

## Fewer conservative voters and more swing voters

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Conservatives are on the decline. Compared with five years ago, the proportion of Singaporeans labelled as politically conservative has shrunk by more than half: from 44.3 per cent to 18.5 per cent.

This category of voters is described in the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) post-GE2020 survey, whose findings were released yesterday, as those who disagree with the need for change in the electoral system, checks and balances, and different voices in Parliament.

On the other hand, the proportion in the swing category - defined as being mixed in their views compared with the pluralists and conservatives - has shot up by more than 20 points to 59.2 per cent.

Pluralists, or those who desire more political diversity, rose slightly by 4.4 percentage points to 22.4 per cent.

Dr Teo Kay Key said the surge in the swing category is surprising, given that most would expect stronger growth in the proportion of pluralists amid calls for more opposition presence in Parliament.

"Perhaps people want some kind of representation and some checks and balances, but not all the way to the pluralist end," said Dr Teo, a postdoctoral fellow at the IPS Social Lab who is also on the survey team. "(Pluralist) demands may have been tempered by other governance issues such as the need for efficient government, which is one of the top three issues shaping voting decisions among all three categories."

The IPS team stressed that the survey results reflect the respondents' concerns and political preferences, but do not tell exactly which party they voted for in GE2020.

In the preceding three general elections, pluralists had always been younger - especially those aged 21 to 29 - and university-educated, as well as more well-off.

But what stood out in GE2020 was the increase in their proportion among the lowest-income households earning less than \$2,000 a month, and those with non-tertiary post-secondary qualifications.

IPS said this points to two effects taking place. First, the consistent trend of those in the higher socio-economic class supporting political pluralism. Second, the effects of bread-and-butter issues at the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, such that voters felt there was a need for political opposition in Parliament.