

Hong Kong People's Views on the 2004 Legislative Council Election

Civic Exchange's Analysis on Polling Results General and HK Island Surveys

8 July 2004

Civic Exchange and Public Opinion Programme (POP) at the University of Hong Kong released two sets of survey results today on the 2004 Legislative Council (LegCo) election. One survey, conducted on 24 May 2004, focused on **Hong Kong Island** residents. The other, conducted between 21-24 June 2004, looked at **all Hong Kong residents**.

Civic Exchange would like to highlight the following areas:

A. How many voters will likely turnout on 12 September?

1. Following on from Civic Exchange's first CE-POP survey released in May 2004,¹ a high percentage of voters continue to indicate (79%) they would definitely or most likely vote in the 2004 LegCo election. This high indication is also consistent with the CE-Wirthlin survey released on 26 June 2004.² The actual turnout rate, however, is likely to be much lower as it will depend on many factors over the campaign period.
2. The CE-Wirthlin survey and this survey indicate that around 15%-16% of the voters may have already decided upon whom they would voter for as their response to the question on their main reason for voting was to "elect the one I want" or "support certain candidate(s)".

B. Do people worry about whether the election will be "fair" and corruption free?

1. A high proportion of respondents stated that the 2004 LegCo election would be "fair" (65%) and "corruption free" (70%). Despite negative news of off-shore mobilisation for the election and fake voter registration, 62% of the respondents remained confident that the 2004 LegCo election would be corruption free and fair.
2. However, over 40% of the respondents aged 60 or above stated that they did not know or it was hard to say whether the election would be fair/corruption free. 38% of the respondents thought Beijing would intervene while 19% claimed they did not know or that it was hard to say.
3. The younger the respondents, the more likely they thought the election would be corruption free and fair. This is an indication that people, and younger respondents in particular, believe in the integrity of local institutions to protect free and fair elections. The HKSAR Government must do everything possible to demonstrate its commitment to free and fair elections.

¹ See HKU POP. *2004 Legislative Council Election: 1st Survey*. May 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/LC04S1%20-%20E.pdf> and Civic Exchange. *Survey on 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 See 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 Civic Exchange. *Survey on Hong Kong People's Views on SCNPC Decision: Civic Exchange's Analysis*. June 2004. <http://www.civic-exchange.org/publications/2004/SCNPC%20survey%20-E.doc>.

C. What are people saying are their priorities?

1. 79% of the respondents stated that economy-related policies proposed by the candidates were quite important or very important
2. 85% of the respondents considered livelihood policies proposed by candidates are quite important or very important.
3. 68% of the respondents aged between 18 and 29 said that political policies proposed by candidates are quite important or very important. Over half of the respondents aged between 30 and 49 from the same survey held this view.
4. The results of this and the CE-Wirthlin survey are consistent that people have expectations on economic, social and political issues and the younger respondents ranked political matters highly. Thus, candidates standing for election needs to understand that Hong Kong people have political aspirations.

D. What are the special characteristics of Hong Kong Island residents

(i) What is the likely turnout rate for Hong Kong Island?

1. 82% of HKI voters said they would or mostly likely would vote in September. 43% of this group of respondents were aged 18 - 39. 13% of HKI voters had not yet made up their mind whether to vote or not.
2. Candidates/parties running on the HKI need to find ways to ensure that the most likely group to turnout on 12 September do turnout and vote for them as well as to convince those who have not yet made up their minds whether to vote to turnout.

(ii) Will a common "list" strategy work?

1. The HKI survey showed that HKI residents would not vote for the 'camp' they support unless they also approved of the candidates on the 'list'. 57% of the respondents said that the identity of the candidates on the list was important to them, not just their party or "camp" affiliations. This indicates that in running on a list, the most popular candidate should be ranked first for the list to gain the highest advantage.
2. In the previous CE-POP survey (May 2004), the respondents indicated that they preferred independent candidates to party candidates. Our interpretation was that they looked at party candidates as individuals first and foremost and whether their individual qualities appealed to them. The current survey result is therefore consistent with the last survey.
3. Candidates from various political parties or groups who are considering running on a common list on HKI need to take this factor into account when making their decision. The response from candidates is understandable as Hong Kong as a whole has weak and not yet well-developed political parties.

(iii) Will people abide by voting advice form candidates?

Candidates from various political parties or groups running on separate lists but who are considering how to advise voters to allocate their votes under the PR voting system to get in candidates from the same "camp" need to take into account that there is voter resistance to following voting advice. 71% of the HKI respondents stated that they would not follow such instructions. Our assessment is that this response does not necessarily mean that voters will not follow advice but that they are independent-minded and will make up their own minds how best to vote. Thus, candidates/parties need to pitch their advice appropriately.