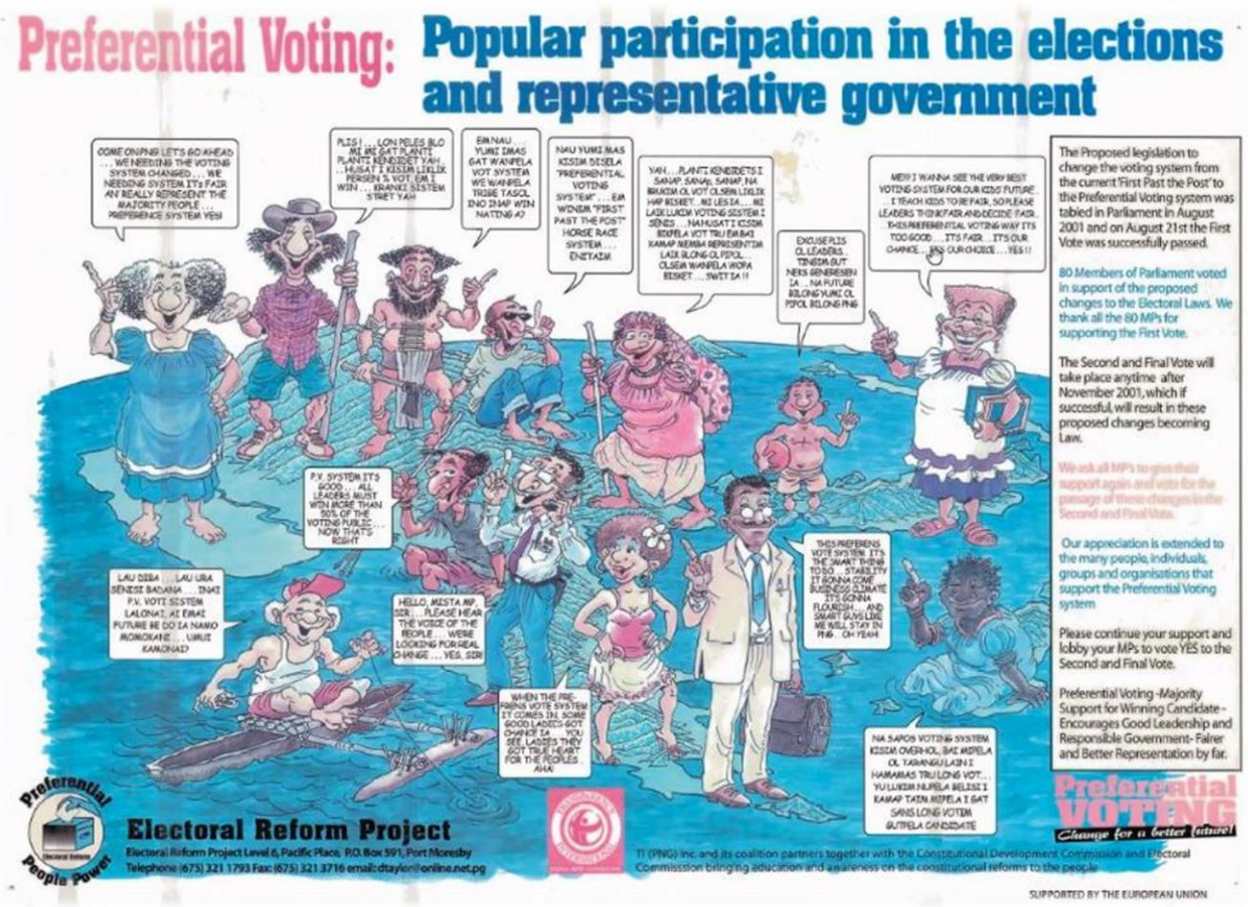
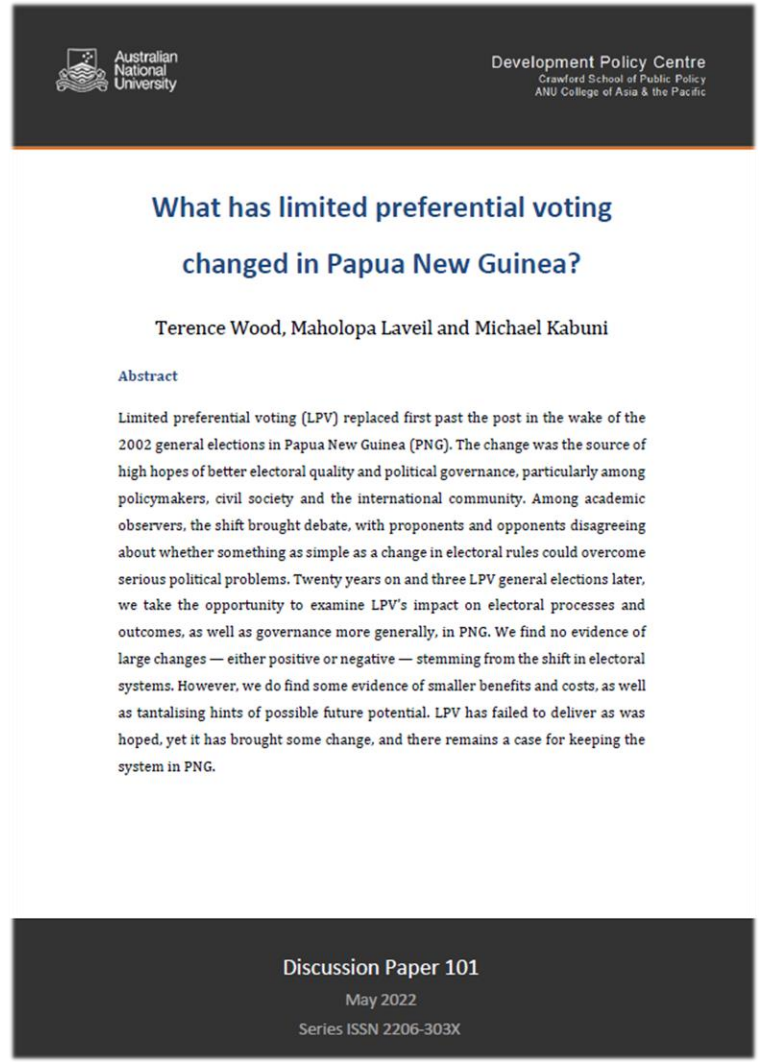
LPV & PNG: costs and benefits

Terence Wood, Maho Laveil & Michael Kabuni





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What has limited preferential voting changed in Papua New Guinea?

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(Anticipated) costs:

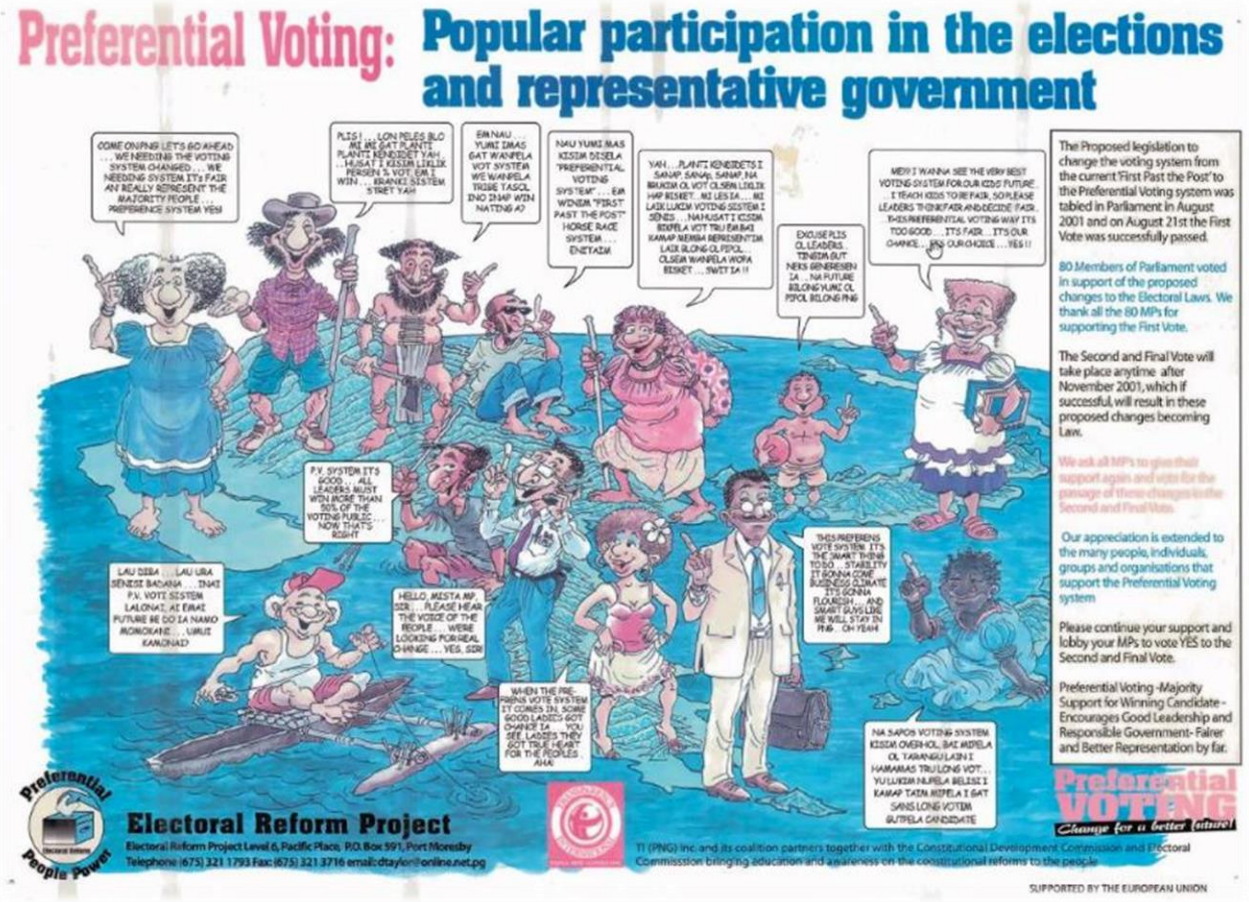
- Price
- More difficult ballots
- Vote buying

(Supposed) benefits:

- Less electoral violence
- Women candidates
- Greater mandate
- Better governance

Big questions:

- National voting
- Voter views



Price of elections

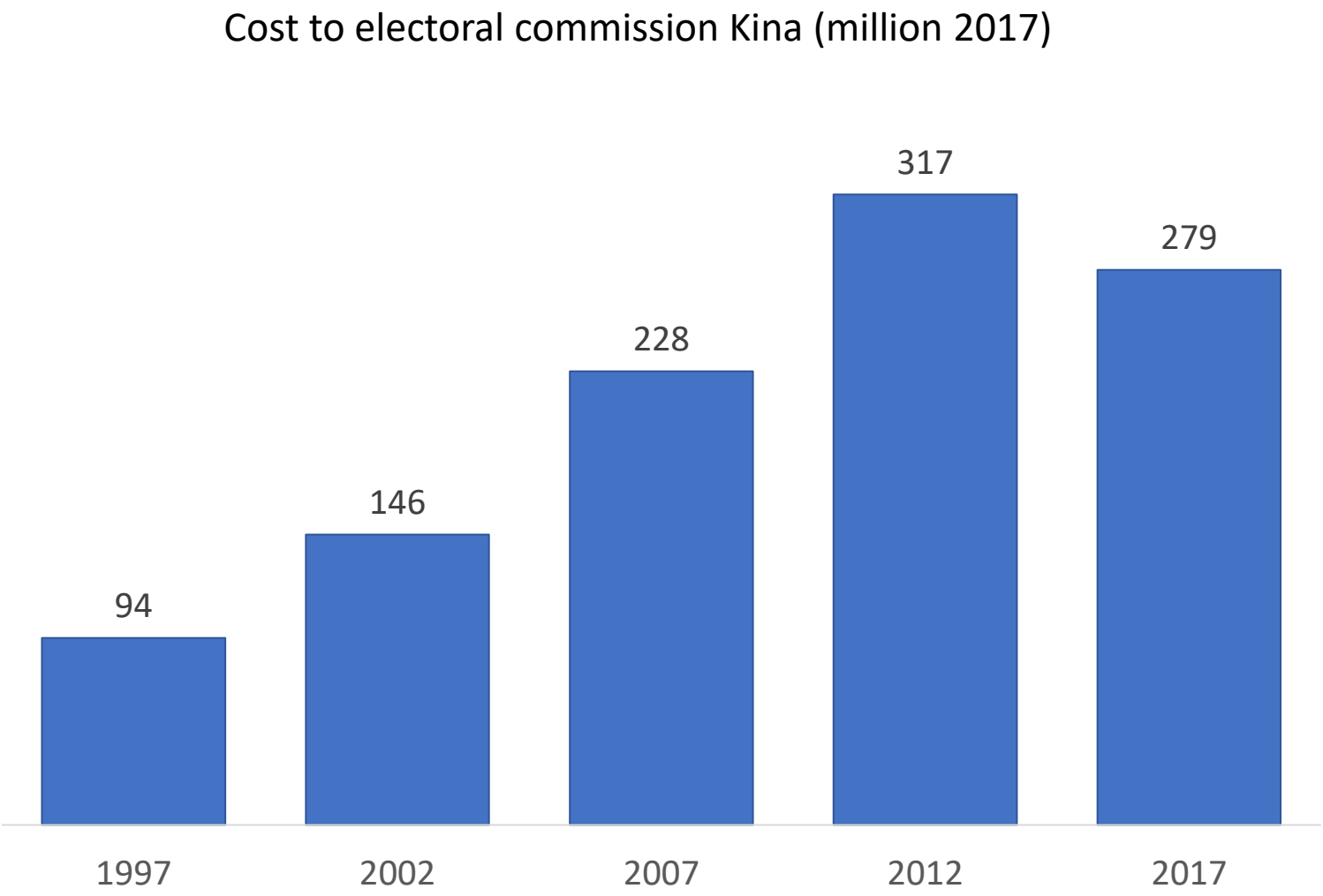
Very hard to work out accurate electoral costs in PNG.

Costs up between 2002 & 2007.

But it was part of broader trend.

Real cost of election is polling not counting.

LPV a bit more expensive, but ok if it works.



Invalid Ballots

LPV more complicated.

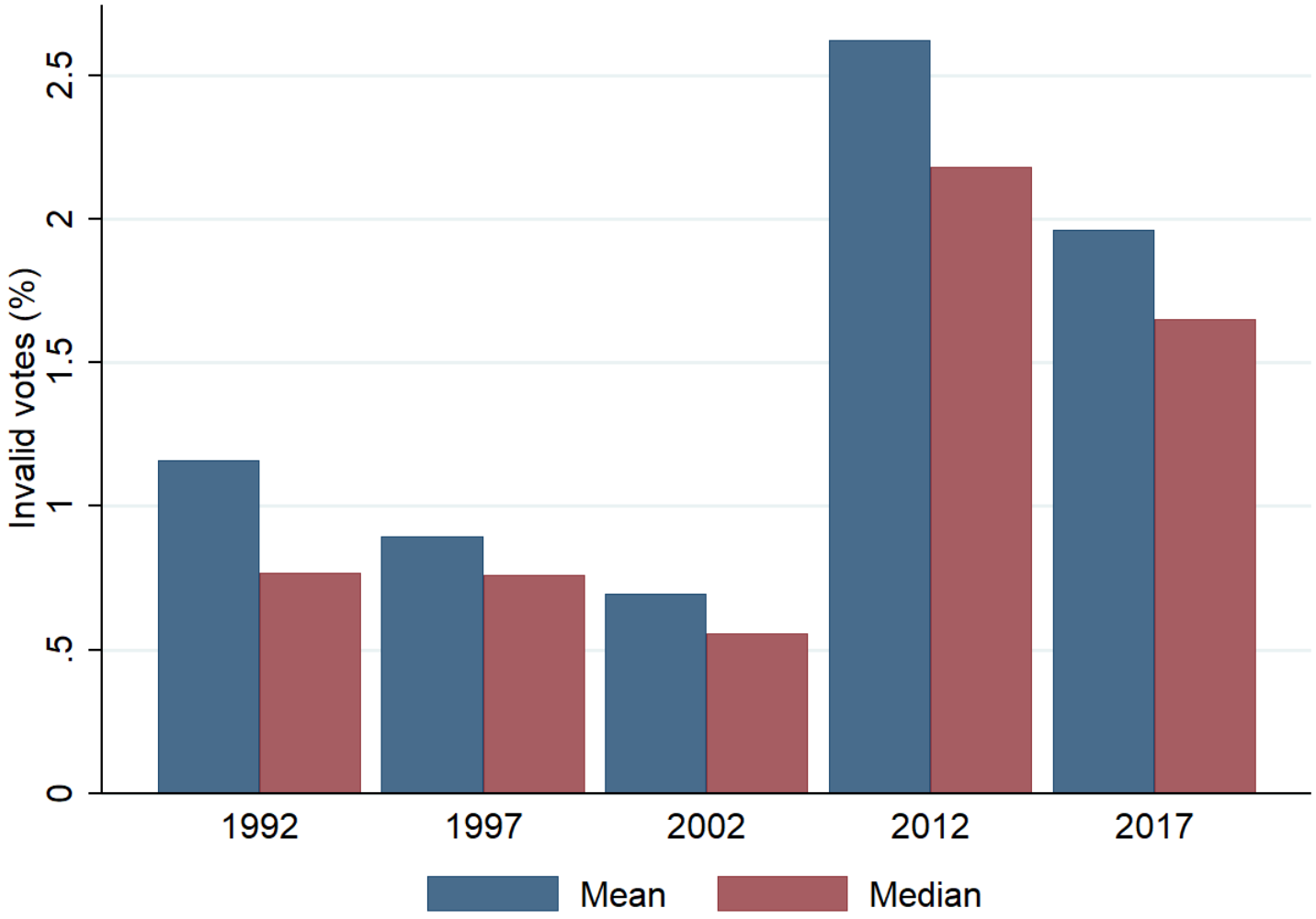
Definitely increased % of invalid ballots.

But magnitude of problem not big.

And possibly improving now.

This is a real cost.

But it is quite small.



Vote Buying

It has been argued (Haley & Zubrinich 2018) that LPV has *caused* vote buying to increase.

By its nature it is hard to get good data on vote buying.

However, we agree with Haley & Zubrinich that vote buying has increased in the LPV years.

But we don't think that vote LPV is the main cause.

Vote buying has increased in Solomons with FPP.

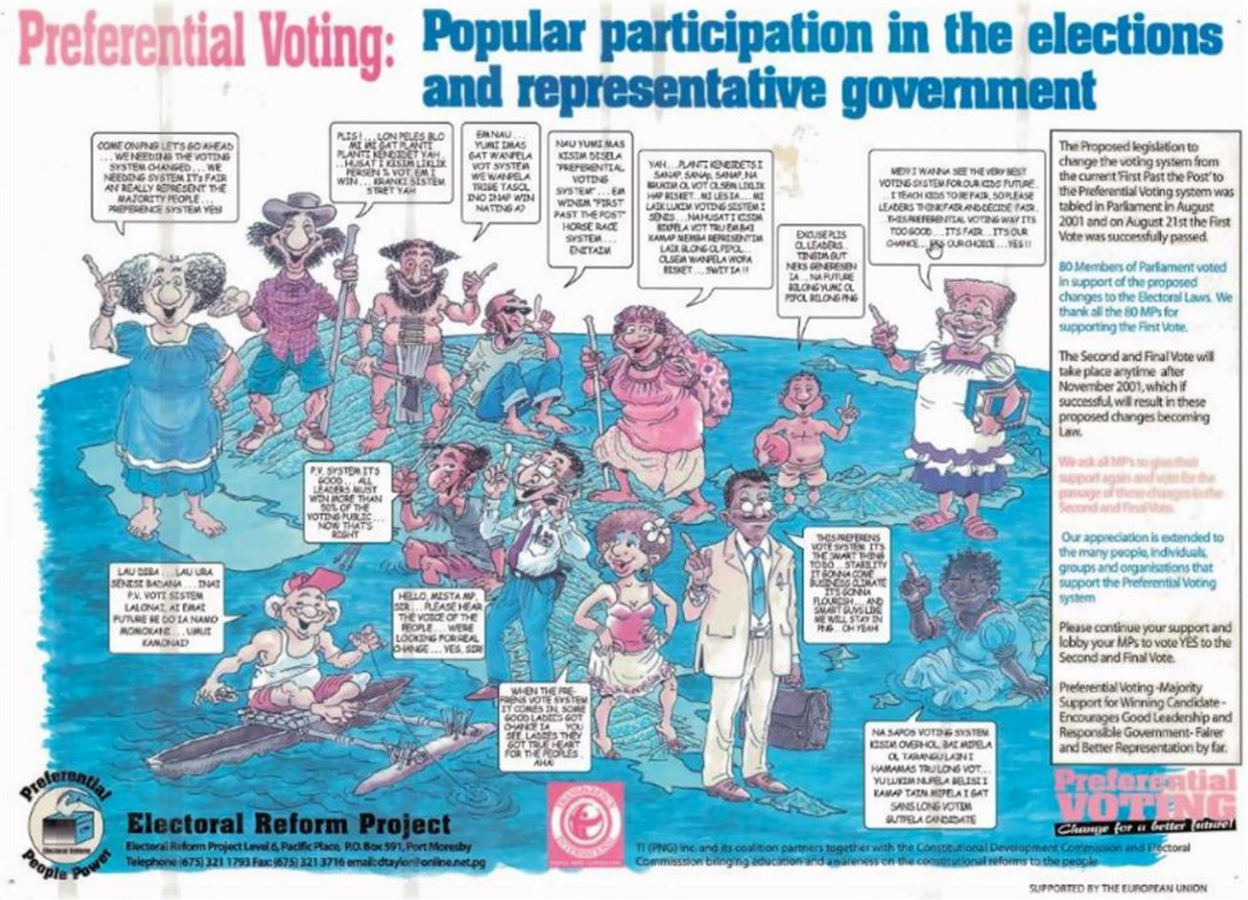
Extractive industry money common to both countries.
CDF/DSIP common to both countries.

Costs:

- Price – real but comparatively small
- Polling & counting complications – real but comparatively small
- Vote buying – major issue, but not likely caused by LPV

What about the benefits?

- Less electoral violence
- Women candidates
- Greater Mandate
- Better governance



Less electoral violence?

At first it seemed like LPV might have helped reduce electoral violence (2007).

Or at least stopped it in the campaign (2012).

But 2017 was a violent election throughout.

LPV has not cured the problem of electoral violence in PNG.

But given the general breakdown in law and order it is quite possible that violence would have been worse still without LPV.

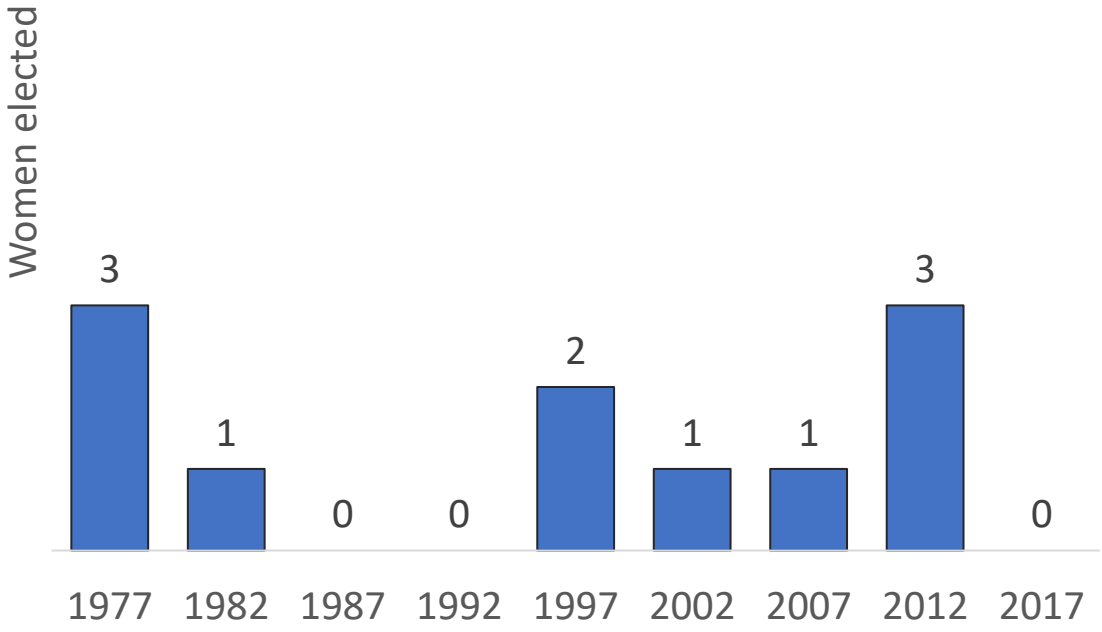
Women candidates?

LPV has not transformative (obviously).

In 2012 helped some like Toni/Kouza in Lae.

But hurt others like Gore (2012 and 2017).

When we look at all candidates not just winners women helped a bit more by preferences, but assistance not great.

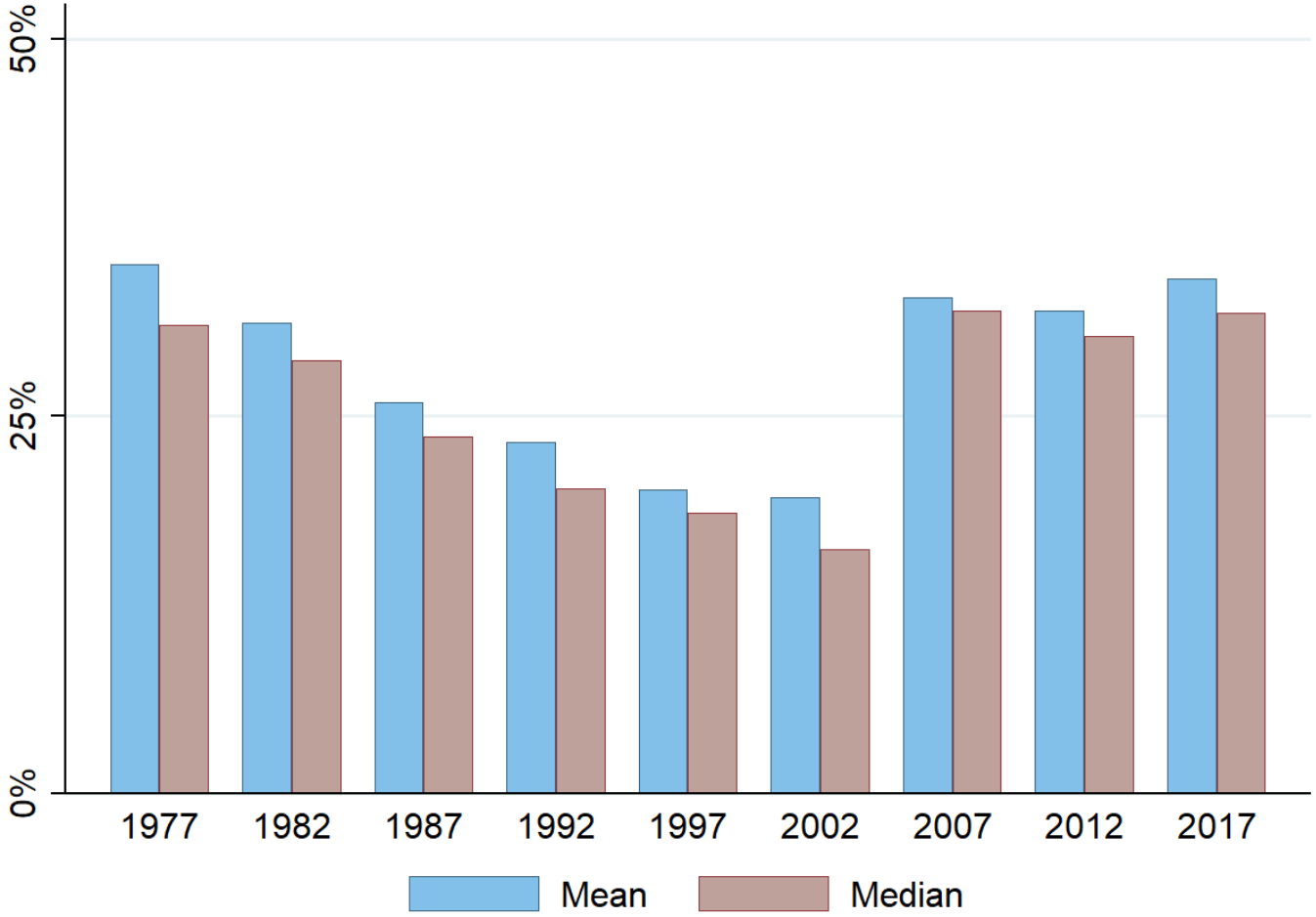


Greater Mandate?

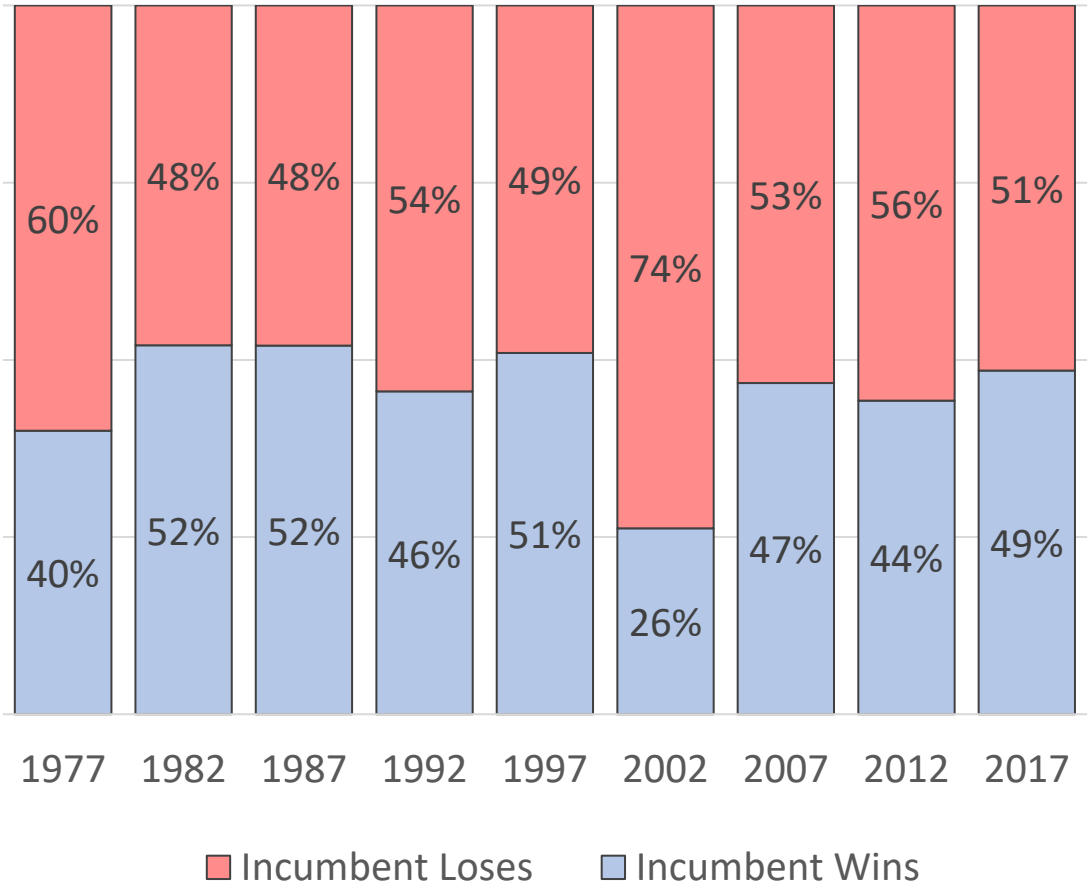
Yes – obviously.

But still rare for candidates to win more than 50%.

And…



Voters seem no happier with their MPs



"Most [survey participants] say MPs are selfish, uncaring politicians who spend their time in Port Moresby and care most about enriching themselves. 'To them being a member is just for the fame and name and supporting their family' is how one participant describes the reputation of MPs. The high turnover in parliament is attributed directly to their poor performance. (Cook & Winn 2012, p. 8)"

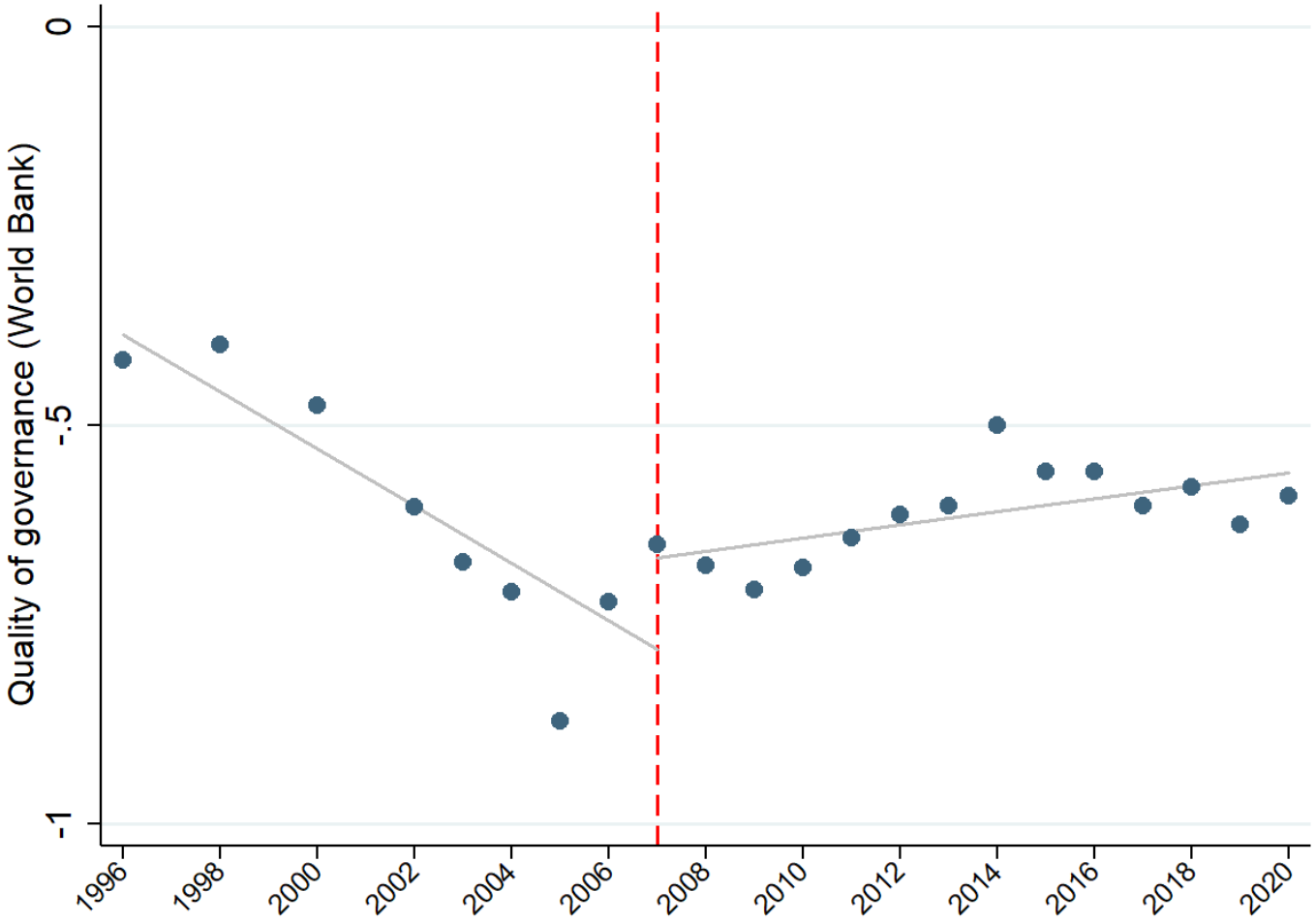
Quality of Governance

A bit better in LPV years.

But improvements start before LPV.

Probably thanks to Morauta reforms.

Governance worsening again post 2014.



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Benefits:

- Less electoral violence – maybe improvement against counterfactual but no solution.
- Women candidates – helps but minor.
- Greater Mandate – yes but is it making politicians any better?
- Better governance – no.

But that's not quite the end of the story…

National Voting?

"[P]arty politics figured more prominently in this election than previously, in that anti-PNC sentiment and campaigning against PNC was evident throughout the country. Several observer teams reported candidates of various affiliations working together to unseat PNC incumbents, while observers in all four regions witnessed incidents in which PNC candidates were verbally harassed and/or prevented from campaigning." (Haley & Zubrinich 2018)

National Voting?

Voters punished the PNC with 2nd & 3rd preferences.

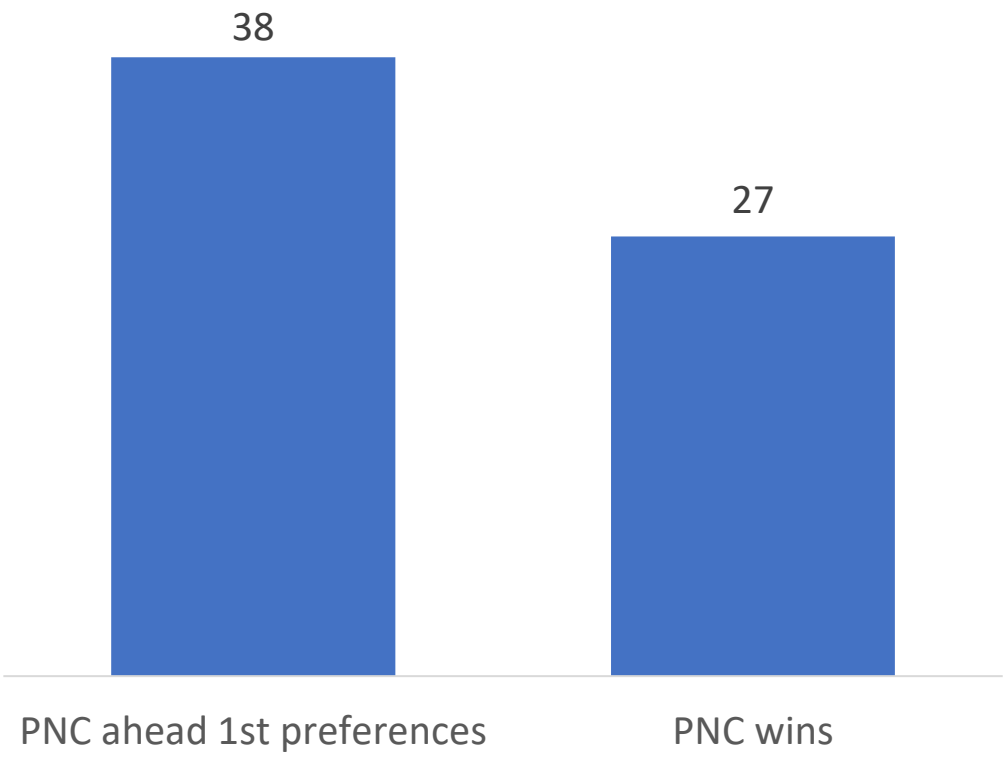
Did not systematically punish other parties.

Didn’t punish PNG in 2012.

Voter’s punished unpopular government with preferences in 2017.

But PNG voters don’t vote on national issues?

Is something changing?



Voters seem to like LPV

> LPV "is all right. Why because as mentioned I can put "1" on the candidate I want and "2" and "3" on the other candidate that my family or clan want." (Cook & Winn 2012, p. 34).

On the basis of existing anecdotal and small-n data, voters seem to like LPV.

Often for pretty basic reasons.

But if voters prefer LPV it is an important attribute that should be considered.

Yet we do need proper survey data to know if voters really like LPV.

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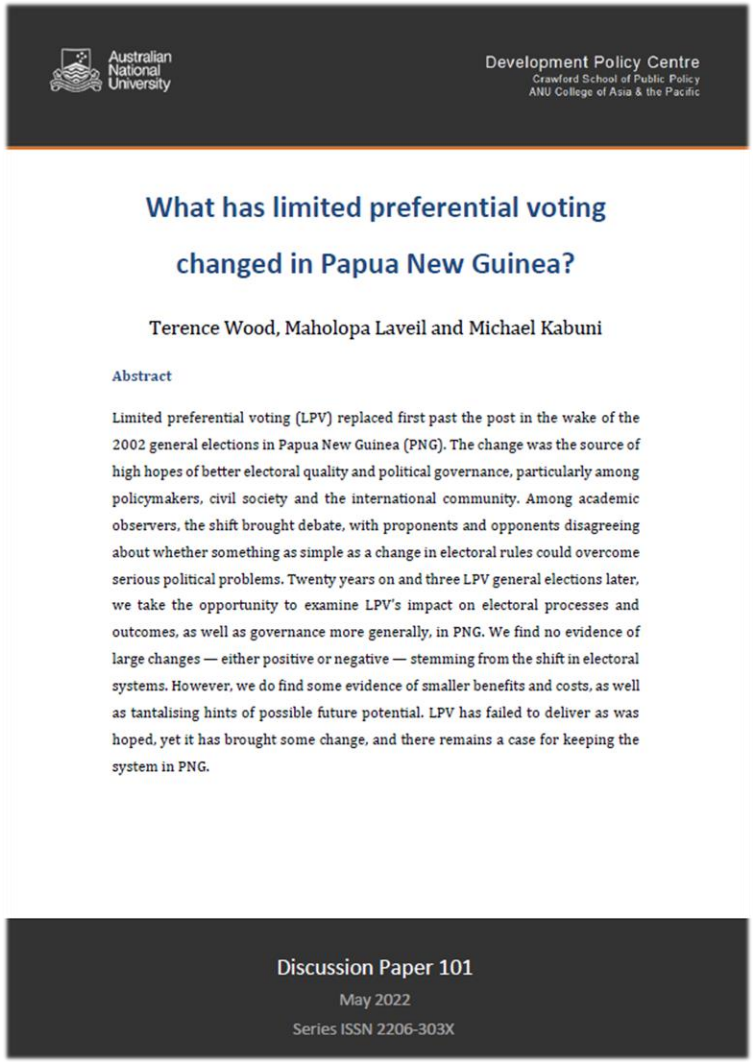
Small costs, small gains but…

- Maybe LPV is changing the nature of voter engagement? Watch this space!
- If voters value LPV, it is a major plus for the system. Need to get proper data.

Questions?



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