



**Pacific Institute
of Public Policy**

Melanesia Poll Results

March 2011

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Melanesia Poll - March 2011

Overview

The profile of Melanesia as a sub-regional grouping increased significantly following the establishment of a permanent secretariat of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) in Port Vila in 2008¹. MSG leaders will meet for their biennial summit on 31 March 2011 in Fiji. Much interest has surrounded this meeting across the region and internationally in relation to the admission of Indonesia and Timor Leste as official observers, and the fact that Fiji's military leader is the current MSG chair.

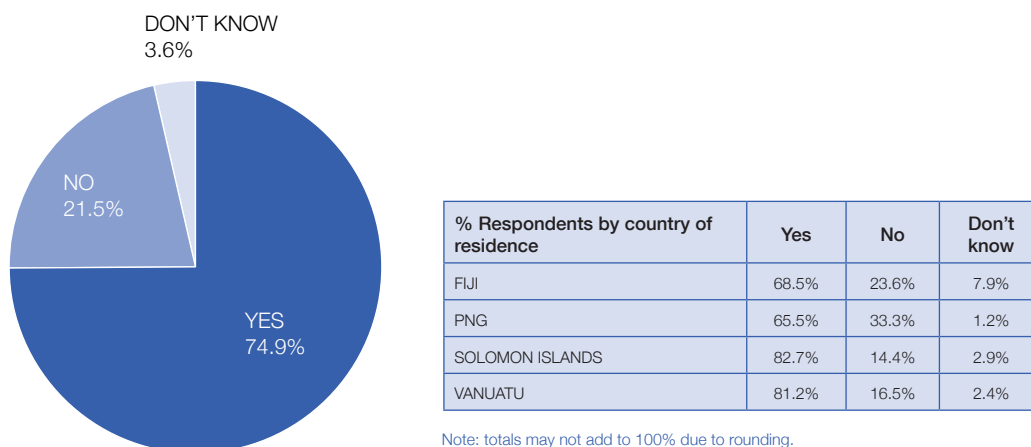
The Pacific Institute of Public Policy (PIPP) conducted a poll of people in the four independent MSG countries (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) between 1 - 10 March 2011. A total of 363 people were surveyed by telephone. Surveys were carried out in English or the national language of each country (Fiji - Fijian; Papua New Guinea - Tok Pisin; Solomon Islands - Pijin; Vanuatu - Bislama). The random sample, while not representative of the entire population in each survey location, covered a broad demographic. The results are not presented as facts about the population of each country or the Melanesian sub-region, but rather the general opinions of those surveyed.

This is the first time a telephone poll has been carried out simultaneously across the four independent Melanesian countries, and is the first of what will be a regular series of Pacific Polls carried out by PiPP on a range of public policy issues.

Melanesian Spearhead Group

Respondents were asked if they had heard of the Melanesian Spearhead Group - see Figure 1 and table below. The majority of respondents in each country clearly knew of the existence of the MSG, with greater awareness amongst respondents in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Figure 1. Have you heard of the Melanesian Spearhead Group?

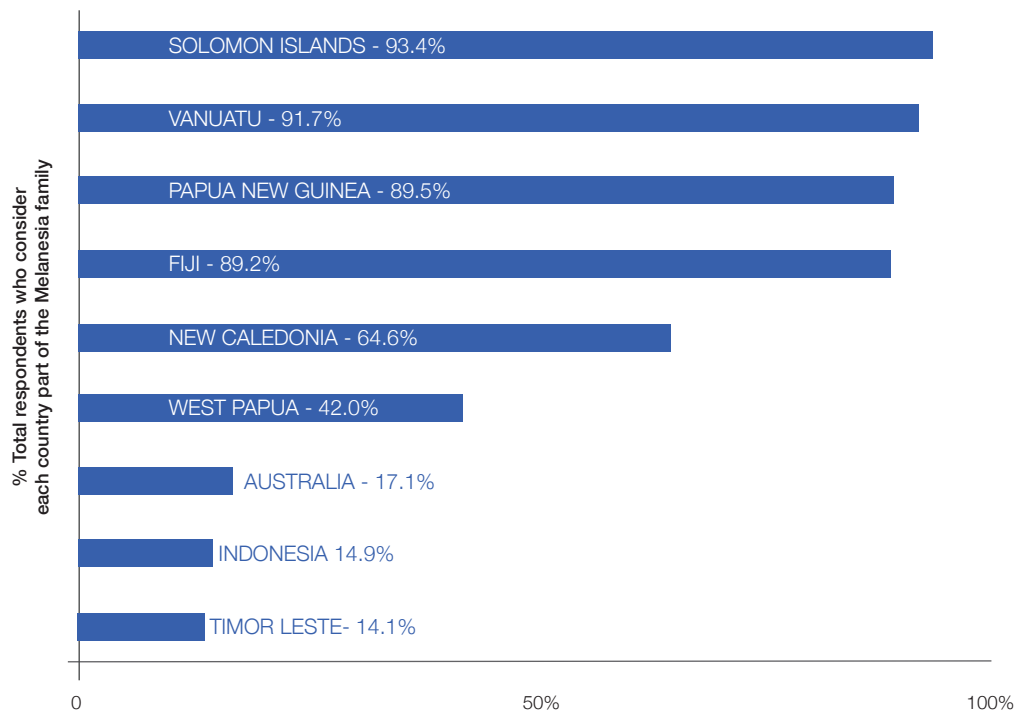


1. The MSG was founded in 1986 by the governments of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) of New Caledonia. Fiji later joined the MSG in 1998.

Defining the Melanesian family

Respondents were asked if they considered a list of nine countries/territories (Australia, Fiji, Indonesia, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Vanuatu, West Papua) as part of the Melanesian family of nations. The majority of total respondents recognised the existing members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group as part of 'the Melanesian family of nations' ahead of West Papua (42%), Australia (17.1%), Indonesia (14.9%) and Timor Leste (14.1%) - see Figure 2.

Figure 2. Do you consider the following territories as part of the Melanesian family of nations?



The following tables break down the responses to the question per country by the percentage of respondents by country of residence.

2a. Do you consider Papua New Guinea as part of the Melanesian family of nations?

| % Respondents by country of residence | Yes | No | Don't know/ No answer |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------|
| PNG | 92.9% | 2.4% | 4.8% |
| FIJI | 79.8% | 11.2% | 9.0% |
| VANUATU | 92.9% | 3.5% | 3.5% |
| SOLOMON ISLANDS | 92.3% | 2.9% | 4.8% |

2b. Do you consider Fiji as part of the Melanesian family of nations?

| % Respondents by country of residence | Yes | No | Don't know/ No answer |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------|-----------------------|
| PNG | 82.1% | 7.1% | 10.7% |
| FIJI | 92.1% | 4.5% | 3.4% |
| VANUATU | 91.8% | 5.9% | 2.4% |
| SOLOMON ISLANDS | 90.4% | 6.7% | 2.9% |

2c. Do you consider Vanuatu as part of the Melanesian family of nations?

| % Respondents by country of residence | Yes | No | Don't know/ No answer |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------|--------------------------|
| PNG | 88.1% | 4.8% | 7.1% |
| FIJI | 87.6% | 7.9% | 4.5% |
| VANUATU | 95.3% | 1.2% | 3.5% |
| SOLOMON ISLANDS | 95.2% | 1.9% | 2.9% |

2d. Do you consider Solomon Islands as part of the Melanesian family of nations?

| % Respondents by country of residence | Yes | No | Don't know/ No answer |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------|--------------------------|
| PNG | 90.5% | 2.4% | 7.1% |
| FIJI | 87.6% | 3.4% | 9.0% |
| VANUATU | 95.3% | 2.4% | 2.4% |
| SOLOMON ISLANDS | 99.0% | 0.0% | 1.0% |

2e. Do you consider New Caledonia as part of the Melanesian family of nations?

| % Respondents by country of residence | Yes | No | Don't know/ No answer |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------|
| PNG | 56.0% | 21.4% | 22.6% |
| FIJI | 57.3% | 23.6% | 19.1% |
| VANUATU | 75.3% | 16.5% | 8.2% |
| SOLOMON ISLANDS | 69.2% | 16.3% | 14.4% |

2f. Do you consider West Papua as part of the Melanesian family of nations?

| % Respondents by country of residence | Yes | No | Don't know/ No answer |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------|
| PNG | 40.5% | 39.3% | 20.2% |
| FIJI | 40.4% | 28.1% | 31.5% |
| VANUATU | 43.5% | 42.4% | 14.1% |
| SOLOMON ISLANDS | 43.3% | 30.8% | 26.0% |

2g. Do you consider Indonesia as part of the Melanesian family of nations?

| % Respondents by country of residence | Yes | No | Don't know/ No answer |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------|
| PNG | 19.0% | 66.7% | 14.3% |
| FIJI | 23.6% | 65.2% | 11.2% |
| VANUATU | 8.2% | 82.4% | 9.4% |
| SOLOMON ISLANDS | 9.6% | 80.8% | 9.6% |

2h. Do you consider Australia as part of the Melanesian family of nations?

| % Respondents by country of residence | Yes | No | Don't know/ No answer |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------|
| PNG | 20.2% | 65.5% | 14.3% |
| FIJI | 36.0% | 56.2% | 7.9% |
| VANUATU | 10.6% | 83.5% | 5.9% |
| SOLOMON ISLANDS | 3.8% | 93.3% | 2.9% |

2i. Do you consider Timor Leste as part of the Melanesian family of nations?

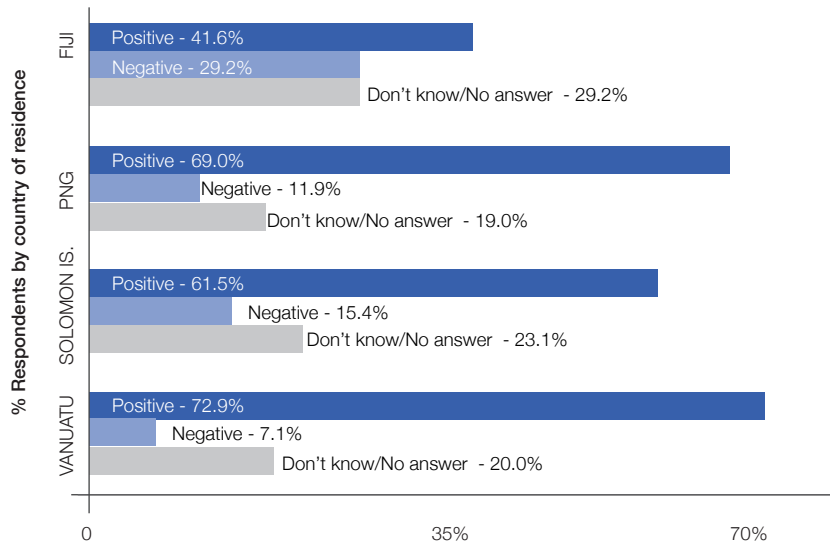
| % Respondents by country of residence | Yes | No | Don't know/ No answer |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------|
| PNG | 10.7% | 70.2% | 19.0% |
| FIJI | 21.3% | 64.0% | 14.6% |
| VANUATU | 14.1% | 72.9% | 12.9% |
| SOLOMON ISLANDS | 10.6% | 75.0% | 14.4% |

Note: totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Relationship with Australia

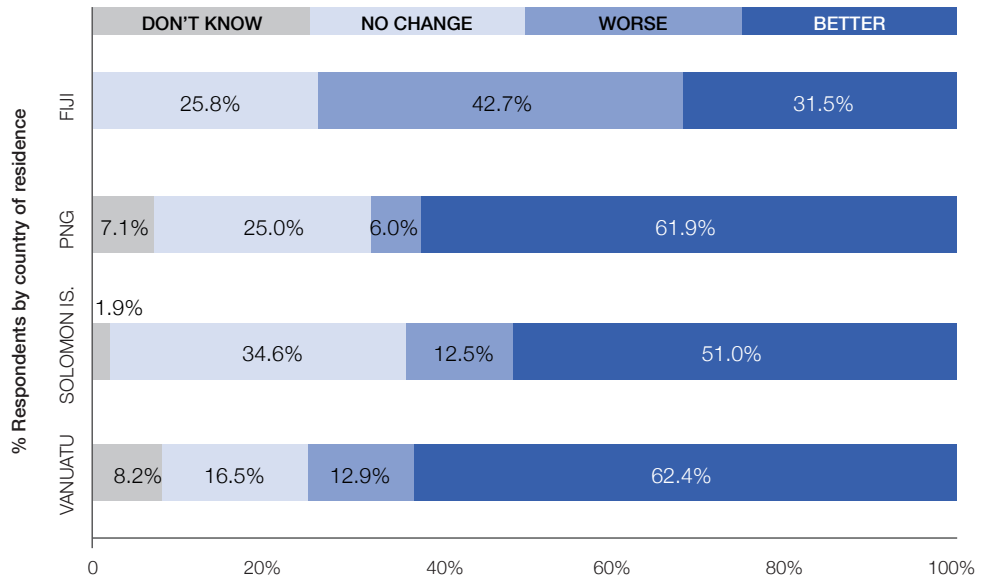
Respondents were asked to rate the relationship between their country of residence and Australia using a scale - positive, negative or don't know. Generally the relationship with Australia was seen as positive, even in Fiji where 41.6% of respondents answered positive compared to 29.2% that reported the relationship as negative - see Figure 3.

Figure 3. How do you rate the relationship between your country and Australia today?



Respondents were then asked how the relationship between their country of residence and Australia had changed over time. Generally, the majority of respondents in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu considered the relationship with Australia was getting better over time. However, in Fiji the greatest proportion of respondents (42.7%) reported the relationship to be getting worse.

Figure 4. How has the relationship between your country and Australia changed over time?

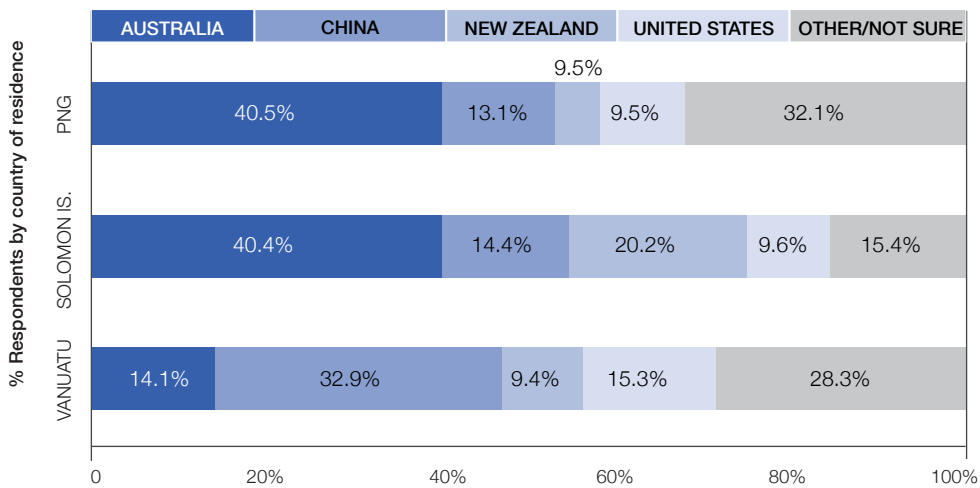


International relations

Respondents were asked what they considered to be the major non-Pacific island country that was the best partner for their country of residence.

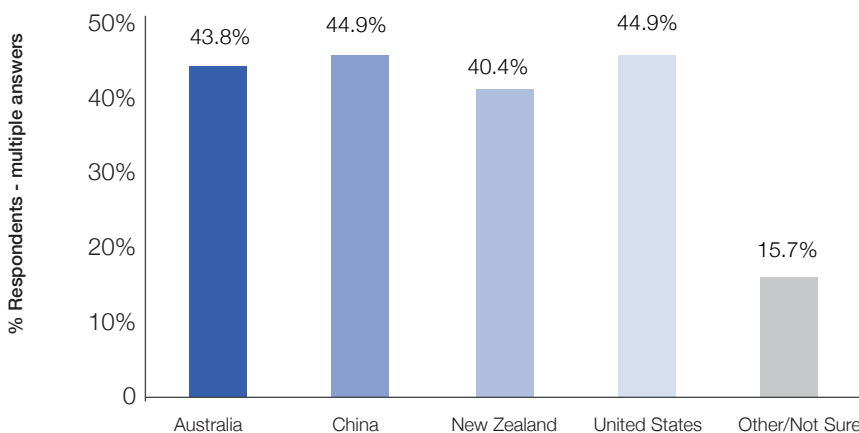
The greatest proportion of respondents in PNG (40.5%) and Solomon Islands (40.4%) identified Australia as the best partner for their country. The highest proportion (32.9%) of respondents in Vanuatu identified China as the best partner for their country. Interestingly, respondents in Solomon Islands were more likely to rate New Zealand (20.2%) as the best partner for their country than those surveyed in PNG (9.5%) and Vanuatu (9.4%). It is noted that Solomon Islands is the only country surveyed that maintains official bilateral relations with Taiwan (and not recognise the One China Policy) and 14.4% of respondents in the Solomon Islands considered China as the best partner for their country, this being similar to the response rate in PNG. Figure 5a shows the responses for PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Figure 5a. What major non-Pacific island country do you think is best partner for your country (PNG, SOLOMON ISLANDS AND VANUATU)?



While the same question was asked of respondents in Fiji, the majority of responses in this country tended to return multiple answers. Accordingly it is not possible to make a direct comparison with the results from the other three countries. Figure 5b shows the responses for Fiji (note respondents provided multiple answers so total does not add up to 100%).

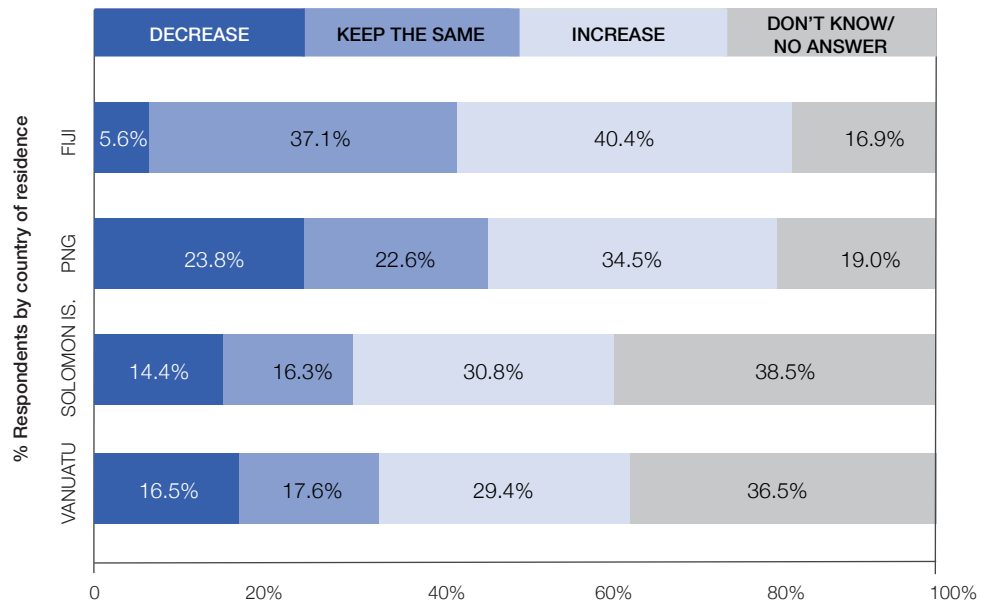
Figure 5b. What major non-Pacific island country do you think is best partner for your country (FIJI)?



Fiji political situation

Fiji has been ruled by a military government since a coup in 2006, since then the international community has placed pressure on the regime in Fiji to hold democratic elections. Respondents were asked what they believed should happen now in relation to the international community's engagement with Fiji. There was general consensus amongst respondents that the international community should increase engagement with Fiji - refer to Figure 6.

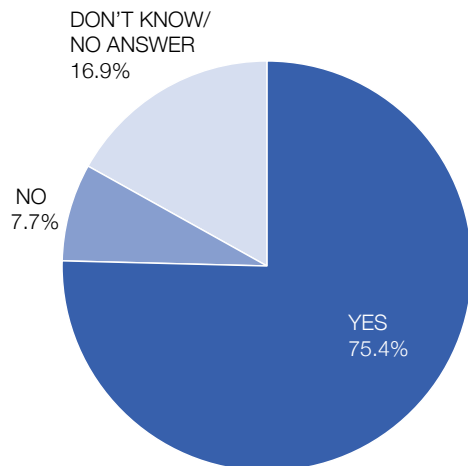
Figure 6. What do you think should happen now in relation to the international community's engagement in Fiji?



West Papua independence

Respondents were asked if they supported independence for the Indonesian controlled Melanesian territory of West Papua. Overwhelmingly respondents supported independence for West Papua - see Figure 7.

Figure 7. Do you support independence for West Papua?



| % Respondents by country of residence | Yes | No | Don't know/ No answer |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------|
| FIJI | 56.2% | 11.2% | 32.6% |
| PNG | 89.3% | 6.0% | 4.8% |
| SOLOMON ISLANDS | 70.2% | 11.5% | 18.3% |
| VANUATU | 88.2% | 1.2% | 10.6% |

Note: totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.