



## **NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**

# **REPORT ON VOTER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS WOMEN CANDIDATES BEFORE AND AFTER THE 2014 SI NATIONAL GENERAL ELECTION**

By

Karlyn T Roughan  
Lysa Wini

27<sup>th</sup> January 2015

## Acknowledgements

Any accomplishment such as this research requires a collaborative effort and participation by a collective. Without the help and support of these organisations and individuals, this report would not be achievable.

First and foremost I would like to thank the Clerk of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, Mrs Taeasi Sanga, for supporting the implementation of this Voter Behaviour Survey;

The UNDP office in Honiara for their financial support to the development of the Young Women Parliamentary Group (YWPG) in commissioning and carrying out this research;

The individuals in the National Parliament Office, Ms Marisa Pepa, Ms Kristina Sogavare, Mr Celsus Talifilu and Mr Sebastian Nauga for coordinating the project;

The YWPG members and individuals within the YWPG, Ms Marisa Pepa, Ms Kristina Sogavare, Ms Lysa Wini and Ms Clarinda Molia for their time and enthusiasm for this project;

Researchers from the Islands Knowledge Institution (IKI), Mr Kellington Simeon and Mr Paul Roughan for the training of the surveyors;

And

The Youth at Work members who dedicated their time, skills and effort in carrying out the survey and for the collection of data in the field.

My sincere gratitude to all mentioned and a humble apology to those that are not mentioned, whose efforts have contributed to the completion of this research and the compilation of this report.

Karlyn T. Roughan

## Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Contents.....	3
Figures.....	4
Tables.....	4
Introduction .....	5
Pilot Survey Project background .....	5
Solomon Islands governance and women’s political participation .....	5
Survey Implementation .....	6
Preparation .....	6
Purpose and rationale.....	6
Goal.....	6
Objectives.....	6
Results.....	9
Introduction .....	9
How common is support for women candidates during the pre-election period? .....	9
How common is support for the idea of women in parliament? (How common are notional supporters?).....	9
How common is the intention for vote for a woman? .....	9
What proportion of those who support the idea of women in parliament (NSs) are also intending to vote for a woman? (IVWs).....	10
What are the reasons for such support? .....	10
Why do people support the idea of women in parliament? .....	10
What reasons were given for intending to vote for a woman (IVW)?.....	11
To what extent does this support get translated into votes?.....	12
Transition rates from notional support to voting for women candidates.....	12
Breakdown of NS, IVW and V4W across the genders.....	13
How does notional support translate to votes in the election? .....	13
Why do notional supporters not intend to vote for a woman? .....	15
How common is it for someone with an intention to vote for a woman to vote for a woman? ..	15
Why women candidates are not getting votes.....	15
Voter Behaviour responses to threats and pressure .....	17
Conclusions .....	19
Notional Support.....	19

Intentions to vote for a woman (IVW) and V4W .....	19
Lessons from the data.....	19
Non-Support for Female Candidates .....	20
Vote Buying in Campaigns and the Expectation of Money.....	20
Gendered cultural perspectives on leadership.....	20
Male numerical dominance and feedback loops.....	20
Support for Female candidates.....	21
Early Preparation .....	21
Personal and Community Help .....	21
Accessibility and approachability.....	22
Recommendations .....	23
Significant issues for Intending Women Candidates .....	23
Avenues for further work.....	23
Further Voter behaviour surveys .....	23
“Women in Politics” Spaces .....	23

## Figures

Figure 1: Major Bases for notional support .....	11
Figure 2: Common reasons given by those intending to vote for a woman candidate.....	12
Figure 3: Illustrates the percentage of respondents giving reasons for not voting a woman.....	15
Figure 4: Reasons for not voting for Women candidates. ....	16
Figure 5: Top 3 reasons for women candidates not getting votes .....	16
Figure 6: Reasons given after the election as to why women are not getting the votes .....	17
Figure 7: Illustrate respondents who were pressured/threatened by different agents .....	17
Figure 8: Summary of respondents that are both NSs and V4W.....	19
Figure 9: Discussion points for past and present women candidates .....	23

## Tables

Table 1: Reasons for notional support given by around 1% of respondents.....	11
Table 2: Trajectory from NS to IVW to V4W .....	12
Table 3: Breakdown of NS, IVW, V4W across the two genders.....	13
Table 4: An overall view of respondents in terms of notional support status, voting intentions status and votes reported status.....	14

## Introduction

### Pilot Survey Project background

#### Solomon Islands governance and women's political participation

Political governance in Solomon Islands is generally recognised as highly democratic in terms of electoral participation and electoral regularity. However, political stability, governance outcomes and development indicators point to low governance effectiveness.

The low presence of women within the national legislature has attracted greatly increasing international attention over the last decade. Despite several years of work on women in parliament issues, there is little understanding of how people vote in relation to women.

There seems to be widespread support for the idea of women in parliament, but this does not translate to electoral success for women candidates. Recent research such as Woods (2014)<sup>1</sup> *Why Can't Women Win? Impediments to Female Electoral Success in Solomon Islands*, as well as previous work such as McMurray (2012)<sup>2</sup> *National elections and women candidates in Solomon Islands: Results from the People's Survey*, provide some hypotheses at the population level, as to why women do not perform well during elections. Three hypotheses from Woods (2014) can be summarised as:

1. Cultural expectations that make women more vulnerable to attacks on character than male candidates.
2. The lack of access to money to enable competition with male candidates 'on an even playing field'.
3. The influence of powerful electoral 'vote brokers' who mobilise sections of the electorate, and whose services are less accessible to women because of patriarchal power networks in society.

These hypotheses map well onto anecdotal and experiential understanding by Solomon Islands regarding elections.

They remained to be tested by detailed observations during an electoral period. The 2014 General Elections were a key opportunity for this to occur.

#### Research questions

Four questions were the focus of this research during the 2014 General Elections period.

- 1) How common is support for women candidates during the pre-election period?
- 2) What are the reasons for such support?
- 3) To what extent does stated support for women candidates persist through to voting stages?
- 4) What are the reasons for the translation of support to votes?

This pilot project aimed to address these questions through a longitudinal survey of a limited number of voters in the Central Honiara electorate.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://cdi.ips.cap.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/CDI-DP-2014-1-Wood.pdf>, accessed 27 August 2014.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/SI/2011-12/D/2011\\_12\\_RES-PPS9\\_SOLS\\_WMN\\_PPLS\\_SRVY\\_McMurray/2012\\_01\\_PPS\\_CM\\_SIPS.pdf](http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/SI/2011-12/D/2011_12_RES-PPS9_SOLS_WMN_PPLS_SRVY_McMurray/2012_01_PPS_CM_SIPS.pdf), access 21 June 2014

## Survey Implementation

### Preparation

The survey was initially conceptualised by YWPG in June 2014 and proposed to the UNDP Parliamentary Support project in July 2014. Approval to conduct the survey was granted in late October 2014 and questionnaire preparation and survey training was conducted immediately. The late approval of the project meant that the third, mid-campaign survey round was not implemented. Rather, survey enrolment was rolled into the pre-election survey round and a single post-election survey round was conducted after the election.

### Purpose and rationale

The voter behaviour study was designed as a pilot to inform the agenda to improve women's parliamentary representation by generating longitudinal data on:

- a) The expressed preferences of voters supportive of women candidates prior to the election and
- b) The voting behaviour

Of a selected sample of voters from the Central Honiara constituency during the 2014 Solomon Islands national general elections.

As a pilot it was not designed or resourced to provide large scale or comprehensive answers to these issues, but instead to provide good quality indicative data and a 'proof of concept' in which a locally conceived and led research effort can be seen as generating good quality and useful information with direct policy relevance.

### Goal

To develop a clearer understanding of what makes people vote for women parliamentary candidates.

### Objectives

The project aimed to generate novel data by implementing a survey during the period immediately before and during the 2014 general elections. It did so in a manner that engaged young women leaders within the YWPG at all stages in design, execution, analysis and reporting so as to provide opportunities for an improvement in YWPG capacity to develop and use policy research in their overall mission.

#### *Develop an effective survey instrument*

Voter opinions and behaviour are areas in which nuanced answers can be raised and processed in a standardised way. A survey instrument was developed through an iterative design and trialling process which was suited to eliciting meaningful and accurate answers on these topics. The design process included several opportunities for trialling and modifying the initial survey instrument.

#### *Train surveyors in the use of the instrument*

Surveyors needed to be trained on implementing the survey. An emphasis in the training was how to reduce bias and build trust with participants, whose honesty was needed for accurate results.

## Pre-Election training

The training was conducted over three days and was designed to be an interactive process. It was facilitated by an experienced social surveyor with ongoing survey experience in Honiara.

Key elements that were covered during the initial training episode were;

- What YWPG is and why the survey is important to YWPG;
- How to conduct an interview. This training element was done by dividing surveyors into groups of 2 and each were given 5mins to interview each other - the objective of this activity was to not only to learn how to talk with another person but to ask questions that would help them know who they are talking to;
- The trainer then presented key principles to remember when carrying out an interview e.g. to be appropriately dressed, to be polite etc.
- Introduction to the survey instrument - the questionnaires were distributed to them and they were given time to answer the questionnaires on their own - the intention here was to see how each person interprets the questionnaire. The questionnaires were collected and as a group the trainees went through the questionnaire to confirm what each question was meant to be asking. Then they were divided into groups of 2 and were asked to carry out the survey on each other. This demonstrated how each individual might interpret the question to another person.
- Translating survey instrument into Pijin - surveyors were given the opportunity to help translate questionnaires to Pijin.
- A talk by Paul Roughan - to learn how the data will be used to help YWPG
- Code of conduct for surveyors - using the code of conduct of the Public Service - surveyors were trained in how to treat each other and the public when interacting during the survey interviews.
- Field exercise - the surveyors were sent out to Point Cruz to carry out the interview and get first-hand experience on how to interview.

Further time was spent testing the questionnaire in the field, in order to help trainees to develop the confidence to interview strangers, identify questions that were unclear, provide an opportunity for them to understand better the questionnaire and inform the coordinators of the best way to ask some sensitive questions e.g. Who do you intend to vote for?

## Post-Election Training (One and a half days)

- Familiarisation with the new questionnaire with an emphasis was more on interpreting and understanding the questionnaire.

### *Identify sample group for detailed surveying*

A sample group of voters was identified through an initial voter attitude survey amongst registered Central Honiara voters. A sub-sample from the sample surveyed was selected for the longitudinal survey. In identifying the sample group, the decision was made to target equal numbers of each of three groups; firstly those intending to vote for a man, secondly those intending to vote for a woman and thirdly those who are gender-undecided with respect to their voting intentions. The target number of participants for each sub-group was 35 to remain within time and financial budgets.

### *Collect longitudinal data from the sample group on preferences*

The longitudinal survey took place amongst the sample group on two occasions: once during the campaigning period prior to the election, and once soon after the election.

*Ensure the quality of collected data*

At each point of data collection, the quality of the data was assessed by an experienced survey coordinator and where necessary, amendments made to the results based on interviewer notes or resurveying was specified.

*Process the collected data into a report suited to the purposes of the YWPG*

The data collected has been processed into suitable results and the survey and results are reported in this report in the first instance, in order to support the work of YWPG.

*Improve the capacity of YWPG in the policy research field*

All activities have been carried out in a manner that engages with the YWPG so as to enable them to improve their ability to conceive, plan, execute and use policy relevant research.

## Results

### Introduction

This section reports on the results of the pilot survey. The survey results aim to answer the following four questions:

1. How common is support for women candidates during the pre-election period?
2. What are the reasons for such support?
3. To what extent does this support get translated to votes?
4. What are the reasons for support not getting translated into votes?

The results answering these questions give us reason to have some overall conclusions about reasons for women not having as much electoral success as might be expected.

### How common is support for women candidates during the pre-election period?

We used 2 measures of support for women candidates during the pre-election period. The first was notional support (NS) and the second was the intention to vote for a woman candidate (IVW).

These 2 measures are meant to differentiate between what people *think* about women in parliament, and their *actions* during voting, which determine whether women succeed in elections.

Respondents answering 'Yes' to question **17a: Should there be women MPs in parliament?**, of the pre-election survey were counted as *notional supporters* (NSs). This measured how common the support was for the idea of women being parliamentarians, and is very similar to the questions that many other surveys have asked on this topic.

Respondents either giving the name of a female candidate or expressing the intention to vote for a female candidate, as an answer to question **25: Who do you intend to vote for?**, of the pre-election survey were counted as *intending to vote for a woman* (IVW). This measured how common it was for people to have plans to vote for a woman.

### How common is support for the idea of women in parliament? (How common are notional supporters?)

There was nearly unanimous support for the idea of women parliamentarians.

- A total of 98 respondents out of 101 were coded as notional supporters (NSs)
- Of the female respondents 52 out of 55 or 95% were notional supporters.
- Coded as notional non-supporters (NNSs) were 3 out of 101 respondents or 3%;
  - All 3 NNSs were female;
    - 2 were NNSs who answered 'No' to question 17a. Should there be women MPs in Parliament? (Was we woman save memba lo parliament too?)
    - 1 had no answer to this question (NA).
- All male respondents were notional supporters (NSs).
  - 100% male (46 out of 46) were notional supporters
- Overall 97% supported the idea of Women in Parliament

### How common is the intention for vote for a woman?

From the survey sample of 101 respondents, only a minority stated their intentions to vote for a woman candidate. Around 32% of respondents were IVWs, resulting in approximately a third of the total sample.

- 32 out of 101 respondents (31.7%) had intentions to vote for a woman candidate.
- This intention was more common among women than among men (38.2% vs. 23.9%).
- 11 male (11 out of 46 = 23.9%), 21 female (21 out of 55 = 38.2%)

### What proportion of those who support the idea of women in parliament (NSs) are also intending to vote for a woman? (IVWs)

Even amongst those that supported the idea of women in parliament, only less than a third (32.7%) intended to vote for a woman.

- 31 out of 98 (32.7%)
- Amongst NSs this was also more common amongst women (37.0%) than men (23.9%).
- 11 male (11 out of 46 = 23.9%), 20 female (20 out of 54 = 37.0%)
- 1 woman who intended to vote for a woman had said she did not support the idea of women in parliament (i.e. she was an IVW but also an NNS).

### What are the reasons for such support?

The survey asked people to give reasons for their support of the idea of women being in parliament. These results were coded, allowing more than one reason to be given by respondents.

### Why do people support the idea of women in parliament?

The 3 most common reasons given for supporting the idea that women should be in parliament were:

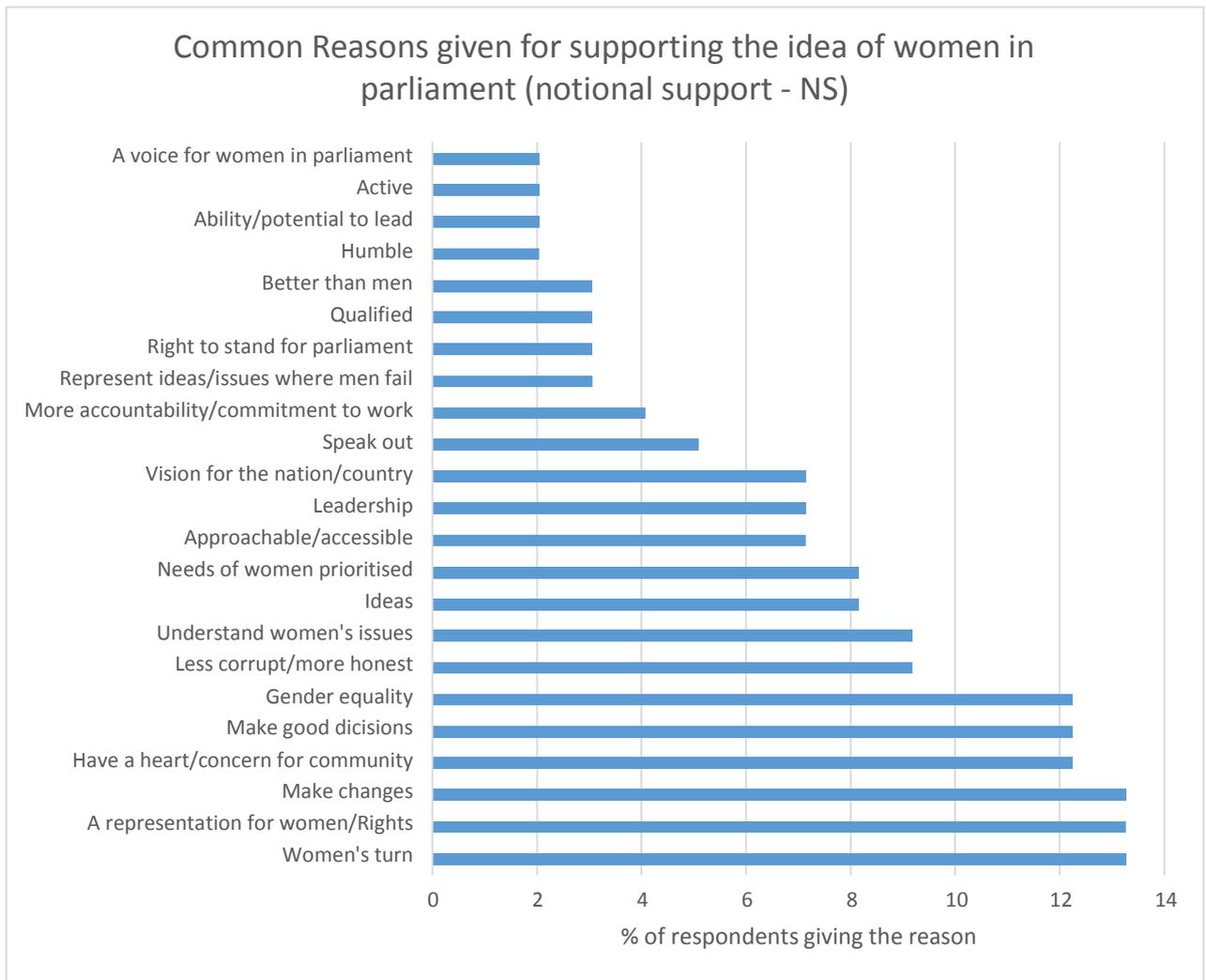
- It's women's turn [to take charge]
- [Women will] represent women and their rights
- [Women will be able to] make changes

Other common reasons given were:

- [Women] have a heart/concerns for the community
- [Women] make good decisions
- [To satisfy] gender equality

Figure 1 below illustrates the percentage of respondents giving individual reasons that were shared amongst the majority to less common reasons for their support for women in to be in parliament.

Figure 1: Major Bases for notional support



There were also some less common reasons given.

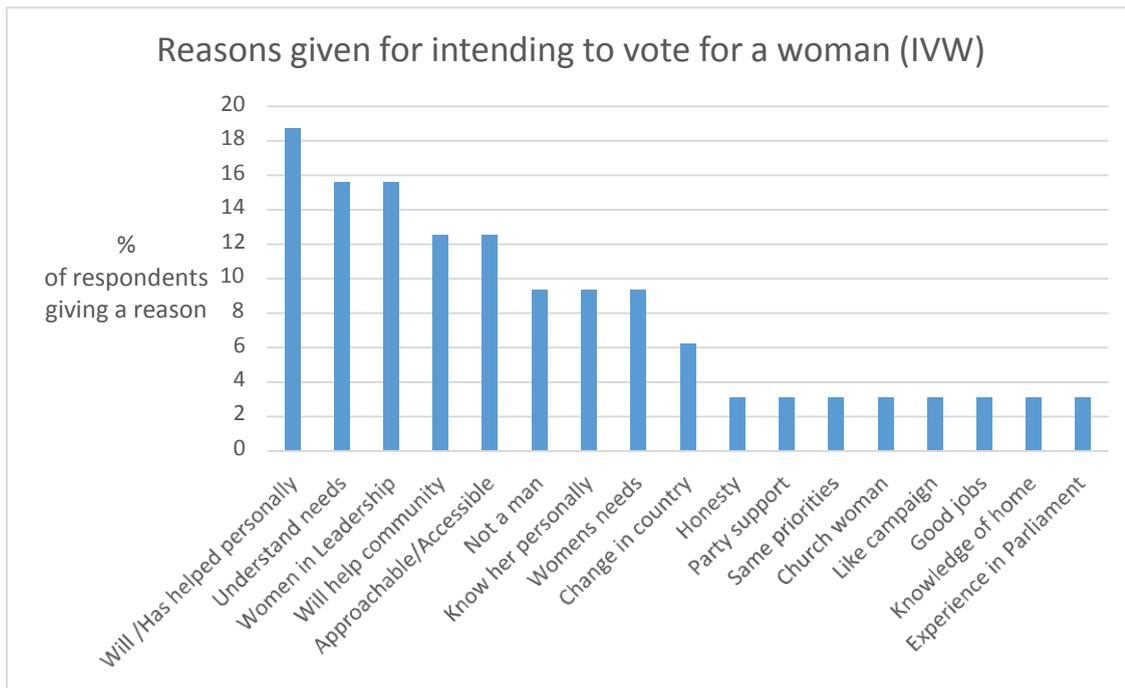
Table 1: Reasons for notional support given by around 1% of respondents

Plans	Good management/planning	Religious
Sharing ideas equally	Hospitable	Less political
Mother approach	Women control the home	More responsible/respectful

### What reasons were given for intending to vote for a woman (IVW)?

In the pre-election survey, those who indicated their intentions to vote for a woman candidate were asked for the reasons for that intention. The most common reasons were collated and are charted in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Common reasons given by those intending to vote for a woman candidate



### To what extent does this support get translated into votes?

By collating results before and after the election, we were able to measure overall how support for women changed across different types of support; notional support, the intention to vote and actual votes reported. From the data collected, we have 98% supporting the idea of women in parliament. This proportion however, reduces with every 'step' towards voting a woman candidate.

### Transition rates from notional support to voting for women candidates

The transition rates from notional support to voter intentions and to voting for women candidates are illustrated in the table below. The code *V4W* was created to signify a reported vote case for a woman candidate, and *V4M* to signify a vote for a man. No distinction was made between women candidates in this analysis.

Table 2: Trajectory from NS to IVW to V4W

Trajectory of support for women candidates	
<p>98% 32% 27%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>98%</b> Notional support (NS)</li> <li>- <b>32%</b> intention to vote for a woman (IVW)</li> <li>- <b>27%</b> voted for a woman (V4W)</li> </ul>

From the sample of 101 respondents, 98% supported the notion of women in parliament while only 32% of them reported intending to vote for a woman as their candidate preference. In the end only 27% reported actually voting for a woman candidate (V4W) on Election Day. This decrease in number, in other words meant that more than 70% of respondents voted for a male candidate.

## Breakdown of NS, IVW and V4W across the genders

The table below disaggregates these factors across show the synopsis of the genders' responses to NS, IVW and V4W.

*Table 3: Breakdown of NS, IVW, V4W across the two genders*

Male Respondents	Female Respondents
<p>Notional Support (NS):</p> <p>100% were notional supporters (NSs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 46 out of 46 male</li> </ul>	<p>Notional Support(NS):</p> <p>Only 98% were Notional supporters (NSs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 52 out of 55</li> </ul> <p>3% of female respondents were non notional supporters (NNSs) or had no answer</p> <p>Out of the 55 female respondents 3 were coded as NNSs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 female had no answer (NA)</li> <li>- 2 female were NNSs</li> </ul> <p>Reasons being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural identity (barrier)</li> <li>- Women lack confidence</li> </ul>
Male Respondents	Female Respondents
<p>Intention to Vote a Woman (IVW):</p> <p>23.9% were IVW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 11 out of 46</li> </ul>	<p>Intention to Vote a Woman(IVW):</p> <p>38.2% were IVW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 21 out of 55</li> </ul>
<p>Voted for a Woman (V4W):</p> <p>26.1% were V4W</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 12 out 46</li> </ul>	<p>Voted for a Woman (V4W):</p> <p>27.3% were V4W</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 15 out of 55</li> </ul>

Even though a majority of respondents supported the idea of women in parliament, only a little over a quarter of the respondents voted for a woman candidate in the end. The majority of NSs did not reflect a fair number of V4W respondents in comparison.

## How does notional support translate to votes in the election?

A notable majority of respondents were notional supporters. For these persons, we can track their progress through to who they voted for on Election Day. To develop this longitudinal account of how these voters, who were notional supporters before a National General Election (NGE) acted through to after voting day, several questions were asked to determine how they carried through their NS to V4W.

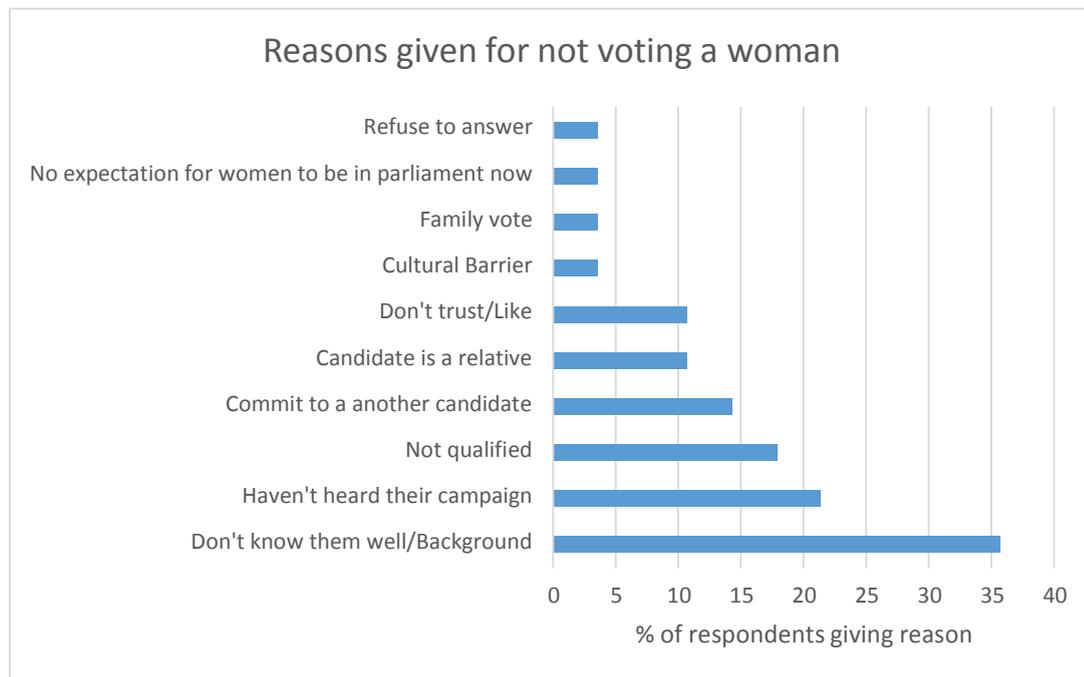
Table 4: An overall view of respondents in terms of notional support status, voting intentions status and votes reported status

	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (0.0%)
Notional support <b>(NS)</b>	46	52	98	97.0
Notional non-support <b>(NNS)</b>	0	3	3	3.0
<b>Intention to Vote for candidate</b>				
Intention to Vote for candidate Man <b>(IVM)</b>	15	16	31	31.6
Intention to Vote for candidate Woman <b>(IVW)</b>	11	20	31	31.6
Gender Undecided Voters <b>(GUV)</b>	19	16	35	35.7
<b>Votes Reported</b>				
Voted for a Man <b>(V4M)</b>	33	17	50	51.0
Voted for a Woman <b>(V4W)</b>	6	14	20	20.4

Of the 97.0% of respondents who were notional supporters, an equal percentage of respondents 31.6% indicated their intentions to vote for both genders IVW and IVM and a further 35.7% at that point were undecided as to who they were going to vote for, in terms of gender (GUV). From the total number of NSs only 20.4% carried through to V4W with more than half 51.0% of NSs voting for a male candidate, V4M.

## Why do notional supporters not intend to vote for a woman?

Figure 3: Illustrates the percentage of respondents giving reasons for not voting a woman



## How common is it for someone with an intention to vote for a woman to vote for a woman?

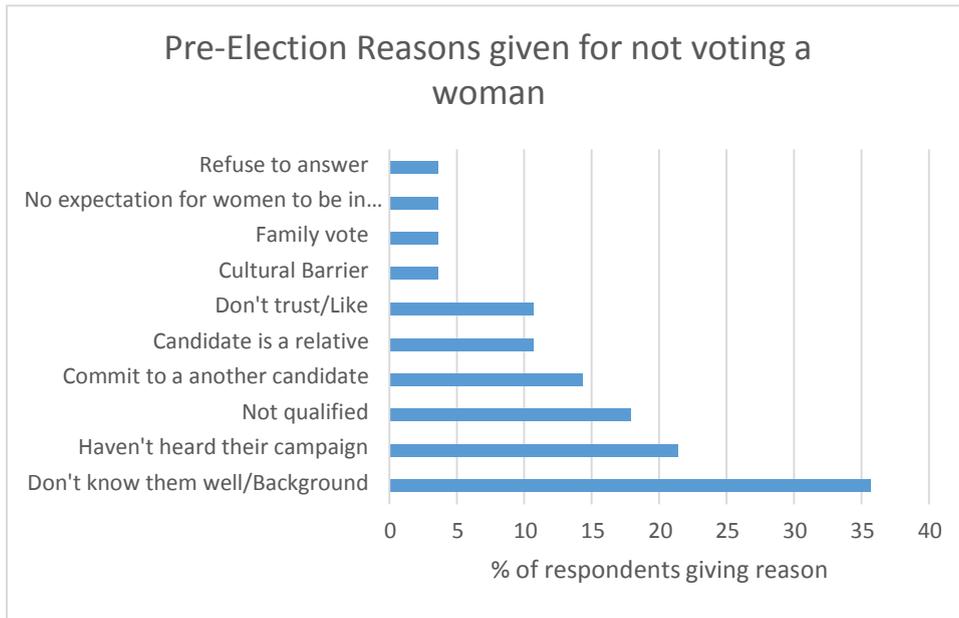
In Table 4, the number of respondents that were IVWs was 31.6%, a total of 31 respondents. Of the 31 IVWs respondents, 35.5% were male and 64.5% were female. More than half were female respondents who opted to vote for a woman candidate, IVW.

From those respondents who were IVMs combined with those GUVs a total of 6.1% ended up voting for a woman candidate V4Ws. This suggests that it is less common to convert from IVWs to V4Ws and even less so from a IVMs and GUVs.

## Why women candidates are not getting votes

In the survey data, there is a change in behaviour was observed with regards to the respondents behaviour who have experienced either or both acts of pressure or threats. In the pre-election question 26 "Can you explain why you are not intending to vote for any of the three (3) women candidates running in Central Honiara?" to attain the reasons behind why women candidates are not getting votes. Figure 4 illustrates the top 10 reasons.

Figure 4: Reasons for not voting for Women candidates.



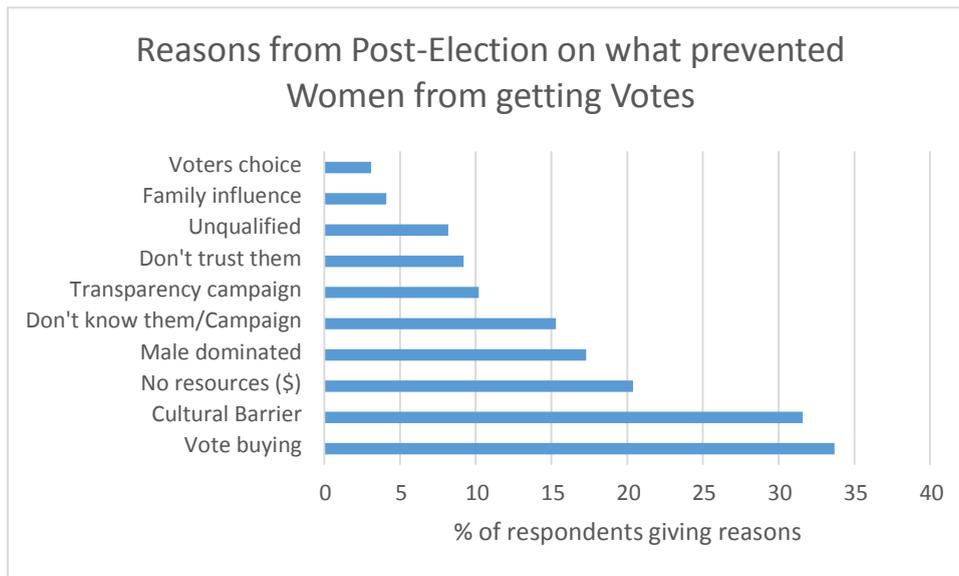
The three main reasons for women not getting votes are tabled below.

Figure 5: Top 3 reasons for women candidates not getting votes

Reasons	%
Don't know them well/Background	35.7
Haven't heard their campaign	21.4
Not qualified	17.9

In the post-election survey, question 5, "What do you think prevented women candidates from getting many votes?" was asked of the respondents. Figure 6 illustrates the relative frequency of reasons given by respondents as to why women candidates were not getting greater number of votes.

Figure 6: Reasons given after the election as to why women are not getting the votes



The top three reasons for women not getting the votes after the election are notably different in comparison to those given before the election. A large proportion of the respondents in the post-election survey saw that corruption, due to vote buying was a major setback for women candidates not getting the votes needed to enter into parliament.

Another hindrance identified by respondents was the cultural aspect, in which women were seen to be categorically deprived of representing voters in parliament in a Melanesian society.

The third most reported reason for women candidates not getting the votes was due to limited financial resources.

### Voter Behaviour responses to threats and pressure

In the post-election survey, questions were asked to determine whether respondents experienced any sort of pressure or threats regarding the casting of their votes.

Figure 7: Illustrate respondents who were pressured/threatened by different agents



Of the 97% who were notional supporters, 44.9 % of respondents received some sort of pressure and or threats to their decision of candidate preferences. Out of the 97%, 11.2% of respondents had experienced *both* pressure and threats to their choice of candidates.

It was observed in the post-election survey that those who reported experiencing both pressure and threats, were generally less forthcoming with naming who they had voted for. These respondents instead chose to indicate only whether the candidate voted for was a man or a woman, and in some cases giving no answer at all. This reticence amounted to 13.6% of respondents reporting threats and pressure.

## Conclusions

### Notional Support

The evidence from the longitudinal survey study indicates that voters have a very high level of support for the *idea* that women should be in parliament. In this report we label this *notional support*, meaning the support of the idea. This high level of support for the idea of women in parliament is consistent with other surveys which also indicate a very high level of support for the idea of women in parliament.

Despite this high level of support, the small number of women in parliament means people do not vote for them in sufficient numbers. In this survey we questioned respondents both before and after the election and focused on their intended vote as well as their actual vote.

### Intentions to vote for a woman (IVW) and V4W

The 98% notional support (NS) for having women in parliament did not lead to a similarly high proportion intending to vote for women (what we call *intending to vote* or IVW in this report). In fact, only 32% of voters indicating notional support went on to indicate an intention to vote for a woman candidate. Only 27% overall reported voting for a women MP candidate.

Figure 8: Summary of respondents that are both NSs and V4W

Total participants in survey	101	
Total no. of participants who are notional supporters (NSs) and voted for a woman candidate (V4W)	20	
	Female	Male
	14	6
Percentage %	Out of 52:	Out of 46:
	26.9%	13.0%

Even though notional support was unanimous amongst men (100%) only 13.0% of them actually voted for a woman. Amongst women, there was a slightly lower level of notional support (98%); however, the proportion voting for a woman was twice that of men: 26.9%.

Of the sample of 101, 14 out of 55 female participants voted for a woman candidate. This amounts to 25% or a quarter of the female participants voted for a woman candidate.

Comparing both genders in how they vote for a woman candidate, they both amount to only 20% or in other words a fifth of the participants voted for a woman.

### Lessons from the data

To draw some analysis from the data findings, a couple of observations and lessons can be drawn from this survey that can help women who are intending to run for parliament.

It was apparent that female respondents were very slightly less supportive of the idea that women should be in parliament. Having said that, female respondents that were notional supporters were

still more likely to both intend to vote for a woman (38.5%), and actually vote for a woman on Election Day, than males. In comparison the male respondents (who were a 100% notional supporters) had a lower rate of intention to vote for a woman (23.9%) than did women.

When it came to voting for women, the genders differ again with the female respondents having more than a quarter 26.9% voting for women and the male respondents having a little over a tenth of them voting for women (13.0%).

It is evident here that female respondents in contrast to male respondents were more likely to stick to a female candidate when stating their intention to vote for a woman to carry that through to an actual reported vote.

The lesson here is female respondents, from this initial survey indicated that they are vital voters for women candidates. Despite all the factors such as cultural barriers, pressures, threats and corruption, to name a few, experienced by female voters, women can depend on these voters to provide the votes needed to get into parliament.

### Non-Support for Female Candidates

We have been able to identify three key contributing factors as to why women have not been getting substantial votes. These factors can be observed in both the pre- and post- election surveys.

### Vote Buying in Campaigns and the Expectation of Money

The first was the extent to which vote buying was perceived and reported throughout the 2014 National General Election (NGE) in the Central Honiara Constituency. This vote buying practise was a dominant feature and one of the reasons behind why women candidates were not getting votes. This placed women candidates (WCs) at a disadvantage.

Another behaviour emerging from these vote buying practices is the view that WCs did not practice money politics as people have come to expect from men: "*hem no play olsem man*". WC were perceived to have no money and voters tended to vote for who has money. Other statements made regarding WCs included: "*...they do not have enough money*" and that people "*follow the person with the money*". These notions predominate in statement regarding why WCs were not getting enough votes.

### Gendered cultural perspectives on leadership

A popular cultural point of view in Solomons is that in *kastom*, males are the main decision makers and are the head of the family. "*They always lead therefore males should be leaders,*" or "*woman hat for high*" were representative of many statements collected regarding cultural standpoints. From this perspective WC are seen to be "*not fit*" for parliament, even before their campaigns, qualifications or characters are assessed. From the start, due to this perception they were already excluded as potential parliamentary leaders.

### Male numerical dominance and feedback loops

The field of candidates in Central Honiara Constituency was dominated by males with only three female candidates running for Parliament, out of a total of 12 candidates. This low number was, nonetheless, the highest number of women candidates of any constituency in the 2014 NGE.

Together with reported vote buying practices, a feedback loop based on perception also created other behaviours that acted to disadvantage WCs. The perception feedback loop as identified by the survey occurs when a candidate appears likely to win. As this perception spreads, voters report migrating towards that candidate – something that survey respondents called “*following the current*”. This act was explained as aligning oneself to be part of the winning candidate’s group. This allows the prospect of voters having accessibility to the winning candidate, turned Member of Parliament (MP). In this case, it is usually a male candidate (MC), having a disproportionate effect on displacing a female candidate from obtaining essential votes.

### Support for Female candidates

There are also lessons which emerge from the data as to how WCs may improve their chances of getting into parliament. These are factors which provide positive basis for WCs to build support and differentiate themselves from the aspects that may weaken their competitiveness.

### Early Preparation

A common sentiment reported by respondents was that voters usually do not know the WCs enough to form an intention to cast their votes for them. They have either not witnessed their campaigns or heard about WCs’ plans or visions for the nation or communities. The WCs’ personal and educational backgrounds and qualifications were somewhat unknown to voters as well.

Early preparation has a great potential for improving voter knowledge about a WC and what she stands for. This general knowledge is something that can be developed well before election year. This can be progressed by conducting preliminary research on the needs and issues of communities and the likely issues of significance for developing a profile. From here WCs can target issues that are of concern, to be able to make more of an impact and difference with relatively limited time and resources.

### Personal and Community Help

Another action open for WCs to take, is to provide assistance for personal and community development. This is distinct from the “money politics” that men are often seen as practicing as a norm. WCs have a choice of platforms to work from when it comes to assisting women in their daily endeavours and in global issues that concern them as women.

### Women

WCs can improve their odds in elections by working from their position as women able to facilitate issues of importance to women voters. This position can be enhanced by:

- Supporting the needs of women and constantly taking them into consideration;
- Assisting women in entrepreneurship by developing business schemes that can generate income for their families, so they can be self-sustaining;
- Working on improving lives and affairs of women locally, nationally and globally, in ways that are clear and felt by individual voters.

### Community

WCs can be involved also in development activities which can improve the overall livelihoods of constituent communities. For example, assisting in access to water, sanitation or proper roading as well as getting involved in communal activities and events. These, if supported, encourage ongoing

constructive relationships with women and various groups within the communities. It is about WCs demonstrating effective relationships and a sense of trustworthiness and familiarity.

### Accessibility and approachability

During a campaigning period accessibility is important. WCs need to be able to have access to their voters and vice versa. The perception of being accessible and approachable was a common factor mentioned by those intending to vote for a woman (IVW). In addition to perceptions, accessibility builds further support by allowing WCs:

- To know and be aware of people's needs;
- To create opportunities for cooperation;
- To be transparent;
- and
- To find opportunities to deliver plans and visions for the future;

These factors are major basis for effectiveness when a candidate does eventually enter into parliament, and accessibility and approachability continue to be major from their constituency supporters.

## Recommendations

### Significant issues for Intending Women Candidates

Some issues of substance were identified from the voter behaviour survey results that should contribute to the advancement of getting women elected into parliament.

The evidence from this pilot survey indicates that voters who have a woman candidate in mind are more likely to vote for a woman, than those who simply plan to vote for a woman. In this sense, planning to vote for an unnamed woman seems to be similar to 'notional support'. Within this group that do have a specific woman candidate in mind, there is a minority who face threats or pressure from families or supporters of another candidate. The evidence suggests that some of these but not all, can be influenced to change from their candidate preference.

The data coming out of this survey indicate that women wishing to run for parliament should consider these steps to increase their chances of electoral success:

1. Make yourself known to the communities and public you are intending to stand in;
2. Ensure voter support at an early stage of the process, with people opting for you as a candidate before they have a candidate in mind;
3. Help out voters personally and through the community.

These points above are the top three reasons given by the participants in the voter behaviour survey as to why they would vote for a female candidate.

### Avenues for further work

#### Further Voter behaviour surveys

As this is a study that can lay the foundations of a baseline in understanding voter behaviour, it is important to do further studies on other elections for other bodies that will occur in the near future. Such opportunities include Honiara City Council elections and Provincial elections for town councillors and provincial assemblies respectively.

These subsequent surveys would allow for a larger sample size, a better depth of research and the identification of a variety of attitudes and voting behaviours outside of Honiara where the majority of constituencies and voters are.

#### "Women in Politics" Spaces

The intention here is for research to identify and create spaces for discourse where past and present women candidates (PPWC) can relate their campaign experiences to intending women candidates, addressing issues surrounding what to expect, how to prepare themselves and so forth. The PPWCs' experiences could involve themes such as experience and lessons learnt for future purposes.

*Figure 9: Discussion points for past and present women candidates*

Experiences	Lesson learnt for Future Purposes
'how to' - steps towards becoming a candidate;	PPWC - Mentors and Leaders to YWPG

Interactions with communities in their constituencies from both urban and or rural areas;	Support, guide and advice YWPG members;
Their experiences can also extend out to their image and portrayal in the public and media domain;	Women in politics and those intending to enter politics can <b>dialogue</b> about issues that affect and are of concern to the women of Solomon Islands and the world

In such a space, the results of this survey would be most useful, as they would contribute to furthering understanding with the use of data.