Merdeka Center – New Straits Times
Health and Lifestyle Survey

Viewpoints On:
lifestyle and healthy Living
healthcare Concerns
and Services

3 – 5 December 2004
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INTRODUCTION
Introduction

The second of a series of three surveys to be undertaken in 2004.

The Health and Lifestyle Survey looks at how Malaysians view their daily lives from the perspective of keeping fit and maintaining a healthy regimen. The survey also looks at their concerns with respect to health and the healthcare services.

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: 800
- Survey period: 3 – 5 December 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?

Top 10 issues of national concern

- Crime and public safety: 18%
- Road safety and accidents: 9%
- Economy: 8%
- Social and moral problems: 6%
- Health: 4%
- Cost of living (price hike, inflation): 4%
- Education: 3%
- Local politics: 2%
- Corruption: 2%
- Peace and stability: 2%
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 & Peace
- Crime & Social Problems

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New Straits Times
PERSPECTIVES ON LIFESTYLE
Which of these words best describes your own lifestyle?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal lifestyle description</th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Calm&quot;</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Active&quot;</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Stressed&quot;</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compared to other people your age, how would you rate your lifestyle in terms of how healthy you think it is? Would you say that your lifestyle is …………?

Leading a healthy life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhealthy</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compared to other people your age, would you say your overall health is ……?

Perception of overall health

- **Good**: Malay 71%, Chinese 51%, Indian 84%
- **Average**: Malay 26%, Chinese 15%, Indian 42%
- **Poor**: Malay 0%, Chinese 2%, Indian 7%
- **Don't know / refused**: Malay 1%, Chinese 0%, Indian 1%
Are you watching what you eat, such as avoiding fatty foods and cutting back on salt and sugar?

Watching what you eat

- All the time: Malay 35%, Chinese 32%, Indian 43%
- Most of the time: Malay 19%, Chinese 19%, Indian 25%
- Sometimes: Malay 23%, Chinese 19%, Indian 31%
- Never: Malay 15%, Chinese 14%, Indian 27%
Do you take nutritional supplements such as vitamins, herbs and special food?

Taking Supplements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All the time</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are you currently trying to lose, gain or maintain weight?

**Losing or Maintaining Weight**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight Goal</th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lose weight</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain weight</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain weight</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really thinking about it</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Have you thought about joining or have you joined, any of the slimming programs that are often advertised in newspapers and magazines?

**Slimming programs**

- Yes
  - Malay: 15%
  - Chinese: 7%
  - Indian: 6%

- No
  - Malay: 85%
  - Chinese: 92%
  - Indian: 85%
How much of the time would you say you have been feeling ‘happy’, over the last one week?

Feeling happy

- Malay
- Chinese
- Indian
- Total

- **All of the time**:
  - Malay: 33%
  - Chinese: 23%
  - Indian: 30%
  - Total: 40%

- **Most of the time**:
  - Malay: 46%
  - Chinese: 46%
  - Indian: 41%
  - Total: 41%

- **At least half of the time**:
  - Malay: 20%
  - Chinese: 24%
  - Indian: 17%
  - Total: 21%

- **Hardly ever**:
  - Malay: 1%
  - Chinese: 5%
  - Indian: 0%
  - Total: 2%
How much of the time would you say you have felt calm and peaceful, over last one week?

Feeling of 'calm and peaceful'

- Malay
- Chinese
- Indian
- Total

- All of the time:
  - Malay: 26%
  - Chinese: 21%
  - Indian: 24%
  - Total: 27%

- Most of the time:
  - Malay: 55%
  - Chinese: 51%
  - Indian: 53%
  - Total: 53%

- At least half of the time:
  - Malay: 17%
  - Chinese: 21%
  - Indian: 17%
  - Total: 17%

- Hardly ever:
  - Malay: 2%
  - Chinese: 5%
  - Indian: 6%
  - Total: 4%
PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH & FITNESS
How often do you visit a doctor in the past year?

Visiting the doctor over the past year

1-3 times per year: 66%
4-6 times per year: 14%
7-9 times per year: 3%
More than 10 times: 8%
Was there a time in the last one year when you were sick but you didn’t visit the doctor?

Visits to the Doctor

Malay
- Visited the doctor: 77%
- Did not visit the doctor: 21%

Chinese
- Visited the doctor: 41%
- Did not visit the doctor: 57%

Indian
- Visited the doctor: 73%
- Did not visit the doctor: 19%
Can you tell me the reason why you didn’t go to visit the doctor?

Reasons for not visiting the doctor

- Not a serious illness: 22%
- Self medication, purchase medicine from pharmacy: 4%
- Home remedy: 4%
- I was too busy: 1%
What is the disease that you fear the most?

**Graph:**

**Most feared disease**

- **Cancer:**
  - Malay: 35%
  - Chinese: 24%
  - Indian: 26%
  - Everybody: 31%

- **Heart disease:**
  - Malay: 17%
  - Chinese: 5%
  - Indian: 15%
  - Everybody: 15%

- **Diabetes:**
  - Malay: 11%
  - Chinese: 3%
  - Indian: 11%
  - Everybody: 3%

- **High blood pressure:**
  - Malay: 9%
  - Chinese: 5%
  - Indian: 4%
  - Everybody: 7%

- **AIDS/HIV:**
  - Malay: 9%
  - Chinese: 2%
  - Indian: 7%
  - Everybody: 6%
Proximity to illnesses

Can you name three (3) health problems that are experienced by your close family members (parents, brothers & sisters)?
Do you have medical insurance?

Access to Medical insurance

- Malay: 22% Yes, 76% No
- Chinese: 41% Yes, 57% No
- Indian: 52% Yes, 48% No
Can you tell me who provided the insurance?

Insurance source (among those with coverage, n = 301)

- Employer
  - Malay: 20%
  - Chinese: 4%
  - Indian: 10%
- Self / family member
  - Malay: 70%
  - Chinese: 94%
  - Indian: 88%
- Both employer and self
  - Malay: 10%
  - Chinese: 1%
  - Indian: 2%
Now I have some questions about your free time. Thinking about all the different things you do in your free time including physical activity and other past times, what is the one thing you do most often in your free time?

Typical free time activity

- Watching TV/Listening to radio: 27%
- Taking part in sports/exercise: 17%
- Reading: 13%
- Gardening: 11%
- Socializing with friends/visiting friends: 8%
- Shopping or window shopping: 4%
- Listen to music/play music: 3%
- Surfing the internet: 2%
- Spend time with family: 2%
- Catch up on sleep: 2%
Do you find yourself desiring to take up physical activity but somehow are unable to follow through?

**Attitudes to physical activity**

- Able to take up, 48%
- Desire but unable to take up, 29%
- Don't want to take up activity, 22%
What makes it difficult for you to take part in the leisure activities that are important to you?

Reasons for not exercising

- Too busy/family commitment/don't have time: 36%
- Not at a convenient time: 20%
- No facilities/physically cannot participate/sports injury/old age: 12%
- Weather: 6%
- Activity too far away/don't have transport: 4%
- Others: 3%
- No facilities for children/have to look after child: 2%
- Not thought about it/uninterested: 2%
- Activity costs too much: 1%
- Lazy: 0%
How often do you take part in physical activity?

Taking part in physical activities

- Everyday or nearly everyday:
  - Malay: 11%
  - Chinese: 19%
  - Indian: 22%

- 2-4 times a week:
  - Malay: 14%
  - Chinese: 26%
  - Indian: 17%

- Once a week:
  - Malay: 17%
  - Chinese: 17%
  - Indian: 21%

- 2-3 times a month:
  - Malay: 4%
  - Chinese: 4%
  - Indian: 0%

- Once a month:
  - Malay: 8%
  - Chinese: 2%
  - Indian: 0%
PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTHCARE SERVICES
How often do you go for medical check-ups?
If you were to be admitted to hospital, which would you prefer: getting treatment from, a government or private hospital?

Hospital preference: Government or Private

- Government hospital:
  - Malay: 67%
  - Chinese: 54%
  - Indian: 26%

- Private hospital:
  - Malay: 22%
  - Chinese: 28%
  - Indian: 4%

- Both government and private hospital:
  - Malay: 15%
  - Chinese: 20%
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the free time that you have for yourself and your family on a working day?

Hospital preference: Government or Private

- Government hospital:
  - Malay: 67%
  - Chinese: 54%
  - Indian: 26%

- Private hospital:
  - Malay: 53%
  - Chinese: 28%
  - Indian: 22%

- Both government and private hospital:
  - Malay: 4%
  - Chinese: 15%
  - Indian: 20%
Why do you choose that (private or government hospital)? Please elaborate….

Reasons for choosing a particular hospital

- Cost saving/cheaper/free: 34%
- Better service/quality/efficient/fast: 27%
- Government servant/pension card/children working in hospital: 4%
- Easily accessible/close to home: 3%
- Availability of insurance card/medical card: 3%
- Affordable: 3%
- Belong to a panel: 2%
- Better healthcare system/in safe hands: 2%
- It is the same: 2%
How satisfied are you with the services provided by government hospitals?

Satisfaction of service provided by government hospitals

- Satisfied:
  - Malay: 79%
  - Chinese: 51%
  - Indian: 73%

- Dissatisfied:
  - Malay: 18%
  - Chinese: 27%
  - Indian: 23%
Thinking further about government hospitals, in your opinion, what aspect of service do you think urgently needs to be upgraded?

- Reduce waiting time: 32%
- Service provided by the staff: 18%
- Lack of specialist doctors and staff: 11%
- Lack of services and facilities: 8%
- Service provided by the counters: 3%
- Treatment provided by the staff: 3%
- Add more beds/rooms: 2%
Overall, how would you rate the services provided by private hospitals as compared to government hospitals?

**Private hospitals vs Government hospitals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Have you ever, at any point in time, sought the help of spiritual healers such as bomoh, temple monks or priests to overcome any illness?

**Choice of medication**

- **Modern - doctors, hospitals, clinics**: 92%
  - Malay: 82%
  - Chinese: 91%
  - Indian: 91%

- **Spiritual - bomoh, priests, monks**: 2%
  - Malay: 2%
  - Chinese: 0%
  - Indian: 0%

- **Traditional - sinseh, acupuncture, herbalist**: 11%
  - Malay: 5%
  - Chinese: 11%
  - Indian: 9%
Have you ever, at any point in time, sought the help of spiritual healers such as bomoh, temple monks or priests to overcome any illness?

Experience with spiritual healers

- Malay
- Chinese
- Indian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Would you agree or disagree, that spiritual treatment by healers such as bomoh, priests or monks can help cure some illnesses?

**Trust in spiritual healing**

- **Malay**
- **Chinese**
- **Indian**

![Chart showing percentages of responses to the question about trust in spiritual healing by ethnicity.](chart.png)
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 children's 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.