

PM's approval rating at record high
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's approval rating has hit a record high at 72 percent, up from 69 percent in April, according to independent pollster Merdeka Centre.

The highest approval rating was noted among Indian respondents (80 percent), followed by Malays (77 percent) and Chinese (58 percent).

The upward trend in Najib's approval rating was consistent for all three races since Merdeka Centre began gauging his popularity in March last year.

However, Najib's high approval rating does not translate into comparable responses to subsequent questions, with many respondents expressing skepticism over his major plans.

For example, only 50 percent of respondents were "confident" that Najib could achieve his targets for his 1Malaysia concept, Government Transformation Plan and New Economic Model, within two years.

Of the three races, Indians (65 percent) and Malays (60 percent) were confident that it could be achieved while conversely, Chinese (60 percent) were not confident it could be done.

In another question, 58 percent of respondents agreed that Najib's administration were good planners but weak implementers, like his predecessors.

Almost three quarters of Chinese respondents (74 percent) agreed to this statement, followed by Malays (51 percent) and Indians (43 percent).

The Najib factor

The survey was done between May 6 and 16 this year - a 10-day period just after the Hulu Selangor by-election (April 25) and before the Sibu by-election (May 16).

Najib's popularity confirms that he is still the key asset in the BN's electoral campaign.

His approval rating was a dismal 44 percent when he took over as the economy was slipping into unforgiving negative territory, and he seemed vulnerable as he was pelted by bad news everywhere he turned.

According to Merdeka Centre, a total of 1,028 Malaysians were randomly surveyed by telephone and the poll has an error margin of 3.1 percent.

Interestingly, almost half or 47 percent of the respondents said they are unemployed or "not in the workforce".

Crime and corruption

On the government's six National Key Result Areas (NKRA), majority of respondents said they were "satisfied" with the:

- * Government's assistance to the needy

- * Improvement of rural living standards
- * Improvement in urban public transport
- * Improvement in primary and secondary education

On the negative side, 61 percent of respondents said they were unsatisfied with government efforts to stamp out corruption, while 57 percent said they were unsatisfied with crime reduction efforts.

Compared to a similar question asked in a December 2009 survey, there was a marked increase in dissatisfaction over the government's graft-busting effort, from 52 percent to 61 percent.

Similarly, disgruntlement over crime-fighting efforts were up from 46 percent in December 2009 to 57 percent in the current survey.

In terms of satisfaction to improvements to education and transport, ratings increased only marginally compared to December 2009 data.

Follow-up questions on areas which need the most attention from the authorities saw respondents choosing graft-busting and crime reduction as the government's main priorities.

Najib introduced the NKRA on July 27 last year and appointed lead ministers for each NKRA to ensure achievement-based management.

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