

The Voters' Choice and Hope in the 14th Malaysian General Election

Sharifah Syahirah^{1*}, Muhd Bazli Hashim², Fatimah Bibi Hamzah³, Syamsul Fozy bin Osman⁴

¹Institute of Graduate Studies, Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia

56100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

²Center of Islamic, General and Language Studies, Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia

56100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

³Faculty of Computing and Multimedia, Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia

56100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

⁴Student Development & Campus Lifestyle, Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia

56100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Corresponding author: pbs20104033@grad.putrabs.edu.my

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
30 April 2023	20 May 2023	31 May 2023	30 June 2023

ABSTRACT

The 14th Malaysian General Election (GE14) marked a significant turning point in Malaysia's democratic development, as the opposition coalition ended more than six decades of the incumbent coalition's rule. This study examines voters' views and priorities immediately before GE14 through a cross-sectional online survey conducted from 24 April to 25 April 2018, using Google Forms distributed via WhatsApp and Facebook. A total of 1,331 responses were collected. The study has three objectives: (i) to measure voters' preferences regarding candidates' characteristics, (ii) to examine issues considered important by voters, and (iii) to discuss voting inclination before GE14. Unlike many previous Malaysian election studies that primarily emphasized party identification, ethnicity, or macro-political outcomes, this study focuses on voters' immediate pre-election perceptions of candidates' personalities, issue salience, and declared voting preferences during the final campaign period. The findings indicate a gradual shift from party-based voting towards greater consideration of candidates' personalities and educational backgrounds. At the same time, corruption and the cost of living emerged as dominant concerns among respondents. This study provides empirical evidence on voter evaluation during a critical electoral transition in Malaysia.

Keywords: General Election; Voter; Choice; Issues; Hope.

How to Cite: Syed Syekh, S. S., Hashim, M. B., Hamzah, F. B., & Osman, S. F. (2023). The voters' choice and hope in the 14th Malaysian General Election. *The Asian Journal of Professional & Business Studies*, 4(1), 12-23.

<https://doi.org/10.61688/ajpbs.v4i1.48>.

Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribute (CC BY 4.0) license.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

1. INTRODUCTION

A general election is an important indicator of a country's maturity in the democratization process. Indicators such as the frequency of elections, transparency, election expenditure, campaign materials used, and results are analysed to determine the extent to which a particular election is free from manipulation and abuse of power by the government. Malaysia has gone through fourteen (14) general elections since 1957, whereby a coalition of thirteen political parties, Barisan Nasional (BN), won, except for the recent GE14 (2018), which was won by Pakatan Harapan (PH), a coalition of four parties. Pakatan Harapan (PH) is a newly formed coalition established in 2015 that consists of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU), People's Justice Party (PKR), Democratic Action Party (DAP), and National Trust Party (AMANAH). This coalition has existed since 2004, known as Barisan Alternatif, and later as Pakatan Rakyat in 2008. These changes were due to the merger and dissolution of parties within the coalition. Unlike PH, BN had a formal and stable coalition since its inception in 1973. It was formerly known as Parti Perikatan (1957), which consisted of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and Malaysian Indian Progress (MIC), and then changed to BN in 1974 and expanded its coalition to include Parti Kemajuan Rakyat (PPP), Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS), Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (GERAKAN), Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sarawak (SUPP), and Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) and Sabah Alliance Party (Arkib Negara Malaysia, 2019). To date, due to PH's victory in securing a majority of parliamentary seats and 11 state legislative assemblies, 10 of BN's political parties have denounced their support for BN. After a strong government party coalition of 13 political parties since 1973, BN is now known as the UMNO-PAS alliance, a Malay-Muslim coalition rather than a multiracial one, and the status of MCA and MIC in BN remains unknown. The shift in voters' preference from BN to the opposition coalition can be traced back to 1999, when Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was sacked by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad for allegedly engaging in immoral conduct. Since 1999, the opposition coalition has evolved and witnessed many love-hate relationships, particularly between DAP and PAS. The opposition coalition gained more influence suddenly after Mahathir Mohammad, Muhiyuddin Yassin, and a few other prominent members of UMNO decided to withdraw their membership and establish a new political party called BERSATU in September 2016. As a result, PH won GE14 and broke BN's unbeatable record of holding power for more than 60 years (Fann, 2019).

This study aims to highlight voters' preferences and concerns in the four days leading up to the GE14 nomination announcement. A survey was distributed within this timeframe to identify and analyze voters' stances before GE14 nomination day. As a result, the findings of this survey are consistent with those of GE14. Although numerous studies have examined Malaysian voting behavior in terms of ethnicity, party loyalty, and electoral outcomes, limited attention has been paid to voters' immediate perceptions in the short period leading up to nomination day, particularly regarding candidate characteristics and issue priorities. Most existing studies discuss GE14 after the election results, whereas fewer studies capture voter attitudes immediately before the electoral decision is formally made. This study addresses this gap by providing survey evidence collected within four days before nomination day, allowing a closer observation of voter preferences at a critical stage of electoral decision-making. In this way, the paper makes a focused contribution to understanding how candidate-centered evaluation and issue salience shaped voter sentiment during Malaysia's democratic transition in GE14.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Voters and The Malaysian General Elections

Voters play a vital role in elections. They determine the validity and strength of the election process. Voters' preferences and hopes usually determine their voting decisions. Voter turnout is one of the main measures of the validity of election results. The Election Commission (EC) has announced that the final voter turnout in GE14 was 82.32%; therefore, the EC chairman concluded that the new government has received the people's mandate. It is also indicated that the principle of democracy is mature and preserved in Malaysia. (The Star, 11 May 2018). Table 1 shows Malaysian voter turnout since GE11 to GE14. The voter turnout indicates the quality and reliability of GE results. GE14 had higher participation than GE11 and GE12. Therefore, the results are reliable and reflect voters' choices.

Table 1

The Malaysian Voters Turnout Since the GE11 to GE14

General Election (GE)/ Year	GE11 (2004)	GE12 (2008)	GE13 (2013)	GE14 (2018)
Registered Voter	9,756,097	10,922,139	13,268,002	14,940,624
Voter Turnout	6,655,348 (73.9%)	7,944,274 (72.74%)	11,226,123 (84.61%)	12,299,514 (82.32%)

Source: New Straits Times (2018) and Election Guide (2019)

Voter turnout in GE13 indicates a shift towards a more participatory political culture, one of the main reasons being a vibrant young generation of voters with increased social and economic mobility (Moniruzzaman Md, 2013). (Moniruzzaman Md, 2013). This table also shows a steady, incremental pattern in voter numbers since 2004. It is anticipated that, in GE15, this incremental pattern of voters will double after Parliament agreed to reduce the minimum voting age from 21 to 18 years. (The Straits Times, 16 July 2019). Ahmad Mahadi et al. (2016) highlighted that the factors determining voting behavior in GE13 include geographical factors, government service delivery, political party ideology, and physical development that contribute to their well-being. Political party entities in communicating with voters, as well as multiethnic issues, are most likely to affect the election results. Propaganda and religion have proven to influence voting behaviour.

Noor et al. (2016) also focused on ethnicity, economic status, and geographical development as the main determinants of voter preferences in GE13. Voting behaviour changes over time, with early voters preferring to vote based on party identification. The Columbia and Michigan models are the two that focus on a social determinist approach, assuming that voting behaviour is influenced by social factors that lead voters to choose a political party that they believe represents their social group. Therefore, in Malaysia, ethnic votes tend to outnumber non-ethnic votes. Similarly, class-based voters are attracted to issues related to economics, human rights, social democracy and the environment. Lee (2019) highlighted two of the main determinants of voters' preferences during GE14: the profile of leadership and economic factors, namely, defections by elite politicians, unemployment, and inequality. Here, an economic voting model is used to investigate the determinants of electoral outcomes.

This study draws on sociological and candidate-centred approaches to voting behaviour by examining whether traditional party attachment remains dominant when voters evaluate candidates during highly competitive elections. While previous Malaysian studies frequently explain electoral outcomes through ethnicity, party alignment, and macroeconomic dissatisfaction, this paper extends the discussion by showing how respondents perceive candidates' personalities and educational backgrounds, alongside issue-based concerns such as corruption and the cost of living. Therefore, this study modestly contributes to the growing discussion on whether Malaysian voters are gradually moving toward more candidate-oriented electoral judgments.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a quantitative method and uses a survey to collect primary data. The survey was converted into a Google Form and distributed via social media platforms, including WhatsApp and Facebook, within 48 hours and four days before the GE14 nomination day (April 24, 2018, to April 25, 2018). The use of online survey forms enables researchers to disseminate the survey to the target population via platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp groups, and other platforms (Prasad & Narayan, 2019). This online survey form also provides a visualisation of data in different charts and graphs, which is a very easy system for graphing between different variables (Vasanth & Harinarayana, 2016). This study employed a non-probability sampling method, categorised as convenience sampling with voluntary participation, in which respondents self-selected to complete the survey after receiving the survey link via digital platforms. Although this method does not provide full representativeness of the Malaysian voting population, it enabled rapid data collection during a politically sensitive, time-limited period immediately before the GE14 nomination day. A total of 1,331 responses were successfully collected and used for descriptive analysis. The survey is divided into four sections: voters'

demographics, voters' decision-making preferences, voters' hopes, and an open-ended section for voters to share their opinions on GE14. This study focuses on descriptive and correlation analyses to identify voters' preferences and issues. concerns.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Analysis

Demographic analysis refers to the study of populations and is used in various fields, particularly politics, policy, marketing, legal, and organisational studies. Demographic variables such as age, gender, and geographical area provide important insights into certain behavioural patterns and preferences (Farhat Yusuf et al., 2014). This study examines three main demographic variables: age, sex, voting registration, and voting area of the respondents. In terms of race and religion analysis, this survey is unable to provide a proper analysis due to low participation among Chinese and Indian respondents. Table 2 indicates respondents' demographics based on age and sex, where the highest number of responses came from those aged 20 to 31 years old, followed by those aged 32 to 43 years old. It indicates that Malaysians in these age categories are the most responsive users of the survey via Facebook and WhatsApp, compared to respondents aged 44 to 56. According to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission's (MCMC) survey (2018), the percentage of internet users in 2018 increased from 76.9% in 2016 to 87.4% in 2018, affecting 28.7 million users. The analysis also shows that on average, Malaysians use the Internet 6.6 hours a day. Social media has become a popular choice for social activities today. An analysis in 2014 showed that Facebook has topped the Malaysian user chart of 12,536 unique visitors (Malaysian Digital Association, 2016), while in 2018, MCMC released data 97.3% of users use Facebook as a social site, and WhatsApp is 98.1% as the most important communication platform and user choice. (MCMC, 2018).

Table 2
Cross-Tab Analysis of Respondents' Age and Sex

Sex/ Age	Male		Female		Total of Respondents	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
20 – 31	248	18.64	333	25.02	581	43.64
32 – 43	227	17.05	254	19.08	481	36.14
44 – Above 56	173	13	96	7.21	269	20.22
Total	648	48.69	683	51.31	1331	100.00

Source: Survey (2018)

In terms of sex, Table 3 indicates balanced representation of males (48.69%) and females (51.31%) in this survey. It is interesting to see that there were more male respondents than female respondents for ages 44 to 56 and above. It also indicates that the findings in this paper are based on both sex preference and issues. A survey conducted by MCMC shows that users over 40 are less likely to use the internet as an online community. 40-49 users using the online community channel were only 17.9%, while users 50-59 were 11.6%, and users 60 years and above were only 6.5%, compared to 20 - 39-year-old 55.9% (MCMC, 2018).

Table 3
Cross-Tab Analysis of Respondents' Age and Sex

Voting Area Sex	Urban		Rural		Overall	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Male	412	30.95	236	17.73	648	48.69
Female	407	30.58	276	20.74	683	51.31

Total	819	61.53	512	38.47	1331	100.00
--------------	------------	--------------	------------	--------------	-------------	---------------

Source: Survey (2018)

Table 3 shows that 819 (61.53%) respondents were from urban areas, and only 512 (38.47%) were from rural areas. Therefore, the findings of this paper mostly reflect urban voters' preferences and issues rather than those in rural areas. According to Abdul Rahman Embong (2011), about 70% of the Malaysian population already lives in towns and cities, and the process of urbanisation is still on-going in a fast pace. Hence, this survey reflects reality by having more respondents from urban areas. However, urban living among the Malays and Bumiputra communities is relatively new compared to that of the Chinese and Indians. Meanwhile, regarding respondents' voter registration status, Table 4 indicates that 95.27% are registered voters.

Table 4
Cross-Tab Analysis of Age and Registration Status

Registration Status/ Age	No		Yes		Overall	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
20 – 31	53	3.99	528	39.67	581	43.64
32 – 43	8	0.61	473	35.54	481	36.14
44 – Above 56	2	0.16	267	20.06	269	20.22
Total	63	4.73	1268	95.27	1331	100.00

Source: Survey (2018)

There are only 63 respondents who are not registered voters, and 46 respondents are between 20 and 25 years old. This is merely due to the voting age being 21. This pattern will change in the future GE15 survey as the Minister of Youth and Sports has managed to lobby and convince the cabinet as well as members of parliament to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18-year-old Malaysians (Business Insider, 2019). This new provision reflects the current government's commitment to a better democratic system and to enabling more Malaysians to exercise their rights as citizens, as mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 21) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Scott Ferguson, 2003).

4.2 Voting Preference

In elections, voters' perceptions and choices have a significant impact on voting patterns and outcomes. Here, five variables have been chosen as the most important factors influencing voters' choices during the general election. These variables are chosen after referring to previous surveys such as the Merdeka Center surveys (The Star, 2018), Ilham Center surveys (2018) and National Young Women survey (2016) and literature reviews such as Hing and Pong, Ahmad Mahadi et.al (2016), Sharifah Syahirah et.al (2015,2016), Nadzi (2018) as well as media writing and debates related to voters such as Wan Hamidi (Malaysiakini, 27 April 2018), Khairul Abidin (Utusan, 21 April 2018), Noorazura Abdul Rahman (Berita Harian 16 April 2018).

Table 5
Voting Preference Prior to GE14

Item	Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Political Party	172	12.92	283	21.26	876	65.82

Gender	1010	75.88	206	15.48	115	8.64
Education level	111	8.34	326	24.49	894	67.17
Manifesto	140	10.52	306	22.99	885	66.49
Candidate's personality	70	5.26	199	14.95	1062	79.79

Source: Survey (2018)

Table 5 depicts that the candidate's personality is the most important factor that influences voters' preferences, followed by the education level of the candidate. Dettman and Weiss (2018) analyse the personalistic linkages that were used in GE14 as in previous general elections. Politicians emphasise their 'personal touch' and offer a barrage of targeted promises. It reflects deep connections between voters and politicians. This has affected voters' decisions. The candidates' personalities in influencing voters' decision proven to be one of the most important variables in various countries and elections. Prysby and Scavo (2004) co-authored a voting behaviour Supplementary Empirical Teaching Units in Political Science (SETUPS) since 1984, explaining voters' judgments of candidates by their characteristics such as experience, morality, compassion, competence, and leadership ability. One of the most important personal characteristics is perceived as honesty and trustworthiness. Years of experience and knowledge would also be the most important characteristics of competency. (SETUPS,2019)

It turns out the manifesto and political parties are slightly the least determining factors compared to the candidate's personality and education. Although many studies, such as Horowitz (1983), Abdul Rahman Embong (1998) and Francis Loh (2002), highlighted that voters in Malaysia still rely on political parties and manifestos, the result of this study portrays a slight shift in this matter (Mansor et al., 2016). Moniruzzam (2013) also discussed the major roles political parties played in influencing voters' decisions in GE13 and previous general elections. As Horowitz (1983) observed, partisan politics works better in ethnic politics. A particular ethnic, such as Malays, has a strong loyalty to a particular party since the party is organised based on the ethnic issue of concern (Mansor et.al. 2016)

This survey also finds that more than 75.88% did not vote based on the candidate's gender, and 15.48% are neutral about it. It is an opposite finding compared to the patriarchal myth that voters prefer male leadership dan candidates. McElroy and Marsh (2010) concluded that voters do not discriminate against women, even in an electoral environment that affords them this opportunity at no cost to their partisan preference. However, one of the prior assumptions of women's underrepresentation in politics was due to voter prejudice. Rashila Ramli (1999, 2005) and Sharifah Syahirah (2010) concluded that society's perception of women as candidates is not the main factor in the underrepresentation of women in politics; other factors, such as within-party patriarchal biases and leaders' reluctance to nominate women candidates, are more significant.

The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (2018) expressed disappointment that all political parties in Malaysia managed to nominate only 239 women candidates, representing 10.24% of 2333 candidates. Although it is better than GE13, KPWKM expressed their concerns about women's underrepresentation in the legislature and reminded the future government to fulfil at least 30% women's representation in the legislature, as stated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Therefore, political parties need to carefully choose candidates with good personalities and educational backgrounds for the future general elections. The Malaysian voters are not a gender bias voter since more than 91.36% answered that they do not vote based on gender. Hence, all political parties' leaders have no reason not to put more women candidates in GE15.

4.3 Issues of Concern

The survey has chosen seven of the most important issues of concern within 48 hours before GE14 nomination day. These issues are also being highlighted in the manifesto of both coalitions, and some of the issues have been repeatedly mentioned in campaign rally such as eliminating corruption. As the most prominent leader in politics, Mahathir Mohamad managed to attract voters' attention in all his campaign rallies by highlighting corruption, mismanagement of the country's wealth and the high cost of living. Most of his rally speeches were attended by thousands and received tens of thousands of viewers via social media platforms, particularly Facebook.

Table 6
Voters' Issues of Concern

No	Item	Mean	Value
C3.1	Welfare & service delivery	4.826	Agree
C3.2	Women Empowerment	4.514	Agree
C3.3	Youth Development	4.772	Agree
C3.4	Family and Children Welfare	4.796	Agree
C3.5	Issues related to Religion	4.721	Agree
C3.5	Issues related to Race	4.251	Agree
C3.6	Eliminating Corruption	4.873	Agree
C3.7	Issues related to the Environment	4.681	Agree
C3.7	Cost of living and price hike	4.840	Agree

Source: Survey (2018)

Based on Table 6, all of the seven issues are people's issues of concern since the mean values are more than 4. It also shows that an issue related to corruption (mean = 4.873) turns out to be the first issue of concern, followed by issues related to cost of living and price hike (mean = 4.840). The third issue of concern is related to the welfare and service delivery of the government (mean 4.826). During the GE14 rally, Mahathir Mohamad repeatedly mentioned corruption. In his last speech before the election day, he said (the speech was in Malay language;

Malaysia pernah diiktiraf sebagai Asian Tiger. Sepatutnya negara ini telah dapat mencapai negara maju pada tahun 2020. Malangnya, pemerintahan Perdana Menteri ke-6 telah membawa malapetaka. Daripada perjuang untuk bangsa, negara dan agama, Najib membawa kepercayaan bahawa segalanya boleh diberi dengan wang. Sekarang negara kita tidak lagi dikenali sebagai Tiger of Asia, sebaliknya dunia memandang hina kepada kita dan menyenaraikan Malaysia dalam senarai sepuluh buah negara yang mengamalkan amalan rasuah yang tertinggi. Kita tidak lagi ditakrif sebagai demokrasi, sebaliknya sebagai kleptokrasi, iaitu negara yang dipimpin oleh perasuah dan pencuri.

(Mahathir Mohammad, Langkawi, 8 May 2018)

In his speech, Mahathir expressed his annoyance at the previous Prime Minister Najib's misconduct, which has changed the country's image from an economically fast-growing country, the Asian Tiger, to one of the most corrupt countries in the world. He introduced the term kleptocracy, the opposite of democracy, which refers to a country ruled by a thief and a corrupt leader. This is parallel with many surveys conducted in relation to government performance and people's perception.

Junaidi et al. (2015) concluded that only a political party with a good track record can maintain power as a government, especially in a mission to eliminate poverty and corruption. Since BN has been perceived as a party coalition that failed in these missions, it lost the people's votes and confidence. In the National Women's Survey (2016), corruption and the cost of living are the two main concerns. Some of the respondents expressed their concerns in the open-ended section of the survey, such as;

Respondent 12: This comment is regarding the Malaysian government. People are against corruption. Please stop corruption.

Respondent 62: The authorities should control corruption in our country, especially within the government itself. There should be more diversity among political leaders. I couldn't help but notice that most of these leaders are Muslim Malay men, which I think is so wrong considering that Malaysia is known for its diversity. Political leaders should consist of both men and women from various races and religions. We need voices from all the existing major races and religions in the country. Everyone should be given the same opportunity to become a leader.

(Sharifah Syahirah et.al, 2017).

These statements indicate that young Malaysian women are concerned about the corruption and misconduct of certain leaders. In other words, corruption was Malaysians' biggest concern years before GE14. However, it was not being rectified by the BN government before GE14. Issues related to family welfare (mean = 4.796), youth development (mean = 4.772), and religion (mean = 4.721) are equally important. Followed by issues related to environment (mean = 4.681), women empowerment (mean = 4.514) and race (mean = 4.251). According to Abdul Razaq Ahmad (2017), there are at least four categories of the idealism of struggle that are analyzed as political struggle, based on national ideas; religious-based struggle; contemporary development-based struggle; and ethnic-based struggle. The findings show that voters prefer leaders who champion the ideas of nationality and are always concerned about the people's economy. While the struggle, from a religious perspective, is low.

Similar findings on welfare and service delivery: Muhammad Hazim Abdul Ghani (2016) highlighted people's agreement with the Federal Government's concern for the welfare of students, colleges, and universities. They also argued that the implementation of free school fees, alongside the provision of book vouchers and RM100 in cash, would help young people continue their studies. The importance of preserving religious diversity in a country is undeniable, especially in Malaysia, which has a wide variety of religions and races. Thus, in the election of candidates, the people's perspective on religious and racial backgrounds is very important. Suresh Kumar N Vellymalay (2019) said that BN's victory in the Cameron Highland by-election was won on various factors, including that the BN candidate, Ramli Mohd Nor, was a native of the Orang Asli and was able to preserve Islam.

4.4 Voting Inclination

The survey also contains a non-compulsory section about political party preference. Surprisingly, more than 50% had no qualms about answering their preference, although it was not a compulsory question. Here, a cross-tab analysis of party preference, gender, and age has been conducted.

Table 7
Cross-tab Analysis on the choice of political party and gender

Gender/ Political Party	Men		Women		Grand Total	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
BN	130	9.77	156	11.72	286	21.49
PH	209	15.70	101	7.59	310	23.29
PAS	109	8.19	51	3.83	160	12.02
Others	25	1.88	20	1.50	45	3.38
N/A	175	13.15	355	26.67	530	39.82
Total	648	48.69	683	51.31	1331	100.00

Source: Survey (2018)

The table above indicates that 575 respondents (43.2%) are reluctant to declare their voting inclination by answering “others” or “N/A”. Most of them also stated that votes are private or that, in Malay, *undi adalah rahsia* (vote is a secret). 28.17% women respondents (N = 375) answered others and N/A. While only 200 (15.03%) male respondents were reluctant. 15.70% of male respondents (N=209) boldly chose PH, followed by 9.77% who supported BN and 8.19% who supported PAS. Female respondents preferred BN 11.72%, PH 7.59%, and PAS 3.83%. Due to BN’s failure to win the GE14 elections, those who had not declared their party preference chose PH; women preferred not to reveal their voting inclination, while men had no problem doing so.

Table 8
Cross-Tab Analysis of Voting Inclination Based on Age

Age/ Political Party	BN	PH	PAS	Others	N/A	Total
20 – 31	104 (7.87%)	145 (10.90%)	56 (4.21%)	28 (2.10%)	248 (18.64%)	581 (43.64%)
32 – 43	105 (7.89%)	85 (6.38%)	72 (5.41%)	12 (0.91%)	207 (15.55%)	481 (36.14%)
44 – Above 56	77 (5.78%)	80 (6.01%)	32 (2.41%)	5 (0.38%)	75 (5.64%)	269 (20.22%)
Total	286 (21.49%)	310 (23.29%)	160 (12.02%)	45 (3.38%)	530 (39.82%)	1331 (100.00%)

Source: Survey (2018)

Table 7 shows that 43.64% of the respondents were aged 20 to 31 years and preferred PH (10.90%) over BN (7.87%) and PAS (4.21%). However, most of these respondents chose “others” or “N/A” (20.74%). Meanwhile, for those aged 32 to 43, preferred BN (7.89%), followed by PH (6.38%) and PAS (5.41%). Similar to the 20 to 31 age group, most respondents in this age group preferred to keep their voting inclination private (16.46%), answering “others” and N/A. Similarly, for the 20- to 31-year-old age group, findings for ages 44 and above were PH (6.01%), BN (5.78%), PAS (2.41%), others, and N/A (6.02%). The result indicates a substantive shift from BN to PH for two age categories, namely 20-31 years old and 44 and above. This finding is consistent with reports from the Ilham Center (8 Mei 2019). The reading of party inclination was totally different from the Merdeka Center surveys, such as a report made by Merdeka Centre survey in April 2018 indicated BN will prevail in GE14 (The Star, 27 April 2019), then, again, Merdeka Center’s final poll still showed BN was winning (Malaysiakini, 8 May 2018). The Merdeka Center’s surveys were inaccurate, perhaps because they were conducted over the phone rather than online.

5. CONCLUSION

Analysis of voters’ preferences and concerns indicates minimal bias against women as general-election candidates. This is parallel with various studies in the previous general election in Malaysia and other countries. Therefore, there shall be no more excuses for political party leaders not to put more women candidates in the GE15. There is also a slight shift from political party influence to candidates’ personalities and educational backgrounds. These findings portray the maturity and progressive nature of voters, who can evaluate candidates rather than rely on political parties’ choices. Hence, it is pertinent for each party to choose the best candidates, especially in terms of personality and education background. All seven issues of concern are near to voters’ hearts and emotions. For this reason, the newly elected government must ensure that all leaders accused of corruption are jailed before GE15 to demonstrate the government’s strength in eliminating corruption. Without stern action against these corrupt accused, voters might suspect the current government of being weak and only making empty promises. This will affect the PH image negatively in the next election. Similarly, to the issues related to the cost of living and price hikes. To date, issues related to the cost of living and price hikes remain unresolved, even after the announcement of Budget 2020. Without proper solutions and actions on these issues, the image of the Malaysia Baru government might be put at stake. Last but not least, based on this survey, around 56.8% of voters do not mind declaring their voting preferences. At the same time, 43.2% prefers to keep it private. Since PH won GE14, there is a high probability that these secretive voters supported PH. Therefore, in the next electoral survey and prediction, election researchers might want to consider this behaviour a strong indicator of opposition-party voters.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to **the Institute of Graduate Studies, Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia**, for providing the resources and support necessary to complete this study. We would also like to thank all participants who contributed their time and insights to this research. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and peers who offered valuable feedback during the development of this manuscript.

REFERENCE

- Abdul Razaq Ahmad, Mohd Mahzan Awang, Jamil Ahmad. (2017). "Aspirasi Terhadap Kepimpinan Politik Negara". *Malaysia Journal of Youth Studies* Volume 16 (19-47).
- Berita Harian. "Mukhriz khuatir ditolak pengundi DUN Ayer Hitam". *Berita Harian* (16 April 2018). Available: <https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/politik/2018/04/412905/mukhriz-khuatir-ditolak-pengundi-dun-ayer-hitam>
- Business Insider. "Teens as young as 18 can now vote and even become MPs, thanks to changes in Malaysia's highest law". *Business Insider*. (July 2019) Available <https://www.businessinsider.my/malaysias-changing-its-law-teens-as-young-as-18-can-now-vote-and-even-become-mps/>,
- Dettman, S., & Weiss, M. L. (2018, November). "Has Patronage Lost Its Punch in Malaysia?" *The Round Table*, 107(6), 1-16.
- ElectionGuide. (2019, February). *IFES Election Guide Country Profile: Malaysia*. Available: <http://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/131/>
- Embong, A. (2011). "Urbanisation and Urban Life in Peninsular Malaysia". *Journal of Southeast Asia Social Sciences and Humanities*, 81(2), 23-39.
- Fann, T. (2019). "Malaysian Begins Rectifying Major Flaws in its Election System", *ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute Perspective*, 55, 1-10.
- Ferguson, S. (2003). *The Right to Vote*. Available: <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/studyguides/votingrights.html>
- Francis, L., & Teik, K. B. "Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and Practices". In *Democracy in Asia* (p. 32). Psychology Press, 2002
- Hing, L. K., & Pong, T. K. (2014). "Thirteenth General Elections (GE13): Chinese Votes and Implications on Malaysian Politics". *Kajian Malaysia*, 32, 25-53.
- Horowitz, D. L. *Ethnic groups in conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985
- Ilham Centre Survey. 100 Kerusi Mampu Dicapai oleh PH di Semenanjung, Johor Jatuh. Kuala Lumpur: Ilham Centre, 2018
- Junaidi, B. A., Muhammad Hazim, A., & Mohd Fuad, M. (2016). *Isu Dasar Kerajaan dalam Politik Pasca Pilihanraya: Kajian KEs DUn Teratai, Pandan, Selangor Darul Ehsan*. Geografia Online Malaysian Journal of Society and Space, 12(4), 34-45.
- Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat. (2018, April). *Prestasi Parti Politik dan Calon Wanita dalam Pilihan Raya Umum ke-14: Pemerhatian Awal KPWKM*. Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat. Available: <https://www.kpwkm.gov.my/kpwkm/uploads/files/KenyataanMedia/> [2019]
- Lee, C. (2019, February). *Economic Voting and the End of Dominant Party Rule in Malaysia*. ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 1, 1-17.
- Mahadi, A., Mat Jali, M., & Besar, J. A. (2016). "Tingkah laku pengundi dan faktor kejayaan Barisan Nasional: Kajian kes FELDA Kuala Krau". *Malaysia Journal of Society and Space*, 12(9), 126-137.
-

- Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). (2018). *Internet Users Survey 2018: Statistical Brief Number Twenty-three*. Cyberjaya: Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission.
- Malaysian Digital Association. (2016). *Exploring the Digital Landscape in Malaysia-Boosting Growth for A Digital Economy*. Digital Integration & Business Transformation Asia Conference.
- Malaysiakini.com. "Merdeka Centre's final poll: BN 100, Harapan 83, 37 too close to call." (8 May 2018). *malaysiakini.com*. Available: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/423763> [2019]
- Malaysiakini.com. "Bagaimana BN boleh menang PRU ke-14" (2018, April 27) *Malaysia Kini*. Available: *malaysiakini.com*: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/421957>
- Mansor, M., Abdullah, A., & Ismail, M. (2016). "Voting Behaviour in Malaysia: Locating the Sociological Determinants of Ethnicity, Middle Classes and Development Gains". *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 34(6), 805-812. doi: 10.5829/idosi.wasj.2016.34.6.15674
- McElroy, G., & Marsh, M. (2010, December). "Candidate Gender and Voter Choice: Analysis from a Multimember Preferential Voting System." *Political Research Quarterly*, 63(4), 822-833. Available: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25749252> [2019]
- Media Baharu. (8 May 2018). "Tun Mahathir - Langkawi: Amanat Malam Terakhir Sebelum PRU 14". Kedah, Langkawi, Malaysia. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGFx6wQVi7s> [2019]
- Moniruzzaman, M. (2013). "The 13th Malaysian general election: uncertainties and expectations", *Intellectual Discourse*, 21(1), 55-70.
- Muhamad Nadzri, M. (2018). "Politik, Pengundi dan Faktor Melayu/Bumiputera: Analisis Terhadap Kegagalan Barisan Nasional Dalam PRU 2018". 45, 386-408.
- Muhammad Hazim Abdul Ghani, Junaidi Awang Besar & Mohd Fuad Mat Jali. 2016. Isu dasar kerajaan dalam politik pengundi pasca Pilihan Raya: Kajian kes DUN Teratai, Pandan, Selangor Darul Ehsan. *Geografia Online: Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*. 12(4): 34-45
- Prasad Nayak, M., & Narayan, K. A. (2019). "Strengths and Weaknesses of Online Surveys". *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 24(4), 31-38.
- Prysby, C., & Scavo, C. "The 2004 Election: Candidate Characteristics." The Regents of the University of Michigan. Available: www.icpsr.umich.edu/SETUPS, 2004
- Rashila Ramli. (1998a). Pembangunan Politik dan Gender: Cabaran dan Strategi bagi calon-calon wanita. In Rokiah Talib & Thambiah, Shanti. *Gender, Budaya dan Masyarakat*, pp. 152-162. Kuala Lumpur: Fakulti Sastera & Sains Sosial, Universiti Malaya.
- Rashila Ramli, Lubi, Elisa Tita and Djanaeva, Nurgul. (2005). *Seeing and Seating: Strategies for Women's Political Participation in the Asia Pacific*. Chiang Mai: Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD).
- Suresh Kumar N Vellymalay. (t.t). "Pilihan Raya Kecil (PRK) Cameron Highlands: Kemenangan BN atau Kekalahan PH?" *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. 16, No. 5 (1-14).
- Syahirah, SS. S. (2010, June). "Pemeriksaan Representasi Politik Wanita di Malaysia: Analisis Pilihan Raya Umum ke-12 (PRU12), 2008". *Journal of Administrative Science*, 7, 11-37.
- Syahirah, SS. S, Puteh, F., Mohd Arif, M., Zainuddin, A., Ayob, A., Hamzah, F. B., & Hashim, M. (2016). *Cabaran Wanita Muda Di Malaysia*. (M. Samsudin, & S. SS, Eds.) Ulu Klang, Selangor: KITA Resources. Retrieved 2019
- Syahirah SS, S., Hamzah, F., & Hashim, M. (14 March 2018). "Leadership, Policy And Governance In Malaysia: A Study on Gen Y Perception and Expectation." *Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing* 683-691. doi:10.1007/978-981-10-8612-0_71
-

- Syahirah SS, S., Mohd Faizal Mohd Arif, Fadilah Puteh, Zainuddin, A., Azman Ayob, Hamzah, F., Mohamad Salleh, M. S. (2016). *Kajian Wanita Muda Kebangsaan 2016: Persepsi dan Harapan Wanita Muda Malaysia* (Vol. 1). (M. Samsudin, & S. Syahirah SS, Eds.) Selangor: K.I.T.A Resources.
- The New Straits Times. "Malaysia's MPs approve amendment to lower voting age from 21 to 18". (16 July 2019). Available: <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysias-federal-constitution-amended-to-lower-voting-age-from-21-to-18>, [2019]
- The Star. "Merdeka Centre survey: Barisan will prevail in GE14" (27 April 2018). Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia: *The Star Online*. Available: <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/04/27/survey-barisan-nasional-will-prevail-in-ge14> [2020]
- The Straits Times. "Malaysia's Election Commission: Voter turnout at 82.32%, higher than initial 76%" (11 May 2018). *The Straits Times*, Available: <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysias-election-commission-voter-turnout-at-8232-higher-than-initial-76> [2018]
- Utusan Malaysia. "Pengundi muda perlu undi BN" (2018, April). Available: <https://www.utusan.com.my/berita/politik/pengundi-muda-perlu-undi-bn-1.654873>
- Vasanthan, R. N., & N., H. S. "Online Survey Tools: A Case Study of Google Form," presented at the National Conference on Scientific, Computational & Information Research Trends in Engineering, GSSS-IETW, 2016
- Yusof, F., Martins, J. M., & Swanson, D. A. (2014). "Method of Demographic Analysis." *Sydney: Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg*. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-6784-3
- Zainudin, H. *Research Methodology for Business & Social Science* (2010 ed.). Shah Alam: University Publication Centre (UPENA), 2010.
-