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Overview

Introduction
Survey Objectives
Methodology

Main Findings
I. Issues
II. Job Satisfaction & Career Development
III. Working & Living Expectations
IV. Balancing Work & Life

Conclusions
INTRODUCTION
Introduction

The first of a series of three surveys, the Work – Life Balance Survey looks at how working Malaysians cope with their jobs and balance their family life.

Supported by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, these surveys have the following objectives:

1. Continued tracking of public opinion on salient issues affecting political and social debate
2. Measure attitudes towards issues affecting work and life, stresses and coping strategies
3. Increase awareness and acceptance of opinion research in public discourse
Survey Methodology

Structured sampling according to:
- ethnicity, gender and occupational sector
- Telephone interviews
- Randomized selection of respondents
- Interviews conducted between: 9am – 9pm
- Total number interviews completed: 612
- Survey period: 7 – 10 October 2004
- Margin of error : +/- 4.30% (95% confidence interval)
PERCEPTIONS ON ISSUES
In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Malaysia right now?

Most Important Issue Amongst Employed Malaysians (Overall)

- Cost of living i.e price hike, inflation: 42%
- Crime & Public Safety: 9%
- Economy: 7%
- Social & Moral Problems: 6%
- Unemployment: 3%
- Education: 1%
- Local politics: 1%
- Foreign immigrants: 1%
- International politics: 1%
- National Unity: 1%
- Health: 1%
- Peace & Stability: 1%
- Corruption: 1%
- Development & Infrastructure: 1%
In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Malaysia right now?

Tracking Public Perceptions on Issues

- Economy
- Education
- Domestic Political Issues
- National Security & Terrorism
- Crime & Social Problems
JOB SATISFACTION & CAREER DEVELOPMENT
How many hours do you spend working each week on average?

**Average Hours Worked Per Week**

- **20-40 hours**:
  - Malay: 18%
  - Chinese: 12%
  - Indian: 8%

- **About 40 hours/week**:
  - Malay: 39%
  - Chinese: 51%
  - Indian: 54%

- **40-50 hours/week**:
  - Malay: 20%
  - Chinese: 24%
  - Indian: 12%

- **50-60 hours/week**:
  - Malay: 10%
  - Chinese: 9%
  - Indian: 9%

- **More than 60 hours/week**:
  - Malay: 10%
  - Chinese: 9%
  - Indian: 6%
How long have you been employed in your current job?

Tenor at Current Employment (By Sector)

- Manufacturing
- Services
- Sales/retail
- Agriculture/fisheries
- Construction
- Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenor</th>
<th>Manufacturing</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Sales/retail</th>
<th>Agriculture/fisheries</th>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 years</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How many times have you changed jobs ever since starting work after leaving school?

Switching Jobs (By Ethnic)
In your view, would you characterize your work as something you feel comfortable or stressful in doing?

**Workplace Atmosphere (By Sector)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
<th>Stressful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales/Retail</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/fisheries</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How would you characterize the process in which employees are promoted in your organization? Is it fair, somewhat fair, somewhat unfair, unfair?

Perceived Fairness of Promotion Process (By Sector)
Job Satisfaction & Development

Please state to what extent would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Attitudes towards Work (All Respondents)

- My job gives me respect and status in society: 79% agree, 10% disagree.
- It gives me a deep sense of personal satisfaction: 79% agree, 18% disagree.
- It offers me the best remuneration for the qualifications I have: 79% agree, 18% disagree.
- It provides the best fit for the skills that I have: 85% agree, 10% disagree.
- I don’t know if I can find another job elsewhere at present: 57% agree, 33% disagree.
Which of the following two statements is closer to your view:

1. One should always be on the lookout for better career/job opportunities even if it means changing jobs very often
2. In the long run, staying with one’s existing job will bring bigger rewards

Switching Jobs vs Staying Put (By Ethnic)

- **Malay**
  - Blue Bar: 31%
  - Red Bar: 68%

- **Chinese**
  - Blue Bar: 42%
  - Red Bar: 50%

- **Indian**
  - Blue Bar: 33%
  - Red Bar: 65%

- **Total**
  - Blue Bar: 35%
  - Red Bar: 61%
Do you see yourself working for the same organization in the next five years?

Seeing themselves in the same organization 5 years from now (By Household Income level)
WORKING & LIVING EXPECTATIONS
Would you say that your income alone is less than enough, just enough, or more than enough to meet the needs of you and your family?

Making Ends Meet: Adequacy of Single Incomes (By Household Income level)
Have you started savings towards the following items?

“Long term savings to cover your children’s education expenses”

Saving for Children's Education (By Household Income level)
Have you started savings towards the following items? “Savings for old age and retirement aside from your pensions or EPF”

Additional Savings for Retirement and Old Age (besides EPF and Pensions) (By Household Income level)

- < RM750/mth: Yes 46%, No 54%
- RM750-1500/mth: Yes 63%, No 37%
- RM1500-3000/mth: Yes 79%, No 20%
- > RM3000/mth: Yes 87%, No 13%
Have you started savings towards the following items? “Savings to cover healthcare and illness expenses”

**Saving for Healthcare (By Household Income level)**

- **< RM750/mth**
  - Yes: 34%
  - No: 66%
- **RM750-1500/mth**
  - Yes: 39%
  - No: 60%
- **RM1500-3000/mth**
  - Yes: 24%
  - No: 75%
- **> RM3000/mth**
  - Yes: 83%
  - No: 17%
Besides your current job, are you engaged in any other activities to boost your income?

Making Ends Meet: Taking On Second Jobs (By Ethnic)

- **Indian**: 19% Yes, 81% No
- **Chinese**: 9% Yes, 83% No
- **Malay**: 23% Yes, 76% No
Besides your current job, are you engaged in any other activities to boost your income?

Making Ends Meet: Taking On Second Jobs (By Educational Background)
Can you tell me more about that activity?

Types of Part Time Work
(n = 108)
To what extent do the additional activities that you are engaged in add up to your income - in percentages?

**Income Generation from Part Time Work - Percentage over Regular Work**  
(n = 106)

- **Less than 10%**: 26%
- **10%-25%**: 25%
- **25%-50%**: 9%
- **50%-75%**: <1%
- **75%-100%**: 1%
- **More than 100%**: 1%
What is the biggest financial burden you face?

Top 6 Biggest Reported Financial Burden (Across Household Income Levels)

- **Education & School expenses**: 26% (26% < RM750/mth, 16% RM750-1500/mth, 12% RM1500-3000/mth, 16% > RM3000/mth)
- **Household/daily expenses**: 15% (11% < RM750/mth, 6% RM750-1500/mth, 6% RM1500-3000/mth, 15% > RM3000/mth)
- **Car loan**: 10% (5% < RM750/mth, 5% RM750-1500/mth, 4% RM1500-3000/mth, 4% > RM3000/mth)
- **Housing loan**: 8% (3% < RM750/mth, 4% RM750-1500/mth, 3% RM1500-3000/mth, 8% > RM3000/mth)
- **Utility bills**: 6% (6% < RM750/mth, 6% RM750-1500/mth, 3% RM1500-3000/mth, 2% > RM3000/mth)
- **Price of goods/essential items**: 7% (3% < RM750/mth, 2% RM750-1500/mth, 3% RM1500-3000/mth, 2% > RM3000/mth)
BALANCING LIFE & WORK
How close is the job that you’re holding now with the one you had ambitions for when you were younger?

Attaining Childhood Ambitions (By Education Level)
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the free time that you have for yourself and your family on a working day?

Satisfaction with Available Free Time (Across Hours Spent at Work)

- 20-40 hrs/wk: 81% Satisfied, 17% Dissatisfied
- About 40 hrs/wk: 84% Satisfied, 15% Dissatisfied
- 40-50 hrs/wk: 78% Satisfied, 22% Dissatisfied
- 50-60 hrs/wk: 72% Satisfied, 26% Dissatisfied
- > 60 hrs/wk: 71% Satisfied, 27% Dissatisfied
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the free time that you have for yourself and your family on a working day?

Satisfaction with Available Free Time (Across Age Groups)
How often do you find yourself bringing work to be completed at home?

Bringing Work Home (By Occupation Type)
What stresses you the most?

Who/What Stresses the Most (Across Gender)
If you have faced stress or work pressures, what do you normally do to relieve the tension and stress?

Relieving Stress (Across Gender)
If there is one thing that would improve the quality of your life at present, what would it be if the choice is between having more money or more free time?

Preference: More Time vs More Money (By Age Groups)
If there is one thing that would improve the quality of your life at present, what would it be if the choice is between having more money or more free time?

Preference: More Time vs More Money (By Job Types)

- Professional & Technical: 50% more money, 41% more free time
- Administrative & managerial: 46% more money, 48% more free time
- Clerical: 56% more money, 32% more free time
- Sales: 56% more money, 30% more free time
- Service: 55% more money, 38% more free time
- Production, Transport & Labor: 64% more money, 30% more free time
- Agricultural & Fishermen: 51% more money, 31% more free time
- Teachers & Lecturers: 46% more money, 51% more free time
CONCLUSIONS
Following On From Previous Surveys

1. Overall public concern over crime has tapered off rapidly since August 2004 due to reduced intensity in media coverage of the subject and the advent of other concerns.

2. Anwar Ibrahim’s release and the UMNO General Assembly in early September generated some interest in domestic politics but it has been overshadowed in October by concerns about the economy and rising prices.

3. Concerns about rising prices, the economy in general and the employment market were uppermost in the minds of workers interviewed in October.

4. With this sub-group of the population, domestic politics and regional events have little bearing on their concerns – which appears more focused on pocketbook and livelihood issues.

5. Recent terrorism events in Indonesia and the troubles in Southern Thailand had little impact on them.
Job Satisfaction and Career Development

1. Most people report being satisfied with their jobs and the hours spent working
2. Most also report that their working environment as being comfortable. Highest proportion of stress reported by those in sales & retail, lowest by those in the government sector
3. Slightly over half report that promotion opportunities are fair but 1 in 3 report uncertainty.
4. Almost two thirds prefer staying with their jobs as opposed to job hopping as means to secure better rewards
5. A large majority report pride in the work and the best fit in skills and qualifications to be reason for sticking to their jobs
6. The better educated are confident of securing better jobs as are those in the manufacturing sector but the lower educated appear less confident
7. The better paid are almost twice more likely to stay with their current employers as those in the lower income bracket
Working and Living Expectations

1. Over 2 out of 3 interviewed say their incomes are “just enough” or cukup makan in order to meet their needs.

2. 1 in 10 say their incomes are inadequate but becomes more acute at the lower income bracket where 1 in 3 say their wages are not enough to make ends meet.

3. Yet many, nearly two thirds claim that they have started savings towards their childrens’ education and made additional savings for retirement and healthcare. Naturally, the ability to save improves with rising income and is shown in results. But findings may need to be read with caution for there is a tendency to over-report savings and downplay expenses amongst respondents in surveys.

4. Nearly 1 in 5 engage in additional income generation activities, this tendency correlates with income. Those better educated tend to earn more from their secondary activities, suggesting higher value employment.

5. Biggest burden is meeting children’s education expenses, followed by household expenses and the general rise of prices.
Work – Life Balance

1. 1 in 3 say they are now doing things close to what they aimed when younger. Higher tendency amongst the better educated (naturally)

2. Almost all are satisfied with the free time they have available, but lowest satisfaction amongst those in the teaching profession. Surprisingly, even those who spend >60 hrs working feel satisfied too.

3. 1 in 8 say they bring work to be completed at home. These tend to be teachers, professionals and government workers.

4. Work and finances are top causes for stress

5. Men de-stress by talking and spending time with family and engaging in sports, women de-stress by talking to friends and ignoring the problems

6. Most Malaysian workers say having more money will improve their quality of life. But those above 50 prefer having more time.