

**MONGOLIAN YOUTH'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNMENT**

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***Abstract:***

In this article, the current image of democracy, beliefs, and political participation among young people have been carefully studied. It can be considered as a feature of the research that male and female representatives aged 16-34 were selected as social representatives of the Mongolian youth. The research team concluded that the advantage of the research method used in this article is that it facilitated the collection of data on the level of trust in democracy and politics among young people from many sectors of society by age and educational level, and revealed the problems faced by young people in the employment sector. However, since the number of respondents is limited in scope, our research cannot represent the interests of all young people in Mongolia, but it can be considered sufficient to observe the general attitude of young people.

***Keywords:*** Democracy, Youths, Rights

***Methodology***

Our research's goal is to evaluate Mongolian youths' attitudes towards the current democratic government of Mongolia. It also aims to determine which factors influence Mongolian youth, which we have defined as being between the ages of 16 and 34, in relation to how they view their government, their ability to influence government actions, and their attitudes towards different forms of government. This section will focus on how our team conducted data collection, how we selected participants, and the number of participants required for our research to be deemed satisfactory. It also discusses the limitations of our research, as well as the process in which our data collection was reviewed and interpreted. The methods described in this section should be considered while discussing the results of our research.

***Approach***

As previously described, our research's primary aim is to collect and evaluate attitudes of Mongolian youth. Therefore, our approach was primarily qualitative in nature, with our research's main interest being participants' perceptions of the current state of Mongolia's democracy. Our research also incorporates aspects of quantitative research, as we are able to categorize our responses into percentages and absolute responses received. Blending both quantitative and qualitative research methods allows us to reach a comprehensive understanding of the responses.

Our first step was to decide which type of data collection we should use. A survey was the most logical approach for collecting large amounts of raw data, which could then be organized and analyzed further. Our team initially determined that a goal of five hundred responses from Mongolian youth would be sufficient, and realistic, for our research. We wanted to avoid setting a sample size that was too high, as we wanted to make sure that each survey response we collected was checked through in detail, and a sample size larger than five hundred would hinder this. At the same time, we needed a sample size large enough that could provide us with results that were representative of the Mongolian youth population. Ultimately, it was decided that five hundred participants would take our survey.

Our research team then decided that although a survey provided general trends and viewpoints of Mongolian youth concerning democracy, we wanted to go further in-depth and analyze individual perspectives. We concluded that focus group interviews would be the most logical next step, as we could specifically interview small groups of Mongolian youth and pinpoint the trends we noticed from our survey responses. For example, if our survey results indicated that Mongolian youth held strongly positive opinions concerning Mongolian democracy, we could use the focus group interviews to delve deeper into the reasoning behind these opinions. It was decided to interview twelve Mongolian youth, each representing different identities that included age, gender, ethnic group, etc. The goal to include different identities was to prevent marginalized communities from being excluded.

#### Data Collection

Our team distributed the survey through several mediums, including social media, targeted emails, and paper-based surveys at Mongolian youth seminars in Ulaanbaatar. Our surveys included preliminary questions, such as asking for age and location, and excluded any identifying information to ensure the participants' personal anonymity. The surveys contain questions related to general sentiments concerning youth's confidence of Mongolian democracy, levels of political engagement, perspectives on media freedom, and other general questions about political satisfaction with regards to Mongolian democracy. The questions asked in the survey will be included later in this article.

Our focus group interviews and discussions placed a focus on equal representation across a number of identities. Our team felt it was important to include perspectives from backgrounds that might be underrepresented in national political discussions. Therefore, from the twelve participants interviewed, we purposefully selected six men and six women in order to reflect gender equality. Additionally, we ensured that four participants were between the ages of 16 and 21, four participants were between the ages of 22 and 27, and four participants were between the ages of 28 and 34. Our research also took into account the rural-urban divide of the country, with six of the participants being from Ulaanbaatar, and six being from rural aimags (provinces) across Mongolia. Finally, we wanted to represent ethnic minority groups, with three of our participants identifying as ethnic minorities (in comparison to the rest identifying as Khalkha, which constitutes around 80% of Mongolia's population).

We divided the twelve participants into two groups of six, with one interview session being held during the weekday and one during the weekend. Our reasoning for these two groups was to provide convenience in scheduling interviews for the participants. The interviews were moderated and conducted in Mongolian, and then transcribed into English to analyze the results. The participants were not compensated for their attendance, and this was done completely voluntarily and confidentially.

After our data from the survey was collected, our team uploaded the raw data from the responses into SPSS, where the data was analyzed. Our interview data was analyzed qualitatively, with each response being marked or graded as being in favor of democracy, being neutral or indifferent to democracy, or being opposed to democracy.

## Limitations

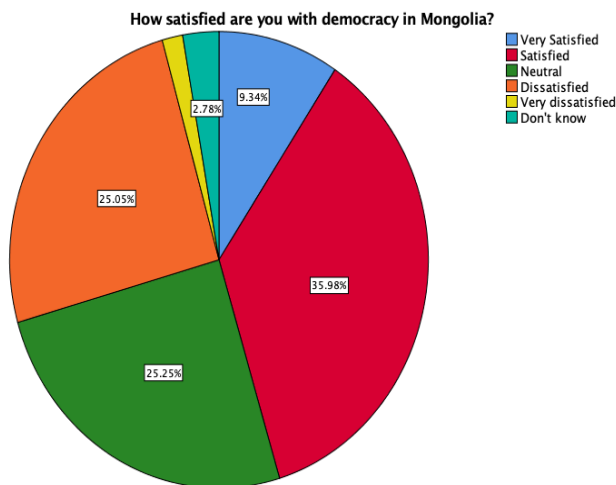
Our first, and potentially most significant limitation, is the fact that our online survey was not accessible to the entire population. Around 68% of Mongolia's population is estimated to have reliable internet access, thus we began our research with the assumption that we could not reasonably expect our online survey to reach rural and low-income youth populations that did not have internet access. Knowing that our research needed as many perspectives as possible, our team attended youth seminars in Ulaanbaatar, in which attendees came not only from the capital itself, but also from aimags across the country.

Another limitation we encountered was ensuring that those who took part in our study understood the terminology being used. To ensure that, our team carefully worded the survey and interview questions as clearly as possible, and often included a 'No Answer' option in case the respondent was unable to confidently answer a question.

## Survey results

Our questionnaire survey was distributed and answered by 503 people aged 16-34, from 21 provinces and 8 districts of Mongolia. Of these, 216 people were aged 16-21, 155 aged 22-27, and 131 aged 28-34 participated. 40.5% of the participants were male and 59.2% were female. 55.8% of participants are from urban areas (Ulaanbaatar, Erdenet, Darkhan), and 44.2% are from rural areas. In terms of educational level, 43% have completed high school, 37.8% are currently earning their bachelor's degree, 7.3% have finished college, 7% have a graduate degree, and 4.7% have not earned a secondary school degree.

Chart №1



answered "satisfied" had completed high school.

When asked how satisfied they are with democracy in Mongolia, 35.9% are satisfied, 25.2% are neutral, and 25% are dissatisfied. That means, the plurality of young people are satisfied with Mongolia's current state of democracy. As shown in the second chart, the majority of young people agree that democracy is the best form of governance, but they believe that there is a need to improve and develop it. The majority of young people who answered "dissatisfied" were from urban areas, while the majority of those who

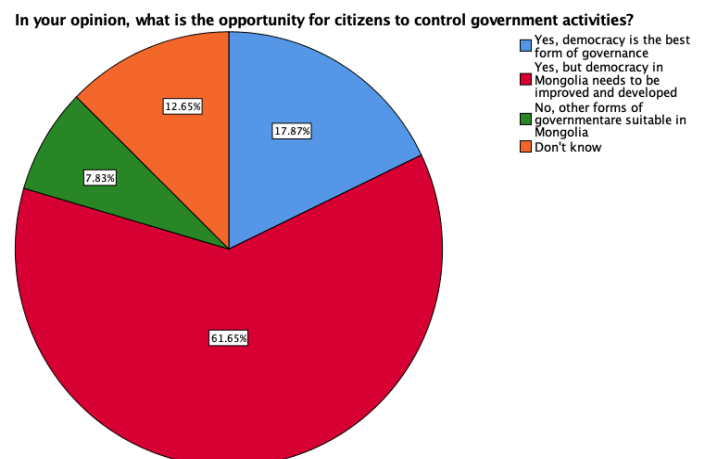
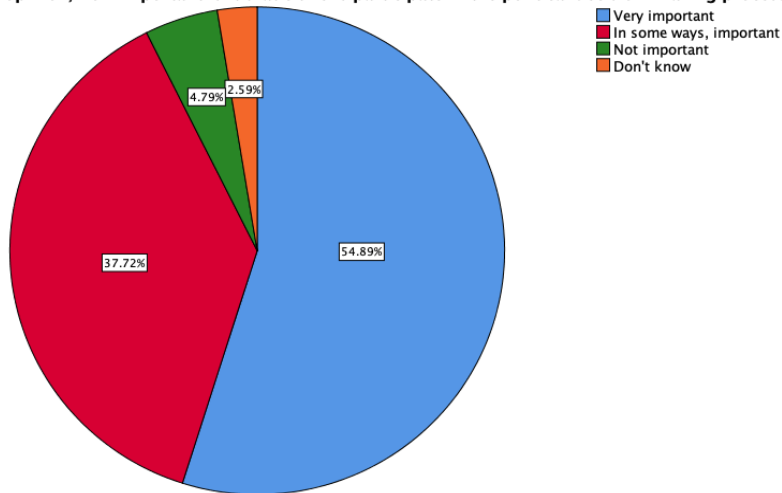


Chart №2

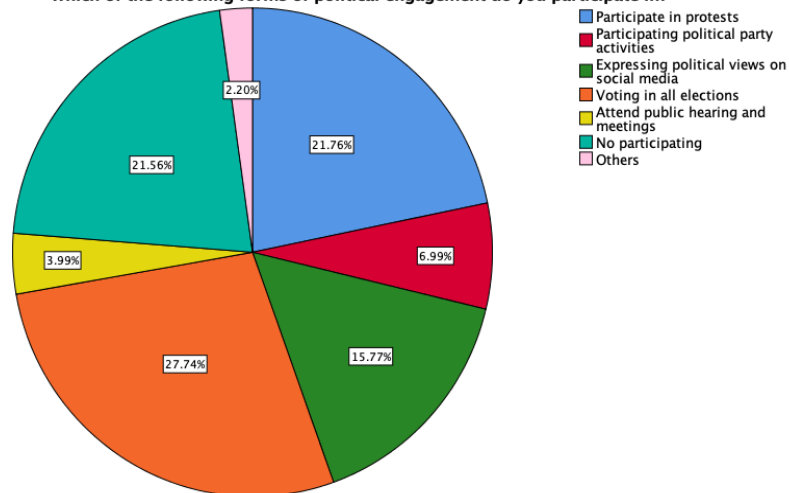
In your opinion, how important is it that citizens participate in the political decision-making process?



As for Question 2, 54.8% of the participants, constituting the majority of those surveyed, believed that it is important for citizens to participate in the political decision-making process. In particular, the majority of citizens aged 22-34 answered "very important". It was considered more important for politics to involve women more than men concerning political decision-making. Also, an absolute majority of young people with a bachelor's degree or higher education considered political participation as "very important". On the other hand, when evaluating (5-Very good, 0-Very bad) the participation of Mongolian citizens in Question 3, 29.3% gave 3 points, 31.5% gave 2 points, 13.5% gave 1 point, and 12.3% did not give any points or "very bad". There are many people who gave zero points from 28-34-year-olds who are working-aged youth. In other words, the young people concluded that the participation of citizens in Mongolia's democracy is not sufficient.

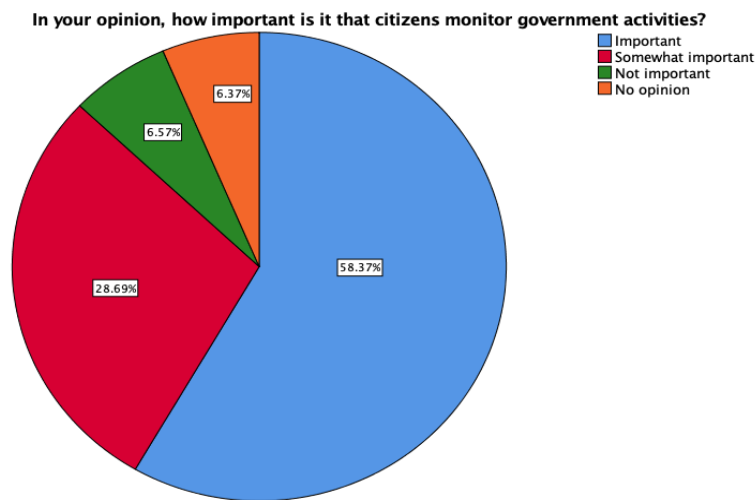
Chart №3

Which of the following forms of political engagement do you participate in?



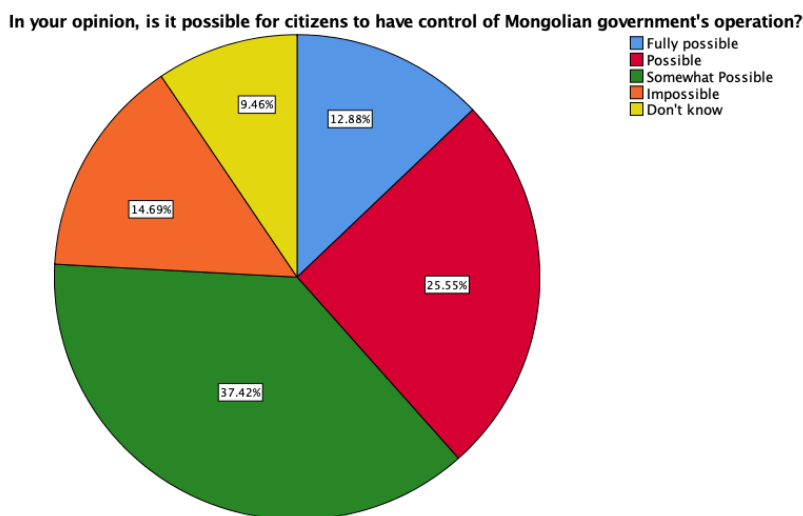
In terms of political participation, the majority of young people focus on voting in elections, participating in demonstrations, and expressing their opinions online. 15.7% of the participants answered that they do not participate in politics in any way. The majority of these people are teenagers who are 16-21 years old.

Chart №4



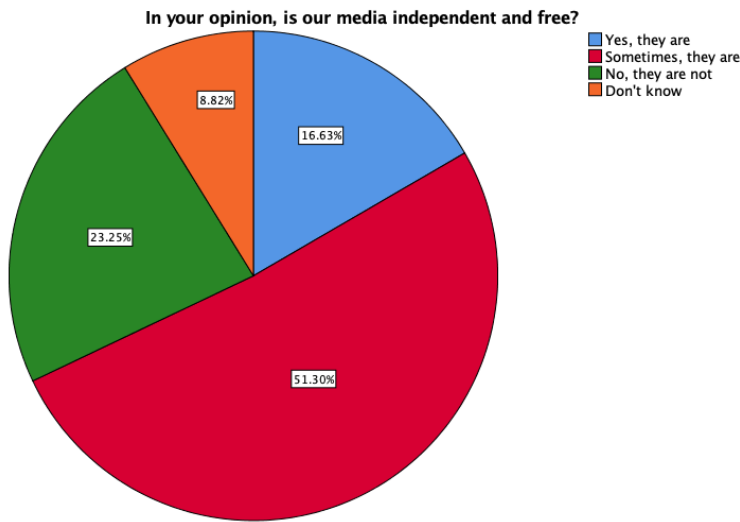
The majority or more than half of the people considered it important to control the government activities. From this, it can possibly be understood that the understanding of democracy among Mongolian youth has increased relatively compared to the past.

Chart №5



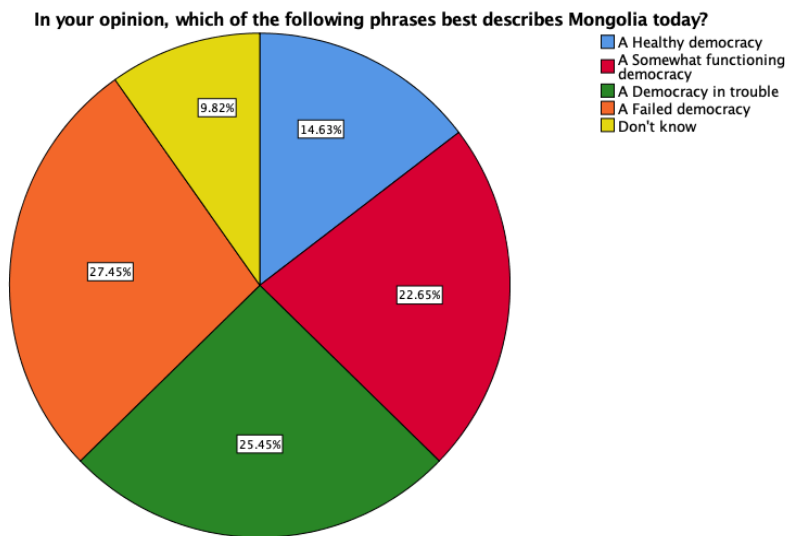
Regarding the possibility of controlling government activities in Mongolia, the majority of people believed that it was possible to a greater or lesser extent. However, 25.5% of the participants answered that it is only partially possible, and 14.6% answered that it is not possible, which shows that there are some perceived difficulties in controlling government activities. Among those who answered that it was impossible to control, the highest percentage were young people with a higher education level, while the majority of young people who answered that it was possible were those with a high school education. Elaborating on these results, the majority of people answered that some problems pertaining to controlling the government were: 1. Information is not open, 2. there is an excessive bureaucracy, and 3. people's opinions are not listened to.

Chart №6



Regarding the freedom of the press, the majority of the participants in the study considered that it was not possible to be free and independent to a certain extent. The majority of those who answered that the press can be independent lived in rural areas.

Chart №7



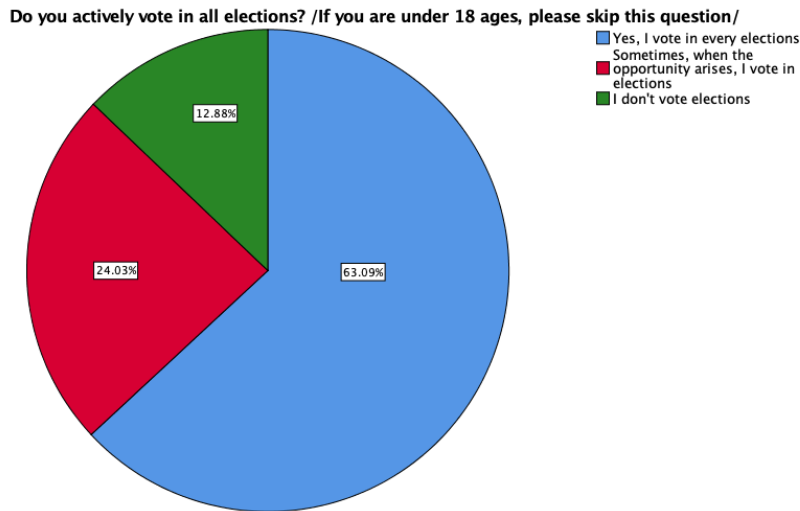
**Your highest Education level completed? \* In your opinion, which of the following phrases best describes Mongolia today? Crosstabulation**

Count		In your opinion, which of the following phrases best describes Mongolia today?					Total
		A Healthy democracy	A Somewhat functioning democracy	A Democracy in trouble	A Failed democracy	Don't know	
Your highest Education level completed?	No Formal Education Level	5	8	2	4	5	24
	High school	45	47	48	51	23	214
	College	5	8	7	12	5	37
	Undergraduate Degree	18	40	60	57	13	188
	Postgraduate degree	0	10	9	13	3	35
Total		73	113	126	137	49	498

When defining the current state of democracy in Mongolia, 27.4% answered that it is in decline, and 25.4% said that it faced considerable problems. In other words, it can be seen

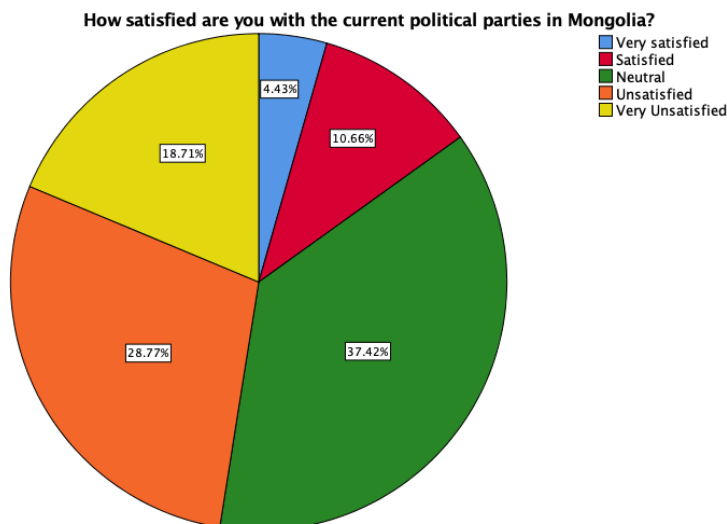
that young people are worried about the integrity of Mongolia's democracy and its future. A significant percentage of young people who chose the answer "healthy democracy" live in rural areas. Many of the young people living in urban areas described themselves as having problems in their daily lives. Responding to an additional question, the majority of young people considered the main problems in strengthening democracy to be: 1. Corruption, 2. Injustice, and 3. Negative Politicization.

Chart №8



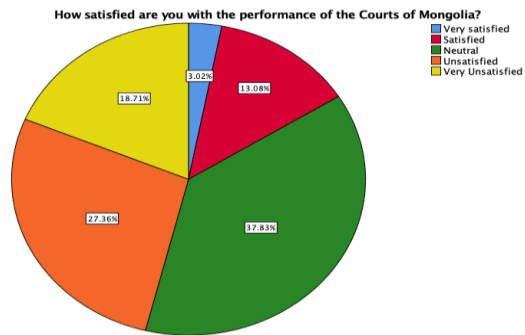
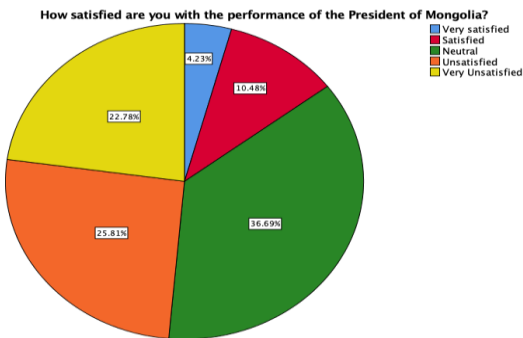
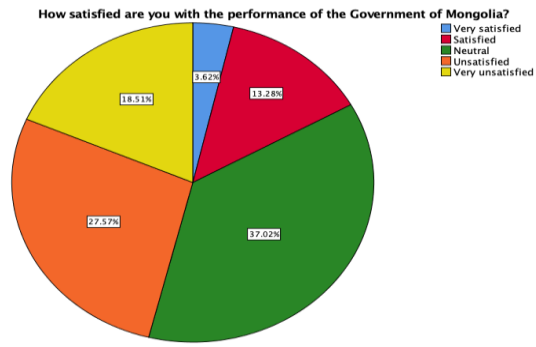
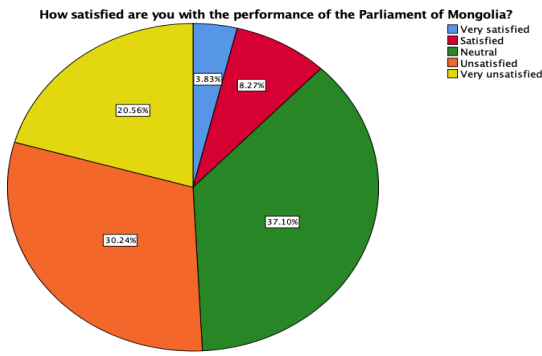
63% of the voting age respondents vote in Mongolian elections. (In the 2020 parliamentary elections, 65% of young people aged 18-25 participated in the elections, demonstrating a representative group.)

Chart №9



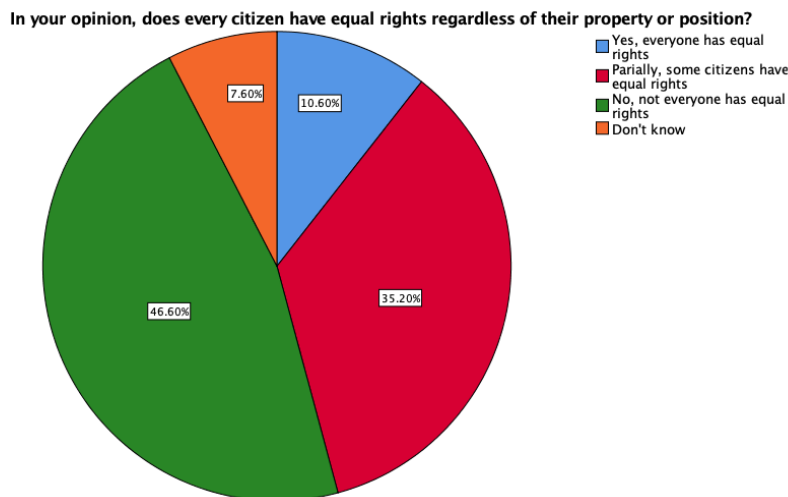
Most of the representatives of the youth evaluated the activities of Mongolian political parties as "mediocre" and "insufficient". It can be seen that trust in the party, which is an important subject for the implementation of democracy, is very low among young people.

Chart №10



Half of the young people responded that they were "unsatisfied" or "very unsatisfied" with the activities of the government, Parliament, president, and judiciary. Youth's trust in democratic representative institutions is overwhelmingly low.

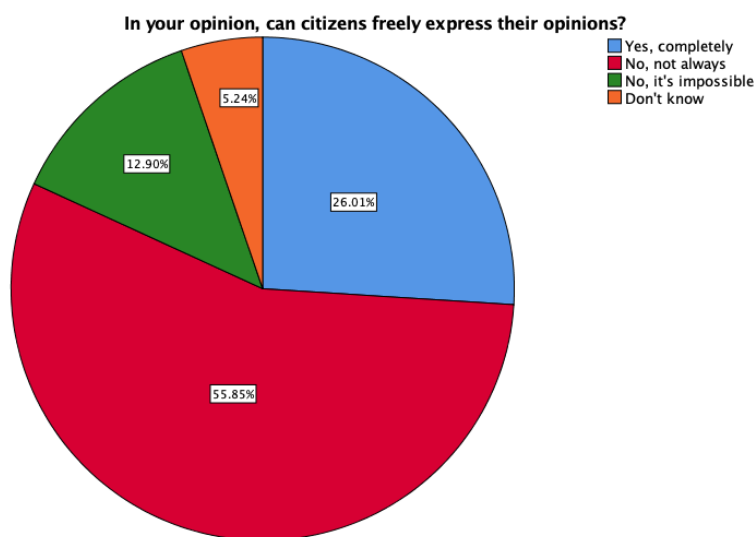
Chart №11



The plurality of young people answered that citizens cannot have equal rights, which means that people believe that they do not have equal rights in our country, regardless of their status or position. The majority of the youth that believe there are equal rights in Mongolia are from urban areas. The majority of young people who believe that not everyone has equal rights had a bachelor's degree or higher.



Chart №12



More than half of the participants felt that the opportunity to freely express their opinion was low. 61% of those who answered "completely possible" live in the rural area, possibly indicating a higher belief of the freedom of speech outside of densely populated urban areas.

#### Analysis

In general, according to the questionnaire survey, young people aged 16-34 have relatively high confidence in Mongolia's democratic government, but they are worried about many problems. It is notable that young people consider political participation and citizen control of government activities to be important, but actual participation and control are insufficient in their views. Political participation of young people is limited to less effective methods such as voting and sharing their opinions online.

In terms of the basic indicators of democracy, such as freedom of the press, equal rights, and the opportunity to freely express opinions, young people were moderately or less satisfied. This may be due to the perceived decline of Mongolian democracy in recent years, economic difficulties, and the growth of inequality. When evaluating the activities of representative organizations, young people usually choose the answer "neutral" or "unsatisfied", which shows that trust in the government is low.

In addition, young people's social status, age, education, and urban-rural affiliation had a significant impact on their opinions and evaluations of the spread of democracy. For example, it was observed that the level of education of an individual has an important effect when comparing the survey responses with the level of education. The majority of young people with bachelor's and higher education are aware of the importance of political participation and control, and on the other hand, they are critical of the development of democracy and the activities of government institutions. Looking at geographical indicators, young people living in rural areas gave more positive answers such as "satisfied" to the majority of questions, while young people living in urban areas were mostly dissatisfied with the implementation of democracy and its current image. In this study, the gender difference of the participants was reflected in their views on democracy, and there were no significant differences.

#### Result of the focus group interview

In a study, our research team collected twelve representatives with identities spanning the majority of key social classes aged 16-34. This interview attempted to find out what

factors affect their level of participation and confidence in politics and democracy. As part of the focus group's orientation questions, the first part asked participants to agree or disagree on eight questions. The second part compares the activities of the Mongolian government with five selected countries. In the third part, a short discussion was held to clarify the problems faced by the youth of Mongolia nowadays. Our research summarizes the opinions and beliefs of those interviewed.

- *Economy:* Since the pandemic, the price of consumer goods has increased by several times, reducing young Mongolians' quality of life. As a result, there is an increasing tendency to doubt the government's actions.

"Citizens find it difficult to pay their daily expenses, and tend to live from salary to salary."

*Injustice:* The result of the focus group interview revealed that the participants felt that Mongolian society is unfair. For example, injustice and inequality can be observed in employment, education, and health care sectors. In particular, the issue of pensions and the social welfare system is very unfair to young people, from their viewpoints.

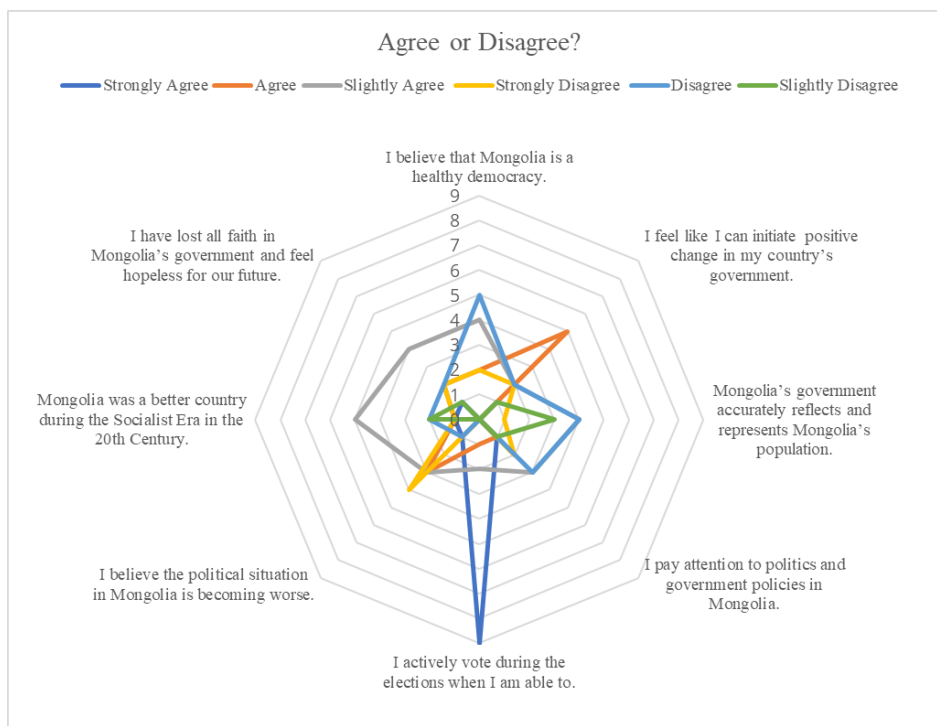
"Every year, the number of university graduates is adjusted based on whether they can provide the demand of the job market. There is still an attitude to get work from an acquaintance or friend in real life. In general, all work is no longer done without familiarity and corruption."

- *Infrastructure:* Rural development is lagging due to poor inter-city road transport and communication. That is why many Mongolians are moving to the capital city Ulaanbaatar. Citizens are making these choices due to organization with the capital city, which allows citizens to live in a relatively comfortable and safe environment.

"By building cities like Erdenet and Darkhan from east to west, it is possible that citizens will not migrate to the capital. In general, this issue isn't decreasing because it is too concentrated in the capital city."

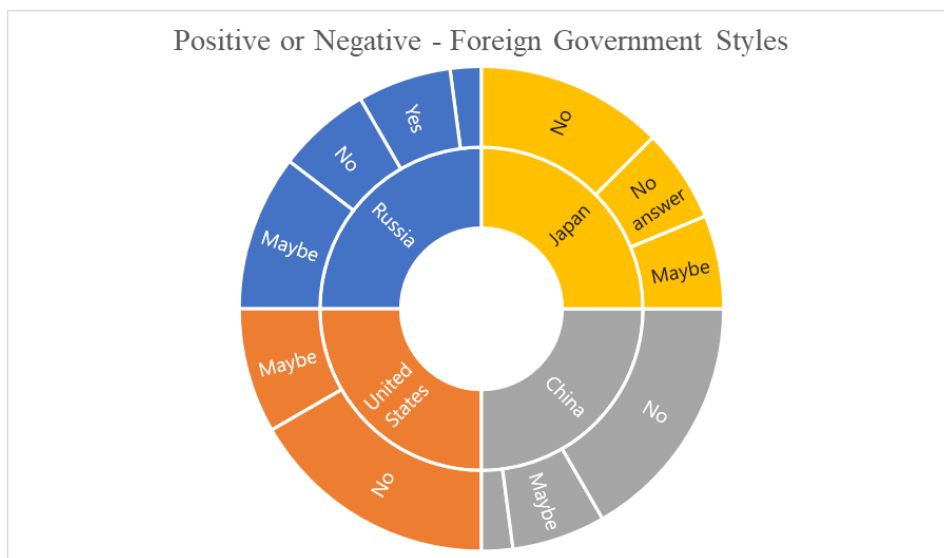
"Due to budget and financial difficulties, it is impossible to come up with a solution that is friendly to people and the city in building architecture. It's just that we can't grow apart from the situation we are in."

Figure 1. Agree or Disagree



Attitudes towards representative democracy among young people aged 16-34 are seeming to favor less democratic aspects, and trust in democracy will further decrease if core needs and social problems do not improve. This conclusion was confirmed followed by the questionnaire in the second part. A favorable attitude exists when looking at Russia's government, albeit the general attitudes were mixed. Furthermore, the general attitude that the activities of the United States, Japan, and Germany's governments are not at all similar to Mongolia's, and Mongolia has no democratic freedom compared to these countries. However, many young Mongolians view Mongolia's government as being free compared to China's government.

Figure 2. Positive or Negative- Foreign Government styles



Despite the many problems faced by today's youth, it is an overwhelmingly positive result that young people are concerned about the future of their country and actively participate in every election, believing that they will bring about positive changes.

### Conclusion

Each coming generation brings different perspectives, innovations, and attitudes to a society, and Mongolia is no exception to this rule. However, Mongolia is in a crucial period, as Mongolia's democratic government pushes for modernization comparable to other East Asian nations. Our research tackled the question of discerning the young generation's opinions on Mongolia's current democracy, as well as highlighting any notable barriers to Mongolia's further development. Both our survey and focus group interviews indicated that Mongolian youth have mixed feelings towards their government, with some attitudes being alarming to those who want to preserve their country's democratic institutions.

Our first key takeaway from our research is that young Mongolians value democracy. The majority of those who responded to our survey indicated that they strongly believe in democratic participation, such as voting and protesting, as well as monitoring their government's actions. This is not to say that young Mongolians are completely in agreement with democracy, but the vast majority have shown willingness to cooperate and improve the democracy of their country.

Our second takeaway is that Mongolians do not view themselves as living in a completely free democracy. The majority of those surveyed indicated that they do not view

their country as being equal, nor adequately protecting freedom of speech. These are key values in any functioning democracy, thus this presents a major (but not impenetrable) barrier to democracy within Mongolia.

Our third takeaway is from our focus group interview, which is that many young Mongolians believe that their government (and democracy) should exist in a form that is independent of other notable governments across the globe. With the possible exception of Russia, most young Mongolians interviewed believe that Mongolia's government should not mimic that of the United States, which is viewed as being one of the largest proponents of global democracy, nor those of Japan or China, which are two of East Asia's leading economies. Although there were significantly more positive attitudes towards Russia's government, there was no overwhelming attitude that Russia's government would be suitable for Mongolia.

Thus, our research indicates that youth attitudes towards democracy in Mongolia are positive, but not without obstacles or frustrations. Through three decades of democracy, Mongolia has managed to remain an "oasis of democracy" in a region often viewed as clinging to authoritarianism. Whether or not Mongolia will continue this road of democracy is not promised, but our research shows that current attitudes towards democracy are still high, albeit not overly optimistic.

#### About research team

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#### ***Хураангуй:***

Энэхүү судалгаагаар залуучуудын дундах ардчиллын өнөөгийн дүр төрх, итгэл үнэмшил, улс төрийн оролцооны талаар анхааран судаллаа. Залуу үеийн төлөөлөл болгон 16-34 насны эрэгтэй, эмэгтэй хүйсийн нийгмийн төлөөллийг сонгон авч оролцуулсан нь судалгааны ажлын нэгэн онцлог хэмээн үзэж болох юм. Энэхүү өгүүлэлд ашигласан судалгааны аргын давуу тал нь нийгмийн олон салбарын залуусыг боловсролын түвшин насны онцлогоор дамжуулан ардчилал, улс төрд хэр итгэл үнэмшилтэй байгаа талаар дата цуглуулах мөн салбар салбарт залуусын өмнө тулгамдаж буй асуудлыг ил гаргахад дөхөм үзүүлсэн хэмээн судалгааны багийн зүгээс үзэж байна. Харин судалгаанд хамрагдагсад тоо массыг хамраагүй учир монголын нийт залуусын бүрэн ашиг сонирхлыг илэрхийлж чадахгүй боловч залуу үеийн ерөнхий хандлагыг ажиглахад хангалттай хэмээн үзэж болох юм. Судалгааны дүнгээс товч дурдвал, залуусын дундах ардчиллын хандлага саармаг буюу дунд дүн гарсан нь анхаарал татаж байна. Энэ нь нэг талаар ардчиллыг улам бэхжүүлэх шаардлага байгаа гэдгийг дахин сануулж өгч байгаа юм.

***Түлхүүр үг:*** Ардчилал, Залуучууд, Эрх