

Malaysians among world's most bigoted, survey shows
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 17 — Malaysians are among the least racially-tolerant people in the world, according to a survey by Swedish economists, who also revealed those from India, Bangladesh and Hong Kong as the most racist.

Researchers for the World Values Survey had aimed to determine whether racial tolerance was linked to free-market economics.

To gauge a respondent's level of racial tolerance, they posed a simple question. Respondents in more than 80 countries were told to identify whom they would not want as neighbours.

One possible answer was "people of a different race". The proportion of people picking this answer from any given country was then used to show the relative tolerance of that society.

Up to 29.9 per cent of Malaysians said they would not like living next to a person of a different race, which was approximately the same percentage in Thailand and the Philippines, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Mali and Zambia.

In contrast, only 9.9 per cent of Singaporeans were considered racially intolerant, marking out the republic as among the most open country in the world.

The data from the survey by Niclas Berggren and Therese Nilsson was recently mapped by the Washington Post to produce an "atlas of global tolerance".

"If we treat this data as indicative of racial tolerance, then we might conclude that people in the bluer countries are the least likely to express racist attitudes, while the people in red countries are the most likely," the Washington Post reported.

In the map, countries that were more racially tolerant were coloured blue. Countries that were less tolerant were coloured in different shades of red.

India, Jordan, Bangladesh and Hong Kong by far the least tolerant, were all coloured red. Malaysia was coloured a lighter shade of red.

In these three countries, more than 40 per cent of respondents said they would not want a neighbour of a different race. This included 43.5 per cent of Indians, 51.4 per cent of Jordanians and an astonishingly high 71.8 per cent of Hong Kongers and 71.7 per cent of Bangladeshis.

Anglo and Latin countries were the most tolerant. People in the survey were most likely to embrace a racially diverse neighbour in the United Kingdom and its Anglo former colonies (the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) and in Latin America. Scandinavian countries also scored high.

Racial tolerance was low in diverse Asian countries. Nations such as Indonesia and the Philippines, where many racial groups often jockey for influence and have complicated histories with one another, showed more scepticism of diversity, the Washington Post

reported.

Malaysia was ranked together with the Philippines.

The results of the survey come after Malaysia emerged from a divisive general election.

Race has become the focus of analyses of the election results, with Umno leaders suggesting a "Chinese tsunami" had resulted in the ruling Barisan Nasional's (BN) worst ever electoral performance.

Despite evidence indicating an urban-rural divide rather than a Malay-Chinese split Umno and its newspaper Utusan Malaysia has maintained a racially-charged tone in the aftermath of the polls.

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