



A Comparative Survey of

DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Working Paper Series: No. 46

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Malaysia Country Report

Second Wave of Asian Barometer Survey

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The Asian Barometer (ABS) is an applied research program on public opinion on political values, democracy, and governance around the region. The regional network encompasses research teams from twelve East Asian political systems (Japan, Mongolia, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, and Indonesia), and five South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal). Together, this regional survey network covers virtually all major political systems in the region, systems that have experienced different trajectories of regime evolution and are currently at different stages of political transition.

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Asia Barometer Survey: Malaysia Survey National Findings
Prepared by Bridget Welsh, Ibrahim Suffian and Andrew Aeria
Working Paper
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This is the initial report of the complete survey findings of the Asia Barometer Survey (ABS) Malaysia Team conducted from July 14th through August 14th in Malaysia. The ABS survey represents the first comprehensive national statistically rigorous survey of contemporary political attitudes in Malaysia through face-to-face interviews nationally. The findings below are descriptive, based on overall cross-tabs and are the first cut of the analysis of the data. They point to high level of trust in existing political institutions, a high sense of responsiveness of the government, support for democracy and the incumbent regime, notably Abdullah Badawi himself, broad recognition of problems of governance in Malaysia, limited social capital and political participation and an increasingly globalized internationally-aware society. As in assessing all polling research, this report should be seen as a snapshot of conditions in a particular time and a baseline for assessing long term changes in political attitudes.

Malaysia Team Logistics and Composition

The Malaysia team joined the Asia Barometer Survey in late 2006, and began implementing the survey in July 2007, once funding was finalized in April 2007. The data will become available for the project as a whole by the end of 2007 and for the broader academic community in the end of 2008. The Malaysia team has completed the survey and data entry through October, and the data is currently being verified by the ABS team in Taiwan. The Malaysia team is currently analyzing the data for presentations of findings later in 2007 and early 2008. An outline of the Malaysia project implementation is attached in Appendix A.

The team is comprised of Dr. Bridget Welsh, Assistant Professor of Southeast Asia Studies at Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Dr. Andrew Aeria, Associate Professor in Political Science at University Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak and Ibrahim Suffian, Director of the Merdeka Centre, Malaysia's leading independent polling company. Over fifty interviewers/supervisors were hired to implement the Malaysia survey. The Peninsular Malaysia interview team was comprised of 32 people and East Malaysia Team 25 people (Sabah 14, Sarawak 11). Ten supervisors checked the work of interviewers. The team was comprised of people of all the major ethnic groups in Malaysia – Malays, Chinese, Indians, Iban and Kadazandusun. The survey was translated into four vernacular languages – English, Mandarin, Malay and Iban – and administered in a total of fourteen languages, those mentioned as well as Tamil, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka, Foochow, Bajau, Bugis, Kadazan, Bidayuh and Murut. The East Malaysia component of this project was supported by a grant from the Asia Foundation.

Survey Design:

The Malaysia team met in January 2007 to discuss the questionnaire and added questions relevant to the Malaysia context. The Malaysia questionnaire was comprised of 211 questions (some with additional subcomponents). The team followed all the questions of the forwarded version, but added questions in the following areas: a) rights of different ethnic communities, b) social capital across ethnicities, c) ethnic identity (including both race and religion), d) different institutions in the Malaysian government, e.g. sultans, local councils; c) questions about identity related to religion/race; e) patronage and specific perceptions of campaigning strategies, f) broader range of responses on perceptions of and travel to international countries, to include different ASEAN neighbors and the Middle East.

Sampling Method:

The survey was conducted using statistical sampling at three different levels – national (random sampling), household (interval sampling) and individual (random gender selection). The total sample size of the survey was 1,200 Malaysian adult citizens (18 years old and above) which provided a maximum error margin of $\pm 2.83\%$ at the 95% confidence level, assuming a simple random sampling design. (The sampling error is at its highest when the true proportion being estimated is close to 50%.)

The following approximate 95%-confidence margins for sampling error should be made when aggregating data at various levels:

Geographic Region	Sample Size	Error Margin
Malaysia	1200	$\pm 3.0\%$
Peninsular Malaysia	900	$\pm 3.3\%$
East Malaysia	300	$\pm 6.0\%$

Selection of the study areas at the national level was performed on a random basis by the Malaysian Department of Statistics (DOS). Originally, the DOS was to have provided the ABS Team with census enumeration block maps (each comprising between 100 households) for each state resulting in 240 census enumeration block maps have been selected distributed across all states in Malaysia. However, as the project progressed DOS was only able to provide us with the random selection of enumeration blocks for states in Peninsular Malaysia, for a total of 180 enumeration blocks. Faced with the prospect of delays, we resolved to utilize an alternative sampling frame by relying on the listing of electoral districts in the Election Roll for East Malaysia. For the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, sampling areas were selected on the basis of the 2004 Electoral Roll. The design in this instance used the 54 state electoral constituencies, weighted for number of voters, as the sampling frame. The electoral constituencies were grouped by geographic regions and allocated respondents in proportion to the overall quota.

Region	State	No of Respondents	Enumeration Blocks
North	Perlis	10	2

	Kedah	82	16
	Penang	65	13
East	Kelantan	66	13
	Terengganu	45	9
	Pahang	61	12
Central	Perak	101	20
	Selangor	202	40
	Wilayah Persekutuan	65	13
South	Negeri Sembilan	42	8
	Melaka	30	6
	Johor	131	26
Region	State	No of Respondents	Electoral Localities
East Malaysia	Sabah	150	30
	Sarawak	150	30
	Total	1200	240

Combined these two random sampling populations provided a national pool of respondents that reflected the demographic and regional diversity of Malaysia.

Households within a census enumeration block in Peninsular Malaysia were then chosen using a 10-household skip pattern using interval sampling. That is, beginning from a random starting point sample households were chosen using a fixed interval of 10 households in between the sampled ones; i.e. every 11th household is sampled. Every enumerator was to continue visiting every eleventh household until his/her quota (that conforms to the pre-determined demographic characteristics) was achieved. In addition, a randomly generated list of 15 home numbers were selected beforehand and handed to team supervisors for use in cases where substitutions were needed, or if the survey team had exhausted the predetermined skip pattern of calling on respondents without obtaining the desired quota of responses from the enumeration block or electoral locality.

A similar pattern was followed in East Malaysia. Within each geographic region, respondents were selected on the basis of electoral districts (each constituency is composed of 10-15 electoral districts) and subsequently randomly selected localities (each electoral district is in turn composed of 10-15 localities). This provided a random set of localities to select respondents.

In selecting the adult within each selected household in Peninsular Malaysia, a respondent was randomly chosen among the household members who are 18 years of age and older, using a probability selection table. Only male family members were pre-listed in the probability selection table of odd-numbered questionnaires and only female family members were pre-listed for even-numbered questionnaires to assure for gender parity. In cases where there is no qualified probability respondent of a given gender in a particular

household, the interval sampling of households would continue until sample respondents was identified. The same random method was applied to a respondent in East Malaysia. The respondents were selected a set interval in the electoral roll in the randomly selected locality. In each census/electoral roll enumeration block, interviewers are required to fulfill a quota of 50 percent male and 50 percent female respondents.

Issues in Survey Implementation:

The survey was implemented smoothly over a month with a multi-ethnic team of interviewers trained and experienced in survey work throughout the country. There were three major areas of concern, initially, which proved to be less crucial as the survey evolved.

First, there were concerns regarding the political sensitivity of the questions. These proved not to be an issue, with less than 5 percent of the respondents asking for documentation associated with the survey. No government officials interfered with the implementation process. An estimated 30 percent of respondents, however, did show hesitation in answering the sensitive political affiliation and voting questions (support for specific political parties). These respondents were concentrated among urban Chinese respondents and rural Malay respondents. The questions involving rights of different communities, however, proved not to be sensitive.

Second, there were initial concerns about the response rate to the survey, particularly in light of the extended length of the questionnaire. Generally, Malaysian respondents showed a high response rate of estimated 60 percent, but there were more problems in the urban areas, particularly among Chinese respondents. Malays in the rural areas and Sabahans showed the highest response rate.

Finally, there were concerns regarding the length of the questionnaire and its potential impact on respondent fatigue and the ability to complete the surveys. This was shaped by the fact that during the initial sessions and pre-test the implementation of one survey took over 1.5 hours. As the administration evolved, however, the average time lowered considerably, to an average of 55 minutes. Respondent fatigue and cooperation did not prove to be significant issues.

Malaysia's 2007 Macro-Political Context

In order to understand the findings in Malaysia, it is central to appreciate the political currents in July-August 2007 and broader political context.

Malaysia is a hybrid political regime, neither fully authoritarian nor fully democratic. The labels used to describe the regime vary from a “semi-democracy” to “dominant one party state.” Malaysia has a regular practice of elections since gaining independence in 1957, with the latest national election held in March 2004. (The state election of Sarawak was held in May 2006 and reflects the practice of holding state elections in East Malaysia under a different calendar.) The elections are seen to be free contests, although not fair.

Malaysia's ratings on civil liberties are also mixed. There are strict limits on civil liberties on assembly, speech and political organization. These are justified by the incumbent government as essential for maintaining political harmony among the races in Malaysia. The government, however, does not engage in broad practices of torture and has only periodically used detention as a means to curb political opposition. Rather, it relies on self-censorship and unspoken limits on political organization.

The governing coalition – *Barisan Nasional* (BN) or National Front – has governed the country since 1957. The BN is now comprised of 14 political parties, based overwhelmingly on ethnicity. The dominant party in the BN is the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which represents the Malay community and is identified with Malay chauvinism. There are three major non-Malay BN political parties – the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) and GERAKAN. The opposition is comprised of three major political parties – the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), Democratic Action Party (DAP) and People's Justice Party (Keadilan Rakyat). The appeal of these parties is also shaped by ethnicity. Within East Malaysia the party configurations are more diverse, reflecting the increased ethnic diversity of Sabah and Sarawak and the different historical experience of political organization in this region. Parties are regional, as well as ethnic in East Malaysia. Yet, a parallel pattern of BN dominance, ethnic organization and ethnic appeal remains.

On average in eleven general elections in Malaysia, the opposition wins 45 percent of the votes, but due to the limits on the opposition within the electoral system, through gerrymandering, malapportionment and the impact of a first-past-the post system, and constraints on political organization for the opposition, holds less than 15 percent of the seats in parliament. In the 2004 election the BN won 63.4 percent of the popular vote, but won 91 percent of the overall seats.

In 2003, the longtime fourth prime minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamad stepped down after twenty-two years in office, turning over power to his chosen successor, Abdullah Badawi. During Mahathir's tenure he centralized political power and weakened political institutions, notably the judiciary and the bureaucracy. His tenure was accompanied by strong economic growth, an average growth rate of 5 percent. After the Asian financial crisis in 1997, pressure for increased democratization intensified, leading to a split between Dr. Mahathir and his deputy prime minister at that time, Anwar Ibrahim. This movement, known as the *reformasi* (reform) movement, led to the emergence of the first broad multi-ethnic alternative to the opposition, merging all the opposition parties in a *Barisan Alternative*, or Alternative Front. The BA split in 2001 over divisions within the opposition over the Islamic governance/secular state. The split in the opposition weakened the opposition as a whole, but strengthened individual parties within the opposition who were free to pursue narrow ethnic-based strategies to gain support.

The first two years of the Abdullah administration, 2003-2004, were an extended honeymoon.¹ During these years Abdullah opened up political space, and embraced

¹ Bridget Welsh, "Malaysia: Out of Mahathir's Shadow?" *Asian Survey* XLV, No. 1 (January/February).

many elements of the *reformasi* (reform) agenda. He decisively won the 2004 election by promising reforms on corruption, governance and Islamic moderation/racial tolerance. His own affable non-confrontational personality and grassroots orientation also contributed to his electoral victory and broad national support.

In the last two years of the Abdullah administration 2005-2007, the glow of the honeymoon faded, and a general sense of disappointment has set in. Abdullah's anti-corruption efforts slowed, and in some cases back-tracked. His promise to reduce big-spending projects has been reversed. Two cases illustrate this reversal – the failure to respond to the recommendations of a police commission to improve performance and address corruption² and the rebirth of the controversial projects like that of the Bakun Dam in Sarawak,³ which illustrates to many observers unnecessary and potentially harmful large infrastructure projects. This reversal was a result of Abdullah's administration's effort to shore up support within the ranks of the dominant party in the regime, UMNO, which has a long-standing pattern of money politics and reliance on contracts. As part of this strengthening effort patronage was dolled out extensively in 2007. Most of the distribution was part of the 9th Malaysia plan, which included new infrastructure projects and a sizeable portion of small business contracts.⁴ Since patronage was tied to shoring up political support within UMNO, there was focus on distribution toward the Malay community. From 2005 onwards Abdullah has relied more extensively on mobilizing racial identity for support, with direct appeals for "Malay" rights.⁵ This has coincided with a rejuvenation of the New Economic Policy, an affirmative action policy toward the Malay community, although nominally toward *bumiputeras* (sons of the soil or indigenous people). The focus on Malays and Malay rights has seen to strengthen support for Abdullah among the Malay community.

Nationally, however, the return to big spending and the New Economic Policy has raised questions of long-term economic competitiveness. During the four years that Abdullah has been in office, the economy has grown at a rate of 5.4 percent. Most of this growth has come from trade in commodities, oil and palm oil, and manufacturing in small electronics.⁶ The share of growth from manufacturing has declined, as the share in

² Thomas Pepinsky, "Malaysia: Turnover without Change," *Journal of Democracy* 18/1 (January 2007): 113-127; Ooi Bee Keng, "Malaysia: Abdullah Does It His Own Vague Way," in Daljit Singh and Lorriane Carlos Salazar (eds.), *Southeast Asian Affairs 2007* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2007). See, for example, this issue raised by the opposition: Lim Kit Siang, "IPCMC Bill – make public after Cabinet Wednesday to give MPs and civil society at least two weeks to study," *Lim Kit Siang for Malaysia*, November 24, 2007, <http://blog.limkitsiang.com/2007/11/24/pcmc-bill-make-public-after-cabinet-wednesday-to-give-mps-and-civil-society-at-least-two-weeks-to-study/>; and limited change on the Transparency International Index at: http://www.cpps.org.my/sub_page.aspx?catID=6&ddlID=162. See also Soon Li Tsin, "IPCMC in limbo - people to blame as well," *Malaysiakini*, June 15, 2007, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/68676>

³ Anil Netto. "New doubts over Malaysia's Bakun Dam," *Asia Times*, October 7, 2007. <http://www.rengah.c2o.org/news/article.php?identifere=de0534t>. "Abdullah says Bakun dam sale to tycoon off but project to proceed," *Malaysiakini*, January 7, 2004, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/18293>

⁴ *Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006-2010* (Putrajaya: The Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, 2006), pp. 340-353, 381-391.

⁵ See Bridget Welsh, "Malaysia at 50: A Mid-Life Crisis Ahead?" *Current History* (April 2007).

⁶ Malaysia GDP - real growth rate. Index Mundi, http://www.indexmundi.com/malaysia/gdp_real_growth_rate.html

services and natural resource extraction has increased. Trade with China has increased sharply, as trade with the United States has declined. Foreign investment has also gradually declined, with the sectoral shift moving from manufacturing toward services, notably Islamic financing. Due to the different sectoral shifts, growth in the economy has been uneven; rural areas focusing in the sale of commodities has benefited, while the urban areas have not seen the same positive impact. Unemployment has increased, reaching 3.4 percent in July before the survey.⁷ This is tied to a drop in manufacturing and slow growth in the retail sector.

The Abdullah administration has made concerted efforts to improve Malaysia's investment attractiveness and shore up the country's economic performance. The Abdullah administration continued a policy of interventionist fiscal policy. With careful monitoring and release of the peg, the value of Malaysia's currency, the *ringgit*, has appreciated.⁸ It has been supported by strong balance in the country's fiscal reserves. There also have been modest economic reforms. One focus has been on improving the performance of government-linked companies (GLCs) reducing government expenditures toward these sectors.⁹ As such, the GLC electricity company raised rates in May 2006, following a cut in fuel subsidies in March of that year.¹⁰ These measures accompanied steps to allow GLCs more autonomy and more leverage in their own investments. While the overall macro performance of most of these companies have improved, the end result has been a rise in inflation locally, and more spending by GLCs abroad. The modesty of the reforms however have not significantly increased domestic investment and increased investor confidence. The reforms have not addressed key problem areas such as limited gains in human resources/education, dependence on state funding for domestic capital and a liberalization of the service sector. While the Abdullah administrations overall macro performance is sound, it has not been seen to initiate the changes Malaysia needs to increase economic competitiveness.

One reason for the failure to introduce structural changes has been the political constraints of Abdullah shoring up support among the Malay community at the expense of reaching out to other races. From 2005 onwards, there has been an increase in racial tensions in Malaysia. Part of this has to do with the political economic factors noted above, notably the increase in patronage toward to Malay community. Another key element is centered over the role of Islamic governance in public life. When Abdullah

⁷ National Summary Data, Department of Statistics Malaysia website, December 4, 2007, <http://www.statistics.gov.my/malay/nsdp.htm>

⁸ For the removal of the peg see: Anil Netto. "Life after the peg in Malaysia" *Asia Times*, August 25, 2007. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/GH13Ae01.html. For current conditions on the peg see "Malaysian ringgit hits new high on Fed rate cut hopes" *Forbes*, November 30, 2007. <http://www.forbes.com/afxnews/limited/feeds/afx/2007/10/29/afx4271540.html>

⁹ These suggestions were outlined in a speech by Prime Minister Ahmad Badawi entitled "G.L.C. Transformation Program," July 29, 2005, Kuala Lumpur. <http://www.pmo.gov.my/WebNotesApp/PMMain.nsf/314edc1f96172e0a48256f240017b913/c10c9299cfc987904825704e00521f1f?OpenDocument>;

¹⁰ Hazlin Hassan, "Electricity tariffs jump 12 percent," *Malaysiakini*, May 24, 2006, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/51497> and "Malaysia: Inflation Up, Growth Down," *Bloomberg*, April 23, 2006. <http://www.malaysia-today.net/Blog-e/2006/04/malaysia-inflation-up-growth-down.htm>

entered office, the role of Islam had already been highly politicized.¹¹ Divisions over the role of Islam in political life had led to social tensions. Dr Mahathir declared Malaysia an Islamic state in 2001, as part of an effort to deflect criticism from the Islamic party (PAS) towards his administration. The reformasi movement had increased their support electorally, and for the first time they became the leader of the opposition in Malaysia nationally. When Abdullah came into office he offered his own brand of political Islam, Islam Hadhari, which has served as a broad, undefined umbrella framework.¹² It effectively reduced the impact of PAS to use religion to buttress support electorally, as its loses in the 2004 election show. The conflict over political Islam has moved away from political parties to groups within society, as new social actors have debated the form and impact of Islam in areas such as family law and religious freedom. The mobilization and intensity of the debates have increased social tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims and within Muslims. Before the survey, a landmark decision on the issue of apostasy, Lina Joy, was handed down denying the right of a Muslim to leave the religion.¹³ This case was one of many that have raised the salience of political Islam in Malaysia over the last two years. Not surprisingly, racial overtones have increased across the board in political discourse, not only over issues associated with religion but also over the rights of different ethnic communities.

The image of Abdullah has shifted in the last two years. Abdullah as a person remains popular across races. His non-confrontational style and genuineness continues to evoke broad political support. Yet, more Malaysians are questioning his ability to lead.¹⁴ On critical issues, he has failed to intervene or express opinions, and in many cases, such as those involving the role of religion, his positions have vacillated. There are rising perceptions of Abdullah as “weak” and indecisive, despite his continued “likeability”.¹⁵ Nevertheless, presently there are no challengers to his leadership within UMNO, and he

¹¹ For a broader discussion of Islam in contemporary politics, see: Patricia Martinez, “Mahathir, Islam and the New Malay Dilemma,” in Ho Khai Leong and James Chin (eds.), *Mahathir’s Administration: Performance and Crisis in Governance* (Singapore: Times Books, 2001), pp. 120-160 and Patricia Martinez, “Islam, Constitutional Democracy and the Islamic State in Malaysia,” in Lee Hock Guan (ed.) *Civil Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2004), pp. 27-53. Recent 2006 survey work by Patricia Martinez points to the importance of Islam as defining identity in Malaysia. See “Malaysian Malays,” *New Straits Times*, August 10, 2006. Also expanded at: <http://www.littlespeck.com/SpecialReport/SpecialRpt-Malays-060831.htm>. See also Joseph Liow, “Dialectics of political Islam in Malaysia,” *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* (July 2004) and Meredith Weiss, “The Changing Shape of Islamic Politics in Malaysia,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 4, No. 1 (2004): 139-173. Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, “Political Dimensions of Religious Conflict in Malaysia: State Response to an Islamic Movement,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 28/80 (2000): 32-65.

¹² Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, *Islam Hadhari: A Model Approach for Development and Progress* (Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Publications, 2006).

¹³ Hannah Beech, “Malaysia’s Crisis of Faith,” May 30, 2007. Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1626300,00.html>

¹⁴ See, for example, Steven Gan, “An Incompetent, Not so Nice Guy,” *Malaysiakini*, November 27, 2007, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/editorials/75321>

¹⁵ The person who used the label “weak” widely to describe Abdullah Badawi was former prime minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, particularly in 2006. See, for example, Simon Montlake, “Malaysia’s Ex-Leader Stays in the Game,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 10, 2006, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1110/p06s01-woap.html>

is expected to extend his tenure. The opposition remains fragmented and ideologically divided, with no clear agenda for voter mobilization.

Malaysia is preparing for the next general elections, which need to be held before March 2009. They are expected to be held next year in 2008. During the months of the survey, the tactic of the BN was to consolidate the Malay base through patronage and racial discourse, and allow for a defection of Chinese voters. Recent polls (conducted by the Merdeka Centre in June 2007) show a considerable defection of Chinese voters toward the opposition. This was after significant gains for the DAP opposition party in the May 2006 state elections in Sarawak. Since their victory, the leading opposition party is now the DAP, which is expected to gain support in Chinese areas. The remaining possible gains for the other parties, PAS and PKR remain unknown. Although PKR's leader Anwar Ibrahim has been regularly on the political scene since 2006 (he was released by Abdullah in 2004), he has not clearly articulated a message and failed to inspire broad support for his political party, which has been riddled by petty factionalism. Cooperation within the opposition remains a serious obstacle for political change.

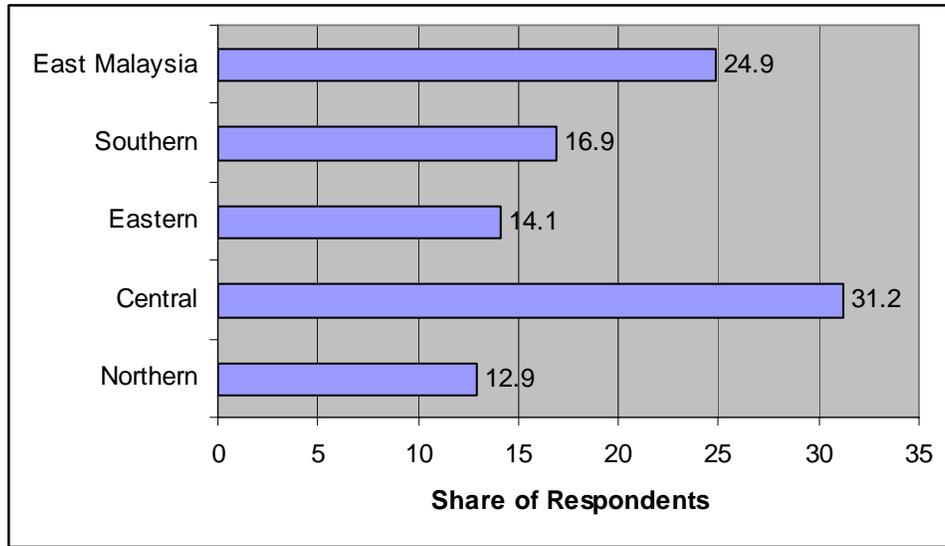
As the election momentum (and racial tensions) have increased, the Malaysian government has initiated a crackdown on the press – issuing gag orders on reporting on religion, race and crime – and gone after bloggers on the internet.¹⁶ The government has used the need to maintain social harmony as a means to justify its actions. In the weeks before the survey, the Malaysian government has been using the 50th anniversary of the country to promote positive messages of Malaysia “success” and thus patriotism was high.

Profile of Survey Respondents

Drawn from a random selection with a sample size of 1,200, the survey is a representative sample of the country. Yet, it is useful to understand how the survey reflects the diversity within Malaysia. As shown in Chart 1, the plurality of respondents came from the center of the Peninsular Malaysia, which has the highest population concentration and is where the national capital Kuala Lumpur is located. The survey has a high number of respondents from East Malaysia, 24.9 percent, reflecting the fact that one of the East Malaysian states, Sabah, is the second most populated in the entire country.

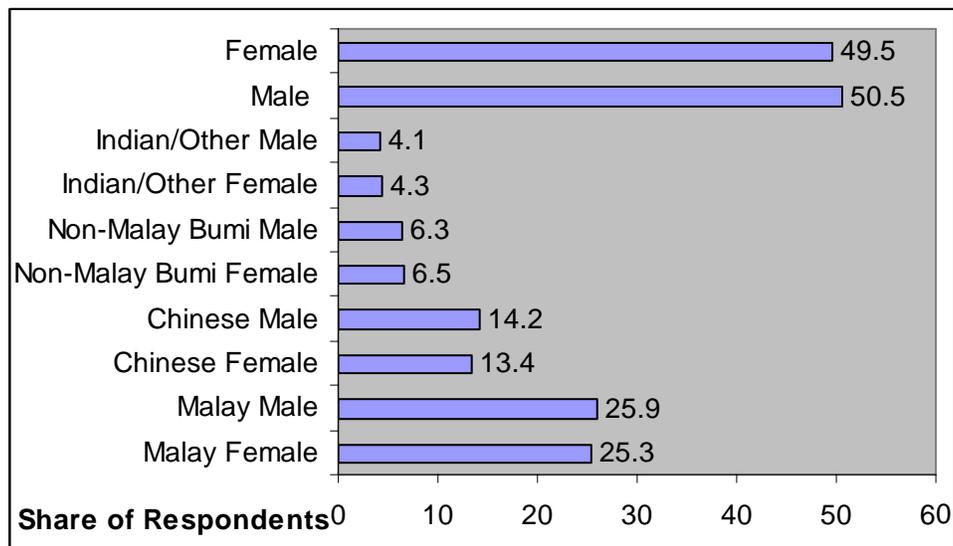
Chart 1: Geographic Distribution of Respondents

¹⁶ Reme Ahmad, “Malaysia: Abdullah hits back at bloggers, websites out to 'rubbish' him,” *Straits Times*, January 29, 2007.



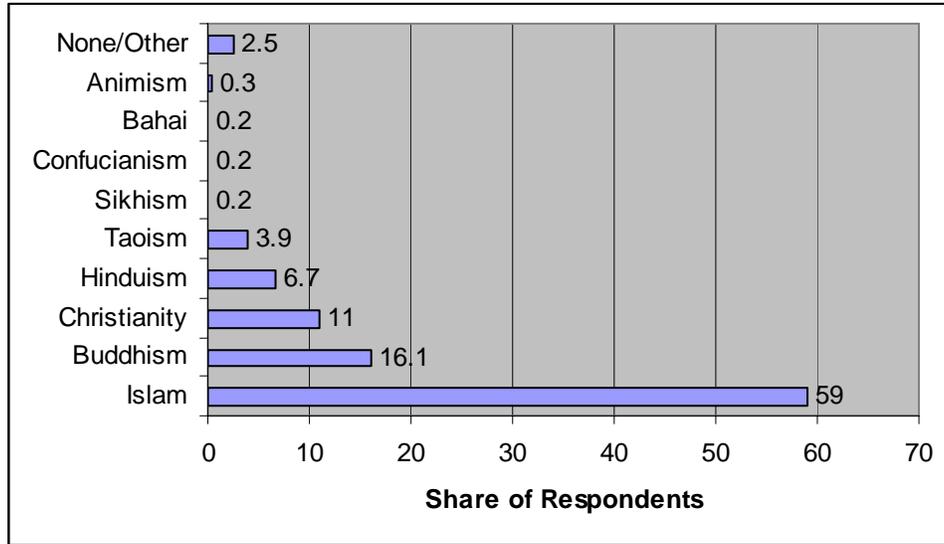
The survey respondents reflect the ethnic heterogeneity of Malaysia, as shown in Chart 2. The largest share of the survey respondents was from the Malay community, followed by Chinese and non-Malay *bumiputeras* from East Malaysia. The survey achieved gender parity, with only a small differential between men and women.

Chart 2: Ethnic and Gender Profile of Respondents



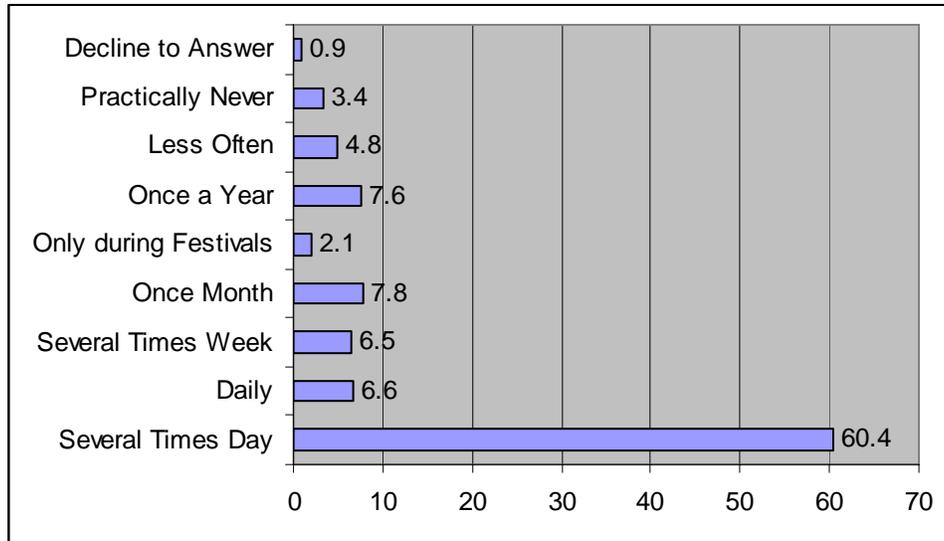
The religious profile of the respondents outlined in Chart 3 reflects the ethnic composition of the respondents, with all of the Malays and a share of the Indians Muslims and diversity of religious identification among the other ethnic communities.

Chart 3: Religious Profile of Respondents



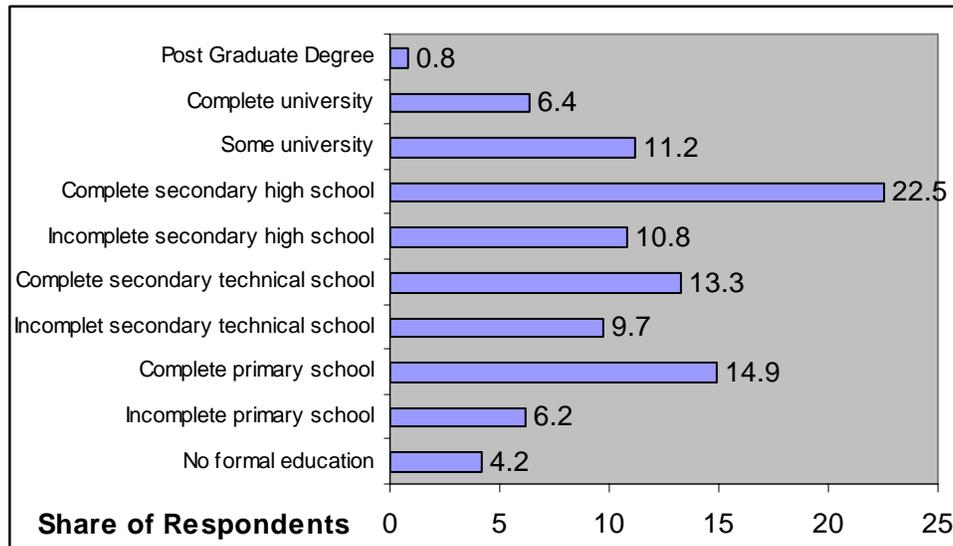
Malaysia is a deeply religious country. An overwhelming majority of respondents, 64.7 percent of respondents described themselves as “very” or “moderately” religious, with only a handful 2.5 percent stating that they were “not religious at all”. In fact, 60.4 percent of the respondents noted that they practiced religious services/rituals several times daily, with only 3.4 percent “practically never”, as shown in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Religious Practice among Malaysian Respondents



The survey respondents live in large households, with 59.8 percent living in households of over five people and an average household size of 4.2 people. The majority of the respondents included two or more generations in a household, 73.9 percent. The majority were married, 64.4 percent, with less than a third of single respondents, 31.3 percent. A small share were “living in as married” (0.2 percent) and reported to be divorced (0.3 percent).

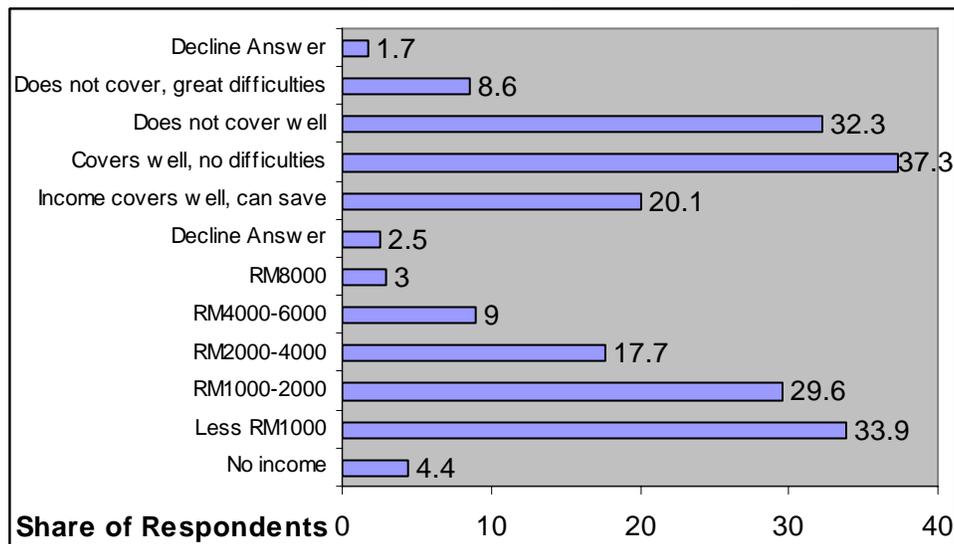
Chart 5: Education Levels of Respondents



The respondents had a variety of educational backgrounds, with the most respondents completing secondary school, 22.5 percent. As shown in Chart 5 above, the overwhelming majority of respondents had some level of secondary school or higher, which is in keeping with the increased educational standards in Malaysia.

In keeping with the diversity of incomes in Malaysia, Chart 6 shows a significant range, with the most respondent households, 33.9 percent, earning less RM1000 (US\$ 286) monthly. A majority of respondents, 57.4 percent, felt that their household income, however, covers their expenses well and they do not experience difficulties. Most Malaysian households owned a landline phone 53.4 percent with 86.4 percent owning a mobile phone. A whopping 73.2 percent of respondents owned a car, which reflects the government’s push for car ownership in the form of the national car, Proton.

Chart 6: Income Perceptions and Reported Levels Respondents



Initial Descriptive Findings

The majority of respondents were optimistic about economic conditions in Malaysia, despite the rise in inflation and high unemployment. As Table 1 shows, over 40 percent of respondents described economic conditions as “very good” or “good”. A parallel positive sense was felt for the family, although at a slightly lower level. In fact, less than 5 percent of Malaysians felt that economic conditions were “very bad.”

Table 1: Assessment of Economic Conditions

	Individual	Family
Very good	6.7	4.5
Good	34.5	30.4
So-so	41.2	58
Bad	11.5	5.4
Very Bad	4.7	1.5
Can't choose	1.1	0.1
Decline Answer	0.2	0.2

The positive assessment extended to their assessment of the past and future economic conditions, as illustrated in Table 2. A majority of the respondents felt that economic conditions were better in the past, suggesting a decline in conditions. Yet, at the same time, the majority of respondents felt that conditions would improve in the future.

Table 2: Assessment of Past and Future Economic Conditions

	Individual		Family	
	Past	Future	Past	Future
Much Better	16.4	21.8	14.6	23.8
Little Better	35.9	34	37.6	37.1
About Same	26.9	20.1	32.8	23.2
Little Worse	15.4	8.6	12.3	4.1
Much Worse	4.5	4.4	2.3	0.6
Can't choose	0.7	10.8	0.2	10.7
Decline Answer	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.6

The positive outlook on the economy extended to Malaysian assessments of the performance of political institutions. Across the board, Malaysians revealed high level of trust in political institutions. As Table 3 shows, a majority of Malaysians trust the governing institutions, with the highest degree of faith in the military. Over three quarters of respondents trust the military, 76.3 percent. Unlike other countries in Asia, the military in Malaysia has been a civilian government and never assumed political power. Trust in the prime minister was almost as high. Three-quarters of respondents, 75.8 percent, trust the prime minister. Of this, 28.7 percent of respondents have a “great deal” of trust in the prime minister. Appointed bodies, in the form of the civil service and local councils, followed, with support for the federal and state government almost equally high. The National Front (BN) also was trusted by two-thirds of the respondents. Collectively, the

respondents showed high trust in the governing institutions tied to the executive control. Two governing institutions, the police and the Electoral Commission, however, did not have quite the same high level of trust. This reflects the considerable public criticism both institutions have faced for performance in the past few years.

Table 3: Trust in Political Institutions

	Great deal	Quite a lot	Not much	None	Cannot decide	Decline Answer	High Trust	Low Trust
Prime Minister	28.7	47.1	15.8	3.8	3.5	1.2	75.8	19.6
Judiciary	19.3	44.1	24.2	5.7	5.9	0.7	63.4	29.9
Parliament	15.9	47.9	21.4	5.4	7.6	1.7	63.8	26.8
Federal Government	19.8	49.8	19.1	5.1	4.8	1.4	69.6	24.2
State Government	20.9	48.7	20.4	4.7	4.4	0.9	69.6	25.1
State Assembly	15.2	48	21.1	6.6	7.5	1.6	63.2	27.7
Political Parties	10.8	41.6	29	8	9.1	1.4	52.4	37
National Front	21.5	45.2	20.6	7.2	4.4	1.1	66.7	27.8
Opposition Parties	5.7	36.2	37.4	12.4	7.1	1.3	41.9	49.8
Civil Service	17.5	54.6	19	4.7	3.4	0.8	72.1	23.7
Local Council	16.3	54.2	19.9	4.8	3.9	1	70.5	24.7
Military	27.5	48.8	11.5	3.6	8	0.6	76.3	15.1
Police	18.3	40.6	26.8	12.2	2.1	0.2	58.9	39
Election Commission	16.2	44.8	24	6.6	7	1.5	61	30.6

The other branches of government, the parliament/state assembly and judiciary were slightly lower in support, but, here too, a strong majority recorded high levels of trust. Malaysians recorded the least trust in political parties, 52.4 percent with high trust. Of these, there was considerable concern over opposition parties, with almost half of the respondents, 49.8 percent, reporting low trust in the opposition parties. These findings points to a significant obstacle for the opposition to gain support.

Respondents also showed strong faith in politicians. Nearly three-quarters, 71.3 percent believed that one could trust politicians at the federal level, with slightly less, 65.9 percent recording similar high trust for local officials.

The support for institutions extended beyond political institutions and actors. Table 4 shows that the respondents had a high degree of faith in television, NGOs and newspapers, although approximately a third of respondents recorded low levels of trust of the media – newspapers and television, 34.9 percent and 27.9 percent respectively. There was also considerable wariness of the Internet, with only a third of respondents, or 34 percent, recording high trust of the Internet. In fact, nearly a quarter, 22.7 percent, could not decide revealing perhaps their lack of familiarity with the Internet. Other sources

have estimated that only 42 percent of Malaysians use the Internet.¹⁷ Of the respondents, 55.9 percent had never used the Internet and 47.5 percent did not use cable television.

Table 4: Trust in Information Sources/Social Organizations

	Great deal	Quite a lot	Not much	None	Cannot decide	Decline Answer	High Trust	Low Trust
Newspapers	13.9	47.9	31.1	3.8	3.1	0.2	61.8	34.9
Television	16.5	52.5	24.9	3	3	0.02	69	27.9
Internet	8.5	25.5	30.2	10.1	22.7	2.8	34	40.3
NGOs	11.2	52.8	21.8	2.6	9.3	2.2	64	24.4

Trust in institutions and political officials however, does not translate into trust in individuals in society. When asked whether “most people can be trusted” only a handful, 4.8 percent, agreed. In fact, the overwhelming majority, 93.4 percent, responded that one “must be very careful in dealing with people.” Yet, clearly they differentiated among types of individuals. As Table 5 shows, respondents expressed high levels of trust in relatives and neighbors, although less so with other people. There were also sharp differences in trust by ethnicity, with only a majority of respondents expressing high levels of trust in Malays, 62.8 percent. In fact nearly a majority of the respondents did not trust Chinese, 49.7 percent, and a majority did not trust Indians, 55.8 percent. Trust in the main East Malaysian races of Kadazans and Ibans was also low, in part since 38.5 percent could not decide on how to answer this question. This reflects that fact that East Malaysian communities are concentrated across the China Sea and many Malaysians do not have regular contact with these communities. In Malaysia’s highly ethnicized society, the low trust across races points to potential for racial tension and misunderstandings.

Table 5: Trust in Individuals

	Great Deal	Quite a Lot	Not very Much	None	Can't Chose	Decline Answer	High Trust	Low Trust
Relatives	29	47.2	19.8	2	2	0.1	76.2	21.8
Neighbors	11.3	54.8	29.2	2.5	2.1	0.2	66.1	31.7
Other People	4.8	44.5	43.7	3.6	3.4	0	49.3	47.3
Malays	10.8	52	29.2	3	4.9	0.2	62.8	32.2
Chinese	4.5	41.2	42.1	7.6	4.4	0.2	45.7	49.7
Indians	3.9	31.9	42.9	12.9	8	0.4	35.8	55.8
Kadazans/Ibans	3.1	25.4	24.4	6	38.5	3.6	28.5	30.4

The other key indicator of social capital is membership in organizations. Malaysians are not joiners. Over two-thirds of respondents, 68.4 percent, did not join any organization. Of those that opted to join, the main organization was a political party, 11.5 percent, residential association, 4 percent, religious organization, 3.2 percent, and sports/

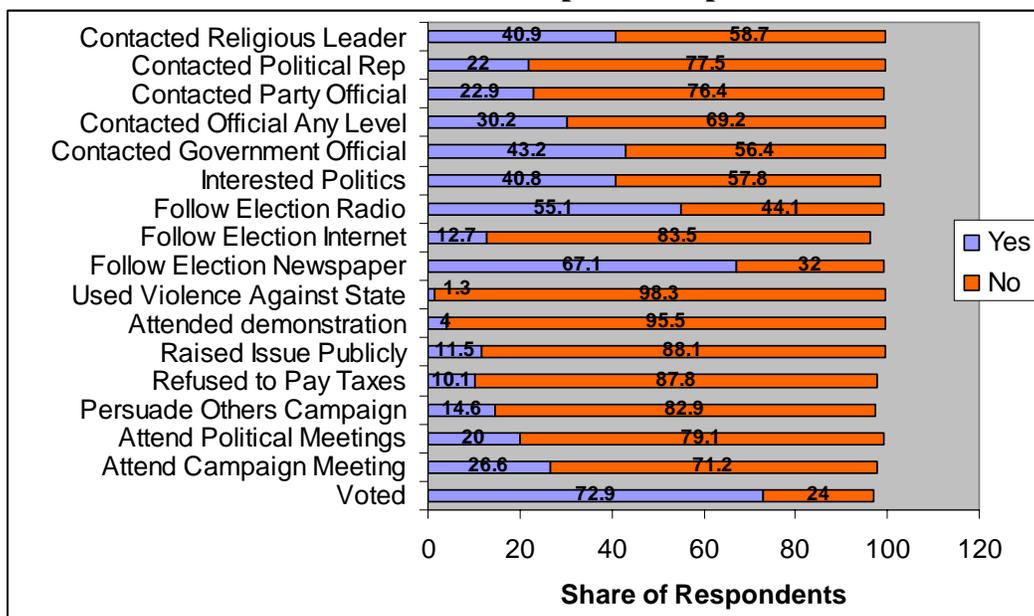
¹⁷ Kenneth E. Corey and Mark I. Wilson, “The Naga Matures: From IT to Intelligent Development Policies in Southeast Asia,” in Victor R. Savage and May Tan-Mullins (eds.), *The Naga Challenged: Southeast Asia in the Winds of Change* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2005), pp. 301-345.

recreational facility, 2.0 percent. When asked if they joined another organization, 86.6 percent, said they did not and 95.4 did not join a third organization. The limited membership in social organizations points to low social capital in Malaysia. In fact, a quarter of the respondents, 25.9 percent, only had contact with less than four people weekly.

Despite the lack of social capital, Malaysians feel safe. Only 12.9 percent of respondents felt unsafe, although 27.4 percent felt that they were less safe than the earlier year. Many Malaysians reported themselves as victims of crime, with 18.6 percent having their car/motorcycle/bicycle stolen, 18.2 percent a victim of pick-pocketing, and 14.5 percent a victim of a break-in. Only 3 percent of respondents were victims of violence, however. The rising crime rate, however, has had an impact on nearly a fifth of Malaysians.

The limited engagement socially extends into political participation. Although, Malaysians are more likely to participate politically than join a social organization. As Chart 7 illustrates, elections are the activity that solicits the most engagement. Nearly three quarters, 72.9 percent, of respondents voted in elections, with 67.1 percent and 55.1 following elections on the radio. A large share of the respondents were interested in politics, 40.8 percent, and contacted officials, 43.2 percent. Yet, fewer people contacted a party official, 30.2 percent, or their political representative, 22.9 percent. Other forms of political engagement were even less frequent. Only 26.6 percent had attended a campaign meeting, 20 percent had attended another political meeting, 11.5 percent had raised a political issue publicly and 14.6 percent had engaged in campaigning. Very few respondents, 4 percent, had participated in a demonstration, with a small fraction of 1.3 percent opting for violence.

Chart 7: Political Participation Respondents



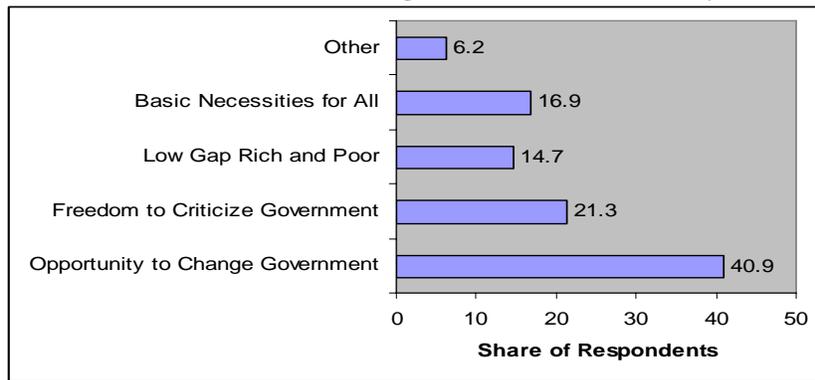
Those that voted did support the BN parties primarily. Of those that acknowledged voting in the 2004 elections, 44.9 percent recorded support for BN parties, with the majority of those voting for “BN” rather than a specific component party within the BN. Many respondents refused to answer this question, particularly those supporting the opposition. A significant portion of Malaysians when asked about their close identification with specific parties answered “none”, 12.5 percent. Most Malaysians, however, acknowledged problems with the electoral process, with only 34.4 percent believing that elections in the country were “completely free and fair.” A small share of respondents pointed to the practice of political parties giving rewards to voters, with 9.1 percent stating they received a political reward. Yet, 48.5 percent of respondents, close to a majority, felt that Malaysian elections offered a “real choice” to voters.

A series of questions examined Malaysian attitudes about the nature of the country’s political system. One of the main cords among respondents was an acceptance of hierarchy and paternal authority. Malaysians were willing to accept the authority of teachers and religious leaders, 50.6 percent and 51.4 percent respectively. An even greater share of respondents felt that the relationship between the government and people was similar to that of a parent to child, 84.3 percent, with 43.7 percent supporting a government decision without question. A similar large share of respondents, 59.1 percent, felt that politics should be left to leaders, with 52 percent believing that “leaders are like the head of the family.” An overwhelming majority of Malaysians, 84.4 percent, insisted they should put their own interests secondary to that of the government, with 58.8 percent recording that they would give up present gains for future ones. In fact, 60.1 percent of respondents claimed they should support government policy even if it jeopardizes their personal interest. A similarly large share, 70.2 percent, expressed the view that the government should decide on what should be discussed on politics in society. Most Malaysians showed a willingness to sacrifice personal interest for society, 62 percent, and an overwhelming majority, 73.5 percent, believed that citizens should abide by the laws, even if they disagreed with them.

The support for government extended to allowing it more rights. In the economy over three quarters of respondents or 76 percent, believed that the government should hold onto the government linked companies. Generally, 71.1 percent believed that government should have more authority and work to address social inequality, 90.5 percent. The majority of Malaysians continue to support the NEP, 74.3 percent.

The respondents also suggested a strong resistance to conflict. With 64.3 percent of respondents pointing to the importance of avoiding conflict with neighbors and 55.4 percent suggesting that they should not insist on their own opinions. There was strong resistance to open conflict between politicians, 65.3 percent, and conflict among political groups, 47.1 percent. A majority, 65.2 percent, also expressed the view that debate over ethnic and religious issues was harmful to society. Many respondents concurred that the “best way to deal with problems was to put them aside toward the future”, 45.4 percent, with 75.3 percent of respondents supporting gradual political reform. Political difference was questioned fundamentally, with 69.4 percent of respondents believing that different views contribute to a “chaotic society.”

Chart 8: Essential Ingredients of Democracy



In keeping with the high levels of trust in political institutions, most Malaysians were satisfied how democracy worked in the country, 65.3 percent. The view of the essential qualities for democratic governance in Malaysia varied considerably. As Chart 8 above shows, most highlighted the need to change or criticize the government, yet a large share pointed to economic conditions and delivery of basic needs. Only 16.3 percent expressed the view that Malaysia was a “full democracy”, with 20.5 percent believing that the democracy in Malaysia had major problems. Interestingly, they do not believe that conditions had improved in terms of democratic governance during the Abdullah administration compared to the Dr. Mahathir period, with the average median assessment of 7 on a 10 point scale for both periods, with 10 full democracy and 1 dictatorship. The similar score suggests consistency in the assessment of the regime in Malaysia, despite the change in prime minister and the touted opening of the system under Abdullah. Most Malaysians felt that democracy was suitable for Malaysia today, with a median of 8 (following the similar 1-10 scale) on the suitability scale. A lower positive ranking however was given to the Abdullah administration, suggesting a discontent between the assessment of level of democracy in the system now and what is wanted by the public.

Most Malaysians, 70.5 percent, believed that democracy was the most suitable form of government for the country, with 77.8 percent believing that this form of government was the most suitable to solve the country’s problems. A similar high number, 69.1 percent, held the view that even greater democracy would resolve the ethnic issues in the country. Although, when pressed, a large share of respondents believed that economic development was more important than democratic governance, 59.6 percent. There was considerable resistance to a strong leader, with only a third or 33.7 percent believing that the country should have a strong leader. A smaller share of Malaysians felt that one party should dominate, 19.4 percent, and only a small share felt that the army should govern, 9.7 percent. Given that the military has never ruled the country, this share is surprisingly high. Slightly more than a third of respondents, 36.8 percent, believed that ordinary people should not have any say in politics. An overwhelming majority of respondents supported censorship of “sensitive issues”, 80.1 percent, which usually involve race or religion.

The survey results however show that Malaysians identify key problems. The main concern of the respondents, 23.9 percent, was inflation/prices, followed by crime at 14.4 percent, management of the economy at 6.3 percent, corruption at 6.1 percent and poverty at 5.7 percent.

When probed on specific issues about the performance of government, there was more skepticism than earlier results suggested. Less than a third, 30 percent, believed that the people have the power to change the government, although there remained high levels of confidence of the government to solve problems within the next five years, 53.2 percent. A 13 percent of respondents felt there was no way that people would have access to the government at all. The Parliament was seen as a “capable” check on government, 74.9 percent. On the judiciary, only 28.1 percent of respondents recorded that it “always punishes the guilty” and 11.3 percent overall believed that the judiciary accepted the views of the executive. There was a similar questioning of the media, with only 12.4 percent recording that parties have equal access to the media. There was a strong sense of government impunity for its actions, with only 12.6 percent feeling that the legal system can effectively address issues if someone in government breaks the law. The sense of unequal treatment extended to society, with only 19 percent recording that they felt everyone was treated equally by the government. In fact, only 30 percent, less than a third of Malaysians, felt that all citizens in the country had basic necessities. A majority of respondents, 52.5 percent, also felt that the government often withheld information from the public and only 13.1 percent believed that the government always abides by the law. A greater share of respondents, 17.3 percent, felt that the government rarely abides by the law. Only 5.2 percent and 3.9 percent of respondents believed the government was not corrupt at the state and federal level. In other words, an overwhelming majority believed that corruption was endemic at the state and federal levels of government, with 11.2 percent and 10.8 percent believing that “everyone is corrupt.” Most felt that the government was not addressing corruption effectively, with only 21.1 percent recording that the “government is doing its best.” A small share of respondents felt that they could speak out on “what they think”, 25.4 percent, and join an organization, 27.2 percent, yet the overwhelming majority did not feel that they had these rights. In fact, only slightly more than a third, 37.8 percent, felt they had the right to participate in politics at all.

Despite the problems with the government, a majority of Malaysians report high level of responsiveness for government, 56.1 percent. Across the board, respondents believe that services are accessible, from getting a new identity card to receiving medical treatment and help from the police. Fewer respondents reported the same level of easy access to political representatives, however, although a large share have never tried to access officials for assistance. Compared to issues of trust, the public assessment of governance was considerably lower.

Table 6: Government Service Accessibility

	Very Difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very Easy	Never Try	Can't Choose
Identity Card	2.1	13.8	64.7	18	0.7	0.7
Desired Primary School	2.2	7	56.5	13.3	16.5	4.6
Medical Treatment	3.4	14.2	65.3	14.4	1.8	0.9

Help From Police	5.3	16.1	40.7	7.5	28.9	1.5
Public Transportation	6.2	20.6	53.6	10.9	7.4	1.2
Complaint Local Council	4.2	19.2	31.4	4.7	38.1	2.5
Contact Party Rep	5.2	15.8	23.2	4.5	47.2	4.1

Malaysians distinguish different groups in Malaysia society, as shown in Table 7. Less than a third across the board felt that vulnerable groups such as prostitutes and mentally ill were the same as ordinary Malaysians, yet in most cases they believed that they should have the same rights as other Malaysians. This group included convicts, drug addicts, prostitutes and gay/lesbians/transvestites. Yet, apostates and mentally ill individuals were not given the same rights by a majority of respondents. Surprisingly, however, a quarter or 25.5 percent believed that the same rights should be extended to non-citizens, migrant workers.

Table 7: Status/Rights of Specific Groups

	Same as Malaysians	Same Rights
Convicts	54.9	74
Drug Addicts	66.6	55.7
Prostitutes	66.6	53.7
Gay/Lesbians Transvestites	67.9	55.2
Migrant Workers	63.1	25.5
Apostates	64	44.5
Mentally Ill	68.5	40.6

When asked about their own identity Malaysians strongly identified themselves as “Malaysians,” 52.9 percent, with only a quarter, 24.9 percent identifying themselves by their religion and 14.9 percent by their ethnicity. This points to the strong sense of national identity, which has translated into high levels of patriotism. Ninety-three percent of respondents were proud to be Malaysian and 80.5 percent believed in loyalty to the country. Only 28.7 percent expressed a willingness to leave Malaysia. Yet, this involved close to a third of Malaysians.

The survey also identified considerably links between Malaysians and the international community, reflecting high level of globalization of Malaysian society. A majority, 57.5 percent, of respondents followed international events closely, with 21.7 percent “very closely.” A 17.8 percent had daily contact with foreigners, with only 38.8 percent recording never having contact. Yet, a majority of Malaysians had not traveled abroad, 58.8 percent. Those that had traveled, however, had predominantly stayed within ASEAN, with the most respondents traveling to Singapore and Thailand.

There was also familiarity with international organizations as shown in Table 8. The organization that was the most well-known was the United Nations, followed by ASEAN. This is in keeping with the multilateral orientation of Malaysia’s foreign policy and the priority that is given to these organizations. The Asian Regional Forum (ARF) was known the least, although the ranking for the organization as on par with other multilateral organizations.

Table 8: Perceptions of International Organizations

	Heard	Average Evaluation
ASEAN	80.5	6
APEC	68.2	6
ARF	56.7	6
EU	65.8	6
UN	88.1	6
IMF	64.9	6
World Bank	78.9	6

The perceptions of foreign countries differ as well, as shown in Table 9. The United States received the lowest rating, followed by India and three ASEAN countries, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Surprisingly, Singapore had the most favorable rating among ASEAN countries, on par with China, Japan and Australia.

Table 9: Perceptions of Foreign Countries

	Median Evaluation
United States	4
China	6
Japan	6
Australia	6
India	5
Singapore	6
Indonesia	5
Thailand	5
Philippines	5

Conclusion:

These results show that the Malaysians support the incumbent regime and the current form of government in high numbers, from support for the Prime Minister and other political officials to trust in institutions. There is considerable support for the type of regime in Malaysia and belief in the quality of democracy in the country. Although there is a differential between the level of democracy Malaysians want, and how they assess the regime currently, the difference is not large. In fact, there are many areas where Malaysians show a willingness to close the political system, in areas such as censorship and other civil liberties.

The assessment of the Malaysian public of responsiveness and governance is less optimistic, however. The areas of corruption and maintaining respect for the law by the government were notable areas of concern. Yet, in assessing economic performance and services, the Malaysian public gives strong rating to the government. The main concern of the Malaysian public is the economy, pointing the persistent importance of economic legitimacy for the regime. The comparatively lower numbers in areas of governance and responsiveness compared to trust show that there is a gap in the performance of the government and the trust given to the government. Some of these concerns have to do

with the nature of the system, in areas such as the electoral process where only a third assess the elections as “completely free and fair.”

The political engagement of Malaysians centers around voting, although there is considerable attention to political issues and a large cohort of individuals who engage directly with government officials and representatives. The focus of political participation in Malaysia is toward the norms and procedures established by the system. This conforms to the overall high trust in government institutions.

The trust does not extend widely in Malaysian society. Social capital is limited in Malaysian and networks across races are low. This is a troubling feature in a multi-ethnic society. Rather, Malaysians turn outward, and are highly globalized. The travel and engage with international affairs, shaping strong views of the international community. The dominant threads of Malaysia’s foreign policy come through in the resonance with multilateralism and ASEAN. The serious concerns of the general public about US also come through, with the public giving the US the lowest ranking, markedly lower than China, and Singapore.

These findings are the first cut of the survey research. Further analysis will examine difference attitudes by ethnicity, class, region (East Malaysia) and age. This should provide a clearer sense of variation within Malaysia as a whole. These results will be published in further working papers.

Appendix A.

Survey Preparation 2007

January 2007	Team Leader Workshop to Review Questionnaire
June 2007	Series of Team Leader Meetings to Discuss Questionnaire /Project Implementation

Survey Implementation 2007:

July 7-8	Training of Peninsular Malaysia Team
July 9	Pre-testing of questionnaire (37 questionnaires pre-tested)
July 10	Debriefing on questionnaire
July 10-11	Meeting with the Taiwanese ABS Visiting Professors
July 11-13	Practice/Pre-testing Questionnaires with team
July 14- August 4	Peninsular East Coast Team Questionnaires
July 14-August 4	Peninsular Northern West Coast Team Questionnaires
July 14-August 21	KL/Selangor Team Questionnaires (Weekends only)
July 21	Training of Sarawak Team
July 22	Training of Sabah Team
July 21- August 5	Sabah Team Questionnaires
July 22-August 14	Sarawak Team Questionnaires
August 1-August 14	Peninsular South Team Questionnaires
August 16-23	Debriefings of Peninsular/Sabah/Sarawak Team

Data Entry 2007

September-October	Input/Checking of Data Entry
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Survey Follow-up

August 23 rd	Team Leader Meeting to Discuss Preliminary Findings
November-December	Data Analysis
December	Early Report Preparation
January 2008	Presentations of findings in Malaysia

Asian Barometer

A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

Working Paper Series

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Asian Barometer

A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

The Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) grows out of the Comparative Survey of Democratization and Value Change in East Asia Project (also known as East Asia Barometer), which was launched in mid-2000 and funded by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan under the MOE-NSC Program for Promoting Academic Excellence of University. The headquarters of ABS is based in Taipei, and is jointly sponsored by the Department of Political Science at NTU and the Institute of Political Science of Academia Sinica. The East Asian component of the project is coordinated by Prof. Yun-han Chu, who also serves as the overall coordinator of the Asian Barometer. In organizing its first-wave survey (2001-2003), the East Asia Barometer (EABS) brought together eight country teams and more than thirty leading scholars from across the region and the United States. Since its founding, the EABS Project has been increasingly recognized as the region's first systematic and most careful comparative survey of attitudes and orientations toward political regime, democracy, governance, and economic reform.

In July 2001, the EABS joined with three partner projects -- New Europe Barometer, Latinobarometro and Afrobarometer -- in a path-breathing effort to launch Global Barometer Survey (GBS), a global consortium of comparative surveys across emerging democracies and transitional societies.

The EABS is now becoming a true pan-Asian survey research initiative. New collaborative teams from Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, and Vietnam are joining the EABS as the project enters its second phase (2004-2008). Also, the State of Democracy in South Asia Project, based at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (in New Delhi) and directed by Yogendra Yadav, is collaborating with the EABS for the creation of a more inclusive regional survey network under the new identity of the Asian Barometer Survey. This path-breaking regional initiative builds upon a substantial base of completed scholarly work in a number of Asian countries. Most of the participating national teams were established more than a decade ago, have acquired abundant experience and methodological know-how in administering nationwide surveys on citizen's political attitudes and behaviors, and have published a substantial number of works both in their native languages and in English.

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