

Survey: Most voters back Najib-Anwar debate

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A recent survey has revealed that most voters want to see regular debates between Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

The survey by independent public opinion research organisation Merdeka Centre, conducted between Feb 10 and 23, found that 54 percent of the respondents were in support of debates between the two.

The support was especially high among young voters, two-thirds of whom agreed that there should be a debate between the two leaders to showcase their "ideas and policies to the nation".

Support was strongest among young Malay voters at 76 percent for those aged 21 to 30, and 56 percent for those aged 31 to 40, and lowest among Malay voters aged 60 and above, at 39 percent.

Chinese voters, who made up one-third of the respondents, showed the highest percentage of support for debate at 66 percent, compared to Malay voters at 54 percent and Indian voters at 34 percent.

Among Indian respondents, those who were against debate exceeded the opposite group by five percent.

While some have argued that such debates are unnecessary and "not a part of our culture" the findings suggest that these will help voters make up their minds, especially since 62 percent of voters - who have yet to decide which party to vote for - back the idea of debates.

Topics of choice

Among the topics voters want to see debated are 'economic issues' (17 percent); 'current national issues' (nine percent); and 'welfare of the people' and 'development of the country' (seven percent respectively). These were followed by 'combating corruption' at five percent.

Current and national issues suggested by the respondents included the National Feedlot Centre scandal, Malaysia's debt, and issues of administration.

The survey randomly interviewed 1,022 voters aged 21 in all states across Peninsular Malaysia via telephone.

The respondents comprised 59 percent Malays, 32 percent Chinese and nine percent Indians.

It was funded internally by Merdeka Centre for release to the public.

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