

people's survey 2011

summary

ANU Enterprise



People's Survey 2011 - Summary
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Cover photo:

Pirumeri village, Pirumeri Island, Shortland Islands,
Western Province. (Tom Perry, RAMSI Public Affairs)

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Most of all we would like to thank the 4,972 men and women who generously gave their time to answer questions and many others who participated in more than 70 focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The insights you have provided on important community

people's survey 2011

summary

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6

provinces (and Honiara)

70+

focus groups

74

interviewers & facilitators

4972

questionnaires

‘The 2011 Solomon Islands Government-RAMSI People’s Survey was the fifth national survey of perceptions of economic conditions, governance and law and order in Solomon Islands’

78%

most common source of earnings was informal selling

86%

said they support RAMSI

75%

said they have access to mobile phones

24%

thought RSIPF improved in the last five years

61%

said the most common cause of conflict is land disputes

overview



Photo: Christopher Chevalier

The 2011 People's Survey is the fifth national survey of perceptions of economic conditions, machinery of government and law and order in Solomon Islands. The 2011 People's Survey was managed by an independent consultancy firm, ANU Enterprise Pty Ltd. All fieldworkers were Solomon Islanders who asked the questions in Solomon Islands Pijin without influencing respondents' answers in any way.

In 2011 a representative random sample of 4,972 people from Choiseul, Guadalcanal, Isabel, Malaita, Temotu and Western Provinces and Honiara were surveyed. Approximately equal numbers of Men and Women (aged 30 and over) and Young Men and Young Women (aged 18-29 years) were interviewed.

The questionnaire was divided into nine sections:

- Section A: Background Information (6 questions)
- Section B: Access to Services and Information (17 questions)
- Section C: Household and Business Finances (17 questions)
- Section D: Safety (15 questions)
- Section E: Most Significant Change (6 questions)
- Section F: Leadership (10 questions)
- Section G: Accountability (6 questions)
- Section H: Elections (3 questions)
- Section I: Resolution of disputes (11 questions)

More than 70 focus group discussions and large group discussions and more than 30 semi structured interviews were also conducted with participants in all the surveyed provinces except Choiseul. These discussions and interviews collected more detailed information and insights on economic conditions, access to services, governance, what more needs to be done before RAMSI can leave Solomon Islands and resolution of disagreements and disputes.

This report is a summary of the key findings. It includes: detailed tables showing the results by province and age/gender group; figures depicting key findings and, where possible, comparisons with previous People's Surveys; and comments from the focus group and other discussions.

The percentages based on the questionnaire are representative of the provinces surveyed, and readers can compare them with previous results for those provinces. Comments and percentages from the group discussions and the structured interviews are not statistically representative. They should be treated as illustrations and examples to provide more understanding of the topics covered.

The full report is available in hard copy and online at www.ramsi.org.

key findings



Photo: Christine McMurray

Access to health services

- Sixty-seven per cent of respondents could reach a health facility in less than one hour, and a further 29% could reach a health facility in one or two hours. Seventy-one per cent had visited a health facility in the past year, of whom 58% were satisfied with the services they received.

Access to education

- Eighty per cent of respondents had attended primary school for five years or more, 53% had never attended secondary school and less than 10% had any formal post-secondary education.
- Eighty-three per cent of respondents could reach a primary school within one hour. Respondents in Guadalcanal were most likely to report long travelling times. Forty-one per cent of respondents had at least one child currently enrolled in a primary school.
- Fifty-three per cent of respondents with at least one child attending primary school were satisfied with the school. The main problems reported by the rest were problems with teachers, followed by problems with buildings and resources.
- Focus group discussion participants commented on the poor quality of some school and clinic infrastructure in rural areas. They were also concerned that rural communities had very limited capacity to deal with problems such as poor performance or absenteeism of health and school personnel.

Transport

- Sixty-four per cent of respondents use small boats for transport, 41% use road transport, 26% use large boats, less than 1% use air transport and 3% said they never use any form of transport.
- Sixty-one per cent use transport to access markets, 50% use transport to access schools and/or health facilities and for social purposes and 30% said they use transport for fishing or food production. Sixty-four per cent were satisfied with the transport available to them.
- Forty-four per cent of those who were not satisfied with the available transport said cheaper fares and fuel are needed, 38% wanted better roads, 33% wanted more frequent public transport and 23% wanted new or better wharfs. A large number of other improvements were also suggested.

Household water supply

- The main source of drinking water for 59% of respondents was community tap or standpipe, while 31% drink surface water from rivers, springs or streams (31%), and 18% use rainwater tanks. Standpipe was mentioned twice as often in rural areas (64% compared with 36% for urban areas). Fifty-one per cent of respondents in Honiara had water piped to their house compared with 6% of those living outside Honiara.
- Fifty-one per cent of respondents said they always had clean drinking water available and 16% did not.

‘Seventy-five per cent of respondents said they had access to a mobile phone, compared with 23% in 2009.’

The main problems mentioned were inadequate supply (53%), broken tanks and pipes (41%) and pollution (40%).

Access to electricity

- Solar power was the most common source of electricity (43%), followed by mains supply (12%) and generators (7%), while 42% of respondents had no electricity.

Access to communications

- Seventy-five per cent of respondents said they had access to a mobile phone, compared with 23% in 2009. Four per cent had access to a landline, 5% could only access two-way radios and 19% had no access to any form of communications.
- Focus group participants said that while the improvement to communications was a huge advantage, especially in rural areas, there were some problems associated with increased phone coverage, including high expenditure on phone services and use of phones for illicit purposes.

Household finances

- Twenty eight per cent of respondents said their household financial situation had improved in the past two years, 37% said it was the same and 34% said it was worse.

- The most common source of earnings was informal selling (78%), while 16% of respondents obtain money from paid work and 1% of respondents obtain income from royalties and logging operations. Focus group discussions mentioned a wide range of income earning activities in rural communities but very little paid employment.
- Sixty-three per cent of respondents perceived ‘sell more’ as the main avenue for increasing their income, while 35% suggested starting their own business.
- Respondents did not have many ideas about what obstacles could be preventing them from increasing their income. Ten per cent mentioned lack of access to land and 10% mentioned family obligations, but participants in focus groups saw the high cost of transport and limited access to markets as major obstacles.
- Twenty-eight per cent of respondents had tried to start a business in the preceding two years. Of these, 73% had faced problems with customers and wantoks not paying for goods, 35% mentioned insufficient cash flow and 25% mentioned insufficient management skills.

Taxation

- Less than three per cent of respondents knew the threshold amount for paying income tax, another 7% made incorrect guesses and 89% said they had no idea.

‘More than 50% of respondents said someone in their family was an absentee wage worker.’

- Sixteen per cent of respondents said they had paid income tax at some time, and 22% said they had earned more than SBD 7,800 in one year. Focus group discussions revealed considerable confusion and misunderstanding of the taxation system.

Access to banks

- Twenty-five per cent of respondents had an account at a bank or other financial institution but only 12% of all respondents would approach a bank if they needed money to start a business. Most said they lack collateral, do not understand the process or fear high interest rates. Focus group discussions confirmed this and described very limited access to banks in rural areas.

Access to agricultural information

- Twenty-nine per cent of respondents rely on their family or community for agricultural information and 22% get information from agricultural extension officers. Male respondents were almost twice as likely as female respondents to receive information from an agricultural extension officer.
- More than half of respondents had not received any information on growing crops in the preceding year.

Absentee workers and remittances

- More than 50% of respondents said someone in their family was an absentee wage worker, more than in the 2007-2009 People's Surveys. Seventy-

five percent said the absentee worker sends money to their household.

Safety

- Perceptions of the law and order situation in communities were similar to 2010, with 31% of respondents saying their community was safe and peaceful, 54% saying there were some problems and 13% saying there were many problems.
- Fifty-nine per cent of respondents said they always feel safe in their community, 36% said they feel safe some of the time and 5% said they rarely feel safe. Forty eight per cent said they feel safer during the day than at night, 2% said they feel safer at night and 49% said there was no difference.
- Eighty-eight per cent of respondents said they always feel safe in their household, 11% said they feel safe some of the times and 1% said they rarely feel safe.
- Seventeen per cent said they always feel safe in Honiara, 42% sometimes feel safe in Honiara and 33% said they rarely feel safe in Honiara. Respondents from outer provinces were least likely to feel safe in Honiara.
- Sixty-one per cent of respondents said the main cause of conflict and problems in Solomon Islands is land disputes, followed by alcohol and drugs (40%) and arguments outside and within the family (40%). Notably, less than 10% mentioned tension between ethnic or provincial groups, migration or illegal settlement.

‘Nineteen per cent of respondents thought Solomon Islands is ready for RAMSI to scale back its activities, 65% said it is not ready and 15% were undecided.’

Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF)

- Thirteen per cent of respondents had asked the RSIPF for help in the past year, which is almost the same as in 2010. The main problems were disturbances (38%), violence and assault (28%), theft (26%) and community disputes (14%).
- Focus group participants emphasised the importance of alcohol as a cause or underlying factor in many disturbances and disputes.
- Forty-four per cent of respondents were satisfied with the help received from police and 55% said they were not satisfied. The most common reason for being dissatisfied was that the police didn't do anything to help (82%), while the only other reason given was that the police were too slow to respond (16%).
- Thirty-one per cent of respondents said the RSIPF treats people well, 36% said the RSIPF treats people well sometimes and 27% said the RSIPF do not treat people well. Twenty-four per cent thought the RSIPF had improved in the past five years, while 24% said the RSIPF had improved in some ways and 40% thought the RSIPF had not improved.
- Focus group discussions revealed considerable dissatisfaction with police performance, but there was also awareness that resource constraints may prevent police from responding to calls. RSIPF officers interviewed provided more details of these constraints and said it was discouraging that they were unable to deliver better services and so had to

face community criticisms.

- Criminal activity (17%) and performance of government and politicians (11%) were also seen as important, while a wide range of other factors were each mentioned by fewer than 10% of respondents. Focus group discussions provided further insights into the underlying causes of problems.

Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)

- Eighty-six per cent of respondents supported the presence of RAMSI in Solomon Islands (compared with 84% in 2010), 9% did not support RAMSI and 6% were undecided.
- Nineteen per cent of respondents thought Solomon Islands is ready for RAMSI to scale back its activities, 65% said it is not ready and 15% were undecided. Of those who thought Solomon Islands is not yet ready, 58% thought it would be more than five years before Solomon Islands will be ready.
- Focus group participants discussed what more RAMSI needs to do before it leaves. Most thought there was much to be done and mentioned a range of responses covering social needs and strengthening law and order and infrastructure.
- Focus group participants also discussed what the Solomon Islands Government needs to do before RAMSI can leave Solomon Islands. Their

‘Twenty-three per cent of respondents had first-hand knowledge of incorrect behaviour by an official but, of these, only 14% had reported this behaviour.’

suggestions included providing more open government, learning from RAMSI’s achievements, reconciliation, building more police posts, strengthening national and customary (kastom) laws, reviving traditional law and order, ending corruption in the public service and improving infrastructure and access to services.

Most significant change

- Forty-one per cent said there had been no significant change in their own lives in the preceding year, and the next most common response (23%) was a change to phone or internet communications. Forty-two per cent said there had been no change to community facilities, while 17% mentioned a change to a school. Other significant changes to communities mentioned by 14% of respondents were additional changes in facilities and changes in respect or community relations.

Leadership

- Sixty-six per cent of respondents thought honesty was a key quality of a good leader, 36% mentioned community consultation, 17% said a good leader should focus on social issues and 17% mentioned equitable funds distribution.
- Ninety per cent of respondents said that women make good leaders.
- Thirty-two per cent of respondents were satisfied

with their current representative in the national parliament, 14% were partially satisfied and 49% were not satisfied. Sixty per cent of respondents were not satisfied with their representative in provincial government or the Honiara Town Council.

- Sixty one per cent of respondents said their national MP had not visited their community in the past year, 20% said there had been one visit and 10% said more than one visit. Sixty-eight per cent said their local government representative had not visited their community in the past year, 15% said there had been one visit and 8% said they had received more than one visit.
- Focus group participants discussed the qualities of a good and bad representative. The qualities mentioned were: being helpful, fair, honest, trustworthy and transparent in their dealings; visiting communities; assisting with school and clinic needs; providing communities with facilities such as solar power; upgrading local access roads; having vision and action plans for their constituency; and understanding the needs of their people.
- The qualities of a bad MP mentioned in focus group discussions included dishonesty, misusing funds, especially the Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF), making false promises, ‘sweet talking’, not telling the truth to voters, not visiting communities, lacking education, not helping rural development and generally practising favouritism and supporting their wantoks at the expense of their constituency.

‘Chiefs were the main source of assistance with land disputes (71%), while 14% of respondents saying they would take a land dispute to government or land courts.’

Women in parliament

- As in previous years, more than 85% of respondents supported the concept of women in parliament. Of the 89% who said there should be women in parliament, 91% also supported the concept of special reserved seats for women.

Performance of national and local government

- Eight per cent of respondents thought national government is performing very well as regards providing basic services to the community and improving the economy, 44% said performance was satisfactory and 37% said national government was not performing well. Three per cent of respondents said local government was performing very well as regards providing services to the community and improving the economy, 29% said performance was satisfactory and 54% said local government performance was not good.
- Respondents made a wide range of suggestions about what more government should be doing to improve Solomon Islands. The most common suggestions were focusing on rural development (35%), focussing on economic programs and job creation (26%), making good policy (17%) and improving schools and education (17%).
- Seventy per cent of respondents said they would report an instance of misuse of power or public money by an official, 22% said they would not

report and 9% didn't know whether or not they would report. Of those who said they would report, 59% said they would report to the police and 19% said they would report to the offender's superiors.

- Twenty-three per cent of respondents had first-hand knowledge of incorrect behaviour by an official, but of these, only 14% had reported this behaviour. Forty five per cent of these reports were to the RSIPF, 14% to church or community leaders, 13% to the Leadership Code Commission (LCC) and 11% to the Ombudsman. The main reasons for not reporting were fear of reporting (46%) not knowing who to report to (25%) and that the offender was their wantok (10%).

MPs and elections

- Eighty-five per cent of respondents said the main job of an MP is to represent or get better conditions for their constituency, 35% said MPs should govern the country and/or make laws and 28% said their main job is to assist those who voted for them. All other suggestions were made by fewer than 8% of respondents.
- Most respondents said they obtain information about candidates directly from the candidates (63%), 36% said from community leaders, 35% said from their family, 17% said from the radio and 16% obtain information about candidates from newspapers and other printed material.
- Thirty-four per cent of respondents voted for the candidate they believed was a good or trusted

‘54% of urban respondents would seek help from the police to resolve major disagreements with people outside their community.’

person, 19% chose a candidate because they made good promises, 18% chose a candidate who had already done good work in their community, 18% chose a candidate they believed was a good leader or MP, and 11% and 7% respectively chose a candidate because of their family or church affiliations.

- Comments in focus group discussions suggested that participants analyse and discuss candidates’ campaign strategies and the known personal characteristics of candidates in national elections. While some participants openly stated that they supported a candidate because they were a family member or had some tribal affiliation, the main influences on their choice were candidates’ campaign strategies and their own expectations about the long term support the candidate might give.

Resolution of disputes

- Fifteen per cent of respondents said they had been involved in a major argument (bigfala raosa) or a dispute with another person in the past year.
- Sixty per cent of respondents said they would seek help from a chief to resolve a major disagreement in their family or community, 20% said they would seek help from the church and 15% said they would ask the RSIPF to assist. Urban respondents were more likely to seek help from the police, and rural respondents more likely to seek help from their chief. Thirty-six per cent of respondents said they would expect to pay for help to resolve a major disagreement in their family or community.

- Chiefs were the main source of assistance with land disputes (71%) while 14% of respondents saying they would take a land dispute to government or land courts. Sixty-three per cent of respondents said they would expect to pay for assistance to resolve a land dispute.
- Sixty-seven per cent of rural respondents would seek assistance from chiefs to resolve major disagreements with people outside their community, compared with 34% of urban respondents. In contrast, 54% of urban respondents would seek help from the police to resolve major disagreements with people outside their community, compared with only 19% of rural respondents. Forty-six per cent of respondents would expect to pay for help to resolve a major disagreement outside their community.

Satisfaction with dispute resolution

- Eighty-three per cent of respondents were satisfied with the methods of resolving major disagreements and disputes available to them and 14% were not satisfied. The main improvements suggested by those who were not satisfied were that there should be fairer local justice without favouritism or nepotism (50%), that kastom laws and the power of chiefs should be strengthened (24%) and access to the RSIPF should be improved (16%).
- Extensive focus group discussions on resolution of major disagreements and disputes suggest dissatisfaction with the modern justice system and widespread reliance on traditional justice, even

‘Eighty-five per cent of respondents said the main job of an MP is to represent or get better conditions for their constituency.’

though it is sometimes perceived as needing improvement or increased powers. Participants also mentioned various payments made during resolution of disagreements and disputes, including payments in kind.

Participation of women in resolution of major disagreements and disputes

- Sixty-five per cent of respondents said women may help to resolve family disagreements and disputes, 24% said they help to resolve disagreements in the community and 12% said they help to resolve disagreements about money and disputes about land. Twenty-nine per cent said women do not participate in resolution of disagreements and disputes.
- Female respondents were asked if they would prefer to seek help with disagreements or disputes from a male or female helper, and 70% said they would prefer a man, 20% said a woman and 10% said either.

notable trends



Photo: Christine McMurray

Capacity

A continuing theme in the People's Survey findings is the need for Solomon Islands to build capacity of both physical infrastructure and human resources development. When asked what more RAMSI and SIG need to do before RAMSI can leave Solomon Islands, many people mentioned the importance of improving quality and access to education, to facilitate employment and the augmentation of livelihoods.

Improvements to transport infrastructure were also perceived as essential to increase income earning opportunities and access to basic services. Although mentioned less often, more access to electricity would also facilitate income-earning opportunities, especially in remote areas.

The data showed that limited access to banks is not simply an inconvenience in Solomon Islands but has many other important consequences. It stunts business development and causes officials to leave their posts to withdraw their salaries. It may also encourage officials to demand cash bribes, and may contribute to theft and robbery, including crimes against women, because small traders, many of whom are women, are known to carry cash and/or keep cash in their houses.

The demand for more skills development was mentioned in various contexts, including transfer of more skills to government officials, upgrading the skills of teachers and health personnel and upgrading the skills and capacity of the RSIPF. It is also clear by implication that more skills in governance are needed, at both the national and provincial levels.

Many of the points made above suggest that respondents and participants tend not to make a

clear distinction between RAMSI's mandate and the responsibilities of national and provincial government. Many things they expect RAMSI to do are responsibilities of national or provincial government, but, as RAMSI is perceived as more capable and there is considerable dissatisfaction with government performance in delivering services, people have unrealistic expectations that RAMSI should take on additional roles such as development of infrastructure.

Gender

As in previous years, the survey data reveal some consistent differences between male and female respondents, but there were few surprises. Comparison with early People's Surveys suggests that Women and Young Women are increasingly confident to speak out about their needs and about things they find unsatisfactory. There is also evidence that the education gap between males and females is closing. What is clear, however, is that there are still considerable differences between provinces and between rural and urban areas in the status of women.

Some examples of gender differences in this report are the following:

- Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to say they earn money from selling produce, and around half as likely to say they have paid work.
- Female respondents were also most likely to say their main opportunity to increase their income was to sell more.

‘A continuing theme in the People’s Survey findings is the need for Solomon Islands to build capacity of both physical infrastructure and human resources development.’

- Family obligations were the main obstacles for female respondents with regard to increasing income.
- Female respondents who tried to start a business were a little more likely to report problems with wantoks and customers.
- Female respondents were more likely to be doing business at the time of the survey, but much less likely to have ever earned SBD 7,800 in one year or to have ever paid tax.
- Female respondents were less likely to have an account with a bank or other financial institution.
- Female respondents were much less likely to have received information on growing crops from an agricultural adviser.
- Twice as many respondents reported a male family member working away from home as reported a female family member working away from home.
- Female respondents were less likely to say they feel safe in their community, their household or in Honiara.
- Female respondents were less likely to have asked the RSIPF for help in the past year but those who had were more likely to be satisfied with the help they received. They were also more likely than their male counterparts to say the RSIPF treated them fairly and with respect.
- Female respondents were more likely to support the presence of RAMSI in Solomon Islands and less likely to believe it is time for RAMSI to scale back its activities.
- Female respondents were more likely to say women make good leaders, more likely to say there should be women in parliament and more likely to say they would vote for a woman candidate.
- Women were much less likely to say they would report misuse of power or public money, but Young Women were more likely than older Women to say they would report misuse of power or public money.
- Female respondents were more likely than males to say they would seek help from the RSIPF for any type of disagreement or dispute.

Accountability

As in previous People’s Surveys, there were many references to problems with accountability and corruption, especially in the focus group discussions. Although people are quick to complain about such things, it seems they are often reluctant to do anything about them, either because they do not know how to lodge a complaint, or because they fear reprisals if they do. This is particularly true in the case of problems with the RSIPF, but also applies to public officials in general. Some respondents who said they would report mismanagement or a dishonest public official had not done so when they actually knew an official was misusing their powers.

New questions on perceptions of good and bad qualities of MPs, and why respondents voted as they did in the last election provide additional insights into how people perceive their representatives. The qualities

‘Female respondents who tried to start a business were a little more likely to report problems with wantoks and customers.’

listed were generally what would be expected of good and bad parliamentary performers anywhere, and participants and respondents were disparaging or critical of malpractices, including under-performing and bribery. On the other hand, many appear to vote in a way that is most likely to bring immediate benefits to them and their family rather than taking a long-term or national view. This is probably a reflection of generally low expectations of government and a lack of ability to ensure government delivers basic services and provides economic opportunities. It points to the need for continuing awareness-raising about government and official responsibility.

One aspect of this is the need for awareness-raising on the nature and purpose of the taxation system. Questions and discussions on tax showed not only a very small taxation base, but also very little knowledge of the nature of tax and how taxes should be used.

Office of the Special Coordinator
Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)
Tel: (+677) 25122
info@ramsi.org
www.ramsi.org

Complete copies of the *2011 People's Survey* are available to download from www.ramsi.org