TIMOR LOROSA'E
NATIONAL SURVEY
OF
CITIZEN KNOWLEDGE
2002
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to evaluate voter education programs to date and lay the groundwork for planning future civic education efforts, The Asia Foundation conducted its second national Survey of Citizen Knowledge in East Timor during January and early February 2002. The survey was based on a random, representative country-wide sample of 1,115 in-person interviews and over-samples totaling 443 additional interviews in the districts of Dili, Baucau, and Oecussi. For the purposes of reporting national results, the over-samples are weighted down to their correct proportions of the national population.

Key findings of the survey included the following:

- The national mood is extremely positive in the wake of the first elections, despite the traumatic events the Timorese suffered in the past.
- The principal national level concerns are leadership and security, the principal local level concerns are basic needs (infrastructure, food, health care).
- Concern over crime is widespread and concern over internal security is rising.
- Voters are much more knowledgeable about political developments in the wake of voter education campaigns before the first election, which reached the vast majority of voters.
- Timorese voters say they feel free to speak their minds and know how to participate in politics.
- Yet participation other than the vote, such as contacting officials or even discussing politics, remains rare, particularly among women, those with no schooling, and residents of small towns and more remote regions.
- Civic education efforts have notched up successes in promoting understanding of concepts of democracy, political tolerance, and multi-party competition.
- But there is more work to be done in all of those areas, as well as in promoting women’s political participation. Civic education efforts should focus on radio, VCD, and in-person means, targeting women, the uneducated, small town residents, and residents of Baucau, Oecussi, and the western region.
- Oral sources of political information are the preferred sources in East Timor – radio, the Chefe de Suco, and civic education groups.
- Like Cambodians and Indonesians, the Timorese participate at very high rates, but they appear more politicized in terms of their understanding of democracy and willingness to discuss politics.
The National Mood: Hope Despite Anxiety

Although East Timorese endured a long and costly struggle for independence from Indonesia and the traumatic violence that followed the referendum two years ago, they are overwhelmingly optimistic about the state of their country now. Some 83 percent say things are getting better in East Timor, and 48 percent say they are much better. The positive feelings run across the board; they are particularly strong on farms, in small towns, and among the politically active, while optimism runs somewhat lower in Dili. The principal reasons cited are peace and economic recovery, followed by freedom, non-governmental organization activity, and reconciliation.

The principal problem facing the country is seen as leadership, while local level concerns focus on basic needs and survival issues. As the situation in East Timor has calmed and the Presidential elections have approached while the country has remained under international tutelage, concern about lack of leadership has risen to the top of the citizens’ concerns, mentioned by 31 percent. Concern about violence takes second place, mentioned by 19 percent, while worry about political instability has dropped and is now mentioned by only 10 percent. At the local level, infrastructural issues are the most frequently cited problems – mentioned by 41 percent as one of their top two concerns, but hunger is most often cited as the number one concern, mentioned in that position by nearly 32 percent of the public. Health care comes next most often, cited by 24 percent. (Although leadership has risen among public concerns, internal security remains a worry for half the public, up since last year, and one in eight Timorese has been a victim of crime in the past six months. The fear of crime is greatest among urban residents, which may help explain why Dili dwellers are less optimistic than most Timorese.)

Voter Education: A Successful Campaign

The survey contains a number of indicators that show that the voter education campaigns conducted in East Timor have had a substantial and positive impact among the electorate. While prior to the initial 2001 election only five percent of the voters knew that they were electing a constitutional assembly, the current survey found that in the wake of substantial voter education efforts 84 percent of the voters had learned the purpose of the first election and 70 percent knew that this year they would vote to elect a president. The huge turnout in last year’s vote and that expected this year reflects the solidification of a sense of civic responsibility, which offers a further indication that the lessons of civic education have taken.

The media voters used to inform themselves can offer a guide for future civic education efforts, and the survey suggests that radio takes first place by far. It was the principal source of election information for 55 percent of the Timorese. (TV played that role for only 10 percent.) However, particularly for those outside the reach of radio, face-to-face information sources were important, including the Chefe de Suco, civic groups, and friends and neighbors.
The different voter education campaigns used reached the large majority of the public (over 90 percent). Public civic education, brochures, and IEC information sessions each reached about three-fifths of the electorate. Half claimed to have gotten voter education from newspapers (although this figure is likely to contain some overclaim). One in four saw voter education programs on video disc, which may become an important medium in the future as it becomes more accessible. The most important message Timorese said they received from the campaigns was gender equality.

**Political Efficacy and Participation: Faith is Widespread but Practice Limited**

Timorese voters express confidence in their ability to participate in politics. Most (84 percent) say they feel free to speak their minds 62 percent say they are interested in national politics, and 60 percent in local politics. Some four in five say they know how to solve a problem in their communities, almost two-thirds say they feel well prepared to participate in politics, and more than half think they can influence developments in their communities. (The exceptions – potential targets for civic education – tend to be women over 35, the poor, the unschooled, small town dwellers, and residents of Oecussi and the western districts.)

Yet while Timorese say they know how to participate, they rarely do, other than voting. The majority says they have never discussed politics, even with members of their family. Three in five have never joined an effort to solve a community problem, and five in six have never contacted local government officials. As with efficacy, gender, education, and location are major influences on participation: women, the unschooled, and residents of small towns and the western region are the least likely to have participated beyond the vote, further suggesting that they are ripe for civic education drives.

While their participation may have been limited until now, the Timorese electorate expressed a clear desire to help shape its political future, particularly in connection with the constitutional debates underway at the time of the poll. Some 67 percent said they wanted to be consulted about the constitution and 85 percent said public participation in constitution writing was important, but only 22 percent indicated that they had an opportunity to discuss it with a constituent assembly member. Lack of consultation was not a reflection of public ignorance: 77 percent of the electorate was aware of one of the principal constitutional debates, that concerning the national language. As with the election itself, the most important medium for information about the assembly was radio, with no other source mentioned by more than 10 percent.

**Civic Education: Some Gains, But More Are Needed**

Civic education efforts to date have notched up some impressive successes in East Timor. The proportion of citizens unable to cite any characteristics of democracy dropped from 37 percent before last year’s election to just 17 percent at present.
Awareness of current political events, notably the coming independence of the country, is high (over 70 percent). Political tolerance has grown: the proportion of Timorese who would let unpopular parties meet in their areas has grown to 62 percent from 53 percent in the previous survey. Similarly, while the Timorese public was split on the desirability of multi-party democracy a year ago, 46 percent in favor, 41 percent against, now they are favorable by a clear 56 percent to 33 percent margin.

Nonetheless, the findings indicate that there is still important work to be done in this domain. The poll found that knowledge of democracy remains shallow: voters cited few characteristics other than “freedom,” and almost none associated it with elections. Although tolerance has grown, some 38 percent still are opposed to free political activity for all parties or unsure about it. Fully 44 percent are still opposed to or unsure about multi-party competition. (The principal reason they give is fear it will lead to violence.) This is particular cause for concern in light of the findings on commitment to democracy. The poll found that if democracy does not work, almost half the public prefers a “strong leader” and just 41 percent say democracy is always best. Clearly, there is work to be done explaining the concepts of democracy and its merits in practice – including free speech, tolerance, and political competition.

Timorese are very supportive of gender equality in politics: 71 percent say women should play a larger role, and both sexes agree on this. An even larger proportion (76 percent) supports an equal say for men and women in the home. This suggests the door is open for civic education efforts to redress the inequalities in participation by gender noted above.

Dispute resolution in Timor is largely the province of informal means. For disputes with neighbors or over land or property matters, the principal sources where the majority of individuals would seek help are the Chefe de Suco and traditional leaders. In addition, 18 percent would ask family members to intercede with neighbors, and 17 percent would call the police over land or property disputes. But the province of the police is clearly seen as combating violent crime: almost the entire public supports the police arresting those who cause public disturbances or break car windows.

One other civic education need highlighted by the survey is in combating corruption. The proportion of voters very concerned about corruption has jumped to 79 percent this year from 56 percent last year. This points to a need for good-government training among leaders and effective non-governmental watchdog groups to promote transparency and oppose corruption in public life.

Thus, the survey sketched out parameters for future civic education efforts. These included an emphasis on breaking the perceived link between political competition and violence, citizen participation, the practical consequences of democracy, and political tolerance. The key medium would still be radio, but print, VCD, and face-to-face techniques would also remain important, especially where radio penetration is low. The principal targets would be women, those with no schooling, older voters, those in small towns, and those living in Baucau, Oecussi, and the western region.
Communicating Voter and Civic Education: Administer Orally

Timorese chiefly want to get information about political life from oral sources -- people talking to them in person or on the radio. Among in-person sources of political information, they prefer the Chefe de Suco (54 percent) and civic education groups (41 percent). Of the mass media, radio (preferred by 67 percent) towers over TV (15 percent), discussion groups (15 percent), posters (14 percent) and brochures (12 percent).

The majority of Timorese (55 percent) listen to the radio at least three times a week, and Radio UNTAET is by far the most popular radio station, although RTK is also a significant factor in Dili. Radio access is closely associated with political efficacy, tolerance, political participation and knowledge. Civic educators might consider universalizing radio coverage by distributing wind-up radios on a free or subsidized basis. Tetum is by far the preferred language for radio news (97 percent).

East Timor in Comparative Perspective

East Timor displays an intriguing pattern of similarities and differences to other countries where The Asia Foundation has conducted surveys (Cambodia and Indonesia). Voter participation in all three countries was very high, typical of “founding elections.” Timorese appear to be the most politicized of the three. They were more interested in politics than either Cambodians or Indonesians and more able to name characteristics of democracy, which may reflect the politicizing effects of the long independence struggle. In all three countries, there remains a substantial challenge in promoting tolerance of unpopular parties, reflecting their histories of partisan strife and violence. The dominant information media in the three countries, vary – radio in Timor, TV in Indonesia, and both in Cambodia, with TV dominant in town and radio in the countryside – reflecting their different levels of economic and social development.
METHODOLOGY

This Survey of Citizen Knowledge was conducted in East Timor during January and early February, 2002. Using random sampling methodology and in-person interviews, a total of 1558 respondents were interviewed, including oversamples in Dili, Baucau and Oecussi. To produce valid national results, the three oversamples were weighted down to their correct proportions of the population, yielding a representative national sample of 1115.

Development of the survey instrument was a collaborative process that included participants from the NGO Forum in Dili during November-December, 2001. The interviews were conducted by trained interviewers from NGO Forum members among potential voters in every district in East Timor from January 14 – February 8, 2002.

The basic sampling method used for the national representative sample (of 1,115 potential voters) was multi-stage random sampling with the following stages:
- Stage 1: Selection of Suco (village-sized urban and rural administrative units) with probability proportionate to population.
- Stage 2: Random selection of Aldeia (neighborhood administrative units) by interval method.
- Stage 3: Random selection of households, by interval method.
- Stage 4: Selection of respondent by Kish Grid.

Suco were selected by statisticians using a Master Frame of all Suco provided by the Civil Registry in Dili.

The sampling used was truly national and random, so that the survey is representative of the adult population of East Timor. The findings closely reflect the public in terms of gender, age,
education and urban-rural balance. The findings regarding public opinion are likely to be representative as well, within the survey’s margin of error.

This is the second survey conducted for The Asia Foundation in East Timor. The first was completed in February and March of 2001 and focused on the August 2001 election. It had a sample size of 1558, and was conducted with the same methodology as the current survey. Findings of the two surveys are compared in this report, where appropriate.

In this report, “districts” refer to the 13 recognized East Timor geographical areas. “Regions” refer to three of the largest districts (Dili, Baucau and Oecussi), as well as three geographical groupings of districts: East (Lautem, Manatuto, Viqueque); Central (Aileu, Ainaro, Ermera, Manufahi) and West (Bobonaro, Covalima, Liquica).

The survey questionnaires, sampling, and interviewing were directed by Safril Faried and Achala Srivasta of AC Nielsen Indonesia, while analysis and writeup of the results was conducted by Nicole Yakatan and Craig Charney of Charney Research, New York. The project was conducted under the supervision of Asia Foundation representatives Nicola K. Reiss, Eduardo Soares and Egas Moniz in Dili and Nilan Fernando in Jakarta.
THE NATIONAL MOOD

Direction of the Country

East Timorese remain optimistic about the direction their country is headed in. More than eight out of ten (83 percent) feel things are getting better in Timor Lorosae, including 48 percent who think things are getting much better. Just nine percent are pessimistic. A year ago, three-quarters of East Timorese (75 percent) thought the country was headed in the right direction.

Farmers (87 percent getting better, 58 percent much better), those in smaller urban areas (88 percent, 66 percent), and the central (92 percent, 68 percent) and western (92 percent, 66 percent) districts are the most optimistic. East Timorese who are very interested in politics and those who have worked for a party or candidate tend to be more optimistic as well (91 percent and 87 percent respectively). Not surprisingly, those who say they are often hungry or concerned about crime are less likely to be optimistic about the direction of the country.

Residents of the largest urban areas are somewhat less positive about the direction of the country, but over two-thirds of them still believe things are getting better. Dili residents have the least optimistic outlook; some 59 percent do think things in East Timor are getting better (just 16 percent much better) but almost a quarter of them (22 percent) believe things are getting worse. In Oecussi, 77 percent are optimistic, while just six percent are pessimistic, but 13 percent are unsure, the highest level in any region, probably because they are less aware of what is happening in the rest of the country.
Reasons for Improvement

The main reasons cited for improvement in the state of the country are peace and economic recovery. Among those who feel things are improving in East Timor, a plurality (44 percent) credit the end to violence as the main reason. Twenty one percent believe the economy is improving and nine percent cite freedom as the reason they feel optimistic. Other reasons for East Timor’s positive direction include freedom (9 percent), an active NGO movement, and a peaceful election, each cited by 5 percent. This pattern of responses is similar to that noted in the survey last year as well.

Improvements, 2001/2002

What has improved?
(One response allowed, reasons given by 5% or more shown)

The fact that violence is subsiding in East Timor is particularly significant for younger citizens (age 17-24), those with no formal education, and people living in Oecussi or the eastern and western regions. Interestingly, East Timorese with the highest feelings of political efficacy are also more likely to cite the end to violence as the most positive step forward for the country. In a calmer environment, these citizens may now feel they can help move the country on to better things.

Reasons for Negative Assessments

Pessimists are more concerned with the economy (48 percent) than with violence (27 percent), but these two issues far outweigh any other worries. Seven percent cannot cite a reason for their apprehension about the direction of East Timor. (Compared to the 2001 poll, the economy has grown slightly as a reason for concern, while riots, political disputes, and the slow pace of change have all faded.)
Other mentions driving a perceived negative trend include the presence of foreigners monopolizing jobs (6 percent), the lack of transparency in government (2 percent), leadership at odds (2 percent), slow governmental change (2 percent) and party conflict (2 percent).

**East Timor’s Biggest Problems**

“Lack of leadership” or “weak leadership” has replaced political conflict and instability as the top concern of East Timorese. This has occurred since the situation has calmed and as independence and the Presidential election are approaching.

Nationally, almost a third of East Timorese (31 percent) believe lack of leadership is the most compelling issue facing the nation. This is a far greater concern than it was last year, when only one percent of citizens mentioned leadership. This may reflect the environment in which this poll was conducted – a crucial period of Constitution drafting and presidential election campaigning which highlighted the issue of leadership. Moreover, many people in East Timor believe strong leadership may be more important than democracy (see “Commitment to Democracy, p.34). It is also possible that the limited role of local leaders vis-à-vis the international community in reconstruction efforts over the past two years is registering in responses to this question. Older citizens and rural residents (39 percent respectively) are particularly concerned about weak leadership, along with residents of Baucau (43 percent), Oecussi (42 percent) and the eastern region of the country (36 percent).
A fifth of the electorate (19 percent) believes violence is still the biggest problem facing the new country, about the same as last year. Dili residents (41 percent), those with the most education (25 percent), and those who often get political information on TV (34 percent) are the most concerned about violence. (These groups overlap a good deal.)

Political conflicts, disputes and instability worry 10 percent of East Timorese, a decrease of 11 percent since last year. Instability is a particular concern in the central part of the country (16 percent). Six percent worry about education and just three percent believe the economy is the biggest problem facing the country. Thus, for the moment at least, concern about conflict has faded while issues of social development have taken a back seat to a perceived need for leadership.

**Biggest Local Problems**

Local-level concerns are much more focused on the economy and basic human needs than on the political situation. Over half of East Timorese (52 percent overall; 29 percent first mention) believe economic issues represent the top or second biggest local problems. Economic issues includes employment opportunities, poverty and high prices, which all put a strain on families and local communities.

Some 41 percent of East Timorese view infrastructure issues as urgent local needs, and 19 percent rate items such as water supply, roads, markets, communication and electricity as the top priority. One third of the electorate (33 percent) cites food security as one of the top two local problems, and almost all of those say it is the primary problem. These certainly relate closely to the economic conditions. Clearly, local concerns are focused on pure survival.
Health care (22 percent, 9 percent first mention) and education (11 percent, 6 percent) rank highly on citizens’ list of local concerns as well, followed by issues of refugees, land/property disputes and nepotism.

Among those who are most concerned about food security are voters in the smallest urban areas, farmers and residents of Dili, Baucau and Oecussi. Economic issues are of most concern to younger people (33 percent), more educated people (36 percent), non-farmers (37 percent), and Dili residents (46 percent).

Security Fears Persist

Despite the restoration of order, security fears are, if anything, even more prevalent in East Timor now than last year. Half of East Timorese are very (27 percent) or somewhat (23 percent) concerned about safety and crime, a total increase of 12 percentage points since last year. This trend is similar for internal security as well as safety on the border. Residents of Dili, along with those living in the eastern and central regions, are the most worried about safety and crime. Eastern residents are by far the most concerned: 61 percent worry about internal security and 81 percent worry about border security, including 49 percent who are very concerned.

Interestingly, the problem of violence is viewed more as a national problem (19 percent think it is the biggest problem), than as a local one, where it barely registers. This might be because most people are hearing about violence in other parts of the country, but no longer witnessing violence first hand.
Over six in ten urban residents are worried about crime and safety, compared to just four in ten rural dwellers. The only exception to this is on border security, where younger rural residents are more concerned than other East Timorese, perhaps because they have seen or felt threatened by militia members.

Many East Timorese still fear that political differences will lead to violence. Among those most concerned about safety and crime are those who believe political party competition is bad (56 percent) and those who never or rarely discuss politics (54 percent).

Part of the concern about crime and security may reflect the frequency of criminal violence. One in eight East Timorese have personally been a victim of crime or physical aggression in the last six months. Criminals struck most frequently against older rural men (21 percent had been victimized), and in the districts of Baucau (24 percent), Aileu (23 percent), and Ainaro (20 percent). Just two percent cited domestic violence as the biggest local problem and it did not register as a national problem.\(^1\)

**Summary: The National Mood**

- Optimism about East Timor is generally strong. Farmers, small town residents and political activists have the most positive feelings about the direction of the country, while those in Dili are somewhat less optimistic.

\(^1\) There is no gender difference among admitted crime victims, potentially indicating either 1) this question was unable to measure domestic violence because victims did not feel free to answer, or 2) the problem is not as widespread as expected, or 3) domestic violence might be so culturally acceptable it is not considered aggression or criminal.
• Views on the economy and violence shape citizens’ impressions of East Timor’s direction, for the most part positively, for a minority, negatively.

• A strong plurality of East Timorese feel leadership is the biggest problem facing the nation; the issue of violence has faded among their concerns and now ranks a distant second place.

• Although violence registers behind concerns about leadership, security fears have actually increased in the last year. Urban residents generally worry more than those in rural areas, and those living in the eastern part of the country are alarmed. Many East Timorese still fear that political differences will lead to violence.

• People see “survival issues” like the economy, jobs, food, water and health care as the principal local-level problems, as opposed to the national concerns they note (leadership, violence).
IMPLICATIONS OF VOTER EDUCATION

Reasons for Voting

Almost all eligible East Timorese voted in the 2001 election (96 percent) and the survey found that 97 percent intend to exercise their right to vote in the next election.

More than three quarters of East Timorese (76 percent) went to the polls in the first election because they felt a civic duty to do so. Once they had the opportunity to vote – and understood what they were voting for – they felt an overwhelming responsibility. This feeling of civic responsibility is particularly compelling among younger voters (80 percent), urbanites (80 percent), more educated voters (80 percent) and those living in the eastern districts of the country (87 percent).

Older, rural and less educated voters are slightly less likely to feel civic responsibility. This is also the case among residents of Oecussi and central East Timor. However, while their feelings of civic duty are comparatively less intense, these voters still give “civic duty” as their main motivation for going to the polls (60-71 percent).

Interestingly, in 2001, only 30 percent of voters identified “civic responsibility” as the most important reason to vote. Almost two-thirds cited “choosing leaders” as their main motivation, perhaps because at the time of last year’s survey, many erroneously believed they were voting for president. This change may indicate the impact of voter education.

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<tr>
<th>Reasons for Voting</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic duty / responsibility</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>To choose a candidate</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Because we need a new government</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>Because we have to</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td>The Chefe told me to</td>
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<td>Someone from a political party</td>
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<td>told me so</td>
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<td>Others</td>
<td>2%</td>
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Q. 51

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Only very small numbers of East Timorese do not plan to vote in 2002. Failure to register is the most common reason given, followed by child care needs or illness.

**Impact of Voter Education**

According to findings in the 2001 East Timor National Survey of Voter Knowledge, five months prior to the August 2001 election, just five percent of eligible voters were aware of the reason they were going to the polls.

This survey clearly shows that the public is becoming more aware of politics. Five months after the election, most East Timorese – 84 percent – understand – and remember – the purpose of the last election (choosing a Constituent Assembly). Seven out of ten citizens (73 percent) correctly identify the reason for the upcoming (presidential) election on 14 April. About the same percentage are aware that 20 May, 2002 marks the day East Timor will officially gain independence and power will be transferred to the new government.

East Timorese are obviously more aware of political developments than they were two years ago. It appears that voter education strategies have had a tremendous impact in the past year. Younger, urban and educated voters are most aware of upcoming elections and milestones. However, older people, rural residents, and those with less schooling know less, indicating the need for more efforts targeting those groups. Those in Baucau, Oecussi and the western regions of the country could also benefit from voter education about the objectives of the next ballot.
Voter Education Needs

Although the empirical evidence (such as high voter participation rates and low levels of spoiled/invalid ballots) suggests adequate education about the basic voting process, voters seem to feel otherwise. While they feel they are prepared to vote, almost three-quarters of the electorate (73 percent) feel they need “basic voting information” before going to the polls. This is especially true of residents of the eastern districts of the country (91 percent).

However, it is not entirely clear what “basic voting information” means to voters. This finding could reflect a simple difference in perception of knowledge versus actual comprehension of the process – in other words, voters lack confidence in their level of understanding. In addition, because of their limited experience with voting, people may be concerned that the procedures will change from election to election. It is also possible this illustrates a lack of confidence in the process that will diminish, as elections remain peaceful, become more habitual and result in good government.

Another possible interpretation of this question is that “basic voting info” actually refers to information about parties or candidates. More than a third of voters (36 percent) pointedly request information about the candidates, and 31 percent specifically want to know more about the political parties and the names of their members. It is possible that voters who want “basic voting info” are looking for similar information without being specific. Clearly, the ambiguity of this data limits its usefulness for message development, but this finding undoubtedly points to the need for on-going voter and civic education.
Election Information Sources Used

Radio is the most important medium for election information in East Timor. More than half of East Timorese got most of their election information from the radio. Although slightly fewer people rely on radio for election results, no other source has a comparable saturation. Educated voters are the most likely to get election information from radio, along with residents in the central and western regions of the country. These findings illustrate that radio will need to play a significant part of voter education for some time to come. The majority of resources should probably be allocated in this direction.

However, this does not mean that other sources of election information should be disregarded. While it is important to note that voters do not currently get most of their information from newspapers, this is probably due mainly to spotty distribution, especially in Baucau, Oecussi and the eastern regions. When asked specifically if they get any election information from newspapers, more than half (53 percent) of the public says it does. This may reflect the sort of overclaim common for newspaper readership figures, particularly in developing countries, but it also points to a substantial proportion who use and are interested in getting news from print media. Increasing use of newspapers as a source of election information cannot be accomplished in a year’s time. That does not diminish the importance of or need for print media in a civil society.

In addition, there are many disadvantaged segments of the electorate who rely on other sources of information. For example, the Chefe de Suco plays an important role in many communities, especially with older voters, less educated voters and in Baucau. In terms of disseminating election results, almost a quarter of the electorate (23 percent) counts on the Chefe de Suco. Voter education efforts should take care not to cut the village chiefs out of the loop.
Voter and civic education groups were almost as important as TV and village chiefs as a source of election information.

**Voter Education Sources**

The use of varied voter education strategies has been effective in reaching the people of East Timor. Most voters report exposure to at least one form of voter education. More than six in ten participated in civic education or election related discussions prior to the August 2001 vote. This form of education was particularly widespread in the eastern (69 percent) and central (70 percent) districts, and among more educated East Timorese (67 percent).

IEC information sessions were most likely to reach urban (71 percent), educated (66 percent) voters, those 25-34 years of age (68 percent) and residents in the eastern (74 percent) and central districts (66 percent). Many voters may have attended both IEC sessions and other voter education meetings; or they may not be differentiating between “election related discussions” and “IEC information sessions.” Seventy-eight percent of voters who attended IEC sessions say they attended public voter education meetings and about the same percentage (75 percent) who attended public discussions say they also went to IEC meetings.

A quarter of the electorate (24 percent) received voter education via video CD. This exposure was concentrated in the central (31 percent) and western districts (39 percent), and had the most impact with younger voters and rural voters (28 percent respectively).

Only 3 percent of the voters said they had not been reached by any of these sources of voter education.
Effectiveness of Message Penetration

The East Timorese electorate managed to absorb several civic education messages in a relatively short period of time. A remarkable four out of ten voters cite gender equality as the civic education message they consider most important. Astoundingly, both men and women choose this message (41 percent respectively).

While many more civic education messages broke through among the urban electorate, gender equality measures first across the board in almost every demographic subgroup. The only exceptions are students and residents of the western districts, where the message of “peaceful elections” holds prominence (by two and 17 percentage point margins, respectively).

While voters find many of civic education messages important, it is interesting to note that freedom of speech does not make the list. More than eight in ten East Timorese believe that people feel free to express their political opinions, but in practice the acceptance and understanding of free speech – and its role in a democracy – is limited. More than a quarter of voters (28 percent) object to unpopular political parties being allowed to hold local meetings, and more than two-thirds (68 percent) do not support allowing someone to make a speech critical of a government employee. This limited tolerance points to the need for ongoing civic education efforts to ensure that democratic values receive more than lip service in East Timor.

Summary: Implications of Voter Education

- It is clear from the findings that voter education activities have led to a detectable increase in voter knowledge. For example, five months prior to the previous election, according to the National Survey of Voter Knowledge, only five percent of the electorate was aware of the purpose of the election (to elect a constituent assembly), but the current survey reveals that more than 70 percent of voters can now correctly identify the purpose of the upcoming election (to elect a president), and are aware of the handover of power on May 20. There was a huge turnout in last year’s election, and the survey reveals that voters plan to go to the polls for the presidential ballot in similar numbers. East Timorese overall are more aware of elections and the political process and they want more information about them.

- Radio is the most widely utilized source of election information for the East Timorese electorate, suggesting it should remain the cornerstone of voter and civic education campaigns. However, because of personal preferences, and limited reach in some areas, other media will also need to be utilized to reach the entire electorate. Television is a significant source of information among groups with access to it, either broadcast or through targeted VCD presentation. Although television access is currently rather limited, many people express a preference for getting political information from television. This and experience in other countries suggests it will become one of the most important media for voter and civic education in the future.

- The Chefe de Suco plays a significant role in disseminating some types of election information, and many voters (particularly those with limited access to other sources of information) indicate they would like to receive election information from the Chefe de Suco. This suggests that it would be useful to formally integrate these leaders into future civic and voter education campaigns.
• The survey shows that public civic education and IEC information sessions were well attended. The use of VCD technology to contact voters without televisions or outside broadcast range was an effective strategy, reaching a quarter of the electorate and highlighting significant opportunities for creative education.

• About half of East Timor voters say they get some election information from newspapers, although this probably involves some overclaim, since print media are not yet widely accessible due to distribution and literacy limitations. Brochures, pamphlets and flyers were more widely utilized in the last election.

• By a solid margin, East Timorese voters feel that gender equality is the most important civic education message they have received. Other important messages concern peaceful elections, voting as a right and responsibility and the benefits of multi-party democracy. But the survey also found a continuing need for civic education, particularly on tolerance.
POLITICAL EFFICACY & PARTICIPATION

Freedom of Expression

More than eight in ten East Timorese (84 percent) feel free to speak their minds about politics, while just 10 percent have some hesitation about expressing political opinions. This strongly positive finding is similar to the figures from 2001 and illustrates existence of a central element of political efficacy and democracy.

Educated, urban, white-collar and wealthy citizens are most likely to believe freedom of expression is widely practiced in East Timor, along with residents of Dili, the eastern and central regions. Not surprisingly, those with high levels of political efficacy, tolerance and interest in politics feel free to speak out on political issues. Citizens who have exercised freedom of expression are among the most ardent cheerleaders: more than nine out of ten of those who frequently discuss politics with family or friends believe East Timorese feel free to say what they want.

Political Interest

Sixty-two percent of East Timorese are interested in politics, an increase of eight percentage points since last year. This suggests that voter and civic education efforts in the past year may have been effective.
Those most interested in national politics tend to be male (67 percent), age 25-34 (68 percent), educated (70 percent) and living in a large city (75 percent). Eastern (74 percent) and central region (71 percent) residents are also interested in national politics and problems. Interested voters are frequent radio listeners and often get political information from television. They are likely to understand the concept of democracy, have high scores on the tolerance and efficacy indices and believe that political party competition is a good thing. They also tend to discuss politics and to participate in the process in ways other than voting. In other words, interest in politics is associated with the development of democratic values and participation, and civic education thus should aim to promote interest as well.

Just 28 percent of the electorate is not interested in politics, while 10 percent say they are not sure if they are interested. They tend to be younger (a quarter of those under age 25) and residents of Baucau and Oecussi. Women were less interested in politics than men or unsure if they were interested, particularly women without schooling (26 percent not interested, 30 percent not sure) and women over 35 (32 percent not interested, 21 percent not sure). Disinterested voters believe political competition is bad, are doubtful about freedom of expression and are less likely to participate in the political process. Almost half of these voters (45 percent) did not receive any civic education. Once more the link between political interest, democratic values, and civic education is underlined by our results.

Interest in Local Politics

Almost the same percentage of the electorate is interested in local politics as is interested in the national scene (59 percent compared to 62 percent). Interest in both is closely associated. Of those very interested in national politics, more than eight out of ten (85 percent) are also interested in local politics. Similarly, of those not interested in national politics, seven out of ten (70 percent) are also uninterested in local politics.
Voters who are paying the most attention to the local political scene are men (66 percent), rural voters (68 percent), educated voters (66 percent) and those in the eastern (69 percent) and central regions (68 percent).

Least likely to be interested in local affairs are women (36 percent), voters under age 25 (38 percent), urban voters (36 percent), Oecussi residents (42 percent) and non-radio listeners (36 percent). Low tolerance, efficacy and participation scores also correlate with disinterest in local politics.

**Personal Political Efficacy**

East Timorese voters indicate that they have fairly strong feelings of personal political efficacy. Nearly eight out of ten say they know whom to contact in their community to solve a problem. Almost two-thirds describe themselves as well prepared for participating in political life. A majority of East Timorese voters feel that they can influence community developments, are given the chance to participate, and have a say in what government does. These figures compare favorably to those in developed democracies. They represent the surge of empowerment encountered in many new democracies after founding elections.
However, much work remains to be accomplished if these attitudes are to be consolidated and endure, rather than being corroded by cynicism before the inevitable frustrations of democratic political life. Indeed, even at present, more than a third of the electorate (35 percent) feels they cannot influence developments in their community and 30 percent feel they are not given the chance to participate. More than a quarter of voters feel they have no say in what government does.

**Measuring Feelings of Efficacy**

When the responses to efficacy questions are combined to create an efficacy index, the findings help to define targets for future civic education. Our efficacy index gave one point for each answer indicating efficacy on the five questions just discussed. A third of the electorate (33 percent) demonstrates low political efficacy (0-2 on the efficacy scale), including 12 percent who feel most disenfranchised. Meanwhile, 43 percent feel a greater ability to have a say in government (4-5 on the scale). Everyone else falls somewhere in between (24 percent; a “3” score).

Those with the lowest feelings of efficacy (0-1 on the efficacy index) tend to be women (62 percent) and people older than 35 (51 percent), especially older women. They are people in the lowest income bracket (69 percent), and nearly half never went to school (47 percent). Uneducated women (31 percent) and residents of small towns (43 percent) are particularly likely to have low efficacy. Regionally, voters who score low on the index are most likely to live in Oecussi (11 percent) or the western districts (33 percent).

Those who feel slightly more empowered, but still could use some civic education to build the knowledge and confidence needed for participation in their government (2 on the efficacy index) are 35-49 years old (34 percent), never went to school (33 percent), especially uneducated men.
(17 percent), farmers (78 percent), middle-income (36 percent), small town residents (40 percent), especially in the central (35 percent) and western regions (24 percent).

Those falling in the middle of the scale tend to be under 35 (63 percent) and are likely to live in the eastern region (26 percent).

Voters on the highest end of the efficacy scale (4-5) tend to be male (53 percent), under age 35 (62 percent), educated (53 percent), especially men with schooling (44 percent), unemployed (18 percent), living in larger urban areas (40 percent). The most empowered voters are found in Dili (22 percent).

Civic Participation & Discussion

Although the East Timorese electorate claims to feel empowered over government, in practice, participatory government is little in evidence. More than eight out of ten voters have never contacted a government official on any level of government, or worked for a political party or candidate in an election. More than nine out of ten have never contacted a national elected official.

### Civic Participation

*Did you...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>At least once</th>
<th>More than once</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss political issues with friends, family or coworkers?</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in an organized effort to solve a community problem?</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact local government officials?</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for a political party or candidate in an election campaign?</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact a nationally elected official?</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six of ten East Timorese have never participated in an organized effort to solve a community problem. Over half of the electorate has never even discussed political issues with friends, family members or coworkers, possibly because discussing politics might be interpreted as conflict with potential for violence. Civic participation is clearly an area to be tagged for future education projects.
Measuring Civic Participation

As with political efficacy, we created an index for civic participation. Respondents received one point for each of the five forms of participation noted in the last section. A quarter of the East Timorese electorate (24 percent) is in the lowest category on the civic participation index, meaning they do not participate in any of the ways other than voting measured in the survey. Another 37 percent score just a “1” on the index, signifying very low participation as well, usually restricted to having discussed politics. A quarter of voters (26 percent) fall into the “2” category. Just 13 percent of voters can be categorized as participatory, including scores of 3, 4 and 5. These results can help further define the targets needed for civic education.

Gender and education seem to be the primary influences on participation. Of those who scored lowest on the participation index (0), nearly six in ten (58 percent) are women and a third (33 percent) never went to school. They are likely to live in small towns (40 percent), especially in the western region (30 percent).

Among those who are in the first level of participation (1), 56 percent are women, 29 percent are under age 25, and nearly half (49 percent) are educated.

In the “2” category, 60 percent are men, 40 percent are 25-34, and 46 percent are educated men. They are highly concentrated in the eastern (26 percent) and central regions (33 percent).

Those at the highest levels of participation (3-5) are male (63 percent), 25-34 (44 percent), educated (58 percent), live in rural areas (43 percent), especially in the central region (34 percent). Interestingly, although urban voters are more empowered on the efficacy index, in terms of participation, rural voters are more likely to have participated than urban voters.
Constitutional Discussion

While they may not have participated in government in the past, East Timorese definitely want to have a say in its design in the future. Two-thirds of the electorate (67 percent) wants to be consulted on the new constitution before it is approved. These voters are more likely to be men, younger and educated, but a clear majority of every demographic subgroup wants to be involved in the constitutional development process.

However, when this survey was fielded (January 2002), voters felt they had not been consulted. Just 22 percent of voters said a constituent assembly member had come to their district to discuss the constitution. In Dili (16 percent), Baucau (16 percent) and the western districts (10 percent) the numbers were even lower. Subsequent to the survey, several consultations did take place, but anecdotally there was a feeling among voters the effort was “too little, too late” – perfunctory, rather than substantive consultation.

Consultation on the Constitution

Would you like to be consulted about the constitution before it is finally approved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Has any member of the constituent assembly come to your district and talked about/discussed the constitution with your community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, where there is greatest desire to be included in the constitution design process (the eastern districts -- 87 percent “yes,” three percent “no”), the most consultation actually took place (42 percent). Whether this was a result of citizen demand, leadership responsiveness or third party involvement is unknown, but this could be a good model for other districts.

Public Role in Constitution Development

Eighty-four percent of East Timorese voters believe that public participation in the writing of the country’s constitution is important, including more than seven in ten (72 percent) who feel it is very important. Just eight percent disagree.
Those most adamant about public participation in the constitution-building process are educated (77 percent very important) and score high on the efficacy (80 percent), participation (80 percent), and tolerance indices (78 percent).

Public Participation in Constitution Writing

Public Participation in the writing of a Constitution is important for building national unity. Do you agree or disagree?

![Bar chart showing public participation in constitution writing](chart.png)

Awareness of Constitutional Issues: National Language

Even without attending consultation meetings, East Timorese voters are quite aware of the national constitution and some of the important issues being debated. For instance, seventy-seven percent know that the constitution mentions an official language.

Men are more knowledgeable about the constitutional debate than women are (81 percent to 73 percent) and younger voters are more aware of the issues than older voters are (80 percent to 74 percent). Those with the most education tend to be well informed (88 percent), while those who never attended school are less familiar with the constitution (61 percent).

Residents of urban areas (80-90 percent) know more about the constitution than those in small towns (67 percent) or rural areas (76 percent). Dili residents (89 percent) and those in the eastern districts (89 percent) are more aware than those in Baucau (80 percent), central districts (79 percent). Those in Oecussi (54 percent) and western districts (57 percent) lag behind in constitutional familiarity.
Information Sources about CA

As with the election, radio is by far the major source of information about the constitution. Over half the electorate (55 percent) says it is learning about the constitution via this medium, compared to nine percent from friends and neighbors, eight percent from TV and six percent from the village chiefs. Consultation meetings do not register at all.

Voters in the central (66 percent) and western districts (63 percent) have relied on radio the most for constitution information, while in Dili, 43 percent get it from TV, higher than any other region. The Chefe plays the biggest role on this issue among less educated voters (11 percent), Baucau residents (13 percent) and those in the eastern district residents (12 percent).

Those living in Oecussi are the least connected: just 45 percent get information from radio, 29 percent cannot name a source for constitutional updates and 16 percent have not received any information at all. Voters without formal schooling are also less likely to have information about the constitutional process.
Summary: Political Efficacy & Participation

- While East Timor voters indicate relatively high levels of political efficacy, most are not yet comfortable with types of democratic participation other than voting. They believe they can participate in the political process and effect change, but beyond voting, they do not know how to get involved to solve community and national problems.

- Despite a high level of interest in political processes, half of the electorate does not discuss politics at all, possibly from a fear that political discussion might lead to conflict and violence.

- There is particular desire for involvement in decision-making on the country’s constitution. People want to be consulted, but do not feel the consultation process has been adequate. They have been following the constitutional development and are aware of major issues such as the national language question.

- Women, particularly older women, rural women, and those without schooling, tend to score low on our measures of political efficacy and participation. These are key target groups for civic education efforts.

- Analysis of the data indicates that some regions (Oecussi, in particular) have lower levels of awareness, efficacy and participation than others. This illustrates they are candidates for voter/civic education and will probably require in-person contact or print campaigns due to lower radio access and exposure.
CIVIC EDUCATION ISSUES

Characteristics of a Democratic Country

The data on understanding of democracy suggests impressive success for civic education efforts in East Timor.

In 2001, nearly four in ten voters (37 percent) could not describe any characteristics whatever of a democracy. Just a year later, that figure has fallen to only 17 percent. Women, older and less educated voters remain less informed than men, but in general, East Timorese have a broader understanding of democracy and the benefits it can bring. In particular, they associate democracy quite strongly with notions of freedom and rights in various forms.

Characteristics of Democracy

If a country is called a democracy, what does it mean to you?

- Freedom of speech – 14%
- Freedom (general) – 11%
- Rights/human rights – 10%
- Freedom of ideas – 9%
- Respect differences – 7%
- Freedom of movement – 6%
- Freedom to choose leaders/party/organization – 5%
- Power of people – 5%
- Limits/Concerns about democracy – 4%
- Peace/happiness – 3%
- Law/discipline – 3%
- Our goal for Timor – 2%
- Independence – 1%
- Other – 2%
- Don’t know -- 17%

However, this understanding is still shallow. People describe democracy as “freedom” or “equal rights” but most are unclear how this will affect their daily lives. Fourteen percent mention “free to speak,” or some variation of it, yet other findings demonstrate there is still considerable opposition to true freedom of expression. There is a substantial gap between theoretical understanding of the concepts of democracy and the practical application of them.

This year, fewer East Timorese are likely to relate democracy to “unity/reconciliation” (from eight percent down to less than one percent). There were also fewer responses expressing preference for “democracy within limits” (from 11 percent to four percent).

There is also little association between elections and democracy. Those who connect democracy to elections still represent less than one percent of East Timorese. Even if we consider the 10 percent who mention freedom “to choose leaders/party/organization” or “power of the people” as referring to elections, those who see elections as a key characteristic of democracy remain a small share of East Timor’s citizenry.
Awareness of Current Political Events (20May)

At the time of the first Asia Foundation survey, five months prior to the August 2001 elections, most East Timorese voters were not certain why they were going to the polls. At about five months prior to Independence, awareness of the approaching milestone illustrates that the Timorese people are paying attention to current political events far more than in the past. Although some describe it as “independence” and others refer to it as “transfer of power,” more than seven in ten people are aware of the significance of May 20th. Thirteen percent believe presidential elections are to be held on that day and 14 percent are unsure.

Less educated voters (27 percent), housewives (20 percent), older voters (18 percent) and small-town residents (21 percent) are less likely to be aware of the importance of May 20th. Oecussi residents (27 percent) and those in the western districts (28 percent) also lack knowledge of this approaching milestone.

Commitment to Democracy

Although they profess support for democracy, the survey raised questions about the depth of commitment to democracy among the Timorese. If democracy does not work, almost half of East Timorese express the preference for a “strong leader” while just 41 percent are convinced that “democracy is always best,” and 12 percent are unsure. This illustrates the uncertainty many East Timorese have about democracy as a practical system. They remain unconvinced that democracy can provide them with the stability they crave. Their experience until recently has included colonialism, occupation, war, and civil unrest – but not democratic governance.

Rural voters show more support (+16 points) for strong leadership compared to the country as a whole, as do those age 35-49 (+16) and voters without formal schooling (+13). Men without education (+19) are among the least committed to democracy.

Interestingly, Dili residents, although they tend to be more educated, also prefer a strong leader by a large margin (+24). Voters in the central districts (+25) and Oecussi (+17) have similar opinions. Those in Baucau and the eastern regions are split, while voters in the western districts are most supportive of democracy (53 percent think democracy is always best, compared to 29 percent who want a strong leader).

Support for strong leaders is associated with a belief that one has no say in government and should not discuss politics, while support for democracy is stronger among those who feel they have a say in politics and discuss it with family and friends. Part of the case for civic education is that it can promote political consciousness and debate, which build democratic values.

Political Tolerance: Party Meetings

East Timorese are more tolerant of free speech and political differences than they were last year. Six in ten voters (62 percent) now support all political parties, including unpopular ones, having the right to hold local meetings, an increase of nine percentage points. This suggests that voter and civic education messages stressing peaceful elections and multi-party competition hit home. Still, that leaves almost four in ten opposing or unsure about a basic premise of democracy.
Women (58 percent), urban voters (58 percent) – especially those in Dili (44 percent) and Baucau (48 percent) – and uneducated voters (58 percent) are less likely to express political tolerance. The trend toward low tolerance in urban areas is similar to what was observed in the survey last year – just 38 percent living in the biggest East Timorese towns then believed all parties should be able to hold meetings.

**Tolerance of Political Party Meetings, 2001/2002**

*Should political parties, even the ones most people don’t like, be allowed to hold meetings in your area?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings suggest that intolerance in East Timor is associated with fears of violence rather than an authoritarian ideology. Breaking the link between political disagreement and violence is needed via civic education efforts promoting both tolerance and non-violence.

**Acceptance of Party Competition**

Attitudes about political party competition are also moving toward acceptance. More than half of the electorate (56 percent) now believes that party competition is a good thing, compared to 46 percent in 2001. This, too, points to the impact of civic education, as well as the confidence-building consequences of a peaceful election.
Men (61 percent) are much more supportive of party competition than are women (51 percent), but the trend is positive even among the latter. In 2001, just 40 percent of women believed party competition was acceptable. Educated voters (65 percent) are considerably more likely to embrace opposition (65 percent) than those with no formal schooling (42 percent). This too, shows improvement from last year, when the figures were 58 percent and 36 percent, respectively.

Voters in the eastern (62 percent) and central districts (66 percent) demonstrate the most support for party competition. In Dili (50 percent), Baucau (48 percent) and especially Oecussi (37 percent) political party divergence is less tolerated.

Those who support party competition understand it as an education process and essential tenet of democracy. Voters who oppose party competition worry about the potential for violence.

The people who do not support party competition also tend – socially and in their response on the efficacy battery – to be those who do not feel they have the capacity to be involved in politics. This again suggests the importance of efforts in civic education campaigns to promote the feeling and reality of political involvement as well as material arguing for multi-party politics.

About four in ten East Timorese voters approve of political party competition simply because they view it as part of democracy or part of the process towards democracy. These voters tend to be men, educated and urban residents, as well as voters in Dili, and the central and eastern regions.

Another quarter of the electorate (25 percent) believes that party competition contributes to voter education. Men and voters in Baucau and the central districts are most likely to hold this view.

Some caution that political competition needs to be “within limits” to be acceptable (16 percent). This view is likely to be expressed by rural voters and those in the eastern and western regions.
A plurality of East Timorese who worry about party competition (28 percent) do so because they are concerned about violence. Older voters, small town residents and those in Baucau and Oecussi are most worried about political competition leading to violence.

Another negative impression of political competition is that it might cause voter confusion (14 percent). Older and urban voters, especially in Dili and Baucau are concerned about competition causing confusion.

Some voters (11 percent) worry about the environment “returning to 1975” – especially older voters, those with a primary education and residents of Baucau, Oecussi and the central districts.

Gender Equality

East Timorese are very supportive of gender equality in politics and within the family, at least rhetorically. Seven out of ten support more women’s participation in the political process and three-quarters believe both men and women should have an equal say in household decisions. The civic education message of gender equality clearly resonated.

Strikingly, there is no difference between men and women on issues of gender equality. Older voters are slightly more likely to think men should make household decisions (23 percent), but they are also are more likely to support women’s political involvement (74 percent). Voters without formal education (especially women) and residents of small towns are least likely to, Baucau residents (78 percent) are the most progressive on gender equality in the political realm, while those in Oecussi (64 percent) are least supportive of women’s participation. Concerning interpersonal relations, Dili residents (82 percent) and eastern district voters are most accepting of gender equality (93 percent), while those in the central (64 percent) and western districts (67 percent) are less so.
Impressive though these findings are, the gender equality questions asked do a better job of testing acceptance of the theory of gender equality than its actual practice. Future research might examine attitudes toward women’s ability, skills, and forms of political activity, so that findings can be applied to civic education.

**Dispute Resolution: Personal & Property**

The Chefe de Suco is clearly the most respected mediator for personal or property disputes. East Timorese are more likely to approach the village chief about these types of problems than they are to go to the police or other governmental entity. There is little grassroots utilization of UN authority over land and property disputes – although offices exist in every district, just six percent of voters would go to UNTAET with a complaint of this nature.

![Dispute Resolution Graph](image)

Especially in the largest cities, the local chief plays an enormous role in resolving disagreements. Half of those in big urban areas (53 percent in Dili) would go to the Chefe de Suco for problems with neighbors. In outlying districts (especially in the eastern region), this responsibility is likely to be shared with the traditional leader. A relatively high percentage of East Timorese (17 percent) are willing to approach the police on matters of land and property. The police are most likely to be involved in property disputes in Oecussi and the central districts.

**Acceptance of Law and Order**

East Timorese firmly support law enforcement for property crimes or public disturbances. More than nine of ten voters agree the police have a right to arrest people in these instances and more than eight of ten voters strongly agree.
Those most accepting of “law and order” are central and western region residents. Only slightly less supportive of a police role for a public disturbance are urban residents, less educated voters and those in Baucau. Police action on property crimes is not as important for rural voters, those in Baucau or the central region.

**Concerns About Corruption, Collusion & Nepotism**

Concerns about corruption, collusion and nepotism (KKN) have increased dramatically since last year. Almost nine in ten voters (88 percent) are worried about corruption, including 79 percent who are very concerned. Last year, 56 percent were very concerned about the issue.

Men and women are equally concerned about corruption; younger voters are slightly more worried than their older counterparts. The most educated voters (92 percent) have greater fears about KKN than those without formal education (83 percent). Eastern (91 percent very concerned) and western district residents (85 percent) are most worried about the issue, compared to just 46 percent of Oecussi voters.
This extreme increase in worry about KKN illustrates the need for “good government” training, to help elected leaders learn about ethics and transparency. Lack of inexperience in this realm could lead to early mistakes that will play into voter fears and could further undermine confidence in democracy. A civic education campaign could encourage the formation of and active participation in citizen anti-corruption “watchdog” organizations.

Summary: Civic Education Issues

- The East Timorese electorate is more conscious of elements of democracy, interested in politics and aware of current political events than last year, reflecting successes for civic education. Tolerance of political parties has also grown.

- Efforts should be made to take advantage of this sentiment and begin on-going civic education as soon as possible. Emphasis should be placed on putting concepts of democracy into practice – especially free speech, tolerance and political competition.

- While voters have educated themselves tremendously in the last year, there are clearly still unresolved information needs. Many people remain uninformed about democracy, and have even greater difficulty moving from a theoretical knowledge of the characteristics of democracy to their practical application. Low tolerance for free expression is perhaps the most troubling example of this, although there has been a significant increase in tolerance since the 2001 survey.

- The strong support for gender equality is a particularly encouraging trend. Specific civic education programs should be aimed at women to promote political participation.
• Many East Timorese still worry that political differences and disputes could lead to violence. Most rely on the Chefe de Suco or traditional leader to resolve differences and have less confidence in the political process or government. This suggests that local and traditional leaders might be important partners for dispute resolution and conflict prevention.

• Arrests by the police are seen as the right response to criminal activity.

• Widespread concerns about corruption threaten to undermine confidence in East Timor’s new democracy. Leaders need “good government” training to establish ethical standards, practices and goals.

Appendix: Civic Education Targets and Contents

Civic Education Recommendations for All Citizens

Emphasis:

• De-link perceived relationship between political competition and violence. The fear of violence seems to be inhibiting acceptance of political competition.

• Provide at least a primary education for every child. The lack of formal education correlates closely with low acceptance of democratic values; institute civic education curriculum for all primary school children for long-term improvement of citizen knowledge, tolerance, efficacy and participation.

• Emphasize citizen participation in accountable government. Voters need tools to put democratic values into action. Show how participation can counter corruption.

• Teach democracy in practical terms. Illustrate connections between elections and problem-solving, particularly in the economic realm.

• Stress importance of political tolerance and free speech.

Media:

• Radio is extremely important and cost-effective

• Continue mixed-media approach

• Face-to-face education and public meetings should happen as often as possible, with an emphasis on the regions where radio penetration is low (e.g. Oecussi).
Civic Education Recommendations for Specific Target Groups

Specific Target Groups:

- Women (50 percent of electorate); especially uneducated women (14 percent) and those in rural areas (17 percent)
- Voters without formal education (25 percent);
- Older voters (39 percent)
- Small towns (32 percent), rural (36 percent)
- Primary geographic: Baucau (13 percent), Oecussi (6 percent), Western region (20 percent)
- Secondary geographic: Dili (17 percent), Central region (25 percent)

Emphasis:

- Stress importance of civic education and informed electorate
- Provide multiple sources of civic education and encourage citizen dialogue
- Link participation to community improvement

Media:

- Radio is the most efficient and cost-effective media, but more than one approach is necessary to reach the entire electorate, especially key target groups, who tend to be non-listeners – step up radio distribution efforts
- Brochures and posters will be best bet in short term
- Try to make use of VCD technology; target groups prefer getting information from television
- Train and incorporate the Chefe de Suco into civic education efforts and communications plan
COMMUNICATING VOTER & CIVIC EDUCATION

Trusted Personal Political Information Sources

Among face-to-face sources of political information, the Chefe de Suco remains the preferred personal source of political information among East Timorese. When first and second responses are combined, over half of voters (54 percent) like to get information from the Chefe. In 2001, the question was slightly different, but 62 percent wanted to get election information from the Chefe. The Chefe is particularly preferred among less educated voters (61 percent); especially less-educated women – 63 percent of them want to get political information from the village chief, compared to 50 percent of educated men.

Baucau (62 percent) and eastern region voters (59 percent) are most likely to prefer that the Chefe de Suco is their face-to-face source of political information.

After the Chefe, the other sources mentioned by more than 5 percent were students (17 percent), Renetil (13 percent), the church and catechists (9 percent), and NGOs (8 percent).

Political Information Media Preferences

In terms of mass media preferences, radio towers above all the rest. Two-thirds of the East Timorese electorate wants to receive political information from the radio as either a first or second media choice. Television runs a very distant second (17 percent), followed by discussion groups (15 percent), posters (14 percent) and brochures (12 percent). Younger (70 percent), educated voters (78 percent) and residents of the central region (77 percent) are most likely to prefer radio information. The preference for radio among older voters (63 percent), farmers (61 percent), residents of Baucau (48 percent) and Oecussi (52 percent) and those with no formal schooling (47 percent) was weaker.
The fact that preferences for electronic media run higher than actual usage (55 percent get election information from radio and 10 percent from TV) illustrates these sources could be better utilized, especially as access improves. Among those who currently listen to the radio, 86 percent prefer to get their political information via this media. Among those who never listen to the radio, more than a third (35 percent) still want to get information this way, while 28 percent don’t know. The next most preferred category is posters (18 percent), followed by discussion groups (17 percent) and brochures (15 percent).

Considering the low level of access to television, it is interesting to note TV is the second choice after radio for political information. Its entertainment appeal might be the result of VCD exposure during last year’s campaign. Those who get most of their political information from TV (only about 10 percent of the electorate) definitely prefer TV over radio.

**Regular Radio Exposure**

Timorese are not more likely to own radios than a year ago – but they are more likely to listen to them.

More than six in ten East Timorese live in households with a working radio, which does not represent a significant national increase over last year, despite radio distribution efforts. Those with household radios are more likely to be young (67 percent), urban (67 percent), educated (78 percent) and non-farmers (77 percent). Dili (81 percent) and central region residents (70 percent) are far more likely to have in-home radio access than East Timorese in other areas: the western region (63 percent), Baucau (61 percent), Oecussi (32 percent) or the eastern region (48 percent).
While the number of working radios per household does not seem to have increased significantly over the last year, radio exposure has. More than four in ten (42 percent) listen to the radio almost every day, an increase of 12 percentage points. Another 13 percent have radio access 3-4 times a week, also a significant increase (eight percentage points). This means almost seven in ten voters (69 percent) have some level of access to radio, while 55 percent of the electorate gets most of its political information from the radio.

Younger voters listen to the radio more than older voters do, men listen slightly more than women do, and urban residents have more access to radio than rural dwellers do. Education is one of the strongest drivers of radio listenership; more than half of those with post-primary education (56 percent) listen daily, compared to just a quarter (27 percent) of those with no formal education.

Dili (51 percent) and the western districts (52 percent) have the most daily radio listeners. Less than a quarter of Oecussi and eastern region residents listen to the radio every day.

Measures of efficacy, tolerance, participation and knowledge of current events all correlate with daily radio listenership and in-home radio access. These measures also correlate with level of schooling so it is unclear how much radio exposure can truly satisfy civic education needs. However, it is certain that radio provides the best opportunity for achieving civic education goals in the short term.

Given the small population size and the fact that several people listen to a single radio, one potential civic education program goal might be to distribute wind-up radios to every family without one. It would require 50,000 – 100,000 sets.
**Favorite Programs**

Eighty-five percent of East Timorese listen to news radio programs, most as a first preference. A third of radio listeners (33 percent) tune in to information programs and about the same percentage (30 percent) listen to music, although only three percent choose music first.

Eighty-six percent of radio listeners are interested in hearing news about districts other than their own. This is particularly true of rural voters and residents of Oecussi and the eastern region, who may feel most out of touch with what is happening in the rest of the country.

Men (88 percent) prefer news more than women do (81 percent), while women prefer music (33 percent to 27 percent). Educated voters (87 percent) listen to news more than voters without formal education (82 percent).

Oecussi and eastern region residents listen to the most news radio (probably because it is the most available), while western region residents tend to listen to more music and traditional/local programming. Music is also popular in Dili and Oecussi.

**Station & Language Preferences**

Radio UNTAET dominates East Timor radio. Eight out of ten radio listeners tune to this station, an increase since last year of six percent. Older voters (84 percent) are slightly more likely to listen to Radio UNTAET than those under age 35 (79 percent). The youngest voters (under age 25) are least likely to tune in to Radio UNTAET, but three-quarters still listen to it.
The only exception to Radio UNTAET saturation is in Dili where half of the electorate listens to other stations, like RTK (37 percent), Falintil (7 percent) and Racambia (7 percent).

Of East Timorese who listen to the radio at least occasionally, nearly nine in ten (88 percent) prefer to hear the radio news in Tetum, while eight percent prefer Indonesian. Less educated and western listeners are most likely to prefer Tetum. Indonesian is most popular in the eastern region, Oecussi and Dili. This question does not measure language preferences of the entire electorate.

Newspaper Election Coverage Exposure

When asked directly if they received any election information from newspapers, just over half of East Timorese respond affirmatively. However, only four percent of voters credit newspapers as the source of most of their election information and just three percent learned election results from newspapers. This media fails to register significantly when voters are asked about preferred sources of political information. This suggests that the newspaper readership claim is exaggerated because of the associated prestige, as is often the case, particularly in developing countries.
Suara Timor Lorosa’e was the source for a plurality (38 percent) of newspaper readers. Dili residents and those in the eastern region of the country were most likely to get information from Suara Timor, while people living in other regions were less likely to have seen it. This newspaper is also much more widely read by educated East Timorese, especially men.

Tais Timor, an information source circulated by UNTAET, provided some election information for almost a third of East Timorese (31 percent). It was more likely to reach older and less educated voters, along with those in the central and western part of the country.

The Timor Post was an election coverage source for 17 percent of the population. Its readers tended to be Dili residents and older voters.

Circulation problems are among the biggest hurdles for newspapers in East Timor – newspapers are simply not available in many parts of the country. Until those problems are addressed, along with the issue of literacy, voters will be unable to rely on newspapers for regular election coverage.

**Summary: Communicating Voter & Civic Education**

- Radio is still the most important communication tool in East Timor. It is the most accessible and among the most credible sources of information. Most people prefer to get information about politics and elections via radio and they are listening considerably more than last year.

- Radio UNTAET continues to be the most popular and dominates the airwaves.
• The importance of the Chefe de Suco clearly needs to be addressed in future civic and voter education programs. An attempt should probably be made to incorporate the Chefe de Suco more fully into voter and civic education communications because many East Timorese rely on and trust their Chefe more than other sources of information.

• Newspaper readership should be developed, but this will be a long process. Suara Timor Lorosa’e continues to be the most widely read newspaper. The publication Tais Timor has had an increased readership since last year.

• Tetum is by far the preferred language for radio news.
EAST TIMOR IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

This section compares the findings of this survey to the results of prior TAF polls in Indonesia and Cambodia.

Electoral Participation

Electoral participation was near-universal in East Timor in 2001 (98 percent) and in Indonesia in 1999 (96 percent). These extremely high rates of voting in the first elections after democratic transition are typical of such “founding elections.” In contrast, participation in Cambodia’s national election in 1998 was a bit lower, though still high at 89 percent. The lower rate of voting may have reflected the fact that it was a second election. (In the same survey, fully 97 percent of Cambodians polled said they planned to vote in the forthcoming local elections, the first ever to be held in that country.)

Political Interest and Discussion

There were noteworthy differences in levels of political interest among the three countries. Interest expressed in politics was considerably higher in Timor (54 percent of voters were interested) and Cambodia (50 percent) than in Indonesia, where only 33 percent said they were interested in politics. This appears to reflect genuine differences in levels of politicization, since in all three countries the proportions of people who said those around them were afraid to express their political views were similar and low. Timor’s independence struggle and the legacy of political conflict in Cambodia appear to have left more interest in politics than the stable authoritarianism of the Suharto epoch.
However, in all three countries, there was a substantial gap between the proportion of citizens who expressed interest in politics and those who actually talked about the subject. In Timor, some 28 percent said they had discussed politics with others, in Indonesia only 11 percent, and in Cambodia the lowest proportion of all, just 10 percent. Despite their perception that freedom of expression exists, it appears that a substantial degree of caution persists among citizens of all three of these countries. Yet the conflict of the independence struggle in Timor seems to have been less inhibiting than Cambodia’s violent history and uncertain present or Indonesia’s shift from stifling dictatorship to wobbly democracy.

**Awareness of Democracy**

There are also some surprising differences in awareness of characteristics of democracy among the three countries. Timorese rated the highest of all three in the proportion who could name at least one characteristic of democracy – fully 81 percent could do so and only 19 percent could not. In Indonesia, half could do so, and half could not. In Cambodia, in contrast, 67 percent could not name any characteristics of a democracy, while only one-third could offer any concept of democracy at all. Of course, even in Timor, the understandings of democracy expressed were not particularly sophisticated, centering on freedom. And in none of the countries was there much association between democracy and elections. Nonetheless, the differences are striking.
These patterns may reflect differences in both culture and civic education. The Timorese and Indonesian polls were taken shortly after national civic education campaigns, while the Cambodian results were several years after the campaigns associated with the 1994 elections there. The Indonesian public is also better educated and more media-exposed than that of Cambodia, which may also help explain the differences between the two countries. But the Timorese struggle for national liberation may also have been an important factor in linking democracy and freedom in the public mind in a way that was not the case in either Indonesia or Cambodia.

### Tolerance of Political Party Meetings

The survey results from all three countries on the question of political tolerance were strikingly similar. In East Timor, some 62 percent of citizens were willing to tolerate meetings of all parties, even unpopular ones, while 28 percent would not. In Cambodia, 64 percent were tolerant and 23 percent not, while Indonesians were the most tolerant—70 percent accepted meetings of all parties and 19% did not.
In all three countries, the figures reported came in the wake of voter education campaigns that had sought to promote political tolerance. In Timor and Indonesia, the proportions who had not been willing to accept meetings by all parties were substantially higher prior to those campaigns, according to the pre-election TAF polls. Even after the campaigns, there remained substantial proportions in all three countries who were concerned about allowing all parties to meet. It is important to recognize, however, that intolerance in these cases was not associated with a rejection of democracy or an embrace of totalitarian ideology. In all three countries, those opposed to free political activity justified it on the fear that it could lead to violent conflict, a not unreasonable fear given their histories of violent strife between parties.

**Sources of Political Information**

Citizens of the three countries vary considerably in the mass media sources of political information on which they rely. In Timor, as seen above, radio is the key medium on which two-thirds of citizens rely, while just 17 percent get political information from TV. Indonesia is the polar opposite: 65 percent get their political news from television, just 9 percent from radio. Cambodia falls into the middle; some 32 percent rely on TV and 29 percent on radio for political news.
These differences most likely reflect differences in the level of development of the three countries. Indonesia is the most affluent and urbanized of the three; its pattern of heavy reliance on television is typical of middle-income countries. Timor is extremely poor, heavily rural, and has little infrastructure; in these circumstances radio is the likeliest mass medium to be available, as in other very poor lands. Cambodia’s development has allowed a growing proportion of citizens to have access to TV, which is the dominant medium in the growing urban areas, while radio remains the key mass medium for reaching rural Cambodians.

**Summary: East Timor in Comparative Perspective**

- Voter participation was extremely high in founding elections in Timor and Indonesia, a bit lower in the second election in Cambodia.
- Over half of Timorese and around half of Cambodians were interested in politics, compared to one-third of Indonesians. In all three countries the proportions who actually discussed politics were much lower.
- Timorese were much likelier to be able to cite at least one characteristic of democracy – four of five mentioned one, usually freedom. Only half of Indonesians and one-third of Cambodians could do the same.
- In all three countries the majority were tolerant of unpopular political parties – but a minority was not, fearing inter-party strife.
- Radio is the most important political medium in East Timor; TV in Indonesia, and among Cambodians TV dominates in town and radio in the countryside. These patterns reflect the differing levels of development of the three countries.