

More swing voters at this year's GE **Proportion of swing voters up, with Malay respondents accounting for 56%**

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Today, 9 July 2011

The overall proportion of swing voters increased in the recent General Election (GE) compared to the previous elections in 2006, according to a post-election survey by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).

In particular, the proportion of swing voters grew most for those aged 40 to 54 (from 33.8 per cent to 47.3 per cent), and those aged 65 and above (from 35.2 per cent to 45.4 per cent), while the proportion of voters who are conservative in their political orientation dipped across the board.

The survey was conducted among 2,084 Singaporeans two weeks after the May 7 polls. All the respondents who did not express a clear stand on whether they desired greater pluralism were classified as swing voters.

Compared to 2006, voters aged between 21 to 29 who wanted to see more diversity in politics saw the biggest increase.

In terms of ethnicity, the Malay respondents accounted for the highest proportion of swing voters (56 per cent). The Malay respondents seemed inclined to consider Opposition parties such as the National Solidarity Party (NSP) and the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), but less so the Workers' Party (WP).

Dr Suzaina Kadir of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, who analysed the survey findings on the Malay electorate, said: "It was found that credibility of candidates — their credentials and whether they are hardworking — are important to the Malays, so perhaps they looked to parties like the NSP as it was known to have candidates who are scholars."

Dr Kadir noted that the Malay respondents relied the most on the Internet as a source of information and communication during the elections, as opposed to other media platforms.

Dr Kadir reiterated that the Internet is a medium that needs to be better utilised for the Malays. "We've always been focused on socio-economic issues for this race but maybe now the issue of connectedness and community needs to be explored," she said.

They also seem more inclined than their Chinese counterparts to desire alternative voices in Parliament.

"Malay voters have become a more complex entity," said Dr Kadir. However, she noted that deeper work needs to be done to conclude that the findings are representative of the Malay electorate.

The IPS survey found that overall, the Internet ranked third in shaping voter decision in the May polls, behind newspapers and television coverage.

In 2006, the Internet was ranked ninth.

IPS senior research fellow Gillian Koh said the Internet has become more important with older Singaporeans but more so with the young and those with higher socio-economic status.

On the back of higher inflation, cost of living became the third most influential issue in May's GE, resounding the most with voters aged between 30 and 54.

In the 2006 polls, cost of living ranked sixth among voters.