

Poll Finds Mixed Views About Bhutto's Return

October 19, 2007

A poll taken in the weeks before the return to Pakistan of Benazir Bhutto, whose convoy was met with an attack as well as large adulatory crowds, finds that a plurality of Pakistanis (50%) approve of her return, while one in three are opposed.

Views are also mixed about the possibility of Bhutto becoming prime minister. Equal numbers (40%) favor and oppose her becoming prime minister. Twenty percent declined to respond.

However, Bhutto does appear to be a bit more popular than the current president Pervez Musharraf. Asked who would be the best person to lead Pakistan, Bhutto wins an anemic plurality with 27 percent favoring her over 21 percent for Musharraf.

The WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of 907 Pakistanis was conducted September 12-28 in urban areas of Pakistan.

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who Musharraf removed from power in 1999 and recently expelled immediately upon his return to Pakistan, has a similar level of support to Musharraf. Twenty-one percent endorse Sharif as the best person to lead Pakistan.

Asked about the possibility of Sharif returning to Pakistan, attitudes are about the same as for Bhutto's return. Fifty-one percent approve of his potential return, 35 percent are opposed and the rest are undecided.

Pakistan Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, whose removal by Musharraf prompted large-scale demonstrations and led to conflicts between police and Pakistani lawyers, does not appear to be emerging as an alternative leader. Only 3 percent identify him as the best person to lead Pakistan.

Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org, comments, "There seems to be little consensus among urban Pakistanis about who should lead Pakistan."

The poll was carried out for WorldPublicOpinion.org by ACNielsen Pakistan through face-to-face interviews in 19 Pakistani cities. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.3 percent.

