

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs
Meeting on 19 February 2001

Major Findings from the Opinion Survey on
Voting Behaviour in the 2000 Legislative Council Elections

Purpose

This paper provides the main findings of an opinion survey conducted by the Home Affairs Bureau on voting behaviour in the 2000 Legislative Council Elections for Members' information.

Introduction

2. It has been the practice of the Government to conduct surveys immediately after Legislative Council elections and District Councils elections to collect public opinion on voting behaviour. Examples of such surveys conducted in recent years include the Survey on 1998 Legislative Council Elections and the Survey on 1999 District Councils Elections.

3. The survey on the 2000 Legislative Council Elections (hereafter referred to as "the Survey") was conducted by the Home Affairs Bureau. This Survey, with a sample size of 3,026 respondents, was conducted for the purpose of understanding people's voting behaviour in the 2000 Legislative Council Elections.

4. Two copies of the Survey report have been sent to the Legislative Council Secretariat for information.

Objectives of the Survey

5. The main objectives of the Survey were:

- (a) to gauge public awareness of the 2000 Legislative Council Elections;

- (b) to identify the reasons for not registering as a voter and the reasons for voting or not voting; and
- (c) to gauge public views on the locations and opening hours of polling stations, the polling procedures and other proposed arrangements.

Survey Operation

6. The Survey was carried out during the period 14-27 September 2000, a few days after the Legislative Council Elections (10 September) when respondents' memory of their voting behaviour was still fresh.

7. The random sampling method was used with households to be interviewed randomly selected from the updated Hong Kong residential telephone directories. One respondent from each of these sampled households was randomly selected for interview over the telephone. Respondents comprised those aged 18 or above and are holders of Hong Kong Permanent ID card. A total of 4 720 telephone calls were made. Of these, 380 were invalid cases such as no target respondent in the selected household, fax lines and long tone. Of the remaining 4 340 cases, 3 026 eligible respondents were successfully interviewed, representing a response rate of 70%.

Major Findings of the Survey

Awareness

8. People's awareness of the Legislative Council Elections was high at 86%, and is about the same as that of the 1998 Legislative Council Elections (89%).

Sources of Awareness

9. Television was considered to be the most effective medium in drawing 86% of public attention towards the elections. This was followed by candidates' campaign activities (65%).

Reasons for not registering as a geographical constituency (GC) voter

10. “Not interested in elections” (22%) was the main reason given for not registering as a GC voter. This percentage is about the same as that in the 1998 elections (23%).

Incidence of voting

11. Among those who claimed they had registered as a GC voter, 73% claimed that they had voted in the 2000 Legislative Council Elections. This percentage is lower than that in the 1998 elections (81%).

Reasons for voting

12. “To fulfill the civic responsibility as a Hong Kong resident” was the reason most cited (68% of the respondent voters), followed by “to support the candidate/party they liked” (27%).

Reasons for not voting

13. 27% of those who claimed to be registered GC voters said that they had not voted. Among them 34% cited “no satisfactory candidate” as the main reason for not voting. This percentage is substantially higher than that in 1998 (8%).

14. “Lack of time” was the second most cited reason for not voting (26%).

15. Other reasons for not voting included “not in Hong Kong on the polling day” (11%), “lack of knowledge about the Legislative Council or candidates” (6%) and “not interested in elections” (5%).

Electioneering on the election day

16. Among those who claimed they had voted in the Elections, 68% did not find the candidates’ electioneering on the election day useful in helping them to decide on their votes.

Location of the polling stations

17. 89% of the respondent voters considered the polling stations were conveniently located.

Evaluation of polling procedures

18. 87% of the respondent voters considered the polling procedures were simple.

Cast votes with a chop

19. 90% of the respondent voters considered it convenient to cast votes with a chop.

Setting a pre-election day

20. More than half (59%) of the respondents supported the proposition of setting a pre-election day so that persons who were unavailable to vote on the polling day could vote on an earlier date.

Closing the polling stations earlier

21. About one-third (31%) of the respondents were supportive of closing the polling stations earlier in the next Legislative Council Elections if the polling day was Sunday, while 45% of the respondents were not supportive of the idea.

Candidates to launch promotional activities on television or radio channels

22. Over half (53%) of the respondents opposed the proposition of allowing candidates to launch promotional activities on television or radio channel.

23. For more details of the abovementioned findings, please see pages 9-75 of the full Report.

Future Action

24. The Home Affairs Bureau intends to conduct similar surveys on voting behaviour immediately after future elections so that a historical trend can be established. Information so obtained could also assist in the improvement of publicity for and the conduct of future elections.

Home Affairs Bureau
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