The Youth Factor
2012 Survey of Malaysian Youth Opinion

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PROJECT DESIGN AND DIRECTION
The Asia Foundation

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FIELDWORK & SURVEY
Taylor Nelson Sofres Malaysia Sdn Bhd, Sunil Pillai
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Lastly, we also thank the 2,105 Malaysian youth who graciously spent their time answering the survey.
FOREWORD

Youth constitutes a large segment, 43 percent, of the total population in Malaysia. The diverse and numerous roles that they play in the country’s political, social and economic landscapes underline the fact that they are a critical demographic group to engage. This observation has not escaped the Malaysian Government which recently unveiled the 2013 Budget, which amongst others, targets young Malaysians through initiatives such as the establishment of the New Entrepreneur Foundation and the Young Entrepreneurs Fund to assist young ICT entrepreneurs, and the Youth Communication Package to improve youth’s connectivity.

In April 2012, The Asia Foundation conducted its fourth nationwide survey of Malaysian youth opinion as part of the Foundation’s continuing efforts to enhance public engagement and innovative research in support of improving governance, civil society, economic progress, and sustainable development in Malaysia.

Over 2,100 youth across all states and federal territories in Malaysia were engaged in the comprehensive survey.

The survey provides a window into the attitudes, concerns and practices of young Malaysians on a range of contemporary political, social and economic issues.

Young Malaysians will undoubtedly continue to be a determining factor in Malaysia’s endeavour to achieve developed nation status underpinned by an innovation-led economy. It is our hope that the understanding gained from the survey will help policymakers, business, civil society and international organizations develop more informed and effective strategies that will nurture youth potential and talents and encourage participation.

Thank you,

Anthea Mulakala
Country Representative
 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Youth Survey 2012 is a continuation of a series of youth surveys conducted between 2006 and 2008 by The Asia Foundation. Between 13 April and 9 June 2012, the Foundation partnered with Taylor Nelson Sofres Malaysia (TNS) to conduct face-to-face interviews with 2,105 Malaysian youth aged between 17 and 35 years old from all 13 states and the federal territory of Kuala Lumpur.

The survey seeks to provide an accurate and timely snapshot of youth attitudes, concerns and practices in 2012. It aims to establish a baseline for measuring change in these attitudes, concerns and practices over time. Ultimately the survey seeks to provide a balanced source of information and analysis that can inform policy and decision-making for government, business and civil society.

The current survey covers a number of topics including: the overall direction of the country, the economy, public institutions, national programmes and services, media consumption, social values, local conditions, ethnic relations and political participation.

The survey reveals the following key findings:

Society & Culture

Youth generally embrace multiculturalism.

Malaysian youth embrace the multicultural society by identifying themselves as Malaysians. Based on their responses to survey questions regarding religious beliefs, criteria for choosing a political party and the ‘1 Malaysia’ programme, there seems to be good awareness and general agreement that unity and harmony is a significant theme in Malaysia. The ability to speak comfortably in more than one language is also a sign of adaptability to Malaysia’s multilingual and multicultural environment. However, this sense of racial harmony could be limited to Malaysians and not extended to migrant and foreign workers living in the country. Survey responses indicate a somewhat negative perception of foreign workers amongst the youth.
Youth are informed and wired.

The survey found Malaysian youth to be increasingly well-informed. In 2007, 39% of youth interviewed said they read newspapers every day. The number rose to 48% in 2012. Youth who watch television for information daily also rose from 52% in 2007 to 74% in 2012.

The 2007 survey observed that the growth of internet usage would continue to flourish. True to our prediction, and comparing against the 2007 National Youth Survey, the usage of Internet has increased tremendously over the past five years. The huge drop in the percentage of youth who do not at all access the Internet for information seeking in the past five years, from 67% in 2007 to a mere 2% in 2012, indicates how quickly Malaysian youth have adapted to connecting to the World Wide Web as a source of information.

Economics

Concern over job and educational prospects.

Malaysian youth are generally satisfied with the progress of the country. Nearly two-thirds of respondents feel the economy is in good shape. More than half of the respondents say the country continues to head in the right direction, and the majority express no desire to live overseas.

Though in general Malaysian youth are positive about the state of the economy, unemployment is an area of some concern amongst youth. Nine percent state unemployment as one of the top five national issues and another five percent indicate concern about the lack of jobs for young people. Despite these concerns however, almost three quarters of respondents perceive that the real issue with the employment situation in Malaysia is not in acquiring employment (which seems to indicate sufficient availability of opportunities), rather it is in acquiring one’s desired employment opportunity (which is more indicative of youth being more discerning in their selection).

To further support our observation that youth are becoming more discerning in their employment choices, respondents do seem to recognise that a tertiary education is vital in getting a higher income job. Hence, higher education pursuits could become more prevalent amongst Malaysian youth in the years to come.
Politics

Politically aware but lacking empowerment.

Malaysian youth are politically sensitive; they are aware of core government policies such as ‘Vision 2020’ and ‘1 Malaysia’ and pay attention to the state of their communities and the nation. They are also able to critically assess the performance of various institutions in the country such as the civil administration, the prime minister, the police, the legal system and non-profit organisations (NGOs).

However, youth perceive themselves as less empowered to act. Only 39% of youth polled say they can make a difference in solving problems within their communities. The sense of empowerment amongst youth increased marginally in 2012 compared to 2008 when only 36% said they could make some difference in the community. In terms of their perceived influence on the government, only 41% of youth today said they could influence how the government works.

Mixed views on political pluralism.

Young Malaysians are a mixed bunch when it comes to political pluralism, demonstrating both conservative and liberal tendencies. Youth indicate moderate acceptance of a woman (50%) and a Muslim from an ethnic minority (44%) as the Prime Minister of Malaysia. The level of acceptance for a non-Muslim ethnic minority prime minister is only 37%. The survey found that the level of acceptance of an ethnic minority prime minister is significantly divided along ethno-religious lines. Non-Muslim respondents are more willing to accept minorities as top leaders, while the Muslim respondents are less accepting. However, the youth are more open to choosing a political party that represents the interests of the people regardless of race and religion (71%) compared to parties that represent the interests of their own religious (14%) or ethnic group (11%).
OVERVIEW OF SURVEY FINDINGS

The analysis examines three dimensions of the youth survey – society and culture, economics and politics. There are several corresponding topics within each dimension.

At a glance, the survey findings show several repetitive trends in the following areas:

- Responses vary across regions. The degree of such variation often coincides with differences shown across ethnic groups. The trend can be loosely interpreted as regional differences reflecting the views of the dominant race within the particular region.

- Differences between age groups reflect life experience. Some of these differences are highlighted in the report.

- Comparisons across gender reveal minimal variation. Male and female respondents largely express similar views about economic and political issues. However, evident differences are observed when discussing family and childcare.

- There is little variation across urban and rural respondents with exception to questions on mobility. There is little evidence to suggest causes for the similarity in views across the urban-rural divide as historical data is needed to trace the changes in opinions. A possible explanation was provided by Tunku Abidin Muhriz in his analysis of a Muslim youth survey for Malaysia¹, suggesting “an increasingly centralised and uniform education system may have played an important role in this regard”.

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SOCIETY AND CULTURE

National identity

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. While there is no official breakdown of racial distribution for youth across the nation, nonetheless, according to the 2010 census\(^2\), the Bumiputra made up 68% of Malaysia’s population, followed by 25% ethnic Chinese, 7% ethnic Indians and 0.7% other races. When the 2010 census was carried out, Malays were the predominant race in Peninsular Malaysia corresponding to 63% of the total population. In East Malaysia, the Ibans constituted 30% of citizens in Sarawak while the Kadazans/Dusuns made up 25% of citizens in Sabah.

When asked about their sense of identity, a majority of 54% think of themselves as Malaysian, followed by 33% identifying themselves as a person of their religion and another 12% perceiving themselves as first belonging to a racial group. The pattern in the sense of identity was divided along ethnic lines, with half of the Malays perceiving themselves mostly as Muslims, while the Indians and East Malaysia Bumiputras largely identifying themselves as Malaysians. Although the majority of Chinese respondents interviewed see themselves mostly as Malaysians, as much as 30% of ethnic Chinese youth most relate to their ethnic group.

---

Youth in Malaysia live in a multilingual environment. On average, a Malaysian student is taught at least two languages in school – Malay and English. In vernacular schools, Malay and English are taught as language subjects, while core subjects are conducted in the students’ mother tongues. Outside of school, youth may speak in local dialects or other popular languages of the neighbourhood. However, despite the fairly wide exposure to several languages in their daily lives, respondents are not necessarily comfortable speaking in multiple languages.

In general, youth are comfortable in speaking an average of 1.37 languages. The ability to speak comfortably in different tongues is not evenly spread across regions. East coast youth speak typically only the Malay language. Given that East coast states have a more homogenous Malay population, this unilingualism is unsurprising. East Malaysians demonstrate the highest multilingual capacity across regions, speaking an average of 1.81 languages. The majority of East Malaysians interviewed can speak the Malay language and several ethnic East Malaysian dialects such as Iban, Bidayuh, Kadazan, and other Chinese dialects due to mixed parentage.

Of the various ethnic groups in Malaysia, the Indians appear to be the most multilingual, speaking 1.97 languages on average, followed by East Malaysia Bumiputras with 1.92 languages. There is no urban-rural differences in the number of languages youth are comfortable in speaking. Youth from both areas could speak an average of 1.40 languages.

**Figure 2. Average number of languages youth are comfortable in speaking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>1.37</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Coast</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Malaysia</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Malaysia Bumiputra</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strata</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family values

The survey glimpses into the family lives of young Malaysians. 64% of youth are single or never married, 35% are married and 1% are divorced. As expected, the percentage of married youth increases with age.

Amongst the married respondents, 66% are working couples. This trend is higher in urban areas (68%), compared to those from the rural areas (61%).

78% of married respondents have children living with them. Young parents in Malaysia appear to be the primary caregivers for their children. During short periods of spousal absence, as many as 34% respondents with children care for their young ones. In the case where both parents are away, 32% of young parents turn to their parents for assistance in taking care of their children. Only eight percent of respondents reported relying on day care facilities.
Three quarters of young parents interviewed spend more than five hours on a weekday with their children. In general, mothers (79%) more than fathers (58%) spend more than five hours on a weekday.

Comparatively, on weekends, parents tend to spend more time with their children, with an overwhelming 91% of young parents spending more than five hours with their children. Similar to the weekday findings, the survey found that mothers (94%) more than fathers (84%) spend more than five hours on a weekend with their children.
Three quarters of respondents reside in family-owned houses. Home ownership is lowest in the central region with only 67% of youth being home owners. In relation to this, the central region also marks the highest rate of home rentals (31%, compared to the national average of 23%). A possible explanation for low home ownership rates and high home rental rates in the central region is that many of the young people currently in the central region have migrated from other parts of the country in pursuit of better education and employment opportunities.
Healthcare and physical activities

Youth view their health positively, with 50% declaring good health and 38% feeling somewhat good about their health. Up to 91% of the youngest age group of 17 to 19 years old assert themselves as healthy, while the oldest age group of 30 to 35 years old feels comparatively less healthy with 85% perceiving themselves as healthy.

When asked about the occurrence of chronic illnesses, 5% admit to suffering from some form of chronic illness. Amongst the 101 respondents affected, asthma accounts for the most common type of chronic illness (35%) amongst youth. Other notable mentions included diabetes, coronary heart disease, and rheumatism or arthritis. A remaining 35% suffer from other kinds of diseases, most of which were gastro-related.
There seems to be available health care facilities across Malaysia, with 90% of youth reporting availability of healthcare facilities within their neighbourhoods, be it private or government managed.

Youth responses suggest that in the more urban areas, such as the central region (28%) and southern region (25%), private healthcare facilities are more available. Conversely, public healthcare facilities appear more available in rural areas such as the east coast (55%) and East Malaysia (48%).

Compared to the national average of 9% stating that there are no healthcare facilities available in their area, East Malaysia youth report the most lack of healthcare facilities, with 28% from this region reporting the complete lack of healthcare facilities in their area. This may be attributable to the geographical remoteness of some parts of East Malaysia and less developed rural infrastructure compared to Peninsular Malaysia.
Despite youth’s optimism on personal health and a moderate rate of perceived availability of neighbourhood recreational facilities, respondents are not very physically active with 44% not participating in any recreational activities at all. Amongst those who regularly participate in physical activities, less than half exercise moderately (one to four days a week) and less than one-fifth exercise very frequently (five days a week).

The survey found that female respondents make less effort to include recreational activities into their routine compared to male respondents, and that the type of recreational activities tends to differ across gender – men favour group activities such as football and badminton, while women prefer more individual physical activities.
Figure 9. Perceived availability of recreational facilities in the neighbourhood

Figure 10. Participation in recreational activities by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical exercise</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football/ soccer/ futsal</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogging/ walking</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Religion and its influence

According to the 2010 census by the Department of Statistics, Islam is the most widely professed religion in Malaysia at 61%, followed by Buddhism at 20%, Christianity at 9%, Hinduism at 6% and other religions at 3%. The survey found that the religious distribution of youth is almost identical to that of the general population. Islam is professed by the Malays and some East Malaysia Bumiputras; Chinese are largely Buddhists; the majority of Indians follow Hinduism; the majority of East Malaysia Bumiputras are Christians; a minority of ethnic Chinese and Indians also profess Christianity.

54% of respondents say that their religious beliefs considerably influence their daily lives, and another 27% say religious beliefs have some influence. The survey found that 72% of Muslim youth feel that religion significantly influences their daily lives. Responses from Hindu and Christian youth were moderately high with close to half saying religion has a lot of influence and more than one-third acknowledging that religion has some influence. Amongst Buddhist respondents, 12% note religion having a lot of influence and 43% having some influence. Taoist youth record the lowest level of religious influence on their daily lives where up to 58% believe their religion has no influence whatsoever on their daily lives.

![Figure 11. Extent of influence religious belief has on daily life by religion](image)

Base: Among those who follow some religion, n = 2096

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One in three Muslim youth perform their prayers with complete regularity. More female Muslims (70%) always perform their prayers compared to male Muslims (63%). Findings suggest a positive correlation between age and frequency of prayers, whereby older respondents indicate praying more often than younger ones. Urban folks seem to be more regular with prayers (70%) compared to those in the rural areas (57%).

Zooming in on the non-Muslims who are not Christians, the survey observed that the Hindus are most frequent in attending religious services compared to the Buddhists and the Taoists. Though the survey finds that urban youth more regularly perform prayers compared to their rural counterparts, rural youth attend religious services with more regularity than urban youth.
Youth in general agree (65% strongly agree and 26% somewhat agree) that all religious groups should be allowed to hold respective religious services and festivals peacefully. Survey findings suggest that respondents from the east coast and East Malaysia exhibit higher levels of tolerance on this topic with close to 80% indicating strong agreement, about 15% higher than the rest of the country.
Young Malaysians seem more agreeable to the government controlling the construction of places of worship and religious monuments with 46% showing agreement; 28% disagreeing and 21% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The level of agreement varies across regions with east coast residents showing the highest level of agreement for government facilitation in the matter and East Malaysians showing the lowest level of agreement.

One possible contributing factor to regional differences in tolerance levels may be that the Federal Constitution places the jurisdiction of Islamic matters under the state, allowing for more variation across states in the implementation of certain religious laws.

![Figure 15. Opinion on whether only the government should decide on building places of worship and/ or religious monuments](image-url)
Access to information

Traditional mainstream mass media, namely television and newspapers, is the main source of information for Malaysian youth. Almost all youth interviewed state television and newspapers as their sources for day-to-day information and national and international news, while two-thirds of youth are wired to the Internet for their daily information.

Youth today spend more time seeking information compared to five years ago. Youth who watch television for information everyday has risen from 52% in 2007 to 74% in 2012. In the same period of time, the frequency of newspaper reading has increased from 39% to 48%; the usage of internet for information seeking has risen from 7% to 48%; and even the use of radio for access to information has increased from 20% to 39%. The huge drop in the percentage of youth who do not at all access the Internet for information seeking in the past five years, from 67% in 2007 to a mere 2% in 2012, indicates how quickly Malaysian youth have adapted to connecting to the World Wide Web as a source of information.
With the prevalence of more frequent internet usage (more than one day a week) amongst youth rising from 32% in 2007 to 98% in 2012, the Internet has become an increasingly dominant platform for communication, information seeking and entertainment. A significant portion of youth, 65% to 74%, access the internet to maintain social connections via activities that include chatting with friends, emailing, and participating in social networks. Two-thirds of youth use the internet for information and news. Roughly half of youth access the internet for music downloads and games.

Not only do youth frequently access information via various means, but they generally trust their media sources. The most trusted media is the television, followed closely by the newspapers and the radio. The level of trust in the Internet is strikingly low, only 56%, compared to traditional media. This is perhaps due to the complexity of verifying the diverse information found online.

The survey does not reveal a significant digital divide between respondents from urban (66%) and rural areas (56%). In addition to television and radio, rural youth rely more heavily on their peers for information (64%) compared with respondents from urban areas (49%).
Figure 18. Trust in various media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Strongly trust</th>
<th>Somewhat trust</th>
<th>Neither trust nor distrust</th>
<th>Somewhat distrust</th>
<th>Strongly distrust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19. Purposes for which the Internet is used

- Chat with friends: 74%
- Check emails: 68%
- Social networking: 65%
- Search for information: 67%
- Read news: 63%
- Download music: 54%
- Play games: 50%

Categories:
- Communication
- Seeking information
- Entertainment
ECONOMICS

Personal finance

The survey reveals that a majority of youth (85%) possess at least one bank account. Amongst 17 to 19 year olds, only 69% possess at least one bank account compared to 30 to 35 year olds where nine in ten respondents possess at least one bank account, suggesting a correlation with age. One of the reasons for this could be the requirement by many employers to have a bank account for transactional purposes.

![Figure 20. Possession of bank account across age groups](image)

In general, 28% of youth have taken loans formally from banks or financial institutions. Here again, a correlation with age emerges, with the percentage of youth taking formal loans increasing from one age group to the next. In addition, more urban youth (30%) take formal loans compared to rural youth (21%).
Overall, formal loans are mainly used to purchase cars. Sarawakian youth record the highest need for car loans at 73%. Sabahan youth record the lowest rate of house loans at only 4%. Compared to the rest of the country, more youth from the east coast (24%) and East Malaysia (23% for Sabah and 34% for Sarawak) take personal loans.

Figure 21. Loans from banks and/or financial institutions

Overall, formal loans are mainly used to purchase cars. Sarawakian youth record the highest need for car loans at 73%. Sabahan youth record the lowest rate of house loans at only 4%. Compared to the rest of the country, more youth from the east coast (24%) and East Malaysia (23% for Sabah and 34% for Sarawak) take personal loans.

Figure 22. Purposes for formal loans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>East Coast</th>
<th>Sabah</th>
<th>Sarawak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buy a car</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy a house</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal loan</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment in business</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House renovation</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical care</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (mainly education was mentioned)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Besides formal loans, youth also take loans from informal sources, though less frequently than formal loans. The findings suggest a positive correlation between age and the tendency for loan-taking, whether formal or informal. The survey indicates that urban youth more frequently take formal loans, while informal loans are more popular in rural areas (14%) compared to urban areas (8%).

Figure 23. Loans from informal sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Qualified for Loan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-19 years old</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24 years old</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29 years old</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35 years old</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Views on the economy

Malaysian youth generally view current economic conditions in the country positively. 62% of respondents perceive a good or somewhat good economic outlook for Malaysia. A closer look reveals that youth from the northern region are most pessimistic on the current economic state while those from East Malaysia are most optimistic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Somewhat good</th>
<th>Neither good nor bad</th>
<th>Very bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Coast</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Malaysia</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing across ethnic groups, Chinese youth are rather conservative in their views on the economy – only 30% view the economy positively, 37% hold neither good nor bad views of the economy and the remaining 33% perceive the current economic condition unfavourably. East Malaysia Bumiputra youth, on the other hand, are the most positive (77%) on the economy while 20% feel it was neither good nor bad and only 2% view it as somewhat bad.
Reflecting on the past year, nearly one-third of young Malaysians are of the opinion that the economy has improved, 12% believe it has deteriorated, while 54% sense no change. East Malaysia Bumiputras are the most positive ethnic group with 42% expressing economic improvement compared to the year before. Chinese respondents are most pessimistic on this point with 28% stating that the economy had worsened over the past year.
Jobs and education

The majority of youth, 73%, agree with the statement that in Malaysia the problem is not in getting a job but in getting a job one likes. This survey finding seems to indicate that perhaps insufficient availability of opportunities is not the biggest challenge of the employment situation in Malaysia; rather youth employment may be hampered by their more discerning attitudes in selecting for a job.

The World Bank in its Malaysia Economic Monitor published in 2012, observes an increase in tertiary education enrollment for young people from 2000 to 2010, with decreased labour participation from those aged between 20 and 24 years old. The report concludes young people preferred deferring workforce entry until tertiary level education is obtained. The youth survey findings support this observation with the indication that Malaysian youth perceive that the minimum level of education required for a well-paying job is a bachelor’s degree (35%), or a certificate or diploma (27%).

---

When queried if restrictions should be placed on young Malaysians going abroad for study or work to prevent brain drain, youth responses are split with 37% agreeing that there should be restrictions, 23% neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the need for restrictions and 39% believing that there should be no restrictions on young Malaysians moving abroad for study or work.

Figure 29. Restriction to prevent talent loss

“Since good talent is being lost when young Malaysians go abroad for study or work, there should be restriction in allowing them to do that”
Foreign workers have been a fixture in the Malaysian workforce for the past decade. As at July 2012, more than 1.58 million foreign workers have registered to work in Malaysia according to Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein. Despite foreign workers’ longstanding presence in the Malaysian workforce and economy, the majority of youth (56%) disagree with the statement that the presence of a large number of foreign workers in Malaysia is good for the economy.

---

Aspiration for mobility

Overall, there does not seem to be a strong desire amongst Malaysian youth to live in another country. The Chinese express the greatest desire to expand their horizons abroad (30%), followed by the Indians (23%), while East Malaysia Bumiputra and Malay youth seem less interested to live abroad.

![Figure 31. Desire to live in another country by ethnic group](image)

Similar to the issues of bank account possession and loans acquisition another age-related trend emerges – the desire to live abroad decreases with age. Younger respondents are more inclined to the idea of living abroad with more than one-fifth of young people from 17 to 24 years of age expressing interest in a life outside of Malaysia compared to only one-tenth of those aged between 25 to 35 who are interested to live outside Malaysia.

20% of those who were inclined to live abroad express their interest to live in Singapore, making this the preferred destination for young Malaysians. The World Bank’s Malaysia Economic Monitor on brain drain\(^6\) shows that 46% of the Malaysian diaspora was highly concentrated in Singapore in the year 2000. Geographic proximity and existing family ties could explain Singapore’s desirability amongst Malaysian youth.

---

Despite the low interest to live abroad, Malaysian youth express interest in domestic mobility. A reason for this could be the ease of movement compared to international migration. One-fourth of youth interviewed state a desire to live in another part of the country – youth from the north and east coast are more inclined to move out of their own cities with one-third of them expressing the desire to live in another part of the country.

Age also positively correlates with domestic mobility. Of those between 17 and 24 years of age, one-third desire shifting location while only one-fifth of those between 25 to 35 years old express interest in moving to another city. The survey also observes that more youth from rural areas (30%) desire to move to another part of the country compared to those from urban areas (25%). This trend may be linked to the higher concentration of education and job opportunities in urban areas.
Amongst those who express the desire to live in another city, Kuala Lumpur is the most preferred city with 45% expressing interest to live in the capital city of the country.
Views on issues of public interest

Inflation, the general economic situation, crime, unemployment, and corruption in the government are identified as the top five national issues. Of these, the top three mentions, namely inflation, the economy, and crime receive very close ratings amongst respondents, indicating that these issues are of equal importance amongst youth.

Prioritisation of concerns varies across regions. In the east coast, crime, violence and personal security are perceived as the biggest problems facing the country (21%). For Sabahan youth, unemployment is the most pressing issue (26%). Looking at the unemployment rate in Sabah which has been inching upwards from 4.9% in 2008 to 5.6% in 2011\(^7\), Sabahan youth’s concerns may be justified. Over in Sarawak, youth are most concerned with the general economic situation (22%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>East Coast</th>
<th>Sabah</th>
<th>Sarawak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflation/ high prices</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General economic situation</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime/ violence/ personal security</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption in government</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of job opportunities for youth</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government competence</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zooming into the neighbourhood level, while one-fifth of youth identify no serious concerns within their residential area, another one-fifth mention crime and violence and threats to personal security as a neighbourhood problem. This problem of crime and violence and threats to personal security is particularly prominent amongst those from the central region with 30% of those residing in these urban centres feeling unsafe. Comparatively, a significantly smaller percentage of youth from East Malaysia cite crime as an issue in their neighbourhood.

Figure 38. Important concerns in the neighbourhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>East Coast</th>
<th>Sabah</th>
<th>Sarawak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No problems</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime/ violence/ personal security</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security/ neighbourhood safety</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many foreign workers in my neighbourhood</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use/ drug trafficking</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water shortage/ constant maintenance work</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power shortage</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perception on the direction of the country

The majority of youth are positive about Malaysia's trajectory, with 58% stating Malaysia is moving in the right direction. Across regions, youth from the central area are least positive on this issue with only 48% believing Malaysia is moving in the right direction whereas Sarawakian youth are most optimistic at 88%.

Upon further probing, youth identified five main reasons for Malaysia’s positive trajectory: economic stability (56%), a harmonious/peaceful country (50%), advanced levels of technology (32%), availability of jobs (17%) and manageable incidences of crime and violence (12%).

While economic stability ranks as the overall top reason, most youth from the northern region and the east coast feel that the country’s harmonious/peaceful state is the primary driver of Malaysia’s positive direction. Compared to the national average of 32% who cite innovation and advancements in technology as a positive contributing reason, more East Malaysian youth, 44%, believe this to be the main reason for Malaysia’s positive forward direction. Government and private investment in developing the Sabah and Sarawak Economic Corridors over the past five years and under the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) could account for this finding. Amongst Indian respondents, job availability is regarded as a main reason for Malaysia’s positive direction.
Figure 40. Reasons for right direction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>East Coast</th>
<th>East Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy is stable</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country is harmonious/peaceful</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative and advance in technology</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs are plentiful</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime and violence are manageable/decreasing</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top five reasons cited as contributing to Malaysia moving in the wrong direction are inflation (57%) – all four major ethnic groups identify inflation as the main reason, increasing crime and violence (37%), rising tension (22%), lack of job opportunities (19%) and an unfair electoral system (19%).

74% of East Malaysian youth attribute the country’s move in the wrong direction to inflation. They seem more overwhelmed by inflation compared to the country as a whole. In the east coast, more emphasis is placed on increasing crime and violence (60%) and rising tension in the country (45%). The survey responses indicate that amongst the Indians, job availability is an important determining factor for the perceived direction of the country, both in the positive (31%) and negative (16%) directions.

Figure 41. Reasons for wrong direction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>East Coast</th>
<th>East Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflation – prices of goods are continuously increasing</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing crime/violence</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising tension in the country</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of job opportunities for youth</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undemocratic &amp; unfair electoral system</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Political participation

Amongst youth of voting age (21 years old and above), 73% have registered to vote. Voter registration is lowest amongst the 21 and 22-year olds. However, it is encouraging to see that voter registration rates rise tremendously starting from 25 years old. By the time Malaysian youth reach 35 years of age, 9 out of 10 young Malaysians are registered as voters.

The northern region has the highest level of registered young voters (60%). The central region and East Malaysia with 49% and 44% respectively ranked lowest. The survey results are consistent with the Election Commission’s findings that Selangor and East Malaysia have the lowest proportion of registered voters in the country.

According to the survey, amongst those of voting age, lack of time to register (33%) and a dislike for politics (21%) are the top two reasons for non-registration. The third and fourth ranked reasons for non-registration – unsure of where to register (15%) and unsure of the procedure for registration (10%) – are linked to a lack in voter awareness and education. Combined, apathy and laziness account for up to 16% of non-registration amongst respondents of voting age.

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Of those registered to vote, 55% voted in the 2008 General Election. Highest voting rates are indicated in the southern region (68%), the northern region (57%) and East Malaysia (57%).

Base: Among those who registered to vote, $n = 1102$
Youth as agents of change

The majority of Malaysian youth feel they can affect at least a little change at the community level, with only one-fifth feeling they have no influence. The sense of empowerment is particularly strong amongst rural youth with 48% responding positively compared to 37% of urban youth. Rural communities tend to be smaller and this could be a factor as to why rural youth feel more empowered within their communities.

The sense of efficacy for change at the community level has not changed much from what it was in 2008.

Moving beyond the immediate community, the survey reveals that in general, Malaysian youth positively perceive their influence over government actions; 69% believe they have at least a little influence over what the government does. The Indians (47%) perceive the highest levels of self-efficacy compared to other ethnicities when it comes to their influence over the government. Conversely, East Malaysia Bumiputra youth see themselves as least in relation to their influence on the government, with 39% saying they have no influence at all in what the government does.
Figure 46. Perceived influence on the government by ethnic group

- **Overall**: 11% A lot of influence, 30% Some influence, 28% A little influence, 23% No influence at all
- **Malay**: 12% A lot of influence, 32% Some influence, 29% A little influence, 21% No influence at all
- **Chinese**: 10% A lot of influence, 28% Some influence, 30% A little influence, 25% No influence at all
- **Indian**: 13% A lot of influence, 34% Some influence, 31% A little influence, 16% No influence at all
- **East Malaysia Bumiputra**: 11% A lot of influence, 20% Some influence, 22% A little influence, 39% No influence at all

Legend:
- Green: A lot of influence
- Blue: Some influence
- Yellow: A little influence
- Red: No influence at all
Views on policies and governance

84% of those interviewed are aware of the ‘Vision 2020’ policy introduced in 1991 during the tabling of the Sixth Malaysia Plan by then Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad. Of this 84%, the overwhelming majority (94% of them) are able to accurately relate the main goal of the policy to the following: “becoming a developed nation”, “being modern and advanced” and “advanced technology”.

Furthermore, up to 81% believe that the country is realising the goals of ‘Vision 2020’ though with varying degrees of achievement – one-fifth of youth feel Malaysia is moving towards achieving ‘Vision 2020’ in all aspects, 44% believe that some aspects of ‘Vision 2020’ will be achieved and 17% said the country is moving towards achieving those goals only in very few aspects.
Apart from ‘Vision 2020’, the survey also gauged public awareness of ‘1 Malaysia’. Compared to the two decades old ‘Vision 2020’, the ‘1 Malaysia’ policy which was introduced more recently in 2010 is recognized by 98% of youth interviewed.

![Figure 49. Awareness of ‘1Malaysia’](image)

Of the main goals of “1 Malaysia”, the majority (83%) relate the policy to racial unity, while 12% relate it to performance and another 5% relate it to development. The connection between the ‘1 Malaysia’ policy and performance and development is valid as the policy is based on two main concepts – fairness to all races and continuing the development agenda of ‘Vision 2020’\(^9\).

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Overall, Malaysian youth have confidence in the various institutions in the country. Of the five institutions – the civil administration, the police, the legal system, the Prime Minister and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – presented in the survey, 81% of young people are most confident in the Prime Minister with 46% expressing high confidence. Confidence in NGOs ranked less favourably. Despite 73% showing some confidence in NGOs, only 19% indicate high confidence.
The Malays and East Malaysia Bumiputras are similarly confident about the country’s institutions. Both groups have high confidence in the Prime Minister and low confidence in the police and NGOs. The Chinese in general place less confidence in all five institutions compared to other ethnic groups. Amongst the major races, Indian youth are most confident in the Prime Minister and NGOs while being least confident in the police and legal system.

Since Independence, the post of Prime Minister of Malaysia has always been held by Malay Muslim males. In this survey, we tried to gauge Malaysian youth’s acceptance of the country being headed by a prime minister that has characteristics atypical of Malaysian prime ministers historically. Of the three kinds of alternatives suggested by the survey, a female prime minister is most well accepted at 50%, followed by a non-Malay Muslim prime minister at 44%. The least accepted option is a non-Malay, non-Muslim prime minister with 37% acceptance rate.
Public acceptance of the alternative types of prime ministers as posed in the survey has not changed much since 2008. The percentages of youth who strongly accept or reject the idea of a woman prime minister, a non-Malay Muslim prime minister and a non-Malay, non-Muslim prime minister have been quite consistent since 2008.
Despite being the most accepted choice overall, a female prime minister is not an idea that is equally accepted across regions. The idea of a female prime minister is most accepted in East Malaysia (78%) and most rejected in the east coast (58%).

The acceptance of a non-Malay prime minister followed a similar geographical pattern, whereby East Malaysian youth are most accepting of this option (73%) while those from the east coast are most unaccepting of this option (57%).

Similarly, the level of acceptance for a non-Malay, non-Muslim prime minister across different regions followed the same pattern whereby East Malaysian youth demonstrate the highest level of acceptance at 68% and east coast youth show the highest level of rejection to this idea at 86%.
In supporting a political party, the majority of young Malaysians favour a multi-racial party that represents the interests of all Malaysians, regardless of ethnicity or religion. East Malaysian youth overwhelmingly support this idea while youth from the east coast are split between supporting a multi-racial party that represents the interests of Malaysians (42%), and supporting a party that represents the interests of one’s religious community (35%). The significance of one’s ethnic community is more apparent amongst east coast youth, where one in five is inclined to support a party that represents the interests of one’s ethnic community.

Figure 58. Factor in choosing a political party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It should be a multi-racial party that represents the interests of all Malaysians regardless of ethnicity (race) or religion</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>East Coast</th>
<th>East Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It should be a party that represents the interests of my ethnic community</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It should be a party that represents the interests of my religious community</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION

*Society & Culture*

**The family unit is the centrepiece of youth’s lives.**

The lives of youth closely revolve around the family. The majority of respondents reside in family-owned houses and young parents exhibit a high dependence on the family unit for childcare – in the event when a spouse is absent for short periods, as many as 34% respondents with children attend to their young ones and another one-third rely on their parents for childcare.

The survey found that young mothers on the whole spend more time with their children compared to the fathers, reflecting a higher degree of devotion amongst female respondents to the family.

**Youth embrace multiculturalism.**

Malaysian youth embrace the multicultural society by identifying themselves as Malaysians. Based on their responses to survey questions regarding religious beliefs, criteria for choosing a political party and the ‘1 Malaysia’ programme, there seems to be good awareness and general agreement that unity and harmony is a significant theme in Malaysia. The ability to speak comfortably in more than one language is also a sign of adaptability to Malaysia’s multilingual and multicultural environment. However, this sense of racial harmony could be limited to Malaysians and not extended to migrant and foreign workers living in the country. Survey responses indicate a somewhat negative perception of foreign workers amongst the youth.

**Mismatch in perceived level of health and lifestyle.**

The youth are optimistic about their health, with 88% declaring a satisfactory level of health. However, despite youth’s high optimism regarding their personal health, their lifestyles do not seem to reflect this. Slightly less than half (44%) regularly participate in physical activities even though infrastructure for recreational activities is available in most neighbourhoods. The survey also found that female respondents make less effort to include recreational activities into their routine compared to male respondents.
Youth are informed and wired.

The survey found Malaysian youth to be increasingly well-informed. In 2007, 39% of youth interviewed said they read newspapers every day. The number rose to 48% in 2012. Youth who watch television for information daily also rose from 52% in 2007 to 74% in 2012.

The 2007 survey observed that the growth of internet usage would continue to flourish. True to our prediction, and comparing against the 2007 National Youth Survey, the usage of Internet has increased tremendously over the past five years. The huge drop in the percentage of youth who do not at all access the Internet for information seeking in the past five years, from 67% in 2007 to a mere 2% in 2012, indicates how quickly Malaysian youth have adapted to connecting to the World Wide Web as a source of information.

Economics

Firmly rooted in Malaysia.

Malaysian youth are generally satisfied with the progress of the country. Nearly two-thirds of respondents feel the economy is in good shape. More than half of the respondents say the country continues to head in the right direction, and the majority express no desire to live overseas.

The desire to live in another country is underwhelming amongst Malaysian youth, with less than one-fifth indicating interest to move abroad. We do however observe that the interest to live abroad increases with age – more than one-fifth from the youngest age group, 17 to 24 years old, express interest in a life outside of Malaysia compared to only one-tenth of those aged between 25 to 35.

In contrast to the seemingly low interest to move abroad, Malaysian youth are keener to move within the country. One quarter of youth are inclined to live in another part of the country. An interesting disparity observed amongst respondents is that those from the rural areas (30%) are more interested in domestic mobility than those from the urban areas (25%). A possible explanation for this could be linked to the higher availability of education and employment opportunities in urban centres.
Concern over job and educational prospects.

Though in general Malaysian youth are positive about the state of the economy, unemployment is an area of some concern amongst youth. Nine percent state unemployment as one of the top five national issues and another five percent indicate concern about the lack of jobs for young people. Based on the survey findings, the concern over unemployment is most glaringly obvious amongst Sabahan youth, with 26% identifying this as the most pressing issue.

Despite these concerns however, almost three quarters of respondents perceive that the real issue with the employment situation in Malaysia is not in acquiring employment (which seems to indicate sufficient availability of opportunities), rather it is in acquiring one’s desired employment opportunity (which is more indicative of youth being more discerning in their selection).

To further support our observation that youth are becoming more discerning in their employment choices, respondents do seem to recognise that a tertiary education is vital in getting a higher income job. Hence, higher education pursuits could become more prevalent amongst Malaysian youth in the years to come.

Rural youth are not marginalised.

Survey responses indicate little variation across urban and rural youth with exception to questions on mobility. There is little evidence to suggest causes for the similarity in views across the urban-rural divide as historical data is needed to trace the changes in opinions.

A possible explanation was provided by Tunku Abidin Muhriz in his analysis of a Muslim youth survey for Malaysia\textsuperscript{10}, suggesting “an increasingly centralised and uniform education system may have played an important role in this regard”.

Another possible contributing factor to the similarity in perceptions and concerns of urban and rural youth could be the government’s on-going efforts to transform rural areas into economic centres by identifying this as a National Key Results Area (NKRA). The Improving Rural Development NKRA was established as a two-phase programme, whereby the first phase focused on the establishment of basic infrastructure in rural areas and the second phase aims to enhance rural development, which includes the need to develop a thriving youth entrepreneurial climate there\(^\text{11}\).

**Politics**

**Dissimilar concerns at neighbourhood and country levels.**

When taking the country as a whole, youth seem to be most affected by economic-related concerns. Of the top five national issues identified by youth, three are related to the economy – inflation (13%), general economic situation (12%) and unemployment (9%). When only considering their immediate vicinity, youth tend to be more concerned with security and personal safety. Four of the top five neighbourhood issues identified can be related to a compromised state of security – crime (19%), security (13%), large presence of foreign workers in the neighbourhood (7%) and drug use or trafficking (6%).

**Politically aware but lacking empowerment.**

Malaysian youth are politically sensitive; they are aware of core government policies such as ‘Vision 2020’ and ‘1 Malaysia’ and pay attention to the state of their communities and the nation. They are also able to critically assess the performance of various institutions in the country such as the civil administration, the prime minister, the police, the legal system and non-profit organisations (NGOs).

However, youth perceive themselves as less empowered to act. Only 39% of youth polled say they can make a difference in solving problems within their communities. The sense of empowerment amongst youth increased marginally in 2012 compared to 2008 when only 36% said they could make some difference in the community. In terms of their perceived influence on the government, only 41% of youth today said they could influence how the government works.

\(^{11}\) PEMANDU. Available at: <http://www.pemandu.gov.my/gtp/Improving_Rural_Basic_Infrastructure-@_/GTP_2@0_Improving_Rural_Development.aspx>
Mixed views on political pluralism.

Young Malaysians are a mixed bunch when it comes to political pluralism, demonstrating both conservative and liberal tendencies. Youth indicate moderate acceptance of a woman (50%) and a Muslim from an ethnic minority (44%) as the Prime Minister of Malaysia. The level of acceptance for a non-Muslim ethnic minority prime minister is only 37%. The survey found that the level of acceptance of an ethnic minority prime minister is significantly divided along ethno-religious lines. Non-Muslim respondents are more willing than Muslim respondents to accept minorities as top leaders. However, the youth are more open to choosing a political party that represents the interests of the people regardless of race and religion (71%) compared to parties that represent the interests of their own religious (14%) or ethnic group (11%).
APPENDIX I
Survey Demographics

Distribution and definition by region

North
- Perlis
- Kedah
- Pulau Pinang
- Perak

Central
- Negeri Sembilan
- Selangor
- Kuala Lumpur

South
- Melaka
- Johor

East Coast
- Pahang
- Kelantan
- Terengganu

East Malaysia
- Sabah
- Sarawak

East Malaysia 33%
Central 16%
South 16%
East Coast 17%
North 17%

Distribution by gender

Male 51%
Female 49%

Distribution by ethnicity

Malay 61%
Chinese 23%
Indian 4%

East Malaysia Bumiputra 11%
Distribution by age groups

- 30-35 years: 31%
- 25-29 years: 22%
- 20-24 years: 25%
- 17-19 years: 23%

Distribution by strata

- Rural: 31%
- Urban: 69%

Distribution by state

- Sarawak: 17%
- Sabah: 17%
- Terengganu: 4%
- Kelantan: 6%
- Pahang: 6%
- Johor: 13%
- Melaka: 3%
- Kuala Lumpur: 3%
- Selangor: 11%
- Negeri Sembilan: 2%
- Perak: 6%
- Penang: 4%
- Kedah: 5%
- Perlis: 1%
### Distribution by occupation

- Clerical / Sales or similar: 11%
- Skilled / Semi-skilled: 12%
- Unskilled: 10%
- Technical / Supervisor: 8%
- Self-employed / Businessperson: 11%
- Professional: 3%
- Mid-level manager / executive: 2%
- Senior official / Manager: 1%
- Other: 40%

### Distribution by household income

- < RM 1,500 per month: 33%
- RM 1,501 – RM 3,000 per month: 37%
- RM 3,001 – RM 5,000 per month: 17%
- RM 5,001 – RM 7,000 per month: 5%
- >RM 7,001 per month: 3%
# Distribution by religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taoism</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhism</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion/Atheist</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX II
Research Methodology

About the sample

The youth survey covered 2105 respondents, aged between 17 to 35 years, from across the country covering all 13 states and 1 federal territory. Our research partner TNS Malaysia conducted the fieldwork between 13 April and 9 June 2012.

Sample Selection process

The sample selection was conducted in four stages.

Stage 1: Selection of Blocks

The household sampling frame comprised of Electoral Districts or Blocks as primary sampling units. The sample blocks were selected based on probability proportional to size within each stratum. In all, 210 blocks were selected and 10 interviews were conducted in each.

Stage 2: Selection of Starting Point

All settlements in a sample block were identified by a list of localities. Localities are basically population centres e.g. street, villages, housing estate, etc. One locality was selected randomly with equal probability as the starting point for the sample block.

Stage 3: Selection of Household

From the starting point, living quarters/households were listed and selected at intervals of three until 10 successful interviews were achieved.

Stage 4: Selection of Individual

Within each sample household all members aged 17 to 35 years old were listed and one was then selected randomly using a Kish grid that ensured equal probability. Considering the possibility of high refusal or low response, a second selection is allowed in a household if the first selection fails.
Final sample size achieved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sample Size achieved</th>
<th>Number of Blocks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>3,901,500</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>4,815,700</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>2,480,100</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Coast</td>
<td>2,517,300</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Malaysia - Sabah</td>
<td>1,503,000</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Malaysia - Sarawak</td>
<td>1,515,000</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2105</td>
<td>210</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quality control checks

Our approach to controlling the project was through a supervisor and a team of interviewers that were appointed and specifically trained as a “Project Team”. The supervisor would continually conduct spot checks in the field. A minimum of 20% of each interviewer’s questionnaires was validated by the Quality Control team which was independent of the field team.

Weighting

Since the sample was kept to an equal number from every region irrespective of the population size of the region, in the end the results were weighted to reflect the true national perspective. The weighting used for this study included region, ethnicity and age and gender.