iPS Institute of
Policy Studies

Report: IPS Closed-Door Discussion on Post-GE2025 Surveys, 1 September 2025

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INTRODUCTION

On 1 September 2025, the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) held a closed-door discussion on Singaporeans' political attitudes and their interactions with media platforms in relation to the 3 May 2025 General Election (GE). Researchers presented findings from three opinion surveys conducted after Polling Day to understand what might have influenced voters' decisions, their use of media and how they felt about the outcome of the GE. The event was attended by 28 participants comprising academics, researchers from think tanks and private sector consultants.

At the first session, Dr Gillian Koh, Senior Research Fellow of IPS, presented findings from the IPS Post-Election Survey (2025), the fifth in the series, while Dr Mathew Mathews, Principal Research Fellow and Head of IPS Social Lab, discussed those from the IPS Perceptions of Governance and Belonging in Singapore (2025).

At the second session, Associate Professor Natalie Pang, Head of the Department of Communications and New Media (CNM) at the National University of Singapore (NUS), and Associate Professor Carol Soon, Deputy Head of the same department, presented findings from the IPS-CNM Survey on Media Use in GE2025.

The presentation slides of the researchers can be found on the event webpage. Both sessions concluded with question-and-answer sessions held under the Chatham House Rule. A summary of the proceedings follows.

SESSSION ONE: POPS (12) — IPS POST-ELECTION SURVEY (2025)

The findings of IPS Post-Election Survey (2025), 12th in the Perceptions of Policies Survey Series (POPS), were based on responses of 2,056 voting-age Singapore citizens. It was administered by YouGov through an online, self-administered survey and drawn randomly from its panel of 156,000 people of that profile. The data was weighted against official statistics from the Department of Statistics to align with the proportions of citizen population in terms of gender, age and ethnicity, and with the resident population in terms of housing type.

Dr Gillian Koh highlighted two methodological considerations in interpreting the findings: first, the types of individuals, particularly those aged 65 years and above, who might be willing to be members of an online panel and whether there would be a natural bias in political attitudes

among such respondents; and second, the higher incidence of "neutral" responses compared to the previous waves, with the need for explicit inclusion of this option in an online questionnaire. Regarding the data shared on the presentation slides, the proportions were calculated considering the non-responses ("don't know", "prefer not to say", "not applicable"), but on the other hand, the mean scores excluded these non-responses which makes them directly comparable to the mean scores of the previous waves of the survey. The margin of error at 95 per cent confidence level for the data is ±2.2 percentage points.

Top election issues

When respondents were asked to indicate how important each of the 21 issues listed in the questionnaire were in shaping their vote, the most important ones by mean scores were "Cost of living", "Need for a good and efficient government", "Affordability of homes for Singaporeans", a new item in the survey, and "Fairness in government policy". Items related to political pluralism, like "Need for checks and balances in Parliament" and "Need for different views in Parliament", had the same mean scores compared to 2020.

Traits of candidates

Between 2020 and 2025, the qualities most valued in political candidates continued to be "honesty", "fairness", "hardworking / committed" and "efficient". What differed from the 2020 survey was the greater importance placed on "experience in grassroots and community work" and "credentials", which Dr Koh suggested may be attributed to the emergence of new parties or coalitions of them, as well as the larger pool of first-time candidates in GE2025, which contrasted with the long-standing People's Action Party (PAP) and Workers' Party (WP) whose candidates comprised many more seasoned politicians.

Credibility of parties

Respondents assessed six key political parties that contested GE2025 on how "credible" they seemed, on a five-point scale, from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". The PAP and the WP converged at the same overall mean score of 3.9. This marked a decline in the PAP's mean score from 4.1 in 2020, while the WP's score remained unchanged.

The Progress Singapore Party (PSP) saw a decline from 3.5 in 2020 to 3.2 in 2025, placing it below the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), which had a mean score of 3.3 in 2025 compared to 3.2 in 2020. The People's Alliance (PAR) and Red Dot United (RDU), new additions in the 2025 survey, recorded mean scores of 2.8.

In terms of demographics, the PAP was rated as more credible by older respondents (especially those aged 65 and above) and the upper-middle income group. The WP drew higher credibility ratings from younger respondents aged 21 to 39 years old, as well as both the upper-middle and middle-middle household income groups. Finally, ethnic minority respondents were more likely to rate the WP and other opposition parties as credible compared to the overall sample.

Electoral system

Respondents mostly agreed or strongly agreed with the statements "I felt free to vote the way I wanted to" (87 per cent) and "It is important to have an elected opposition in Parliament" (74 per cent). At the same time, a growing share of respondents adopted the neutral position on the statements — "the election system is fair to all political parties" and "there is no need to change the election system".

Cluster analysis: Conservatives, pluralists or swing voters

In the cluster analysis — a staple of this survey series — respondents were grouped into Conservatives, Pluralists and Swing voters through statistical analysis.[1] See Figure 1.
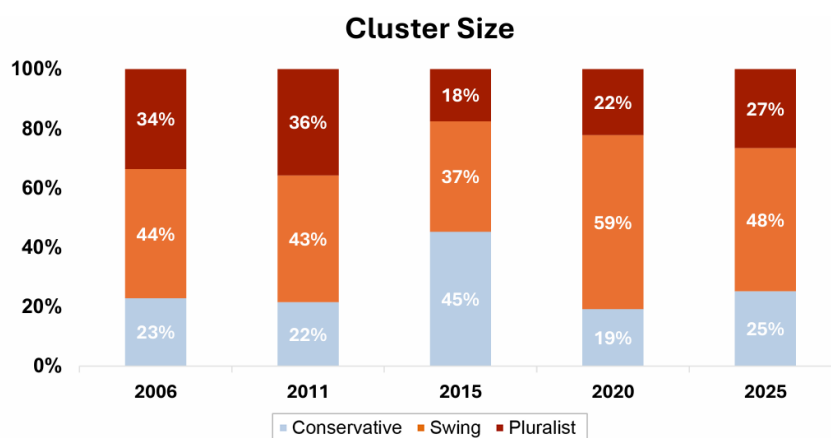

Figure 1: Slide from Dr Koh's presentation on the cluster analysis across the past five waves of IPS Post-Election Survey (2025).

The Conservative cluster — those comfortable with the political status quo — grew from 19 per cent in 2020 to 25 per cent in 2025. The Pluralist cluster — those supportive of electoral reform and greater pluralism — also expanded from 22 per cent in 2020 to 27 per cent in 2025. Meanwhile, the Swing cluster declined across most age groups, with a more gradual decline among those aged 65 and above. Comparing across segments, the proportion of Conservatives increased among younger respondents aged 21 to 39 years old, while the proportion of Conservatives declined and the Pluralists grew among older respondents, 65 years and above, in this 2025 survey.

The internal characteristics of the clusters change with each survey too. The 2025 Pluralist cluster expressed stronger agreement on the importance of having elected opposition Members of Parliament (MPs), of having checks and balances, and different views in Parliament. Notably, the 2025 Conservative cluster also showed higher support for these

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[1] The cluster analysis grouped respondents into three categories based on their responses to five statements. Conservatives' responses generally suggest support for the political status quo compared to the other groups, while Pluralists' responses generally suggest support for greater political pluralism and change in the electoral system compared to the other groups, but the precise ratings on these attitudes can vary with each survey. Meanwhile, the Swing category respondents held an eclectic mix of views.

pluralist values, being more likely to agree that it is important to have checks and balances as well as diverse views in Parliament, compared to Conservatives in 2020.

SESSION ONE: IPS PERCEPTIONS OF GOVERNANCE AND BELONGING IN SINGAPORE (POGABIS) (2025)

This survey polled 2,872 Singapore citizens of voting age, with the dataset weighted for age, race and gender to ensure representativeness to the citizen population. It was conducted through a mix of commercial and academic online panels. To address the underrepresentation of older respondents in most commercial panels, IPS worked with the Centre for Research on Successful Ageing (ROSA) at the Singapore Management University, which provided access to a sizeable panel of older Singaporeans and strengthened the robustness of the sample for that demographic segment.

Reported voting decisions

When asked which party they voted for in GE2025, 41.5 per cent of respondents declined to answer, though results among those who did answer the question closely mirrored the actual election results. These results were used for further analysis.

Dr Mathew Mathews shared how different demographic groups voted. Support for the PAP increased with age and socio-economic status, and among those with lower education. More than eight in 10 seniors aged 65 years and above, seven in 10 of those aged 51 to 65 years old, seven in 10 private property dwellers, and seven in 10 of those with secondary and below qualifications indicated they voted for the PAP — all higher than the national average of 65.6 per cent. By gender, women leaned slightly more towards the PAP than men, with over two-thirds indicating they voted for the PAP, compared to six in 10 males.

In contrast, support for the WP did not vary significantly among the categories of age, gender, housing type and education levels. However, support for other opposition parties and independent candidates, or "OOPI" for short, declined significantly among older voters.

Impact of satisfaction with government performance on vote

Respondents indicated their level of satisfaction with government performance across 28 key issues on a nine-point scale (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). See Figure 2.
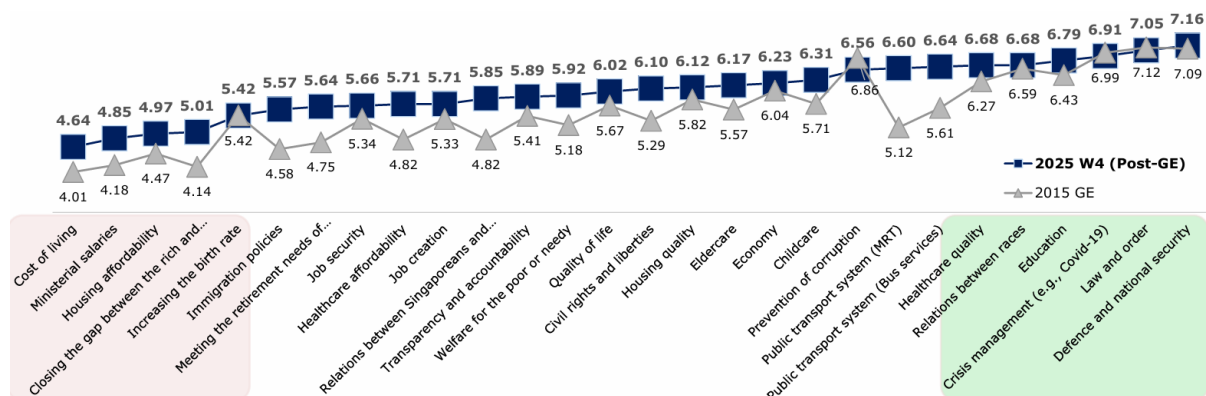
Figure 2: Slide from Dr Mathew's presentation showing areas of satisfaction with government performance from the IPS Perceptions of Governance and Belonging in Singapore (2025)

In 2025, satisfaction was lowest for "Cost of living", "Ministerial salaries", "Housing affordability", "Closing the gap between the rich and poor" and "Increasing the birth rate". Satisfaction was highest for "Defence and national security", "Law and order", "Crisis management (e.g., Covid-19)", "Education" and "Relations between races".

Although the areas of highest and lowest satisfaction remained broadly stable over the past decade, overall satisfaction levels were higher in 2025 than in 2015. Dr Mathew highlighted two notable shifts: the issue of "Increasing the birth rate" was less of a concern a decade ago but emerged among the top five concerns in 2025, while "Satisfaction with the prevention of corruption" declined slightly since 2015.

Voting decisions: Time frames and reasons

When asked when they decided which party to vote for in GE2025, about one-third of respondents had already done so before Parliament was dissolved (35.9 per cent) while a similar proportion decided between the dissolution of Parliament and before Polling Day (36.3 per cent). Older and more affluent respondents were more likely to have decided before Parliament was dissolved whereas lower-educated respondents were significantly more likely to decide only on Cooling-off Day or Polling Day itself.

On voting decisions, close to six in 10 respondents indicated the suitability of the candidate to be an MP as a key reason for their voting choice, while nearly four in 10 cited the reputation or brand of the political party. Other factors were less salient: close to three in 10 cited the question of whether the party would manage town council issues well as being an important consideration, while a similar proportion said their voting decision was shaped by their views that the opposition candidates were not credible.

Perceptions of the outcome of the GE

Regarding attitudes towards the GE2025 results, about eight in 10 respondents agreed to varying degrees that the elected MPs in their constituency would take care of their town council well and be effective in their duties, and that the results reflected the will of the people. Satisfaction levels differed sharply by who they voted for: nine in 10 PAP voters expressed satisfaction with the outcome, compared to about four in 10 WP voters or OOPI voters.

Question-and-answer session

A participant asked whether being in the Conservative cluster equated to support for the PAP, and how to reconcile the differences between two surveys: the POPS survey suggested there was growing pluralism among the oldest respondents while the POGABIS survey found stronger support for the PAP within the same group.

Dr Koh explained that Conservatives were generally less likely to agree on the need for elected opposition MPs, checks and balances, and diverse views in Parliament — positions that can serve as a proxy for PAP support. However, the 2025 Conservative cluster showed greater

openness to the need for such checks and balanced and diverse perspectives. She stressed that voting outcomes ultimately depended on the choice before voters; for instance, contests between the PAP and the WP tended to be more competitive than those involving smaller and younger opposition parties.

Dr Mathew added that the POGABIS survey captured respondents' reported voting behaviour, whereas the POPS survey focused on party credibility and how attitudes towards political pluralism evolved over time. Dr Koh further clarified that while the proportion of Pluralists were rising among those aged 65 and above, the proportion of Conservatives remained marginally higher. She also flagged that the YouGov panel could be skewed by the profile of older individuals likely to participate in online surveys, and if so, the actual proportion of Conservatives in this age group could be different, that is, higher.

Local issues in party campaigns

A participant asked about the importance of local issues in party campaigns, citing his experience working with a Group Representation Constituency (GRC) where intensified efforts to address municipal issues by the town council there may have secured the incumbent PAP team a 12-percentage point increase in votes. Dr Koh agreed that local issues had become more salient, as noted in the survey where there was an increase in those who said that municipal issues and the upgrading of flats and estates were important. She noted that the PAP shifted its messaging from saying that doing these were conditional on electoral support, as they did in the past, to highlighting its track record and future commitments.

The WP also campaigned on the improvements it had made in estate management, receiving green ratings in the national assessment in their wards. The SDP that campaigned in Sembawang GRC and Sembawang West SMC suggested that the PAP would continue to deliver on town council projects even if SDP secured these constituencies. Some other parties that downplayed such issues — the PSP, whose candidate in West Coast-Jurong West GRC said that the primary role of an MP was to represent residents and debate national policies in Parliament rather than act as an "estate manager", saw a decline in vote share compared to 2020.

Relatedly, a participant asked whether the "two-for-one" narrative promoted by an opposition candidate, suggesting that voters could have their voices represented in Parliament while still be well served on the ground by the PAP, was effective. Dr Koh responded that neighbourhood facilities and upgrading of flats were key issues in this election, balanced with growing support for political pluralism. She noted that the "two-for-one" narrative could be persuasive for some voters, but its impact ultimately depended on whether the candidates could credibly deliver on their promises.

Explaining the PAP swing: Issues and structural drivers

The presenters were asked whether the survey findings might not present the full picture, given that cost of living concerns remained consistent with past surveys, yet voters still swung towards the PAP despite the rising intensity of these concerns. Dr Mathew suggested that, in the context of heightened global uncertainty, voters may have voted based on which party

would do better in defence and national security, law and order, and crisis management. These were areas respondents were most satisfied with the government about, based on the survey findings.

A participant argued that attention should shift from micro-issues to broader structural factors to explain the swing, pointing out that the electoral system and compulsory voting created a baseline of default votes for the PAP, estimated at one in four votes. This, he suggested, posed a structural disadvantage for opposition parties, which would require enormous material resources and manpower resources to compete with the PAP. He added that resource constraints shaped the WP's "eastern strategy" in this election, referring to how it did not contest the Marine Parade GRC which helped to strengthen its team contesting the East Coast GRC.

Dr Koh emphasised that voting decisions were potentially shaped by a multitude of considerations. On compulsory voting, she stressed that it ought to be kept in place, as structural barriers, such as work, mobility or caregiving duties, could otherwise prevent some groups from voting, thereby undermining representation if it were not compulsory. On resources, she noted from a forum where WP candidates spoke during the election hustings that it had gained more volunteers after its performance in GE2020. Hence the number of candidates that WP fielded (which was 26) may not be a reflection of the availability of resources and interest. The party has since tightened scrutiny of both candidates and volunteers, including commissioning commercial parties to screen potential candidates if reports of this are to be believed. This, she noted, suggests WP is taking an approach of achieving gradual, quality-driven growth rather than rapid expansion.

SESSION TWO: IPS CNM SURVEY ON MEDIA USE IN GE2025 (I)

This presentation focused on answering three main questions: the role of media in GE2025 and how different groups of voters engaged with it; the influence of different media types on voting behaviour; and respondents' experiences with AI-manipulated content in the election. The survey, conducted online by IPS Social Lab, polled 2,071 Singaporean citizens of voting age after Polling Day.

Dr Carol Soon began by defining "legacy" and "non-legacy" media. Legacy media refers to traditional mass media that existed before the digital age, characterised by one-way communication and controlled by a limited number of organisations then, though many now have digital formats such as websites and apps. Non-legacy media refers to interactive digital platforms such as social media, podcasts and online forums that allow user-generated content, multi-way communication and greater user participation. Examples of both categories were included in the questionnaire to ensure respondents understood what each term meant.

Interest in election issues and voting behaviour

In the lead up to the general election, increased interest in local, regional issues and international developments was expected. Reflecting this, about 74 per cent of respondents said they were very or extremely interested in election issues — an increase from 66 per cent in GE2020.

When asked which party they voted for, 87 per cent of the respondents revealed whom they voted for, compared with the 53 per cent who did so in the GE2020 survey. Among them, 66.9 per cent said they voted for the PAP, which was slightly above the national average of 65.6 per cent, while 15.8 per cent reported voting for the opposition.

Media use for information-seeking and sharing

Media usage increased across the board in GE2025. The three most frequently used media sources for election information were similar to GE2020: online websites of Singapore legacy media, television and Singapore-based online-only platforms (e.g., Mothership, Rice Media).

Findings by demographic segments

Across all age groups, income and education segments, the digital formats of Singapore legacy media were the most frequently used.

Among younger Singaporeans aged 21 to 34 years old, social networking sites were the top source in 2020, followed by digital-only news platforms and then legacy media websites. In 2025, however, legacy media websites had become their top source. For those aged 35 to 59 years old, media use patterns remained stable from 2020 to 2025. Among seniors aged 60 years old and above, television, previously the most used in 2020, dropped to second place in 2025.

Across all income groups, television ranked second after digital formats of Singapore legacy media, although for those living in households without income, television remained the most frequently used.

By education, television was the second most used medium across all segments. TikTok ranked third among those with post-secondary education, while digital-only Singapore news platforms ranked third among degree holders and above.

Findings by the parties that respondents supported

PAP and opposition supporters referred to legacy media with greater frequency than to non-legacy media. Having said that, opposition voters were far more engaged across all the media sources than PAP voters.

About 93 per cent of respondents were loyal voters (i.e., they voted for the same party in both GE2020 and GE2025), and this group used legacy media significantly more than non-legacy media. The remaining 7 per cent were swing voters (i.e., voters who voted for different parties in the two elections) and they had a more balanced use of legacy and non-legacy media.

Trust in sources of election information

Trust in all communication channels increased from GE2020, with Singapore legacy media being trusted more than personal communication or content from opinion leaders and content creators.

Across age, education and household income groups, Singapore newspapers and radio, together with their digital formats, ranked among the top three most trusted media.

Dr Soon highlighted two other interesting findings. First, seniors expressed the highest trust in personal communication via social networking sites (SNS) with their colleagues, likely because a majority of the respondents aged 60 years old and above were within the employment and re-employment age. This finding points to the potential importance of workplace interactions. Second, respondents from households without income had the lowest levels of trust across all other media sources, as well as in personal communication via SNS with colleagues, friends or family.

Attitudes towards AI-manipulated content

Most respondents reported that they never or rarely encountered AI-manipulated content in the GE2025 season, with about a third who said they had encountered it sometimes to very often. Dr Soon added that this low level of exposure could either be due to minimal abuse or the deterrent effect of the Elections (Integrity of Online Advertising) (Amendment) Bill, also known as the Eliona Bill.

Respondents were also asked about their concerns over the impact of AI-manipulated content and disinformation related to the election, their confidence in detecting it, and their trust in different entities — such as the government, technology companies and website publishers — to counter it.

By age, older voters had the highest confidence in regulations and in existing measures by website publishers, while middle-aged voters were the most concerned about the potential misuse of AI. By education levels, degree holders and above were most concerned about AI misuse and the most distrustful of online content. Respondents with secondary education or below tended to have the highest confidence in existing safeguards against the misuse of AI.

SESSION TWO: IPS-CNM SURVEY ON MEDIA USE IN GE2025 (II)

This presentation explored two key research questions: how voters learnt about and engaged with political parties and candidates through different media platforms, and the types of expressive, informational and relational engagement on social media in the election.

The survey focused on non-legacy media platforms which included YouTube, SNS, instant messaging platforms and online discussion forums. Compared to the GE2020 survey, there were two new additions in the GE2025 survey edition: TikTok and podcasts of online content creators.

Dr Natalie Pang explained why these were categorised separately: TikTok was distinguished from other SNS because, unlike platforms where users mainly watched content from within their networks, TikTok's algorithm exposed them to content outside their networks. Podcasts were distinguished from YouTube to better reflect the recent growth of podcasters who are on multiple platforms such as Spotify and YouTube.

Political engagement by platform

Amidst a diverse media landscape, social media platforms were collectively used more frequently than traditional party channels for political engagement which refers to learning about and interacting with political parties and candidates.

YouTube and TikTok were the two most frequently used platforms among youth, 21 to 34 years old, while YouTube and SNS were most used among the middle-aged group, 35 to 59 years old. Seniors aged 60 years and above, however, engaged more through traditional party platforms than younger cohorts.

By income, people from high-income households earning $8,000 and above used YouTube, SNS and TikTok most frequently. Among those who were from households that earned $4,000–$7,999, YouTube and TikTok were the top two platforms, while for those from households that earned less than $4,000, SNS and TikTok ranked the highest. Engagement across all media channels was lowest among the no-income group.

By education, YouTube and SNS were most frequently used by degree holders and above. Among voters with post-secondary and secondary or lower education, TikTok, SNS and YouTube were the top three platforms.

Expressive, informational and relational engagement

Dr Pang listed three types of engagement on social media: expressive, informational and relational. While social media may not directly shape voting decisions, it can have mediation or moderation effects, she explained.

Expressive engagement has a self-reflexive quality; when individuals express their views, it can sometimes reinforce their opinions and such increased engagement can have a longer-lasting impact. It can take a variety of forms — posting a comment on a short video for instance or sharing an opinion while circulating a podcast in one's own chatgroup.

Informational engagement relates to the use of social media platforms to seek and share information. One's formation of opinions on different issues can be shaped by their information diet.

Relational engagement refers to the use of social media to connect with others during the election, for example, by following new accounts because of the content they were posting or connect with people they may already know who have similar opinions.

All three forms of engagement across different social media platform rose compared to the past two elections. Informational use remained the highest, but expressive engagement grew significantly. More voters said they used multiple platforms to express opinions about candidates, parties or election issues in GE2025. Dr Pang suggested this rise was linked to new expressive affordances on platforms, for example, Instagram Stories that disappeared after a short time, and the growth of short video-sharing platforms that encouraged content creation for self-expression.

SNS, TikTok and instant messaging were most frequently used for expression. Notably, seniors aged 60 years old and above drove much of the recent growth in expressive use, reporting the use of podcasts as their main platform for expression, followed by SNS and TikTok.

By education levels, expressive, informational and relational engagement were highest among voters with secondary education or below. By income, informational engagement was highest among both lower-income ($1–$3,999) and higher-income ($8,000 and higher) households, with no significant difference between them. Across all income groups, social networking sites remained the primary platform for seeking and sharing election-related information.

Limitations of study

Dr Pang concluded by highlighting two key limitations of the study. First, it could not capture the development of derivative content across platforms. For example, viral clips originating from podcasts may have circulated on TikTok, leading respondents to report TikTok as the source, even though the content originated elsewhere. Second, the survey could not account for how voters may actively curate their social media feeds, for instance, by unfollowing certain accounts or intentionally following others to shape the content they consumed during the election.

Question-and-answer session

Participants raised clarifying questions on non-legacy media. One asked about the self-reported exposure to AI-manipulated content, noting that some respondents may have encountered such content without recognising it. Dr Soon noted that while the survey did not capture this, it was possible that respondents failed to recognise AI-manipulated content that they came across, given how plausible the AI-generated material that was circulated seemed, during the election.

Another participant asked if the survey considered the role of vernacular media for information-seeking. Dr Pang explained that the study focused on English-language content but acknowledged the growing influence of vernacular social media, particularly Chinese-language platforms such as *Xiaohongshu* and WeChat.

Influence of non-legacy media

A participant asked whether the growing prevalence of social media implied that the internet would become the most important influence on voting decisions. Dr Soon responded that exposure might not translate directly into impact. The 2020 survey found that voters ultimately placed greater weight on factors such as the quality of candidates, the track record and performance of political parties, and the desire for political pluralism in Parliament. However, Dr Pang added that the role of social media extended beyond immediate voting outcomes, contributing to a more informed and deliberative citizenry. For example, following more political podcasts during elections could shape longer-term political deliberation among voters.

A participant asked why, even among younger voters who frequently used social media, the use of legacy media for election information rose in this election. Dr Soon explained that context matters — information-seeking for elections could differ from everyday use. In such periods, voters could prioritise accuracy and timeliness of information, which legacy media were perceived to provide. In addition, growing concerns about online harms, misinformation and disinformation on social media may have encouraged a more prescribed and selective use of online platforms for election-related information.

Role of media in reinforcing or changing perceptions

A participant asked whether the survey could identify which platforms were more likely to change voters' minds and which reinforced existing perceptions. Dr Pang responded that this depended on the affordances of each platform. Whether individuals shifted their views in the context of electoral politics boiled down to the extent to which a platform provided opportunities for deliberation and reconsideration.

She noted that platforms such as TikTok, with its short video clips, could expose users to new content and thus held some deliberative potential although much of it seemed geared towards providing entertainment value. Podcasts provided viewers richer and deeper information in a conversational format, giving them greater deliberative potential.

On the reinforcement effect, Dr Pang argued that all platforms had the potential to entrench existing views. Users on social networking sites often exercised agency by following accounts that aligned with their beliefs and unfollowing those that did not, while discussion forums similarly tended to be used to seek out information that affirmed pre-existing positions.

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