



## Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation

### May 2024 Public Opinion Poll – English Excerpt

Released:

**May 28, 2024**

**Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation (TPOF)** today released the result of its May 2024 nation-wide poll. This marks the 93rd monthly survey conducted by the TPOF aimed at tracking the development and changes in Taiwan’s public opinion. The full release in Chinese language is available on our official website.

#### **How the Survey was Conducted**

This survey was conducted on May 20-22, 2024, with a sample size of 1,077. Adults 20 years of age and older residing in Taiwan were interviewed by telephone using live interviewers. Landline and cellphone numbers were drawn through dual-frame random sampling with a proportion of 70% from landlines and 30% from cellphones. Samples were demographically weighted to adjust for gender, age, education and the district of residency based on the latest statistics published by the Ministry of the Interior. Sampling error is around  $\pm 2.99$  percentage points with 95% level of confidence.

## Background

Lai Ching-te was inaugurated as the new President of the Republic of China (Taiwan) on May 20, 2024, taking over the position his DPP predecessor Tsai Ing-wen had held over the last eight years. For many Lai's [inauguration speech](#) was considered a restrained one, although his statement about "Republic of China and the People's Republic of China are not subordinate to each other" was poorly-received by Beijing, which launched a [major military exercise](#) around Taiwan just three days after Lai's inauguration.

However, this particular statement about "ROC and PRC are not subordinate to each other" was not invented by Lai but was explicitly stated previously by former President Tsai during her 2021 National Day speech in a concept known as "four commitments". This concept was in turn also stated in similar rhetorical forms by both former President Chen Shui-bien (2000-2008) and former President Lee Teng-hui (1988-2000).

In comparison Lai's speech was well-received by the United States and other Western countries, which all issued statements of congratulations to Taiwan. U.S. President Biden even mentioned Taiwan again in his speech at West Point on May 25, during which he vowed the U.S. is "willing to use force when required" to protect "our nation, our allies, our core interests", a statement that was interpreted by many as hinting at U.S. commitment to defend Taiwan if China attacks.

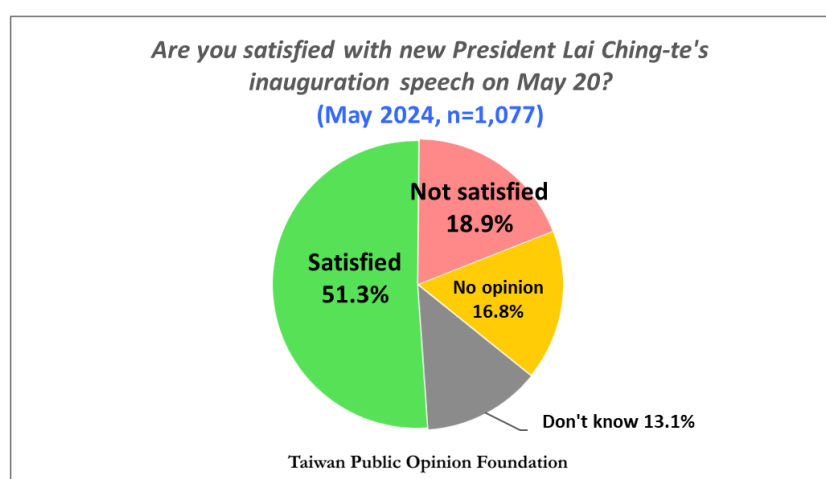
Taiwan had a turmoil month not just from China's military exercise, but also due to a domestic political fight erupted between the ruling DPP and the opposition parties that now controlled Taiwan's parliament the Legislative Yuan, which led to large scale physical fights among legislators on May 17.

How do Taiwanese public perceive their new president and his inauguration speech? And what do they think about the current fight between the ruling government and the oppositions in the parliament? That's what our poll this month is interested in exploring.

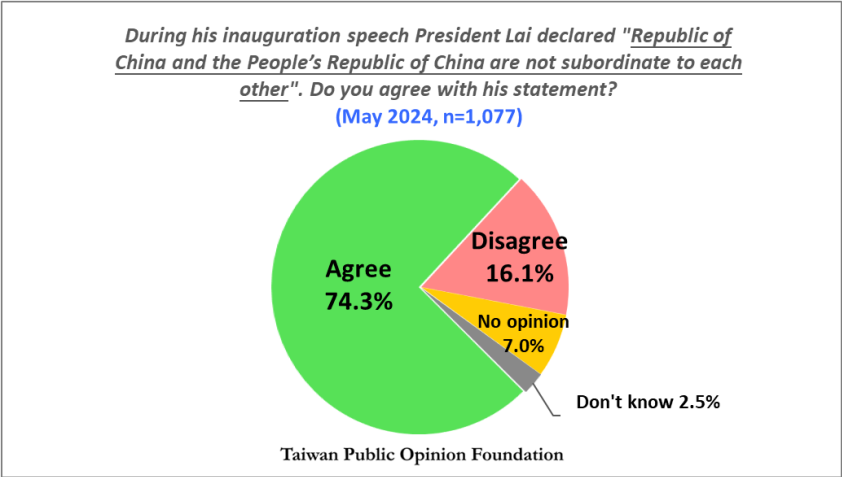
## Main Findings:

1. On Lai Ching-te's May 20 inauguration speech, the poll finds among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, a majority of 51.3% said they are satisfied, while only a small minority of 18.9% are not satisfied. This means that Lai's inauguration speech was generally well-received by Taiwanese public, indicating a good start of Lai's presidency. A few observations:

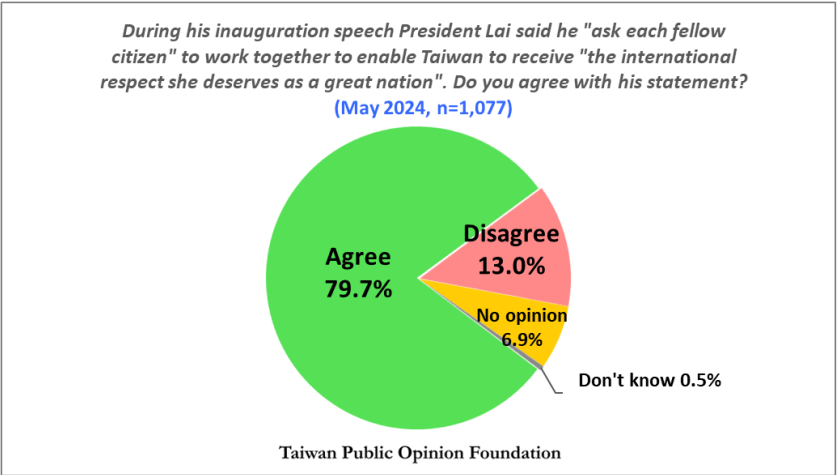
- Public receptions to Lai's speech are noticeably different across age groups. Young people reacted to it with difference, among those age 20-24 only 31% are satisfied while a majority of 40% have no opinion. While the oldest people received Lai's speech with enthusiasm, 66% among those age 65 and above are satisfied with Lai's speech and only 14% are not satisfied, 20% have no opinion.
- Receptions were also divided by partisan affiliations. DPP supporters were overwhelmingly (85%) satisfied with it, while supporters of opposition KMT (25% satisfied, 43% not satisfied) and TPP (24% satisfied, 36% not satisfied) were far less sanguine with it.



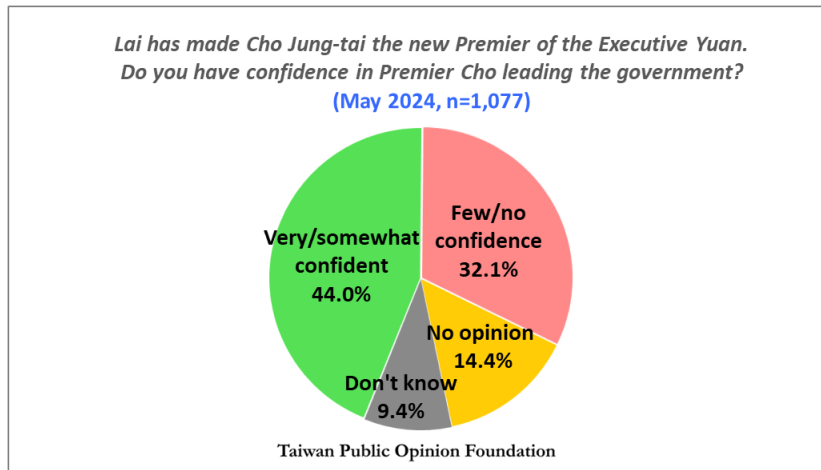
2. Regarding the part of [Lai's inauguration speech](#) that declared "ROC and PRC are not subordinate to each other", the poll finds among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, 74.3% said they agree with it while only 16.1% disagree. This means that Lai's separation of relations between ROC and PRC is rooted in strong Taiwanese public opinion consensus on the matter and is hardly a "provocative" or "novel" concept invention by himself.



3. Lai’s inauguration speech concluded by saying he wishes “all citizens to work together” to “allow [Taiwan] the international respect she deserves as a great nation.” The poll finds among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, 79.7% said they agree with it while only 13% disagree. This means that not only is Lai’s statement a direct reflection of the vast majority of Taiwanese public’s vision and aspiration for the government, but also the future of Taiwan in general.

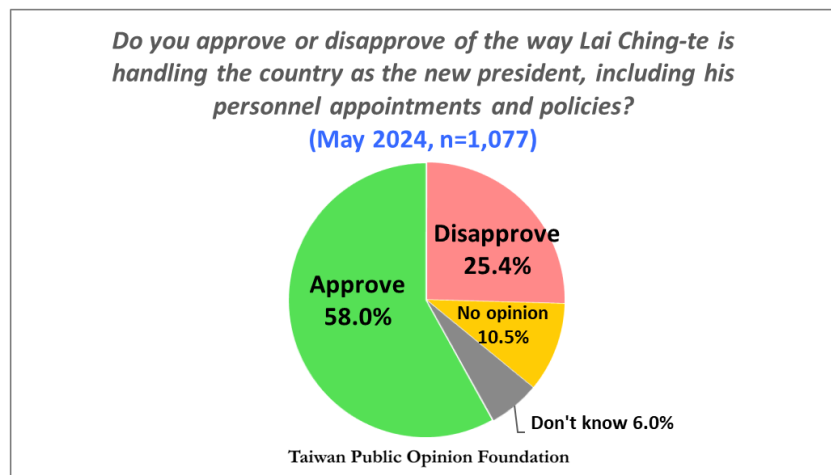


4. President Lai has tapped Cho Jung-tai, a DPP politician who was briefly the Chairman of the DPP during Tsai’s first presidential term, to be the Premier of the Republic of China, which is constitutionally the head of the government but subordinated to the president. The poll finds among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, a majority of 44% said they have confidence in Cho, while only 32.1% said they have few or no confidence. It is likely that a “honeymoon” effect from the new president is also boosting Taiwan’s public’s confidence in the new Premier, a person they are not so familiar with.



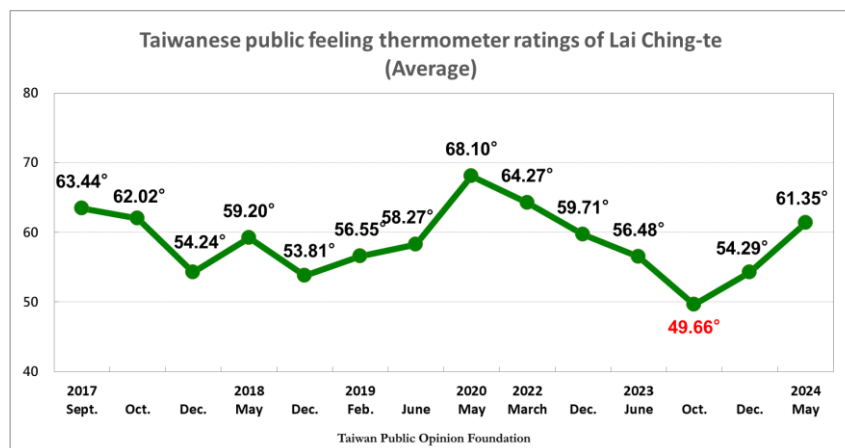
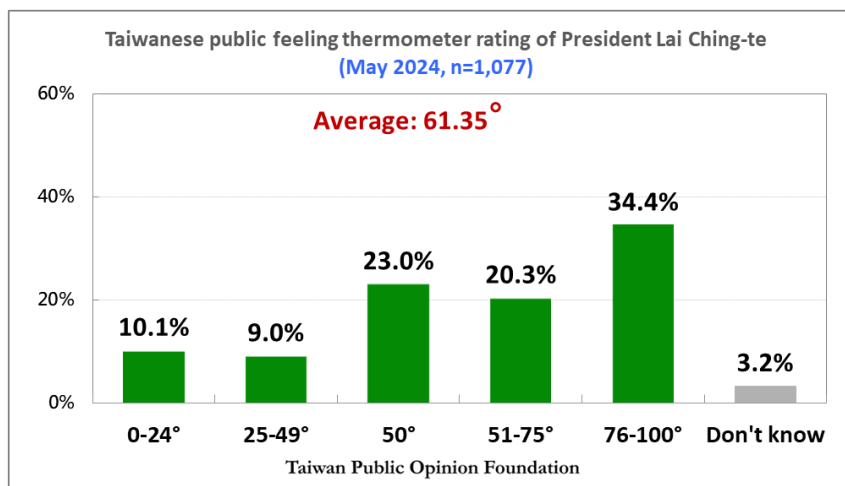
5. On the new President Lai Ching-te’s approval rating, the poll finds among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, 58% said they approve of the way Lai is handling the country, while 25.4% disapprove. Clearly the majority of Taiwanese public are willing to give President Lai the benefit of the doubt regardless of their partisan affiliation or preconceived notion about him.

In comparison, former President Tsai Ing-wen’s approval rating at the beginning of her first term in 2016 was even higher at 69.9% and reached 71.5% at the beginning of her second term in 2020. However, a 58% start is still a respectable number for Lai given today’s political circumstances are different from before. Tsai started off in 2016 following former President Ma Ying-jeou’s record low approval ratings, and the beginning of her second term coincided with the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic and Taiwan’s perceived success in pandemic containment, it is no surprise that Tsai had much higher approval ratings compared to Lai today.



6. The poll asked respondents to rate President Lai Ching-te on a *feeling thermometer* between 0 and 100 – whereas 0 is the most negative and 100 is the

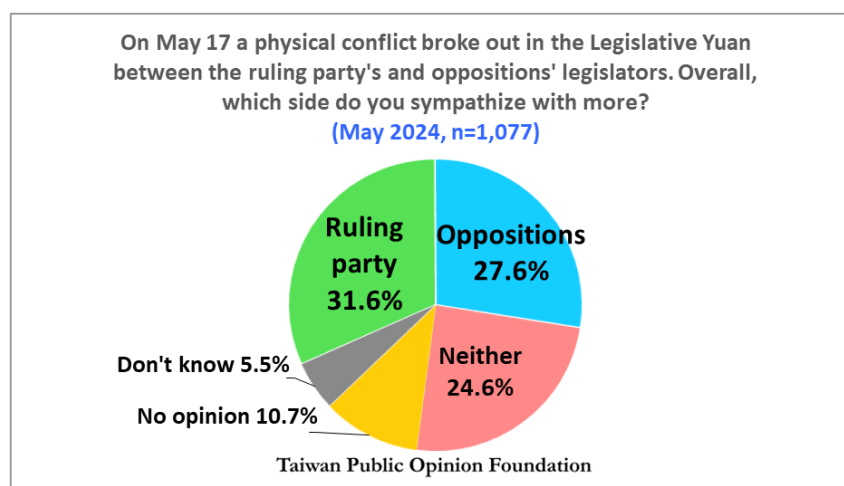
most positive. Among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, it was found that 54.7% have warm feeling (temperature of 51° and above) toward the new president, while 23% have neutral feeling (temperature of 50°), and 19.1% have cold feeling (below 50°). The average Taiwanese public feeling temperature of Lai is therefore at 61° currently, which is a marked improvement over the ratings in previous two polls last year at 49° and 54° respectively. Lai’s thermometer rating has now recovered to the level he once had in 2017 when he was tapped by then President Tsai to be the Premier of the government.



- On May 17 a [massive physical fight](#) erupted between the legislators of the Legislative Yuan – Taiwan’s parliament. The opposition parties including the KMT and TPP hold a majority in the parliament and attempted to pass a legislative reform bill that would expand the parliament’s oversight power over the government, but the ruling DPP claimed the bill was intrusive and lacking transparency. DPP legislators therefore deployed physical altercations among other obstruction techniques to block the bill from passing. The poll finds among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, 31.6% said they sympathize with the

ruling party with regards to the May 17 legislative fights, while 27.6% sympathize with the oppositions. This indicates the ruling party still has slightly more sympathy among the public after this fight, but the difference is small.

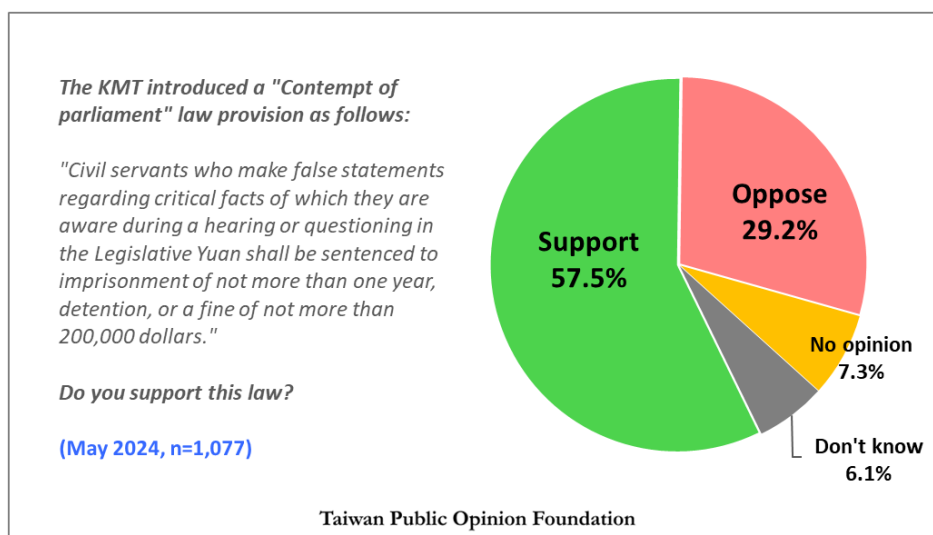
- In terms of age, the ruling party has strong support among the oldest people of 65 and above, of whom 43% support the DPP and only 22% support the oppositions. Among mid-age groups of 55-64 and 45-54 the support for either side is roughly equal, while among the younger age group of 25-34 the DPP has more support at 26.7% compared to oppositions with 21.9%. However, among the youngest people of 20-24 only 19.3% support the DPP and 30.5% support the oppositions.
- In terms of partisan affiliations, among DPP supporters 71.3% support the ruling party and only 3% support the oppositions. Among KMT supporters 3.2% support the ruling party and 64.8% support oppositions. Among TPP supporters 4.6% support the ruling party and 52.4% support the oppositions, but noticeably 30.3% said they support neither side. Among independents, 7.9% support the ruling party, 12.9% support the oppositions, and a majority of 47.5% support neither side.



8. Among the contentious points in the Legislative Yuan reform was the “contempt of parliament” provision introduced by the KMT. We are interested in knowing what the public actually think about the provision itself. A full text of the provision was read out to respondents, and it was found that a majority of 57.5% support the provision while 29.2% oppose it. In other words, the addition of “contempt of parliament” provision, which did not exist in Taiwan laws before this, has strong support among the majority Taiwanese public opinion. The ruling

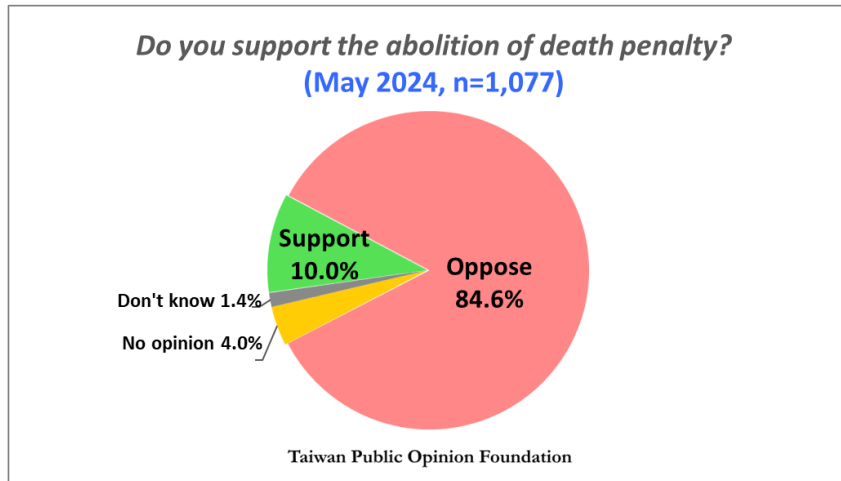
DPP is now the minority in the Legislative Yuan, its vehement opposition to this provision is not only against the majority in the newly elected parliament but also inconsistent with majority Taiwanese public opinion. Moreover:

- All age groups overwhelmingly support the provision even among the oldest people of age 65 and above where DPP finds its most partisan supporters, of whom 45% support it while 33% oppose it.
- Among DPP supporters 38% support the provision and 52% oppose it, among KMT supporters 79% support it and 9.1% oppose it. Among TPP supporters 85% support it and 11% oppose it. Among independents 51% support it and 22% oppose it.

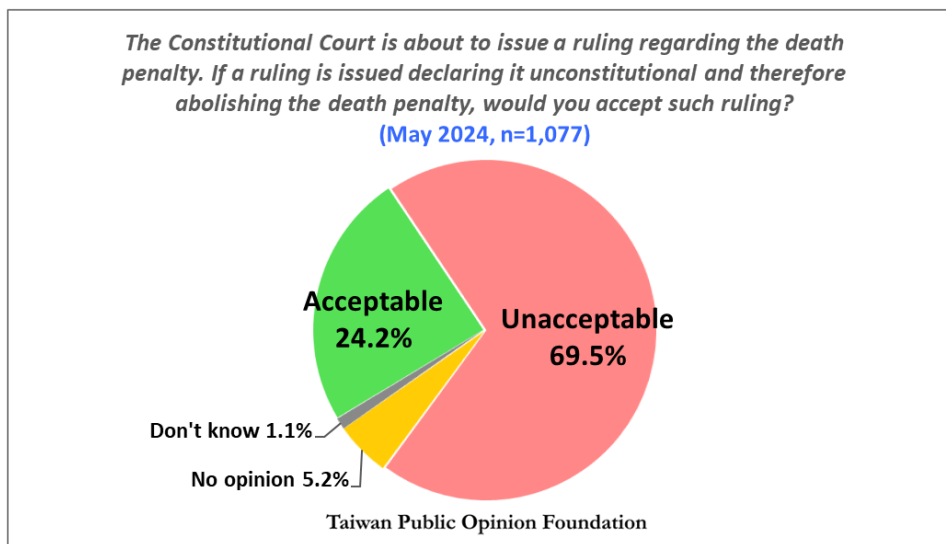


9. The existence of death penalty in Taiwan's legal system and the potential abolition of it have been discussed from time to time. The poll finds that among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, a vast majority of 84.6% said they are opposed to abolishing death penalty, and only 10% support a change. This means that the continuing existence of death penalty has overwhelming support among the Taiwanese public, such strong consensus among the Taiwanese society cannot be easily ignored in discussing the issue.





10. The poll asked whether the public would accept a ruling by Taiwan’s Constitutional Court if the death penalty were declared unconstitutional and therefore abolished. Among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, a majority of 69.5% said such a ruling would be unacceptable to them, while only 24.2% find it acceptable.



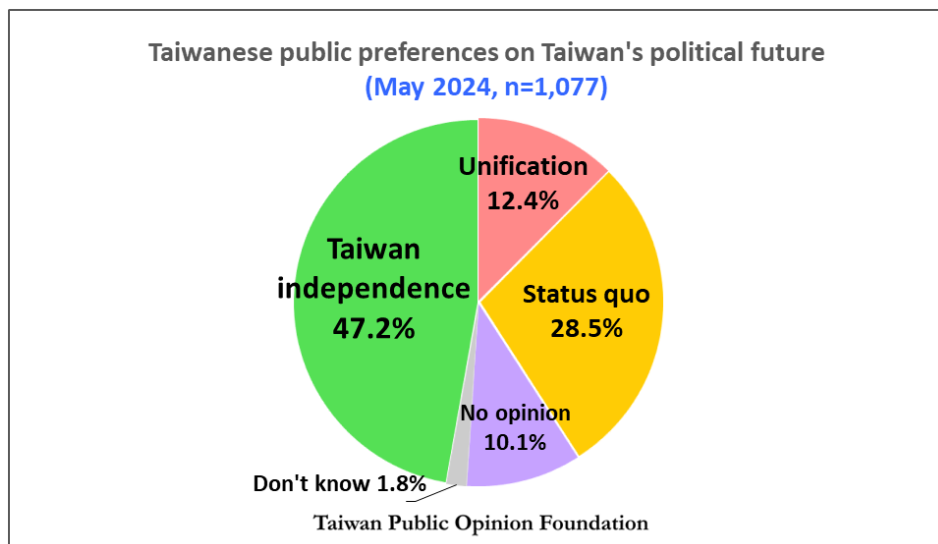
11. The poll asked: “*There are debates regarding the future of Taiwan. Some people argue Taiwan should pursue unification with the other side of the [Taiwan] Strait, while others argue Taiwan should pursue its own independence. Do you support Taiwan independence, or unification with the other side?*”

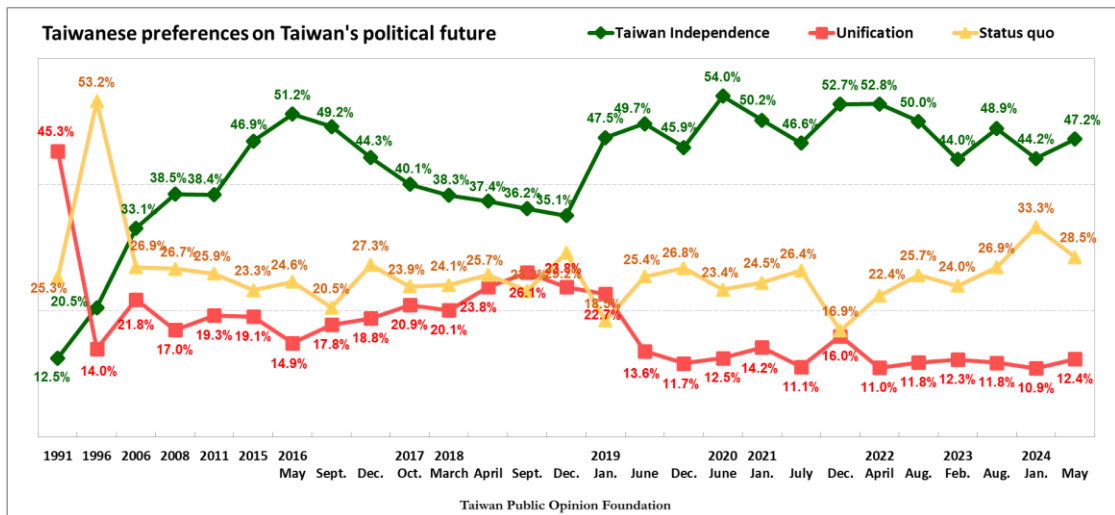
It was found that among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, 47.2% prefer Taiwan independence, 28.5% prefer maintaining status quo, 12.4% prefer unification with China, while 10.1% said they do not know or have no opinion on the matter. In other words, the majority of Taiwanese people clearly prefer Taiwan independence as the most desirable political future, while maintaining status quo

only constitutes the second most popular position, and those who prefer unification with China remain an extremely small minority.

Compared to the previous poll that was done in January 2024, support for independence increased by 3%, while support for status quo decreased by 4.8%, and support for unification with China increased by a slight 1.5%. Overall, the changes remain small and larger trends of majority preference for independence remains unchanged, the small increase of support for independence might have something to do with the inauguration of the new President Lai, who has usually been perceived as leaning more toward the idea of Taiwan independence though Lai himself has not affirmed this idea for several years.

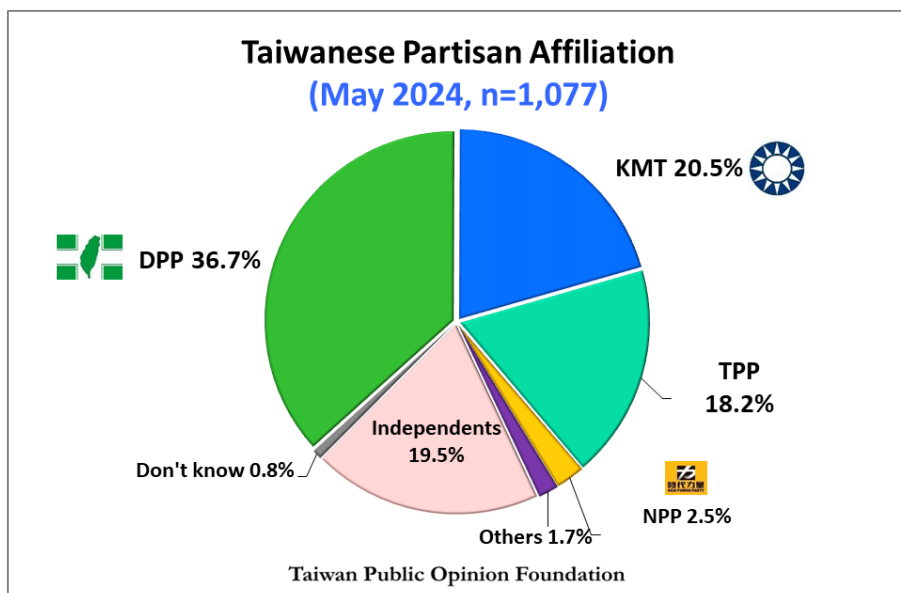
Taiwan's successive governments including both DPP and KMT camps have repeatedly asserted, contrary to polling evidence, that Taiwanese majority prefer "maintaining status quo" indefinitely. This message, while politically convenient and expedient for whoever in the ruling government position, is simply not rooted in facts and has greatly misled the international community.





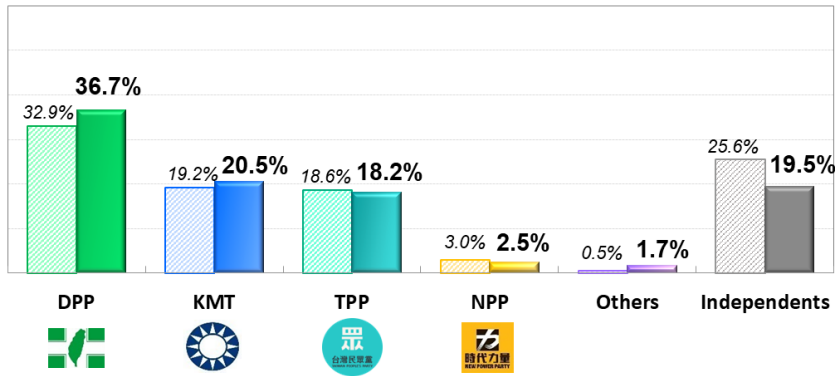
12. On political party affiliation, the poll finds among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, 36.7% support the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), 20.5% support the Kuomintang (KMT), 18.2% support the Taiwan People's Party (TPP), 2.5% support the New Power Party (NPP), and 19.5% respondents identified themselves as independents.

Compared to last month, there have been interesting changes to partisan affiliation across parties. The DPP saw small increase in support likely due to “honeymoon effect” from the inauguration of a new president, while the KMT and TPP supports remain largely the same as before. But as the honeymoon effect wanes while domestic partisan rift and conflict in the parliament continue, will this relatively high level of support for the DPP continue as well? It remains to be seen.



## Taiwanese Partisan Affiliation

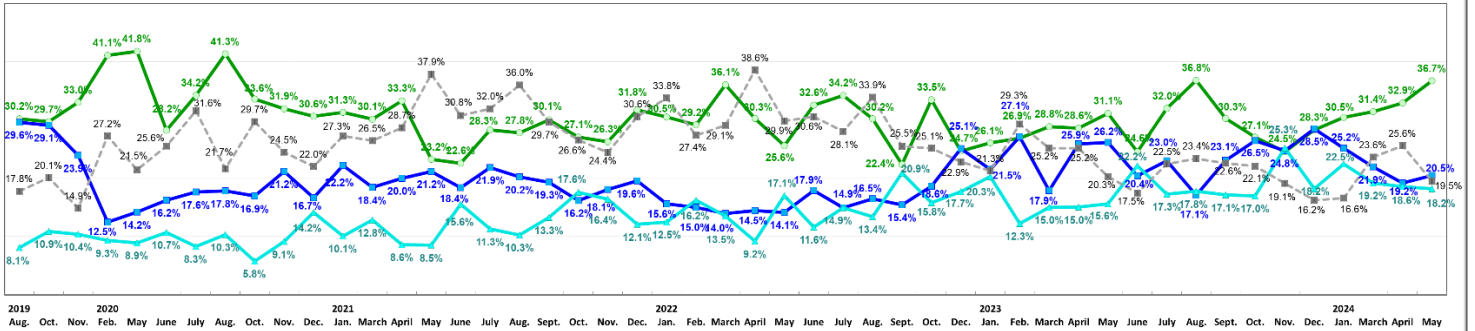
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## Taiwanese Partisan Affiliation 2019 - 2024

DPP KMT TPP Independents



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