



OVERVIEW

This newsletter provides an overview of the key findings from the latest Opinion Leaders Panel research. This edition updates you with public opinion from Wave 11 of the Opinion Leaders Panel, conducted during the period 23rd July – 13th August 2008. As with most Opinion Leaders Panel, the survey updated key trend measures on government performance, issues facing the country and Vision 2020. The survey also covered use and satisfaction with a range of public services, and included specific questions on the Passport Office, Customs, Freedom of Information and the protection of people's personal data.

NATIONAL ISSUES

The two issues of most concern to the public of Trinidad and Tobago continue to be: crime and inflation/prices, with 91% and 75% of the public, respectively, saying that these are two of the most important issues facing the country.

Health/hospitals is seen by over one in four persons (26%) as one of the key national issues, placing it as the third most frequently mentioned issue.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

One in five citizens (19%) is satisfied with the way the Government is managing the country. This is the same level of public satisfaction as recorded in Wave 10 earlier in the year. The proportion of the public expressing dissatisfaction with Government's performance is now at 78%, which is up four percentage points since Wave 10.

CONTENTS

- 1 **National Issues**
Government Performance
Vision 2020
- 2 **Public Services**
- 3 **Freedom of Information Act**
Personal Data
Passport Renewal
- 4 **Customs**
Local Government Reform
Methodology

VISION 2020

Four in five (81%) citizens say they have heard a great deal or a fair amount about Vision 2020. This is the highest level of awareness with the Vision ever recorded in the Opinion Leaders' Panel (OLP) research since it was first polled in 2003. However, over half of the public (53%) feel that Trinidad and Tobago is unlikely or will certainly not be a developed nation by 2020, compared to two in five (41%) who believe this is likely or certain to happen. This is the lowest level of confidence recorded to date in any of the OLP Waves.

SATISFACTION WITH PUBLIC SERVICES

The survey measured both overall public ratings of key Public Services (irrespective of whether individuals had used that service recently or not) and also measured satisfaction among those who have used the service in the past 12 month.

The first chart (chart 1) reflects overall public satisfaction with Services. The highest levels of public satisfaction are found with TT Post (80% satisfied) and T&TEC (78%). For ten of the 25 services covered in the survey, at least half of the public was satisfied with them. The services with the highest levels of public dissatisfaction are the Police (42% dissatisfied), Passport Office (43%) and Hospitals (46%).

The chart also shows the change in satisfaction levels since the same question was asked in 2007 (Wave 7). Where asked previously, for the most part more people are now satisfied with the Services, especially Public Transport (up 13 percentage points). The main exception is TSTT where public satisfaction has fallen by ten percentage points over the year.

The next chart (chart 2) provides data on how many users of each of the Services are satisfied or dissatisfied. The highest performing Services are Pre-Primary Schools (89% satisfied), Primary Schools (85%), Tertiary Institutions (83%) and TT Post (83%). The services which record the highest levels of user dissatisfaction are Hospitals (45%), Police (50%), HDC (53%) and Passport Office (54%).

As with general public views on Service, satisfaction among users has tended to increase in the past 12 months. The exception, however, among users is with HDC where satisfaction has decreased by 12 percentage points

Chart 1: Satisfaction with Key Services (all public)

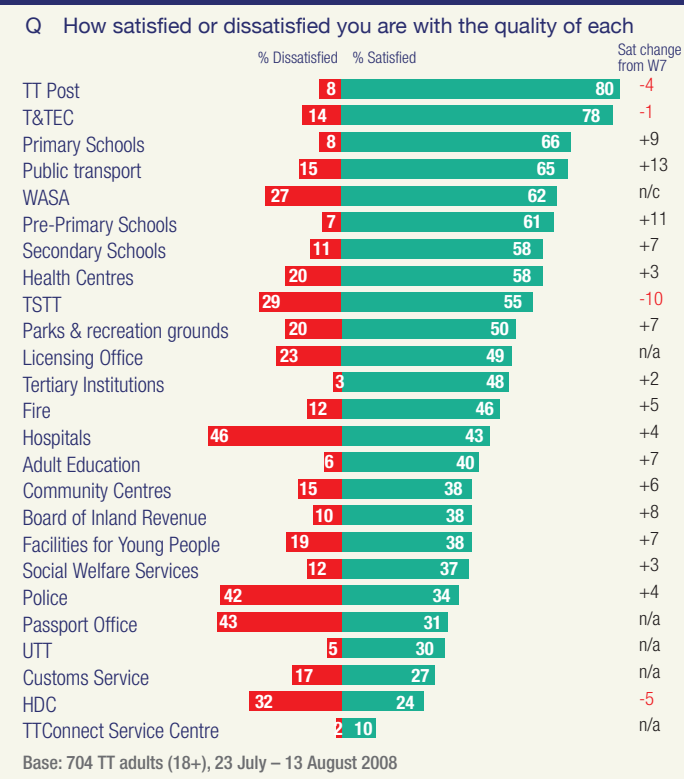
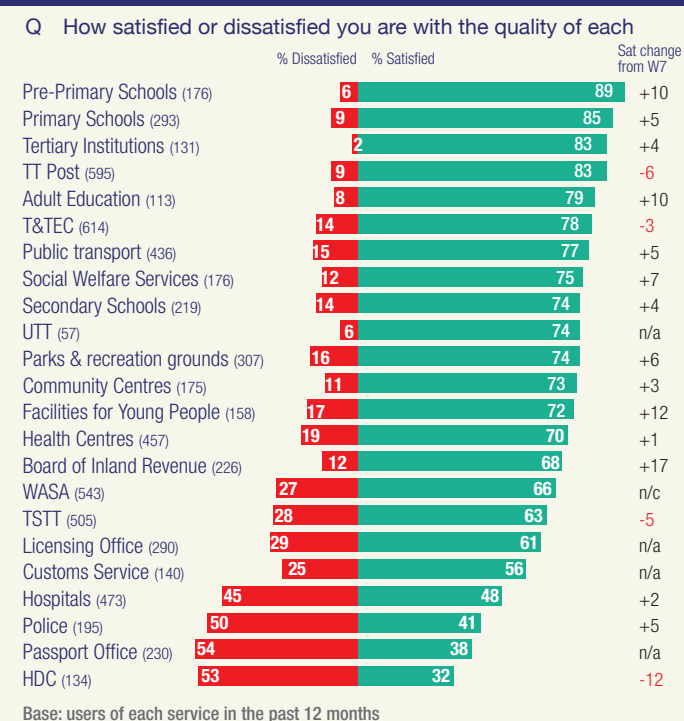


Chart 2: Satisfaction with Key Services (users)



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

One in five respondents (20%) feel they know at least a fair amount about the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Public knowledge of the FOIA is lower now than when the same question was asked in 2005 (29%).

Most of the public do not have an opinion about how well the FOIA is working; this is a clear reflection of the low levels of public awareness. Among those that feel informed about the FOIA, approximately half (51%) are satisfied with how it is working – twice the proportion (24%) who are dissatisfied.

PERSONAL DATA

Almost four in five persons (79%) are ‘concerned that their personal information is being protected by the public and private organisations’ that hold information on them. This level of concern is higher in Trinidad and Tobago (+15 percentage points) than the average across the 27 nations of the EU (where the same measure was asked in January this year).

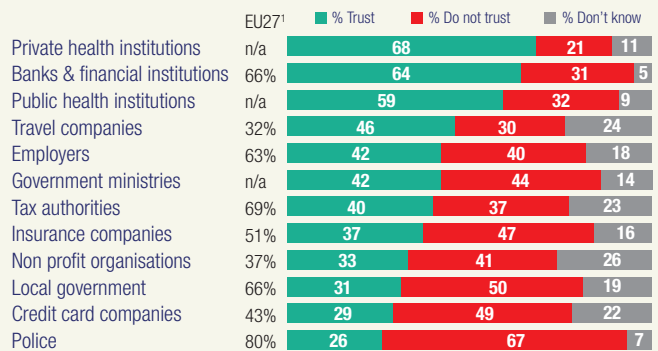
There is strong support for the establishment of an independent body to monitor the manner in which personal information is used by organisations with 85% of the public saying it is important that this body exists.

Chart 3 shows the proportion of the public that do and do not trust different institutions ‘to use their personal information in a proper way’.

For only three of these twelve institutions do more than half of the public trust them: Private Health Institutions (68%), Banks & Financial Institutions (64%) and Public Health Institutions (59%). The least trusted institutions are the Police (26% trust), Credit Card Companies (29%) and Local Government (31%).

Chart 3: Trust to use personal information

Q Please tell me if you trust or do not trust each of the following types of organisations to use your personal information in a proper way?



Base: 704 TT adults (18+), 23 July – 13 August 2008 (¹ =27 EU Member States, Jan 08)

PASSPORT RENEWAL

There is very high awareness (86%) of the new telephone system to make appointments to apply for or renew a passport, but twice as many people think the system is working badly (51%) than well (25%).

One in ten (10%) respondents has a machine readable passport and about half (51%) a non-machine readable version. A third of those who currently hold a passport say that their passport has already expired, and one in nine (11%) say that theirs will expire by the end of 2009.

CUSTOMS

Approximately one in five households (21%) have used or contacted the Customs Service in the past 12 months. The majority of the public have never contacted this service. Just over half of the respondents who have used the Customs Service in the past year are satisfied with the quality of the service overall (56%), compared with one quarter (25%) who are dissatisfied

When asked to select from a list of positive and negative associations people might have about the Customs Service, the most frequently chosen ways to describe the service are that it is: “slow” (30%), provides a “poor service” (24%) and is “unsatisfactory” (18%). The six most frequently selected phrases are all negative.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

Familiarity with the Government’s plans to reform Local Government rose sharply between March/April 2008 (as measured in Wave 10) and July/August 2008 (as measured in Wave 11), from three in ten persons (29%) who claimed to have heard either a great deal or a fair amount about the plans to half the public (51%).

Wave 11 research also shows that while just over half the public (55%) support the Government’s reform agenda for Local Government, almost three in five persons (57%) do not believe that the Government is “interested in listening to ordinary people about how they would like to see local government reformed”.

Slightly over three in five respondents (62%) have heard about the Government’s public consultations on Local Government reform, and the vast majority of people believe that these consultations are a good idea (88%) and will be useful (77%).

METHODOLOGY

In total 704 completed interviews were achieved. This was based on sampling 1,003 respondents from the full Panel of 2,362 members. This gives an overall response rate of 70%.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face between 23 July and 13 August 2008. As with all waves of the Panel, after fieldwork was completed, the data were checked and results weighted by age, ethnicity, gender and regional corporation to the 2000 census data. Weighting for work status is derived from an analysis of the most recent labour force survey data.

Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to multiple responses, computer rounding or the exclusion of cases indicating “don’t know/not stated”.

THANKS AND CONTACTS

Thanks again to the Panel members for their participation in the research. The Opinion Leaders’ Panel is a very important tool for Government in determining ways and means of making its services more responsive and more efficient. We need your fullest support in helping us to shape our Public Services to improve service to all citizens. More updates will be provided in later issues of Opinion Leaders’ News

For more information contact: David Bazil
Ministry of Public Administration
National Library Building
Coner Hart & Abercromby Streets,
Port of Spain, Trinidad
Phone: (868) 623-8578
Fax: (868) 623-6027
Or visit the Opinion Leaders’ Panel
website: www.opinionleaders.gov.tt

