

## ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

### WOMEN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The most fundamentally political engagement is social interaction, thus the initial concern of this study was to locate women socially. **Table 2.1** reveals that the majority of women were found in religious, women's and community groups. The least representative group was the trade union movement. The data shows many nascent community and women's groups, within the last ten years. Of the members in these groups interviewed only three held positions at the executive levels. All of these were secretarial positions. Women were not represented at the executive level in any groups.

**TABLE 2.1 Women's Community Participation by Administrative Region.**

ACTIVE MEMBER												
Group/Organisation	Reg # 1	Reg # 2	Reg # 3	Reg # 4	Reg # 5	Reg # 6	Reg # 7	Reg # 8	Reg # 9	Reg # 10	TOTAL	%
Community Group	1	3	1	7	13	10	3	1	6	3	48	11
Women's Group	3	10	3	14	14	11	2	4	12	4	77	17
Religious Group	1	7	6	25	11	19	1	2	3	5	80	18
CTA/PTA	1	7	2	13	4	4	1	3	2	1	38	8

Trade Unions	..	..	..	4	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	0.8
Youth Clubs	..	5	..	10	2	2	1	..	..	4	24	5.3
Sport Clubs/Groups	..	4	..	3	1	1	1	..	3	..	13	2.9
Other	..	2	1	4	..	1	1	1	2	..	12	2.6

The most important reason cited for belonging (42%) was similar interests with the group or organization as the principal reason for becoming members. The researcher learned that in some instances these groups were the social support that helped members through very difficult periods in their lives. Women were slightly more concerned about bettering the living conditions of the community, than they were with issues of personal development. **(See Table 2.2)** The craft and sewing groups were found to be in higher demand and prevalence in rural and hinterland communities than in the urban centres. In the "other" category women revealed that these groups offer an invaluable social network to women who are striving for independence and their own income. In other cases women cited the need to advance a women's agenda as a principal reason for joining a group or organization.

<b>Reason</b>	<b>No of Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
<i>Shared the concerns and interest of the group.</i>	188	42
<i>To build my self-confidence and ability to deal with issues</i>	121	27
<i>To organize activities for the betterment of the community/village</i>	145	33
<i>To work with local gov't authorities, ngos and other groups</i>	45	10
<i>I want to be a political activist.</i>	20	4
<i>The possibility of accessing funds for projects</i>	30	7
<i>Other</i>	149	33
<i>Not in a group/organization</i>	40	9

An overwhelming majority of women were discouraged from getting involved in community activities because of family responsibilities and work, twenty-seven and twenty-eight per cent respectively. In many group discussions the view was reiterated that the primary concern of women was to meet the basics need of the family. These

women did not perceive community development as inextricably linked to their personal and familial well being. It can be noted from the data **Table 2.3** that ethnicity/race had the least relevance in this regard.

However, a small percentage (five) noted that at the level of the village members of the various parliamentary parties would engage in verbal feuds that resulted in the denial of some public services in some hinterland areas. This situation created a great deal of disenchantment for women who are considering running for local office. Thirty-per cent in the “not discouraged” category represents those women who are already involved in politics and others who are not so inclined.

<i>Factor</i>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>As a % Total Population</b>
<i>Too busy with family responsibilities</i>	120	27
<i>Too busy with work</i>	127	28
<i>My race/ethnicity</i>	6	1
<i>Lack of qualifications</i>	10	2
<i>Lack of family/community support</i>	34	8
<i>My partner discourages me</i>	13	3
<i>Lack of funds</i>	30	7
<i>I think males did a better job</i>	9	2
<i>Political rivalry within the villages/community</i>	22	5
<i>Never been interested in community activities</i>	30	7
<i>Other</i>	34	8
<i>Not discouraged</i>	142	32

The influence that women have on public policy as shown by the numbers in **Table 2.4a** & **Table 2.4b** below. The greater number of women elected versus those appointed must be noted in the context that elections in Guyana have not been directly for a candidate but rather a political party. The centrally controlled parties determine who would be the best candidate to maintain the parties’ share in a particular constituency. The event of an election caused some women see their position as directly elected rather than appointed.

<b>Table 2.4a: Percentage distribution of women who are politically active.</b>						
<b>Council</b>	<b>Chair</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Councilor</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>%</b>
Community Development Councils	4	0.89	8	1.79	..	..
Amerindian Village Council	1	0.22	2	1.44	..	..
Neighbourhood Democratic Council	2	0.44	8	1.79	..	..
Regional Democratic Council	0	..	13	2.91	..	..
Parliament	..	..	..	..	2	0.44
Political Party/Arm	3	0.67	3	0.67	5	1.12
Other	1	0.22	2	0.44	..	..

<b>Table 2.4b Percentage Distribution of Women Elected/Appointed to Councils</b>						
<b>Council</b>	<b>Elected</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Appointed</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Joined</b>	<b>%</b>
Community Development Council	9	2	3	0.67	..	..
Amerindian Village Council	3	1	..	..	..	..
Neighbourhood Democratic Council	8	2	2	0.44	..	..
Regional Democratic Council	10	2	3	0.67	..	..
Parliament	2	0	..	..	..	..
Political Party/Arm	2	0	5	1.12	5	1.12
Other	1	0	2	0.44	..	..

The source of funding for an election campaign continues to evoke a fair deal of discussion. The data here is striking, in that, party finance and fundraisers are the highest income generators. Some party finance is realized through fundraising activities mostly spearheaded by women. This is borne out by data shown in **Table 2.5 & 2.6** below. One can surmise that “didn’t have to campaign” conforms with the practice of the party executive to select councilors and members of parliament after winning seats in a given constituency.

<b>Table 2.5: Women’s Source of Finance for Elections Campaign</b>			
	<b>Source</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>

<i>Personal money</i>	11	2
<i>Contributions from relatives</i>	6	1
<i>Fund raising activities</i>	20	4
<i>Donations from business people</i>	9	2
<i>Political party finance</i>	21	5
<i>Other</i>	2	0
<i>Didn't have to campaign</i>	7	2

Not surprisingly, a significant 17 per cent volunteered time and facilities to election campaigns rather than put themselves up for election. A similar proportion (11 per cent) was asked for donations and helped to raise funds for the party. Twenty-three per cent of the respondents said that they had never been asked to by anyone.

**Table 2.6: Women's Contribution to Election Campaigns**

<b>Contribution</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
<i>I volunteered money</i>	48	11
<i>I volunteered time and facilities</i>	76	17
<i>I helped to raise funds</i>	47	11
<i>I was asked for donations by a fundraiser</i>	50	11
<i>I have never been asked by anyone</i>	101	23
<i>Never contributed anything</i>	208	47

When asked (**Table 2.7**) why women did not run for office, respondents expressed concern about the time this would take away from the family. The data here is similar to the reasons cited above for not participating in community activities. A significant portion held the view that "politics is too dirty and ugly". Fifty per cent of the women interviewed were either disinterested in participation at this level or felt that the question did not apply to their circumstances. Councillors elected to local communities are not paid so that for most women charged with families running for office is perceived as a personal cost rather than a benefit. Some women have expressed the need for more training that would allow them to participate as informed and competent citizens in decision-making. Indeed a number of women who indicate disinterest feel that they are not competent enough for the job based on the level of education attained. This fallacy can be addressed through training programmes and seminars.

<b>Table 2.7: Reasons why women did not run for office</b>		
<b>Reason</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
<i>It would take too much time away from my family</i>	71	16
<i>It would take too much time away from my paid work</i>	44	10
<i>Politics is too dirty and ugly</i>	67	15
<i>I may lose my job/friends</i>	7	2
<i>I worry about the safety of my family</i>	20	4
<i>Financially, it isn't worth the trouble</i>	23	5
<i>My family will not support the decision on to run for office</i>	21	5
<i>I did not receive tangible help with child care &amp; transp.</i>	2	0
<i>Don't feel I am educated enough</i>	30	7
<i>Other</i>	48	11
<i>Not applicable /not interested</i>	223	50

**Table 2.8** shows that 18 per cent said that changes in family responsibilities, would enable them to run for office, 14 per cent needed more information politics and 10 per cent felt that their financial circumstances and self-confidence would have to change. The most frequently cited factor (27 per cent) was that “the way politics is played in Guyana” would have to change for women to actively pursue political goals. The researcher found that many women perceived ‘Guyanese politics’ with the two major contenders PPP/C and PNC/R as confrontational.

Women registered dissatisfaction with the conflicts and tensions which existed in local communities because the major parties could not find common ground. Women interviewed expressed the need for a more conciliatory approach by both the PPP/C and PNC/R, and did not think that more women entering the game at this stage could modify the political intransigence. On the other hand some women felt that one party or the other was contributing and benefiting from the social and political fracture. In sum, women see changing the political culture in Guyana as a prerequisite to their full participation.

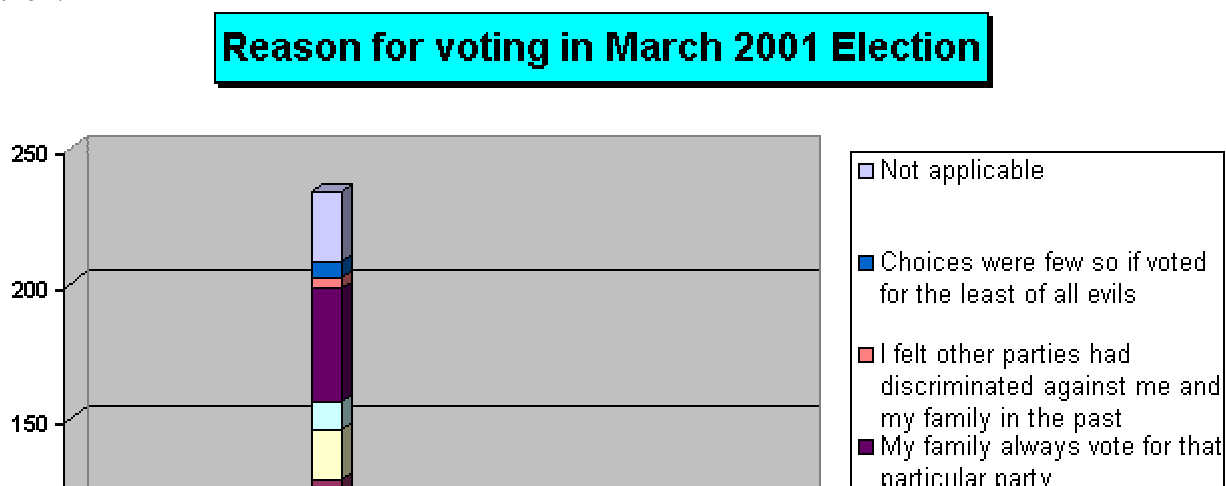
**Table 2.8: Changes which enable women to run for office**

<i>Change</i>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
<i>The way politics is played in Guyana</i>	119	27
<i>Legislative provisions for women to become elected</i>	35	8
<i>My family responsibilities</i>	82	18
<i>My financial circumstances</i>	43	10
<i>My career /job</i>	35	8
<i>The way I feel about myself</i>	45	10
<i>I need more information</i>	61	14

The premise for voting at elections in Guyana is arguably on ethnic polarization. Many politicians and citizens alike would have themselves believe that this is otherwise and deny that while on the "hustings" there are racial undertones and appeals to their respective race based constituencies. Yet there is a dearth of thoughtful manifestos and constructive debate about the issues of development, which should concern Guyana. The question was posed to ascertain if women's pattern of voting deviated from the norm with a view to determining the prospects for more purposeful elections in the future.

Based on the data below it can be argued that women have voted along ethnic lines unintentionally or really perceived that the party they voted for had discussed development plans rather than engaged in mudslinging and the high octane political rhetoric which is common in Guyana. In every region except Regions 1, 8 & 9, women felt that their vote was based on the plans the parties had proposed. A convergence of interests between individual desires, needs of the community and how the party articulated these may explain the disparity seen in the latter regions.

Figure 2.1



## REGIONS

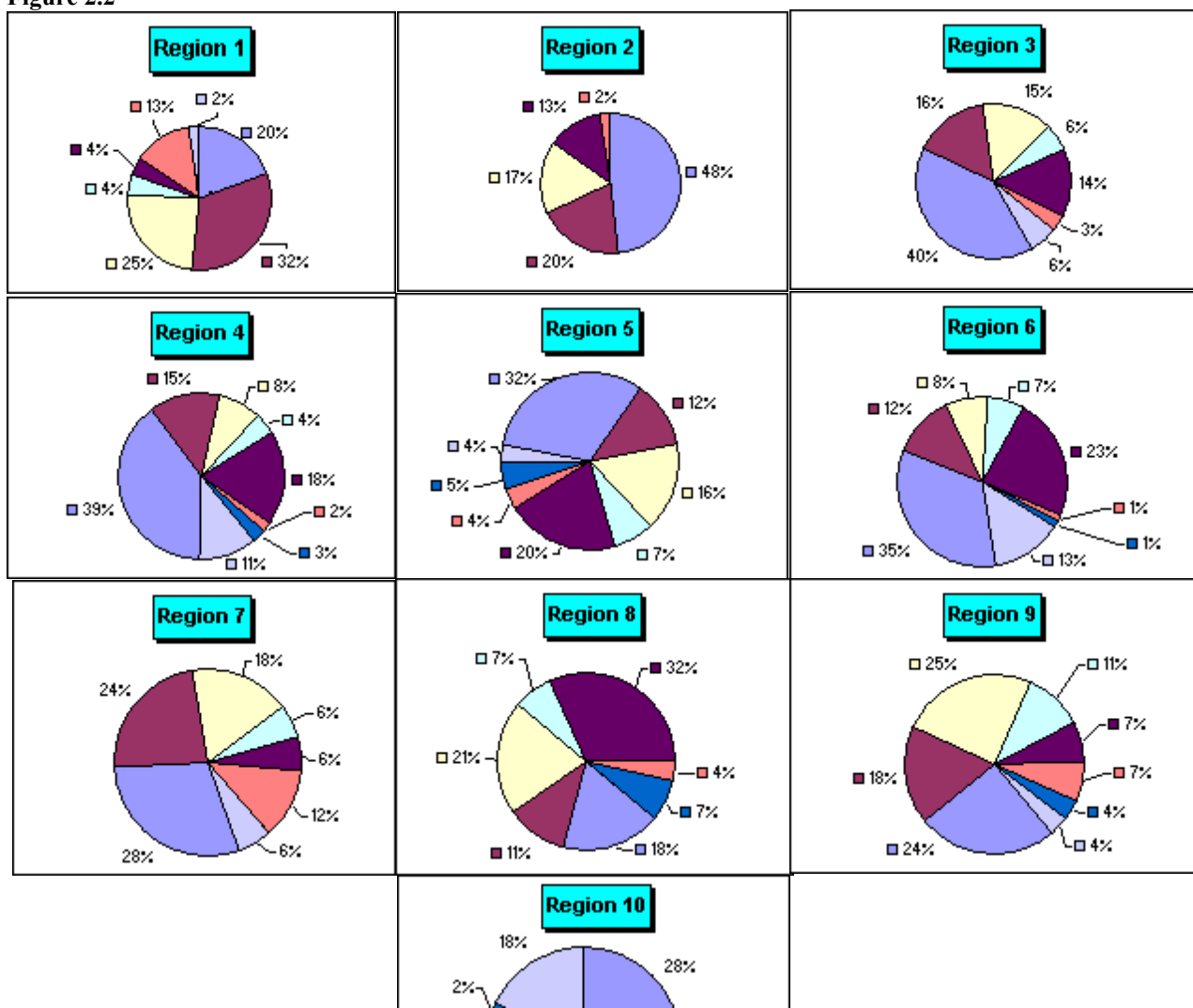
At the same time **Figure 2.2** shows that was traditional familial voting in the regions particularly Regions 3, 4, 5, 6 & 8. Most political parties observe and respect invisible boundaries. In some areas and/or regions particular political parties have no representatives. In fact the party presence in certain the local communities emerged as a major contributory factor in women deciding which party would receive their vote. In all the regions except 6 and 4 women voted for a party based on how they proposed to improve community life.

While past discrimination by other parties is often cited as a reason for voting against a particular party. There were fewer instances than expected of women voting for a party because other parties had discriminated against her and family in the past. A significant percentage of the women interviewed did not vote in the last election particularly in Region 4-11%, Region 6-13%, and Region 10 -18%.



**Percentage Distribution on Voting in March 2001 Elections by Administrative Region.**

Figure 2.2

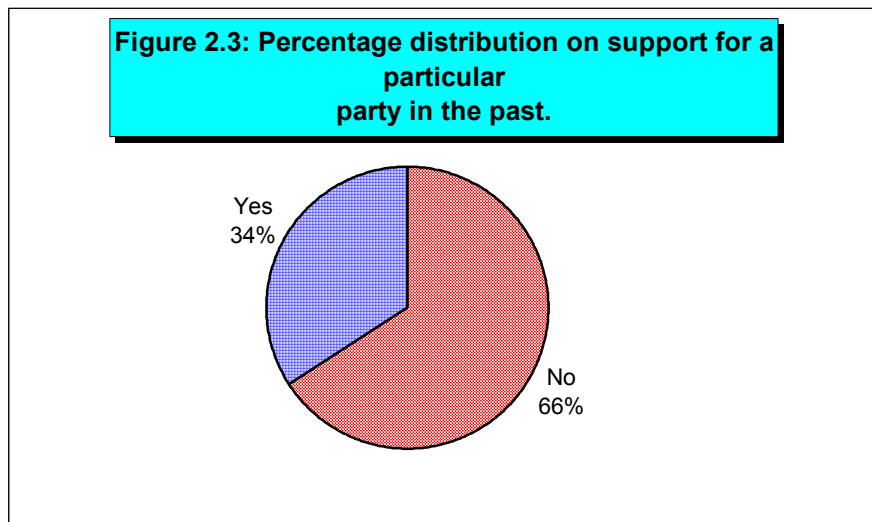


Only 34 per cent of women interviewed admitted to supporting a particular party in the past. This finding is not consistent with the persistent racial voting patterns observed in the General and Regional Elections of 1992, 1997 and 2001.

Further probing of respondents found that 76 per cent of the population intends to vote at the upcoming local government elections. The other 24 per cent felt that their vote was inconsequential to the overall election result therefore they would not participate.

Overall women felt a great sense of civic responsibility and were hopeful that new elections will improve the community. There is also widespread expectation that these elections will give birth to more responsive, citizen-oriented forms of local authorities.

A range of reasons including the advancement of women, community development, solutions to violent crimes and domestic abuse issues compel these women to vote for responsive and effective local government officials. On the other hand some had more myopic goals of keeping their party in office.



### **WOMEN AND ADVOCACY**

The influence of civil society on public policy is generally viewed as desirable. As such a number of questions were asked of women with regard to advocacy. The following data highlights the capacity of groups of women to organize campaigns for change in a sustained manner.

Indeed these findings along with the data discussed on the media in the next section point to the fact that the space for advocacy in Guyana is almost non-existent. Groups involved in advocacy point out that the institutional responses to campaigns have been tardy or altogether weak. This among other reasons make campaigning and advocacy the least attractive means of influencing public policy for women. Historically, the political structures and culture did not provide the space for civil society input to public policy. The present political climate frustrates innovations and intervention by civil interests groups. The first concern is the appropriate definition of whom or what constitutes civil society. A number of key informants opine that any expression of contrary views on issues of public concern was seen as a challenge to the institutions of power and partisan.

A prerequisite to sustained and effective advocacy and networking is being knowledgeable of the issues and the cost of such actions. **Tables 3.1** below points to the amount of training women have received in the selected areas. Less than half the women interviewed attended leadership seminars, twenty-five per cent learned budgeting and accounting and another 25 per cent said they had taken training in public speaking. Those who learned record keeping exceeded the latter by 3 per cent. In other words the data makes a strong for capacity building, if women are to be effective change agents in Guyanese society.

	No	%	Yes	%
<i>Leadership skills</i>	276	62	170	38
<i>Strategic planning</i>	354	79	92	21
<i>Record keeping</i>	319	72	127	28
<i>Budgeting and Accounting</i>	334	75	112	25
<i>Report and Proposal writing</i>	353	79	93	21
<i>Campaign/Advocacy</i>	364	82	82	18
<i>Public speaking</i>	336	75	110	25
<i>Legal requirements for the group</i>	390	87	56	13
<i>Membership development</i>	350	78	96	22
<i>Other</i>	437	98	9	2

The main element of most group/organization plans has been fundraising activities. This is not surprising given the limited funds available to implement community projects. Often times this is the only element for the work plan that gets attention. There exists the inherent danger that an organization/group becomes overrun from these activities and deviate from its original purpose. **Table 3.2** indicates that election of office bearers, strategy review and a priority list rank next in order of importance. It is noteworthy that of the 18 per cent of the women who received advocacy training a relatively high percentage (17 per cent) placed this on their work plan. On the other hand with very

limited exposure to strategic planning, many women have been reviewing and updating the work programmes with a long term view to accomplishing specific goals in the community or their sphere of operation.

<i>Element of the work plan</i>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
<i>A strategy that is reviewed or updated annually</i>	155	35
<i>Elections for office bearers</i>	175	39
<i>Fundraiser(s)</i>	183	41
<i>Governing rules and regulations</i>	152	34
<i>An annual list of priority activities to work on</i>	155	35
<i>Advocacy</i>	75	17
<i>Timelines</i>	127	28

Consultations with more established women's organizations/groups did not reveal this strength. One informant noted that while strategic planning is most desirable, implementation by that particular group is delayed because of the benefits derived from the flexibility of the current arrangement on a range of issues. This lends itself to collaboration with various groups with shared interests.

From data in **Table 3.3** it can be inferred that of the women interviewed in this study 11 per cent were willing to register their concern over the development of their local communities as indicated by campaigns for better roads and facilities. Domestic violence campaigns were also important with 15 per cent of responses. Women's rights is much further down the lists of priorities. Other social issues - HIV/AIDS, health care, education, water, power supply and women's general development - also emerged as priorities for different groups.

The finding that many women have not been involved in campaigns can be explained in part by the widely held view that to campaign is to register "discontent with the government of the day." Another perception is that campaigns are the same as

demonstrations and protests and are not a part of the advocacy process. Hence many women describe their reluctance to be a part of advocacy campaigns as fear of recrimination or being perceived as partisan.

<i>Type of Campaign</i>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
<i>Domestic violence</i>	68	15
<i>Safe and healthy environment</i>	61	14
<i>Better health care/facilities</i>	74	17
<i>Better road/bridges</i>	49	11
<i>Women's rights</i>	60	13
<i>Other</i>	10	2

In some hinterland and rural communities the opportunities for advocacy was non-existent and the institutions for redress were almost non-existent. The only recourse to citizens from these locations is the use of the media and efforts are handicapped by limited access.

The survey shows that a common source of campaign finance was fundraisers as shown in **Table 3.4** below. Personal contributions followed closely behind with 72 per cent. Contributions from residents and other sympathetic persons was represented by 9 per cent. Individuals and non-governmental organizations with shared interests and other funding agencies reveal a mere 7 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. The annual budget of the groups in many cases were insufficient or non-existent to support advocacy campaigns.

<b>Source of Finance</b>	<b>Reg # 1</b>	<b>Reg # 2</b>	<b>Reg # 3</b>	<b>Reg # 4</b>	<b>Reg # 5</b>	<b>Reg # 6</b>	<b>Reg # 7</b>	<b>Reg # 8</b>	<b>Reg # 9</b>	<b>Reg # 10</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<i>Contribution from residents</i>	4	6	3	10	8	4	1	2	1	3	42
<i>Contribution from members</i>	5	7	5	21	13	8	1	2	3	7	72

<i>Interested individuals and NGOs</i>	3	4	2	8	3	1	2	3	1	3	30
<i>Fundraiser(s)</i>	4	9	5	22	11	8	2	2	3	9	75
<i>Group's annual budget</i>	3	3	1	6	4	1	1	1	1	2	23
<i>Funding Agencies</i>	..	3	2	7	4	4	1	1	..	3	25
<i>Other</i>	..	1	..	2	1	1	..	..	..	1	6

The survey probed respondents to find out whether they worked with another group(s) in advocacy campaigns. It is noteworthy that the groups that most women collaborated with in their attempts to ventilate issues were other residents of the community (17 per cent), religious groups (16 per cent) and the people affected by the issue (15 per cent). A striking correlation exists between the issues – roads, domestic violence and the environment and the groups women choose to work with. On the other hand one cannot ignore the seeming lack of inclination to collaborate with local authorities, government ministries, private sector and the media.

Women were asked about the success of the activities. A number of women and groups pointed out these are ongoing so that it was too early to determine the results. A few successes were recorded in the campaigns on domestic violence, traffic laws and road rehabilitation. The membership of a few groups increased as a result of the campaigns raising awareness and effecting attitudinal change. In other instances local authorities took remedial action or changed policies.

<b>Target Group</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>General public/residents of the community</i>	368	83	78	17
<i>Government ministry/agency</i>	418	94	28	6
<i>People affected by the issue</i>	377	85	69	15
<i>Reporter/Journalist</i>	431	97	15	3
<i>Local authority</i>	414	93	32	7
<i>Business people</i>	406	91	40	9
<i>Religious groups</i>	374	84	72	16
<i>Other</i>	442	99	4	1

Many women noted minimal improvements in roads, drainage and sanitary conditions in their communities. At the same time limited success was noted in the areas of institutional support for domestic violence especially at the level of law enforcement agencies; support for better health care facilities; rehabilitation of roads; and de-silting of canals and drains and better potable water supply.

In cases where follow-up activity was appropriate or feasible groups have monitored by site visits, meetings, written correspondence and distribution of pamphlets or bulletins.

None of women only targeted men in their endeavours to resolve community or national problems as shown in **Table 3.5b** below. Women were more likely to work with other women in all instances than with men. This indicates that women think that other women can invariably contribute to the resolution of problems. The value of involving both sexes was the strategy most used by women to bring about the desired change.

<b>Table 3.5b: Target Groups in advocacy campaign by male and female representation</b>			
<b>Target Group</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>B</b>
<i>General public/residents of the community</i>	21	..	40
<i>Government ministry/agency</i>	..	..	12
<i>People affected by the issue</i>	22	..	26
<i>Reporter/Journalist</i>	6	..	8
<i>Local authority</i>	5	..	8
<i>Business people</i>	..	..	18
<i>Religious groups</i>	18	..	27

The extremely limited use of the media by women throughout all regions should be of concern to interest groups, given its potency as a medium for widespread dissemination. This study found that most women were disinclined to use the electronic and print media to help groups send their messages across to the public, and instead relied on word of mouth to disseminate information about the advocacy campaigns.



Understandably access to the media is a challenge to groups and individuals in rural and hinterland communities. Groups in these areas still rely heavily on the bell cry, posters and community meetings.

<b>Method</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Public meetings</i>	387	87	48	11
<i>Newspaper/Radio/Television Reports</i>	370	83	35	8
<i>Newsletters</i>	398	89	15	3
<i>Flyers and posters</i>	377	85	47	11
<i>Loudspeakers</i>	406	91	22	5
<i>Word of mouth</i>	..	..	91	20

The data in **Table 3.7** clearly shows that a majority of women collaborated through meetings with other groups. Further probing of respondents revealed that the most important contribution of other group brought to the table was moral support. In addition, efforts to reach out to other groups were particularly useful for the technical skills and knowledge that were shared to accomplish the desired goals. The financial resources were the least cited method of collaboration.

<b>Method</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
<i>Meetings</i>	68	15
<i>Written position statement</i>	18	4
<i>Lobbying actions</i>	13	3
<i>Small projects</i>	54	12
<i>Research and information sharing</i>	38	9
<i>Fundraising</i>	48	11
<i>Other joint programme-related activities</i>	18	4

Data in **Table 3.8** points out that women felt very positively about working with other groups. The greatest number - 72 per cent felt that success was more likely than failure, 62 per cent also felt that there was strength in numbers and another 54 per cent think that concerted efforts were more effective. A much smaller amount (25 per cent) held negative views about the likely results of collaboration with others.

**Table 3.8: Percentage Distribution of the outcome of groups working together.**

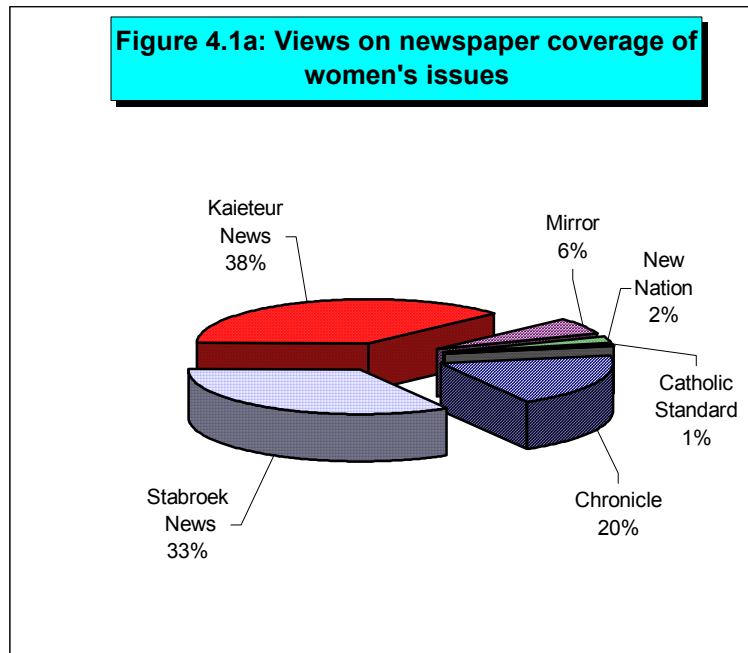
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
<i>Have greater success</i>	319	72
<i>Have more strength</i>	277	62
<i>Use less resources and accomplish more</i>	179	40
<i>Are more effective</i>	242	54
<i>Cause dissatisfaction</i>	45	10
<i>Cause confusion</i>	66	15

### **WOMEN AND THE MEDIA**

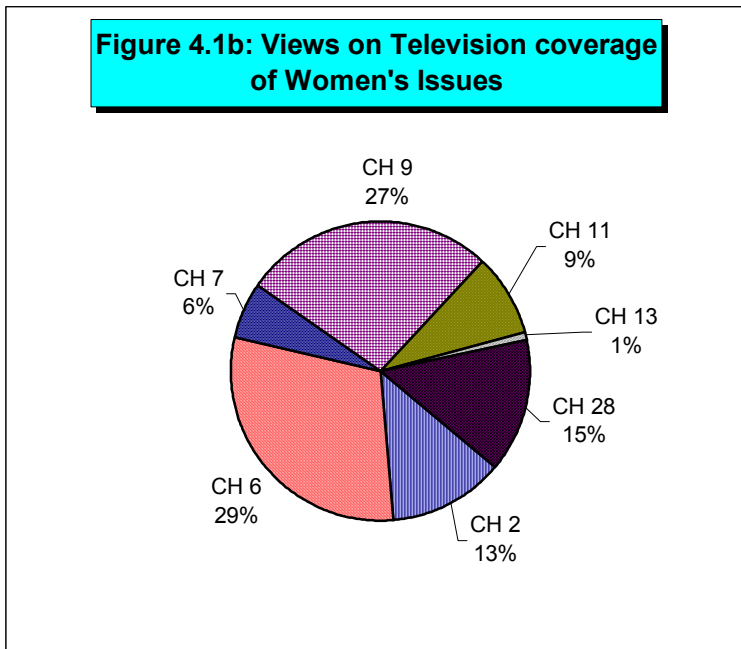
The use of the media is arguably one of the most potent political tools available to the society. Women were asked to give opinions on how the media represented women's issues and interests. The aggregated figures reveal that 38 per cent believed that the Kaieteur news best represented women's interests, 3 per cent fewer believed that of Stabroek News. Only 20 per cent thought that Guyana Chronicle was favorably disposed to women's issues and a total of 9 per cent felt that the weekly New Nation, Mirror and Catholic Standard covered women's issues well.\*

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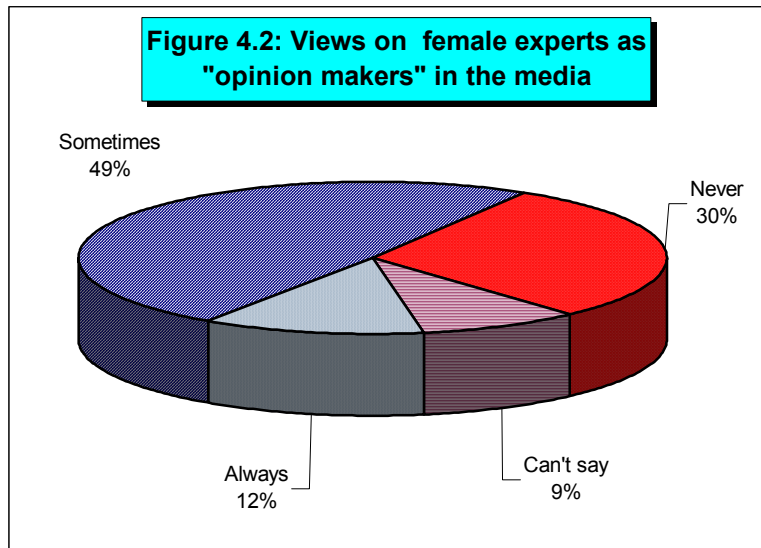
\* New Nation has not published since June 2002.



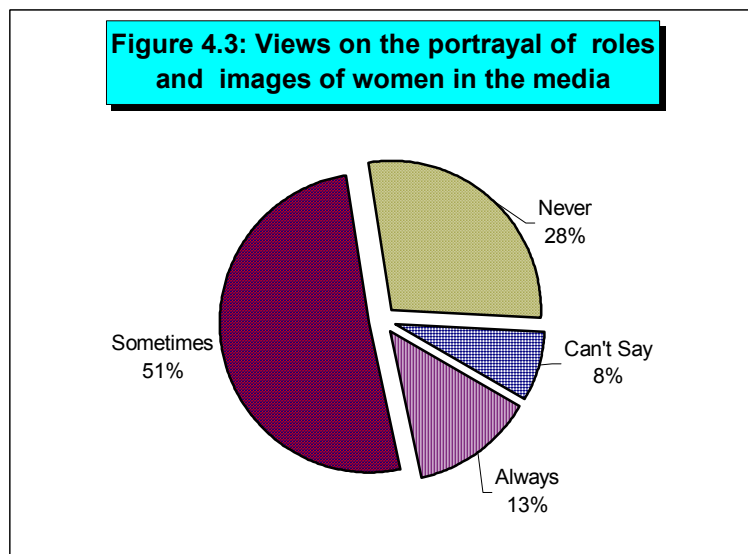
With respect to television front twenty-nine per cent found that CNS Channel 6 was most generous with airtime given to coverage of women's issues. Twenty-seven per cent found that HBTB Channel 9, fifteen per cent identified VCT Channel 28 and thirteen per cent saw GWTB Channel 2 respectively as also favorably disposed to women's issues. RBS Channel 13 was deemed the least favorable while WRHM Channel 7 and GTB Channel 11 earned a relatively meagre endorsement of 6 per cent and 9 per cent respectively.



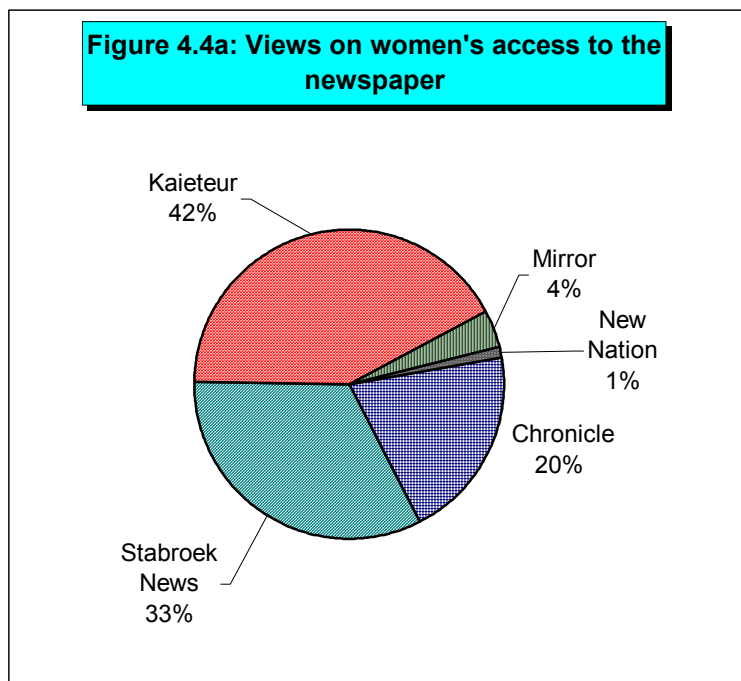
The survey asked whether women experts were visible in Television. Twelve per cent expressed the view that the reporter "always" consulted females as opinion makers. Almost half felt that on issues related to women that the reporter had "sometimes" sought the opinion of a female expert as opposed to solely consulting with males deemed to be the experts in the area. Thirty per cent held the view that the reporters "never" consulted female experts thereby displaying a strong deference to male authority. Nine per cent could not offer an opinion, one reason proffered was lack of access to the electronic media and another was that the viewer never paid attention to who was quoted and seen offering a viewpoint. See **Figure 4.2** below.



Similar views were expressed with regard to the media portrayal of the roles and images of women. Thirteen per cent felt that the roles and images were "always" positive. A little more than half of them felt that the roles and images were "sometimes". On the other hand twenty-eight per cent felt strongly that the media "never" showed positive images of women.



Often stories that celebrated the achievements of women have been given scant attention while stories and advertisements of a more derogatory nature are given more airtime and media attention.



Women were asked to speak on how they felt about the media's readiness to listen to and cover their stories. Forty-two per cent felt that Kaieteur newspaper was the most accessible for ordinary women who had a story to tell. Thirty-three per cent thought that the Stabroek News was also much more likely to tell their stories. Accessibility to the Chronicle was less than half that of the Kaieteur News with 20 per cent. The weekly newspaper the Mirror and New Nation were not cited as favorable to women's issues or their interests\*.

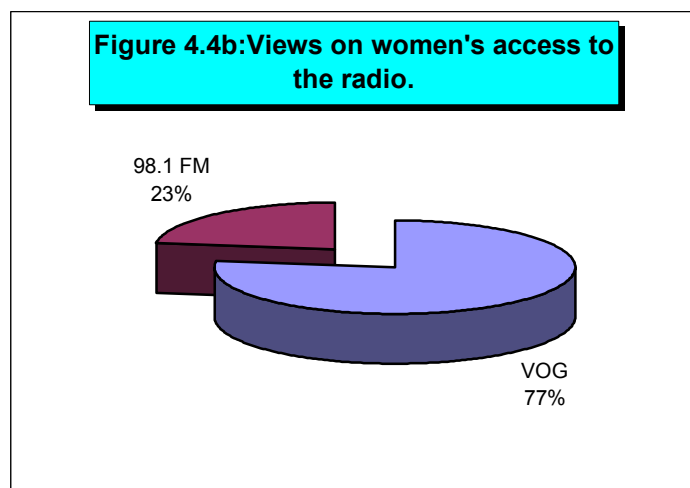
Of interest however was the finding that 45 per cent of women interviewed indicated Stabroek News as the top source of information on the current issues in Guyana. As revealed by **Table 4.1** the daily Chronicle maintained its third rank and the Kaieteur News gained the second highest with 39 per cent.

\* New Nation has not published since June 2002.

**Table 4.1 Views on the Best Source of Information - Newspapers**

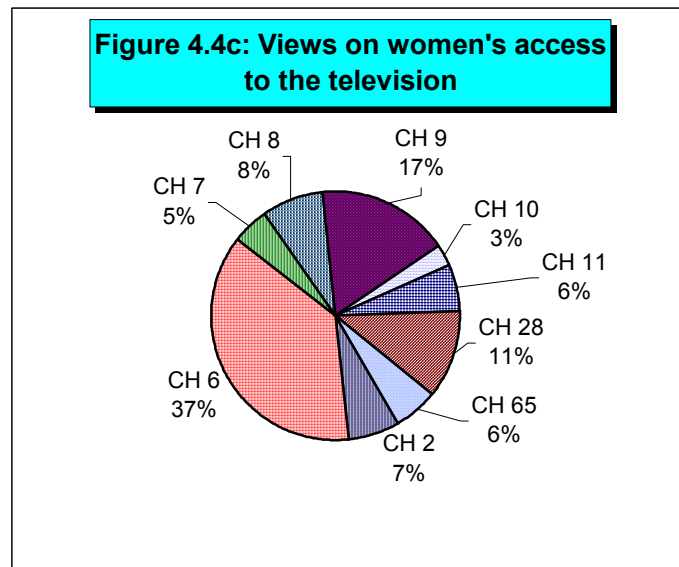
Newspaper	No. of Responses	As a % of Total Population
Chronicle	125	28
Stabroek News	200	45
Kaieteur	174	39
Mirror	9	2
New Nation	8	2
Catholic Standard	1	0

**Figure 4.4b** notes that the Voice of Guyana radio was seen as three times more accessible to women and more woman friendly than 98.1 Hot FM the music station. Given government's monopoly the same data obtained for radio as a source of information on current events in Guyana. However, when compared with television newscasts VOG (23 per cent) obtained a slightly higher percent than Capitol News (20 per cent).



The geographical reach of the media generally impedes women's access to television. Common practice among some private entrepreneurs was to procure tapes of Prime News and Voice of the People for airing in local communities. Residents of region nine only have access to Brazilian media and no access to local television programs. Both Berbice and Essequibo have Channel 8 with different programs schedules. DTV

Channel 8 in Berbice was found to be more accessible (6 percent) than RCA in Essequibo (2 per cent).



Consistent with earlier findings, CNS Channel 6 (37 per cent) was found to be most accessible to ordinary women, followed by HBTv Channel 9 (17 per cent) and VCT Channel 28 (11 per cent). Next were Channel 11 – 6%, Ch 65 – 6%, Ch 2 – 7%, Ch 7 – 5 % and Ch 10 – 3 %.

Women identified domestic violence, health and the dignity of women as the primary issues of concern to women raised in the media. It is important to note that these issues were not always discussed from a gender perspective. Similarly, there is need for discussions on the issues of underemployment, racial discrimination, violent crimes, rape, suicide and single-parenting to offer analysis and different perspectives from gender-sensitive opinion makers.

All newscasts presented in **Table 4.2** below are not broadcasted throughout all regions. Evening News has the widest viewership (35 per cent) among women interviewed, followed by Prime News (33 per cent) and 6 O'clock News (32 per cent).



**Table 4.2 Views on the Best Source of Information - Television**

<b>Newscasts</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
6 O' Clock News	144	32
Capitol News	86	19
Evening News	160	35
News Today	76	17
News Update	57	13
Prime News	145	33

It is the widely held view that talkshows should provide the opportunities for open discussion of issues and presentation of opinions. It is instructive to note that women in this survey displayed disinclination to these programs. **Table 4.3** bears this out. It is impossible to determine to what extent this low viewership in this segment of the media reflects the educative and informational role of the talkshows cited. These sources were selected primarily for access to live and direct coverage of events and stories.

**Table 4.3 Views on Best Source of Information - Talkshows**

<b>Talkshow</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
At Home with Roger	11	2
Getting It Right	3	1
Girl Talk	1	0
Square Talk	2	0
Sunrise Show	7	2
Voice of the People	9	2
Wake up Guyana	3	1
Other	4	1

Just over one third of the women interviewed had used the media to publicize issues. More organized groups have used press conferences, press releases and articles in the newspaper to promote issues of interest to the public for debate or information. The frequency of both letters to the editors and appearance on talkshows were also high. As were paid advertisements, flyers and call in programs on television and radio.

The following **Table 4.4** represents women's views on the frequency with which female politicians speak to women issues. Two members of the PPP/C and one member of the PNC/R emerged as the top three females: Indra Chandrapal, Gail Teixeira and Faith Harding. This question was located in the section related to media precisely because the public depends on the media to publish a story or event. The counterargument to this view is that the media will only publicize events and activities brought to their attention. One cannot ignore the symbolism of a women speaking even if not on women's issues from the data below.

<b>Name</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
Andaiye	6	1
Bibi Shaddick	38	9
Carolyn Rodrigues	31	7
Deborah Backer	44	10
Faith Harding	53	12
Gail Teixeira	50	11
Indra Chandrapal	92	21
Janet Jagan	38	9
Jennifer Westford	8	2
Particia Woolford	8	2
Philomena Sahoye-Shury	16	4
Savitrie Singh	9	2
Shirley Melville	6	1
Varshnie Jagdeo	13	3
Viola Burnham	12	3

## **WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

The final section of the survey attempted to determine the political participation of women in the formal sphere and women's perceptions about the opportunities which exists for achievement of gender equality in Guyana.

The low level of participation at public meetings and consultations points the role of women in shaping public policy. As shown in **Table 5.1**, an average of 11 percent of the respondents attended public consultations or meetings. The highest percentages attended local authority meetings – NDC–19 percent and RDC–16 percent. Consultations on poverty reduction and constitutional reform which had extensive outreach followed with 15 percent and 12 percent respectively.

**Table 5.1 : Percentage Distribution of Women attendance to Public Meetings.**

Public Meeting	Yes	As % of Total Population	No	As % of Total Population
	Constitutional Reform consultations	55	12	391
Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme consultations	67	15	379	85
Joint Local Government Task Force consultations	20	4	426	96
NDC meetings	87	19	359	81
RDC meetings	71	16	375	84
Municipal Council meetings	24	5	422	95
Amerindian Village Council meetings	33	7	413	93
Community Development Councils	86	19	360	81
Local government decentralisation public meetings	37	8	409	92
Other	17	3	429	97

In the group surveyed and as **Table 5.2** indicates 13 percent of women were not aware that these meetings were taking place and 19 percent were not interested in the proposed issues. The survey did not probe this evidence of apathy further. Those who thought attending would "make no difference" equaled the respondents who lacked the self-confidence to attend public forums.

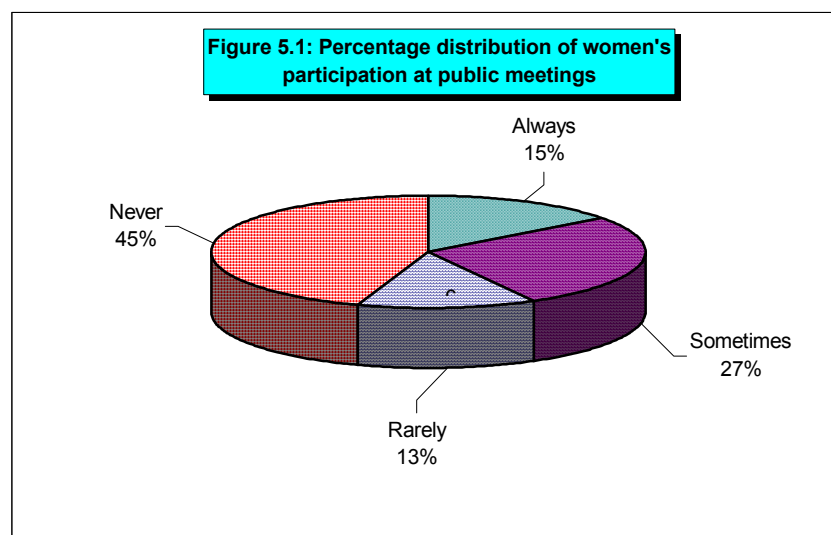
<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Not Interested</b>	<b>Don't Care</b>	<b>Didn't Know</b>	<b>Makes No Difference</b>	<b>Lack of Confidence</b>
<i>Constitutional Reform consultations</i>	92	5	58	14	3
<i>Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme consultations</i>	90	4	75	17	5
<i>Joint Local Government Task force consultations</i>	91	3	85	15	1
<i>NDC meetings</i>	79	5	60	19	1
<i>RDC meetings</i>	84	2	48	16	1
<i>Municipal council meetings</i>	81	2	49	13	1
<i>Amerindian Village council meetings</i>	82	2	40	13	1
<i>Community Development Councils</i>	83	5	51	14	1
<i>Local government decentralisation public meetings</i>	82	7	53	15	1
<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0

Slightly different trends were noted in **Table 5.3** when women were asked about the factors that generally prevented them from attending community meetings. "Not knowing about the meeting" prevented 27 percent of the respondents from attending meetings on the whole. Group discussions revealed that it is common for notices to reach their attention after the meeting(s) had taken place. With respect to statutory local authority meetings of the RDC, NDC and Municipality residents were not aware that these are open to the general public. As was noted above women cited family responsibilities as a factor which inhibits their attendance. Other factors cited were that their partners attended and meetings tended to result in no positive action and too much talk.

**Table 5.3: Percentage Distribution of Factors that Prevent Attendance to Public Meetings.**

Factor	No. of Responses	As a % of Total Population
<i>I was not aware of the meeting(s)</i>	120	27
<i>I was not interested in the issues</i>	92	21
<i>I thought the meeting had a political agenda</i>	46	10
<i>I thought it was not only for officials or other important people</i>	40	9
<i>I was afraid of violence</i>	27	6
<i>It was at an inconvenient time</i>	70	16
<i>The location was too far away</i>	32	7
<i>Family responsibilities</i>	81	18
<i>Meeting were not properly publicized</i>	59	13
<i>Other</i>	25	6
<i>Not applicable</i>	126	28

**Figure 5.1** highlights that even when women attended public meetings, 45 percent 'never' actively participate. Fifteen percent 'always' participate, 27 percent 'sometimes asked questions or made comments, while 13 percent 'rarely' said anything.



Data in **Table 5.4** indicates that 47 percent of the women who knew local councillors, only 27 percent had spoken to them about problems or concerns in the local community. Only 33 percent knew the names of the councilors and 74 percent of the women said they only saw councilors at election time. Twenty-five percent perceived

the councillor's response to issues as timely. It is clear from the data that women had equal opportunity to speak with councilors when they needed to do so. Overall the citizen- local authority relationship can be characterized as weak, when one takes a cursory view of high percentages of women who do not know or communicate with councilors.

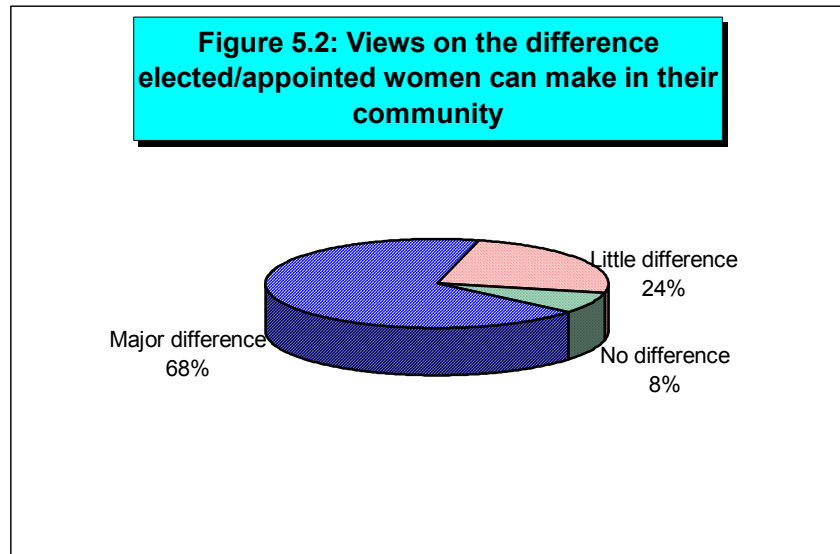
<b>Table 5.4: Relationship with councillors in local community</b>				
	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>I only know their names</i>	297	67	149	33
<i>I only see them at election time</i>	328	74	118	26
<i>I know who they are</i>	237	53	209	47
<i>I have written or spoken to them to discuss problem or issues</i>	324	73	122	27
<i>Councillor(s) respond in a timely manner to problem</i>	334	75	112	25
<i>Councillor(s) are always available to the community</i>	346	78	100	22
<i>Only my husband speak with the councilors</i>	432	97	14	3

Women in this study displayed an impressive awareness of constitutional provisions which seek to enable full participation by women. **Table 5.5** indicates that women were more familiar with legislative provisions related to women's rights as human rights and the prevention of all forms of discrimination.

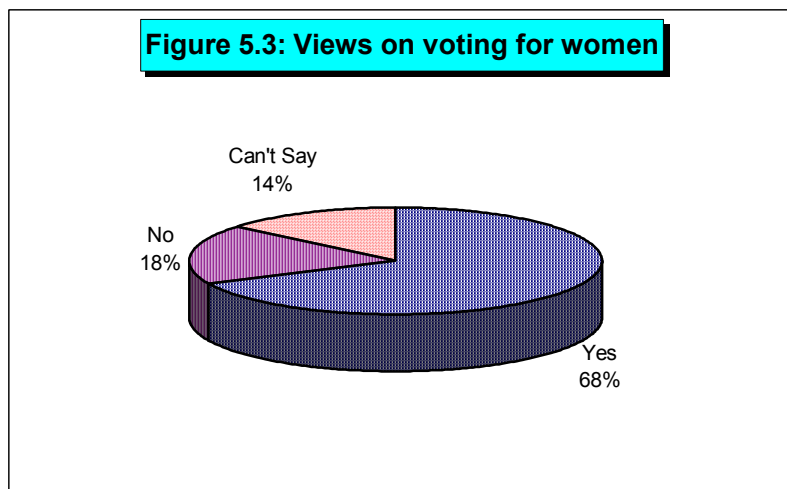
<b>Table 5.5: Women's knowledge of constitutional provisions</b>		
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
<i>Prevention of all forms of discrimination against women</i>	244	55
<i>Elections provisions for 30% women's on voter's lists</i>	215	48
<i>Women's rights as human rights</i>	295	66
<i>Individuals or groups may run for local office</i>	203	46

A large plurality, 68 percent felt that women can have a positive influence on community development as displayed in **Figure 5.2**. Twenty-four percent were less sanguine and 8 percent said that women could not make a difference even when elected or appointed to positions of decision-making. In discussion with groups women said that

new and honest approaches that were consistent with women's style of leadership would not be sustained by their male counterparts.



**Figure 5.3** displays views on whether women were prepared to vote for other women. Sixty-eight percent felt certain that would endorse a woman candidate, 18 percent were not likely to vote for a woman and 14 percent could not say.



When an effort was made to further probe the reasons for voting for a women candidate, respondents overwhelmingly saw the need for reliability and responsibility. Similar views were shared with regard to knowledge of issues affecting the community.

<b>Table 5.6: Factors that would influence a vote for a woman</b>		
<b>Factor</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>As a % of Total Population</b>
<i>Knowledge of the issues affecting the community</i>	343	77
<i>Problem-solving skills</i>	290	65
<i>Reliability and responsibility</i>	353	79
<i>Friendliness</i>	100	22
<i>Intelligence</i>	229	51
<i>Beauty and calm</i>	19	4
<i>Other</i>	19	4

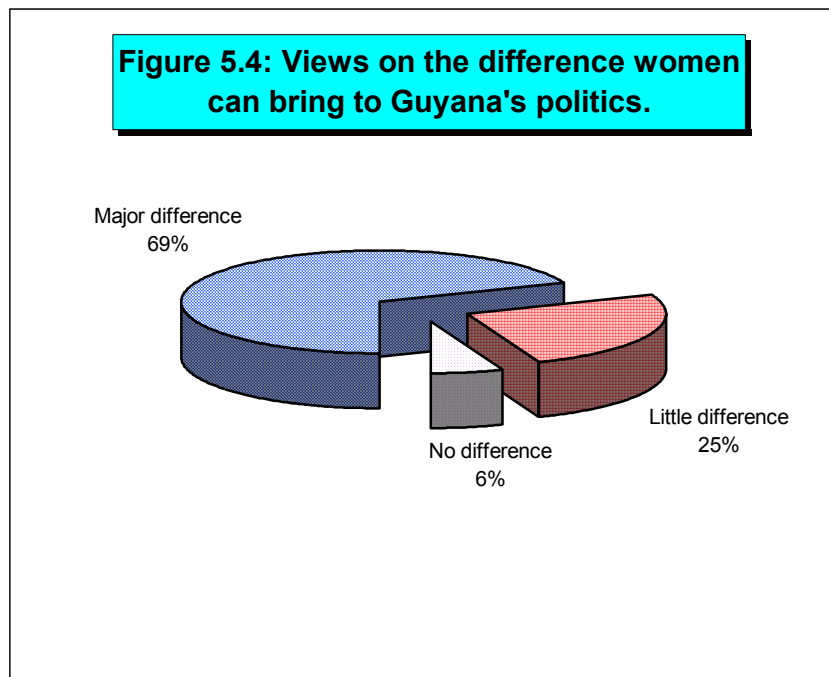
The survey attempted to capture views on women networking across party lines. There were fairly low levels of optimism about networking at the local-18%, regional-17% and national levels-21% compared to 69 percent who felt that the prospects at the community level were much greater. (See **Table 5.6**)

<b>Table 5.7: Levels at which women are likely to work across party lines</b>		
<b>Level of Government</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>As % of Total Population</b>
Local government	82	18%
Regional level	78	17%
National level	95	21%
Community groups	307	69%
Other	4	1%

The majority of respondents (69 percent) as shown by **Figure 5.4** said that women working across party lines call change the way politics is played in Guyana. Twenty-five percent said little difference and 6 percent felt that no difference can be made from women working across party lines.



The researcher probed this area with groups and informants and found the consequential view that women found networking to desirable, but difficulties could arise for women politicians through competing claims on their loyalty. In the words of one informant "the leaders at the top must approve of this approach otherwise, no benefits will incur." This view confirms to popular opinion that women Members of Parliament display lack of commitment to gender-sensitive issues and more allegiance to the political party. On the whole 85 percent of the respondents felt that numerous benefits can be derived from women networking.





Sixty-three per cent of the women in the survey (**Table 5.9**) felt that women were excluded from participation, 53 per cent again perceived family responsibilities as a significant determinant of women's political participation. Lack of confidence 35 per cent and "not educated enough" 25 per cent were also cited as limitations.

<i>Reason</i>	<b>No of Responses</b>	<b>As % of Total Population</b>
<i>Not educated enough</i>	111	25
<i>Lack of confidence</i>	158	35
<i>Not given a chance</i>	281	63
<i>Burdensome family responsibilities</i>	230	52
<i>Not ambitious enough</i>	43	10
<i>Other</i>	28	6

**Figure 5.5** illustrates that 85 per cent of the women interviewed were hopeful about the impact of increased women MPs. Even though there was general dissatisfaction with the aggression and assertive of the current MPs. Women felt that issues related to and affecting women such as crime and unemployment were accorded insufficient attention by the present parliament. On the other hand women were sanguine that a equal distribution of women in the Parliament would allow women's issues fairer attention and treatment.

