



## NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICE



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### **DISCUSSION NOTES FOR PRESENTATION TO THE SPECIAL PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON 2022 GENERAL ELECTIONS**

1. The National Statistical Office (NSO) was established by an Act of Parliament Chapter 386 entitled Statistical Services Act 1980 in **1981** (5 February 1981) and became the central agency in Papua New Guinea for providing official statistical information to meet the needs of the Government for the formulation of policy and development planning.
2. *These powers of NSO are stated in Sections 4 and 17 of the Statistical Services Act which in summary requires NSO to collect, compile and coordinate official statistics derived from;*
  - a) *statistical surveys and censuses; and*
  - b) *administrative and registration records, and other data collection instruments (forms and papers)*

*The statistical information or statistical products derived from these;*

  - (i) are published regularly; or*
  - (ii) are planned to be published regularly; or*
  - (iii) could reasonably be published regularly<sup>1</sup>.*
3. Responsibilities of other state agencies in relation to the NSO are stated in Section 5 which basically is about NSO coordinating the National Statistical System. (Also specified and further elaborated in the Government's blue print Statistical Plan called the PNG Strategy for the Development of Statistics, 2018-2027).
4. Section 18 requires head of each State agency to inform the National Statistician of the official statistics which the agency is responsible. To date, under my leadership I deny having been informed of such statistical activities, programs and plans.

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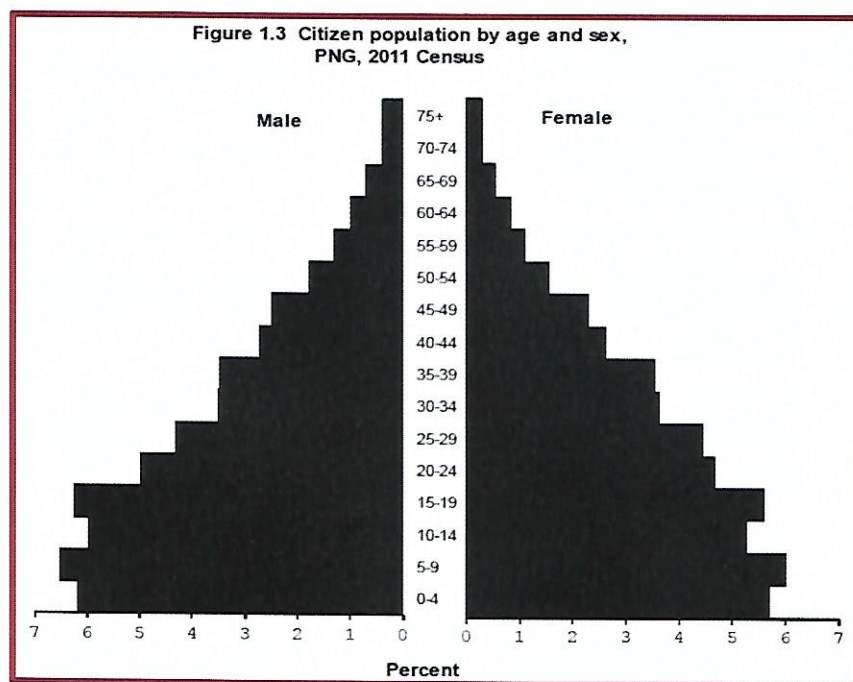
<sup>1</sup> Statistical Services Act 1980

5. NSO's role in the development of this country is vital as the statistics it produces assists in the formulation of development policies, long and medium-term plans, and tracks and monitors progress of development.
6. The statistics it provides assists all sectors of the government allowing them to observe and review their respective policy indicators. However, official statistics are intended for a wide range of users including government (national and subnational), research institutions, professional statisticians, journalists and the media, businesses, educational institutions and the general public. The Electoral Commission is among the range of users.
7. According to the Organic Law on Provincial and Local-level Governments Section 106 (subsection 3), "*there shall be a census or the count of all natural persons in each province in the year proceeding a general election*".
8. NSO collects census data by doing a house-to-house and face-to-face enumeration collecting personal information of the people visited during the time of census. Results include population distributed by age, sex and geographic area, and socio-economic characteristics of the population amongst other indicators.
9. Information from the census is therefore needed by the Electoral Commission to determine the number of eligible voters (18 years and over) and provisional voters (17 years at the time of census) out of the total population by their geographic areas. Projections are also necessary when the elections are going to be conducted one or two years after a national census.
10. The statistics, whether recent or projected, should estimate the total number of voters per province to vote for the provincial (regional) member and total number of voters per district to vote their local (open) member.
11. Census information is usually reported at national and subnational level however lower administrative levels are always available. District level information is also important for the Electoral Commission because an administrative district is equivalent to an open-electorate or electorate which is represented by an elected member of parliament.
12. *Electoral districts are theoretically distributed on the basis of one person, one vote, but this assumes that each open electorate has roughly the same population. Population trends shift over time, with some areas growing*



*faster than others, and other areas experiencing slower growth, or even a decline in population<sup>2</sup>.*

13. NSO also plays an important role during the review and redistribution of electoral (district) boundaries. During such reviews NSO only supports or denies population figures cited by the public, standing by the integrity of the statistics it produces. Poor statistics can cause a mal-apportionment, where the share of seats in parliament allocated to one part of a country is significantly out of proportion with that part's share of the population. In other words, an elected member of parliament can represent fewer voters than others.
14. Due to the NSO's involvement in assisting the Electoral Commission (EC) with census information for electoral purposes, the census is often confused with common roll or voters registry update. This unfortunate misconception has also caused the integrity and quality of census data, especially in the inaccurate reporting of age. Population pyramid of 2011 Census shows huge numbers amongst the population in the 15-19 age group. NSO is recently collaborating with the media to rectify this misconception.



15. The NSO is recently collaborating with the media to rectify this misconception. The collaboration with the media is to differentiate the roles of NSO from EC in regard to the common roll update. The following table tries to emphasize on some common differences.

<sup>2</sup> [https://transparencypng.org.pg/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-PNGsElectoral-Boundaries-Redistribution\\_BWorking-Paper\\_2022-02\\_Department-of-Pacific-Affairs.pdf](https://transparencypng.org.pg/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-PNGsElectoral-Boundaries-Redistribution_BWorking-Paper_2022-02_Department-of-Pacific-Affairs.pdf)

Agency	Information collected	Population	Use for the information collected	How often information is collected?	How the census assists PNGEC / PNGND?
<b>NSO (Census)</b>	For every man, woman and child, both citizens and non-citizens	All population in PNG (including the old, the sick, babies, mentally ill etc.)	For development planning at all levels	Every ten (10) years and requires collection within 2 weeks	NSO provides to the PNGEC the total number of all persons in PNG aged 18 years and above (eligible voters) – No names but numbers only
<b>PNGEC (Common roll / Voters list Update)</b>	Every man and woman aged 18 years and above who are citizens	All persons (citizens) who are 18 years and above	Establish a range for Persons who can vote (eligible voters) – no names provided	Every five (5) years and updating within 6 months to 1 year	

16. Even though NSO collects personal information of Papua New Guineans, under the Statistical Services Act Section 31, NSO is not permitted to divulge personal information including names of persons (respondents).

17. In summary, NSO provides the statistics only as an information guide to assist PNGEC to estimate their voting population in the districts in order for them to plan for its election operations and resources mobilisation. NSO also assists EC in the redistribution of the population for reviewing of electoral boundaries which may result in the introduction of new electorates.

We just did that and made recommendations for progressive creation of the new electorates (where we have witnessed 6 new additional electorates in 2022 and others in 2027).

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