

GE2020: PAP's credibility dipped, WP's went up from previous polls, says IPS post-election survey

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The Workers' Party (WP) was seen as more credible in the 2020 General Election than in previous polls, while there was a slight dip in the proportion of voters who found the People's Action Party (PAP) credible, a post-election survey by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) has found.

PAP was still seen as the most credible political party in Singapore by citizens surveyed by IPS, but the proportion of people who agreed or strongly agreed that PAP was a credible party dipped from 93 per cent in 2015 to 86 per cent this year.

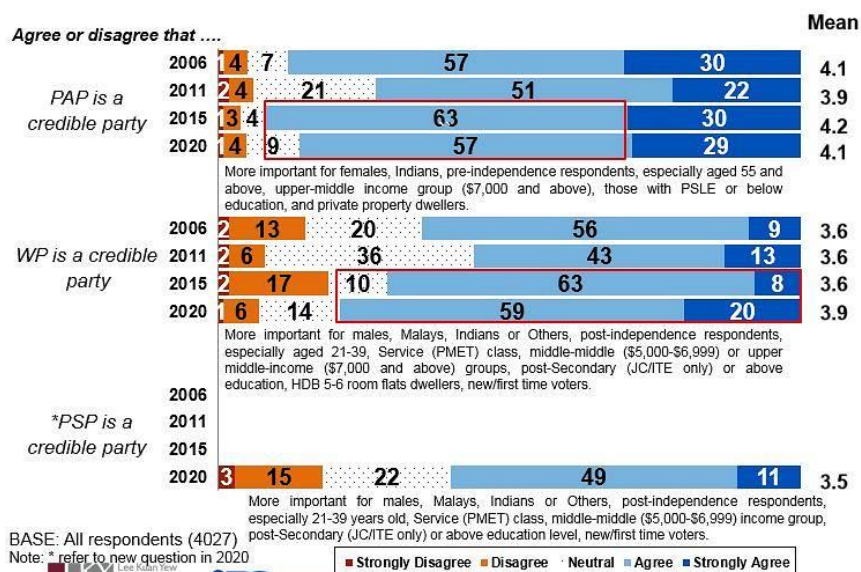
WP came second, with 79 per cent of respondents saying that they found the party credible, compared to 71 per cent in 2015.

These were the results from one of the questions in the Perception of Policies in Singapore Survey, which polled the attitudes of 4,027 citizens from Jul 11 to Aug 21. They were presented at a forum via Facebook live on Thursday (Oct 1).

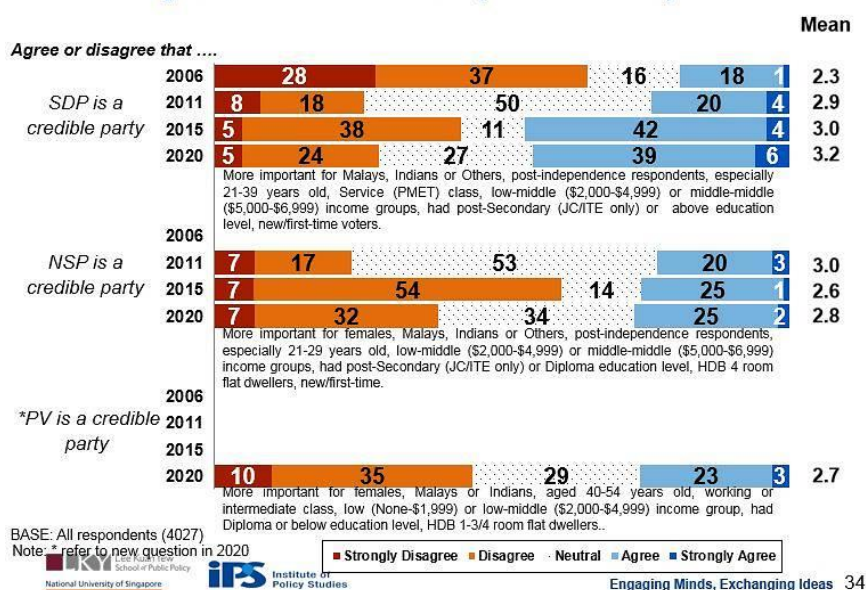
In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate the credibility level of each of six political parties in GE2020 on a scale of one to five, where five means that they "strongly agree" that the party was a credible party. Only the six parties with the highest numerical votes were included in the survey to avoid respondent fatigue, researchers said.

A mean score for the parties was also calculated using the survey responses, where the PAP scored 4.1 over a maximum of five in 2020, a slight decrease from 2015's score of 4.2. The WP's mean score went up to 3.9, from 3.6 in the previous three elections.

Credibility of Political Parties (Mixed Mode)



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"The PAP, not surprisingly, is considered to be the most credible party, but it really has no room for complacency. The next GE is likely to be even tougher for presumptive prime minister Heng Swee Keat and his team," said Dr Lam Peng Er, Senior Research Fellow at the East Asian Institute, a panellist at the IPS online forum.

"Given the twin trends of demographic change, more (being) amenable to political pluralism, and rising credibility of the Workers' Party. It is not inconceivable that the Workers' Party will win another SMC or GRC in the next GE."

He added that this was also contingent on the performance of WP as Singaporeans are "very performance-based".

Despite being a newcomer, Progress Singapore Party (PSP) was ranked third, with 60 per cent of respondents agreeing that it was credible, while the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) came fourth with 45 per cent.

While this was roughly the same as 2015's 46 per cent, the proportion of respondents who found SDP not to be credible fell from 43 per cent in 2015 to 29 per cent this year. More people felt "neutral" about the party than before.

Next came the National Solidarity Party with 27 per cent of respondents finding it credible, and Peoples Voice with 26 per cent.

The research was conducted by a team led by Dr Gillian Koh, IPS' deputy director of research. The other members of the team are Dr Teo Kay Key, a postdoctoral fellow at the IPS Social Lab, research associate Mr Damien Huang, and Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser of the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore.

PAP CREDIBILITY DROPS AMONG MIDDLE-AGED

The team noted that there was a 13 percentage point drop in those aged 40 to 49 who said that they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that PAP was a credible party. There were also drops in the party's credibility rating in the low to low-middle income and among those living in one to three-room Housing Board flats.

The largest change for the WP was in the “strongly agree” category, which leaped from 8 per cent in 2015 to 20 per cent in 2020.

Examining the results across age, more people in the 30 to 34 age band and more seniors found the WP credible in GE2020. There were also rises among PMET voters, those who have only post-secondary educational qualifications and among HDB one- to three-room flat dwellers.

“These findings reinforce the sense that the issue of livelihoods, especially for the low- to middle-income households, influenced support for the PAP and WP. Respondents in the highest occupation class of service (PMET) found the WP credible, yet so did those in the lowest housing category which means there were proportions of respondents on both ends of the socio-economic spectrum that found the WP credible,” said the research team.

Dr Teo highlighted that the credibility ranking of the parties is the same as their ranking by the number of votes received in GE2020.

Looking at the three elections from 2011 to 2020, Dr Lam said that GE2020 was a “new normal” election, continuing the trend from 2011 - which means that the opposition is “here to stay”.

“With hindsight, GE2015 is actually an anomaly,” said Dr Lam, who noted that PAP’s good showing at the polls coincided with the demise of founding father Lee Kuan Yew and celebrations marking Singapore’s 50th year of independence.

“There were talks of an opposition wipeout (this year) ... (which) turned out to be so untrue.”

He pointed out that WP made modest gains and even the SDP, which he said is considered “relatively radical” by many Singaporeans, did well.

Dr Lam also said that he expects the PAP to remain in power, but with a lower vote share and fewer seats in Parliament.

“The PAP may even lose its two-thirds majority and the power to change the Constitution at will.”

The PAP won 83 parliamentary seats in GE2020 with 61.2 per cent of the popular vote and WP, which contested only 21 seats, won 10 of them with about 11 per cent of total votes.

None of the other parties won any wards in the Jul 10 polls, but PSP sent two of its candidates to Parliament as Non-Constituency Members of Parliament after narrowly losing West Coast GRC to PAP.

Ten opposition parties and one independent candidate contested in the General Election. The other parties were the Reform Party, the Singapore People’s Party, Singapore Democratic Alliance, Red Dot United and People’s Power Party.