MYANMAR 2014

Civic Knowledge and Values in a Changing Society
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MYANMAR is undergoing an extraordinary period of change. The transition from military rule to a quasi-civilian government since 2011 is exemplified by shifts from a closed economic system to one that is market-oriented, from an isolated country to one that is engaging actively in regional and global affairs, and from decades of conflicts with multiple, ethnic armed groups to a push for a national ceasefire and political dialogue. Changes of this magnitude within such a compressed time frame are not easily accomplished, however, given the urgent need for updated knowledge and the lack of capacity in many sectors within government and society, as well as the continuing distrust of the government’s reform agenda among ethnic armed groups and civil society organizations. After so many years of severely curtailed social, political, and economic development under military rule, many in society remain skeptical about whether current reforms can bring genuine, inclusive development and peace, or will be captured by crony capitalism and the old political order.

In this challenging context, The Asia Foundation carried out a nationwide survey in 2014 to document public knowledge and awareness of new government institutions and processes, and to gauge the political, social, and economic values held by people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, which will inform the country’s long-term development and the nature of state-society relations. Conducted during the months of May and June, the survey included face-to-face interviews with more than 3,000 respondents across all 14 states and regions. States and regions are constitutionally equivalent in Myanmar but have different historical roots. States encompass the areas with large numbers of minority ethnic populations, while regions are where the majority of ethnic Burmans reside. The survey over-sampled in the states to ensure a better understanding of their views. It should be noted that, given the complex ethnic map of Myanmar, the views of the states as reported in the survey should not be taken as the views of the ethnic groups themselves. Questions allowing multiple responses and open-ended answers were also incorporated in the survey to capture public perception with greater nuance.

The survey results show that in the early stages of Myanmar’s transition to democracy, people are generally hopeful about the future, though that optimism is tempered by a number of challenges. People have very limited knowledge about the current structure and functions of various levels of government, particularly at the subnational levels. They are most knowledgeable about the national government on the one hand, and the lowest levels of village and ward administrations, with which public interaction is highest, on the other. People express a strong preference for democracy in the abstract and a high level of expectation that voting will bring about positive change, but they possess a limited understanding of the principles and practices that underpin a democratic society. Democracy is viewed as having provided new freedoms, but there is little association of democracy with rule by the people. Social trust is particularly low, and political disagreements deeply polarizing. Gender values remain highly traditional, with both men and women expressing a similarly strong view that men make better political and business leaders than women.

On the whole, people are positive about the current situation in the country, but there is a pervasive underlying uncertainty, with positive sentiment dropping among the states. The tangible results of the
reform process in delivering roads, schools, and economic growth are cited by respondents who believe that the country is going in the right direction, whereas ongoing conflicts, a bad economy or lack of development, and problematic governance and corruption are highlighted by those who are negative about the direction in which the country is heading. Economic performance figures prominently as a public concern, serving as a key indicator for how well people feel the country is doing. In this regard, the economic values that people express bode well for the future if properly harnessed to drive inclusive growth as market-oriented reforms continue. People feel strongly that competition, individual effort, and hard work contribute to a better life, and that there is enough economic opportunity to benefit everyone. Nevertheless, the public continues to have a high expectation that the government will play a strong role in ensuring an equitable and inclusive society.

Given the newness of this kind of survey in Myanmar, and also the recent establishment of many government institutions and processes since 2011, it is not surprising that the percentage of people answering “don’t know” is high. The refusal rate is negligible, and the “don’t know” responses drop markedly on questions to which people feel they know the answers, such as those related to the lowest level of government in village-tracts and wards, or how they define their own identity. This suggests that people generally are not afraid to answer survey questions, but that they do face a significant knowledge and information gap. Women are consistently less knowledgeable than men, and respondents in the states are less knowledgeable than those in the regions. Variations in the level of knowledge also appear among the states.

The data is rich for further analysis, and has implications for the Union government, state and region governments, national and regional parliaments, political parties, civil society organizations, the private sector, and development partners. In order to sustain and promote further democratic reforms in Myanmar, greater effort must be focused on increasing public knowledge of key governance institutions and processes. Decentralization is happening, but few citizens understand clearly the role of government at the state and region or township levels. Values that people express about political and economic life, social trust, ethnic and religious tolerance, and gender should be considered in the design of policies and development programs. The consistently low level of knowledge among the states and among women also needs to be addressed. Lastly, we hope that the data gathered here will provide a platform for a wide-ranging, public discussion in the country about the vision people have for a new Myanmar, one that will strengthen governance and justice, support peace, and offer economic opportunities to all. This first survey of civic knowledge and values and the nature of state-society relations in Myanmar in 2014 can serve as a benchmark for assessing the country’s progress in the years to come.
KNOWLEDGE OF GOVERNMENT

Knowledge of government is low. Overall, the survey revealed that basic knowledge about the structure and functions of the government is very low. A significant 82% of respondents are unable to name any branches of the government, with 14% correctly citing the executive, 3% the legislative, and 2% the judicial. Respondents are most knowledgeable about the executive branch, with 87% of all respondents correctly identifying the president as the head of state in Myanmar. There is a significant difference in knowledge between states and regions, as 93% of respondents in the regions answered correctly, compared to 73% in the states.

FIG. 1.1: NAMING THE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT
(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to exactly 100% in the figures below. Additionally, where multiple answers were possible or responses are combined, it is so noted. Unless otherwise specified, the number of respondents, "n", is 3,000.
Public knowledge about the selection/appointment process for key government positions is poor. Although respondents report overwhelmingly (95%) that they participated in the 2010 elections, many incorrectly believe that key officials are elected directly by citizens. More than a third (36%) of all respondents did not know, and only 12% knew, that the president is indirectly elected by the national, or Union, Parliament, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. A significant 44% believed incorrectly that the president is elected directly by ordinary citizens. Similarly, 32% of all respondents believed that the chief minister is elected, while only 22% correctly answered that the chief minister is appointed by the president. In a related question, 25% of respondents correctly identified the president as responsible for appointing Union ministers, but 17% believed that ministers are selected by voters.
People know very little about the functions of the legislative branch at the Union and state/region levels. Few respondents (15%) correctly identified the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw as the institution that passes bills into law, while 76% did not know. Respondents tended to associate both the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and the state/region hluttaws with the function of representation (44% Pyidaungsu, 45% state/region), rather than lawmaking (14% Pyidaungsu, 11% state/region) or providing budgeting and oversight (4% Pyidaungsu, 4% state/region). Almost half of all respondents said they did not know the functions of the hluttaws.

FIG. 1.4: FUNCTIONS OF THE PYIDAUNGSU, STATE, AND REGION HLUTTAWS
(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

Knowledge of the 25% reservation of parliamentary seats for the military is low. When asked to state the percentage of defense services representatives in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, 68% of respondents said they did not know, and only 15% were able to provide the correct figure of 25%. As for the presence of defense services personnel in the state and region hluttaws, 49% of respondents did not know if there are any, 39% believed that there are, and 13% thought there are not. Respondents in the regions were more likely to know the correct answer, with 42% stating that defense services personnel are in the state and region hluttaws, compared with only 29% in the states.
Knowledge of the judiciary is lowest of all. When asked to name the highest court in Myanmar, a majority (56%) stated that they did not know. A third (29%) of respondents correctly named the Supreme Court, 7% cited the state or region court, 5% named the township court, and 2% named the district court. When asked whether the chief justice of the Supreme Court is elected or appointed by the president, half of the respondents (50%) correctly answered that the chief justice is appointed by the president, while 15% believed that the chief justice is elected by voters. More than a third (35%) said they did not know.

FIG. 1.6: WHICH IS THE HIGHEST COURT IN THE COUNTRY?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL MYANMAR</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>RURAL</th>
<th>URBAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State or regional court</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township court</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District court</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
People are more aware of the national government and the lowest level of village-tract/ward government than they are of the various subnational government entities in between. When people were asked to describe the key functions of various subnational government institutions, 76% stated that they did not know the functions of the state and region governments, and 68% said that they did not know the functions of the township government. In contrast, only 33% felt they did not know the functions of the village-tract or ward administrator.

**FIG. 1.7: KNOWLEDGE OF KEY FUNCTIONS OF SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENT (STATE/REGION GOVERNMENT) (COMBINED 3 RESPONSES)**

- Implementing Educational Programs: 6%
- Repair of Bad Roads: 5%
- Maintenance of Health Centers: 4%
- Mediating Conflicts Between Citizens: 3%
- Helping the Poor: 3%
- Don’t Know: 76%

**FIG. 1.8: KNOWLEDGE OF KEY FUNCTIONS OF SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENT (TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT) (COMBINED 3 RESPONSES)**

- Repair of Bad Roads: 8%
- Implementing Educational Programs: 8%
- Maintenance of Health Centers: 7%
- Mediating Conflicts Between Citizens: 6%
- Helping the Poor: 3%
- Don’t Know: 68%
When asked whether state and region governments have the power to tax or impose fees, only a third (31%) were able to answer correctly in the affirmative; a third (36%) did not think so, and another third (33%) did not know. Lack of knowledge about the activities of the state and region hluttaws is underscored by the low number of respondents (4%) who were able to correctly name their representative in their state or region hluttaws. In contrast, 85% of all respondents identified correctly the name of their village-tract or ward administrator, while only 16% knew the names of their chief ministers, and just 7% knew the name of their township administrator.

FIG. 1.10: DO STATE AND REGION GOVERNMENTS HAVE THE POWER TO TAX OR IMPOSE FEES?
The survey also probed people’s sense of which level of government affects their lives the most by its decisions. Twenty-nine percent of respondents identified the national government, and 20% cited the village-tract or ward administrator. A similar percentage believe that no government decisions affect their lives (14%) or that decisions made at different levels of government affect their lives equally (12%). While 21% of respondents stated that they did not know, only 3% felt the decisions of state and region governments affected their lives most, and a mere 2% thought so about the township governments.

**FIG. 1.11: RESPONDENTS WHO KNEW THE NAMES OF THEIR GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Level</th>
<th>All Myanmar</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Village-tract/Ward Administrator</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Minister</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township Administrator</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP in the State/Region Hluttaw</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIG. 1.12: DECISIONS OF WHICH LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT AFFECT THEM MORE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Level</th>
<th>All Myanmar</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Government</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village-tract/Ward Administrator</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Region Government</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township Government</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of them</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the Same</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF DEMOCRACY

People report a high rate of election participation, while asserting a lack of interest in “politics.”
Politics in Myanmar, naing ngan yeb, carries with it the burden of decades of military rule and political repression. Involvement in and discussion of politics has long been seen as dangerous or requiring expertise beyond the capacity of ordinary people. The survey results suggest that these notions persist, with respondents rarely voicing a strong interest in politics, yet acting in a way that reflects awareness and interest in political participation through voting.

Overall, only 5% of respondents said they were very interested in politics, and few said they discussed politics with friends often (9%), or almost all the time (3%). Forty-six percent of all respondents said they were not at all interested in politics, and 49% said they never or almost never discuss politics with friends. Women reported much less interest in politics, with 59% stating that they never or almost never discuss politics with friends, compared to 41% of men.

FIG. 2.1: HOW OFTEN DO THEY DISCUSS POLITICS WITH FRIENDS?
\[N=1610\]

This reported lack of interest in politics, however, is countered by people’s strong interest in election participation. An overwhelming number of respondents reported participating in the 2010 general elections (95%) and expressed an intention to vote in the election of 2015 (93%).
People believe in exercising their right to vote, and express cautious optimism about the 2015 general elections. People are eager to exercise their right to vote, with 77% believing that voting can lead to improvements in the future, while only 10% feel that things will not change no matter how one votes. When it comes to the 2015 general elections, 68% of all respondents think they will be free and fair, with significantly more optimism in the regions (72%) than in the states (56%). The lower optimism in the states seems to be offset by a greater sense of uncertainty or lack of knowledge: 26% of respondents in the states said they did not know, as compared to only 13% in the regions. In addition, 38% of respondents believed the coming election will have a very positive impact and 42% foresaw somewhat positive impact. Only 4% felt the election would have no impact at all, and 15% said they did not know.

FIG. 2.3: POTENTIAL FOR VOTING TO BRING IMPROVEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All MYANMAR</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>REGION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voting can change things</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things are not going to get better</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**FIG. 2.4: POTENTIAL OF 2015 ELECTIONS TO IMPACT LIFE**

[Bar chart showing potential impact of 2015 elections to impact life in Myanmar, State, Region, Male, Female.]

People’s understanding of democracy and systems of government reflects a society in transition. When people were asked an open question about what it means when a country is called a democracy, “freedom” was most frequently mentioned (53%), follow by “rights and law” (15%), “peace” (11%), and “equal rights for groups” (8%). Just 3% mentioned “government of the people.” More than one third of respondents (35%) said they did not know, with significantly more respondents in the states (43%) expressing this uncertainty than in the regions (32%). Almost twice as many women (45%) as men (25%) said they did not know what it means when a country is called a democracy.

**FIG. 2.5: WHAT DOES DEMOCRACY MEAN? (COMBINED 3 RESPONSES)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL MYANMAR</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights and law</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal rights for groups</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government of the people</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked what the relationship between the government and people should be, a majority (52%) felt that the government and the people should relate as equals. A substantial number of respondents (43%), however, believed that the government should be like a father and the people like children.

**FIG. 2.6: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE**

People mostly feel free to express political opinions, but respondents in the states feel much less free to do so. Sixty-six percent of all respondents said they feel free to express their political opinions where they live, while 23% do not. Significantly fewer respondents feel free to express their political opinions in the states (53%) than in the regions (71%), a gap that was most pronounced in Rakhine State, where only 41% of respondents felt free to express their political opinions, while 51% felt they were not free to do so.

**FIG. 2.7: DO PEOPLE FEEL FREE TO EXPRESS POLITICAL OPINIONS?**
There is a high degree of political polarization. When asked whether all political parties, even ones most people do not like, should be allowed to meet in their community, 52% of all respondents said yes, but more than a third (35%) said no. The level of political polarization is more clearly defined when personal experience is captured. When asked whether they would end a friendship if a friend supported a political party most people don’t like, 41% said they would, while 52% said they would not. Significant variation exists among the states, with 68% in Rakhine State electing to end the friendship, compared to just 18% in Shan State. Political polarization is also higher in rural areas, where 45% would end the friendship, than in urban areas, where 32% say they would do so.
IDENTITY, VALUES, AND TRUST

Identity of respondents in the regions is more clearly defined by religion, whereas those from the states express more layers of identity connecting to their ethnicity, local community, and religion. An overwhelming majority of all respondents (91%) were very proud to be from Myanmar, with little difference between residents of the states and the regions. When asked to express how they relate to the world, however, only about one third of all respondents (35%) identified themselves as part of the Myanmar nation first and foremost. Twenty-four percent identified primarily with their religious group, 10% with their local community, and 9% with their ethnic group. The identity of those in the regions is defined most clearly by their religious group (28%), whereas the respondents in the states expressed more layers to their identity: as members of their ethnic group (19%), their local community (16%), or their religious group (15%).
People agree strongly with the principle of equal rights under the law, and that there should be separation between politics and religion. Almost three quarters (73%) of respondents agreed with the principle that citizens should have equal rights under the law regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion. Despite apparently deep political polarization, people generally believed that ethnic minorities need additional help to make them more equal with other communities, with 57% agreeing strongly and another 31% agreeing somewhat. Only 2% disagreed strongly with this idea.
Additionally, 41% of all respondents agreed strongly, and another 28% agreed somewhat, that religious leaders should concentrate on guiding the people in matters related to faith and not get involved in politics. Only 9% disagreed strongly and 12% disagreed somewhat with the same statement.

People highlight honesty and responsibility as key values to impart to children, while they look for fairness and decisiveness in leaders. When asked to state the most important qualities children should be encouraged to learn at school, almost half of all respondents mentioned “honesty” (48%), and a significant proportion mentioned “responsibility” (39%) and “hard work” (38%). “Religious faith” (28%) was the fourth most frequently mentioned quality, followed by “independence” (24%), and “tolerance and respect for other people” (23%).
Similarly, when asked to state the most important qualities of a leader, more than half of all respondents (54%) said “fairness” was an important trait, while almost half mentioned “decisiveness” (48%), “generosity” (47%), and “honesty” (46%) as important traits of a leader. In contrast, only 19% mentioned that “religious faith” was an important quality for a leader.

**FIG. 3.5: QUALITIES MOST IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN** (COMBINED 3 RESPONSES)

- Honesty: 48%
- Responsibility: 39%
- Hard work: 38%
- Religious faith: 28%
- Independence: 24%
- Tolerance and respect for others: 23%
- Unselfishness: 23%
- Obedience: 22%

**FIG. 3.6: QUALITIES MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADER** (COMBINED 3 RESPONSES)

- Fairness: 54%
- Decisiveness: 48%
- Generosity: 47%
- Honesty: 46%
- Listens to people: 27%
- Toughness: 26%
- Religious faith: 19%
- Knows how to use good people: 10%
Participation in activities to improve society and government is highly valued, but actual participation is low. While people believe overwhelmingly (80%) that it is very important for citizens to participate in improving society and government, only 18% of respondents said that they have participated in such activities. Men participated at a rate (24%) twice that of women (12%), and most people reported this participation as volunteer work (68%). Almost a quarter of respondents (22%) said they were members of voluntary associations, community-based organizations, or non-governmental organizations, and about half of these associations (49%) were social clubs, with membership in religious associations the second most frequently cited (21%).

**FIG. 3.7: IMPORTANCE OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

**FIG. 3.8: PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**
Levels of social trust are very low. An astounding 77% of all respondents believe that, generally, most people cannot be trusted (71% in the states, 80% in the regions). The situation did improve when people were asked whether most people in their neighborhood can be trusted, with 56% agreeing strongly or somewhat that most people can be trusted, and 43% disagreeing strongly or somewhat with that statement.

**FIG. 3.9: CAN MOST PEOPLE BE TRUSTED?**

![Pie chart showing 77% of respondents believe most people cannot be trusted.]

**FIG. 3.10: CAN MOST PEOPLE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BE TRUSTED?**

![Pie chart showing 36% of respondents agree strongly that most people in their neighborhood can be trusted, 26% disagree strongly, and so on.]
FIG. 3.11: CAN MOST PEOPLE BE TRUSTED? (GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES)
Public trust in various governance institutions is tentative. When asked to rate the integrity of various institutions, few respondents rated them highly. For many institutions, a large number of respondents answered “don’t know,” again underscoring the general lack of knowledge about key governance institutions in the country. The most “don’t know” responses were recorded for the Union Election Commission (43%), for Parliament at both the Union level (33%) and the state/region level (36%), and the media (32%). Overall, the public viewed the office of the president and the village-tract/ward administrators most favorably, while the police received the lowest positive rating, followed by the courts and the army.

**FIG. 3.12: PERCEPTIONS OF INTEGRITY OF VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Very high integrity</th>
<th>High integrity</th>
<th>Neither high nor low integrity</th>
<th>Low integrity</th>
<th>Very low integrity</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village-tract/ward administrator</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOs/CSOs</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/region government</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township administrator</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International organizations</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/regional Internationals</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEC</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Very high integrity
- High integrity
- Neither high nor low integrity
- Low integrity
- Very low integrity
- Don’t know
People exhibit remarkable belief in the benefits of hard work, competition, and wealth sharing, although they also see a strong role for the government in providing for the people. Almost three quarters of all respondents (73%) believed that hard work usually makes life better, with only about one quarter (24%) believing that success depends more on luck and connections. While 28% felt that income should be made more equal, nearly 7 in 10 (69%) agreed that income differences are needed to reward individual effort. The same proportion (69%) said that competition is good and stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas, while only 26% believed competition brings out the worst in people. The survey also asked whether people can get rich only at the expense of others, or whether wealth can grow so that there is enough for everyone. An overwhelming 90% of respondents believed that there is enough wealth for everyone.

**FIG. 3.13: VALUE OF HARD WORK**

- **24%** In the long run, hard work usually brings a better life.
- **73%** Hard work doesn’t generally bring success. It’s more a matter of luck and connections.

**FIG. 3.14: VALUE OF INCOME INEQUALITY**

- **28%** Income should be made more equal.
- **69%** We need larger income differences to reward individual effort.
FIG. 3.15: VALUE OF COMPETITION

- Competition is good. It stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas. (69%)
- Competition is harmful. It brings out the worst in people. (26%)

FIG. 3.16: GOVERNMENT AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Government should take more responsibility to make sure everyone is provided for. (58%)
- People should take more responsibility for themselves. (37%)

FIG. 3.17: AVAILABILITY OF WEALTH

- People can only get rich at the expense of others (4%)
- Wealth can grow so there’s enough for everyone (90%)
- I don’t agree with either statement (3%)
- I don’t know (3%)
However, the public also feels the government can do more to ensure everyone is provided for in an equitable and inclusive way. A substantial majority of respondents (58%) felt that government should take more responsibility to provide for the people, while a large minority (37%) said that people should take more responsibility for themselves.

**GENDER**

**People believe that women should decide their own votes.** The survey asked respondents whether a woman should make her own choice when voting or whether men should advise her. A very strong majority of respondents (82%) believed that women should make their own choice, while 18% said that men should advise them. There was no significant difference in opinion by state or region or by gender, though in urban areas 88% said women should make their own choice, compared to 80% in rural areas. In Shan State, 93% said that women should make their own choice, while in Mon State, 26% felt men should advise the women.

**The view is mixed on the equal importance of a university education for both boys and girls.** When asked whether a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl, 44% agreed that it is more important for a boy (23% agreed strongly, 21% agreed somewhat) and 52% disagreed (28% disagreed strongly, 24% disagreed somewhat). The responses were similar between men and women.

**FIG. 4.1: AGREE/DISAGREE: UNIVERSITY IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR A BOY THAN FOR A GIRL**

Both men and women believe strongly that men make better political and business leaders than women. A strong majority of respondents (71%) believe that men make better political leaders than women (42% agreed strongly, 29% agreed somewhat), and a similarly strong 71% believe that men make better business executives than women (41% agreed strongly, 30% agreed somewhat). It is notable
that there is virtually no difference in these responses between men and women, and the intensity of those who agree strongly with both of these statements is high. These responses indicate a firm cultural and social perspective on the preference for male leadership that cuts across gender lines.

**FIG. 4.2: AGREE/DISAGREE: MEN MAKE BETTER POLITICAL LEADERS THAN WOMEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All MYANMAR</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEN</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOMEN</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBAN</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIG. 4.3: AGREE/DISAGREE: MEN MAKE BETTER BUSINESS EXECUTIVES THAN WOMEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
<th>Disagree somewhat</th>
<th>Agree somewhat</th>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All MYANMAR</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEN</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOMEN</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBAN</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PEACE PROCESS**

Knowledge about the existence of ongoing, armed conflicts appears low. A little more than half of all respondents (55%) believed that there are ongoing, armed conflicts in Myanmar, while one third (34%) said there are none. However, feedback from consultation meetings suggests that conflict is likely to be defined in different ways by different groups around the country, and that the term for
conflict used by the survey (pa ti paa kha) may be too abstract or academic to capture what ordinary people experience as fighting, or taiq pwe. People are also likely to view conflicts in very personal terms rather than as a broad national issue. Even so, significant variation in knowledge about ongoing, armed conflict is seen between the states, with respondents most aware of ongoing conflicts in Kachin State (74%) and Mon State (58%), where ethnic armed conflict has been present for years, and respondents least knowledgeable in Chin State, where 67% believe there is no armed conflict. Overall, men (63%) were more knowledgeable about the conflicts than women (48%).

**FIG. 5.1: AWARENESS OF ONGOING, ARMED CONFLICT**

![Graph showing awareness of ongoing armed conflict](image)

**FIG. 5.2: AWARENESS OF ONGOING, ARMED CONFLICT (BY STATE)**

![Graph showing awareness of ongoing armed conflict by state](image)

Of respondents who believe there are ongoing, armed conflicts, 19% did not know their main causes,
30% attributed the conflict to political divisions, 27% to ethnic tensions, and 21% to religious tensions. Notably, respondents in the regions (24%) were significantly more likely than those in the states (14%) to attribute ongoing, armed conflict to religious tensions.

**FIG. 5.3: PERCEIVED CAUSES OF ARMED CONFLICTS IN MYANMAR (N=1660)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Myanmar</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political divisions</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic tensions</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious tensions</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secessionism by ethnic minorities</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most respondents express guarded hope about the outcome of the current peace process. All respondents were informed of ongoing peace negotiations between the Union government, ethnic armed groups, the Parliament, and the army, and were subsequently asked to express their level of confidence that the current peace process would end these conflicts. There is cautious optimism, with 64% of all respondents expressing confidence in the peace process (23% very confident, 41% somewhat confident). Greater uncertainty exists among the states than among the regions. Forty-seven percent of respondents in the states expressed confidence in the outcome of the peace process (15% very confident, 32% somewhat confident), compared to 70% in the regions (26% very confident, 44% somewhat confident). Twice as many respondents in the states (32%) as in the regions (15%) said they did not know.
Understanding of federalism is very low. While discussions of federalism and political power-sharing arrangements have been central to peace negotiations, very few respondents (14%) had heard of the term “federalism.” Urban areas (26%) were more aware of the term “federalism” than rural areas (8%). Nearly half (45%) of those respondents who had ever heard of the term said they did not know what it meant, while 15% associated federalism with self-governance.

After federalism was explained to respondents as allowing states and regions more independence while maintaining the Union, a slight majority of 54% expressed cautious optimism that federalism might help resolve conflict in the country (22% agreeing strongly, 32% agreeing somewhat). One third of all respondents said that they did not know.
PUBLIC OUTLOOK

People are cautiously optimistic about the direction in which Myanmar is headed. A majority (62%) of all respondents believe things in Myanmar are going in the right direction, while 28% say they don’t know. The level of optimism is markedly higher in the regions (67%) than in the states (49%), with the difference reflected mainly in the number of respondents who answered “don’t know”: 37% in the states and 25% in the regions. Relatively few people in either the states (7%) or the regions (3%) felt the country is headed in the wrong direction.

FIG. 6.1: ARE THINGS IN MYANMAR MOVING IN THE RIGHT OR THE WRONG DIRECTION?
People most frequently cited the building of roads and schools, and overall economic development and growth as reasons for their optimism. Respondents who felt the country is moving in the wrong direction most frequently cited the ongoing conflicts, the lack of economic development, and bad governance. In general, people felt the government is doing a relatively better job in education, healthcare, and providing security, while they felt the government is doing less well in developing the economy and creating jobs, and is not doing well in fighting corruption.
### FIG. 6.3: REASONS THINGS ARE GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION
**COMBINED 3 RESPONSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>All Myanmar</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are building roads</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools are being built/access to education is improving</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic growth/economy is getting better/economic development</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall there is progress</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy/political liberalization/many parties/freedom</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good government/rulers/leaders/ruling party</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals are being built/access to health care is improving</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no conflict/there is peace</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure is being built</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Most people’s economic situation remained the same in the past year.** When respondents were asked how their current economic situation compares to a year ago, a majority of respondents (50%) reported that their economic situation had not changed. Nearly a third of all respondents (31%) reported being in a better economic situation, and 4% were much better off, while 14% felt they were worse off than they were a year ago. On average, more respondents in the regions felt their economic situations had improved in the last year (34% better off, 3% much better off), than in the states (26% better off, 4% much better off).
FIG. 6.5: PEOPLE WHO WERE BETTER OFF OR WORSE OFF COMPARED TO ONE YEAR AGO
Most people do not often fear for their personal safety or the safety of their families. Most respondents (73%) do not often fear for the safety of themselves or their families, while 17% of respondents fear for their safety often or sometimes. Respondents most likely to fear for their safety or the safety of their families live in Kachin State (38%), Rakhine State (35%), and Chin State (32%). Note, however, that the survey does not include respondents from areas controlled by non-state armed groups or from contested areas experiencing ongoing armed conflict.

**FIG. 6.6: FEAR FOR PHYSICAL SAFETY**

People feel more knowledgeable about problems facing their local communities than they do about problems at the national level. When asked about the biggest problem facing Myanmar, almost half (47%) said they don’t know. Respondents who did offer an opinion tended to believe that conflict, whether based on ethnicity or religion, is one of the biggest problems (22%), with poor economy (13%), poverty (12%), and unemployment (11%) as other common answers. When asked to consider the biggest problems in their local areas, poor road conditions (20%) and electricity (20%) were the most frequently cited, while more than one third (37%) said they don’t know.
FIG. 6.7: BIGGEST PROBLEMS FACING MYANMAR AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL
(COMBINED 3 RESPONSES)

- Conflict/ethnic conflict/religious conflict: 22%
- Bad/poor economy: 13%
- Poverty: 12%
- Unemployment is high: 11%
- Few schools/poor access to education: 4%
- Corruption: 3%
- Poor health facilities/lack of good hospitals: 3%
- Road conditions are poor: 3%
- Don’t know: 47%

FIG: 6.8: BIGGEST PROBLEMS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL  (COMBINED 3 RESPONSES)

- Roads are poor: 20%
- Electricity: 20%
- Unemployment is high: 10%
- Poverty: 10%
- Drinking water is inadequate/unclean: 8%
- Poor state of education/schools: 7%
- Poor health facilities/lack of good hospitals: 7%
- Conflict/ethnic conflict/religious conflict: 6%
- Don’t know: 37%
The Union government is seen by respondents as being most responsible for solving local problems. When asked who is most responsible for solving local problems, a majority of respondents (55%) identified the Union government as most responsible, and the village-tract or ward level government, with which they deal most frequently, as the next most responsible (21%). These results may relate to the lack of knowledge about the functions of government, particularly at the subnational levels, but it could also be that most people do not differentiate greatly among the different levels, and tend to associate government with the Union level.

**FIG. 6.9: WHO IS MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR SOLVING LOCAL AREA PROBLEMS?**

(Combined 3 responses, N=1884)

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Television (37%) is the source from which people generally get their information about what is happening in the country, but people also rely substantially on information provided through friends, family, and neighbors (35%), as well as the radio (35%). In the states, respondents obtain information about national news primarily from friends, family, and neighbors, relying less on television and radio than respondents in the regions. All respondents cite state-run media—television, radio, and print—as the most frequently accessed sources of information.
### FIG. 7.1: MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION (COMBINED 2 RESPONSES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>All Myanmar</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, family, and neighbors</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village leader</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/computer</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUDING NOTES

Survey data is rich and can be drawn on to inform the work of many stakeholders working to support Myanmar’s democratic transition, inclusive economic growth, and multicultural society. Survey results have documented a society emerging out of decades of isolation, military rule, and conflict. People are happy with new freedoms and eager to exercise their right to vote, but their knowledge of government institutions and processes is low, and their understanding of their rights and responsibilities in a democracy is limited. There is cautious optimism about the reforms and where the country is heading, including the potential for the current peace process to succeed, but there remains a significant divide between states and regions in both knowledge about government and confidence in the reforms. The low level of social trust and deep political polarization have historical roots, but will need to be addressed for Myanmar to move forward.

At the most basic level, civic education, to deepen and sustain citizens’ commitment to democracy through a more equal relationship with the government, will need to be a significant part of governance and development efforts. In addition, given Myanmar’s long history of ethnic and religious conflict, and a traditional society that is facing the challenge of adapting to new values as the country proceeds with its opening process, it will be essential that updated knowledge in a variety of issue areas be provided in ways that a large number of citizens can easily access. In many instances, the development of new terms and vocabulary is needed in local languages to enable a base of common understanding. Weaving together a society that is open to different narratives of how groups construct their own history and see themselves as part of the larger nation is a challenging task, but survey information such as this and other in-depth research can provide a firmer basis for understanding how people think and feel about key issues affecting their lives, and how civic education, governance policies, and development initiatives can usefully target their messages and activities for more beneficial outcomes. It is the optimism of the public, even if cautious, for peace, development, fair opportunities, and an inclusive society that we hope will resonate with readers and animate the ongoing national discourse on the nature of a new, post-transition Myanmar.