

SHOULD WE REALLY BE HAVING ELECTIONS NOW?

HERE'S 4 REASONS WHY WE SHOULDN'T



this infographic is part of CAPE's
GE VOTER EDUCATION SERIES

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1

Securing a fresh mandate is **NOT** necessary

PM Lee said earlier in March that strong leadership with an unequivocal mandate is necessary going into the crisis. Commentators like Calvin Cheng have also suggested that an electoral mandate is needed in order to draw on past reserves. Indeed, in many societies, elections are called to secure a fresh mandate ahead of national crises or major policy decisions **BUT** the current circumstances in Singapore are vastly different:

1. STRONG EXISTING MANDATE

No. 1

Highest public trust among developed countries ¹



Wide international and local praise for govt's response to the crisis ²

2. MANDATE IS STILL "FRESH"



One full year left in the current term of govt

3. NO ONE IS ASKING FOR A FRESH MANDATE



Most Singaporeans are in fact against holding an election during this crisis according to polls by Lianhe Zaobao and Yahoo News! ³



Even Opposition parties are calling for delayed elections ⁴



A drawdown on past reserves is already safeguarded by Presidential approval

2

Holding a GE now affects the legitimacy of the elections

Singaporeans will likely see this as an act of **political opportunism** by the PAP.

Given the disadvantages that opposition parties will have in a COVID-19 election and the unnecessary public health risks, Singaporeans may see this as a political play to secure an easy electoral victory. In the worst case scenario, public trust and the government's legitimacy may deteriorate for "politicising" this moment of crisis. This is not without history: the 2017 Reserved Presidential elections and resultant walkover resulted in protests that President Halimah was "not my president."⁵

Voters may also be less engaged

The unprecedented crisis and massive disruptions to daily life may understandably cause voters to be less in tune with election campaigning. The result will be a less-informed and engaged electorate with lower voter participation and ultimately, a less-than-democratic election.

**SIMI MANDATE?
EXCUSES ONLY!**

**GARMENT FIXING
OPPOSITION
AGAIN!**

**GOT NO MOOD
TO READ PARTY
MANIFESTO LAH**

3

There is **no level playing field** for public engagement across the political spectrum

- Holding a GE during this period of social distancing **unfairly disadvantages the opposition parties**

Unlike the PAP which has access to greater media and grassroots resources, opposition parties depend immensely on physical rallies to gain momentum and access to voters.⁶ The playing field has always been unfair, as noted by Mothership,⁷ but holding an election in this period further diminishes the ideal of free and fair elections.

- **Voters may be disenfranchised** in an election held in this period

Healthcare workers who are busy on the frontlines, as well as the elderly and vulnerable may not be able or willing to turn up to vote. This is in addition to the possibility of less voter engagement in the prevailing climate of uncertainty.



4

It distracts society from fighting the crisis & remains an **unnecessary public health risk**

COVID-19 is one of the greatest crises we have faced as a society. This is the time for us to demonstrate our national unity in providing mutual aid in our communities and standing in solidarity with frontline healthcare workers. The politicking and **political division inherent in electoral campaigning will only distract us from these priorities.** Given the uncertainty of the COVID-19 crisis in the coming months, holding elections now will also distract our political leaders from focusing on the critical work needed to tide our nation over this difficult period.

Furthermore, over **2 million voters**, as well as thousands of electoral officials, counters, and administrative workers, **will have to risk infection in participating in an election.** Even with precautions, electioneering will lead to unnecessary exposure of election workers and an unnecessary strain on existing transport and logistic resources.

*This is not a game of cards.
This is your life and mine!*



Even with precautions, many of the previously mentioned concerns still hold true.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

1. Declare a **state of emergency** and delay elections till after the 14 April 2021 deadline or when the crisis subsides

- OR -

2. Pass a **constitutional amendment** to delay the election deadline until after the crisis

However, given the supermajority that the ruling party enjoys in Parliament with the wherewithal to make constitutional amendments easily without input from opposition MPs, this option may have little public legitimacy.



What does Constitutionality even mean when the ruling party has a supermajority in Parliament that can amend and has amended the constitution with ease?

WHAT IS BEING DONE AROUND THE WORLD?

46

At least 46 countries and territories across the globe have decided to **postpone national and subnational elections** due to COVID-19.⁸ 13 other countries or territories have held elections but under precautions, and prior to worsened conditions.

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This resource is part of CAPE's GE Voter Education Series. CAPE, or the Community for Advocacy & Political Education – a student organisation based in Yale-NUS College – was founded in 2017 by students from Yale-NUS College and the Law Faculty of the National University of Singapore (NUS). An independent and non-partisan community, we aim to build capacity for political literacy and constructive participation in Singapore's civic democracy.