

Who swung to the opposition in GE 2015? Mostly women: IPS survey

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SWING voters who chose the opposition in Singapore's general election last September mainly consisted of women who had an average age of 38, according to survey findings revealed by the Institute of Policy Studies on Wednesday.

Speaking at the IPS symposium about her findings on the demographics of voters, researcher Zhang Weiyu noted that the actual percentage of swing voters in the past election was 5 per cent.

Most of the ones who swung to the opposition lived in either one to two room HDB flats or four room HDB flats, and most of them ranked "having different voices in Parliament" as a top concern, the survey found.

In 2015, the ruling People's Action Party won the election with 70 per cent of votes, a big swing from the previous election in 2011, which they won by only 60 per cent of votes.

Ironically, 84 per cent of the voters who swung from the PAP to the opposition last year, had attended mostly rallies held by the former, said Zhang.

Meanwhile, the swing voters who picked the ruling party in GE 2015 were mostly men at an average age of 43, according to the survey.

Zhang said that the voters typically lived in four-room HDB flats and had higher education level.

Seventy-nine per cent of the swing voters who attended rallies went for the ones organised by the Workers' Party.

"Both types of swing voters tended to participate in rallies more, but they participated more in those held by the party they actually abandoned," said Zhang.

Researcher Elmie Nekmat said that active participation on social media does not necessarily influence voting behaviours.

According to his research findings, open platforms such as public Facebook statuses or discussions in an open Facebook group have little significance in influencing voters' opinions on housing, transport and population.

However, participation via closed social media, such as Facebook messenger or WhatsApp, did have an impact on public opinions, he said.

Based on findings by another researcher, Debbie Goh, who did a survey on personalised communication and the knowledge gap during GE 2015, she discovered that for voters aged 60 and above, the ones with below average online engagement had a higher mean knowledge score compared to those with above average engagement.

For those in the high-income level, below average users scored close to the maximum score, while above average users scored a little lower.

Goh concluded, "Excessive [online] use by some groups had negative influence on knowledge."