

Opinion Leaders' Panel 2007

Wave 8 Report

Research Study Conducted for
Government of Trinidad & Tobago



Fieldwork 23 – 27 August 2007

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and objectives

The Opinion Leaders' Panel was established as part of the programme for Modernising Government in Trinidad & Tobago. The purpose of this research is to provide evidence about the views of citizens of Trinidad & Tobago as a basis for informed decision making, policy formulation and implementation with respect to public service delivery.

This volume contains the report from Wave 8 of the Opinion Leaders' Panel. This survey was conducted by MORI with HHB & Associates on behalf of the Government of Trinidad & Tobago.

1.2. Methodology

For the first time the Opinion Leaders' Panel survey was conducted by telephone rather than face to face. The decision was taken to do this because of the high proportion of Panel members (newly recruited as part of Wave 7) who gave us their home or cell numbers: in total 83% of the full Panel members did so.

In total, 948 Panel members were successfully interviewed for Wave 8 out of a sample of 1,132 who were contacted or attempt was made for contact. The response rate was therefore 84%.

The methodological report for Wave 8 provides greater detail on the technical approach and recommendations for the future and has been provided under separate cover.

1.3. Weighting

The data have been weighted by age, ethnicity, gender and regional corporation to the 2000 census data. Weighting for work status of respondents was derived from an analysis of the most recent labour force survey data.

1.4. Area combinations

Reference is made in this report to different areas of the country, which have been classified as follows:

- i. **North** (Port of Spain and Diego Martin);
- ii. **South** (San Fernando, Point Fortin, Princes Town, Penal/Debe and Siparia);
- iii. **East** (Arima, San Juan/Laventille, Tunapuna/Piarco, Rio Claro/Mayaro and Sangre Grande);

- iv. **Central** (Chaguanas and Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo); and
- v. **Tobago**.

1.5. Presentation and interpretation of the data

This study is based on interviews conducted on a representative sample of the adult population of Trinidad & Tobago. All results are therefore subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant. In general, results based on the full sample are subject to a confidence interval of ± 3 percentage points. A guide to statistical reliability is appended. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple answers. Throughout the volume, an asterisk (*) denotes any value less than half a per cent but greater than zero.

In the report, reference is made to “net” figures. This represents the balance of opinion on attitudinal questions, and provides a particularly useful means of comparing the results for a number of variables. In the case of a “net satisfaction” figure, this represents the percentage satisfied on a particular issue or service less the percentage dissatisfied. For example, if a service records 40% satisfied and 25% dissatisfied, the “net satisfaction” figure is +15 points.

It is also worth emphasising that the survey deals with citizens’ *perceptions* at the time the survey was conducted **rather than with facts** and these may not accurately reflect the level of services actually being delivered.

1.6. Acknowledgements

MORI would like to thank Senator, Dr. the Honourable Lenny Saith, Minister; Ms Arlene McComie, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Public Administration and Information and their colleagues; Ms Gillian Macintyre, Ms Donna Ferraz, Ms Ingrid Ryan Ruben and Ms Coreen Joseph; the Central Statistical Office, Kim Bayley at Caribbean Market Research and Louis Bertrand and the team at HHB & Associates for their help in executing this project. In particular, we would like to thank all the 948 citizens of Trinidad & Tobago who gave up their time to take part in this survey and to tell us their views.

1.7. Publication of data

As the Government of Trinidad & Tobago has engaged MORI to undertake an objective programme of research, it is important to protect the interests of both organisations by ensuring that it is accurately reflected in any press release or publication of findings. As part of our standard Terms and Conditions of Contract, the publication of the findings of this research is therefore subject to advance approval of MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

2. Summary & Implications

Awareness of the Budget Speech

- There was high interest in the Budget Speech: more than nine in ten people watched it live or heard about it in some other way;

Overall Reactions to the Budget Speech

- By a ratio of four to three, the public believes the Budget Speech outlined what is right for the country;
- Almost half say the Budget proposals are “good for me personally”; more than half (57%) say the Budget proposals are good for the country;

Detailed Reactions to the Budget Speech

- Several of the specific proposals tested in the survey receive popular support, especially the increase in the minimum NIS pensions (75% say this is right amount), the construction of ECCE centres (73% say this is right amount) and the \$3,000 backpay for retired civil servants (63% say this is right amount). However, some proposals are seen not to go far enough, especially the increase in both the minimum wage (75% say this is not enough) and the disability grant (57% say this is not enough);
- The proposal to ban people using cell phones while driving is very popular; there is also strong support for an amnesty on filing income tax. More than half the public, however, is opposed to banning casinos or allowing an aluminium smelter to be built;

Impact of the Budget Proposals

- The Budget is seen to have had most impact on education and jobs; but failed to convince many people that it would contribute to fighting crime or tackling high prices;
- In terms of future proposals, banning cell phones in cars and tax filing amnesty are popular. Banning casinos and allowing aluminium smelter to be built are unpopular;

Media Reporting

- Focus group participants believe that the media reporting of the Budget was generally negative. Many say they do not trust the media, but this varies greatly on the type of media and specific format;

Advertising the Budget Proposals

- A quarter of the public recalls seeing a newspaper advertisement post Budget explaining the Government's budget proposals. Generally, this was seen to be clear and easy to understand, but participants believe it could be improved in many ways, in particular by making it non-political, avoiding impressions of exaggeration and by signposting to further information on how promises will be delivered;

Gas Reserves

- By a ratio of four to three, the public believes that the country's gas reserves will be mostly used up in 10 years time;

Unemployment Statistics

- The public is split on whether they think the unemployment rate has fallen from 12% in 2002 to 5% in 2006. Telling people that the source of this information is "Official" rather than "Government" does not make a difference to their views;

Vision 2020

- Awareness of and confidence in Vision 2020 has not changed post Budget compared with views measured in May-July this year, despite the Budget being well "branded" with Vision 2020.

Recommendations

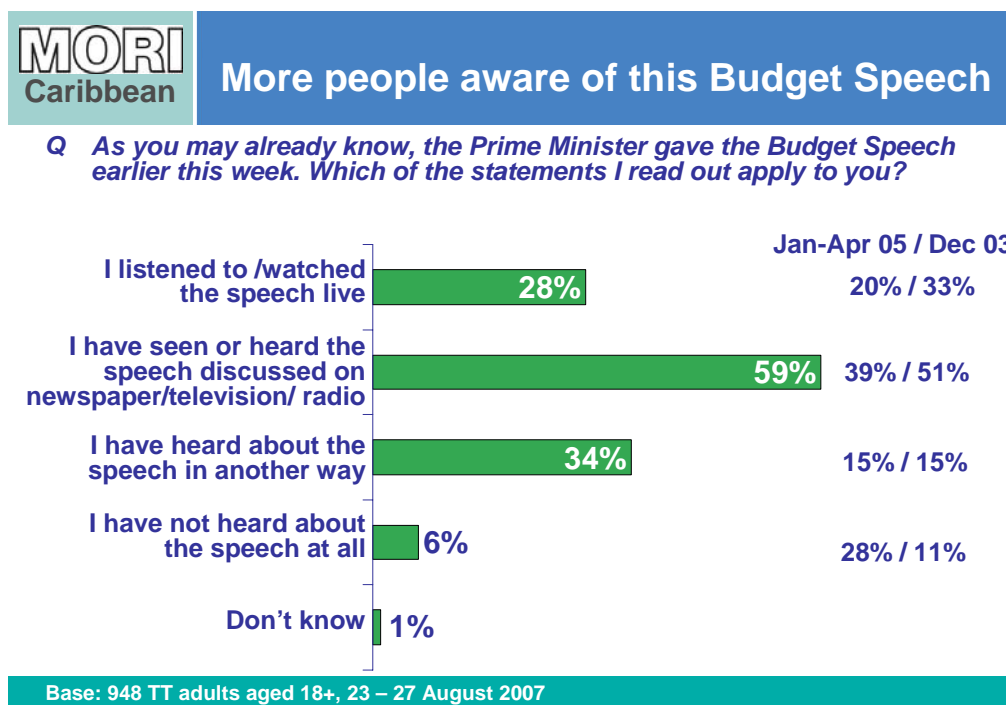
- More emphasis should be placed on explaining to the public how the Budget proposals are aimed at tackling their two major concerns about crime and prices;
- Government-branded advertising should be used in future communications to explain Budget proposals;
- As far as possible, specific proposals should be grouped around themes that resonate with different groups, for example "for families", "for business", "for older people" etc;
- When explaining Budget proposals, avoid mixing new proposals with longer term commitments or changes;
- For major projects, direct people to further information on the details of the implementation schedules and plans; and
- Highlight the four or five key priorities for 2008, linked to Vision 2020, with information on when and how they will be achieved.

3. Awareness of the Budget Speech

3.1 High awareness of the Budget Speech

Nearly all adults in Trinidad & Tobago (93%) have heard about the Budget Speech in some way. This includes approximately three in ten (28%) who listened or watched the Speech live and twice this proportion (59%) who have seen or heard about the speech in the media. Awareness of the Speech is consistently high across all demographic sub groups of the public.

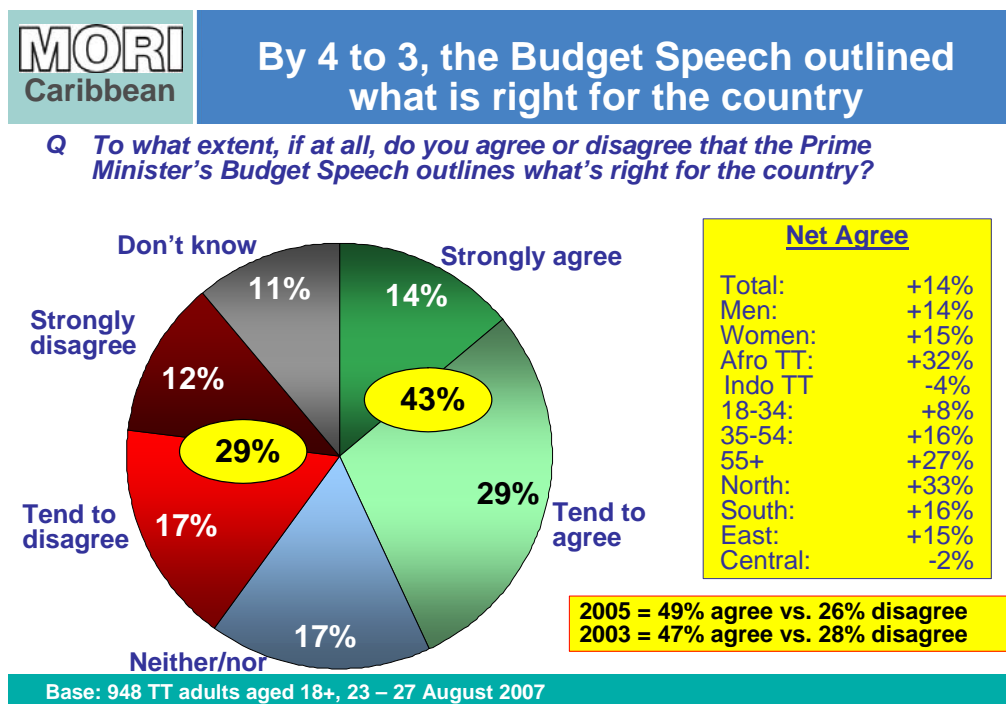
Public awareness of the 2007 Budget Speech is higher than awareness of the 2003 and 2005 Speeches.



4. Overall Reactions to the Budget Speech

4.1 Right or wrong for the country?

More people agree (43%) than disagree (29%) that Budget Speech outlines what is right for the country. Support is highest among Afro-Trinidadians (53%) and people living in the North (51%) and lowest among 18-34 year olds (38%), Indo-Trinidadians (34%) and people living in Central (36%).



Focus group participants' views were mixed overall. Positive reactions were as follows:

- Many participants felt the Budget was an attempt to address the needs of the poor;
- Specific groups, such as CEPEP workers, pensioners and those paying taxes and NIS increases, tax breaks and stamp duty; were seen to have done well;
- Ban on cell phones (but participants felt it would be inappropriate to divert police resources away from other areas in order to enforce this);
- Extension of CDAP (but some participants were concerned about the perceived quality of CDAP medication);

- More emphasis on agriculture; and
- Greater focus on education and de-shifting of schools.

Participants also expressed a number of concerns about the Budget proposals:

- Is the extra money spent on education, for example, going to result in noticeable improvements? There is a need to convince the public that past and current public spending have brought about improvements in social well-being;
- Minimum wage increase is too small;
- Further effort to diversify the economy is required;
- Increased investment in health, tourism and agriculture;
- Not enough money is being saved;
- Many proposals were not new, but had been announced/promised before;
- Not enough transparency in the manner in which money is spent; and
- Not enough on tackling prices or on tackling crime.

The following comments from participants are typical:

A lot of money was placed in education for the past couple years and we're still not getting anywhere in terms of both teacher and student development. (South)

It was an accumulation of things that he promised before and he just put it in the budget. (Central)

What he did is address the poor man, so he could feel a little comfortable and satisfied. (Central)

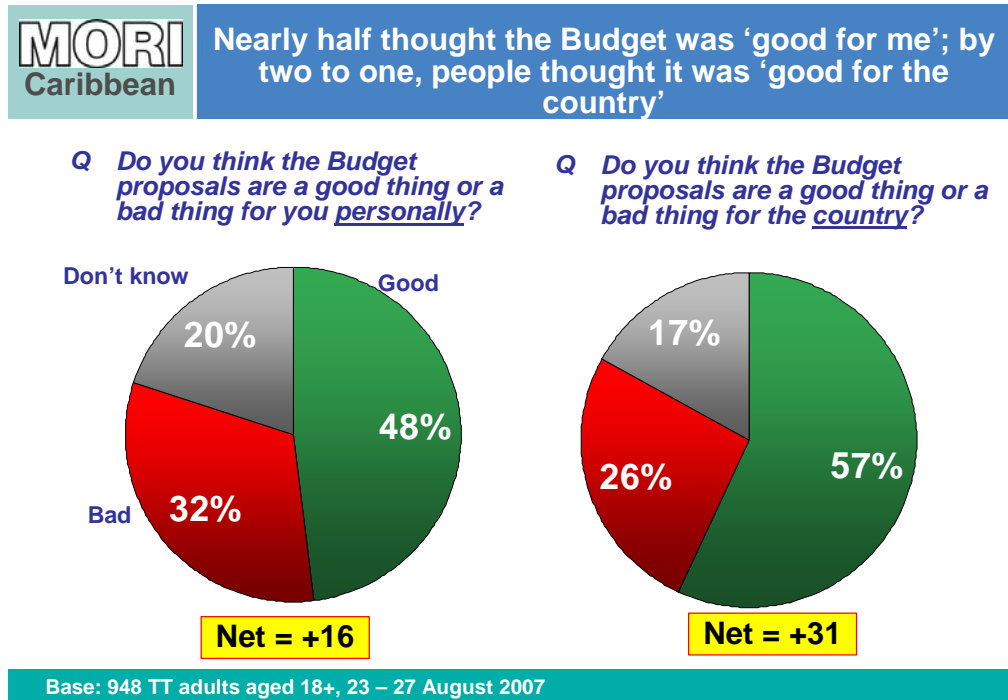
Most of the terms they use in the budget, we don't understand, so we just wait until they break it down. (South)

A lot of small districts need health centres, no mention was made on that.”. (North)

4.2 Impact of the Budget personally and for the country

Half the public (48%) believes that the Budget proposals are good thing “for me personally”. Around a third of the public (32%) believes the proposals are bad for them personally.

Belief that the Budget proposals are a good thing for the country is even stronger with twice as many saying they are a good thing (57%) than a bad thing (26%).



Sub-groups' views of whether the Budget proposals are good “for me personally” are similar to views overall about the Budget and about whether the proposals are “good for the country”. In terms of the former, there are no differences by gender, but significant differences by other demographics in terms of the proportion saying “good”:

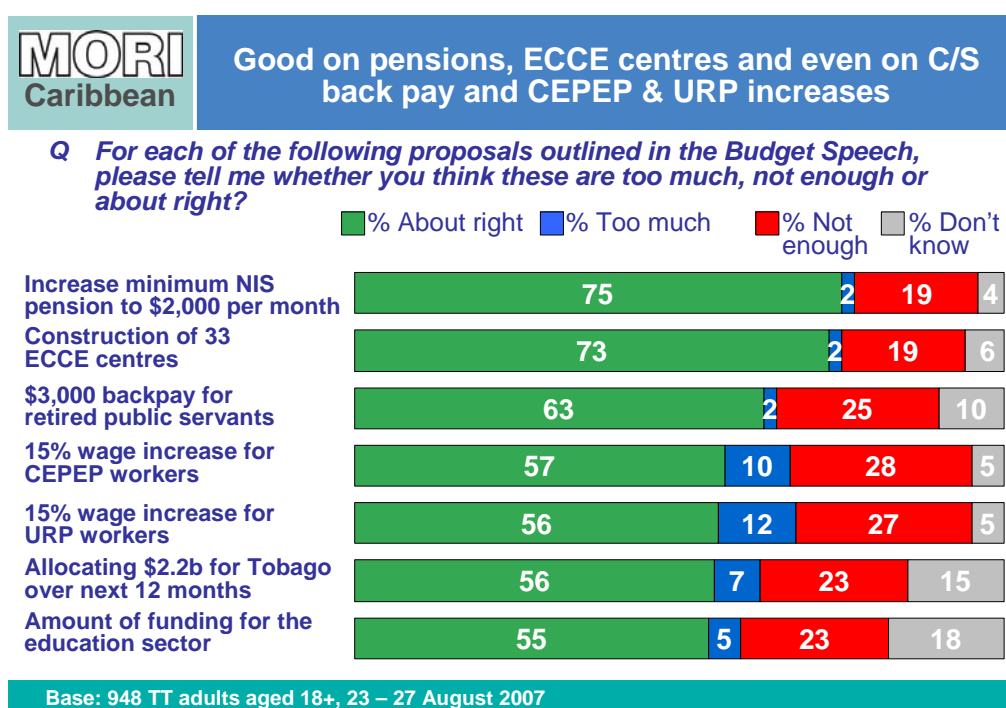
- **Age:** 18-24 (50%), 25-34 (46%), 35-54 (44%), 55-64 (55%), 65+ (62%);
- **Ethnicity:** Afro-TT (58%), Indo-TT (38%), Other/Mixed (52%); and
- **Region:** North (67%), South (49%), East (42%), Central (44%).

5. Detailed Reactions

5.1 Financial Proposals

The survey asked respondents for their reactions to twelve specific proposals contained within the Budget. For each one, the public was asked whether they thought the proposals were about right, too much or not enough.

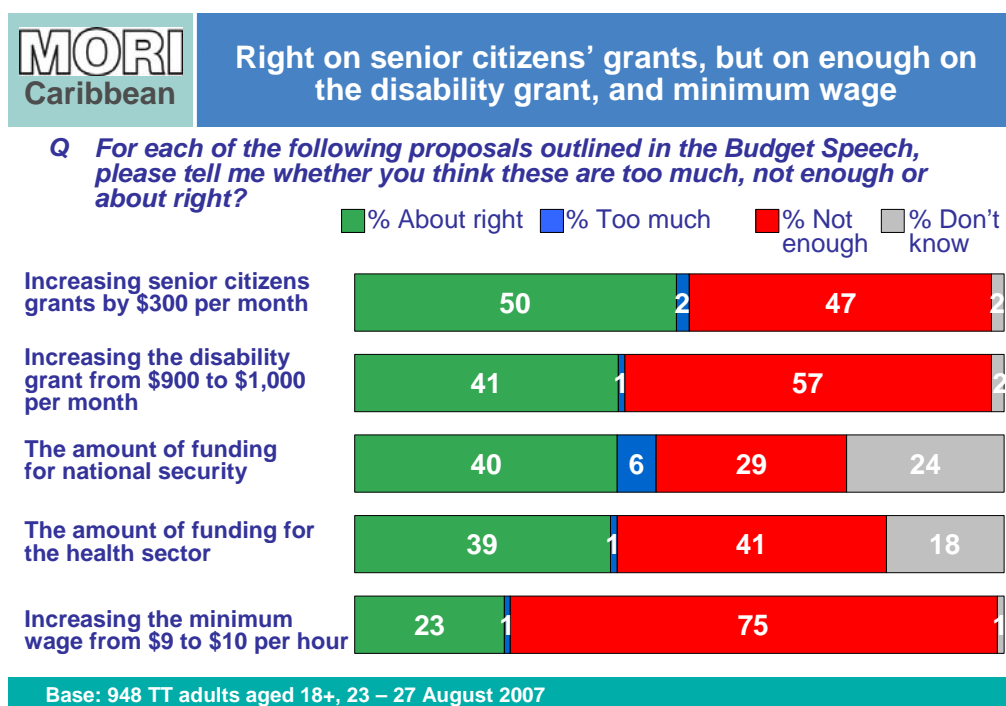
For eight of the twelve proposals more than half the public believes the Budget **proposals are about right**. This includes three quarters who say this about the increase in the minimum NIS pension to \$2,000 per month (75% say this is about right) and the construction of 33 ECCE centres (73%).



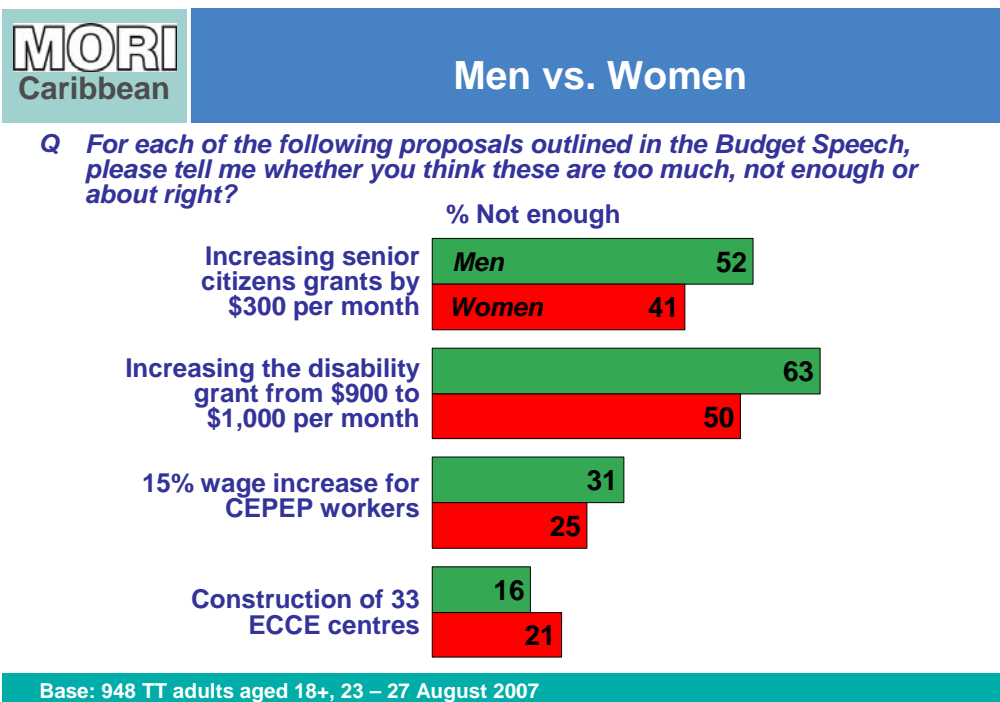
For none of the twelve proposals do many people believe the Budget **gave too much away**. The proposals with the highest levels of the public saying too much are the 15% wage increases for CEPEP workers (10% say this was too much) and the 15% wage increase for URP workers (12% say this was too much). However, for both these proposals many more people say that the proposals didn't do enough (28% and 27% respectively) and twice as many again say the proposals were about right (57% and 56% respectively).

For three of the proposals, a large proportion of the public thinks that the Budget **did not do enough**. These are increasing senior citizens grants by \$300 per month (47% say didn't do enough, though half say it was about right), increasing the disability grant from \$900 to \$1,000 per month (57% say didn't do enough) and increasing the minimum wage from \$9 to \$10 per hour (75% say didn't do enough).

The public is unsure about whether the Budget proposals provided enough funding or not for national security and for the health sector as views on these two proposals are more divided.



For three of the twelve proposals more men than women believe that not enough was done in the Budget. These are increasing the senior citizens grant (men are 11 points higher than women in saying not enough), increasing the disability grant (men 13 points higher) and 15% wage increase for CEPEP workers (men 6 points higher). Only with the construction of 33 ECCE centres is the reverse true (women 5 points higher than men in saying not enough).



The key differences in responses by age are that under 55s, compared with over 55s, are more likely to say the following proposals were not enough: the amount of funding for the education sector, the health sector and for national security, and the increase in the disability grant. In contrast, under 35s are less likely than older age groups to think that the increase in senior citizens grants was not enough.

The main differences in responses by ethnicity are that Indo Trinidadians are less likely to think the Budget proposals are about right on the 15% wage increase for CEPEP workers, increasing the senior citizens grants and construction of 33 ECCE centres.

5.2 Other Proposals

There is very strong support for banning people using their cell phone while driving (90% say it is the right thing to do). This is consistently high across different sub groups of the public.

There is also a high level of support for providing an amnesty for people who have not filed their income tax (69%). Support for this is highest among men (72%), 35-54 year olds (72%), Afro-Trinidadians (72%) and people living in South (75%).

The majority of the public thinks it is wrong to ban casinos (56%), particularly men (63%), or to allow an aluminium smelter to be built (61%), particularly Indo-Trinidadians (73%) and those living in Central (71%).



Right or wrong on some proposals

Q Do you think it is the right thing or the wrong thing to do each of the following?

■ % Right ■ % Wrong ■ % Don't know

Ban people using their cell phone while driving



Provide an amnesty for people who have not filed their income tax



Ban casinos



Allow an aluminium smelter to be built



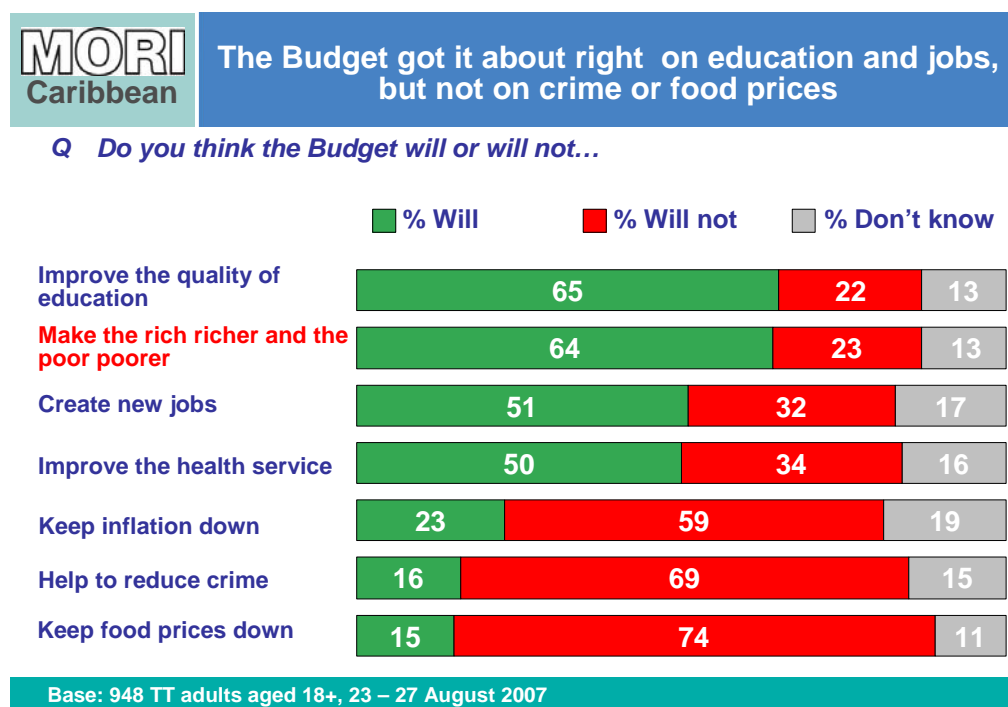
Base: 948 TT adults aged 18+, 23 – 27 August 2007

6. Impact of the Proposals

The survey tested whether the public thinks the Budget proposals will make a difference to several aspects of public services and quality of life.

Encouragingly, more than half the public thinks the proposals will improve the quality of education (65%), create new jobs (51%) and improve the health service (50%).

However, two thirds (64%) say that the Budget will “make the rich richer and the poor poorer” and the majority of the public thinks the proposal will not keep inflation down (59%), help to reduce crime (69%) or keep food prices down (74%).



Men and women have much the same views about the impact of the Budget proposals on these issues with the exception that slightly more women think the Budget will improve the health service (53% to 47%).

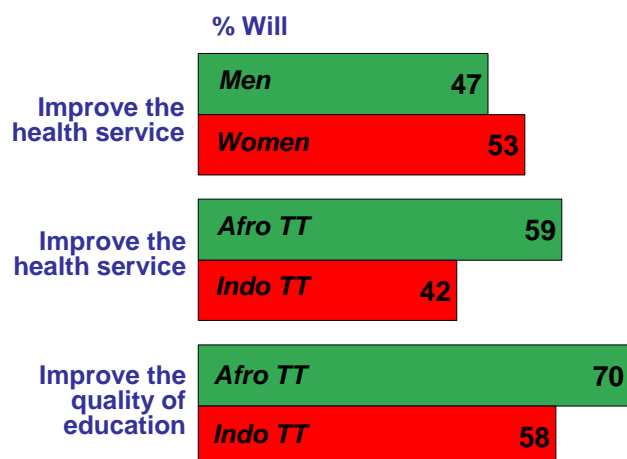
On two of the seven proposals more Afro- than Indo-Trinidadians think the Budget will have an impact: improving the health service (17 points higher) and improving the quality of education (12 points higher).

By region, people in the North tend to be more positive about the impact of the proposals than those living elsewhere in the country.



Sub group analysis

Q Do you think the Budget will or will not...



Base: 948 TT adults aged 18+, 23 – 27 August 2007

7. Media Reporting

Focus group participants were asked for their views on how they feel the Budget has been reported in the media. The key findings are as follows:

- Participants generally believe the media were negative about the Budget. No media is particularly seen as trusted; but some give more balanced views than others;
- **News broadcasts:** generally distrusted, but participants approve of the whole Budget being on Parliament Channel as you “can hear it from the horse’s mouth” and “you can make your own mind up”. Also because they “show” the Budget, participants felt it was difficult for the media to distort what was said;
- Participants in the South focus group were suspicious of CNMG’s reporting as it is seen as the Government’s channel. CNC 3 and Gayelle were cited in at least two groups as being more trusted to be fair and balanced;
- **Phone-ins:** seen as biased by most and easy to manipulate who calls in;
- **Panel discussions on TV:** the level of trust in these depends mostly on who the panel members are. For instance some participants believed that Morgan Job was not being a suitable moderator (“doesn’t give anyone a chance to speak”). For others Andy Johnson was seen as better;
- Participants liked the idea of panel discussions as a way of being informed about the Budget and felt that these should be balanced with people speaking for and against; and
- **Editorials in newspapers:** most participants said they didn’t read them. Those who did read them said they felt the editorials were mostly biased. Among papers generally Express most trusted – mainly because it is seen to have the best reporting.

Participants in each of the groups were asked which media person best represented their views on the Budget. Most participants couldn’t name anyone. In the Central group, the most popular was Diana Mahibir-Wyatt (TV6) as she was seen to take a neutral position. In the North group participants mentioned Gary Griffith.

Some participants in the South and North groups felt Kamla Persad-Bissessar gave a good response on the Budget (seen as balanced as well as critical of the government); similarly others said that Winston Dookeran also appeared to be “fair and balanced”.

8. Advertising the Budget Proposals

One in four people (24%) recalls seeing a newspaper advertisement on the Wednesday following the Budget Speech that listed the Government's Budget proposals. Although the question asked specifically about Wednesday it is likely that this recall includes other days people may have remembered seeing the advertisement as well.

Half of those who saw the ad recalls seeing it in the Express (53%), two in five in the Newsday (42%) and one in five in the Guardian (19%).

Few of those who saw the ad say they read all of it (just 13% did, which equates to c.3% of the public generally). The vast majority (71%) say they read some of it (c.17% of the public) and 16% say they did not read any of it (c.4% of the public).

Three in five people who read the ad say that it was helpful in explaining the Budget proposals. This is substantially more than the proportion who say it was unhelpful (9%). It can also be calculated that the ad was reported by respondents to have had no impact directly on 82% of the public either because they did not see the ad or because after reading at least some of it they say it did not make any difference. We know from direct experience as well as many advertising exposure research studies that many people report advertising having had no impact on them, when it has as proven by their changes in their behaviour, so these findings should take this into account.

Focus group participants were shown a copy of the ad. Several provided positive feedback on it. Generally, it was seen to be clear and easy to understand (although some felt there was too much text), but there were many suggestions on how the ad could be improved:

- Most importantly, participants felt it should not have been a political ad since its purpose was to demonstrate what the Government had achieved and the fulfilment of its promises;
- Rather than having a photo of the Prime Minister/PNM logo it should have shown photos of public service improvements;
- Government achievements should be separated from pledges for the future;
- Pledges should be grouped under headings rather than a long list; and
- The strap-line "out of love for our country and you" should be deleted.

While most participants said they understood how percentages worked many were sceptical about them, commenting that they felt they were used to exaggerate increases. More generally, many participants were critical of certain claims in the ad that were perceived to be misleading or exaggerated. These include:

- Showing the increase in the minimum wage from 2002, rather than from 2006;
- The stated rise in old age pension;
- Stating that departure tax was removed, but not saying that the cost would be added to the price of tickets; and
- Including several “old” promises from previous Budgets (one example given was on mortgage information).

The effectiveness of the ad was also limited in that people were not confident that the pledges could be achieved and there was also a strong demand for providing more information on how the proposals would be implemented. This would not necessarily have to be on the ad itself, but there should be signposts for further information.

The following are some typical comments from focus group participants in reference to the ad:

Everything is put across clearly. Anybody could understand it. (South)

They could have added pictures of actual things that they've done. (Central)

He made it seem like he jumped from \$800 to \$1600 [for the senior citizens' grant], but that was over a long period of time. (Central)

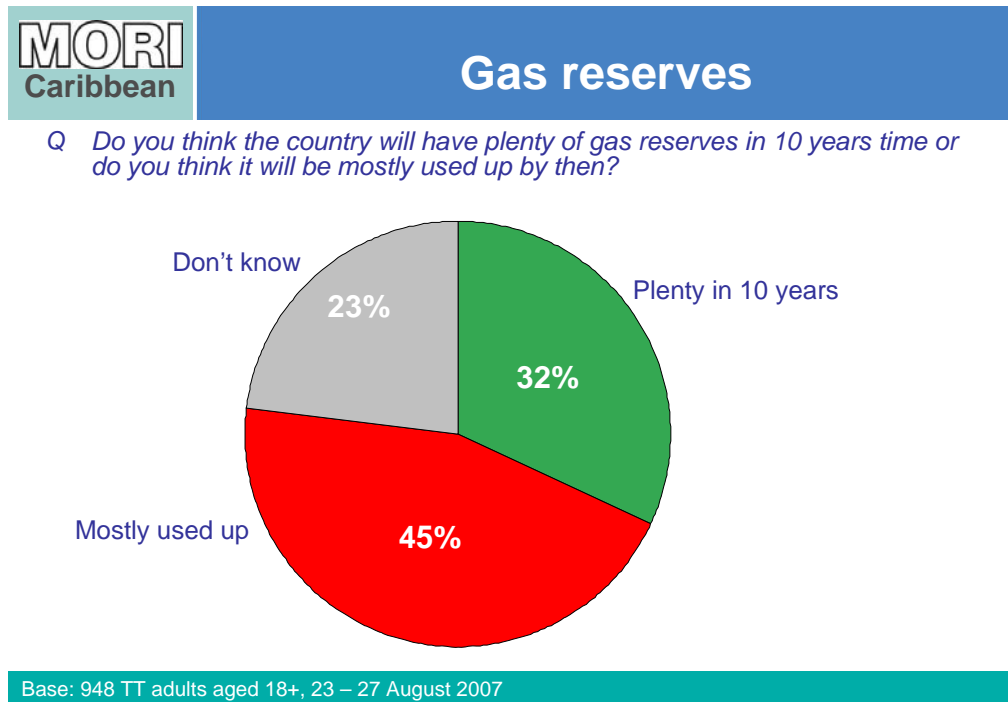
Some of the things that they have in it is some things they have been repeating over the years. For example, the Police Training College, that has been repairing for the last 3 or 4 years and they have not completed it. (E/W Corridor)

If they say, well this is how much we have paid and this is what we are going to pay in a graph, it will look good. (E/W Corridor)

When I see you are talking about everybody in this country and you putting the PNM' (symbol), I have a problem with that. The Government is doing this for us, not the PNM. (E/W Corridor)

9. Gas Reserves

Three in ten (32%) people say that they believe that the country will have plenty of gas reserves in ten years time. A higher proportion, however, believes that gas will be mostly used up by then (45%). Indo-Trinidadians (56%) and under 35s (51%) are most likely to believe reserves will be mostly used up.

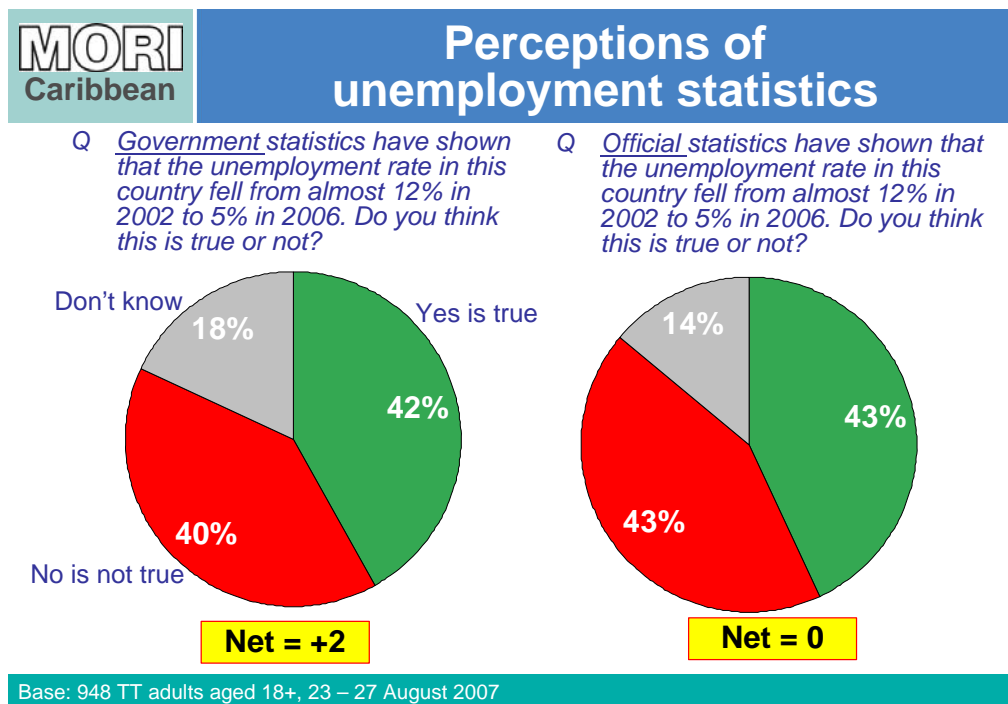


10. Unemployment Statistics

The public is split on whether it believes that the unemployment rate has fallen from almost 12% in 2002 to 5% by 2006. As many people believe this to be the case (42%), as believe it not to be true (40%).

To test whether the impact of telling respondents that the statistics are “Government” or “Official” makes a difference to views, this question was split-sampled with half of respondents being told that “Government statistics have shown...” and half being told that “Official statistics have shown...”. MORI’s research in the UK has revealed that the British public is more likely to accept Official rather than Government statistics.

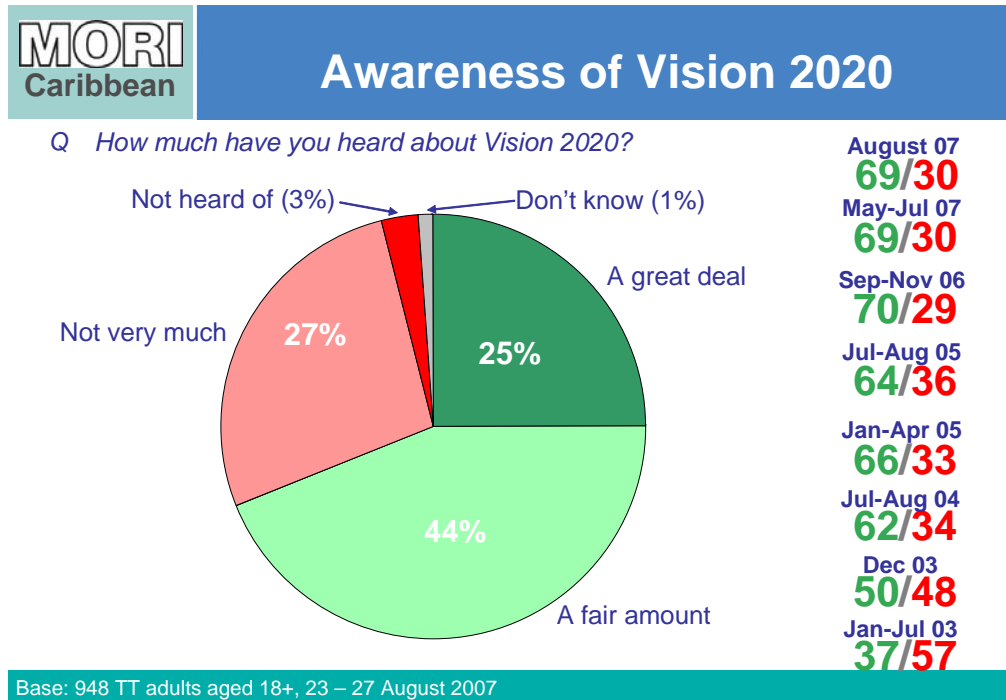
In Trinidad & Tobago there is no statistical difference in accepting the fall in unemployment rates when this is disclosed to respondents by an Official or from a Government source.



11. Vision 2020

11.1 Awareness of Vision 2020

Awareness of Vision 2020 is the same post-Budget as was the case pre-Budget in May to July 2007 (69% say they have heard “a great deal” or “a fair amount”).



11.2 Confidence in Vision 2020

Confidence that Vision 2020 will be achieved has not changed, statistically, since the Budget proposals. Just over half the public thinks it is likely to be achieved (53% - up 3 points since May to July 2007) and just over two in five think it is unlikely (42% up 3 points since May to July 2007).

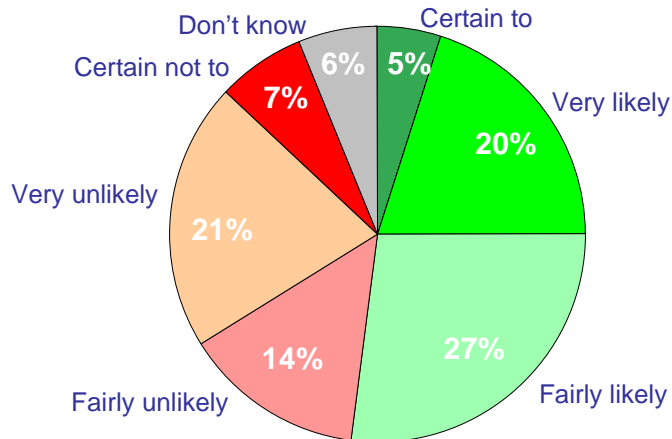
The only significant change between Wave 7 and Wave 8 is that fewer people in the latter say they “don’t know” whether the country will become developed by the year 2020 (down by 5 points).

The main desire expressed by focus group participants when discussing Vision 2020 was for information from the Government about how Vision 2020 will improve people’s quality of life in the short-term (over the next two to three years), and for the Government to set out more clearly what it sees as its key priorities for 2008.

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Confidence in Vision 2020

Q Vision 2020 is the Government's commitment to make Trinidad and Tobago a fully developed nation by 2020. How likely is it that this will be achieved?



August 07

53/42

May-Jul 07

50/39

Sep-Nov 06

52/43

Jul-Aug 05

54/41

Jan-Apr 05

49/46

Jul-Aug 04

58/35

Dec 03

59/33

Jan-Jul 03

63/30

Base: 948 TT adults aged 18+, 23 – 27 August 2007

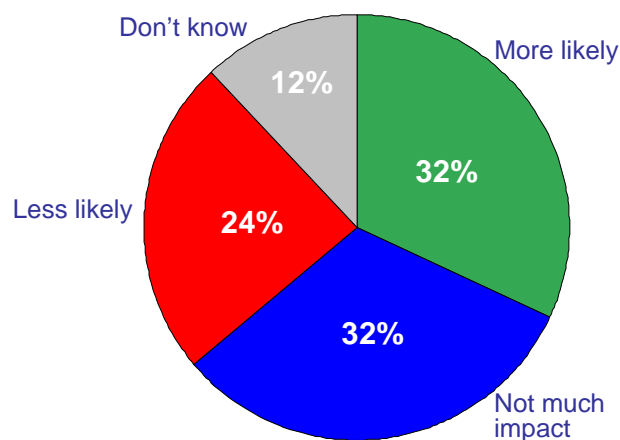
Given that there has been no change in views about Vision 2020 between Waves 7 and 8 of the Panel, it is to be expected that views on whether the Budget proposals make it more or less likely that the Vision will be achieved, are split.

The same proportion of the public says that the Budget proposals will make it more likely for Vision 2020 to be achieved as say the proposals will not have much impact (32%). A quarter of the public (24%) says the proposals will make it less likely to be achieved.

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Impact of Budget proposals on Vision 2020

Q Do you think the Budget proposals will make it more likely that Vision 2020 can be achieved or less likely, or will they not have much impact?



Base: 948 TT adults aged 18+, 23 – 27 August 2007

Appendices

I. Guide to Statistical Reliability

The sample tolerances that apply to the percentage results in this report are given in the table below. This table shows the possible variation that might be anticipated because a sample, rather than the entire population, was interviewed. As indicated, sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample and the size of the percentage results. Strictly speaking, these sampling tolerances apply to only random probability sample, and thus these should be treated as broadly indicative.

Table 13: Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
Size of sample on which Survey result is based			
100 interviews	6	9	10
200 interviews	4	6	7
300 interviews	3	5	6
400 interviews	3	5	5
500 interviews	3	4	4
600 interviews	2	4	4
948 interviews	2	3	3
1,000 interviews	2	3	3

Source: MORI Caribbean

For example, on a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 948 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary by more than 3 percentage points, plus or minus, from a complete coverage of the entire population using the same procedures.

Tolerances are also involved in the comparison of results from different parts of the sample, or when comparing results different groups of residents. A difference, in other words, must be of at least a certain size to be considered statistically significant. The following table is a guide to the sampling tolerances applicable to comparisons.

Table 14: Differences required for significance at or near these percentages

	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
Size of sample on which Survey result is based			
100 and 100	8	13	14
100 and 200	7	11	12
100 and 300	7	10	11
100 and 400	7	10	11
100 and 500	7	10	11
200 and 200	7	10	11
200 and 300	5	8	9
394 and 554 (Men v. Women)	4	5	6
338 and 396 (Afro-Trinidadians vs. Indo-Trinidadians)	4	7	7
2,540 and 948 (Wave 7 and Wave 8)	2	3	4

Source: MORI Caribbean

The table above also shows that when comparing results from the Wave 8 survey with the Wave 7 survey, differences need to be around $\pm 4\%$ at the 50% level to be significant.

II. Guide to Social Classification

The table below contains a brief list of social class definitions as used by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising. These groups are standard on all surveys carried out by Market & Opinion Research International (MORI) Limited.

Table 15: Social Grades

	Social Class	Occupation of Chief Income Earner
A	Upper Middle Class	Higher managerial, administrative or professional
B	Middle Class	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1	Lower Middle Class	Supervisor or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2	Skilled Working Class	Skilled manual workers
D	Working Class	Semi and unskilled manual workers
E	Those at the lowest levels of subsistence	State pensioners, etc, with no other earnings

III. Topline Results
