



CONNECTING YOUTH VOICES TO POWER

Youth Voice into Parliament

Aim

To ensure the views of young people are fed into the call for public submissions by the Constitutional Law Review Commission (CLRC) for Special Interest Groups in Parliament.

The Youth Coalition (YC)

This survey was disseminated and the findings analysed by the Youth Coalition, a network of 15-20 civil society organisations and groups that work with young people or on issues that affect youth in PNG.

Key findings

- 915 surveys were returned in just 24 days by young people 18-35 living in 12 provinces.
- The Youth Coalition model offers the ability to access youth voice across PNG in a short time with almost no additional resources needed.
- The participants generally felt that their voices were not being heard in Parliament with 72% of respondents feeling that issues affecting young people were not being heard in Parliament.
- 88% of young people thought it was important to have a youth representative in Parliament to represent their issues
- 52% of respondents did not vote in the 2017 elections. A higher percentage of respondents in villages and settlements voted than those in cities or towns.
- 75% of young people surveyed said they felt they had full freedom to vote for who they wanted in the 2017 national elections.

Methodology

All the questions in the survey related to issues raised in the Special Interest Group Reference Paper from the Constitutional Law Reform Commission (CLRC).

We surveyed young people from September 20 to October 14 2018. The survey tool was reviewed and tested by members of the Youth Coalition strategic group and staff from the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission. We used an online and paper methodology to achieve 915 valid responses from young people from different parts of the country. The online survey was disseminated via the social media platforms of Youth Coalition partners and received 276 responses. The paper survey was taken physically to various parts of PNG and youth cohorts in Port Moresby by Youth Coalition partner staff and received All paper responses were then entered into the online survey tool for ease of analysis.

Responses to the Survey were given on a confidential and non-attributable basis. All respondents were required to give consent for their results to be shared. Of 915 responses, 854 gave consent to share their responses publicly. Youth under 18 were not included to avoid more complex consent requirements.

The survey form was divided into three parts: **Part 1** gathered information about age group, sex, location and community type and whether there are working or schooling. **Part 2** asked about young people's voice in relation to participation in the national elections. **Part 3** focused on the use and the abuse of drugs and alcohol in young people's communities, ease of access to alcohol and possible responses to abuse.

Survey results

Information on respondents

915 young people between the ages of 18-35 years of age participated in the survey. We had relatively equal representation of sexes with 45% of the respondents being female and 55% male.

57% of the respondents were between the age of 18-24 years old, representative of the high number of University and College students that participated in the survey (54% of responses). 24% of respondents were in the workforce.

Young people residing in 12 PNG provinces responded, increasing to 16 if home province is factored in. A reasonable mix of community type was represented with 63% living in towns or cities, 24% in Villages and 10% in settlements.

Youth participation in elections

The data showed that 52% of respondents did not vote in the 2017 elections. Interestingly more respondents in villages and settlements voted in the last election than those in towns and cities as can be seen in the table below. Those in settlements appeared most likely to have voted.

Table 1: Respondents who voted in the last election by community type

I live in	Yes	No
A City	34%	66%
A Town	45%	55%
A Settlement	70%	30%
A village	67%	33%

Overall a greater % of males surveyed voted than females. The survey did not ask why young people did not vote so this would be an interesting area of enquiry, but there appears to be a need to increase youth participation in voting during elections especially for young women.

Freedom to vote

A second question asked young people if they had freedom to vote for their preferred candidate in the elections. 75% of participants said they had full freedom to vote whilst 21% said they had 'some' or 'little' freedom. Interestingly, 75% felt they had **full freedom** to vote for who they chose yet only 48% actually voted.

When we compared this answer to where young people lived the survey results revealed that:

- Out of the 203 respondents who live in Villages 84% said they had full freedom to vote for whoever they wanted during the last elections;
- Out of the 369 respondents who live in Cities 70% said they had full freedom to vote for whoever they wanted during the last elections;

Further enquiry is needed to understand reasons why young people do not have full freedom to vote and the reason for the differential between cities and villages/ settlements.

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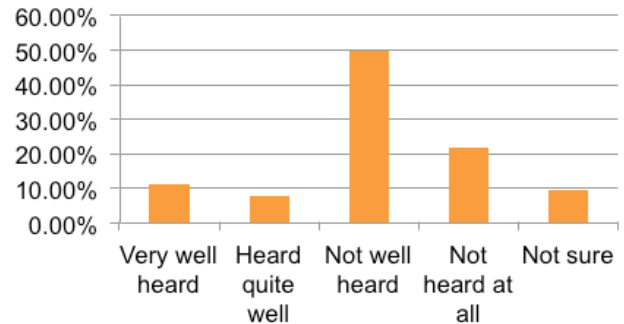
Next we asked if young people felt their voices were being heard in National Parliament.

The response was clear, with only 11% of respondents feeling that issues affecting youth were being 'well heard' in Parliament. A clear 72% felt that issues affecting youth were not being heard at all, or not heard well.

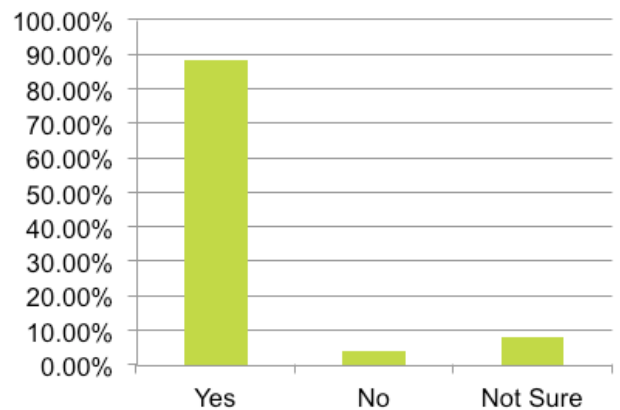
With 70% of the population in PNG under the age of 35 this data raises concerns that the majority of the population (youth and children) are not being adequately represented or prioritised on the floor of parliament.

When asked whether the young people thought it was important to have a *youth representative in Parliament* overwhelmingly **88% of respondents voted yes**. This response is clearly linked to the responses in the previous question.

Do you feel that issues that affect young people are being heard in the National parliament?



Would you like there to be a specific youth representative in National parliament?



Recommendations

Members of the Youth Coalition make the following recommendations:

1. Government to increase opportunities to ensure youth voices are being heard in Parliament. This may include having a reserved seat for a youth representative in Parliament
2. Further research needs to be done to understand why such a high percentage of youth have not voted. There needs to be more voter education for young people to ensure they are enrolled in the common roll and understand their civic duty to vote during national elections
3. That Youth and youth focused organizations work more closely in partnership with the National Youth Development Authority to channel the concerns of young people up to government.

Acknowledgements

The Youth Coalition would like to thank all the organisations who worked tirelessly to get such a strong response in such a short time.

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