

A CAPE explainer on Ballot Secrecy

# IS YOUR VOTE ACTUALLY SECRET?



# YES.

# YOUR VOTE IS SECRET

Here's how your ballot is secured and implications of myths of ballot secrecy



CA  
PE



# NO BREAKS in the chain of custody of ballot papers

Throughout the entire life cycle of your ballot, candidates and agents from all contesting parties are involved in ensuring the secrecy and security of your ballot.



## At the polling station:

Candidates and polling agents (from contesting parties) are physically present to observe ballot boxes



## At the counting station:

Candidates and counting agents are physically present to observe counting. Counting is also a rapid process that usually finishes by midnight.



## During transport from polling to counting centres:

All ballot boxes are sealed. Candidates may affix their own seals as well. The transport process can be observed by candidates.



## Safekeeping and eventual destruction:

Ballot boxes are secured in a Supreme Court vault for 6 months and is subsequently destroyed. All candidates may observe this process.

Elections Department Singapore (ELD), Ballot Secrecy.  
[https://www.eld.gov.sg/voters\\_ballotsecrecy.html](https://www.eld.gov.sg/voters_ballotsecrecy.html)

# There is **NO** practicality in tracing ballot serial numbers to you



Serial numbers are printed on the ballots. This was introduced in 1947 by the colonial government as a measure against fraud. Many countries do this too, including the UK and New Zealand.

**THEORETICALLY** your ballot serial number could be traced to you.

## But this requires:

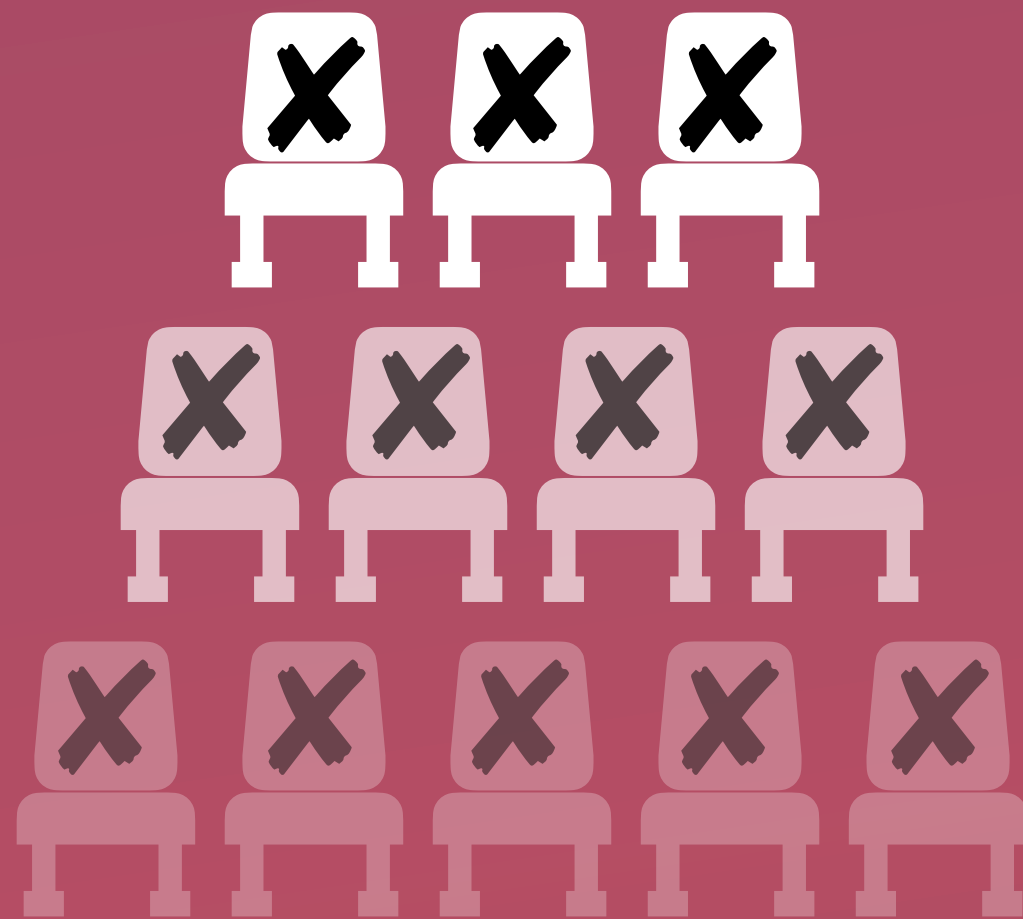
- 1 An order from the Court arising from an election petition.
- 2 The Court must be satisfied that votes have been fraudulently cast thus affecting the result of the election.

*Also don't forget:*

There are also over 2.7 million ballots to sift through!  
And your ballots are destroyed after 6 months!

Elections Department Singapore (ELD), Ballot Secrecy.  
[https://www.eld.gov.sg/voters\\_ballotsecrecy.html](https://www.eld.gov.sg/voters_ballotsecrecy.html)

# Voter doubts about ballot secrecy have tangible impacts on our electoral results



In GE2020, opposition parties might have gained **5 TO 12 MORE SEATS**\* if all voters believed their ballots were secret

i

Political scientists Kai Ostwald and Guillem Rimbau found that 3-5% of Singaporean voters, believing that ballots were not secret, voted for the PAP out of fear of reprisal rather than individual preference. They estimated an equivalent resulting vote swing of between 5 to 12 close-margin seats in GE2020.

Ostwald, K., & Rimbau, G. (2023). Voting behaviour under doubts of ballot secrecy: reinforcing dominant party rule. *Democratization*, 30(5), 855–874.