

RELIABILITY OF OPINION POLLS AND PRESENT POLITICAL SCENARIO

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Surveys and polls are good ways to judge larger public opinion and this tool is extensively used in West to get the perception of the subjects. In Pakistan, the acceptance or rejection of public opinion survey by public at large is majorly based on the findings of the survey. For instance, a survey is accepted if the findings are in line with our thoughts, otherwise it will be rejected without understanding the scientific details of it. The Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) is among few organizations that has been spreading awareness about public opinion research in Pakistan since last one decade.

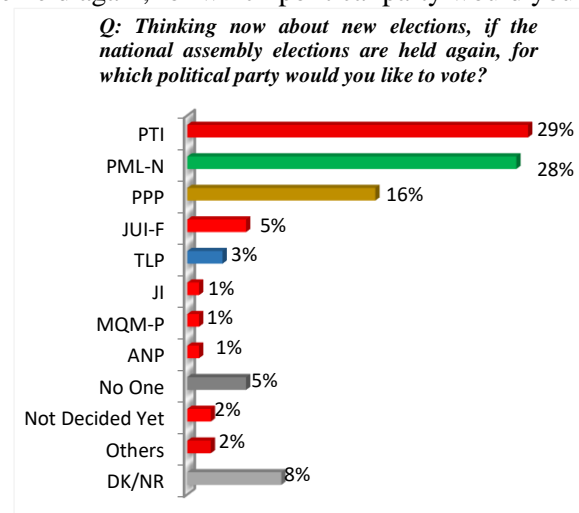
There is a dire need to understand the underlying reasons for acceptance or rejection of any public opinion polls. And what should form the bases of a good or bad poll, rather than mere accepting or rejecting its result on whims. Majorly, a good quality poll always addresses the scientific details, like randomization of sampling, unbiased questions, and a fair data collection etc. These details are always provided with the poll results. If any of these are not in line with normal practices, one can question the authenticity of a poll otherwise we can confidently rely on the poll findings.

One of the major reasons, why opinion polls are now widely accepted, is advent of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) in this field. Gone are the days of pen & pencil, now the interviewing process is fully digitized. Over the time, major polling organizations have improved the science and accuracy of polling methods using ICTs. Polling companies now administer data collection through computer-assisted interviewing using specific applications with GPS locations. As the respondent provides answers, the interviewer enters them directly onto the server via computer program giving the results immediately without any interference. Now it's easy to collect data in real time from the field with utmost accuracy. This has given a great edge and insight for analyzing data in a very limited time.

IPOR has been conducting surveys to gauge the voter preference time to time to inform the public and media at large. In this regard, to capture the present political landscape of Pakistan (2nd Quarterly Report-2022) IPOR conducted a country-wide public opinion survey to gauge the feelings of the voters, their voting intentions and approval ratings for political parties of Pakistan. The survey consisted of 3,509 respondents who were interviewed from March 17, 2022 to March 21, 2022.

To gauge the voting intentions and political parties' popularity respondents were asked "Thinking now about new elections, if the national assembly elections are held again, for which political party would you like to vote"? The national level results of the survey revealed that both the biggest parties are standing at neck to neck in case of early elections with 29% of the voters favoring PTI, 28% favoring PMLN, 16% of the voters favoring PPP whereas 5% of the respondents said that they will vote for JUIF in case of new elections.

Although there is a perfect tie between top two political parties, but if the elections are held again no political party will be able to get a clear majority in national assembly. To transform this popularity into seats, these political parties will have to make alliances with other political parties. In the current political situation, a seat-



to-seat adjustment plan can benefit both PMLN and PPP, considering the PTI graph is improving since last year or so.

The preference of voters towards top three political parties from July 2018 to March 2022 revealed interesting results. Comparative analysis showed that majority of the voters were in favor of PTI at the time of elections in July 2018, however this popularity graph suddenly dropped in 2020. Yet, a steady increase in PTI popularity graph was can be observed in March 2022 survey report.

Furthermore, the results of the current survey report showed that the inclination of voters towards PMLN is changing with a slightly difference since elections in July 2018. While, findings revealed that the inclination of voters towards PPP is increasing after November 2020 survey report.

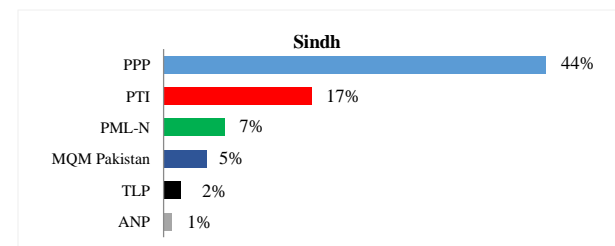
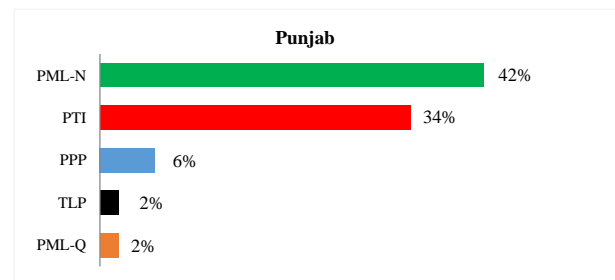
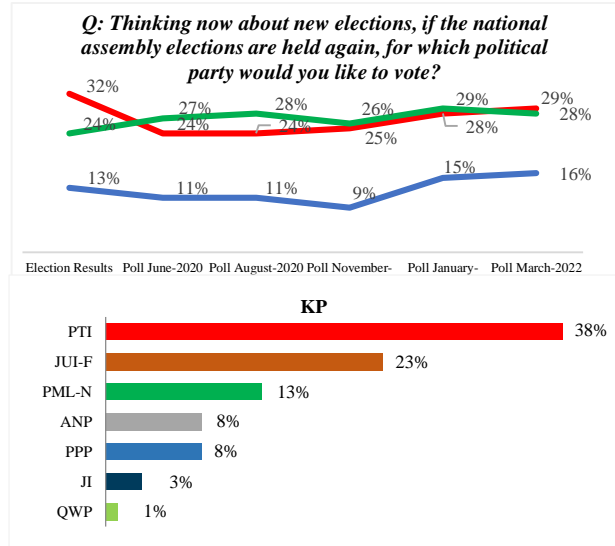
Provincial-wise breakdown shows that, PTI is gaining most of the support from KPK where PTI is at 38% followed by Punjab at 34%, in Baluchistan at 18%, while people in Sindh are least inclined towards PTI as it enjoys support of only 17% of the respondents there.

Out of four provinces PTI stood at number one position in two provinces KPK and Baluchistan; however, a closer look shows that in Baluchistan, PTI, PPP and PMLN are standing at neck to neck with 18% of the voters saying, they will vote for PTI, 17% said PPP and 15% said they will vote for PMLN in case of new elections.

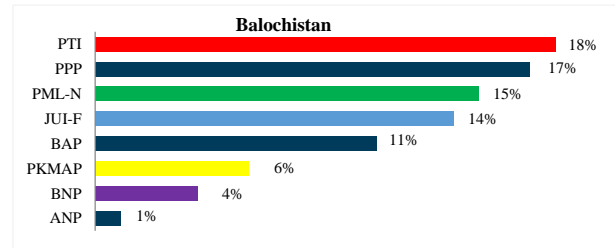
The overall inclination of the voters towards PMLN is at 28%, however provincial wise breakdown shows that the PMLN is receiving most of the support from Punjab with 42% of the respondents saying that they will vote for PMLN if the new elections of national assembly elections are held. On the other hand, PMLN has a good standing in Baluchistan as well where it is standing at neck to neck with PTI and PPP, where both parties have 18% and 17% support respectively.

At the national level the leaning of the voters towards PPP is at 16%; but on the other hand, provincial wise analysis shows that the PPP is the most popular party of Sindh, where it has support of 44% respondents. Another important point is that PPP is far ahead in Sindh from its arch rival parties PTI, PMLN and MQM Pakistan, where these rival parties enjoy support of only 17%, 7% and 5% respondents respectively.

JUIF received support of 5% respondents at the national level, yet it has a good standing in KPK as well, where it is the second most popular party after PTI and is far ahead from PMLN, ANP and PPP with 23% support.



In Baluchistan, JUIF is standing at fourth position, leaving behind nationalist's parties like BAP, PKMAP and BNP with support of 14% respondents there. Also, it is not far behind from PTI, PMLN and PPP, keeping in view the margin of error of this survey, which is $\pm 2-3\%$, it can be said that the JUIF is standing neck to neck with PPP and PMLN in Baluchistan.



The findings of this survey shows that if the elections held again PTI and PML-N will be in neck and neck fight without any clear winner. Thus, portraying the scenario of hung parliament. These findings also show that the PMLN would be in a position of forming a government in Punjab, PPP in Sindh, PTI in KPK, while in Balochistan it will be anybody's game with the help of nationalist parties as always.

SHORT BIO OF THE WRITER

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Tariq Junaid, with his three decades of experience of working in different governmental, non-governmental and international research institutions, formed the Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) in March 2011. IPOR has researched with a range of local and international organizations. IPOR opinion polls are widely respected by its local & international clients, political parties, media etc. Since its inception IPOR has delivered more than 500 different kinds of research and evaluation projects.

Junaid holds master degrees in Mass Communications (1991) and in Development Studies (1997) from Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Netherlands. Junaid also completed Executive Education Certificate in "Strategic Management of Non-Governmental Organizations" (2007) from John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA, USA.