

Less desire for political diversity

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IPS releases survey findings on GE2015

The desire for greater political diversity dropped sharply in the recent General Election (GE) compared to the previous one, according to a survey by Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).

The vote swing of 9.8 percentage points to the People's Action Party (PAP) in the Sept 11 GE (it won nearly 70 per cent of the vote) was likely due to middle- and higher-income earners backing the political status quo.

GE2011 saw the PAP's share of the popular vote fall from 66.6 per cent in 2006 to 60.1 per cent, and the Workers' Party becoming the first opposition party to win a GRC.

The percentage of respondents who support greater political pluralism and change in the electoral system had halved, from 35.8 per cent in a 2011 survey to 18 per cent this year.

But the percentage of "conservatives" in support of the political status quo, doubled from 21.6 per cent in 2011 to 44.3 per cent this year.

Lead researcher Gillian Koh said: "We are surprised that the number of people we consider to be pluralists has diminished."

"Those who are still there are supportive of the political ideal of having opposition in Parliament, diverse views and a strong system of checks and balances."

The "need for efficient government" was cited as the top priority among a list of 18 issues. About 98 per cent of respondents rated it as "important" or "very important".

This was followed by "amount of government help for the needy", "fairness of government policy" and "cost of living", which at least 90 per cent deemed important or very important.

The survey polled a random sample of 2,015 voting-age Singaporeans.

MEDIA

The findings were presented at a post-election conference yesterday to share the think-tank's analysis of the performance of the political parties, voter behaviour, and the influence and role of media in shaping the outcome of GE2015.

One of the conclusions was that the use of the Internet and social media has not eroded the role of television and print newspapers in shaping voter attitudes. The majority of social media users (98.5 per cent) relied on traditional media sources like TV, newspapers and websites of Singapore's mainstream media outlets.

IPS research fellow Carol Soon, who studies new media, said this shows that social media users had a relatively varied media diet and suggests that they are "more critical and discerning than they were thought to be".