



OVERVIEW

In December 2003, the third wave of the Opinion Leaders' Panel survey was conducted in Trinidad and Tobago. Wave III treated mainly with issues related to Trust, Police and Crime, Health, Education and the Board of Inland Revenue.

Since the baseline research of the Panel in 2002, more people are satisfied with key public services and, in general, feel these provide good value for money. In addition, Vision 2020 is becoming better known in the country and optimism that Trinidad and Tobago will become a developed country by the year 2020, is increasing.

Crime and fear of crime continue to be a cause for concern among the population. However, despite better-regarded public services, dissatisfaction with the Government has risen. Two areas of uneasiness are the state of the health service and the poor image of the police.

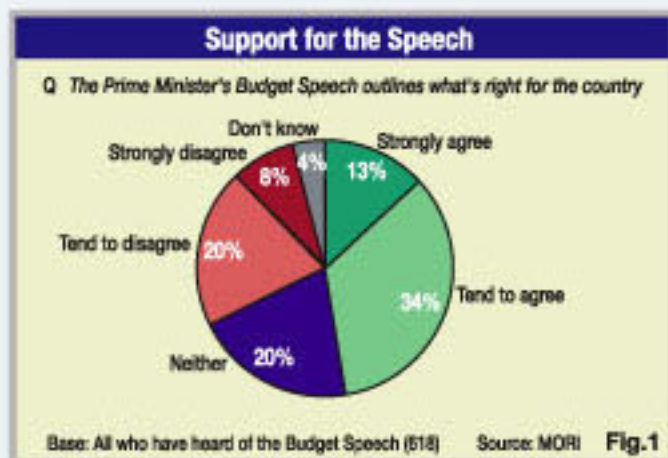
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Satisfaction with Government

Overall there has been a sharp rise in dissatisfaction with the Government. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of individuals are now dissatisfied with Government (up 11 points since June – July 2002) and only 36% (one in three people) are satisfied – a two-point rise over the same period.

Budget Speech

Almost half the population (47%) believe that the Budget Speech was suitably tailored to the needs of Trinidad and Tobago. Only one in three people disagreed. (See Fig. 1)



TRUST

Teachers (91%) are the most trusted professionals in the country, followed by nurses (80%) and professors (79%). Government ministers (22%) and politicians (18%) are the least trusted. This is a common finding in many countries.

More people trust journalists (45%) than not (41%) to tell the truth. Other findings show that 76% of people trust doctors while only 35% trust the police.

SERVICE SATISFACTION AND VALUE FOR MONEY

Among the adult population and specifically among service users, more people say they are satisfied with each of the following services shown in Fig.2 than did so in Wave I of the Panel. The only exception to this is satisfaction with hospitals which has fallen by two points to 48%.

Among the general public, dissatisfaction is highest with hospitals (46%), facilities for young people (27%) and health centres (24%). Among users of individual services, dissatisfaction is also highest with hospitals (47%), the police (26%), facilities for young people (25%) and health centres (21%).

There is evidence of a close relationship between people's satisfaction with individual services and their belief that each service provides value for money. Education services are the most favourably regarded by the public in both respects. (See Fig.2)



POLICE AND CRIME

A large majority of the population (92%) say that crime is one of the most important issues facing the country.

Reported experience of crime and anti-social behaviour has also increased. However, these incidents are more related to 'street scene' incidents, such as poor street lighting and litter/animal droppings, rather than violent crime.

Feelings of safety

As a reflection of people's increasing concern about crime, many more people say (70% in 2003 compared to 31% in 2002) they now feel less safe generally than they did three years ago.

Responsibility for combating crime

Most people (62%) feel that the police are mainly responsible for combating crime. However, the public does not see the police as solely responsible for it. Parents/families (44%) and the National Government (35%) are deemed by many people as having a role to play in the process. (See Fig.3)

There is also a feeling that providing more facilities for young people and stricter penalties for serious crime could be possible deterrents to committing crime.

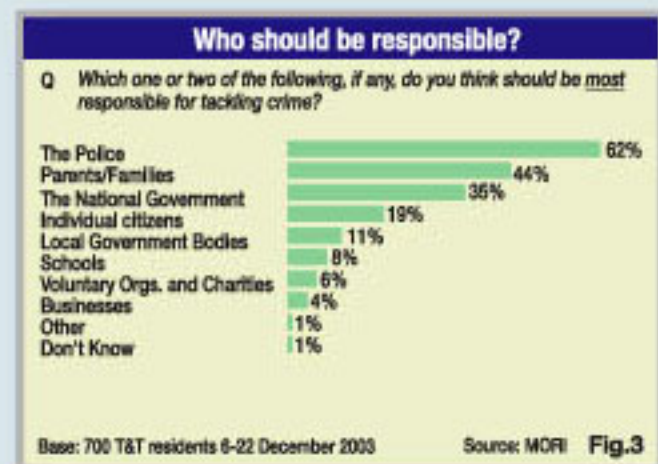


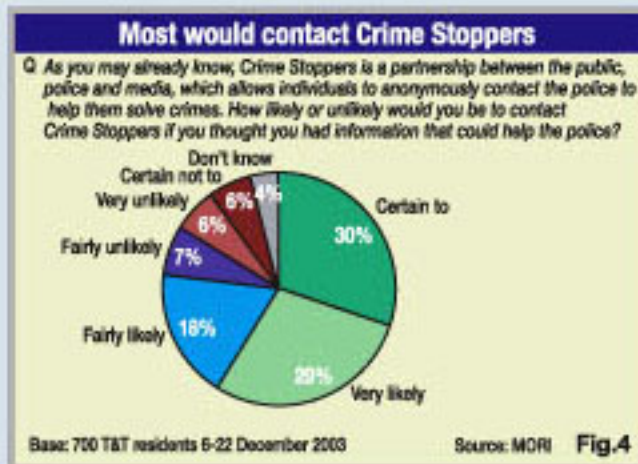
Image of the Police Service

The image of the Police Service appears to be very poor especially when compared with the image of teachers. The top qualities attributed to the police are negative, with the top three being poor service (38%), corrupt (36%) and slow (33%).

Crime Stoppers

The Crime Stoppers strategy has one of the highest levels of awareness among private-sector initiatives asked about in the Survey—three in four people (76%) believe they know a fair amount about the programme.

Most people (59%) also said that they would contact Crime Stoppers if they had information they thought would be useful to the police in fighting crime. Building people's confidence that their names will remain anonymous will help Crime Stoppers become more effective in the future. (See Fig.4)

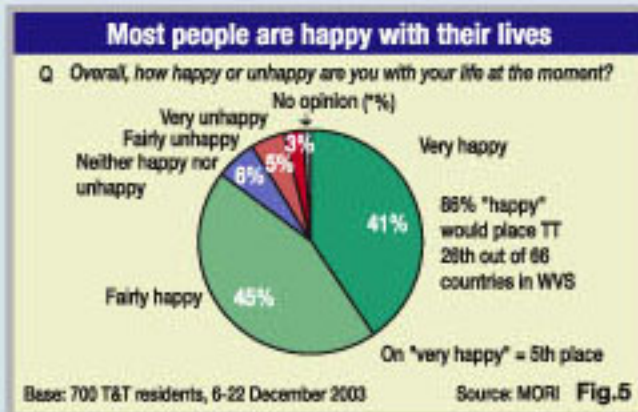


QUALITY OF LIFE

Satisfaction and Happiness

Most citizens say they are happy with their lives at present (86%), and two in every five people say they are very happy with it.

¹Supporting data shows that "happiness" ratings in Trinidad and Tobago are high when compared to other countries. (See Fig. 5)

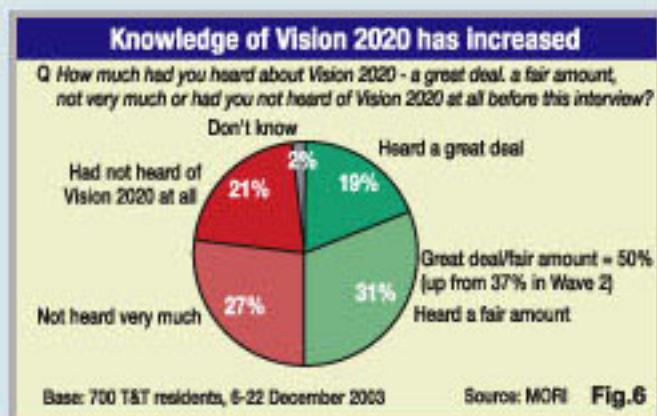


¹Using the World Values Survey

VISION 2020

Increased Awareness

Over three in four people (77%) say they have heard of Vision 2020. This is an increase from mid-2003 when 69% said they had heard of it. The level of knowledge about Vision 2020 is also increasing, with half the public now saying they know at least a fair amount, compared with 37% in July-August 2003. (See Fig.6)



Belief in Vision 2020

Six in ten people (59%) believe that Vision 2020 will be achieved by that year. However, fewer people (4%) are certain that it will be achieved.

Communication of Vision 2020

People say they mainly find out about Vision 2020 through the television – and they prefer to find out this way.

However, demand for communication of Vision 2020 via the internet is high among younger people (16% of those under 35 years old).

HEALTH

Concern with health issues

People are concerned about health issues, particularly HIV/Aids, which is seen as the second most important issue facing the country after crime.

Dissatisfaction with hospitals is high compared with other services – both among users of hospitals and among the general public. Long waiting times are particularly seen as a problem at hospitals. While health centres are generally better regarded than hospitals, there is still much room for improvement.

Image of the Health Service

In general, people feel that the health service has a poor image. Many believe it is failing the country (65%) and failing people individually (60%). However, while most people express these views, there is an expectation that the health service will get better in the future.

Knowledge of health initiatives

There is little knowledge of the Government's health-related initiatives, especially the Patients' Charter. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the people say they have never heard of it or don't know about it.

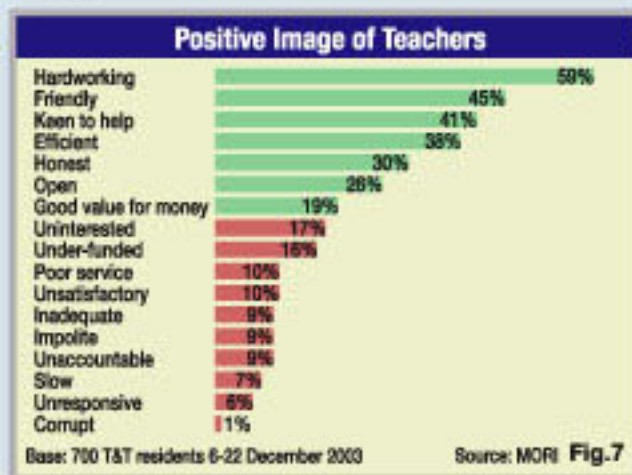
Overall recall of the Health Sector Reform Programme is also low; 36% have never heard of it or don't know about it.

EDUCATION

Image of Teachers

Teachers are the most trusted professionals in the country – (91% say they trust teachers to tell the truth). The image of teachers is very favourable with all the top attributes being positive – hardworking (59%), friendly (45%) and keen to help (41%).

(See Fig. 7)



Educational decentralisation

Most people do not know very much about educational decentralisation and most say they are opposed to letting principals select their own teachers (84%) – the focus group discussions suggest this may be about concern over opportunities for nepotism.

Discipline and Basic Skills

Perceptions of poor discipline in the classroom are also a concern; 79% feel that too many teachers are unable to maintain discipline in the classroom. People think there is room for improvement in the teaching of the basics, reading and writing.

School Feeding Programme

The School Feeding Programme is a well-known initiative and had the highest score of all initiatives asked about; 49% say they know a great deal about it.

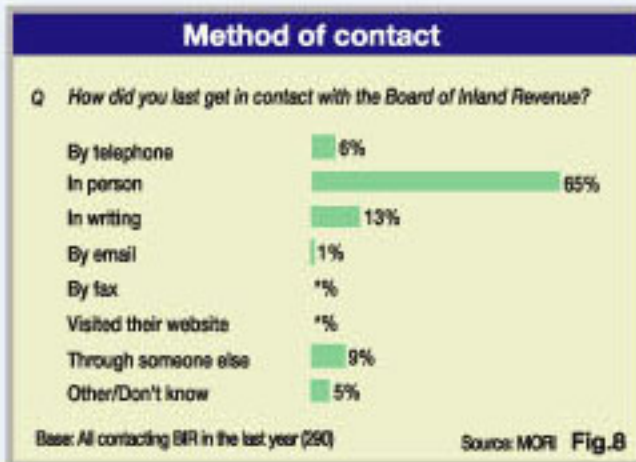
Satisfaction with Schools

Satisfaction with, and perceived value for money of primary schools is the highest of all public services.

BOARD OF INLAND REVENUE

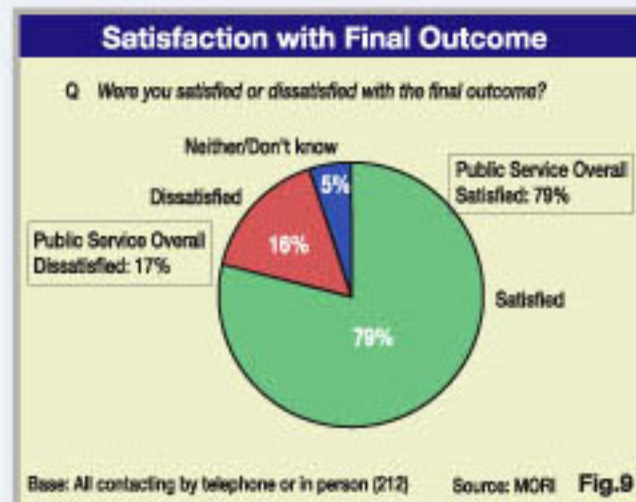
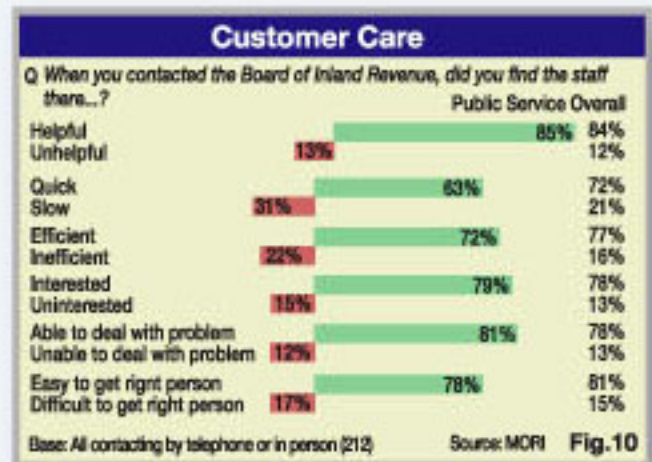
Usage

Four in ten people have used the Board of Inland Revenue within the last twelve months. Of these individuals, the main methods of contact have been personal visits (65%) and written (13%). (See Fig.8)



Customer Service

The vast majority (79%) of people who have contacted the Board of Inland Revenue say they were satisfied with the final outcome of their contact. However, the speed and efficiency with which enquiries are dealt are the main areas in need of improvement. (See Fig.9 and Fig.10)



M E T H O D O L O G Y

Results were based on 700 face-to-face, in-home interviews with members of the Opinion Leaders' Panel of Trinidad and Tobago.

Data are weighted to reflect the profile of the population.

Where results do not sum up to 100, this may be due to multiple responses, computer rounding or the exclusion of don't knows/not stated.

The fieldwork was conducted by HHB and Associates under the direction of MORI (6 to 22 December 2003).



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Thanks again for your participation. The Opinion Leaders' Panel is a very important tool for the 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 for the betterment of all citizens. More updates will be provided in later issues of Opinion Leaders News.