



News Release

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Malaysians concern about climate change, dissatisfied with government efforts

KUALA LUMPUR – A survey conducted by Merdeka Center in December 2016 showed that an overwhelming majority (81%) of Malaysians expressed concern about climate change. From this number, 32.5% of respondents said they have “great care” about climate change while 48.8% reported “somewhat care about climate change”.

In December 2016 Malaysia ratified the Paris Agreement, a protocol aimed at reducing global carbon emission by 2030 as part of the efforts to fight climate change. In addition, a recent scientific report noted that 2016 was the hottest year on record. As part of its interest on the topic, Merdeka Center carried out a public opinion survey during the second half of December 2016 to gauge the perspectives and attitudes of the Malaysian public towards climate change.

The data collected showed differences among Malaysians on their views towards climate change. As expected, those with higher income, college education and those aged 40 years old expressed a higher level of concern compared to their other peers.

When asked what they thought was the main cause for climate change, 70% of the respondents reported that it was caused mostly “by human activities” while 22% chose that it was caused mostly by “natural changes in the environment”. As with the earlier findings, these views were heavily influenced by the respondents’ income and education level. Those who were higher educated or belonging to upper income groups were more likely to blame human activities as the cause for climate change.

With respect to the perceived impact of climate change in Malaysia, 21.2% respondents believed it will cause “damage to forest and plants”, followed by 20.7% who felt “storms would become severe” and 17.1% believed “more droughts would occur and water shortages increase”. The remainder of respondents chose “rising sea levels and shoreline erosion” at 14.2% and 11.1% felt climate change would “harm wildlife and destroy their habitats”. 5.4% of the respondents reported that all of the earlier mentioned phenomenon could affect Malaysia.

When asked what they perceived about the weather, almost two-thirds (64.2%) of the respondents claimed the weather had become more unstable over the past three years. 24.3% of the respondents report that weather conditions have remained largely unchanged while 9.4% said the weather in Malaysia has become more stable in the last three years.

When respondents were asked about the level of temperature, 65.3% of them perceived that the temperature in Malaysia had been higher when compared to three years ago. One-quarter (25.4%) of respondents claimed temperatures had remained the same while only 5.3% claimed the temperature now was lower.

More Expect Federal Government Efforts in Climate Change

When asked about their satisfaction with the government's handling of climate change, only 37.5% of respondents report satisfaction while close to one-half (49.7%) expressed dissatisfaction. The survey found that Bumiputera respondents were more likely to be satisfied with the government efforts while those with higher education and incomes were more dissatisfied.

Malaysians were also split when assessing their own personal efforts at protecting the environment with 38.9% of the respondents claimed they had done enough while 42.5% of the respondents claimed they had not done enough.

The survey was carried out by Merdeka Center between 18th to 29th December 2016. A total of 1,208 respondents were interviewed via fixed line and mobile telephones. Respondents were selected on the basis of random stratified sampling along age group, ethnicity, gender and geographical location (including Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak). The survey comprised 50% Malay, 30% Chinese, 8% Indian, 6% Muslim Bumiputra and 6% non-Muslim Bumiputra respondents. The poll was internally funded by Merdeka Center.

About Merdeka Center for Opinion Research

Merdeka Center for Opinion Research was formally established in 2001 as an independent organization focused on public opinion research and socio-economic analysis. Merdeka's mission is to act as a bridge between ordinary Malaysians and other stakeholders with the leading members of the nation – by collecting public opinion studies and expressing them through survey results, analysis and position papers. For details, visit: www.merdeka.org

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