



News Release

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PM's approval rating remains stable amidst concerns over the economy and Covid-19

PETALING JAYA - Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's approval rating remains stable at 67% based on a recently concluded national survey of Peninsula Malaysia voters.

The results indicate that the Prime Minister retains strong support from the Malay electorate at 83% as compared to 30% from the Chinese and 66% from the Indian communities respectively. This figure shows some improvement compared to the 63% approval rating recorded at the end of January 2021.

The survey also found that public mood about the direction of the country was mixed with 41% expressing that the country was "moving in the right direction", while 46% felt the country was "headed in the wrong direction". These views showed marked change since January 2021, when 32% felt the country was headed in the right direction, and 54% expressing things were in the wrong direction.

Those who expressed the view that the country was headed in the right direction cited positive feelings towards the administration as well as recognition that the public's welfare was being taken care of. Those who felt the country was headed in the wrong direction cited concerns over political stability and unfavorable economic conditions.

In terms of issues of personal concern to voters, economic conditions remain topmost concern at 57% followed by the pandemic at 16%, while politics was a distant third, expressed only by 2.4% of those interviewed.

The concern over the economy is underpinned by voters' own personal financial conditions where 57% reported that their conditions were "worse off" compared to a year ago, before the full impact of the pandemic-imposed movement controls. With respect to their views of the national economy, 68% felt that national economic conditions were negative compared to one year ago.

These sentiments weigh highly on voters' views on the government's handling of the economy. The survey found 51% reported that they were satisfied with the government's management of the economy while 43% were dissatisfied.

With respect to the Covid-19 pandemic, the same survey found that a majority of voters at 70% were satisfied with how the government was handling the problem. This represents an improvement from the low of 53% observed in January 2021 (at the point in time when daily infections exceeded 4,000 cases).

The survey also discovered that a large majority (74%) of voters have consistently held the view that the government has been helpful towards citizens who need assistance during the pandemic period, compared to 25% who were dissatisfied. Additionally, 56% of voters felt satisfied that the government had a “clear vision” of what it takes to rehabilitate the nation while 35% were dissatisfied.

In our view, the survey indicates a West Malaysian electorate that is exhibiting some signs of optimism after the reopening of the economy along with the commencement of the vaccination rollout. This is manifested in the still strong approval for the Prime Minister and reasonable confidence in the handling of the pandemic and economy – despite the still stressed conditions voters report for their own personal financial conditions and their perception of the economy.

The provision of financial assistance to households and some businesses affected by the economic difficulties induced by the pandemic, as well as relaxation of conditions for people to withdraw from the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), has buoyed public perceptions of the government and its leader.

The survey was carried out by Merdeka Center between 31st March and 12th April 2021 to gauge voters’ perceptions of current developments. 2,111 registered voters comprising 64% Malay, 28% Chinese, and 8% Indian, reflective of the Peninsula Malaysia 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 Center’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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