



**News Release**  
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### **Getting into one year after GE14: PM's approval rating at 46%, government at 39%**

**BANGI** –Only 39% of Malaysian voters gave the Pakatan Harapan federal government positive ratings in a nation-wide survey carried out in March 2019.

The same survey also saw 46% of voters reporting as satisfied towards the performance of Dr Mahathir Mohamed as the country's Prime Minister. This was a marked decline compared to the 71% recorded in August 2018.

The decline in public support for the administration can also be seen in the number of voters who felt the "country was headed in the wrong direction" which increased from 24% in August 2018 to 46% in March 2019.

The decline in ratings are likely to be attributable to three factors, i.e. the condition of the economy as it is perceived by ordinary consumers, the perceived performance of the administration, and concerns over Malay rights and privileges as well as fair treatment of the other races in Malaysia.

As a result, public satisfaction in the government's management of the economy has fallen from 60% in August 2018 to 40% in March 2019.

Some indications include:

- Only 34% of voters believe that the country was heading in the right direction, compared to 55% in August 2018. This sentiment was more acute among Malay voters where only 24% felt the country was headed in the right direction;
- 40% of voters expressed satisfaction in the way the government is managing the economy now, down from 60% in August 2018;
- 46% of voters were satisfied with the Prime Minister compared to 71% in August 2018; and
- 67% of the voters agreed PH needed more time to fulfil their election pledges.

### **The economy remains top voter concerns**

Consistent with previous surveys, the state of the economy remains the top most concern among voters, reported by 63% of those surveyed, followed by concerns over race-related issues such as the controversy over the USJ Hindu temple relocation and the public debate over the proposed ratification of the ICERD, which captured media headlines late last year.

When asked to respond from a fixed list of issue items, the survey found that concerns over unfavorable economic condition as well as inflation or cost of living remained high at 54% while concerns over racial matters such as preservation of Malay rights and fair treatment of others was significant at 23%, Concerns over corruption had declined from 33% to 23% in August 2018.

Despite the declines registered above, the same survey also found that an overwhelming majority of voters (67%) agreed that the administration should be given more time to fulfill its election promises. This figure also includes a majority, 52% of Malay voters who had largely been more critical of the new administration.

### **Public attitudes towards New Government policies/proposals**

In addition to the above indicators, the same survey also asked voters of their views on a number of recently proposed or announced policies and measures. This segment yielded mixed views from the electorate as summarized in the table below. In our opinion, the results appear to indicate a public that favors the status quo, and thus requires a robust and coordinated advocacy efforts in order to garner their acceptance of new measures such as abolishing the mandatory death penalty or even the imposition of taxes on sugared drinks.

<b>Government Policies / Proposals</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>
Support for abolishment of mandatory death penalty	22	69
Support for lowering voting age to 18 years old	48	50
Support for new law to punish insults against other races/religion	85	12
Support for abolishing exams for Primary 1 to 3	40	54
Support for tax on sugary beverages	40	55

The Merdeka Center for Opinion Research has consistently carried out voter surveys prior to, and after the landmark May 2018 general election, although the results of some surveys were not released, the data points of the intervening periods were included in this report.

This particular survey was carried out by the between 5th to 11th March 2019 to gauge voters' perceptions towards economy, leadership and current issues. 1,204 registered voters comprising 52% Malay, 29% Chinese, 7% Indian, 6% Muslim Bumiputra, 6% Non-Muslim Bumiputra, (from Sabah and Sarawak), reflective of the national electoral profile, were interviewed via fixed line and mobile telephones. Respondents were selected on the basis of random stratified sampling along age group, ethnicity, gender and state constituency. The poll was funded by Merdeka Center's internally generated financial resources.

### **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](http://www.merdeka.org)

Contact: Ibrahim Suffian  
 Director - Programs  
 Mobile: 6012 379 1940  
 Email: [ben@merdeka.org](mailto:ben@merdeka.org)

Tan Seng Keat  
 Research Manager  
 Mobile: 6012 395 0316  
 Email: [sengkeat@merdeka.org](mailto:sengkeat@merdeka.org)