

Discussion and activities

1. True or false?

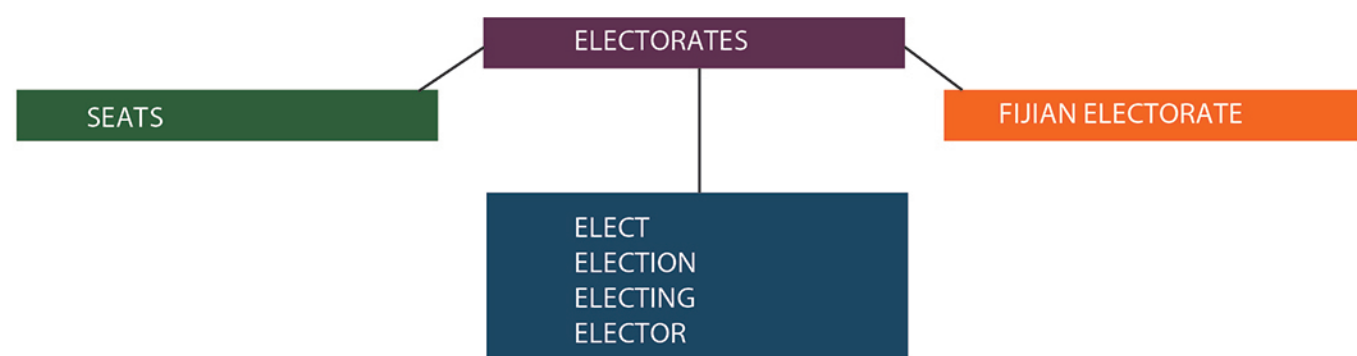
Working in pairs or small groups, decide if these statements are **True or False**.

1. The number of Members of Parliament can change as determined by the Electoral Commission before each general election. **True or False?**
2. Parties can join together in Parliament to form the Government. **True or False?**
3. A political party can have MPs in Parliament even if it doesn't win at least 5 per cent of the national vote. **True or False?**
4. Any person living in Fiji can vote in an election. **True or False?**
5. The first election under the new constitution was on 17 September 2014. **True or False?**
6. Voting age is 16. **True or False?**
7. "Democracy" means the President rules. **True or False?**
8. Media campaigns stop 48 hours before polling day. **True or False?**

2. Election Vocabulary and Concepts

Create a word map (either in your book or on a classroom marker board) for each of the words: **democracy, representative, citizen, candidate, political, electorate**.

Write the bolded word in the first box. In the next boxes, write other words and phrases that can have the same meaning. Finally, write other words that come from the same root word.



3. Try This

If you were standing for the student council at your school, how would you persuade your classmates to vote for you? What ideas, suggestions, and plans do you have that would make a difference for the students? Write a short speech that outlines what you would do if elected.

2019 Reprint

PUBLISHED BY



PARLIAMENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF FIJI
2017

CONTACT INFORMATION

Parliament of the Republic of Fiji
P.O. Box 2352
Government Buildings
Suva, Fiji.
Phone : (679) 3305811
Fax: (679) 3305325
Email : info@parliament.gov.fj
Website: www.parliament.gov.fj
Facebook: fijiparliament
Twitter: fijiparliament
Youtube: Parliament of the Republic of Fiji

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Assistance of the NZ Parliament
Education Services

This educational material has been developed through the UNDP, Fiji Parliament Support Project and supported by:



DISCOVER Parliament

How Do We Choose Who Will Represent Us?

Imagine if all Fijians had to meet together to make decisions about laws or about how taxes should be spent. This would be very difficult, if not impossible. Instead, we choose a small number of people to represent our views in Parliament, where these decisions are made. This is what happens in a democracy (a word that comes from the Greek language meaning "people rule").

Who can be a representative in Parliament? How are representatives chosen? How do they get into Parliament?

Candidates and Parties

Representatives are chosen every four years in a general election.

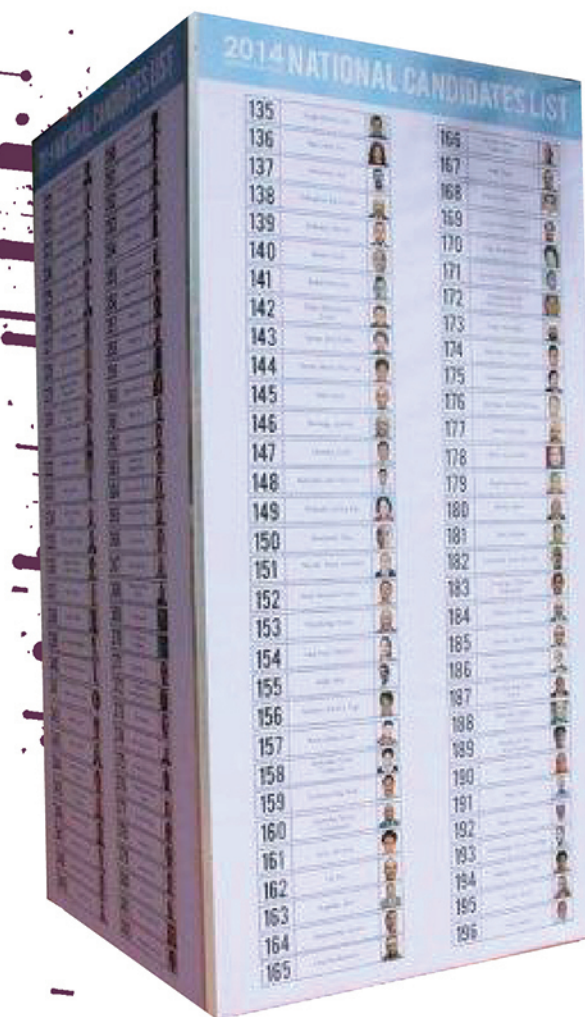
The Constitution and the Electoral Act outline the rules for an election. The Electoral Commission is responsible for running the election and making sure that the rules are followed.

All Fijians who are registered as voters can offer themselves as candidates for election. Most candidates belong to a political party which is a group of people with similar views on how our country should be run, and some stand as independents. Belonging to a party greatly increases a candidate's chance of being elected. People who offer themselves for election are keen to contribute to decision-making in Fiji.

Electorate

The word **electorate** refers to the people entitled to vote in an election. Fiji has a single national electoral roll and the elected members of Parliament (number of members can change in the future) represent voters across the whole country. Candidates are elected by all voters. In some countries there are many "constituencies" or "seats". Each constituency votes for candidates and the one who receives the most votes becomes the local member of Parliament (MP). This was the old system in Fiji before 2014. The first election under the new Constitution with one national "constituency" was on 17 September 2014.

When a general election approaches, political parties select candidates to stand for election. The parties propose lists of candidates to voters. Each party can nominate candidates not more than the number determined by the Electoral Commission before each general election. If a party or an independent candidate receives 5 percent of the national votes cast, the party or candidate will be allocated a seat(s) in Parliament. The more votes a party receives the more people on its list are elected to Parliament. This is called **proportional representation**. Individuals not belonging to a party may also stand in the election as Independents. They must receive at least 5 per cent of the national votes cast to win a seat in Parliament.



General elections

A general election is held every four years. On the day of the election, Fijian citizens aged 18 years and over choose who they want to represent them in Parliament. They do this by going in person to polling places and casting their votes. The votes are counted, and the results are published in the following few days. The candidates for each political party are ranked according to the number of votes (highest to lowest) they gain after an election. Likewise the selection of members of Parliament for each party will begin from the highest polling candidate in that party in proportion to the number of seats allocated by the Electoral Commission.

A party that gains the most votes and allocated the most seats in Parliament forms the Government. If no party has more than half the members of Parliament, parties may form a coalition with other parties or independents, to have the majority and together form Government.

DID YOU KNOW ?

The first elected members to the Legislative Council were 6 Europeans in 1904. The Indo-Fijians started voting in 1929 and had three Indo-Fijian representatives in the Legislative Council. *i Taukei* started voting in 1963; before that, *i Taukei* representatives to the Legislative Council were appointed by the Council of Chiefs.



Ratu Sir Josefa Lalabalavu Vana'ali'ali Sukuna
Original Photograph, PDC, Parliament of Fiji

THAT'S INTERESTING

*Ratu Sir Josefa Lalabalavu Vana'ali'ali Sukuna was the first local Speaker of the Legislative Council appointed in 1956. Before that the Governor chaired meetings. Ratu Sukuna had participated in World War I; became the first Fijian University Graduate. He attained a BA and LLB from Oxford University; initiated wearing of tailored sulu, which is considered the formal dress of modern *i Taukei* men; was appointed as the Native Lands Reserves Commissioner; initiated the establishment of the Native Land Trust Board now called *i-Taukei* Land Trust Board; recruited Fijians for World War II; and other important achievements.*

DID YOU KNOW ?

The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji meets in the Parliament Chamber at the Government Buildings located in the capital city of Suva. The current building was built in 1939, used by the Legislature Council which automatically became the Parliament of Fiji after independence in 1970. The building was used by the Courts after the coup of 1987. From 1992 to 2006, Parliament met in a new Parliament building located at Veiuoto, Nasase in Suva. The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji has now returned to the original building in Government Buildings, Suva. The centrepiece of the building is the Parliament Chamber, with a U shape seating arrangement. The features of the chamber include the Speaker's Chair and the central table on which the Mace sits during the sittings of Parliament. The Mace is the symbol of the authority of Parliament entrusted by it to the Speaker. It is placed in brackets on the central table at the start of a day's proceedings and removed at the end of the day to signal the close of parliamentary business for that day.

How are members of Parliament elected?

YOU HAVE ONLY ONE VOTE

This is a vote for your preferred candidate from a political party or an independent candidate contesting the election. The party or the independent candidate receiving at least 5% of the total number of votes cast is awarded seat(s) in the parliament.

SCHEDULE
(Section 37)

BALLOT PAPER FOR THE ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

CIRCLE ☐ OR TICK ☐ OR CROSS THE NUMBER OF THE CANDIDATE YOU WISH TO VOTE FOR
DO NOT CIRCLE, TICK OR CROSS MORE THAN ONE NUMBER.

135	155	175	195	215	235	255	275	295	315	335	355	375	395
136	156	176	196	216	236	256	276	296	316	336	356	376	396
137	157	177	197	217	237	257	277	297	317	337	357	377	397
138	158	178	198	218	238	258	278	298	318	338	358	378	398
139	159	179	199	219	239	259	279	299	319	339	359	379	399
140	160	180	200	220	240	260	280	300	320	340	360	380	400
141	161	181	201	221	241	261	281	301	321	341	361	381	401
142	162	182	202	222	242	262	282	302	322	342	362	382	402
143	163	183	203	223	243	263	283	303	323	343	363	383	403
144	164	184	204	224	244	264	284	304	324	344	364	384	404
145	165	185	205	225	245	265	285	305	325	345	365	385	405
146	166	186	206	226	246	266	286	306	326	346	366	386	406
147	167	187	207	227	247	267	287	307	327	347	367	387	407
148	168	188	208	228	248	268	288	308	328	348	368	388	408

(A sample of the ballot paper used in the 2014 election)

THAT'S INTERESTING

2014 Election

In April 2009 the Fijian Government announced that elections would take place by September 2014 specifying that the elections would be held under the provisions of a new Constitution. On 30 June 2012 voter registration for the 2014 elections began in Suva. On 23 March 2014, the Government announced that the elections would take place on 17 September of that year, a day to be declared a national holiday. Pre-polling for the elections began two weeks prior to the main election date to cater for those unable to travel long distances to cast their vote. It ended on 15 September. A 48-hour blackout period began soon after, during which no media, including print or social was allowed to print or post any election material which looked like campaigning.



Electronic panel on members table

DID YOU KNOW ?

Your Parliament is one of the world's modern parliaments. It uses electronic voting system. While voting a member may press '+' for Yes, '-' for no or 'X' to abstain. Show of hands or division was used in past parliaments and is still used in many of Westminster type parliaments. Live parliament coverage is also shown streaming on the national television stations and live streaming on the internet.

ELECTION FACTS

Elections are always held on a chosen day which is called a "polling day". To vote, a person must be 18 years or over and be a Fijian citizen (there are some other requirements and exceptions to this rule). Votes are cast in secret in polling booths, which are usually in places such as schools and church halls. Candidates and parties put out lots of advertisements, posters and pamphlets leading up to an election. There are rules around what they are allowed to do for advertising. People called scrutinisers make sure that the voting process is followed properly and that votes are counted accurately. Initial election results are announced on the days following polling day. When all counting has been completed, the Electoral Commission declares how many seats in Parliament have been won by each party.