

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG PUBLIC OPINION PROGRAMME (POP)

CIVIC EXCHANGE

JOINTLY CONDUCT

2004 Legislative Council Direct Election : 1st Survey 【 All constituencies in Hong Kong 】

SURVEY REPORT

Research Team Members

Project Director : CHUNG Ting-Yiu Robert
Project Manager : PANG Ka-Lai Karie
Research Executive : LAM Mo-Chun Calvin
Data Analyst : CHOW Kwong-Pok Cliff
Copy Editor : CHUNG Sin-Yan Yennice

MAY 2004

CONTACT INFORMATION

Date of survey	: 18-20 May 2004
Survey method	: Telephone survey with interviewers
Target population	: Cantonese-speaking population of Hong Kong aged 18 or above
Sampling method	: Standard POP telephone sampling method was used. Telephone numbers were selected randomly from residential telephone directories and mixed with additional numbers generated by the computer. If more than one subject had been available, the one who had his/her birthday next was selected.
Weighting method	: The data reported have been adjusted according to the age and gender distributions of the Hong Kong population as reported in the 2001 Population Census.
Sample size	: 1,039 successful cases
Response rate	: 62.3%
Std. sampling error	: Less than 1.6%

< Everything in this publication is the work of individual researchers, and does not represent the stand of the University of Hong Kong. CHUNG Ting-Yiu Robert is responsible for the work of the Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong.>

1. Preamble

- 1.1 The Public Opinion Programme (POP) was established in June 1991 to collect and study public opinion on topics that could be of interest to academics, journalists, policy-makers, and the general public. POP was at first under the Social Sciences Research Centre, a unit under the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Hong Kong, and was transferred to the Journalism and Media Studies Centre in the University of Hong Kong in May 2000. In January 2002, it was transferred back to the Faculty of Social Sciences in the University of Hong Kong. Since its establishment, POP has been conducting opinion researches on various social and political issues and providing quality survey services to a wide range of organizations provided that they agreed to publicizing the findings to the general public, as well as allowing the research team to design and conduct the research independently, and to reserve the right to release the findings for public consumption.
- 1.2 In May 2004, Civic Exchange commissioned the POP Team to conduct a series of opinion surveys on the 2004 Legislative Council direct election. This survey was the first one in the row, with four main areas of investigation as follows:
- i. Hong Kong people's priorities and party identification;
 - ii. Hong Kong people's knowledge of the election system;
 - iii. Hong Kong electors' voting behaviour and propensity to vote;
 - iv. Hong Kong people's political inclination and participation in political activities.
- 1.3 The questionnaire was designed in consultation with the client, but the POP Team was fully responsible for designing and conducting this study, without any interference from the client.

2. Research Method

- 2.1 This was a random telephone survey conducted by telephone interviewers under close supervision. To minimize sampling bias, telephone numbers were first drawn randomly from the residential telephone directories as "seed numbers", from which another set of numbers was generated using the "plus/minus one/two" method, in order to capture the unlisted numbers. Duplicated numbers were then filtered, and the remaining numbers were mixed in random order to produce the final telephone sample.
- 2.2 The target population of this survey was Cantonese-speaking population of Hong Kong aged 18 or above. When telephone contact was successfully established with a target household, one person aged 18 or above was selected. If more than one subject had been available, selection was made using the "next birthday rule" which selected the person who had his/her birthday next from all those present.
- 2.3 Telephone interviews were conducted during the period of 18-20 May 2004. A total of 1,039 Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong citizens aged 18 or above were successfully interviewed. The overall response rate of this survey was 62.3% (Table 1 in Appendix II), and the standard sampling error for percentages based on this sample was less than 1.6 percentage points. In other words, the sampling error for all percentages was less than plus/minus 3 percentage points at 95% confidence level.
- 2.4 As shown in Table 2, among the 8,015 telephone numbers sampled for the survey, 2,508 were confirmed to be ineligible, among them 350 were fax or data lines, 1,473 were invalid telephone numbers, 35 were call-forwarding numbers, while another 399 were non-residential numbers. Besides, 157 of them were invalidated due to special technological reasons, while 94 cases were voided because target respondents were unavailable at the numbers provided.
- 2.5 Meanwhile, a total of 2,944 telephone numbers were invalidated before the research team could confirm their eligibility. Among them 265 were busy lines and 1,646 were no-answer calls after making a maximum of 5 times' recalls. Forty-one cases were diverted to answering devices while another 226 were blocked. Moreover, 184 cases were treated as

unsuccessful because of language problems, while 567 interviews were terminated before the screening question. Fifteen cases were voided for other problems.

- 2.6 On the other hand, 1,524 cases failed to complete the interview. Among them 3 were rejected at the household level, another 6 rejected the interview immediately after their eligibility was confirmed, 1,444 were unfinished cases with appointment dates beyond the end of fieldwork period. Besides, 53 cases were incomplete due to unexpected termination of interviews, 18 were classified as miscellaneous due to other non-contact problems, and the remaining 1,039 were successful cases (Table 2 in Appendix II).

3. Key Findings

(Please refer to Appendix II for cross-reference of the tables cited.)

3.1 Hong Kong People's Priorities and Party Identification

3.1.1 As shown in Table 3, more than half of the respondents (52%) thought the would-be Legislative Councillors returned in the upcoming election should tackle economy-related problems first, while 21% said the Councillors should treat the labor and employment issues as their first priority. Summing up, as high as 73% of respondents were most concerned with the economic situation in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, 9% considered "constitutional/democratic development" to be the most pressing issue to be handled by the Legislative Councillors returned in September (Table 3).

3.1.2 The survey also found that, for both livelihood and political issues, Democratic Party (DP) was named as the party that appealed to most respondents most (livelihood issues: 20%; political issues: 24%), followed by Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB, 9% and 9%) and Liberal Party (LP, 8% and 6%). On the other hand, quite a number of respondents said no political party appealed to them (31% and 26%). Nearly 30% opted for "don't know" (29% and 30%, Tables 4 & 5).

3.2 Hong Kong People's Knowledge of the Election System

3.2.1 As regards people's knowledge of the system used in the geographical constituency direct election this September (namely, proportional representation system, or "party-list" system), this survey revealed that 68% of the respondents admitted that they did not know, as contrast to 7% who claimed they knew (Table 6).

3.2.2 Despite this low knowledge level, when asked whether the proportional representation system was suitable for Hong Kong, 27% gave an affirmative answer, 23% said the opposite, as high as half (50%) failed to make a judgment (Table 7).

3.2.3 Apart from the election system, respondents' knowledge of the total number of seats returned by direct election was also put to test. Results found that, 76% confessed that they had no idea at all, 9% thought they knew but their answer was wrong. Only 16% of them

were capable of giving the correct answer, i.e. 30 seats (Table 8).

- 3.2.4 When it came to their own geographic constituencies, the knowledge level slumped further. As high as 88% admitted they did not know, another 9% gave a wrong answer. Meanwhile, just 3% was able to answer this question correctly (Table 9).

3.3 Hong Kong Electors' Voting Behaviour and Propensity to Vote

- 3.3.1 Of the 808 registered voters captured in this survey (Table 10), one-tenth of them (10%, or 8% of total sample) submitted their registration less than a year ago, while 31% (or 24 % of total sample) registered at least four years ago. Moreover, 36% (or 28% of total sample) had forgotten when (Table 11).
- 3.3.2 Findings also showed that 61% (or 47% of total sample) of these voters self-reported that they had voted in the District Council Election last November, whilst 38% (or 30% of total sample, Table 12) had not. Similarly, 64% (or 50% of total sample) of this sub-group claimed they had voted in some elections before, one-third (33%, or 25% of total sample) said they had not (Table 13).
- 3.3.3 As a snapshot taken three and a half months ahead of the Legislative Election, the registered voters' propensity to vote was found to be 78% (Table 14). Nevertheless, this percentage should never be taken as a projection of the actual turnout rate because many people who claimed they would vote at this stage would eventually not vote.

3.4 Hong Kong People's Political Inclination and Participation in Political Activities

- 3.4.1 Regarding the political inclination of the respondents, two-thirds of them (67%) said they would prefer to vote for a candidate rather than a political party, if they were given a free choice, whilst 19% would opt for a party (Table 15).
- 3.4.2 On the other hand, those who inclined to support the pro-democracy camp accounted for 32% of the overall sample, 5% went to the pro-China camp, while 30% preferred to associate themselves with the moderate camp. Meanwhile, 26% said they had no political inclination at all (Table 16).
- 3.4.3 Looking back, 19% and 2% of the respondents had participated in the July 1 and new year rallies respectively (Tables 17 & 18). What about the July 1 rally this year? 13% gave an affirmative answer, including 5% who said "definitely yes" (Table 19).

4. In-depth and Comparative Analyses

4.1 “New” Vs “Old” Registered Voters

- 4.1.1 Cross-tabulation analyses were conducted in order to study the differences between the “new” voters and “old” voters, in terms of their election knowledge, propensity to vote and political inclination. “New voters” is operationally defined as those who submitted their voter registration after the last LegCo Election took place four years ago (base=267), while “old voters” is defined as those who had registered before that (base=251). This section has only included the most significant findings.
- 4.1.2 Our cross-tabulation analyses showed that a relatively higher proportion, 12%, of the “old” voters claimed they knew the proportional representation system, compared to only 5% of the “new” voters.
- 4.1.3 Meanwhile, further analyses also found that the propensity to vote in the coming LegCo Election was higher among the “old” voters, as 59% of them said they would definitely cast their vote, which was 10 percentage points higher than that of the “new” voters (49%).
- 4.1.4 On the other hand, “new” voters’ propensity to participate in this year’s July1 rally was higher than that of the “old” voters, figures being 21% and 12% respectively.
- 4.1.5 In terms of their demographic profile, analyses showed that the “new” voters were generally younger than the “old” voters (within age bracket 18-29: 39% vs 13%), received relatively more education (within those with secondary education or above: 87% vs 78%), and also with many more students (18% vs 1%).

4.2 Comparison among 1998, 2000 and 2004 Direct Elections

(Please refer to Summary Table below for cross-reference of the figures cited.)

- 4.2.1 When compared with the data collected in February 1998 and June 2000, i.e. roughly 3.5 months ahead of the elections, the percentage of those who claimed to have some knowledge of the proportional representation system grew from 2% in 1998, to 4% in 2000, and then 7% this year. Meanwhile, those who thought this system was suitable for Hong Kong also grew from 1998's 11% to 2000's 17%, and then this year's 27%. However, the number of respondents holding the opposite view also increased from 13% in 1998, to 14% in 2000, and then 23% this year.
- 4.2.2 As regards respondents' knowledge of the number of direct-elected seats, the proportion of respondents who could give a correct answer to the total number of seats in Hong Kong was 6% in 1998, it climbed to 16% this year. However, the correct percentage remained at a low level of 3% this year as far as the respondent's own geographical constituency (GC) was concerned. It indicated that the respondents' knowledge of its own GC was very limited 3.5 months before the election. Such figures were not available for the year 2000.
- 4.2.3 When the registered voter's propensity to vote was compared across three election years, all taken around 3.5 months before the election, the figure increased significantly from 63% in 1998 to 78% in 2000, and then remained stable this year (78%).
- 4.2.4 Finally, all three surveys had showed that respondents would prefer to vote for a candidate rather than a party, if they were given a free choice. The pro-candidate figures registered in 1998, 2000 and this year were 65%, 71% and 67% correspondingly.

A Summary Table – Time Series Analyses with 1998 and 2000 data

Date of survey	10/2/1998	7-8/6/2000	18-20/5/2004	<i>Latest change</i>
Overall sample size	535	1,074	1,039	--
Number of registered voters	359 [^]	791	808	--
Overall response rate	48.7%	49.0%	62.3%	--
Sampling error of % (at 95% conf. level)*	+/- 4%	+/- 3%	+/- 3%	--
Some knowledge of the proportional representation system **	2%	4%	7%	+ 3%
No knowledge of the proportional representation system **	89%	78%	68%	-10%
A suitable election system for HK	11%	17%	27%	+ 10%
An unsuitable election system for HK	13%	14%	23%	+ 10%
Correct answer to the total number of direct-elected seats in HK	6%	--	16%	+ 10%
Did not know or wrong answer to the total number of direct-elected seats in HK	94%	--	85%	-10%
Correct answer to the number of direct-elected seats in their own GC	3%	--	3%	--
Did not know or wrong answer to the no. of direct-elected seats in their own GC	9%	--	9%	--
Registered voters' propensity to vote	63% [^]	78%	78%	--
Vote preference : a candidate	65%	71%	67%	-4%
Vote preference: a political party	14%	14%	19%	+ 5%

* "95% confidence level" means that if we were to repeat a certain survey 100 times, using the same questions each time but with different random samples, we would expect 95 times getting a figure within the error margins specified.

** Collapsed from a 5-point scale.

[^] The figure shown was an average of 4 surveys conducted in Feb 1998.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 This survey has showed that, people's general knowledge of the election system and the number of seats to be returned by direct election in the coming Legislative Council Election was at a very low level. As high as 68% of the respondents admitted they had limited knowledge of the proportional representation system and only 16% managed to answer correctly when asked for the total number of direct-elected seats. The knowledge level further slumped to 3% when it came to the respondent's own geographical constituency.
- 5.2 With respect to their political inclination, 67% of the respondents claimed they preferred to vote for a candidate rather than a party, whilst those who affiliated themselves with pro-democracy camp and moderate camp each accounted for around 30%.
- 5.3 As a snapshot taken 3.5 months ahead of the Election, the self-reported propensity to vote among the registered voters captured in this survey was 78%. As for their voting history, 61% of these voters claimed they had voted in the DC Election last November.
- 5.4 Results also revealed that 13% of the respondents said they intended to participate in the July 1 rally this year, including 5% who said "definitely yes".
- 5.5 Cross-tabulation analyses showed that generally more "old" voters (those registered at least 4 years ago) than the "new" voters (those registered less than 4 years) claimed they had a better understanding of the election system (12% and 5% respectively). Besides, 59% of the former group said they would definitely cast their vote in September as compared to 49% of the latter. However, in terms of their propensity to participate in this year's July 1 rally, the "new" comers were relatively more positive than the "old" voters (21% and 12% respectively).
- 5.6 Finally, as indicated by the comparative analyses across three election years, the proportion of respondents who claimed to have some knowledge of the election system grew from 2% in 1998 to 4% in 2000, and then to 7% this year. Moreover, those who could give a correct answer to the total number of direct-elected seats in Hong Kong also grew from 6% in 1998 to 16% this year. As for the registered voter's propensity to vote, taken around 3.5 months ahead of the election, the figure also increased from 63% in 1998 to 78% in 2000, and remained at the same high level this year.