# AsiaBarometer

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## Achievements

The AsiaBarometer sought to describe and shed light on the quality of life in Asia (Inoguchi and Fujii, 2012). Participants were asked to respond to questionnaires and were interviewed face to face. Questions dealt with issues such as personal health, trust and confidence in social institutions, political orientation, and international relations. Given the diverse social, economic, and political settings of the region, these kinds of secondary questions allow analysts to gain a fuller understanding of the responses as they apply to a wider society and quality of life. The achievements of the AsiaBarometer also extend to the methodology, theoretical impact, and substance of the survey.

In terms of methodology, the survey allowed researchers to pursue, over time, four kinds of comparative analyses: comparisons within each surveyed country, within and between each sub-region of Asia, and between Asian and western countries. Also significant is that all the countries approached agreed to participate, despite 27 of them having nondemocratic political systems. Although some governments requested that certain questions be excised (which was done), the project's emphasis on the daily life of ordinary people helped the survey to proceed.

The theoretical results are also considerable. The four types of comparisons employed in the survey allowed the authors to test some theories, such as modernization, globalization, the clash of civilizations, and the Asian values hypotheses. Based on the respondents' feedback, Inoguchi and Fujii (2012) categorized Asian societies along a spectrum of materialism (lifestyle driven by survival), postmaterialism (lifestyle driven by social relations), and public sphere dominance (lifestyle constrained by state regulations). Inoguchi and Fujii compared this division of societies to the classification of regime types provided by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). Interesting findings include the fact that the Huntingtonian clash of civilization hypothesis weakens with the intensity of globalization (Collet and Inoguchi, 2012). Hence, the clash of values is sometimes more apparent within a society than between societies and nations (Inoguchi, 2007).

In terms of substance, the AsiaBarometer data highlight three important findings. First, the least happy group of Asians are high-income earners, residing in the democratic systems of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, whereas the happiest respondents reside in the poorest societies of South Asia. This suggests that family, religion, and community play critical roles in achieving what John Stuart Mill labels "happiness by the way." Second, five societal patterns have been identified, each reflecting the influence of materialism, postmaterialism, and public sphere dominance. And, third, influences that are deeply embedded and that impact social relations, which in turn affect quality of life, such as interpersonal trust and confidence in social institutions, have been examined. These influences emerge through an empirical examination of trust and confidence, in which the source can be traced largely to historical experience and accumulated patterns of political culture (Inoguchi, 2004).

## The Next Step

The AsiaBarometer has generated a substantial amount of research, but its focus has shifted from quality of life to health and the environment, and trust. To move forward, several steps should be considered. First, time-series data is needed, and to achieve this goal a set questionnaire should be applied to all countries. Second, institutional infrastructures and co-operation between countries and academic institutions should be implemented. Third, the methodology for national and global survey sampling requires further enhancement in comparing the national and subnational averages with the national samples and in determining the size of survey

samples for individual countries based on global population size.

SEE ALSO: Globalization; Health and Culture; Survey Research

## References

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## Further Readings

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