

**The general election surprise: younger Malays too went to Barisan
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Here's what was expected: Pakatan Rakyat (PR) comfortably won the battle for first-time and younger voters in Election 2013. Here's what was not expected: Barisan Nasional (BN) snared more Malay votes in this category of voters.

Going into the elections, the general line was that PR would obtain the bulk of the first-time and young Malaysian vote because its focus on a range of issues, including corruption, would be attractive to younger voters.

Also, the Opposition had a stronger slate of young politicians like Rafizi Ramli, Nurul Izzah Anwar and Liew Chin Tong who found support among young Malaysians.

But Ibrahim Suffian (pic) of Merdeka Center sounded a note of caution for the opposition pact on this thinking. He noted that the majority of first-time Malay and young Malay voters gave their support to BN, suggesting that the Opposition has not done enough to convince young Malays that their future was secure with PAS, PKR and DAP.

And Ibrahim noted that this segment is only going to get larger in coming elections, due to the higher birth rate among Malays.

Given the changing population profile, Malays will be an even larger chunk of new voters in future polls than the nearly two-thirds, or 64.17% of new voters, registered this year.

So PR would have to continue refining its position on Malay rights and cobble together a plan with an emphasis on job and wealth creation.

The voting pattern of young and first-time voters was collated by the respected pollster Merdeka Center as part of its study of the recent general election.

There are five voting channels and each represents an age group. The pollster said that based on the electoral rolls used on election day there were some 2.7 million more voters, and the influx of new voters was more pronounced in mixed and urban seats.

Of the five channels or groups, the youngest group of under 30s was 64.17% Malay. The voter turnout overall for all races in this group of first-time and young voters was a hefty 83.22%. Of those, just over half, or 52.96%, voted for PR.

But those older than this group were more inclined to vote for the Opposition. In the 31-40 age group, 54.25% voted for PR.

The ethnic composition of this latter group was 53.12% Malays, 29.28% Chinese, 7.61% Indians and 10% others. The voter turnout was about the same as the younger group, at 83.47%.

"Pakatan Rakyat will have no choice but to reach out to the Malays, tackle their fears about the position of Malays and at the same time put forward a comprehensive economic plan," noted Ibrahim. – August 16, 2013

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