



TIPNG Domestic Election Observation Report 2022





Transparency International PNG Inc.
Section 54, Allotment 31, Lokua Avenue, Boroko
PO Box 591, Port Moresby, NCD
Phone: +6753234917 and +6753237517
E-mail: info@transparencypng.org.pg
Website: www.transparencypng.org.pg

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Cover Photo: Polling Official Inking finger of voter during 2022 National General Election in West New Britain

Foreword



This independent observation report by Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) is the culmination of collaboration with individuals, communities, and organisations to build elections integrity through partnership. It reaffirms TIPNG's commitment to working with partners to strengthen good governance within the rule, by empowering people in Papua New Guinea to take action against corruption.

Elections in Papua New Guinea are a constitutionally guaranteed and guided process that should be protected by all sectors of society. The peaceful transition of power, through a free, fair and safe electoral process is the hallmark of any successful democracy, and citizens are right to expect nothing less than this standard.

TIPNG has observed the conduct of four national general elections and in that time there has been evident deterioration in the quality of the preparation, conduct, and delivery of the elections. The data collected by TIPNG's volunteer observers attests to that assessment, and is explored in detail in this observation report.

In providing this independent report, TIPNG aims to provide an evidentiary basis to the PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC), Parliament and the Government for interventions to promote transparency and integrity within our elections. In this undertaking, we are pleased to note that in addition to the PNGEC and the Inter-Department Electoral Committee (IDEC), there is now a Special Parliamentary Committee on the Conduct of the 2022 National General Election (NGE), to review the report and take on board recommendations, with a view towards reform.

However, in developing electoral reforms it is essential that they be insulated from political self-interest. This is due to the pressing governance risk that those who obtained political office through corruption will use the process of legislative reform to further retain power and undermine democratic norms. For the integrity of electoral reforms, there has to be as wide engagement as possible, to ensure public confidence in the process. Reformers must also not take the easy way out by diluting standards in the National Constitution and Organic Laws to excuse poor electoral practices.

As you read the findings and recommendations of this report, keep in mind these fragile democratic norms require us all to work together to safeguard them. TIPNG stands ready to support this vital process of reform and we remain grateful for your support.

Peter Aitsi, MBE
Board Chair - Transparency International PNG

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- Advancing PNG: Women Leaders Network
- AOG Church (Sandaun)
- Bougainville Youth Association Network
- Caritas PNG
- Catholic Archdiocese of Rabaul
- Country Women's Association
- Daru Urban Youth Association
- ESP Education Division
- Fresh Produce Development Agency
- Gomu Welfare Association Inc.
- Goroka United Church
- NIP Rugby Union Association
- Omie Consultants
- PNG Australia Alumni Association (Milne Bay Chapter)
- Red Cross Milne Bay Branch
- Rural Country Care Association
- Rural Development Inc.
- The Voice Inc.
- West Coast Development Foundation
- Young Women's Christian Association

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We acknowledge the Electoral Commission of PNG (PNGEC) for the support provided.

TIPNG also thanks the churches, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, youth groups, women's groups, security partners, the media, members and leadership of the Joint Security Taskforce, state agencies and international development agencies, for working in partnership with us to build elections integrity in Papua New Guinea.

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Executive Summary

This is the fourth observation of elections that TIPNG has carried out, and is a part of TIPNG's Building Election Integrity through Partnership (BEIP) Project. A team of 340 TIPNG observers collected election-related information in 20 provinces across all 4 Regions, covering 578 polling places including in areas that posed safety risks.

The 2022 National General Election has continued the trend of deterioration in the quality of elections in PNG. This was evident across the preparation, conduct, and the delivery of the election. Key issues TIPNG identified during the 2022 national general elections were:

- frequent instances of roll inaccuracy;
- lack of enforcement against election offences,
- non-compliance with Constitutional requirements
- disturbances in the conduct of the ballot counting,
- confusion on the declaration of seats;
- and widespread election-related violence.

These electoral issues further undermine the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

Therefore, restoring confidence in the electoral process, ensuring transparency and integrity of elections, must be a priority going forward towards improving the next elections.

Strategies to improve the conduct of National Elections in Papua New Guinea should include focus on promoting transparency and integrity throughout the entirety of the 5-year electoral cycle

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| DJAG | Department of Justice and Attorney General |
| EAC | Election Advisory Committee |
| ICAC | Independent Commission Against Corruption |
| IDEC | Inter-Departmental Electoral Committee |
| JSTF | Joint Security Taskforce |
| LLG | Local Level Government |
| LPV | Limited Preferential Voting |
| NGE | National General Election |
| PESC | Provincial Election Steering Committee |
| PNG | Papua New Guinea |
| PNGEC | Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission |
| PO | Presiding Officer |
| TEW | Temporary Electoral Worker |
| TIPNG | Transparency International Papua New Guinea |

Introduction

Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) conducted our 4th consecutive Domestic Election Observation of the National General Election (NGE) in 2022. Overall, the observation concluded that the 2022 NGE has continued the trend of deterioration in the quality of elections in PNG.

It is clear from our findings that the accumulated failings in the preparation, conduct, delivery and conclusion of the 2022 NGE have resulted in significant procedural issues impacting the quality of the elections. Many eligible voters could not freely, fairly or safely vote, and consequently, their views were not taken into consideration in the formation of the 11th National Parliament.

Through the observation, key issues TIPNG identified during the 2022 NGE were: frequent instances of roll inaccuracy; lack of enforcement against election offences, non-compliance with Constitutional requirements; disruptions in the conduct of the ballot counting; confusion on the declaration of seats; and widespread election-related violence. These electoral issues undermine democracy and the rule of law.

This report therefore strongly calls for restoration of confidence in the electoral process, ensuring transparency and integrity of elections, must be a priority towards improving the next elections. Further, strategies to improve the conduct of National Elections in Papua New Guinea should include focus on promoting transparency and integrity throughout the entirety of the 5-year electoral cycle.

This report by TIPNG provides the findings of the NGE observation that was conducted across the country in 2022, and deliberates on the issues from the elections that require concerted action by all actors.

The report is divided into four main sections. The first section explains TIPNG's role and activities as an accredited domestic observer. The second section presents the findings from the election observation. The third section provides a discussion of the findings and in the fourth section, the report makes recommendations on the way forward to improve the next and future elections. The report concludes with a discussion on electoral reform in light of the findings of TIPNG's 2022 Domestic Election Observation.

1. TIPNG Election Observation



TIPNG Domestic Election Observer in West Sepik

1.1 Overview of Observation Process

During the 2022 NGE, TIPNG was accredited with the PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC) as a Domestic Election Observer Group. There were a total of 340 registered TIPNG observers fielded in 20 provinces across PNG to observe the 2022 NGE. In the two prior elections (2017 and 2012), TIPNG engaged 313 and 282 volunteer observers respectively.

TIPNG and other local organisations were domestic election observers, there were also international observers from diplomatic missions, development partners and academia that field teams during the elections. The presence of observers contributes to the credibility in the conduct of elections. Observers abide by a code of conduct in the process of collecting election-related information throughout the country.

The key objectives of TIPNG's observation were to:

- Report and highlight to the PNGEC any gross abuse of the electoral processes;
- Report to the citizens of PNG if democratic processes were followed during the elections;
- Encourage more transparent approaches to the conduct of elections;
- Empower citizens by showing that they can contribute to the integrity of the electoral processes.
- Inform the reform process following the conclusion of the election

TIPNG empowers citizens to protect the integrity of the elections by engaging volunteers across the country from our civil society partners. It is TIPNG's hope that the presence of our observers builds public confidence in the trustworthiness of the electoral processes. For instance, the presence of our observers during elections may reinforce expectations that officials should perform their roles according as required by the law.

It is the combined effort of our fellow citizens in volunteering their time to observe that has enabled TIPNG to speak out on our expectations for improved elections. We thank all TIPNG Observers in 2022 and across multiple elections since we first observed in 2007.

1.2 Data Collection

TIPNG's Observer Manual had guidance notes and forms to fill out for data collection. The manual was used by observers to enter observations through the polling place questionnaire and voter survey. Each manual contained three polling place questionnaires and four voter surveys for each polling place. The manual was developed by TIPNG in 2012 and revised and updated in preparation for the 2017 and then the 2022 NGE.

The Polling Place Questionnaire recorded the electoral process in 578 polling places. The Questionnaire focused on aspects of the conduct of polling, so as to provide an overall indication of the integrity of the 2022 NGEW. Polling processes chosen for observation by TIPNG, were informed by official PNGEC and also readily observable. The Polling Place Questionnaire enabled TIPNG observers to collect data on:

- the opening process and the procedures applied
- the polling process itself, the provision of materials and staff, the application of procedures such as the application of ink, indications of any coercion or bribery, the partiality of staff etc.
- the closing process including the time and key record keeping and ballot box security

The Voter Survey captured the perceptions of 2184 individual voters towards the polling/voting.

The interview of individual voters was designed to find out what voters themselves felt about the elections as we realise that our own observations can be biased or at odds with reality, especially if the observer was not from that area. The Voter Survey sampled attitudes about specific actions that could have occurred during the election period and then the extent to which the voters thought this made the elections free and fair or not.

1.3 Challenges and Data limitations

Observation teams experienced certain challenges before and during observing the 2022 election. The most pressing challenge was the late gazettement and printing of the polling schedule, with the final list of polling sites only made available to TIPNG the day before the official commencement of polling.

This late polling schedule compounded the existing logistical difficulty for individual observers travelling around to observe polling stations in the area due to security threats and associated costs. This had an impact on the collection of data by limiting collection to predominantly centralised urban locations, and even then based on late polling data.

In addition to the polling schedule delay, issuing of Identification cards for observers and the polling places' lists by the PNGEC was delayed until the day before polling started. The delay to the last day has negatively impacted the time and effective participation of the observation team, as well as the performance of officials towards a credible election.

Although the TIPNG Domestic Election Observation covered all regions and almost all provinces, we cannot say that we had a "representative sample" of all polling places. For this reason the results should be understood to be representative only of the areas in which we observed.

2. Observation Findings



Voters in Milne Bay examining Candidate Posters

2.1 Background and Types of Election Issues

TIPNG observers witnessed a number of irregular practices in Papua New Guinea's 10th NGE, initially scheduled from May 12 to July 23, 2022. There were frequent instances of roll inaccuracy, lack of enforcement against election offences, non-compliance with Constitutional requirements, disturbances in the conduct of the ballot counting, confusion on the declaration of seats, and widespread election-related violence.

These practices violate electoral laws and are not new. In previous NGEs, TIPNG and other observation groups identified electoral issues such as administrative challenges (operations, funding and security), bribery, vote buying or baim vot, double, multiple and bloc voting, underage voting, and use of violence and intimidation.¹

Notably, the use of other voter's names is a recurring issue. This enables further illegal practices like underage voting and double voting. As a result, genuine voters miss out and are denied their right to vote. Timely and accurate updating, monitoring and verifying of the electoral roll is crucial to the successful conduct of the elections. The electoral roll should be supported by the conduct of a National Census every 10 years. The last National Census was conducted in 2011, and the 2021 census has been deferred to 2024. This has worsened the inaccuracies of the roll, including the issue of names not being on the roll, names of those voting in the last election being removed, and mixed names.

¹See previous observation reports: TIPNG (2009, 2012, 2017, 2022); Commonwealth Observer Group (2012, 2017, 2022), Papua New Guinea National Research Institute (2009, 2011, 2022); ANU (2018) and Haley and Zubrinich (2018). See also Haley and Anere (2009); Ketan (2013); and Fairio et al. (2020)

Irregular voting practices have also continued to be observed. Despite the introduction of the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) voting system in the 2007 national election to address problematic electoral practices such as bloc voting, multiple voting, double voting, intimidation and influence, these issues continued after the 2007 election. In addition, the lack of broader election awareness and education on the LPV system and election integrity generally contributed to the issues mentioned.

Another highly concerning trend was the delay in completion of elections across electorates. This delay impacted the commencement of the 11th Parliament on the 9th of August with the first sitting to elect the Prime Minister, proceeding while several seats were yet to be declared. This situation arose in part due to the setting of the date of the Return of Writs to coincide with the constitutional deadline of having an election by the 5th Anniversary of the previous Return of Writs - meaning there was no room for error, even as errors arose. While 2022 had unique constitutional challenges, the delay in completion of elections across electorates was seen in 2017 and other recent national general elections.

In the sections that follow, the key issues identified during the 2022 NGE are grouped by TIPNG into four critical areas: political, administrative, social and governance issues. The range of categories indicate that there are multiple factors that impact the election process. Since 2002, the extensive shortcomings of the electoral process have mainly been enabled by the broader political environment, in particular a culture of impunity in relation to electoral offences. With regard to the administration of elections, TIPNG found in its 2021 National Integrity System Assessment, that the process of electoral management has had deficiencies in the application of rules, human resources, and the return of seats. Social and governance issues also prevail, as discussed below, and the issues within the PNGEC, while peculiar to that institution, are also symptomatic of a larger malaise.



¹See previous observation reports: TIPNG (2009, 2012, 2017, 2022); Commonwealth Observer Group (2012, 2017, 2022), Papua New Guinea National Research Institute (2009, 2011, 2022); ANU (2018) and Haley and Zubrinich (2018). See also Haley and Anere (2009); Ketan (2013); and Fairio et al. (2020)

2.2 Political Issues Related to the 2022 Election

Lack of national political leadership in supporting the constitutional processes for elections worsened poor electoral conduct in 2022. These included, for instance, political issues in the appointment of the Electoral Commissioner, timely budget appropriation and delayed start to the Inter-Departmental Election Committee (IDEC).

Further to this, political leaders at the national level were not vocal on the need for electoral laws to be enforced by the election administration and the polling place management. This in turn meant that the PNGEC did not have the political support to prioritise the constitutional and legal requirements in the 2022 national elections. Print, broadcast and social media reported widespread electoral irregularities, non-impartiality of officials, legality of those facing court to contest, and constitutionality of the deferral of return of writs.

Adherence to the rule of law has also been weakened due to vested political interests during the 2022 NGE. The election laws in PNG including the Organic Law on National and Local Level Government Elections, Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates provide the guidelines to conduct elections with integrity and transparency. However, instances of bribery, roll inaccuracy, intimidation and violence are in violation of election legislation. For example, the electoral law requires the display of rolls for verification in a timely manner, but this did not eventuate in most electorates during the 2022 NGE.

The deferral of the return of writs has constitutional implications on the periodicity of the national general elections that will need to be resolved before the next election. The return of writs was required by the 5th of August. However, it appears to have been pushed back to the 12th of August for political convenience, to allow sufficient time for the remaining undeclared seats to be declared.

This compounds an existing legal ambiguity between the Constitution and the Organic Law on National and Local-Level Government Elections. The Constitution requires that the National General Election be conducted within the period of three months before the fifth anniversary of the day fixed for the return of the writs for the previous general election. However, the Organic Law on National and Local-Level Government Elections sets the fifth anniversary not with the previous return of writs, but instead with the term of the current Parliament.

In either case, extension of Return of Writs required public notice in the National Gazette, and the Government Printing Office as the agency tasked with gazetting faced political and legal pressure during the course of the 2022 NGE. A notable instance of this pressure was with legal challenges by politicians following alleged fraudulent gazettes of appointments of returning officers.

Another example of political and legal pressure on the conduct of elections were questionable declarations of seats following property destruction. The incident of the burning of ballot boxes in Markham and Kabwum District in Morobe Province gave rise to the question of constitutionality when it was alleged that the number of ballot papers did not correspond to the total voting population. Despite the concern raised by media and other concerned bodies, the Electoral Commission citing 'special circumstances' declared Koni Iguan as member-elect for the Markham Open seat and Patrick Basa as member-elect for Kabwum Open seat. The legality of the declaration was questioned, given the counting had been disrupted, and the precedent set by effectively allowing

A more egregious example of the deterioration in constitutional democratic norms was the declaration of Southern Highlands Regional Seat. It was reported that candidate William Powi, who allegedly was not leading at the time counting was disrupted by violence, was declared as the winning candidate, raising the question of the integrity of the election's outcome. This appeared to be a unilateral decision by the Electoral Commission, again citing special circumstances, with no public disclosure as to the electoral data that supported the declaration.

These electoral decisions with direct political implications, point to the absence of an Election Advisory Committee (EAC) as provided for in the Organic Law on National and Local-Level Government Elections. The EAC is intended to lessen the political pressure on the Electoral Commissioner by providing an external verification for the decision to fail elections. For the second consecutive National General Election, the EAC was established far too late to be able to meaningfully protect the integrity of the PNGEC.

A further buffer to political pressure on the Electoral Commission is media freedom. A free media enables information to reach citizens and voters, and when done well, reporting is fact-based and impartial. This credible information from reliable media sources protects the electoral processes from political capture. However, media outlets during the 2022 NGE were limited, for instance counting venues in the National Capital District and across the country did not allow the media to enter with their phones and cameras to record proceedings.



Journalist photographing Presiding Officer reading seal numbers to scrutineers in NCD

This was just one facet of the information bottleneck experienced by journalists during the elections. Official press statements were not being released regularly on issues that needed clarification and the Electoral Commissioner was not consistent in conducting press conferences as had been the case in 2017. These conditions only served to weaken the media's ability to act as a buffer between the PNGEC and political actors.

2.3 Administrative Issues Reflected in the 2022 Elections

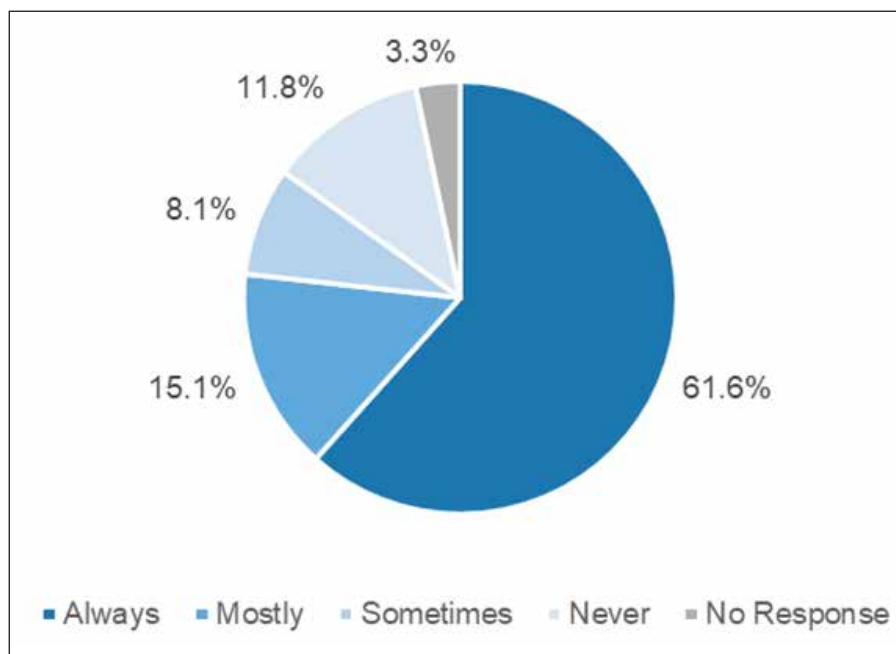
TIPNG's Observers found that most of the trends in the 2012 and 2017 elections administration issues during polling continued into the 2022 NGE. It appears that the conduct of polling at the locations observed, has stagnated, if not worsened. The following graphs are generated from the Polling Place Questionnaires and Voter Surveys questions that were asked by TIPNG observers during the polling period.

Use and accuracy of the electoral roll

Electoral roll discrepancies and inaccuracies were a widespread issue across the country. TIPNG observed that in a number of instances, citizens who came to vote did not find their names on the electoral roll, and many of these reported to TIPNG that they had voted in the last 2017 national election. There were also occurrences of mixed names or someone else had voted using their names. The 2022 observation found similar flaws in the electoral roll that were similar in nature to 2017. The continued inaccuracies in the roll have directly contributed to election fraud, including double voting, underage voting, bloc voting, and using other people’s names to vote.

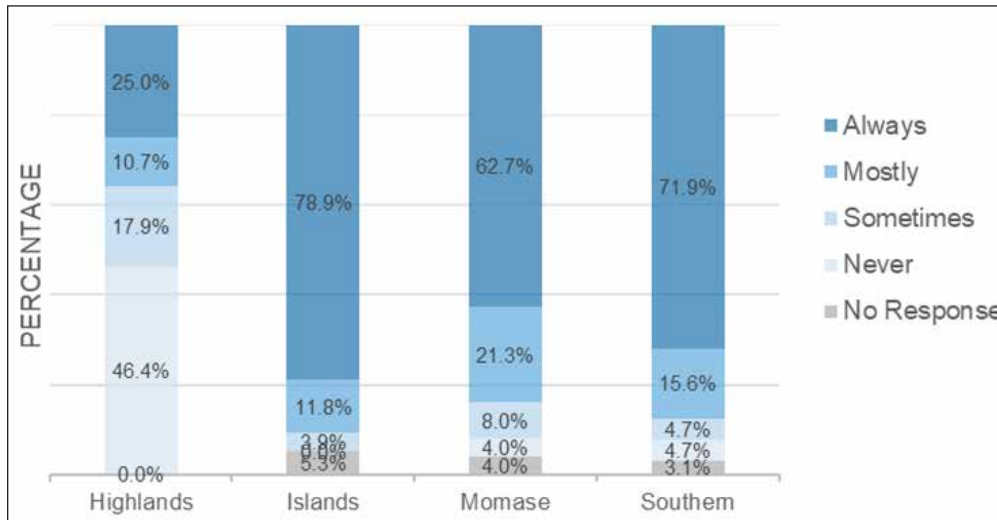
During polling, observers were asked to take notes on whether the electoral roll was used or not at the polling places. Observations at polling places illustrated in Figure 1 shows that 61.6% of the polling places observed always used the electoral roll. In 15.1% of the polling stations observed, the electoral roll was mostly used during voting. In 8.1% of the polling places the electoral roll was used sometimes and 11.8% indicated that the electoral roll was never used. Among the polling places observed where the roll was never used, most of these were in the Highlands, where it was never used in 46.4% of the locations observed. There were no indications of whether the electoral roll was used or not in 3.3% polling places

Figure 1. Was the electoral roll used?



A look at the use of electoral roll by region shows the Highlands region recorded the highest number of observations where the electoral roll was never used (38.3%), followed by the Momase region (19.2%) as seen in Figure 2. The electoral roll was reported to be always used in the Southern region 77.8% of the time and New Guinea Islands, 75.7% of the time.

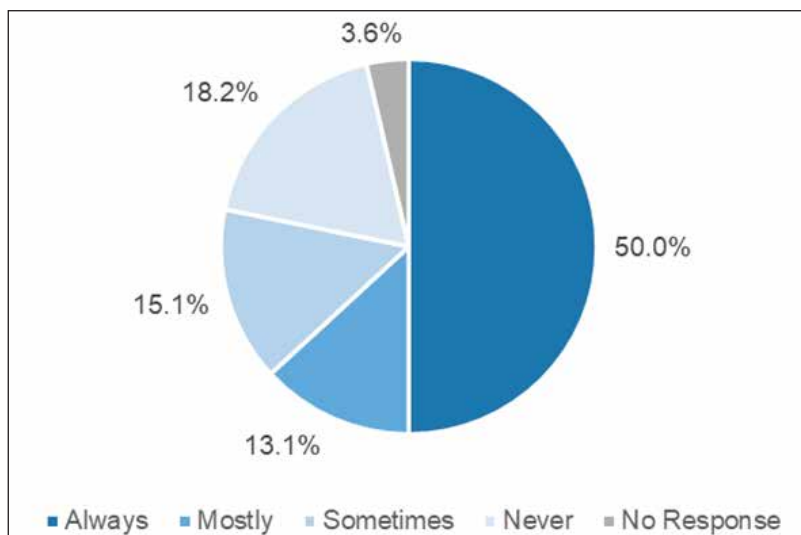
Figure 2. Frequency of electoral roll use by region



If the electoral roll was used, observers were asked to note if each voter was appropriately identified by questioning before their names were crossed off the roll and allowed to proceed to vote. In 50% of the polling places, observations showed that voters were appropriately questioned and identified before voting.

Another 13.2% observations indicated that in most cases the correct procedure was followed, and 15.1% found it was sometimes followed. About 18.2% indicated that even though the electoral roll was used, the voters were not properly questioned and identified before crossing off their names on the roll. These results are shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. If the roll was used, was the voter identified before checking the name off the roll?

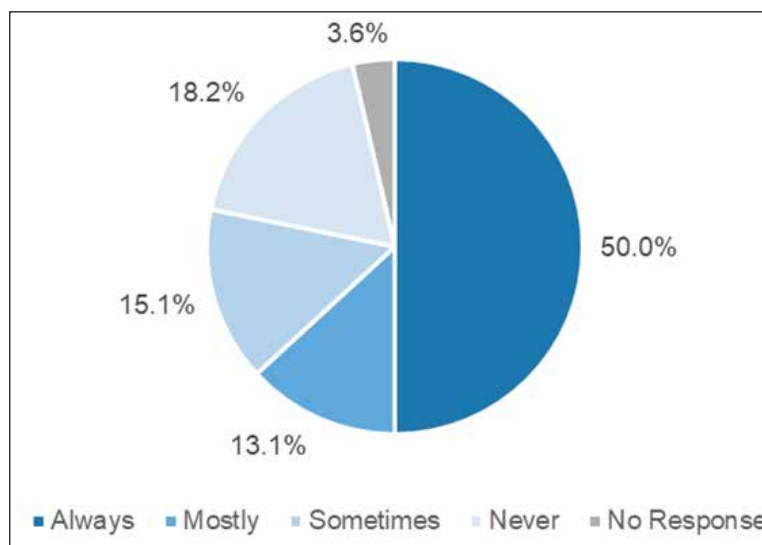


It remains a concern that voting processes are not adhered to by the polling officials and the security personnel responsible. Identity theft during voting resulted in many voters unable to vote because someone else had used their names to vote already.

“I witnessed people voting multiple times, people voting without names being checked, underage voting, vote selling and buying.” (Voter Survey, Moresby North West, NCD)

In polling stations where the electoral roll was used, the observers also noted whether the voters followed the list and voted in the order in which they appeared in the ward roll, or if voters were free to turn up to vote whenever they were ready during the polling location’s open hours. About 31.8% of the polling places observed indicated that voters came up in order of the ward roll to vote. However, in more than half, 59.15% of the polling places observed, the voters did not go in order. The ward roll was used, however voters could just turn up to vote whenever they were ready to vote (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Did voters come up to the polling clerk in the order they were listed in the ward roll or were they free to come up whenever they were ready to vote?



The practice of not following the electoral roll to vote contributed to other illegal practices observed, like underage voting and double voting, as well as resulting in genuine voters missing out. People voting using other peoples’ names is a shared concern that occurred all over the country in the 2022 national election.

Figure 6. How often did citizens say they were not able to vote because they were not on the roll but lived in the ward for a long time and enrolled or voted in previous elections?

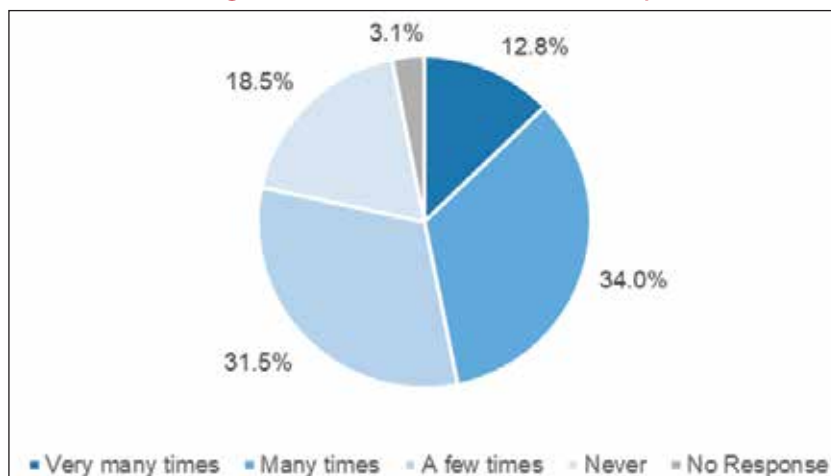
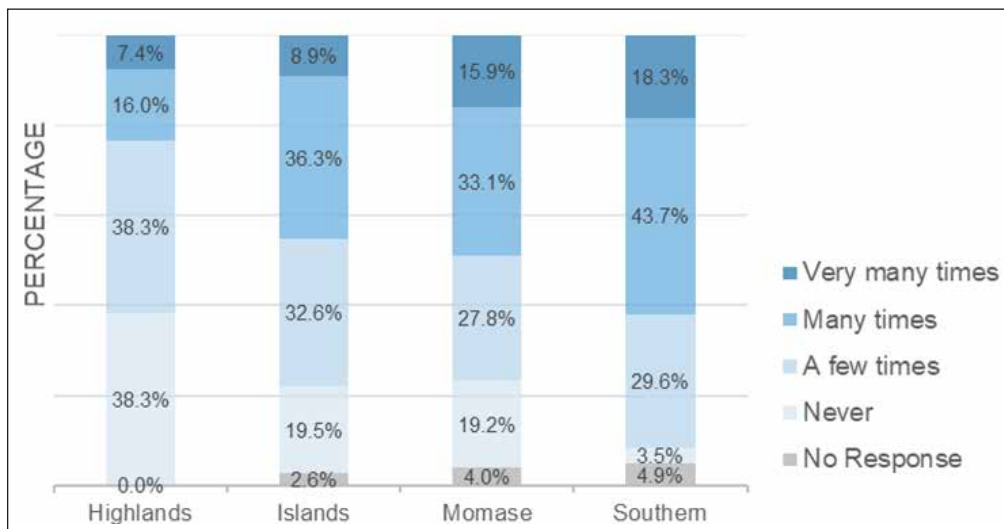


Figure 7. How often did citizens say they were not able to vote because they were not on the roll but lived in the ward for a long time and enrolled or voted in previous elections? (Regional)



It is highly concerning that in 78.3% of the polling places observed, at least some eligible voters were not able to vote in this election because of flaws in the electoral roll. The results for this observation are illustrated in Figure 6 and are similar to the observations in the 2017 election (77.3%). It was witnessed about 12.8% very many times, 34% observed it many times, 31.5% observed it a few times, and it was not witnessed in 18.5% polling places. A look at this issue by region (Figure 7) shows it was most prevalent in the Highlands region, in 38.3% of polling places observed.

“One person complained because his name was not on the common roll though he voted in 2017” (Voter Survey, Wewak East Sepik)

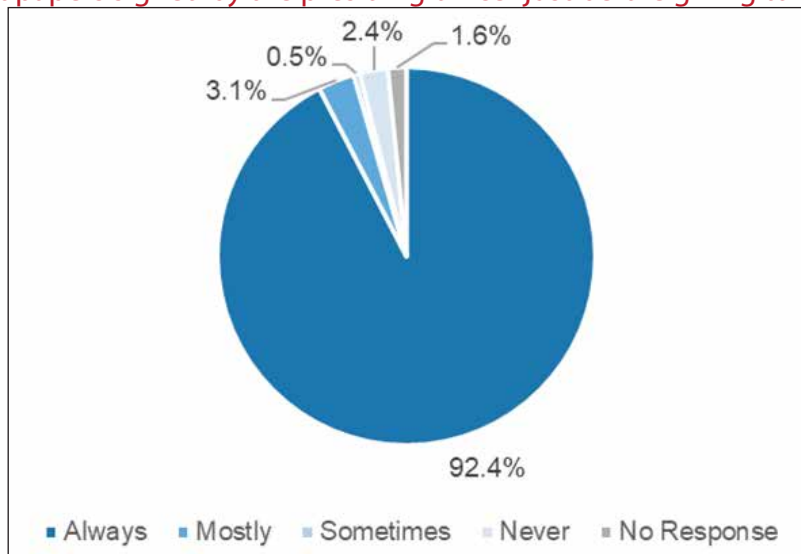
“Many people who lived in the ward for a long time and also voted in 2012/2017 did not vote because their names were not in the common roll.” (Observer in Daru, Western Province)

“A woman complained that since she has been eligible to vote in 2002 till now, she couldn't find her name in the common roll.” (Observer in Kokopo, East New Britain Province)

Signing of ballot papers

Signing of ballot papers by the presiding officer before giving it out to the voter is another measure to contain fraud in elections (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Are ballot papers signed by the presiding officer just before giving to the voter?

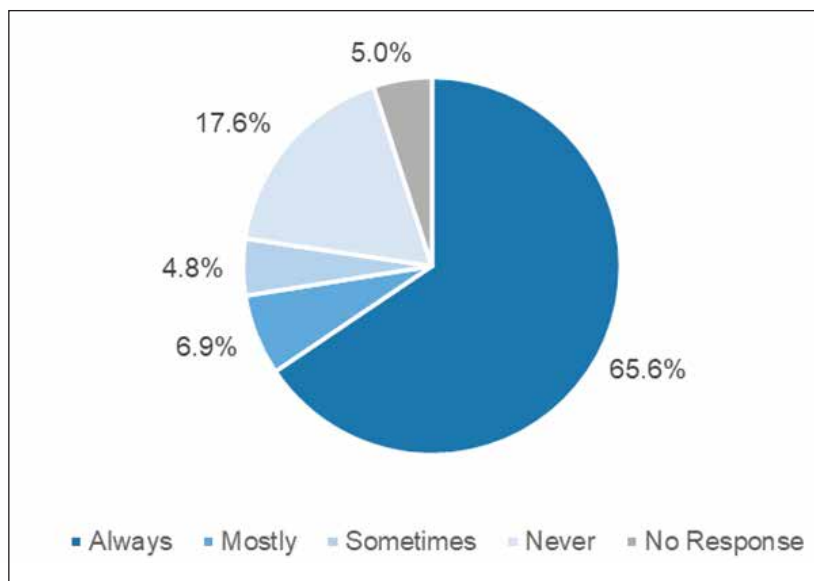


Observers reported that in 92.4% polling places the presiding officer always signed before issuing the ballot papers to voters. Another 3.1% reported that the presiding officer signed most of the time, 0.5% reported sometimes, and 2.4% reported that the presiding officer never signed before handing out the ballot papers. This could be due to the ballot papers being pre-signed and issued to voters during polling time. These results are similar to observations made in 2012 and 2017.

Use of indelible ink

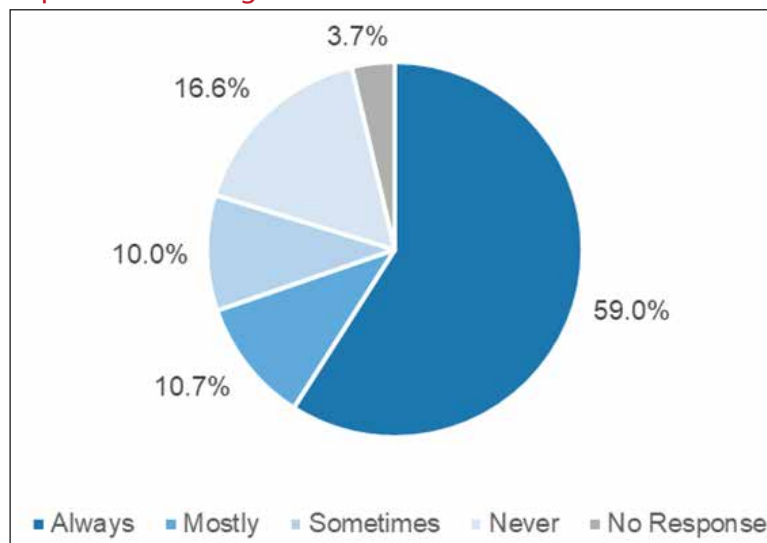
Signing of ballot papers by the presiding officer before giving it out to the voter is another measure to contain fraud in elections (Figure 8).

Figure 9. Was ink put on voters fingers after voting?



The use of indelible ink is an important measure to prevent double and multiple voting and ensure election fairness. Observations made on the use of indelible ink at polling places indicated that voters always had their fingers marked with an indelible ink after they voted in 65.6% of polling places observed. In 17.7% of the polling places observed, voters never had their finger marked after casting their votes. Another 6.9% indicated that the indelible ink was used most of the time and 4.8% only used the indelible ink to mark the voters' fingers sometimes. This is similar to 2017 and worse in comparison with the 2012 elections, where there were only 2% observed locations where ink was never used and more than 80% reported usage of indelible ink during voting.

Figure 10. Were the fingers of voters checked for signs of ink at some time before giving a ballot paper and having ink put on their finger?



Another observation made during polling was to see if polling officials did check people's fingers for any signs of ink on their fingers before issuing ballot papers to voters. These checks are necessary to make sure that the voters vote only once. Results presented in Figure 10 show that in the majority of the polling places observed, 59%, the officials did check for evidence of ink before issuing ballot papers. In about 10.7% of the locations they mostly did so, 10% sometimes and in 16.6% the polling officials never checked the voters' fingers before giving ballot papers. The rate was the lowest in Highlands, where 35.7% locations were observed to never check.

TIPNG observers noted the following regarding the use of ink at polling venues:

"From my observation, the election polling was unfair and proper processes were not followed. The roll was not used as well as the ink on the finger." (Observer in Kundiawa, Simbu)

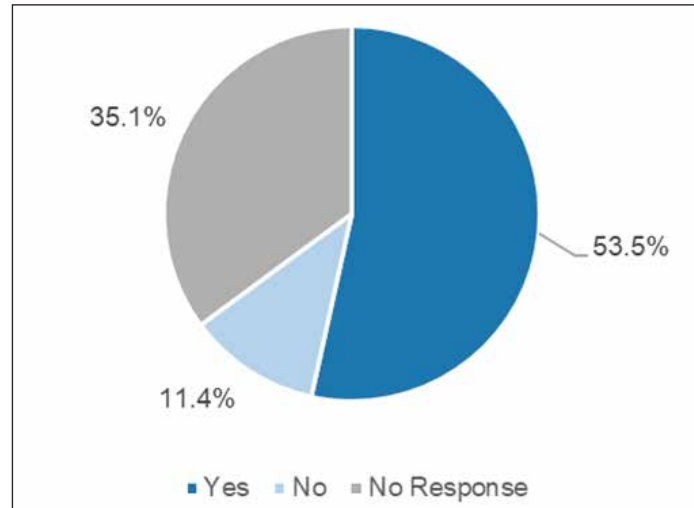
"There were surplus ballot papers and so most people voted more than once despite having ink on their fingers" (Observer in Goroka, Eastern Highlands)

"Voter had to remind officials to ink their finger and waited for a few moments." (Voter Survey, Moresby Northwest, NCD)

Filling in of the ballot account form

After close of polling, observers noted whether or not the ballot account form was filled in. The ballot account form is designed to collect additional information about the movement of ballots and thus would add more accountability to the polling process.

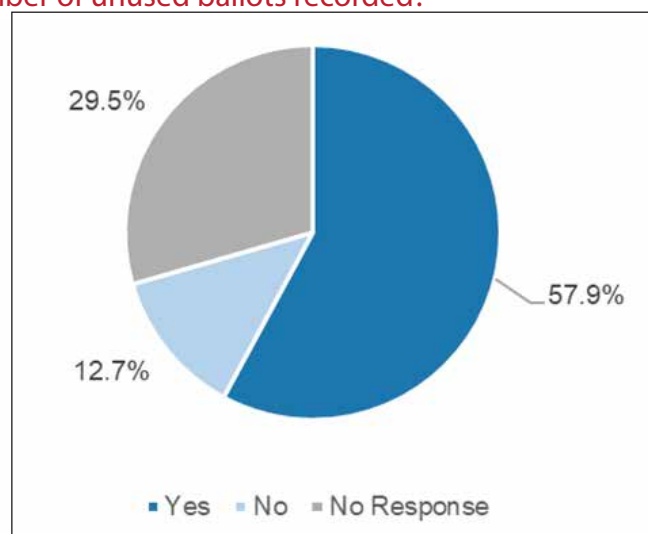
Figure 11 Was the reminder of the ballot account form filled in?



More than half of the observations (53.5%) stated that the ballot account form was filled in, while 11.4% did not fill in the ballot account form after polling ended. This abuse of procedures was found across all regions. A third of the observers did not answer this question. The findings were very similar in 2017.

Record of unused ballot papers

Figure 12. Was the number of unused ballots recorded?



Another observation of the elections process after close of polling is the announcement and recording of the number of unused ballot papers. About 57.9% reported that the numbers of unused ballot papers left were recorded by polling officials after the voting ended. However 12.7% reported that the numbers of unused ballot papers were not recorded, and 29.5% did not answer this question. These results were similar to those in 2017.

It is noted from comments written by the observers that information about a number of unused ballot papers were not disclosed by the presiding officer on many occasions.

“The total number of ballots were announced but we couldn’t hear. It wasn’t repeated. We could not witness the closing because of the threat of violence from the community to us as observers.” (Observer in Goroka, Eastern Highlands)

“The presiding officer strictly did not want to mention the amount of ballot at the start and also the used and unused amount of ballots remaining at the end of the process.” (Observer in Wewak, East Sepik)

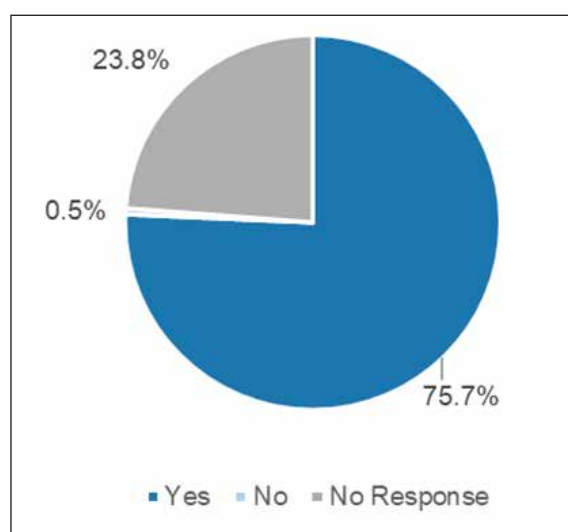
TIPNG Observers also noted the following regarding the recording and/or use of unused ballot papers

“All leftover ballot papers were burned after the close of polling with the consent of all parties present.” (Observer in Lae, Morobe)

“There were queries about the leftovers of the ballot papers. Scrutineers' argument was that they wanted the ballot papers (left overs) must be put in the envelope and returned back to the electoral office. The official was using a tinted glass vehicle and the scrutineers complained. They said the official must use the proper vehicle, it must be transparent” (Observer in Lorengau, Manus)

Ballot box integrity after polling

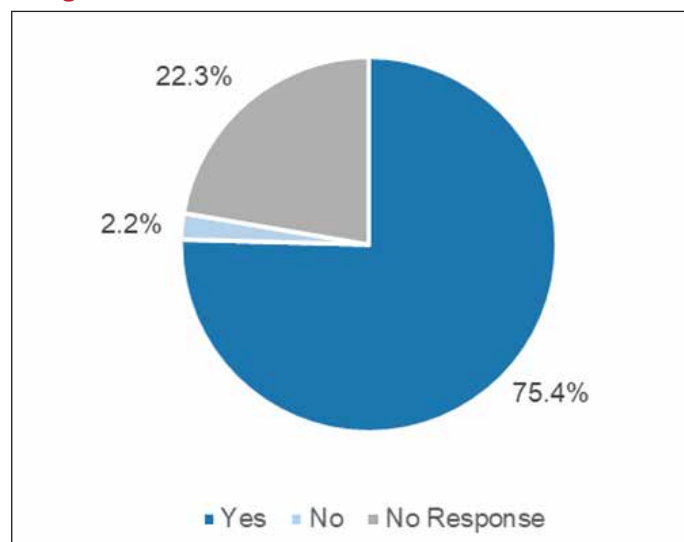
Figure 13. Were ballot boxes adequately sealed after closing of the polling?



After polling ended, observations continued to see if the ballot boxes were adequately sealed. 75.7% (compared to 82% in 2017) reported that the ballot boxes were adequately sealed and 0.5% reported that they thought the ballot boxes were not adequately sealed. Another 23.8% did not answer this question. The results for this question as well as the next one are not significantly different from the previous national general election.

Figure 13 shows the findings when asked if secure arrangements were in place for the transport of the ballot boxes to the counting center. A majority of 75.4% (compared to 82.8% in 2017) reported that there were enough secure arrangements made for the transport of the ballot boxes. Only 2.3% reported that there were not enough secure arrangements in place for transporting the ballot papers and 22.3% did not indicate whether there were secure arrangements made for the transport or not.

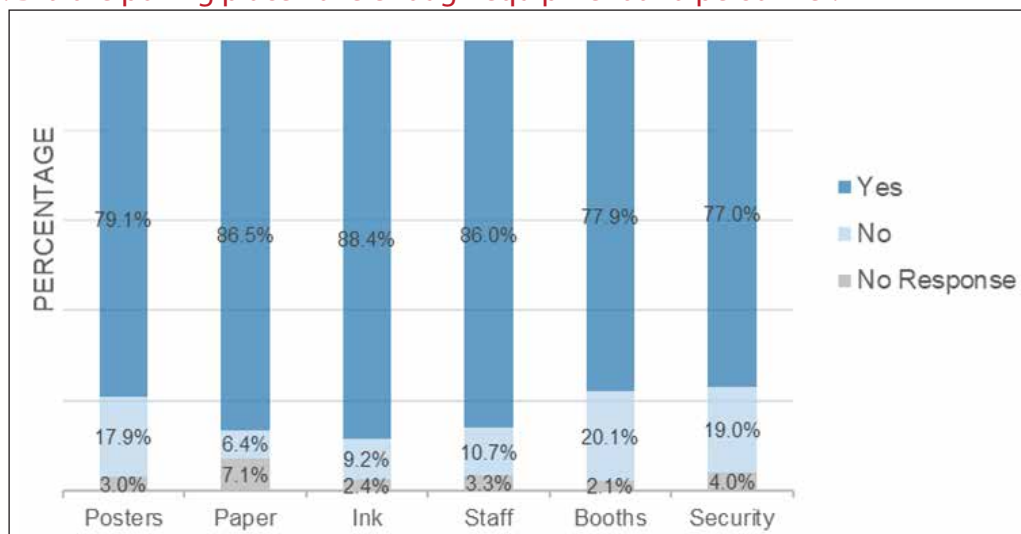
Figure 14. Were adequately secure arrangements made for the transport of the ballot boxes and ballots at the end of polling?



It is unclear how many ballot papers were actually dispersed to the designated polling stations, how many were actually used during voting. There were more widespread reports of burning of ballot papers not just in the Highlands but also some coastal areas, notably in Morobe. There were claims of excessive numbers of ballot papers in circulation prior to polling as well at polling locations and allegations of tempering by voters and scrutineers.

Figure 14: Did the polling place have enough equipment and personnel?

Figure 14: Did the polling place have enough equipment and personnel?



The results in Figure 14 clearly show that most of the polling places observed (79%) had few issues with the availability of election materials including security personnel and polling officials. However, 18% of polling places observed did not have enough candidates' posters, 20% did not have enough booths and 19% did not have enough Security personnel.

2.4 Social Electoral Issues

The democratic mandate in PNG is as weak as it has ever been, with voters rights continuing to be impeded.. A structured intervention is required to restore public trust and demonstrate greater levels of competency in resolving overall social issues, including gender disparity and electoral corruption seen in the observer data here.

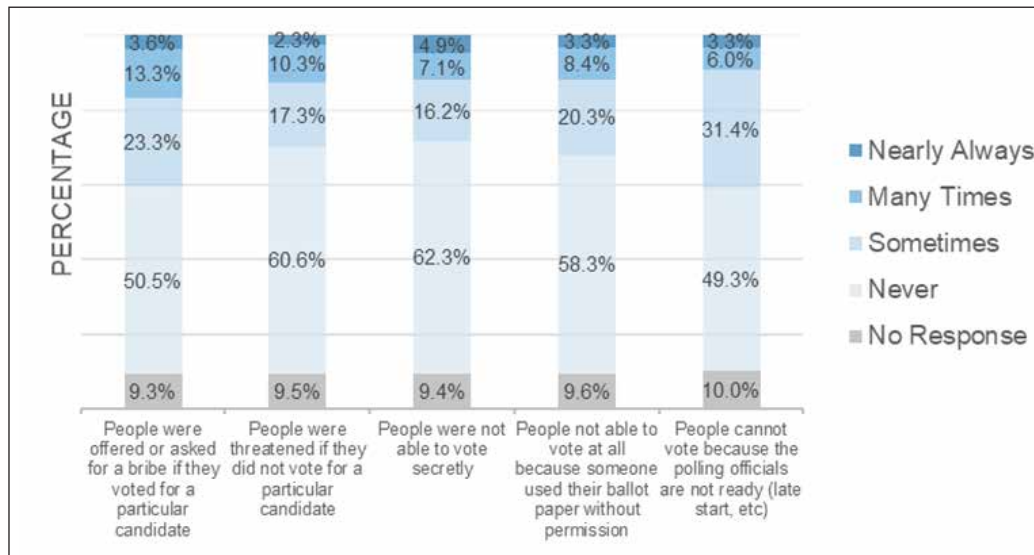
TIPNG has observed the 2007, 2012 and 2017 National General Elections, using the same observer survey instruments and also the 2013 LLG Elections, 2019 Bougainville Referendum and 2021 Moresby North West By-election. Reports from these observations have been presented to the PNGEC and Government and lead to reforms such as the introduction of the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system and the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIP-PAC).

However, there are still several recurring issues from recent elections that still need to be resolved through the reform process commenced by the Government through the establishment of a Special Parliamentary Committee to review the conduct of the 2022 NGE. These recurring issues are identified in the appendix to this report.

Radio, print media, television, and social media such as Facebook were utilised in 2022 to disseminate election information and awareness, however, there was a lack of consistent media engagement. In the 2017 NGE where, in comparison, the media were not given access to the Electoral Commissioner on a daily basis during the polling period. For the 2022 NGE, the PNGEC did not issue regular press statements, and there was no official website until a few weeks before polling.

During polling, the observation team recorded that there was lack of information and awareness on voting, despite voter education messages being broadcast through the radio. Lack of media engagement undermines media freedom and transparency in the country. Regular updates of election progress via media from issue of writs, polling, counting, and declaration can contribute to minimising election related violence. These civic concerns relating to voters rights, corruption and the impartiality of officials

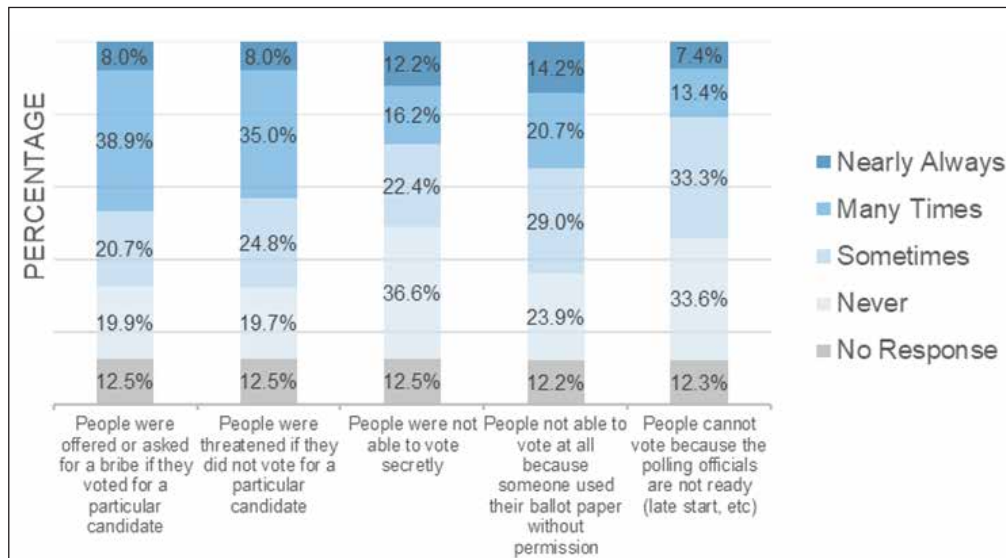
Figure 15. Overall Responses to Voter Survey



These social issues were reflected in the Overall responses to the TIPNG Voter Survey looking at 5 key experiences for voters relating to bribery, threats, secrecy of the vote, appropriation of voting and polling official’s preparedness. The Voter Survey is distinct from the Polling Place Questionnaire as it captures the views of voters.

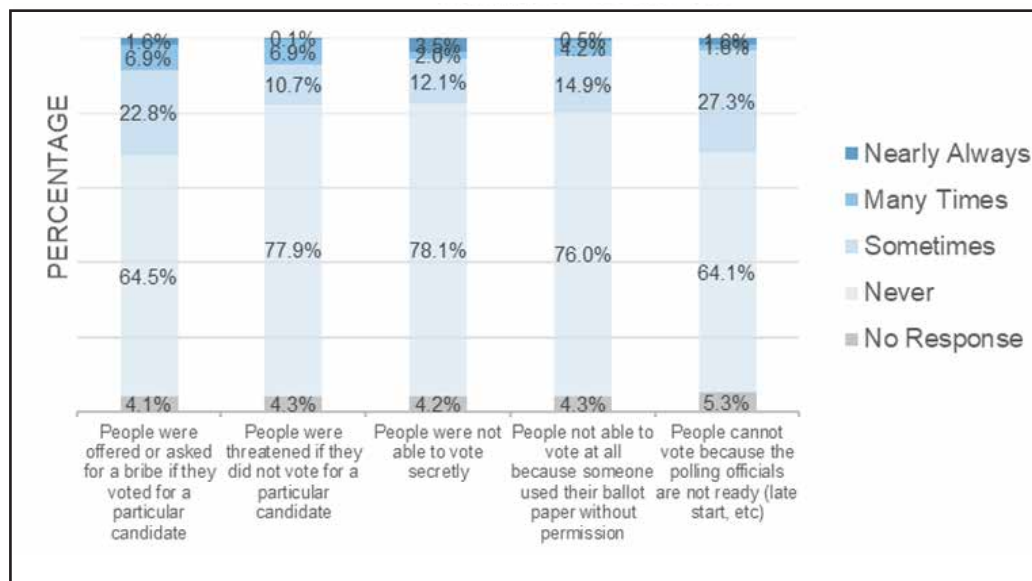
From the national responses while the majority of the voters surveyed said they had never experienced the issues, a significant minority have experienced the issues. At the national level the preparedness of polling officials was the leading issue faced, with 31% of voters facing it sometimes, 6% many times and 3% nearly always. These were the overall national responses to the voter survey, so it is worthwhile to see the variance in responses from across PNG’s 4 regions.

Figure 16. Highlands Responses to Voter Survey



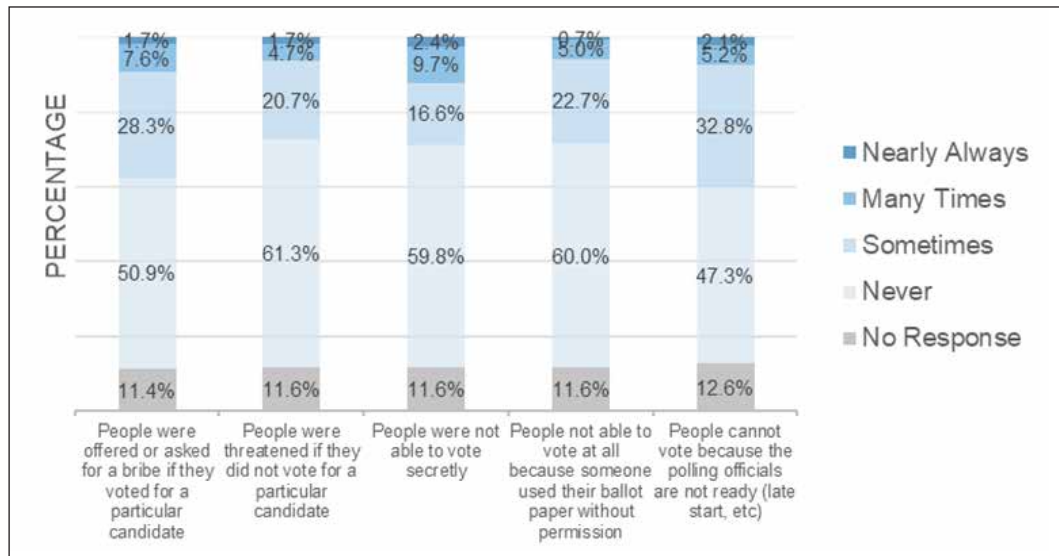
When looking at the Voter Survey issues in the Highlands, it is evident how the frequency in voters facing social electoral issues increases. In contrast to the overall national picture, the majority of those surveyed had faced the 5 issues. Notably with the responses in the highlands to bribery, where 38% indicated that they faced this issue many times during the election.

Figure 17. New Guinea Islands Response to Voter Survey



In contrast to the Highlands, the New Guinea Islands trends better than the national average with high majorities saying they had never experienced any of the 5 social electoral issues. That said, like the Highlands, bribery at 22% of interviewed voters saying it sometimes occurred, only behind readiness of polling officials at 27% of interviewed voters saying it sometimes occurred.

Figure 18. Momase Responses to Voter Survey

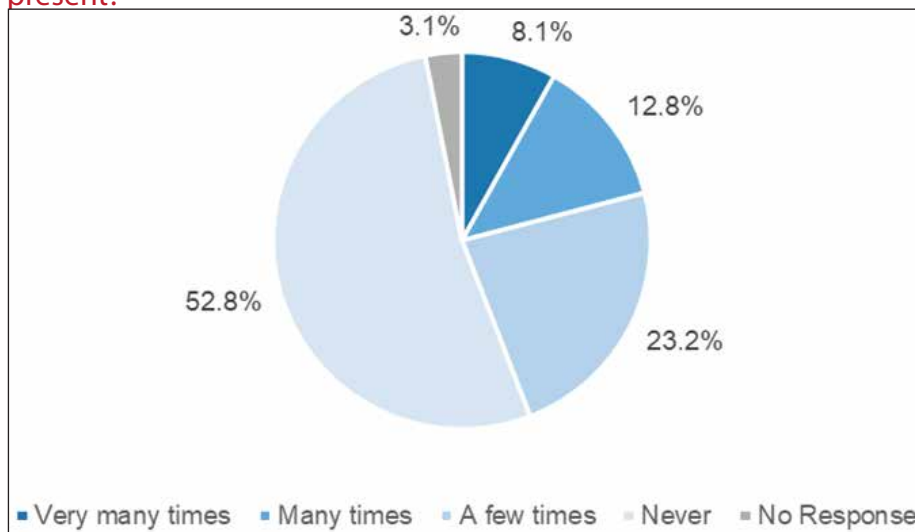


The Momase trends closer towards the national overall response than either the Highlands or the New Guinea Islands. The majority of Momase voters that were surveyed said they never faced the 5 social electoral issues in the survey instrument. Much like the Overall and New Guinea Islands responses, the biggest issues experienced were with bribery, at 28% of voters surveyed saying it happened sometimes, and the unpreparedness of polling officials which 32% of voters surveyed saying it occurred sometimes.

Appropriation of voting rights of others

Observers reported that ballots were used by other people without their agreement or without their presence in 37% of the polling places. This occurred very many times (8.1%), many times (12.8%) and a few times (23.2%). It was not seen in 52.8% polling places, as depicted in Figure XX below.

Figure 19. Did anybody vote on behalf of someone else without their agreement or without that person being present?



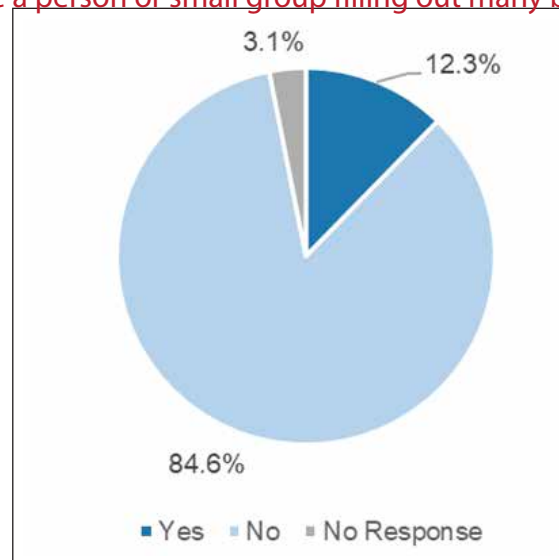
These results for 2022 are similar to 2017 and 2012 elections. It is evident from the observers comments below that there were gross appropriations of votes' rights by others by way of double/multiple voting and block voting. The complicity of polling officials and security personnel involved in facilitating the practice should also be noted.

"Polling station was near a popular candidate so bloc voting happened. The remaining ballot papers were signed by the candidate himself." (Observer in Hagen Central, Western Highlands Province)

"Some of the proper processes were not followed because some of the names were in the electoral roll but they were not there to cast their vote, so others came to cast the vote for those persons." (Observer in Ialibu Pangia, Southern Highlands)

"Half of the total number of ballot papers were shared amongst the scrutineers to share with their voters." (Observer in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province)

Figure 20. Did you ever see a person or small group filling out many ballot papers?



Observers also reported on if a person or group of people were seen filling out many ballot papers. Results illustrated in Figure 20 show that 12.3% of the observations indicated that there were indeed instances where many ballot papers were marked by one person or a small group of people. These incidents are witnessed during cases where block voting took place.

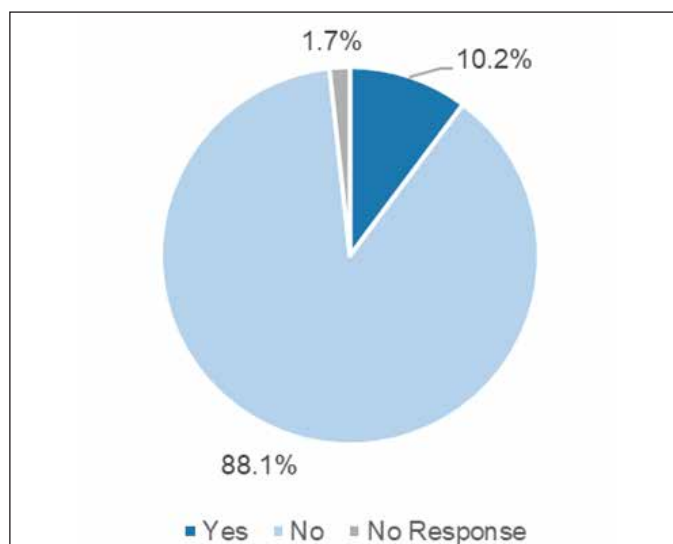
In a majority of locations (84.6%) observers reported that the scenario was not witnessed at the polling places. Nonetheless, it is very concerning for the 12.3% polling stations where it occurred. This was also the case in 2017. No election is considered to be truly fair if votes are being cast by one person and/or a minority group. The driver behind this issue is Highlands region, where in 2022 it was witnessed in a remarkably high 62.1% of the polling places observed.

"In this polling area, no one voted freely because leaders and influential people had already decided who to vote for. Therefore, they let the groups of men (10 per group) and they were the ones filling out the ballot papers in the presence of the polling officials and security personnels. (Observer in Goroka, Eastern Highlands)

“Polling Officials have already labelled 1 on the ballot papers while we signed the 2 and 3, not good” (Observer in Jimi, Jiwaka)

“All the ballot papers had their first preferences marked already. We only marked two and three only, which is not democratic and totally against our rights.” (Observer in Kundiawa Gembogl, Simbu)

Figure 21. Did you ever see a voter receiving 10 or more ballot papers?



Another observation regarding the use of ballot papers made was to see if any one voter was issued 10 or more ballot papers to vote. In most places, no person was issued 10 or more ballot papers (88.1%). However, about 10.2% observed that one person did receive 10 or more ballot papers to mark (see Figure 21). Again, this occurred in previous NGEs; instances of one person receiving more than 10 ballot papers continue to be very concerning and undermine the true nature of a fair election.

Observers made written accounts of appropriations of voters’ rights, including the following examples:

“The polling officials did not disclose any information on the numbers of ballot papers received and completed. Only the family heads in the clans were voting on behalf of the families where multiple ballot papers were filled by them only.” (Observer in Wabag, Enga)

“Most people did not vote because the leaders filled most of the ballot papers. Only about less than 500 were given to the people to vote.” (Observer in Tambul Nebilyer, Western Highlands Province)

“Before the polling took place, the Polling Official knew and made it clear that it was a base vote for a particular candidate and so signed the ballot papers and the people filled theirs in.” (Observer in Kundiawa Gembogl, Simbu)

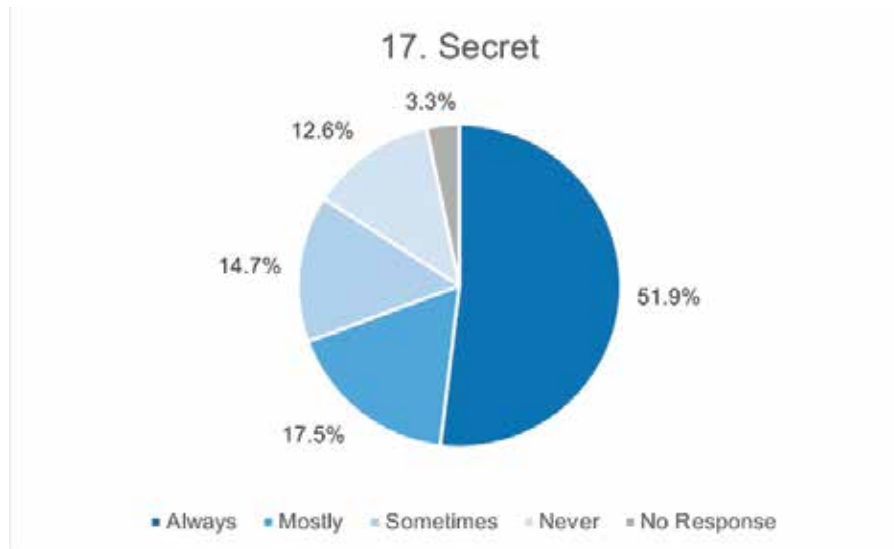
“The ballot box was distributed on the same day from the Police station. No one voted. Ballot papers were shared equally according to the number of scrutineers present and signed by each of them.” (Observer in Imbonggu, Southern Highlands Province)

“Same voter vote many times more than once which is not fair because everyone have the right to elect their candidate” (Observer in Lae, Morobe)

“People took the ballot papers and ran from all directions to choose their own because the securities were not strong enough. The police and Warders couldn’t stop them. I saw it with my own eyes and could not believe it.” (Observer in North Waghi, Jiwaka)

Secrecy of voting

Figure 22. Can people vote without others being able to see who they voted for?

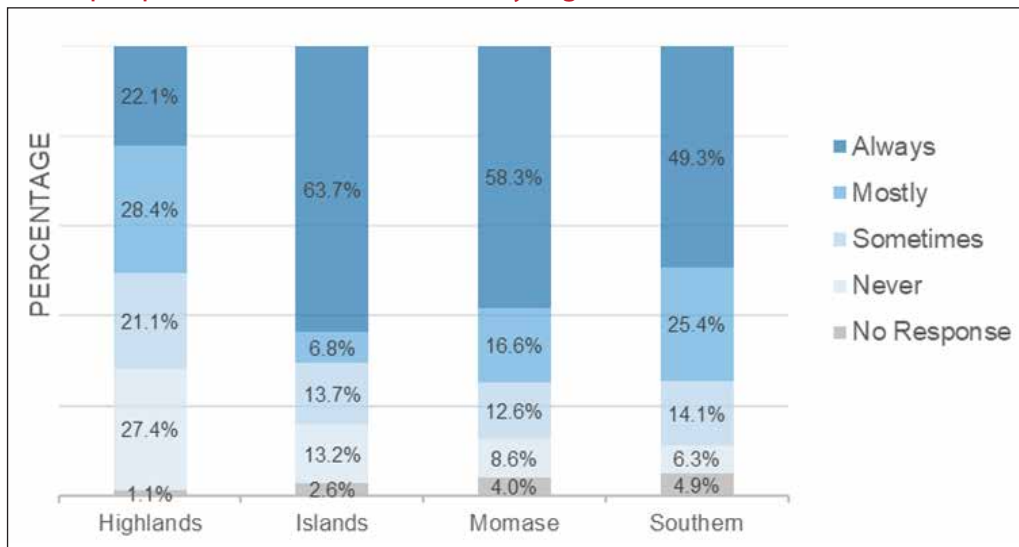


Voting in secret is a prerequisite in achieving a free and fair election. Observations were made to establish whether people were able to vote without others seeing who they voted for, and the results are presented in Figure 22. Only half (51.9%) reported that people voted in secret. Observers reported that 17.5% mostly and 14.7% sometimes voted in secret. However, it is problematic that in 12.6% of polling sites observed, people never voted in secret. This figure is slightly lower than the 2017 observation of 18.7% however the difference is not statistically significant due to variations in locations observed.

Fundamentally, no electoral commission should say an election was conducted freely and fairly when there is evidence of people not voting in secret. This problem was also seen in 2012, where about 36% never or sometimes voted in secret, as compared to 31.6% in 2017. This figure is still nearly a third of the polling locations observed, thus the 2017 election obviously was unfair and not free according to international standards.

When looking at the results by region, voters’ inability to vote in secret is highest in the Highlands region, where 48.4% never or sometimes voted in secret. This was followed by New Guinea Islands with 26.8% (see Figure 23). The evidence is consistent with the 2017 results and shows a widespread lack of respect for individual voting rights.

Figure 23. Were people able to vote in secret? (by regions)



TIPNG’s observers noted the following regarding secret voting:

“Ballot box Guard who was assisting the voters to place their ballot papers into the Regional and Open Ballot Box was mostly opening it up to check and fold again to put it in the right boxes. Meaning she was reading the ballot papers which is not secret voting to the voter himself or herself anymore.” (Observer in Madang, Madang Province)

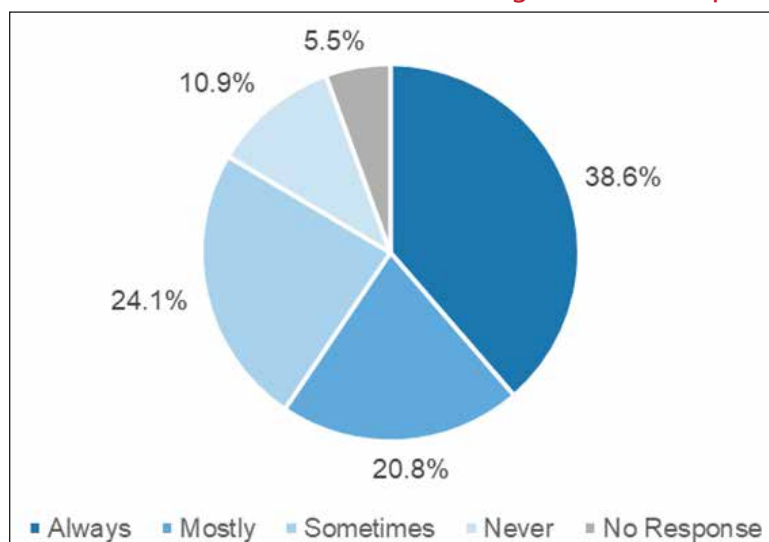
“Polling here was not really good because Polling booth was crowded, Polling compartment was too close for male and females also too small which resulted in no secret voting” (Observer in Nakanai, West New Britain)

“There were not even enough candidate posters around the area and that led to overcrowding at the polling booth, no secret voting.” (Moresby Northwest, NCD)

Assistance to voters with low literacy levels or with disabilities

Assistance given to persons with low literacy levels or with disabilities was another area observed during polling. The question asked whether illiterate persons and persons with disabilities were able to choose their own helper to assist them to vote.

Figure 24. Were voters who are illiterate/disabled choosing their own helpers?



It was concerning that disabled and illiterate persons were always assisted during voting by someone of their own choice in only about one third of the time (38.6%). A further 20.8% reported assistance most but not all of the time, and 24.1% sometimes. It was worrying that 10.9% reported that disabled and illiterate voters were never allowed to choose their own helper during polling. This was reported most frequently in the Highlands, where voters were not given a choice in 37.9% of the polling places observed. The overall results were similar in 2017.

Observers commented that in many instances, persons with low literacy levels were deprived of their right to vote, even by persons they thought would assist.

“Some voters had disability problems in which the presiding officer, authorised the polling clerk to assist the voter to vote well for their candidate” (Observer in Daru, Western Province)

“Couple of elderly women who cant be able to read to write the code of the eligible candidates of their choice has been assisted by same person all the time (ARO) which is not good from the voters point of view” (Voter Survey, Madang Urban, Madang Province)

“In this ward area, there is a community where the majority of voters couldn’t read or write. The polling officials and the scrutineers didn’t notice that there was the same man and woman who would bring these illiterate voters and assist them. This happened for two days at this polling station” (translated from Observer in Bogia, Madang)

“Sometimes the voters would be scared to vote because they couldn’t read or write. Some of those with disabilities had the right to vote, but because of the distance they didn’t”.(translated from Voter Survey in Central Bougainville, AROB)

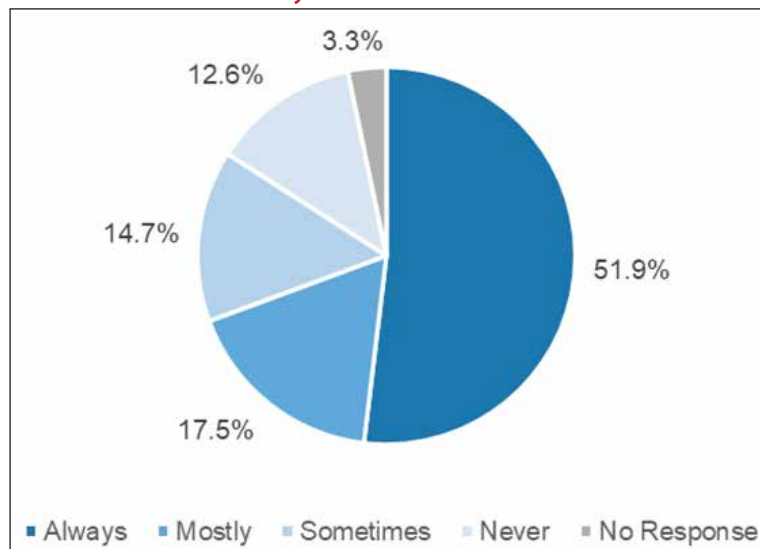
“There are some old men and women who are not sure how to cast their votes and are controlled by wrong people which means that it is not fair they should be helped by their biological family.” (Observer in Lae, Morobe)

One old lady in that ward came with her helper got ballot paper and said that was her last vote to her bubus” (Voter Survey in Sohe, Oro)

Rights of women voters

Women’s rights to participate equally in the democratic election process were not fully respected in more than a third of the polling places observed. In nearly two thirds of the polling places observed (59.2%), women were always able to vote freely. Overall, this is similar to the result in 2017 although it appears that the situation for women in the Highlands has worsened. It is unacceptable that the abuse of women’s rights to vote is still prevalent in many places.

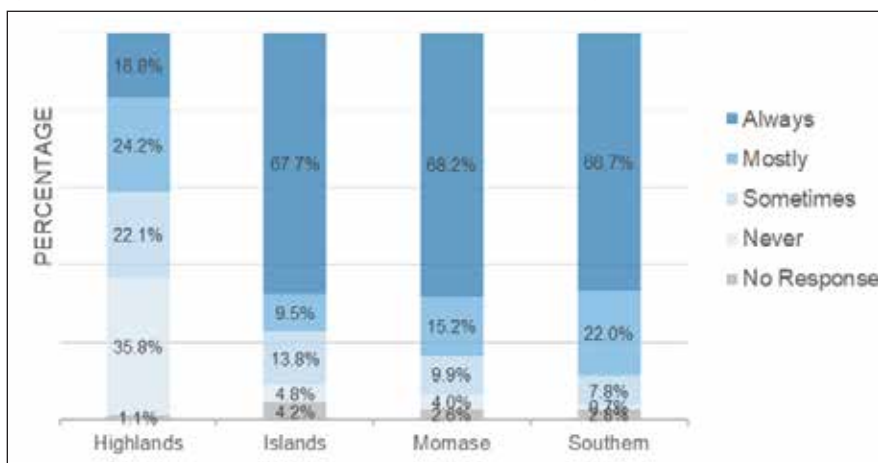
Figure 25. Were women able to vote freely and without interference?



Results illustrated in Figure 25 above shows that in polling stations throughout the country, 8.7% reported that women’s rights to vote were never respected or women were never given the right to vote, while 12.7% reported that women were sometimes able to vote without interferences, and 16.5% mostly but not always were able to vote without interference.

The view by region shows that women’s rights to vote are the least respected in the Highlands region. The situation has worsened in that in 2022 women never voted without interference in 35.8% of the locations observed, which is worse than 23.5% in 2017, and only 16.8% always vote without interference, which is a decline from 32.2% in 2017. Respect for women’s rights improved in Momase region from about half always voting without interferences in 2017 to more than two thirds in 2022 (68.2%), now fairly close to the New Guinea Islands region and the Southern region (see Figure 26 below).

Figure 26. Ability of women to vote without interferences by region



Below are some written comments regarding the abuse of women’s rights during voting:

"The election process in that polling place was mostly unfair and processes were not followed because most of the women did not have the freedom of choice to vote freely. Only the men were allowed to vote freely to vote on behalf of the majority." (Observer in Wabag, Enga)

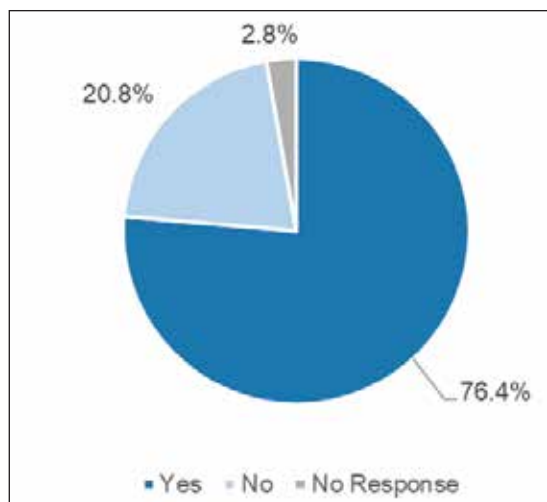
"A man was forcing his wife to vote for his candidate and threatened her saying he will hit her if she doesn't." (Observer in Popondetta, Oro)

"Many women had their husbands assist them to choose their candidates and also helped them to follow polling procedures." (Observer in Namatanai, New Ireland)

"Women were not free to vote because there were young men with bush knives threatening them on who to vote." (Dei, Western Highlands Province)

PNGEC instructed the Presiding Officers to have separate entrances and polling booths for men and women. TIPNG observed the separations of polling booths and the entrances to the women-only polling areas. Results of these observations are presented in Figure 27 below.

Figure 27. Were there separate polling booths or entrances to polling places for women?



Observers reported that the large majority (76.4%) of locations observed had separate voting booths for the women, representing a significant improvement since 2017 (only 29.9%). This indicates that the PNGEC's policy change to promote "Express Lanes" for women voters, has proven to be popular. In 20.8% of the polling sites, observers reported that there were no separations; both males and females entered the polling place from the same entrance and voted at the same booths. This was a vast improvement over the previous election, which saw two thirds of the locations with no separations.

"This polling I observed was mostly fair. For example; voter with special conditions like women with young babies, pregnant women, elderly people were considered promptly" (Observer in Wewak, East Sepik)

"Women made different lines to cast their votes and men made a different line to cast their votes but brought money around and bribed people and that's the corruption in the polling area." (Observer in North Waghi, Jiwaka)

"Polling here or set up here was nice/good, but the Polling compartment was too low. Otherwise it was nice that females had their own compartment which was apart from male." (Nakanai, West New Britain)

Southern and Highlands previously led the rates of separate booths in the 2017 elections, when the policy was trialled mainly in these regions. In 2022, there was an increase in separate polling places for women in all regions. Highlands improved but not as much as Southern, which continued to prioritise separate polling places. Other regions also took up the new policy and made relatively greater gains than in the Highlands. For example, in Momase in 2017 TIPNG observed only 4.2% polling places with separation and 78.8% in 2022.

Figure 28. Separations of polling booths and entrances for women by region

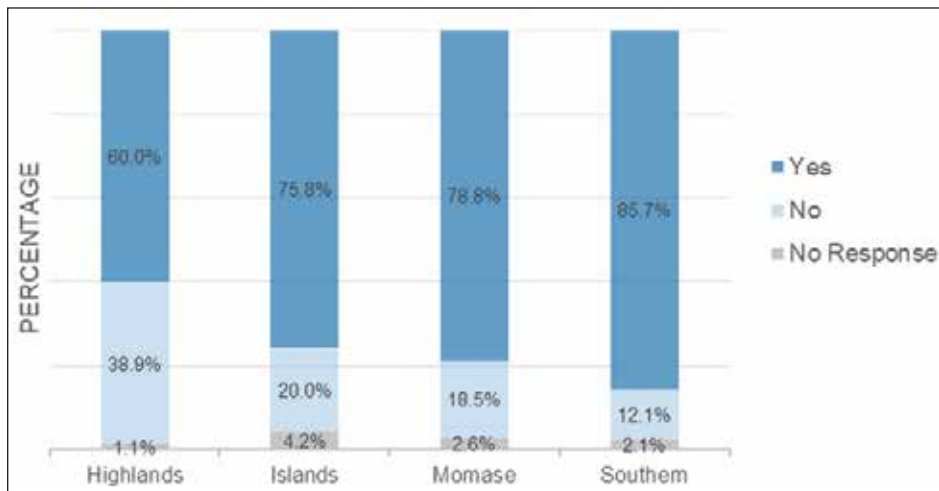


Figure 29. showing relation between places with separate booths and women being always free to vote

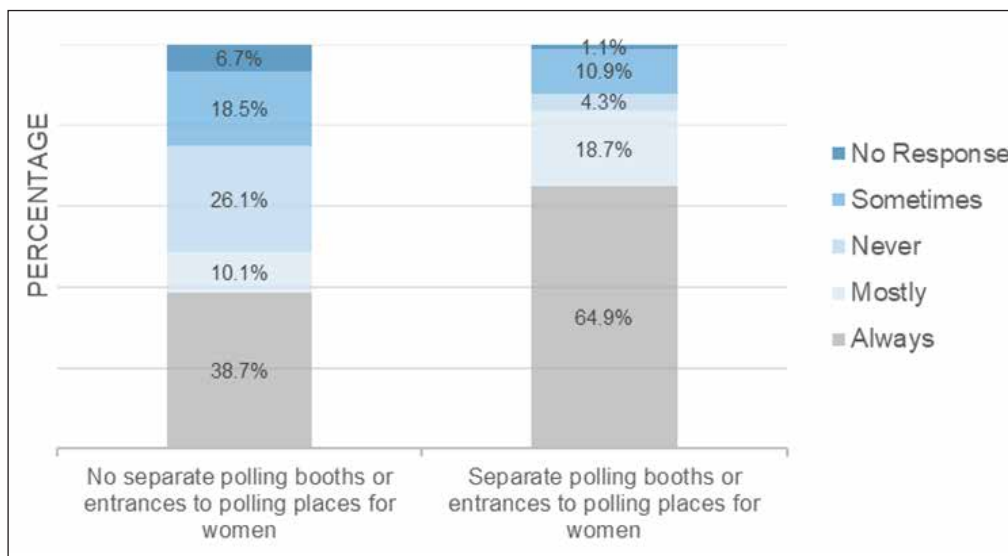


Figure 29 shows the relation between places with separate booths and women being always free to vote. It is clear that having a separate polling booth is related to women being free to vote, with TIPNG data showing that when there was no separate polling booth or entrance for women, women’s freedom to vote was observed at polling sites to be at 38% and when there was a booth or entrance for women, women’s freedom to vote was observed at 64% at polling sites.

“No proper polling booths, PO only announce ballot papers. People rush in and were chased out by security forces. Youths and women were in fear, and ran away. Fight starts to begin, bush knives everywhere.” (Observer in Porgera Paiela, Enga)

“Women were not able to vote because only males were voting” (Voter Survey, Wabag, Enga)

Bribery and intimidation during polling

Occurrences of bribery and intimidation of voters during polling is another area of great concern. Observers recorded evidence on the prevalence of bribery and intimidation.

Figure 30. Was there any evidence of bribery/intimidation of voters?

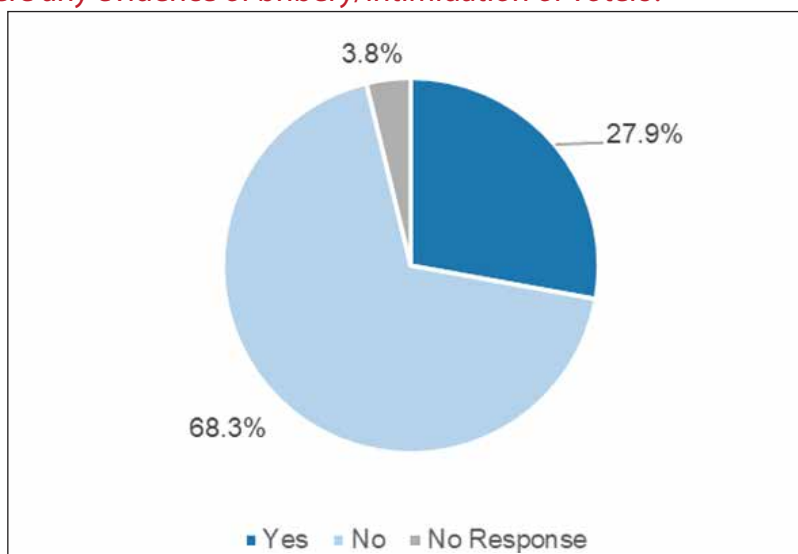


Figure 30 presents results where observers were asked to note if there was any evidence of bribery and intimidation of voters during polling. About two thirds (68.3%) reported no sightings of any sort of bribery and intimidation of voters and nearly a third (27.9%) reported occurrences of bribery and intimidation of voters during polling. This was very similar to the 2017 observations.

The continued prevalence of voters being intimidated/bribed during polling is unacceptable and yet widespread. Some witness accounts by observers on cases of intimidation and bribery are quoted below:

“There are a few people affected by selling their votes through bribing, their candidates' supporters rule their rights to vote. Few people are bribing in polling place” (Observer in Imbonggu, Southern Highlands Province)

“A voter was said to be carrying around K50's bribing voters to vote for a certain candidate.” (Observer in Wewak, East Sepik)

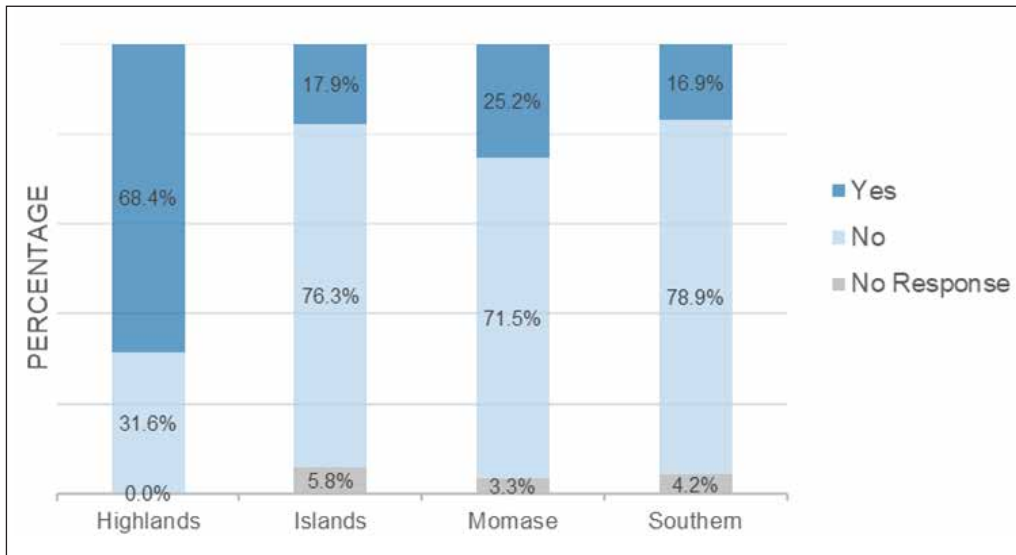
“Bribing and buying votes of supporters of certain candidates during campaign and during polling times” (Voter Survey, Madang Urban, Madang)

“Committees of candidates wrote names of their candidates on pieces of paper with cash and gave them to the voters.”(Observer in Nakanai, West New Britain)

“Bribing of voters by some candidates. Few voters doesn't come to the polling booth to vote because they want cash from the candidate to cast their vote”(Observer in South Bougainville, AROB)

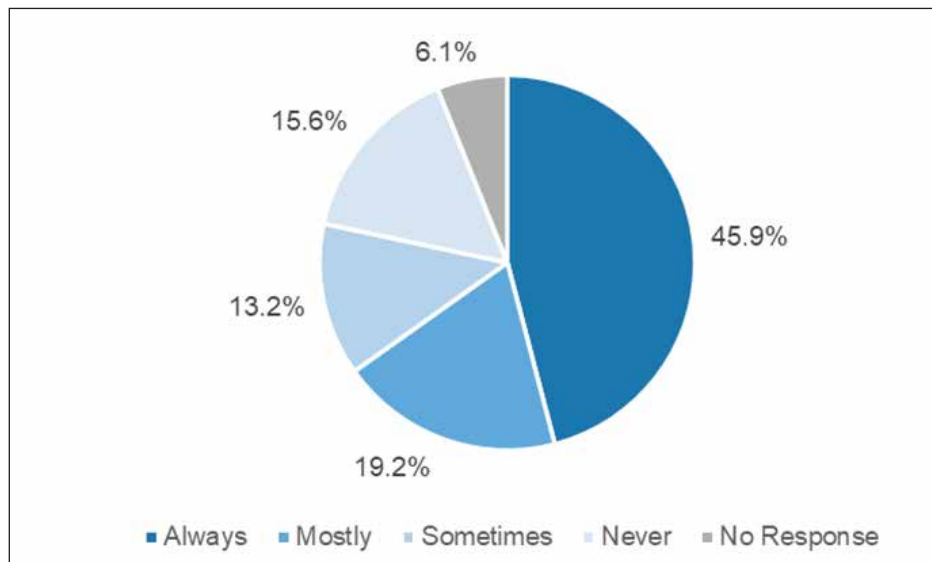
A look at bribery and intimidation during polling by region indicated that its occurrence is highest in the Highlands with 68.4% which is three times as high as in other regions. Although it is still prevalent in the other three regions, three quarters of the observations in the other three regions indicated no evidence of intimidation and bribery during polling (Figure 31).

Figure 31. Evidence of intimidation/bribing of voters during polling by region



Impartiality of polling officials and security personnel

Figure 32. Were the polling officials fair/impartial?



It is essential for persons facilitating polling to maintain neutrality in order to deliver a fair and free election. Observers were instructed to note evidence of polling officials and security personnel taking sides or showing signs of favouritism towards any one particular candidate that could compromise their impartiality during polling. In 2022, polling officials in 15.5% of the locations observed were never impartial when conducting the polling. In another 13.2% of cases, officials were sometimes impartial. On the positive side, 19.2% of locations reported officials were impartial most of the time and 45.9% always impartial, as shown in Figure 32.

Polling officials are assumed to be partial where there is evidence of double/multiple and block voting. For elections to be free and fair, the officials assigned to facilitate the election processes must be seen by voters as impartial. The evidence of unfairness amongst polling officials to manipulate the polling process undermines trust.

Written comments from the observers indicate that in some locations, polling officials were being fair and ensured polling was conducted fairly. In other locations, their conduct was not fair to the voters. There were also comments concerning unacceptable behaviours. These results and comments are similar to those from 2017 and 2012.

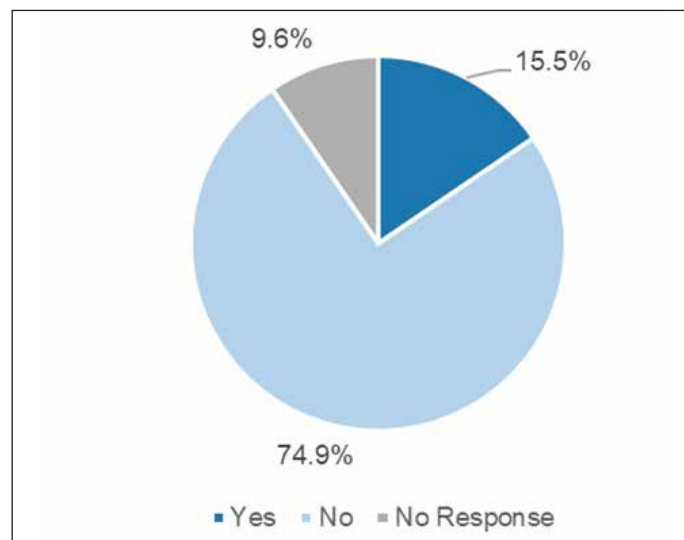
Some comments regarding the behaviour and impartiality of polling officials are given below:

“A male voter slammed the polling table because his name was not on the list and came back later on with a k100 handing it to one of the polling officials.” (Observer in Lorengau, Manus)

“The community leaders were vocal and told the PO to proceed with the polling even though the scrutineers were not there.” (Observer in Goroka, Eastern Highlands)

“The PO refuses to give out information of the ballot papers used when asked by the scrutineers because this information is for officials only. There was a suspension of polling at 9:47am due to people not having their names on the common roll, ARO made it clear that no name no vote.” (Observer in South Bougainville, AROB)

Figure 33. Was there any evidence of intimidation/bribing of Polling Place Officials?



Observations were also made to determine whether or not there was evidence of bribery and intimidation towards the polling officials present at the polling place at the time of voting (Figure 33). A majority of 74.9 % reported no indication and/or evidence of any bribery and intimidations towards the polling officials during polling, which is comparable to the 2017 results. About 15.5% reported occurrences of bribery and intimidation towards the polling officials at the polling areas.

The polling officials are responsible to deliver a free and fair election thus the evidence of their being bribed and intimidated is a serious concern in the 2022 elections. The regional breakdown shows particular concern in the Highlands, where 46.4% of locations reported evidence of bribery and intimidation. Evidence of bribery and intimidation of polling officials are seen in many written comments by the observers and the results are consistent with the 2017 and 2012 reports.



Electoral Officials in Eastern Highlands being pressured to allow bloc voting

“PO called a start by first addressing the issues the scrutineers brought up the day before at the previous polling place. The scrutineers had also wanted the ward councillor and village recorder to be used to identify eligible voters in this ward instead of the common roll which had too many names missing. PO responded by moving the Polling Clerk to Ballot Box Guard and emphasising the use of the common way to identify eligible voters. The scrutineers were not satisfied with the PO's response and demanded to hear from the ARO. ARO arrived shortly after, reiterating the PO's response. The scrutineers again were not satisfied and demanded to hear from the RO. Only after the RO arrived with police officer reiterating the PO and ARO's response did the commotion die down and polling was allowed to start for the day at 10:45am. Polling carried on peacefully the rest of the day with no other disputes from the scrutineer” (Observer in Kokopo, East New Britain)

“The candidates for that particular area prior to the polling had issued strong warning to the voters not to interfere or otherwise. Fearing destruction of properties and death, the voters watched helplessly while selected youths and leaders assisted the polling officials to do as directed or wished and controlled the whole polling process.” (Observer in Pogera Paiela, Enga)

“Polling did not end yet and some people tried to hijack the ballot boxes and fights started. The polling officials ran away for their lives from the voting area.” (Observer in Jimi, Jiwaka).



Female voters standing in their queue in New Ireland Province

In each region (Morobe, EHP, Southern and Highlands), TIPNG observed two separate lines in most of the provinces: one for males and other for females. However, in most instances, there were crowds around the two lines that suggest that intimidation and influence were very likely. Therefore, voters were not voting in secret.

In the Highlands, mostly men voted. Bloc voting was taken as normal and conducted by young men who collected 200-300 ballot papers and filled them. Women and other vulnerable groups of people, such as people with disabilities and elderly people were influenced when their ballot papers were filled by young men.

Double and multiple voting continue to occur in 2022, with levels comparable to 2017 where 23% of the voters interviewed by TIPNG did not mark their fingers with the indelible ink after they voted.

“Because of lack of security personnel, disabled and elderly people couldn’t vote” (Observer in Goroka, Eastern Highlands)

“Scrutineers were escorting the illiterate/disabled to cast they votes which they are not supposed to do it must be a family member” (Observer in Daru, Western Province)

The discrepancies with the electoral roll in the 2022 election has continued to enable double, multiple and block voting.

2.5 Elections-related Governance Challenges

Security and election related violence were widespread during the 2022 NGE. Election-related violence that were common during previous elections in the Highlands region have now occurred in the coastal areas: deaths, fights, damaging state properties, road and airport closure; and burning of ballot boxes. Media reports of election-related violence in the Lagaip Electorate described the process as a 'chaotic election'. Despite a total of 10,300 security forces engaged for the 2022 national elections, security issues were reported throughout the country. It was reported that the polling places were crowded and often the officials and security personnel had no control over polling booths. By June 22, the media recorded 30 election-related deaths. This 2022 election experienced widespread incidents of violence across the country which contradicts the democratic principles of free, fair and safe elections.

Lack of election awareness and education. In spite of the keenness to vote, eligible voters generally lack the basic knowledge on the democratic election process and the value of their vote. Election awareness and education in 2022 was not as widespread as in the 2012 NGE and continued the trend of the 2017 NGE which had almost no awareness or outreach by the PNGEC.

In addition, the PNGEC materials were finalised a few days before the scheduled election activities, which resulted in the delay to properly prepare and efficiently distribute the materials to other centres. As a result, voters did not have early access to awareness materials in preparation for the election

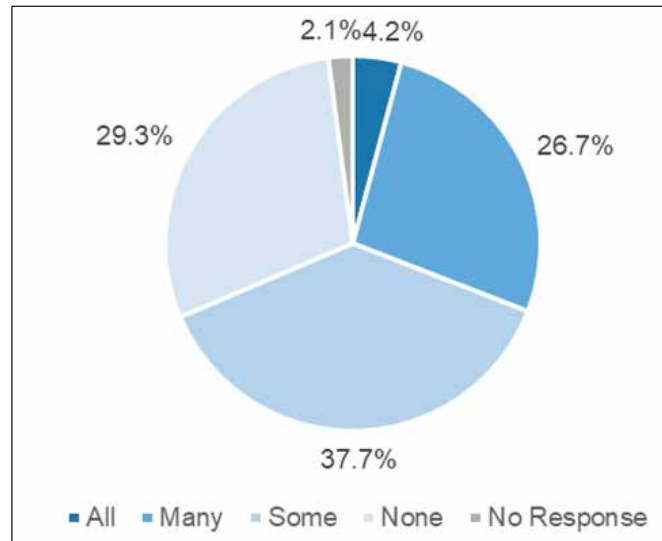
Accessibility of polling locations

The location of the polling sites during the 2022 NGE was a factor in the perpetration of violence and electoral malpractice. The selection of the physical location of the polling site can and has been used to support bloc voting to win elections.

A number of observations on accessibility were made and recorded by observers during voting. For example, observers noted the accessibility of polling locations by voters and the amount of time it took voters to get to the polling place from their homes.

Figure 34 shows the percentages of polling places that observers estimated to take more than an hour to reach. About 29.3% of the polling stations were obviously situated close to the voting population, thus taking no more than an hour to get to the voting area. This was a negligible improvement since 2017 (26.7%) which could be attributed to variation in locations observed. About 37.7% of the polling stations were set up in places where some took more than an hour to reach, and 26.7% of the voting areas assigned were far from many voters. About 4.2% of the designated areas for voting were in fact so far away from the voters that everyone had to travel more than an hour to get there to vote. This was negligibly worse as compared to 2017 (3.7%).

Figure 34. How many voters had to walk/travel more than an hour to get to polling place?



TIPNG’s Observers noted the following regarding polling place locations:

“People walked 2-3 hours to the polling places” (Voter Survey, Central Bougainville, AROB)

“Some people walk for hours because location of polling is very distance” (Voter Survey Bogia, Madang)

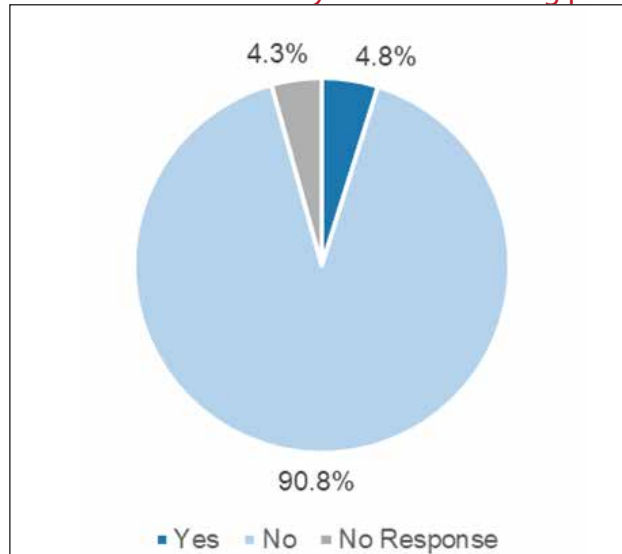
“Most voters didn’t have the chance to cast their vote due to transportation problems. Most old people have to walk long distances to cast their votes.” (Pogera Paiela, Enga)

Ballot Box observation during polling

The movement of ballot boxes during the 2022 NGE was prone to abuse and acts of violence, as controlling the boxes, effectively controls the outcome of an election. Observations on the ballot boxes before polling, during polling and after polling are therefore critical in the election observations. The TIPNG observers were able to record their impressions during polling, noting if the ballot boxes were ever taken away from the public eye or hidden and if so, why.

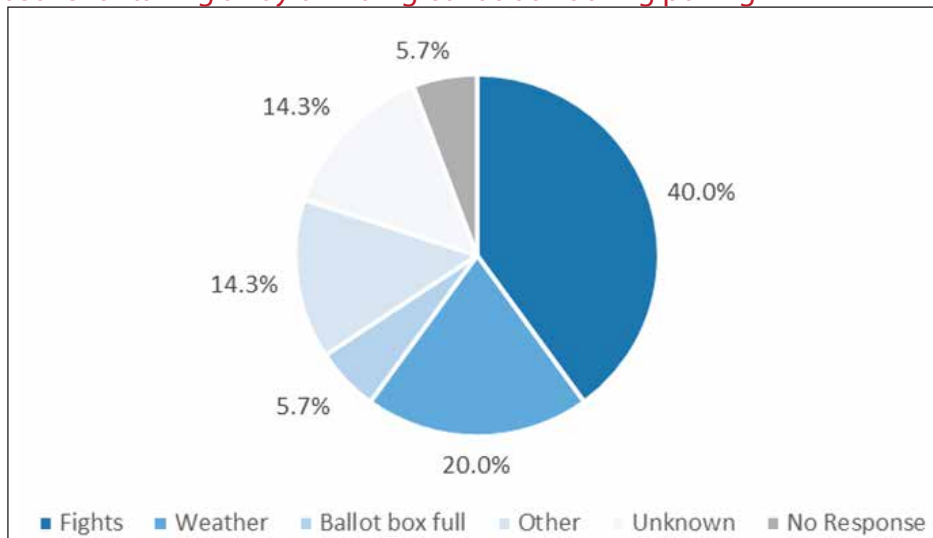
Figure 35 shows whether ballot boxes were taken away or hidden during polling. In 4.8% of the polling places, observers reported cases where the ballot boxes were hidden or taken away, and at a higher rate in the Highlands (14.7%). This was a slight improvement over the previous NGE. In 90.8% they indicated that the ballot boxes were never taken away or hidden during the polling period, which was the same as in 2017 (90.3%).

Q7 Figure 35. Was the ballot box ever taken away or hidden during polling?



The main reason observed for taking away or hiding the ballot box during polling in 2022 was fights, as seen in Figure 36 below. In contrast the main reason in 2017 was weather-related.

Figure 36. Reasons for taking away or hiding ballot box during polling



About two thirds of the fights that resulted in the boxes being taken away or hidden occurred in the Highlands. Weather affected the Islands and Momase. Only 5.7% said the ballot boxes were taken away because they were full and 14.3% reported that the ballot boxes were taken away or hidden for unknown reasons. There were 'other' reasons in another 14.3% of the cases.

“Officials, scrutineers or campaign managers took away the ballot boxes. Every one or All officials were bribed by all candidates.” (Observer in Pogera Paiela, Enga)

“Strong people wanted to hijack the ballot boxes. But at last, polling officials and the scrutineers took away the ballot boxes to the police station with security forces, and all people were shouting and crying everywhere because they had not cast their votes for their candidates.” (Observer in Porgera-Paiela, Enga)

Impartiality of Security Personnel

Figure 37. Were the police and any other security forces impartial/fair?

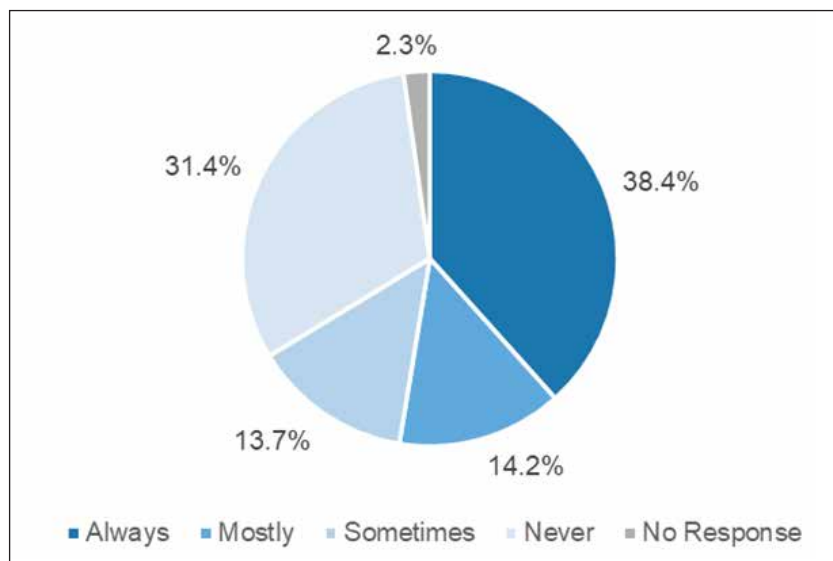


Figure 37 illustrates the neutrality of security personnel on site during polling. It is of great concern to see that in 31.4% of the locations observed, security personnel were never impartial, while 13.7% were only sometimes impartial. In another 14.2% of polling locations observed, the security personnel were being impartial most of the time, and 38.4% always impartial. These results are similar to 2017 observations and are reflected in the comments from the 2022 Observers.

“People voted well, youths, women, men, disable everyone voted peacefully, police also did their job well, no weapons eg; knife, people came to vote empty hand.” (Voter Survey, South Bougainville, AROB)

“The police officers came in with force and demanded to the PO if they could vote without their names been on the common roll book. The police tried to convince the polling officials but they took a stand with the help of the scrutineers to reject them back from the polling place because their names were not return down on the common roll book. The police officials should make it their business to get their names enrolled in the common roll, even though the general public too, so that they would not demand and convince the polling officials but rather have a safe and a very fair elections by casting their votes under their own names for their candidate” (Observer in Daru, Western Province)

“Some supporters of candidates attempted to bribe voters with money but other scrutineers found out and reported to security personnel they brought the perpetrator to the police station for further questioning.” (Observer in Vanimo, West Sepik)

“The problem is there are not enough polling compartments, only two, one for woman and one for man which means the queue was very long and the police personnel too was not enough to control the number of crowds they were outnumbered with there should be more police officers.” (Observer in Lae, Morobe)

Notably, the Highlands, which had more policing than other regions in 2022, seems to have had more reports of neutrality. This could be indicative that the security planning for the Highlands elections and the presence of the Police Commissioner in the region during polling and counting.

Figure 38 on Police neutrality by Region

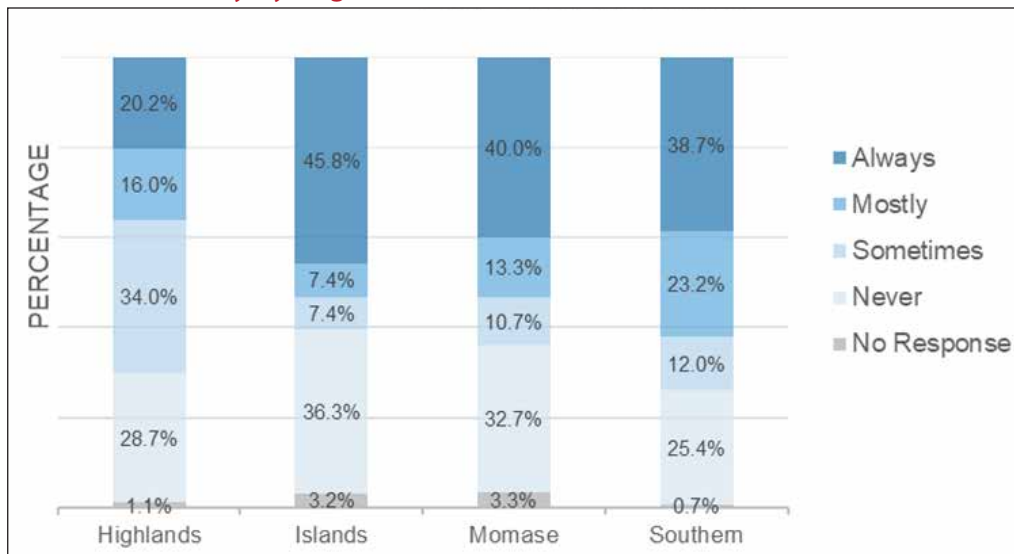
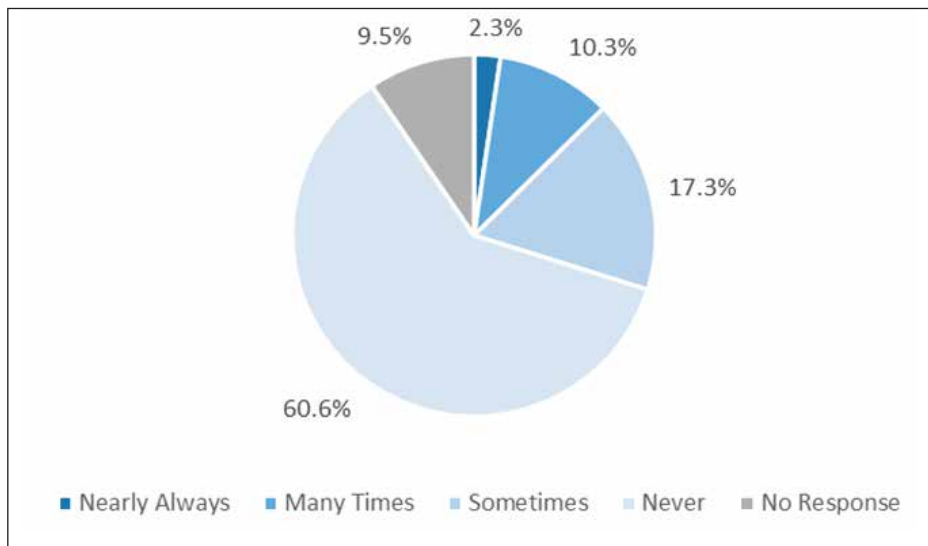


Figure 39 on whether People were threatened if they did not vote for a particular candidate



Voters were surveyed on whether people were threatened if they did not vote for a particular candidate. While the 60% of those surveyed said this had never occurred, it is notable that 17% said Sometimes, 10% said Many Times and 2% indicated that this Nearly Always happened. This would indicate for a third of those surveyed, threats by a particular candidate occurred in their community during the 2022 NGE. This finding underscores the level of violence prevalent across PNG during the elections.

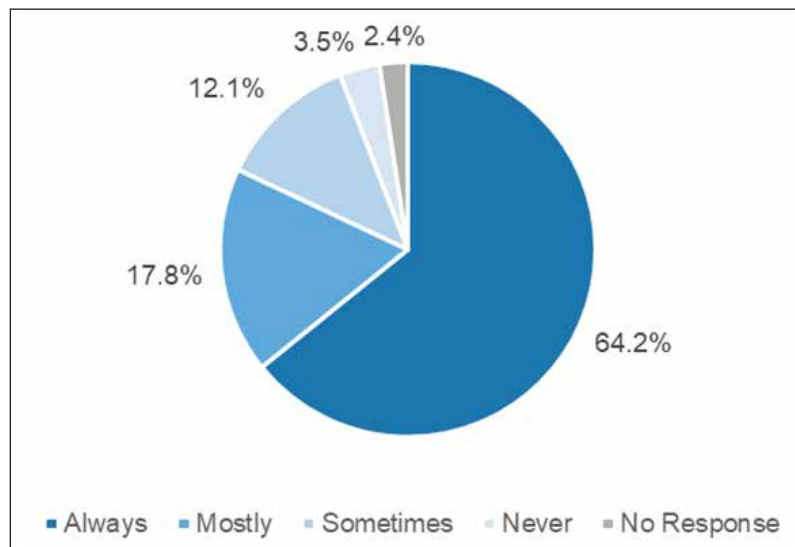
2.6 Overview of Observing Polling

TIPNG’s Observers collected data on the scrutiny and observation process, to inform the overall assessment of the Polling Place. Data on how scrutineers and observers were perceived helps improve and gauge the level of public understanding and support for scrutiny and observation respectively. Both activities, when done correctly, strengthen the integrity of the polling process.

Ability of scrutineers to fulfil their role

Candidates' scrutineers keeping a watchful eye to ensure voting is conducted fairly during polling, was another issue observed during the elections. The observers were asked to note down whether or not the scrutineers were able to see everything at the polling place (except who people voted for). Results shown in Figure 40 indicated that in 63.7% of the polling stations observed, the scrutineers were able to see everything, except who people voted for.

Figure 40. Ability of scrutineers to see everything at polling place (except who people voted for)



Scrutineers were always able to see everything in 64.2% of the locations observed, and 17.8% most of the time. However, in 3.5% of the polling locations observed, the scrutineers never saw what happened during the polling, and 12.1% sometime. It is a concern that in 15.6% of the polling places the scrutineers could not see most or any of what was happening during polling.

Scrutineers involvement during polling is critical to ensure a free and fair election is being conducted thus not being able to keep a watchful eye during polling is concerning. Because of the ever-growing number of candidates, some polling areas may not be spacious enough to accommodate all scrutineers.

Comments made by observers indicated that in some places, the scrutineers were active in performing their tasks:

“Because there are many scrutineers of the candidates here and also their voters as well as security personnel also. And it's hard for them to bribe or do anything that is against the voting protocols.” (Observer in Lae, Morobe)

“The polling officials were given money three days prior to the polling. However, since the police personnel were strict and scrutineers of other candidates were watching so they could not take any actions,” (Observer in Ialibu Pangia, Southern Highlands)

“There was force applied at the polling booth but the polling officials stood their ground with the help of the scrutineers.” (Observer in Daru, Western)

In other polling places, the access granted to scrutineers was abused:

“Supporter and scrutineers of a candidate giving drinks and biscuits to voters.” (Observer in Vanimo, West Sepik)

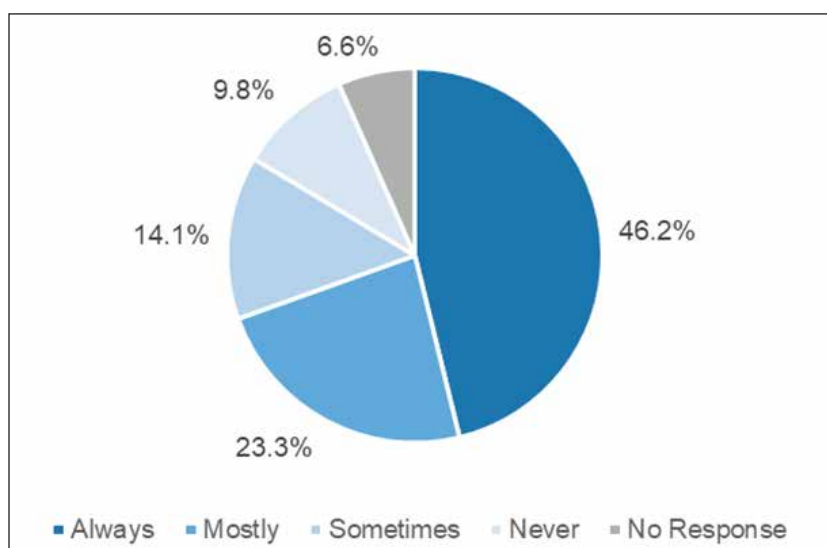
“Nearly all elections here is always not fair because the polling officials and people, scrutineers are disturbing the voting process” (Observer in Bogia, Madang)

“Voters were unhappy that the police were rough with them to queue properly, while doing nothing to the scrutineers who were there bribing the people with money.”(translated from Observer in Nakanai, West New Britain)

What was the response to the Observers?

The observers placed at the polling places were asked to report the level of cooperation and access they were granted by polling officials on site. Results showed 46.2% always or mostly had access and cooperation, which was a significant decrease from 2017 (64.6%). Some did not feel they had adequate access or cooperation, however, the majority of experiences were positive.

Figure 41. Did you have adequate access and the cooperation of polling officials?



While there were some access and cooperation challenges, no observers were actually blocked or made to leave a polling place. In the Highlands notably, TIPNG observers were recognised and welcomed by the general public as part of the elections process.

Some observers reported that presiding officers were unwilling to give out information on the number of ballots received, because they said this information was “confidential”. This may have been due to the presiding officers being poorly trained – and a lack of confidence that they were carrying out procedures correctly. It may also be an indication of the lack of preparation and planning for polling teams.

TIPNG observers often had better access than the scrutineers, whose access is often restricted because there are so many of them, representing many candidates and also because of their antagonistic relationship with polling officials. Overall, the comments indicate that in most places polling staff and voters welcomed us, probably because they felt that observer presence would help prevent issues from arising.

Finally, the observers made an overall assessment of how fair they personally thought the polling was conducted in the area they observed.

Figure 42. Overall, do you think the election process you saw in this polling place was fair?

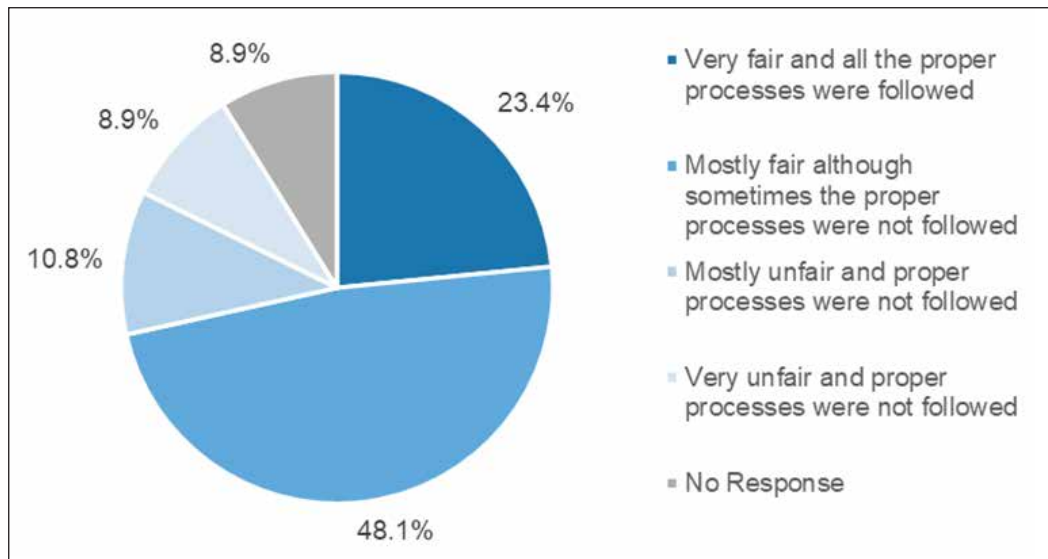
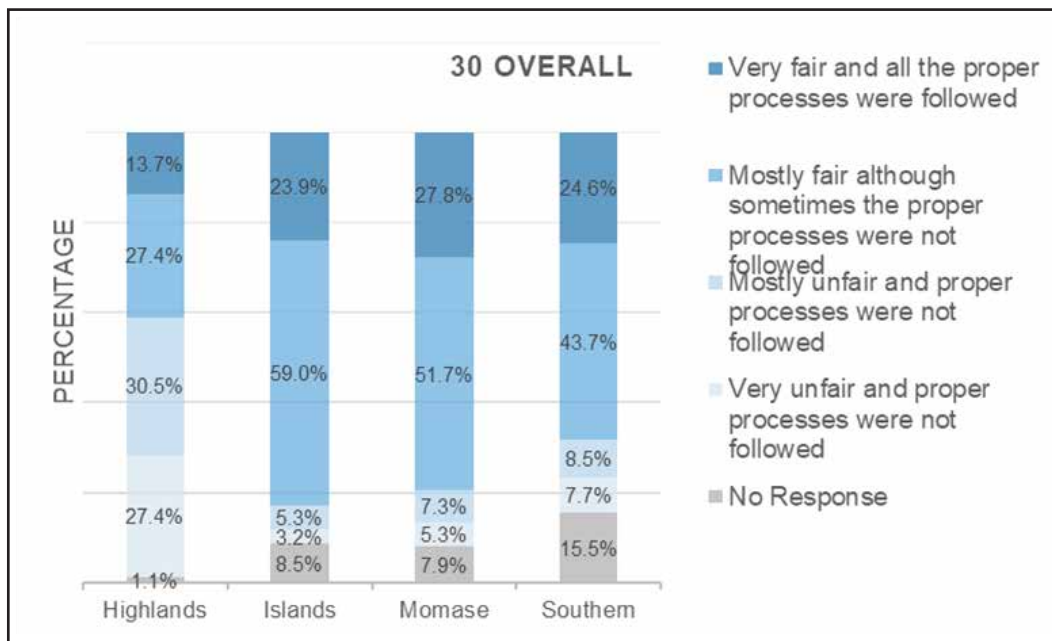


Figure 42 shows that only 23.4% of the observers thought that the election was very fair and all the proper processes were applied, which was a significant decline from 2017 (47.3%). Another 48.1% indicated that the polling was mostly fair although sometimes proper processes were not followed (26.5% in 2017) and 10.8% reported the election to be mostly unfair and proper voting procedures were not followed (1.3% in 2017). Further, 8.9% of the observers’ assessment indicated that the election was totally unfair and proper processes were never followed (13.9% in 2017).

The observers’ assessment of the Highlands was considered more unfair than other regions, rating the election as 27.4% totally unfair and 30.5% mostly unfair in the polling places observed.

Figure 43. By region, Overall, do you think the election process you saw in this polling place was fair?



3. Discussion of Findings



Voter in Moresby North East Polling Booth Checking Candidates Before Voting

TIPNG's observation findings show that the electoral process fell short of the expected standard of free, fair and safe elections. This section analyses the results of the observation in detail, so as to assess where there are areas of strengths and deficiencies. While the 2022 Observation identifies critical areas of grave concern, many of these issues were also witnessed in previous elections. This assessment provides an opportunity to inform the work of the PNGEC, Government and Parliament in pursuing electoral reform.

3.1 Standard of Free, Fair and Safe Elections

In evaluating the elections against the standard of free, fair and safe, it is important to first define the terms being used. Freedom in elections can be seen in the ability of voters to express without constraint or inducement their own personal preferences through the selection of candidates. Fairness relates to equality in terms of participation in the electoral process, no voter, candidate or supporter should be disadvantaged in the delivery and conduct of the election. Assessing safety relates to the level of electoral violence by all actors (individuals, communities, candidates, their supporters, law enforcement and security personnel) and consequently its impact on citizens and voters' well-being.

3.2 Challenges to Democratic Freedoms

Voters' democratic right to elect their parliamentary representatives was undermined during this year's national election. Section 50 of the National Constitution enshrines the right of all PNG citizens who are above the age of 18 years, and have lived in their electorate for more than 6 months to vote and stand for public office. While PNG has been successful in having regular elections, the ability of citizens to participate freely has consistently been challenged.

The lack of candidate posters at polling sites demonstrates that voters knowing who they will vote for is not prioritised by administrators. Voters have a right to know the candidates and choose their leaders democratically. When there are not enough posters for people to access to know the candidates, there are likely chances of undemocratic behaviours such as influence, intimidation, and bribery of voters by certain supporters or candidates. The people have a right to access information that will help them make informed choices during elections.

For instance, though the process of voting involves two separate lines, women and other vulnerable voters continue to be influenced and intimidated during polling. Women and other vulnerable citizens were not able to exercise freely their right to vote because of several factors such as expected gender norms. Gender norms play a significant role during elections. In several electorates, it has become a norm that men as the head of the family make decisions and women's votes (wife and daughters for instance) are influenced as well. For example, bloc voting was common and accepted in Eastern Highlands Province. The prevalent abuse of women's right to vote is unacceptable.

A further impediment to free elections is bribery. Bribery was commonly observed in previous elections and has continued to be a concern in this election. Observations indicate that bribery has changed, whereas previously money or gifts were exchanged in public settings, bribery now involves high-level meetings, and mostly unseen transactions. Funding for campaigns is not adequately regulated and often involves clientelism, a form of bribery where corporations or companies provide funding to candidates or parties for favour when they win, for example, government projects.

3.3 Impediments to Fairness

The administrative issues resulting in unfair elections can be addressed through the application of existing electoral laws. For instance public awareness on the need to respect the rule of law, before, during and after the elections so that elections are free of violence would go some way towards promoting fairness. Equally important is that there is a perception of accountability, the public needs to see those that violate electoral laws face prosecution. That has been one positive development since the last election, the investigation, arrest and successful prosecution of the 2017 NCD Provincial Election Manager for corruption allegedly involving a candidate, however these law enforcement activities require consistent support and capacity. It is notable that while the NCD Provincial Election Manager was arrested, charged and is serving time in prison, the other party, the candidate who induced the Manager has not been investigated, charged or prosecuted

The extent of roll inaccuracy was worse in the 2022 election because the roll update was significantly late this year. This did not allow sufficient time for objections as required under electoral law. This was also the case with the polling schedule as its release was delayed till the week of polling, which meant citizens did not have a 14 day period to object to the selected polling sites as allowed in the law. This impacted in particular rural communities who may not have access to a central polling site, and to persons living with disability who could not have their objections to inaccessible polling sites considered.

Additionally, democratic principles such as the 'secret ballot' and 'one person one vote' were not exercised and were compromised. Factors such as bribery, intimidation and influence occurred throughout this election, and previous elections. It is unfortunate that we repeat the same concerns but it shows a lack of consideration by the government and related stakeholders to improve our elections so that we can have an election that is free, fair and safe for all citizens across this democratic state.



A group of men bloc voting in Jiwaka, as police personnel sit to the side and watch.

3.4 Impact of Electoral Violence on Safety

Persistent electoral violence during the 2022 NGE hindered voters from exercising their rights to vote. Causes of violence included citizens' dissatisfaction with their inability to participate in elections, and with the perception that election processes were not being followed. This creates a causal link between the violence that occurred and electoral administrative issues. The administrative issues included roll discrepancy, impartiality of polling officials, late start to voting, delayed counting, and unconstitutional declaration of certain seats.

In far too many instances, lives were lost due to electoral violence with reported estimates in the media of 50-200+ people dying during the 2022 NGE. A notable instance of elections-related death was the shooting allegedly by elections security personnel of a woman trying to vote in the National Capital District. The persistent level of violence also calls into question the state's strategy relating to election security.

3.5 Overall Assessment of 2022 National General Election

It is clear that the accumulated failings in the preparation, conduct, delivery and conclusion of the 2022 NGE have resulted in significant procedural issues impacting the quality of the elections. As TIPNG observed, many eligible voters could not freely, fairly or safely vote, and consequently, their views were not taken into consideration in the formation of the 11th National Parliament.

The PNGEC does not bear sole responsibility for the poor conduct of the 2022 National General Elections. In reviewing the pattern of electoral maladministration, it is important to consider to what extent inadequate elections in Papua New Guinea are not only tolerated but also engineered by those entrusted with power.

The institutional weak points that could be manipulated to undermine elections integrity are the appointment of the Electoral Commissioner and the budget allocated to the PNGEC to carry out its functions. Both of these weak points arose in the 2022 NGE with the late appointment of the Electoral Commissioner and minimal budgetary allocation in 2021, which should have been the year for electoral preparation

If the PNGEC's institutional independence from political interference is not restored, legislative and reform of the elections will not increase public confidence in the integrity of the elections.

Those tasked with delivering the elections in PNG must not be complacent. Rather, the numerous problems experienced during 2022 should be a wake-up call for our nation's leaders and administrators to take action. In undertaking post-election analysis, all stakeholders should focus on structured medium-term interventions that will promote transparency and integrity in PNG's national elections.

4. Recommendations for Elections



Voter in New Ireland Province casting her vote

Restoring public confidence in the electoral process should be the aim of any reform process. In considering areas for action to restore public confidence in Electoral Management, TIPNG has grouped recommendations into two broad categories; promotion of transparency and promotion of integrity. Transparency pertains to the dissemination of information in a timely, accessible and accurate manner. Integrity actions are focussed on ensuring that norms, processes, standards, regulations and laws are agreed to and complied with by responsible parties.

The recommendations aim to assist the following entities to coordinate their efforts:

1. PNG Electoral Commission, as the Constitutionally mandated electoral body
2. Special Parliamentary Committee on Elections, as lead on legislative reform
3. The Inter-Departmental Election Committee, as administrative coordinators supporting the delivery of elections and reforms

For reference, unimplemented recommendations from prior reports are captured in the appendix to this report.

4.1 Transparency Actions

The following recommendations relate to the dissemination of information in a timely, accessible and accurate manner. Increasing transparency of the electoral process will create greater public trust in the outcome of elections.

PNG Electoral Commission

- Develop a 5-year PNGEC communications plan to empower voters and partners through proactive sharing of timely, accurate and accessible electoral information. This should be managed by a dedicated communications team.
- Create a digital repository of training information for journalists and civil society to reference and use for dissemination of information pertaining to the elections
- Take civic education seriously as one of PNGEC's main activities leading up to the elections. Also, partner with other stakeholders to carry out effective civic education and awareness in preparation for elections.
- Formalise and publicly share the Terms of References for PESC to enable planning at provincial level for elections. Civil Society participation should be maintained in the PESC Terms of Reference.
- Present the PNGEC 2022 National General Election report to the Parliament
- Develop and share clear guidelines for how to report corrupt conduct by officials during the election and how they will be addressed; this will serve as a deterrent and restore trust.
- Develop and share a clear expected standard of what constitutes a successful election so that a failed election can be assessed objectively.
- Ensure the timely and effective issuance of ID cards for observers and polling sites schedules.

Special Parliamentary Committee on Elections

- Support the tabling of the PNGEC's full report on conduct of 2022 NGE in Parliament and make it publicly available.
- Legislate requirements for electoral information, e.g. roll information, to be made available proactively to the public.
- Ensure Electoral Reform consultation information is shared publicly through media and that resources are made available online and in accessible format

Inter-Departmental Election Committee

- Commit funding through National Budget or the entire 5-year election cycle with each of the PNGEC's deliverables publicly committed to and reported to the IDEC in regular meetings.
- Effectively coordinate elections with partners in the provinces like the NCD PESC.
- Empower voters through proactive sharing of timely, accurate and accessible information.
- Take a clear policy direction on gazettal process for electoral documents.
- Strengthen and expand the DJAG call centre and connect it with other call centres such as police to effectively address legal issues throughout the elections period and provide information to the general public.

4.2 Integrity Actions

Integrity actions are focussed on ensuring that norms, processes, standards, regulations and laws are agreed to and complied with by the responsible parties.

PNG Electoral Commission

- Develop public complaints process and an internal anti-corruption strategy within the PNGEC prior to the 2027 NGE.
- Investigate, arrest and prosecute electoral officials that were alleged to have engaged in corruption during the 2022 NGE.
- Review organisational structure of the PNGEC and procedures for engagement of temporary electoral workers to promote accountability.
- Establish and equip the Electoral Advisory Committee a year prior to the commencement of elections.
- Sign an MoU with the police to more effectively implement election laws and regulations, and hold those committing offences accountable through criminal prosecution.
- Advocate for legislative reform to increase oversight and accountability at decision points within PNGEC.
- Address constitutional questions raised in 2022 elections, before 2027.
- Support the Courts in reviewing procedures for election petitions and court of disputed returns process to ensure substantive matters in complaints are addressed.
- Commence updating the roll early to prevent issues of multiple voting, underage voting and community violence.
- Carry out investigations, arrests and prosecution of electoral officials that were alleged to have engaged in corruption during the election.
- Sign an MoU with the Independent Commission Against Corruption on addressing election corruption cases.

Special Parliamentary Committee on Elections

- Support legislative reform to increase accountability at decision points within PNGEC, for instance through increasing the number of Commissioners, in a similar manner to the Ombudsman Commission.
- Strengthen the Electoral Commission's accountability mechanisms within existing levels of Independence; integrity of elections will be reduced if there is legislated oversight by the Government of the day.
- Align the Organic Law with recently developed anti-corruption legislation, notably the Organic Law on Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Whistle-blower Act on protected disclosures.
- Support the amendments to the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates.

Inter-Departmental Election Committee

- Strengthen election accountability mechanisms such as the Provincial Election Steering Committee (PESC).
- Develop PESC Terms of References and signed with funding at the provincial level for planning meetings in the 4 years preceding the elections.
- Design and carry out best practices training so that members of the PESC are aware and equipped.
- Identify and draw applicable lessons from the PESC coordination observing the Moresby NorthWest By-Election to improve future elections, and to further strengthen the role of other provincial PESC.
- Effectively establish and strengthen PESC in other provinces and PESC provincial reports must be submitted in a timely and coordinated manner.
- Develop an effective coordinating PESC mechanism to oversee the 22 provincial PESC coordination bodies.
- Formalise strategic partnerships with members of the PNGEC's Election Outreach Network based on a clear communications plan
- Make TEW recruitment under PESC oversight.
- Recruit TEWs from within Provincial Public Service, blacklisting TEW officials who have had issues previously.
- Review JSTF toll-free calls and develop systems to address the concerns.
- Work in collaboration with the Electoral Body, making efficient regular updates of election progress from issue of writs, polling, counting, and declaration

Conclusion

This report has presented the findings of observations by TIPNG, discussed those findings and identified recommendations with specific actions to the PNG Electoral Commission, the Special Parliamentary Committee on the 2022 General Election and the Inter-Departmental Elections to improve the conduct of the 2027 NGE.

The Domestic Election Observation by TIPNG was conducted with the intent to empower observers by demonstrating that citizens can contribute to the integrity of the electoral processes. While the data collected by TIPNG's volunteer observers identifies several deficiencies in electoral processes during the 2022 NGE, these findings are intended to inform and empower Papua New Guineans and those advocating for reforms to promote greater transparency and integrity in the conduct of elections in Papua New Guinea. In pursuing reforms to the bedrock of democracy in Papua New Guinea, the electoral process, the risks to be mindful of are:

- Vested political interest from those who have obtained public office through corruption, seeking to retain public office through corruption. This can be addressed by having an inclusive reform process that is open to the public and prioritises technical expertise.
- Uninformed reforms that are based on speculation or populist appeal. The elections are a technical and legal process and reforms should be informed on objective data with clear baselines and evidentiary support. This also means that reforms can be measured against baselines to identify if the intended impact has been achieved.
- Legitimising poor governance practices, under the assumption that current electoral standards are unattainable. The constitutional standard of elections, every 5 years, with specified processes for the elections period and administered by an independent agency should not be undermined for political convenience. There is a risk that reform will enable abuse of democratic rights by watering down the standard of elections, rather than focussing on improving performance. This can be by having an informed public, active civil society and a free media.
- Individualising the issues and not taking a systems approach. Non-performance by office holders should be addressed through public service mechanisms and appointments processes, not through undermining the public office.
- Prioritising single large projects to reform over holistic and collaborative improvements. Any intervention to support election integrity will need to work in tandem with existing practices, as such reform should focus on the processes.

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Appendix

Combination of Other Observer Recommendations on 2017 National Elections (as of June 2021)

TIPNG made the following recommendations in its 2017 election observation report. Within these major recommendations are those made by other observers.

- EU Expert mission - https://ec.europa.eu/fpi/sites/fpi/files/documents/election-epert-mission-png-2017-final-report_en.pdf
- Commonwealth - <https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/PNG%20COG%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>
- Melanesian Spearhead Group - <https://www.msgsec.info/wp-content/uploads/MSGOG-Reports/PNG-National-General-Elections-2017-Report-dated-28-August-2017.pdf>
- Australian National University - http://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/uploads/2019-04/png_report_hi_res.pdf

1) Enforcement of existing laws by agencies during the Elections - With clear examples of bribery and exhortation being observed by TIPNG observers during the 2017 National Election, our recommendation is for law enforcement agencies to create an expressway for dealing with violations of election laws during the elections.

- The MSGOG observed that PNG had comprehensive Electoral Laws; however, these laws needed to be enforced by those responsible. (Melanesian Spearhead Group)
- The penalty for a candidate convicted of bribery, attempted bribery and whose election or return has been voided by the National Court, should be extended to include ineligibility to contest not only the re-run elections but any elections and the ineligibility to hold any public office for an appropriate length of time. (EU Expert Mission)
- Election-related offences, particularly with regard to bribery, undue influence and underage voting, should be enforced to dispel the culture of impunity. (Commonwealth)
- Greater effort should be made to prosecute cases involving election offences, such as treating and bribery and those involving other criminal wrongdoing during the election period. (Australian National University)

Current Status: This will not be seen until the actual election itself, whether or not laws are enforced well by responsible agencies.

2) Electoral Roll Update and Verification - In the period leading to the 11th National Parliament, PNGEC along with relevant stakeholders needs to give the highest priority to conducting an update of the electoral roll so as to ensure eligible voters, including first time voters, are encouraged to register and update their information.

- A thorough review of the voter register to be prioritised and conducted well in advance of the next electoral event. The management of the voter registration and data collection including the display of the preliminary roll and the system of appeals on enrolments or transfers needs to be strengthened. (EU Expert Mission)

- Consideration should be given at future elections to providing voter registration forms at polling stations to voters turned away because their names are not on the roll, to help improve the roll's future accuracy. (Commonwealth)
- The PNGEC should consider providing for continuous voter registration, including online registration. (Commonwealth)
- PNGEC needs to introduce the voter identification card system to address the inaccuracy of the common roll and for the verification of individual eligible voters, as per the Law. (Melanesian Spearhead Group)

Current Status: An update and verification of the Electoral Roll has not been done.

3) Security and Prevention of Election Related Violence - The PNGEC should develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to advocate for violence prevention.

- The training of the election officials to be improved and strengthened. The PNGEC needs to ensure not only that all key procedures are uniformly carried out by polling station officials, but also that important decisions that it adopts are timely disseminated at polling station level. (EU Expert Mission)
- The presence of sufficient security personnel needs to be guaranteed in all polling areas so as to offer the necessary protection to polling officials against pressure and intimidation. (EU Expert Mission)
- Clarification is needed regarding the role, responsibilities and remit of Provincial Election Steering Committees vis-à-vis those of key electoral officials, particularly in relation to the appointment of election officials, polling schedules and the conduct of polling and counting. (Australian National University)
- Electoral officials and security personnel deployed to remote districts need a means for reliable and effective communication. (Australian National University)
- Funding for the security operations must be released in a timely manner, so as not to delay polling and counting, and in order to ensure security personnel on election duties are properly provided for. Reliance on local authorities, local businesses and local communities contributes to the perception the security personnel are partisan. (Australian National University)
- The timing and manner in which security personnel are deployed requires significant reflection in the wake of the 2017 elections. Early deployment remains essential in order to identify and address political and security risks, while greater emphasis should be placed on having security on the ground at polling stations. (Australian National University)

Current Status: It is unclear whether or not the PNGEC has developed a comprehensive strategy to advocate for violence prevention. At present there is no information going out on how election violence will be addressed or prevented. This recommendation has not been taken up.

4) Recommendation on Election awareness - In-depth and intense awareness and campaigns should be carried out in schools, universities, workplaces, church groups. Workplace policies and incorporation in institution curriculums are examples that can be further explored.

- In order to increase the transparency of the PNGEC in the implementation of the elections, a periodic and inclusive public communication mechanism could be introduced. A liaison committee with regular information meetings with external election stakeholders could be a particularly useful tool of communication, together with organised dissemination of relevant documentation pertaining to the electoral framework. (EU Expert Mission)
- A sustained programme of voter education should be undertaken in partnership with civil society such as Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) and church groups. Areas of focus should include voter registration, how to vote and the importance of ballot secrecy. (Commonwealth)
- The PNGEC should carry out awareness programmes over the enrolment process, including display of the rolls and initiatives such as the 'Roll Look Up' app. Voters should also be made aware of their rights to appeal decisions relating to their registration. (Commonwealth)
- The PNGEC should engage with the media more thoroughly to enhance public understanding of the electoral process. It should also expand its use of social media. (Commonwealth)
- We encourage the PNGEC to collaborate with various youth organisations across PNG to develop and implement youth-friendly voter and civic education programmes, in consideration of the large youth population in PNG. The PNGEC should develop targeted civic awareness programmes for students of high schools and universities, so as to empower these young people to share this knowledge with their families and communities. (Commonwealth)

Current Status: This recommendation has not been taken up. The elections are a year away but still there is not much awareness being carried out on elections, voting rights, engagement with CSO's etc...

Other Recommendations:

1) Legal Framework

- In order to implement the right to an effective legal remedy and to enhance the level of confidence in the process, appropriate mechanisms to file appeals against decisions of the election administration need to be adopted before the polling and the announcement of results should be established. (EU Expert Mission)

Current Status: Recommendation has not been taken up. A nation - wide review of the Organic Law on National and Local Level Government Elections has been conducted and a report was tabled in Parliament in 2020. When the parliament reconvening in August of 2021 it is unclear as to whether electoral reforms will be passed.

2) Electoral Administration

- A lesson-learned exercise to be conducted in order to review and strengthen the effectiveness of the management by the PNGEC. Consideration should be given to increase the number of electoral commissioners for instance to five, aiming to improve the independence and impartiality of the PNGEC, who would be vested with geographical and horizontal responsibilities. (EU Expert Mission)
- The Electoral Commissioner to initiate the establishment of the Electoral Advisory Committee early in advance of the polling, for instance on the commencement of the campaign period, in order to benefit from its recommendations on electoral matters and give a more inclusive character to the decision-making process. (EU Expert Mission)
- The continuing empowerment of provincial authorities with new responsibilities could also help reduce costs and ensure more timely and effective election operations in the field. The PNGEC should provide training to provincial officials and ensure accountability of all expenditures within a specified time period. (Commonwealth)
- The Inter-Departmental Election Committee (IDEC) should be chaired by the Electoral Commissioner (or co-chaired with the Chief Secretary) so as to ensure the Electoral Commissioner is able to coordinate effectively across different government agencies, and to counter perceptions that the PNGEC is under the control of the Government and is not fully independent. (Commonwealth)
- The PNGEC should strengthen its working relationship with the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission (IPCC) to deliver regular briefings for political parties and candidates on all aspects of the election, to foster greater trust in the election process. (Commonwealth)
- Given the levels of distrust that now prevail, key electoral personnel must be recruited on the basis of merit. (Australian National University)
- Local efforts adopted to enhance trust in electoral processes should not be discouraged, and should possibly be adopted more widely, for example having scrutineers or candidates sign the outside of ballot boxes before polling teams are inserted. (Australian National University)
- The role and mandate of the Elections Advisory Committee should be clarified, and members provided with clear guidance on the circumstances under which elections might be failed. (Australian National University)

Current Status: A bulk of the recommendations from observers under Election Administration have not been seen to be taken up.

3) Boundary Delimitation

- A review of the boundaries of the Open electorates to be conducted well in advance of the next electoral event, in accordance with Constitutional provisions and recommendations of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. (EU Expert Mission)
- Inequalities arising from the present electoral boundaries need to be addressed to ensure equal representation for all citizens. This will require political will as successive parliaments have voted against the recommendations of the Boundaries Commission. (Australian National University)

Current Status: In recent statements, NBC reported on the 17th of April 2021 that Papua New Guinea Electoral Boundaries Commission needs K14 million to commence work on the review of electoral boundaries. Acting Electoral Commissioner Simon Sinai noted that it is about time the Boundaries Commission starts work on what was left back in 2018 as all boundaries in the country are overdue for a review. A call out was out on provinces and districts including stakeholders concerned to assist the Commission while conducting a review of all electoral boundaries around the country. Sunday Chronicle further reported on the 18th of April 2021 that 11 new electorates would be created in addition to the existing 89.

4) Candidate Nomination

- Independent candidates to be allowed to contest elections under one or both of the following conditions:
 - a. constituency-based nomination by verifiable signatures of voters in each electorate.
 - b. payment of a financial deposit which would be subject to refund if the independent candidate scores a minimum percentage of the total valid votes cast in that election in the electorate. (EU Expert Mission)

Current Status:

5) Campaign/ Electoral Finance

- It is critical that the PNGEC be provided with timely and adequate funding. The Government should consider introducing arrangements for direct appropriation of funds to the PNGEC to ensure its independence. (Commonwealth)
- Parliament should update and strengthen laws relating to the regulation and transparency of campaign financing. This needs to be coupled with more active enforcement of such laws. (Commonwealth)
- The PNGEC should ensure adequate and timely release of funds to provincial election authorities and service providers, to minimise avoidable disruption to the election timetable. (Commonwealth)
- Consideration should be given to amend the OLIPPAC so as to provide for:
 - a. appropriate campaign expenditure ceilings for political parties and candidates.
 - b. dissuasive and proportionate sanctions for exceeding the campaign donation ceilings.
 - c. requirements for the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission to make public the financial returns of the parties and of its audit report, in order to increase the transparency and accountability of electoral campaign. (EU Expert Mission)

Current Status: Amendments to the OLIPPAC have been made and it is yet to be passed in parliament. Amendments also covered campaign financing. PNGEC is however greatly underfunded and has recently announced that K14 million is needed to conduct a review of the PNG Electoral Boundaries.

6) The Media

- The defamation provisions in the Cybercrime Code Act 2016 to be reviewed, as they foresee excessive sanctions, both pecuniary and deprivation of liberty. (EU Expert Mission)
- Regulations should be developed to allocate free airtime during the campaign period to electoral contestants by state-owned audio-visual broadcasters on equal or proportional terms, granted on the basis of transparent and objective criteria. (EU Expert Mission)
- The creation of an independent Media Regulatory Authority could be considered, with clearly defined functions and with statutory powers to ensure editorial standards are maintained. (EU Expert Mission)
- Technical and financial support to be provided to the Media Council in order to be strengthened as a self-regulatory body. (EU Expert Mission)

Current Status: Recommendations have not been taken up.

7) Polling, Counting and Tabulation

- The strict enforcement of the secrecy of the ballot needs to be ensured by all key stake holders including election officers, the police, candidates and their scrutineers as well as voters. (EU Expert Mission)
- Training for Returning officers (RO), ARO and all Polling Officials needs to be prioritized to allow them to undertake the responsibilities effectively and based on the law. (Melanesian Spearhead Group)
- The overall transparency of the announcement of the election results to be improved. At a time of declaration of results at the constituency level the PNGEC should publish official data on voter turnout per district including gender breakdown, number of invalid votes per district and number of ballot boxes excluded from the count by returning officers. (EU Expert Mission)
- Counting should commence in all locations following the conclusion of the polling period. (Commonwealth)
- Counting processes should be reviewed, with a view to making it more efficient without compromising the transparency of the process. (Commonwealth)
- At all counting centres, consideration should be given for the ballot paper to be projected on a screen to ensure greater transparency during the counting period. (Commonwealth)
- PNG may wish to adopt the simple single page ballot paper system for both the Open Electorate and Provincial Governor seat to minimize wastage and cost of producing ballot papers. (Melanesian Spearhead Group)
- One-day polling as presently employed should be abandoned due to its unworkability or strengthened through the establishment of more polling teams and polling stations. In its current form it contributes to violence, insecurity and widespread electoral abuses. (Australian National University)

Current Status: Improvements in polling, counting and tabulation can only be seen when the Election is actually held.

8) Electoral Justice

- In order to ensure a balance between timely adjudication of election disputes and respect for the right to an effective remedy, a time frame could be set by the Organic Law for adjudicating election petitions and judicial reviews to provide that:
 - a. The National Court – Court of Disputed Returns to deliver its judgments within an appropriate time limit, for instance within one hundred and twenty days from the date of filing of the election petition.
 - b. A request for a judicial review by the Supreme Court of a decision of the National Court to be heard and disposed of, for instance, within one hundred and eighty days after the submission of the application for review. (EU Expert Mission)
- The system for election petitions should be reviewed to reduce the burden on the courts, and free the PNGEC from being a respondent, which would ensure speedier resolution of disputes. The PNGEC should be seen as a friend of the court, rather than a party to the proceedings. (Commonwealth)

Current Status: Unclear whether reviews on the process of election petitions have been taken up. Timing of adjudication disputes relating to elections still has not improved.

7) Polling, Counting and Tabulation

- The capacity of civil society organisations to be strengthened, with adequate donor support, so as to be able to undertake more comprehensive and long-term observation activities apart from voting, in particular voter registration, campaign, counting and announcement of results. (EU Expert Mission)
- The Organic law to be amended in order to explicitly include the right of citizens and international observers to observe all stages of the electoral process. (EU Expert Mission)

Current Status: Civil Society involvement in the electoral process is still lacking. TIPNG with funding from DFAT will be conducting a Nation-Wide observation of the 2022 National Elections.

10) Participation of Women

- An Organic Law providing for reserved seats for women in the parliament to be adopted. (EU Expert Mission)
- The OLIPPAC to be amended in order to include compulsory quotas for women for political parties nominating candidates in elections to the parliament, for instance a 20 per cent of women to their total number of candidates nominated. (EU Expert Mission)
- We urge political parties, independent candidates and stakeholders to enhance youth and women's political participation at all levels, to foster meaningful involvement and inclusion. A study looking into the participation of women as voters and as candidates should be commissioned to better understand the barriers faced by women. (Commonwealth)
- Ways to enhance the security of the campaign environment for female candidates should be examined. (Commonwealth)

Current Status: Recommendations have not been taken up. The Prime Minister however at PNG's 1st National Integrity Summit hosted by TIPNG stated that the government is looking at improving women participation in politics and having in place specialised seats in parliament for women. It was recently reported that the 5 seats allocated to women in parliament by the special parliamentary committee were rejected.

11) Participation of people with Disabilities

- A National Disability Act to be adopted with specific provisions for political participation. Financial incentives could be provided to political parties for nominating candidates for disabilities, while the election administration could consider developing procedures to promote the participation of disabled people as voters and election officials. (EU Expert Mission)

Current Status: Recommendation has not been taken up.

12) Election preparations

- Effort should be made to ensure polling stations are able to open on time. Election officials should ensure that the time for transportation of ballot boxes, materials and staff is incorporated into planning so as to minimise delays. (Commonwealth)
- The PNGEC should consider measures to be put in place with the aim of reducing the overall length of the polling period. (Commonwealth)
- The PNGEC should review the placement of polling locations to ensure adequate shelter, lighting where possible, and to enable voters to easily access the polling stations. Consideration should be given to a more equal distribution of voters among polling stations. (Commonwealth)
- Noting that security forces and polling officials are often deployed away from their homes, special effort should be made to ensure these officials are able to vote. Such consideration could include 'advance polling' for all officials involved in the national election. (Commonwealth)

Current Status: Progress of this cannot be seen until elections are actually carried out or approaching.

13) Voting practices

- There needs to be Standard Operating Procedures for the conduct of elections. (Melanesian Spearhead Group)
- The PNGEC should consider using more effective indelible ink with a higher concentration of silver nitrate. (Commonwealth)
- The PNGEC should ensure sufficient distribution of ballot papers based on the numbers on the electoral roll. The colour on the back of the ballot papers should match the front. (Commonwealth)
- The IPPCC should coordinate with the PNGEC to train political party representatives, including scrutineers, on voting procedures so as to avoid confusion at polling stations. (Commonwealth)

- The provincial and open ballot papers need to be redesigned so they remain easily distinguishable once folded. This could easily be achieved by ensuring the ballot paper is coloured front and back. (Australian National University)

Current Status: Progress of this cannot be seen until elections are actually carried out or approaching.

14) Previous Election Reports

- Give immediate attention and consideration to the recommendations of past Observer reports. (Melanesian Spearhead Group)
- There is a need for continued robust observation of forthcoming elections. This will help establish a strong culture of citizen accountability. (Australian National University)

Current Status: Recommendations of past observer reports have not been taken up. It is unclear how many observations will be carried out in 2022, this will be seen in the lead up to the commencement of elections and during the elections.

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