

WelshGE2015 Survey: Post-Election Insights on Voting in Singapore

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About the Welsh GE2015 Survey



This survey is an independent assessment of factors explaining voting behavior in Singapore's GE2015.

The purpose of the Welsh GE2015 Survey is to contribute to understanding and knowledge, to complement and expand the existing research on the political views of the Singaporean public.

Welsh GE2015 was privately funded by a Singaporean citizen and implemented by a research firm based in Singapore.

The survey questions and analysis were developed by Professor Bridget Welsh, with technical assistance provided by the Merdeka Center. Questions regarding the survey can be directed to bridgetwelsh1@gmail.com

Sampling of the Welsh GE2015 Survey

The survey was conducted by telephone.

A total sample size of 800 were interviewed, with the results weighted in line with the Singapore Department of Statistics 2010 Census of Population updated annually for gender, ethnicity and age distribution.

The sample size is a nationally representative sample with a margin of error of $\pm 3.46\%$.

The survey had a refusal rate of 18%, indicating reluctance to participate in survey research on political issues.



Source(s) of Information: Findings



GE2015 was not an Internet/Social Media Election

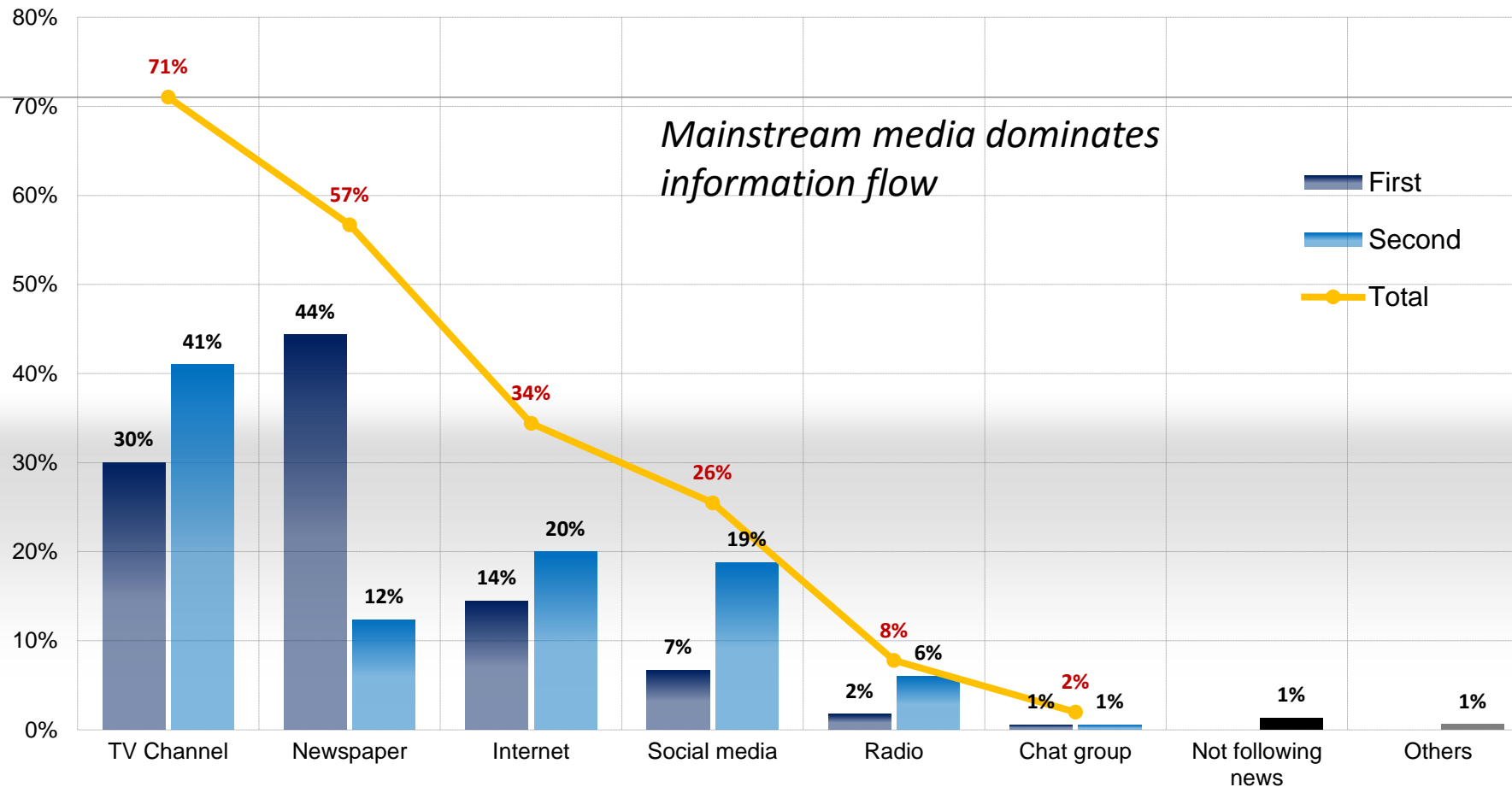
Mainstream media remains the dominant source of information for political affairs, especially television.

Social media and chat groups were less influential as a source of information, although chat groups were more important than in GE2011.

Chat groups, such as WhatsApp, were the least impactful as a news source.

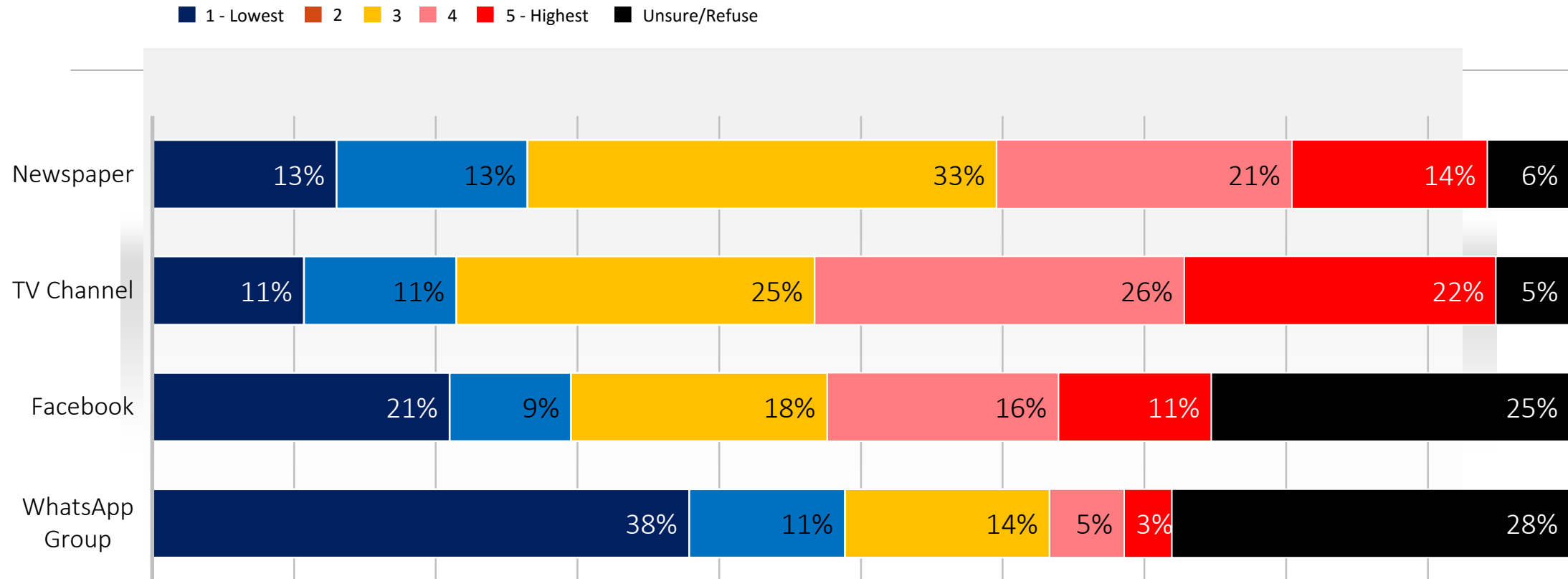
Source(s) of Information

Main sources of information about domestic political and current affairs



Q: Please tell me TWO sources/channels you consider to be your main source of information about domestic political and current affairs?

Prioritization of Sources of Information



Mainstream media most important information source in GE2015

Q: On a scale of 1-5 with **5 as the highest**, how influenced were you by the following sources in the 2015 General Election?

Views of Current Political Conditions



A large majority perceive the country moving in the right direction, with nearly a third of Singaporeans strongly holding this view.

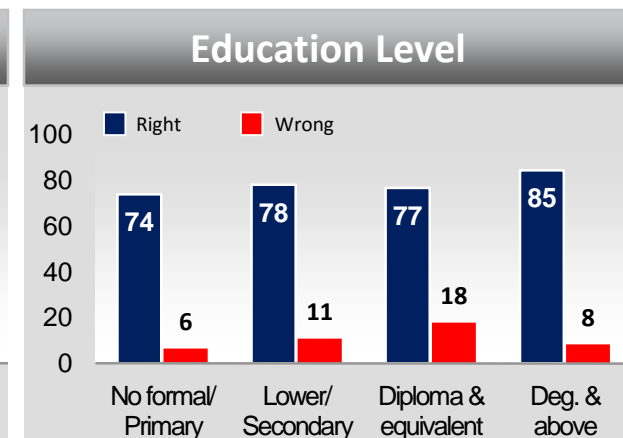
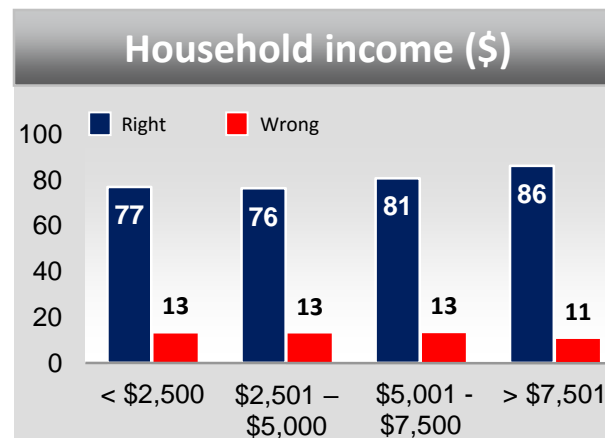
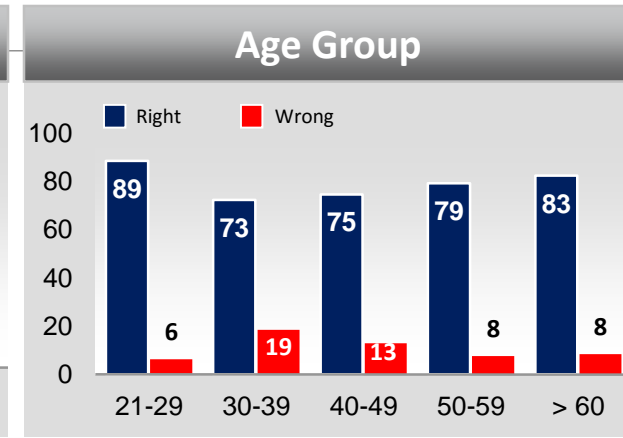
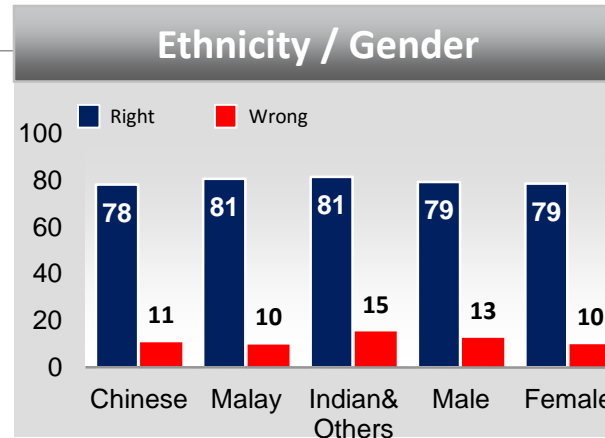
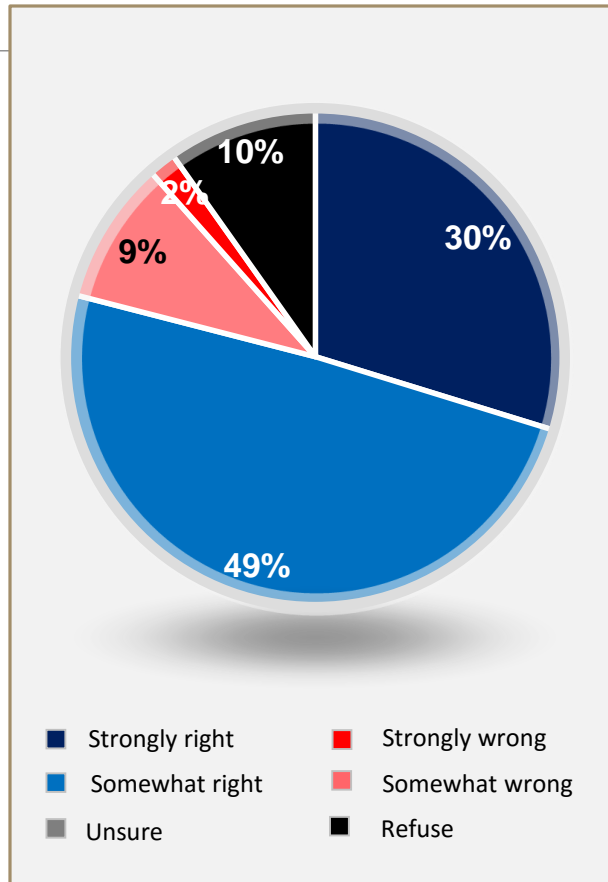
There are only modest demographic differences in public perceptions of the direction of the country.

For those Singaporeans perceiving the country moving in the right direction, stability, government performance and economic development are the main reasons provided.

For those Singaporeans perceiving the country moving in the wrong direction, immigration and cost of living issues were the most important, followed by concerns with government performance.

Direction of the Country

*Very positive views
on the direction of
Singapore*



Q: Considering the conditions in the country today, how strongly would you say that things are heading in the right or wrong direction?

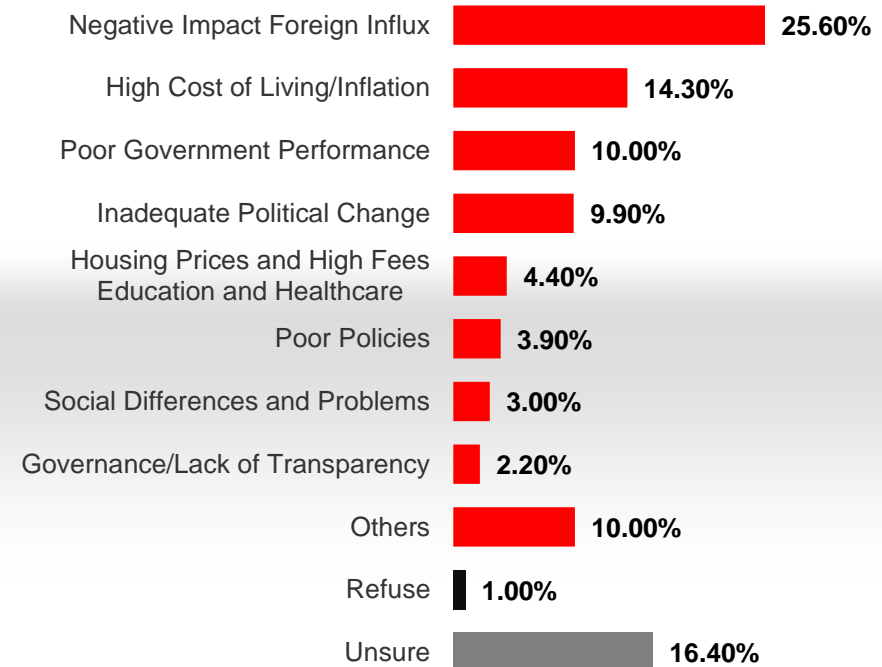
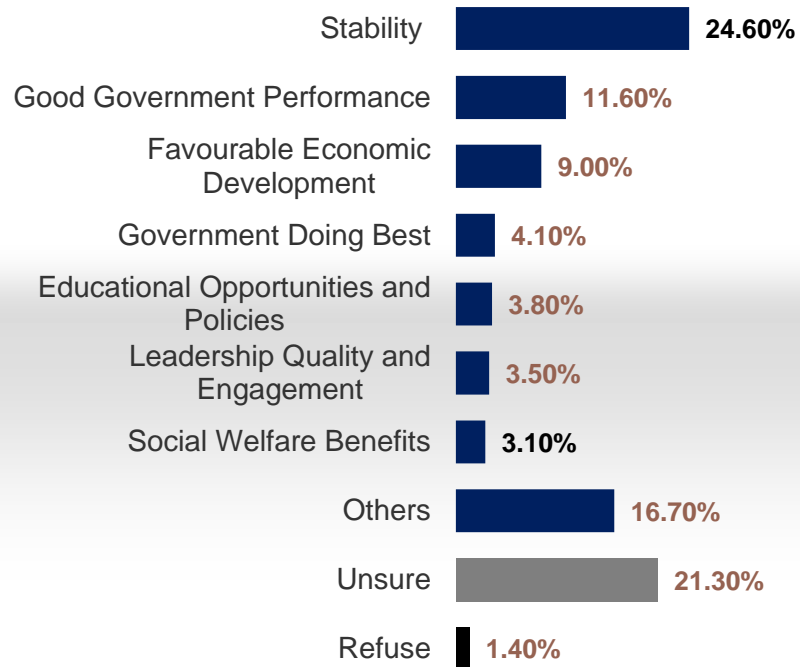
Direction of the Country



79%
RIGHT DIRECTION (n=633)



11%
WRONG DIRECTION (n=90)

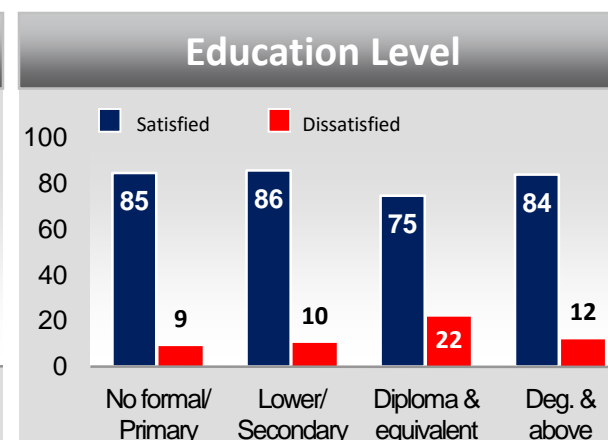
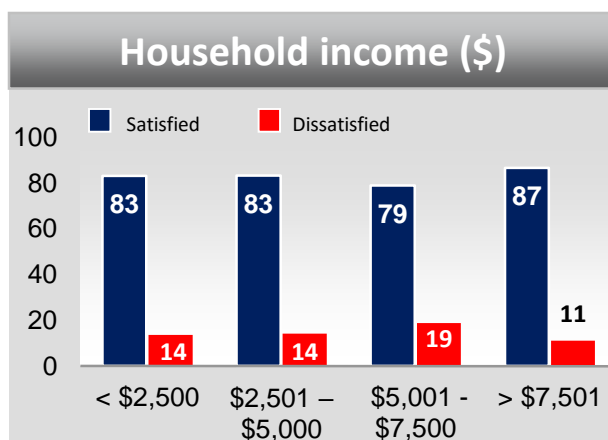
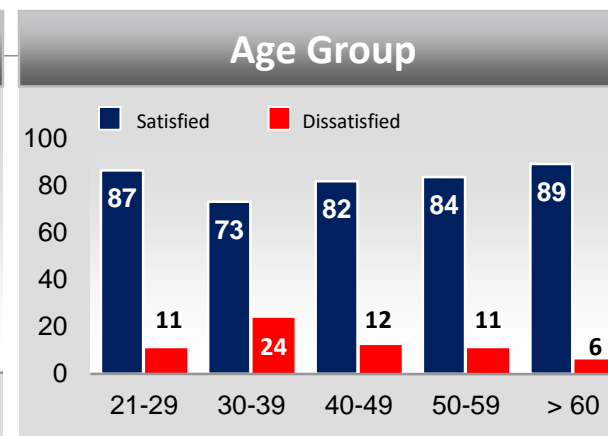
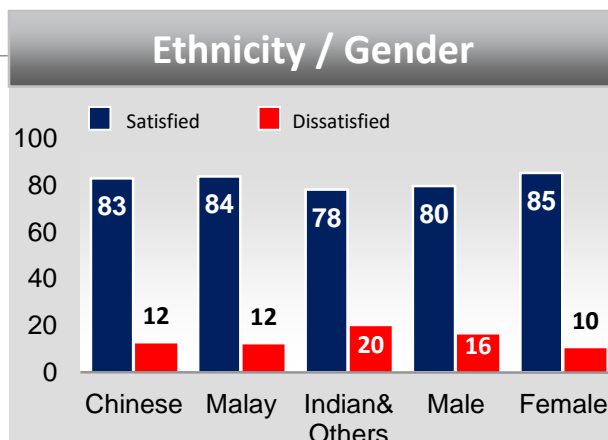
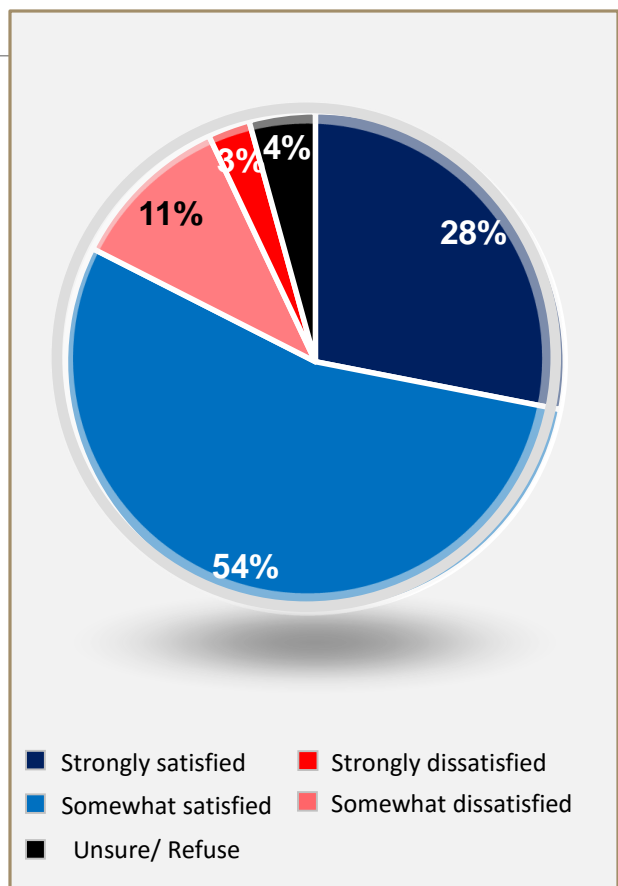


Stability and Economy versus Foreigners/Jobs and Cost of Living

Q: And what would you say is the issue that is the main reason for you answering right/wrong direction?

Satisfaction with the Government

High satisfaction reported

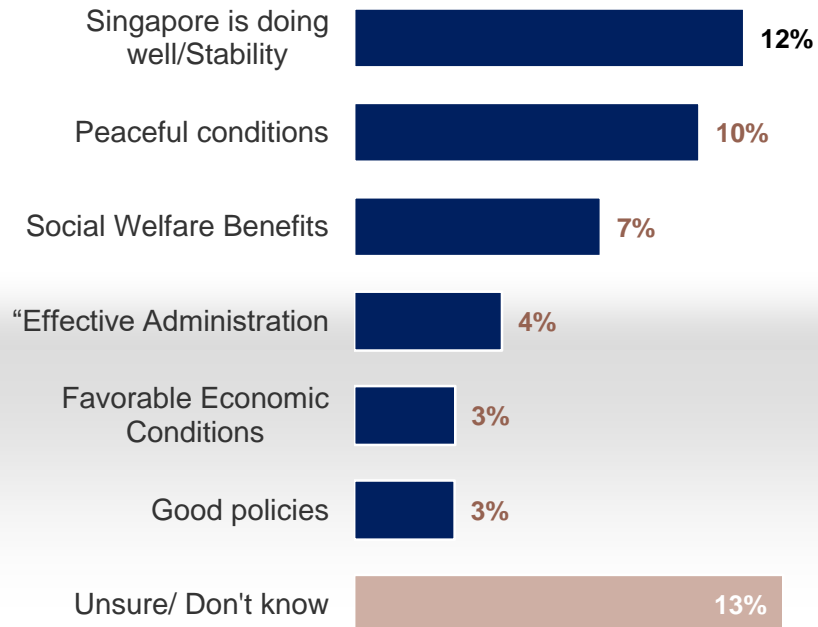


Q: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how the government is performing these days?

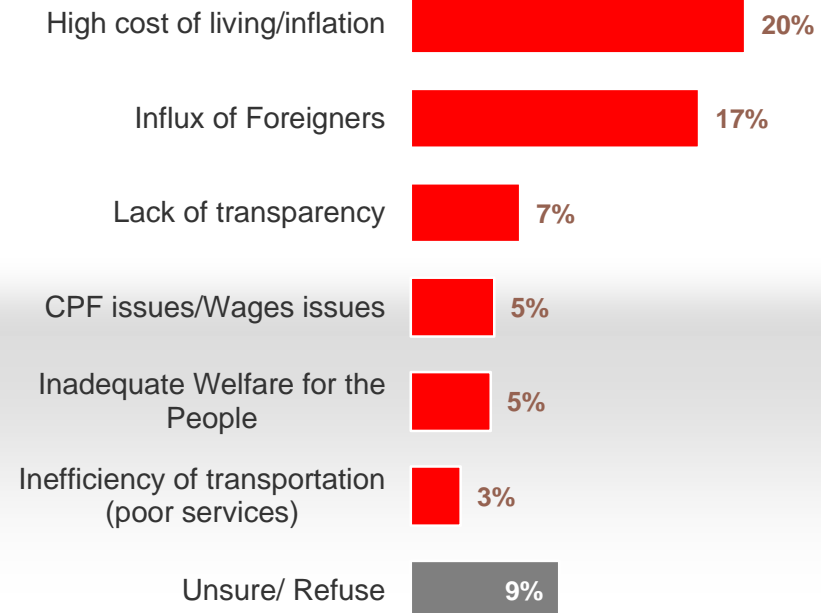
Satisfaction with the Government



82%
SATISFIED (n=661)



13%
DISSATISFIED (n=106)



Q: What would you say is the issue that is the main reason for your answer? (satisfied with performance)

Participation in GE2015

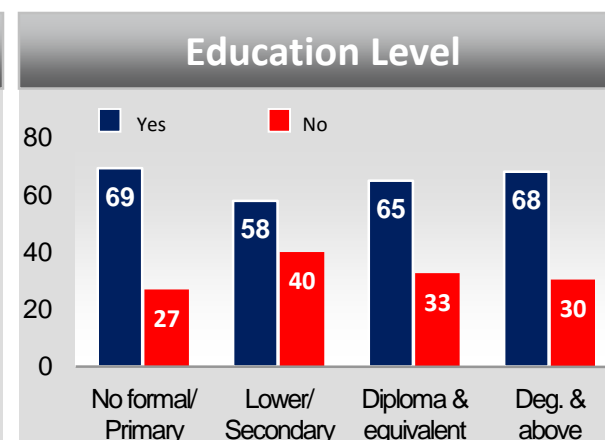
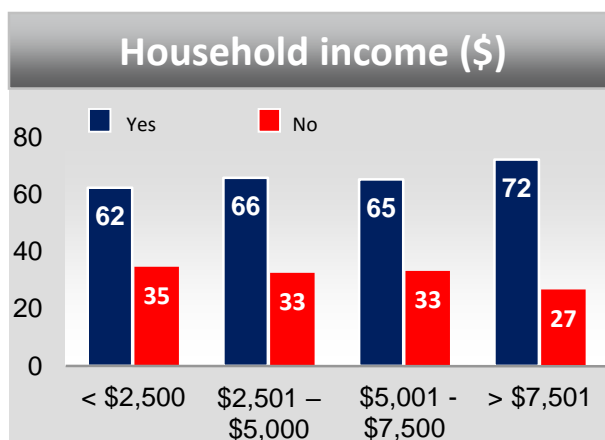
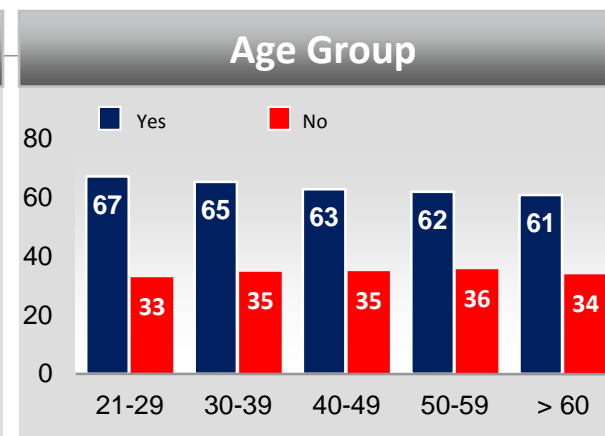
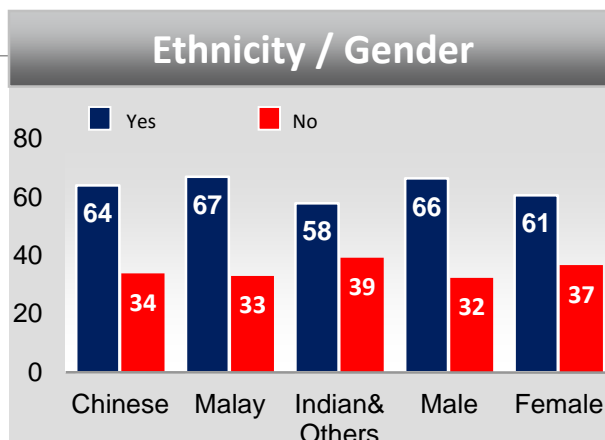
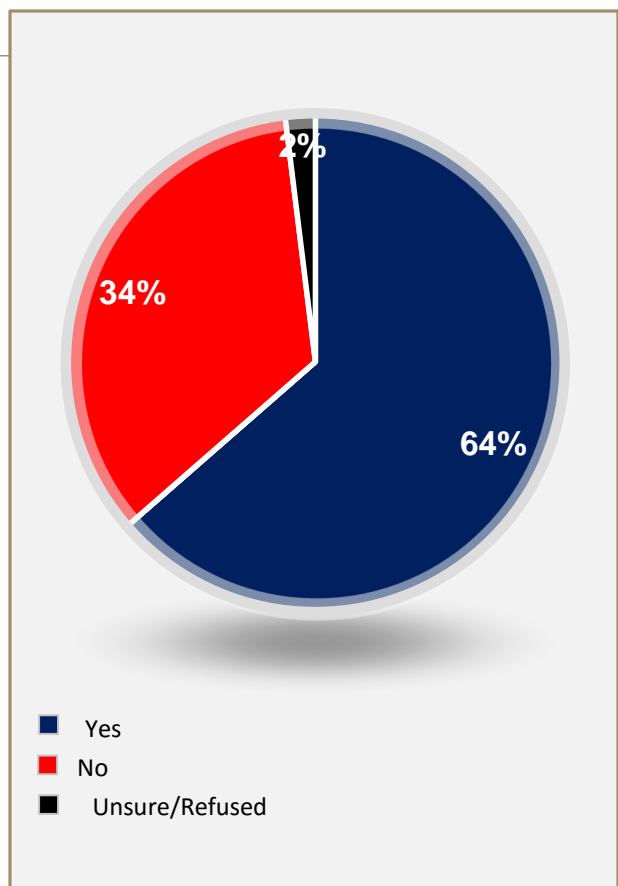


Nearly two-thirds of Singaporeans followed the GE2015 campaign, challenging the myth that Singaporeans are politically apathetic. Interest is high among younger Singaporeans.

Voting remains the main form of political participation, with only small shares of Singaporeans attending rallies or engaging in campaigning.

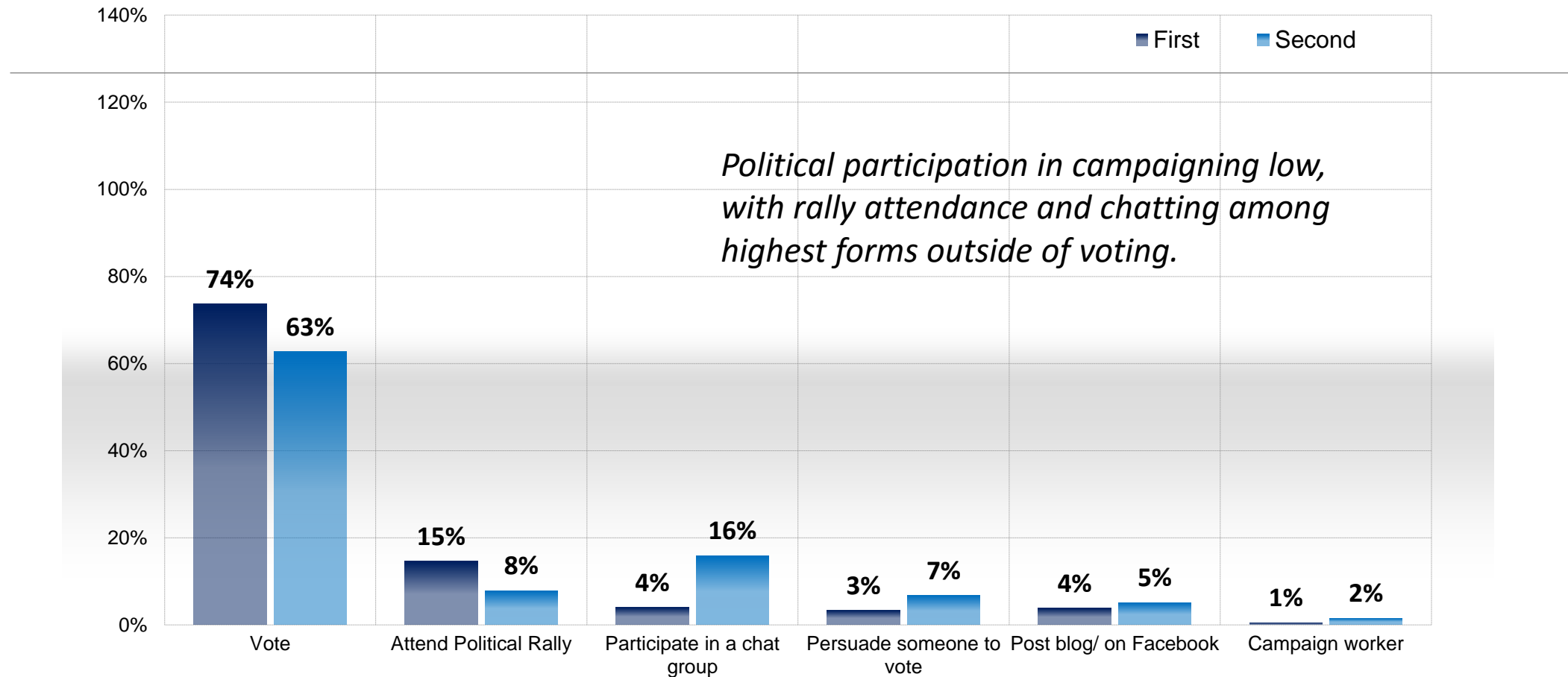
Follow the Election Campaign

High engagement with campaign, with modest variation



Q: Did you follow the 2015 Singapore General Election campaign?

Forms of Participation in GE2015 Campaign



Q: Which of the following did you participate in during the GE campaign?

Views of Leadership: Findings



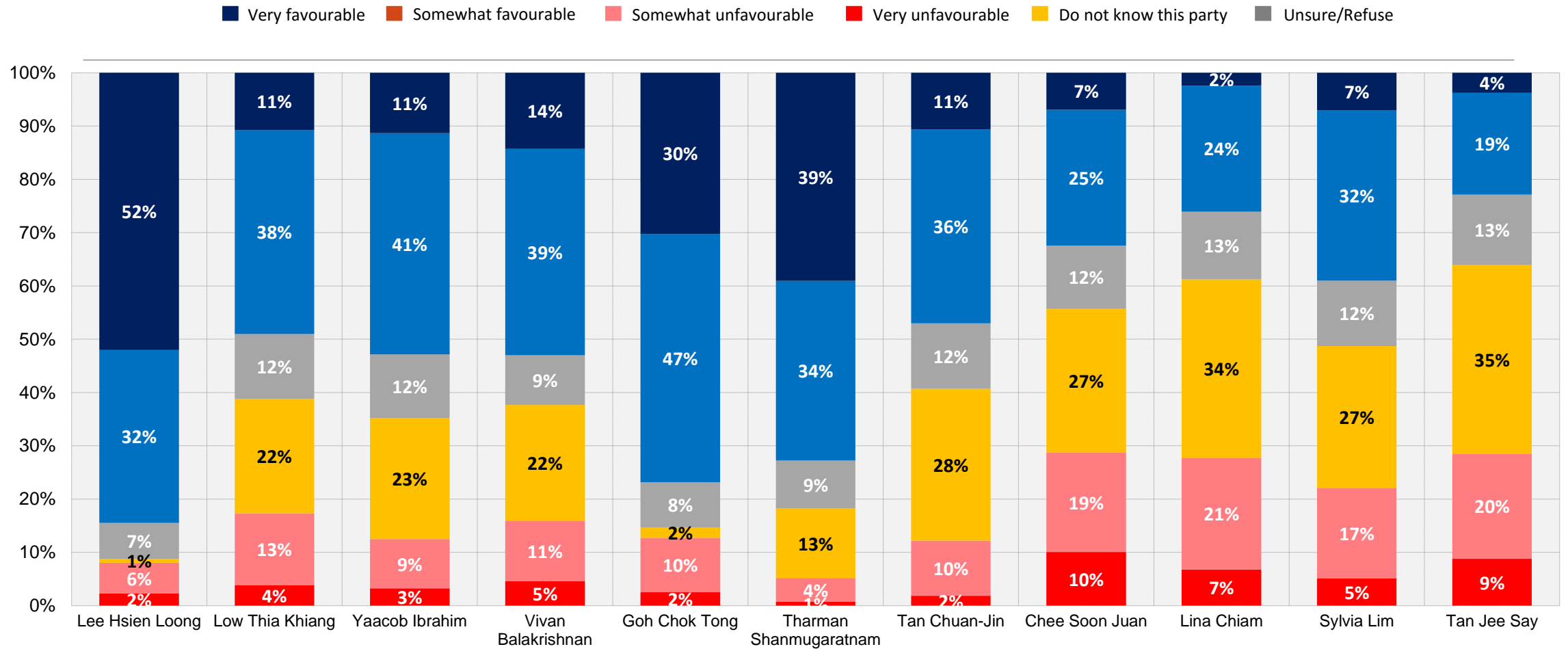
Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Emeritus Senior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam from the PAP have the most favorable public assessments among the politicians surveyed.

Around a quarter of Singaporeans are not familiar with many leading Singaporean politicians.

Opposition politicians, in particular Chee Soon Juan and Tan Jee Say, have the highest unfavorability ratings by the public, although their favorability assessments are higher than their negative views indicating polarization of views of these leaders in the public.

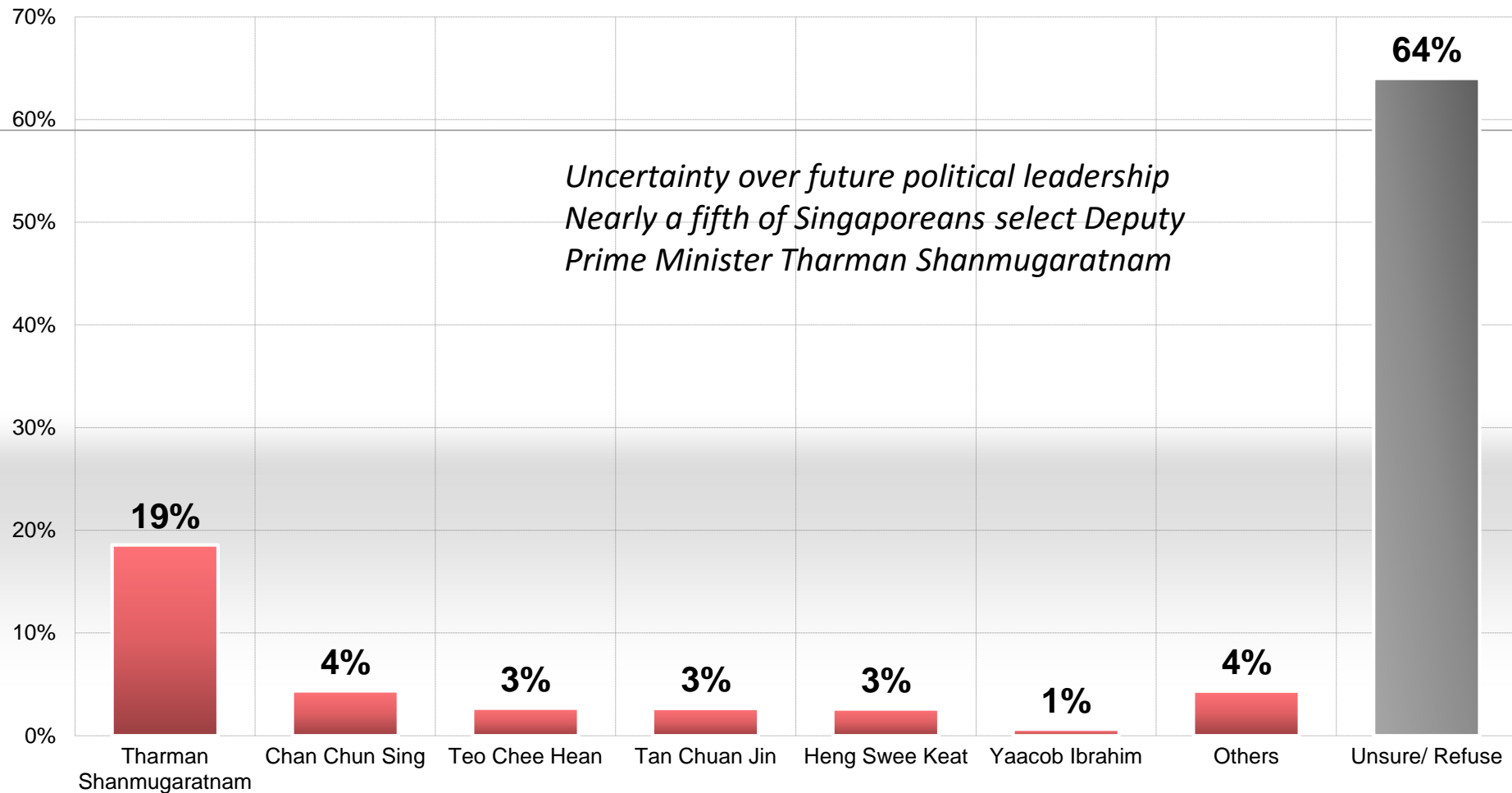
Most Singaporeans are unsure who will be the future prime minister of Singapore after Lee Hsien Loong. Those that do answer primarily indicate Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam.

Perception towards Leadership



Q: Do you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of the following leaders?

Future Prime Minister



Q: Who do you think will be the next prime minister after Lee Hsien Loong?

Views of Political Parties



Among political parties, PAP has the most favorability among Singaporeans, with limited unfavorability.

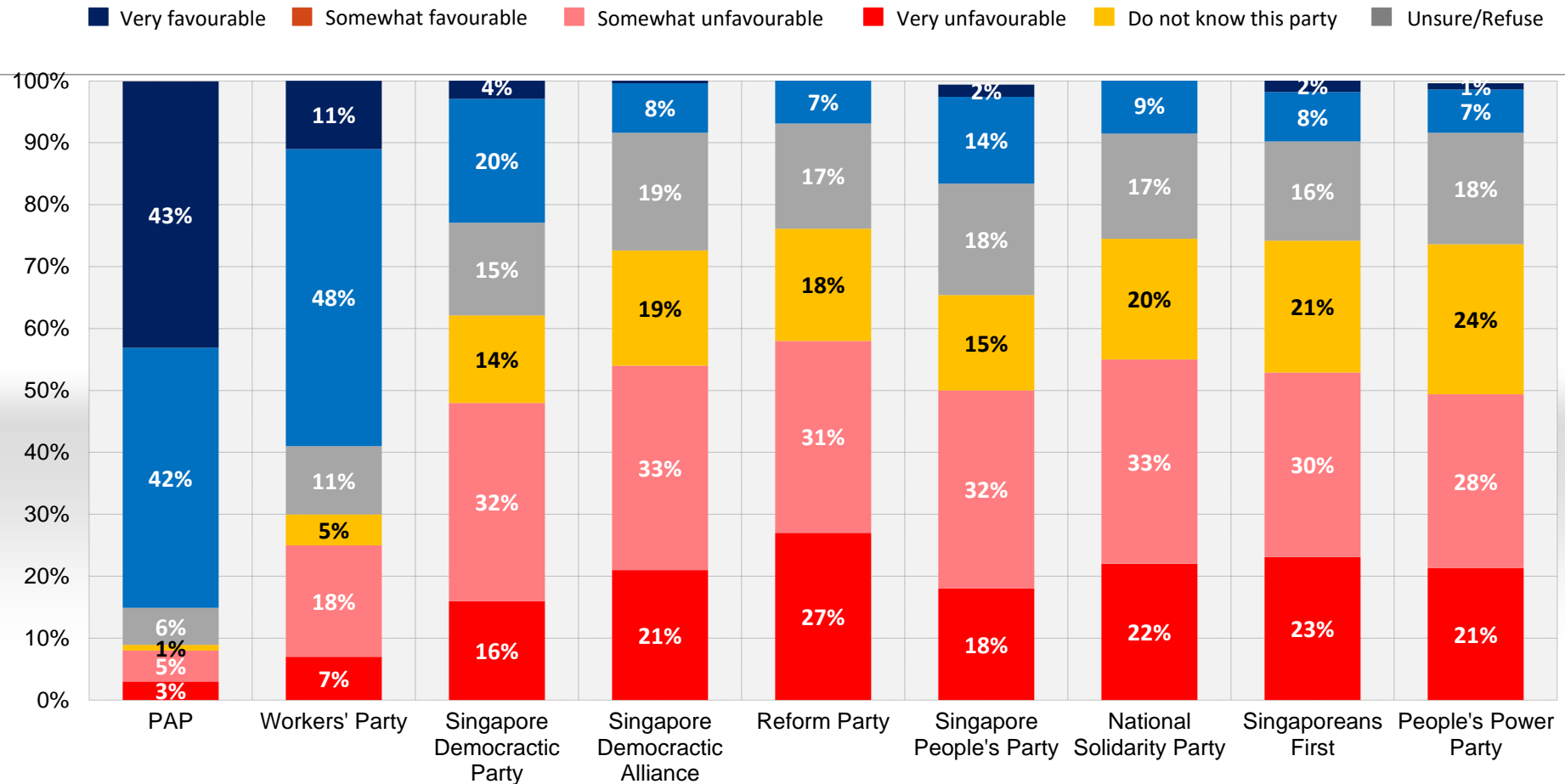
WP is the most popular opposition party with high levels of favorability, especially when compared to other opposition parties.

All of the opposition parties except WP have higher unfavorable than favorable assessments among Singaporeans. Reform Party, National Solidarity Party and Singaporean Democratic Alliance has the most unfavorable assessments. The favorable views of non-WP opposition parties are less than a quarter of Singaporeans, with the Singapore Democratic Party recording the most favorability after WP.

A large majority of Singaporeans perceive the PAP as engaging in party renewal.

Singaporeans are split on their views of the opposition's performance in parliament, but a majority of Singaporeans want a stronger opposition.

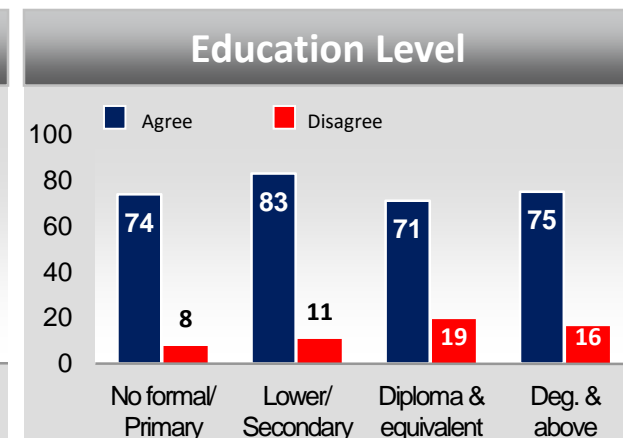
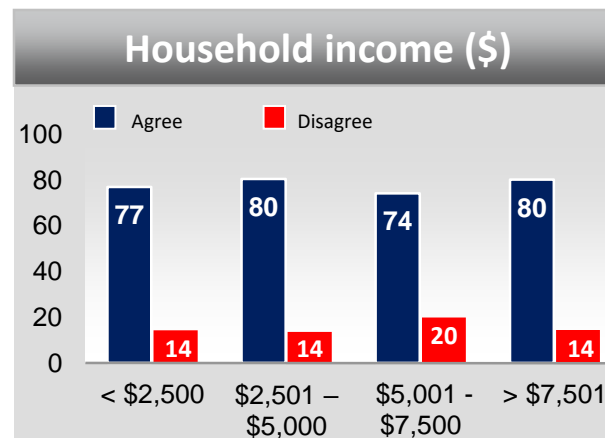
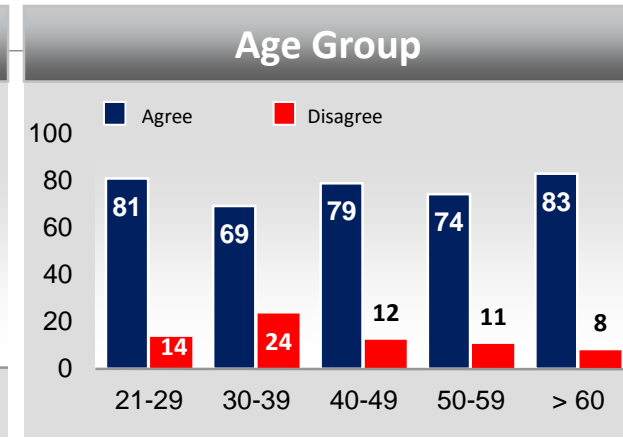
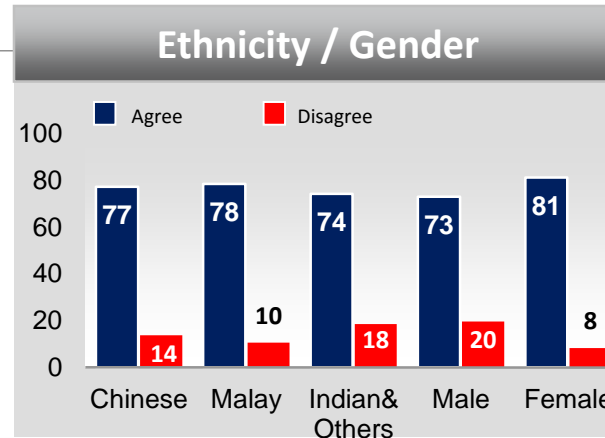
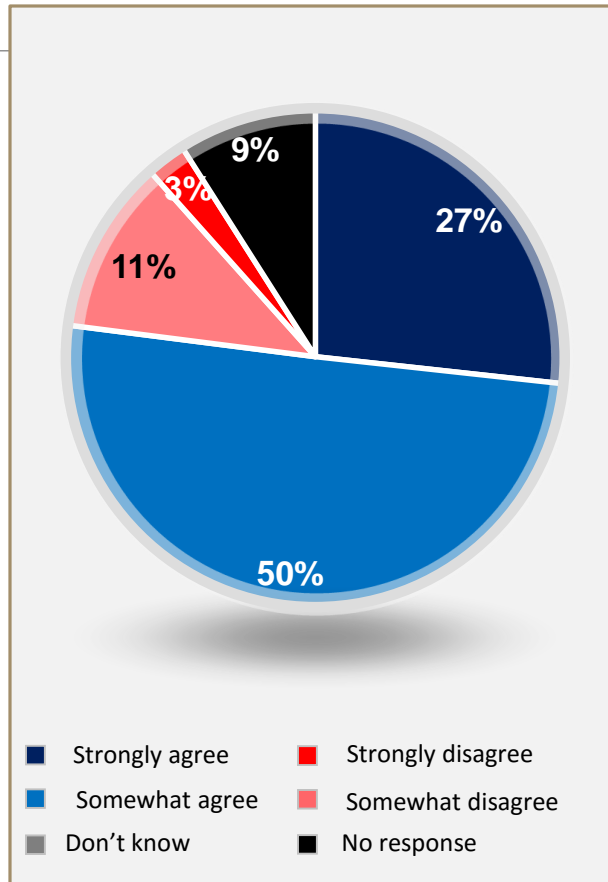
Perception towards Political Parties



Q: Do you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of the following political parties?

Perceptions towards PAP

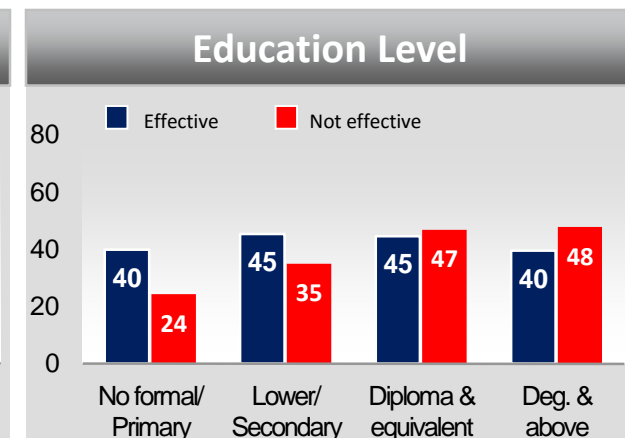
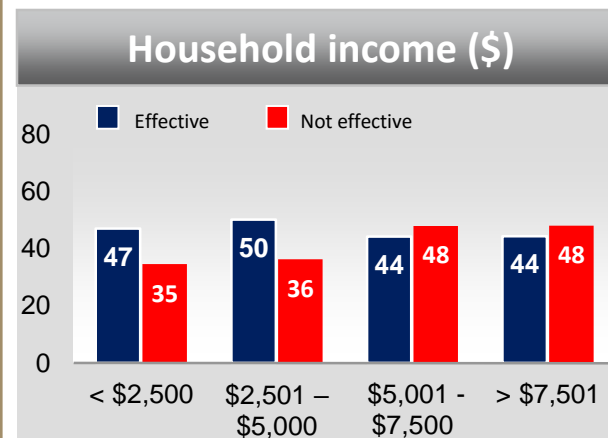
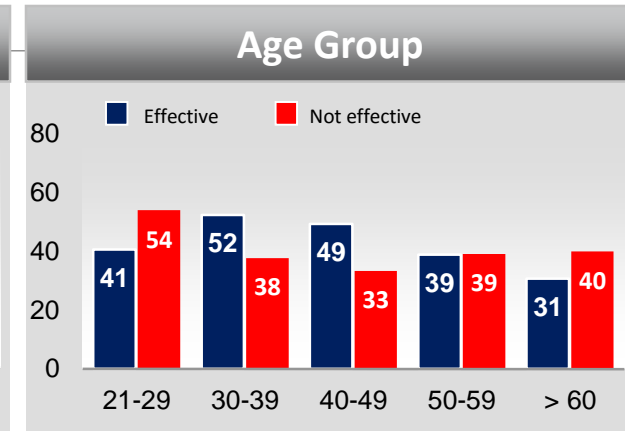
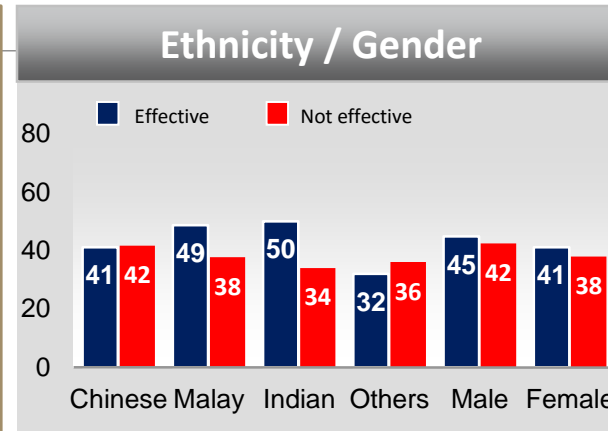
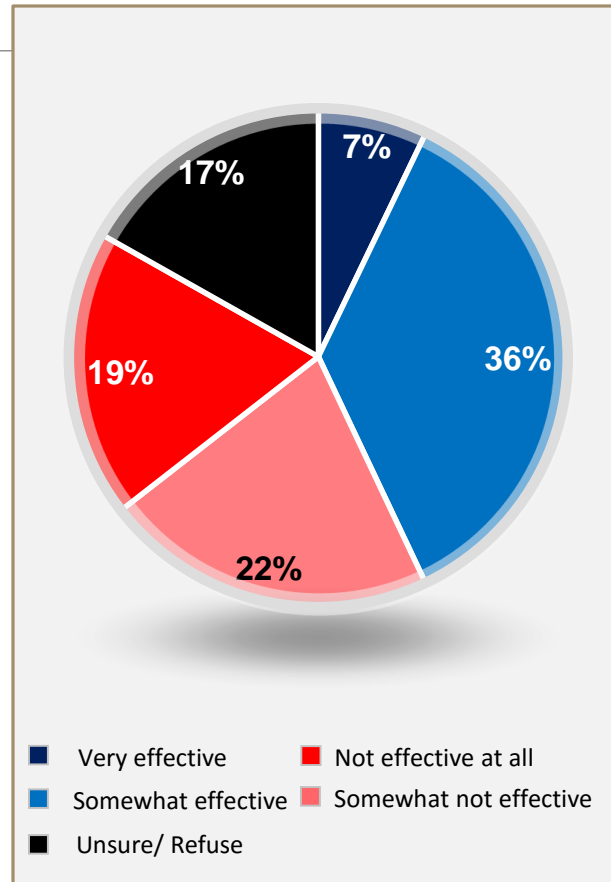
Party renewal perceived by a majority of the public.



Q: Do you think PAP renewal (re-generating) as a party is progressing well?

Effectiveness of Opposition In Parliament

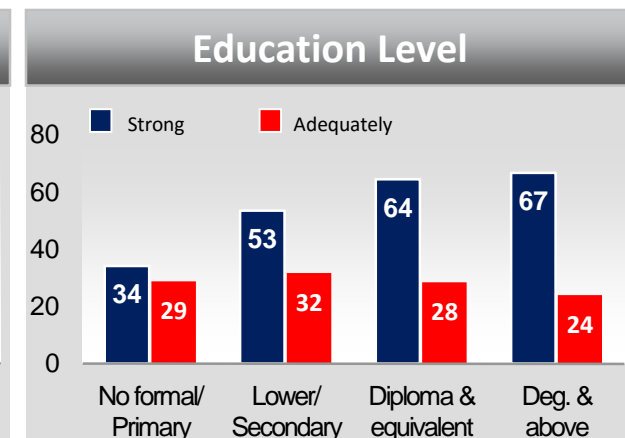
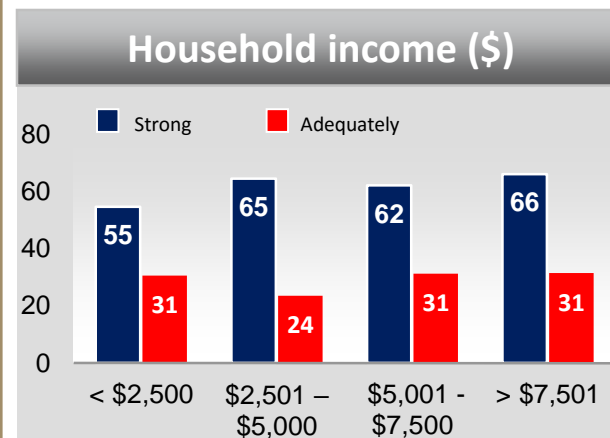
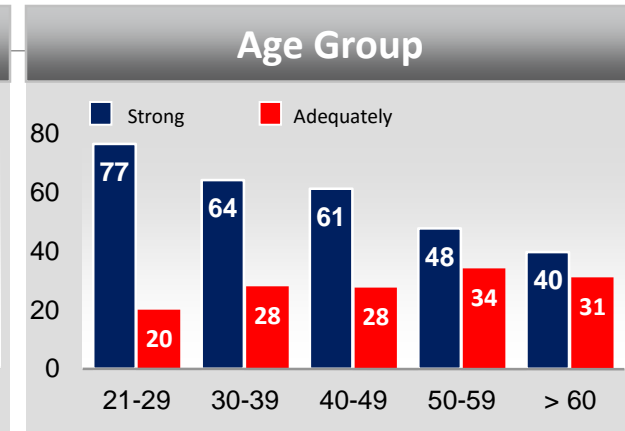
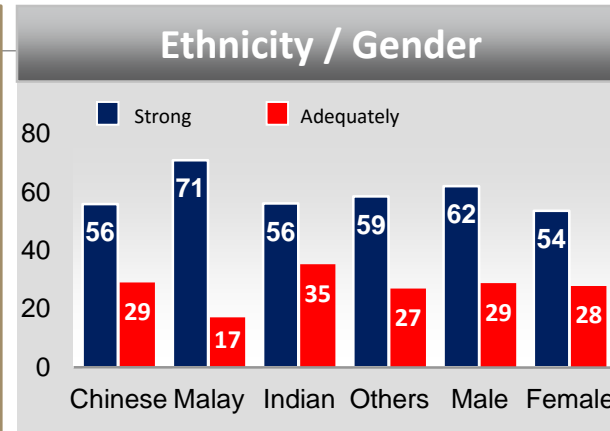
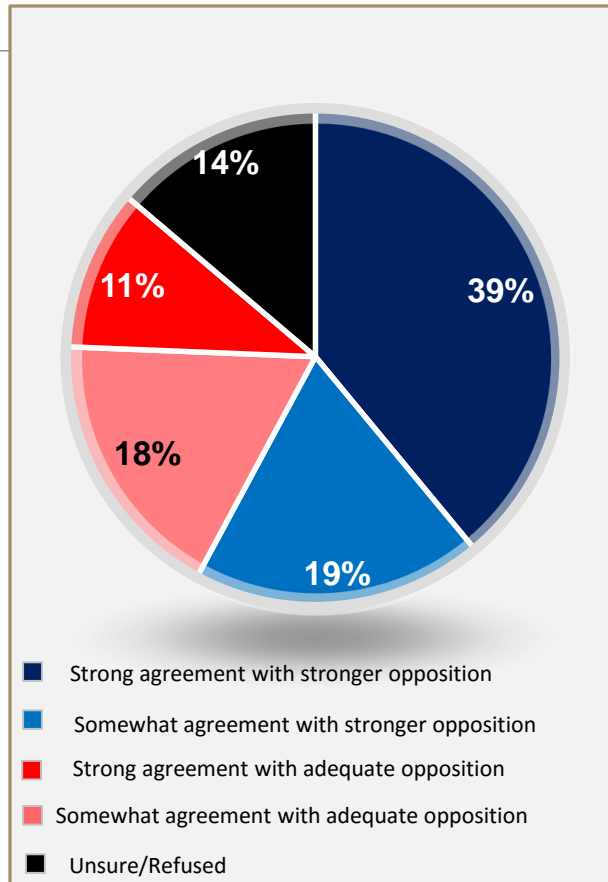
Split views of opposition performance, with interesting demographic differences



Q: How effective was the opposition in parliament before the election campaign?

Perspectives on Strength of Opposition

Nearly two-thirds stated they wanted a stronger opposition, with variations



Q: In the recent election campaign, did you think that Singapore needed a stronger opposition or was strong enough?

Election Issues in GE2015



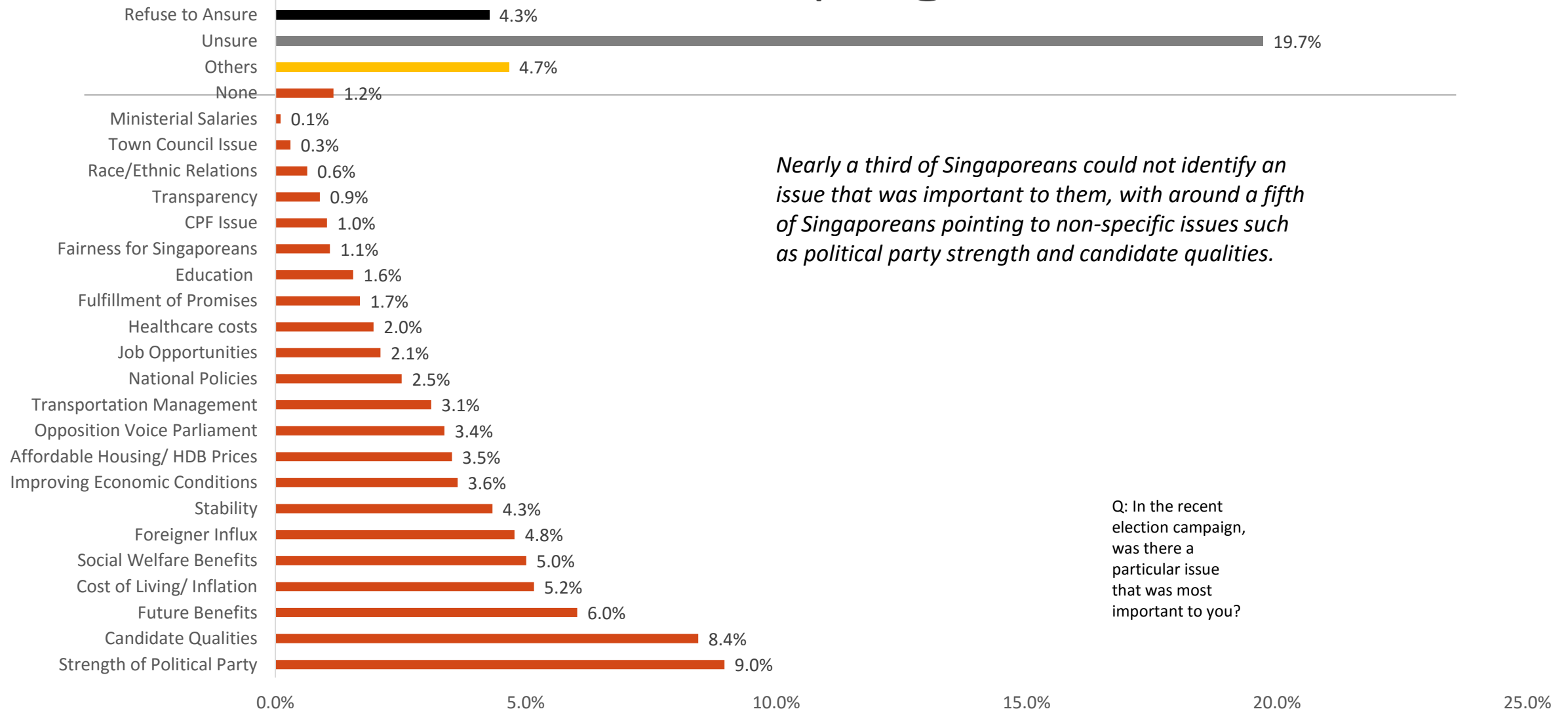
Specific Issues were not as important as perceptions of the political party and candidate in GE2015.

Singaporeans identified a wide range of issues in GE2015, with social welfare and future benefits as well as cost of living/inflation and immigration as among the most prominent.

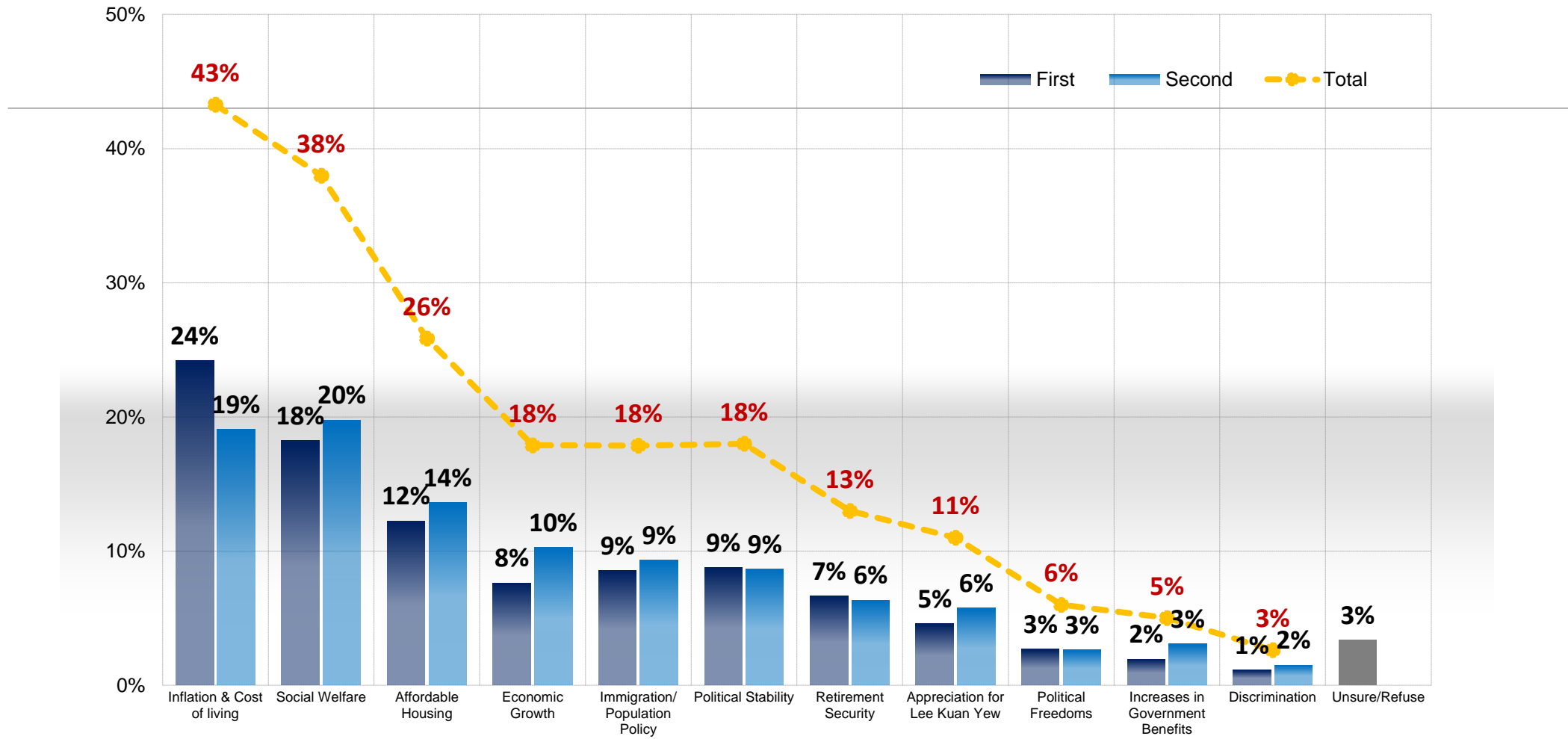
When given a list of issues to prioritize, cost of living and social welfare remained important, with immigration less so and housing more so.

The LKY factor and Town Council governance were not prioritized among Singaporeans.

Citizen-Identified Campaign Issues



Perceptions of Election Issues



Q: I am going to read you a list of issues people were seen as important in the past election, which two were the most important issues for you?

Voting in GE2015

Singaporeans prioritized party leadership and candidates in GE2015, followed by the political party. These factors worked together to influence voters.

Issues were less important in shaping voting behavior in GE2015. Perceptions of government benefits were also an important factor.

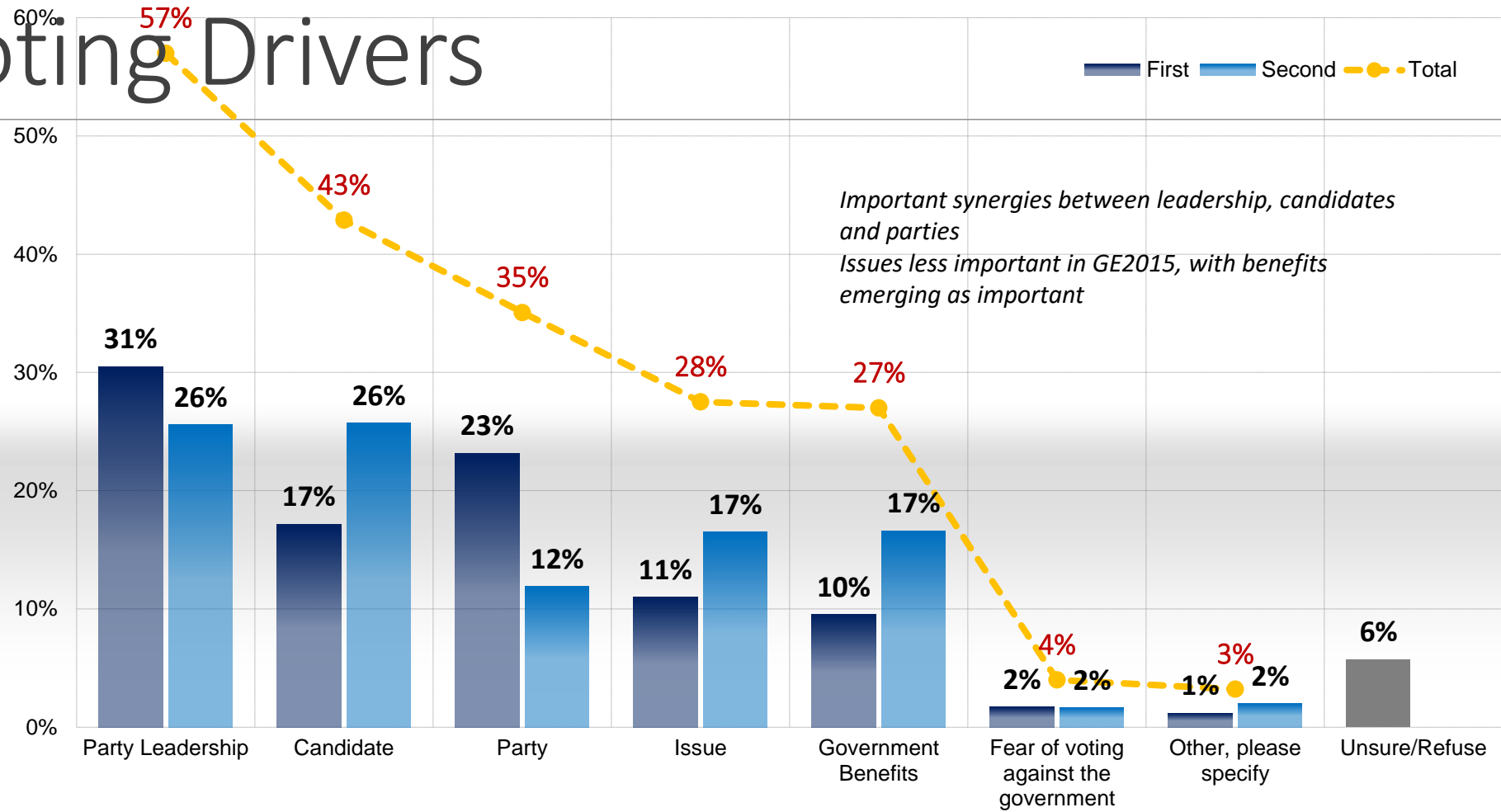
In self-identified reasons for voting, candidate qualities and government performance emerged as important.

Only a small minority of voters changed their vote during the campaign period. Voters in Singapore had decided how to vote before the campaign started.

A majority of Singaporeans did not perceive the opposition as having effective grassroots. This extended to WP in the areas they contested, which has traditionally been seen to have local grassroots.

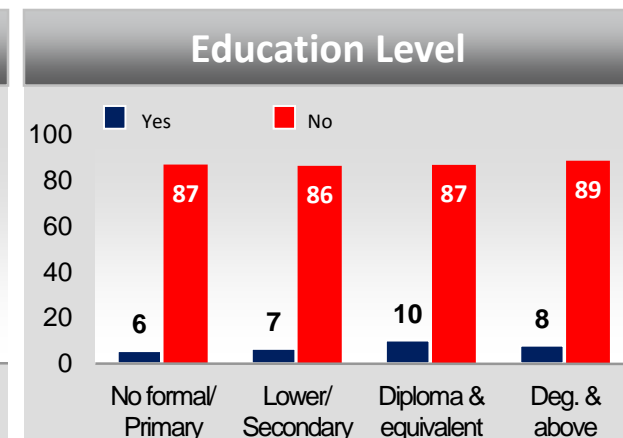
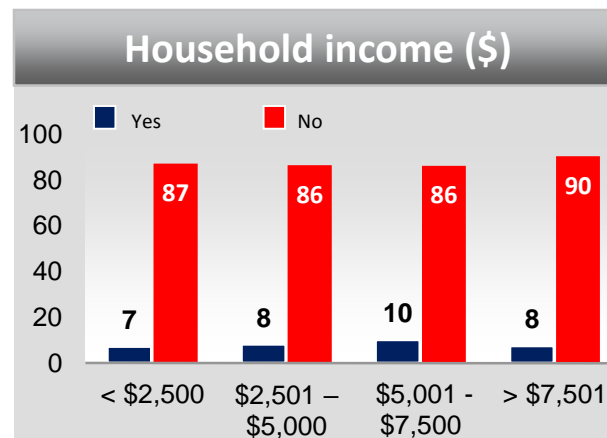
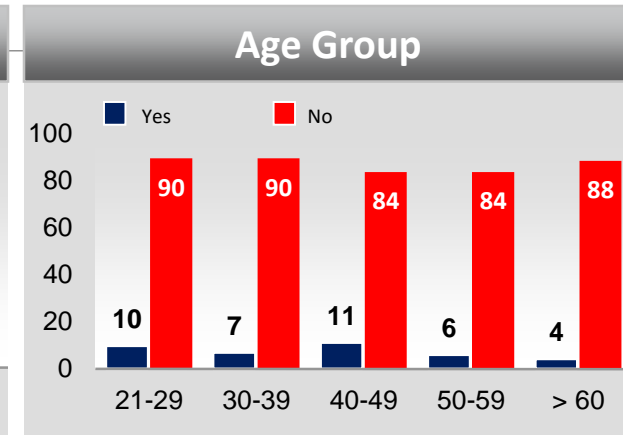
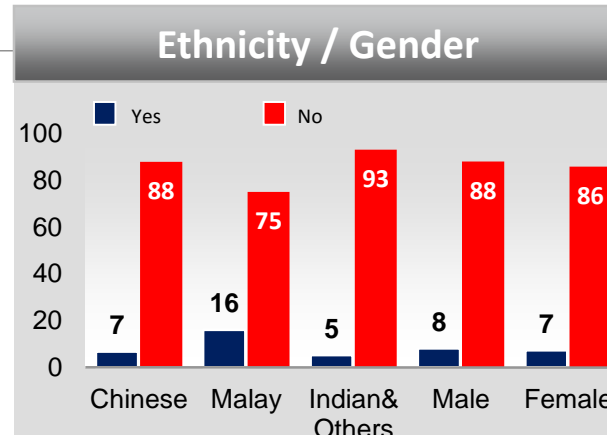
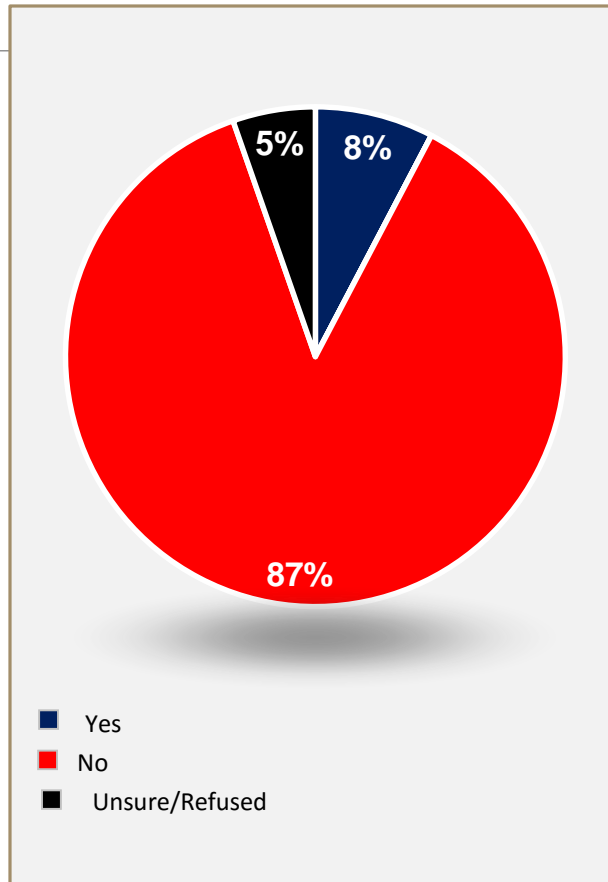


Voting Drivers



Q: In this general election, what would you say was your main consideration when voting?

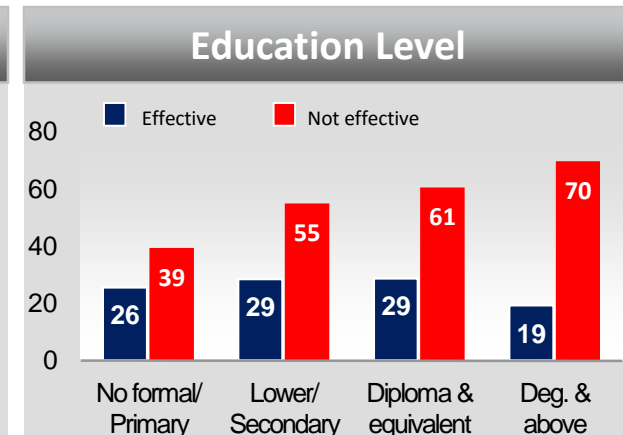
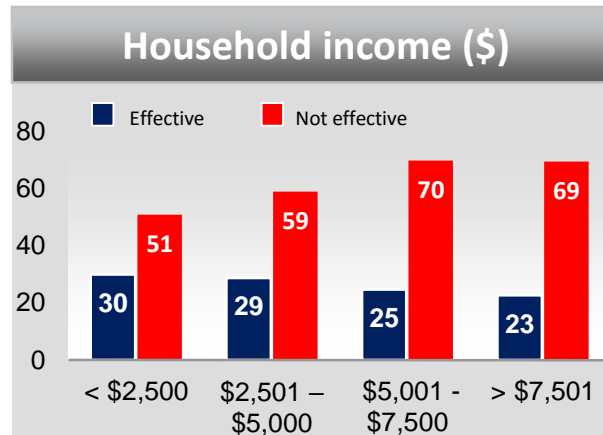
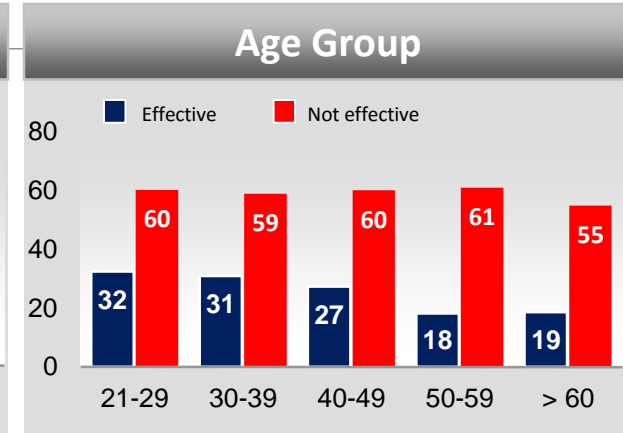
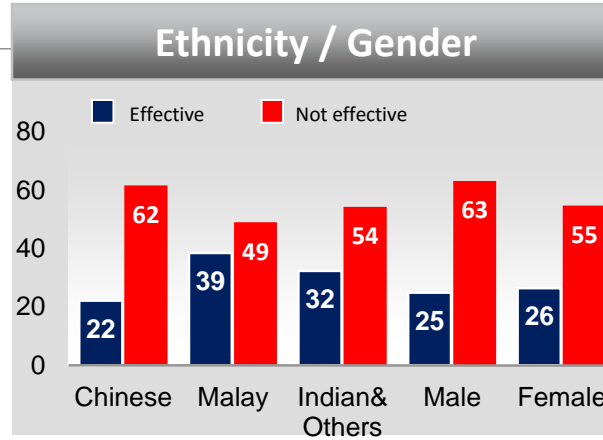
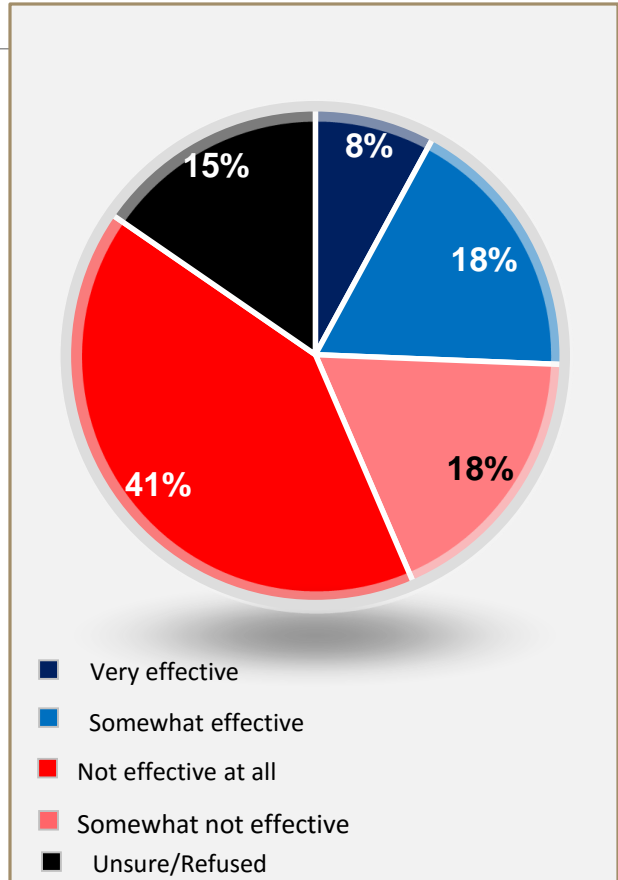
Impact of Campaign on Changing Voting



Q: Did you change your intention to vote for the PAP/Opposition during the campaign?

Views of the Opposition Grassroots

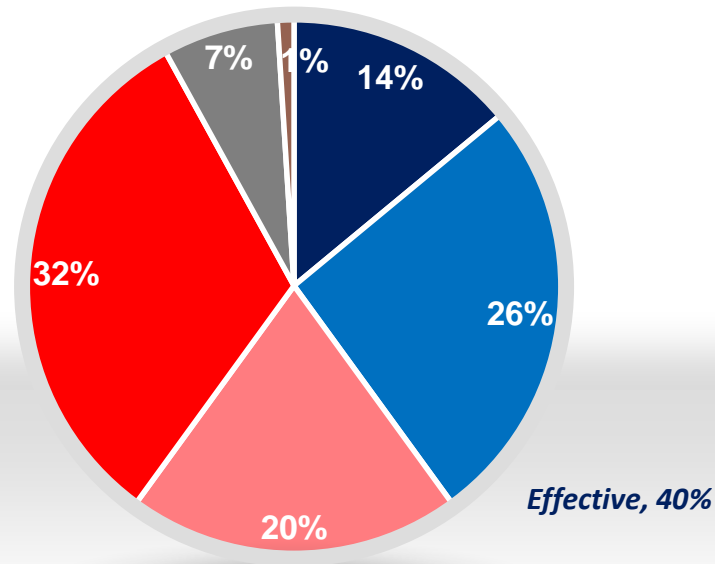
Perceived weak opposition grassroots, with only third favorable



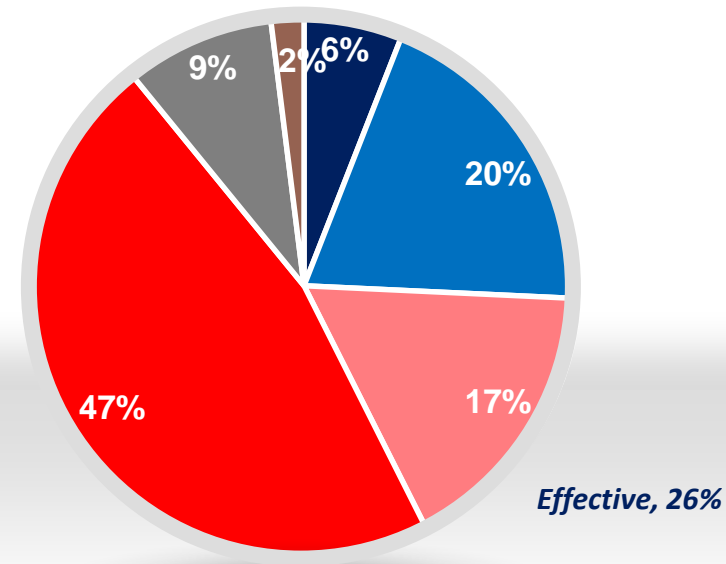
Q: How effective were the opposition grassroots in your area during the election campaign?

Views of Opposition Grassroots of Specific Parties

1. Singapore Democratic Party (SDP)



2. Workers' Party (WP)



■ Very effective ■ Not effective at all ■ Unsure
■ Somewhat effective ■ Somewhat not effective ■ Refuse

Q: How effective were the opposition grassroots in your area during the election campaign?

In areas where specific opposition parties contested, there were different views of opposition grassroots effectiveness.

Institutional Impact on GE2015



Nearly two-thirds of Singaporeans reported receiving government benefits in the year before the election. This finding has surprisingly few demographic differences.

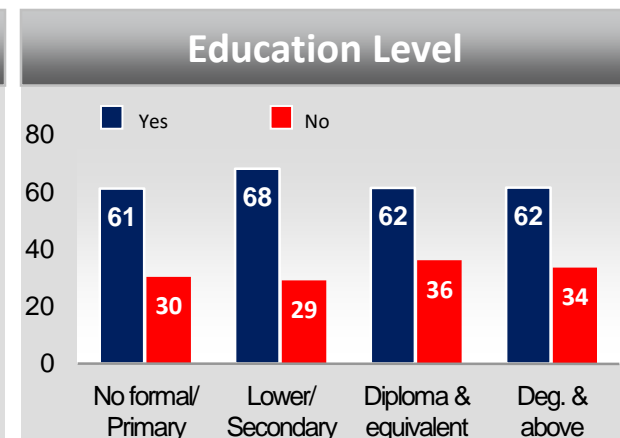
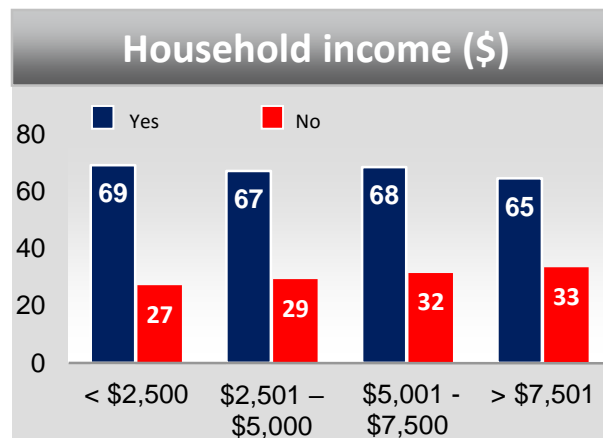
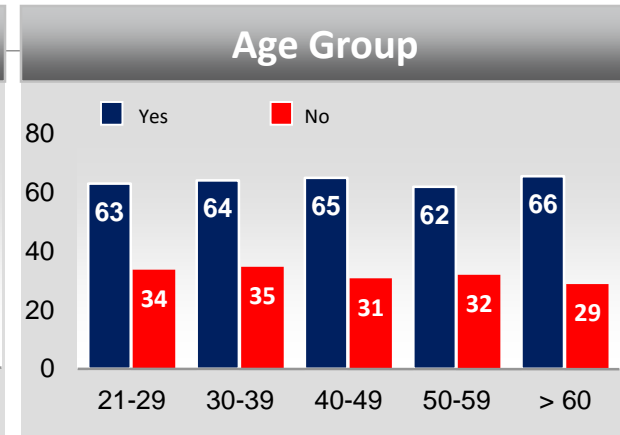
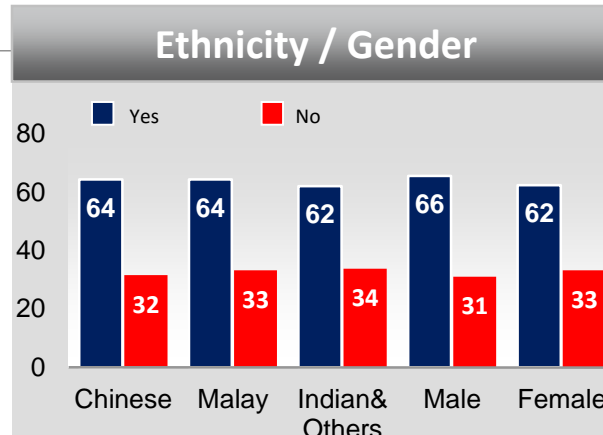
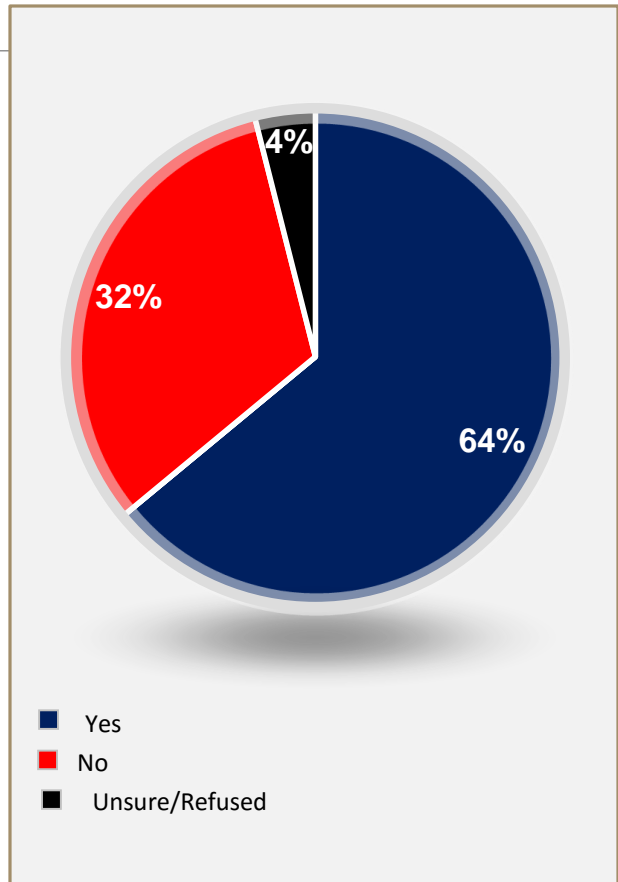
People's Associations were perceived as prominent in the GE2015 campaign, but there were greater demographic differences in perceptions.

People's Associations were seen to boost the performance of the PAP in GE2015 by a majority with a third disagreeing.

A majority of Singaporeans did not report receiving benefits at the local level through the PAs, with nearly a fifth reporting they did receive local benefits.

Received Government Pre-Election Funds

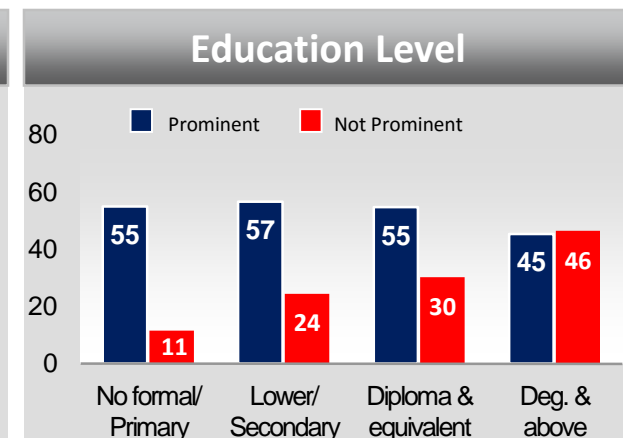
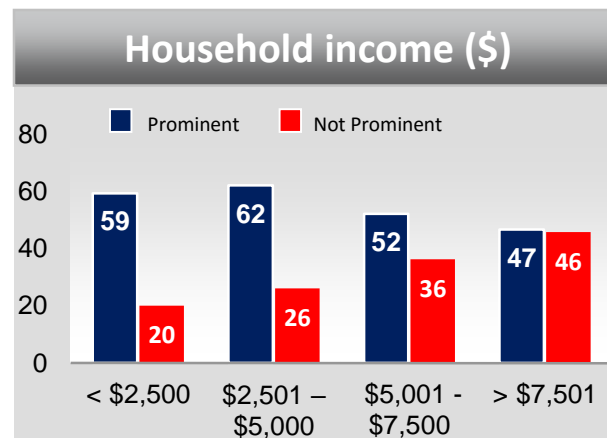
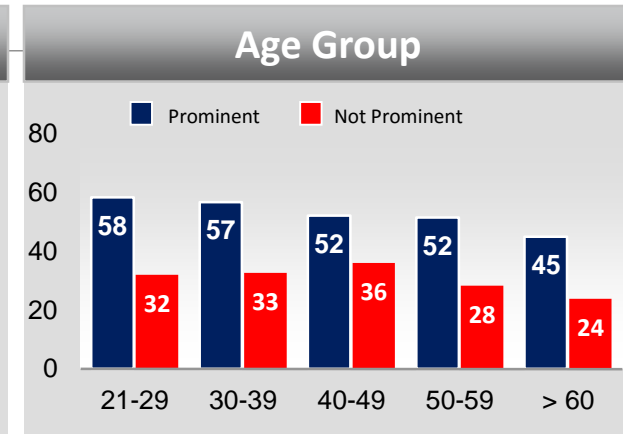
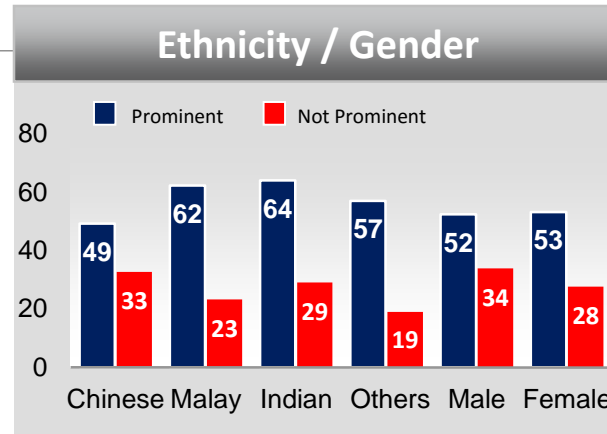
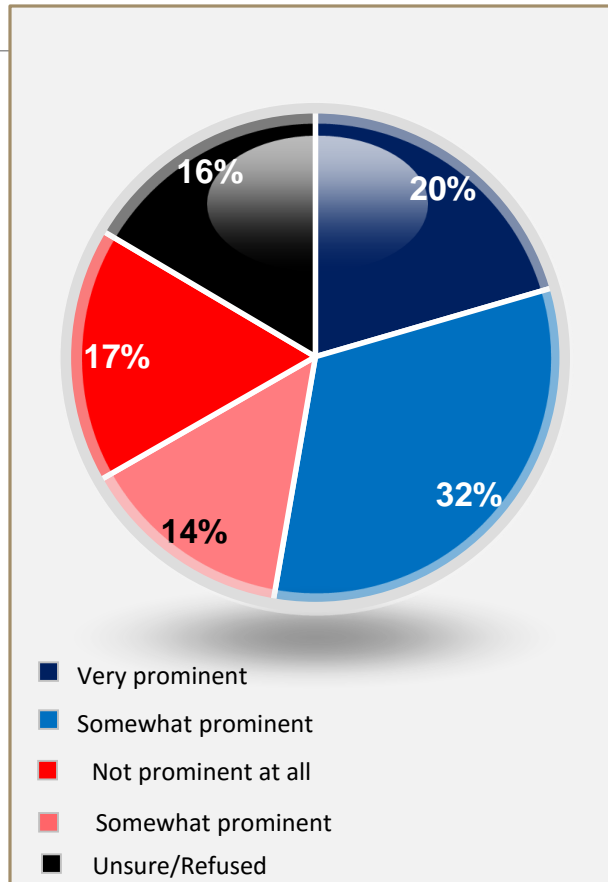
Nearly two-thirds reported receiving government funds



Q: Did you receive government funds in the year before the election, e.g. tax rebate, subsidy etc.?

People's Association Organizations

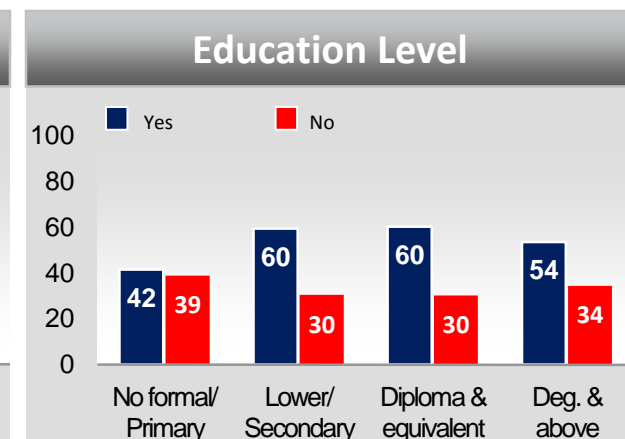
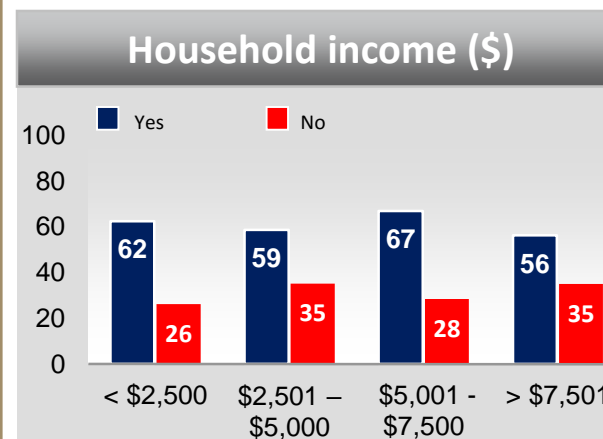
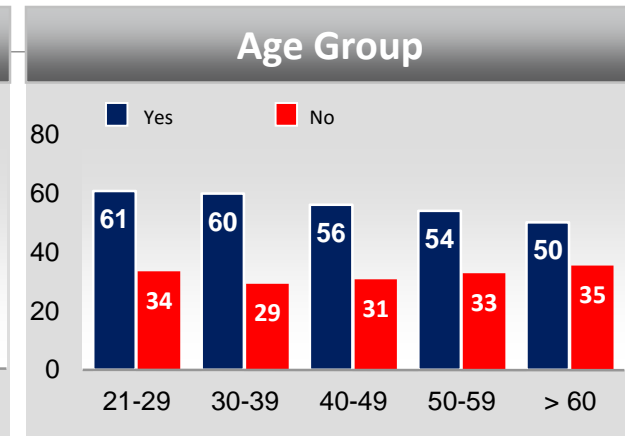
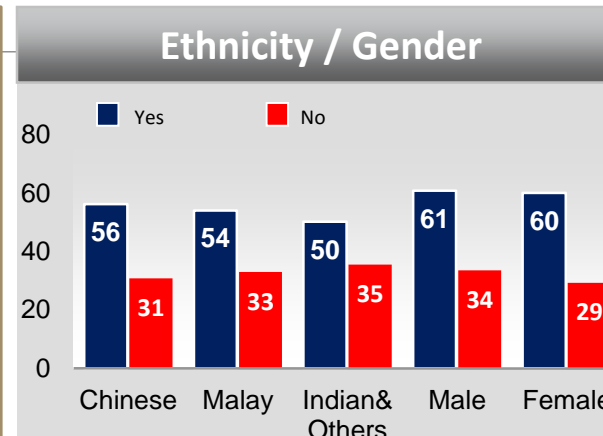
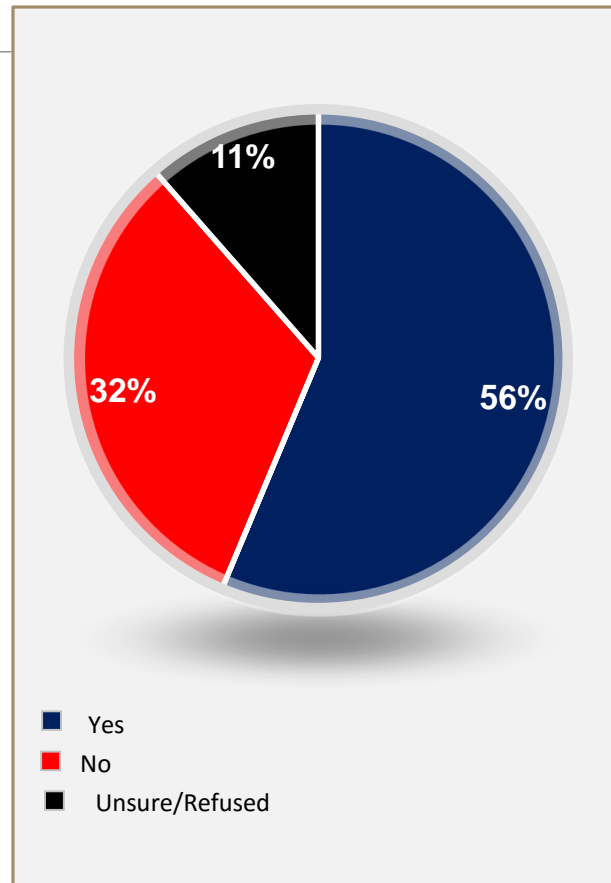
PAs were prominent in the GE2015 campaign, but views varied across Singaporeans.



Q: How prominent were the People's Association organizations such as Residential Committees in your area during the election campaign?

Perception of PA impact on PAP

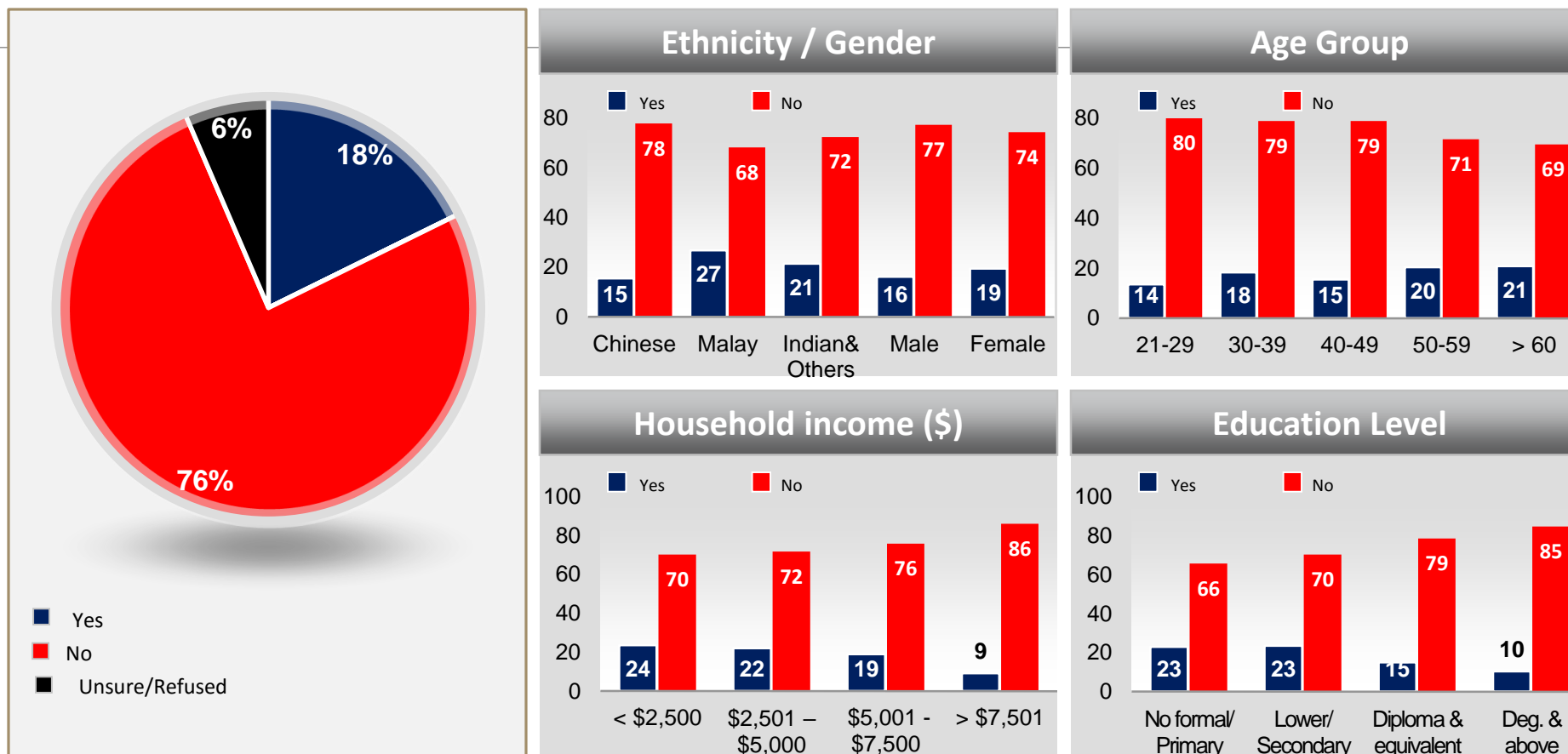
Majority believe PA's boost PAP, but a third think PAs are not important



Q: Do you think that these organization's benefits influenced people to support the PAP?

Local Benefits: People's Associations/Grassroots Orgs.

Low level of perceived PA benefits, but socio-economic variation in benefit received



Q: Did you receive any benefits from the People's Association or Grassroots Organisations (RCs etc) before the elections?

Post-Election Reflections



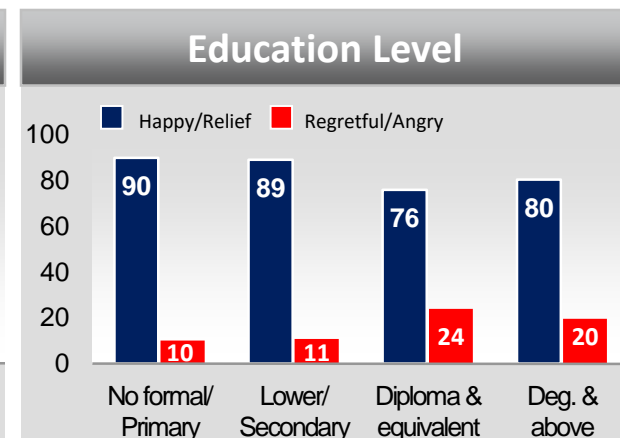
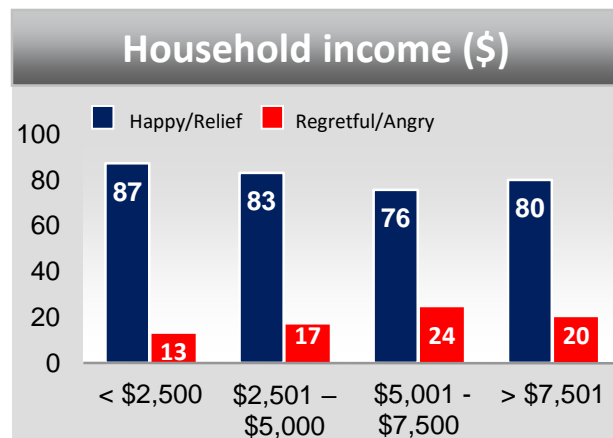
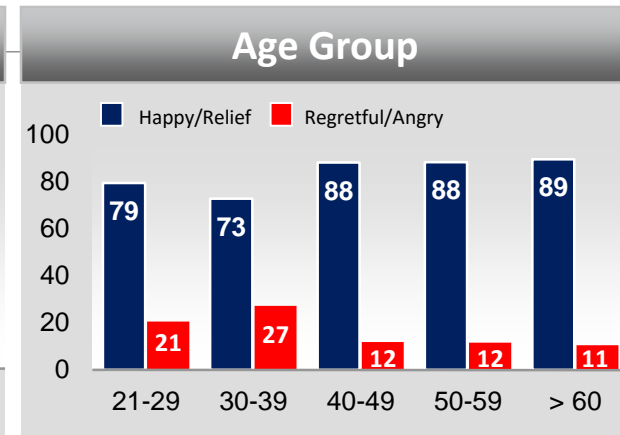
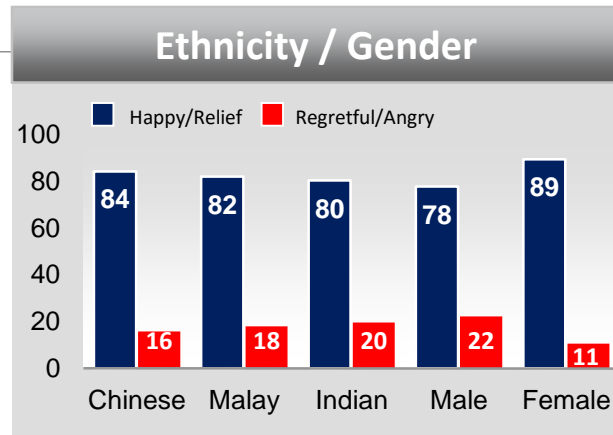
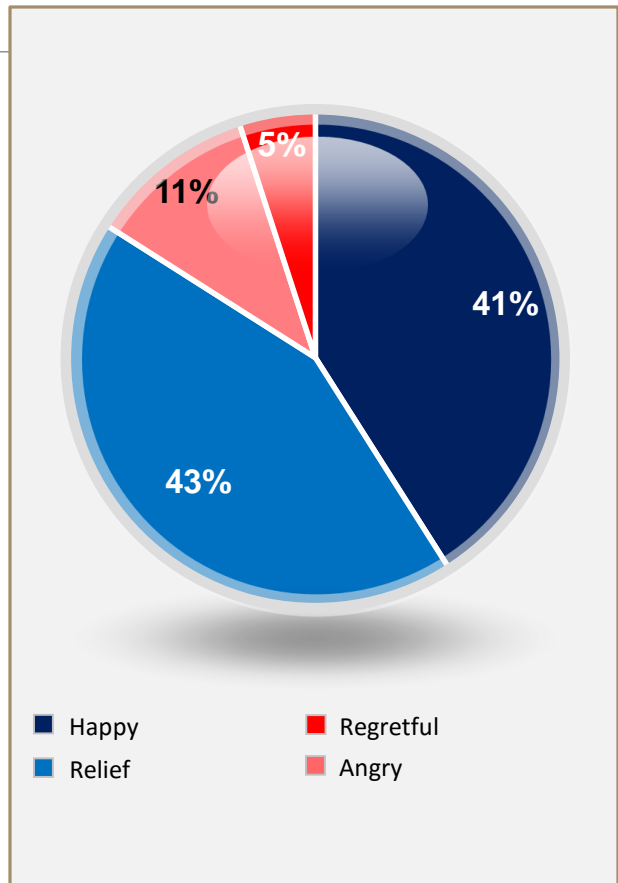
Most Singaporeans were either happy or relieved with the election results after GE2015, with a small minority regretful or angry.

A majority of Singaporeans do not believe the opposition is adequately strong post-election, with a third believing it is adequately strong.

A majority of Singaporeans expressed support for some form of electoral reform. The main reform areas involved the rights of new citizens and independence of the electoral commission. A fifth of Singaporeans believed there was no need for electoral reform.

Perceptions of Post-Election

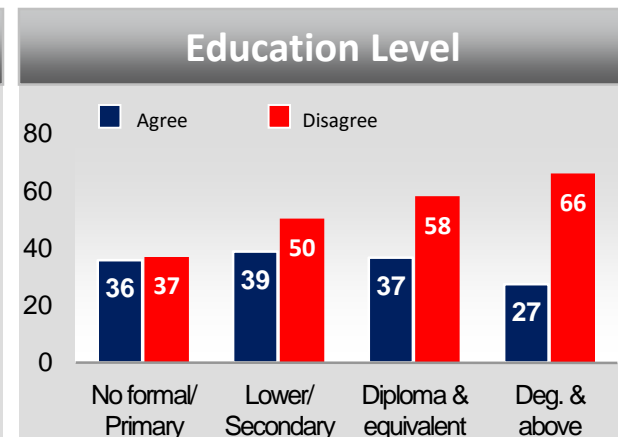
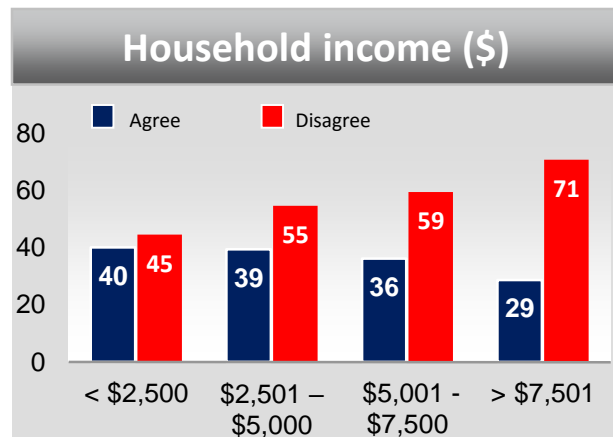
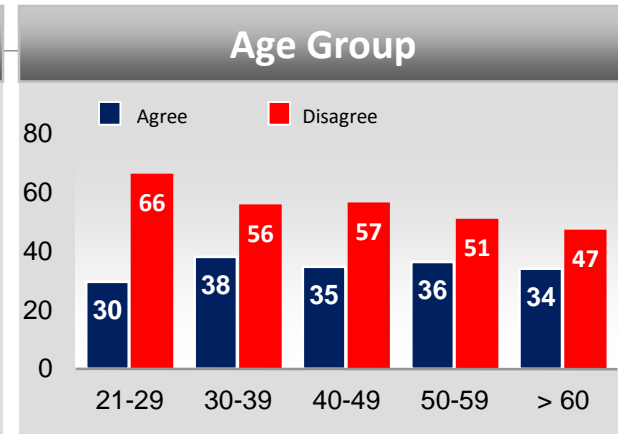
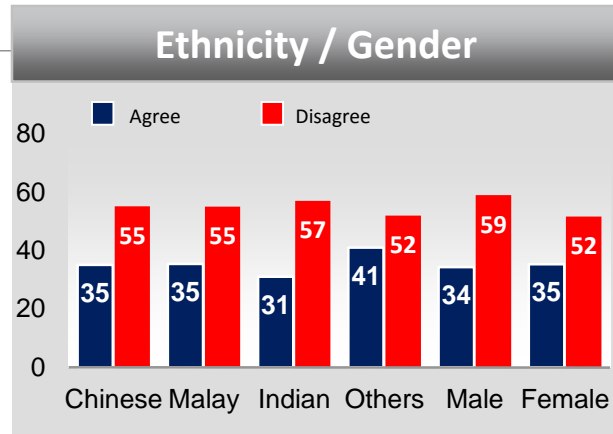
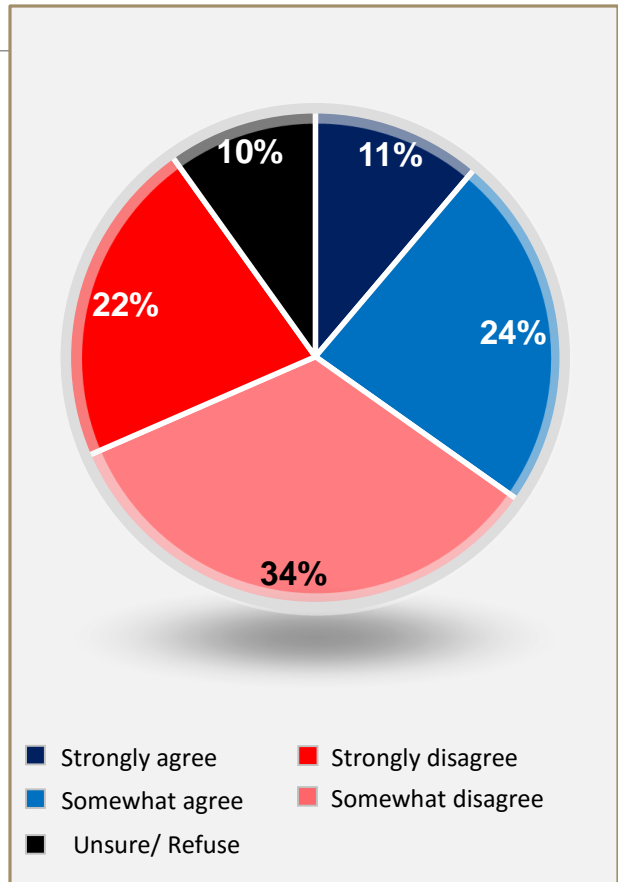
High levels of happiness or relief after the elections.



Q: Which of the following emotions best describes your perception after the general elections?

Post-Election Perspective of Strength Opposition

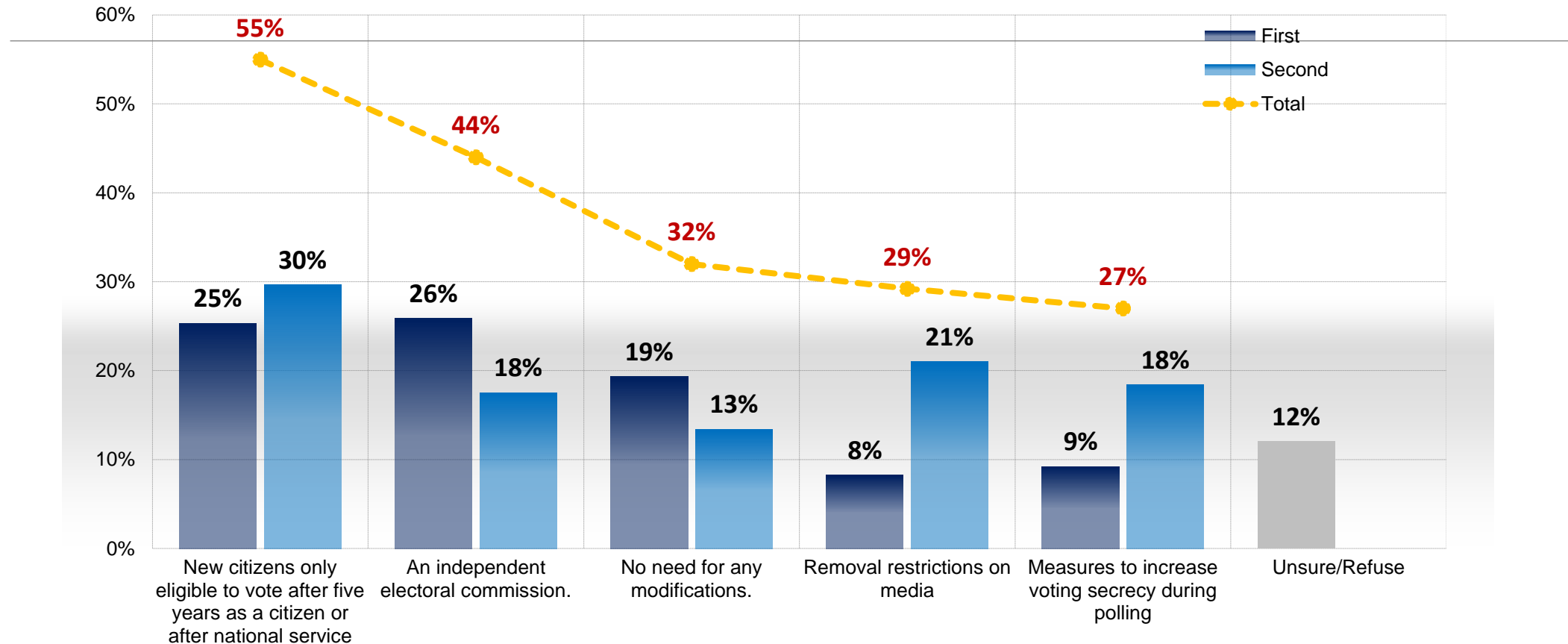
Majority believe opposition is not strong enough post-election, especially wealthier, more educated and youth



Q: In light of the election results, do you think the political opposition is strong enough?

*Diverse views of electoral reform,
but majority want changes.*

Perspectives on Electoral Reforms

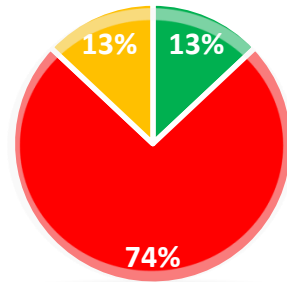


Q: Which one the following do you think would be most important to ensure that elections in Singapore are more free and fair?
Please give Top 2 reasons

Respondent Profile

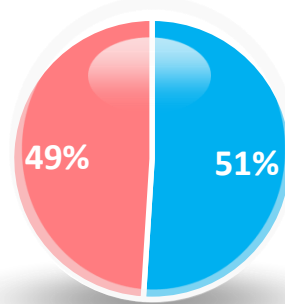
Ethnicity

Malay Chinese Indian & Others



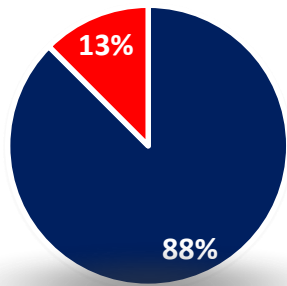
Gender

Male Female

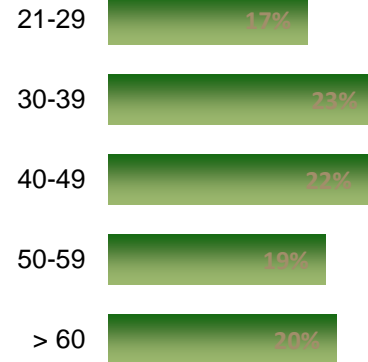


Born in Singapore

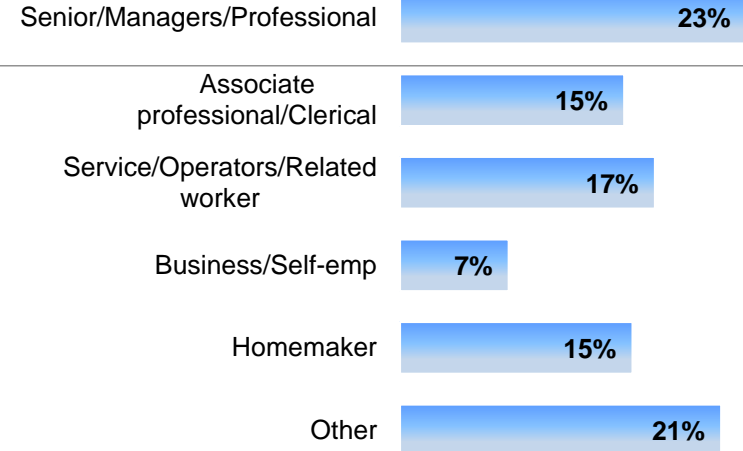
Yes No



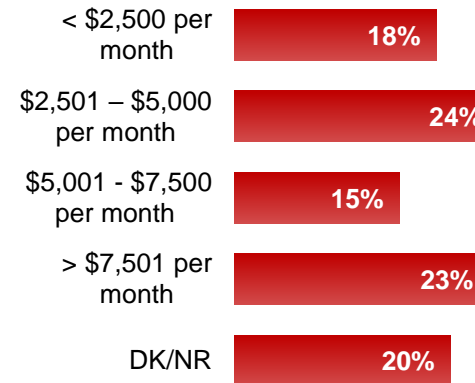
Age Group



Occupation



Monthly Household Income (\$)



Conclusions



Findings of Welsh GE2015 Survey echo many of the findings of the Institute of Policy Studies post-election survey and pre-election Blackbox Quad Research, especially with regard to the importance of party leadership, candidates and the party in voting decision-making and with regards to the timing of decisions on voting.

The Welsh poll does deepen understanding of public views surrounding the election.

While Singaporeans want a stronger opposition, they are divided on the opposition's performance in parliament and perceive weak opposition grassroots.

The role of government at the national and local level was important in shaping voting behavior through the perception of social welfare benefits and the role of government-linked local institutions.

Singaporeans are looking for reforms in the electoral process and a stronger opposition, suggesting that the political situation remains fluid in Singapore.

For Further Reading

For more detail on the analysis of the poll, please see the following academic publications:

Bridget Welsh, “Political Identities, Engagement and Voting in Singapore’s 2015 Election,” in Terence Lee and Kevin YL Tan, *Change in Voting: Singapore’s 2015 General Election*. (Singapore, Ethos), pp. 191-219.

Bridget Welsh, “Clientelism and Control: PAP’s Fight for Safety in GE2015,” *The Round Table*, 2016, April, Forthcoming.

Future work will analyze the role of religious differences in voting.

