



PRESS STATEMENT

11th August 2023

STATE ELECTIONS 2023: STATUS QUO REMAINS IN PLACE

From the 3rd of July to the afternoon of 11th August 2023, the Merdeka Center has carried out a series of surveys covering the six states undergoing state elections. Surveys covering Penang, Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu were discrete surveys covering only the Malay electorate while that of Negeri Sembilan covered all ethnic groups and was carried out prior to nomination day.

Due to intense interest on the political contestation in Selangor, a more comprehensive rolling survey was implemented there which commenced prior to nomination day and concluded on the eve of election day.

Voters were interviewed to seek their views on the upcoming election, leaders, preferences for political parties, and issues affecting their choices.

State Government Performance (see Slide #10 & #11)

- We note that voters in all states with the exception of Kelantan expressed strong approval, in excess of 60%, for their state governments' performance. In Kelantan however, satisfaction towards the state government among Malay voters there amounted to 51% as shown below:

State	State Govt Approval Rating (All Ethnicities)	State Govt Approval Rating (Malay Only)
Kedah	NA	73%
Kelantan	NA	51%
Terengganu	NA	71%
Penang	NA	58%
Selangor	75%	67%
Negeri Sembilan	61%	55%

- Mirroring state government approval, satisfaction with the respective Chief Ministers also showed similar trends. In Negeri Sembilan and Selangor where our surveys covered respondents across all ethnic groups, showed overall approval ratings of 66% and 59% for Chief Ministers Amirudin Shari and Aminuddin Harun respectively.

State	Chief Minister	Approval Rating (All Ethnicities)	Approval Rating (Malay Only)
Kedah	Sanusi Md Nor	NA	77%
Kelantan	Ahmad Yaacob	NA	58%
Terengganu	Dr Ahmad Samsuri	NA	67%
Penang	Chow Kon Yeow	NA	55%
Selangor	Amirudin Shari	66%	63%
Negeri Sembilan	Aminuddin Harun	59%	58%

Preferred Ruling Coalition (see Slide #15 & #16)

- We asked voters of their preferred choice of coalition to lead their respective state governments. The results here are split between states which we were able to cover all ethnic groups and those where we only interviewed Malay respondents.

- States with a **full ethnic representation** held results as follows:

State	Perikatan Nasional	Pakatan Harapan & Barisan Nasional	Undisclosed & Undecided
Selangor	36%	49%	15%
Negeri Sembilan	18%	59%	22%

- Responses among **Malay respondents** for the six states were as follows:

State	Perikatan Nasional	Pakatan Harapan & Barisan Nasional	Undisclosed & Undecided
Kedah	66%	17%	16%
Kelantan	50%	26%	24%
Terengganu	57%	24%	20%
Penang	49%	28%	22%
Selangor	46%	37%	16%
Negeri Sembilan	32%	40%	29%

- In our view these findings offer an indication of voters' intentions on election day but do not take into account specific local issues, candidate effects and campaign dynamics in individual constituencies as well as disparities in voter turnout. Surveys were conducted until afternoon of 11th August 2023. As such, any significant developments or events that may take place thereafter would not be reflected in these findings.
- That said, the strong overt preference expressed by Malay voters towards Perikatan Nasional (PN) in the Malay dominant majority states of Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu provides a

window on the likely outcome of the elections there – that PN will likely gain further ground in the Malay constituencies at the expense of UMNO and Pakatan Harapan (PH).

- These findings also indicate that the broad voting patterns along ethnic and regional lines attained during the 2022 General Election largely remains in place in this state elections.
- The surveys conducted ahead of the state elections indicate that PN will likely maintain and marginally expand their Malay vote shares across all the six states. However, these gains are inadequate to wrest power in the three PH held states.

Expected Election Outcomes

- From the surveys that we had implemented, we found that the two main coalitions, i.e. Pakatan Harapan/Barisan Nasional and Perikatan Nasional, particularly in parts of Penang and Selangor as well as the mixed ethnic areas of Kedah still needed to swing undecided voters to their side as well as persuade their core voters to turn up to vote.
- Younger Malay voters in these surveys also continued to display strong preference for Perikatan Nasional as was the case in the November 2022 General Election.
- Non-Malay voters remained firmly in support of Pakatan Harapan but questions abound on their turnout rate.
- At the same time, questions about out-of-town Malay voters to Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu may become academic as PN enjoys significant majority support that reduces their dependence on out-of-state voters to make the trek home to vote.
- Reflecting upon the survey results and incorporating our assumptions on allocation of undisclosed voters, we estimate the results for the state elections will be as follows:
 - **A status quo outcome in the six states.** Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu will remain in the hands of PN while Penang, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan will continue to be held by PH/BN.
 - **PN will make further inroads in the Malay constituencies** in Kedah and BN incumbent seats in Kelantan and Terengganu.
 - **PN may make small gains in a handful of seats in Negeri Sembilan** but will not threaten the position of the PH/BN state government.
 - Seats with between 70% to 90% Malay representation in Selangor and Penang are heavily contested and are currently considered ‘too-close-to-call’. Yet **both state governments will remain firmly with PH/BN.**

Top Issues of Concern (See Slide #14)

- As expected, voters across all six states expressed strong concerns about inflation and economic growth, with more than 55% reporting interest on these topics.
- We note some intra-state differences – 9% and nearly 5% of voters in Kelantan and Kedah respectively expressed concern on water supply management issues.

About This Survey

This survey was part of an exercise carried out in various stages among a total of 6,179 respondents comprising a representative sample of Malaysian voters aged 18 and above voting in the six states. These respondents were successfully interviewed on the following corresponding dates:

Negeri Sembilan	: 03/7 – 14/7
Kedah	: 12/7 – 02/8
Kelantan	: 04/8 – 08/8
Terengganu	: 08/8 – 09/8
Penang	: 02/8 – 04/8; 10/08-11/08
Selangor	: 26/7 – 11/8

About Merdeka Center

Merdeka Center was formally established in 2001 as an independent organization focused on public opinion research and socio-economic analysis. Merdeka Center's mission is to act as a bridge between ordinary Malaysians and other stakeholders with the leaders 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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