

# National Electorate Survey Highlights

**Voter Perceptions on:**

**National Issues, Economic Optimism, Crime & Public Safety, Islam and Political Participation**

February 24, 2004



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## Introduction

Research Objectives

Methodology

## Findings:

I. Issues & Concerns

II. Economics

III. Education

IV. Corruption

V. Islam in Politics

VI. Political Participation & Perceptions

## Conclusions



# INTRODUCTION

## *Pendahuluan*



- ❖ Merdeka Center is a social research organization based in Selangor that is geared towards conducting research in the area of social, economics and political attitudes in Malaysia with a view towards promoting democratic values and deepening the quality and nature of public discourse.
- ❖ In the political arena, Merdeka Center works to assist political parties and non government organizations through strengthening strategy formulation and development of effective communications.
- ❖ Merdeka Center has conducted several opinion polls over the past, beginning from the by elections at Indera Kayangan, Ketari and Anak Bukit.
- ❖ Merdeka Center's Malaysian Political Viewpoints Project serves to track the opinions of the Malaysian public and to identify issues. It is hoped that information generated from this project would serve as a basis for recommendations that could be adopted in the shaping of strategies leading to the upcoming 11<sup>th</sup> General Elections.



With general elections slated to take place before the end of 2004, Merdeka Center has embarked on a series of studies regarding the political attitudes of the Malaysian public. Developed under the ambit of the “Malaysian Opinion Polling Project”, working in collaboration with Institut Kajian Malaysia dan Antarabangsa (IKMAS) and financially supported by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the studies aim to generate discussion about the opinions and expectations of ordinary Malaysians regarding the political future of the country

This public opinion gauging process has a two-fold objective of:

1. Promote collective reflection about the future; and
2. Offer officials, political leaders and activists information that may generate more responsive and effective decision making.

Tactically, this opinion survey examines the following themes:

- ❖ Issues commanding primary public attention (Economy, Education, Political Islam, etc)
- ❖ Factors leading towards support for political parties
- ❖ Attitudes towards political organizations and public institutions

Findings and conclusions reached in this survey were the result of a series of focus group interviews with randomly selected voters in Klang Valley and a telephone-based survey.

## Focus Groups

- ❖ Conducted with 2 groups (voters 21 – 35 and Voters above 35 years old)
- ❖ Comprising 16 randomly selected registered voters (and several non-registered youths)
- ❖ Respondent domicile: Klang Valley
- ❖ Study period: 18 October 2003

## Telephone Opinion Survey

- ❖ Sampling structured by state and ethnic factors
- ❖ 1017 respondents – matching with ethnic, gender and geographic distribution.
- ❖ Interview period: 9:00 am to 9:30 pm
- ❖ Survey period: 21-30 December 2003
- ❖ Maximum margin of error: +/-3.10%



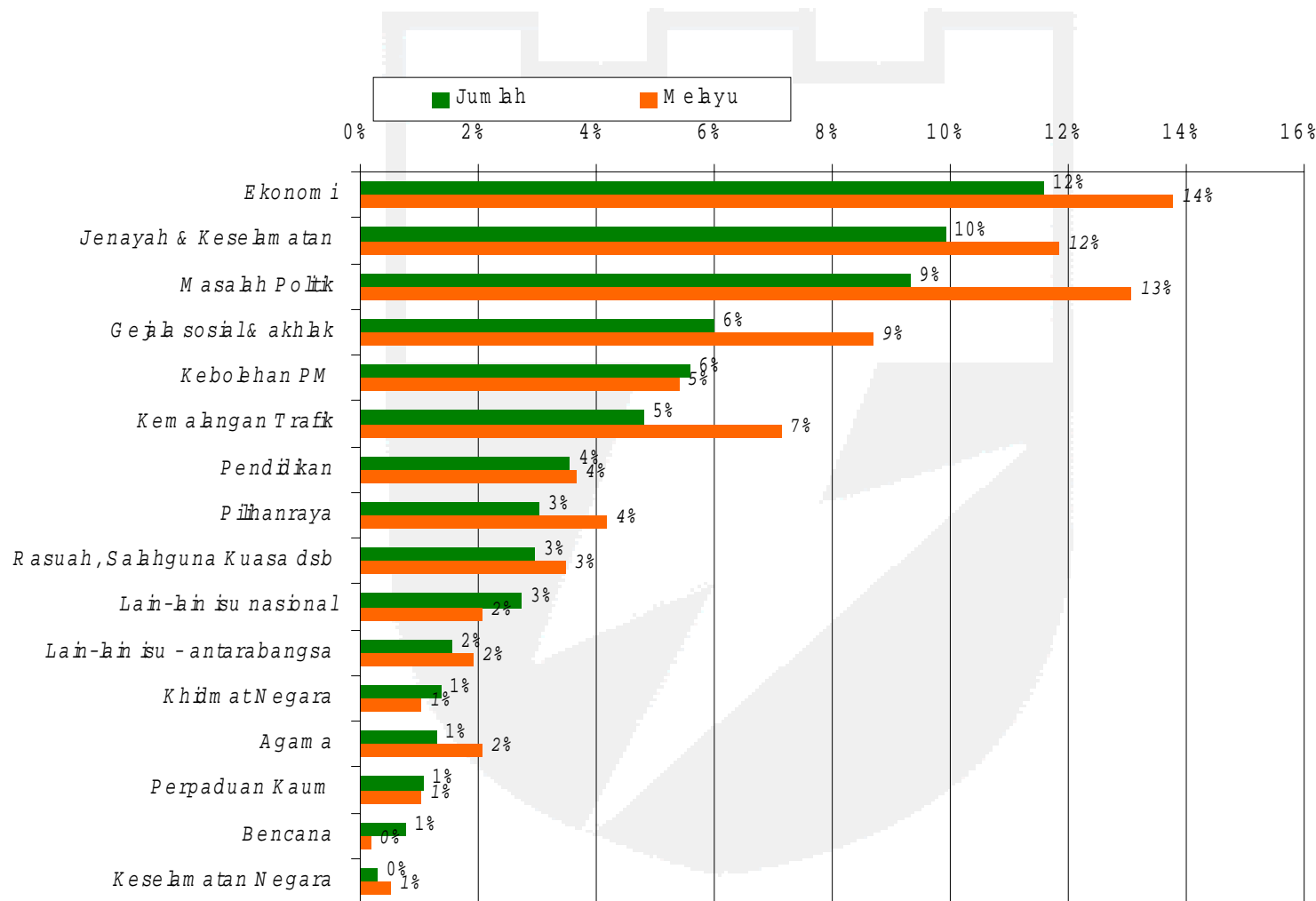
# I. ISSUES & CONCERNS





“Pada pendapat anda, apakah isu paling penting dalam negara sekarang?”

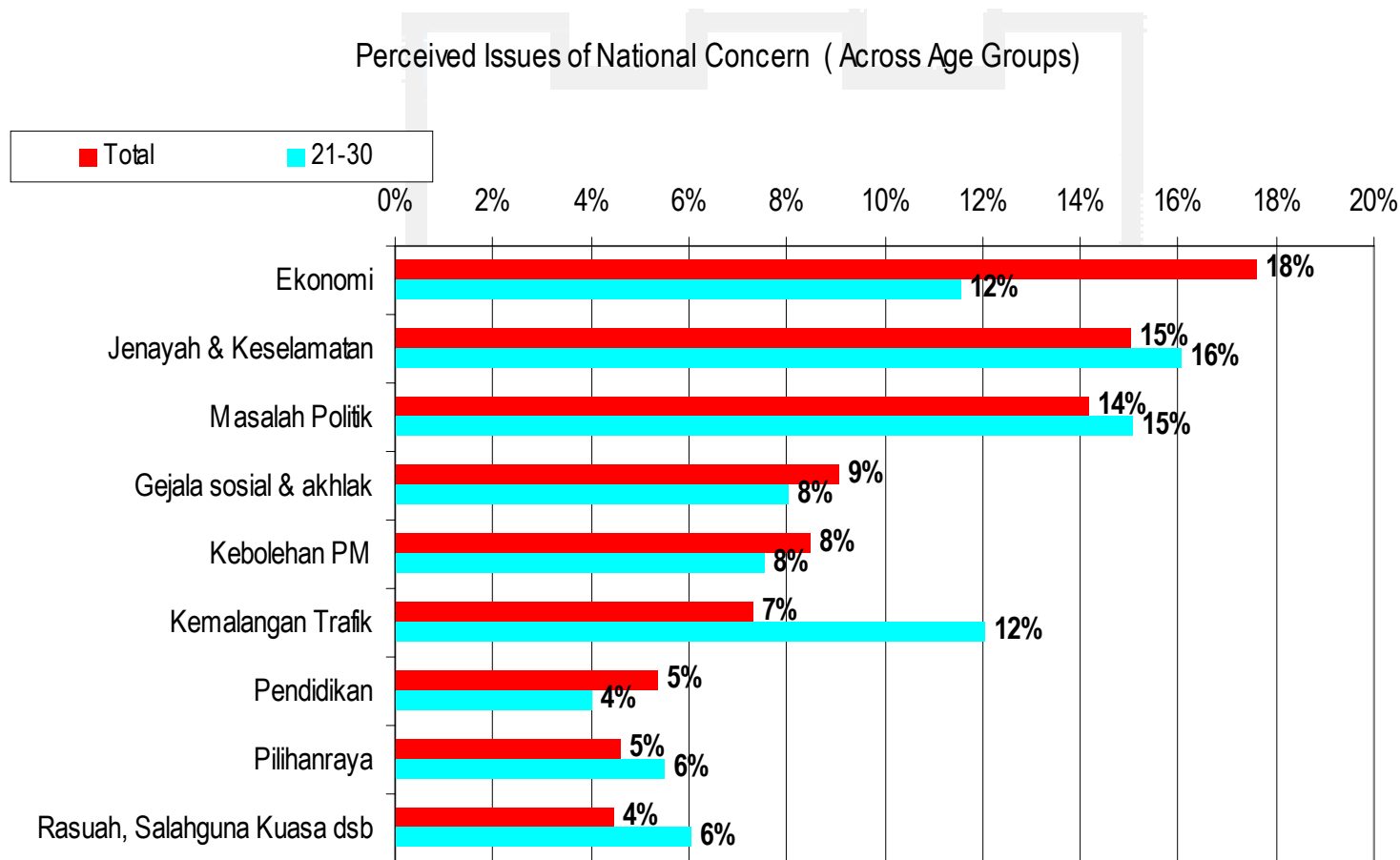
Persepsi Isu Utama Negara (Menjelang January 2004)



What do you think, is the most important issue in the country at this moment?



“Pada pendapat anda, apakah isu paling penting dalam negara sekarang? (by Age Groups)”

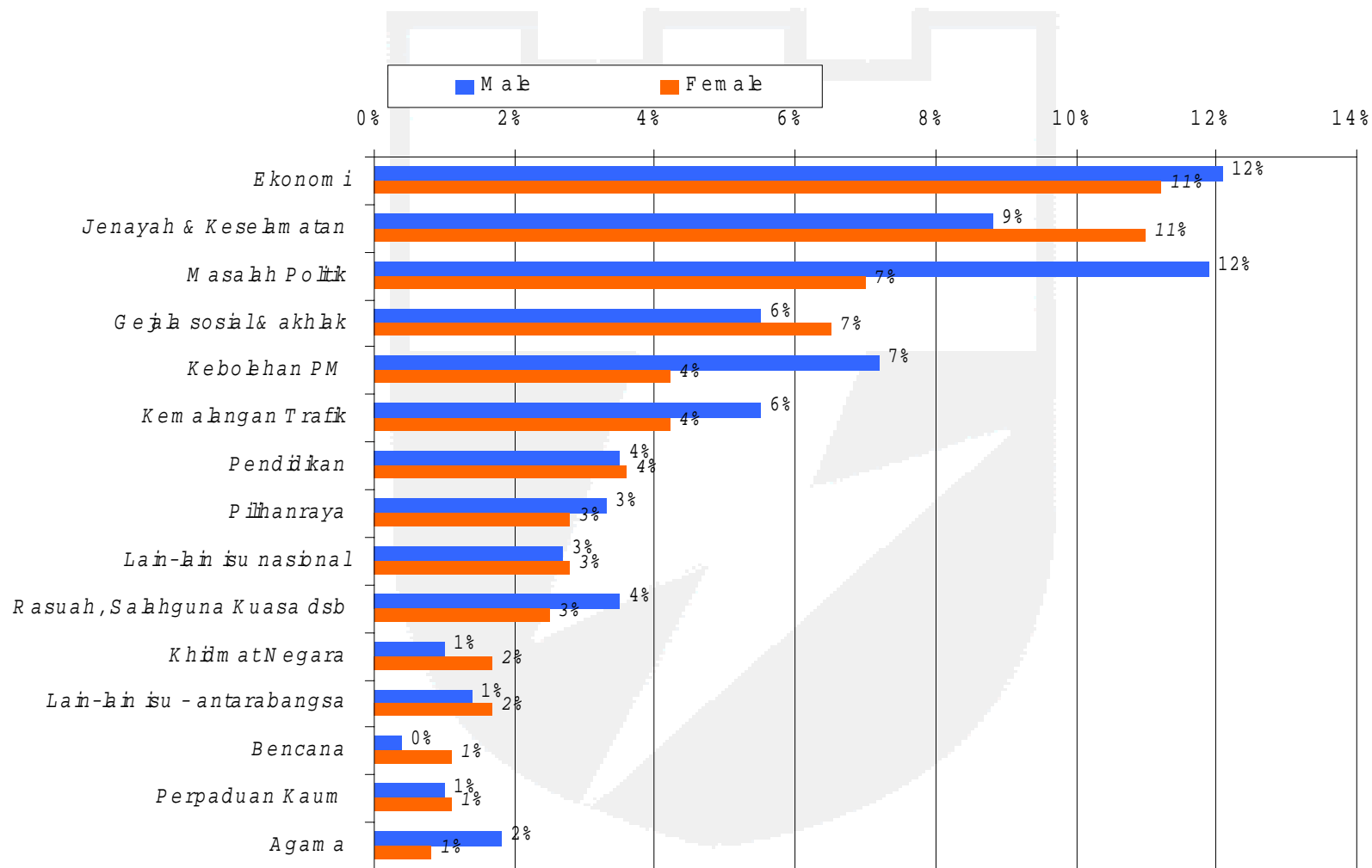


What do you think, is the most important issue in the country at this moment?



“Pada pendapat anda, apakah isu paling penting dalam negara sekarang? (by Gender)”

Persepsi Isu Utama Negara (Menjelang January 2004)

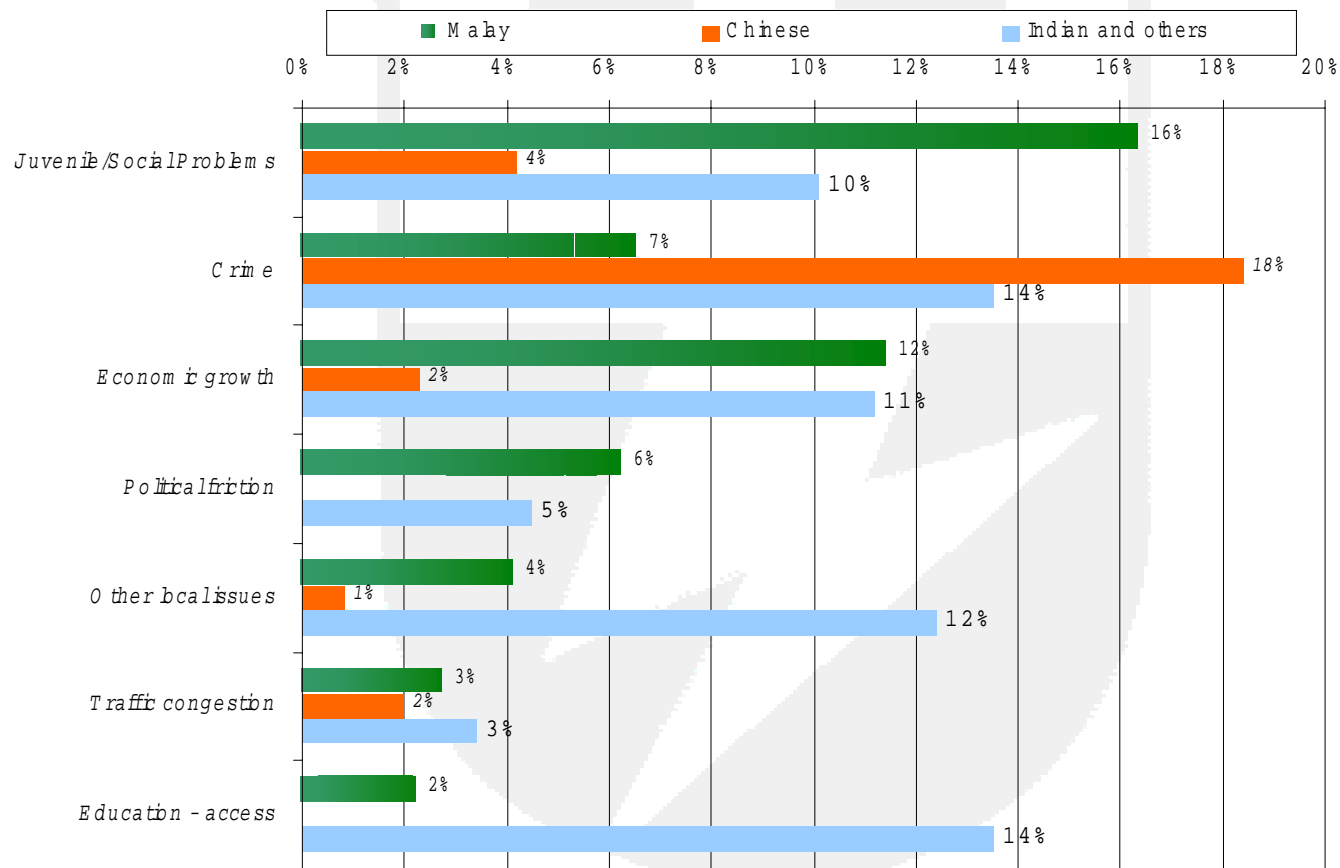


What do you think, is the most important issue in the country at this moment?



## Pada pendapat anda, apakah isu yang paling penting di kawasan tempat tinggal anda sekarang?

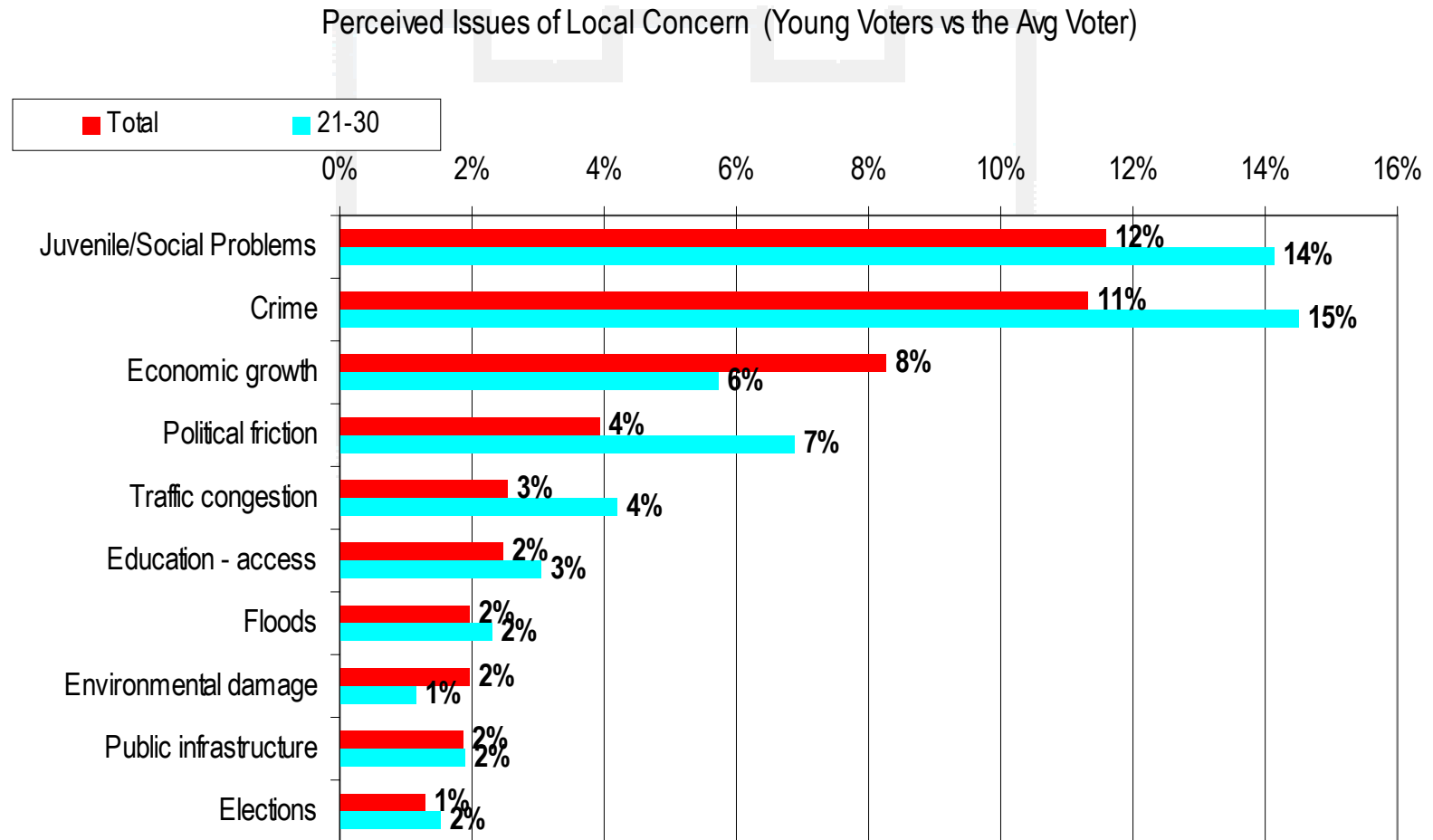
Persepsi Isu Utama Kawasan Setempat (Menjelang January 2004)



What do you think, is the most important issue in your neighborhood at this moment?



## Pada pendapat anda, apakah isu yang paling penting di kawasan tempat tinggal anda sekarang? (by Age Group)

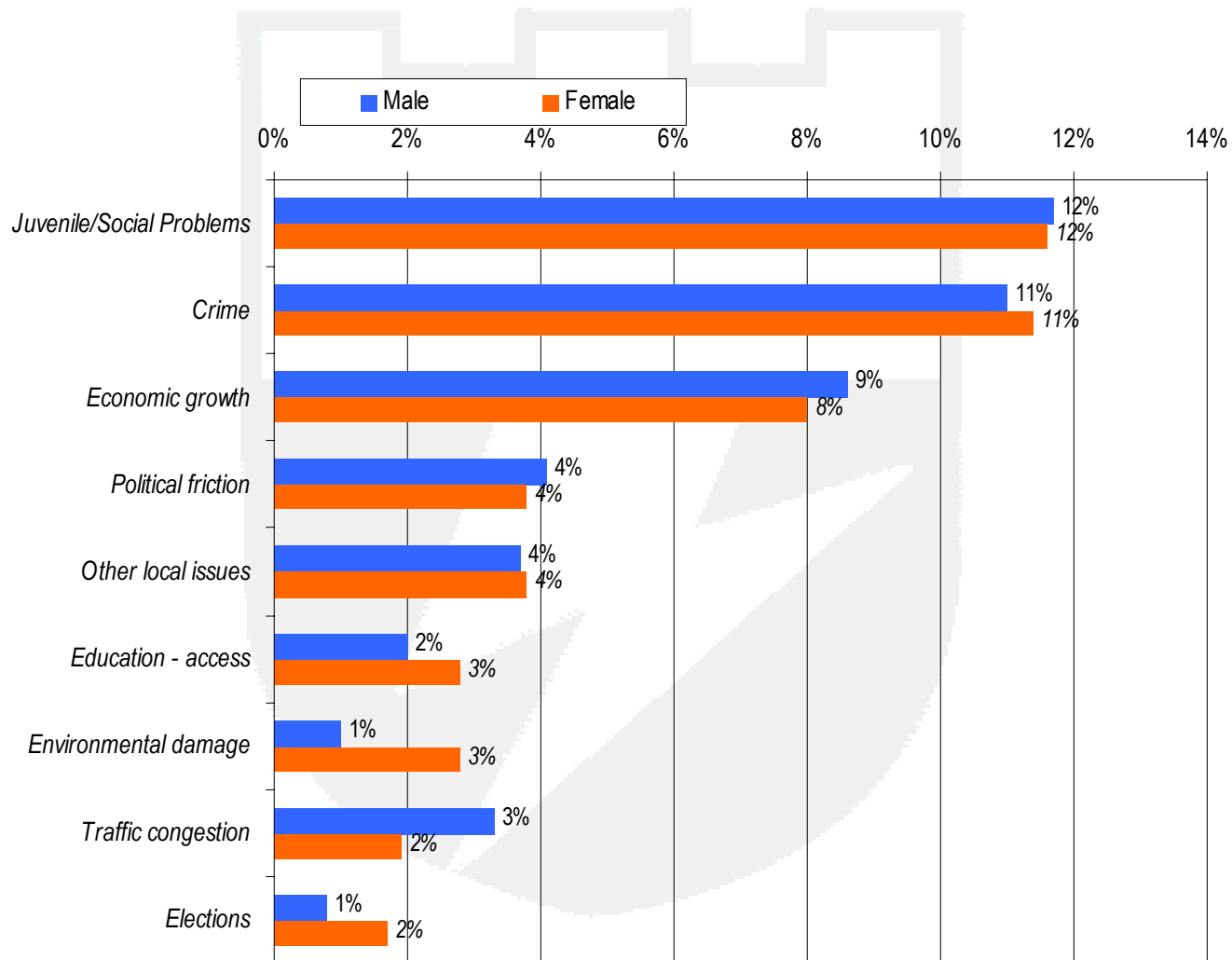


What do you think, is the most important issue in your neighborhood at this moment?



**Pada pendapat anda, apakah isu yang paling penting di kawasan tempat tinggal anda sekarang? (by Gender)**

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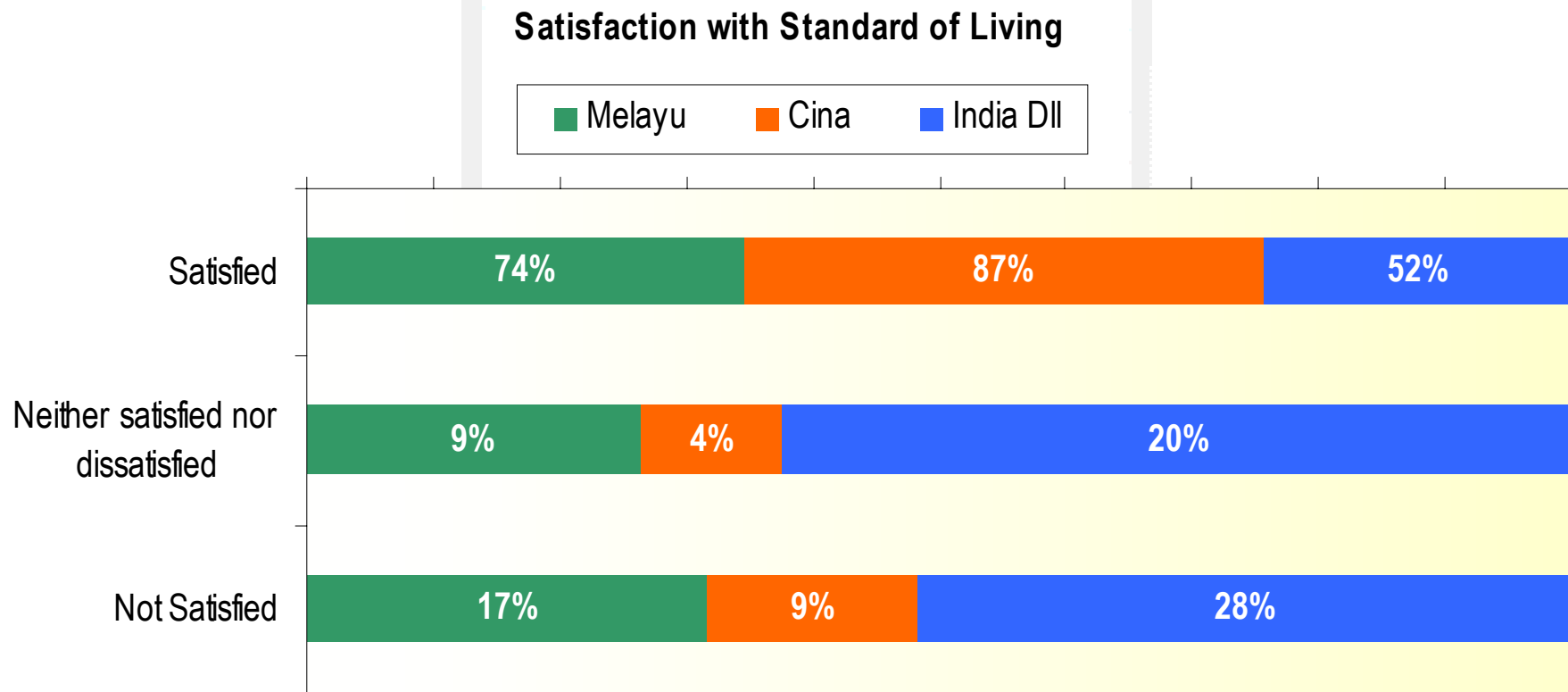




## II. PERCEPTIONS ON THE ECONOMY



**Barangan atau kemudahan yang dibeli seperti rumah, perabot, makanan, kereta, riadah dan melancong, mencerminkan taraf hidup seseorang. Sejauh mana anda berpuas hati atau tidak berpuas hati dengan taraf hidup anda sekarang?**



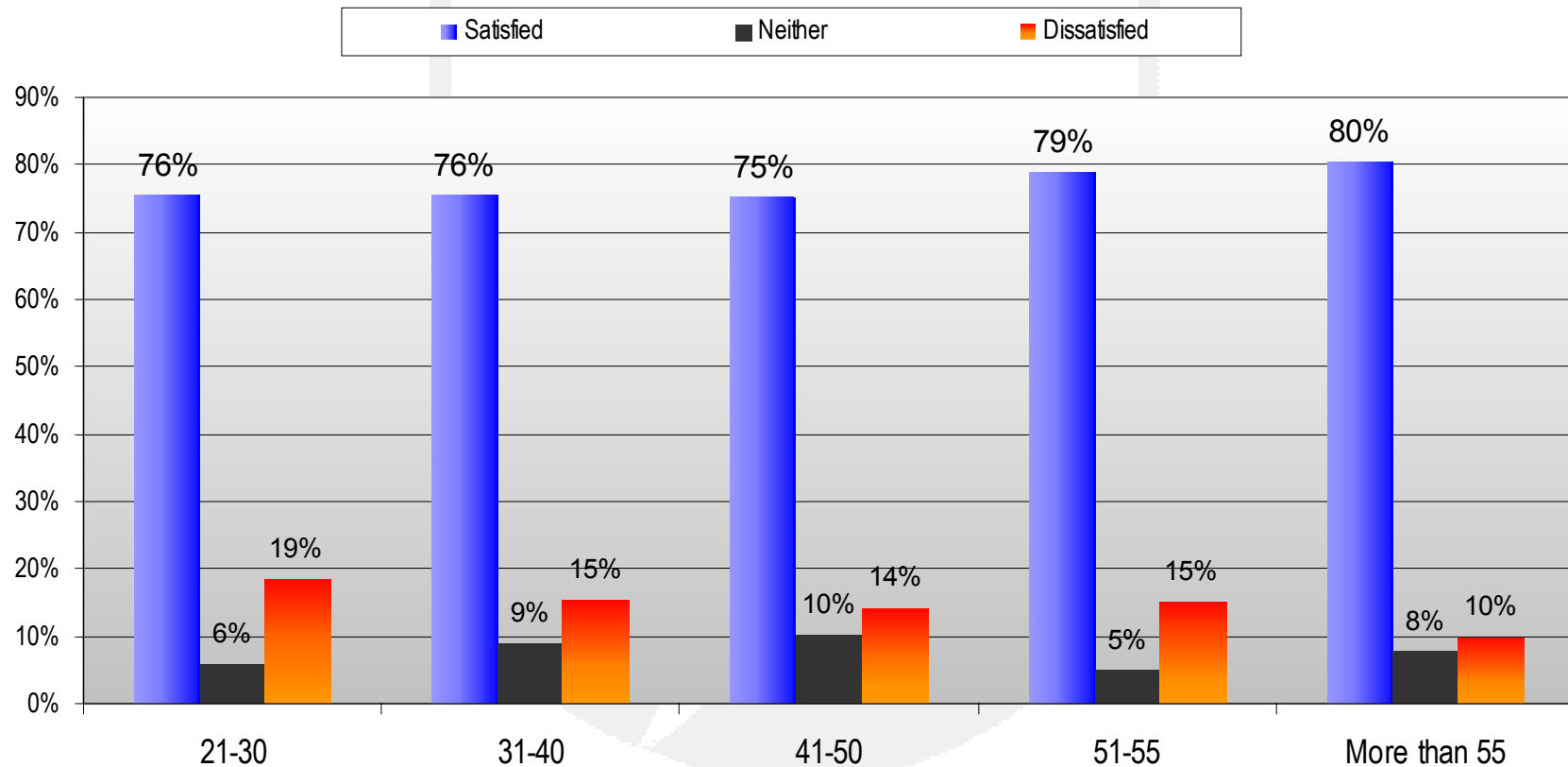
The things that people can buy and do – their housing, furniture, food, cars, recreation and travel – make up their standard of living. How satisfied or dissatisfied do you feel about your standard of living at present?





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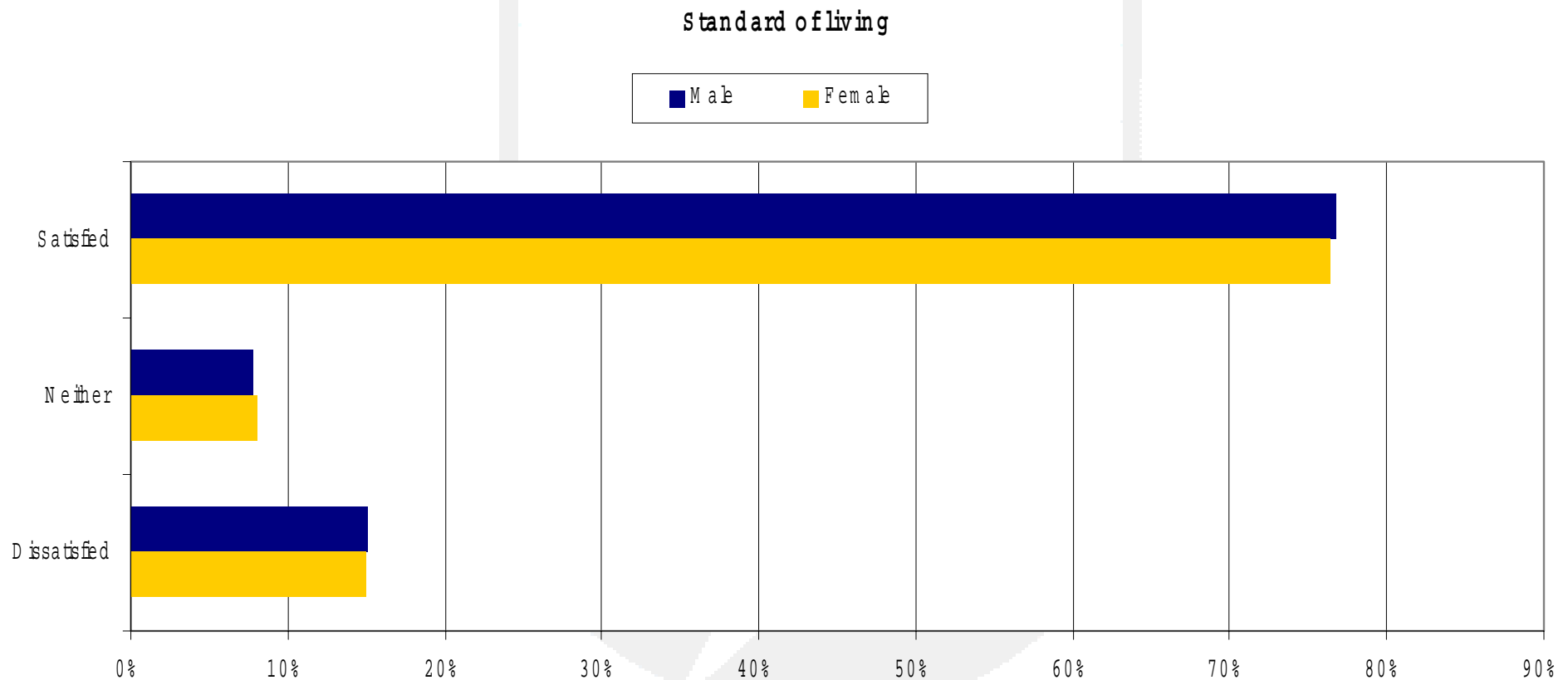
Satisfaction with Standard of Living (Across Age Groups)



The things that people can buy and do – their housing, furniture, food, cars, recreation and travel – make up their standard of living. How satisfied or dissatisfied do you feel about your standard of living at present?



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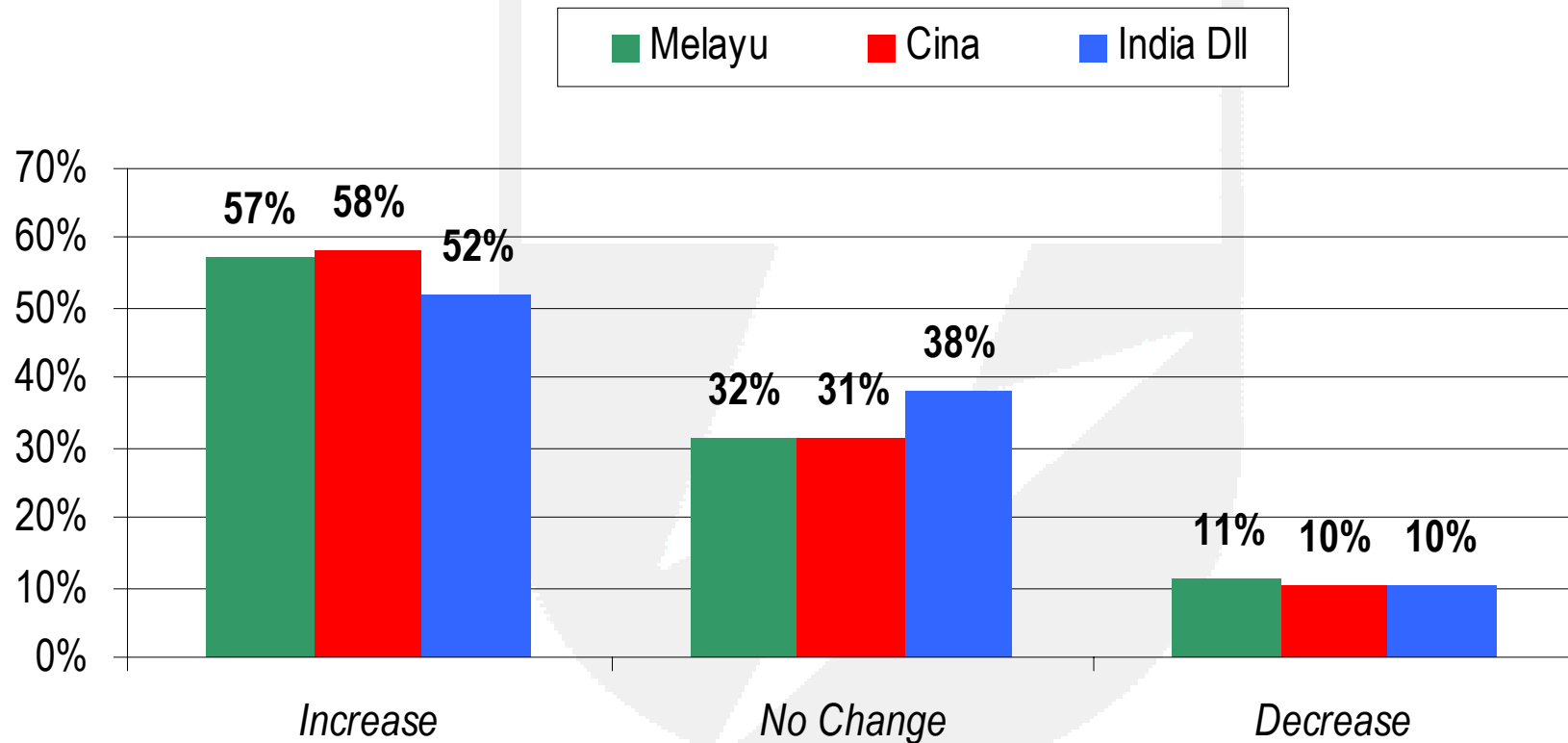


The things that people can buy and do – their housing, furniture, food, cars, recreation and travel – make up their standard of living. How satisfied or dissatisfied do you feel about your standard of living at present?



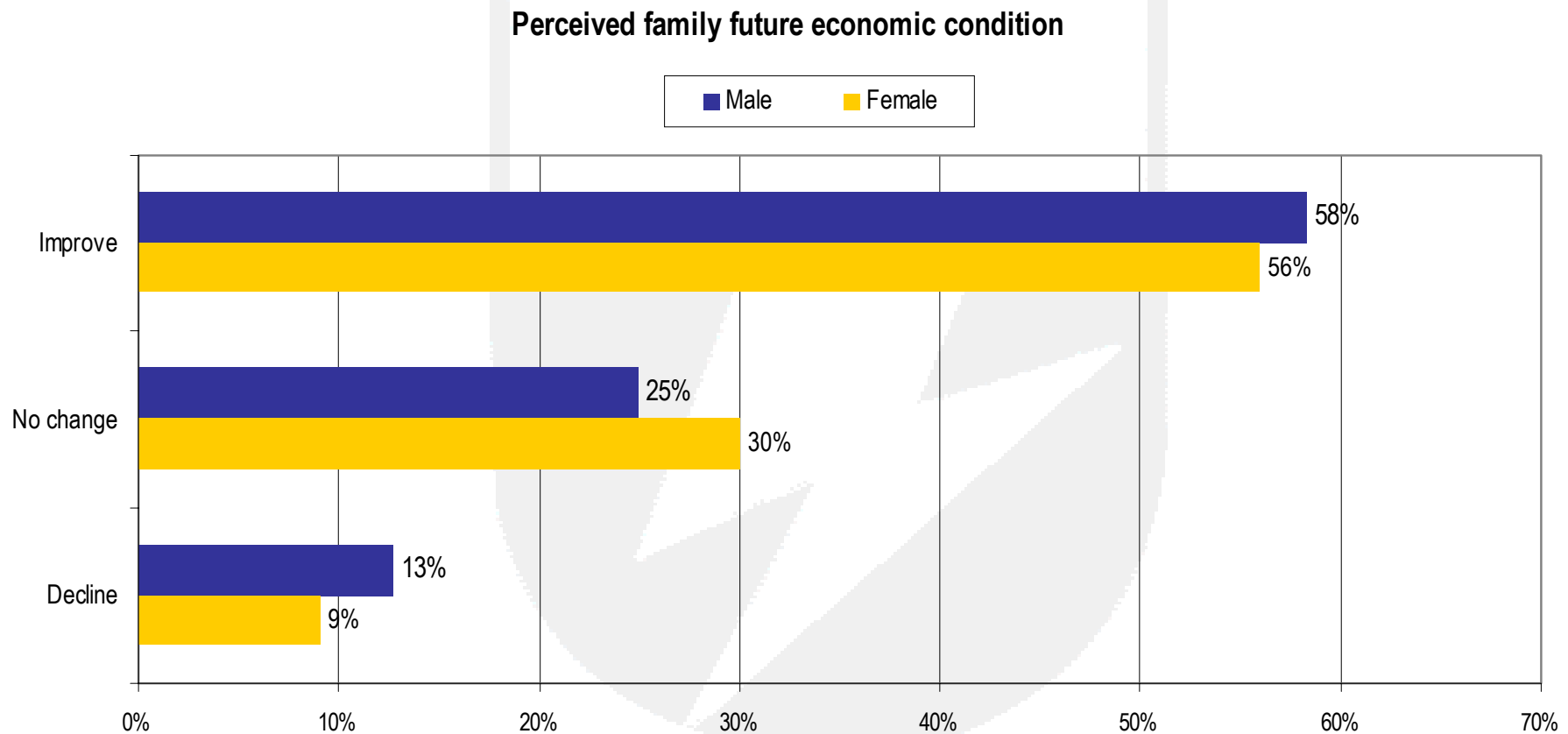
**Apakah pandangan anda tentang keadaan ekonomi/kewangan keluarga anda setahun dari sekarang – adakah ianya akan meningkat, merosot atau sama sahaja?**

## Optimism About The Economy



***In your opinion, what would you expect your family's economic condition to be one year from now?  
Would it improve, decline, or stay about the same?***

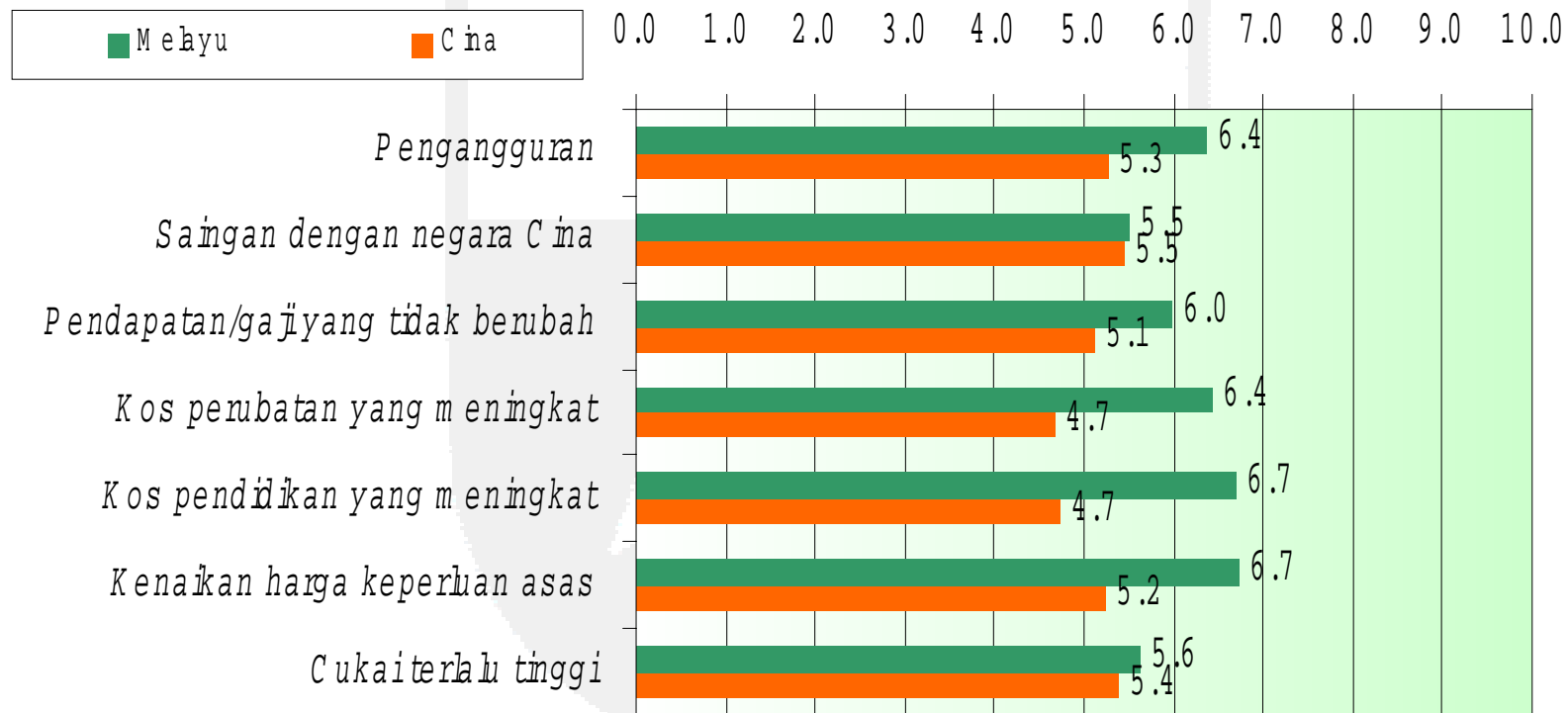
**Apakah pandangan anda tentang keadaan ekonomi/kewangan keluarga anda setahun dari sekarang – adakah ianya akan meningkat, merosot atau sama sahaja? (By Gender)**



*In your opinion, what would you expect your family's economic condition to be one year from now?  
Would it improve, decline, or stay about the same?*

Saya akan membacakan senarai isu mengenai ekonomi. Untuk setiap isu, saya ingin anda terangkan bagaimana seriusnya masalah tersebut, dengan mengikut skala 1 hingga 10 dimana 1 bermaksud “Tidak ada masalah langsung” dan 10 bermaksud “Masalah amat serius”. (By Ethnic)

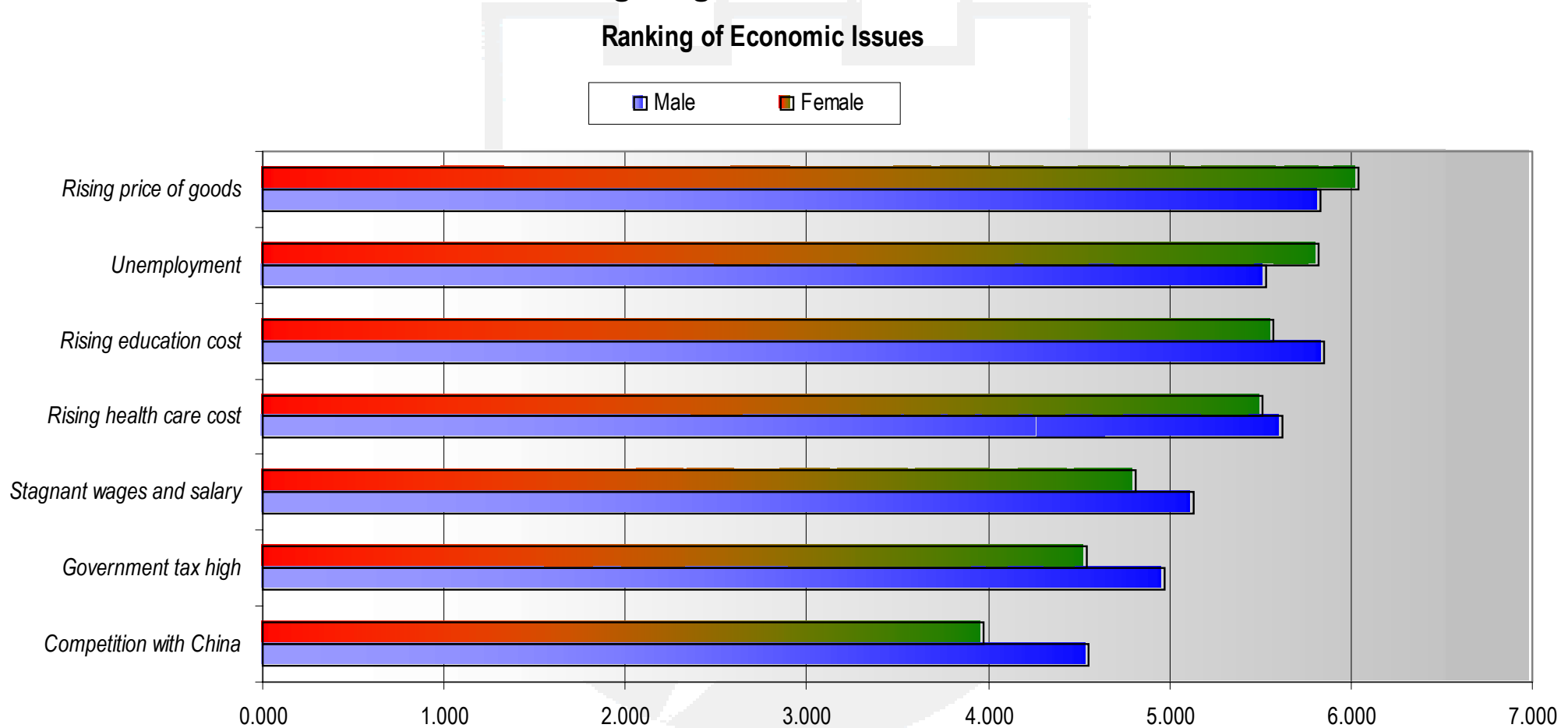
Persepsi Terhadap Faktor Tekanan Ekonomi



*I am going to read you a list of issues relating to the economy. For each issue, I want you to tell me how serious it is as a problem to you today, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means “No Problem At All” and 10 means “Very Serious Problem”.*

## Perceptions on the Economy

**Saya akan membacakan senarai isu mengenai ekonomi. Untuk setiap isu, saya ingin anda terangkan bagaimana seriusnya masalah tersebut, dengan mengikut skala 1 hingga 10 dimana 1 bermaksud “Tidak ada masalah langsung” dan 10 bermaksud “Masalah amat serius”.**

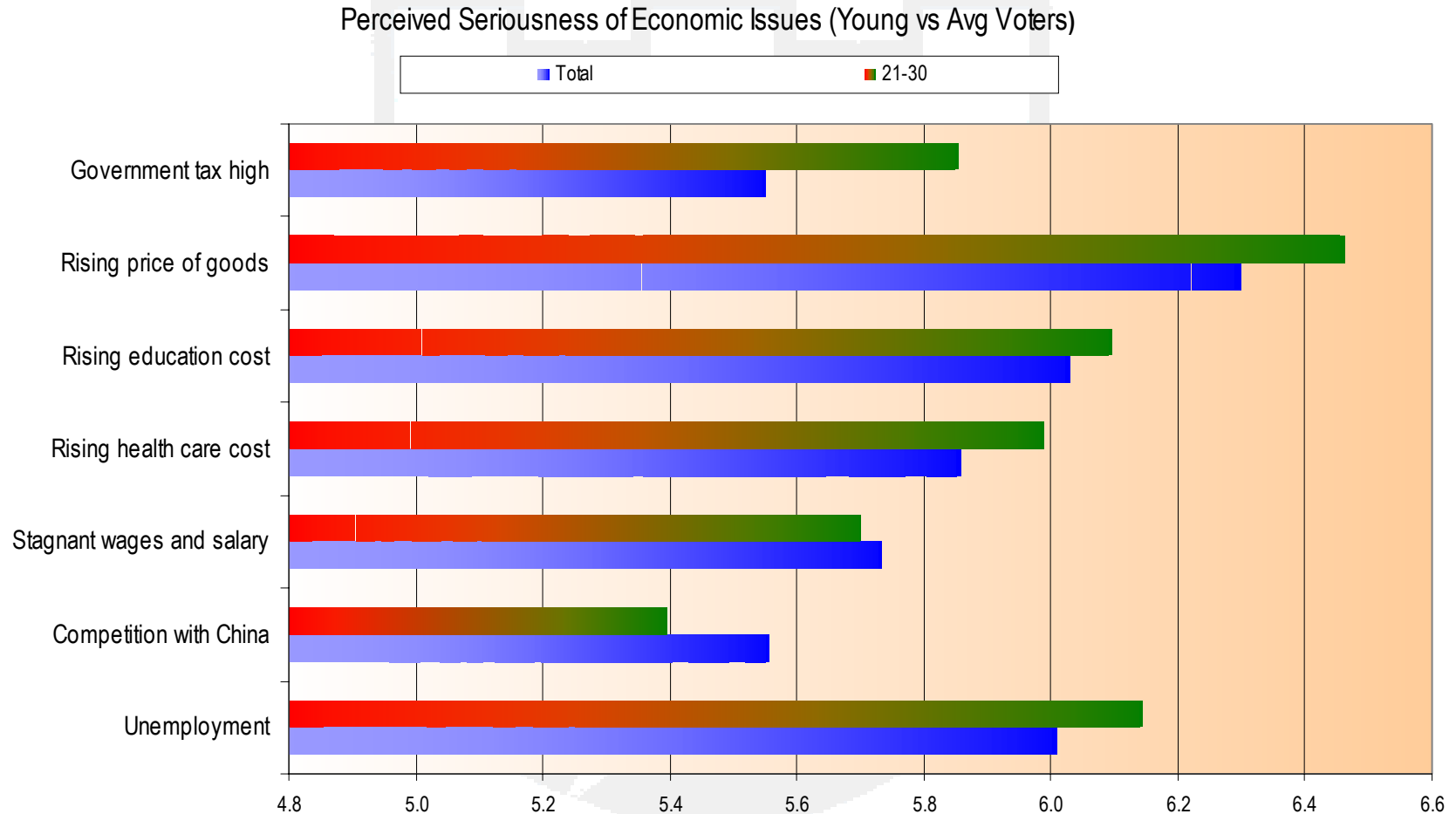


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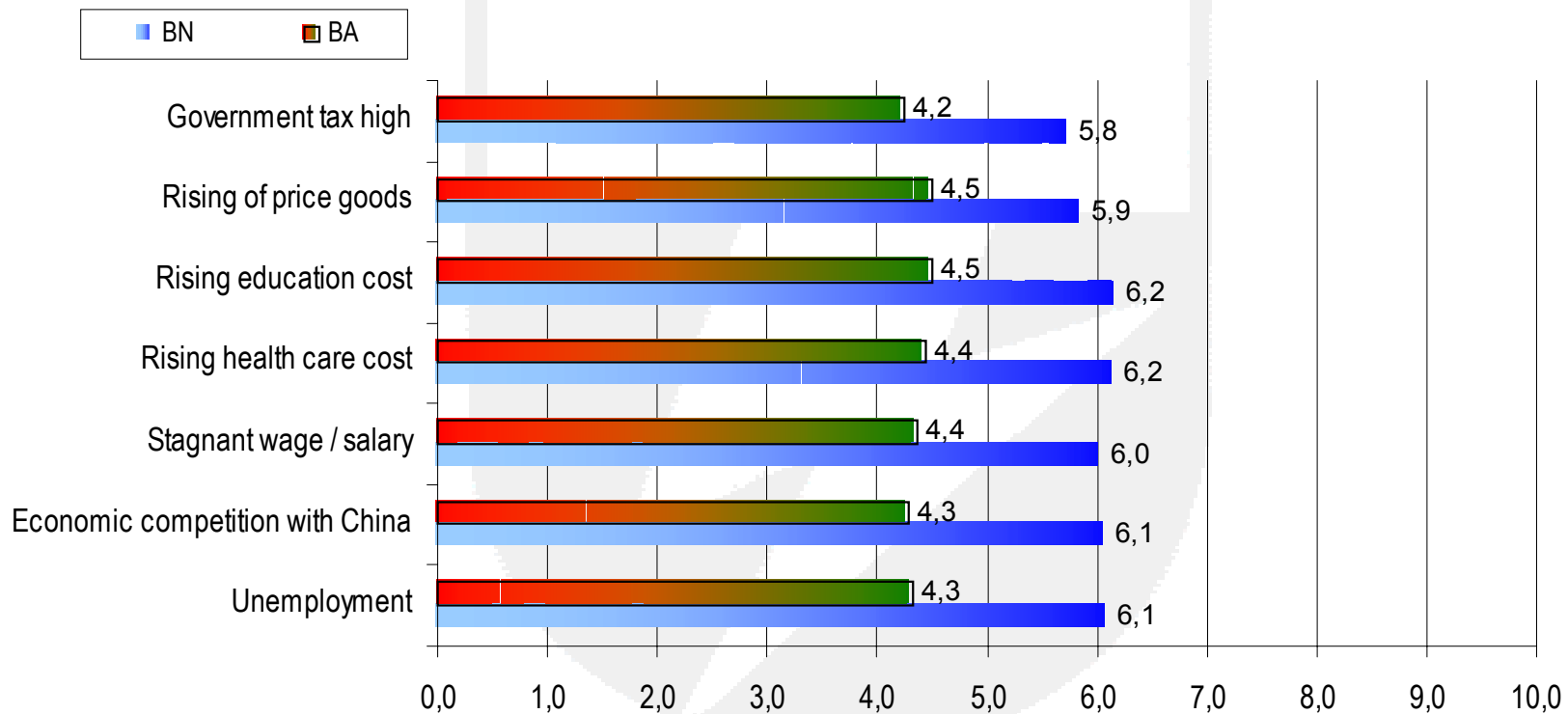


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## Perceptions on the Economy

Saya akan membacakan senarai isu mengenai ekonomi. Mengikut skala 1 hingga 10 dimana 1 bermaksud “Kurang berupaya” dan 10 bermaksud “Amat berupaya”, sila nyatakan keupayaan Barisan Nasional berbanding Barisan Alternatif dalam mengendalikan isu-isu berikut.

Perceived BN vs BA Capability in Addressing Economic Issues

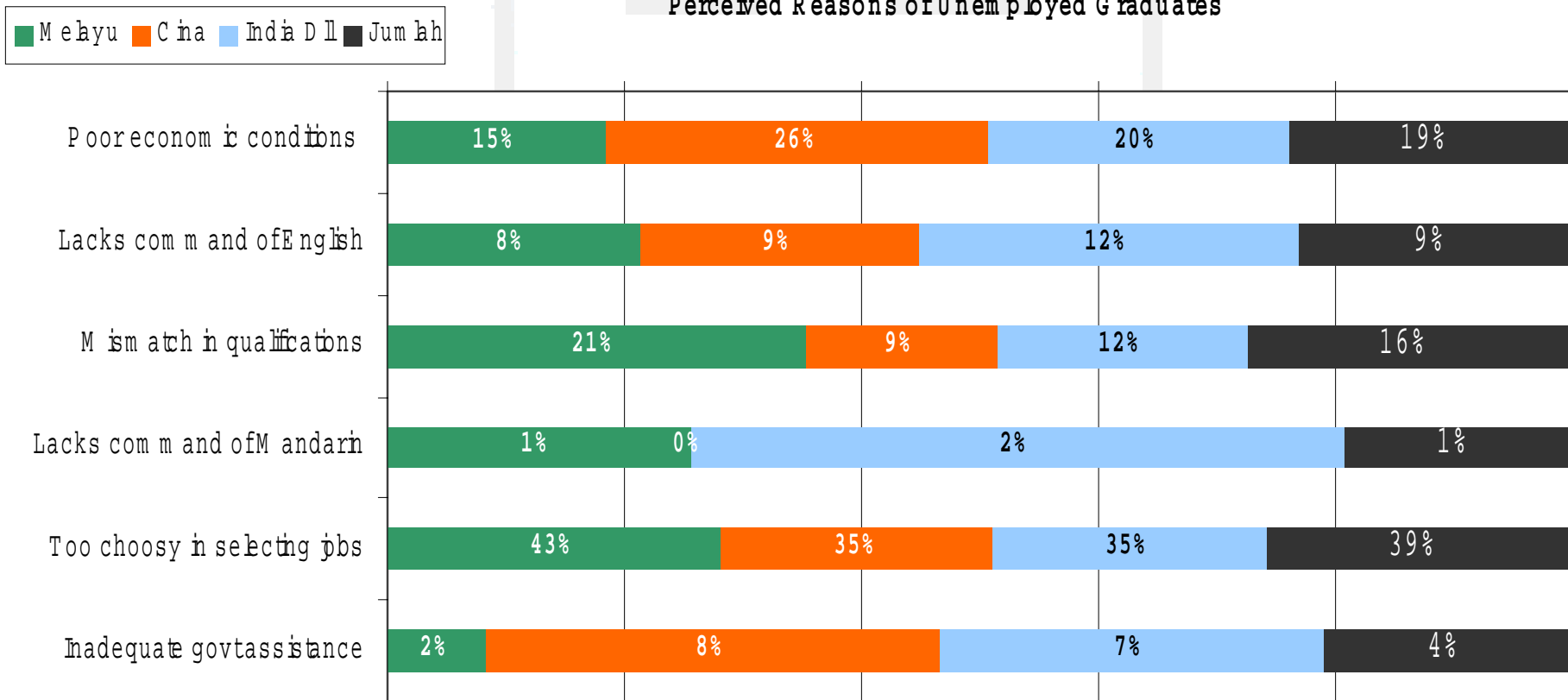


I am going to read you a list of issues relating to the economy. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is “very incapable” and 10 is “most capable”, please rate the ability of Barisan Nasional in handling the following issues





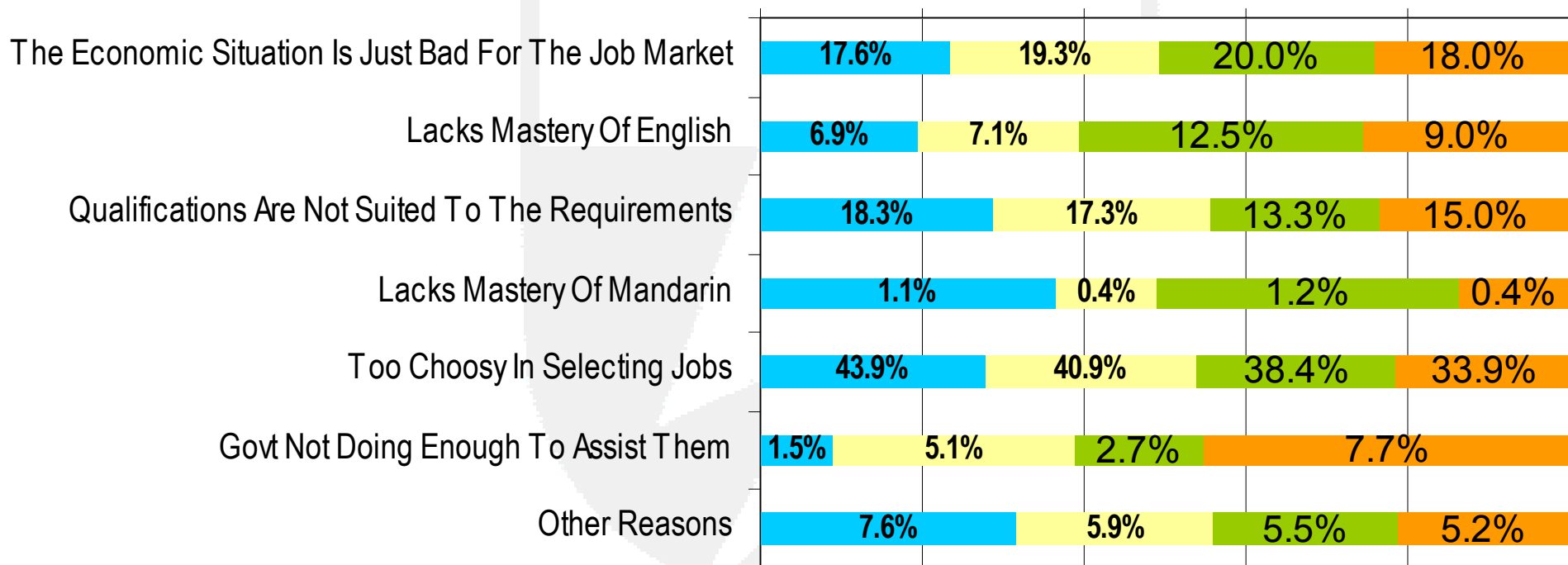
***Pada pendapat anda apakah faktor yang menyebabkan ramai graduan universiti tidak dapat mencari pekerjaan pada masa ini?***



*What do you think is the reason why many university graduates are not able to find employment these days?*

## ***Pada pendapat anda apakah faktor yang menyebabkan ramai graduan universiti tidak dapat mencari pekerjaan pada masa ini? (By Age Group)***

Perceived Reasons for Unemployed Graduates ( Across Age Groups)



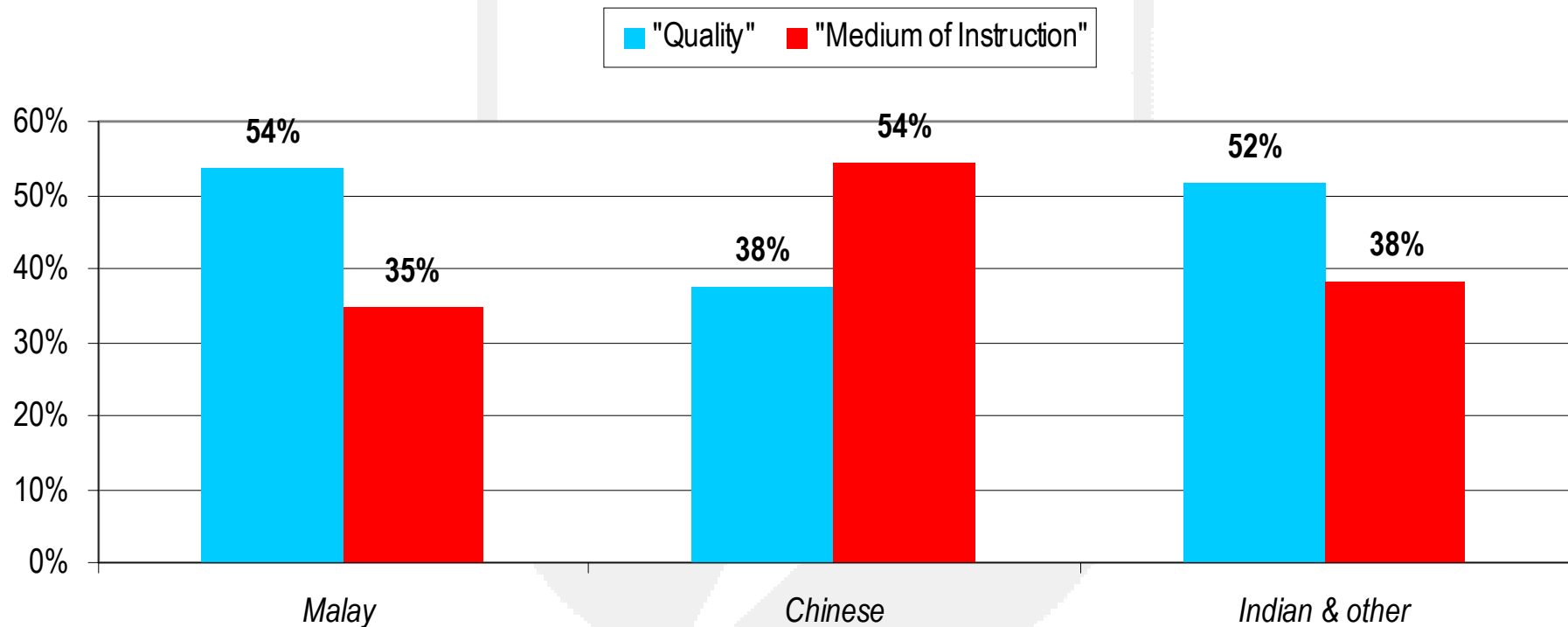
*What do you think is the reason why many university graduates are not able to find employment these days?*



### III. PERCEPTIONS ON EDUCATION

Jika dibandingkan di antara “kualiti pendidikan” dan “bahasa pengantar”, faktor manakah yang anda rasa mendorong ibu bapa untuk menghantar anak-anak mereka ke sekolah Cina di kawasan anda?

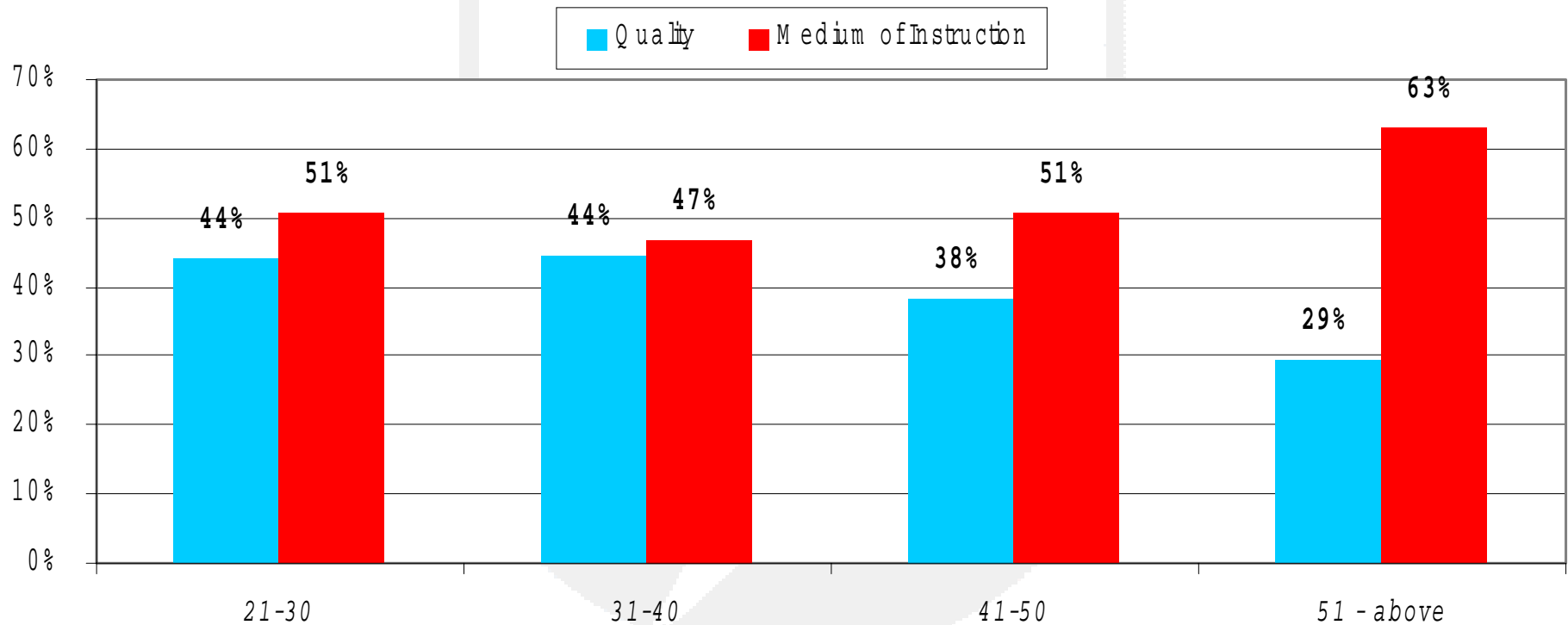
Perceived Primary Reason for Sending Children to Vernacular Schools



*Comparing between “quality of education” and “medium of instruction”, which factor has the greatest influence on parents who send their children to Chinese schools in your area?*

Jika dibandingkan di antara “kualiti pendidikan” dan “bahasa pengantar”, faktor manakah yang anda rasa mendorong ibu bapa untuk menghantar anak-anak mereka ke sekolah Cina di kawasan anda? (By Age Group)

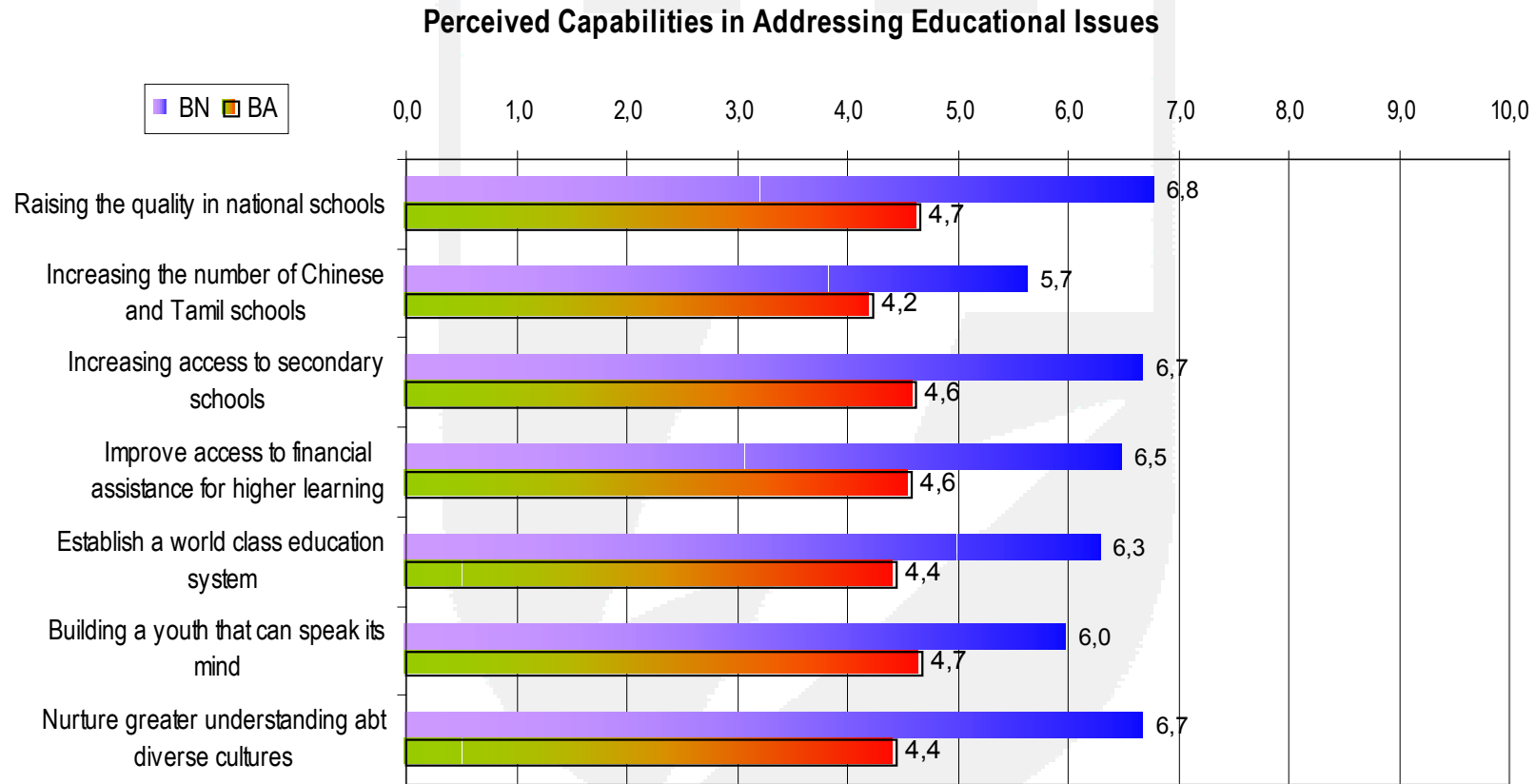
Perceived Primary Reason for Sending Children to Vernacular Schools  
(Amongst Chinese Respondents Across Age Groups)



*Comparing between “quality of education” and “medium of instruction”, which factor has the greatest influence on parents who send their children to Chinese schools in your area?*



**Bercakap mengenai pendidikan, jika mengikut skala 1 hingga 10 dimana 1 bermaksud “Kurang berupaya” dan 10 bermaksud “Amat berupaya” sila nyatakan keupayaan Barisan Nasional berbanding parti-parti Alternatif dalam menyediakan perkara-perkara berikut.**



*Talking further about education, on a scale of one to ten, where 1 = “Least Capable” and 10 is “Most Capable” the highest, how would you rate the ability of BN in delivering the following?*



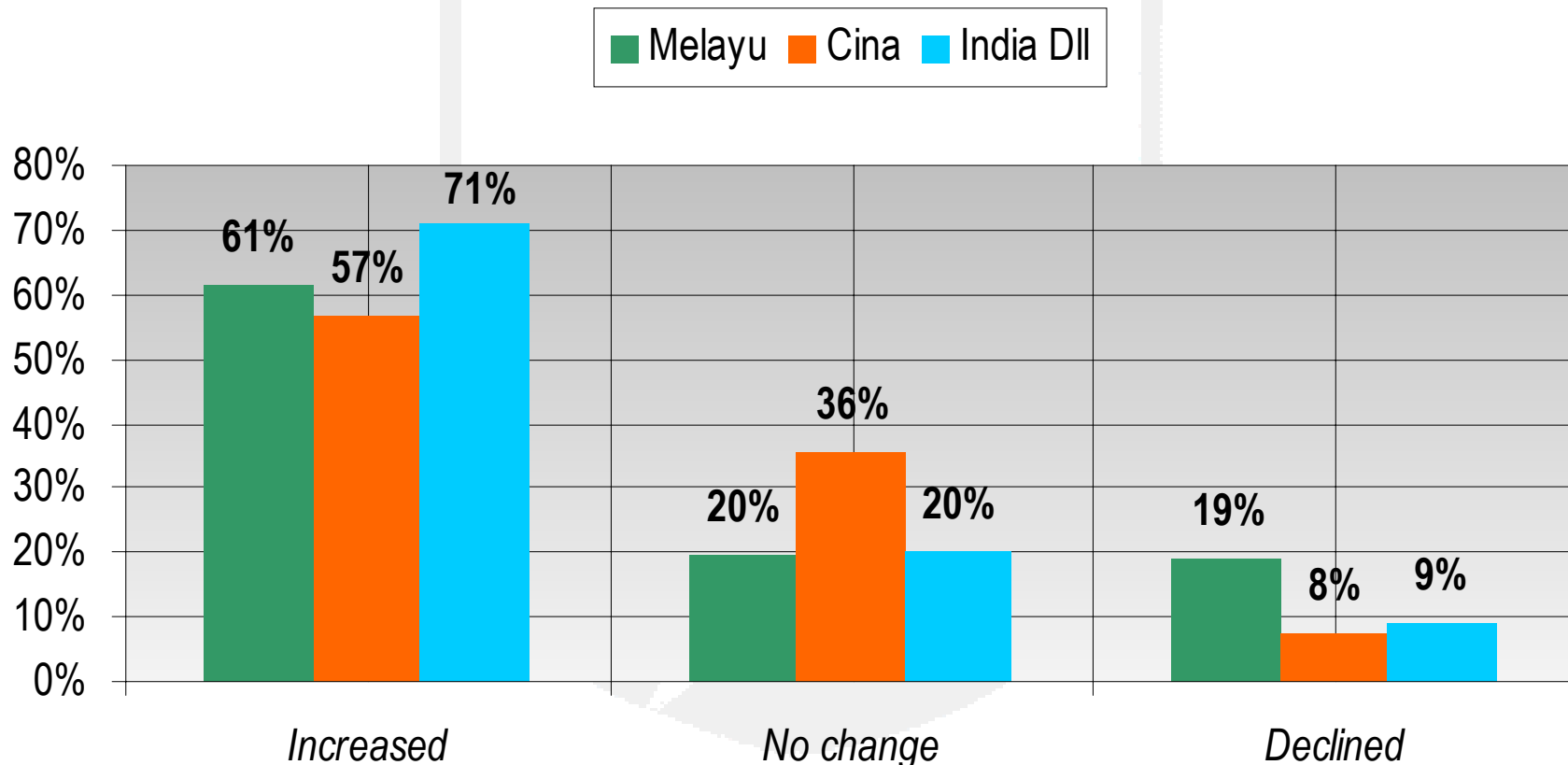


## IV. PERCEPTIONS ON CORRUPTION



**Sejauh mana anda rasa gejala rasuah dalam kerajaan meningkat atau berkurangan sejak beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini?**

## Perceived Incidence of Corruption in Govt

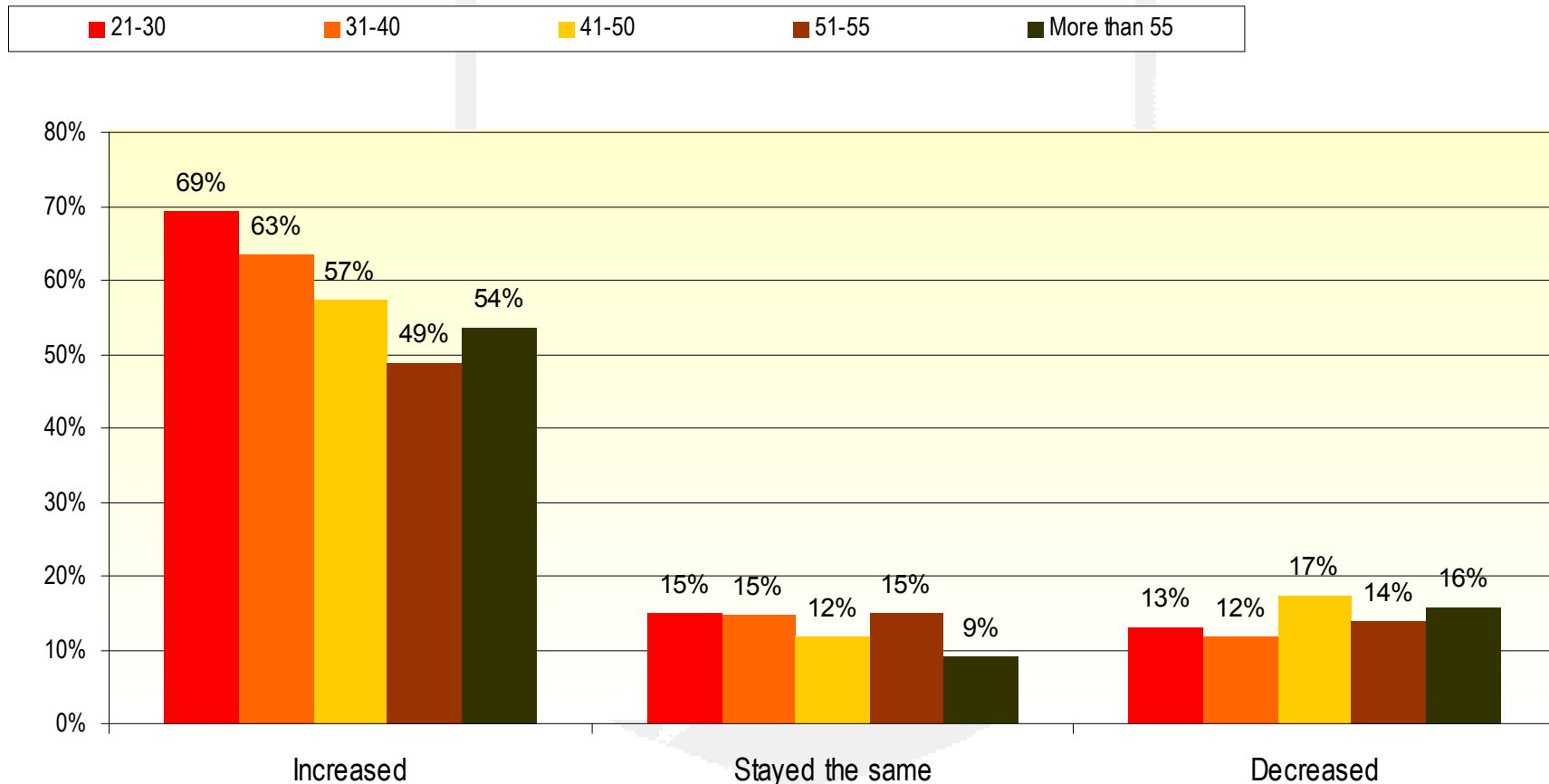


To what extent would you say your concern about corruption in government has increased or decreased in the past few years?



## Sejauh mana anda rasa gejala rasuah dalam kerajaan meningkat atau berkurangan sejak beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini? (By Age Group)

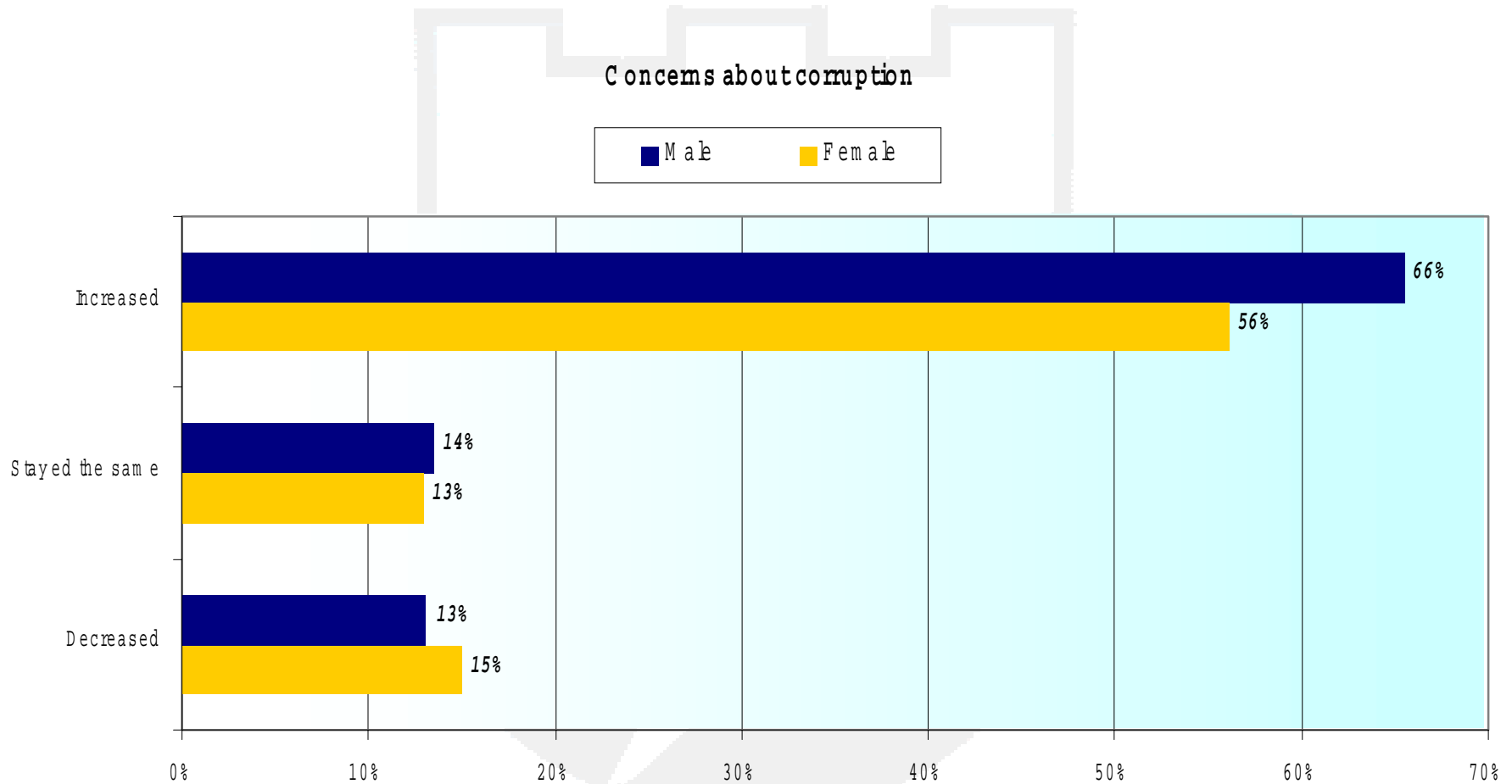
Perception of Incidence of Corruption (By Age)



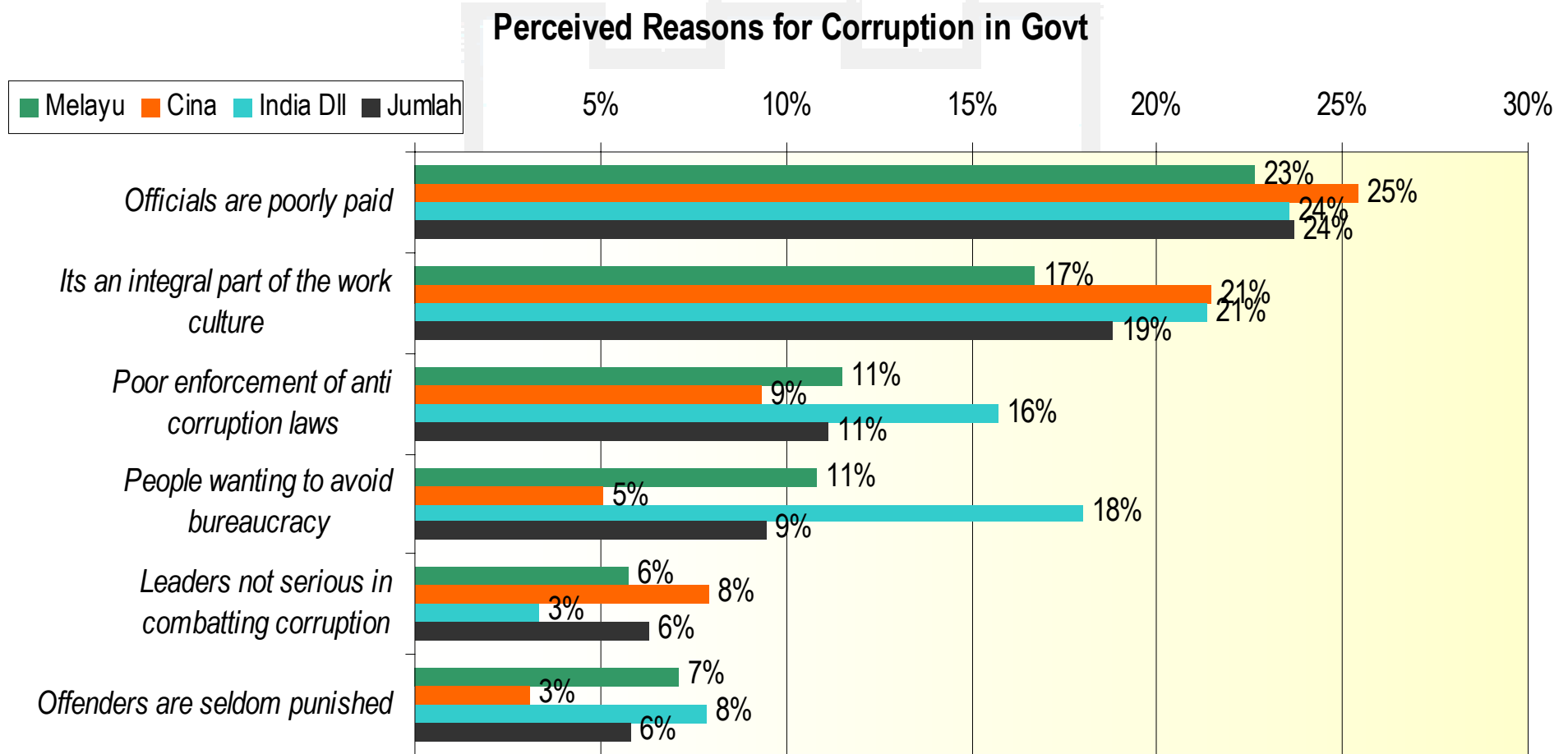
To what extent would you say your concern about corruption in government has increased or decreased in the past few years?



## Sejauh mana anda rasa gejala rasuah dalam kerajaan meningkat atau berkurangan sejak beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini? (By Gender)



**Bercakap mengenai rasuah, apakah sebab utama ia berlaku dalam pentadbiran kerajaan pada masa ini?**

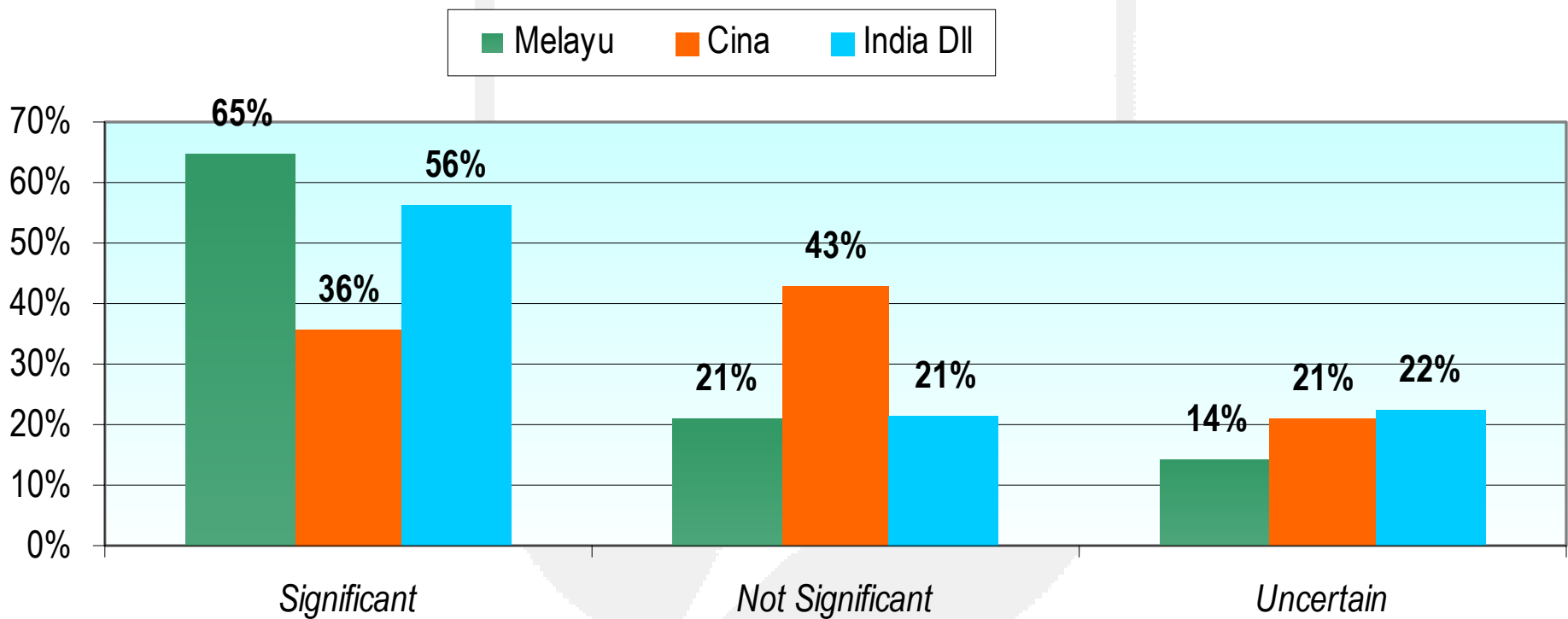


*Talking about corruption, what do you think is the main reason why it is occurs in government administration these days?*



Sejauh mana anda rasa bahawa undi anda di pilihanraya boleh memainkan peranan dalam menangani isu rasuah dalam kerajaan?

## Perceived Significance of the Vote in Fighting Corruption

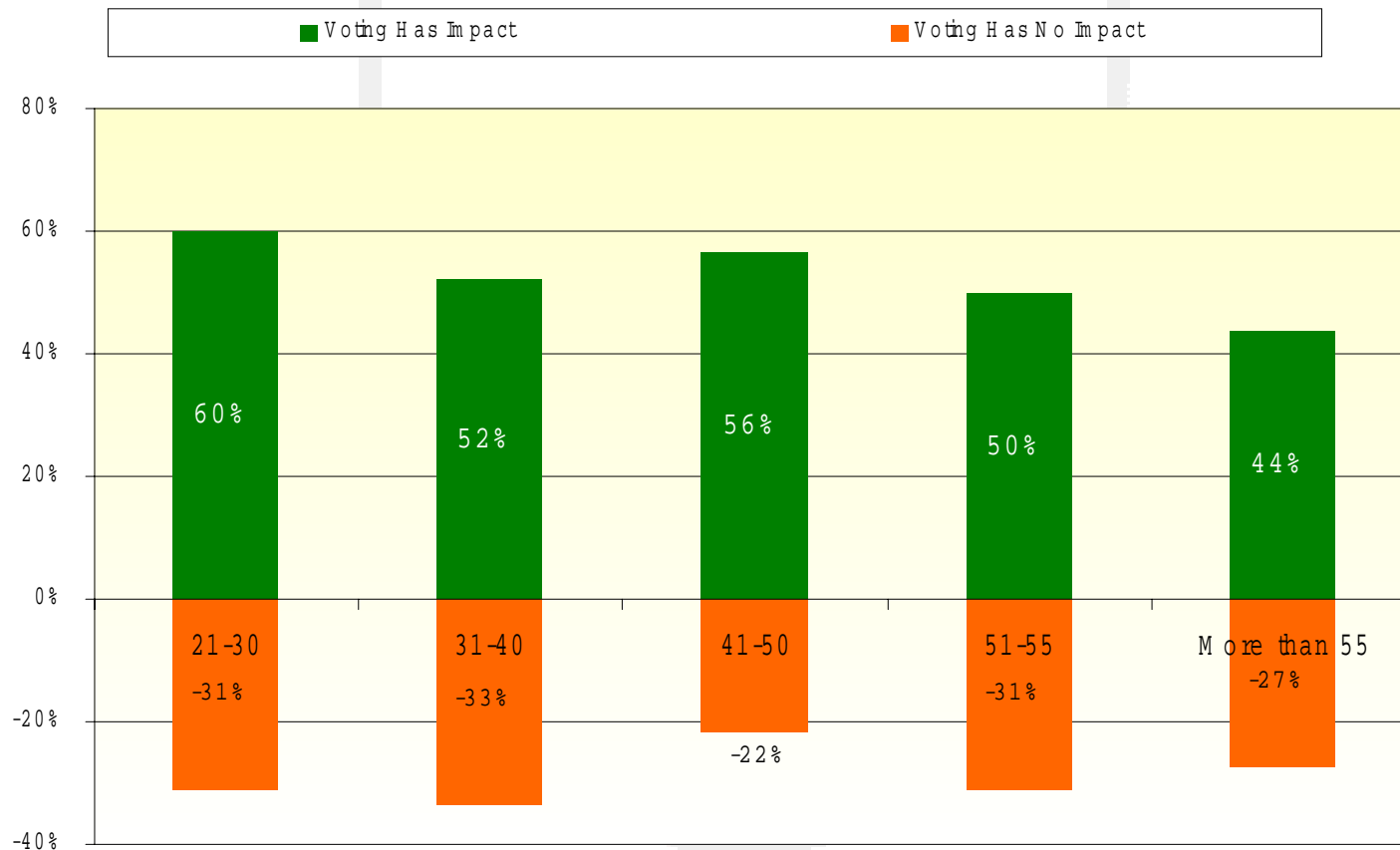


*How strongly do you feel that you voting in an election could play a role in addressing the issue of corruption in government?*



## Sejauh mana anda rasa bahawa undi anda di pilihanraya boleh memainkan peranan dalam menangani isu rasuah dalam kerajaan? (by Age Group)

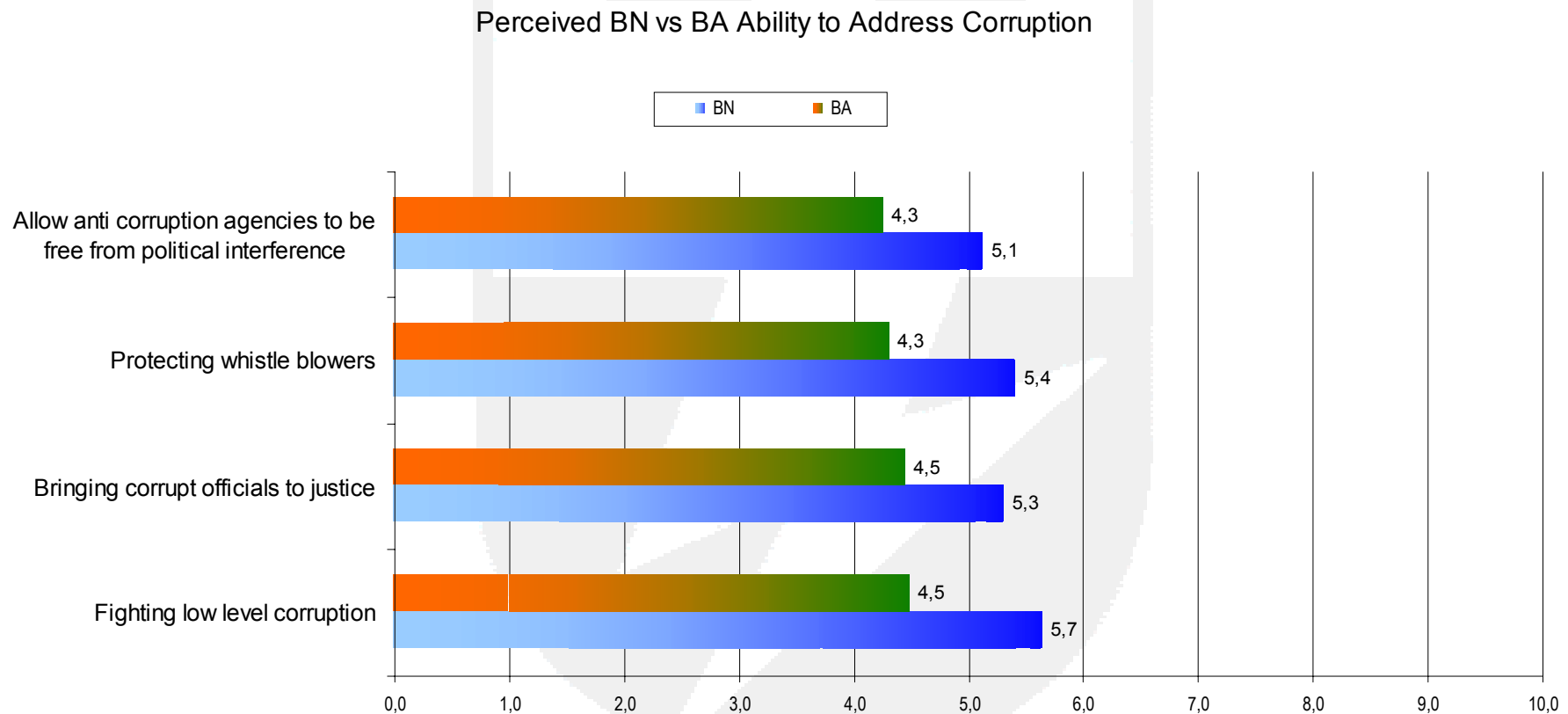
Perceived Significance of Voting in Addressing Corruption (By Age)



*How strongly do you feel that you voting in an election could play a role in addressing the issue of corruption in government?*

## National Issues: Corruption

Dengan menggunakan skala antara satu hingga sepuluh, dimana satu adalah yang paling rendah dan sepuluh yang paling tinggi, sejauh manakah anda rasa keupayaan Barisan Nasional/Barisan Alternatif bertindak mengenai isu-isu rasuah berikut.

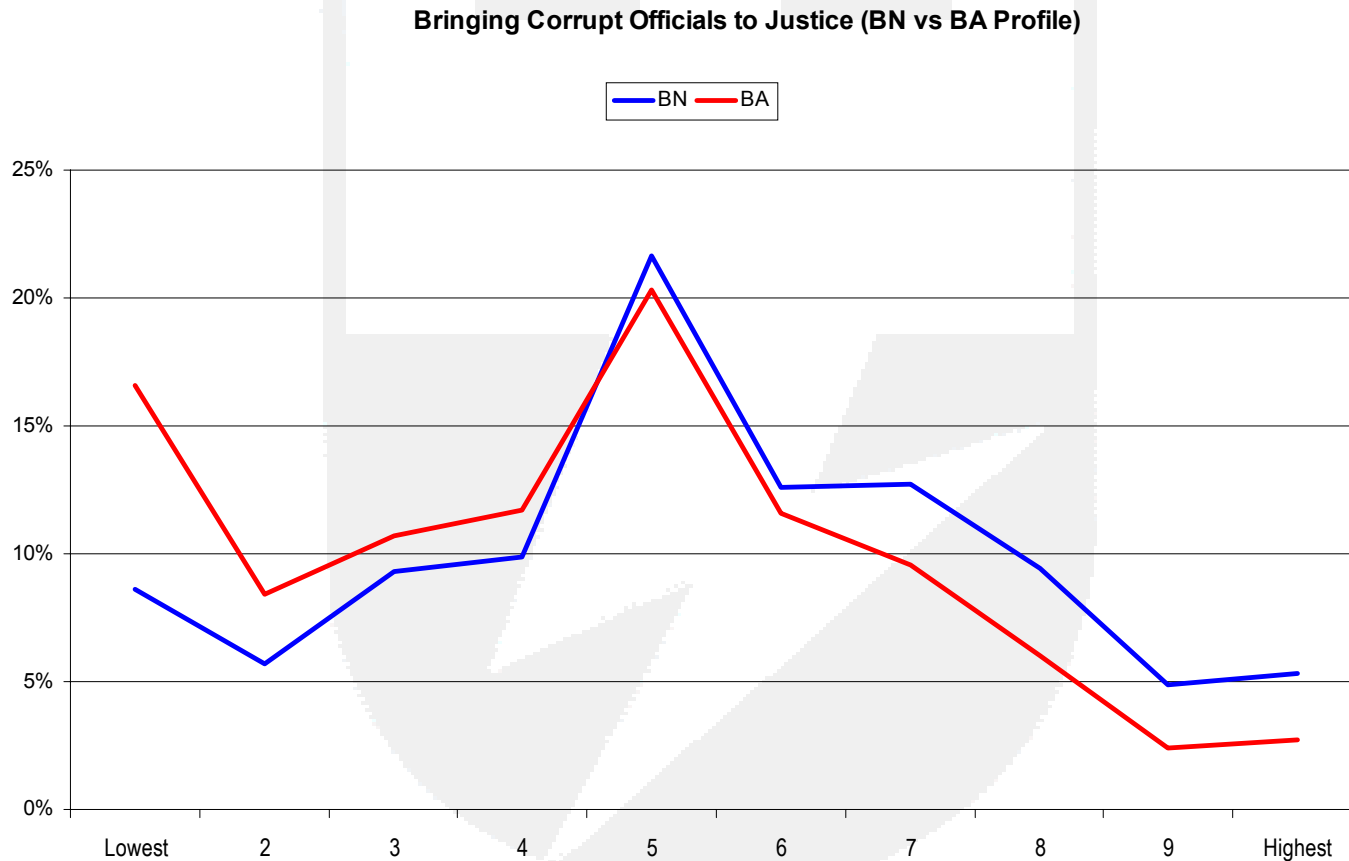


On a scale of one to ten, where one is the lowest and ten is the highest, how would you rate the ability of BN/BA in delivering the following things on corruption?



## National Issues: Corruption

Dengan menggunakan skala antara satu hingga sepuluh, dimana satu adalah yang paling rendah dan sepuluh yang paling tinggi, sejauh manakah anda rasa keupayaan Barisan Nasional/Barisan Alternatif bertindak mengenai isu-isu rasuah berikut.



On a scale of one to ten, where one is the lowest and ten is the highest, how would you rate the ability of BN and the BA in delivering the following things on corruption?





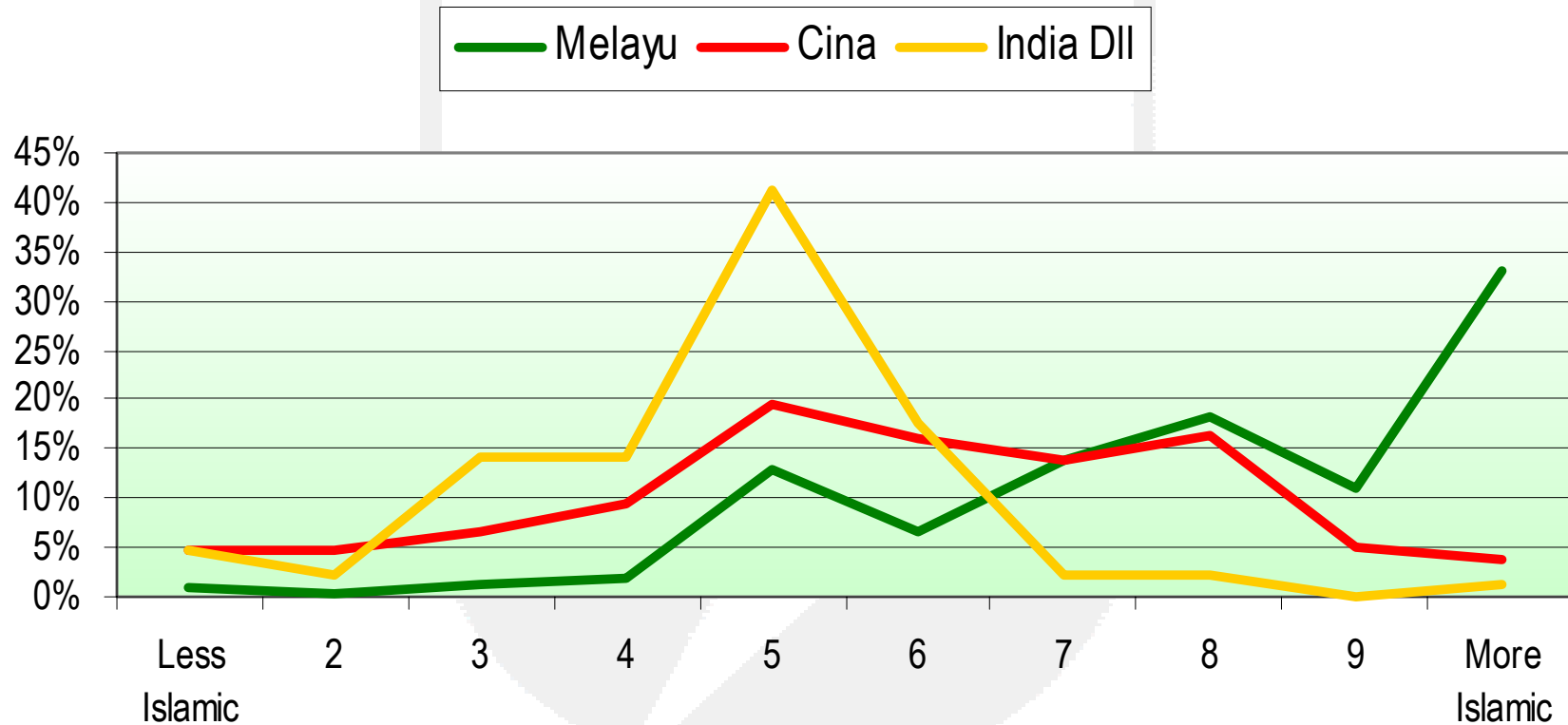
## V. ISLAM IN POLITICS





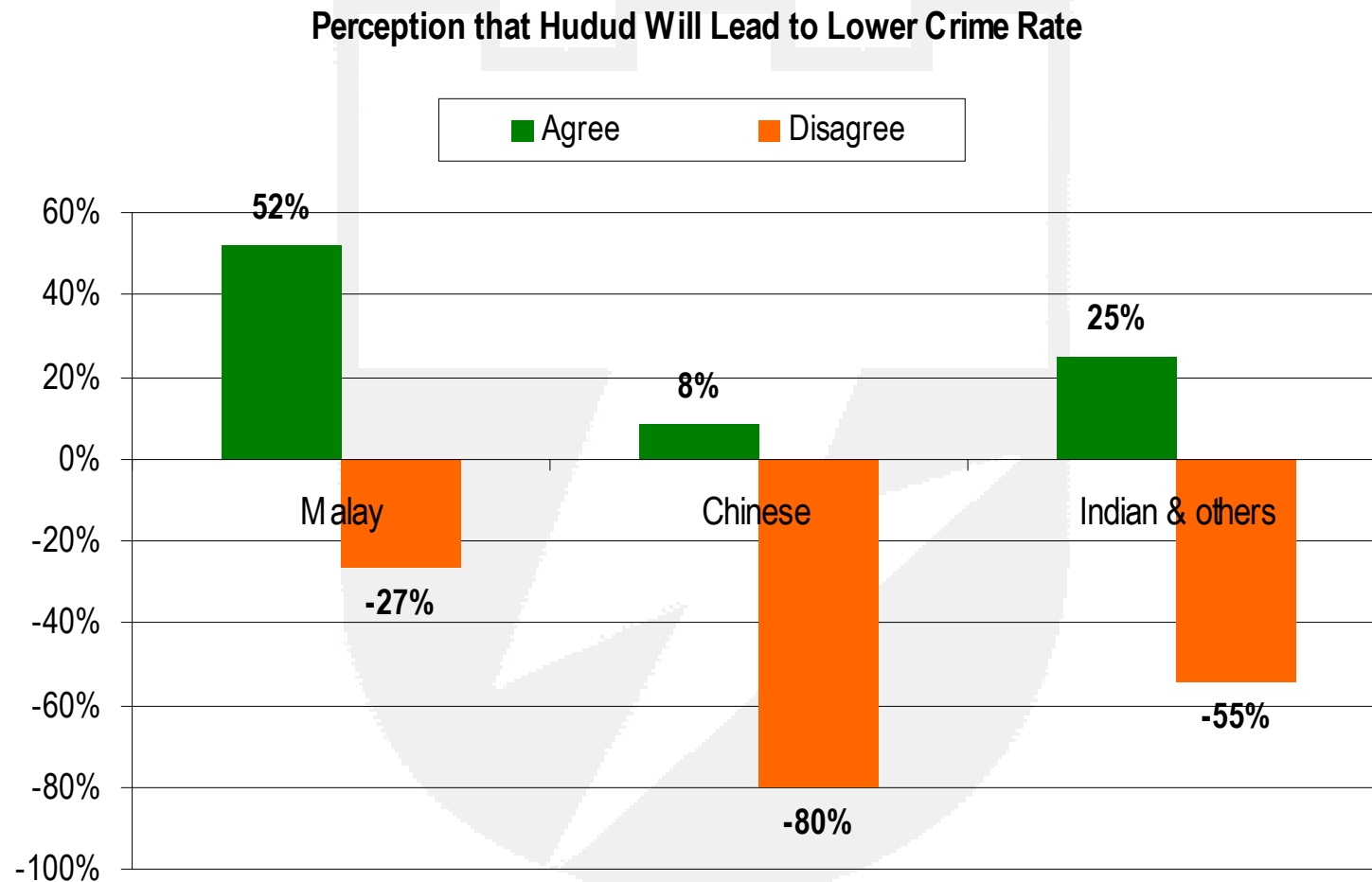
Dengan menggunakan skala 1 hingga 10, dimana 1 bermaksud “kurang Islamik” dan 10 bermakna “lebih Islamik” , apakah yang anda inginkan bagi Malaysia?

Stated Direction of Islamization in Malaysia



On a scale of one to ten, with one being "Less Islamic" and ten being "More Islamic" , how would you like Malaysia to be?

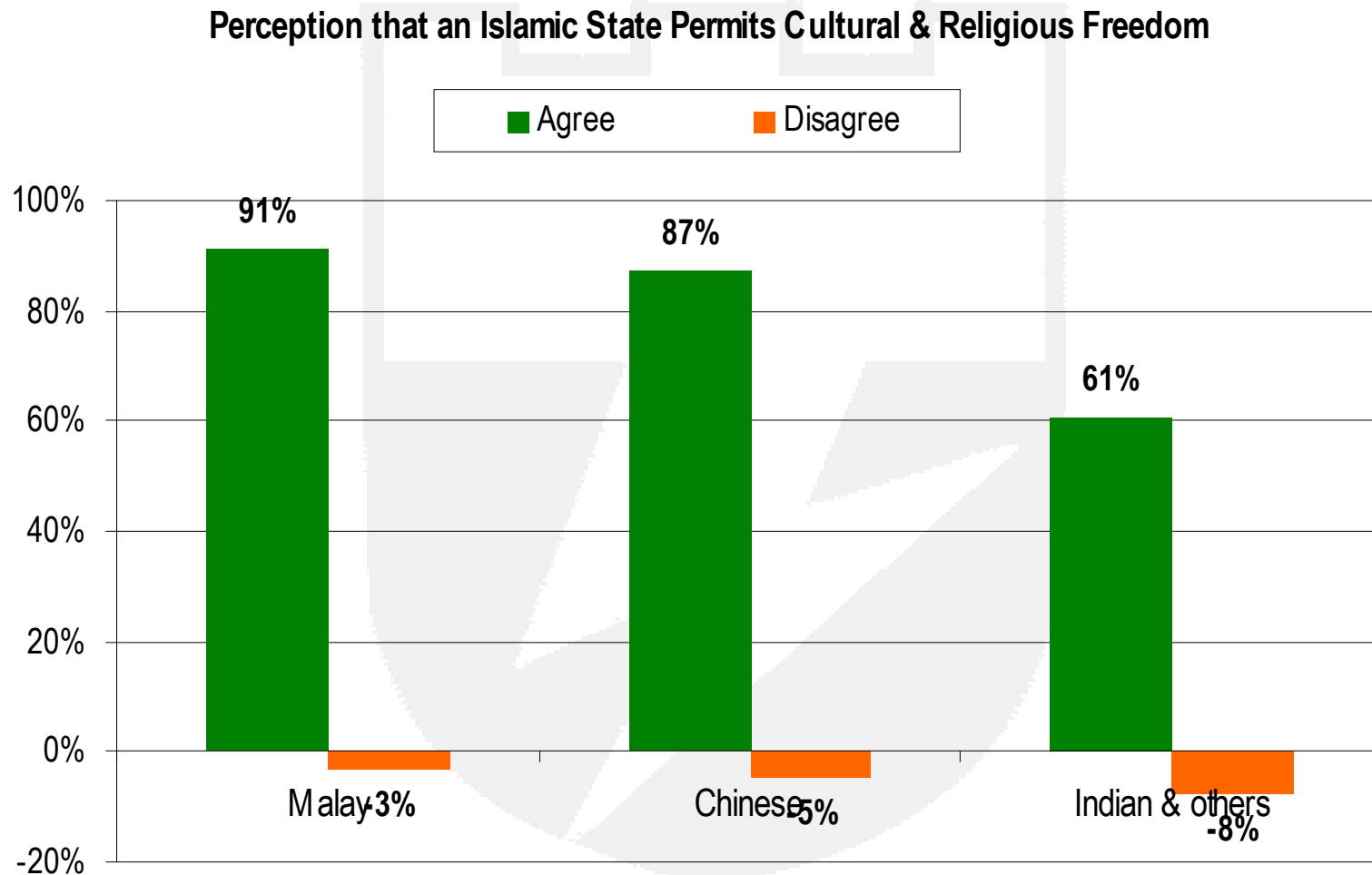
Saya akan membacakan beberapa kenyataan. Untuk setiap kenyataan, sila nyatakan sama ada anda bersetuju atau tidak bersetuju.



I am going to read you a few different statements. For each statement, please tell me whether you agree or disagree.



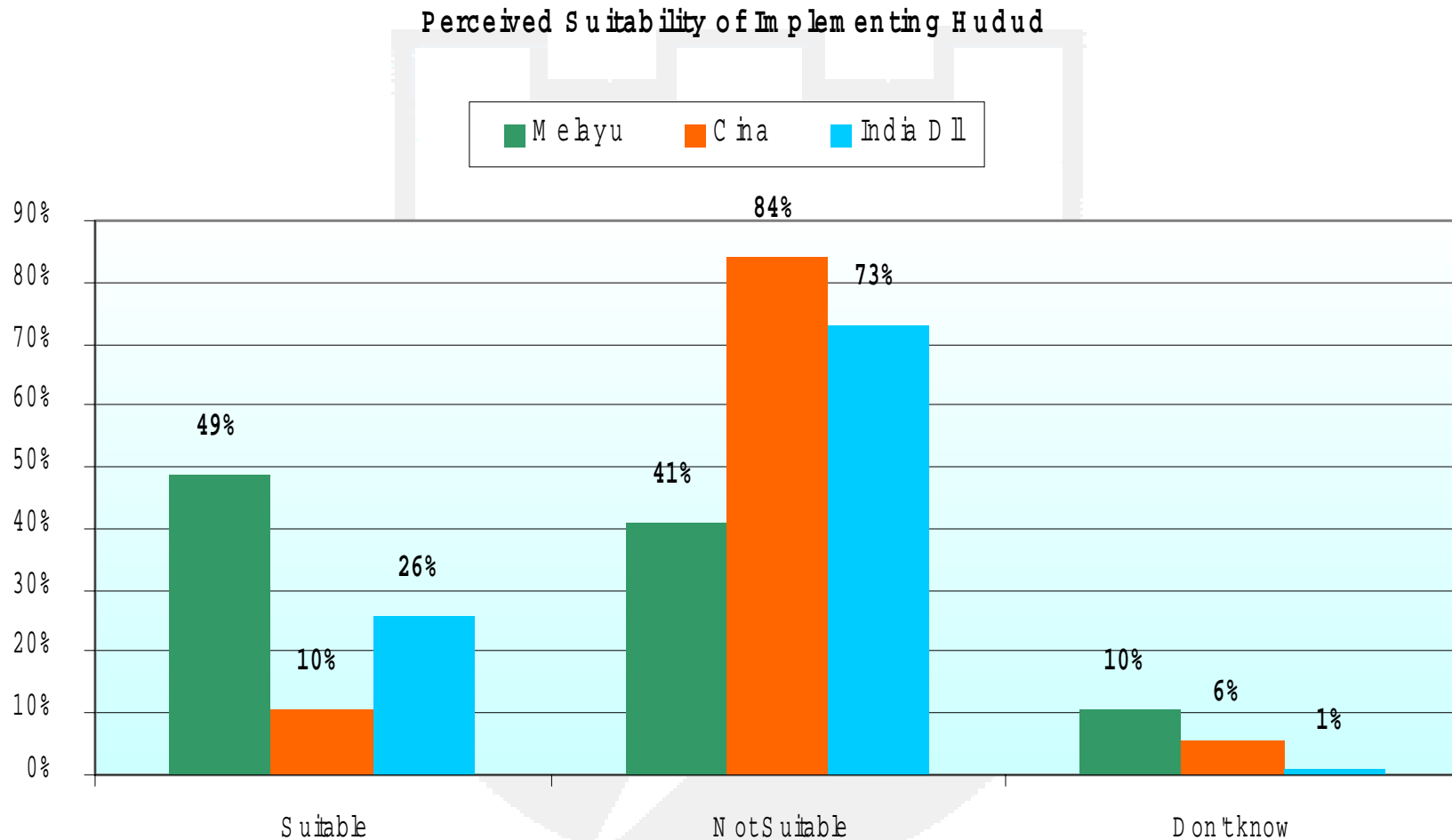
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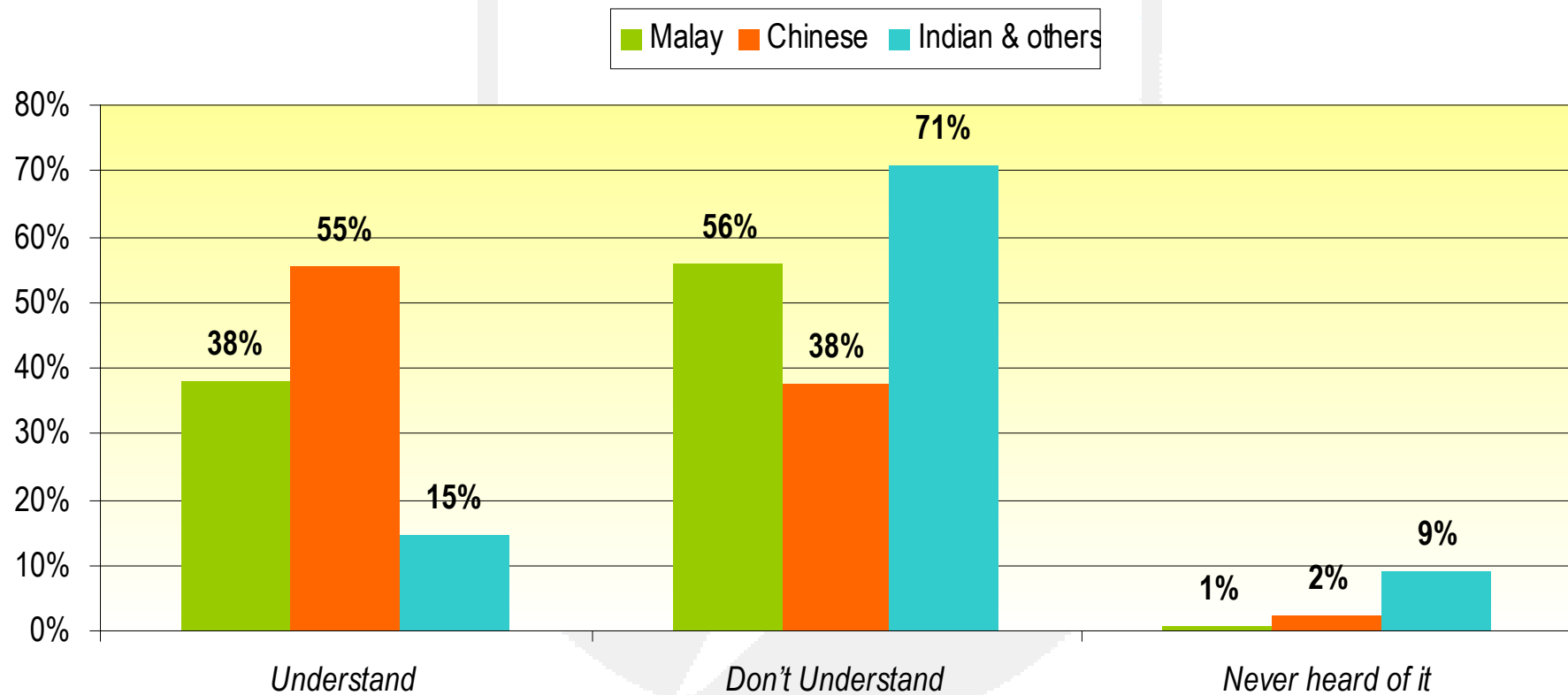
Adakah anda merasakan pelaksanaan undang-undang hudud bagi orang Islam, termasuk memotong tangan pencuri yang bersalah, sesuai dilaksanakan di negara ini?



Do you think the implementation of Islamic Criminal Law or *Hudud* on Muslims, which includes amputation of the hand for convicted thieves, suitable to be carried out in this country?

Parti PAS telah mencadangkan supaya Malaysia menjadi sebuah Negara Islam. Sejauh manakah anda faham tentang cadangan PAS tersebut ?

Comprehension of PAS' Islamic State Concept

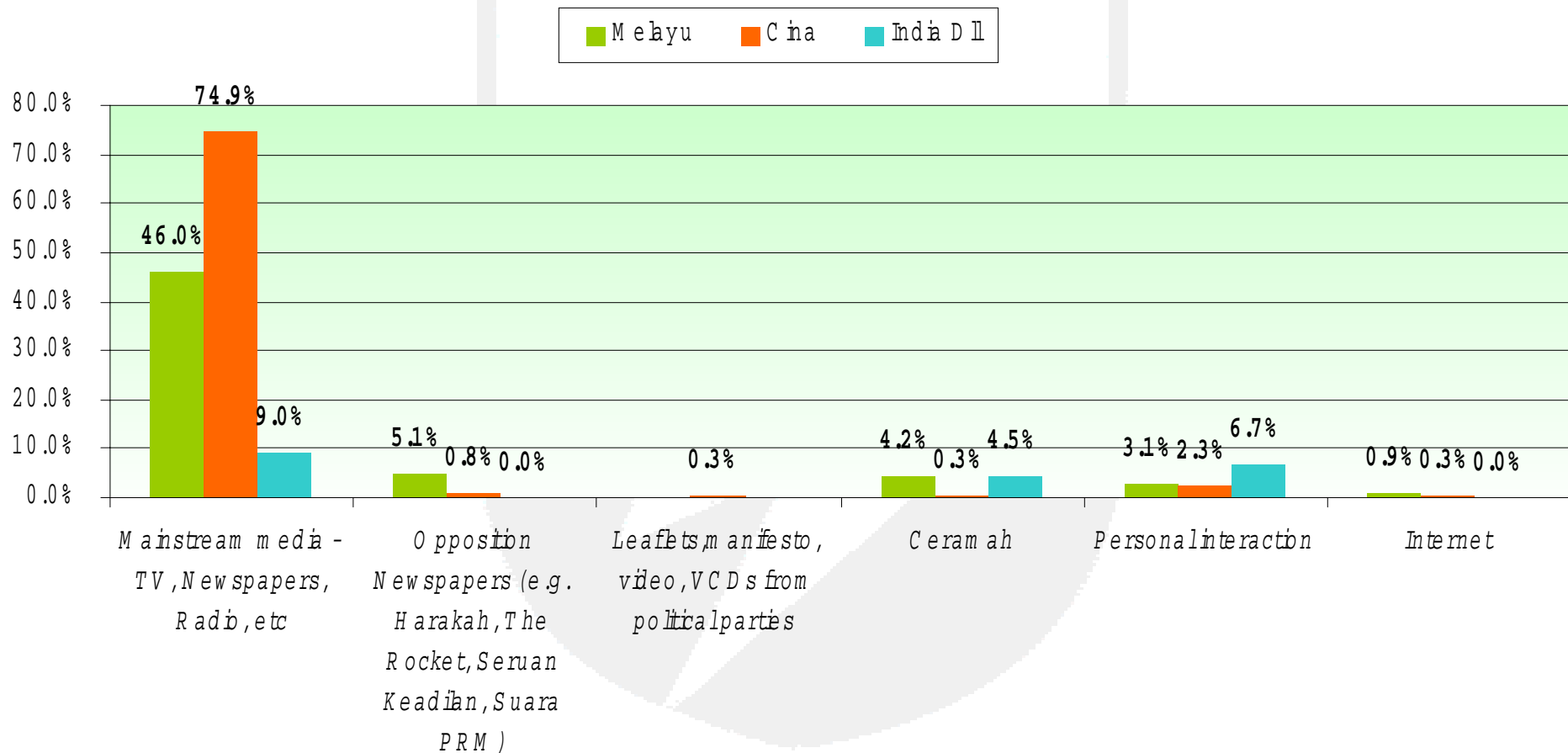


As you may know, PAS has proposed Malaysia become an Islamic State. How would you rate your understanding of this proposal?



Jika anda faham, sila nyatakan bagaimana anda dapat tahu mengenai cadangan PAS tersebut?

Source of Information About PAS Islamic State



For those who understand, please tell me how you came to know about the proposal.

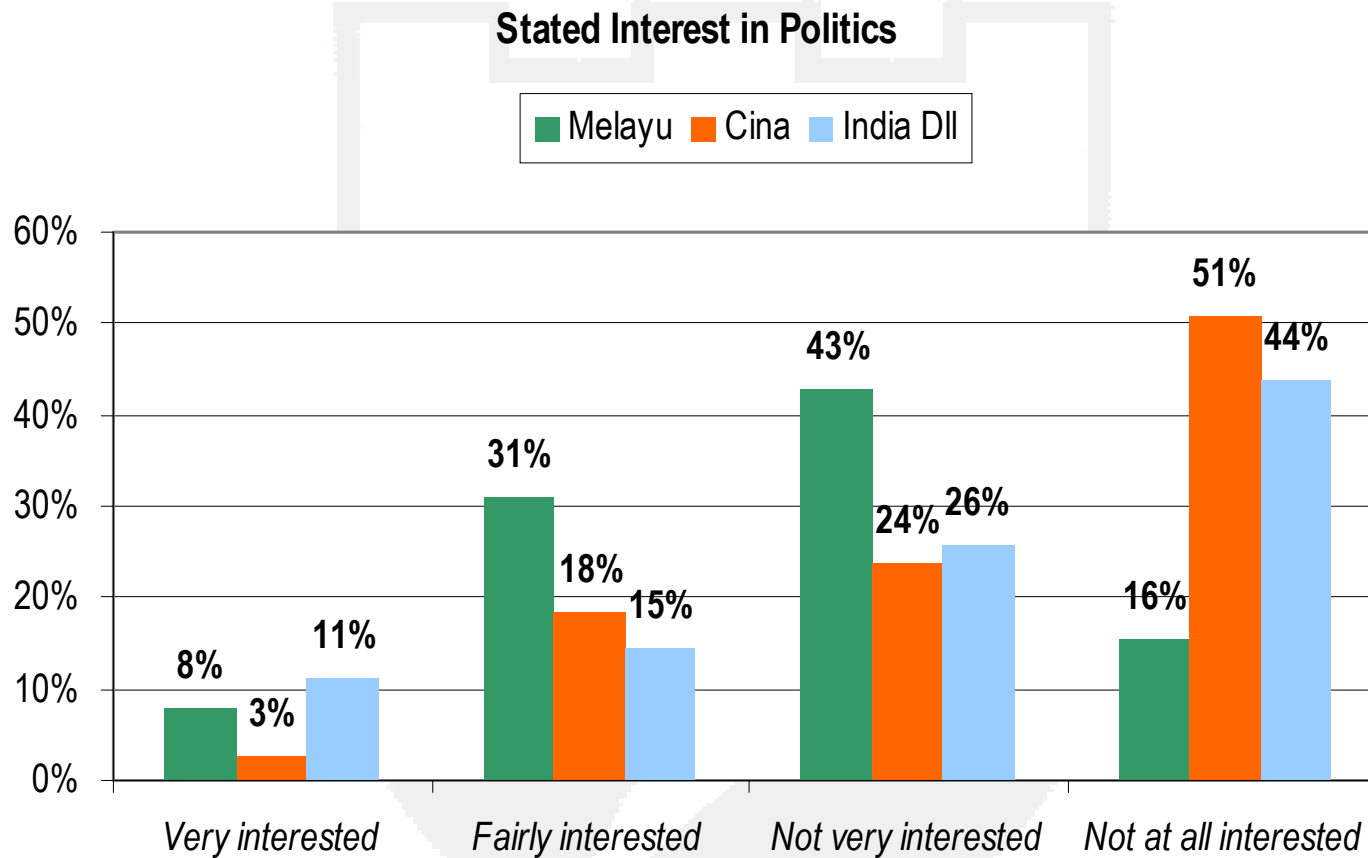




## VI. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & PERCEPTIONS



Sejauh manakah anda berminat dengan politik?

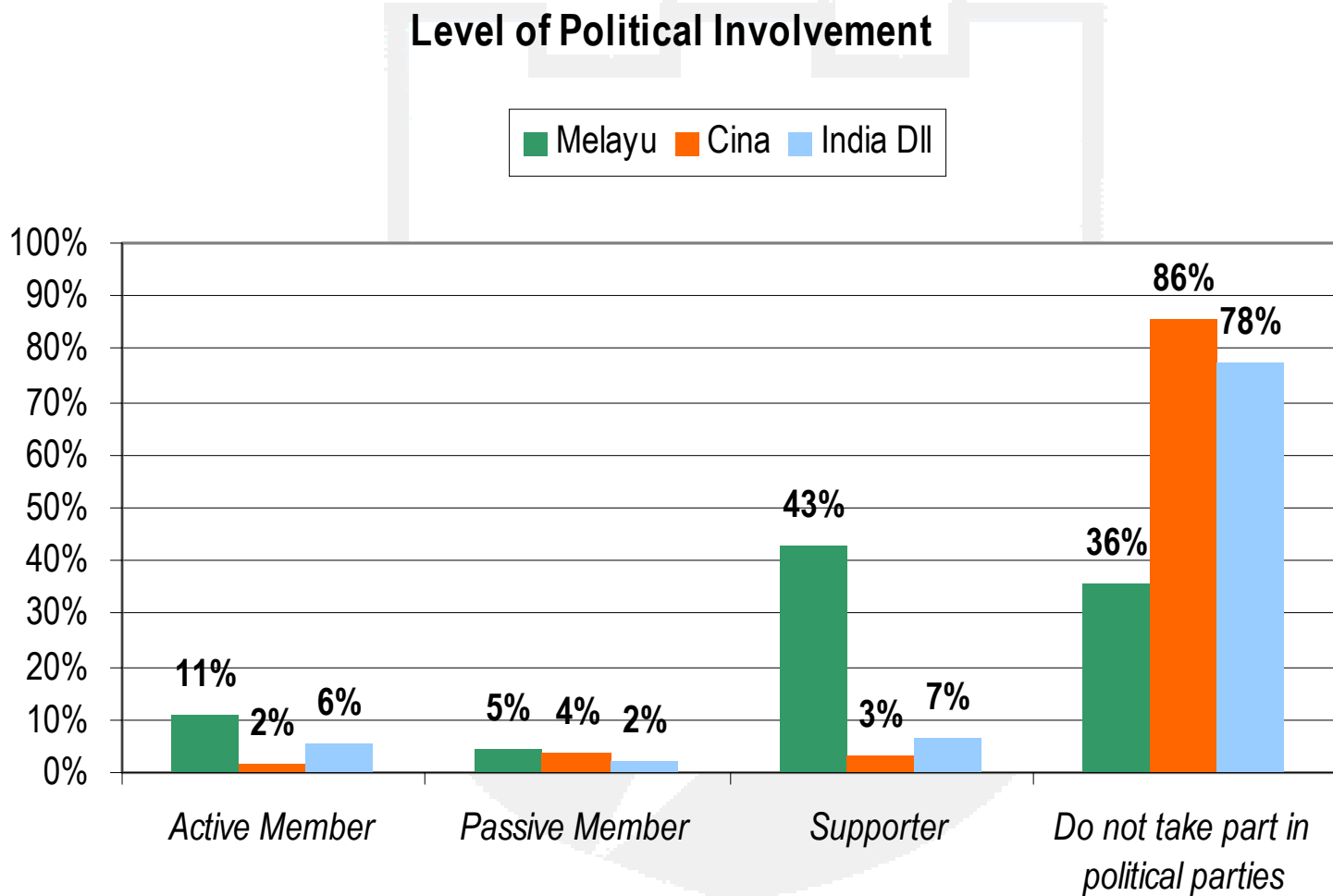


How interested would you say you are in politics?





Di manakah antara yang berikut menggambarkan tahap penyertaan anda dalam parti-parti politik?

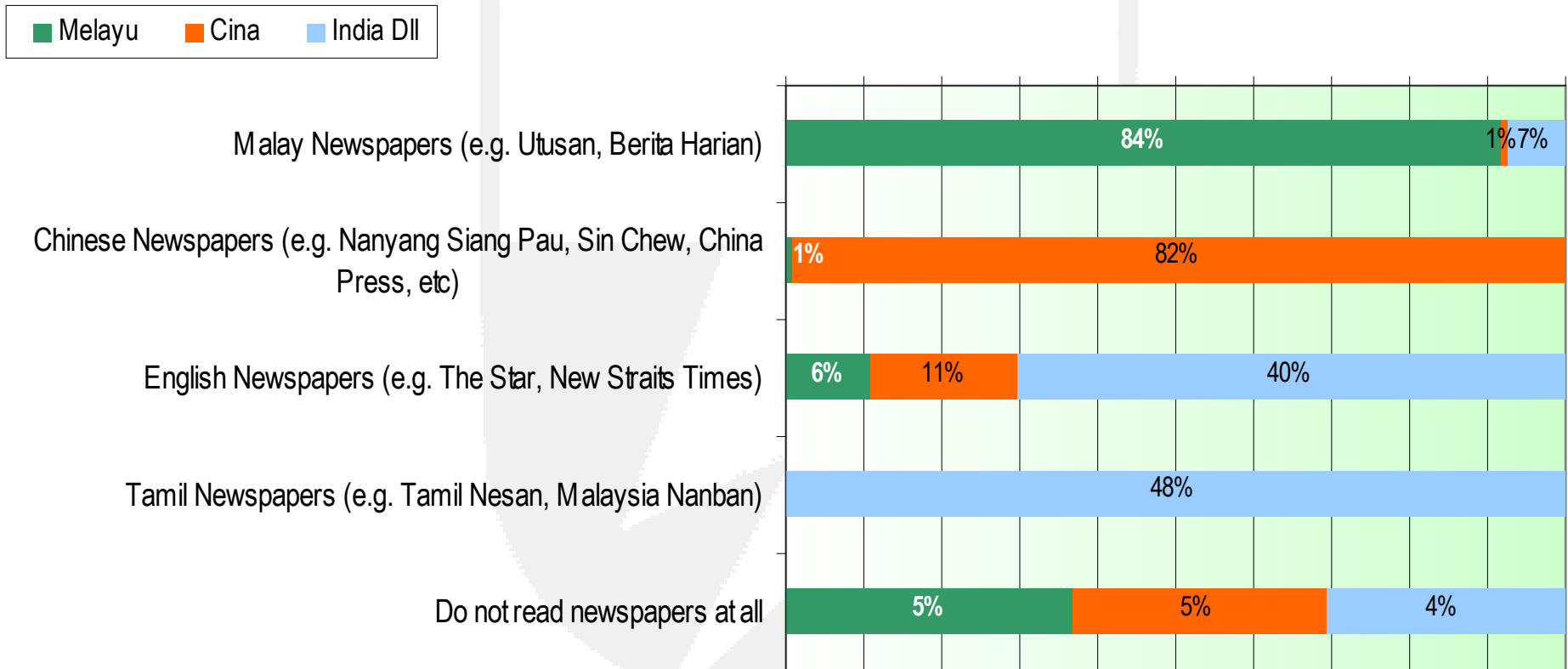


Which of the following best describe the degree of your involvement in political parties?



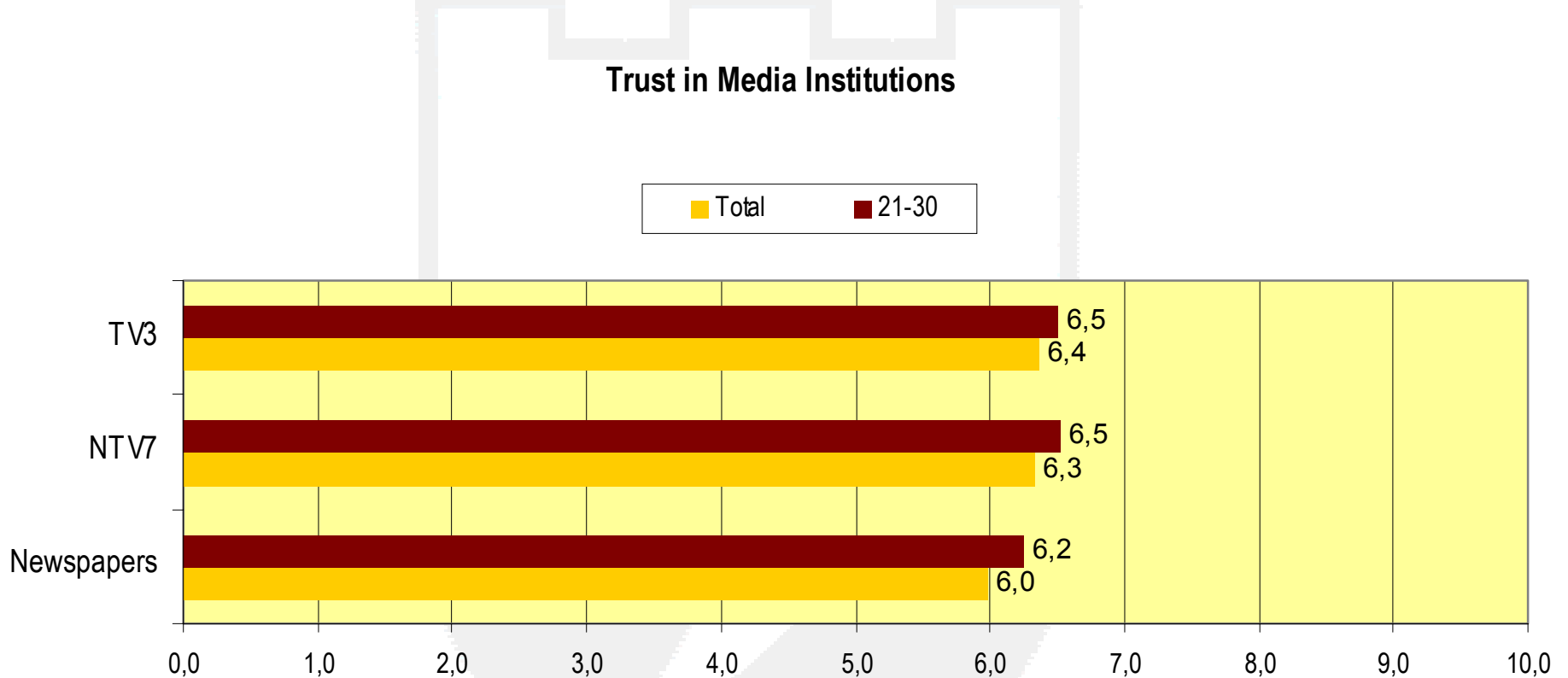
Apakah jenis akhbar arus perdana yang anda selalu baca?

Stated Newspapers Read by Voters



Which type of mainstream newspapers do you read the most?

Dengan menggunakan skala 1 hingga 10, dimana 1 bermaksud “Kurang dipercayai” dan 10 bermaksud “Amat dipercayai”, sila nyatakan sama ada individu atau institusi berikut boleh dipercayai untuk berkata benar dalam isu-isu semasa atau politik?

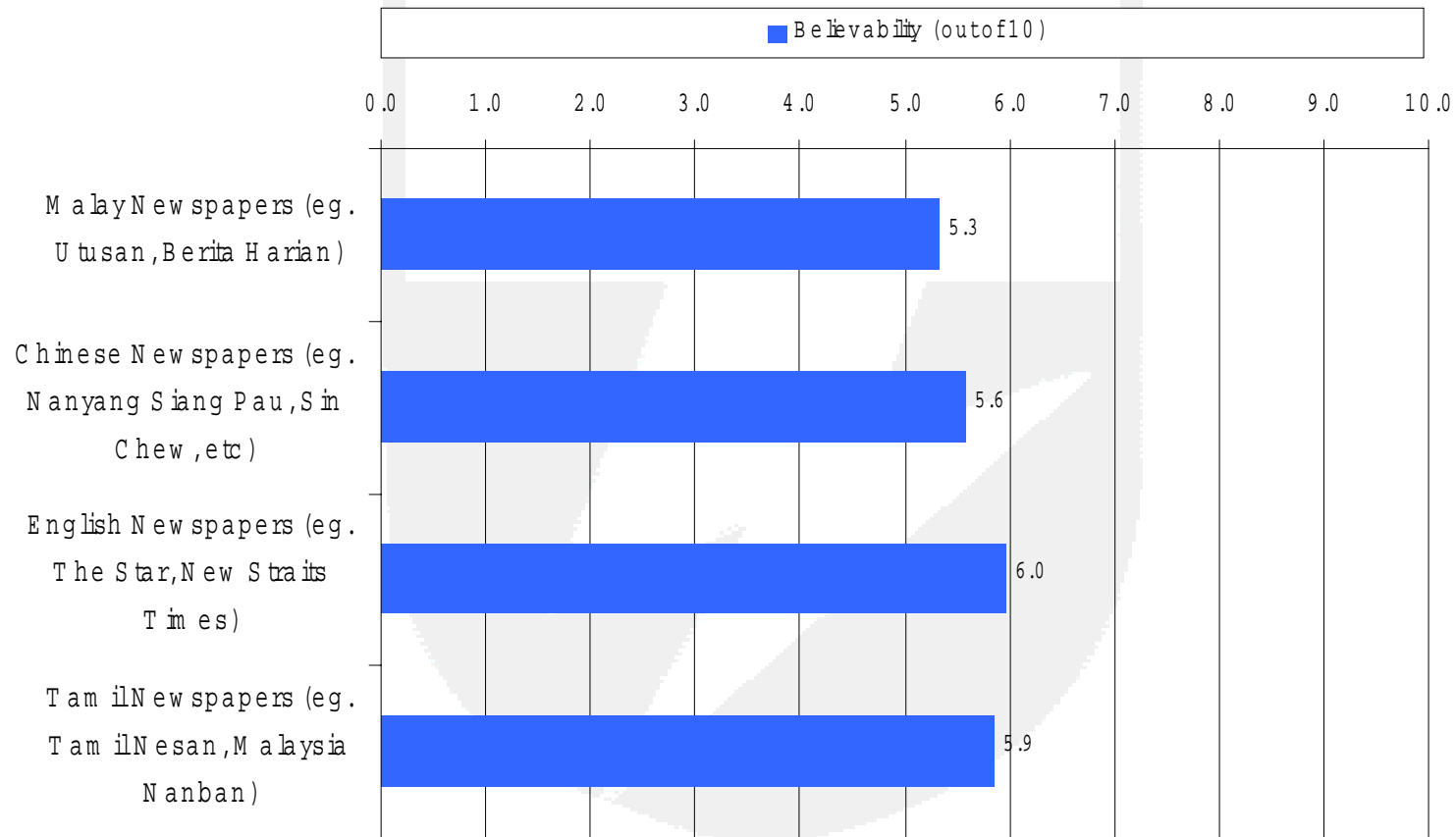


On a scale of one to ten, where 1 means “Least Trustworthy” and 10 means “Most Trustworthy”, please tell me how much you think the following individuals and institutions can be trusted to tell the truth or not, when it comes to politics and issues?



Dengan menggunakan skala 1 hingga 10, dimana 1 bermaksud “Kurang dipercayai” dan 10 bermaksud “Amat dipercayai”, sila nyatakan sama ada akhbar yang sering anda baca boleh dipercayai untuk berkata benar dalam isu-isu semasa atau politik?

Reported Believability of Political News Carried in Newspapers among Readers

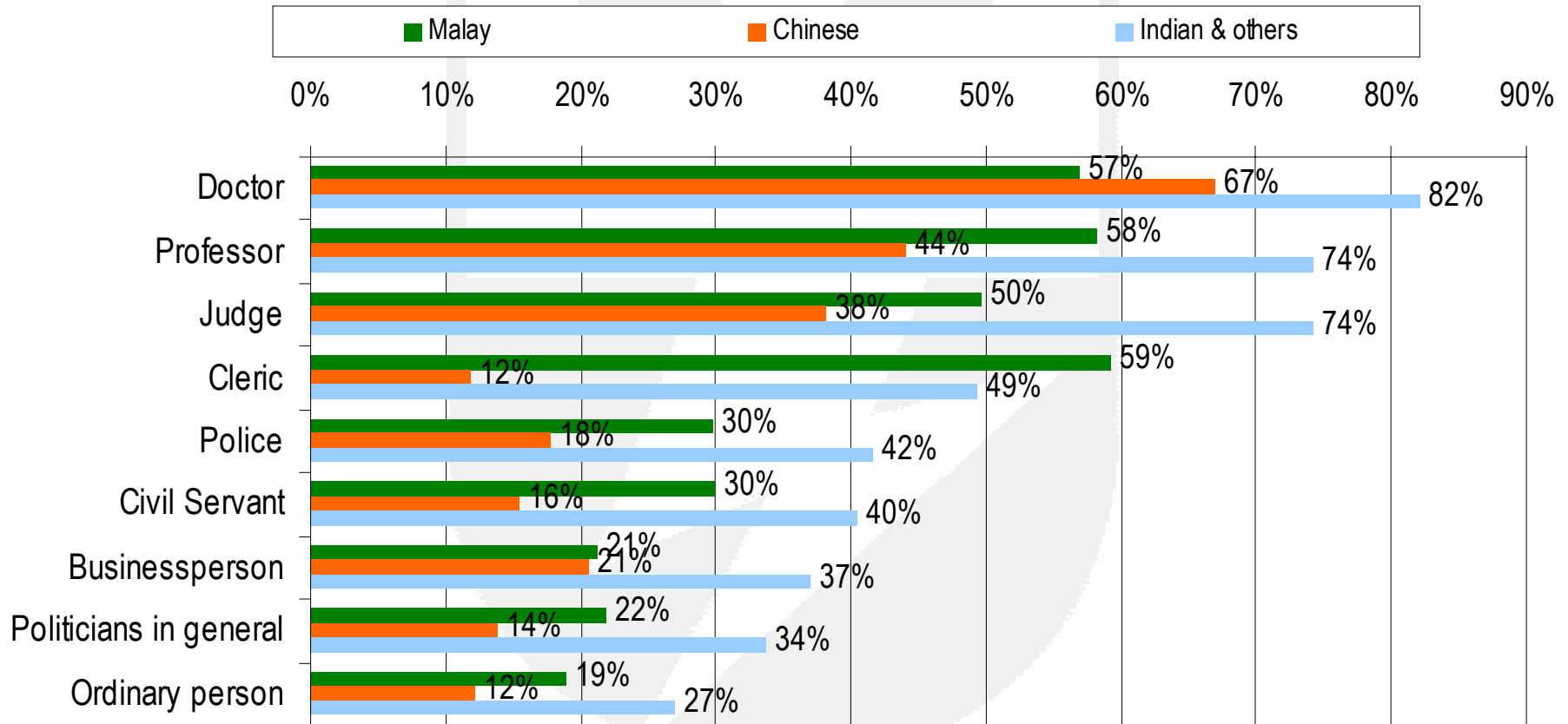


On a scale of one to ten, where 1 means “Least Trustworthy” and 10 means “Most Trustworthy”, please tell me how much you think the newspaper you read the most can be trusted to tell the truth or not, when it comes to politics and issues?



Sekarang saya akan membacakan senarai beberapa kumpulan orang. Untuk setiap satu, sila terangkan sama ada anda percaya mereka berkata benar atau tidak.

Trust in Types of Occupation



Now I am going to read you a list of different types of people. For each, would you tell me whether you generally trust them to tell the truth or not?



Jika pilihanraya diadakan sekarang, berapa pentingkah faktor-faktor berikut dalam menentukan siapa yang anda akan undi, mengikut skala 1 hingga 10 dimana 1 adalah yang paling rendah manakala 10 adalah yang paling tinggi.



If elections were to be held today, please tell me how important, on a scale of one to ten, where one is the lowest and ten is the highest, the following factors are in determining how you would vote?



# CONCLUSIONS



## Issues

### National & Local Issues

- The Economy remains no. 1 national issue followed by Crime and Public Safety
- Social problems and crime top concerns in local issues
- Standard of Living: Large majority satisfied, no discernible differences across age group but Indians are least satisfied

### Economy

- Within the economy, rising household expenses, cost of education and jobs make up main issue
- Voters credit BN with higher capabilities in handling economic issues

### Education

- Similarly, voters credit BN with higher capability to deliver education but some differences in relative rankings of component issues (e.g. vernacular schools, gettings kids to speak their mind)





## Issues

### Corruption

- Respondents perceive widespread corruption and have significantly increased over time
- Most ascribe to poor salaries but significantly other reasons given denote systemic problems
- Malays and younger voters tend to believe that their vote in the coming election will have an impact in fighting corruption
- Social problems and crime top concerns in local issues
- Voters ascribed lower capability to opposition but they do better on this issue compared to education and the economy

### Islamic State

- Malay voters want Malaysia to be “more Islamic” and non-Malays tend to cluster around the middle of the spectrum
- More universal aspect of the Islamic State (e.g. democracy and freedom to practice religion) are more readily accepted by non-Muslims except for hudud
- The Malays are split on the suitability of implementing hudud
- A sizable no. of voters claim to understand PAS’ Islamic State proposal but most received understanding from mainstream media



# Conclusions

## Sources of Political Information

- Most voters tend to rely on vernacular newspapers
- Believability of these newspapers tends to be rather low

## Political Involvement

- Majority of voters claim not interested in politics
- Malays tend to be most involved

## Trust

- Younger voters exhibit higher level of trust
- The most trusted people differ across ethnic groups, but politicians and businessmen generally score lowest

## Voting Motivations

- In elections, voters place political stability, adhering to religion and racial harmony

## Conclusions

### By Gender

- Women are more concerned about practical issues such as household economics, standard of living concerns, education, and quality of services as compared to men
- Men tended to be more interested in broader, less personal areas such as economic growth and politics
- Nevertheless, there is confluence in terms of economic pressures. Here the defining variable appears to be ethnic rather than gender.
- Women also appeared to be in closer contact with local issues and concerns
- Women's interests in other areas may be the reason for its lower involvement in political participation

## Future Directions

The surveys reveal a trend that shows increasing concerns about crime and social problems.

It also shows that some ethnic groups tended to experience more economic stress compared to others

Further research should look into public perceptions on matters such as:

- perceptions about Islam in politics
- trust and perception of the media
- socio-economic factors in social problems
- effectiveness of public awareness programs
- “civic literacy”