

A survey conducted on behalf of the Jamaica Debates Commission has shown that sixty-six percent of Jamaicans watched or listened to the recent leadership debate between Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) Leader Andrew Holness and People's National Party (PNP) President, Portia Simpson-Miller. This is compared to the 41-percent of Jamaicans who watched the debate on Finance and Economic issues and the 38-percent who watched or listened to the Youth on Economic debate.

The attention paid to the debates was slightly higher than was the case in 2007.

In the view of those polled the PNP's Lisa Hanna was by far the most effective debater in the first debate with some 52% of those polled believing that she did best, followed by the JLP's Warren Newby with 18% being the closest rival. In the Finance and Economic Debate there was a statistical dead heat between Mr. Audley Shaw and Dr. Peter Phillips while in the leadership debate, of the 1,400 people sampled, JLP leader Andrew Holness was given a slight edge over PNP President Portia Simpson-Miller.

The majority of persons who watched the debates found them useful and over 25% of them said the leadership debate caused them to decide or change their voting intentions.

The public was strongly supportive of the team debate format of young political representatives and were also very supportive of the inclusion of questions from members of the audience in the leadership debate that was staged at the Faculty of Law at the University of the West Indies.

Members of the public were of the view that the debates were too short (even the 90 minute version) and that the time allowed for answering questions was also too short. They have expressed the view that more debates need to be staged and more frequently.

Based on the JDC's analysis, for the three debates, eight journalists participated, three moderators guided the questioning, 73 questions were asked in just over 30 different areas.