

# **IPS' post-GE2020 survey finds surge in importance of bread-and-butter issues, political ideals, role of online media**

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- The top issues on voters' minds were an efficient government, fairness in policymaking, and more help for the needy
- But bread-and-butter issues and political ideals grew in importance the most, compared with the previous election
- GE2020 saw internet-based platforms rise to become the most important source of information affecting voters' decisions
- Facebook was seen as the most influential platform

An efficient government, fair government policies, and more aid to the needy were among the top issues for voters in the General Election (GE) in July, a post-election survey has found.

A survey by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) of more than 4,000 respondents also discovered that the cost of living, the employment situation and a desire for different views in Parliament had surged in importance more than any other issues since the last election in 2015.

IPS has so far conducted similar surveys following the GEs in 2011, 2015 and 2020. More than 2,000 respondents were polled randomly via landline phone for each survey. For this year's survey, it also polled around 2,000 or more voters over mobile phones and the internet.

The study asked respondents to rank how important each issue was in shaping their voting decision on a five-point scale, out of a list of 15 issues.

## **THE MOST INFLUENTIAL ISSUES**

While the Government's handling of the Covid-19 crisis featured high as a factor that influenced votes, with 89 per cent saying that it was important or very important, voters were also concerned about other issues.

- The need for an efficient government (97 per cent)
- Fairness of government policy (92 per cent)
- The amount of government aid for the needy (91 per cent)

Ensuring an efficient government has been the top concern of voters since 2006, especially for diploma and university degree holders, and service industry workers who are professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs).

However, the think-tank also noted a significant variation since its poll after GE2015 in terms of which category of respondents chose a particular issue as their most important.

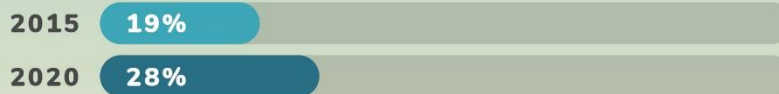
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# POST-ELECTION SURVEY

## INFLUENCE OF ISSUES

Very important

### JOB SITUATION



### COST OF LIVING



### NEED FOR DIFFERENT VIEWS IN PARLIAMENT



Source: Institute of Policy Studies

In the case of the job situation, the cost of living and the need for different views in Parliament, each had gone up nine percentage points since GE2015 to 28 per cent, 47 per cent and 39 per cent respectively — the biggest rises for any issue.

This suggested that differing considerations loomed large for different groups of voters in GE2020, IPS said.

For those aged 30 to 54, whose monthly household incomes ranged from S\$2,000 to S\$6,999, the study found that the jobs situation and the cost of living were among their most salient issues, more so than in the previous GE.

“(These issues) suggest that the question of sustainable livelihoods especially in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic affected the vote for respondents of working age and in the low- to middle-income households,” IPS said.

“They are the most vulnerable to threats to job and income security. Bread-and-butter issues were critical to them.”

At the same time, political ideals were important as well, especially for the young and better-educated.

Compared with 2015, more respondents said that the need for a diversity of views in Parliament was their most important issue. This was particularly salient for those aged 21 to 29, as well as those with household monthly incomes of between S\$5,000 and S\$6,999.

More diploma and university degree holders, and service workers who are PMETs also identified this as their most important issue.

How respondents scored other issues:

- Cost of living (88 per cent said that it was important or very important)
- Need for checks and balances in Parliament (87 per cent)
- Need for different views in Parliament (87 per cent)
- Wealth and income inequality (83 per cent)
- Work of former Member of Parliament (77 per cent)
- Neighbourhood facilities (76 per cent)
- Foreigners and immigration policy (74 per cent)
- Upgrading of housing estate (53 per cent)
- Legal status of homosexuality (40 per cent)

## **HOW VOTERS GOT THE NEWS**

The survey also asked respondents to score the most important communication platform responsible for shaping the way they voted.

GE2020, dubbed by many as Singapore's first digital election due to the safe distancing rules brought in to curb the pandemic, had predominantly featured online-based campaigning since physical interactions and group events were largely not allowed.

As such, internet-based channels moved to the top of the chart, with 12 per cent more respondents picking it as the most influential factor compared with 2015. Television coverage was second, followed by newspapers, election e-rallies, and information gained through friends, family and colleagues.

Respondents were also more ambivalent about the role of door-to-door visits, the work done by the party grassroots, and party literature.

This is a change from IPS' 2015 findings, which concluded that while the use of social media was high back then, it was not as important in shaping voting decisions as other platforms.

IPS noted that online rallies — a new category given the safe distancing measures imposed during GE2020 — were especially important for younger voters, especially those in the 21-to-29 age group.

Respondents who picked the internet were then asked to name the specific platforms. The top five were:

- Facebook (74.1 per cent)
- YouTube (29.8 per cent)
- Platforms of national media outlet CNA (29.7 per cent)
- Instagram (25.3 per cent)

- Website of national daily The Straits Times (16.9 per cent)

When only taking into account respondents who were polled via the phone, CNA was the second-most important internet-based platform, IPS said.