Snapshot of voters: 4 in 10 polled are fence-sitters

By Kor Kian Beng
kianbeng@sph.com.sg

Of all the voters on this eve of polling day, the swing voters are the most crucial. They make up about four in 10 of the 2.2 million registered voters. (About half of them will get to cast their votes tomorrow.)

Mr Tan Wei Shen, 23, a national serviceman, is one of them. "I'm probably going to close my eyes and randomly vote that day." Around 30 per cent of the fence-sitters said they are waiting to be persuaded by the contending parties, while 15 per cent said they are too busy to think about it.

This gives tonight’s rally speakers a last chance to woo these fence-sitters.

Salesman Remy Chia, 31, said: "I'm still waiting for more convincing points to be brought up during rallies."

Lawyer Lim Sing Yun, 26, said: "I'm waiting to hear what the incumbent has to say. I've already heard the opposition candidate. I want to see who will be able to serve the country and the constituency better."

Election watchers told The New Paper that swing voters might play an important role in some constituencies like Hougang and Potong Pasir single-seat wards (see report on facing page), and Aljunied GRC.

Dr Chong described them as "issue-based voters" and that they need to be persuaded that it will be better to vote for PAP. "But it also depends on what they see as attractive in the opposition," PAP's Hougang candidate, Mr Eric Low, estimated that 10 per cent of Hougang residents could be swing voters — mostly first-time voters and better-educated white-collar workers and professionals.

Mr Low, who's trying to unseat Workers' Party chief Low Thia Khiang, said: "Being young, upgrading or having a lift on their floors may not be real concerns to them. "It’s not easy to address this group. I have to convince them on how they should choose the party that can provide them a better future and better Hougang."

It’s a tactic that, Dr Chong said, PAP has clearly used to win over the swing voters. "PAP has been emphasising the party’s track record and the need for an inclusive society, which will appeal to swing voters who want both economic progress and political space for themselves," he said. "The WP is focused on branding itself as a credible party for the long term. It’s hoping that this will instil confidence in the swing voters."

But with one day to go before Polling Day, is there still time to win over the swing voters? Mr Tan said: "Certainly, all parties will make the final surge now. I think the approach will be more rhetoric and emotive with a combination of promises, threats, and incentives to vote one way or another."

Dr Chong summed it succinctly: "Yes, there’s still time. All it takes is one inspiring speech!"