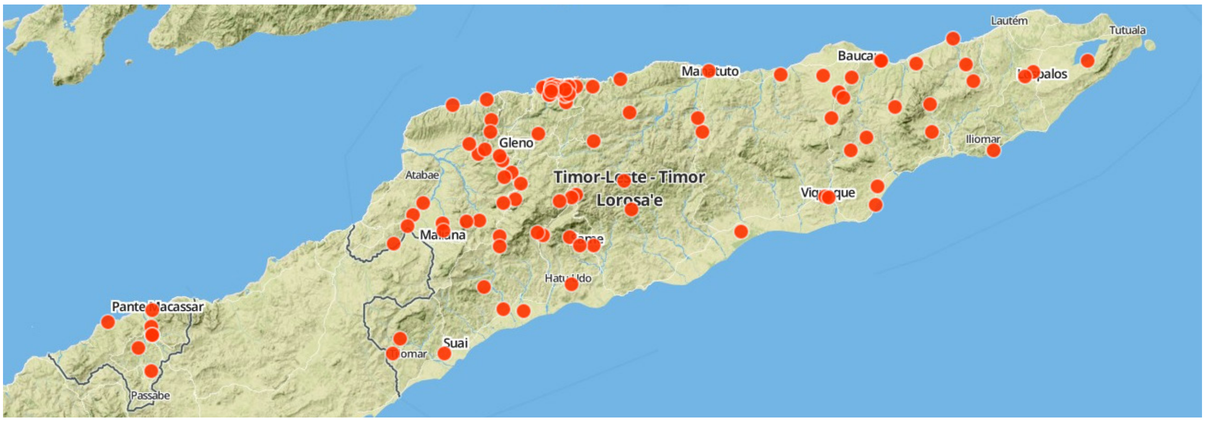
Timor-Leste Public Opinion Poll

The Asia Foundation
Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

MARCH 2014

From March-May 2014, The Asia Foundation in partnership with NGO Belun, conducted its third nationwide opinion poll, interviewing 820 adults across all 13 districts of Timor-Leste. Respondents were selected at random - regardless of status seniority or education. This bi-annual opinion poll provides a snapshot of national perceptions towards important issues including the performance of the government, the conditions in people's local area, and people's optimism for the future. By 'measuring the pulse' of the country every six months, this opinion poll provides valuable insights into the priorities and sentiments of the general public in Timor-Leste.

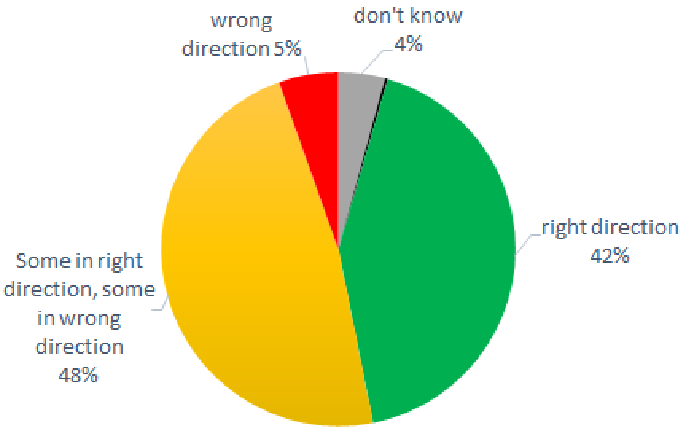


820 interviews were conducted from randomly selected sampling points in each of the country's 13 districts (shown above)

OVERALL PROGRESS

Forty-two percent of respondents believe the country is going in the right direction (down 5 points since September 2013), whilst only 5% believe it to be going in the wrong direction (steady since September). The majority of respondents (48%) are now offering a mixed response (up from 44% in September 2013 and 36% in March 2013), to indicate that some things are going in the right direction, whilst others are going in the wrong direction. Female respondents were almost twice as likely to say the country is going in the wrong direction (7%) than male respondents (4%). Respondents living in urban areas were more likely to offer a mixed response (62%) than rural respondents (41%).

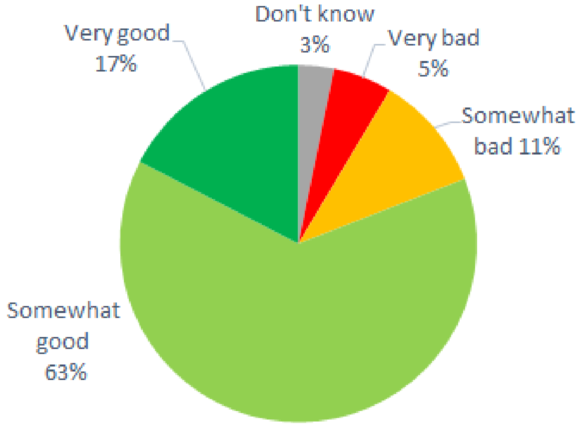
Generally speaking, do you think things in Timor-Leste today are going in the right direction or do you think they are going in the wrong direction?



GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Eighty-one percent of respondents (up 4 points) believe the government is doing a good job, including 17% who said "very good" and 64% who said "somewhat good". Sixteen percent of respondents (down 4 points since September 2013) believe the government is doing a bad job, including 11% who said "somewhat bad" and 5% who said "very bad". Respondents living in urban areas were more likely to have a favorable view of the government's performance (88% saying either "somewhat good" or "very good") compared to those living in rural areas (77% either "somewhat good" or "very good").

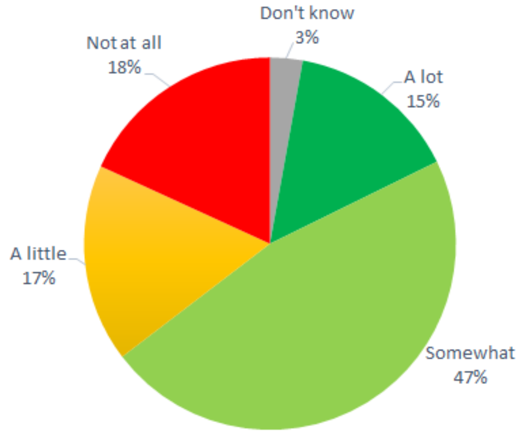
Thinking of the government, how do you feel about the way it is carrying out its responsibilities? Are they doing a good job, somewhat good job, somewhat bad job, or very bad job?



INFLUENCE ON GOVERNMENT

Sixty-one percent of respondents believe the government hears and considers their views (up 8 points since September 2013), with 15% of respondents saying the government does this "a lot" and 40% saying "somewhat". In contrast, 35% of respondents believe the government does not consider their opinions (down 8 points), with 17% saying the government hears and considers their views "very little" and 18% saying "not at all". Urban respondents were more likely to feel the government hears and considers their views (67%) than rural respondents (59%).

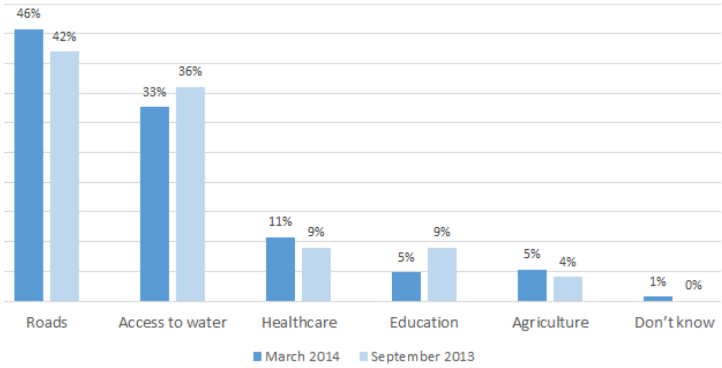
How much do you think the government hears and considers your views?



LOCAL PRIORITIES

Faced with a choice between education, healthcare, agriculture, access to water, and roads, 46% of respondents say improving roads is the biggest priority in their local area (up 4% since September 2013). Thirty-three percent say access to water (down 3% since September 2013). Healthcare has overtaken education to become the third highest priority (11% of respondents list it as their highest priority) whilst education and agriculture were each the highest priority for 5% of respondents. The highest priority for rural respondents is roads (51%), whilst the highest priority for urban respondents is improving access to water (41%).

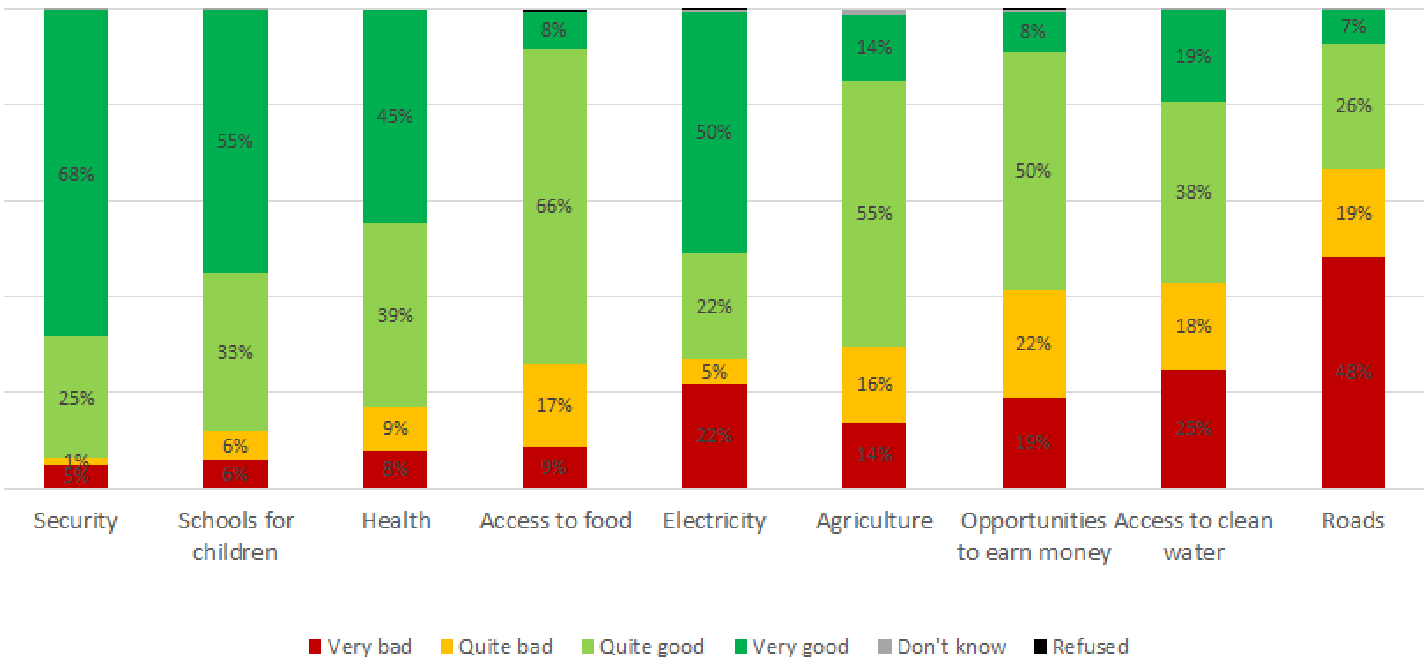
Of the following issues, which do you think most needs to be improved in this area - education, health, access to water, agriculture or roads?



LOCAL CONDITIONS

Respondents were asked to rate various conditions in their local area. As in our opinion polls from March and September 2013, security and schools for children received the highest ratings, with 93% of respondents saying security conditions are either "somewhat good" or "very good" and 88% of respondents saying schools for children are either "somewhat good" or "very good". Roads once again received the lowest rating, with only 33% of respondents rating the condition of roads as either "somewhat good" or very good" (up 8% from March 2013). Positive ratings for electricity, opportunities to earn money and access to clean water have increased since September 2013. Rural respondents were more likely to rate every condition less favorably than urban respondents.

I would like to ask you about today's conditions in the village/neighborhood where you live? Would you rate (insert item here) as very good, quite good, quite bad, or very bad in your area?



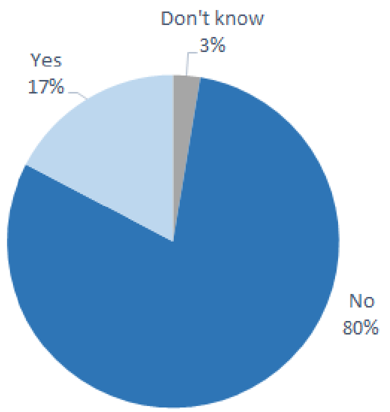
ISSUE IN FOCUS: TOURISM

According to the 2012-2017 Strategic Development Plan, the Government of Timor-Leste will facilitate the growth of the tourism sector by improving infrastucture. In our latest poll, we explored public awareness of tourism and its potential impacts on communities.

ENCOUNTERS WITH TOURISTS

When respondents were asked whether tourists have ever visited their community, the majority of respondents (80%) answered "no". Only 17% of respondents knew of tourists visiting their community previously. More urban respondents were aware of tourists having visited their community (22%) than rural respondents (15%).

Have tourists visited your community?

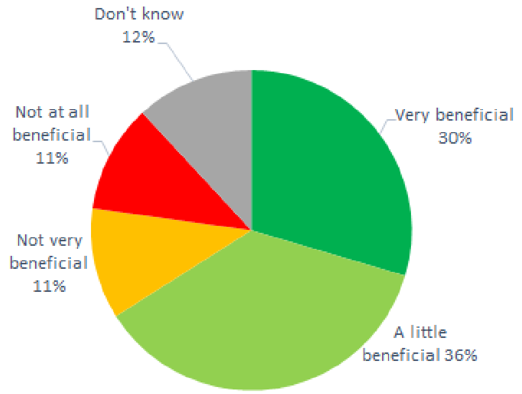


IMPACT OF TOURISM

The majority of respondents (66%) believe an increase in tourists will be beneficial for their community (with 36% saying "a little beneficial" and 30% saying "very beneficial"). Twenty-two percent of respondents feel their community will not benefit greatly from additional tourists (including 11% who said "not very beneficial" and 11% who said "not at all beneficial"). Twelve percent of respondents were unsure of the impact of an increased number of tourists ("don't know").

Male respondents were more optimistic about the potential benefits of tourism to their communities (70% either "a little beneficial" or "very beneficial") compared to female respondents (61% either "a little beneficial" or "very beneficial"). Younger people (17-34 years) and those that had completed primary school were more likely to view the impact of tourists on their communities positively (70% and 71% answering either "a little beneficial" or "very beneficial" respectively) than older respondents and people who had not completed primary school (63% and 62% either "a little beneficial" or "very beneficial" respectively).

Do you believe an increase in tourists to your community will be beneficial or not?

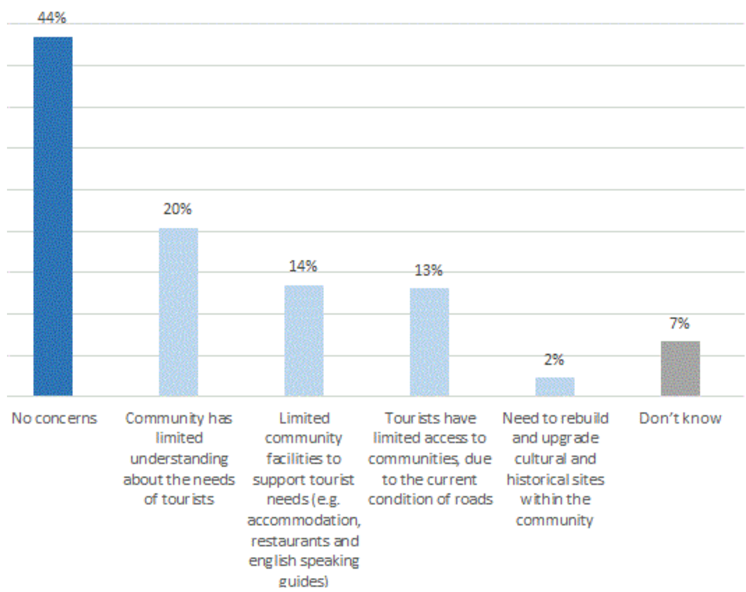


COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS FOR TOURISTS

Respondents were asked whether they believe their community is ready to meet the needs of tourists. A large number of respondents (44%) had no concerns about their community's preparedness to meet tourist needs. Urban respondents were less likely to have concerns about community preparedness for tourists (56% having no concerns) than rural respondents (38% having no concerns).

However, 49% of respondents indicated that they do have concerns about their community's ability to meet the needs of tourists. The biggest concern (cited by 20% of all respondents) is that their community has limited understanding about the needs of tourists. Fourteen percent of respondents are concerned that their community has limited facilities for tourists, such as accommodation, restaurants or tourist guides. A further thirteen percent of respondents are concerned that tourists have limited access to their community due to the current condition of roads. Only 2% of respondents expressed concern that historical and cultural sites within their community needed to be upgraded.

Younger respondents (17-34 years) and respondents who had completed primary school expressed greater concern about their community's understanding of tourist needs than other respondent groups (25% of each group nominating this as their greatest concern).



Do you have any concerns about your community's readiness to respond to the needs of tourists?

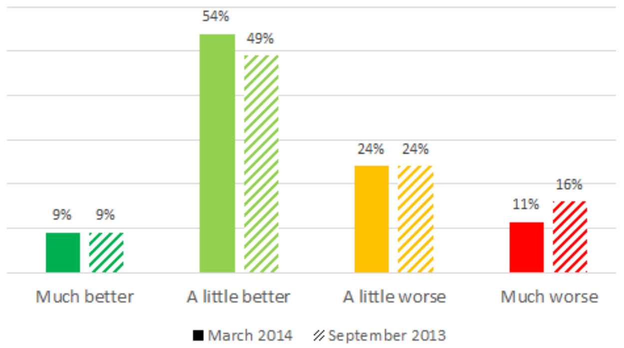
ECONOMIC SITUATION OF HOUSEHOLD

An increasing number of respondents (63%) believe the economic situation of their household has improved over the past two years (up 5 points since September 2013). This includes 54% of respondents who describe their economic situation as "a little better" and 9% who say it is "much better".

Thirty-five percent of respondents say they are worse off than 2 years ago (with 11% saying "much worse" and 24% saying "a little worse"). This figure has dropped 5 points from a total 40% of respondents in September 2013.

Respondents with a higher level of education (having completed primary school or above) were more likely to view their economic situation as having improved in the past two years (71% answering either "a little better" or "much better") than those who did not complete primary school or had no education (56% "a little better" or "much better"). Younger people aged 17-34 were also more likely to say their economic situation had improved over the past 2 years (69% answering either "a little better" or "much better") than those aged 35 and above (59% "a little better" or "much better"). Those working on farms and living in rural areas were less likely to view their economic situation as having improved in the past two years compared to those living in urban areas or engaged in other forms of work.

How does the economic situation of your household compare to two years ago? Would you say it is much better, a little better, a little worse or much worse?

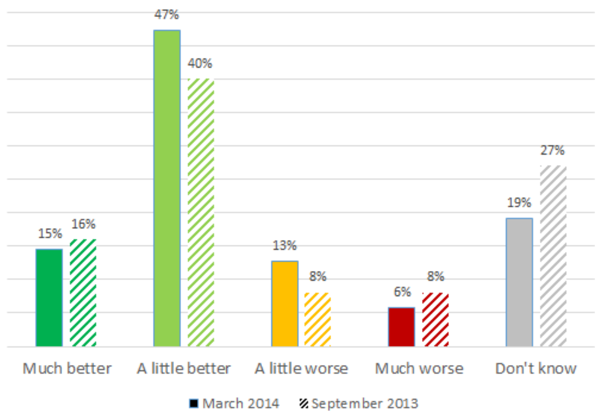


EXPECTED ECONOMIC SITUATION

Sixty-two percent of respondents say they expect the economic situation of their household to improve (either "much better" or "a little better") over the next year, up 6 points since September 2013. A declining number of respondents (19%, down from 24% in September 2013) believe their economic situation will worsen (either "much worse" or "a little worse) over the next year. Nineteen percent of respondents were unsure ("don't know") of the economic future of their household in the coming year.

Rural respondents were less optimistic about their economic future (57% answering either "a little better" or "much better") compared to urban respondents (71% saying either "a little better" or "much better"). Respondents who had completed primary school or above were more optimistic about their economic future (67% either "a little better" or "much better") compared to those who did not complete primary school or had no education (57% either "a little better" or "much better").

What do you think will happen to the economic situation of your household in a year's time? Would you say it will be much better,



OPINION POLL METHODOLOGY

- This opinion poll is conducted in 104 randomly-selected aldeia in all 13 districts of Timor-Leste. A target of eight face-to-face interviews are completed in each aldeia. Interviewers recorded responses on tablet computers.
- Aldeia are selected using a multistage/stratified random selection process.
- Quality control is conducted in the field, with survey supervisors revisiting one aldeia for each interviewer. At 6 of the 8 households where an interview took place, the supervisor checks that the kish grid has been used properly and, having located the respondent, asks and records answers to three questions from the original survey. In addition to this, quality control through remote trend analyses are conducted from within The Asia Foundation, where collected data is aggregated in an online cloud database. Data is weighted to ensure that the male-female ratio and urban-rural ratio in each district is the same as that recorded for people aged 17+ in the 2010 national census.
- Data collection for the March 2014 opinion poll commenced on 5 March 2014 and concluded on 17 May 2014.
- A total of 820 respondents over the age of 17 were interviewed from a national population of 575,878 individuals over the age of 17 (from the 2010 national census). As such, the research carries a Margin of Error of 3.42%.

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The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works thorugh a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.

For more information about the Foundation's Public Opinion Poll in Timor-Leste or to enquire about adding questions to the next survey, please contact The Asia Foundation.

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