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Upswing in younger voters backing status quo in GE2025: IPS study

But overall trend towards political pluralism has grown among S'poreans, survey finds

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Younger voters backing the political status quo were likely a key factor in the nationwide swing of 4.33 percentage points to the People's Action Party in the May 3 General Election, defying the growing trend of greater desire for political pluralism among Singaporeans.

This was among the findings by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) in its post-election survey, which polled 2,056 voting-age Singaporeans on international research firm YouGov's Singapore panel through an online, self-administered survey.

The results shed some light on what has been described as a landslide win by the PAP in GE2025, which saw the party's share of the popular vote increase to 65.57 per cent from 61.24 per cent in GE2020.

IPS, which has conducted similar surveys since 2006, found a sharp rise in conservatives, or those who support the political status quo, among those aged 20 to 39.

The researchers had grouped respondents into three categories – conservatives, pluralists and swing voters – based on their answers to five statements. The statements were: The need for checks and balances in Parliament; the need for differing views in Parliament; the importance of elected MPs from opposition parties; whether the election system is fair to all political parties; and whether there is a need to change the election system.

Among respondents in the 20 to 29 age group, the proportion of conservative voters rose to 28.6 per cent in GE2025 from 13.3 per cent in GE2020, and among the 30 to 39 age group, the proportion rose to 25.7 per cent in GE2025 from 15 per cent in GE2020.

This was accompanied by a slight fall in the proportion of pluralists, or those who believe in the need for political diversity, among these groups.

In comparison, IPS found growing support for political diversity among those aged 40 and above. The sharpest increase was among those aged 55 to 64, with pluralists outstripping conservatives in this age group.

Overall, though, the trend towards political pluralism has grown, with even conservative voters increasingly believing in the need for checks and balances, differing views and elected opposition MPs.

IPS senior research fellow Gillian Koh, who led the research team behind the survey, said the increase in support for the status quo among the young could be due to the importance voters placed on materialist concerns in GE2025.

The latest survey found that the cost of living was the top concern, with 74 per cent of respondents saying it was a very important election issue, compared with under half of respondents in 2020. Six in 10 respondents said affordability of homes – a new item added in the 2025 survey – was a very important issue.

Voters also placed greater importance this time on the efficiency and fairness of government, facilities in the neighbourhood, upgrading of flats and the job situation, compared with GE2020 and the election years before.

Dr Koh said young voters may have felt that it would be too risky not to support the incumbent Government, with the election taking place against a backdrop of global uncertainty and trade wars.

At the same time, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and his fourth-generation leadership team had also made a concerted effort to reach out to younger Singaporeans over the past two or three years, sending out a "very clear message that the leaders hear you", she added.

"That form of outreach has probably provided some political returns for the PAP, not in a cynical fashion, but really a true sort of deep engagement of youth, recognising that they have particular concerns," Dr Koh said.

CONVERGENCE IN CREDIBILITY SCORES FOR PAP, WP

GE2025 also saw the Workers' Party consolidating its position in the constituencies it held. Despite the nationwide swing to the PAP, the WP retained Aljunied GRC with 59.68 per cent of the vote, Sengkang GRC with 56.31 per cent and Hougang SMC with 62.17 per cent.

Meanwhile, the smaller opposition parties were routed, with a total of 27 candidates from the National Solidarity Party, People's Alliance for Reform, People's Power Party and Singapore United Party polling below 12.5 per cent and losing $364,500 collectively in election deposits.

This was borne out by the much higher credibility rating the WP received in the latest survey compared with other opposition parties, with Singaporeans now seeing the PAP and WP as equally credible political parties.

The PAP saw a dip in overall credibility rating to 3.9 in GE2025 compared with 4.1 in GE2020, while the WP's mean score remained stable at 3.9 over both elections.

Compared with GE2020, the proportion of those who "agreed" and "strongly agreed" that the PAP was credible dipped by 17 percentage points to 69 per cent, while the proportion of those who "agreed" and "strongly agreed" that the WP was credible dipped by 14 percentage points to 65 per cent. Many more respondents this time around stated that they were "neutral".

Meanwhile, the Progress Singapore Party dropped in credibility ratings to 3.2 in GE2025 from 3.5 in GE2020. The Singapore Democratic Party's score improved to 3.3 in GE2025, from 3.2 in GE2020.

So, despite the trend towards greater pluralism, Dr Koh said voters' decisions came down to the match-up between political parties.

"It really depends on who is facing off against the PAP," she said, with less credible parties doing much worse.

Where candidates were concerned, voters continued to value traits such as honesty, fairness, hard work and commitment.

This time around, more respondents also cited experience in grassroots and community work, as well as credentials, as very important for candidates to have.

Dr Koh put this down to political parties fielding younger and new candidates, with 32 on the PAP's slate and 14 on the WP's slate.

With no previous track record to go on, voters would have looked to these factors as a proxy to decide on these candidates' suitability as MPs, she said.

This dovetailed with the findings of a separate study on perceptions of governance, belonging, and electoral behaviour led by Dr Mathew Mathews, an IPS principal research fellow and head of the IPS Social Lab.

A total of 2,872 Singaporeans of voting age were polled from May 8, 2025, to June 20, 2025. Of these, 58.5 per cent were willing to reveal which party they voted for.

From this subset, six in 10 respondents said they voted based on the qualities of the candidates fielded in their constituencies, while four in 10 said the reputation and brand of the party were what mattered. Just over three in 10 said their voting decision was based on which party could take care of town council issues well.

These factors ranked highest in a list that included other reasons such as the need for more opposition voices in Parliament, not wanting to lose a minister-calibre candidate, and not wanting to lose a good opposition candidate.

Older voters were more likely to say they voted for the PAP, as were women. Voters who live in larger public housing types and private property were also more likely to have voted for the ruling party.

In contrast, support for the WP was relatively consistent across genders, age groups and housing types.

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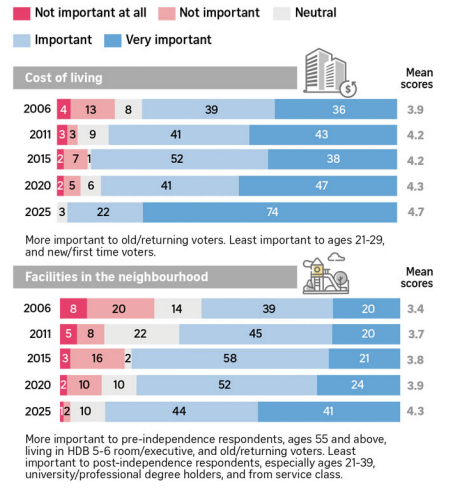
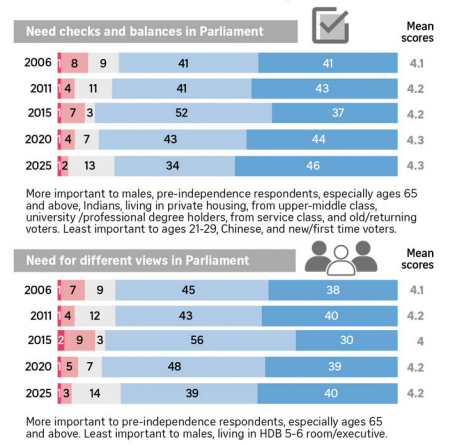
Influence of issues which grew in importance for voters



Influence of issues related to pluralism



NOTE: Survey percentages don't always add up to 100%

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