

**Surveys on ALL Geographical Constituencies
Hong Kong People's Views on the 2004 Legislative Council Election**

Civic Exchange's Analysis on Polling Results

9 August 2004

Civic Exchange and Public Opinion Programme (POP) at the University of Hong Kong released a set of survey results today on the 2004 Legislative Council (LegCo) election. The survey looked at how people in all geographical constituencies (GCs) view the 2004 LegCo election. The survey was conducted between 26 July and 29 July 2004. A total of 1,005 successful cases were collected.

Civic Exchange would like to highlight the following areas:

A. How well do people understand the 2004 LegCo Geographical Constituency election?

1. 77% of the respondents stated that they did not know the number of legislators to be returned by direct election at the September election. There was another 10% who claimed that they knew the answer, but their answers were wrong. These percentages were slightly higher (by about 1%) than the survey results obtained from the first in the series of CE-POP surveys released in May 2004.¹
2. Among all age groups, respondents aged between 18 and 29 had the lowest accuracy rate in terms of giving the correct answer. 85% of respondents aged between 18 and 20 said they did not know the answer, while 79% of the respondents aged between 21 and 29 stated the same. These percentages were the two highest among other age groups.
3. 79% of the total respondents indicated that they did not know the numbers of seats returned by their geographical constituencies. Only 7% of the respondents could give the right answers. This percentage was higher than the CE-POP survey results collected in May 2004, but was still rather low.
4. This survey was conducted about 1.5 months prior to the election day. The high percentages showed that respondents still lacked basic knowledge on the September election. The HKSAR Government needs to do more to inform Hong Kong people.²

¹ See HKUPOP. *2004 Legislative Council Election: 1st Survey*. May 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/LC04S1%20-%20E.pdf> and Civic Exchange. *Attitudes towards 2004 Legislative Council Election: Civic Exchange's Preliminary Analysis of Polling Results*. May 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/LC0401pa-e.doc>.

² The HKSAR Government has been focussing on encouraging Hong Kong voters to vote on 12 September 2004, but not so much on introducing other relevant basic information.

Candidates who choose to give their voters voting advice (in particular) should take this into account because the lack of knowledge may further hinder their efforts in this aspect as voters do not necessarily understand the logic behind the advice.³

B. What may affect voters' intention to vote?

1. The survey showed that voters' propensity to vote remains high: 77% of voters stated they would definitely or most likely to vote. Such finding is consistent with previous CE-POP and CE-Wirthlin surveys released in May, June and July 2004.⁴ However, it is too early to predict the turnout rate.
2. 14% of voters indicated that they still had not yet decided whether they would vote or not. This percentage is consistent with all previous CE-POP surveys released in 2004. Now that campaigning has formally started, candidates/parties really need to connect to this group of people and encourage them to vote.
3. One-third of those who registered as voters before the last LegCo election in 2000 stated that their intention to vote in the coming September LegCo election had increased when compared to the LegCo election in 2000. The highly charged political environment in Hong Kong in recent years could be a cause for such an increase. The finding could also be explained by the CE-HKTP survey results released on 4 August 2004: The CE-HKTP survey showed a significant increase in the percentage of people who regarded political issues as their most concerned problem in 2004. Besides, the same CE-HKTP survey illustrated that more people were dissatisfied with the general performance of the HKSAR Government and much more people were very dissatisfied with the performance of Chief Executive CH Tung in July 2004 than in August 2000.⁵
4. 24% of voters said that the July 1 rallies in 2003 and 2004 had increased their intention to vote in the 2004 LegCo election, while 69% said the rallies had not changed their intention.
5. 22% of voters stated that the increase in communication between the Central People's Government (CPG) and the democrats recently had increased their intention to vote on 12 September 2004. 73% said that their intention to vote remained unchanged.

³ From previous CE-POP surveys released in June and July 2004, it was found out that many respondents stated they would not follow voting advice from candidates. See HKUPOP. 2004 Legislative Council Direct Election: Survey on Individual Constituency (New Territories West). July 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/LC04NTW%20-%20E.pdf>; HKUPOP. 2004 Legislative Council Direct Election: Survey on Individual Constituency (New Territories East). July 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/LC04NTE%20-%20E.pdf>; HKUPOP. 2004 Legislative Council Direct Election: Survey on Individual Constituency (Kowloon East). July 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/LC04KLE%20-%20E.pdf>; HKUPOP. 2004 Legislative Council Direct Election: Survey on Individual Constituency (Kowloon West). July 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/LC04KLNW%20-%20E.pdf>; HKUPOP. 2004 Legislative Council Direct Election: Survey on Individual Constituency (Hong Kong Island). July 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/LC04HKI%20-%20E.pdf>.

⁴ See footnotes 1 and 3; Wirthlin Worldwide Asia. Survey on Hong Kong People's Views on SCNPC Decision. June 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/SCNPC%20survey%20-E.doc>; and HKUPOP. 2004 Legislative Council Direct Election: 2nd Survey. July 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/LC04S2%20-%20E.pdf>.

⁵ See Hong Kong Transition Project. Half-way to Where? The Electoral Structures and public Opinion Contexts: 2004 Hong Kong Legislative Council Election. August 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/HalfwaytowhereE.pdf>.

6. The survey revealed that the two rallies and the increased communication between CPG and the democrats had very little negative impact on voters' intention to vote. This finding could be supported by the CE-HKTP survey results released on 4 August 2004, which stated that people were not worried about social unrest in Hong Kong nor were they worried about constitutional reform disputes causing chaos.⁶

C. How do people see destructive election-related behaviour?

1. 73% of the respondents indicated that they somewhat resisted or very much resisted verbal smearing of candidates, and 87% stated that they somewhat resisted or very much resisted the candidates' publicity materials being physically damaged. This implies that people value rational, constructive and mature election more.
2. However, in comparing the above responses, respondents objected more to candidates' publicity materials being damaged than verbal smearing. One possible reason for this difference in the level of acceptance is that the exchange of accusations especially between politicians often occurs (not only during election periods). People get used to it and it is intangible and very often hard to verify. Publicity materials being damaged, on the other hand, is tangible and illegal.
3. The survey clearly revealed that destructive election-related behaviour was not acceptable, to people across all age groups. Candidates/parties should avoid being dragged into these unfavourable actions.

D. How do people see party politics in Hong Kong?

1. Previous CE-POP surveys showed that respondents tended to identify with independent candidates more than party candidates. Similar to these surveys, 59% of the respondents this time stated that their interests had not been represented by political parties in Hong Kong.
2. However, 45% of the respondents thought that party politics would be more beneficial to the democratic development in Hong Kong. This indicates that people do see the benefits of having political parties developed in order to proceed with democratic development in Hong Kong. This also implies that there exists a fairly promising environment (in terms of support from Hong Kong people) for political parties to develop in Hong Kong.
3. Political parties/groups should take this into account when they chart out their development strategies in the future. The HKSAR Government should also consider providing a more suitable environment to help nurture the not yet mature political parties/groups in Hong Kong as the city is very concerned about its political development.

⁶ Ibid.