

## Social network sites, instant messaging most popular modes of political engagement in GE2020: IPS survey

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Social networking sites and instant messaging were the two most used platforms for political engagement in this year's General Election, a post-election survey by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) has found.

Digital platforms also rose in importance for voters seeking information, with online websites of Singapore mass media being the most used in the 2020 General Election.

"While older voters used traditional forms of mass media more frequently than younger ones, digital platforms were popular across all age groups," said IPS senior research fellow Carol Soon on Wednesday (Oct 7) at a media briefing.

"And very importantly, instant messaging played a very important role during this election, especially for the boomers."

Dr Soon also presented the findings to the public on Thursday at an online IPS forum on GE2020 Internet and media use.

A total of 2,018 citizens aged 21 and above took part in an online survey by YouGov from Jul 13 to 21. They answered questions on their demographics, media use, political traits and voting behaviour.

The data was later weighted based on proportions of gender, race and age groups in the Singapore citizen population.

Voters were divided into four generation groups - first-time voters (aged 21 to 26), other youths (27 to 35), sandwiched generation (36 to 55) and boomers (aged 56 and above).

Among respondents who indicated who they voted for, 63.8 per cent said they voted for the People's Action Party (PAP), while 32.5 per cent voted for the opposition, results which were "quite close to the outcome of the election", said Dr Soon.

### ENGAGING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES

Social networking sites and instant messaging platforms were the most used by voters when learning about and interacting with political parties and candidates, with 34 per cent using social networking sites and 30 per cent using instant messaging platforms once a day or more.

More traditional forms of party communication, brochures and newsletters were only used by about 15 per cent of voters once a day or more.

Between generations, youths used social networking sites more frequently to engage with parties and candidates.

However, boomers used instant messaging most frequently to engage with parties and candidates.

**“We see how IM (instant messaging) has become an important part of election communication, and help close the divide between generations,” said Dr Soon.**

In addition, those who used social networking sites and instant messaging platforms also reported doing so most frequently, with 19.4 per cent saying that they used social networking sites several times a day to learn about and interact with political parties and candidates.

## **SEEKING INFORMATION ON GE2020**

When it comes to seeking information on the 2020 General Election, online websites of Singapore mass media were most used among voters, with more than 45 per cent of respondents saying that they turned to these websites about once a day or several times a day.

This was followed by television and Singapore online-only news and information websites, which include outlets like Mothership and Rice Media.

Social networking sites and instant messaging platforms came in fourth and fifth, while traditional mass media like print newspaper and radio fell behind.

In contrast, the top three sources of information in the 2015 General Election were - television, print newspapers and online websites of Singapore mass media.

**“Comparing GE2020 and GE2015, we see a sharp drop in popularity for print newspapers and radio,” said Dr Soon.**

**She added that the “information diet” of younger voters was mostly made up of online sources, with social networking sites as their top choice. In 2015, television was still among the top three sources of information of younger voters.**

**For older voters, television and information from online websites of Singapore mass media “formed the staple”, with television being “particularly important”.**

**Instant messaging came in third for boomers, whose use of media “changed the most”, said Dr Soon.**

**But she noted that there was “no difference” in the use of instant messaging platforms for information seeking between the generations.**