

# **PAP's perceived credibility falls, more swing voters in S'pore: 5 key takeaways from IPS post-GE2020 survey**

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The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) on Thursday (Oct 1) shared the results of a survey it had conducted after the July 10 general election.

The think-tank polled a sample of 4,027 voting-age Singaporeans using three methods - random calls through landlines, mobile phones and an online survey. The results were weighted to be representative of the national population in terms of age, gender and race.

IPS had conducted similar surveys after the general elections in 2006, 2011 and 2015.

Here are the key findings from the latest survey.

## **1. Fall in PAP's perceived credibility**

The People's Action Party (PAP) is still seen as the most credible political party, but the proportion of respondents who felt this is so fell from 93 per cent in the 2015 general election to 86 per cent in GE2020.

While the percentage who strongly agreed that the PAP is credible was similar to 2015, those who said they merely agreed with the statement dropped from 63 per cent in 2015, to 57 per cent in 2020. This is a return to pre-2015 levels.

The party's perceived credibility fell across all age groups, with the drop in positive ratings sharper among those with secondary and diploma education, the lower-income, those living in one- to three-room Housing Board flats, and men.

Conversely, the Workers' Party's (WP) perceived credibility rose among respondents of all age groups.

It came in second, followed by the Progress Singapore Party, the Singapore Democratic Party, the National Solidarity Party and Peoples Voice.

The uptick in the WP's perceived credibility was led by professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs), those with post-secondary (ITE and junior college) qualifications and those living in one- to three-room flats.

IPS noted that both PMETs and those in the lowest housing category found the WP credible, which means it won supporters from both ends of the socio-economic spectrum.

## **2. Spike in importance of jobs, cost of living and need for political diversity**

Three major issues that saw the sharpest spike in "very important" ratings compared with 2015 were the jobs situation, cost of living and the need for different views in Parliament.

Jobs and cost of living were a focus for those aged 30 to 54 in low- to middle-income households; while having greater political diversity appealed more to younger voters aged 21 to 29 holding PMET jobs.

Both issues are not mutually exclusive, the researchers said.

Respondents in the low- to middle-income band felt that the jobs situation arising from the pandemic was a challenge to their sense of security.

Some may have therefore responded that they support checks and balances and diverse voices in Parliament due to these bread and butter issues rather than for the sake of political diversity in itself.

### **3. Need for efficient government continues to be top issue**

As with previous surveys, respondents cited the "need for good and efficient government" as the top priority on a list of 15 issues.

This has been a top concern since 2006, especially among PMETs and those with diplomas or university education.

A new item on this year's list that was among the top three issues was the Government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Almost nine out of 10 voters surveyed said it was "important" or "very important".

Respondents who felt this issue was particularly important included those born before 1965, those from low- and low-middle income groups and those with secondary education or below.

### **4. Fewer conservatives, more pluralists and swing voters**

Compared with 2015, the proportion of those categorised as politically conservative shrank by more than half, from 44.3 per cent to 18.5 per cent.

They are defined in the survey as those who disagreed with the need for change in the electoral system, checks and balances, or different voices in Parliament.

Those in the swing category - defined as being mixed in their views compared to the pluralists and conservatives - rose sharply by more than 20 percentage points to 59.2 per cent.

Pluralists, or those who desire more political diversity, rose slightly by around 4 percentage points to 22.4 per cent.

While pluralists are typically younger and more well-off, there was an increase in their proportion this year among the lowest-income households earning less than \$2,000 a month and those with only 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; and second, the effects of bread and butter issues at the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, such that respondents felt there was a need for political opposition in Parliament.

The IPS research 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.

### **5. Internet overtakes television as most important platform shaping voting decisions**

The verdict is in: GE2020 was Singapore's first Internet election.

The Internet was the most important communication platform that shaped Singaporeans' voting decisions this year.

Following it, in declining order of importance, are local television coverage, newspapers, e-rallies and friends plus family and colleagues.

In contrast, television coverage was the most influential communication channel in GE2015, followed in second place by both print newspapers and the Internet.

For voters born after 1965, referred to as post-independence voters, the Internet played a particularly important role in shaping their decisions. It did likewise for PMETs.

The younger the respondent and the higher the occupational class, the more likely it was that the Internet was important to him or her, the researchers said.

Those who say the Internet was important in providing material that shaped their vote, placed Facebook as their number one source - just as they did in 2015.

It was followed by CNA's various platforms, YouTube, Instagram and The Straits Times website.