

Results of a Public Opinion Survey on the Activities and Participation of Mongolian Trade Unions

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Abstract

The basis of democratic governance is the involvement of civil society in the policy-making and decision-making processes. Ensuring the right of interest parties to be involved in the policy process and creating a legal environment for improving civil society participation are considered to be important issues.

Trade unions have become a subject in public policy development, expressing the interests of its members and supporters. Policy actors and organizations work together to define the content of policies to address any challenges and Trade Union play a major role in the arrangement of implementation as per the decisions.

Most of the Mongolian Trade Union (MTU) members of inherited from the old socialist era are limited to the framework of state institutions inherited from the previous social era. These weaknesses are the reasons for the slow development of the MTU society. It is also necessary to improve the influence of the organization and its ability to lead and move.

Keywords: policy-making, decision-making processes interest group, participation, Trade Union

1. Introduction

Whether interest groups are involved in policy-making is determined by their political rights. Before 1990, public organizations such as the Workers' Union, the Mongolian Youth Union and the Mongolian Women's Union operated in Mongolia, which implement socialist state ideology and one-party policy decisions. Since the democratic revolution, those unions have been reformed and a legal environment has been created for them to operate independently from the state. Although interest group participation in the process of developing government policies and making decisions in Mongolia is partially achieved, the lack of research on the scope of impact of their activities and the level of participation indicates the need for research in this area.

Trade Unions, as a form of interest group united by citizens' interests, play an important role in determining, developing and implementing of government policy. It has been proven that involving Trade Unions in policy development positively impacts the quality of policies and improves monitoring and implementation. Therefore, it is essential to study how the implementation of Trade Union's rights to participate in the process of developing public policies, and decision-making and how the processes of negotiation, consultation, and cooperation on policy issues are ensured, are very important.

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by the Mongolian Trade Union Organization, a major interest group in Mongolia in participating in the state policy-making process and identify possible solutions to deal with them.

Research methods such as summarizing, analyzing, and documenting the history of the Mongolian Trade Union have been applied in the research.

2. Discussion

Trade Union, as a form of interest group, is more stable and diverse in its influence and activities on the political system in more developed and stable countries, depending on the relationship between state institutions and in comparison with other nations. The influence and activities are more stable and legalized and they are more widespread and cover more classes of society.

J.Madison, A.Bentley, and D.Truman first laid the theoretical and methodological foundations for the study of interest groups and their participation in politics.

Interest groups and participation of interest groups in the policy-making process have been studied by researchers J.Almond, J.Powell (expression of social interests, typological analysis of interest groups) (Note 1), R.Dahl, E.Frenkel (pluralism theory) (Note 2), F.Schmitter, G.Lembruch (corporatism and neocorporatism)

(Note 3), M.Olson (problems of the origin of interest groups and analysis of the negative consequences of activities of interest groups) (Note 4), R.Salisbury (concept of political entrepreneurship) (Note 5), C.Lindblom, J.Wilson (problems of the political influence of business) (Note 6), J. Blondel, M. Duverger, J.Meino, W.Alemann, G.Jordan (analysis of the typology and organization of interest groups) (Note 7), L.Milbraz, J.Barry, D.Decifer, R.Hall, A.Dardorf, B.Walp, B.Levin, H.Ziegler, M.Baer, K.Coleman, R.Smith, N.G.Zyablyuk (Theory and Practice of Lobbying) (Note 8), etc., have studied the interest groups from many different ways and perspectives, respectively.

Modern socio-political development takes the concept of civil society development to a completely different level, including reflecting the interests of society members in the process of developing and applying the political decisions, offering opportunities for further strengthen state-civil partnership relations.

In 1985, researcher Richard B. Freeman identified that Trade Unions provide information and expertise to policy debates on working environment standards, wages, and workplace safety. Based on this, he clarified the understanding of the structure and functions of the institution. On the other hand, researcher Kingdon considered that Trade Unions play an important role in bringing labor-related issues into political policymaking and, consequently, wages (minimum wage) and labor rights to the attention of policymakers, and clarified the role of trade unions in society.

In political science, interest groups are considered to be powerful actors that can influence the formulation of public policy by transforming the collective interests of multiple social groups into specific demands. Therefore, this study was performed based on the methodology of systems theory, group approach, pluralist theory, structure-role theory and institutional theory.

It is more effective for ordinary citizens to voluntarily unite and convey their positions and interests to the state through interest group organizations. Article 16 of the 1992 Constitution of Mongolia states that The right to freedom of association in political parties or other voluntary organizations based on social and personal interests and opinions... Discrimination and persecution of a person for joining a political party or other associations or for being their member are prohibited... freedom of thought, opinion, expression, speech, press, and peaceful assembly (Constitution of Mongolia, 1992) provides the legal basis for the establishment of interest groups in Mongolia. In other words, the Trade Union has not only created opportunities for members to join the Union but also to express and protect the interests of its supporters, involved in and influence the development of state policy.

As well as Article 3.3 of the Law on Trade Union Rights states that “It is prohibited to restrict the rights and freedoms of citizens or to discriminate against them with regards to membership or non-membership in Trade Union ” (Law of the People’s Republic of Mongolia on Trade Union Rights, 1991) and Article 5.4 of the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations states that “Discrimination against and/or restriction of the rights and freedom of any person on the grounds on his/her association with a non-governmental organization is prohibited” (Law on Non-Governmental Organizations, 1997) respectively.

The number of members of the MTU was 624,800 in 1990, but today it has decreased by 3 times. As of today, there are more than 200,000 members, 13 professional industrial associations, and a total of 24 Associations in aimags and the capital of Ulaanbaatar (G.Adiya). As of May 2024, 7.2 percent of the total population, or about 14 percent of the total workforce, is a member of the MTU. The main reasons for explained below:

- Before 1990, the right of citizens to join a Trade Union was based on voluntary participation, but in reality, everyone who signed a labor agreement was automatically considered a Trade Union member.
- As Mongolia transitioned to a market economy, state-owned enterprises were closed, resulting in workers losing their jobs and losing their Trade Union membership.
- As well as, since most employers who privatized industries did not want to have Trade Union organizations or did not support their activities, workers were unable to maintain their rights to be members of the Trade Union and they were spontaneously dissolved.
- Employees of newly established enterprises are not aware of the importance of joining the Trade Union and do not take the initiative to exercise their rights.
- Most of the members are government employees. Expansion to include private sector employees has been slow.

3. Materials and Methods

In my research paper, I have selected a questionnaire from a quantitative methodology while the document research and individual interview from qualitative research methodology respectively. Data were collected within the framework of the following processes. These include:

1. Conducting a pre-data collection study, identifying the research variables, and developing the research design;
2. Testing the research design on a sample of 58 people to determine the reliability of the data collection tools;
3. The pilot study confirmed the reliability of the variables, the sample, and the appropriateness of the scale, so the study was conducted in electronic and paper form between June and December 2024, covering 1000 citizens of the aimag and the capital city.

The participation of Trade Unions, which are representatives of interest groups, in the state policy-making process and the factors affecting it were considered in the following eight groups. In doing so, they:

1. Factors related to citizens' attitudes towards protecting their right to work;
2. Factors related to how interest group participation in the policy-making process is understood;
3. Factors related to trust in institutions operating in the direction of ensuring and protecting labor rights;
4. Economic factors affecting the development of trade union organizations in the policy-making process;
5. Factors related to the efficiency arising from the participation of interest groups (trade union organizations) in the policy-making process;
6. Factors related to the sources of information about trade unions;
7. Factors related to the content of information about trade union organizations;
8. Factors that negatively affect the participation of interest groups (Trade Unions) in the policy-making process.

The survey questionnaire consisted of 70 questions designed to have a 5-level Likert Scale. The statistical processing program SPSS /Statistical Package for the Social Sciences/ was used to process the survey data. When processing the data collected within the scope of the quantitative research with this program, descriptive statistical analysis; correlation analysis, regression analysis, factor analysis, and reliability analysis were performed, respectively.

4. Results

In this study, in order to include representatives of citizens from aimags and the capital city in the study sample, the territory of Mongolia was divided into 5 main clusters based on the “Comparative Study of Main Regional Socio-Economic Indicators” conducted by the National Statistics Office in 2018, and 1-2 aimags from each cluster were selected and randomly sampled.

Table 1. General information of the survey participants (by age, gender, and educational level)

	Participants data	Percentage	Number
Gender	male	52.7	527
	female	47.3	473
Age	18-25	21.3	213
	26-35	22.9	229
	36-45	25	250
	46-55	18.1	181
	56-65	9	90
	66 and above	3.7	37
	Other	0	0
Education	Basic	17	170
	Secondary	34.6	346
	Vocational and Technical	7.4	74
	Higher	41	410
Employment	Non- working	16.5	165
	Student	9	90

	Retired	11.7	117
	Herder	10.6	106
	Private employee	17.6	176
	Public employee	34.6	346
Marital status	Married	77.3	773
	Single	15.5	154
	Divorced	4.9	49
	Widow	2.4	24

Participants in this survey, 527 or 52.7% were male and 473 or 47.3% were female, divided into 5 age groups: 21.3% were 18-25, 22.9% were 26-35, 25% were 36-45, 18.1% were 46-55, 9% were 56-65, and 3.7% were over 66; In terms of educational level, 41% had higher education, 7.4% had vocational education, 34.6% had secondary education, and 17% had lower secondary education. In terms of marital status, 77.3% were married, 15.5% were single, 4.9% were divorced, and 2.4% were widowed. Regarding employment status, 34.6 percent were in government organizations, 17.6 percent in private organizations, 10.6 percent were herders, 22 or 11.7 percent were retired, 9 percent were students, and 16.5 percent were unemployed.

4.1 Regression Analysis

As a result of the regression analysis, the coefficient of determination of the linear regression equation for the factors was $R^2 = 0.743$ which confirmed that 74% of the data depended on the considered factors and 26% of the external influence was not considered. Therefore, the factors not considered were a limitation of the study. However, the regression analysis also confirmed that this 26% of external influence did not reduce the results of the study.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

The representativeness of the original study population, the reliability of the questionnaire, and the appropriateness of the scale size were tested using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. As can be seen from the table below, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.962, which indicates that the survey questionnaire is reliable and the scale of 1-5 points is appropriate. It will be useful to conduct reliability analysis on the data.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

In this section of the study, an attempt was made to use statistical methods to show the differences in the results of the survey by variables such as age group, gender, education, employment, place of residence, and distance from the center.

4.3.1 Age and Dependent Var

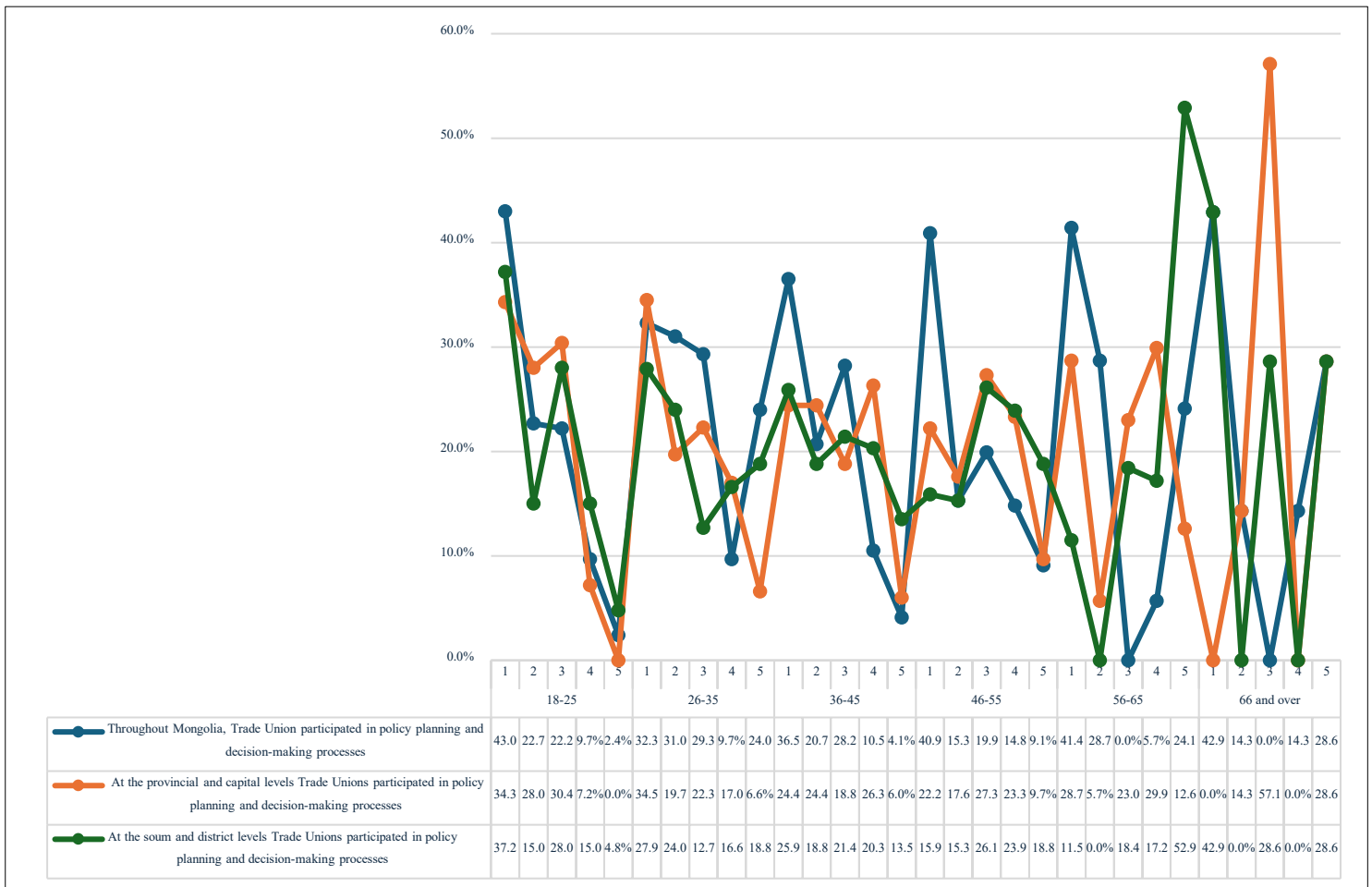


Figure 1. Experience of participation in Trade Unions

Outcome from the survey shows that 24 percent of those aged 26-35 and 28 percent of those aged 66 and over answered that they “completely agree” that trade unions participate in policy planning and decision-making processes throughout Mongolia. In other words, when considering the age groups throughout Mongolia, only 2.4-9.1 percent of those aged 18-25, 36-45, and 46-55 answered that trade unions were involved in policy planning and decision-making processes.

28 percent of participants aged 66 and over agreed that trade unions were involved in policy planning and decision-making processes throughout the aimag and capital city. 22.3-34.3 percent of participants representing the 18-25, 26-35, and 36-45 age groups stated that trade unions were not involved in policy planning and decision-making processes at all.

Regarding the participation of Trade Unions in the policy planning and decision-making process at the district level, 52.9 percent of participants aged 56-65 and 28 percent of participants aged 66 and over responded that there is some form of participation of trade union organizations in the policy planning and decision-making process. However, 37 percent of respondents aged 18-25, 27 percent of them aged 26-35, and 25 percent of them aged 36-45 answered that there was no such participation at all. In other words, the survey results show that at any level, the participation of trade unions in the 18-25 and 26-35 age groups was limited.

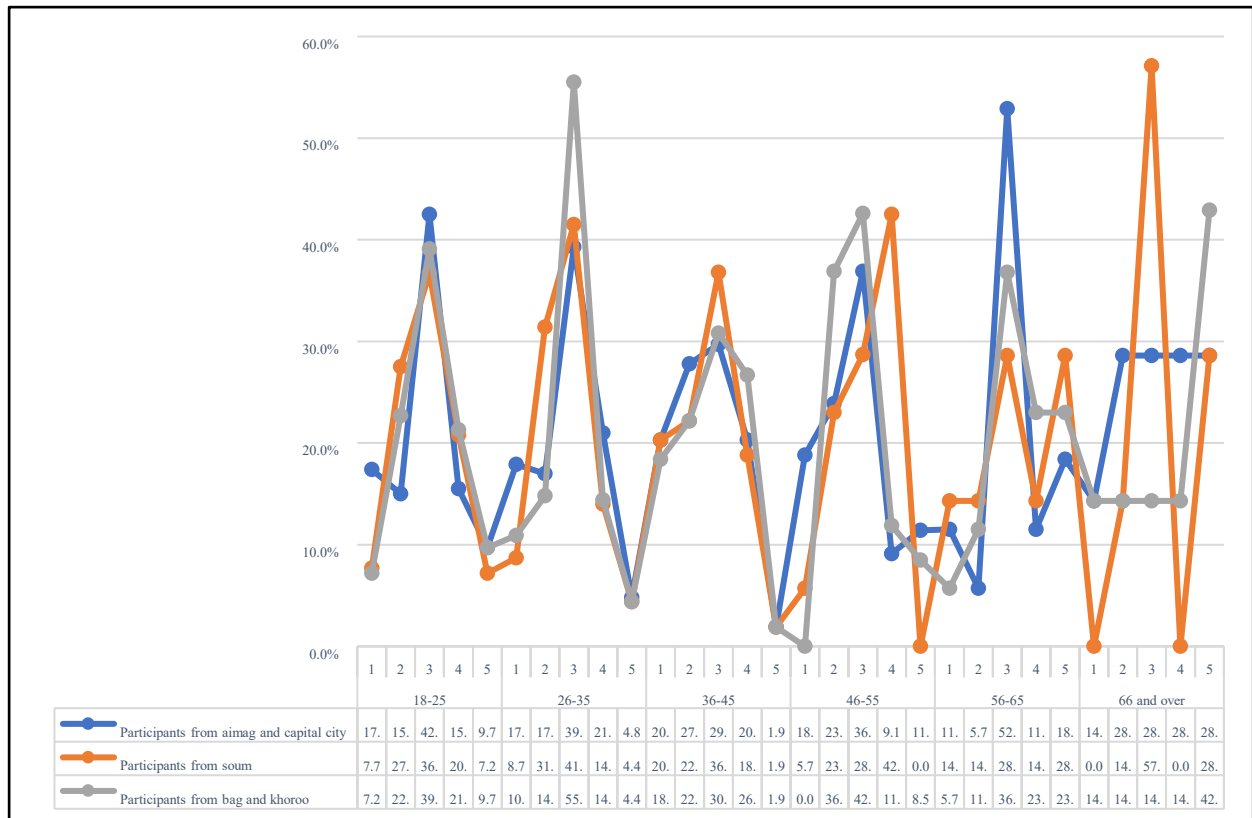


Figure 2. Assessment of Trade Union participation in the policy-making process

While 28 percent of respondents aged 66 and over in the aimag and the capital city “strongly agree” that the participation of trade union organizations is sufficient, 36-42 percent of respondents aged 18-25, 39-55 percent of respondents aged 26-35, 29-36 percent of respondents aged 36-45, 28 percent of respondents aged 46-55, and 28-52 percent of respondents aged 56-65 each responded “moderately agree” that the participation of trade unions is sufficient.

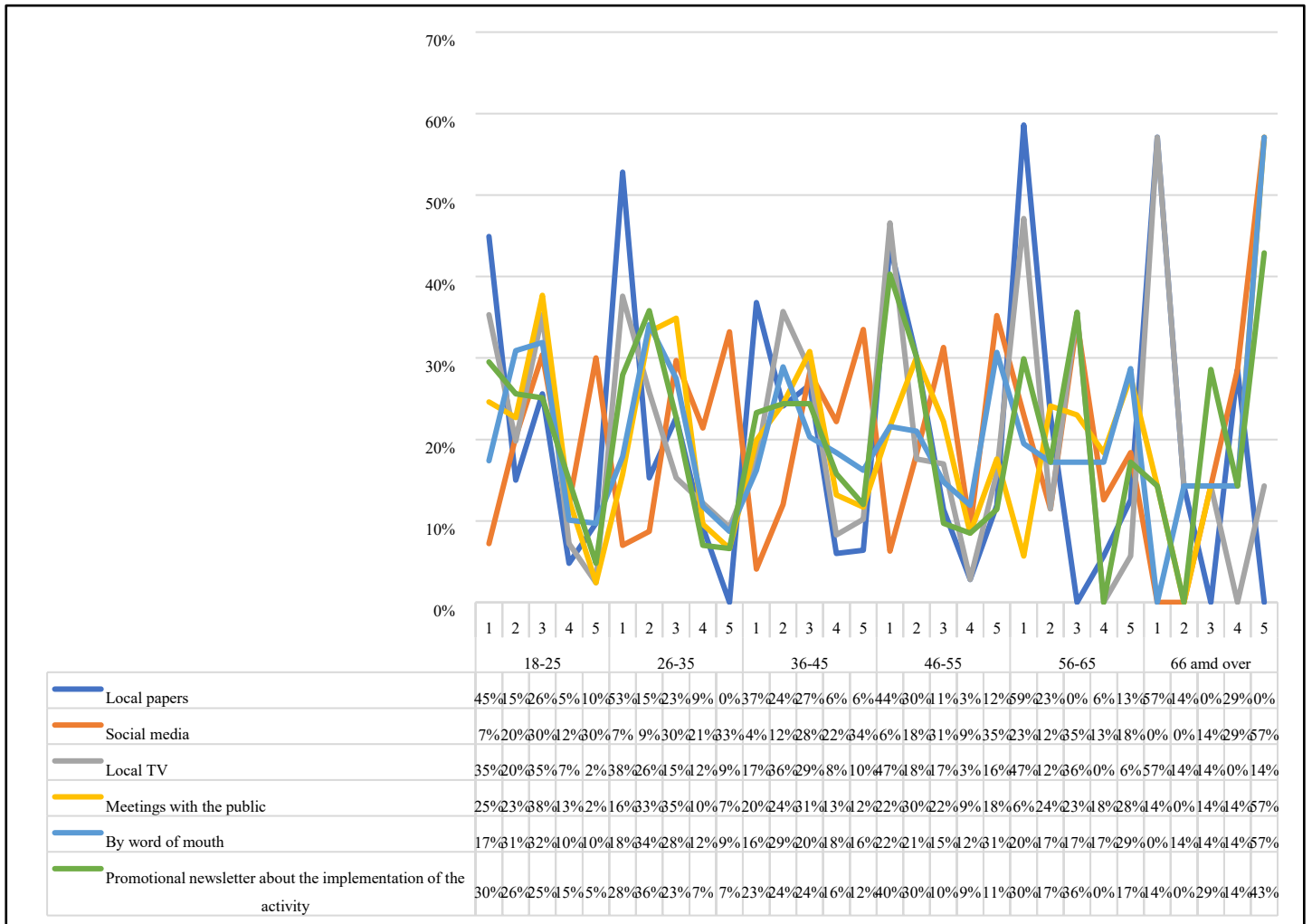


Figure 3. Sources of information on Trade Unions

According to the outcomes from the survey, 45 percent of participants aged 18-25 and 53 percent of participants aged 26-35 do not get any information from local papers, and 30-35 percent of participants aged 18-25 get information from social media and local television, respectively.

However, 34 percent of participants aged 36-45 and 35 percent of participants aged 46-55 get information from social media, 29 percent of participants aged 56-65 get information from other sources, and 57 percent of participants aged 66 get information about the Trade Union organization from social media, meetings with the public, and by word of mouth. In other words, in terms of participants of all ages, social media comes first as a source of information, and the age group that receives relatively more information from all the above sources of information is 66 and over.

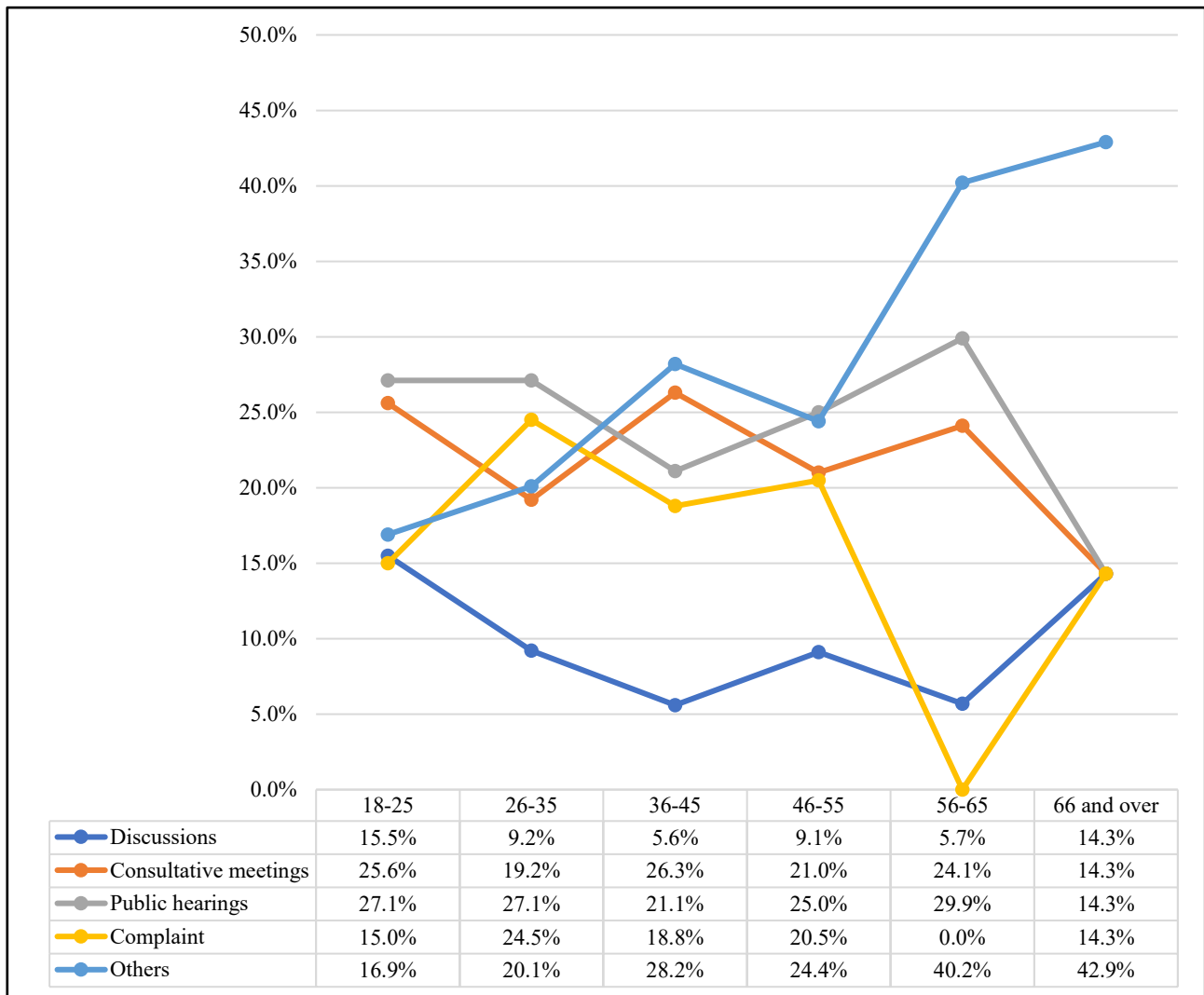


Figure 4. Forms of participation in the policy designing

The survey found that 27.1 percent of respondents aged 18-25 were very familiar with public hearings, 25.6 percent with consultative consultations, 27.1 percent with public hearings, 26.3 percent with consultative meetings, 25 percent with public hearings, 29.9 percent with public hearings, and 57 percent with respondents aged 66 and over.

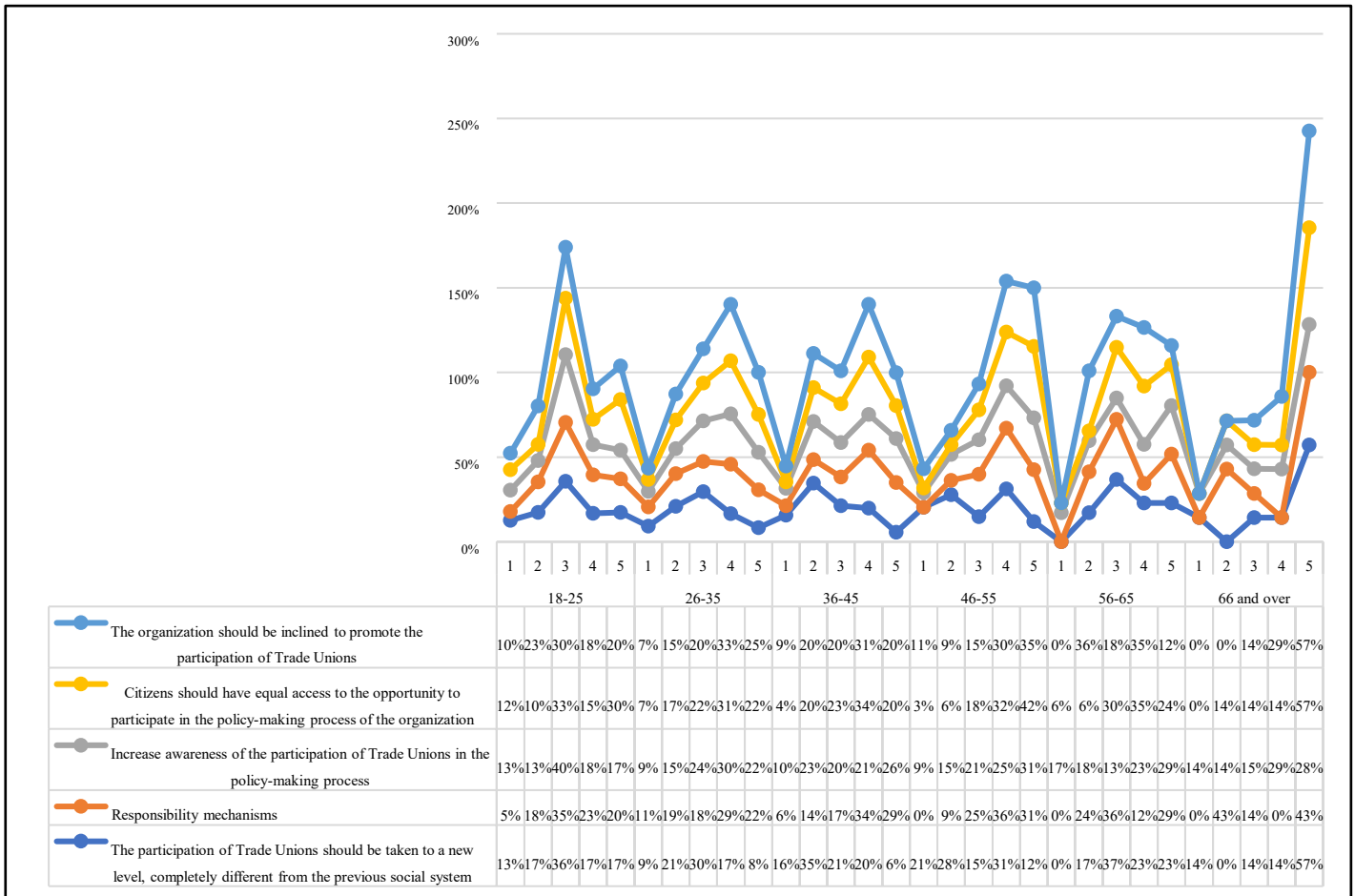


Figure 5. Ways to increase citizens participation

The survey outcomes show that 35 percent of respondents aged 46-55 and 57 percent of respondents aged 66 and over “strongly agree” that an organization should be willing to seek to resolve issues through the participation of Trade Unions. As well as, 42 percent of respondents aged 46-55 and 30 percent of respondents aged 18-25 “strongly agree” that equal access to Trade Union participation opportunities increases the participation of the organization. 26 percent of respondents aged 36-45 and 29 percent of respondents aged 56-65 and over “strongly agree” that providing knowledge and information about the benefits of Trade Union participation increases the participation of the organization.

Thirty-one percent of respondents aged 46-55 and 43 percent of respondents aged 66 and over “strongly agree” that trade union organizations can increase their participation in policy-making processes if their members and supporters work with respect.

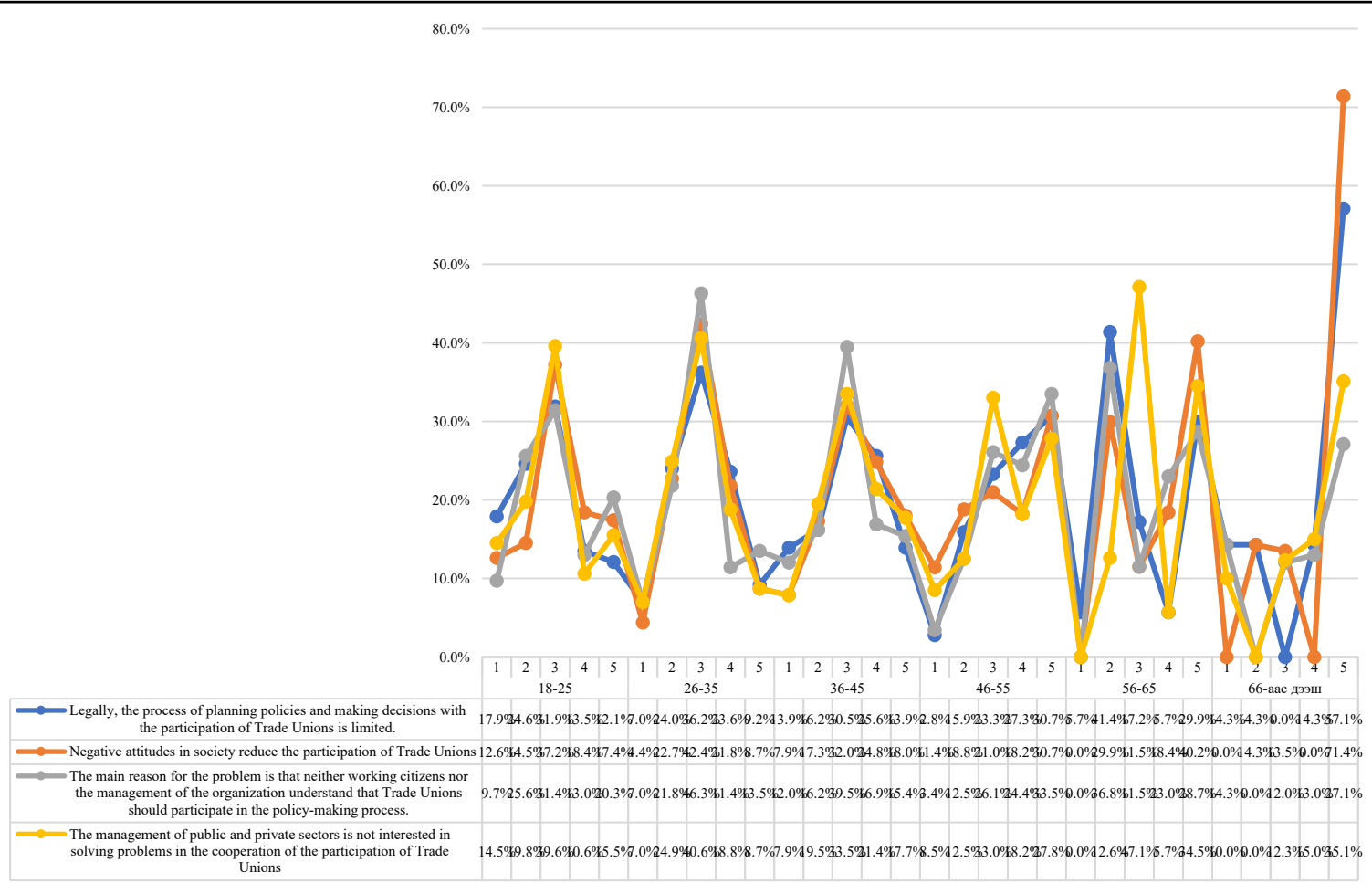


Figure 6. Factors that negatively affect citizens participation

The results of the survey show that 30 percent of participants aged 46-55 “strongly agree” that the limited legal framework for recognizing the participation of trade unions negatively affects participation; 40 percent of participants aged 56-65 “strongly agree” that negative attitudes and stereotypes in society regarding the participation of trade unions negatively affect citizen participation; 33 percent of participants aged 46-55 “strongly agree” that citizens’ lack of awareness of the possibility of participating in the policy-making process through their trade unions limits participation; 34 percent of participants aged 56 and over “strongly agree” that the management of public and private sector institutions does not try to solve problems with the participation of trade unions, which reduces the participation of the institution in the policy-making process.

4.3.2 Gender and Dependent Variables

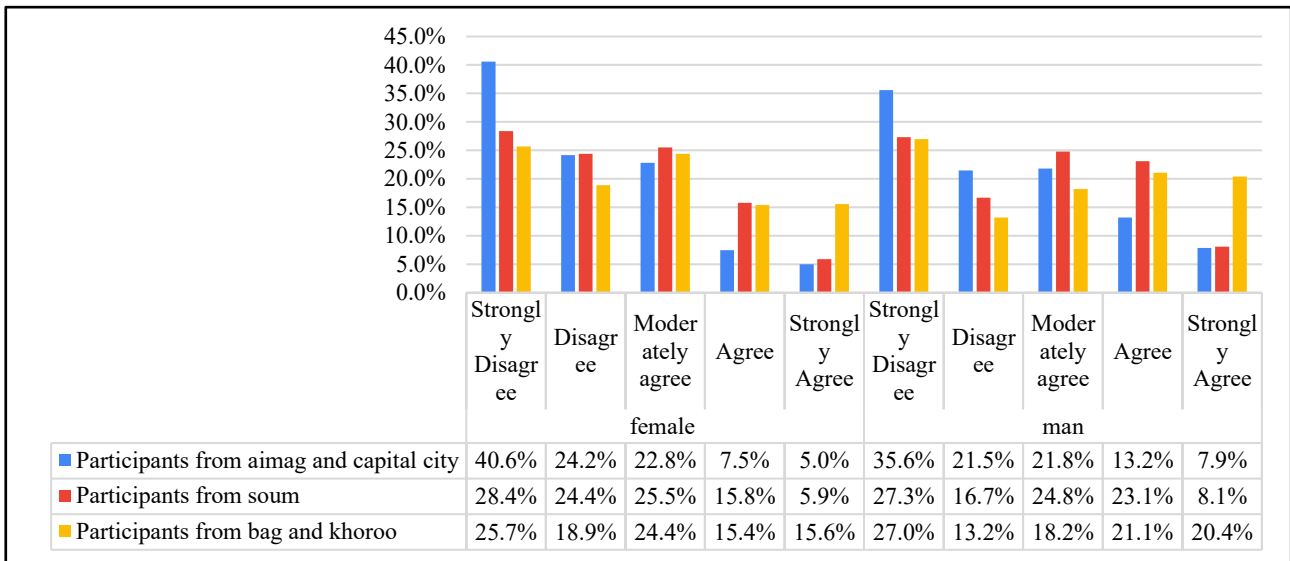


Figure 7. Perceptions of Trade Union participation at the aimag, capital city, soum, district and bag, khoroo levels

At the aimag and capital city levels, 5 percent of female participants and 21.8 percent of male participants believed that trade unions were generally involved in policy planning and decision-making processes, while at the soum and district levels, 25.5 percent of female participants and 24.8 percent of male participants believed that trade unions were only moderately involved in policy planning and decision-making processes with citizen participation, and 24.4 percent of female participants and 18.2 percent of male participants believed that trade unions were moderately involved in policy planning and decision-making processes with citizen participation at the bag and khoroo levels. The survey results show that the rate of regular participation of male participants at all levels is 3-5 percentage points higher than the rate of regular participation of female participants.

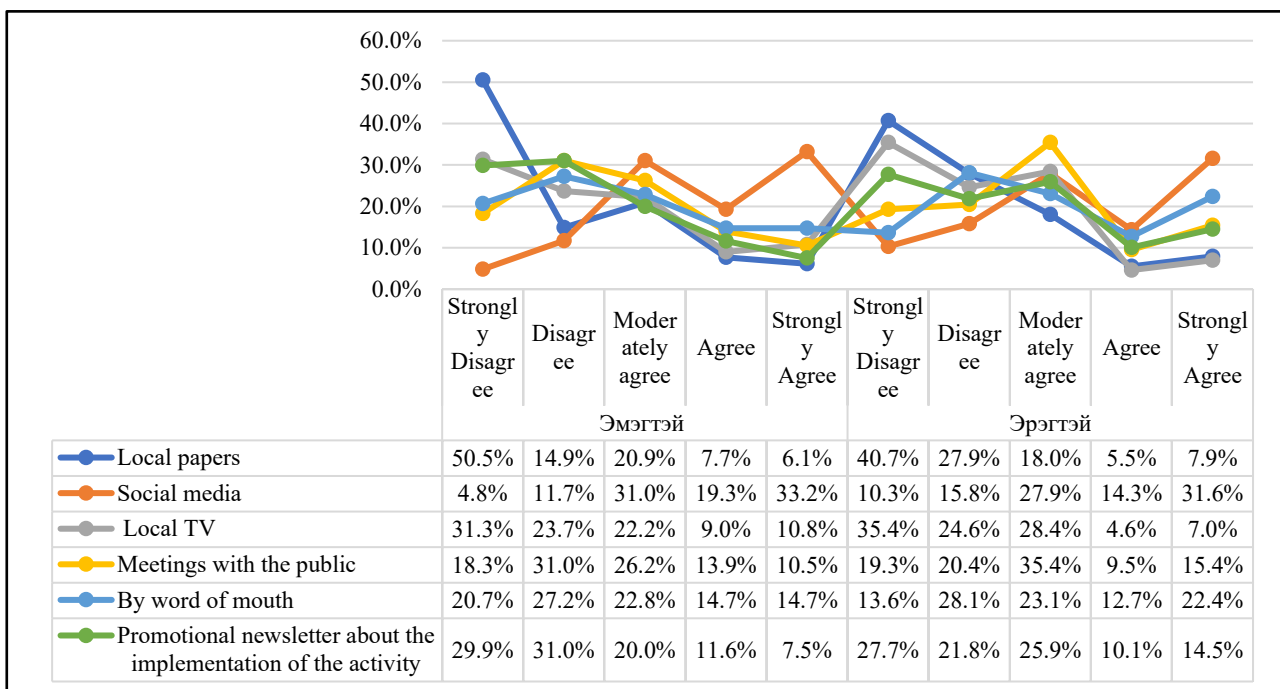


Figure 8. Sources provide information about Trade Unions

In summary, 50.5 percent of female participants and 40.7 percent of male participants do not receive information from local newspapers; 33.28 percent of female participants and 31.6 percent of male participants receive information from social media; 31.3 percent of female participants and 35.4 percent of male participants do not receive information from local television at all; 26.2 percent of female participants and 35.4 percent of male participants receive information from meetings with citizens at the Trade Union; 20 percent of female participants and 25.9 percent of male participants receive some information from promotional materials regarding the implementation of activities.

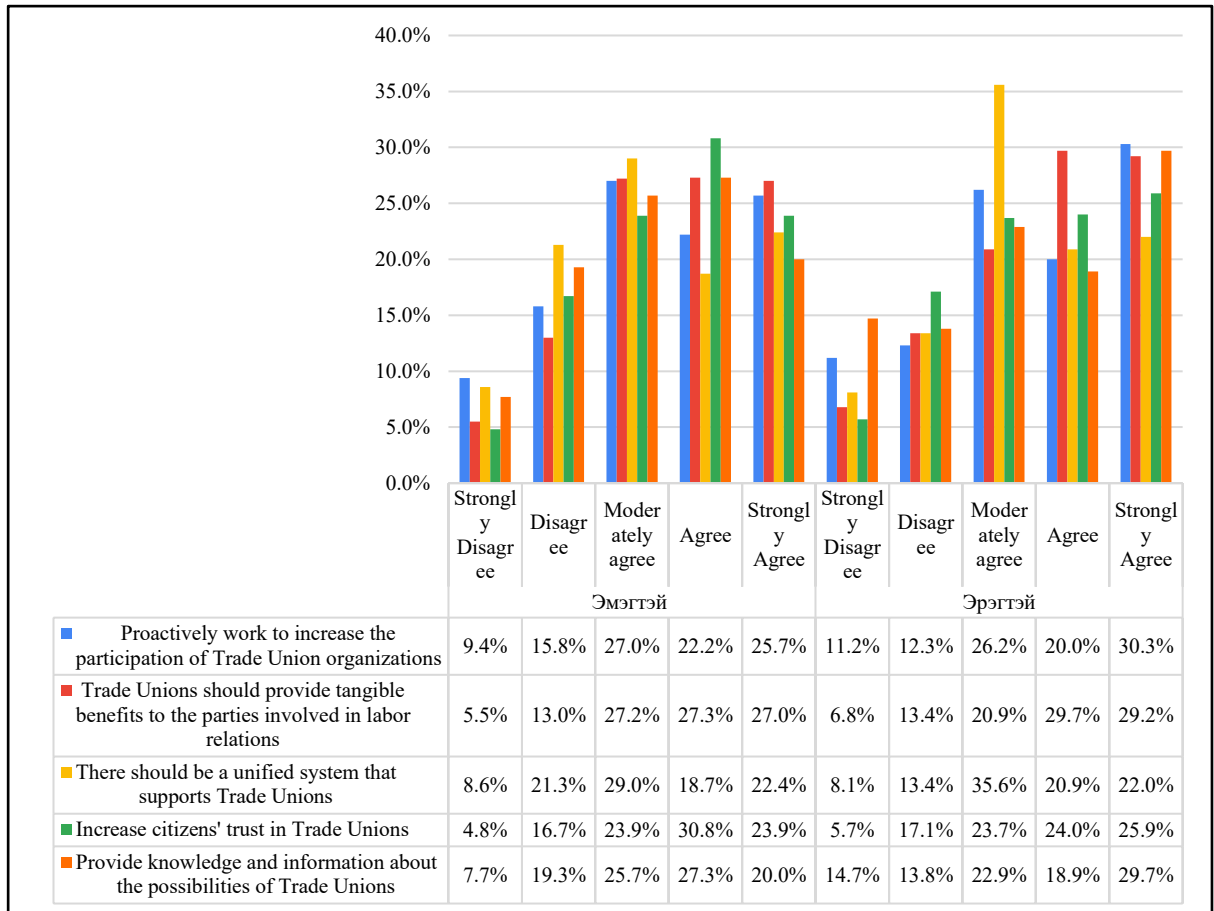


Figure 9. Factors positively affect the citizens participation

According to the survey results, 27 percent of female participants “strongly agree” that trade union participation is effective and increases participation; 29-30 percent of male participants “strongly agree” that trade union participation should be proactive in increasing participation, participation should be beneficial for citizens, and providing opportunities and knowledge about trade union participation will increase citizen participation.

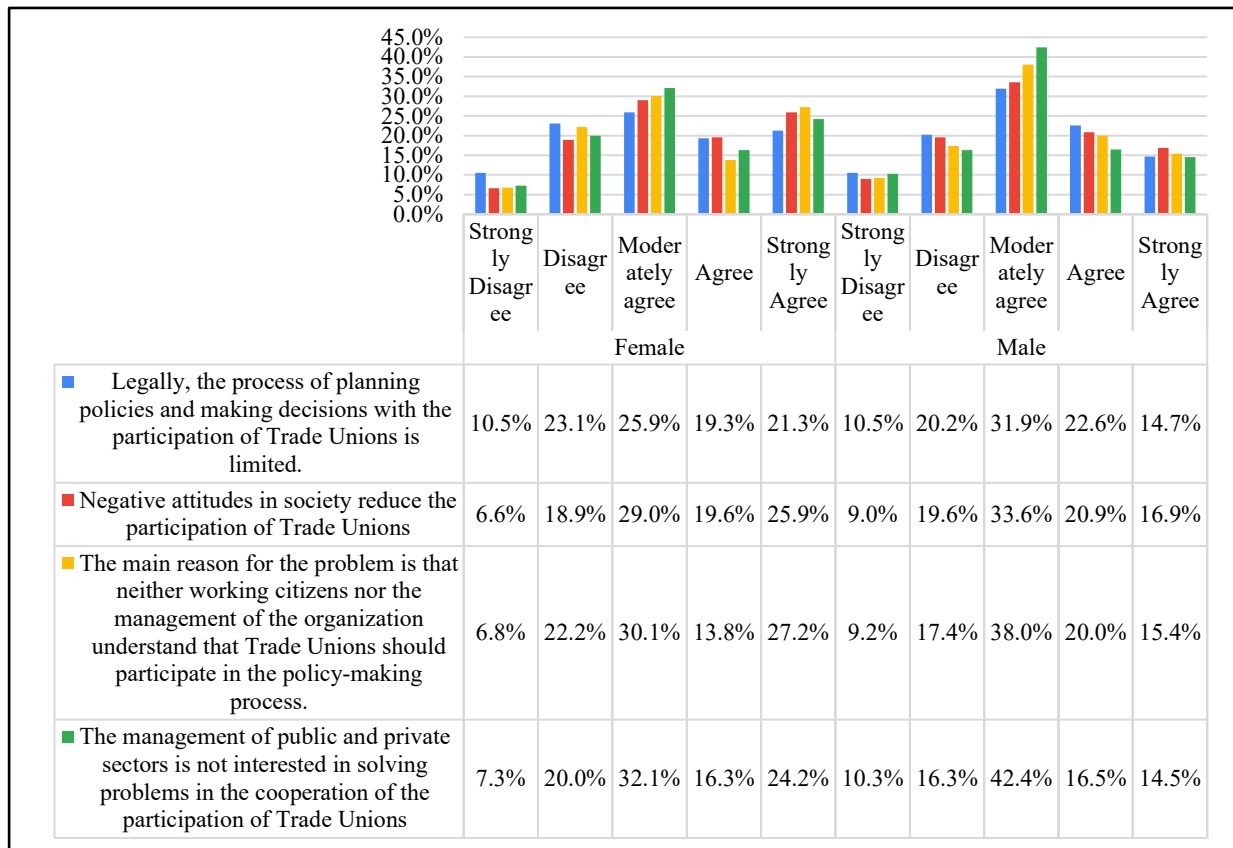


Figure 10. Negative factors limiting the participation

27.2 percent of female participants said that their participation is limited due to lack of awareness and knowledge about the opportunities for participation in Trade Unions, while 16.9 percent of male participants believed that negative attitudes towards trade union participation in society limit citizen participation.

4.3.3 Space and Dependent Variables

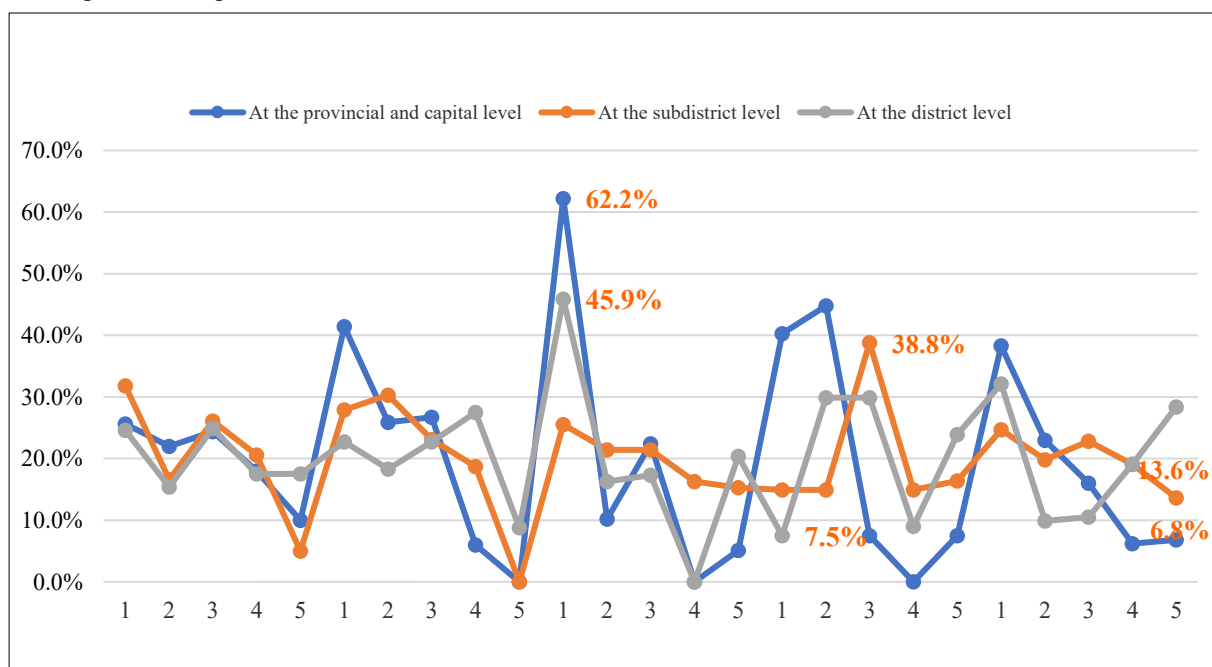


Figure 11. Level of participation in Trade Unions

In this part of the study, participants were ranked at 5 levels of distance from the center as shown in the Figure above, and their participation in the policy development and decision-making process of the aimag, capital city, soum, district, and bag khoroo was summarized on a scale of 1-5.

In this regard, if they “strongly disagree” with the ability to participate, they were given 1 point, if they “generally disagree” they were given 2 points, if they “moderately agree” they were given 3 points, if they “generally agree” they were given 4 points, and if they “strongly agree” they were given 5 points.

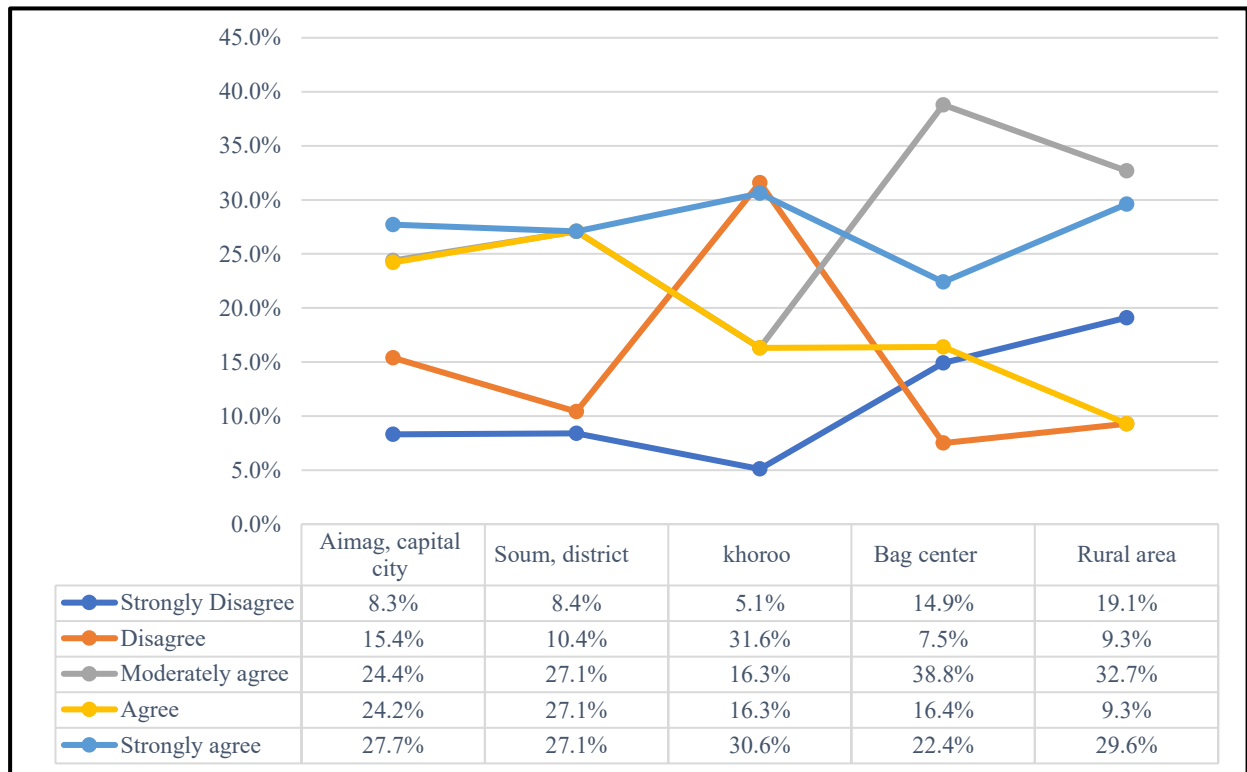


Figure 12. Tendency to prioritize the participation of Trade Unions

The survey results show that the farther away from the provincial and capital centers, the less likely the participants in soums and districts are to prioritize the participation of Trade Unions in policy-making processes. On average, 27-38.8 percent of respondents “moderately agree” that trade union participation is important.

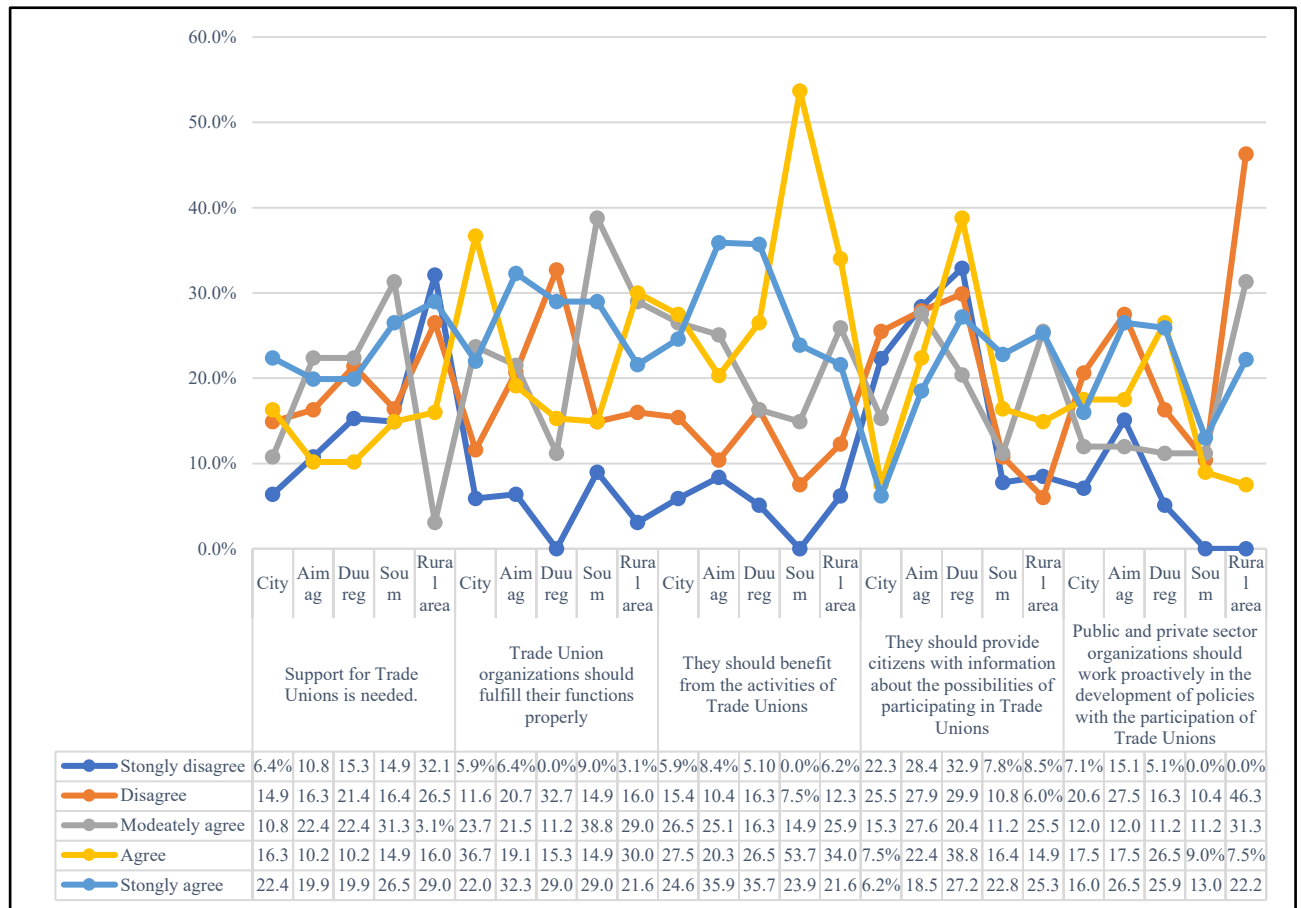


Figure 13. Ways to increase participation

The results of the study show that 53.7 percent of the respondents “agree” that citizens will receive real outcomes from the results decided with the participation of the Trade Unions, which will increase the participation of that institution. However, 22.4-26.5 percent of the respondents “strongly agree” that the policy-making system with the participation of the Trade Union and that public and private sectors should work more proactively to develop an attitude towards policy-making with the participation of the Trade Union.

4.3.4 Analysis of the Relationship Between Factors

Table 2. Analysis of factors affecting citizen participation at the aimag and capital city levels
Correlations

Indicators	Participation rate	Media source	The tendency to prioritize the participation of Trade union organizations at aimag, soum and bag level	Citizens attitude towards participation	Trust in the institutions implemented by the Trade Union	Socio-economic development
Rate of participation of Trade Unions	1	.508**	.401**	.284**	.292**	.320**
Media source	.508**	1	.463**	.430**	.327**	.441**
Tendency towards the importance of trade union participation	.401**	.463**	1	.663**	.573**	.549**
Citizens' attitude towards Trade Unions	.284**	.430**	.663**	1	.755**	.707**
Factors related to trust in institutions such as Trade unions	.292**	.327**	.573**	.755**	1	.717**
Economic development and capacity of Trade unions	.320**	.441**	.549**	.707**	.717**	1
Benefits of policies designed with the participation of Trade unions	.529**	.451**	.572**	.594**	.632**	.618**
Factors that negatively affect participation of Trade union	.298**	.329**	.430**	.599**	.619**	.636**
Legal environments of Trade Unions	.463**	.288**	.399**	.420**	.478**	.539**

The following results were obtained when measuring the strength of the relationship between the main factors and indicators affecting participation using the correlation coefficient.

Trust in Trade Union institutions and the parties' attitude towards how they perceive their active participation have a strong correlation of 0.755, while a weak positive correlation of 0.288 is observed with factors related to the legal environment of the Trade Union and the sources of information from which information about the Trade Union and its policies and decisions is obtained. From here, a linear regression analysis can be performed between the factors.

Table 3. Linear regression analysis between the factors

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.832 ^a	.751	.437	.51637

A. Predictors: (Constant), Legal framework, CEC, Source of information, Trust in institutions, Attitude towards the importance of trade union participation, Factors that negatively affect trade union participation, Benefits of ensuring trade union participation, Socio-economic development.

b. Perception of trade union participation

Table 4. Linear regression analysis between factors

ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	208.597	8	26.075	97.791	.000 ^b
	Residual	264.236	991	.267		
	Total	472.833	999			

For working people, joining a trade union is a means for them to protect their rights. It is believed that this survey was conducted in rural areas, villages, and communes of Mongolia, as well as in densely populated aimags and the capital city, which is useful for realistically assessing the influence of Trade Unions, clarifying issues, improving policies, and increasing citizen participation and improving activities to protect their rights.

5. Conclusion

The following conclusions are made within the framework of the research work.

One. It is necessary to further improve the legal environment related to this relationship, especially since the activities of the Mongolian Trade Union are limited to providing information only.

Two. On the one hand, the limited authority of the Mongolian Trade Union is observed, but on the other hand, since there is a tendency for its participation in organized political activities to increase, unless the legal environment for the activities of such quasi-organizations is made more clear, the development of civil society organizations, which are a key indicator of the development of a democratic system, will tend to become more dependent on political parties.

Three. It is necessary to properly understand and introduce the importance of the Mongolian Trade Union, which is a form of interest group, to the citizens, and to increase the understanding of society members about its importance.

Four. When examining the situation of publicizing and providing information on the policies and decisions of Trade Unions to citizens, it was observed during the research that, on the one hand, it is aimed at informing and promoting the activities of the organization's management to citizens. It can be considered that the possibility of monitoring the activities of Trade Unions and, furthermore, ensuring the implementation of decisions made is very limited. In other words, the flow of information from the organization itself is dominated by the information flow.

Five. It is necessary to improve the effective cooperation between Trade Unions and consumers. To do this, it is necessary to develop a culture and practice of initiative, creativity, and cooperation, which is based on the rights and obligations granted by law, in order to ensure that the parties work in a balanced and more productive manner. It is necessary to study the possibilities for implementing good practices in other countries of the world and adapt them to the conditions of Mongolia.

Six. It is necessary to involve young people and those working in the informal economy in the activities of Trade Union. Young people's knowledge and understanding of the activities of Trade Union and the role of this organization in protecting labor rights was very low.

On the other hand, it is more important for young people to actively participate in the activities of Trade Union and participate in solving problems in labor relations. In other words, it is more important for solving the problems of their age groups facing labor relations, and at the same time, it is important to find solutions that are appropriate to the differences of groups without treating labor relations in a flat manner.

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Notes

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