

Our Correspondent

**Public opinion equally split on govt, opposition narratives: survey**

ISLAMABAD: General public opinion is equally split on opposition alliance (PDM) objectives and govt narrative, reveals a survey conducted by Pulse Consultant.

According to the survey, almost one third of the respondents (39 percent) agreed with the government narrative that “opposition alliance was formed to hide/secure their corruption”, whereas almost similar number of respondents (40 percent) believe that the PDM was formed to remove the current government. Some 21 percent have no opinion in this regard.

Less than half of the respondents (45 percent) believe that the government stands firm and have no worries with the opposition movement, whereas one third (35 percent) of the respondents feel that the government’s nerves are shaking due to the opposition’s movement. 20 percent have no opinion.

The survey findings show that highest number of respondents in the last two years are ‘indifferent’ (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) about Prime Minister Imran Khan’s overall performance.

As compared to July 2020 wave, in October 2020 wave, satisfaction (40 percent to 37 percent) and dissatisfaction (45 percent to 40 percent) with Prime Minister Imran Khan’s overall performance both declined and rose respectively. Of “indifferent” (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) increased significantly – 14 percent to 21 percent (+7 percent)

It seems that opinion on question ‘on overall basis Pakistan is heading towards a right direction or wrong direction’ is almost same as previous quarter – In July 2020, 52 percent were saying that Pakistan is moving towards a wrong direction – now with the decline of 3 percent, 49 percent seem to be claiming the same. In July 2020, 42 percent had opinion that on overall basis Pakistan is moving in the right direction, now in October 2020 with the improvement of 1 percent, 43 percent believe that Pakistan is heading towards the right direction. 8 percent have no opinion.

In October 2020 Quarterly Performance Evaluation Survey (QPES) wave, almost half of the respondents (46 percent) have no belief on PM’s claim that “country is out of economic crisis”, just 10 percent believed on PM’s claim whereas 27 percent ‘somewhat believed’. 17 percent had no opinion. With the improvement of 2 percent - now 63 percent respondents believe that ‘Economically, the country is moving towards ‘wrong direction’.

The survey shows that although negativity about provincial governments still prevails, but there is a sigh of relief for the PTI-led Punjab and KP governments in shape of improved satisfaction.

The Punjab government gained positivity but couldn't cross negative circumference. In July 2020, satisfaction with Punjab government was 26 percent, and now with the improvement of 8 percent, in October 2020, it has become 34 percent, whereas dissatisfaction reduced by 7 percent - 54 percent (July 2020) to 47 percent (October 2020). In between (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) increased from 11 percent to 16 percent.

For the PTI-led KP government, the gap has reduced though the dissatisfaction level is still high. Satisfaction Index of the KP government improved 3 percent (from 38 percent to 41 percent). On the other hand, dissatisfaction also increased - 09 percent (from 42 percent to 51 percent).

The survey shows the Sindh government regained its unpopularity. The trend of dissatisfaction with Sindh government resumes (54 percent to 60 percent). Satisfaction is just 19 percent.

Balochistan is successful in surpassing negativity. First time in last five waves, satisfaction (37 percent) surpassed dissatisfaction (35 percent).

The survey further revealed that the respondents were not mainly supporting government narrative against opposition.

Like July 2020, in October 2020 wave 'public opinion is reflecting almost same trend regarding perception 'corruption has increased'. In July 2020 – those who were saying corruption increased were 63 percent, and now they are 64 percent. Similarly, those who believed that corruption was decreased were 24 percent, and now in current wave they are 25 percent. 11 percent have no opinion.

In July 2020, 36 percent believed on government narrative of terming previous government responsible about current economic challenges – In October 2020, with minor improvement of just 1 percent, now 37 percent believe on government claim. However, 'no answer' increased from 10 percent to 17 percent.

However, majority (46 percent) still believe that 'economic crisis' happened due to 'current govt policies'. Majority (65 percent) of the respondents have an opinion that the government failed to bring back the looted money from foreign accounts. Just 7 percent believe that looted money has returned and 12 percent have opinion that there is little improvement on this front.

According to the survey results, with the decline of 4 percent, now 51 percent respondents believe that politically Pakistan is heading towards a wrong direction (55 percent in July 2020, 51 percent in October 2020). However, with the minor increase of 1 percent, more than one third of respondents (41 percent) believe that politically country is heading towards right direction – previously in July 2020, it was 40 percent.

Like all previous waves, almost all (96 percent) respondents agreed with the statement that "inflation increased in current government tenure". Almost half of the Pakistanis

reported "inflation" as the key challenge (47 percent) in spontaneously reported problems, followed by unemployment (29 percent) and corruption (16 percent).

Survey results showed that majority (55 percent) believe that opposition will never resign from assemblies.

More than half (53 percent) believe that JI should keep its anti-govt campaign separate from the PDM. Half of the respondents (51 percent) have opinion that Nawaz Sharif is advocating Indian narrative, 23 percent didn't agree with this narrative, and quarter (26 percent) have no opinion.

Similarly, more than half (53 percent) respondents believe on government narrative that Nawaz Sharif is not as sick as he pertained and he left the country on false medical grounds, and almost quarter (26 percent) respondents are aligned with the PML-N narrative that he is sick and will return after treatment.

After taking stand against the establishment by Nawaz Sharif almost 44 percent respondents believe that the PML-N can be divided, whereas 32 percent claimed that the PML-N will remain intact. Almost quarter (24 percent) of the respondents have no opinion.

Almost half (53 percent) respondents believe that current political statements of Nawaz Sharif are damaging the PML-N, whereas 26 percent have opposite opinion, while remaining 21 percent didn't answer.

Respondents are equally split on the question of new provinces – 43 percent are in favour, 48 percent have opposite views, whereas 09 percent have no opinion.

About questions asked in context with the government initiative of ban on dowry, majority, especially women (56 percent), believe that dowry is Important (63 percent females) - 39 percent have opposite opinion, whereas 5 percent have no opinion. 61 percent believe that dowry must be allowed to some extent (73 percent females), whereas 36 percent have opposite idea of complete ban. Just 3 percent have no opinion.

The survey was conducted through Computer Assisted Telephonic Interviews (CATI), a state-of-the-art technology where all calls are recorded. At 95 percent confidence level, on bipolar answers – for the sample of 2,011 respondents – study's error of margin is just  $\pm 2.07$  percent.