



International Foundation  
for Electoral Systems

# **Election FAQs: Papua New Guinea**

*2022 National Election*

*July 2-22, 2022*

Asia-Pacific

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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## When is the 2022 national election?

Voting will be conducted according to the gazetted polling schedule. The polling period will start July 2, 2022 and end July 22, 2022. During this period, due to various movement, logistics and security considerations, there will be one-day polling (on different days) in some provinces and multiday polling in other provinces. Polling will be held between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.

There will be no polling on Saturdays or Sundays, and the first day of voting will be Monday, July 4.

## How are polling locations determined? How many polling locations will be set up?

Polling locations (also called polling places) are established according to a polling schedule that includes the election date, polling team numbers and names of the ward, polling places and the polling village or location assigned to each polling place. The polling schedule from the 2019 Local-Level Government Elections and the updated electoral roll data were used as the basis for determining the number of polling places. The Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission assigns as many polling places for each electorate as it deems necessary. Polling places are typically central locations in a city, town or village, such as schools, markets, churchyards or other familiar locations.

For the 2022 National Election, polling will take place at approximately 10,500 polling places. Most polling places will contain a single polling booth managed by one polling team. However, in areas with larger populations, multiple polling booths will be set up at a single polling place. At each polling place, voters will wait in lines divided by sex, either male or female, outside and leading into a polling booth.

## Which type of representatives are citizens voting for in the election?

Voters will directly elect 118 Members of Parliament (MPs) to serve in the National Parliament for a five-year term. Of the 118 MPs, 96 will represent districts (also known as open electorates) and 20 will represent provinces, one the National Capital District and one the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. To elect both types of MPs, each voter will cast two ballots: an open electorate ballot and a provincial electorate ballot. The table below presents a breakdown of the number of representatives elected by region and the type of seat contested.

Region	Open	Provincial	Total Seats
Highlands	36	7	43
Momase	26	4	30
New Guinea Islands	13	5	18
Southern	21	6	27

Region	Open	Provincial	Total Seats
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>118</b>

The 118 MPs will be selected from among 3,625 candidates, of whom 1,276 are endorsed by the 51 registered political parties and 2,349 are independent candidates.

Previously, the National Parliament was consisted of 111 MPs. On March 22, 2022, the National Parliament accepted the recommendations of the Electoral Boundaries Commission to create seven new open electorates, for a total of 96 constituencies. The 11th Parliament will therefore comprise 118 members.

### **When will official results be announced?**

Following the issue of electoral writs on May 12, 2022, the official results are expected to be announced by July 29, the date by which the electoral writs for the 2022 National Election must be returned to the Governor-General of Papua New Guinea.

### **What is the structure of the government?**

Papua New Guinea is a constitutional monarchy and unicameral parliamentary democracy. Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of State. She is represented by a governor-general, who is nominated for appointment by a vote of the National Parliament.

The prime minister is the head of government and is appointed by the governor-general on the proposal of the National Parliament. The National Executive Council (executive branch) is appointed by the governor-general on the recommendation of the prime minister.

The National Parliament will be composed of 118 Members of Parliament, of whom 96 represent open electorates and 22 represent provincial electorates, comprising electorates for the 20 provinces plus the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and the National Capital District. Members for provincial electorates generally also serve as provincial governors. Each province has its own provincial assembly and administration. Open electorate members also serve in their respective Provincial Assemblies.

The judiciary comprises the Supreme Court, National Court and local and village courts.

Separate elections are held for local-level governments (LLG) every five years. The LLG system consists of 28 urban and 302 rural LLG assemblies, for a total of 330. LLGs have an average of 19 ward members, elected for a five-year term based on a ward system. The current LLG members were elected in 2019.

### **What electoral system is used?**

Since 2007, all national elections use the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system. In the LPV system, voters rank their top three candidates from first to third choice on the ballot. To win, a candidate must have the support of an absolute majority of the electorate, or 50 percent plus

one of all formal ballots. In the LPV system, a candidate must receive 50 percent plus one or more votes to win in a specific constituency.

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

The Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission is mandated by the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, the Organic Law on National and Local-Level Government Elections and the Electoral Law (National Elections) Regulation to prepare for and conduct the 2022 National Election.

The Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission consists of one electoral commissioner, who is appointed by the Governor-General. The Commission is currently led by Electoral Commissioner Simon Sinai, ML.

## **Who is eligible to vote in the election?**

The *Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea* and *Organic Law on National and Local-level Government Elections* state that a person is eligible to vote if he or she is:

- A citizen of Papua New Guinea;
- At least 18 years of age or older before or on the date of Issue of Writs (May 12, 2022); and
- On the electoral roll.

A person must be on the electoral roll in order to vote. Voters are not required to present any identification document to vote in the election.

## **How many registered voters are there?**

For the 2022 National Election there are an estimated 5.6 million registered voters.

## **How was the electoral roll prepared?**

The electoral roll used in the 2019 local-level government (LLG) elections formed the base roll for the electoral roll update for the 2022 National Election. The National Capital District and Autonomous Region of Bougainville did not hold LLG elections in 2019. Therefore, in the National Capital District, the 2017 National Elections electoral roll was used as the base roll; in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, the 2021 Bougainville Community Government Elections electoral roll was used as the base roll.

In consultation with the provincial electoral offices, the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission developed an enrollment strategy with three phases for the national electoral roll update:

- **Phase 1: Working Roll Display and Amendment Process.** Included in-person pre-registration to identify the expected number of new and transfer-in electors and claim for enrollment form requirements and recording updates for existing electors.

- **Phase 2: Voter Registration Field Work Exercise.** Enrollment agents engaged with eligible electors (new and transfer-in) who registered their intention to enroll in the first phase to complete a claim for enrollment form and to collect information for updates for existing electors.
- **Phase 3: Public Display of Preliminary Roll and Objections Process.** Phase 3 could not be implemented in full. Public display was made possible only electronically, without the possibility of making corrections or further enrollments.

As an integrity initiative, the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission established a ward enrollment committee in each ward to support local ownership and oversight of the roll update process. Two enrollment agents were assigned to each ward to conduct the roll update exercise. The electoral roll update process was initially planned to begin in early 2021; however, in the context of funding constraints and several *ad-hoc* electoral events since late 2020, that was not possible. The electoral roll update took place in early 2022 and ended upon the issue of writs May 12, 2022.

## **Are there reserved seats for women?**

The Papua New Guinea National Parliament does not have a quota or reserved seat system. There are currently no women representatives in the National Parliament. According to the most recently available data, of the 3,635 candidates, 167, or 5 percent of contesting candidates, are women. In the 2017 National Elections, 167 (5 percent) of the 3,340 candidates were women. In 2012, approximately 4 percent of the candidates were women.

## **How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?**

If a voter requires assistance to cast a ballot, he or she may choose a person to aid in the voting process. If no such person is appointed by the voter, the presiding officer or assistant presiding officer will assist the voter to make choices and place the ballots in the ballot boxes.

Sections 140 and 143 of the *Organic Law on National and Local-level Government Elections* outline the protocol to assist voters who have a physical disability, are blind, have low vision or are illiterate.

## **How are the risks of COVID-19 being mitigated?**

The Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission recognizes that elections involve large, nationwide gatherings during voter registration, campaign rallies, polling and counting, which increase human-to-human contact and therefore increase the risk of transmitting COVID-19.

The Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission has engaged regularly with the institutions that are mandated to coordinate and respond to COVID-19 in Papua New Guinea — the Papua New Guinea National Control Centre for COVID-19 and the Papua New Guinea National Department of Health. As part of the engagement, the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission has developed COVID-19 Mitigation Standard Operating Procedures for enrollment, nominations, polling and counting in consultation with key stakeholders.

## **How will election results be counted?**

Once polling closes, polling teams transport the ballots in sealed ballot boxes to counting centers, where they will be counted sequentially in the presence of scrutineers. Counting will take place in district and provincial capitals. At the counting centers, ballots will be sorted, counted, quality checked and tabulated under the supervision of the assistant provincial returning officer and/or assistant returning officer and with support from sorters, counters, runners, tally persons and data recorders. Each candidate may appoint one scrutineer to observe counting in their place and raise objections if necessary.

Under Papua New Guinea's limited preferential voting system, the counting process occurs in two phases. The first phase is known as the first preference count. In this phase, the officials sort and count the votes from each ballot box for each constituency according to the voter's indicated first preference. During counting, officials also determine whether each ballot represents a formal (valid) or informal (invalid) vote; only formal votes are allocated to candidates. After the counting of all ballot boxes, the officials determine whether a candidate received an absolute majority of the votes. If no candidate received an absolute majority, the counting process will proceed to the second phase, known as the distribution of preferences.

At this stage, the counting officials will exclude the candidate who received the lowest number of votes and then distribute that candidate's votes to the remaining candidates based on the next preference marked on the ballots. The exclusion process continues until a candidate receives an absolute majority. Once a winning candidate is identified, the returning officer submits a request to the electoral commissioner for authorization to declare the results. Upon approval of the request, the returning officer officially declares the results of the election by signing and returning the writ to the electoral commissioner, who then returns them to the governor-general.

The results of the first preference count and distribution of preferences are recorded and certified in hard-copy forms.

While these are manual processes, data processing officers will use paper-based results forms and tablets to electronically record results and images of the forms throughout the counting process. The captured data and images will be transmitted automatically to the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission so results can be efficiently aggregated, verified and announced to the public through the Commission's media center and website.

## **What integrity measures are being used to prevent fraud during the election?**

The Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission will employ the following integrity measures to deter fraud during the 2022 National Election:

- Ballots with security features, such as unique serial numbers and watermarks, will be used for voting;
- Serial-numbered, tamper-evident seals will be used to prevent tampering with ballot boxes;

- Indelible ink will be applied to the small finger of voters' left hands to prevent repeat voting;
- Polling and counting will be witnessed by international and domestic observers and scrutineers appointed by candidates; and
- Counted ballots will be kept in sealed bags and placed in sealed ballot boxes during the counting process.

## **Are there any codes of conduct?**

Papua New Guinea will use the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Candidates and Party Scrutineers during the 2022 National Election. The document has been designed as part of a collaborative effort by the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission and the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission to uphold the electoral laws of the country. The aim of the Code of Conduct is to ensure the integrity of the electoral process, foster a peaceful campaign environment and promote the orderly conduct of elections. As of June 2022, 45 of 53 registered parties have signed the Code of Conduct. This marks a substantial increase over 2017 when only 24 of 45 parties signed the code.

Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission staff and temporary election workers are bound by a Code of Ethics and Conduct.

## **How will election disputes be adjudicated?**

As described in Part 18 of the *Organic Law on National and Local-level Government Elections*, the National Court has exclusive jurisdiction to hear and decide disputes relating to the validity of an election or return of writ. To challenge the result of an election, a voter or a candidate in the disputed constituency must file a signed petition with the National Court or a courthouse in the relevant provincial capital headquarters within 40 days of the declaration of the election results. The petition must “set out the facts relied on to invalidate the election or return” and “be attested by two witnesses whose occupations and addresses are stated.”<sup>1</sup> The petitioner must also pay a filing fee of 1,000<sup>2</sup> Papua New Guinea Kina (PGK) and deposit 5,000 PGK with the Registrar of National Court as security for costs.<sup>3</sup> The filing fee must be paid at a provincial finance office, and the official receipt of the payment shall be filed in the registry with the petition. The security deposit must be paid in cash or by bank check into the National Court Registrar’s Trust Account at the appropriate bank, and evidence of the deposit shall be filed with the petition.

The decision of the National Court is final and cannot be reviewed by way of appeal.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 208, Organic Law on the National and Local-level Government Elections.

<sup>2</sup> Section 6, Election Petition Rules 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Section 209, Organic Law on the National and Local-level Government Elections.

## **Who will be managing electoral security?**

The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary will work alongside the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission to provide security for electoral officers carrying out election-related activities. Security personnel, such as police, correctional services or defense force officers, are responsible for ensuring that electoral officials are safe and that polling places and counting centers are peaceful. At polling places, the presiding officers are responsible for liaising with security personnel, while the assistant provincial returning officers and assistant returning officers are charged with the responsibility at counting centers.

The security personnel will be responsible to provide security, including physical security of premises and materials, logistics teams and poll workers. The security personnel will also be responsible for providing security to polling teams as they move in accordance with the polling schedule.

## **Will the election management body use a media center?**

The Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission will host a media center for media personnel and other accredited stakeholders during the polling and counting process. In addition, the Electoral Commission will post all media releases and official results on its website ([www.pngec.gov.pg](http://www.pngec.gov.pg)).

## **Who can observe during election? How can they get accreditation?**

International and domestic observer groups and scrutineers appointed by candidates can observe the polling and counting process. The Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission prepared a list of international observer groups and worked with the Papua New Guinea Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to issue invitations. Based on the receipt and review of observer accreditation applications, the Commission will issue accreditation badges to observers.

## Resources

- *The Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea 1975*, as amended in 2016
- *Organic Law on National and Local-level Government Elections 1997*, as amended in 2012
- *Interpretations Act 1975*
- *Criminal Code Act 1974* (particularly Division 3 — Corrupt and Improper Practices at Elections)
- *Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates 2003*
- *Electoral Law (National Elections) Regulation 2007* (“Electoral regulations”)
- *Election Petition Rules 2017*
- *Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Candidates and their Supporters*
- *COVID-19 Mitigation Standard Operating Procedures*

## Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Papua New Guinea elections authorities as of June 29, 2022, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any International Foundation for Electoral Systems policy or technical recommendations.