

## **Party ties matter less to execs**

**Sophie Hong**

**My Paper**, 2 November 2011

When it comes to a presidential candidate's independence from political parties, professionals and executives do not think it as important a criterion as those from lower socio-economic groups do.

This was one finding by an Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) survey, the results of which were released yesterday.

When asked to rank the importance of political independence for a presidential candidate on a scale of one to five - with five being most important - people from higher socio-economic groups had a mean score of 3.43.

The average score for clerical and service workers was 3.57, while that for blue-collar workers was 3.93.

IPS senior research fellow Gillian Koh explained that the results might mean that professionals, managers and executives "are very realistic, cynical and questioning".

So, they believe that a presidential election "must surely attract people who have already been politicians, or are closely associated with politicians or political parties", she said.

"They may feel that it is unlikely that candidates will have no such background."

In line with this, former political ties were "less of a criterion" in shaping votes during the last election, said Dr Koh.

Instead, greater emphasis was placed on personal attributes such as honesty, empathy and good communication skills, the survey found.

The survey polled 2,025 voters between Sept 20 and Oct 5, after the Aug 27 Presidential Election.

Speaking at a panel discussion during the IPS Forum on the Presidential Election yesterday, Assistant Professor Eugene Tan of the Singapore Management University said that the election was "not about the battle of the CVs (curriculum vitae)".

"What we saw in the General Election and the Presidential Election was the need for politicians to emote. That explains why certain politicians, like Nicole Seah, did well," he said.

Another finding of the survey was that, although much has been speculated about the role of social media during the Presidential Election, traditional media, like newspapers, still remained the top information source that shaped voter choice.

During the discussion, Mr Goh Sin Teck, editor of Lianhe Zaobao, said that, although social media was not a deciding factor, it was still "a force to be reckoned with".

According to Mr Goh, a significant development during the Presidential Election was when all four candidates accepted an invitation to participate in a forum held by a "non-traditional- media website".

IPS also found that the public needed more education on the role of the elected president, as 58 per cent of the respondents failed to get more than five correct answers out of the 11 choices given about the responsibilities of the president.

To address this, Dr Tan suggested that schools could play a part, while constitutional-law expert Kevin Tan proposed an educational drama series.