

LOWY INSTITUTE FIJI POLL 2011



Fiji at Home and in the World PUBLIC OPINION AND FOREIGN POLICY

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FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Executive Summary

The Lowy Institute Fiji Poll reports the results of a face-to-face opinion survey conducted in Fiji between 19 and 21 August 2011 using a sample of 1,032 adults randomly selected from the major urban and peri-urban areas of Viti Levu (the main island of Fiji).

Fiji and the World

Most Fiji people were positive about the importance of maintaining good foreign relationships, particularly with traditional partners such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States and United Kingdom. They also recognised the value of relationships with Asian economic powers – China, Japan and India.

Although the Fiji government has worked hard on its relationships with fellow Melanesian countries, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the Fiji people were less enthusiastic about the value of these relationships to Fiji.

The Pacific Islands Forum was regarded as the most important regional organisation for Fiji, and 79% disapproved of Fiji's suspension from the Forum. A large majority also disagreed with Fiji's suspension from the Commonwealth. While Fiji has been isolated from the Pacific Islands region's premier institution as a result of the 2006 coup, 77% of Fiji people said Fiji's traditional leadership role in the region was the same or stronger since the coup.

The majority of Fiji people said Fiji should be left alone to sort out its return to democracy, expressing opposition to international pressure on the Fiji government. While Australia was the foreign country Fiji people regarded most warmly, 81% said Australia should lift all sanctions and re-establish normal relations with Fiji.

Fiji at Home

The people of Fiji registered a strong approval rating of 66% for the performance of Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama as Prime Minister. A similar number (65%) said Fiji was heading in the right direction.

A majority said the Fiji government was doing a good job at listening to the views of the Fiji people and in delivering key social services such as health, education and transport. The government's performance on reducing racial inequalities also rated highly at 67%. A smaller majority (59%) said the government was improving the economy and increasing employment opportunities.

A slim majority (53%) of Fiji people said democracy was preferable to any other form of government. Fifty-three per

cent said the Fiji government was doing a good job preparing to draft a new constitution, 52% said the government was doing a good job making progress towards elections and 51% said the government was doing a good job reforming the electoral system.

A significant majority (66%) of Fiji people said the Church should not be involved in politics.

While overall approval for the current key role of the Fiji military was high at 68%, support for a long-term role for the military in Fiji's politics was lower at 52%.

There was near universal support in Fiji for some of the basic tenets of democracy, with over 95% overall support for the importance of the right to free expression, the right to vote in national elections, the right to a fair trial, and a media free from censorship.

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Introduction

On 5 December 2006 Fiji military commander, Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama deposed Laisenia Qarase, the elected Prime Minister of Fiji, in a military coup. The coup followed a sustained period of discord between the government and the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, led by Bainimarama, over three contentious parliamentary bills – the Reconciliation Tolerance and Unity Bill, the Qoliqoli Bill and the Land Tribunal Bill. Bainimarama issued an ultimatum to the government to agree to a series of demands or resign.

When the government did not meet all the military's demands, Bainimarama seized power and assumed the position of Prime Minister, which he has maintained to date. He promised to engage in a clean-up campaign to rid Fiji of corruption and to eliminate racial inequalities in Fiji. Bainimarama said elections would be held when the country was stable and when appropriate electoral reforms were implemented.

The coup attracted international condemnation. Australia, New Zealand, the United States, United Kingdom, the European Union and Japan all condemned the coup and called for a swift return to democracy. Australia and New Zealand imposed travel sanctions on members of the military regime. Other nations imposed a variety of limited sanctions.

Fiji was suspended from the Pacific Islands Forum in May 2009 when Bainimarama failed to demonstrate he could meet an earlier undertaking to hold elections in 2009. The Commonwealth also suspended Fiji when it did not deliver on its promises to hold democratic dialogue that would lead to elections in 2010.

In April 2009, following a landmark Court of Appeal decision that the coup had been illegal, Fiji's President Iloilo abrogated the constitution and appointed Bainimarama as interim Prime Minister. The Fiji government imposed the Public Emergency Regulation which restricted freedom of assembly and imposed censorship of the media. The President also appointed a new judiciary. The Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji was sacked and replaced by his deputy.

In July 2009, Bainimarama gave a speech to the nation entitled 'A strategic framework for change'. In this speech he announced that elections would be held in 2014 and a new constitution would be in place by 2013. He promised major pro-growth and pro-poor economic reforms and new laws that would address Fiji's social problems. He also committed to engagement with the international community.

Bainimarama has sought to reduce the influence of the Methodist Church in Fiji politics. He has banned the annual conference of the Methodist Church three times and taken in

senior Church officials for questioning. Bainimarama has also reduced the powers of Fiji's chiefs, substantially diminishing their influence on the nation. The media's freedom was removed first by the Public Emergency Regulation, which also continues to restrict freedom of assembly, and then by the Media Industry Development Decree 2010.

Reports of intimidation have increased, with Fiji's trade unions appealing for international action to address intimidatory tactics used by the Fiji military-led government.

Supporters of the Bainimarama government point to its pro-poor policies and commitment to liberal economic reforms as evidence of positive progress in Fiji. Detractors argue that media censorship, acts of intimidation and lacklustre implementation of promised reforms are proof that Bainimarama is not serious about reform or returning the country to democracy.

Bainimarama has openly argued with the Australian and New Zealand governments and committed Fiji to a 'look north' policy, involving closer ties with Asian partners such as China, India and Indonesia and with the emerging economic powers of Brazil and South Africa.

Opinion Polling in Fiji

Opinion polling has a long history in Fiji. The Fiji Times launched the first Tebbutt Times Poll in 1992 and opinion polling has been a regular feature of public debate in Fiji since then. This opinion poll, however, is the first since the imposition of the Public Emergency Regulation in April 2009 and the introduction of the Fiji Media Industry Development Decree in June 2010. It is also the first to canvas, in a substantial way, the opinions of Fiji people about the world.

The poll was conducted in the same method as other opinion polls in Fiji have been and on a confidential basis. Further information on the poll's methodology is available at the end of this publication.

The poll results tend to suggest that the Fiji people did not feel inhibited answering the survey. For example, the fact that a third of Fiji people were prepared to say that Bainimarama was doing either an average, fairly poor or very poor job as Prime Minister suggests that they felt sufficiently free to voice an opinion in a confidential survey.

Fiji and the World

Feelings Towards Other Countries

Consistent with the Lowy Institute's annual poll, *Australia and the World – Public Opinion and Foreign Policy*, this poll asked respondents in Fiji to rate their feelings to other countries on a 0 to 100 scale. Of the 14 countries included in the poll, Australia was the most warmly regarded, achieving a rating of 74°. New Zealand and the United States shared equal second place with 72°. The fourth highest rated country was the United Kingdom at 68°.

In the 2009 Lowy Institute Poll, Australians also recorded warm feelings about Fiji, rating Fiji at 64°.¹

Fiji's Asian partners recorded relatively warm ratings, with China at 64°, Japan at 63°, and India at 62°. Singapore, which is one of Fiji's leading sources of imports, was less warmly regarded (53°). Indonesia, however, recorded the equal lowest rating, at only 50°, almost identical to the 51° rating it achieved in the 2011 Lowy Institute poll on Australian public opinion and foreign policy.

Surprisingly, Fijians were not enthusiastic in their feelings towards their Pacific neighbours, with Samoa and Tonga sharing a rating of 55°; Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu sharing 52° and Solomon Islands rating equal lowest at just 50°.

Foreign Relations

An overwhelming majority agreed that Fiji's relations with many foreign partners were important. Over 85% of respondents agreed it was important that the Fiji government have a good relationship with the governments of all 14 countries included in the survey.

Of this majority, 76% strongly agreed that it was important the Fiji government had a good relationship with the Australian government and 72% strongly agreed it was important to have a good relationship with New Zealand. This result defies the trends and rhetoric of the brittle diplomatic relationships between Fiji and Australia and New Zealand.

A relatively high number of respondents also strongly agreed with the importance of good government-to-government relations with the United States (67%), United Kingdom (66%), Japan (62%), China (60%) and India (58%).

Fiji Prime Minister Bainimarama has made efforts to prioritise relations with Fiji's Melanesian neighbours, principally through his personal involvement with the Melanesian Spearhead Group. He has also forged a new

Figure 1: Feelings towards other countries

Please rate your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, 0 (zero) meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to 100: the higher the number the more favourable your feelings are toward that country. If you have no opinion or have never heard of that country, please say so.

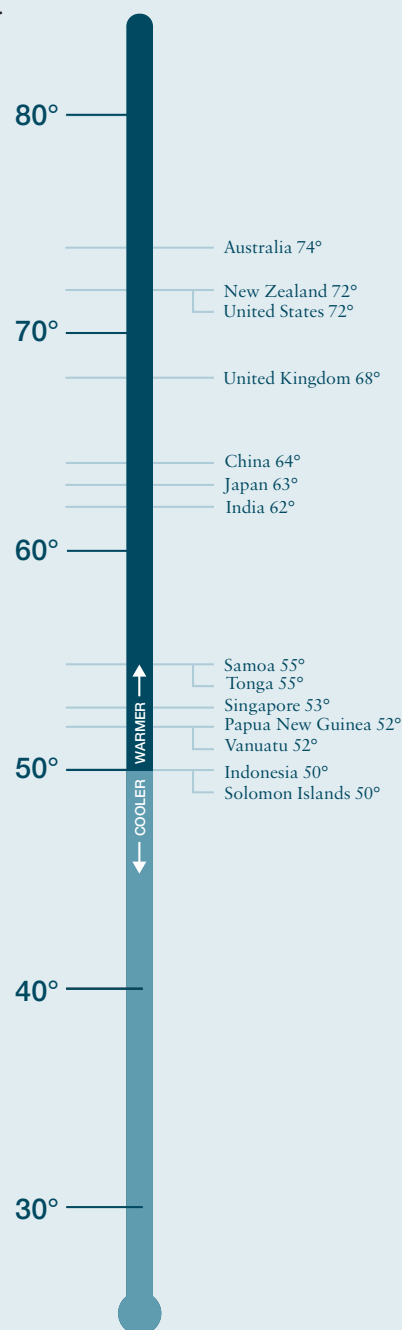
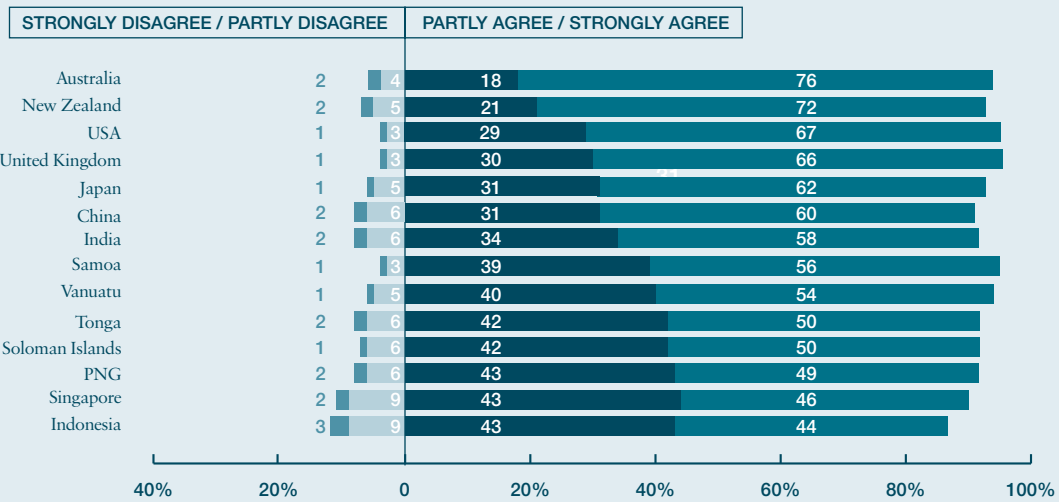


Figure 2: Importance of relationships

Thinking now about the Fiji Government’s relations with governments from other countries, do you personally agree or disagree that it is important for the Fiji government to have a good relationship with the governments of each of the following countries...



diplomatic relationship with Indonesia, opening the first Fiji Embassy in Jakarta in April 2011 and welcoming Indonesian advice on electoral reforms. These efforts appear to have not yet garnered significant sympathy from the Fiji population.

The importance of good official relationships with Fiji’s Pacific neighbours did not attract as much strong agreement, with 56% strongly agreeing with good relations with Samoa, 54% with Tonga, 50% with Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, and 49% with Papua New Guinea.

The importance of good relations with Singapore and Indonesia also failed to attract strong support, with only 46% strongly agreeing in the case of Singapore and 44% in Indonesia’s case.

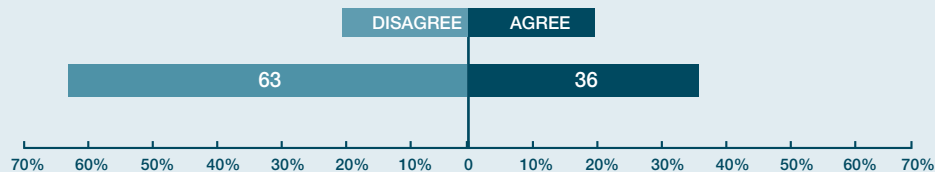
The Australian Approach to Fiji

Australia has led international opprobrium towards the military government in Fiji since the December 2006 coup. In response to the coup, the Australian government imposed travel restrictions on Bainimarama, his supporters and their families, as well as members of the Fiji government, military officers and rank-and-file members of the military. Defence cooperation and ministerial-level contact with the Interim Government were suspended. Contact at officials-level continues to take place in order to pursue key interests. Australia also maintains an A\$37.5 million aid program in Fiji.³

The Australian approach, while supported by partners such as New Zealand, the United States, European Union, United

Figure 3: Australian approach

Now a few questions about Australia. Please think about the approach the Australian Government has taken towards the current Fiji government in response to the coup in 2006. Do you personally agree or disagree with the approach the Australian Government has taken towards the current Government in Fiji in response to the 2006 coup?



Kingdom and Japan, has attracted significant criticism from the Fiji government.

A clear majority (63%) either strongly disagreed (44%) or partly disagreed (19%) with the approach taken by the Australian government towards the Fiji government in response to the 2006 coup. Thirty-six per cent of respondents either strongly agreed (21%) or partly agreed (15%) with the Australian approach.

The most prominent element of the Australian government's response to the 2006 coup has been the imposition of travel sanctions against members of the military regime and their relatives.

AUSTRALIAN TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Australia implements sanctions which include *"Restrictions on visas to travel to Australia by:*

- *high profile coup supporters; ranking Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) officers (warrant officer rank and above), and their families*
- *other RFMF members, but not their families;*
- *Interim Government Ministers, and their families;*
- *Interim Government-appointed senior public servants; and*
- *Interim Government appointees to government or quasi-government boards."*⁴

In the Lowy Institute's 2010 Poll on Australian public opinion and foreign policy, Australian respondents were presented with three options for dealing with the Fiji government with regard to the sanctions policy. The majority of Australians were supportive of the government's approach with 56% saying it should 'keep existing limited travel sanctions.' Twenty-four per cent said the government should 'lift all sanctions and re-establish normal relations with Fiji' while just 16% said it 'should impose more sanctions against Fiji.'⁵

When a similar question was asked of Fiji respondents, the difference in attitude was stark. An overwhelming majority (81%) said the Australian government should 'lift all sanctions and re-establish normal relations with Fiji'. Only 13% said the Australian government should 'keep existing travel sanctions' and a tiny 5% said it should 'impose more sanctions against Fiji.'

Foreign Pressure

The Fiji government has long resisted international and regional pressure to hold elections or make other moves towards the early restoration of democracy. Fiji Prime Minister Bainimarama has said other countries should not be interfering in Fiji and in particular has emphasised that the Australian and New Zealand governments have nothing

to do with the situation in Fiji.⁶

An overwhelming majority of Fiji people appear to agree with Bainimarama, with 83% saying foreign countries should allow Fiji to sort out its return to democracy on its own. Only 16% said foreign countries should try to pressure for democratic elections in Fiji.

Commonwealth

Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth in September 2009 following the Fiji government's failure to reactivate the President's Political Dialogue Forum process, which was facilitated by the Commonwealth and the United Nations, 'in a manner that was independent, inclusive, time-bound and without any pre-determined outcome, and that would lead to credible elections in the country by October 2010.'⁷

Fiji's suspension from the Commonwealth was highly unpopular in Fiji, with 76% of respondents disagreeing with the suspension. Of this majority, 57% strongly disagreed with Fiji's suspension. Just under a quarter (23%) agreed with the Commonwealth's decision.

An even larger majority (82%) disagreed with the Commonwealth's decision to exclude Fiji from participation from the Commonwealth Games in New Delhi in 2010.

Fiji's Role in the Pacific Islands Region

Fiji is known as the hub of the Pacific Islands region. It plays host to the region's premier organisation, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, and is the headquarters of the region's main university, the University of the South Pacific. Fiji is a major transport and services hub for much of the Pacific Islands region.

Fiji has traditionally played a strong leadership role in the region. Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, the nation's first Prime Minister and later President, was a founding father of the Pacific Islands Forum and worked hard to advance the objectives of the Forum regionally and internationally.

A large majority (73%) of Fiji people either strongly agreed (38%) or partly agreed (35%) that Fiji currently played a leadership role in the Pacific Islands region while 24% strongly or partly disagreed.

Fiji's ability to play a leadership role has been affected by its suspension from the Pacific Islands Forum for failing to hold elections as promised in 2007 and by its exclusion from the PACER Plus regional trade negotiations.

Despite these constraints, when asked to compare Fiji's leadership role five years ago with its role nowadays, 77% said it was either the same (32%) or stronger (45%). Just 22% said Fiji's leadership role had weakened.

Regional Organisations

Since Fiji was suspended from the Pacific Islands Forum in May 2009, Prime Minister Bainimarama has worked to elevate the importance of the sub-regional organisation, the Melanesian Spearhead Group in Fiji. The Melanesian Spearhead Group’s members are Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia’s *Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste* (FLNKS) movement.

When asked whether the Pacific Islands Forum or the Melanesian Spearhead Group was more important for Fiji, a slight majority (51%) of Fiji people said the Pacific Islands Forum was more important. Just 16% said the Melanesian Spearhead Group was the more important organisation for Fiji. Twenty-nine per cent said both organisations were equally important.

Prime Minister Bainimarama has also argued that Australia and New Zealand should not be members of the Pacific Islands Forum.⁸ A large majority of Fiji people disagree with him, with 80% saying that Australia should be a member of the Forum and 76% saying New Zealand should be a member.

Fiji was suspended from the Pacific Islands Forum following its ‘failure to address constructively by May 1, 2009, the expectations of Forum Leaders to return Fiji to democratic governance in an acceptable time-frame.’⁹

Perhaps reflecting their majority support for the Pacific Islands Forum as the more important regional organisation for Fiji, 79% of Fiji people disagreed with Fiji’s suspension from the Forum – a similar proportion to that which

Figure 4: Melanesian Spearhead Group vs Pacific Islands Forum

Please think now about regional organisations. Overall, which one do you personally think is more important for Fiji...

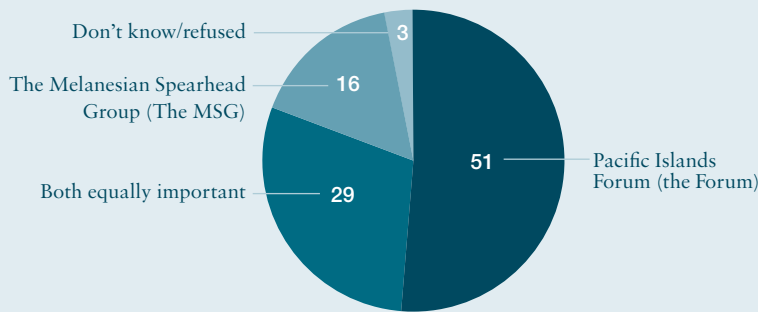


Figure 5: Pacific Islands Forum membership

Now just about the Pacific Islands Forum. Do you personally think that Australia/New Zealand should be a member of the Pacific Islands Forum?

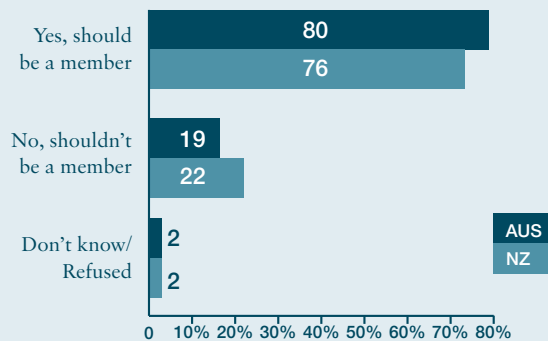
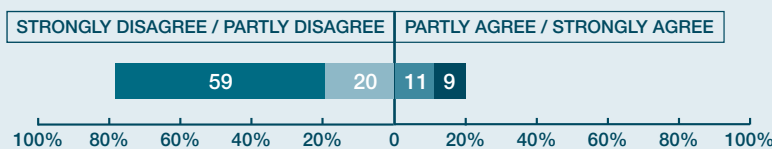


Figure 6: Pacific Islands Forum suspension

Do you personally agree or disagree with Fiji’s suspension from the Pacific Islands Forum?



disagreed with Fiji's suspension from the Commonwealth. Of this majority, 59% strongly disagreed with the suspension. Just 20% of respondents agreed with the Forum's decision to suspend Fiji.

Rugby World Cup Sanctions

Rugby Union is the most popular sport in Fiji and has a large and passionate following. In the lead up to the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand in September 2011, questions were raised about whether the New Zealand government's sanctions against members of the Fiji government and military may prevent Fiji fielding its preferred team.¹⁰

Fiji lock Leone Nakarawa, 23, a junior officer in the military, is the only player believed to have been affected by New Zealand's travel sanctions, but following his resignation from the military, has been granted a temporary exemption from the travel sanctions by the New Zealand government.¹¹ The release of this news may not have been widely known in Fiji at the time the survey was conducted.

Presented with three options for Fiji's response to the travel sanctions on its players, which at one point may have threatened Fiji's participation in the World Cup, 37% said Fiji needed to accept the travel sanctions as a necessary response to the 2006 coup. Most people, however, took a negative view of the potential impact of the sanctions; 35% said Fiji should either try to get around the travel sanctions by lobbying for World Cup games involving Fiji to be played outside New Zealand and 27% said Fiji should protest against the travel sanctions by boycotting the Rugby World Cup.

Fiji at Home

Performance of Bainimarama as Prime Minister

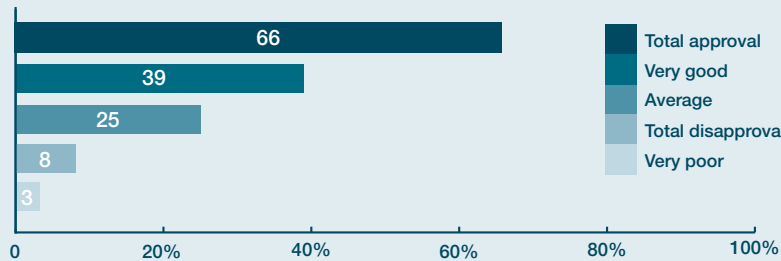
Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama has occupied the position of Prime Minister since December 2006. A significant majority (66%) of Fiji people said Bainimarama was doing a good job as Prime Minister, with 39% saying he was doing a *very good* job, and 27% saying he was doing a good job. While disapproval rates were low, with only 8% saying he was doing a fairly poor or very poor job, a quarter (25%) said Bainimarama was doing an average job as Prime Minister.

Prime Minister from iTaukei and moderate increase from Indo-Fijians between 2008 and 2011.

Although 66% is a high approval rating for a Prime Minister who has been in power for more than five years, it is not unusual in Fiji. Laisenia Qarase, the elected leader Bainimarama replaced himself recorded an approval rating of 73% in June 2006, when he had been Prime Minister for more than five years.¹³

Figure 7: Performance of Bainimarama as Prime Minister

Overall, how good a job do you personally think Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama is doing as Prime Minister?



A higher percentage of Indo-Fijians (75%) approved of Bainimarama’s performance than did iTaukei (indigenous Fijians) (60%). While there might be *relative* differences in the strength of approval, all segments approved of Bainimarama’s performance as a Prime Minister in an *absolute* sense.

In polling conducted in Fiji in December 2008, 48% of Fiji people approved of Bainimarama as Interim Prime Minister, with 35% of iTaukei and 64% of Indo-Fijians saying they approved.¹² The results of this survey therefore reveal a marked increase in approval of Bainimarama as

Is Fiji Going in the Right Direction?

Sixty-five per cent of Fiji people said things in Fiji were going in the right direction. Twenty-one per cent said things in Fiji were going in the wrong direction.

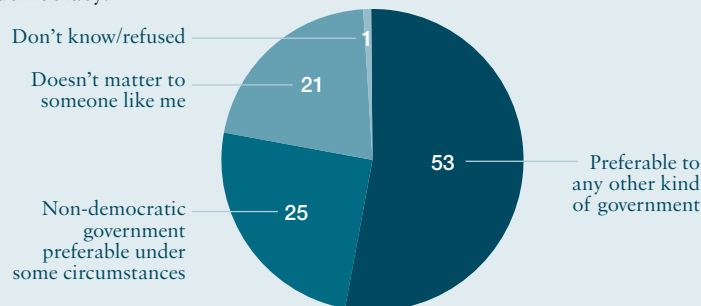
A higher percentage of Indo-Fijians (71%) said things were going in the right direction than did iTaukei (62%).

Democracy

The 2006 coup was Fiji’s fourth in the independence era, making its democratic credentials one of the weakest in

Figure 8: Democracy

I am now going to read you three statements about democracy. Please say which one of the three statements comes closest to your own personal views about democracy.



the Pacific Islands region. A slight majority (53%) of Fiji citizens said democracy was preferable to any other kind of government. A quarter said a non-democratic government could be preferable under some circumstances. Twenty-one per cent said it did not matter what form of government Fiji had.

Government Performance

Asked how much the Fiji government listens to the views of people, 61% said the government was doing a good job (28% said a very good job and 33% said a fairly good job); 26% said it was doing an average job and only 13% said it was doing a very poor or fairly poor job.

The Fiji government has promised it would improve basic services for the population.¹⁴ Its efforts to deliver services appear to have registered with citizens, with 82% saying the government was doing a good job providing education, 71% saying it was doing a good job providing transport and

transport services and 69% saying it was doing a good job delivering healthcare and health services.

The Fiji government has also committed to other national goals and reforms in Bainimarama’s 1 July 2009 speech, “A strategic framework for change”. Its performance in delivering on these rated somewhat less well with respondents. Few respondents (16% or less), however, were willing to say the government was doing a poor job in working on its promises.

Of the eight goals and reforms included in the survey, the government’s performance on ending racial inequalities and divisions rated the highest with 67% saying the government was doing a very good or fairly good job. Sixty-three per cent said it was doing a very good or fairly good job improving land ownership laws.

The Fiji economy has either contracted or grown only marginally in the last four years. According to World Bank estimates, the economy grew by only 0.1 per cent in

Figure 9: Government performance ratings – services

Please think about how the Government is performing in terms of delivery of services. How good a job do you personally think the Government is doing in terms of delivering services in...

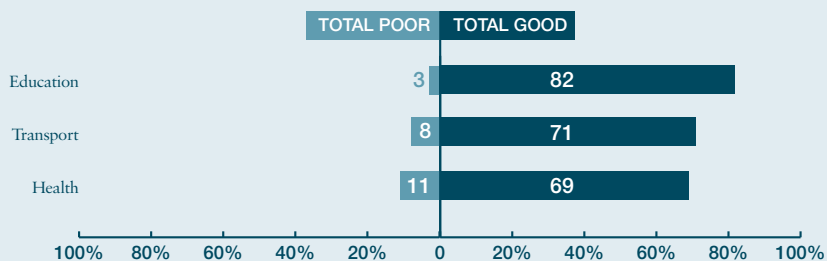
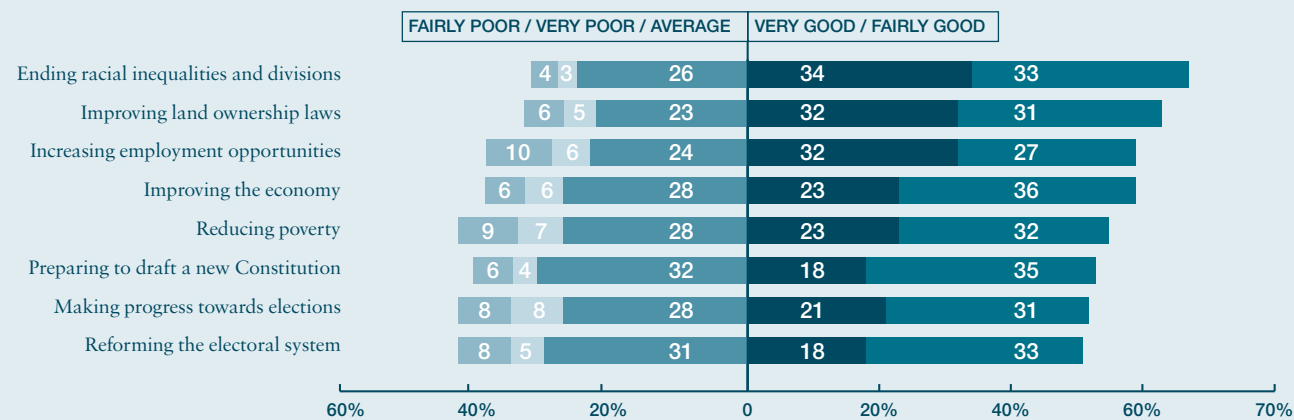


Figure 10: Government performance ratings – general

How would you rate what the Government is doing in terms of working on...



2010.¹⁵ Average annual inflation for 2010 was 5.5 per cent. Investment activity has been weak. Public debt is estimated to have reached 57.6 per cent of GDP, up from 49.9 per cent in 2007.¹⁶ Most of Fiji's public debt is domestic and held by the Fiji National Provident Fund. The percentage of people living in poverty in Fiji is estimated to have grown from 32 per cent in 2007 to 45 per cent in 2010.¹⁷

Despite Fiji's economic malaise, 59% said the government was doing a very good or fairly good job improving the economy and increasing employment opportunities. Fifty-five per cent believed the government was doing a very good or fairly good job reducing poverty, even though official statistics proved the opposite.

The government performed a little less well in convincing the population it was preparing for a return to democracy, with 53% saying the government was doing a very good or fairly good job preparing to draft a new constitution, 52% saying the government was doing a very good or fairly good job making progress towards elections; and 51% saying the government was doing a very good or fairly good job reforming the electoral system. The 53% of respondents who said democracy was preferable to any other kind of government had slightly less confidence in the government's progress in returning to democracy.

The Fiji government has promised to draft a new constitution by September 2013 to replace the 1997 constitution that Bainimarama abrogated in April 2009. The government has indicated that consultations on the new constitution would commence in September 2012. Prime Minister Bainimarama said in July 2009 that the new constitution would derive its impetus from the People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress.¹⁸

Although the detail of the proposed new constitution has not been openly discussed in Fiji, most people said the new constitution would lead to a better democracy (83% strongly

or partly agreed); end racial divisions and inequalities (77% strongly or partly agreed) and end Fiji's coup culture (70% strongly or partly agreed).

Role of the Church

Prime Minister Bainimarama has argued against the influence the Methodist Church in Fiji has had in politics and has placed various restrictions on public meetings of the Church that he perceived to have a political agenda.

The survey was conducted immediately before the Fiji government's most recent ban on the Methodist Church's annual conference and publicity around the role of senior leaders of the Church.¹⁹ Sixty-six per cent of Fiji people said the Church and other religious organisations should not be involved in politics at all. Twenty per cent said the Church and other religious organisations should be involved a little in politics, while just 14 per cent said the Church and other religious organisations should be involved a lot in politics.

Figure 11: Role of church in future politics

Do you personally think that the Church and other religious organisations should be involved a lot, a little or not at all in politics?

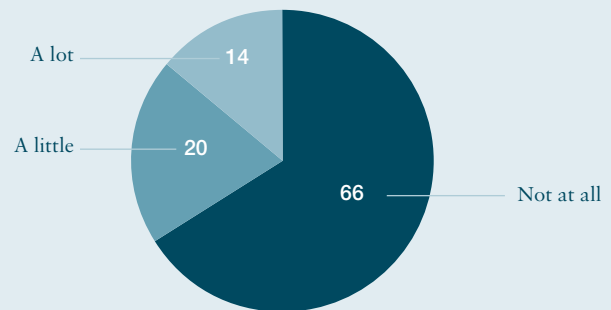


Figure 12: New constitution

The Government has promised to introduce a new constitution by 2013. Thinking about what effect the new constitution will have, please say whether you personally agree or disagree with the following statements...

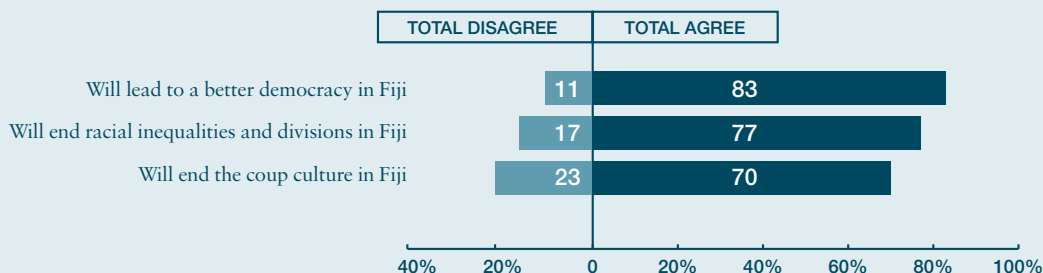
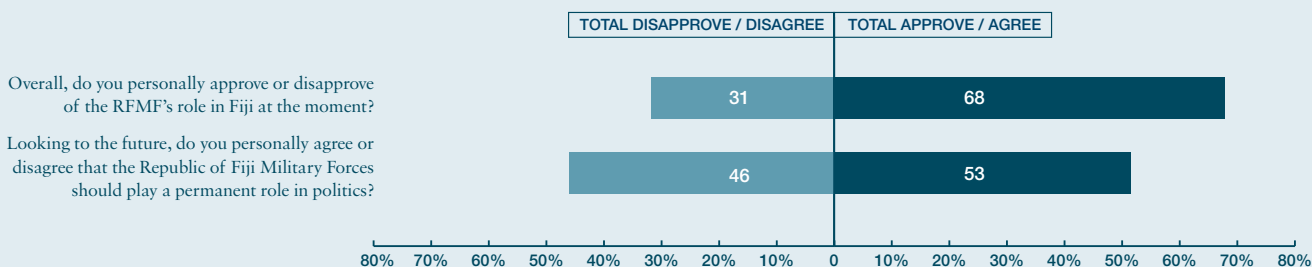


Figure 13: Role of Republic of Fiji Military Forces today and in the future



Role of the Military

The role of Fiji’s military in politics has long been contentious with some of Fiji’s key partners such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States and European Union. The dominant role the Republic of Fiji Military Forces are playing in Fiji now, however, attracted significant general approval, with 31% strongly approving of the role played by the military and 37% partly approving. Thirty-one per cent disapproved, with 12% partly disapproving of the military’s role and 19% strongly disapproving.

When it came to the question of whether the military should play a permanent role in politics, Fiji people were more circumspect, with 24% strongly agreeing with the proposition and 29% partly agreeing. The rate of disagreement also increased, with 46% disagreeing that the military should play a permanent role in the nation’s political life (with 14% partly disagreeing and 32% strongly disagreeing).

Community perceptions of the military’s role in politics were quite different, with 78% of Indo-Fijians approving of the military’s current role versus 61% of iTaukei respondents. A majority of Indo-Fijians (62%) agreed the military should

play a permanent role in politics, but 54% of iTaukei disagreed with a permanent political role for military in the nation’s political system.

Media

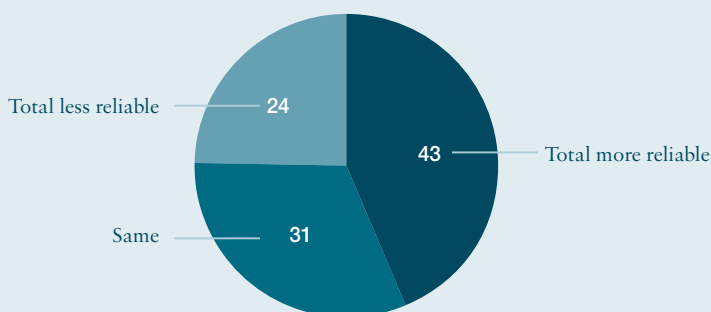
Fiji’s government introduced the Fiji Media Industry Development Decree 2010 on 28 June 2010 but has exercised censorship of the media since imposing the Public Emergency Regulation in April 2009. Attorney-General Aiyaz Sayed Khaiyum has said that the intention of the Media Decree was to improve the quality of the local media.²⁰

Opinion was divided on whether the media had become more reliable and trustworthy since the 2006 coup. Fifty-five per cent said the media’s performance now was either the same (31%) or less reliable (24%) since the coup, while 43% said it had become either a little more reliable and trustworthy (28%) or a lot more reliable and trustworthy (15%).

Interestingly, a higher percentage of Indo-Fijian respondents (52%) said the media was more reliable since the coup than did iTaukei respondents (38%).

Figure 14: Media credibility

Now I will ask about the local media in Fiji. Since the December 2006 coup, do you personally think the local media in Fiji has become more reliable and trustworthy, less reliable and trustworthy or is it about the same as before the coup?



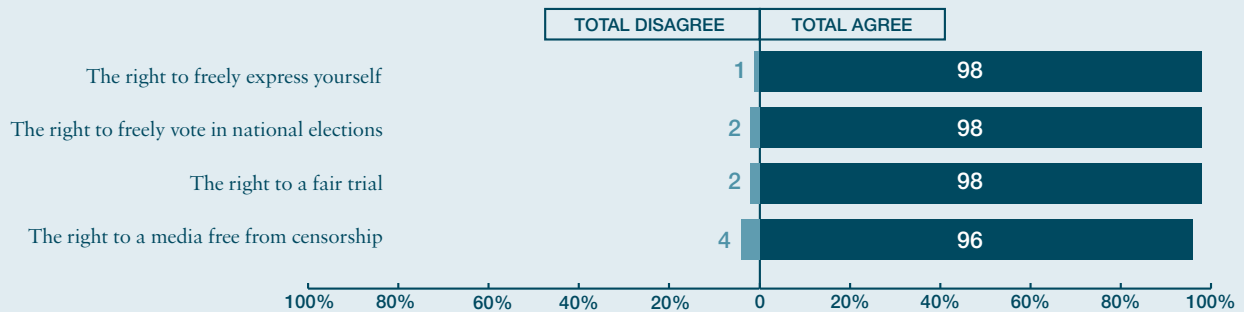
Human Rights

Despite the relative ambivalence of respondents towards the proposition that democracy was the most preferable form of government and towards the issue of reliability of the media in an environment of censorship, some basic human rights and tenets of a democratic society resonated in near universal fashion.

Ninety-eight per cent of Fiji people said they either strongly or partly agreed it was important to have the right to freely express oneself; the right to vote in national elections; the right to a free trial; and 96% said they either strongly or partly agreed in the right to a media free from censorship.

Figure 15: Importance of human rights

And now I will ask about the United Nations and human rights. The United Nations has set out a number of human rights that it claims apply to all people throughout the world. I am going to read you a few of these. For each one, please say whether you personally agree or disagree that it is important for you personally here in Fiji. You can choose any of the answers here on this card...



INTERPRETING FIJI OPINION

The discrepancy between the high number of people who either strongly or partly agreed that core human and democratic rights were important for them personally and the much lower number of people who said democracy was preferable to any other kind of government is difficult to interpret.

If 98% of the Fiji people strongly or partly agree with the right to freely vote in national elections, why do only 53% say democracy is preferable to any other kind of government? Why do 66% of Fiji people say Commodore Bainimarama is doing a very good or good job as Prime Minister when his government has denied the people democratic rights they say are important to them?

The Fiji people may associate democracy with a system of government rather than as a set of processes and rights. This system of government has effectively broken down four times through two military coups led by Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka in 1987, the George Speight-led coup in 2000 and the Bainimarama coup in 2006, and therefore has perhaps been tarnished in the eyes of the Fiji people.

The fact that basic democratic rights such as the right to freely vote in national elections and the right to freely express yourself have so much support, together with the outcome that fewer people agree that the military should play a permanent role in politics than those who approve of the military's current role, suggest the Fiji people do expect that a future government will deliver more democratic rights to the people.

Tables of results

Please note that totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. Each response option has been rounded individually and grouped responses (e.g. those who ‘somewhat agree’ plus ‘strongly agree’) have not been rounded at the group level.

Throughout the tables an “*” represents a response given by less than 0.5% of people.

FEELINGS TOWARDS OTHER COUNTRIES

Table 1a: Please rate your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, 0 (zero) meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to 100: the higher the number the more favourable your feelings are toward that country. If you have no opinion or have never heard of that country, please say so.

Country	Mean rating out of 100	<i>No opinion/ never heard of that country</i>
Australia	74	*
New Zealand	72	0
The United States	72	1
The United Kingdom	68	1
China	64	2
India	62	1
Japan	63	1
Samoa	55	2
Tonga	55	2
Singapore	53	1
Papua New Guinea	52	2
Vanuatu	52	2
Solomon Islands	50	3
Indonesia	50	4

IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Table 1b: Thinking now about the Fiji Government's relations with governments from other countries, do you personally agree or disagree that it is important for the Fiji government to have a good relationship with the governments of each of the following countries...

	Strongly agree	Partly agree	Total agree	Partly disagree	Strongly disagree	Total disagree	Don't know/ Refused
Australia	76%	18%	94%	4%	2%	6%	*
New Zealand	72%	21%	93%	5%	2%	7%	*
The United States	67%	29%	96%	3%	1%	4%	*
The United Kingdom	66%	30%	96%	3%	1%	4%	1%
Japan	62%	31%	93%	5%	1%	6%	1%
China	60%	31%	91%	6%	2%	8%	*
India	58%	34%	92%	6%	2%	8%	*
Samoa	56%	39%	95%	3%	1%	4%	1%
Tonga	54%	40%	94%	5%	1%	6%	*
Vanuatu	50%	42%	92%	6%	2%	8%	1%
Solomon Islands	50%	42%	92%	6%	1%	7%	1%
Papua New Guinea	49%	43%	92%	6%	2%	8%	1%
Singapore	46%	43%	89%	9%	2%	11%	1%
Indonesia	44%	43%	87%	9%	3%	12%	1%

AUSTRALIAN APPROACH

Table 2a: Now a few questions about Australia. Please think about the approach the Australian Government has taken towards the current Fiji government in response to the coup in 2006. Do you personally agree or disagree with the approach the Australian Government has taken towards the current Government in Fiji in response to the 2006 coup?

Strongly agree	15%
Partly agree	21%
Total agree	36%
Partly disagree	19%
Strongly disagree	44%
Total disagree	63%
<i>Don't know</i>	1%

AUSTRALIAN SANCTIONS

Table 2b: Following the 2006 coup, the Australian government imposed travel sanctions against members of the Fiji Government and Military and supported the suspension of Fiji from the Commonwealth. Which one of the following approaches do you personally think the Australian government should now take?

Lift all sanctions and re-establish normal relations	81%
Keep existing travel sanctions	13%
Impose more sanctions	5%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	1%

FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS PRESSURE

Table 3: I am now going to read out two statements about democracy in Fiji. Please tell me which one you personally agree most with - Foreign countries should try to pressure for democratic elections in Fiji, OR Foreign countries should allow Fiji to sort out its return to democracy on its own.

Allow Fiji to sort out on its own	83%
Try to pressure return to democracy	16%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	*

COMMONWEALTH SUSPENSION

Table 4A: Now I will ask about Fiji's suspension from the Commonwealth. Do you personally agree or disagree with Fiji's suspension from the Commonwealth?

Strongly agree	9%
Partly agree	14%
Total agree	23%
Partly disagree	19%
Strongly disagree	57%
Total disagree	76%
<i>Don't know</i>	1%

COMMONWEALTH GAMES EXCLUSION

Table 4B: Do you personally agree or disagree with the decision to exclude Fiji from participation in the Commonwealth Games?

Strongly agree	7%
Partly agree	10%
Total agree	17%
Partly disagree	20%
Strongly disagree	62%
Total disagree	82%
<i>Don't know</i>	1%

RUGBY WORLD CUP SANCTIONS

Table 5: Due to travel sanctions, Fiji's rugby team might miss out on participating in the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand. I am going to read you three statements about this, and please tell me which one you agree with most.

Fiji needs to accept the travel sanctions; they are a necessary response to the 2006 coup in Fiji	37%
Fiji should try and get around the travel sanctions by lobbying to host Rugby World Cup games involving Fiji outside of New Zealand.	35%
Fiji should protest against the travel sanctions by boycotting the Rugby World Cup altogether	27%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	2%

LEADERSHIP ROLE IN PACIFIC NOWADAYS

Table 6A: Now I am going to ask about whether Fiji currently plays a leadership in the Pacific. Do you personally agree or disagree that Fiji currently plays a leadership role in the Pacific?

Strongly agree	38%
Partly agree	35%
Total agree	73%
Partly disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	16%
Total disagree	24%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	2%

LEADERSHIP ROLE COMPARED TO PREVIOUS

Table 6B: Thinking back to Fiji's leadership role say 5 years ago, and comparing that to nowadays, would you personally say that Fiji's leadership role in the Pacific is now stronger, weaker or about the same?

Stronger	45%
Same	32%
Weaker	22%
<i>Don't know</i>	1%

MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP VS PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

Table 7: Please think now about regional organisations. Overall, which one do you personally think is more important for Fiji...

The Melanesian Spearhead Group	16%
Pacific Islands Forum	51%
Both equally important	29%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	3%

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Table 8: Now just about the Pacific Islands Forum (the Forum). Do you personally think that Australia/New Zealand should be a member of the Pacific Islands Forum?

	Australia	New Zealand
Yes, should be a member	80%	76%
No, shouldn't be a member	19%	22%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	2%	2%

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SUSPENSION

Table 9: Do you personally agree or disagree with Fiji's suspension from the Pacific Islands Forum?

Strongly agree	9%
Partly agree	11%
Total agree	20%
Partly disagree	20%
Strongly disagree	59%
Total disagree	79%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	1%

PERFORMANCE OF BAINIMARAMA AS PRIME MINISTER

Table 10: Overall, how good a job do you personally think Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama is doing as Prime Minister?

Very good	39%
Good	27%
Total Approval	66%
Average	25%
Fairly Poor	5%
Very Poor	3%
Total Disapproval	8%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	2%

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Table 11: Overall, do you personally think that things in Fiji are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction?

Right direction	65%
Wrong direction	21%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	13%

LISTENING

Table 12: Please think about how much the current Government listens to the views of people like yourself. Overall, would you personally say the government is doing a very good job, a fairly good job, an average job, a fairly poor job or a very poor job of listening to the views of people like yourself?

A very good job	28%
A fairly good job	33%
Total good	61%
An average job	26%
A fairly poor job	6%
A very poor job	7%
Total poor	13%
<i>Don't know</i>	*

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE RATINGS - SERVICES

Table 13: Please think about how the Government is performing in terms of delivery of services. How good a job do you personally think the Government is doing in terms of delivering services in...

	Education	Transport	Health
A very good job	56%	43%	38%
A fairly good job	26%	28%	31%
Total good	82%	71%	69%
An average job	15%	21%	19%
A fairly poor job	1%	4%	6%
A very poor job	2%	4%	5%
Total poor	3%	8%	11%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	*	*	*

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE RATINGS - GENERAL

Table 14: How would you rate what the Government is doing in terms of working on...

	Very good	Fairly good	Total good	Average	Fairly poor	Very poor	Total poor	<i>Don't Know/Refused</i>
Ending racial inequalities and divisions	34%	33%	67%	26%	4%	3%	7%	*
Improving land ownership laws	32%	31%	63%	23%	6%	5%	11%	2%
Increasing employment opportunities	32%	27%	59%	24%	10%	6%	16%	*
Improving the economy	23%	36%	59%	28%	6%	6%	12%	*
Reducing poverty	23%	32%	55%	28%	9%	7%	16%	1%
Preparing to draft a new Constitution	18%	35%	53%	32%	6%	4%	10%	5%
Making progress towards elections	21%	31%	52%	28%	8%	8%	16%	4%
Reforming the electoral system	18%	33%	51%	31%	8%	5%	13%	5%

NEW CONSTITUTION

Table 15: The Government has promised to introduce a new constitution by 2013. Thinking about what effect the new constitution will have, please say whether you personally agree or disagree with the following statements...

	Will lead to a better democracy in Fiji	Will end racial inequalities and divisions in Fiji	Will end the coup culture in Fiji
Strongly agree	44%	40%	36%
Partly agree	39%	37%	34%
Total agree	83%	77%	70%
Partly disagree	7%	11%	13%
Strongly disagree	4%	7%	10%
Total disagree	11%	18%	23%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	5%	6%	6%

DEMOCRACY

Table 16: I am now going to read you three statements about democracy. Please say which one of the three statements comes closest to your own personal views about democracy.

Preferable to any other kind of government	53%
Non-democratic government preferable under some circumstances	25%
Doesn't matter to someone like me	21%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	1%

ROLE OF CHURCH IN FUTURE POLITICS

Table 17: Do you personally think that the Church and other religious organisations should be involved a lot, a little or not at all in politics?

A lot	14%
A little	20%
<i>Not at all</i>	66%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	*

ROLE OF REPUBLIC OF FIJI MILITARY FORCES

Table 18A: And thinking about the Republic of Fiji Military Forces and the role it plays in Fiji at the moment. Overall, do you personally approve or disapprove of the RFMF’s role in Fiji at the moment?

Strongly approve	31%
Partly approve	37%
Total approve	68%
Partly disapprove	12%
Strongly disapprove	19%
Total disapprove	31%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	1%

ROLE OF RFMF IN FUTURE POLITICS

Table 18B: Still looking to the future, do you personally agree or disagree that the Republic of Fiji Military Forces should play a permanent role in politics?

Strongly agree	24%
Partly agree	29%
Total agree	53%
Partly disagree	14%
Strongly disagree	32%
Total disagree	46%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	1%

MEDIA CREDIBILITY

Table 19: Now I will ask about the local media in Fiji. Since the December 2006 coup, do you personally think the local media in Fiji has become more reliable and trustworthy, less reliable and trustworthy or is it about the same as before the coup?

A lot more reliable and trustworthy	15%
A little more reliable and trustworthy	28%
Total more reliable	43%
Same	31%
A little less reliable and trustworthy	16%
A lot less reliable and trustworthy	8%
Total less reliable	24%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	1%

IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Table 20: And now I will ask about the United Nations and human rights. The United Nations has set out a number of human rights that it claims apply to all people throughout the world. I am going to read you a few of these. For each one, please say whether you personally agree or disagree that it is important for you personally here in Fiji. You can choose any of the answers here on this card...

	The right to freely express yourself	The right to freely vote in national elections	The right to a fair trial	The right to a media free from censorship
Strongly agree it is important	85%	87%	85%	70%
Partly agree it is important	13%	11%	13%	26%
Total agree	98%	98%	98%	96%
Partly disagree it is important	1%	2%	1%	3%
Strongly disagree it is important	-	-	1%	1%
Total disagree	1%	2%	2%	4%
<i>Don't know/Refused</i>	*	*	*	*

Acknowledgements

The Lowy Institute Fiji Poll was conducted in Fiji between 19 and 21 August 2011. The Lowy Institute Fiji Poll is overseen by the Institute's Executive Director, Dr Michael Wesley and was managed by Myer Foundation Melanesia Program Director Jenny Hayward-Jones, with the advice of Director of Polling Fergus Hanson and Research Consultant Sol Lebovic.

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The fieldwork was conducted by Tebbutt Research. Quality control, data entry, data processing and advice were provided by Tebbutt Research (Caz Tebbutt, Managing Director, Tim Wilson, General Manager Fiji and Viema Rokovu, Field Manager).

Methodology

A quantitative approach was employed, with a questionnaire length of 10-15 minutes. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and door-to-door (n=1032), with one respondent aged 18+ per household. A portion of the interviews were conducted either partially or entirely in the vernacular (Fijian or Fiji Hindi), with the remainder in English. Fieldwork was conducted by the Tebbutt Research field team in accordance with global best practice, specifically the ESOMAR standard. Team leaders observed a minimum 10% of interviews in field.

The sample frame consisted of the major urban and peri-urban areas of Viti Levu (the main island of Fiji), covering Greater Suva (Lami, Suva, Nasinu, and Nausori), and the western division (Nadi, Lautoka, and Ba). The sample was stratified by ethnicity (iTaukei, Indo-Fijian, and other ethnicities), gender, age, and location. Start points were selected at random, and respondents were selected at random from within the household, to quota. Data was post-weighted to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics population estimates (based on the 2006 census). A truly random survey of the sampled population with this sample size, surveyed with 100% response rate, would produce results with a maximum $\pm 3.04\%$ margin of error at 95% confidence level.

Notes

- ¹ Fergus Hanson, *The Lowy Institute Poll 2009: Australia and the world - public opinion and foreign policy*. Sydney, Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2009.
- ² Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics, *Overseas merchandise trade statistics*, 2011.
- ³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *Fiji: Country Brief*. 2011: http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/fiji/fiji_brief.html.
- ⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Australia's autonomous sanctions: Fiji*.
- ⁵ Fergus Hanson, *The Lowy Institute Poll 2010: Australia and the world - public opinion and foreign policy*. Sydney, Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2010.
- ⁶ ABC News, Free speech nothing but trouble: Bainimarama. (2009).
- ⁷ Commonwealth Secretariat, Fiji suspended from the Commonwealth. 1 September 2009.
- ⁸ Australia Network News, Bainimarama criticises Fiji's ban from Pacific forum. (3 August 2010).
- ⁹ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Forum Chair on suspension of Fiji military regime from PIF. (2 May 2009).
- ¹⁰ Michael Field, Fijian rugby soldier granted visa for World Cup. (Stuff.co.nz, 19 August 2011).
- ¹¹ Radio New Zealand International, New Zealand suspends travel ban for Fiji rugby player. (20 August 2011).
- ¹² Data provided by Tebbutt Research.
- ¹³ Data provided by Tebbutt Research.
- ¹⁴ Voreqe Bainimarama. A strategic framework for change. <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat/stories/200907/s2613470.htm>, 1 July 2009 2009.
- ¹⁵ World Bank, *East Asia and Pacific Economic Update 2011: Securing the present, shaping the future*. World Bank, 2011.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Fiji Times, 45% of people in poverty. *The Fiji Times Online*, 21 April 2010.
- ¹⁸ Bainimarama. A strategic framework for change.
- ¹⁹ Radio New Zealand International, Fiji regime declares travel ban for Methodist leaders. (26 August 2011).
- ²⁰ Fiji Broadcasting Commission, Fiji media decree now in force. (28 June 2010).

Middle: Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, addresses the general debate of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, 26/Sep/2009. United Nations, New York. by Flickr user UN. Photo/Devra Berkowitz. www.unmultimedia.org/photo/
Right: A typical market, by Flickr user Jaredw_1986's http://www.flickr.com/photos/jaredw_1986/102993921/

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