



Electoral Integrity Project



# Electoral Administration During Covid

Summary of the Electoral  
Management Survey Data  
2.0

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**High quality election administration and management are essential for the delivery electoral integrity and democracy. During the pandemic period, electoral officials, resources and administrative systems were likely to be under considerable pressure. The Electoral Integrity Project undertook a survey of electoral management bodies (‘EMBs’) in the summer of 2021. Overall, 49 electoral management bodies completed the survey via a representative. The data highlights continuity in poll practices, but considerable cost pressures on electoral officials during the pandemic. Data on training and the use of technology in the electoral process is also included.**

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## Introduction

High quality election administration and management are essential for the delivery electoral integrity and democracy. The covid-19 pandemic posed a major threat to how elections would function with calls for elections to be postponed or adapted.

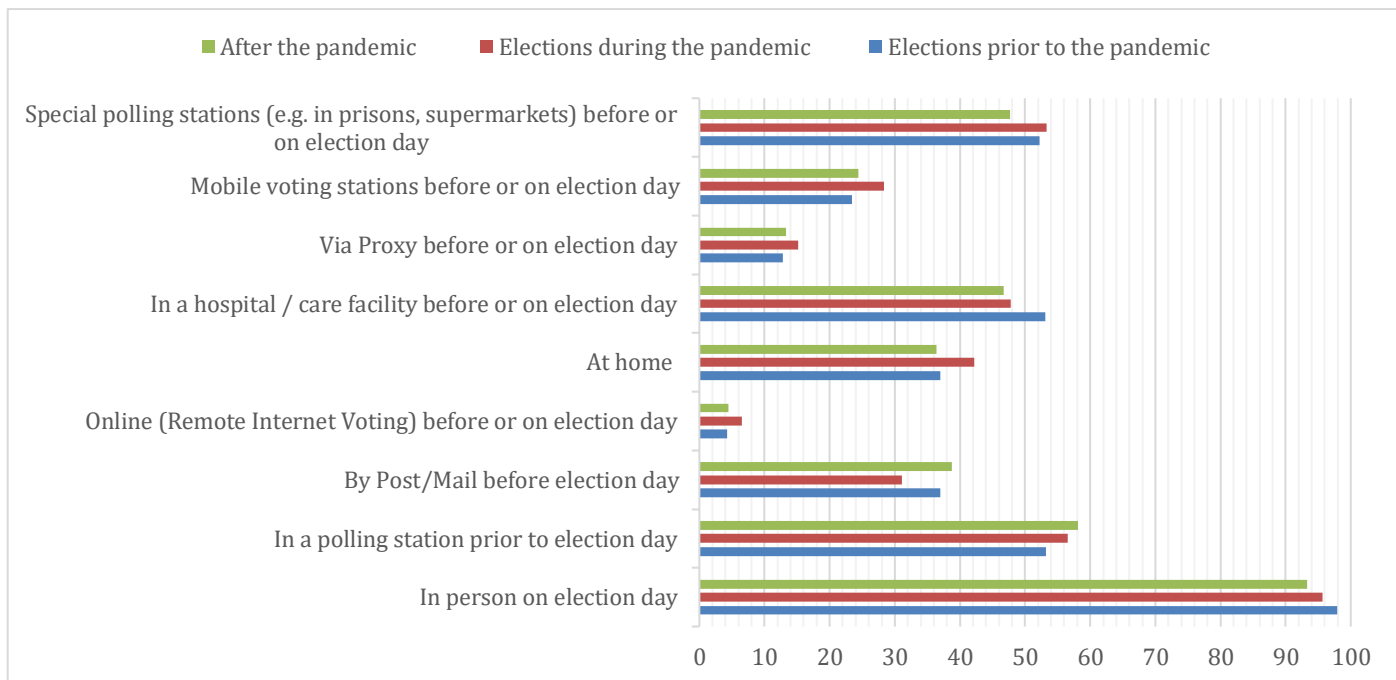
This policy report summarises the data from a survey of electoral management bodies (EMBs) on how they ran elections during the pandemic. Further analysis of the data is available elsewhere. For example, the data was used to support the publication of full length book looking at the effects of the pandemic on electoral integrity and how EMBs responded [1] a policy paper on training and professional development [2] and an academic paper on training [3].

## Methodology

The Electoral Integrity Project has previously collected data on how elections are run and managed through

surveys of electoral management bodies around the world [4-7]. The Electoral Integrity Project ran a survey of EMBs during the pandemic in the summer of 2021, to ascertain how they had adapted their processes. The survey also covered other electoral practices which are not easily identifiable from other sources such as legal code and election observation reports. The survey was in collaboration with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) who co-designed the survey and supported the distribution.

Overall, 242 EMBs were contacted, of which 49 responded to the survey. The survey was completed by a representative of each organisation via online survey software or a Word .doc. The survey was provided in Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian. These were mostly national EMBs, but also included three regional bodies: Élections Québec, the Zanzibar Electoral Commission and the Electoral Management Board for Scotland.



elections had been postponed in the past.

The data is which is freely available for download alongside a codebook and a copy of the survey.<sup>1</sup> Some responses were not published on the request of the EMB.

## Voting methods during the pandemic

It was suggested during the pandemic that the voting process should be adapted for pandemic conditions. Online and postal voting would enable citizens to cast their vote with less risk of infection. Covid-19 would therefore be an accelerant of the gradual move from voting at traditional ballot boxes during limited hours - to voting at a greater variety of methods locations and times. Figure 1 shows responses with regard to voting methods before, during and plans for after the pandemic. As this illustrates, there were few changes. Elections continued to be held in person on election day in nearly all cases. There were some isolated cases of special polling stations and the availability of voting from home - but by and large - the voting process remained the same.

## Election postponement

A number of elections were postponed during the pandemic [1, 8]. Yet there was very little data available about how frequently election postponement happened. The survey therefore asked EMBs about how many

Respondents could recall few previous examples of postponed elections. Overall, 12 EMBs could provide an example of at least one postponement. Five EMBs provided a second example. Nearly all examples, however, were the result of the pandemic. Exceptions included an election being postponed because the boundary delimitation process had not been completed due to electoral registration issues. Other cited causes included an 'insurgency' and the spread of another disease (foot and mouth).

## Cost of elections

There are often concerns about the additional investment needed to run elections during the pandemic. The survey asked respondents about the extent to which the pandemic had increased costs, which areas were the most expensive, and whether they had difficulties obtaining the additional funds needed. We asked what the additional costs that EMBs had to pay were. As figure 2 shows, only 10% reported no cost increases. By contrast, some reported huge increases of over 41% of their costs. A third (32.7%) of EMBs had no difficulties obtaining the additional funding that they needed - but the vast majority experienced some challenges and about 10% experienced major challenges.

<sup>1</sup> Toby S. James and Holly Ann Garnett. 2023. [Electoral Management Survey 2.0](#). Electoral Integrity Project.

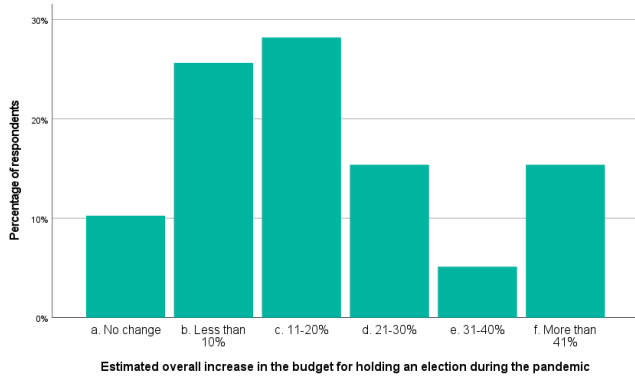


Figure 2: Reported changes in EMB costs during the pandemic

## Training

Little is known about the training that is provided to electoral officials. The survey therefore gathered data on the training provided to officials at different levels.

### Poll workers

Poll workers play the central role of greeting citizens, but also processing their vote at polling stations. Operational training was mandatory in 65.2% of jurisdictions. In 38.8% of jurisdictions this was stated in the electoral act or other electoral legislation and in 24.5% of jurisdictions certification was required to be a poll worker.

### General training

Permanent staff sizes vary enormously by EMB. However, the survey also showed variation in the training opportunities. The majority (75.0%) provided learning and development opportunities. Roughly half (42.6%) did this via an online learning and management system.

### Dedicated Units

Some EMBs have specific organisational units dedicated to providing internal education and training. Where this was the case electoral education and operational training was the main focus (Table 1)>

Focus	Percentage
Operational training	51.1%
Professional development	39.1%
Electoral education	57.4%
Research	46.8%

Table 1: The focus of EMB dedicated training units

## Election administration technology

The survey also contained questions about the use of technology. Computerised technology was reported to be most commonly used at the results stage where electronic vote tabulation was in place in 71.4% of responding EMBs (Table 2).

Technology use	Percentage
Biometric data in voter registration	27.6%
Biometric data in polling stations	14.3%
Electronic poll books	26.5%
Electronic vote tabulation system	71.4%

Table 2: Percentage of EMBs that reported using computerised technology in the electoral process

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