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Youths more politically conscious- Latin American Public

Opinion survey

Thursday, 05 March 2015 20:43

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Guyanese youths appear to be more interested in politics than older folks and the East Indian and other Guyanese are satisfied with aspects of the way the country is being run , according to a recent study conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP).

LAPOP Director at Vanderbilt University, Dr. Elizabeth Zechmeister told a small but broad cross section of Guyanese at public session at the Georgetown Club that research conducted in Guyana from June 2014 to July 2014 that youths are more satisfied with how democracy is working.

“The younger cohorts are a bit more satisfied with how democracy is working in this country than in older cohorts so we found that interesting because sometimes young people are cynical, sometimes they are optimistic. In this case, they seem to be on balance a bit more optimistic than others,” she said.

The findings are based on a sample size of 1,588 persons interviewed face-to-face during mid-2014 across the country.

Her comments come against the background that the incumbent People's Progressive Party Civic (PPPC) and the coalition of A Partnership for National Unity and the Alliance For Change (APNU-AFC) are putting a lot of emphasis on getting the youths out to vote.

The research further shows that trusting core political institutions- - Parliament, President and political parties- has declined over the period 2012-2014. A breakdown shows that Guyanese 25 years and under of voting age "have a little more trust in political parties than did are older age cohorts." She added that older folks' trust in political parties "was dropping faster."

In terms of the Greater Georgetown compared to the rest of Guyana, she said "people are a bit more discontent with the way democracy is working."

When looked at from the perspective of race, the LAPOP study revealed that Afro-Guyanese are less satisfied with how democracy is working in their country than those who are identified as Indo-Guyanese and others.

On the question of confidence in politics, Dr. Zechmeister said respondents related that the most serious problem facing Guyana was politics, compared to the economy, security and basic services. In that regard, questions were asked about confidence in political parties, the Parliament and the Executive. Compared to data from 2006 and 2009 when 15 percent of the respondents identified politics as "the most serious problem," she said that figure has grown to 25.6 percent.

Compared to 2009 when the figure stood at 47 points, now 30.7 of Guyanese do not believe their government cares about them. "Looking at the rest of the region, Guyana ranks third to the bottom in terms of people's belief that those who govern the country care about and listen to them." People in the Greater Georgetown area, according to the findings, believe that the government listens to them less.

From the perspective of race, Afro Guyanese feel that the government listens to people like them than are Indo-Guyanese.

The LAPOP Director at the Vanderbilt University cautioned that the research findings could not be used to forecast the likely outcome of the May 11, 2015 because the study is not a election poll and that the findings are older than six months. "We know that when people go to the voting booth, typically their span is about six months; thinking back about six months...is the retrospective vision that people have when they walk into the polling booth," she said.

She hoped that the data would help decision-makers to craft programmes to improve ways of dealing with issues such as corruption and the very low trust that Guyanese have in the police.