The Asian Democracy Index for Malaysia 2012: Authoritarian and Ineffectual Government despite Formal Democratic Institutions

ANDREW AERIA AND TAN SENG KEAT

Introduction

In early 2012, at the invitation of the Consortium for the Asian Democracy Index (CADI), the authors of this report joined CADI's multi-country project to survey democracy in the region, particularly in Malaysia, using the Asian Democracy Index (ADI) method. Led by the Democracy and Social Movements Institute (DaSMI) of Sungkonghoe University, Korea, the Malaysia component of CADI was thus part of a larger regional collaboration to develop an alternative index that better reflected the quality of democracy in Asia.

Being new to the project—with no prior knowledge of the appropriateness of the survey instrument and having limited funds—the Malaysian CADI team could only conduct a pilot ADI study, which canvassed the views of a small sample of citizen professionals throughout the country. Consequently, the results cannot be regarded as anything but exploratory in nature. It was a first step in testing and refining the survey instrument so as to make the instrument more consistent and useful when appraising the quality of democracy in a region of great diversity. After all, not only is Asia diverse in terms of ethnicities, languages, religions and cultures but not all countries share the same political, economic, or social systems and levels of democratic governance. Hence, any effort to evaluate the quality of democracy in Asia would require a survey tool and methods of analysis that would allow for equivalent and consistent comparisons. As

Andrew Aeria is Associate Professor at the Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Social Sciences, University Malaysia Sarawak. Tan Seng Keat is Research Manager at Merdeka Centre, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.

well, the project aimed to look beyond the formal institutions and procedural laws of democracy so as to evaluate the underlying quality of our democratic societies given our desire to develop a somewhat more nuanced appreciation of democracy. This was also to distinguish ourselves from the hitherto better known surveys and indexes frequently quoted in academic and public discourses presently like the Freedom House Index,[1] the Asia Barometer,[2] the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index,[3] and the Democracy Ranking.[4]

This report thus represents the findings of the pilot ADI survey conducted from June to July 2012. It is divided into three key sections, the first laying out the socio-economic and political context of Malaysia in 2012 before discussing the survey methods. After presenting our findings, we then conclude by evaluating the robustness of our survey approach in capturing the quality of democracy in the country.

Malaysia in 2012

In the Twelfth General Election of 2008, a large section of the country's electorate shifted their support from that of the hitherto governing coalition, the Barisan Nasional (BN) to that of the fledgling opposition coalition, the Pakatan Rakyat (PR). BN lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority for the first time since 1969, itself an indicator of the deep-rooted desire for change and reforms in the political and socioeconomic fabric of the country (Khoo 2008; Thomas 2008).

The ensuing four years, until the period when this survey was run, was a period of intense sociopolitical competition with both BN and PR jostling to win the hearts and minds of the electorate and thus consolidate their respective political positions.

Soon after the 2008 general election, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and the BN federal government orchestrated a palace coup in the state of Perak which saw the collapse of the PR state government after three PR state assemblymen defected to BN. A serious constitutional crisis ensued after the Sultan (as Constitutional Head of the State of Perak) refused to dissolve the state assembly to pave the way for new state elections despite being advised so by the PR Chief Minister. Instead, BN was invited by the Sultan to form a new state government. As well, there were numerous defections of PR members of parliament (MPs) to BN after the 2008 General Election. Collectively, these defections and the palace coup seriously sullied the democratic fabric of the country (Jalleh 2009; Rasiah 2009; Chan 2010).

As well, between 2008 and 2011, there were a total of sixteen by-elections throughout the country. There was also a state election in Sarawak. Despite the election system being heavily biased in favor of the ruling BN party (Lim 2011), all these electoral contests were keenly contested by both the BN and PR which ensured that the country remained in a heightened state of electioneering (McDonald 2012). Largely in response to numerous electoral abuses perpetrated by the caretaker BN government during the 2008 General Election and subsequent by-election contests, a loose coalition of sixty-two nongovernment organisations (NGOs) that called themselves the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (or Bersih 2.0) led a series of large demonstrations throughout the country in pursuit of genuine electoral reforms and democracy (Aeria 2012; Sreenevasan 2013).

It was also at this time that Perkasa, an ethno-religious supremacist group, emerged to champion Malay-Muslim rights in the country, pulling the country toward the political far right in the process. Among the core issues raised by Perkasa were the constitutional supremacy of Malay special rights and privileges within government economic policy and exclusivity of Islam within the country (Loh 2010).

As well, despite the repeal of the notorious Internal Security Act in September 2011 that allowed for indefinite detention without trial, the human rights situation in the country did not improve. Deaths in custody and cases of police impunity all continued to occur with worrying regularity. The Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC), one of 125 recommendations made by a Royal Commission investigating police mismanagement and abuse of power in 2004, remained unimplemented (SUARAM 2013). Similarly, public security did not improve with the incidence of crime rising unabated (SUARAM 2012).

Cumulatively, all these incidents and frequent by-election contests meant that economics, politics, and civil society in Malaysia remained in a heightened state of flux and ferment when the Malaysian team ran the CADI survey in August 2012.

Our Survey Method

Financial constraints saw the Malaysian team survey thirty-five adult Malaysian professionals from all over the country. Of these, sixteen were female and nineteen were male. Their age groups varied from twenty to above fifty with respondents coming from the following age groups, as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Ages of Survey Respondents

Age Cohort (Years)	Number
Under 20	1
20-29	9
30-39	12
40-49	10
50 and Above	3
Total	35

Table 2 shows the ethnic breakdown of the respondents in the sample. Unfortunately, given the need to conduct the survey on short notice, we were unable to match the profile of our respondents to the demographic profile of the national population. Hence, we ended up having a less than ideal profile of respondents with less non-Malay/Bumiputera respondents in our sample size than we would have liked. As shown in table 2, this is indicated by the high levels of variance.

Table 2. Ethnic Background of Respondents

Ethnicity	Number	% of Respondents	% of National Population	Variance (in %)
Chinese	21	60	24.1	+35.9
Malay	6	17.1	54.8	-37.7
Other Bumiputera	2	5.7	13	-7.3
Indian	5	14.3	7.3	+7.0
Other Minorities	1	2.9	0.9	+2.0
Total	35	100	100	n.a.

Given that the respondents were all professionals who had university degrees and college diplomas, the survey sample was biased toward an urban population from the cities of Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, Johor, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu. There were no respondents from any rural areas within the sample.

The survey was administered via e-mail. Respondents were mailed the survey and given a period of two weeks to complete the questionnaires. Also, since the survey language used was English, the respondents who ultimately responded to the questionnaires were those who were fluent in English.

The CADI survey covered three broad areas of focus, namely, perceptions about politics, economics and civil society. There are a total of fifty-eight questions: nineteen questions are about the country's politics, twenty questions about the economy, and nineteen questions on the area of civil society.

Survey Results

Perception about Politics in Malaysia

Our survey found that 71 percent of the respondents thought they were victimized by government violence (see table 3). A similar number (72 percent) thought that their citizen freedoms were less than protected by the government. This figure rises to 92 percent if the mid-range responses are taken into account, with only 9 percent of respondents citing confidence in government protection of their citizen freedoms (see table 4). On the issue of freedom of assembly, 74 percent of those polled opined that political groups and their activities lacked freedom of assembly (see table 5). When it came to the issue of opposition movements, 77 percent of the respondents concluded that opposition groups and their ideologies were controlled by the government (see table 6). On the issue of suffrage, 57 percent of respondents considered that their vote was less than or not protected, with the figure rising to 69 percent if the mid-point of the survey scale is taken into consideration (see table 7).

Policy implementation and execution by government agencies was also viewed as generally ineffective by 61 percent of respondents; this figure rises to 84 percent if the mid-point of the survey scale is considered (see table 8). Upon examining the influence of non-elected officials upon politics, 52 percent were convinced that such officials played a role in Malaysian politics. This figure rises to 78 percent when the survey scale mid-point is added, suggesting that more than two-thirds of those polled were convinced that hereditary and feudal issues played a big role in the country's politics (see table 9).

Consequently, it was no surprise to find that 75 percent of those polled considered the rule of law weak and ineffective in Malaysia (see table 10). Such results were similarly reflected in the 82 percent who thought that the conduct of elections were less than fair or unfair (see table 11). As well, 87 percent did not think there was transparency in government or in its agencies in the conduct of public affairs (see table 12). This result

was corroborated by a similarly large percentage (82 percent) of respondents who, on being asked about how well government maintains checks and balances, replied that there was a serious lack of institutional independence and accountability by government (see table 13).

Much of this was likely due to the high level of control exercised by the governing majority party upon parliament. 88 percent of the respondents held the view that parliamentary power was largely monopolized by the majority party, thus making proceedings of the legislature undemocratic (see table 14). Resultantly, many respondents (77 percent) did not think parliament was representative of their own constituents, the electorate, and social groups (see table 15). Unsurprisingly, 85 percent of respondents did not view the implementation and operation of government policies as being fair and rational. Put differently, government policy implementation was generally viewed as being authoritarian and more selective than participatory (see table 16) despite the fact that citizens generally participate in elections and other political decision-making processes. However, 48 percent of respondents in the negative, 29 percent positive, and 23 percent in the mid-point suggests a view that although citizens have access to electoral participation and political decision-making, the view is skewed toward less participation rather than more (see table 17).

Regarding the issue of political affirmative action, respondents were largely of the view that little political affirmative action existed to champion the cause of marginal groups (see table 18).[5] In other words, a majority (74 percent) viewed that marginal groups were less represented or even unrepresented in the country's policies.[6] When it comes to trust in the government, most respondents (69 percent) articulated less or a complete lack of trust, while a further 29 percent only had moderate trust in government (see table 19). When the same question was posed with regard to parliament, 61 percent said that there was less trust or a complete lack of trust in the said institution. Consequently, more people trusted parliament than the government/executive (see table 20 in relation to table 19). And yet, when the question of trust was posed again, this time for democracy, 61 percent indicated their trust in democracy as a system of governance, with a further 31 percent expressing moderate trust in democracy (see table 21). In other words, although respondents had high trust in democracy as a system of governance, they viewed the government in a poor light, while parliament only came off slightly better than the government/executive.

Perception of Control within the Malaysian Economy

On the issue of monopolies within the economy, our poll found that 82 percent of our respondents thought that the country's political power elites had extensive control over the operation of private companies, with only 17 percent thinking that control was balanced towards others (see table 22). Labor rights were perceived by 86 percent of our respondents to be weak and not institutionally guaranteed, while a mere 15 percent thought that labor rights were more robust (see table 23). When asked about forced child labor, responses were varied, with 57 percent thinking child rights were strongly or fully guaranteed, 21 percent thinking it poorly guaranteed, and a further 21 percent thinking it moderate (see table 24).

On the question of central government independence from foreign influences, most respondents took a middle-of-the-road perspective, with 39 percent saying that the central government was independent or fully independent and 36 percent saying otherwise. The remaining 24 percent took a middle position (see table 25). The view of respondents changed slightly when asked about transparency of corporate affairs in the country. A majority (54 percent) thought that corporate affairs were less than or not transparent, 22 percent thought the opposite, and 25 percent took a middle position (see table 26). However, on the issue of fair competition among private enterprises, a large majority of those polled (76 percent) thought that competition was deeply lacking or that monopolies prevailed. Only 9 percent thought that private enterprises were competitive, while 15 percent took a middle position (see table 27).

The earlier view of weak labor rights was further corroborated when in response to the question of whether or not the government protected or guaranteed labor rights, 57 percent of respondents thought labor was tightly restricted and thus labourers did not enjoy many rights. Only 15 percent thought otherwise, while 28 percent gave middle-position responses (see table 28). That majority view is reinforced by the fact that 72 percent of respondents thought that corporate control of labor was tightly restricted. Only 18 percent thought that private companies protected labor rights (see table 29).

This perception of tight control by private companies was also reflected by the perception of the said companies' control of the economy; 94 percent of respondents thought that private companies had an overwhelming monopolistic influence over the economy (see table 30). In terms of regional equality, there was an overwhelming perception (83 percent) that there were grave imbalances with very serious regional economic disparities in

the country (see table 31). This imbalance was also reflected in a near total perception (98 percent) among respondents that income disparity was deeply skewed in the country (see table 32), seconded by the fact that all respondents polled thought that asset disparity was deeply unequal (see table 33).

When the respondents were polled on the issue of labor market discrimination, the afore-described view of deep inequality and unfairness continued. All respondents thought that discrimination within the labor market was very serious between regular and irregular labor (see table 34). Unsurprisingly, given such skewed inequalities and tight controls of labor by private enterprise, 57 percent of respondents thought that the support systems for the poor were very weak or non-existent, 20 percent thought that they were satisfactory, and 23 percent took a middle view (see table 35). Likewise, just over half (51 percent) of those polled held negative views about social insurance programs; while they existed, the view was that things generally could be better. The rest held middling or only slightly positive views about these programs (see table 36).

To the question about how well-organized labor is, respondents thought that labor was generally organized (54 percent replied in and around the middle point) although many were of the opinion that labor unions did not function very well (43 percent) (see table 37). Consequently, it was no surprise when some respondents indicated that labor unions only had limited or no influence (39 percent) over government policy, while 57 percent indicated their belief that labor unions have a less than satisfactory or middling influence over government policy (see table 38). This view was also corroborated by the perception of a lack of labor union involvement with corporate management—74 percent of replies indicated such was the case. Only 12 percent thought labor unions had some involvement or influence in corporate management, while 13 percent gave middling responses to the question in the matter (see table 39).

According to the respondents, public monitoring of corporate activities was also very weak. 68 percent of replies indicated very little and/or weak monitoring of private enterprises by consumer and environmental groups, while 32 percent gave middle or more positive replies (see table 40). All these views were in contrast to the desire of the respondents to see Malaysia achieve economic equality. 52 percent believed that the public desired to improve economic equality, 41 percent were not so enthusiastic about such a development taking place, while 9 percent gave midpoint answers. However, when the overall pattern of responses is viewed, it is evident that more wanted equality and a reduction of inequality (see table 41).

Perceptions about the Robustness of Civil Society

A series of nineteen questions about the status of civil society were posed to the respondents. This is one question more than what was in the ADI civil society questionnaires used by other teams because we felt that in Malaysia, it was necessary to divide the question on media fairness into one about mainstream/"traditional" media and another on Internet/online media.

On the question of how free citizens' social activities are from government interference, 71 percent noted that there were deep government controls over media, culture, and civil society groups in the country (see table 42). Consequently, 87 percent thought that government had an inordinate amount of influence, being overbearing over society (see table 43). On the other hand, when it came to the question of corporate influence over society, 74 percent thought that private companies had more influence over society (see table 44).

On the issue of whether or not the basic needs of citizens are met in the country, responses indicated that generally this was so, although a sense of deprivation exists (see table 45). However, when the same question was refined to refer to vulnerable groups and minorities like children, women, the disabled, and immigrants, a substantial number of responses (83 percent) indicated that such groups were largely neglected in Malaysia, with the country not conforming to basic international conventions (see table 46). Taking a more sectoral view, generally, respondents thought that there was sufficient educational opportunities accorded to citizens, although significant neglect existed; many people are still marginalized as far as education is concerned (see table 47). On the issue of respect for different cultures, religion, languages, races, nations and ideas, respondents generally articulated the view that there was generally significant acceptance and respect for various social/political/cultural groups, but there are equal levels of intolerance (see table 48).

The influence of NGOs in Malaysian society is also moderate to low, according to the respondents (see table 49). Still, although with limited influence, NGOs continue to punch beyond their weight, so to speak, since the respondents viewed NGOs as having an above average importance in representing the public interest (see table 50). The experts think that NGOs are regarded well by the public as being institutionally committed to democracy (see table 51). Unfortunately, citizen participation in NGOs is perceived as being moderate to low (82 percent), indicating a general level of apathy toward civil society involvement by the general populace (see table 59). This is largely reflected by the fact that most respondents thought NGOs do not have much or even no influence over government policy in the country

(see table 60). Still, NGOs are generally well regarded in terms of being representative of social diversity, although about a third of those polled felt that they represented narrow interests (see table 52).

When asked about the media, an overwhelming number of those polled (92 percent) thought that the mainstream media was unfair and unjust in its coverage of the news (see table 53). In contrast, 75 percent thought that the Internet media was more balanced and even-handed in its coverage of the news and public views (see table 54). This divergence between the mainstream and internet media rightly reflected the large information gap between citizens; 84 percent of respondents held the view that there was a moderate to large information gap in society (see table 55).

When asked if citizens have equal access to cultural facilities and activities, the responses were varied, with unequal access being perceived to be more evident than equal access (see table 56). Power distribution among the people was also seen as very unequal, with elites monopolizing power to a large extent in the minds of an overwhelming 90 percent of respondents (see table 57). Affirmative action programmes were also viewed by 85 percent of respondents as being poorly implemented or non-existent in the country (see table 58).[7]

Conclusion

The questionnaires were lengthy and designed to take less than an hour each. However, during the administering of the questionnaires, they were found to be quite detailed and challenging for many respondents who found the concepts unfamiliar. Thus, respondents needed time to reflect on the questions asked. Indeed, one respondent found the questions difficult (even threatening not to complete the survey as it reminded him of school exams!). Consequently, most respondents took over an hour to complete the questionnaires. Generally, we received the following feedback from our respondents: 1) the questionnaires were too long; and 2) some concepts are challenging and drained the mental energy of respondents who had to figure out not only complex issues but also answers along a detailed Likert scale of 0-10.

Nevertheless, our pilot poll of the Asian Democracy Index revealed that Malaysia in 2012—on the eve of what promised to be a keenly contested general election—was dominated by a small but extremely powerful elite in politics and the economy. Civil society was weak, given the monopoly control exerted by the political-economic elite upon various facets of civil society life, especially the mass media, which constrains the sharing of information and knowledge of current affairs in society. The limited reach

of the Internet media in a developing country like Malaysia further limited the dispersion of information, consequently of power. Thus, despite the impending repeal of various oppressive laws like the Internal Security Act as promised by the governing Barisan Nasional government, the reality within society was that of continued domination of society by elites. In other words, democracy remained constrained by the concentration of power in politics, economics, and society. Malaysia in 2012 had a more authoritarian character despite its public facade of democracy. Government was also viewed as more ineffectual than efficient or effective.

But such conclusions have a major caveat. Apart from detailed issues about the questionnaires and specific questions that arose via respondents' feedback, the Malaysia team had serious reservations about the size of the sample. Normally, a sample size of 1000 persons is about the right size to derive an accurate reflection of a nation's outlook toward an issue. Given that the Malaysian CADI survey only managed to survey thirty-five persons on account of serious budgetary limitations, the reality is that there exists a major impediment in generalizing the survey results. Such a tiny sample (even if it is of professional, white-collared graduates) does not constitute a significant, representative, or reliable indicator of national sentiment toward democracy. In other words, the findings of this particular survey cannot be referred to as being a representative or reliable indicator of the state of democracy in Malaysia in 2012. However, its value derives from being able to put forward a completely different and more analytical perspective of democracy from that of the usual legal and normative definitions. Indeed, the analytical perspective utilized in this survey, namely democracy as dispersion of political, economic, and social power complements the legal-normative approach and has potential to be used as an organizing and campaigning tool to further advance the cause of democracy beyond academic circles.

Notes

1. More details of the Freedom House Index can be found here: http://www.freedomhouse.org.
2. Further details of the Asia Barometer Index can be found here http://www.asianbarometer.org.
3. Details of the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index can be found here: https://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=DemocracyIndex12.
4. Democracy Ranking's index of democracy can be found here: http://democracyranking.org.
5. This particular result is problematic and even likely inaccurate as political affirmative actions are very prevalent and visible within Malaysia. We discuss this point subsequently when we evaluate the methodological robustness of the survey instrument in a later section.

6.   Although the responses are not incorrect, there was likely some confusion in the respondents' understanding of this question. Since 1970, Malaysia has advocated a major political affirmative action program, namely the New Economic Policy (NEP). Via policy interventions, the NEP seeks to eradicate poverty among poor Malay and indigenous (Bumiputera) peoples of the country; to develop an entrepreneurial class of Bumiputera businesses, and to re-allocate wealth concentrations by assisting the Bumiputera corporate community to gain 30 percent of the country's corporate wealth. In this particular question however, "political affirmative action" referred to the "political rights of minorities"; specifically, "quotas for women and people with disabilities."

7.   As in endnote 6, though the responses to this point are not incorrect, there was likely some confusion in the respondents' understanding of this question. The NEP has benefitted members of the Malay/Bumiputera community more than other communities. Consequently, there is considerable antipathy towards the NEP amongst non-Malay/Bumiputeras. Given that our sample was ethnically skewed, there is a real likelihood that the responses to this question are imbalanced.

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Appendix: Responses of Malaysian Experts

Politics

Table 3: Government Violence
Q1: How well are citizens protected from the violence wielded by government agencies in the country?
Most respondents feel victimized by government violence (comment by researchers).
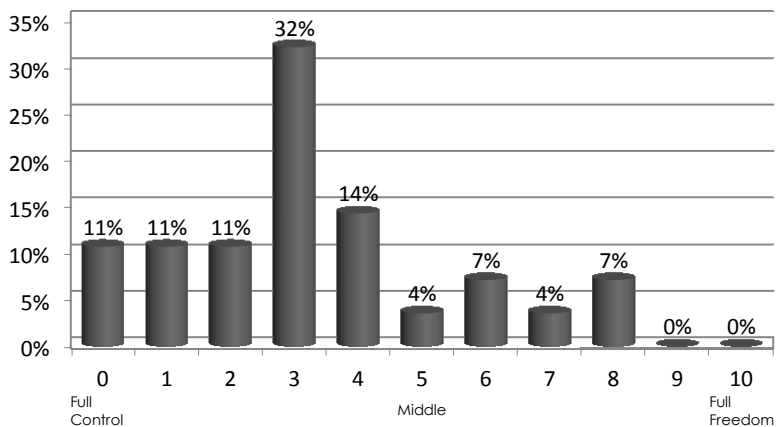
Table 4: Protection of Citizen Freedoms
Q2: How well is citizens' freedom protected in the country?
71 percent of those polled feel that their freedoms are less than protected.
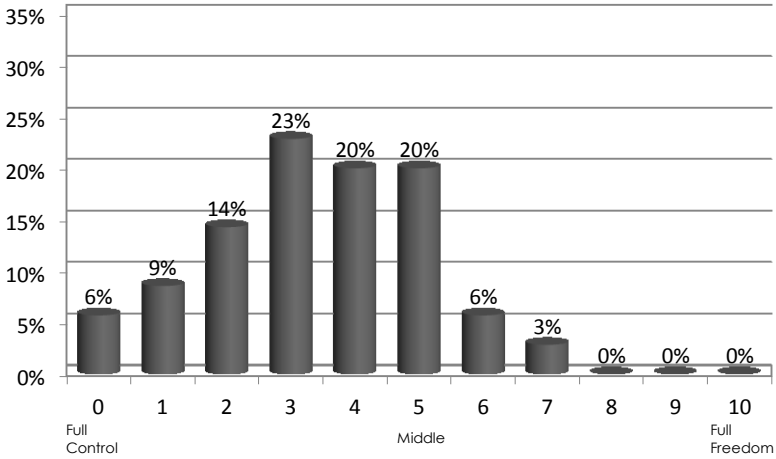
Table 5: Freedom of Assembly
Q3: *How much is freedom of assembly and activities of political groups (parties and quasi-political organizations) protected in the country?*
About 75 percent of those polled feel political groups lack freedom of assembly.
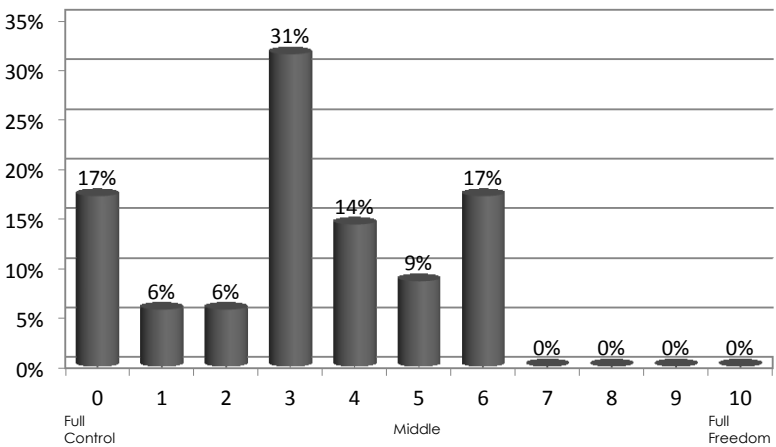
Table 6: Opposition Movements

Q4: To what extent are movements opposed to the government or governing groups and the governing ideology allowed in the country?
78 percent feel opposition groups and ideologies are heavily controlled by the government.
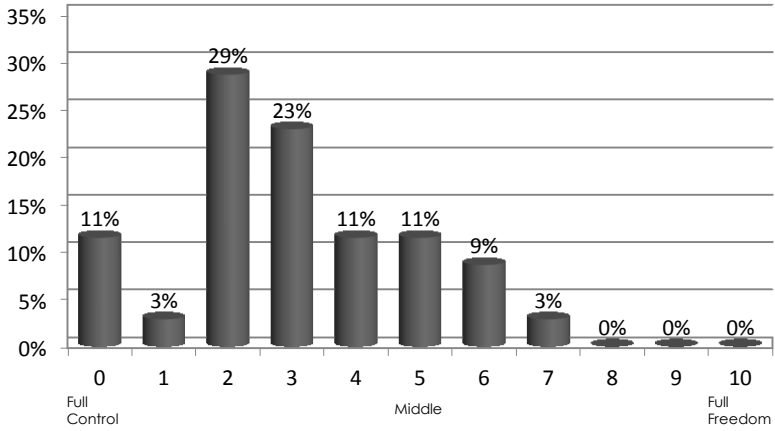
Table 7: Suffrage

Q5: How well is suffrage (of citizens) protected in the country?
Generally, respondents feel that suffrage is less than or not protected.
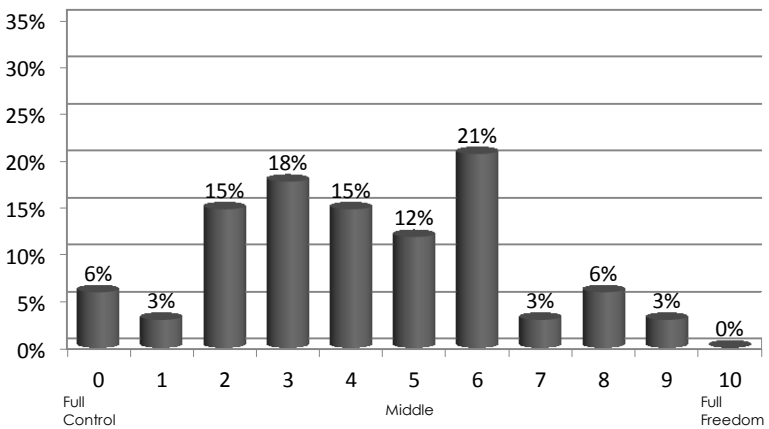
Table 8: Implementation of Government Policy
Q6: How well do all government agencies implement government policies in the country?
According to the respondents, policy implementation and execution by government agencies are generally ineffective.
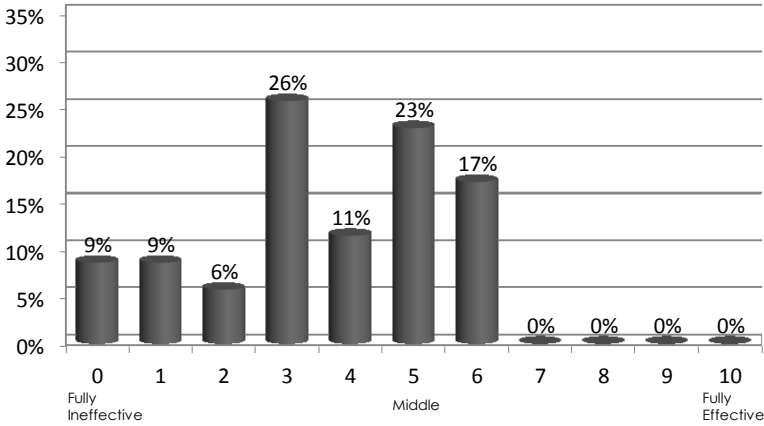
Table 9: Non-elected officials' Influence on Politics
Q7: How much do non-elected groups account for political power in the country?
According to the respondents, political monopoly of unelected officials leans toward hereditary/feudal controls.
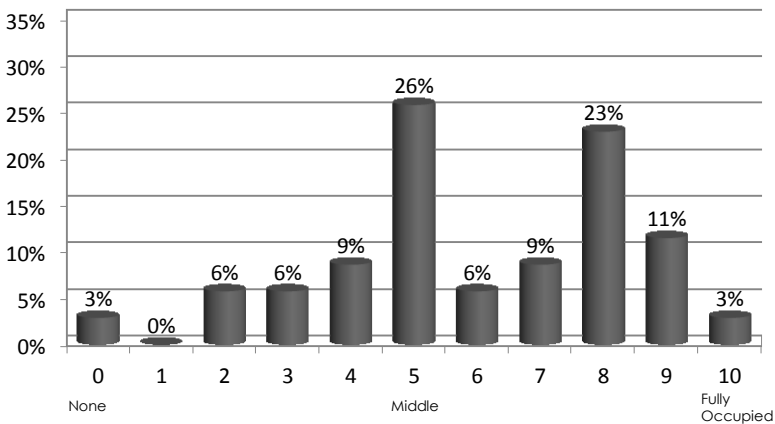
Table 10: Rule of Law
Q8: How well is the rule of law established in the country?
Rule of law is seen as generally weak or ineffective.
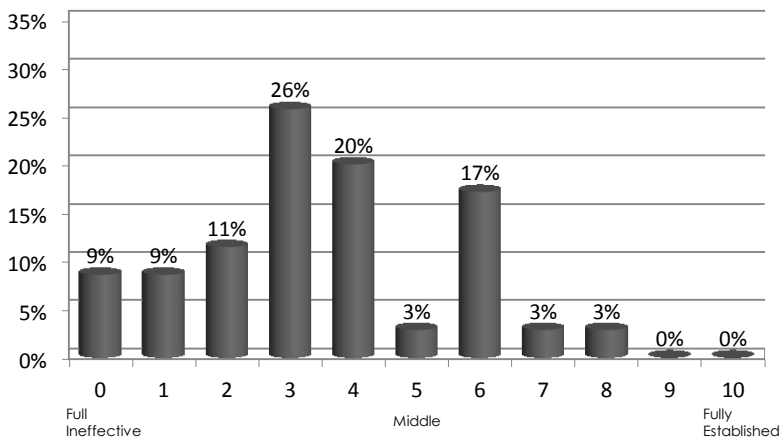
Table 11: Fair Elections
Q9: Are elections conducted fairly in the country?
According to the respondents, elections are largely conducted less than fairly or unfairly.
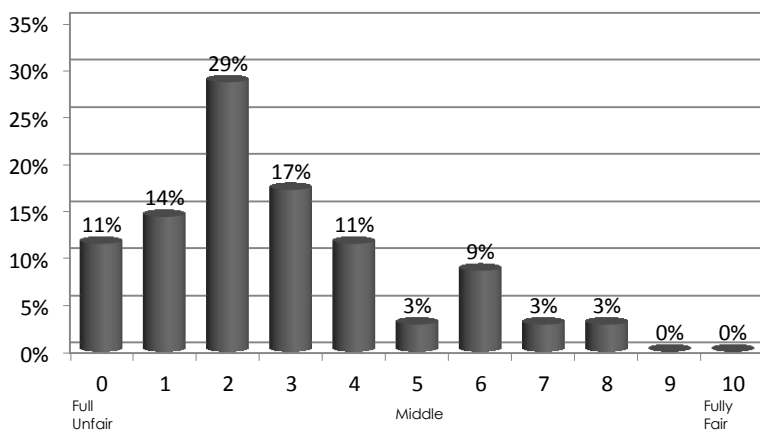
Table 12: Government Transparency

Q10: How transparent are the operation of government agencies in the country?

Most of the respondents think that government agencies and operations lack transparency.
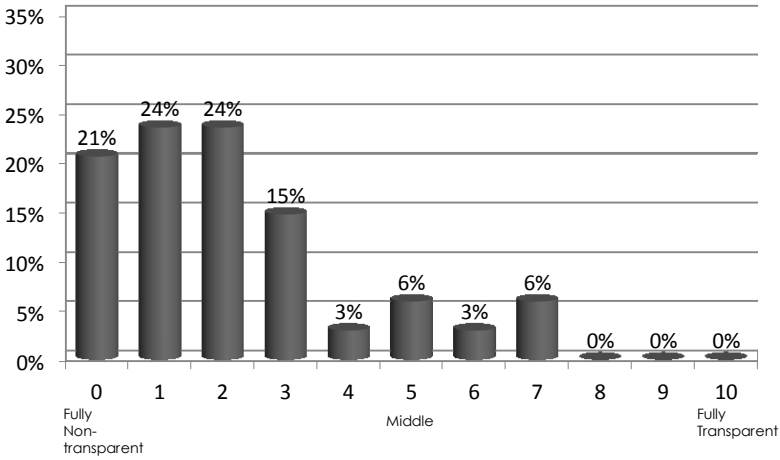
Table 13: Checks and Balances in Government

Q11: How well do government agencies maintain checks and balances?

Generally, the experts' responses suggest a serious lack of institutional independence of and accountability by government.
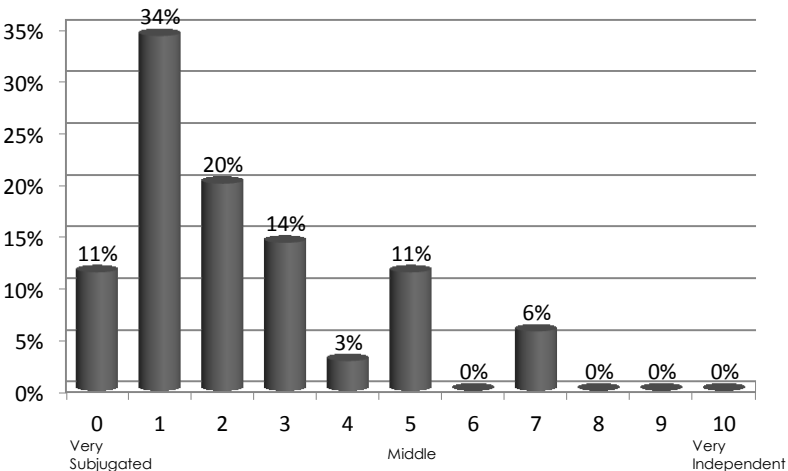
Table 14: Legislative Power Distribution
Q12: How well is power within the legislature distributed in the country?
According to the respondents, power is largely monopolised by the majority party, thus, the legislature is undemocratic.
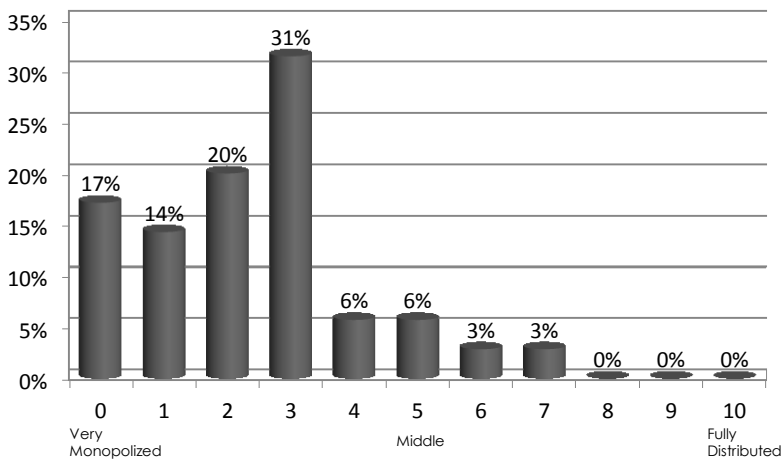
Table 15: Parliamentary Representation
Q13: How well does parliament or the legislature represent various social groups in the country?
Parliament is generally unrepresentative of the electorate and social groups, said the respondents.
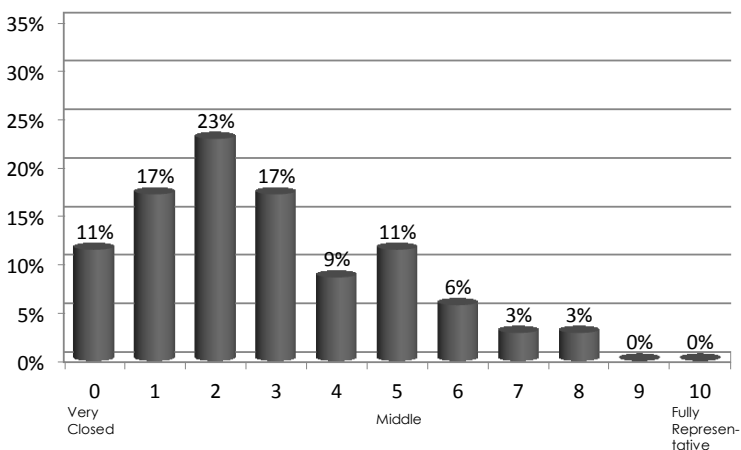
Table 16: Fair and Rational Policy Implementation
Q14: Do government agencies operate and implement policies fairly and rationally in the country?
According to the respondents, government policy implementation is generally more authoritarian and selective than participatory.
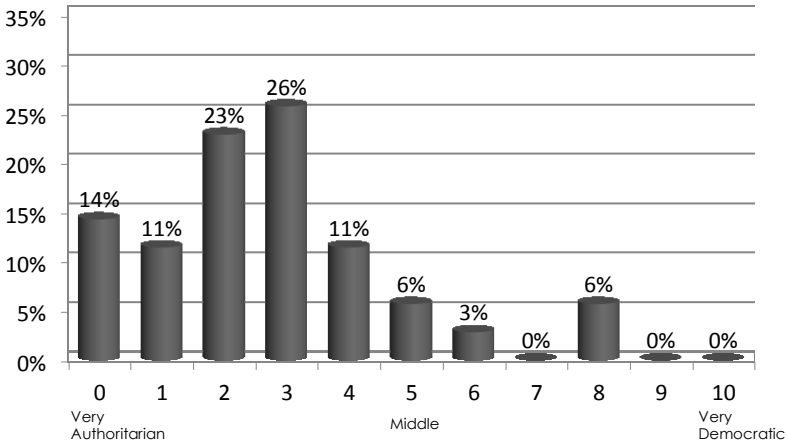
Table 17: Citizen Participation in Elections and Decision Making
Q15: How actively do citizens participate in elections and other political decision-making processes in the country?
Citizens generally have access to participation but such access is skewed toward less rather than more.
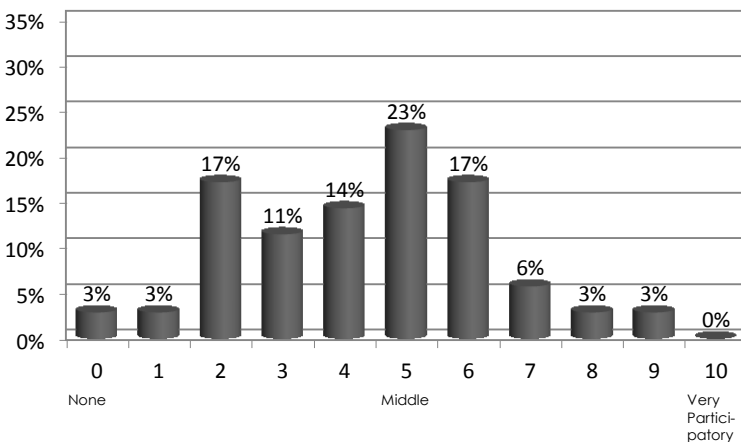
Table 18: Political Affirmative Action
Q16: How well established and implemented are political affirmative actions in the country?
The results generally lean toward less or non-existent implementation, thus marginalized groups are under- or unrepresented.
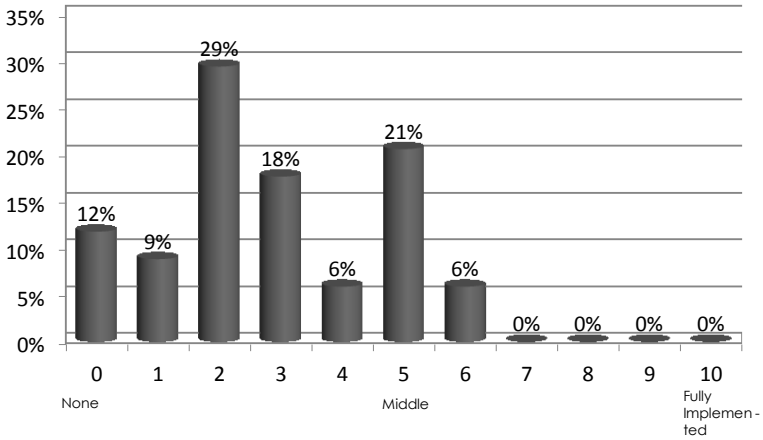
Table 19: Public Trust in Government
Q17: Does the public trust the government?
According to the respondents, majority of the public have less trust in or fully distrust government.
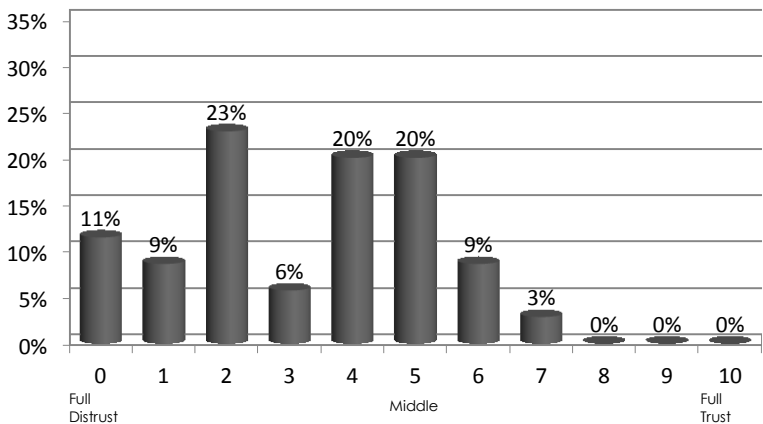
Table 20: Public Trust in Parliament
Q18: Does the public trust the parliament/legislature?
According to the respondents, the public has more distrust than trust for parliament.
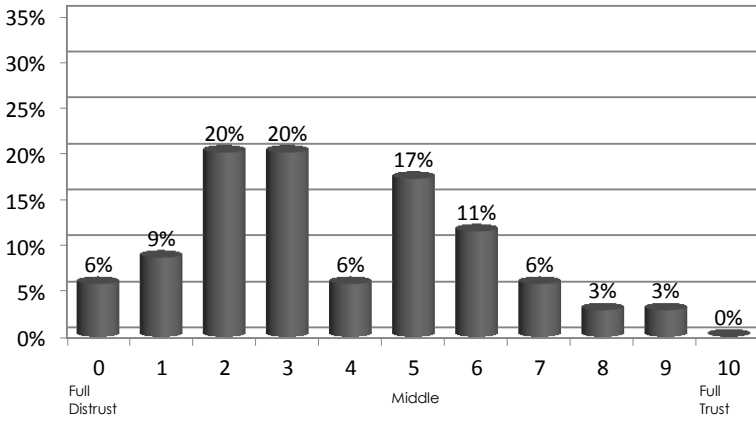
Table 21: Public Trust in Democracy
Q19: Does the public trust democracy?
According to the respondents, there is still a lot of trust that democracy works.
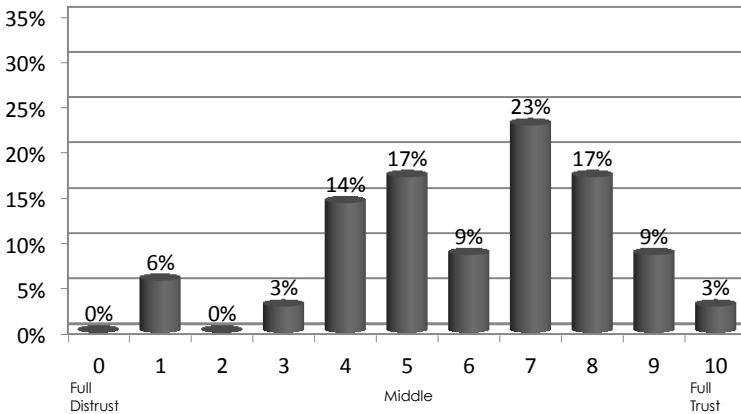
Economy

Table 22: Influence of Political Power Elite
Q1: How much influence do the political power elite have on the operation of private companies in the country?
According to the respondents, the said elites have large/extensive influence over the economy.
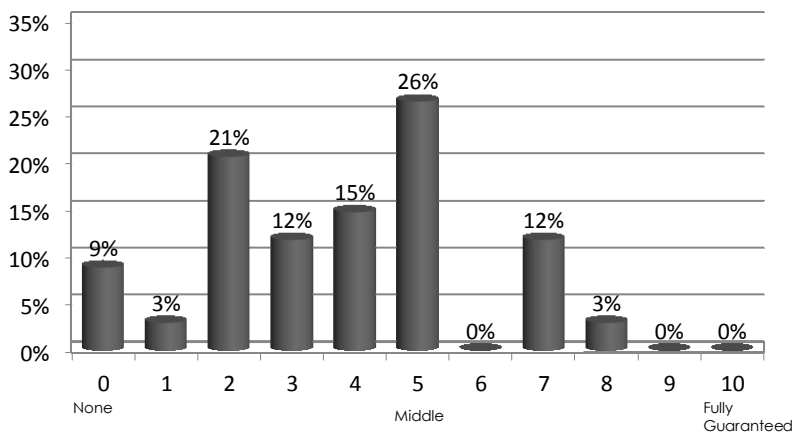
Table 23: Labor Rights
Q2: Are labor rights well established in the country?
Labor rights are seen to be weak and not institutionally guaranteed.
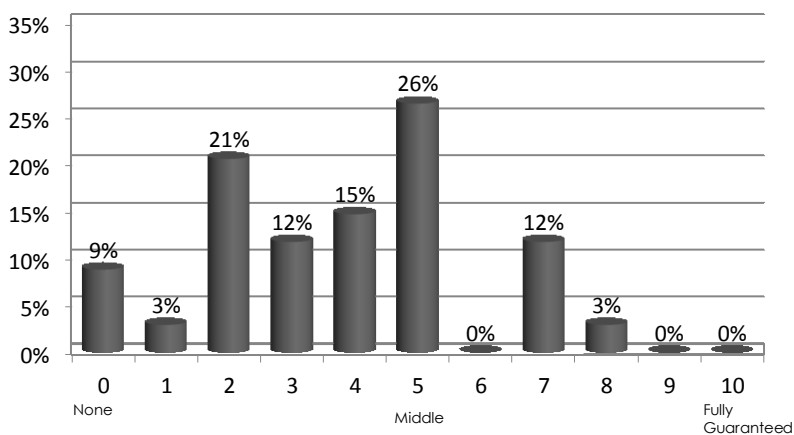
Table 24: Forced and Child Labor
Q3: Is Forced Labor and Child Labor Prohibited in the Country?
According to the respondents, both are legally guaranteed but in various degrees.
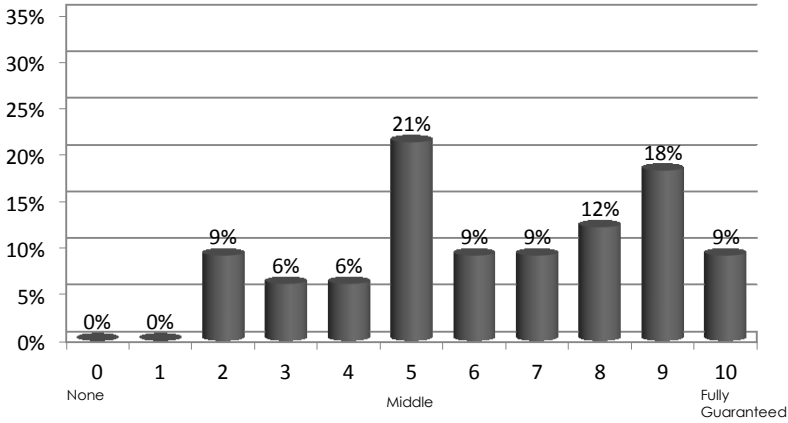
Table 25: Central Government Independence from Foreign Influence
Q4: How independent are central government decision-making processes from foreign countries and/or foreign capital influences in the country?
Generally, the respondents see the condition of this matter as middle of the road.
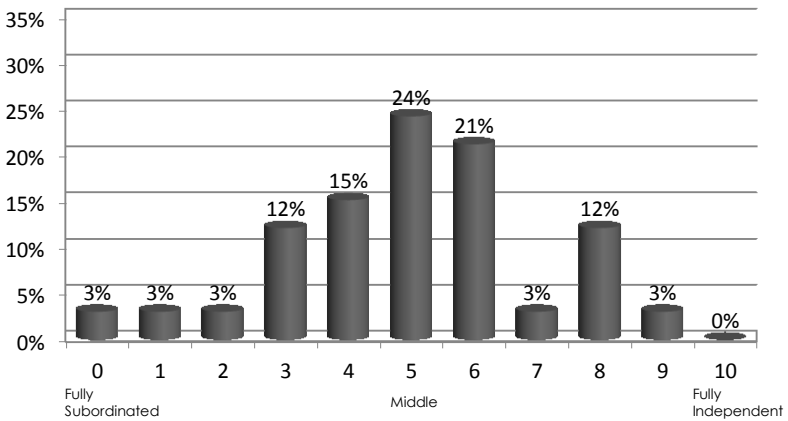
Table 26: Transparency of Corporate Operations
Q5: How transparent are corporate operations in the country?
The respondents see corporate operations in Malaysia as less than to non-transparent.
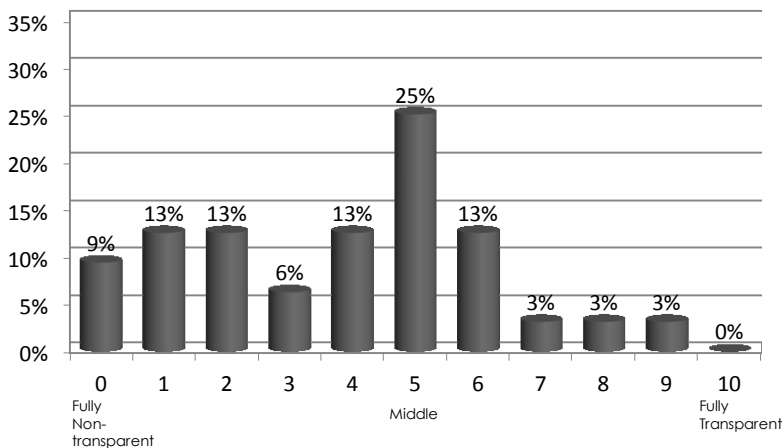
Table 27: Private Enterprise Competition
Q6: How fair is competition between companies in the country?
The respondents generally see competition as lacking unfair given the existence of monopolies.
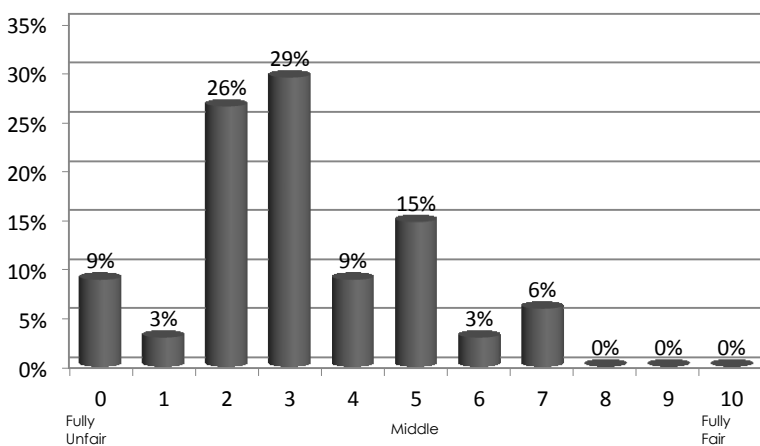
Table 28: Protection of Labor Rights
Q7: How much effort does the government exert to protect and guarantee labor rights in the country?
According to the respondents, labor is highly restricted (labourers have few rights or are unprotected).
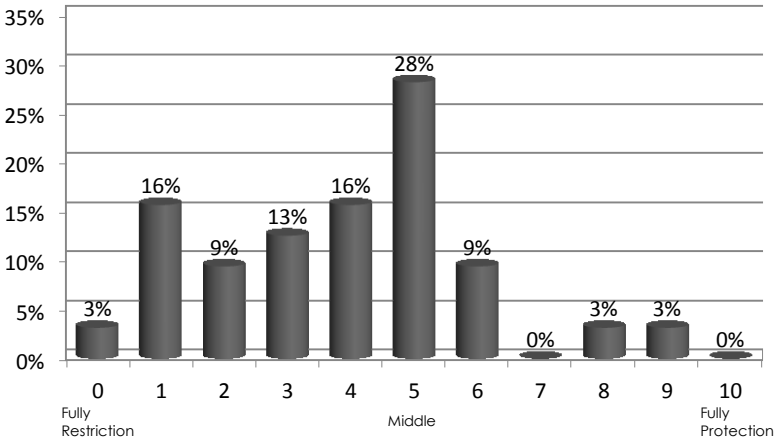
Table 29: Corporate Protection of Labor Rights
Q8: How well do private companies protect/guarantee labor rights in the country?
The respondents think that labor rights are generally less protected in Malaysia and have tight restrictions.
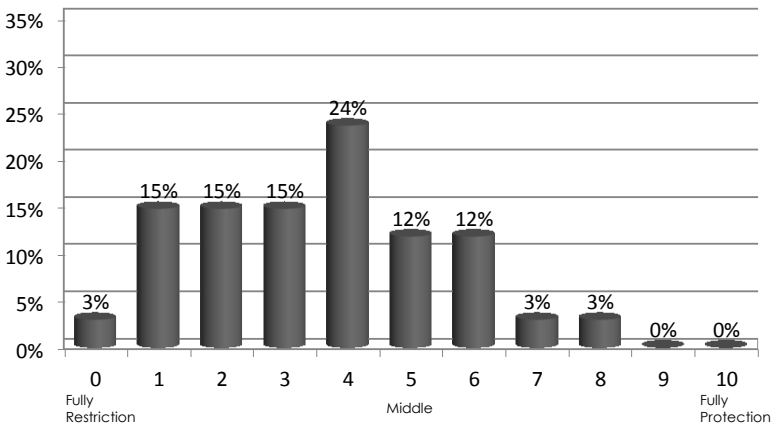
Table 30: Economic Monopolies and Domination
Q9: To what extent is the economy dominated by certain groups in the country?
According to experts, there are high levels of domination by monopolies and favored conglomerates.
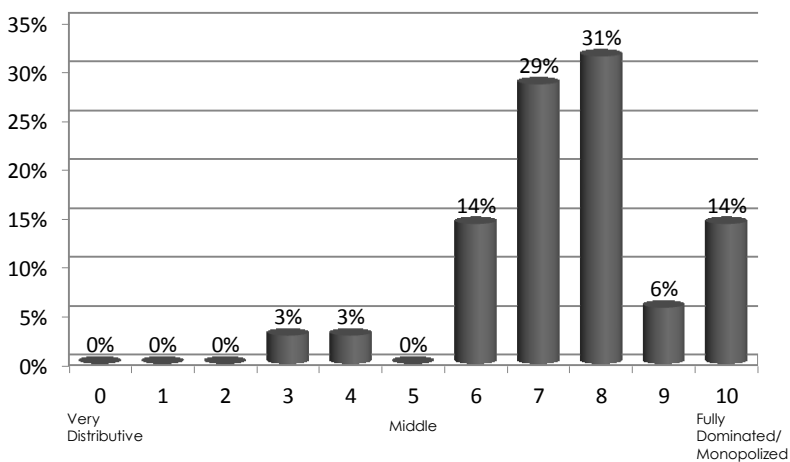
Table 31: Regional Economic Inequalities
Q10: How serious are the economic disparities/inequalities between regions in the country?
According to the respondents, regional disparities are highly skewed.
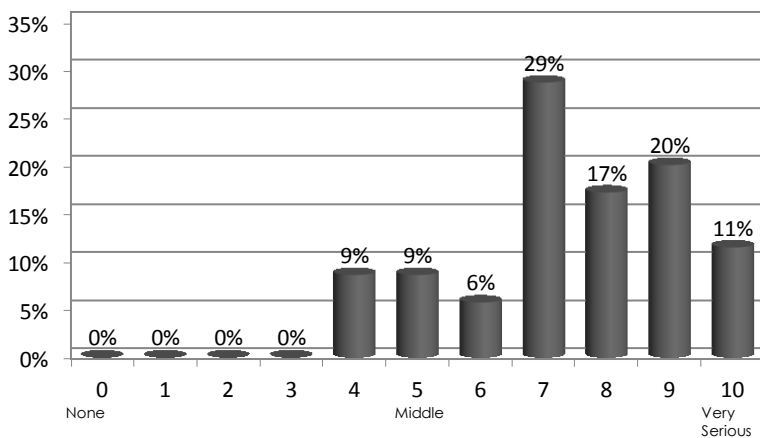
Table 32: Income Disparity
Q11: How serious is income disparity in the country?
The respondents said that income inequalities are highly skewed.
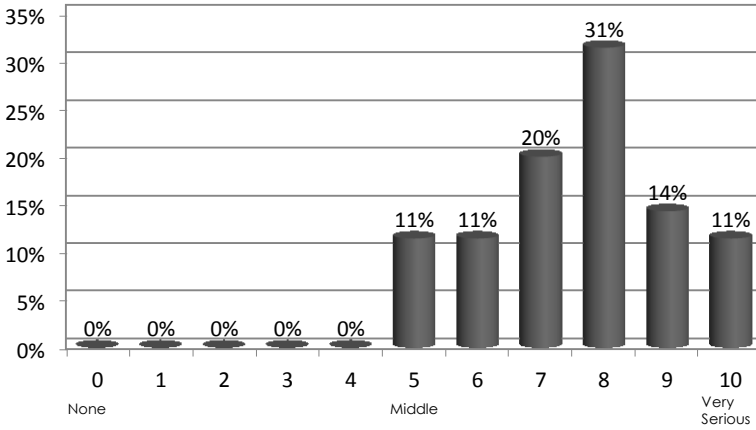
Table 33: Asset Disparity
Q12: How serious is asset disparity in the country?
The respondents said that asset disparity is highly skewed.
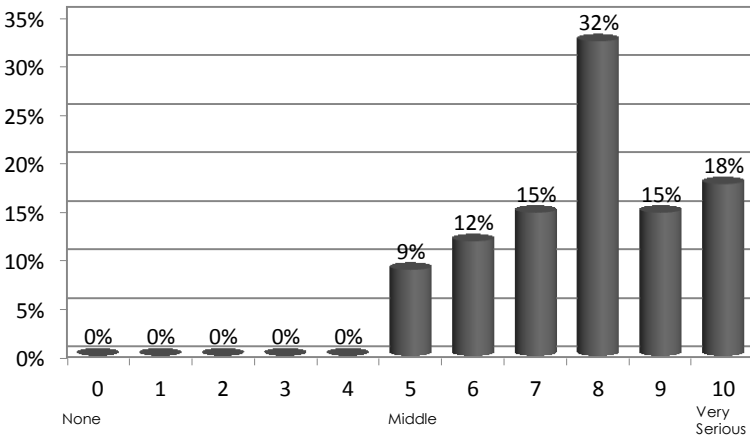
Table 34: Labor Market Discrimination
Q13: How serious is labor market discrimination in the country?
Discrimination is very serious between regular and irregular labor, according to the respondents.
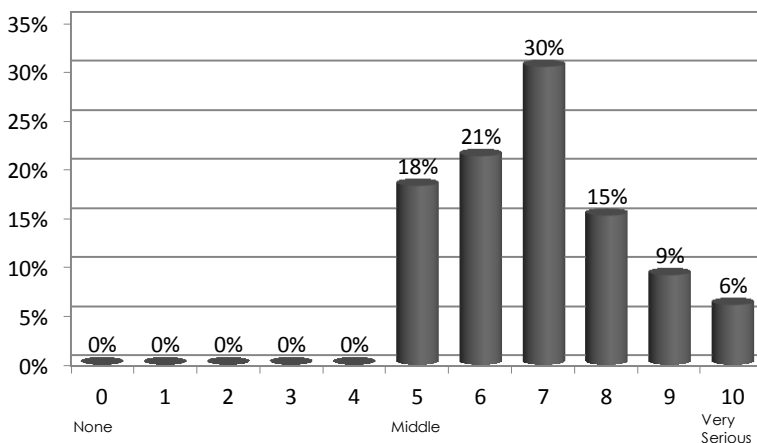
Table 35: Support Systems for the Poor
Q14: How well established are support system for the poor in the country?
There are less than satisfactory support systems available for the poor, according to the respondents.
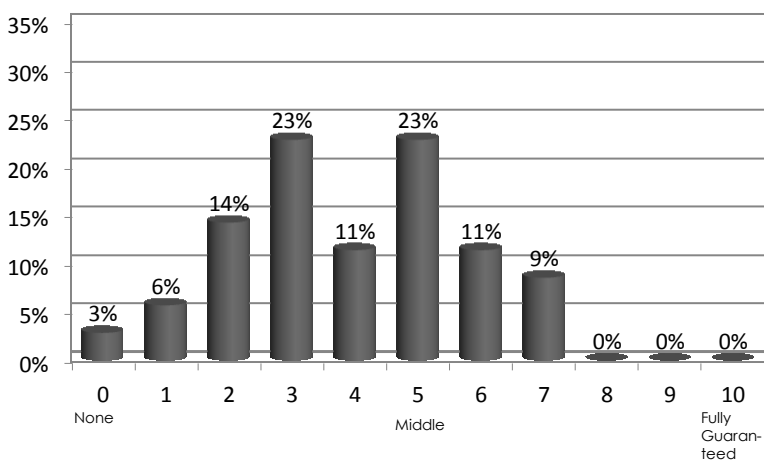
Table 36: Social Insurance Programs
Q15: How well do social insurance programs operate in the country?
Generally, the experts said that social welfare programs exist, but they could be improved.
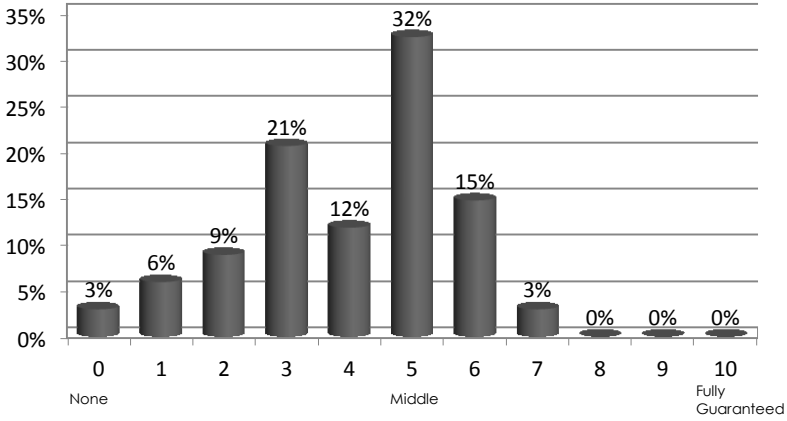
Table 37: Organized Labor Unions
Q16: How well organized are labor unions in the country?
Labor unions are generally well organized but are not functioning well, according to the experts.
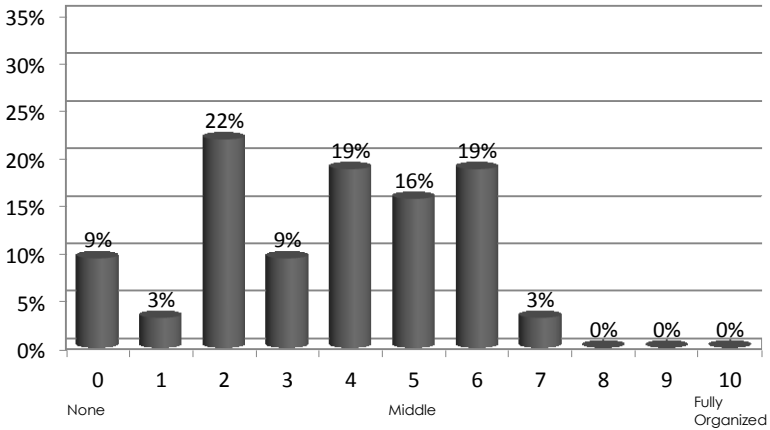
Table 38: Influence of Labor Unions on Government
Q17: How much influence do labor unions have on the policies of central government in the country?
According to the experts, labor unions have less than satisfactory to limited influence on the central government.
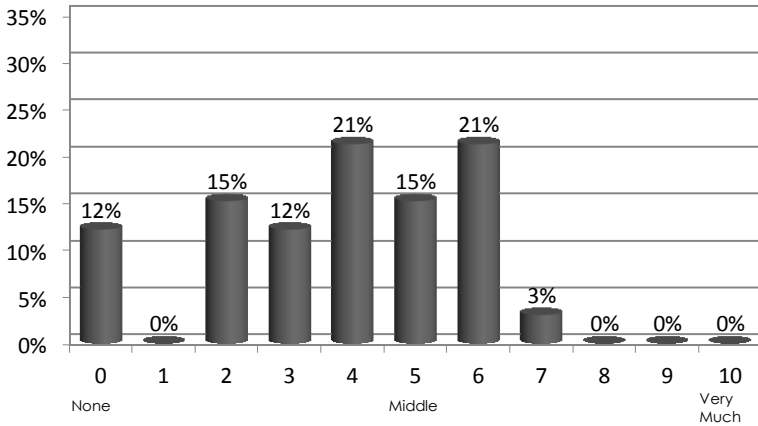
Table 39: Labor Union Participation in Corporate Management
Q18: How participatory are labor unions in the management process of the country?
The experts said that labor unions are largely non-participatory, with limited influence in corporate management of private enterprises.
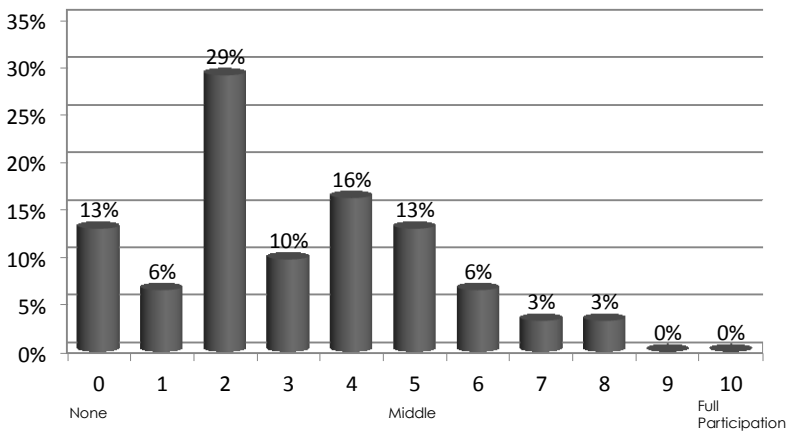
Table 40: Public Monitoring of Corporate Activities
Q19: Is there any public monitoring of corporate activities in the country?
Generally, according to the experts, there is very little/weak monitoring of private enterprises by consumer and environmental groups in Malaysia.
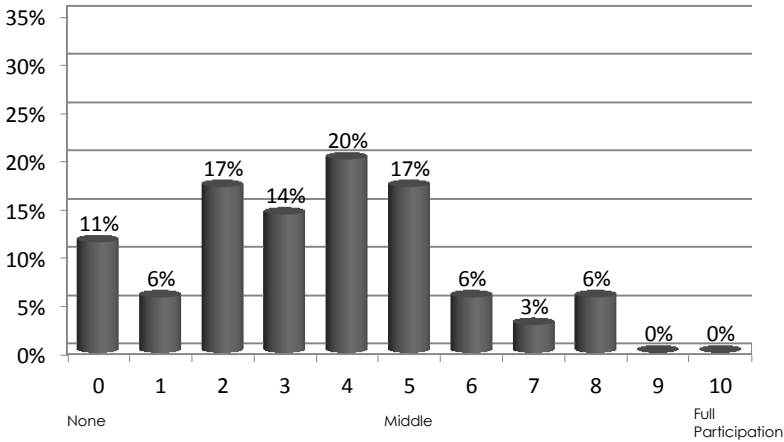
Table 41: Public Enthusiasm toward Economic Equality
Q20: How enthusiastic is the general public about improving economic inequality in the country?
According to the respondents, those who are keen on improving economic equality and reducing inequality outnumber those who are not.
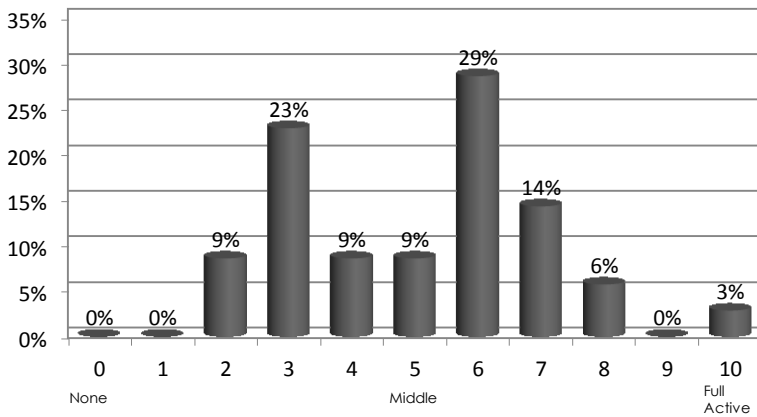
Civil Society

Table 42: Freedom from Government Interference

Q1: How free are citizens' social activities from government interference in the country?

There are deep controls over media, culture, and civil society groups, said the respondents.
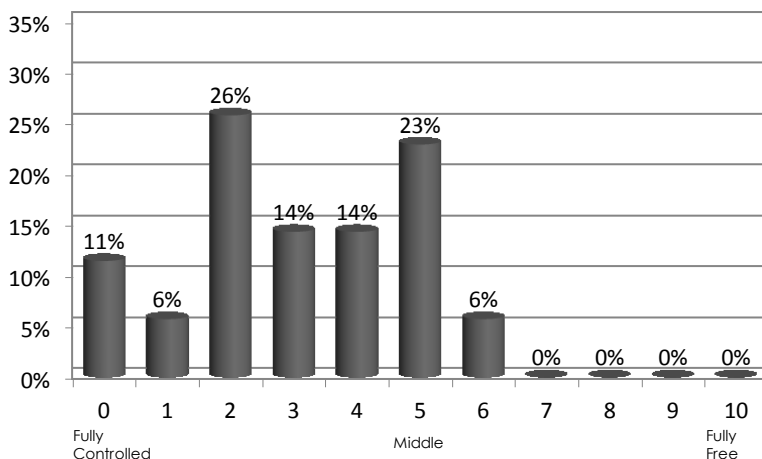
Table 43: Influence of Government Organizations upon Society

Q2: How much influence do government organizations have on society in the country?

The respondents think that such organizations have very heavy to overbearing influence.
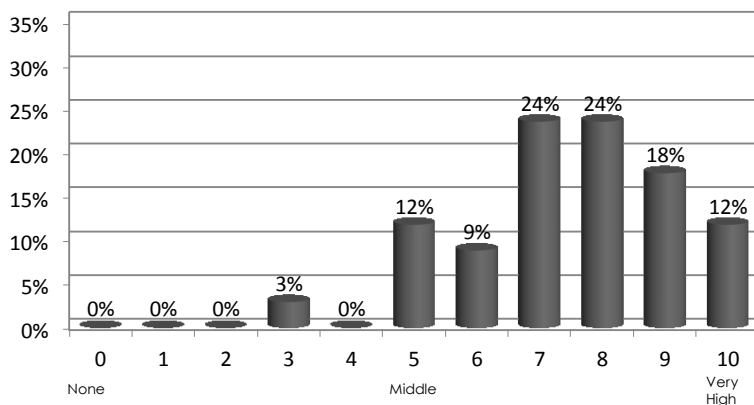
Table 44: Corporate Influence on Society
Q3: How much influence do private companies have on society in the country?
They have more influence rather than less, said the respondents.
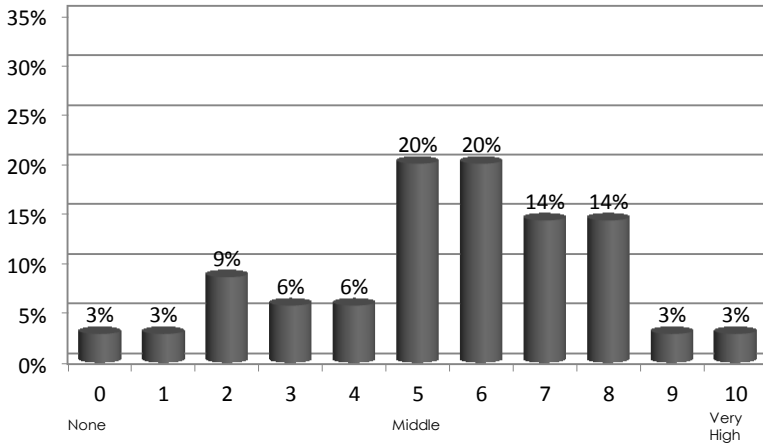
Table 45: Basic Needs of Citizens
Q4: To what extent are the basic needs of citizens met in the country?
According to the respondents, such needs are generally met, but a sense of deprivation exists.
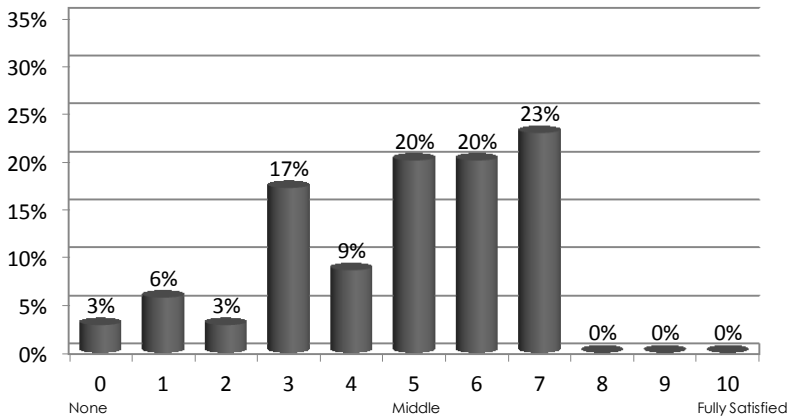
Table 46: Special Care for Vulnerable Groups
Q5: Aside from the basic needs as stated in Q4, to what extent is special care provided for vulnerable people or minorities, such as children, women, people with disabilities, and immigrants in the country?
These groups, according to the experts, are largely neglected, which is not in fulfillment of international standards.
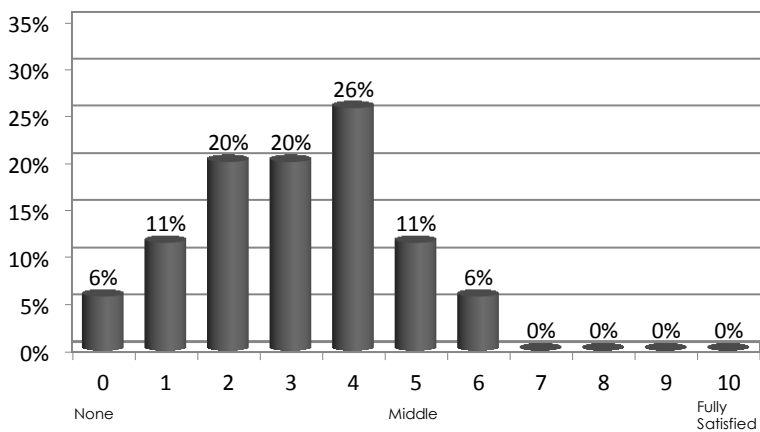
Table 47: Educational Opportunities
Q6: Are citizens provided with sufficient educational opportunities in the country?
Access is seen to be generally satisfactory, but with significant marginalization.
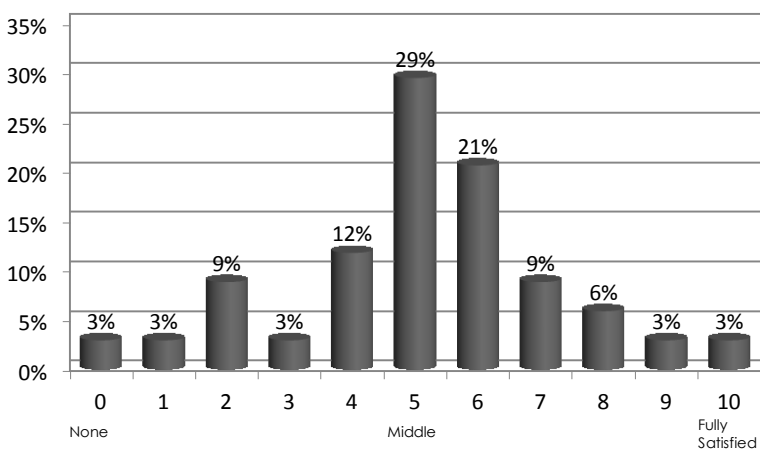
Table 48: Respect for Others
Q7: Do citizens respect different cultures, religions, languages, races, nations, and ideas in the country?
In Malaysia, said the experts, there is significance acceptance and respect but with equal levels of intolerance.
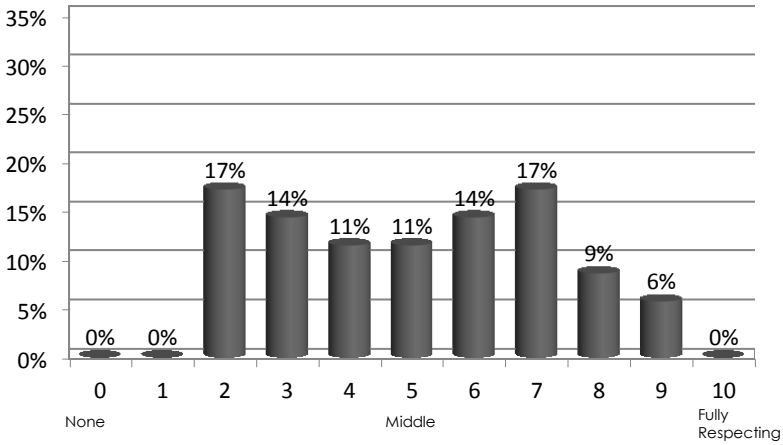
Table 49: NGO Influence on Society
Q8: How much influence do NGOs have on society in the country?
NGOs have moderate to weak influence on society, according to the experts.
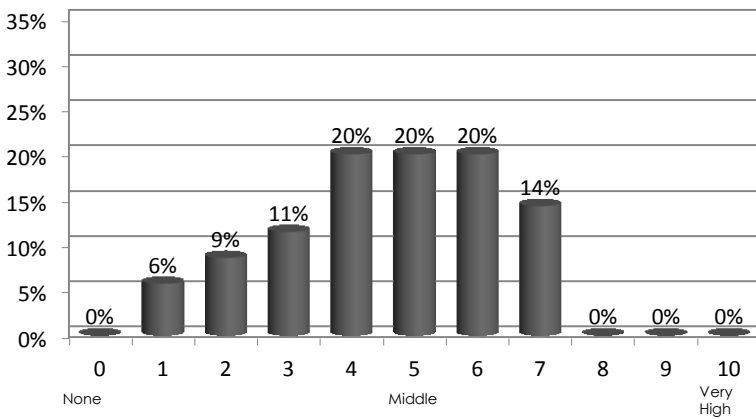
Table 50: Public Interests Representation by NGOs
Q9: How well do NGOs represent the public interest in the country?
There is above average quality of representing public interest among NGOs, according to the respondents.
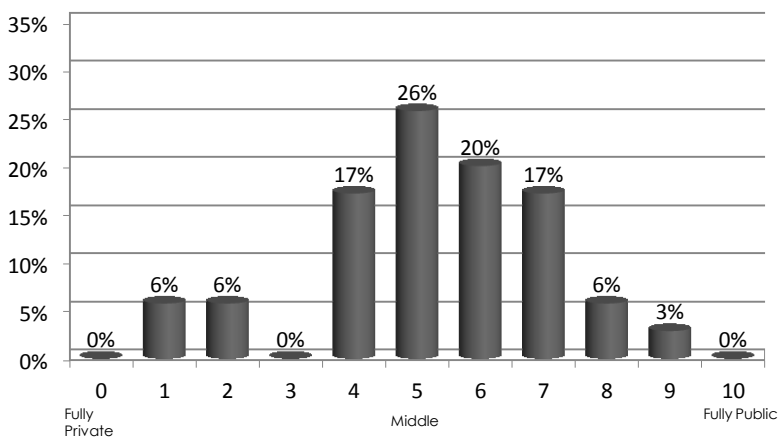
Table 51: Are NGOs Democratic?
Q10: Do NGOs operate democratically in the country?
They are seen as generally democratic.
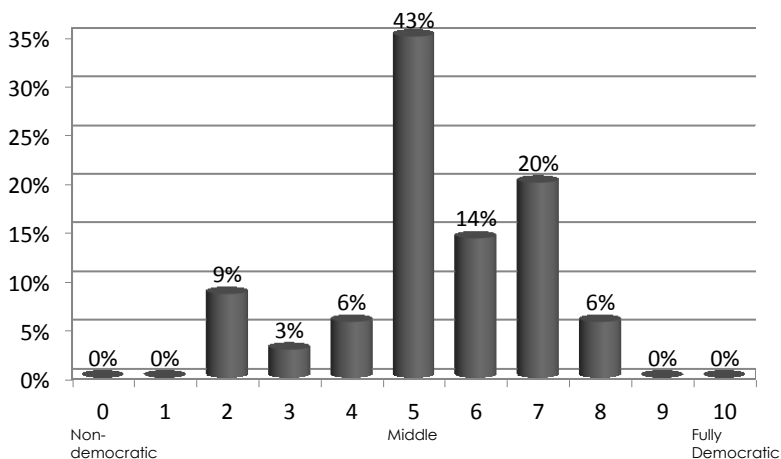
Table 52: NGO Representation of Diversity
Q11: Do NGOs represent the diverse and different values and demands of society effectively in the country?
The experts said that NGOs are generally representative of diverse values and demands, although a perception of narrow causes exists.
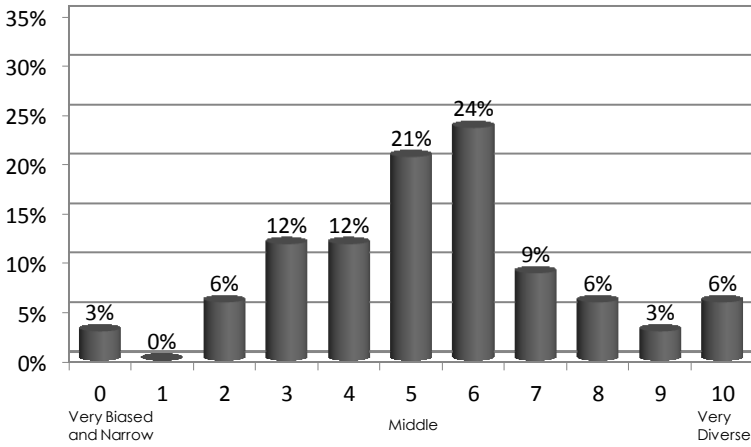
Table 53: Fair and Just Mainstream Media
Q12: Is the mainstream media fair and just in the country?
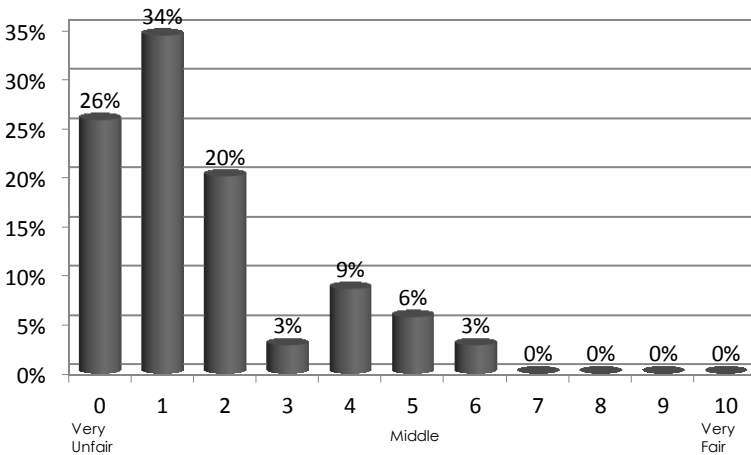It is deeply unfair and unjust in presenting news and views, according to the respondents.

Table 54: Fair and Just Internet Media
Q13: Is the Internet media fair and just in the country?
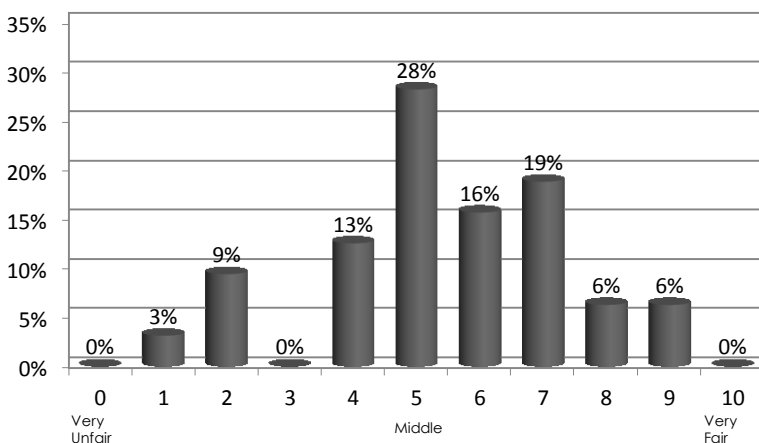The Internet media is generally even-handed treatment of news and views, according to the experts.

Table 55: Information Gap among Citizens
Q14: How wide is the information gap between citizens in the country?
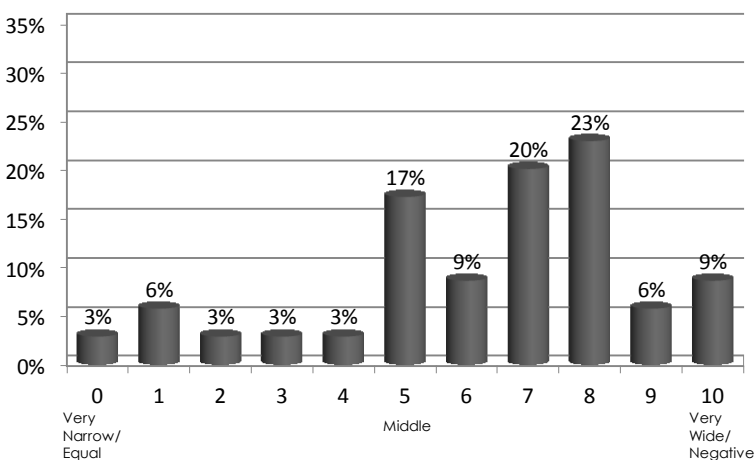The experts think that there is a significant gap, reflecting deeply unequal access.

Table 56: Access to Cultural Facilities and Activities
Q15: Do citizens have equal access to cultural facilities and activities in the country?
They have variable access, said the experts, but such access is more unequal than equal.
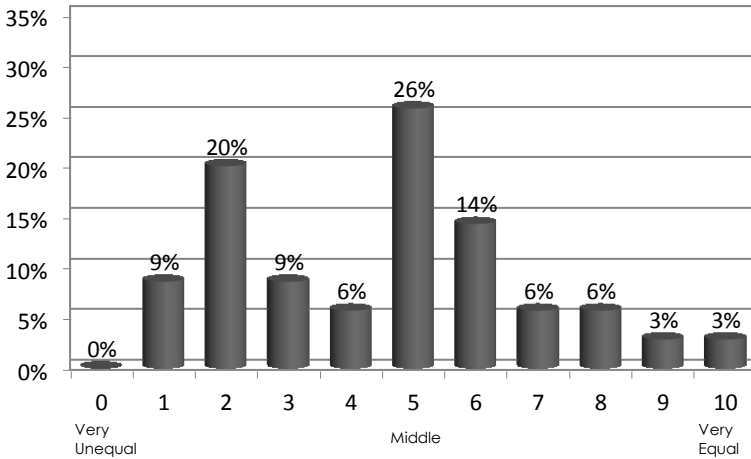

Table 57: Distribution of Power among People
Q16: Is power distributed equally among people in the country?
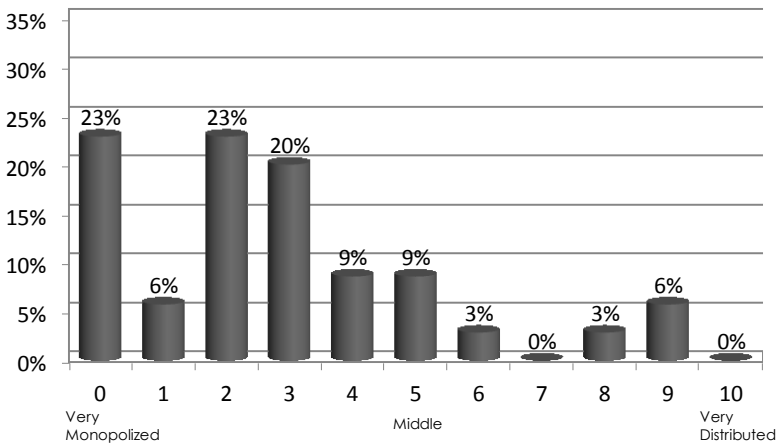Power is largely monopolized by elite interests, said the respondents.

Table 58: Affirmative Action Programs
Q17: Are affirmative action programs well established and operational in the country?
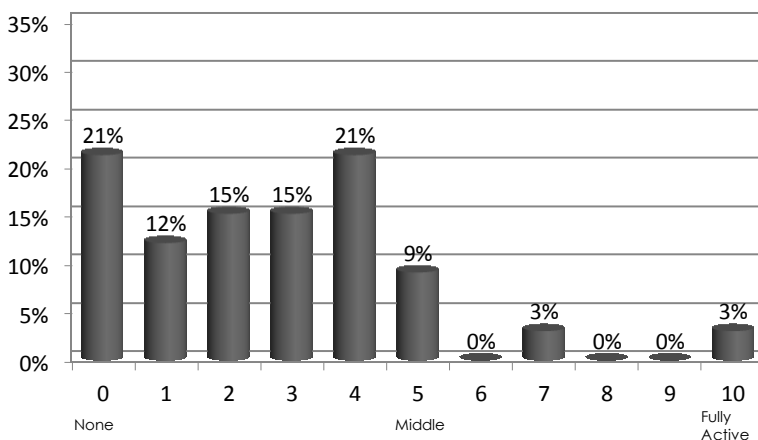According to the experts, in Malaysia, such programs are poorly established (low to non-operational).

Table 59: Citizen Participation in NGOs
Q18: How actively do citizens participate in NGO activities in the country?
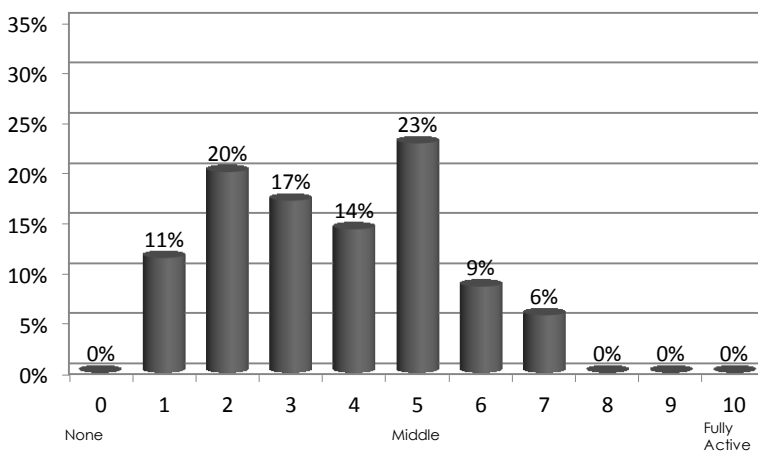Citizens are seen to be generally apathetic or have low levels of participation.

Table 60: NGO Influence over Government Policy
Q19: How influential are NGOs on government policymaking processes in the country?
NGOs are seen to have largely weak to no influence over policymaking in Malaysia.