

ASEAN@50

Volume 2



Voices of ASEAN: What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples?

Edited by
Ponciano Intal, Jr. and Lydia Ruddy



Economic Research Institute
for ASEAN and East Asia



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DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
KAGAWARAN NG UGNAYANG PANLABAS

Foreword



I congratulate the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to ASEAN and the Philippine ASEAN National Secretariat for publishing this 5-volume publication on perspectives on the making, substance, significance and future of ASEAN. This valuable publication, forming part of the Philippines' commemorative activities in celebration of ASEAN's golden anniversary, highlights ASEAN as one of the world's most successful and enduring regional organizations.

It pleases me to note that this printed work equally supports the development priorities of President Rodrigo Duterte and the Philippine Chairmanship priorities — building a people-oriented and people-centered ASEAN, maintaining peace and stability in the region, cooperating in maritime security, advancing inclusive and innovation-led growth, promoting a resilient ASEAN, and establishing ASEAN as a model of regionalism and a global player. Consistent with President Duterte's pursuit of an independent foreign policy for the benefit of the Filipino people, the publication also affirms the ASEAN Community Blueprints in raising the profile and awareness on the ASEAN pillars of political-security, economic and socio-cultural communities.

We seek the aid of the Almighty and are hopeful that this publication will provide the reader with greater insights on ASEAN's history, will be used by decision makers, government officials, analysts, and the people of ASEAN, in charting the future course of the region .

Mabuhay!

Manila, August 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Peter S. Cayetano".

Alan Peter S. Cayetano
Secretary of Foreign Affairs
Republic of the Philippines

Foreword



Recent turbulence in what was often assumed to be the soundly anchored, mature political and economic trading regimes of North America and Europe reminds us that public attitude should not be taken for granted. This is an important lesson for us all on the 50th anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN).

Voices on ASEAN: What does ASEAN mean to ASEAN peoples? is therefore a timely and welcome contribution on this significant anniversary of ASEAN. The information contained therein should not be taken lightly but be used to ensure ASEAN enters its second half century not resting on the laurels of its remarkable economic achievements to date, but guides it forward in line with the hopes and expectations of its citizens.

We have seen how over the last 50 years ASEAN has been remarkably adept at providing a platform for creating a new regional identity, political and economic realities, in an area once noted for internal conflict and divided by colonial histories. ASEAN has been a way to address these priority challenges through creating stability and fostering economic growth.

But as ASEAN looks to the future, this study reminds us of both the gaps and expectations amongst ASEAN citizens concerning the region. Awareness of ASEAN is higher than it has ever been, but awareness of ASEAN is primarily for its economic pillar. Yet the concerns of its people go beyond the economic sphere. Corruption is the issue of number one concern of almost half its people, followed by climate change and natural disasters. Indeed, only one of the top five issues relates directly to the economic pillar championed by ASEAN.

If the leaders of ASEAN can address these concerns with the vigour and foresight employed by them in the first 50 years, then ASEAN will be truly remarkable, continue to be relevant to its citizens on a more personal level while also shepherding the region's economic future.

For this important study, I would like to thank all those who contributed to *Voices on ASEAN: What does ASEAN mean to ASEAN peoples?*, the second of our five-volume series to mark the 50th anniversary of ASEAN. In addition to my colleagues at ERIA who analysed the data and wrote the integrative chapter of the volume, I would like to pay a special tribute to our 10 research institute network partners who worked tirelessly in each of the 10 ASEAN member states to implement the surveys, arrange for numerous focus group discussions, share their findings with the team at ERIA, and write the country chapters in the volume.

Jakarta, August 2017



Hidetoshi Nishimura

President

Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia

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Voices of ASEAN

What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples?*

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Overview

The year 2017 marks 50 years since the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed under the Bangkok Declaration on 8 August 1967. The five founding members, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, envisioned political and economic cooperation that would promote stability and prosperity for each country and ultimately a sense of shared culture and identity for the region as a whole. Over the past 50 years, the association has not only withstood the pressures of deep transformations resulting from the significant changes in the region but has in fact doubled in size to its current 10 members by accepting new members, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam.

With the passing of a half-century of working together, a key issue now revolves around the question of shared identity and belonging. The region is home to many cultures and languages as well as great disparities in the member states' economies and levels of development. ASEAN has provided a platform for continuous discussion between leaders, which has helped the region address these disparities and adapt to the constantly changing circumstances. But what do the people of ASEAN think about

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data unless otherwise stated.

ASEAN? What are their hopes and expectations for ASEAN as a region? Are they aware of how ASEAN institutions work on their behalf? And are ASEAN programmes and initiatives addressing the key concerns of ASEAN people?

To address these questions, this volume presents and discusses the results of an ASEAN-wide survey of representatives from selected sectors on their aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN. The survey was supplemented by a series of follow-up focus group discussions (FGDs) with some of the survey respondents.

The first chapter presents and discusses the major findings and results of the surveys. Each of the 10 chapters, thereafter, reports on the individual country results and findings.

This volume is part of a larger commemorative publication that consists of the following five volumes:

- Volume 1: The ASEAN Journey: Reflections of ASEAN Leaders and Officials
- Volume 2: Voices of ASEAN: What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples?
- Volume 3: ASEAN and Member States: Transformation and Integration
- Volume 4: Building ASEAN Community: Political-Security and Socio-cultural Reflections
- Volume 5: The ASEAN Economic Community into 2025 and Beyond

Methodology

The Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) developed a public-opinion survey with a series of questions regarding the concerns, aspirations, and expectations of ASEAN people for ASEAN. It was designed to elicit the feelings and opinions of different groups, representing a variety of ages, genders, and affiliations, regarding their priorities for ASEAN by 2025. The survey posed a sequence of questions that first asked about the respondents' general awareness of ASEAN and what they believed were the benefits of being a member of ASEAN. The second set of questions aimed to make inferences about their concerns, hopes, and expectations for the association. The survey was carried out in all 10 ASEAN Member States, with each country team using an online platform (Survey Monkey). In some cases, the paper questionnaires were translated into the local languages. The surveys were followed up with FGDs with some of the survey respondents.

A total of 2,322 respondents participated in the survey. The affiliations represented were students, labour, business, government officials, civil society, academia, and others.

For this integrative chapter, ERIA collated the responses across all 10 countries using the country data. The cumulative totals were calculated along with the weighted averages based on the size of each country's relative population. All ASEAN figures in this chapter are reported as the non-weighted totals unless otherwise noted; the results using the weighted averages were similar to the unweighted totals reported here.

Key Findings

Familiarity with ASEAN

Virtually all respondents were at least 'slightly familiar' with ASEAN. Three-fifths of them were 'moderately' to 'very' familiar with ASEAN. Awareness increased significantly since 2014. Respondents were mostly aware of ASEAN's economic pillar.

Generally, the older respondents (those aged 50 or over) tended to be more familiar with ASEAN than the younger respondents (those aged 15–30). Also, those from academe and government tended to be more aware of ASEAN than the other groups, especially the students.

In the FGDs, a number of participants said they had learned about ASEAN first in their primary school, high school, or university classes, while there were also a number who had learned about ASEAN only in 2015 from news and media as the ASEAN Member States prepared for the realisation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Comparisons with earlier studies conducted by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in 2007 and 2014 indicate that awareness of ASEAN increased significantly after 2014 – perhaps as a result of all the news about the establishment of the AEC in 2015. In the ISEAS's 2014 survey of students, only 56% were aware of ASEAN – this jumped to 87% in ERIA's survey in 2016.

However, comments during the FGDs made it clear that much of the participants' awareness was related to ASEAN's economic pillar. Indeed, several respondents stated that they believed the AEC and ASEAN were the same. Many respondents could not identify the other two pillars of ASEAN. Considering some of the key findings related to the challenges and aspirations for ASEAN (which are largely non-economic in nature), awareness limited only to ASEAN's economic pillar is an issue that should be addressed.

Benefit from ASEAN

Two-thirds of respondents perceived their countries' membership of ASEAN as 'moderately' to 'very' beneficial. Thus, the respondents overwhelmingly considered membership of ASEAN to be a good thing. Not surprisingly, two-thirds said they would be moderately to extremely concerned if their countries were to leave ASEAN.

Respondents listed many perceived benefits from membership, primarily related to trade and the free flow of people. These included the following:

- access to more export markets and regional supply chains;
- greater diversity of goods for sale in their countries;
- ease of travel to other ASEAN countries and greater tourism opportunities, especially using ASEAN lanes;
- trade and investment linkages; and
- greater access to jobs.

Few understood the political and security benefits – especially the enduring regional stability – that ASEAN has brought.

Feeling of ASEAN citizenship

More than three-fourths of all respondents felt 'moderately' to 'very much' as ASEAN citizens. Combined with those who indicated feeling 'somewhat' as ASEAN citizens, a sense of ASEAN belonging was shared by virtually all the respondents. Much of this sense of ASEAN belonging is shaped by geography. A full sense of ASEAN citizenship may call for ASEAN to be more deeply engaged and more aligned with the concerns and interests of the non-elites.

Only 3% of the respondents said they did not feel like they were ASEAN citizens. The degree of the respondents' sense of ASEAN citizenship or belonging was similar across the various groups, albeit to a lesser extent among those in the business sector. Remarkably, the highest degree, 'very much', was chosen by the greatest shares of respondents for all groups except the business respondents. Half of the students indicated they felt 'very much' as ASEAN citizens. This was substantially higher than the 37% in the 2014 ISEAS survey of ASEAN university students who 'strongly agreed' with the statement: 'I feel that I am a citizen of ASEAN.' (The ERIA survey question was deliberately set similar to the ISEAS question to allow for comparisons of the results for the students as well as other groups.)

The survey results can be viewed as the fruition of the ASEAN leaders' community-building aspirations, which started since the association's establishment in 1967 when,

as former ASEAN Secretary-General Rodolfo Severino explained, ‘Southeast Asia’s peoples hardly knew one another, having been cut off and kept isolated from one another by the colonial powers’ (Severino, 2014: 8). The participants of the FGDs in Indonesia expressed it perhaps more cogently as ‘their feeling that there exists a sense of solidarity among countries and citizens in the region ... their feeling of being better accepted in other ASEAN societies than those outside the region’ (Habibie Center, 2016: 4). A participant in the Philippine FGD said she felt a sense of belonging because she did not require a visa when visiting ASEAN countries.

Nonetheless, the results of the FGDs suggest that the sense of ASEAN belonging, shaped primarily by geographic and ethnic closeness and facilitated by the ease of travel within the region, could blossom into a full sense of ASEAN citizenship. This can be achieved as ASEAN becomes less elitist, better connected with the average person, and more aligned with the concerns and interests of the ASEAN peoples.

Priorities and concerns for ASEAN

There was remarkable unanimity in the priorities and concerns for ASEAN until 2025 across the respondent groups. The most pressing concerns were non-economic ones. Thus, ASEAN belonging and identity can be strengthened by moving beyond the economic pillar.

One remarkable result of the ERIA survey was the near unanimity among the students, businessmen, government representatives, academics, and non-governmental organisation (NGO) participants about the top two priority concerns for ASEAN that require concerted action by all ASEAN Member States. These were (1) corruption and (2) climate change and natural disasters, both of which had almost the same shares of respondents that placed these issues within their top five most pressing problems facing ASEAN today and until 2025 (46%–47%). The next two most pressing concerns, again with almost the same percentage of respondents considering them as among the top five issues for ASEAN (35%–36%), were (3) trade, investment, and regulatory coherence, and (4) income disparity and social inequality. The fifth most pressing concern for ASEAN until 2025 was agriculture and food security.

We can note that the top two pressing concerns for ASEAN that require concerted action by ASEAN Member States were non-economic issues. Of the top five concerns, only one was inherently related to economic integration. This implies that ASEAN peoples do not look at ASEAN primarily from an economic integration perspective, despite the fact that the respondents were more aware of the ASEAN Economic Community. Rather, they seem to see ASEAN from a community perspective, sharing largely common concerns. This suggests that a key means of deepening the sense of

ASEAN belonging, identity, and citizenship – and, thus, a deep sense of the ASEAN community – is to concertedly address the prioritised common concerns of ASEAN peoples. This shift towards more regionally coordinated actions on non-economic issues points to a higher level of comfort with the idea of belonging to a common socio-political community.

Aspirations for ASEAN

ASEAN peoples aspire for and largely expect an ASEAN in 2025 that is integrated, connected, resilient, and a significant voice and player in global and regional affairs. There are, however, large expectations gaps in the areas of good governance, equity, the environment, and human rights.

The survey results show that the aspiration of about three-quarters or more of all the respondents was for ASEAN by 2025 to be integrated and connected as well as resilient and a strong voice and player in the region and globally. The top three aspirations were for people and businesses to have ease of communication through information and communications technology (ICT), for consumers to have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN source, and for ASEAN to be well connected physically via land, air, and water. The next-ranked aspiration was for the ease of movement of skilled workers and professionals. Thus, the apparent overriding aspiration was for ASEAN to be integrated and connected.

It is worth noting that more than three-quarters of the respondents were reasonably optimistic that ASEAN in 2025 would indeed be characterised by the ease of communications via ICT as well as the ease of access to goods and services within the region. Two-thirds expected improvements in physical connectivity, and three-fifths were optimistic about the ease of the regional movement of skilled workers and professionals.

About three-quarters of all respondents hoped for, and at least three-fifths expected, ASEAN to be a strong voice globally that is deeply engaged with global powers to ensure peace in the region by 2025. They also wanted the association to be able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards; however, only about three-fifths of the respondents were optimistic that ASEAN would be resilient from natural disasters and health hazards by 2025.

Nearly three-quarters of all the respondents also aspired for an ASEAN in 2025 that has good governance and less corruption; environmental sustainability with more liveable cities; and greater equity and protection of human rights, especially for minorities.

However, the gaps between the respondents' aspirations and expectations were significant, especially for good governance and reduced corruption. The expectations gap was particularly high among the business sector respondents; only about one-third were optimistic about the possibility of good governance and significantly less corruption. There was a hint of scepticism among many of the participants in the FGDs on the political will for addressing corruption (and an almost cultural determinism), which explains to some extent the large expectations gap.

Corruption was the most important concern of the participants that would need to be addressed concertedly by the ASEAN Member States. As highlighted earlier, addressing this issue region-wide will help deepen the sense of ASEAN belonging and community. It is also worth noting that the near congruence between the aspirations and expectations on an integrated and connected ASEAN by 2025 reflects the appreciation of the constant push for ASEAN economic integration and connectivity as embodied in the AEC blueprints, messages from the ASEAN meetings, and the ASEAN Member States' policy emphasis on integration and connectivity in the region. Finally, it is worth noting also that good governance and good regulatory practices are now included in the AEC Blueprint for 2016–2025, although they are not yet emphasised in ASEAN communiqués.

Thus, it is important for ASEAN and its member states to place more importance on good governance and the institutionalisation of good regulatory practices in the implementation of the AEC Blueprint 2025. Doing so can enhance the synergy of good regulatory practice with the implementation of other AEC measures (e.g. addressing the trade barrier effects of non-tariff measures, more facilitative standards, and conformance regimes). It can also reduce the gap between aspirations and expectations, indicating greater credibility of the governance of ASEAN Member States, and engender a deeper sense of ASEAN belonging and citizenship.

Overlaps between national and regional priorities

When asked to rank the most pressing problems facing their country, ASEAN people were most concerned about (1) corruption, (2) income disparity and social inequality, and (3) agriculture and food security – all three of which were also included in the top five regional problems. The fourth and fifth most pressing concerns at the national level, and which had almost equal percentages of respondents that considered them among the most pressing concerns, were infrastructure availability and quality, quality education provision and access, and climate change and natural disasters. Infrastructure availability and quality are intimately linked with regional physical connectivity, one of the key aspirations of the ASEAN peoples for ASEAN by 2025. This concordance of

national and regional concerns and aspirations calls for concerted regional initiatives to be undertaken by all ASEAN Member States. Such initiatives would likely result in greater synergy among all the countries and at the same time deepen the sense of ASEAN belongingness and community.

There were also national concerns that reflected the unique circumstances of the individual ASEAN Member States. For example, the top national concern for the Philippine respondents was having accessible Internet connections because the country has been bedevilled by comparatively slower and more expensive Internet connections for some years. In addition, the continued, significant growth of the country's booming information technology and business process management industry demands a cost-effective, efficient, and dynamic ICT sector. Unemployment was among the top five national concerns for the respondents in Myanmar, Cambodia, and Lao PDR, three countries with substantial numbers of citizens that work overseas, primarily in Thailand. Surprisingly, unemployment was the number one national concern for respondents in Brunei. This was likely due to a concern for the lack of quality jobs and poor employment prospects in the future rather than unemployment per se, considering that the respondents were predominantly college students. For the Singapore respondents, corruption was not a national issue, but, nonetheless, was the number one regional issue.

A challenge for the ASEAN Member States is the melding of both the common regional and national concerns and the more country-specific priority concerns. Nonetheless, the substantial overlap of regional and national concerns indicates that there is actually large room for more concerted efforts among all the member states for addressing the common priority concerns.

Aspirations for a bigger role for ASEAN

In addition to the desire for ASEAN to act collectively to address region-wide issues, such as climate change, corruption, and agriculture and food security, there was also a strong hope for ASEAN to play a bigger role as a global player. When asked about the aspirations and hopes for ASEAN by 2025, 'ASEAN is a strong voice and important player in global negotiations and forums' was the fourth most highly ranked aspiration for respondents across ASEAN. The sixth most highly ranked aspiration was, 'ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world (e.g. the United States and China) to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region'.

These results indicate not only a willingness for ASEAN to present itself as a single region with a common identity but also the desire for the association to act at the global level.

At the same time, that two-thirds and three-fifths of all respondents expected ASEAN to have a bigger global voice and greater regional presence by 2025, respectively, suggests that the majority of the respondents were reasonably confident of the capability of ASEAN and its member states to play such roles. This indicates a growing appreciation of the increased importance of ASEAN in the global and regional arenas.

Media and textbooks

The role of the media and textbooks needs to be better understood and utilised to increase public awareness of ASEAN's programmes and activities.

Of the respondents, 72% agreed or strongly agreed that the media did not have sufficient coverage of ASEAN. Participants stated that they thought the media focused too much on conflict or other sensationalised stories and did not spend enough time on the main activities and accomplishments of ASEAN. At the same time, however, there were misgivings by some participants concerning how media and textbooks would cover ASEAN if required to do so. For example, there was an impression that textbooks on ASEAN focused too much on history and were outdated. Indeed, some participants pointed out that the focus of the textbooks tended to be on historical conflicts. Similarly, they mentioned that most ASEAN events and activities were not 'newsworthy' enough in the traditional sense for the media.

The results of the survey and the FGDs suggest that engaging ASEAN people may require more creative means of information dissemination, including greater use of social media, for example, as well as updating and complementing the information in textbooks with more current information and possibly more engaging and interactive means of disseminating such current information.

The ASEAN Secretariat

Overall, respondents agreed that the ASEAN Secretariat should be improved.

Of the respondents, 45% strongly agreed, and 42% agreed that the ASEAN Secretariat should be gradually upgraded.

Among the member states, this question generated the widest divergence in responses of any of the questions. Indonesia had the highest support for improving the ASEAN Secretariat, with 62% of respondents strongly agreeing with the idea. At the other extreme, only 3% of the Thai respondents strongly agreed. Across ASEAN, government

officials felt the strongest that the secretariat should be upgraded, with strong agreement from 51% of the respondents.

Conclusion

As former President Fidel Ramos of the Philippines said:

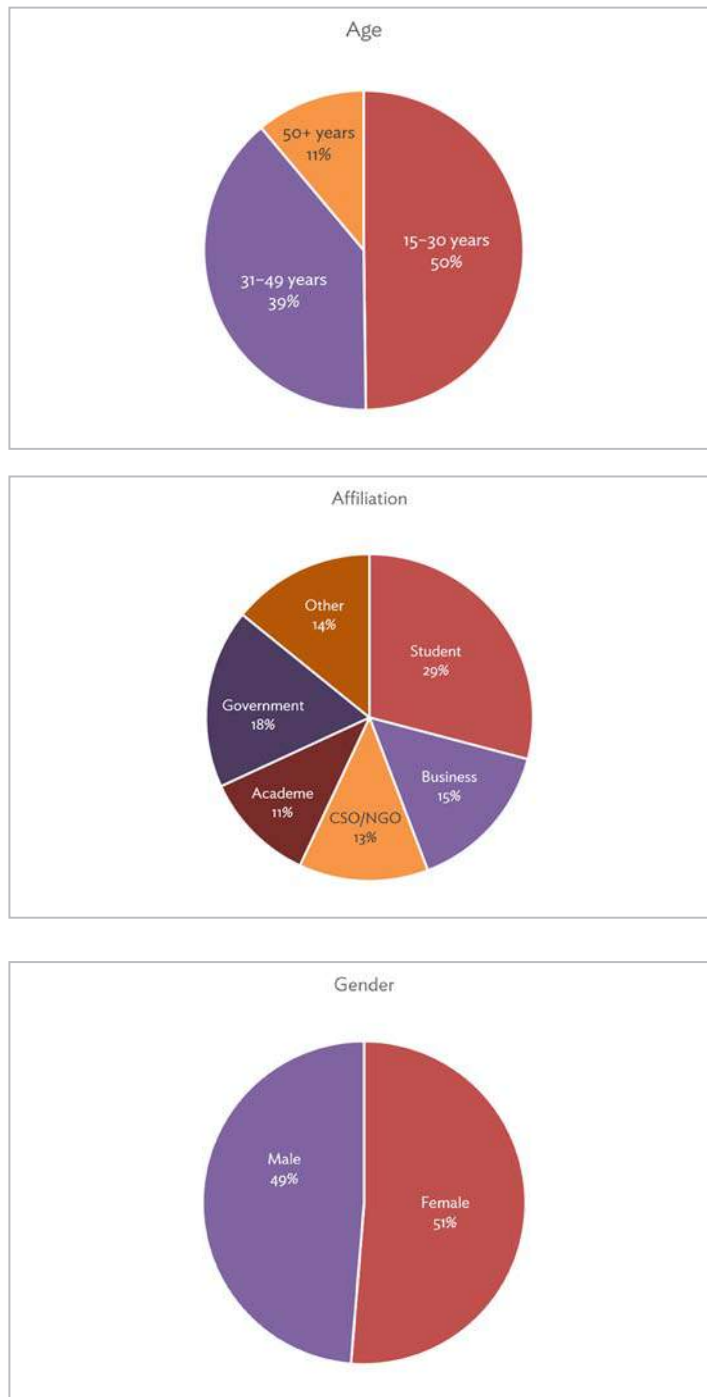
If the Southeast Asian peoples are to embrace ASEAN as their ‘Community’, they must see it as a pervading, beneficial influence on their daily lives. They must regard the ASEAN vision and mission as their own, being its most important stakeholders. (Ramos, 2013: 8)

Clearly, the ASEAN Community is still a work in progress. By concertedly addressing common concerns for the region and the individual countries, it is likely that the sense of ASEAN belonging and identity will deepen, and the sense of the ASEAN Community will be invigorated and continue to grow.

Characteristics of the Respondents

The survey’s 2,322 respondents included both men and women of a range of ages and affiliations, namely students and representatives from labour, business, government, civil society, academia, and others (Figure 1). The vast majority (89%) of respondents across all countries were under the age of 50 – only the Philippines, with a share of 37%, had more than 15% in the 50+ age range. At the other extreme, 73% of the respondents in Lao PDR were aged 15–30 years old. The gender representation was fairly balanced for ASEAN as a whole, with 51% female and 49% male respondents. There was a larger degree of variation in some of the countries. For instance, male respondents greatly outnumbered female respondents in Cambodia (65%) and Malaysia (64%), and female respondents outnumbered males in Myanmar (71%) and Brunei (67%).

Figure 1: Main Characteristics of the Respondents



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

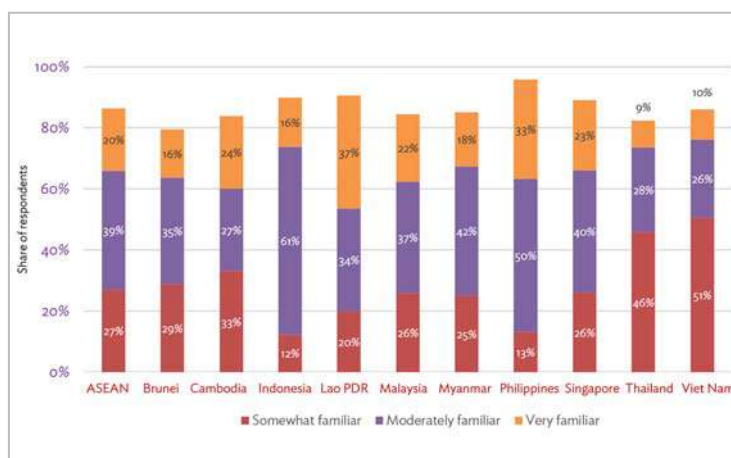
The affiliations of the respondents were fairly evenly distributed across the member states. Many of the surveys included a separate section for ‘labour’, but for this chapter, we added ‘labour’ to the ‘others’ category because three countries did not include labour as a separate category. Overall, students were the most highly represented group in the surveys, except in the Philippines survey, where they were included in the ‘others’ category. Almost half of Brunei’s respondents (48%) were students. Government representatives were the second most highly represented group, comprising 18% of the respondents. A third of Singapore’s respondents (33%) were from the business sector, compared to an average of 15% across ASEAN. For all the member states, about 13% of the respondents were from civil society organisations (CSOs) or NGOs – although Brunei (1%), Lao PDR (5%), and Viet Nam (6%) had low shares. In contrast, Indonesia had a high number of CSO and NGO respondents, perhaps because the country has an active and engaged CSO sector. Academia was slightly less well represented, comprising 11% of the respondents across ASEAN. It was particularly under-represented in Lao PDR (2%) and Singapore (2%).

Awareness, Belonging, and Attitudes about Membership of ASEAN

General awareness

The survey asked the respondents to indicate their level of awareness of ASEAN by choosing from five options: ‘very familiar’, ‘moderately familiar’, ‘somewhat familiar’, ‘slightly familiar’, and ‘not at all familiar’. Figure 2 shows the results.

Figure 2: Awareness of ASEAN



Finding: The majority of respondents (87%) were at least somewhat familiar with ASEAN. Virtually all (98%) were at least slightly familiar with ASEAN.

Over 80% of those surveyed in each country were at least ‘somewhat familiar’ with ASEAN, ranging from a low of 80% in Brunei to a high of 96% in the Philippines, while 100% of the respondents in the Philippines and Thailand were at least slightly familiar with ASEAN. Even in Cambodia, which had the highest share of those who chose ‘not at all familiar’, only 5% said they were not at all aware of ASEAN.

The higher percentages of respondents in the Philippines who were moderately to very familiar with ASEAN can be attributed in part to the fact that the respondents in the Philippines included more people in the 50+ age group, and according to the findings, awareness of ASEAN appears to increase with age. The respondents from Indonesia also showed a higher level of awareness, with 90% indicating that they were at least ‘somewhat familiar’ with ASEAN – perhaps attributable to the fact that the ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta. Similarly, the higher level of awareness in Lao PDR (91%) may be because the country was ASEAN Chair in 2016, the same year as the survey. The level of awareness in Thailand, on the other hand, was lower in comparison, with 83% saying they were at least ‘somewhat familiar’ with ASEAN, perhaps due to what the authors of the report for Thailand note as ‘the possibility of Thai-centric views or prejudiced beliefs imprinted in the country’s education system, especially in history classes and textbooks that are repeatedly taught to young kids for generations’. Viet Nam also showed a lower level of awareness, perhaps as a result of the country engaging with many other countries and regions through free trade agreements during the same period, indicating a certain level of competition between ASEAN and other regions for attention.

During the FGDs, many respondents stated that they were most familiar with the AEC and did not know about ASEAN’s other two pillars. In fact, some respondents thought that the AEC and ASEAN were the same. Respondents in several countries said they learned about ASEAN through their work. There were also more surprising explanations. For example, in Myanmar, respondents learned about ASEAN in 2014 when the ASEAN Southeast Asian Games were held in their country, and Myanmar was the Chair of ASEAN. Respondents in the Singapore and Viet Nam FGDs mentioned the ASEAN lane and visa-free travel in airports as a ‘pleasant experience that brings out a sense of ‘ASEAN-ness’.

Generally, the older respondents were more aware of ASEAN than the younger ones (Table 1). As noted in the Philippines report, this was perhaps due to greater awareness of ASEAN through work or personal experiences. Thailand was an exception, as the

youngest age group had the highest percentage of those who indicated being ‘very familiar’ with ASEAN.

Table 1: Familiarity with ASEAN by Age Group

	Age (% of respondents, ASEAN average)		
	15-30 years	31-49 years	50+ years
Very familiar	17	21	33
Moderately familiar	37	40	44
Somewhat familiar	30	28	15
Slightly familiar	14	10	6
Not at all familiar	2	1	2

Gender variations were generally not considerable. The male respondents in some countries, such as the Philippines, were more aware of ASEAN, while in other countries, such as Cambodia, female respondents had greater awareness of the association.

In terms of affiliation, respondents from government and academia had the highest levels of awareness. This may be explained by the fact that people who work in these fields are more likely to engage with ASEAN as part of their professional activities. Students and those in the ‘other’ category had the highest shares of respondents who were only slightly familiar or not at all familiar with ASEAN (Table 2).

Table 2: Awareness of ASEAN by Affiliation

	Affiliation (% of respondents, ASEAN average)					
	Student	Business	CSO/NGO	Academe	Government	Other
Very familiar	15	16	15	24	28	11
Moderately familiar	34	37	43	43	43	43
Somewhat familiar	32	34	29	29	23	26
Slightly familiar	16	12	14	3	6	16
Not at all familiar	3	2	0	0	0	4

CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Participants in the Malaysian FGDs stated they felt that awareness of ASEAN was skewed towards the economic and business aspects of the regional organisation. For example, discussions during the FGDs with industry and CSO participants revealed that they were aware of ASEAN as a platform that represented regional business relationship strengths.

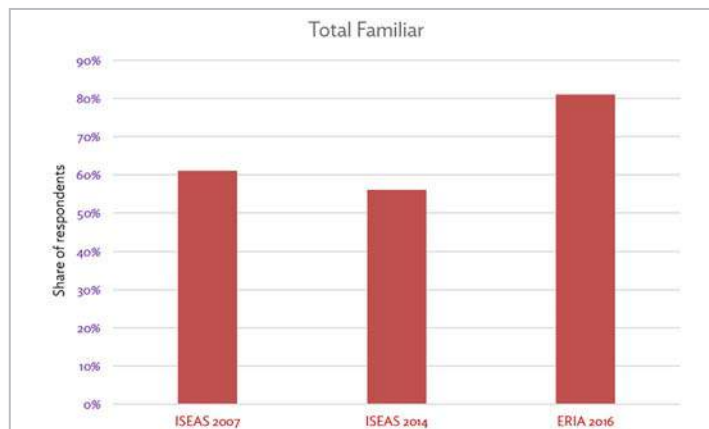
Comparison with ISEAS surveys

In 2007 and 2014, the ISEAS conducted similar surveys on attitudes and awareness towards ASEAN, which serve as an interesting comparison to this survey. They used a four-point scale with the options ‘very familiar’, ‘somewhat familiar’, ‘a little familiar’, and ‘not at all’ rather than a five-point scale as used in this study. The ISEAS survey respondents were all students.

We compared the ISEAS results with the results from our student respondents by combining the first three ERIA categories into one (‘familiar’), roughly equivalent to the two ISEAS categories of ‘very familiar’ and ‘somewhat familiar’. The last two options for both sets of surveys were comparable: ERIA’s were ‘slightly familiar’ and ‘not at all’, while the ISEAS surveys used ‘a little familiar’ and ‘not at all’.

There was a significant rise in awareness between the 2014 and 2016 surveys, with the share of those in the total ‘familiar’ group increasing from 56% to 81% (Figure 3). This is understandable given the fact that there was considerable media coverage of the AEC during 2015. It also supports statements made by several of the FGD participants that their awareness was primarily related to the economic aspects of ERIA.

Figure 3: Comparison of Student Awareness of ASEAN



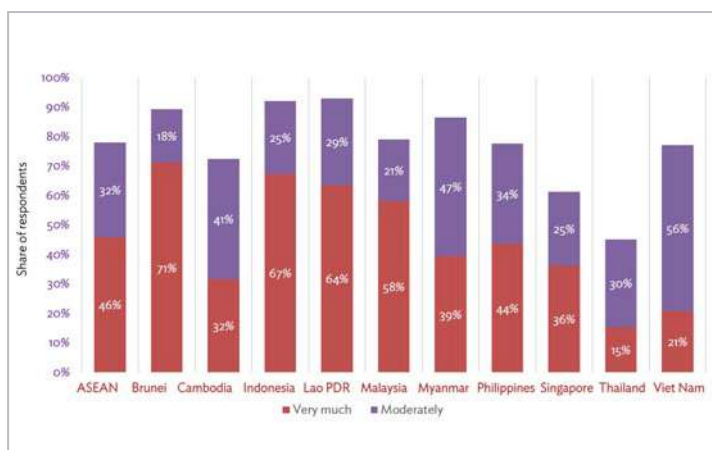
Sources: ERIA (2016); Thompson, Thianthai, and Thuzar (2016).

Citizenship

The survey asked respondents to assess the extent to which they felt like ASEAN citizens using a four-point scale with the options ‘very much’, ‘moderately’, ‘somewhat’, and ‘no’.

Finding: In all countries, except Thailand, the majority of respondents considered themselves at least moderately as ASEAN citizens (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen



As with the question on the awareness of ASEAN, Indonesia and Lao PDR expressed higher levels of feeling like ASEAN citizens. In contrast, 71% of the respondents from Brunei felt ‘very much’ as ASEAN citizens, which may be explained by the fact that Brunei is very focused on ASEAN, whereas other countries, such as Singapore, focus on other countries and regions as well. Thailand had the lowest level of feeling of ASEAN citizenship, and only 15% of respondents selected ‘very much’.

While the majority of the respondents identified at least moderately as ASEAN citizens (78%), the FGDs elicited a more nuanced perspective. For example, some Malaysian respondents revealed that their sense of citizenship was based more upon geographic proximity than upon a sense of shared identity. In fact, some respondents expressed their opinions that ASEAN was an elitist and state-centric organisation that should become more inclusive.

Overall, respondents from the CSOs and NGOs (54%), academia (51%), and government (52%) were most likely to feel ‘very much’ like citizens of ASEAN. The business respondents (34%) were the least likely to feel like ASEAN citizens. During the FGD in Indonesia, business respondents explained that they felt that there had been few positive impacts resulting from cooperation with ASEAN. Generally, there were not

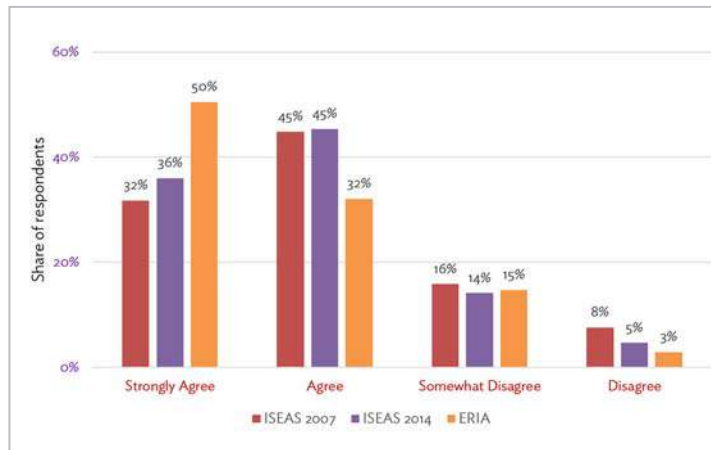
large differences among the age groups or genders, although the older respondents were somewhat more likely to indicate feeling ‘very much’ as ASEAN citizens.

Comparison with ISEAS surveys

The ISEAS survey posed the same question: ‘I feel that I am a citizen of ASEAN.’ It used a similar four-point scale with four choices: ‘strongly agree’, ‘somewhat agree’, ‘somewhat disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’.

Overall, there was a trend towards an increasing feeling of ASEAN citizenship over time. Of the students in ERIA’s 2016 survey, 50% felt ‘very much’ like ASEAN citizens, whereas only 36% (in 2014) and 32% (in 2007) of the students in the ISEAS surveys strongly agreed with the statement (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Comparison of Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen



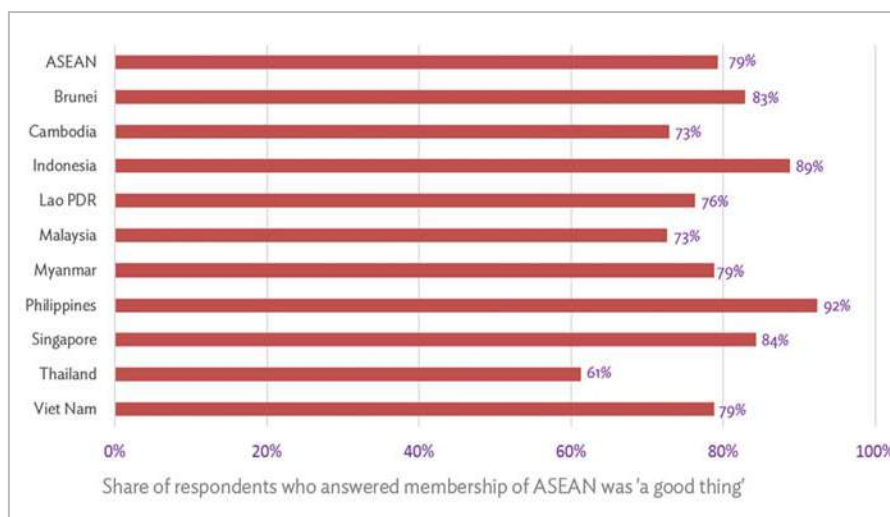
Sources: ERIA (2016); Thompson, Thianthai, and Thuzar (2016).

Membership of ASEAN

The next question asked respondents: ‘What do you think of your country’s membership in ASEAN?’ The four choices were: ‘a good thing’, ‘a bad thing’, ‘neither good nor bad’, and ‘don’t know’.

Finding: Respondents overwhelmingly believed that membership of ASEAN was ‘a good thing’. Every country, except Thailand, had at least 70% confidence that it was a good thing (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Opinions on Membership of ASEAN



Overall, 79% of the total respondents thought that membership of ASEAN was good. Thailand stood out as having the lowest opinion of ASEAN membership, with only 62% saying it was a good thing, compared to 72%–92% for the other countries. These results are similar to those of the ISEAS 2014 survey, in which only 71% of the Thai respondents felt that membership of ASEAN was beneficial compared to an average of 89% for the region. In fact, there appears to be a downward trend in Thailand as 90% of the Thai respondents in the ISEAS 2007 survey agreed that membership was beneficial.¹

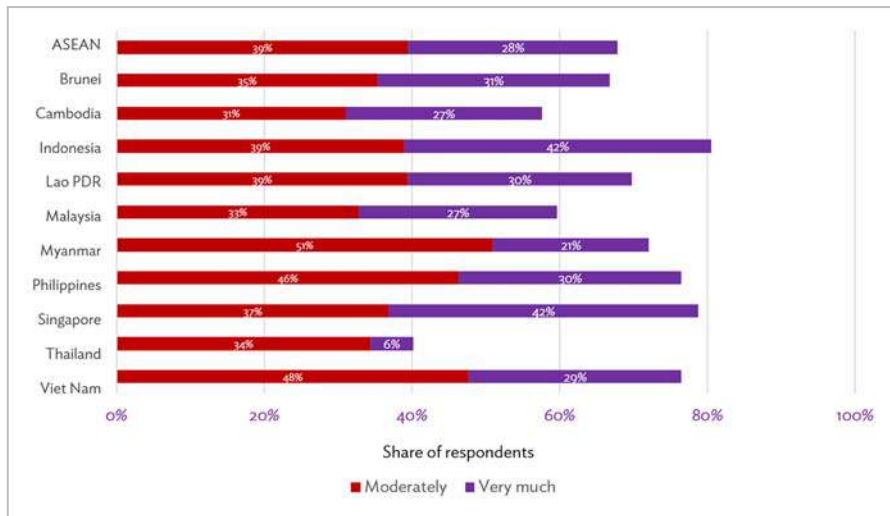
Benefit from ASEAN

The respondents were next asked: 'Would you say your country has benefited from being a member of ASEAN.' They were given five choices: 'very much', 'moderately', 'somewhat', 'fairly', and 'don't know'.

Findings: Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents (68%) felt that their countries had benefited 'very much' or 'moderately' from being a member of ASEAN (Figure 7).

¹ The ISEAS surveys used slightly different categories: 'strongly agree', 'somewhat agree', 'somewhat disagree', and 'strongly disagree'. ERIA's survey used the following: 'a good thing', 'neither good nor bad', 'don't know', and 'a bad thing'. For our analysis, we compared the ISEAS 'total agree' category (which included both 'strongly' and 'somewhat agree') with ERIA's category of 'a good thing'.

Figure 7: Benefit from Being a Member of ASEAN



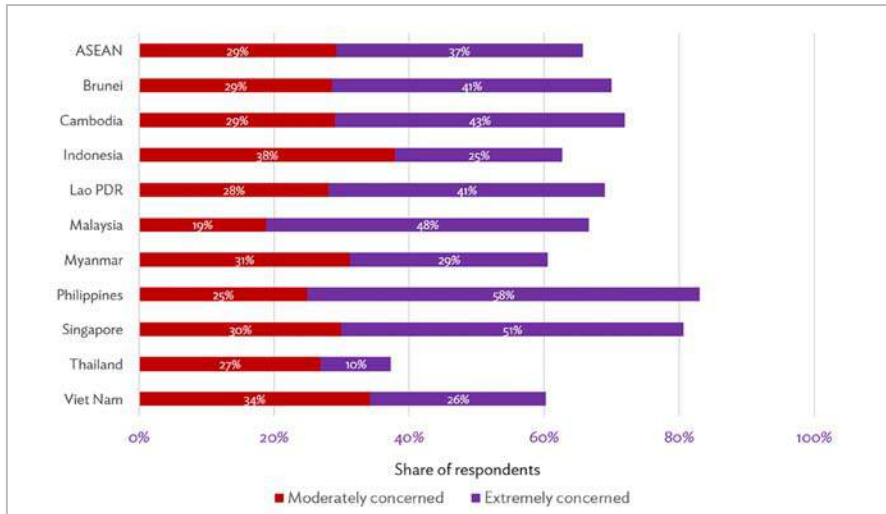
Opinions about leaving ASEAN

Respondents were asked the question: ‘How would you feel if your country were to leave ASEAN?’ They were given five choices: ‘extremely concerned’, ‘moderately concerned’, ‘somewhat concerned’, ‘slightly concerned’, and ‘not at all concerned’.

Finding: The majority of respondents (65%) were extremely or moderately concerned about the prospect of their countries not being part of ASEAN (Figure 8). Respondents from the Philippines were the most concerned, while those from Thailand were the least concerned.

The Philippines and Singapore indicated the highest levels of concern, with 58% and 51%, respectively, stating they would be ‘extremely concerned’. Respondents in Thailand stood out as having by far the lowest level of concern, with just 10.4% answering ‘extremely concerned’. The next lowest was Indonesia at 24.9%, which is surprising given that along with Singapore, they expressed the highest level of perceived benefit. One possible explanation comes from comments during the FGD, where some said they considered Indonesia’s membership in ASEAN as neither good nor bad. They said that Indonesia would be able to stand alone since the country was not dependent on ASEAN. Therefore, they thought that if Indonesia were no longer a member of ASEAN, then they would have nothing to lose.

Figure 8: Respondents' Concern if Their Countries Were to Leave ASEAN



Pressing Problems

The survey asked respondents to rank the five most pressing problems facing their countries and ASEAN as a whole until 2025. They were given a list of 21 issues to choose from and were given the option to add an issue of their choice.

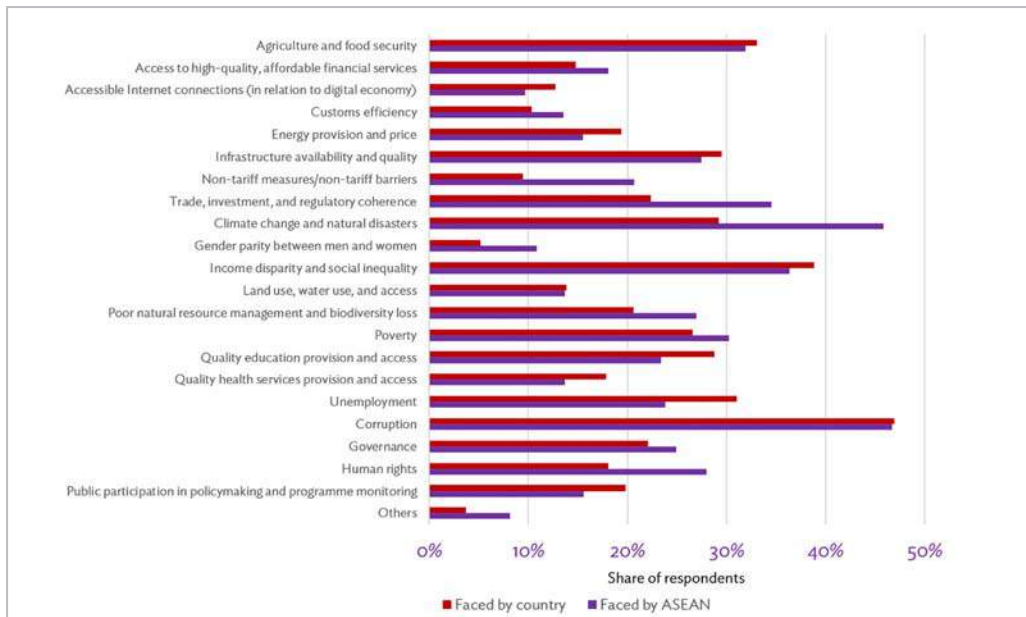
Figure 9 shows the summary results for ASEAN. It shows the percentage of respondents who indicated a given issue as one of the five most pressing problems facing ASEAN or their home country at present and until 2025.

As chosen by the respondents, the top five most pressing problems facing the ASEAN Community today and until 2025 for which the ASEAN Member States should act upon jointly and/or concertedly under ASEAN were the following:

- (1) corruption;
- (2) climate change and natural disasters;
- (3) income disparity and social inequality;
- (4) trade, investment, and regulatory coherence; and
- (5) agriculture and food security.

The next four concerns were poverty and, with almost equal shares of respondents, human rights, infrastructure availability and quality, and poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss.

Figure 9: Top Five Most Pressing Problems at Present and until 2025



The top five most pressing problems at the national level were the following:

- (1) corruption;
- (2) income disparity and social inequality;
- (3) agriculture and food security;
- (4) unemployment; and
- (5) a trio of concerns chosen by equal shares of respondents: climate change and natural disasters, infrastructure availability and quality, and quality education and access.

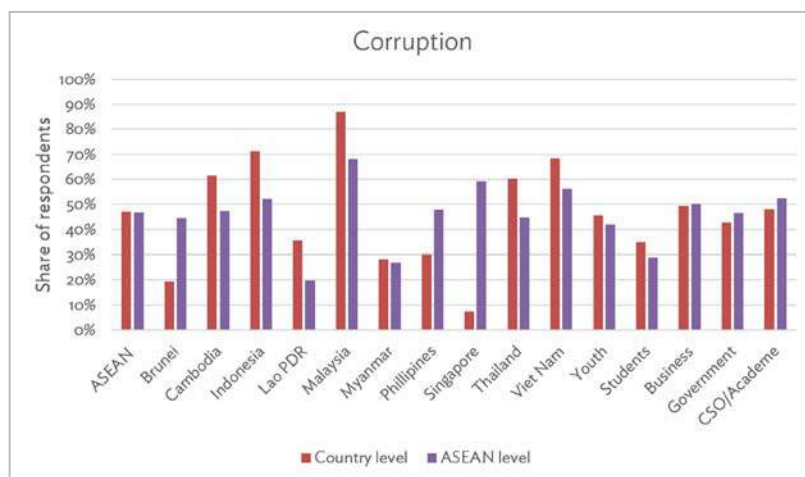
Next in the ranking at the national level was poverty. Note that the rankings at the national level are the averages for the whole region, but the national priorities differ among the ASEAN Member States. There were also some country-specific national priorities.

Corruption

Corruption was considered to be the most pressing problem facing ASEAN as a region now and until 2025 by the respondents in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, and the second most pressing problem by the respondents in Cambodia and Viet Nam. By affiliation, it was the pressing problem for respondents from the business sector, civil society, and academe, and the second most pressing problem for the student and government sector respondents. At the national level, corruption

was considered the most pressing problem by at least three-fifths of all respondents in Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, and the third most pressing problem in Lao PDR and the Philippines. The results for Malaysia were the most emphatic: 87% of all respondents considered corruption as one of the most pressing problems for Malaysia, and 68% considered corruption as one of the most pressing problems for ASEAN as a region as well, with both shares being the highest among all countries (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Corruption as a Pressing Problem



No other problem or concern among the member states had this level of overlap between what is considered a pressing problem at the regional level and what is considered a problem at the national level. This seems to suggest that the respondents see corruption (and the related governance problems) as a critical bottleneck to production efficiency, investment attractiveness, competitiveness, and possibly even development. This is consistent with the growing literature and experience that the quality of institutions has a material impact on investment attractiveness and economic growth performance. In the Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International, most of the ASEAN Member States have comparatively mid-to-low scores, with the exception of Singapore and, to a lesser extent, Brunei (Table 3). Not surprisingly, corruption places far down the list of priority problems in Singapore and Brunei, although the countries did choose corruption as the most pressing problem for the region as a whole.

Table 3: Corruption Perception Index

Corruption Perception Index 2016	
Country Global Rank	Country Score (100 = very clean)
7. Singapore	84
41. Brunei	58
43. Malaysia	49
90. Indonesia	37
101. Philippines	35
101. Thailand	35
113. Viet Nam	33
123. Lao PDR	30
136. Myanmar	28
156. Cambodia	21

Source: *Corruption Perceptions Index 2016*, Transparency International.
http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016#table
(accessed 8 April 2017).

As shown by the Corruption Index ranking in Table 3, Malaysia ranks third-best among the ASEAN Member States in terms of corruption perception. Yet, the Malaysian respondents were nearly unanimous that corruption was one of the most pressing national problems. The results of the FGD in Malaysia provide an insight on this concern. The participants mentioned they worried about the ‘tarnished reputation of Malaysia in the wake of various perceived unregulated financial practices. Some participants felt powerless in dealing with corruption as they said overcoming the problem required very strong political will’ (Yi et al., 2017: 16).

The Malaysian respondents were also the most worried about corruption in ASEAN, with two-thirds considering it as one of the five most pressing problems in ASEAN now and until 2025. The participants of the FGD in Malaysia indicated the reasoning behind their concern: ‘The participants ... viewed corruption as embedded in the system of many ASEAN Member States. They mentioned that the non-interference policy impeded accountability, meaning people in some ASEAN countries were free to engage in corrupt activities without being held accountable during high-level ASEAN meetings. This was closely linked to the problem of governance in the sense that poor governance was considered to be the main root of most problems (corruption, human rights violations, etc.)’ (Yi et al., 2017: 16).

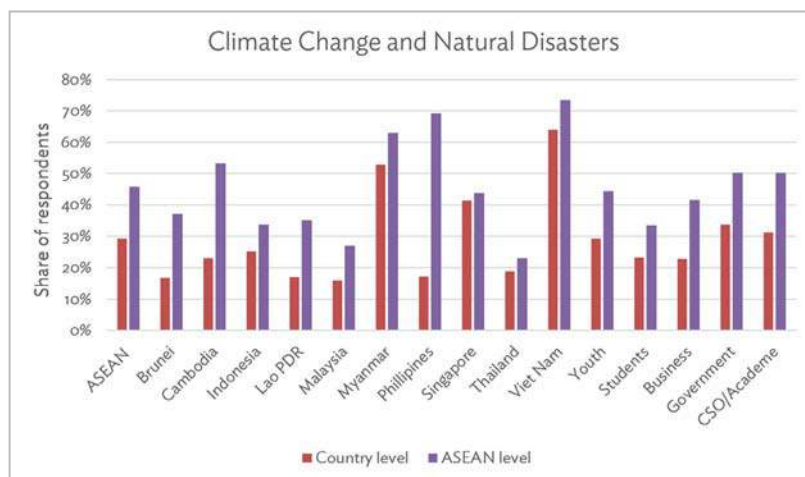
It is worth noting that a number of ASEAN Member States have been more aggressive recently in their efforts to streamline regulations and processes and combat corruption (e.g. Indonesia and the Philippines). It is also worth noting that good governance and the

institutionalisation of good regulatory practices are in the AEC Blueprint for 2016–2025. Thus, there is concordance between what people would like to be addressed through 2025, what the AEC Blueprint aims for, and what a number of ASEAN Member States are now undertaking. In short, this is largely a matter of the accelerated and coordinated implementation of what is in the AEC Blueprint and is ultimately a matter of political will.

Climate change and natural disasters

Climate change and natural disasters were chosen as the most pressing problem facing ASEAN now and until 2025 by respondents in Cambodia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Viet Nam (Figure 11). This problem was also chosen as the second most pressing problem in the region for the respondents from Lao PDR and Singapore. By affiliation, it was the most pressing problem for the student and government sector respondents, and the second most pressing problem for the respondents from the business, civil society, and academic sectors. At the national level, only the respondents from Myanmar, Singapore, and Viet Nam considered climate change and natural disasters to be among the five most pressing concerns in their countries.

Figure 11: Climate Change and Natural Disasters as a Pressing Problem



This bifurcation between the regional level (as one of the top two most pressing problems) and the national level (where it ranked low as a pressing national concern in most of the ASEAN Member States) is interesting. ASEAN is known as one of the most disaster-prone regions and one of the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Thus, the respondents not surprisingly considered climate change and natural disasters as a pressing concern for the region. However, at the same time, for many of the member states, there were other more pressing concerns at the national level than climate change and natural disasters, with the exception of Myanmar and Viet Nam,

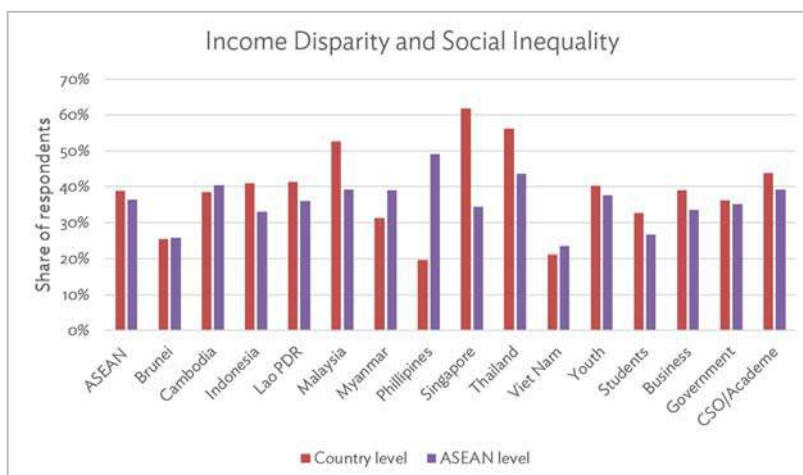
where they were considered to be the first and second most pressing national concerns until 2025, respectively.

This suggests that the way forward for addressing this important concern at the regional level is to strengthen regional cooperation in disaster prevention, response, and recovery as well as in climate change adaptation. ASEAN has indeed endeavoured to strengthen regional cooperation in this area in recent years with the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management Emergency Response and the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre). In addition, ASEAN and its member states have worked together in the global arena through the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction. Making ASEAN peoples more aware of these regional cooperation initiatives will largely mean stronger implementation and coordination at both the national and regional levels.

Income disparity and social inequality

Income disparity and social inequality comprised the second most pressing problem at the national level when averaged across all countries, and the third most pressing problem facing ASEAN (Figure 12). This issue was selected as the most pressing national challenge by respondents in Singapore and Lao PDR, the second most important national concern in Malaysia, and the third most pressing national problem for the respondents in Thailand. Wealth inequality has become a more important social issue in Singapore in recent years, while Malaysia has historically had the highest income inequality in ASEAN; indeed, Malaysia's Bumiputera policy is arguably anchored on ameliorating income disparity and social inequality in the country. It is worth noting that income disparity and social inequality ranked low as a pressing concern both at the national and regional levels for the respondents in Viet Nam. This was likely due to the comparatively more equitable distribution of income in Viet Nam than in a number of other ASEAN Member States and also due to its success in having comparatively inclusive high growth relative to China.

Figure 12: Income Disparity and Social Inequality as a Pressing Problem



Somewhat surprisingly, income disparity and social inequality topped the list of the most pressing national concerns at present and in the future for Lao PDR. The results of the FGDs provide some insight into why this has become a major concern for the respondents in the country. Specifically, the FGD participants were worried about the widening divide between the fast-growing urban areas (due to the rapid growth of the Lao PDR economy during the past one and a half decades) and the rural areas, which have experienced very little improvements in infrastructure and other facilities. With the majority of the population living in the rural areas, respondents were concerned that the economic boom in the urban areas would further widen the urban–rural divide in the country.

The third pillar of the AEC Blueprint 2015, a region of equitable development, is reflective of the importance of inclusive growth in ASEAN. Nonetheless, the major focus has historically been on narrowing the development gaps between the original ASEAN members and the newer members (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam). The AEC Blueprint 2016–2025 aims for a resilient, inclusive, people-oriented, and people-centred ASEAN. Inclusivity is increasingly ingrained in the overall integration agenda of ASEAN, albeit much of it through small and medium-sized enterprise development and dynamism. There is indeed strong policy support for inclusive growth and inclusive integration at both the national and regional levels. As for the previous concerns, the devil is in the implementation details moving towards 2025 and indeed even beyond.

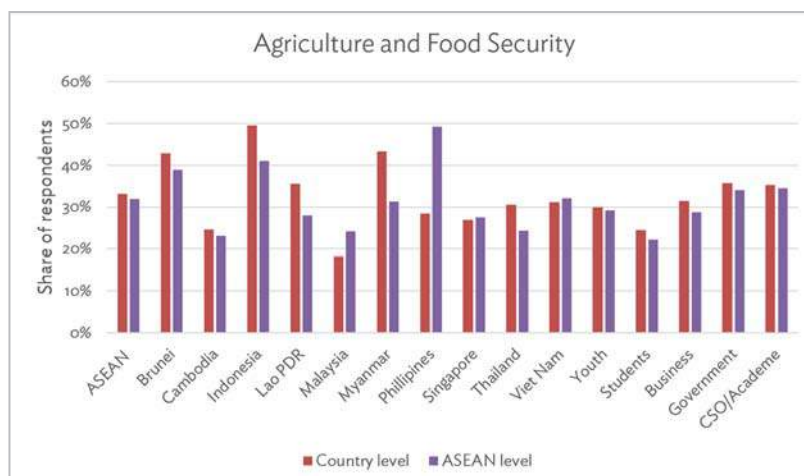
Agriculture and food security

Agriculture and food security was the third most pressing problem at the national level and ranked fifth at the ASEAN level (Figure 13). At the national level, agriculture

and food security was of particularly pressing concern in Indonesia, where half of all respondents noted it as a pressing problem, and in Brunei and Myanmar, where at least two-fifths of the respondents chose it as a pressing problem. Around one-third of the respondents in Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Viet Nam considered it as one of the top five most pressing problems. At the regional level, respondents in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Brunei were the most worried about agriculture and food security. Interestingly, the respondents from Malaysia and Singapore, two food importing countries, did not see agriculture and food security as a particularly pressing problem in their countries or the ASEAN region. Respondents in both countries said that food security did not equate to food self-sufficiency because both were not food self-sufficient (especially in food grains).

Indonesia and the Philippines have been the two largest net importers of rice in ASEAN for decades. As rice is the staple grain in both countries, fluctuations in its price are of prime policy concern due to the social (poverty) and political impacts. Thus, it is not surprising that the respondents in the two countries considered this as one of the most pressing problems now and until 2025. Respondents in Indonesia were also worried about the declining share in national output of the agriculture sector, which has been a critical source of exports and economic growth in Indonesia for quite some time. In Myanmar, the FGD participants stated that the problem stemmed from deficiencies in several areas, such as research and development; financial and physical access; and the transfer of technology, marketing skills, and quality inputs, such as seeds, fertilisers, and tools. In short, the participants from Myanmar highlighted the constraints to the development of their country’s agriculture sector considering that it had a potentially substantial comparative advantage given its high land-to-population ratio and the presence of large sources of irrigation for both surface and groundwater.

Figure 13: Agriculture and Food Security as a Pressing Problem

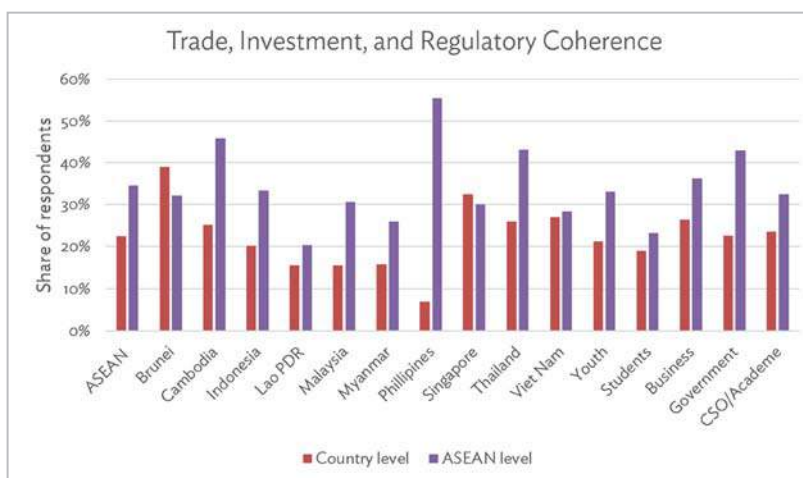


The respondents and participants from Indonesia and the Philippines, the two major net importers of rice in ASEAN, were keen to see agriculture and food security as an important area for regional cooperation. The most important regional initiative in food security is the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve, which came to fruition during the aftermath of the 2007–2008 world food price crisis when global food prices, including those of rice, shot up tremendously during 2007 and into the first half of 2008. The ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework and the Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region provide a more holistic approach to addressing food security in the region in addition to an emergency food reserve. Again, implementation is the critical factor as indicated in the AEC 2025 Consolidated Strategic Action Plan.

Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence

Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence ranked fourth as the most pressing regional concern for ASEAN but ranked only 10th as a national concern. This is not surprising since trade, investment, and regulatory coherence are strongly related to the economic integration agenda of ASEAN. Indeed, regulatory coherence is primarily of concern at the regional level because it involves differing regulations among ASEAN Member States. Respondents from Thailand, the Philippines, and Cambodia placed this issue as the third, third, and second most pressing concern for the region, respectively (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Trade, Investment, and Regulatory Coherence as a Pressing Problem



Trade and investment were important also at the national level. Interestingly, the respondents from Brunei and Singapore highlighted trade and investment as a pressing national concern despite them being the two smallest countries in ASEAN and

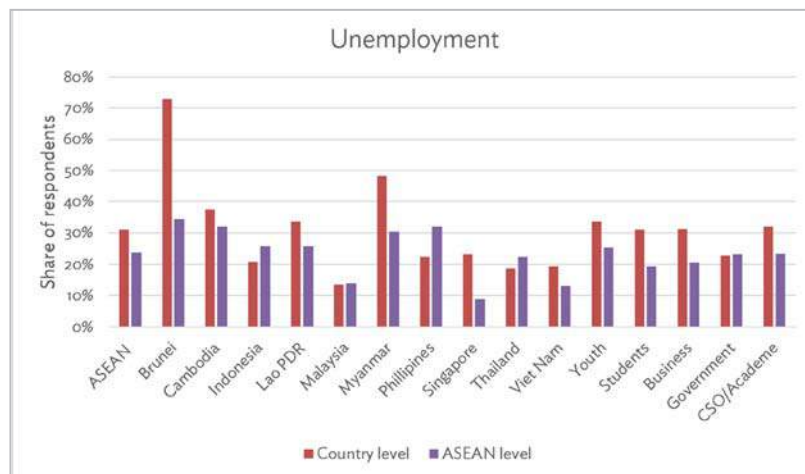
Singapore being the dominant foreign direct investment destination in the region. In contrast, the respondents from the Philippines, arguably the least successful major ASEAN country in enticing foreign investment so far, placed this issue among their five lowest-ranking problems at the national level.

The results of the FGDs with the private sector in Singapore provide a good basis for understanding the importance of trade, investment, and regulatory coherence for the ASEAN region. The private sector participants highlighted the problems of non-tariff barriers in trading with other business sectors in the region, the bureaucratic inefficiencies that hinder in attracting foreign direct investment, and restrictions on labour mobility, among others. The private sector participants said that despite the AEC, doing business on the ground remained problematic because of bureaucratic politics and institutional inefficiencies. At the same time, they noted that the rising middle class with growing purchasing power offered growing trade and investment opportunities.² In sum, there is much that remains to be done to ensure that trade and investment become an even more potent force for greater social welfare.

Unemployment and poverty

Unemployment was the fourth most pressing problem at the national level and the sixth most pressing problem at the regional level based on the ASEAN averages (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Unemployment as a Pressing Problem



² Much of this paragraph draws from Lim, Kiruppalini, and Lee (2016).

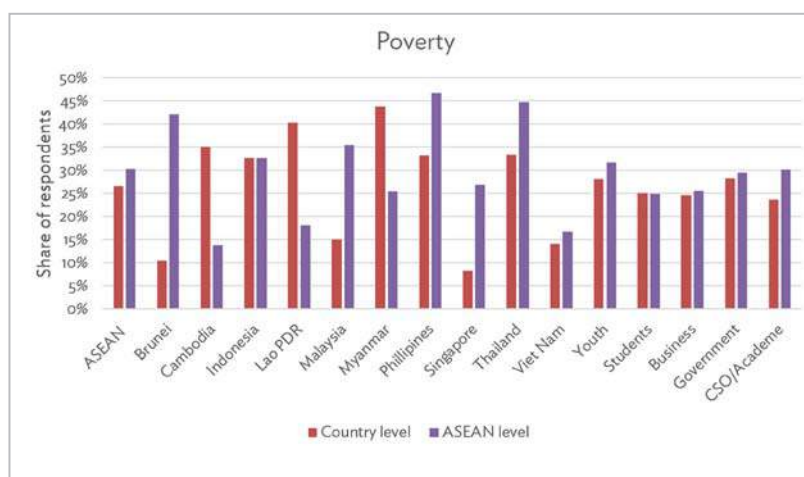
At least a third of respondents in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar considered unemployment as one of the most pressing national problems in their countries. Over one-third of the respondents also chose poverty as among the most pressing national problems. These three countries are major exporters of (largely low-skilled and likely largely poverty-driven) labour to Thailand; hence, it is not surprising that unemployment (and poverty) was viewed as important by at least a third of the respondents in the three countries.

Surprisingly, nearly three-quarters of the respondents from Brunei considered unemployment as one of the five most pressing problems in their country now and until 2025. In fact, the Brunei respondents were the most worried about unemployment among all the ASEAN respondents. Considering that poverty was not a priority concern for the Brunei respondents and noting that nearly half of the respondents were students, it is likely that the serious concern for unemployment was based on the perceived poor employment prospects until 2025. The country's economy has been relatively stagnant in recent years because of the sharp drop in the price of petroleum since 2014 and the secular decline in the price of natural gas since 2009, the country's two main export products. This is likely the reason for the poor growth prospects – and the negative implications for the employment prospects of the youth – and why the government has been trying to diversify the economy and shift away from its heavy dependence on oil and natural gas.

It is worth noting that unemployment and poverty were not major national concerns for the respondents in Viet Nam, a country which has had one of the most sustained and dramatic declines in poverty rates in the world during the past two decades. Significant contributing factors to this decline in poverty were the success in employment creation and the surge in enterprises in the country during the period. It is also worth noting that even though poverty was a major concern in the Philippines, the respondents were less concerned about unemployment, despite the country having the highest official unemployment rate among ASEAN Member States. It is possible that the reason for this is that the unemployment rate indicates a relatively high reservation wage considering the employment prospects abroad, especially in the Middle East.

Finally, it is worth noting also that while poverty was the sixth most pressing problem for ASEAN, unemployment was significantly lower in importance as a concern for the region as a whole. This implies that the issue of unemployment is viewed as largely a national concern rather than a significant regional concern. Interestingly, for the poorer member states (Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar), poverty was ranked very low as a regional concern; this implies that for the respondents in these countries, the poverty problem was seen fundamentally as a national concern to be addressed by their respective governments (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Poverty as a Pressing Problem



Infrastructure availability and quality, and quality education provision and access

At the national level, infrastructure availability and quality, and education provision and access both shared the same ranking overall. At the regional level, respondents placed greater importance on infrastructure availability and quality than educational quality and access. Infrastructure availability and quality are central to physical connectivity nationally and regionally; indeed, infrastructure is at the core of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. Quality education provision and access are being increasingly viewed as important for countries to move up the technology and value chain ladder. Although not afforded as much importance as physical connectivity, regional cooperation in higher education, such as through the ASEAN Universities Network, and efforts at standardising skills certification at the regional level, such as the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, are also important initiatives for strengthening the human capital in the region across the board while providing mechanisms for deeper interpersonal understanding of the ASEAN peoples with varying ethnicities, cultures, and religions and thereby building a greater sense of ASEAN community (Figures 17 and 18).

Human rights

Human rights was the seventh most pressing problem for the region. Half of all the Malaysian respondents considered it as one of the top five pressing problems for ASEAN now and until 2025, along with more than one-third of respondents in Myanmar and the Philippines and nearly three-tenths of respondents in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Thailand (Figure 19).

Figure 17: Infrastructure Availability and Quality as a Pressing Problem

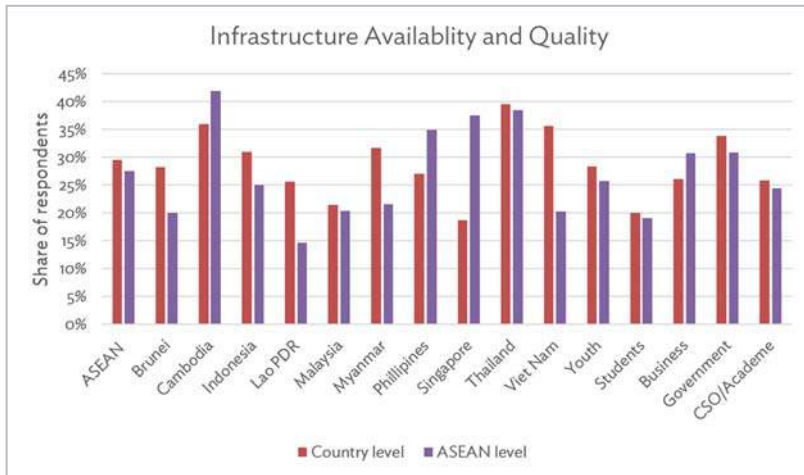


Figure 18: Quality Education Provision and Access as a Pressing Problem

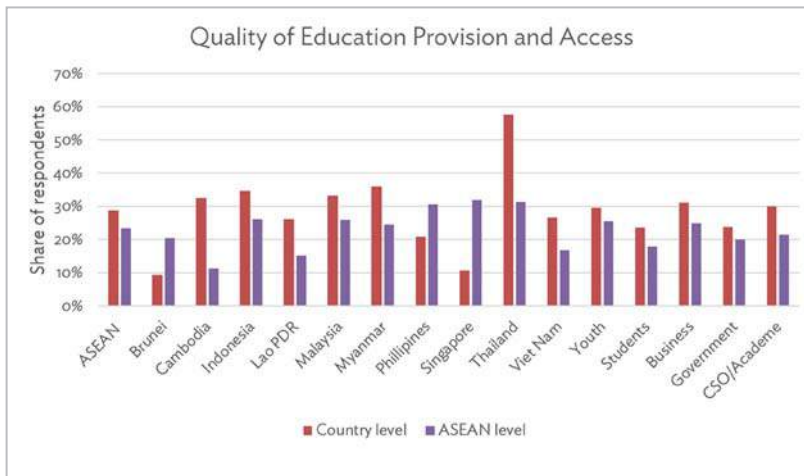
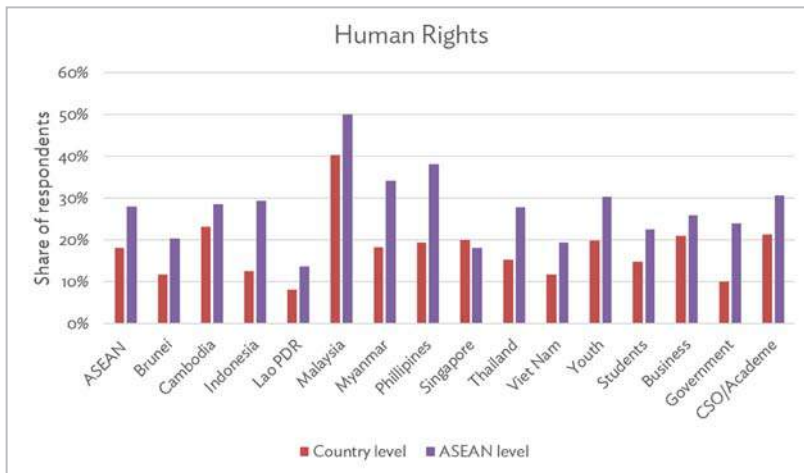


Figure 19: Human Rights as a Pressing Problem



The FGDs in Malaysia provided some insights into why human rights was the second most pressing problem for ASEAN, after corruption, for the Malaysian respondents. Some of the participants included quality education provision and access, quality health services and access, public participation in policymaking, the right to information and data, and a free and fair media as within the purview of human rights. Thus, to a large extent, they encompassed many of the previously discussed issues. Also, importantly, the participants agreed that the issue of human rights should not only cover refugees but also include other groups, such as children and even women. A number also expressed fears of racial discrimination, religious extremism, and violence in the region (Yi et al., 2017: 16–17).

Other regional concerns

Governance was highlighted as a concern for the region by the respondents in Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand; however, corruption was the number one concern for 8 of the 10 countries, as indicated earlier. Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss were significant concerns for the respondents in the Philippines and Viet Nam. Access to high-quality, affordable financial services was a significant concern in Cambodia and the Philippines. Only the respondents in the Philippines placed high priority on the following as regional concerns: public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring for the region, land and water use and access, gender parity between men and women, energy provision and price, customs efficiency, and accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy).

Other national concerns

Public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring was emphasised as a national concern in Singapore. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, two-fifths of all respondents indicated accessible Internet connections as a national concern. This is probably because the country has suffered from some of the slowest and most expensive Internet connections in the region for some time.

It is interesting to note that gender parity between men and women, provision and access to quality health services, non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers, customs efficiency, and access to high-quality, affordable financial services were mentioned by only very few respondents as most pressing national concerns in each of the 10 ASEAN Member States.

Aspirations and Expectations for ASEAN by 2025

One of the questions in the first part of the survey asked respondents to provide a simple yes or no response to the following question: ‘Do you have aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN?’ Respondents who replied yes were asked to explain their answers. However, only the four countries who used online surveys (Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei) were able to record the responses. Their answers are incorporated into the discussion in this section.

Later in the survey, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with 15 statements, both in terms of what they hoped for and what they expected regarding the situation in ASEAN by 2025. They were given a six-point Likert scale: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, neutral’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’, and ‘don’t know’. The responses to these questions are grouped here in four broad categories: an integrated and connected ASEAN; ASEAN global and regional engagement; a resilient and sustainable ASEAN; and people engagement, resilience, and social equity.

An integrated and connected ASEAN

An integrated and connected ASEAN is the fundamental goal of the economic integration and connectivity agenda of ASEAN. The integration goal has been popularly described in terms of Pillar 1 of the AEC Blueprint 2015, i.e. a single market and production base. This goal is now described more straightforwardly as ‘a highly integrated and cohesive economy’ under the AEC 2025. Complementing the integration agenda is the connectivity agenda under the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, which aims for a ‘seamlessly and comprehensively connected and integrated ASEAN that will promote competitiveness, inclusiveness, and a greater sense of community’ (ASEAN Secretariat, 2016: 9). Connectivity encompasses physical connectivity, institutional connectivity, and people-to-people connectivity. Integration is akin to economic connectivity, which captures these three forms of connectivity and to a large extent is the other side of the same coin.

To capture people’s aspirations and expectations about an integrated and connected ASEAN, we posed the following four statements characterising ASEAN by 2025:

- Consumers have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country.
- It is easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.
- ASEAN countries are well connected through roads, railways, air, and shipping.
- People and businesses can communicate easily with one another through ICT.

Figures 20–23 present the summaries of the responses. The bar graphs measure the percentages of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed with the statements. They provide the responses for each ASEAN Member state and selected group, specifically, students, youth, business, government and civil society/academe. (The group ‘others including labour’ is not included in the graphs.) The graphs show the responses for the aspirations alongside those for the expectations for comparison.

The figures show high aspirations for an integrated and connected ASEAN, at least in the areas specified in the four statements. At least four-fifths of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the first three statements, while at least three-quarters agreed with the fourth statement on the mobility of skilled workers and professionals. This group of statements under an ‘integrated and connected ASEAN’ represented the most popular aspirations, as shown by the percentage of respondents who agreed with the statements.

When comparing the results of the respondents’ aspirations and expectations (or the percentage of respondents who thought the statements would likely happen by 2025), it is not surprising that the expectations are generally lower across all the statements. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that no less than two-thirds of all respondents thought the statements related to integrated and connected ASEAN would happen by 2025. This degree of positive expectation was also the highest among all the statements. In short, a significant share of the respondents aspired for and expected that ASEAN in 2025 would be well connected and integrated, although they were slightly guarded with respect to the mobility of skilled labour and professionals. Although the respondents were not a representative sample of the whole ASEAN population, they provide a clear indication that the ASEAN integration and connectivity agenda is aligned with the aspirations of ASEAN peoples.³

³ The survey is more or less purposive and is biased towards those with access to the Internet because the Survey Monkey online platform was used in a number of the countries. Even with ERIA Research Institute Network institutes, which employed paper-based surveys (because the questions needed to be translated into the national languages), the clientele of the institutes can be expected to have been more educated urban professionals, business people, and students.

Figure 20: Consumer Access to Goods and Services

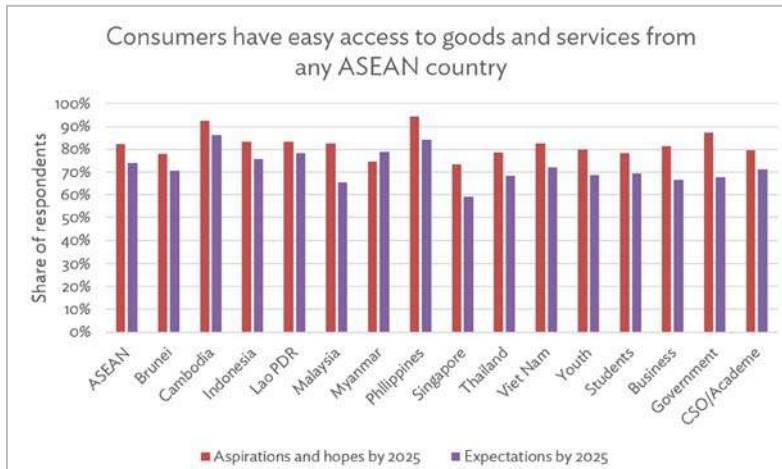


Figure 21: Mobility of Skilled Labour and Professionals in ASEAN

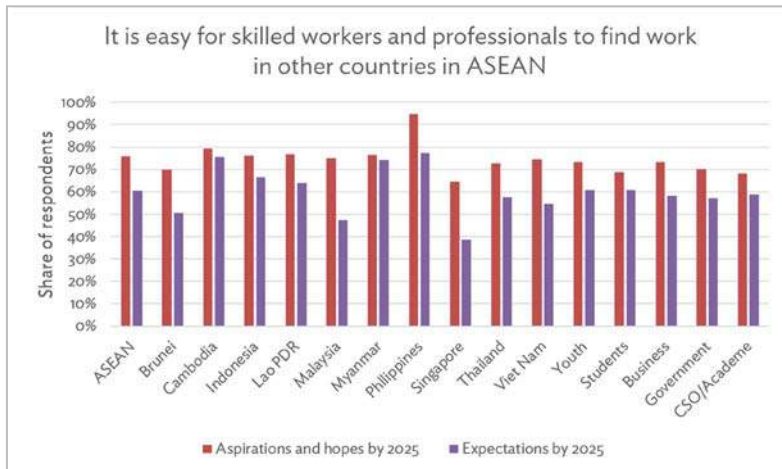


Figure 22: Physical Connectivity in ASEAN

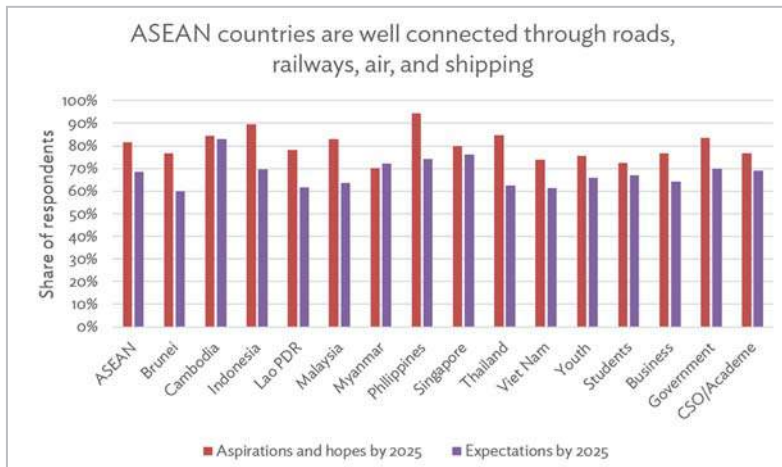
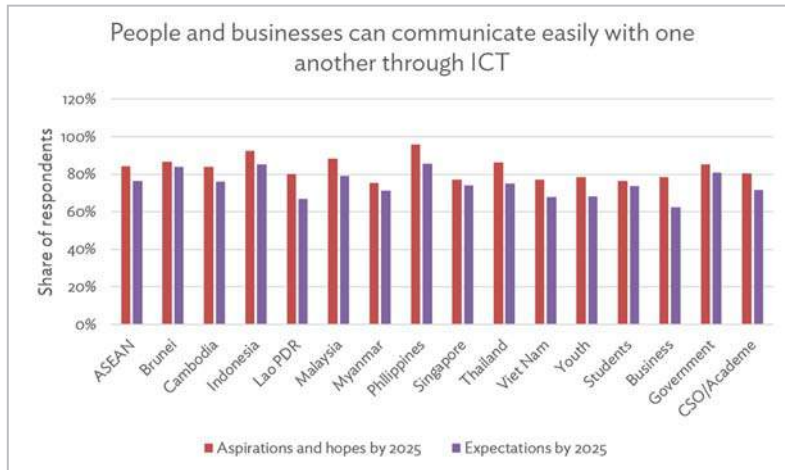


Figure 23: ICT Connectivity in ASEAN



Figures 20–23 show some variation among the ASEAN Member States around the ASEAN averages. The Philippine respondents stand out as being the most supportive and having the highest aspirations for ASEAN integration and connectivity, followed by the Indonesian respondents. The government respondents were the most supportive of regional connectivity, while the business sector representatives had the most conservative expectations of regional connectivity.

The FGD comments made it clear that many of the respondents were interested in the mobility aspect of ASEAN connectivity and integration. One Malaysian respondent summarised it as ‘freedom to choose where I live, work, and do business, subject to security controls’. Similarly, a respondent from Brunei mentioned the ‘free flows of skilled labour and economic activity to get mutual benefits among members’. One of the Indonesian business respondents wanted ‘more Indonesian businesses to explore ASEAN markets’ and urged for ‘the acceleration of standardised accreditation systems to allow Indonesian professionals to move easily throughout the region’. Of course, increasing diversity of ASEAN products in local markets was appealing to many respondents. A young Vietnamese respondent enthused that ‘buying goods from ASEAN is also a popular choice. A lot of types of fruits from Cambodia, Thailand, etc. are now available in Viet Nam. Thai consumer products are also good and thus increasingly present in their homes.’ For Singaporeans, integration and connectivity were primarily about trade matters but not just for self-interest, as indicated by one respondent’s wish ‘to have better trade relations across ASEAN so that all economies can benefit’.

The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 promotes connectivity through ICT, an item with huge support from all sectors and ASEAN Member States in the survey. A Vietnamese business woman elaborated that the past improvement of

telecommunication services in Viet Nam had helped her business a lot in contacting partners, with reductions in costs and more modern services. The only issues were stability and roaming fees for mobile phone services. Participants from the Philippines, although having the highest ratings in the survey, expressed doubts during the FGD: ‘Having good digital connectivity is also a long shot. All of the participants said it would be a long time before the slow speed and high cost of Internet connections in the Philippines are solved.’ Roads, railways, and other massive infrastructure for connectivity were expected to get a boost from China’s One Belt, One Road initiative. One Malaysian participant remarked that ‘with the support of the newly established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, ASEAN countries are expected to have well-developed systems of roads, railways, and ports by 2025’.

Connectivity and its potential positive impacts will face challenges, however, including corruption and a lack of regulatory coherence. The Thai students noted that ‘highly skilled professionals are currently encountering problems with passing licence registrations in other member countries due to relevant regulatory barriers, such as language requirements, similar to the problems in the business sector’. Thai business representatives expressed similar sentiments: ‘There are barriers preventing labour mobility throughout the region. These may be caused by government policies that focus primarily on protectionism policies.’ Respondents from Indonesia, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam stated concerns regarding the free flow of labour and whether they could compete regionally. Participants in the Viet Nam FGDs were apprehensive that freer mobility could be a ‘threat to livelihood, even in Viet Nam, due to the employment of foreigners’. Still, they agreed that, in general, the opportunities would induce them to learn and become more competitive in the labour market – the foundation for better income.

ASEAN global and regional engagement

ASEAN centrality in a dynamic and outward-looking region is one of the key measures of the ASEAN Political-Security Community 2025. This reflects the ASEAN drive to play a significant role in the region and the international arena through deeper cooperation with dialogue partners; strengthened engagement with other parties; reaching out to new partners; and constructive participation in global affairs, ideally based on a common ASEAN platform. Indeed, even before the ASEAN Free Trade Area became a reality, ASEAN already played a critical facilitating role for peace in the region through the ASEAN Regional Forum. ASEAN has established a number of mechanisms and institutions for confidence building, enhanced cooperation, and the prevention of conflicts in the region, including the most important at present, the leaders-only, ASEAN-led East Asia Summit.

In view of the long history of ASEAN’s deep engagement in regional and international affairs, it is worthwhile to gauge people’s aspirations and expectations for ASEAN’s global and regional engagement and voice. The following two statements were used to measure the degree of support for ASEAN engagement with the world:

- ASEAN is a strong voice and an important player in global negotiations and forums.
- ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world (e.g. the United States and China) to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.

Figure 24: ASEAN Has a Strong Global Voice and Presence

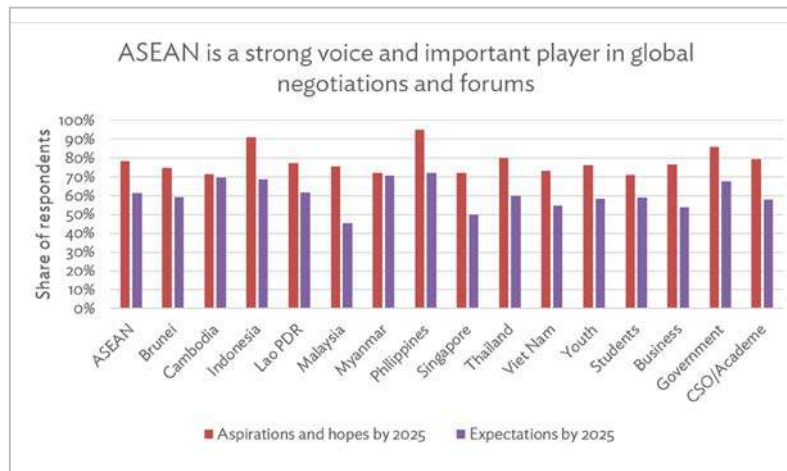
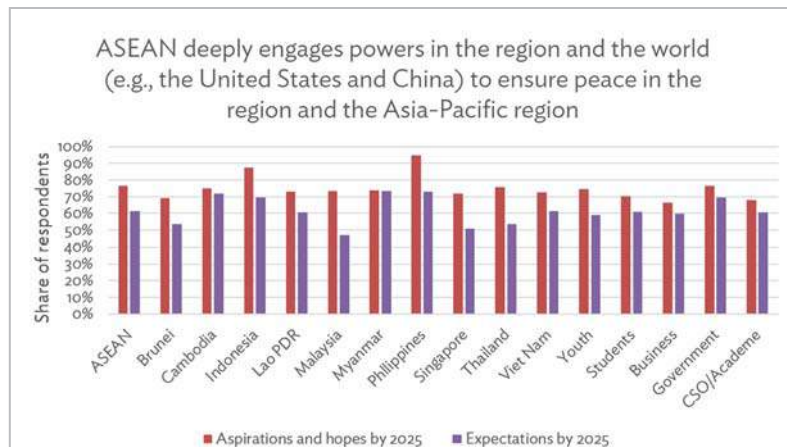


Figure 25: ASEAN Deeply Engages World Powers for Peace



Figures 24 and 25 show the survey results for these statements. As the figures show, there was robust support from more than three-quarters of the respondents for the aspiration for ASEAN to become a strong global and regional presence and voice by 2025. Remarkably, the same aspiration was shared by at least two-thirds of the respondents in each member state, suggesting a common desire in the region. Indonesia and the Philippines stood out, however, in their overwhelming support for an active and visible global and regional role for ASEAN.

Such a strong desire from the Philippine respondents may have been influenced by the constant media coverage of the South China Sea problem, while the Indonesian respondents may have been accustomed to the large leadership role expected of a large economy and polity in the region and the world. Indeed, one key theme of Indonesia's hosting of the 2011 ASEAN Summit focused on having a common ASEAN platform and voice in the international arena.

The results on the expectations side were, not surprisingly, more measured. Three-fifths of respondents supported ASEAN's deep engagement with the world and regional powers, and two-thirds supported ASEAN having a stronger global voice and presence. There was also significantly greater variation in the incidence of support among the respondents in each member state. For example, respondents in Malaysia and Singapore were substantially less optimistic than the respondents in the Philippines, Myanmar, and Indonesia. At the same time, however, the gaps between the aspirations and expectations were large for Indonesia and the Philippines and second only to Malaysia. That is, while the respondents aspired for ASEAN to have a strong voice and presence regionally and internationally by 2025, they were also more subdued as to what would likely occur by 2025. Similarly, the government representatives were more optimistic than the students, business representatives, youth, and those from civil society or academe regarding ASEAN becoming a significant global voice and presence as well as being able to engage big powers to ensure peace in the region.

The results of the FGDs and the country reports provide useful insights into why ASEAN peoples are keen to see more global and regional engagement by ASEAN. There seem to be three main motivations: a continued need to provide a platform for regional dialogue to promote peaceful resolutions to internal conflicts; an increasing need to build strength in numbers to stand up to outside influences; and a sense of pride and self-confidence of being able to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the world's greatest powers.

Respondents saw a bigger role for ASEAN as a mediator on environmental issues such as climate change and pollution, security, and human rights. Several respondents wrote about the haze from fires in Indonesia. Concerns about the South China Sea

and the Rohingya issue were also raised several times. One person from Malaysia summed up the feelings expressed by many when he stated that he hoped that ASEAN could take a ‘common stand and have solidarity in regional issues, such as the South China Sea, Rohingya, and border disputes between ASEAN countries’. An Indonesian respondent observed that ‘ASEAN, as a collective voice, can be more assertive in dealing with members that violate human rights. I am worried that ASEAN only acts as a ceremonial organisation that does not bring any benefit for its members.’ In fact, several respondents even explicitly wanted to get rid of the policy of non-intervention. A Malaysian respondent summed it up starkly: ‘Do away with the non-intervention policy; it’s way too wide a term.’

As the global balance of power seems to be entering a new phase as the centre of gravity shifts to new regions, especially East Asia, there was some wariness among respondents about ASEAN’s position and a sense that it needed to be strengthened. Singaporean participants in the FGD expressed a sense of foreboding due to recent global events: ‘Major powers are beginning to look increasingly inward, and this leaves the small ASEAN states vulnerable as traditional security umbrellas become less dependable. ASEAN must thus stand united and fend for itself, and globalisation and the ensuing connectivity and integration it brings will help to facilitate this. Surging ahead with the consensus-based approach and going against the waves of anti-globalisation has to be the new way forward for ASEAN to prosper’.

Other regional issues were also a cause for concern for the participants. CSO representatives and students in the Singapore FGD expressed concerns over the rise of China, with particular reference made to the South China Sea disputes between China and the four ASEAN claimant states, and noted these as examples of the limitations of the ASEAN Way in achieving progress on key political issues.

Likewise, on the economic front, participants from the CSO and academia FGDs in Malaysia stated that ‘as a collective unit, ASEAN had strength in numbers and experience when it came to trade negotiations with economic superpowers, such as through the ASEAN-China FTA, the ASEAN-India FTA, and the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership’.

Lastly, there was a growing sense of pride or self-confidence coming from ASEAN’s bigger role on the global stage. A participant from the business sector in the Philippines expressed ‘hope that the ASEAN Member States would soon be able to rank among China, the Republic of Korea, and Japan, and added that Singapore may be able to lead ASEAN in this regard’. A respondent from Singapore hoped ‘that ASEAN can be as strong and unified as the European Union and be recognised internationally as a force to

be reckoned with'. Finally, a respondent from Brunei aspired for 'ASEAN to be united as a strong voice in international forums and gatherings and to have influence in ensuring peace internationally'.

A resilient and sustainable ASEAN

As a region that commonly experiences natural disasters, such as typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, as well as one of the most vulnerable regions in the world to the adverse effects of climate change, ASEAN has been assiduous in strengthening its resilience to natural disasters. Prime examples of this regional effort are the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response and the establishment of the AHA Centre. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASSC) Blueprint 2025 has a resilient ASEAN as one of its key characteristics, with a fairly long list of measures. ASEAN is also increasingly concerned with sustainable development, albeit much of it in tandem with the United Nations sustainable development initiatives, such as the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. To capture the aspirations and expectations on resilience and sustainable development, the survey asked respondents to give their opinions on the following three statements with respect to ASEAN by 2025:

- The region's biodiversity and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved.
- ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.
- ASEAN is able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.

The survey results are shown in Figures 26–28. About three-quarters of the respondents were supportive of the three statements as aspirations for ASEAN by 2025. Respondents in Indonesia and the Philippines were particularly supportive, with at least nine-tenths aspiring for a more resilient and sustainable ASEAN by 2025. There was comparable support for the aspirations by the various affiliation groups; the only notable exception was the support by more than four-fifths of the government sector respondents for the aspiration for ASEAN to be resilient against natural disasters and health hazards.

The expectations were far more sobering, however. Less than half of the respondents expected ASEAN would have more liveable major cities and more sustainably managed natural resources by 2025. Indeed, the two sustainability aspirations had the second- and third-highest gaps between aspirations and expectations. The expectations gaps were smaller than those for the sustainability aspirations, perhaps reflecting that regional cooperation and national programmes for greater resiliency are more strongly felt and

Figure 26: ASEAN's Biodiversity and Natural Resources Are Sustainably Managed

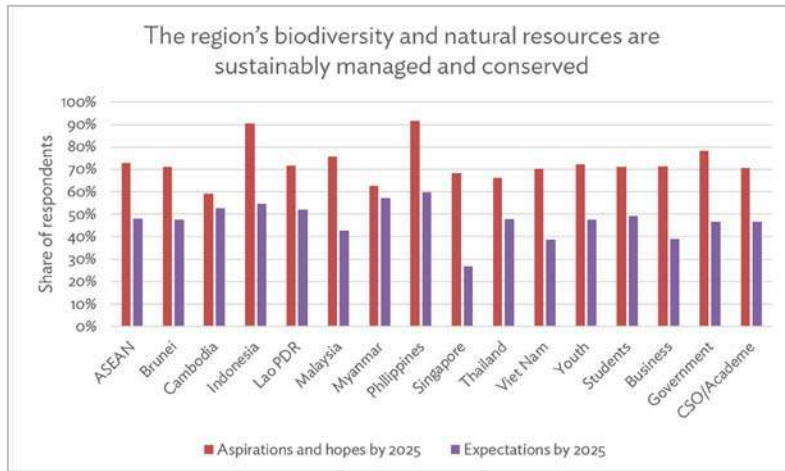


Figure 27: ASEAN Major Cities Are Less Polluted

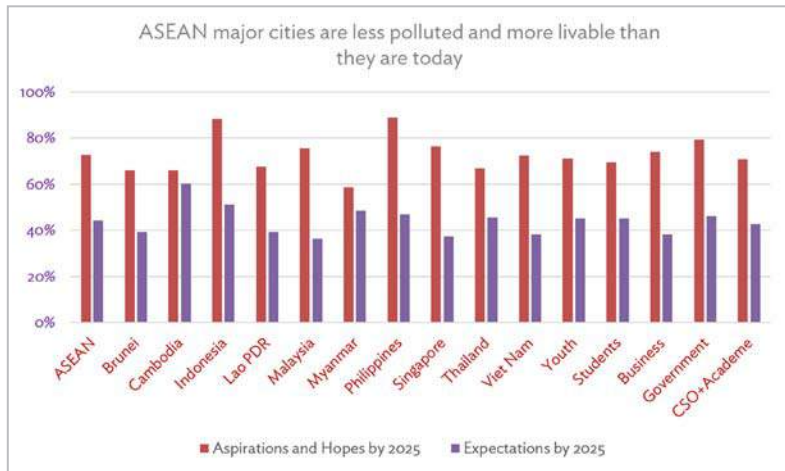
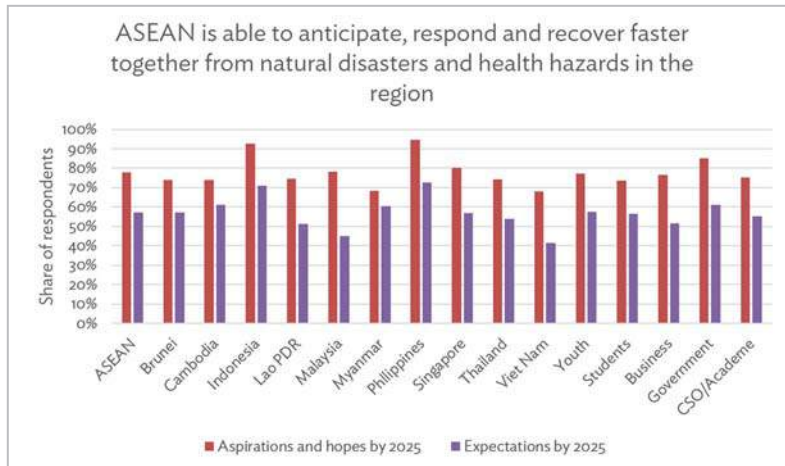


Figure 28: ASEAN Is Resilient to Natural Disasters and Health Hazards



visible. It is possible that the large expectations gaps for the sustainability aspirations reflect the respondents' views that urban pollution and natural resource management issues cannot be realistically solved within a decade given the gravity of the problems in a number of ASEAN cities and the inherently long-term, large-scale investments that are needed to address adequately these problems.

The country reports and the FGDs offer some specific insights into what ASEAN peoples hope for and expect on these matters, including some poignant observations about how sustainability and resilience impact their daily lives. The youth participants in the Viet Nam FGD asserted that 'economic well-being is neither guaranteed nor meaningful in the absence of a clean environment'. Three of the participants had volunteered in hospitals and were shocked by the incidence of cancer due to the poor environmental quality. The unlikely reduction of pollution was a clear concern. The participants agreed it would be unlikely to see less pollution in major ASEAN cities. Many complained about the existing levels of pollution and had seen few meaningful attempts to reduce the problem (Vo, Nguyen, and Dinh, 2017). The FGD business representatives also argued that pollution and traffic jams were prevalent, if not getting worse, in major cities in ASEAN, with the exception of Singapore. According to participants in the Cambodian FGD, ASEAN cities will continue 'to face problems of city pollution due to poor governance and the lack of proper city planning'. But the issue of a sustainable and resilient ASEAN is not completely without hope. One Philippines participant thought environmental protection 'appeared feasible because officials will be motivated to meet this objective given its potential advantages for tourism'. However, most of the participants felt that the realisation of environmental protection depended on leadership and governance and on the citizens themselves.

People engagement, governance, and social equity

Arguably people engagement, governance and social equity are all critical elements in building an ASEAN Community. The words of the former President of the Philippines Fidel Ramos resonate well in this regard:

If the Southeast Asian peoples are to embrace ASEAN as their 'community', they must see it as a pervading, beneficial influence on their daily lives. They must regard the ASEAN vision as their own, being its most important stakeholders. [A] great deal of ASEAN's work in building 'community' must focus on encouraging, assisting, and – if need be – pressuring member states to promote good governance, strengthen the rule of law, build an inclusive economy, and defend representative democracy. (Ramos, 2013: 8)

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) is at the core of the community-building project and gives a human face to integration. The Nay Pyi Taw Declaration on the ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision succinctly sums up the vision for moving forward as 'an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community that is inclusive, sustainable, resilient, dynamic, and engages and benefits the people' (ASEAN, 2014). In order to gain a deeper understanding of how people feel about ASEAN as an inclusive and engaging community, the survey asked respondents to rate the following statements regarding ASEAN by 2025:

- Basic social protection and health services are provided to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.
- There is good governance and very much less corruption.
- There is equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.
- Human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected.
- ASEAN peoples are well aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.
- The ASEAN Community strongly engages and benefits its peoples.

The survey results are shown in Figures 29–34. It is clear from the results that there is wide support for a more engaged ASEAN, better governance in the region, and a more inclusive ASEAN. These aspirations were strongest in Indonesia and the Philippines as well as with the government respondents, at least with respect to an ASEAN that is more deeply engaged with the people. The expectations were significantly lower, however. It is worth noting that the largest expectations gap was for the statement on good governance and very much less corruption. The low expectations were held by respondents in all member states. It must be emphasised that the ASCC Blueprint 2025 states that its number one characteristic is that it engages and benefits the people. Good governance and good regulatory practices are highlighted in the AEC Blueprint 2025. An inclusive ASEAN is woven into the AEC, ASCC, and APSC blueprints for 2025. This means that narrowing the large expectations gap may well be a matter of implementing the measures in the blueprints.

Figure 29: Basic Social Protection for Migrants and Temporary Workers

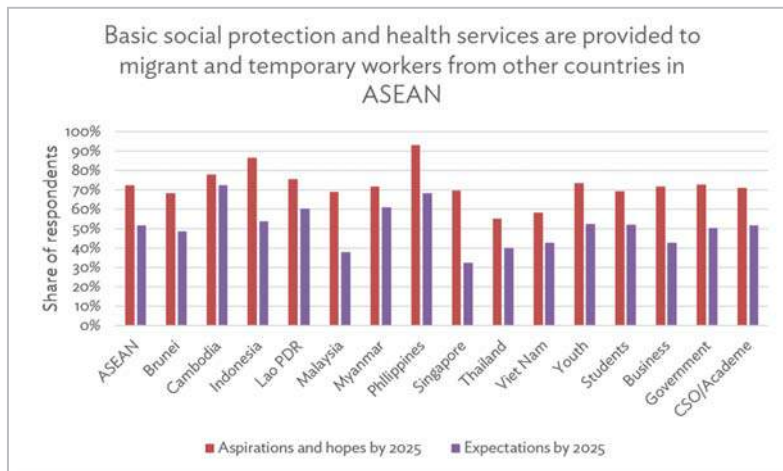


Figure 30: Good Governance and Less Corruption in ASEAN

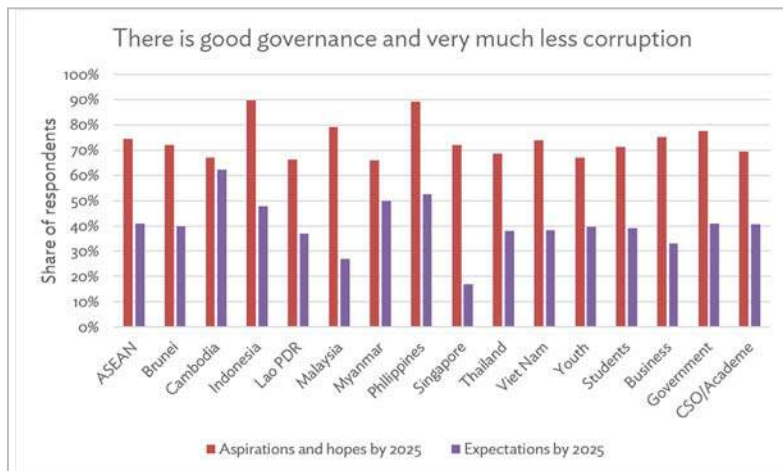


Figure 31: Equitable Access to Opportunities in ASEAN

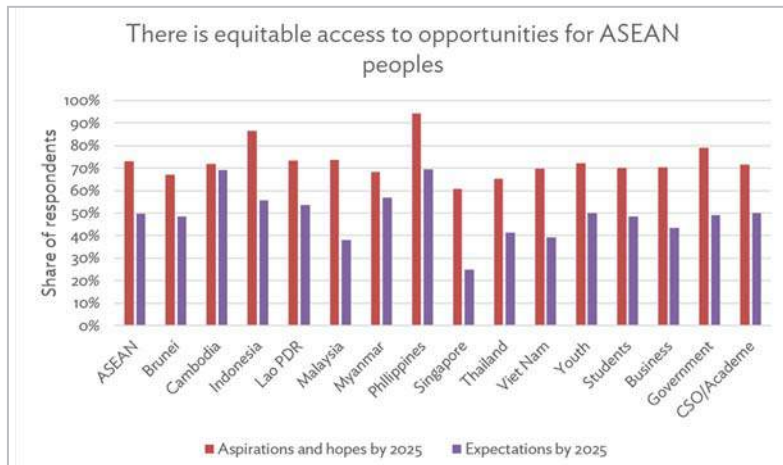


Figure 32: Protection of Human Rights and Minorities in ASEAN

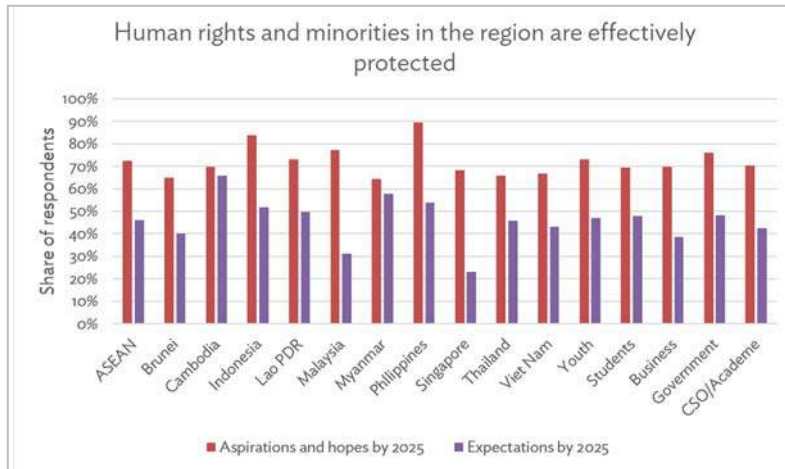


Figure 33: ASEAN Peoples Are Well Aware of the ASEAN Community and Its Programmes

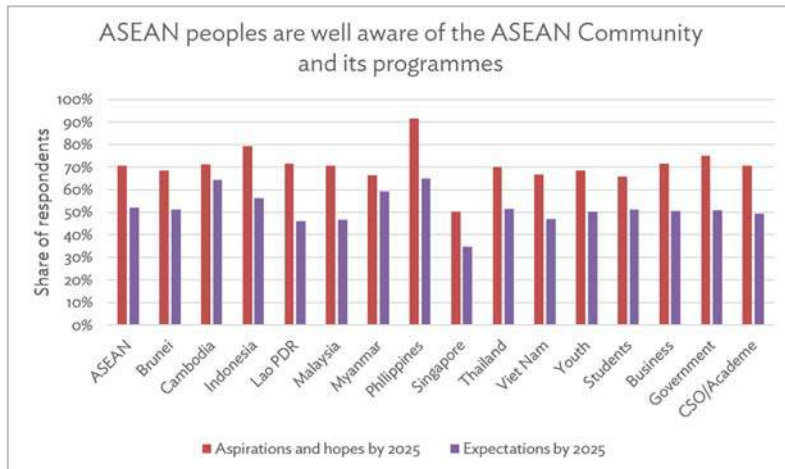
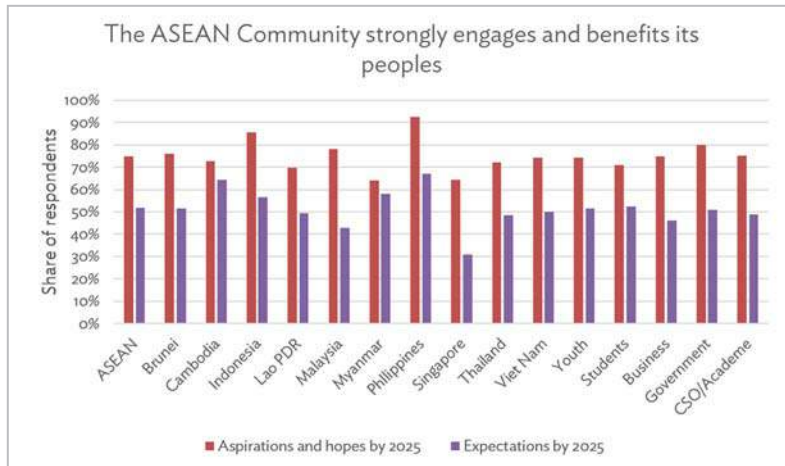


Figure 34: ASEAN Strongly Engages and Benefits Its Peoples



The country reports and FGDs highlighted the problems quite starkly. The hopes revolved around good governance, the eradication of corruption, and inclusive economic development and education. The issue of corruption elicited particularly strong comments from the FGD participants. One Filipino respondent asserted that ‘corruption will also be highly impossible to eradicate. Hence, good governance within ASEAN cannot be achieved by 2025.’ Another respondent in the Philippines gave a particularly grim forecast for the eradication of corruption, saying that it was ‘inborn’ in the culture of ASEAN countries. Thai participants thought that corruption was embedded into the systems of ASEAN Member States. Some Malaysian respondents felt ‘powerless’ in dealing with corruption and said that overcoming the problem required ‘very strong political will, which Malaysian leaders did not seem to have’.

Human rights were mentioned several times, especially by the students. Some participants were concerned with specific social benefits. The CSO participants and students in Singapore highlighted ASEAN’s lack of focus on soft issues, such as human rights violations and the protection of vulnerable populations, as their greatest area of concern. Examples raised included the Rohingya refugees in Myanmar; impoverished populations in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam; and persistent transboundary haze pollution. An Indonesian participant stated: ‘ASEAN as a collective voice can be more assertive in dealing with members that violate human rights’.

Many comments dealt with poverty. For example, one Malaysian respondent hoped ASEAN would assist Malaysia ‘to grow out of our cycle of poverty, violence, and corrupt government and promote greater cooperation’. Meanwhile, one respondent from Brunei hoped for ‘ASEAN to eradicate poverty’. Almost all participants in the Vietnamese Youth FGD acknowledged the ‘difficulty in ensuring basic social protection and health services for immigrants and temporary workers due to the limitation of budgets and differences in attitudes towards locals and foreigners, etc’.

A Malaysian respondent hoped there would be ‘more help to give education to the underprivileged children in the region and more cross-border youth interaction for culture exchange and mutual understandings’. Similarly, an Indonesian respondent hoped that ‘ASEAN can keep on assisting their members’ development processes, especially in economic and security matters’.

The last two questions in this survey section were related to the awareness of ASEAN and the strength of ASEAN’s community engagement. Echoing the sentiments of former President Fidel Ramos, one Singaporean CSO FGD participant commented that ‘identity and pride go hand in hand, and for one to identify with ASEAN, one has to feel pride in belonging to ASEAN’. The respondent elaborated that to feel proud of ASEAN, he

had to see that ASEAN was making an effort to protect its most vulnerable citizens. However, because he had not seen ASEAN doing this, he said he did not feel pride nor a sense of ASEAN identity.

As a respondent from the Thai Government explained, ASEAN community-building needs to work on the socio-cultural aspect: 'In terms of the ASEAN Community as a people-based community, the importance of socio-cultural integration has not been extensively raised among the public compared to the economic benefits. However, culture can play a larger role in building "trust" that can contribute to the success of doing business in member countries.' He went on to provide a useful suggestion for moving forward: 'The existing lack of awareness and knowledge of ASEAN shows that the government might not have made sufficiently broad preparations to encourage public engagement in the ASEAN Community and build ASEAN citizenship among Thai people. Non-profit organisations have rather been neglected in the country's aim for ASEAN integration, despite their potential to contribute to community development. Comparing relevant players, NGOs are more connected with local people and have a good understanding of the social conditions within their countries. Therefore, Thailand should emphasise the role of NGOs in the region and engage them in the cultural and economic aspects of ASEAN integration.'

Sources of Information

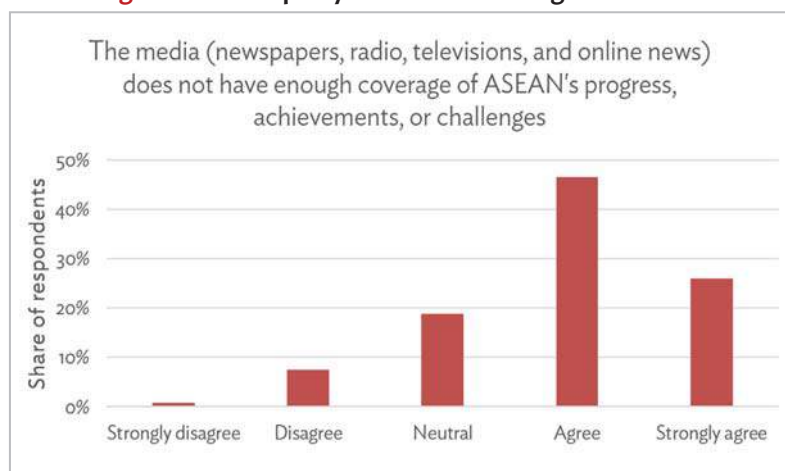
Two questions explored how respondents gained knowledge about ASEAN. The respondents overwhelmingly stated that they were not able to receive enough information on ASEAN. During the FGDs, the respondents expressed the desire to have access to better information about ASEAN. For example, the Vietnamese business participants knew that information about tariffs and rules of origin was available online but found that the language was too technical. As most of them were from small and medium-sized enterprises, they had difficulty in seeking assistance from lawyers who might be able to give clearer explanations.

Media

The survey asked the respondents whether they agreed with the following statement: 'The media (newspapers, radio, televisions, and online news) does not have enough coverage of ASEAN's progress, achievements, and challenges.' The respondents chose from five possible responses: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neutral', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'.

Finding: Of the respondents, 72% agreed or strongly agreed that the media did not have sufficient coverage of ASEAN (Figure 35).

Figure 35: Adequacy of Media Coverage of ASEAN



Across the board, the media was blamed for not providing good coverage of ASEAN-related news and issues. Of the respondents, 26% strongly agreed that the media did not have good enough coverage of ASEAN. Respondents from all member states noted the media's emphasis on economics and business in stories about ASEAN and said that there was not enough coverage of the socio-political and politico-security issues. However, some mentioned that stories like those related to the South China Sea put too much of a negative light on ASEAN. The Malaysian FGD participants described ASEAN news programmes as 'uninteresting' and 'mostly about high-level meetings that are disconnected with the general-public subscribers'.

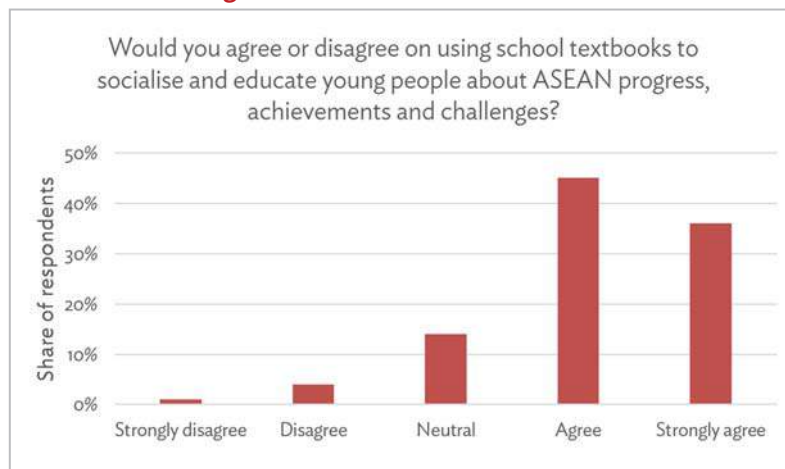
However, there appeared to be a misunderstanding on the part of the general public and even ASEAN officials about the role of the media, which needs to be more carefully analysed so that it can be better utilised for sharing ASEAN's progress. Every year there are multiple gathering of journalists to discuss how to better cover ASEAN. The problem is that most events and activities are not 'news-worthy' in the traditional sense.

Textbooks

The second question in this section asked: 'Would you agree or disagree with using school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN's progress, achievements, and challenges?' The five possible answers were: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neutral', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'.

Finding: The vast majority of respondents (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that textbooks should be used to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN's progress, achievements, and challenges (Figure 36).

Figure 36: Textbooks and ASEAN



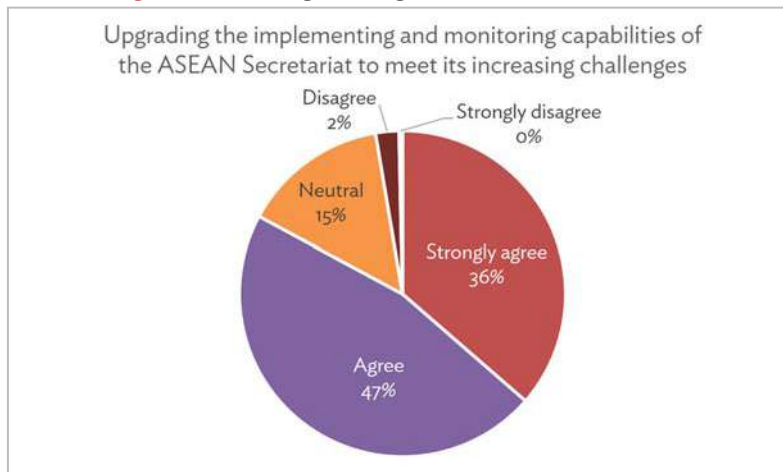
In the FGD with the Vietnamese students, respondents stated that the information in high school and university textbooks was limited and outdated. The Thai students observed that there needed to be more positive news about ASEAN to counteract the negative impressions given by their textbooks that devote many pages to discussions of conflicts between Thailand and its neighbouring countries. Some FGD participants in Myanmar wished that textbooks included content on the cultural, economic, and social development of ASEAN's Member States. The Malaysian FGD participants suggested that textbooks should contain more applied knowledge that is more dynamic and less 'static' than just the history of ASEAN. For example, they suggested components on business studies or the business culture of ASEAN.

The ASEAN Secretariat

Respondents were asked: 'Would you agree or disagree with the idea of gradually upgrading the implementing and monitoring capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges?' They were given five possible responses: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neutral', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'.

Finding: Of the respondents, 36% strongly agreed, and 46% agreed that the ASEAN Secretariat should be gradually upgraded (Figure 37).

Figure 37: Strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat



Among the member states, this question generated the widest divergence in responses of any of the questions. Indonesia most strongly supported upgrading the ASEAN Secretariat, with 62% strongly agreeing with the idea. At the other extreme, only 3% of the Thai respondents agreed. By affiliation, the government officials felt the most strongly that the ASEAN Secretariat should be upgraded, with 51% in strong agreement.

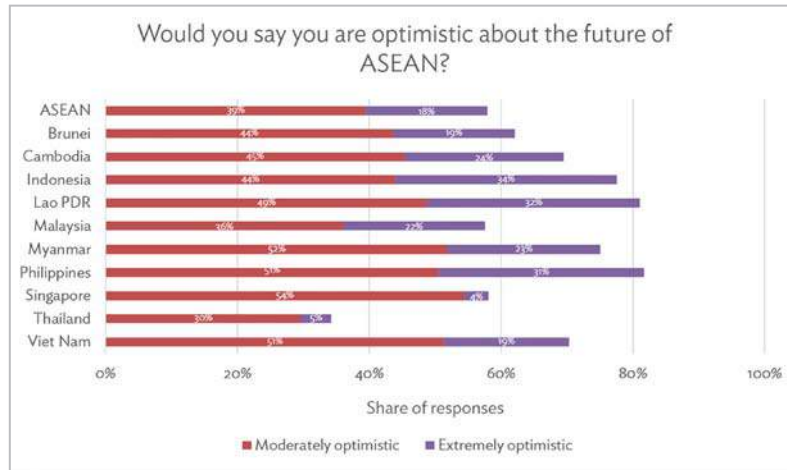
The Future of ASEAN

The last question in this section asked: ‘Would you say you are optimistic or pessimistic about the future of ASEAN?’ Respondents chose from the following options: ‘extremely optimistic’, ‘moderately optimistic’, ‘somewhat optimistic’, ‘slightly optimistic’, and ‘not at all optimistic’.

Finding: The majority (57%) of respondents felt at least moderately optimistic about the future of ASEAN (Figure 38).

The spectrum of responses among the countries was quite large. The shares of respondents who were moderately optimistic and extremely optimistic about ASEAN’s future ranged from 35% in Thailand to 82% in the Philippines. Only 4%–5% of Singapore and Thailand’s respondents were extremely optimistic, while as much as 34% of Indonesian respondents felt the same. Nearly a third of the Lao PDR and Philippine respondents were also extremely optimistic about ASEAN’S future. Overall the share of those who chose ‘moderately optimistic’ was twice that for ‘extremely optimistic’ for all the ASEAN respondents. Overall, all affiliations showed similar levels of optimism for

Figure 38: Optimism for ASEAN’s Future



the future of ASEAN. By age, interestingly, 74% of respondents aged 50 or older were at least moderately optimistic, much higher than the overall average of 57%.

Participants in the Malaysian FGDs expressed some pessimism and were ‘not optimistic about the future at the regional (ASEAN) level due to the inability of ASEAN governments (including Malaysia) in solving their own country-level problems’.

Perhaps it is best to view the essence of the pessimism expressed by some of the Malaysian participants as essentially a challenge and an implicit call for a greater focus on implementation and stronger political will to address the common priority concerns highlighted in the survey in a regionally concerted way. In the process, there can be both stronger national and regional commitment and pride. Repeating the statement of former Philippine President Fidel Ramos highlighted earlier in the chapter:

If the Southeast Asian peoples are to embrace ASEAN as their ‘Community’, they must see it as a pervading, beneficial influence on their daily lives. They must regard the ASEAN vision and mission as their own, being its most important stakeholders.’ (Ramos, 2013: 8)

In short, the challenge for ASEAN is that now that the ASEAN house has been built, ASEAN needs to ensure that the house is well lived and well maintained. This calls for greater focus on the implementation of ASEAN and complementary national measures and ensuring that the ASEAN Community truly engages and benefits its peoples.

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What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Thailand*

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Introduction

This study carried out a public opinion survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) as part of the ASEAN@50: Retrospective and Perspectives on the Making, Substance, Significance, and Future of ASEAN project. The survey and FGDs were conducted to explore the opinions of Thai people from different groups, namely students and those from business, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia, and government, to make inferences about the aspirations, concerns, and hopes of the Thai people for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The survey, ‘What does ASEAN mean to Thai people?’, was sent out both online and as a paper-based survey. Both Thai and English versions of the survey were provided to overcome language barriers and reach out to diverse groups of Thai people.

This chapter is structured in six parts. The first part provides the main characteristics of the survey respondents. The second explores the respondents’ awareness, attitudes, and expectations for ASEAN. The third part examines the respondents’ opinions on the role of the media and textbooks to spread knowledge and information about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges. The fourth part explores views on the pressing problems facing Thailand and ASEAN today and until 2025. The fifth part investigates expectations

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

** The authors would like to thank Supasyn Itthiphathong, Parinya Mingsakul, and Chosita Salakham for their excellent research assistance.

and aspirations for ASEAN by 2025 and the role of ASEAN Secretariat. The final part concludes and discusses the way forward.

Characteristics of the Respondents

The survey covered a total of 260 respondents. Nearly half of the respondents (46.2%) were young people aged 15–30 years old, while 45.8% were aged 31–49. Only 8.1% of the respondents were aged 50 or older (Figure 1). In terms of gender, the majority of the respondents (62.7%) were female, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Age of the Respondents

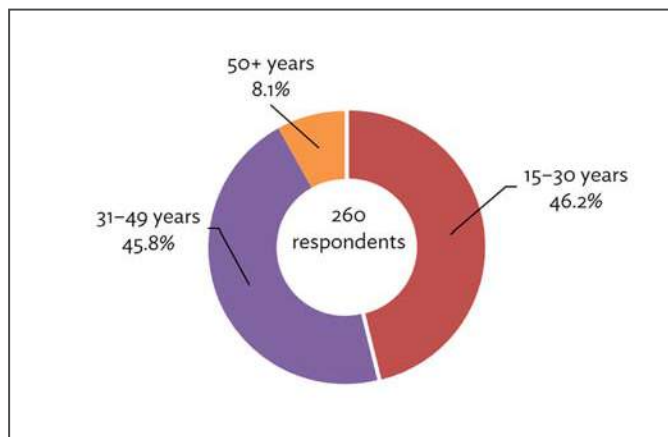
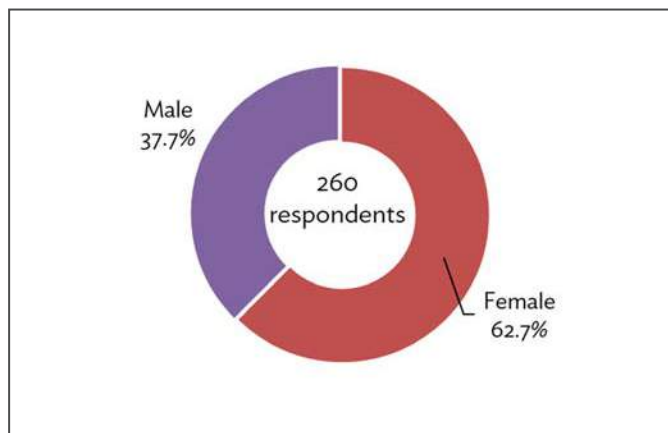
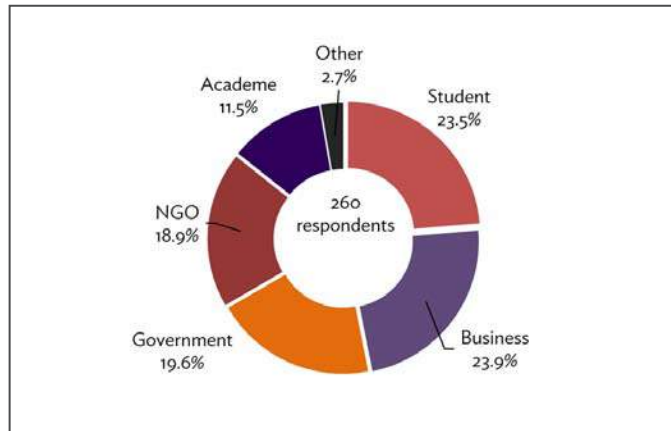


Figure 2: Gender of the Respondents



The affiliations of the respondents varied. Figure 3 shows that nearly a quarter of the respondents (23.5%) were students, while 23.9% were from the business sector. The other respondents were from the government sector (19.6%), NGOs (18.9%), academia (11.5%), and others (2.7%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Affiliation of the Respondents



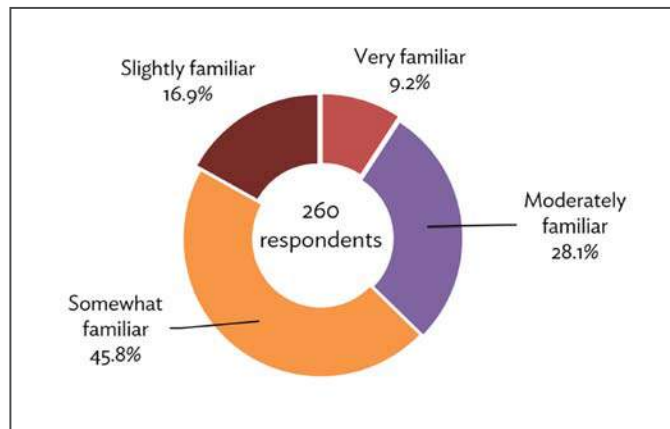
NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Awareness, Attitudes, and Expectations for ASEAN

Awareness of ASEAN

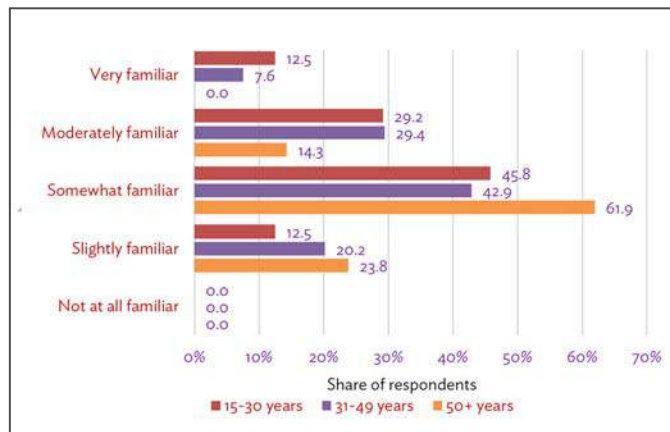
From the survey results, the largest proportion of respondents (45.8%) expressed being somewhat familiar with ASEAN. This was followed by those who were moderately familiar (28.1%), slightly familiar (16.9%), and very familiar (9.2%) with ASEAN (Figure 4). Notably, all respondents had at least some awareness of the association.

Figure 4: Awareness of ASEAN



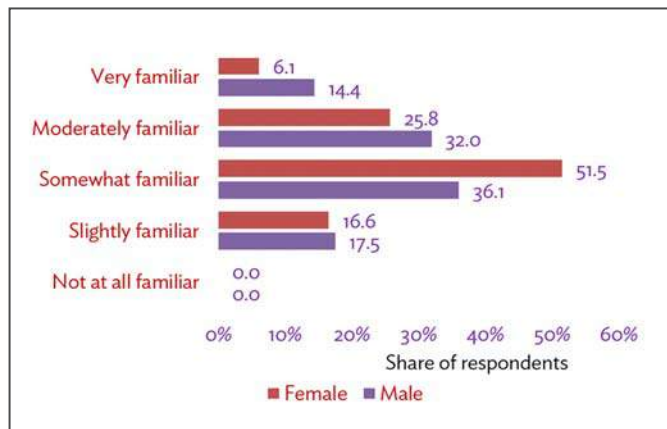
By age, the largest shares for all age groups were of those who were somewhat familiar with ASEAN, with those aged 50 or over comprising the largest share (61.9%) (Figure 5). However, the results show that the younger respondents were more likely to be familiar with ASEAN than the older respondents. This may be due to the low media exposure and lack of knowledge of ASEAN’s work in previous decades compared to today. Meanwhile, nearly 30% of the respondents aged 15–30 and 31–49 were moderately familiar with ASEAN compared to 14.3% of those aged 50 or over.

Figure 5: Awareness of ASEAN by Age



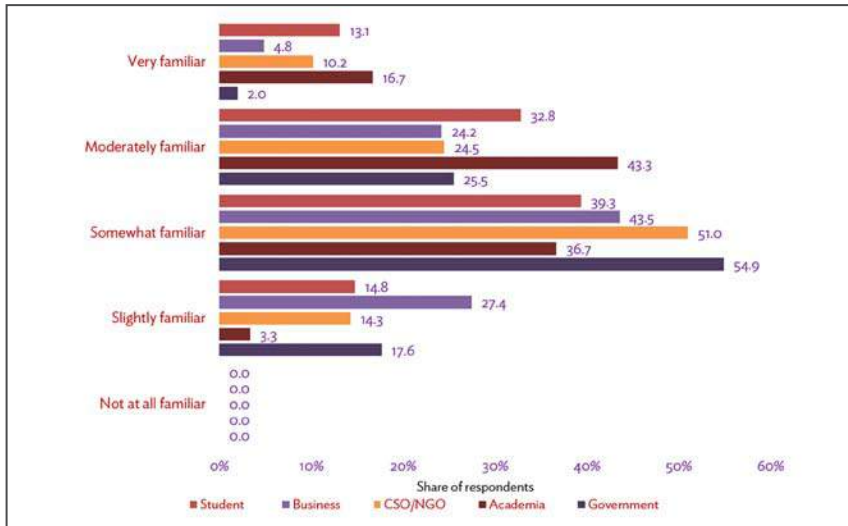
Categorised by gender, interestingly, the male respondents tended to be more familiar with ASEAN than the female respondents. Specifically, nearly half of the male respondents (46.4%), but only around a third of the female respondents (31.9%), were moderately familiar or very familiar with ASEAN (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Awareness of ASEAN by Gender



Compared with the respondents from other affiliations, those from academia and the students were more likely to be moderately or very familiar with ASEAN (60% of the respondents from academia and 45.9% of the students). Nonetheless, about a quarter of the respondents (27.4%) from the business sector indicated being slightly familiar with ASEAN, while the shares of respondents from other affiliations were considerably lower in comparison (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Awareness of ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Feeling of being an ASEAN citizen

Of the 260 respondents, more than half (51.9%) indicated feeling somewhat as ASEAN citizens (Figure 8). Meanwhile, 29.6% and 15.4% of the respondents expressed feeling moderately and very much as ASEAN citizens, respectively. Interestingly, only 3.1% of respondents said they did not feel they were ASEAN citizens.

The results across age groups were mostly similar. The young respondents aged 15–30 were more likely to feel very much as ASEAN citizens than the senior respondents aged 50 or over (Figure 9).

By gender, roughly half (53.4% of the female respondents and 49.5% of the male respondents) felt somewhat as ASEAN citizens. This was followed by those who chose ‘moderately’ (27.6% of females and 33% of males) and ‘very much’ (15.3% of females and 15.5% of males) (Figure 10). Very few respondents felt they were not ASEAN citizens (3.7% of females and 2.1% of males).

Figure 8: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen

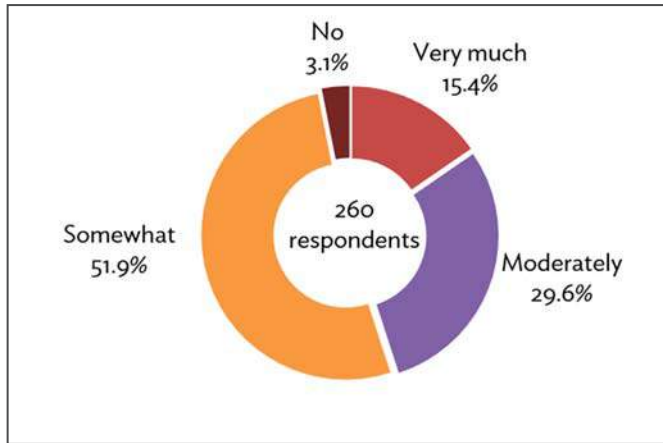


Figure 9: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen by Age

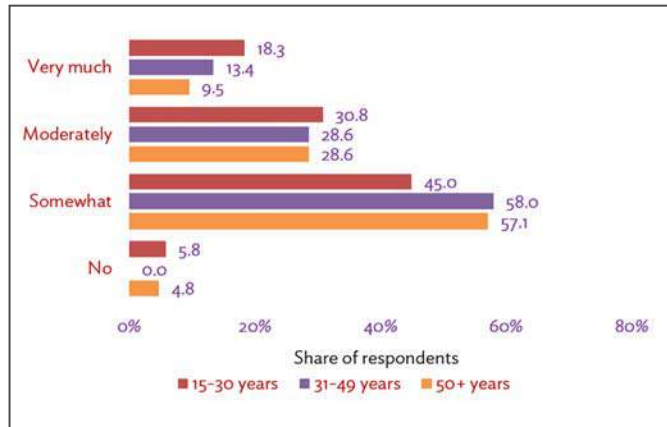
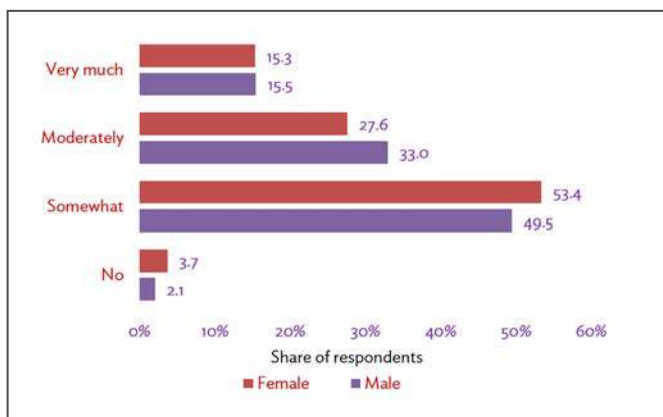
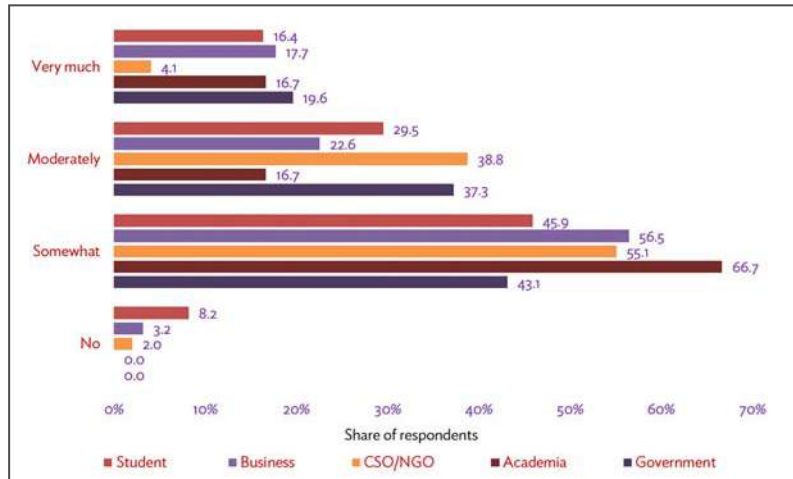


Figure 10: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen by Gender



By affiliation, the respondents from the government sector were more likely to feel moderately or very much as ASEAN citizens compared to those from other affiliations (Figure 11). This may be due to the government’s approach to policymaking with other ASEAN Member States, in which policymaking processes are more government-centric rather than people-centric. As such, individuals who are not affiliated with the government may feel excluded from the negotiation process.

Figure 11: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN

Of the 258 respondents, 53.1% said they did not have aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN.

By age, the youngest age group, those aged 15–30, was more likely to have aspirations, expectations, and concerns for ASEAN than the older generations. In particular, about half of the respondents in the older age groups, i.e. those aged 50 or above (57.1%) and those aged between 31 and 49 (56.4%), said they did not have aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN. In contrast, only 49.2% of respondents aged 15–30 expressed the same view. (Figure 12)

The results for the female and male respondents were similar. Specifically, 53.4% of females and 52.6% of males said they did not have aspirations, expectation, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN (Figure 13).

Figure 12: Aspirations, Expectations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN by Age

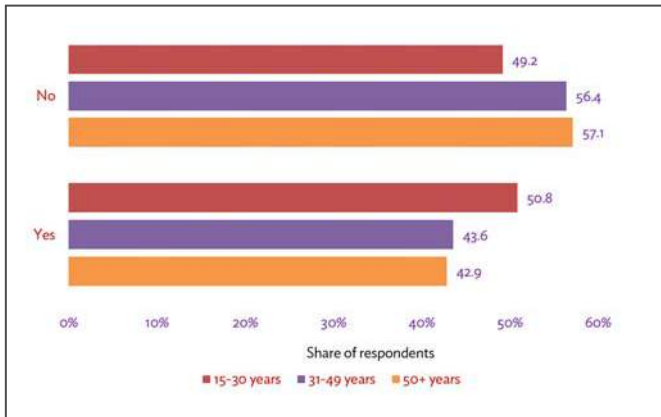
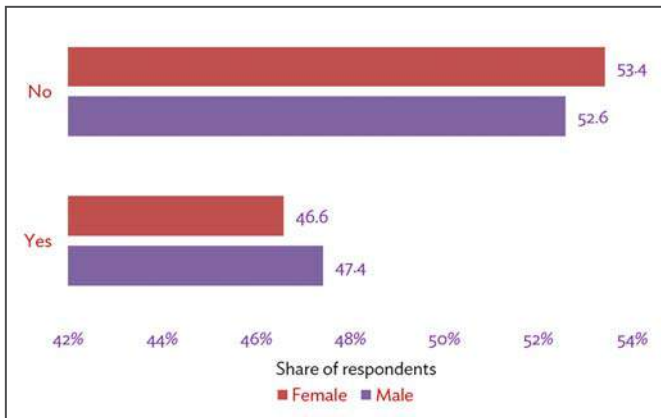
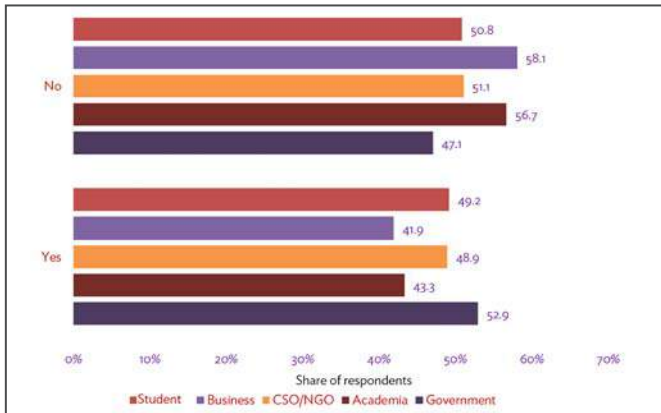


Figure 13: Aspirations, Expectations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN by Gender



The majority of respondents across all affiliations, except the government affiliates, indicated not having aspirations, expectations, or concerns for ASEAN, although the results varied by affiliation (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Aspirations, Expectations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN by Affiliation



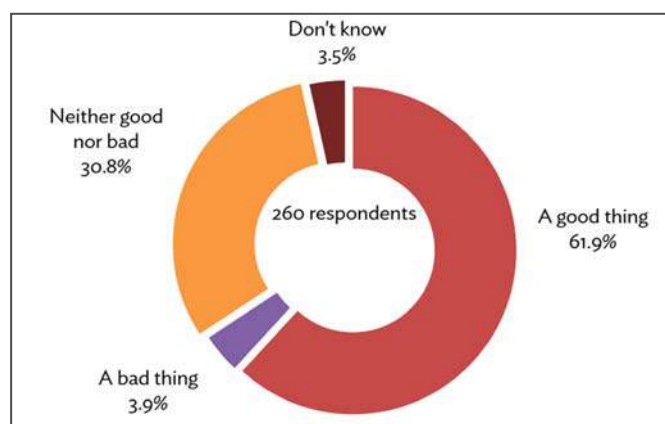
CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

The respondents' perspectives on their aspirations and concerns were diverse. They perceived some issues as both aspirations and concerns. For instance, labour mobility was mentioned as potentially having both positive and negative impacts on employment conditions in the country. Some of the respondents believed increased mobility would increase competition for career searching, while others felt that it would increase opportunities for better jobs with higher salaries. This difference in opinion may have resulted from a lack of knowledge and understanding about the facts related to the movement of skilled labour in ASEAN. For example, some participants in the FGDs thought that workers from ASEAN could freely move to Thailand. They were not aware that domestic laws and regulations are the main barriers for foreign workers, especially skilled workers, for working in Thailand.

Thailand's membership of ASEAN

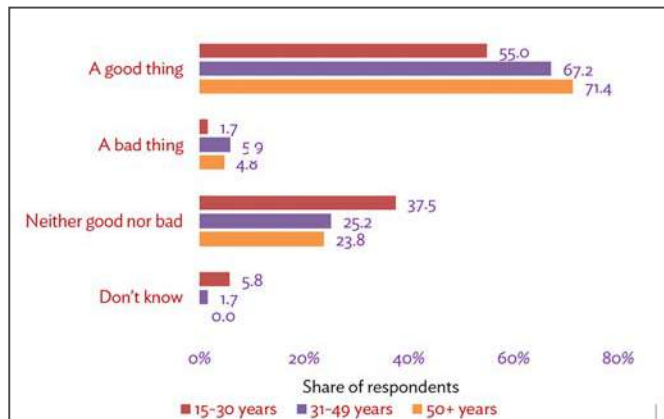
Regarding the question of whether membership of ASEAN was good or bad for Thailand, more than half of the respondents (61.9%) perceived it as a good thing. However, 30.8% thought it was neither good nor bad, and only 3.9% viewed Thailand's membership of ASEAN as bad (Figure 15). Very few respondents (3.5%) said they did not know.

Figure 15: Perception of Thailand's Membership of ASEAN



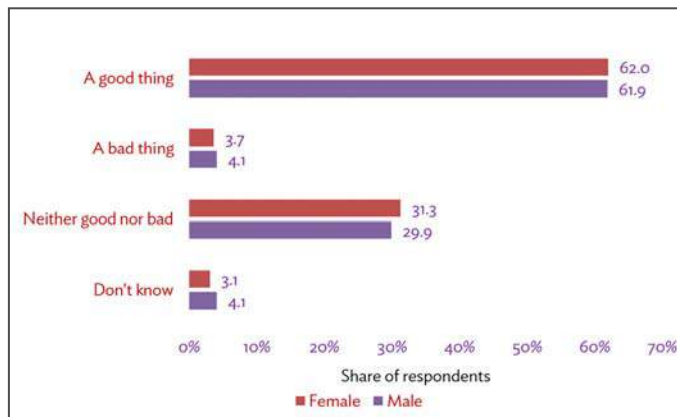
The results were not significantly different by age. Most respondents across all age groups thought that it was good for Thailand to be a member of ASEAN. The highest share was for those aged 50 or above (71.4%), followed by respondents aged 31–49 (67.2%), and those aged 15–30 (55.0%) (Figure 16). Very few respondents thought that it was bad for Thailand to be a member of ASEAN. Only 1.7% of the respondents aged 31–49 and 5.8% of those aged 15–30 did not know whether it was good or bad for Thailand. None of the respondents aged 50 or above indicated 'don't know'.

Figure 16: Perception of Thailand’s Membership of ASEAN by Age



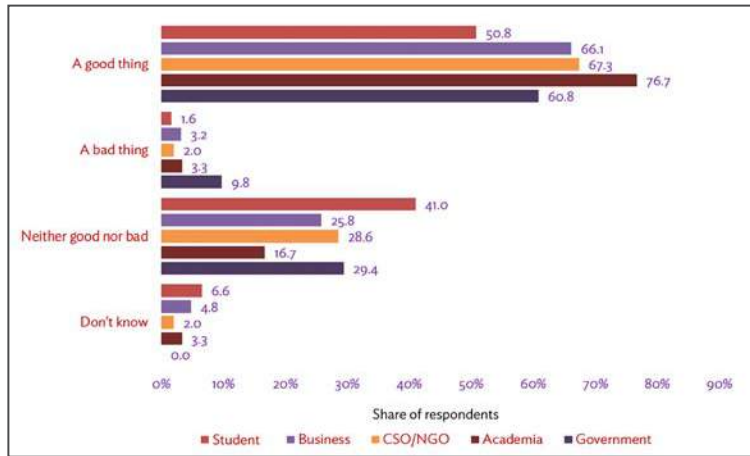
The survey results were also very similar for the female and male respondents (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Perception of Thailand’s Membership of ASEAN by Gender



By affiliation, more than 50% of the respondents from almost all affiliation groups thought that Thailand’s membership in ASEAN was a good thing. The highest share was from academia (76.7%), followed by those from NGOs (67.4%), business (66.1%), government (60.8%), and students (50.8%) (Figure 18). Interestingly, 9.8% of the respondents from the government sector considered the country’s membership to be bad, while 7% of the students did not know whether it was good or bad. Overall, more than a quarter of respondents from all affiliation groups, except academia, considered it to be neither good nor bad.

Figure 18: Perception of Thailand’s Membership of ASEAN by Affiliation

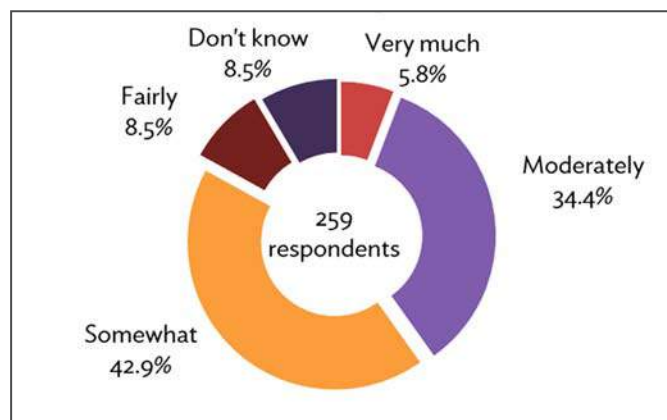


CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Benefit from being a member of ASEAN

When asked whether Thailand had benefited from being a member of ASEAN, the highest share of respondents thought that Thailand had somewhat benefited (42.9%). This was followed by those who said the country had moderately benefited (34.4%), fairly benefited (8.5%), and very much benefited (5.8%) (Figure 19). Notably, nearly 10% of the respondents did not know whether Thailand had benefited or not from being a member of ASEAN.

Figure 19: Perception of Thailand’s Benefit from Being Part of ASEAN



By age, the results were similar for respondents aged 15–30 and those aged 31–49. However, respondents aged 50 or above thought that Thailand had benefited more compared to the other two age groups (Figure 20).¹

Additionally, more than 10% of respondents aged 15–30 and 50 or above did not know whether Thailand’s membership of ASEAN had been beneficial. Thailand’s benefits from being a part of ASEAN comprise mostly economic benefits. However, it is noticeable that the majority of the respondents aged 15–30 and 31–49 chose ‘somewhat’, possibly due to Thai-centric views held by some Thai individuals.

Figure 20: Perception of Thailand’s Benefit from Being Part of ASEAN by Age

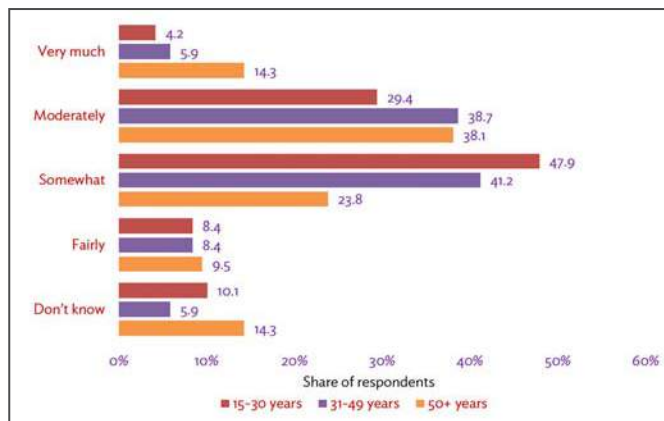
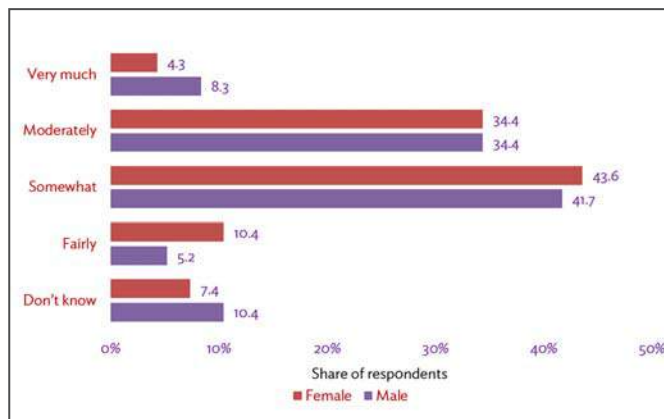


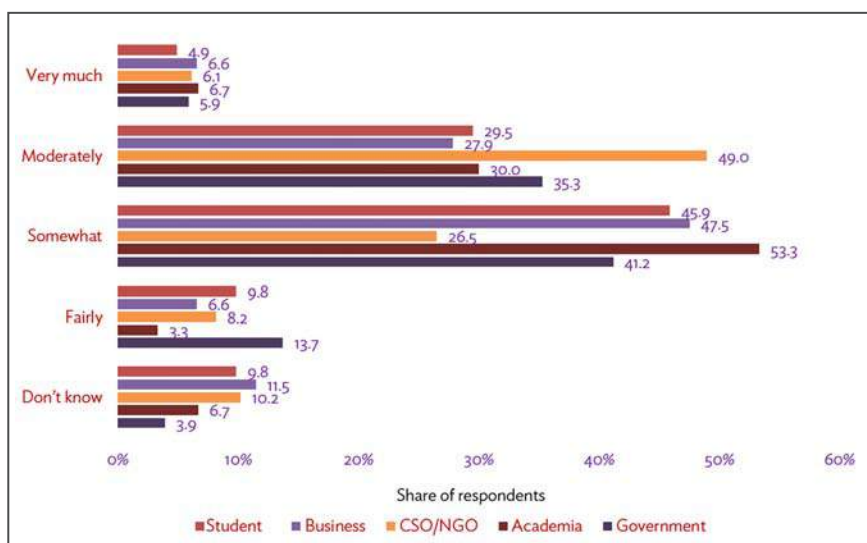
Figure 21: Perception of Thailand’s Benefit from Being Part of ASEAN by Gender



¹ We note that the sample size of respondents aged 50 or above was considerably smaller than the two younger age groups.

By affiliation, the largest shares of respondents from almost all affiliations, except those from NGOs, thought that Thailand had somewhat benefited from being a member of ASEAN, while nearly half of the respondents from NGOs believed that Thailand had moderately benefited from its membership (Figure 22). Notably, even respondents from the business sector did not think that Thailand had benefited very much from being a member of ASEAN. Some respondents from the business sector mentioned in the FGD that ASEAN economic integration tended to benefit large and transnational companies more than small and local enterprises. For example, large companies could access reliable and current information to gain advantages, while small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) had limited capabilities. As such, they said that SMEs should not be overlooked and should be promoted to enhance competitiveness and catch up with the dynamics of economic integration.

Figure 22: Perception of Thailand’s Benefit from Being Part of ASEAN by Affiliation

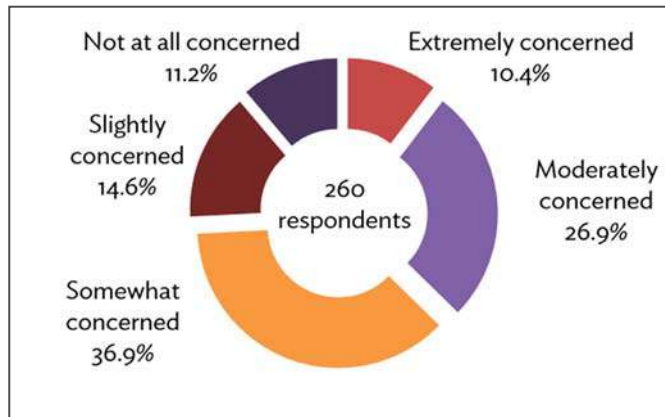


CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Concerns if Thailand were to leave ASEAN

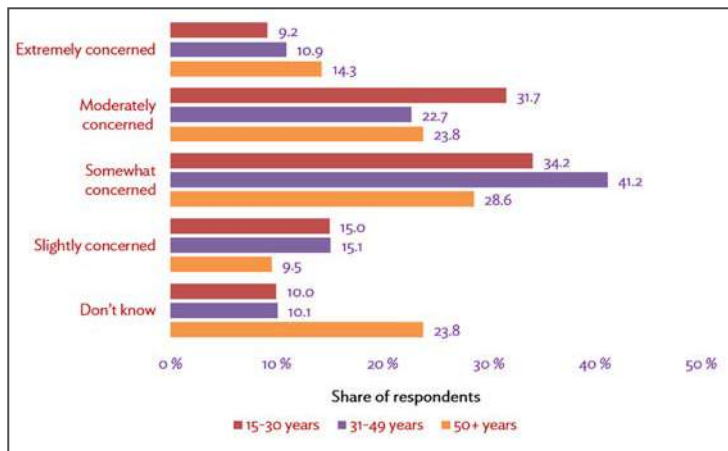
When asked about how concerned they would be if Thailand were to leave ASEAN, the largest share of respondents stated they would feel somewhat concerned (36.9%). This was followed by those who said they would be moderately concerned (26.9%), slightly concerned (14.6%), and extremely concerned (10.4%) (Figure 23). However, 11.2% said they would not be at all concerned. The FGDs suggested that some would not be concerned because they thought that Thailand leaving ASEAN was not a realistic threat.

Figure 23: Concern if Thailand Were to Leave ASEAN



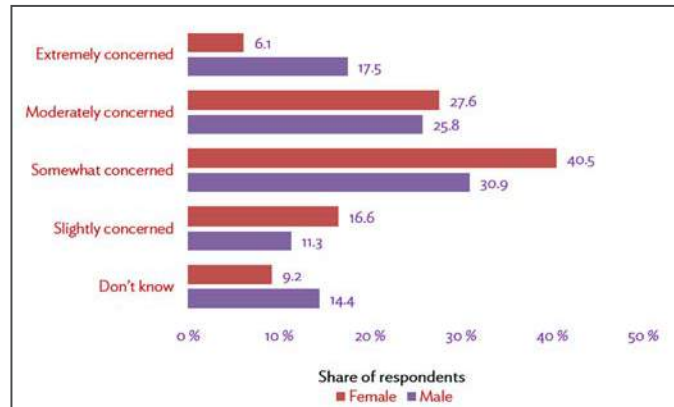
Classified by age, the survey results across all age groups were similar. In particular, the highest shares of respondents in all groups indicated they would be somewhat concerned if Thailand were to leave ASEAN. However, nearly a quarter of respondents aged 50 and above, but only 10% of respondents in the two younger age groups, answered they would not be concerned at all if Thailand were to leave ASEAN (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Concern if Thailand Were to Leave ASEAN by Age



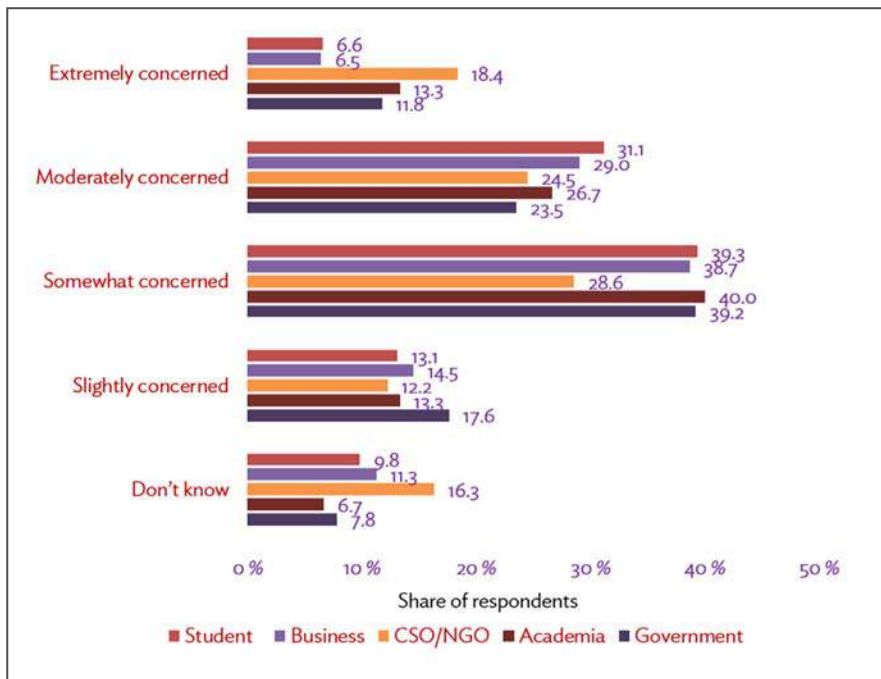
The results by gender were again mostly similar. That is, the highest proportions of respondents said they would be somewhat concerned if Thailand were to leave ASEAN. Noticeably, though, the share of male respondents who chose ‘extremely concerned’ (17.5%) was almost three times greater than the share for female respondents (6.1%) (Figure 25).

Figure 25: Concern if Thailand Were to Leave ASEAN, by Gender



By affiliation, the highest shares of respondents across all groups indicated they would be somewhat concerned if Thailand were to leave ASEAN. The proportions of respondents who indicated moderate or extreme concern were quite high (more than a third) for almost all affiliations: 42.9% for those from NGOs, 40.0% for those from academia, 37.7% for the students, 35.5% for those from business, and 35.3% for those from government (Figure 26). The business respondents, for example, said they would be concerned if Thailand were to leave ASEAN because Thai conglomerates, such as Siam Cement Group, had expanded their businesses and benefited greatly from the ASEAN market. About 23% of Siam Cement Group’s revenue is solely from the ASEAN market (Siam Cement Group, 2016).

Figure 26: Concern if Thailand Were to Leave ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Views on the future of ASEAN

When asked about their opinions on the future of ASEAN, about half of the respondents said they were somewhat optimistic (51.5%) (Figure 27). The remaining 29.6% were moderately optimistic, while about 10% were slightly optimistic. Roughly 5% were extremely optimistic, and 3.5% were not at all optimistic.

The survey results were similar across the different age groups. However, respondents aged 50 or above had a higher share of those who were extremely optimistic, at 14.3%, compared to the younger groups, which comprised less than 4% each (Figure 28).

The results for the female and male respondents were also mostly similar (Figure 29). Large shares, 55.2% of female respondents and 45.4% of male respondents, were somewhat optimistic about the future of ASEAN.

Figure 27: Optimism about the Future of ASEAN

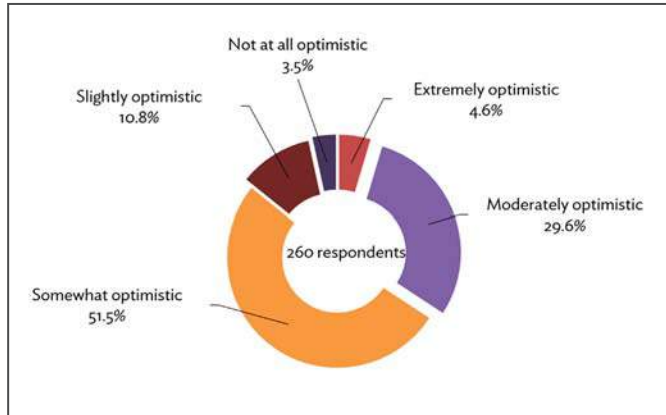


Figure 28: Optimism about the Future of ASEAN by Age

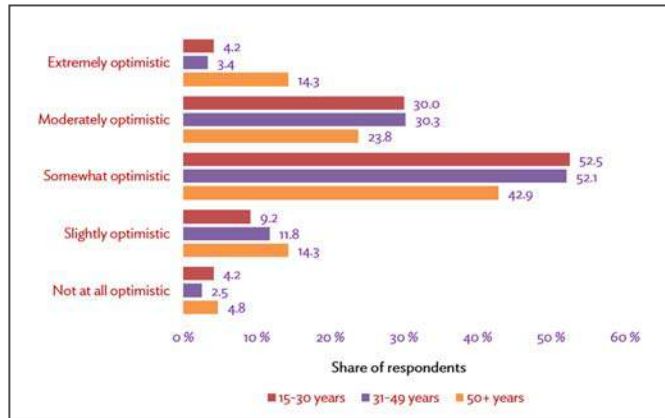
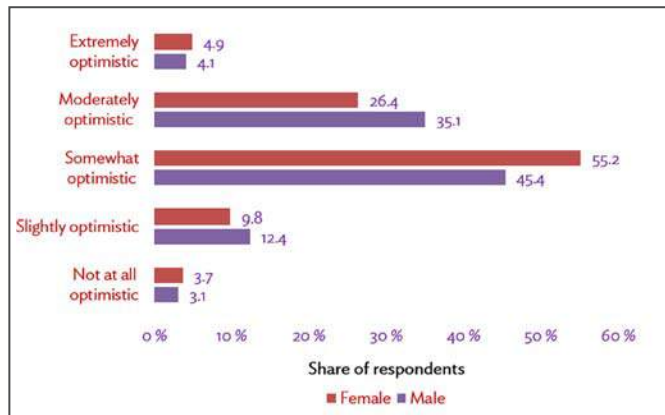
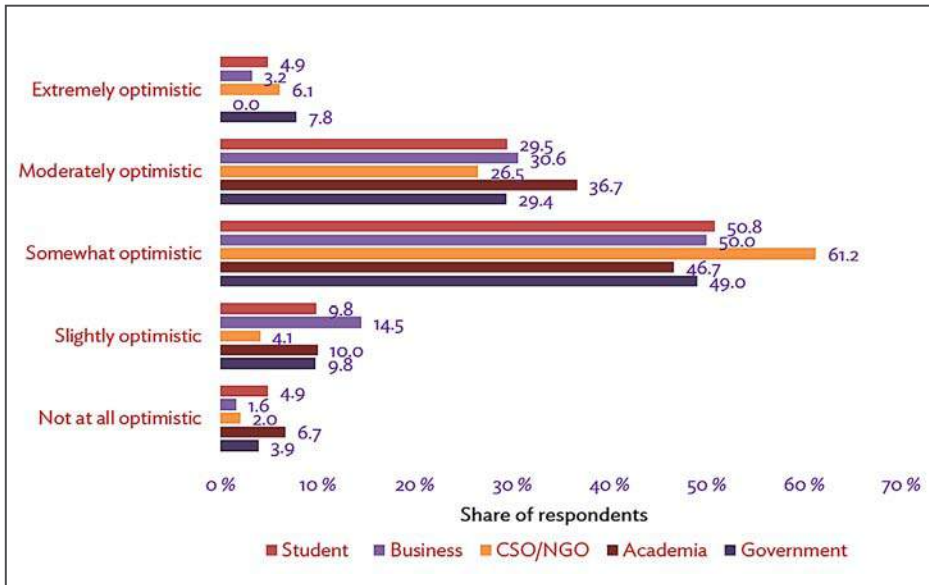


Figure 29: Optimism about the Future of ASEAN by Gender



The highest shares in all affiliations were somewhat optimistic about the future of ASEAN (Figure 30). This was followed by those who were moderately optimistic. Optimism about the future of ASEAN was neutral for some respondents because major advertised initiatives, such as the AEC Blueprints, have not been implemented by all ASEAN Member States. This shows that ASEAN has a limited role in intervening and holding member countries accountable for not implementing the blueprints.

Figure 30: Optimism about the Future of ASEAN by Affiliation



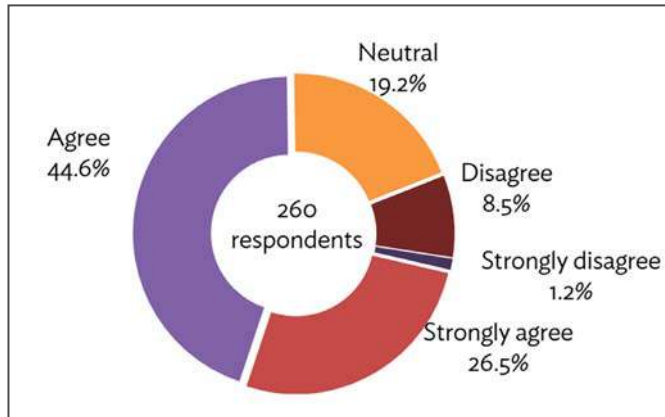
CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Opinions on the Role of the Media and Textbooks to Spread Knowledge and Information about ASEAN

The role of the media

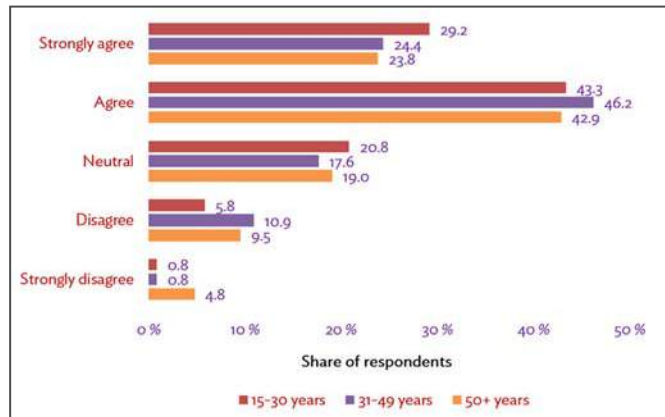
Most respondents felt that the media should play a greater role in publicising information and knowledge about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges. In particular, more than 70% of the respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) with the statement: ‘The media (newspapers, radio, television, and online news) does not enough have coverage of ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges’. Meanwhile, 19.2% of the respondents were neutral about the statement, and nearly 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN



The survey results were mostly similar when classified by age and gender, although there were some differences in terms of magnitude (Figure 32 and Figure 33).

Figure 32: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN by Age



The largest shares of respondents from all affiliations agreed that the media did not have enough coverage of ASEAN’s progress, achievements, or challenges (Figure 34). Nevertheless, the shares of respondents from NGOs and academia that disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement were relatively higher than those from other affiliations. In the FGDs, some NGO participants pointed out that not only media coverage but also media content was important for spreading knowledge and information and creating true understanding about ASEAN. They also mentioned that the Thai media had publicised some myths about ASEAN.

Figure 33: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN by Gender

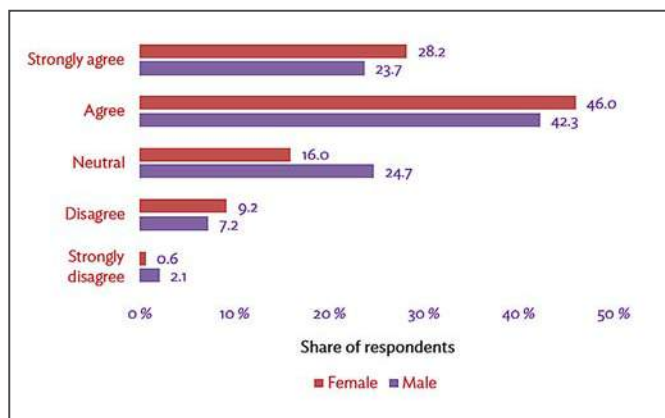
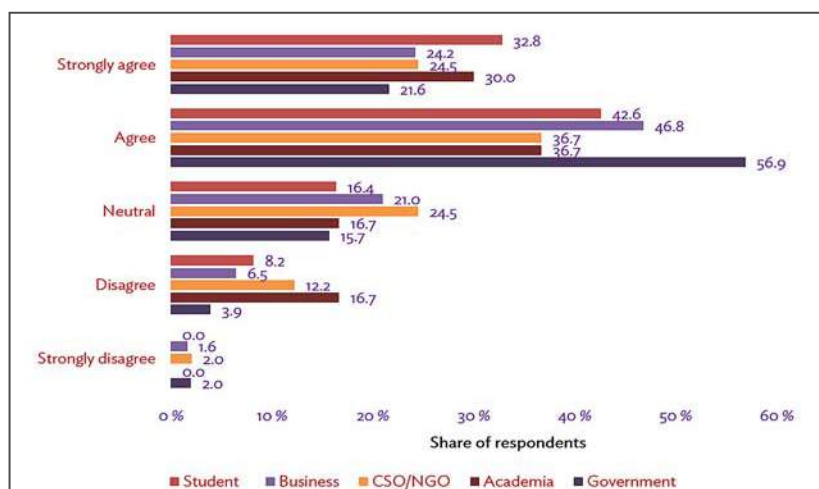


Figure 34: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

The role of school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN

Similarly, about 70.0% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with using school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges (Figure 35). Meanwhile, 15.0% were neutral, and 8.1% disagreed. Participants in the FGDs mentioned that school textbooks played a crucial

role in educating young people about ASEAN’s member countries. History classes were said to be limited in coverage, focusing on the Thai-centric history of conflicts and rivalry. As a result, participants said that each generation had continued to have minimal exposure to ASEAN’s achievements and progress, and the majority of the Thai population had tended to be less integrated with other ASEAN Member States.

Figure 35: Agreement with Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN

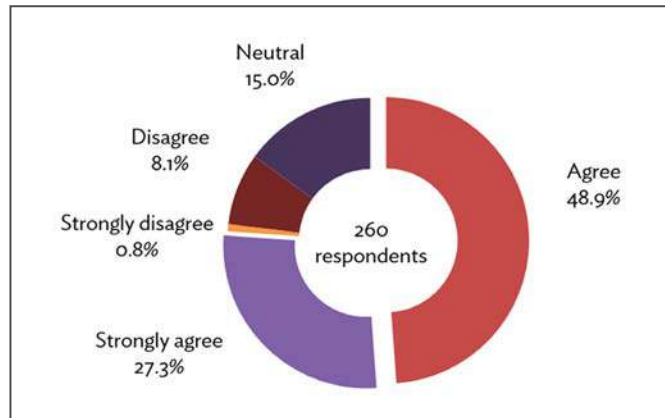
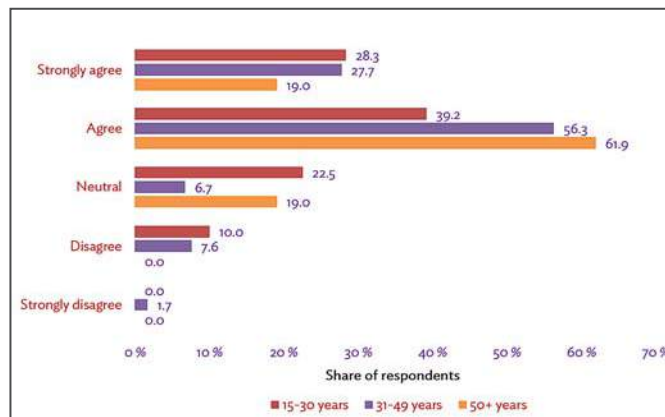


Figure 36: Agreement with Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN by Age



Examining the results by age, more than 80% of the respondents in the two older groups agreed or strongly agreed that textbooks should be used to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges, while 68% of respondents in the younger 15–30 age group agreed or strongly agreed (Figure 36).

In terms of gender, the survey results for the female and male respondents were not significantly different (Figure 37). Meanwhile, by affiliation, the student group had the lowest share of respondents (68.9%) who agreed or strongly agreed with using textbooks, whereas the government respondents had the highest share (84.3%) (Figure 38).

Figure 37: Agreement with Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN by Gender

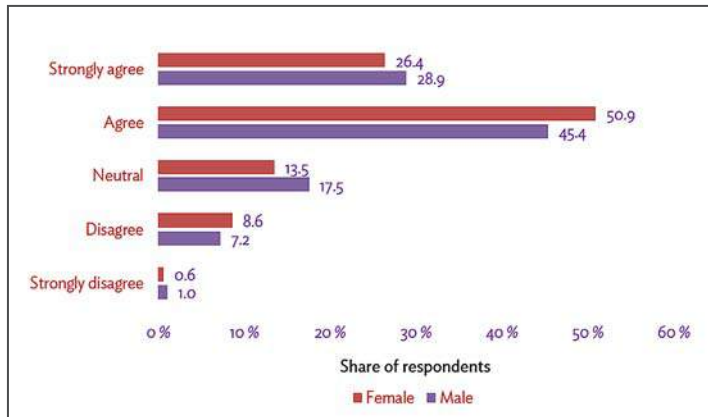
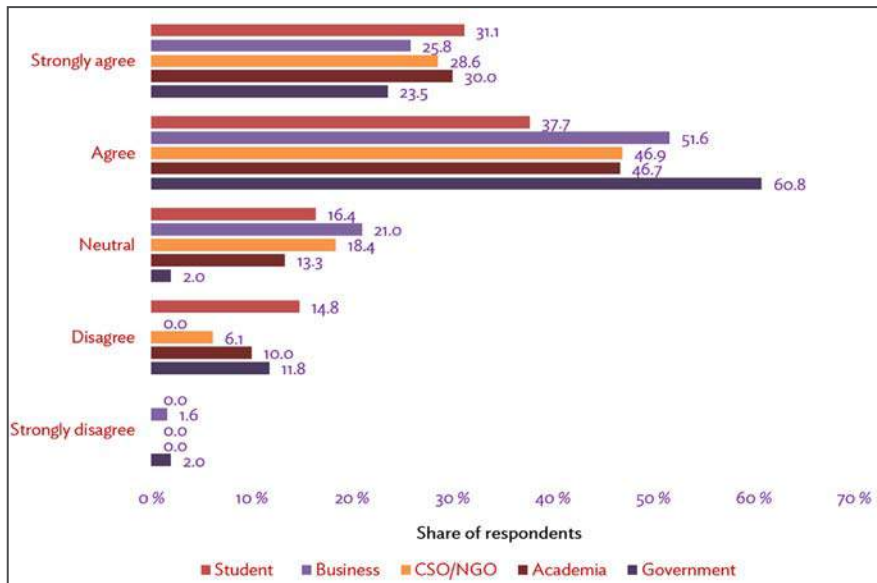


Figure 38: Agreement with Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Some youths in the FGD mentioned that current textbooks for Thai students in primary and secondary education tended to cause bias and negative perceptions of neighbouring countries because they taught only topics on historical conflicts or wars between Thailand and those countries. They noted that content about present and future issues for ASEAN, such as its progress, achievements, and challenges, did not appear in textbooks. Meanwhile, some participants from the NGO and academia groups voiced concerns that the Ministry of Education and Thai teachers had limited capabilities for delivering knowledge and information about the dynamics of ASEAN, so, therefore, textbooks may not be helpful for educating young people.

Pressing Problems for Thailand and ASEAN

The survey results identified the top five pressing problems facing Thailand and ASEAN today and until 2025. Four of these were common problems, namely corruption; income disparity and social inequality; poverty; and infrastructure availability and quality (Figure 39a and Figure 39b). The unique pressing problems were the provision of quality education, considered as one of top five problems for Thailand, and trade, investment, and regulatory coherence as one of top five problems for ASEAN. The provision of quality education was ranked sixth among the problems for ASEAN.

The similarity in the pressing problems for Thailand and ASEAN may reflect the hope in solving these problems together at the country and regional levels. For example, ASEAN, as an organisation exercising non-interference, is prohibited from taking action against corruption and human rights violations. Therefore, the ASEAN region as a whole has made little progress in these areas. Increased collaboration in dealing with these common issues may satisfy Thai people's concerns and encourage a sense of togetherness in the region.

Figure 39a: Top Five Problems Facing Thailand Today and until 2025

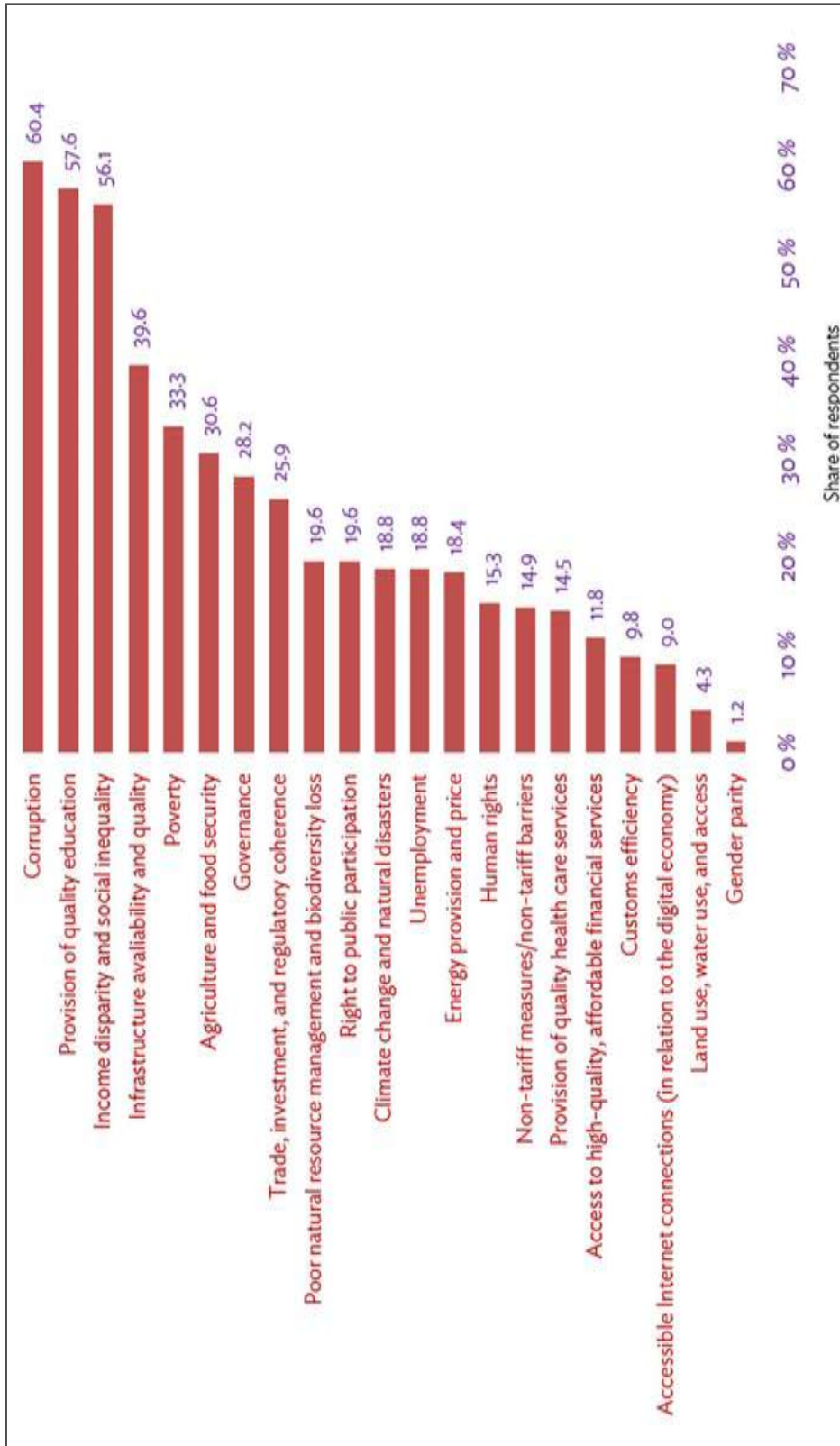
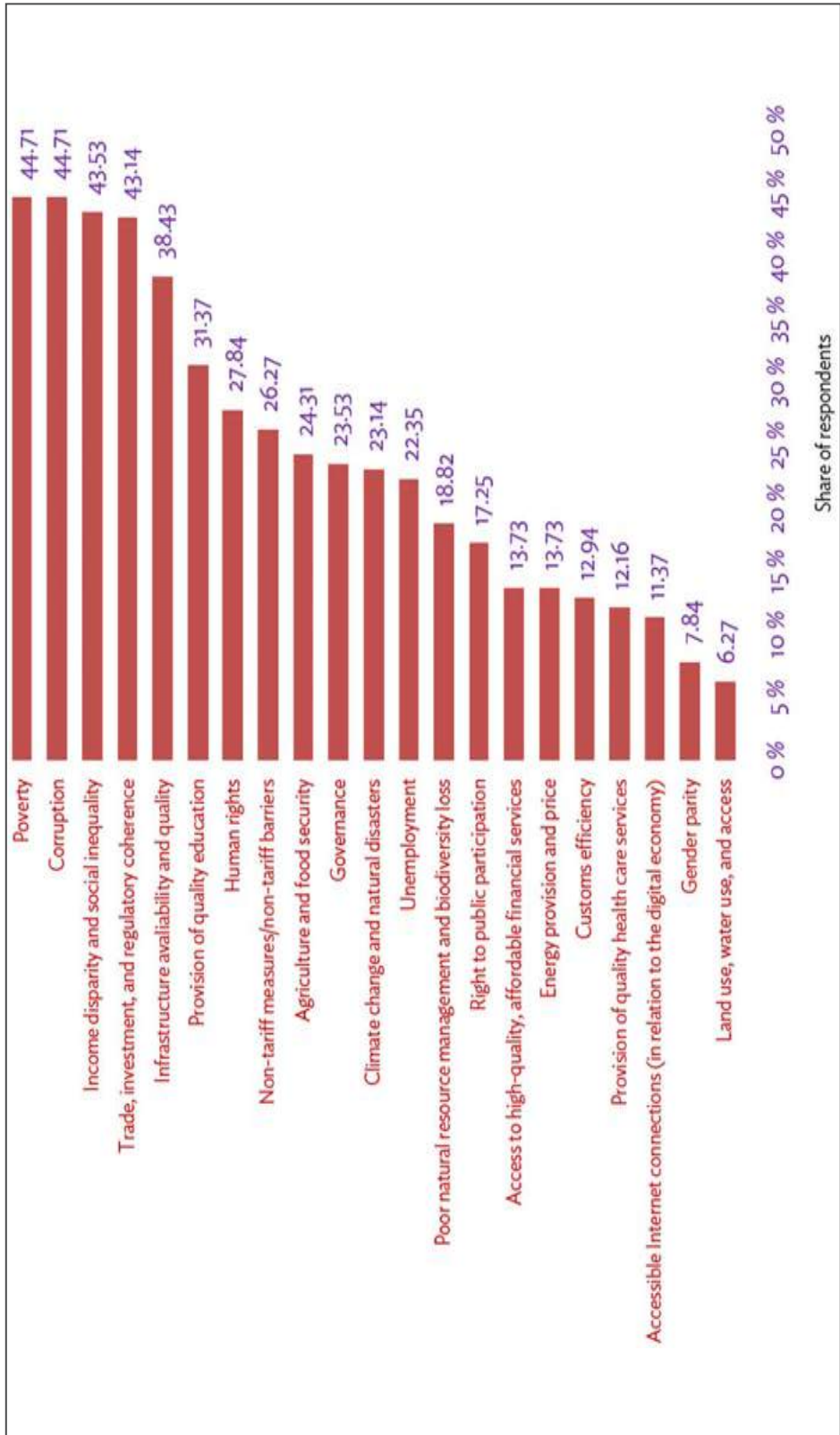


Figure 39b: Top Five Problems Facing ASEAN Today and until 2025



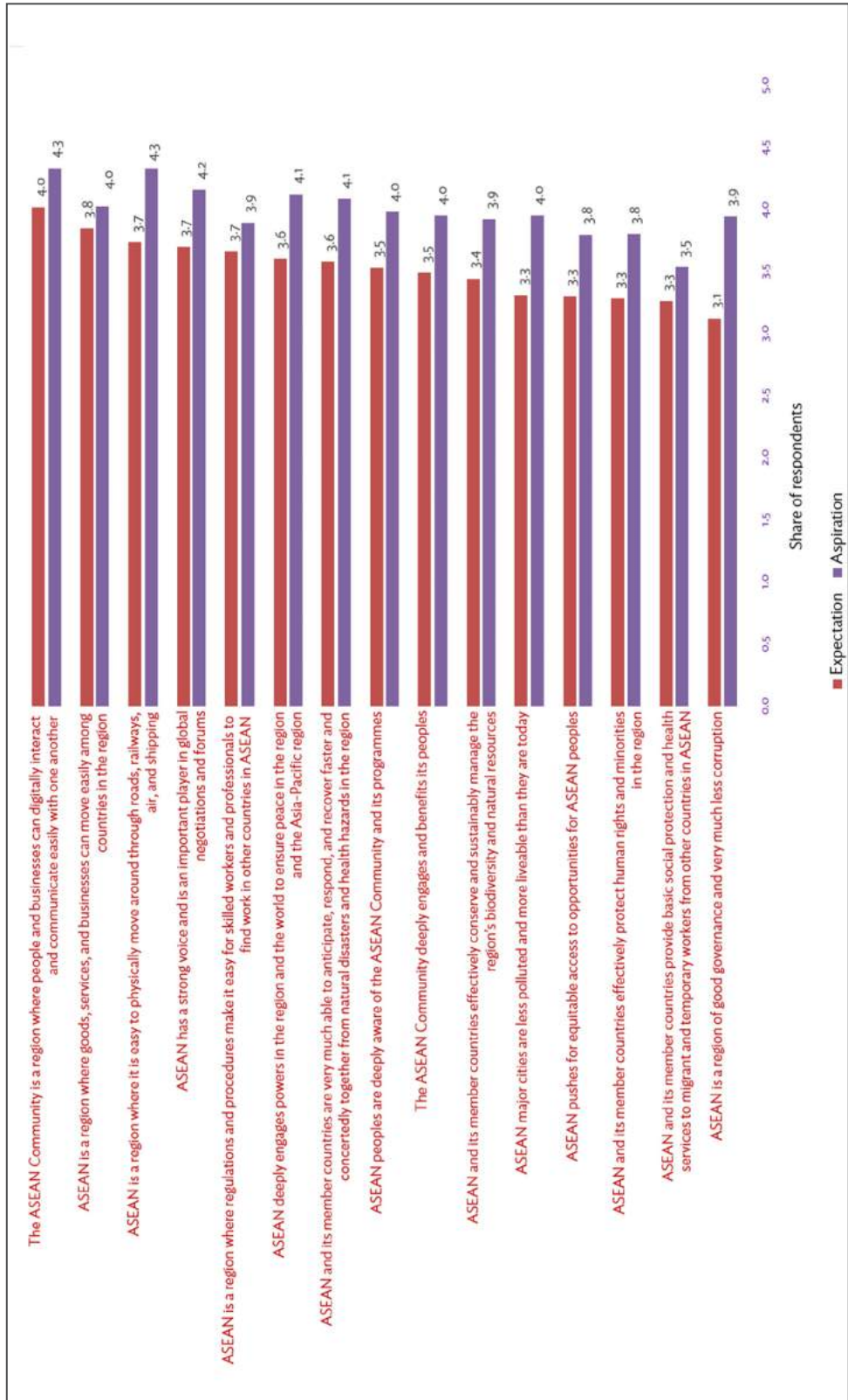
Expectations and Aspirations for ASEAN by 2025

Among the top five expectations of what respondents believed would likely happen by 2025, three were also listed among the top five aspirations by 2025. These were: ‘The ASEAN Community is a region where people and businesses can digitally interact and communicate easily with one another’; ‘ASEAN is a region where it is easy to physically move around through roads, railways, air, and shipping’; and ‘ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums’ (Figure 40).

However, two of the top five expectations were not among the top five aspirations of the respondents. These were: ‘ASEAN is a region where goods, services, and businesses can move easily among countries in the region’, and ‘ASEAN is a region where regulations and procedures make it easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN’.

Two of the top five aspirations were not among the top five expectations: ‘ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region’, and ‘ASEAN and its member countries are very much able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster and concertedly together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region’. It is noted that these above issues – specifically, conflict, natural disasters, and health hazards – are persistent threats in ASEAN that remain unresolved. Therefore, it is unsurprising that these issues were at the top of the lists.

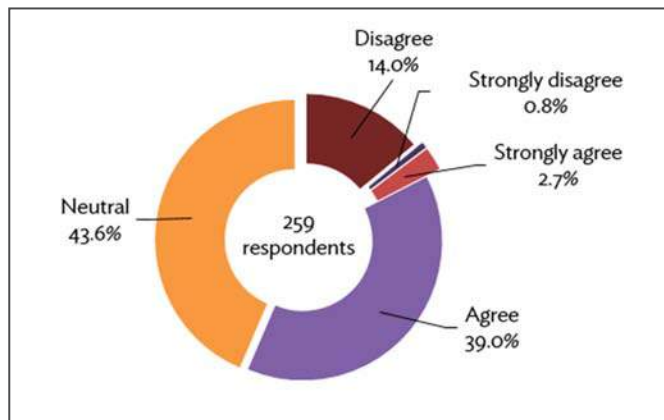
Figure 40: Expectations and Aspirations for ASEAN



Improving the role of the ASEAN Secretariat

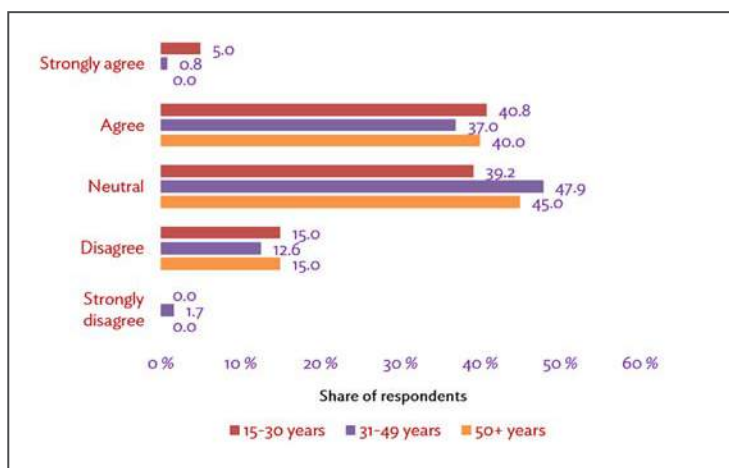
Overall, the largest share of respondents (43.6%) were neutral about the idea of gradually upgrading the implementing and monitoring capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges. This was followed by those who agreed (39%), disagreed (13.9%), strongly agreed (2.7%), and strongly disagreed (0.8%) (Figure 41).

Figure 41: Agreement with Upgrading the Role of the ASEAN Secretariat



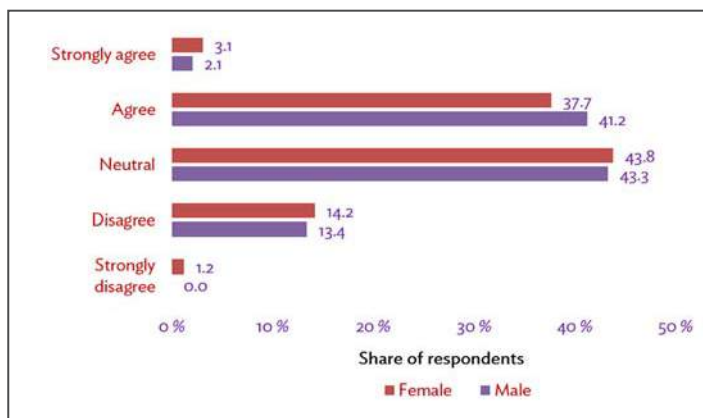
By age group, 47.9% of respondents aged 31–49 were neutral about the idea of upgrading the capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat, while similar proportions of respondents aged 15–30 and 50 or over indicated ‘neutral’ or ‘agree’ (Figure 42).

Figure 42: Agreement with Upgrading the Role of the ASEAN Secretariat by Age



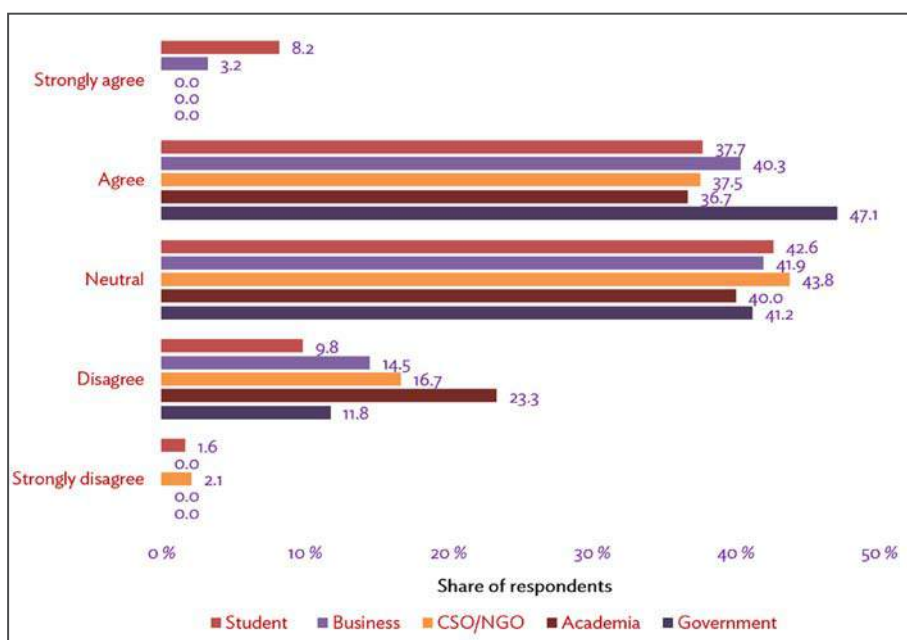
By gender, the female and male respondents expressed similar views on upgrading the capabilities of the secretariat, as shown in Figure 43.

Figure 43: Agreement with Upgrading the Role of the ASEAN Secretariat by Gender



The highest shares of respondents for almost all affiliations, except the government group, were neutral on upgrading the capabilities of the secretariat (Figure 44). Nonetheless, nearly half of the government respondents (47.1%) agreed with the idea. This may reflect that the government respondents had more belief in the ASEAN Secretariat than respondents from other affiliations.

Figure 44: Agreement with Upgrading the Role of the ASEAN Secretariat by Affiliation



In the FGDs, some participants mentioned feeling neutrally about the idea of upgrading the capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat because they believed the decision would not create tangible changes or real impacts. The respondents believed that the basic function of the ASEAN Secretariat was to facilitate and coordinate stakeholders for the effective implementation of ASEAN's projects and activities. In addition, it must comply with the ASEAN Charter, which includes the norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of ASEAN Member States. Therefore, with limited functions and the norm of non-interference, some thought the ASEAN Secretariat would not be able to cope with the challenges facing ASEAN.

The feedback from the FGDs emphasised the increasing concerns and challenges the ASEAN Community faces today and will face in the future. It also pointed to the association's increased collective challenges that require collective action through ASEAN's mechanisms. Participants noted that the ASEAN Secretariat should have the legal authority to tackle these challenges, otherwise it would not be able to cope with the new and increasing challenges in the globalised world.

However, as much as 43.6% of the respondents were neutral about the idea of upgrading the ASEAN Secretariat. The basic function of the secretariat is to facilitate and coordinate stakeholders for the effective implementation of ASEAN's projects and activities. Nevertheless, it must comply with the ASEAN Charter, which includes the norm of non-interference in ASEAN Member States' internal affairs. The pressing problems for ASEAN, which include the provision of governance, quality education, human rights, trade, investment and regulatory coherence, and affordable Internet connections, are generally internal affairs for member countries. Thus, the respondents may not have believed that increasing the ASEAN Secretariat's role would help in coping with these challenges.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

The survey results show several differences in the views towards ASEAN across age groups. The youngest age group, those aged 15–30, had high hopes for ASEAN and its potential to operate as a successful association for the benefit of its member states. However, they also appeared to be exposed to false scepticism of ASEAN brought on by the media, newspapers, books, and what they had learned from teachers. Therefore, their feeling of being ASEAN citizens was close to non-existent, and this may carry on in the future.

In general, the majority of the Thai respondents tended to view ASEAN neutrally due to the fact that they did not perceive ASEAN as having a significant effect on their lives. From the business perspective, respondents indicated that ASEAN economic integration tended to benefit large companies more than SMEs.

Some suggestions for making Thai people feel more attached to ASEAN are as follows. First, the media should play a greater role by focusing more on media coverage and content to spread knowledge and information and create true understanding of ASEAN. For example, the media should publicise content about ASEAN's present and future issues, such as its progress, achievements, and challenges.

Secondly, the similarities in the pressing problems facing Thailand and ASEAN may reflect the hope in solving these problems together at the country and regional levels. Collaboration in dealing with these common issues may satisfy the needs of the Thai people and encourage a sense of togetherness in the region.

Finally, at present, large companies can access reliable and current information to gain various advantages, but SMEs have limited capabilities. Therefore, SMEs should not be overlooked and should be promoted to enhance competitiveness and catch up with the dynamics of economic integration.

Reference

Siam Cement Group (2016), *Annual Report 2016*. Siam Cement Group. <http://scc.listedcompany.com/misc/ar/20170227-scc-ar-2016-en-04.pdf>

What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Viet Nam*

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Introduction

In decades of reforms, Viet Nam has sought to broaden the economic opportunities for its people and the business community while building the capacity to enable them to take advantage of these opportunities. Together with market-oriented institutional reforms, proactive economic integration has brought a more diverse range of economic opportunities and access to valuable resources, including capital, technical, and management expertise. On this basis, Viet Nam has improved itself economically in terms of livelihood and capacity, enlivening subsequent efforts to cooperate with other countries in areas such as science, technology, and food security. This has enabled Vietnamese people to participate in and benefit from the international development process.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) membership marked an important milestone within this process. Notwithstanding efforts under the ‘open-door’ policy since 1986, accession to ASEAN in 1995 remained the first most important breakthrough. ASEAN was the playground where Viet Nam was first exposed to trade and investment liberalisation. Over time, the association has gradually built on and realised initiatives to expand regional cooperation beyond economic issues. Viet Nam and other member states have worked to narrow the intraregional development gap and maintain regional stability to foster the improvement of their people’s well-being. The

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

voice of ASEAN, reflected in the collective efforts of the officials of its member states, has gradually become more influential in the regional setting.

Viet Nam has gone a long way to completing various measures for the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015. However, there is still an array of further work to be done by 2025. It is thus important to ensure that such future work continues to target and be inclusive of Vietnamese people. In light of this, an essential precondition is a comprehensive understanding of the current perceptions and aspirations of Vietnamese people for ASEAN.

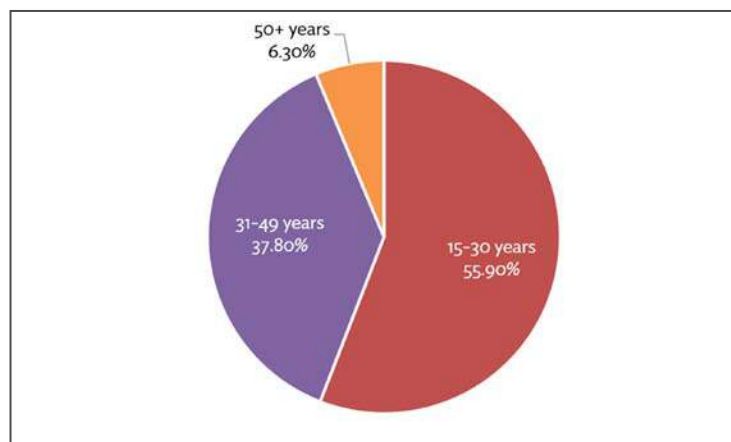
This chapter presents the findings from a survey of Vietnamese people on the importance of ASEAN. The survey was designed to capture the opinions of various groups in Viet Nam on the importance and priorities of ASEAN until 2025. It was complemented by three focus group discussions (FGDs) with respective participation from (i) young people, (ii) business representatives, and (iii) researchers and members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

This chapter first describes the basic information about the respondents. It then summarises the key perceptions and aspirations of the respondents about ASEAN. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of the implications of the survey findings.

Basic Information about the Respondents

Figure 1 depicts the shares of the survey respondents by age group. As shown, almost 56% of respondents were aged between 15 and 30 years old. Nearly 38% of the respondents were aged between 31 and 49 years old, while those aged 50 or older accounted for just over 6% of the respondents.

Figure 1: Distribution of the Respondents by Age



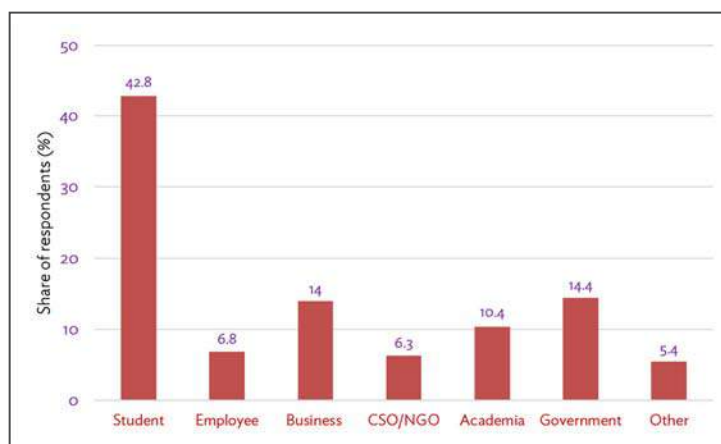
By gender, the number of male and female respondents were the same (Table 1). The share of men in the 15–30 age group (nearly 59%) was slightly higher than that for women (over 53%). Meanwhile, the numbers and shares for women in the 31–49 and 50+ age groups slightly exceeded those for men.

Table 1: Distribution of Survey Respondents by Age Group and Gender

Age	Number of Respondents		Share (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
15–30 years	59	65	53.2	58.6
31–49 years	43	41	38.7	36.9
50+ years	9	5	8.1	4.5
<i>Total</i>	111	111	100.0	100.0

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the respondents by profession. As shown, almost 43% of the respondents were students, outnumbering the other professions in the group. The business and government sectors accounted for roughly the same shares of respondents at around 14%. Just over 10% of the respondents were from academia. The remaining smaller shares of respondents were for employees (at almost 7%), members of civil society organisations or NGOs (just over 6%), and other professions (over 5%).

Figure 2: Distribution of the Respondents by Affiliation

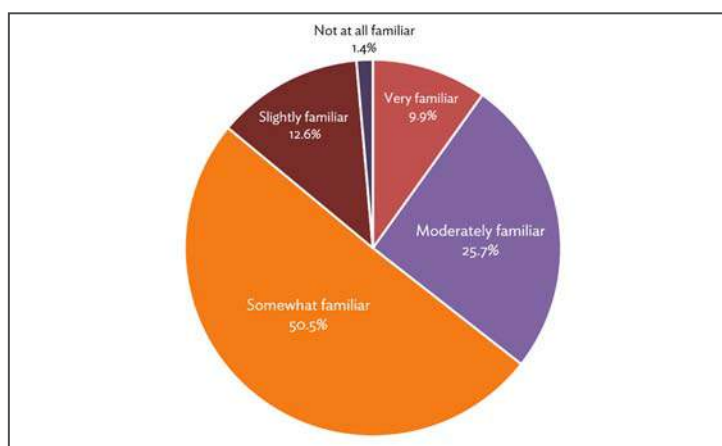


CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Voices of ASEAN

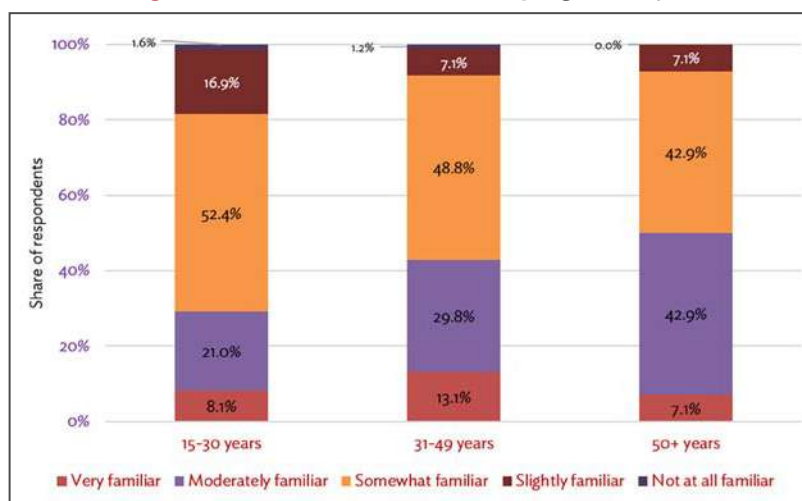
Figure 3 summarises the respondents' awareness of general ASEAN-related issues. Very few people were unfamiliar with ASEAN. Notably, more than a half of the respondents were somewhat familiar with ASEAN-related topics. Meanwhile, less than 10% of those surveyed indicated high familiarity, and around 25% of the respondents indicated moderate familiarity. More than 12% of the respondents admitted that they were only slightly aware of ASEAN issues. During the youth FGD, almost all participants stated that they mostly heard about the ASEAN Economic Community. Specifically, they kept hearing about the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Community interchangeably and thought these terms were the same. They mentioned that they never heard about the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community or the ASEAN Political-Security Community. In fact, the FGD participants added that the vast information on the World Trade Organization (WTO), the European Union-Viet Nam free trade agreement (FTA), and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, etc. somehow diverted their attention away from ASEAN.

Figure 3: Awareness of ASEAN
(share of respondents)



The respondents' awareness of ASEAN only varied slightly by age group (Figure 4). In general, those aged 50 or older were the most familiar with ASEAN topics. In contrast, the share of respondents with only slight familiarity with ASEAN issues was higher for those between 15 and 30 years old than the other age groups. Consistent with this finding, the FGD with the young people showed that three out of eight participants only started to hear about ASEAN-related content from 2015, when the local media included more information on Viet Nam's preparation for the ASEAN Economic Community.

Figure 4: Awareness of ASEAN by Age Group



Details of the respondents’ awareness of ASEAN by profession are shown in Table 2. Overall, the largest share of respondents was somewhat familiar with ASEAN topics, and this holds across all professions. However, the students and employees were less confident about their understanding of ASEAN vis-à-vis other groups of respondents. This is reflected in the larger shares of students and employees who had only somewhat or slight familiarity with ASEAN topics. It should also be noted that the awareness of the business group is consistent with previous survey findings, especially by Nguyen (2014), as about 76% of those surveyed lacked knowledge about the ASEAN Economic Community.

Table 2: Awareness of ASEAN by Affiliation

	Students	Employees	Business	CSO/NGO	Academia	Government	Other
Very familiar	6.3	20.0	9.7	14.3	21.7	9.4	0.0
Moderately familiar	18.9	0.0	25.8	35.7	30.4	46.9	33.3
Somewhat familiar	52.6	73.3	48.4	42.9	43.5	43.8	50.0
Slightly familiar	20.0	6.7	12.9	7.1	4.3	0.0	16.7
Not at all familiar	2.1	0.0	3.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

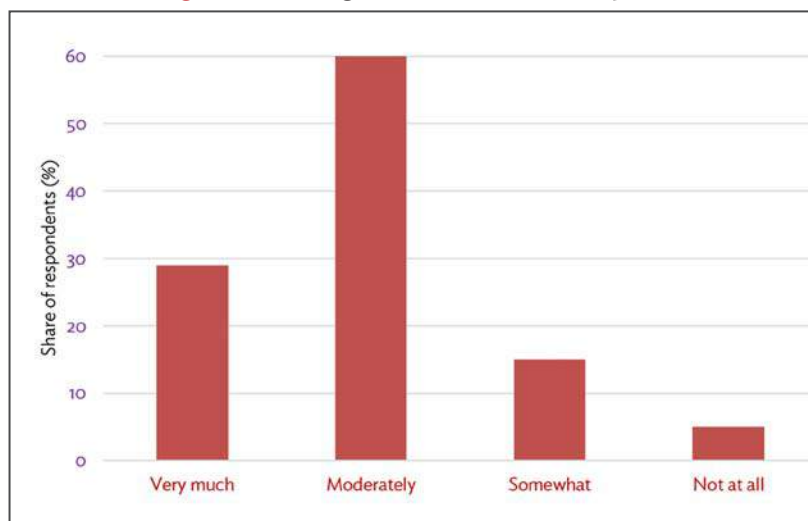
A large share of business representatives, meanwhile, were either moderately or somewhat familiar with ASEAN topics. The FGD with the business representatives also showed that all participants had heard of ASEAN, and some had even been acquiring information about ASEAN since the early 2000s. Still, the business representatives suffered from some lack of awareness of ASEAN. Four out of six business participants in the FGD knew that the ASEAN Economic Community was only a pillar of the ASEAN

Community but could not describe or list the other two pillars. The most important pieces of information that the business participants cared about were the reduction of tariffs and the related opportunities and challenges, especially those specific to their industries or products.

The FGD participants aspired to better understand ASEAN-related topics. The young people said they could find related information on the Internet but needed guidance on finding and accessing the relevant information. The business representatives wanted to know more about the conditions for utilising preferential tariffs and the main advantages of the cumulative rules of origin under ASEAN over the usual rules of origin under the WTO. They understood that the information was available on the Internet but said the language was overly technical with lots of jargon. As the concerned businesses were small and medium-sized enterprises, many had problems seeking assistance from lawyers about the related content in the ASEAN agreements. Meanwhile, the NGO participants and researchers suggested that more meaningful information should be made available through the Internet, possibly via the websites of government agencies, business associations, and research institutes.

Figure 5 shows the feelings of the respondents towards being ASEAN citizens. Again, less than 7% of the respondents did not feel they were ASEAN citizens. Notably, over 56% of those surveyed felt moderately as ASEAN citizens. Around one-fifth of the respondents felt very much as ASEAN citizens, while around 16% said they felt somewhat as ASEAN citizens.

Figure 5: Feeling of ASEAN Citizenship



Some differences appear when comparing the feelings of the respondents by age group (Figure 6). Again, the oldest age group had the highest likelihood (36%) of having a strong feeling of ASEAN citizenship. Respondents aged 15–30 had a relatively weaker feeling of being ASEAN citizens but had the highest share among those with a moderate feeling (almost three-fifths). The young people in the FGD indicated they did not feel they were citizens of the same region as people from Cambodia, Lao PDR, or Myanmar, although they strongly preferred being able to access the same services and opportunities as people in Singapore. They enjoyed most the ease of travelling to ASEAN countries without visas, an important consideration given that Viet Nam’s ordinary passport is only accepted visa-free in a limited number of countries.

Figure 6: Feeling of ASEAN Citizenship by Age Group

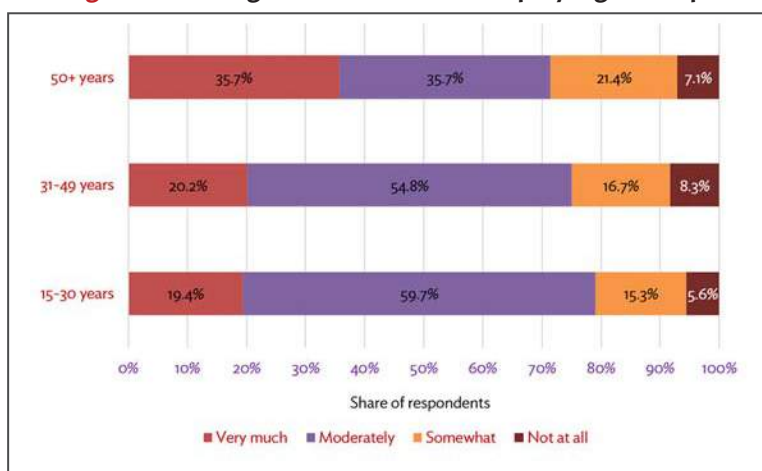


Figure 7 shows the respondents’ perceptions of Viet Nam’s membership of ASEAN. Consistent with the policy objective to enhance economic opportunities through economic integration, which effectively started with ASEAN, almost 79% of the respondents believed that ASEAN membership was beneficial for Viet Nam. However, about 14% of those surveyed claimed that the country’s membership had been neither good nor bad, and another 5% even argued that it had been unfavourable. Around 3% of respondents indicated they did not know whether Viet Nam’s membership in ASEAN had been good or bad.

The majority of the FGD participants appreciated the value that ASEAN membership had added to Viet Nam. For young people, travelling to other ASEAN countries had become a lot easier. Many had benefited from faster immigration procedures via expedited ASEAN lanes, though they had not recognised, prior to the FGD, that such measures had originated from the work of ASEAN. The FGD participants recognised the increased availability and greater diversity of goods from ASEAN countries. A concern

raised by some of the NGO participants was that by being a member of ASEAN, Viet Nam was suffering from a narrower policy space and could no longer protect its domestic industries (of which retailing services were an example).

Figure 7: Perception of Viet Nam’s Membership of ASEAN
(share of respondents)

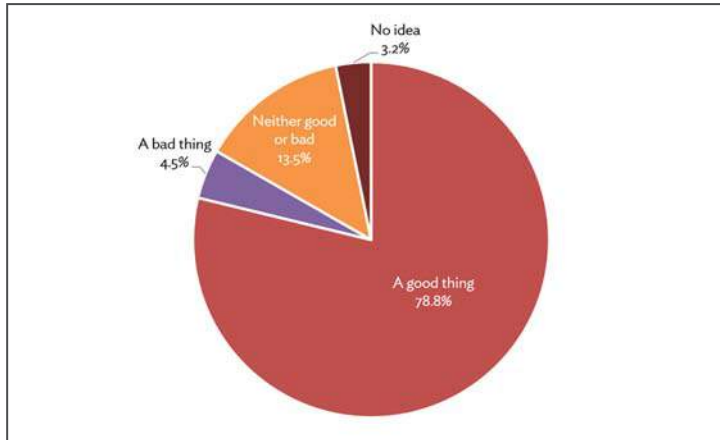
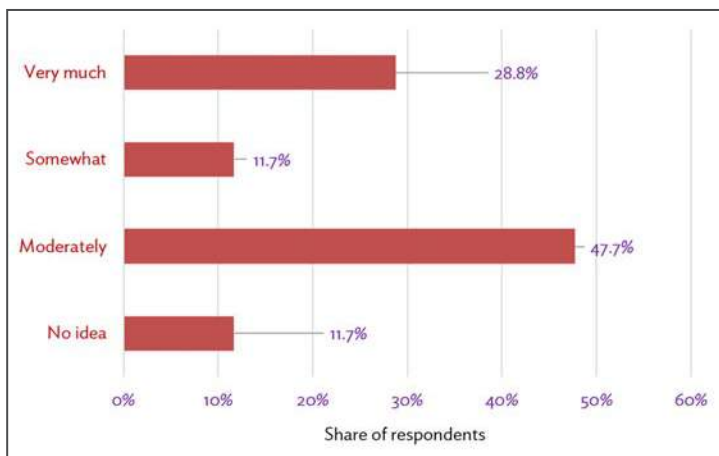


Figure 8 depicts the respondents’ assessment of Viet Nam’s membership of ASEAN. Nearly 48% acknowledged moderate benefits from Viet Nam’s membership, while around 29% indicated that the country had benefited highly from ASEAN. Another 12% claimed the benefits were subtle, and the same share had no idea about whether ASEAN had been beneficial for Viet Nam.

Figure 8: Perceived Benefits of Viet Nam’s Membership of ASEAN



The young people and business representatives in the FGDs elaborated that trade in goods, tourism, and job opportunities in ASEAN as a single market would continue to create benefits for Viet Nam. They cited the trend among some Vietnamese people of

going to Singapore to form start-ups as an example. However, a business participant added that benefits to Viet Nam and enterprises would be conditional upon further economic reforms in the country, especially in the areas of tax, business registration, and contract enforcement. Meanwhile, all NGO participants and researchers agreed that resolving various issues would require coordination and a common voice in ASEAN.

From another perspective, Figure 9 illustrates how the respondents stated they would feel if Viet Nam were no longer a member of ASEAN. As shown, more than 34% of the respondents said they would be extremely concerned. Another 26% said they would be moderately concerned, while 17% indicated some (less than moderate) concern. Around 13% of the respondents answered that they would be only slightly concerned about leaving ASEAN, and less than 10% said they would not be concerned.

Figure 9: Level of Concern if Viet Nam Were to Leave ASEAN
(share of respondents)

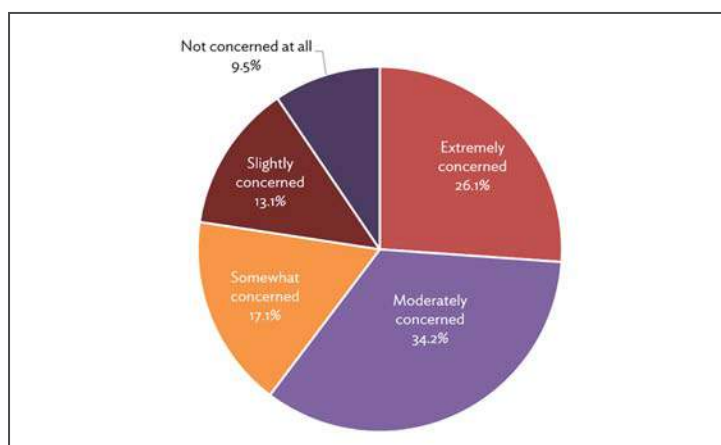


Figure 10 shows the perceptions of the respondents about the future of ASEAN. Very few respondents (around 5%) indicated they were not optimistic about ASEAN's future. Notably, more than half of the respondents expressed moderate optimism for ASEAN, and 19% were extremely optimistic. Meanwhile, similar shares of respondents were somewhat or slightly optimistic about ASEAN's future, at around 13% and 12%, respectively.

Figure 11 illustrates the respondents' perceptions of media coverage about ASEAN-related issues. This appears to be an area where the media in Viet Nam has failed to perform well. Less than 12% of the respondents claimed that media coverage of ASEAN's progress and challenges had been adequate, and very few people expressed strong agreement (less than 1% of the survey sample). In contrast, almost 48% of

the respondents agreed that media coverage of ASEAN was insufficient, and over 14% indicated strong agreement that the coverage was insufficient. Over 26% of the respondents felt neutrally about the media's coverage of ASEAN.

Figure 10: Perceptions on the Future of ASEAN

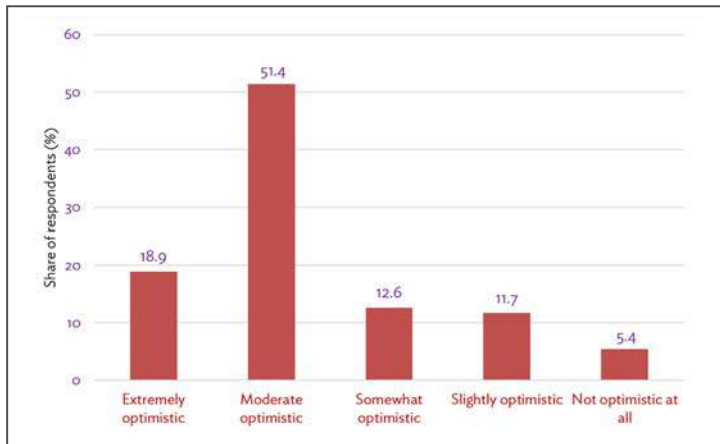
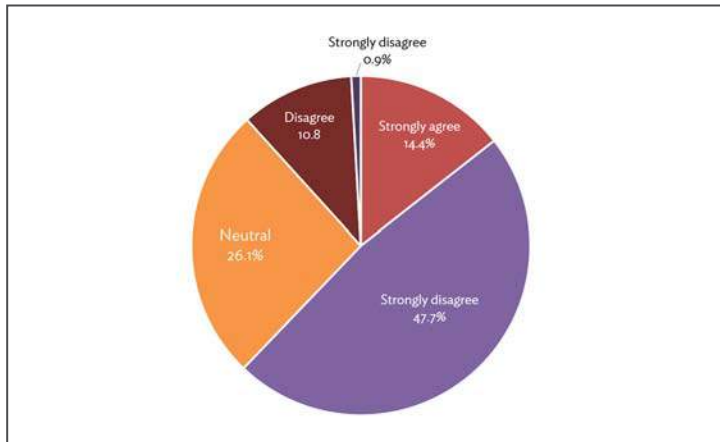


Figure 11: Agreement on the Inadequacy of Media Coverage of ASEAN
(share of respondents)



Similarly, Figure 12 shows the respondents' opinions on the need to incorporate ASEAN-related topics into textbooks. Only 7% of the respondents disagree with incorporating topics on ASEAN, while 3% expressed strong disagreement. Importantly, over 41% agreed that textbooks in Viet Nam should include content relevant to ASEAN, while 19% indicated strong agreement. Nearly 30% of the sample indicated neither agreement nor disagreement. The young participants in the FGD argued that existing information in official high school and university textbooks was limited. Most of the information was said to be outdated, focusing largely on the history of ASEAN.

Participants suggested that seminars and workshops were instrumental in delivering information on ASEAN but also complained that they often lacked the opportunity to go to such events. University students, for example, said they could not attend events on weekdays due to clashes with their class timetables. The participants also agreed that it would be difficult to include all the information in textbooks since other content of relevance to students must also be included. Meanwhile, all business participants in the FGD recommended that textbooks at both the school and university levels must include content on the work of ASEAN. The majority of the NGO participants and researchers suggested further that the core information on ASEAN (including its history, charter, major blueprints, outcomes until 2015, and directions until 2025) should be incorporated into textbooks.

Figure 12: Perceptions on the Need for Textbooks to Include Topics on ASEAN

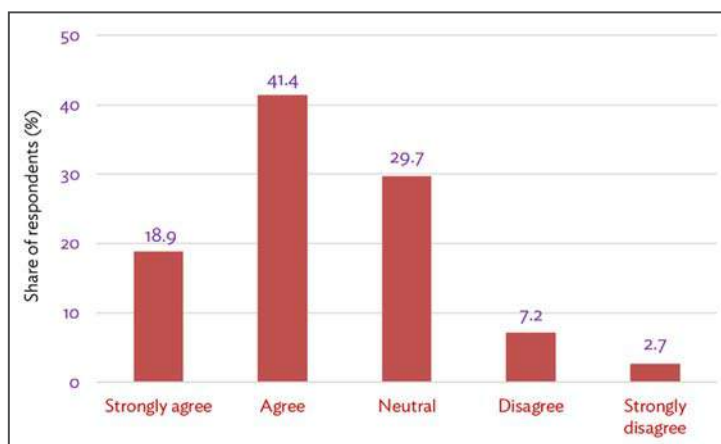


Table 3 summarises the responses on the pressing issues facing Viet Nam until 2025. The most pressing issue was corruption, chosen by almost 69% of respondents. Climate change and natural disasters followed with agreement by 64% of respondents. The availability and quality of infrastructure, and agriculture and food security emerged as other important issues for Viet Nam in the next decade, chosen by 36% and 31% of the respondents, respectively. Another important issue for Viet Nam was the poor management of natural resources and biodiversity loss, as indicated by over 28% of respondents. Conversely, the least important issues for the country by 2025 included gender equality, energy provision and prices, Internet connections, and customs efficiency.

Table 3: Pressing Concerns for Viet Nam until 2025

Issue	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Agriculture and food security	69	31.1
Access to high-quality, affordable financial services	36	16.2
Accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy)	22	9.9
Customs efficiency	25	11.3
Energy provision and price	17	7.7
Infrastructure availability and quality	79	35.6
Non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers	46	20.7
Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence	60	27.0
Climate change and natural disasters	142	64.0
Gender parity between men and women	5	2.3
Income disparity and social inequality	47	21.2
Land use, water use, and access	26	11.7
Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss	53	23.9
Poverty	31	14.0
Quality education provision and access	59	26.6
Quality health services provision and access	63	28.4
Unemployment	43	19.4
Corruption	152	68.5
Governance	53	23.9
Human rights	26	11.7
Public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring	30	22.5

The ranking of issues in Table 3 is different from the outcome of the FGD discussions. In all three discussions, the common pressing issues for Viet Nam included trade, investment, and regulatory coherence, and climate change and natural disasters. Inadequate public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring was seen by the majority of NGO participants and researchers to undermine the quality and inclusiveness of public policies and programmes.

Table 4: Pressing Concerns for ASEAN until 2025

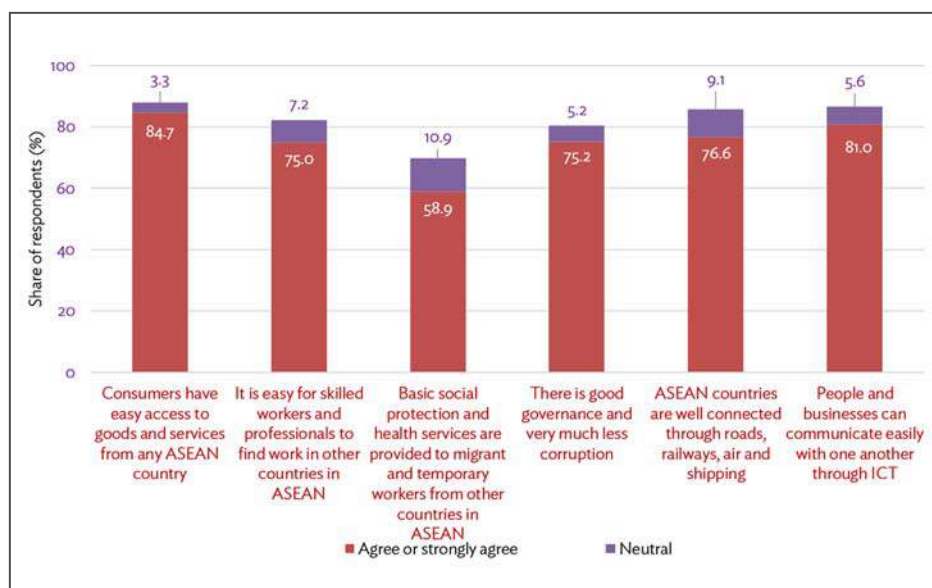
Issue	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Agriculture and food security	71	32.0
Access to high-quality, affordable financial services	25	11.3
Accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy)	13	5.9
Customs efficiency	28	12.6
Energy provision and price	11	5.0
Infrastructure availability and quality	45	20.3
Non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers	65	29.3
Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence	63	28.4
Climate change and natural disasters	163	73.4
Gender parity between men and women	16	7.2
Income disparity and social inequality	52	23.4
Land use, water use, and access	34	15.3
Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss	88	39.6
Poverty	37	16.7
Quality education provision and access	37	16.7
Quality health services provision and access	31	14.0
Unemployment	29	13.1
Corruption	125	56.3
Governance	70	31.5
Human rights	4	19.4
Public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring	55	24.8

Table 4 shows the major issues that ASEAN as a whole faces until 2025. Climate change and natural disasters ranked first among the pressing issues, as indicated by over 73% of respondents. Corruption was the second most important issue, as indicated by 56% of respondents. In addition to these issues, the poor management of natural resources and biodiversity loss remained a challenge to ASEAN according to 40% of respondents. It should be noted that climate change and natural disasters, and the poor management of

natural resources and biodiversity loss were also indicated by the FGD participants as key issues for ASEAN. Agriculture and food security, and governance issues were indicated as pressing for ASEAN by 32% of respondents. Interestingly, the least important issues for ASEAN were Internet accessibility, energy provision and price, and gender equality, consistent with those for Viet Nam.

Figure 13 illustrates the respondents' preferences for improvements in ASEAN in terms of accessibility issues. The most important aspect for improvement was access to goods and services from ASEAN producers, with strong agreement or agreement from almost 85% of the respondents. A couple of young participants in the FGD gave the example of having to buy high-quality, informally imported goods from travellers who had visited other ASEAN countries (such as milk powder for infants and toddlers from Singapore or Malaysia). They asserted that if there were more official import channels with lower or zero tariffs, then the availability of such products for domestic consumers would increase.

Figure 13: Aspirations for Accessibility-related Issues in ASEAN by 2025



ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ICT = information and communications technology.

Another important issue for improvement is the ease of ICT-based communication between people and businesses, indicated by 81% of respondents. One business participant in the FGD elaborated on how improvements in telecommunications services in Viet Nam had helped her business significantly in contacting partners, leading to a reduction of costs and more modern services. The only remaining issues were the stability and roaming fees of mobile phone services.

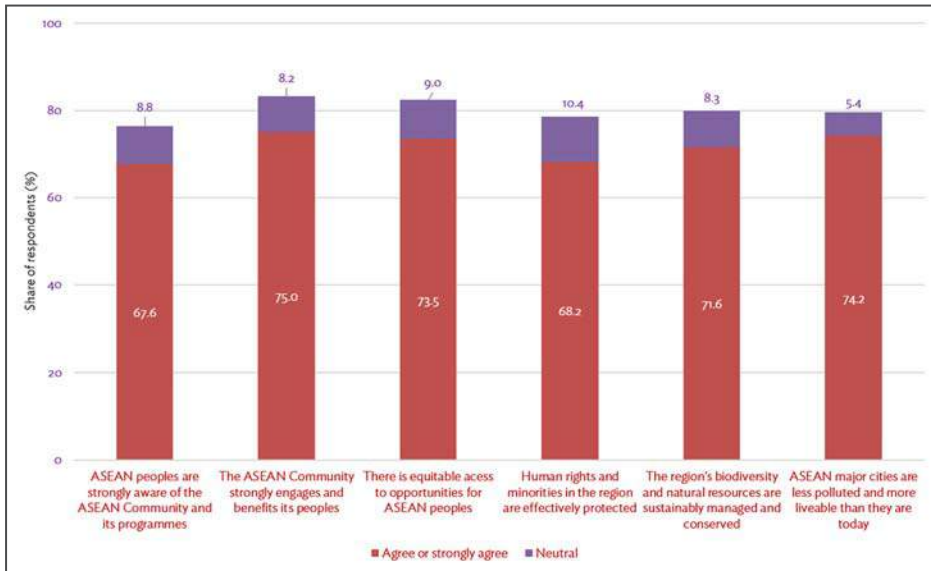
Transport connectivity, the ease of finding jobs, and improved governance and less corruption were other areas where respondents wanted improvements by 2025. Each of these issues was indicated by around three-quarters of the sample. The business participants in the FGD emphasised that these improvements were associated with improved access to goods and services from ASEAN.

Improvement in the accessibility of temporary workers and migrants to basic social protection and health services was the least chosen by the survey respondents, although the share of respondents agreeing to this improvement was almost 59%. The need for such improvement was rated differently by the NGO participants and researchers in the FGD. Three researchers and one NGO participant thought that immigrants and temporary workers should be treated the same as local workers as they said everyone should have the right to basic social protection and health services. The other researcher was neutral about the need for this improvement, while the other NGO participants contended that immigrants from foreign countries (including within ASEAN) should be treated differently in order to protect the welfare of Vietnamese people. These participants explained that having too many foreign workers would reduce the employability of local workers, and the state would need to do something to compensate for this.

Figure 14 illustrates the preferences of respondents towards improvements in ASEAN regarding inclusiveness and sustainability issues by 2025. As shown, the most essential improvement was the engagement and shared benefit of ASEAN to its peoples, as indicated by roughly 75% of respondents. Reducing pollution and improving liveability in ASEAN major cities was chosen by slightly fewer respondents (around 74%). Equal access to opportunities and the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources were other preferred improvements by 2025, with respective shares of nearly 74% and 72% of the respondents. Enhancing awareness of the ASEAN Community and the protection of human rights and minorities were other areas where progress was deemed necessary, each of which was indicated by roughly 68% of the respondents.

The FGDs showed, meanwhile, that several aspects of sustainable development need to be improved in ASEAN. Among the key aspects mentioned were the management of biodiversity and natural resources, the engagement of the people, equitable opportunities, and the reduction of pollution in major cities. In particular, the youth participants asserted that economic well-being was neither guaranteed nor meaningful in the absence of a clean environment. Three of the youth participants had volunteered in hospitals and with people with cancer and were shocked by the incidence of cancer due to poor environmental quality.

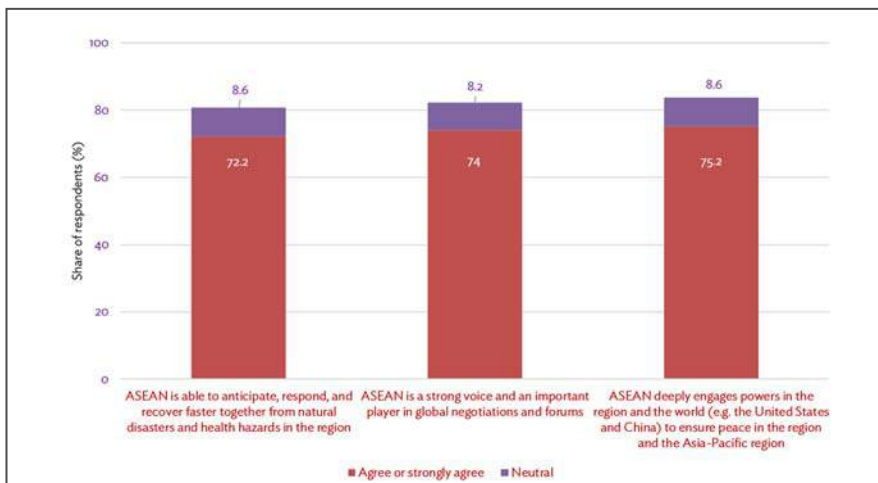
Figure 14: Aspirations for Inclusiveness and Sustainability Issues in ASEAN by 2025



ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Figure 15 focuses on the preferred improvements to general issues for ASEAN as a common community. The most important improvement, based on the respondents' preferences, is the engagement of international and regional powers in ASEAN affairs for ensuring regional stability. This improvement was suggested by over 75% of respondents. Next was the need for improvement in ASEAN's influence in international forums and negotiations, chosen by 74% of respondents. Finally, 72% of respondents wanted ASEAN to be able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.

Figure 15: Aspirations for ASEAN Issues by 2025

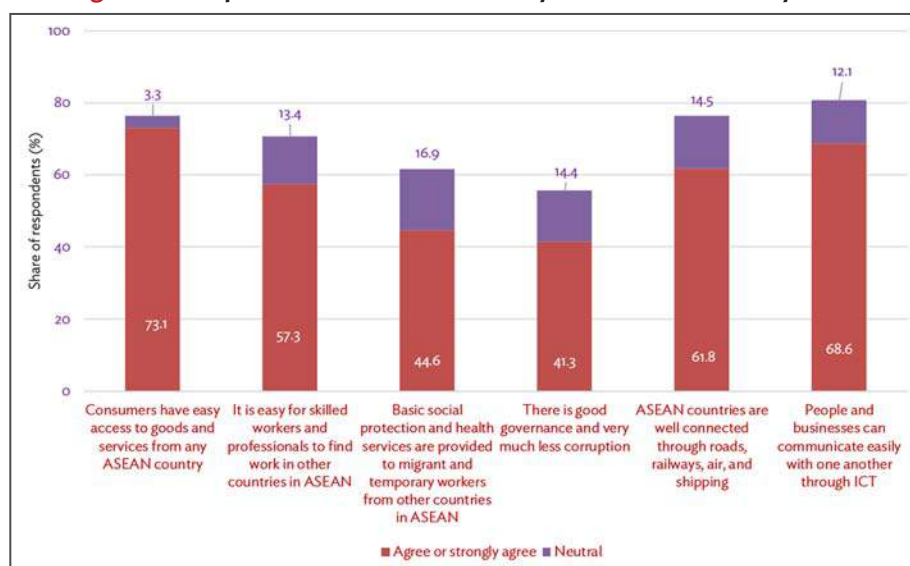


ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

In addition to their preferences for improvements in ASEAN, respondents were also surveyed on their expectations of reasonable progress for ASEAN until 2025. Figure 16 shows respondents' perceptions on the likelihood of improvements in terms of accessibility issues. Again, the most likely improvement was easier access to goods and services from ASEAN producers, agreed or strongly agreed with by over 73% of the respondents. Based on their knowledge of ASEAN, the business representatives in the FGD expected the most progress to be made in the trade of goods and services. This was the same for the young people, the NGO participants, and the researchers in the FGDs. Half of the business participants in the FGD doubted whether they would see more service providers from ASEAN since Viet Nam had already opened up to various services under the WTO and other FTAs.

Respondents also expected an increase in the ease of ICT-based communication between people and businesses and improved transport connectivity, albeit at lower likelihoods of 69% and 62%, respectively. Meanwhile, over 57% of the respondents believed in the likelihood of higher mobility for skilled workers in ASEAN. Improvements in governance and accessibility were chosen as the least likely to occur, and were agreed with by 41% and 45% of the respondents, respectively. It should be noted that this level of expectation appears to be less than the corresponding aspiration for all areas (Figure 13 and Figure 16).

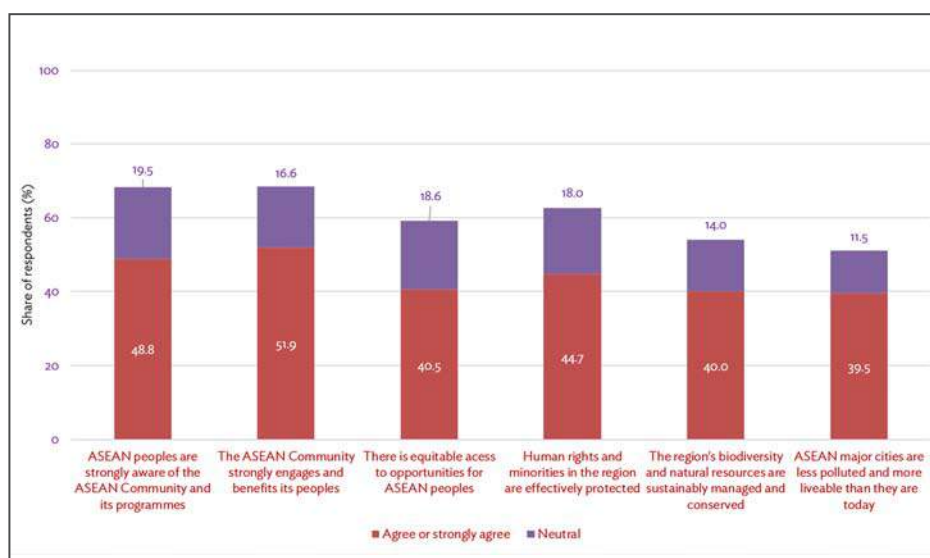
Figure 16: Expectations for Accessibility Issues in ASEAN by 2025



ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ICT = information and communications technology.

Figure 17 shows the beliefs of the respondents about improvements in inclusiveness and sustainability issues in ASEAN by 2025. In general, the level of expectation was lower than for the accessibility issues. The highest likelihood was attached to the engagement and shared benefits of ASEAN for its peoples, as indicated by roughly 52% of the respondents. Building awareness of the ASEAN Community and the protection of human rights and minorities were next, with respective shares of respondents in agreement and strong agreement of 49% and 45%, respectively. Respondents indicated that reducing pollution and improving liveability in ASEAN’s major cities, equitable access to opportunities, and the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources were least likely to see improvement by 2025. These issues were each agreed or strongly agreed with by around two-fifths of the respondents. For all areas related to inclusiveness and sustainability, the respondents’ expectations were again lower than their aspirations, while the level of neutrality for the expectations exceeded that for the aspirations (Figure 14 and Figure 17).

Figure 17: Expectations for Inclusiveness and Sustainability Issues in ASEAN by 2025

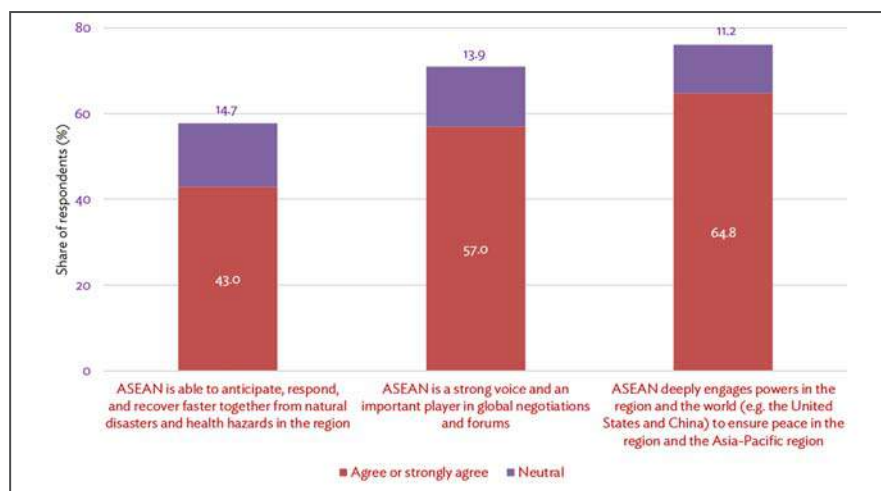


ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations

The unlikely reduction of pollution was a clear concern for the participants in the FGDs. The youth participants agreed that it would be very unlikely to see less pollution in major ASEAN cities. Some of the participants named several cities in ASEAN that they had visited, including Jakarta and Manila. All but one had been to Ha Noi before. They all complained about the existing levels of pollution and said they had seen few meaningful attempts to reduce pollution. The business representatives in the FGDs also argued that pollution and traffic jams were prevalent, if not getting worse, in major cities in ASEAN, with the exception of Singapore. Meanwhile, two-thirds of the NGO participants and researchers rejected the possibility of lower pollution in major ASEAN cities by 2025.

Figure 18 shows the respondents' perceptions of the likelihood of improvements to ASEAN as a common community. The most likely was the engagement of international and regional powers in ASEAN affairs for ensuring regional stability. As much as 65% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed this was likely to happen. Improvement in ASEAN's influence in international forums and negotiations followed, with agreement or strong agreement by 57% of the respondents. Around 43% of the respondents believed that ASEAN would improve in terms of its capacity to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disaster and health hazards in the region. Again, improvements in these three aspects was highly preferred by Vietnamese respondents, but the belief in the likelihood of such improvements was low.

Figure 18: Expectations for ASEAN-related Issues by 2025



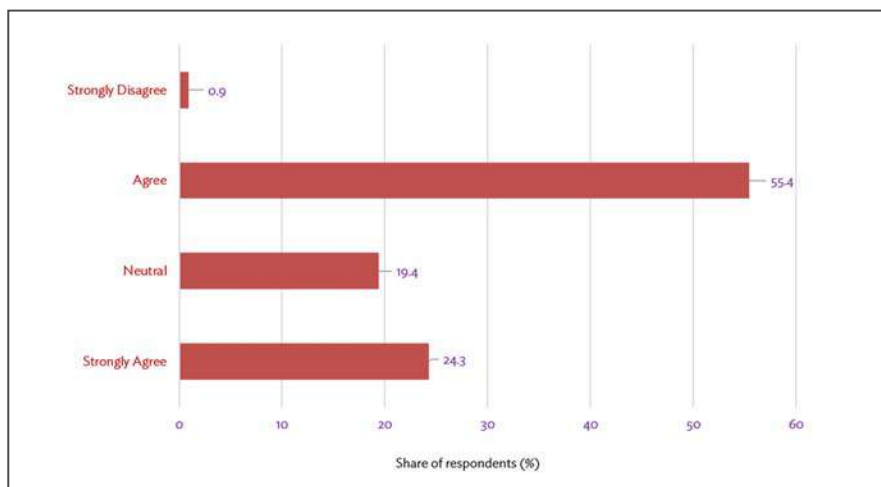
ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Figure 19 summarises the perceptions of the respondents on the need for capacity improvements to the ASEAN Secretariat. Only less than 1% of the respondents disagreed with the need for capacity improvements, while 20% were neutral. Almost 56% of the respondents agreed that the ASEAN Secretariat needed to gradually improve its capacity. Another 24% of the respondents were in strong agreement with the need for the improvements.

The FGD participants were not able to elaborate on the need for gradual capacity improvements to the ASEAN Secretariat. The key reason was their limited knowledge of the role and ongoing difficulties and challenges of the secretariat. The business participants were not able to make judgments on the capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat, especially in terms of preparing content or advocacy programmes for regional economic integration or coordination with major dialogue partners. A limited number of participants in the FGDs could not name the current Vietnamese secretary-general.

Even the NGO participants and researchers admitted that capacity building for the ASEAN Secretariat was necessary but could not explain in detail where the capacity improvements should be.

Figure 19: Agreement with the Need for Gradual Capacity Improvements for the ASEAN Secretariat



Conclusion

Various research and reports have elaborated on the significant implications of ASEAN for Viet Nam. Among the most important implications is the ‘ASEAN Way’, which has enabled Viet Nam to adapt to new rules, while building capacity for and engaging its citizens in the regional community-building process. Past work with the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint shows that achieving the regional ASEAN Economic Community – as per the definition of the community, i.e. a single production base and a single market with the free flow of goods, capital, and people – still requires further time and effort. As argued by Lloyd (2005), the definition of a single market is one in which the Law of One Price must hold in all goods, services, and factor markets. The progress towards ASEAN economic integration has been limited, and ASEAN is still far from having a single market.

Even if a true single market cannot be realised, it is crucial to make gradual improvements to the ASEAN community-building process, especially in building the sense of a common community. If this sense of community can be enhanced, the momentum for further integration of ASEAN will continue.

The survey described in this chapter has important findings. Most respondents were familiar with ASEAN, although those aged over 50 years old appear to have been more familiar with ASEAN-related topics. The students and employees were less confident about their understanding of ASEAN vis-à-vis the other groups of respondents. More than three-quarters of those surveyed felt moderately or strongly as ASEAN citizens, while almost 79% of respondents believed that ASEAN membership had been beneficial for Viet Nam. Meanwhile, about 60% of the respondents indicated they would be extremely or moderately concerned if Viet Nam were to leave ASEAN, and about 69% expressed strong or moderate optimism about the future of ASEAN.

However, Viet Nam is also facing several issues related to becoming a more integral part of ASEAN. Media coverage of ASEAN-related topics was generally perceived to be insufficient. Viet Nam also appears to be encountering pressing issues similar to those faced by ASEAN, including climate change and natural disasters, corruption, poor management of natural resources and biodiversity loss, and agriculture and food security. Most importantly, the respondents aspired to witness a range of improvements in ASEAN in various aspects, including accessibility, inclusiveness, and sustainability issues, although few respondents believed the realisation of such improvements was likely.

From Viet Nam's perspective, while promoting a competitive ASEAN remains important, engaging the people and inducing them to share in the benefits from the regional community-building process should be given priority. To begin with, information on ASEAN should be better disseminated, aimed at informing the people and preparing them ahead of community-building measures of the opportunities and challenges of regional integration. Incorporating ASEAN content into textbooks is also necessary, but will not suffice in the absence of measures to make the ASEAN community-building process participatory to the people. Fostering intergenerational dialogues and the sharing of experiences may further help to alleviate the differences in attitudes towards ASEAN across age groups.

The findings identify a range of challenges for Viet Nam and ASEAN, and many of them are not new, e.g. corruption, climate change, and natural disasters. It is, therefore, necessary for Viet Nam to incorporate measures to effectively address such issues in its domestic agenda. Central to such measures should be meaningful attempts to increase public participation in the rule-making process on the basis of complete information provision and the fostering of a sense of ASEAN citizenship. At the broader level, further capacity building for the ASEAN Secretariat should remain essential for ensuring that the region as a whole is proceeding 'from actions to decisive actions', rather than just 'from vision to action' (Nguyen et al., 2014).

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What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Brunei Darussalam*

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Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a grouping of 10 member states in Southeast Asia that fosters regional cooperation and facilitates economic integration amongst its members. ASEAN was formed on 8 August 1967 with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand as its founding members. ASEAN has expanded over the years with the joining of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam. Brunei joined ASEAN as its sixth member on 7 January 1984, a week after the country gained independence.

Based on the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 (ASEAN, 2016), ASEAN aims to promote economic growth, social progress, and cultural progress in the region through joint endeavours; foster regional peace and security; encourage active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical, and scientific fields; promote partnerships in the development of agriculture and industries, trade, and transportation and communication facilities within the region; promote Southeast Asian studies; and maintain 'close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organisations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation among themselves'.

A few key highlights have shaped ASEAN in different ways from other associations. These highlights include the ASEAN Way, the ASEAN Charter, and the ASEAN Community.

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

** The author would like to express her appreciation to Muhammad Sufrizul bin Haji Md. Hussein, Ainaa Zafirah bte Abdul Manap, and Nur Ahlina bte Haji Zulkifli for their assistance in the data coding and dissemination of the online surveys.

The 'ASEAN Way' refers to an approach to solving issues that respects the cultural norms of Southeast Asia. It can be summarised as

a working process or style that is informal and personal. Policymakers constantly utilize compromise, consensus, and consultation in the informal decision-making process ... it above all prioritizes a consensus-based, non-conflictual way of addressing problems. Quiet diplomacy allows ASEAN leaders to communicate without bringing the discussions into the public view. Members avoid embarrassment that may lead to further conflict. (Masilamani and Peterson, 2014)

On 15 December 2008, the members of ASEAN met in Jakarta to launch the ASEAN Charter, signed in November 2007, with the aim of moving closer towards being a community. The charter established ASEAN as a legal entity and aimed to create a single free trade area for the region encompassing 500 million people. This was a momentous development for ASEAN for consolidating, integrating, and transforming itself into a community. It was achieved while ASEAN was seeking a more vigorous role in Asian and global affairs and at a time when the international system was experiencing a seismic shift.

Another key point in ASEAN's history, considered as one of the major milestones in the regional integration of ASEAN, was the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015. The ASEAN Community is composed of three pillars: the ASEAN Economic Community, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, and the ASEAN Political-Security Community.

Each pillar has its own blueprint. The ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint, adopted by the ASEAN leaders in November 2015, forms part of a general master plan, ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together, which is geared toward the realisation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. The said concept envisages, among others,

a rules-based, people-oriented, people-centered ASEAN Community, where our peoples enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms, higher quality of life and the benefits of community building, reinforcing our sense of togetherness and common identity, guided by the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter ... a vibrant, sustainable and highly integrated economies, enhanced ASEAN Connectivity as well as strengthened efforts in narrowing the development gap. (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015)

As ASEAN approaches its 50th founding anniversary in 2017, it is timely to ascertain the public's perception of the association to determine the gaps and areas for improvement.

The region and the world when ASEAN was born 50 years ago were very different to how they are now. Southeast Asia is no longer the divided region it was in the 1960s and 1970s. ASEAN has to evolve with and adapt to the times and must remain relevant and responsive to the needs of its peoples.

In a *titah*, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam said at the 27th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur:

ASEAN needs to be more economically integrated and interdependent. This is possible by improving on what has been accomplished to facilitate trade and investment. Businesses, especially micro, small, and medium enterprises, should continuously be made aware of opportunities and be able to take advantage of ASEAN's integration efforts. (Borneo Bulletin, 2015)

His Majesty Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam highlighted the importance of raising awareness of ASEAN, especially among the youth, as they play an integral part in fostering a people-centred, people-oriented ASEAN. There is also the need to keep the youth informed of ASEAN's vision because they are the ones who will inherit its work.

His Majesty Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam further added:

It is hoped that ASEAN can continue to develop into a community that is more dynamic, based on the principles that have shaped the region today. ASEAN economies have enjoyed growth, the peoples of ASEAN have become closer, and most importantly, they have benefited from the efforts of ASEAN leaders. (Borneo Bulletin, 2015)

Methodology

This study conducted a purposive online survey as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) with selected target groups, particularly focusing on youth aged between 19 and 25 (for the online survey) and business people as well as employees in the public and private sectors (for the FGDs). The instruments used for the survey were provided by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA).

To solicit respondents for the online survey, invitations were sent to people from academe, the public sector, the business sector, non-governmental organisations, and

students. The survey was also disseminated through personal contacts to obtain random responses from the four districts in Brunei.

The FGDs comprised two sessions. The first was with the business sector and the second FGD was with employees from the public and private sectors. Given the time constraint for this project, the FGDs focused more on respondents' aspirations and expectations as well as matching the discussions on questions 16 and 17 as much as possible in order to cover a broad spectrum of views and opinions on ASEAN.

Results and Discussions

Profile of the survey respondents

The survey had a total of 280 respondents (completed surveys) and was answered by Bruneians from all four districts of the country. The students were the largest group of survey respondents, followed by those from the public sector, 'others', the business sector, labour, academe, and civil society organisations/non-governmental organisations.¹ Respondents in the 'other' category comprised unemployed respondent-retirees and people representing semi-government agencies.

More than half of the respondents were aged 15–30, while 33.57% were aged 31–59 (serving as a good representation of the general population, as described in Footnote 1). Only 6.07% of the respondents were aged 50 or above. Meanwhile, the number of female respondents was double the number of male respondents.

According to an International Monetary Fund report, about 56% of Brunei's citizens and permanent residents work in the public sector. Hence, it is not surprising that Table 1 shows about 26% of the respondents were from the public sector.

¹ The survey was intended to focus on youth aged between 15 and 30 years old. Brunei has a young population; the Department of Economic Planning and Development reported that in 2015, about 17% of the country's population was aged between 15 and 24 years old, and about 46% were between 25 and 54 years old.

Table 1: Profile of the Survey Respondents

	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Affiliation		
Students	135	48.21
Government	73	26.07
Business	17	6.07
Academe	16	5.71
Labour	4	1.43
Civil society organisation/ non-governmental organisation	4	1.43
Other	31	11.07
<i>Total</i>	280	100.00
Age		
15–30 years	169	60.36
31–49 years	94	33.57
50+ years	17	6.07
<i>Total</i>	280	100.00
Gender		
Male	93	33.21
Female	187	66.79
<i>Total</i>	280	100.00

As shown in Figure 1, the largest share of respondents (35.13%) was moderately familiar with ASEAN. This was followed by those who were somewhat familiar, slightly familiar, very familiar, and, lastly, not at all familiar with ASEAN. When asked about their level of recognition of themselves as ASEAN citizens, 71.07% of the respondents indicated ‘very much’ (Figure 2). Meanwhile, 18.21% answered ‘moderately’, 8.93% responded with ‘somewhat’, and only 1.79% said they did not see themselves as ASEAN citizens. Figure 3 shows the respondents’ responses about their perceptions of Brunei’s membership of ASEAN. A high percentage of the total respondents, 82.86%, answered positively about the country being a member of ASEAN. Only 0.71% responded that the country’s membership was a bad thing.

Figure 1: Awareness of ASEAN

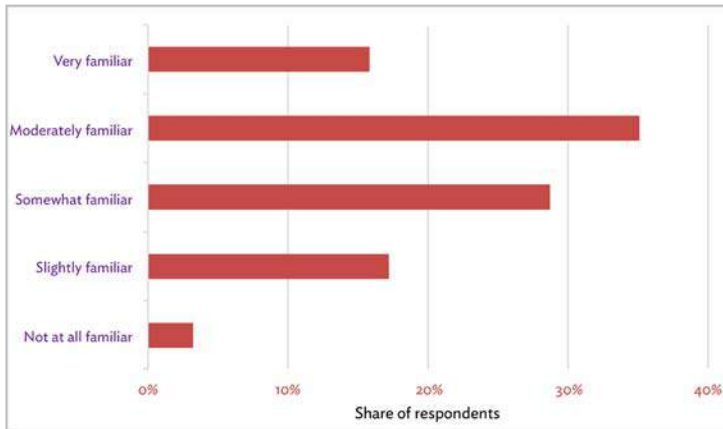


Figure 2: Identification as an ASEAN Citizen

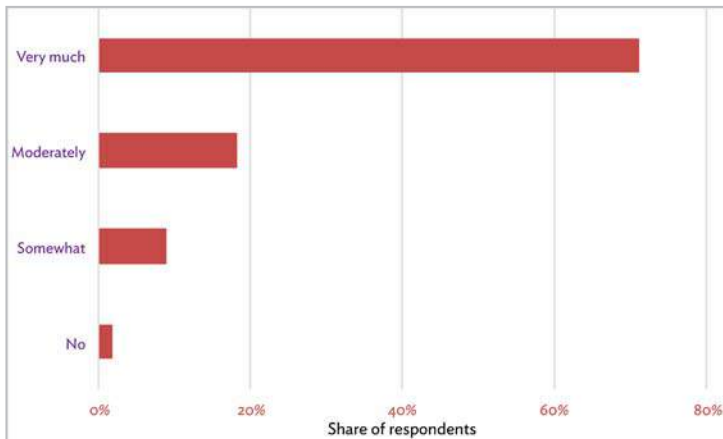
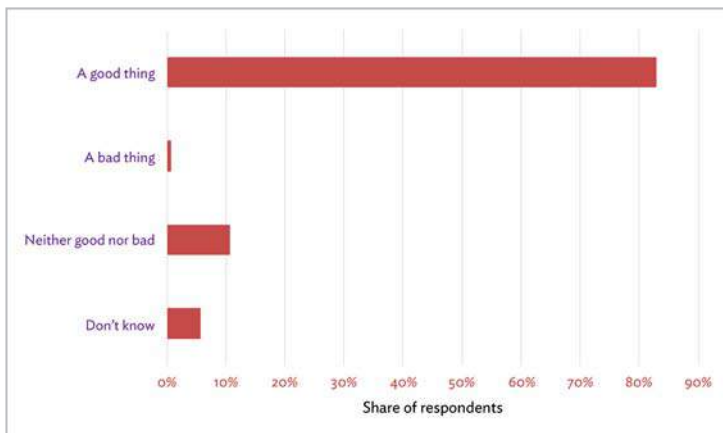


Figure 3: Perception of Brunei's Membership of ASEAN



A Pearson coefficient was calculated, which showed that people aged 31–49 were more familiar with ASEAN than younger respondents. Nevertheless, Bruneians, irrespective of their age, positively expressed their aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN.

The significance of ASEAN

When asked about whether Brunei had benefited from being a member of ASEAN, 31.43% and 35.36% of the respondents answered positively that the country had benefited ‘very much’ and ‘moderately’, respectively (Figure 4). This was in line with the responses for question 10 of the survey, which asked respondents how they would feel if Brunei were to leave ASEAN. The general consensus was that the respondents would be extremely concerned (as shown in Figure 5) if Brunei were to leave ASEAN as the country had played a key role in the association and in supporting intra- and inter-regional trade among ASEAN member countries. Meanwhile, a large share of respondents, 43.57%, was moderately optimistic about ASEAN’s future (Figure 6).

Figure 4: Opinion on Brunei’s Benefit from Being a Member of ASEAN

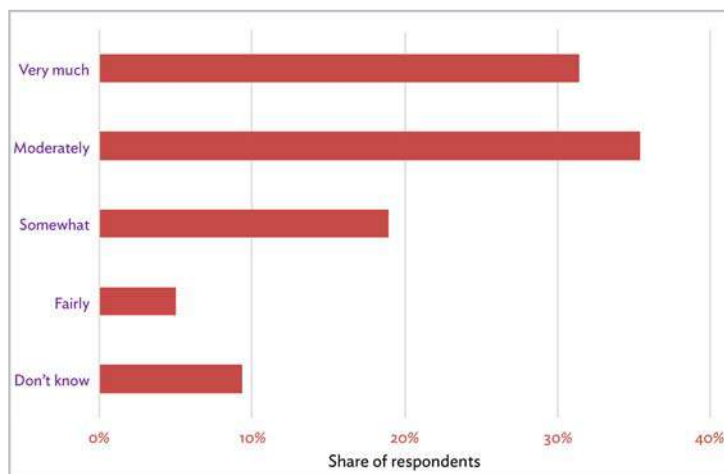


Figure 5: Feeling if Brunei Were to Leave ASEAN

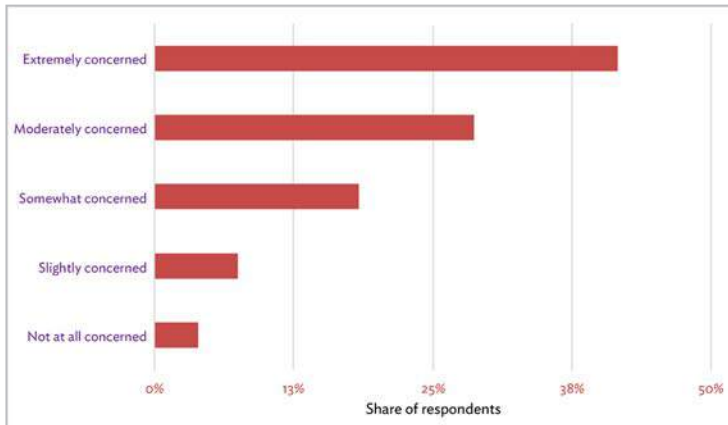


Figure 6: Perception of ASEAN's Future

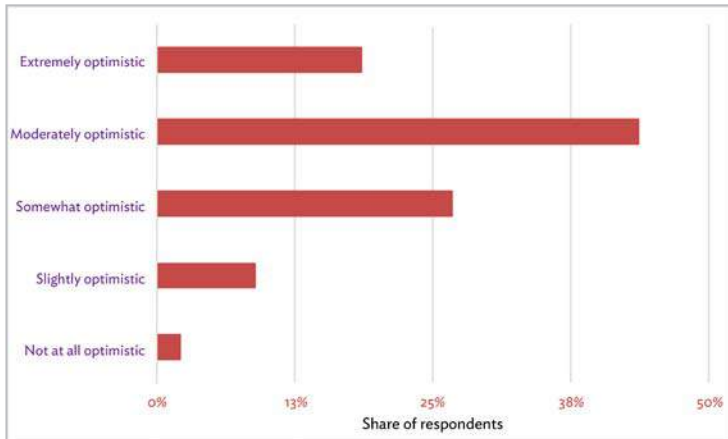
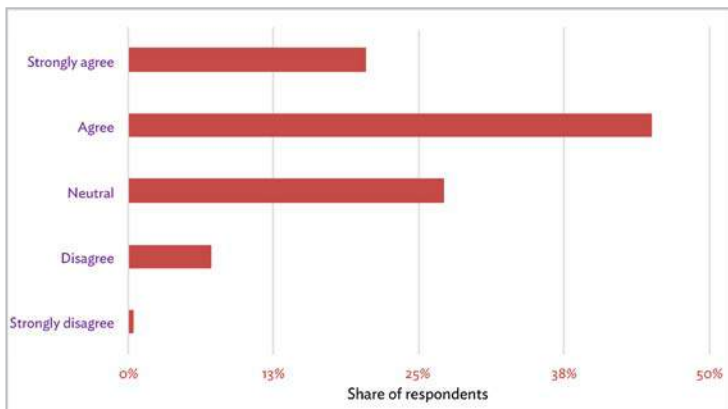


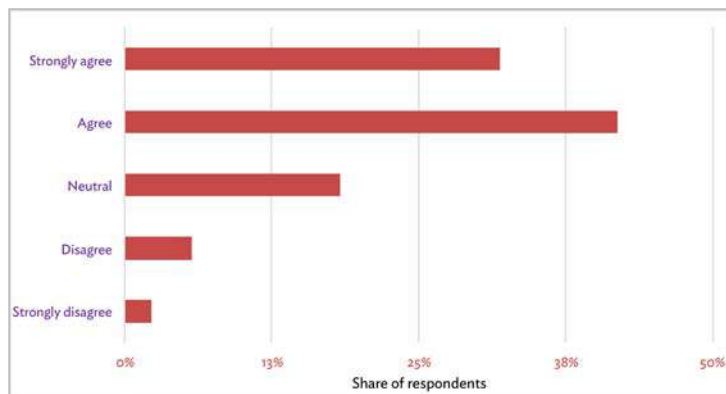
Figure 7: Extent of Agreement that Media Coverage of ASEAN Is Not Sufficient



Increased public awareness of ASEAN is necessary for achieving successful regional integration. The media plays a critical role in this process. As shown in Figure 7, 45% of the respondents agreed that the media (newspapers, radio, television, and online news) does not have sufficient coverage of ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges. A smaller proportion, 27.14%, felt neutrally about the statement. Only 7.15% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that coverage is not enough.

Next, the respondents were asked about their perception of the use of textbooks to promote, socialise, and educate ASEAN youth about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges (Figure 8). Large proportions of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this use of textbooks, at 41.94% and 31.90%, respectively. A challenge arising from these results would be to convince the 18.28% of respondents who answered ‘neutral’ to also support this strategy. The FGDs participants also discussed this issue, and those from the business community noted that ASEAN was an integral part of the country’s trade development. They expressed strong support for schools to include ASEAN in their curriculum so students can be educated about ASEAN from an early age. Furthermore, the qualitative discussions in the FGDs highlighted the need for media coverage to include stories that relate ASEAN’s policy issues and decisions to the everyday lives of the communities they aim to serve, and to include the voices of these communities and other relevant sources. The participants expressed that in this way, people can understand ASEAN better and have more realistic expectations of the association.

Figure 8: Perception of the Use of Textbooks to Promote ASEAN



Pressing problems facing Brunei and ASEAN

Next, from a list of choices, respondents were asked to choose five challenges they thought were most pressing for Brunei and ASEAN today and until 2025. The top five challenges for Brunei were: (1) unemployment; (2) agriculture and food security; (3) trade, investment, and regulatory coherence; (4) public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring; and (5) infrastructure availability and quality. Meanwhile, the most pressing issues for ASEAN were: (1) corruption; (2) poverty; (3) agriculture and food security; (4) climate change and natural disasters; and (5) unemployment. Brunei and ASEAN shared two common problems: agriculture and food security, and unemployment.

Agriculture and food security

Agriculture accounts for less than 3% of Brunei's gross domestic product, and the country imports more than 80% of its food. Only around 2% of the population is engaged in agriculture, although Brunei technically has much more fertile soil to exploit. The country owns a cattle farm in Australia that supplies most of the country's beef. At almost 588,000 hectares, this ranch is larger than Brunei itself. Eggs and chickens are largely produced locally to the extent that the country is self-sufficient in these products. Thus, agriculture and fisheries are among the sectors that the country has selected for highest priority in its efforts to diversify the economy.

There are also efforts to produce more rice and train rice farmers in innovative farming techniques, such as hybrid rice planting, with the aim to reduce imports as well as introduce new brands of rice into the international market. Brunei also plans to do the same with tropical fruits, and all can fit perfectly together with the country's efforts to build up a burgeoning *halal* industry.

Brunei became a member of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2013. This marked the beginning of a proactive partnership and the country's close involvement in the FAO's regional knowledge networks. Recent FAO regional assistance pertinent to Brunei has focused on a framework for food security and a vision for the food agriculture and forestry sector. The objectives of current country-level cooperation include reducing and diversifying the origins of food imports and developing rice production with a view to attaining self-sufficiency in this food commodity.

The FAO is also cooperating with Brunei and other ASEAN Member States on the development of an Integrated Food Security Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security for the region. In addition, the FAO is providing important regional- and country-level technical support in response to transboundary animal disease threats. It is also helping countries to improve their nutrition and food safety approaches and to balance food security needs with developments in the bioenergy sector.

Unemployment

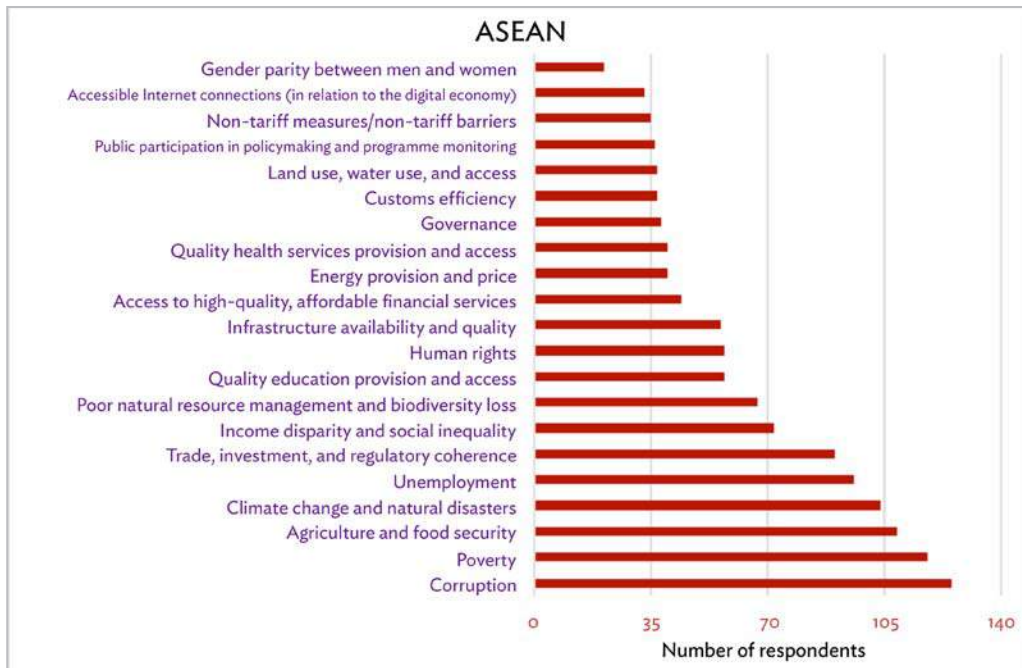
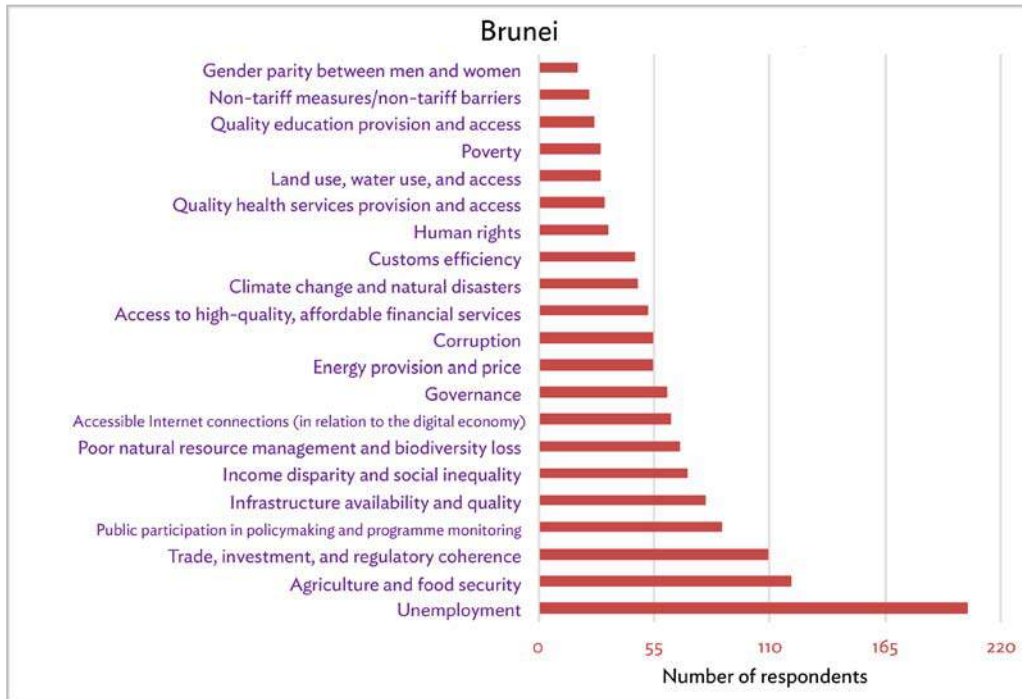
Borneo Bulletin (2015) reports that out of the 14,267 unemployed locals in 2015, 65% resided in the Brunei-Muara District (where the capital city, Bandar Seri Begawan, is located); 55% were women; 54% were between the ages of 20 and 29; and 63% had secondary education as their highest level of educational attainment.

A study on unemployment in Brunei conducted by Cheong and Lawrey (2009) argues that locals have to change their mindset in order to find jobs. According to the study, the local youth are not willing to work as their reservation wage is much higher than the salaries offered for the jobs they are qualified for. Brunei's Department of Economic Planning and Development states that in 2014, 58.5% of the jobless population were female (*The Economist*, 2014). Only 69.2% of the total jobless had completed secondary education, and only 5.7% had completed higher education. Hence, the issues of first-job salary expectations as well as the insufficient skills of job seekers have to be urgently addressed in order to foster the rapid development of the non-oil and gas sectors of the economy.

Another issue that has caused unemployment, particularly frictional unemployment, is the mismatch of career expectations and available employment. Employment policy needs to work to transform the attitudes and mindset of school-leavers. Further career guidance for various types of available jobs in manual, semi-skilled, and skilled professions should be given to students at the high-school level so they can make realistic job choices.

In terms of the issues facing ASEAN as a whole, the respondents highlighted the following as key issues for the region: (1) gender parity between men and women; (2) non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers; (3) quality education provision and access; (4) poverty; and (5) land use, water use, and access. These reflect the respondents' perceptions that these issues are not of significant concern for Brunei but are significant for other ASEAN countries.

Figure 9: Pressing Problems Facing Brunei and ASEAN



In contrast, the problems facing Brunei now and until 2025 with the least number of responses were: (1) gender parity between men and women, (2) accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy), (3) non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers, (4) public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring, and (5) land use, water use, and access.

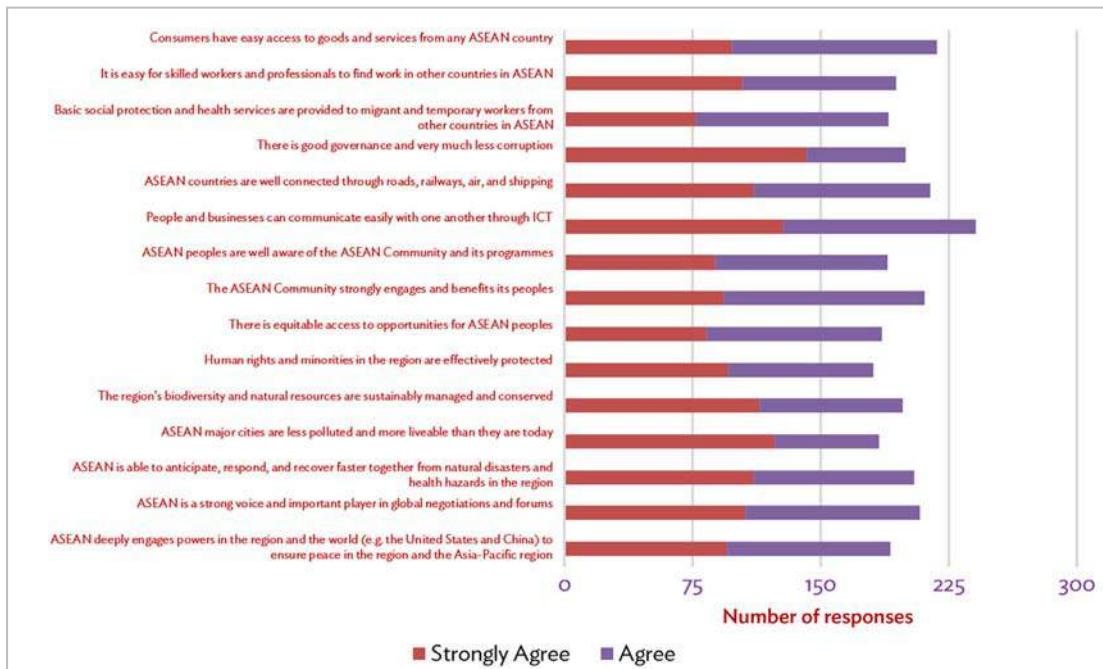
The least pressing problems of gender parity between men and women; non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers; and land use, water use, and access were common at the domestic and regional levels. The issues of quality education provision and access and poverty were pressing problems for ASEAN but were not relevant for Brunei, according to the respondents. This was likely partly due to Brunei's high literacy rate of 99.8% for males and 99.7% for females during the period 2008–2012 (UNICEF, 2012).

When asked about the most pressing problems facing the ASEAN Community today and until 2025, the top five problems identified by the respondents were corruption, poverty, agriculture and food security, climate change and natural disasters, and unemployment.

Aspirations and hopes for ASEAN

Based on the same set of statements, the respondents were also asked about their aspirations and hopes for ASEAN by 2025. A total of 123 respondents strongly agreed with the aspiration that ASEAN major cities would be less polluted and more liveable than they are today. For most statements, the responses were generally dominated by 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. Of the respondents, 118 agreed with the aspiration that the ASEAN community strongly engages and benefits its people. Meanwhile, 142 agreed with the statement regarding good governance in the ASEAN region and less corruption. However, a smaller percentage of respondents agreed with the aspiration that the basic social protection and health services provided to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN will be sufficient. This is an area that cannot be neglected if we are to consider the holistic role of the ASEAN Community.

Figure 10: Aspirations and Hopes for ASEAN

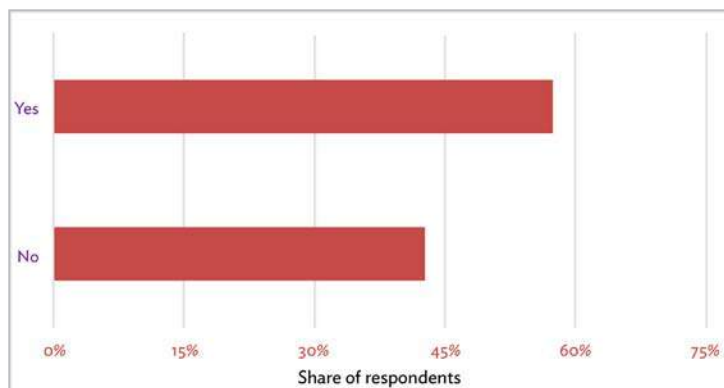


ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ICT = information and communications technology.

Expectations for ASEAN

When asked whether they had aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN, 57.4% of the respondents answered 'yes' and gave reasons. The reasons included the hopes that ASEAN would become a stronger regional platform both socially and economically; be a more integrated community for achieving economic stability, free trade, and zero tariffs to encourage trade between ASEAN countries and emulate the European Union to be united as one; have the free movement of workers between ASEAN countries in order to reduce unemployment; have open innovation among ASEAN business partners to share and contribute ideas and systems to make ASEAN countries stronger; and provide aid in the form of programmes and volunteer work in the less economically developed countries of ASEAN.

Figure 11: Having Aspirations, Expectations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN



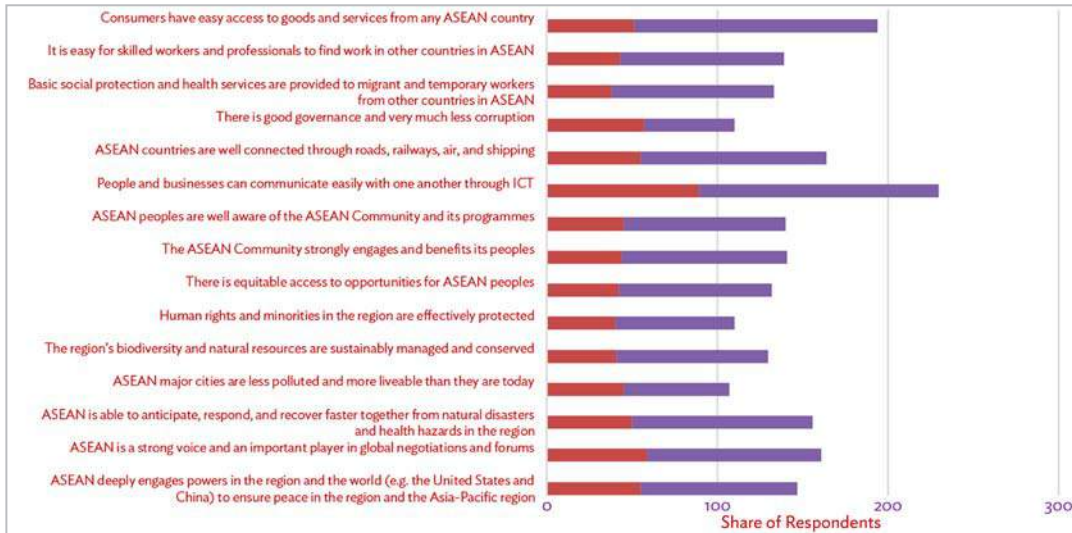
To further investigate their answers, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with 15 statements describing situations in ASEAN based on what they thought would probably happen in ASEAN by 2025.² The respondents were required to choose one of six options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, or don't know.

For all 15 statements, the majority of the respondents agreed that the situations depicted were likely to happen by 2025 (Figure 11). As many as 143 respondents agreed with the statement that consumers will have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country. This shows the respondents' expectations for trade openness and the deregulation of trade. This was further supported by 141 respondents who agreed with the statement that people and businesses will be able to communicate easily with one another through ICT. Both statements go hand in hand, which shows that a large percentage of respondents, especially those aged 15–30, supported the facilitation of trade in goods and services in ASEAN. Another important statement was: 'The ASEAN Community strongly engages and benefits its peoples.' For this statement, 100 respondents, approximately 36%, had a neutral view. It would be interesting to see in

² The statements were the following: ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world (e.g. the United States and China) to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region; ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums; ASEAN is able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region; ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today; the region's biodiversity and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved; human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected; there is equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples; the ASEAN Community strongly engages and benefits its peoples; ASEAN peoples are well aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes; people and businesses can communicate easily with one another through ICT; ASEAN countries are well connected through roads, railways, air, and shipping; there is good governance and very much less corruption; basic social protection and health services are provided to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN; it is easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN; and consumers have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country.

future research how the perception of this 36% of respondents might be shifted towards the ‘agree’ response.

Figure 12: Expectations for ASEAN

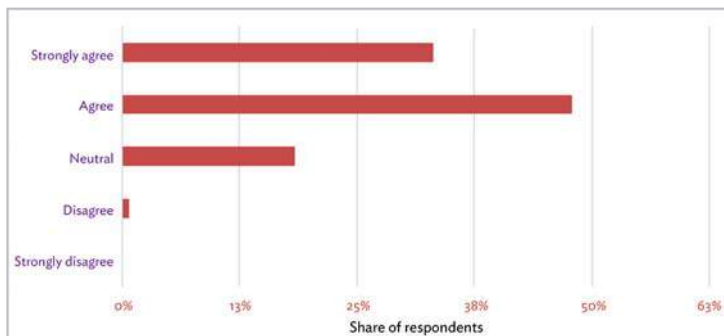


ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ICT = information and communications technology.

The ASEAN Secretariat

The ASEAN Secretariat, based in Jakarta, serves as the liaison agency that facilitates and coordinates the collaboration between ASEAN’s stakeholders. Overall, the majority of the respondents responded positively to the idea of improving the implementation and monitoring capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat in order to tackle the challenges ahead. To date, the ASEAN Secretariat is an organisation with 305 staff handling the workload of over 1,200 meetings annually.

Figure 13: Agreement with Upgrading the Implementing and Monitoring Capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat



Focus Group Discussions

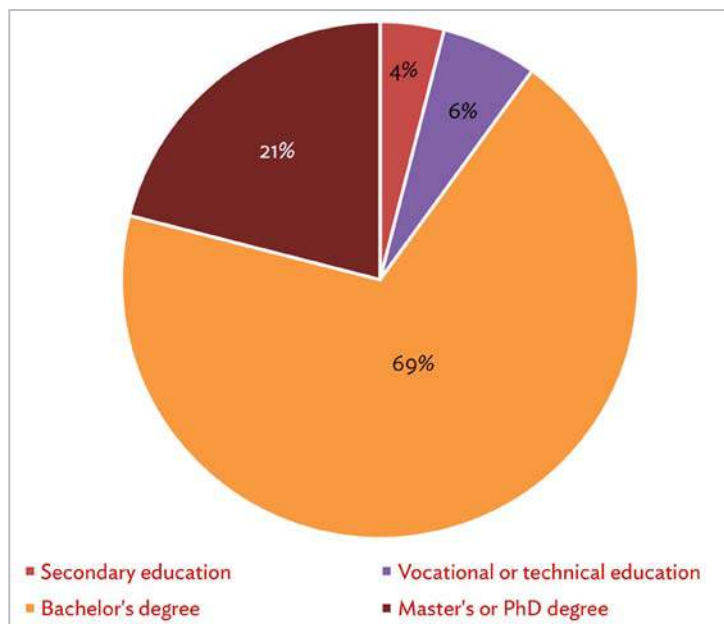
Results of the FGDs

The study included two FGDs. The first session was with the business sector (32 participants) and the second FGD was with employees from the public and private sectors (53 participants). Given the time constraint for this project, the FGDs focused more on participants' aspirations and expectations as well as matching the discussions for questions 16 and 17 as much as possible in order to cover a broad spectrum of views and opinions on the future of ASEAN.

Many of the discussions focused on three issues: ease of doing business; technological innovation for driving efficiency and productivity; and, interestingly, as highlighted by a number of the business participants, the need to provide an enabling environment for free trade zone facilities. The average age of the participants of both FGDs was around 35 years of age. The oldest participant in the business group was 67 years old, while the oldest public and private sector group participant was 51 years old.

Of the FGD participants, around 69% had a bachelor's degree, while 21% had either master's or PhD qualifications (Figure 14). The other 10% of the participants had completed either vocational or technical education, or at least secondary education.

Figure 14: Educational Background of the FGD Respondents



The participants were also asked to list the top three factors they thought would drive overall business activities and foreign direct investment into Brunei and ASEAN. The top three key factors identified by the participants were: ease of doing business (67%), establishing high-tech warehousing and distribution facilities near main ports (62%), and the establishment of free trade zones near ports in ASEAN countries (59%).

Furthermore, there were discussions on the enabling factors for driving ASEAN's productivity and growth. The top three factors were: paperless procedures or effective paperwork procedures, greater private sector engagement, and a platform for hearing more of the community's voices and feedback. These results were incorporated into a poll, which indicated that 69% of the participants agreed (30% strongly agreed and 39% agreed) that these enabling factors would help to drive and support growth in ASEAN. They also thought these factors would improve efficiency and productivity by increasing ASEAN's competitive advantage.

Summary and Conclusions

The survey and FGD results show the positive finding that the respondents recognised and were aware of ASEAN's role and activities, and identified as ASEAN citizens. They also had aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN as well as positive perceptions of Brunei's membership of the association. This was further supported as respondents agreed that Brunei had benefited from being a member of ASEAN, although a large share said the benefit was only moderate. One of the main ways to promote ASEAN further would be to increase the media's coverage of the association's progress, achievements, and challenges.

To overcome its challenges, ASEAN needs to be more alert and quick to react to the upcoming and persisting issues in the region, particularly corruption, poverty, agriculture and food security, climate change and natural disasters, and unemployment. The role of proper communication channels can also play a big part in overcoming these issues. On the whole, the respondents had the expectation that ASEAN would be able to pursue the ASEAN Community Vision through the mutual support of the people in the region. This will heavily rely on the will of the people to work together to achieve this goal. Unity of the ASEAN peoples will be necessary to face the region's development issues and challenges. Last but not the least, the ASEAN Secretariat will need to function more effectively, as revealed by the results in this perception survey, by strengthening its capacity to deliver the support and aid required for achieving ASEAN's goals.

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What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Cambodia*

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Introduction

With technical and financial support from the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace conducted a survey and an in-depth focus group discussion (FGD) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to assess people's perceptions of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), especially the awareness, aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes of selected groups in the country towards ASEAN. This study is a contribution towards the ASEAN@50: Retrospective and Perspectives on the Making, Substance, Significance, and Future of ASEAN project.

The survey was conducted through prepared sets of questionnaires, which were sent to selected groups of respondents as required by the scope of the study. Seven groups of people participated in the survey: (1) labour, (2) members of civil society organisations, (3) business professionals and/or entrepreneurs, (4) academe, (5) students, (6) government officials, and (7) others. The text of the questionnaires was prepared by ERIA in English then translated by researchers from the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace into the local language, Khmer. A total of 310 sets of questionnaires, each containing 19 questions, were distributed directly to the respondents, but only 203 were collected and qualified for data entry and analysis.

* All figures and tables in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

In addition, an FGD was held with 22 stakeholders, comprising 5 university students, 3 respondents from non-governmental organisations and academia, 10 business professionals, and 4 government officials. In the FGD, stakeholders were asked to elaborate on their answers to some of the key questions asked in the survey. Participants in the FGD were also given the chance to complete the survey questionnaires manually, and this was carried out prior to conducting the meeting.

Findings from the Survey

Survey representation: Distribution by age, gender, and affiliation

Of the 203 respondents, 86 were aged 16–30 years old (young people), representing 42.4% of the total; 89 (43.8%) were 31–49 years old (middle-aged people); and 28 (13.8%) were senior individuals aged 50 or over (Table 1).

Seventy-two (35.5%) respondents were female, and 131 (64.5%) were male (Table 2).

Table 1. Distribution of the Respondents by Age

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
16–30 years	86	42.4
31–49 years	89	43.8
50+ years	28	13.8
<i>Total</i>	203	100.0

Table 2. Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Female	72	35.5
Male	131	64.5
<i>Total</i>	203	100.0

The respondents were from seven groups of occupations (Table 3). They comprised 49 students (24.1% of the total respondents), 27 labour or workers, 36 business people, 24 from non-governmental organisations or civil society organisations, 19 from academia, 29 government officials, and 19 ‘others’ including farmers, military officers, and homemakers.

Table 3. Distribution of the Respondents by Affiliation

Affiliation	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Students	49	24.1
Labour	27	13.3
Business	36	17.7
Civil Society	24	11.8
Academia	19	9.4
Government	29	14.3
Other	19	9.4
<i>Total</i>	203	100.0

Awareness of ASEAN

When asked about their level of awareness of ASEAN, 48 respondents selected ‘very familiar’, 55 selected ‘moderately familiar’, 67 chose ‘somewhat familiar’, 22 selected ‘slightly familiar’, and only 11 selected ‘not at all familiar’ (Table 4). This implies that the majority of Cambodians are well aware of ASEAN.

Table 4. Awareness of ASEAN

	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Very familiar	48	23.7
Moderately familiar	55	27.1
Somewhat familiar	67	33.0
Slightly familiar	22	10.8
Not at all familiar	11	5.4
<i>Total</i>	203	100.0

When disaggregating the responses by age group, 14 of the 86 respondents aged 16–30 (16.3%) said they were ‘very familiar’ with ASEAN, 26 of the 89 middle-aged respondents (29.2% of those aged 31–49) selected ‘very familiar’, and 8 of the 28 respondents aged 50 or older (28.6%) said they were ‘very familiar’ with ASEAN (Table 5). This indicates that older people have a greater awareness of ASEAN.

Table 5. Awareness of ASEAN by Age Group

Age Group	Awareness of ASEAN (number of respondents)						Very familiar (%)
	Very familiar	Moderately familiar	Somewhat familiar	Slightly familiar	Not at all familiar	Total	
16–30 years	14	23	33	12	4	86	16.3
31–49 years	26	24	29	6	4	89	29.2
50+ years	8	8	5	4	3	28	28.6
<i>Total</i>	48	55	67	22	11	203	23.7

The female respondents were found to have a greater awareness of ASEAN than the male respondents. Twenty of the 72 female respondents (27.8%) indicated they were ‘very familiar’ with ASEAN, while 28 of the 131 male respondents (21.4%) selected the same answer (Table 6).

Table 6. Awareness of ASEAN by Gender

Gender	Awareness of ASEAN (number of respondents)						Very familiar (%)
	Very familiar	Moderately familiar	Somewhat familiar	Slightly familiar	Not at all familiar	Total	
Female	20	21	22	8	1	72	27.8
Male	28	34	45	14	10	131	21.4
<i>Total</i>	48	55	67	22	11	203	23.7

Among the different affiliations, government officials had the greatest awareness of ASEAN as 26 of 29 (89.7%) indicated they were ‘very familiar’ with ASEAN (Table 7). The second-highest was the business group, in which 7 of 36 respondents selected the same choice. None of the respondents from the labour or ‘other’ groups selected ‘very familiar’.

Table 7. Awareness of ASEAN by Affiliation

Affiliation	Awareness of ASEAN (number of respondents)					Total	Very familiar (%)
	Very familiar	Moderately familiar	Somewhat familiar	Slightly familiar	Not at all familiar		
Students	8	17	18	3	3	49	16.3
Labour	0	13	7	4	3	27	0.0
Business	7	7	16	5	1	36	19.4
Civil society	3	5	10	5	1	24	12.5
Academia	4	8	6	1	0	19	21.1
Government	26	3	0	0	0	29	89.7
Other	0	2	10	4	3	19	0.0
<i>Total</i>	48	55	67	22	11	203	23.7

Feeling of being an ASEAN citizen

When asked whether they felt like ASEAN citizens, respondents in all age, gender, and affiliations groups generally gave positive answers. The survey respondents were given four options: ‘very much’, ‘moderately’, ‘somewhat’, and ‘no’. Of the 203 respondents, 64 (31.5%) selected ‘very much’, 83 (40.9%) selected ‘moderately’, and 50 (24.6%) selected ‘somewhat’. Only six respondents selected ‘no’ (Table 8).

Table 8. Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen

	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Very much	64	31.5
Moderately	83	40.9
Somewhat	50	24.6
No	6	3.0
<i>Total</i>	203	100.0

Examining the responses by age, 22 of the 86 respondents (25.6%) in the youngest age group selected ‘very much’, while 31 of the 89 respondents (34.8%) in the middle-aged group and 11 of 28 (39.3%) in the oldest age group selected the same option (Table 9). This implies that older people feel more positively towards being ASEAN citizens.

Table 9. Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen by Age Group

Age Group	Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen (number of respondents)					Very much (%)
	Very much	Moderately	Somewhat	No	Total	
16-30 years	22	37	25	2	86	25.6
31-49 years	31	40	18	0	89	34.8
50+ years	11	6	7	4	28	39.3
Total	64	83	50	6	203	31.5

The male respondents felt more strongly about being ASEAN citizens than the female respondents. Twenty of the 72 (27.8%) female respondents selected 'very much', while 44 (33.6%) of the 131 male respondents selected the same choice (Table 10).

Table 10. Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen by Gender

Gender	Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen (number of respondents)					Very much (%)
	Very much	Moderately	Somewhat	No	Total	
Female	20	34	17	1	72	27.8
Male	44	49	33	5	131	33.6
Total	64	83	50	6	203	31.5

Examining the respondents' feelings of being ASEAN citizens by affiliation, surprisingly high shares of students and those in the labour group selected 'very much'. In the survey, 14 of 27 (51.9%) in the labour group selected 'very much', while 20 of 49 (40.8%) in the student group selected the same option (Table 11). However, when combining the answers of both 'very much' and 'moderately', the government officials felt more positively about being ASEAN citizens.

Table 11. Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen by Affiliation

Affiliation	Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen (number of respondents)					Very much or moderately (%)
	Very much	Moderately	Somewhat	No	Total	
Students	20	18	9	2	49	77.6
Labour	14	6	6	1	27	74.1
Business	4	18	13	1	36	61.1
Civil society	7	8	8	1	24	62.5
Academia	6	9	4	0	19	79.0
Government	10	14	4	1	29	82.8
Other	3	10	6	0	19	68.4
<i>Total</i>	64	83	50	6	203	72.4

Aspirations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN

The survey asked respondents to answer simply ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the question of whether they had aspirations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN. The feedback was generally positive. Of the 203 respondents, 162 (79.8%) selected ‘yes’ and only 41 (20.2%) selected ‘no’ (Table 12).

Table 12. Having Aspirations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN

	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
No	41	20.2
Yes	162	79.8
<i>Total</i>	203	100.0

The questionnaires allowed respondents to add comments about their aspirations, concerns, or hopes. As expected, not all respondents wrote comments. Only about one-third of all respondents, most of which were government officials or from academia, gave details:

Aspirations

- We are proud to be ASEAN citizens.
- ASEAN provides strong market access to Cambodian products and services.
- ASEAN safeguards peace and security with its bigger and more powerful neighbours for Cambodia.
- We are ASEAN; we must live together and prosper together.
- Cambodian skilled labourers will have increasing opportunities to work legally in ASEAN member countries, especially in Thailand, and will be treated with respect for their rights.

Concerns

- Cambodia will lose competitiveness with ASEAN in the markets for labour and quality products.
- Development gaps will grow as some ASEAN members become richer, and Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam will be exploited.
- Negative impacts from different cultures will harm Cambodia's tradition and culture.
- There will be negative impacts on the environment, especially in Phnom Penh and other megacities in ASEAN.

Hopes

- ASEAN Member States will work together closely and with mutual respect.
- ASEAN will represent its ideas and position as 'one voice' in international politics and security issues.
- ASEAN will bring a better future, with development and prosperity.
- ASEAN Members States can resolve their differences and share a common destiny.

The oldest age group had the highest share of those responding positively to having aspirations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN, with 27 of 28 respondents (96.4%) answering 'yes' (Table 13). Only 82.0% of respondents in the middle-aged group and 72.1% in the youngest group answered 'yes'.

Table 13. Having Aspirations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN by Age Group

Age Group	Aspirations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN (number of respondents)			Yes (%)
	No	Yes	Total	
16–30 years	24	62	86	72.1
31–49 years	16	73	89	82.0
50+ years	1	27	28	96.4
Total	41	162	203	79.8

By gender, a greater share of the male respondents answered positively than the female respondents. Of the 131 male respondents, 106 (80.9%) selected ‘yes’, while 56 of the 72 female respondents (77.8%) selected the same option (Table 14).

Table 14. Having Aspirations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN by Gender

Gender	Aspirations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN (number of respondents)			Yes (%)
	No	Yes	Total	
Female	16	56	72	77.8
Male	25	106	131	80.9
Total	41	162	203	79.8

Further examination of the responses by affiliation reveals that 28 of the 49 students (77.6%), 23 of the 27 labour respondents (85.2%), 29 of the 39 business respondents (80.6%), 17 of the 24 civil society respondents (70.8%), 23 of the 29 government officials (84.2%), and 16 of the 19 respondents in the ‘other’ category (84.2%) selected ‘yes’ (Table 15). The results indicate a high incidence of having aspirations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN among all groups of people in Cambodia.

Table 15. Having Aspirations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN by Affiliation

Affiliation	Aspirations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN (number of respondents)			Yes (%)
	No	Yes	Total	
Students	11	38	49	77.6
Labour	4	23	27	85.2
Business	7	29	36	80.6
Civil society	7	17	24	70.8
Academia	3	16	19	84.2
Government	6	23	29	79.3
Other	3	16	19	84.2
Total	41	162	203	79.8

Perception of membership of ASEAN

The survey next asked respondents how they felt about Cambodia's membership of ASEAN. The four available answers were 'a good thing', 'a bad thing', 'neither good nor bad', and 'don't know'. Of the 203 respondents, 148 (72.9%) answered 'good' for this question. Only 7 respondents (3.5%) chose 'bad', 39 (19.2%) selected 'neither good nor bad', and 9 selected 'don't know' (Table 16).

Table 16. Perception of Membership of ASEAN

	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
A good thing	148	72.9
A bad thing	7	3.5
Neither good nor bad	39	19.2
Don't know	9	4.4
<i>Total</i>	203	100.0

The oldest age group had the highest share (75.0%) of respondents who answered positively about membership of ASEAN by choosing 'good' (Table 17).

Table 17. Perception of Membership of ASEAN by Age Group

Age Group	Membership of ASEAN (number of respondents)					Good (%)
	Good	Bad	Neither	Don't Know	Total	
16–30 years	61	3	17	5	86	70.9
31–49 years	66	1	19	3	89	74.2
50+ years	21	3	3	1	28	75.0
<i>Total</i>	148	7	39	9	203	72.9

A greater share of the male respondents (77.9%) than the female respondents (63.9%) indicated they had a 'good' perception of membership of ASEAN (Table 18).

Table 18. Perception of Membership of ASEAN by Gender

Gender	Membership of ASEAN (number of respondents)					Good (%)
	Good	Bad	Neither	Don't Know	Total	
Female	46	2	21	3	72	63.9
Male	102	5	18	6	131	77.9
Total	148	7	39	9	203	72.9

By affiliation, the labour and academia groups had the highest shares of positive answers, with 88.9% and 84.1% answering 'good', respectively (Table 19).

Table 19. Perception of Membership of ASEAN by Affiliation

Affiliation	Membership of ASEAN (number of respondents)					Good (%)
	Good	Bad	Neither	Don't Know	Total	
Students	34	1	9	5	49	69.4
Labour	24	0	2	1	27	88.9
Business	22	3	10	1	36	61.1
Civil society	17	2	5	0	24	70.8
Academia	16	1	2	0	19	84.2
Government	22	0	6	1	29	75.9
Other	13	0	5	1	19	68.4
Total	148	7	39	9	203	72.9

Benefit from being a member of ASEAN

The survey asked respondents whether Cambodia had benefited from being a member of ASEAN. The five available answers were 'very much', 'moderately', 'somewhat', 'no', and 'don't know'. Of the 203 respondents, 54 (26.6%) answered 'very much', 63 (31.0%) selected 'moderately', 8 selected 'no', and 6 selected 'don't know' (Table 20).

Table 20. Benefit of ASEAN Membership

	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Very much	54	26.6
Moderately	63	31.0
Somewhat	72	35.5
No	8	3.9
Don't know	6	3.0
<i>Total</i>	203	100.0

Among the respondents, those in the youngest and the middle-aged groups gave the highest shares of very positive answers regarding Cambodia's benefit from being a member of ASEAN, at 27.9% and 27.0%, respectively (Table 21).

Table 21. Benefit of ASEAN Membership by Age Group

Age Group	Benefit from ASEAN (number of respondents)						Very much (%)
	Very much	Moderate	Somewhat	No	Don't Know	Total	
16–30 years	24	23	30	6	3	86	27.9
31–49 years	24	27	35	1	2	89	27.0
50+ years	6	13	7	1	1	28	21.4
<i>Total</i>	54	63	72	8	6	203	26.6

By gender, a higher share of male respondents (29.8%) than female respondents (20.8%) answered very positively about the benefit from ASEAN membership (Table 22).

Table 22. Benefit of ASEAN Membership by Gender

Gender	Benefit from ASEAN (number of respondents)						Very much (%)
	Very much	Moderate	Somewhat	No	Don't Know	Total	
Female	15	25	25	4	3	72	20.8
Male	39	38	47	4	3	131	29.8
<i>Total</i>	54	63	72	8	6	203	26.6

Of the respondents, high shares of the business group (36.1%) and students (34.7%) indicated that Cambodia had benefited very much from being a member of ASEAN (Table 23).

Table 23. Benefit of ASEAN Membership by Affiliation

Affiliation	Benefit from ASEAN (number of respondents)					Total	Very much (%)
	Very much	Moderate	Somewhat	No	Don't Know		
Students	17	17	12	2	1	49	34.7
Labour	2	15	9	1	0	27	7.4
Business	13	6	15	2	0	36	36.1
Civil society	5	4	13	0	2	24	20.8
Academia	4	7	7	1	0	19	21.1
Government	9	11	7	1	1	29	31.0
Other	4	3	9	1	2	19	21.1
Total	54	63	72	8	6	203	26.6

Feeling if Cambodia were to leave ASEAN

Respondents were also asked how they would feel if Cambodia were to leave ASEAN. The five options were 'extremely concerned', 'moderately concerned', 'somewhat concerned', 'slightly concerned', and 'not at all concerned'. Of the respondents, 87 (42.9%), selected 'extremely concerned', 59 (29.1%), selected 'moderately concerned', 40 (19.7%) indicated 'somewhat concerned', 10 (4.9%) selected slightly concerned, and 7 selected 'not at all concerned' (Table 24).

Table 24. Feeling if Cambodia Were to Leave ASEAN

	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Extremely concerned	87	42.9
Modertaley concerned	59	29.1
Somewhat concerned	40	19.7
Slightly concerned	10	4.9
Not at all concerned	7	3.5
Total	203	100.0

All age groups expressed similar concerns about Cambodia leaving ASEAN. Among the respondents, 43.0% of the youngest age group, 43.8% of the middle-aged group, and 39.3% of the oldest group indicated they would be ‘extremely concerned’ if Cambodia were to leave ASEAN (Table 25).

Table 25. Feeling if Cambodia Were to Leave ASEAN by Age

Age Group	Feeling if Cambodia Were to Leave ASEAN (number of respondents)						Extremely concerned (%)
	Extremely concerned	Moderately concerned	Somewhat concerned	Slightly concerned	Not at all concerned	Total	
16–30 years	37	27	17	5	0	86	43.0
31–49 years	39	20	20	3	7	89	43.8
50+ years	11	12	3	2	0	28	39.3
<i>Total</i>	87	59	40	10	7	203	42.9

Examining the responses by gender indicates only a slight difference between the genders. Of the 72 female respondents, 30 (41.7%) chose ‘extremely concerned’, while 57 of the 131 male respondents (43.5%) chose the same option (Table 26).

Table 26. Feeling if Cambodia Were to Leave ASEAN by Gender

Gender	Feeling if Cambodia Were to Leave ASEAN (number of respondents)						Extremely concerned (%)
	Extremely concerned	Moderately concerned	Somewhat concerned	Slightly concerned	Not at all concerned	Total	
Female	30	22	16	1	3	72	41.7
Male	57	37	24	9	4	131	43.5
<i>Total</i>	87	59	40	10	7	203	42.9

By affiliation, the ‘other’ group had the highest share of respondents who chose ‘extremely concerned’, at 57.9%. This was followed by the government officials at 37.9% (Table 27).

Table 27. Feeling if Cambodia Were to Leave ASEAN by Affiliation

Affiliation	Feeling if Cambodia Were to Leave ASEAN (number of respondents)						Extremely concerned (%)
	Extremely concerned	Moderately concerned	Somewhat concerned	Slightly concerned	Not at all concerned	Total	
Students	21	14	13	1	0	49	42.9
Labour	9	14	1	2	1	27	33.3
Business	17	8	8	1	2	36	47.2
Civil society	10	4	5	3	2	24	41.7
Academia	8	6	4	1	0	19	42.1
Government	11	11	5	0	2	29	37.9
Other	11	2	4	2	0	19	57.9
<i>Total</i>	87	59	40	10	7	203	42.9

Optimism for the future of ASEAN

Respondents were next asked whether they were optimistic about the future of ASEAN. The five options were ‘extremely optimistic’, ‘moderately optimistic’, ‘somewhat optimistic’, ‘slightly optimistic’, and ‘not at all optimistic’. Of the respondents, 49 (24.1%) selected ‘extremely optimistic’, 92 (45.3%) chose ‘moderately optimistic’, 41 (20.2%) selected ‘somewhat optimistic’, 17 (8.4%) selected ‘slightly optimistic’, and only 4 (2.0%) chose ‘not at all optimistic’ (Table 28).

Table 28. Optimism for the Future of ASEAN

	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Extremely optimistic	49	24.1
Modertaley optimistic	92	45.3
Somewhat optimistic	41	20.2
Slightly optimistic	17	8.4
Not at all optimistic	4	2.0
<i>Total</i>	203	100.0

By age group, the young and middle-aged respondents (26.7% and 25.8%, respectively) shared nearly similar rates of optimism for ASEAN. However, the oldest group was less optimistic (10.7%) (Table 29).

Table 29. Optimism for the Future of ASEAN by Age

Age Group	Optimism for ASEAN (number of respondents)						Extremely optimistic (%)
	Extremely optimistic	Moderately optimistic	Somewhat optimistic	Slightly optimistic	Not at all optimistic	Total	
16–30 years	23	35	20	7	1	86	26.7
31–49 years	23	38	18	9	1	89	25.8
50+ years	3	19	3	1	2	28	10.7
<i>Total</i>	49	92	41	17	4	203	24.1

Examining the responses by gender shows that a greater share of the male respondents (25.2%) chose ‘extremely optimistic’ compared to the female respondents (22.2%) (Table 30).

Table 30. Optimism for the Future of ASEAN by Gender

Gender	Optimism for ASEAN (number of respondents)						Extremely optimistic (%)
	Extremely optimistic	Moderately optimistic	Somewhat optimistic	Slightly optimistic	Not at all optimistic	Total	
Female	16	35	16	5	0	72	22.2
Male	33	57	25	12	4	131	25.2
<i>Total</i>	49	92	41	17	4	203	24.1

Looking at the shares of respondents who chose ‘extremely optimistic’ by affiliation group shows that the respondents in the business group (38.9%) were the most optimistic about ASEAN. This was followed by the ‘other’ group (36.8%) and the government officials (31.0%) (Table 31).

Table 31. Optimism for the Future of ASEAN by Affiliation

Affiliation	Optimism for ASEAN (number of respondents)						Extremely optimistic (%)
	Extremely optimistic	Moderately optimistic	Somewhat optimistic	Slightly optimistic	Not at all optimistic	Total	
Students	9	30	7	2	1	49	18.4
Labour	2	17	5	3	0	27	7.4
Business	14	9	10	3	0	36	38.9
Civil society	4	12	3	2	3	24	16.7
Academia	4	6	5	4	0	19	21.1
Government	9	14	5	1	0	29	31.0
Other	7	4	6	2	0	19	36.8
Total	49	92	41	17	4	203	24.1

Perception of media coverage of ASEAN

The survey asked the respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: ‘The media (newspapers, radio, television, and online news) does not have enough coverage of ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges.’ The respondents could choose from five answers: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’. The results show that 46 of the total 203 respondents (22.7%) selected ‘strongly agree’, 89 respondents (43.8%) chose ‘agree’, 29 (14.3%) selected ‘neutral’, 30 selected ‘disagree’, and 9 selected ‘strongly disagree’ (Table 32).

The share of those who strongly agreed with the statement was highest for the oldest age group, at 25.0% or 7 of 28 respondents (Table 33).

Table 32. Perception of Media Coverage of ASEAN

	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Strongly agree	46	22.7
Agree	89	43.8
Neutral	29	14.3
Disagree	30	14.8
Strongly disagree	9	4.4
Total	203	100.0

Table 33. Perception of Media Coverage of ASEAN by Age Group

Age Group	The Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN (number of respondents)						Strongly Agree (%)
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	
16–30 years	17	37	12	17	3	86	19.8
31–49 years	22	39	12	11	5	89	24.7
50+ years	7	13	5	2	1	28	25.0
<i>Total</i>	46	89	29	30	9	203	22.7

The responses by gender show that the male respondents (32 of 131, or 24.4%) had a higher share than female respondents (14 of 72, or 19.4%) of those who strongly agreed with the statement that the media does not have enough coverage of ASEAN (Table 34).

Table 34. Perception of Media Coverage of ASEAN by Gender

Gender	The Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN (number of respondents)						Strongly Agree (%)
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	
Female	14	34	10	10	4	72	19.4
Male	32	55	19	20	5	131	24.4
<i>Total</i>	46	89	29	30	9	203	22.7

By affiliation, the business group (12 of 36, or 33.3%) and those from academia (6 of 19, or 31.6%) had the highest shares of those who strongly agreed with the statement (Table 35).

Table 35. Perception of Media Coverage of ASEAN by Affiliation

Affiliation	The Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN (number of respondents)					Total	Strongly Agree (%)
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree		
Students	7	25	6	10	1	49	14.3
Labour	5	6	10	6	0	27	18.5
Business	12	12	6	4	2	36	33.3
Civil society	4	14	3	0	3	24	16.7
Academia	6	9	1	3	0	19	31.6
Government	9	14	1	5	0	29	31.0
Other	3	9	2	2	3	19	15.8
<i>Total</i>	46	89	29	30	9	203	22.7

Perception of the use of ASEAN school textbooks

The survey asked the respondents the following question: ‘Would you agree or disagree with using school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges?’ The five available answers were ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’. The results show that 88 respondents (43.4%) selected ‘strongly agree’, and 94 (46.3%) chose ‘agree’, 15 selected ‘neutral’, 3 selected ‘disagree’, and 3 selected ‘strongly disagree’ (Table 36).

Table 36. Perception of the Use of ASEAN School Textbooks

	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Strongly agree	88	43.4
Agree	94	46.3
Neutral	15	7.4
Disagree	3	1.5
Strongly disagree	3	1.5
<i>Total</i>	203	100.0

The responses on the perception of the use of ASEAN school textbooks by age group show that all age groups shared similarly high levels of agreement with the statement (Table 37). The shares of those who chose ‘strongly agree’ were 37.2% for the youth age group, 48.3% for the middle-aged group, and 46.4% for the oldest age group.

Table 37. Perception of the Use of ASEAN School Textbooks by Age

Age Group	Use of ASEAN School Textbooks (share of respondents)						Strongly Agree (%)
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	
16–30 years	32	45	7	1	1	86	37.2
31–49 years	43	38	5	2	1	89	48.3
50+ years	13	11	3	0	1	28	46.4
<i>Total</i>	88	94	15	3	3	203	43.4

Examining the responses by gender, a greater share of the male respondents (44.3%, or 72 of 131) than the female respondents (41.7%, or 30 of 72) strongly agreed with the use of ASEAN-related school textbooks (Table 38).

Table 38. Perception of the Use of ASEAN School Textbooks by Gender

Gender	Use of ASEAN School Textbooks (number of respondents)						Strongly Agree (%)
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	
Female	30	36	6	0	0	72	41.7
Male	58	58	9	3	3	131	44.3
<i>Total</i>	88	94	15	3	3	203	43.4

By affiliation group, labour (74.1%, or 20 of 27 respondents) and the government officials (65.5%, or 19 of 29 respondents) had the highest shares of respondents who strongly agreed with the statement (Table 39).

Table 39. Perception of the Use of ASEAN School Textbooks by Affiliation

Affiliation	Use of ASEAN School Textbooks (number of respondents)						Strongly Agree (%)
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	
Students	13	29	4	0	3	49	26.5
Labour	20	6	1	0	0	27	74.1
Business	6	23	4	3	0	36	16.7
Civil society	9	12	3	0	0	24	37.5
Academia	10	9	0	0	0	19	52.6
Government	19	9	1	0	0	29	65.5
Other	11	6	2	0	0	19	57.9
<i>Total</i>	88	94	15	3	3	203	43.4

Pressing challenges facing Cambodia

The respondents were next asked to decide on the five most pressing problems facing Cambodia today and until 2025. Twenty-one pressing problems were prepared for respondents to choose from, and these were subdivided into three categories: economic issues (eight problems), sociocultural issues (nine problems), and governance and political issues (four problems). Each respondent was asked to select five pressing problems. Respondents could also choose 'other', for which they were requested to provide details.

The responses to this question show that the top five pressing challenges for Cambodia were: (1) corruption, chosen 125 times; (2) income disparity and social inequality, chosen 78 times; (3) unemployment, chosen 76 times; (4) infrastructure availability and quality, chosen 73 times; and (5) poverty, chosen 71 times (Table 40).

Table 40. Top Five Challenges Facing Cambodia

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Corruption	125	61.6
Income disparity and social inequality	78	38.4
Unemployment	76	37.4
Infrastructure availability and quality	73	36.0
Poverty	71	35.0
Quality education provision and access	66	32.5
Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence	51	25.1
Agriculture and food security	50	24.6
Quality health services provision and access	48	23.7
Access to high-quality, affordable financial services	47	23.2
Climate change and natural disasters	47	23.2
Human rights	47	23.2
Energy provision and price	44	21.7
Customs efficiency	42	21.0
Governance	42	20.7
Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss	33	16.3
Public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring	31	15.3
Non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers	14	6.9
Land use, water use, and access	13	6.4
Gender parity between men and women	11	5.4
Accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy)	6	3.0

Challenges facing ASEAN

Using the same problems, the respondents were next asked what they thought were the five most pressing problems facing the ASEAN Community or region from today until 2025 that required collective action by all ASEAN Member States. As in the previous question, respondents could choose from the 21 pressing problems, and these were again subdivided into three categories: economic issues (eight problems), sociocultural issues (nine problems), and governance and political issues (four problems). The respondents were also given the choice of ‘other’ and were requested to provide details.

Using accumulated counts, the top five challenges for ASEAN were (1) climate change and natural disasters, chosen 108 times; (2) corruption, chosen 96 times; (3) trade, investment, and regulatory coherence, chosen 93 times; (4) infrastructure availability and quality, chosen 85 times; and (5) income disparity and social inequality, chosen 82 times (Table 41).

Table 41. Top Five Challenges Facing ASEAN

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Climate change and natural disasters	108	53.2
Corruption	96	47.3
Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence	93	45.8
Infrastructure availability and quality	85	41.9
Income disparity and social inequality	82	40.4
Access to high-quality, affordable financial services	66	32.5
Unemployment	65	32.0
Human rights	58	28.6
Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss	49	24.1
Agriculture and food security	47	23.2
Governance	46	22.7
Energy provision and price	37	18.2
Non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers	34	16.8
Poverty	28	13.8
Public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring	26	12.8
Quality education provision and access	23	11.3
Quality health services provision and access	20	9.9
Gender parity between men and women	18	8.9
Customs efficiency	16	7.9
Land use, water use, and access	14	6.9
Accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy)	4	2.0

Aspirations for ASEAN in 2025

The respondents were then asked for their opinions regarding what they hoped would happen in ASEAN by 2025. They were presented with 15 statements and asked to state their level of agreement by choosing from among the following options: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neutral', 'disagree', 'strongly disagree', and 'don't know'. The respondents were also given the choice of 'other' and were requested to provide details.

Due to errors in translation and data entry, only 188 of the 203 completed questionnaires qualified for the analysis for this section. The results are as follows.

- To the statement that by 2025, 'ASEAN is a region where goods, services, and businesses can move easily among countries in the region', 47 respondents (23.2%) selected 'strongly agree', and 127 (62.6%) selected 'agree'. This was followed by 11 respondents (5.4%) who answered 'neutral' and 3 who selected 'disagree' (Table 42).

Table 42. Perception of the Ease of Movement of Goods, Services, and Businesses in ASEAN by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	47	23.2
Agree	127	62.6
Neutral	11	5.4
Disagree	3	1.5
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Don't know	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- To the statement that by 2025, 'ASEAN is a region where regulations and procedures make it easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN', 43 respondents (21.2%) chose 'strongly agree', 106 (52.2%) chose 'agree', 32 (15.8%) selected 'neutral', 6 selected 'disagree', and only 1 chose 'don't know' (Table 43).

Table 43. Perception of the Ease of Movement of Skilled Workers and Professionals in ASEAN by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	43	21.2
Agree	106	52.2
Neutral	32	15.8
Disagree	6	3.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Don't know	1	0.5
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- The next statement was that by 2025, 'ASEAN and its member countries provide basic social protection and health services to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN'. For this statement, 49 respondents (24.1%) chose 'strongly agree', 97 (47.8%) chose 'agree', 34 (16.7%) selected 'neutral', 7 selected 'disagree', and 1 selected 'strongly disagree' (Table 44).

Table 44. Perception of the Provision of Social Protection and Health Services by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	49	24.1
Agree	97	47.8
Neutral	34	16.7
Disagree	7	3.4
Strongly disagree	1	0.5
Don't know	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- In response to the statement that by 2025, 'ASEAN is a region of good governance and very much less corruption', only 53 respondents (26.1%) selected 'strongly agree'. Meanwhile, 73 (36%) answered 'agree', 37 (18.2%) selected 'neutral', 22 (10.8%) selected 'disagree', and 3 selected 'strongly disagree' (Table 45).

Table 45. Perception of Achieving Good Governance and Less Corruption by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	53	26.1
Agree	73	36.0
Neutral	37	18.2
Disagree	22	10.8
Strongly disagree	3	1.5
Don't know	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- For the statement that ‘ASEAN is a region where it is easy to physically move around through roads, railways, air, and shipping’, 57 respondents (28.1%) chose ‘strongly agree’. This was followed by 102 respondents (50.2%) who chose ‘agree’, while 23 (11.3%) selected ‘neutral’, 4 selected ‘disagree’, and 2 selected ‘strongly disagree’ (Table 46).

Table 46. Perception of the Ease of Transport Connectivity by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	57	28.1
Agree	102	50.2
Neutral	23	11.3
Disagree	4	2.0
Strongly disagree	2	1.0
Don't know	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- To the statement that by 2025, ‘the ASEAN Community is a region where people and businesses can digitally interact and communicate easily with one another’, 42 (20.7%) respondents strongly agreed, and 116 (57.1%) agreed. Meanwhile, 24 (11.8%) selected ‘neutral’, only 2 chose ‘disagree’, 1 chose ‘strongly disagree’, and 3 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 47).

Table 47. Perception of the Ease of Digital Interaction and Communication by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	42	20.7
Agree	116	57.1
Neutral	24	11.8
Disagree	2	1.0
Strongly disagree	1	0.5
Don't know	3	1.5
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- In response to the statement that 'ASEAN peoples are deeply aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes', 40 respondents (19.7%) chose 'strongly agree', while 94 (46.3%) chose 'agree', 33 (16.3%) selected 'neutral', 18 chose 'disagree', and 3 chose 'strongly disagree'.

Table 48. Perception of Deep Awareness of the ASEAN Community by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	40	19.7
Agree	94	46.3
Neutral	33	16.3
Disagree	18	8.9
Strongly disagree	3	1.5
Don't know	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- To the statement that by 2025, 'the ASEAN Community deeply engages and benefits its peoples', 42 respondents (20.7%) strongly agreed, while 95 (46.8%) selected 'agree', 38 (18.7%) selected 'neutral', 10 selected 'disagree', 2 selected 'strongly disagree', and 1 chose 'don't know' (Table 49).

Table 49. Perception of Deep Engagement and Benefit from the ASEAN Community by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	42	20.7
Agree	95	46.8
Neutral	38	18.7
Disagree	10	4.9
Strongly disagree	2	1.0
Don't know	1	0.5
Total	188	100.0

- Next was the following statement: ‘There is equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.’ For this statement, 43 (21.2%) respondents strongly agreed, 92 (45.3%) agreed, 40 (19.7%) were neutral, and 13 (6.4%) disagreed (Table 50).

Table 50. Perception of Equitable Access to Opportunities

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	43	21.2
Agree	92	45.3
Neutral	40	19.7
Disagree	13	6.4
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Don't know	0	0.0
Total	188	100.0

- In response to the statement that ‘human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected’, 46 respondents (22.7%) selected ‘strongly agree’, 85 (41.9%) selected ‘agree’, 44 (21.7%) selected ‘neutral’, 12 selected ‘disagree’, and 1 selected ‘strongly disagree’ (Table 51).

Table 51. Perception of the Effective Protection of Human Rights

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	46	22.7
Agree	85	41.9
Neutral	44	21.7
Disagree	12	5.9
Strongly disagree	1	0.5
Don't know	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- There was strong agreement with the statement that ‘the region’s biodiversity and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved’. Of the respondents, 51 (25.1%) strongly agreed, and 60 (29.6%) agreed. Meanwhile, 49 (24.1%) selected ‘neutral’, 25 (12.3%) disagreed, and 3 strongly disagreed with the statement (Table 52).

Table 52. Perception of Sustainable Environmental Conservation and Management in ASEAN

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	51	25.1
Agree	60	29.6
Neutral	49	24.1
Disagree	25	12.3
Strongly disagree	3	1.5
Don't know	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- There were mixed opinions on the statement that by 2025, ‘ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today’. Of the respondents, 46 (22.7%) strongly agreed, 78 (38.4%) agreed, and 29 (14.3%) were neutral. However, 27 respondents (13.3%) disagreed, and 7 strongly disagreed with the statement (Table 53).

Table 53. Perception of Achieving Less Pollution and More Liveable ASEAN Cities by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	46	22.7
Agree	78	38.4
Neutral	29	14.3
Disagree	27	13.3
Strongly disagree	7	3.4
Don't know	1	0.5
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- There was strong agreement with the statement: ‘ASEAN is able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.’ Fifty-five respondents (27.1%) strongly agreed, and 84 (41.4%) agreed. Meanwhile, 41 respondents (20.1%) were neutral, and 8 disagreed with the statement (Table 54).

Table 54. Perception of the Ability to Respond Faster to Natural Disasters and Health Hazards in ASEAN by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	55	27.1
Agree	84	41.4
Neutral	41	20.2
Disagree	8	3.9
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Don't know	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- Many respondents expressed high aspirations for the statement that ‘ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums’. Fifty respondents (24.6%) strongly agreed, and 84 (41.4%) agreed, but 47 (23.2%) were neutral, 6 disagreed, and 1 strongly disagreed with the statement (Table 55).

Table 55. Perception of a Strong Global Role for ASEAN by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	50	24.6
Agree	84	41.4
Neutral	47	23.2
Disagree	6	3.0
Strongly disagree	1	0.5
Don't know	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- Respondents also showed strong agreement with the statement, ‘ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world (e.g. the United States and China) to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region’. Fifty-five respondents (27.1%) strongly agreed, 86 (42.4%) agreed, 40 (19.7%) were neutral, 4 disagreed, 2 strongly disagreed, and 1 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 56).

Table 56. Perception of ASEAN’s Deep Engagement in the Region and the World by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	55	27.1
Agree	86	42.4
Neutral	40	19.7
Disagree	4	2.0
Strongly disagree	2	1.0
Don't know	1	0.5
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

Expectations for ASEAN by 2025

To examine their perceptions of the future of ASEAN, the survey asked respondents about what they believed and expected would happen in ASEAN by 2025. They were presented with 15 statements and for each statement were requested to select one of six

answers: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’, and ‘don’t know’. Respondents were also given the choice of ‘other’ and were requested to provide details. Due to errors in translation and data entry, only 188 of the 203 completed questionnaires qualified for the analysis in this section.

- The respondents expressed strong agreement with the statement: ‘Consumers have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country.’ Of the respondents, 37 (18.2%) strongly agreed, 125 (61.6%) agreed, 15 (7.4%) were neutral, 5 disagreed, 3 strongly disagreed, and 3 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 57).

Table 57. Perception of Access to Goods, Services, and Businesses

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	37	18.2
Agree	125	61.6
Neutral	15	7.4
Disagree	5	2.5
Strongly disagree	3	1.5
Don't know	3	1.5
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- Next was the following statement: ‘It is easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.’ For this statement, 38 respondents (18.7%) chose ‘strongly agree’, 104 (51.2%) chose ‘agree’, 30 (14.8%) selected ‘neutral’, 4 chose ‘strongly disagree’, and 4 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 58).

Table 58. Perception of the Ease of Movement of Skilled Workers and Professionals

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	38	18.7
Agree	104	51.2
Neutral	30	14.8
Disagree	8	3.9
Strongly disagree	4	2.0
Don't know	4	2.0
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- There was a high level of expectation for the statement that ‘basic social protection and health services are provided to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN’. For this statement, 47 respondents (23.2%) strongly agreed, 89 (43.8%) agreed, 36 (17.7%) were neutral, 6 disagreed, 5 strongly disagreed, and 5 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 59).

Table 59. Perception of the Provision of Social Protection and Basic Health Services

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	47	23.2
Agree	89	43.8
Neutral	36	17.7
Disagree	6	3.0
Strongly disagree	5	2.5
Don't know	5	2.5
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- Responses to the following statement were mixed: ‘There is good governance and very much less corruption. Forty-seven respondents (23.2%) strongly agreed and 70 (34.5%) agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 35 (17.2%) were neutral, 20 disagreed, 6 strongly disagreed, and 10 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 60).

Table 60. Perception of Achieving Good Governance and Less Corruption by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	47	23.2
Agree	70	34.5
Neutral	35	17.2
Disagree	20	9.9
Strongly disagree	6	3.0
Don't know	10	4.9
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- There was strong agreement with the statement: ‘ASEAN countries are well connected through roads, railways, air, and shipping.’ While 59 respondents (27.6%) strongly agreed, and 100 (49.3%) agreed, 27 (13.3%) were neutral, 2 disagreed, 2 strongly disagreed, and 1 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 61).

Table 61. Perception of Strong Transport Connectivity by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	56	27.6
Agree	100	49.3
Neutral	27	13.3
Disagree	2	1.0
Strongly disagree	2	1.0
Don't know	1	0.5
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- The respondents showed strong agreement with the expectation that ‘people and businesses can communicate easily with one another through ICT’. Forty respondents (19.7%) strongly agreed, 103 (50.7%) agreed, 29 (14.3%) were neutral, 5 disagreed, 2 strongly disagreed, and 9 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 62).

Table 62. Perception of the Ease of Communication through ICT

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	40	19.7
Agree	103	50.7
Neutral	29	14.3
Disagree	5	2.5
Strongly disagree	2	1.0
Don't know	9	4.4
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- The respondents expressed strong agreement with the statement: ‘ASEAN peoples are well aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.’ For this statement, 31 respondents (15.3%) strongly agreed, 90 (44.3%) agreed, 47 (23.2%) were neutral, 9 disagreed, 2 strongly disagreed, and 9 indicated ‘don’t know’ (Table 63).

Table 63. Perception of Awareness of the ASEAN Community by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	31	15.3
Agree	90	44.3
Neutral	47	23.2
Disagree	9	4.4
Strongly disagree	2	1.0
Don't know	9	4.4
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- There was also good agreement with the following statement: ‘The ASEAN Community strongly engages and benefits its peoples.’ Of the respondents, 31 (15.3%) strongly agreed, 90 (44.3%) agreed, 47 (23.2%) were neutral, 9 disagreed, 2 strongly disagreed, and 9 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 64).

Table 64. Perception of Strong Engagement and Benefit from the ASEAN Community

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	31	15.3
Agree	90	44.3
Neutral	47	23.2
Disagree	9	4.4
Strongly disagree	2	1.0
Don't know	9	4.4
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- Many respondents agreed with the statement: ‘There is equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.’ For this statement, 42 respondents (20.7%) chose ‘strongly agree’, 88 (43.3%) chose ‘agree’, 41 (20.2%) selected ‘neutral’, 9 selected ‘disagree’, 1 selected ‘strongly disagree’, and 7 selected ‘don’t know’ (Table 65).

Table 65. Perception of Equitable Access to Opportunities for ASEAN Peoples

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	42	20.7
Agree	88	43.3
Neutral	41	20.2
Disagree	9	4.4
Strongly disagree	1	0.5
Don't know	7	3.4
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- The results also show strong agreement with the expectation that ‘human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected’. As many as 42 respondents (20.7%) strongly agreed, and 82 (40.4%) respondents agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 38 (18.7%) were neutral, 12 disagreed, 5 strongly disagreed, and 9 did not know (Table 66).

Table 66. Perception of the Effective Protection of Human Rights and Minorities in ASEAN

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	42	20.7
Agree	82	40.4
Neutral	38	18.7
Disagree	12	5.9
Strongly disagree	5	2.5
Don't know	9	4.4
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- There was also a high level of agreement with the expectation that ‘the region’s biodiversity and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved’. For this statement, 48 (23.6%) respondents strongly agreed, and 51 (25.1%) agreed. Meanwhile, 62 (30.5%) were neutral, 16 disagreed, 6 strongly disagreed, and 5 selected ‘don’t know’ (Table 67).

Table 67. Perception of the Sustainable Management and Conservation of the Environment in ASEAN

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	48	23.6
Agree	51	25.1
Neutral	62	30.5
Disagree	16	7.9
Strongly disagree	6	3.0
Don't know	5	2.5
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- To the statement, ‘ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today’, 39 respondents (19.2%) strongly agreed, 74 (36.5%) agreed, 44 (21.7%) were neutral, 18 disagreed, 6 strongly disagreed, and 7 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 68).

Table 68. Perception of Achieving Less Pollution and More Liveable ASEAN Cities

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	39	19.2
Agree	74	36.5
Neutral	44	21.7
Disagree	18	8.9
Strongly disagree	6	3.0
Don't know	7	3.4
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- Many agreed with the statement: ‘ASEAN is able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.’ Fifty-four respondents (26.6%) strongly agreed, and 61 (30%) agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 60 (29.6%) were neutral, 5 disagreed, 1 strongly disagreed, and 7 selected ‘don’t know’ (Table 69).

Table 69. Perception of ASEAN’s Faster Response to Natural Disasters and Health Hazards by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	54	26.6
Agree	61	30.0
Neutral	60	29.6
Disagree	5	2.5
Strongly disagree	1	0.5
Don’t know	7	3.4
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- There was strong agreement with the statement: ‘ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums.’ In response to this statement, 48 (23.6%) chose ‘strongly agree’, 83 (40.9%) chose ‘agree’, 36 (17.7%) selected ‘neutral’, 8 selected ‘disagree’, 2 selected ‘strongly disagree’, and 11 chose ‘don’t know’ (Table 70).

Table 70. Perception of ASEAN as an Important Player in Global Negotiations and Forums by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	48	23.6
Agree	83	40.9
Neutral	36	17.7
Disagree	8	3.9
Strongly disagree	2	1.0
Don’t know	11	5.4
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

- There was general agreement with the statement: ‘ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world (e.g. the United States and China) to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.’ While 53 (26.1%) respondents strongly agreed and 82 (40.4%) agreed, 41 (20.2%) were neutral, 4 disagreed, and 7 selected ‘don’t know’ (Table 71).

Table 71. Perception of ASEAN’s Deep Engagement of Powers in the Region and the World by 2025

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	53	26.1
Agree	82	40.4
Neutral	41	20.2
Disagree	4	2.0
Strongly disagree	1	0.5
Don’t know	7	3.4
<i>Total</i>	188	100.0

Upgrading and monitoring the capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat

The survey asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the idea of gradually upgrading the implementing and monitoring capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat to meet the region’s increasing challenges. Five possible answers were available for respondents to choose from: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’.

The respondents showed strong agreement with upgrading the capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat. Of the respondents, 83 (40.9%) strongly agreed, and 97 (47.8%) agreed. Only 22 (10.8%) were neutral, and 1 respondent disagreed (Table 72).

Table 72. Perception of Upgrading the Capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat

	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Strongly agree	83	40.9
Agree	97	47.8
Neutral	22	10.8
Disagree	1	0.5
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	188	100.0

Findings from the Focus Group Discussion

A study team from the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace organised and facilitated an FGD, which was held in Phnom Penh with 22 stakeholders: 5 university students, 3 participants from non-governmental organisations and academia, 10 business participants, and 4 government officials. During the FGD, stakeholders were asked to elaborate on their answers to some of the key questions from the survey questionnaires. Participants of the FGD were also given time to complete their survey questionnaires before and during the meeting.

The feedback from the discussions in various sections was mostly similar to the results of the survey. However, there were deeper discussions and analysis on some issues, such as the costs and benefits of ASEAN membership, people's awareness and general conceptions of ASEAN, and the challenges faced by Cambodia and by ASEAN as a whole.

Similar to the survey, the FGD showed strong aspirations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN. Most of the participants indicated they were proud to be ASEAN citizens and would like to continue to reside in ASEAN. Many hoped that ASEAN would bring further prestige and prosperity to Cambodia. Participants mentioned that without membership of ASEAN, Cambodia would not be as prosperous as it was today. In general, they expressed positive opinions about the association. Their concerns were mainly related to Cambodia's ability to participate in the ASEAN single market and the free flow of goods, services, and skilled labour, and the concern that Cambodia would face competition for market access.

The respondents were relatively well aware of ASEAN as an association of 10 countries and could name all of the member states. However, many did not know the exact or

technical details of the operations or functions of ASEAN or how Cambodia could benefit from ASEAN. Among the participants in the FGD, those from academia and the government officials had the greatest understanding and awareness of ASEAN. The business group seemed to have limited knowledge of ASEAN's opportunities for trade, investment, and business as the participants tended to be more involved in local markets and markets in the European Union and North America than in ASEAN markets.

Almost all of the participants thought that ASEAN had brought many positive impacts to Cambodia across many fields, especially in economic development. The participants considered ASEAN to be a driving force for Cambodia's reforms and for improving the country's image and reputation in the international arena, and they considered ASEAN to be a symbol of regional integration and unity.

However, some of the participants felt that while Cambodia had benefited in many sectors as a result of being a member of ASEAN, the country still faced many current and future challenges. The respondents considered the main challenges to be the disparities in wealth and development that still exist among ASEAN Member States and the Cambodian population. Poverty, unemployment, and poor infrastructure are still the main challenges for Cambodia. To maximise the benefits from regional integration, Cambodia should address all these challenges with efforts to further its reforms and engage more in the implementation of ASEAN's agreements and protocols.

The participants highlighted various challenges that ASEAN as a body faces. Participants from academia and the student group proposed that ASEAN would face problems with city pollution due to poor governance and inadequate city planning. The business group expressed concerns for the present weak status of Cambodia in regional competition within ASEAN. Meanwhile, the civil society organisation representatives thought the big challenges for Cambodia and ASEAN were corruption, human rights issues, and the management of natural resources and the environment.

Conclusion

ASEAN has been operational for 50 years since its founding in 1967, and the association has made remarkable achievements in all sectors. From five founding members to 10 fully integrated members, ASEAN can be considered as one of the great successes of regional integration and a symbol of regional integration and unity.

The survey for this study shows high awareness, aspirations, and positive perceptions among Cambodians of ASEAN across different occupation, age, and gender groups. The

majority of the respondents expressed positivity towards being ASEAN citizens and were optimistic in their strong aspirations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN. However, not all Cambodians share similar views, and many lack awareness of ASEAN or do not think positively of the association. As such, a minority of the respondents showed limited awareness of ASEAN and did not have strong aspirations, concerns, or hopes for it.

The survey found that the top five most pressing challenges for Cambodia were corruption, income disparity and social inequality, unemployment, infrastructure availability and quality, and poverty. For ASEAN, the top five pressing challenges were climate change and natural disasters; corruption; trade, investment, and regulatory coherence; infrastructure availability and quality; and income disparity and social inequality. The respondents felt that corruption, income disparity and social inequality, and infrastructure availability and quality were common concerns for Cambodia and ASEAN.

Although ASEAN has carried out its roles effectively and successfully, there is still a need to improve by encouraging participation; promoting awareness; and strengthening the role of media, school textbooks, and the ASEAN Secretariat.

Based on the results of the survey, while ASEAN has accomplished a great deal during its first 50 years, its member states should work together to reduce the development gaps and strengthen ASEAN's role in promoting a regional architecture for peace and prosperity for the people in the region.

What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Indonesia*

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Background

The Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, in partnership with The Habibie Center, initiated a survey followed by a series of in-depth focus group discussions (FGDs) in Indonesia between September and October 2016 to assess the aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes of people in Southeast Asia towards the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This national-level exercise was part of a region-wide survey for the ASEAN@50: Retrospectives and Perspectives on the Making, Substance, Significance, and Future of ASEAN project.

The survey was conducted electronically through the Survey Monkey platform and was targeted at the Indonesian public in general. The survey drew participation from people from diverse professions, including labour, non-governmental organisation (NGO) employees, business professionals and entrepreneurs, academics, students, and government officials. A total of 19 questions were posed to respondents on issues ranging from their awareness of ASEAN all the way to respondents' aspirations and concerns for ASEAN.

Subsequently, a total of three FGDs were carried out with the following stakeholders: students (youth) (16 students, comprising three high school students and 13 university students); NGOs and those from academia (10 participants, comprising nine NGO

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

activists and one representative of a policy think tank); and businesses (seven business representatives). In the FGDs, stakeholders were asked to elaborate on their feedback on some of the key questions posed in the survey. Participants of the FGDs were also given the chance to complete the survey manually, and this was carried out prior to the FGDs.

Survey Outcomes

Survey participants: Distribution, characteristics, and background (Questions 1–5)

The survey drew participation from 302 respondents, of which 182 (60.26%) were aged 15–30, 103 (34.1%) were aged 31–49, and the remaining 17 (5.63%) were aged 50 or older (Figure 1). The gender distribution of the survey was relatively balanced, although the number of male respondents, totalling 166 respondents (54.97%), slightly exceeded the number of female respondents at 136 respondents (45.03%) (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Age Distribution of the Respondents

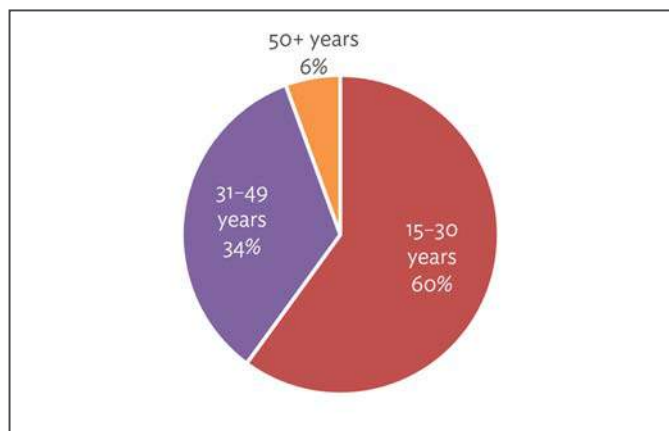
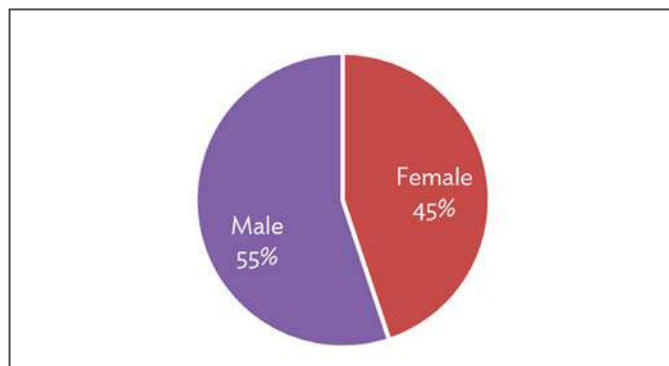
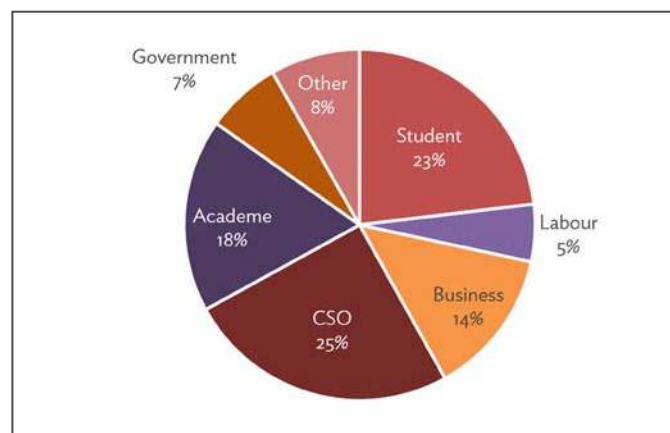


Figure 2: Gender Distribution of the Respondents



In terms of occupation, 76 respondents (25.08%) were from NGOs or civil society organisations (CSOs), 54 (17.82%) were from academia, 70 (23.10%) were students, 41 (13.53%) were business representatives, 21 (6.93%) were government officials, 16 (5.28%) were labour, and 25 (8.25%) were respondents with other occupations (Figure 3). Rather than classifying their occupations in the ‘business’ category, a large number of respondents opted for the ‘other’ category but stated their occupation as an ‘employee of a private sector organisation’. The survey team took the liberty of putting these respondents under the ‘business’ category in the final assessment of the survey. It is interesting to note that some respondents also listed their occupation as ‘housewife’, and one identified herself as a midwife, a possible indication that people from more diverse occupations are becoming at least more familiar with ASEAN.

Figure 3: Affiliations of the Respondents



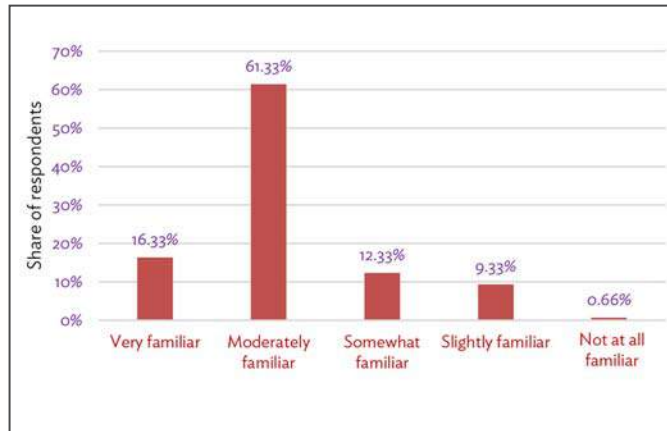
CSO = civil society organisation.

Voices of ASEAN

Awareness of ASEAN (Question 5)

Respondents were asked about their awareness of ASEAN. They were given five possible answers: ‘very familiar’, ‘moderately familiar’, ‘somewhat familiar’, ‘slightly familiar’, and ‘not at all familiar’. An overwhelming 184 respondents (61.33%) claimed they were moderately familiar with ASEAN (Figure 4). This was followed by 49 respondents (16.33%) who claimed they were very familiar and 37 respondents (12.33%) who were somewhat familiar with ASEAN. The responses for this question suggest that the majority of the Indonesia-based respondents were relatively familiar with ASEAN-related issues.

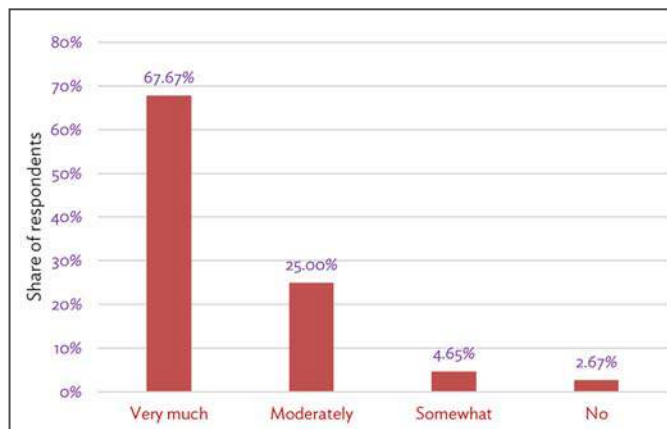
Figure 4: Awareness of ASEAN



Discussions carried out during the FGDs revealed that most basic information regarding ASEAN was made available during the respondents' school years, especially starting from secondary-level education onwards. However, most FGD participants also stated that their familiarity with ASEAN was limited to basic historical facts (i.e. about ASEAN's establishment, membership, and other basic facts). Some FGD participants argued that although there was significant media coverage of ASEAN, much of it remained superficial without going deeper into what really goes on in the association. Some NGO/CSO representatives also claimed that their familiarity with ASEAN was sectoral and primarily related to areas that coincided with their advocacy work (e.g. related to human rights).

Feeling of being an ASEAN citizen (Question 6)

Figure 5: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen



Survey respondents were given the following statement: ‘I feel that I am an ASEAN citizen.’ They were then asked to choose their level of agreement from among four options: ‘very much’, ‘moderately’, ‘somewhat’, and ‘no’. Of the 302 participants, 300 answered this question. The majority, 203 respondents (67.67%), stated they felt ‘very much’ as ASEAN citizens, followed by 75 respondents (25.00%) who answered ‘moderately’ (Figure 5). Only eight respondents (2.67%) did not agree with the statement.

When asked to elaborate during the FGDs, participants generally felt that a sense of solidarity existed among the countries and citizens in the region. Some also emphasised their feeling of being better accepted in other ASEAN societies than in societies outside the region. Despite giving generally positive feedback, representatives from the NGO/CSO and business communities took a more cautious approach to the issue. Some of the NGO participants, for example, argued that their sense of belonging towards ASEAN depended on the extent to which the association could help advance their interests. Similarly, although accepting the idea of ASEAN citizenship, some of the business community representatives felt that a direct, positive impact of ASEAN cooperation had been largely absent.

Aspirations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN (Question 7)

With simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ options, respondents were asked whether they had any aspirations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN. The respondents were also allowed to provide open-ended feedback.

An overwhelming 240 respondents (81.08%) answered ‘yes’ and gave feedback. Generally, their concerns, aspirations, and hopes can be summarised into five key areas: emerging regional issues (e.g. the South China Sea, terrorism, human rights violations, the consolidation of democracy in the region, the widening income gap, narrowing development gaps among and within ASEAN Member States, corruption, and sustainable economic growth)¹;

- the necessity for ASEAN to undertake major reforms, especially regarding its major principles (e.g. non-interference), often summed up as the ASEAN Way;
- the deepening of ASEAN integration (including making many of its agreements more binding), with many referring to the experiences of the European Union;

¹ One area of concern about the ASEAN Economic Community that often appeared in the feedback was the ‘free flow of labour’. This was linked to the argument that Indonesia lacks the capable human resources to compete with its counterparts in ASEAN.

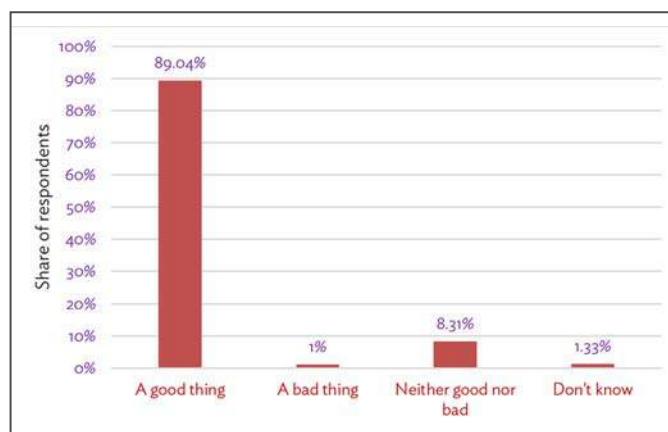
- ASEAN unity and centrality and ASEAN’s standing in the global community; and
- in-depth socialisation of ASEAN and its activities.

The outcomes of the FGDs also reflect the additional comments made by the participants. The FGD participants, especially those from NGOs, added that ASEAN lacked teeth in implementing its key agreements, such as the ASEAN Charter. They often referred to ASEAN’s inability to address, for instance, gross violations of human rights, such as those experienced by the Rohingya community in Myanmar.

Indonesia’s membership of ASEAN (Question 8)

Respondents were asked their opinion of their country’s membership in ASEAN. The four possible answers were ‘a good thing’, ‘a bad thing’, ‘neither good nor bad’ and ‘don’t know’. Of the 303 participants, 301 answered the question. Among these, 268 respondents (89.04%) considered Indonesia’s membership in ASEAN to be ‘a good thing’ (Figure 6). Only three respondents (1.00%) saw it as ‘a bad thing’, 25 respondents (8.31%) answered ‘neither good nor bad’, and four respondents (1.33%) responded with ‘don’t know’. The survey outcomes were consistent with the feedback received from the FGD participants.

Figure 6: Opinions on Indonesia’s Membership of ASEAN

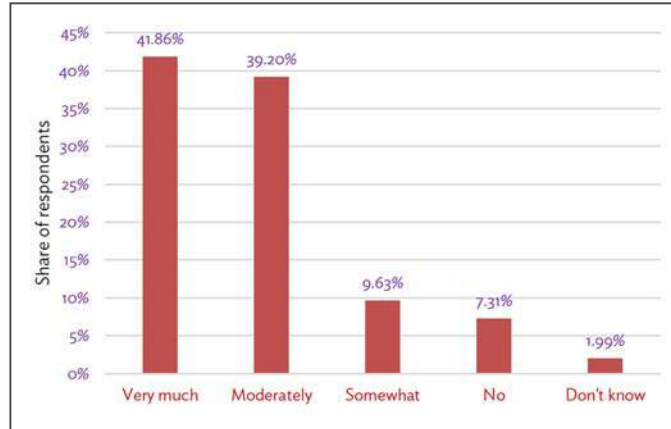


Benefit from being a member of ASEAN (Question 9)

Respondents were asked whether they thought Indonesia had benefited from being a member of ASEAN. The five possible answer choices were ‘very much’, ‘moderately’, ‘somewhat’, ‘no’, and ‘don’t know’. Of the 301 respondents who answered the question, 126 respondents (41.86%) stated the country had ‘very much’ benefited, whereas 118 (39.20%) answered ‘moderately’ (Figure 7). Another 29 respondents (9.63%) opted for ‘somewhat’, and 22 respondents (7.31%) opted for ‘no’. Only six respondents (1.99%)

answered 'don't know' to this question. These survey outcomes were consistent with the feedback received from the FGD participants.

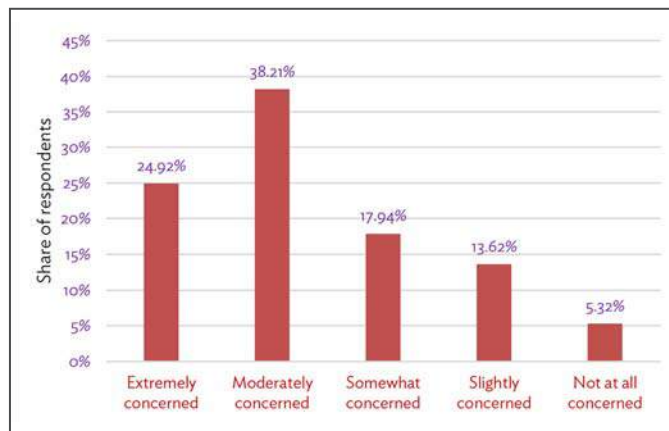
Figure 7: Has Indonesia Benefited from Being a Member of ASEAN?



Concern if Indonesia were to leave ASEAN (Question 10)

Respondents were asked how they would feel if Indonesia were to leave ASEAN. They could choose 'extremely concerned', 'moderately concerned', 'somewhat concerned', 'slightly concerned', or 'not at all concerned'. Of the respondents, 75 (24.92%) indicated they would feel 'extremely concerned' and 115 respondents (38.21%) stated they would be 'moderately concerned' (Figure 8). Meanwhile, 54 respondents (17.94%) answered 'somewhat concerned' and 41 (13.62%) replied 'slightly concerned'. Finally, 16 people (5.32%) said they would feel 'not at all concerned'.

Figure 8: Concern if Indonesia were to leave ASEAN



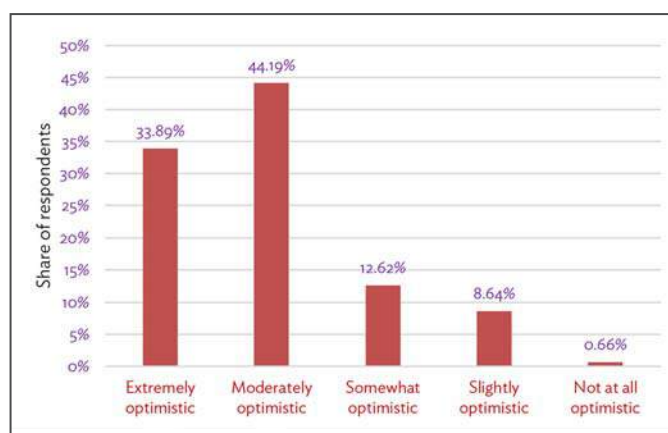
In response to the three questions above, most of the FGD participants believed that Indonesia's membership in ASEAN was good since it brought many benefits to the country. The participants saw that many opportunities had emerged from the membership, be they political, economic, or social benefits. With a population of more than 250 million people, Indonesia is considered to be the largest beneficiary of the regional cooperation. Therefore, participants said they would feel quite concerned if Indonesia were ever to leave ASEAN. According to them, the issue was not that ASEAN had not brought any benefits. On the contrary, they indicated that Indonesia should 'step up its game in order to get something out of ASEAN' and noted that Indonesian membership in ASEAN was a form of leverage that had not been utilised effectively. This view mostly came from the business community, who said they perceived Indonesia as an object or market instead of as a big player in ASEAN.

During the FGDs, there were also some dissenting voices. Some considered Indonesia's membership in ASEAN as something that was 'neither good nor bad'. This group of people thought that Indonesia would be able to stand alone since the country was not dependent on ASEAN. Accordingly, they said that if Indonesia were no longer a member of ASEAN, they would not lose anything.

Opinions on the future of ASEAN (Question 11)

Respondents were asked whether they were optimistic or pessimistic about the future of ASEAN. The five options were 'extremely optimistic', 'moderately optimistic', 'somewhat optimistic', 'slightly optimistic', and 'not at all optimistic'. Among the respondents, 102 (33.89%) were 'extremely optimistic', 133 (44.19%) were 'moderately optimistic', 38 (12.62%) were 'somewhat optimistic', and 26 (8.64%) were 'slightly optimistic' (Figure 9). Only two respondents (0.66%) said they were 'not at all optimistic'.

Figure 9: Optimism for the Future of ASEAN

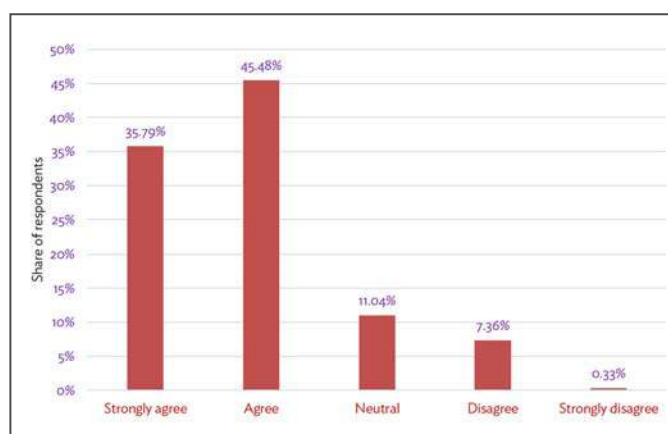


Some of the FGD participants who were optimistic about the future of ASEAN believed that ASEAN had potential, especially in its role as a regional economic bloc. However, those who were not optimistic said they were worried about the existing issues within ASEAN, which they thought would hamper the future of regional integration. Some of the issues mentioned were human rights, humanitarian crises, the non-punishment nature of ASEAN, economic disparity, and the lack of preparedness of ASEAN youth to compete in the ASEAN Economic Community era.

Media coverage of ASEAN (Question 12)

The survey respondents were next asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: ‘The media (newspapers, radio, television, and online news) does not have enough coverage of ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges.’ The five possible responses were ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’. Of the 302 respondents, 299 answered this question. In response, 136 (45.48%) agreed that the media did not have enough coverage of ASEAN. This was followed by 107 respondents (35.79%) who indicated ‘strongly agree’, 33 (11.04%) who chose ‘neutral’, and 22 (7.36%) who chose ‘strongly disagree’ (Figure 10). Only one respondent answered ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 10: The Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN



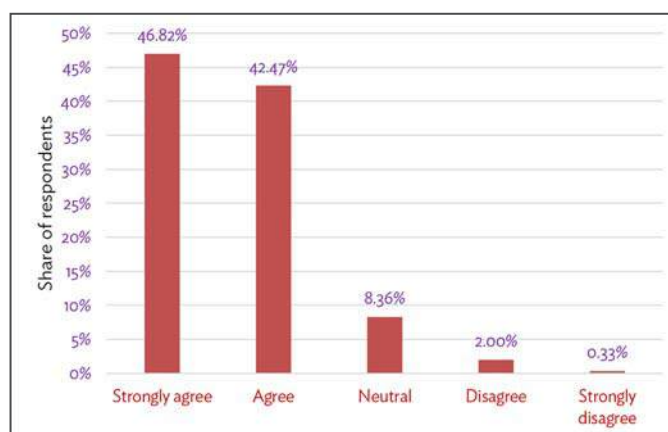
When asked more deeply about the issue during the FGDs, participants felt that the national media in Indonesia generally focused on domestic rather than regional issues. Moreover, the FGD participants added that given the need of the media to attract more readers or viewers, it tended to report sensational and often negative news. They noted that ASEAN was often considered to be not controversial enough by the media and so only received coverage when incidents occurred, such as those related to the South

China Sea or border conflicts. Consequently, the FGD participants felt that they did not know enough about the actual progress, achievements, and challenges faced by ASEAN.

Using school textbooks to socialise and educate youth (Question 13)

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the use of school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges. The five choices were ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’. Of the 302 respondents, 299 answered this question. Of these, 140 respondents (46.82%) stated that they strongly agreed with using schoolbooks (Figure 11). Meanwhile, 127 respondents (42.47%) opted for ‘agree’, 25 (8.36%) chose ‘neutral’, and 6 (2.00%) chose ‘disagree’. Only one respondent answered ‘strongly disagree’.

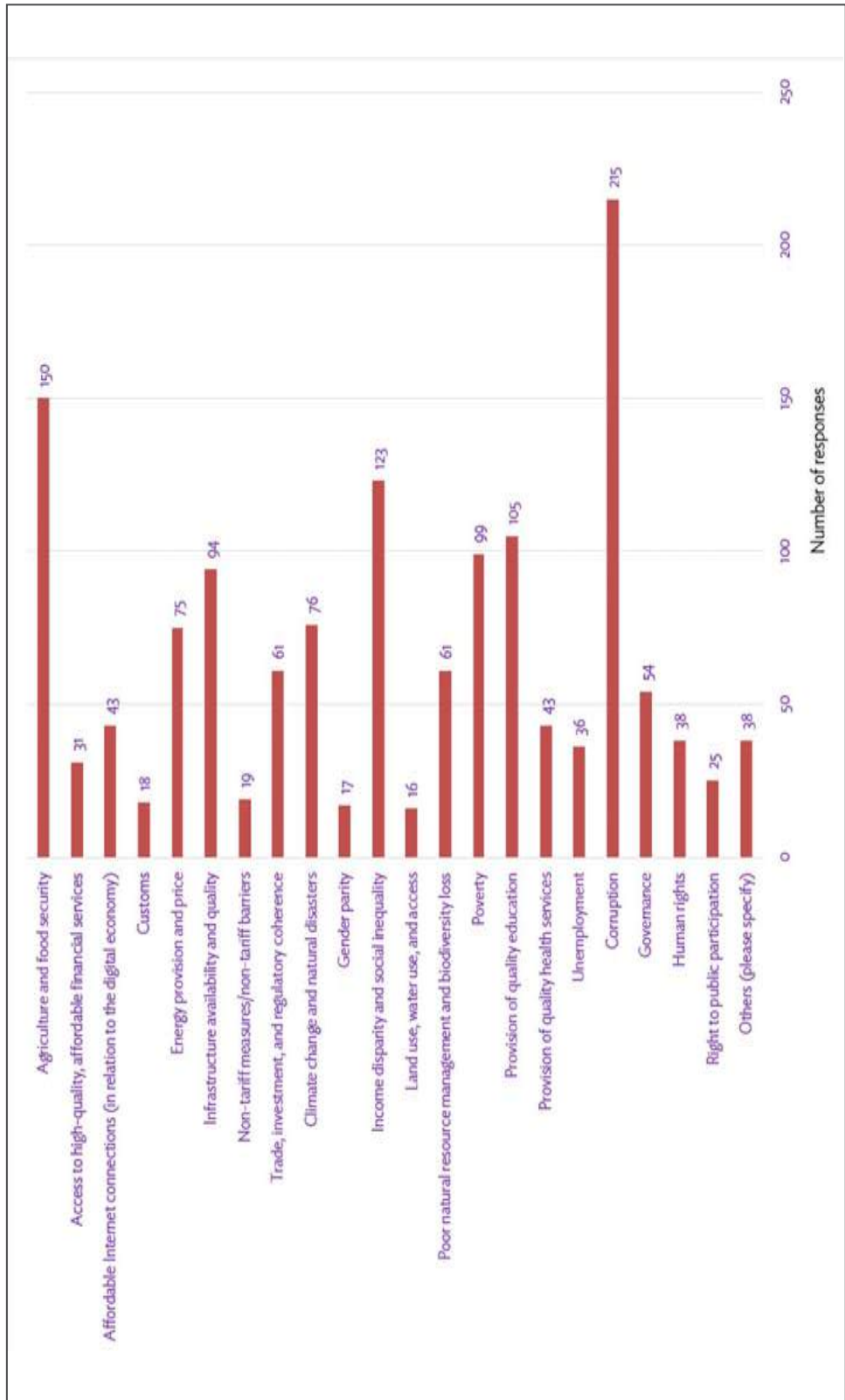
Figure 11: Using School Textbooks to Educate Young People about ASEAN



Top five pressing problems facing Indonesia at present and until 2025 (Question 14)

The survey respondents were next asked their opinions on the five most pressing problems facing Indonesia today and until 2025. Twenty-one pressing problems were available for respondents to choose from, and these were subdivided into three categories: economic issues (eight problems), sociocultural issues (nine problems), and governance and political issues (four problems) (Figure 12). Respondents were also given the choice of ‘others’, for which they were requested to provide details.

Figure 12: Top Five Pressing Problems Facing Indonesia until 2025



Of the 302 respondents, 215 selected corruption as one of the top five pressing problems facing Indonesia until 2025. This was followed by agriculture and food security, which was selected by 150 respondents; income disparity and social inequality by 123 respondents; provision of quality education; by 105 respondents; and poverty by 99 respondents. Only 16 respondents selected land use, water use, and access as one of their top five pressing problems. Meanwhile, 38 respondents chose ‘others’ and specified their own pressing problems. Prominent among these were the presence of internal conflicts and tensions not only within the country but also among government institutions; increasing issues related to ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations; terrorism and radicalism; and immorality among the younger generation.

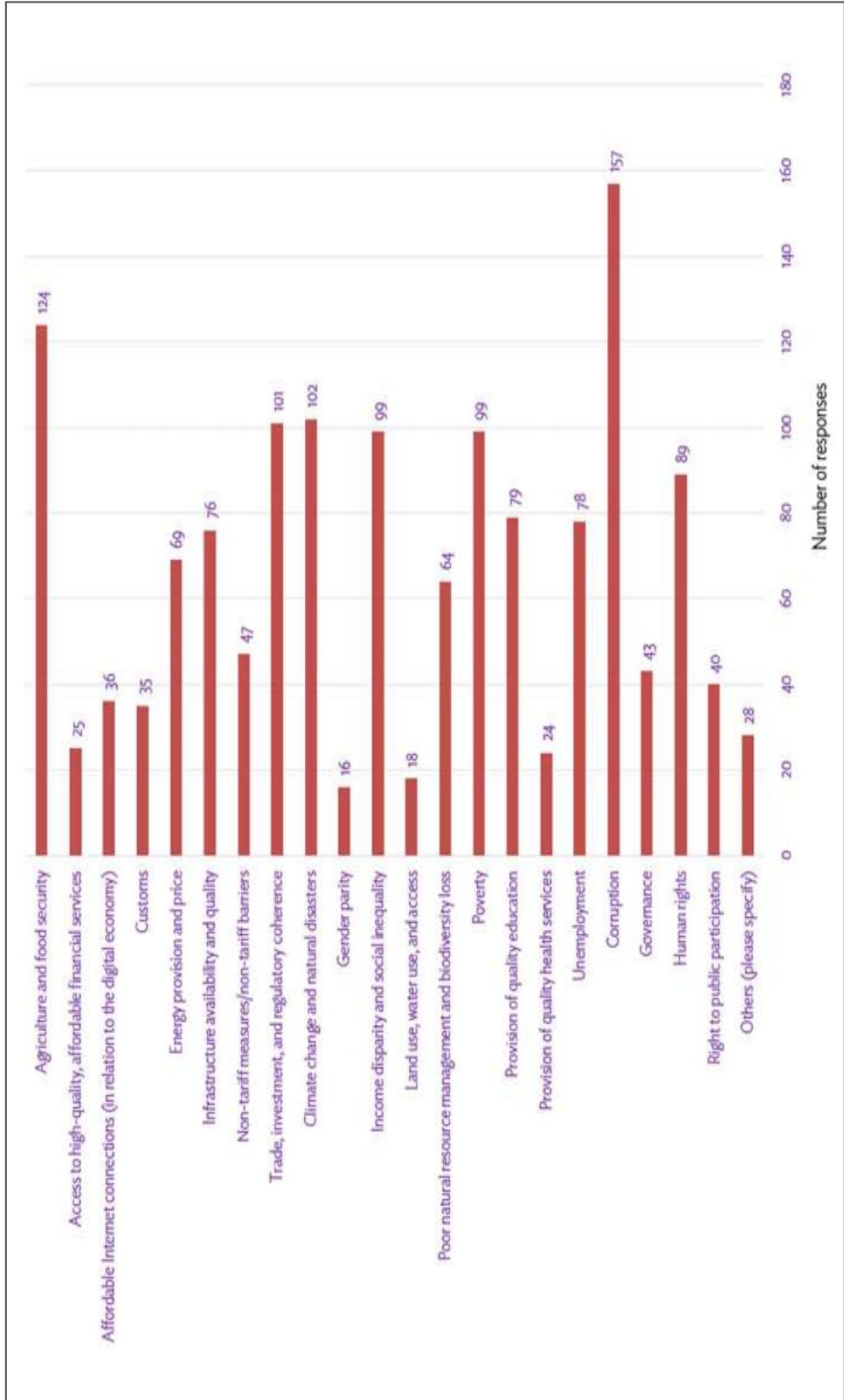
Deeper discussions during the FGDs revealed that with regard to agriculture and food security, participants felt the agriculture sector’s contribution to Indonesia’s gross domestic product was decreasing. It was further noted that this phenomenon was being seen not only in Indonesia and within ASEAN but around the globe. The FGD participants also emphasised corruption and governance issues, pointing out that the former had become widespread in Indonesia, while the latter was the key to eradicating corruption and human rights violations. Participants from the business sector were also keen for these issues to be addressed to encourage a more attractive business environment in Indonesia.

Top five pressing problems facing the ASEAN Community at present and until 2025 (Question 15)

Respondents were asked what they thought were the top five most pressing problems facing the ASEAN Community and region today and until 2025 that should be tackled collectively by all ASEAN Member States. As in the previous question, 21 pressing problems were available for respondents to choose from, and these were subdivided into three categories: economic issues (eight problems), sociocultural issues (nine problems), and governance and political issues (four problems). Respondents were again given the choice of ‘others’ and requested to provide details. All respondents answered this question.

Of the respondents, 124 selected agriculture and food security as one of the top five pressing problems (Figure 13). This was followed by corruption, selected by 157 respondents; climate change and natural disasters by 102 respondents; and trade, investment, and regulatory coherence by 101 respondents.

Figure 13: Top Five Pressing Problems Facing the ASEAN Community at Present and until 2025



The issue of poverty and the issue of income disparity and social inequality each received votes from 99 respondents, and thus stood equally as the fifth most pressing problems facing the region. Only 16 respondents listed gender parity, while 28 respondents selected ‘others’ and provided their own pressing problems, which included maritime and territorial border issues, mass immigration, terrorism, religious conflicts and tensions, and transnational crimes.

When asked more deeply about the issue during the FGDs, the participants suggested that better natural resource management would lead to exports of higher value products. The participants highlighted that agriculture and food security were important because the price of rice tended to fluctuate, and they mentioned there had been cases of starvation in remote rural areas due to these price fluctuations. Participants also felt that with regard to income disparity and social inequality, a lack of common perceptions on wages had led to greater income inequality, and this had then led to the emergence of an illegal workforce throughout the region.

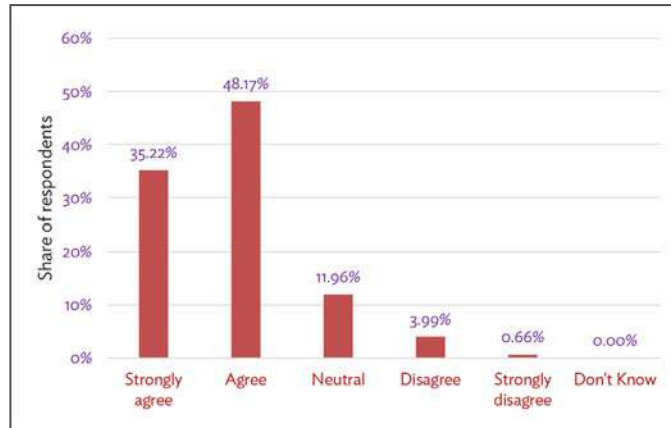
With regard to trade, investment, and regulatory coherence, the FGD participants from the business community noted the prevalence of overlapping regulations and the poor enforcement of regulations in Indonesia. Another issue raised by the FGD participants in general was poverty, and many urged ASEAN Member States to do more in terms of sharing best practices to address this issue.

Hopes and aspirations for ASEAN by 2025 (Question 16)

Respondents were asked for their opinions regarding what they hoped would actually happen in ASEAN by 2025. They were presented with 15 separate statements and for each statement were given the options ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’, and ‘don’t know’. Respondents were also given the choice of ‘others’ and were requested to provide details. All 302 respondents answered this question.

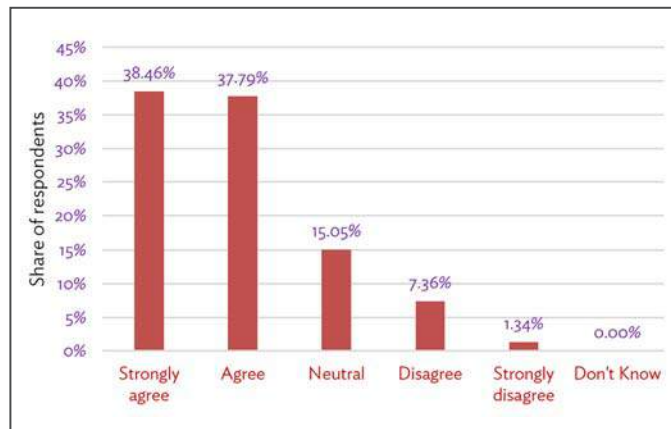
Statement 1 was: ‘ASEAN is a region where goods, services, and businesses can move easily among countries in the region.’ Of the respondents, 145 (48.17%) chose ‘agree’, 106 respondents (35.22%) answered ‘strongly agree’, and 36 respondents (11.96%) chose ‘neutral’ (Figure 14). Only two respondents selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 14: ASEAN Is a Region Where Goods, Services, and Businesses Can Move Easily among Countries in the Region



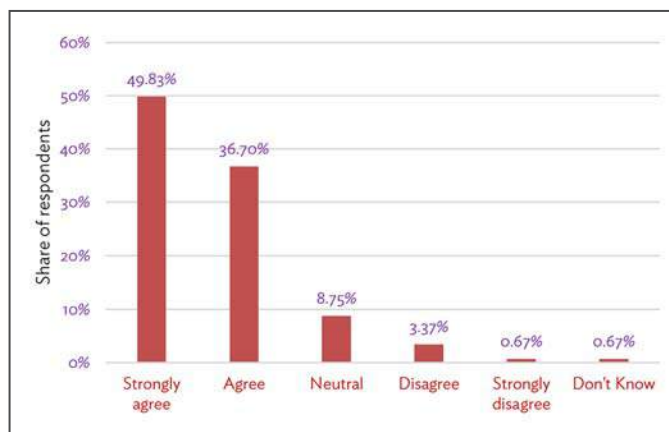
Statement 2 proposed: ‘ASEAN is a region where regulations and procedures make it easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.’ For this statement, 115 respondents (38.46%) chose ‘strongly agree’, followed by 113 respondents (37.79%) for ‘agree’; and 45 respondents (15.05%) for ‘neutral’ (Figure 15). Only four respondents (1.34%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 15: ASEAN Is a Region Where Regulations and Procedures Make It Easy for Skilled Workers and Professionals to Find Work in Other Countries in ASEAN



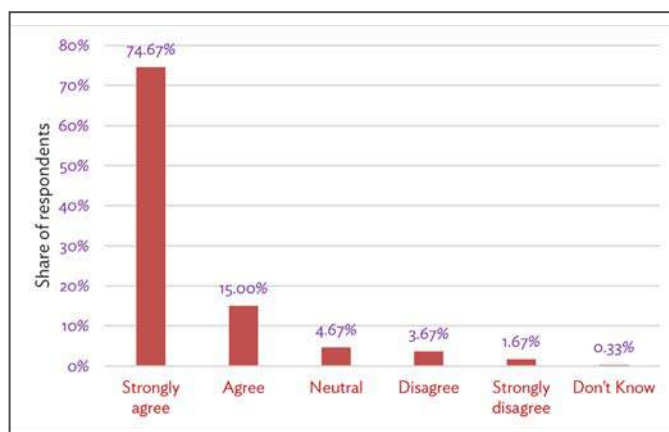
Statement 3 was: ‘ASEAN and its member countries provide basic social protection and health services to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN’. For this statement, 148 respondents (49.83%) chose ‘strongly agree’, 109 (36.70%) chose ‘agree’, and 26 (8.75%) opted for ‘neutral’ (Figure 16). Only two respondents (0.67%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 16: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Provide Basic Social Protection and Health Services to Migrant and Temporary Workers from Other Countries in ASEAN



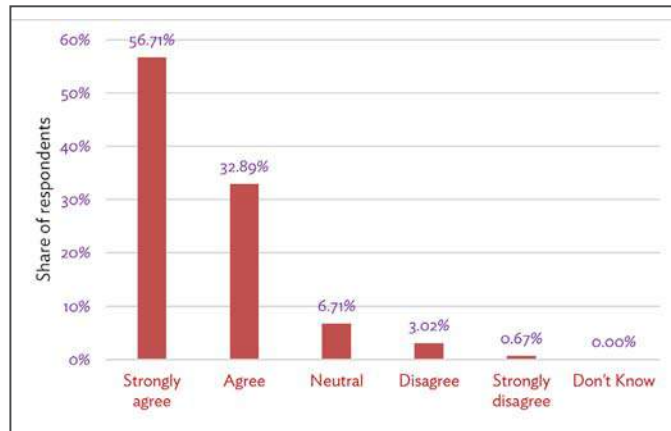
Statement 4 was: ‘ASEAN is a region of good governance and very much less corruption.’ An overwhelming 224 respondents (74.67%) opted for ‘strongly agree’ (Figure 17). This was followed by 45 respondents (15.00%) who answered ‘agree’ and 14 (4.67%) who chose ‘neutral’. Five respondents (1.67%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 17: ASEAN is a Region of Good Governance and Very Much Less Corruption



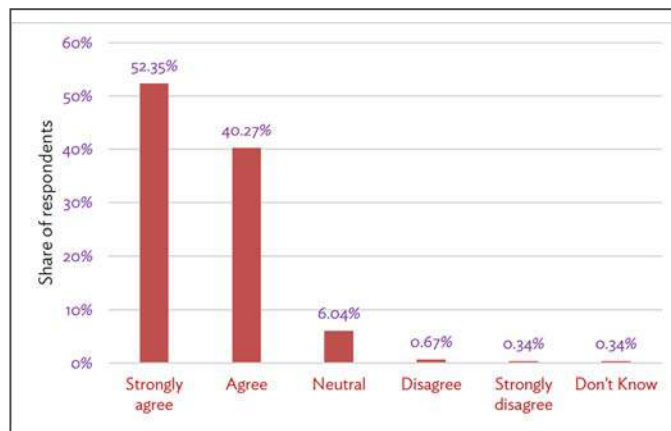
Statement 5 was: ‘ASEAN is a region where it is easy to physically move around by roads, railways, air, and shipping’. For this statement, 169 respondents (56.71%) chose ‘strongly agree’, 98 (32.89%) answered ‘agree’, and 20 (6.71%) chose ‘neutral’ (Figure 18). Two respondents (0.67%) answered ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 18: ASEAN is a Region Where It Is Easy to Physically Move Around by Roads, Railways, Air, and Shipping



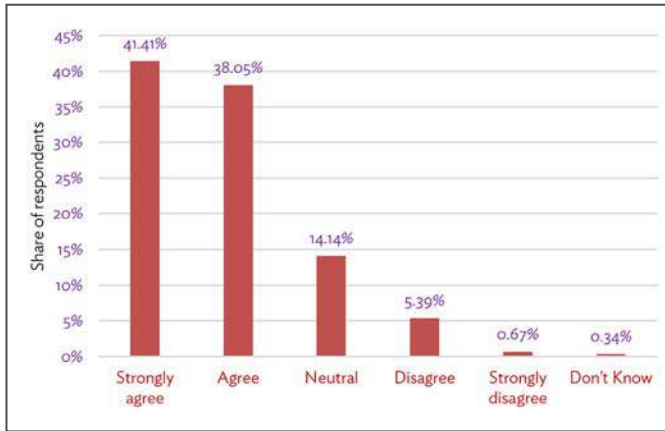
Statement 6 stated: ‘The ASEAN Community is a region where people and businesses can digitally interact and communicate easily with one another.’ Of the respondents, 156 (52.35%) strongly agreed with the statement. This was followed by 120 respondents (40.27%) who answered ‘agree’ and 18 respondents (6.04%) who opted for ‘neutral’ (Figure 19). Only one respondent selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 19: The ASEAN Community Is a Region Where People and Businesses Can Digitally Interact and Communicate Easily with One Another



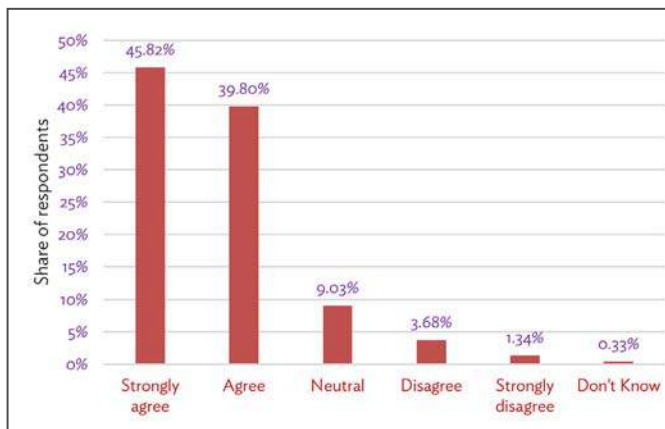
Statement 7 was: ‘ASEAN peoples are deeply aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.’ For this statement, 123 respondents (41.41%) strongly agreed, 113 respondents (38.05%) answered ‘agree’, and 42 respondents (14.14%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 20). Two respondents chose ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 20: ASEAN Peoples Are Deeply Aware of the ASEAN Community and Its Programmes



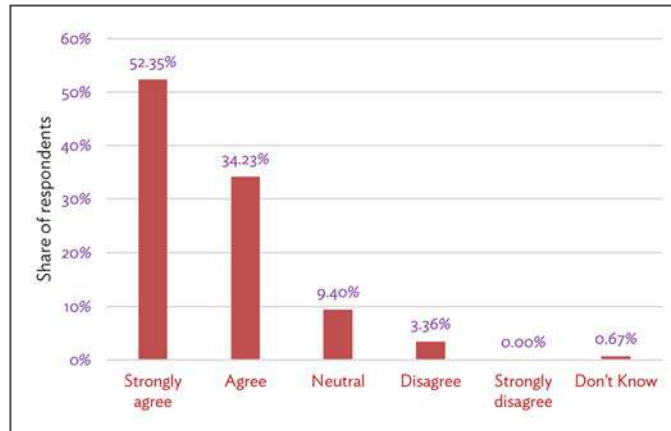
Statement 8 proposed: ‘The ASEAN Community deeply engages and benefits its peoples.’ Of the respondents, 137 (45.82%) strongly agreed, while 119 (39.80%) answered ‘agree’, and 27 (9.03%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 21). Only four respondents (1.34%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 21: The ASEAN Community Deeply Engages and Benefits Its Peoples



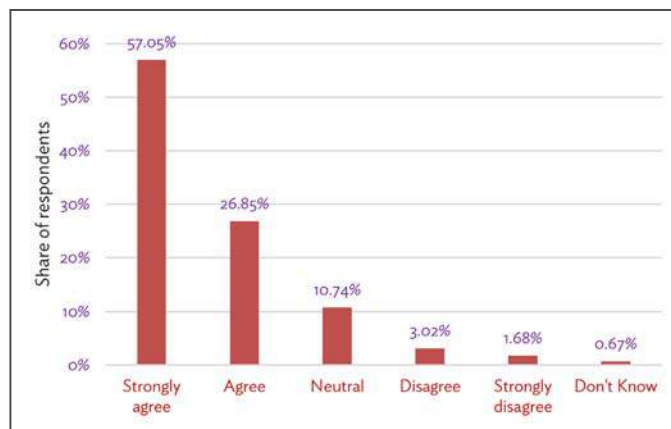
Statement 9 posited: ‘ASEAN pushes for equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.’ For this statement, 156 respondents (52.35%) strongly agreed, 102 (34.23%) answered ‘agree’, and 28 (9.40%) chose ‘neutral’ (Figure 22). None of the respondents selected ‘strongly disagree’, although 10 respondents (3.36%) chose ‘disagree’.

Figure 22: ASEAN Pushes for Equitable Access to Opportunities for ASEAN Peoples



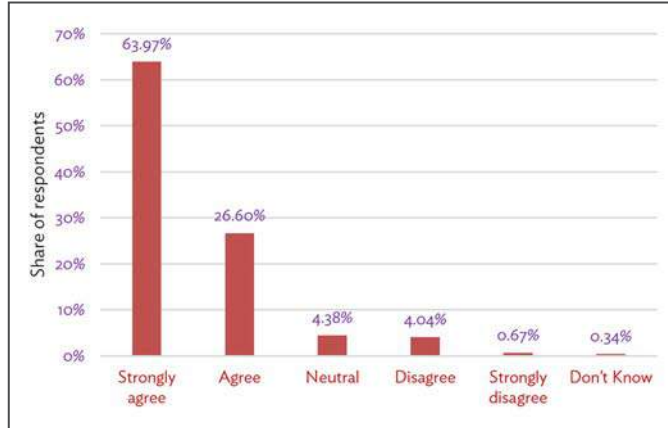
Statement 10 proposed: ‘ASEAN and its member countries effectively protect human rights and minorities in the region.’ Of the respondents, 170 (57.05%) strongly agreed with the statement, while 80 (26.85%) answered ‘agree’, and 32 (10.74%) opted for ‘neutral’ (Figure 23). Only five respondents (1.68%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 23: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Effectively Protect Human Rights and Minorities in the Region



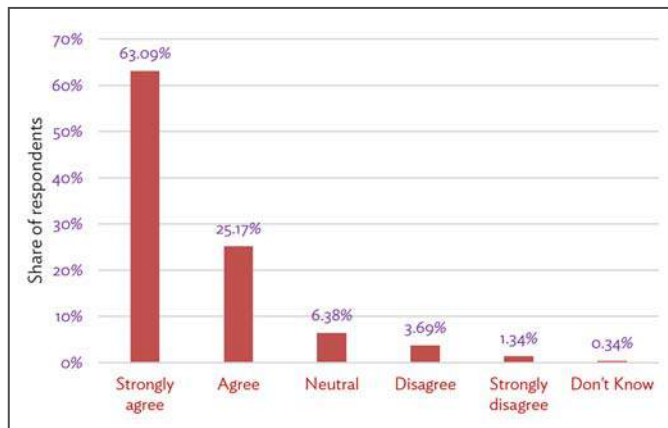
Statement 11 was: ‘ASEAN and its member countries effectively conserve and sustainably manage the region’s biodiversity and natural resources’. For this statement, 190 respondents (63.97%) strongly agreed, while 79 respondents (26.60%) answered ‘agree’, and 13 respondents (4.38%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 24). Two respondents (0.67%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 24: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Effectively Conserve and Sustainably Manage the Region’s Biodiversity and Natural Resources



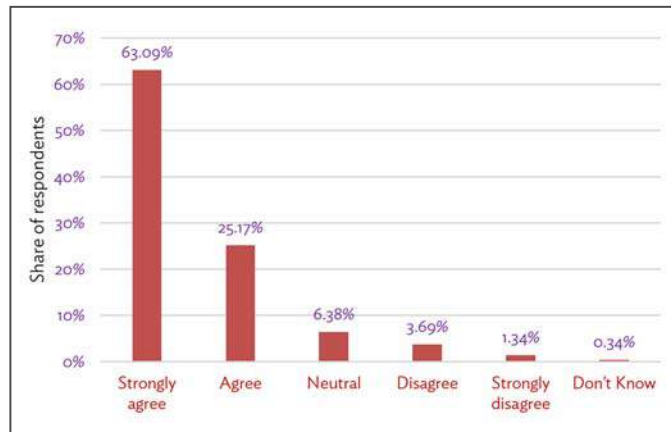
Statement 12 proposed: ‘ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.’ Of the respondents, 188 (63.09%) strongly agreed with the statement, 75 (25.17%) answered ‘agree’, and 19 (6.38%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 25). Only four respondents (1.34%) chose ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 25: ASEAN Major Cities Are Less Polluted and More Liveable Than They Are Today



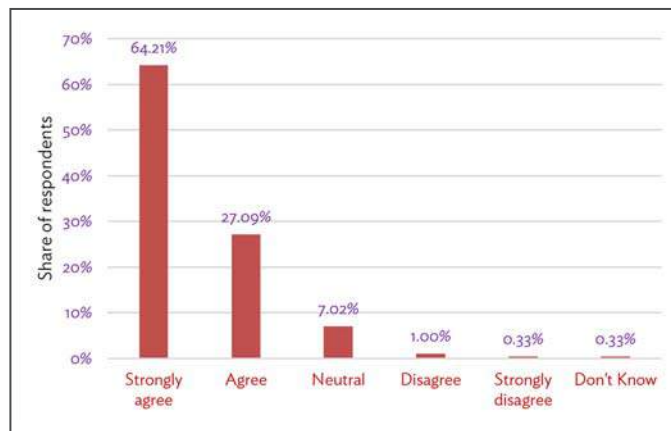
Statement 13 was: ‘ASEAN and its member countries are very much able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster and concertedly together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.’ An overwhelming 167 respondents (56.04%) strongly agreed with this statement, while 109 respondents (36.58%) answered ‘agree’, and 12 (4.03%) opted for ‘neutral’ (Figure 26). Only one respondent (0.34%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 26: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Are Very Much Able to Anticipate, Respond, and Recover Faster and Concertedly Together from Natural Disasters and Health Hazards in the Region



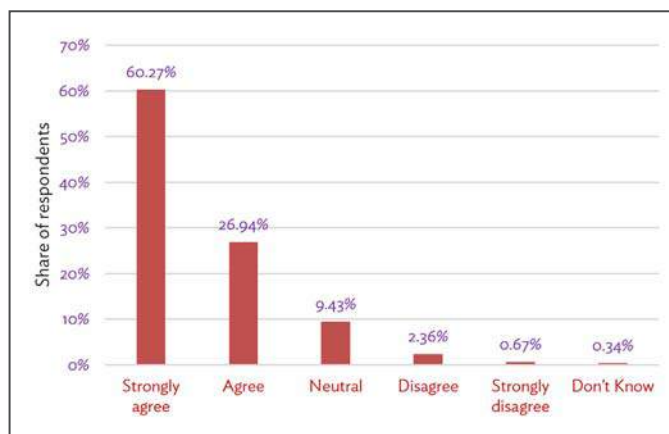
Statement 14 was: ‘ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums.’ As many as 192 respondents (64.21%) strongly agreed with this statement (Figure 27). Meanwhile, 81 respondents (27.09%) answered ‘agree’ and 21 (7.02%) answered ‘neutral’. One respondent (0.33%) answered ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 27: ASEAN Has a Strong Voice and Is an Important Player in Global Negotiations and Forums



Lastly, statement 15 proposed: ‘ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.’ An overwhelming 179 respondents (60.27%) strongly agreed with this statement (Figure 28). This was followed by 80 respondents (26.94%) who answered ‘agree’ and 28 respondents (9.43%) who answered ‘neutral’. Only two respondents (0.67%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 28: ASEAN Deeply Engages Powers in the Region and the World to Ensure Peace in the Region and the Asia-Pacific Region



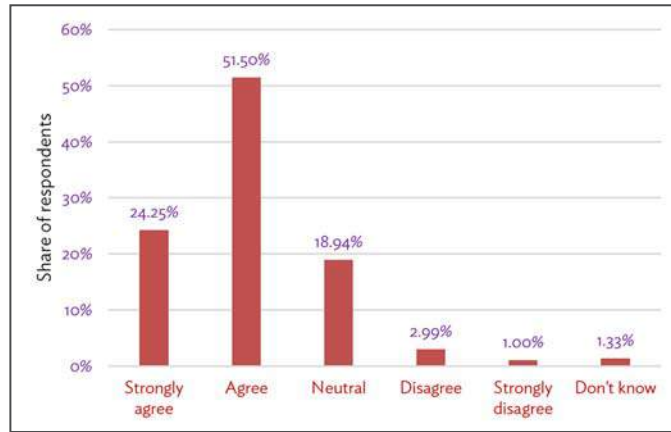
In the FGDs, the business group was most prominent with the hope that by 2025, ASEAN would have a strong voice and be an important player in global negotiations and forums. They also hoped ASEAN would become a region where goods, services, and businesses can move around easily. They were keen for ASEAN to become a commonwealth and argued that the region could become more prosperous if goods and services were more easily available. The discussion participants further expressed their hopes that by 2025, ASEAN would push for equitable access for all ASEAN citizens. They wanted more Indonesian businesses to explore ASEAN markets and urged for the acceleration of standardised accreditation systems to allow Indonesian professionals to move freely throughout the region.

What is likely to happen by 2025? (Question 17)

Respondents were asked for their opinions on what they believed and expected would actually happen in ASEAN by 2025. They were presented with 15 statements. For each statement, respondents were asked to choose ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘don’t know’. They were also given the choice of ‘others’, for which they were asked to provide details. All 303 respondents answered this question.

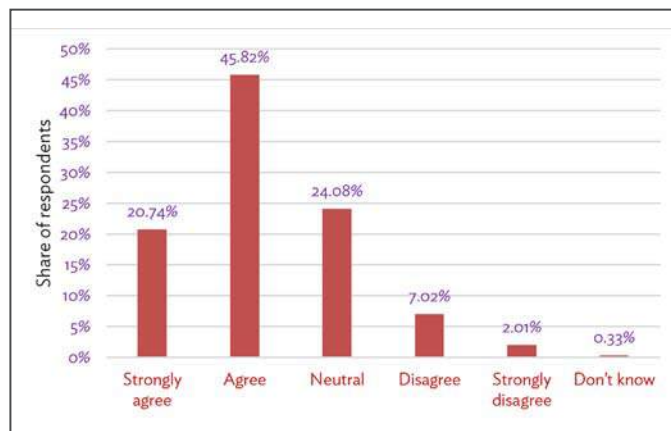
Statement 1 proposed: ‘ASEAN is a region where goods, services, and businesses can move easily among countries in the region.’ For this, 155 respondents (51.50%) answered ‘agree’ (Figure 29). This was followed by 73 respondents (24.25%) who answered ‘strongly agree’ and 57 (18.94%) who answered ‘neutral’. Three respondents (1%) chose ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 29: ASEAN is a Region Where Goods, Services, and Businesses Can Move Easily among Countries in the Region



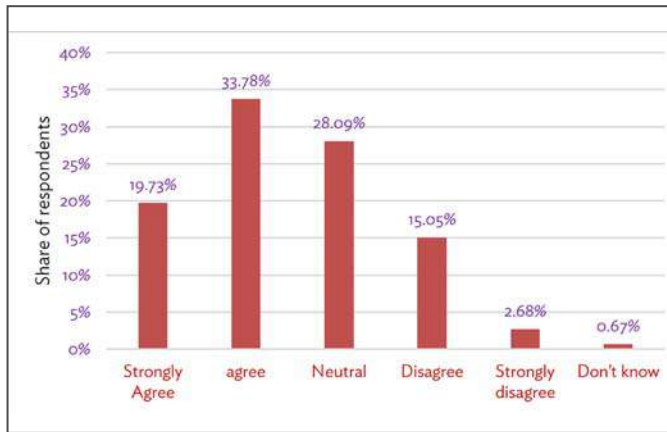
Statement 2 was: ‘ASEAN is a region where regulations and procedures make it easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.’ Of the respondents, 62 (20.74%) answered ‘strongly agree’, 137 (45.82%) answered ‘agree’, and 72 (24.08%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 30). Six respondents (2.01%) chose ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 30: ASEAN Is a Region Where Regulations and Procedures Make It Easy for Skilled Workers and Professionals to Find Work in Other Countries in ASEAN



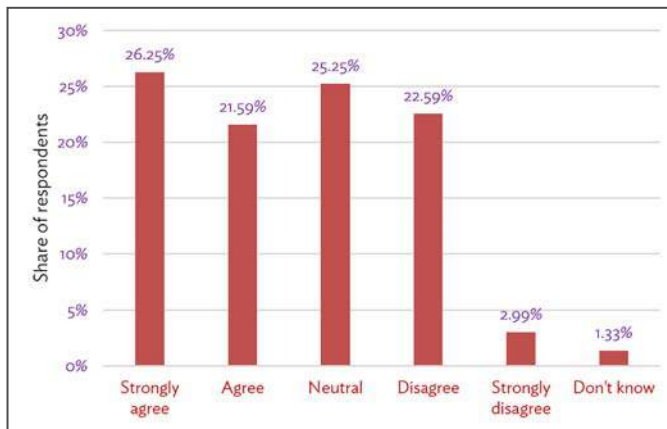
Statement 3 proposed: ‘ASEAN and its member countries provide basic social protection and health services to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.’ For this statement, 59 respondents (19.73%) replied ‘strongly agree’ (Figure 31). Meanwhile, 101 respondents (33.78%) answered ‘agree’, and 84 respondents (28.09%) answered ‘neutral’. Eight respondents (2.68%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 31: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Provide Basic Social Protection and Health Services to Migrant and Temporary Workers from Other Countries in ASEAN



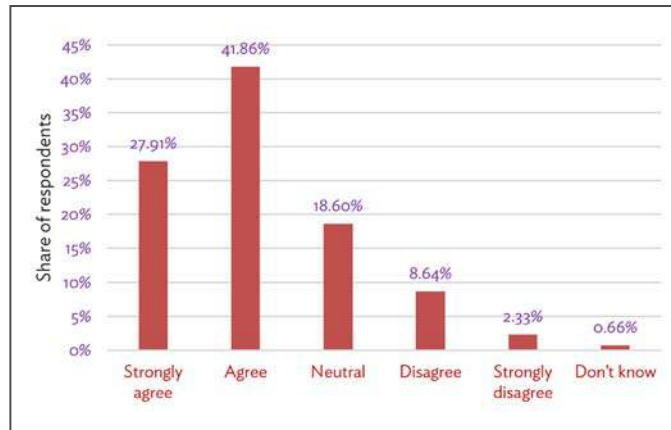
Statement 4 was: ‘ASEAN is a region of good governance and very much less corruption.’ Of the respondents, 79 (26.25%) strongly agreed (Figure 32). Meanwhile, 65 respondents answered ‘agree’ (21.59%), and 76 (25.25%) answered ‘neutral’. Nine respondents (2.99%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 32: ASEAN Is a Region of Good Governance and Very Much Less Corruption



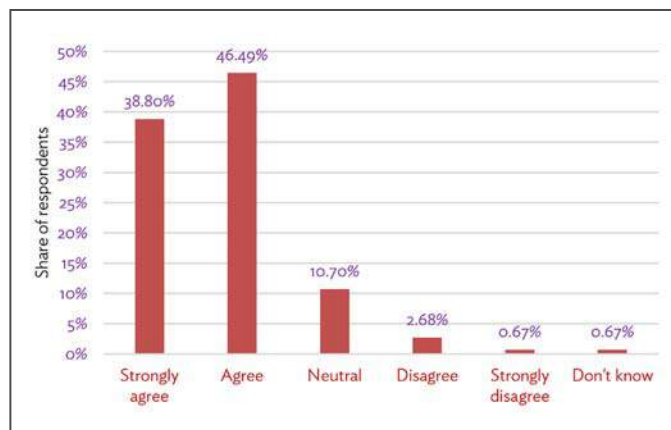
Statement 5 proposed: ‘ASEAN is a region where it is easy to physically move around by roads, railways, air, and shipping.’ Of the respondents, 84 (27.91%) answered ‘strongly agree’, 126 (41.86%) answered ‘agree’, and 56 (18.60%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 33). Seven respondents (2.33%) answered ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 33: ASEAN Is a Region Where It Is Easy to Physically Move Around by Roads, Railways, Air, and Shipping



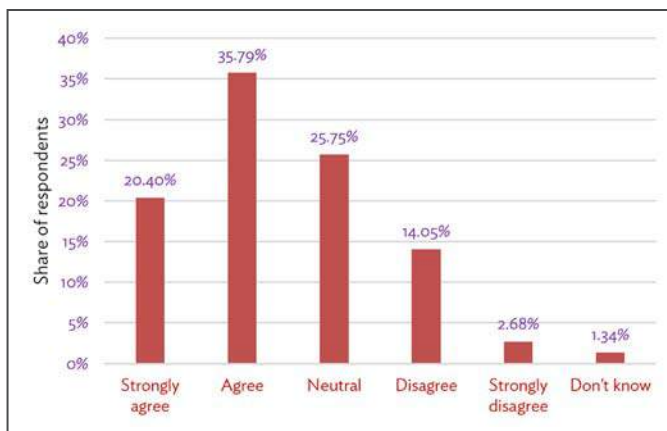
Statement 6 proposed: ‘The ASEAN Community is a region where people and businesses can digitally interact and communicate easily with one another.’ For this statement, 116 respondents (38.80%) strongly agreed (Figure 34). Meanwhile, 139 respondents (46.49%) answered ‘agree’, and 32 respondents (10.70%) answered ‘neutral’. Only two respondents (0.67%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 34: The ASEAN Community Is a Region Where People and Businesses Can Digitally Interact and Communicate Easily with One Another



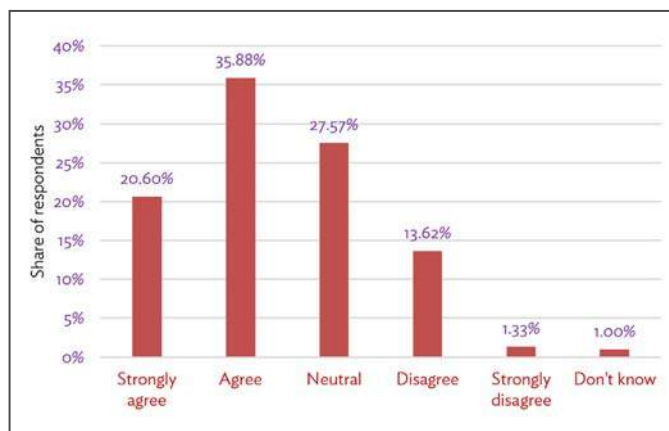
Statement 7 proposed: ‘ASEAN peoples are deeply aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.’ Of the respondents, 61 (20.40%) strongly agreed (Figure 35). Meanwhile, 107 (35.79%) answered ‘agree’, and 77 (25.75%) answered ‘neutral’. Only eight respondents (2.68%) chose ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 35: ASEAN People Are Deeply Aware of the ASEAN Community and its Programmes



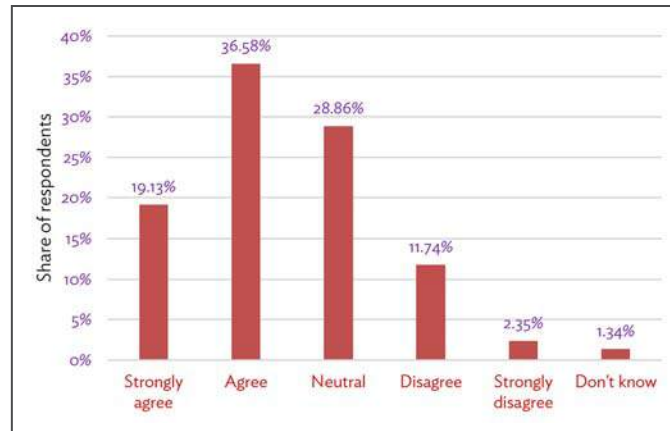
Statement 8 proposed: ‘The ASEAN Community deeply engages and benefits its peoples.’ For this statement, 62 respondents (20.60%) replied ‘strongly agree’, 108 respondents (35.88%) answered ‘agree’, and 83 respondents (27.57%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 36). Meanwhile, four respondents (1.33%) chose ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 36: The ASEAN Community Deeply Engages and Benefits Its Peoples



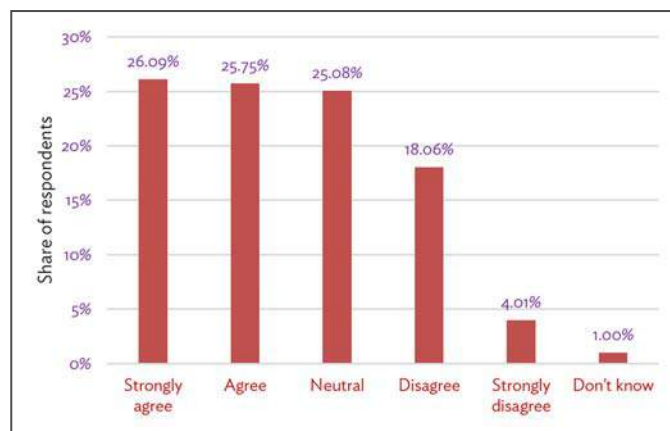
Statement 9 was ‘ASEAN pushes for equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.’ Of the respondents, 57 (19.13%) strongly agreed, while 109 (36.58%) answered ‘agree’, and 86 (28.86%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 37). Seven respondents (2.35%) selected ‘strongly disagree’ and 35 (11.74%) selected ‘disagree’.

Figure 37: ASEAN Pushes for Equitable Access to Opportunities for ASEAN Peoples



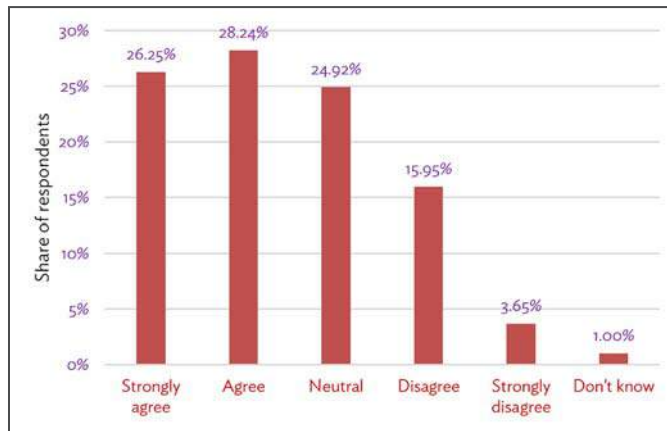
Statement 10 proposed: ‘ASEAN and its member countries effectively protect human rights and minorities in the region.’ Of the respondents, 78 (26.09%) strongly agreed with the statement, while 77 (25.75%) chose ‘agree’, 75 (25.08%) answered ‘neutral’, and 12 (4.01%) selected ‘strongly disagree’ (Figure 38).

Figure 38: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Effectively Protect Human Rights and Minorities in the Region



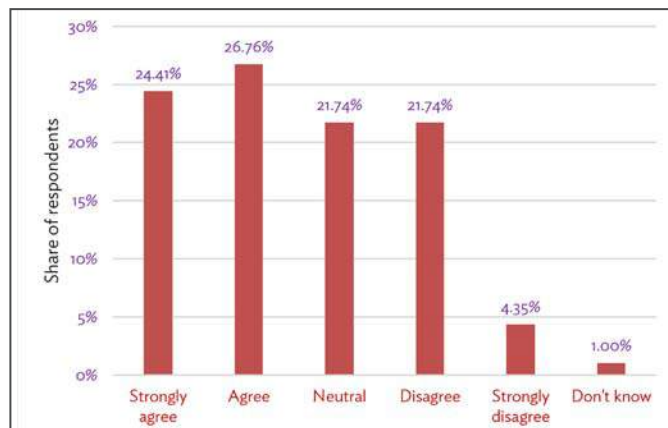
Statement 11 was: ‘ASEAN and its member countries effectively conserve and sustainably manage the region’s biodiversity and natural resources.’ Of the respondents, 79 (26.25%) strongly agreed, 85 (28.24%) answered ‘agree’, and 75 (24.92%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 39). Eleven respondents (3.65%) answered ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 39: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Effectively Conserve and Sustainably Manage the Region’s Biodiversity and Natural Resources



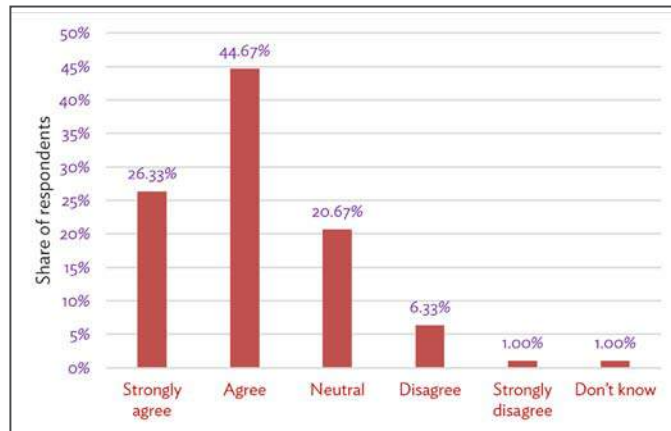
Statement 12 was: ‘ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.’ Of the respondents, 73 (24.41%) strongly agreed with the statement (Figure 40). This was followed by 80 respondents (26.76%) who answered ‘agree’ and 65 respondents (21.74%) who answered ‘neutral’. Only 13 respondents (4.35%) answered ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 40: ASEAN Major Cities Are Less Polluted and More Liveable than They Are Today



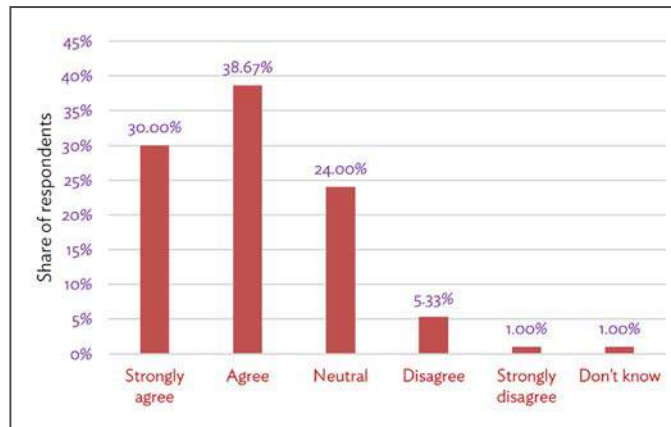
Statement 13 proposed: ‘ASEAN and its member countries are very much able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster and concertedly together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.’ For this statement, 79 respondents (26.33%) answered ‘strongly agree’, 134 respondents (44.67%) answered ‘agree’, and 62 respondents (20.67%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 41). Three respondents (1%) chose ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 41: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Are Very Much Able to Anticipate, Respond, and Recover Faster and Concertedly Together from Natural Disasters and Health Hazards in the Region



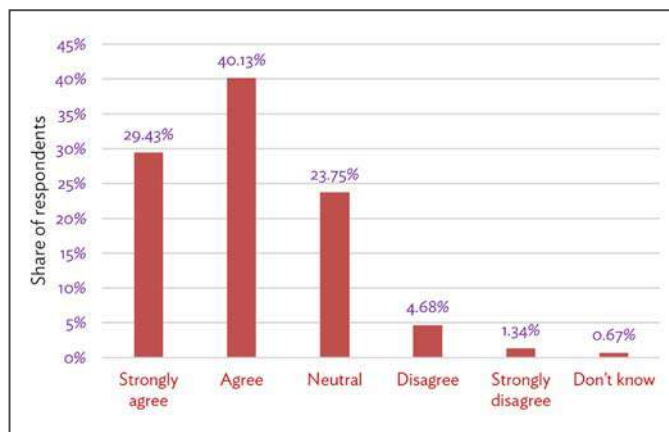
Statement 14 was: ‘ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums.’ Of the respondents, 90 (30.00%) strongly agreed, while 116 respondents (38.67%) answered ‘agree’, and 72 (24.00%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 42). Only three respondents (1%) selected ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 42: ASEAN Has a Strong Voice and Is an Important Player in Global Negotiations and Forums



Lastly, Statement 15 proposed: ‘ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.’ For this statement, 88 respondents (29.43%) chose ‘strongly agree’, 120 respondents (40.13%) answered ‘agree’, and 71 respondents (23.75%) answered ‘neutral’ (Figure 43). Only four respondents (1.34%) answered ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 43: ASEAN Deeply Engages Powers in the Region and the World to Ensure Peace in the Region and the Asia-Pacific Region

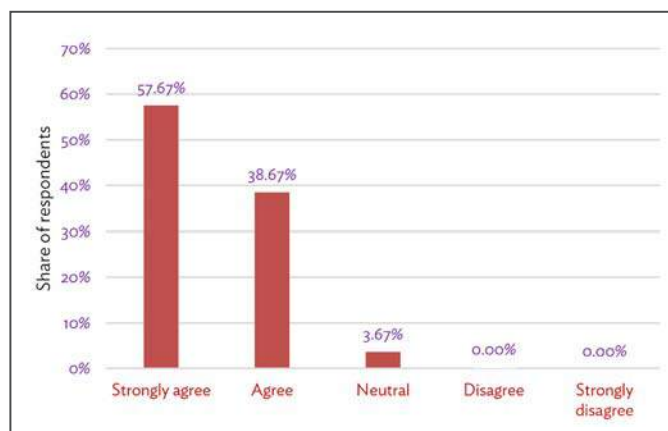


In the FGDs, the business group believed that the most important achievement by 2025 would be for ASEAN to be able to deeply engage powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the wider Asia-Pacific region. In addition, they believed that ASEAN would become a region where goods, services, and businesses move easily among countries. Meanwhile, they also thought that ASEAN was already a region where people and businesses were able to digitally interact and communicate easily with one another.

Upgrading the implementing and monitoring capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat (Question 18)

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the idea of gradually upgrading the implementing and monitoring capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges. The five possible answers were ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’. Of the 302 respondents, 300 answered the question. The majority, 173 respondents (57.67%), answered ‘strongly agree’ (Figure 44). This was followed by 116 respondents (38.67%) who opted for ‘agree’ and 11 respondents (3.67%) who opted for ‘neutral’. None of the respondents answered ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 44: Upgrading the Implementing and Monitoring Capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat



When questioned more deeply about the issue during the FGDs, participants stated that it was important for the ASEAN Secretariat to have control and monitoring functions to ensure that ASEAN policies were being implemented. Some participants suggested that the ASEAN Secretariat's role should not only be limited to implementing and monitoring responsibilities but should also include initiating capabilities. When participants were informed that strengthening the role of the ASEAN Secretariat would mean greater financial contributions from the ASEAN Member States, they did not have a problem with this. However, some participants did attach a number of qualifications. For example, it was underlined that the secretariat should remain neutral, be transparent, and be focused on its tasks. One participant mentioned that greater financial contributions would be acceptable as long as there were real gains. Other participants, however, stated that the ASEAN Secretariat should instead look to working closer with and involving civil society more. Participants suggested that the role of civil society should be maximised so that ASEAN policies truly reflect the aspirations of the public. Meanwhile, one participant admitted that he/she was unaware of the role and functions of the ASEAN Secretariat.

What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Lao PDR*

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Background

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2017, the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, in partnership with the National Institute for Economic Research, carried out a public-opinion survey on the aspirations, expectations, concerns and hopes of the Lao PDR people for ASEAN. This national-level survey was part of the regional ASEAN@50: Retrospective and Perspectives on the Making, Substance, Significance, and Future of ASEAN project.

The survey was conducted electronically through the Survey Monkey platform and on a paper basis through questionnaires sent out to the general public in Lao PDR. However, the respondents that participated in the survey had limited diversity in their backgrounds as a substantial share of the respondents were students aged between 15 and 30 years old. This was likely because students are more active in participating in this kind of exercise, especially through electronic platforms. There was a limited number of respondents older than 50 years old. This could have been because the majority of people in that age group are not familiar with electronic surveys, and the paper-based survey did not have adequate outreach. In addition, the survey was not able to draw participation from satisfactory numbers of respondents from academia, business, civil society organisations/non-governmental organisations (CSOs/NGOs), or labour. This limits detailed analysis at the subcategory level.

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

In addition to the survey, the study included two focus group discussions (FGDs). The first FGD was carried out with a group of 12 students, mostly university students in their early twenties. The second was with a mix of young and senior government officials.

Survey Results

Characteristics of the respondents

A total of 211 respondents took part in the survey. A majority of 73% (154 respondents) were between the ages of 15 and 30. About 25.1% (53 respondents) were aged 30–49, and only 1.9% (4 respondents), were aged 50 years or older (Figure 1). The survey drew participation from a greater proportion of the male population, with 120 male respondents (56.9%) and only 91 female respondents (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Age Distribution of the Respondents

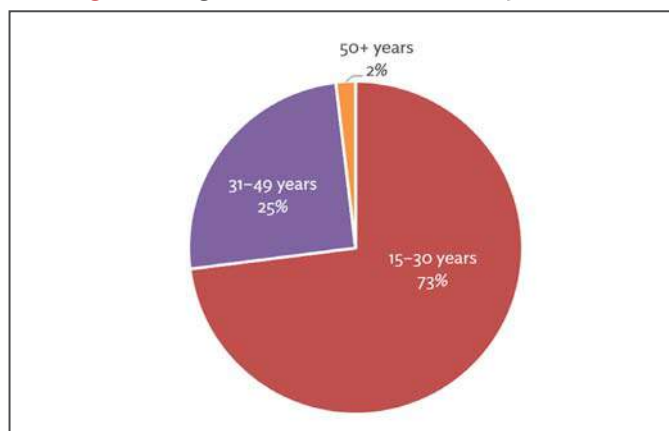
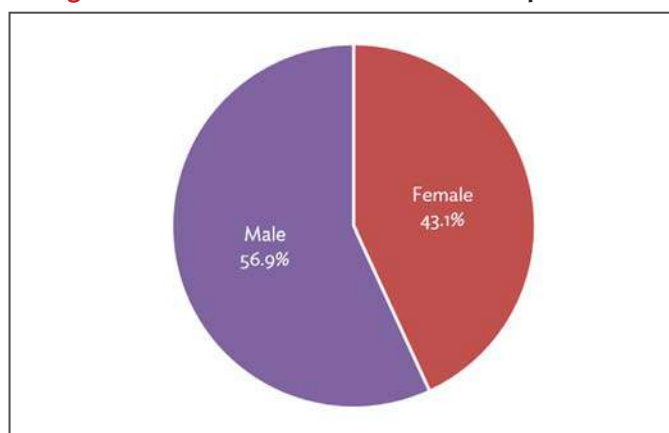
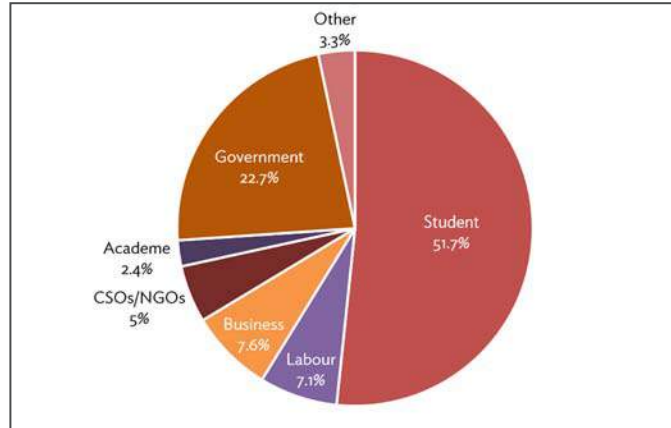


Figure 2: Gender Distribution of the Respondents



In terms of occupational background, there was limited diversity among the respondents as 109 (51.7%) were students (Figure 3). The second-largest group was government officials, which totalled 48 respondents (22.7%). Next were respondents from the business category, which accounted for 7.6%. Those from the labour category accounted for 7.1%, followed by representatives from CSOs/NGOs (5.2%), academia (2.4%), and others (3.3%).

Figure 3: Affiliation of the Respondents



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation..

Voices of ASEAN

Degree of awareness of ASEAN

The survey asked the respondents to indicate the extent of their awareness of ASEAN. The respondents were asked to choose from five levels of awareness: ‘very familiar’, ‘moderately familiar’, ‘somewhat familiar’, ‘slightly familiar’, and ‘not at all familiar’. Of the 211 survey respondents, 210 answered this question. The majority claimed that they were well aware of ASEAN issues: 37% said they were very familiar, and 33.6% indicated being moderately familiar (Figure 4). A sizeable proportion of respondents, 19.9%, claimed they were somewhat familiar with ASEAN. Another 8.1% indicated they were only slightly familiar with ASEAN, while 0.9% were not at all familiar with ASEAN.

Since there were only four respondents aged 50 years old or older, these were grouped with respondents aged 31–49 for comparison purposes. Figure 5 shows that a relatively larger proportion of respondents aged 15–30 indicated they were very familiar with ASEAN (39.6%) compared to those who were 31 years old or older (29.8%). However, a larger share of those aged 31 years or older (43.9%) indicated they were moderately familiar with ASEAN. Examining the results by gender, Figure 6 shows that male respondents were more familiar with ASEAN than their female counterparts.

Figure 4: Awareness of ASEAN

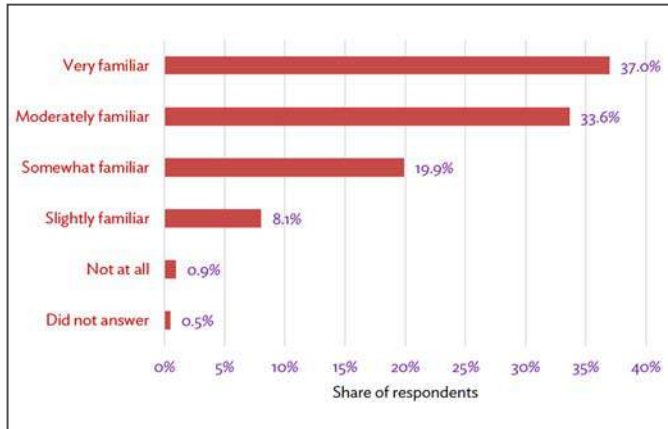


Figure 5: Familiarity with ASEAN by Age

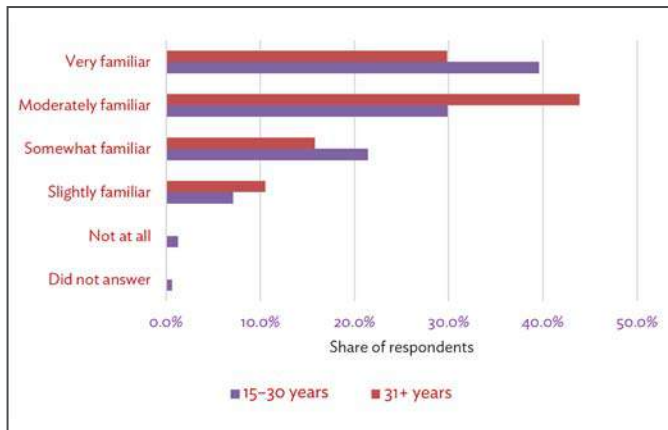
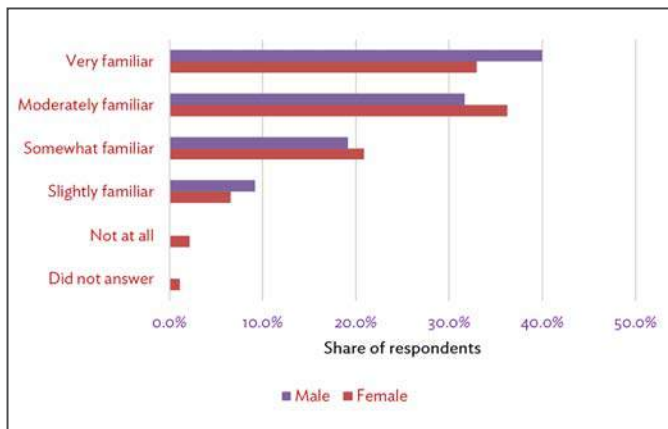


Figure 6: Familiarity with ASEAN by Gender

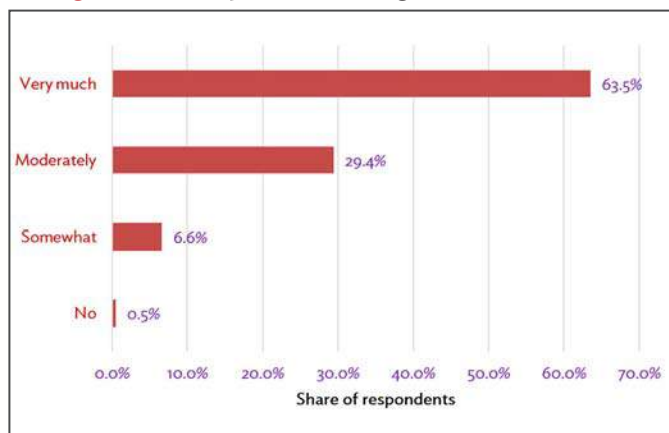


The FGDs revealed the respondents generally obtained information about ASEAN from Internet and media sources, including television and newspapers. In addition, some participants mentioned that because Lao PDR had been the host of the ASEAN Summit and related summits in 2016, they had seen topics on ASEAN being covered and discussed more frequently.

Perceptions on ASEAN citizenship

The survey asked the participants to what degree they felt they were ASEAN citizens. Four choices were given: 'very much', 'moderately', 'somewhat', and 'no'. Almost two-thirds of respondents, 63.5%, felt very much that they were ASEAN citizens (Figure 7). A modest share of respondents, 29.4%, indicated feeling moderately as ASEAN citizens. This was followed by 6.6% of respondents who felt somewhat as ASEAN citizens. Around 0.5% of respondents indicated they did not feel they were ASEAN citizens.

Figure 7: Perceptions of Being an ASEAN Citizen



A similar pattern emerges when examining the responses by demographic and occupational background. At least 60% of the respondents in each group indicated they felt very much as ASEAN citizens. For example, as much as 71.7% of the respondents aged 31–49 and 61.7% of respondents aged 15–30 indicated they felt very much as ASEAN citizens. Similarly, 65.8% of the male respondents and 60.4% of the female respondents felt very much as ASEAN citizens.

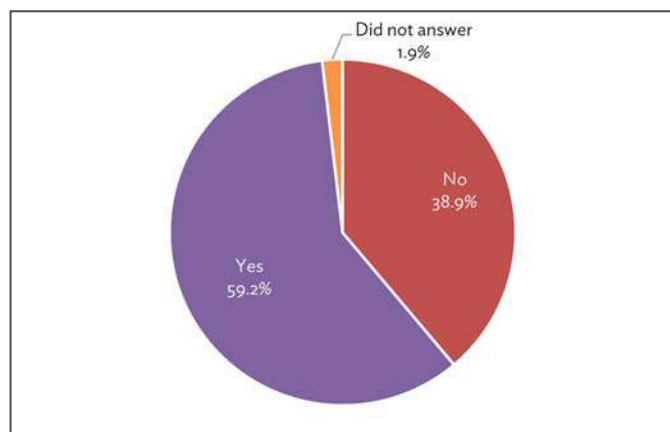
In the FGDs, participants who felt very much as ASEAN citizens said they felt so because Lao PDR was part of ASEAN, and ASEAN itself had become increasingly integrated through the establishment of the ASEAN Community. This shows evidence of increased integration in the region. Interestingly, those who had moderate feelings of being ASEAN citizens argued that although there was increased integration in the region, differences in the rules, regulations, and norms of each member country acted as

barriers to free movement between countries. In addition, some felt that other ASEAN Member States did not know much about Lao PDR, and they also did not know much about other countries.

Aspirations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN

The survey asked respondents to indicate whether they had aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN. The respondents were given the choices ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and were asked to provide details if they answered ‘yes’. Of the 211 respondents, 1.9% did not answer this question, while 38.9% selected ‘no’, and 59.2% selected ‘yes’ (Figure 8). Examining the responses by demographic and occupational background, at least 50% of respondents in each group indicated having aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN.

Figure 8: Aspirations, Expectations, Concerns, and Hopes for ASEAN

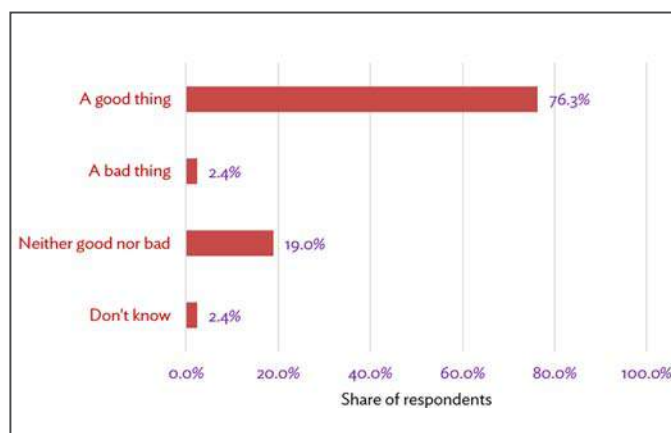


Of those who indicated having aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN, most expressed aspirations, expectations, or hopes, and very few expressed concerns. Most of the aspirations, hopes, and expectations were for ASEAN to bring about deepened regional integration and closer regional cooperation. A sizeable number of respondents had the expectation that ASEAN would benefit its member countries and their people in terms of development and a reduction in the development gap in the region. Some hoped that ASEAN would benefit Lao PDR and contribute to its development. However, concerns were also raised, including that of higher competition and the ability of Lao PDR to compete. The responses gathered from the FGDs were along similar lines.

Perception of Lao PDR's membership of ASEAN

The survey asked respondents about their perception of their country's membership of ASEAN. Four choices were given: 'a good thing', 'a bad thing', 'neither good nor bad', and 'don't know'. Of the 211 respondents, one respondent did not answer this question (Figure 9). Meanwhile, 76.3% indicated that Lao PDR's membership of ASEAN was a good thing. Only 2.4% thought it was a bad thing, and 19% said it was neither good nor bad.

Figure 9: Perception of Lao PDR's Membership of ASEAN



Figures 10 and 11 show that the ratios of respondents by age and by gender did not differ much. Of the respondents aged 15–30, 76% thought that Lao PDR's membership in ASEAN was a good thing, as did 77.2% of the respondents aged 31 and over. Very small proportions of respondents – 2.6% of those aged 15–30 and 1.8% of those aged 31 or older – thought ASEAN membership was a bad thing for their country. The shares of respondents that indicated 'neither good nor bad' were 18.1% for the younger group and 21.1% for the older group. Similarly, comparing the respondents by gender, high proportions of both the male and female respondents thought Lao PDR's membership in ASEAN was a good thing, at 75% and 78%, respectively. Meanwhile, 2.5% of the male respondents and 2.2% of the female respondents thought ASEAN membership was bad for Lao PDR. Interestingly, as much as 83.3% of the government officials thought that the country's membership in ASEAN was a good thing, and none thought it was a bad thing (Figure 12).

Figure 10: Perception of Lao PDR's Membership of ASEAN by Age

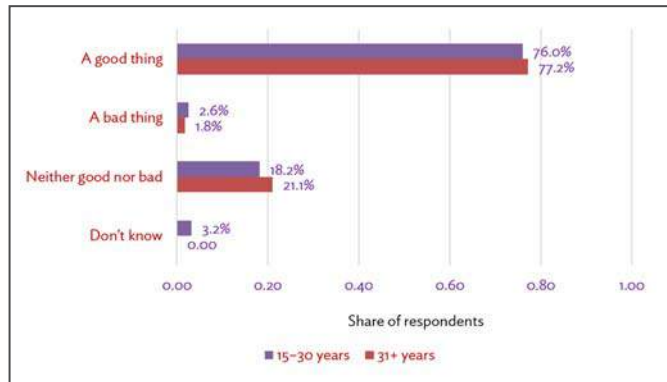


Figure 11: Perception of Lao PDR's Membership of ASEAN by Gender

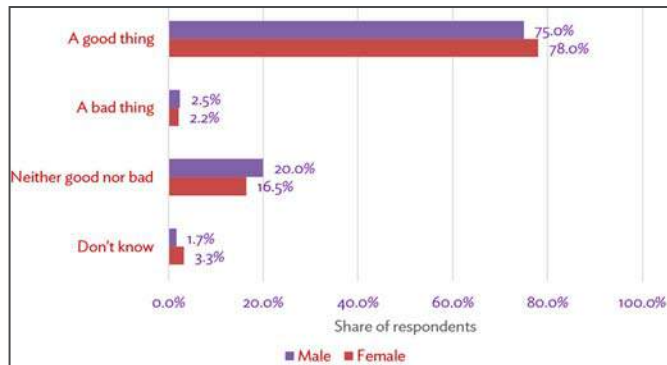
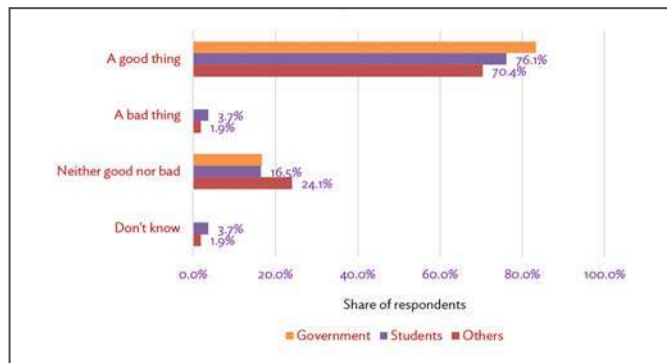


Figure 12: Perception of Lao PDR's Membership of ASEAN by Affiliation



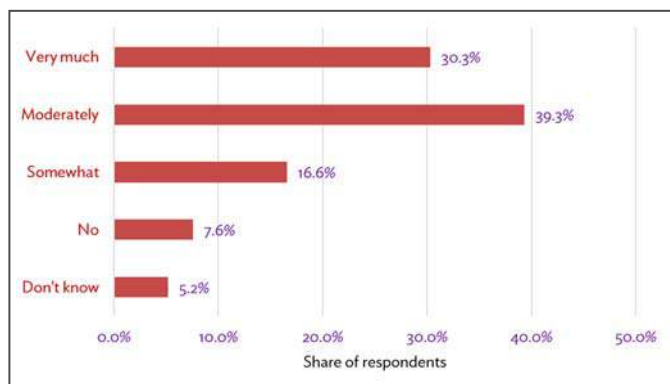
The FGDs showed that overall, the majority of the participants viewed Lao PDR's membership in ASEAN as a good thing. Many of the students claimed that ASEAN was an international platform for the country to promote itself and enhance cooperation

with other countries. Some government officials indicated that as a small, land-locked country, Lao PDR had benefited from joint political and economic bargaining power as a member of ASEAN. Some mentioned that ASEAN framework had helped the country improve its domestic regulatory framework. Some of the participants who thought that Lao PDR's membership was neither good nor bad explained that they said so because they had not noticed any substantial impacts from Lao PDR's membership of ASEAN.

Perception of the benefit from ASEAN membership

In addition to the previous question, the survey asked respondents whether they thought Lao PDR had benefited from being a member of ASEAN. The respondents chose from five options: 'very much', 'moderately', 'somewhat', 'no', and 'don't know'. Although a large proportion of respondents felt that Lao PDR's membership in ASEAN was a good thing, only 30.3% of the total respondents thought the country had benefited very much from its membership (Figure 13). The largest share of respondents, 39.3%, felt that Lao PDR had moderately benefited from its membership, 16.6% thought the country had somewhat benefited, 7.6% thought the country had not benefited, and 5.2% indicated they did not know. For this question, 0.9% of the respondents did not answer.

Figure 13: Perception of the Benefit from ASEAN Membership



Figures 14, 15, and 16 show the shares of responses by age, gender, and affiliation. Overall, comparing across age and gender groups, the shares of responses for each choice show very similar patterns. The largest shares of respondents selected 'moderately', followed by shares of those who chose 'very much', 'somewhat', and 'no'. Interestingly, when comparing by occupational background, we can see that the largest group that felt Lao PDR had benefited very much from ASEAN was the government-affiliated respondents (Figure 16).

Figure 14: Perception of the Benefit from ASEAN Membership by Age

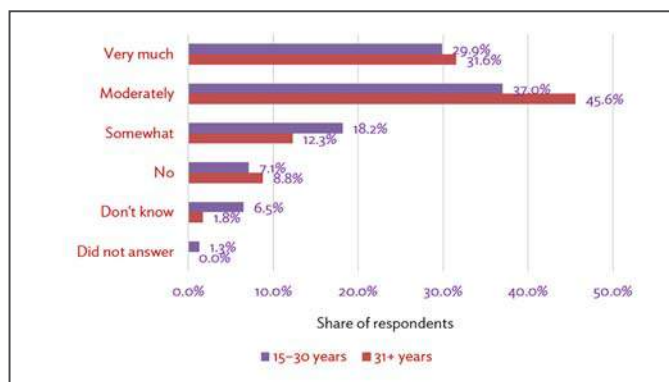


Figure 15: Perception of the Benefit from ASEAN Membership by Gender

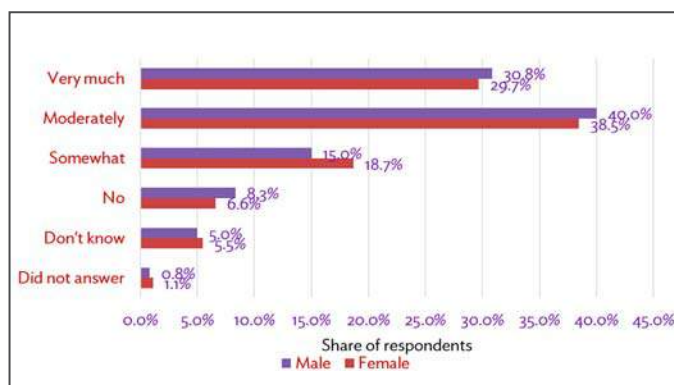
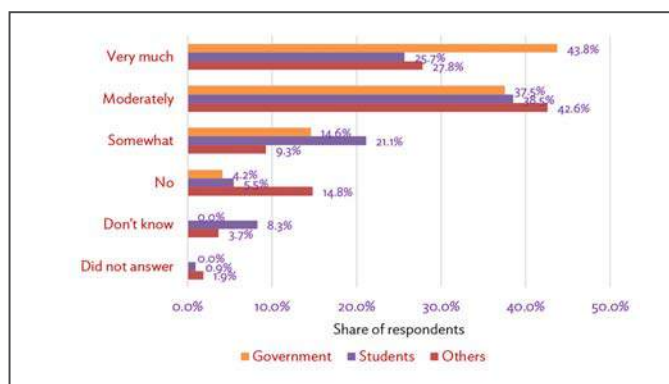


Figure 16: Perception of the Benefit from ASEAN Membership by Affiliation



In the FGDs, the majority of the participants in the student group thought that Lao PDR had benefited from ASEAN membership only moderately, while the majority of participants in the government official group thought the country had benefited very much from ASEAN membership. Following on from the previous question, the student

group elaborated that having ASEAN as a platform to promote the country had boosted the country's tourism sector as well as trade and investment. The student group also added that strengthened regional cooperation had allowed the country to learn from and other countries' experience and technical know-how, especially relating to economic and social development.

Concern if Lao PDR were to leave ASEAN

The survey next asked whether respondents would be concerned if Lao PDR were to leave ASEAN. The respondents could select one of five choices: 'extremely concerned', 'moderately concerned', 'somewhat concerned', 'slightly concerned', or 'not at all concerned'. Consistent with the results of the previous questions, the largest share of respondents, 40.8%, indicated they would be extremely concerned if Lao PDR were to leave ASEAN (Figure 17). Meanwhile, 28% indicated they would be moderately concerned, 16.6% said they would be somewhat concerned, and 5.2% said they would be slightly concerned. A sizeable share of respondents, 8.5%, indicated they would not be at all concerned if the country were to leave ASEAN, while 0.9% of the respondents did not answer the question.

Figure 17: Concern if Lao PDR Were to Leave ASEAN

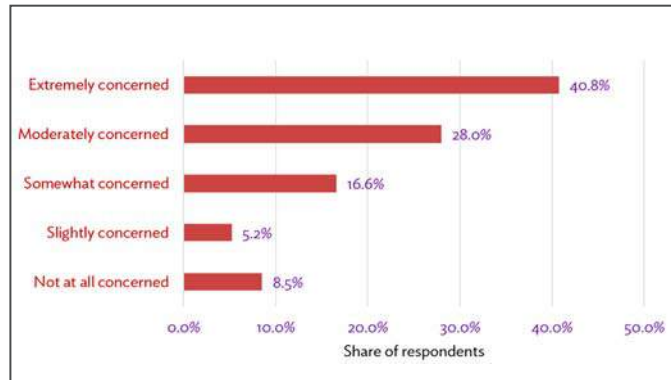


Figure 18 shows that the respondents aged 31 years old or above would be more concerned if Lao PDR were to leave ASEAN than those aged 15–30. Almost 51% of the older age group, but only 37% of the younger age group, said they would be extremely concerned. The younger age group also had a higher proportion of respondents that answered they would not be at all concerned if Lao PDR were to leave ASEAN.

Comparing the responses by gender, the shares of male and female respondents were almost identical in their concern if Lao PDR were to leave ASEAN, at 40.8% and 40.7%, respectively (Figure 19). However, the share of female respondents that indicated they would be moderately concerned was much higher than for the male respondents, while a higher ratio of male respondents indicated they would not be concerned at all.

This reflects that overall, female respondents indicated greater concern than their male counterparts.

Figure 20 shows the responses by affiliation. Overall, the government respondents indicated greater concern than the students and other respondents. Among the government officials, 50% said they would be extremely concerned if Lao PDR were to leave ASEAN, while none said they would not be at all concerned. Meanwhile, 42.6% of students and 35.8% of respondents with other affiliations indicated they would be extremely concerned, with about 11% for both answering that they would not be at all concerned.

During the FGDs, the majority of the participants elaborated that because they thought ASEAN membership was a good thing and Lao PDR had benefited from ASEAN, they would be very much concerned if the country were to leave ASEAN. They claimed that Lao PDR would lose international creditability to a certain extent, and it would be more difficult for the country to ensure good cooperation with other countries in the region. They added that this would have a negative impact on the country’s trade and investment.

Figure 18: Concern if Lao PDR Were to Leave ASEAN by Age

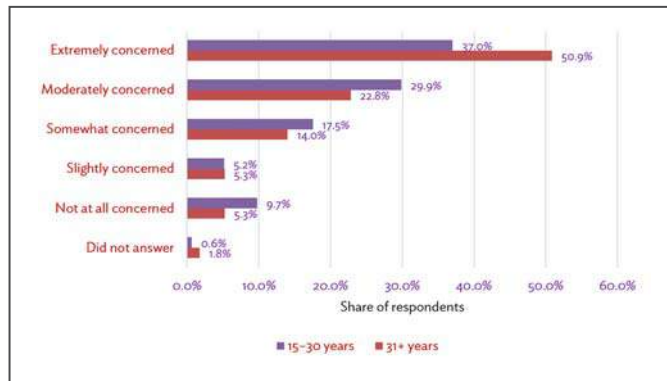


Figure 19: Concern if Lao PDR Were to Leave ASEAN by Gender

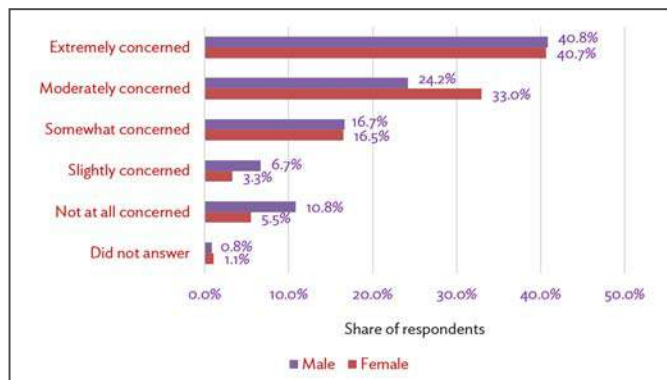
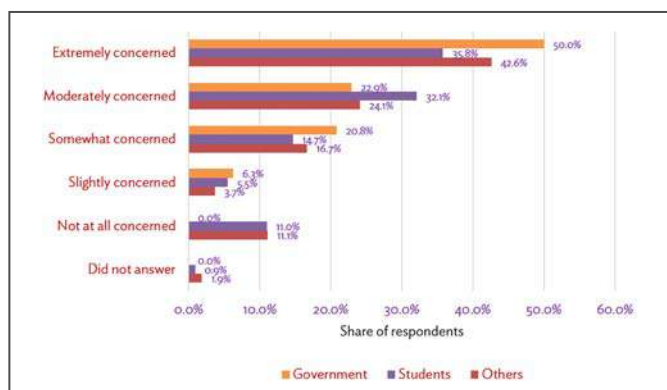


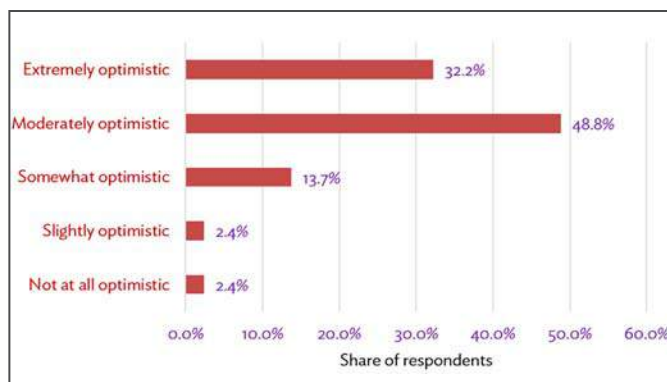
Figure 20: Concern if Lao PDR Were to Leave ASEAN by Affiliation



Perception of the future of ASEAN

The survey asked what the respondents thought about the future of ASEAN. They were given five possible choices: ‘extremely optimistic’, ‘moderately optimistic’, ‘somewhat optimistic’, ‘slightly optimistic’, and ‘not at all optimistic’. Of the respondents, 0.5% did not answer the question (Figure 21). Overall, 48.8% of the respondents said they were moderately optimistic about the future of ASEAN, 32.2% said they felt extremely optimistic about the future of ASEAN, 13.7% felt somewhat optimistic, and 2.4% felt slightly optimistic or not at all optimistic.

Figure 21: Perception of the Future of ASEAN



Comparing the responses of those aged 15–30 and those aged 31 or over, Figure 22 shows that overall, the largest shares in both groups were at least moderately optimistic. The figure also reveals that the respondents in the younger age group had a higher proportion of those who were extremely optimistic compared to the older age group, while the older age group had a higher share of respondents who expressed moderate optimism about the future of ASEAN.

Figure 22: Perception of the Future of ASEAN by Age

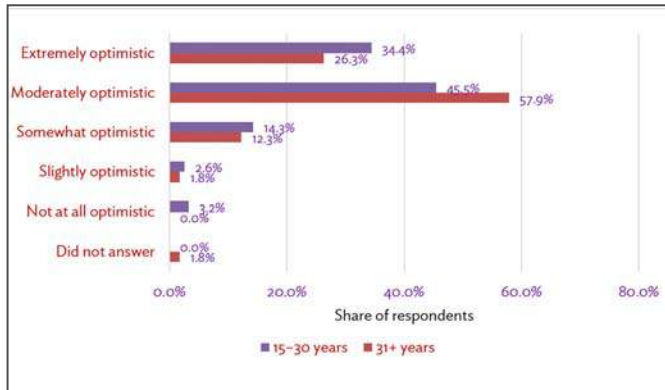


Figure 23: Perception of the the Future of ASEAN by Gender

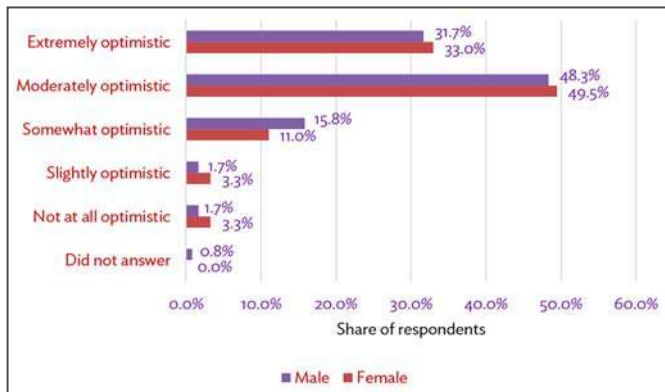
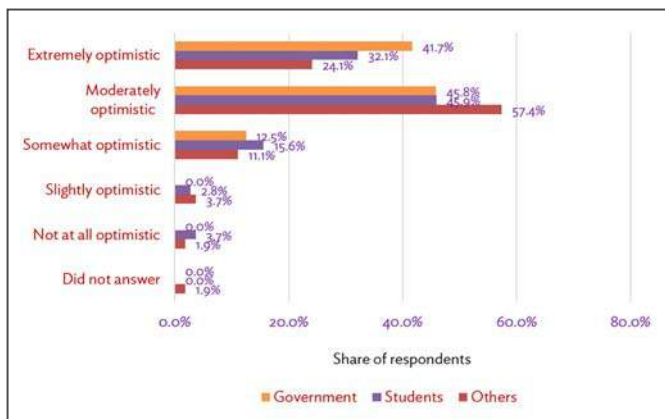


Figure 24: Perception of the the Future of ASEAN by Affiliation



As shown in Figure 23, the responses by the male and female respondents were similar. Shares of 31.7% of the male respondents and 33% of the female respondents were extremely optimistic about the future of ASEAN, while 48.3% of the male respondents and 49.5% of the female respondents were moderately optimistic about the future of ASEAN. Both groups had small proportions of respondents who were slightly optimistic or not at all optimistic, at 1.7% for the male respondents and 3.3% for the female respondents.

Comparison by affiliation shows that the government respondents were relatively more optimistic about the future of ASEAN than the students and other respondents. They had the largest share of respondents who answered ‘extremely optimistic’, while none chose ‘slightly optimistic’ or ‘not at all optimistic’ (Figure 24).

During the FGDs, participants elaborated on their perceptions of the future of ASEAN. Overall, the participants were optimistic about ASEAN’s future, although opinions varied. Some participants thought that in years to come, they would see improved global economic conditions that would help boost the regional economy. Some participants believed that establishing the ASEAN Community marked the beginning of strengthened regional cooperation and integration through implementation of the blueprints. Some participants were also considerably optimistic about the tourism sector in the region.

Media coverage of ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges

The respondents were given the following statement: ‘The media (newspaper, radio, television, and online news) does not have enough coverage of ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges.’ They were then asked to state their level of agreement with the statement by choosing one of five possible responses: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’. Figure 25 shows that the majority of respondents agreed with the statement: 57.8% chose ‘agree’, and 19.9% chose ‘strongly agree’. Meanwhile, 18% of the total respondents were neutral, 3.3% disagreed, and only 0.9% strongly disagreed.

Figures 26, 27, and 28 show that the patterns of responses among groups were similar. The proportions of respondents that indicated they agreed with the statement were between 56% and 62%, and the proportions of those who strongly agreed with the statement in each group were between 16% and 26%. The shares of respondents who disagreed in all groups were less than 6.3%.

Figure 25: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN’s Progress, Achievements, and Challenges

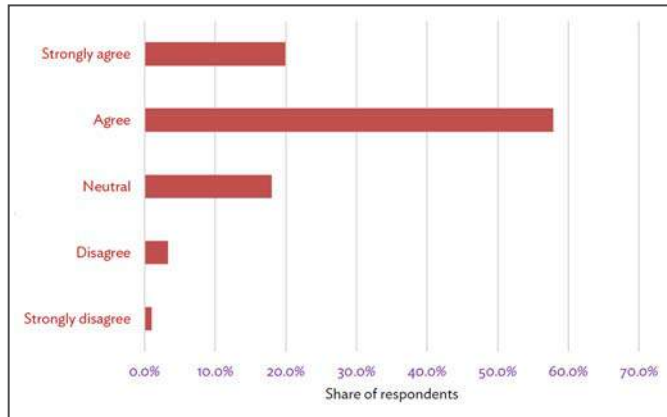


Figure 26: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN’s Progress, Achievements, and Challenges, by Age

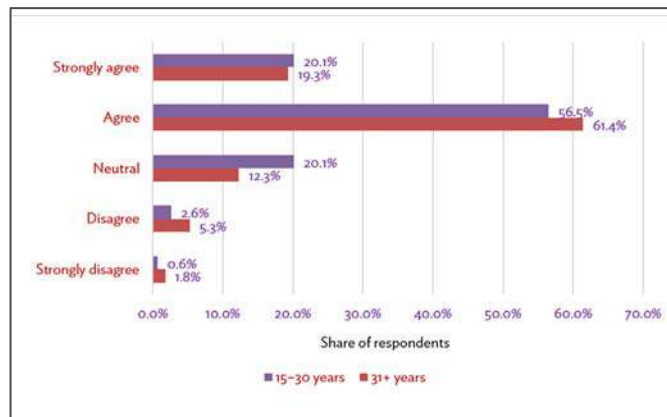


Figure 27: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN’s Progress, Achievements, and Challenges, by Gender

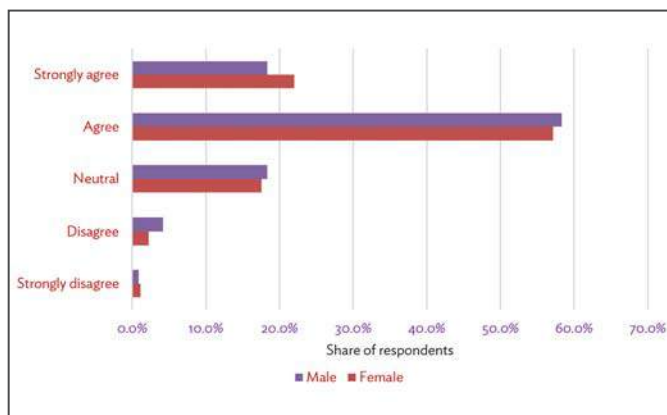
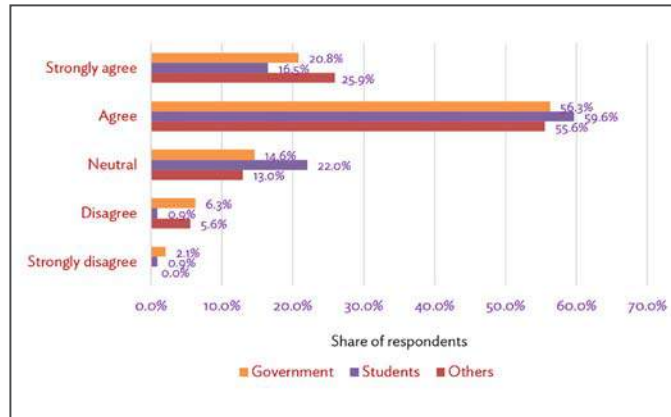


Figure 28: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN’s Progress, Achievements, and Challenges, by Affiliation



The FGDs revealed that the majority of the participants acknowledged that the media did cover topics on ASEAN. However, the participants thought that most media pieces did not provide much in-depth analysis or details on ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges. As such, most participants agreed with the statement. Moreover, some participants pointed out that they felt Lao PDR’s media had less coverage of ASEAN than the media in Thailand and that they had benefited from Thai media in learning about ASEAN.

Perception of using textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN

The survey asked respondents about the extent to which they agreed with using school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges. The respondents were given five possible choices: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’. Overall, the majority of the respondents agreed with using textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN to a certain extent. Figure 29 shows that 39.3% of the total respondents strongly agreed with using school textbooks for these purposes, and 44.5% agreed with the idea. Meanwhile, 13.7% of the respondents were neutral about the idea, and 1.9% and 0.5% of the respondents indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea, respectively.

Figure 30 compares the responses between the two age groups. Respondents in the older age group tended to agree more with the idea of using textbooks. Of those aged 31 or older, 45.6% strongly agreed with the idea, and 47.7% agreed with the idea. Meanwhile, for the younger group, 37% indicated ‘strongly agree’, and 43.5% indicated

‘agree’. None of the respondents in the older group answered ‘neutral’ or ‘strongly disagree’, but 7% chose ‘disagree’. The figure also shows that a sizeable proportion of respondents aged 15–30, 18.8%, were neutral with the idea, and almost none disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 29: Perception of Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN’s Progress, Achievements, and Challenges

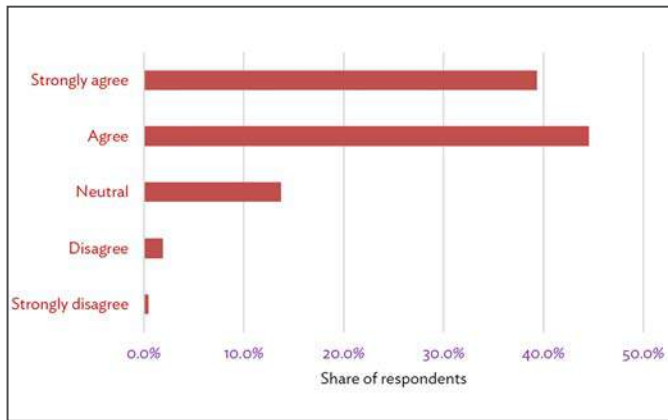


Figure 30: Perception of Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN’s Progress, Achievements, and Challenges, by Age

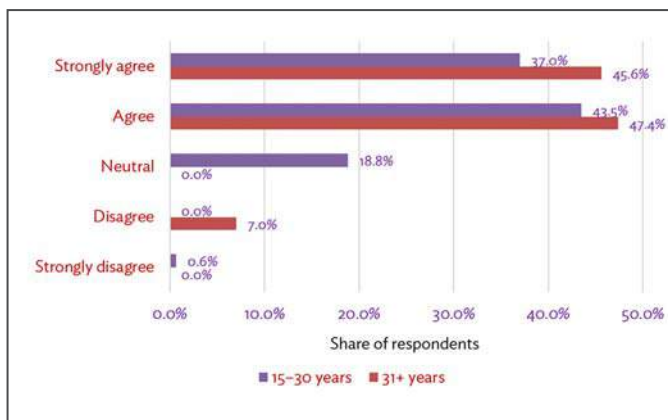


Figure 31 compares the responses of the male and female respondents. The majority of both the male and female respondents agreed or strongly agreed with using school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN, while less than 20% indicated ‘neutral’ or ‘disagree’.

Figure 32 shows the responses by affiliation. Overall, the majority of respondents from all affiliations agreed with using school textbooks to educate young people about ASEAN. The majority of the respondents in each affiliation selected ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’, and

Figure 31: Perception of Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN’s Progress, Achievements, and Challenges, by Gender

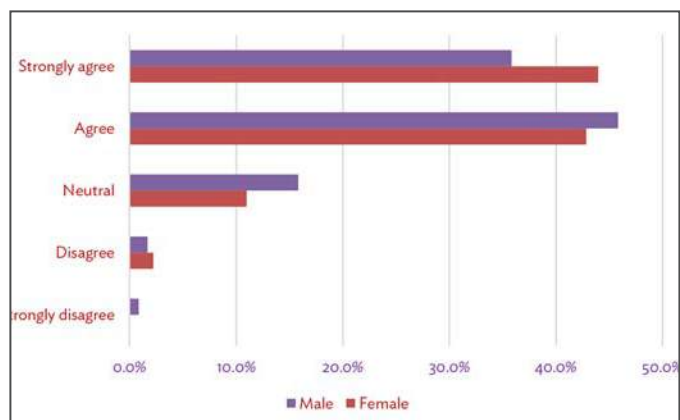
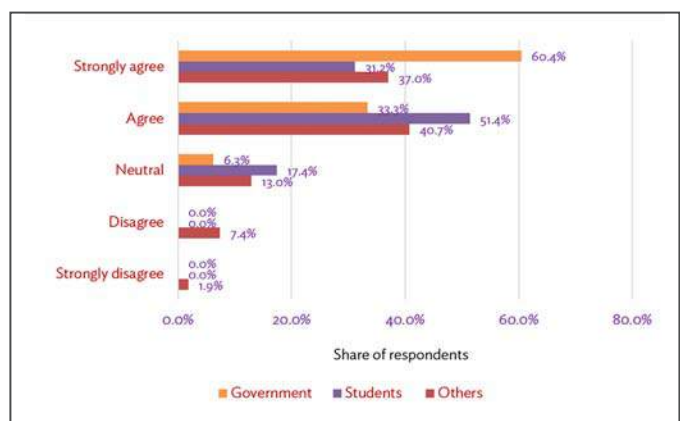


Figure 32: Perceptions of Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN’s Progress, Achievements, and Challenges, by Affiliation



none of the government officials or students selected ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’. Among the affiliation groups, the government respondents were most in agreement as 60.4% of them indicated strong agreement, and 33.3% indicated agreement with the idea.

The participants from the FGDs also agreed with using textbooks. Some participants reasoned that as ASEAN provided potential benefits for the economic development of Lao PDR, it was important for young people to have a good understanding of its progress, achievements, and challenges so they could prepare themselves for the opportunities and challenges. Some people shared their ideas that the content should include the cultural, economic, and social development of each member country so that

young people can learn more about ASEAN's Member States and have more of a sense of an ASEAN identity.

Top five pressing problems facing Lao PDR at present and until 2025

The survey asked respondents to select five issues they thought were the most pressing problems facing the country now and until 2025. The respondents were given 21 issues, of which eight were economic issues, nine were sociocultural issues, and four were governance and political issues. Figure 33 shows that income disparity and social inequality was viewed as the most pressing problem, selected by the highest proportion of respondents (41.2%). This was followed by poverty; agriculture and food security; corruption; and unemployment. Among the issues, gender disparity was the least selected, followed by issues related to non-tariff measures and public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring.

The participants in the FGDs made differing selections, and their overall results were slightly different from the results of the survey. The top five pressing problems chosen by the participants were income disparity and social inequality, unemployment, access to high-quality education, access to high-quality health services, and corruption. The majority of participants felt that economic development over the last decade had resulted in increased disparity in the country. They mentioned that in urban areas, there had been a rapid increase in the numbers of buildings, big houses, restaurants, and expensive cars. On the other hand, in rural areas, there had been limited improvement in infrastructure and facilities. Unemployment was viewed as one of the most pressing issues, especially among the student participants. Some shared how they had seen how difficult it was for their seniors to find jobs. They mentioned that job opportunities were limited despite high economic growth. Some participants complained about the low quality of health care provision in Lao PDR compared to its neighbouring countries and were also concerned about the lagging state of education. Participants also expressed their concerns about corruption but were positive about the efforts being made by the current government to fight it.

Figure 33: Top Five Pressing Problems Facing Lao PDR at Present and until 2025

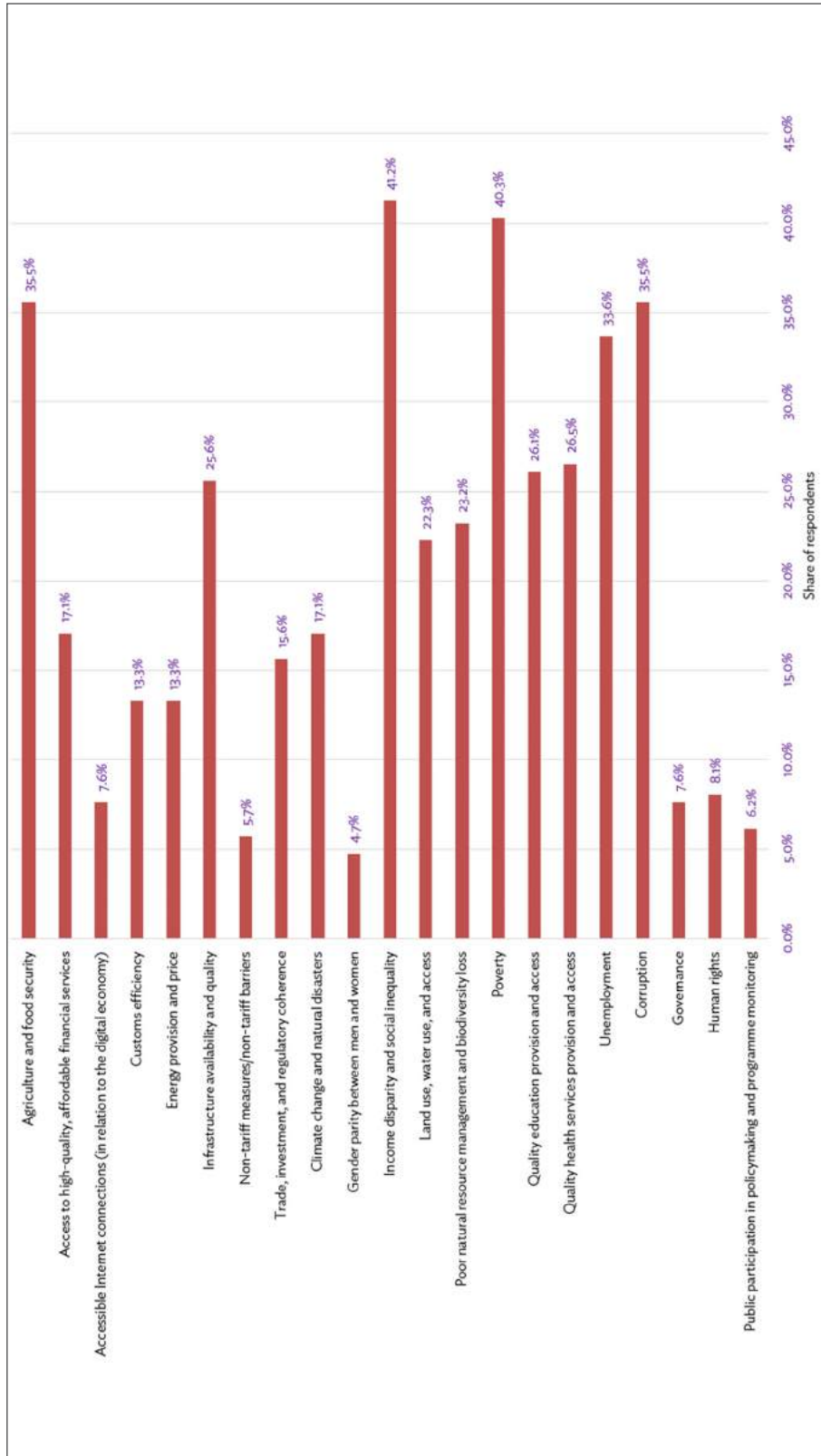
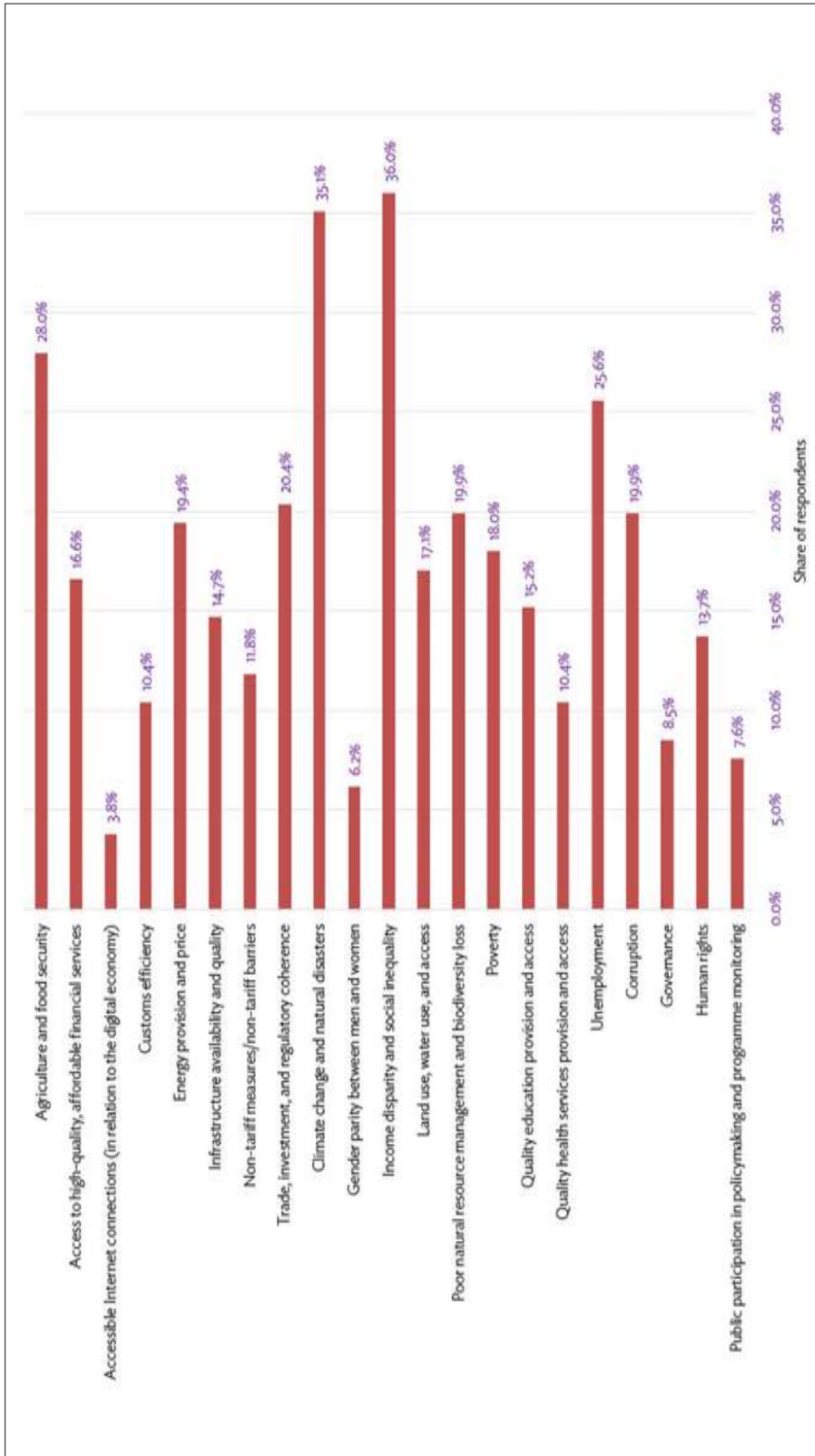


Figure 34: Top Five Pressing Problems Facing ASEAN at Present and until 2025



Top five pressing problems facing ASEAN at present and until 2025

Similar to the previous section, the respondents were asked to select the top five pressing problems facing ASEAN at present and until 2025 from among 21 possible choices. The issue of income disparity and social inequality was selected by the highest share of respondents (36%) (Figure 34). This was followed by climate change and natural disasters (selected by 35.1% of the respondents), agriculture and food security (28%), unemployment (25.6%), and corruption (19.9%). The issue of accessible Internet connections was selected by only 3.8% of the total respondents. This was followed by public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring, which was selected by 7.6% of the participants.

The results from the FGDs again differed slightly from the survey results. As in the survey results, the issues of climate change and natural disasters, income disparity and social inequality, and unemployment were selected by the majority of participants as among the top five pressing problems facing ASEAN. Land use, water use, and access, and the issue of energy provision and price were not in the list of the top five problems in the survey results but were among the top five selected by the FGD participants.

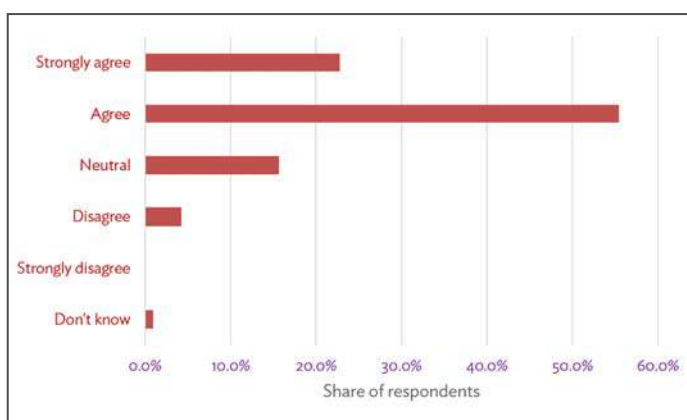
The participants explained that the issue of climate change and natural disasters was a pressing problem not only at the regional level but also at the global level. For ASEAN, the participants claimed this was a pressing issue that would require concerted efforts to address, especially as over the last few years there had been more severe, frequent occurrences of natural disasters in the region, including in Lao PDR. The issue of income disparity and social inequality was also a concern. They felt that this issue was being faced by the ASEAN Member States individually but that there was also regional disparity. They recognised the need for joint efforts to help reduce the regional disparity.

Expectations for ASEAN by 2025

The survey provided 15 statements related to ASEAN and asked the respondents whether they agreed each statement would be likely to happen by 2025. There were six possible choices: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’, and ‘don’t know’. The results for each statement are as follows.

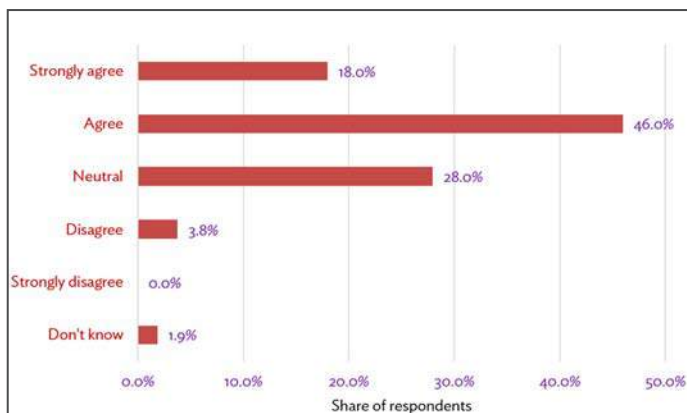
The first statement given to the respondents was: ‘ASEAN is a region where goods, services, and businesses can move easily among countries in the region.’ Of the respondents, 22.7% strongly agreed with the statement, 55.5% selected ‘agree’, and 15.6% chose ‘neutral’ (Figure 35). Meanwhile, 4.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, none of the respondents strongly disagreed, and 0.9% indicated ‘don’t know’.

Figure 35: ASEAN Is a Region Where Goods, Services, and Businesses Can Move Easily Among Countries in the Region



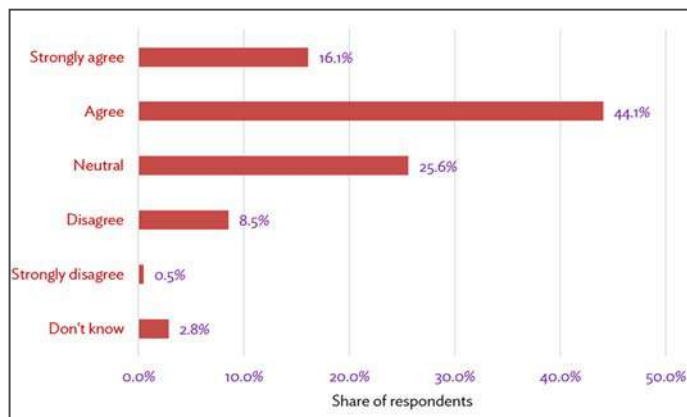
Statement 2 was: ‘ASEAN is a region where regulations and procedures make it easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.’ Of the respondents, 46% agreed with the statement, and 18% strongly agreed (Figure 36). The share of respondents who chose ‘neutral’ was significant, at 28%. None of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, while only 3.8% disagreed, and 1.9% answered ‘don’t know’.

Figure 36: ASEAN Is a Region Where Regulations and Procedures Make It Easy for Skilled Workers and Professionals to Find Work in Other Countries in ASEAN



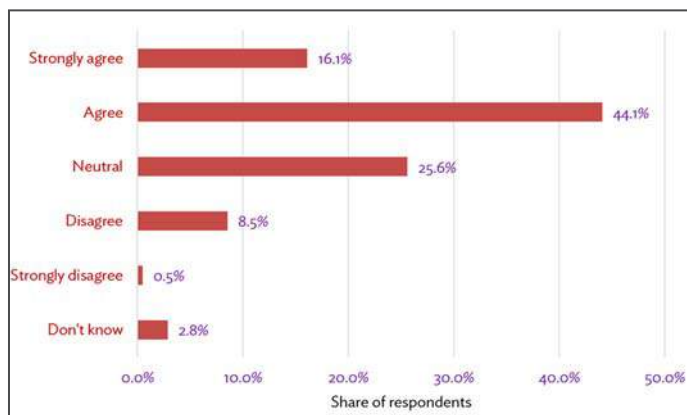
Statement 3 was: ‘ASEAN and its member countries provide basic social protection and health services to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.’ For this statement, 44.1% of the respondents agreed, 16.1% strongly agreed, and 25.6% were neutral (Figure 37). The ratio of respondents who disagreed was somewhat sizeable at 8.5%. A small share of respondents, 0.5%, strongly disagreed, and 2.8% selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 37: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Provide Basic Social Protection and Health Services to Migrant and Temporary Workers from Other Countries in ASEAN



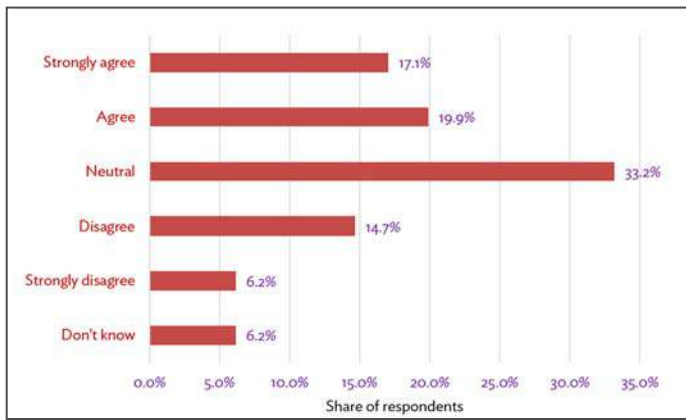
Statement 4 proposed by 2025: ‘ASEAN is a region of good governance and very much less corruption.’ Figure 38 shows that the largest share of respondents, 33.2%, were neutral about this statement. However, 17.1% strongly agreed, and 19.9% agreed. The ratios of respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed were considerable, at 14.7% and 6.2%, respectively. Meanwhile, 6.2% of respondents selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 38: ASEAN Is a Region of Good Governance and Very Much Less Corruption



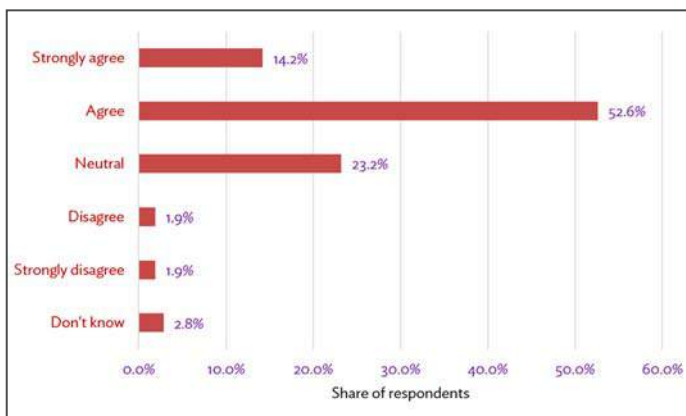
Statement 5 given to the respondents was: ‘ASEAN is a region where it is easy to physically move around through roads, railways, air, and shipping.’ Figure 39 reveals that a large share of respondents, 38.9%, agreed with the statement, and 22.7% strongly agreed. A sizeable 21.8% of the total respondents were neutral with the statement, while 9.5% disagreed, and 1.9% strongly disagreed. The remaining 2.4% indicated they did not know.

Figure 39: ASEAN Is a Region Where It Is Easy to Physically Move around through Roads, Railways, Air, and Shipping



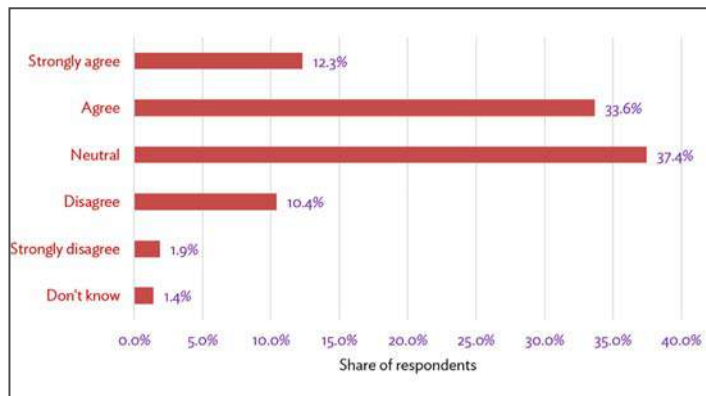
Statement 6 was: ‘The ASEAN Community is a region where people and businesses can digitally interact and communicate easily with one another.’ The majority of respondents, 52.6%, agreed with the statement, while 14.2% strongly agreed (Figure 40). A notable share of 23.2% selected ‘neutral’, while 1.9% indicated ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’. The remaining 2.8% chose ‘don’t know’.

Figure 40: The ASEAN Community Is a Region Where People and Businesses Can Digitally Interact and Communicate Easily with One Another



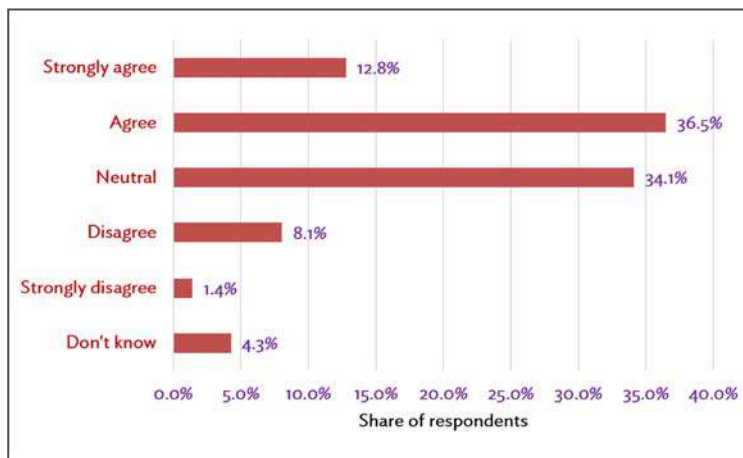
Statement 7 given to the respondents was: ‘ASEAN peoples are deeply aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.’ Interestingly, the largest proportion of respondents, 37.4%, was neutral about the statement (Figure 41). This was followed by 33.6% of respondents who selected ‘agree’ and 12.3% who selected ‘strongly agree’. Meanwhile, 10.4% of respondents chose ‘disagree’, and 1.9% chose ‘strongly disagree’. The remaining 1.4% selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 41: ASEAN Peoples Are Deeply Aware of the ASEAN Community and Its Programmes



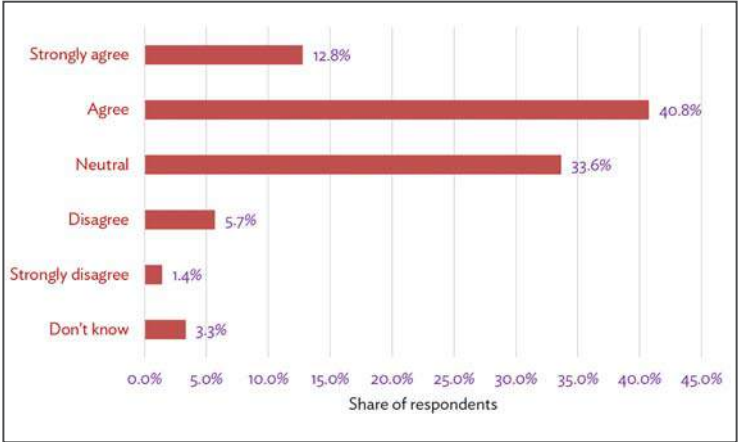
Statement 8 was: ‘The ASEAN Community deeply engages and benefits its people.’ Although the majority of respondents were quite positive about the statement, with 36.5% selecting ‘agree’ and 12.8% selecting ‘strongly agree’, a sizeable proportion, 34.1%, felt neutrally about the statement (Figure 42). Meanwhile, 8.1% chose ‘disagree’, 1.4% chose ‘strongly disagree’, and 4.3% answered ‘don’t know’.

Figure 42: The ASEAN Community Deeply Engages and Benefits Its Peoples



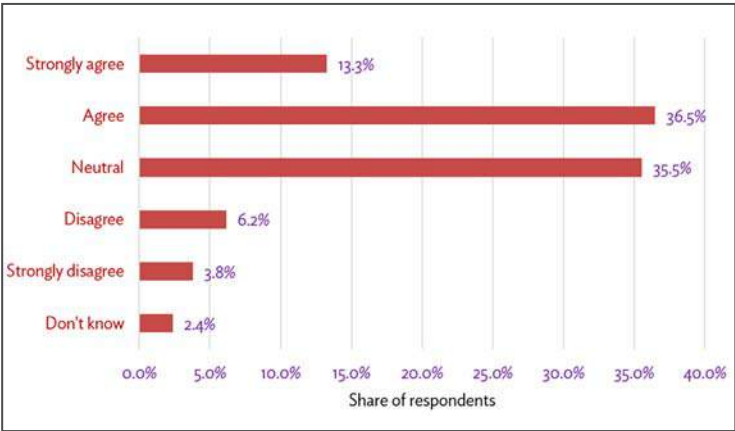
Statement 9 was: ‘ASEAN pushes for equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.’ Of the respondents, 12.8% strongly disagreed with the statement, while 40.8% agreed (Figure 43). A considerable share of respondents, 33.6%, selected ‘neutral’, while 5.7% chose ‘disagree’, 1.4% chose ‘strongly disagree’, and 3.3% chose ‘don’t know’.

Figure 43: ASEAN Pushes for Equitable Access to Opportunities for ASEAN Peoples



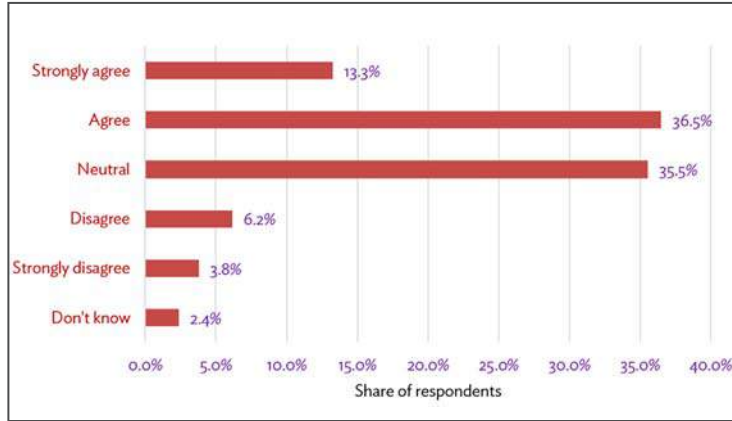
Statement 10 proposed: ‘ASEAN and its member countries effectively protect human rights and minorities in the region.’ For this statement, 36.5% of the respondents agreed and 13.3% strongly agreed (Figure 44). Meanwhile, 35.5% answered ‘neutral’, 6.2% chose ‘disagree’, 3.8% chose ‘strongly disagree’, and 2.4% chose ‘don’t know’.

Figure 44: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Effectively Protect Human Rights and Minorities in the Region



Statement 11 was: ‘ASEAN and its member countries effectively conserve and sustainably manage the region’s biodiversity and natural resources.’ For this statement, 42.2% of the respondents agreed, and 10% strongly agreed (Figure 45). Meanwhile, 29.4% chose ‘neutral’, 10.9% selected ‘disagree’, 1.4% selected ‘disagree’, and 3.3% selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 45: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Effectively Conserve and Sustainably Manage the Region’s Biodiversity and Natural Resources



The next statement, Statement 12, was: ‘ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.’ Figure 46 shows that the largest proportion of the respondents (32.2%) was neutral about the statement. Meanwhile, 27.5% of the respondents said they agreed with the statement, and 11.8% indicated strong agreement. Interestingly, the proportion of respondents who indicated ‘disagree’ was quite large at 17.1%. However, the proportion of respondents who strongly disagreed was much smaller at 3.3%, and the proportion who chose ‘don’t know’ was 5.2%.

Figure 46: ASEAN Major Cities Are Less Polluted and More Liveable than They Are Today

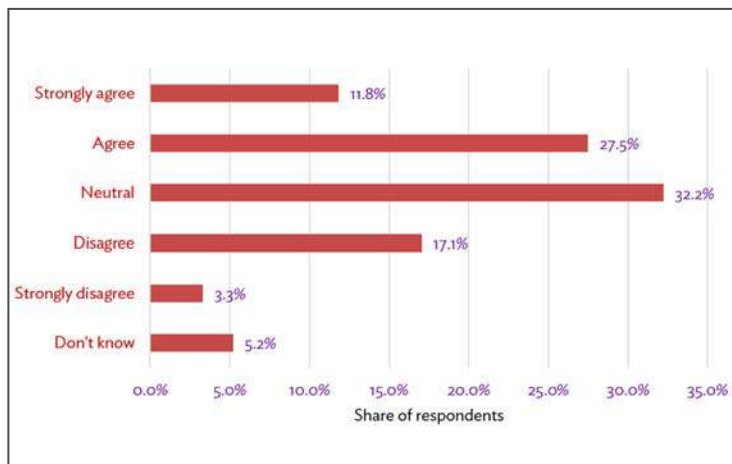
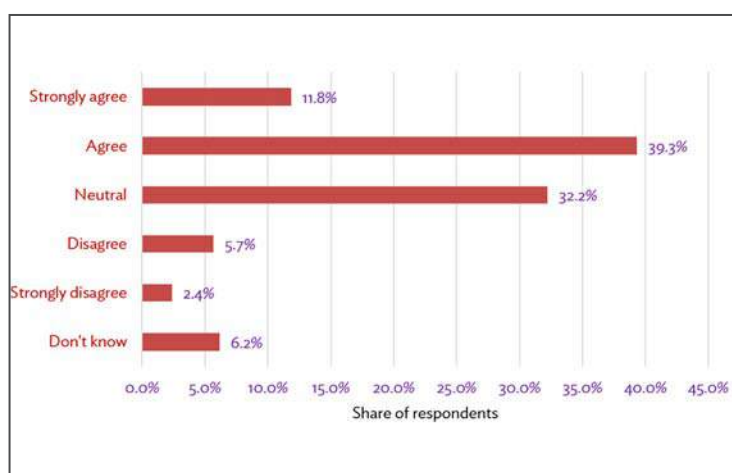


Figure 47 shows the perceptions of the respondents for Statement 13: ‘ASEAN and its member countries are very much able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster and concertedly together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.’ The proportion of respondents who strongly agreed with the statement was 11.8%, and those who agreed accounted for 39.3%. Meanwhile, 32.2% were neutral about the statement, and 5.7% and 2.4% selected ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’, respectively. Lastly, 6.2% of respondents answered ‘don’t know’.

Figure 47: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Are Very Much Able to Anticipate, Respond, and Recover Faster and Concertedly Together from Natural Disasters and Health Hazards in the Region



Statement 14 was: ‘ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums.’ Figure 48 shows that the largest share of respondents, 40.8%, agreed with the statement, and 20.9% strongly agreed. Although 25.6% of the respondents were neutral about the statement, those who did not agree accounted for less than 10% of the total respondents: 5.2% selected ‘disagree’ and 1.9% selected ‘strongly disagree’. Lastly, 3.3% selected ‘don’t know’.

The last statement, Statement 15, proposed: ‘ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.’ Of the respondents, the largest proportion, 43.1%, agreed, and 17.5% strongly agreed (Figure 49). Over a quarter of respondents, 27.5%, were neutral about the statement. Only small shares of respondents indicated ‘don’t know’ (3.3%), ‘disagree’ (4.7%), and ‘strongly disagree’ (1.4%).

Figure 48: ASEAN Has a Strong Voice and Is an Important Player in Global Negotiations and Forums

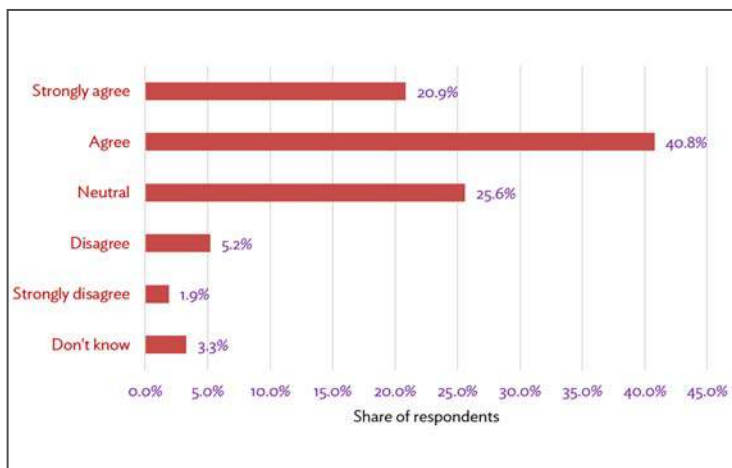
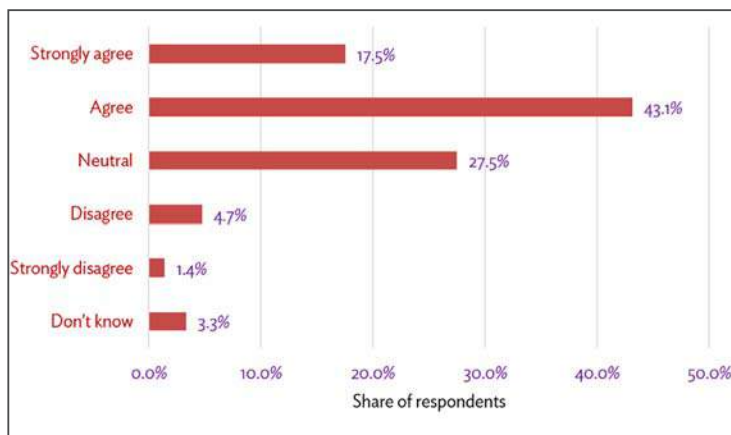


Figure 49: ASEAN Deeply Engages Powers in the Region and the World to Ensure Peace in the Region and the Asia-Pacific Region



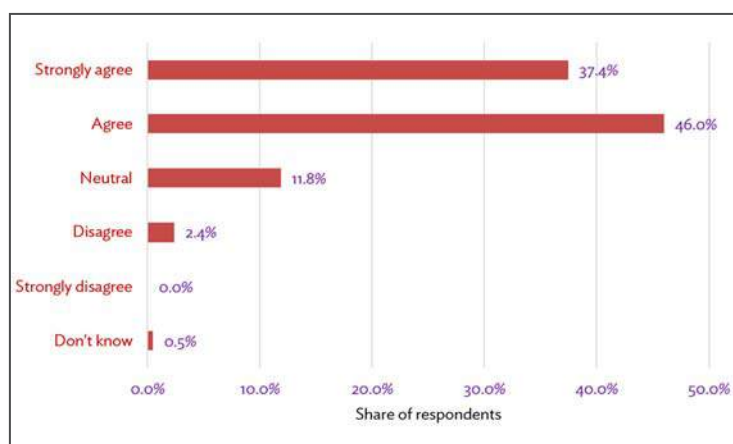
In the FGDs, the majority of the participants were generally positive about ASEAN's future. Most expected to have a free flow of goods, services, and businesses. They claimed there had been good progress in this area and that they had noticed improved integration. The issues that many participants thought would be a challenge to overcome by 2025 were pollution and natural disasters. They took Lao PDR as an example and explained that as the economy had developed, they had noticed worsening conditions in these two areas.

Aspirations for ASEAN by 2025

The respondents were next given the same 15 statements about ASEAN. However, unlike in the previous section, the respondents were asked whether each statement was what they actually wanted to happen in ASEAN by 2025. For each statement, the respondents selected one of six possible choices: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’, and ‘don’t know’. The results are as follows.

Figure 50 shows the responses for Statement 1: ‘ASEAN is a region where goods, services, and businesses can move easily among countries in the region.’ Slightly more than 80% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement as an aspiration for ASEAN by 2025, with shares of 37.4% and 46.0%, respectively. Meanwhile, 11.8% of the respondents selected ‘neutral’, 2.4% selected ‘disagree’, and 0.5% selected ‘don’t know’. None of the respondents chose ‘strongly disagree’.

Figure 50: ASEAN Is a Region Where Goods, Services, and Businesses Can Move Easily among Countries in the Region



Statement 2 was: ‘ASEAN is a region where regulations and procedures make it easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.’ The ratios of respondents who indicated that the statement strongly agreed and agreed with their aspirations for ASEAN by 2025 were relatively large at 28.4% and 48.3%, respectively (Figure 51). Respondents who chose ‘neutral’ accounted for 14.2% of the respondents. Respondents who chose ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ accounted for 4.3% and 0.5%, respectively. Only 0.9% selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 52 shows the respondents’ aspirations for Statement 3: ‘ASEAN and its member countries provide basic social protection and health services to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.’ The majority of respondents either strongly

Figure 51: ASEAN Is a Region Where Regulations and Procedures Make It Easy for Skilled Workers and Professionals to Find Work in Other Countries in ASEAN

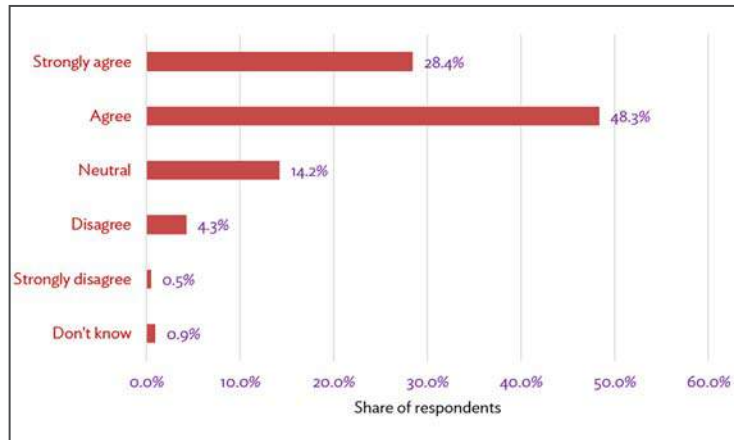
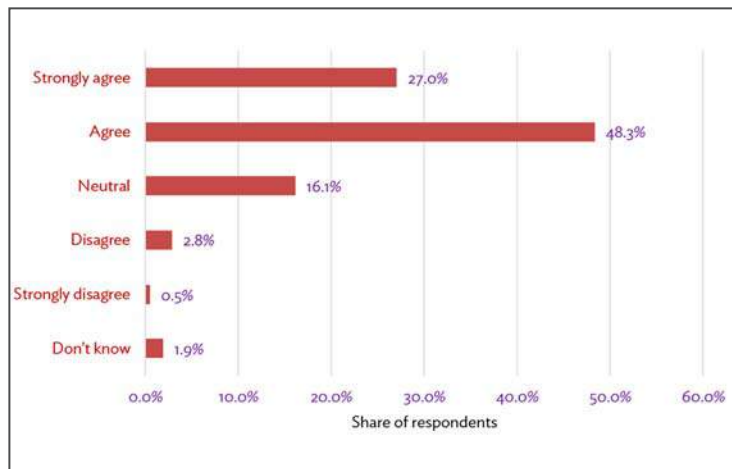


Figure 52: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Provide Basic Social Protection and Health Services to Migrant and Temporary Workers from Other Countries in ASEAN



agreed or agreed with the statement, while 27% selected ‘strongly agree’, and 48.3% selected ‘agree’. Respondents who chose ‘neutral’ comprised 16.1% of the total. Meanwhile, 2.8% of the respondents selected ‘disagree’, 0.5% selected ‘strongly disagree’, and 1.9% selected ‘don’t know’.

Statement 4 was: ‘ASEAN is a region of good governance and very much less corruption.’ The largest proportion of respondents (34.6%) selected ‘agree’ (Figure 53). This was followed by 31.8% who selected ‘strongly disagree’ and 19.9% who selected ‘neutral’. Meanwhile, 6.2% chose ‘disagree’, 0.9% chose ‘agree’, and 2.8% selected ‘don’t know’.

Statement 5 was: ‘ASEAN is a region where it is easy to physically move around through roads, railways, air, and shipping.’ The majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that this was what they wished to happen in ASEAN by 2025, with shares of 38.9% and 39.3%, respectively (Figure 54). ‘Neutral’ was selected by 15.2% of respondents, while ‘disagree’ was selected by 2.8%. None of the respondents selected ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘don’t know’.

Figure 55 shows the responses for Statement 6: ‘The ASEAN Community is a region where people and businesses can digitally interact and communicate easily with one another.’ Significant proportions of the respondents wished for this to happen, with 48.3% selecting ‘agree’ and 31.8% selecting ‘strongly agree’. A share of 10.9% selected ‘neutral’, 2.8% selected ‘disagree’, 1.4% selected ‘strongly disagree’, and 1.4% selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 53: ASEAN Is a Region of Good Governance and Very Much Less Corruption

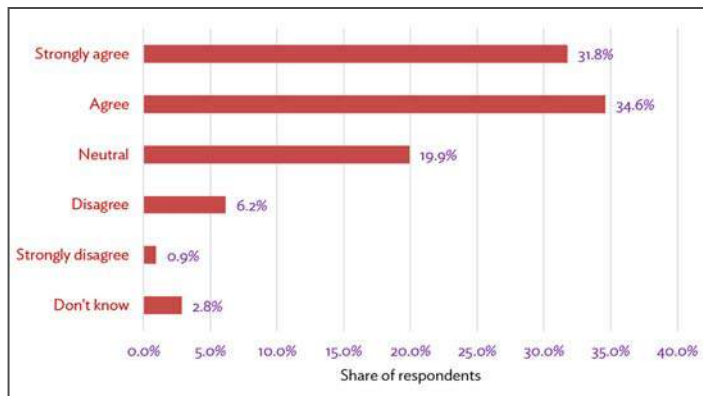


Figure 54: ASEAN Is a Region Where It Is Easy to Physically Move Around through Roads, Railways, Air, and Shipping

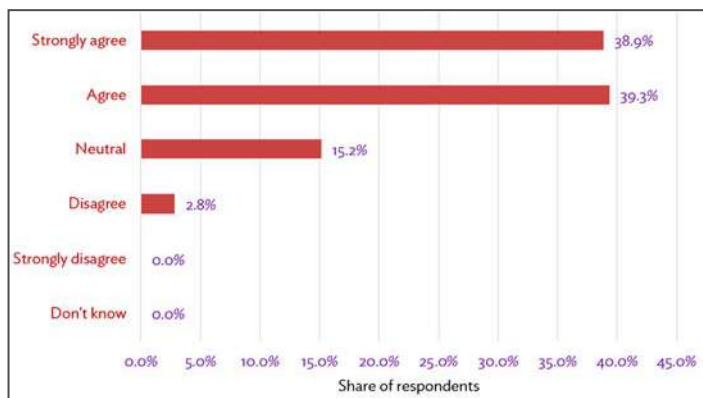


Figure 55: The ASEAN Community Is a Region Where People and Businesses Can Digitally Interact and Communicate Easily with One Another

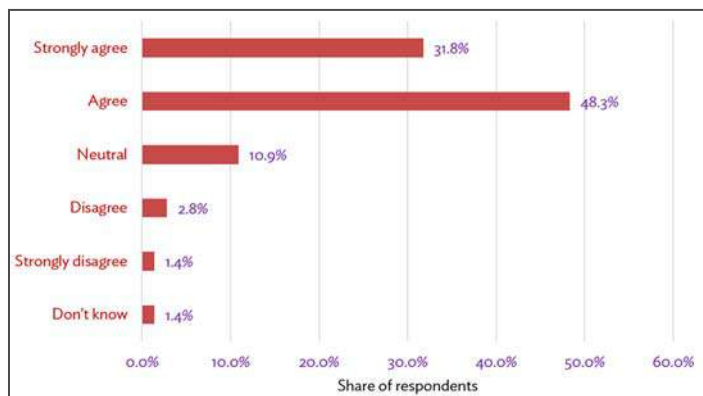


Figure 56 shows the responses for Statement 7: ‘ASEAN peoples are deeply aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.’ For this statement, 46% of the respondents agreed they wished for this to happen by 2025, while 25.6% strongly agreed. A share of 18.5% selected ‘neutral’. Respondents who selected ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’, and ‘don’t know’ accounted for 2.8%, 0.9% and 2.8% of the total respondents, respectively.

Figure 56: ASEAN Peoples Are Deeply Aware of the ASEAN Community and Its Programmes

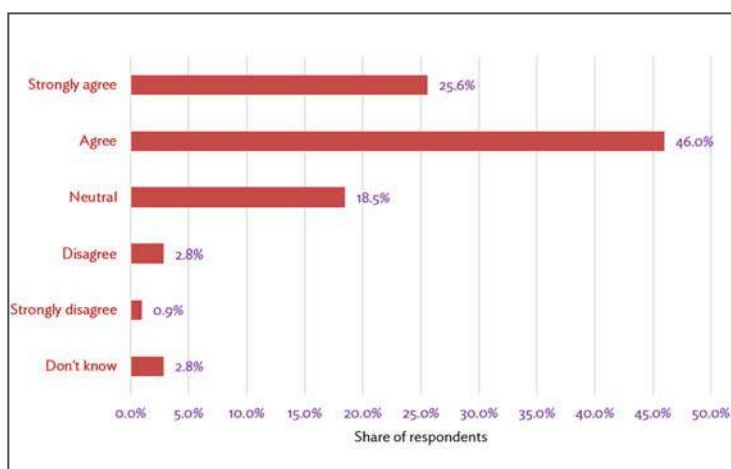
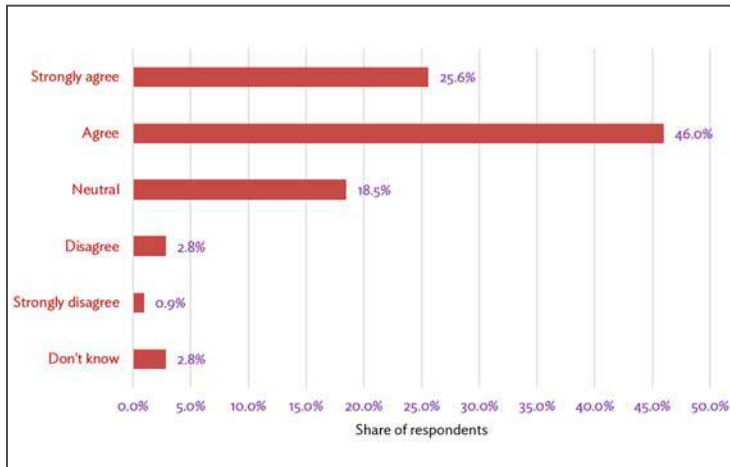


Figure 57 shows the responses for Statement 8: ‘The ASEAN Community deeply engages and benefits its peoples.’ For this statement, 30.8% of respondents selected ‘strongly agree’, 38.9% selected ‘agree’, and 21.3% selected ‘neutral’. Only a small proportion of 3.3% of the respondents selected ‘disagree’, and 0.9% selected ‘strongly disagree’. The remaining 0.9% selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 57: The ASEAN Community Deeply Engages and Benefits Its Peoples



Statement 9 was: ‘ASEAN pushes for equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.’ Of the respondents, 33.6% strongly agreed with the statement, 39.8% agreed, and 17.5% selected ‘neutral’ (Figure 58). A small share, 3.8%, selected ‘disagree’, while 0.5% selected ‘strongly disagree’ and 0.9% selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 58: ASEAN Pushes for Equitable Access to Opportunities for ASEAN Peoples

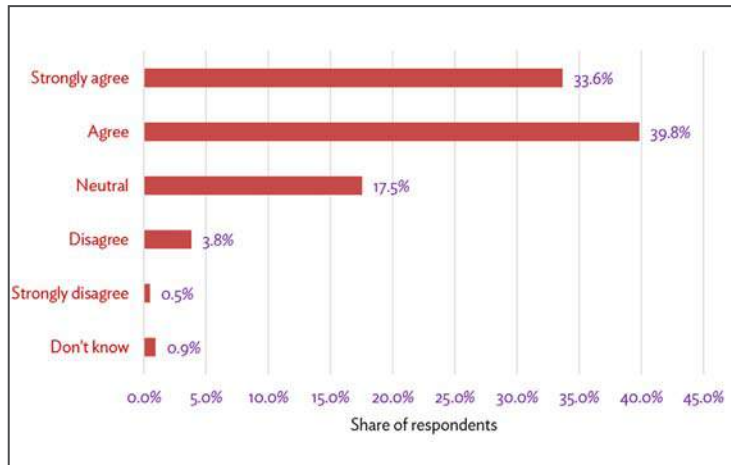
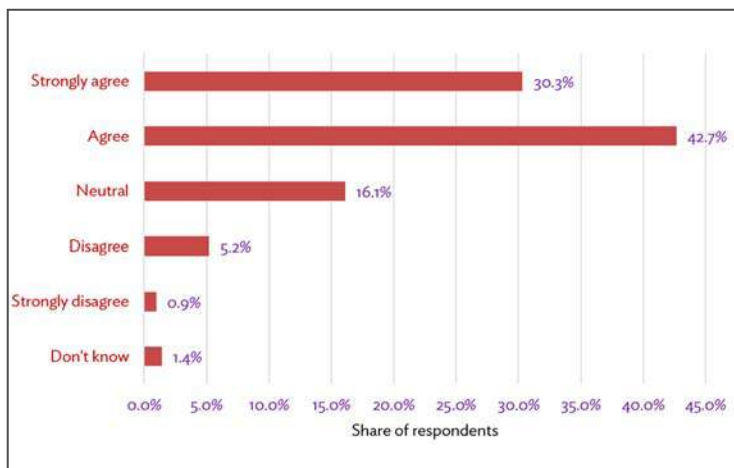


Figure 59 shows the responses for Statement 10: ‘ASEAN and its member countries effectively protect human rights and minorities in the region.’ A large proportion of 42.7% of the respondents selected ‘agree’, followed by 30.3% who selected ‘strongly agree’. Meanwhile, 16.1% chose ‘neutral’, 5.2% selected ‘disagree’, 0.9% selected ‘strongly disagree’, and 1.4% selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 59: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Effectively Protect Human Rights and Minorities in the Region



Statement 11 was: ‘ASEAN and its member countries effectively conserve and sustainably manage the region’s biodiversity and natural resources.’ Overall, more than 70% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the statement represented their aspirations, with shares of 30.3% and 41.2%, respectively (Figure 60). Meanwhile, 17.5% of respondents selected ‘neutral’, 5.7% selected ‘disagree’, 0.5% selected ‘strongly disagree’, and 0.9% selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 60: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Effectively Conserve and Sustainably Manage the Region’s Biodiversity and Natural Resources

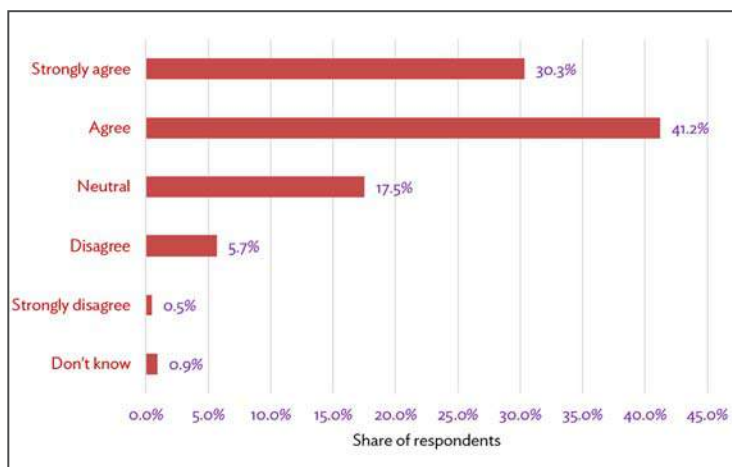
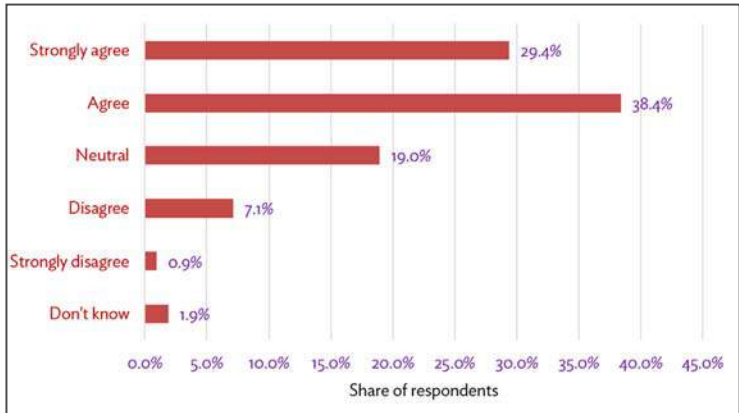


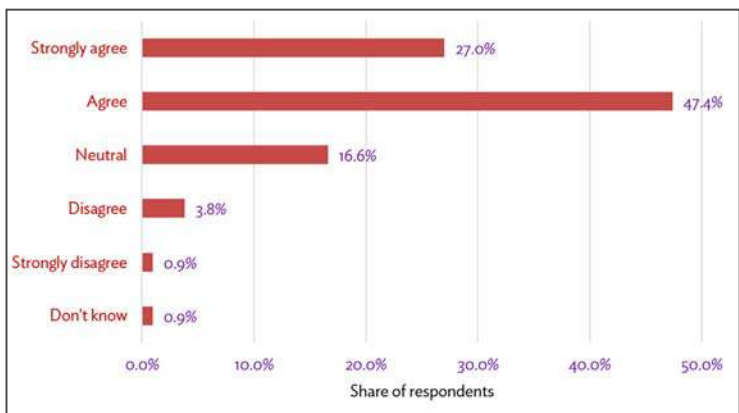
Figure 61 shows the respondents’ opinions on Statement 12: ‘ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.’ For this statement, 29.4% selected ‘strongly agree’, 38.4% selected ‘agree’, and 19% selected ‘neutral’, while 7.1% selected ‘disagree’, 0.9% selected ‘strongly disagree’, and 1.9% selected ‘don’t know’.

Figure 61: ASEAN Major Cities Are Less Polluted and More Liveable than They Are Today



Next, respondents were asked about Statement 13: ‘ASEAN and its member countries are very much able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster and concertedly together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.’ For this statement, 27% of respondents selected ‘strongly agree’, and as much as 47.4% selected ‘agree’ (Figure 62). Meanwhile, 16.6% indicated ‘neutral’, 3.8% selected ‘disagree’, and 0.9% selected ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘don’t know’.

Figure 62: ASEAN and Its Member Countries Are Very Much Able to Anticipate, Respond, and Recover Faster and Concertedly Together from Natural Disasters and Health Hazards in the Region



Statement 14 was: ‘ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums.’ Of the respondents, 37.9% strongly agreed and 39.3% agreed that the statement was what they wished to happen in ASEAN by 2025 (Figure 63). A

smaller proportion of respondents, 15.2%, selected 'neutral'. Those who did not agree accounted for less than 4%. Specifically, 2.8% selected 'disagree', and 0.5% selected 'strongly disagree'. For this statement, 0.9% of the respondents selected 'don't know'.

Figure 63: ASEAN Has a Strong Voice and Is an Important Player in Global Negotiations and Forums

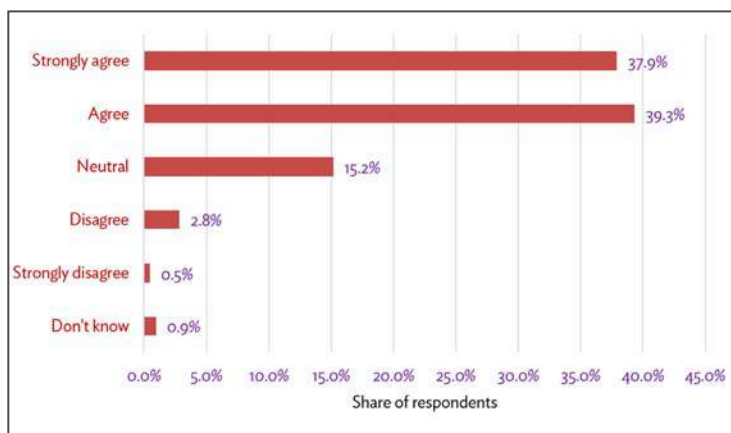
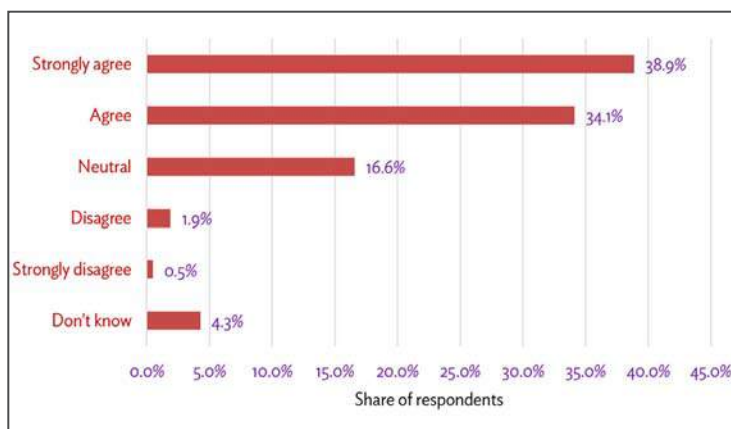


Figure 64 shows the responses for the final statement, Statement 15: 'ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.' When asked whether the statement was what they wished to happen in ASEAN by 2025, the largest proportion of the respondents, 38.9%, indicated 'strongly agree', and 34.1% selected 'agree'. Meanwhile, 16.6% of the respondents selected 'neutral', 1.9% selected 'disagree', 0.5% selected 'strongly disagree', and 4.3% selected 'don't know'.

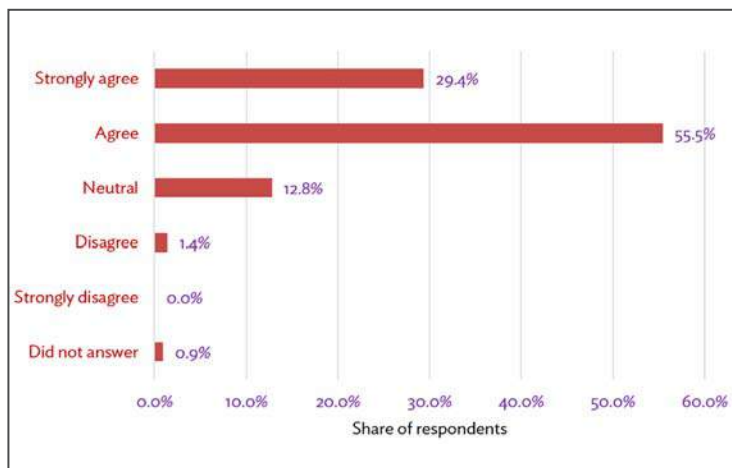
Figure 64: ASEAN Deeply Engages Powers in the Region and the World to Ensure Peace in the Region and the Asia-Pacific Region



Perceptions on upgrading the implementing and monitoring capacities of the ASEAN Secretariat

The survey next asked the respondents to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the idea of gradually upgrading the implementing and monitoring capacities of the ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges. The respondents had five choices: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, and ‘strongly disagree’. Figure 65 shows that more than half of the total respondents, 55.5%, agreed with the idea, and 29.4% strongly agreed. Meanwhile, a small proportion of the respondents (12.8%) were neutral about the idea, and 1.4% did not agree with it. None of the respondents strongly disagreed. The remaining 0.9% did not answer the question.

Figure 65: Perceptions on Upgrading the Implementing and Monitoring Capacities of the ASEAN Secretariat



Overall, the participants in the FGDs agreed with the idea. Some of the government participants explained that over time, ASEAN had set more ambitious goals, and the areas of ASEAN cooperation and integration had expanded and become more complicated. Therefore, in general, they agreed that the ASEAN Secretariat’s implementing and monitoring capacities needed to be upgraded.

What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Malaysia*

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Background

The Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia commissioned the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs, Malaysia, to carry out a public opinion survey to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2017. The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs has an existing partnership with the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies to run a programme called the Southeast Asia Network for Development, whose purpose is to examine ASEAN policies, especially those related to economic integration. The survey was conducted in Malaysia by the Southeast Asia Network for Development team in January and February 2017.

Since its establishment, ASEAN's half-century journey has celebrated many milestones, from the formation of free trade areas to the creation of its charter and, more recently, the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. ASEAN aspires to realise deeper consolidation, integration, and stronger cohesiveness as a community by 2025.

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

The ASEAN@50: Retrospective and Perspectives on the Making, Substance, Significance, and Future of ASEAN project will give a voice to the ASEAN Community for expressing its aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN by 2025. This study focuses on Malaysia and is a national-level project that involves an online survey of 19 questions in six parts:

- (i) characteristics of the survey respondents,
- (ii) respondents' awareness and source of knowledge of ASEAN's progress,
- (iii) Malaysia's achievements and challenges in ASEAN,
- (iv) current and future challenges for Malaysia and ASEAN,
- (v) expectations and aspirations for ASEAN by 2025, and
- (vi) the role of the ASEAN Secretariat and the way forward.

The findings from the online survey were further complemented with feedback from three focus group discussions (FGDs), which included members from academia (academics and students), industry (business and private sector representatives), and civil society organisations (CSOs). The FGD participants were given the same survey questionnaire but were also asked to elaborate on various key questions.

Survey Findings

Profile of the respondents

A total of 186 Malaysians, aged from 15 to over 50, participated in the survey (Figure 1). Respondents aged 15–30 comprised the largest share (51%). This was followed by those aged 31–49 (39%), while the remaining 19 respondents (10%) were aged 50 or above. The distribution of gender in the survey was skewed towards male respondents. There were 119 males comprising 64% of the respondents, while female respondents comprised only 36% of respondents (Figure 2). The FGDs had a similar composition.

As Figure 3 shows, the survey respondents were comprised mostly of students (27% of the respondents). These were followed by the respondents affiliated with the business community (16%), while the government officials and members of academia each represented 14% of the respondents. Those with 'other' affiliations (10.8%) included retirees and homemakers.

Figure 1: Age of the Respondents

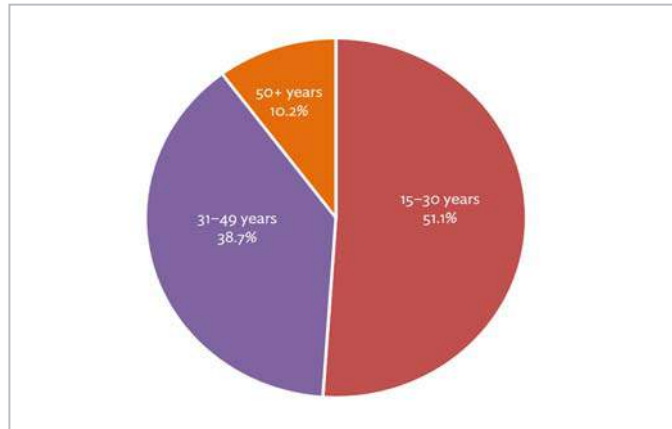


Figure 2: Gender of the Respondents

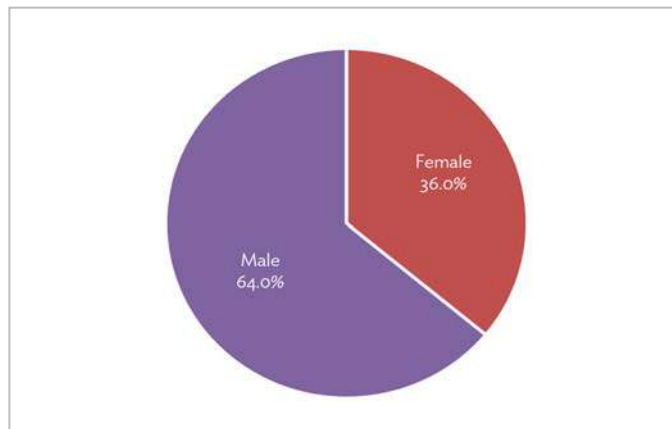
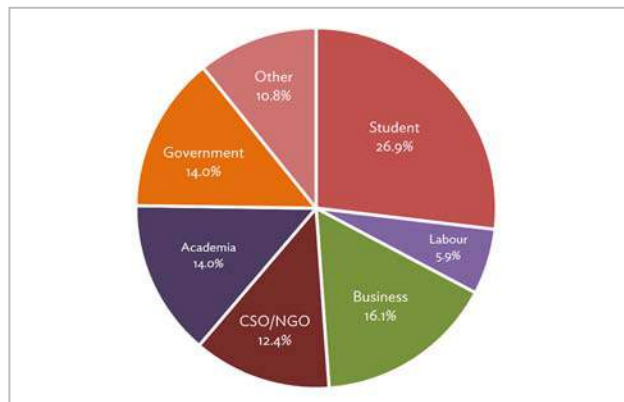


Figure 3: Affiliation of the Respondents



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

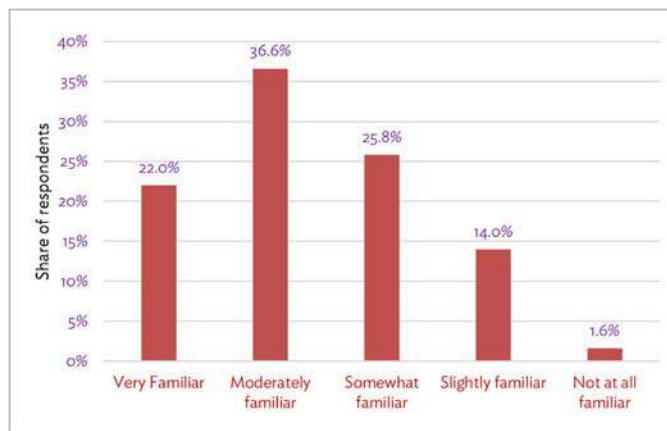
Voices of ASEAN

Awareness of ASEAN

The respondents were asked about their awareness of ASEAN and given five choices: ‘very familiar’, ‘moderately familiar’, ‘somewhat familiar’, ‘slightly familiar’, and ‘not at all familiar’. Figure 4 shows that most respondents (36.6%) were moderately aware of ASEAN, while almost equal shares chose ‘very familiar’ (22%) and ‘somewhat familiar’ (26%). The respondents’ awareness of ASEAN was also skewed towards the economic and business aspects of the regional organisation. For example, discussions during the FGDs with the industry and CSO representatives revealed that they were aware of ASEAN as a platform that represents regional business relationship strengths.

The CSO representatives, however, felt that ASEAN was too economic- and business-centric and were less aware of the activities and initiatives of ASEAN’s other pillars. They argued that engagements between ASEAN and civil society were not significant compared to many other regional cooperation organisations, such as the European Union. Meanwhile, the depth of their awareness was limited merely to the visual and physical presence, such as of tourism fair posters, sports events, and immigration counters at airports. They deemed the practical visibility and visible achievements in areas other than business to be lacking. The FGD respondents from academia added that they were aware of ASEAN’s presence, especially through the education network called the ASEAN University Network. Some even linked ASEAN with the old archipelagic reference of Nusantara.

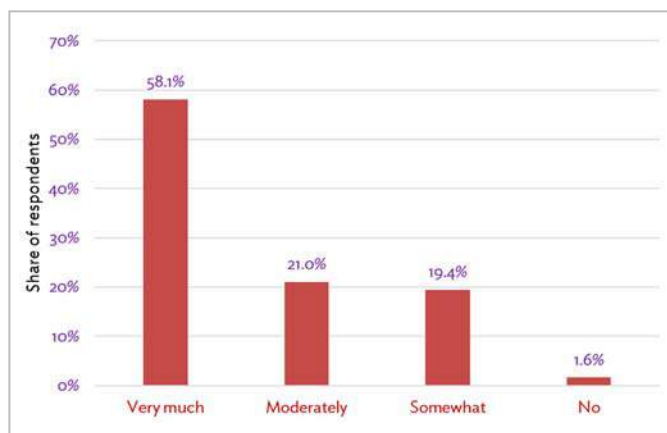
Figure 4: Awareness of ASEAN



Despite some superficial views of ASEAN’s presence, the majority of the respondents (58%) identified themselves as ASEAN citizens (Figure 5). However, during the FGDs, there were some participants who did not feel they were ASEAN citizens because they felt ASEAN was an elitist and state-centric organisation. However, respondents with this view were not in the majority.

Many of those who answered that they felt very much like ASEAN citizens also responded that they only felt so due to ASEAN’s geographical proximity. The CSO respondents from the FGDs questioned the mechanisms that directly link ASEAN with voices from the community. In the absence of such links, respondents said they remained pessimistic about the inclusiveness of ASEAN to its citizens. The industry FGD participants, however, stressed that such pessimism was due to the slow rate of business development in the region. Those from academia, on the other hand, believed that they would only be able to embrace the concept of ASEAN citizenship if ASEAN Member States were able to make collective decisions in areas crucial to people’s livelihoods (e.g. in the areas of human rights, welfare, poverty, and inequality).

Figure 5: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen



Aspirations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN

In a semi-open-ended question asking respondents whether they had aspirations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN, an overwhelming 134 respondents (73.2%) answered ‘yes’. The responses revolved around the three political-security, economic, and socio-cultural pillars of the ASEAN Community. In the political-security pillar, the core concerns were related to the issues of security cooperation and country governance, especially with regard to corruption. While many hoped that the region would grow stronger in terms of market integration and competitiveness, respondents also raised the issues of wealth distribution and income inequality.

Aspirations for a people-centred ASEAN came to the fore in most comments; however, equally pressing in the social dimension were concerns about human rights issues and development gaps (inequality) across ASEAN.

Malaysia's membership of ASEAN

In a series of questions gauging respondents' opinions of Malaysia's benefit from being a member of ASEAN, more than 72% (135 respondents) responded positively about the country's membership of ASEAN. The results (Table 1) suggest that the respondents believed the country's membership was a good thing. This is consistent with the next question, where more than 60% of respondents believed that the country had 'very much' or 'moderately' benefited from being a member of ASEAN. Since most of the respondents had positive views of Malaysia's membership in ASEAN, it is understandable that 67% indicated they would be moderately or extremely concerned if the country were to leave ASEAN.

The participants from academia explained in the FGD that being a member of ASEAN, Malaysia benefited from many social programmes, such as the ASEAN Scholarship and the previously mentioned ASEAN University Network. They also believed that Malaysia should stay in ASEAN as it was one of the founding members of the association. The respondents mentioned that Malaysia could play a significant role in narrowing the development gap and accelerating the economic integration efforts of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam. Some students were unsure about the implications of Malaysia leaving ASEAN. According to them, Malaysia had its own problems, and they were unclear on whether leaving ASEAN would mitigate or exacerbate these problems.

The FGD participants viewed ASEAN as a coalition of 'strength in numbers' and agreed that Malaysia had benefited from being a member of ASEAN, especially in view of the many trade, services, and investment liberalisation efforts that have been undertaken over the years. The economic and business benefits were the main reason why respondents thought Malaysia should remain a member of ASEAN. However, not all industry participants felt the same. Some played down the market effect, meaning that while they acknowledged the country had benefited from having a larger market for trade, the facilitation of investment had left a lot to be desired.

The CSO respondents were pessimistic about the benefits of the membership beyond the scope of economics and business. They argued that community engagement had been questionable or insignificant, especially in areas such as human rights. They mentioned that the non-interference policy of ASEAN seemed to make members very selective in their actions. Again, top-level ASEAN engagement with the community

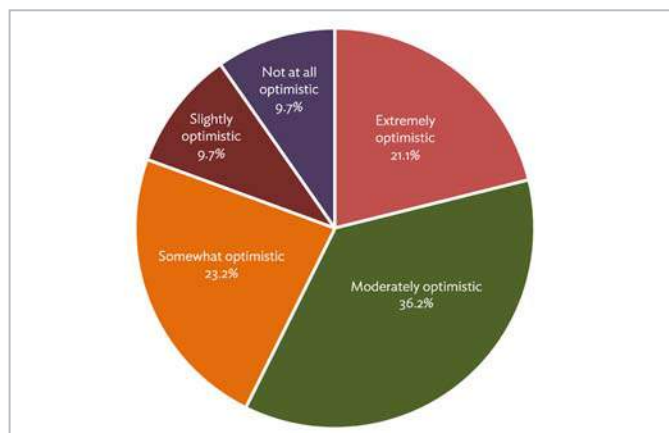
was said to be minimal, thus rendering the benefits questionable. Hence, in view of the limited involvement of civil society in ASEAN, some CSO participants felt that the country's departure from ASEAN would be insignificant. The mixed sentiments on Malaysia's membership in ASEAN were reflected in the level of optimism and pessimism about the future of ASEAN (Figure 6).

Table 1: Benefits of Membership of ASEAN

What do you think of your country's membership in ASEAN?		
Answer	Share of Respondents (%)	Number of Responses
A good thing	72.6	135
A bad thing	2.2	4
Neither good or bad	19.9	37
Don't know	5.4	10
<i>Total</i>	100.0	186
Would you say your country has benefited from being a member of ASEAN?		
Answer	Share of Respondents (%)	Number of Responses
Very much	27.3	50
Moderately	33.3	61
Somewhat	25.1	46
Fairly	4.9	9
Don't know	9.3	17
<i>Total</i>	100.0	183
How would you feel if your country were to leave ASEAN?		
Answer	Share of respondents (%)	Number of responses
Extremely concerned	48.1	89
Moderately concerned	18.9	35
Somewhat concerned	16.2	30
Slightly concerned	9.7	18
Not at all concerned	7.0	13
<i>Total</i>	100.0	185

Figure 6 shows that most of the respondents were either somewhat optimistic (23.2%) or moderately optimistic (36.2%) about the future of ASEAN. The FGDs highlighted the source of this pessimism. First, many argued that the answer to the question was conditional. For example, they mentioned that the slow and selective decision-making process, referred to as the 'ASEAN Way' had been generating pessimistic views about ASEAN throughout the years.

Figure 6: Optimism about the Future of ASEAN



The business FGD participants questioned the extent of knowledge sharing and technology transfers among ASEAN businesses. The participants from academia were hopeful there would be preferential treatment in terms of university fees among ASEAN Member States. Participants across the FGDs exhibited one common source of pessimism, which was the link between weak domestic governance and the future of ASEAN. Many were not optimistic about the future of ASEAN as a regional-level organisation due to the inability of ASEAN governments (including Malaysia) to solve their own country-level problems.

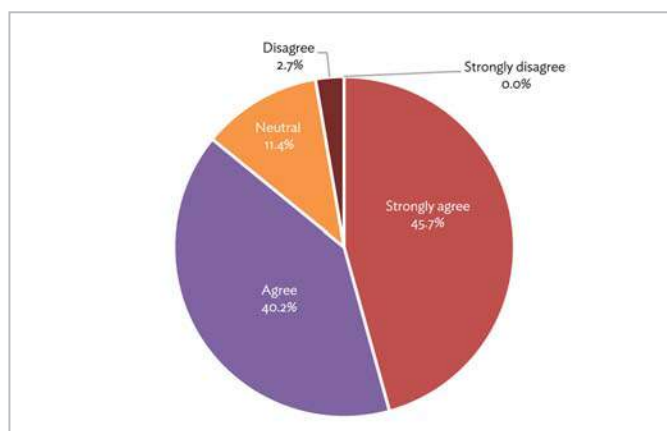
Media coverage of ASEAN

The next question asked respondents whether they agreed that the media (newspapers, radio, television, and online news) did not have enough coverage of ASEAN's progress, achievements, and challenges.

Figure 7 shows that an overwhelming 158 respondents (86%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Only less than 5% of respondents were aware of the media's coverage of ASEAN affairs. During the FGDs, some CSO participants defended the media by saying that the media had to be practical due to limitations in resources for covering vast amounts of news. Therefore, they said that practicality had to be taken

into consideration, and much of the space being given to local news rather than ASEAN news. They noted that to get coverage, ASEAN news had to be very engaging (an example was GOASEAN TV, which focuses on ASEAN tourism) or sensationalised, and most participants expected that negative news would get more coverage. The participants further elaborated on the current news about ASEAN, mentioning that apart from being uninteresting, the news was mostly about high-level meetings that were disconnected from the general public, leading to reduced interest in the media regarding ASEAN.

Figure 7: Agreement on Insufficient Media Coverage of ASEAN



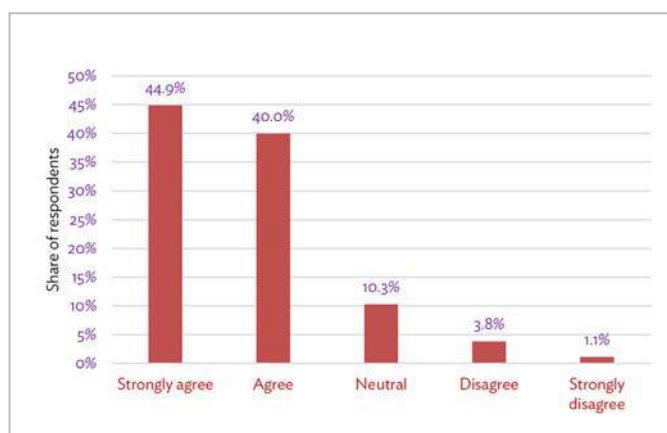
The industry FGD participants had similar responses. They mentioned that even when the media covered news about ASEAN, they at times felt lost in the rich soup of terminology, be it jargon, initials, or confusing abbreviations. More importantly, they stressed the inability of ordinary readers to capture business or market implications from the news.

Participants also argued that the issue was not only the amount of coverage but also the quality of coverage. Both the CSO and industry participants expressed doubts about the local media, which they said in many cases was not impartial when it came to reporting news, especially about the local government. The academia participants further added a caveat that the role of the media may be counterproductive in uniting ASEAN. They explained that some of the news may hinder ASEAN's community-building process. For example, they mentioned that at times it seemed like ASEAN was not united in solving important issues such as human rights violations under the long-celebrated non-interference policy and that media coverage of the policy was not always complimentary.

Educational resources: School textbooks to socialise and educate youth

The respondents were next asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the use of school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN's progress, achievements, and challenges. As Figure 8 shows, 83 of the 185 respondents (44.9%) answered 'strongly agree' for this question, while 40.0% answered 'agree'. In total, 84.9% of the respondents felt that textbooks were a good vehicle for promoting ASEAN to the younger generation.

Figure 8: Agreement with Using School Textbooks to Educate and Socialise Young People about ASEAN



During the FGDs, participants from academia agreed that the use of textbooks could help instil a positive image of ASEAN in youths. Their only concern was the level of dynamism in ASEAN. They mentioned that textbooks may only expose readers to the static history of ASEAN. They thought that knowledge of the dynamic goings-on in ASEAN would be difficult to capture merely in textbooks and would require more active encouragement for students to enquire about ASEAN. As such, they argued that simply reading may not be sufficient.

Echoing the academia participants, the industry FGD participants said they would prefer textbooks with applied knowledge rather than static history. They said that while the spirit and aspirations of ASEAN should be introduced, more important were the practicalities of the knowledge disseminated from the textbooks. They suggested that textbooks should include components on business studies or the business culture of ASEAN. Participants argued that proper content planning would be required to prevent textbooks from being overly exam-oriented. All three groups in the FGD, however, disagreed that textbooks were an effective socialisation tool. They highlighted that

textbooks were primarily tools for education and knowledge dissemination purposes and that socialisation would require a more active approach.

Top five pressing problems facing Malaysia and ASEAN at present and until 2025

The respondents were given a list of 21 problems based on (i) economic, (ii) sociocultural, and (iii) governance and political themes. Among these problems, they were required to choose the five most pressing problems facing Malaysia today and until 2025. Next, they were required to answer similar questions but with respect to ASEAN. The responses are shown in Table 2. The final column in the table shows the differences in the respondents' selections. These differences show the problems that Malaysians perceive to be more important for their country than for ASEAN, and vice versa. From the data, we can ascertain the problems that respondents feel should be resolved at the country level and those that require collective ASEAN-level cooperation. We analyse the top five problems based on the number of respondents.

Of the respondents, 162 deemed corruption to be the top and main pressing problem facing Malaysia until 2025. This was followed by income disparity and social inequality (98 respondents), governance (90 respondents), human rights (75 respondents) and quality of education provision and access (62 respondents). For ASEAN, corruption (127 respondents) was also identified as the top problem facing the region. The other main problems were mostly the same as Malaysia, namely human rights (93 respondents), income disparity and social inequality (73 respondents), and governance (71 respondents). The only difference between Malaysia and ASEAN was the issue of poverty. Respondents deemed poverty (66 respondents) to be more important for ASEAN than for Malaysia. Examining the differences in perception shows the severity of corruption as the main problem facing the country. Respondents perceived public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring; income disparity and social security; governance; and energy provision and price to be domestic problems rather than ASEAN-centric problems, which were poverty; trade, investment, and regulatory coherence; climate change and natural disasters; human rights; and agriculture and food security.

In-depth discussions during the FGDs revealed that with regards to corruption, participants were worried about the tarnished reputation of Malaysia in the wake of various perceived unregulated financial practices. They cited problems with Malaysian politicians regarding corrupt practices. Some participants felt powerless in dealing with corruption as they said overcoming the problem required strong political will, which Malaysian leaders did not seem to have. Participants also viewed corruption as

embedded in the systems of many ASEAN Member States. They mentioned that the non-interference policy impeded accountability, meaning people in some ASEAN countries were free to engage in corrupt activities without being held accountable during high-level ASEAN meetings. This was closely linked to the problem of governance in the sense that poor governance was considered to be the main root of most problems (corruption and human rights violations, etc.).

Participants from the FGDs exhibited similar frustrations regarding governance in Malaysia. One common concern was the presence of development policies with limited institutions for credible monitoring and evaluation. Issues such as fiscal profligacy, which is documented in the Malaysian Auditor General's Report, have yet to be addressed properly, and many perpetrators have not been held accountable.

For ASEAN, industry participants expressed doubts about the governance of the ASEAN Chairmanship. Some pointed out the weakness of the annual rotation system and mentioned that one year was insufficient for a country to see through and evaluate new initiatives or programmes. They thought that the non-intervention policy further weakened the credibility of the organisation as a whole because important issues, such as corruption and human rights violations, were not discussed or tackled firmly at the senior leadership level.

In the FGDs, participants were asked about their definition of human rights. Some participants mentioned the provision and access of quality education, health services, and public participation in policymaking in their overarching definition (some included gender parity). Therefore, discussions on human rights generally encompassed these issues as well. The academia FGD participants felt there was a need to include the right to information and data in Malaysia. There was also a call for a free and fair media from the CSO participants. For ASEAN (and to some extent Malaysia), issues on human rights are documented in the media but not specifically discussed in ASEAN meetings. Participants also agreed that the issue should span beyond refugees and include groups such as children and women. A small group of FGD participants also expressed their fears of racial discrimination, religious extremism, and violence in the region.

The only problem specific to Malaysia was the quality of education. Declining Programme for International Student Assessment scores, graduate unemployment, and the inability of local universities to secure top global rankings were among the concerns raised. A problem specific to ASEAN, according to the respondents, was poverty. Participants were concerned about unequal economic growth, especially in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam.

Table 2: Top Five Pressing Problems Facing Malaysia and ASEAN at Present and until 2025

	Malaysia	Share of Total (%)	ASEAN	Share of Total (%)	Difference (%) ^a
Economic Issues					
Agriculture and food security	34	3.8	45	5.0	-1.2
Access to high-quality, affordable financial services	21	2.3	16	1.8	0.5
Accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy)	16	1.8	17	1.9	-0.1
Customs efficiency	7	0.8	16	1.8	-1.0
Energy provision and price	30	3.3	12	1.3	2.0
Infrastructure availability and quality	40	4.4	38	4.2	0.2
Non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers	12	1.3	23	2.6	-1.2
Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence	29	3.2	57	6.3	-3.1
Sociocultural Issues					
Climate change and natural disasters	30	3.3	50	5.5	-2.2
Gender parity between men and women	11	1.2	14	1.6	-0.3
Income disparity and social inequality	98	10.8	73	8.1	2.7
Land use, water use, and access	12	1.3	18	2.0	-0.7
Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss	41	4.5	44	4.9	-0.4
Poverty	28	3.1	66	7.3	-4.2
Quality education provision and access	62	6.9	48	5.3	1.5
Quality health services provision and access	17	1.9	14	1.6	0.3
Unemployment	25	2.8	26	2.9	-0.1
Governance and Political Issues					
Corruption	162	17.9	127	14.1	3.8
Governance	90	9.9	71	7.9	2.1
Human rights	75	8.3	93	10.3	-2.0
Public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring	55	6.1	29	3.2	2.9
Other (please specify)	10	1.1	4	0.4	0.7
Total responses	905	100.0	901	100.0	
1 respondent 5 options, 186 respondents = 930 selected Missing = 930 – total responses	25		29		

^a The difference in the percentages of respondents' choices for Malaysia and ASEAN. A positive value represents a problem that respondents perceived to be more pertinent for Malaysia than for ASEAN.

Hopes and aspirations versus expectations: What will likely happen by 2025

The respondents were next given two sets of the same questions. For the first set, the respondents were asked to identify their aspirations for ASEAN, or what they wished the situation would be for ASEAN by 2025. Respondents were given 15 different options to choose from on a Likert scale. For the next set, the respondents were asked to identify their expectations on what they believed would most likely happen in ASEAN by 2025. They were again given the same 15 answer options. Instead of reporting the aspirations and expectations separately, we present the results using a method for analysing the aspirations and expectations based on how they match. Table 3 shows the findings and explains the method used. Respondents agreed on six aspirations that they wanted to see happen in ASEAN by 2025.

First, they wanted consumers to have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country. The industry participants in the FGD believed that trade liberalisation efforts and regional cooperation in trade in goods and services would continue to be active until 2025 and beyond. ASEAN has had a visible track record in economic liberalisation since the early 1990s with the introduction of the ASEAN Free Trade Area and a series of investment and services liberalisation initiatives over the years. With the demise of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, participants said they anticipated a focus shift to the upcoming Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement that would increase the movement of goods and services by 2025.

Second, the participants said ASEAN should be a region where regulations and procedures make it easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN. Some participants in the FGDs believed ASEAN to be host to a large pool of human capital and noted that ASEAN Member States should tap this resource. There was also a show of optimism from the academia participants regarding the effectiveness of mutual recognition agreements, which facilitate the movement of skilled labour among member states. Some participants agreed but imposed a caveat that the mobility of labour still depended on the demand and supply of the country. They mentioned that ASEAN countries may remain closed and reserved should issues of trust, job protectionism, and unemployment arise until 2025.

The third and fourth expectations were on the future of ASEAN connectivity. In terms of physical connectivity, respondents said they expected ASEAN to be a region where it would be easy to physically move around using roads, railways, air, and shipping. One participant from the academia FGD noted that ASEAN may be part of China's current One Belt One Road initiative, which focuses on the rapid development of

Table 3: Differences in Aspirations and Expectations by 2025

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
1	Consumers have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country.	-42	10	26	3	1	1
2	It is easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.	-54	2	32	11	5	1
3	Basic social protection and health services are provided to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.	-36	-20	22	28	5	1
4	There is good governance and very much less corruption.	-93	-2	39	32	19	4
5	ASEAN countries are well connected through roads, railways, air, and shipping.	-56	18	20	15	-2	2
6	People and businesses can communicate easily with one another through information and communications technology.	-28	11	9	9	-1	0
7	ASEAN peoples are well aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.	-44	-2	43	0	1	-2
8	The ASEAN Community strongly engages and benefits its peoples.	-45	-21	41	16	7	0
9	There is equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.	-40	-26	34	22	9	-1
10	Human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected.	-73	-13	31	31	18	2
11	The region's biodiversity and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved.	-60	-2	23	27	7	2
12	ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.	-72	-1	30	30	8	2
13	ASEAN is able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.	-58	-5	43	14	5	-3
14	ASEAN is a strong voice and an important player in global negotiations and forums.	-59	3	31	10	14	-1
15	ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world (e.g. the United States and China) to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.	-52	2	26	10	10	1

Note: The table shows the difference between the respondents' expectations and aspirations. A positive value means more respondents chose 'most likely to happen' over 'wish to happen'. For example, 72 respondents answered 'agree' regarding their aspiration for consumers to have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country. Meanwhile, 82 respondents answered 'agree' on their expectation to have easy access to goods and services. This gives a positive value of 82-72 = 10, meaning that according to the respondents, the aspiration will most likely be met by 2025. A negative sign indicates the opposite. A larger negative value means the respondents strongly wished the situation would happen, but in reality, many did not believe it would happen (e.g. governance).

transport infrastructure. With the support of the newly established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, ASEAN countries are expected to have well-developed systems of roads, railways, and ports by 2025. In terms of digital connectivity, respondents were very confident that by 2025, people and businesses will be able to communicate easily with one another through information and communications technology (ICT). This is based on the rapid development of ICT. One academia participant pointed out that ICT progress will be enhanced through the ASEAN Masterplan on Connectivity 2025.

The final two expectations were predictions of ASEAN's global stature by 2025. Respondents aspired and expected that ASEAN would have a strong voice and play an important role in global negotiations and forums. Participants from the CSO and academia FGDs stated that as a collective unit, ASEAN had 'strength in numbers' and experience when it came to trade negotiations with economic superpowers, such as through the ASEAN-China FTA, the ASEAN-India FTA, and the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership. This is related to the final aspiration and expectation that by 2025, ASEAN will deeply engage powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region. Some participants assumed that ASEAN would ride on the rising role of China in the region. While globally, ASEAN's presence may be expanding, some participants hoped that individual state problems would also have a voice within the organisation. While currently only limited to certain issues, many FGD participants believed there was a need for strong voices on all issues within the ASEAN Community.

Table 3 also shows the disconnects between aspirations and expectations. The top three disconnects were the following:

- (i) There is good governance and much less corruption.
- (ii) Human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected.
- (iii) ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.

While respondents hoped for good governance and less corruption in ASEAN by 2025, many did not expect it would happen. The FGD participants across the three groups were consistent in their pessimistic views about the level of corruption in ASEAN and Malaysia. Many conceded that corruption was embedded in the country's system and that it would be persistent even after 2025 unless political will were strong enough to create change. One reason for this pessimism was in part due to the lack of trust in existing institutions to protect whistle-blowers.

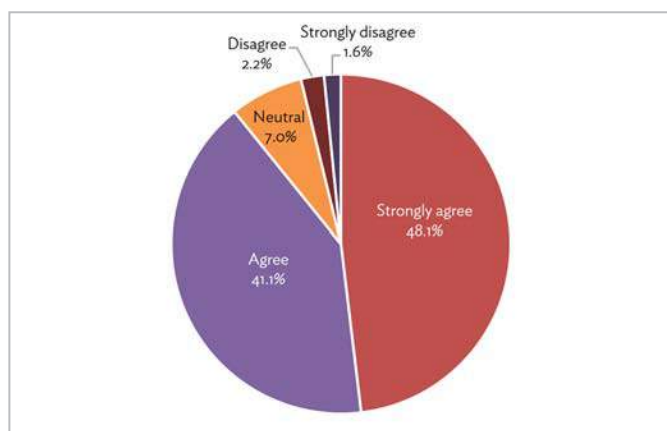
The second aspiration was for the effective protection of human rights and minorities in the region. Again, this was considered to be a far-fetched aspiration, as pointed out time and again in the FGDs, due to the non-interference policy of ASEAN. The academia FGD participants argued that solving human rights issues within the country itself was challenging enough and even more so at the regional level. The CSO participants added that solving this issue was conditional on the member states' priorities. They noted that when it came to human rights issues, almost all member states were 'ASEAN in spirit but nationalistic in vested interests'.

Third, respondents hoped that ASEAN major cities would be less polluted and more liveable than they are today. However, many did not believe this would happen because of the trade-off between development and environmental conservation. In the FGD, participants felt there was a strong correlation between development and pollution. The industry participants highlighted the lack of pollution management and green technology development in the country. Some argued that the removal of tax breaks on hybrid cars was a step backward in pollution management. In short, the participants noted that while the rhetoric of sustainable development and managed pollution was always on the table, priorities were very dependent on the will of the member states.

The ASEAN Secretariat

When asked about the idea of gradually upgrading the implementing and monitoring capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat, almost 90% of the survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the proposition (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Upgrading the ASEAN Secretariat



The main challenge was the alignment of each country's political will with ASEAN's development plan. The organisation has limited avenues to push for change, leading to the possibility for the organisation to move into something more concrete that involves regulatory power sharing. The industry FGD participants said they would prefer to see ASEAN operating in a somewhat similar manner as the European Union. One change may be to revise the ASEAN Charter to allow intervention in crucial circumstances involving human security and rights. The upgrading of ASEAN's implementing and monitoring capabilities may also require additional responsibilities for each member state to ensure the organisation maintains neutral and transparent in its governance.

What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Myanmar*

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Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is moving towards integration and aims to establish the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2020, representing an important milestone in ASEAN economic cooperation. Integration contributes to narrowing the gaps in the disparities and imbalances between ASEAN member states. It is also critical for generating economic growth, improving the living standards of the people in the region, and achieving the overall development of the member states. Nevertheless, the success of regional integration will mainly depend on the willingness, commitment, and perceptions of the people in the region. Moreover, the institutional quality of the member states will play an important role in the harmonisation and integration processes towards the AEC.

In this study, questionnaires were created by ERIA, and a survey was carried out by the Department of Economics of the Yangon University of Economics from August to November 2016 in Yangon, Myanmar. The respondents were from the fields of education, business, youth, culture, civil society, small and medium-sized enterprises, and others. The number of initial respondents totalled 238, but 30 were deleted from the datasheet due to incomplete and inconsistent data. The analysis uses the remaining 208 respondents. Some respondents provided their email addresses, while others only gave their names.

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

Survey Responses

Profile of the survey respondents

Figure 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents. Of the respondents, 35% were aged 15–30, 62% were aged 31–49, and the rest were aged 50 or older.

Figure 1: Age Distribution of the Respondents

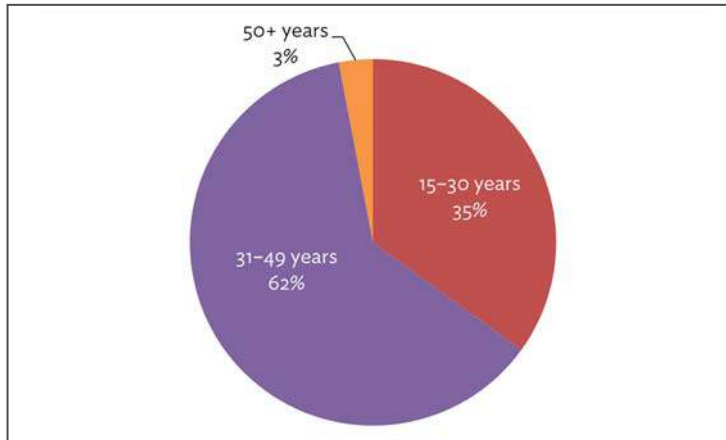
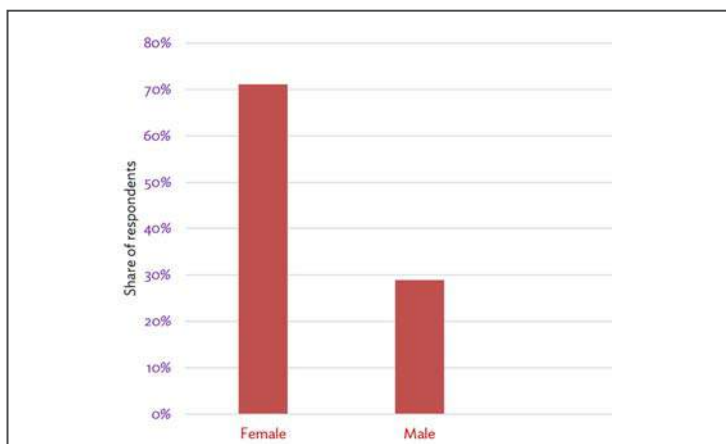


Figure 2: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

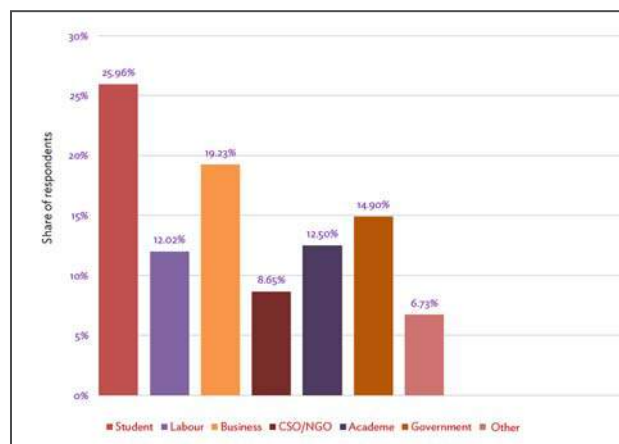


As shown in Figure 2, 71.15% of the survey respondents were female, and 28.85% were male. Thus, women were moderately overrepresented in the survey.

Affiliations of the respondents

Of the survey respondents, 25.96% were students (Figure 3). The second-largest group comprised those from business (19.23%). Those from government represented 14.9% of the sample, while those from academia comprised 12.5%. Next were those from labour (12.02%), civil society organisations/non-governmental organisations (CSOs/NGOs) (8.65%), and others (6.73%).

Figure 3: Affiliations of the Respondents

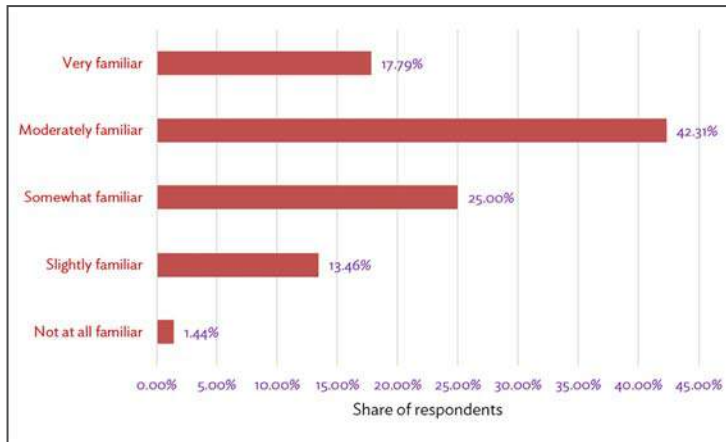


CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Awareness of ASEAN

Of the respondents, 42.31% were moderately familiar with ASEAN through various sources, such as newspapers, journals, broadcasts, and social media. Meanwhile, 25% were somewhat familiar, 17.79% were very familiar, 13.46% were slightly familiar, and 1.44% were not at all familiar with ASEAN (Figure 4). Discussions with the respondents revealed the main reasons they were familiar with ASEAN were because of the Southeast Asian Games that were held in Myanmar in late 2014 and Myanmar's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014. The respondents were also familiar with ASEAN from media, such as news articles, journals, and announcements on government websites regarding ASEAN's summits and meetings, its current situation and prospects, and the ASEAN Football Championship. Furthermore, the respondents working in NGOs and international NGOs answered that they had knowledge of ASEAN through their working environments.

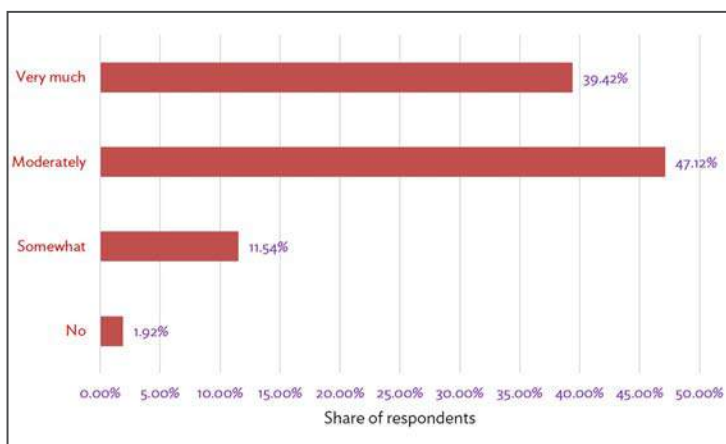
Figure 4: Awareness of ASEAN



Feeling of being an ASEAN citizen

As shown in Figure 5, 39.42% of the respondents said they felt very much like ASEAN citizens, while 47.12% said they felt moderately as ASEAN citizens. This was followed by 11.54% who felt somewhat like ASEAN citizens and 1.92% who did not feel they were ASEAN citizens. Most respondents expressed having hopes and aspirations for being accepted as ASEAN citizens with equal rights and equal opportunities among ASEAN societies. Some of the respondents stated they felt Myanmar had better opportunities and accessibility in sectors as an ASEAN member when dealing with international societies.

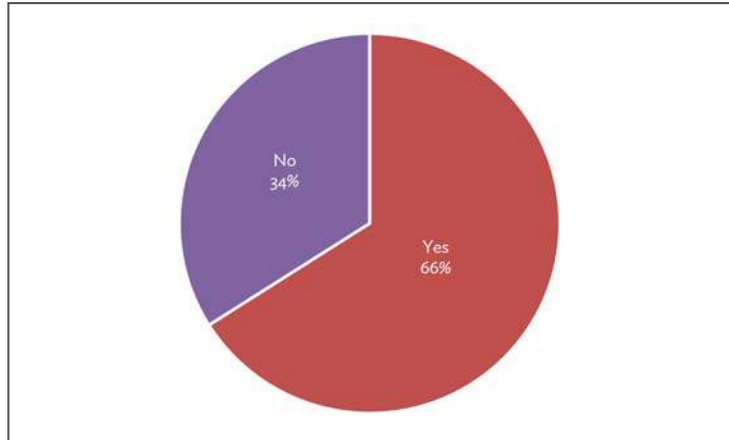
Figure 5: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen



Aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN

When asked whether they had aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN, the majority, 66%, said they did, while 34% said they did not (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Aspirations, Expectations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN



There were many differences in the reasons for the respondents' aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes. Some respondents said they expected to get visas easier, have future job opportunities, or benefit from assistance and aid through equitable opportunities for people living in ASEAN. Respondents thought the regional integration of ASEAN would increase economic output not only within the region but also in other countries around the world because of the larger market for goods and services.

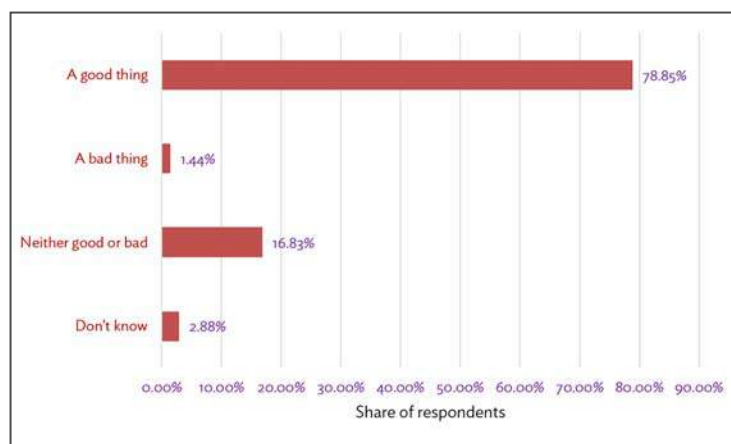
Some people said they expected to be united as one without discrimination and oppression, including in the less developed countries in ASEAN. They said that if ASEAN people were fully aware of the ASEAN Community and its progress, the community could strongly engage and benefit its people and enhance and increase the right to public participation. They expected more collaboration on economic and social activities through integration to assure advantages for the ASEAN Member States. They also said that through agreements on the ASEAN Free Trade Area, residents would have the opportunity to buy and sell products at proper prices and improve trade conditions, which would enhance the economic development of the region.

Some participants hoped that leaders and representatives would work together in the global environment to handle situations in their countries, in every aspect, more effectively and efficiently. To ensure a successful future for all ASEAN countries, economic development, such as through job creation and achieving a higher quality of living, and maintaining the peace and stability of the community cannot be neglected. Respondents highlighted the need to obtain equal rights in ASEAN countries for health, education, social and living standards, government salaries, technology, and economic growth, etc. Transportation by road, railway, sea, and air among ASEAN member countries must also be improved and become safer and easier. Most of the respondents hoped that ASEAN would lead all 10 member states to coexist with one another through peace and forgiveness. Some hoped for development and better rule of law practices for Myanmar and the building of peaceful and modernised countries throughout the region. Of the respondents, 34% had no aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN. Meanwhile, some worried about the awareness, knowledge, and challenges of establishing integration among the ASEAN Member States.

Myanmar’s membership of ASEAN

Figure 7 illustrates the respondents’ thoughts on their country’s membership of ASEAN. Most of the residents (78.85%) thought it was good to be a member of ASEAN. Only 1.44% of the residents thought membership was bad, and 16.83% thought it was neither good nor bad. Meanwhile, 2.88% of the residents did not know whether Myanmar’s membership of ASEAN was good or bad.

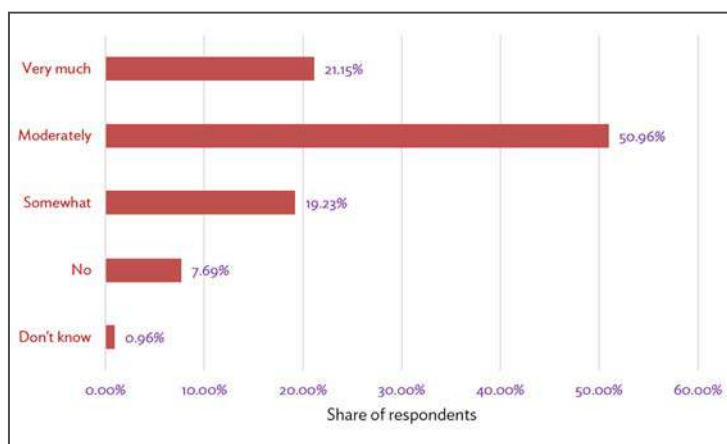
Figure 7: What Do You Think of Your Country’s Membership in ASEAN?



Benefit from ASEAN membership

Figure 8 shows the opinions of the respondents on whether they thought Myanmar had benefited from being a member of ASEAN. As illustrated in the figure, 50.96% said there had been moderate benefits from being a member of ASEAN, 21.15% said membership had been very beneficial, and 19.23% said membership had been somewhat beneficial. Meanwhile, 7.69% stated there had been no benefit, and 0.96% said they did not know. The respondents stated that their country's citizens had benefited through visa exemptions for regional countries as a result of being a member of ASEAN.

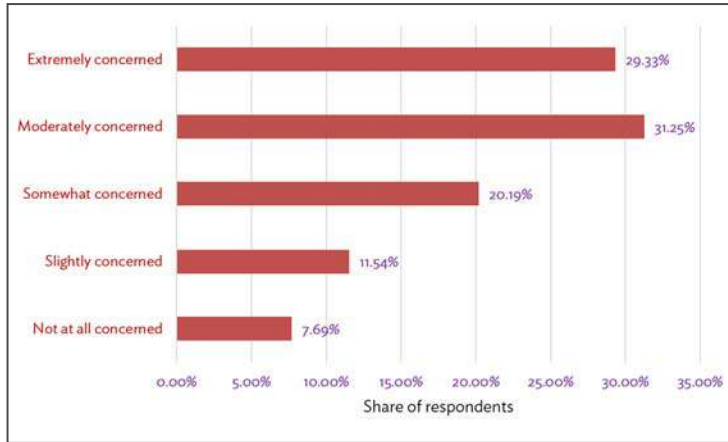
Figure 8: Would You Say Your Country Has Benefited from Being a Member of ASEAN?



Concern if Myanmar were to leave ASEAN

Figure 9 shows the respondents' opinions on how they would feel if Myanmar were to leave ASEAN. Of the respondents, 31.25% said they would be moderately concerned, 29.33% said they would be extremely concerned, 7.69% replied they would not be at all concerned, 11.54% said they would be slightly concerned, and 20.19% said they would be somewhat concerned.

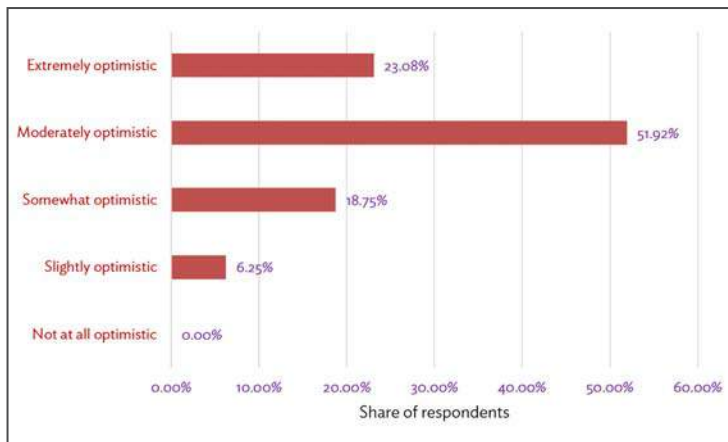
Figure 9: How Would You Feel If Your Country Were to Leave ASEAN?



Optimism for the future of ASEAN

Among the 208 respondents, 23.08% said they were extremely optimistic about the future of ASEAN, while more than half of the participants, 51.92%, were moderately optimistic (Figure 10). Meanwhile, 18.75% were somewhat optimistic, and 6.25% were slightly optimistic. None of the respondents chose 'not at all optimistic'.

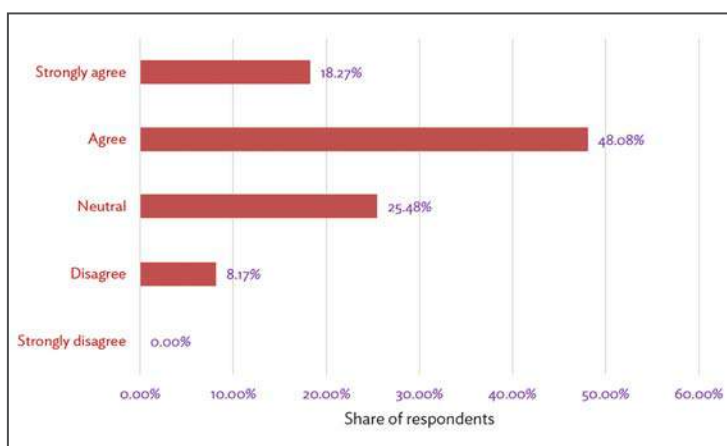
Figure 10: Would You Say You Are Optimistic about the Future of ASEAN?



Media coverage of ASEAN

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: ‘The media (newspapers, radio, television, and online news) does not have enough coverage of ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges.’ Responses were given by 208 participants. Of these, 18.27% indicated strong agreement, 48.08% said they agreed, 25.48% were neutral, 8.17% said they disagreed, and none strongly disagreed with the statement (Figure 11). From these statistics, most respondents appeared to agree with the statement.

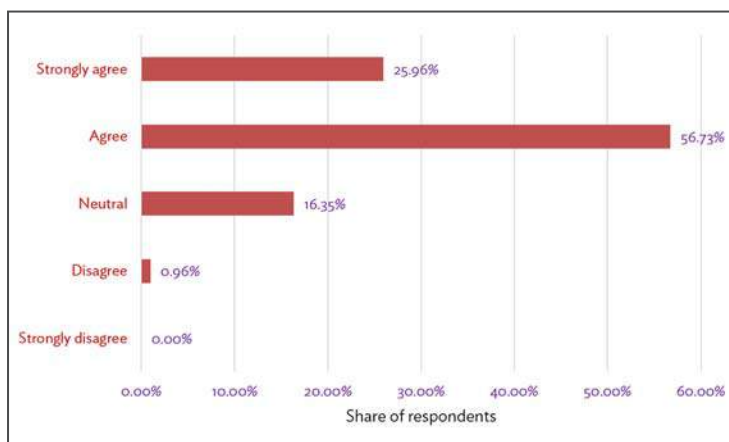
Figure 11: The Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN’s Progress, Achievements, and Challenges



Using school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN

The next question asked the survey participants whether they agreed or disagreed with using school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges. Of the 208 respondents, 25.96% strongly agreed, 56.73% agreed, 16.35% were neutral, and 0.96% disagreed (Figure 12). None of the respondents indicated strong disagreement.

Figure 12: Do You Agree with Using School Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN’s Progress, Achievements, and Challenges?



Most pressing problems facing Myanmar today and until 2025

The next question asked respondents about pressing problems facing Myanmar today and until 2025 in three groups: economic issues, sociocultural issues, and governance and political issues. Eight problems were included under economic issues, nine problems under sociocultural issues, and four under governance and political issues. Among the 21 problems, each respondent was asked to choose the top five most pressing problems facing Myanmar today and until 2025. The results of the survey show the top five most challenging problems to be climate change and natural disasters; unemployment; poverty; agriculture and food security; and educational quality, provision, and access (Table 1).

Most pressing problems facing the ASEAN Community and region today and until 2025

Next, the same 21 pressing problems were given to the respondents, but this time they were asked to choose the top five most pressing problems facing the ASEAN Community and region today and until 2025. The most frequently selected problems were climate change and natural disasters; income disparity and social inequality; human rights; agriculture and food security; and unemployment (Table 2).

By comparing the top five most pressing problems in Myanmar and in the ASEAN region, we can see three common issues: climate change and natural disasters, agriculture and food security, and unemployment. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were concerned about these three problems for both Myanmar and the ASEAN region.

Table 1: Most Pressing Problems Facing Myanmar Today and until 2025

Ranking	Type of Issue	Problem	Share of Respondents (%)
1	Sociocultural	Climate change and natural disasters	52.88
2	Sociocultural	Unemployment	48.08
3	Sociocultural	Poverty	43.75
4	Economic	Agriculture and food security	43.27
5	Sociocultural	Quality education provision and access	36.06
6	Economic	Infrastructure availability and quality	31.73
7	Sociocultural	Income disparity and social inequality	31.25
8	Governance and political	Corruption	28.37
9	Sociocultural	Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss	27.40
10	Governance and political	Human rights	18.27
11	Sociocultural	Land use, water use, and access	17.79
12	Sociocultural	Quality health services provision and access	17.31
13	Governance and political	Governance	16.83
14	Economic	Access to high-quality, affordable financial services	15.87
15	Economic	Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence	15.87
16	Economic	Energy provision and price	14.90
17	Governance and political	Public participation in policymaking and program monitoring	10.58
18	Economic	Accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy)	8.65
19	Economic	Non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers	8.65
20	Economic	Customs efficiency	7.21
21	Sociocultural	Gender parity between men and women	5.77

Table 2: Most Pressing Problems Facing ASEAN Today and until 2025

Ranking	Type of Issue	Problem	Share of Respondents (%)
1	Sociocultural	Climate change and natural disasters	62.98
2	Sociocultural	Income disparity and social inequality	38.94
3	Governance and political	Human rights	34.13
4	Economic	Agriculture and food security	31.25
5	Sociocultural	Unemployment	30.29
6	Sociocultural	Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss	28.85
7	Governance and political	Corruption	26.92
8	Economic	Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence	25.96
9	Sociocultural	Poverty	25.48
10	Sociocultural	Quality education provision and access	24.52
11	Economic	Access to high-quality, affordable financial services	22.12
12	Economic	Infrastructure availability and quality	21.63
13	Sociocultural	Land use, water use, and access	18.75
14	Governance and political	Governance	17.79
15	Economic	Non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers	17.31
16	Sociocultural	Quality health services provision and access	16.35
17	Economic	Energy provision and price	15.87
18	Governance and political	Public participation in policymaking and program monitoring	15.87
19	Sociocultural	Gender parity between men and women	10.58
20	Economic	Customs efficiency	8.65
21	Economic	Accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy)	5.29

Aspirations and hopes by 2025

The respondents expressed their aspirations and hopes for the enhancement of ASEAN integration by 2025 by giving their opinions on the following 15 statements (Table 3). The six possible answers were ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’, and ‘don’t know’.

Statement 1: Consumers have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country.

This statement shows the aspirations of consumers to have easy access to goods and services from ASEAN. The respondents hoped for the facilitated consumption of goods and services between ASEAN countries by 2025, shown by the answers of ‘strongly agree’ by 28.85%, ‘agree’ by 45.67%, ‘neutral’ by 16.3%, ‘disagree’ by 5.77%, and ‘strongly agree’ by 0.48%.

Statement 2: It is easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.

Regarding the ease of skilled workers and professionals in finding work in other countries in ASEAN, 47.60% of the respondents answered ‘agree’, 28.85% answered ‘strongly agree’, 18.75% answered ‘neutral’, 3.85% answered ‘disagree’, and 0.48% stated ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘don’t know’. This shows that in general, the respondents hoped for skilled workers and professionals to be able to find jobs easily in any ASEAN country.

Statement 3: Basic social protection and health services are provided to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.

In accordance with ASEAN’s blueprint for 2025, ASEAN is continuing to promote the development of a strong healthcare industry that will contribute to better healthcare facilities, products, and services to meet the growing demand for affordable and quality healthcare in the region. Thus, 24.52% of the respondents answered ‘strongly agree’, 47.12% answered ‘agree’, 17.79% indicated ‘neutral’, 8.65% answered ‘disagree’, 1.44% answered ‘strongly disagree’, and 0.48% answered ‘don’t know’ with regard to basic social protection and health services being provided to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.

Statement 4: There is good governance and very much less corruption in ASEAN countries.

The blueprint for ASEAN 2025 states that good governance will happen through greater transparency in the public sector and engagement with the private sector. ASEAN countries should enhance engagement with the private sector and stakeholders to improve transparency and the synergies between government policies and business actions across industries and sectors in the ASEAN region. For the aspiration of good governance and very much less corruption, 23.56% of the respondents strongly agreed, 42.31% agreed, 22.12% were neutral, 8.17% disagreed, 2.40% strongly disagreed, and 1.44% indicated ‘don’t know’.

Statement 5: ASEAN countries are well connected through roads, railways, air, and shipping.

The ASEAN Blueprint envisages that ASEAN transport cooperation should focus on the areas of land transport, air transport, maritime transport, and transport facilitation and, in addition, embrace sustainable transport as a key, new sectoral focus due to its vital role in the sustainable development of the ASEAN region. For the aspiration that ASEAN countries are well connected through roads, railways, air, and shipping, 24.52% of the respondents chose ‘strongly agree’, 45.67% chose ‘agree’, 19.71% chose ‘neutral’, 9.13% answered ‘disagree’, and 0.48% answered ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘don’t know’.

Statement 6: People and businesses can communicate easily with one another through ICT.

The ASEAN Blueprint mentions that information and communications technology (ICT) is a key driver of ASEAN’s economic and social transformation. A strong ICT infrastructure with pervasive connectivity in ASEAN can facilitate the creation of a business environment that is conducive to attracting and promoting trade, investment, and entrepreneurship. Also, ASEAN countries hope to establish a digitally enabled economy that is secure, sustainable, and transformative. Accordingly, for the aspiration that people and businesses are able to communicate easily with one another through ICT, 23.56% of the respondents answered ‘strongly agree’, 51.92% answered ‘agree’, 19.23% chose ‘neutral’, 4.81% answered ‘disagree’, and 0.48% indicated ‘don’t know’.

Statement 7: ASEAN peoples are well aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.

For the aspiration that ASEAN peoples are well aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes, 47.12% of the respondents indicated ‘agree’, 19.23% indicated ‘strongly

agree', 24.04% indicated 'neutral', 5.77% answered 'disagree', 0.96% answered 'strongly agree', and 2.88% replied 'don't know'.

Statement 8: The ASEAN Community strongly engages and benefits its peoples.

ASEAN and subregional cooperation projects can broaden ASEAN people-to-people, institutional, and infrastructure connectivity to facilitate the movement of capital as well as skilled labour and talent. The stronger the ASEAN Community is, the greater the opportunities for people in the region. Therefore, for the aspiration for an ASEAN Community that strongly engages and benefits its peoples, 42.79% chose 'agree', 21.15% chose 'strongly agree', 27.40% indicated 'neutral', 5.77% answered 'disagree', 1.44% chose 'strongly disagree', and 1.44% answered 'don't know'.

Statement 9: There is equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.

The AEC Blueprint 2025 focuses on enhancing equitable economic development for the ASEAN Community. For this reason, ASEAN peoples hope for equitable access to opportunities. The respondents expressed their opinions on this statement: 48.5% chose 'agree', 19.71% chose 'strongly agree', 17.79% indicated 'neutral', 9.62% chose 'disagree', 1.44% chose 'strongly disagree', and 2.88% chose 'don't know'.

Statement 10: Human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected.

For the aspiration that human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected through the implementation of ASEAN's 2025 Blueprint, 43.75% of the respondents answered 'agree', 20.67% answered 'strongly agree', 23.08% answered 'neutral', 9.13% answered 'disagree', 1.44% answered 'strongly disagree', and 1.92% answered 'don't know'.

Statement 11: The region's biodiversity and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved.

According to ASEAN's 2025 Blueprint, by developing a sustainable growth agenda that promotes the use of clean energy and related technologies, ASEAN can actively promote green development, including renewable energy through green technology, and enhance sustainable consumption and production. When asked their opinion about the region's biodiversity and natural resources being sustainably managed and conserved, 41.83% of the respondents chose 'agree', 20.67% chose 'strongly agree', 23.56% chose 'neutral', 9.13% chose 'disagree', 1.92% chose 'strongly disagree', and 2.88% chose 'don't know'.

Statement 12: ASEAN’s major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.

ASEAN implements frameworks to support the deployment and utilisation of efficient low-carbon technologies and promote access to mechanisms that foster more affordable low-carbon technologies. Accordingly, for the aspiration that ASEAN’s major cities will be less polluted and more liveable than they are today, 38.46% answered ‘agree’, 20.19% answered ‘strongly agree’, 26.92% answered ‘neutral’, 8.17% answered ‘disagree’, 3.37% indicated ‘strongly disagree’, and 2.88% answered ‘don’t know’.

Statement 13: ASEAN is able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.

Regarding the aspiration that ASEAN is able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards, 44.23% of the respondents answered ‘agree’, 24.04% answered ‘strongly agree’ and ‘neutral’, 5.29% answered ‘disagree’, 1.44% answered ‘strongly disagree’, and 0.96% replied ‘don’t know’.

Statement 14: ASEAN is a strong voice and an important player in global negotiations and forums.

ASEAN countries prefer a more strategic and coherent approach towards external economic relations with a view to adopting a common position in regional and global economic forums and continuing to promote engagement with global and regional institutions. For this reason, ASEAN peoples hope that ASEAN will be a strong voice and an important player in global negotiations and forums. For this statement, 53.37% of the respondents chose ‘agree’, 18.75% chose ‘strongly agree’, 21.63% answered ‘neutral’, 3.85% chose ‘disagree’, 1.93% chose ‘strongly disagree’, and 0.48% chose ‘don’t know’.

Statement 15: ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world (e.g. the United States and China) to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.

When asked about the aspiration that ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region, 50.48% indicated ‘agree’, 23.08% indicated ‘strongly agree’ and ‘neutral’, 1.44% chose ‘disagree’, and 0.96% answered ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘don’t know’.

Table 3: Aspirations and Hopes for ASEAN Integration by 2025
(% of respondents)

Aspirations and Hopes by 2025	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
1. Consumers have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country.	28.85	45.67	16.83	5.77	0.48	2.40
2. It is easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.	28.85	47.60	18.75	3.85	0.48	0.48
3. Basic social protection and health services are provided to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.	24.52	47.12	17.79	8.65	1.44	0.48
4. There is good governance and very much less corruption.	23.56	42.31	22.12	8.17	2.40	1.44
5. ASEAN countries are well connected through roads, railways, air, and shipping.	24.52	45.67	19.71	9.13	0.48	0.48
6. People and businesses can communicate easily with one another through ICT.	23.56	51.92	19.23	4.81	0.00	0.48
7. ASEAN peoples are well aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.	19.23	47.12	24.04	5.77	0.96	2.88
8. The ASEAN Community strongly engages and benefits its peoples.	21.15	42.79	27.40	5.77	1.44	1.44
9. There is equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.	19.71	48.56	17.79	9.62	1.44	2.88
10. Human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected.	20.67	43.75	23.08	9.13	1.44	1.92
11. The region's biodiversity and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved.	20.67	41.83	23.56	9.13	1.92	2.88
12. ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.	20.19	38.46	26.92	8.17	3.37	2.88
13. ASEAN is able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.	24.04	44.23	24.04	5.29	1.44	0.96
14. ASEAN is a strong voice and important player in global negotiations and forums.	18.75	53.37	21.63	3.85	1.92	0.48
15. ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.	23.08	50.48	23.08	1.44	0.96	0.96

ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ICT = information and communications technology.

Expectations by 2025

Next, the respondents were given the same 15 statements, but this time they were asked to answer based on their expectations for the enhancement of ASEAN integration by 2025 (Table 4). The available answers were again ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’, and ‘don’t know’.

Statement 1: Consumers have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country.

About 58% of the respondents agreed with this statement due to the AEC Blueprint 2025. The blueprint includes the elimination of tariffs, the advancement of regional trade processes and procedures, and the promotion of trade liberalisation within the region. In fact, 20.67% of respondents, with many from the business group, strongly agreed with this statement. However, more than 15% were neutral, while approximately 5% disagreed on the expectation of easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country.

Statement 2: It is easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.

The new blueprint includes not only the creation of job opportunities within the region but also a reduction in income inequality in member states as among ASEAN’s social and cultural priorities. Accordingly, around 55% of the respondents agreed with the expectation that it will be easier for skilled workers and professionals to work in other regional countries, while 18% strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 22% chose ‘neutral’, and about 4% disagreed because of the education gap among regional countries. Nearly 1% did not know whether it would be easy to find work within the region.

Statement 3: Basic social protection and health services are provided to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.

With regard to the provision of basic social protection and health services for migrants within the region by 2025, 42% of the respondents agreed, and 18% strongly agreed. At present, most migrants and temporary workers are from informal sectors, and this has led to the situation where the current social protection and labour laws in the region cannot fully cover or be effective for them. Therefore, around 3% of respondents disagreed, and nearly 1% strongly disagreed with this expectation by 2025.

Table 4: Expectations for ASEAN Integration by 2025
(% of respondents)

Expectations by 2025	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
1. Consumers have easy access to goods and services from any ASEAN country.	20.67	58.17	15.87	5.29	0.00	0.00
2. It is easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.	18.27	55.77	20.67	4.33	0.00	0.96
3. Basic social protection and health services are provided to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.	18.27	42.79	34.62	3.37	0.96	0.00
4. There is good governance and very much less corruption.	16.35	33.65	34.13	11.54	1.92	2.40
5. ASEAN countries are well connected through roads, railways, air, and shipping.	15.87	56.25	23.08	4.81	0.00	0.00
6. People and businesses can communicate easily with one another through ICT.	16.83	54.33	22.60	3.85	0.48	1.92
7. ASEAN peoples are well aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.	16.83	42.31	32.21	6.73	0.48	1.44
8. The ASEAN Community strongly engages and benefits its peoples.	16.83	41.35	37.50	2.88	0.48	0.96
9. There is equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.	13.94	42.79	37.98	1.92	0.00	3.37
10. Human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected.	12.98	44.71	31.25	8.17	0.96	1.92
11. The region's biodiversity and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved.	10.10	47.12	31.73	7.21	1.44	2.40
12. ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.	12.50	36.06	33.65	13.94	1.92	1.92
13. ASEAN is able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.	15.87	44.71	32.69	4.33	0.96	1.44
14. ASEAN is a strong voice and important player in global negotiations and forums.	16.83	53.85	21.63	4.33	0.96	2.40
15. ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.	14.90	58.65	21.15	3.37	0.48	1.44

ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ICT = information and communications technology.

Statement 4: There is good governance and very much less corruption.

Good governance and the fight against corruption is key for the ASEAN Community for moving towards sustainable ASEAN integration by 2025. More than 85% of the respondents thought that ASEAN would become a region where good governance and very much less corruption was achieved by 2025. However, around 15% disagreed, strongly disagree, or did not know. Many who did not agree thought that Myanmar was a country with a weak rule of law and high levels of corruption across many sectors. They also thought there would be a high risk of political interference in the judicial systems of the regional countries.

Statement 5: ASEAN countries are well connected through roads, railways, air, and shipping.

Efforts are being made for infrastructure development for the purposes of sustainable economic growth, economic integration with enhanced trade, a reduction in development gaps, and the improvement of resource sharing and efficiency to provide basic needs among ASEAN Member States. As such, more than 95% agreed with this expectation, although some responded neutrally, and about 4% expressed disagreement. As there is a wide gap between the more developed ASEAN countries, such as Singapore, and the less developed countries, such Myanmar, some respondents believed that the economic and political differences in the member countries would hinder connections through infrastructure development.

Statement 6: People and businesses can communicate easily with one another through ICT.

About 93% of the respondents who answered 'strongly agree', 'agree', or 'neutral' for this statement mentioned the 2015 ASEAN ICT Master Plan. Since 2011, the development of the ICT sector in the ASEAN region has brought more employment opportunities, transformation into the e-system in some government activities, and vital advancements in the telecommunications sector. Many of the respondents imagined that the future regional economic situation regarding ICT development would advance rapidly by 2025. Some respondents – 3.85% for 'disagree', 0.48% for 'strongly disagree', and 1.92% for 'don't know' – expressed the opinion that Myanmar had been left behind in ICT-related areas compared with other member countries. As a result, they said that Myanmar would face difficulties in catching up in the next decade, especially in ICT development, for which the country ranked 138th in the Global Innovation Index 2015.

Statement 7: ASEAN peoples are well aware of the ASEAN Community and its programmes.

Myanmar took the role of chair of ASEAN for the first time in 2014, and, as a result, most of the people in the country have at least some awareness of the ASEAN Community and its programmes. Accordingly, about 40% of the respondents pointed out that they knew the ASEAN Community and its programmes well, and 16.83% agreed with the statement's expectation. Meanwhile, 32% answered 'neutral', and about 4% chose 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', or 'don't know'.

Statement 8: The ASEAN Community strongly engages and benefits its peoples.

More than 95% of the respondents reacted to the opportunities and advantages of creating the ASEAN Free Trade Area and the AEC by agreeing, strongly agreeing, or responding neutrally to this statement. They talked about the openness of the regional cooperation, tourism opportunities, increases in foreign direct investment, and the advancement of health and education services within the ASEAN region by 2025. However, 2.88% chose 'disagree', and 0.48% chose 'strongly disagree'. Meanwhile, 0.96% said they did not know whether ASEAN would be a region that strongly engages and benefits its peoples by 2025.

Statement 9: There is equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.

About 42% of the respondents agreed with the statement that opportunities will be equally accessible to all ASEAN peoples by 2025, while 13.94% were in strong agreement, and 37.98% were neutral. As there are still constraints, weaknesses, and problems facing regional integration within the AEC, about 1.92% expressed their disagreement, while 3.37% were unsure about the statement.

Statement 10: Human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected.

ASEAN has made efforts to protect human rights and minorities by implementing three mechanisms: the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, and the Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Promotion and Protection of Migrant Workers. Accordingly, about 44% of the respondents believed the protection of human rights and minorities would be stronger by 2025, whereas nearly 13% had strong confidence in the realisation of the statement. However, 8.7% did not agree with the expectation, and nearly 1% strongly disagreed with it due to income inequality and gender discrimination in Myanmar and other regional countries.

Statement 11: The region’s biodiversity and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved.

The consumption of natural resources has risen along with the increases in populations and rapid economic growth in the region. Thus, national resource management is also considered as one of the key factors in ASEAN’s Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, 2015. Therefore, more than 90% of the respondents agreed that the region’s biodiversity and natural resources will be sustainably managed and conserved by 2025. In contrast, due to the shortage of natural resources such as natural gas, oil, jade, and rubies in Myanmar in recent years, 7.21% expressed their disagreement, and 1.44% strongly disagreed that this would occur in the region by 2025.

Statement 12: ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.

Although the Transboundary Haze Pollution Act has been introduced for air pollution in the region, ASEAN Member States still face pollution-related issues. To combat this, the ASEAN region will adopt the Roadmap for a Transboundary Haze-Free Region by 2020. As a result, more than 80% of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Statement 13: ASEAN is able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.

About 95% of the participants responded positively to the expectation of cooperation in responding to natural disasters and climate change. ASEAN Member States cooperate to recover from natural disasters and health hazards through integration in adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage, technology development and transfers, REDD+ financing (such as through the Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund and the REDD+ financing mechanism), and transparency of action and support (including measurement, reporting, and verification). However, about 5% of the respondents indicated that ASEAN is a region that produces high-level emissions due to its industrial activities.

Statement 14: ASEAN is a strong voice and an important player in global negotiations and forums.

As the ASEAN region is trying to become an integrated community in various sectors through the AEC Blueprint 2025, most of the respondents, about 93%, agreed that ASEAN will play a strong role in global negotiations and forums by 2025. In contrast, about 7% opposed this view because of the various risks that might be encountered.

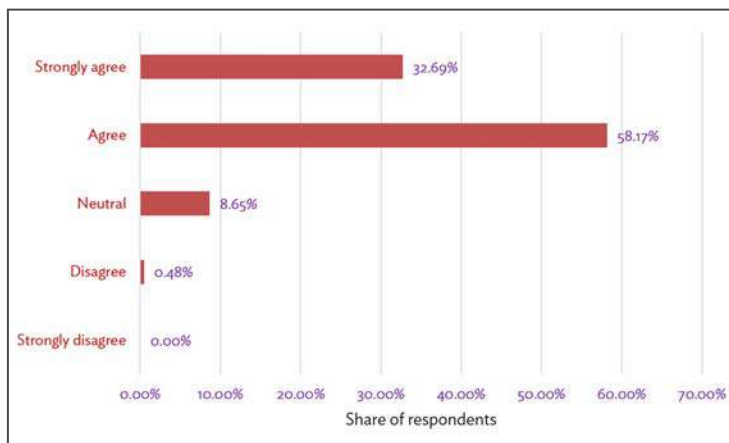
Statement 15: ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world (e.g. the United States and China) to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.

Since ASEAN is trying to promote economic, political, and security-related cooperation among its member countries through the enhancement of the AEC and integration in various sectors, about 95% of the respondents expected this statement to be accomplished by 2025. However, nearly 5% disagreed with this expectation.

Upgrading the capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges

Finally, the 208 survey participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the idea of gradually upgrading the implementing and monitoring capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges. Of the respondents, 32.69% strongly agreed with the idea (Figure 13). More than half of the total respondents (58.17%) agreed, while 8.65% and 0.48% of the respondents were neutral or disagreed, respectively. None of the respondents strongly disagreed.

Figure 13: Agreement with Upgrading the Implementing and Monitoring Capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat



What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from the Philippines*

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Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a grouping or coalition of 10 member states in Southeast Asia that works to foster regional cooperation. It was formed on 8 August 1967 with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand as its founding members. ASEAN's membership has grown over the years with the joining of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam.

Based on the Bangkok Declaration of 1967, ASEAN aims to promote economic growth, social progress, and cultural progress in the region through joint endeavours; foster regional peace and security; encourage active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical, and scientific fields; promote partnerships in the development of agriculture, industries, trade, and transportation and communication facilities within the region; promote Southeast Asian studies; and maintain 'close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation' (ASEAN, 2016).

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

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A turning point in ASEAN's history, which is considered a major milestone in the regional integration of ASEAN, was the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015. The ASEAN Community is composed of three pillars: the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, and the ASEAN Political-Security Community.

Each pillar has its own blueprint. The AEC Blueprint, adopted by the ASEAN leaders in November 2015, forms part of a general master plan called *ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together*, which is geared towards the realisation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. The said concept envisages:

a rules-based, people-oriented, people-centered ASEAN Community, where our peoples enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms, higher quality of life and the benefits of community building, reinforcing our sense of togetherness and common identity, guided by the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter ... a peaceful, stable and resilient Community with enhanced capacity to respond effectively to challenges, and ASEAN as an outward-looking region within a global community of nations, while maintaining ASEAN centrality ... vibrant, sustainable and highly integrated economies, enhanced ASEAN Connectivity as well as strengthened efforts in narrowing the development gap. (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015: 13)

As ASEAN approaches its 50th founding anniversary in 2017, it is timely to ascertain the public's perception of the association to determine the gaps and areas for improvement. The region and the world when ASEAN was born 50 years ago were very much different to how they are now. ASEAN should evolve with and adapt to the times and must remain relevant and responsive to the needs of its peoples.

For this aim, the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) commissioned the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) to carry out a research project as part of the ASEAN@50: Retrospectives and Perspectives on the Making, Substance, Significance, and Future of ASEAN project. The research is aimed at making inferences about the level of awareness of the Filipino people of ASEAN as well as their aspirations, concerns, and hopes for the association. The results are intended to inform ASEAN's policies, programmes, and projects.

Methodology

The study was carried out through a purposive online and paper-based survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) with select target groups. ERIA provided the instruments used for the survey. Additional efforts were made to simplify some of the questions for the FGDs, particularly the statements on the expectations and aspirations for ASEAN.

To find respondents for the survey, invitations were sent by PIDS to people in government, academe, the business sector, and civil society organisations/non-governmental organisations (CSOs/NGOs). The survey was also advertised through the PIDS social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter); the institute's electronic newsletter, *PIDS Updates*; and personal contacts.

The FGDs were comprised of three sessions. The first session was with the youth sector in Butuan City, the regional centre of Caraga (a region in Mindanao). Another FGD targeted the business sector and was held in Cebu City (in the Visayas). The third FGD was held in Quezon City (in Luzon) and comprised a mixed group of representatives from government, academe, business, and NGOs/CSOs. Given the limited resources available for this project, the selection of strategic areas for the FGDs was intended to obtain, as far as possible, a broad spectrum of views and opinions on ASEAN.

Results and Discussion

Profile of survey respondents

The survey had a total of 289 respondents (Table 1). The largest group of respondents was from the government, followed by those from academe, CSOs/NGOs, business, and others. 'Others' comprised students, staff of international organisations, and media personnel.

Three-quarters of the survey respondents were over 30 years old, and there were equal proportions of respondents aged 31–49 and those aged 50 or older. There were slightly more male than female respondents.

Table 1: Profile of the Survey Respondents

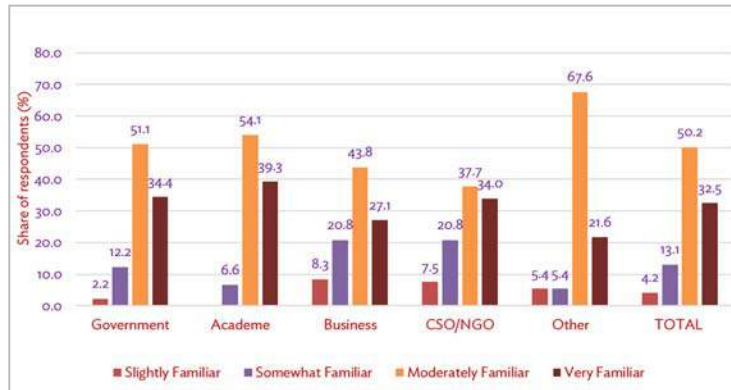
	Number of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
Affiliation		
Government	90	31.14
Academe	61	21.11
Business	48	16.61
CSO/NGO	53	18.34
Others (mostly students)	37	12.80
<i>Total</i>	289	100.0
Age		
15-30 years	73	25.26
31-49 years	108	37.37
50+ years	108	37.37
<i>Total</i>	289	100.00
Sex		
Male	150	51.90
Female	139	48.10
<i>Total</i>	289	100.0

CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Awareness of ASEAN

Across the age and affiliation groups, the majority of the survey respondents were moderately familiar with ASEAN (Figure 1). Slightly more respondents from academe had greater familiarity with ASEAN than those from the government. The majority of the FGD participants said that they had learned about ASEAN at school, while the out-of-school youths said they heard about ASEAN on the radio or television.

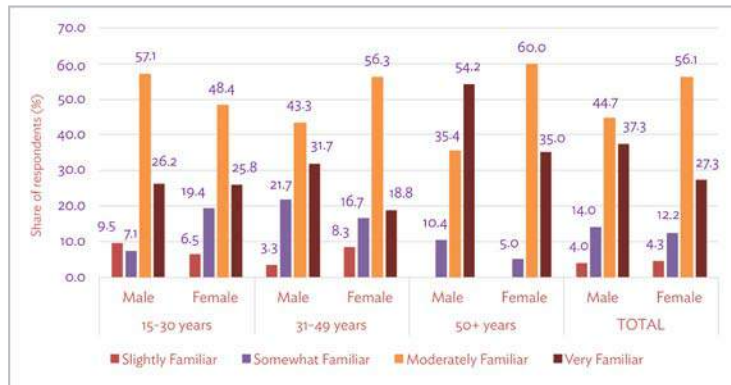
Figure 1: Share of Respondents by Age



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

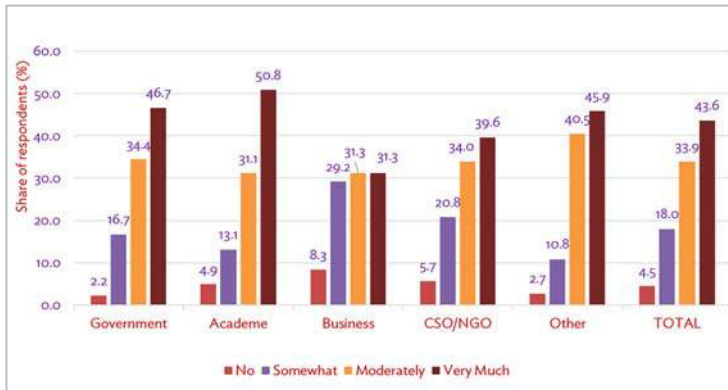
For all three age groups (15–30 years, 31–49 years, and 50+ years), there were more survey respondents who were moderately familiar with ASEAN than those who were very familiar with it (Figure 2). Most of the respondents aged 15–30 and 31–49 were moderately aware of ASEAN, regardless of their gender. Those aged 50 or older who expressed moderate familiarity with ASEAN were predominantly female. However, a slightly larger proportion of men aged 50 or older reported a high awareness of ASEAN.

Figure 2: Awareness of ASEAN by Gender and Age



The majority of the survey respondents from academe and government felt very much as ASEAN citizens (Figure 3). Many of the CSO/NGO respondents had the same sentiment, while an equal number of respondents from the business sector felt either very much or only moderately that they were ASEAN citizens. This feeling of ASEAN citizenship was validated in the FGD with the business sector, in which respondents also said they considered themselves as ASEAN citizens. Respondents in the ‘other’ category conveyed a strong affiliation towards ASEAN.

Figure 3: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen by Affiliation

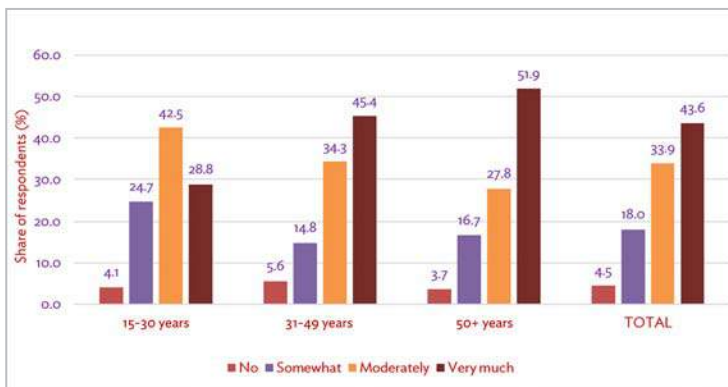


CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

One participant from the mixed FGD argued, however, that it would be more appropriate to use the term ‘ASEAN national’ rather than ‘ASEAN citizen’ because the attachment felt by many towards ASEAN was more in terms of one’s identity as a Southeast Asian rather than in terms of his/her rights and duties, which the participant noted was what citizenship was all about.

The feeling of being an ASEAN citizen increased with age among the respondents (Figure 4). The majority of the younger respondents (15–30 years) in the survey felt moderately as ASEAN citizens, while all except one of the participants in the youth FGD said they did not feel they were part of ASEAN. They said they had no idea of what ASEAN did and added that they did not receive enough information about the association.

Figure 4: Identification as an ASEAN Citizen by Age



In contrast, the older respondents (31–49 years and 50+ years) considered themselves very much as ASEAN citizens. This can be attributed to the greater awareness of ASEAN through work or personal experience as one advances in years. Most participants in the mixed FGD said they learned about ASEAN through their work. For example, a participant from the NGO sector who was a member of the ASEAN Farmers' Association said that ASEAN was always a part of his group's discussions with the Department of Agriculture.

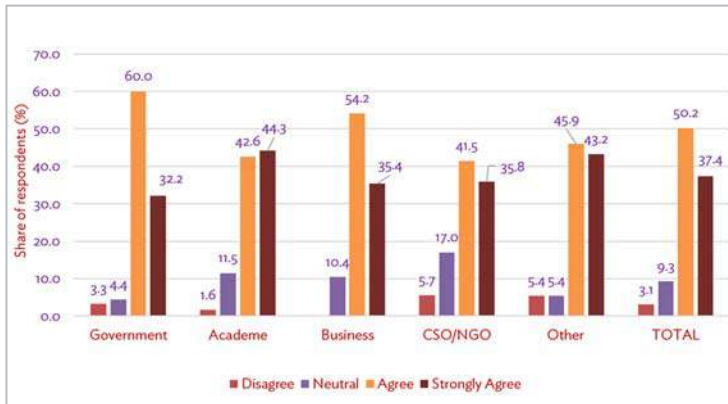
There was a consensus across the groups that media coverage of ASEAN was not enough (Figure 5). The survey respondents from government felt most strongly about this, followed by those from the business sector and others. The youth respondents in the FGD said they knew more about the United Nations than ASEAN, while a participant in the mixed FGD noted the absence of the ASEAN flag in offices and schools.

When asked whether they agreed with using school textbooks to increase social awareness and educate young people about ASEAN's progress, achievements, and challenges, there was strong agreement among the respondents from government, academe, CSOs/NGOs, and others (Figure 6). Those from the business sector also answered in the affirmative but were slightly less enthusiastic about the idea.

Survey respondents aged 15–30 and 50+ years, particularly the younger respondents, expressed strong agreement with using school textbooks to educate young people about ASEAN (Figure 7). However, those aged 31–49, although in agreement, agreed to a lesser extent; slightly more respondents from this age group chose 'agree' than 'strongly agree'.

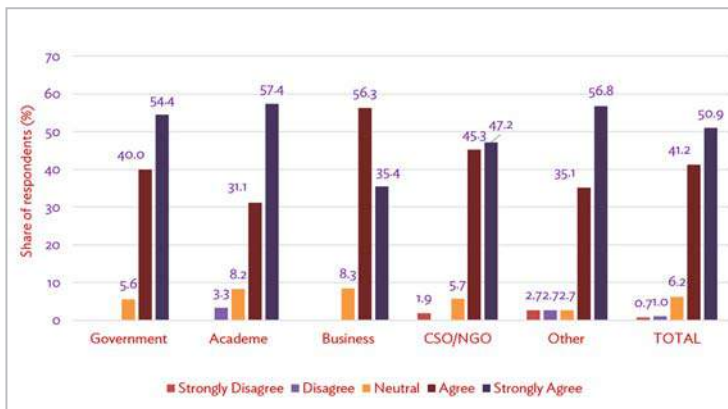
The majority of participants in the three FGDs thought that ASEAN and its goals, programmes, and activities should be introduced and taught in schools. Those from the business sector said awareness-raising should start during primary education, while more advanced topics about ASEAN, such as those that require broader international consciousness, should be taught in secondary and tertiary education. A few participants emphasised the importance of regularly updating of textbooks and noted that some textbooks with ASEAN content were not updated.

Figure 5: Agreement That Media Coverage of ASEAN Is Not Enough by Affiliation



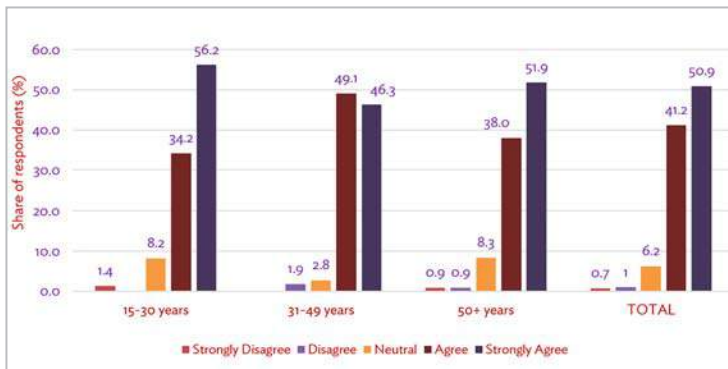
CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Figure 6: Perception on the Use of Textbooks to Promote ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Figure 7: Perception on the Use of Textbooks to Promote ASEAN by Age



Membership of ASEAN

For all groups, the majority of the survey respondents (between 85% and 97%) had favourable views on the Philippines' membership of ASEAN (Figure 8). The largest percentage of those that responded positively came from government, and the lowest was from the business sector.

More than 9 out of 10 respondents across all age groups also thought that being part of ASEAN was favourable for the Philippines. This coincides with the results of the FGDs, in which all participants expressed positive views on the Philippines' membership of ASEAN.

For instance, while awareness of ASEAN and what it does was low among the youth participants in the FGD, they all agreed that membership of ASEAN was good for the Philippines in terms of trade; peace-building; resolving territorial conflicts and problems related to food security, hunger, and technology; and receiving aid in times of need. Nevertheless, most felt that ASEAN was not doing anything to help the Philippines resolve its geopolitical conflict with China. They added that they felt that in terms of assistance in resolving the situation, the United States was doing more than ASEAN.

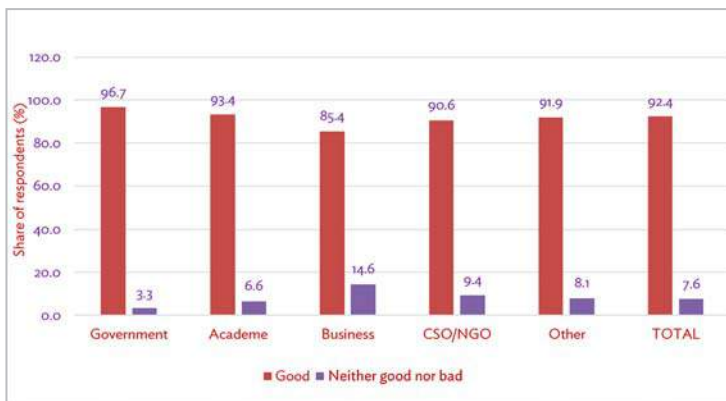
Meanwhile, the most cited reasons by the business sector participants were related to trade (namely, the ease of importing and exporting due to fewer trade barriers), ease of travel across ASEAN, and more employment opportunities for professional workers. On the latter, the youth participants noted that ASEAN membership was good for creating more jobs for the Philippines, which they said had a low capacity in this area. They added that being part of ASEAN helped Filipino workers access jobs in other ASEAN countries. The participants from the business sector also viewed ASEAN as a good platform for harmonising the political and economic agenda of the member states and for having a unified stand in addressing the issues faced by each member and ASEAN as a whole.

However, while membership of ASEAN was generally perceived to be positive, more respondents thought the Philippines benefited only moderately from ASEAN (Figure 9). Among the business sector respondents, slightly more respondents chose 'somewhat' than 'moderately'. This corroborates the business group's tepid response to the question on the Philippines' membership of ASEAN, which, although positive, was not as warm as the other groups (Figure 8). Despite this, more survey respondents, regardless of their affiliation, said they would be extremely concerned if the Philippines were to leave ASEAN (Figure 10). Participants of the three FGDs gave the same response. The youth, in particular, said they thought leaving ASEAN would weaken the Philippines because it would be alone in solving its problems, particularly disasters and territorial conflicts.

One respondent used the analogy of the Philippines not having friends if the Philippines were to leave ASEAN. All of the participants of the mixed FGD said they wanted the Philippines to keep its ASEAN membership.

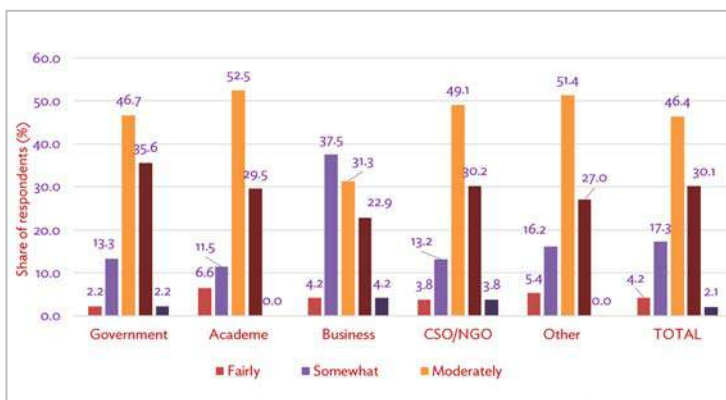
In terms of ASEAN’s future, the majority of the respondents were moderately optimistic, with the largest percentage coming from the CSO/NGO sector (Figure 11). This may have been due to the moderate familiarity of the respondents with ASEAN’s activities and/or the perception that the Philippines had only moderately benefited from its membership of the association (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Perception of the Philippines’ Membership of ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Figure 9: Extent of the Benefit from ASEAN by Affiliation



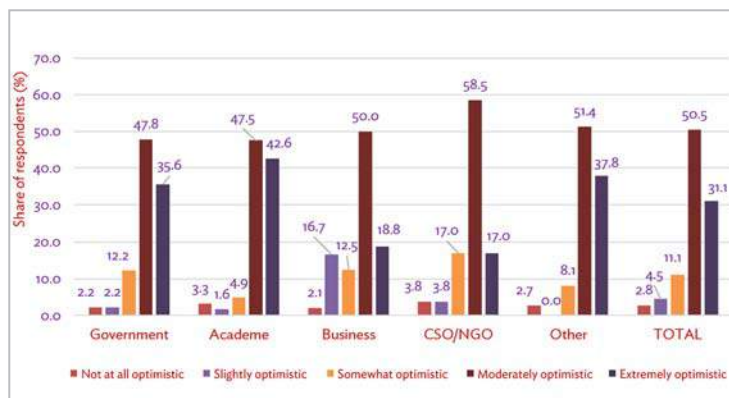
CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Figure 10: Feeling if the Philippines Were to Leave ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Figure 11: Perception of ASEAN’s Future by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Pressing problems

From a list of choices, the respondents were asked to choose five items that they thought were the most pressing problems facing (a) the Philippines and (b) the ASEAN Community today and until 2025.

The results differed for the two settings. As shown in the summary graph in Figure 12, the top five issues chosen by the respondents for the Philippines were (1) the availability of affordable Internet connections, (2) poverty, (3) corruption, (4) agriculture and food security, and (5) energy provision and prices. Meanwhile, the most pressing problems for ASEAN were (1) climate change and natural disasters, (2) territorial/maritime disputes,

(3) trade, investment, and regulatory coherence, (4) agriculture and food security, and income disparity and social inequality, and (5) corruption.¹

The only common response was agriculture and food security, which is indicative of the urgency and gravity of this problem at the local (country) and regional (ASEAN) levels. This also shows that the survey respondents were acutely aware of the mediocre performance of Philippine agriculture, which has accentuated concerns about food security, especially among the poor and the vulnerable. They were also aware of the need to boost agricultural performance and ensure food security in the face of a growing ASEAN population, and the higher priority that ASEAN Member States have apparently given to investing in regional production networks in manufacturing and related activities and services.

Meanwhile, in the FGDs, the most common answers in terms of the top five issues for the Philippines were corruption, poverty, and climate change and natural disasters. For ASEAN, aside from corruption and climate change and natural disasters, the most common answers were poverty, unemployment, and trade and investment.

The top five pressing problems for the Philippines validate the most immediate concerns facing the country today. As a foremost concern, information and communications technology services in the Philippines, including the Internet, are among the most expensive in ASEAN. As explained in a PIDS discussion paper (Albert, Serafica, and Lumbea, 2016), fixed telephone services in the Philippines in purchasing power parity US dollars cost US\$36.15 per month, the highest in ASEAN. Meanwhile, mobile cellular services and fixed broadband services are priced at US\$22.24 per month (second highest) and US\$51.59 per month (third highest), respectively, based on data from the International Telecommunication Union. Price, nevertheless, does not translate into quality services. Despite the high cost, Internet speeds in the Philippines are among the slowest in the Asia-Pacific region. According to the *State of the Internet* report by Akamai (2015), a cloud data network that monitors Internet traffic, the Philippines' average connection speed was 2.8 Megabits per second (Mbps) for the third quarter of 2015, significantly less than the global average connection speed of 5.1 Mbps and the second lowest in the Asia-Pacific region. The Philippines also ranked third in terms of the lowest peak connection speed, at 25.3 Mbps, much slower than the global average of 32.2 Mbps. This is a big concern because the Philippines' services sector owes much of its stellar performance to improvements in information and communications technology, which has been instrumental to the robust growth of the information technology-

¹ Territorial/maritime disputes were not in the original list of problems in the questionnaire provided by ERIA. However, the PIDS research team decided to add this item in view of its growing domestic and regional relevance.

business process management industry. In 2015, the industry generated more than US\$22 billion in revenue and more than 1 million full-time jobs (IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines, 2016). Poor-quality services by Philippine telecommunications firms will create a significant hindrance to the continuous growth of the information technology-business process management industry and to the services sector as a whole.

Meanwhile, as the second most serious concern selected by the majority of survey respondents and one of the top issues by the FGD participants, high poverty incidence remains a daunting challenge for the Philippines. While the country has enjoyed rapid economic growth, averaging 6% during 2010–2016, not all segments of the population have enjoyed this growth. Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority estimated a poverty incidence of 21.6% in 2015. While this was significantly lower than the 25.2% reported in 2012, it is still rather substantial. The figure could have been further reduced if not for major setbacks that affected the Philippines between 2012 and 2015, particularly climate-related disasters. The problem of high poverty incidence has framed the current discussions of the policy community in pushing the government's development strategy and agenda forward with inclusive growth as a critical goal.

Corruption, as the third most pressing concern chosen by the survey respondents and one of the top issues identified by the FGD participants, is related to the general perception of the persistence of corruption and its relative worsening in recent times, as reflected in the corruption perception index released by Transparency International. In 2015, the Philippines ranked 95th out of 168 countries in the index, 10 places lower than its ranking in 2014 (85th). In 2013 and 2012, it ranked 94th and 105th, respectively. In this regard, the government has recently established Project Repeal, which is intended to reduce the regulatory burden on firms. The project requires government agencies to implement the Anti-Red Tape Act more resolutely and included the issuing of an executive order establishing a freedom of information framework and implementation plan in the government.

Unreliable power supply and the high cost of electricity in the Philippines were also top concerns among respondents. Energy woes affect not only local households and businesses but also discourage foreign investors. The Philippines' power rates are among the highest in the world. A study by International Energy Consultants in June 2012 (see KPMG Global Energy Institute [2013]) shows that the average retail tariff charged by Meralco, the country's largest distributor of electrical power, of US\$0.2026 per kilowatt-hour, is the ninth highest in the world and the second highest in Asia (KPMG Global Energy Institute, 2013). Sixty-five percent of this tariff consists of generation costs, which are borne by power producers. The government is undertaking an ongoing review

of the energy and power policies and plans in consultation with various stakeholders. It is important to pin down and revoke any policy, regulatory, or institutional issues that have contributed to high power costs.

Meanwhile, the pressing problems identified for ASEAN reflect the transnational scope and the seriousness of climate change, territorial/maritime disputes, and trade and investment issues. These are not new problems in the region, yet they have inarguably intensified over the years. The region of Southeast Asia is one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The Asian Development Bank (2009) attributes this to several reasons, including the region's large and growing population (as disasters are partly a function of population exposure), its long coastlines, the high concentration of human and economic activities in coastal areas, the dependence on agriculture as a source of livelihood for a large segment of people, and the reliance on natural resources and the forestry sector for growth and development.

In terms of territorial or maritime disputes between ASEAN Member States or with other neighbouring countries, the most immediate issue that comes to mind is the conflict in the South China Sea. The participants in the FGDs likewise associated territorial or maritime disputes with the South China Sea dispute. As a highly contested territory, the dispute involves the competing claims of Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam. In July 2016, the Hague's Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled in favour of the Philippines. The court concluded that China's claims of historic rights to the disputed areas in the South China Sea were without legal basis, and thus its activities within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, specifically '(a) interfering Philippine fishing and petroleum exploration, (b) constructing artificial islands and (c) failing to prevent Chinese fishermen from fishing in the zone' were an infringement on the Philippines' sovereign rights (Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2016). China refused to accept the ruling. But, nevertheless, a recent state visit by President Rodrigo Duterte to China appears to have helped improve the relationship between China and the Philippines.²

Corruption, agriculture and food security, and income disparity and social inequality also emerged as among the top problems for ASEAN today and until 2025. ASEAN is a major nexus of growth in the world, and its member states have exhibited relatively strong economic performance. However, this survey reveals several major regional challenges that indicate the priorities ASEAN leaders should have in the immediate future.

² Recent news reports indicate that Filipino fishermen now fish in the traditional fishing grounds in the Scarborough Shoal without harassment from the Chinese coast guard. Whether this is a short term or permanent arrangement has yet to be established.

The least chosen issues for the Philippines were (1) non-tariff barriers/measures and gender parity; (2) the right to public participation; (3) trade, investment, and regulatory coherence; (4) territorial/maritime disputes; and (5) customs issues. These reflect the respondents' perceptions that these items are not significant concerns for the country. This could have been because of the perceptions that these problems have already been addressed or are already being acted upon, or that these problems are of regional, rather than local, concern. This can be seen for territorial/maritime disputes and trade, which although regarded as among the least concerning problems in the Philippines, emerged among the top, pressing problems in ASEAN.

Meanwhile, for ASEAN, the following were the least chosen by the respondents as pressing problems: (1) health services and energy provision and prices; (2) affordable Internet connections; (3) quality education, and land and water use and access; (4) unemployment; and (5) public participation. While Internet connections and energy provision and prices were not concerns for the respondents for ASEAN, these items were among the top five pressing problems for the Philippines, reflecting the survey respondents' perceptions that these were domestic, rather than regional, issues. The low level of concern for the other problems may be indicative of views that measures are already being made to solve them, and thus they are no longer pressing problems for ASEAN.

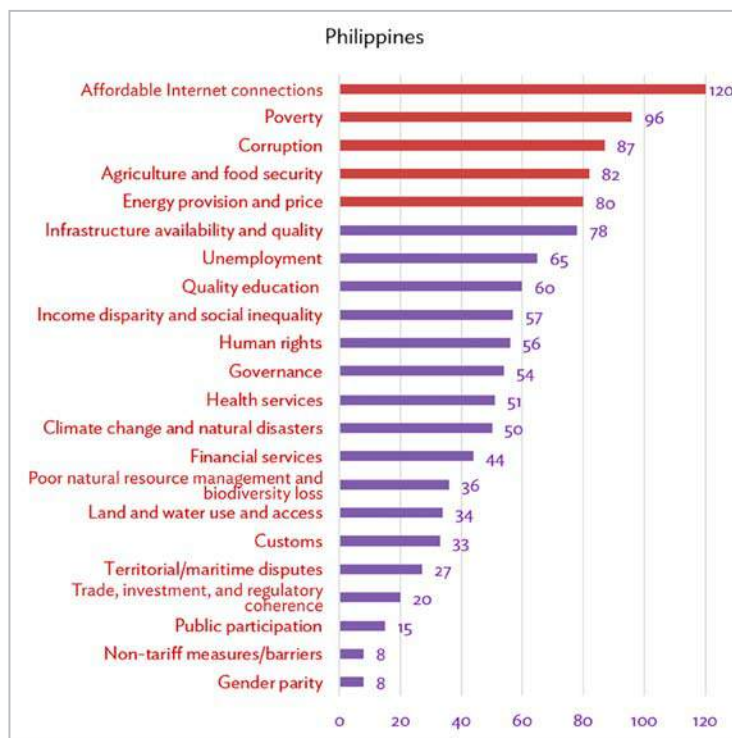
Addressing the problems

Using the same set of problems, the survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they thought that the government of each ASEAN Member State should act independently in addressing the problems or whether the governments should act jointly and/or concertedly under ASEAN.

Figure 13 presents the summary results. For 21 of the 22 items, the majority of the respondents said that ASEAN should address the issues as a group. This view was most prominent (by between 75% and 95% of the respondents) for the following issues: (1) agriculture and food security, (2) climate change and natural disasters, (3) non-tariff barriers/measures, (4) territorial/maritime disputes, and (5) trade, investment, and regulatory coherence. That four of these items also surfaced as among the top five most pressing problems in ASEAN (i.e. climate change, territorial/maritime disputes, trade, and agriculture and food security) further validates the importance of these issues in the region and the need for international cooperation in addressing them. Of the five issues identified by the survey respondents, two were also mentioned by the FGD participants: territorial/maritime disputes and climate change and natural disasters.

The only issue regarded by the survey respondents as within the ambit of individual member states to tackle was corruption. In the FGDs, the participants also selected corruption as well as human rights, poverty, unemployment, and the lack of affordable and quality education. Notably, corruption emerged as one of the top, pressing problems in the Philippines. The respondents' opinion that it should be addressed by the member states individually confirms their view that corruption is more of a domestic concern and an issue that can be more effectively addressed by the individual countries.

Figure 12: Pressing Problems for the Philippines and ASEAN
(number of responses)



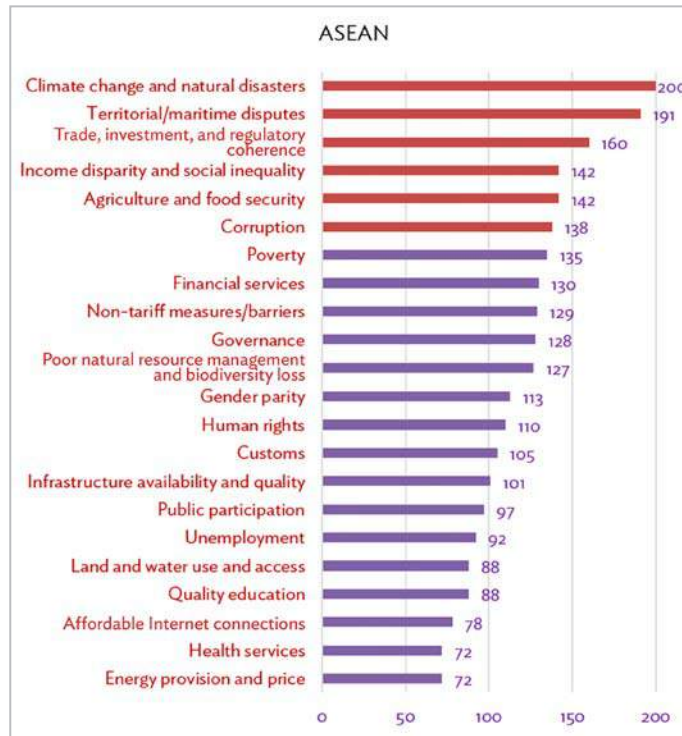
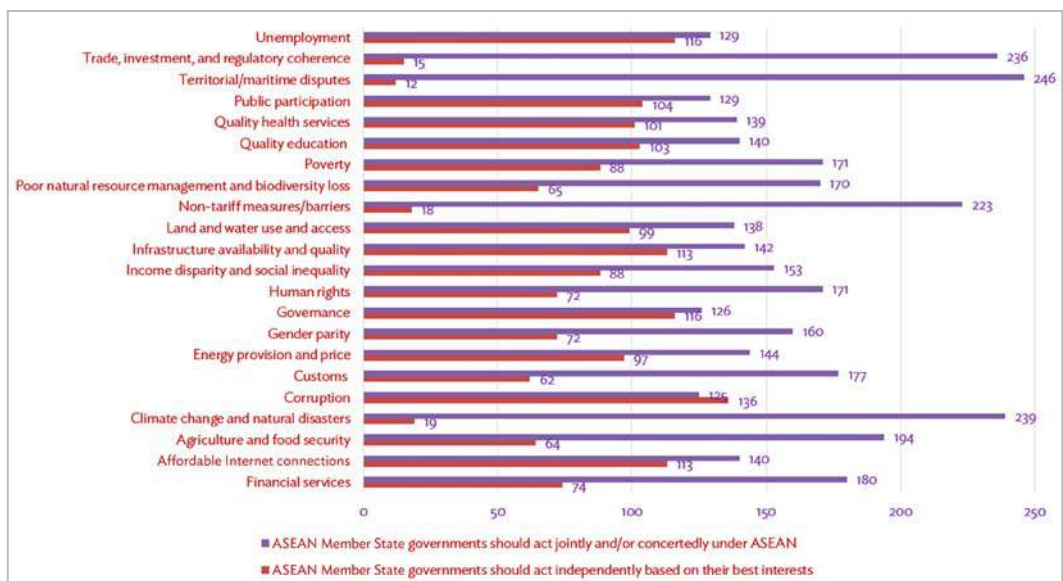


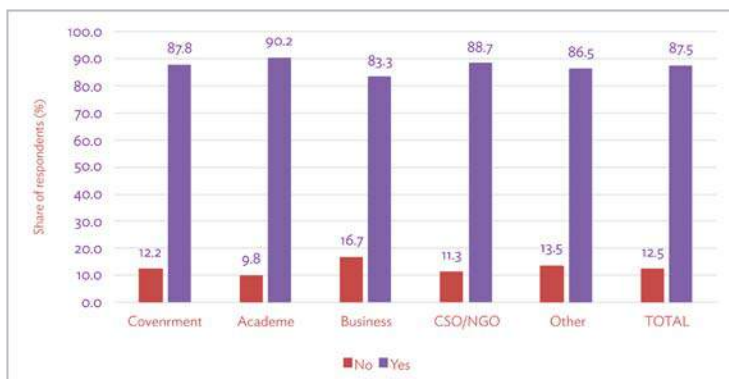
Figure 13: Perceptions on Independent or Joint Action for Addressing Problems in ASEAN
(number of responses)



Expectations for ASEAN

The majority of the respondents replied positively when asked whether they had aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Aspirations, Expectations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

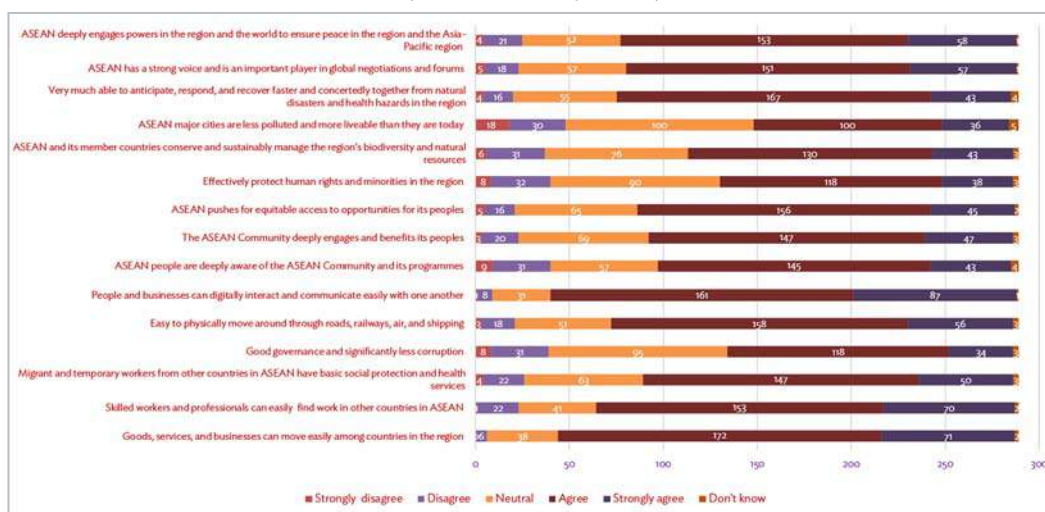
To probe their responses, the respondents were asked to state their agreement or disagreement with 15 statements describing specific situations in ASEAN.³ They were asked how likely they thought the situations were to happen by 2025 and expressed their views using a six-point Likert scale (strongly agree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, don't know).

For all 15 statements except for one, the majority of the respondents agreed that the situations described were likely to happen by 2025 (Figure 15). The exception was the statement: 'ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.' For this, there were equal numbers of survey respondents who were neutral and who agreed with the statement. This indicates a certain ambivalence towards the realisation of the scenario. This result coincides with the views of the business sector participants

³ The situations given were the following: free movement of goods, services, and business among ASEAN countries; ease of finding work within ASEAN by skilled workers; basic social protection and health services to migrant and temporary workers; good governance and less corruption; ease of physical movement due to good infrastructure; good digital connectivity; ASEAN peoples have deep awareness of the ASEAN Community and its programmes; the ASEAN Community deeply engages and benefits its peoples; equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples; effective protection of human rights and minorities in the region; proper conservation and sustainable management of the region's biodiversity and natural resources; less polluted and more liveable cities; effective response and fast recovery from natural disasters and health hazards; ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums; ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.

in the FGD. Their expectations were lowest for this item along with two other scenarios. The youth sector participants in the FGD also felt that having liveable cities would be difficult to achieve and thought that whether this could be attained would depend on the officials of the ASEAN Member States and their citizens. A similar result was seen in the FGD with the mixed group of participants. This reflects pessimism about the quality of life in ASEAN cities, which face the problems of congestion, lack of infrastructure, and rapid urbanisation due to the growth of in-migration from rural areas, and these problems constrain the delivery of quality services.

Figure 15: Expectations for ASEAN
(number of responses)



Furthermore, it is interesting to note that a number of respondents were neutral about the statement regarding good governance and low corruption. While the majority (118 respondents) agreed that the scenario would likely happen by 2025, 95 respondents chose not to take sides, indicating they were uncertain about whether the scenario would be achievable in the future. This reflects the perceptions about the extent of the corruption problem in the minds of some of the respondents who felt doubtful whether the situation could change for the better. In the youth FGD, the participants said that corruption would be impossible to eradicate. One participant even said she thought corruption was inborn in the culture of ASEAN countries. Even in the FGD with the business sector and the FGD with the mixed group, participants had the lowest expectations of a reduction in corruption. Accepting corruption as a fact of life is different from accepting that nothing can be done to minimise, if not eliminate, it. The responses, which cut across different types of respondents, seem to reflect how much

corruption has impaired the social fabric. Corruption is a very serious social problem that ASEAN leaders and the community need to deal with effectively.

This ambivalence was likewise seen in the statement on the effective protection of human rights and minorities in the region. A total of 118 respondents thought this scenario would likely be achieved by 2025, but 90 had neutral opinions. Participants of the youth FGD thought this scenario would be achievable depending on the country's leaders. Those from the business sector expressed pessimism about the attainment of this goal.

The only statement for which most FGD participants expressed optimism was for the ease of the movement of goods, services, and businesses across ASEAN. Generally, the participants thought this scenario would be attainable by 2025. This reflects high confidence in terms of achieving the objectives of the AEC but not in terms of the ASCC objectives, which call for a more people-centred and inclusive ASEAN.

Aspirations and hopes for ASEAN

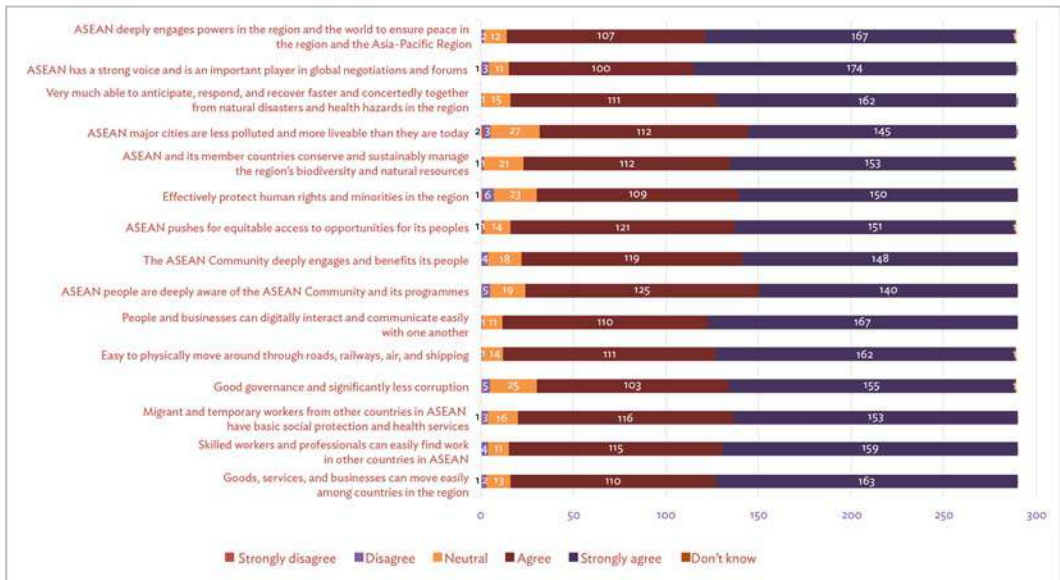
Using the same set of statements, survey respondents were asked to express their aspirations for ASEAN by 2025. The possible responses were 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neutral', 'strongly agree', and 'don't know'.

For all 15 statements, the majority answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree', with more survey respondents choosing the latter (Figure 16). Specific answers were obtained in the FGDs. Participants from all three FGDs aspired for economic growth for ASEAN. A participant from the business sector expressed hope that the ASEAN Member States would soon be able to rank among China, the Republic of Korea, and Japan and added that Singapore might be able to lead ASEAN in this regard. However, he added that a progressive ASEAN could only be realised if the member states consolidate their political power through the integration agenda. The participant said that to make this happen, member states needed to be able to play an active role in the global negotiations and forums that directly affect the ASEAN region. Another participant supported this view and said that through strategic alliances, competitive advantages could be attained when negotiating and trading with nations outside of ASEAN. Another participant related territorial disputes to this, stating that conflicts in geopolitical jurisdictions could be won through a unified stand and support for the concerned member state.

Similar views were expressed by the participants in the youth FGD. The concept of cooperation among ASEAN Member States, of treating each other like ‘brothers and sisters’ and having peace and unity in the region, entered the discussion as one of the aspirations for ASEAN. While cooperation among member states in addressing territorial and maritime disputes was not mentioned, unlike in the FGD with the business sector, the youth participants expressed hope that member states would help one another, especially in times of calamity and disaster. They also mentioned good governance, the absence of corruption, and member states benefiting from ASEAN’s programmes and projects as among their hopes for ASEAN.

Education was also mentioned during the business sector FGD. One participant proposed that ASEAN could be instrumental in building quality education through faculty and student exchanges and the training of professionals in member states.

Figure 16: Aspirations for ASEAN
(number of respondents)



The ASEAN Secretariat

The majority of the survey respondents agreed with the idea of upgrading the capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges (Table 2).

In the FGD with the youth participants, however, none of the participants had heard of the ASEAN Secretariat. In the FGD with the mixed group of participants, all participants were aware of the ASEAN Secretariat, but its mandate and functions were not commonly known. One participant added that based on its name, she thought it provided ‘secretariat’ or administrative services to ASEAN, in particular during meetings and conferences. One added that the ASEAN Secretariat should promote itself by publishing specific position papers, similar to those published by the staff members of other international organisations.

Table 2: Agreement with Upgrading the Capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat to Meet Its Increasing Challenges
(number of respondents)

Affiliation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Government	0	1	2	34	53	90
Academe	0	0	1	23	37	61
Business	0	0	3	22	23	48
CSO/NGO	0	0	3	22	28	53
Others	1	0	0	13	23	37
Total	1	1	9	114	164	289
Age	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
15-30	1	1	4	30	37	73
31-49	0	0	2	43	69	108
50+	0	0	3	41	64	108
Total	1	1	9	114	164	289
Sex	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	1	1	5	60	83	150
Female	0	0	4	54	81	139
Total	1	1	9	114	164	289

Summary and Conclusions

Both the survey respondents and the participants in the FGDs were not only aware of ASEAN but also moderately identified as ASEAN citizens (with the feeling of ASEAN identity growing with age and experience). There was recognition that the association had become a mechanism through which member states were able to discuss issues of common concern. Many also thought that membership of ASEAN had benefited the Philippines, albeit only moderately. This may be attributed to the limited information on ASEAN and its activities and accomplishments disseminated to the public through the media.

To remain relevant, ASEAN has to be more responsive to emerging and prevailing issues across the region, notably climate change and natural disasters, territorial and maritime disputes, trade and investment issues, agriculture and food security, and income disparity and social inequality.

By and large, there is hope that ASEAN, in a changing world, will find opportunities for mutual cooperation as it pursues a common vision for the ASEAN peoples. This rests in part on the ability of its member states to work harmoniously with one another and contribute actively towards the realisation of the ASEAN Community Vision. ASEAN should provide a strong leadership role to integrate its member states, which individually also face a host of development issues and challenges. As ASEAN's coordinating body for the implementation of its projects and activities, the ASEAN Secretariat also needs to strengthen its capabilities to provide effective technical support in meeting the association's goals and aspirations.

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What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Singapore*

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Introduction

This chapter contains key insights and takeaways gleaned from an online survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted from September to November 2016 by the Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA). The SIIA team reached out to 160 respondents, comprised of students, youth, civil service organisation (CSO) and non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives, and respondents from the private sector.

As a city-state and the most developed Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member State, there is broad knowledge and understanding of the importance of ASEAN to Singapore in terms of economics, politics, and security. This investigation finds that there is general optimism across all sectors for what ASEAN has achieved and how ASEAN is relevant to Singapore. Although the respondents commended ASEAN's efforts on the economic front, they were generally unaware of ASEAN's politico-security achievements.

The concept of ASEAN identity and citizenship, however, is still relatively weak at this stage of ASEAN's development. Differences in perceptions and understanding of ASEAN are due to diverse political, cultural, and social backgrounds and are reinforced

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

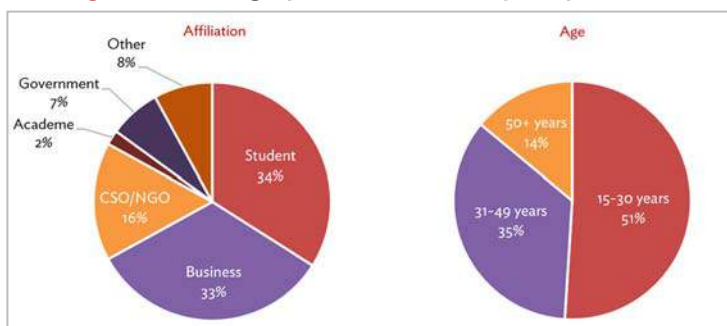
by the absence of coordinated common efforts by ASEAN governments, the public, and social media to cultivate a sense of regional identity.

Moving forward, ASEAN must invigorate its institutional and administrative structures with a view to developing more cohesive and coherent policies against external threats and internal challenges. With more enlightened common policies and better coordination, Singaporeans are optimistic that ASEAN will become more united, prosperous, and resilient over time.

Profile of the Respondents

A total of 160 respondents completed the survey. Of these, 34% were students, 33% were business sector individuals, 16% were from the CSO/NGO sector, and 7% were from the government sector (Figure 1). Due to limitations on the dissemination of the survey, which will be explained in the next section, we were unable to obtain any respondents from the labour sector.

Figure 1: Demographics of the Survey Respondents



CSO = civil service organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

In terms of age, the 15–30 age group was the most well represented, with a share of 51% of the respondents. This was in part because all of the students were in this age group as well as a number of the young working professionals.

Research Methodology

The online survey and FGDs were conducted between September and November 2016. To disseminate the survey to students, we reached out to the student unions of the National University of Singapore, Yale-NUS College, Singapore Management University, and Nanyang Technological University. The student unions sent out the survey link in their weekly mailers to their students. To obtain respondents from the other sectors, we asked members and friends of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, disseminated the survey at our corporate seminars, and contacted members of our mailing list.

We initially reached out to the National Youth Council, Singapore Business Federation, Civil Service College, National Trade Unions Congress, and People's Association, and asked whether they would be able to help us disseminate our survey to their members. Unfortunately, they were unable to do so because of restrictions under the Personal Data Protection Act. In accordance with the act, organisations and government statutory boards are not permitted to disclose personal data on their members to third-party organisations. As such, these organisations were unable to use their portals to disseminate the external content to their members as this would have been a violation and misuse of their members' personal contact information. Due to such limitations, we were only able to receive a total of 160 responses for the survey.

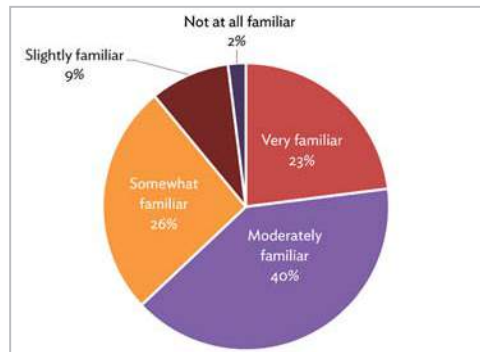
We also carried out four FGDs. The first FGD was conducted with a group of students at Yale-NUS College. The second was conducted with a group of respondents representing the CSO/NGO sector. The third session was conducted with a group of business professionals across all sectors, and the last session was conducted with a group of working professionals at an international bank in Singapore.

Research Findings

General knowledge and awareness

The survey results show that the largest proportion of respondents, 40%, were moderately familiar with ASEAN. Meanwhile, 23% indicated being very familiar with ASEAN, and 26% were somewhat familiar with ASEAN (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Extent of Awareness of ASEAN

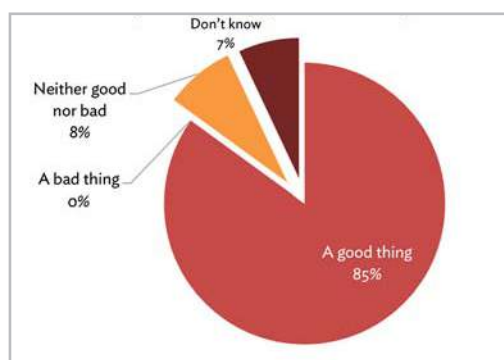


While most respondents were moderately aware of ASEAN, during the FDGs, respondents across all sectors agreed that ASEAN did not feature much in their typical day-to-day lives. Participants from the private sector who did business with the region were generally more exposed to ASEAN, albeit only in a business context. Respondents from the CSO/NGO sector and the student group said that they did see or hear the occasional mentions of ASEAN on the television or radio or in local newspapers, often related to economic issues, such as exports or trade agreements. Respondents across all sectors mentioned the ASEAN lane they had seen at airports in some member states while travelling overseas as a pleasant experience that brought out a sense of ‘ASEAN-ness’.

The respondents from the CSO/NGO sector and the student group said that they were first made aware of ASEAN during compulsory primary school education, when they learnt about the benefits that ASEAN had brought to Singapore. Several respondents noted that the economic benefits of ASEAN were usually emphasised over the politico-security benefits. Even in local media, which informs the public’s perception of ASEAN, respondents noted that the economic benefits of ASEAN usually took precedence over the politico-security benefits of the association. This perhaps explains why most respondents did not have a good grasp of these benefits from ASEAN.

Regardless of their level of knowledge of ASEAN, the respondents, in general, felt that ASEAN was good for Singapore. An overwhelming 85% of the respondents said that Singapore’s membership of the association was a good thing, with no respondents answering that it was bad.

Figure 3: Perception of Singapore's Membership of ASEAN



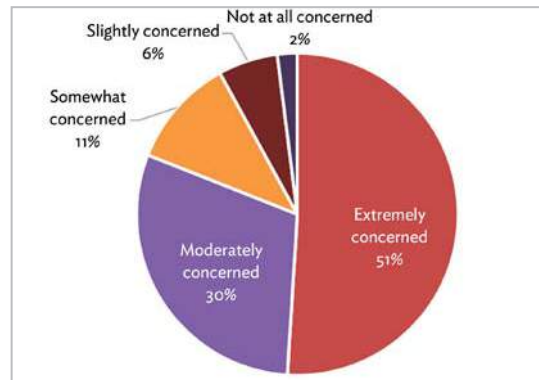
When asked to elaborate in the FGDs, respondents across all sectors were quick to point to the economic benefits from access to ASEAN's larger markets for imports and exports, and the expansion of investment and trade linkages within the region. The private sector respondents substantiated this fact by saying that ASEAN policies had been crucial for reducing tariffs, enhancing trade, and promoting business expansion across the region.

The private sector respondents also mentioned that economic growth in Singapore had plateaued in the last few years, and there was a need to look outward. ASEAN had provided Singapore with regional markets to expand to in terms of procurement, supply chains, and exports. They noted that as Singapore taps into the industrialisation processes of key ASEAN economies, the republic's economy could also grow in tandem.

Respondents, particularly from the private sector, also felt that Singapore had much to offer to the ASEAN business community. As a country with a reputation for transparent processes and strong institutions, including the rule of law, Singapore is well known for being the ideal location for the regional headquarters of multinational corporations (MNCs) targeting ASEAN opportunities and ASEAN-domiciled businesses. Singapore is also a strong logistics, banking, and financial hub with good connectivity to the rest of the world. Singapore's value proposition is thus to brand itself as a gateway to the rest of the ASEAN business community.

From the FGDs, it was clear that the politico-security benefits of ASEAN for Singapore were not well understood. Only a few respondents were cognisant of the enduring regional stability that ASEAN had brought to the region, and they mentioned it only in brief. As much as 92% of the respondents indicated they would be somewhat to extremely concerned if Singapore were to leave ASEAN, with 51% of the respondents indicating extreme concern (Figure 4). Four respondents said they would not be at all concerned.

Figure 4: Concern if Singapore Were to Leave ASEAN



The survey results were supported by the FGDs, where respondents were quick to point to the negative economic repercussions that leaving ASEAN would bring to Singapore’s economy. They noted that access to markets would be compromised and transnational business operations would be affected. Further, respondents across all sectors said that as one of the founding members of ASEAN, Singapore’s decision to leave would send a strong negative signal to the international community and be detrimental to the country’s international reputation.

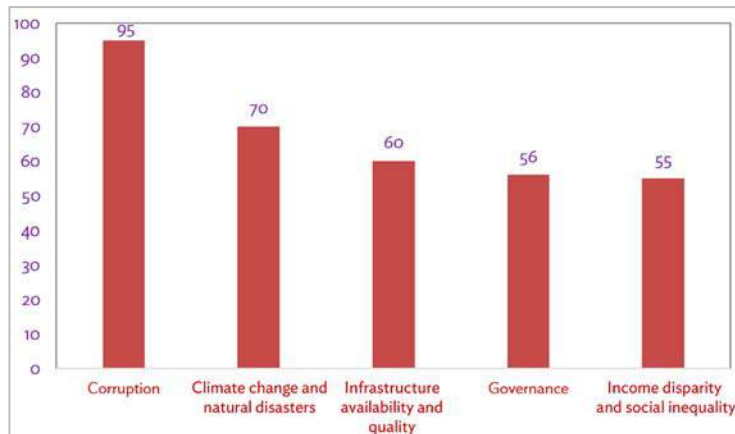
Respondents also felt that leaving would be harmful to Singapore’s bilateral relations with countries both within and outside of ASEAN. Without ASEAN’s strategic umbrella, Singapore would be left to fend for itself in negotiating with its difficult or more geopolitically powerful neighbours.

In the politico-security realm, some well-informed student respondents felt that Singapore’s departure from ASEAN would cause significant disruptions to regional stability and fissures in regional unity. Some respondents also raised concerns that Singapore’s departure from ASEAN would undermine the association’s credibility and encourage more aggressive foreign policies by major powers.

Top issues facing ASEAN

The survey asked respondents to identify what they thought were the five most pressing problems facing the ASEAN region today and until 2025 from a list of 21 economic, socio-cultural, governance, and political issues (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Top Issues Facing ASEAN
(number of votes)



Corruption was identified as the top challenge to the region, with a total of 95 votes. This was followed by climate change and natural disasters (70 votes), infrastructure availability and quality (60 votes), governance (56 votes), and income disparity and social inequality (55 votes). Other significant issues identified were quality education provision and access (51 votes); trade, investment, and regulatory coherence (48 votes); and agriculture and food security (44 votes).

However, during the FGDs, the participants also raised and discussed other issues of concern. While the CSO/NGO sector and student participants mentioned the issues of corruption and climate change, discourse on these issues took a back seat to other soft issues. Both groups of respondents highlighted ASEAN's lack of focus on soft issues, such as human rights violations and the protection of vulnerable populations, as their greatest area of concern. Examples raised included the Rohingya refugees in Myanmar; the impoverished populations in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam (CLMV); and the persistent transboundary haze pollution.

The respondents also identified the rise of nationalism in Southeast Asia as a worrying trend, noting that the tendency for countries to increasingly and more aggressively place their national self-interests first served as an impediment to the attainment of regional goals and objectives.

Some respondents also recognised the 'ASEAN Way' of consultation and consensus as a lowest common denominator approach that imposed low ceilings on what could be achieved. Respondents felt that the ASEAN Way had worked well in terms of economic progress for the region, but not in the politico-security domain. They mentioned that

each ASEAN Member State had its own vested interests and, especially in the politico-security dimension, where many issues were related to state sovereignty, ASEAN was not able to achieve consensus on such decisions. Both groups of respondents also mentioned the rise of China as a cause of concern and referred to the South China Sea disputes between China and the four ASEAN claimant states as examples of the limitations of the ASEAN Way in achieving progress on key political issues. As a result, respondents were worried that ASEAN lacked a coherent strategy to stand up to a more proactive China in the region.

Private sector respondents, on the other hand, were more concerned with the challenges to the business community. Respondents from the sector felt that the implementation of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) policies had worked to reduce tariffs, which had been very beneficial for businesses. However, most respondents echoed concerns that non-tariff barriers still remained a huge challenge for doing business with other ASEAN localities. One respondent raised the example of the bottlenecks in production that were sometimes experienced in ASEAN shipping ports because trade regulations and standards were not harmonised across the region. Respondents added that these non-tariff barriers caused significant delays in the time taken for products to enter markets, raising logistical costs.

Another respondent raised the concern that economic nationalism still existed rather strongly in ASEAN Member States, and the ensuing protectionist measures tended to market ASEAN as a costly region to do business in. Further, respondents mentioned that even though the AEC had ensured greater opportunities for businesses, the reality on the ground was that the ease of doing business still remained relatively unchanged or only slightly improved because of bureaucratic politics and institutional inefficiencies. Business sector representatives lamented that the implementation process in ASEAN had been relatively slow. Private sector respondents also said that more work needed to be done by the AEC to move towards regulatory convergence. They added that in anticipation of the establishment of the AEC, there had been much hype and optimism within the business community towards the end of 2015. However, a year later, nothing new seemed to have been achieved, and given that the initial momentum of the AEC had slowed down, respondents were worried that progress moving forward would be even slower.

The private sector respondents also voiced their concerns that foreign direct investment within the ASEAN region still faced many bureaucratic inefficiencies, and that there had been a lack of differentiation between ASEAN and non-ASEAN investments within the region. Several respondents expressed the hopes that ASEAN would work towards greater investment liberalisation and the removal of complicated bureaucratic

procedures so that investment would be easier and more forthcoming from businesses. Respondents also felt that differentiating between ASEAN and non-ASEAN investments would provide a greater incentive for intra-ASEAN investments to take place.

Aspirations versus expectations by 2025

The survey twice presented the respondents with a set of 15 scenarios in the form of statements. The first time, the respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed ASEAN should aspire to each scenario. The second time, they were asked to signal the extent to which they thought ASEAN could realistically achieve each scenario (see Table 1).

Table 1: Key Issues of Concern: Expectations Fall Short of Aspirations

Issue of Concern	Number of Respondents	
	Aspiration	Expectation
There is good governance and very much less corruption	113	26
There is equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples	95	38
The ASEAN Community strongly engages and benefits its peoples	101	48
Human rights and minorities in the region are effectively protected	107	35
The region's biodiversity and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved	107	41
ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today	119	58

ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Across all issue areas, the survey results show that the expectations of the respondents generally fell far short of the aspirations, signalling pessimism and a lack of confidence in ASEAN achieving its goals. In areas such as good governance, equitable access to opportunities, improvements in human rights, and the conservation of biodiversity, there was overwhelming pessimism that ASEAN would not be able to achieve the desired scenarios.

However, in the area of hard and soft connectivity, expectations matched up well with the aspirations, signalling optimism for ASEAN's ability to fulfil its infrastructural connectivity agenda (Table 2).

Table 2: Key Issues of Concern: Expectations Match Aspirations

Issue of Concern	Number of Respondents	
	Aspiration	Expectation
ASEAN countries are well connected through roads, railways, air, and shipping	124	118
People and businesses can communicate easily with one another through ICT	121	115

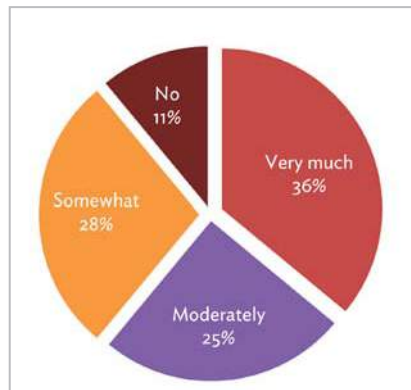
ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ICT = information and communications technology.

This could be explained by the fact that the developing ASEAN economies have come to understand that infrastructure development is the key engine of developmental growth and have actively put this as a top priority on their agendas. China and Japan have also been proactive in bidding for infrastructural projects in ASEAN countries, such as Indonesia, Myanmar, and Cambodia, and these bids have often been covered in local news. The respondents could see that infrastructural connectivity within ASEAN is being actively improved upon, and this could perhaps explain their optimism.

Sense of ASEAN identity

The survey asked the respondents how much they agreed with the following statement: 'I am an ASEAN citizen.' Of the respondents, 36% agreed 'very much', 28% agreed 'somewhat', and 25% agreed 'moderately', while 11% of respondents disagreed with the statement (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen



The FGDs, however, painted quite a different picture than the survey results. Participants across all sectors unanimously agreed that there was no concept of an ASEAN identity and, as such, said they did not identify with the idea of citizenship of ASEAN. Respondents from the CSO/NGO sector and the students said they felt that ASEAN functioned more like an economic bloc rather than a regional organisation with common goals and purposes. As there was no concept of citizenship of an economic bloc, they said they did not identify with being ASEAN citizens. Respondents from the business sector said they felt they had no affinity with the concept of ‘ASEAN identity’ because each ASEAN country was uniquely different, and there was no known or established understanding of what being an ASEAN citizen meant. Moreover, they mentioned that there had been no visible push for an ASEAN identity within the region.

Respondents from the CSO/NGO and business sectors also felt that the idea of citizenship of ASEAN was an abstract concept. They said that if one were to understand the concept of citizenship as bringing with it a host of benefits, such as voting rights and legal protection, then, in that sense, the concept of ASEAN citizenship did not exist. One student respondent raised the point that Singapore’s citizens lived in an ivory tower and were disconnected from the issues that other ASEAN citizens face. They said that because there was no ability to emphasise with or understand the day-to-day realities of other ASEAN citizens, there was no sense of solidarity with other ASEAN peoples. Some respondents also made the distinction between ASEAN as a regional organisation and Southeast Asia as a geographical region, saying that by geographical default they did identify with being a citizen of Southeast Asia but not a citizen of ASEAN.

Recommendations: The Way Forward for ASEAN

As ASEAN enters a new phase of development, it should better communicate what it has done and is doing for ASEAN peoples and not let what it has not done drown out the overall narrative.

In the FGDs, the participants were asked to give their recommendations on how ASEAN needs to improve in order for it to be resilient and adapt to the changing circumstances ahead. Respondents from the student group and the CSO/NGO sector overwhelmingly felt the need for ASEAN to take a stronger stance on the soft issues facing the region, particularly in the areas of human rights violations and vulnerable populations. Respondents voiced their concerns that ASEAN had traditionally tended to relegate these issues to the domestic realm and had been reluctant to address such sensitive issues using the ASEAN platform. Some respondents commented that for them to feel a sense of pride and identity for ASEAN, they needed to see the association making

an effort to engage with these issues and help those most in need of help. ASEAN's tendency to not engage critically with such issues that affect people on a more emotional level could perhaps explain why the respondents stated they did not feel a strong sense of ASEAN pride or, hence, ASEAN identity.

Respondents across all sectors felt that policymaking within ASEAN was currently conducted among the elite, with little consultation with stakeholders on the ground or at the mid-levels of society. The respondents felt that this top-down approach needed to evolve to become a more people-centred, bottom-up approach that considered the voices of the CSO/NGO community and the business community. The CSO/NGO group, in particular, felt that their sector was the one sector within ASEAN that had developed organically with strong regional integration efforts and achievements in terms of tangible progress. With their first-hand experience in interacting with communities across ASEAN, the CSO/NGO and business sectors can provide valuable insights for policymaking.

To improve the sense of ASEAN identity, respondents suggested creating more opportunities to promote cross-cultural understanding through people-to-people connections, which they said would enhance regional solidarity. Suggestions included more student exchanges under the ASEAN brand name. Some respondents also mentioned that the way ASEAN is taught to students as part of their compulsory education needed to be improved so that the focus was not purely economic and instead would allow students to better understand ASEAN's other intangible marks of progress, especially in the politico-security domain. A recommendation was also given by a respondent from the CSO/NGO sector for ASEAN to attach its brand name to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities to strengthen its brand recognition and boost ASEAN awareness.

Respondents across all sectors were also unclear of the role of the ASEAN Secretariat and the relationship between the secretariat and the country chairman of the year. As such, in educating the general public about ASEAN, they said the distinction between the two should be made clearer. Respondents from the student group raised the need for greater continuity in agenda setting and policy implementation between the ASEAN Secretariat and the country chairman, given the annual rotation of duties. Some respondents were concerned that when countries took on the chairmanship, they tended to prioritise different issues on the agenda in line with their national interests, which sometimes served as impediments to the attainment of regional goals. Some respondents also commented that the budget of the ASEAN Secretariat needed to be increased.

Respondents also felt that the ASEAN Way needed to be revisited and evolved to meet the rising global challenges ahead.

Conclusion: Key Takeaways

Students

The student respondents were keenly aware of how ASEAN worked as a regional institution and had a good grasp of the guiding principles of ASEAN. However, they felt that ASEAN had done little to nothing for human security in the region. The students thus felt that ASEAN needed to take a stronger stance and take better action on softer issues, such as transboundary haze and human trafficking. These are issues that students can relate to on a deeper and more emotional level, as opposed to economic issues.

As an extension of the above point, for people living in Southeast Asia to relate to ASEAN, there is not only a need for the grouping to take a stance on soft issues but also a need for ASEAN to create the opportunity for the wider community to have a healthy public discourse on these issues. The respondents had a strong sentiment that ASEAN tended to sweep such issues under the carpet and to make statements of fact rather than take action. By facilitating discourse on these issues, ASEAN can help to communicate its purpose more effectively and be seen as doing something rather than nothing. Consequently, greater engagement with these issues can then sow the seeds of a stronger ASEAN identity that students can identify with.

Civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations

The CSO/NGO sector respondents felt that ASEAN needed to change the way decision-making is done and adopt a bottom-up approach to understanding the issues that ASEAN peoples face rather than the existing top-down approach that is disconnected from actual issues happening on the ground. They said that ASEAN must welcome the voices of alternative actors and make an effort to consult those within civil society. A bottom-up approach would allow for more participation and consultation from ASEAN peoples themselves, making ASEAN more relatable to the common man. This would consequently go a long way to building up an ASEAN identity that people can relate to.

The CSO/NGO sector felt that CSOs and NGOs within the region had already been successful in building organic cross-border networks, but the participants said ASEAN could do more to foster greater coordination and collaboration between CSOs and

NGOs throughout the region. They said that unlike in interactions at the G2G level, there was no bureaucracy at that level, and, hence, integration had been rather seamless. One respondent involved with humanitarian work in ASEAN commented that ASEAN-CLMV still remained rather fragmented in the CSO realm and suggested that ASEAN could become the enabler for CSO integration to flourish in these countries.

Private sector

Respondents from the private sector generally thought that ASEAN had been moving on the right trajectory, although progress had been slow. One respondent commented that although the initial enthusiasm and optimism for the AEC had worn down over the past year, ASEAN was seen as ‘an increasingly bright spot’.

The immense potential of ASEAN has been recognised by businesses across the world, and investments in the region in recent years have increased massively. If ASEAN continues to build up robust hard and soft infrastructure across all ASEAN markets, this will be even more beneficial for business expansion and economic integration in the region. Another respondent commented that digitisation was providing optimism for the region. Increased connectivity to the rest of the world through digital platforms is giving people in less-developed ASEAN countries the chance to access banking opportunities and e-commerce brands, and this will further drive connectivity and economic growth in the region.

Most importantly, in this time where a rising and increasingly vitriolic anti-globalisation sentiment is sweeping across the world, ASEAN stands at a crossroads where it must decide which of two divergent paths to take. On the one hand, ASEAN could ride the waves of the anti-globalisation movement and adopt more nationalistic and anti-trade policies; or it could fight against the waves of anti-globalisation. The obvious choice is that ASEAN needs to stand united and go against the waves of anti-globalisation because globalisation still has much to offer to many of the ASEAN economies.

Moreover, major powers are beginning to look increasingly inward, and this leaves the small ASEAN states vulnerable as traditional security umbrellas become less dependable. ASEAN must thus stand united and fend for itself, and globalisation and the ensuing connectivity and integration it brings will help to facilitate this. Surging ahead with the consensus-based approach and going against the waves of anti-globalisation have to be the new way forward for ASEAN to prosper.

Focus Group Discussion with Students

Knowledge and awareness of ASEAN

The students generally had a good-to-strong understanding of what ASEAN is and how it functions. They first learned about ASEAN through their compulsory primary and secondary school curriculums. Those who pursued the study of history at the junior college level were substantially well versed about ASEAN. However, all students appeared to have acquired at least a basic level of understanding of the association.

All students agreed that ASEAN did not feature much in their daily lives, especially not in non-academic settings. Some examples of how ASEAN did feature included the various cultural programmes offered to students from secondary school to the university level, the ASEAN travel lane at airports in ASEAN Member States, and occasional mentions in newspapers or other media.

Students were aware of the positive contributions that ASEAN had brought to Singapore, and those who had studied ASEAN in an academic context were able to list tangible examples. In general, all students were aware that the economic benefits of ASEAN had been strong, and some students mentioned the regional defence infrastructure and security benefits.

All students said they would be worried or shocked if Singapore were to leave ASEAN, citing economic and security repercussions.

ASEAN identity and consciousness

When the students were asked whether they felt like ASEAN citizens, the general sentiment was that they did not feel any real sense of ASEAN identity. One student commented, 'there is no concept for it', and another student commented, 'ASEAN citizenship is just an abstract concept that I have no affinity with'.

As one student mentioned, the reason for this lack of identity can be attributed to the fact that ASEAN rarely features in people's day-to-day lives. Another student stated that Singapore was very much an anomaly among the ASEAN nations, with Singaporeans living in an 'ivory tower', giving rise to a sense of dislocation from other ASEAN peoples.

Another salient reason raised by a different student was that to the knowledge of average citizens, ASEAN played more of an economic rather than political role. The students

were more aware of ASEAN's trade agreements and less knowledgeable about the association's politico-security arrangements. As such, ASEAN's economic contributions to Singapore had not had much of a trickle-down effect to the people in terms of the creation of an ASEAN identity. One student likened ASEAN to an economic bloc and said there was no need to have citizenship of an economic bloc.

Recommendations for ASEAN

Evolving the ASEAN Way

The students were aware of the ASEAN Way and ASEAN's consensus approach to solving regional issues. They believed that while this had worked well for ASEAN, the current geopolitical climate and China's rise would pose a threat to regional unity and the resilience of ASEAN. Additionally, the students felt that the lowest common denominator within ASEAN was too low, with each country having vastly different national interests. As such, they believed that while ASEAN could continue to be effective socio-economically, they were far less optimistic about the politico-security dimension in the future.

When discussing the politico-security future of ASEAN, most students were aware of the ongoing disputes in the South China Sea and expressed their fears that China's rise had not been peaceful and had increased tensions within ASEAN. Some students expressed their fear that ASEAN would not be able to stand united against China, signalling pessimism for ASEAN's political future.

Given the above, some students mentioned the need to evolve and institutionalise the ASEAN Way to adapt with the changing times.

Role of the ASEAN Secretariat

When asked about how the ASEAN Secretariat could be improved, all of the students were unclear as to what the role of the secretariat was in the first place. One student mentioned the need for greater coordination between the ASEAN Secretariat and the country chairman of the year, and hoped for the secretariat to play a greater role in agenda-setting with the country chairman for ensuring continuity in goals and agendas even as the chairmanship rotates.

Others

The participants also mentioned the Rohingya problem in Myanmar, the haze situation, climate change, corruption, and the lack of quality infrastructure as pressing problems for ASEAN to tackle.

Conclusion

The first main takeaway from the FGD was that the students did not feel any sense of ASEAN identity. This was because their main perception of ASEAN was informed by its economic contributions to Singapore. As such, they viewed ASEAN as more of a trade and economic bloc and did not feel any affiliation to it culturally or politically. According to the students, this was compounded by the fact that ASEAN is such a culturally diverse region, that ASEAN typically does not take a solid stance on political issues, and that the main focus of ASEAN has always been on building an economic community.

Secondly, the students were keenly aware of how ASEAN worked as a regional institution. They understood the ASEAN Way, the principle of non-interference in each member country's sovereignty, and its consensus-based approach. However, the students felt that ASEAN had done little to nothing for human security in the region. Thus, they felt that ASEAN should have a stronger stance and take better action on softer issues, such as transboundary haze and human trafficking. These social issues are what students can relate to on a deeper and more emotional level, as opposed to economic issues.

As an extension of the second point, the last key takeaway, therefore, is that for students to relate better to ASEAN, there is not only a need to take a stance on soft issues but also a need for ASEAN to create the opportunity for the wider community to have healthy public discourse on these issues. There was a strong sentiment from the students that ASEAN tended to sweep such issues under the carpet and make statements of fact rather than take action. By facilitating discourse on these issues, ASEAN can help to communicate its purpose better and be seen as doing something rather than nothing. Consequently, greater engagement with these issues can then sow the seeds of a greater ASEAN identity that students can identify with.

Focus Group Discussion with Civil Society Organisation and Non-governmental Organisation Representatives

Knowledge and awareness of ASEAN

Respondents from the CSO/NGO sector had a basic understanding of what ASEAN was and what it had done for the region. There was unanimous agreement from respondents that their first introduction to ASEAN had been through their compulsory primary and secondary school curricula.

The participants generally felt that ASEAN did not feature significantly in their daily lives or outside of their work obligations for some respondents. Their main interactions with ASEAN were through reading articles in newspapers or through other content in local media.

The participants felt that Singapore had benefited much from ASEAN, and the overwhelming opinion was that these benefits had manifested economically rather than in the security and political domains. They did not seem to be aware of how Singapore had benefited from being in ASEAN from a politico-security perspective. As one respondent suggested, the reason for this could be because in school, students first learn about the economic benefits of ASEAN before the security benefits. Another respondent mentioned that there were many incentives for Singapore to be a part of ASEAN in terms of trade, finance, and banking. They mentioned that other countries in ASEAN also stood to benefit from Singapore's expertise as a trade, logistics, and transport hub.

All respondents agreed that they would be concerned if Singapore, as a founding member, were to leave ASEAN. Economic reasons were cited as the first concern, with regional stability and other security considerations taking a backseat. Other respondents mentioned the damage that leaving the association would bring to Singapore's reputation on the international stage and the negative repercussions for bilateral relations with countries both within and outside of ASEAN.

ASEAN identity and consciousness

The participants were asked whether they felt like ASEAN citizens, but the collective agreement was that an ASEAN identity did not quite exist and that they did not identify with the label of an 'ASEAN citizen'. One respondent mentioned that the concept

of an ASEAN identity was not as robust as that of identity in the European Union. Respondents elaborated by saying that by geographic default they identified with being Southeast Asian. However, they said this was different to feeling a sense of connection to ASEAN as a bloc.

One respondent homed in on the idea of citizenship, saying that if one were to understand the concept of citizenship as bringing with it a host of benefits and legal protection, then the concept of ASEAN citizenship did not exist. Another respondent commented that identity and pride go hand in hand, and for one to identify with ASEAN, one had to feel pride in belonging to ASEAN. The respondent elaborated that to feel proud of ASEAN, he would have to see that ASEAN was making an effort to protect its most vulnerable citizens. However, he explained that because he had not seen ASEAN doing this, he did not feel proud of ASEAN or have a sense of ASEAN identity.

Recommendations for ASEAN

Human rights

The respondents felt that within ASEAN, there was a tendency for issues concerning politics and human rights to be viewed as domestic issues rather than regional issues that needed to be tackled as a bloc. As such, ASEAN had always invested more effort into the economic realm, with little effort to tackle the softer issues with which people could feel an emotional or tangible connection.

Education

The respondents felt that the way students were taught about ASEAN from a young age as part of the compulsory national education needed to be improved to make ASEAN more relatable to the general public. One suggestion was to create more initiatives for student exchange within ASEAN to promote cross-cultural understanding and friendship. All respondents agreed that more opportunities for people-to-people connections were imperative and would go a long way in community-building and creating a collective ASEAN identity.

Bottom-up participation

The respondents felt that decision-making in ASEAN needed to be improved to allow the voices of those at the bottom and middle levels of society to come through. They felt that policy-making within ASEAN was a top-down initiative driven by the government, with little consultation with different members of society. They suggested establishing a mechanism for understanding challenges at the ground level before they move up to policymakers. This bottom-up and top-down approach would help create a more people-centered ASEAN.

The ASEAN Charter and the principle of non-intervention

Two respondents mentioned that there were many ceilings to what ASEAN could achieve because of the principle of non-interference. One respondent thus suggested revisiting the ASEAN Charter and removing the principle of non-intervention or reforming the charter so that the principle of non-intervention could be applied selectively to certain countries.

Conclusion

The first main takeaway, which is similar to that of the student group, is that respondents from the CSO/NGO sector did not feel any sense of ASEAN identity. In their daily lives, they only felt the trickle-down effects of the economic benefits that Singapore had accrued from ASEAN. The respondents felt that ASEAN had not done much to ease the social problems faced by vulnerable populations. They also felt that a sense of ASEAN pride and identity could only come from seeing ASEAN working to help those most in need and said that they did not have a sense of ASEAN identity because they had not seen this happening.

The second takeaway is that ASEAN needs to change the way it works and adopt a bottom-up approach towards understanding the issues that ASEAN peoples face instead of the existing top-down approach, which is disconnected from the actual issues happening on the ground. ASEAN must welcome the voices of alternative actors and take efforts to consult those within civil society. A bottom-up approach would allow for greater participation and consultation from ASEAN peoples themselves and make the association more relatable to the average citizen. This would consequently go a long way to building up an ASEAN identity that people can relate to.

The last takeaway is that respondents from the CSO/NGO sector believed that their sector within ASEAN had already been extremely successful in building organic, cross-border networks but that ASEAN could do more to foster greater coordination and collaboration between CSOs and NGOs throughout the region. The respondents believed that integration between CSOs and NGOs within the region had been rather seamless, in part because unlike in interactions at the G2G level, there was no bureaucracy at that level. However, one respondent involved with humanitarian work in the region stated the opinion that ASEAN-CLMV still remained rather fragmented in the CSO realm and that ASEAN could become an enabler for CSO integration to flourish even further in those countries. A recommendation was for ASEAN to attach its brand name to HA/DR activities to strengthen its brand and boost ASEAN centrality.

What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Thailand*

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Introduction

This study carried out a public opinion survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) as part of the ASEAN@50: Retrospective and Perspectives on the Making, Substance, Significance, and Future of ASEAN project. The survey and FGDs were conducted to explore the opinions of Thai people from different groups, namely students and those from business, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia, and government, to make inferences about the aspirations, concerns, and hopes of the Thai people for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The survey, ‘What does ASEAN mean to Thai people?’, was sent out both online and as a paper-based survey. Both Thai and English versions of the survey were provided to overcome language barriers and reach out to diverse groups of Thai people.

This chapter is structured in six parts. The first part provides the main characteristics of the survey respondents. The second explores the respondents’ awareness, attitudes, and expectations for ASEAN. The third part examines the respondents’ opinions on the role of the media and textbooks to spread knowledge and information about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges. The fourth part explores views on the pressing problems facing Thailand and ASEAN today and until 2025. The fifth part investigates expectations

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

** The authors would like to thank Supasyn Itthiphathong, Parinya Mingsakul, and Chosita Salakham for their excellent research assistance.

and aspirations for ASEAN by 2025 and the role of ASEAN Secretariat. The final part concludes and discusses the way forward.

Characteristics of the Respondents

The survey covered a total of 260 respondents. Nearly half of the respondents (46.2%) were young people aged 15–30 years old, while 45.8% were aged 31–49. Only 8.1% of the respondents were aged 50 or older (Figure 1). In terms of gender, the majority of the respondents (62.7%) were female, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Age of the Respondents

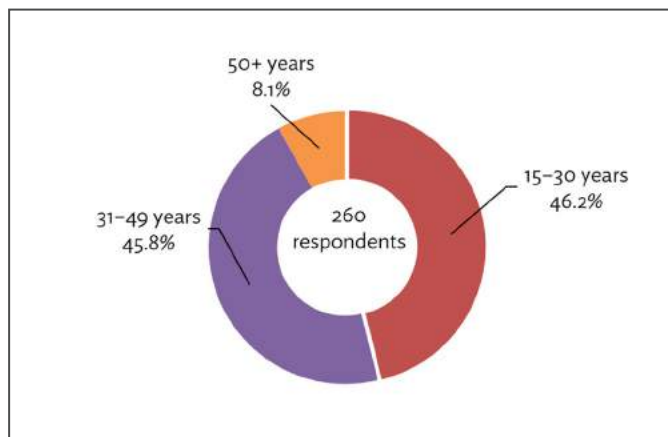
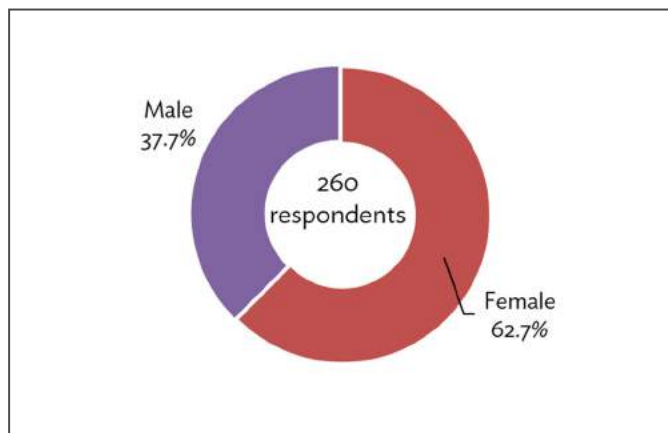
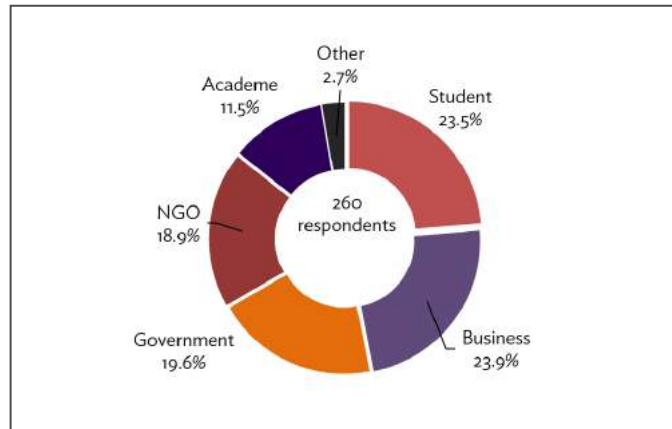


Figure 2: Gender of the Respondents



The affiliations of the respondents varied. Figure 3 shows that nearly a quarter of the respondents (23.5%) were students, while 23.9% were from the business sector. The other respondents were from the government sector (19.6%), NGOs (18.9%), academia (11.5%), and others (2.7%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Affiliation of the Respondents



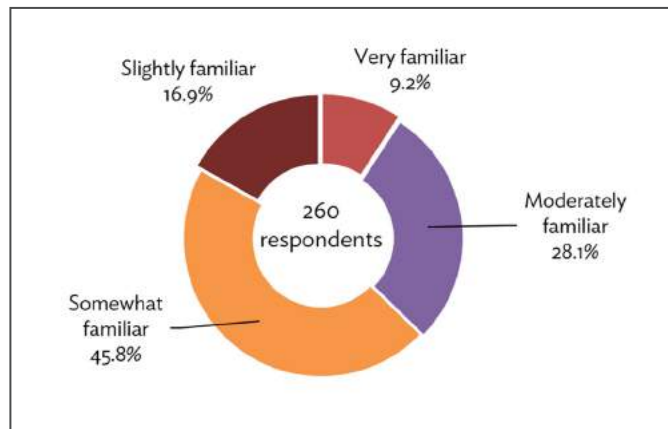
NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Awareness, Attitudes, and Expectations for ASEAN

Awareness of ASEAN

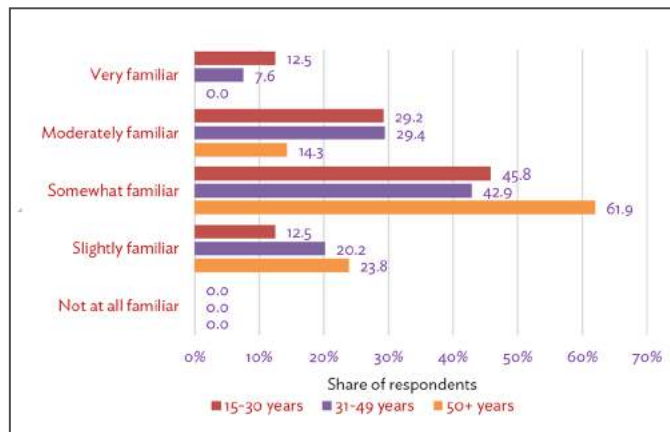
From the survey results, the largest proportion of respondents (45.8%) expressed being somewhat familiar with ASEAN. This was followed by those who were moderately familiar (28.1%), slightly familiar (16.9%), and very familiar (9.2%) with ASEAN (Figure 4). Notably, all respondents had at least some awareness of the association.

Figure 4: Awareness of ASEAN



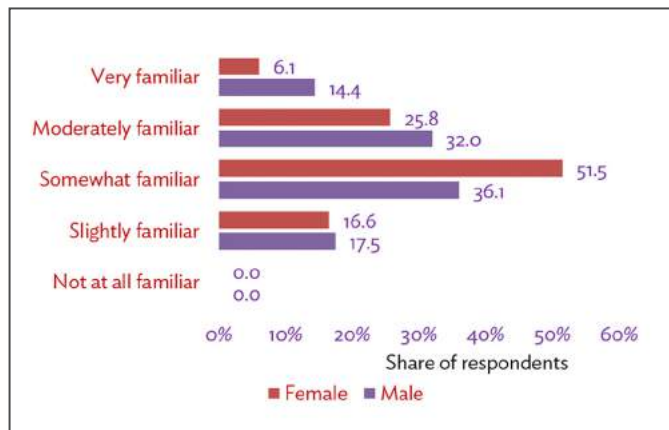
By age, the largest shares for all age groups were of those who were somewhat familiar with ASEAN, with those aged 50 or over comprising the largest share (61.9%) (Figure 5). However, the results show that the younger respondents were more likely to be familiar with ASEAN than the older respondents. This may be due to the low media exposure and lack of knowledge of ASEAN’s work in previous decades compared to today. Meanwhile, nearly 30% of the respondents aged 15–30 and 31–49 were moderately familiar with ASEAN compared to 14.3% of those aged 50 or over.

Figure 5: Awareness of ASEAN by Age



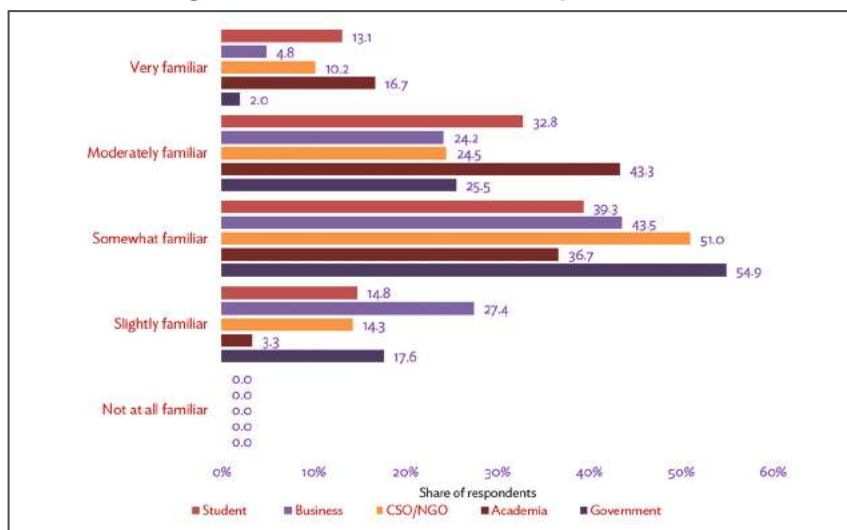
Categorised by gender, interestingly, the male respondents tended to be more familiar with ASEAN than the female respondents. Specifically, nearly half of the male respondents (46.4%), but only around a third of the female respondents (31.9%), were moderately familiar or very familiar with ASEAN (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Awareness of ASEAN by Gender



Compared with the respondents from other affiliations, those from academia and the students were more likely to be moderately or very familiar with ASEAN (60% of the respondents from academia and 45.9% of the students). Nonetheless, about a quarter of the respondents (27.4%) from the business sector indicated being slightly familiar with ASEAN, while the shares of respondents from other affiliations were considerably lower in comparison (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Awareness of ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Feeling of being an ASEAN citizen

Of the 260 respondents, more than half (51.9%) indicated feeling somewhat as ASEAN citizens (Figure 8). Meanwhile, 29.6% and 15.4% of the respondents expressed feeling moderately and very much as ASEAN citizens, respectively. Interestingly, only 3.1% of respondents said they did not feel they were ASEAN citizens.

The results across age groups were mostly similar. The young respondents aged 15–30 were more likely to feel very much as ASEAN citizens than the senior respondents aged 50 or over (Figure 9).

By gender, roughly half (53.4% of the female respondents and 49.5% of the male respondents) felt somewhat as ASEAN citizens. This was followed by those who chose ‘moderately’ (27.6% of females and 33% of males) and ‘very much’ (15.3% of females and 15.5% of males) (Figure 10). Very few respondents felt they were not ASEAN citizens (3.7% of females and 2.1% of males).

Figure 8: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen

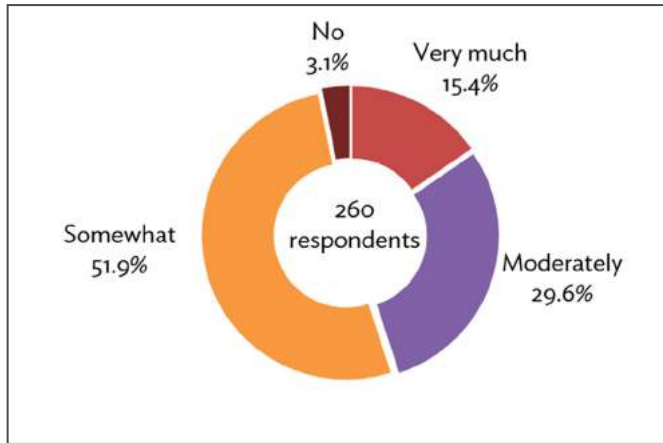


Figure 9: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen by Age

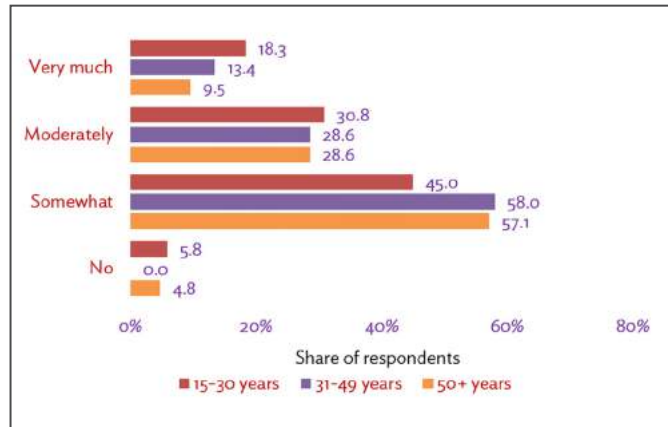
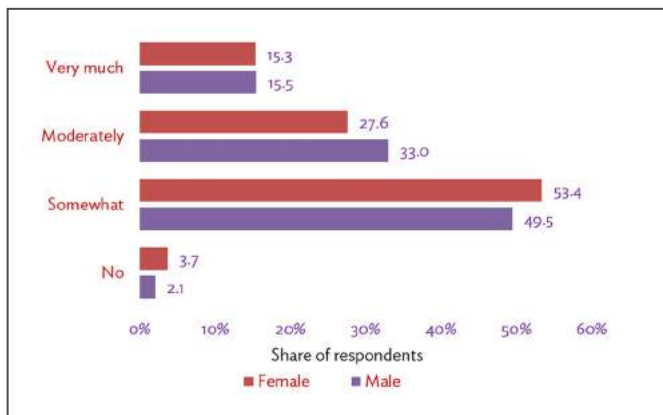
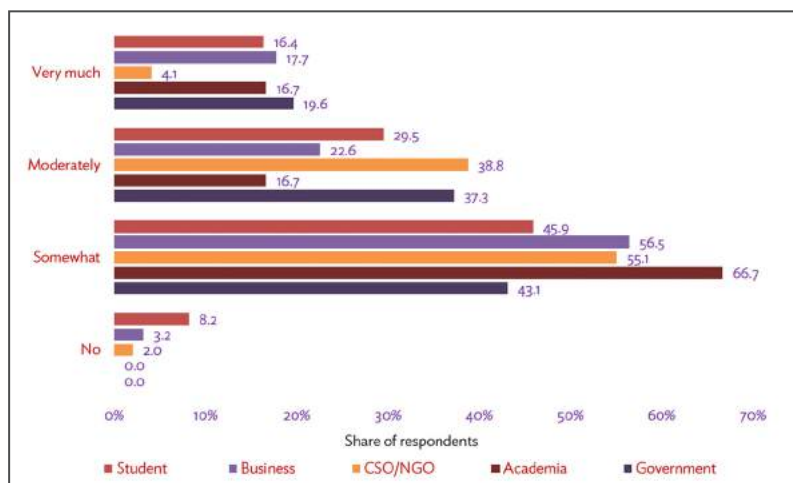


Figure 10: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen by Gender



By affiliation, the respondents from the government sector were more likely to feel moderately or very much as ASEAN citizens compared to those from other affiliations (Figure 11). This may be due to the government’s approach to policymaking with other ASEAN Member States, in which policymaking processes are more government-centric rather than people-centric. As such, individuals who are not affiliated with the government may feel excluded from the negotiation process.

Figure 11: Feeling of Being an ASEAN Citizen by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN

Of the 258 respondents, 53.1% said they did not have aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN.

By age, the youngest age group, those aged 15–30, was more likely to have aspirations, expectations, and concerns for ASEAN than the older generations. In particular, about half of the respondents in the older age groups, i.e. those aged 50 or above (57.1%) and those aged between 31 and 49 (56.4%), said they did not have aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN. In contrast, only 49.2% of respondents aged 15–30 expressed the same view. (Figure 12)

The results for the female and male respondents were similar. Specifically, 53.4% of females and 52.6% of males said they did not have aspirations, expectation, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN (Figure 13).

Figure 12: Aspirations, Expectations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN by Age

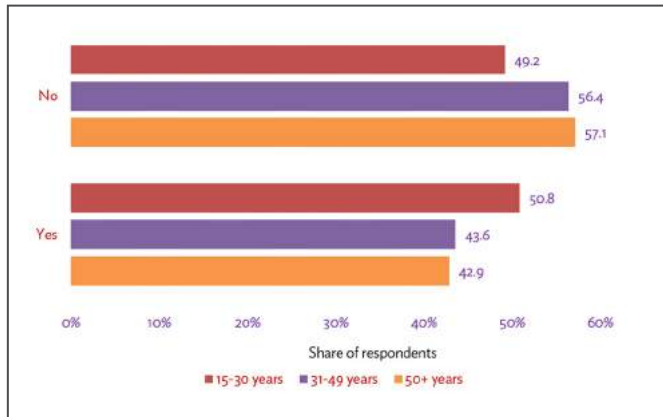
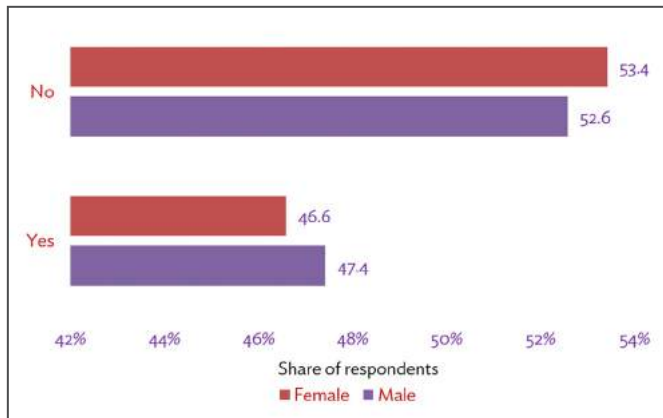
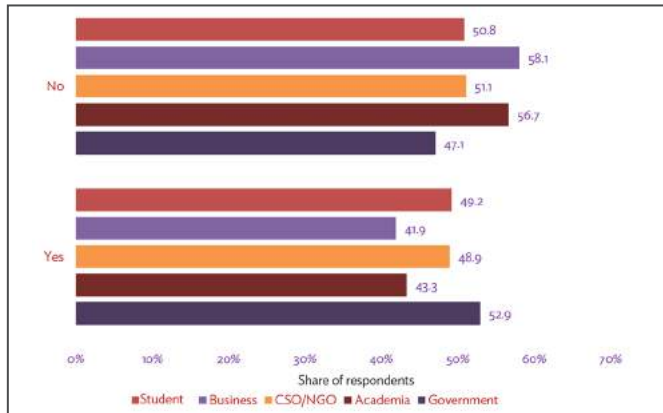


Figure 13: Aspirations, Expectations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN by Gender



The majority of respondents across all affiliations, except the government affiliates, indicated not having aspirations, expectations, or concerns for ASEAN, although the results varied by affiliation (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Aspirations, Expectations, Concerns, or Hopes for ASEAN by Affiliation



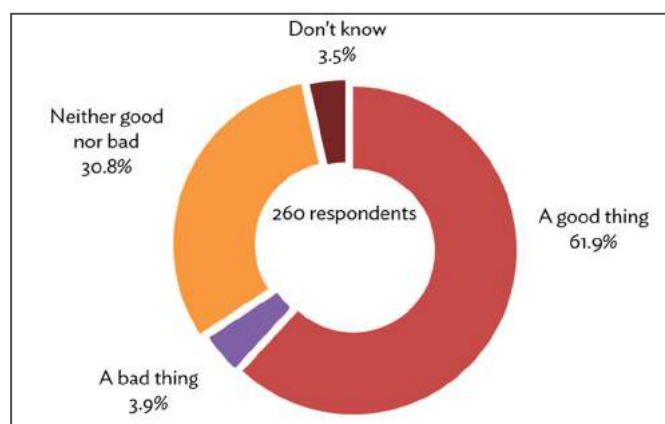
CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

The respondents' perspectives on their aspirations and concerns were diverse. They perceived some issues as both aspirations and concerns. For instance, labour mobility was mentioned as potentially having both positive and negative impacts on employment conditions in the country. Some of the respondents believed increased mobility would increase competition for career searching, while others felt that it would increase opportunities for better jobs with higher salaries. This difference in opinion may have resulted from a lack of knowledge and understanding about the facts related to the movement of skilled labour in ASEAN. For example, some participants in the FGDs thought that workers from ASEAN could freely move to Thailand. They were not aware that domestic laws and regulations are the main barriers for foreign workers, especially skilled workers, for working in Thailand.

Thailand's membership of ASEAN

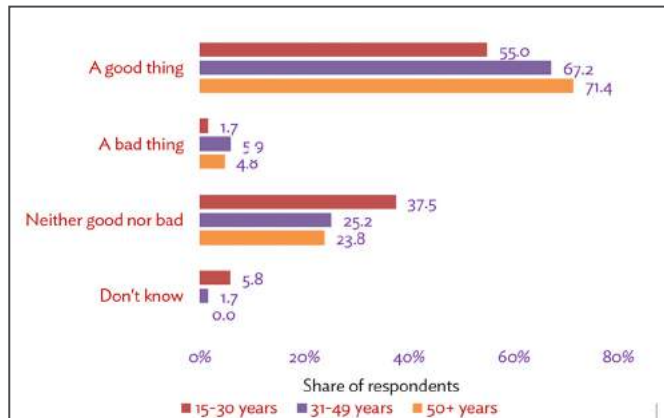
Regarding the question of whether membership of ASEAN was good or bad for Thailand, more than half of the respondents (61.9%) perceived it as a good thing. However, 30.8% thought it was neither good nor bad, and only 3.9% viewed Thailand's membership of ASEAN as bad (Figure 15). Very few respondents (3.5%) said they did not know.

Figure 15: Perception of Thailand's Membership of ASEAN



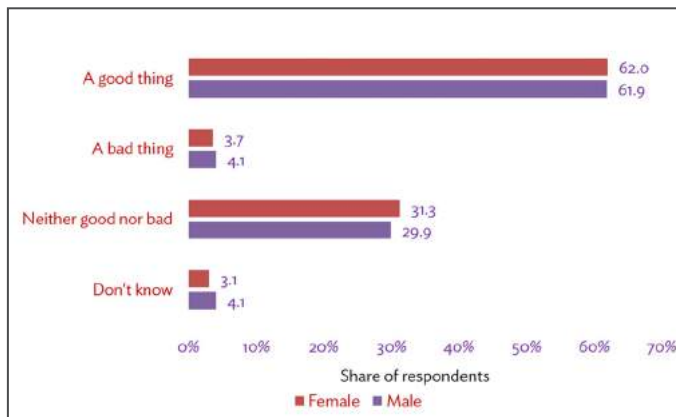
The results were not significantly different by age. Most respondents across all age groups thought that it was good for Thailand to be a member of ASEAN. The highest share was for those aged 50 or above (71.4%), followed by respondents aged 31–49 (67.2%), and those aged 15–30 (55.0%) (Figure 16). Very few respondents thought that it was bad for Thailand to be a member of ASEAN. Only 1.7% of the respondents aged 31–49 and 5.8% of those aged 15–30 did not know whether it was good or bad for Thailand. None of the respondents aged 50 or above indicated 'don't know'.

Figure 16: Perception of Thailand’s Membership of ASEAN by Age



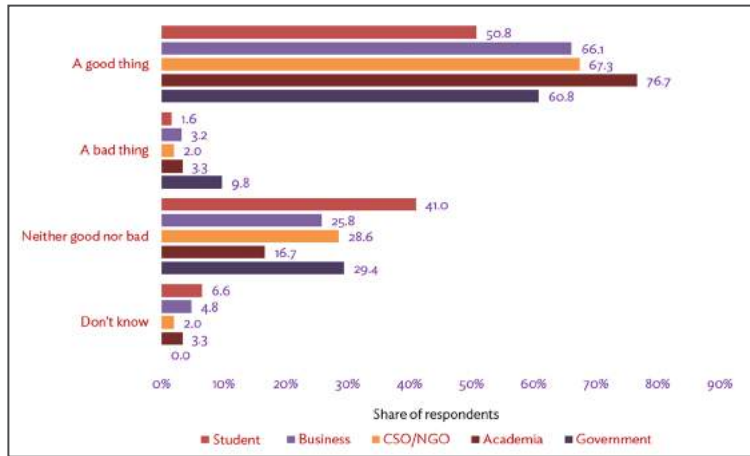
The survey results were also very similar for the female and male respondents (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Perception of Thailand’s Membership of ASEAN by Gender



By affiliation, more than 50% of the respondents from almost all affiliation groups thought that Thailand’s membership in ASEAN was a good thing. The highest share was from academia (76.7%), followed by those from NGOs (67.4%), business (66.1%), government (60.8%), and students (50.8%) (Figure 18). Interestingly, 9.8% of the respondents from the government sector considered the country’s membership to be bad, while 7% of the students did not know whether it was good or bad. Overall, more than a quarter of respondents from all affiliation groups, except academia, considered it to be neither good nor bad.

Figure 18: Perception of Thailand’s Membership of ASEAN by Affiliation

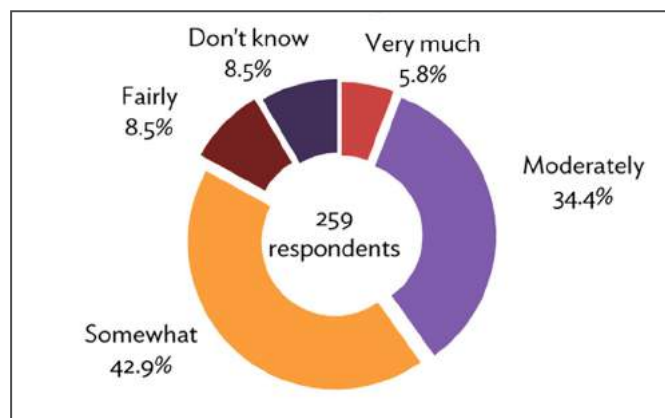


CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Benefit from being a member of ASEAN

When asked whether Thailand had benefited from being a member of ASEAN, the highest share of respondents thought that Thailand had somewhat benefited (42.9%). This was followed by those who said the country had moderately benefited (34.4%), fairly benefited (8.5%), and very much benefited (5.8%) (Figure 19). Notably, nearly 10% of the respondents did not know whether Thailand had benefited or not from being a member of ASEAN.

Figure 19: Perception of Thailand’s Benefit from Being Part of ASEAN



By age, the results were similar for respondents aged 15–30 and those aged 31–49. However, respondents aged 50 or above thought that Thailand had benefited more compared to the other two age groups (Figure 20).¹

Additionally, more than 10% of respondents aged 15–30 and 50 or above did not know whether Thailand’s membership of ASEAN had been beneficial. Thailand’s benefits from being a part of ASEAN comprise mostly economic benefits. However, it is noticeable that the majority of the respondents aged 15–30 and 31–49 chose ‘somewhat’, possibly due to Thai-centric views held by some Thai individuals.

Figure 20: Perception of Thailand’s Benefit from Being Part of ASEAN by Age

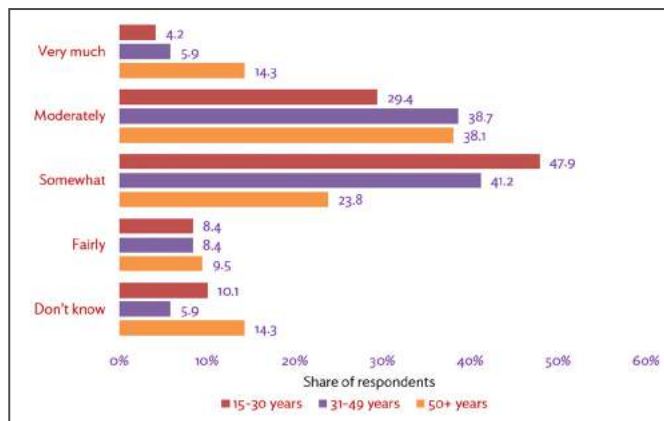
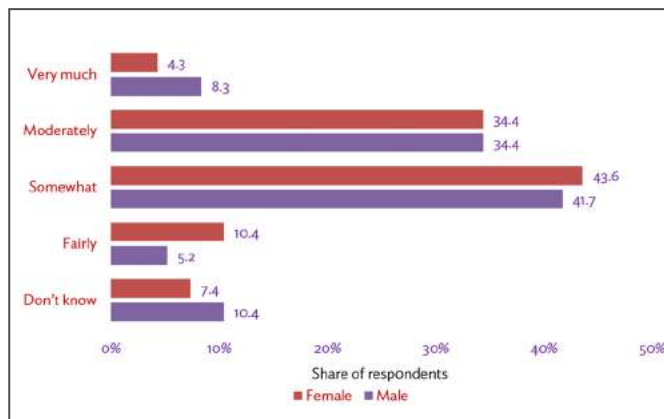


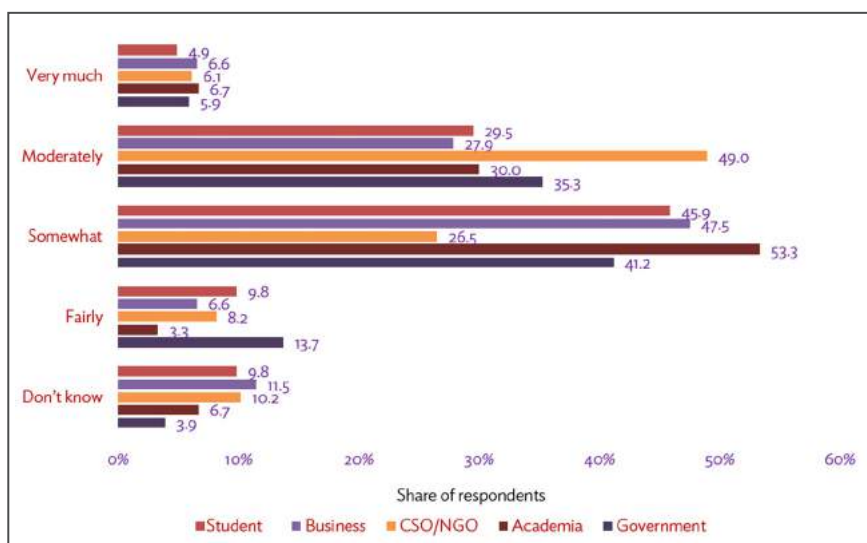
Figure 21: Perception of Thailand’s Benefit from Being Part of ASEAN by Gender



¹ We note that the sample size of respondents aged 50 or above was considerably smaller than the two younger age groups.

By affiliation, the largest shares of respondents from almost all affiliations, except those from NGOs, thought that Thailand had somewhat benefited from being a member of ASEAN, while nearly half of the respondents from NGOs believed that Thailand had moderately benefited from its membership (Figure 22). Notably, even respondents from the business sector did not think that Thailand had benefited very much from being a member of ASEAN. Some respondents from the business sector mentioned in the FGD that ASEAN economic integration tended to benefit large and transnational companies more than small and local enterprises. For example, large companies could access reliable and current information to gain advantages, while small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) had limited capabilities. As such, they said that SMEs should not be overlooked and should be promoted to enhance competitiveness and catch up with the dynamics of economic integration.

Figure 22: Perception of Thailand’s Benefit from Being Part of ASEAN by Affiliation

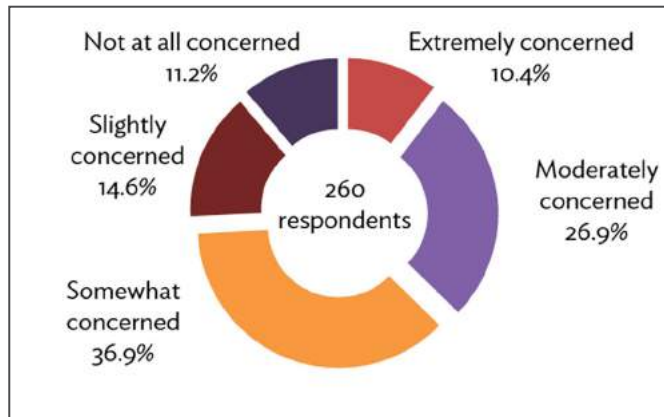


CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Concerns if Thailand were to leave ASEAN

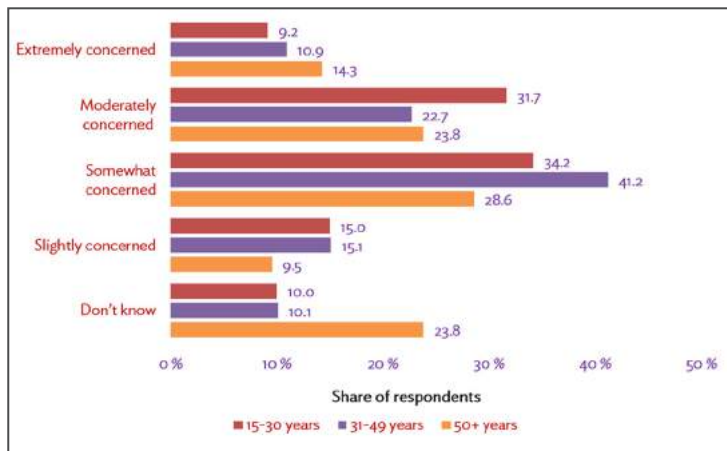
When asked about how concerned they would be if Thailand were to leave ASEAN, the largest share of respondents stated they would feel somewhat concerned (36.9%). This was followed by those who said they would be moderately concerned (26.9%), slightly concerned (14.6%), and extremely concerned (10.4%) (Figure 23). However, 11.2% said they would not be at all concerned. The FGDs suggested that some would not be concerned because they thought that Thailand leaving ASEAN was not a realistic threat.

Figure 23: Concern if Thailand Were to Leave ASEAN



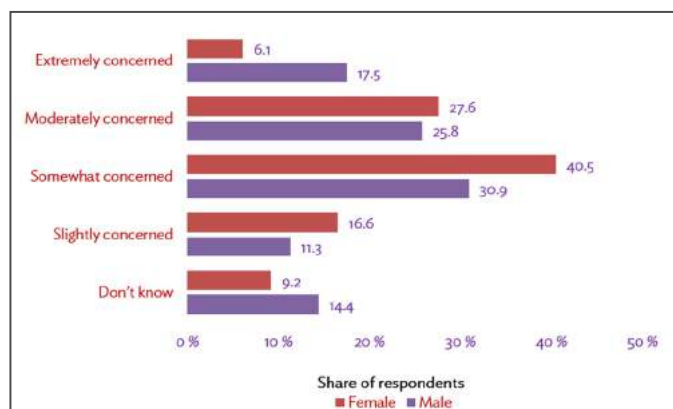
Classified by age, the survey results across all age groups were similar. In particular, the highest shares of respondents in all groups indicated they would be somewhat concerned if Thailand were to leave ASEAN. However, nearly a quarter of respondents aged 50 and above, but only 10% of respondents in the two younger age groups, answered they would not be concerned at all if Thailand were to leave ASEAN (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Concern if Thailand Were to Leave ASEAN by Age



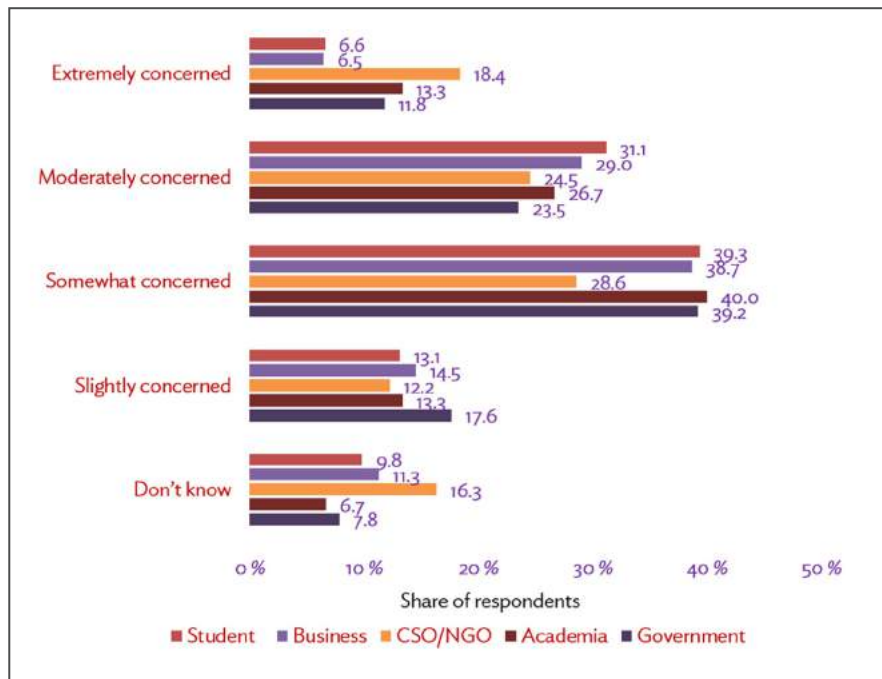
The results by gender were again mostly similar. That is, the highest proportions of respondents said they would be somewhat concerned if Thailand were to leave ASEAN. Noticeably, though, the share of male respondents who chose ‘extremely concerned’ (17.5%) was almost three times greater than the share for female respondents (6.1%) (Figure 25).

Figure 25: Concern if Thailand Were to Leave ASEAN, by Gender



By affiliation, the highest shares of respondents across all groups indicated they would be somewhat concerned if Thailand were to leave ASEAN. The proportions of respondents who indicated moderate or extreme concern were quite high (more than a third) for almost all affiliations: 42.9% for those from NGOs, 40.0% for those from academia, 37.7% for the students, 35.5% for those from business, and 35.3% for those from government (Figure 26). The business respondents, for example, said they would be concerned if Thailand were to leave ASEAN because Thai conglomerates, such as Siam Cement Group, had expanded their businesses and benefited greatly from the ASEAN market. About 23% of Siam Cement Group’s revenue is solely from the ASEAN market (Siam Cement Group, 2016).

Figure 26: Concern if Thailand Were to Leave ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Views on the future of ASEAN

When asked about their opinions on the future of ASEAN, about half of the respondents said they were somewhat optimistic (51.5%) (Figure 27). The remaining 29.6% were moderately optimistic, while about 10% were slightly optimistic. Roughly 5% were extremely optimistic, and 3.5% were not at all optimistic.

The survey results were similar across the different age groups. However, respondents aged 50 or above had a higher share of those who were extremely optimistic, at 14.3%, compared to the younger groups, which comprised less than 4% each (Figure 28).

The results for the female and male respondents were also mostly similar (Figure 29). Large shares, 55.2% of female respondents and 45.4% of male respondents, were somewhat optimistic about the future of ASEAN.

Figure 27: Optimism about the Future of ASEAN

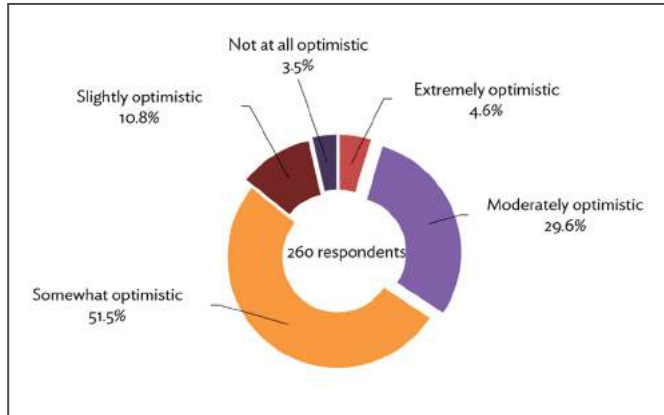


Figure 28: Optimism about the Future of ASEAN by Age

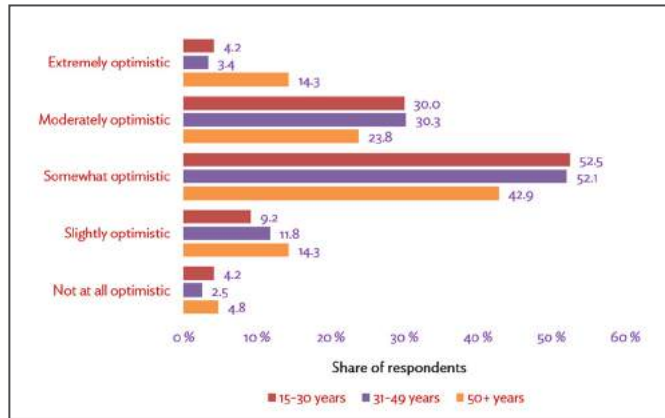
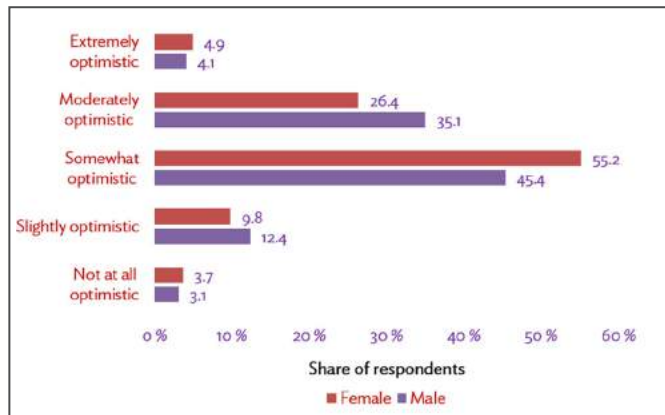
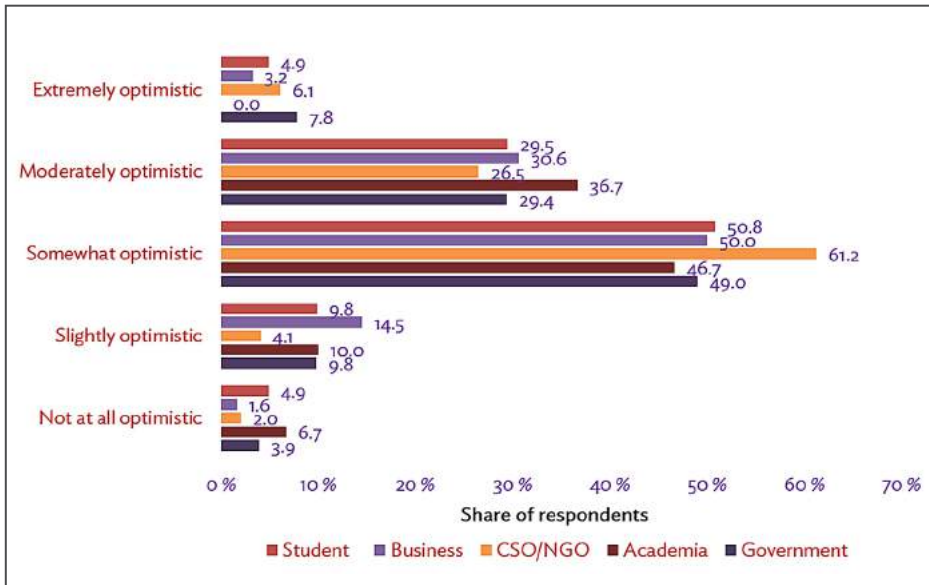


Figure 29: Optimism about the Future of ASEAN by Gender



The highest shares in all affiliations were somewhat optimistic about the future of ASEAN (Figure 30). This was followed by those who were moderately optimistic. Optimism about the future of ASEAN was neutral for some respondents because major advertised initiatives, such as the AEC Blueprints, have not been implemented by all ASEAN Member States. This shows that ASEAN has a limited role in intervening and holding member countries accountable for not implementing the blueprints.

Figure 30: Optimism about the Future of ASEAN by Affiliation



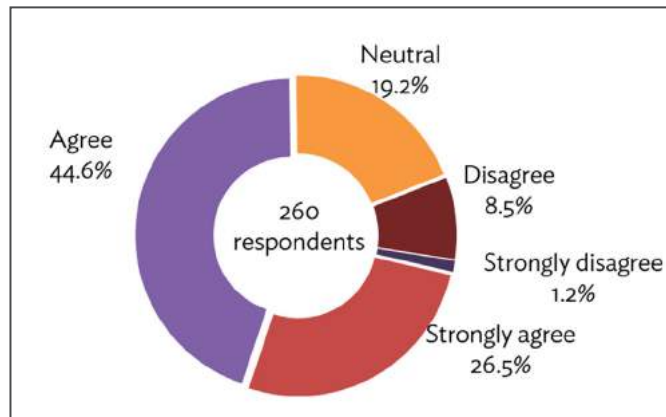
CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Opinions on the Role of the Media and Textbooks to Spread Knowledge and Information about ASEAN

The role of the media

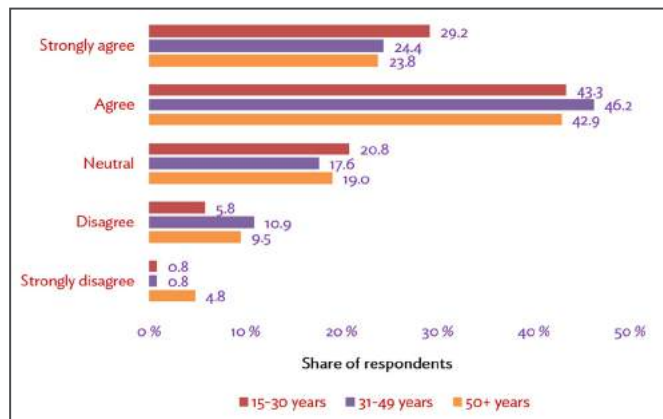
Most respondents felt that the media should play a greater role in publicising information and knowledge about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges. In particular, more than 70% of the respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) with the statement: ‘The media (newspapers, radio, television, and online news) does not enough have coverage of ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges’. Meanwhile, 19.2% of the respondents were neutral about the statement, and nearly 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN



The survey results were mostly similar when classified by age and gender, although there were some differences in terms of magnitude (Figure 32 and Figure 33).

Figure 32: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN by Age



The largest shares of respondents from all affiliations agreed that the media did not have enough coverage of ASEAN’s progress, achievements, or challenges (Figure 34). Nevertheless, the shares of respondents from NGOs and academia that disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement were relatively higher than those from other affiliations. In the FGDs, some NGO participants pointed out that not only media coverage but also media content was important for spreading knowledge and information and creating true understanding about ASEAN. They also mentioned that the Thai media had publicised some myths about ASEAN.

Figure 33: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN by Gender

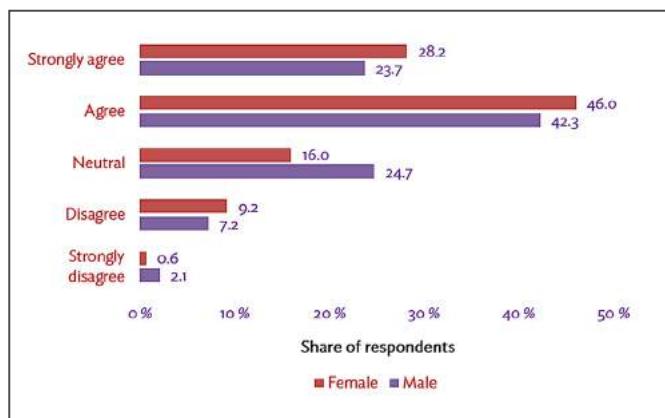
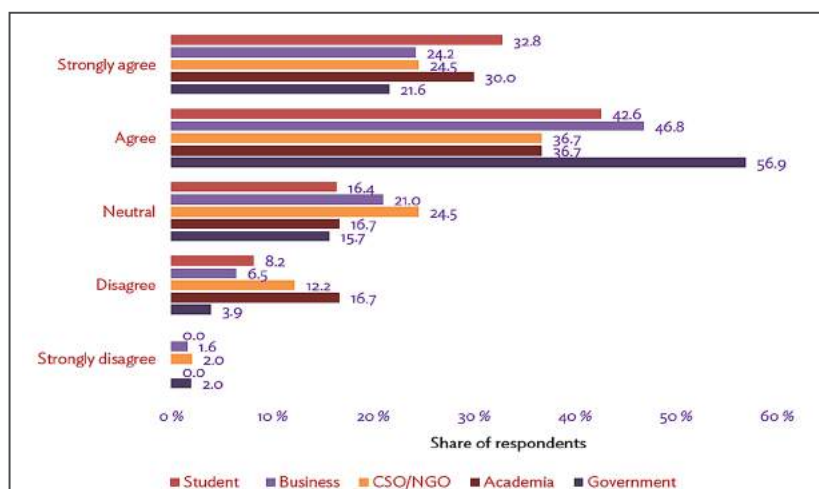


Figure 34: Agreement that the Media Does Not Have Enough Coverage of ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

The role of school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN

Similarly, about 70.0% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with using school textbooks to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges (Figure 35). Meanwhile, 15.0% were neutral, and 8.1% disagreed. Participants in the FGDs mentioned that school textbooks played a crucial

role in educating young people about ASEAN’s member countries. History classes were said to be limited in coverage, focusing on the Thai-centric history of conflicts and rivalry. As a result, participants said that each generation had continued to have minimal exposure to ASEAN’s achievements and progress, and the majority of the Thai population had tended to be less integrated with other ASEAN Member States.

Figure 35: Agreement with Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN

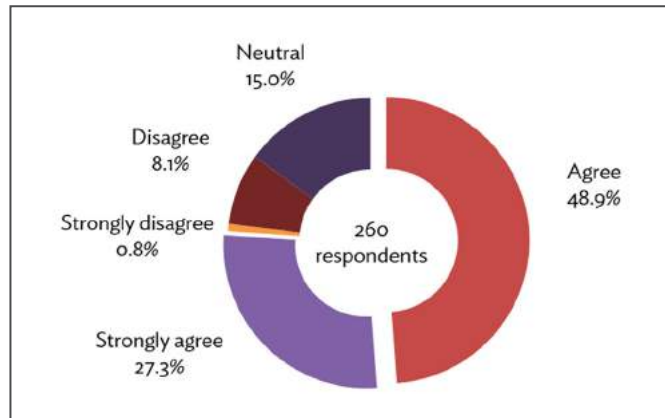
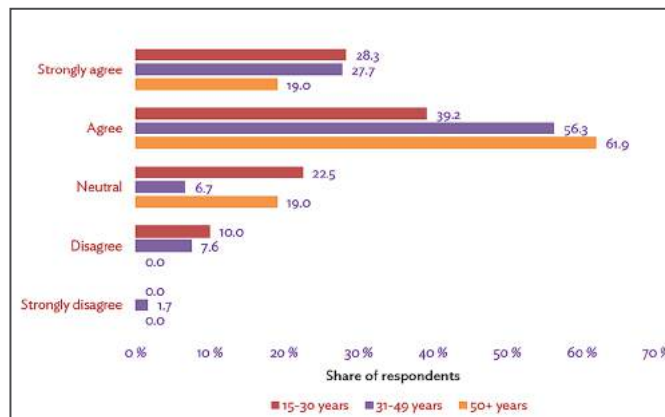


Figure 36: Agreement with Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN by Age



Examining the results by age, more than 80% of the respondents in the two older groups agreed or strongly agreed that textbooks should be used to socialise and educate young people about ASEAN’s progress, achievements, and challenges, while 68% of respondents in the younger 15–30 age group agreed or strongly agreed (Figure 36).

In terms of gender, the survey results for the female and male respondents were not significantly different (Figure 37). Meanwhile, by affiliation, the student group had the lowest share of respondents (68.9%) who agreed or strongly agreed with using textbooks, whereas the government respondents had the highest share (84.3%) (Figure 38).

Figure 37: Agreement with Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN by Gender

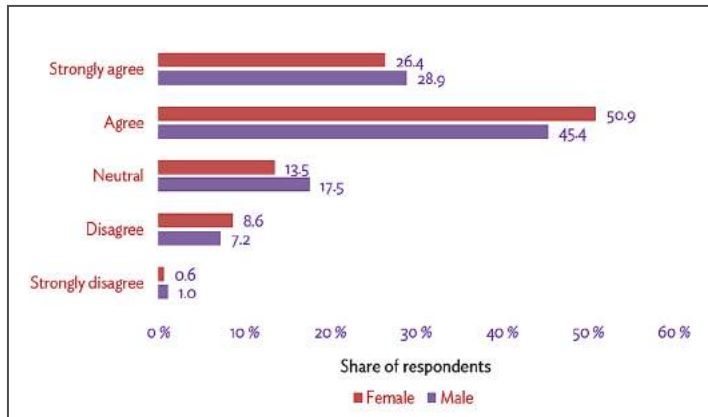
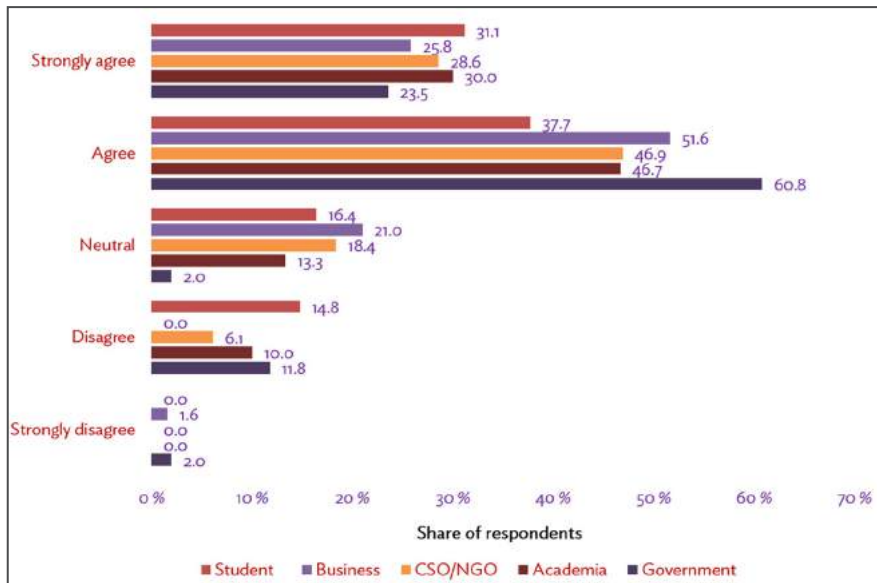


Figure 38: Agreement with Using Textbooks to Socialise and Educate Young People about ASEAN by Affiliation



CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Some youths in the FGD mentioned that current textbooks for Thai students in primary and secondary education tended to cause bias and negative perceptions of neighbouring countries because they taught only topics on historical conflicts or wars between Thailand and those countries. They noted that content about present and future issues for ASEAN, such as its progress, achievements, and challenges, did not appear in textbooks. Meanwhile, some participants from the NGO and academia groups voiced concerns that the Ministry of Education and Thai teachers had limited capabilities for delivering knowledge and information about the dynamics of ASEAN, so, therefore, textbooks may not be helpful for educating young people.

Pressing Problems for Thailand and ASEAN

The survey results identified the top five pressing problems facing Thailand and ASEAN today and until 2025. Four of these were common problems, namely corruption; income disparity and social inequality; poverty; and infrastructure availability and quality (Figure 39a and Figure 39b). The unique pressing problems were the provision of quality education, considered as one of top five problems for Thailand, and trade, investment, and regulatory coherence as one of top five problems for ASEAN. The provision of quality education was ranked sixth among the problems for ASEAN.

The similarity in the pressing problems for Thailand and ASEAN may reflect the hope in solving these problems together at the country and regional levels. For example, ASEAN, as an organisation exercising non-interference, is prohibited from taking action against corruption and human rights violations. Therefore, the ASEAN region as a whole has made little progress in these areas. Increased collaboration in dealing with these common issues may satisfy Thai people's concerns and encourage a sense of togetherness in the region.

Figure 39a: Top Five Problems Facing Thailand Today and until 2025

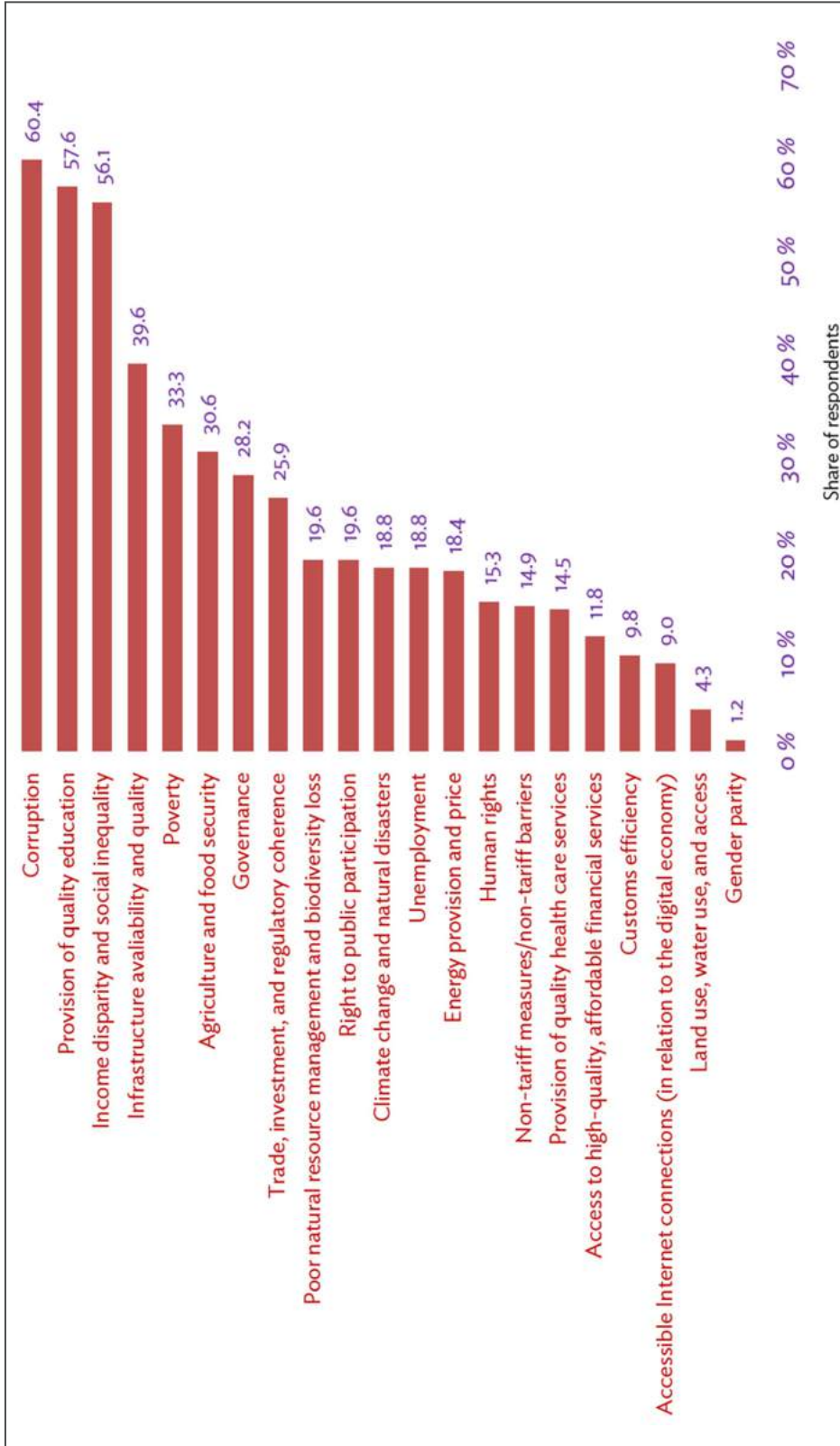
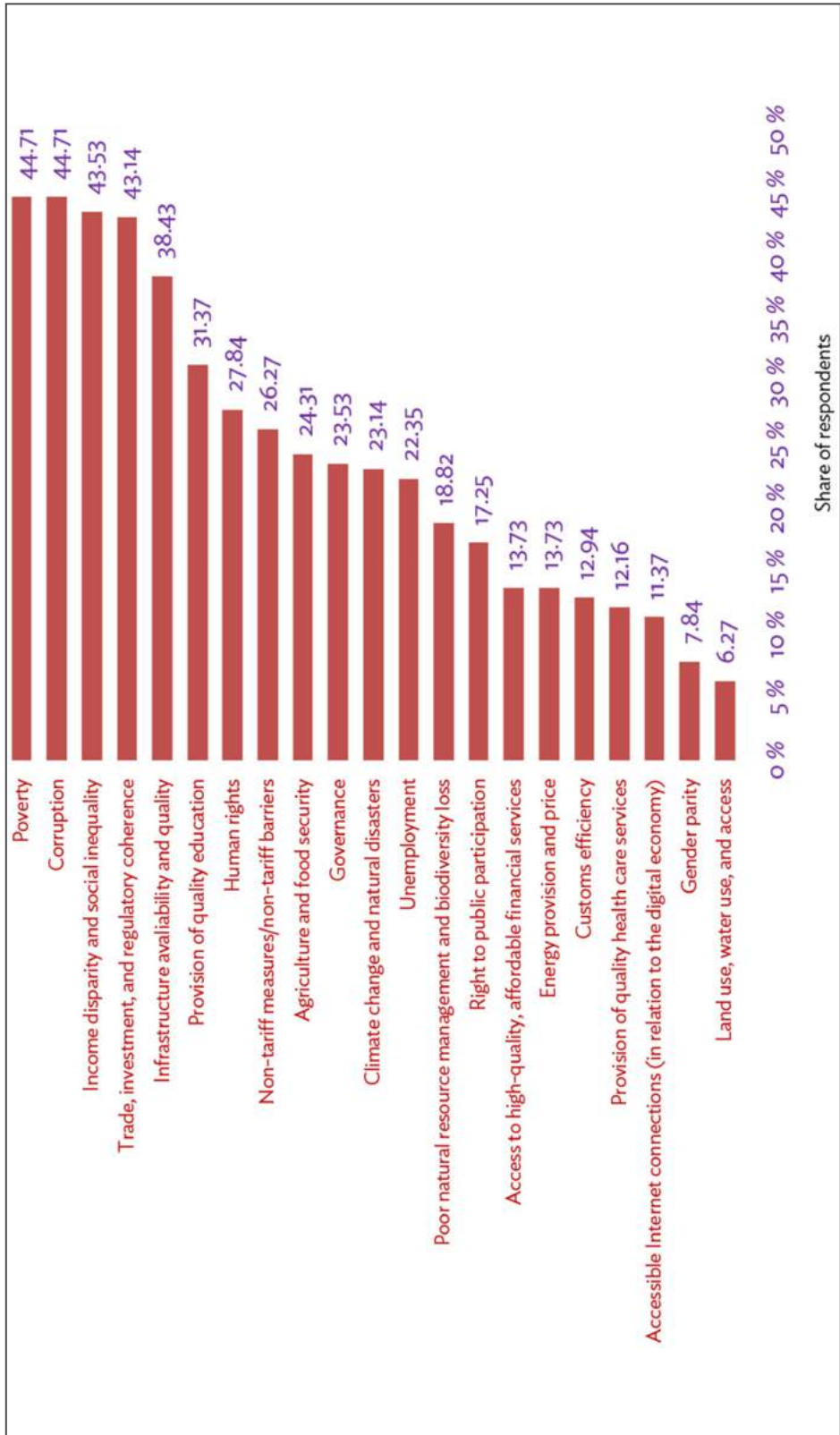


Figure 39b: Top Five Problems Facing ASEAN Today and until 2025



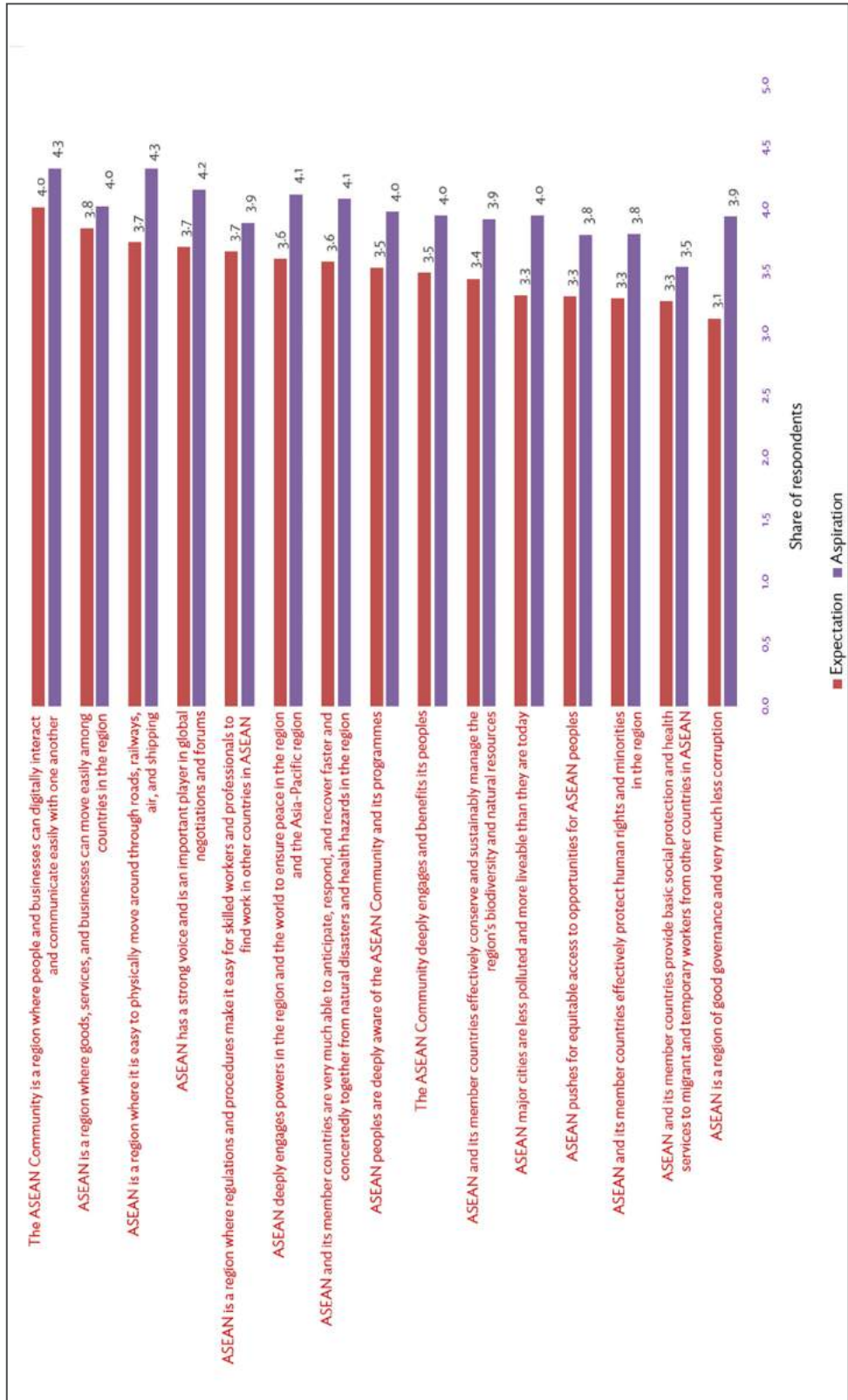
Expectations and Aspirations for ASEAN by 2025

Among the top five expectations of what respondents believed would likely happen by 2025, three were also listed among the top five aspirations by 2025. These were: ‘The ASEAN Community is a region where people and businesses can digitally interact and communicate easily with one another’; ‘ASEAN is a region where it is easy to physically move around through roads, railways, air, and shipping’; and ‘ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums’ (Figure 40).

However, two of the top five expectations were not among the top five aspirations of the respondents. These were: ‘ASEAN is a region where goods, services, and businesses can move easily among countries in the region’, and ‘ASEAN is a region where regulations and procedures make it easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN’.

Two of the top five aspirations were not among the top five expectations: ‘ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region’, and ‘ASEAN and its member countries are very much able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster and concertedly together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region’. It is noted that these above issues – specifically, conflict, natural disasters, and health hazards – are persistent threats in ASEAN that remain unresolved. Therefore, it is unsurprising that these issues were at the top of the lists.

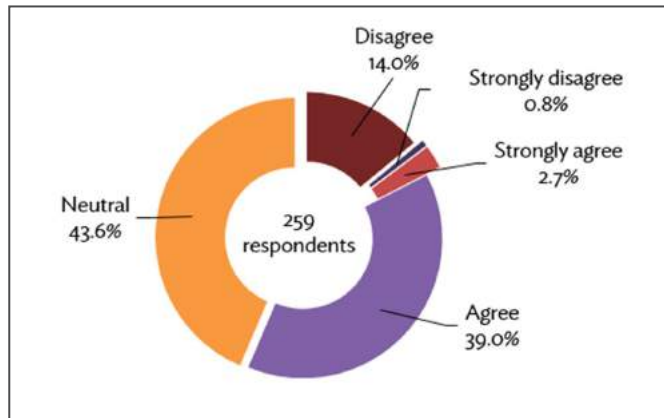
Figure 40: Expectations and Aspirations for ASEAN



Improving the role of the ASEAN Secretariat

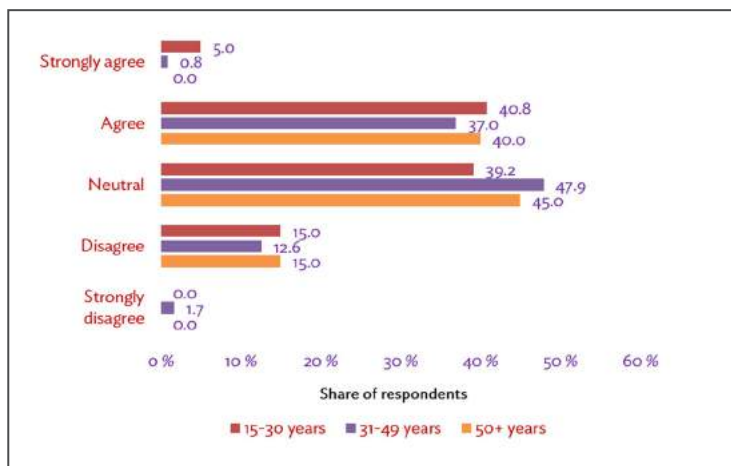
Overall, the largest share of respondents (43.6%) were neutral about the idea of gradually upgrading the implementing and monitoring capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges. This was followed by those who agreed (39%), disagreed (13.9%), strongly agreed (2.7%), and strongly disagreed (0.8%) (Figure 41).

Figure 41: Agreement with Upgrading the Role of the ASEAN Secretariat



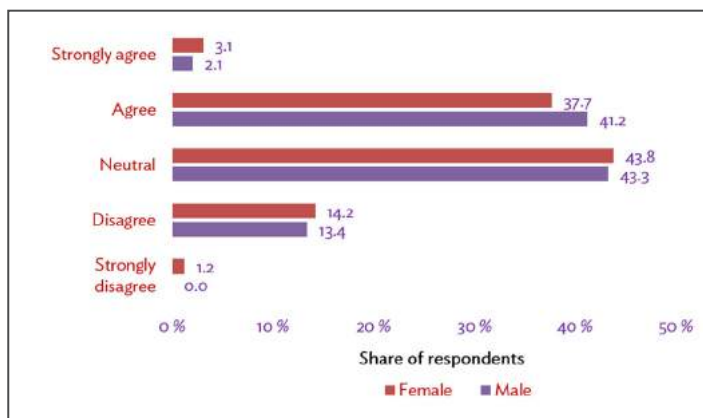
By age group, 47.9% of respondents aged 31–49 were neutral about the idea of upgrading the capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat, while similar proportions of respondents aged 15–30 and 50 or over indicated ‘neutral’ or ‘agree’ (Figure 42).

Figure 42: Agreement with Upgrading the Role of the ASEAN Secretariat by Age



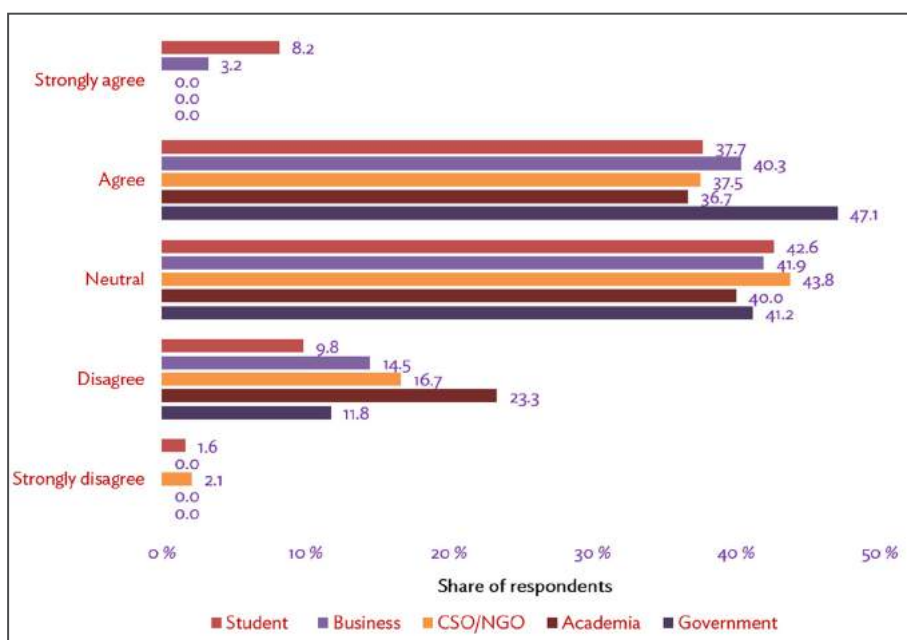
By gender, the female and male respondents expressed similar views on upgrading the capabilities of the secretariat, as shown in Figure 43.

Figure 43: Agreement with Upgrading the Role of the ASEAN Secretariat by Gender



The highest shares of respondents for almost all affiliations, except the government group, were neutral on upgrading the capabilities of the secretariat (Figure 44). Nonetheless, nearly half of the government respondents (47.1%) agreed with the idea. This may reflect that the government respondents had more belief in the ASEAN Secretariat than respondents from other affiliations.

Figure 44: Agreement with Upgrading the Role of the ASEAN Secretariat by Affiliation



In the FGDs, some participants mentioned feeling neutrally about the idea of upgrading the capabilities of the ASEAN Secretariat because they believed the decision would not create tangible changes or real impacts. The respondents believed that the basic function of the ASEAN Secretariat was to facilitate and coordinate stakeholders for the effective implementation of ASEAN's projects and activities. In addition, it must comply with the ASEAN Charter, which includes the norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of ASEAN Member States. Therefore, with limited functions and the norm of non-interference, some thought the ASEAN Secretariat would not be able to cope with the challenges facing ASEAN.

The feedback from the FGDs emphasised the increasing concerns and challenges the ASEAN Community faces today and will face in the future. It also pointed to the association's increased collective challenges that require collective action through ASEAN's mechanisms. Participants noted that the ASEAN Secretariat should have the legal authority to tackle these challenges, otherwise it would not be able to cope with the new and increasing challenges in the globalised world.

However, as much as 43.6% of the respondents were neutral about the idea of upgrading the ASEAN Secretariat. The basic function of the secretariat is to facilitate and coordinate stakeholders for the effective implementation of ASEAN's projects and activities. Nevertheless, it must comply with the ASEAN Charter, which includes the norm of non-interference in ASEAN Member States' internal affairs. The pressing problems for ASEAN, which include the provision of governance, quality education, human rights, trade, investment and regulatory coherence, and affordable Internet connections, are generally internal affairs for member countries. Thus, the respondents may not have believed that increasing the ASEAN Secretariat's role would help in coping with these challenges.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

The survey results show several differences in the views towards ASEAN across age groups. The youngest age group, those aged 15–30, had high hopes for ASEAN and its potential to operate as a successful association for the benefit of its member states. However, they also appeared to be exposed to false scepticism of ASEAN brought on by the media, newspapers, books, and what they had learned from teachers. Therefore, their feeling of being ASEAN citizens was close to non-existent, and this may carry on in the future.

In general, the majority of the Thai respondents tended to view ASEAN neutrally due to the fact that they did not perceive ASEAN as having a significant effect on their lives. From the business perspective, respondents indicated that ASEAN economic integration tended to benefit large companies more than SMEs.

Some suggestions for making Thai people feel more attached to ASEAN are as follows. First, the media should play a greater role by focusing more on media coverage and content to spread knowledge and information and create true understanding of ASEAN. For example, the media should publicise content about ASEAN's present and future issues, such as its progress, achievements, and challenges.

Secondly, the similarities in the pressing problems facing Thailand and ASEAN may reflect the hope in solving these problems together at the country and regional levels. Collaboration in dealing with these common issues may satisfy the needs of the Thai people and encourage a sense of togetherness in the region.

Finally, at present, large companies can access reliable and current information to gain various advantages, but SMEs have limited capabilities. Therefore, SMEs should not be overlooked and should be promoted to enhance competitiveness and catch up with the dynamics of economic integration.

Reference

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What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? Survey Findings from Viet Nam*

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Introduction

In decades of reforms, Viet Nam has sought to broaden the economic opportunities for its people and the business community while building the capacity to enable them to take advantage of these opportunities. Together with market-oriented institutional reforms, proactive economic integration has brought a more diverse range of economic opportunities and access to valuable resources, including capital, technical, and management expertise. On this basis, Viet Nam has improved itself economically in terms of livelihood and capacity, enlivening subsequent efforts to cooperate with other countries in areas such as science, technology, and food security. This has enabled Vietnamese people to participate in and benefit from the international development process.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) membership marked an important milestone within this process. Notwithstanding efforts under the ‘open-door’ policy since 1986, accession to ASEAN in 1995 remained the first most important breakthrough. ASEAN was the playground where Viet Nam was first exposed to trade and investment liberalisation. Over time, the association has gradually built on and realised initiatives to expand regional cooperation beyond economic issues. Viet Nam and other member states have worked to narrow the intraregional development gap and maintain regional stability to foster the improvement of their people’s well-being. The

* All tables and figures in this chapter were derived from the survey data.

voice of ASEAN, reflected in the collective efforts of the officials of its member states, has gradually become more influential in the regional setting.

Viet Nam has gone a long way to completing various measures for the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015. However, there is still an array of further work to be done by 2025. It is thus important to ensure that such future work continues to target and be inclusive of Vietnamese people. In light of this, an essential precondition is a comprehensive understanding of the current perceptions and aspirations of Vietnamese people for ASEAN.

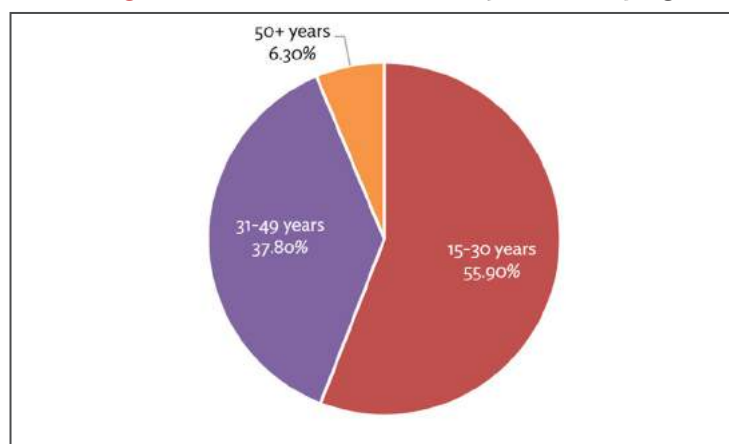
This chapter presents the findings from a survey of Vietnamese people on the importance of ASEAN. The survey was designed to capture the opinions of various groups in Viet Nam on the importance and priorities of ASEAN until 2025. It was complemented by three focus group discussions (FGDs) with respective participation from (i) young people, (ii) business representatives, and (iii) researchers and members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

This chapter first describes the basic information about the respondents. It then summarises the key perceptions and aspirations of the respondents about ASEAN. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of the implications of the survey findings.

Basic Information about the Respondents

Figure 1 depicts the shares of the survey respondents by age group. As shown, almost 56% of respondents were aged between 15 and 30 years old. Nearly 38% of the respondents were aged between 31 and 49 years old, while those aged 50 or older accounted for just over 6% of the respondents.

Figure 1: Distribution of the Respondents by Age



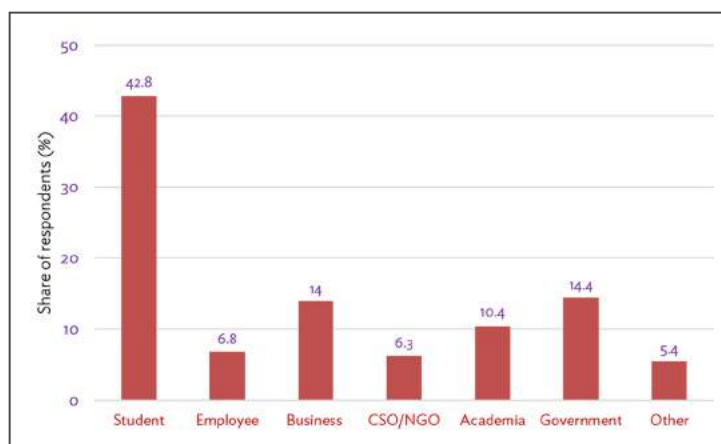
By gender, the number of male and female respondents were the same (Table 1). The share of men in the 15–30 age group (nearly 59%) was slightly higher than that for women (over 53%). Meanwhile, the numbers and shares for women in the 31–49 and 50+ age groups slightly exceeded those for men.

Table 1: Distribution of Survey Respondents by Age Group and Gender

Age	Number of Respondents		Share (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
15–30 years	59	65	53.2	58.6
31–49 years	43	41	38.7	36.9
50+ years	9	5	8.1	4.5
<i>Total</i>	111	111	100.0	100.0

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the respondents by profession. As shown, almost 43% of the respondents were students, outnumbering the other professions in the group. The business and government sectors accounted for roughly the same shares of respondents at around 14%. Just over 10% of the respondents were from academia. The remaining smaller shares of respondents were for employees (at almost 7%), members of civil society organisations or NGOs (just over 6%), and other professions (over 5%).

Figure 2: Distribution of the Respondents by Affiliation

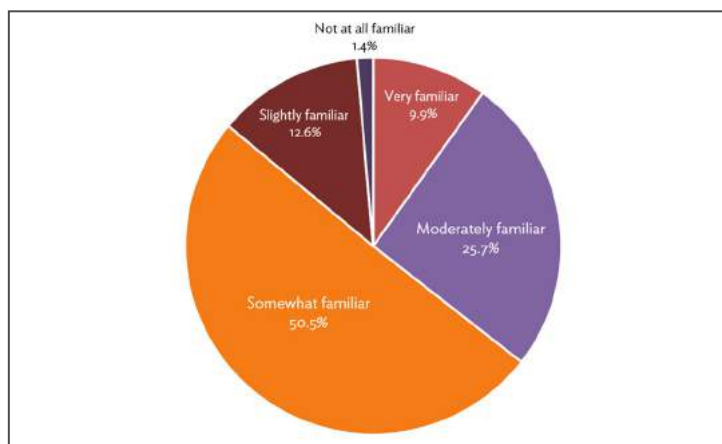


CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

Voices of ASEAN

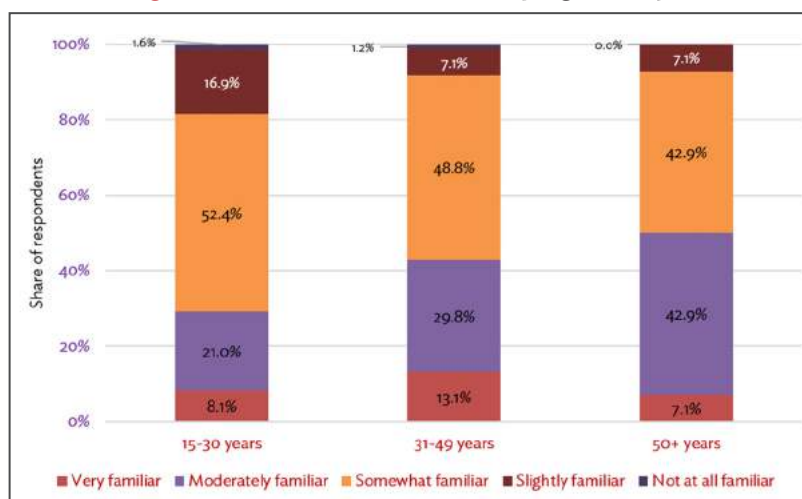
Figure 3 summarises the respondents' awareness of general ASEAN-related issues. Very few people were unfamiliar with ASEAN. Notably, more than a half of the respondents were somewhat familiar with ASEAN-related topics. Meanwhile, less than 10% of those surveyed indicated high familiarity, and around 25% of the respondents indicated moderate familiarity. More than 12% of the respondents admitted that they were only slightly aware of ASEAN issues. During the youth FGD, almost all participants stated that they mostly heard about the ASEAN Economic Community. Specifically, they kept hearing about the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Community interchangeably and thought these terms were the same. They mentioned that they never heard about the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community or the ASEAN Political-Security Community. In fact, the FGD participants added that the vast information on the World Trade Organization (WTO), the European Union-Viet Nam free trade agreement (FTA), and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, etc. somehow diverted their attention away from ASEAN.

Figure 3: Awareness of ASEAN
(share of respondents)



The respondents' awareness of ASEAN only varied slightly by age group (Figure 4). In general, those aged 50 or older were the most familiar with ASEAN topics. In contrast, the share of respondents with only slight familiarity with ASEAN issues was higher for those between 15 and 30 years old than the other age groups. Consistent with this finding, the FGD with the young people showed that three out of eight participants only started to hear about ASEAN-related content from 2015, when the local media included more information on Viet Nam's preparation for the ASEAN Economic Community.

Figure 4: Awareness of ASEAN by Age Group



Details of the respondents’ awareness of ASEAN by profession are shown in Table 2. Overall, the largest share of respondents was somewhat familiar with ASEAN topics, and this holds across all professions. However, the students and employees were less confident about their understanding of ASEAN vis-à-vis other groups of respondents. This is reflected in the larger shares of students and employees who had only somewhat or slight familiarity with ASEAN topics. It should also be noted that the awareness of the business group is consistent with previous survey findings, especially by Nguyen (2014), as about 76% of those surveyed lacked knowledge about the ASEAN Economic Community.

Table 2: Awareness of ASEAN by Affiliation

	Students	Employees	Business	CSO/NGO	Academia	Government	Other
Very familiar	6.3	20.0	9.7	14.3	21.7	9.4	0.0
Moderately familiar	18.9	0.0	25.8	35.7	30.4	46.9	33.3
Somewhat familiar	52.6	73.3	48.4	42.9	43.5	43.8	50.0
Slightly familiar	20.0	6.7	12.9	7.1	4.3	0.0	16.7
Not at all familiar	2.1	0.0	3.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

CSO = civil society organisation, NGO = non-governmental organisation.

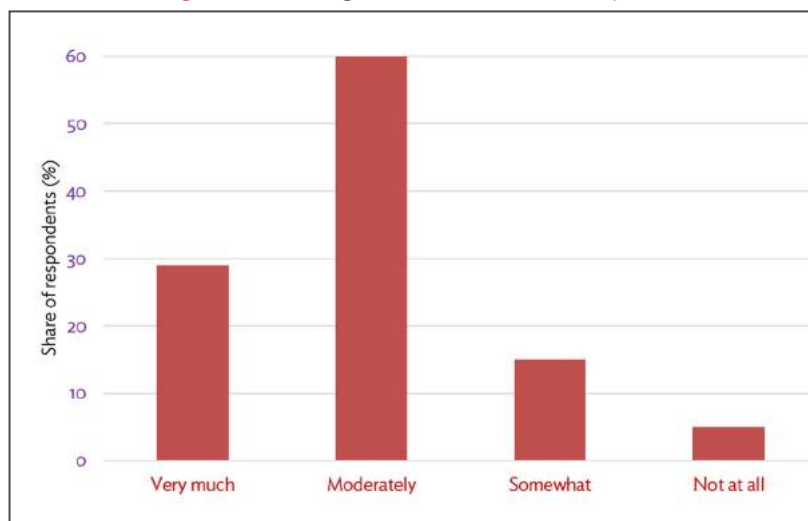
A large share of business representatives, meanwhile, were either moderately or somewhat familiar with ASEAN topics. The FGD with the business representatives also showed that all participants had heard of ASEAN, and some had even been acquiring information about ASEAN since the early 2000s. Still, the business representatives suffered from some lack of awareness of ASEAN. Four out of six business participants in the FGD knew that the ASEAN Economic Community was only a pillar of the ASEAN

Community but could not describe or list the other two pillars. The most important pieces of information that the business participants cared about were the reduction of tariffs and the related opportunities and challenges, especially those specific to their industries or products.

The FGD participants aspired to better understand ASEAN-related topics. The young people said they could find related information on the Internet but needed guidance on finding and accessing the relevant information. The business representatives wanted to know more about the conditions for utilising preferential tariffs and the main advantages of the cumulative rules of origin under ASEAN over the usual rules of origin under the WTO. They understood that the information was available on the Internet but said the language was overly technical with lots of jargon. As the concerned businesses were small and medium-sized enterprises, many had problems seeking assistance from lawyers about the related content in the ASEAN agreements. Meanwhile, the NGO participants and researchers suggested that more meaningful information should be made available through the Internet, possibly via the websites of government agencies, business associations, and research institutes.

Figure 5 shows the feelings of the respondents towards being ASEAN citizens. Again, less than 7% of the respondents did not feel they were ASEAN citizens. Notably, over 56% of those surveyed felt moderately as ASEAN citizens. Around one-fifth of the respondents felt very much as ASEAN citizens, while around 16% said they felt somewhat as ASEAN citizens.

Figure 5: Feeling of ASEAN Citizenship



Some differences appear when comparing the feelings of the respondents by age group (Figure 6). Again, the oldest age group had the highest likelihood (36%) of having a strong feeling of ASEAN citizenship. Respondents aged 15–30 had a relatively weaker feeling of being ASEAN citizens but had the highest share among those with a moderate feeling (almost three-fifths). The young people in the FGD indicated they did not feel they were citizens of the same region as people from Cambodia, Lao PDR, or Myanmar, although they strongly preferred being able to access the same services and opportunities as people in Singapore. They enjoyed most the ease of travelling to ASEAN countries without visas, an important consideration given that Viet Nam’s ordinary passport is only accepted visa-free in a limited number of countries.

Figure 6: Feeling of ASEAN Citizenship by Age Group

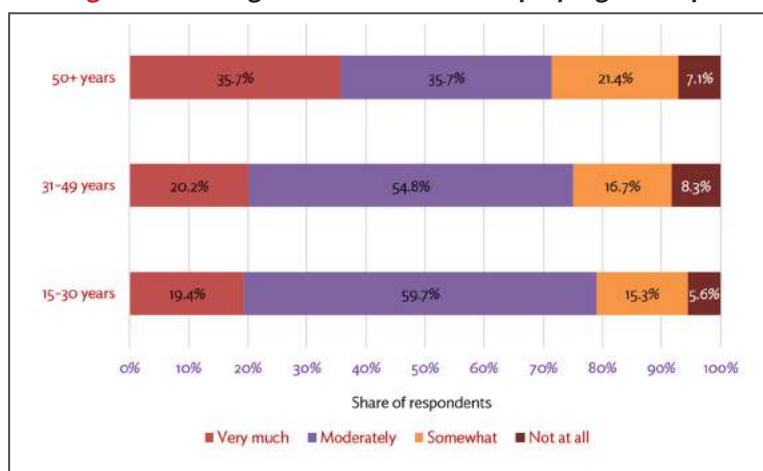


Figure 7 shows the respondents’ perceptions of Viet Nam’s membership of ASEAN. Consistent with the policy objective to enhance economic opportunities through economic integration, which effectively started with ASEAN, almost 79% of the respondents believed that ASEAN membership was beneficial for Viet Nam. However, about 14% of those surveyed claimed that the country’s membership had been neither good nor bad, and another 5% even argued that it had been unfavourable. Around 3% of respondents indicated they did not know whether Viet Nam’s membership in ASEAN had been good or bad.

The majority of the FGD participants appreciated the value that ASEAN membership had added to Viet Nam. For young people, travelling to other ASEAN countries had become a lot easier. Many had benefited from faster immigration procedures via expedited ASEAN lanes, though they had not recognised, prior to the FGD, that such measures had originated from the work of ASEAN. The FGD participants recognised the increased availability and greater diversity of goods from ASEAN countries. A concern

raised by some of the NGO participants was that by being a member of ASEAN, Viet Nam was suffering from a narrower policy space and could no longer protect its domestic industries (of which retailing services were an example).

Figure 7: Perception of Viet Nam’s Membership of ASEAN
(share of respondents)

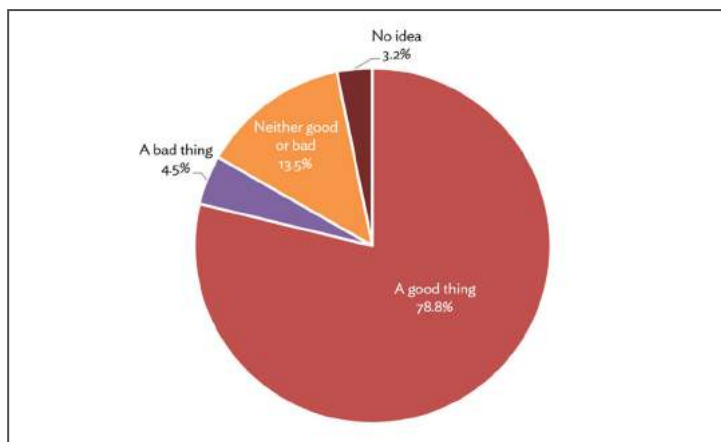
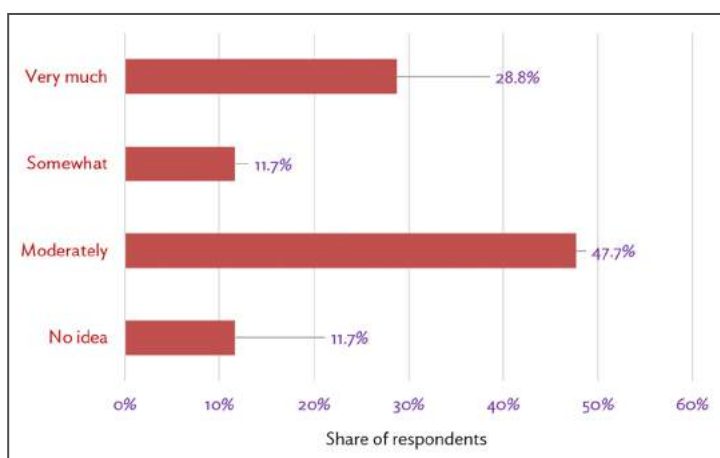


Figure 8 depicts the respondents’ assessment of Viet Nam’s membership of ASEAN. Nearly 48% acknowledged moderate benefits from Viet Nam’s membership, while around 29% indicated that the country had benefited highly from ASEAN. Another 12% claimed the benefits were subtle, and the same share had no idea about whether ASEAN had been beneficial for Viet Nam.

Figure 8: Perceived Benefits of Viet Nam’s Membership of ASEAN



The young people and business representatives in the FGDs elaborated that trade in goods, tourism, and job opportunities in ASEAN as a single market would continue to create benefits for Viet Nam. They cited the trend among some Vietnamese people of

going to Singapore to form start-ups as an example. However, a business participant added that benefits to Viet Nam and enterprises would be conditional upon further economic reforms in the country, especially in the areas of tax, business registration, and contract enforcement. Meanwhile, all NGO participants and researchers agreed that resolving various issues would require coordination and a common voice in ASEAN.

From another perspective, Figure 9 illustrates how the respondents stated they would feel if Viet Nam were no longer a member of ASEAN. As shown, more than 34% of the respondents said they would be extremely concerned. Another 26% said they would be moderately concerned, while 17% indicated some (less than moderate) concern. Around 13% of the respondents answered that they would be only slightly concerned about leaving ASEAN, and less than 10% said they would not be concerned.

Figure 9: Level of Concern if Viet Nam Were to Leave ASEAN
(share of respondents)

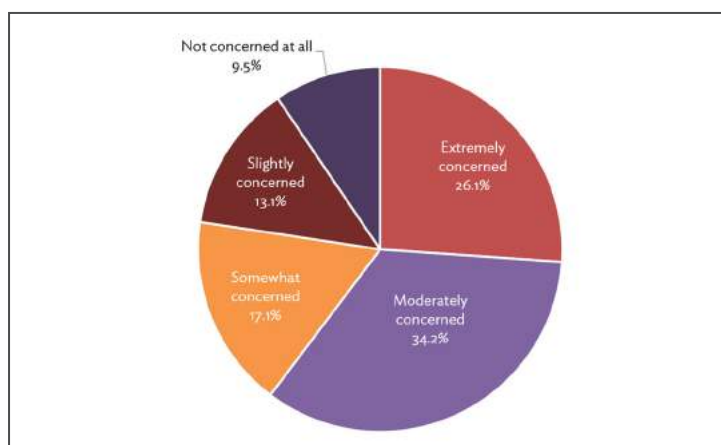


Figure 10 shows the perceptions of the respondents about the future of ASEAN. Very few respondents (around 5%) indicated they were not optimistic about ASEAN's future. Notably, more than half of the respondents expressed moderate optimism for ASEAN, and 19% were extremely optimistic. Meanwhile, similar shares of respondents were somewhat or slightly optimistic about ASEAN's future, at around 13% and 12%, respectively.

Figure 11 illustrates the respondents' perceptions of media coverage about ASEAN-related issues. This appears to be an area where the media in Viet Nam has failed to perform well. Less than 12% of the respondents claimed that media coverage of ASEAN's progress and challenges had been adequate, and very few people expressed strong agreement (less than 1% of the survey sample). In contrast, almost 48% of

the respondents agreed that media coverage of ASEAN was insufficient, and over 14% indicated strong agreement that the coverage was insufficient. Over 26% of the respondents felt neutrally about the media's coverage of ASEAN.

Figure 10: Perceptions on the Future of ASEAN

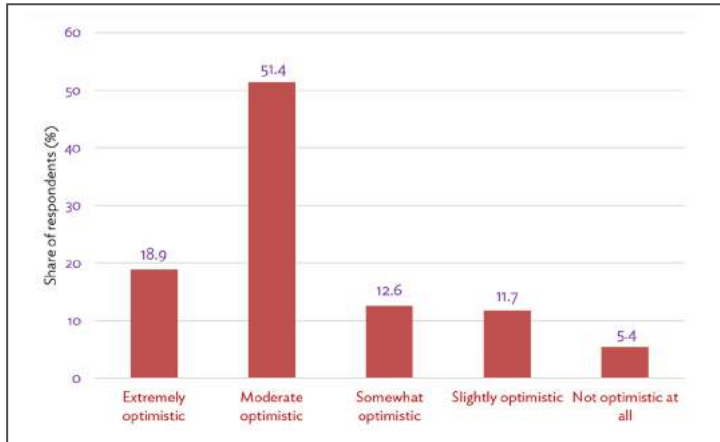
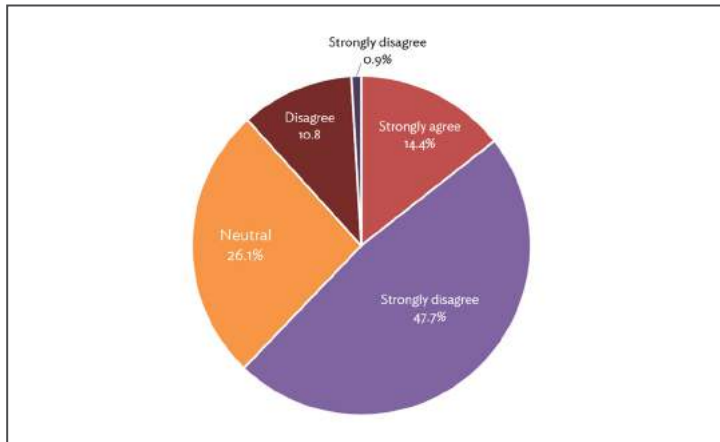


Figure 11: Agreement on the Inadequacy of Media Coverage of ASEAN
(share of respondents)



Similarly, Figure 12 shows the respondents' opinions on the need to incorporate ASEAN-related topics into textbooks. Only 7% of the respondents disagree with incorporating topics on ASEAN, while 3% expressed strong disagreement. Importantly, over 41% agreed that textbooks in Viet Nam should include content relevant to ASEAN, while 19% indicated strong agreement. Nearly 30% of the sample indicated neither agreement nor disagreement. The young participants in the FGD argued that existing information in official high school and university textbooks was limited. Most of the information was said to be outdated, focusing largely on the history of ASEAN.

Participants suggested that seminars and workshops were instrumental in delivering information on ASEAN but also complained that they often lacked the opportunity to go to such events. University students, for example, said they could not attend events on weekdays due to clashes with their class timetables. The participants also agreed that it would be difficult to include all the information in textbooks since other content of relevance to students must also be included. Meanwhile, all business participants in the FGD recommended that textbooks at both the school and university levels must include content on the work of ASEAN. The majority of the NGO participants and researchers suggested further that the core information on ASEAN (including its history, charter, major blueprints, outcomes until 2015, and directions until 2025) should be incorporated into textbooks.

Figure 12: Perceptions on the Need for Textbooks to Include Topics on ASEAN

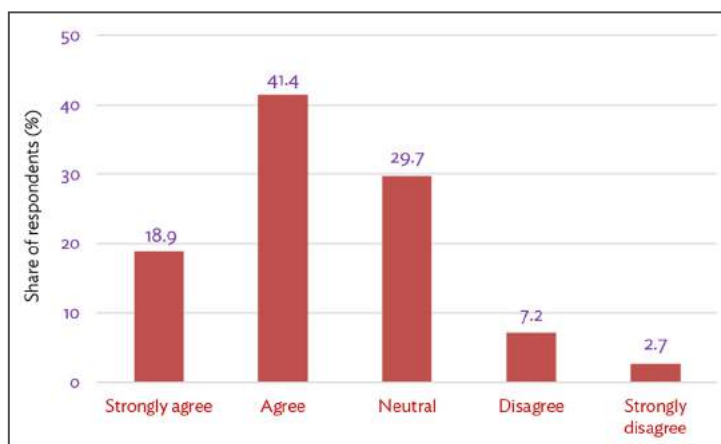


Table 3 summarises the responses on the pressing issues facing Viet Nam until 2025. The most pressing issue was corruption, chosen by almost 69% of respondents. Climate change and natural disasters followed with agreement by 64% of respondents. The availability and quality of infrastructure, and agriculture and food security emerged as other important issues for Viet Nam in the next decade, chosen by 36% and 31% of the respondents, respectively. Another important issue for Viet Nam was the poor management of natural resources and biodiversity loss, as indicated by over 28% of respondents. Conversely, the least important issues for the country by 2025 included gender equality, energy provision and prices, Internet connections, and customs efficiency.

Table 3: Pressing Concerns for Viet Nam until 2025

Issue	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Agriculture and food security	69	31.1
Access to high-quality, affordable financial services	36	16.2
Accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy)	22	9.9
Customs efficiency	25	11.3
Energy provision and price	17	7.7
Infrastructure availability and quality	79	35.6
Non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers	46	20.7
Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence	60	27.0
Climate change and natural disasters	142	64.0
Gender parity between men and women	5	2.3
Income disparity and social inequality	47	21.2
Land use, water use, and access	26	11.7
Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss	53	23.9
Poverty	31	14.0
Quality education provision and access	59	26.6
Quality health services provision and access	63	28.4
Unemployment	43	19.4
Corruption	152	68.5
Governance	53	23.9
Human rights	26	11.7
Public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring	30	22.5

The ranking of issues in Table 3 is different from the outcome of the FGD discussions. In all three discussions, the common pressing issues for Viet Nam included trade, investment, and regulatory coherence, and climate change and natural disasters. Inadequate public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring was seen by the majority of NGO participants and researchers to undermine the quality and inclusiveness of public policies and programmes.

Table 4: Pressing Concerns for ASEAN until 2025

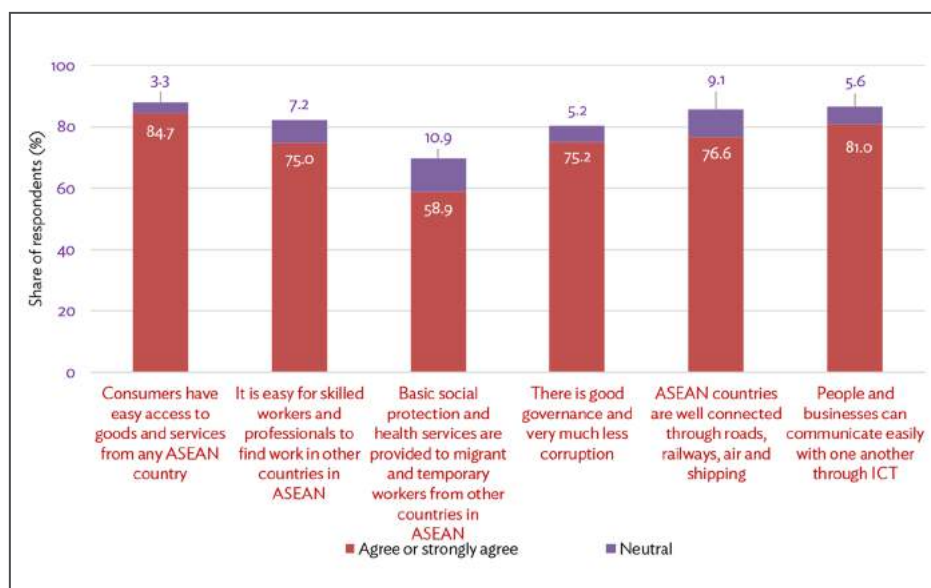
Issue	Number of Responses	Share of Responses (%)
Agriculture and food security	71	32.0
Access to high-quality, affordable financial services	25	11.3
Accessible Internet connections (in relation to the digital economy)	13	5.9
Customs efficiency	28	12.6
Energy provision and price	11	5.0
Infrastructure availability and quality	45	20.3
Non-tariff measures/non-tariff barriers	65	29.3
Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence	63	28.4
Climate change and natural disasters	163	73.4
Gender parity between men and women	16	7.2
Income disparity and social inequality	52	23.4
Land use, water use, and access	34	15.3
Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss	88	39.6
Poverty	37	16.7
Quality education provision and access	37	16.7
Quality health services provision and access	31	14.0
Unemployment	29	13.1
Corruption	125	56.3
Governance	70	31.5
Human rights	4	19.4
Public participation in policymaking and programme monitoring	55	24.8

Table 4 shows the major issues that ASEAN as a whole faces until 2025. Climate change and natural disasters ranked first among the pressing issues, as indicated by over 73% of respondents. Corruption was the second most important issue, as indicated by 56% of respondents. In addition to these issues, the poor management of natural resources and biodiversity loss remained a challenge to ASEAN according to 40% of respondents. It should be noted that climate change and natural disasters, and the poor management of

natural resources and biodiversity loss were also indicated by the FGD participants as key issues for ASEAN. Agriculture and food security, and governance issues were indicated as pressing for ASEAN by 32% of respondents. Interestingly, the least important issues for ASEAN were Internet accessibility, energy provision and price, and gender equality, consistent with those for Viet Nam.

Figure 13 illustrates the respondents' preferences for improvements in ASEAN in terms of accessibility issues. The most important aspect for improvement was access to goods and services from ASEAN producers, with strong agreement or agreement from almost 85% of the respondents. A couple of young participants in the FGD gave the example of having to buy high-quality, informally imported goods from travellers who had visited other ASEAN countries (such as milk powder for infants and toddlers from Singapore or Malaysia). They asserted that if there were more official import channels with lower or zero tariffs, then the availability of such products for domestic consumers would increase.

Figure 13: Aspirations for Accessibility-related Issues in ASEAN by 2025



ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ICT = information and communications technology.

Another important issue for improvement is the ease of ICT-based communication between people and businesses, indicated by 81% of respondents. One business participant in the FGD elaborated on how improvements in telecommunications services in Viet Nam had helped her business significantly in contacting partners, leading to a reduction of costs and more modern services. The only remaining issues were the stability and roaming fees of mobile phone services.

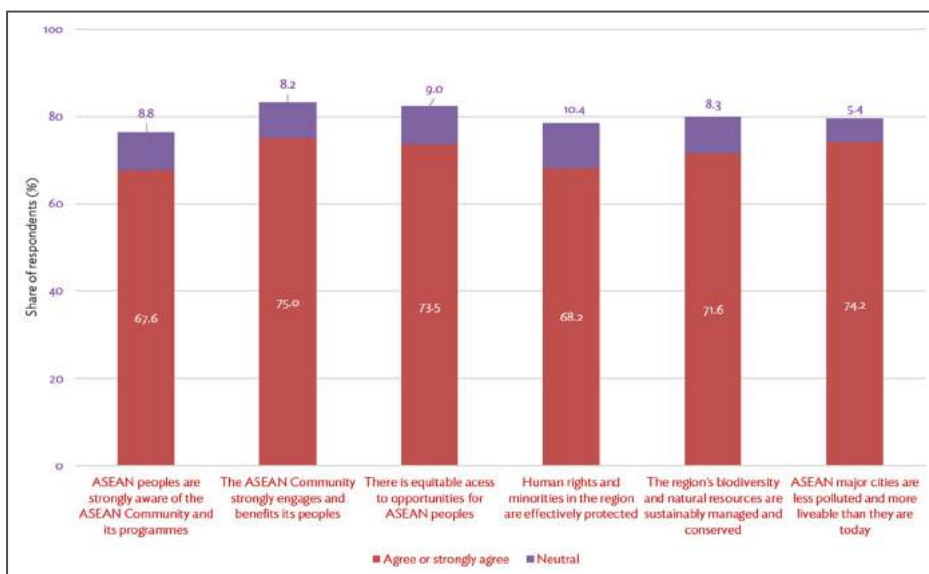
Transport connectivity, the ease of finding jobs, and improved governance and less corruption were other areas where respondents wanted improvements by 2025. Each of these issues was indicated by around three-quarters of the sample. The business participants in the FGD emphasised that these improvements were associated with improved access to goods and services from ASEAN.

Improvement in the accessibility of temporary workers and migrants to basic social protection and health services was the least chosen by the survey respondents, although the share of respondents agreeing to this improvement was almost 59%. The need for such improvement was rated differently by the NGO participants and researchers in the FGD. Three researchers and one NGO participant thought that immigrants and temporary workers should be treated the same as local workers as they said everyone should have the right to basic social protection and health services. The other researcher was neutral about the need for this improvement, while the other NGO participants contended that immigrants from foreign countries (including within ASEAN) should be treated differently in order to protect the welfare of Vietnamese people. These participants explained that having too many foreign workers would reduce the employability of local workers, and the state would need to do something to compensate for this.

Figure 14 illustrates the preferences of respondents towards improvements in ASEAN regarding inclusiveness and sustainability issues by 2025. As shown, the most essential improvement was the engagement and shared benefit of ASEAN to its peoples, as indicated by roughly 75% of respondents. Reducing pollution and improving liveability in ASEAN major cities was chosen by slightly fewer respondents (around 74%). Equal access to opportunities and the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources were other preferred improvements by 2025, with respective shares of nearly 74% and 72% of the respondents. Enhancing awareness of the ASEAN Community and the protection of human rights and minorities were other areas where progress was deemed necessary, each of which was indicated by roughly 68% of the respondents.

The FGDs showed, meanwhile, that several aspects of sustainable development need to be improved in ASEAN. Among the key aspects mentioned were the management of biodiversity and natural resources, the engagement of the people, equitable opportunities, and the reduction of pollution in major cities. In particular, the youth participants asserted that economic well-being was neither guaranteed nor meaningful in the absence of a clean environment. Three of the youth participants had volunteered in hospitals and with people with cancer and were shocked by the incidence of cancer due to poor environmental quality.

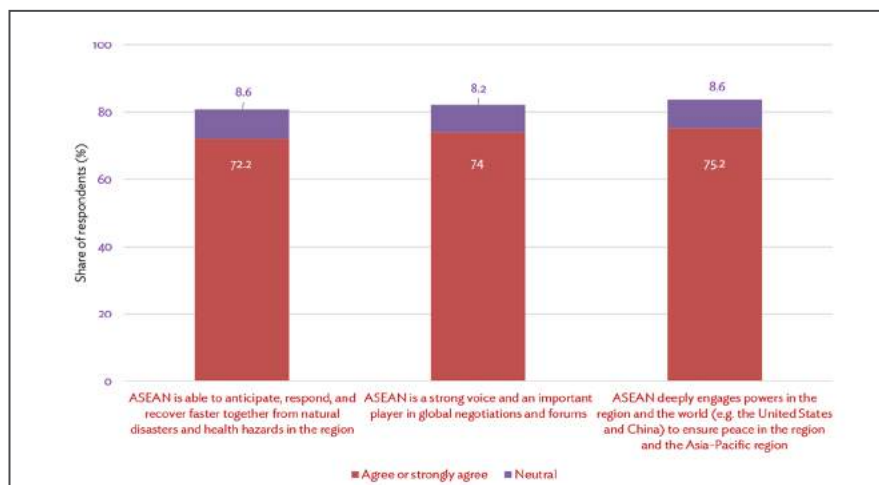
Figure 14: Aspirations for Inclusiveness and Sustainability Issues in ASEAN by 2025



ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Figure 15 focuses on the preferred improvements to general issues for ASEAN as a common community. The most important improvement, based on the respondents' preferences, is the engagement of international and regional powers in ASEAN affairs for ensuring regional stability. This improvement was suggested by over 75% of respondents. Next was the need for improvement in ASEAN's influence in international forums and negotiations, chosen by 74% of respondents. Finally, 72% of respondents wanted ASEAN to be able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.

Figure 15: Aspirations for ASEAN Issues by 2025

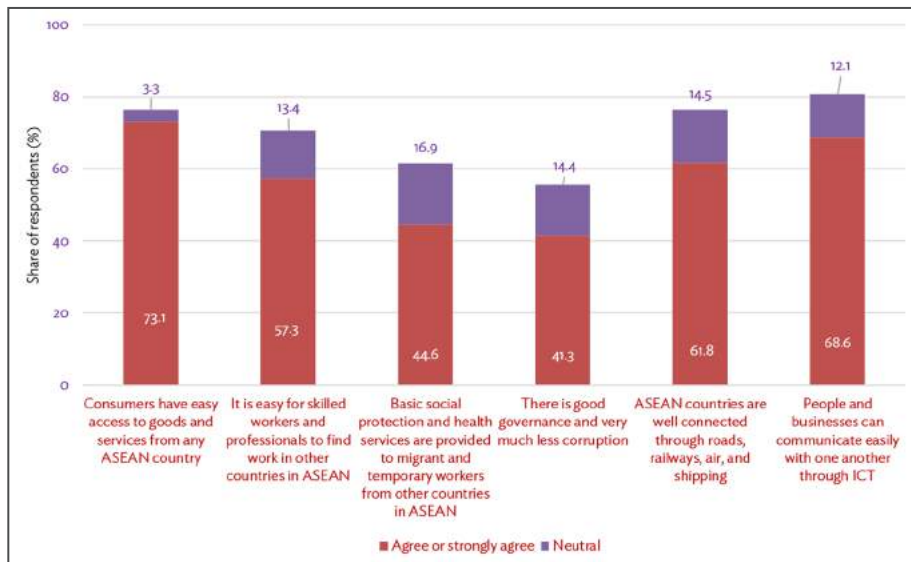


ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

In addition to their preferences for improvements in ASEAN, respondents were also surveyed on their expectations of reasonable progress for ASEAN until 2025. Figure 16 shows respondents' perceptions on the likelihood of improvements in terms of accessibility issues. Again, the most likely improvement was easier access to goods and services from ASEAN producers, agreed or strongly agreed with by over 73% of the respondents. Based on their knowledge of ASEAN, the business representatives in the FGD expected the most progress to be made in the trade of goods and services. This was the same for the young people, the NGO participants, and the researchers in the FGDs. Half of the business participants in the FGD doubted whether they would see more service providers from ASEAN since Viet Nam had already opened up to various services under the WTO and other FTAs.

Respondents also expected an increase in the ease of ICT-based communication between people and businesses and improved transport connectivity, albeit at lower likelihoods of 69% and 62%, respectively. Meanwhile, over 57% of the respondents believed in the likelihood of higher mobility for skilled workers in ASEAN. Improvements in governance and accessibility were chosen as the least likely to occur, and were agreed with by 41% and 45% of the respondents, respectively. It should be noted that this level of expectation appears to be less than the corresponding aspiration for all areas (Figure 13 and Figure 16).

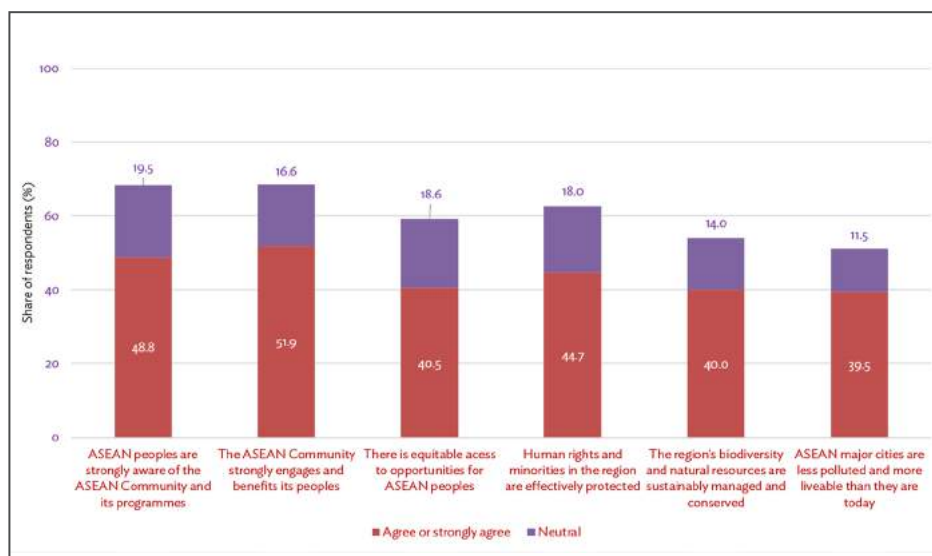
Figure 16: Expectations for Accessibility Issues in ASEAN by 2025



ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ICT = information and communications technology.

Figure 17 shows the beliefs of the respondents about improvements in inclusiveness and sustainability issues in ASEAN by 2025. In general, the level of expectation was lower than for the accessibility issues. The highest likelihood was attached to the engagement and shared benefits of ASEAN for its peoples, as indicated by roughly 52% of the respondents. Building awareness of the ASEAN Community and the protection of human rights and minorities were next, with respective shares of respondents in agreement and strong agreement of 49% and 45%, respectively. Respondents indicated that reducing pollution and improving liveability in ASEAN’s major cities, equitable access to opportunities, and the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources were least likely to see improvement by 2025. These issues were each agreed or strongly agreed with by around two-fifths of the respondents. For all areas related to inclusiveness and sustainability, the respondents’ expectations were again lower than their aspirations, while the level of neutrality for the expectations exceeded that for the aspirations (Figure 14 and Figure 17).

Figure 17: Expectations for Inclusiveness and Sustainability Issues in ASEAN by 2025

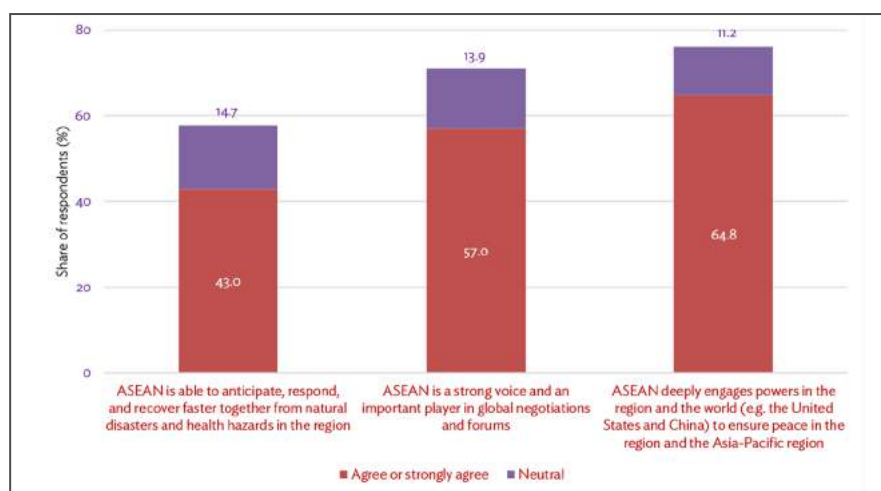


ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations

The unlikely reduction of pollution was a clear concern for the participants in the FGDs. The youth participants agreed that it would be very unlikely to see less pollution in major ASEAN cities. Some of the participants named several cities in ASEAN that they had visited, including Jakarta and Manila. All but one had been to Ha Noi before. They all complained about the existing levels of pollution and said they had seen few meaningful attempts to reduce pollution. The business representatives in the FGDs also argued that pollution and traffic jams were prevalent, if not getting worse, in major cities in ASEAN, with the exception of Singapore. Meanwhile, two-thirds of the NGO participants and researchers rejected the possibility of lower pollution in major ASEAN cities by 2025.

Figure 18 shows the respondents' perceptions of the likelihood of improvements to ASEAN as a common community. The most likely was the engagement of international and regional powers in ASEAN affairs for ensuring regional stability. As much as 65% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed this was likely to happen. Improvement in ASEAN's influence in international forums and negotiations followed, with agreement or strong agreement by 57% of the respondents. Around 43% of the respondents believed that ASEAN would improve in terms of its capacity to anticipate, respond, and recover faster together from natural disaster and health hazards in the region. Again, improvements in these three aspects was highly preferred by Vietnamese respondents, but the belief in the likelihood of such improvements was low.

Figure 18: Expectations for ASEAN-related Issues by 2025



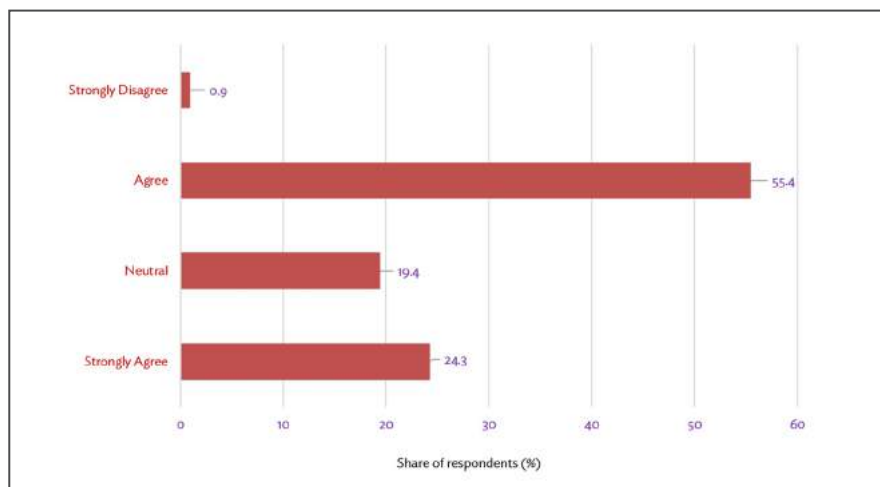
ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Figure 19 summarises the perceptions of the respondents on the need for capacity improvements to the ASEAN Secretariat. Only less than 1% of the respondents disagreed with the need for capacity improvements, while 20% were neutral. Almost 56% of the respondents agreed that the ASEAN Secretariat needed to gradually improve its capacity. Another 24% of the respondents were in strong agreement with the need for the improvements.

The FGD participants were not able to elaborate on the need for gradual capacity improvements to the ASEAN Secretariat. The key reason was their limited knowledge of the role and ongoing difficulties and challenges of the secretariat. The business participants were not able to make judgments on the capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat, especially in terms of preparing content or advocacy programmes for regional economic integration or coordination with major dialogue partners. A limited number of participants in the FGDs could not name the current Vietnamese secretary-general.

Even the NGO participants and researchers admitted that capacity building for the ASEAN Secretariat was necessary but could not explain in detail where the capacity improvements should be.

Figure 19: Agreement with the Need for Gradual Capacity Improvements for the ASEAN Secretariat



Conclusion

Various research and reports have elaborated on the significant implications of ASEAN for Viet Nam. Among the most important implications is the ‘ASEAN Way’, which has enabled Viet Nam to adapt to new rules, while building capacity for and engaging its citizens in the regional community-building process. Past work with the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint shows that achieving the regional ASEAN Economic Community – as per the definition of the community, i.e. a single production base and a single market with the free flow of goods, capital, and people – still requires further time and effort. As argued by Lloyd (2005), the definition of a single market is one in which the Law of One Price must hold in all goods, services, and factor markets. The progress towards ASEAN economic integration has been limited, and ASEAN is still far from having a single market.

Even if a true single market cannot be realised, it is crucial to make gradual improvements to the ASEAN community-building process, especially in building the sense of a common community. If this sense of community can be enhanced, the momentum for further integration of ASEAN will continue.

The survey described in this chapter has important findings. Most respondents were familiar with ASEAN, although those aged over 50 years old appear to have been more familiar with ASEAN-related topics. The students and employees were less confident about their understanding of ASEAN vis-à-vis the other groups of respondents. More than three-quarters of those surveyed felt moderately or strongly as ASEAN citizens, while almost 79% of respondents believed that ASEAN membership had been beneficial for Viet Nam. Meanwhile, about 60% of the respondents indicated they would be extremely or moderately concerned if Viet Nam were to leave ASEAN, and about 69% expressed strong or moderate optimism about the future of ASEAN.

However, Viet Nam is also facing several issues related to becoming a more integral part of ASEAN. Media coverage of ASEAN-related topics was generally perceived to be insufficient. Viet Nam also appears to be encountering pressing issues similar to those faced by ASEAN, including climate change and natural disasters, corruption, poor management of natural resources and biodiversity loss, and agriculture and food security. Most importantly, the respondents aspired to witness a range of improvements in ASEAN in various aspects, including accessibility, inclusiveness, and sustainability issues, although few respondents believed the realisation of such improvements was likely.

From Viet Nam's perspective, while promoting a competitive ASEAN remains important, engaging the people and inducing them to share in the benefits from the regional community-building process should be given priority. To begin with, information on ASEAN should be better disseminated, aimed at informing the people and preparing them ahead of community-building measures of the opportunities and challenges of regional integration. Incorporating ASEAN content into textbooks is also necessary, but will not suffice in the absence of measures to make the ASEAN community-building process participatory to the people. Fostering intergenerational dialogues and the sharing of experiences may further help to alleviate the differences in attitudes towards ASEAN across age groups.

The findings identify a range of challenges for Viet Nam and ASEAN, and many of them are not new, e.g. corruption, climate change, and natural disasters. It is, therefore, necessary for Viet Nam to incorporate measures to effectively address such issues in its domestic agenda. Central to such measures should be meaningful attempts to increase public participation in the rule-making process on the basis of complete information provision and the fostering of a sense of ASEAN citizenship. At the broader level, further capacity building for the ASEAN Secretariat should remain essential for ensuring that the region as a whole is proceeding 'from actions to decisive actions', rather than just 'from vision to action' (Nguyen et al., 2014).

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