmed the statement that the presence of people from other ethnic groups is a cause of insecurity or increases unemployment.

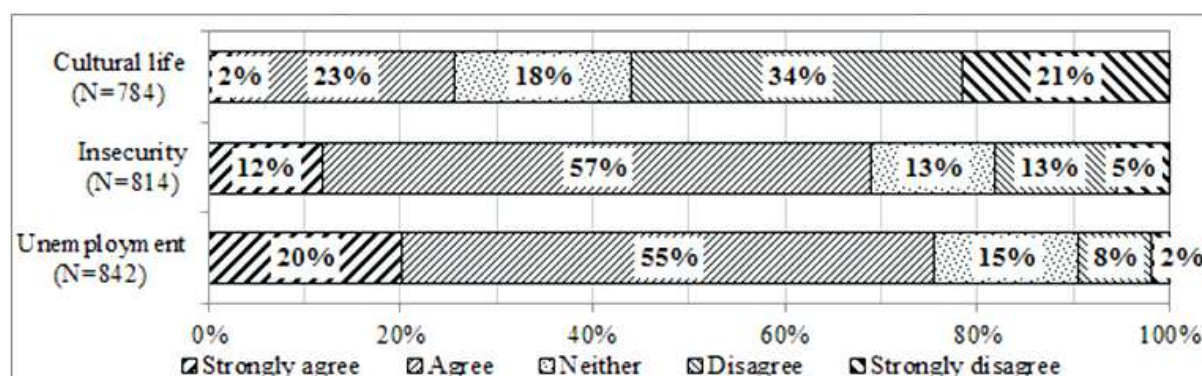


Figure 1. Frequency Distribution of Answers to q3.17

The frequency distribution of responses to each item in q3.30 is shown in Figure 2. “Immigrants/foreign workers” was the most selected of the four items pertaining to different cultures and the fourth most selected of all 15 items, followed by “people of a different race,” “people who speak a different language,” and “people of a different religion.”

¹⁰ The country has been excluded since the first LiTS due to political and social conditions. See Synovate. *Life in Transition Survey (LiTS) 2006: A Brief Report on Observations, Experiences and Methodology from the Survey*. (Nicosia, Cyprus: Synovate), www.ebrd.com/downloads/research/surveys/litsrepo.pdf

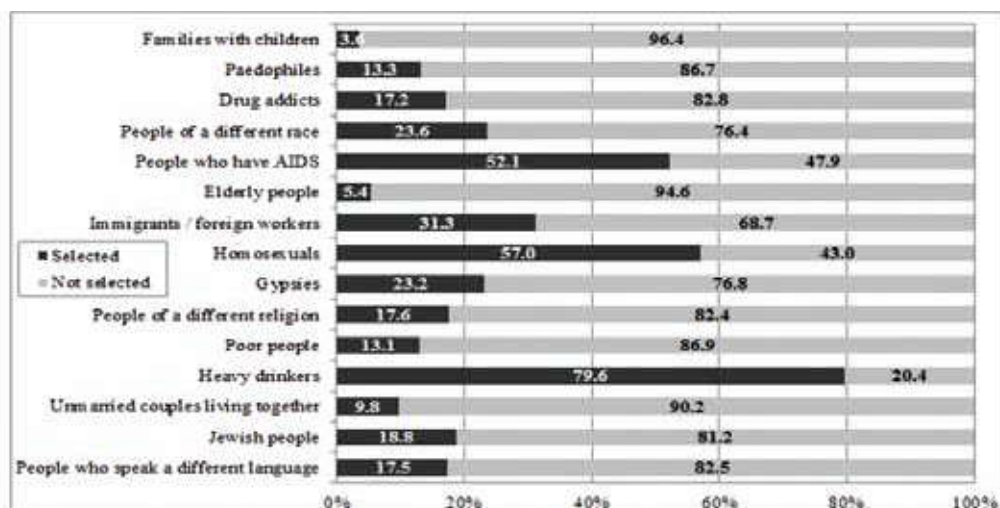


Figure 2. Frequency Distribution of the Items in q3.33

Although respondents who indicated that they would not like members of these groups as neighbors were not in the majority, the results did not indicate that exclusive attitude toward people of different cultures was marginal. The simple mean score of those who selected these items was 25.5%; the only item whose percentage exceeded this score was “immigrants/foreign workers.” However, this score was influenced by the exceptionally high percentage that chose “heavy drinkers.” When this item was excluded, the score fell to 16.2%, which all four items pertaining to different cultures exceeded.

3.2. Cross-National Comparison

Next, I compared the distribution in Mongolia with that in other PSCs. For the sake of simplicity, the response categories “strongly agree” and “agree” were merged into “yes.” Similarly, the categories “strongly disagree” and “disagree” were merged into “no.”

Table 2. Cross-national comparison of frequency distribution (q3.17)

Cultural life	Yes	Neither	No	Insecurity	Yes	Neither	No
25 Azerbaijan (N=822)	31.1%	22.7%	46.1%	1 Mongolia (N=814)	69.0%	12.8%	18.2%
26 Bulgaria (N=890)	30.8%	34.7%	34.5%	2 Czech Republic (N=988)	53.1%	25.6%	21.3%
27 Armenia (N=762)	25.7%	20.7%	53.5%	3 Russia (N=1424)	51.8%	22.8%	25.4%
28 Mongolia (N=784)	25.6%	18.5%	55.9%	4 Hungary (N=992)	44.1%	32.4%	23.6%
29 Czech Republic (N=980)	20.1%	36.8%	43.1%	5 Bulgaria (N=889)	38.8%	32.8%	28.3%
Total (N=28295)	43.1%	29.2%	27.7%	Total (N=34379)	32.2%	31.7%	36.1%
Unemployment	Yes	Neither	No				
1 Mongolia (N=842)	75.7%	15.0%	9.4%				
2 Czech Republic (N=986)	64.0%	24.7%	11.3%				
3 Russia (N=1443)	60.1%	21.1%	18.8%				
4 Hungary (N=994)	57.8%	25.9%	16.3%				
5 Georgia (N=860)	48.7%	24.4%	26.9%				
Total (N=34338)	39.1%	29.1%	31.8%				

Table 2 shows the results of the responses to q3.17. Countries are listed in order of the percentage of people who indicated answers that were categorized as “yes.” Because of space limitations, only part of the results are presented here; nevertheless, from the table it is obvious that a negative attitude toward people from different ethnic groups is more common in Mongolia than in other PSCs.

The results of comparing the items on a different culture are shown in Table 3. The percentage of people who selected groups of people of different cultures was relatively high in Mongolia and exceeded the mean score of all PSCs. In particular, the percentage who selected “immigrant/foreign workers” in Mongolia was the highest. Again, the results indicated a negative attitude in Mongolia toward people of different cultures.

Table 3. Cross-national comparison of frequency distribution of the four items on different cultures in q3.33

Race			Immigrants / Foreign Workers		
	Selected	Not selected		Selected	Not selected
1 Armenia (N=1000)	32.3	67.7	1 Mongolia (N=1000)	31.3	68.7
2 Moldova (N=1043)	31.5	68.5	2 Russia (N=1581)	28.8	71.2
3 Azerbaijan (N=1002)	27.2	72.9	3 Czech Republic (N=1007)	27.4	72.6
4 Czech Republic (N=1007)	23.7	76.3	4 Moldova (N=1043)	24.3	75.7
5 Mongolia (N=1000)	23.6	76.4	5 Hungary (N=1040)	24.0	76.0
6 Tajikistan (N=1007)	21.5	78.6	6 Estonia (N=1001)	23.6	76.4
Total (N=32243)	15.1	85.0	Total (N=32243)	16.3	84.0

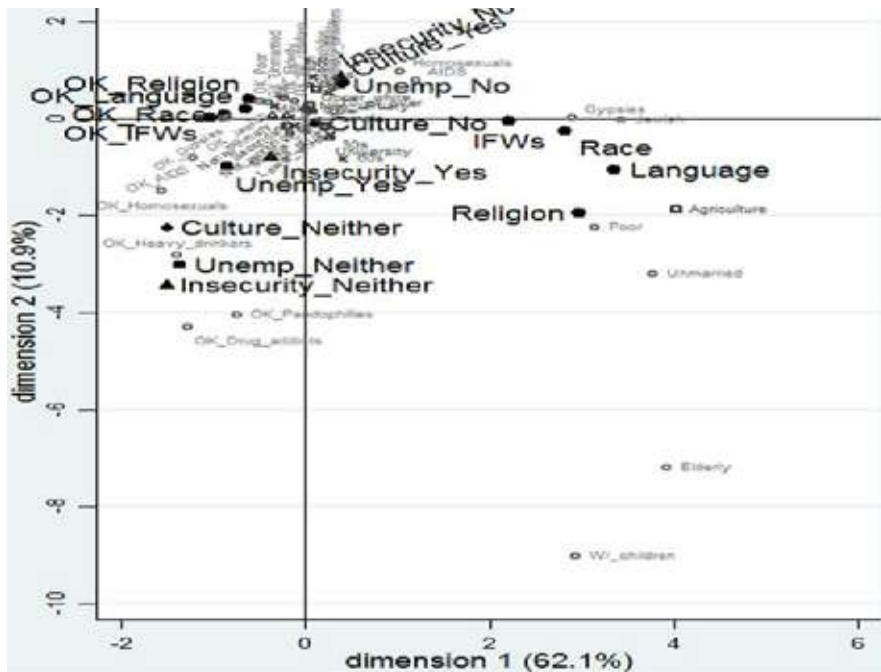
Religion			Language		
	Selected	Not selected		Selected	Not selected
1 Moldova (N=1043)	30.6	69.4	1 Moldova (N=1043)	22.7	77.3
2 Armenia (N=1000)	27.8	72.2	2 Mongolia (N=1000)	17.5	82.5
3 Tajikistan (N=1007)	26.3	73.7	3 Kosovo (N=1091)	13.4	86.6
4 Azerbaijan (N=1002)	24.3	75.8	4 Kyrgyzstan (N=1014)	12.7	87.3
5 Kyrgyzstan (N=1014)	22.7	77.3	5 Russia (N=1581)	11.1	88.9
6 Mongolia (N=1000)	17.6	82.4	6 Czech Republic (N=1007)	9.2	90.8
Total (N=32243)	10.5	89.5	Total (N=32243)	6.9	93.1

3.3. Multiple Correspondence Analysis

Lastly, I conducted multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) in order to examine the features of the variables. MCA is a method of multivariate analysis that displays structures among a set of categorical variables.¹¹ The result is presented as a two-dimensional scatter chart, and distance between points indicates relationships between categories.

In this study, I conducted two kinds of analysis. The first was a single-nation analysis to examine the relationships between attitudes toward different ethnic groups,¹² the groups of people listed in q.33, and respondents’ socio-demographic backgrounds. The variables included gender, age groups in increments of 10 years, educational attainment,¹³ residence,¹⁴ income level,¹⁵ and occupational status.¹⁶ The second was a cross-national comparison of attitudes toward people of different ethnic groups and those of different cultures.

Figure 3. MCA Results: Mongolian Data (N=638). IFWs stands for “immigrants/foreign workers.” “OK_” indicates



¹¹ For mathematical background and a description of the practice of MCA, see Michael Greenacre and Jörg Blasius, eds., *Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Related Method* (Boca Raton, FL: Chapman and Hall/CRC, 2006); and Michael Greenacre, *Correspondence Analysis in Practice* (Boca Raton, FL: Chapman and Hall/CRC, 2007).

¹² Responses to the three variables were reorganized into three categories as shown in Table 2.

¹³ There were four categories to describe educational attainment. “None/primary” included respondents with either no education or primary or lower secondary education. “(Upper) Secondary” consisted of those with secondary education. “None-tertiary” indicated those with post-secondary education but not tertiary. Respondents with a bachelor’s degree or above were classified as “tertiary.”

¹⁴ Respondents’ residences were sorted into the following three categories along with the primary sampling units: “Metropolitan” (the capital city Ulaanbaatar), “city” (Local cities including Darkhan-Uul *aimag*, Orkhon *aimag*, and other *aimag* centers), and “rural” (other sampling units).

¹⁵ The respondents were asked to rank their present income on a 10-point scale. Answers from 1 to 4 were categorized as “low,” 5 and 6 were categorized as “middle,” and 7 to 10 were categorized as “high.”

¹⁶ The occupational status of the respondents was classified, on the basis of their primary job, as “upper white” (managerial and professional jobs), “lower white” (clerical and sales jobs), “blue” (manual labor), “agriculture,” and “not working.”

that respondents did not select the item, which means that they would accept members of the group as neighbors.

Figure 3 shows the results of the first analysis. Responses of “OK” for all four items are located close together, indicating that respondents who accepted a certain group of people of a different culture were likely to accept the other three groups of people. Negative and positive responses to people from other ethnic groups were not as distant as responses to the four items on different cultures, and all were closer to tolerant responses than to intolerant ones. Expectations and anxiety regarding different ethnic groups are unlikely to change people’s attitudes toward people of different cultures. Moreover, most of the socio-demographic attributes are so concentrated that it remains unclear which attributes are related to tolerant or intolerant attitudes toward different cultures. Although “agriculture” is located particularly near the exclusive attitudes, there was no significant relation between respondents’ jobs and their attitudes in cross-tabulation analyses at the 5% level.¹⁷

Figure 4. MCA Results: Cross-national Analysis of PSCs (N=26370)

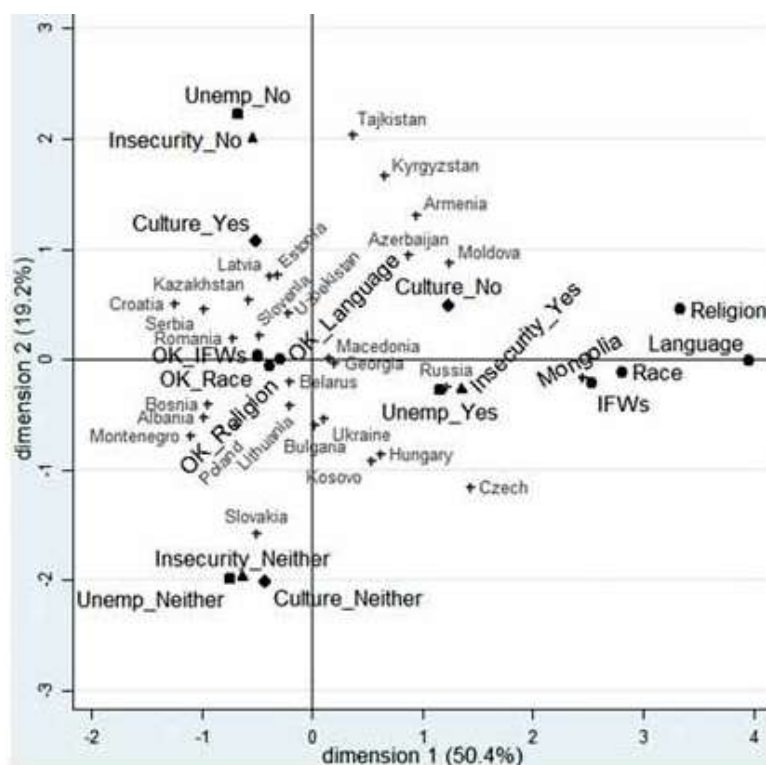


Figure 4 shows the results of cross-national comparison. The figure confirms that there is a less tolerant attitude in Mongolia toward people of different cultures consistent with the tendency in Tables 2 and 3. Mongolia is very closely located to negative attitudes toward both people from other ethnic groups and those of different cultures, and an exclusive attitude toward immigrants and foreign workers was especially salient, which can be interpreted as a reaction to the increase of Chinese laborers in the country. According to the census in 2010, the number of Chinese residents in Mongolia had more than doubled between 2000 and 2010 and became majority.¹⁸ Other reports claimed that Chinese expatriates in Mongolia are estimated to be 20,000,¹⁹ or that around 17,000 Chinese workers employed in Mongolia,²⁰ a country with less than 3 million citizens.

4. Conclusion

The analysis results can be summarized as follows: although a majority of Mongolians is tolerant of people of different cultures, they are not likely to agree with the idea that people from other ethnic groups enrich their culture. Rather, they tend to regard such people as a threat to social security or unemployment. According to their responses to q3.33, their tolerance to people of different cultures is weak compared with that of other groups of people. Cross-

¹⁷ The reason for this might be that there were very little number of people whose main job is “Agriculture.” They comprised less than 1% of the respondents in Mongolia.

¹⁸ Mongol Ulsyn Ündesnii Statistikiin Khoroo, *Khün am, oron suutsny 2010 ony ulsyn toologo*. (Ulaanbaatar, Mongol Ulsyn Ündesnii Statistikiin Khoroo, 2011), p.28.

¹⁹ Ishida Koichiro, “Mongolia Looks to Japan to Get out of China’s Economic Shadow,” *the Asahi Shimbun*, April 1, 2013, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/china/AJ201304010090>

²⁰ “Labor,” *M.A.D. Investment Solutions*, Last modified August, 2013, <http://mad-research.com/mongolian-real-estate-market/construction-sector/labour/>

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national comparison also revealed a weaker tolerance to different cultures in Mongolia than in other PSCs. Among groups of people of different cultures, the Mongolians are least tolerant to immigrants and foreign workers. These findings imply that the latent risk of exclusivism is comparatively high in Mongolia. People of different cultures have a relatively high risk of being scapegoated compared with those with other features, and such a risk is higher in Mongolia than in other PSCs.

However, factors relating to tolerance or intolerance to the people of different cultures were hardly found in the analyses here. Further research is required to clarify what determines the attitude toward different culture in Mongolia.

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Abstract

The rise and rampancy of ultranationalists has been repeatedly reported in Mongolia in recent years, but whether views and actions characterized by ultranationalism are prevalent remains to be determined. Some insist that ultranationalists are gaining in popularity, and others deny that such groups represent the majority of the Mongolian people. However, the grounds of these arguments are unclear. To elucidate this question on an empirical basis, I examined how tolerant and intolerant Mongolians are to people of different cultural backgrounds based on statistical analyses of cross-national survey data. A comparison among post-socialist countries reveals that although people with intolerant attitudes toward those from different cultures remain in the minority in Mongolia, the percentage of such people is relatively high compared with other post-socialist countries; in particular, a negative attitude toward foreign workers and immigrants is clearly observed. The result demonstrates the potential risk of the spread of exclusivism in Mongolia.

Keywords: Mongolia, exclusivism, nationalism, racism, ethnicity, foreign workers