

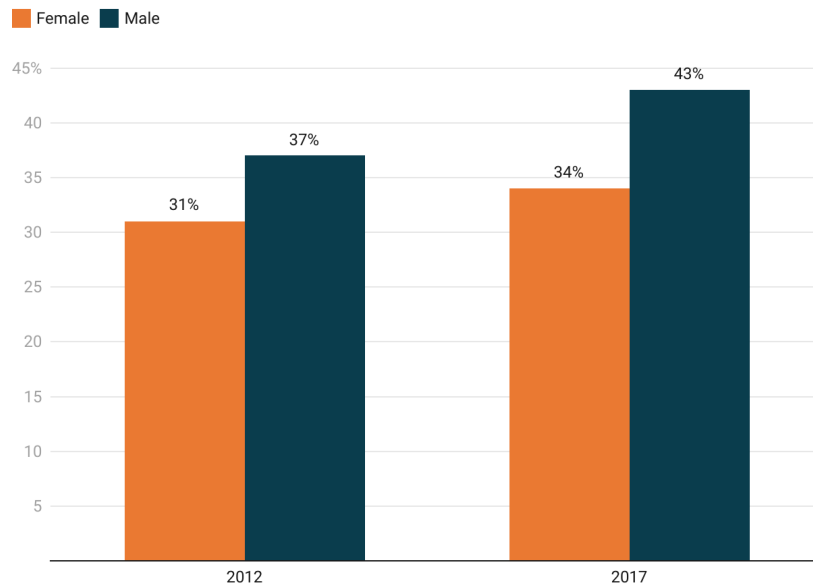
PNG: parties need to do more to help women get elected

By Maholopa Laveil
23 September 2021

Female candidates are under-represented in parties at Papua New Guinean (PNG) elections. This is concerning given [over 80 per cent](#) of successful candidates since 2002 had party affiliations, and no female candidate was successful in 2017. A [proposed revision](#) to the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPAC) includes a requirement in which 20 per cent of all candidates in a party be women. In this post I describe the extent to which women have been endorsed by parties in the previous two elections, and investigate the impact if the proposed revised OLIPPAC is passed.

The proportion of [female candidates](#) endorsed by parties in PNG is the lowest in the Pacific, and one of the lowest in the world. Just 31 per cent of female candidates were endorsed by parties in 2012, and 34 per cent in 2017. In elections in India in the same period, [43 per cent](#) of all female candidates were endorsed by parties. In Samoa the figure was [90 per cent](#), and in Solomon Islands it was [69 per cent](#).

Percentage of all candidates by gender, who were party members

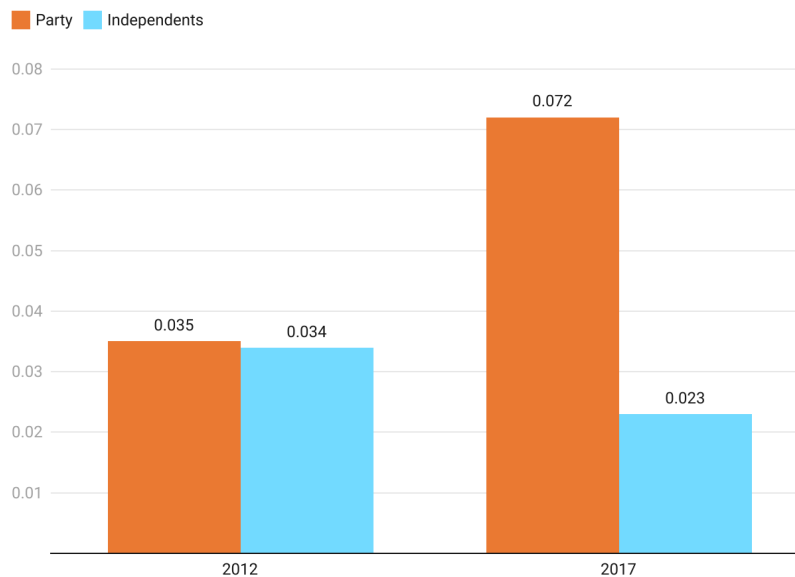


Source: PNG Elections Database • Created with Datawrapper

In 2012, there were [119 female candidates](#) (compared to 3,308 male candidates), and this increased to [176 female candidates](#) (compared to 3,156 male candidates) in 2017. As mentioned above, women with party affiliations averaged about a third of all female candidates contesting in both elections.

One hope is that by joining parties, women will become more competitive. This seems like it might be the case based on comparisons of female candidate competitiveness between women in parties, and women who are not in parties. This can be done by comparing the [competitiveness scores](#) across first-preference votes (data on after-preference votes is unavailable, however first-preference vote totals change little at the after-preference count). The competitiveness score is found by dividing the number of first preference votes of each female candidate by the number of votes won by the candidate in the lead. The score ranges from 0 to 1, and if the female candidate is leading, her score would be 1. As the chart below shows, in 2012 party endorsed female candidates were slightly more competitive (median score) in votes won, and their competitiveness improved significantly in 2017, while female candidates who identified as independents became less competitive.

Female candidates: median vote competitiveness score



Source: PNG Elections Database • Created with Datawrapper

However, there is no way of knowing whether the current relationship is caused by parties helping women become more competitive, or whether it is simply because parties look for female candidates who they think are more competitive.

In general, although women in parties performed better than women who were independents, women still comprised a tiny share of all candidates in parties. In 2012, 3.2 per cent of all candidates with a party affiliation were women. This share increased to 4.4 per cent in 2017. Although the [current OLIPPAC](#) does not have a quota for female candidates in parties, a [proposed revised OLIPPAC](#) currently before parliament does. The quota was initially set at 5 per cent, however, it has been revised to now require 20 per cent of all party candidates to be women. In a parliament comprised entirely of men, it remains to be seen if there will be support for the proposed quota.

The proposed quota would see a radical change in the composition of party candidates. A total of [43 parties](#) contested both the 2012 and 2017 elections. In 2012, female candidates made up 5 per cent or more of all candidates in only a quarter of all parties. In 2017, female candidates made up 5 per cent or more of all candidates in 37 per cent of all parties. Only in one party in 2017 – the Wantok in Godly Services Party, a party of 3 candidates – were all candidates women.

Share of women in parties, 2012 and 2017

Party	2012	2017
Christian Democratic Party	4.0%	5.9%
Coalition for Reform Party	0.0%	6.9%
Grassroots United Front Party	Null	3.0%
Indigenous People's Party	7.5%	Null
Kingdom First Party	0.0%	Null
League for Democracy Party	12.5%	Null
Mama Papa Graun Pati	0.0%	Null
Mapai Levites Party	33.3%	0.0%
Melanesian Alliance Party	14.3%	7.3%
Melanesian Liberal Party	0.0%	0.0%
Model Nation Party	Null	10.3%
Nation's Interest Party	Null	6.7%
National Alliance	2.8%	1.4%
National Conservative Party	Null	0.0%
New Dawn Transformation Party	4.0%	Null
New Generation Party	0.0%	4.2%
Our Development Party	0.0%	0.0%
Papua and Niugini Union Pati	1.8%	10.3%
Papua New Guinea First Party	Null	0.0%
Papua New Guinea National Party	2.6%	Null
Paradise Kingdom Party	Null	9.3%
People's Action Party	Null	0.0%
People's Democratic Movement	0.0%	0.0%
People's Freedom Party	0.0%	0.0%
People's Heritage Party	0.0%	Null
People's Labour Party	4.2%	0.0%
People's Movement for Change Party	2.1%	3.3%
People's National Congress Party	2.4%	2.2%
People's Party	4.3%	2.8%
People's Progress Party	0.0%	4.9%
People's Republican Party	0.0%	Null
People's Resources Awareness Party	25.0%	0.0%
People's United Assembly Party	0.0%	Null
Pipol First Party	0.0%	Null
PNG Conservative Party	0.0%	Null
PNG Constitutional Democratic Party	5.4%	7.1%
PNG Country Party	0.0%	3.1%
PNG Destiny Party	0.0%	0.0%
PNG Greens Party	16.7%	8.3%
PNG Labour Party	6.3%	Null
PNG National Party	Null	1.8%
PNG New Vision Party	0.0%	Null
PNG One Nation Party	Null	0.0%
PNG Party	0.0%	3.5%
PNG Socialist Party	Null	0.0%
PNG Youths Party	Null	2.4%
Republican Party	Null	0.0%
Rural Development Party	0.0%	Null
Social Democratic Party	2.8%	11.6%
SOM Pioneer Party	Null	7.7%
Stars Alliance Party	0.0%	0.0%
Transform PNG Party	0.0%	Null
Triumph Heritage Empowerment Party	4.4%	7.0%
Trust PNG Party	Null	5.4%
United Party	0.0%	2.3%
United Resources Party	0.0%	0.0%
Wantok in Godly Services Party	Null	100.0%

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Note: This table can be sorted by party or by either of the years. Sorting by 2017, for example, shows the Wantok in Godly Services Party at the top of the table with 100 per cent of female candidates.

The proposed quota would also dramatically increase the number of female candidates. Under a 20 per cent quota there would have been 219 party endorsed female candidates, instead of the 37 party endorsed female candidates in 2012; in 2017, instead of 61 party endorsed female candidates, there would have been 264. The [largest party](#) in 2017, the Grassroots United Front Party (GUF), endorsed 3 female candidates for 98 male candidates. Under a 20 per cent quota, GUF would have endorsed 20 female candidates.

Although we cannot be sure whether being backed by a party will make women more

competitive, a 20 per cent quota will have the clear effect of increasing the number of women standing in elections. Simply from a statistical perspective more women candidates ought to increase the chances that some women win. Hopefully, parties who need women candidates and who would like to back winning candidates, will look for more competitive women candidates to support. This may also help. Even if it does not, the change would still be significant at least in that there would be many more women candidates in future elections.

Note: The author is grateful to [Dr Terence Wood](#) for comments on earlier drafts. Election and party data were taken from the [PNG Elections Database](#).

Disclosure

This research was undertaken with the support of the ANU-UPNG Partnership, an initiative of the PNG-Australia Partnership. The views represent those of the author only.

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Link: <https://devpolicy.org/png-parties-need-to-do-more-to-help-women-get-elected-20210922/>

Date downloaded: 25 April 2024



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