

Younger S'poreans "more likely to back opposition"

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SINGAPORE: A post-election survey on new media consumption has shown that younger Singaporeans tend to perceive new media as a "more important and trustworthy" source of information, and are more likely to vote for opposition parties compared to the rest of the population.

About a quarter of 2.3 million voters at the General Election 2011 in May are between the ages of 21 and 35.

The survey by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) concluded that the Internet was not a decisive factor in influencing voter decision during GE 2011.

But it is a different story for those in the 21-to-34 age group, compared to the rest of the population.

The survey showed that although the media consumption pattern of this group is largely traditional -- they spend more time watching television, reading newspapers and going to mainstream media websites instead of getting information from blogs or alternative sites -- this group is more politically cynical.

More than half or 50.2 per cent said there are too many rules against political participation in Singapore. One-third, or 30.2 per cent, said they believe politicians preferred to have more power than serving the public.

About 65 per cent said they believe there is too much government control over mass media content.

While the study showed the majority of young people voted for the ruling People's Action Party (26.2 per cent), the percentage of votes for the opposition was higher, compared to the total population.

15.9 per cent of young Singaporeans voted for the opposition compared to 10.8 per cent among the total population.

Researchers said it could be because of information available online.

Assistant Professor Trisha Lin from the Nanyang Technological University Wee Kim Wee School of Communications and Information said: "The voting pattern is more favourable to the opposition parties.

"One of the reasons could be (the) opposition parties... don't have too much access to the mass media."

Assistant Professor Lin added that opposition parties might thus have turned to new media, which is more inexpensive.

The study also highlighted the kind of information online users were exposed to by bloggers.

The top three topics were issues of governance, the quality of a candidate and Singapore's political system.

There was also a sense that parties can do more to exploit new media to engage voters.

For example, researchers said political parties can use new media to encourage political participation.

There is also a call for authorities to further loosen media control on online political engagement.

Another proposal is extending political studies at tertiary levels, with new media learning tools.