

May 2012 Political Opinion Poll Report

January 15th 2013 will be five years since the last general election was held and the next one is therefore due in a matter of months. This timeline has created considerable public interest in the state of political opinion in Barbados and as such CADRES has been commissioned to conduct a survey of public political opinion. Unlike previous CADRES polls, this one was commissioned by a private sector group with an interest in the state of political opinion nationally and the information has been made exclusively available to the NATION for publication over the next two weeks. The questions which form the basis of this survey were a mixture of the standard political questions as well as questions which were designed by CADRES based on areas of general interest.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this survey is consistent with that which CADRES always adheres to when conducting national political polls. Our interview team was deployed to conduct 1080 face to face interviews in 30 constituencies across Barbados. The survey was designed by Peter W. Wickham who is a Director of CADRES and was managed by Kristen Hinds, one of the organisation's Research Consultants. The CADRES methodology is well-known to the NATION's readers and this survey was consistent and also can be expected to fall within a +/- 5% margin of error notwithstanding our design bias which focuses on the most marginal Polling Divisions (PDs).

CADRES uses the term "*Uncertain voter*" which is a term coined by CADRES to refer to those persons who responded, "*Don't know*", "*Won't say*", "*None*" or "*Not Voting*" to the major political question. CADRES appreciates the fact that not all persons so identified are uncertain, but this is a convenient way to refer to the cumulative group and it helps us to distinguish between committed and uncommitted support. At several points the analysis will be conducted according to political support and this compares the respondents who identified with the two major political parties as well as those who were "*Uncertain*".

CONSIDERATIONS

In the interest of transparency, CADRES notes that this survey was initially planned for the weekend of the 4th – 7th May, but was postponed due to bad weather. These data were therefore (all) collected on the last weekend (11th – 14th May) which was also rain affected to some extent. The preference for this time had no political significance and there were no major events that occurred while the pollsters were in the field that would have impacted on the outcome of the survey or created bias.

SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION

In an effort to determine the way in which government is perceived CADRES used several measurement tools and the first of these is presented in Table 01, which speaks to satisfaction with Government and Opposition. Respondents were asked to rate the performance of both government and opposition on a scale ranging from "1" to "10" with "1" relating to the lowest or worst performance and "10" relating to the highest or best performance. Respondents were asked to assess how both parties performed overall, as well as in particular sectors and the information is presented in a way that allows for comparison with previous CADRES polls conducted during the time of this administration.

It can be seen that there has been a noticeable drop in the overall performance of the DLP from the "6" range in 2009 and 2010, to a 5.1 presently which is essentially now only a passing grade. The BLP has also fallen-off during this period; however its scores were always in this present range. The sector scores are also reflective of decline within sectors in most instances. On this occasion CADRES included the Cost of Living which was perhaps the DLP's worst performance of 3.3, while the best performance was in Education which also fell from 7.2 in 2010. Failing grades were also awarded in the areas of the Economy, Employment, the QEH and Health.

Table 01: Satisfaction with Government and Opposition													
	DLP (Overall)	BLP (Overall)	Government's Performance										
			Cost of Living	Housing & Lands	Education	QEH & Health	Social Sector	Transport	Road Works	The Economy	Employment	Tourism	Crime
May 2012	5.1	5.1	3.3	6.0	6.7	4.8		5.7		3.9	4.0	5.6	5.1
September 2010	6.2	5.4		6.7	7.2	4.8		6.4		4.6	4.5	6.4	
July 2009	6.4	5.5		6.3	6.6	5.1	5.4	6.0	5.4	5.0	4.5	6.0	

The opinion on our general political direction was also tested and the appended chart generated which demonstrates that a majority of Barbadians believe that we are presently on the WRONG TRACK or heading in the WRONG DIRECTION, in addition to being WORSE OFF now than we were four years ago. The future expectations were also tested and respondents generally expected that they would be BETTER OFF in the next five years. This response was coloured by heavily by political support with the majority of persons indicating that they were WORSE OFF and that we were on the WRONG TRACK being BLP supporters. It is also noteworthy; however that the majority of Uncertain voters indicated that they too were WORSE OFF, believed us to be on the WRONG COURSE and expected to be WORSE OFF in the next five years at this current rate.

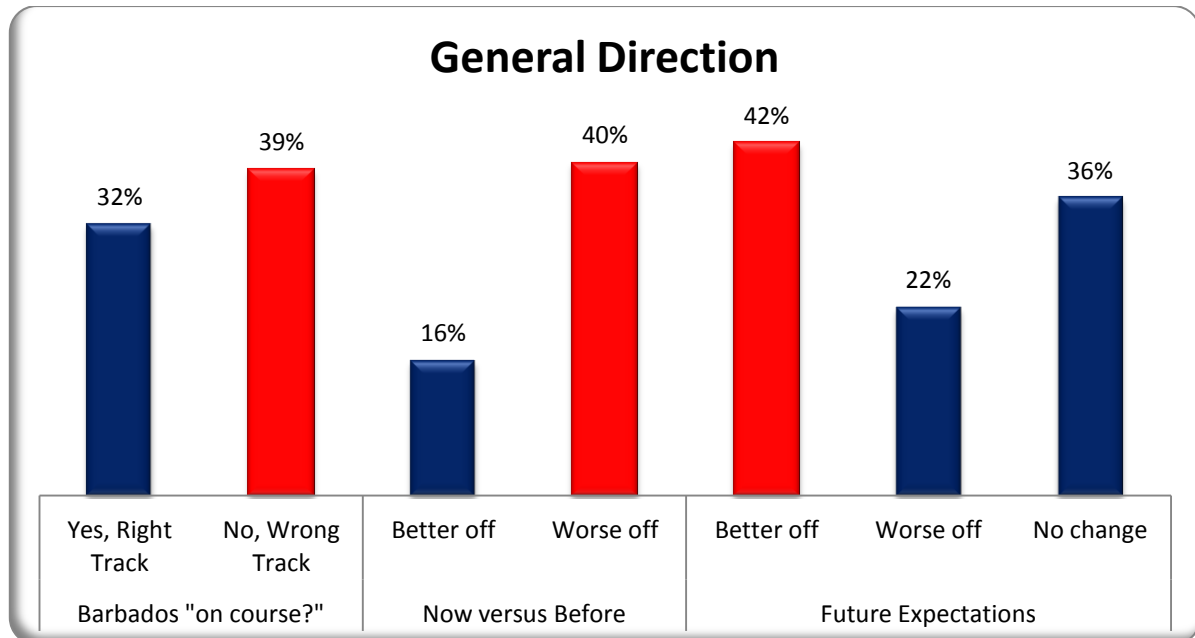


Figure 1: General Direction

POLITICAL CULTURE

On this occasion CADRES made an attempt to determine the voting priorities of Barbadians in a way that was not done previously. Figure 02 presents responses to the question that asked respondents to rank the importance of the following factors in terms of their decision to support or not support both the DLP and BLP. It is noteworthy that respondents had the opportunity to speak to a decision to support both the DLP and or BLP which means that CADRES captured the motivations to vote for and against both parties in a way that clearly speaks to voting priorities. In each instance the factor is presented alongside the highest score received at that level of prioritisation and demonstrates that Barbadians are inclined now motivated to vote for both parties for reasons that essentially similar. The only minor difference is the BLP prioritisation of Party Unity over Party Loyalty, suggesting that Dems were more motivated by loyalty at this time, while Bs were more motivated by Unity.

The analysis is clear in its suggestion that regardless of the political party of preference, Barbadians are at this time motivated to vote for leadership first and foremost, followed by economic performance and thereafter party/team competence. It is equally clear that the “attractiveness” of candidates is the least important factor to voters at this time and this is useful information to have in response to suggestions that a general election can be reduced to a series of “30 by-elections”. Certainly there is a basis for the suggestion that strong candidates can impact on a less favourable national situation, but the prevailing evidence here is that “we” attach considerable significance to national political factors and specifically leadership. In this specific case, persons who intend to vote for the BLP are significantly more motivated by leadership considerations, than those who would look to the DLP and this also speaks volumes.

BLP Votes			DLP Votes	
32%	Leadership	1	Leadership	28%
23%	Economic Performance	2	Economic Performance	28%
27%	Party/Team competence	3	Party/Team Competence	25%
20%	Party Unity	4	Party Loyalty	23%
24%	Party Loyalty	5	Party Unity	22%
44%	Candidate Attractiveness	6	Candidate Attractiveness	45%

On this occasion CADRES sought to explore the extent to which traditional voting patterns will be a factor in this election and the analysis reflected in Figure 2 which should generate some amount of interest. The two questions enquired into familial voting habits in 2008 and compared these with 2013 intentions and the responses are disaggregated into party support sub-groups. It becomes clear that at the national level Barbadians are LESS likely to vote with their families than they were in 2008 and while the trend is not hugely significant, it should be noted that the distance between the two parties is such that any slight movement will have significant consequences politically. Within party groups it is also interesting to note that BLP supporters are now MORE LIKELY to vote with their family, while Dems are LESS LIKELY to vote with their family. The most significant deviations are; however among the PEP supporters and “*Uncertain Voters*” which is not entirely surprising. The PEP is a new organisation and would not yet have any significant amount of political loyalty hence persons supporting it would be moving away from historic loyalty. In the case of “*Uncertain Voters*” there is also significant movement; however one can only presume the direction of their support. This statistic does; however confirm that this voting group is a potential resource for both political parties.

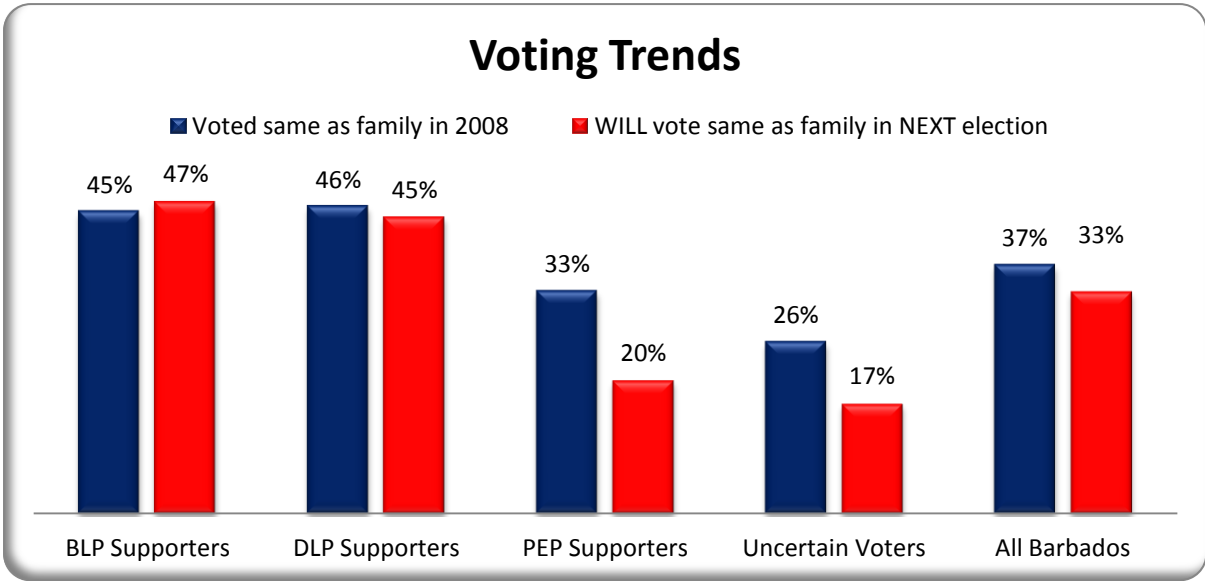


Figure 2: Voting Trends

POLITICAL PARTY ISSUES

In this section CADRES addressed issues related to the two political parties and sought to determine what voters thought of both institutions. The appended charts speak to key findings regarding the strengths and weaknesses of both political parties and which party is perceived to be better with respect to specific attributes. The comparative presentation of strengths and weaknesses demonstrates a clear perception that “*leadership*” is the major strength of the BLP and major weakness of the DLP; while the DLP’s major strength is its “*policies*” with the BLP’s major weakness being it’s “*candidates*”. In this regard it is also important to note the primacy of leadership as reflected in the voting priorities section above. These cumulative findings would support the argument that while both parties have their strengths, the BLP is presently perceived to be stronger in the areas that Barbadians are more interested in at this time.

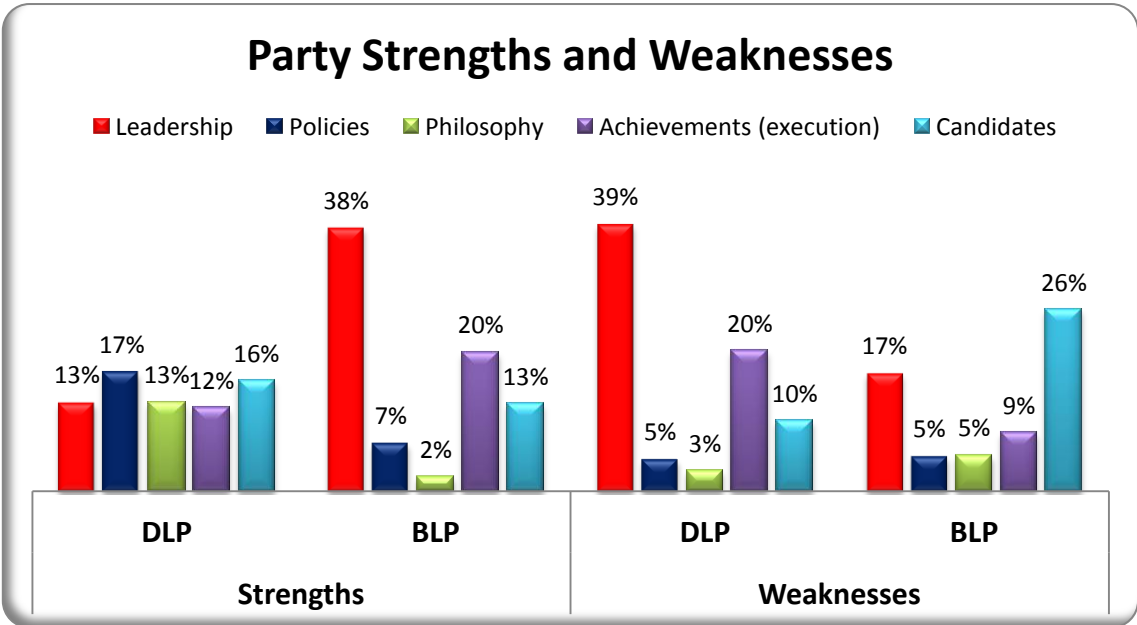


Figure 3: Party Strengths and Weaknesses

In further pursuit of this issue it was also asked which party is better on four key issues as presented in the appended chart which is easily interpreted. At this time Barbadians believe that the BLP is stronger on “Leadership” and “Party Competence”, while the DLP is stronger regarding “Party Unity” and the parties equal on the issues of “Social Services/Social Stability”. The DLP’s strength on party unity is interesting since that organisation has also had its challenges recently; however this finding suggests that the BLP has some work left to be done regarding the perception that it is a unified organisation and it should take note of this shortcoming. It is also clear that it is easier for political parties in government to manage internal dissent.

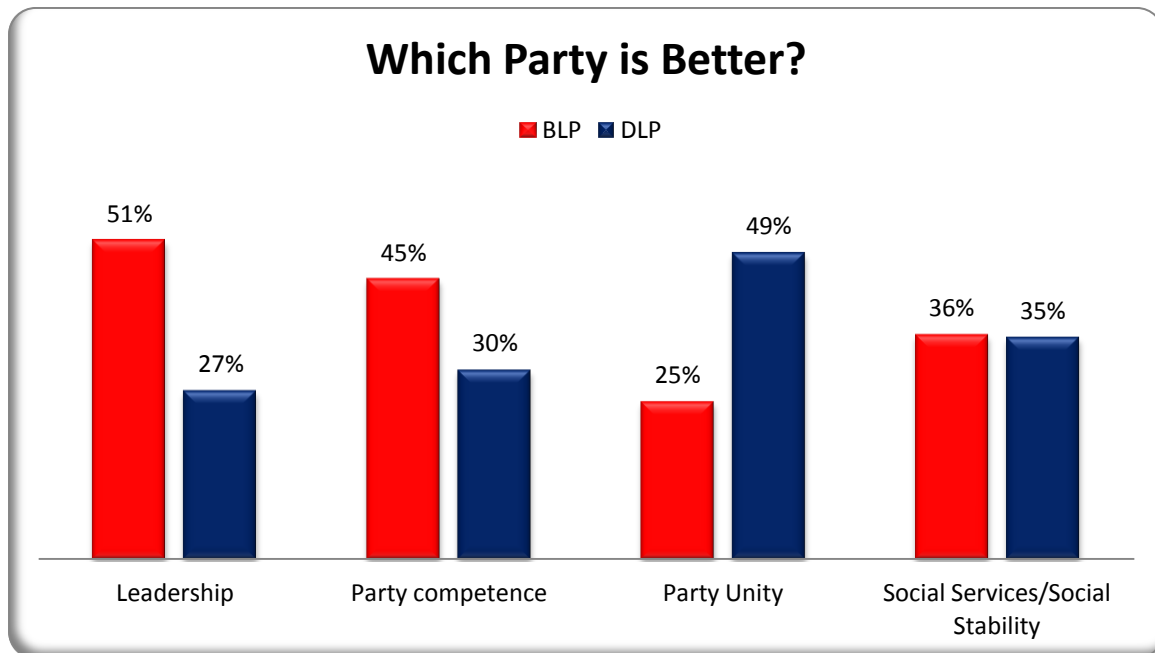


Figure 4: Which Party is Better

LEADERSHIP ISSUES

Leadership is always of considerable interest in political surveys and especially so in this instance because of the importance being attached to it in this election by voters. In this regard CADRES treated leadership customarily and the typical analysis is presented below. Table 03 presents the findings in the question on leadership preference which is presented both from the perspective of the entire country as well as the “Uncertain Voters” which presents a complimentary picture. In this instance respondents were presented with an open ended question and it is important to note that respondents were NOT prompted with options; hence the appended list reflects the individual that voters would instinctively prefer to be led by.

Opposition Leader Owen ARTHUR is the most popular choice nationally; however there is a statistically insignificant difference between himself and former Opposition Leader Mia MOTTLEY who essentially joins him in the top spot once the margin of error of the poll is taken into consideration. The second most popular choice nationally is Finance Minister Christopher SINCKLER who is ten points ahead of his boss, current PM Freundel STUART, who is himself statistically tied with Health Minister Donville INNIS who has now appeared on the leadership horizon as a serious option.

Attention should also be paid to the opinion of the “*Uncertain Voters*” for whom leadership is a primary concern. The majority (33%) of these persons like MOTTLEY most, while SINCKLER is preferred by 21.7%. It is clear that MOTTLEY and SINCKLER represent a most important resource with both political parties as it pertains to the “*Uncertain Voters*” group which is as yet large enough to determine the outcome of the next election.

Table 03: Leadership Preference			
ALL Barbadians		“ <i>Uncertain Voters</i> ” ONLY	
Owen ARTHUR	29.8%	Mia MOTTLEY	33.0%
Mia MOTTLEY	25.5%	Christopher SINCKLER	21.7%
Christopher SINCKLER	19.7%	Owen ARTHUR	19.5%
Freundel STUART	9.9%	Freundel STUART	9.2%
Donville INNISS	5.1%	Dennis Kellman	5.5%
Dennis Kellman	3.7%	Donville INNISS	4.3%
Esther Byer-Sukoo	2.4%	Esther Byer-Sukoo	2.4%
David ESTWICK	1.9%	David ESTWICK	2.2%
Dale MARSHALL	1.0%	Dale MARSHALL	1.4%
David COMMISSIONG	0.9%	David COMMISSIONG	0.7%

As was the case with previous polls, CADRES conducted a detailed assessment of the extent to which Barbadians approve of the current leaders and this is presented in Figure 5 and table 04. The leadership approval chart speaks to a “Yes” or “No” question on the extent to which Barbadians approve of two leaders and it can clearly be seen that the majority APPROVES of ARTHUR, while the majority DO NOT APPROVE of STUART.

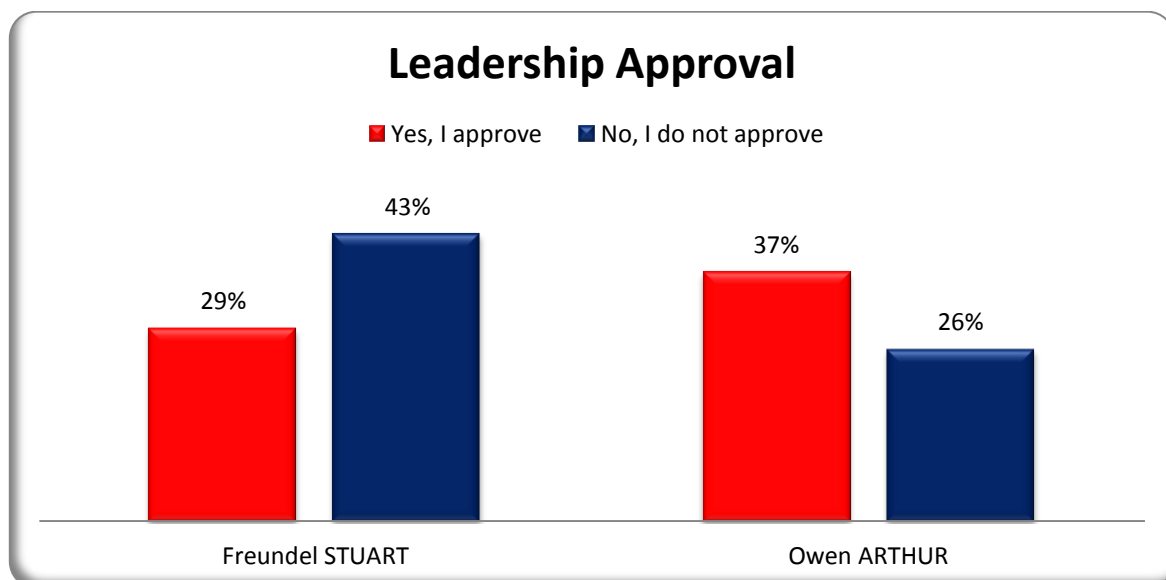


Figure 5: Leadership Approval

The numeric scores for the two leaders are also instructive and show PM STUART has given a “failing grade” by Barbadians with his average score being 3.9, while ARTHUR’s is slightly above the “pass mark” with a 5.5. As would be expected the party supporters are slightly more enthusiastic about their leaders, but the views of the “Uncertain Voters” are here also important since these are slightly less flattering of both leaders. It should be noted that since this score is an average the standard margin of error caution does NOT apply and one can therefore assume a level of statistical significance applies to minor differences between scores.

	STUART, Freundel	ARTHUR, Owen
BLP Supporters	3.4	6.5
DLP Supporters	5.3	4.9
PEP Supporters	2.9	4.5
Uncertain Voters	3.4	5.1
All Barbados	3.9	5.5

Based on the foregoing, CADRES considered it logical to explore the profile or personality of PM Stuart who was never subjected to a such a profile which has been previously applied to PM’s Arthur and Thompson. This analysis is explored in Figure 6 which compares the PM’s attributes that respondents liked MOST with those that it liked LEAST and it is most profound. Barbadians have identified the PM’s “pleasantness” as his most LIKED attribute, while they overwhelmingly converged on his propensity to “Take too long to make decisions” as his trait that they like LEAST. On previous occasions that this analysis was conducted, it was noted that when a leader is identified as “pleasant” this is not necessarily flattering in the political sense, since people tend to look for other attributes in their leaders. “Pleasant” generally communicates a lack of familiarity with the leader and the resulting presumption that he is a “nice guy” however leaders who are perceived in this way often face major challenges convincing electorates of their leadership ability.

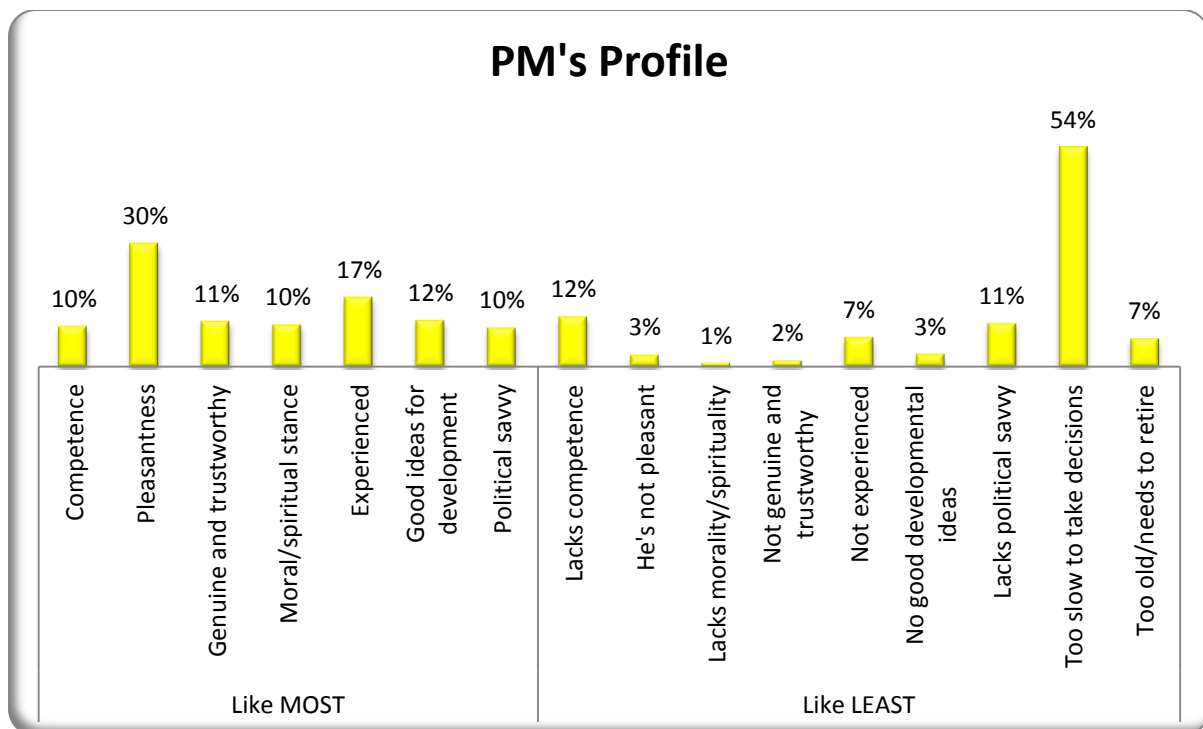


Figure 6: PM's Profile

Although CADRES is fully aware that a Deputy Prime Minister is not a constitutional requirement, we considered it relevant to ask Barbadians who they would wish to see such a title bestowed upon and Table 5 presents this information. The vast majority of respondents preferred SINCKLER for this post, with INNISS being the second most popular candidate. It is noteworthy that this question was also “open ended” and as such persons could select any option which is reflected in the fact that persons such as PM STUART and Dale MARSHALL appeared on the list even though one assumes that they would not be eligible for such an appointment at this time.

Christopher SINCKLER	42%
Donville INNISS	12%
Dennis KELLMAN	10%
Esther BYER-SUCKOO	7%
David ESTWICK	7%
Ronald JONES	7%
Richard SEALY	6%
Michael LASHLEY	2%
Freundel STUART	2%
Dale MARSHALL	1%
Steven LASHLEY	1%
Hanesly BENN	1%
Adriel BRATHWAITE	1%
Steve BLACKETT	1%
Patrick TODD	1%
Mara THOMPSON	0.4%
George HUDSON	0.1%

PARTY SUPPORT

The likely outcome of the next election is premised on several bases, which are explored in this section. The first of these are presented in Figure 7 which speak to our readiness for an election and the extent to which we desire change at this time. The former expression demonstrates that a majority of Barbadians are now ready for an election and this is a statistic that CADRES believes is making a profound statement, especially as the election is not due for some months. This presumption here is that people desire an election to change a quantity that is already known and the implication for the government is that waiting might enhance national frustration and make the situation worse.

The time for change statistic also demonstrates clearly that a majority of respondents wish to see a change in government, although it should be noted that this is a majority of respondents and not a majority of Barbadians, some of whom preferred not to answer this question. The 42% wishing for change is still short of the 48% that wished for change just prior to the 2008 election, but considerably greater than the 28% that wanted change in 2003.

Election Readiness, Change and Party Most Likely to WIN

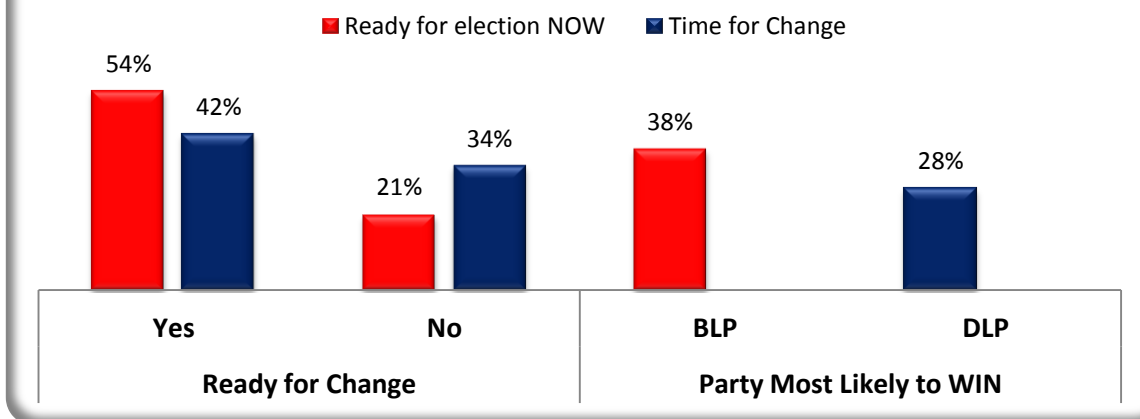


Figure 7: Election Readiness, Change Party Most Likely to WIN

Respondents were also asked which party they believed was “most likely” to win the election which is not necessarily an indication of which candidate they will support. 38% believed that the BLP would win, with 28% believing that the DLP will win and 34% refusing to offer an opinion. In this regard, no persons predicted a PEP victory.

Finally the political question was posed to respondents and Figure 8 presents the likely results if an election were called last week. At that time, 31% of persons promised to support the BLP, while 26% promised to support the DLP, which is a statistical dead heat since the margin of error of the poll is +/- 5%. In addition there is also a large “Uncertain Vote” (42%) that has the potential to change the outcome of the next election especially since the distance between the two parties is so small. In table 06 disaggregated information pertaining to the likelihood that respondents will vote is presented and it can be seen that at least half of these voters will actually vote. Moreover, these “Uncertain Voters” have given clear indications of their intentions and concerns which were presented above and the next election will therefore depend heavily on how both political parties treat to these issues and concerns

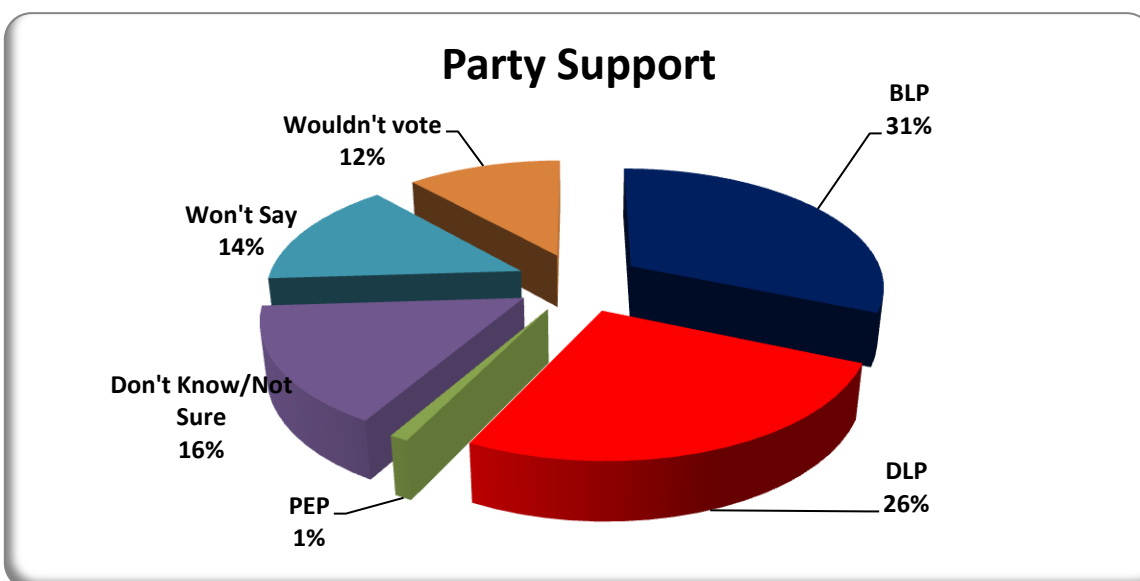


Figure 8: Party Support

Table 06: Likelihood that Respondent will vote	
BLP Supporters	7.2
DLP Supporters	7.7
PEP Supporters	7.1
Uncertain Voters	5.5
Total	6.6

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

This poll can be said to give a clear indication that Barbadians are “thinking seriously” about changing their government, but are still grappling with some reservations it has about the BLP. On this occasion, the DLP’s numbers are down and this assessment of the DLP’s performance implies a high level of dissatisfaction with the government, but an even higher level of dissatisfaction with its leadership. Certainly the relationship between the leader and the government is not lost on CADRES. The PM’s stocks are considerably lower than that of his party and indeed are the lowest ever recorded by a sitting Prime Minister since we commenced operations in 1990. Barbadians are not only clear about their difficulties with this leader, but they are equally clear on the reasons why they would prefer not to retain him. The impact of this has clearly damaged the DLP’s chances in the next election.

At the policy level, there is some indication that Barbadians are perhaps happier with the Dems in some areas; however it is equally clear that the DLP has not impacted on the economy in the way that people would like. The overwhelming concern of Barbadians is the cost of living and related economic issues. It is noteworthy that this is where the DLP had been marked “hardest”, suggesting a national discomfort with the handling of an issue that is of major concern. At the same time, the assessment in areas like Education and Health has been somewhat more consistent. In previous polls, the Health Sector had recorded improvements, which is both unusual and commendable. However the slide in the Health Sector numbers demonstrates clearly the extent to which Barbadians are overwhelmed by their economic challenges.

On the other side, the BLP still appears to have considerable work to do before it can be said to have “sealed the deal” with Barbadians. In this regard the two leading personalities there are almost equally popular. However, while the trend of popular support is clearly in the BLP’s favour, it cannot take this for granted at the level of the constituency. It is also important to recall that when the two parties were compared, the BLP outperformed the DLP in all regards EXCEPT party unity. It is therefore incumbent on the BLP to speak to issues of unity, in much the same way that the DLP needs to frontally address issues of its own leadership. In the latter case, the DLP’s ability to manage dissent is enhanced because it is in office and holds patronage that can be used to induce support where necessary.

In summary, a clear majority of Barbadians are now ready for an election and have in this survey indicated that their primary concerns are leadership and the economy. The party that continues to speak to these issues best and moreover is able to capture the interest of the “*Uncertain Voters*” is therefore likely to prevail.

CADRES May 2012