

Chapter 5

Lifestyles

In this section, we examine a way of life or lifestyles. We extend the analyses done by Chong-Min Park (2009) and examine six lifestyles: modern life, digital life, religious life, global life, political life, and family life. We also tap the relative standard of living of the respondents. We use the pooled survey data conducted from 2003 to 2008, assuming survey responses are time invariant in that pattern and nature of survey responses for a particular question do not differ across covered years. We treat the survey responses as if they are asked in the same year. For example, the AsiaBarometer conducted surveys in China in 2003, 2004, 2006, and 2008, and we analyze the responses as if they are cross-sectional data.

5.1 Modern Life

One of the most important factors that affect lifestyles in modern life is the extent to which infrastructure is constructed and necessities are available to citizens. The AsiaBarometer Surveys asked the extent to which respondents have access to public utilities. The exact wording of the question is “Which of the following public utilities does your household have the use of?” The list of public utilities in the 2003 and 2004 questionnaires includes the following three public utilities: “public water supply,” “electricity,” and “LPG or piped gas.” From 2005 onward, the following four public utilities are added to the questionnaire: “fixed-line phone,” “mobile phone,” “facsimile,” and “cable TV.” “LPG or piped gas” was written as “piped gas” in the 2003 and 2004 questionnaires, “liquefied petroleum gas or LPG” in 2005, and “liquefied petroleum gas or LPG, piped gas” from 2006 to 2008.

To compare the extent to which the people of 29 Asian societies live a modern life with these necessities, we used the data from 2005 to 2008 and counted the number of public utilities each respondent could access at home.¹ We then calculated the

¹ Turkmenistan is included in this analysis. See *supra* note 1.

Table 5.1 Number of public utilities

Society	Mean	<i>N</i>
Taiwan	6.1	1,006
South Korea	5.9	1,023
Japan	5.7	2,015
Maldives	5.6	821
Hong Kong	5.4	1,000
Singapore	5.4	1,038
Bhutan	5.2	801
China	5.1	3,000
India	5.0	2,290
Malaysia	4.7	1,000
Uzbekistan	4.7	800
Nepal	4.5	800
Vietnam	4.4	1,000
Thailand	4.1	1,000
Kazakhstan	3.5	800
Sri Lanka	3.4	813
Philippines	3.1	1,000
Pakistan	3.1	1,086
Laos	3.0	1,000
Cambodia	2.9	1,012
Mongolia	2.8	800
Turkmenistan	2.7	800
Kyrgyzstan	2.5	800
Tajikistan	2.4	800
Afghanistan	2.1	874
Bangladesh	2.0	1,008
Indonesia	1.7	1,000
Myanmar	1.1	1,000
<i>Asia</i>	<i>4.1</i>	<i>30,387</i>

average values of the numbers for each society and for Asia as a whole. For the region of Asia, the average number of public utilities is 4.1 out of 7 utilities.

The mean values vary considerably from a low of 1.1 in Myanmar to a high of 6.1 in Taiwan (see Table 5.1). The Taiwanese people have the most access to the seven public utilities, followed by the South Korean people with a mean of 5.9 and the Japanese people with a mean of 5.7.

Myanmar, on the other hand, is the country in which the seven public utilities are least available in Asia. It is followed by Indonesia with a mean of 1.7 and Bangladesh with a mean of 2.0.

5.2 Digital Life

To examine the levels of digital lives of ordinary people in Asia, we first look at the question about how often the respondents view Internet web pages on computers. The AsiaBarometer asked this question from 2005 onward, thereby eliminating

Table 5.2 Viewing internet web pages by computers (%)

	Almost every day	Several times a week	Several times a month	Seldom	Never
South Korea	49.2	13.4	3.5	5.1	28.7
Hong Kong	39.7	11.9	5.7	11.4	31.3
Singapore	36.2	12.5	5.2	8.9	37.0
Bhutan	26.3	17.1	8.4	16.2	32.0
Japan	30.2	14.1	6.6	7.5	41.7
Taiwan	28.1	11.9	5.2	10.5	44.3
Maldives	19.2	11.0	6.8	21.7	41.2
China	18.3	9.8	5.8	12.5	53.6
Nepal	5.3	9.1	5.3	12.2	68.1
Vietnam	7.1	6.8	5.6	11.8	68.8
Uzbekistan	6.5	6.5	6.0	13.1	67.8
Malaysia	5.3	6.9	3.9	12.0	71.9
India	6.7	4.7	4.1	6.2	78.3
Philippines	5.1	6.1	4.3	14.6	69.8
Thailand	6.9	5.5	1.8	7.6	78.2
Mongolia	1.3	4.5	7.0	11.6	75.6
Sri Lanka	1.5	5.3	3.3	15.0	74.8
Laos	1.4	2.5	5.7	6.2	84.2
Pakistan	3.9	3.7	1.5	3.9	87.0
Kazakhstan	2.3	3.3	3.3	8.5	82.6
Cambodia	0.7	2.5	3.7	2.0	91.2
Kyrgyzstan	2.0	2.6	1.6	6.6	87.1
Tajikistan	2.0	1.2	2.5	10.7	83.7
Turkmenistan	0.5	1.4	3.3	4.2	90.7
Myanmar	0.1	1.5	3.0	10.9	84.5
Afghanistan	3.7	0.4	0.4	95.5	0
Bangladesh	0.7	0.8	0.5	3.4	94.6
Indonesia	0.5	0.6	0.6	4.9	93.3
Total	12.8	7.0	4.3	11.8	64.1

Brunei, surveyed in 2004, from analysis of this question. Table 5.2 shows the distribution of survey responses across the five response categories, ranging from “almost every day” to “never” for each society and for the entire sample.

Table 5.2 ranks 28 societies and countries based on the sum of the top three positive ratings. Table 5.2 shows that in only five countries and societies does a majority of respondents view Internet web pages at least several times a month. In the rest of the countries, negative ratings (the sum of the “seldom” and “never” responses) prevail.

We also look at the question about how frequently the respondents read and write e-mails. Since the AsiaBarometer asked this question only after 2006, the number of countries and societies in Table 5.3 was reduced to 15. Table 5.3 shows the distribution of survey responses across the five response categories, ranging from “almost every day” to “never” for each of the 15 countries and societies. According to Table 5.3, a majority of the respondents say they use computer e-mails

Table 5.3 Reading or writing e-mails by computers (%)

	Almost every day	Several times a week	Several times a month	Seldom	Never
Singapore	35.8	12.6	4.4	8.6	38.6
South Korea	28.8	14.0	7.1	11.3	38.8
Hong Kong	30.3	11.6	6.2	11.7	40.2
Taiwan	21.6	11.9	6.0	11.5	49.0
Japan	23.1	10.3	5.1	12.5	49.1
China	7.2	8.2	6.6	13.8	64.2
India	9.7	6.6	5.7	5.7	72.3
Malaysia	4.6	6.0	4.3	11.5	73.7
Vietnam	3.6	6.9	4.3	8.7	76.6
Philippines	4.3	6.0	4.4	14.6	70.6
Thailand	4.4	4.1	1.8	6.5	83.2
Cambodia	0.6	1.9	3.3	1.8	92.5
Laos	0.8	1.3	3.4	5.2	89.3
Myanmar	0.0	0.5	2.3	8.7	88.5
Indonesia	0.5	0.4	0.9	3.9	94.3
Total	12.1	7.3	4.7	9.8	66.1

Table 5.4 Reading or writing messages by mobile phones (%)

	Almost every day	Several times a week	Several times a month	Seldom	Never
South Korea	52.4	15.0	5.0	7.3	20.4
Singapore	58.2	10.2	3.4	6.2	22.0
Japan	48.1	15.5	4.2	6.3	26.0
Malaysia	43.4	15.6	3.5	6.3	31.2
Philippines	42.0	12.8	3.7	15.7	25.8
China	35.7	14.0	5.7	12.6	32.0
India	28.4	16.6	8.0	9.2	37.9
Taiwan	18.0	17.6	13.6	20.9	29.8
Hong Kong	18.7	14.7	11.6	22.5	32.5
Vietnam	25.8	6.9	3.8	14.0	49.6
Cambodia	7.4	9.3	8.6	6.0	68.7
Laos	5.7	8.5	10.5	10.8	64.4
Indonesia	16.0	6.7	1.1	10.9	65.3
Thailand	6.2	7.4	5.0	16.0	65.4
Myanmar	0.1	0.7	1.4	5.5	92.3
Total	29.4	12.0	5.8	11.2	41.6

at least several times a month in only 2 of the 15 countries. A majority say they never use computer e-mails in ten of these countries and societies.

The AsiaBarometer also asked the respondents how often they text using mobile phones from 2006 onward. Table 5.4 shows the distribution of survey responses across the five response categories, ranging from “almost every day” to “never” for each of the 15 countries and societies surveyed since 2006. Over a majority of the respondents say they use mobile phone messaging at least several times a month in

7 of the 15 surveyed countries and societies. A majority of respondents in five countries report that they never use mobile phone messaging.

In all, the levels of digital life are not high in Asia.

5.3 Religious Life

The AsiaBarometer asked respondents in all 29 countries and societies whether they belong to any particular religion and how often they pray or meditate. Table 5.5 shows that a vast majority (80%) of the respondents have religious affiliation. In a majority of countries and societies, over 90% of the respondents belong to a religion. Yet some countries and societies show a quite different pattern. The proportion of those who belong to a religion is the lowest in China at 17%, followed by Hong Kong

Table 5.5 Religious affiliation (%)

	Yes	No
Afghanistan	100	0
Bangladesh	100	0
Indonesia	100	0
Maldives	100	0
Cambodia	99.9	0.1
Laos	99.9	0
Myanmar	99.9	0.1
Pakistan	99.9	0
India	99.9	0.1
Philippines	99.8	0.1
Nepal	99.8	0.3
Sri Lanka	99.7	0.1
Thailand	99.6	0
Malaysia	99.3	0.7
Brunei	99.3	0.6
Bhutan	99.0	0
Tajikistan	98.1	1.5
Turkmenistan	95.5	1.3
Kyrgyzstan	92.5	6
Uzbekistan	88.4	10.6
Singapore	87.0	12.9
Mongolia	80.6	18.6
Taiwan	75.6	24.1
Kazakhstan	75.1	22.3
Vietnam	63.1	36.7
South Korea	56.4	43.3
Japan	32.4	66.3
Hong Kong	27.0	72.8
China	17.4	81.6
Total	79.9	19.6

Table 5.6 Frequency of praying (%)

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	On special occasions	Never
Maldives	59.8	40.2	0	0	0
Afghanistan	96.9	2.2	0.6	0.3	0
Philippines	77.8	16.7	2.2	2.9	0.3
Myanmar	77.8	15.9	2.9	3.1	0.3
Indonesia	87.0	6.3	0.9	5.5	0.3
India	85.4	7.2	0.9	4.0	2.6
Bangladesh	60.5	29.6	4.0	5.6	0.4
Pakistan	53.5	32.2	5.8	5.1	3.3
Malaysia	77.7	7.5	1.8	10.9	2.2
Brunei	68.2	11.8	2.4	16.5	1.1
Nepal	57.1	9.3	2.8	27.9	3.0
Bhutan	53.6	11.9	2.4	29.2	2.9
Sri Lanka	47.5	12.8	5.7	24.3	9.7
Laos	16.2	40.5	8.3	33.7	1.4
Singapore	47.9	8.7	3.6	19.7	20.1
Cambodia	17.7	27.0	2.3	34.9	18.1
Uzbekistan	34.4	9.9	2.8	36.6	16.3
Turkmenistan	40.5	0	0	7.8	51.7
Tajikistan	35.0	4.2	2.3	38.7	19.9
Thailand	23.2	10.8	2.9	50.4	12.7
South Korea	17.6	12.3	3.6	25.5	41.0
Kyrgyzstan	24.5	5.1	1.4	27.4	41.7
Japan	21.7	4.4	3.7	33.9	36.2
Kazakhstan	10.9	2.4	2.9	49.0	34.7
Vietnam	4.5	7.1	13.4	51.5	23.5
Taiwan	7.6	3.6	9.7	38.3	40.9
Mongolia	5.7	4.9	14.9	49.7	24.8
Hong Kong	6.9	2.9	1.7	10.3	78.2
China	4.5	2.4	3.0	21.9	68.2
Total	42.0	12.1	3.6	22.2	20.2

at 27%, Japan at 32%, and South Korea at 56%. These are all North East Asian countries and societies.

Table 5.6 below shows the response results to the question about frequencies of prayer or meditation. Slightly more than one-half of the entire sample (54%) reported they pray or meditate “daily” or “weekly.” In contrast, about two-fifths (42%) said they pray or meditate “on special occasions” or “never.” Only 4% said they pray or meditate “monthly.”

Table 5.6 ranked 29 societies on the sum of the top two categories “daily” and “weekly.” According to Table 5.6, the Maldives emerges as the country with the highest percentage. All of the Maldivian respondents pray or meditate “daily” or “weekly.” It is followed by Afghanistan at 99%, and then the Philippines and Myanmar, both which are over 90%.

On the other side of the spectrum, China, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Taiwan, and Vietnam in this order have the least percentage of those who pray or meditate on a

“daily” or “weekly” basis. In these countries and societies, the percentage of praying and meditating “daily” is in the single digits, whereas those who reported “on special occasions” and “never” outnumber those who reported “daily” and “weekly.”

5.4 Global Life

To measure and compare the levels of global life across the 29 countries and societies, we look at two sets of questions. The first question asks respondents the extent to which they live a life internationally. The second question asks respondents to assess their own ability to speak English. The exact wording of the first set of questions is “Which, if any, of the following statements applies to you?” The six statements include “A member of my family or a relative lives in another country,” “I have traveled abroad at least three times in the past three years,” “I have friends from other countries who are in SURVEYED COUNTRY,” “I often watch foreign-produced programs on TV,” “I often communicate with people in other countries via the Internet or e-mail,” and “My job involves contact with organizations or people in other countries.” The AsiaBarometer posed this question to the respondents of all the 29 societies from 2003 to 2008.

We counted the number of statements for which each individual respondent said “yes.” The maximum value is six and the minimum is zero. According to Table 5.7, the grand mean for the entire sample of Asia is 1.0. On average, one of the six statements applies to the surveyed respondents in Asia.

Table 5.7 also reports the average value for each society or country. Generally speaking, the mean values are low in Asian societies. One-half of the 29 societies have a mean less than 1. The number of applicable statements is the largest in Brunei with a mean of 2.8, followed by Singapore with a mean of 2.7 and the Maldives with 2.4. The number of the statements is the smallest in Turkmenistan and Indonesia, both with a mean of 0.4. They are followed by Thailand and China, both with a mean of 0.5

The second question we chose taps the extent to which people experience global life, and in this survey, this is determined by how well the respondents rate their ability to speak English. The exact wording of the questions is “How well do you speak English?” The AsiaBarometer asked respondents this question in all the surveys from 2003 to 2008 on the five verbal response categories, including “not at all,” “very little,” “I can speak it well enough to get by in daily life,” and “I can speak English fluently” along with the “don’t know” category.

To convey a balanced picture of self-assessed English proficiency in each society, we combined the two positive replies “I can speak English fluently” and “I can speak it well enough to get by in daily life” and then combined the two negative ratings “very little” and “not at all.” We then constructed a percentage difference index (PDI) by subtracting the combined ratings of the latter from those of the former. Values of this index range from a low of a negative 100 points to a

Table 5.7 Levels of living internationally

	Mean	<i>N</i>
Brunei	2.8	804
Singapore	2.7	1,838
Maldives	2.4	821
Bhutan	1.9	801
Uzbekistan	1.8	1,600
Laos	1.7	1,800
Cambodia	1.5	1,824
Nepal	1.5	800
Philippines	1.3	1,800
Vietnam	1.2	2,607
Malaysia	1.2	2,600
Hong Kong	1.1	1,000
Myanmar	1.1	2,600
Sri Lanka	1.0	1,613
Tajikistan	1.0	800
Taiwan	0.9	1,006
Kyrgyzstan	0.9	800
Kazakhstan	0.9	800
Mongolia	0.8	800
Afghanistan	0.7	874
Japan	0.6	3,697
Pakistan	0.6	1,086
Bangladesh	0.6	1,008
South Korea	0.6	2,642
India	0.5	3,112
China	0.5	4,800
Thailand	0.5	2,600
Indonesia	0.4	1,825
Turkmenistan	0.4	800
Total	1.0	49,158

high of a positive 100 points. According to the PDI values reported in the last column of Table 5.8, Singapore emerges as the nation where most people evaluate their ability to speak English high with a positive 62 points. It is followed by Bhutan (+62), the Maldives (+40), and Nepal (+2). The rest of the societies other than these top four all have negative values on the PDI. Of the 29 surveyed societies, 25 societies or over three-quarters of Asian respondents rated their own ability to speak English negatively. The total mean of the PDI for the entire sample of Asia is a negative 48 points. One-half of the 29 societies have a PDI lower than a negative 70 points. We also notice that those who replied with “I can speak English fluently” constitute the majority (55%) only in Singapore. Those who replied with “I can speak it well enough to get by in daily life” constitute the majority in the other three top countries: Bhutan (45%), the Maldives (41%), and Nepal (38%). Looking at the societies ranked at the bottom of Table 5.8, more than three-quarters replied “not at all”—Kazakhstan (80%), Turkmenistan (79%), Tajikistan (77%), Kyrgyzstan

Table 5.8 Self-assessed ability to speak English (%)

	Fluently	Enough in daily life	Very little	Not at all	PDI
Singapore	55.3	25.8	14.6	4.2	62.3
Bhutan	35.6	45.1	11.5	7.8	61.5
Maldives	29.1	40.8	20.2	9.9	39.9
Nepal	13.3	37.9	24.9	24.0	2.3
Brunei	14.9	32.2	45.1	7.9	-5.9
Sri Lanka	15.7	29.5	39.9	15.0	-9.6
India	19.0	25.4	35.0	20.6	-11.1
Philippines	6.6	26.5	58.7	8.2	-33.9
Hong Kong	3.9	23.1	45.2	27.8	-45.9
Malaysia	9.0	17.6	40.9	32.4	-46.7
Bangladesh	2.4	23.2	32.1	42.3	-48.7
South Korea	0.7	21.7	53.8	23.8	-55.1
Pakistan	3.8	16.6	19.2	60.3	-59.0
Thailand	1.3	16.7	36.5	45.5	-63.9
Vietnam	2.6	14.7	38.7	44.0	-65.5
Myanmar	1.7	12.9	36.4	49.1	-70.9
Japan	1.0	11.5	53.3	34.2	-75.0
Cambodia	1.5	10.6	28.9	59.0	-75.8
Mongolia	0.9	10.2	22.8	66.1	-77.8
China	1.5	8.1	38.1	52.3	-80.8
Uzbekistan	2.4	6.4	28.4	62.8	-82.5
Taiwan	1.5	6.6	40.2	51.7	-83.8
Laos	0.9	6.4	32.9	59.8	-85.5
Afghanistan	3.0	3.5	18.4	75.1	-87.0
Kyrgyzstan	0.8	3.3	18.8	77.3	-92.0
Kazakhstan	1.1	2.5	16.5	79.9	-92.7
Indonesia	0.3	2.6	38.6	58.5	-94.2
Tajikistan	0.4	1.9	20.4	77.3	-95.5
Turkmenistan	0.4	1.6	18.9	79.1	-96.0
Total	10.5	15.3	34.4	39.8	-48.4

(77%), and Afghanistan (75%). Overwhelming majorities of people in Asia and within each society assessed their own English proficiency as low.

According to Tables 5.7 and 5.8, the people of Asia tend to have a low level of global life.

5.5 Political Life

The AsiaBarometer asked the respondents how often they vote in the national elections on a five-category verbal scale, ranging from “every time,” “most of the time,” “sometimes,” “rarely,” and “never voted,” along with two other response

Table 5.9 Voting frequency in national elections (%)

	Every time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never voted	Don't have the right to vote
Laos	88.1	3.7	3.5	2.1	1.4	1.2
Mongolia	81.9	11.9	3.4	1.0	1.0	0.9
Thailand	79.6	9.4	6.3	2.2	2.3	0.3
Sri Lanka	78.0	11.7	5.4	1.8	1.9	1.2
Philippines	75.1	11.6	5.2	4.0	3.5	0.6
Vietnam	74.9	14.6	5.5	1.8	3.0	0.2
Cambodia	73.6	10.1	3.7	1.0	6.8	4.8
Indonesia	72.4	18.7	4.9	2.7	1.0	0.1
India	68.9	13.7	8.1	3.3	4.4	1.6
Bangladesh	65.8	12.9	6.1	2.5	7.3	5.4
Maldives	65.0	12.8	8.4	3.1	10.7	0
South Korea	62.5	19.0	8.3	4.6	3.9	1.7
Malaysia	59.7	10.5	3.8	2.7	11.4	11.9
Kyrgyzstan	56.4	26.5	8.9	3.7	3.2	1.4
Japan	53.1	23.4	10.9	7.9	4.5	0.2
Taiwan	52.9	25.8	10.5	4.7	3.8	2.3
Uzbekistan	46.4	14.8	13.8	11.4	13.1	0.5
Pakistan	46.2	29.6	8.8	6.6	3.6	5.0
Nepal	41.4	22.3	11.9	6.9	17.5	0
Kazakhstan	40.5	24.1	13.7	10.2	11.0	0.5
Turkmenistan	38.1	29.8	12.9	10.7	8.5	0
Singapore	37.3	14.9	12.7	10.8	12.5	11.7
Tajikistan	33.2	28.8	18.8	9.4	9.8	0
Hong Kong	21.9	6.8	10.9	6.9	27.8	25.7
China	14.3	8.1	11.9	20.2	20.0	25.5
Bhutan	1.5	1.8	2.6	5.3	88.8	0
Total	57.2	14.9	8.2	6.0	8.7	5.0

categories “don't have the right to vote” and “don't know.” This question was not asked in Myanmar in 2003, 2004, and 2007; it was not asked in Brunei and China in 2004; and it was not asked in Afghanistan in 2005.

The bottom line of Table 5.9 reveals that 72% of all the respondents vote in national elections either every time or most of the time. Of the respondents, 5% do not have the right to vote. Table 5.9 also shows the distribution of survey responses across six response categories with the exception of the “don't know” category. The 26 countries and societies are ranked based on the “every time” category. Generally speaking, voter turnout is high in Asia. Over 60% of the respondents in 12 of the countries and societies vote every time in national elections. When we combine the two positive responses together, over 60% of respondents in 22 countries and societies vote either every time or most of the time at their national elections.

5.6 Family Life

To examine the levels of family life of ordinary citizens living in Asia, we first examine their eating patterns. The AsiaBarometer asked respondents whether they eat a home-cooked breakfast and dinner at home. Table 5.10 shows the percentages of those who say they eat breakfast and evening meals cooked at home at home for each country/society and for the entire sample. Table 5.10 reveals that of the respondents, over 90% eat both home-cooked meals at home; 93% eat breakfast cooked at home; and 97% eat evening meals cooked at home.

We then look at the types of housing for respondents. The AsiaBarometer asked respondents in all the surveys from 2003 to 2008 to categorize their current residence according to the given choices. The five categories include “owner-occupied detached or semidetached house (duplex),” “owner-occupied terraced house or unit in an apartment or condominium complex,” “rented detached or

Table 5.10 Diet (%)

	Breakfast	Dinner
Laos	99.4	100
Myanmar	99.5	99.9
Pakistan	99.5	99.1
Philippines	98.6	99.5
Kyrgyzstan	98.4	98.9
Kazakhstan	97.9	99.3
Nepal	98.6	98.5
Indonesia	97.5	99
Tajikistan	97.5	98.6
Cambodia	96.3	99.6
Mongolia	97.0	98.8
Afghanistan	97.9	97.6
Uzbekistan	97.3	97.7
Sri Lanka	96.2	98
India	99.5	94.6
Brunei	96.1	97.6
Bhutan	93.5	97
Japan	91.9	98.3
China	92.2	97.9
Taiwan	90.7	97.4
Singapore	90.8	95.3
Thailand	88.6	96.4
South Korea	90.1	94
Malaysia	88.8	95.3
Maldives	89.3	91
Vietnam	81.2	97.9
Hong Kong	78.2	97.7
Turkmenistan	75.9	99.6
Bangladesh	98.1	72.6
Total	92.9	96.7

Table 5.11 Current residence (%)

	Owner-occupied detached or semi-detached (duplex) house	Owner-occupied terraced house or unit in an apartment or condominium complex	Rented detached or semi-detached (duplex) house	Rented terraced house or unit in an apartment or condominium complex	Other (a room in a relative's home, etc.)
Uzbekistan	1.7	94.7	0.1	3.1	0.4
Tajikistan	73.8	22.0	1.3	1.3	1.6
Turkmenistan	64.1	31.6	0.9	2.0	1.4
Kazakhstan	49.4	45.0	0.5	4.8	0.4
Vietnam	89.7	4.0	4.0	1.6	0.7
Kyrgyzstan	58.9	34.5	0.9	4.6	1.1
Singapore	4.3	88.9	0.5	5.1	1.2
Laos	88.9	2.2	2.2	4.4	2.3
Taiwan	50.2	38.3	3.2	5.9	2.5
Indonesia	83.8	4.4	7.5	2.0	2.2
Pakistan	85.3	2.7	8.9	1.2	1.9
Sri Lanka	76.3	10.8	7.6	3.8	1.4
Philippines	83.4	1.8	8.3	3.6	2.9
Cambodia	53.2	31.7	6.6	5.7	2.8
Myanmar	77.3	5.1	9.5	3.0	5.1
South Korea	31.1	46.1	8.8	12.8	1.2
Japan	69.8	4.9	5.0	19.6	0.7
Afghanistan	68.7	5.3	16.5	1.7	7.8
China	17.6	52.6	1.4	19.0	9.4
Thailand	53.5	15.1	7.1	19.0	5.3
Malaysia	36.2	31.8	5.8	18.5	7.7
Maldives	48.7	17.2	13.3	17.1	3.7
India	35.2	30.1	17.6	14.1	3.0
Bangladesh	58.6	3.3	22.6	11.1	4.4
Hong Kong	0.4	56.2	0.4	43.0	0
Brunei	42.3	13.1	10.0	8.1	26.6
Mongolia	25.8	26.2	1.6	3.1	43.3
Nepal	33.3	9.3	5.1	51.7	0.6
Bhutan	9.6	9.1	38.3	16.0	26.9
Total	50.6	26.6	6.9	11.2	4.7

semidetached house (duplex),” “rented terraced house or unit in an apartment or condominium complex,” and “others (a room in a relative’s home, etc.),” along with a “don’t know” response. The first category “owner-occupied detached or semidetached house (duplex)” was written as “owner-occupied detached house” from 2003 to 2005. The third category “rented detached or semidetached house (duplex)” was written as “rented detached house” from 2003 to 2005.

Table 5.11 shows the distribution of survey responses on the five categories for each country and society and for the entire sample of Asia. Of the respondents, 77% have their own home, compared to 18% who have rented accommodations. Table 5.11 ranks the 29 countries and societies based on the proportion of the respondents who

Table 5.12 Number of family members

Afghanistan	8.8
Maldives	8.6
Brunei	7.6
Pakistan	7.4
Tajikistan	6.9
Cambodia	5.4
Malaysia	5.3
Myanmar	5.3
Philippines	5.2
Laos	5.2
Bangladesh	5.0
Sri Lanka	4.9
Nepal	4.9
Kyrgyzstan	4.7
Indonesia	4.6
India	4.6
Uzbekistan	4.6
Bhutan	4.5
Vietnam	4.5
Mongolia	4.5
Taiwan	4.4
Thailand	4.2
Singapore	4.0
Kazakhstan	4.0
Turkmenistan	3.8
South Korea	3.7
Japan	3.6
Hong Kong	3.6
China	3.5
Average	4.7

have their own home, combining the first two categories together. More than one-half of the respondents live in their own home in 27 of the 29 countries and societies. Exceptions are Nepal with 43% and Bhutan with 19% being homeowners.

To examine family life in Asia, we also ask respondents to quantify the number of family members. According to Table 5.12, the average family size for the entire sample is 4.7 people. The number of family members varies from 3.5 people in China to 8.8 in Afghanistan. A vast majority of countries and societies have around four or five family members on average.

5.7 Self-Assessments of Relative Standard of Living

To tap subjective assessments of one's own standard of living, the AsiaBarometer asked respondents the question "How would you describe your standard of living?" This item asked respondents to assess their own standard of living in a relative

Table 5.13 Self-assessments of relative standard of living (%)

	High	Relatively high	Average	Relatively low	Low	Mean	PDI
India	13.9	22.8	57.0	5.0	1.3	3.43	30.3
Sri Lanka	8.2	27.3	59.2	4.0	1.2	3.37	30.2
Maldives	12.0	11.3	72.6	3.6	0.5	3.31	19.2
Singapore	7.9	16.3	70.7	3.2	1.9	3.25	19.2
Bhutan	2.4	19.3	73.8	3.5	1.0	3.19	17.2
Brunei	3.1	8.0	87.2	1.5	0.2	3.12	9.3
Malaysia	4.5	9.4	78.5	5.9	1.7	3.09	6.3
Hong Kong	1.0	12.3	75.4	10.3	1.0	3.02	2.0
Taiwan	0.6	8.1	83.8	6.9	0.6	3.01	1.2
Myanmar	1.5	12.5	70.8	12.1	3.1	2.97	-1.2
Vietnam	1.1	8.6	78.7	8.5	3.2	2.96	-2.1
Afghanistan	7.9	12.0	55.8	15.4	8.9	2.95	-4.4
Thailand	1.1	6.0	80.7	10.1	2.2	2.94	-5.2
Bangladesh	2.7	14.0	63.3	13.5	6.6	2.93	-3.4
Pakistan	8.4	13.7	49.3	19.2	9.4	2.92	-6.6
Japan	1.7	10.5	66.9	16.7	4.1	2.89	-8.6
Philippines	1.4	6.2	75.5	13.3	3.6	2.89	-9.3
Cambodia	0.6	6.5	77.1	11.7	4.2	2.88	-8.8
China	0.9	9.8	69.1	15.7	4.4	2.87	-9.3
Kyrgyzstan	2.4	6.4	74.3	8.8	8.2	2.86	-8.2
South Korea	0.8	10.2	66.3	19.1	3.6	2.85	-11.8
Laos	2.2	6.5	69.3	17.1	5.0	2.84	-13.4
Mongolia	1.4	5.5	71.9	16.9	4.3	2.83	-14.2
Kazakhstan	1.1	4.8	74.2	14.7	5.2	2.82	-14.0
Nepal	1.5	6.8	68.9	16.5	6.3	2.81	-14.5
Turkmenistan	6.4	11.7	43.9	27.8	10.2	2.76	-19.8
Uzbekistan	1.5	6.0	68.5	13.9	10.1	2.75	-16.5
Indonesia	0.9	4.4	69.5	17.0	8.1	2.73	-19.7
Tajikistan	0.9	8.6	59.4	22.0	9.1	2.70	-21.6
<i>Asia</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>11.4</i>	<i>69.0</i>	<i>12.2</i>	<i>4.0</i>	<i>2.98</i>	<i>-1.3</i>

perspective on a 5-point verbal response category: “high,” “relatively high,” “average,” “relatively low,” and “low,” along with “don’t know” category. This variable can measure a sense of relative well-being (Shin and Inoguchi 2009). The sample size is 52,008 without the “don’t know” responses and missing values.

To compare the self-assessed relative standard of living among the 29 countries and societies, Table 5.13 reports the distributions of survey responses across the five categories, ranging from “high” to “low,” the mean values, and the percentage difference indexes (PDIs) for the 29 countries and societies that represent the entire sample of Asia. The original five-category verbal scale is assigned a 5-point numeric scale, ranging from a low of 1 (“low”) to a high of 5 (“high”). The mean is calculated on this 5-point numeric scale. The PDIs are calculated by subtracting the two combined negative ratings (the sum of “relatively low” and “low”) from the two combined positive ratings (the sum of “high” and “relatively high”).

According to the row at the bottom of Table 5.13, the distribution of survey responses across the five categories appears to be normal. An overwhelming majority (69%) of the people of Asia assessed their own standard of living as average. Only a few (4%) assessed their standard of living as high, and more than one-tenth (11%) assessed it as relatively high. Similarly, more than one-tenth (12%) assessed their standard of living as relatively low, and only a few (4%) assessed it as low. As a result, the mean value for the entire Asian sample is close to 3 and the PDI is close to 0.

We also note that those who replied with “average” constitute a majority in all the 29 societies with the exception of Turkmenistan (44%) and Pakistan (49%). Because large proportions of the surveyed respondents in each society replied with “average,” we refer to the mean value for the data on the 5-point numeric scale to compare the levels of self-assessed standard of living. According to the means reported in the second column from the right of Table 5.13, India, with a mean of 3.43, has the largest proportion of people who positively assess their own standard of living. It is followed by Sri Lanka with a mean of 3.37 and the Maldives with a mean of 3.31.

In contrast, Tajikistan, with a mean of 2.70, has the most people who negatively assess their own standard of living. It is followed by Indonesia with a mean of 2.73 and Uzbekistan with a mean of 2.75. We note that the mean values center around 3, ranging from a low of 2.70 to a high of 3.43. We also note that the rankings of the 29 societies based on the mean values are similar to those based on the PDI values. India is ranked first on the PDI with a positive 30 points, and Tajikistan is ranked 29th with a negative 22 points.

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