



OVERVIEW

This newsletter provides an overview of the key findings from the latest Opinion Leaders' Panel research. This edition updates you with public opinion reactions to the proposals set out in the 2007 Budget Speech, as well as public opinion on other issues such as Vision 2020 and belief in unemployment statistics.

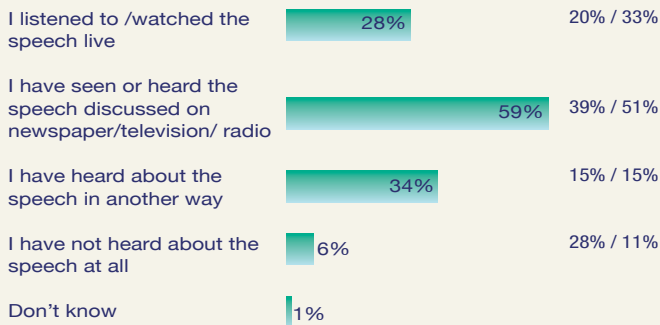
AWARENESS OF THE BUDGET

There was high interest in the 2007 Budget Speech (chart 1). Nearly all adults in Trinidad & Tobago (93%) heard about the Budget Speech in some way. This included around three in ten (28%) who listened or watched the Speech live and twice this proportion (59%) also saw or heard about the speech in the media.

Chart 1: Awareness of Budget Speech

Q As you may already know, the Prime Minister gave the Budget Speech earlier this week. Which of the statements I read out apply to you?

Jan-Apr 05 / Dec 03



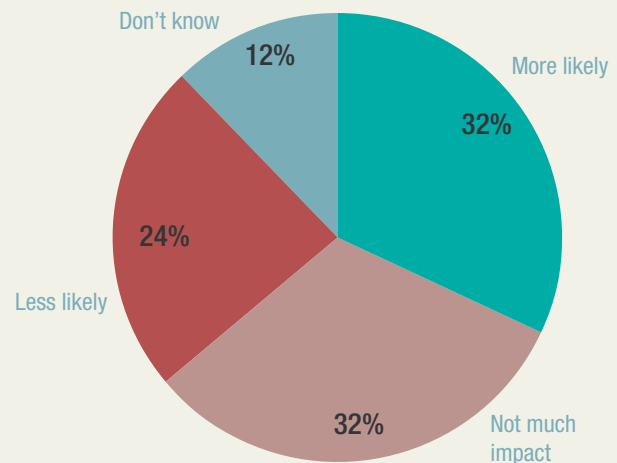
Base: 948 TT adults aged 18+, 23 – 27 August 2007

IMPACT ON PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN VISION 2020

There was no consensus among members of the public about whether the Budget proposals would make achieving Vision 2020 more likely or not (chart 2). Just over three in ten (32%) people said the Budget would make it more likely that Vision 2020 would be achieved. The same proportion (32%) believed the proposals made no difference. A quarter of the public (24%) said the proposals will make it less likely to be achieved.

Chart 2: Impact of the Budget proposals on Vision 2020

Q Do you think the Budget proposals will make it more likely that Vision 2020 can be achieved or less likely, or will they not have much impact?



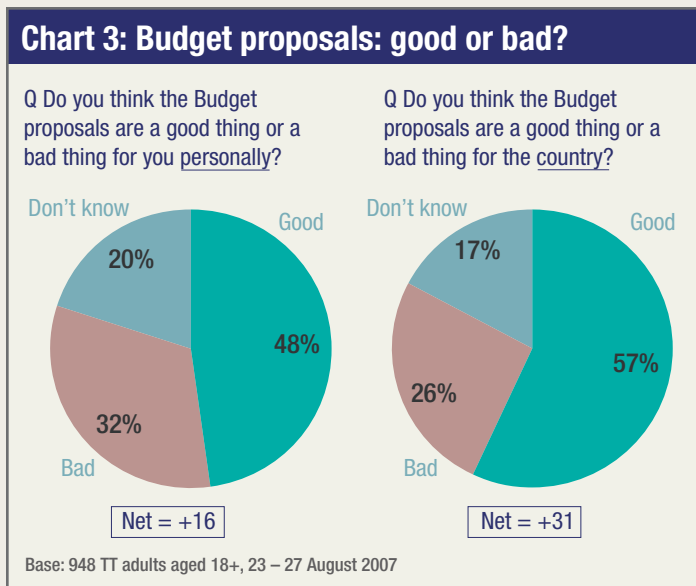
Base: 948 TT adults aged 18+, 23 – 27 August 2007

After the Budget proposals, we found that seven in ten (69%) adults across the country say they have heard a fair amount or a great deal about Vision 2020 and that a little over half the public (53%) believe it is likely or certain that the country will achieve developed nation status by 2020.

OVERALL REACTIONS TO THE BUDGET

By a ratio of four to three, the public believed the Budget Speech outlined what is right for the country (43% agree vs. 29% disagree).

Half the public said that the Budget proposals were “good for me personally” (chart 3), compared with 32% who felt they were not. Even more people agreed that the Budget proposals were “good for the country” (57%).

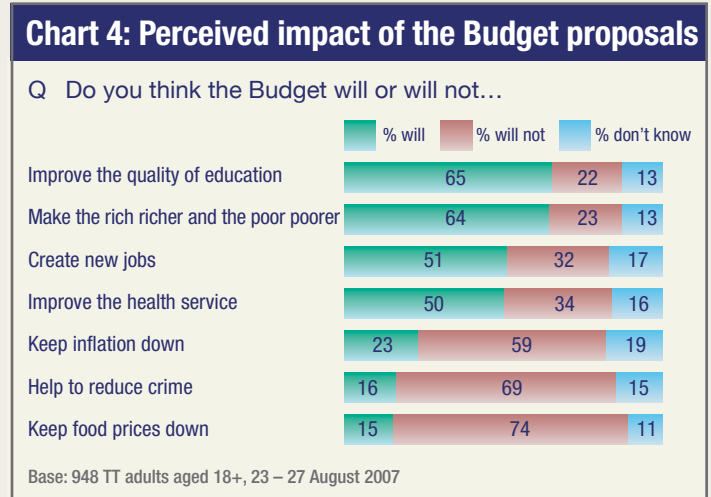


IMPACT OF THE BUDGET PROPOSALS

The survey tested whether the public thought the Budget proposals would make a difference to several aspects of public services and quality of life (chart 4).

Three times as many people believed the Budget proposals will improve the quality of education than not (65% will improve and 22% will not improve). Half of adults also thought that the proposals would create new jobs (51%) and improve the health service (50%).

However, two thirds (64%) agreed that the Budget will “make the rich richer and the poor poorer” and the majority of the public thought the proposals will not keep inflation down (59%), help to reduce crime (69%) or keep food prices down (74%).



DETAILED REACTIONS TO THE BUDGET PROPOSALS

As part of the survey, the public was asked for their reactions to twelve specific proposals contained within the Budget in terms of whether each proposal was seen to be about right, too much or not enough (chart 5).

For eight of the twelve proposals more than half the public believed the Budget **proposals are about right**. This includes three quarters who said this about the increase in the minimum NIS pension to \$2,000 per month (75% said this is about right) and the construction of 33 ECCE centres (73%).

Very few people believed the Budget **gave away too much** on any of the twelve specific proposals covered in the survey. One in ten people (10%) said that the 15% wage increases for CEPEP workers and one in eight people (12%) said that the 15% wage increase for URP workers was too much. However, for both these proposals many more people thought that the proposals did not do enough (28% and 27%, respectively) and twice as many again believed the proposals were about right (57% and 56%, respectively).

For three of the proposals, large proportions of the public thought that the Budget **did not do enough**. These are increasing senior citizens grants by \$300 per month (47% said did not do enough, though half said it was about right), increasing the disability grant from \$900 to \$1,000 per month (57% said did not do enough) and increasing the minimum wage from \$9 to \$10 per hour (75% said did not do enough).

The public was unsure about whether the Budget proposals provided enough funding or not for national security and for the health sector as views on these two proposals were more divided.

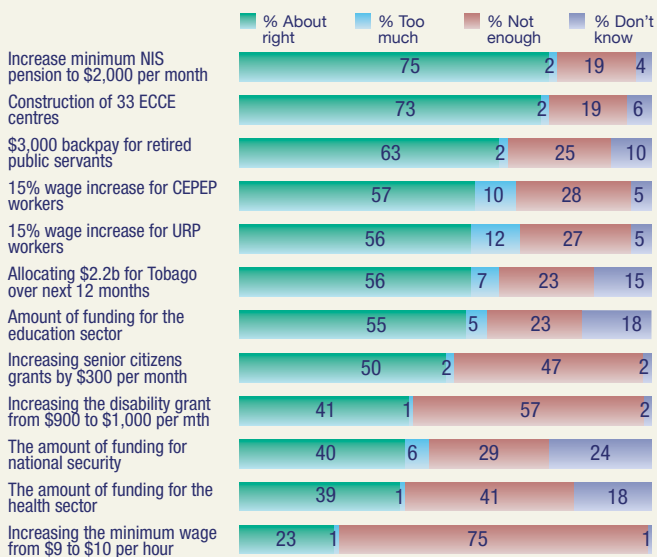
OTHER PROPOSALS

The survey asked the public their views on four further proposals.

Nine in ten people (90%) said it was right to ban people using their cell phones and seven in ten people (69%) said it was right to provide an amnesty for people who have not filled in their income tax. However, more than half the public felt it was wrong to ban casinos (56%) or to allow an aluminium smelter to be built (61%).

Chart 5: Detailed reaction to the Budget proposals

Q Now thinking about each of these pledges. Please tell me whether you think the Government has



Base: 948 TT adults aged 18+, 23 – 27 August 2007

GAS RESERVES

The survey asked people's expectations about future gas reserves in Trinidad and Tobago. Three in ten (32%) people said they believe that the country will have plenty of gas reserves in ten years time. A higher proportion, however, believed that gas will be mostly used up by then (45%).

UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

The survey explored whether the public believes that the unemployment rate has fallen from 12% to 5% between 2002 and 2006, and to see if there is a difference in views when respondents are informed this is "official" rather than "Government" statistics. This was achieved by "split sampling" the questionnaire so half of respondents were asked the following question: "Government statistics have shown that the unemployment rate in this country fell from almost 12% in 2002 to 5% in 2006. Do you think this is true or not?". The other half of the sample was asked exactly the same question, except they were told that "Official statistics show" rather than "Government statistics".

The results show that telling people the statistics are "Government" or "Official" makes no difference to people's acceptance of them. In the former question wording (using "Government" statistics) 42% said the fall in unemployment rate was true and 40% said it was not. In the other version (using "Official" statistics) 43% said the fall in unemployment rate was true and 43% said it was not true. These differences are not statistically significant differences.

METHODOLOGY

The Opinion Leaders' Panel is a panel of approximately 2,400 Trinidad and Tobago adults, representative of the entire population. The fieldwork for Wave 8 was conducted by telephone. This was done to provide rapid feedback on the Budget proposals, and was possible because 83% of panel members had given their home or cell numbers. In total, 948 Panel members were interviewed for Wave 8 out of a sample of 1,132 who were randomly selected for contact. The response rate was 84%.

As with all waves of the Panel, after fieldwork was completed, the data were checked and weighted to the latest available information to ensure the results are properly representative of all adults.

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 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 to make 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

