

## The wired and the young

**Rachel Chang**

**The Straits Times**, 5 October 2011

Singapore voters who used Facebook and blogs for news on this year's general election are younger, better-educated and from homes with a higher income than the average household's.

They are also likely to be men and more knowledgeable about politics, according to a new survey.

While they express less trust of mainstream media, they are also more aware that what they read on blogs, Facebook and Twitter may not be fair.

'They are sceptical consumers,' summed up senior research fellow Tan Tarn How yesterday.

'They don't just swallow information hook, line and sinker.'

Mr Tan was speaking at a conference where this profile of the core online consumer was presented to discuss the impact of new media on the May general election.

They make up 30 per cent of the voters polled in the survey of 2,000 voters by the Institute of Policy Studies.

In an unexpected finding, this group, when compared with the other respondents, displayed lower levels of political cynicism, which is an academic term that refers to what extent one distrusts politicians' motives.

Professor Ang Peng Hwa of Nanyang Technological University pointed to other studies that have shown those who go online are generally more trusting, as they are more open to connecting with strangers.

Mr Tan noted that lower levels of cynicism could be a corollary of this group's interest in politics. 'If you are cynical, you're likely to disengage,' he said. 'Being less cynical allows you to say, what I do could make a difference.'

Separately, researchers also homed in on younger Singaporeans - 447 among the 2,000 Singaporeans polled are between 21 and 34 years old.

They found that these younger voters are more politically active, and more likely to attend political rallies, volunteer with political parties and write to the Government and media.

They are also more likely to say they voted for the opposition, although voting patterns overall are largely similar to those of the older generations.

Only about half of those polled are willing to reveal their vote.

Of young Singaporeans, 26 per cent say they voted for the PAP while 16 per cent say they voted for the opposition.

Among all the 2,000 surveyed, 30 per cent say they voted for the PAP and 11 per cent, for the opposition.