



LC Election 2004 Candidates' Strength Analysis: Explanatory Notes

The Public Opinion Programme (POP) and Civic Exchange will be jointly conducting a series of public opinion surveys on the 2004 Legislative Council direct election, some of which will focus on the strength of candidates in each constituency. Since many surveys would be conducted before the close of nomination, while the exact lists of candidates are still to be decided, there are difficulties to project the strength of different candidates using opinion data. The POP team has therefore developed a set of simple questions in order to control individual variables, so as to deduce the strength of different team-ups. Below is a brief description of this method.

A list of candidates who may take part in the election in a certain constituency would first be determined by the POP Team. The respondents would then be asked to choose one candidate from the list. The respondents would then be asked to choose another candidate among the remaining candidates if their first choice drops out from elections. After that, the respondents would then be asked to choose again another candidate among the remaining candidates if both the respondents' first and second choices dropped out from elections. The questions are phrased as below:

- [Q1] If the Legislative Council elections were to be held tomorrow, and you had the right to vote, which candidate or list would you vote for ?
- [Q2] If [Choice #1] drops out from elections, which one of the remaining would you vote for ?
- [Q3] If [Choice #2] drops out from elections, which one of the remaining would you vote for ?

This method can in fact be simplified by asking the respondents to list out their first, second, third... choices among the given candidates or lists, which means to put the candidates or lists in a ranked order. However, judging from the flow of interviews, it will be more convenient and closer to real-life situations to ask the respondents question by question.

Based on the answers obtained, the POP Team can then deduce the strength and source of each candidate list, under different combinations and scenarios. The method used is in fact similar to the calculations based on the transferable vote system. Its advantage is the avoidance of using too many permutations in the questionnaire, and invalidation of the entire survey when certain candidates finally drop out. At a time when various political parties and groups are working on the coordination of candidate lists, this type of surveys should have a high reference value.

For the whole series of "2004 Legislative Council Direct Election: Survey on Individual Constituency" just completed by POP and Civic Exchange, we have used this method to examine the strength and power base of different potential candidates within each constituency. The figures are open for public consumption, but the scenarios will only be discussed in detail by the Director of POP in his future column articles, in order to save time and space.

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