

**IPS POST-ELECTION SURVEY 2006
CLUSTER ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL ORIENTATION**

By Gillian Koh, Tan Ern Ser and Jeanne Conceicao¹

To add greater depth to our study, the IPS Post-Election Survey 2006, we clustered responses to 6 statements in our survey which will suggest whether respondents would prefer greater pluralism in Singapore's political landscape. They are the six which most effectively differentiate where respondents stand on this issue. The statements are:

How important are the following issues in shaping your decision on who to vote or who to support if you had voted?

- Need for checks and balances in Parliament (Qn.1i)
- Need for different views in Parliament (Qn. 1j)

Agree or disagree:

- The whole election system is fair to all political parties that want to contest the elections. (Qn.4)
- The votes for upgrading policy is fair because the government first rewards constituencies that support its political party. (Qn.5)
- There is no need to change the election system because it has served Singaporeans well. (Qn.7)
- It is always important to have elected opposition party members in Parliament. (Qn.8)

The statements were adjusted for direction of the responses vis-à-vis whether they suggested that more pluralism or change was desirable.

The responses were clustered and respondents with scores that were low were put into the 'Conservative' category to suggest that they were satisfied with the political landscape and system that currently exists. Those who scored very high were clustered into 'Pluralist' to suggest that they desired a greater level of political pluralism or were concerned about the fairness of the system. All those who were in-between without a clear stand in either direction were clustered into 'Swing'. This group remains to be convinced that the present situation is ideal.

The following are the findings, where the bivariate analysis was significant.

As the survey is based on quota sampling, conclusions are indicative of the general population of Singapore though they do not have the generalising quality that a simple random sample would offer.

¹ Dr Gillian Koh is Senior Research Fellow, Dr Tan Ern Ser, Adjunct Senior Research Fellow, and Ms Jeanne Conceicao is Research Fellow, all of the Institute of Policy Studies, Singapore. We wish to thank Mr Alan Tay, Joshua Research Consultants, Singapore and also Dr Yap Mui Teng, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies for their kind assistance in this project.

AGE

Table 1: Political Orientation by Age Brackets

Political Orientation	Age (%)					Total
	21-29	30-39	40-54	55-64	65 & above	
Conservative	24.8	21.8	24.9	30.3	46.5	26.5
Swing	44.9	44.0	33.8	39.3	35.2	40.0
Pluralist	30.4	34.1	41.3	30.3	18.3	33.5
Total (n=951)	100	100	100	100	100	100

Chi-square=30.2, df=8, p=0.000 sig.

In Table 1, we find that the greater percentage of those between 21-39 are Swing, the smallest in the conservative Conservative. The largest percentage of those between 40-54 are Pluralist. An equal proportion of those in 55-64 band are Conservative and Pluralist. The largest percentage of those in the 65 and above band are Conservative.

So almost half of the younger groups are not clearly decided one way or the other. A significant minority among the middle aged, 40-54 years old are in support of greater pluralism, which is somewhat surprising. Support for the current political landscape increases as we move through the 55 years and above age bands which on the other hand is something to be expected.

Table 2: Political Orientation by Pre- and Post-Independence Age Brackets

Political Orientation	Age (%)		Total
	Post-Independence 21-39	Pre-Independence 40 & above	
Conservative	23.2	29.7	26.5
Swing	44.4	35.7	40.0
Pluralist	32.4	34.6	33.5
Total (n=951)	100	100	100

Chi-square=8.715, df=2, p=.013 sig.

A larger percentage among the Post-Independence respondents were in the Swing category, and the second largest group were in the Pluralist category. This is the same for the Pre-Independence group, with the largest percentage of them being in the Swing category, and the second largest being in the Pluralist camp. Hence the split in the support for the current political landscape and for change are somewhat similar for both the pre- and post-Independence generations among our respondents.

The largest band fall in the middle category. They constitute the group that do not have one entrenched view of the political landscape.

This seems to throw into question the notion that the pre-Independence generations of Singaporeans are highly conservative and that the post-Independence generations, are highly 'liberal' and a group that will precipitate a large change in the political landscape. It is a far more nuanced situation.

Two notable groups to look at, based on Table 1, are those in the Middle aged (40-54) band who desire change, and those in the 21-39 age bands that do not have one clear position and may be part of the 'swing constituency'.

Clearly, at this point in time, our study suggests that **there is support for greater pluralism among both the post- and pre-Independence generations of Singaporeans.**

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS

Table 3: Political Orientation by Housing Type

Political Orientation	Housing Type (%)				Total
	1-3 room Flats	4 room flats	5-6 room/exec flats	Private	
Conservative	25.1	29.9	28.4	18.6	26.5
Swing	45.3	45.1	33.8	34.9	40.0
Pluralist	29.6	25.0	37.8	46.5	33.5
Total (n=950)	100	100	100	100	100

Chi-square=31.07, df=6, p=.000 sig

The highest proportion of the respondents from the 1-3 room and 4 room flats lie in the Swing category. In addition, almost 30% among the 1-3 roomers are in clear support of a more pluralist landscape, while almost 30% among the 4

roomers in support of the status quo. The spread is slightly more even among the 5-6 roomers with the largest proportion in support of greater pluralism, at 37.8%. As we move to the higher social class, those living in private housing, the proportion in support for greater pluralism among these respondents also increases to 46.5%. It is only the 4 roomers that buck this broad trend where the **proportion in support for greater pluralism increases among the higher classes.**

Table 4: Political Orientation by Occupational Class

Political Orientation	Occupational Class (%)			Total
	Working Class	Intermediate Class	Service Class	
Conservative	40.9	27.4	23.3	27.1
Swing	35.5	46.2	37.4	39.5
Pluralist	23.6	26.4	39.4	33.3
Total (n=711)	100	100	100	100

Chi-square=23.4, df=4, p=.000 sig

Note: 'Working Class' occupations comprise of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers; 'Intermediate class' occupations comprise of clerical and service workers; and 'Service class' occupations comprise managers, professionals, and associate professionals.

We examine the responses by occupational classes. Again looking at the Pluralist figures suggests that **the proportions of those in support for greater pluralism also increases among the higher occupational classes** – from 23.6% among the Working Class, to 26.4% among the Intermediate Class, to 39.4% among the Service Class. The largest proportion of those in the 'in-between stand' of Swing is found among the Intermediate Class, and the largest proportion of respondents who are Conservative is found among the Working Class.

Table 5: Political Orientation by Education

Political Orientation	Education Type (%)					Total
	Primary & below	Sec.	Post-Sec.	Diploma	University/Professional	
Conservative	35.6	26.9	24.4	21.6	23.9	26.5
Swing	41.7	41.5	46.6	46.6	29.1	40.0
Pluralist	22.7	31.6	29.0	31.8	47.0	33.5
Total (n=951)	100	100	100	100	100	100

Chi-square=31.13, df=8, p=.000 sig

Note: 'Secondary' includes those with secondary education by no o or N level qualifications and those with NTC3 or equivalent qualifications. 'Post-secondary' includes those with A levels, NTC 1/2 qualifications, or certificate in office skills. 'University/Professional' includes those with post-graduate level qualifications and other professional credentials.

Education level is another proxy for class. From the lowest levels to Diploma, the largest proportions of respondents in each bracket lie in the 'Swing' category. These proportions range from 41.5% to 46.6%.

Among the rest, a larger group among the respondents in the 'primary and below' bracket are 'Conservative', but a larger proportion among those in the 'Secondary' up to 'Diploma' brackets are 'Pluralist'.

Moving up to the highest bracket, those with university or professional qualifications, the largest percentage among this group support greater pluralism, that is, 47% to be exact.

To reiterate, while significant groups of those in the lowest to diploma-educated respondents do not have one clear stand in their political orientation, a good proportion among the best-educated support a greater level of pluralism. **With some caveat, higher education could therefore be associated with a greater tendency to want change in the political landscape.**

Table 6: Political Orientation by Monthly Household Income

Political Orientation	Monthly Household Income (%)				Total
	Low	LM	MM	UM or High	
Conservative	32.2	26.1	21.4	25.6	26.5
Swing	41.9	45.7	34.4	30.6	40.0
Pluralist	26.0	28.2	44.3	43.8	33.5
Total (n=951)	100	100	100	100	100

Note: 'Low' denotes monthly household income of 0 to \$1999, 'LM' or 'Lower Middle' denotes income of \$2000 to \$4999, 'MM' or 'Middle Middle' denotes income from \$5000 to \$6999 and 'UM or High' or 'Upper Middle or High' denotes \$7000 and above.

Chi-square=31.54, df=6, p=.000 sig

Yet again, the most significant proportions among the lower classes – Low and Lower Middle income groups fall in the 'Swing' category.

Of the rest, a larger proportion in the Low income category take a clear stand for status quo at 32.2 in the 'Conservative' category, but this is the reverse for the Low Middle group. As we move to the higher groups, the Middle Middle, Upper Middle or High income groups, the proclivity to support greater pluralism is also higher and is the largest proportions in the respective groups, that is, 44.3% among the Middle Middle group, and 43.8% in the Upper Middle or High group. This reinforces the earlier trend among the other proxies for class, where **a larger proportion of the lower groups fall in the 'Swing' category, and the support for greater pluralism increases with the higher levels. The support for status quo is the greatest among the lowest socio-economic class.**

ETHNICITY

The final demographic variable we explore for its possible influence on political orientation is ethnicity.

Table 7: Political Orientation by Ethnicity

Political Orientation	Ethnicity (%)				Total
	Chinese	Malay	Indian	Others	
Conservative	27.9	19.4	25.8	11.1	26.5
Swing	37.3	56.5	38.7	44.4	40.0
Pluralist	34.8	24.2	35.5	44.4	33.5
Total (n=951)	100	100	100	100	100

Chi-square=17.588, df=6, p=.007 sig

When the results are examined by ethnicity of the respondents, the highest proportion of each group stood in the 'Swing' category with no one clear stand for status quo or change towards greater pluralism.

Among the rest, the larger proportion of respondents in the 'Others' category supported change and pluralism (although this is a cell with a small absolute number of 4 individuals), next came the Indians, then the Chinese and finally the Malays. It should be noted also that the largest proportion among the Malays stood in the 'Swing' category.

Conclusion

Given the foregoing bivariate analysis, the results indicate the following: that **there is no clear divide between the Post- and Pre-Independence Singaporeans in their political orientation. There is some support for greater pluralism among both groups.** The younger voters are more likely not to have a clear one-sided stand and remain to be persuaded on various aspects of the electoral and broader political system.

Class is another clear determinant with differences of significance whether we use the Housing, Education, Occupation or Monthly Household Income variables as proxy for it. Those in the lower socio-economic classes tend to be in the in-between category of 'Swing' and then the next largest proportion supports the status quo. **Support for greater pluralism increases with the higher socio-economic classes.**

Using Ethnicity as a variable in explaining political orientation, a significant group among the Malays stand in the in-between category of 'Swing', but it is also true of the other groups that a largest proportion tend to stand in that same space. It is also true that the next largest proportion will support greater

pluralism or change. The smallest proportion stands for status quo. The division of opinion therefore is similar across the different ethnic groups. **It is less useful as a guide in understanding the trend in political orientation compared to Age and Socio-Economic Class.**

Another significant finding is that **a good proportion of our respondents, about 40%, fall in the 'Swing' category.** There is no one clear direction that they take. This could mean that they either remain to be convinced or make their decisions on who to vote or what they value on other considerations.

Clearly, the **next largest proportion of our respondents value greater diversity, value the need for checks and balances in our governance system.** It is **only the smallest group of our respondents who are convicted that the current system, process and status is comfortable for them.**

Further multivariate ANOVA analysis indicates that **only the differences in Age and Housing Type explain differences in the where people stand in our three categories on political orientation with any significance.**

* * * * *