



[By The Malaysian Insider](#)

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 8 – Fact or myth: That a majority of Malaysians opposed the ISA protests and other demonstrations.

Fact or myth: That city folk despise street protests and the traffic congestion and other disruptions brought about when thousands of Malaysians march.

Findings of a recent survey – carried out after the ISA demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur – shows that there is a slim margin between those who support and oppose street protests.

The poll of 1,000 individuals representative of the demographics of the country also indicates that the majority of urban dwellers believe that the government should allow street protests, supporting the thesis that city folk are willing to put up with traffic congestion and other inconvenience as long as demonstrators are championing issues of national interest.

Some 50 per cent of those polled believed that demonstrations are a waste of time, and believed that the government should move to stop protests. But 42 per cent supported the ISA protests and felt that the government should allow demonstrations.

This finding will surprise the Barisan Nasional government that has operated on the premise that the vast majority of Malaysians or the silent majority of peace and stability-loving individuals are against the messiness of street politics.

This assumption has encouraged the authorities to take a tough stance against demonstrators and the organisers of protests.

The survey, conducted by Vox Malaysia, a new polling and research outfit, also challenges another common-held position: that city folk beset with traffic congestion, road blocks and other disruptions are anti-demonstrations.

There is generally a higher tolerance for demonstration among urban Malaysians vis-a-vis rural folk. Some 62 per cent of urban folk interviewed said they support the ISA demonstrators compared with 38 per cent of rural folk interviewed.

Also, 67 per cent of urban folk polled said that while they did not care about the ISA demonstrators, they believed that the government should allow demonstrations. Only 33 per cent of rural folk surveyed felt the same way.

Quite clearly, those who identified themselves as Pakatan Rakyat supporters were more

tolerant of demonstrations. Some 46 per cent of those who identified themselves as Pakatan Rakyat supporters said they supported the ISA demonstrations, compared with 38 per cent of independents and 16 per cent of Barisan Nasional supporters.

Quite clearly, all the findings taken together suggest that the Najib administration may need to reassess some assumptions it has about Malaysians and their perception of demonstrations.

The mainstream media may also need to revisit some of the reports and cliched headlines after street protests.