

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN KAZAKHSTAN SOCIETY (Based on Public Opinion Polls)

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### *I n t r o d u c t i o n*

I dentifying young people as a separate social group has been practiced since the differences in outlook between the younger and older generations was first noticed. The generation gap, which has existed since the dawn of civilization, has become a target of study for thinkers and scientists; entire fields of research have appeared in philosophy, sociology, and psychology devoted to relations between the generations, whereby particular attention is focused on behavioral traits, as well as on how values are formed among young people as a whole, as well as in their individual groups.

Today, there is a wealth of scientific information that allows drawing up a universal portrait of young people as a specific socio-demographic segment of society. The numerous studies show that, along with certain general characteristics (biological and psychological), young people living in different countries of the world differ from each other in many parameters (both external and internal). Despite the growing globalization, it is

the local sociocultural environment that continues to have the greatest influence on the younger generation.

Demographers customarily classify people between the ages of 15 and 30 as young; however, the social sciences do not stipulate any precise social or age limits to define the concept "young people." Usually the question of who to classify as young is determined in each specific case based on the scientific and applied tasks at hand.

Surveys on youth problems are not carried out very often in the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK), and the information available to the broad public is mainly journalistic (or synoptic) in nature and usually extremely superficial. So it can be said that there is essentially no serious research (including academic dissertations) in the republic aimed at studying young people. There is also a dearth of specialists on youth affairs. However, an increased interest is currently being shown in young people as a social phenomenon in Kazakhstan society. This is primarily due to the fact that

a new generation, which has grown up in essentially very different conditions, is emerging to replace the old.

If we keep in mind that a person's conscious socialization begins at the age of 7-8, more than 25% of Kazakhstan's population today can be called "children" of the post-Soviet times. This is why it is particularly important to gain a clear idea of what young people today are like, what qualities they possess, and how generational continuity affects the situation in the country.

At present, the cross-generational relations on which public attention is focusing are examined from the following perspectives:

- 1) *From the sociocultural respect*, a whole set of questions is examined related to the cultural identity of young people, as well as to how they conform to the prevailing social standards. This includes the moral characteristics of the younger generation, the special features of their world outlook, their attitude toward cultural heritage, degree of religiosity, level of education, and so on. The above-mentioned parameters form the basis on which the nature of cross-generational relations as a whole is evaluated. It has become popular in Kazakhstan society to think that a break in continuity has occurred that is leading to the formation of a value and cultural abyss between the older and younger generations. This is due to the fact that over the past 20 years, the sociocultural situation in the country has frequently fallen under the influence of different movements and trends, and it is young people who are the main expressions of cultural diversity.
- 2) *From the political respect*, young people are viewed as a potential bearer of the idea of major political changes, however, in the stable conditions in Kazakhstan, this is not perceived as a threat to the political system. Nevertheless, the measures adopted by the state (for example, the initiative to create a national youth movement) show that the government is

keeping close tabs on the moods of young people and trying not to permit their radicalization or the emergence of protest groups. What is more, the political potential of young people has become an urgent issue in light of the events in Kyrgyzstan and the Middle Eastern countries (as we know, it is young people who form the nucleus of the revolutionary movement in those countries).

The increased interest in young people has given rise to numerous speculations among experts (both Kazakh and foreign). For example, it is popular opinion that there is such an obvious generation gap in Kazakhstan society that there is no need to scientifically prove it. There is also a popular myth about the destructive potential of young people and about a youth revolt against the political system that is supposedly brewing in the depths of society.

The supporters of the above-mentioned conjectures point out that Kazakhstan's young people have grown up in new conditions and, consequently, are programmed in advance to reproduce a different sociopolitical structure. In so doing, as mentioned above, there are no special studies that might confirm or refute this hypothesis.

This article presents the results of opinion polls (covering all age groups) which to some extent might fill the existing gap in the scientific understanding of Kazakhstan's young people today and shed light on the discussion about the nature of cross-generational relations. An attempt has been made based on mass polls to draw a social, political, and value-cultural picture of the younger generation.

The research carried out by the employees of the Strategy Center for Social and Political Research Public Fund in 2009-2010 by means of a questionnaire survey of the adult population of Kazakhstan (face-to-face) served as the empirical basis of this study. An average of 1,600 respondents took part in each survey; they were selected by means of a quota sample represented by place of residence (city-village), gender, age, and ethnic affiliation (the data of the RK Statistics Agency were used to form the sample). The survey was

carried out in each of the country's 14 regions (including the regional center and 2-3 villages in each region) and cities of republican status (Almaty and Astana).

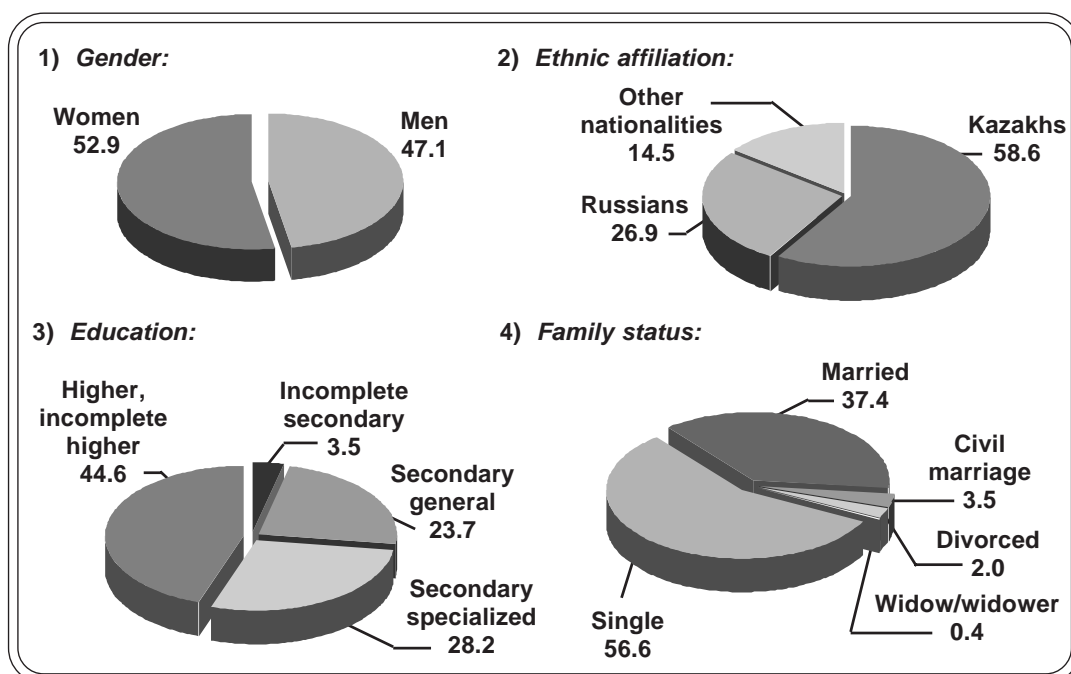
Since only people who have come of legal age are included in the sample in the national polls, the lower age limit of the youth group was 18. The upper age limit of the group was determined based on the official interpretation of the term "young," according to which citizens under 30 are considered young (Law on Government Youth Policy of the RK). It should be noted that in each survey,

the percentage of young people between 18 and 29 in keeping with the sampled population amounted to no less than 30% of the total number of respondents (in correspondence with the structure of the population). In numbers, this amounts to an average of 500 young people in a sample of 1,600 people (see Fig. 1).

As the many years of observations show, the social-demographic structure of young people presented above is stable and was representative of this group in terms of such parameters as gender and ethnic affiliation.

Figure 1

The Social-Demographic Structure of the Youth Sample



## Social Life

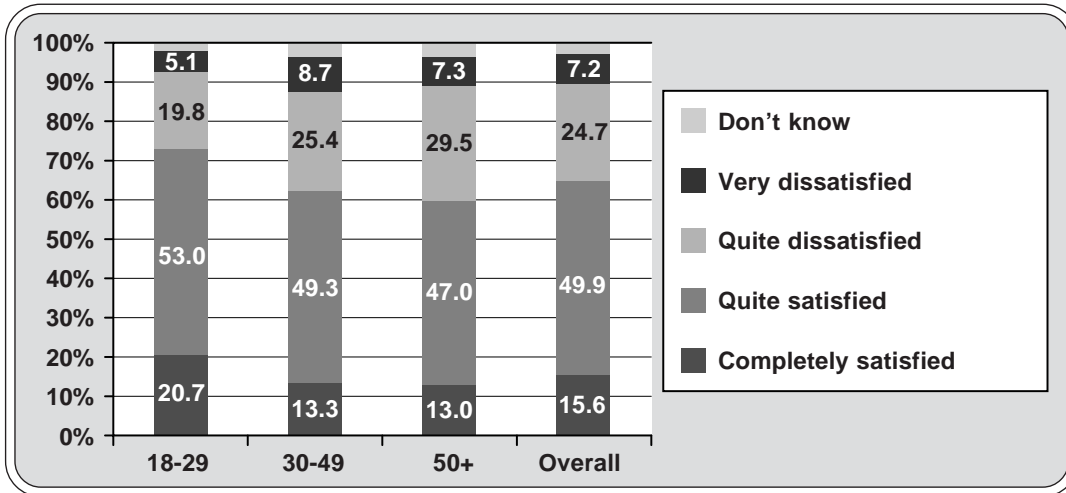
The social wellbeing of people today is primarily determined by material and essential benefits, as well as the position they hold (status-related, official, and professional). Age as such is not an important criterion in the formation of social moods. Nevertheless, the studies we carried out in different years make it possible to identify such a consistent characteristic of young people as a high level of optimism and more positive perception of the world around them compared with people of the middle and older generations. For example, in a recent survey, every fifth young person said they were

“completely satisfied” with their life, while every second said they were “quite satisfied,” whereas there were noticeably fewer members of the middle and older generations who felt this way.

A total of 25% of young people are dissatisfied with their lives, while 34% of the middle generation and 37% of the older generation fall into this category (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2

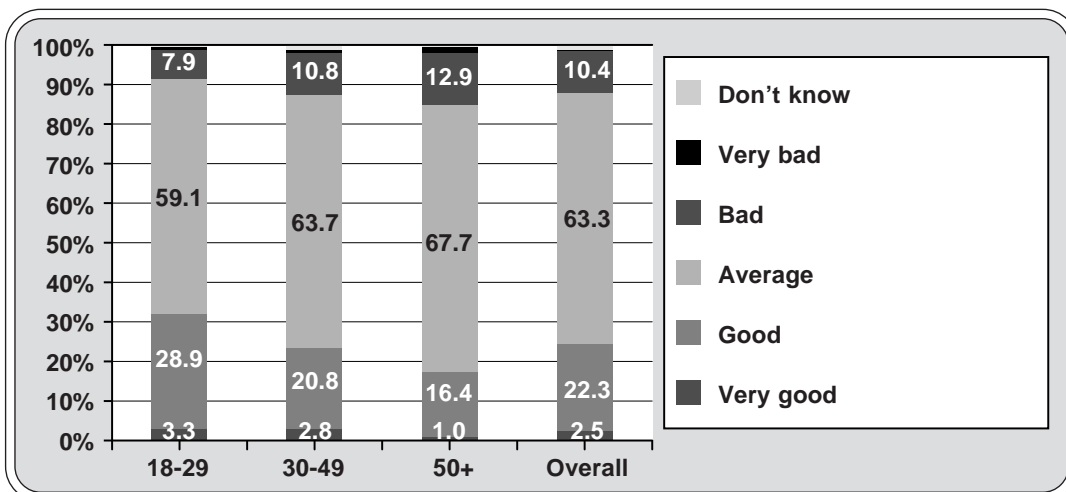
Level of Life Satisfaction of Different Age Groups and Among the Population as a Whole (January 2010)



The next index that distinguishes young people from the older generation is the assessment of their family’s material status. According to the data obtained, young people are inclined to assess the

Figure 3

Assessment of the Material Status of the Family by Different Age Groups and Among the Population as a Whole (January 2010)



prosperity of their families somewhat higher than their parents. For example, 29% of young people regard it as good, whereas 21% and 16% of respondents from the middle and older generations, respectively, gave this assessment of the prosperity of their families (see Fig. 3).

Kazakhstan's young people also largely have a positive assessment of future changes in the material status of their families; 55% were certain that their prosperity would improve in the next year, while only 42% of the older generation shared their optimism.

Do the above-mentioned assessments (relatively high) among young people show that they objectively live better than the older and middle generations?

On the one hand, the survey shows that, compared with the other age groups, young people have a higher income. According to the data obtained during the poll, the average monthly family income among 18-29-year-olds amounts to 58,400 tenge (around \$400) compared to 56,000 tenge among 30-49-year-olds and 53,300 tenge in the 50 and older age group. Moreover, young people declare they have greater consumer possibilities than the older generation.

But upon closer look we discover that there are no serious differences in the status of the age groups; the younger generation is reproducing the same socio-professional structure as the adult population. Moreover, 53.5% of young people do not have jobs (the relatively high level of unemployment in this group also shows the social vulnerability of young people); this applies to students, the unemployed, and housewives who are dependent on their relatives (see Table 1).

Table 1

**Socio-Professional Characteristics of Different Age Groups and of the Population as a Whole**  
(%, January 2010)

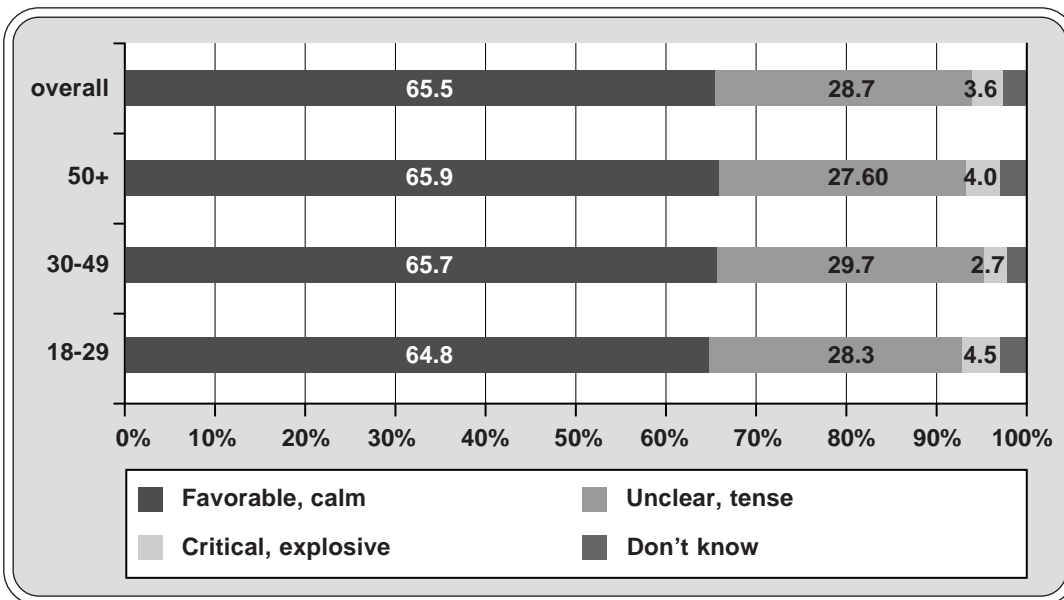
	18-29	30-49	50+	Overall
<b>Businessman, owner</b>	2.4	7.5	3.8	4.9
<b>Director, manager</b>	1.6	2.2	1.0	1.7
<b>Civil servant</b>	5.9	7.4	3.8	6.0
<b>Budget sphere employee (medicine, education)</b>	6.3	13.8	7.3	9.7
<b>Employee of a private company, bank</b>	10.6	10.8	4.5	9.1
<b>Farm worker</b>	1.2	3.8	3.0	2.8
<b>Industrial worker</b>	5.9	10.1	6.3	7.7
<b>Service employee</b>	9.6	12.9	5.3	9.8
<b>Pensioner (old age or invalid)</b>	0.4	1.3	51.5	14.2
<b>Student, pupil</b>	28.4	—	—	9.1
<b>Unemployed, temporarily out of work</b>	13.7	12.7	7.5	11.7
<b>Housewife</b>	11.4	13.1	4.8	10.4
<b>Other</b>	2.4	4.4	1.5	3.0

So young people’s relatively positive attitude toward social issues can be put down to their lower degree of involvement in the public division of labor, low encumbrance with family and everyday concerns, and inclination toward maximalism when assessing their own conditions. It should be noted that the younger the age group, the more positive the mood; students between the age of 18 and 22 are the most optimistic.

There are no significant differences in perception of the general situation in the country between young people and the older generation. It is assessed by all three age groups in approximately the same way: most people think it is favorable and calm, more than a quarter believe it to be unclear and tense, and approximately 4% regard it as critical and explosive (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4

**Assessment of the General Situation  
in the Country Broken Down into Age Groups and  
Among the Population as a Whole  
(January 2010)**



The results of the survey show that young people feel basically the same way as the country’s adult population regarding society’s most urgent problems. Young people are mainly concerned about increasing food prices, high utility rates, and low income level.

Nevertheless, some problems are strictly related to young people, such as the high cost of university education and not having their own housing. Moreover, young people are more concerned than adults about environmental problems, the low quality of education, and recreational problems (see Table 2).

We should take a closer look at the unavailability of housing, since today it is difficult to overestimate its significance in the life of young people who intend to start their own family. A special study determined that more than 60% of young people feel the need to improve their housing conditions (this figure is 54% among the members of the middle generation, and 48% among the older generation). Every fourth young member of the Kazakhstan population rents housing, while every third lives with his or her parents. Housing is most urgent for young people who live in the capital cities and particularly for those who have secondary specialized education and are in a civil marriage.

Table 2

**The Most Urgent Problems of  
Kazakhstan Society Broken Down into Age Groups and  
Among the Population as a Whole  
(%, January 2010)**

	18-29	30-49	50+	Overall
Increase in price of food and basic essentials	54.4	60.8	62.6	59.2
High utility rates	47.5	49.5	55.7	50.5
Low income level	37.7	41.7	31.2	37.7
Unemployment	30.8	32.8	25.5	30.2
Low quality of health care	24.0	26.6	33.2	27.5
High cost of study in higher educational institutions	33.8	21.3	21.8	25.4
Corruption	21.8	22.0	18.1	20.9
Unavailability of housing	25.5	17.3	7.7	17.4
Low pension level	8.6	8.3	34.9	15.4
Poor roads	14.9	15.0	11.4	14.0
Wage arrears	10.4	15.6	11.6	12.9
Insufficient number of kindergartens	13.6	14.8	8.7	12.8
Health problems	7.3	11.9	20.0	12.6
Crime	13.0	11.9	12.1	12.3
Low level of education	12.8	11.7	9.2	11.4
Problems with paying back loans	8.4	12.5	9.4	10.4
Environmental problems	12.4	9.4	6.4	9.6
Problems with drinking water supply	8.8	10.2	9.4	9.5
Recreational problems	6.7	3.4	2.7	4.3
No problems	2.0	1.7	0.7	1.6
Other	0.6	1.1	2.0	1.2
Don't know	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3

There is a clear lack of correlation between the life precepts of young people and the older generation when resolving certain problems. In the event the socioeconomic situation in the country worsens, most young people (63%) intend to look for ways to improve their lives themselves. This

position dramatically differs from the inclination that predominates among the older generation to patiently wait for better times (45%).

It is obvious that in the context of the new market conditions and change in ideological references, the rising generation has formed as a more self-sufficient and independent socio-demographic group that prefers to take active steps (particularly in difficult situations) and rely primarily on itself.

Radical ways to improve life are not popular among the country's population; only 5% of young people are willing to openly oppose the authorities. Approximately, the same number of young people intend to leave the country if life becomes worse (see Table 3).

Table 3

**Distribution of Responses to the Question  
"What Will You Do if the Socioeconomic Situation  
in the Country Deteriorates in the Near Future?"  
(%, January 2010)**

	18-29	30-49	50+	Overall
I will independently look for any way to improve my life	62.7	56.0	44.2	55.0
I will patiently wait for better times	21.9	27.1	45.4	30.3
I will try to emigrate	4.1	3.7	2.0	3.4
I will participate in mass protest demonstrations	2.3	3.9	2.5	3.0
I will join an organization intent on achieving a change in power	2.3	1.6	0.7	1.6
Other	0.2	0.2	—	0.1
Don't know	6.6	7.5	5.2	6.6

## Political Relations

After acquiring its independence, the country's political development unfolded in keeping with a precise course aimed at establishing a strict vertical of power and ensuring a high degree of manageability of the domestic situation.

As practice shows, the political model that has formed in Kazakhstan has proven effective; it has become a consensus for the population, managerial elite, and external political entities, thanks to which, during the past 20 years, the situation in the country has been developing normally without any social upheavals or ethnic conflicts (which cannot be said about other countries of the former Soviet Union). This stability has had an impact on the political consciousness of the Kazakhstan population (including young people).

On the basis of the study results, some special features of the political consciousness of Kazakhstan's young people today can be identified. The fact that young people are not very involved in the



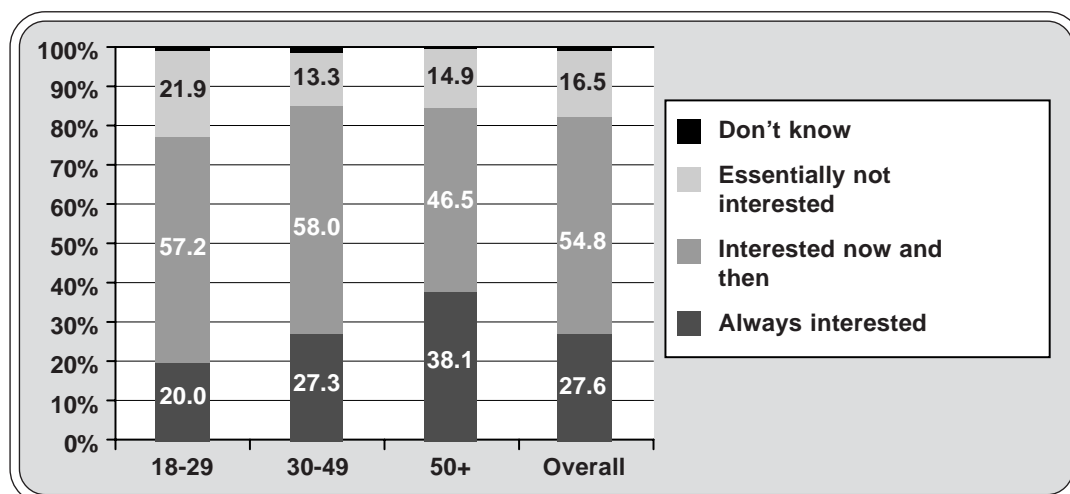
country's political life is largely due to the slogan declared at the beginning of independence, "first the economy, then politics," which resulted in de-politicization of the young people who grew up under the new regime and is confirmed by the results of sociological polls.

According to the data obtained, only every fifth young person shows an ongoing interest in the political events going on in the country, while 22% of the young people polled are entirely indifferent to them.

Figure 5 shows that an interest in political life is almost twice as high among the members of the middle and older generation.

Figure 5

Interest in the Political Events  
in the Country Broken Down into Age Groups and  
Among the Population as a Whole  
(March 2010)



The low level of civilian and electorate activity is a result of the low interest in politics. According to the poll data, 54% of young voters are willing to take part in parliamentary elections, while every third has no attention at all of going to the polls (particularly if elections are to be held next weekend). It should be noted that the same index is noticeably higher in the older age groups.

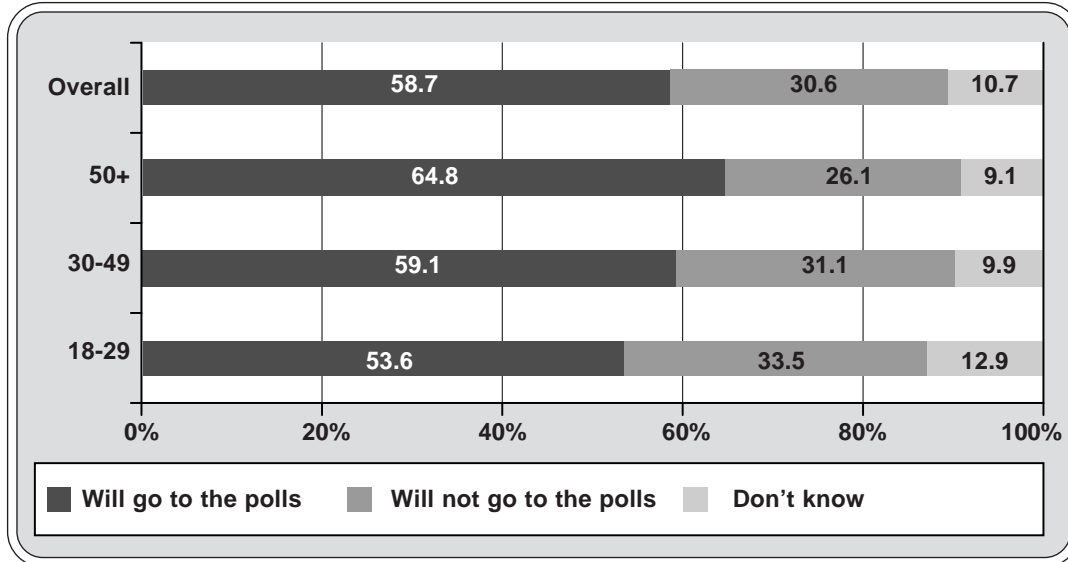
As the analysis shows, young people in large cities and members of non-Kazakh nationalities are less inclined to participate in voting. Young people living in rural places (68% of whom are willing to go to the polls) and young Kazakhs (66%) show greater civic consciousness.

So it becomes clear that, in Kazakhstan's conditions, electoral culture is still greatly influenced by Soviet tradition, according to which people participate in elections not so much to express their political will as to fulfill their civic duty. For entirely understandable reasons, this way of thinking predominates among the older generation, as well as among young people raised in a conservative rural environment (see Fig. 6).

Despite their apolitical behavior, Kazakhstan's young people still have quite a high level of loyalty toward the authorities; the president enjoys the trust of 82% of the country's young people, the government is trusted by 60%, and the parliament by 54%. These data make it possible to claim that the young people of Kazakhstan, like the rest of the republic's population, support the regime, although this attitude does not necessarily mean recognition of the authorities' merits.

Figure 6

**Electoral Activity (for Elections to the Majilis) of Different Age Groups and  
Among the Population as a Whole  
(March 2010)**



At the same time, 33% of young people do not trust the defense and security structures, and 44% mistrust the judicial system.

It is interesting that young people are quite critical of the “fourth power” (the media)—41% trust it and 39% do not trust it. As for the opposition, every second respondent does not trust it, while every third does not know.

So it can be claimed that young people’s support of the existing regime is based on trust in the head of state and his personal authority, which reflects the specifics of Kazakhstan’s political system with its strict centralization of power in keeping with the president’s policy.

The above-mentioned assessments of the political entities have remained stable over the past few years both with respect to young people and among the entire population of Kazakhstan, and in this case we can talk about the consolidated nature of public opinion (see Fig. 7).

So the conclusion can be drawn that Kazakhstan’s young people have a very low protest potential. Studies show that at present about 4% of young people are willing to participate in violent acts toward the authorities, while 6% are ready to take part in spontaneous meetings (3% and 5% among the population as a whole, respectively).

But, as experience shows, a deterioration of social conditions is capable of significantly catalyzing an increase in protest moods among young people. A sharp increase in prices, unemployment, and drop in the standard of living in the country could arouse active dissatisfaction among 25% of young citizens and particularly among those who are not working or have a low level of income (28%). There is also a comparatively high level of protest moods among students (27%).

On the whole, compared with the other age groups, young people more frequently express their willingness to participate in meetings and demonstrations: every fourth is ready to resort to illegal means of pressure on the authorities (only 15% of the 50 and older age group express such moods) (see Fig. 8).

Figure 7

Young People's Trust in the Power Structures and Other Political Entities  
(November 2009)

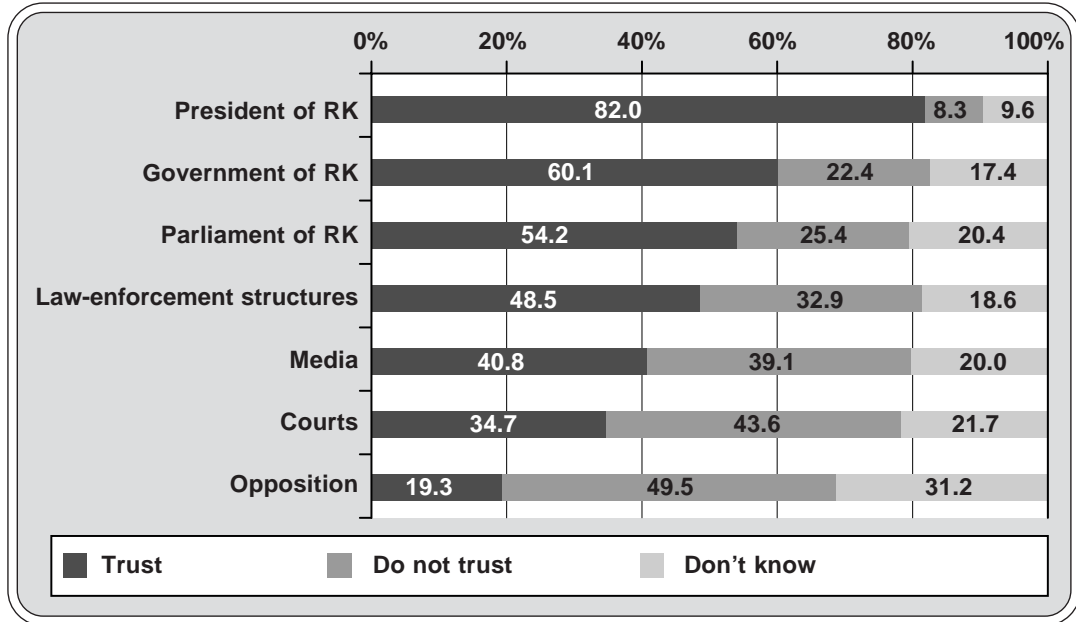
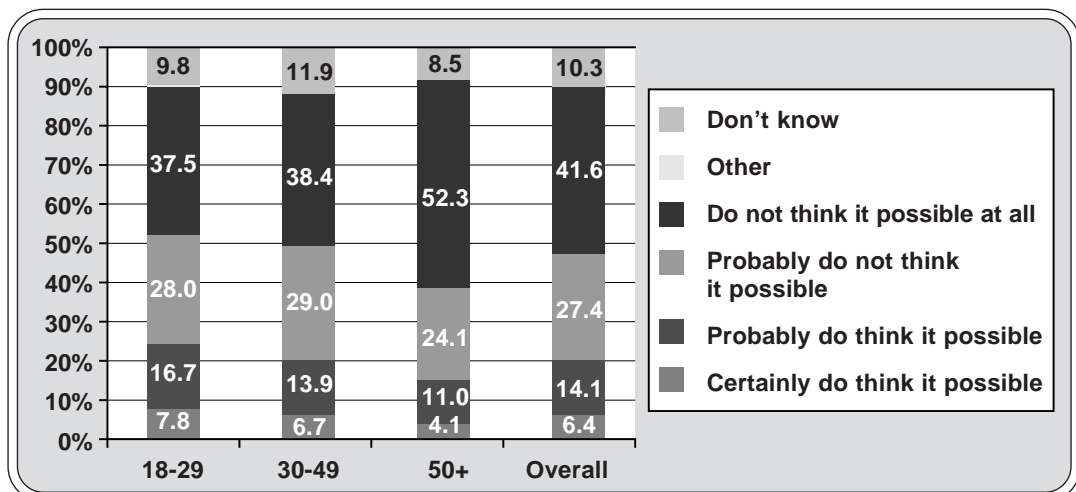


Figure 8

Distribution of Responses to the Question  
 "Do You Consider It Possible For Yourself Personally,  
 or Do You Approve of Participation in Mass Protest Acts (Demonstrations, Meetings)  
 Against an Increase in Prices, Unemployment,  
 and Drop in Standard of Living?"  
 (November 2009)



## Values and Precepts

The picture of young people's political predilections would not be complete without analyzing their values. It is known that when it gained its independence, Kazakhstan, like other countries of the former Soviet Union, entered a time of major political and economic changes that led to a complete change in the ideological reference points of development. Restructuring of state governance and public relations began in Kazakhstan along the lines of the democratic countries. At the same time, a corresponding system of values and ideals was established that presumed the use of the attributes characteristic of them.

In this respect, the question arises of the degree to which the Kazakhstan youth is receptive of the new values? Has it become imbibed with the ideals of the Western world or does it have other role models?

During research of this problem, the respondents were asked what the most important values for them are, the list of which included categories of both a political and an ideological nature. The results obtained make it possible to identify a system of political values characteristic for the different generations.

Not one of the alternatives offered in the survey questionnaire gathered a sufficient number of votes to be recognized as a prevailing social value. This shows that the political ideals of Kazakhstan society are still in flux, while the value system itself is in an amorphous state.

Nevertheless, the rating obtained makes it possible to identify the precepts predominating in the mass consciousness. As the following table shows, such categories as "independence" and "justice" took first place, gathering 30% of the votes each. Whereby these two categories are equally significant both for the older age groups and for young people, that is, they are of a consolidating nature (from the viewpoint of the generation gap).

But a more in-depth analysis of the survey results shows that, during the post-Soviet period, there has nevertheless been a shift in the value system of the younger generation. Such categories as personal safety and freedom are particularly important for today's young people (each of them gathered 23% of the votes), while the middle and older generations prefer stability, order, and government assistance.

So there has been an obvious shift away from the priorities of the Soviet era: the older generation raised on the principles of collectivism still places priority on common values that call for conservation of the situation, for young people, however, personal freedom is gradually moving to the forefront.

The decrease in paternal moods among young people is also worth noting, which is closely correlated with their inclination to rely on their own capabilities when resolving particular problems (see Table 4).

It can be noted that individualism inculcated during the post-Soviet period exists in the consciousness of Kazakhstan's young people, which presumes the priority of personal interest over public. Despite the decrease in their importance, conservative values still continue to play a significant role (particularly for the rural youth). So it would be more correct to talk not about a sharp turn, but gradual change in mental precepts in the consciousness of the rising generation.

It is worth noting that democracy is not particularly appealing either to the adult population or to young people; its ideas have not succeeded in transforming into an ideological structure that society understands. So the conclusion can be drawn that democratization in the classical understanding has not occurred in Kazakhstan, probably because this process is frequently of a declared and guided nature. Correspondingly, there are no prerequisites for forming a demand for democracy among the broad masses of the country's population. On the contrary, as the economic and political situation stabilized, the social foundation of conservatism became reinforced, with a tendency toward the state's protective role. So, according to the surveys, even among young people, the number of supporters of state regulation of the domestic political and economic situation (50%) predominates over those who uphold liberalization (25%).

Table 4

**Distribution of Responses to the Question  
“Which of the Following Values Are the Most Important for You?”  
(%, choice of up to three alternatives)**

	18-29	30-49	50+	Overall
Independence	29.8	30.4	29.7	30.0
Justice	29.6	29.6	31.7	30.2
Personal Safety	23.1	19.9	18.9	20.6
Freedom	22.9	19.6	13.8	19.1
Stability	21.3	24.5	24.1	23.4
Order	21.1	24.2	26.4	23.8
Government Assistance	21.1	22.2	26.4	23.0
Personal Worth	13.2	8.8	7.6	9.9
Equality	12.8	14.6	13.3	13.7
Democracy	11.5	14.9	16.3	14.2
Morality	11.5	16.3	12.6	13.8
Conscience	9.3	9.3	11.7	9.9
Spirituality	8.1	8.8	10.3	9.0
Private Property	5.1	5.3	5.3	5.3
Solidarity	4.9	4.0	6.0	4.8
Tradition	3.8	4.0	4.8	4.1
Other	0.4	—	—	0.1
Don't know	7.5	7.6	5.1	6.9

On the basis of the data obtained, it can be concluded that, in the political respect, Western ideals have not found wide support (or understanding) among the rising generation and have not been “assimilated” as cultural models, styles of behavior, and ways of life. The distribution of responses to the question about what country (or union of countries) the people of Kazakhstan would like to live in shows this to a certain extent.

For example, approximately the same number of respondents in each of the three groups would like to live in their own country (without it joining any other country) (an average of 36%); 16% of the respondents in the 18-29 age group would like to live in Europe, while this figure was almost three-fold lower among the members of the older generation.

Moreover, it should be noted that approximately 16% of people older than 50 and 8% of young people are still nostalgic for the Soviet Union (see Table 5).

Table 5

**Distribution of Responses to the Question  
“If You Could Choose, Which Country or Union of  
Countries Would You Like to Live In?”  
(%, November 2009)**

	18-29	30-49	50+	Overall
In United Europe (the European Union)	15.5	8.8	5.9	10.2
In a united Union of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan	17.0	19.1	20.4	18.7
In the Commonwealth of Independent States—CIS (like now)	15.1	16.7	15.6	15.9
In a newly united Union of all the republics of the former Soviet Union (15 countries)	8.0	10.8	15.6	11.1
In my own country without it joining any other country	37.0	35.5	34.7	35.8
Don't know	7.4	9.1	7.9	8.2

Analyzing young people's perception of particular historical events is an important aspect in understanding the value orientation of young people. It is known that after the countries of the former Soviet Union acquired their independence, critical reassessment of the history of the Soviet period occurred. Designing and interpreting the Soviet past to comply with the changed reality have become important components of the ideological policy of the regimes in the newly independent states. Within the framework of the educational process, the new generation has been presented with a “revised” version of history that gives a fresh interpretation of the cultural and historical heritage of the Soviet Union.

In 2009, a special study was carried out in 14 post-Soviet countries under the Eurasian Monitor project (for more detail, see: [eurasiamonitor.org]), during which particular attention was focused on studying how different age groups representing the different eras (Soviet and post-Soviet) perceive history.

Table 6 presents the separate results of this study, which graphically illustrate certain characteristics in the historical consciousness of the people of Kazakhstan (during the poll, the respondents were asked to assess the significance of certain key events in the Soviet and post-Soviet history of the 20th century).

- First, the rising generation clearly knows much less about history than the adult population; the further back in time an event occurred, the less young people know about it. For example, 22% of the respondents in the 18-29 age group do not know anything about the February Revolution (while only 9% of the 50 and older age group do not know), 13% do not know about the formation of the Soviet Union, and 2% know nothing about the victory over Fascist Germany.
- Second, despite the fact that the Soviet period is largely assessed positively by all of Kazakhstan's population (apart from the tragic events of 1937-1938), there is an ambiguous attitude among the different age groups, due to generational differences, to the actual collapse of the

Table 6

**Assessment by Different Age Groups of the Main Events of  
the 20th Century (%)**

Historical Events	Age group	Assessment				
		Have not heard of this event	negative	neutral	positive	Don't know
1. February Revolution of 1917 in the Russian empire (fall of autocracy)	18-29	21.9	12.4	20.7	27.1	17.9
	30-49	9.8	12.7	24.1	35.0	18.3
	50+	9.1	11.5	23.3	40.9	15.2
2. Ascension to power of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party (October Revolution of 1917)	18-29	14.4	9.8	25.6	38.0	12.1
	30-49	5.8	15.0	21.0	49.1	9.2
	50+	5.4	10.5	17.2	58.8	8.1
3. Formation of the Soviet Union in 1922	18-29	13.0	5.2	20.5	52.4	8.9
	30-49	6.0	6.0	16.5	60.7	10.7
	50+	4.7	4.4	13.9	68.6	8.4
4. Political court cases in 1937-1938, mass arrests, repressions and shooting of political prisoners	18-29	15.0	65.4	8.9	4.0	6.6
	30-49	6.3	74.6	7.6	5.1	6.5
	50+	5.4	73.6	7.4	5.7	7.8
5. Germany's capitulation to the Soviet Union in May 1945 (victory of the Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945)	18-29	1.7	4.6	2.9	87.3	3.5
	30-49	1.1	3.6	2.2	91.3	1.8
	50+	0.7	5.1	4.4	88.5	1.4
6. Collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991	18-29	4.9	31.7	14.4	35.45	13.5
	30-49	1.6	45.1	16.7	27.0	9.6
	50+	0.7	49.0	16.2	25.7	8.4
7. Acquisition by Kazakhstan of its independence in December 1991	18-29	1.2	2.3	7.2	85.6	3.7
	30-49	0.9	2.7	6.7	86.6	3.1
	50+	0.7	1.0	6.8	89.2	2.4

Soviet Union. The older and middle generations perceive this event very negatively (45% and 54%, respectively), while young people are more inclined to regard it as a positive turn in the country's history (35%).

- Third, despite all the existing differences, there are no categorical differences between the generations in their assessment of the events of the historical past. And although the importance of the Soviet heritage is gradually declining, it does not threaten a split in values between the generations.

Attention is drawn to the fact that the same traits are inherent in middle-aged people as in the older and younger generations. So it can be presumed that middle-aged people are a kind of buffer zone that ensures generational continuity and acts as a link in the transfer of values.

### *In Lieu of a Conclusion: Is There a Generation Gap in Kazakhstan?*

The comparative data obtained help to answer one of the key questions of the topic under review, "Is there a generation gap in Kazakhstan?"

Before answering this question, we should clarify what precisely the "generation gap" is and how it is manifested?

According to well-known Russian sociologist G.V. Osipov,<sup>1</sup> this gap occurs when, due to its socialization, the younger generation does not identify itself with the main social standards (ideological, legal, distributional), rejecting them, thus alienating itself and attempting to reproduce a different political and ideological structure. The concept "gap" ("split") acquires key significance in this event, since it gives rise to profound differentiation between the generations (most often between the older and younger) with respect to fundamental life values and precepts.

In social life, age differences can be manifested in an imbalance in the professional structure of society in terms of age, or in a decline in the social status of one of the groups.

In the cultural sphere, the generation gap could cause the emergence of different types of stereotypes (the Pepsi generation, transition-age children, and so on), or phobias (for example, gerontophobia).

But more often than not the generation gap is manifested in the political and ideological sphere, since the new generation often refuses to accept the established sociopolitical standards and acts as an advocator of cardinal changes.

It is no accident that the concept of "generation gap" came to the fore in the 20th century, when young people in different parts of the world became the main participants in antigovernment demonstrations (the youth rebellions of the 1960s in Europe, the Cultural Revolution in China, the December events in Almaty in 1986, and so on).

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the topic of relations between the generations was raised anew in essentially all the newly independent states. In some countries, this problem boosted the activity of extremist movements (the Baltic countries and Russia), in others it was manifested in political (electoral) behavior (for example, in Moldova and Ukraine, young people vote differently from the older age groups), and in still others revolutionary masses appeared ready to engage in active illegal acts (Kyrgyzstan).

If we keep in mind all the above, it becomes clear that Kazakhstan has no obvious signs of a generation gap today. The studies show that despite the difference in life values (according to some

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<sup>1</sup> G.V. Osipov, *Sotsiologia i obshchestvo*, Moscow, 2007.



parameters), the young people of Kazakhstan are still oriented toward reproducing the existing social structure and assess the situation in the country within the framework set by public opinion.

In the political respect, young people do not stand out in terms of their radical views, rather, on the contrary, they support the official policy, expressing, in so doing, loyalty to the existing government. The conclusion can be drawn that today's younger generation identifies itself as part of the system of social and political relations that has formed in Kazakhstan and, accepting the standards that predominate in society, is trying to adapt to the current conditions and looking for ways to express itself within the existing system of coordinates.

As for public policy, there are no radical youth organizations in Kazakhstan, while the electoral behavior of young people is relatively predictable and does not differ from the actions of other age groups. Moreover, it should be noted that during Kazakhstan's 20 years of independence, the protest activity of its population has never been of a markedly youth nature.

At present, most of the active and politicized young people are trying to realize their potential within the ranks of Zhas Otan (which is the youth wing of the ruling party). Moreover, the civil service is the most attractive place to work for students.

In addition to the stability of the domestic political situation, weak transformation of the social institutions (school, family, army), differentiation of society along other lines (not age-related), etc., the present author believes one of the most important factors ensuring generational continuity in Kazakhstan to be the system of traditional values that continues to play an important role in the socialization of the younger generation. Sociologists studying the reasons for the absence of generational differences among the residents of the Central Asian countries in assessments of the Soviet period of history have also come to the same conclusion (participants in the Eurasian Monitor project).

Transfer of the cultural and spiritual heritage is an important component in bringing up children in Kazakhstan society. As a rule, in every Kazakh family, the rising generation is inculcated with reverence of the customs and legacy of their ancestors, respect for the elderly, and a solicitous attitude toward history. This makes the sociocultural connection between the generations stable and relatively independent of external circumstances.

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