



OVERVIEW

This newsletter provides an overview of the key findings from the latest Opinion Leaders' Panel research. This edition updates regular trend questions on issues such as satisfaction with the Government, key national issues and Vision 2020. The survey also updated public ratings of government performance on a range of policy areas, examined public support for constitutional reform, regional integration and international summits. In addition, the research asked about perceptions of media bias and about the police service.

The survey was conducted during the period 2nd – 21st January 2009. Respondents were interviewed in-home, face-to-face and are members of the Opinion Leaders' Panel.

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT

One in five persons are satisfied, but three in four say they are dissatisfied with the performance of the Government. These ratings are consistent with findings from the Opinion Leaders' Panel surveys undertaken in 2008: fieldwork conducted in March/April, July/August and September 2008.

SATISFACTION BY POLICY AREA

There is a wide range in public approval for the Government's performance on specific policy areas, ranging from seven in ten saying the Government is doing a good job in "education"(71%), "transportation" (71%) and "electricity" (70%) to around three in four saying it is doing a poor job in "drainage" (73%), "health" (74%) and "food security" (77%).

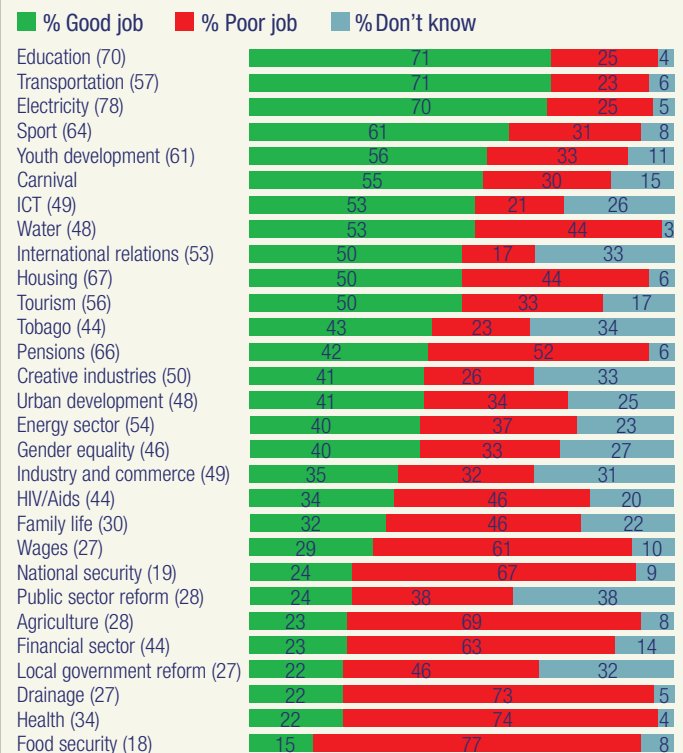
Overall, on seventeen of the twenty-nine policy areas more of the public believe the Government is doing a good job than a poor job. The largest increase in approval since January 2008 is with "transportation" (up 14 points) whilst the largest falls in approval are with "pensions" (down 24) and "financial sector" (down 21).

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Chart 1: Government performance

Q The present government has promised to improve the quality of people's lives by addressing a number of areas. For each one of the following please tell me whether you think the Government is doing a good job or poor job at handling these.



Base: 689 TT adults (18+), 2-21 January 2009 (Figures in brackets = 16 Dec 07-21 Jan 08)

KEY ISSUES FACING THE NATION

“Crime” continues to be seen as the most important issue facing the country, with nine in ten citizens saying this is one of the key national issues when asked for their spontaneous view. Two thirds say crime is the single most important issue. This overall level of concern has been consistently around the nine in ten rating for the past five and a half years.

“Inflation/prices” remain the second most important issue facing the country, although the proportion of the public saying this has fallen from 75% in mid 2008 to 63% in January 2009. While concern about “inflation/prices” has declined somewhat over the past six months, concern with other economic-related issues, such as the “economy” has seen a doubling in the proportion of the public considering it to be a major national issue. “Unemployment” has also increased in public concern over this period.

The third most important national issue proffered by the public is “health/hospitals” with two in five people (41%) saying this is a key concern. This is also the issue that has received the most significant increase over the past six months – up sharply from 24% in mid 2008.

The chart below shows the long term trends in the saliency of key national issues.

VISION 2020

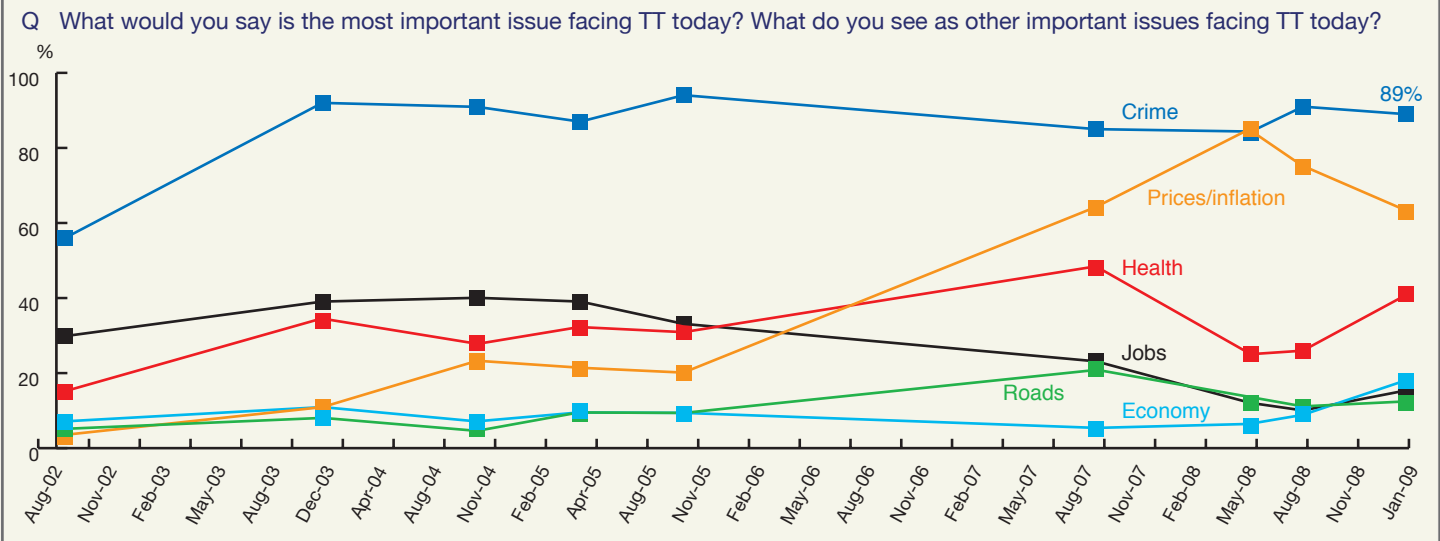
There are continuing high levels of awareness of Vision 2020 with eight in ten people saying they have heard a fair amount or a great deal about Vision 2020. Just two in a hundred citizens now say they are unaware/ have never heard of Vision 2020.

However, confidence in Vision 2020 being achieved continues to fall. Currently, more than three in five people (63%) think it is unlikely that Vision 2020 will be achieved – this is up from 50% in March-April 2008 and from 42% in January 2008.

MEDIA BIAS

Many people are critical about how the media report news and events, and focus groups participants do not feel that the media reports Government activity in a fair and impartial way. However, the survey results show that for several individual media outlets, the most common public response is to say different media are “generally neutral” in their reporting of the Government.

Chart 2: Key issues facing TT (trend)



INTERNATIONAL SUMMITS

The public supports Trinidad and Tobago's hosting of the Summit of the Americas in April 2009 by more than two to one, (53% support vs. 28% oppose). Support for the country's hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting later in the year is marginally higher (58% support vs. 22% oppose).

In the focus group discussions the main reason participants gave for opposing the summits being held in Trinidad and Tobago was the perceived cost to the country. In terms of reasons given for supporting the hosting, three were seen as most important:

- A commitment has been made to host the summits;
- It will attract foreign investment into the country; and
- It will provide the country with international recognition and promote a positive image of the country.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Just under half of the public (45%) say they have heard at least a fair amount about discussions to change the country's Constitution. This is slightly down from just over half (51%) who said this in January 2008.

More than twice as many people are in favour of Constitutional reform than are opposed to it (54% vs. 23%, respectively). These findings are consistent with views held in January 2008.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Two in five people (42%) have heard at least a fair amount about plans for regional integration. Awareness is up by 13 percentage points from when measured four months ago.

Among the two thirds of the public who have at least heard about the integration plans, over half are in support (55%). This level of support is higher than when measured in September 2008 (44%), up by 11 percentage points.

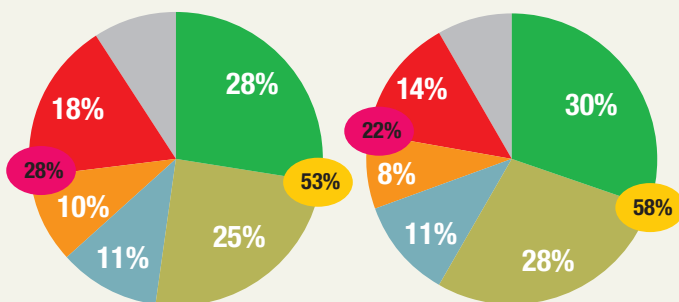
Chart 3: International summits

Q Do you support or oppose Trinidad & Tobago hosting the Summit of Americas in April 2009 / the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in October 2009?

■ Strongly support ■ Tend to support ■ Neither
■ Strongly oppose ■ Tend to oppose ■ Don't know

Summit of Americas

CHOG

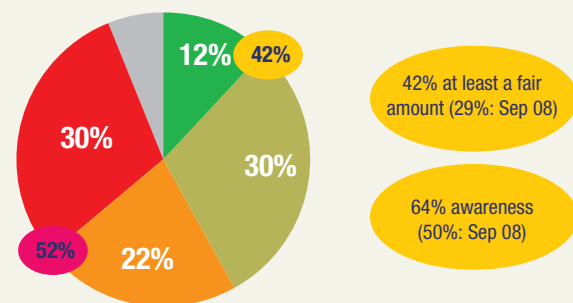


Base: 689 TT adults (18+), 2 - 21 January 2009

Chart 4: Awareness of Integration Plans

Q Before this interview, how much if anything have you heard about the plans to form a political and economic union between several states in the Caribbean?

■ Heard a great deal ■ Heard a fair amount
■ Not heard very much ■ Not heard about plans at all ■ Don't know

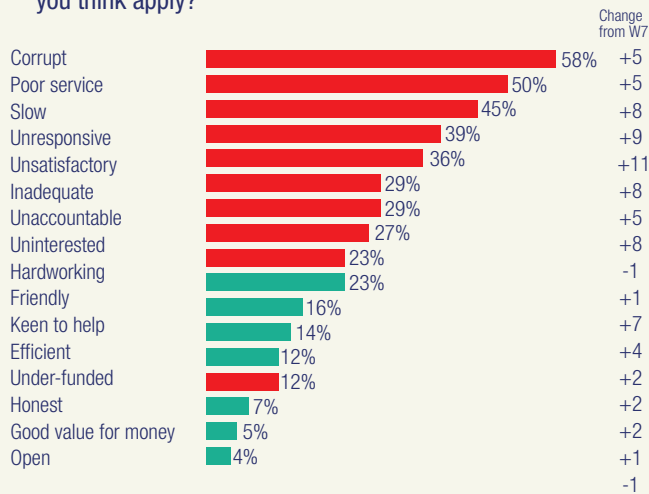


Base: 689 TT adults (18+), 2 - 21 January 2009

CRIME AND THE POLICE

Chart 5: Image of the police

Q These are some words that people have used to describe the Police. Please read through the list and tell me the words that you think apply?



Base: 689 TT adults (18+), 2 – 21 January 2009 (W7 = 31 May – 15 July 2007)

The image of the Police Service in Trinidad & Tobago continues to be poor with most people selecting “corrupt” (58%), “poor service” (50%) and “slow” (45%) as the best ways to describe the service. In many ways the image of the Police Service has deteriorated since last measured in mid 2007. For example there has been an 11 point increase in the proportion of the public selecting “unsatisfactory” as a description of the service.

The new Acting Commissioner of Police, James Philbert, is relatively well regarded by the public with over half expressing satisfaction (54%) with his performance compared to three in ten who are dissatisfied (31%).

METHODOLOGY

The Opinion Leaders’ Panel is a panel of approximately 2,400 citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and is representative of the entire population. The fieldwork for Wave 13 was conducted face-to-face in respondents’ own homes. In total, 689 Panel members were interviewed for Wave 13. The response rate was 86%.

As with all waves of the Panel, after fieldwork was completed, the data were checked and weighted to the latest available census data to ensure that the results are properly representative of the adult population of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

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 for the betterment of all citizens. More updates will be provided in later issues of Opinion Leaders’ News

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