

# GE not an 'Internet election'

By SARAH CHANG

THE majority of voters in the May 7 General Election (GE) relied largely on **mainstream media**, such as newspapers and television, for election news.

Even the 30 per cent minority who sought their news from the Internet said they turned to mainstream media for some election information.

The survey, conducted jointly by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and Nanyang Technological University, found that only three in 10 respondents used mainly Facebook or blogs to get updates on the election.

Even then, more than 95 per cent of the 30 per cent still read and accessed some news from mainstream media.

The survey results were quite unexpected, researchers said, as the GE was touted by political observers to be an "Internet election".

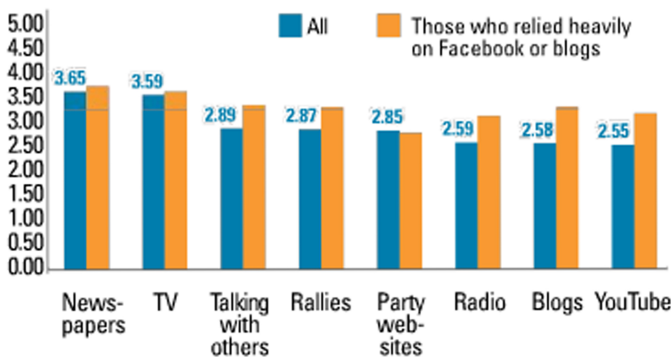
Many also believed that new and alternative media such as Facebook, blogs and political websites like Temasek Review Emeritus had influenced and swayed voters' decisions greatly.

The survey involving 2,000 Singaporeans was conducted two weeks after the election, and took two months to complete. It was part of a national study on the impact of new media on the GE.

## MEDIA IMPORTANCE

How important was each of the following as a source of information about the recent General Election?

1=Unimportant 5 Very Important. "I don't know's" range from 7 to 36%



SOURCE: INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES

IPS senior research fellow Tan Tarn How said that the effect of the Internet was not "decisive" in this election, although it was significant.

"Unlike elections in the Philippines, where the...rallying of people really came through SMSes, the impact of the Internet and new media in our election didn't quite have the same impact," he said yesterday on the sidelines of a presentation held at Orchard Hotel.

He was one of three researchers involved in the survey.

The survey also found that the 30 per cent of respondents who looked to the Internet for news – initially thought to be a "lunatic fringe", or those who hold extreme political views – were found to be less politically **cynical** and more politically savvy.

Those in this group were also described as "persuadable consumers", as they were more **influenced** in the way they voted by content in all media as compared to the other 70 per cent.

IPS deputy director Arun Ma-

hiznan explained that these people might have realised – after engaging in discussions over time – that politicians here have met most of their expectations.

"If you compare public goods offered by the Government with those of any other country in the neighbourhood, and even with most of Asia – with the possible exception of Japan – it has been absolutely first class," he said.

First-time voter Jennifer Ho, who lives in Aljunied GRC, said that she relied heavily on new media in deciding between the Workers' Party and People's Action Party, which contested there.

The 23-year-old student said: "The influence of these on-line channels was definitely bigger, because I spend more time on them. Television and newspaper provided me only with additional facts."

[schang@sph.com.sg](mailto:schang@sph.com.sg)

## HELPDESK 我的字典

**Mainstream media:**

主流媒体 zhǔ liú mí tí

**Decisive:**

决定性的 jué dìng xìng de

**Cynical:**

持怀疑态度的 chí huái yí tài dù de

**Influenced:** 影响 yǐng xiǎng