



## News Release

6 September 2024

### **Encouraging trust on Federal Government, lingering polarization**

56% of youths noted their trust in the Federal Government, yet sense of discrimination among minority groups persists with 58% of Chinese and Indian respondents believing they are being unfairly treated in Malaysia (15% drop from our previous study in January 2023). In addition, 73% of Malay respondents (including three-quarters of East Coast respondents) insists on continuing Malay / Bumiputera privileges despite mixed feedback on equal treatment (48%) and Malay / Bumiputera privileges (49%) nationwide.

In the survey conducted between 3<sup>rd</sup> April to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2024, majority of respondents across all ethnic backgrounds stated their confidence in the Madani government including 48% of all Malay respondents, a reflection of increasing approval of Malaysian youths with current administration.

Ethnic tension however is still on the horizon, not limited to inter-ethnic differences but also within the same race; surprisingly only 75% of Malay respondents are trustful towards fellow Malays, compared to Chinese (95% trust level towards fellow Chinese) and Indians (85% trust level towards fellow Indians). One-third of Malay respondents also reported lack of interaction with close friends and acquaintances from a different ethnic background (the lowest among all ethnic groups in this study).

East Coast respondents were also against the idea of a woman becoming Malaysian Prime Minister (58% disapproval compared to 40% disapproval reported nationwide), polar opposite of what we found in other regions (57% approval and above in the Northern, Southern, Central Peninsular as well as East Malaysia). On the other hand, 58% of Malay respondents (inclusive of 60% East Coast respondents) largely oppose concerts being attended by Muslims.

Despite the high degree of trust towards the Federal Government, only one-third (33%) of youths surveyed viewed national direction positively (at the time of study). Economic concerns remain prevalent as mentioned by 77% of respondents inclusive of rising cost of living, income constraints and unfavorable economic climate).

On the topic of 2025 economic outlook, youth perception was mixed with 47% believing the economy will improve and 45% thinking otherwise – especially within the Malay and Indian segments. Yet, youth respondents were optimistic on expected financial situation with 64% stating potential improvement (including 77% of ethnic Chinese respondents).

Career-wise, one-third of all respondents (33%) desire to pursue entrepreneurship in the next 10 years compared to professional work (32%) – a sizable shift from our 2023’s findings which indicated preference to prioritize job security. Among respondents in tertiary institutions and unemployed individuals, there are contrasting perspectives with half opting for academic qualifications, and 46% declaring skill-related qualification to be their choice – indicating TVET’s heightening popularity among Malaysian youths.

Regarding media consumption, Facebook was the primary source of news (chosen by 42% of respondents). Also, youths prefer to learn more about their local developments (45%) compared to international affairs (34%) and political stories (22%).

On governance and politics, the survey found youths to be divided in terms of adherence to political leaders with 44% agreeing to adhere and 46% disagreeing. For the most part, Malay and East Malaysian respondents are more receptive towards their political leaders (46% approval among Malays, 59% among Muslim Bumiputeras and 63% among Non-Muslim Bumiputeras). Malays are also divided in terms of preferred political party, with 49% opting for Malay-dominant multi-racial party, and 32% siding with a coalition with equal say.

Trust in the Malaysian Parliament is moderate with 51% approval, yet trust on politicians seem to be on the decline with 59% distrust being recorded (70% among Muslims and 53% among non-Muslims). Regarding political participation and involvement, only 31% indicated their interest in politics compared to 49% in January 2024. Political discussion regularly took place with family members (46%) and friends (45%), indicating the need to advocate for alternative sources in producing informed electorates.

This particular survey was carried out between 3<sup>rd</sup> April and 12<sup>th</sup> May 2024 focused on young Malaysians views towards their aspirations and needs, media consumption patterns, perceptions of the country and economy, career aspirations, ethnic relations and socio-cultural aspects as well as governance and politics.

A total of 1,605 young Malaysians comprising 57% Malay, 21% Chinese, 7% Indian, 9% Muslim Bumiputra, 7% Non-Muslim Bumiputra, (from Sabah and Sarawak), somewhat reflective of the national population profile of those aged 18-30 years old, who 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. The poll was funded by Merdeka Center’s internally generated financial resources and other donors.

## About Merdeka Center

Merdeka Center 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)

Fadhil Rahman

Senior Research Officer

Mobile: +6010-4609830

Email: [fadhil@merdeka.org](mailto:fadhil@merdeka.org)