

CADRES MARCH 2010 POLL RELEASED

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PPP/C holds biggest bloc of voters – AFC on the upswing - CADRES poll

The governing PPP/Civic continues to command the single largest bloc of voters but has lost significant support since the last general election, according to a new poll that also shows that an alliance between opposition parties could see a result in their favour.

The March 2010 poll, conducted by the Barbados-based Caribbean Development Research Services Inc. (CADRES), also showed that while no single opposition force currently commands a majority of support, the AFC could hold the balance of power after votes are counted. The poll projected the PPP/Civic's overall support at 38%, the PNCR at 31% and the AFC at 26%, representing a drop of 16%, 3% and a gain of 18%, respectively.

When asked directly which party they would support if an election were held at the time of the survey, the PPP/Civic got support from 25% of respondents, the AFC 25% and the PNCR 23%, while other parties drew a total 3%, and persons in the "Don't know/Won't say" category accounted for 24%. The "Don't know/Won't say" category, CADRES said in a press release yesterday, is sufficiently large to alter the course of an election. Therefore, relying on historical trends, which it said has proven to be a most reliable indicator, CADRES anticipated the way voters in the category would behave, in order to determine the overall measurement of support among the parties.

"In the final analysis, however, the PPP/Civic is still leading, the PNCR is still the second most popular party, however the AFC would have been in a position to hold the balance of power if an election were called in March this year," CADRES said in the press release.

The next general election is due by the end of November next year and there is speculation regarding the outcome and possible configurations for both the governing party and the opposition groups.

Stabroek News was told that the poll was privately commissioned and CADRES was recently given approval to release the findings to the public. In addition to party support, CADRES will also release the survey's findings on major issues and leadership, over the next weeks. CADRES explained that it conducted a political opinion survey that covered all 10 administrative regions.

Approximately 1,000 Guyanese voters were randomly selected and interviewed and, according to CADRES, in each instance the sample was proportionate to the percentage of the population that actually lives in the respective administrative region. The margin of error associated with such a survey is +/- 5% and as a result the results could be said to be a "reasonable indicator" of public opinion in Guyana at the time it was conducted.

According to CADRES, the contemporary political reality can be best analysed from the perspective of electoral swing, which measures improvement and deterioration in the fortunes of a political party between elections. The swing analysis, which showed the decline of support for the PPP/Civic and the PNCR as well as the gain made by the AFC, indicates that the latter is "the political party that Guyanese have taken the most interest in over the last four years. While the AFC continues to be the least popular "big" party, CADRES noted, it has captured the interest of Guyanese over the past four years, absorbing the percentages of voters who have defected from the PPP/Civic and the AFC.

The analysis of the survey data on the basis of age showed that the PNCR's supporter tends to be older, while the AFC's tends to be younger. The PPP/Civic's supporter, it added, is relatively evenly spread across all age groups. Analysing the data on the basis of race, CADRES said there were "few surprises," and it noted that the PNCR's support base is still largely Afro-Guyanese, while the PPP/Civic's is still predominantly Indo-Guyanese. The AFC, it added, is a mixed party albeit more inclined towards Afro-Guyanese and smaller party supporters are more mixed.

Meanwhile, Afro-Guyanese were more inclined to refuse to state their political party support.

CADRES concluded that the data presents a political scenario that can be interpreted from different perspectives. It noted that from a pro-PPP/Civic perspective it appeared that the data is no different to that which emerged prior to the 2006 general election before the party launched its campaign. Further, it noted that data reflected a level of uncertainty that has emerged based on the imminent departure of the PPP/Civic's Presidential Candidate. President Bharrat Jagdeo is constitutionally barred from serving another term in office.

However, the data does demonstrate that the PPP/Civic still commands the largest bloc of voters and would have first option to form a government if an election were held.

Meanwhile, CADRES said the perspective for the opposition "can be favourable...but only if these entities form an alliance of some sort, since no individual party is sufficiently well organised in terms of party support to threaten the PPP/Civic's dominance." Further, it said no single opposition force can now command a majority on its own and trends in the data suggest that the AFC has and will continue to erode the PNCR support but cannot win on its own. As a result, CADRES said that the demographic of the voter who refused to state their political opinion is critical, noting that these persons are Afro-Guyanese who, it was assumed, would support the PNCR but could be influenced to support the AFC based on current trends.

CADRES, under the direction of political scientist Peter Wickham, conducts social and political surveys and related research in the Caribbean. It has been responsible for the design and management of political, economic and social research projects in the Caribbean, for various clients and regular contributions to the press on electoral and political issues. Among its major projects/consultancies are public opinion polls in Antigua, Barbados, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands (Tortola), St. Kitts, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands and Guyana, since 1993. Its polls have been commissioned by newspapers, political parties and governments.

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