

A photograph of a woman in a patterned dress handing a document to a ballot box. In the background, other people are visible under a large tree. The scene is outdoors, likely at a polling station.

2017 PAPUA NEW GUINEA GENERAL ELECTIONS ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT

Australian National University
Department of Pacific Affairs

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ABBREVIATIONS

AEC	Australian Election Commission	PMV	public motor vehicle
ANU	Australian National University	PNC	People's National Congress Party
ARO	assistant returning officer	PNG	Papua New Guinea
COG	Commonwealth Observer Group	PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force
CSO	civil society organisation	PNGEC	Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission
DDA	District Development Authority	PNGRPP	PNG Registry of Political Parties
DES	Decentralised Enrolment System	PO	presiding officer
DSIP	District Services Improvement Program	PPC	provincial police commander
EAC	Electoral Advisory Committee	PPP	People's Progress Party
EHP	Eastern Highlands Province	PSIP	Provincial Services Improvement Program
EM	election manager	RO	returning officer
ENB	East New Britain	RPNGC	Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary
IDEC	Inter-Departmental Election Committee	SHP	Southern Highlands Province
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems	TEW	temporary election workers
IPPCC	Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission	TIPNG	Transparency International Papua New Guinea
K	kina	WHP	Western Highlands Province
LLG	Local Level Government	WiLSP	Women in Leadership Support Program
LPV	limited preferential voting		
MP	member of parliament		
NA	National Alliance		
NATEL	National Elections		
NDC	National Capital District		
NGI	New Guinea Islands		
OLPLLG	Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government		
OLPLLGE	Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government Elections		
PESC	Provincial Election Steering Committee		
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Delivering a national election “is the largest and most complex logistical operation a country ever faces in peacetime... It involves putting the entire adult population of the country through a proscribed process, under tight timeframes, sometimes as short as one day” (Maley 2014). In PNG the exercise is further complicated by difficult terrain, punishing weather conditions, poor transport infrastructure, extreme linguistic and cultural diversity which manifests as highly variable voter behaviour, inconsistent administrative performance at the subnational level, markedly diverse security environments and severe fiscal constraints, including significantly reduced funding in non-election years and the late and piecemeal release of funds in election years. All of these factors contribute to PNG’s elections being amongst the world’s most challenging and most expensive (per capita) to deliver (DFAT 2013).

In mid-2017, PNG conducted its 9th general elections since independence. This report provides an independent research-based assessment of those elections, undertaken by Australian- and PNG-based researchers, under the auspices of the ANU. The ANU was one of several groups, including the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Melanesian Spearhead Group, the European Union, and Transparency International PNG (TIPNG), who were invited to observe the elections.¹ The 2017 election observation was the third such observation undertaken by the ANU in PNG, and is the most comprehensive observation we have undertaken to date anywhere in the region. Funded in partnership by the ANU and the Australian Aid Program, the 258-person observation team, led by Nicole Haley, head of DPA,² comprised 32 PNG academics/researchers in team leader roles, 21 ANU-based academics in mentoring roles, 10 ANU undergraduate students, 192 PNG observers recruited from civil society and the tertiary sector, and three ANU support staff.

The observation differed from those of other groups in that it employed a mixed-methods approach, involving detailed observation by domestic and international observers from the issue of writs through to the formation of government, key informant interviews and two cross-sectional citizen surveys designed to explore attitudes, perceptions and the ways citizens engaged with and experienced the election.³ In total, over 7500 citizens were surveyed. Their views, experiences and insights inform this report and supplement the observations made by the ANU team.

Box 1: At a Glance – the ANU observation

- » 35 observer teams each led by a PNG researcher or practitioner
- » 258 observers, including 34 international and 224 domestic
- » Domestic observers from civil society and the tertiary sector
- » Each of PNG’s major tertiary institutions represented
- » Systematic observation over three months
- » Over 6500 person days of observation
- » Collection of quantitative and qualitative data in a systematic way
- » Provision for evidence-based comparisons between districts and regions
- » Priority given to local knowledge and PNG expertise
- » Observations made in all four regions and in National Capital District (NCD)
- » A mix of urban, rural, open and provincial electorates observed
- » Observations in 69 of 111 electorates
- » Detailed study of 44 electorates (33 open and 11 provincial)
- » Detailed observations at 945 of the 10,825 polling stations nationwide
- » 7510 citizens surveyed during the pre-poll (campaign) and post-polling periods

The approach employed also enabled exploration of the political economy factors shaping the electoral environment and political culture more broadly – things that influence the elections, but are largely beyond the control of the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission (PNGEC) – and provided for an evidence-based assessment about the administration and execution of the election; the impact of electoral reforms and the decentralisation of election delivery; and the extent to which PNG citizens owned their votes and exercised genuine choice in the election.

The key findings arising from the team observations and citizen surveys are summarised below. The data upon which these findings are based is provided and discussed more fully in the body of the report.

Key Findings

The 2017 elections did not improve on the 2012 elections. Sobering as it is, this report concludes that elections in PNG continue to trend in the wrong direction. It finds that the 2017 elections witnessed a marked deterioration in the overarching election environment. Serious irregularities, including voter intimidation, personation, underage voting, multiple voting and proxy voting, were identified to a greater or lesser extent by each of the 35 observer teams deployed by the ANU. Electoral misbehaviour and malfeasance, as noted in relation to both the 2007 and 2012 elections, continued to flourish in 2017, facilitated in large part by the poor state of the electoral roll. It proved more widespread and more brazen than ever before. Electoral violence was also more widespread than previously noted, punctuating the election period in all but three of the 69 electorates in which the ANU observation team made detailed observations. Coupled with this, poor standards and bad behaviour have become normalised, serving to undermine local confidence in the PNGEC and the electoral process more broadly. Restoring confidence in the electoral process must be a priority moving forward.

Assessing an election is no easy task. Nor is it “an exact science” (EU 2016:61). Developing countries, those with poor transport and communications infrastructure and difficult terrain, and those prone to violence and insecurity are particularly difficult environments in which to deliver elections. PNG serves as a case in point. As a consequence, imperfect adherence to proper electoral practices and some level of irregularity are to be expected.

Increasingly, electoral practitioners support deep analysis of the electoral process and advocate the application of international election standards and principles in the conduct of election observation and the assessment of elections,⁴ choosing to characterise the conduct of elections in terms of credibility and legitimacy. Credibility in this context involves more than being “good enough”, and speaks to the issue of whether or not, on balance, the election result represents the genuine will of the people.

The key international standards, against which elections are typically assessed, have their genesis in Article 21(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which states:

“The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures”.

In practice this is taken to include a requirement that elections are held within a prescribed period, under a sound legal framework that offers actual and timely remedy, by an effective election administration that conducts itself in a transparent and non-partisan manner, and provide voters with: the freedom to exercise genuine choice without inducements, intimidation and undue influence or fear of retribution; the freedom to vote by genuine secret ballot; universal and equal suffrage, including a genuine opportunity to register, inspect the electoral roll and vote. (NDI 2013:6-7; EU 2016:19).

The 2017 PNG national elections were qualitatively different to preceding elections. Throughout the country a large number of citizens and commentators, including highly prominent citizens and government MPs, have indicated publicly and directly via social and mainstream media that they consider the 2017 elections the “worst elections” ever.⁵ Whilst the surveys and data from the ANU observation do not necessarily provide for such an assessment, they do evidence that the quality, integrity and credibility of elections has deteriorated significantly since 2007, even in locations which have typically delivered elections of a higher standard.

Elections in PNG are highly variable on multiple fronts. Election administration, violence, insecurity, electoral fraud and malpractice all vary significantly from location to location, meaning elections are conducted in diverse social, cultural, administrative and regulatory contexts. Nevertheless, none of the observer teams deployed by the ANU in 2017 reported entirely well-managed and well-administered elections and nowhere in the country did the elections run smoothly or without incident. Moreover, varying degrees of disorder were witnessed around the country and within individual electorates.

Certainly, there were some polling stations which were well run and well administered with almost all rules followed. However, there were others where important rules and processes were violated, and others still where large-scale fraud and maladministration were witnessed. In fact, the 2017 elections saw democratic processes hijacked in many places, resulting in elections that were seriously flawed. Electoral fraud – comprising unlawful interference in the process of the election including fraudulent voter registration, manipulation of the electoral roll, personation, multiple voting, underage voting and misrepresentation or alteration of the true results of the election (e.g. false declarations and double declarations) – was more brazen and more widespread than in either 2007 or 2012. Money politics was also more widespread and of a different order than in earlier elections, being focused on key officials and local “strongmen” who could deliver outcomes rather than individual voters.

Administration of the 2017 elections was very much decentralised, with key responsibilities, including updating and maintaining the electoral roll, development of polling schedules, appointment and training of polling teams, the transport, storage and security of sensitive materials and counting arrangements devolved to provinces. Materials and supplies including ballot papers, indelible ink and ballot boxes were purchased centrally.

As in previous elections, preparations were hampered by the late receipt of funds and the quantum of funds received. However, more so than in 2007 or 2012, there was clear evidence of early preparatory work around procurement of essential items, including the ballot papers, ballot boxes, indelible ink etc. It was also clear that this was done with a view to making considerable savings and to addressing many of the problems identified in 2012. This is to be commended.

Bona fide problems were evident, however, at the provincial level. In large part these pertained to the electoral roll – and lack of confidence therein – and concerns about the partisanship of key officials, delayed funding and funding shortfalls. More so than in previous elections, observers reported candidate capture of key electoral processes, including the roll update, appointment of polling and counting officials and with counting and declarations. Interference of this kind was identified to varying degrees in all regions. However, allegations of political interference were most prevalent in the Highlands. Such were the levels of distrust in many places that polling was delayed due to complaints about the electoral roll and the appointment of polling officials.

The electoral roll continues to be highly problematic, disenfranchising scores of eligible citizens across the country. This remains the most significant administrative challenge for the PNGEC moving forward. In 2017, all 35 observer teams noted serious defects with the electoral roll, and we find, based on the observations made and information provided by the 3770 citizens surveyed during the campaign period, that many citizens were not provided genuine opportunity to register on a non-discriminatory basis, nor were they provided reasonable opportunity to inspect the electoral roll prior to or during the election. We also find that the poor state of the 2017 electoral roll created such angst, disaffection and disenfranchisement that it influenced almost every other aspect of the election.

In contrast to previous elections, responsibility for cleansing, updating and preparing the 2017 electoral roll was devolved to provinces, and a Decentralised Enrolment System (DES) was introduced. In many provinces this important work was delayed due to funding shortfalls and when it did occur was opaque and served simply to exacerbate the problems identified in past elections rather than obviate them. The pattern of simultaneous under- and over-enrolment noted in many locations across the country in 2007 and 2012 was again evident in 2017. Overall, very few of the 7510 citizens surveyed pre- and post-polling had confidence in the electoral roll, with confidence in the accuracy of the roll dropping to just 10% in 2017.

One pleasing development, though, was the online **Roll Lookup**⁶ application, which provided citizens with the ability to check their enrolment status online. One in six citizens surveyed during the campaign period reported knowing about the application and over half of those had checked their enrolment status online many via a mobile hand-held device

such as a mobile telephone. Unfortunately, where entries were found to be incorrect they were not able to be amended online.

The investment in awareness ahead of the 2017 elections was far more modest than in either 2007 or 2012.

This is reflected in the results of the pre-polling citizen survey, which reveal that across all four regions a smaller proportion of citizens attended voter awareness in 2017 compared with 2012. Of particular note, though, is the significant increase in candidate led 'awareness' and the growing importance of social media. While election-related print media, television and radio broadcasts reached fewer voters than in 2012, between 9–27% of voters (depending on region) reported exposure to PNGEC media awareness via social media.

Elections in PNG are hyper-competitive, attracting large numbers of candidates. In 2017, 3340 candidates nominated – slightly fewer than had nominated than in 2012. Of these, three in five candidates ran as independents, although only 14 independent candidates were elected – two fewer than in 2012. Seventy per cent of all those who contested the elections received a primary vote share of 3% or less.

The 2017 elections saw a return to an eight-week campaign period, compared to the five-week campaign period in 2012. While wealthier candidates seemingly benefited from the shorter campaign period in 2012, they were not disadvantaged by the longer campaign, being able to outlast their competitors. For the most part, general campaigning tended to be less flamboyant than in previous elections, with citizens in many parts of the country describing the election as “dry”, reflecting a qualitative change in the way money was used in this election.

Observers across the country reported candidates were less mobile than in recent elections, due to the prevailing security situation, with many campaigning only in areas where support and access was assured. As in 2012, local campaign managers played a pivotal role brokering and maintaining support for their candidates. Nevertheless, campaigning remained highly competitive. Observers and citizens reported curtailing their movements throughout the campaign, polling and post-polling periods, due to unprecedented levels of violence and insecurity which punctuated the elections from start to finish (see also TIPNG 2017:62).

The ANU observation team documented and witnessed election-related violence (i.e. violence catalysed by the election) in all but three of the 69 electorates in which it undertook detailed election observations.⁷ The team also documented 204 deaths due to election-related violence,⁸ large-scale destruction of property and the hijacking and destruction of numerous ballot boxes, all of which were beyond the capabilities of the security personnel to prevent or contain. Whilst we cannot comment authoritatively on the 42 electorates to which we did not deploy observers, we do note there were media reports of election-related deaths in nine of the 42 electorates, armed violence (including with firearms) in 15 of the 42; election violence resulting in serious injuries in 11 of the 42 and election violence resulting in major property damage in 15 of the 42.

Money played a huge part in 2017 elections, and there is no doubt that “money politics”, which continues to be most pervasive in the Highlands, was more significant than ever before. Candidates across the country (in all four regions) were observed to have spent significant amounts of money securing support and offering material incentives to voters. Though widespread, money politics was of a different order than in earlier elections, being focused on key officials and those with the ability to influence. It was mediated by “strongmen” in some communities, and well-respected leaders in others. There was also a significant flow of resources from voters to candidates, providing an ideal situation for “strongmen” and other community leaders to consolidate their political influence at the local and parliamentary level. The flow of resources from communities to candidates as mediated by local strongmen signals a fundamental shift in the relationship between constituents and their political representatives.

Over 10,500 security personnel took part in the 2017 national elections security operations, making it one of PNG’s largest security operations to date. By way of contrast, approximately 8500 security personnel had taken part in the 2012 election operations. Like the broader election administration, election security in 2017 was also decentralised and subject to funding shortfalls.

Three in five observer teams, including all 13 Highlands teams, witnessed police brutality, including the use of excessive force. In **Hela, Eastern Highlands** and **National Capital District** observers witnessed security personnel driving their

vehicles at speed into crowds in order to disperse those who had gathered, and in several locations security personnel were observed firing either warning shots or shots directly into gathered crowds. Civilian deaths resulted in Southern Highlands, Hela, Enga and Gulf provinces. Despite this heavy-handedness, security personnel proved largely unable to deter voting irregularities or to prevent serious election-related violence. By way of contrast, security at the counting centres was unequivocally described as tight, although more than half of all observer teams (20 of 35) reported police harassment of scrutineers, local observers, counting officials and, in some cases, the general public.

Notwithstanding considerable variation in the nature, extent and patterns of violence, ANU observers in all four regions – particularly those who had observed multiple elections – considered the 2017 elections the most violent they had witnessed. Citizens surveyed during the post-polling period tended to concur, with two thirds considering the 2017 election worse than 2012, and the most violent of the three most recent elections. In all but six of the 69 electorates in which detailed observations were made,⁹ ANU observers witnessed violent altercations leading to serious injury, death or major property damage. What is more, they documented 204 election-related deaths between the issue of writs and the immediate post-declaration period. Across all regions, fewer citizens reported voting freely in 2017 than in 2012. Specifically, one third (35%) of all citizens surveyed post-polling reported they experienced intimidation when voting, while one in four (25%) reported that they did not vote. As in previous elections, women experienced intimidation more frequently than their male counterparts.

In 2017 the ANU observation team undertook detailed observations at 945 of the 10,825 polling stations nationwide. Polling station coverage varied considerably between electorates, although observations were made at 20% of polling stations in the 33 open electorates in which detailed studies were made, delivering a high degree of confidence in the observation findings.

As in 2012, the conduct of polling varied from place to place across the country, although in each and every electorate in which observations were made, procedural anomalies and serious irregularities were noted, albeit with varying frequency. Serious irregularities, including personation, underage voting, multiple voting and proxy voting, have seemingly become commonplace across much of the country and served to undermine the integrity of the vote.

Overall, very few polling stations opened on time, being delayed by anything from several hours to several days. As a consequence, polling fell behind schedule in many provinces, necessitating the revision of elections schedules on the ground, and an extension of polling by four days in four provinces, namely **Madang, Gulf, Western** and **East Sepik**. Variation in the set-up of polling stations and in the processing of voters was again noted around the country, although adherence to procedure continues to be strongest in the New Guinea Islands, Southern and Momase regions. In the Highlands the electoral roll and indelible ink were abandoned early or not used at all and observers reported less individual voting than in 2012. None of the Highlands observer teams witnessed individual voting of a kind associated with democratic elections.

Two thirds (65%) of all citizens surveyed post polling considered the 2017 elections worse than the 2007 and 2012 elections, and fewer than half (46%) reported being able to freely exercise their vote. Many voters were denied genuine choice due to violence and intimidation, or through block voting or coerced collective voting which sometimes entailed being issued with pre-marked ballot papers. The ANU team also noted the extent to which the polling schedules work to disenfranchise particular groups of voters to a greater or lesser extent in particular regions. If maximum voter franchise is to be achieved this will need to be addressed in future elections, just as greater effort will be needed to address the violence and intimidation associated with elections in PNG.

On balance, counting was considered less well managed than previously. Counting once again proved slow – slower in fact than 2012 – and fewer checks and balances were witnessed. It took two weeks to complete most open counts and longer for provincial ones. As a consequence, the deadline for the return of writs was extended twice. As at 24 July (the date by which the writs were initially to have been returned) only 59 of 111 seats (53%) had been declared. By comparison, 76 of 111 seats (68%) had been declared at the equivalent point in 2012. So too when parliament sat for the first time after the election; five seats were still to be declared.

Fierce competition and disputes between candidates saw numerous ballot boxes destroyed, damaged or hijacked and many were set aside or excluded from counting due to alleged ballot box tampering. As a consequence, 13 seats were

declared with fewer than 80% of all boxes counted, including three provincial seats which were declared with less than 30% of all boxes counted.

Nonetheless the 2017 general elections generated fewer electoral petitions than in 2012, although 50 per cent more than 2007. The number of filed election petitions dropped from 105 in 2012 to 79 in 2017 and saw 71 of 111 results challenged. By way of contrast, 80 of 111 election results were challenged in 2012. While the overall reduction in the number of election petitions filed may suggest greater confidence in the 2017 election results, we do not consider this to be the case and submit that instead there are still strong indications of continued and widespread dissatisfaction.

A record number of women (179) contested the 2017 national election, continuing a trend of increasing numbers of women contesting national elections in PNG. While 167 women are officially recorded as having contested the 2017 national elections (IFES 2017:3), we found that in fact 179 women did so, accounting for 5.4% of the 3340 candidates who nominated. Of the 179 women who contested the 2017 elections, 117 ran as independents, while 62 were party endorsed. Eleven of the 27 parties that endorsed female candidates endorsed only a single female candidate. In 2017, party-endorsed female candidates typically performed better and placed higher than their independent counterparts.

Women candidates who participated in a post-election debrief workshop hosted by DPA as part of the *PNG Women in Leadership Support Program (WiLSP)*¹⁰ were adamant the electoral environment has become less favourable for women, with many readily asserting the detrimental impact violence and intimidation had on their campaigns. They also identified money politics as a particular challenge influencing election performance, noting the increased prevalence of early campaigning over the course of the election cycle. Women candidates also insisted that the electoral process has been corrupted, and that such corruption is typically effected by men to the benefit of men.

As in previous PNG elections, women's and men's experiences of and participation in the 2017 elections was highly gendered. In the six Highlands provinces in which observations took place, observers witnessed intimidation and assaults upon women during the campaign period. Assaults and intimidation were also witnessed by observers in **NCD, Lae Open, Menyamaya Open** and **Yangoru-Saussia Open**. In several locations across the Highlands, and in **Rigo Open**, observers also reported young girls being gifted to candidates, key officials or security personnel, as well as politically motivated marriages being organised. Across the Highlands, observers witnessed men – often young men – controlling the vote at polling stations. Where this happened few women voted, and even fewer voted freely. In every region the proportion of women who reported voting freely was lower than the proportion of men who were reported as having voted freely.

More women were engaged as election officials in 2017 than previously, with 30 or so appointed to key roles. For example, two of the 22 election managers (EMs) were women, as were 13 of the assistant EMs. Two of the 89 open electorate returning officers (ROs) were also women and 14 or so of the more than 350 assistant returning officers (AROs). Disappointingly, observers in several provinces reported poor treatment of the women in these leadership roles, noting that they were subjected to what our observers considered “more than usual” abuse and harassment by candidates and scrutineers.

There is still considerable work to be done to improve the franchise of people with disability, including around the rights of people with disabilities. Analysis of the quantitative data from the pre-poll citizen survey revealed there to be a small, though not insignificant proportion of respondents across all four regions that felt disabled citizens should not vote. Pleasingly, the proportion of respondents who voiced such views dropped in 2017.

In many places, people with disabilities would have found it difficult to fully participate in the elections, despite the formal introduction of designated express lanes for the elderly, infirm and people with disability. Though widely publicised in the press, only nine observer teams witnessed discussion of the new express lanes in the training provided to polling teams, and even fewer saw them operating in practice. Nevertheless, observers reported seeing the elderly and disabled fast-tracked at some polling stations.

Observers also noted, however, that few polling stations in rural areas were set up to accommodate the needs of the elderly, infirm or people with disabilities. Accessing polling stations and navigating the “rugby scrum” queues at many locations would have proved particularly difficult for the mobility impaired. It is conceivable therefore that many citizens with a disability did not vote.

Recommendations

The following recommendations arise from the key findings contained within this report. The recommendations are grouped under thematic sub-headings and not necessarily in order of priority. Activities such as strengthening the voter registration system and producing a new more credible electoral roll should be accorded the highest priority. These will be absolutely critical to the success or otherwise of the 2022 general elections.

Electoral Rolls

- » ***Development of a brand new electoral roll is again warranted.*** Widespread irregularities in both 2012 and 2017 electoral rolls indicate that the gains of 2007 have not been sustained. As such we recommend a widely publicised nationwide enrolment exercise over the next three years, coupled with the introduction of a voter identification card.
- » ***Establishment and maintenance of a new electoral roll would be greatly facilitated by the immediate establishment of a permanent roving enrolment team within the PNGEC.*** Decentralisation of responsibility for the preparation and maintenance of the electoral roll and the use of locally engaged enrolment agents has failed to deliver a credible roll that inspires citizen confidence.
- » ***In order to improve the integrity of the electoral roll, all citizens must be provided with genuine opportunity to actively participate in the voter registration, verification and roll cleansing exercises when they occur.*** To facilitate this, the work of cleansing and updating the electoral roll must commence earlier in the electoral cycle, thereby allowing sufficient time to properly display preliminary rolls at the district and sub-district levels.

Electoral Boundaries and Equal Suffrage

- » ***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.
- » ***Greater effort is required to safeguard the franchise of urban settlers.*** Additional security should be deployed to those polling stations where migrant settlers are enrolled to ensure their votes are not usurped. Beyond this the Boundaries Commission might explore the merits of urban seats, such as those introduced in Samoa prior to the 2016 Samoan elections.

Election Administration and Management

- » ***Given the levels of distrust that now prevail, key electoral personnel must be recruited on the basis of merit,*** appointed early in the election cycle, properly trained and supported, and held accountable for their actions.
- » ***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.
- » ***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.
- » ***The PNGEC needs to ensure greater consistency and discernment in relation to wards with large enrolments and in relation to the number of voters to be processed in a single day at any one polling station.*** Additional polling teams should be assigned to wards with large enrolments. The current situation where some polling stations have as few as 30 registered voters while others have over 4000 registered voters is patently absurd.
- » ***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.
- » ***The provincial and open ballot papers need be redesigned so they remain easily distinguishable once folded.*** This could easily be achieved by ensuring the ballot paper is coloured front and back.

- » **The power to declare elections should be removed from ROs** and vested in the electoral commissioner alone. Declarations should only be made after the full results have been supplied and verified at PNGEC headquarters in Port Moresby.

Awareness and Training

- » **Training of electoral officials continues to be important and needs to be given priority in the lead up to the 2022 elections.** The effectiveness of cascade training has proven limited, especially in relation to the introduction of new concepts, ideas and procedures. Instead we recommend the establishment of a small professional team of trainers within the PNGEC who travel to each district well in advance of the elections to train and accredit prospective polling officials.
- » **Electoral and civic awareness and voter education involving civil society needs to be prioritised and funded throughout the election cycle to ensure widespread coverage,** especially in remote rural areas which are for the most part beyond the reach of media campaigns. Ongoing donor support for such activities is encouraged.
- » **All public awareness activities should cease prior to the issue of writs,** in order to prevent manipulation and co-option by candidates. Only media awareness should continue through the campaign period.

Security and Inter-Agency Cooperation

- » **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.
- » **Electoral officials and security personnel deployed to remote districts need a means for reliable and effective communication.** Where mobile phone coverage is poor they need to be provided with radios or satellite phones that are in good working order so as to facilitate inter-agency communication in the field.

Security

- » **The role of the security forces in elections needs to be clearly established through ongoing training,** which includes modules on electoral procedures and electoral offences and should include guidance on when and how to intervene. Security personnel on election operations must be seen to be making a genuine contribution to electoral security and governance.
- » **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.
- » **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.
- » **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.** Unless there are consequences for such behaviour, ongoing degradation of the electoral environment is likely.

Domestic Observers

- » **There is a need for continued robust observation of forthcoming elections.** This will help establish a strong culture of citizen accountability. Preparation for such activities must commence earlier in the election cycle to ensure local observers are recruited, trained and accredited well in advance.

Inclusion

- » **Greater participation on the part of women in PNG's political processes needs to be encouraged.** To facilitate this, gender-segregated polling should be retained. Staff should be trained and made cognisant of these procedures, and

if necessary they should be legislatively prescribed. Further research concerning how to encourage greater numbers of women candidates is also needed, as are enabling mechanisms which would facilitate an increase in the number of women in parliament.

- » **Continue establishing separate polling stations in urban areas for people with disabilities** and establish procedures to ensure that they are given priority at all other polling booths.

COUNT 01	COUNT 02	PROG.TOT	COUNT 03	PROG.TOT	COUNT 04	PROG.TOT	COUNT 05	PROG.TOT	COUNT 06
DATE'S Number & Name									
PR. CHAN PHILIP									
2	0	2	0	2					
2	0	2	0	2					
4	1	5	3	8					
878	423	1301	854	2155					
0	0	0	0	0					
1	0	1	0	1					
0	0	0	2	2					
626	335	961	807	1768					
1	0	1	0	1					
1514	759	2273	1666	3939					
54	13	67	44	111					
1568	772	2340	1710						

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

In mid-2017, PNG conducted its 9th general elections since independence. As in previous elections, the Australian National University (ANU) was one of several groups invited by the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission (PNGEC) to observe the elections. Other observer groups included the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Melanesian Spearhead Group, the European Union, Transparency International Papua New Guinea (TIPNG), and representatives of several diplomatic missions. Their findings are contained in a series of publicly available reports (see COG 2017; PIFS 2017; EU 2017; TIPNG 2017). Accreditation of observers was coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The 2017 elections saw Australian- and Papua New Guinea-based researchers work together under the auspices of the ANU, to undertake their third, and most comprehensive, election observation yet. Funded in partnership by the Australian National University (ANU) and the Australian Aid Program, the 258-person observation team, led by Nicole Haley, head of the ANU Department of Pacific Affairs (DPA), comprised 32 PNG academics/researchers in team leader roles, 21 ANU-based or ANU-affiliated researchers in mentoring roles,¹¹ 10 ANU undergraduate students, 192 PNG observers recruited from civil society and the tertiary sector, and three ANU support staff. Each of PNG's major tertiary institutions were represented – the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), the University of Technology (Unitech), Divine Word University (DWU), and the University of Goroka (UOG) – as were the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission (IPCCC) and the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission (CLRC). Of the PNG contingent, three very experienced observers, Thompson Fafungian, Steven Gari and David Lundape, took on key coordination roles, identifying and training observers in the Sepik, and eastern and western ends of the Highlands respectively.

As part of the 2017 ANU election observation, 35 small observer teams were deployed throughout the country. Collectively, these teams carried out observations in 69 of PNG's 111 electorates and undertook detailed studies of 44 electorates (33 Open and 11 Provincial). This entailed independent observation by four or more observers in the case of open electorates and ten or more observers in the case of provincial seats. Observations encompassed all four regions (Highlands, Momase, Southern and New Guinea Islands), National Capital District (NCD) and 17 of PNG's 22 provinces.

Initially, observers were engaged to undertake 20–30 days observations over a two-month period (many were later extended, up to 50 days in some cases, due to the delays in polling and counting). Each observer was tasked to make observations during the campaign, pre-poll, polling and counting periods using a detailed observation journal. In total the ANU observation team amassed over 6500 person days of observation, carried out observations at 945 polling stations, and generated 1220 detailed polling reports. Observers also conducted cross-sectional citizen surveys during the pre-poll (campaign) and post-polling periods.¹² These surveys offer a population snapshot and – given that they have been repeated periodically (in the context of the 2007, 2012 and 2017 elections) – provide for the analysis of trends in attitudes, perceptions and citizen experiences over time. In 2017 over 7500 citizens were surveyed.

There are several things that set the ANU observation apart from other observation missions – namely its intent, duration, composition, geographic scope and methodological approach. For instance, the ANU observation did not simply seek to inform a formal assessment regarding the integrity of the election, but instead aimed to:

1. generate quantitative and qualitative data that can be utilised to **strengthen electoral administration in PNG including the capacity to manage elections**, particularly around voter registration, electoral roll improvement, electoral management, election logistics and coordination;
2. **assess the impact greater decentralisation of election management** had on the conduct of the election, its delivery and broader electoral governance;
3. **build local capacity to observe, research and monitor elections** in order to robustly engage with electoral politics in PNG. This was achieved through a consortia approach which engaged PNG academics and independent researchers (in team leader roles), ANU-based and ANU-affiliated scholars (in mentoring roles) and trained over 200 PNG citizens as election observers;

4. **inform policy thinking concerning political governance in PNG.** The observation will generate data that might be utilised to **inform future country situational analysis and political economy analysis**, by providing insights into civic awareness, women's political participation, money politics, changing political culture, and the ongoing decentralisation processes; and
5. **lend credibility to the electoral process** through involving civil society and academia in independent observation of the elections.

The ANU observation also differed from those of other observer groups in that it employed a genuine mixed-methods approach involving detailed observation by domestic and international observers (many with disciplinary and country-specific expertise); observation from the issue of writs through to the formation of government; key informant interviews and two cross-sectional surveys. It also built on deep, long-term knowledge concerning elections in PNG. Several of the ANU mentors and PNG team leaders have observed and studied between three to five consecutive elections.

Given these earlier research investments, and the breadth of expertise possessed by the local academics/researchers in team leader roles, the 2017 observation provides not only the most comprehensive study of PNG elections to date, but delivers invaluable comparative data, which enables us to assess and understand the changing nature of electoral politics and how PNG elections are trending.

The DPA Approach

The DPA approach to election observation prioritises local expertise and utilises mixed field-based methods to systematically observe, monitor and assess elections. It involves systematic observation of the nomination, campaigning, pre-polling, polling and counting periods in order to gather comprehensive research-based evidence on electoral politics, electoral administration and the conduct of elections. The approach, based on tested, rigorous methodologies suited to the PNG context and utilised in 2007 and 2012, adheres to international election standards and principles pertaining to the conduct of election observation and the assessment of elections.

Building on the approach employed in relation to the 2007 and 2012 election observations (Haley and Anere 2009; Haley and Zubrinich 2013), we set out in 2017 to undertake detailed studies of one in three electorates across the country to ensure a national perspective. This was considered important as previous election observations have made evident that elections in PNG vary significantly from place to place and are conducted in diverse social, cultural and administrative contexts (ibid: 4). To better account for this variation, we deployed more teams than in 2007 and 2012. In total, the 2017 observation saw 35 observer teams deployed. By way of contrast, 18 teams had been deployed in 2007 and 21 in 2012.

Electorates were purposely selected to ensure a representative mix of rural and urban electorates, open and provincial electorates, and reflect a range of experiences across a number of criteria, including: access to services; reputed administrative performance, and overall disadvantage. In selecting electorates, we took into account the presence or otherwise of comparative data upon which we might establish electoral trends and the political economy factors influencing elections in that district. The number of electorates studied in each region was determined with regard to the 2011 PNG Census (NSO 2011), and in particular the proportion of PNG's population living in each region. Table 1 lists the electorates in which detailed observations were made, while Figure 1 shows the electorates observed.

Table 1. Electorates Subject to Detailed Observation¹³

Team		Electorates Observed in Detail	Team Leader
Highlands			
1	Chimbu Provincial (3)	Kundiawa Open (1)	Ms Anna Naur-Yambo (3)
2	Gumine Open (1)	Gumine Open (1)	Mr Gabriel Goiye (2)
3	Goroka Open (3)	Goroka Open (3)	Mr Dick Bomai Witne (2)
4	Obura-Wonenara Open (1)	Obura-Wonenara Open (1)	Mr Bennie Atigini (1)
5	Western Highlands Provincial (1)		Dr Joe Ketan (3)
6	Dei Open (1)	Dei Open (1)	Ms Carolyn Murray (1)
7	Hagen Open (3)	Hagen Open (3)	Mr Matthew Rapenda (3)
8	Wabag Open (3)	Wabag Open (3)	Fr Dr Philip Gibbs (3)
9	Kandep Open (1)	Kandep Open (1)	Mr Nomison Napo (1)
10	Southern Highlands Provincial (3)	Imbonggu Open (1)	Mr Isaac Mini (3)
11	Mendi Open (2)	Mendi Open (2)	Mr Philip Pakalu (2)
12	Hela Provincial (2)	Komo-Magarima Open (1)	Mr David Lundape (3)
		Tari-Pori Open (2)	Sr Julien Hayara (3)
13	Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open (3)	Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open (3)	Mr David Lundape (3)
Momase			
14	Bulolo Open (2)	Bulolo Open (2)	Mr Ngawae Mitio (2)
15	Lae Open (2)	Lae Open (2)	Mr Dudley Delabu (1)
16	Menyamy Open (1)	Menyamy Open (1)	Mr Francis Paul (1)
17	Madang Provincial (2)		Mr Patrick Matbob (3)
18	Madang Open (2)	Madang Open (2)	Mr Patrick Matbob (3)
19	Nuku Open (1)	Nuku Open (1)	Dr Benjamin Barcson (1)
20	East Sepik Provincial (2)		Mr Caleb Warige (3)
21	Yangoru-Saussia Open (3)	East Sepik Provincial (2)	Fr Dr Patrick Gesch (3)
Southern			
22.	National Capital District Regional (3)	Moresby North East (1)	Dr Goru Hane-Nou (3)
23.	Moresby North West (2)	Moresby North West (2)	Prof. Betty Lovai (1)
24.	Moresby South (2)	Moresby South (2)	Ms Puana Kelly (1)
25.	Kairuku-Hiri Open (2)	Kairuku-Hiri Open (2)	Dr Linus Digim'rina (2)
26.	Rigo Open (1)	Rigo Open (1)	Mr John Watmelik (3)
27.	Northern (Oro) Provincial (1)	Sohe Open (1)	Mr Eric Lausi (3)
28.	Ijivitari Open (3)	Ijivitari Open (3)	Ms Theresa Meki (1)
New Guinea Islands			
29.	Central Bougainville Open (1)	Central Bougainville Open (1)	Ms Isobel Koredong (1)
30.	North Bougainville Open (1)	North Bougainville Open (1)	Ms Isobel Koredong (1)
31.	East New Britain Provincial (1)	Gazelle Open (3)	Ms Patricia Kassman (2)
32.	Kokopo Open (2)	Kokopo Open (2)	Ms Patricia Kassman (2)
33.	New Ireland Provincial (1)	Kavieng Open (1)	Mr Thadeus Waninghu (2)
34.	Namatanai Open (2)	Namatanai Open (2)	Ms Almah Tararia (2)
35.	West New Britain Provincial (1)	Talasea Open (1)	Ms Dianne Mirio (1)

Each team member undertook observations at multiple polling stations. Collectively, the ANU observation team produced 1220 detailed polling reports and undertook observations at 945 separate polling stations. Of these, two in five (41%) were located in the Highlands, and approximately one in five in each of the other three regions. Coverage was weakest in Momase and strongest in Southern Region (see Table 2). It varied considerably between electorates (see Appendix A), ranging between 8% in *Ijivitari*, *Talasea* and *Gazelle Open* electorates (where roaming polling teams operated) and upwards of 50% in *Dei*, *Hagen* and *Gumine Open* electorates in the Highlands (where one day polling was the norm). Overall, our teams made comprehensive observations at 14% of all polling stations in the 69 open electorates in which observations were made, and 20% of polling stations in the 33 open electorates in which detailed observations were made, delivering a high degree of confidence in the observation findings.

Figure 1. Map of Electorates Observed

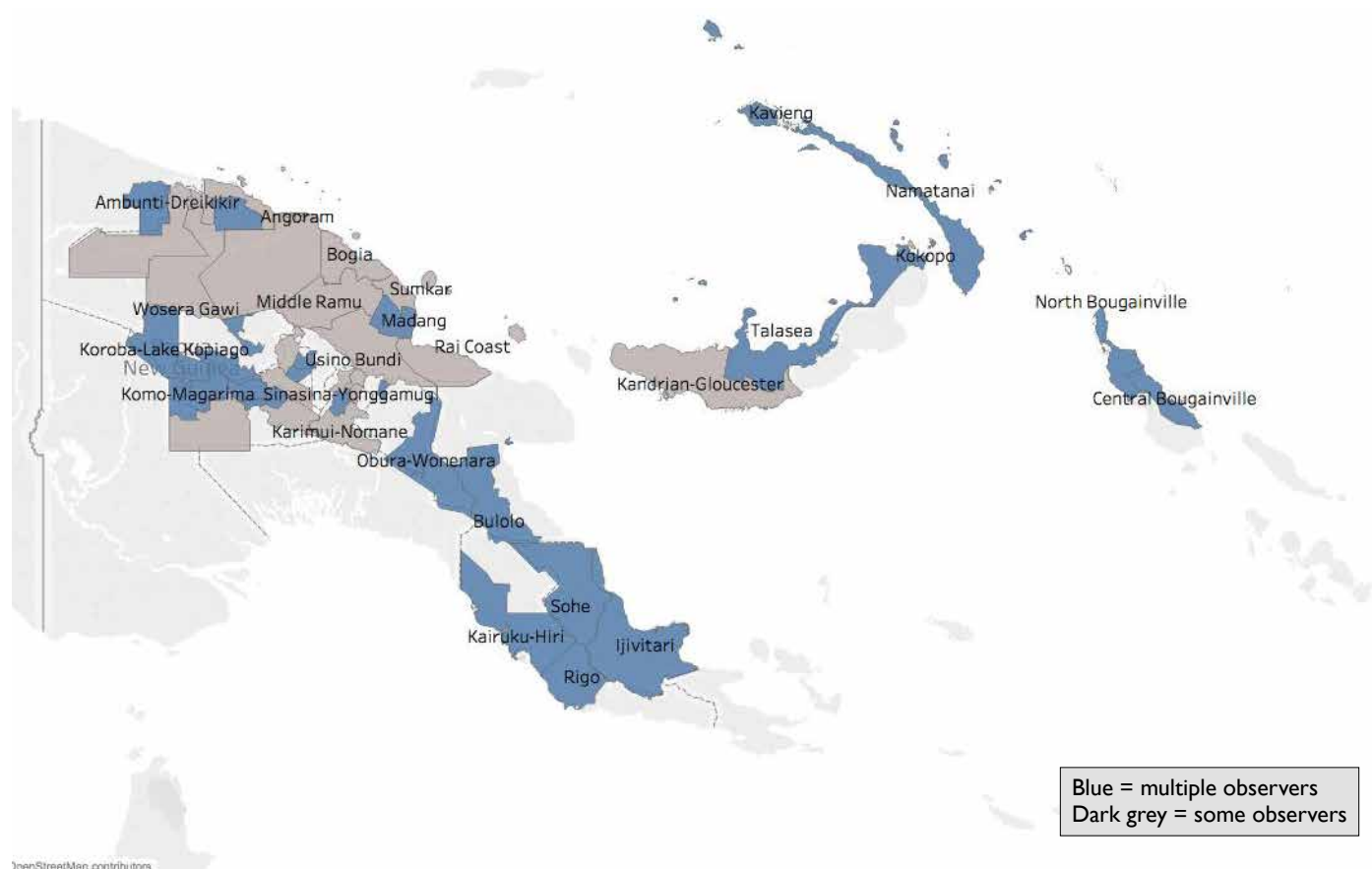


Table 2. Summary – number of observations made and polling stations observed

Region	Detailed Observations Made	Polling Stations Observed	Total Polling Stations in Electorates Observed	% Polling Stations in Electorates Observed	Proportion of Polling Stations Observed by ANU Team
Papua New Guinea	1220	945	6579	14%	100%
Highlands	433	384	2026	19%	41%
Momase	249	164	1982	8%	17%
Southern	296	205	1007	20%	22%
New Guinea Islands	242	192	1564	12%	19%

As well as undertaking detailed observations, the ANU observer teams administered two short cross-sectional citizen surveys. The first was administered during the campaign period and the latter during post-polling. In total, 7510 citizens were surveyed. Table 3 below offers a breakdown of the quantitative sample by region and gender, while Table 4 offers a breakdown of the sample by region and setting.

Table 3. Quantitative Sample – by region and gender

Region	Pre-polling Survey Sample				Post-Polling Survey Sample			
	Total (n)	Male	Female	Not Specified	Total (n)	Male	Female	Not Specified
Papua New Guinea	3770	2081	1680	9	3740	2008	1712	20
Highlands	1382	735	642	5	1443	787	646	13
Momase	938	533	403	2	952	518	427	7
Southern	786	428	356	2	651	349	302	0
New Guinea Islands	664	385	279	0	694	357	337	0

Table 4. Quantitative Sample – by region and setting

Region	Pre-polling Survey Sample				Post-Polling Survey Sample			
	Total (n)	Setting	Sample (n)	Sample %	Total (n)	Setting	Sample (n)	Sample %
Papua New Guinea	3770	Rural	2586	69	3740	Rural	2555	68
		Urban	1184	31		Urban	1185	32
Highlands	1382	Rural	1097	79	1443	Rural	1080	75
		Urban	285	21		Urban	363	25
Momase	938	Rural	626	67	952	Rural	638	67
		Urban	312	33		Urban	314	33
Southern	786	Rural	320	41	651	Rural	277	43
		Urban	466	59		Urban	374	57
New Guinea Islands	664	Rural	543	82	694	Rural	560	81
		Urban	121	18		Urban	134	19

Overall there is an urban bias to the quantitative data. This is because we had entire teams observing in each the major urban centres; Port Moresby (3 teams), Lae, Madang, Mt Hagen, Goroka and the Gazelle Peninsula (2 teams). Whereas the 2011 census records that 17.5% of PNG's population lives in urban and non-village settings, just over 30% of our respondents did.

As in previous elections, team members were tasked to record their observations in a specially designed journal. Prior to the 2017 elections, the observer journal used in 2012 was updated. This saw a series of new questions designed to explore voter perceptions concerning service delivery in their electorate over the past five years along with a series of questions concerning sorcery and witchcraft. The latter questions sought to determine whether the election gave rise to sorcery and witchcraft allegations or violence and whether candidates and/or supporters were attempting to use sorcery and witchcraft to influence election outcomes.

The journal utilised in 2017 consisted of 14 separate sections – each covering a different aspect of the election: Key Electoral Personnel (Section 1), Voter Registration and the Electoral Roll (Section 2), the Nomination Period (Section 3), the Campaign Period (Section 4), Pre-Polling (Section 8), Polling (Section 9), Post-Polling (Section 10), Counting (Section 12), and Disputes (Section 13). Observers were also asked to collect information about candidates contesting the election (Section 5), to attend election rallies and record the key aspects of candidate speeches (Section 6), to conduct pre-polling and post-polling surveys (Sections 7 and 11) and to complete an evaluation form (Section 14). In addition to their journals, teams were issued with iPads on which to record the citizen survey results.

Challenges

Large scale election observation is never without challenges. In 2017 these were compounded by the very short lead time available to us to mobilise and train teams. It is also the case that some of the problems encountered in 2007 and 2012 were again seen in 2017. For example, delays to polling and counting meant considerable additional expense that had not been provisioned for. Likewise, there was, once again, surprisingly little knowledge about the role and presence of domestic observers in the field. Several teams found that key electoral officials and security personnel were initially resistant to their presence with some obstructing observation efforts.

For the most part, though, observers were able to observe the elections without restrictions and in many cases received valuable support and assistance from the security forces and key electoral personnel in their electorates. Nevertheless, the level of insecurity experienced by observers in 2017 was unprecedented. Several observers were threatened in relation to their work and a number, as in 2012, were assaulted. Individual observers in **Hela, Western Highlands, Enga** and **NCD** were assaulted by security personnel whilst carrying out their duties and an observer in Southern Highlands narrowly escaped being shot when police fired upon the crowd outside of Mendi police station. His brother who was with him at the time was not so lucky, being shot in the leg. Observers in places as diverse as Tari, Mendi, Kundiawa, Poppondetta, Kavieng and Rabaul, were caught up in election violence, while observers in Rabaul and Mt Hagen had to be relocated for their own safety. In addition, two very experienced observers in Mt Hagen withdrew from the observation prior to polling due to fear for their personal safety.

As noted previously, in relation to 2007 and 2012, elections in PNG are fiercely contested and as such some degree of violence and insecurity is to be expected. As a consequence, it is somewhat of a challenge to ensure a strong representation of women across the entire observation team. In 2017 considerable effort was dedicated to identifying suitably qualified women to lead teams, and to ensuring strong representation of women across all regions and in all roles. We are pleased to report that in 2017, a third of our observer teams (12 of 35) were led by PNG women. Beyond this we had set ourselves an ambitious target of 40% women's representation. We met or exceeded this target in the New Guinea Islands and Southern regions and within the ANU contingent but fell shy of it in Highlands and Momase where 34 and 30% of our observers respectively were women. Overall women accounted for 36% of the observer team.

Recommendation:

- » ***There is a need for continued robust observation of forthcoming elections.*** This will help establish a strong culture of citizen accountability. Preparation for such activities must commence earlier in the election cycle to ensure local observers are recruited, trained and accredited well in advance.

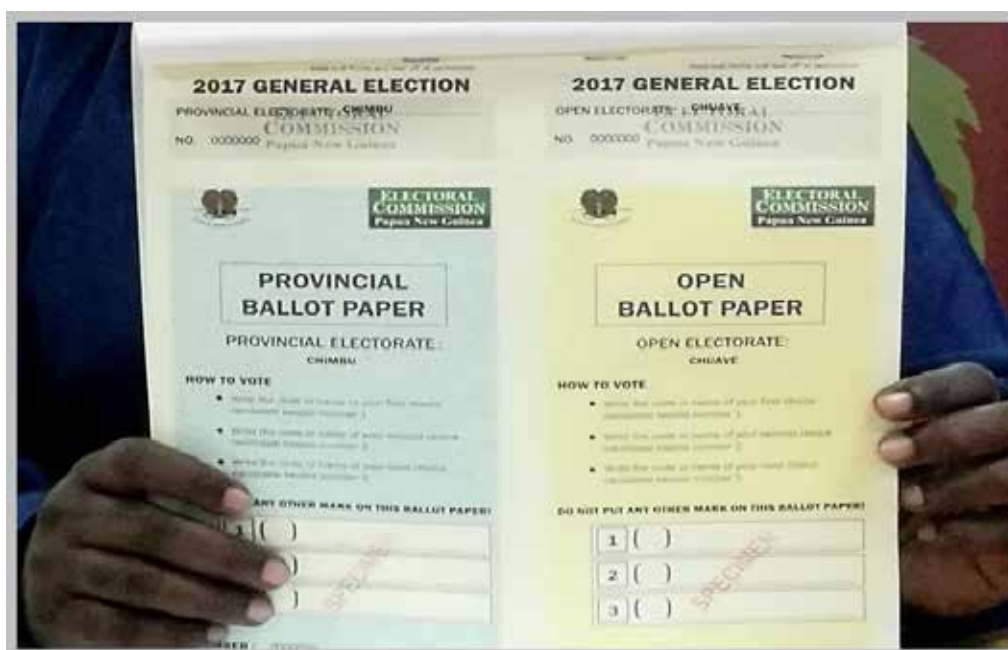
SECTION 2: ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Administration of the 2017 elections was very much decentralised, with key responsibilities, including responsibility for updating and maintaining the electoral roll, development of polling schedules, appointment and training of polling teams and the transport, storage and security of sensitive materials and polling teams and counting arrangements devolved to provinces. Materials and supplies, including ballot papers, indelible ink and ballot boxes were purchased centrally and dispatched to provincial election offices in two phases. The first phase saw non-sensitive materials dispatched, while sensitive materials such as ballot papers, candidate posters and electoral rolls were dispatched on the eve of the election. EMs and Provincial Election Steering Committees (PESCs) were responsible for arrangements at the sub-national level.

Procurement of the ballot papers for the 2017 elections proved particularly controversial, with the contract to supply and deliver the ballot papers awarded to a local company, Treid Pacific Limited, over the PNG Government Printers. Under this contract, 10 million ballot papers – 5 million provincial papers and 5 million open papers – were printed in Indonesia.¹⁴ Electoral Commissioner, Patilias Gamato staunchly defended the decision on the basis it delivered substantial cost savings,¹⁵ and saw the introduction of ballot papers with a series of in-built security features which the locally printed ballot papers utilised in previous elections did not have. The provincial and open ballot papers used in 2017 (see Figure 2) were readily differentiated from each other – a significant improvement on 2007 and 2012 (c.f. Haley and Anere 2009:43; Haley and Zubrinich 2013:10), although once folded appeared identical, which contributed to ballot papers sometimes being deposited in the wrong box.

Figure 2. Sample Ballot Papers

Source: <http://www.pnhec.gov.pg/news/2017/01/23/democracy-of-png-not-compromised-gamato-assures-nation>



The ballot papers were delivered ahead of schedule and were stored at the PNGDF Air Transport Wing at Jacksons Airport for approximately 10 weeks under PNGDF guard, prior to being dispatched to the provinces. In the days leading up to the commencement of polling, social media was abuzz with rumours of “additional papers”. These rumours were strenuously denied by the electoral commissioner,¹⁶ although seemingly confirmed by security personnel and key officials in some provinces (e.g. the Western Highlands and Northern Province).

In 2017 the adoption of more readily identifiable ballot papers was accompanied by the return of separate ballot boxes for provincial and open electorates. The move was welcomed by voters and polling officials. The 2012 trial of single ballot boxes had been widely criticised for giving rise to lengthy delays, and accusations of ballot box tampering, especially in cases where papers needed to be transferred between counting centres (ibid). Voters and officials had likewise been

critical of the lightweight clear plastic ballot boxes utilised in 2012 and of the ballot box seals which were easily removed if applied incorrectly. The 2017 elections saw the introduction of new ballot box seals and a return to the more durable metal ballot boxes in the Highlands. We note that greater effort was also made to distinguish the provincial and open ballot boxes through the application of large coloured stickers which matched the colour of the ballot papers. Collectively these moves are viewed as having contributed to improved voter franchise in that fewer ballot boxes were damaged or destroyed and fewer ballot papers disputed and/or declared informal due to delays or concerns arising from the transfer between counting venues.

As in previous elections, preparations for the election were hampered by the late receipt of funds and the quantum of funds received. For example, the background information pack provided to observers makes clear the PNGEC and the Inter-Departmental Electoral Committee (IDEC) were both aware that the level of funding available for the election operation was insufficient “to provide security for Highlands polling teams or to facilitate the pre-deployment of security personnel to the Highlands”.¹⁷ And more recently, in response to public criticism concerning the conduct of the 2017 elections, the electoral commissioner revealed that by December 2017, the PNGEC had only received 80% of the K279 million 2017 national elections budget allocation, was yet to receive the remaining balance and still has outstanding debts of K26 million.¹⁸

The timetable for the 2017 general elections, announced in February 2017, was officially revised three times during the election period, just as in 2012 (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:26). Polling fell behind schedule in many provinces, necessitating the revision of elections schedules on the ground, and an extension of polling by four days in four provinces, namely Madang, Gulf, Western and East Sepik. Counting delays likewise saw the return of writs extended by four days in the first instance to 28 July 2017, and then by a further three days to 31 July 2017, to allow for counting be completed. As at 24 July, the date by which the writs were initially to have been returned, only 59 of 111 seats (53%) had been declared. By comparison 76 of 111 seats (68%) had been declared at the equivalent point in 2012.

By 28 July 2017, 88 seats had been declared and 77 writs returned.¹⁹ In the subsequent days a further 28 writs were returned. When parliament sat on 2 August 2017 for the first time after the elections, six writs remained outstanding; these being **Madang Provincial** (declared 1 August); **Kandep Open** (declared 2 August); **Kundiawa-Gembogl Open** (declared 3 August); **Eastern Highlands Provincial** (declared 5 August); **Chimbu Provincial** (declared 7 August) and **Southern Highlands Provincial** (declared 27 September). By way of comparison, five writs were outstanding at the formation of government in 2012 (Enga, Western Highlands Province (WHP), Eastern Highlands Province (EHP), Chimbu and NCD). Table 5 below outlines both the original election timetable and the revised timetable.

Table 5. 2017 Election Timetable

Election Event	Original Timetable	Revised Timetable
Issue of Writs	20 April 2017	20 April 2017
Close of Nominations	27 April 2017	27 April 2017
Polling Commences	24 June 2017	24 June 2017
Polling Concludes	8 July 2017	12 July 2017
Return of Writs	24 July 2017	31 July 2017

Key Electoral Personnel

For the most part, observers were critical of key electoral personnel and their performance. In 2017 four out of five observer teams (28 of 35) reported poor and/or variable performance on the part of EMs, ROs and AROs, observing that they seemed ill prepared and were “conveniently absent” when administrative issues, problems and complaints arose. Only seven observer teams (20%) provided consistently positive assessments.²⁰ By way of contrast, eight of 21 observer teams (38%) had considered the overall performance of key personnel in their electorate commendable in 2012 (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:27). Many of those who stood out were female assistant EMs who played critical roles ensuring delivery of the elections (cf. Haley and Zubrinich 2013:27; COG 2017:10). Take for example the assistant EM for **Chimbu**. Observers reported that she was on the ground “from start to finish” and conducted herself well. They

contrasted her performance with that of the EM and ROs who were often absent. Observers also noted that two **Chimbu Province** ROs were seen to enter the counting centre whilst heavily intoxicated.

As already noted, the administration of elections in PNG is now largely decentralised, with a great deal of responsibility devolved to EMs and ROs. In 2012 we had observed considerable variation with respect to the relationship between key personnel such as EMs and ROs and their respective PESCs. Where PESCs were consulted, and subsequently endorsed key appointments, “good working relations between the PESC and key officials were observed” (ibid: 27). Where PESCs did not recognise the formal appointees, problems ensued. Some appointed their own officials (ibid) whilst others took control, countermanding decisions made by the ROs (ibid: 86), causing considerable confusion on the ground.

In order to avoid this situation in 2017, “several Provincial Administrators signed memoranda of understanding (MOU) with the PNGEC on provincial support to be provided to the electoral process” (COG 2017:10). A similar approach had been taken in relation to the 2013 LLG elections. These MOUs set out a process for the appointment of key officials. That process entailed PESCs working with districts to compile a list of potential public servants to act as ROs and AROs, making a recommendation to the PNGEC about who from the list should be appointed, working with the provincial administrator to arrange the secondment of public servants recommended for appointment. It is understood that early on the electoral commissioner had instructed that district administrators not be appointed as ROs or AROs on the basis they would likely have a conflict of interest, in that they ordinarily work closely with and report to sitting members of parliament (Open MPs) through the District Development Authority (DDA), and as a consequence might not be impartial in the discharge of their duties and functions during the election.²¹

For the most part this process worked well. However, there were still cases where PESCs made competing appointments, **Usino-Bundi Open** being a case in point. Observers there reported that the gazetted RO fought with the PESC appointed RO at Walium Station during the nomination period, which led to the nomination of candidates being delayed for three days.

We note however that on the eve of the election, Justice Makail found, in the case of *Lawrence Itali & Paulus Kaa Konts v. Patilias Gamato & Electoral Commission* (2017) N6698, the aforementioned MOU process to be outside the provisions of the Organic Law on National and Local-level Government Elections (OLNLLGE). Notwithstanding this, and noting that key appointments were made centrally and confirmed through publication in the National Gazette, providing PESCs with an opportunity for formal input into appointment processes meant they did not make as many competing appointments as they had in 2012 (c.f. Haley and Zubrinich 2013:27). As a consequence, observers reported better working relations between key officials and PESCs in 2017.

That is not to say that positions were not disputed. In many cases positions were disputed, although typically through the courts (c.f. the above-mentioned court case) or by way of a petition from candidates on the eve of polling rather than through the appointment of alternates on the ground. For instance, the **Hagen Open** team noted that the electorate RO and the ARO for Hagen Rural Local Level Government (LLG) were disputed through the courts. The **Jimi Open** RO's appointment was likewise challenged, as was the appointment of the **Madang Provincial** RO. In **Dei Open** and **Gumine Open** candidates unsuccessfully petitioned for the removal of their respective ROs.

Approximately six months out from the election the electoral commissioner had sought to transfer several EMs to different provinces and/or different roles. This saw the EM for **Chimbu Province** moved to the **Eastern Highlands**, for example. Others, like the EMs for **Hela** and **Southern Highlands** refused to be moved. David Wakias, EM for **Southern Highlands**, successfully petitioned the courts and had the appointment of his replacement Jacob Kurap quashed. He was reinstated as EM one month prior to the issue of writs. According to evidence presented in court, the acting provincial administrator and chairman of the SHP PESC had twice written to the electoral commissioner seeking Wakias' removal on the basis that he had failed to cooperate with the PESC and attend scheduled meetings. There had been similar attempts to remove the controversial EM in both 2007 and 2012.

It is perhaps no coincidence that in those places where appointments were challenged in the courts prior to the election, there was significant post-election violence. At the height of the post-election violence following declaration of Hagen Open, the chairman of the Western Highlands PESC had this to say:

“The PESC made recommendations to the EC concerning the appointment of ROs and AROs for the Western Highlands. We did so having regard to the experience, managerial skills, and communication skills of the individuals recommended. In relation to Hagen Open the EC rejected the recommendations we made. This led to the situation we see today, the hijacking of process, as people have called it, is the direct cause of these protests. It has seen the lives of innocent people and the security personnel put at risk and has seen government buildings burnt to the ground.”

Across the country observers consistently encountered and reported concerns that electoral officials were partisan. More so than in previous elections, observers reported candidate capture of, or influence over, electoral processes, including everything from the roll update through to the appointment of polling and counting officials and with respect to declarations. Interference of this kind was identified to varying degrees in all regions, however allegations of political interference were most prevalent in the Highlands.

Throughout PNG, mistrust has grown to such an extent that candidates, their supporters and voters expect key personnel to be partisan. Certainly, key electoral personnel are subject to immense pressure, including bribery and threats upon their lives and those of family members. So significant are the risks associated with taking on such roles, some choose not to do so. During the course of the 2017 elections there were a number of serious security incidents involving key officials that were witnessed by observers and/or reported in the press.

Box 2: Security incidents involving key officials

- » the RO for **Talasea Open** refused to take up his appointment due to death threats
- » the RO for **Central Bougainville** was assaulted in the counting room
- » the RO and an ARO for **Kandep Open** were shot in Wabag during the count
- » an ARO for **Dei Open** was held up at gunpoint by a candidate whilst under police escort
- » an ARO for **Komo-Magarima Open** was assaulted by supporters and later by police
- » the ARO for Pori LLG in **Tari-Pori Open** was assaulted by PNGDF personnel
- » the RO for **Gumine Open** stepped aside during the count due to death threats
- » an ARO for **Aitape-Lumi Open** was taken hostage and later rescued by security forces
- » the RO and AROs for **Wapenamanda Open** were targeted in post-declaration violence – which saw their houses and vehicles torched
- » the RO for **Nipa-Kutubu Open** was similarly targeted – his house, vehicle and other property were torched
- » the RO for **Finschhafen Open** took refuge in police custody following the unexpected defeat of former speaker of parliament

Such were the levels of distrust in many places that polling was delayed due to complaints about the appointment of key personnel – presiding officers and polling officials – and concerns about counterfeit ballot papers and the accuracy of the electoral roll. In **Southern Highlands, Enga** and **Western Highlands** provinces scrutineers signed the outside of ballot boxes before they were sent out to allay fears that boxes would be hijacked or substituted (see Figure 3), while in Hela candidates unsuccessfully petitioned for the removal of the EM and reappointment of POs and polling officials. This saw polling delayed by a day.

Figure 3. Signed Ballots Boxes - Enga and Southern Highlands provinces



In **Chimbu Province**, where polling was delayed for two days due to concerns about both additional and counterfeit ballot papers, the PESC redistributed ballot papers according to the preliminary roll, stamped every ballot paper and burnt 11,500 excess ballot papers (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Stamped Ballot Papers – Chimbu Province



Though not in accordance with formally recognised procedures, and possibly unlawful, these efforts nonetheless served as important circuit breakers in tense and potentially volatile situations. As such, and so long as they do not serve to undermine or rewrite the law, diminish the franchise of particular groups or legitimise irregularities, we argue that local efforts to build trust should not be discouraged.

Recommendations:

- » **Given the levels of distrust that now prevail, key electoral personnel must be recruited on the basis of merit**, appointed early in the election cycle, properly trained and supported, and held accountable for their actions.
- » **Local efforts adopted to enhance trust in electoral processes should not be discouraged**, and should possibly be adopted more widely, for example by having scrutineers or candidates sign the outside of ballot boxes before polling teams are inserted.

Voter Registration

Although voter registration had concluded prior to the commencement of the observation we sought to assess the effectiveness of the exercise in a number of ways. In the first instance, observers were asked a series of questions about voter registration and the electoral roll, including whether an electoral roll update had taken place, the manner in which it was undertaken, whether claim for enrolment forms were available in their LLG, and if so, where and for how long the preliminary rolls were displayed for verification.

Citizens were also asked a series of questions concerning voter registration and the electoral roll in the pre-polling and post-polling citizen surveys. As part of the pre-polling survey intending voters were asked:

- » Was an electoral roll update undertaken in your LLG in 2016 or 2017?
- » Were the electoral rolls displayed for verification?
- » Do you know anyone who was unable to register?
- » Are you aware there is an online **Roll Lookup** application?
- » Did you check your enrolment using the online **Roll Lookup** application?

Those participating in the post-polling survey were asked:

- » Did you vote in this election?
- » Do you think the 2017 electoral roll is accurate?
- » Was your name on the electoral roll?
- » In which of the three most recent elections (2007, 2012 or 2017) was the electoral roll the most accurate?

Although no attempt was made to independently verify citizen responses, observers were asked to record how many people were turned away from polling stations on the basis their name was not on the electoral roll. In places where the roll was used, observers witnessed many voters being turned away.

Manipulation of the electoral roll is one of the clearest ways to gain political advantage and improve the likelihood of political success, so much so that the practice of “padding the electoral roll with [ghost] names in some areas and constraining registration in others” (ibid) is now well established (see also Haley and Zubrinich 2013:31). Problems with PNG’s electoral roll have long been evident, are well documented (Standish 2002, 2003; Haley 2004:20; 2002; 2011a; Gibbs 2006; Haley and Anere 2009; Haley and Zubrinich 2013) and have given rise of a range of efforts to improve the quality of the electoral roll (DFAT 2013:5). The outcomes of these efforts – many donor-funded – have been mixed.

On the face of it, the 2017 electoral roll looks to be more accurate than those used in 2002, 2007 and 2012, in that actual enrolments exceed expected enrolments by only 11%. By contrast, in 2002 actual enrolments had exceeded expected enrolments by 77% (see Table 6 below), resulting in an electoral roll broadly equivalent to the size of the population at that time. Appearances aside, all 35 observer teams noted serious defects with the 2017 electoral roll.

Table 6. Electoral Roll – 2002–2017

Year	Projected Population ²²	Projected Enrolment ²³	Nationwide Enrolment
2017	8.24 million	4.53 million	5.06 million
2012	7.19 million	3.95 million	4.87 million
2007	6.28 million	3.45 million	3.94 million
2002	5.48 million	3.01 million	5.34 million

In April 2016, the PNGEC had announced that updating of the electoral roll for the 2017 election would commence on 1 June 2016 and take three to four months to complete. Responsibility for cleansing, updating and preparing the 2017 electoral roll was devolved to provinces, and a decentralised enrolment system (DES) was introduced. The enrolment process, overseen by provincial ROs and the RO for each open electorate, was delayed in many places due to funding shortfalls. As a consequence, it occurred very late in the election cycle, and in many cases with funding and direct support provided by provinces.

Given the shortcomings with the 2012 roll, it is disappointing that the 2017 roll was not afforded greater priority, especially given that past experience has shown it is not possible to deliver a good election without a credible electoral roll. Having regard to observer reports, it seems that decentralisation of responsibility for the roll served to exacerbate many of the problems identified in past elections rather than obviate them. Based on the access we were afforded²⁴ it seems that widespread, and in many cases, systematic hijacking of the roll update process occurred. It also seems that the poor state of the 2017 electoral roll created such angst, disaffection and disenfranchisement that it influenced almost every other aspect of the election (see also TIPNG 2017:9).

To the PNGEC's credit, concerted efforts were made to limit roll inflation (see also COG 2017:15). This entailed limiting the number of claim for enrolment forms, having regard to the inter-census population growth rate of 2.9% between the 2000 and 2011 census. As a consequence, 850,000 claim for enrolment forms, locked to districts, were distributed throughout the country, resulting in a net increase of just 190,000 names on the 2012 electoral roll. Without knowing how many names were removed during the cleansing process, it is unclear how many new enrolments were actually effected.

Based on the observations made by our teams, we consider it highly likely there were citizens eligible to enrol who were denied the opportunity to do so (see also COG 2017:15). Certainly, the pattern of simultaneous under- and over-enrolment noted in many locations across the country in 2007 and 2012 (Haley and Anere 2009; Haley and Zubrinich 2013; DFAT 2013:27), and again in 2017 points to this. As does the fact that observers in all 63 electorates in which observations were made, were told there were not enough forms to enrol new and missing voters (see also TIPNG 2017:36).

In **Wabag Open** observers collectively identified over 1500 eligible citizens whose names were missing from the 2017 electoral roll. Their detailed checks on the ward rolls for two of Wabag District's 64 wards also revealed 300 entries for people who were either unknown, deceased, living elsewhere, underage or duplicate entries. Assuming similar numbers of ineligible entries in each of the other wards then there may be as many as 10,000 excess enrolments. Projections based on the 2011 census seemingly confirm this and suggest the number of excess voters may be even higher. For instance, we note that Wabag Open was one of five open electorates in which growth in the roll exceeded the 16% accumulative growth provided for by the PNGEC. The others were **Porgera-Lagaip**, **Kagua-Erave**, **Mendi** and **Ijivitari Open** electorates.

In many provinces, access to claim for enrolment forms was restricted locally, contributing to the shortage experienced nationwide. In **East New Britain** observers were told by the EM and ward recorders that each ward was issued only five claim for enrolment forms, while in parts of the Highlands wards were allocated just 10 forms, far fewer than were needed given the assumed 3% per annum roll growth. In other provinces, access to the forms was restricted in far more parochial ways, with claims they were only available to those with particular political alignments. The partisanship of enrolment agents was a criticism repeated across the country by citizens and observers alike (see also Haley 2013a; Haley and Zubrinich 2013:31; and Ladley, Holtved and Kantha 2010:vii for comparisons with 2007). In some provinces enrolment agents took a venal approach, selling the claim for enrolment forms. In Southern Highlands, for example, a couple of enterprising enrolment agents unashamedly advertised on Facebook that they were in possession of enrolment forms, specifying when and where they would be available for purchase.

ANU observers also received reports that some enrolment agents in other provinces withheld completed claims for enrolment due to the non-payment of monies owed or promised to them by key electoral officials. This hampered the registration of new voters. Similar accounts were provided to the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG 2017:15).

For the most part, the roll update process was completely opaque, with many observers reporting that they had no knowledge of an update having taken place. Not one of the 224 local observers reported an enrolment process which involved enrolment agents systematically visiting wards and villages in order to update the roll. One observer in the Highlands provided that:

“No-one came to our house, family or village to get names for the electoral roll. It was only later I heard that it was done. Candidates here are complaining that there were large increases in some places and decreases in other places.”

(Observer, Chimbu Province)

Similar reports were received from observers in the New Guinea Islands, Momase and Southern regions, including from one observer, a community leader, who has observed the past three elections in Central Province. He reported that unlike previous elections, enrolment agents did not reach out to the community. This was doubly frustrating as he had not been able to vote in 2012, having been removed from the roll prior to the election (see Haley and Zubrinich 2013: 34). To date, his efforts to re-enrol have proved futile.

Another observer directly involved in the roll update process in one Highlands province had this to say:

“I was engaged as a data entry officer and I saw first-hand what went wrong with the update process. The forms were given to the enrolment agents but when they came back were either more or less than we expected. From what I saw the names of many eligible voters were not registered due to insufficient forms, and when the forms came back the EM instructed us which ones to enter properly and which ones to paste or transfer to other areas. Most of the names collected were misplaced to other wards, and most were not enrolled properly. The electoral roll used in 2017 was really a ‘cut and paste’ roll.”

(Observer, Highlands Region)

The observer in question, who had been involved in delivering civic education in the lead up to both the 2007 and 2012 elections, and had observed both elections, directly attributed the problems with the 2017 roll to decentralisation of roll management responsibilities: “All of this happened because the roll update process was managed locally. It was manipulated by the EM to benefit particular candidates”.

In addition to receiving complaints from citizens who claimed they were not on the roll, observers around the country reported seeing voters turned away from polling stations on polling day. Many encountered voters who insisted they were enrolled and had voted in 2012. Some observers themselves reported similar experiences. And some even reported having checked their enrolment online, only to be told they were not on the roll when they presented in person to vote. Such was the experience of Professor Betty Lovai, who led the Moresby Northwest observer team. She attended upon several polling stations (including the one at which she had previously voted) only to be told she was not on the roll. However, PNG **Roll Lookup** listed her as enrolled. Similar issues were reported by the Registry of Political Parties observation team (PNGRPP 2018:15).

All observer missions (international and domestic) highlighted issues with the 2017 electoral roll and reported seeing voters turned away from polling stations (COG 2017:16; PIFS 2017:8; EU 2017:5–6; PNGRPP 2018:56). TIPNG’s assessment was particularly harsh. In relation to the 2017 electoral roll they noted “egregious flaws” and “gross inaccuracies” (TIPNG 2017: 36), finding that eligible citizens were turned away from three quarters (77%) of the polling stations their observers reported on (ibid:39).

Few people interviewed pre- and post-polling had confidence in the electoral roll. Most were highly critical, pointing out that many names were missing and that some areas or wards were grossly over-inflated. In places these

problems were attributed to political interference at the local level but in others were seen as failings on the part of the PNGEC in Port Moresby – a view being promulgated by EMs and ROs in some places (cf. Haley and Zubrinich 2013:31). Even the observer engaged as a data entry officer in the lead up to the election (see above) attributed some of the problems with the roll to PNGEC headquarters saying:

“We sent all the data of new enrolments, transfers and our working rolls to Port Moresby to be verified and printed, but they were not printed according to the updates.”

(Observer, Highlands Region)

More so than in 2012, observers reported under- and over-enrolment at the Ward level in 2017. Many were of the view this benefited particular candidates and disadvantaged others. Analyst Paul Flanagan concurs, arguing that roll cleansing or “ghost-busting” were more effective in seats not held by the People’s National Congress party (PNC).²⁵ We have also identified what appears to be systematic manipulation of the electoral roll in the fortnight preceding polling. The electoral roll utilised in Hela on polling day was dated 15 June 2017. It provided the basis on which ballot papers were distributed at the ward level. Typically wards received an allocation of papers equivalent to the number of electors enrolled plus five additional ballot papers. The 15 June 2017 electoral roll simultaneously exhibited gross under-enrolment and over-enrolment at the ward level, which seemingly benefited key PNC-endorsed candidates. Tables 7 and 8 below provide examples of the under-enrolment and over-enrolment in **Tari-Pori Open** and **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** electorates.

Table 7. Examples of Under- and Over-Enrolled Wards in Tari-Pori Open Electorate

LLG	Ward No.	Ward Name	2012 Enrolment	Expected Enrolment	Enrolment 15 June 2017	Enrolment 21 June 2017
Over-Enrolled Wards						
Tagali Rural	9	Karita 2	599	695	1,591	604
Tagali Rural	10	Munima	799	927	1,650	1,043
Tagali Rural	15	Halonguali	858	995	1,654	1,165
Tari Urban	2	Piribu 2 (Paibuali)	394	457	2,005	1,329
Tari Urban	9	Pai 1	205	238	786 ²⁶	224
Excess Enrolments					4,374	1,053
Under-Enrolled Wards						
Tagali Rural	1	Kwagiebi	747	867	614	520
Tagali Rural	3	Eganda	1,546	1,793	893	1,582
Tagali Rural	5	Tulupu/Manopi	783	908	756	666
Tari Urban	5	Yulubete (Tari 4)	736	854	593	845
Tari Urban	6	Kupari	1,234	1,431	767	1,087
Under-Enrolment					2,230	1,153

Table 8. Examples of Under- and Over-Enrolled Wards in Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open Electorate

LLG	Ward No.	Ward Name	2012 Enrolment	Expected Enrolment	Enrolment 15 June 2017	Enrolment 21 June 2017
Over-Enrolled Wards						
Awi-Lagayu Rural	16	Tarane	566	657	1,170	693
Awi-Lagayu Rural	22	Kutage	398	462	1,878	452
Awi-Lagayu Rural	26	Embe 2	479	556	1,084	544
Lake Kapiago Rural	4	Horale	666	773	1,490	706
Lake Kapiago Rural	7	Hirane	1,020	1,183	2,302	1,147
Lake Kapiago Rural	10	Peragola	770	893	2,620	871
North Koroba Rural	1	Kelabo 1	544	631	1,385	622
North Koroba Rural	23	Yaluba	547	635	1,634	617
North Koroba Rural	24	Pupa (Yaluba 2)	501	581	1,641	568
South Koroba Rural	18	Tangimapu	1,172	1,360	1,898	1,315
South Koroba Rural	19	Tumbite	2,760	3,202	3,845	2,984
South Koroba Rural	21	Pumbulumu 2	1,276	1,480	1,798	1,422
Excess Enrolments					10,334	-472
Under-Enrolled Wards						
Awi-Lagayu Rural	12	Puyena	843	978	601	1,071
Awi-Lagayu Rural	13	Kewe 1	1,196	1,387	988	1,381
Awi-Lagayu Rural	21	Paka	756	877	652	839
Lake Kapiago Rural	5	Aluni	845	980	534	1,001
Lake Kapiago Rural	8	Alukuni	833	966	523	927
Lake Kapiago Rural	19	Suwaka	857	994	624	955
North Koroba Rural	5	Kagoma	755	876	477	854
North Koroba Rural	7	Warukumu	698	810	353	778
North Koroba Rural	21	Kereneiba	1,135	1,317	721	1,273
South Koroba Rural	8	Kakarene 1	954	1,107	608	1,065
South Koroba Rural	13	Maria	1,334	1,547	940	1,473
South Koroba Rural	23	Mbuli	1,357	1,574	794	1,364
Under-Enrolment					5,598	432

We note many of these irregularities were subsequently corrected in the final roll produced for the 2017 election (dated 21 June 2017) however this roll was not the one used on polling day in Hela. Table 9 below shows the net effect of the corrections to the **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** electorate roll.

Table 9. Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open – 15 June 2017 & 21 June 2017 Ward Enrolment Comparison

Electorate	Ward Enrolment	2017 Enrolment 15 June 2017	2017 Enrolment 21 June 2017
Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open	Under-enrolled	46	0
	Within expected range	11	71
	Slightly over-enrolled	2	10
	Extremely over-enrolled	22	0

The case of Koroba-Lake Kopiago Open is a particularly interesting one as the over- and under-enrolment seemingly benefited key regional candidates rather than any particular open candidate.

Nationwide, confidence in the electoral roll has diminished since 2012 (see Table 10 below). The decrease in confidence is particularly marked in NGI and NCD. Whereas one third of citizens surveyed in NGI in 2012 considered the electoral roll accurate, now only one in ten do. In 2017, confidence in the electoral roll was weakest in NCD. Alongside decreasing confidence in the roll, citizens displayed much more confidence in their assessments. For instance, the proportion of respondents not sure whether the roll is accurate has dropped from 36% in 2012 to a mere 13% in 2017.

Table 10. Perceptions of the Accuracy of the Electoral Roll – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Post-polling Survey - 2012			Post-polling Survey - 2017			
	Is the electoral roll accurate?			Do you think the 2017 electoral roll is accurate?			
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	No Response (%)
Papua New Guinea	17	47	36	10	76	13	1
Highlands	14	36	50	9	65	24	2
Momase	12	69	19	8	84	6	1
Southern	16	60	24	12	82	5	1
NGI	30	51	19	12	82	5	0
NCD	26	22	52	7	87	5	1

Citizens throughout the country were adamant that the 2017 electoral roll is less accurate than both the 2007 and 2012 rolls (see Table 11), and a greater proportion of citizens in all regions reported that their names were not on the roll in 2017. In addition, as many as two-thirds reported personally knowing someone who had not been able to register for the 2017 election. Again, the most significant shifts with respect to the roll's accuracy were noted in the New Guinea Islands and NCD.

Of the 3740 citizens surveyed post polling only three in five (60%) said they were enrolled to vote in the 2017 elections. Many asserted that their right to vote had been usurped due to administrative shortcomings on the part of the PNGEC. As in 2007 and 2012, the majority of people in Momase, NGI and Southern regions were aware of their electoral status, with fewer than one in 20 unsure whether their name was on the electoral roll (see Table 11). By contrast, 39% of all citizens surveyed in the Highlands remained unsure of their enrolment status even after polling. This is no doubt because the electoral roll was seldom used on polling day in the Highlands.

Table 11. Perceptions of the Accuracy of the Electoral Roll – 2017

Region	2017 Post-polling Survey				2017 Post-polling Survey			
	In which election was the electoral roll the most accurate?				Was your name on the electoral roll?			
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	No Response	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	No Response
Papua New Guinea	25	44	7	24	60	20	17	3
Highlands	30	36	5	30	42	14	39	6
Momase	20	52	8	20	75	22	3	1
Southern	24	49	9	17	68	28	4	0
NGI	24	48	6	21	75	22	3	1
NCD	26	45	8	20	55	39	5	1

The problems with the 2017 electoral roll can be attributed to a flawed enrolment process coupled with the lack of an effective verification process. Of the 224 local observers, only eight (4%) reported seeing the preliminary/working rolls displayed for public verification. Of the 3770 citizens surveyed during the campaign period, just one in five (21%) reported that the preliminary or working rolls had been displayed for verification in their area. This is an improvement on 2012, where only 17% of citizens surveyed had reported a public verification process.

Notwithstanding the variation in responses provided by observers and those citizens surveyed, it seems the objection and verification process²⁷ was perfunctory at best, and qualitatively weaker than 2012. In many locations preliminary rolls seem not to have been displayed, were displayed for a very short time, or so late in the piece as to prevent objections. Even in places where the rolls were displayed, the nature, extent and duration of the display did not allow for widespread scrutiny and as such did not provide safeguards against over- and under-enrolment or errors and omissions.

For example, observers in **Northern Province** reported that the preliminary rolls for both **Ijivitari Open** and **Sohe Open** were displayed for one week at the provincial headquarters. In **Hagen Open** and **Obura-Wonenara Open** the preliminary rolls were displayed for a total of four days at their respective district offices. In the case of **Hagen Open** this was over the Easter long weekend, so while citizens could check the roll there was no opportunity to object or seek amendments. Observers in **Kandep Open** were told the preliminary roll was displayed for one week in a single ward. Had the rolls been publicly displayed more systematically many of the delays and much of the violence noted on polling day and in the wake of the election may have been avoided.

Having regard to the citizen survey results, the verification exercise undertaken in Port Moresby in 2017 was more visible than in 2012, and yet did not serve to improve confidence in the roll. The preliminary rolls for **NCD** were displayed at Police Stations, and although this seemed fairly widely known, there were still many voters who did not feel comfortable checking their enrolment. Whereas 27% of NCD citizens surveyed in 2012 had seen the preliminary rolls displayed, 39% of those surveyed in 2017 had, yet as noted previously (see Table II above) only 7% of those surveyed in NCD considered the electoral roll accurate, down from 26% in 2012. More than half of the 466 NCD citizens surveyed also reported personally knowing someone who had been unable to register in 2017.

A key point of departure with 2012 was the quality of the roll update process in institutional settings. Whereas the 2012 **Moresby North West** team had found the enrolment and verification exercises to be conducted in a comprehensive way in the Motu-Koitabu villages and in institutional settings (e.g. police and army barracks, University of Papua New Guinea, National Research Institute, Institute of Public Administration and Port Moresby Technical College) this was not the case in 2017. Instead, observers in Port Moresby, Lae, Goroka and Madang were all highly critical of the enrolment process – or lack thereof – in the country's tertiary institutions, noting significant under-enrolment at each major campus.

The Madang team leader, a long-term staff member at Divine Word University (DWU), reported that new DWU staff who had sought to enrol at the provincial electoral office, were told to enrol when the enrolment agents visited campus. They never came. Some observers opined that proper updates were not conducted at university campuses because students around the country had been actively campaigning for the removal of the O'Neill-led PNC Government. However, observers in NCD also noted major irregularities with the electoral rolls at Murray Barracks, Gordon's Police Barracks, McGregor Police Barracks,²⁸ Bomana Prison and Bomana Police College. This is particularly disappointing as such settings should have provided ease of access for the purpose of the roll update.

Across the country observers saw voters turned away from polling stations, often in significant numbers. In the Highlands, where the roll was rarely used, this tended to be due to a shortage of ballot papers or fraud. Elsewhere in the country, voters were turned away because their names were not on the roll. One observer in **East New Britain** observed polling at 25 polling stations over eight days between 24 June and 3 July 2017 inclusive. Her reports, as summarised in Appendix B, indicate that 2857 citizens voted, while 903 voters were turned away. This equates to 24% of those who sought to vote.

Our observer teams in **Kokopo Open** and **Gazelle Open** in 2012 had likewise reported seeing people turned away en masse at several locations (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:32). Many of these were long-term residents who had voted in past elections including 2007 (ibid). Similar claims were made in 2017, including at Kuluan and Rainau Plantations, where nobody voted. The manager of both plantations could not provide any explanation for this saying:

“The village recorder came here and collected all of the names. I don’t know what has happened. I know for a fact many of the people who could not find their names on the 2017 roll had voted here in the 2012 election.”

(Oil Palm Plantation Manager, Kokopo)

Despite the assertion that many of those turned away at Kuluan and Rainau Plantations had voted in 2012, observers in **Kokopo Open** in 2012 had reported that migrant plantation workers fared poorly overall, with many turned away from polling stations because their names were not on the electoral roll (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:39).²⁹ Disappointingly, errors and omissions identified in 2007 and 2012 had not been rectified in many provinces.

In order to make it easier for citizens to check their enrolment status, the PNGEC launched **Roll Lookup**,³⁰ an electronic application which could be accessed online or through mobile hand-held devices. Of the 3770 citizens surveyed during the campaign period, one in six (17%) reported knowing about **Roll Lookup**, and approximately one in 10 (9%) reported having used it to check their enrolment. Not surprisingly, knowledge of the application was strongest in urban areas, with one in four voters (25%) knowing they could check their enrolment online.

The pre-poll citizen survey revealed that over half of those who knew about Roll Lookup had used it (see Table 12). The surveys also revealed that 334 of the 351 citizens who had checked their enrolment online had regular access to a mobile phone.

Table 12. Knowledge and use of the Roll Lookup Application

Region	Pre-polling Survey				Pre-polling Survey			
	Are you aware there is an online Roll Lookup application?				Did you check your enrolment using the online Roll Lookup application?			
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)	No Response	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)	No Response
Papua New Guinea	17	70	11	2	9	79	7	5
Highlands	11	70	16	2	6	81	9	4
Momase	16	72	9	3	10	76	4	10
Southern	32	63	4	1	19	78	1	2
NGI	12	76	9	2	7	82	8	4
NCD	38	57	4	1	25	72	1	2

Without a doubt, **Roll Lookup** affords citizens with access to the internet the opportunity to check their enrolment status. This is a welcome development, especially given that voters were provided with limited opportunity to verify their enrolment details in the provinces and districts. We note, however, that **Roll Lookup** has not served to halt the general degradation of the electoral roll nor improve its accuracy, in as much as there was no provision to enrol online or amend one's enrolment if it was found to be incorrect. The current methods of voter registration, verification and roll cleansing lack transparency and undermine community trust in and ownership of the electoral roll (Haley 2013a; Haley and Zubrinich 2013). Absence of community ownership has served to exacerbate problems with the electoral roll and expose it to blatant manipulation by self-interested individuals. It has also meant the electoral roll is no longer used in many places and abused in others. Writing after the 2012 elections, as part of their independent evaluation of Australia's electoral assistance to PNG between 2000 and 2012, Henderson and Boneo (DFAT 2013: iii) concluded that “it is doubtful that the PNG electoral roll fulfils adequately any of the main functions normally expected of a roll”. We concur.

If the integrity of the electoral roll is to be improved all citizens must be provided with genuine opportunity to actively participate in the voter registration, verification and roll-cleansing exercises. To facilitate this, the work of cleansing and updating the electoral roll must commence earlier in the electoral cycle, thereby allowing sufficient time to properly display preliminary rolls at the district and sub-district levels. The incorporation of “public readings of the electoral roll, in the presence of community scrutineers, ward councillors and village recorders” would likely

contribute to a more accurate electoral roll and a sense of community ownership with respect to the roll. It would also help ensure greater equality between citizens (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:37).

Electoral Boundaries and Equal Suffrage

One of the hallmarks of democratic elections is that each eligible citizen should have only one vote and that those votes should be of equivalent value. Enrolments in PNG's open electorates vary widely, are no longer relatively equivalent in size, and well exceed the legislative tolerance of 20% (see also COG 2012:12; Haley and Zubrinich 2013:38; COG 2017:13). Based on an enrolled population of 5.06 million and the number of open electorates being fixed at 89, a median enrolment or "population quota" of 56,880 could be expected and would see acceptable enrolments range from 45,500 to 68,255. As at the 2017 elections, enrolments in 50 of the 89 open electorates fell outside of the accepted range.

In each region there were electorates which exceeded or were well below the prescribed enrolment range, although the net effect in each region would be markedly different if this variation were to be rectified. For example, there are only three electorates in the Highlands with very small enrolments, but 14 with excessively large enrolments. Momase, however, has 14 low enrolment electorates and only two that exceed the legislative tolerance, these being **Lae Open** and **Madang Open**. If PNG's electoral boundaries were to be redrawn to correct the excessive variation, then the Highlands Region would likely gain seats, while Momase would lose seats. NGL and Southern regions would also likely lose seats although not as many as Momase. It is in large part because of this that past attempts to create new seats and redraw electoral boundaries have failed.

Of the 89 open electorates, there are six with enrolments of well over 100,000 and five with enrolments under 30,000. Beyond the diminished voice this affords those in larger electorates, the wide variation in enrolments has obvious and significant service delivery and development implications for PNG citizens, given that the development budget – District/Provincial Services Improvement Programs (DSIP/PSIP) – is distributed to MPs as a fixed amount regardless of the population of their electorate.

Variations of this kind have significant implications for the quality of democratic governance in PNG and result in unequal suffrage for PNG citizens (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:38). Accordingly, "the inequalities arising from the present electoral boundaries" must be addressed at the earliest opportunity (ibid), noting of course that this task is complicated by the legal requirement that electorate and district boundaries be coterminous.

The franchise of citizens in the Highlands Region and in major urban centres was further diminished by the practice of one-day polling. There is absolutely no doubt voters outside of the Highlands and in non-urban settings are given greater opportunity to participate in the elections, and do so in an environment of relative security, with kin and people with whom they are closely associated. For example, our teams in NGL, Momase and Southern regions all reported multiple instances of villages within the same ward being assigned separate polling days. This is confirmed by the polling schedules. As a consequence, those supporting different candidates were not unnecessarily forced to come together at a single location on polling day. In the Highlands and urban areas, however, this is not the case. Groups with diverse political interests and often with longstanding enmities were required to come together in a highly charged, competitive political environment. It is hardly surprising that voters in these areas report high levels of violence and intimidation.

Central Bougainville Open, with an enrolled population of 3974 and 308 polling stations, provides a useful point of contrast with the approach taken in the Highlands and in urban areas. Observers in East New Britain also highlighted the case of ward 22, Ulaveo, in Bitapaka Rural LLG in **Kokopo Open**, which provides a stark contrast with the situation encountered in the Highlands. Ulaveo comprises several oil palm plantations, each of which were assigned separate polling stations. In total, eight separate polling stations and eight full days of polling were provided for the 527 enrolled voters of Ulaveo. The **Kokopo Open** observer team visited three of the eight polling stations, namely Tokua Airport Compound, Kaluan Plantation and Rainu Plantation which had 30, 50 and 67 registered voters respectively. At the conclusion of polling the polling team reported to observers that over the eight days of polling only 264, exactly half of the 527 registered voters in Ward 22, Ulaveo, had voted and that a total of 135 would-be voters were turned away because their names could not be found on the electoral roll.

Box 3: One Person, One Vote?

- » Voter enrolments vary widely and well exceed the legislative tolerance of 20%
- » Six electorates with over 100,000 registered voters
 - » **Porgera-Lagaip Open** (143,534)
 - » **Angalimp-South Waghi Open** (125,527)
 - » **Mendi Open** (114,557)
 - » **Nipa-Kutubu Open** (116,724)
 - » **Talasea Open** (111,983)
 - » **Moresby North-East Open** (105,057)
- » Five electorates with under 30,000 registered voters
 - » **Rabaul Open** (22,364)
 - » **Kabwum Open** (28,950)
 - » **Golilala Open** (29,179)
 - » **Samarai-Murua Open** (29,385)
 - » **Esaála Open** (29,930)
- » Average enrolments per polling station, per day also vary widely
 - » **Lae Open** (1,611)
 - » **Angalimp-South Wahgi Open** (1,569)
 - » **Porgera-Lagaip Open** (1,206)
 - » **Goroka Open** (1,050)
 - » **Pomio Open** (185)
 - » **Central Bougainville Open** (128)
 - » **Kavieng Open** (255)
 - » **Rabaul Open** (287)
- » Similar sized electorates are treated differently
 - » **Central Bougainville** (39,674) – 308 polling stations
 - » **Chuave Open** (38,657) – 69 polling stations
 - » **Karamui-Nomane Open** (39,498) – 69 polling stations

In 2017 urban and peri-urban settlers were disenfranchised across the country. As in 2012, observers in Port Moresby witnessed polling stations in the settlements which shut down early afternoon for no apparent reason (c.f. Haley and Zubrinich 2013:38), and observers in **Mt Hagen Open**, **Goroka Open**, **Obura-Wonenara Open**, **Wewak Open**, **Lae Open** and **Madang Open** all saw settlers, and sometimes public servants, threatened with eviction and intimidated by local landowners. One settler in **Lae Open**, interviewed as part of the 2017 post-polling survey, had this to say:

“As a settler from another province living here in the settlements in Lae, we are forced to vote for local people through fear and intimidation of being evicted. Most of us settlers cannot be seen to be associated with other candidates or be seen to be involved in vote buying or gifting in fear that our landlords will evict us. Our landlords insist they get our first preferences.”

(Voter, Lae Open)

Observers in **Lae Open** provided similar accounts of landowners taking charge of proceedings. One described a polling station where the “landlords” (local landowners) armed with iron rods and bush knives were controlling the vote, and another where the landlords sent away the polling team and conducted the polling themselves, successfully casting all the ballot papers for their preferred candidate.

In the Western Highlands many settlers were denied the right to vote, despite being enrolled. An observer in **Mt Hagen open**, for instance, reported that polling at Gomis Fishpond, Ward 2, Hagen Urban LLG, commenced peacefully between 11am and midday. Many of those enrolled and the majority of those present at the commencement of polling were migrant settlers. Soon thereafter the polling station was overrun by “landowners from rural areas”. Evidently there was no security at the polling station and the observer reported that “these landowners voted multiple

times until they had finished all of the ballot papers at around 2.30–3.00pm. The migrant settlers were simply bystanders in this election”. Another observer in **Hagen Open** had this to say.

“The rural areas voted on Friday but polling for Hagen Open was delayed until Saturday, meaning most of the SDA’s didn’t vote. It also meant that the rural voters, who had voted on Friday, came here on Saturday too. They chased the settlement people out. The settlers were voting peacefully in an orderly fashion when the rural people arrived they told them how to vote. The scrutineers forced their way in and voted for them. They said if you don’t vote this way today, tomorrow you will pack your bags and go back to your own places.”

(Observer, Mt Hagen Open)

Elsewhere in the Highlands, in **Goroka Open** and **Obura-Wonenara Open** for example, it was public servants and staff employed at key government institutions who were disenfranchised. Observers in **Goroka Open**, for instance, reported that staff from the University of Goroka and Goroka Hospital were effectively disenfranchised, while observers in **Obura-Wonenara Open** reported that landowners prevented the Aiyura National High School staff and National Agricultural Research Institute NARI staff from voting. The landowners argued:

“These are our votes. We are many and the votes are few so only the landowners will vote. These ballot papers are for us and not you outsiders. You are from other districts and have no right to vote here.”

(Observer, Obura-Wonenara Open)

To make matters worse, there was much confusion as to which electorate these institutions were located in. Polling in Ward 18, Kosa, Gadsup/Tairora LLG (Obura-Wonenara District) was delayed while key officials determined whether they should vote in **Kainantu Open** or **Obura-Wonenara Open**. The confusion arose because Ward 18 (Kosa) seemingly duplicates some if not all of Kainantu Urban LLG, such that the polling schedules for each electorate assigned teams to these locations.³¹ As it turned out, many of those seeking to vote in Ward 18 had in fact voted the day before in **Kainantu Open**. As a consequence, polling at Apaira (Team 385) was disrupted by fighting, when those who hadn’t voted yet objected to those who had voted the day before voting again.

This distinction between “asples” (locals) and “kam man” (migrants) has long been a feature of politics in **Madang Open** (see Matbob 2013), and was evident again in 2017 albeit with a slightly different inflection. Ward 10, Sek, Ambenob Rural LLG, stands as a useful example. Observers witnessed all three days of polling for Ward 10 which had a total enrolment of 1556, reporting that different groups of voters were treated differentially by the polling team. Polling commenced at Alexishafen at 10am on 5 July 2017, proceeding in accordance with an agreement reached between the local councillor and the polling team. The agreement saw the local councillor and ward recorder “assist” by identifying voters. They were observed to work from a separate list and to make sure “asples” voted, regardless of whether or not their names were on the electoral roll. Many were not enrolled.

The following day’s polling at Danip Station was delayed, disrupted and subsequently suspended, because voters there wanted to employ a similar process which involved local leaders identifying those who should vote. In fact, this is what happened in relation to the “asples” Bel voters although the Ari voters (a separate ethnic/language group) were only permitted to vote if their names were on the electoral roll. The separate approach employed in relation to Ari voters, was a source of major discontent. Fighting erupted, polling was suspended, and extra security was brought in to restore order. The third day of polling took place at Vidar Village. There polling was restricted, by agreement between the local leaders and polling team, to the local landowners from Sek Island and nearby. Only after the local landowners (“asples”) had voted were settlers (“kam man”) and others whose names were on the electoral roll (e.g. the Ari villagers from the day before) permitted to vote. Observers reported that all the ballot papers were used and that many people, who had waited for three days in some cases, were unable to vote.

Throughout the country, to varying degrees, the franchise of women voters was significantly compromised, such that PNG women did not participate in the 2017 elections as equal citizens. The challenges faced by women voters are discussed at length later in this report.

Recommendations:

- » **Development of a brand new electoral roll is again warranted.** Widespread irregularities in both 2012 and 2017 electoral rolls, evidence that the gains of 2007 have not been sustained. We recommend a widely publicised nationwide enrolment exercise over the next three years, coupled with the introduction of a voter identification card.
- » **Establishment and maintenance of a new electoral roll would be greatly facilitated by the immediate establishment of a permanent roving enrolment team within the PNGEC.** Decentralisation of responsibility for the preparation and maintenance of the electoral roll and the use of locally engaged enrolment agents has failed to deliver a credible roll that inspires citizen confidence.
- » **In order to improve the integrity of the electoral roll, all citizens must be provided with genuine opportunity to actively participate in the voter registration, verification and roll-cleansing exercises when they occur.** To facilitate this, the work of cleansing and updating the electoral roll must commence earlier in the electoral cycle, thereby allowing sufficient time to properly display preliminary rolls at the district and sub-district level.
- » **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.
- » **Greater effort is required to safeguard the franchise of urban settlers.** Additional security should be deployed to those polling stations where migrant settlers are enrolled to ensure their votes are not usurped. Beyond this the Boundaries Commission might explore the merits of urban seats, such as those introduced in Samoa prior to the 2016 Samoan elections.
- » **The PNGEC needs to ensure greater consistency and discernment in relation to wards with large enrolments and in relation to the number of voters to be processed in a single day at any one polling station.** Additional polling teams should be assigned to wards with large enrolments. The current situation where some polling stations have as few as 30 registered voters while others have over 3,000 to 4,000 registered voters is patently absurd.
- » **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.

Awareness

The 2017 election was preceded by donor-funded and supported awareness, delivered as one component of the Australian-funded Electoral Systems Strengthening Project, which has operated in PNG since 2015. The project implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), seeks to improve election management across a variety of areas, including strategic planning, voter registration, inclusion and voter awareness.

While we are not privy to the exact nature of this investment, greater emphasis, it seems, was placed on the media campaign, with investment in face-to-face voter education on this occasion having been far more modest than in recent elections. Face-to-face awareness, where it occurred, was coordinated at the provincial level, by PESCs, and was delivered by the PNGEC, CSOs and in some instances by security personnel deployed as part of the NATEL (National Elections) deployment.

Across all regions a smaller proportion of citizens surveyed post-polling reported having attended voter awareness in 2017 as compared with 2012 (see Table 13). The pre-polling survey, however, revealed a more complex picture, namely

a marked decrease in face-to-face voter awareness attendance in the Highlands and NGI, and slight increases in Momase and Southern regions in comparison with 2012. This variation is discussed further below.

Table 13. Awareness Attendance and Exposure – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Pre-polling Survey				Post-polling Survey	
	Did you attend any face-to-face voter awareness?		Did you see any PNGEC media awareness?		Did you attend any LPV voter awareness?	
	Yes (%) 2012	Yes (%) 2017	Yes (%) 2012	Yes (%) 2017	Yes (%) 2012	Yes (%) 2017
Papua New Guinea	43	39	39	66	42	27
Highlands	44	31	31	45	39	29
Momase	33	42	51	67	34	32
Southern	35	41	59	76	38	24
New Guinea Islands	61	35	31	66	65	40
NCD	34	39	67	77	51	25

Notwithstanding the modest increases in reported awareness in Momase and Southern regions in 2017, it remains the case – across the country – that far fewer citizens were exposed to voter awareness in 2017 compared with 2007. Citizen surveys undertaken over the course of the past three elections suggest fewer and fewer people in the Highlands, in particular, are being exposed to face-to-face voter awareness. Whereas 68–70% of citizens surveyed in **Enga, Southern Highlands** and **Hela** had attended voter awareness in the lead up to the 2007 elections, less than half had in 2012 (38–49%), and less than a quarter in 2017 (21–24%).

Table 14 below further reveals that the proportion of citizens attending CSO-led voter awareness has more or less halved since 2012 in the Highlands, NGI and Southern regions,³² while the proportion of citizens attending awareness delivered by the PNGEC has remained more or less the same, except in Southern Region where a slight increase was noted. Also noteworthy is the significant increase in candidate-led awareness in Southern Region in 2017. This had been noted in the other regions in 2012, with observers reporting that awareness was not only being conducted in competition with campaign events, but also being co-opted by and used to the advantage of candidates in certain places (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:44).

Table 14. Awareness Attendance and Delivery by Region – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Attended Awareness (% of respondents)		Awareness Deliverer (% of respondents)						
			Civil Society		PNGEC		Other	Candidate	Police
	2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017	2017
PNG	43	39	24	13	14	11	11	13	2
Highlands	44	31	28	11	14	14	8	5	4
Momase	33	42	9	15	8	9	19	19	1
Southern	35	41	15	9	17	22	3	15	2
New Guinea Islands	61	35	37	17	13	10	21	19	1

It seems, with respect to voter awareness, that candidates have and are effectively occupying the space vacated by CSOs and the churches. Indeed, as Table 15 below indicates candidates are now equally important as civil society and the PNGEC with respect to the delivery of voter awareness, although their interests are undoubtedly more partisan.

Table 15. Awareness Attendance and Delivery by Region – 2017

Region	Public Awareness Only (% of respondents)		Public Awareness & Media Awareness (% of respondents)		Media Awareness Only (% of respondents)		No Awareness (% of respondents)	
	2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017
PNG	7	8	36	31	38	35	18	26
Highlands	10	5	34	26	31	33	25	36
Momase	4	9	29	33	51	35	16	23
Southern	3	7	27	34	59	42	10	17
New Guinea Islands	4	14	57	32	31	34	8	20

Just as face-to-face voter awareness was less prevalent in 2017, so too were there decreases, across the country, in the number and proportion of voters reporting having been exposed to the nationwide PNGEC media campaign in one form or another. Across all regions the proportion of citizens reporting no access to public or media awareness grew (see Table 16 below).

The pre-polling citizen survey, conducted during the campaign period, reveals that media penetration in PNG varies by region, setting and media type. Doubtless this impacted upon the overall reach and effectiveness of the PNGEC media campaign. Both previous observations (2007 and 2012) found urban respondents more likely to report exposure to media awareness and PNGEC advertising than their rural counterparts. This remains the case.

Table 16. Exposure to Awareness by Type and Region – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Public Awareness Only (% of respondents)		Public Awareness & Media Awareness (% of respondents)		Media Awareness Only (% of respondents)		No Awareness (% of respondents)	
	2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017
PNG	7	8	36	31	38	35	18	26
Highlands	10	5	34	26	31	33	25	36
Momase	4	9	29	33	51	35	16	23
Southern	3	7	27	34	59	42	10	17
New Guinea Islands	4	14	57	32	31	34	8	20

In all four regions urban respondents reported exposure to media awareness in all its forms with greater or equal frequency to that of their rural counterparts (see Table 17). What has changed is the relative importance of particular media forms. The 2017 elections, for instance, saw between one and three voters in every ten exposed to PNGEC media awareness via social media. By contrast election related print media, television and radio broadcasts reached fewer voters than in 2012.



Table 17. Exposure to Awareness and Media by Region and Setting – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Setting	Public Awareness (% of respondents)		Social Media (% of respondents)		Print Media (% of respondents)		Television (% of respondents)		Radio (% of respondents)	
		2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017
Papua New Guinea	Rural	47	38	NA	13	45	40	29	16	48	24
	Urban	40	40	NA	21	60	51	60	41	54	35
Highlands	Rural	45	30	NA	16	37	37	25	18	38	20
	Urban	43	36	NA	16	53	41	46	52	41	41
Momase	Rural	33	44	NA	9	44	37	19	5	65	25
	Urban	33	38	NA	20	68	60	58	30	74	26
Southern	Rural	36	45	NA	15	63	46	43	32	50	34
	Urban	33	39	NA	27	64	52	73	45	55	32
New Guinea Islands	Rural	69	44	NA	11	60	44	38	14	63	23
	Urban	59	56	NA	12	70	44	78	27	86	62

Overall, awareness efforts in 2017, though more varied, were less effective in their reach. That said, face-to-face awareness remains important, reaching some voters who had not seen, read or heard anything of the PNGEC media campaign. As in 2007 and 2012, the 2017 observation found that face-to-face awareness continues to be the most effective method in reaching those living in remote rural areas (Haley and Anere 2009:3; Haley and Zubrinich 2013:41) (see Table 18 below). For the most part, awareness continues to be well received, although many citizens reported to observers that they would prefer it to be delivered by civil society members rather than by candidates and the PNGEC, and that overall there should be more awareness. Many saw a more prominent role for donors in this space.

Table 18. Exposure Awareness in Remote Electorates – 2017

Region/Electorate	Public Awareness %	Social Media %	Print Media %	Television %	Radio %
Highlands Region	31	16	38	25	24
Kandep Open	66	30	57	7	26
Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open	18	7	9	6	0
Menyamy Open	40	6	46	1	6
Nuku Open	60	10	25	0	34

Recommendation:

- » *Electoral and civic awareness, and voter education involving civil society, needs to be prioritised and funded throughout the election cycle to ensure widespread coverage, especially in remote rural areas which are for the most beyond the reach of media campaigns. Ongoing donor support for such activities is encouraged.*
- » *All public awareness activities should cease prior to the issue of writs, in order to prevent manipulation and co-option by candidates. Only media awareness should continue through the campaign period.*

Pre-Poll Administration

More so than 2007 or 2012, there was clear evidence of early preparatory work around procurement of essential items, including the ballot papers, ballot boxes, and indelible ink. It was also clear that this was done with a view to making considerable savings, all of which is to be commended. Despite the piecemeal release of election funds, key materials were dispatched from Port Moresby in a timely manner.

Problems were evident, however, at the provincial level. In large part these pertained to the electoral roll, and lack of confidence therein, as well as funding shortfalls which led to delays with the insertion of polling teams and security personnel. In many locations, polling officials and security personnel refused to be deployed until their allowances were paid, at least in part. For example, complaints about the non-payment of security personnel gave rise to a stand-off in **Enga Province** which was only resolved when the provincial government stepped in and their paid allowances.

In parts of PNG, particularly the boundaries of SHP, Hela and Western provinces, administrative and political boundaries are not coterminous, meaning there are communities which are physically located in one district, but are assigned to a different district/electorate or even multiple electorates for the purpose of voting. For each of the past three elections this has caused confusion with respect to the delivery of elections and has provided opportunities for fraud and malpractice. This very confusion provides the basis of the thus far successful **North Fly Open** election petition (EP 31 of 2017; *Paiyo Bale v. James Donald & Electoral Commission*), in which Justice Makail found the declaration and election of James Donald as the member for North Fly Open null and void, on the basis that polling by four Nomad Rural LLG polling teams (Teams 26, 27, 28, and 29) in **North Fly Open** was unlawful because Nomad Rural LLG is in fact gazetted within and forms part of **Middle Fly Open** electorate.

By way of background, Nomad Rural LLG comprises 41 wards all of which were included in the polling schedule for **Middle Fly Open** electorate. According to the evidence presented in court, a decision was taken locally, seemingly in accordance with past practice, that 24 wards would vote in **North Fly Open** and 17 wards would vote in **Middle Fly Open**. The 24 wards in question were serviced by Teams 26, 27, 28, and 29. What is particularly interesting is that many of these same villages/wards which are undisputedly located in Western Province are also included in Mt Bosavi Rural LLG (wards 9, 11, 12, and 13) and were included in the **Nipa-Kutubu Open** polling schedule as well (see below). In a similar vein, wards 17 and 38 of Nomad Rural LLG (which include the polling villages of Juha, Tobi 1, Tobi 2, Omini/Omeibi, Siabi and Tinahai) are also included as wards 22 and 26 in North Koroba Rural LLG, in **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** electorate. In a situation similar to that outlined in the **North Fly Open** judgement, polling teams from Southern Highlands and Hela have been sent into Western Province to conduct polling for **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** and **Nipa-Kutubu Open** for at least the past 5 national elections.

Section 27 of the Organic Law on Provincial and Local-Level Governments (OLPLLG) provides for the establishment of LLGs and stipulates that they should in principle be contained within a single open electorate, but may extend beyond one or more electoral boundaries pursuant to a proclamation by the head of state. In Hela and SHP there are at least four LLGs which span two electorates (Auwi-Pori Rural; Kuare Rural) and two which span two provinces (Mt Bosavi Rural LLG and North Koroba Rural LLG); the latter seemingly inconsistent with s. 36 (2)(b) of OLPLLG. In 2012 boxes for some of the Mt Bosavi Rural wards were counted in both **Komo-Magarima Open** and **Nipa-Kutubu Open**, while a second set of boxes bearing the same numbers as the Mt Bosavi boxes were entered into the **Komo-Magarima Open** count under different polling names. Specifically, there were two each of boxes numbered 33–38.

In 2017 the Auwi-Pori Rural LLG wards within **Tari-Pori Open** electorate were originally assigned **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** ballot papers, while the Mt Bosavi Rural LLG wards in **Komo-Magarima Open** electorate were assigned **Nipa-Kutubu Open** ballot papers, leaving a shortfall in both **Tari-Pori** and **Komo-Magarima Open** electorates. This necessitated the use of generic papers, which arrived in Tari on a charter flight a day or so prior to polling, giving rise to much suspicion and fuelling the perception that administrative systems in Port Moresby had failed.

Candidates contesting **Hela Provincial**, **Tari-Pori** and **Komo-Magarima Open** electorates vehemently opposed to the use of these generic papers and spent the best part of two days arguing with the EM about this and a series of other

issues, including the appointment of polling officials. In response, the excess **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** papers were publicly burnt by security personnel.³³ It is unclear what happened to the excess **Nipa-Kutubu Open** ballot papers. Candidates in Hela petitioned the PNGEC for an explanation, refusing to allow the election to proceed until they had received a response. The electoral commissioner responded in writing, with his response read out to candidates at 9am on Monday 26 June 2017, the scheduled polling day. Only after the candidates had received their response did the processing of ballot boxes begin. In response to the Hela candidates' petition, the EC instructed the EM to immediately publish the electoral roll and at the same time authorised the use of the preliminary roll. The EM did neither.

Confusion concerning the wards of Kuare Rural LLG and Mt Bosavi Rural LLG also resulted in much discussion, fuelled candidate petitions, and led to the deferment of polling in Southern Highlands as well. In the end, polling in **lalibu Pangia Open** was deferred for two days³⁴ because all the wards for Kuare LLG were originally included in the **Kagua-Erave Open** polling schedule. In response to a candidate petition,³⁵ a new polling schedule for **lalibu-Pangia Open**, which included several of the Kuare wards, was produced.³⁶ Polling at Mt Bosavi, however, did not eventuate because the ballot boxes were allegedly hijacked and diverted to Nipa station.³⁷ All 14 ballot boxes (7 open and 7 regional) were subsequently set aside and not counted. Such issues should have been anticipated as these particular ballot boxes had proved controversial in each of the last three elections (Haley and Anere 2009:41) and the failed 2002 elections.

In contrast to 2012, the ballot papers were not pre-packed in Port Moresby. They were dispatched to provinces according to the enrolled population and were redistributed locally based on ward enrolments. In some provinces it was this process, that took place a day or two before polling, which afforded candidates and citizens their first real opportunity to scrutinize the 2017 electoral roll. This was undoubtedly the case in Hela and Chimbu provinces. Although unlike Hela, where the 2017 electoral roll as supplied was used, the Chimbu PESC sought approval to use the preliminary roll. Upon receiving this approval the ballot papers were redistributed according to the preliminary roll and the back of each ballot paper stamped and signed by the provincial administrator. The entire process took two days to complete.

“The preliminary rolls for Chimbu were updated in October 2016 as part of the pre-election project. We were told on several occasions that the updated roll would be displayed once the amendments had been entered. In fact, the revised roll was never displayed. It simply surfaced during the pre-poll period when the distribution of ballot papers began. So many concerns were raised when people finally saw the electoral roll. To cool things down the Provincial Election Steering Committee agreed to use the 2012/ preliminary roll, and sought the Electoral Commissioner’s approval to do so.”

(Observer, Chimbu Province)

Training

As in 2007 and 2012, a cascade training approach was adopted by the PNGEC. This saw EMs and ROs typically receive a week’s training in the fortnight or so leading up to the issues of writs. This training was provided by the PNGEC with support from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and IFES. EMs and ROs in turn trained AEMs and AROs either just before or soon after the issue of writs, while ROs and AROs trained presiding officers and polling officials during the latter part of the campaign period. In the NGI, Momase and Southern regions, where polling teams were finalised early, this training took place 12–22 June 2017, in line with the PNGEC’s official training schedule. In Momase and NCD polling officials were provided with a day’s training which observers considered to be clear and comprehensive. For the most part observer teams in NGI reported training which ran for two to three hours at most, while polling officials in **Oro Province** received a total of one hour’s training. Despite the brevity of the training offered observers considered it clear and comprehensive, noting the many of the temporary election workers (TEWs) engaged in 2017 had previous election experience.

In the Highlands the situation was far more ad hoc, perhaps deliberately so. In parts of **Chimbu Province**, polling officials received four to six hours training although in **Gumine Open** it was described as “quick and brief”. In Eastern Highlands (**Goroka Open** and **Obura-Wonenara Open**) observers reported similar variation. By contrast, the training in Western

Highlands (with the exception of **Hagen Open**) was described as comprehensive, as was the training in **Kandep Open** and **Wabag Open**. In each of these cases the training took place a day or two prior to polling and generally involved all members of the polling team. In parts of **Southern Highlands Province**, POs were provided with training although other members of the polling team were not. Observers in **Mendi Open**, however, reported no training whatsoever.

Likewise, observers in **Hela Province** were not aware of any training being provided to polling officials in **Tari-Pori Open**. Elsewhere in the province, training was cursory at best and delivered immediately prior to polling. Observers in Komo were not aware of any formal training as such, reporting that polling teams were finalised early on polling day and were given a short briefing prior to being dispatched to their respective polling places. Observers in Magarima did not see any training either, although were informed that the AROs for Upper and Lower Wage Rural LLGs had finalised the polling teams in the early hours of the morning and conducted training for polling officials at 4am on polling day. The situation in **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** was not dissimilar. The polling teams for North and South Koroba were finalised at 7–8pm on the eve of polling. Polling officials were trained at a local guest house commencing at 1am on polling day. At Lake Kapiago and Auwi-Logaiyu LLGs, the polling teams were not finalised until after the ballot boxes and papers had arrived. At Kapiago, polling teams were announced at 8pm on the eve of polling and at Auwi even later. In both places training commenced after midnight on polling day after several hours of complaint over the non-payment of outstanding allowances from the 2012 elections.

Similar complaints caused delays and distractions across the country, with many polling officials refusing to be deployed until their allowances were paid. In several places, polling officials received part payments upfront and were promised the balance on completion of their polling duties. In Western Highlands for instance, polling officials reported receiving 75% less than they had in 2012. In Chimbu and Hela provinces, polling officials reported receiving only K20 each upfront. Many in Hela claim never to have received outstanding balances, while those in Chimbu received the balance of their polling allowances in late July, 14 days after the conclusion of polling. In Obura-Wonenara balances had still not been paid when the declarations were made and in **Ijivitari Open** there were polling officials who reported receiving just K100 in total.

In 2017 the PNGEC introduced new procedures for the recruitment and management of TEWs. From the outset it was intended that those engaged to support the election would be paid directly into nominated bank accounts in order to counter claims of non-payment, something which had plagued previous elections. Where polling officials were identified early, and provided accurate bank account details, payments were effected successfully, albeit with delays in some instances. In many cases, complaints about non-payment were attributed to TEWs providing incorrect banking details. This is very likely the case. In fact, we experienced similar problems paying allowances to election observers. Many payments bounced in the first instance because the names and account details provided did not match those held by the banks. That polling teams in the Highlands were finalised so late, on the eve of polling in many instances, would have contributed to the significant delays with payments.

As noted above, the majority of observer teams (25 out of 35), especially those outside of the Highlands, considered the training provided to polling officials to be clear and comprehensive. However, even where the training was considered comprehensive, the issue of gender-segregated polling was seldom discussed and very few observer teams reported discussion of the express lanes introduced in 2017 to improve the franchise of the elderly, infirm and people with disability. In total only nine of the 35 observer teams reported discussion of the new express lanes in the training provided to polling teams.³⁸ **Cascade training of the kind typically employed in the lead up to elections in PNG is not particularly effective when it comes to introducing new concepts, ideas and procedures.**

Recommendation:

- » **Training continues to be important and needs to be given priority in the lead up to the 2022 elections.** The effectiveness of cascade training has proven limited, especially in relation to the introduction of new concepts, ideas and procedures. Instead we recommend the establishment of a small professional team of trainers within the PNGEC who travel to each district well in advance of the elections to train and accredit prospective polling officials.

Communications

Telecommunications in PNG have improved significantly over the past decade and, as a consequence, communications within key agencies at election times have greatly improved. In places where there is good network coverage, mobile phones were used to great effect. These telecommunications advances have also made the electronic transmission of results possible.

That said, inter-agency communications could be greatly strengthened and communications remain problematic in the more remote areas where communications infrastructure is weakest. There were, for instance, polling teams that needed to be inserted or retrieved by air who were left stranded for days, and many examples where changes to polling schedules were not communicated back to EMs and ROs. In places these delays led to ballot boxes being excluded.

The electronic transmission of results, trialled in 2012, was again used in 2017, although in many cases with less effect. Progressive tallies, it seems, were not systematically transmitted to PNGEC headquarters in Port Moresby at the end of each box count, as they had been in 2012. This meant there were often delays broadcasting progressive and final results via local media. In many cases, up-to-date information was more readily available via social media.

Recommendation:

- » ***Electoral officials and security personnel deployed to remote districts need reliable and effective means of communication.*** Where mobile phone coverage is poor they need to be provided with radios or satellite phones that are in good working order so as to facilitate inter-agency communication in the field.

Inter-agency Coordination

Multiple agencies are involved in the delivery of elections in PNG. Over the course of the past three elections considerable effort has gone into improving inter-agency coordination. At the national level this involved the establishment of IDEC – chaired by the chief secretary – and at the provincial level by the establishment of PESCs – chaired by provincial administrators.

More so than in previous elections, administration of the 2017 elections was decentralised, with key responsibilities devolved to EMs and PESCs. For the most part the devolution of powers was well received and resulted in considerably less confusion on the ground. Providing PESCs with an opportunity for formal input into the appointment of key officials meant they did not make as many competing appointments as they had in 2012 (c.f. Haley and Zubrinich 2013:27) and as a consequence observers reported better working relations between key officials and PESCs in 2017. That said, observers still reported problems in some provinces, most notably Madang, Enga and Southern Highlands provinces.

As in 2012, the issue of competing appointments, where they were made, caused major disruptions. For example, competing appointments in **Usino-Bundi Open** led to localised fighting at Waiyam District Station and saw candidates prevented from nominating for three days. In **Wabag Open** the EM and PESC published separate presiding officer lists, and observers reported nil cooperation between these respective authorities. Considerable pressure was placed on the EM to accept the PESC's list, giving rise to palpable tension between the RPNGC and PNGDF who were seen to be taking direction from either the EM or PESC.

Observers in Southern Highlands also reported a lack of cooperation between the EM and the PESC, and we note that according to evidence presented in court in the case of *Wakias v. Gamato* (2017) PNGC62; n6687, the chairman of the SHP PESC twice wrote to the electoral commissioner seeking the EM's removal on the basis that he had failed to cooperate with and attend PESC meetings. Moreover, when polling in SHP was delayed, EM Wakias blamed the delay on "interference by the provincial election steering committee" saying too "the Southern Highlands election steering committee failed us".³⁹

In some provinces where EMs and PESCs were seen to be working well together, concerns were raised about the partisanship of both. In one Highlands province, the provincial administrator and chair of the Hela PESC was observed to be campaigning on behalf of key PNC-endorsed candidates. His perceived partisanship was the subject of intense social media debate throughout the campaign period.

In places, security personnel were also seen to countermand directions made by EMs and ROs, thereby derailing or unnecessarily complicating election preparations. For instance, in Hela, ballot boxes and papers were initially being processed electorate by electorate with priority given to those places where ballot boxes and polling teams needed to be inserted by air. However, upon instruction from the police, the ROs and AROs processed the **Tari-Pori Open** boxes first, even though there was less urgency to do so – given those boxes and teams were to be inserted the following day by road.

Police from outside the province also insisted that electoral officials cease providing scrutineers with key information, (such as the number of ballot papers and serial numbers) as this was in their view slowing proceedings. Observers from the **Chimbu Provincial** team likewise reported that the security personnel placed pressure on electoral officials to shortcut procedures and fast track the election on the basis they were required to move onto **Jiwaka Province** and provide security for the elections there.

Even where there was goodwill between election officials and security personnel, it was clear that that last minute changes to polling schedules hampered security efforts. In the lead up to polling police commanders in the Highlands, NGI and Southern regions all went on record stating that they were stretched for manpower and would not be able to provide security at each polling station. The West New Britain provincial police commander, for instance, stated that 19 of 32 correctional services officers assigned election security duties had withdrawn and that “continuous changes” to the polling schedules were affecting police operations.⁴⁰ It was also the case that these last-minute changes were not necessarily communicated to the other agencies involved giving rise to much frustration. For example, one observer in Madang reported:

“Today, Tuesday 27 June 2017, was the first day of polling here in Madang Open. Polling had been due to commence on Saturday 24 June, but preparations were not complete. There was a lot of confusion at the Police Station this morning between the EC, PNGDF and RPNGC. The EC vehicle drove off with the ballot papers without any security escort. The PNGDF took off in hot pursuit and forced the EC vehicle to return to the Police Station. The PNGDF personnel got angry at the EC staff for the lack of coordination.”

(Observer, Madang Open)

In places observers also noted a huge amount of distrust between agencies. Such distrust was particularly evident in Enga and Hela provinces.

Whilst we acknowledge the key role played by provinces in relation to the funding and delivery of elections, and that the cooperation of provincial and district officials is essential to the successful election delivery in PNG, any further devolution of powers to PESCs should be carefully considered and the mandate of PESCs clarified. It is clear that some PESCs were viewed with suspicion, others were seen to be partisan, and that others saw themselves as the final authority as regards delivery of the election. It is also worth remembering that in 2013 the PESCs in each of the six Highlands provinces where LLG elections were failed reported that “there was no trouble” and “no need for their elections to be cancelled” (PNGEC 2013:17), giving cause for concern about the extent to which these PESCs may have been implicated in the events which gave rise to the failure of the elections in the 27 LLGs in question.

Continued blurring of the role and responsibilities of PESCs vis-à-vis those of EMs and ROs will only lead to further problems in future elections. Judgements such as *Lawrence Itali & Paulus Kaa Konts v. Patilias Gamato & Electoral Commission* (2017) and *James Yoka Ekip & Simon Sanangke v. Patilias Gamato* (2017) must inform thinking on these matters.

Recommendation:

- » **The role, responsibilities and remit of PECSS 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, need to be clarified.

Security

For the past two decades, elections in PNG's Highlands provinces have been characterised by high levels of violence and insecurity. Such violence and insecurity has progressively extended into other parts of the country. The 2017 elections saw just over 200 election-related deaths (i.e. deaths attributed to violence catalysed by the election),⁴¹ countless citizens seriously injured, widespread election-related violence and large-scale destruction of property, which the security personnel were unable to prevent. Observers and citizens alike reported curtailing their movements throughout the campaign, polling and counting periods. In all but six of the 69 electorates in which detailed observations were made, observers witnessed violent altercations leading to serious injury, death and/or major property damage.⁴² Whereas 33 of 35 observer teams (94%) witnessed serious election violence in 2017, only two thirds of observer teams (14 or 21) had made similar such observations in 2012 (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:6). Having regard to media reports and those made by our observer teams, we find that the elections in 67 of PNG's 89 open electorates were marred by episodes of serious election-related violence of one form or another during the campaign, polling, counting or post-declaration periods.

In the lead up to the election, both the PNGEC and IDEC acknowledged that preparations for the election had been hampered by the late receipt of funds and that the level of funding provided was insufficient “to provide security for Highlands polling teams or to facilitate the pre-deployment of security personnel to the Highlands”.⁴³ On the eve of polling in the Southern Highlands, the Highlands Western End Divisional Police Commander, Chief Superintendent Kaiglo Ambane, stated that a last minute increase in the number of polling places in SHP would mean only one or no police at each polling station.⁴⁴

The level of insecurity experienced by observers in 2017 was unprecedented. Individual observers in **Hela, Western Highlands, Enga** and **NCD** were assaulted by security personnel whilst observing the elections and female observers in the **Eastern Highlands** were harassed by security personnel. Moreover, observers in places as diverse as Tari, Mendi, Kundiawa, Popondetta, Kavieng and Rabaul, were caught up in election violence and observers in Rabaul and Mt Hagen had to be relocated following threats. Most concerning was the fact that two experienced observers from Mt Hagen withdrew from the observation prior to polling due to fears for their own safety. The levels of insecurity experienced by observers in 2017 were certainly outside the norms of what we have ordinarily come to expect for PNG elections, and are particularly noteworthy given the sizable security presence.

For the past decade or so, elections in PNG have been underwritten by huge investments in security. In 2017, over 10,500 RPNGC, PNGDF, and correctional services personnel took part in the national elections security operations, making it one of PNG's largest ever security operations. By way of contrast, approximately 8500 security personnel had taken part in the 2012 election operations. As with the broader election administration, election security in 2017 was also decentralised, with regional commanders taking “charge of the security operations in their respective regions”.⁴⁵

In total, K121 million was earmarked to support the election security operations. This was less than originally requested. It was also the case that the funding was released later than expected thereby hampering the timely deployment of troops in some locations and delaying polling by several days. In **Oro Province** for instance, polling was delayed for several days due to the non-payment of security personnel, and in Enga only proceeded because the provincial government stepped in to resolve the impasse, by paying the security personnel's allowances from the provincial government coffers. **Heavy reliance on local authorities, local businesses and local communities to provide support for security personnel on election operations contributes to the perception they are partisan.**

More so than in 2007 or 2012, observers reported mixed performance on the part of the security personnel.

Certainly, the security personnel were highly visible and were present in large numbers in each of the provincial centres and were seen to be out and about in the electorate during the polling period. Unlike previous elections, they were seen to be well equipped with vehicles, which resulted in an enhanced response capability. However, despite the sizeable security contingent, observers reported a much lighter security presence at polling stations across the country, noting that although the security personnel were seen driving by polling stations at regular intervals, seldom did they alight their vehicles to closely monitor proceedings.

Observers also reported that many of those providing security at polling stations were reservists or elderly police, ill-equipped to deal with rowdy, sometimes belligerent, crowds. As a consequence, many observers considered the 2017 security arrangements inadequate, and requiring considerable reflection. An experienced observer, observing his third election in **Chimbu Province**, offered the following assessment:

“The security arrangements for polling were terrible. Everywhere I went the security personnel were just watching everyone breaking laws. They did nothing. I do not understand. I am still trying to work out what the security personnel’s duty was at polling stations. They were there but did nothing to control anything.”

(Observer, Chimbu Province)

Observer teams also felt the security personnel were more directly implicated in violence in 2017 elections than earlier ones.

Certainly, there were candidates around the country who had engaged police and defence force personnel as bodyguards and trouble-shooters. Several such personnel were detained during the election period. Take for example the Port Moresby-based police officer who was apprehended in possession of his state-issued firearm whilst protecting a high profile **Ijivitari Open** candidate,⁴⁶ or the three soldiers attached to the PNGDF air transport wing who were detained in Kokopo, allegedly in possession of the **Namatanai Open** common rolls.⁴⁷ In the Highlands, five soldiers armed with cash and weapons were arrested trying to force their way into the counting centre in Chimbu,⁴⁸ and three policemen were arrested in Goroka trying to smuggle two “unauthorised ballot boxes” into the counting centre.⁴⁹

Observers in **Obura-Wonenara Open** also reported an exchange of gunfire between RPNGC personnel from Kainantu and Aiyura, while observers in **Wabag Open** reported a high degree of tension between the PNGDF and RPNGC. In Chimbu, observers reported:

“It seems there are different groups of security forces in this election. From what we have seen, many are directly involved in politics. We see one group arresting the other and when faults are found it is not clear which group is here to truly safeguard election, counting and declaration process? Who do we trust? Who do we look to ensure a free and fair election?”

(Observer, Chimbu Province)

During a break in counting in Mt Hagen, a PNGDF soldier alleged that some security personnel were working to ensure the government’s re-election. He made the following unverified comment to observers:

“This election was planned from start to finish by the PNC. Millions has been pumped into specific people in power to ensure PNC candidates and those in alliance with PNC win. The PNGDF Commander and the Electoral Commissioner are both involved and because of this my commanding officer ordered us to deliver 16 extra ballot boxes with papers to a particular place in the Western Highlands. You will see all of the candidates who win in Western Highlands, Enga and Southern Highlands they all have connections with senior PNGDF officers. The PNGDF plays a major role in determining who wins and they have the power to make a candidate win or lose.”

(PNGDF Soldier, NATEL Deployment)

Fierce competition and disputes between candidates also saw numerous ballot boxes either destroyed or hijacked and many were set aside due to alleged ballot box tampering. In **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** for instance, close to a third of all ballot boxes (21 of 81 open and 31 of 81 provincial) were destroyed or excluded due to tampering. Based on information provided to us by the PNGEC, it is evident that 13 seats were declared based on fewer than 80% of all boxes counted, including three Provincial seats in the Highlands which were declared with less than 30% of all boxes counted. Of the 13 seats where greater than 20% of boxes were destroyed or set aside, 11 were in the Highlands region. There were also seats which returned more ballot boxes than were issued, and more ballot paper than were issued.

The case of **Tari-Pori Open** electorate proved particularly controversial, not least because some of its wards were initially assigned to **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open**, necessitating the use of generic ballot papers, and rendering the original roll figures inaccurate. Following the declaration of **Tari-Pori Open** reports emerged that the total votes cast well exceeded the total number of ballot papers issued, a claim the electoral commissioner subsequently denied.⁵⁰ We find however that the explanation provided does not directly accord with observations made on the ground by observers who recorded the number of ballot papers issued to each location, although acknowledge that the number of additional ballot paper counted was in the order of 5000 and not the 20,000 originally claimed. Having regard to the number of ballot papers issued, as stated on the ground in Tari, the official turnout was 109%. Taking into account the ballot papers for the 21 destroyed/excluded boxes for **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open**, turnout there also exceeded 100%. When interviewed by observers following the declaration, the RO had this to say about the excess papers counted:

“Lucky those Koroba-Kapiago boxes were destroyed otherwise the votes cast would have exceed 100,000. Where those votes came from I don’t know.”

(Returning Officer, Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open)

In the wake of polling a series of desperate acts reminiscent of the failed 2002 elections were again observed and/or reported in both mainstream and social media. These included attempts to bomb shipping containers in which ballot papers had been secured; attempts on the lives of key officials; attempted kidnappings of members elect; alleged kidnapping of key officials; growing numbers of election related deaths; premature declarations; double declarations; and significant post-election related violence in all Highlands provinces.

In 2017 more than half of our observer teams (22 of 35 teams) including all 13 Highlands observer teams witnessed police brutality, including the use of excessive force. In **Hela, Eastern Highlands** and **NCD** observers witnessed security personnel driving their vehicles at speed into crowds in order to disperse those who had gathered, and in several locations security personnel were observed to fire either warning shots or directly into gathered crowds, resulting in civilian deaths in **Southern Highlands, Hela, Enga** and **Gulf** provinces. One such incident occurred at Mendi Police Station and involved a member of the ANU Observer Team. The team member’s brother, who was also in the crowd, was shot and seriously wounded. Observers also witnessed and reported heavy handedness by the police and defence force personnel in relation to candidates and key electoral personnel, and the Post-Courier reported the death of a young man at Kerema Station allegedly at the hands of the “election police unit”.⁵¹

And yet for all this heavy handedness, the security forces seemed unable to deter voting irregularities or to prevent election-related violence. In total the ANU observation team documented 84 election related deaths between the issue of writs and the commencement of polling and 204 deaths up to and including the post-declaration period. In addition, countless citizens were injured and widespread election violence led to large-scale destruction of property.

By way of contrast, security at the counting centres was unequivocally described as tight. The vast majority of security personnel were seen to carry out their duties diligently, with only properly accredited and authorised personnel allowed into the counting centres and only after they were subjected to thorough security checks. That said, more than half of all observer teams (20 of 35) reported police harassment of scrutineers, local observers, counting officials and the general public.

Recommendation:

- » ***The role of the security forces in elections needs to be clearly established through ongoing training***, which includes modules on electoral procedures and electoral offences and includes guidance on when and how to intervene. Security personnel on election operations must be seen to be making a genuine contribution to electoral security and governance.
- » ***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.
- » ***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.
- » ***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***. Unless there are consequences for such behaviour ongoing degradation of the electoral environment is likely.

SECTION 3: THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Nominations

Overall, the nomination period proved more eventful than in either 2007 or 2012. In several locations observers reported that individual candidates experienced difficulty nominating. The most notable example of this was in **Ialibu-Pangia Open**, where rival candidates and observers alike reported that candidates seeking to challenge the PM Peter O'Neill experienced considerable difficulty nominating. While the PM successfully nominated at Pangia Station without incident, other candidates took to social media reporting that the district electoral office was inexplicably closed and/or unattended when they sought to nominate. High profile challenger Stanley Liria eventually managed to track down the RO and nominate just prior to the close of nominations.⁵² He posted on Facebook photos and video of his nomination rally and convoy.

Impressive nomination rallies are now commonplace, and often involve vehicular convoys and crowds of noisy supporters. In many places candidates attended nomination in traditional regalia and some were carried by their supporters on purpose-built platforms. The 2017 campaign saw candidates try to outdo each other with grandiose displays of support.

Observers in both the **Madang Open** and **Madang Provincial** teams reported that traffic came to a standstill in Madang town on the final day of nominations and that “the travelling public were left stranded with no public motor vehicles (PMVs) to transport them”. Nixon Duban, the PNC endorsed incumbent for **Madang Open** had a flotilla of approximately 50 boats and large vehicular convoy of over 100 vehicles. **Madang Provincial** candidate Peter Yama likewise had a large vehicular convey, while Pangu Party candidate, Bryan Kramer, had a convoy was led by several hundred cyclists. Cyclists also led Sam Basil's convey in **Bulolo Open**.

The final day of nominations for **Lae Open** was similarly chaotic. John Rosso also had a large convoy of over 100 overloaded cars, truck and buses. Observers reported that it was the largest ever convoy witnessed in Lae. Walter Schnaubelt's nomination in **Namatanai Open** was also held up as the first of its kind and was arguably the most impressive nomination display witnessed. It involved a convoy of over 50 trucks, thousands of people in traditional dress, presentation of the candidate by local chiefs and LLG heads, and gifting of more than 20 large pigs and numerous yam houses. Local chiefs crowned Schnaubelt with a traditional headdress and carried him on a decorated platform to Namatanai District Office to nominate.

Similarly impressive was the fanfare associated with **Moresby South** MP, Justin Tkatchenko's nomination convoy which involved over 50 buses, hundreds of cars, and thousands of supporters in green shirts. It culminated in an open-air concert at Sir Hubert Murray Stadium. Former MP for **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open**, Herowa Agiwa, also hosted an open-air concert featuring the popular solo artist Hitsy Golu as part of his nomination rally. The event was described by observers as the first of its kind at Koroba Station. In many places nominations were immediately followed by large public rallies.

For the most part, nomination events were festive affairs involving men, women and children, although in some places the nomination period was associated with considerable violence, which carried over into the campaign period. Observers in **Dei Open**, for instance, witnessed one candidate fire upon another candidate at Dei Council Headquarters, while observers in Chimbu noted that many candidate supporters attending nomination events came armed, with faces blackened and shouting war cries to attract attention. These displays of strength, intended to intimidate rival candidates, led to violent confrontations between groups of candidate supporters, and proved frightening for observers and citizens alike.

“A regional candidate ... nominated and was on his way out when another candidate ... and his supporters went in. Both groups were heavily armed especially with bush knives and wore black charcoal face paint. They were dressed as if they were going to the battlefield. This was very frightening for the onlookers and unlike anything I had seen in previous elections.”

(Observer, Chimbu Province)

In **Gumine Open**, the sitting MP Nick Kuman was prevented from nominating on three separate occasions, when supporters of rival candidates mobilised, stoning his group. He eventually managed to nominate with RPNGC protection. Nominations for **Kerowagi Open**, proved similarly eventful and as violent as 2012 (see Haley and Zubrinich 2013: 49), when the sitting MP, Carmilus Dengama, was attacked by aggrieved constituents while seeking to nominate. The fighting which ensued saw a young man killed and six others seriously injured.⁵³

Election-related violence during the nomination period was also witnessed in Madang, Southern Highlands, and West New Britain provinces. The violence reported by observers from the **Madang Provincial** team stemmed from the appointment of two ROs and competing AROs in **Usino-Bundi Open**. The first set, observers were told, were gazetted and appointed based on recommendations from the local government while the other set was reputedly appointed by the PESC. As the issue of writs approached the ROs and AROs for **Usino-Bundi Open** clashed, giving rise to localised fighting which saw the Waiyam District Office locked for almost a week. Candidates were unable to nominate during the first part of the nomination period because the registration office was chained and locked. Observers reported seeing supporters of each of the ROs and AROs “roaming around armed to the teeth” and witnessed several violent clashes. As far as we are aware this fighting did not result in any deaths.

In Mendi, however, there was at least one death during the nomination period. It came about when Governor William Powi’s nomination convoy came under attack from stone-throwing youth and sped off. As it did so an elderly man was reportedly hit and killed, sparking riots which saw a PNC billboard vandalised and a public toilet block built by the governor destroyed.⁵⁴

In West New Britain’s Talasea Open electorate, three people were reported to have been killed in election related violence during the nomination period. In this case, an incident at the Kimbe market saw an election dispute from 2012 reignited. The dispute concerned one group’s failure to honour its commitment of support to the other group’s candidate in 2012. On this occasion the fighting at the marketplace spilled over into a nearby settlement area and saw three people killed and several others hospitalised.⁵⁵ In the wake of these deaths the aggrieved group demanded K200,000 compensation for each death, and that the group which had failed to honour their commitments in 2012, deliver 3000 votes to candidates of the aggrieved groups’ choosing in 2017.⁵⁶ There were three further election-related deaths in **Talasea Open** during the campaign and polling periods. Two of these, documented by observers, went unreported in the media.

Observers also documented election-related deaths caused by misadventure. In Kerema a grade 11 student died after falling from an overloaded vehicle, which was part of a nomination convoy, while in Hela multiple people were injured and one died when an overloaded truck carrying supporters of a **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** candidate overturned.⁵⁷ Observers reported that the candidate in question paid PGK 36,000 and 1000 pigs in compensation to the young man’s relatives. Observers from the **Hela Provincial** team also reported a death due to alcohol poisoning early in the campaign period.

By the close of nominations 3340 candidates had nominated to contest the 2017 National Elections. Five subsequently died prior to the commencement of polling.

Campaigning

Although a record of over 4000 citizens had signalled their intention to contest the 2017 elections, slightly fewer candidates actually nominated than in 2012. Whereas 3435 candidates contested the 2012 elections – a significant increase on the 2,875 and 2,759 candidates who contested the 2002 and 2007 elections respectively – 3340 nominated to contest in 2017. Three in five candidates ran as independents, although only 14 independent candidates were elected – two fewer than in 2012.⁵⁸

Over half (61 of 111) of those elected in 2017 had served a previous term or part thereof in parliament. As in previous elections, MP turnover was high, with only 46 MPs (41%) from the ninth parliament returned. Fifteen (14%) of those elected in 2017 were re-elected former MPs, nine of whom had served multiple terms. By contrast, 2012 had seen 11 former MPs re-elected. With Sam Akoitai being declared the member for **Central Bougainville**, following a court-ordered recount, the number of re-elected former MPs increased to 16, and the number of returned MPs to 45, which is broadly consistent with both the 2007 and 2012 elections, which saw 44 out of 109 and 44 out of 111 MPs returned respectively.

The 2017 elections saw a return to an eight-week campaign period. By way of background, 2012 had seen the official campaign period shortened to allow additional time to finalise the electoral rolls in the Highlands (Trawen 10 April 2012 quoted in PNG Electoral Commission 2013, Haley and Zubrinich 2013: 26). That decision was welcomed at the time, with citizens and observers subsequently concluding the shorter campaign period moderated both campaign expenditure and campaign violence. While wealthier candidates appeared to have benefited from the shorter campaign period in 2012 (ibid: 55; COG 2012:19), they were not disadvantaged by the longer campaign, being able to outlast their competitors.

For the most part, general campaigning tended to be less flamboyant than in previous elections, with citizens and observers in many parts of the country describing the election as “dry”. Based on the experience of 2007 and 2012, voters around the country had expected a steady flow of food, goods, and cash throughout the campaign period. In many places constituents were left sadly disappointed, not because money politics figured less prominently in this election, but because money was deployed differently, meaning goods and cash did not flow to individual voters to the same extent they had in 2007 and 2012. For example, observers in the **Northern provincial** team, visited villages in both **Sohe Open** and **Ijivitari Open**, which had built grandstands in the hope that candidates would come, campaign and offer them inducements of various kinds. They reported with great disappointment that few candidates had visited their communities in 2017. Similar complaints were encountered by observers in the **Southern Highlands** and **Hela Provincial** teams and by observers in **Moresby North West Open**.

“The importance of money politics increased in the 2017 elections. For example the campaign period was generally very quiet throughout the electorate and province the reason being that most candidates didn’t have enough money to fund their campaigns, even though leading up to the campaign period they had promised to play with money. This raised high expectations amongst voters. Ultimately candidates could not meet those expectations and decided not to go out campaigning. As a result the few that had money, became very popular. Money is now seen as the principle determinant of election success.”

(Observer, Ijivitari Open)

While the practice of impressive nomination rallies continued, observer teams throughout the country reported fewer large public rallies during the campaign period. Some observers attributed this to the high degree of underlying tension. Across the country observers consistently reported seeing large public rallies being disturbed and disbanded due to rowdy volatile crowds. In **East New Britain**, **Talasea Open**, **Bulolo Open**, **Rigo Open** and **Kairuku Hiri Open**, observers reported that candidates seeking to speak at public forums were threatened and shouted down by the supporters of rival candidates. They also saw punches thrown at public rallies and public accusations of incest (ENB) and sorcery. Observers in **Kavieng Open** and **Central Bougainville** likewise reported verbal threats issued to candidates seeking to publically campaign. Certainly, many of the large rallies, particularly those involving PNC candidates, were disrupted by violence. In **Tari-Pori Open**, for instance, citizens threw sticks and stones at the sitting MP James Marabe and PM Peter O’Neill, and tore up PNC caps and T-shirts. Observers witnessed similar scenes at PNC rallies in **Wabag Open**, **Kandep Open**, **Goroka Open**, **Menyama Open** and **Ijivitari Open**.

Firearms featured more prominently in the 2017 elections than in 2012. Not only were weapons present in large numbers, but they were openly displayed or brandished in such a way as to intimidate. Bush-knives were also used with effect to menace and maim. In 2017, the presence of guns and bush-knives were noted at many Highlands polling stations and observers in Hela and Chimbu provinces witnessed polling-day gun violence. Firearms also featured more prominently in post-election violence than in either 2007 or 2012.

Although a gun amnesty in Hela prior to the elections resulted in the surrender of 600 mostly home-made weapons, including from local business leaders, government officials and the provincial EM,⁶⁰ few weapons were surrendered or seized elsewhere in the pre-election period. By way of contrast, 2012 saw several successful raids by the security forces (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:58). Although in this election, mid way through the campaign period, police in Eastern Highlands were reported to have seized “military-issued firearms and ammunitions and PNGDF uniforms”, allegedly bound for Southern Highlands.⁶¹ According to press reports these weapons and uniforms were being transported by the brother of a SHP candidate and Lae-based detective. Elsewhere, in Central Province, a ward councillor in Abau District

was disarmed and arrested after attempting to discharge a pistol during at a rally for the PNC incumbent Sir Puka Temu. In addition, observers throughout the country encountered consistent rumours that supporters of various candidates were heavily armed. As we have argued previously, “the mere presence of guns, even hidden ones, carry the implicit threat of retributive violence” (ibid).

Overall, candidates were less mobile than in recent elections, due to the prevailing security situation, with many campaigning only in areas where support and access was assured. As in 2012, local campaign managers played a pivotal role brokering and maintaining support. Nevertheless, campaigning remained highly competitive. Increasingly candidates seemed to prefer smaller clan or village level gatherings, particularly those organised by their own supporters in their respective communities. And many relied on campaign teams and committees to campaign on their behalf. In 2017 some candidates sought to use social media to connect with their constituents, rather than travel to outlying villages.

In 64 of the 69 electorates in which detailed observations were made, observers witnessed public rallies and/or campaigning which culminated in violent clashes – some minor, some far more serious. Stone throwing was witnessed at a rally at Eboa village in **Kairuku-Hiri Open** and at another in **Nuku Open**. Punches were exchanged between opposing groups of supporters in **East New Britain, Northern Province, Rigo Open, Bulolo Open** and **Namatanai Open** electorates, while rallies in East Sepik Province resulted in man losing a hand and another his fingers. Specifically, a rally which took place in **Wosera-Gawi Open** electorate saw the crowd set open a drunken man who disrupted proceedings. In the fight that ensued his fingers were chopped off. Observers in **Nuku Open** reported fleeing a rally that erupted into violence, and subsequently learnt that a man accused of having ensorcelled a campaign manager had his hand chopped off.

As noted above, observers in all but six of the 69 electorates in which the ANU deployed observers witnessed violent altercations leading to serious injury, death and/or major property damage. Some examples, in addition to those outlined above, include:

- » **Menyamyaya Open** (Momase): observers reported that the 2017 campaign was particularly tense, due to unresolved conflicts stemming from the 2012 election and extant land issues. Following a campaign rally at station market, Thomas Pelika’s supporters were attacked by supporters of a rival candidate. Pelika’s campaign team was severely beaten. Three members of the team and a child caught up in the fighting were admitted to the local health centre for treatment.
- » **Lae Open** (Momase): observers reported several violent incidents resulting in death or injury. These included a drunken brawl at a campaign house that resulted in a stabbing and the death of one man, a separate stabbing involving the supporter of another candidate and the rape of a young female supporter by a candidate.
- » An observer in **Madang Open** (Momase) reported a fight which resulted in two deaths between groups of opposing supporters at an election event at Gum School.
- » **Yangoru-Saussia Open** (Momase): observers reported one person was killed during the campaign period in East Yangoru LLG. He received a bush knife to the head.
- » An observer in **Rai Coast Open** (Momase) reported two separate incidents in which men accused of election-related sorcery were killed.
- » An observer in **Usino-Bundi Open** (Momase) witnessed a clash at a campaign rally which resulted in a man receiving fatal bush knife wounds.
- » Observers in **Moresby North East** (Southern) reported the death of two men following a drunken brawl outside a candidate’s campaign house.
- » Observers in **Moresby South** (Southern) reported that a young man from the Highlands was stoned and died following a campaign event at Mahuru Village. His kinsmen are reported to have torched two houses and two cars and to have knifed four boys in retaliation.
- » **Gazelle Open** (New Guinea Islands): observers reported that supporters of rival candidates were attacked in their homes and assaulted and that following a campaign event on 22 June 2017, two men were slashed with bush knives. One succumbed to his injuries a few days later.

- » An observer in **Kavieng Open** (New Guinea Islands) reported election-related fighting between two brothers who were supporting different candidates which resulted in one of the men being killed.
- » In **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** (Highlands), a clash between candidate supporters at Koroba Station saw four people sustain serious bush-knife injuries.
- » Observers in **Tari-Pori Open** (Highlands) witnessed a man killed by his enemies at an election rally.
- » Observers in **Mendi Open** (Highlands) reported two election-related deaths during the campaign period – a man chopped and killed in Mendi and another at a campaign event in Lai Valley.
- » In **Gumine Open** (Highlands) supporters of two candidates – one a serious contender and the other a vote splitter – fought throughout the election period, from before the issue of writs. Observers reported four deaths during the campaign period and two post declaration, multiple people injured and hospitalised and at least seven permanent houses destroyed.
- » Following the death of **Goroka Open** (Highlands) candidate and former MP Mathias Ijape, several people were accused of having murdered him using sorcery. They were tortured, and two elderly women within the group were killed as a result.

As the above examples demonstrate, serious election-related violence was by no means confined to the Highlands Region. In addition to actual violence, much sorcery-related violence was noted in relation to the 2017 elections. This is discussed in detail in a separate section of the report.

Observers in all four regions, particularly those who had observed multiple elections, considered the 2017 elections the most violent they had ever witnessed. Citizens surveyed during the post polling period tended to concur. Two thirds (65%) of all citizens surveyed post-polling considered the 2017 election worse than 2012 (see Table 19), while three in five (63%) who answered the question – “In which election was electoral violence greatest?” – identified the 2017 election the most violent of the three most recent elections. By way of comparison, the 2012 Domestic Observation had found that 43% of respondents considered the 2012 elections worse than 2007 and that the three in four citizens surveyed (77%) considered 2007 and 2012 more violent than the 2002 elections (see Table 20; Haley and Zubrinich 2013:52).

Table 19. The 2017 Election compared with the 2012 and 2007 Elections– electoral violence

Region	Post-polling Survey 2017				Post-polling Survey 2017			
	How did this election compare with the 2012 elections?				In which election was electoral violence greatest?			
	Better %	Same %	Worse %	No Response %	2007 %	2012 %	2017 %	No Response %
Papua New Guinea	13	16	65	6	6	20	44	30
Highlands	8	13	73	6	8	21	57	14
Momase	19	20	55	6	6	26	26	42
Southern	14	17	65	3	5	18	50	28
NGI	12	19	60	9	4	9	38	48
NCD	7	16	74	3	4	16	57	23

Table 20. The 2012 Election Compared with the 2007 and 2002 Elections – electoral violence

Region	Post-polling Survey 2012			Post-polling Survey 2012		
	Overall how did this election compare with the 2007 elections?			In which election was violence greatest?		
	Better (%)	Same (%)	Worse (%)	2002 (%)	2007 (%)	2012 (%)
Papua New Guinea	30	27	43	23	34	43
Highlands	36	25	40	28	38	34
Momase	14	22	64	4	34	63
Southern	26	24	50	21	32	47
NGI	34	40	26	28	25	45
NCD	39	35	25	15	41	44

It is clear that the trajectory towards increased electoral violence identified in relation to the 2002, 2007 and 2012 elections (Haley and Zubrinich 2013: 52) has continued for the most part unabated. We note, however, that there were a handful of electorates which were considered to have experienced more violence in 2012. Respondents considered this the case in **Kandep Open**, **Goroka Open**, parts of **Chimbu Province**, **Lae Open** and **Madang Open**, despite the fact that multiple election-related deaths were recorded in each of these electorates. Overall, though, we find that campaigning in PNG continues to be highly competitive and highly conflictive and that the 2017 elections witnessed more violence and more widely dispersed violence than in previous elections.

“This election, the 2017 National General Election, was absolutely out of control. In every election there is fighting in Chimbu. People, especially men and youth, go really crazy indeed. But 2017 was worse. There was tribal fighting and deaths in every electorate that were caused by this one thing – the elections.”

(Observer, Chimbu Province)

Influence of Political Parties

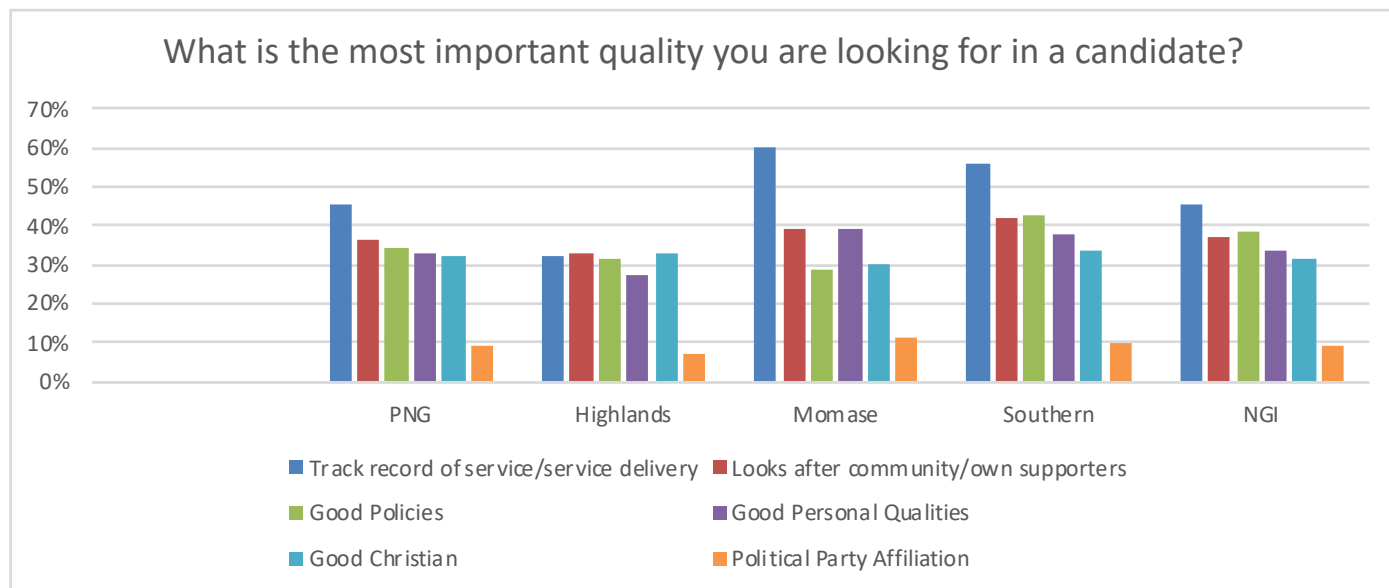
At the time of the 2017 elections there were 44 registered political parties, two fewer than 2012.⁶² Of these, all but two endorsed candidates for the 2017 national elections. In total, only two in five of the 3340 candidates who nominated were party endorsed. As was the case in previous elections those with party endorsement performed better than non-endorsed candidates. In total 97 party-endorsed candidates were elected (7.3% success rate), while only 14 independent candidates were elected (0.7% success rate).

Over the course of the past five elections the number of MPs elected as independents has reduced significantly. In 2017 only 13% of MPs elected had run as independents. By contrast independents accounted for 14% of those elected in 2012, 18% of those elected in 2007; 33% of those elected in 1997 and 38% of those elected in 1992 (Kaiulo 2002:178). Of the 14 independent candidates elected all but three have since joined a political party.

Despite the fact that party-endorsed candidates perform better than independent candidates, political parties are largely unimportant to voters (Standish 2006; Gibbs 2006:13; Haley and Zubrinich 2013:55-56). Voter choice remains driven by local politics, personal interest and personal gain, and not by party policies. Party politics remains “largely decorative” and confined to “impressive nomination rallies” and the occasional fleeting visit by party leaders or prominent ministers (Standish et al. 2004:6).

Of the 3740 citizens surveyed post polling, only 21 (0.6% of respondents) cited political party affiliation as the primary factor driving voter choice, and only 9% identified it as one of multiple factors which influenced their choice. The factors most frequently identified by voters as having influenced how they voted were a track record of service and/or service delivery (46%); looks after community/own supporters (37%); good policies (34%); good personal qualities (33%) and good Christian (32%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Most Sought-After Qualities in a Candidate



That said, party politics figured more prominently in this election than previously, in that anti-PNC sentiment and campaigning against PNC was evident throughout the country. Several observer teams reported candidates of various affiliations working together to unseat PNC incumbents, while observers in all four regions witnessed incidents in which PNC candidates were verbally harassed and/or prevented from campaigning. Large rallies involving PNC candidates descended into chaos in *Tari-Pori Open*, *Rigo Open*, *Yangoru-Saussia Open*, *Goroka Open*, *Wabag Open*, *Menyamy Open*, *Tambul Nebilyer Open* and *Ijivitari Open*, with onlookers throwing sticks and stones and tearing up PNC caps and t-shirts to disrupt proceedings. In Goroka, police fired upon and dispersed the anti-PNC crowd.

As in previous elections, party-endorsed candidates typically received some campaign support, although the extent of support varied greatly, and in many cases came quite late during the campaign, fuelling the perception of a “dry election”. A month out from the election, Dr Alphonse Gelu, Registrar of the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission (IPPC), reported that he had been unable release funding to political parties as the government had delivered less than half of the IPPCC’s budgeted allocation to political parties.⁶³ It has since been confirmed that in 2017, the Registry received only K300,000 of the K1.1million budgeted for political parties (being for 2016), and that this money was paid out in June 2018. No monies have been received for 2017. Given the significant shortfall in funding, payments were made to the 14 smaller parties only (Gelu, personal communication June 2018).

Influence of Limited Preferential Voting (LPV)

As in 2012, candidates continued to concentrate their campaign efforts on areas where they believed they had base support. Typically, such campaigning was focused on gaining first preferences. Overall, candidates were observed to campaign less widely than in the past and this was thought to be due to cash flow problems arising from the national fiscal position and the underlying tension in many places. Just as in 2012, “many high profile or hot candidates” were prevented from campaigning in the home areas of their key opponents, and many candidates chose not to campaign outside of their local area due to the prevailing security environment” (Haley and Zubrinich 2013: 57).

Ethnically closed campaigning was again noted in many electorates, and although there were slightly fewer candidates overall in 2017, compared with 2012, observers reported an increase in candidates considered to be “vote splitters”. Many attributed this to LPV. In some places, ethnic groups put up multiple candidates, with a view to retaining preferences within the group. This is not a particularly effective strategy.

Overall there was little concerted collaboration, except where candidates were working together to unseat a PNC incumbent, and no serious evidence of widespread preference swapping, either between parties or individual candidates, except where based on ethnicity. Our observers reported very few alliances or preference-swapping deals. What

was noted however; was the exchange of ballot papers in candidate strongholds, something that appeared reasonably widespread in **Chimbu** and **Western Highlands**.

“Something I saw for the first time this election was open and regional candidates exchanging ballot papers. For example an open candidate would exchange the regional ballot papers from his flower pot (base area/stronghold) with the open ballot papers from the regional candidate’s base area, saying, ‘Give me your open papers and I will give you my regional papers’.”

(Observer, Chimbu Province)

Interestingly, the 2017 elections resulted in some surprise wins wherein successful candidates were elected on the back of preferences from a different ethnic group. Petrus Thomas’s win in **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** was a case in point. Thomas, a Duna speaker, won on the back of Huli preferences after the ballot boxes from his base area were destroyed or set aside.

Influence of “Money Politics”, Vote Buying and Gifting

Money played a huge part in this election, and there is no doubt that “money politics”, which continues to be most pervasive in the Highlands, was more significant than ever before. Candidates across the country (in all four regions) were observed to have spent very large amounts of money, securing support and offering material incentives to voters. We are certainly not surprised that nearly half (45%) of all voters interviewed by the TIPNG observation team reported that voters were offered bribes or inducements or asked for bribes and inducements in return for their vote (TIPNG 2017:19). This is entirely consistent with the tenor of our own findings.

In all regions except Momase, citizens most frequently identified 2017 as the election in which political gifting and vote buying were the most prevalent (see Table 21). In 2012, 84% of citizens surveyed post polling had considered the 2012 elections the worst in terms of vote buying and political gifting. In 2017, twice as many citizens surveyed considered political gifting and vote buying more prevalent than in 2012.

Table 21. Money Politics: Political Gifting and Vote Buying – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Post-polling Survey 2012			Post-polling Survey 2017				Post-polling Survey 2017			
	In which election was vote buying/gifting greatest?			In which election was political gifting greatest?				In which election was vote buying greatest?			
	(% of respondents)			(% of respondents)				(% of respondents)			
	2002	2007	2012	2007	2012	2017	NR	2007	2012	2017	NR
Papua New Guinea	5	11	84	7	24	48	22	5	22	49	24
Highlands	4	8	88	4	21	62	13	3	19	67	12
Momase	2	11	87	7	32	33	28	4	31	29	36
Southern	5	14	80	9	24	49	18	6	21	53	21
NGI	11	14	75	12	18	38	33	10	17	35	38
NCD	11	26	63	8	18	55	19	5	16	62	18

Though seemingly more widespread than in previous elections, money politics was also of a different order being focused on key officials and mediated by strongmen in some communities, and well-respected leaders in others. Observers described the shift as follows:

“The election period is generally an opportunity for people to make money, but in 2017 money was not flowing through to individual voters but instead was going to polling and counting officials and campaign houses.”

(Observer, Lae Open)

“Vote buying and money politics has increased but cash flow is minimal. This election was controlled by youth, strongmen and money. Money elected the leaders, not the citizens of this nation. Few people actually voted because youth and strongmen who captured the money, controlled the ballot papers and made sure there was a block vote.”

(Observer, Gumine Open)

“Previously votes were bought with money but in this election it was ballot papers and ballot boxes that were bought with money. Instead of buying votes from grassroots voters candidates paid large amounts of money to POs, ROs and AROs, to ensure that voting was controlled and the ballot papers dumped by polling officials.”

(Observer, Mendi Open)

Across the country there was also a significant flow of resources from voters to candidates. Observers in **Yangoru-Saussia Open**, for instance, witnessed supporters presenting the incumbent MP Richard Maru with K100,000 on money sticks, while observers in **Ialibu-Pangia Open** witnessed a campaign event where a candidate was presented with two vehicles, pigs, a cow and a large sum of cash. Observers in **Dei Open** sought to systematically document the flow of goods and money. During the final two weeks of the campaign they witnessed one candidate receive K61,800, 107 large pigs to the value of K321,000, as well as 4 drums of diesel, eight bags of sweet potato and one cassowary. In addition, they witnessed another candidate receive from supporters two 4WD Toyota Landcruisers, one Landcruiser Utility, and one 4WD 5 door vehicle, K72,310 in cash, 71 large pigs to the value of K213,000, 34 bags of sweet potato, 43 full banana hands, 8 bags of taro, 6 bags of coconut and a fuel drum.

Understanding how and to whom money flows in elections and how money is used to influence electoral outcomes is critically important, because it sheds light on the nature of the relationship between the average citizen and their political representatives. As in previous elections “huge amounts of money and gifts of various kinds were observed to change hands” (ibid: 7). Whereas in 2012 the largest individual payments reported in citizen surveys were made outside of the Highlands (**NCD Provincial, Namatanai Open, Moresby North West** and **Madang Open**), they were almost exclusively confined to the Highlands Region in 2017. Across the country a proliferation of campaign houses and men’s houses, which are central to the distribution of food, cash and gifts, was also noted. No longer limited to the Highlands, campaign houses are ubiquitous across all four regions.

Figure 6. Votes for Sale



Both the qualitative and quantitative data collected in 2017 revealed money politics to be more nuanced than previously understood (c.f. Haley and Zubrinich 2015b). Certainly, there were instances in which votes were bought, sold and marketed either individually or as a job lot, as in 2007 and 2012. Where votes were sold individually, typical payment configurations of K100–200, K50, and K20 for first, second and third preferences were noted. Across all four regions, though, there were also individual voters who reported receiving anywhere between K1000–4000 for their vote and some who reported receiving much larger payments – up to K200,000 in one case – on the understanding they would deliver a large block of votes.

By and large, though, the proportion of citizens receiving gifts from candidates remains unchanged. Overall, one third of all citizens surveyed post-polling (37% of men and 28% of women) admitted to having received gifts

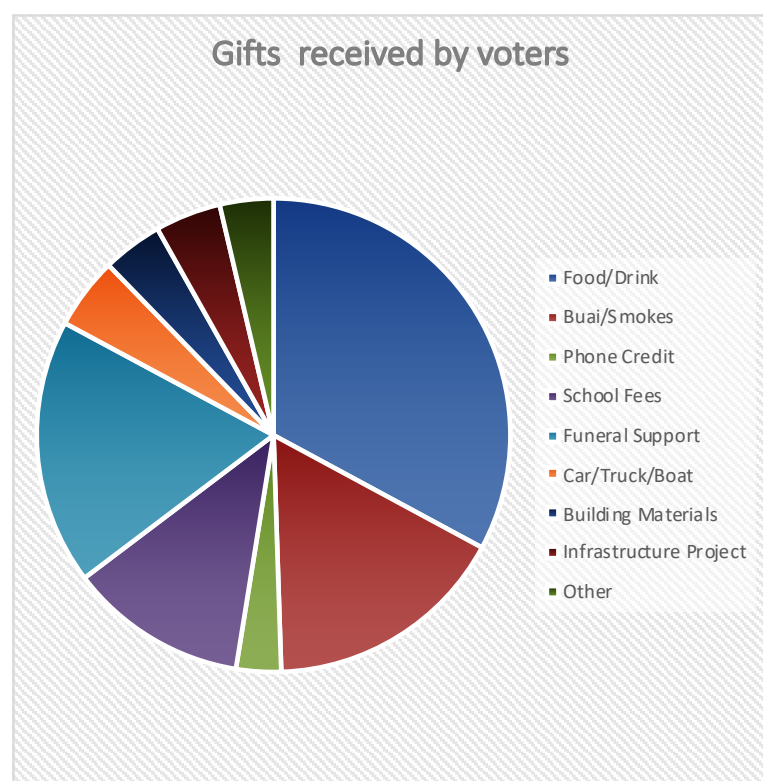
in return for their vote (see Table 22 below). Although there was little overall movement at the national level, the survey results suggest increases in political gifting the Highlands and Southern regions and decreases in Momase and NGL.

Table 22. Admission of Having Received Gifts by Region and Gender – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Post-Polling Survey 2012				Post-Polling Survey 2017			
	Male Respondents		Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Female Respondents	
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
Papua New Guinea	36	64	29	71	37	63	28	72
Highlands	49	51	39	61	57	43	44	56
Momase	22	78	20	80	20	80	15	85
Southern	11	89	8	92	32	68	26	74
NGI	35	65	29	71	24	76	13	87
NCD	35	65	34	66	33	67	29	71

The types of gifts or inducements received by voters were many and varied, ranging from food and drink at campaign houses or lunch packs post polling (18% of respondents nationwide) or buai and cigarettes (9%) at campaign houses, to mobile phone credit (2%), material items such as sewing machines, lawn mowers, coffee pulpers and cocoa fermentary supplies (2%) to cars, trucks and boats (3%). Voters across the country also reported receiving assistance with school fees (7%), and the repatriation of dead bodies, as well as contributions to funerary feasts (10%), while some reported receiving building materials (2%) or funds for an infrastructure project of one kind or another (2%). Observers in **Lae Open** noted that the amounts given by candidates as funeral contributions increased significantly during the campaign period.

Figure 7: Gifts Received by Voters



Another aspect of political gifting evident in 2017 was the extent to which candidate supporters financed the money politics enterprise. Nationwide, 9% of respondents reported personally contributing cash to a candidate's campaign, while a further eight percent said another member of their family did. Likewise, 20% of citizens surveyed reported giving goods to a candidate, and a further 11% said that another member of their family had. Overall, one in five citizens surveyed had personally participated in fundraising on behalf of a candidate and one third had actively campaigned for a candidate (See Table 23).

A significant factor for understanding money politics in the PNG context is that the transfer of resources invariably engenders indebtedness. In previous elections observed by ANU scholars, resources have characteristically flowed from candidates to supporters. Elections in PNG have typically involved candidates distributing

largesse to voters. As such, the flow of resources from communities to candidates as mediated by local strongmen, in many cases, signals a fundamental shift in the relationship between constituents and their political representatives.

Table 23. Money Politics and Citizen Involvement in Campaigning – by region

Region	Post-Polling Survey 2017							
	Individual gave cash (%)	Individual gave goods (%)	Individual raised funds (%)	Individual actively campaigned (%)	Other family member gave cash (%)	Other family member gave goods (%)	Other family member raised funds (%)	Other family member actively campaigned (%)
Papua New Guinea	(%)	20	18	32	(%)	11	7	2
Highlands	13	26	23	38	12	16	10	3
Momase	9	20	18	33	7	11	8	2
Southern	4	11	10	27	5	6	4	2
NGI	3	15	15	26	1	3	1	1
NCD	3	7	11	18	6	6	5	3

While Table 22 above (Admission of Having Received Gifts by Region and Gender – 2012 and 2017 compared) suggests considerable variation in the proportion of citizens involved in political gifting in each region, the situation outside of the Highlands appears somewhat more homogenous once we take into account those giving and those receiving. As evidenced by Table 24 below, roughly three in five citizens in the Highlands (58%) were involved in political gifting in one way or another, while half this number were involved in the other three regions (27–33% depending on region). Table 24 also shows that in the Highlands and Southern regions many citizens are both giving and receiving. However, in Momase and the New Guinea Islands individual citizens tend to give or receive but generally not both.

Money politics in PNG is not simply about pork-barrelling or big men distributing largesse to constituents in return for political support. It is about the creation of multi-directional indebtedness. As Haley and Dierikx (2013) pointed out in relation to the 2007 elections, and we pointed out in relation to 2012 (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:66), candidates are not simply relying on personal resources or leveraging traditional networks to finance their campaigns, but instead are having to rely on increasingly larger networks of financiers (see also Flower 2012). We also noted that wealthy individuals were financing or contributing to candidates' campaigns in order to ensure those candidates were beholden to them should they win. In 2017 it was not just wealthy businessmen backing candidates but, as highlighted above, grassroots communities across the country. In all four regions local communities were observed to declare their allegiances by giving cash and goods to the candidates they were supporting, in order that these might be redistributed with a view to growing an even broader network of support and to strengthen their claims to goods and services post-election should “their” candidate prove successful.

Table 24. The Give and Take of Money Politics – by region

Region	Post-Polling Survey 2012	Post-Polling Survey 2017		Post-Polling Survey 2012	Post-Polling Survey 2017	
	Received Gifts (%)	Gave or Received Gifts (%)	Received Cash (%)	Received Cash (%)	Received Cash (%)	Gave or Received Cash (%)
Papua New Guinea	32	34	41	34	24	29
Highlands	44	48	58	54	46	52
Momase	21	16	32	12	7	15
Southern	10	28	33	24	14	16
NGI	32	17	27	13	5	8
NCD	34	30	33	34	15	17

Although the overall proportion of men and women receiving gifts from candidates in 2017 was more or less the same as during the last election, fewer citizens personally reported receiving cash in return for their vote, and those who did typically received more than they had previously. This is consistent with qualitative observations which indicate that money is influencing elections in more insidious ways, being captured by middlemen and strongmen in many places. In all regions except Momase the average amounts reported to have been received by male voters increased significantly. As reflected in Table 25 below, money politics continues to be most prevalent in the Highlands Region, while the disparity in the amounts received by male and female voters has widened since 2012.

Table 25. Money Politics by Region and Gender – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Post-Polling Survey 2012				Post-Polling Survey 2017			
	Did you receive money from a candidate for your vote?				Did you receive money from a candidate for your vote?			
	Male Respondents		Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Female Respondents	
	Yes (%)	Av. amount (K)	Yes (%)	Av. amount (K)	Yes (%)	Av. amount (K)	Yes (%)	Av. amount (K)
Papua New Guinea	38	305	30	237	26	1230	19	246
Highlands	59	378	49	136	52	1375	38	218
Momase	13	468	11	196	8	470	6	246
Southern	29	420	18	493	15	917	12	140
NGI	14	50	11	45	7	782	4	492
NCD	40	543	28	549	17	1135	12	98

Our research finds that within electorates men typically receive money more often than women, and that they receive more money than women. For example, the post-polling survey found that 52% of Highlands men and 38% of Highlands women had received cash from candidates. The average amount received by Highlands men was K1375 while the average amount received by women was just K218. The median amounts received were significantly lower, indicating, as we might expect, considerable inequality within individual electorates. Nonetheless, the average amounts received by male voters in 2017 tended to be greater than the average amounts received in the same electorates in 2012.

As in previous elections we have observed, there was considerable variation between electorates in relation to the amounts of money received and the frequency with which voters received money. Table 26 provides comparisons for the 20 electorates for which we have comparative data. Although fewer people reported receiving cash in 2017, marked increases in the frequency and amounts received by men in **SHP Provincial** and **Mendi Open** were noted. Also noteworthy were the increased amounts received by men and women in **Namatanai Open**. In our experience, money politics is now largely normalised in the Highlands with citizens readily willing to admit having received cash for their vote. Elsewhere, citizens seem more reticent to make such admissions. Yet even in those electorates where few respondents admitted receiving cash, there was general agreement that vote buying and gifting were more significant in 2017 than in 2012 (see Table 21 above), suggestive of a degree of under-reporting.

Table 26. Money Politics by Electorate and Gender – 2012 and 2017 compared

Electorate	Post-Polling Survey 2012				Post-Polling Survey 2017					
	Did you receive money from a candidate for your vote?				Did you receive money from a candidate for your vote?					
	Male Respondents		Female Respondents		Male Respondents			Female Respondents		
	Yes (%)	Av. amount (PGK)	Yes (%)	Av. amount (PGK)	Yes (%)	Av. amount (PGK)	Median amount (PGK)	Yes (%)	Av. amount (PGK)	Median amount (PGK)
Highlands	59	378	49	136	52	1375	715	38	218	70
Hela Provincial	51	352	32	133	50	1731	1000	27	312	50
Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open	29	400	22	80	47	880	350	17	69	40
Tari-Pori Open	49	243	34	149	49	2001	300	28	86	50
SHP Provincial	44	289	40	55	70	(989)	200	35	164	60
Mendi Open	37	147	22	113	78	(825)	450	23	228	50
Wabag Open	64	370	51	152	51	695	400	42	170	100
Mt Hagen Open	76	148	74	149	59	372	200	56	90	50
Chimbu Provincial	81	452	51	264	60	(605)	435	51	(220)	75
Goroka Open	68	194	63	76	51	400	200	33	132	40
Momase	13	468	11	196	8	470	225	6	246	50
Madang Open	28	607	14	202	8	567	275	6	464	50
East Sepik Provincial	10	203	6	340	4	(295)	250	9	118	100
Yangoru-Saussia Open	2	10	7	30	5	1343	200	3	200	200
Bulolo Open	0	0	0	0	2	50	50	2	5	5
Southern	29	420	18	493	15	917	100	12	140	50
NCD	40	543	28	549	17	(280)	200	12	98	50
Moresby North West	41	310	21	203	13	458	250	13	248	235
Kairuku-Hiri Open	5	70	2	45	3	100	100	14	50	50
Ijivitari Open	29	162	18	105	16	553	290	14	256	80
New Guinea Islands	14	50	11	45	7	782	300	4	492	300
Gazelle Open	8	50	7	46	3	50	20	0	0	0
Kokopo Open	7	50	2	40	5	88	85	0	0	0
Namatanai Open	13	50	11	55	10	1543	1000	4	(1430)	2500

In **Nuku Open**, for instance, only nine per cent of respondents reported receiving cash for their votes, and yet observers reported money being splashed around by candidates during the campaign period, including one candidate who campaigned across the electorate using a helicopter, giving out large cash donations to churches, schools and campaign coordinators. Observers were also informed that several candidates were buying votes on the eve of polling. Likewise, in **Rigo Open** where only nine per cent of citizens surveyed admitted to receiving gifts and five per cent admitted receiving cash for their vote, citizens and observers alike were adamant that vote-buying and political gifting were rife, with candidates buying sports uniforms, roofing iron for houses, building materials for churches, solar panels for communities and hosting sports competitions. As in 2012, those candidates that campaigned with money and gifts tended to outperform those that did not.

Influence of Magic and Sorcery

Magic and sorcery seemingly figured far more predominantly in the 2017 elections than in either 2007 or 2012, although this may in part be because we were more alert to it than in previous elections. In 2012 observers in all four regions had uncovered references to magic and sorcery in relation to the election, although at the time these seemed the exception rather than the norm. In 2012 the **Southern Highlands Provincial** team, for instance, reported much dream interpretation and divination in relation to the elections (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:66), while observers in **Kairuku-Hiri Open** noted the role played by chiefs and sorcerers in the maintenance of order at polling stations, and observers in **Yangoru-Saussia Open** reported that key candidates had purportedly engaged sorcerers to enhance their campaigns.

Observers in **Kokopo Open** and **Gazelle Open** had also reported that allegations of sorcery disrupted counting in both electorates in 2012. Specifically, two **Kokopo Open** candidates had attacked another candidate's supporter, alleging he had used sorcery to change the ballot papers in the counting room, while in **Gazelle Open** counting was suspended after a painted human skull was found on the roof of the counting centre. Church leaders in Gazelle were brought in to pray over the counting officials and ballot papers before counting could resume (ibid:86).

In 2017, concerns about the use of sorcery to influence election outcomes were noted in all four regions, although most notably in Momase. One seasoned observer from the **East Sepik Provincial** team had this to say:

*“If you want to win or ensure things are in your favour then you must use sorcery...
For sure all elected members of East Sepik Province won through sorcery.”*

(Observer, East Sepik Province)

Another observer from the same team further noted:

“This is 2017, and yet people still turn to sorcery when in need of an explanation or an outcome. Candidates who thought they could win without sorcery came face to face with it in this election. At times they were forced to succumb to their supporters’ wishes. Take for example the case of one highly educated candidate for Angoram Open. His supporters claimed that someone had worked magic, meaning he was not collecting the votes he expected. His supporters urged him to pay K20,000 to a sorcerer and have him look into the situation. The candidate said there was no need for that, but the supporters were unconvinced and went ahead and paid the sorcerer a visit. Soon thereafter the candidate left for POM [Port Moresby]...Sorcery is something educated Papua New Guineans do not want to believe in, but election time forces them to confront their beliefs. Elections are when sorcery comes alive and when sorcerers become rich... Elections are a good time for sorcerers. They use the campaign period to openly market their powers to candidates and if successful, the sorcerer is put on the candidate’s payroll.”

(Observer, East Sepik Province)

The death of the sitting MP for **Ambunti-Drekikir Open** midway through the campaign period was attributed to sorcery, as was the death of a **Yangoru-Saussia Open** candidate's father. Observers in **Yangoru-Saussia Open** also reported concerns within the community that powerful sorcery was at play in the 2017 elections. Core to Peter Wararu's campaign was the assertion that Richard Maru was using sorcery to steal the election. In fact, much of Wararu's support derived from “Christian faithful within the Catholic and Assembly of God churches”, who sought to protect his campaign through a spiritual warfare of sorts, described by observers as follows:

“The faithful supporting Peter Wararu were moving around the electorate, praying and worshipping together. They were following a statue of Mary, Our Lady of Fatima. They moved from one Christian community to the next in prayer and worship. Wararu’s supporters are saying the Lady of Fatima cannot be carried close to Richard Maru’s posters or campaign houses, noting how every time the statue is carried near a Maru banner or poster dogs bark.”

(Observers, Yangoru-Saussia Open)

So profound were the concerns about witchcraft and sorcery in the Sepik, a decision was made to count only in daylight hours. Observers reported much talk that sanguma (witches) were moving around in the vicinity of counting rooms and claims that two counting officials were attacked by sanguma outside the **Wosera-Gauwi Open** counting venue. They also reported that a **Wewak Open** candidate was locked up in the police cells for two nights after kidnapping and terrorising two men accused of practicing sorcery against him,⁶⁴ and that concerns about sorcery being used to remove ballot papers from ballot boxes resulted in recounts in both **Angoram Open** and **Yangoru-Saussia Open** electorates.⁶⁵ Concerns about sorcery were also noted in the West Sepik seat of **Nuku Open**. Observers there reported a clash between supporters of rival candidates at a campaign rally. In the melee a man accused of having ensorcelled a rival candidate's campaign manager was set upon and had his hand chopped off in retribution.

As in the Sepik, observers in Morobe and Madang provinces also reported heightened witchcraft and sorcery-related activity in the context of the election campaign. Observers in Madang, for instance, reported consistent rumours that a leading candidate for the **Madang Regional** seat had used sorcery in past elections and was doing so again in 2017, while observers in **Madang Open** encountered reports that the incumbent had engaged a powerful sorcerer and had threatened to invoke the forces of nature to swallow up and bury opposing candidate Bryan Kramer should he win. As in **Nuku Open**, observers reported sorcery-related retributive violence in **Madang Open** and **Rai Coast Open**, where a man accused of sorcery was killed during the campaign period and another on polling day.

In Morobe province, observers did not encounter sorcery-related violence per se, but did encounter consistent rumours that magic was at play in the election. Observers in **Bulolo Open**, for instance, reported the launch of a "sorcerers co-operative" during the campaign and claims that the ballot papers were being moved by magic in the counting room. Similar accounts of disappearing ballot papers were also encountered in **Nawae Open** and **Menyama Open**. In **Menyama Open**, observers also reported concerns about heightened sorcery- and witchcraft-related activity during the election, including a disturbance at one polling station when an elderly man invoked the dead spirits to come and vote. There were claims too, that a suspected sorcerer seen to kill a village chicken and a snake within the district administration area, was threatened with bush knives and was forced to leave the place under police escort. Observers also reported the removal from the counting room of a scrutineer alleged to possess supernatural powers after he was accused of tampering with the ballot papers, and separately the removal of a reserve police officer believed to be possessed by witchcraft. He was escorted out of the counting centre and sent back to his own village under heavy police escort.

"Everyone in Menyama was concerned that sorcery and witchcraft were being practiced in the night during the counting period. The scrutineers of all 22 candidates and the security personnel were on high alert and kept watch through the night till day break. There were rumours going around that candidates might try to use small animals to get through the gate and into the police station where the ballot boxes were being kept in order to move the ballot papers around and thus influence the counting and election outcome. That is the reason why they kept watch at night and why the scrutineers, security personnel, PNGDF and CIS chased and killed any animals that came near to the restricted area around the police station."

(Observer, Menyama Open)

In the Highlands where much overt violence was witnessed, there were fewer reports concerning the use of magic or sorcery in relation to the election. For the most part, observers in **Southern Highlands** and **Hela** provinces, and in **Dei Open** electorate noted neither discussion about sorcery and witchcraft nor sorcery-related violence, although one observer in **Imbonggu Open** reported that a candidate had been urging voters to vote wisely, claiming that preferences could magically change once in the ballot box.

Observers in **Goroka Open**, **Kandep Open**, **Wabag Open** and **Obura-Wonenara Open** all reported that people were being warned to be careful and to protect themselves from sanguma (witches) when moving around at night and when visiting campaign houses, while observers from the **Chimbu Provincial** team and **Obura-Wonenara Open** teams reported that election officials had "banned sorcerers from involving themselves in the election". Observers from the **Chimbu Provincial** team also reported that several high-profile candidates had engaged the services of sorcerers from elsewhere

in PNG to enhance their campaigns, while observers in **Gumine Open** reported that the sitting MP was reputed to have sought out those with sorcery powers and placed them on his payroll. They also reported that another candidate had focused his campaign on one particular part of the electorate said to have produced many powerful sorcerers and had pumped all his money into that area.

In **Western Highlands** and **Goroka Open** citizens expressed concern that votes had magically changed, alleged election-related sorcery killings and reported extreme retributive violence. Observers in **Hagen Open**, for instance, reported that four women accused of poisoning an adolescent girl at a campaign event were tortured by fire, hot irons and bush knives and were eventually killed, while observers in **Goroka Open** reported that two women were killed and others tortured after a prominent candidate died early in the campaign period. In **Wabag Open**, observers reported five separate incidents involving the torture of at least eight women accused of witchcraft, although as far as we can tell none of these incidents were explicitly election related.

In **East New Britain**, sorcery was again openly discussed, as it had been in 2012. One observer, for instance, reported “each candidate has a sorcerer to help him win” and that “a well-known and powerful sorcerer is working for a particular candidate”. He went on to report that “the campaign manager for a rival candidate has warned the committee members to watch out for and protect themselves from that particular sorcerer”. Observers reported that a supporter of a sitting MP was seen driving around in the MP’s car with a “human skull ... and a lady dressed completely in black”. A human skull was later found hanging on a tree outside the counting centre at Vunapope Hall. Pictures of the skull were posted on Facebook, fuelling discussion that supernatural forces were at play in the 2017 elections.

Elsewhere in NGL, claims regarding witchcraft and sorcery were also raised. In **Talasea Open**, observers encountered claims that a candidate was “changing people’s mindset so they would vote for him”, while one observer in **Namatanai Open** reported “money in great measure” moving people in the 2017 elections and “black power” being deployed as the “top up for victory”. Another observer in the same electorate witnessed the pre-poll training provided to presiding officers and polling officials, and overheard the officials discussing how dangerous the 2017 election was compared to earlier elections because all candidates were using sorcery to enhance their chances of success. Polling officials were warned during the training to keep alert. Post-polling, one citizen surveyed insisted witchcraft was used to great effect in the 2017 elections, being used to befuddle voters so they would mix up their preferences when voting.

Observers in **Kavieng Open** also reported that one campaign team was transporting an elderly man renowned for his magic around in a vehicle and having him perform spells to ensure voters maintain support for their party. Observers in **Namatanai Open** reported an alleged sorcery killing, and that one community, which had purportedly mobilised magic in support Byron Chan in 2012, had withdrawn their support for him in 2017 after he refused to cover the funeral arrangement for an old man who had died. Chan’s cousin and fellow candidate Walter Schnaubelt was reputed to have made a substantial contribution towards the old man’s funeral when Chan had refused, which resulted in the community reportedly harnessing their magic to Schnaubelt’s benefit.

Concerns about sorcery and witchcraft were also evident to varying degrees in Southern Region. Many of the purported sorcerers engaged elsewhere in the country were said to have hailed from Southern Region. That said, observers in **Moresby North East** and **Moresby North West** encountered no claims of sorcery and witchcraft activity in relation to the election, and the only mention of it in relation to the **Moresby South** campaign was a claim that the sitting MP had amassed his wealth through black magic and had engaged a sorcerer to assist with his campaign. It was subsequently claimed that this sorcerer had also magically changed votes cast in favour of other candidates into votes for the incumbent. By contrast, observers in **Rigo Open** noted much talk about witchcraft, particularly after the death of a man during the campaign period was attributed to witchcraft. People within the electorate claimed it was an election-related killing.

References to witchcraft and sorcery featured prominently in the elections in **Northern Province**, throughout the campaign, polling and into the counting period. Reference was also made to the use of sorcerers and witches in the 2012 elections, with one observer reporting:

“I heard David Arore had a witch from Samarai who helped him win the last election. Unfortunately she died in 2017 just before the polling. People are now saying he won’t win this time.

(Observer, Ijivitari Open)

Observers also reported hearing that the **Northern Province** governor had engaged his own sorcerer by way of response at a cost of K20,000 and that he was also using locally-engaged experts. During the campaign, supporters of a rival candidate publicly accused Governor Garry Juffa of soliciting the support of sorcerers and witches, while a member of the security forces informed observers he had witnessed Juffa emerging “from a witchcraft house in Kokoda before going to vote”. The decisiveness of Juffa’s win certainly generated much speculation with observers and citizens alike highlighting that no one had ever been elected as governor of Oro twice or with such a margin.

The count for **Ijivitari Open** proved equally contentious, with widespread allegations that each of the leading candidates had engaged witches and sorcerers to improve their prospects of success. As counting progressed, rumours emerged that the leading candidate had used witchcraft to collect votes from other candidates, with witnesses coming forward to report that the candidate in question had been seen in the company of two people from Milne Bay. Losing candidates also claimed that votes cast by their supporters were not “found” during the count. Some candidates took to social media with their concerns, and four days into the count, candidate supporters fought outside the counting venue. A suspected sorcerer was apprehended, beaten and subsequently locked up for his own safety.

As evident from the foregoing discussion, elections in PNG are associated with high levels of distrust and are influenced in large part by local belief systems. Restoring confidence in the electoral process will doubtlessly prove to be difficult in the face of such deep-seated beliefs.

Influence of New Technology

Over the course of the past three elections the telecommunications environment in PNG has changed profoundly. Digicel, whose entry into the PNG telecommunications market coincided with the 2007 election, now boasts a 90% market share⁶⁶ and has over 2.5 million subscribers. Observers in 2007 noted in particular the swift uptake of mobile phones by security personnel involved in the election operations, and in 2012, that mobile phones were being used by candidates and their campaign teams to maintain regular contact. Having noted the presence of mobile phones in the 2012 election campaign, we have since sought to monitor the impact of mobile phones in our election work across the region (Haley and Zubrinich 2015a:28).

In 2017, mobile phones were widely used to share information about the election, to source information about the time and location of campaign events, and in some cases to confirm registration details via the PNGEC’s **Roll Lookup** application. Mobile phones were also used to influence and intimidate voters, facilitate political gifting and vote buying, to mobilise support and to spread information and misinformation, including fake news.

Some candidates incorporated mobile phones and social media directly into their campaigns. One such candidate was Oro Governor Garry Juffa, an avid social media user. In addition to his social media posts, which are followed by many outside Oro, Juffa’s campaign team made direct regular contact with constituents in villages throughout the electorate via text messages and telephone calls, thus reducing the need to campaign widely throughout the province. Observers in Western Highlands also noted the incorporation of social media into the campaign arsenal.

“One notable activity witnessed for the first time in this election is that candidates are paying youth to spend quality time on social media, particularly Facebook, and to make positive comments and promote them on provincial and district forums.”

(Observer, Mt Hagen Open)

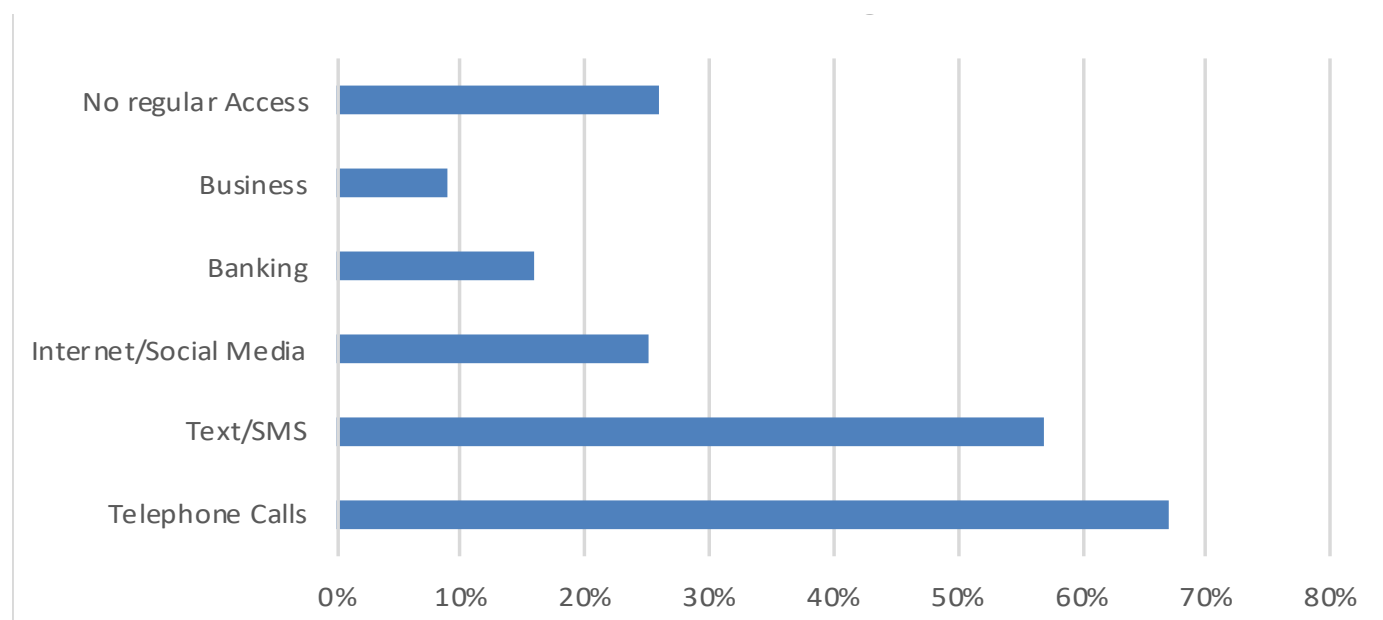
In 2017 we sought to investigate the influence of mobile phones on the election in two ways: first through a series of questions in the pre-poll citizen survey which explored mobile phone ownership and usage, and second by asking observers to reflect and report on the ways mobile phones were used during the election.

Exactly three quarters of those surveyed pre-polling reported regular access to a mobile phone. Not surprisingly, access was greatest in the major urban centres: Port Moresby (90%); Kokopo/Gazelle (91%); Lae (85%); Madang (79%) and Mt Hagen (79%), and was somewhat stronger among men (79%) as opposed to women (70%). Respondents were also asked: *Which of the following activities do you regularly use a mobile phone for?* The question allowed for multiple responses and many respondents reported more than one activity or usage. Their responses are recorded (Table 27) and depicted (Figure 8) below.

Table 27: Mobile Phone Usage – by activity type and region

Region	Post-polling Survey 2012					
	Which of the following activities do you regularly use your mobile phone for?					
	Banking (%)	Business (%)	Phone Calls (%)	Internet/ Social Media (%)	Text/SMS (%)	No Regular Access/ No Response (%)
Papua New Guinea	16	9	67	25	57	26
Highlands	11	7	62	17	54	30
Momase	15	6	66	24	55	28
Southern	20	16	75	39	64	16
NGI	23	10	66	19	61	26
NCD	26	19	82	44	68	11

Figure 8: Mobile Phone Usage – by activity type



Much to our surprise, one in four respondents reported regular use of a mobile phone to access the internet or use social media. Respondents were also asked if they had shared or received information about the election via mobile and whether they had joined in a social media discussion about the election.

In 2017 mobile phones proved to be an important vehicle for accessing and sharing information about the election in all four regions (see Table 28). Of the 3770 people surveyed during the campaign period, 29% had shared or received information about the election via mobile phone, one in five (20%) had engaged in election-related social media discussion and one in six (16%) had been exposed to the PNGEC media/awareness via social media.

Table 28. Election-Related Information Sharing and Mobile Phones

Region	Pre-polling Survey 2017			Pre-polling Survey 2017			Pre-polling Survey 2017	
	Have you shared information about the elections via mobile?			Have you joined a social media discussion about the election?			Have you seen any PNGEC media via social media?	
	Yes %	No %	No Response %	Yes %	No %	No Response %	Yes %	No Exposure/ No Response %
Papua New Guinea	29	57	13	20	68	12	16	84
Highlands	32	54	14	17	69	14	16	84
Momase	26	57	17	19	63	17	14	86
Southern	29	61	11	23	69	8	22	78
NGI	25	63	12	18	72	10	11	89
NCD	29	65	6	24	71	5	27	73

Observers across the country were adamant that mobile phones have had a profound impact on the conduct of elections in PNG. Positive and negative developments were identified in each region. On the positive side, observers noted improved communication between polling teams and key electoral officials, noting that EMs and ROs could track the progress of mobile polling teams, and that polling teams could seek updates on transport arrangements and contact security personnel if assistance was needed. In this respect mobile phone technology is seen to have contributed to improved coordination on the part of key officials. To this end, observers in **Gumine Open** reported seeing mobile phones distributed to presiding officers at the PO training so that they could maintain contact with the RO. Phones were also used to record key information. For instance, scrutineers in many places were observed to photograph ballot boxes and record the serial numbers on ballot box seals, using the cameras on their phones, rather than record these by hand.

Mobile phones were also used to great effect by candidates and their committees to extend and secure support. Phones were seen being used to maintain contact with supporters, convey messages to family members in remote rural areas about how to vote, and to build networks and political alliances. On the negative side of mobile phone usage, observers in the **Southern Highlands, Western Highlands, Kairuku-Hiri Open**, and **Gumine Open** reported the use of mobile phones to negotiate payments and bribes and to offer inducements, with one observer from **Dei Open** remarking “mobile phones are especially good for those involved in election fraud”.

Observers in **Wabag Open** also discerned that blocks of votes were being auctioned and sold using mobile phones and applications such as Whats App, while observers in **Hela** and **Western Highlands** provinces noted that mobile phones have made it much easier for candidates to make direct contact with ROs and POs, enabling them to buy off such officials without risk of being seen. Observers in **Western Highlands Province** also reported mobile phones were used by candidates and their supporters to avoid road blocks and police checks when moving cash and weapons, and to monitor the movements of rival candidates.

For the first time , 2017 saw candidates and parties use bulk text messaging services to reach out to voters. Observers in **Port Moresby**, for instance, reported that Digicel customers received bulk text messages asking them to vote for PNC candidates Michael Malabag and Powes Parkop. So too observers in Oro and **New Ireland provinces** reported that Digicel subscribers there received text messages advising them vote for particular candidates. These text messages named and provided the candidate's box number.

In places mobile phones were also used to intimidate and to control voters and officials. For instance, observers from the **Gumine Open** and **Chimbu Provincial** teams reported that many voters had received threatening text messages and that they themselves had received threatening texts during the count, while observers in **Imbonggu Open** noted that mobile phones were being used by candidate supporters to mobilise support and call in local strongmen if voting wasn't going as planned. Candidates in some electorates were known to have distributed mobile phones to their scrutineers, diehard supporters and members of their campaign team.

During polling, scrutineers and campaign managers were seen to be providing regular updates on the progress of polling at particular polling stations. Many teams in the Highlands reported witnessing the rapid response capabilities of campaign teams once scrutineers reported that polling had gone awry. In **Dei Open**, for instance, one observer reported seeing a particular candidate's campaign manager and supporters drive in and forcibly shut down a polling station upon learning that their candidate was not receiving promised votes. Having done so, they commandeered the remaining ballot papers and filled them out in favour of their candidate. Rapid responses of this kind were also noted in **Imbonggu Open**, **Koroba-Lake Kopiago Open** and **Tari-Pori Open**. Observers in **Koroba-Lake Kopiago Open** directly attributed the hijacking and destruction of some ballot boxes to information being spread via mobile phone.

And while it did not result in the destruction of ballot boxes, information and images circulated via mobile phone were seen to have influenced voter turnout in some places and to have fuelled post-election violence in others. In **Namatanai** and **Kavieng Open**, as well as parts of **East Sepik** and **Madang** provinces, observers reported that voter turnout, community attitudes and the conduct of polling were sometimes influenced by the polling that had taken place in the days preceding it. Observers in several locations reported being shown mobile phone footage of what was going on elsewhere in the electorate and reported seeing citizens in diverse locations assert their right to be afforded similar privileges extended to voters elsewhere across the country.

Mobile phones and social media were also used by candidates and citizens alike to share evidence of voting irregularities, money politics, political violence, police brutality and to incite violence (see Figure 9 below). Mobile phones were the vehicle by which information, including fake news, was swiftly circulated. They provided more or less real-time information and as counting progressed it became evident that results were circulating on social media long before they were made available through official channels. Observers at different Highlands locations summed up the impact of mobile phones on elections as follows:

“Mobile phones have allowed candidates to control their campaign teams and supporters remotely. Phones are used to cause disruptions, collect information and direct supporter responses to situations from afar.”

(Observer, Gumine Open)

“Social Media, Whats App and Facebook all played a massive role in this election. Not only was violence fuelled by it but some candidates were ruined on Facebook.”

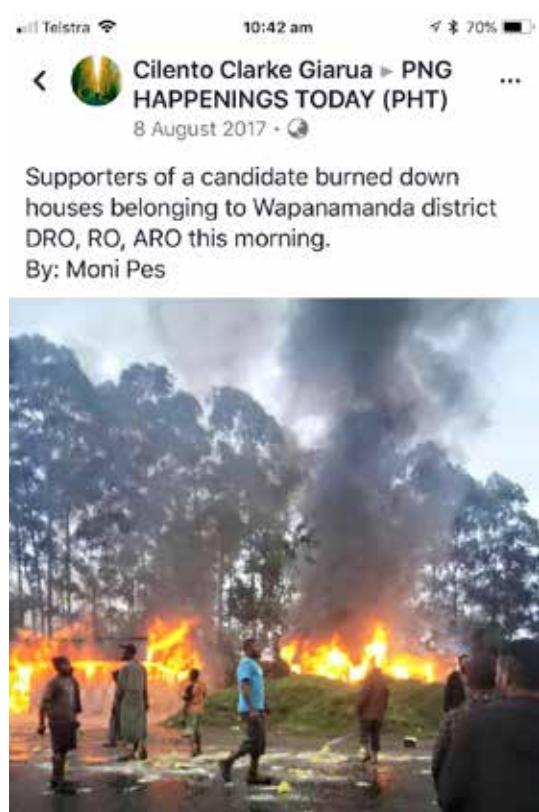
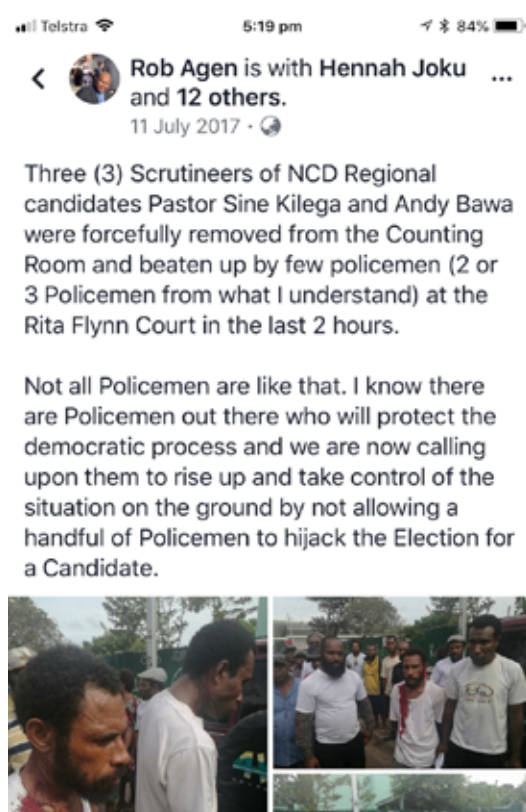
(Observer, Dei Open)

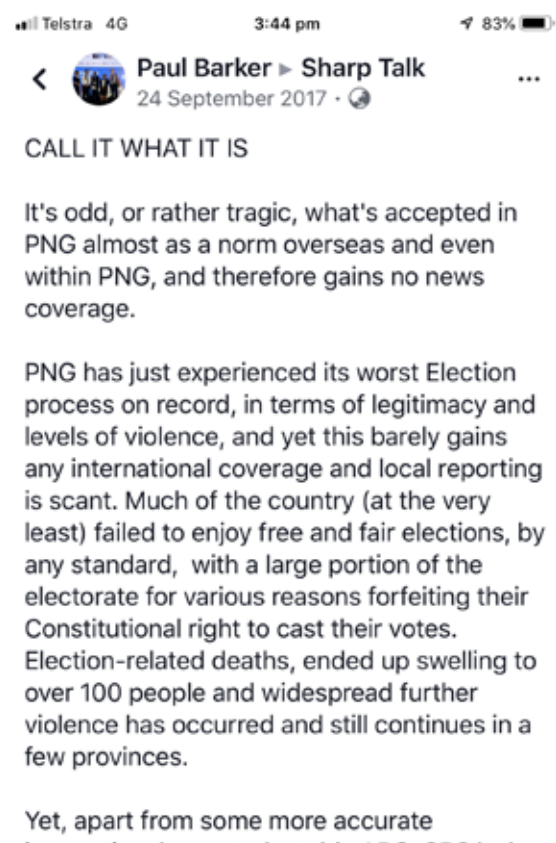
“Innocent people lost their lives because of mobile phones. In this election we saw people using phones to report “people here are not giving us their votes”. In retaliation roads were blocked and people killed. Candidates, campaign teams and diehard supporters all used their phones to mobilise people, leading them to destroy houses and property and burn trucks.”

(Observer, Wabag Open)

Clearly mobile phones have enhanced citizen participation in PNG elections, although not necessarily in positive ways.

Figure 9: Examples of Candidate and Citizen Posts Concerning the Elections





SECTION 4: POLLING AND COUNTING

Polling

In 2017 the ANU observation team undertook detailed observations at 945 polling stations. Of these, two in five (41%) were located in the Highlands, and approximately one in five in each of the other three regions. By way of contrast, observations were made at 529 polling stations in 2012 (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:4). Polling station coverage in 2017 was weakest in Momase and strongest in the Highlands and Southern regions. It varied considerably between electorates (see Appendix A), ranging between 8% in **Gazelle Open**, **Ijivitari Open**, and **Talasea Open** electorates (where roaming polling teams operated) and upwards of 50% in **Dei Open**, **Hagen Open** and **Gumine Open** electorates in the Highlands, where one-day polling was the norm. Overall our teams made comprehensive observations at 14% of all polling stations in the 69 open electorates in which observations were made, and 20% of polling stations in the 33 open electorates in which four or more observers made detailed observations, delivering a high degree of confidence in the observation findings.

Those observing in the Highlands and urban centres where one-day polling was employed were asked to visit 2–3 polling stations, while those observing in places where mobile polling was employed were asked to make observations at five polling stations. Individual teams approached their observations differently, taking into account factors such as safety and security, familiarity, ease of movement and availability of transport and the nature of polling (one-day or roaming). Some travelled ostensibly in teams or subsets thereof (e.g. **Nuku Open**, **Rigo Open** and **Moresby North East Open**), others saw a designated driver drop off and pick up observers each day as appropriate (e.g. **Ijivitari Open**, **Sohe Open**, and **Kairuku Hiri Open**). Some teams arranged for individual observers to travel with mobile polling teams (e.g. **Namatani Open**, **Kavieng Open**, **Yangoru-Sausia Open**, and **Central Bougainville**) while others assigned individual observers to an electorate and LLG where they might safely observe for the duration of polling (e.g. **Hela Provincial**, **SHP Provincial**, **Chimbu Provincial**, **Dei Open**, **Wabag Open**).

In the major urban centres observers found it easier to move around and were often able to visit multiple polling stations for shorter periods. Many team leaders and mentors employed a similar approach in order to ensure a comparative perspective. In making their observations, each observer was asked a series of questions pertaining to the layout of the polling station and the time it opened, the size and composition of the security presence, the conduct of polling and the nature of any irregularities and/or electoral offences witnessed.

Elections in PNG vary significantly from place to place and are conducted in diverse social, cultural and administrative contexts. As such there is considerable divergence in how elections look and how they are experienced. The methodology we have developed seeks not simply to examine the conduct of elections and the degree of procedural correctness but also to gauge the way citizens in different parts of the country, and different groups of citizens experience the elections. To this end, what are critical are the pre- and post-polling citizen surveys, and in particular the questions concerning citizen experiences in relation to violence and intimidation.

Across the country, observers encountered electoral violence, widespread allegations of vote buying and political gifting, vote tampering, allegations of bias and partisanship on the part of key officials and the security personnel, and corrupt acts by officials, candidates and their supporters. In each and every electorate observed, anomalies and irregularities were noted.

One-day polling once again proved unrealistic and unworkable in practice (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:72; PNGRPP 2018:159). It took several days to complete polling in each of the Highlands provinces, and in Port Moresby, after being delayed once, polling was extended to a second day at several key locations.

Polling also fell behind schedule in many other provinces, necessitating the revision of elections schedules on the ground, and an extension of polling by four days in four provinces, namely Madang, Gulf, Western and East Sepik. Likewise, there were places that did not poll and places where polling stations were shut early. These delays and last-minute changes to polling schedules doubtlessly saw voters disenfranchised en masse, most notably in the New Guinea Islands, Momase and Southern regions, where roaming polling teams were the norm.

Before directly discussing the observations our teams made, it is worth considering voter expectations ahead of polling. Although the 2017 national elections were the third since the introduction of LPV, which involves expressing one's preferences by transposing a two-digit code number and/or the names of their preferred candidates to the ballot paper, it is evident a significant proportion of the voting population still find LPV confusing. Of the 3770 citizens surveyed during the campaign period, one in six (14%) indicated that they were not confident in their ability to vote properly using LPV, while one in four (26%) said they expected to require assistance in order to vote (see Tables 29 and 30 below). By way of background, section 140 of OLNLLGE provides for voters who are unable to mark their own ballot paper (by virtue of visual impairment, physical incapacity or illiteracy) to nominate another citizen to assist them.

Table 29. Voting Confidence – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Pre-poll Survey 2012			Pre-poll Survey 2017			
	Do you know how to vote properly?			Are you confident you know how to vote properly using LPV?			
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	No Response (%)
Papua New Guinea	74	12	14	80	14	5	1
Highlands	65	15	20	75	17	7	1
Momase	80	12	8	82	14	4	1
Southern	82	8	10	86	10	2	3
NGI	85	8	7	86	12	2	0
NCD	74	8	18	83	13	2	3

Table 30. Expectations of Assistance– 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Pre-poll Survey 2012			Pre-poll Survey 2017			
	Do you expect to require assistance to vote?			Do you expect to require assistance to vote?			
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	No Response (%)
Papua New Guinea	30	62	8	26	71	3	1
Highlands	33	56	11	29	65	4	2
Momase	27	69	4	27	69	2	2
Southern	23	72	5	20	77	1	2
NGI	33	64	3	21	78	1	0
NCD	74	8	18	83	13	2	3

The confidence of citizens to use LPV has risen somewhat since 2012. For instance, the proportion of voters who found LPV confusing and difficult had dropped in each region except the New Guinea Islands. That said, one in five of those who voted still found LPV confusing (15%) or difficult (6%), suggesting an ongoing need for awareness.

Table 31. Experience of LPV – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Post-polling Survey 2012		Post-polling Survey 2017			
	How do you find the new voting system?		How do you find the LPV voting system?			
	Confusing & Difficult (%)	Easy (%)	Confusing (%)	Difficult (%)	Easy (%)	No Response (%)
Papua New Guinea	29	71	15	6	75	4
Highlands	35	65	16	7	72	5
Momase	31	69	14	6	78	2
Southern	21	79	12	4	82	2
NGI	16	84	19	6	70	5
NCD	20	80	14	4	80	2

Around the country observers noted that voting continues to be slow (ibid:81; COG 2012:25) especially when voters mark their own papers. Where voting was assisted, it proceeded much more quickly and efficiently, however as discussed elsewhere in this report, such assistance was often forced upon voters.

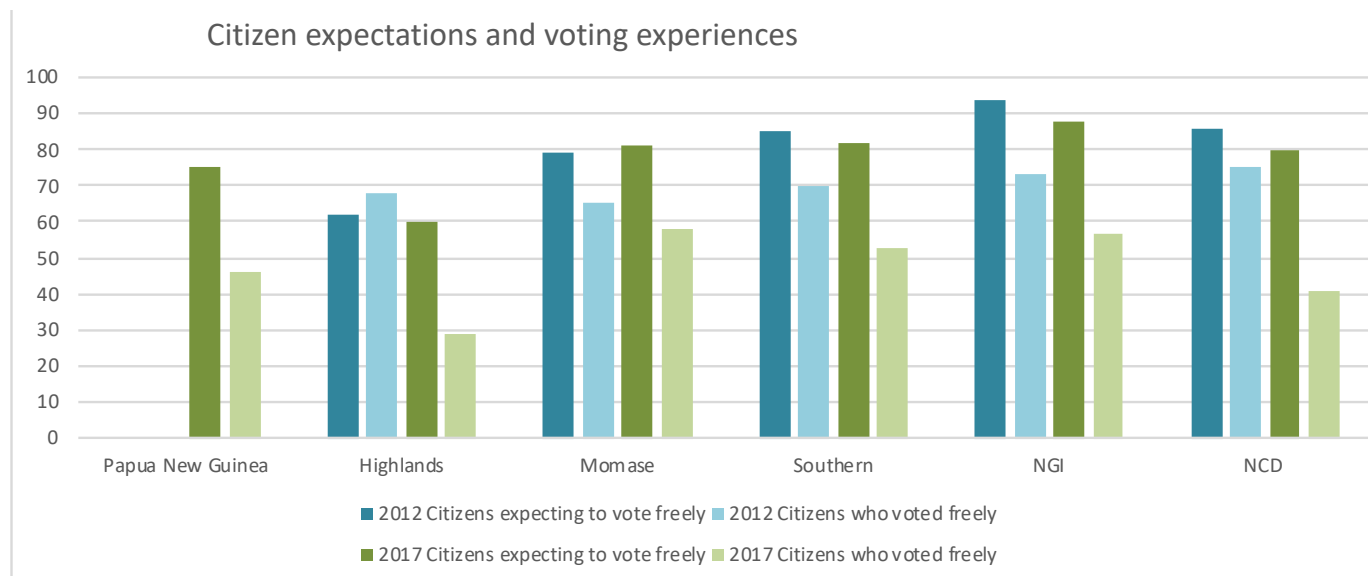
During the campaign period, citizens were also asked whether they expected to be able to vote freely without undue influence. Somewhat surprisingly, three quarters of those surveyed did expect to vote freely (see Table 32 below) despite the fact many citizens had experienced intimidation and many had not voted in 2012 (10–21% and 10–25% respectively dependent on region).

Table 32. Experiences of Intimidation – 2017

Region	Pre-Polling Survey 2017				Post-Polling Survey 2017			
	Do you expect to be able to vote freely without undue influence?				Were you able to vote freely without intimidation?			
	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response	Yes	No	Didn't Vote	No Response
Papua New Guinea	75	14	10	2	46	35	25	3
Highlands	60	17	21	2	29	56	31	2
Momase	81	13	4	2	58	23	18	2
Southern	82	13	4	1	53	22	27	2
NGI	88	9	2	0	57	19	20	4
NCD	80	14	4	1	41	24	40	2

Post-polling voters were asked whether they had been able to vote freely without intimidation. Across the country there was as marked a difference between voter expectations and their experiences as there had been in 2012 (see Figure 10). Importantly there were also significant drops in each region with respect to the proportion of the population who voted freely without undue influence. While three in five people in the Highlands and four out of five in NCD had expected to be able to vote freely, only half this number actually did so. Across the country fewer than half (46%) of all citizens surveyed post-polling reported being able to freely exercise their vote.

Figure 10. Citizen Expectations and Voting Experiences – 2012 and 2017

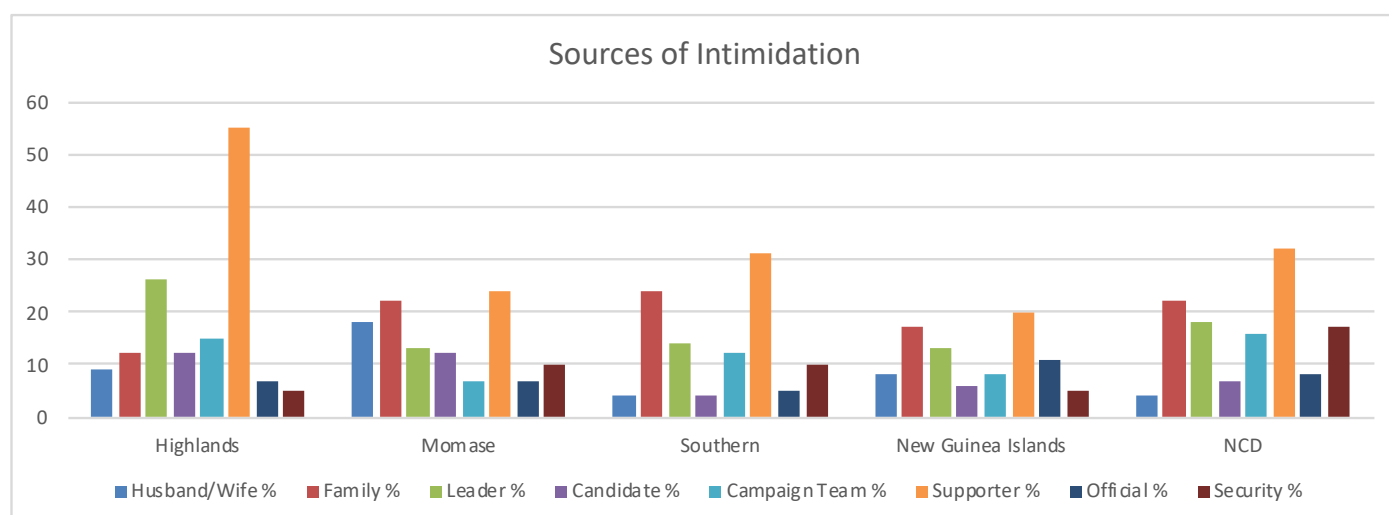


As in 2012, male voters were less likely to anticipate experiencing undue influence and were more likely to be able to cast their vote freely. In all four regions, women were more likely to have experienced intimidation and less likely to have voted. Women's experiences are discussed in more detail in Section 5 of this report.

Nationwide, one third (35%) of those interviewed post-polling reported having experienced intimidation. This is consistent with TIPNG's observation findings. Indeed 34% of voters they interviewed also reported "threats to voters on polling day" (TIPNG 2017:8). In addition, one quarter of those surveyed by ANU observers reported that they did not vote.

Those who did not vote freely were subsequently asked: *If you experienced intimidation who was responsible?* This question generated a range of responses, as depicted in Figure 11 below. What is clear is a sizable proportion of the population in all four regions were subjected to intimidation in an effort to influence their vote. Across the country much of the intimidation experienced was attributed to candidate supporters and to a lesser extent campaign teams. Many who experienced intimidation also identified their spouse or another family member as the source, suggesting that much intimidation takes place in the home and/or community rather than at the polling station. In the Highlands, one in four of those who experienced intimidation (26%) identified a community leader as the source, and across all four regions a small proportion of respondents reported being intimidated by polling officials and/or security personnel.

Figure 11. Sources of Intimidation - by region



As already noted in the general discussion on campaigning, two thirds (65%) of all citizens surveyed post-polling considered the 2017 elections worse than the 2007 and 2012 elections, and the majority considered it the worst of the last three elections in terms of the prevailing security environment and in terms of electoral malfeasance (see Table 33 below). The view that the 2017 elections were the worst in terms of fraud and malpractice was very strongly held in NCD, although even more so in Hela, Western Highlands and Southern Highlands provinces. Upwards of three in four citizens surveyed in these provinces (77–84% depending on province) felt there was more fraud in 2017. Likewise, three quarters considered 2017 the worst in terms of electoral violence. Such assessments are particularly telling as these are the key provinces in which the national elections failed in 2002 and the LLG elections failed in 2013.

Table 33. The 2017 Election Compared With the 2012 and 2007 Elections – violence and fraud

Region	Post-polling Survey 2017				Post-polling Survey 2017			
	In which election was electoral violence greatest?				In which election was electoral fraud greatest?			
	2007 %	2012 %	2017 %	No Response %	2007 %	2012 %	2017 %	No Response %
Papua New Guinea	6	20	44	30	4	17	50	29
Highlands	8	21	57	14	2	14	68	16
Momase	6	26	26	42	4	23	32	40
Southern	5	18	50	28	5	15	55	24
NGI	4	9	38	48	5	15	34	46
NCD	4	16	57	23	2	7	73	18
Hela Province	5	13	73	10	1	10	77	12
SHP	1	7	77	14	1	7	84	7
WHP	4	11	73	12	2	4	78	16

Across the country, polling was consistently delayed by anything from several hours to several days. Very few polling stations opened on time. For the most part the delays experienced were caused by the late arrival of polling officials, and in some cases by rain or last-minute changes to polling schedules. Start times often varied between districts and LLGs, and depended very much on the manner in which polling teams were inserted. Teams reliant on air support for insertion and/or the delivery of essential election materials tended to experience the longest delays. Where one-day polling was in force, and where polling actually took place, ballot boxes were consistently displayed open and empty prior to the commencement of polling. However, there were places, predominantly in the Highlands, which did not poll because ballot boxes were hijacked and/or diverted to alternate locations and places where polling was dramatically shortened due to fighting or other security incidents.

As in previous elections, polling fell behind schedule in the Highlands provinces. Several factors contributed to this: poor infrastructure and bad weather, a shortage of air transport, last minute changes to the air transport schedules, stand-offs between candidates and electoral officials and disputes about the non-payment of allowances to polling officials and security personnel. Such delays saw polling deferred or delayed in several locations and resulted in Sunday polling in **Ialibu-Pangia Open, Kandrian-Gloicester Open, Menyama Open** and **Central Bougainville Open**.

The issue of Sunday polling, which is seemingly in contravention of Section 130 of OLNLLGE, proved particularly controversial in 2017, and saw **Ialibu-Pangia Open** candidate, Stanley Liria, file a Supreme Court reference seeking a ruling on the constitutionality of Sunday polling. Liria later withdrew his application in the “national interest” stating “his participation in the court proceedings and the court proceedings themselves could be contributing to the ongoing unrest in and about Southern Highlands”.⁶⁷ Interestingly the votes cast on Sunday in **Kandrian-Gloicester Open** were declared informal by Provincial Returning Officer Emily Kelton, and were removed from the count.⁶⁸

For the most part, polling stations were set up as well as they might be, given local conditions and the nature of the polling venue in question. Most were set up outdoors, with whatever furniture could be sourced

locally, meaning the set-up of polling stations varied greatly and that most locations were subject to the vagaries of local weather conditions. Having observed elections elsewhere in the region, we believe greater use could be made of permanent structures like community halls, church halls and classrooms, although we acknowledge that the growing violence associated with elections might place such assets at risk. Where permanent structures were utilised it proved somewhat easier to ensure voters entered and exited the polling station in an orderly fashion thereby avoiding the “rugby scrum” approach to polling which involves much pushing, shoving and intimidation.

Variation in the set-up of polling stations and in the processing of voters was noted around the country, although it is very much the case that adherence to procedures around the identification of voters and the issuance of ballot papers remains strongest in the New Guinea Islands, Southern and Momase regions. Outside of the Highlands, polling teams tended to verify and process voters in order of arrival, although in each region there were places where officials worked through the roll alphabetically. For the most part this saw individuals cast their own votes, often with assistance some of which was forced.

In the Highlands, little adherence to procedure was noted and observers reported less individual voting than in 2012. Individual voting was most evident in **Eastern Highlands** and **Chimbu** where “*man-meri* voting” and “next voting” were employed at many polling stations.⁶⁹ That said there were places in each province where names were called alphabetically and in these places much proxy voting was also noted.

In **Hela** and **Southern Highlands** some individual voting was witnessed, typically early in the day, although in many places votes were simply claimed and ballot papers marked by small groups of men. In **Enga** individual voting was rare, with papers distributed to and marked by household heads, or their designate, or by a small group of appointed scribes including polling officials and scrutineers. *Tanim tebol* voting⁷⁰ was witnessed in several locations. In those parts of **Enga** where individual voters were issued papers, voters “claimed their safety” by declaring their vote publicly or by handing their ballot paper directly to a candidate scrutineer to be marked on their behalf.

In the **Western Highlands**, collective voting of the kind witnessed in **Jiwaka Province** in 2012 seems to have gained widespread acceptance. Ballot papers were either claimed or shared between candidates on the instruction of local leaders. At times this saw small groups of men marking the ballot papers on behalf of the broader group or saw individual voters issued pre-marked papers to deposit in the ballot box. Invariably this happened at polling stations in candidates’ respective stronghold areas. In the **Western Highlands** the principle role of scrutineers is now to claim or secure as many second and third preferences as is possible, either by force or by buying them.

For the most part, voters queued patiently and demonstrated considerable restraint in what in most places were highly-charged, competitive environments. Nationwide the electoral roll was the source of much angst and the principle cause of the polling day disruptions witnessed around the country. It saw individuals and groups disenfranchised.

Serious irregularities of various kinds, including intimidation, personation, underage voting, multiple voting and proxy voting were noted in each and every electorate in 2017, although there was much variation in the frequency with which they were observed. For the most part, observers in Momase, Southern and New Guinea Islands regions reported consistent use of the indelible ink, although many also noted that it did not necessarily provide a robust safeguard against double or multiple voting as people with ink were permitted, in many locations, to vote again regardless. In the Highlands, the use of ink was reported early in the day, in places, although tended to be abandoned early or not used at all. In many places it seemed to be considered optional and to impede the efficient processing of voters. So too the electoral roll. As in 2012, the incentives to abandon procedure were greater in some places than others, particularly those assigned one polling team per ward regardless of enrolled population. **Chimbu, Eastern Highlands, Enga, Hela** and **Jiwaka** provinces were all cases in point.

Outside of the Highlands, observers reported widespread use of the electoral roll but noted considerable variation in the way it was used. Such variation was evident both within and between electorates. In places, voters lined up and identified themselves and in others, names were called in alphabetical order. Where the latter occurred much proxy voting was noted. Regardless of whether the electoral roll was used or how it was used, it proved to be a major source of discontent, giving rise to everything from delays, arguments and disruptions, violent altercations, assaults of polling officials, fights and ballot boxes being destroyed. Collectively observers saw thousands of people turned away

from polling stations around the country. This was most evident in Port Moresby, the New Guinea Islands and Momase, where polling teams, to their credit, generally persisted with the electoral roll despite its deficiencies, and the delays it caused.

Problems with the electoral rolls seemed particularly acute at each of the major tertiary institutions. At the UPNG main campus at Waigani, polling was deferred twice. Initially from 27 June to 30 June, and then from 30 June to 1 July. The second postponement occurred after staff and students became aware that the UPNG roll contained the names of only 1350 registered voters. Staff and students insisted that the campus community included 4000–5000 eligible citizens. Staff also reported that the roll principally comprised the names of former students, not the current ones. In Lae, the staff and students at Unitech encountered similar problems and did not poll, after learning that only 1100 ballot papers had been received, despite enrolments of 4000–5000. Initially there was a standoff, with the waiting crowd demanding they be provided with 4000 additional papers. It is understood that at first the RO promised to bring additional papers claiming that the Unitech papers had been diverted elsewhere, although after an hour or so of waiting he subsequently informed the gathered crowd there would be no additional papers provided. At that point, some within the crowd called for the 1100 papers received to be burnt, which is ultimately what happened.

Observers in **Lae Open** reported that many candidates had visited and provided support to the various student associations on campus in the weeks leading up to polling. They also reported that candidates had been buying votes on campus on the eve of polling and early on polling day. Even before the ballot papers arrived tension was high amongst the student community due to this intense politicking and a prior conflict which had seen an SHP student killed and the burning of core Unitech infrastructure. When the ballot papers arrived and there were far fewer than expected, staff and students evidently agreed the papers should be burnt to avoid the likelihood of further violent confrontation. Problems were also experienced at Divine Word University in Madang, the University of Goroka and the Pacific Adventist University. Many observers opined that the problems encountered on the university campuses across the country had been deliberately orchestrated in response to the student protests of 2016, which had seen tertiary students across the country call for the removal of the O'Neill-led PNC-government.

As noted above, observers in NCD reported major irregularities with the electoral rolls in other institutional settings beyond the university campuses, including Murray Barracks, Gordon's Police Barracks, McGregor Police Barracks, Bomana Prison and Bomana Police College. At Murray Barracks, many serving personnel and their families were not enrolled. This saw polling delayed for some time as they angrily argued with and demanded an explanation from the PO. Observers described the situation as very tense and reported that many of the PNGDF personnel present were armed. Evidently they demanded to vote and insisted that if they didn't vote no one would. Eventually a compromise agreement was reached whereby the soldiers present agreed that polling could proceed if they were given a book of ballot papers. To resolve the impasse the PO agreed to their demand. Thereafter polling proceeded without incident, with the PNGDF providing security at the polling station.

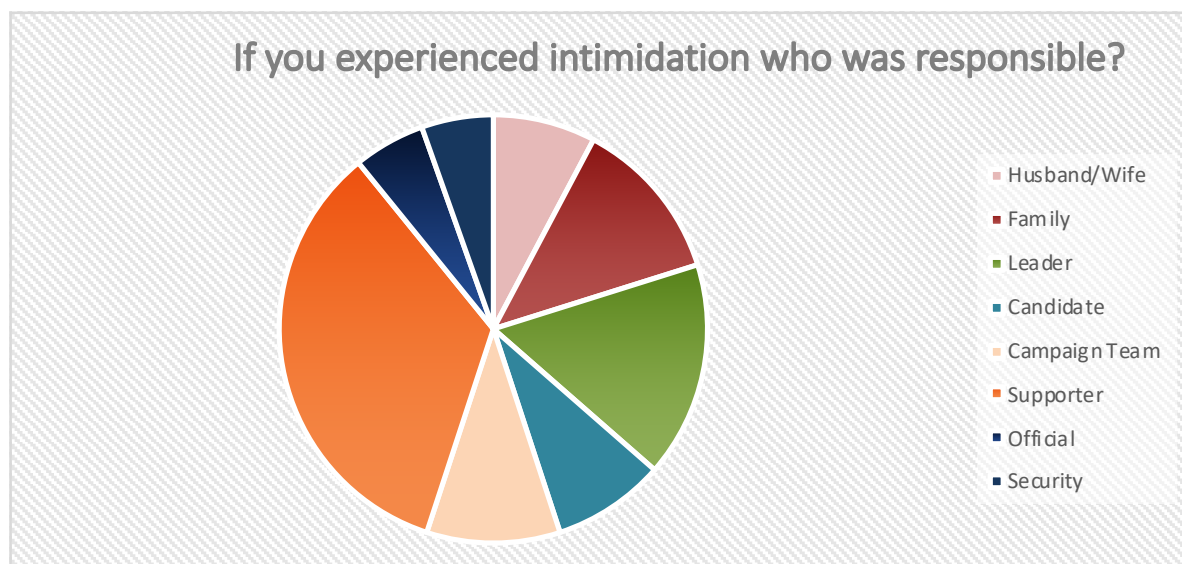
Although they tended to be in the minority, it should be noted that observers did visit polling stations that were well run and where most rules were followed. Typically, these were located outside of the Highlands. In parts of Momase, Southern and NGI regions the better-run polling stations (those where few violations were noted) outnumbered those where multiple serious violations were noted. In the Highlands and in the major urban centres, the reverse was the case. There the typical polling station was one where important rules were disregarded and where some or many serious violations were noted.

Widespread serious irregularities were identified in each of the Highlands provinces, particularly in relation to the conduct of polling, with both the electoral roll and indelible ink being abandoned early or not used at all. Throughout much of the Highlands, culturally-entrenched practices of coerced collective voting prevailed.⁷¹ Observers in each of the Highlands provinces reported places where “voters” were issued pre-marked ballot papers. Sometimes all preferences were marked, sometimes just the first preference. In other places candidates and their supporters claimed the ballot papers or a share of the ballot papers which were marked on behalf of the community by polling officials, scrutineers, candidate supporters and local strongmen. None of the observer teams in the Highlands witnessed individual voting of a kind typically associated with democratic elections. The extent and scale of irregularities and serious violations noted across the Highlands undoubtedly impacted upon election results.

More than half (51%) of the 3740 citizens surveyed post-polling either did not vote or experienced intimidation when seeking to do so. Significant regional variation was noted (Highlands 69%; Momase 40%; Southern 45% and New Guinea Islands 39%). This is up significantly on 2012, where less than a third of respondents (27–35% depending on region) had reported experiencing intimidation and/or not voting (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:72). Specifically a third of those surveyed post-polling (35%) reported experiencing intimidation when seeking to vote (Highlands 56%; Momase 23%; Southern 22% and New Guinea Islands 19%) and/or being denied the right to vote, either because their name was not on the roll, because they were too scared to vote or because they were forcibly prevented from doing so. Overall a quarter of those surveyed in 2017 had not voted (Highlands 31%; Momase 18%; Southern 27% and New Guinea Islands 20%).

Intimidation is a well-established aspect of electoral competition in PNG. Even in places where the elections ran relatively smoothly and where observers reported a fair degree of procedural compliance, a significant proportion of voters reported experiencing intimidation and undue influence when voting. Intimidation takes a number of forms. It is not necessarily overt and highly visible and nor does it necessarily take place at the polling station. As illustrated by Figure 12 below, the majority of those who experienced intimidation did so at the hands of a candidate (11%), campaign team member (13%) or candidate supporter (44%).

Figure 12. Sources of Intimidation



Voting Irregularities

With the administration of, and security arrangements for, elections in PNG now very much decentralised, there is increased scope for electoral malfeasance. In 2017 serious irregularities, of one kind or another, were witnessed across the country in all electorates in which observations were undertaken. Notwithstanding this, they continue to be widespread and most pronounced in the Highlands. Underage voting, multiple voting, collective voting, proxy voting and personation were noted with varying frequency in each region. According to observers in New Ireland, underage voting involving primary school age children was seen for the first time in 2017. At one polling station in Konoagil LLG, **Namatani Open**, three grade 2 students, two grade 4 students and two grade 6 students were all seen to vote. According to the observer who witnessed this “people could not believe their eyes” and were shocked by the brazenness of the underage voting.

Observers in **Talasea Open** and **Yangoru-Saussia** also witnessed underage voting, at times involving primary school age children, while most observers in **Central Bougainville Open** reported double voting, underage and a great deal of proxy voting. Scrutineer objections to the double and proxy voting were forcefully rebutted by polling officials and voters alike on the basis that the individuals involved were simply “voting for old people who couldn’t walk the long distance to the polling station”. In much the same vein, double voting in **Menyamya Open** was denied by those involved on the basis that the votes were being cast for “absent and deceased family members”.

Although one quarter of all citizens surveyed post-polling had not voted, the number of people and proportion of voters who reported voting multiple times was up across the entire country in 2017. Overall, one in ten citizens surveyed and one in five in the Highlands reported voting multiple times. In those parts of the Highlands where individual voting was witnessed (**Eastern Highlands, Chimbu, Southern Highlands and Hela**) a third or more (30–43%) of all men surveyed post-polling reported voting multiple times. In **Enga** and **Western Highlands**, where collective voting in one form or another was practiced, fewer than one in five men reported voting multiple times. Across the Highlands, men who voted multiple times reported voting on average 18 times. Outside of the Highlands, those who voted multiple times rarely voted more than twice (see Table 34).

Table 34. Frequency of Voting – by region and gender

Region	Post-polling Survey 2017							
	How many times did you vote in the 2017 election?						Votes Cast	
	0 Did not Vote % All Voters	1 Once Only % All Voters	2+ Multiple Times % All Voters	No Response % All Voters	2+ Multiple Times % Male Voters	2+ Multiple Times % Female Voters	Average Votes Cast Male Voters	Average Votes Cast Female Voters
Papua New Guinea	25	62	11	2	15	6	11	3
Highlands	31	48	20	1	29	11	18	3
Momase	18	72	8	2	10	5	2	2
Southern	27	64	5	4	7	4	3	2
NGI	20	76	2	2	2	1	2	2
NCD	40	50	6	4	7	5	4	3

Overall little secrecy was afforded to voters, with polling stations set up in such a way that scrutineers could often see into polling compartments, where they were used. Coupled with this, observers around the country reported abuse of the assisted voting provisions, noting an extraordinarily high level of assisted voting (much of it seemingly forced), and that few voters were afforded a genuine secret ballot. Even where individual voting prevailed, ballot papers were often “checked for formality” by polling officials, scrutineers or local leaders. In places, voters and polling officials alike asserted that the use of separate ballot boxes necessitated the checking of ballot papers, which appeared identical once folded, to ensure ballots were not cast in the wrong box, potentially rendering them informal. As in 2007 and 2012, the high levels of assisted voting witnessed throughout the country translated into a very low informal vote. In the Highlands – where the vast majority of voting was assisted – the overall informality rate was less than 1%. By way of comparison, 3% of votes cast in Momase and Southern regions were declared informal and 4% in the New Guinea Islands.

More so than in the other PNG elections we have observed, the presence of candidates at polling stations was noted. Across the country observers reported the presence of candidates and campaign managers at polling stations. Often they were seen to be protecting the candidate's interests although many were also reported to be canvassing for votes. Vote buying, treating and intimidation on the part of candidates or their agents on polling day was noted by 31 of the 35 observer team, including: in each of the Highland's electorates and in the NCD seats; in **Central Bougainville, Namatanai Open, Kavieng Open** and **Talasea Open** in the New Guinea Islands, in **Lae Open, Madang Open, Menyamy Open, Yangoru-Saussia Open** and **Wewak Open** in Momase; and in **Ijivitari Open, Sohe Open** and **Rigo Open** in Southern Region. Much of the treating observed involved buai (betelnut), cigarettes and the provision of refreshments (food and drink) and was much more brazen than in previous elections.

Threats and intimidation, where observed, were considered more brazen. For example in **Central Bougainville** a high profile candidate and ex-combatant directly threatened to reignite the Bougainville conflict if the constituents of his electorate did not vote for him. In **Hagen Open**, settlers and migrant workers from neighbouring provinces were again threatened with eviction if they did not surrender their votes to the local candidates (c.f. Haley and Zubrinich 2013:39),

and in **Hela Province**, candidates reported having to pay off warlords in order to campaign in particular areas. Some went further and engaged the services of these warlords to control voting on polling day. In the **Eastern Highlands** and **Chimbu**, candidates also engaged the services of youth, strongmen and even criminals to provide muscle for their campaigns. According to observers, one candidate in **Obura-Wonenara Open** was reputed to have bailed out convicted criminals to support his campaign, while in **Gumine Open** voters were threatened and terrorised by youth squads referred to locally as the “30-man squads”. One man interviewed post polling had this to say:

“[One candidate] spent millions on his campaign buying votes. Individual sub-clans were given amounts ranging from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands. He also engaged several 30-man squads to control voters. These youth squads were armed with high powered weapons and terrorised voters. The people had no freedom to cast their votes. They were powerless and cast their votes in fear.”

(Voter, Gumine Open)

Similar accounts were recorded in **Kundiawa-Gembol Open**. Observers there likewise witnessed large amounts of cash (K50,000 – K60,000) distributed at the ward level to key leaders. The amount given to any particular individual, they said, was dependent on the level of influence that person has on his or her community. They also noted the critical role played by youth.

“Youth are the power house driving this election. They are involved in so many ways: providing security, voter intimidation, as drivers and handyman, as pimps, as messengers between candidates and as scrutineers.”

(Observer, Kundiawa-Gembol Open)

Outside of the Highlands there were also reports of criminal elements seeking to influence the conduct of the elections. Late in the campaign period a group of seven heavily armed men in camouflage gear were detained near Kimbe. Media reports indicate that police confiscated a large quantity of 9mm factory-made rounds, a Glock semi-automatic 9mm pistol, a homemade 12-gauge shotgun, three shotgun cartridges, a box of unspecified ammunition, and a magazine containing as further 17 9mm rounds. **West New Britain** provincial police commander, Jim Namora, said the seven were believed to be part of a wider network of known criminals and convicted felons sponsored by candidates “to be members of a quasi-military group orchestrated for the 2017 polling”.⁷²

Such is the interrelationship between money politics and violence, that many communities were angst ridden upon learning of the problems with the electoral roll. A shortfall of ballot papers in many areas led to heated polling day standoffs once it became apparent that commitments to candidates could not be met in full. In places this led communities to fight over the papers received and, in some cases, the eventual destruction of the ballot box(es) in question. In other places compromise agreements were reached, including that no one would vote or that the available votes would be split or shared on some agreed basis.

Examples of such agreements were reported across the county. For example, an observer at one polling station in Bundi LLG, **Usino-Bundi Open** electorate reported a polling station which received only 400 ballot papers. Locals insisted there were twice this number of eligible citizens in the ward and that their enrolments had been much higher in the past. Heated discussion saw polling delayed for several hours and threats made against the polling officials. Eventually it was agreed that 100 ballot papers would be assigned to one candidate, 50 ballot papers to another candidate, 50 ballot papers for the scrutineers to share amongst themselves and that individual voting would proceed with the remaining ballot papers.

In the **Western Highlands** many such agreements were reached and documented by observers. One such agreement concerned the distribution of ballot papers and preferences at Kinjibi Field, Kotna Rural LLG in **Dei Open** electorate. Five polling stations were set up on the field to service the 2200 enrolled voters of wards 21 and 22. The boxes for these five polling stations arrived early afternoon and polling commenced around 1.30pm. When polling commenced there were separate lines for men and women although the electoral roll and ink were not being used. After 30 minutes or so of

successful polling, two candidates arrived with boisterous supporters in tow and dismissed the waiting voters. This led to a heated argument between the candidates and their supporter muscle, during which the local candidate laid claim to all of the first preference votes for both wards. He was challenged by a rival candidate who insisted he was entitled to a share of the votes as he had given the people of those wards K37,000 and 17 pigs during the campaign period. The candidates eventually agreed to share the first preferences voted for four of the five polling stations. When the scrutineers for other candidates objected to this arrangement they were invited by the polling team to mark the second and third preferences for their candidates, which evidently ameliorated their concerns.

The fifth polling station had been established to service the migrant plantation workers of Kinjibi Plantation. Ahead of the election the settlers had allegedly been threatened and were too scared to vote at the plantation, so agreed to move the polling station to the playing field where the locals could see how they voted. No one enrolled at this polling station voted, but instead instructed the PO to mark all of the ballot papers in favour of the local candidates and mark the preferences at the direction of the local leaders. Candidate and voter dissatisfaction concerning the agreements reached in such cases gave rise to post-election violence in many locations, including Kinjibi, leaving voters doubly disenfranchised.

Both inside and outside of the Highlands polling officials were seen to abandon proper procedure in the face of community pressure, threats to their personal safety or simply to diffuse highly volatile situations. Much of the pressure stemmed from the poor state of the electoral roll and/or a desire to speed up the polling process. To this end polling officials bowed to pressure, allowing line-up voting, multiple voting, underage voting and personation. In many places across the Highlands polling officials lost control of or ceded control of their polling stations to scrutineers and candidate supporters who claimed and marked the available ballot papers.

In **Lae Open** and **Madang Open** polling officials adopted a range of compromise approaches in the face of robust community pressure, including using both the 2017 and 2012 electoral rolls, allowing people to vote even when they were not enrolled if community leaders vouched for them, or simply allowing anyone who wanted to vote do so until the ballot papers were exhausted. Elsewhere in Momase, bespoke polling arrangements were again noted. For example, at some polling stations in **Yangoru-Saussia Open** voters were organised into two large blocks designated government and opposition. Such was the tension in this particular electorate the majority of voters insisted on having a witness accompany them to the polling booth to confirm they had honoured their pre-poll voting commitments. In **Namatanai Open**, voters were also seen to organise themselves into two groups, those supporting the People's Progress Party (PPP) candidate and those supporting the National Alliance Party (NA) candidate. At some polling stations voters were called up on an alternating basis, at others the PPP voters were required to wait until all the NA supporters had voted.

Across the country, there were voters, candidates, campaign managers, polling officials and security personnel who were observed to behave badly, either by intimidating voters or by soliciting votes with food, small tokens of appreciation or cash. In many places observers reported the guns, bush knives, sling shots and sticks in civilian hands. In places, these weapons were being used to influence the process and in others simply to protect the ballot box.

More so than in either of the previous two elections, observers reported concerted efforts to destroy ballot boxes, both during polling and in the immediate post-polling period. Observers in **Enga** and **Western Highlands province** respectively reported that key candidates were offering incentives of between K30,000 and K50,000 to destroy the ballot boxes containing votes for rival candidates. In the **Western Highlands** it was consistently reported by citizens and observers alike that one incumbent MP had successfully employed 'plan A' and 'plan B' to ensure re-election.

"Plan A involved manipulating the electoral roll to ensure inflated enrolments in his stronghold areas and deflated enrolments in the base areas of rival candidates. Plan B involved having a heavy security presence in stronghold areas to protect the vote and minimal security in other areas to increase the likelihood that rival candidates' boxes would be hijacked or destroyed or disputed due to the lack of security."

(Observer, Western Highlands Province)

Notwithstanding the many irregularities witnessed, and the violence observed in many places, observers also reported considerable restraint on the part of citizens who were disenfranchised by the roll or other egregious acts witnessed

by observers. In places, particularly the **Western Highlands** and **Hela** provinces, observers noted the long hours of discussion and the great lengths communities went to in order to broker compromises and peaceful solutions to the invidious situation they had been placed in through having their vote cut. In many places it was this very situation that led to ballot papers being shared or distributed much like a slaughtered pig. A more accurate electoral roll would go a long way towards addressing such practices and many of the other irregularities witnessed.

We note in relation to the irregularities described above that section 96A of the Organic Law on National and Local-Level Government Elections (OLNLLGE) empowers the electoral commissioner, acting on the recommendation of the Electoral Advisory Committee to fail or more properly cancel an election “if the circumstances prevailing in an electorate are such that proper conduct of elections in that electorate is not practicable”. We note, too, that OLNLLGE offers no real guidance as to how these prevailing circumstances or the proper conduct of elections might be assessed. Despite this, the types of irregularities relied upon by former electoral commissioner Andrew Trawen— when he failed the LLG elections in 27 Highlands LLGs in 2013— provide a benchmark of sorts. Considered against these, the 2017 national elections might arguably have been failed in several locations.

In a welcome move, the EAC, which had not been convened in 2007 or 2012, was activated in May 2017. However its members subsequently resigned mid-election sighting an inability to perform their role and duties because they had not received baseline data requested nor ongoing reports on the progress of polling from the PNGEC.⁷³ Upon resigning, the committee said they had been unable to look into matters they were expected to look into and had resigned to “protect the integrity of the EAC, themselves as individuals and their nominating bodies”. Although they did not question the integrity of the elections per se, their resignation was read by many as an indictment of the elections. Others considered it premature, especially as their resignation removed the possibility of failing the elections (see also EU 2017:29). In view of this, what is needed is further clarity around the role of this committee and circumstances upon which elections might be failed.

Recommendations:

- » ***The PNGEC needs to ensure greater consistency and discernment in relation to wards with large enrolments and in relation to the number of voters to be processed in a single day at any one polling station.*** Additional polling teams should be assigned to wards with large enrolments. The current situation where some polling stations have as few as 30 registered voters while others have over 3000–4000 registered voters is patently absurd.
- » ***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.
- » ***The provisions concerning assisted voting should be reviewed and strengthened.*** As they currently stand they are open to widespread abuse. Alternate measures to improve the franchise of people with disability should be explored.
- » ***The provincial and open ballot papers need be redesigned so they remain easily distinguishable once folded.*** This could easily be achieved by ensuring the ballot paper is coloured front and back.
- » ***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.*** Unless there are consequences for such behaviour, ongoing degradation of the electoral environment is likely.
- » ***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

Post-Polling

In 2017, observers noted considerable variation with respect to post-polling administration. By way of contrast, the post-polling arrangements in 2012 had proven consistently sound, in that ballot boxes were swiftly transported under security escort and properly secured in preparation for counting. The main problem observed concerned the completion of polling station returns.

Once again, the completion of returns proved problematic. In fact, only one observer team in the Highlands and a handful of observers elsewhere in the country reported seeing POs complete their polling station returns on polling day itself. Most teams reported that returns – if completed at all – were dealt with after the fact, often at counting centres. In many places the lack of completed returns caused delays and disruptions during the count.

“The observations I made in the counting room suggest that polling was not done well in a number of places. More so than ever before, scrutineers raised a lot of objections in the counting room and served notices of dispute upon the RO in relation to several boxes. However, most objections concerned the fact the PO’s returns did not add up.”

(Observer, Kairuku-Hiri Open)

More so than 2007 or 2012, observer teams reported delays with the extraction of ballot boxes from remote locations and delays in relation to the transfer of boxes from staging areas to secure lock-ups and counting centres. Several teams including **Gumine Open**, **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open**, **Imbongu Open**, and **Rigo Open** reported delays of five to seven days. In circumstances reminiscent of the failed 2002 elections, the ballot boxes from Lake Kapiago LLG which had been inserted by air were not collected for five days. This saw the boxes disputed and excluded from the count.

In 2012, security personnel had been present at most polling stations to witness the close of polling. They and the POs often returned to the staging area together and transferred custody of the ballot box to the RO or ARO as appropriate. Security personnel were also seen to provide verbal and (if appropriate) written accounts of any security breaches or irregularities witnessed. In 2017, many observers reported that someone other than the PO or security personnel took custody of the ballot box at the close of polling or while in transit. In **Hela**, **Chimbu**, **Southern Highlands**, **Western Highlands**, **NCD**, **Bougainville** and **New Ireland** provinces observers reported seeing ballot boxes transported on private vehicles, by candidates, campaign managers and supporters. It was not uncommon to see candidates claim and take custody of ballot boxes from their stronghold areas.

In **Tari–Pori Open** for instance, ballot boxes were seen being delivered to the police station by candidates and supporters with the PO trailing behind in a separate vehicle. Elsewhere candidates provided private security escorts for the ballot boxes in transit. This seemed highly irregular and was certainly at odds with past practice. Where ballot boxes were transported in daylight hours and in plain sight, such practices were seemingly tolerated, although the movement of ballot boxes under cover of darkness raised considerable suspicion and invoked a violent response from security personnel. This was certainly the case with respect to the ballot boxes from Pori LLG in **Tari–Pori Open** electorate. Polling at each of the wards in Pori commenced between 4.00pm and 7.30pm and continued well into the night, concluding somewhere between 11pm and 12.30am. At the conclusion of polling the ballot boxes were returned to Tari by road via a convoy which included candidates, scrutineers, police, and PNGEC vehicles. The convoy was intercepted by PNGDF personnel just outside of Tari. Considering the situation highly irregular, the PNGDF personnel took custody of the ballot boxes, and assaulted those in the convoy vehicles including police, polling officials, scrutineers, supporters and an observer who was travelling in the police escort vehicle. In the wake of this, there was widespread concern about violent reprisals.

An observer in **Rigo Open** also reported that those providing private security escorts experienced heavy-handed responses from both RPNGC and PNGDF. He reported feeling unsafe because of this. Heightened tension in the immediate post-polling period was noted by observers across the country –so too a heightened sense of vulnerability. Tribal fighting erupted in all seven Highlands provinces, meaning people’s freedom of movement was severely constrained. One **Gumine Open** observer described the situation as follows:

“In fact it is not safe here because supporters of candidates are very cruel and are taking actions which are barbaric and scary to most local people. Being scared is hindering people’s movement and their ability to move to and fro safely.”

(Observer, Gumine Open)

In **Imbonggu Open** observers reported violent assaults on polling officials and the destruction of houses and property even before the counting had begun. Accounts of extreme polling day and post-polling violence were also provided by observers in **Dei Open**. They reported that at 2am on polling day a candidate woke the boys at a rival candidate’s campaign house, held them at gunpoint and then discharged his weapon saying “Tell your councillor this one is for him”. The same candidate subsequently disrupted polling at several places on polling day laying claim to all the ballot papers issued.

At one polling station another candidate objected to the menacing behaviour and claimed a share of the first preference votes on the basis that he had given K37,000 and 17 pigs to the people of that ward during the campaign period. After much heated discussion it was determined the two candidates would share the first preferences. The first candidate remained dissatisfied with the outcome and sought retribution, blaming the local councillor who had accepted money from the second candidate, thereby creating the expectation that a certain number of votes would flow. Following the close of polling the first candidate and his ‘boys’ allegedly returned to the second candidate’s home area. They burnt down his campaign house and his trade store, shot a man, knifed two others and chopped a fourth man – the second candidate’s cousin – into pieces. They also torched a Dyna truck and a 10-seater vehicle. According to observers, such extreme election violence had never before been witnessed in **Dei Open** electorate.

Although the Highlands region once again supplied most instances of apprehension and violence, observers in all four regions felt unsafe during the immediate post-polling period or stated that local people felt the same.

Counting

Considerable effort went into strengthening aspects of the counting process in the lead-up to the 2017 elections, including the recruitment of counting officials and developing more robust systems for the collection, recording and electronic transmission of results.

Women were better represented in counting rooms in 2017 than in either 2007 or 2012. Importantly, a number of women were engaged as counting officials, even in provinces where they had been poorly represented in polling teams, and in most provinces approximately one third of counting officials were women. By contrast, the much sought-after gains in results management were not so evident. Notwithstanding the increased number of female counting officials, observers reported poor treatment of female assistant EMs in some provinces and noted that the female ROs in **West New Britain** and **Central Bougainville** were both subjected to abuse and harassment by scrutineers.

Across the country very few observers considered the training provided to counting officials adequate. Even when it was deemed relatively comprehensive there were concerns about the very short time allotted to training in the majority of electorates. In some counting rooms, training seemingly comprised a quick briefing immediately prior to the commencement of the count. Observers in **Chimbu** reported that there was no training for counting officials in **Kundiawa-Gembol Open** and that the majority of counting officials were related to the RO. In **Kavieng Open** the wife of one candidate was engaged as a PO and counting official, which observers considered highly irregular.

On balance, counting was considered less well-managed than previously. As in 2012, many of the problems associated with counting stemmed from the lack of amenities provided at the counting venues. A lack of running water and toilet facilities at counting venues in **New Ireland**, **Northern** and **East Sepik** provinces resulted in illness, which was attributed to sorcery. Polling officials also complained of not being fed or paid, even though they were working long hours over an extended period.

Despite concerted efforts to strengthen the administrative systems supporting the recruitment of temporary election workers, observers felt the selection of counting officials remained highly problematic, with accusations of bias and nepotism rife. In many places RO’s allegedly engaged family members, wantoks and close associates. In **Chimbu Province**,

for instance, it was alleged that the majority of those engaged for the count were related to key officials, and as pleasing as it was that half of those engaged in Chimbu were women, observers reported that most were schoolgirls aged between 14–20 years. Observers in **Kavieng Open** likewise reported that the RO's young sons were employed in the counting room, as well as the wife of a high-profile candidate and several members of the **Kavieng Open** DDA board, including an LLG President, one MP appointed representative, and the Kavieng Urban LLG secretary.

In **Hela** and **Southern Highlands** provinces, the vast majority of counting officials were related to, or were close associates, of candidates. In **Hela** the situation came about as a consequence of the pre-polling standoff between candidates and the EM. In response to complaints about the make-up of polling teams, the EM agreed to let candidates submit the names of their preferred counting officials on the understanding he would recruit from these lists. By contrast, local church and civil society leader, Pastor Solomon Minga, was removed as a counting official from the **Chimbu Provincial** count due to his close association with the incumbent governor, Noah Kool. Pastor Solomon served as chair of the Chimbu PESC at one point under Kool and had previously served as the appointed church representative on the Joint Provincial Planning and Budget Priorities Committee (JPPBPC).

Whilst we affirm the important role that scrutineers play in ensuring the integrity of elections, poor scrutineer behaviour was once again noted in counting rooms around the country (c.f. Haley and Zubrinich 2013). Scrutineers, for instance, were responsible for many unnecessary delays in counting rooms. In some places observers felt ROs were perhaps too willing to revisit previous decisions and forgo procedural correctness in order to appease scrutineers and to avoid allegations of corruption and bias. Elsewhere the opposite was true, with observers describing the zealous approach employed by some ROs, who quite simply refused to entertain scrutineer objections saying “take it to the court of disputed returns”.

Observers in **Chimbu Province**, for instance, reported that more than 2000 unstamped ballot papers were admitted into the **Chuave Open** count despite fervent protests from scrutineers. Observers and key officials in Hela Province also reported the presence of non-authentic ballot papers in some boxes. They also noted that a scrutineer who questioned the validity of these papers was forcibly removed from the **Tari-Pori Open** counting room and was beaten by security personnel. As a consequence, scrutineers were reticent to press their objections even when they had the evidence to do so. Observers in Hela had this to say about how scrutineer objections were dealt with:

“They tried to dispute some boxes but the election manager took no notice of what they had to say. He just kept bulldozing them, saying “Take the matter to court. I’m not here to entertain you and your complaints. I’m here to get a job done”. He took no notice of them, even when they had evidence that a ballot box had been hijacked. Every box was counted, even those that were damaged, had been slashed open with a bush knives or had been tampered with in some way. Even those boxes that were regarded as hijacked were counted as well.”

(Observer, Hela Province)

“The counting in 2017 was very different to 2012. In 2012 when a box was disputed, the RO would question the PO and listen to what the scrutineers said and then make a decision as to whether the box should be counted. But this time he said “Put it in writing”. But when the scrutineers put their complaints in writing he said “Do I look like a magistrate? Take this to the court house and go to the court of disputed returns”. Over and over again the EM and ROs said “Count it! Count it!” and so the boxes were counted and the process bulldozed.”

(Observer, Tari-Pori Open)

Observers elsewhere described similar such responses to scrutineer objections.

“Scrutineers protested against certain boxes on the basis they had been hijacked and all of the ballot papers marked by a few key individuals. The RO told the scrutineers to take note of the irregularities and relay any concerns to their candidates so they might challenge the result in the Court of Disputed Returns.”

(Observer, Kairuku-Hiri Open)

“From what I saw scrutineers were suppressed in the counting room. They were prevented from raising complaints during counting, being intimidated by other scrutineers and by the PNGDF security personnel. At one point the election manager instructed the scrutineers to stop raising complaints and delaying the count. He said ‘You will not stop the counting process. If you have issues, take them to your candidates and ask them to come with a court order. If your petition is not accompanied by a court order, consider the petition toilet paper.’”

(Observer, Obura-Wonenara Open)

Fierce competition and disputes between candidates saw numerous ballot boxes either damaged, destroyed or hijacked. In some places such boxes were counted and in others they were set aside. Nationwide, 13 seats were declared with fewer than 80% of all boxes counted, including three provincial seats, which were declared with less than 30% of all boxes counted. This is particularly remarkable given that many of the corresponding open boxes for the same seats were counted. In the wake of the election, Police Commissioner Baki directly linked the violence of the counting period and deaths of police officers in Enga and Southern Highlands to inconsistent decision-making by election officials and the PNGEC.⁷⁴

In PNG, security personnel play a critical role with respect to counting. Across the country tight security arrangements were in force at each counting centre, although observers did note cases where candidates were allowed into counting rooms while counting was in progress. **Madang Open, Kavieng Open** and **Central Bougainville Open** are all cases in point. Observers in New Ireland also noted an expatriate consultant employed by the provincial government issuing instructions to election officials. That said, none of our observers reported a lack of security at counting centres. Quite the opposite, many reported a surfeit of security and a number of incidents where security personnel were felt to have overstepped the mark. Observers in NCD for instance reported multiple breaches of remit, including assaults on the general public, counting officials, scrutineers and a member of the ANU Observation Team, while observers in the Eastern Highlands consistently reported a range of abuses.

“Security force brutality is alarmingly worse than anything I have previously seen. I have witnessed more than 20 cases of security force harassment and violence ... at the National Sports Institute each day. Several polling officials were beaten by the security personnel because they were scruffy and not clearly displaying their ID cards.”

(Observer, Obura-Wonenara Open)

“The Security forces at the National Security Institute checked everyone who entered the counting centre. They even checked the passers-by. They beat up everyone in the possession of would-be weapons – knives, scissors, screwdrivers etc. Any boys who had dreadlocks were beaten and had their dreadlocks cut off with a kitchen knife.”

(Observer, Goroka Open)

In Tari security personnel fired upon crowds waiting for news of election results, while security personnel destroyed the makeshift shelters being used by scrutineers in **Northern Province** and **Central Bougainville** in response to what they considered rowdy behaviour on the part of the scrutineers. An incident involving security personnel in Hela resulted in a similar such response.

“On Friday morning some Mobile Squad 06 police personnel went outside the gate and punched and kicked anyone in their way. They even burnt the small canteens and then opened fire on the crowd. A lot of people were injured by those police and fighting broke out. The police personnel took custody of one candidate’s 5-door vehicle and a 10-seater belonging to another candidate. At the same time they torched a hired vehicle being used by Philip Undialu.”

(Observer, Hela Province)

Counting in 2017 was often rushed. Oftentimes neither POs nor their returns were available when scrutineers raised objections to particular boxes, and important checks and balances were regularly dispensed with. Even extra ballot papers, where identified, were counted and some boxes found to have far fewer papers than expected were counted without demur.

“Counting was rushed. Proper procedure was not followed. Several irregularities were noted, including overcrowding which made scrutinizing the counting process difficult. Time was also a big problem which led to procedures being overlooked, no returns, rushed counting day and night and a cursory quality check wherein only the top 10 candidate’s votes were recounted and only the leading candidate’s papers checked ballot by ballot.”

(Observer, Western Highlands Province)

For all the rush, most seats took a long time to count. The progress of counting was slow in many provinces, taking up to two and in some cases three weeks for many of the open counts and longer for the provincial counts. As a consequence, the deadline for the return of writs needed to be extended – twice as in 2012 – and when parliament sat and formed government on 2 August 2017, counting was ongoing in five electorates and six writs were still to be returned.

Moreover, the much-vaunted electronic results management system failed to deliver expected gains in results management and accessibility. In practice, results were published on social media and mainstream media ahead of being updated on the PNGEC results website, and we note that at the time of writing results remain incomplete for 11 of 111 seats. In 2017 the capture of results in counting rooms also proved somewhat problematic. In previous elections scrutineers were able to obtain copies of the signed 66A results at the close of polling each day, although in 2017 this was not always the case, and in some counting rooms there were significant delays transferring results to tally boards. In Tari, scrutineers were not permitted to observe the quality checks and in some places a quality check at the end of first preference count was not undertaken. More remarkably, there were claims in relation to **Gumine Open** and **Hela Provincial** that results were changed following the final eliminations.⁷⁵ Both matters were included in subsequent election petitions.

Across the country there were a range of incidents that seriously undermined the probity of the count. For example, serious allegations were raised with respect to counting in **Northern Province**, with candidates and scrutineers alike voicing widespread concerns about vote-rigging in the **Northern Regional** and **Ijivitari Open** seats. Scrutineers were particularly vocal about being harassed and being blocked from carrying out their duties. Counting was in fact suspended for several days after candidates lodged a petition citing irregularities in counting and ballot box tampering. Their principle complaint concerned the alleged failure to confirm the number of ballot papers issued to each polling station and the number of used and unused papers as set out in the POs returns. The absence of such information fuelled fears that additional papers were in circulation and had made their way into particular ballot boxes. At the conclusion of the primary count, and before the quality check had been undertaken, the counting officials went on strike for two days complaining about the non-payment of their allowances. Under pressure, in this case from the principal of Popondetta Secondary School where the count was taking place, the RO insisted that counting resume. New counting officials were brought in and they proceeded straight to eliminations without undertaking a quality check.

In **Northern Province**, the concerns about additional papers were raised alongside concerns about sorcery. Similar concerns and allegations plagued counting rooms around the country. Indeed, as noted earlier, persistent allegations concerning sorcery disrupted counting on several occasions in **East Sepik Province**, and in **Menyamya Open** it saw two

alleged sorcery practitioners ejected from the counting room.

Counting in **Madang Open** and **Moresby North West Open** proceeded extremely slowly, being prolonged by demands from trailing PNC incumbents that full recounts be undertaken. **Moresby North West Open** also delivered one of the scandalous highlights of the election, namely the absurd Airways Hotel room declaration of third placed candidate Joseph Tonde.⁷⁶

In the Highlands many of the problems associated with counting in previous elections were again revisited.

For example, in **Tari-Pori Open** and **Komo-Magarima Open**, boxes that had been hijacked and recovered post-polling were admitted to the count despite their dubious provenance. Of more concern though is that once again widespread violence appears to have become the hallmark of elections in the Highlands region. Much violence was noted in each of the Highlands provinces during counting. In Hela, attempts were made to fire bomb the shipping container in which the ballot boxes had been secured. One man had his cheek sliced off by a bush knife and another was hospitalised with a gunshot wounds received outside of the counting centre. Observers reported that shots were fired into the counting centre while counting was in progress.

In Wabag, attempts by a PO to destroy one of the disputed **Kandep Open** ballot boxes saw scrutineers intervene. Their attempts to protect the box saw them hauled out of the counting room and beaten by police. In a retaliatory attack, the RO and ARO for **Kandep Open** and two others were ambushed the following morning. The ensuing violence not only claimed the lives of the two gunmen but saw two police officers and more than 20 civilians killed and countless other people injured or displaced.⁷⁷

Counting in Kundiawa also sparked much post-election violence. According to observers, each night of counting in Kundiawa town was accompanied by rowdy (if not violent) brawls. Observers also reported that Kundiawa Hospital was shut for a month after hospital staff and incoming patients were harassed and assaulted by security personnel, who suspected they may have been seeking to smuggle additional ballot papers into the counting room.⁷⁸ Such harassment included stopping ambulances at the security checkpoints and checking incoming patients. On one occasion observers reported seeing a haemorrhaging post-partum mother forced to walk from the checkpoint to the hospital.

Throughout the **Kuniawa-Gembol Open** count, there were persistent rumours that additional ballot papers were in circulation. To allay candidate fears about such papers, the ballot papers in **Chimbu Province** had been stamped prior to distribution. As counting in **Chimbu Province** progressed numerous unstamped papers were identified, although observers reported inconsistencies in the manner with which they were dealt. In some cases they were declared informal and in others they were admitted into the count.⁷⁹ What is interesting in this case is that according to observers, the RO initially declared the papers informal but the PESC insisted they be counted.

The information provided above gives examples of many and varied misdemeanours and malfeasance within and beyond counting rooms across the country. It is by no means exhaustive. Remarkably issues similar to those outlined above marred counting in **New Ireland Province**. Historically, elections in PNG's NGI region have been regarded as the best in the country. Yet in 2017, **New Ireland Province** recorded at least one election-related death and saw fighting on the streets of Kavieng. Counting in New Ireland was suspended twice. On the first occasion, scrutineers had unsuccessfully petitioned the EM to remove the provincial RO. When counting resumed, candidates attempted to serve another petition, which the EM refused to receive. The following morning they tried again. On this occasion a scrutineer fired two warning shots outside the counting centre's main gate to ensure the petition was received. Thereafter he and his candidate's supporters blocked the road to the police station to prevent the ballot boxes being moved. This saw counting again suspended. Police were subsequently called in to remove the roadblock and clashed with the PPP supporters. Observers report that NA supporters joined in to help the police. The situation in Kavieng remained tense throughout the count and on the evening before the declarations were made, a live bomb was discovered at the back of the counting centre.⁸⁰ Incidents such as these signal the levels of violence associated with the 2017 elections.

Recommendations:

- » ***The PNGEC is encouraged to adopt formal accreditation procedures for scrutineers*** to minimise the risk of unnecessary delays in counting rooms.
- » ***A dedicated, thorough and comprehensive count-training package should be provided to counting officials***, in the event that LPV is retained for the 2022 elections.
- » ***The power to declare elections should be removed from ROs***, and vested in the electoral commissioner alone. Declarations should only be made after the full results have been supplied and verified at PNGEC headquarters in Port Moresby.

Election Petitions

Full results from the 2017 elections are yet to be made available for analysis and scrutiny at the time of writing.

In the absence of these we have sourced results from a range of sources including the PNGEC, observers, scrutineers and candidates. The data sourced indicates some serious anomalies, although in the absence of full results these have proven difficult to verify. Overall the 2017 general elections generated fewer electoral petitions than in 2012, although 50% more than 2007. The number of election petitions filed dropped from 105 in 2012 to 79 in 2017, and saw the election results for 71 electorates challenged. By way of contrast, 80 of 111 election results had been challenged in 2012. A significant proportion of results from each region (58%–71% depending on region) were challenged. Unsurprisingly, the Highlands region delivered the largest number of petitions, with 29 of 41 (71%) results challenged. Outside of the Highlands 3 in 5 results were challenged (19 of 29 in Momase, 14 of 24 in Southern and 10 of 17 in the New Guinea Islands region).

The reduction in the number of election petitions filed might suggest greater confidence in the 2017 election results. We do not consider this to be the case and submit instead that there are still strong indications of continued and widespread dissatisfaction. A number of candidates have indicated that it proved much harder to source results and other key information needed to mount a successful petition in 2017, not least because many ROs and AROs went into hiding or were placed under house arrest or in the “protective custody” of members elect in the immediate post-declaration period. We have spoken with candidates who were keen to dispute the election results but were unable to source the required supporting evidence. This proved to be a source of frustration for many.

As at 31 August 2018, 48 petitions (61%) had been dismissed and 13 (16%) petitions withdrawn or discontinued.

Currently 15 petitions remain active including four where action has been granted for a recount. In addition, three petitions have been completed following a judicial recount. These saw Henry Amuli (***Sohe Open***) and Henry Leonard (***Samarai Murua Open***) confirmed, while the recount for ***Central Bougainville*** saw Sam Akoitai declared elected. Whilst it is pleasing that three quarters of all petitions have been finalised in the 12 months since the election, we note that most were dismissed on technical grounds as incompetent, due to incorrect pleading or incorrect relief sought. As such the substantive issues raised by these petitions were never tested.

SECTION 5: INCLUSION

Gender

In this section of the report we examine women's participation as candidates, election officials, voters and citizens in the 2017 PNG national elections. Disappointingly the elections delivered no female MPs, despite yielding the largest ever field of women candidates.

Women as Candidates

The number of women contesting elections in PNG continues to rise slowly but steadily. While 167 women are officially recorded as having contested the 2017 national elections (IFES 2017:3),⁸¹ we find that in fact 179 women did so, accounting for 5.4% of the 3340 candidates who nominated. By way of contrast, 135 women had contested the 2012 elections and 101 women had contested the 2007 elections, with the proportion of female candidates in each election less than 4%. The confusion concerning the number of women who stood in 2017 arose because 15 female candidates were officially recorded as men, while three male candidates were recorded as women.

Southern Region delivered, in total, the largest number of women candidates (51) although women were proportionately best represented in NCD, accounting for 9.9% of all candidates who contested the NCD seats. Relative to the population of each region and the number of male candidates in each region, the Highlands recorded proportionately the fewest female candidates (see Table 35 below).

Table 35. The Number of Female Candidates Contesting

Region	Total Candidates	Female Candidates	% Female Candidates: All Candidates	Party Endorsed Female Candidates	% Party Endorsed: Female Candidates
Papua New Guinea	3340	179	5.4%	62	35%
Highlands	1320	50	3.8%	18	36%
Momase	870	46	5.3%	18	39%
Southern	677	51	7.5%	17	33%
NGI	331	18	5.4%	7	39%
NCD	142	14	9.9%	2	14%

The number and proportion of women contesting individual seats ranged widely. Although women accounted for 5.4% of all candidates, close to a third of all seats (35 of 111) were exclusively male contests. By contrast there were 14 seats in which women accounted for at least one in ten candidates. In fact, just over a third of all women who contested the 2017 national elections ran in these 14 seats (see Table 36). Overall only ten of the 179 women (6%) who contested the 2017 elections achieved a primary vote share of greater than five per cent. Of these, all but one, had competition from other female candidates.

Table 36. Electorates in which Female Candidates Accounted for >10% of All Candidates or Received >10% Primary Vote Share

Electorate	Total Candidates	Female Candidates	% Female Candidates: All Candidates	Total Allowable Ballot	1st prefs. received by female Candidates	Primary Vote Share Female Candidates	Final Vote Share Female Candidates
Rigo Open	39	8	20.5%	31,742	3,338	10.5%	15.9%
Gulf Provincial	51	9	17.6%	66,110	4,217	6.4%	9.4%
East Sepik Province	26	4	15.3%	216,194	14,760	6.8%	11.3%
Moresby North East	51	7	13.7%	68,773	1,831	2.7%	3.3%
Kavieng Open	22	3	13.6%	23,434	3,159	13.5%	18.8%
Wewak Open	30	4	13.3%	33,920	739	2.2%	2.5%
Goroka Open	30	4	13.3%	76,143	2,571	3.4%	3.5%
Telefomin Open	16	2	12.5%	24,438	910	3.7%	6.3%
Manus Open	34	4	11.8%	23,259	1,316	5.7%	6.9%
Manus Provincial	26	3	11.5%	23,291	882	3.8%	4.4%
Central Provincial	27	3	11.1%	139,089	22,315	16.0%	30.3%
Rai Coast Open	37	4	10.8%	40,924	3,733	9.1%	19.0%
North Waghi Open	29	3	10.3%	53,752	5,459	10.2%	13.1%
Middle Fly Open	29	3	10.3%	26,709	547	2.0%	2.4%
Moresby South Open	15	1	6.7%	37,660	4,444	11.8%	11.8%
Sohe Open	42	4	9.5%	37,956	6,250	16.5%	22.9%

The three seats which attracted the largest number of women candidates, Gulf Provincial (9), Rigo Open (8) and Moresby North East (7), are all situated in PNG's Southern region, as are the two seats in which women candidates received the highest overall vote share. Overall, we find that one in six voters in **Central Province** and **Sohe Open** gave their first preference to a woman candidate.

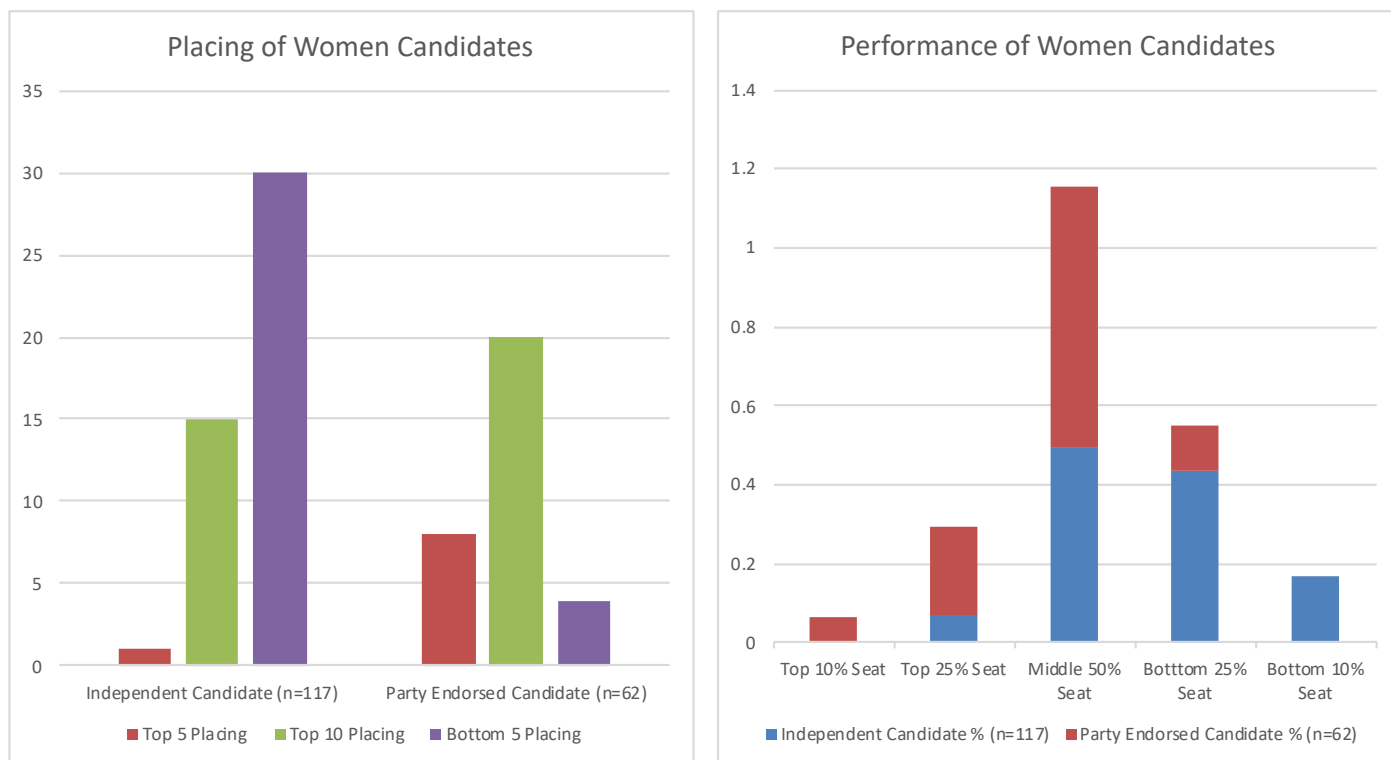
At the time of the 2017 elections there were 45 registered political parties. Forty parties fielded candidates in the elections (PNGRPP 2018:25), and 27 endorsed one or more female candidate. Of the 179 women who contested the 2017 elections, 117 ran as independents, while 62 (35%) were party endorsed. Eleven of the 27 parties endorsed only a single female candidate, while the Pangu Party endorsed the highest number of female candidates. Six of its endorsed candidates were women. In contrast, PNC, the major coalition partner, endorsed only two female candidates – the sitting MPs, Delilah Gore and Julie Soso (ibid:22).

At present there are few incentives for parties to endorse and support the election of women candidates.

Because the party that wins the largest number of seats is invited to form government, parties typically endorse candidates they consider to have a strong likelihood of success. For this reason, women candidates find it difficult to secure party endorsement. Proposed amendments to the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPAC) would, if passed, see the introduction of a 20% quota in respect of endorsed women candidates. Absent of other changes, this measure alone is unlikely to result in the election of more women MPs.

In 2017, party-endorsed female candidates performed better and placed higher than their independent counterparts (see Figure 13 below). Of the seven female candidates who secured a vote share of more than 10%, six were party endorsed. It is also the case that independent candidates were 7.5 times more likely to have finished in the bottom five places of the seat they contested. We do not attribute the strong performance of party-endorsed female candidates to their party endorsement per se, but argue that they secured party endorsement because they were strong candidates.

Figure 13. Placing and Performance of Independent and Party-Endorsed Female Candidates



In the lead up to the 2017 elections, several organisations offered support to women candidates by way of candidate training. Specifically, the IPPCC worked closely with political parties to strengthen their women’s wings and offered training to intending candidates with support from the Australian Labour Party and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Separately UNDP provided 50 intending candidates with “training and skills development on both policy and parliamentary issues” and hosted a practice parliament in March 2017,⁸² while the PNG Women in Leadership Support Program (WiLSP), supported by the Australian Government in partnership with the Government of Papua New Guinea as part of the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program provided intending candidates with training to assist in the development of a strategic campaign.

One hundred and twenty seven women undertook the WiLSP training ahead of the 2017 national elections. Of those 127 women, 75 had originally intended to contest the 2017 national elections, although having completed the training several decided not to contest the election, citing the need for further preparatory work. Some chose instead to engage with the election in other ways, either by joining the ANU Observation Team to learn more about elections and campaigning or by joining a campaign team for another candidate. Of the 179 women who contested the 2017 elections, one in four (26%) had completed the first module of WiLSP training in early 2017.

Although no women were elected to PNG’s 10th Parliament, those who undertook the WiLSP training consistently placed higher and on average obtained a greater overall vote share than those women who did not attend the WiLSP training. Specifically, women who undertook the training were four times more likely to have placed in the top five and six times more likely to have finished amongst the top 10% of candidates in their respective electorates. There are a range of factors that influence candidate performance, and whilst the WiLSP training is unlikely to have been the key determinant of success, it does seem to have contributed to the competitiveness of those who undertook the training.

Women candidates are acutely aware that the electoral environment has become more unfavourable for women, with many readily asserting the detrimental impact violence and intimidation had on their campaigns. They also identified money politics as a particular challenge influencing election performance, noting the increased prevalence of early campaigning over the course of the election cycle. Women candidates also insisted that the electoral process has been corrupted, and that such corruption is typically effected by men to the benefit of men.⁸³

Many felt they had launched their campaigns too late to be influential. One candidate who ran third said that while she had a great deal of community support for her campaign, a number of people had told her:

“You came too late, you should have been here a year ago.”

(Female Candidate 2017 Elections)

Several others echoed her experience, noting the importance of early campaigning.

Women candidates also highlighted the severe constraints they face securing the financial resources required to resource a credible election campaign. Specifically, they identified a lack of financial resources, compared to those available to their male counterparts, as a major impediment to electoral success.

Increasingly, the barriers to improved political participation on the part of women are well understood (Haley and Zubrinich 2016; Barbara and Baker 2016), however what is not so well understood are the reasons why and the conditions under which individual voters – male and female – vote for a woman candidate. Certainly, there have been attempts to examine and indeed measure the willingness of voters to – in principle – vote for women candidates. The RAMSI People’s Survey in Solomon Islands (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011) and the recent ANU election studies in PNG and Solomon Islands are all cases in point.

For example, the current study found three in five (63%) citizens surveyed during the pre-poll survey, were of the view that there should be more female MPs in PNG’s parliament, and three in four (75%) indicated that they would, in principle, vote for a ‘good’ woman candidate, although significantly fewer (42%) felt there were ‘good’ women contesting the election (see Table 37). In the Highlands and Momase, less than one third of all citizens surveyed considered there to be good women candidates contesting the elections.

Table 37. Views Concerning Women MPs

Region	Pre-Polling Survey 2017				Pre-Polling Survey 2017				Pre-Polling Survey 2017			
	Do you think there should be more women MPs?				Would you vote for a good woman candidate?				Are any good women Candidates contesting this election?			
	Yes	No	Don’t Know	No Response	Yes	No	Didn’t Vote	No Response	Yes	No	Don’t Know	No Response
Highlands	52	28	17	3	65	21	11	2	32	38	28	2
Momase	59	27	11	3	72	18	9	1	29	47	19	5
Southern	73	19	8	1	87	8	4	1	63	16	20	1
NGI	77	14	7	1	83	11	5	1	47	30	22	1
NCD	76	17	6	1	89	8	3	0	61	15	22	1

To date there has been very little research which has examined actual voter behaviour and voter choice in relation to women candidates in PNG. As such little is known about the contexts and conditions under which women collectively poll well. This is a gap that future research should seek to address.

Across the country, observers noted that few candidates (male or female) explicitly campaigned on women’s issues. Only 25 of the 35 observer teams noted some mention of women’s issues during the campaign period. The issue most frequently mentioned was women’s economic empowerment.

Women as Supporters and Voters

Nationwide, observers noted that women tended to play supporting roles during the campaign period – cooking food, providing hospitality and entertaining guests at campaign houses. There were individual women and women’s groups in all four regions who were beneficiaries of candidates’ largesse, although women were not involved in money politics to the same extent as men.

Money politics in PNG is strongly gendered. Women are not only less likely to directly benefit from candidate largesse but also account for a smaller proportion of those who actively contributed personal resources to a candidate's campaign. Across all areas of support investigated, one third of those who provided support to a candidate's campaign were women.

Observers witnessed intimidation and assaults upon women during the campaign period in each of the Highlands' electorates in which observations took place and at several other locations around the country. Specifically, assaults and intimidation were witnessed by observers in **NCD, Lae Open, Menyamaya Open** and **Yangoru-Saussia Open**. On polling day at Ward 9, East Yangoru, observers witnessed a man violently spear his wife upon learning that she had voted against his wishes. Like many in that electorate, the two were supporting different candidates. The incident sparked a broader fight between drunken supporters of Richard Maru and Peter Wararu, and which saw polling suspended.

At another polling station in the same electorate, Yangoru Station, two brothers were observed fighting for custody of their elderly mother in order to cast her vote. One was supporting Maru and the other was supporting Wararu. Again, the incident sparked broader fighting and saw the polling station close early before everyone had had a chance to vote. In **Obura-Wonenara Open**, polling at Ward 17, Asara, was likewise brought to an early halt after a supporter of the incumbent discovered his wife had voted for the former MP John Boito. Observers reported that the man shot his wife with a bow and arrow.

In several locations across the Highlands, observers also reported young girls being gifted to candidates, key officials or security personnel as well as politically-motivated marriages being organised. Such marriage alliances were also noted in **Nuku Open** and **Rigo Open**. In Chimbu's **Karamiu-Nomane Open** electorate observers reported seeing the daughters of a candidate in the company of the security personnel. One allegedly spent the night before polling with the PNGDF and was seen moving around in a vehicle with two soldiers on polling day, while the other kept the sole policeman at another polling station occupied while local youth marked all the ballot papers. For the most part observers felt that young women's involvement in such activities was forced or coerced by male family members. In **Western Highlands Province** observers also noted the presence of "coffee ladies" at campaign houses. These women, many of whom were considered vulnerable in one way or another (they were often described as widowed, divorced or separated and dependent on local strongmen for support and protection) were understood to have been providing sexual services in order to secure votes.

In 2017, only one quarter of observer teams (9 of 35) felt that the majority of women who wanted to vote were generally permitted to do so, while another quarter reported considerable variation within electorates. In the latter electorates there were some polling stations where most women who wanted to vote did so and others where few women voted. By contrast, 17 of the 35 observer teams (including all 13 Highlands' observer teams) reported that few or no women who wanted to vote were actually able to do so.

TIPNG similarly found that women's voting rights were regularly usurped (2017:48–49). In addition, due to the large number of polling stations where few women voted, there were electorates in which women did vote, but few marked their own ballot papers. **Talasea Open, Kairuku-Hiri Open** and **Menyamya Open** are all cases in point. By way of comparison, two thirds of the 2012 observer teams (13 of 21) had felt that women who wanted to vote were generally permitted to do so.

One observer in **Chimbu Province** summed up women's participation in the 2017 elections as follows:

"Elections in PNG place a huge burden on women. While there is lots of money being dished out at election time, women receive very few benefits, despite playing major rolls in the campaign period. Many are cooking till daybreak, boiling coffee until daybreak, building campaign houses, raising pigs for campaign feasts, dancing and showing hospitality to the men who come to our campaign houses, but when it comes time to vote, the men and boys in our communities get the cash handouts and show women no respect. Many women here know how to read and write and don't need assistance but when it comes to voting the men and boys just come and take control of women's votes. They take away their democratic rights through forced voting."

(Observer, Chimbu Province)

The same observer stated that in the immediate post-polling period, women reported a high degree of tension within the community and anticipated violence during the counting period and beyond. One woman he interviewed post-polling admitted feeling very concerned:

“We are expecting there to be much violence once counting begins. That is what happened in 2012. In the meantime we are removing and relocating our personal belongings to safer sites. I am really worried as the candidates here in this LLG spent so much money and resources during the campaign period. People in the rest of Chimbu will tell you that this part of Gumine electorate is a hot spot zone for election violence. That is why you will see few people here in the hauslain. Many have already left and have relocated to safer areas in fear of what is to come.”

(Female Voter, Gumine Open)

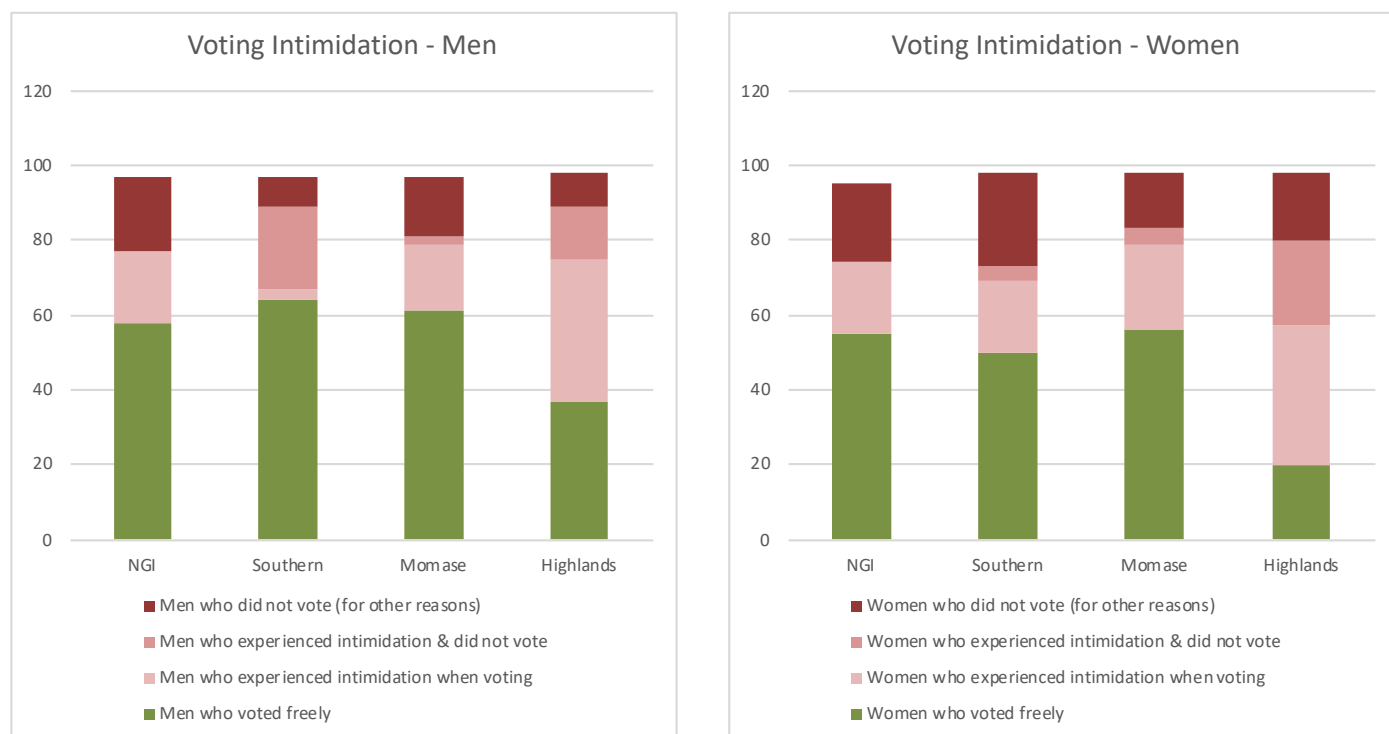
Throughout the Highlands observers witnessed men – often young men – controlling the vote at polling stations. Where this happened, few women voted, and even fewer voted freely.

Across the country a great number of people experienced intimidation and many did not vote. As noted above, fewer than half (46%) of all citizens surveyed post-polling reported being able to freely exercise their vote. In every region the proportion of women who reported voting freely was lower than the proportion of men who voted freely (see Table 38 and Figure 14 below). In the Highlands, only one in five women reported voting freely, and two in five did not vote at all. The remainder and many of those who did not vote reported being subject to intimidation and undue influence. The situation in NCD was not much better. There, two in five women reported voting freely, and two in five reported not voting at all. The remainder of those who voted reported experiencing intimidation when doing so.

Table 38. Voter Intimidation in 2017 – men’s and women’s experiences compared

Region	Post-Polling Survey 2017 Male Respondents				Post-Polling Survey 2017 Female Respondents			
	Voted Freely %	Experienced Intimidation %	Did Not Vote %	No Response %	Voted Freely %	Experienced Intimidation %	Did Not Vote %	No Response %
Papua New Guinea	50	33	22	2	41	37	29	3
Highlands	37	52	23	2	20	60	41	2
Momase	61	20	18	3	56	27	19	2
Southern	64	25	30	3	50	23	29	2
New Guinea Islands	58	19	20	3	55	19	21	5
NCD	43	22	41	3	39	26	40	1

Figure 14. Voter Experiences 2017 – men’s and women’s experiences compared



In each and every electorate in which citizens were surveyed, a greater proportion of women reported having experienced intimidation when voting or being denied the right to vote, in comparison to their male counterparts. In the Highlands in particular a significant proportion of women (up to 73% in **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open**, 63% in **Tari-Pori Open** and 56% in **Wabag Open**) self-reported not voting or having experienced intimidation (up to 90% in **Komo-Magarima Open**, 85% in **Wabag Open** and 83% in **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open**). In the **Southern Highlands, Enga** and **Hela** provinces combined only 30 women reported being able to vote free of intimidation or undue influence in 2017. By way of contrast, the electorates in which women self-reported the highest rates of intimidation in 2012 were **Wabag Open** (41%), **Mendi Open** (32%) and **Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open** (29%).

Figure 15 below depicts women’s voting experiences in the 33 open electorates in which detailed observations were made, while Table 39 and Figure 16 which follow offer a sobering comparison of women’s experiences of intimidation at the regional level in 2012 and 2017. They show the proportion of women who voted freely dropped in each region in 2017 while the proportion of women experiencing intimidation rose considerably.

Figure 15. Women's Voting Experiences – by electorate

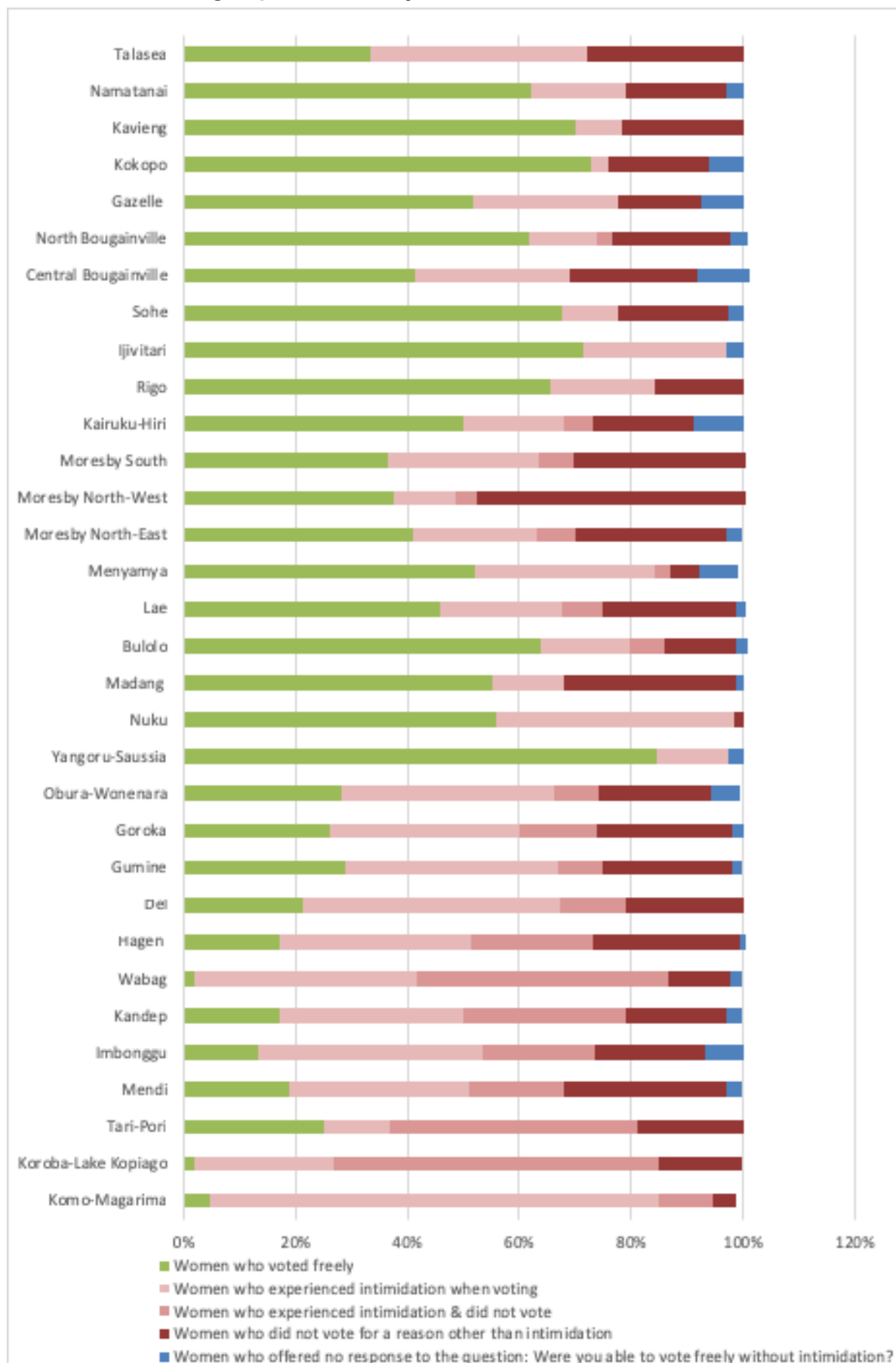
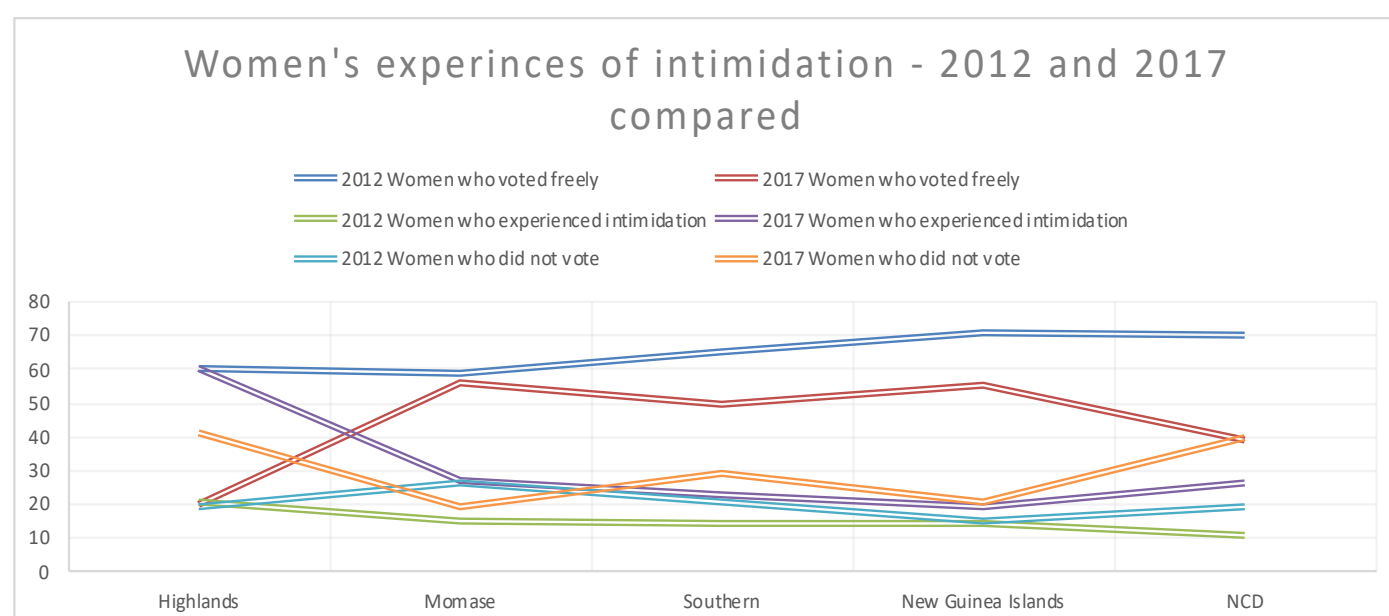


Table 39. Women's Experiences of Intimidation – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Post-Polling Survey 2012			Post-Polling Survey 2017			
	Voted Freely %	Experienced Intimidation %	Did Not Vote %	Voted Freely %	Experienced Intimidation %	Did Not Vote %	No Response %
Papua New Guinea	1	1	1	41	37	29	3
Highlands	60	21	19	20	60	41	2
Momase	59	15	26	56	27	19	2
Southern	65	14	21	50	23	29	2
New Guinea Islands	71	14	15	55	19	21	5
NCD	70	11	19	39	26	40	1

Figure 16. Women's Experiences of Intimidation – 2012 and 2017 compared



Just as voting experiences are gendered so too is money politics. For many women the changing nature and extent of money politics impacts significantly upon their voting experiences. Reflecting on her own experiences over time one elderly female voter in Chimbu had this to say:

“My son was the MP for Gumine at one time. But back then things were different. Now politics is all about money and cargo and that has changed the way we vote. Before we were told to line up in family groups and we listened. The leader of the clan stood at the front of the line with his wives and children and then the others lined up behind. There was no pushing or pulling, and voting was conducted in an orderly fashion. Now the young people are in control and we old people miss out and no longer get to vote. Even our women with their separate polling booths have no freedom to choose. They like others here were threatened by a team called the ‘30-man squad’.”

(Female Voter, Gumine Open)

As noted earlier, men typically receive gifts and cash more often than women and in larger amounts (see Tables 23 and 26 above). Three in five (62%) of those who received cash from candidates were men, and on average men reported receiving five times more than women in exchange for their vote. Male recipients reported receiving on average K1230 compared with the K246 received by women.

Approximately one quarter of those who received cash (23%) reported having directly elicited the money they had received. Of these three quarters (75%) were men. Men also expressed a greater confidence to decline cash offered with close to half (48%) of those who received cash reporting that they had been free to decline the cash offered. Only one third (32%) of female respondents expressed the same confidence. Men also expressed a greater confidence in their ability to accept cash from a candidate and then vote for a different candidate. By contrast few women had the self-assurance that they could accept money from one candidate and vote for another.

With a view to improving the franchise of women voters, the PNGEC introduced gender-segregated polling at the 2007 elections. Implementation of the policy has been disappointing, with less adherence to the policy noted over time. In 2017 none of the observer teams consistently reported the use of separate polling compartments for women or the use of separate queues. In contrast, consistent use of separate voting compartments and lines had been noted in 8 of 18 electorates (44%) in 2007 and 5 of 21 electorates (24%) in 2012 (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:15).

In 2017 only some polling stations in some electorates – 10 of the 33 open electorates in which detailed observations were made – were set up to accommodate gender-segregated polling, although we note in practice many of the women's voting compartments were used by men and women. TIPNG likewise found that few polling stations (just 30% of those their observers reported on) had separate voting compartments for women. The majority of the polling stations set up to accommodate gender-segregated polling were in urban electorates, namely **Moresby North-East, Moresby North West, Moresby South, Lae Open** and **Goroka Open**, or in urban LLG's of rural electorates. For example, in **Northern Province**, the only place separate voting compartments for women were seen was Popondetta Urban LLG, and in **Obura-Wonenara Open** the only place they were seen was Ward 18, Gadsup/Tairora LLG.

Of the 3770 citizens surveyed during the campaign period, only a third (36%) were aware the PNGEC had adopted a policy of gender-segregated polling, although close to half (45%) of those surveyed post-polling were in favour of the policy. In many places outside of the Highlands observers and citizens suggested that separate polling compartments and queues were not necessary, with some asserting "it's not like the Highlands here" or "our women are free to vote as they choose". The results of the citizen survey, and in particular women voters' reported polling day experiences, suggest otherwise.

Whilst the intimidation experienced by women voters in the Highlands is overt, the intimidation experienced by women in other parts of the country is largely invisible and takes place for the most part in the home or community (see Figure 11 above). Reform measures such as gender-segregated polling, even if enforced, are likely to have only a modest impact in such circumstances. The potential impact of separate polling compartments is greatest in the Highlands, however, some of those opposed to the policy felt that if employed, it would potentially expose women to more violence. One Chimbu woman interviewed as part of the post-polling survey put it this way:

"Forget about having a place or polling booth for women. There's no need, because when you block vote the boys just get the ballot papers and mark them. No-one would dare getting a paper then hide and vote... Who here would want to cast their vote for another candidate? ... If someone wanted to go against the boys and vote for another they would just bring trouble on themselves."

(Female Voter, Gumine Open)

Over the course of the past three elections, the franchise of women voters has diminished significantly. For example, of the 200 women surveyed post-polling in **Southern Highlands Province** (SHP) in 2007, just over half (51%) reported that they had voted freely without intimidation (Haley and Anere 2009:45). A similar-sized survey of women voters interviewed in SHP and the then newly created **Hela Province** in 2012 found the proportion of women who voted freely had dropped to 41% (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:98). In the most recent elections, only 13% of women in Hela and SHP

reported voting freely. Sixty-eight per cent of those surveyed said they had experienced intimidation and exactly half (50%) reported that they did not vote. In **Enga Province** the franchise of women voters has similarly diminished over the past decade. There, 42% of women surveyed reported voting freely in 2007, 35% in 2012, and just 8% in 2017. A woman interviewed post-polling in **Kandep Open**, was one of those who did not vote in 2012 or 2017. She had this to say:

“I have been praying for the past 5 years for a good leader for Kandep and for the nation. Throughout the country that is what Catholics have been praying for. I was really prepared to vote for a good leader in this election but I didn’t get a chance to do so. This is the second time I have been denied the opportunity to vote. Still I will keep praying, although I think I will die without getting the opportunity to vote again or to vote for a good leader.”

(Female Voter, Kandep)

Table 40 below provides a direct comparison between 2012 and 2017 for the 20 electorates for which we have comparative data. In all but four electorates intimidation has clearly increased.

Table 40. Women’s Voting Experiences by Electorate – 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Post-Polling Survey 2012			Post-Polling Survey 2017			
	Voted Freely %	Experienced Intimidation %	Did Not Vote %	Voted Freely %	Experienced Intimidation %	Did Not Vote %	No Response %
Highlands	60	21	19	20	60	40	2
Hela Provincial	35	30	35	10	76	58	0
Koroba-Lake Kapiago	53	29	18	2	83	73	0
Tari-Pori Open	37	32	32	25	56	63	0
SHP Provincial	25	0	75	18	56	39	4
Mendi Open	61	32	7	20	49	46	3
Wabag Open	35	41	24	2	85	56	2
Mt Hagen Open	79	15	6	17	56	48	1
Chimbu Provincial	71	23	6	26	55	22	2
Goroka Open	79	9	12	27	46	38	3
Momase	59	15	26	56	27	19	2
Madang Open	47	15	38	55	13	31	1
East Sepik Provincial	68	9	23	68	21	23	1
Yangoru-Saussia Open	57	24	19	85	13	0	3
Bulolo Open	100	0	0	64	23	17	2
Southern	65	14	21	50	23	28	2
NCD	70	11	19	39	26	40	1
Moresby North West	59	9	32	38	15	52	0
Kairuku-Hiri Open	82	8	10	50	23	18	9
Ijivitari Open	52	29	19	71	26	11	3
New Guinea Islands	71	14	15	70	7	21	5
Gazelle Open	71	11	18	52	26	15	7
Kokopo Open	67	18	15	64	23	18	6
Namatanai Open	74	12	14	62	17	18	3

Women as Election Officials

Thirty or so women were appointed to key roles for the 2017 elections. Two of the 22 EMs were women – Emily Kelton (WNB) and Rossie Pandihau (Jiwaka) — as were 13 of the assistant EMs. Two of the 89 open electorate ROs were also women – Denise Palipal (Central Bougainville) and Theresa Yohang (Manus Open) – as were 14 or so of the 350 AROs.

In some places, women were reasonably well represented in polling teams, but not consistently so. They were however generally well represented in counting teams, often accounting for 25–50% of all counting officials. Some observers suggested that the poor representation of women in polling teams was due to the volatile nature of elections in PNG.

A month out from the issue of writs, a male provincial RO was appointed to assist the EM for Jiwaka, Rossie Pandihau. The appointment proved controversial, sparked much discussion in both the mainstream press and social media, and was queried by intending candidates, with some arguing that she had been sidelined at the eleventh hour for political reasons. It is pleasing to note that much of the commentary focused on how well qualified and how deserving of her position the EM was. In the wake of this commentary, the EM sought to clarify the situation with respect to the PRO's appointment and was quoted in the media as saying, "Jiwaka needed a male officer to coordinate and support Pandihau who is a female EM".⁸⁴ Once again people jumped to Pandihau's defence, questioning the EC's explanation and the tacit assumption that men are better suited to senior positions.⁸⁵

Observers in several provinces reported poor treatment of women in key leadership roles. They noted that the EM in West New Britain (Emily Kelton), the RO in Central Bougainville (Denise Palipal) and several assistant EMs were subjected to what observers considered 'more than usual abuse and harassment' by scrutineers. Observers in Central Bougainville, for instance, felt the RO was challenged more aggressively than she would have had she been a man. By way of example, counting in Central Bougainville was suspended on three separate occasions and in the end was moved to Buka after the RO was assaulted in the first instance and threatened on another. On the first occasion counting was suspended after a drunken supporter – accompanied by two others, one with a torch and one with an axe – stormed the counting room and punched the female RO. Observers were highly critical of the security personnel who failed to prevent the security breach. Counting resumed two days later, following a negotiated peace settlement, but was suspended soon thereafter when a group of supporters stormed the counting room and threatened the RO. It was this second security breach that resulted in the change of counting venue.

Observers also reported the harassment of female counting officials by security personnel and scrutineers within and outside counting venues, particularly those in the Highlands. They also noted that as counting dragged on and night time counting was introduced, many women dropped out of the counting teams.

Recommendation:

- » ***Greater participation on the part of women in PNG's political processes needs to be encouraged.*** To facilitate this, gender segregated polling should be retained. Staff should be trained and made fully cognisant of these procedures, and if necessary they should be legislatively prescribed. Further research concerning how to encourage greater numbers of women candidates is also needed, as are enabling mechanisms which would facilitate an increase in the number of women entering parliament.

People with Disabilities

In 2012 designated polling stations that accommodated the needs of voters with a disability were established in urban areas in all regions. Although not as successful as it might otherwise have been – in that many voters were turned away from these polling stations – the pilot was a welcome initiative, and one that should be revisited.

In 2017 the PNGEC introduced designated express lanes to improve the franchise of the elderly, infirm and people with disability. Although widely publicised in the press, only nine of the 35 observer teams reported discussion of the new express lanes in the training provided to polling teams, and even fewer teams saw them operating in practice. Nevertheless, observers reported seeing the elderly and disabled fast-tracked at some polling stations (see also COG 2017: 27).

Observers also noted, however, that few polling stations in rural areas were set up to accommodate the needs of the elderly, infirm or people with disability. Accessing polling stations and navigating the “rugby scrum” queues at many locations would have proved particularly difficult for the mobility impaired. It is conceivable therefore that many citizens with disability did not vote.

There is still considerable work to be done to improve the franchise of people with disability, including around the rights of people with disability. Analysis of the quantitative data from the pre-poll citizen survey revealed there was a small, though significant proportion of respondents across all four regions felt that disabled citizens should not vote (see Table 41). Pleasingly the proportion of respondents who voiced such views dropped in 2017.

Table 41. Do You Think People With Disabilities Should Vote? 2012 and 2017 compared

Region	Post-Polling Survey 2012			Post-Polling Survey 2017			
	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %	No Response %
Papua New Guinea				73	12	14	1
Highlands	58	23	19	59	16	24	1
Momase	75	8	17	69	15	14	2
Southern	78	17	5	85	8	5	2
New Guinea Islands	77	13	10	86	6	6	1
NCD	88	11	2	86	6	6	2

Recommendation:

- » *Continue establishing separate polling stations in urban areas for people with disabilities*, and establish procedures to ensure that they are given priority at all other polling booths.

SECTION 6: OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS

Notwithstanding the variable nature of elections in PNG, we feel the 2017 elections witnessed further deterioration in the overarching election environment, including in the preparation and execution of the elections. In many places democratic processes were hijacked, resulting in elections that were neither free, safe, fair nor inclusive, especially with respect to women, settlers and the elderly. One former candidate engaged as a counting official in the counting centre at Hela put it this way:

“This election did not touch the people. Women and the elderly ones didn’t vote. Elections in Hela are only for young, strong and energetic men and boys. The determining factor in this election was how effectively candidates mobilised the boys. You don’t need to appeal to women, old people or those living in remote places. They are of no concern. Few of them vote and they do not influence election outcome in any way.”

(Counting Official, Hela Province)

Electoral fraud was more brazen and more widespread than in either 2007 or 2012. Likewise, money politics was also more widespread and of a different order than in earlier elections, being focused on key officials rather than individual voters and was mediated by “strongmen”. Across the country there was also a significant flow of resources from voters to candidates, signalling a fundamental shift in the relationship between constituents and their political representatives. Coupled with this the level of insecurity was unprecedented and outside the norms of what we would ordinarily expect – even for a PNG election.

As has been highlighted in the past, election-related violence, money politics and electoral malfeasance are most pronounced in the Highlands and less evident in coastal areas and the New Guinea Islands. This remains true, however we feel the quality and integrity of the 2017 elections compared to 2012 have deteriorated significantly, even in the locations that have historically delivered more credible elections.

Notwithstanding the inherent difficulties of delivering elections in the PNG context, we find that overall the PNGEC did not acquit itself well in 2017. The poor state of the electoral roll created such angst, disaffection and disenfranchisement that it influenced almost every other aspect of the election. Indeed, the electoral roll directly contributed to the violence and procedural abuses witnessed on polling day (see also TIPNG 2017:61).

Certainly, there have been significant problems with the electoral roll in the past, but decentralisation of responsibility for preparation and maintenance of the roll has exacerbated these problems. It saw widespread and in many cases systematic hijacking of the roll update process at the local level, which in turn facilitated much of the fraud and malpractice witnessed.

Throughout the country a very high proportion of citizens have indicated publicly and directly that these are the ‘worst elections’ ever. Many of the local observers involved in the ANU observation shared this view (see Section 7). Sadly, many of the gains identified in recent elections were well and truly wound back in 2017. Likewise, checks and balances employed in recent elections were not consistently employed this time around – particularly in counting rooms – paving the way for fraud and malpractice.

Another area of major concern was the disenfranchisement of women. Despite concerted efforts to improve the franchise of women, they continued to fare poorly in this election, being effectively excluded from the electoral process in many places. We consider the poor results for women to be directly related to the levels of corruption and maladministration of the elections more generally.

Astonishingly, the elections were hailed a success – even peaceful – by many. For example:

- » Hela provincial administrator and chairman of the PESC, William Bando, described elections there as “peaceful and trouble free.”⁸⁶
- » SHP Provincial Police Commander (PPC) and commanding officer on the ground, Sibro Papoto, said the people of

SHP had “freely exercised their democratic rights”, while SHP EM, David Wakias, described polling and counting as “very peaceful despite minor ... supporter clashes.”⁸⁷

- » Western Highlands PPC, Martin Lakari, described polling in the Western Highlands “peaceful” and declared the elections “free, fair and safe.”⁸⁸
- » Eastern Highlands provincial administrator and chairman of the PESC, Samson Akunai, praised the people of Eastern Highlands saying the elections were conducted in an “orderly manner” and were “trouble free from the nomination period to campaign and all the way to polling and counting.”⁸⁹
- » Electoral Commissioner Patilias Gamato said despite complications the elections were “comparatively peaceful.”⁹⁰
- » PM Peter O'Neill in his independence day speech said that “while there were unfortunate incidents, these were the most peaceful elections in recent decades”.

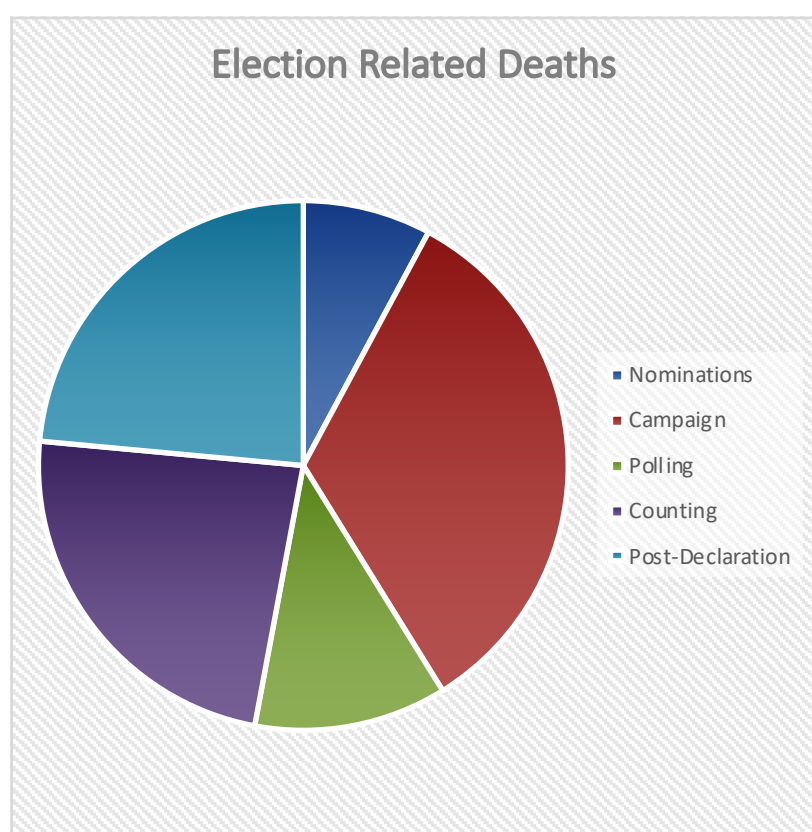
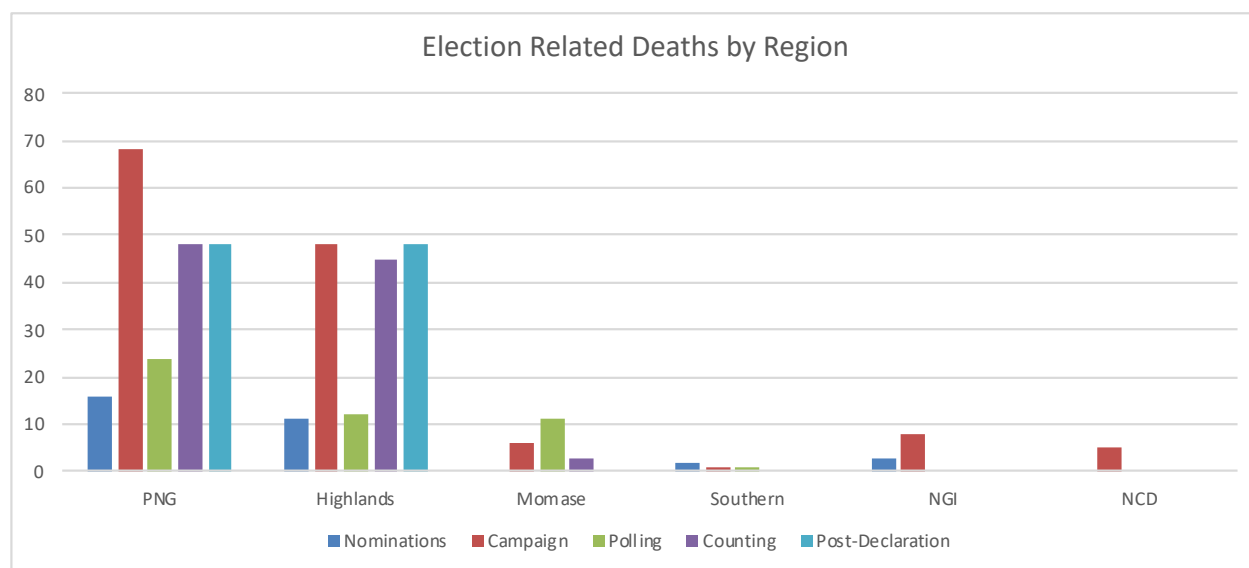
Such assessments are at odds with our team’s observations and the assessments of citizens across the country. As noted earlier in this report the ANU observation team documented 204 deaths, twice as many as were claimed in relation to the 2002 national elections (which failed in six electorates) and four times as many as estimated in relation to the 2007 elections (DFAT 2013:8). In addition, several hundred people were seriously injured and/or maimed and major property damage, including cars, houses, trade stores and government infrastructure destroyed and burnt, was documented in all except six provinces (namely **Central, Madang, Manus, New Ireland, Northern, and West Sepik** provinces).

It is in relation to the issues of violence and intimidation that this report departs significantly from those of the International Observer Missions. We would argue that the observations and data presented herein make evident that there were more than “a small number of deaths” and that a large proportion of PNG’s eligible citizens were not free to exercise their democratic rights “largely unhindered” (c.f. COG 2017:viii).

Consistent with past elections much of the violence and destruction documented took place in the Highlands and much of it post-polling, but not exclusively so. As the TIPNG Observation report rightly notes, reports of election-related violence (including deaths) “started during the nomination week and continued throughout the campaign period ... into voting and escalated during counting, resulting in the tragic and senseless loss of many lives” (TIPNG 2017:62). Figure 17 below shows in which region and when in the election cycle these deaths took place.

In 2017, election-related deaths were documented in all but six provinces, namely West Sepik, Milne Bay, Northern, Western, Manus and Bougainville. Of the election-related deaths documented, four out of five (164 of 204; 80%) occurred in the Highlands, and just over half (108 of 204; 53%) occurred between the issue of writs and the conclusion of polling. The remaining deaths were spread equally between the counting (24%) and the immediate post-declaration periods (24%). Of the 204 deaths recorded, 133 (65%) were independently documented in the media.

Figure 17. Election Related Deaths by Region and Point in the Electoral Cycle



In sum, the 2017 elections did not improve on 2012.

Instead, they were marred by widespread fraud and malpractice, including extensive vote rigging, coerced collective voting, and the hijacking and/or destruction of ballot boxes, political gifting and money politics which was qualitatively different to previous elections. The 2017 elections also generated unprecedented levels of election-related violence and intimidation which saw as many as half of PNG's eligible citizens disenfranchised in one way or another. Problems with the electoral roll were increasingly evident in 2017, and appeared to have been exacerbated by the devolution of core administrative responsibilities to provinces.

Throughout much of the country the elections were seriously flawed and lacked integrity,

and despite existing legal mechanisms which provide for the withdrawal of a writ once issued, these were not utilised in 2017. The apparent unwillingness to address the most egregious examples of fraud and

malpractice, despite former electoral commissioner Andrew Trawen's bold stand in relation to the 2013 LLG elections, should give cause for concern, as it serves to undermine the legitimacy of the 2017 elections; winds back the gains of 2012 and the strong message delivered in 2013; further degrades the electoral environment and serves to normalise the poor voter and candidate behaviour which has become increasingly evident over the course of the past four elections. "The integrity of elections cannot simply be asserted, but must be demonstrated" (Haley 2013b:347). Failure to do so will, as Sir Andrew Trawen predicted in the forward to the *2013 Local-Level Government Elections Report to Parliament*, see PNG's international reputation "severely eroded" (PNGEC 2013:3) and undermine local confidence in the PNGEC and the electoral process more broadly. Restoring that confidence should be the foremost priority moving forward.

SECTION 7: CONCLUDING ASSESSMENTS FROM LOCAL OBSERVERS

In keeping with the ANU observation being a domestic observation delivered in collaboration with local partners our final concluding assessments are those of the many brave and committed citizens who observed the 2017 elections. Many had observed the 2007 and 2012 elections and thus are well placed to provide the assessments they offer. Their assessments are uncensored, brutally honest and remarkably consistent. They offer keen insights which must necessarily inform future election reforms, future election support and most significantly the planning, preparation and delivery of future elections.

“From what I have observed with my own two eyes, heard and experienced during the observation from the campaign period, to the polling period and all the way to the counting centre, I conclude this was a fake and fail election, instead of being free, fair and safe. Several things occurred in the process which killed the notion of a free, fair and safe election. First and foremost this was a fake and fail election due to the fact that the citizens of PNG didn’t efficiently, effectively or freely exercise their freedom of choice. Their freedom to choose leaders according to their own wishes was stripped from them by intimidation, malpractice, corruption and misconduct. Money was widely used to buy votes and youth exercised dominion over the ballot papers, especially in relation to voting. These two things together meant they controlled the election. Indeed young and energetic lads were bribed with money by candidates to use their physical force to take control of the ballot papers and to sign the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd preferences according to their candidate’s wishes. More than that, they practised multiple voting and didn’t give a chance to other people, especially the old people, ladies, girls and mothers to freely go in and vote for those they believe would be the right leaders who could cater for their future.”

(Observer, Chimbu Province)

“I am ashamed to say, PNG is fast becoming a country ruled by the rich and criminals who have hijacked the electoral process. As a citizen of this nation I believe this was the worst election ever due to the following reasons: extra ballot papers for God knows who’s benefit; security personnel ignoring electoral laws being broken and just leaving the people to take complete control of polling places; discrepancies in electoral rolls; political gifting and bribery at its worst; the PNGEC failing to properly execute duties and being seen to favour the ruling party, training of polling officials was rushed and very brief, and no training for counting officials.”

(Observer, Chimbu Province)

“Thinking back now I would say that overall the 2012 elections were a bit ok across Simbu because many people got to exercise their democratic rights and to vote by standing in a queue. The same cannot be said of the 2017 elections.

Sadly most people did not get to vote. Someone did it on their behalf.”

(Observer, Gumine Open)

“Politics is the most significant lifestyle disease in our community and our society. Through involvement in politics we are producing life-time enemies – enemies in the election context and enemies in tribal fighting. Instead of choosing our leaders through elections we are creating lifetime enemies. Unless we find a solution this will only get worse in future elections. And even more people will die.”

(Observer, Gumine Open)

“The 2017 National Election event was not free, fair or safe. It was an event characterised by fear, intimidation, and harassment resulting in deaths, homes razed and garden’s destroyed.”

(Observer, Obura-Wonenara Open)

“The 2017 election was the worst I have ever seen. Specifically there were no restrictions whatsoever at polling stations. Voters simply entered the polling booth and demanded ballot papers at will. At Aserenka a candidate claimed all of the ballot papers and marked them himself, while at Tontaina the ballot papers were marked in the night. With all this happening there was no democracy exercised in the 2017 national elections.”

(Observer, Obura-Wonenara Open)

“What can I say? There was sorcery. There was fighting. Few people voted and lots of people died, but I see in the paper the PM says it was a successful and peaceful election. Rubbish! Democracy is dead and the country is controlled by warlords. The people of this country joined together with their candidates to unseat PNC, but still many of the same faces are in parliament. I can’t explain it and fear what this means for PNG.”

(Observer, Goroka Open)

“Money was flowing like water in this election. It controlled the election.”

(Observer, Goroka Open)

“This election has been the worst election ever conducted in the history of Western Highlands and Papua New Guinea as a whole. As a domestic observer I have witnessed and heard about a lot of events and happenings that are inconsistent with the democratic principles enshrined in PNG’s constitution. There has been an increase in widespread corruption, fraud, bribery and violence related to this year’s election. Corrupt and illegal acts were practised across the Western Highlands. Voters were deprived of their democratic rights. Instead of casting their own votes, polling officials and other influential figures directly cut all of the votes, motivated by money, loyalty and power... There were also persistent rumours of candidates bribing the security forces to inject alien ballot boxes into counting rooms, although there was a lack of evidence to prove these allegations. There were also more deaths and injuries this election. People in some areas were afraid to cast their vote because of threats from candidates or fear of getting themselves involved in culturally motivated political situations. The rights of voters were abused by other voters who forced these innocent people to vote for their candidate or face the ultimate consequence which is death or severe mistreatment.”

(Observer, Western Highlands Province)

“Having observed the past two elections, I can say the 2017 national election was very, very seriously compromised. From what I saw, one party was directly involved and was the driving force behind the criminal activities. Throughout Enga people are dying. So far 20 to 30 people are confirmed dead and there are as many seriously injured. Wabag General Hospital has been closed for one month and remains closed. People are suffering. Many are without homes and without shelter. There are no services. No schools are open. The bank and post office are closed as are the small shops... When will we have free and fair elections? ... The 2017 elections were the very worst in Enga Province. There was no freedom, no choice, no hope... So many people have been killed and many more were

injured. People are living in fear and nobody is willing to collect the bodies. Please I beg you, what can be done to ensure this doesn't repeat in 2022? My heart is broken."

(Observer, Wabag Open)

"This was my first time to be involved in such an activity and it was my privilege to observe in Kandep. Kandep is an interesting place to observe but also a very risky place. Kandep is a fighting zone and a high risk area that has experienced problems in every national election. There is always fighting every election. Many lives are lost and much property destroyed. This year's election started well. The campaign period was relatively quiet all things considered and many people surveyed reported that the campaign period went smoothly. Since the 4th day of counting however things changed, there is much tension and everyone is on high alert. This is because the majority of people were deprived of their right to vote, because some men think being an MP is their birthright. These men have caused problems not just in this district, but in the province and the country as a whole...But in the end it is the locals who suffer the loss of human lives, houses and food gardens. Will they ever be released from this?"

(Observer, Kandep Open)

"Few people cast their votes this election. Fear, hatred and intimidation saw them prevented from voting. I am sure the absolute majority of people in this electorate didn't exercise their right to vote in this election. Many didn't vote because of the failed roll update and the aggressiveness of supporters. Only the strong middle-aged and young men managed to vote. Old people didn't vote. Sick people didn't vote. Disabled people didn't vote. Pregnant women didn't vote. Young girls didn't vote and women didn't vote. Many ballot papers were pulled or destroyed, and many ballot boxes were destroyed or hijacked. This was surely the worst election ever, and one that will be ongoing in its consequences."

(Observer, Koroba-Lake Kopiago Open)

"The 2017 elections were hijacked from start to finish by desperate men determined to retain power. This election was just for the young and the strong. Women were totally excluded from the voting process. It must be that they are no longer citizens of this nation."

(Observer, Komo-Magarima Open)

"The 2017 election was different to those that came before. Everyone in Hela was shocked and disappointed to see that so many people were denied the opportunity to elect their leaders... Some put up an argument, some just walked away disappointed. To my dismay I observed that as a consequence it was simply agreed that the ballot papers should be shared and given to supporter groups to mark. All the ballot papers were marked in this way. This came about because there were major problems with the electoral roll... Some wards were inflated and in others the names of eligible voters were deleted... I myself did not get to vote because candidates played money and their supporters fought over the ballot papers. The fraud I saw in 2017 compromises the spirit of democracy... To give an outline of the fraud I saw: cash was being distributed at polling places; women and people with disability were given no opportunity to vote; scrutineers/supporters took control of all the ballot papers; campaign manager were present at polling station giving out drinks, smokes and betelnut; the police were mute and did not apprehend electoral offenders;

gifts more than in previous election; and all of the voting in my LLG done at night from 18:00 hours to 1am the following morning. These elections took place in fear and favour of particular candidates and as a result the entire election process was hijacked.”

(Observer, Tari-Pori Open)

“There are several things I learnt through observing this election. First the common rolls were updated with huge figures in South Koroba, parts of Tari-Pori and in Magarima. This saw the voting process hijacked. In 2017 the counting process was hijacked as well and was completely bulldozed by the PNC candidates and their supporters. All of the counting officials, presiding officers, AROs and ROs were all one-sided. Even disputed boxes were allowed to be counted if that would benefit PNC and scrutineers were not allowed to argue or raise objections in the counting.”

(Observer, Hela Province)

“The 2017 elections were worse than previous elections. Why? Because the common roll was not updated properly and this had a huge impact on the election. In addition people were voting differently, many missed out because their names were not on the roll, and others through political manipulations which saw inflation and deflation in the roll. In past elections, votes were bought with money but in 2017 it was the ballot papers and ballot boxes that were bought with money. Instead of buying votes from voters, candidates paid large amounts of money to POs, ROs and AROs, to ensure that voting was controlled and the ballot papers dumped by POs. During the counting I actually heard a PO admit to the scrutineers that he had “dumped” a ballot box for a particular candidate. I believe that in the remote areas most of the ballot boxes were dumped in this way...Action must be taken against those who engage in corrupt practices. Previously people were never charged for the corrupt practices they do at election time, and now we see the outcome of this. Illegal practices are growing with each and every election. The electoral commission must action and implement the electoral law and see to it that serious action is taken against those who commit electoral offences. Otherwise elections in this country will continue to get worse.”

(Observer, Mendi Open)

“2017 is the third national election using the LPV voting system in SHP and the country as a whole. There was awareness, observations and recommendations from both 2007 and 2012... Due to some unknown reasons many of the recommendations and suggestions made previously were not carried out and implemented. Therefore practices such as repeat voting, ghost names and bribery have reached the highest peak. Young men are the main ones doing the repeat voting. They simply pushed out the female voters and dominated the voting area... Bribery was the very greatest in SHP in 2017. Money was played from 2013 to 2017 just for this election, but during the campaign and polling periods it was even worse. Supporters contributed animals, cash and cars, while candidates bribed collectively (clans, tribes, and families) and individually too, giving as much as K300 for a first voted. The outcomes for SHP and the country will be bad...This is because MPs once elected are concerned most for their own supporters and family members than for the other communities, clans and tribes in the district. The supporters of the MP spend their time for the next five years writing up false claims which see the DSIP and PSIP money used up meaning services don't reach everybody.”

(Observer, Imbonggu Open)

“The 2017 National Election campaign, voting and counting was not like previous elections. It was the worst ever. So much blood was shed and the killing of people has grown worse.”

(Observer, Southern Highlands Province)

“In the East Sepik people are more conscious of development issues than ever before. Because of this ordinary citizens are becoming “kaikai man” [lit. eating men]. Elections in PNG have become very expensive because voters are greedy for some benefits. Anyone running for election must have a lot of money. What I saw in this election was that the voters moved out of their villages and stayed in Wewak and Angoram with the candidate they were supporting. Candidates take care of the voters and feed them. If they feel neglected or hungry they simply move to another camp. They test the candidate’s money power. They are doing this because they think the candidate will forget them when he wins so the campaign is their time to get something from the candidate. Candidates also spend a lot on transportation, transporting the voters back to their villages to vote. What I saw was that the camps in town remained full of people until the 11th hour when everyone was transported home in crowded PMVs and outboard motors. The candidates did this to protect their votes because there was also a lot of sorcery at play in this election. Elections are a time when sorcery comes alive and sorcerers become rich. One more thing, violence after the election was a new development in Angoram in 2017. Angoram voters have spoken – they chose where they eat and where they park their canoes. It is clear now that candidates in the East Sepik will need to spend more to get elected in 2022.”

(Observer, East Sepik Province)

“I look forward to a time when elections in PNG are free of the trouble and strife we have seen in this election. At times in this election people in Yangoru-Saussia were literally fighting for votes. This must stop, so PNG can develop into a democracy where every Papua New Guinea citizen has equal voice.”

(Observer, Yangoru-Saussia Open)

“While there were several minor problems and grievances with the 2017 national elections in Nuku Open, the largest source of frustration was the perceived incompleteness of the electoral roll. Many eligible voters were seemingly missing from the common roll, and at times during the polling their frustrations spilled over and things turned violent, although on the whole this mainly consisted of fist fights which were readily dealt with by the PNGDF.”

(Observer, Nuku Open)

“Generally the election Menyama was quiet and peaceful compared to other places. No major violence erupted like in other centres as I saw on social media. However the 2017 electoral roll was not accurate and this meant many people did not vote. Some subsequently found out their names were called at other polling places, but not in the village or ward in which they reside. Some people used other people’s names to vote. Political gifting and vote buying was the other thing that stands out in relation to this election. It started in 2012/2013 and continued all the way up to this election.”

(Observer, Menyama Open)

“This election has not been a peaceful one because supporters have been boasting about their candidates saying their candidate will win. People are arguing and fighting and sometimes killing each other. There was a big fight at Kumalo River where supporters fought in the presence of their respective candidates. Some houses burned and a vehicle smashed just because they were supporting different candidates.”

(Observer, Bulolo Open)

“The single biggest problem with this election was the common roll. Most of the commotion that occurred at the polling stations I visited and those that other observers visited were caused by the common roll. Most voters found their names were not on the roll and this caused much frustration as many said their names were on the common roll when they voted in 2012.”

(Observer, Lae Open)

“The people of Rai Coast were friendly at first but when the polling officials told them they could not vote because their names were not on the electoral roll things changes. Arguments erupted and fighting followed. Two or three times every day polling was stopped due to fighting. This prolonged the polling and saw it extended for two days... In conclusion I would say this year’s election was an ethnic and failed election.”

(Observer, Madang Province)

“Observing in Madang has been a positive experience just as it had in previous elections. The electoral commission really needs to fix the roll, as nothing much has changed. The roll was also a big problem in past elections. The roll update process must be improved as a matter of urgency, and it must include a verification process. I have yet to see a roll verification or objection being done in Madang ever. It has not happened yet in three elections!”

(Observer, Madang Open)

“As an observer I got to witness firsthand the whole gruelling process from polling to declaration. It certainly gave me a different perspective on the election and I learnt that elections are very difficult things to run... That said, many people complained of not voting in this election. Many people thought that because they had voted in 2012 their names would still be on the roll. Luckily for some their names were still there. But for many unfortunates their names were not. In some polling areas I visited I witnessed mothers and old people from the ward who were turned away. When their names could not be found they cried openly.”

(Observer, Madang Open)

“The 2017 electoral roll is significantly incomplete. For example in one village there is only one name and in another – a large village – there are only 6 names. Because ballot papers are issued based on the roll the number of ballot papers is insufficient. At first the police commander told us more ballot papers would be sent from Port Moresby, but later we were told the EC had not approved the release of further ballot papers and that the election should just run with the existing supply.”

(Observer, Central Bougainville)

“About this election, it was very poor. I am not very happy because I saw many people were not on the common roll. Also the PNGEC needs to work properly with the ABG to fix up the common roll before the referendum. In future, polling stations should be

set up in places people know and places that are easily accessible and can properly accommodate people. Many of the polling places in this election were not appropriate.”

(Observer, North Bougainville)

“PNG citizens have the right to vote and not simply be bystanders in the election process. They want to know why they were able to vote in 2012 only to find their names were not on the roll in 2017. How did this happen? It seems impossible to us. They didn’t die. They didn’t go somewhere. Who is at fault? The ward recorder? The government? Or the PNGEC? The electoral commission must do something to ensure every PNG citizen inside the country has the right to vote in 2022.”

(Observer, Namatanai Open)

“In 2017 the electoral roll was not updated properly, and although it was said they could use the preliminary or supplementary roll this was not supplied to the polling team. From what I saw, some candidates were involved in bribery and corrupt practices. And some candidate supporters were openly buying votes at polling places. It was also seen that some polling teams were accepting gifts and food from candidate supporters.”

(Observer, Kavieng Open)

“In my opinion and through my observations in Kokopo, Rabaul and Gazelle Open electorates, I can say this election was well run barring a few logistical and administrative hiccups along the way... The biggest issue ... was the common roll. All kinds of issues were raised in relation to the roll. The public as well as election officials raised concerns about names not appearing on the common roll. I witnessed firsthand that a good number of people who had voted in 2007 and 2012 did not have their names on the roll in 2017. This is the issue of most concern.”

(Observer, East New Britain Province)

“The election in Gazelle proved different and a real challenge in 2017 compared to previous elections. There was much more violence in this election than in previous elections as one candidate and his supporters were harassing the other candidates and their supporters. The campaign proved to be all about money, goods and materials. Whoever had the money, got the votes and this was evident in the end results. The winner and the runner-up ... gave out t-shirts, food, hosted tea nights, coffee nights, killed pigs and hosted feasts. These materials and money won the hearts and minds of people who had previously been loyal supporters of other candidates. In addition there was much violence. Some supporters were very aggressive and violent towards the supporters of other candidates.”

(Observer, Gazelle Open)

“The elections in West New Britain were rough. 2017 was the worst election in PNG’s history. Bribery and intimidation were evident... Many Highlanders who have moved to WNB have influenced the coastal people to accept money politics. They have brought their ways to WNB and this has affected the way people think and the choices they make when it comes to voting.”

(Observer, Talasea Open)

“As an observer in the 2017 national elections, I find that this election was poor compared to previous elections. There were lots of delays...The electoral roll was poorly updated, and many, many citizens did not cast their votes because their names were not on the electoral roll.”

(Observer, Ijivitari Open)

“The 2017 election was the worst election I have ever witnessed. By comparison with 2002, 2007 and 2012 this election was not properly planned by the PNG Electoral Commission and the Provincial Election Steering Committee. There were issues such as the polling and counting officials were not paid, meal allowances and security allowances were not paid and facilities at the counting venues had deteriorated. The toilets were not working and the water supply had been turned off because the water bills had not been paid by the Oro Provincial Administration.”

(Observer, Northern Province)

“I have seen and learnt so much, including that even when it looks good it is rotten.”

(Observer, Northern Province)

“Vote buying was so much more common in this election as pointed out by the men I interviewed. They reported receiving roofing iron, solar panels and road contracts all on the eve of polling.”

(Observer, Rigo Open)

“Youth, especially young girls, complained that the sitting MP and some other candidates contesting this election got married to very young girls aged up to 25. Some were even in high school. They said this was a form of vote buying by using the money game.”

(Observer, Rigo Open)

“Observing the 2017 election has been an eye-opener. It was a mind blowing, stressful but exhilarating experience. I have learnt so much but has also made me feel so sorry for my people. It has motivated me to educate myself and the people around me to not vote by bribes but to vote for their democratic rights. I witnessed first-hand that vote buying and gifting is widely practised, including in the city, and that people are now just voting for the fun of it and what they can get (from candidates).”

(Observer, Moresby South)

“Being an observer was not an easy thing. It was obvious the police officers and officials felt threatened that we might expose things they didn't want exposed. We experienced so much harassment from the security personnel at the counting venue. From what I saw the security officials were directly involved in this election. They were threatening and physically harassing the counting officials, scrutineers and observers.”

(Observer, Moresby North West)

“The electoral commission has failed us. This was the worst election ever. But my question is: Is there the political will to fix the many problems we witnessed in this election?”

(Observer, Moresby North East)

Based on these observations it is clear that much needs to be done to restore confidence in PNG's electoral process and to deliver safe and credible elections in 2022.

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Appendix A. Number of Detailed Observations Made and Polling Stations Observed

Region/Electorate	Observations Made	Polling Stations Observed	Total Polling Stations	% Polling Stations Observed
Papua New Guinea	1220	945	10825	9%
Highlands	433	383	3020	13%
Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open	36	30	81	37%
Tari-Pori Open	19	17	77	22%
Komo-Magarima Open	16	16	99	16%
Mendi Open	31	23	145	16%
Imbonggu Open	28	26	123	21%
SHP – Other	8	8	277	3%
Wabag Open	26	24	74	32%
Kandep Open	12	9	75	12%
Hagen Open	74	60	107	56%
Dei Open	56	53	103	51%
WHP – Other	8	8	222	4%
Gumine Open	42	36	62	58%
Chimbu – Other	34	34	386	9%
Obura-Wonenara Open	20	19	119	16%
Goroka Open	23	21	76	28%
Momase	249	164	3117	5%
Nuku Open	32	9	102	9%
Yangoru-Saussia Open	18	18	97	19%
ESP – Other	28	28	719	4%
Bulolo Open	28	18	166	11%
Lae Open	23	16	55	29%
Menyamy Open	39	17	145	12%
Madang Open	59	36	105	34%
Madang Prov. – Other	22	22	593	4%
Southern	296	205	2486	8%
Moresby North East Open	68	46	164	28%
Moresby North West Open	71	62	126	49%
Moresby South Open	48	27	69	39%
Kairuku-Hiri Open	31	18	182	10%
Rigo Open	24	24	139	17%
Ijivitari Open	30	13	160	8%
Sohe Open	24	15	128	13%
New Guinea Islands	242	192	2202	9%
North Bougainville Open	20	10	308	3%
Central Bougainville Open	45	31	195	16%
Gazelle Open	18	13	165	8%
Kokopo Open	42	31	118	26%
Rabaul Open	12	8	78	10%
Namatanai Open	50	48	188	26%
Kavieng Open	34	30	150	20%
Talasea Open	16	16	201	8%
WNB – Other	5	5	161	3%

Appendix B. Observer Summary of Voting and Voters Turned Away in East New Britain

Polling Station	Date	Total Enrolled	Total Voters	Men Who Voted	Women Who Voted	Total Turned Away	Men Turned Away	Women Turned Away
Raburu (Uniting Church) Kokopo	24/06/17	500	145	69	76	18	-	-
Vunapope (Ulapia College) Kokopo	24/06/17	55	25	-	-	13	3	10
Vunapope (Sea View) Kokopo	26/06/17	55	18	13	5	27	15	12
Bitatita (United Church) Kokopo	26/06/17	135	75	34	41	12	-	-
Nonga (Nonga Base Hospital) Rabaul	26/06/17	165	114	57	57	36	-	-
Navunaram (Com. Hall) Gazelle – Day 2	26/06/17	1452	345	179	166	41	14	27
Navunaram (Com. Hall) Gazelle – Day 3	27/06/17	1452	59	36	23	15	6	9
Rakunai (United Church) Gazelle	27/06/17	200+	107	49	58	11	-	-
Matupit 3, Rabaul	27/06/17	584	235	138	97	41	-	-
Vunapope (Old Kokopo Market) Kokopo	27/06/17	?	29	-	-	38	18	20
Ulaveo (Tokua Airport) Kokopo	28/06/17	33	7	3	4	3	3	0
Ulaveo (Kuluan Plantation) Kokopo	28/06/17	50	0	0	0	17	-	-
Vunapope (Takubar Market) Kokopo	28/06/17	44	20	18	2	4	1	3
Vunapope (Botanical Gardens) Kokopo	28/06/17	?	50	-	-	30	-	-
Barovon (United Church) Kokopo	28/06/17	345	240	120	120	9	4	4
Nguvalian (Uniting Church) Kokopo	28/06/17	317	257	-	-	78	-	-
Takubar (United Church) Kokopo	29/06/17	618	116	55	61	15	6	9
Rainau (Rainau United Church) Kokopo	29/06/17	1127	355	159	196	63	-	-
Vunapope (Court House) Kokopo	29/06/17	?	249	124	125	35	13	22
Molot (United Church) Kokopo	30/06/17	286	124	44	80	5	-	-
Nakukur No 1 (United Church) Kokopo	30/06/17	681	127	66	61	5	-	-
Vunapope (Vavagil Guest House) Kokopo	01/07/17	?	44	-	-	30	20	10
Ulagunan (Com. Centre) Kokopo	03/07/17	?	60	38	22	300	150	150
Ulaveo (Rainau Plantation) Kokopo	03/07/17	67	0	0	0	19	-	-
Vunapope (Kokopo Secondary) Kokopo	03/07/17	?	56	28	28	38	18	20
Total			2857			903		

ENDNOTES

1. The findings of these other groups are contained in a series of publicly available reports (see COG 2017; PIFS 2017; EU 2017; TIPNG 2017).
2. Established in 1996 as the **State, Society and Governance in Melanesia** (SSGM) Program, and funded in partnership by the ANU and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), ANU DPA is the leading international centre for applied multidisciplinary research and analysis concerning Melanesia and the broader Pacific. Comprising over 60 research active scholars, including 20 academic staff and 25 PhD students, DPA is situated within the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs. It seeks to set the international standard for scholarship on the region.
3. Cross-sectional studies are used in the social sciences to investigate perceptions, attitudes and experiences at a societal level at a particular point in time. When repeated periodically they can also be used to analyse trends. They differ from longitudinal studies which follow the same sample of people over time.
4. See for example Bjornlund (2004), Maley (2014) and others (e.g. NDI 2013; EU 2016).
5. For instance, three former prime ministers Sir Michael Somare, Sir Julius Chan and Sir Mekere Morauta are all reported to have made such claims (see <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/png-vote-pm-and-electoral-commissioner-defend-handling-of-worst-national-poll> and <http://www.looppng.com/elections/2017-elections-worst-ever-governors-70198>), as have scores of ordinary citizens, as well as winning and losing candidates alike (see for example PPP candidate and regular contributor to *PNG Attitude*, Mathias Kin's, piece entitled "[The grand scam](#)"). Others who have offered highly critical assessments of the election include Laurence Stephens, Chair of TIPNG who described the 2017 elections as "flawed to an unforgivable extent" (TIPNG 2017:3) and Paul Barker, executive director of PNG's Institute of National Affairs (see Figure 9).
6. See <http://www.pnhec.gov.pg/irc/roll-lookup/RollLookUp>
7. The three being Sumkar Open, Rabaul Open and Kandrian-Gloucester Open.
8. Of these two-thirds (133 deaths) were also reported in the media, many times more than were reported in relation to 2007 or 2012 elections. It is acknowledged that some of these deaths may, in part, be attributable to longstanding grievances and tribal conflicts exacerbated or catalysed by the elections. They are included here on the basis that local observers (and in some cases social and mainstream media as well) directly attributed them to the election.
9. The exceptions are Kairuku-Hiri Open, Wewak Open, Bogia Open, Sumkar Open, Rabaul Open and Kandrian-Gloucester Open.
10. The *PNG Women in Leadership Support Program* (WiLSP), supported by the Australian Government in partnership with the Government of Papua New Guinea as part of the *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* program, provided intending candidates with training to assist in the development of a strategic campaign. One hundred and twenty seven women undertook the WiLSP training ahead of the 2017 national elections.
11. The ANU contingent included several of DPA's consortium and research partners from the Lowy Institute, the Development Policy Centre and Swinburne University.
12. Cross-sectional studies are used in the social sciences to investigate perceptions, attitudes and experiences at a societal level at a particular point in time. When repeated periodically they can also be used to analyse trends. Respondents to one survey are not intentionally sampled again, rather a fresh sample of people are surveyed each time the study is undertaken. Cross-sectional studies of this kind are particularly useful in contexts where preservation of the respondent's anonymity is important. They differ from longitudinal

studies which follow the same sample of people over time. A recognised limitation of surveys that require respondents to self-report is the tendency to provide socially acceptable responses rather than the truth, especially in relation to taboo or value-laden subjects or offences. As such, a degree of under-reporting is common and to be expected. The use of a mixed methods approach, in this case, ameliorates bias and improves confidence in the findings.

13. The numbers against the teams, electorates and team leaders indicates the number of consecutive observations made in these electorates, or by the team leaders.
14. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/poll-job-given-abroad/>
15. See <http://www.pngec.gov.pg/news/2017/01/19/ballot-papers-for-2017-election-printed-overseas-for-first-time>
16. See <http://www.looppng.com/elections/gamato-dispels-rumours-extra-ballot-papers-61323>
17. Source: Background Information Pack provided to observers by the PNGEC.
18. See <http://www.looppng.com/png-news/gamato-responds-opposition's-statements-78011#.Wz64lnQbxVI.mailto>
19. <http://www.pngec.gov.pg/news/2017/07/28/statement-of-the-occasion-of-return-of-writs-for-2017-election>
20. These being Yangoru-Saussia, Menyama, Madang, Kairuku-Hiri, Rigo, Kokopo and Gazelle Open electorates.
21. See James Yoka Ekip & Simon Sanangke v. Patilias Gamato (2017) PGNC 75; N6705 (4 May 2017).
22. The figures cited herein were calculated by taking the mid-2000 census figures and applying a growth factor of 2.76% per year, which was the population growth rate between 1980 and 2000 and is the growth rate recommended for planning purposes by the PNG National Statistical Office (NSO).
23. As at 2000, 55% of the population was 18 years or older. The projected enrolment figures cited herein are 55% of the projected population.
24. In 2007 and 2012, ANU observers were provided access to the electoral roll. A formal request was made to the electoral commissioner to obtain a copy of the master list utilised in the 2017 election in support of our election report. A subsequent request was made to purchase a copy of the latest print of the electoral roll upon payment of the prescribed fee under section 248 of the Organic Law on National and Local Level Government Elections. Despite the EC instructing the director of policy to make this information available to us it was never forthcoming.
25. See <http://pngconomics.org/2017/07/pngs-electoral-bias-indicators-pncs-near-30000-ghost-voters-and-mathematical-impossibilities/> and <http://pngconomics.org/2017/07/pngs-electoral-commission-hides-the-truth/>
26. Actual enrolment was 221, however EM said “the names of people from this ward had been moved elsewhere, so I have included 570 extra ballot papers so everyone there can vote. I am issuing generic papers for this purpose”.
27. See <http://www.emtv.com.pg/electoral-commission-launches-objection-verification-process/>
28. See also <http://www.looppng.com/elections/%E2%80%8Bncd-polling-starts-mcgregor-61998> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmzOx7uSOyA>
29. See also Commonwealth Observer Group 2012:37.
30. See <http://www.pngec.gov.pg/irc/roll-lookup/RollLookUp>

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31. For example: Team 388 (Obura-Wonenara Open) and Team 219 (Kainantu Open) were both assigned to SIL Ukarumpa; Team 390 (Obura-Wonenara Open) and Team 217 (Kainantu Open) were both assigned to the CIS Bundaira; Team 392 (Obura-Wonenara Open) and Team 216 (Kainantu Open) were both assigned to Tairora High School; Team 393 (Obura-Wonenara Open) and Team 218 (Kainantu Open) were both assigned to Aiyura Nation High School; and Team 394 (Obura-Wonenara Open) and Team 218 (Kainantu Open) were both assigned to the National Agricultural Research Institute.
32. CSO-led awareness was more prevalent in Momase in 2017, as compared to 2012. Certainly, Momase recorded the lowest attendance rates in 2012, in part due to the delayed appointment of a provincial awareness coordinator in East Sepik, which meant the awareness delivered was ad hoc, confined to the final weeks of the campaign and limited to in and around Wewak, resulting in very low overall attendance rates (Haley and Zubrinich 2013:46).
33. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/day-1-hiccups/>
34. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/polling-delayed/>
35. See <https://emtv.com.pg/ialibu-pangia-polls-asked-to-be-deferred-to-tomorrow/>
36. See <https://pngdailynews.com/2017/07/01/ialibu-pangia-deferred-to-sunday/>
37. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/wong-unaware-diversion-boxes/>
38. These being Goroka Open, Western Highlands Provincial and Dei Open in the Highlands, Menyamya Open and East Sepik Provincial in Momase, Sohe Open and Ijivitari Open in Southern Region and ENB Provincial and Kokopo Open in the New Guinea Islands.
39. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/southern-highlands-vote-today/>
40. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/2017-national-elections/>
41. The ANU observation team documented 204-election related deaths. Of these, two thirds (133 deaths) were also reported in the media, many times more than were reported in relation to 2007 or 2012 elections. It is acknowledged that some of these deaths may, in part, be attributable to longstanding grievances and tribal conflicts exacerbated or catalysed by the elections.
42. These being Kairuku-Hiri, Wewak, Bogia, Sumkar, Rabaul and Kandrian-Gloucester Open electorates.
43. Source: Background Information Pack provided to observers by the PNGEC.
44. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/2017-national-elections/>
45. See <http://www.pnec.gov.pg/news/2016/12/19/10-600-personnel-for-2017-election-security-operations>
46. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/officer-high-powered-weapon-arrested/>
47. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/soldiers-detained-kokopo-not-awol/>
48. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/soldiers-cash-arrested/>
49. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/cops-arrested-ballot-boxes/>
50. <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/335679/png-electoral-chief-rejects-ghost-voters-claim>
51. See <http://postcourier.com.pg/kerema-town-uproar-election-killing/>
52. See <http://www.pngblogs.com/2017/07/rival-ialibu-pangia-candidates-accuse.html>
53. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/deaths-mar-first-week-election/>

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54. See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/pngnewspage/permalink/1418936261477918/> and <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/programmes/datelinepacific/audio/201841895/png-police-prepared-for-highlands-elections-risk>
55. See <http://www.abc.net.au/news/programs/pacific-beat/2017-04-28/tension-in-png-islands-after-deadly-election/8481090>
56. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/3000-votes-3-deaths/>
57. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/deaths-mar-first-week-election/>
58. The Background Information Pack provided to observers by the PNGEC lists 2018 of the 3340 candidates who nominated to contest the elections as independent candidates. According to the PNGRPP (2018:26) the number of independent candidates was slightly lower at 1936. COG (2017:18) cites a figure of 2147 independent candidates while the EU (2017:19) cites a different figure again – 1921 independent candidates. Whatever the case, independent candidates significantly outnumbered those that were party endorsed, as they have in previous elections.
59. The exceptions being Kairuku-Hiri Open, Wewak Open, Bogia Open, Sumkar Open, Rabaul Open and Kandrian-Gloucester Open. No election related violence whatsoever was witnessed in the later three electorates.
60. The National, “Hela of a gun haul”, 27 February 2017
61. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/military-issued-guns-ammunitions-seized/> and <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/331601/png-security-forces-launch-election-operations-in-highlands>
62. See <http://www.looppng.com/elections/44-political-parties-confirmed-2017-national-elections-52632>
63. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/political-parties-payment-list/>
64. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/failed-candidate-faces-kidnap-claim/>
65. See <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/335400/sorcery-blamed-for-missing-votes-in-png-election-count>
66. See <http://www.devpolicy.org/telecommunications-papua-new-guinea-conversation-telikom-20170905/>
67. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/pm-in-clear/>
68. See <http://www.looppng.com/elections/contradictory-decision-sunday-polling-wnb-63300>
69. The former involves calling for male or female voters in turn or groups thereof (i.e. 2 men, 2 women or 10 men, 10 women) while the later involves the PO calling out ‘next’ when the previous voter had finished.
70. *Tanim tebol* voting is thought to have originated in Enga Province. It literally means “over-turning the table” and refers to a type of voting whereby leaders decide that all votes will be cast for a particular candidate, and that all ballot papers will be marked by a small group on behalf of the broader community,
71. Collective or block voting was reported in 13% of observations made the TIPNG observer team (TIPNG 2017:43). It was also reported outside of the Highlands in Abau Open electorate by the Registry of Political Parties observer team, who noted that in Aroma LLG “all first preferences were marked in favour of the respective home candidates, either by the committees of the candidates or by the relatives of the candidates. Some voters were allowed to mark the second and third preferences for candidates of their choice, but for some their second and third preferences were marked by the committees too” (PNGRPP 2018:46).

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72. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/six-armed-men-arrested/> and <https://www.thenational.com.pg/seven-suspects-plead-not-guilty/>
73. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/not-quarrel-ec-advisers/>
74. See <http://www.looppng.com/png-news/police-deaths-blamed-ec-inconsistency-67561> and <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/340666/two-more-police-killed-in-png-election-violence>
75. See <http://www.pngec.gov.pg/news/2017/08/03/commissioner-gamato-clarifies-gumine-open-issue> and <http://www.looppng.com/elections/potape-disputes-declaration-claim-63504> and <https://www.thenational.com.pg/potape-declaration-undialu-illegal/>
76. See <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/336006/bizarre-declaration-clouds-png-s-mores-by-northwest-result> and <http://news.pngfacts.com/2017/07/tug-of-war-as-double-declaration-for.html>
77. See <http://www.abc.net.au/news/programs/pacific-beat/2017-08-14/22-confirmed-dead-from-kandep-election-related/8803382> and <http://www.looppng.com/png-news/gunfight-wabag-town-63417>
78. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/hospitals-clinical-service-shuts/>
79. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/kundiawa-gembogl-counting/>
80. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/police-defuse-bomb-threat-kavieng/>
81. See <http://www.pngec.gov.pg/news/2017/07/28/statement-of-the-occasion-of-return-of-writs-for-2017-election>
82. http://www.pg.undp.org/content/papua_new_guinea/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2017/03/14/national-parliament-hosts-first-practice-session-for-women.html
83. The Registry of Political Parties observation team likewise identified vote buying (money politics), corruption, a lack of financial resources and violence and intimidation as the key factors inhibiting women's electoral success in 2017 (PNGRPP 2018:22).
84. See <http://www.looppng.com/elections/gamato-clarifies-jiwaka-pro-status-57429>
85. See <http://emtv.com.pg/jiwakans-claim-gamatos-explanation-on-jiwaka-pro-status-unsatisfactory/>
86. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/peaceful-polling-hela-far-bando/>
87. See <https://postcourier.com.pg/shp-counting-nears-end/>
88. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/polling-peaceful-whp-lakari-says/>
89. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/people-praised-maturity-polls/>
90. See <https://www.thenational.com.pg/election-hailed-despite-setbacks/>

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