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Elections in Fiji

2014 General Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Asia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Fijian elections authorities as of 15 September 2014, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Election Day is Wednesday, September 17, 2014.¹ Polls are open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.²

For whom are citizens voting on Election Day?

In this general election, Fijian citizens will be electing all fifty Members of Parliament (MPs) to represent them in Fiji's legislature, Parliament.³ Whichever party controls a majority or plurality of seats in Parliament will then form a government and choose a Prime Minister to serve as its head.

Who can vote in the country?

All Fijian citizens who turned 18 years of age on or before August 4, 2014, are eligible to vote, provided that they registered by that date. Additionally, registered Fijian citizens not residing in Fiji can vote by mail, provided they applied to do so before August 26, 2014, and their vote is received before polls close on Election Day.⁴ The following citizens may not vote in this election: those who have been legally declared "mentally unsound," are currently imprisoned for a period of over 12 months, or are otherwise disqualified from registering due to a past electoral offense.⁵⁶

How many registered voters are there?

According to the official Facebook page of the Fiji Elections office, as of September 3, 2014, there are 591,095 registered voters.⁷

What is the structure of the government?

Fiji's government is based on the British Westminster model. Under a new constitution adopted in 2013, Parliament, the only body endowed with legislative authority, will be comprised of fifty members directly elected by Fiji's citizens at least every four years.⁸ The party with the most seats in Parliament will form a majority government, or a coalition, and elects a Prime Minister, who must by law be the leader of the largest party and a sitting MP.⁹ The Prime Minister then forms a cabinet by nominating MPs to lead government ministries that provide government services.¹⁰ Fiji's formal head of state, the President, holds what is a largely ceremonial title. Its holder must be an individual not currently holding

¹ Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 10). *My election. My Fiji*. Retrieved from <http://www.electionsfiji.gov.fj/2014-general-election/>

² Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 10). *2014 General elections FAQs*. Retrieved from <http://www.electionsfiji.gov.fj/2014-general-election-faqs/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Fijian Elections Office. *Voter information guide*. p. 6.

⁶ 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, Article 55.2.

⁷ Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 11). *Official Facebook page of the Fijian elections office*. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/Fijianelectionsoffice>

⁸ 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, Articles 46, 52, 54.1, 58.1.

⁹ Ibid. Article 93.1-2.

¹⁰ Ibid. Article 95.1-2.

office but who has, nevertheless, had a “distinguished career in any aspect of national or international life” and is appointed by Parliament.¹¹ Fiji’s judiciary is legally distinct from the legislature and the executive and is headed by a Supreme Court, with whom final judicial authority is vested.¹² As in the United States, Justices in the Supreme Court are appointed by the executive following approval from the legislature.¹³ Judges at the lower level are appointed by the Judicial Services Commission, a body tasked with “ensuring the efficient functioning of the judiciary.”¹⁴

What is the electoral system?

Fiji’s elections will be determined by a multi-member, open list, representation system.¹⁵ All candidates will be listed on a single, nationwide list, from which voters will make a single choice by choosing a number associated with a candidate. Seats will be awarded proportionally to each party based on the percentage of votes they receive.¹⁶ Independent candidates can win individual seats as well, but all parties or independent candidates must obtain at least five percent of the total vote to gain representation in Parliament.¹⁷

Fiji’s electoral system was reorganized following the adoption of the 2013 Constitution, and this election represents the first time it will be implemented. In the past, Fiji had a bicameral system consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives.¹⁸ Senators were all appointed by the President, based on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and Council of Chiefs.¹⁹ Representatives were directly elected by all citizens; however, approximately two-thirds of seats were reserved for ethnic constituencies (ethnic Fijians, Fijian Indians, Rotumans and all others not belonging to the previous categories).²⁰

Are there reserved seats for women? What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

There are no reserved seats for women. There are 44 women candidates out of a total of 247 candidates.²¹ See table below for gender breakdown within the candidate list:²²

¹¹ 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, Articles 81.2, 83.1.

¹² Ibid. Articles 97.1-2, 98.1,3.

¹³ Ibid. Article 106.1.

¹⁴ Ibid. Article 104.5.

¹⁵ Ibid. Article 53.1.

¹⁶ Ibid. Article 53.2.

¹⁷ Ibid. Article 53.3.

¹⁸ 1997 Constitution of Fiji, Article 45.

¹⁹ Ibid. Article 64.1.

²⁰ Ibid, Article 51.1.

²¹ Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 10). *2014 candidates list*. Retrieved from <http://www.electionsfiji.gov.fj/2014-candidates-list/>

²² Pacific Women in Politics. (2014, September 10). *Current elections – Fiji*. Retrieved from <http://www.pacwip.org/current-elections/fiji.html>

Total Number of Candidates	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Percentage of Female Representation
Total: 249	44	205	17.7
Fiji First: 50	9	41	18
Fiji Labour Party (FLP): 37	5	32	13.5
Fiji United Freedom Party (FUFPP): 3	0	3	0
National Federation Party (NFP): 49	9	40	18
Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA): 49	8	41	16.3
One Fiji Party: 13	3	10	23
People's Democratic Party (PDP): 46	9	37	19.6
Independents: 2	1	1	50

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

The Electoral Commission is an independent government agency and is responsible for overseeing elections and formulating relevant policy.²³ It has the authority to regulate the registration of voters, candidates and political parties, the number of seats in parliament and the declaration of results.²⁴ Its members include a chairperson who must be a judge, and six other members; all are appointed by the President.²⁵ Beneath the Electoral Commission is the Fijian Elections Office, responsible for administering the elections. The Office is headed by the Supervisor of Elections, who is also appointed by the President.²⁶ The Office is responsible for registering voters, parties and candidates, implementing voter education initiatives and enforcing electoral laws.²⁷

²³ 2014 Electoral Decree, Article 3.1.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 2014 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, Article 75.6-7.

²⁶ Ibid. Article 76.4 and 2014 Electoral Decree, Article 6.

²⁷ 2014 Electoral Decree, Article 6.1.

What is a polling place? What is a polling booth?

The Fiji Electoral Decree 2014 defines a polling station as “a building, structure, vehicle, vessel or enclosure ... which is identified pursuant to section 41 for the purpose of taking votes during polling.”²⁸ The decree states that “[p]olling stations and venues must be located in a place that is adequate for the efficient and orderly conduct of polling and is readily accessible to voters.”²⁹ A polling venue is defined as “a location that has one or more polling stations.”³⁰ “More than one polling station may be located in a polling venue provided there is sufficient space for the efficient and orderly conduct of polling.”³¹

How many polling places are set up on Election Day?

There will be 1,337 polling stations on Election Day, and each polling station has approximately 500 voters assigned to it.³²

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

In mid-August, the Fiji Elections Office sent 3,964 letters to registered voters abroad informing them of the postal voting system.³³ Out-of-country voting is permitted for Fijian citizens abroad, provided they have first registered to vote³⁴ and then registered for postal voting no later than August 26, 2014.³⁵ Postal ballots must be received by the Supervisor of Elections no later than the close of polling on Election Day, or 6:00 p.m. on September 17, 2014.³⁶

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

The Electoral Decree requires the Supervisor of Elections to ensure polling stations are at ground level and provide ramp access to polling booths for persons in wheelchairs.³⁷ The decree also mandates that illiterate or blind voters, or voters with other physical disabilities, can request that the presiding officer

²⁸ Ibid. Article 2.

²⁹ Ibid. Article 41.3.

³⁰ Ibid. Article 2.

³¹ Ibid. Article 41.4.

³² *Fiji Sun*, September 7, 2014.

³³ The Jet. (2014, August 26). *FEO sends out letters informing overseas voters on the postal voting system*. Elections sec. Retrieved from <http://thejetnewspaper.com/2014/08/26/feo-sends-out-letters-informing-overseas-voters-on-the-postal-voting-system/>

³⁴ Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 11). *Postal voting*. Retrieved from <http://www.electionsfiji.gov.fj/postal-voting/>

³⁵ Fijian Elections Office. “Postal Voting Information Paper.” p. 2.

³⁶ Fijian Elections Office. “Postal voting tri-fold.” p.1. Retrieved from <http://www.electionsfiji.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/postal-voting-tri-fold.pdf>

³⁷ 2014 Electoral Decree, Article 44.

assist him/her to cast their vote.³⁸ The Fijian Elections Office also produced a voter information video in Fiji Sign Language.³⁹

What technology will be used?

Leading up to these elections, Fiji put in place a new Electronic Voter Registration (EVR) system using biometric technology. During the voter registration process, thumbprints were collected from the registrants by an electronic scanner and then saved as a biometric marker, along with a photograph.⁴⁰ The purpose of the new system was to help eliminate voter fraud by accurately identifying an individual who tries to register more than once. All registered voters for the election can look up the location of their assigned Polling Station online, and they can also text (SMS) their voter identification number to 545 to look up their Polling Station.⁴¹ As of September 8, 2014, 405,604 registered voters had reportedly utilized this system.⁴²

Voting will be conducted with paper ballots.

Will the election management body use a media center?

Nothing official has been announced, but there will likely be a media center at the tabulation site in Suva. All journalists have to be accredited by the Fiji Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) to cover the elections. Only journalists who are previously registered with MIDA may get accreditation.⁴³

Where is voting, counting and tabulation held?

Voting will take place at 1,337 polling stations around the country. Counting will take place at each polling station.⁴⁴ Results from each polling station will be posted in a publicly accessible place at the polling station.⁴⁵ The presiding officer will then deliver the ballot papers and tabulations to a collection point from which they will be delivered to the Fiji Election Office in Suva for the certification and announcement of results.⁴⁶ The system used to count the votes is called the d'Hondt method, named after the Belgian mathematician Victor d'Hondt. It is a system of proportional representation that allocates seats to parties in proportion to the vote achieved by each party.

³⁸ Ibid. Article 57.1.

³⁹ Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 11). *Inside the polling station (sign language version)*. Retrieved from <http://www.electionsfiji.gov.fj/inside-the-polling-station-sign-language-version/>

⁴⁰ Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 11). *Voter registration*. Retrieved from <http://www.electionsfiji.gov.fj/voter-registration/>

⁴¹ Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 11). *2014 general election*. Retrieved from <http://www.electionsfiji.gov.fj>

⁴² Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 11). *Official Facebook page of the Fijian elections office*. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/Fijianelectionsoffice>

⁴³ (2014, September 9). Interview with local media representative.

⁴⁴ 2014 Electoral Decree, Article 89.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Article 97.2.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Articles 100.4, 101.1.

Who will observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

Invitations to observe elections are issued by the Government of Fiji under the Electoral Decree 2014. All observers who have been nominated must visit the Fijian Elections Office in Suva to register and receive their accreditation documents and an identity tag.⁴⁷ A Multinational Observer Group (MOG) has been accredited to observe the elections. The group comprises long- and short-term observers from Australia, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, India, Israel, South Africa, Brazil, Russia, Turkey, Japan, New Zealand, Korea and Iran.⁴⁸

When will official results be announced?

The Supervisor of Elections, Mohammed Saneem, has publicly stated that final results will be announced four to seven days after Election Day.⁴⁹

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

During polling, any registered voter or any polling agent may submit a complaint in writing to a presiding officer concerning any breach of polling procedure, unlawful campaign activity, or interference with the rights of a voter or polling agent at the polling station.⁵⁰ The presiding officer must register the complaint in the record book of the polling station and provide an immediate response. If satisfied that there is a substantial breach, then the officer must take such action as appropriate to remedy the breach.⁵¹ If the presiding officer refuses to recognise or address any substantiated breach, the complainant may immediately lodge a complaint to the Supervisor, who must consider the complaint on an immediate basis and make such order as he or she deems appropriate to remedy any substantiated breach.⁵²

Part Five of the Electoral Decree establishes a Court of Disputed Returns, which has the power to: order a recount of the ballot papers from one or more polling stations; declare invalid the results in one or more polling stations; order repeat voting in one or more polling stations; declare that any person who was returned as elected was not duly elected (and vice versa); declare an election to be absolutely void and to order a new election.⁵³ According to the 2013 Constitution, the Fiji High Court constitutes the Court of Disputed Returns.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 11). *Electoral observers for the 2014 general election*. Retrieved from <http://www.electionsfiji.gov.fj/electoral-observers-for-the-2014-general-election/>

⁴⁸ Fijian Elections Office. (2014, September 11). *Terms of reference for observer group signed*. Retrieved from <http://www.electionsfiji.gov.fj/terms-of-referenced-for-observer-group-signed/>

⁴⁹ (2014, September 7). FijiOne TV.

⁵⁰ 2014 Decree, Article 64.1.

⁵¹ Ibid. Article 64.2.

⁵² Ibid. Article 64.3.

⁵³ 2014 Electoral Decree, Article 126.1.

⁵⁴ 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, Article 66.

What security arrangements have been made?

The Fiji Police Force will provide security at polling stations.⁵⁵ Police officers may accompany presiding officers as they travel from the polling station to the collection point, upon request.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ 2014 Electoral Decree, Article 100.5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Article 100.5.

Resources

- 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji
 - Specifically, Chapters 3-5 ([English](#))
- 2014 Electoral Decree ([English](#))
- Fijian Elections Website ([English](#))
- Official Fijian Elections Office Facebook Page ([English](#))
- ElectionGuide.org: Republic of Fiji, Election for House of Representatives ([English](#))