



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 and key national issues. The survey also examined public attitudes to a range of other public services and policy areas, including transportation, the economy and government services.

The survey was conducted during the period 25th April – 10th June 2009. Respondents were interviewed in-home, face-to-face and all respondents are members of the Opinion Leaders' Panel.

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT

A quarter of the public (25%) is satisfied with the performance of the Government, but seven in ten (71%) are dissatisfied. In January 2009, 19% of the public were satisfied with the Government, which means there has been a small increase in overall satisfaction in the first half of 2009. Satisfaction with the Government's performance is now at its highest level since January 2008 (when 35% of people were satisfied), but still only half the level of the highest rating it received in July 2003 (48% satisfied).

KEY ISSUES FACING THE NATION

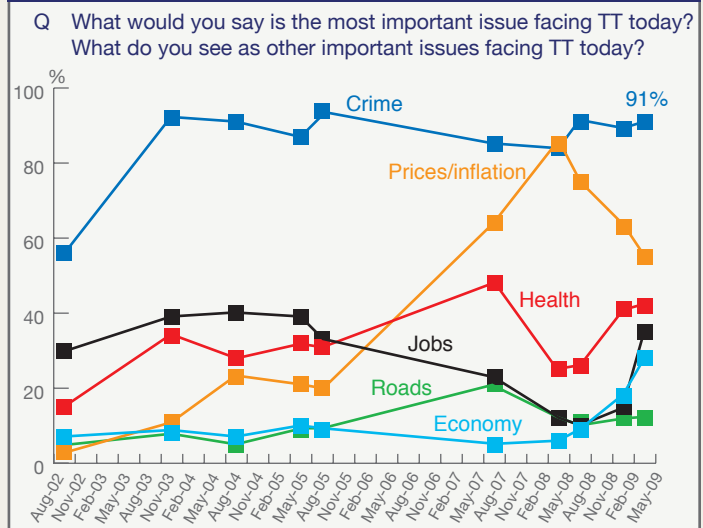
As shown in the following chart, crime continues to dominate as the single most important issue facing the nation, as it has done over the past six years. Three quarters of the public (74%) identified crime as the most important issue facing the nation and a further nine in ten persons (91%) consider it to be one of the most important issues. The next in ranking by level of concern were "inflation/prices" (55% says it is one of the most important issues) and "health/hospitals" (42%).

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Since the beginning of the year, while there has been a fall in the proportion of the public believing that "inflation/prices" is a major national issue (down 8 points); there have been considerable increases in concern about "unemployment" (up 20 points) and "economy" (up 10 points).

Chart 1: Key Issues Facing TT (Trend)



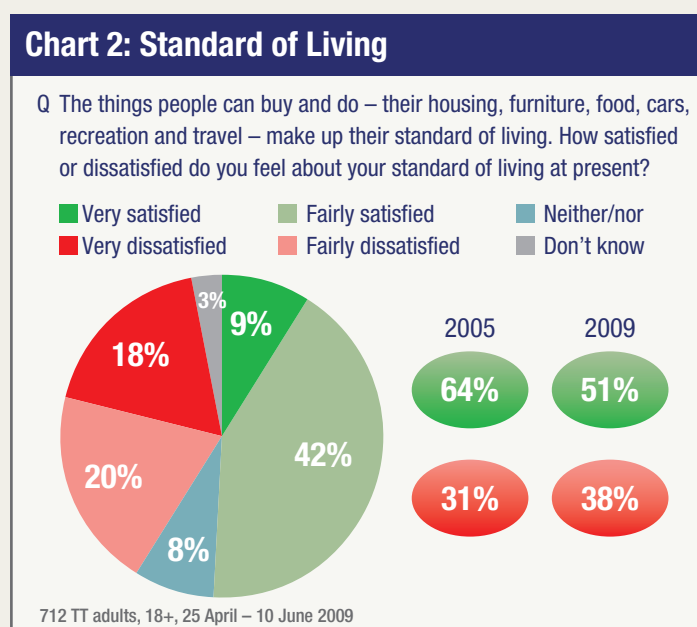
Given the international financial crisis, this wave of the Panel updated some key questions on the public's assessment of the economy and their standard of living, as well as some measurements of the performance of the Central Bank.

## CURRENT STATE OF THE ECONOMY

More people describe the current state of the country's economy as "poor" (55%) than "good" (42%). This represents a significant shift in public rating of the economy from when it was last measured in mid 2005; at that time, two thirds of the public (67%) described the economy as "good" whilst three in ten (31%) considered it to be "poor".

## STANDARD OF LIVING

Reflecting the decline in the proportion of the public who consider the state of the economy to be "good", there has been a fall in the proportion of respondents expressing satisfaction with their current standard of living, from 64% satisfied in 2005 to 51% satisfied in the current survey.



## ECONOMIC OPTIMISM INDEX (EOI)<sup>1</sup>

The public is pessimistic both about the general economic condition of the country (-31 EOI) and their own personal financial situation (-7 EOI) over the next twelve months.

The public is particularly concerned about the general state of the economy, with more than half (53%) believing it will get worse, which is more than double the proportion expecting it to get better (22%).

## THE CENTRAL BANK: KNOWLEDGE AND INTEREST

Very few people feel they know "a great deal" about the roles and responsibilities of the Central Bank – just one in fifty (2%) people feel they do. In total, one in four persons (25%) consider that they know "at least a fair amount".

Only a small proportion of the public say they have "never heard of" the Central Bank (4%), but the majority of the public admit that they "know not very much" (63%).

In contrast there is a high level of interest among the public in understanding what the Central Bank does, with almost three quarters of the respondents saying they are either very (37%) or fairly (36%) interested.

As well as asking about overall awareness, respondents were asked to select from a list of responsibilities, the areas for which they believe the Central Bank has responsibility. Fewer than half of the public correctly identify any of the Bank's responsibilities; the top two most selected are "monitoring the economy" (46%) and "regulating banks, insurers and other financial companies" (44%). The red bars in the chart on the next page represent the proportion of the public who incorrectly believe the Bank has those responsibilities.

<sup>1</sup> EOI is calculated by subtracting the proportion of the public who expect things to get worse from those who expect things to get better over the next 12 months.

### Chart 3: Central Bank: Knowledge

Q Which, if any, of the following do you think the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago is responsible for?



712 TT adults, 18+, 25 April – 10 June 2009

## THE CENTRAL BANK: OVERALL SATISFACTION AND THE CLICO CRISIS

More of the public express satisfaction (37%) than dissatisfaction (19%) with the overall performance of the Central Bank (giving a net satisfaction rating of +18), although a large proportion of the public says they are “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” (24%) or “don’t know” (20%). Among those who feel informed about the roles and responsibilities of the Central Bank the net satisfaction rating is +50, reflecting that familiarity with the Bank is highly correlated with favourability.

When asked more specifically about the Bank’s performance in handling the Clico crisis, twice as many people are dissatisfied (38%) with its performance than are dissatisfied with the Bank generally (19%), including more than one in five people (22%) who are strongly dissatisfied with the Bank’s performance in dealing with this crisis. Even among those who feel informed about the Bank, more than two in five (44%) are dissatisfied with its handling of the Clico crisis.

## NATIONAL FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAMME (NFLP)

The Central Bank runs an extensive Financial Literacy Programme. However, this research suggests there is fairly low unprompted awareness of the NFLP, with half of the public (48%) saying that they have “never heard of it”, and a further quarter (25%) saying that they have heard of the Programme but don’t know much about it.

Overall, approximately one in five people (22%) have heard at least a fair amount about the NFLP.

Among those members of the public who have heard of the Programme, one in twelve persons (8%) say that it has provided them with useful information and “has had a major impact on my financial decisions”. A further 18% say that it has “had some impact on my financial decisions”.

## THE LICENSING OFFICE

The image of the Licensing Office is negative with people most likely to describe it as “corrupt” (44%), providing “poor service” (39%), “slow” (35%) and “unsatisfactory” (31%). The highest positive descriptions people select about the Licensing Office are that it is ‘hardworking’ (13%) and ‘friendly’ (11%).

The overall ‘net image rating’ of -13 compares to other public services as follows<sup>2</sup>:

- Police (-19)
- Nurses (-4)
- Doctors (0)
- Social Workers (+3)
- Teachers (+15)

<sup>2</sup> The net image rating is calculated by averaging the percentages of positive responses and averaging the negative responses, and then subtracting the latter from the former. A net image rating of zero would mean that, on average, as many people select positive as negative statements to describe a particular service.

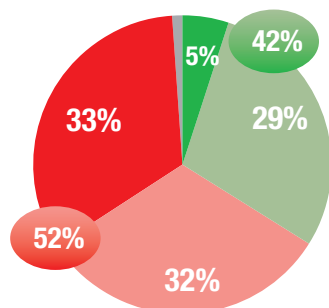
## ROAD SAFETY

As shown in the following chart, two thirds of the public (65%) do not feel safe when driving on major roads and highways in Trinidad and Tobago, including one third (33%) who say they feel 'not at all safe'. Women (70%), persons over the age of 55 years (72%), Indo-Trinidadians (73%) and people living in South Trinidad (78%) are most likely to feel unsafe driving on the nation's highways.

**Chart 4: Highway Safety**

Q How safe or unsafe do you feel driving on major roads and highways in this country? Would you say...

Very safe      Fairly safe  
Not at all safe      Not very safe      Don't know



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By far the most popular proposal to increase road safety is 'more police officers/patrols to detect illegal/bad driving' with 75% of the public believing that this will help. The next two most popular choices are 'introducing surveillance cameras to detect illegal/bad driving' (52%) and 'introducing breathalysers to detect drunk drivers' (47%). Relatively few people prioritise infrastructure developments as a means of improving highway safety. For example, just 10% selected "build more major roads/highways" and 13% selected "better lighting".

In separate questions looking specifically at public attitudes towards the breathalyser and surveillance cameras, there is almost universal support for introducing the breathalyser to detect drunk driving (96%) and introducing surveillance cameras to detect illegal/bad driving (96%).

## RAPID RAIL

There is strong public support for the introduction of the Rapid Rail System with three in five people (60%) saying it was the right thing to do and one in five (22%) believing it is the wrong thing to do.

Most people do not think that the Rapid Rail System will be built before 2012. Just eight percent believe that it will be built between now and 2012 and a further one in twelve (8%) believe it will be built in 2012. Half the public (49%) expect that the System will be built in 2013 or later and over a third (36%) say they do not know when it will be built.

## WATER TAXI SERVICE

There is strong support for the introduction of the Water Taxi Service with four in five persons (80%) saying that it was the right thing to do.

Only two percent of the public say they have personally used the Water Taxi Service, which means that there were not enough respondents in this survey who have used the Service to provide any results on user satisfaction.

However, among the general public, a clear majority (62%) are satisfied with the Water Taxi's performance and only a very small proportion (6%) have expressed dissatisfaction.

## FLOODING

Flooding was discussed in the focus group sessions, although questions were not asked about it in the main survey. Nearly all the participants felt that flooding was a serious problem in the country, and that it is getting worse. The main reasons suggested for flooding were:

- Lack of proper drainage;
- Cutting and removal of trees for housing and other developments; and
- Littering

Most participants were not aware of the Government's effort to respond to the flooding problem, and assume that Government is not doing anything, or that it does not consider flooding to be an issue. Coastal flooding is mainly seen as a problem in South Trinidad with several participants identifying Mosquito Creek as one of the areas requiring attention.

## THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (EMA)

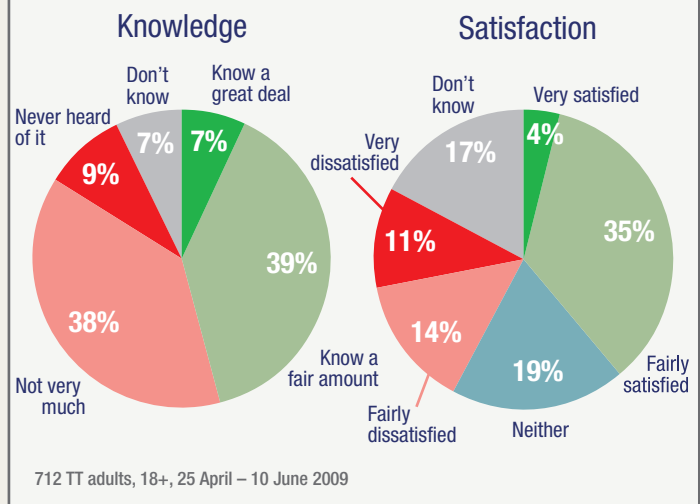
### Knowledge

Less than half of the public (46%) feel they know either a "great deal" (7%) or a "fair amount" (39%) about the roles and responsibilities of the Environmental Management Authority (EMA). Most people, however, have at least heard about the Authority (84%).

When asked to select from a list, just over half of the public believed that the EMA is responsible for "preventing and/or controlling pollution and conserving the environment" (54%) and around half thought it is responsible for "promoting education and public awareness about the environment" (49%). There is less public understanding of the EMA's other responsibilities.

### Chart 5: EMA: Knowledge & Satisfaction

- Q How much, if anything, do you feel you know about the roles and responsibilities of the EMA – the Environmental Management Authority?
- Q Overall, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of the Environmental Management Authority (EMA)?



### Satisfaction

Overall, more people are satisfied (39%) than dissatisfied (25%) with the performance of the EMA. Amongst those people who know at least a fair amount about the EMA, three in five (59%) are satisfied with its performance, compared with fewer than three in ten (28%) who are dissatisfied.

### Sources of Information

The three ways in which most people currently find out about the services provided by the EMA are:

- TV (63%);
- Newspapers (53%); and
- Radio (49%).

The sources people say that they would most prefer to use to find out about the EMA's services are the same as those they currently use. The key differences are that more people would prefer to use, than currently use the website of the EMA (20% vs. 10%) and there is a higher preference for brochures/leaflets/flyers (20% prefer vs. 14% use).

## MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Knowledge

More people do not feel informed (53%) than feel informed (44%) about the services provided by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). Just one in ten persons (10%) say they are “very well informed”.

In addition, by a ratio of two to one, the public does not feel informed about the qualifying criteria to access the Ministry’s services. Overall just three in ten people feel either “very well informed” (6%) or “fairly well informed” (25%), compared with two thirds of citizens who feel they are “not very well informed” (42%) or “not at all informed” (22%).

There is a high level of awareness of three of the six services and programmes run by the Ministry of Social Development

- Senior Citizens’ Grant (97% have heard of it);
- Public Assistance (92%);
- Disability Grant Assistance (88%);
- Burial Assistance (43%);
- Micro Enterprise Training & Development Grant (27%); and
- Urgent Temporary Assistance (13%).

Two of the ten Divisions of the Ministry of Social Development have fairly high levels of awareness among the general public – the Social Welfare Division (75% of the public have heard ‘at least a fair amount’) and ‘TT Food Card’ (63%). Half the public feels familiar with NADAPP (51%), but fewer than half with any of the other Divisions.

### Satisfaction

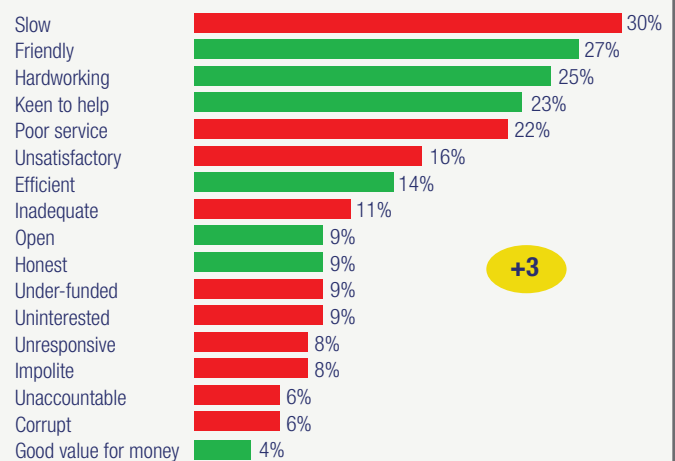
Among the three services covered in the survey where there were enough respondents who had accessed or used them, between six and seven in ten users are satisfied with each of the services. Satisfaction with ‘Public Assistance’ is slightly lower now than when recorded in 2004 (59% satisfied in 2009 vs. 65% in 2004), but satisfaction with the ‘Old Age Pension’ has fallen dramatically (65% in 2009 vs. 83% in 2004).

### Image of Social Workers

Although the most common word chosen to describe social workers is ‘slow’ (30%) the next three most common descriptions are all positive: ‘friendly’ (27%), ‘hardworking’ (25%) and ‘keen to help’ (23%).

**Chart 6: MSD: Image of Social Workers**

Q These are some words that people have used to describe different public services. Please read through the list and tell me the letters that you think apply to Social Workers?



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## TTCONNECT SERVICE CENTRES

Overall awareness of tconnect Service Centres has increased from 28% in mid 2008 to 39% now, albeit knowledge still remains fairly low with just one in twenty persons (4%) saying they have “heard a great deal” and more than half (55%) admitting they have “never heard” of the tconnect Service Centres.

Among the 39% of the public who are aware of the tconnect Service Centres, more than half (55%) believe having the option of using one of these centres will make it easier for people to obtain government information and services. This is twice the proportion of persons who believe the Centres will “not make much difference” (27%). Very few (2%) think that the Service Centres will make it “harder” to obtain government information or services.

## GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The following chart shows the government services that people expect they might use or access in the next 12 months (green bars) and which they would consider visiting at tconnect Service Centre to access (yellow bars). There is a relatively close correlation between wanting to access different services and being prepared to consider using these through tconnect Service Centres.

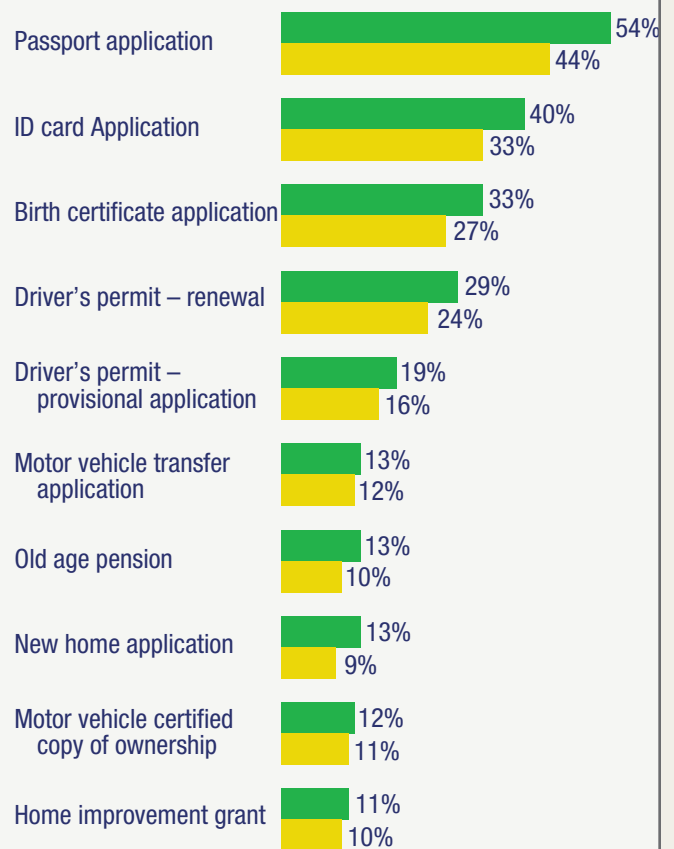
The government services with the highest likely demand are “passport application” (54% of the public say they or someone in their household might use this service in the next 12 months), followed by “ID card application” (40%), “birth certificate application” (33%) and “driver’s permit – renewal” (29%).

### Chart 7: Government Services and using them at TtConnect Service Centres

Q Here is a list of government services. Please tell me whether you think you or someone else in your household might use or access this service in the next 12 months?

Q If these services were available at a TTConnect – service centre, which, if any, do you think you would consider using or accessing at a TTConnect – service centre?

- Might use/access in next 12 months
- Consider using at TT Connect



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## DATA PROTECTION

The vast majority of people feel safe providing personal information during a personal visit to a Government Office (90% feel safe), but only around half (48%) feel safe providing personal information via a letter or application form. An even smaller proportion would feel safe doing this by email (20%), on a website (19%) or by telephone (16%).

There is a broad consensus that an individual's personal information or data should be shared across government if the individual gives permission for this to happen – two thirds of the public (66%) agree with this. However, there is very strong opposition to sharing personal information across government where an individual has not been asked their permission for this – four in five people (79%) disagree that this should happen, including 62% who strongly disagree.

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA)

### Knowledge

Almost a quarter of the public (24%) says they know a "great deal" or "fair amount" about the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). This compares favourably with 20% of the public who said they know a "great deal" about the FOIA when asked in mid-2008. Currently, the vast majority of the public have heard "not very much" (39%) or have "never heard of it" (27%).

### Satisfaction

More people are satisfied (22%) rather than dissatisfied (13%) with how the Act is working, but most people (65%) do not express an opinion – which is a reflection of the relatively low levels of knowledge about the Act. These views are consistent with those expressed in mid-2008.

## METHODOLOGY

Tobago, and is representative of the entire adult population. The fieldwork for Wave 14 was conducted face-to-face in respondents' own homes between 25th April and 10th June 2009. In total, 712 Panel members were interviewed for Wave 14. The response rate was 80%.

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 all adults resident in the country.

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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