



PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT

Bhola By-election 2010

(April 6 to 17, 2010)

Introduction

The Election Working Group (EWG) conducted two pre-election surveys of the election environment throughout Bhola-3 constituency from April 6-17, 2010. EWG Long Term Observers (LTOs) conducted this pre election surveys in two upazila of Bhola-3 constituency.

Methodology

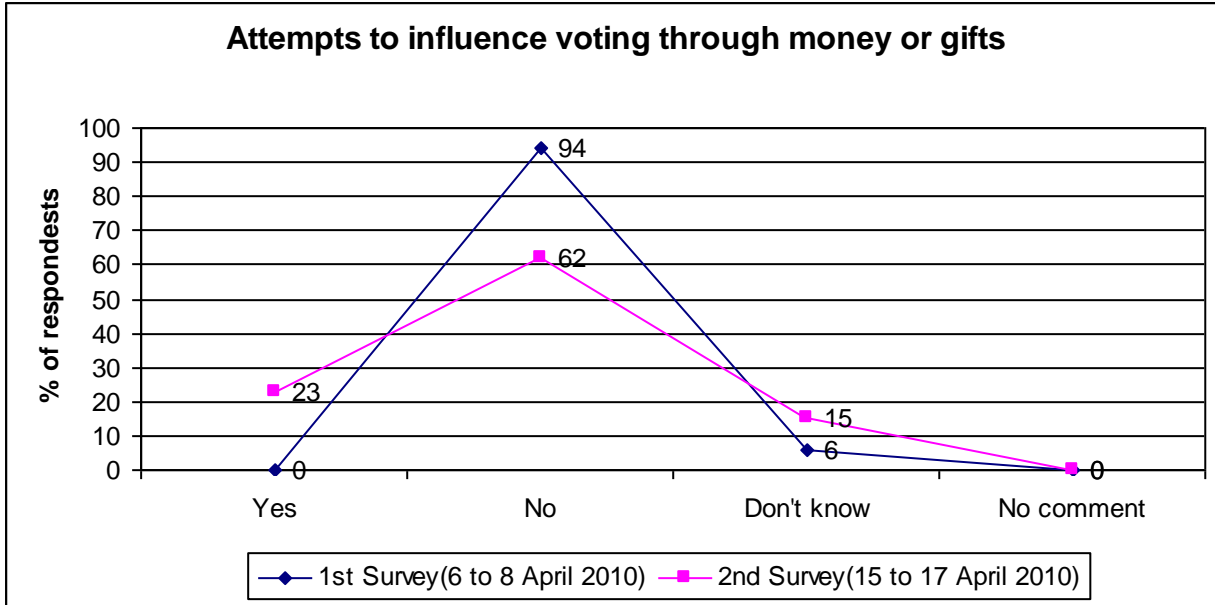
The target population of the EWG surveys consisted of eligible voters in Lalmohan and Tazumuddin Upazila of Bhola-3 Constituency. The target sample size was 280 respondents in two upazilas of Bhola-3 constituency. Each LTOs was responsible for two unions and they interviewed a sample of ten eligible voters in each union. The actual sample size for the two round pre election surveys is shown in the Table below. Respondents included businesspersons, day laborers, vendors, teachers, housewives, professionals, students, religious leaders, and social workers. While the sample was not scientifically drawn, the EWG believes that the findings broadly represent eligible voters' perceptions of the quality of the political environment and that they provide important indicators for critical issues that should be addressed prior to the election to ensure that it is – and is perceived to be – as free, fair, and transparent as possible.

Table: Survey Respondent Sample Size, per Upazila

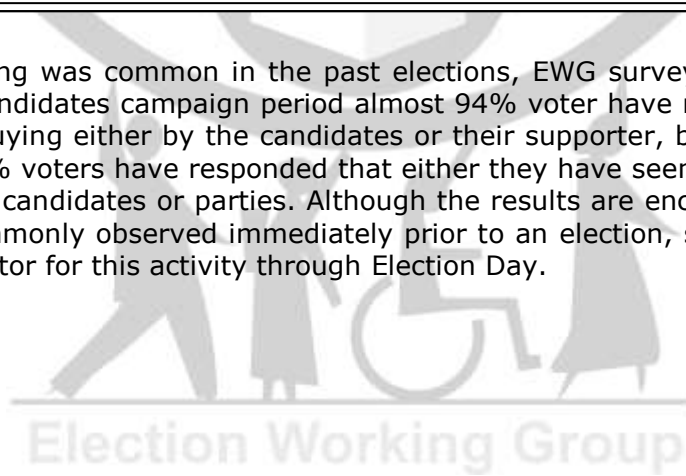
	Lalmohan	Tazumuddin
1st Survey Sample	110	50
2nd Survey Sample	80	40

1 Candidates' Campaigning

1.1 Have you heard of any attempts to influence voting through money or gifts in your area?

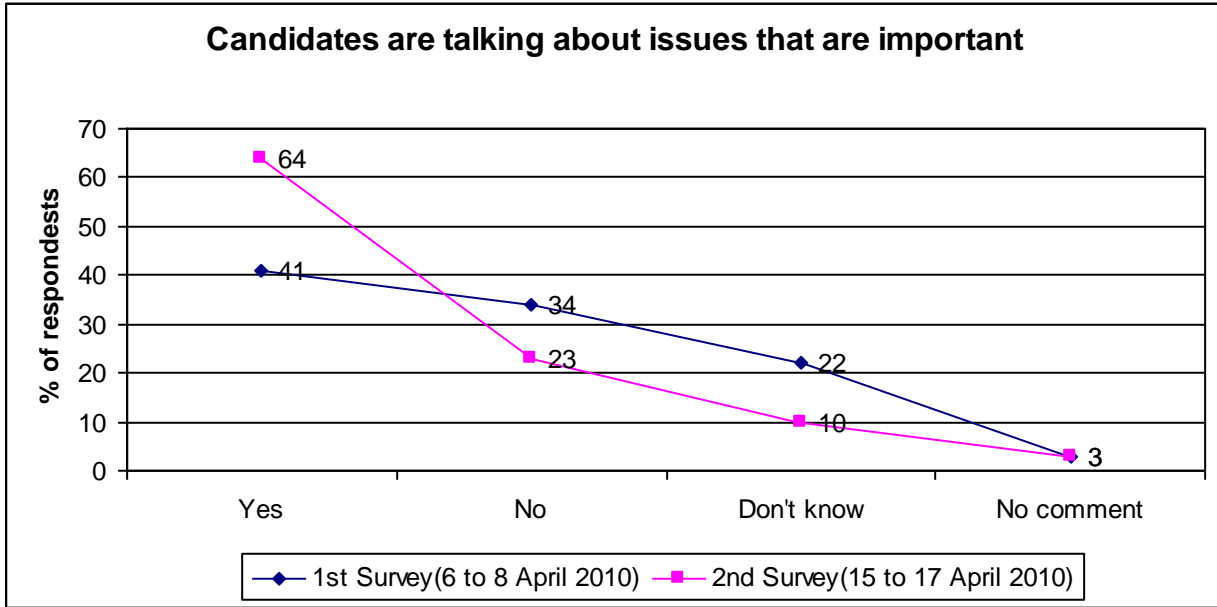


Although vote-buying was common in the past elections, EWG survey revealed that in the beginning of the candidates campaign period almost 94% voter have not seen or heard any attempts of vote buying either by the candidates or their supporter, but few weeks prior to election almost 23% voters have responded that either they have seen or heard attempts of vote buying by the candidates or parties. Although the results are encouraging, but as vote buying is most commonly observed immediately prior to an election, so it will be important to continue to monitor for this activity through Election Day.



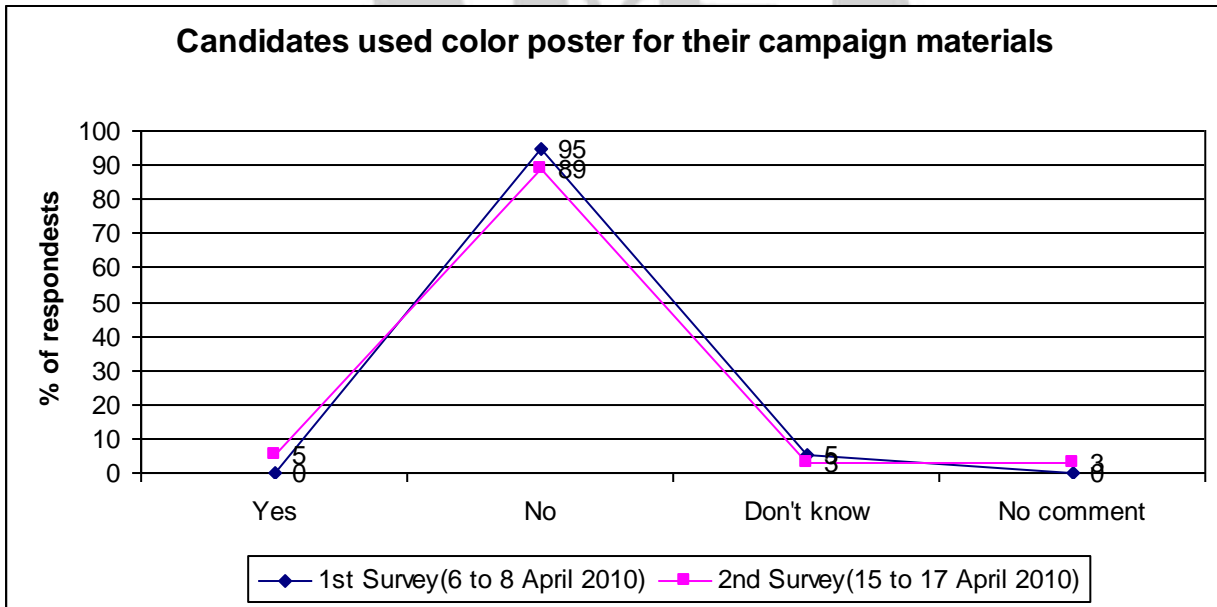
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1.2 Do you feel that candidates are talking about issues that are important to you?



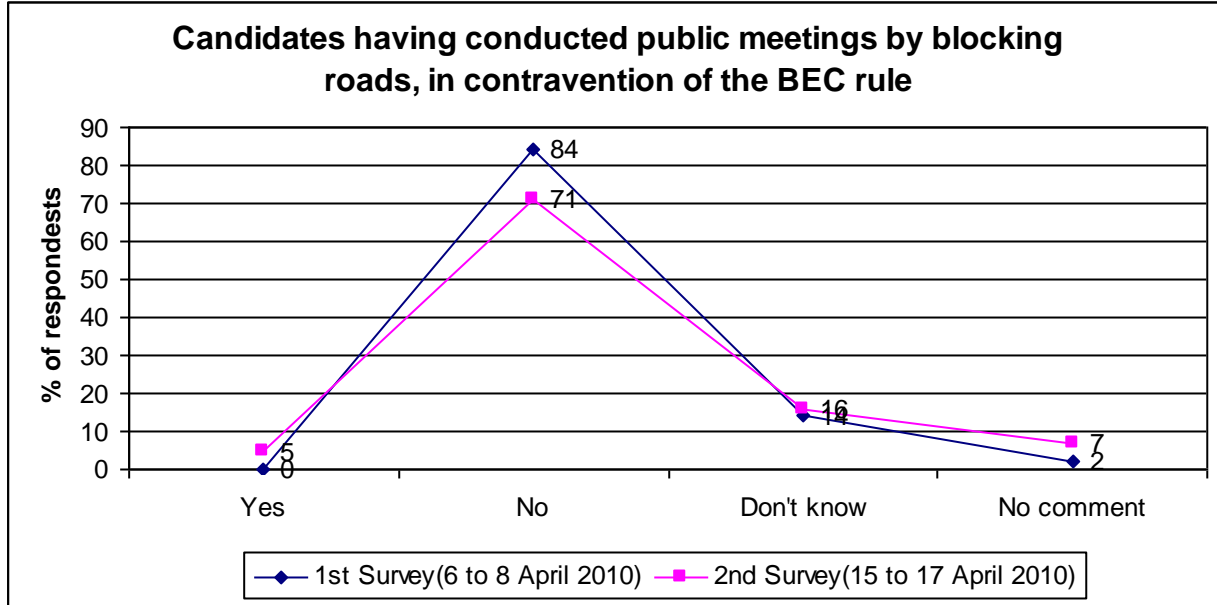
It is clear that at this point, from the beginning of the official campaign period, the candidates have tried to engage the electorate on the issues they consider important. The survey results also reveals (applicable for both of the survey) that almost 64% believe the candidates are addressing critical issues; this number is higher from the earlier days of the campaign period. These findings suggest that there is a good opportunity for candidates to pick up votes during the campaign period by crafting platforms and messages that are responsive to the concerns of voters.

1.3 Have any candidates in your area used color posters for their campaign materials?

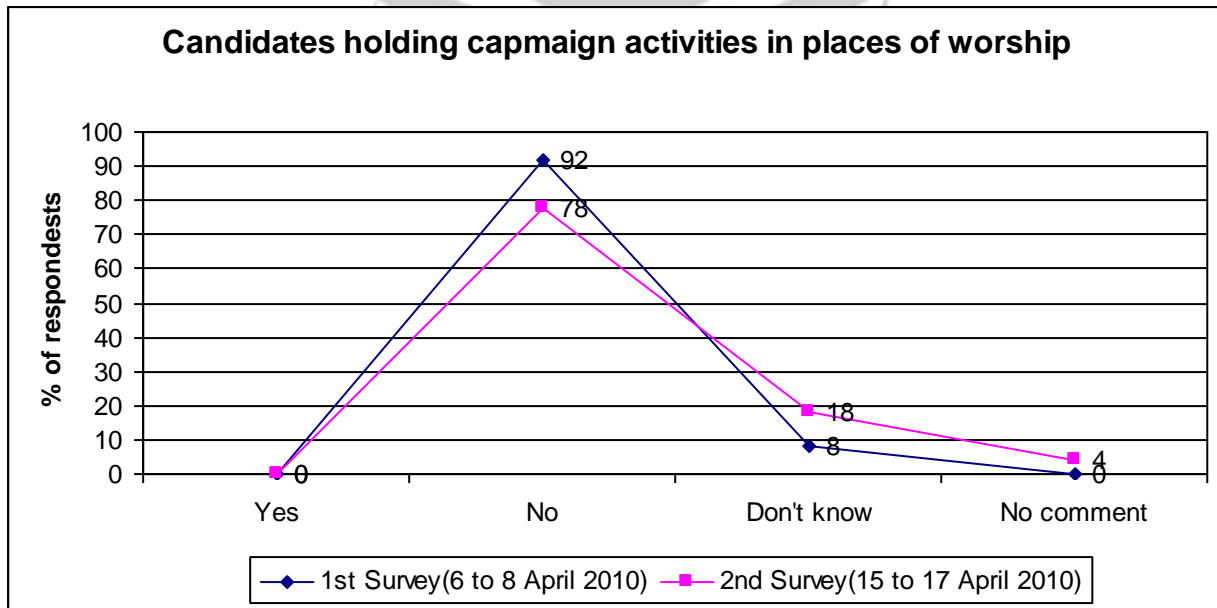


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1.4 Are you aware of any candidates having conducted public meetings by blocking roads, in contravention of the BEC rule?



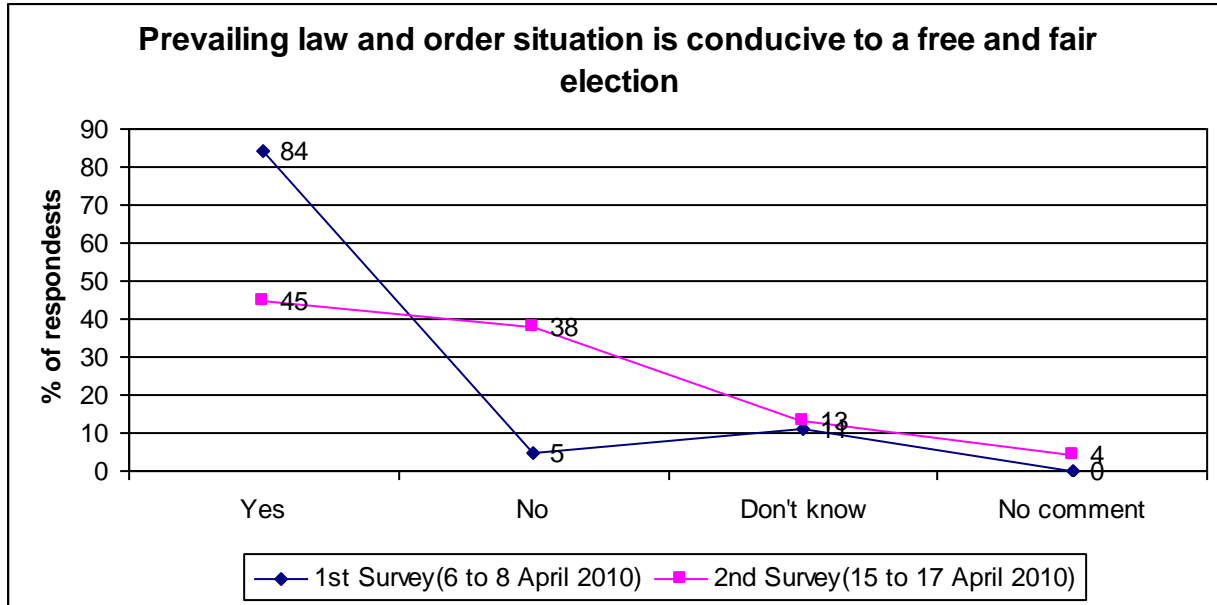
1.5 Are you aware of any candidates holding campaign activities in places of worship, for example a mosque, temple or church, in contravention of BEC rules?



In general, the responses from the above question indicates that the candidates have been respecting election regulations up to this point, and no significant violation of election regulation was observed. In the last week of election campaign period only 5% voters have stated that they are aware of some violations. Though the general trends are positive but it is important to continue to monitor this through the campaign period as well as during and post election period.

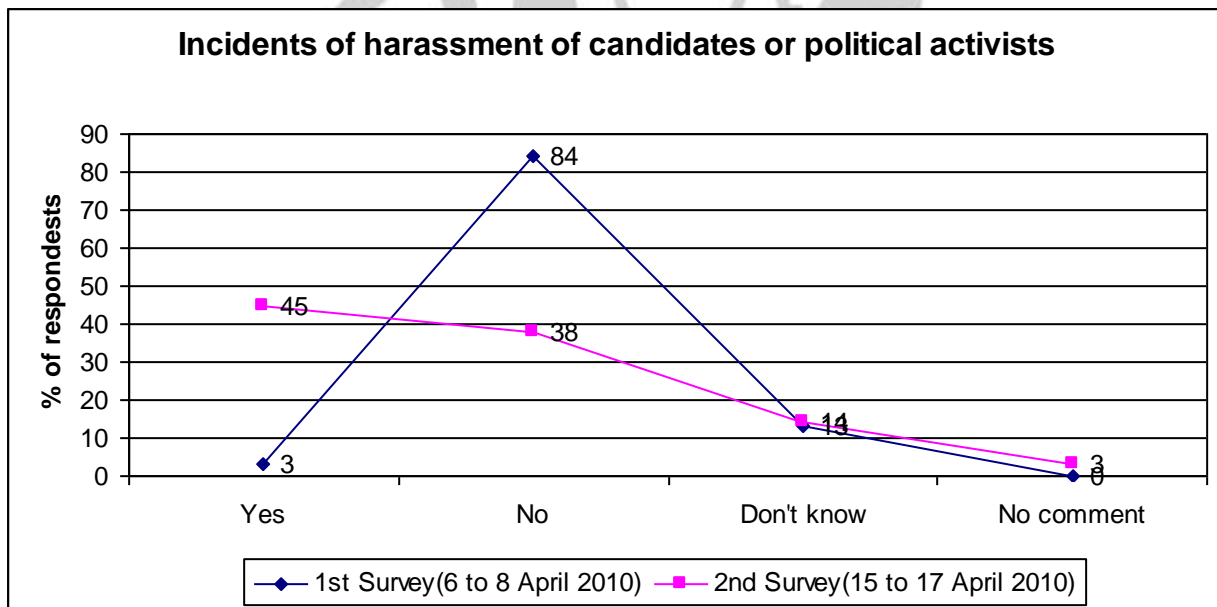
2 Election Related Violence

2.1 Do you think that the prevailing law and order situation in your area is conducive to a free and fair election?



Bangladesh has a long history of election violence, and the present Bholá By lection is no different. The result indicates that overall law and order situation are not conducive. Though in the first survey almost 84% voters responded that law and order situation was favorable in their respective areas, but the confidence level significantly dropped to 45% during the last week of election.

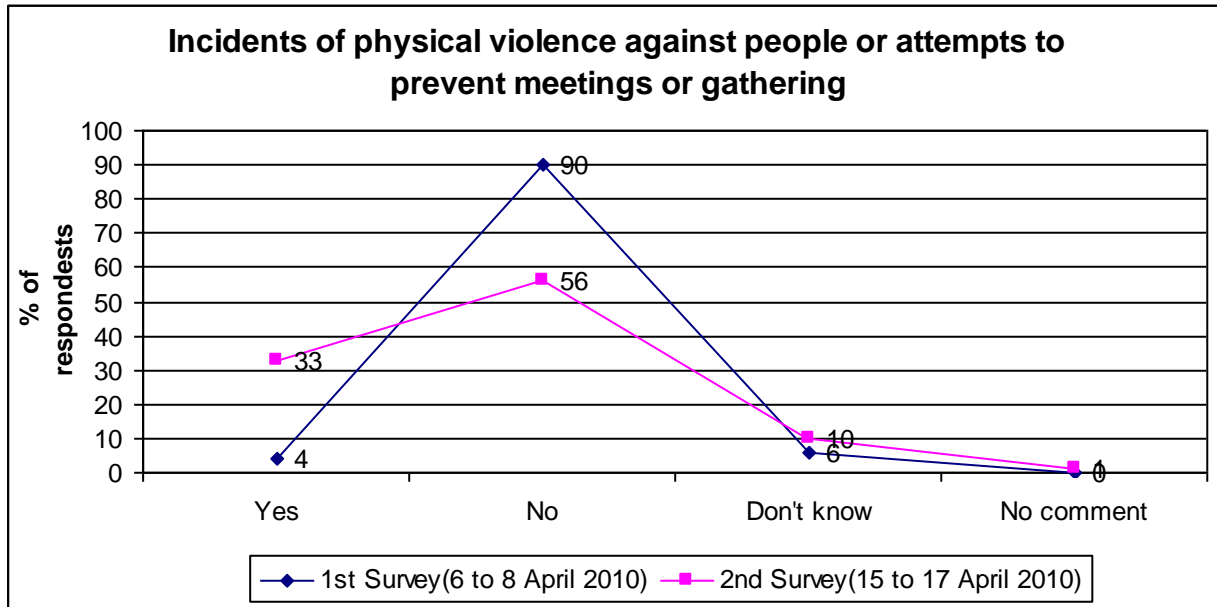
2.2 Have there been any incidents of harassment of candidates or political activists in your area?



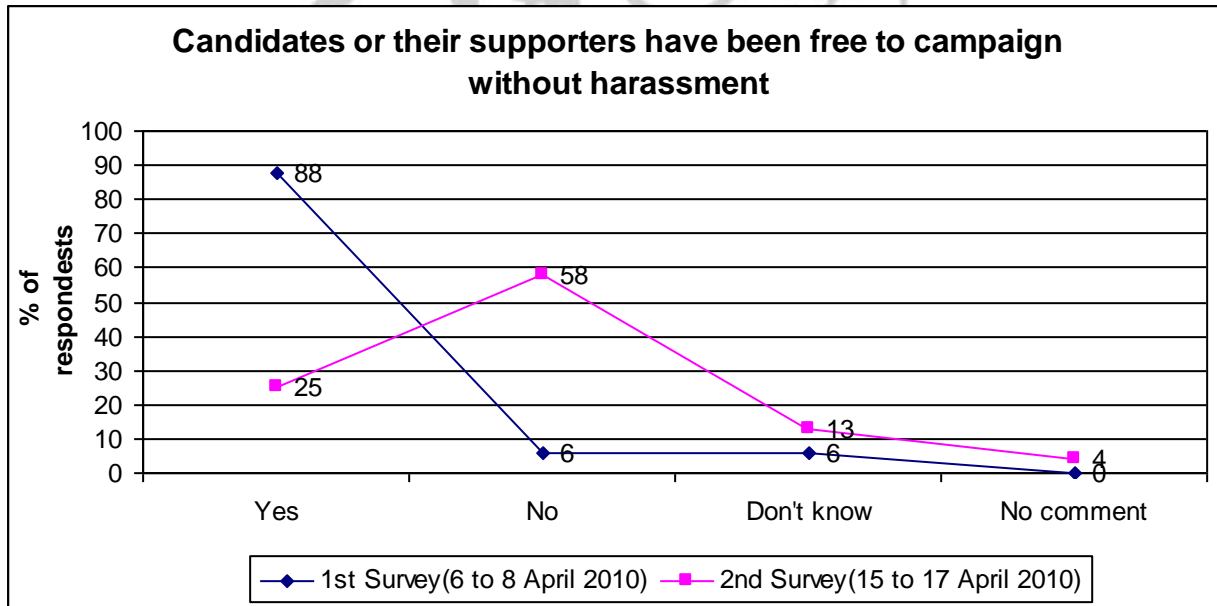
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The survey results indicate that overall reports on incidents of political harassment were significantly low compare to the last week of campaign period. As survey indicates, during the first survey period almost eighty four percent of respondents (in both upazilas) have not heard of such incidents but this percentage dropped to 38% during the second survey, where the voters indicated about the incidents of harassment and also stated that this political harassment was not only limited to candidates, but included political actors and activists.

2.3 Have there been any incidents of physical violence against people or attempts to prevent meetings or gatherings being held in your area?



2.4 Do you think that candidates or their supporters have been free to campaign without harassments?

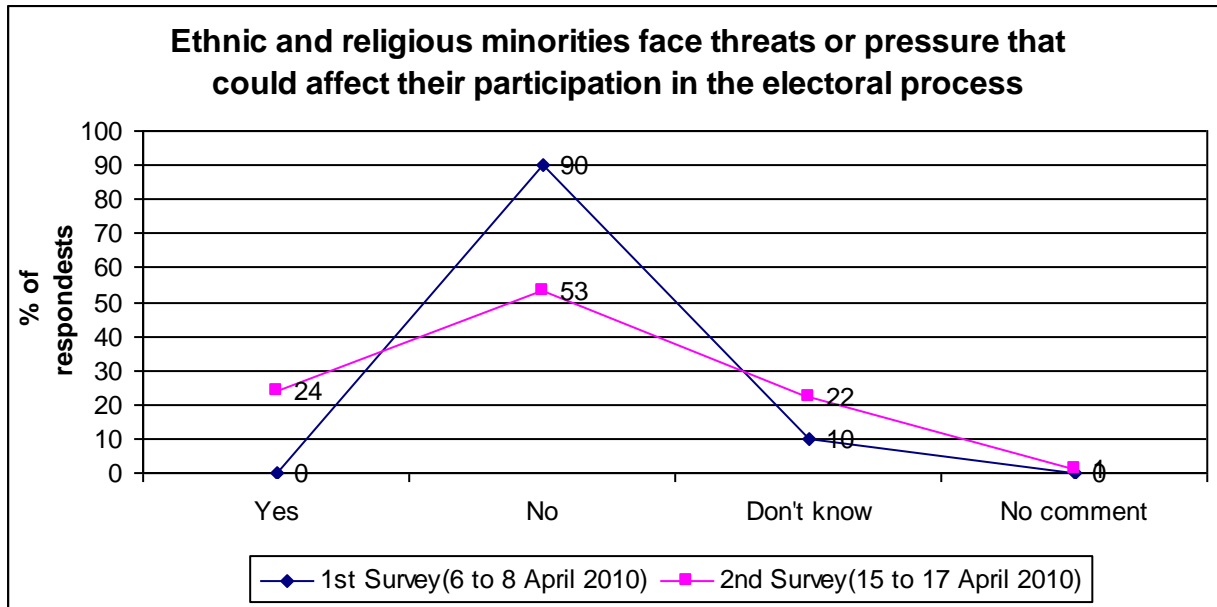


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Again, response to question 2.3 and 2.4 demonstrate almost the similar results of question 2.2, where the overall situation regarding the security and campaign environment is raising serious concern among the voters prior to the election.

3 Participation of Disadvantaged People

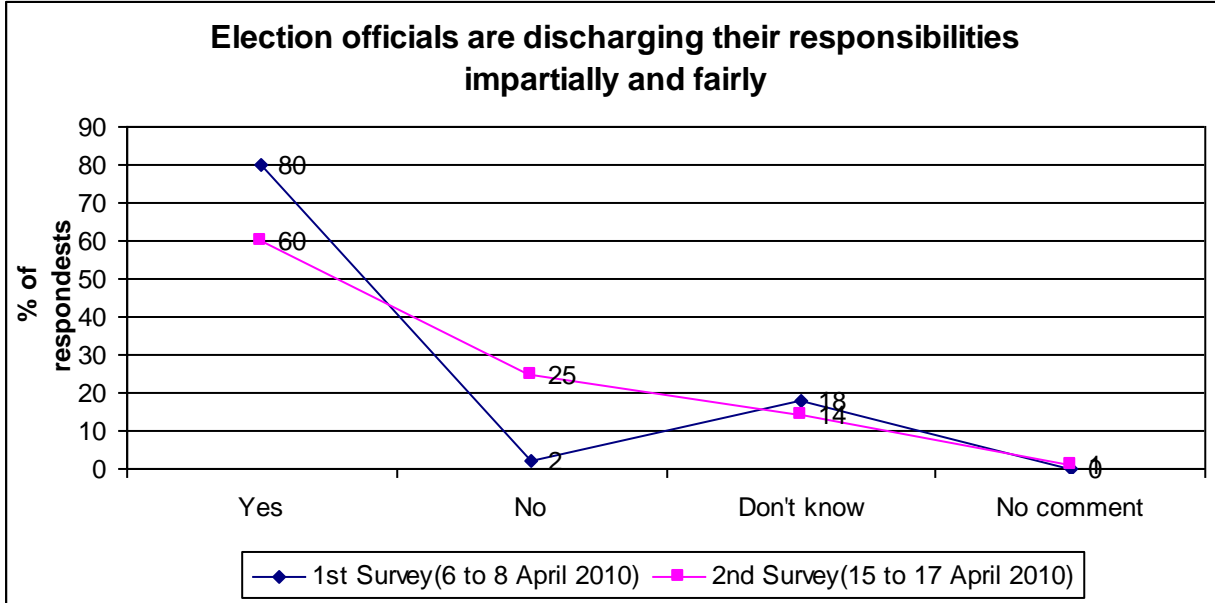
3.1 Do ethnic and religious minorities face threats or pressure that could affect their participation in the electoral process?



The survey results indicates that almost 24% voters believes that the disadvantaged and minority voters are facing threats or pressure that may affect their participation in electoral process. The survey also reveals that in the early weeks of the campaign period almost no voters indicated that the minority and disadvantaged voters are facing any challenges or threats. In this respect the Observers should make a special effort to monitor and publicize any potential constraints on the full participation of minorities in the electoral process

4 Role of Election Administration

4.1 Do you feel that election officials are discharging their responsibilities impartially and fairly?



The survey result indicates that in most cases the election officials are discharging their duties impartially in order to ensure a free and fair election. Although in both of the survey majority of the voters (almost 80%) believes that the election officials are carrying out their duties in a neutral manner, but almost 25% voters (during the last week of election) doubt the neutrality of the election officials.

