

## **AUGUST 2009 POLITICAL OPINION POLL REPORT**

The report that follows presents data collected in a survey of Public Opinion in Barbados between 7<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> August 2009. The survey was commissioned by the Democratic Labour Party and was designed by Peter W. Wickham who is a political consultant and a director of CADRES. The methodology used in this instance was not dissimilar to that used in previous CADRES polls that have been made public since 1990. As such, polling divisions were selected in all 30 constituencies and face to face interviews were conducted with approximately twelve persons in each instance, totalling approximately 1,000 interviews.

The CADRES methodology selects constituencies based on their historical political behaviour and to this end, reference was made to the 2008 election report which provides information on the zones where the most “moderate” political opinion can be located in Barbados. This selection of PDs enhances the accuracy of the CADRES poll; however it also frustrates the calculation of a margin of error. Nonetheless, CADRES polls have generally fallen within the +/- 5% margin of error and are therefore generally regarded as accurate indicators of national political opinion.

Interviews were conducted by a team drawn largely from the UWI, Cave Hill and these students were managed by Kristen Hinds and Shane Rocheford of CADRES.

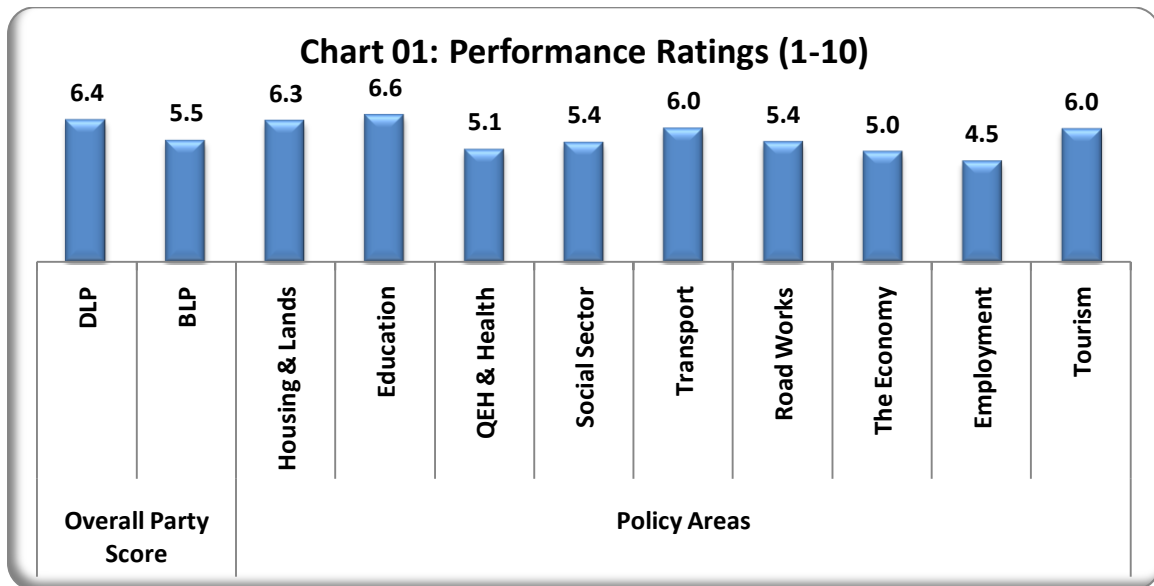
### **METHODOLOGY AND CONSIDERATIONS**

The only significant political event that could have impacted on this survey was the resignation of Opposition Senator Kerrie Symmonds, which could not have been anticipated by CADRES. Fortunately 90% of the interviews used in this exercise would have been completed by that time and any negative impact on the perceptions of the BLP would therefore have been minimal.

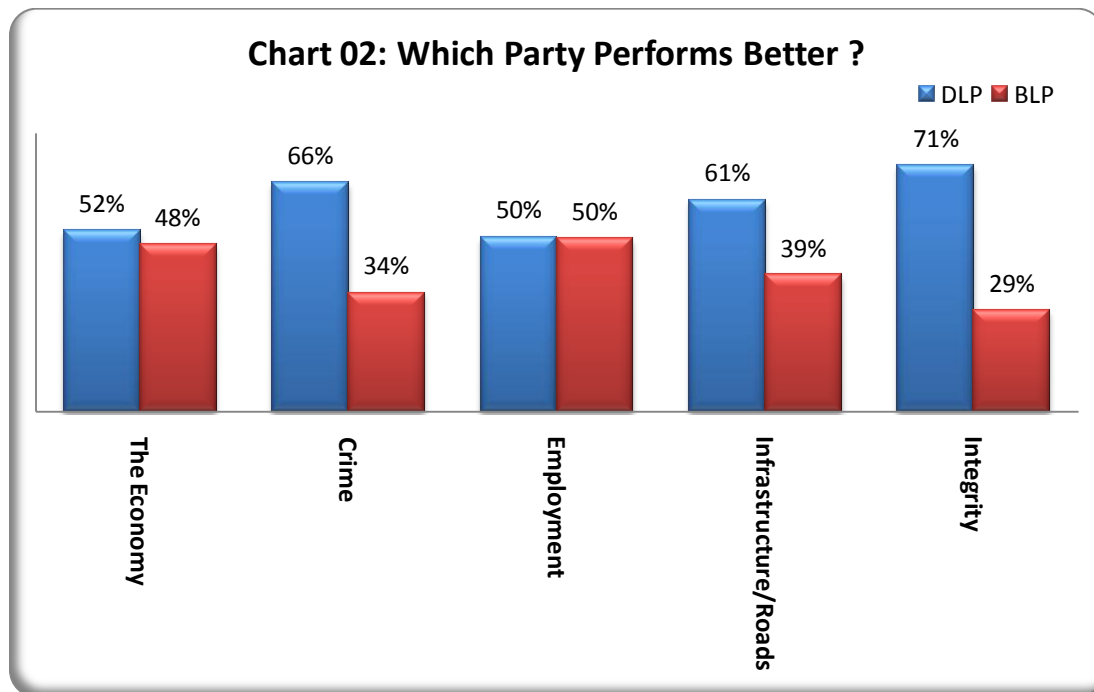
CADRES uses the term “*Uncertain voter*” which is a term coined by CADRES to refer to those persons who responded, “*Don’t know*”, “*Won’t say*”, “*None*” or “*Not Voting*” to the major political question. CADRES appreciates the fact that not all persons so identified are uncertain, but this is a convenient way to refer to the cumulative group and it helps us to distinguish between committed and uncommitted support.

### **SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION**

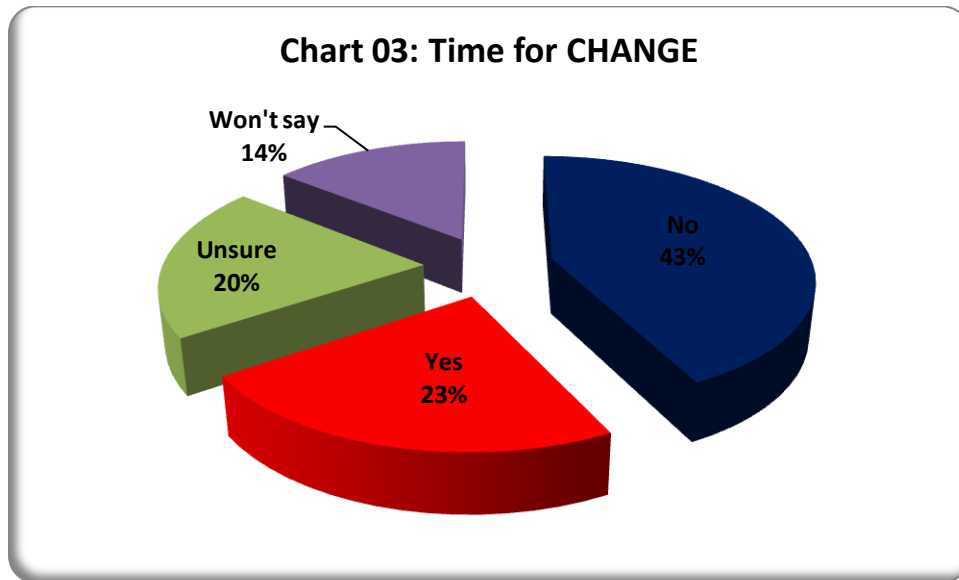
CADRES employed several indicators that were designed to test the extent to which people were satisfied with the DLP’s governance and the work being done by the opposition. The numerical ratings were all non-competitive and asked persons to rate the government and opposition on a scale ranging from 1 (one) to 10 (ten). In the first instance, performance ratings were solicited regarding each significant area of government’s operations and it can be seen that Barbadians awarded the highest scores in the area of education, housing, transport and tourism. The only “*failing*” grade was awarded in the area of employment. Persons were also asked to rate the two parties overall as government and opposition and the results are also presented in chart 01. Barbadians have essentially given both parties a passing grade, but people believe that the DLP has performed better as a government (6.4) than the BLP has as an opposition.



This rating was complemented by a competitive assessment of the party that performed better in five key policy areas identified in chart 02. Barbadians tended to set the BLP apart from the DLP (favourably) in the areas of crime and infrastructure, with the largest gap between the two parties being reflected in integrity. It is interesting to note that Barbadians do not think that the BLP has distinguished itself from the DLP in the area of economics or the economy which is consistent with the scores identified above.

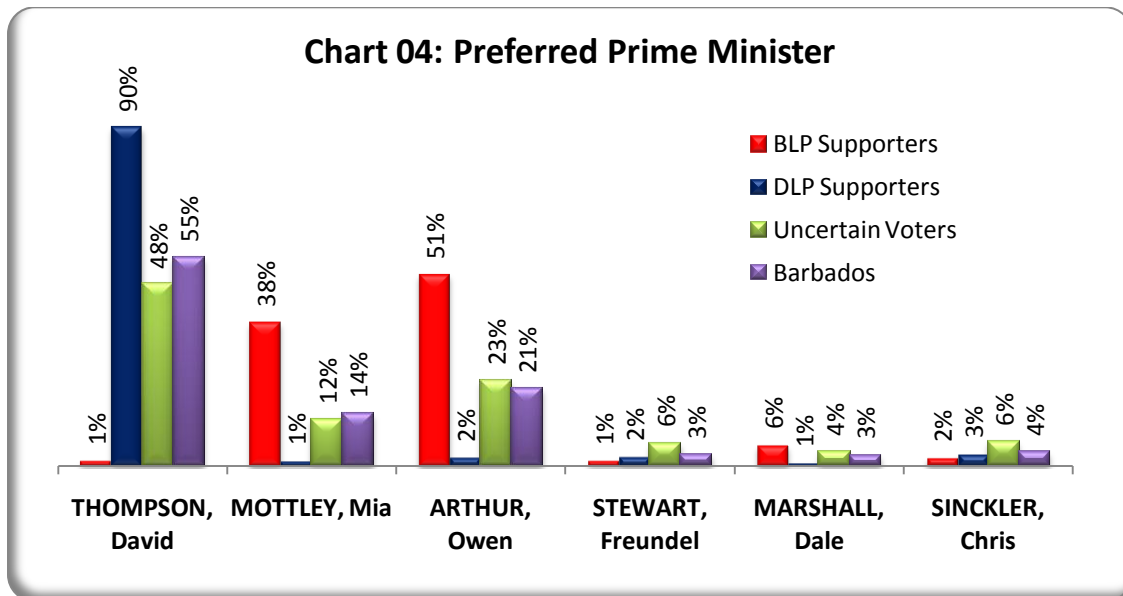


Although a general election is not due at this time, the extent to which persons desire change is a useful indicator of the level of satisfaction with the government and this is presented in chart 03. The vast majority of Barbadians do not desire change at this time (43%) while some 23% do believe that this is a good time for a change of government.

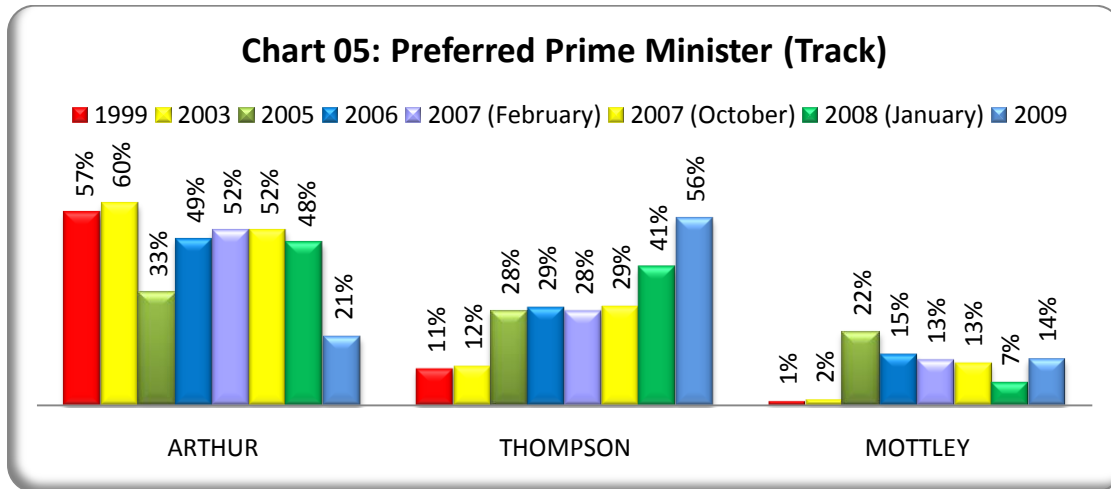


## LEADERSHIP

Leadership preference normally generates considerable interest since this is a key indicator of the extent to which either party is likely to win a general election if it were called at this time. In this instance, CADRES used three measures for each party leader which is the normal approach. Initially respondents were asked which individual would be their preferred Prime Minister and the results are presented in Chart 04, which conveniently arranges data according to party support. It can be seen that PM THOMPSON is the individual most preferred at this time by a majority (55%) of Barbadians, while former PM ARTHUR is the second most preferred leader (21%). Leader of the Opposition Mia MOTTLEY is now the choice of 14% of Barbadians. It is also interesting to note the extent to which the individual leaders are popular within their respective parties. This analysis demonstrates that a majority of DLP supporters prefer Thomson, while the BLP supporters opt for Arthur.



In an attempt to place leadership data in historical context, CADRES has presented historical leadership data in chart 05 and this allows for a comprehensive reflection on the extent to which leaders have improved and slipped in polls over the past decade. It can be seen that PM Thompson's popularity has grown to a level that is almost similar to that of former PM Arthur's in 1999; conversely, Arthur's popularity has fallen to 21% from his high point of 60% in 2003. The situation regarding the ebb and flow of the popularity of Leader of the Opposition, Mia Mottley is most interesting since the "high point" of her popularity was in 2005 when she was Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General and this declined steadily to the 2008 low point. This most recent assessment demonstrates that Barbadians have started to consider her more favourably; however she is now at 14%, which is exactly where PM Thompson was in 1999, but she is still less popular than Arthur was when he was Leader of the Opposition (23% in July 1994).



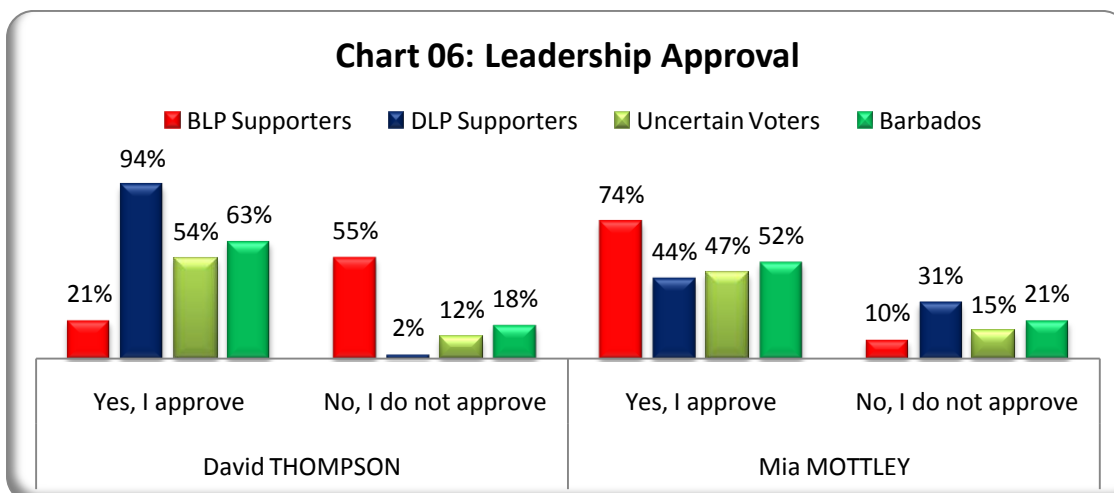
CADRES has always maintained that the competitive approach to assessing the popularity of leaders is somewhat misleading since it will force a comparison of roles that are not similar and to this extent we have encouraged an analysis that exploits historical data and also presents objective measures as is done in Table 01. This presents scores awarded to different leaders based on a question that asks respondents to rate the performance of leaders on a scale ranging from one to 10.

**Table 01: Leadership Performance Ratings**

|                  | David THOMPSON | Mia MOTTLEY |
|------------------|----------------|-------------|
| BLP Supporters   | 4.8            | 6.6         |
| DLP Supporters   | 7.9            | 5.2         |
| Uncertain Voters | 6.1            | 5.3         |
| Barbados         | 6.6            | 5.6         |

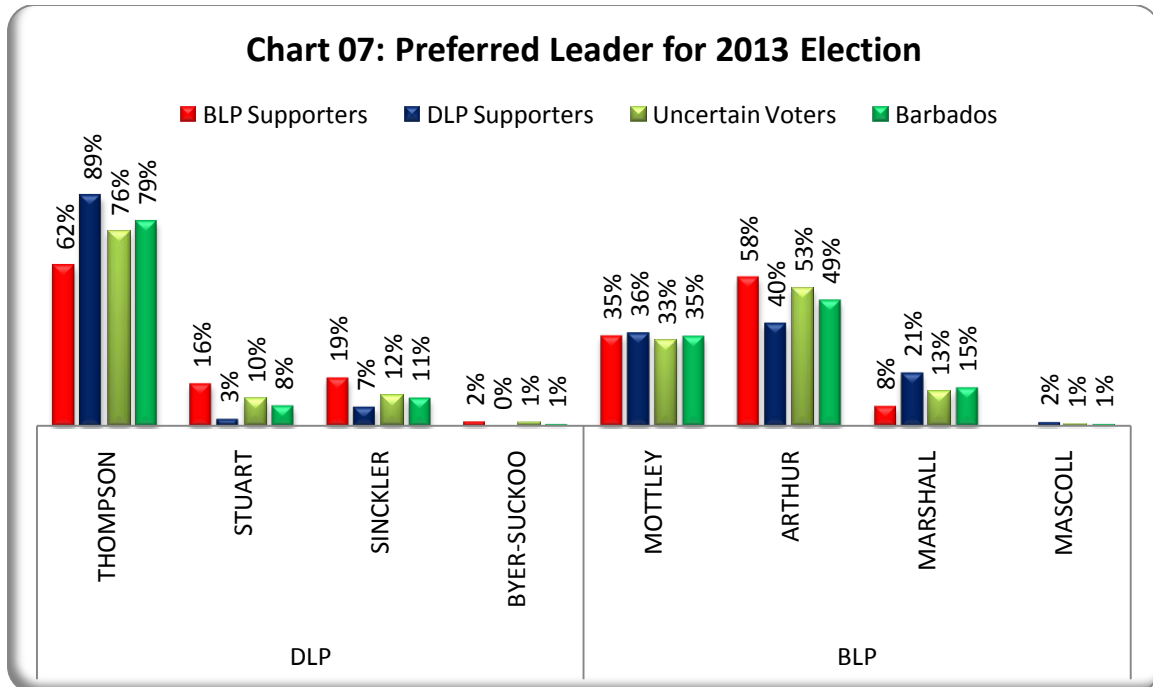
These scores are presented from the perspective of both political parties and it can be seen that PM Thompson received a 6.6, while Ms. Mottley received a 5.6. The scores awarded within party groups are also interesting and demonstrate that DLP supporters have a higher regard for their leader than the BLP supporters have for theirs. The perspective of “uncertain voters” is also interesting since these persons are somewhat more objective.

A similarly objective measure is presented in chart 06 which presents an approval rating based on a simple question that asks persons if they approve of THOMPSON and MOTTLEY individually. Here PM Thompson has a 63% approval rating, while Ms. Mottley recorded a 52% rating.



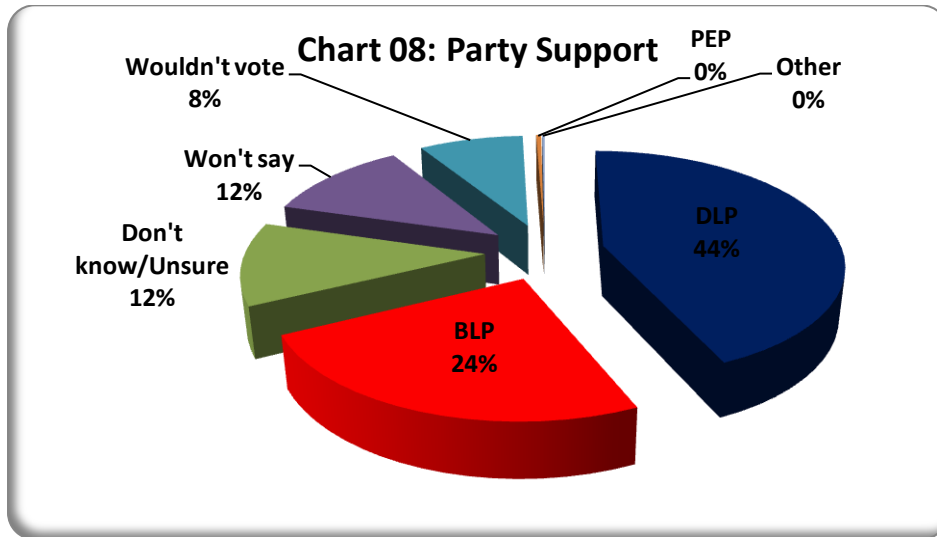
The final leadership question was novel in that it sought to determine whether Barbadians wished to see a person other than the current leader lead the respective parties into the 2013 election and these data are presented in chart 07. It would appear that at the national level there is a level of satisfaction with the leadership of Thompson and a consistent expectation regarding his intention to lead the DLP into the 2013. It is noteworthy however that there is some interest in the candidacy of Sinckler who has double digit support across the country and the support of 19% of Dems for a leadership run in 2013.

The BLP situation is slightly more complex since the majority favour Arthur who is not presently the party leader, while 35% prefer Mottley. Among party supporters, the majority want Arthur to lead them into 2013, with 35% preferring Mottley.

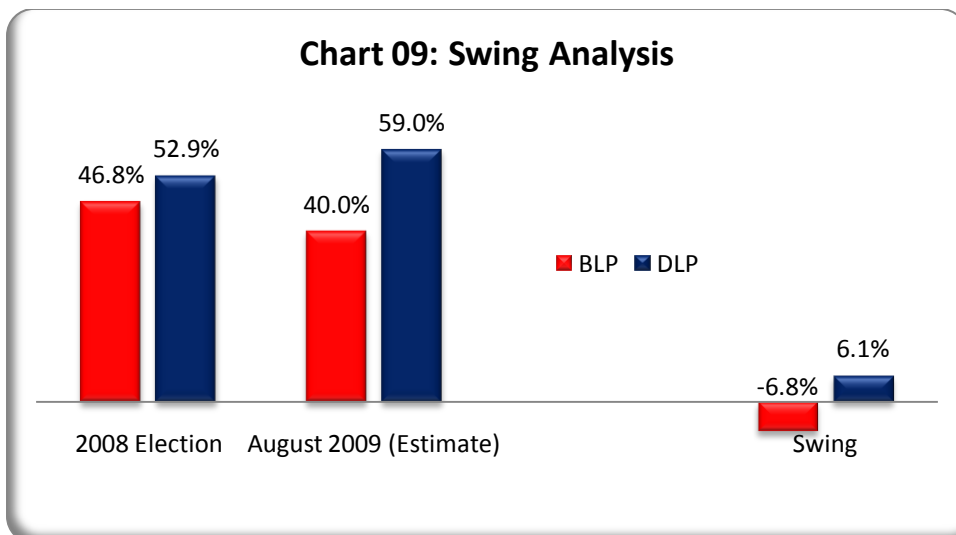


## PARTY SUPPORT

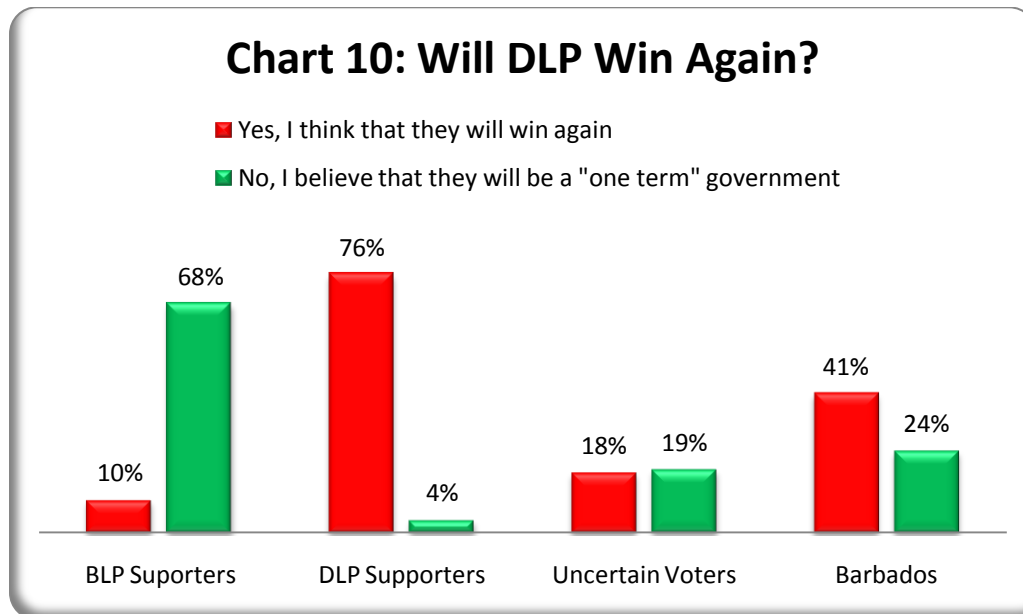
The current level of support retained by the two major parties was explored in the final section of this survey and the major finding is presented in chart 08. This demonstrates that the DLP now has the support of 44% of persons polled, while the BLP has the support of 24% of persons interviewed. There is also a substantial quantity of persons interviewed who responded to interviewers in various ways that have been characterised as “uncertain”. This large uncertain group frustrates accurate prediction, however CADRES has reliably predicted the actual outcome in terms of party support and the impact on seats by reference to the swing analysis that allocates uncertain votes based on their historical behaviour.



This swing analysis offered in chart 09 that is projecting a national swing of 6.8 % in favour of the DLP which suggests that if an election was called last week, the DLP would have improved its fortunes and could expect to capture most if not all of the seats that are within the 6% swing range (*approximately six additional seats*). This improvement should be placed in the context of the BLP's performance when it was also in its first term; however no polls were conducted during the BLP's post 1994 or 1999 terms. There is, however, data from the first mid-term poll (2005) which showed a -6% swing away from the BLP and the outcome of the closest election (2008) resulted in a 9% swing away from the BLP.



Against the background of much speculation on the issue of the DLP securing a second term, CADRES included a relevant question that asked persons if they believed that the DLP would secure a second term and chart 10 demonstrates that a majority of Barbadians believe that the DLP will win again in 2013. It is important to remember that this question asked if people “believed” that the DLP would win again and not if they would support them, hence it can be seen that 10% of persons who pledged to support the BLP were still of the opinion that the DLP would win. Similarly, within the DLP’s support base there are some 4% of persons who were sceptical about the DLP’s fortunes in 2013. The DLP might be interested to note the views of uncertain voters on this question since equal numbers of these uncommitted voters believed that the DLP would both win and lose the next election.



**SUMMARY JUDGEMENT**

The foregoing political data is generally favourable towards the DLP as it approaches its second year anniversary since there has been some amount of improvement nationally as it relates to both the Prime Minister and the DLP as a party. It is, however, noteworthy that the DLP appears to be benefiting from some amount of perceived confusion within the BLP regarding leadership preference and the prospects for 2013, which is curiously similar to the BLP 2005 low point when supporters were divided regarding their loyalties to Arthur and Mottley. This is also considerable room for the DLP to strengthen its profile since while people appear to prefer the DLP to the BLP; the DLP is at best scoring in the “high sixes”. This is similar to the BLP’s midterm assessment, but there is clearly room for improvement if the DLP views its performance objectively and not by way of comparison with the BLP.

**CADRES August 2009**