

Passive Resistance Among Malaysian Voters: New Dynamics in the Malaysian Electoral Landscape

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Abstract

The study aims to analyse the factors that impact political participation among voters in Malaysia and investigate the shifts in voting behaviour among voters, particularly those aged 18–39, during the 14th general elections in 2018, the 2022 general elections (GE15), and six state elections in 2023. Malaysia's political history reveals how some people remain loyal to one political party throughout time. However, the 15th General Election demonstrated a significant shift in voting patterns, taking into account factors such as race and age distribution. The 15th general election results indicate growing discontent among Malaysians, who wish for political reform in reaction to the hung parliament and political instability, the youth crisis, the rise of ethnic and religious divides, and the Malay community's diminishing support for the UMNO party. Several elections have shown notable shifts in voting patterns due to passive resistance or silent protest. These forms of protest manifest people's dissatisfaction with certain issues and policies that impact citizens, the economy, and governance.

Keywords: Trends, Voting, General Elections, Passive Resistance, Protest, Voting Behaviour.

Introduction

Significant political unrest and reorganisations marked the 15th General Elections (GE15) in Malaysia, held on November 19, 2022, reflecting significant political uprisings and transformations within the country's political landscape. In 2021, the Malaysian parliament enacted a law reducing the minimum voting age for general elections from 21 to 18 and introducing Automatic Voter Registration (AVR). As a result, young people have become politically involved as early as 18. The Johor State Elections, held on March 12, 2022, coincided with the ongoing Malaysian political crisis of 2020–2022 and the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. The state election is crucial because it was the first to grant voting rights to 18-year-olds, allowing them to participate in the electoral process.

Research has indicated that using social media to obtain political information does not necessarily motivate voters to engage in elections and may hinder them from completing their civic duty. According to Malaysian research, factors such as party identification, political interest, information credibility, demographic attributes, and candidate qualities significantly impact voting behaviour more than social media usage alone (Allam 2015). Voter turnout among youth in the 2022 Johor state election, the first to implement the Undi18 law allowing 18–20-year-olds to vote, was low, accounting for approximately 6% of all voters (Tan, 2022).

Empirical studies on social impact have recently become popular (Llano-Gonzalez, 2012; Fowler & Christakis, 2009). The pandemic causes Malaysians to seek political information via social media, and the country's uncertain political situation discourages or prohibits people from voting, particularly first-time voters. Studying Malaysian voting trends is critical for understanding the issues and requirements of those involved in the political process, as well as developing appropriate tactics and activities to promote political participation in the future.

Globalisation and young people's reliance on social media for political information can impact their voting decisions. Social media can also be effective in encouraging young people to vote because of their high engagement. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tik Tok have experienced substantial popularity among young individuals, rendering them a very efficient method of connecting with and captivating this particular demographic. A survey by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) reveals that over 80% of Malaysians aged 15 to 24 use social media. Social media platforms facilitate the engagement of young individuals with their peers and communities, enabling them to share knowledge and resources about voting. Promoting a communal comprehension of voting procedures can foster a mutual perception of societal norms and inspire young people to participate in electoral activities.

The 2018 general elections witnessed a significant surge in youth participation. Nevertheless, the participation rate of the youngest eligible voters, aged 18–20, was significantly lower. Age inequalities among Malaysian voters have endured for an extended time. We can implement measures at the national, state, and municipal levels to eliminate this disparity and shift from a paradigm that solely focuses on voter activation to one that focuses on expanding the electorate. In the 2018 general election, 82.32% of registered voters, or 12,299,514, voted (online, 2019). According to Welsh (2018), 20.2% of registered voters are aged 21 to 30, while 23.4% are aged 31 to 40. However, at this point, it is still unclear how social media affects actual voting behaviour.

The most recent election results show a division in first-time young voters' voting tendencies along spatial and chronological developmental lines. Urban youth who are not Bumiputera or Malay are likely to support the PH party, while non-urban youth who are Bumiputera or Malay tend to support the PN party. The AVR implementation will grant significant influence to the 53% of young voters, comprising Gen-Y (25–40 years old) and Gen-Z (18–24 years old), who are considered the key demographic in this highly divided election (Mayberry 2022). Malaysian youth's political participation is exceedingly low in political parties and youth organisations. Only 2.7 million out of Malaysia's total young population of 13.88 million actively participate in youth organizations, as reported by the Registrar of Young (Sani & Saad,

2018). The quick implementation of Undi18 without adequate mechanisms for balanced information and political education has raised concerns about the effectiveness of young people's involvement in elections and the danger of political abuse of their rights (Ling & Puyok, 2024).

This study will analyse the accomplishments of the dominant political parties in the 14th, 15th, and six (6) state elections in 2023. It will also examine party identification and the impact of individuals' enduring allegiance to political parties on their voting preferences. This article will also discuss other aspects, such as the sources of political information particularly via social media, characteristics of candidates, and stances on policies. By investigating these aspects, this study can help us understand how difficult it is to decide how to vote. The findings will substantially impact political campaigns, governments, and the democratic process. This paper examines what motivated people to vote, particularly first-time voters, in the 2018–2022 elections and the six (6) state elections in 2023.

The Disclosure of Various Issues Follows the 14th General Election

The presence of several additional factors before the election has made Malaysian voting patterns more intricate and uncertain. Factors such as the increasing influence of young individuals, the significant role of Chinese voters in shaping election dynamics, the division of Malay votes, and other pertinent variables add complexity to the situation. Before Malaysia's 14th general election in 2018, several significant concerns arose. The 1MDB corruption scandal posed a significant threat to the political authority and continued existence of Prime Minister Najib Razak. The opposition alliance, Pakatan Harapan (PH), often exploited this issue to attract support (Nadzri, 2018). People have accused the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) alliance of using sophisticated electoral manipulation techniques like gerrymandering and malapportionment to gain an unfair advantage in elections (Mikulic, 2018).

Malaysia's 14th general election in 2018 yielded an unexpected result. The opposition alliance, Pakatan Harapan (PH), comprises Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU), the Democratic Action Party (DAP), and Parti Amanah Negara. The AMANAH party emerged as the winner in the election, thereby putting an end to the longstanding governance of the Barisan Nasional, which had held power since the country's independence (Al Jazeera, 2018). This significant consequence was directly attributed to the Barisan Nasional (BN) party's failure to regulate political discussions on social media. Before GE14, the redrawing of electoral boundaries resulted in an increase in the number of ethnic Malay voters in constituencies where BN had previously suffered defeat.

Furthermore, a significant issue lies in the fact that Malaysian politics predominantly revolves around ethnic divisions, with the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which is primarily Malay-dominated, exerting substantial influence within the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition. The opposition alleged that UMNO engaged in the practice of Malay hegemony and exhibited a bias towards the Malay community (Nadzri, 2018). Controversial initiatives like the GST implementation and the rise in living expenses have contributed to the decline in BN's popularity. Under Najib's leadership, there were concerns about China's increasing economic influence in Malaysia (Mikulic, 2018). Consequently, a significant number of devoted BN voters, particularly among the Chinese and Indian voters, have begun to search for a new government.

Pakatan Harapan (PH) has emerged as the most dominant party in Malaysia's 14th general election on May 9, 2018. Pakatan Harapan, a coalition of the People's Justice Party/ Parti

Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), Democratic Action Party (DAP), Malaysian United Indigenous Party (PPBM), and National Trust Party (AMANAH), won an aggregate of 113 seats in the Dewan Rakyat. With an overwhelming majority from their victory, they were able to create the next federal government (Team, N. 2018). The coalition party's victory in the 14th general election, which initially included members from competing parties, was somewhat unexpected.

This election is significant because it marks the end of the Barisan Nasional's (BN) long-standing hegemony over Malaysia, which had existed since independence in 1957. The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which led the BN alliance, won only 79 seats, a significant decrease from previous election results. Pakatan Harapan (PH), a coalition of PKR, DAP, PPBM, and AMANAH, won Malaysia's 14th general election on May 9, 2018. The Alliance of Hope (PH) party secured 113 seats in the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives). This substantial number enables them to establish the forthcoming federal government with a simple majority (Team, N. 2018).

The Chinese community's overwhelming 90% support for the coalition and PH's success in winning 73 out of 83 mixed constituencies, where no single race group made up more than 70% of the population, were two key factors in PH's victory. The PH also secured around 70% of the Indian votes (Funston, 2018). In the 14th general election held on May 9, 2018, the Chinese community in Malaysia showed strong support for Pakatan Harapan (PH). Peninsular Malaysia garnered an estimated 95% of the Chinese votes, representing the highest level of support from this demographic in history (Lim, 1970; Welsh, 2023). The significant level of Chinese support was critical in PH's victory, as the alliance obtained 113 seats out of 222 in the Dewan Rakyat, allowing them to form the federal government. The Chinese population in Peninsular Malaysia accounts for 28% of the votes, or 4.9 million voters, as they are present in mixed constituencies.

The Chinese people were receptive to the inclusive discourse and commitment to improved governance of the Pakatan Harapan (PH). Nevertheless, the racially polarising narratives disseminated by past coalitions like Barisan Nasional (BN) and Perikatan Nasional (PN) resulted in feelings of marginalisation among certain factions. The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the leading party of the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, experienced a significant decline in Chinese support. In the 2022 Johor state election, Chinese support for UMNO stood at over 13%, but it dropped to 6% in the GE14 (Welsh, 2024). The People's Hope (PH) coalition, with substantial backing from the Chinese community and robust support from other ethnic groups, successfully ended the 61-year reign of the National Front (BN) and assumed power in 2018 (The Star, n. d.).

The Downfall of Pakatan Harapan (PH): “The Sheraton Move”

UMNO and PAS executed the Sheraton Move as a strategic manoeuvre to reduce DAP's ongoing influence within the PH coalition and safeguard the Malay-Muslim agenda in Malaysia. Lastly, the Sheraton Move was associated with an attempt to protect specific UMNO officials facing or anticipating legal action for money laundering and power abuses. The Sheraton Move, which took place in February 2020, was a momentous political occurrence in Malaysia that resulted in the downfall of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government and the ascent of the Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition. This event directly links to Muhyiddin Yassin, who was pivotal in the subsequent political manoeuvring.

The Sheraton Move began on February 23, 2020, with numerous political factions participating, including Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu), BN, PAS, and others. The objective of these meetings was to form a new coalition government. The Sheraton Move

took its name from the Sheraton Hotel in Petaling Jaya, the venue for crucial decision-making. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad tendered his resignation on February 24, 2020, resulting in a vacant seat. Subsequently, the Yang DiPertuan Agong (King) designated him as the provisional prime minister (Bernama, n.d). After consulting with Members of Parliament (MPs) and political leaders, the Yang DiPertuan Agong (King) appointed Muhyiddin Yassin as the new Prime Minister on February 29, 2020. On March 1, 2020, Muhyiddin took office as Malaysia's eighth prime minister.

The Sheraton Move sparked substantial political turmoil in Malaysia (Bowie, 2021). The Muhyiddin administration enforced a series of lockdowns while mitigating the economic repercussions through various stimulus initiatives. Nevertheless, the brief duration of its rule was characterised by coalition instability, a controversial declaration of emergency, and a severe economic downturn in 2020. Muhyiddin's tenure as prime minister was characterized by persistent political maneuvering and the absence of a clear majority in Parliament, which ultimately led to his resignation in August 2021. Consequently, certain individuals held the belief that the Sheraton Move contravened the electoral mandate that the PH received in 2018. Consequently, there was a pervasive erosion of trust among the general populace and a clamour for legislation to prohibit political party defections to prevent similar occurrences in the future (Yunus, 2022). Despite disagreements, some voters in Muhyiddin's electoral district held a favourable view of him, particularly regarding his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Palansamy, 2022).

The Division of Malay Votes Among Malays-Dominated-Based Parties

Voting serves as a method to elect a leader capable of meeting the needs of the populace. Participating in citizens' responsibilities and duties toward their nation improves democracy's effectiveness. There are different perspectives on the most suitable type of governance for everyone, resulting in disagreement over the choice of a governing system. However, we acknowledge that this decision carries inherent risks for all individuals participating in the voting process. When contemplating the pivotal factors that drive an individual to vote, several elements are at play. The voter turnout among individuals aged 18–29 was notably low, indicating a lack of preparedness among this demographic to participate in voting.

Social media is widely considered indispensable in today's globalised society for disseminating political information to the general public and inspiring individuals to engage in political activities. The calibre of content on social media plays a crucial role in indirectly transmitting political information to voters. Social media platforms play a substantial role in political campaign operations and have a notable influence on political engagement, both directly and indirectly (Hamid et al., 2022). Political education, which fosters civic awareness and stimulates interest in politics, serves as an effective means of inspiring individuals to engage in political activities (Lupien, 2022).

Approximately 70% of the Malaysian population utilises the Internet and devotes nearly 20 hours per day to engaging with social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Research has confirmed that Malaysians utilise social media platforms to acquire information about elections. Given the significant reliance of young people on social media, it is unlikely that they gain significant political knowledge through modern digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram. However, researchers are still determining whether social media can enhance political literacy among young individuals, particularly those who are voting for the first time (Abdullah & Syed Annuar, 2022).

Social media has emerged as a crucial platform for political parties to actively involve and influence young individuals aged 18 to 39, comprise 50.3% of the registered voters. Candidates actively employ platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook to distribute concise and captivating videos, clarify policy stances, and garner support from younger voters (Abdullah et al., 2021). The study suggests that utilising social media as a source of political information in Malaysia does not necessarily lead to an increased likelihood of voting. The study indicates that the use of social media may distract young voters from fulfilling their civic duty to vote. This finding emphasizes the complexity of the relationship between young people's involvement in social media and their voting participation.

Since Malaysia gained independence in 1957, the ruling party, Barisan Nasional, had never lost an election until now. With the support of the Sabah Heritage Party (WARISAN) and Pakatan Harapan, the alliance secured victory in all 121 seats. There are 222 seats in the Dewan Rakyat available for contest. Mahathir Mohamad, at the age of 93, assumed the position of prime minister for the second time, making him the oldest elected leader globally. The voter participation rate in the same election was 82.32%. The 14th general election in Malaysia, also known as GE14, took place on May 9, 2018. The recent election in Malaysia brought about a significant change in the nation's history, as Prime Minister Najib Razak's longstanding ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional (BN), lost power after more than sixty years of continuous governance.

Mahathir Mohamad's opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan (PH), won the election by securing 113 of the 222 parliamentary seats. The opposition parties, namely the Democratic Action Party (DAP), the People's Justice Party (PKR), and the National Trust Party (AMANAH), formed an alliance known as Pakatan Harapan, which played a crucial role in their triumph (Gomez & Osman, 2019). This writing focuses on the achievements of political parties that are predominantly Malays, including the United Malays National Organisation/Barisan Nasional (UMNO/BN), the Malaysian United Indigenous Party (PPBM), the National Trust Party (AMANAH), and the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS).

Table 1

Total of Parliamentary Seats Won by UMNO, PPBM, and PAS in the 14th General Election, 2018

Parties	Won	Contesting
BN/UMNO	79	222
PAS	18	157
PPBM (PH)	12	52
AMANAH	11	34

Adapted and modified from the 14th General Election Malaysia (GE14 / PRU14) - Results Overview, n.d.

Table 1 displays the number of parliamentary seats obtained by several political parties with a significant Malay influence in the 14th general election. Table 1 shows that UMNO/BN secured 79 of the 222 contested seats. PAS won 18 parliamentary seats out of the 157 they contested. The PPBM emerged triumphant in the election, capturing 12 out of the 52 contested seats, owing to the backing of the Alliance of Hope (PH) coalition party. The AMANAH party secured victory in 11 out of the 34 contested seats. The elite fragmentation within UMNO resulted in the loss of several influential leaders and the emergence of competing political parties against UMNO/BN, especially in the Malay/Bumiputera majority seats.

Muhyiddin played a pivotal role in wresting control of Johor from BN, while Mukhriz and Shafie accomplished the same in Kedah and Sabah, respectively, by founding WARISAN. Importantly, the inclusion of Mahathir in the PH coalition led to a substantial number of Malaysians, including both Malays and Bumiputras, developing a stronger belief in the opposition's ability to form the next government. Previously, this was the only opposition faction that had accomplished this achievement (Nadzri, 2018). The internal conflict among the ruling class resulted in a split of the Malay and Bumiputera voters, which had been the primary and exclusive sources of support for UMNO/BN since 2008.

Table 2

Total Comparison of Parliamentary Seats Won By UMNO, PPBM and PAS in the 14th General Election, 2018 and 15th General Election, 2022

Parties	Seats won in 2018	Seats won in 2022
PAS	18	49
UMNO/BN	79	26
PPBM	12	25
AMANAH	11	8

Source: Adapted and modified from the 14th General Election Malaysia (GE14 / PRU14) - Results Overview; 14th General Election Malaysia (GE15 / PRU15) - Results Overview, n.d.

An analysis of the parties' seat distribution will facilitate discussions and offer a more definitive foundation for commenting on shifts in voting patterns. Table 2 demonstrates a significant change in voting patterns between two consecutive general elections as a result of parliamentary activities. The fragmentation of votes among four distinct parties within the Malay community has led to a decrease in the numerical strength of UMNO-BN, the dominant political party representing the Malay population. In the 14th Parliamentary by-election of 2021, a newly formed political alliance under the leadership of former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad secured the first defeat of the BN-UMNO coalition.

The Political Swing Among Chinese and Indian Voters

The Democratic Action Party (DAP) is a social democratic political party in Malaysia situated on the left side of the political spectrum. Membership in the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition is highly significant. In the November 2022 15th General Election (GE15), the Democratic Action Party (DAP) secured a significant victory by winning 40 out of the 55 parliamentary seats that were up for grabs. The political party in Malaysia has attained a success rate of 73%, which is one of the highest recorded (Sarji, 2023). The Democratic Action Party (DAP) was instrumental in the overall triumph of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) alliance during the 15th General Election (GE15).

The alliance won by gaining a substantial number of seats, amounting to 81 seats, including votes obtained through associated parties. The foundation of the Unity Government was imperative due to the absence of a single alliance that could attain a decisive majority, resulting in a hung parliament (Loheswar, 2024). The Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), alternatively referred to as the People's Justice Party, is a politically moderate and all-encompassing party in Malaysia. In 2003, the merger of the People's Justice Party (PKR) and the Malaysian People's Party (PRM) resulted in its formation. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail is the head of the PKR, a political

party that prioritises social justice and fighting corruption. Both parties made important contributions to the overall victory of the political party in two consecutive general elections, resulting in a substantial transformation in the political landscape.

Table 3

Total of Parliamentary Seats Won by DAP and PKR in the 14th General Election, 2018

Parties	Won	Contesting
DAP	42	47
PKR	48	71

Source: Adapted and modified from 14th General Election Malaysia (GE14 /PRU14) - Results Overview, n.d.

The Democratic Action Party (DAP) demonstrated remarkable performance in the 2023 Malaysian state elections, surpassing other parties within the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition. The Democratic Action Party (DAP) won 42 out of the 47 seats it contested, the highest number of seats won among the component parties of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition. The Democratic Action Party (DAP) attained an impressive success record of almost 98%, emerging victorious in 45 out of the 46 seats it competed for in six (6) states (Morden, 2023). The party succeeded significantly in Penang, Perak, and Selangor states, securing 11, 13, and 20 seats.

Table 4

Statistics For The Six State Elections 2023, August

No. of seats	BN	PH	PN	GTA	GRS	GPS	OTH
Kedah [36]	0	3	33	0	0	0	0
Kelantan [45]	1	1	43	0	0	0	0
Negeri Sembilan [36]	14	17	5	0	0	0	0
Penang [40]	2	27	11	0	0	0	0
Selangor [56]	2	32	22	0	0	0	0
Terengganu [32]	0	0	32	0	0	0	0
Johor [56]	40	12	3	0	0	0	1
Melaka [28]	21	5	2	0	0	0	0
Pahang [42]	17	8	17	0	0	0	0
Perak [59]	9	24	26	0	0	0	0
Perlis [15]	0	1	14	0	0	0	0
Sabah [73]	14	9	0	0	24	0	26

Sarawak [82]	0	2	0	0	0	76	4
TOTAL	120	141	208	0	24	76	31

Source: Adapted and modified from the 14th General Election Malaysia (GE15/PPRU15) - Results Overview, n.d.

In the 15th election, Chinese voters exhibited a discernible change in their voting patterns compared to previous elections. The victory in the Selangor 15th state election in 2023 and the Kuala Kubu Bharu by-election on May 11, 2024, were expected. Pang Sock Tao, a candidate from the Pakatan Harapan party, won the election by defeating Khairul Azhari Saut from the Perikatan Nasional (PN) party with a margin of 3,869 votes (Tan, 2024).

Passive Resistance: A Crucial Role Among Young Voters In Changing Malaysia's Political Landscape

The introduction of Undi18, which lowered the voting age from 21 to 18, had a significant impact on the demographic makeup of voters in Malaysia's 15th General Election (GE15). In the 15th general election, voter turnout increased compared to the previous general election. The total number of registered voters is 21,173,638. The age group of 18 to 39 accounted for 50.3% of the entire voter population registered on the electoral roll for GE15 in Malaysia. Targeted campaigns, along with the implementation of Undi18, are pivotal in driving a substantial surge in voter turnout during general elections. Political parties strategically targeted the youth vote by utilising social media platforms, recognising their ability to impact election results (Hui, 2022). Social media was crucial in actively involving young voters. Political parties extensively used platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook to actively interact with the younger demographic. TikTok rose to prominence as a dominant platform, primarily due to its extensive popularity among Malaysia's younger generation. In early 2022, the expected number of TikTok users in Malaysia stood at over 17 million, the majority of them being adults aged 18 and above (Wei, 2022).

Political parties and candidates employed concise videos and compelling information to attract the attention of young voters. For instance, Muhyiddin Yassin, the chairman of Perikatan Nasional (PN), joined a popular TikTok trend that received millions of views and likes, showcasing the platform's extensive reach and impact. Similarly, Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman, a candidate from the Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (MUDA), utilised TikTok as a medium to engage with the younger audience. His primary objective was to develop a combination of instructional and entertaining information, commonly known as "edutainment." (Koh, 2024). The youthful electorate had discernible motivations, including apprehensions about corruption, economic stability, and employment opportunities, driven by a genuine desire for change. Furthermore, they expressed a preference for politicians who demonstrated accountability and genuine engagement with the community (BJensen, 2023). The 2023 Malaysian state elections were held on August 12, 2023, in six states: Selangor, Kelantan, Terengganu, Negeri Sembilan, Kedah, and Penang. The elections coincided with the 2023 Kuala Terengganu by-election. The findings revealed a significant increase in ethnic polarisation, with most non-Malays supporting the PH+BN coalition, while Malays predominantly supported the PN coalition. A process of national reconciliation is urgently necessary to overcome these divisions.

Table 5

Number of Voters by Age Group In 2023 State Elections

KEDAH (Total: 1,585,085 voters)	
AGE	VOTERS
18-20	104,284
21-29	356,184
30-39	349,528
KELANTAN (Total: 864,425 voters)	
AGE	VOTERS
18-20	104,284
21-29	330,558
30-39	347,225
NEGERI SEMBILAN (Total: 1,585, 085 voters)	
AGE	VOTERS
18-20	55,017
21-29	181,946
30-39	192,242
PENANG (Total: 1,234,198 voters)	
AGE	VOTERS
18-20	67,633
21-29	230,838
30-39	241,506
SELANGOR (Total: 3,747,057 voters)	
AGE	VOTERS
18-20	274,194
21-29	851,180
30-39	792,581
TERENGGANU (Total: 930,894 voters)	
AGE	VOTERS
18-20	64,264
21-29	218,414
30-39	240,900

Source: Adapted and Modified from 14th General Election Malaysia (GE15 / PRU15) - Results Overview, n.d.

The statistics above indicate that the youth population, specifically those between the ages of 18 and 39, primarily influences the state elections. PH+BN secured an overwhelming majority of 60.5% of the votes, leading to their triumph in 34 out of the 56 seats in Selangor. In contrast, the PN obtained 37.8% of the votes and successfully gained 22 seats. They swore in Amirudin Shari for his second term as Menteri Besar (chief minister). The PN party won convincingly in Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah, gaining more than 60% of the seats in each state. The Perikatan Nasional (PN) party won in Kelantan, taking 43 out of 45 seats. Perikatan Nasional (PN) secured victory in all 32 election districts in Terengganu. The Perikatan Nasional

(PN) party has reappointed Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar as the Chief Minister (Menteri Besar) of Terengganu.

The PH+BN coalition demonstrated exceptional performance in Negeri Sembilan, securing 60.9% of the votes and winning 31 out of 36 seats. In Penang, the PH+BN political coalition secured 66.5% of the total votes and secured 29 out of the 40 available seats. The Democratic Action Party (DAP), a member of the PH coalition, achieved success in 45 out of the 46 contested seats, experiencing an average increase of 5% in support compared to the 2022 general election (Wong, 2024). Significantly, there was an 8% increase in support from the Malay community. However, a significant number of young Malay voters who previously supported BN made a shift to PN instead of PH in the recent elections. In the 2023 Malaysian state elections, there was a noticeable increase in racial division, with non-Malays largely supporting the Pakatan Harapan (PH) and Barisan Nasional (BN) coalitions, while Malays predominantly favoured the Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition. The polarisation emphasises the need to achieve national reconciliation to bridge these divisions and ensure a cohesive political future for Malaysia (Othman, 2023).

Conclusion

The study above suggests that the Chinese and Indian communities, as well as the voting behaviours of the Malays, have had an impact on reshaping the political landscape of the country. The Malay community's voting behaviour in the 2023 state elections has undergone significant changes as a result of concerns about the policies implemented by the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the perceived infringement upon Malay and Islamic religious rights by the previous government under the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition. This phenomenon is apparent in multiple electoral cycles occurring in 2018, 2022, and 2023, where the voting pattern consistently experiences unpredictable and pragmatic changes. The voting patterns of the Malay population, which initially deviated during the 14th general election in 2018, remained consistent until the 15th general election in 2022. Similarly, the Chinese and Indian communities' voting preferences have changed, with a shift in their support from the BN component party to the DAP party in both elections. We cannot underestimate the significance of young individuals, as their evolving passive resistance has influenced the outcomes of state elections through alterations in their voting behaviour. Given the significant reliance of young people on social media for political information, it would be imprudent to disregard the impact of social media in facilitating passive change. Enrolling in formal education at the school level is an effective method to ensure that young individuals attain a significant level of political literacy. An official implementation is crucial, as the majority of young individuals acquire political knowledge primarily from the Internet or social media. Furthermore, individuals' degree of degradation and political maturation differs depending on their upbringing, which includes their familial lineage and the impact of their associates. An optimal information ecosystem would enhance individuals' political involvement, guaranteeing their active participation in the election process after each voting cycle, while also reshaping their thinking to fulfil this civic duty. This fortunate situation will eventually lead to a shared propensity for voting behaviour among young Malaysians.

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