THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

REPUBLIC OF FIJI

ANNUAL REPORT

2020

THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

2020 Annual Report

FOREWORD

It is my great privilege to deliver the 2020 Annual Report of the Electoral Commission in accordance with Section 75 (4) of the Constitution.

The Electoral Commission members were duly elected by H.E the President on 20 March 2020. I was re-appointed as the Chair of the Electoral Commission with four (4) other Commissioners namely Mr Simione Naiduki, Ms Margot Jenkins, Mr Jawahar Lal and Ms Kavita Raniga. There were two newly appointed members to the Commission and it is my pleasure to introduce Ms Selina Lee Wah and Ms Merewalesi Roden.

As mentioned above, five (5) Commission members including myself have had the opportunity of overseeing the 2018 General Elections and have familiarized ourselves with the processes of the same. As we draw near to the much anticipated 2022 General Elections, the inclusion of the two (2) new members of the Commission (with their own different professional backgrounds), will certainly allow us to perform our duties and responsibilities better as conferred to us by law.

We had undertaken a few activities since our appointment to this office in March this year. A highlight of this would be the appointment of members of Parliament, the seats of which were left vacant by their predecessors (details of this are listed in the report). The Electoral Commission intends to improve from the last General Election and hopes that the 2022 General Election will see the standards of election delivery enhanced.

In this Report, the Electoral Commission has also taken the opportunity to submit two (2) additional reports to Parliament, the first is the Fijian Elections Office Annual Report for 2020 and second, the 2018 General Election Voter Turnout and Survey Reports. Both reports are submitted pursuant to section 75(5) of the Constitution.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my Commission members, the Supervisor of Elections who is also the Secretary to the Electoral Commission and the Fijian Elections Office Staff for the tremendous work put in through the years. As the next General Election is coming up, the Electoral Commission will be working closely with their stakeholders for the successful delivery of a credible 2022 General Elections.

Suresh Chandra
Chairperson

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) According to Section 75 (4) of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji 2013, the Commission must make an Annual Report to the President concerning the operations of the Commission and must submit a copy of its Annual Report to Parliament.

(ii) The Annual Report is for Calendar Year, January 2020- December 2020.

(ii) Key activities of the Electoral Commission for 2020 included the following:

    a. Appointment of Commission Members. This included 5 ongoing Commissioners and 2 that were newly appointed.
- i. Mr Suresh Chandra (Chair)- Reappointed
- ii. Ms Margot Jenkins- Reappointed
- iii. Ms Kavita Raniga- Reappointed
- iv. Mr Jawahar Lal- Reappointed
- v. Mr Simione Naiduki- Reappointed
- vi. Ms Merewalesi Roden- Newly appointed
- vii. Ms Selina Lee Wah- Newly appointed

    b. Electoral Commission meetings were inclusive of both Face to Face and meetings via electronic medium.

(iv) The Electoral Commission was sufficiently funded to ensure it was able to meet its responsibilities as per the legal framework.

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INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to section 75(4) of the Constitution, the Electoral Commission must deliver its Annual Report to his Excellency the President, Major-General (Rt'd). Jioji Konusi Konrote and the Secretary-General to Parliament.

In 2020, the President on the advice of the Constitutional Offices Commission appointed the Electoral Commission for the 2022 General Election. This Report acknowledges the appointments of the Commissioners in embarking on a new journey as overseers in the upcoming 2022 General Elections.

Since the year 2020 saw the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic, most of the planned activities of the Electoral Commission had to be reconsidered and revised. The direct face-to-face meetings of the Electoral Commission had to be cancelled and meetings took place through electronic medium.

Despite the disruptions brought about by the Pandemic, the Electoral Commission was able to successfully execute its Constitutional Tasks and also continue its monitoring of election preparation activities of the FEO.

Copies of this report will also be delivered to the Minister responsible for Elections and the Supervisor of Elections respectively.

REPORTING STRUCTURE

Chairperson
The Electoral Commission
Mr. Suresh Chandra
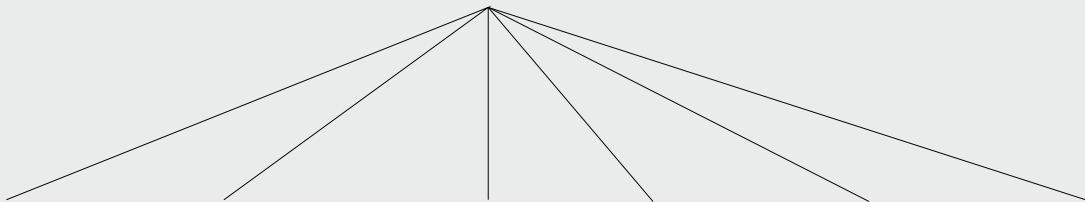
Commissioner
Ms. Margot Jenkins

Commissioner
Mr. Jawahar Lal

Commissioner
Ms. Selina Lee Wah

Commissioner
Mr. Simione Naiduki

Commissioner
Ms. Merewalesi Roden

Commissioner
Ms. Kavita Raniga

Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Mr. Mohammed Saneem

Administrative Assistant
Ms. Savaira Maka

INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Budget Allocation

2020-2021

Description	Budget $
Salaries	17,170
FNPF Contribution	850
Electoral Commission Allowance	35,000
Legal fees	10,000
Publication	2,500
Advertising Expense	2,500
Postage and Freight	100
Stationery Expenses	4,000
Sundry Expenses	300
Printing - Stationery	4,000
Repair & Maintenance - Furniture/Fittings	5,000
Hire of Venue	10,000
Purchase of office supplies	2,000
Mobile Phone Expenses	2,500
Accommodation	12,000
Travelling Meals	2,000
Vehicle Repairs & Maintenance	3,000
Vehicle Fuel	4,000
Travelling - Air fare	15,000
Meetings	8,000
VAT	7,821
Total	**147,741**

Commissioners Allowance

All Commissioners are employed part time. They are required to meet (face to face or by electronic medium) to discuss issues pertaining to their responsibilities as set out in Section 75 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji.

They are allowed a sitting allowance of $500 per day when a meeting is held. This is inclusive of meetings with Fiji's Political Parties, NGO's, Civil Societies, Media, Fiji Police Force and other important stakeholders. The Commissioners are also prescribed with meal allowance of $50 per day. However, this will not be conveyed to them, instead the EC Secretariat will arrange for their meals accordingly.

Secretariat

The EC Secretariat is staffed with 1 individual (Administrative Assistant), apart from the Secretary to the Electoral Commission.

The Secretariat is tasked with making their own procedure and guidelines for their responsibilities under the law. There were a few appointments of new members of Parliaments carried out this year which was facilitated by the Secretariat.

EC Activities for 2020

The Electoral Commission met 5 times in 2020. This includes:

i. Attending the first EC Formal Meeting- FEO Business Papers and Review of Responses to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights (21-22 May, 2020)
ii. Review of Laws and drafting and giving ideas on EC Strategic Plan (20-21 July, 2020)
iii. Discuss on EC Budget, amendments to the Political Parties Registration, Conduct Funding and Disclosures Act and EC Strategic Plan (09 October, 2020)
iv. Discussions on Voter Survey Analysis (23 November, 2020)
v. Discussions on Voter Survey Analysis continued with detailed presentations from Officers in-charge of different areas namely Northern, Southern, Eastern and Central Divisions (27 November, 2020).

The following activities were conducted via electronic medium:

i. Mr Faiyaz Koya; (24 March 2020)
ii. Mr Virendra Lal; (08 December 2020) and
iii. Ms Tanya Waqanika (08 December 2020)

The Electoral Commission has established procedures for the filling of vacancies in Parliament. The process requires the Secretariat to seek verifications from various agencies outside of the FEO and the EC and the EC wishes to extend sincere appreciation and gratitude to these agencies for their expedient response.

Reports pursuant to section 75(5) of the Constitution

2020 Annual Report of the Fijian Elections Office

The EC has decided to annex the 2020 Fijian Elections Office Annual Report to this Parliamentary Report.

The FEO has been providing the EC with its ongoing reports on the election operations at the EC meetings, and where the EC was not able to convene meetings due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the reports were received in electronic format on a quarterly basis.

The FEO annual report is designed to report on the ongoing progress of the operational activities in preparation for the next General Election. The presentation of the FEO Annual Report also commensurate with the Commissioners endeavors to enhance the transparency in election operations. It is also necessary for parliament to be aware of the extent of election operations annually.

The EC has noted the ongoing preparations by the FEO for the 2022 General Elections and the EC is satisfied that the progress is on par with its expectations. The EC noted various innovative activities undertaken by the FEO to continue the capacity building of its staff. The EC also welcomes the initiative taken by FEO to enhance its staff training platforms and adopting the 'e-vuli' platform.

The FEO has also continued providing Voter Services to Fijians and over 48,000 voters receiving voter services despite the impact of the pandemic. A special congratulation to the SoE for the relocation and opening of the Suva Voter Services Centre at the historic building. The new service centre presents an accessible, professional and welcoming environment for the provision of election services.

It is also necessary for the FEO to digitize all the voter registration forms from 2012 as the paper forms are deteriorating every day. The EC also welcomes the new process to digitize the forms in the VSC's on a daily basis. Having these forms available in digital format will assist in preserving the records and also allow instant access for verification purposes.

The FEO also introduced the online register for Political Parties. This electronic record will be available directly for the public and will provide essential information about the Parties in Fiji.

The EC also acknowledges that the FEO successfully implemented 6 of its 9 planned projects from 2020.

The 2018 General Election Voter Turnout and Survey Report

The SoE initially presented the statistics from the FEO's Voter List digitization project to the Electoral Commission in the EC's first meeting. The EC acknowledges the depth of the research put in the data being presented, as well as the thematic approach taken by the SoE in the analysis.

The Report has allowed the EC to comprehend the voter turnout using data and figures directly from the polling stations. We have noted the trends in the participation as well as the lack thereof.

It is also a matter of concern to note the low turnout in the 2018 General Election. Whilst the EC noted that the low turnout required urgent and immediate attention, it is not wise to make hasty plans without thorough research and planning.

The approach taken by the FEO in terms of dealing with turnout is commendable. Now that there is data and facts to ascertain the response of voters, these can form the basis for drawing up response strategies to build up the turnout in the next election.

Parliament is invited to note the turnout figures from various areas and identify ways and means to build greater participation in the electoral process.

The Survey Report further provides greater access to understanding voter perception and behavior. The Survey was done using some very basic questions that can assist a reasonable person to understand the dynamics of the voter behavior in the last election.

Whilst it is not necessary to repeat all the findings of the report in the EC Report, the EC does accept the results as general explanation of the thinking and behaviors in Fiji. The contents of the report will also be extremely useful to all stakeholders such as political parties, CSO's and voters as well.

CONCLUSION

Since 2020 falls in the middle of the electoral cycle, it is mostly regarded as time to consolidate key election data and prepare for the upcoming General Election.

The EC activities in such year are minimal and will pick up in 2021 and 2022. Ideally 2020 would have been a year for vigorous training activities but due to the impact of COVID-19, most of the activities could not eventuate.

Fijian Elections Office

2020 Annual Report

MISSION

Our mission as Fiji's election management body is to implement internationally recognized election best practises in accordance with the law, effectively regulate political parties and efficiently register eligible Fijians to ensure that we deliver the highest quality of election services under the supervision of The Electoral Commission.

VISION

Our vision is to be recognised as a professional institution that conducts fair and credible Elections broadly representing the will of the Fijian people.

Guiding Principles

Right to vote
Every citizen over the age of 18 years has the right to vote by secret ballot.

One person, One vote , One value
Every voter has one vote, with each vote being of equal value.

A credible single National Register of Voters
Every registered voter shall be listed on a single National Register of Voters.

Independence, Impartiality and Neutrality
The Fijian Elections Office is an independent body and shows no preference in either speech or action for any individual candidate or political party.

Excellence in Service Delivery
Provide highest quality of electoral services to all Fijians in a professional, effective and timely manner.

Good Governance
The Fijian Elections Office values accountability, honesty, integrity and transparency in all its transactions and will ensure that all legislative disclosures are properly and adequately done.

Participation
Empowering every Fijian to take ownership of the election through active involvement.

Innovation
Strive towards continuous, innovative and practical solutions to contribute towards the evolution of electoral practices in Fiji.

Verifiability
In elections, to mechanise Fijian Elections Office processes so that given the same data and assumption, an independent and impartial Observer can produce the same results.

List of Abbreviations

AWEB	Association of World Election Bodies
BDM	Births, Deaths and Marriages Registry
DMs	Divisional Managers
EC	Electoral Commission
EMB	Election Management Body
EMiS	Election Management Information System
EMS	Election Management System
ESS	Exolvo Self Service
EVR	Electronic Voter Registration
FEO	Fijian Elections Office
GE	General Election
HRD	Human Resources Department
IDD	International Day of Democracy
MOG	Multinational Observer Group
NDA	Needs Development Assessment
NRV	National Register of Voters
RAMEO	Recruitment Assistant and Management of Elections Official System
RMiS	Results Management and Information System
SoE	Supervisor of Elections
SOP	Standing Order Procedure
SP	Strategic Plan
TDU	Training and Development Unit
ToTs	Training of Trainers
VSC	Voter Services Centre

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FOREWORD

Bula Vinaka and welcome to the 2020 Annual Report for the Fijian Elections Office **["FEO"]**.

This report for the first time forms part of The Electoral Commission's **["EC"]** annual report to the Parliament. During the Strategic Planning exercise earlier this year it was noted that the FEO activities on an annual basis can be reported to parliament and the best machinery for this reporting would be through the annual report of the EC.

Prior to 2020 all activities of the FEO were religiously reported to the EC during the EC meetings and such meetings would take note of the activities of the FEO in terms of the culminating delivery of the next General Election.

In terms of advancing the transparency of its operations, the FEO will continue to provide an annual report to The EC for publication purposes. However, in terms of operations, reports on FEO activities will continue to be provided to The EC on a quarterly basis. Where an activity involves directly the Commissioners, reports to The EC are generally provided on an adhoc or on a request basis.

The FEO has adopted the vision to be recognised as a professional institution that conducts fair and credible elections broadly representing the will of the Fijian people for its 2020-2023 Strategic Plan.

In delivering this, as Fiji's Election Management Body **["EMB"]** our mission is to implement internationally recognized election best practises in accordance with the law, effectively regulate political parties and efficiently register eligible Fijians to ensure that we deliver the highest quality of election services under the supervision of The EC.

The FEO will continue its operational activities despite the setbacks it has suffered due to the economical impacts of COVID-19 and we anticipate that all election activities will be completed prior to 1st April 2022 and have the nation and the FEO ready to deliver the 2022 General Election.

Vinaka

Mohammed Saneem
Supervisor of Elections

Introduction

The FEO is an independent EMB established in March 2014 under the Electoral Act, 2014. The FEO's role is to deliver credible elections in line with international best practises.

The Supervisor of Elections **["SoE"]** is the head of the FEO and reports to The EC under the legal framework. The EC oversees the conduct of elections while the FEO under the leadership of the SoE carries out the operational functions of the election.

The FEO administers the conduct of voter awareness, registration of political parties and voter registration. FEO also conducts Trade Union Elections in Fiji.

As per section 6 (2) of the Electoral Act, 2014, the SoE has complete independence to determine the composition of the FEO including the authority to determine the remuneration, the terms and conditions of employment and recruitment procedure as well as the disciplinary processes to deal with staff at the FEO.

The FEO is made up of four (4) Directorates; Executive, Operations, Information and Technology and Corporate Services.

A graphical overview of the core structure of the FEO is illustrated below:
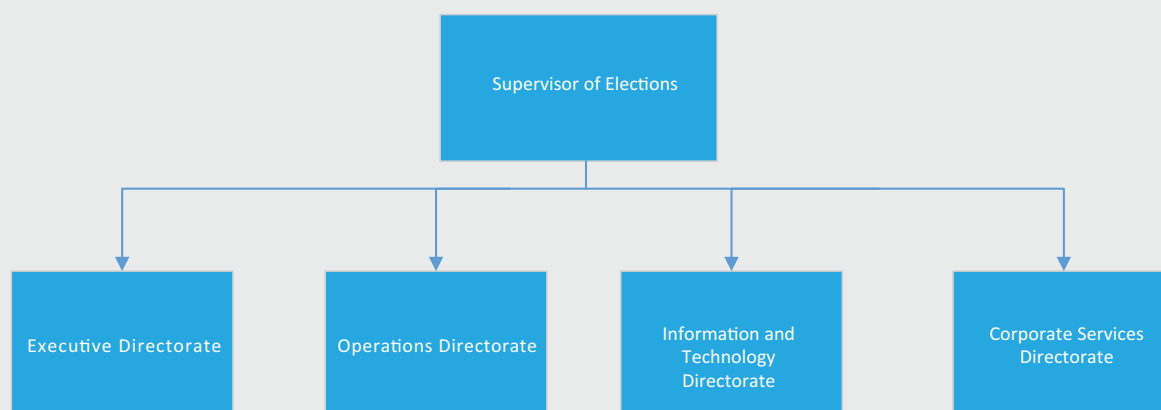
The Fijian Government through the Ministry of Economy issues the FEO with an annual grant from the National Budget every year. The FEO's Strategic Plan forms the foundation for the FEO budget requests and this long term plan allows the Ministry to support electoral activities throughout the electoral cycle. Donor partners also assist the FEO in the implementation of its mandate through financial and technical support. The FEO through its international relations also receives technical and institutional support from overseas EMB's as well as regional and international organisations.

The FEO has conducted two (2) General Elections under the 2013 Constitution. Whilst the FEO organized and conducted elections for the 50 members of Parliament in 2014, the 2018 General Election saw the election of 51 members to the August House. This is in line with the requirements set out in section 54 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji.

The FEO's headquarters is based at 59-63 High Street, Toorak, Suva and it also operates sub-offices in Lautoka and Labasa.

Directorate Reports

Executive Directorate

The Executive Directorate is supervised by the SoE. This unit comprises of the EC Secretariat, Legal & Compliance, Political Parties Management, Internal Audit, International Relations and Communications. This Directorate supports the SoE to manage and ensure that all functions of the FEO are carried out efficiently and effectively.

Legal and Compliance

This Department's role is to provide legal advice to the FEO in relation to the provisions under the Electoral Act, 2014, the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013, the Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act, 2012 and any other applicable laws. It is also responsible for the effective and efficient implementation of the electoral and applicable laws through the development, testing and amending of the organization's Standing Order Procedures **["SOPs"]**. At the moment the FEO has 18 policies and 63 procedures.

The Operations Directorate's SOPs which forms bulk of the existing SOPs are awaiting amendment to the electoral laws before it could be amended further. Following the 2018 General Election the EC and the SoE submitted a Joint Report to Parliament **["Joint Report"]** which includes the Multinational Observer Group Report **["MOG Report"]**.

The Joint Report and MOG Report made recommendations for Parliament to consider before going into the next General Election in 2022, including the review of various aspects of our electoral laws in order to deliver General Elections in line with international best practises. In particular, the Joint Report made recommendations for inter alia the review of laws on political party funding and disclosures and the development of clearer guidelines on the restrictions on the use of State resources during a political party's campaign period. A clearer definition for 'campaign period' was also recommended too for the purposes of clarity.

The Joint Report also recommended that the rules surrounding objections and appeals relating to the registration of voters should be developed so that political parties and other registered voters can utilize such mechanisms to challenge the registration of voters.

The legal framework for election has been tested both in the 2014 and 2018 General Elections. Hence, it is only appropriate to carry out electoral law reforms before the next General Election. This resulted in the Legal and Compliance Department and the SoE having countless meetings with the Solicitor General's Office identifying relevant electoral laws that required amendments to its provisions.

As a result, in the December 2020 parliament sitting the three (3) electoral bills were tabled. These bills would be deliberated in the March 2021 parliament sitting. Once the bills are passed, the organization would be in a better position to amend its operational SOPs.

Political Party Management

The SoE is also the Registrar of Political Parties and oversees the registration, conduct, funding and disclosures of political parties. At the FEO, the Review and Compliance Officer provides a supporting role to the office of the Registrar of Political Parties in ensuring compliance and adherence to the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act, 2013.

Registered Political Parties

There are currently seven (7) registered political parties in Fiji and they are listed below:
1. FijiFirst
2. Fiji Labour Party
3. Freedom Alliance
4. HOPE
5. National Federation Party
6. Social Democratic Liberal Party
7. Unity Fiji

In 2020, there were no new registrations and neither were there any de-registrations of any political parties. There was only one (1) suspension action by the Registrar of Political Parties against the Social Democratic Liberal Party on 26 May 2020 pursuant to section 19(3) of the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act, 2013. They were unsuspended on 29 June 2020 after rectifying the breach.

Online Register for Political Parties

In the year 2020, the FEO achieved a major milestone for political parties and this was the development of the Online Register for Political Parties.

The Online Register contains details of all the registered political parties particularly the:
a) Name of the Political Party;
b) Symbol of the Political Party;
c) Registration Date of the Political Party;
d) Names of the Registered Officer;
e) Address of the Political Party;
f) Contact Details;
g) The website link; and
h) The constitution link of the party.

The Register has been constantly updated when new appointments or resignations have been made and this is available on https://www.feo.org.fj/political-parties-register/. A snapshot of the Register can be seen below:
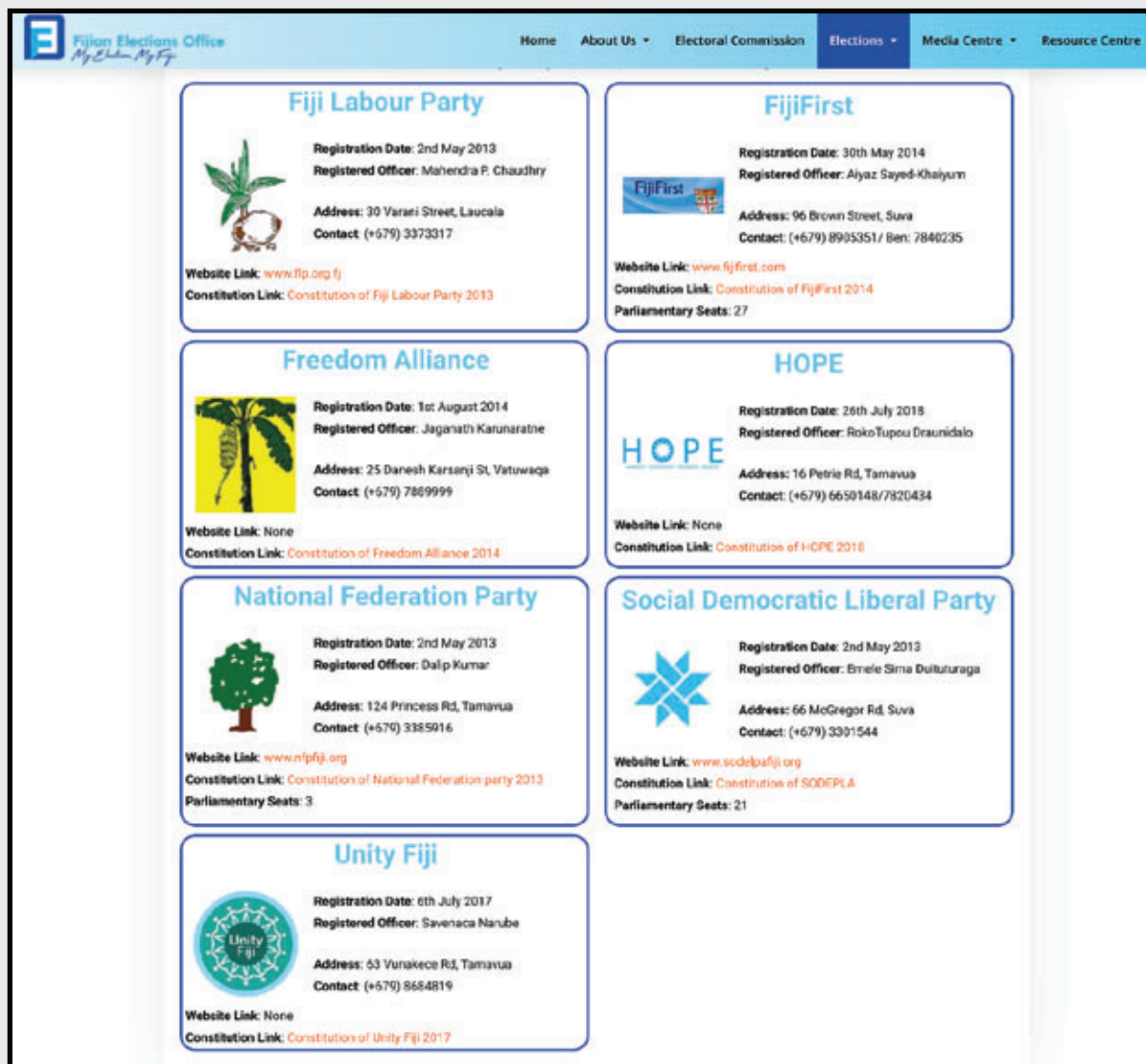
Audit/ Verification of Financial Disclosures of Political Parties

All political parties are required to submit declarations and disclosures to the Registrar of Political Parties. In 2020, the Registrar directed that an audit/verification exercise be carried out with all registered political parties. This commenced in the 2nd half of 2020 and saw the verification of three (3) political parties accounts, namely FijiFirst, Fiji Labour Party and the National Federation Party. The list of donations and audited accounts for these political parties were published in the Gazette on 19 November, 2020 and the Fiji Sun Newspaper on 26 November 2020.

In this project, the team comprised of the Internal Auditor, the Financial Controller, the Review and Compliance Officer and the Registrar of Political Parties overseeing the project. Three (3) political parties' accounts have been verified whereas four (4) are still in the verification process.

International Relations

The International Relations section of the FEO, under the current Strategic Plan is responsible for facilitating and hosting election related workshops between FEO and other EMB's or with International Cooperation Partners such as the Association of World Election Bodies **["AWEB"]**, International Foundation for Electoral Systems **["IFES"]** and the Commonwealth Electoral Network **["CEN"]**.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the workshops organized for the FEO were conducted virtually through platforms such as Zoom.

Listed below is a list of webinars and other international events that FEO participated in during the year 2020.

	Webinars and other International events that FEO Participated in 2020	
	Title of Webinars	**Hosted By**
1	The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Elections and EMBs- Asia and Pacific Regions	Commonwealth Electoral Network
2	Safegaurding Health and Elections	IFES
3	Legal Consideration when delaying or adapting Elections	IFES/Presentation from Fiji-Manager Legal
4	Erosion of Information Integrity	IFES/ Presentation from Fiji-Manager Legal
5	Preserving Electoral Integrity During an Infodemic	IFES / Presentation from Fiji-Public Relations and Engagement Coordinator
6	Election Interference: Attacks critical information systems	Council of Europe
7	Issues, Challenges and Protocols for Conducting Elections during COVID-19: Sharing Country Experiences	AWEB India/ Presentation from Fiji-Director Corporate Services
8	First online course - Social Media and EMBs	AWEB-Attended by FEO Communications and Media Team
9	Dissemination of Electoral Information to Voters in Times of Crisis-Webinar	AWEB
10	Valuable Lessons Learned and Future Outlook	AWEB/ Presentations from Fiji -Director Operations and Director Corporate Services

The FEO also took part in various virtual meetings which were attended by the SoE. These meetings included the 8th AWEB Executive Meeting and the PIANZEA senior officials meetings for the months of September and December.

Other international events which FEO participated in included the New Zealand General Election 2020 Virtual Visitors Programme which was organized by the Electoral Commission of New Zealand and an article contribution for the AWEB Newsletter in its October issue.

The FEO will continue with the various virtual programs in 2021 which would include the following:

- AWEB 9th EB written Meeting through email.
- Bridge workshops on the topics listed below:
  o Electoral Costs and Finances.
  o Gender Equality and Elections.
  o Electoral Education and Information.
- Online program run by the A-WEB Secretariat on the following topics:
  o The Role of Media in Election Management.
  o Fostering Transparency in Political Finance.
  o Strengthening Voter Education.
  o Political Inclusion of Marginalized Groups.
- PIANZEA Senior Officials Meeting.
- A-WEB and IFES Webinars.
- Online Surveys.

Internal Audit

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value to and improve an organization's operations.

The FEO Internal Auditor ensures the FEO maintains best practices and good governance through providing input to all corporate services activities. It also ensures that support policies and procedures of the FEO undergoes an ongoing program of audits of internal practice to ensure compliance with documented procedures.

The following are the activities that were undertaken by the Internal Auditor for the year 2020:

- Monitoring of activities of the Strategic Plan **["SP"]** for quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4 for Executive Directorate, Corporate Services Directorate and IT Directorate.
- Internal Audit framework has been developed and submitted to the respective Director for review.

The following are the activities that are currently in progress and will continue in 2021:

- Audit of the Communications plan.
- Audit of the Trade Union elections.

Communications and Public Relations

The Communications arm of the FEO is responsible for the creation and dissemination of content for the promotion and sustenance of the organisation's brand and image within the public sphere. With reference to Pillar four (4) of the FEO 2020-2023 SP, the Communications team also develops and implements effective public outreach and engagement programs to strengthen electoral participation.

For 2020, the Communications team undertook several key projects to engage with the electorate and to increase public awareness of FEO activities. A significant portion of this also included providing communications support to other departments to ensure the overall objectives of the FEO were met.

The major project for the year was the nationwide Voter Survey which was conducted from 15 September to 31 October, 2020. The Election Management and Information System **["EMiS"]** team had developed a Voter Survey App especially for the project. More than 150 staff were deployed around the country and 14,137 responses were collected from registered voters. The results were compiled into the 2018 General Election Voter Turnout and Survey Reports.

Furthermore, the Communications Department also ran a virtual quiz competition as part of the International Day of Democracy **["IDD"]** celebrations in September which garnered a lot of interest from the public especially from young voters. The event was complemented with an extensive awareness campaign on the FEO's online platforms. In addition, two (2) days of Voter Festival was also organised on 16 and 17 September, 2020 to create awareness on IDD and this included a registration drive at the Suva Voter Services Centre **["VSC"]**.

In line with FEO's strategic goals to establish the FEO as the centre of election information, the Communications Department in conjunction with the EMiS Department developed an Electoral Information Resource Centre which was incorporated into the FEO website. The website will be launched in the first quarter of 2021.

Moreover, the Department looks forward to the Elections Planning Workshop scheduled to be held in March 2021 that will strategize the communication and awareness plans for the 2022 General Election. Following this, the Communications Strategy for the next General Election will be developed.

Corporate Services Directorate

The Corporate Services Directorate includes; Procurement and Asset Management, Human Resources and Training, Finance and Administration and Ballot Paper Design and Production Departments. The Directorate's core responsibilities includes the implementation of corporate governance within the legal framework, recruitment and training of staff, the sustainable management of resources and the exercise of prudent financial management.

Human Resources

The core functions of the Human Resources Department **["HRD"]** is to conduct merit based recruitment and selection of FEO staff focussing on selecting high performing, honest employees with high standards of integrity, providing equal employment opportunity and reviewing and confirming position based remuneration and benefits for the FEO.

In 2020, the HRD completed their SP related activities such as the finalization of the ongoing organization structure for the FEO, facilitation of external audit for the Department, review and finalization of the IT Directorate structure and appointment of personnel to vacant positions through advertisments.

Apart from the SP activities, the HRD undertook the following activities:

1. Post Processing:
   a. Batch A/2020 was advertised in January 2020.

A1/2020	Director IT	On-hold
A2/2020	Deputy Director IT	On-hold
A3/2020	Manager Development Services	On-hold
A4/2020	Manager Legal	Appointed
A5/2020	Operations Coordinator (2x)	On-hold
A6/2020	Political Parties Regulation & Information Management Coordinator	On-hold
A7/2020	Finance Officer Payments	On-hold
A8/2020	Finance Officer Reconciliation	Appointed
A9/2020	Administration Assistant to Electoral Commission	Appointed

From the nine (9) positions advertised in Batch 01/2020, only three (3) positions were processed and appointment done, whilst the remaining is on-hold due to budgetary constraints.

B1/2020	Divisional Administrative Assistant (4x)	Appointed

One of the major achievements was the revamping and training of staff on the use of Exolvo Self Service **["ESS"]** for the effective management of leave and other administrative tasks by the FEO staff. The HRD also supported project managers in the timely hiring of staff for projects.

As the FEO prepares for the next General Election, the HRD will be undertaking various crucial activities in 2021 which includes the implementation of online application module for FEO vacancies, organizing Leadership trainings for senior staff and exploring avenues for FEO to be part of various excellence awards.

As part of the election preparations the HRD will also be finalising the FEO's election mode structure, conducting recruitment drive for election officials and continuing post processing of vacant positions.

Training and Development Unit

The Training and Development Unit **["TDU"]** is responsible for identifying staff trainings and development needs for FEO staff. It is also responsible for developing training packages for all trainings conducted at FEO.

Training Strategy at FEO

Training is a crucial aspect for organizational development and success at the FEO. As such, the FEO has streamlined most of its training functions in order to become more efficient and productive in its training deliveries.

The FEO has categorized its trainings into two (2) streams. They are professional development trainings for FEO core staff and elections training for the short term staff who are recruited for polling duties.

In line with the SP activities, the TDU continued with knowledge trainings for its core staff as a way of capacity building and equipping staff with the relevant knowledge and skills required for the conduct of the next General Election. Staff were required to attend trainings and complete ongoing assessments to ensure that the capacity levels and productivity within the organization increases.

For the year 2020, TDU have facilitated 31 trainings for both organizational (corporate) and operational trainings for FEO staff.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most trainings organized in 2020 were conducted virtually on Google Meet and Zoom. Trainings offered through this mode were tailor made to ensure that it was interactive between the facilitators and participants.

E – training Platform (e-Vuli – Moodle)

The TDU is working on changing the dynamics of delivering trainings at FEO by offering blended training through e-Vuli (Moodle). Blended learning is the effective combination of online learning and classroom learning.

The key idea behind Moodle is to develop competency based courses and offer these at a user pace. Such courses will only admit trainees for face to face sessions once they have completed the given pre-requisites on Moodle. Face to face sessions will take them to real-life scenarios after which they will be tasked to do post tests, surveys or other assignments.

Moodle at FEO will be piloted with courses such as Managing Up, Managing Change Effectively and Online Induction. If the system supports, Moodle will also be used to run trainings for Election Officials during 2022 General Election.

Induction trainings which have been run on Moodle are carried out for all new employees who have joined the organization. This training familiarizes staff with the organization's mission, vision, guiding principles, SOPs as well as the terms and conditions of employment.

Preparations for the next General Election

The TDU will be developing Trainer Guides for FEO trainings in 2021. Once the training manuals are developed by the Operations team, the TDU will proceed with the finalization of the training packages before commencing with the Election Officials training in 2022.

Finance and Administration

The core function of the Finance Department is to provide financial and administration support to ensure that election commitments are met. The Department also ensures that all legislative requirements are met and that all financial and administration support required for the election operations are provided in a timely, efficient and effective manner.

The following activities were completed in 2020:
- Conducted budget consultations/preparation with each directorate.
- Managed appropriate financial records for donor funds.
- Requested Operational grant for EC.
- Prepared annual financial statement.
- Cleared 2018 FNPF payments for Election Officials.
- Managed to setup finance system and bank account for EC.
- Processed payment for e-filing and voter survey project.
- Setup Mpaisa payment platform for FEO.
- Assisted in the conduct of financial statement audit for the year 2017-2018.
- Managed funds for EC.

The following are the activities' which will commence in the year 2021 and will build up to the 2020/2023 general elections:

- Develop 2022/2023 General Election Budget.
- Develop operational budget for the year 2021-2022.
- Assist the office of the Auditor General's Office in the conduct of 2018-2019 audit.
- Develop Election Officials salary payment platform.
- Open Divisional bank account.
- Provide financial support for all the projects and operating activity for the office.
- Manage funds for EC.

Budget /Expenditure

This annual report falls on two (2) different financial year/budget year. The months from January 2020 to July 2020 is for the budget year 2019-2020, whereas, the months from August to December is for the budget year 2020-2021.The total budget approved for the year 2019-2020 was $4,545,261, whereas, for the year 2020-2021 , $4,376,166 has been allocated.

The table below summarises the expenditure summary for two (2) different budget cycles. From the expenditure report for the year 2019-2020 $39,644.26 was the expenditure for EC.

Expenditure Report from January 2020 to December 2020

	Expenditure January 2020 -July 2020	Expenditure August 2020 - 10 December 2020	Expenditure Total	Comments
Prior Year Reimbursement	$39,167.08		$39,167.08	This payment relates to reimbursement to MoE for prior year balances for bond for office building
Information Technology Expenses	$46,555.82	$79,261.14	$125,816.96	
Consultants Fees	$42,251.98	$7,909.33	$50,161.31	
Depreciation	$760,716.44		$760,716.44	
Electoral Commission Allowance	$12,700.00		$12,700.00	
Management Expense	$1,882.68	$29.23	$1,911.91	
Insurance	$2,549.89	$36,155	$38,704.89	
Marketing /Advertisement Costs	$25,263.24	$47,619.05	$72,882.29	
Newspaper & Subscription	$338.10	$327.27	$665.37	
Personnel Emoluments Expense	$1,193,235.46	$949,383.81	$2,142,619.27	
Staff Training - Training	$420.00	$6,438.07	$6,858.07	
Postage and Courier Expense	$3,771.04	$2,544.52	$6,315.56	
Office Administration Expense	$188,859.55	$146,952.25	$335,811.80	
Telecommunication Expenses	$78,930.39	$42,981.43	$121,911.82	
Travel and Accommodation Expense	$16,749.51	$6,058.41	$22,807.92	
Financial Expense	$1,648.00	$985.62	$2,633.62	
EC and Office Meeting Expense	$1,803.85		$1,803.85	
Total	$2,416,843.03	$1,326,645.13	$3,743,488.16	

Procurement & Asset Management

The core functions of the Procurement & Asset Management Department **["PAMD"]** are:

a) To promote accountability for the use of FEO funds in the acquisition of goods and services within FEO;
b) To assist Departments to acquire value added, appropriate and quality goods and services that meet immediate and long term needs with minimum impact on the environment;
c) To acquire, manage and maintain all assets of the FEO; and
d) To ensure that all processes in the procurement of goods and services are done in the most ethical, transparent and accountable manner at all times.

The following activities were completed by the PAMD in 2020:

- Developed and finalised the Procurement Plan for 2022/2023.
- Carried out the Existence of Assets Projects for all FEO Assets.
- Conducted Year End Board of Survey for all damaged and Ageing/Unusable assets.
- Documented a draft of the Inventory Management System for Warehouse operations use in 2022.
- Created a new Commercial Policy which would govern the establishment and winding down of temporary offices.
- Conducted annual maintenance for all buildings at FEO.

Apart from the SP activities, other projects that were conducted by the PAMD were as follows:

Destruction of 2018 General Election Sensitive & Non-Sensitive Materials

This approved project was done under the supervision of Manager Procurement & Asset Management within 12 days, destructing a total of 2,173 Ballot boxes of sensitive and non-sensitive materials. Items were either pulped or incinerated. A total of 10.6 tonnes of sensitive materials were pulped.

Existence of Assets and Re-tagging

This approved project commenced on 30th June and involved verification of physical assets with the Fixed Asset Register to ensure that assets were present as stated and recorded. The recommendations of this project have been put up to FEO Management for further considerations and deliberations.

FEO Inventory Stocktake

This project commenced on 16th June 2020 and was completed after two (2) months.

The PAMD anticipates to conduct the following activities in 2021 as it builds up to the next General Election.

Inventory Management System for FEO Warehouse

FEO will implement the Inventory Management System for its warehouse in 2021. Currently, it is being developed and will be tested in the coming months.

Divisional Office Setup

The PAMD will be securing commercial spaces for its Divisional Offices and Warehouses in 2021 in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures in place. This will ensure that the selection processes are being undertaken in an accountable and transparent manner.

Information and Technology Directorate

The Information and Technology Directorate is responsible for the overall IT infrastructure, networking, software development and providing IT support services to the FEO staff. This Directorate also ensures that all FEO systems are developed and managed efficiently and effectively during election and non-election years.

The Directorate consists of two (2) units, the EMiS unit which is the developing team and the ICT unit which looks after the FEO network and support services.

Election Management Information System

Previously known as the EMiS team, this unit is now under the IT Directorate. The Departments role is to create and look after systems and data required for the general elections, with special focus on the Election Management System **["EMS"]**.

The Development Services team work towards achieving their goal to adapt the latest and current technologies to enhance the efficiency of the delivery of the objectives of the organization. This has been achieved through the constant liaisons and working with other Departments to ensure that the set goals and activities are met.

In 2020, majority of the activities listed for the EMiS team has been successfully completed. The Department had managed to achieve a lot of its set targeted activities despite shift in time lines and complexity brought on by the circumstances.

The following list highlights the completed projects.

2020 Major Projects and Achievements

- Running online Quiz for the International Day of Democracy with the Public Relations and Engagement Coordinator.
- Development of the Voter Survey App and analysis on the data collected.
- Development, implementation and review of Intranet for FEO.
- Information and System Policy, System Development Procedure and System Change Management Procedure were created.
- The E-Filing project was done in conjunction with Manager EVR. The EVR Document Manager **[EDM]** and a batch uploader application was developed to assist in this project.
- Development and implementation of the Industrial Elections Management System **[IEMS]**. IEMS has been completed and hosted in-house. The system has been used to run two (2) Industrial Elections.
- The FEO website was revamped and content reviewed to remove old outdated and repetitive content. The website software version was also updated and security enhanced.
- During the work from home period, training sessions and infomation sessions have been conducted on how to use FEO applications and some of the useful applications such as, Microsoft Word, Excel and Google Suite. These trainings were done using Remote conferencing tools like Zoom and Google Classroom.
- Development of an e-Learning platform for the FEO. Moodle has been implemented to conduct in-house trainings.

In preparations for the next General Election, the Department is gearing up to complete its pending projects and new ones that have been scheduled for 2021.This includes enhancement of the core applications such as the EMS, Results Management and Information System **[RMiS]** and the Recruitment Assistant and Management of Elections Official System **[RaMEO]**.

In addition, processes and existing systems will be streamlined to ensure a smooth running of the General Election. This includes standardizing reports and statistics that the FEO uses in its administration and decision-making.

The IT Team will also be responsible for the management and running of the National Results Centre

Information Communication and Technology

The main functions of the ICT Infrastructure Team is to provide the services below:

a. Facilitate executive decision-making and aid in ICT strategic planning.
b. Ensure compliance with international ICT standards.
c. Ensure capacity planning and ICT resource utilization requirements are addressed.
d. Create an ICT architecture that will support the requirements of FEO's daily business operations and during the government elections period.
e. Improve ability to securely share data and services between FEO Offices.
f. Introduce and implement latest technology to improve and assist the business and projects.

The IT Department was able to successfully complete the following during the year 2020:

1. Creation of ICT Framework, new Policies, Procedures and Forms.
2. Inventory and Tagging of ICT items at Warehouse.
3. Implementation of ICT Helpdesk Service.
4. Implementation of Network Monitoring System.
5. Relocation and Setup of ICT Services at new Suva VSC .
6. Update Internet Access setup and data plans for VSC in Suva, Lautoka and Labasa.
7. Conduct training for users on Computer Usage and Security.
8. Design and Implement efficient ICT Services for Adjudication, E-Filing and other projects.
9. Provisioning of Servers for EMiS Team for Moodle, Intranet and any locally hosted services.
10. Completion of Board of Survey.
11. Online Solutions proposed to EMiS Team to suit business requirement and efficient option for access and delivery – online one (1) Hour Quiz open to the public, online Elections Officials Recruitment Systems at VSCs and Divisional Offices.

The following projects are planned for 2021:

1. Fully implement online E-Filing and EVR Services for local and overseas access.
2. Upgrade the Server Infrastructure.
3. Re-design the network for local and WAN Access.
4. Prepare an improvement Command Center reporting system and procedure after reviewing the last report.
5. Implement WAN Connectivity to all VSC's, Divisional Offices, Warehouse and any remote office that requires ICT Services, internet and application access.
6. Implement in-house computer network vulnerability system.
7. Implement Disaster Recovery solution.
8. Computer Network design at the National Results Center for the next General Election.

OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

The Operations Directorate includes the Operations, Industrial Elections Department and the Divisional Offices. The Operations Directorate's core responsibilities includes the update and maintenance of an accurate National Register of Voters **["NRV"]**, Management of Polling Venues, Postal voting, Pre poll voting and Polling operations.

Voter Registration

In 2020 the FEO worked closely with the public and provided services via its Divisional VSCs.

The FEO began its voter registration exercise in February 2020. The Labasa and Lautoka VSCs started providing registration services from 3 February 2020 while the Suva VSC commenced services from 11 February 2020 at a new refurbished location. Through the VSCs, the FEO provided services such as new registrations, corrections/change of details, replacement of cards, confirmation of deceased voters and request for mobile registrations.

Below are the VSCs that provided services to the general public.

Division	Area	Location	Date Opened
Central	Suva	Old Fiji Visitors Bureau Building, Suva.	11/2/2020
Western	Lautoka	36 Vitogo Parade, Lautoka.	3/2/2020
Northern	Labasa	Legal Aid Building, Jaduram Street, Labasa.	3/2/2020

Voter Registration Statistics

Through the Electronic Voter Registration **["EVR"]** system, the FEO maintains a complete list of all registered voters in Fiji. As of December 2020, there were a total of 48,634 engagements/services provided by the three (3) VSC's. There was an increase of 7,563(19.67%) engagements as at December, 2020 compared to December 2019.

Below is the breakdown of the Voter Registration Tally for the year 2020.

Month	New Registration	Correction	Replacement	Total Engagement
February	839	2984	1826	5649
March	712	3278	1353	5343
April	208	1023	306	1537
May	488	1772	824	3084
June	845	3029	1944	5818
July	1011	3581	1885	6477
August	887	2818	1316	5021
September	1653	2386	1026	5065
October	1294	2203	1015	4512
November	826	1935	738	3499
December	702	1400	527	2629
Total	9465	26409	12760	48634

Data Cleaning Exercise

Data cleaning exercises were conducted in January and July 2020 to remove deceased voters from the NRV. These voters were identified via Confirmation of Deceased forms received at the VSC's and via secondary verifications of the data received from Births, Deaths and Marriages [BDM] Registry. As such, this resulted in a total of 4846 voters confirmed deceased who were removed from the NRV between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2020.

As required by Law, voters serving a sentence of imprisonment for a term of 12 months or more shall be removed from the NRV. As such, 322 voters were removed (flagged as inmate) from the NRV during the data cleaning exercises. During these exercises a total of 171 persons were reinstated into the NRV.

National Register of Voters Statistics as at 31 December 2020.

Division	Gender	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81+
Central	Male	3191	35171	33417	24322	19945	12470	5341	1483
Central	Female	4099	35300	32425	24036	20552	13755	6301	2222
Eastern	Male	118	2430	3186	2472	2453	1733	916	302
Eastern	Female	157	2027	2810	2108	2094	1415	825	385
Northern	Male	1176	10641	10921	9391	8571	5272	2169	817
Northern	Female	1460	10255	9724	8382	7968	5305	2998	1097
Western	Male	2224	26949	30493	23826	20342	12781	5536	1576
Western	Female	2546	27359	28483	22100	19817	13572	6869	2133
Overseas	Male	2	402	898	1124	992	605	229	40
Overseas	Female	3	338	747	900	815	558	189	25
Total		14976	150872	153104	118661	103549	67466	31373	10080

Gender Distribution by Division

Division	Gender	Total as at 31 Dec 2020	Percentage
Central	Male	135340	20.82%
Central	Female	138690	21.33%
Eastern	Male	13610	2.09%
Eastern	Female	11821	1.82%
Northern	Male	48958	7.53%
Northern	Female	47189	7.26%
Western	Male	123727	19.03%
Western	Female	122879	18.09%
Overseas	Male	4292	0.66%
Overseas	Female	3575	0.55%
Total		650081	

Summary and Voter Count by Division

Summary	Total	Percentage
Registered Voters	650091	
Gender		
Female	324155	49.86
Male	325936	50.14
Division		
Central	274033	42.15
Eastern	25432	3.91
Northern	96150	14.79
Overseas	7867	1.21
Western	246609	37.93

Comparative Data Analysis

The FEO received 30,280 records from the BDM Registry which was compared to the EVR data. From this record, FEO has removed 28,091 voters from the NRV.

It has been identified that another 1,794 possible voters could be removed after conducting further verification. These voters will be removed from the NRV during the 2021 data cleaning exercises.

E-Filing of EVR Forms

The EMiS Team at the FEO has developed an E-Filing Software called EVR Document Manager. This software was used to e-file EVR forms for the FEO from the months of September to December. At the completion of this exercise, 203,785 forms have been uploaded into the EVR Document Manager.

This project is scheduled to be completed in 2021.

Polling Venue Management

In line with section 82 (2) (c) of the Electoral Act 2014, 13 pre-poll polling venues with a total of 3,604 voters were specifically open to cater for members of the disciplinary forces in the 2018 General Election.

As part of the updating of the NRV, the 13 polling venues had to be cleared and locked until Election year. As such, these voters had to be reassigned and moved to the polling venues closest to their registered residential addresses.

Below is the summary of Polling Venues as at 31 December 2020.

As at 31 December 2020	
Total No. of Polling Venues	**1424**
No. of Pre Poll Venues	569
No. Election Day venues	854
Overseas - HQ	1
Total No. of Polling Stations	**2165**
No. of Pre Poll Stations	570
No. Election Day Stations	1595
No. of Postal Stations	will be confirmed based on number of voters applying for Postal Voting

The Polling Venue Assessments will be carried out in 2021.However, prior to the conduct of this exercise, the Divisional Managers **[DMs]** will carry out a performance analysis of all polling venues in Fiji.

Activities that the DMs will be carrying out during the polling venue assessments are:

- Performance assessment for each polling venue.
- Analysis for each Hub after looking at statistics of voter turnout for the venues in the Hub.
- Projections for each Hub based on the relevant fields decided by the respective DMs.
- Carry out analysis on voters experience in the 2018 General Election.
- Develop a polling area boundary for each Hub.

Preparations for the next General Election

The Voter Registration and Polling Venue Management unit will be carrying out the following activities in 2021 as it prepares for the next GE.

- Review and update existing policies and procedures.
- Finalizing the polling venue management procedure.
- Finalizing registration and polling venue assessment forms.
- Upgrade EVR system.

Divisional Managers

The DMs play an important role in the operational aspects of conducting General Elections. Their roles have been decentralized to the four (4) divisions to oversee preparations and the conduct of elections.

The following activities were completed by the DMs in 2020:

- Print and publish preliminary polling venue list.
- Review and update 2022/2023 Election Operational Plan.
- Establish the FEO Map Bank.
- Develop new FEO Forms and update existing Forms.
- Finalise FEO Divisional Organisation Structure.
- Analyse the 2018 General Election data for operations planning.

The following are the activities that is currently in progress which will continue to year 2021:

- Conduct consultation meeting with stakeholders regarding Pre-Poll Venues.
- Re-assessment of polling venues.
- Develop new policies and procedures.
- Develop new Operational Manuals and journals.

Industrial Elections

The Industrial Elections **["IE"]** Department under section 154 of the Electoral Act, 2014 is responsible to conduct trade union elections for registered trade unions and any other elections approved by the Minister responsible for elections.

Under the 2020-2023 FEO SP, the IE Department has one (1) milestone which is to "Implement Industrial Election Management Platform". So far, three (3) trade unions have implemented the election management platform to test the system before it rolls out in 2021.

The IE Department has completed the following activities in 2020 under the 2020-2023 FEO SP:

- Identify, develop and implement strategies so Trade Union members with disabilities or special needs have access to Trade Union electoral process.
- Compile and publish an Annual Trade Union Election Plan.
- Implement changes to the overall conduct of Trade Union Elections.

Below are the on-going activities, which is conducted all throughout the year 2020 and will roll over in 2021:
- Develop regulations for the conduct of Trade Union Elections.
- Conduct Trade Union elections.
- Submit annual reports on trade union elections to Executive Management.

This year, the IE Department has conducted over 11 trade union elections, two (2) student body elections and two (2) association elections of which there were 35 branch elections and 11 national elections. Out of these elections, there was a total of 14 contested elections and 32 uncontested elections.

The total turnout of voters for the contested elections was 3,913 out of the 37,327 registered members. Invalid votes were minimal which was 0.23% compared to the 99.77% valid votes. Out of the 18 elections conducted, there was nine (9) elections conducted through the Postal Voting Mode, six (6) elections through Attendance Voting and three (3) elections were conducted using the Touch Voting Screen Machines.

Name	Date Held	Type of Election
Fiji Bank & Finance Sector Association	25/2-3/3/20	Postal
Fiji National University Students Association	26/2-28/220	Attendance
Fiji Teachers Union	3/4 - 21/3/20	Attendance
Fiji Public Service Association	2/3/-20/3/20	Postal
Coral Coast Tourism Workers Union	25/3/20	Postal
Fijian Holdings Limited	14/9-12/10/20	Postal
Fiji Airline Pilots Association	21/8/20	Attendance
Fiji Hotels Allied Industries Employees Union	24/8-4/9/20	Postal
National Union of Trade Union Workers	2/9-4/9/20	Postal
FNU Students Association	19/10-23/9/20	Attendance
Association of the University of the South Pacific Staff	22/9/20	Attendance
Fiji National University	21/10-25/10/20	Postal
Suva City Council Staff Association	9/11/20-13/11/20	Postal
Fiji Cooperative Dairy Company Limited	27/11/20	Postal

Milestone Achievements for 2020

Under the four (4) year SP of the FEO, there are a number of milestones for each particular year which need to be accomplished. For 2020 the following were the milestones.

1)	Develop an Online Register for Political Parties
2)	Staffing Structure for 2022/23 General Election Approved
3)	Implement Inventory Management System
4)	Finalize General Election Calendar for 2022/23
5)	Publish Provisional Polling Venue List
6)	Develop a Four (4) year Voter Registration Strategy
7)	Communications Strategy Approved
8)	Implement Industrial Election Management Platform
9)	Establish IT Directorate

The FEO has successfully completed six (6) of the milestones from the nine (9) that were allocated for 2020. The following three (3) milestones have been shifted to 2021 for implementation.

1) Implement Inventory Management System
2) Communications Strategy
3) Industrial Election Management Platform

Conclusion

The year 2020 has indeed been a challenging year. Alot of lessons were learnt especially due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the outbreak of the pandemic, most countries that were required to conduct elections continued to do so. Various types of strategies were developed to combat the effects of Covid 19 pandemic and to ensure the the safety and security of voters were paramount and furthermore that this democratic process continued despite the pandemic.

The virtual world also gave a sense of hope since alot of FEO staff had been able to attend webinar trainings and workshops through the virtual process. This was indeed something new to the FEO but nevertheless it just indicates that we could still continue with normal business under the current environment.

2021 will be an interesting year for the FEO as we gear up towards the preparatory stages to deliver the 2022 General Election .

2018 General Election Voter Turnout and Survey Reports

Table of Contents

Foreword by the Supervisor of Elections

Bula Vinaka

Welcome to the Report on Voter Turnout and behaviour in the 2018 General Election. Notably this is the first time such information is being compiled and published for Fiji. Indeed, it was necessary to commence analysis based on data on Turnout first and then follow it up with a field survey to determine the general perception and behaviour of Fijian Voters.

The 2018 General Election Voter Turnout Report was generated directly from the Voter Lists of each Polling Station. In Fiji, a voter can only vote at the Polling Station in which he or she has been assigned. The alternative is to apply and vote via Postal ballot. In the event a voter is a Postal voter, a mark is placed in the Voter List used for polling to indicate that the voter is a Postal voter. Postal voters were not permitted to vote in person at the Polling Stations on Election Day. The Fijian Elections Office **["FEO"]** scanned all the Voter Lists and digitized the turnout records. This allowed the FEO to conduct numerous data analysis to understand the possible trends in Fiji's voting environment.

Following on from this exercise, the FEO created a survey for the voters at the last election. The survey was designed to understand the context and background of the voters (survey respondents), their behaviour patterns, their expectations on election timelines and their experiences from the 2018 General Election operations. This was also an ideal opportunity for the FEO to test the success of its awareness programs at the last election. Finally, some very general research was done on the medium that is most relied on by voters for election information.

Ideally, it was the FEO's desire to conduct this exercise in the months following the 2018 General Election. However, due to legal restrictions on the access to the Voter Lists which were to be stored in safe custody for 12 months after the general election, the scanning exercise was not possible. To make this process possible earlier in the election timetables, the FEO has recommended for law reform to allow the scanning to take place directly at the National Results Centre. The turnout statistics presented in this report will most likely be available in few weeks following the next General Election.

This first report presents some arguments on important aspects of the election, however, we decided to mostly present data so as to facilitate open discussions from all relevant stakeholders. A total of 14,137 participants were surveyed. In the absence of specific voter behaviour studies, particularly in Fiji, it is not possible to specifically prove or disprove any particular theories as such. However, it is noted that the data does seem to correlate with some international theories and norms on voter behaviour.

It must be noted that having electronic voter registration as the base platform for information has allowed for these advancements here in Fiji. Since details of voters are available in electronic format, the 'back-end' of the custom built Survey App, as well as the Voter List scanning software, allowed for direct correlation on who registered, and whether they voted. In addition, during the survey, once a voter provided their voter number, the Survey App knew if the person was a voter in 2018 and if so, whether the person voted or not.

Lastly, I wish to congratulate Neelam Prasad and the team for successfully conducting the exercise and presenting this first of its kind (and certainly not the last) data and analytics on voter turnout and behaviour.

Mohammed Saneem
Supervisor of Elections

Acknowledgements by Project Lead – Voter Survey

As the Public Relations & Engagement Coordinator at the FEO, the Voter Survey project was part of the key deliverables in 2020 under the FEO's 2020 -2023 Strategic Plan. At the outset, it had been decided that in order for the survey to be meaningful, the entire country had to be surveyed and the data should broadly represent all the people that voted. Based on the 2018 General Election Turnout Reports, some areas were regarded as areas of special interest, in particular some parts of urban centres where the turnout was particularly low. To balance the scale, we also surveyed some areas that recorded very high turnout as well.

I would like to acknowledge the Supervisor of Elections, Mr Mohammed Saneem for commissioning the Voter Survey project, a first for Fiji and a massive undertaking for the FEO. Mr Saneem's support and guidance is appreciated and has been crucial to the completion of the project.

I would also like to acknowledge the Acting Manager Development Services (EMiS) Amendra Chand for the development of the Voter Survey App which was used to conduct the survey and collect data for analysis. The App performed extremely well and was appropriately designed to meet the requirements of the nationwide survey. Amendra's contributions also extended to data synchronization, verification and generation of the reports without which any meaningful analysis would not have been possible.

Furthermore, I would also like to thank the following FEO team members for their co-operation and support in the planning and implementation of the project:

- Director Corporate Services **-** Anaseini Senimoli
- Director Operations **-** Sanjeshwar Ram
- Manager Legal **-** Ana Mataiciwa
- Divisional Managers **-** Litia Sema (DM Central), Viliame Vuiyanuca (DM Western), Raajan Jattan (DM Eastern) and Faiyum Ali (DM Northern).
- And last but not the least, the entire FEO team for their assistance, input and also for going out to conduct the surveys.

This survey report was presented to the Electoral Commission on 23 November 2020 and I wish to convey my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Chairperson and all the members of the Commission for their time and valuable contributions on the findings. Their immense wealth of contextual knowledge and experience greatly assisted in the preparation of this report.

Neelam Prasad
Public Relations & Engagement Coordinator.

List of Abbreviations

CSO   Civil Society Organization

EC   Electoral Commission

EVR   Electronic Voter Registration

FEO   Fijian Elections Office

NGO   Non-Governmental Organization

SoE   Supervisor of Elections

1.0 Introduction

The 2018 General Election Voter Turnout and Survey Report is presented in two (2) parts;

    (1) Turnout data from the Voter List Analysis; and
    (2) Results from the FEO nationwide Voter Survey.

The commissioning of such a report was done with the primary objective of being able to provide a comprehensive understanding of Fijian voters.

The first stage of the report was scanning the Voter Lists. Once the turnout was established, then it became necessary to get a generalized view on the conditions surrounding which Fijians decided to vote or not.

Using the Voter List Analysis data, the study population was divided into different sub-groups including by age, gender and the division to which they belong and this data was then used to identify trends in turnout and patterns of voter behaviour. The sub-groups from that report were also used in the voter survey and the responses received provided further insight into the thought rationale, attitudes and interest in the electoral process amid other contributing factors that constitute a voting decision. The survey also measured the satisfaction of voters in the services provided by the FEO and their experience in voting during the 2018 General Election.

It is hoped that the report serves as a foundation for further research and precedes as the first of many surveys and reports against which voter turnout would be measured and meaningfully interpreted for the next general election and thereafter.

This Report is developed by the FEO to provide information on voter turnout in the 2018 General Election. The data and information published in this report are generated from the Voter List analysis and the nationwide survey. In the publication of the data, individual details of voters including their attendance in 2018 was not made available to survey teams or FEO staff. The entire project was conducted following the destruction of Ballot Papers and neither this survey nor the turnout reports reveal the vote of any particular voter. The FEO will not be liable for any misinterpretation of this Report.

2018 General Election Voter Turnout Report

2.0 Voter Turnout Report

2.1 Project Outline

The FEO successfully concluded the 2018 General Election in which 458,532 out of 637,527 voters cast their ballots. This represented 71.9% of the registered voters for the General Election.

For the first time in Fiji's electoral history, Voter List analysis was carried out for a General Election. 2,130 Voter Lists from the 2018 General Election were analysed to extract turnout data.

2.2 Methodology

After the expiry of the 12-month safekeeping period of all election materials, the FEO initiated its project to carry out a detailed analysis of the Voter Lists and Polling Venue Records.

The Voter Lists from all polling stations were scanned and then digitized. The voter details from each polling station were digitally mapped against the voter registration data to create digital information on each polling station particularly in terms of voter turnout.

The digitization process was done using a software developed in-house by Amendra Chand. The scanning of the Voter List and subsequent matching was done using the 'double blind entry system'. Quality checks were carried out as well as a post digitization audit to ensure the accuracy of the data to be used. The scanning exercise was completed in December 2019 and final quality checks were done in January 2020. The FEO managed to verify 98.8% of the polling station Voter Lists in this exercise.

Simply put, at the conclusion of this phase, one would be able to enter the VoterCard number of a person and the system would be able to tell whether the person voted or not. But, that's not entirely where it ends, details of the person such as age, gender, address and all other details maintained in the Voter Registration database would also be available. The digitization process does not reveal who the person voted for.

Table 2.2.1 Voter List Analysis: National Summary	
Polling Stations Processed	Total Polling Stations
2,130	2,154
98.89%	

Table 2.2.2 Voter List Analysis: Divisional Summary		
Divisions	Polling Stations Processed	Total Polling Stations
Central	757	766
	98.83%	
Western	750	761
	98.55%	
Northern	404	406
	99.51%	
Eastern	219	221
	99.11%	

Note: 24 Polling Station Voter Lists could not be scanned and digitized.

2.3 Voter Registration Statistics for the 2018 General Election

The table below shows the Voter Registration statistics from the 2018 General Election:

	Total	Percentage(%)
Registered voters	637,527	
Gender:		
Female	316,431	49.63
Male	321,096	50.37
Division		
Central	265,184	41.60
Western	244,245	38.31
Northern	94,094	14.76
Eastern	26,034	4.08
Overseas	7,970	1.25

Division	Gender	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81+	Female	Male
Central	Male	6761	35427	31655	22683	19122	10706	4224	1037		131615
Central	Female	6928	34765	31034	22405	19862	11876	5181	1518	133569	
Eastern	Male	436	2931	3202	2418	2440	1550	761	212		13950
Eastern	Female	405	2447	2796	2092	2059	1289	726	270	12084	
Northern	Male	2327	10929	10834	9110	8220	4403	1823	570		48216
Northern	Female	2402	10176	9570	8194	7555	4726	2499	756	45878	
Overseas	Male	42	512	1039	1082	970	514	168	25		4352
Overseas	Female	36	420	874	885	794	459	141	9	3618	
Western	Male	5500	28596	30198	22401	19872	10867	4489	1040		122963
Western	Female	5353	28559	28149	20915	19262	11999	5618	1427	121282	
TOTAL		30190	154762	149351	112185	100156	58389	25630	6864	316431	321096

2.4 The Turnout in 2018:

2.4.1 National Summary

Table 2.4.1.1 National Turnout for the 2018 General Election	
Total Registered Voters	637,527
Attended	458,532
Total Invalid Votes	4,197 [*0.92%*]
Turnout	*71.9%*

Note: All data on voter turnout is based on the 2,130 Polling Stations that were processed for Poll Day and Pre-poll.

Table 2.4.1.2 Turnout based on the digitized Voter Lists	
Total Registered Voters	611,650
Attended	443,455
Total Invalid Votes	4,088 [*0.92%*]
Turnout	*72.50%*

2.4.2 Summary on the Different Voting Methods

In the 2018 General Election, voters had voted by either Postal voting, voting on Election Day or Pre-Poll voting. Overseas voters could vote by Postal voting only.

The turnout was as follows:

Table 2.4.2.1 National Turnout by Voting Method		
	Attended	Registered
Poll Day	397,945	542,622
	73.34%	
Postal- Local	8,161	10,040
	81.28%	
Postal- Overseas	1,019	7,970
	12.79%	
Pre-Poll	45,510	69,028
	65.93%	

For Election Day, the turnout was 73.34% with 397,945 Fijians casting their vote. Of the local voting population who had applied for Postal Voting, 81.28% sent their postal packets back. For Overseas Postal, 85.85% of voters who had applied for postal voting sent their postal packets back. The turnout rates for Postal are good indicators that the reforms to the Postal Voting sector worked well including the idea of splitting local and overseas. The 80% plus turnout for Postal also indicated that the postal companies that were engaged had delivered their targets very well. Overall, the turnout for voters registered overseas was 12.79%.

For Pre-Poll, the turnout was quite low with 45,510 voters casting their ballot out of the 69,028 people who had registered. A turnout rate of 65.93% is concerning as Pre-Poll is where the election is taken to the people. The one issue faced with Pre-Poll was that after the announcement of the election date, there was little time to convey the dates for Pre-Poll voting to the population.

2.4.3 Turnout by Gender

Below is the summary on the national voter turnout by gender.

Figure 2.4.3.1 National Turnout by Gender

	Male	Female
■ Registered	307,079	304,571
■ Attended	220,016	223,439
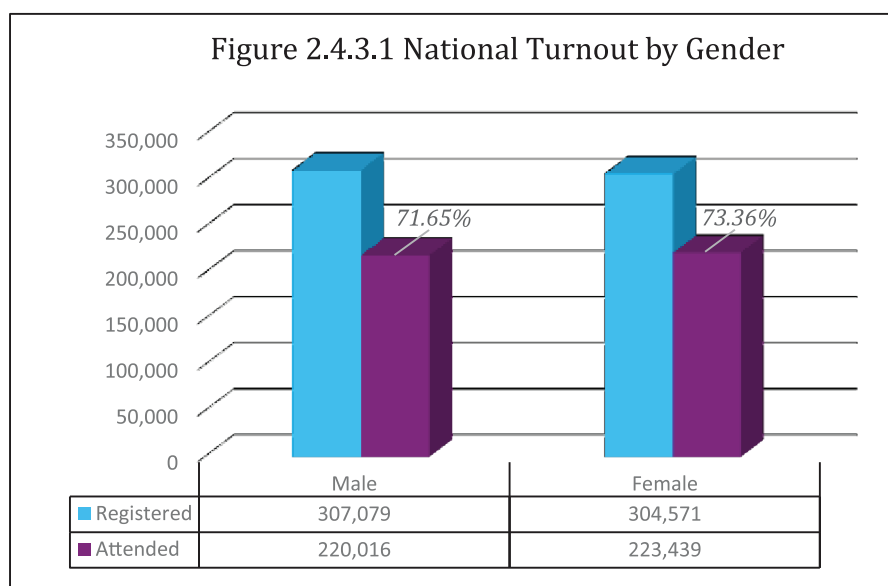
In terms of gender, more females compared to males had cast their votes in the 2018 General Election. 73.36% of females voted in comparison to 71.65% males. In terms of numbers, the total number of females that had voted was 223,439, about 3,423 more than the total number of males (total for males was 220,016).

It is generally understood that the turnout for females in an election could be a key measure of accessibility to voting. Over the years, election management bodies have strived to make voting accessible for the female voting population. The higher turnout of females compared to males in Fiji is a positive indicator that Polling Venues were accessible.

The turnout of females can also be used as a measure of the security situation. The 2018 General Election was conducted in a peaceful environment. Police were present at every polling location to provide security. Voters were able to attend and cast their votes without any fear, threats or coercion.

2.4.4 Turnout by Gender for Different Voting Methods

The following is a breakdown on the national turnout by gender and method of voting.

Table 2.4.4.1 Turnout by General by Method of Voting				
	Male		Female	
	Attended	Registered	Attended	Registered
Poll Day	195,720	269,321	202,225	273,301
	72.67%		74%	
Postal-Local	4,625	5,717	3,536	4,323
	80.90%		81.80%	
Postal-Overseas	501	4,352	518	3,618
	11.51%		14.32%	
Pre-Poll	24,296	37,758	21,214	31,270
	64.35%		67.84%	

Figure 2.4.4.2 Turnout by Gender by Method of Voting

	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Poll Day		Postal- Local		Postal- Overseas		Pre-Poll	
Registered	269,321	273,301	5,717	4,323	593	594	37,758	31,270
Attended	195,720	202,225	4,625	3,536	501	518	24,296	21,214
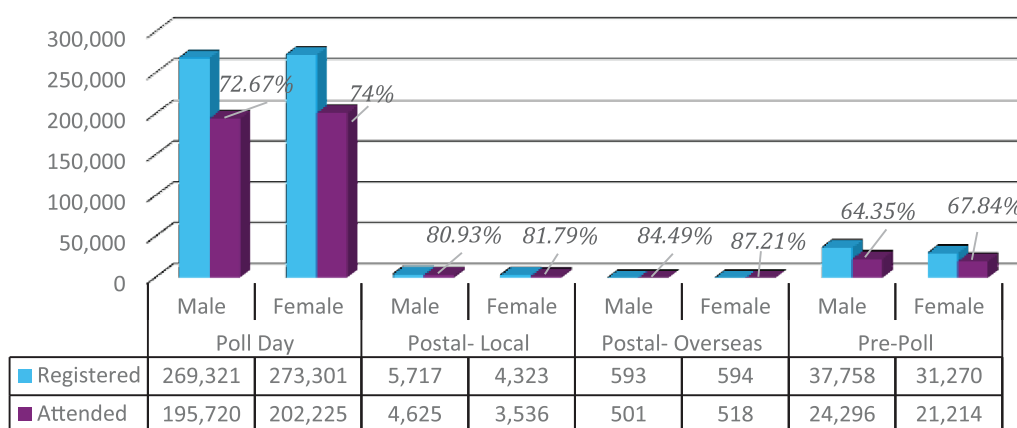
It is noted that 202,225 females voted on Election Day in comparison to 195,720 males-that's 6,000 more females. Once again, in terms of accessibility to Polling Venues on Election Day, particularly by females, it is safe to say that the Polling Venues were accessible. The environment on Election Day was also safe and conducive to promote higher turnout of females.

In addition, the turnout rates also indicate a higher level of female interest, in terms of attendance to vote. Both Postal and Pre-Poll also recorded a higher turnout among females.

2.4.5 National Turnout by Age

Below is the summary on turnout for the different age groups.

Figure 2.4.5.1 National Turnout by Age

	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81+
Registered	28,531	148,436	143,193	107,112	96,227	56,452	24,971	6,728
Attended	17,915	89,670	106,969	87,540	79,334	43,459	15,915	2,653
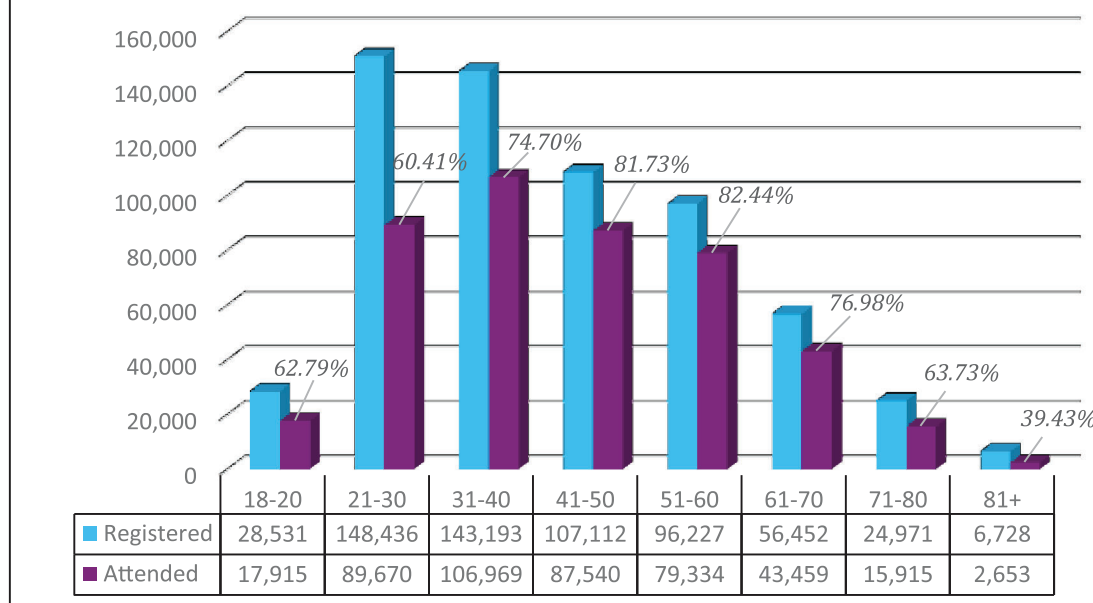
Note: Data by age is presented as at 14 November 2018..

The 18-80 age group is more practical for analysis as far as greater numbers are concerned. The lowest turnout within this group was recorded for the 21-30 cohort at 60.41%. This was followed by the 18-20 age group at 62.79% which means that of the 28,531 registered voters only 17,915 had voted.

One likely explanation is that these registered voters had come from other parts of the country to attend university in urban centres and they did not change or update their addresses to be able to vote in Suva. Or that these are the university students who had finished their exams and went back to their homes, and because the *Writ* was issued during the examination period, they did not get a chance to update their details. The third possible reason is disinterest. This will be explored in the survey results.

The 21-30 age group represents the budding working class and university students. It is likely that within this cohort also were voters who had registered in urban centres where they were attending university and did not update their addresses when they moved back home, or they still had their old addresses though they were working or attending university in urban centres.

The second plausible reason is that people within this class may have taken the double time and continued working on Election Day as a lot of businesses were open. The third reason could be a lack of interest in voting generally. It could also be said that individuals in this age category, who have just begun their careers would be heavily engaged in work and even overtime.

Furthermore, the 31-40 cohort which is presumably the working-class population, had a turnout of 74.70%. In Fiji, it is safe to say that most of them would be married, have children, are either starting a business or probably own a mortgage. This generalization may not apply to all the people in this age category though. This age category is considered to be the drivers of national spending and perhaps the economy. Majority of the policies that were debated on in the 2018 General Election were likely to affect the 31-40 age group.

Moreover, turnout for the 41-50 cohort was 81.73%. This is the group that is likely to be accustomed to voting as they would have voted for several elections in the past including those where voting was compulsory. This group of people have the experience of Fiji's political evolution since independence.

The 51-60 cohort has the highest turnout; 82.44%. This category of voters can be said to be the seasoned voters of the country. These are the citizens that are nearing retirement age, that have been involved and have been around for a while and have seen the political dynamics of the country. They have amassed enough knowledge to understand why elections are important and they have a view to put forward.

The 61-70 cohort had a turnout of 76.98% and this is the third highest in terms of turnout by age category. This cohort has been around since independence and they hold very dear the politics and development of the country.

The 71-80 cohort recorded a 63.73% turnout. Considering the age, it is likely that a lot of them may not be mobile, they may have health issues and some of them may be in old care facilities. Overall, the lowest turnout is for voters aged 81+ but there are exceptions for this group as they are likely to have mobility and health issues among other issues that accompany old age. The FEO endeavours to continually update the National Register of Voters particularly in terms of deceased voters, however, in some instances conducting verifications on this is challenging.

2.5 Divisional Summary

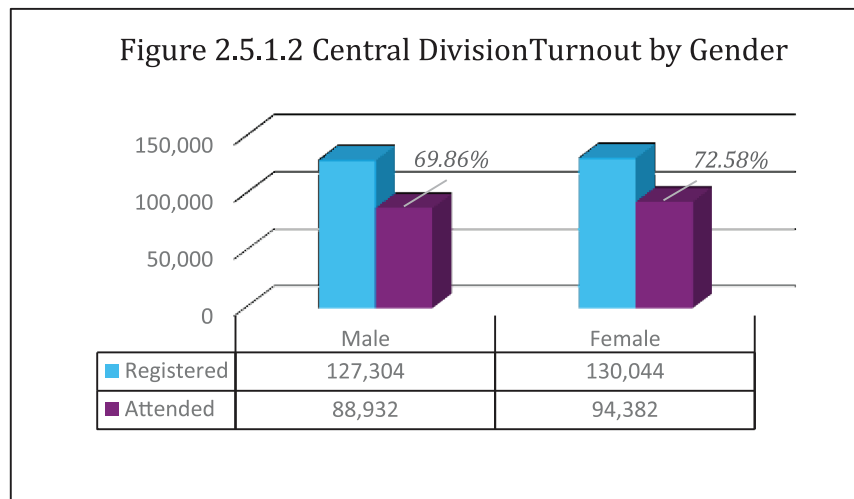Below is the summary on voter turnout by Division.

Note: The Divisional data does not include statistics on Postal voting.
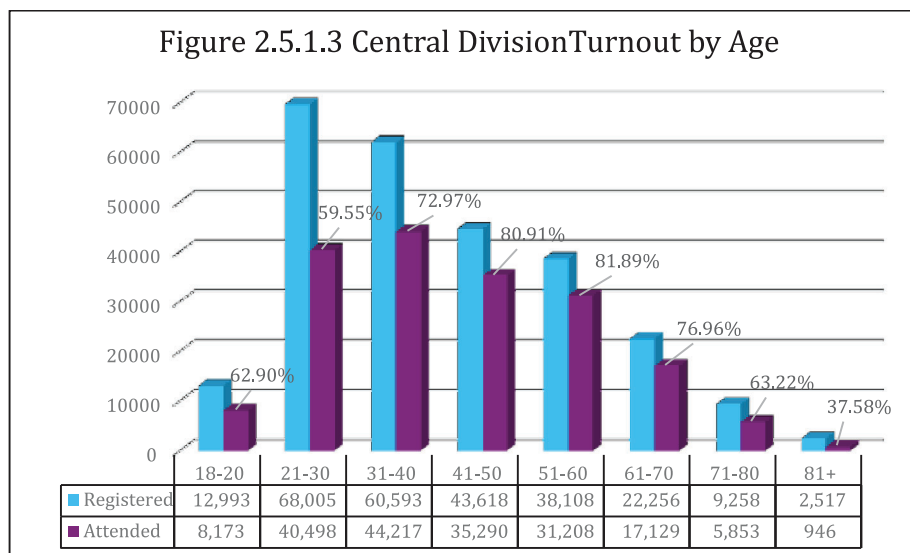
2.5.1 Central Division

The Central Division which has the highest number of registered voters in the country recorded a turnout of 71.23%.

Table 2.5.1.1 Turnout for Central Division	
Total Registered Voters	257,348
Attended	183,314
Turnout	*71.23%*

In terms of gender, turnout was higher for females at 72.58% compared to the 69.86% turnout for male voters. It was noted that 5,450 more women in comparison to men had voted.

Figure 2.5.1.2 Central DivisionTurnout by Gender

	Male	Female
Registered	127,304	130,044
Attended	88,932	94,382

Looking at the breakdown for age, the highest turnout was for the 51-60 age group, followed by the 41-50 cohort. The lowest turnouts were recorded for the 81+ cohort followed by the 18-20 and 71-80 age groups.

Figure 2.5.1.3 Central DivisionTurnout by Age

	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81+
Registered	12,993	68,005	60,593	43,618	38,108	22,256	9,258	2,517
Attended	8,173	40,498	44,217	35,290	31,208	17,129	5,853	946

2.5.2 Western Division

The Western Division recorded a turnout of 73.75%.

Table 2.5.2.1 Turnout for Western Division	
Total Registered Voters	237,541
Attended	175,197
Turnout	*73.75%*

Females had a higher turnout in this division compared to males at 74.14%.

Figure 2.5.2.2 Western Division Turnout by Gender

	Male	Female
Registered	119,367	118,174
Attended	87,585	87,612

Male: 73.37% Female: 74.14%
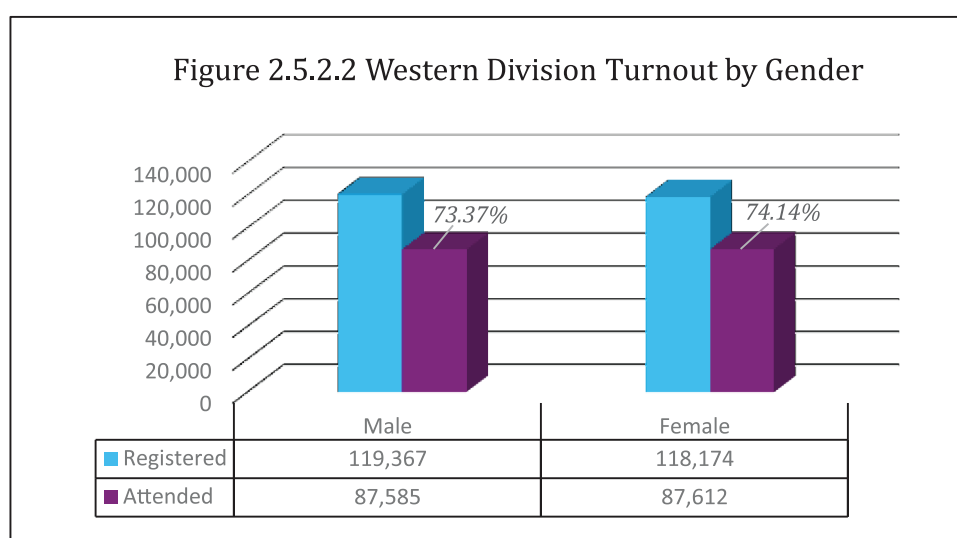
The Western Division had the highest turnout amongst the four (4) divisions for the 21-30 age group at 62.17%. On the day of election, it was observed that the weather was fine in the western parts of the country.

The age breakdown is as follows:

Figure 2.5.2.3 Western Division Turnout by Age

	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81+
Registered	10,243	54,896	56,795	42,211	38,326	22,542	10,070	2,458
Attended	6,568	34,131	43,090	34,803	31,824	17,348	6,463	970

18-20: 64.12% 21-30: 62.17% 31-40: 75.87% 41-50: 82.45% 51-60: 83.03% 61-70: 76.96% 71-80: 64.18% 81+: 39.46%
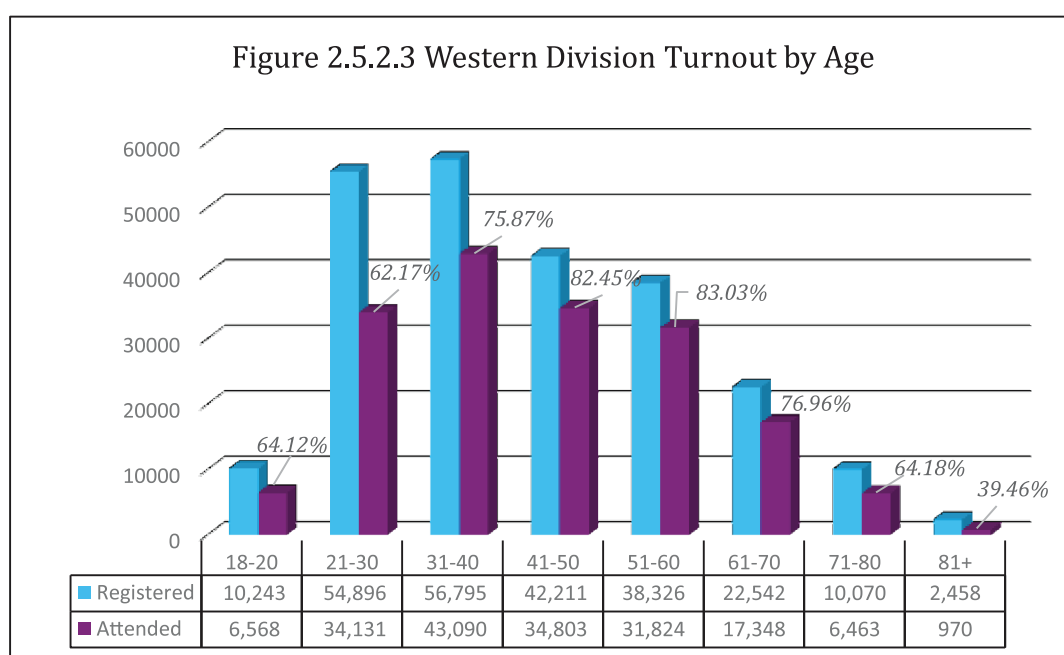
2.5.3 Northern Division

The Northern Division recorded the highest turnout at 73.93%.

Table 2.5.3.1 Turnout for Northern Division	
Total Registered Voters	91,580
Attended	67,707
Turnout	*73.93%*

As per the gender breakdown, more females than males had voted in the North.

Figure 2.5.3.2 Northern Division Turnout by Gender

	Male	Female
Registered	46,849	44,721
Attended	34,417	33,290
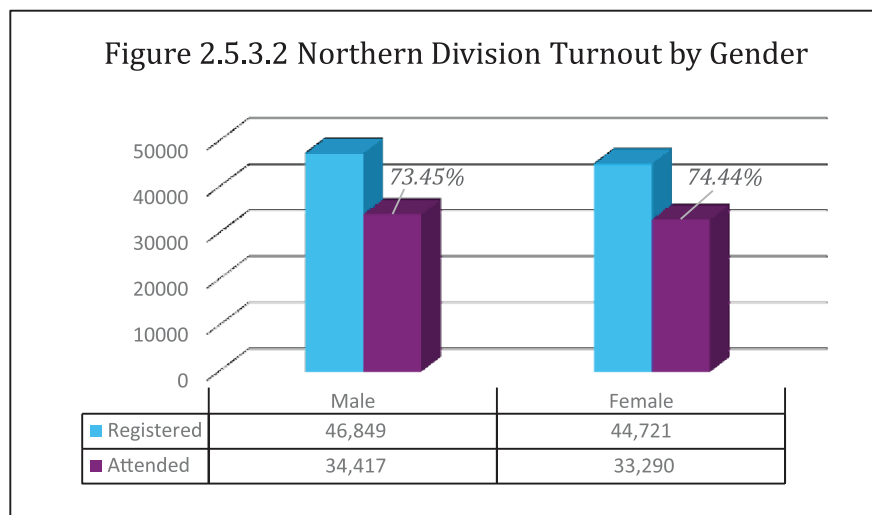
In terms of age, the 51-60 cohort had the most turnout at 83.68% followed by the 41-50 group at 83.44%. With the 81+ group an exception, the lowest turnout was for 18-20 year olds closely followed by 71-80 year olds.

Figure 2.5.3.3 Northern Division Turnout by Age

	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81+
Registered	4,469	20,271	19,973	16,929	15,469	8,941	4,222	1,306
Attended	2,748	12,249	15,536	14,126	12,945	6,922	2,668	513
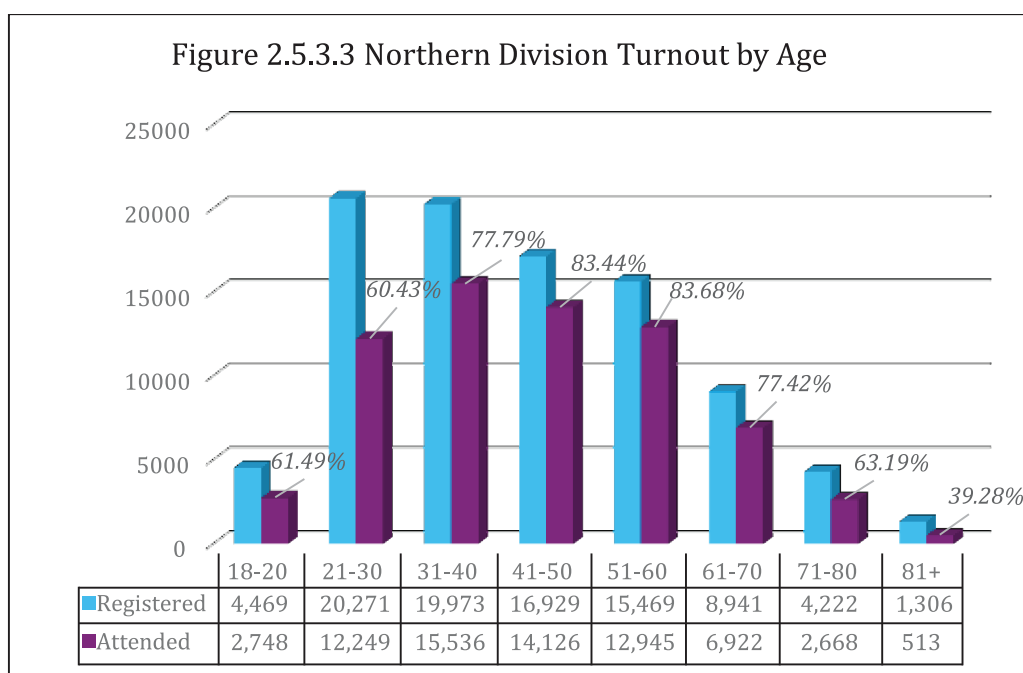
2.5.4 Eastern Division

The Eastern Division had the lowest turnout amongst the four (4) divisions with only 68.45% of the registered voters casting their ballot.

Table 2.5.4.1 Turnout for Eastern Division	
Total Registered Voters	25,181
Attended	17,237
Turnout	*68.45%*

Consistent with the other three (3) divisions, the Eastern Division also recorded a higher turnout for females.Below is the gender breakdown for this division:

Figure 2.5.4.2 Eastern Division Turnout by Gender

	Male	Female
Registered	13,549	11,632
Attended	9,082	8,155
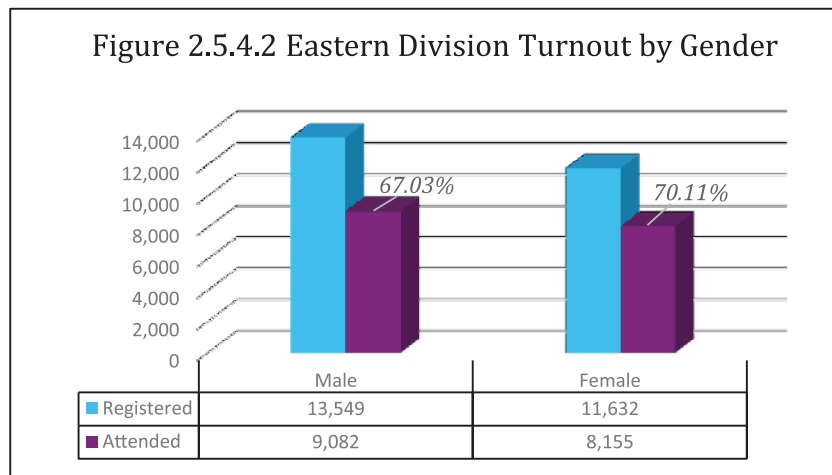
The highest turnout was recorded for the 51-60 age group in the Eastern Division while the lowest was for the 81+ and 18-20 cohorts.

Figure 2.5.4.3 Eastern Division Turnout by Age

	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81+
Registered	826	5,264	5,832	4,354	4,324	2,713	1,421	447
Attended	426	2,792	4,126	3,321	3,357	2,060	931	224
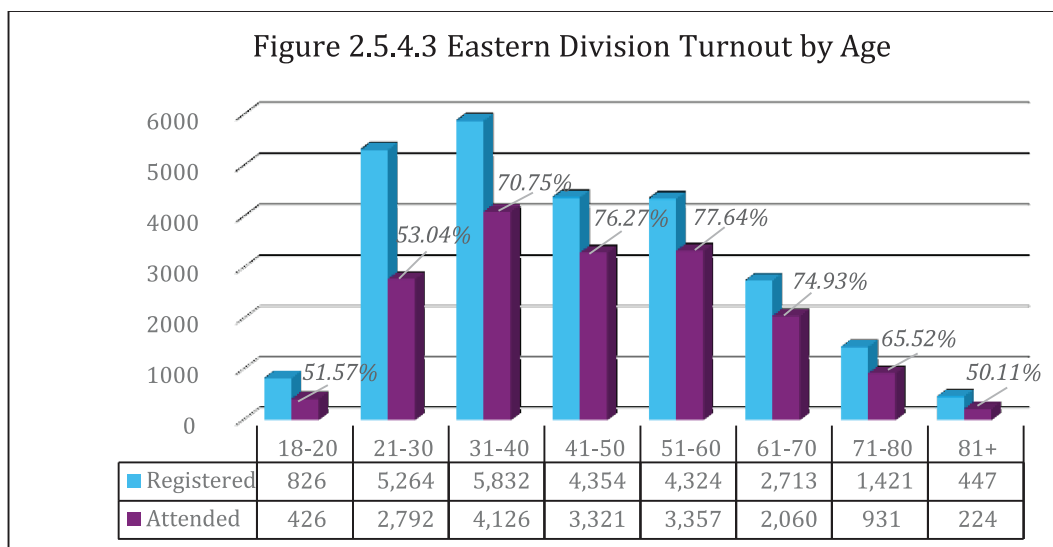
2.5.5 Overseas

A total of 7,970 Fijians living abroad were registered in 2018. Of this 1,188 voters had applied for Postal Voting but only 1,019 voters had sent their postal packets back.

Table 2.5.5.1 Turnout for Overseas	
Total Registered Voters	7,970
Attended	1,019
Turnout	*12.79%*

Figure 2.5.5.2 Overseas Turnout by Age

	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81+
Registered	78	923	1,893	1,977	1767	980	317	35
Attended	13	91	142	211	336	168	56	2

Turnout percentages: 16.67%, 9.86%, 7.5%, 10.67%, 19.02%, 17.14%, 17.67%, 5.71%
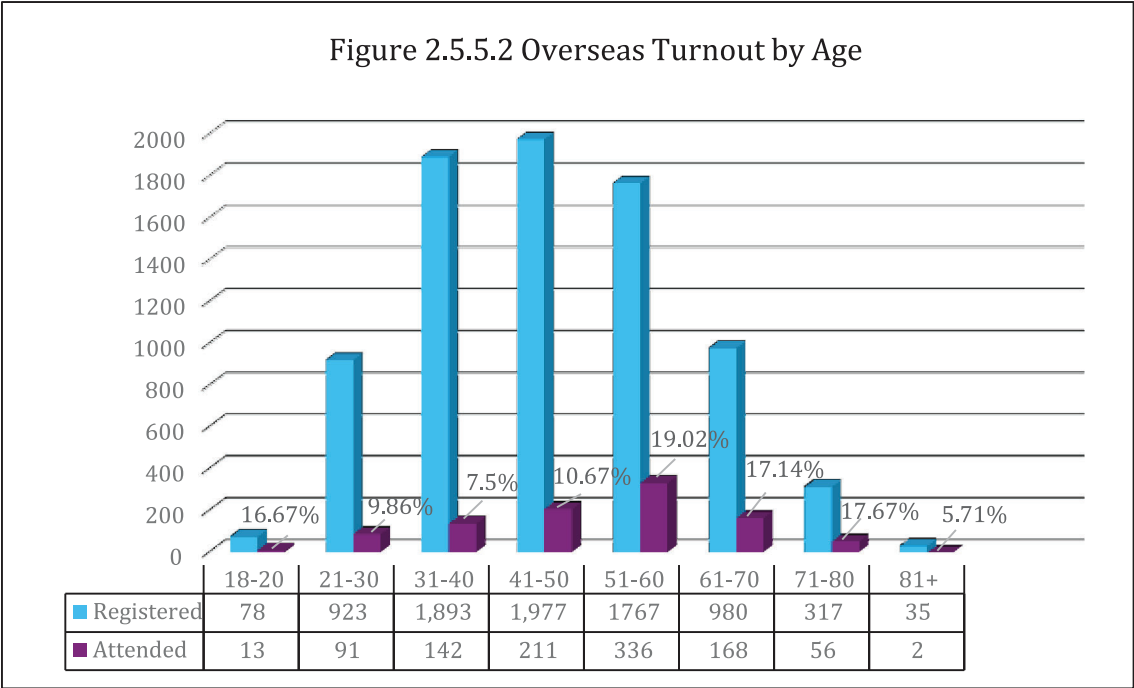
Conclusion

It is observed that there were consistent trends in the turnout by age cohorts in the 2018 General Election. It would be interesting to investigate the reasons for such patterns as well as to determine counter measures to promote greater participation.

Another practical observation was that due to ongoing voter registration, especially the school based registration exercises since the 2014 General Election, a good number of voters ended up not updating their addresses and on Election Day, found it impractical to go to their Polling Stations.

The 2018 General Election was announced towards the very end of the 'election window' and by then the rainy season in Fiji had started. On the day election took place, the Central Division and much of the other parts of the country experienced very heavy rainfall including flooding. This is another practical contributor in terms of low turnout.

While the figures in the Report were generated from 2,130 Voter Lists, it is safe to say the trends remained generally similar throughout the country.

2018 General Election
Voter Survey Report

3.0 Voter Survey Report

3.1 Introduction

The nationwide Voter Survey was one of the milestones identified in the FEO 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. In reference to Pillar 4 of the Strategic Plan, the Voter Survey is a key initiative of the FEO to engage the electorate.

The survey attempted to explore and provide a more comprehensive understanding on voter turnout in the Fijian context with emphasis on the behaviour of voters, the reasons for turnout or the lack of it. The survey is also one of the first in Fiji to determine the expectations of the voters in terms of election operations. Survey findings would assist the FEO in enhancing its services and in developing more effective and targeted strategies for the next general election.

The Voter Survey Project was officially rolled out on 15 September 2020 with 154 staff engaged to conduct the field work. At the conclusion of the survey, a total of 14,137 responses were received.It was a nationwide survey with coverage extending to all four [4] divisions including Rotuma.

3.2 Methodology

The nationwide Voter Survey was conducted in two (2) parts;

> 1) Fieldwork where teams were dispatched across the country to survey voters; and
> 2) Analysis of results and compilation of reports pertaining to the results.

The survey was conducted via a custom developed Voter Survey App. The App was designed to host a questionnaire and collect responses from users. Within the survey period, 14,137 responses were collected.

Timeline

The survey was carried out between 15 September 2020 to 31 October 2020.

Voter Survey App

The App was developed by Amendra Chand. Initial work on the App began in February, 2020. It took three (3) months to develop and test the application. The questionnaire was developed by the project team and finalized and updated on the App. After the test phase, further modifications were done to incorporate language compatibility to enhance accessibility for Fiji's diverse voting population. The survey questions were available in English but the staff were trained to translate in Fiji-Hindi and iTaukei as well. The staff engaged in Rotuma translated the questions in the local language as well.

The App was then rolled out during the FEO Voter Festival on 16 and 17 September, 2020 at the Suva Voter Services Centre. Positive feedback was received. The App validated data using the voter's VoterCard number to identify if the voter was registered to vote in the 2018 General Election. The App provided multi-language support giving users options to either do the survey in English or vernacular (Fiji-Hindi & iTaukei). The questions were designed as per voter attendance, therefore, the App was able to query if the voter had voted, had not voted or had cast a Postal vote using the Voter List Analysis done in 2019/2020. However, this information was not available to the person conducting the survey.

Quality Control

Effective controls were in-built within the App to prevent any non-response bias. The App was able to query if a voter had voted or not in the 2018 General Election. Based on this, the participant was able to access a particular questionnaire. In this way, it was not possible for a person who did not vote to answer questions pertaining to voting and vice versa. Moreover, systematic quality assurance procedures were applied throughout, whereby random samples were selected and verified.

Sampling

The population being studied for the survey was the registered electorate for the 2018 General Election. Probability sampling technique was applied where registered voters were randomly selected to participate and the survey was directly administered to them. The conclusions drawn from the random samples is assumed to be representative of the study population.

Subpopulations

Geographical subpopulations were selected based on areas where turnout was low in the 2018 General Election. However, the sub-population was not restricted to these areas allowing the survey to capture a sample that was representative of the entire electoral population. Areas that had recorded a voter turnout of 73% or less were identified as priority areas for the survey ahead of other locations. The table below lists the areas identified;

Central	Western	Northern	Eastern
Nausori	Ba	Labasa	Lomaiviti
Nasinu	Lautoka	Savusavu	Rotuma
Suva	Sigatoka		
Navua	Tavua		
	Rakiraki		

The Questions

The questionnaire was designed to test a series of hypotheses on voter behaviour and turnout as well as to gauge public feedback on the services provided by FEO. To get a more accurate depiction, three (3) sets of questionnaires were developed. These were for voters who had voted, those that had not voted and those who voted by post in the 2018 General Election.

Field work

A total of 154 staff carried out the field work for the nationwide survey. This included 44 core staff of the FE0 who conducted the survey in the Central Division, while, 110 external staff carried out the survey in the Western, Eastern and Northern Divisions.

A total of 168 external staff were hired to collect responses from voters. It was expected that each staff collects at least 100 survey responses. However, at the conclusion of the survey, only 110 staff had submitted survey responses.

Incentives

Since the survey was voluntary by nature, the FEO had to devise an appropriate strategy to encourage voters to participate. As such, every voter who participated was asked to give their phone contact which would be entered into a draw for a chance to win an FEO Merchandise Pack. Approximately 200 Merchandise Packs were given away.

3.3 National Summary

A total of 14,137 responses were collected from around the country. Breakdown on the survey responses is as follows:

3.3.1 Summary of Responses by Gender

The table below provides a breakdown on the number of males and females that undertook the survey.

Table 3.3.1.1 Summary of Responses by Gender	
Male	6,118
Female	8,019
Total	14,137

Figure 3.3.1.2 provides the gender breakdown by percentage:

Figure 3.3.1.2 National Summary by Gender
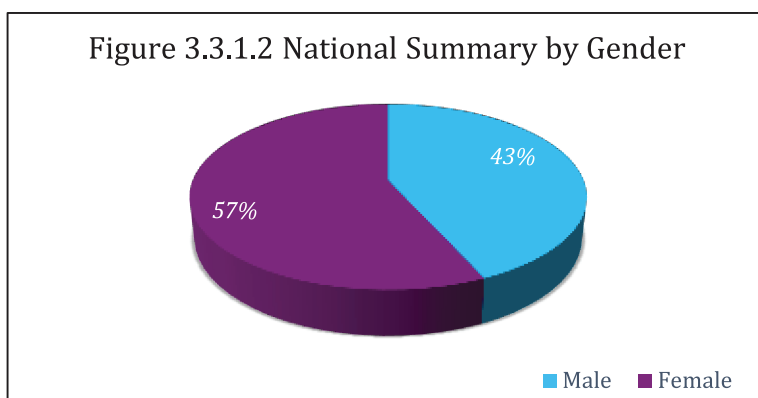
3.3.2 Summary of Responses by Voted or Not Voted

The table below provides a breakdown on the number of people who participated in the survey and had voted in the 2018 General Election. It also includes the gender distribution.

Table 3.3.2.1:Summary by Voted/Not Voted			
	Male	Female	Total
Voted	5,106	6,584	11,690
Not Voted	1,012	1,435	2,447
Total	6,118	8,019	14,137

3.3.3 Summary of Responses by Method of Voting

The table provides a breakdown on the different methods of voting the survey respondents had used or were supposed to use [for those who did not vote] in the 2018 General Election.

Table 3.3.3.1: Summary of Responses by Method of Voting			
	Voted	Not Voted	Total
Poll Day Voters	10,179	2,011	12,190
Pre-Poll Voters	1,213	377	1,590
Postal Voters	298	59	357

3.3.4 Divisional Summary

Figure 3.3.4 details the number of survey responses collected from the four [4] divisions. Also includes responses from overseas voters who happened to be in Fiji and participated in the survey.

Figure 3.3.4 Summary of Responses by Division

	Central	Western	Northern	Eastern	Overseas
Totals	4,939	6,260	2,334	592	12
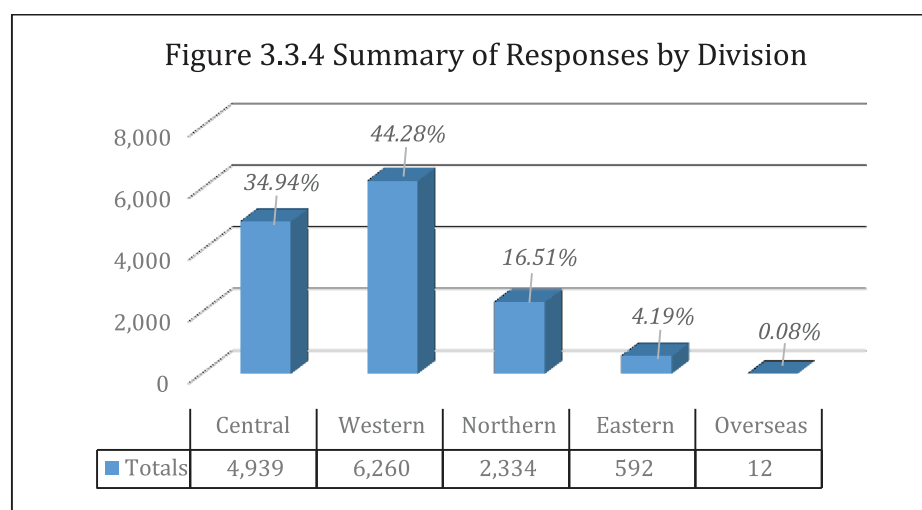
3.3.4.1 Central Division

Figure 3.3.4.1.1 provides a summary on the number of respondents who had voted together with the gender breakdown. It appears more females participated in the survey than males.

Figure 3.3.4.1.1 Summary by Voted/ Not Voted

	Voted	Not Voted
Female	2,282	481
Male	1,793	383
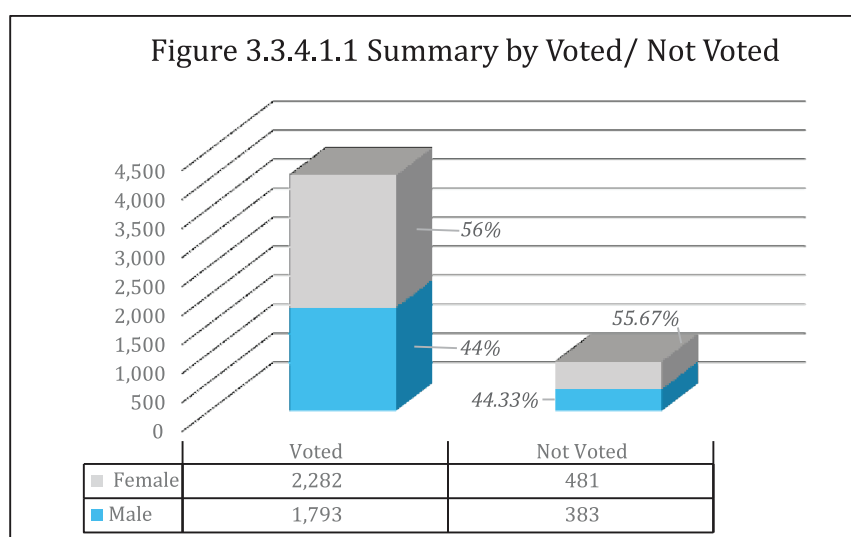
Table 3.3.4.1.2 provides a breakdown by method of voting:

Table 3.3.4.1.2: Summary of Responses by Method of Voting	
Poll Day Voters	4,627
Pre-Poll Voters	128
Postal Voters	184
Total	4,939

3.3.4.2 Western Division

Figure 3.3.4.2.1 provides a breakdown on the gender distribution for survey respondents in the Western Division by Voted or Not Voted:

Figure 3.3.4.2.1 Summary by Gender by Voted/ Not Voted

	Voted	Not Voted
Female	3013	655
Male	2214	378
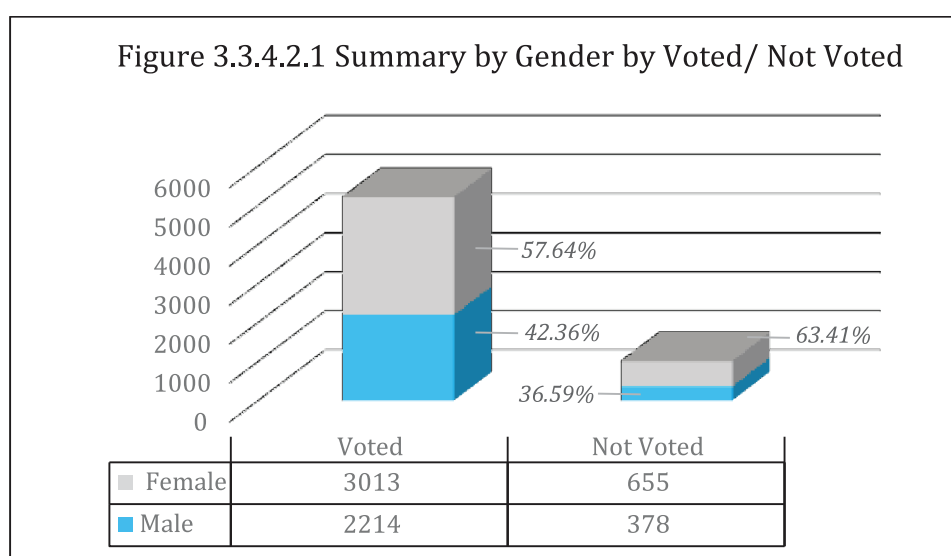
Table 3.3.4.2.2 provides a breakdown on the method of voting:

Table 3.3.4.2.2: Summary of Responses by Method of Voting	
Poll Day Voters	5,227
Pre-Poll Voters	949
Postal Voters	84
Total	6,260

3.3.4.3 Northern Division

Consistent with other divisions, the Northern Division also had a higher number of female participation in the survey. Figure 3.3.4.3.1 provides a detailed breakdown:

Figure 3.3.4.3.1 Summary by Voted/ Not Voted

	Voted	Not Voted
Female	1040	224
Male	884	186

Voted: 54.05% / 45.95%
Not Voted: 54.63% / 45.37%
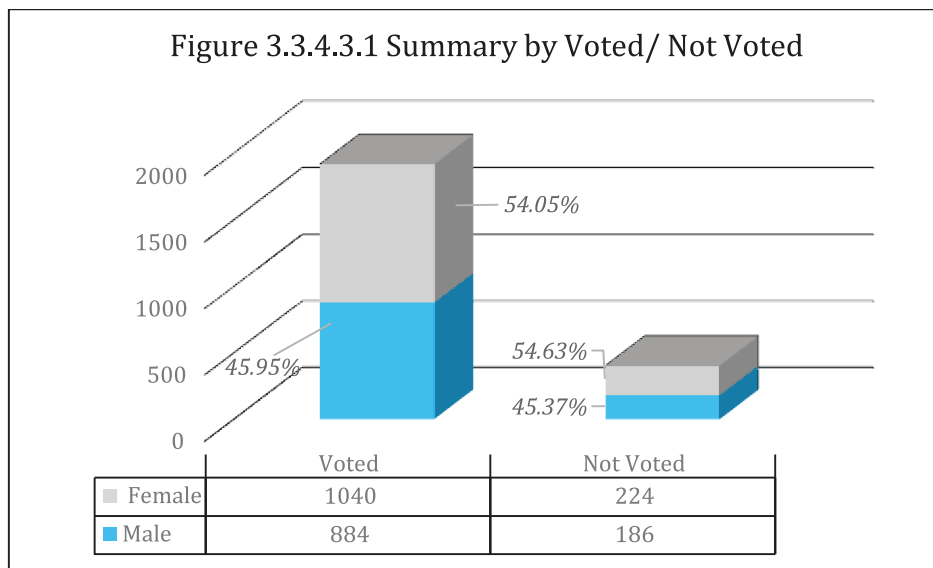
Table 3.3.4.3.2 provides a breakdown on the method of voting.

Table 3.3.4.3.2: Summary of Responses by Method of Voting	
Poll Day Voters	2,138
Pre-Poll Voters	127
Postal Voters	69
Total	2,334

3.3.4.4 Eastern Division

Below is a summary for the Eastern Division;

Figure 3.3.4.4.1 Summary by Voted/ Not Voted

	Voted	Not Voted
Female	248	69
Male	214	61

Voted: 53.68% / 46.32%
Not Voted: 53.08% / 46.92%
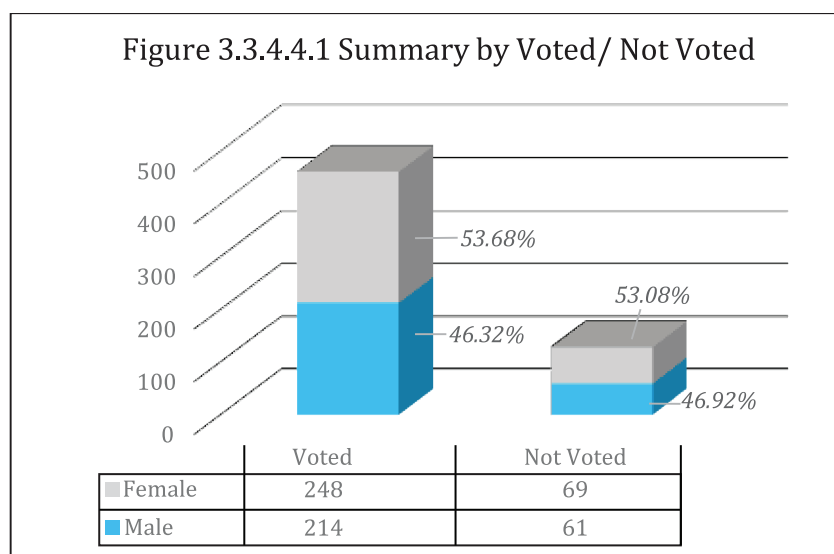
The table below provides a breakdown on the method of voting:

Table 3.3.4.4.2: Summary of Responses by Method of Voting	
Poll Day Voters	198
Pre-Poll Voters	386
Postal Voters	8
Total	592

3.3.4.5 Overseas

Figure 3.3.4.5.1 provides a breakdown on the gender distribution for overseas respondents who participated.

Figure 3.3.4.5.1 Summary by Voted/ Not Voted

	Voted	Not Voted
Female	1	6
Male	1	4
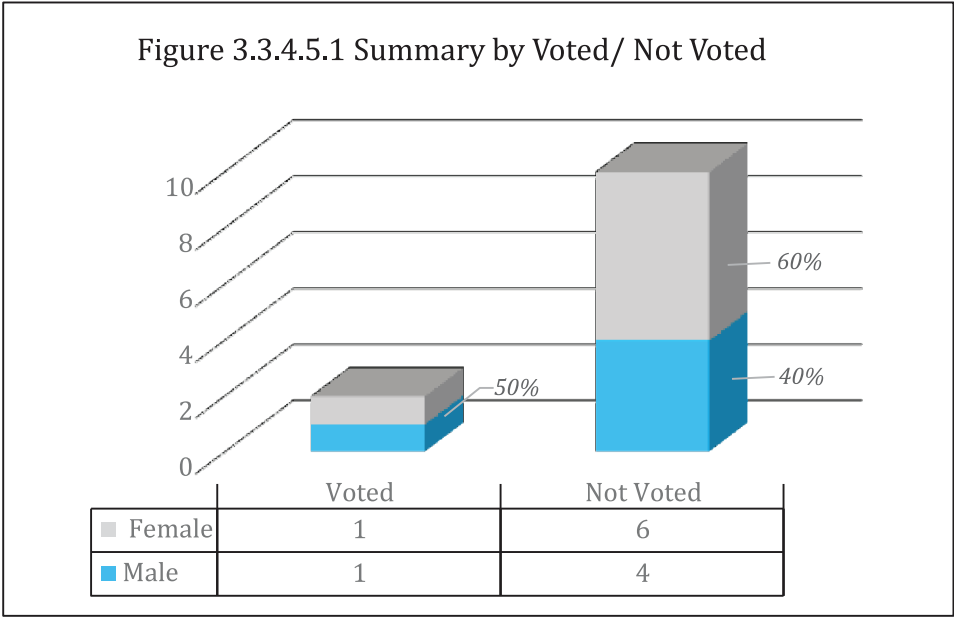
3.4 Educational Background

Below is the summary on the educational background of the survey respondents. Both national and divisional summaries are included.

3.4.1 National Summary

Never attended school-250
Primary-2,713
Secondary-6,505
Tertiary-4,601
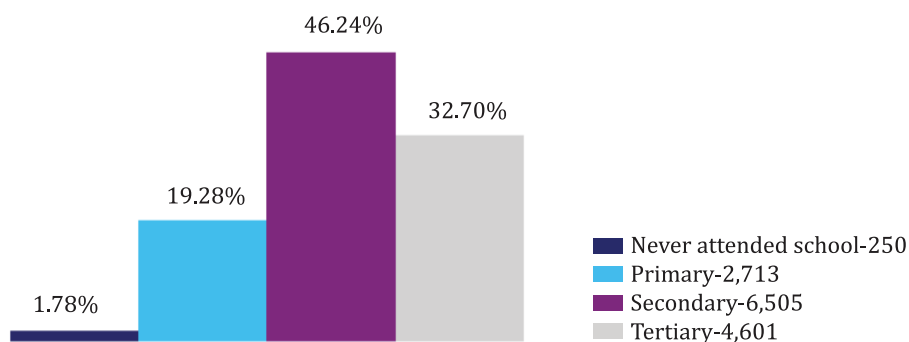
3.4.2 National Summary by Gender by Educational Background

Figure 3.4.2 Gender breakdown by Educational Background

	Male	Female
Never attended school	76	174
Primary	1,257	1,456
Secondary	2,786	3,719
Tertiary	1,971	2,630

3.4.3 Central Division

Never attended school-69
Primary-757
Secondary-2,029
Tertiary-2,042

3.4.4 Western Division

48.21%

28.32%

21.84%

1.63%

■ Never attended school-102
■ Primary-1,364
■ Secondary-3,010
■ Tertiary-1,768

3.4.5 Northern Division

49.12%

27.37%

20.24%

3.27%

■ Never attended school-76
■ Primary-471
■ Secondary-1,143
■ Tertiary-637

3.4.6 Eastern Division

54.16%

24.79%

20.54%

0.51%

■ Never attended school-3
■ Primary-121
■ Secondary-319
■ Tertiary-146

3.5 Employment Background

Below is the summary on the employment background of the people surveyed. The responses to this question are relevant to the time of the survey and not during the 2018 General Election.

3.5.1 National Summary

61.74%

38.26%

☐ Yes-5,346
■ No-8,626
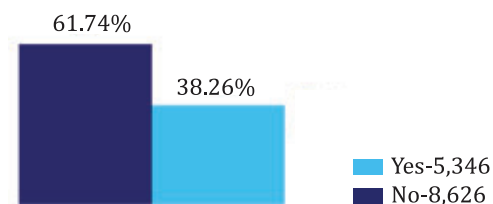
3.5.2 National Summary by Gender by Employment

Figure 3.5.2.1 Gender by Employment Statistics

	Employed	Unemployed
■ Female	3,038	3,004
■ Male	2,308	5,622

56.83% *43.17%* *34.82%* *65.18%*

3.5.3 Central Division

50.65%   49.35%

☐ Yes-2,401
■ No-2,464

3.5.4 Western Division

67.75%

32.25%

Yes-1,999
No-4,200

3.5.5 Northern Division

66.90%

33.10%

Yes-764
No-1,544
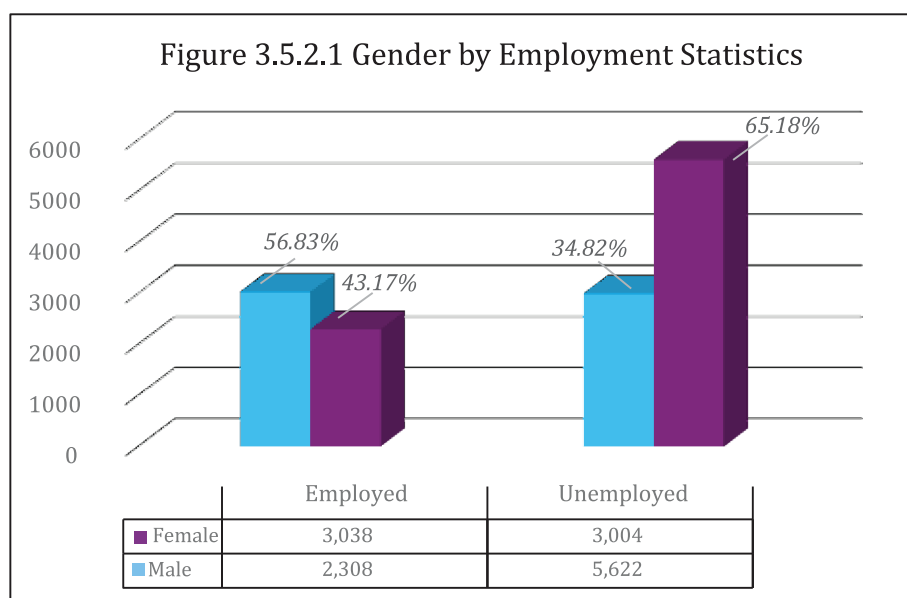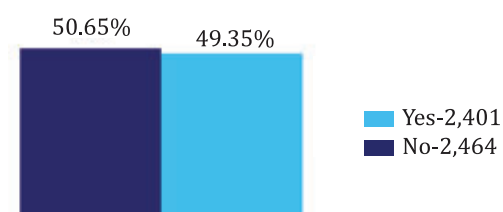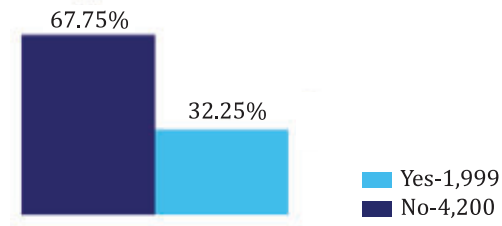
3.5.6 Eastern Division

69.90%

30.10%

Yes-177
No-411

3.5.7 Summary on the employment status of respondents who had voted

61.49%

38.51%

Yes-4,453
No-7,109
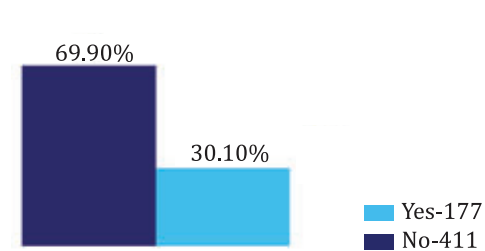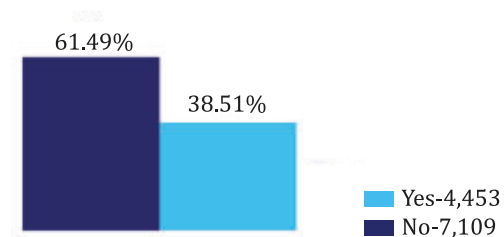
3.5.8 Summary on the employment status of respondents who had not voted

62.95%

37.05%

Yes-893
No-1,517
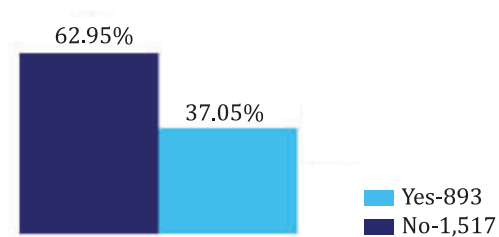
3.6 The Survey Questions

List of Questions	Explanatory Notes
General Questions	
What is your educational background?	The questions were designed to get a background on the study population.
Are you currently employed?	
Information Questions	
In 2018, how often did you come across advertisements or information shared by the FEO on "How to Vote"?	The Information Questions tested the effectiveness of FEO's communication of key messages pertaining to the 2018 General Election. These questions also provide details on the medium on which voters receive information.
In 2018, how often did you come across advertisements or information shared by the FEO on how to change your polling venue?	
In 2018, how often did you come across advertisements and information shared by FEO to remind voters that Election Day was on 14 November 2018?	
Where do you get most of your election information from?	
Behavioural Questions	
What convinced you to register to vote?	The question was designed to seek out the reasons or rather the motivation for registering.
How closely were you following the campaigns of candidates?	These questions explored the complex relationship between people's attitude towards politics and candidates and its subsequent correlation to voting.
How much interest do you take in politics?	
Why didn't you vote?	The question was posed to respondents to identify the main reasons for people not voting in the 2018 General Election.
Aspiration Questions	
If it were up to me, the date of the General Election should be announced:	The earlier question tested whether people were satisfied with the amount of time they were given to prepare for the election as voters. The latter was to identify a possible trend for the next General Election.
Will you vote in the next General Election?	
Questions on Voting Experience	
How did you find the layout of the ballot paper?	All these questions were designed to test voter satisfaction; with the voting process, the time it takes to cast a vote, the polling venue, ballot paper and the postal voting process.
How did you find the layout of the postal ballot paper?	
How long did it take you to cast your vote?	
Was it easy to vote?	
Was the polling venue within walking distance from your place of residence?	
Did you find the Postal Voting process easy?	
Did you receive your ballot paper on time?	

Note: The survey reponses in this report are presented as summaries. The first graph is a combined response followed by those who voted and those that did not vote.
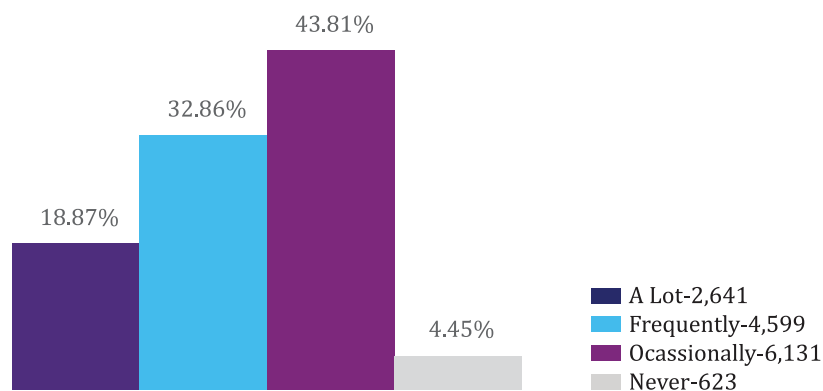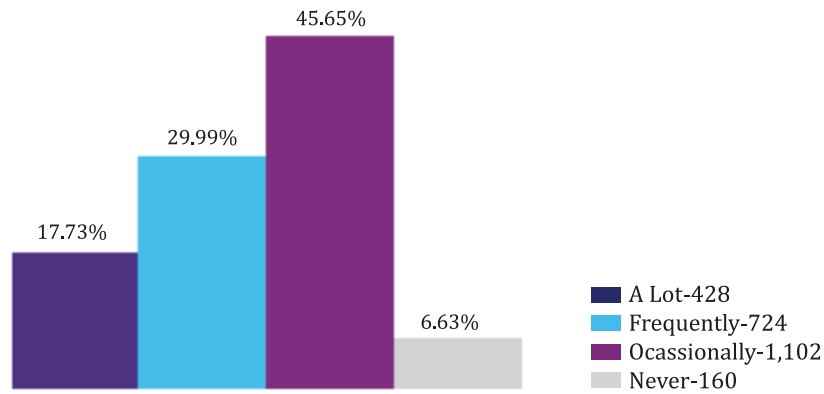
3.7 Information Questions

Access to information is critical for making informed and confident voting decisions. The survey sought feedback from voters on the advertisements that FEO had pushed out during the election period in 2018 to disseminate important information to the public such as how to vote, how to change your polling venue and the date of the general election.

A key aspect to consider with information dissemination and access is understanding the mediums through which the voting population consumes electoral information. A broader understanding of this is equally important in getting the right information to the public.

In 2018, how often did you come across advertisements or information shared by the FEO on "How to Vote"?

Combined

- A Lot-2,641
- Frequently-4,599
- Ocassionally-6,131
- Never-623

18.87% 32.86% 43.81% 4.45%

Voted

- A Lot-2,213
- Frequently-3,875
- Ocassionally-5,029
- Never-463

19.11% 33.46% 43.43% 4.00%
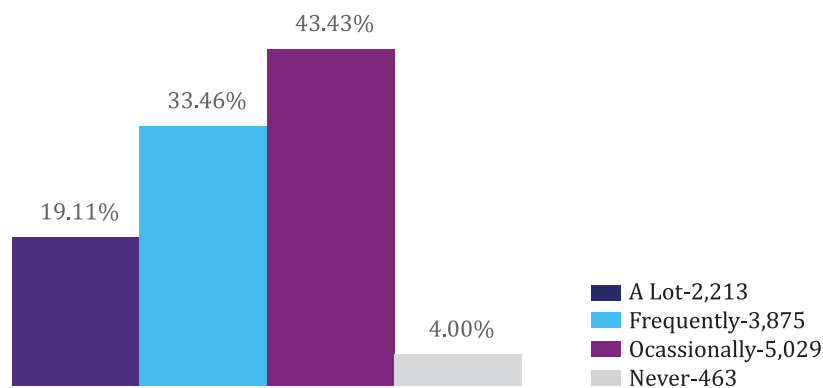
Not Voted

The summary above indicates more than 95% of the respondents had come across the advertisment on how to vote, either 'Frequently', 'Occasionally'. or 'A lot'. giving a good indication that voters knew how to cast their ballot.

Among the respondents who did not vote, 93.37% indicated they had come across the particular advertisment either 'A lot' (17.73%), 'Frequently' (29.99%) or 'Occasionally' (45.65%).

On the basis of this question and the responses received, it is inferred that most of the voting population were well aware of the voting process.

How often did you come across advertisements or information shared by the FEO on how to change your polling venue?

Combined

Voted

▪	A Lot-1,869
▪	Frequently-3,796
▪	Ocassionally-5,009
▪	Never-885

Not Voted

▪	A Lot-382
▪	Frequently-685
▪	Ocassionally-1,096
▪	Never-254
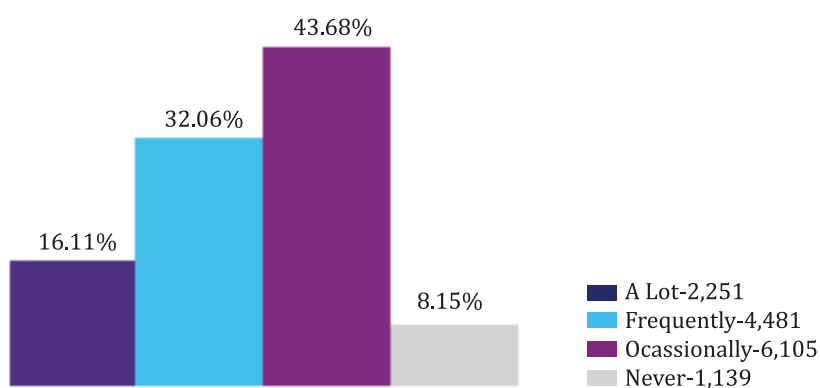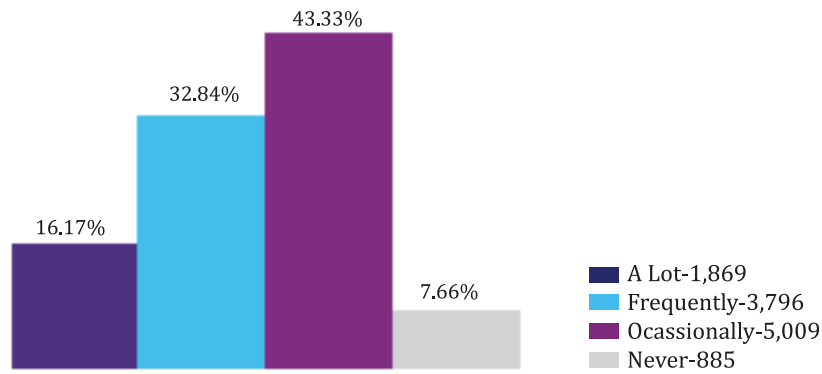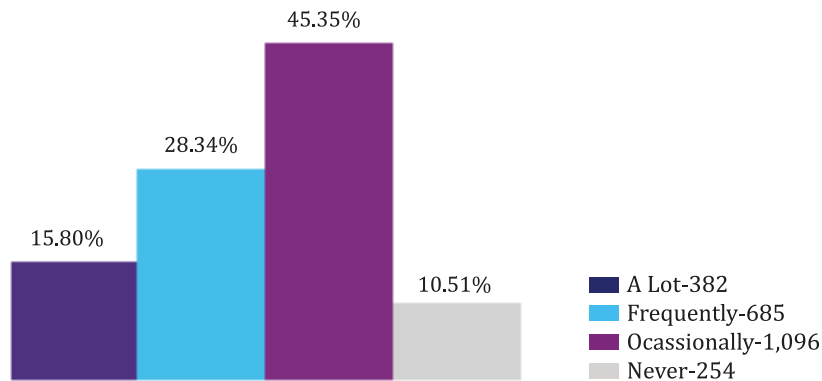
From the findings, we infer that people were generally aware of how they could change their polling venue.

91.85% of the total respondents reported they had come across the advertisement on 'how to change your polling venue' either 'Occasionally' (43.68%), 'Frequently' (32.06%) or 'A Lot' (16.11%).

Among the respondents who did not vote, 10.51% said they had never come across the advertisement which still leaves about 89.49% of people reporting that they were exposed to the advertisement.

In 2018, how often did you come across advertisements and information shared by FEO to remind voters that Election Day was on 14 November 2018?

Combined

▪	A Lot-3,136
▪	Frequently-4,802
▪	Ocassionally-5,429
▪	Never-592
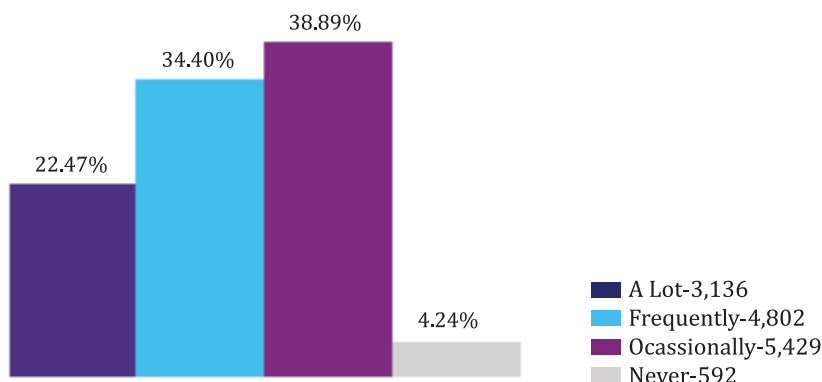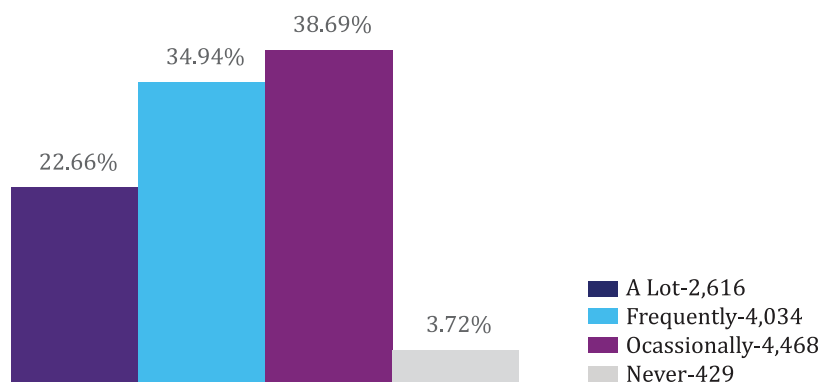
Voted

Not Voted
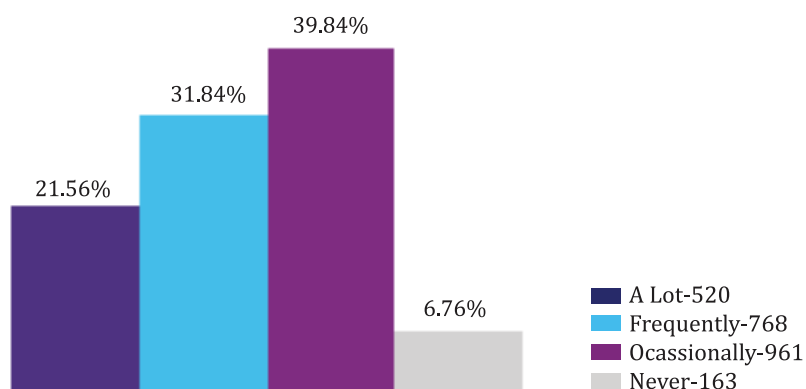
On the basis of responses from the people surveyed, it is projected that over 95% of the voting population had come across an FEO advertisement that reminded them that Election was on 14 November 2018. The question focussed on FEO advertising only, other sources of information were not measured.

It was found that 95.76% of the survey respondents were able to recall seeing an advertisement on the election date. Response to this question was higher for those who voted with 96.28% of the respondents reporting that they had come across the advertisment. Meanwhile, the response was 93.24% for those who did not vote.

Where do you get most of your election information from?

This question allowed a survey participant to select multiple answers.

Combined

Voted

33.47%

29.70%

22.92%

13.91%

Newspaper-2,723
Radio-5,815
Social Media-4,487
Television-6,553

Not Voted

32.57%

29.01%

26.12%

12.30%

Newspaper-469
Radio-996
Social Media-1106
Television-1,242
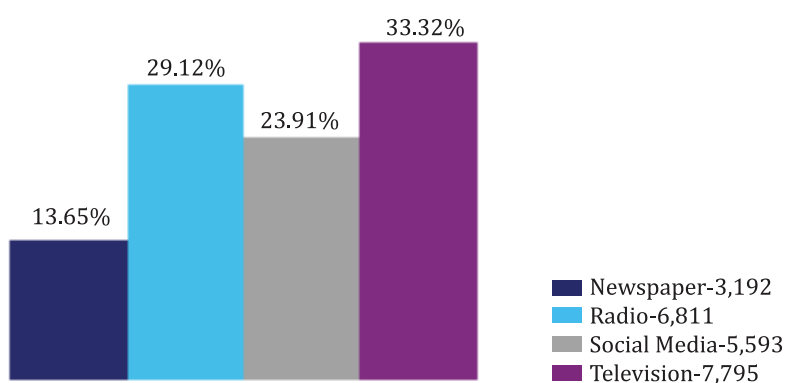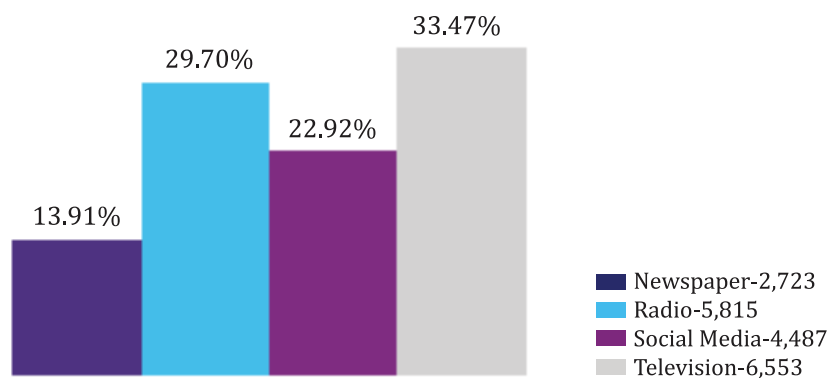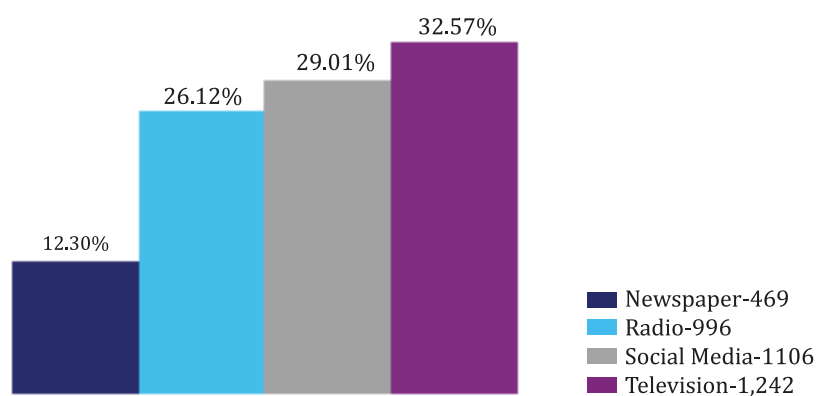
Television is the most popular platform for accessing election information commanding almost one third (33.32%) of the audience preference. This is closely followed by Radio (29.12%) and Social Media (23.91%).

Social Media is the second most preferred medium for respondents who did not vote (29.01%) after Television (32.57%). Results also revealed that social media is the most preferred medium for 18-30 year olds. As such, the platform would have to be strategically utilized in getting messages across to the youths at the next general election.

3.8 Behavioural Questions

An important objective of the survey was to provide a broader understanding of voter behaviour in the Fijian context. As such a number of survey questions were designed to seek information on voter behaviour and the general perceptions of Fijians to voting.
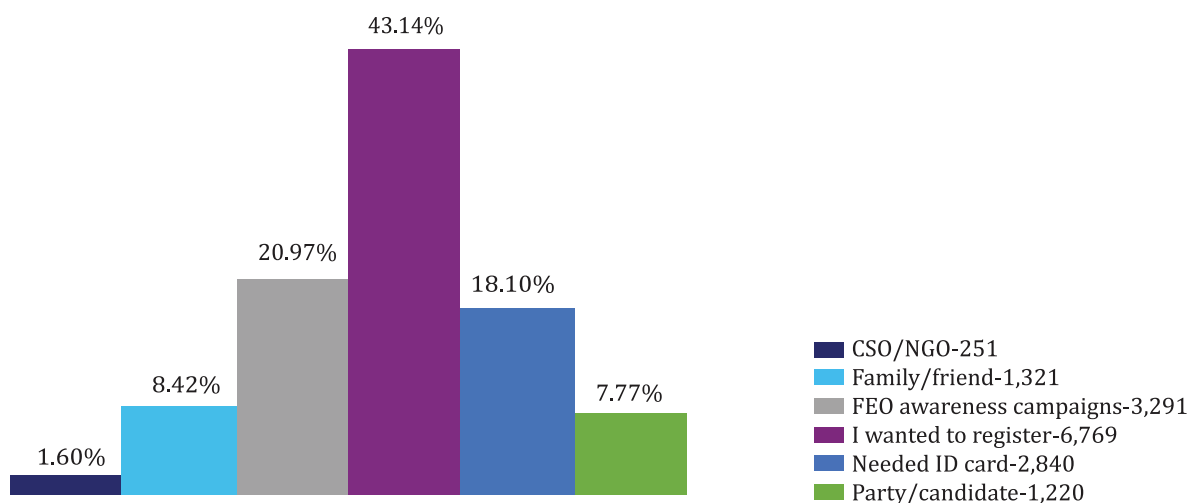
What convinced you to register to vote?

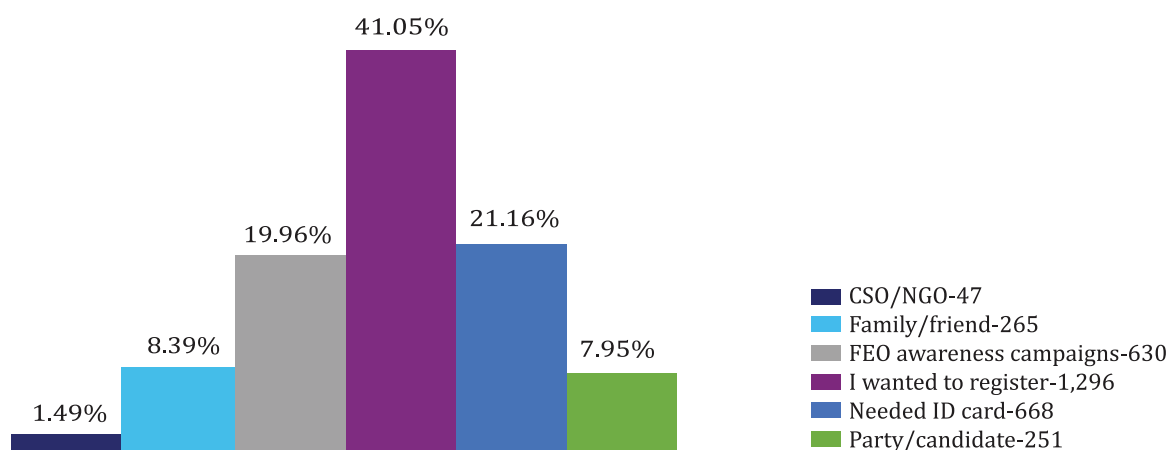This question allowed a survey participant to select multiple answers.

Combined

42.79%

20.80%

18.61%

8.41%

7.80%

1.58%

- CSO/NGO-298
- Family/friend-1,586
- FEO awareness campaigns-3,921
- I wanted to register-8,065
- Needed ID card-3,508
- Party/candidate-1,471

Voted

43.14%

20.97%

18.10%

8.42%

7.77%

1.60%

- CSO/NGO-251
- Family/friend-1,321
- FEO awareness campaigns-3,291
- I wanted to register-6,769
- Needed ID card-2,840
- Party/candidate-1,220

Not Voted

41.05%

21.16%

19.96%

8.39%

7.95%

1.49%

- CSO/NGO-47
- Family/friend-265
- FEO awareness campaigns-630
- I wanted to register-1,296
- Needed ID card-668
- Party/candidate-251

Close to half (42.79%) of the people surveyed said they registered because they wanted to. The same trend was noted for respondents who had voted (43.14%) and those who did not (41.05%). A fifth (20.80%) of the total respondents surveyed revealed they registered due to awareness campaigns conducted by the FEO. Among voters, 20.97% of the respondents went for this option and it was 19.96% for non-voters.
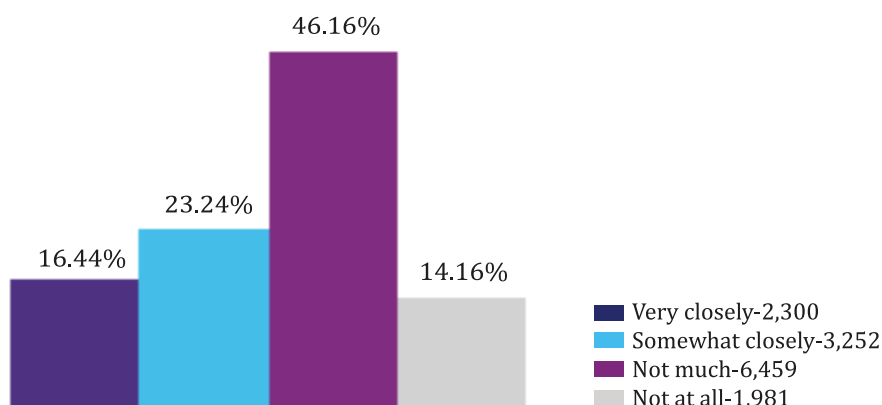
The fact that more than 40% of citizens surveyed said they had registered because they wanted to register indicates the existence of a predisposition to vote. Whether it is a feeling of civic duty, a desire to affect the electoral outcome or any other reason, this group of people intended to vote. A similar trend was also noted between the group that voted and the group that did not vote.

A fifth (21.16%) of respondents who did not vote said they had registered because they needed an ID card. Within this group, 25.70% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-20 years.

In Fiji, the VoterCard has been adopted as a universal ID card and this forms a secondary motivation for some citizens to obtain this card and also to keep it up-to-date.

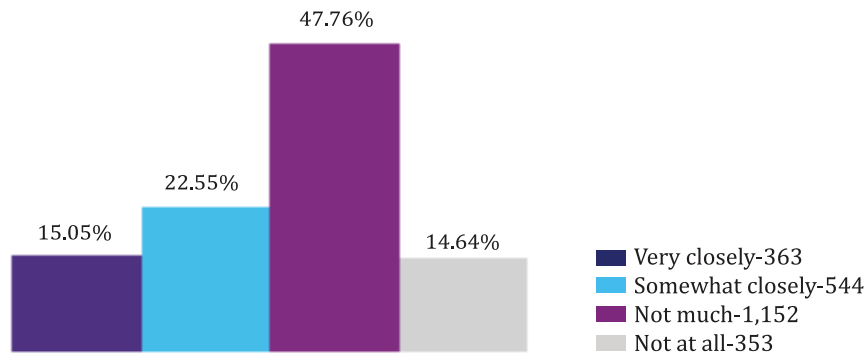## How closely were you following the campaigns of candidates?

Combined

Voted

Not Voted

47.76%

22.55%

15.05%

14.64%

■ Very closely-363
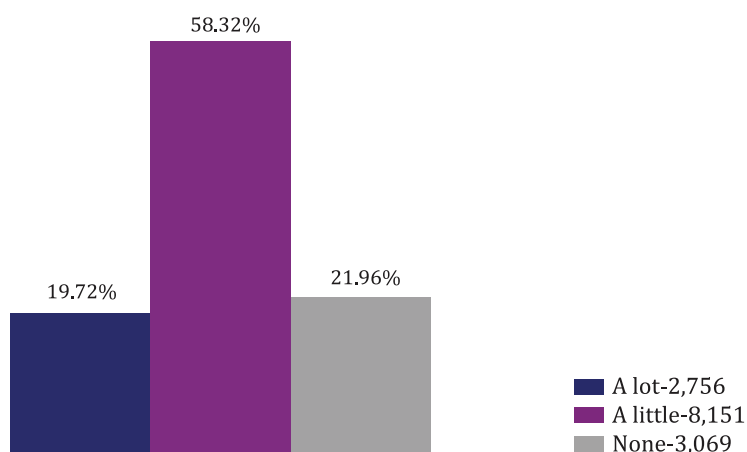■ Somewhat closely-544
■ Not much-1,152
■ Not at all-353
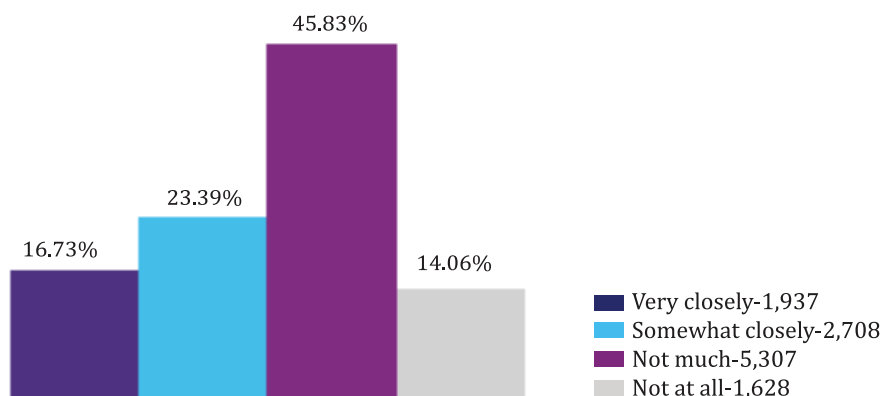
As per findings, data suggests that more than half of the voting population did not take an active interest in the campaigns of candidates. 60.32% of the respondents recalled either not following the campaign at all (14.16%) or following but not much (46.16%).

Less than 40% of the people surveyed had shown a reasonable amount of interest in the campaigns of candidates with 16.44% reporting that they had closely followed the campaigns and 23.24% following somewhat closely.

Among people who voted, 40.1% showed a reasonable amount of interest in the campaigns with 16.73% closely following the campaigns and 23.39% following somewhat closely.

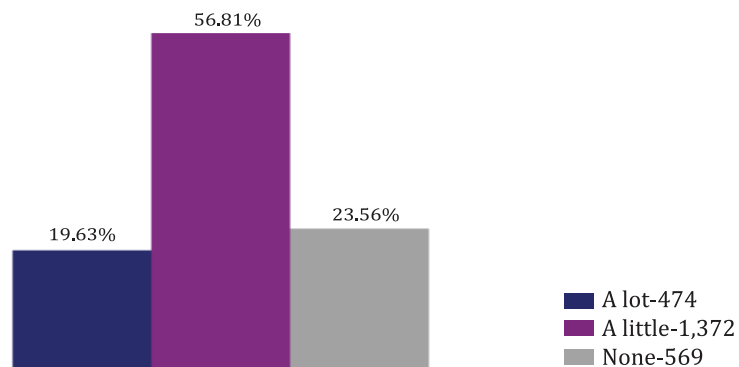## How much interest do you take in politics?

Combined

58.32%

19.72%

21.96%

■ A lot-2,756
■ A little-8,151
■ None-3,069

Voted

58.64%

19.74%   21.62%

- A lot-2,282
- A little-6,779
- None-2,500

Not Voted

56.81%

19.63%   23.56%
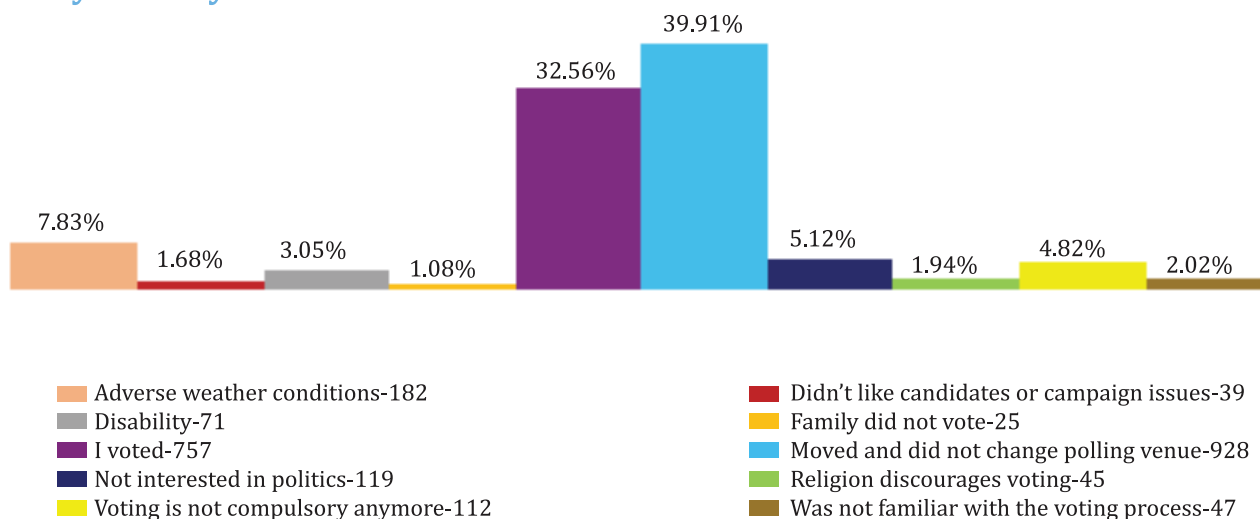
- A lot-474
- A little-1,372
- None-569
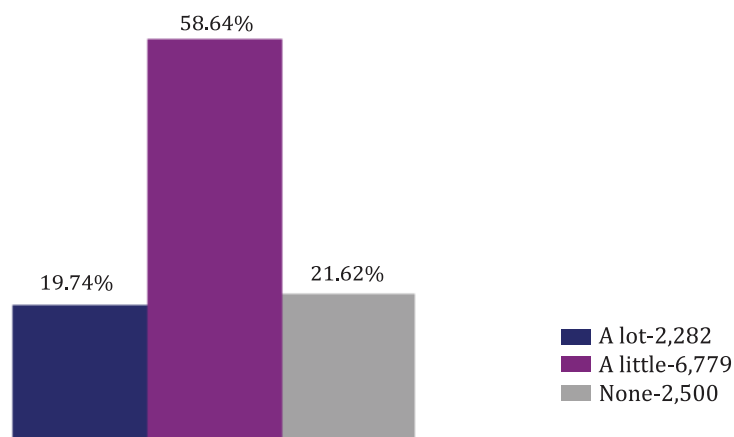
More than half of the respondents (58.32%) reported having 'A little' interest in politics. The trend was consistent among those who voted; (58.64%) and those that did not (56.81%).

Over one fifth (21.62%) of the respondents who voted, reported having no interest in politics. Interestingly, the percentage of respondents who take no interest in politics (21.62%) is higher than the percentage who took a lot of interest (19.74%).

A similar trend was noted for respondents who did not vote.

Why didn't you vote?

7.83% 1.68% 3.05% 1.08% 32.56% 39.91% 5.12% 1.94% 4.82% 2.02%

■ Adverse weather conditions-182   ■ Didn't like candidates or campaign issues-39
■ Disability-71   ■ Family did not vote-25
■ I voted-757   ■ Moved and did not change polling venue-928
■ Not interested in politics-119   ■ Religion discourages voting-45
■ Voting is not compulsory anymore-112 ■ Was not familiar with the voting process-47

The question was posed to survey respondents who did not vote in the 2018 General Election. The most popular reason for not voting was 'Moved and did not change the Polling Venue' (39.91%). Almost a third (32.56%) of the respondents who did not vote as per turnout data from the Voter List Analysis went for the 'I voted' option. 'Adverse weather conditions' was the third most chosen option followed by 'not interested in politics'.
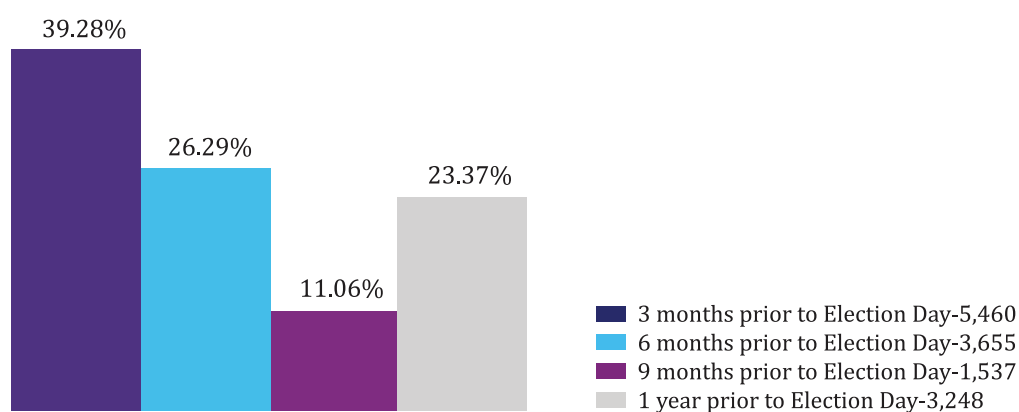
For the 18-50 age group, not being able to change the Polling Venue was the most popular reason for not voting.
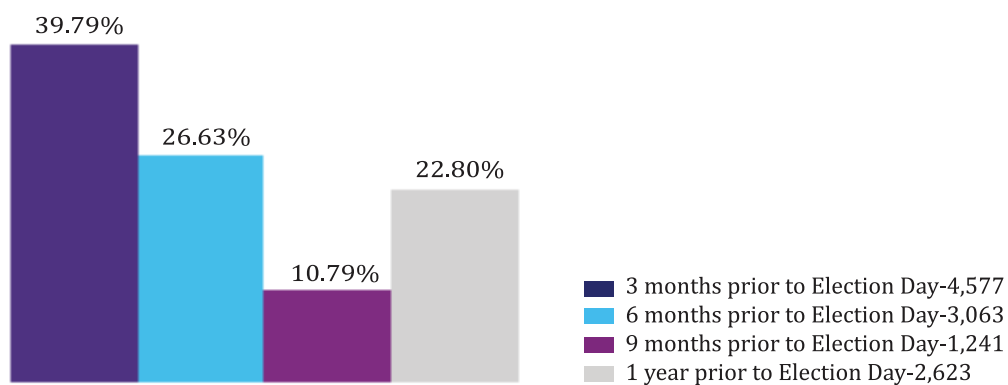
3.9 Aspiration Questions

The Voter Survey created provisions for the voting population to share their aspirations in relation to general elections in Fiji. Aspiration questions focused on two (2) key elements; the perceptions of the voting population on the announcement of the date of general election and an indication of their interest in voting during the next one.

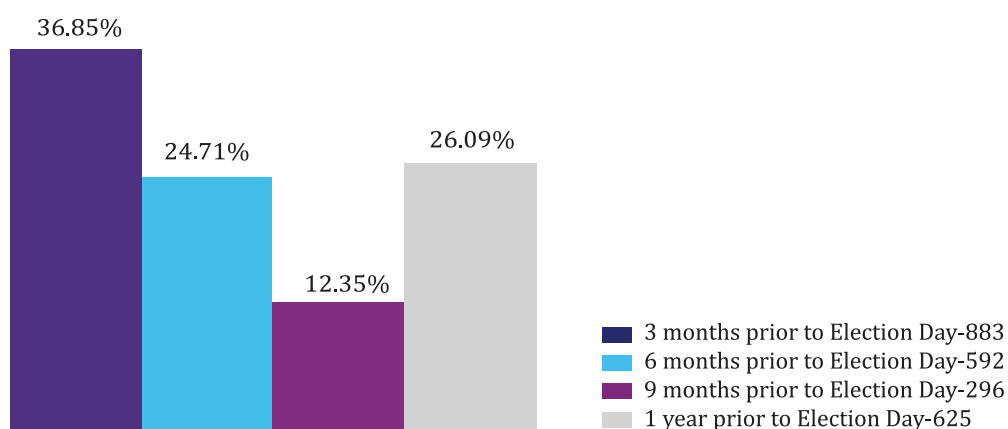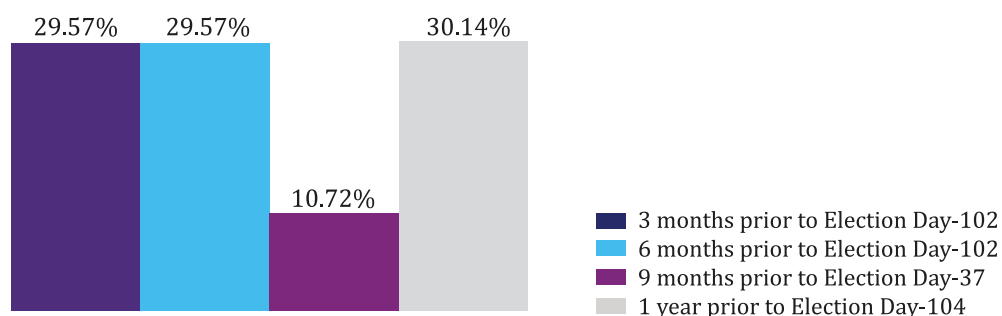### If it were up to me, the date of the General Election should be announced:

Combined

39.28%

26.29%

23.37%

11.06%

- 3 months prior to Election Day-5,460
- 6 months prior to Election Day-3,655
- 9 months prior to Election Day-1,537
- 1 year prior to Election Day-3,248

Voted

39.79%

26.63%

22.80%

10.79%

- 3 months prior to Election Day-4,577
- 6 months prior to Election Day-3,063
- 9 months prior to Election Day-1,241
- 1 year prior to Election Day-2,623

Not Voted

36.85%

24.71%

26.09%

12.35%

- 3 months prior to Election Day-883
- 6 months prior to Election Day-592
- 9 months prior to Election Day-296
- 1 year prior to Election Day-625

Postal Voters

3 months prior to Election Day-102
6 months prior to Election Day-102
9 months prior to Election Day-37
1 year prior to Election Day-104

According to the responses received, announcing the election date three (3) months ahead of the Election Day was the most preferred choice for the respondents (39.28%). The next preferred option is 'six (6) months' (26.29%). In 2018, the election date was known about 47 days before the General Election.
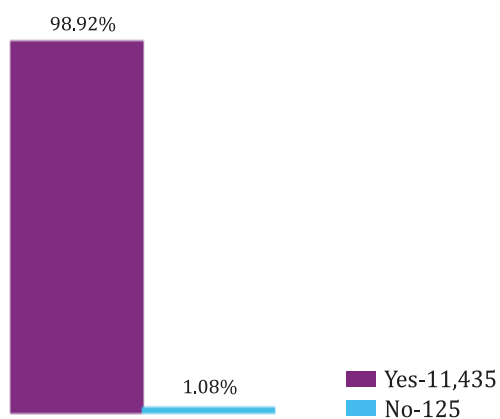
Interestingly, a quarter of the respondents who did not vote indicated they want the election date to be announced one (1) year ahead of the Election Day. On the other hand, about a third of the Postal voters had preferred to know the election date a year in advance.

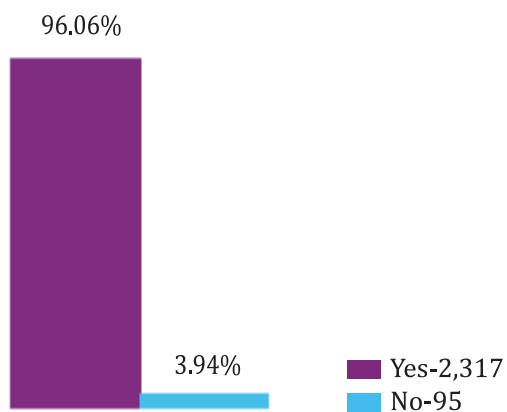## Will you vote in the next General Election?

Combined

Yes-13,752
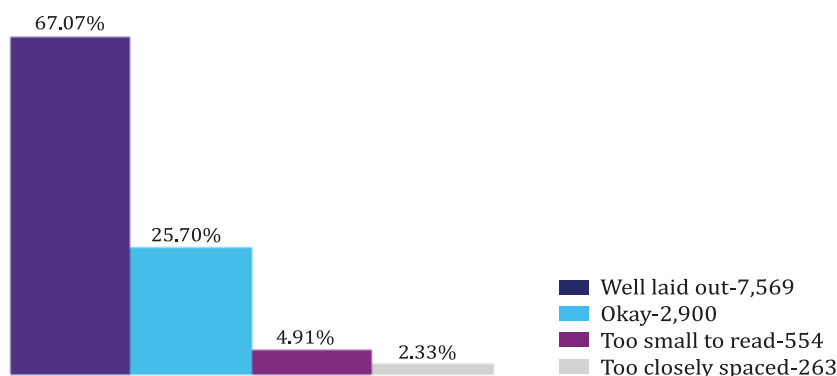No-220
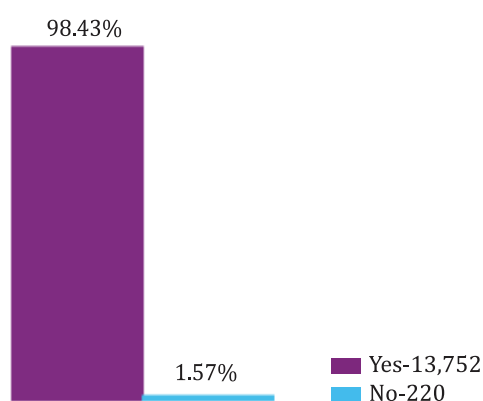
Voted

Not Voted

A positive feedback was received for this question with more than 98% of the respondents indicating they would vote in the next general election. 96% of the respondents who did not vote also indicated the same.

3.10 Questions on Voting Experience

A fraction of the survey questions were explicitly developed to gather feedback on peoples' voting experience in the 2018 General Election. The core focus of the Voter Survey was to engage the electorate and understand their approach to voting and general elections. So, these questions were an opportunity to seek the view of the voting population on the voting process, their experience at the polling venues and the overall service delivery by the FEO.

How did you find the layout of the ballot paper?

67.07%

25.70%

4.91%

2.33%

Well laid out-7,569
Okay-2,900
Too small to read-554
Too closely spaced-263

Over two thirds of the respondents reported that the ballot paper was `Well laid out' (67.07%). Another 25.70% said it was 'Okay'. Overall, more than 90% of the respondents gave positive feedback on the question. However, close to 7% of the respondents recalled facing issues with the ballot paper with 4.91% reporting it was 'too small to read' and 2.33% indicating it was 'too closely spaced'. Generally, voters in Fiji have had the experience of two (2) General Elections using ballot papers designed as such and hence this may contribute to greater voter comfort in using them.

How did you find the layout of the postal ballot paper?

73.47%

18.71%

5.44%

2.38%

Well laid out-216
Okay-55
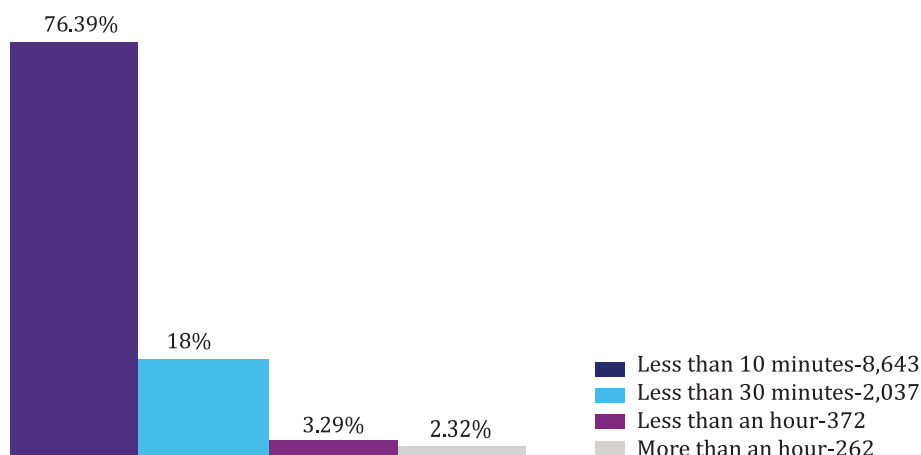Too small to read-16
Too closely spaced-7
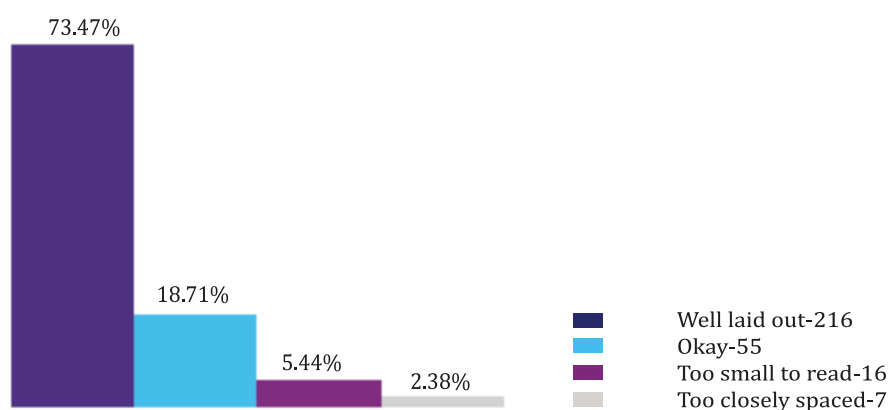
Almost three quarters (73.47%) of the postal voters surveyed indicated the ballot paper was 'Well laid out' while 18.71% said it was 'Okay'. Overall, more than 90% of the respondents gave positive reviews on the ballot paper.

Similar to Election day voters, close to 8% of the postal voters reported they found the ballot paper either 'Too small to read' (5.44%) or 'Too closely spaced' (2.38%). The FEO provides a magnifying lens for voters that may need one at every Polling Station and polling staff may need to emphasize this in the next general election.
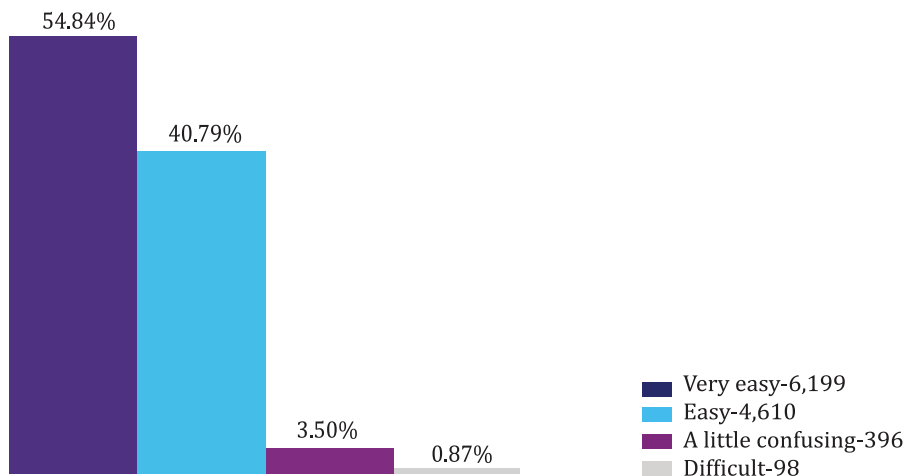
The ballot papers used for Postal Voting are the same as the Pre-Poll and Election Day ballot papers.

How long did it take you to cast your vote?

76.39%

18%

3.29%   2.32%

- Less than 10 minutes-8,643
- Less than 30 minutes-2,037
- Less than an hour-372
- More than an hour-262

More than three quarters (76.39%) of the respondents recalled they were able to vote in 'Less than 10 minutes'. Combined more than 94% of the respondents reported being able to vote in 'Less than half an hour'. Just over 5% of the respondents indicated the process took either 'Less than an hour' (3.29%) or more (2.32%).

Was it easy to vote?

54.84%

40.79%

3.50%

0.87%

- Very easy-6,199
- Easy-4,610
- A little confusing-396
- Difficult-98

Satisfaction with the voting process was very high with the vast majority of the respondents either reporting the process was 'Very easy' (54.84%) or 'Easy' (40.79%). Less than 5% of the respondents recalled the process being 'A little confusing' (3.5%) or 'Difficult' (0.87%). Over 95% rated it easy.

Was the polling venue within walking distance from your place of residence?

88.77%

11.23%

■ Yes-9,972
■ No-1,262
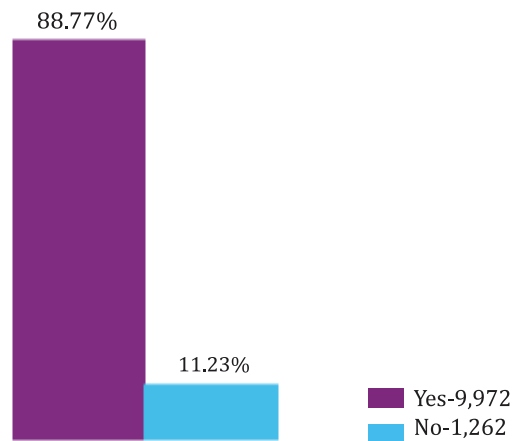
Most of the respondents reported their polling venue was within walking distance from their homes (88.77%). However, there were some respondents (11.23%) who stated otherwise.

Did you find the Postal Voting process easy?

60.54%

32.31%

5.78%

1.36%

■ Very easy-178
■ Easy-95
■ A little confusing-17
■ Difficult-4
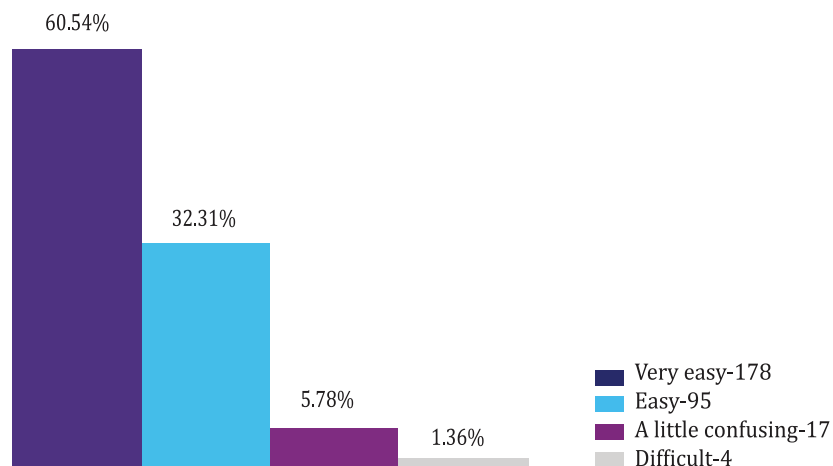
Overall, the vast majority of the respondents (92.85%) found the voting process either 'Very easy' (60.54%) or 'Easy' (32.31%).

Did you receive your ballot paper on time?

98.28%

1.72%

■ Yes-286
■ No-5
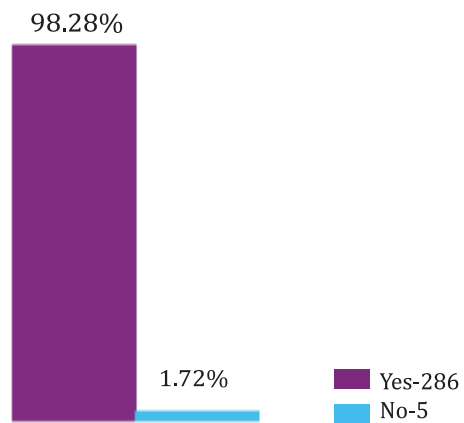
Almost all the postal voters surveyed (98.28%) reported receiving their ballot paper on time.

Conclusion

The intention of publishing this data is to provide a factual basis for future election awareness and consultation. The survey broadly explains the general voter tendencies in Fiji. It allows individual actors in the political landscape to ascertain the voter dynamics in this country.

The survey responses will also be helpful to candidates, political parties, the media, CSO's and all other stakeholders. On one hand, it could be considered as a stocktake before the 2022 General Election. It is also noted that whilst the reasoning and assumptions provided in the report for the 2018 General Election provide the opportunity for the FEO to act decisively in improving the process and engagement overall, every election is unique and it could be a different scenario in 2022.

The information is also being presented primarily in raw format to allow for further investigative research. Essentially, this first set of data hopes to draw away several 'subjective' individual assessments of voter behaviour from the last election.

The survey is an apolitical one. It does not attempt to draw or make any political inferences on the success or failures of any particular party or candidate. However, it does present an essential tool for interested candidates, parties and any other interested organization to develop its strategies in the next general election.

While all care has been taken to conduct the survey and develop this first set of data, the FEO urges users of this data to consider the actual purpose of this exercise and the use or publication of information from this data set for other purposes is discouraged. The FEO denies any liabilities arising out of the incorrect use of this data.

This Report is the country's inaugural research on Voter Turnout for a General Election. It presents an opportunity for more deeper research and investigation into the Fijian Voter perception and behavior. At the same time, it creates the path for development of voter theories that are more contextually relevant and responsive to the electoral climate in Fiji. At the very least, the findings of the project will help shape the voter awareness in the 2022 General Election.

NOTES: