

## IPS Researchers at the ST Half-Time Survey Roundtable

IPS Senior Research Fellow Gillian Koh and the Head of IPS Social Lab, Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser, were panellists in a roundtable hosted by *The Straits Times* on April 23. The ST convened this session to discuss the findings of its survey of people's perceptions of key policies, three years after the 2011 General Election and at the mid-point of this term of government. Nominated Member of Parliament Eugene Tan, People's Action Party MP Hri Kumar Nair (Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC), and Workers' Party MP Sylvia Lim (Aljunied GRC) were the other panellists.

The two-hour discussion started out with panellists giving [their reactions to the survey findings](#). Roundtable participants – who included ST editors and journalists, representatives from civil society, academics and contributors to the ST Forum page – asked a series of questions which resulted in a lively discussion, and at times, an intense debate between Mr Nair and Ms Lim. Topics discussed included the [value that survey respondents placed on having checks and balances in the political system](#) and [whether the GRC system should be replaced with single-seat wards](#) so that candidates would fight elections on their own merit. IPS Research Fellow Carol Soon, who was one of the participants, asked panellists to assess the [importance of non-bread and butter issues to the electorate](#), and whether these issues would surface in the next election.

In bringing the Roundtable to a close, ST's Assistant Political Editor Robin Chan, who moderated the session, asked panellists [what they would be watching out for in the second-half of the government's term](#). Assoc Prof Tan said he would be concerned with the sentiment of Singaporeans and whether they felt Singapore was a good place to raise children, earn a living and grow old. Dr Koh said she hoped citizens would move away from the mindset that they are customers of a government providing public services, and realise that they are stakeholders in the Singapore story.

Referencing the recent public debate on the foreign population in Singapore, she added that citizens could not “in one breath” ask for tighter restrictions on foreign labour and then for their needs for the labour-intensive tasks of eldercare and childcare, for instance, to be fully met. “Serious and strategic choices” had to be made, given the exponential rise in demand for the caring services and yet the trimming back on foreign workforce growth, she said. Dr Koh said she would also look out for discussions among Singaporeans on how the country should be governed and how it should distribute resources, especially with regard to the unveiling of the lifelong medical insurance scheme, Medishield Life, next year.

**More reports**

*The Straits Times*. 2014. [Taking the pulse at half-time](#) 26 April

*The Straits Times*. 2014. [On the ST survey](#) 26 April

*The Straits Times*. 2014. [What It Takes to Keep the Govt on its Toes](#) 26 April

*The Straits Times*. 2014. [Hri Kumar on GRCs: Race still matters](#) 26 April

*The Straits Times (Singapolitics)*. 2014. [Ten takeaways from the ST half-time survey roundtable](#) 26 April

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