

CPA BIMR

Election Observation Mission to the Cayman Islands

APRIL 2025



FINAL REPORT

"I was impressed by the professional, well-organised and smooth-running of Election Day in our observations in the Cayman Islands. In particular, the Elections Office went 'the extra mile' to ensure persons with disabilities could cast their vote, either in their own home via mobile voting, or in polling stations where accessibility was clearly prioritised. I hope our observations detailed in this report are a helpful reflection on the operation of these elections and play a part in bolstering democracy in the Cayman Islands."

Deputy Rob Ward (Jersey), Head of Mission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association British Islands and Mediterranean Region (CPA BIMR) conducted an international election observation mission to the 2025 Cayman Islands General Election, assessing their observations against international legal standards, commitments and obligations, as well as domestic laws.
- **Legal framework:** The legal framework offers a good basis for the conduct of democratic elections, reflecting the international standards applicable to the jurisdiction. Rights of political participation, to vote and to stand for election, and the freedoms of expression, assembly and association, are well protected.
- **Referendums:** The Referendum (Cruise Berthing Infrastructure, Gambling and Cannabis) Act (2025) provided for the conduct of three referendums but was minimal in substantive regulatory content. It is inapplicable for future votes.
- **Boundary delimitation:** Boundary delimitation rules and practices did not result in an equal weight of the vote, with significant differences in the ratio of numbers of voters to elected representatives.
- **Election administration:** The Elections Office oversaw all aspects of the electoral process and should be commended for their transparency, efficiency and professionalism.
- **The right to vote:** The right to vote is reserved to citizens, noteworthy as the population is composed of more than fifty per cent non-Caymanian nationals, some of whom have been resident for lengthy periods, without voting rights. Citizens are entitled to vote upon reaching 18 years of age, having been resident for two of the preceding four years, and being registered.
- **Voter registration:** Voter registration is voluntary and continuous. There were 25,643 eligible voters on the register for this election and stakeholders generally expressed confidence in the integrity of the register.
- **The right to stand for election and candidate registration:** Residency requirements for standing for election are considerably more onerous than for voting and are arguably unreasonable when compared to international standards.
- **Election campaign:** The official eight-week election campaign was dynamic, competitive, and peaceful. Parties and candidates held rallies and public meetings, campaigned on traditional media outlets and social media, participated in public debates, and displayed campaign signage.
- **Campaign finance:** Campaign finance emerged as a key concern with significant gaps in transparency and accountability. There is a legal CI\$40,000 expenditure cap per candidate

during the official campaign period and successful candidates must report on their campaign finances. However, there is no such requirement on unsuccessful candidates, no auditing of accounts, and accrued campaign expenses may be underreported.

- **Media:** The media environment respected freedom of expression. It was marked by a shift toward digital platforms, though radio and print media still played dominant roles. There is no media code of conduct for elections.
- **The political participation of women:** Five women were elected to Parliament, which is just twenty-six per cent of the membership. There are no affirmative action measures in place to support greater political participation of women.
- **The political participation of persons with disabilities:** Excellent efforts were made by the Elections Office to ensure that persons with disabilities were supported to vote. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has not yet been extended to the Cayman Islands.
- **Postal and mobile voting:** Approximately 10 per cent of voters registered to use postal voting or advance voting, known as mobile voting. The administration of these mechanisms was transparent and efficient.
- **Voting on Election Day:** Voting took place in a calm, orderly, and peaceful manner across 65 polling stations. Polling staff demonstrated high levels of preparedness and professionalism, and Election Day was marked by transparency, good organisation, and efficiency.
- **Counting and results:** The count was conducted with high levels of transparency and professionalism, with real-time updates giving the public live information as the count progressed.
- **Electoral justice:** Election dispute resolution is well provided for through administrative and judicial remedies.
- **Recommendations:** As is normal practice for election observations, the mission has identified recommendations for consideration. These can be found on page 25.

CPA BIMR would like to thank all those in the Cayman Islands who supported the work of this election observation, including the elections office, polling staff, candidates and civil society organisations. We are grateful for their assistance and trust that this report will be a useful asset in upholding and strengthening democracy in the Cayman Islands in the years ahead.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MISSION

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association British Islands and Mediterranean Region (CPA BIMR) conducted an international election observation mission to the Cayman Islands General Election on 30 April 2025.

The mission was composed of nine observers, including four Commonwealth parliamentarians. These observers were:

- Head of Mission: Deputy Rob Ward (Jersey)
- Short-Term Observer: Alun Davies MS (Wales)
- Short-Term Observer: Tim Johnston MHK (Isle of Man)
- Short-Term Observer: Evelyn Tweed MSP (Scotland)
- Legal Analyst: Anne Marlborough (Ireland)
- Electoral and Campaign Analyst: Sandi Gale (UK)
- CPA BIMR Coordinator: Martin Vickery (UK)
- CPA BIMR Administrator: Luke Fearon (UK)
- CPA BIMR Administrator: Elinor Souch (UK)



The CPA BIMR international election observers to the Cayman Islands General Election.

CPA BIMR was invited to facilitate this observation by the Governor, in her capacity as the Head of State's representative in the Cayman Islands. The mission had cross-party support, with all three competing political parties and a number of independent candidates engaging with the mission.

The observers were present from 21 April to 2 May 2025. The mission conducted an independent assessment of the Cayman Islands General Election against international legal standards, commitments and obligations, as well as domestic laws.

This is the fourth time CPA BIMR has observed general elections in the Cayman Islands, with previous missions in 2013, 2017 and 2021. In 2021 the mission was conducted virtually, due to COVID-19

restrictions. The 2021 final report contained 15 recommendations. At the time of the 2025 mission, one of these recommendations had been partially implemented.¹

The mission arrived in the Cayman Islands nine days before election day and met a wide range of stakeholders in the General Election. These included candidates, the elections office, election officials, members of the judiciary, media outlets, and civil society groups for young people, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+ persons and women. Observers attended rallies for each of the three political parties competing.

Advance voting, known as mobile voting, was observed in six districts during the week prior to Election Day. On Election Day itself the mission observed voting across Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac, in all 19 districts, visiting 27 polling stations and observing five counting centres.

In this General Election voters were also given the opportunity to vote on three referendum questions. These questions were on the same ballot paper as the parliamentary elections and therefore the mission was able to observe referendum voting. Prior to Election Day the mission met with referendum campaign groups and observed some referendum campaigning.

The mission is independent in its composition, findings, and conclusions, adhering to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers signed at the United Nations in 2005.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The Cayman Islands is a UK Overseas Territory situated in the Caribbean. It comprises three islands: Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac, and Little Cayman. It operates as a parliamentary democracy with internal self-governance. Executive authority is vested in the British Crown and exercised by an appointed Governor (currently H.E. Mrs Jane Owen). The Governor chairs the Cabinet and appoints the Premier from amongst the elected Members of Parliament (MPs). The Parliament consists of 21 MPs: 19 directly elected representatives and two non-voting ex-officio members (the Deputy Governor and the Attorney General). The Constitution (2009) introduced significant institutional reforms, including the separation of powers, a Bill of Rights, and the modernisation of the Territory's political structures.

In recent decades the Parliament has been politically dominated by independent candidates and loosely organised alliances such as the People-driven, Accountable, Competent and Transparent

¹ Recommendation 14 in the 2021 final report stated that "Clear and coherent complaints and appeals procedures should be introduced... Effective time limitations for complaints, appeals and petitions could be considered." Since this recommendation was made, new Grand Court Rules have been introduced to regulate applications by the Supervisor of Elections to review candidates' qualifications. See the section on Electoral Justice below.

(PACT) group. The People's Progressive Movement (PPM) has been the most consistent political party, having led several administrations since it was founded in 2002.

The 2025 General Election was held against a backdrop of political upheaval. In October 2024, four MPs from the governing United Peoples Movement (UPM) resigned, leaving the government without its majority in Parliament. In response, a Cabinet reshuffle was initiated by the Premier to keep the government functioning. In consultation with the Governor, a decision was made to hold early elections. A writ for a general election was issued on 5 December 2024, and 30 April 2025 was agreed as the date for the election. Parliament was officially dissolved on 1 March 2025.

In early 2025, three of the seven remaining members of the minority UPM government joined the PPM to seek re-election. The collapse of the UPM led to the formation of two new political parties: The Caymanian Community Party (TCCP), led by André Ebanks and composed of former UPM members; and the Cayman Islands National Party (CINP), founded in January 2025 by Dan Scott and made up of business owners and corporate professionals with limited electoral experience.

The PPM, TCCP, CINP and a number of independent candidates contested the election. Alongside the General Election, three non-binding referendums were held.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The electoral legal framework offers a good basis for the conduct of democratic elections, in accordance with the international standards applicable to the Cayman Islands. Political rights are established in the Constitution and by law, with the rights of political participation, to vote, to stand for election, and the freedoms of expression, assembly and association, all protected. There are particularly elaborate provisions in the law to vindicate the voting rights of persons with disabilities. There is clarity in the content of the law, and it is widely disseminated and accessible to stakeholders.

A significant corpus of international human rights standards applies to the conduct of elections in the Cayman Islands. Instruments include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (entered into force for the Cayman Islands on 23 March 1976); the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (4 January 1969); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (extended to the Cayman Islands in March 2016); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2 September 1990), and the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.²

Whilst not specifically a human rights treaty, the Convention against Corruption (CAC) is relevant to the regulation of campaign finance and was extended to the Cayman Islands on 14 December 2020. The Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness entered into force for the Cayman Islands on 13

² See UK Parliament [website](#) for further information on specific treaty instruments extended to the Cayman Islands; see also United Kingdom reports under the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process for commentary on human rights obligations in relation to the Cayman Islands, e.g. [2017](#) and [2022](#).

December 1975, which is of tangential relevance to elections. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has not yet been extended to this jurisdiction.

The electoral legal framework is set out principally within the Constitution of the Cayman Islands (as amended to 2020) and in the Elections Act (2022 Revision), as well as in the jurisprudence of the courts. Assented to on 18 February 2025, the Referendum (Cruise Berthing Infrastructure, Gambling and Cannabis) Act (2025) made minor amendments to election law. International good practice counsels against a change in the fundamental elements of electoral law in close proximity to an election, with one year considered appropriate as the minimum period to ensure stability in the law. While the new legislation did not alter the fundamental elements of the law, this was, nonetheless, a less-than-optimal period within which to enact such legislation.

The secrecy of the ballot, as in previous electoral processes, is not perfectly protected in law, as serial numbers are printed on both the ballot paper and the counterfoil, and the registration number of the voter is recorded on the counterfoil, as required by law. Regulation of campaign finance exists, but the law is narrow in scope of application, lacking any specific obligations for the scrutiny of reports on expenditure to verify their accuracy.

Recommendation: The right to vote: Amend the rules on the printing and recording of the serial number of the ballot paper, to ensure absolute secrecy as to the identity of the voter.

The Data Protection Act (2021 Revision) exempts the Elections Office from its data protection rules, due to their obligations, under the Elections Act, to generate the Register of Electors. This register is a public document and is available both in hard copy and online. It contains the names, addresses and occupations of voters. This raises a concern as to the balance struck between personal privacy rights and the need to maintain the register. In April 2022, the Ombudsman published a report³ that urged reform of the law to allow voters to opt out of the public list, as there is no such option at present.

Recommendation: The right to privacy: Consider law reform to protect the right to privacy in the dissemination of voter registration data.

The Elections Act makes provision, in section 56(1), for the presence in polling stations of such “observers as may be authorised in writing by the Supervisor” but otherwise does not mention election observation. It lacks any regulation of the roles and responsibilities of observers. The Referendum Act (2025) modified the Elections Act and elaborated an interpretation of “observer” as including “scrutineers”. It also amended sections 45-56 of the Elections Act, substituting “observers” for “candidates, their agents”, intermingling observers with the political process; and provided that the Governor would appoint “observers” to verify the ballot paper accounts and the counting of the votes.

Both domestic and international election observers were accredited by the Elections Office and freely observed all stages of the electoral process. The ICCPR has been interpreted as requiring independent

³ Office of the Ombudsman, April 2022, [Report on Election Registration and Processing of Voter Data](#).

scrutiny of the voting and counting process.⁴ This has developed through the practice of both domestic and international election observation around the world. The Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations⁵ of 2012 sets out the criteria for independent domestic election observation.

Recommendation: The principle of independent election observation: Consider legal regulation of the roles and responsibilities of election observers, both domestic and international, clarifying the independent nature of their work.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The electoral system in the Cayman Islands is defined by the Constitution and the Elections Act. In November 2016, an amendment of the elections law increased the number of elected members of the then Legislative Assembly of the Cayman Islands (now the Parliament of the Cayman Islands) from 18 to 19, and abolished multi-member constituencies. Therefore, since 2017, a First Past the Post system has been in operation, reinforcing the "one person, one vote" principle.

The Cayman Islands is divided into 19 electoral districts, and there are a total of 65 polling stations across these districts. There is no requirement for candidates to achieve an absolute majority (more than 50 per cent of votes) to be elected. The 19 MPs are elected for a four-year term and there are no term limits in place.

While the electoral system is generally well understood by voters, parties and candidates, some stakeholders have suggested revisiting a structure of multi-member constituencies. Several stakeholders mentioned that single-member constituencies in a territory with a relatively small voting population can result in a candidate winning their seat with relatively few votes, particularly in less populated districts. Future electoral reform remains an open topic of debate.

REFERENDUMS

The Constitution provides that the Parliament may enact a law to hold a referendum "*on a matter or matters of national importance.*" The decision to hold such a referendum may be initiated by a petition signed by 25 per cent of the electorate, which would lead to a decision binding on the Government and the Parliament; or initiated by the Parliament itself, in which case the decision is advisory only, effectively a consultative referendum.

A referendum was conducted on 20 May 2009 to approve the Constitution of the Cayman Islands, with the question posed in tandem with a legislative election, on a single ballot paper. Discussion of

⁴ [General Comment 25](#) to Article 25, ICCPR, paragraph 20.

⁵ Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors, [Declaration of Principles](#) 2012.

potential referendums has been on the political agenda intermittently since then, with the issues that finally appeared on the ballot paper in 2025 having been discussed for long periods of time.

A petition from the electorate, requesting a referendum on the question of whether to approve a government plan to develop a cruise port terminal in Georgetown, alongside enhancement of the cargo port, was initiated in 2018. The Referendum (People Initiated Referendum Regarding the Port) Law (2019) was enacted in response. A judicial review⁶ of the Law, alleging incompatibility with the Constitution, was successful in the Grand Court, which quashed the legislation. This decision was subsequently overturned⁷ by the Court of Appeal on 2 July 2020. The Court accepted that it was possible for the legislature to proceed by way of piecemeal legislation to conduct specific referendums, rather than being required to introduce comprehensive law to regulate all referendums.

The Referendum (Cruise Berthing Infrastructure, Gambling and Cannabis) Act (2025) followed the former law, which had been upheld in the Court of Appeal, but provided for the holding of three consultative referendums simultaneously. The questions concerned approval or rejection of proposals to develop cruise berthing infrastructure; to legalise gambling in the form of a national lottery; and to decriminalise the consumption and possession of small amounts of cannabis. Despite the courts previously accepting this approach of piecemeal legislation as a way to conduct referendums, the form of law enacted was a matter of controversy as it was bespoke and exclusively applicable to these three referendum questions, rather than to all future referendums.

The Referendum Act (2025) is very slight in content, setting out, in minimal measure, how the referendum would be managed concurrently with the parliamentary elections. The law is silent on important matters such as the formulation of the referendum questions; the regulation of campaign advocacy on the referendum questions; campaign finance; the provision of impartial information to explain both sides of the questions; the role of the media and of lobby groups; and other measures necessary to ensure equity and fairness in the conduct of the referendums. While there are no binding international standards on the conduct of referendums, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission) has elaborated Guidelines on the Holding of Referendums⁸ that offer insight into good practice in this field of representative democracy.

Recommendation: Good practice in the conduct of referendums: Consider the drafting of comprehensive legislation to regulate the conduct of referendums, reflecting international good practice.

⁶ Shirley Elizabeth Roulstone v The Cabinet of the Cayman Islands, [Grand Court](#), 23 January 2020.

⁷ The Cabinet of the Cayman Islands and the Government of the Cayman Islands v S.E. Roulstone [CICA 6/2020](#).

⁸ [Guidelines](#) on the Holding of Referendums (revised) 2022, Venice Commission.



Referendum campaign signage for the cruise berthing referendum.

BOUNDARY DELIMITATION

International law establishes the principle of equal suffrage, of “one person, one vote”, requiring that the vote of one elector should be equal to that of another.⁹ This implies that the ratio of voters to elected representatives should be as near to equal as possible across constituencies. These principles are reflected in the Constitution of the Cayman Islands, which states that *“there will be an equal ratio between the number of elected members of Parliament representing each electoral district and the number of persons qualified to be registered as electors... in that district.”*

The rules on equality have not been well respected, as the boundaries are out of date and the numbers of voters in constituencies deviate from the rules. The constituency of West Bay South, for example, was the most populous, with 1,773 registered voters, while the constituency of East End had 899. Specific deviations are permitted to ensure representation of the voters of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman in Parliament.

Constitutional rules, as set out in section 88, require that an Electoral Boundary Commission be appointed, by the Governor, no later than eight years after the last such Commission submitted a report to Parliament. The last report was accepted in 2015, with the recommended changes in boundaries then introduced for the first (2017) and subsequent (2021) elections to the new 19 single-member constituencies. These boundaries were retained for the 2025 election, failing to comply with the constitutional provision for an equality of voters per district.

An Electoral Boundary Commission was appointed in January 2023, as constitutionally required, but the Parliament rejected the Commission’s report on 26 July 2024, with a revised report also rejected on 31 January 2025. As the recommendations from 2015 were retained, the boundaries, as noted above, fail to reflect demographic changes that have taken place in the Cayman Islands during the past decade.

⁹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), [General Comment 25](#), paragraph 21.

Recommendation: 'One person, one vote,' the vote of one elector should be equal to the vote of another: Revise the constituency boundaries before the next General Election to advance the equality of the vote.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Elections in the Cayman Islands are managed by the Supervisor of Elections, an independent office holder appointed by the Governor, who serves without a fixed term limit. The Supervisor of Elections leads the Elections Office, which has a small permanent staff with additional staff members hired during the different stages of the electoral cycle. There are three Deputy Supervisors and 19 Returning Officers. Returning Officers are appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Supervisor. Presiding Officers oversee polling operations on Election Day, assisted by poll clerks who are appointed and trained by the Elections Office. Approximately 300 polling officials were deployed across the 19 electoral districts on Election Day.

The Elections Office is responsible for the planning and implementation of all aspects of the electoral process, including voter registration, training of candidate agents and polling staff, production and distribution of voter and civic education materials and the administration and counting of the vote on election day.

Training for Returning and Deputy Returning Officers began in November 2024, followed by sessions in April 2025 for Presiding Officers, poll clerks, field officers, and logistical staff. Training for polling staff who are recruited close to an election are trained on essential procedures such as the opening and closing of polls, voter assistance, and the secure handling of election materials. Stakeholders widely praised the professionalism and preparedness of polling staff, noting high levels of transparency, organisation, and efficiency throughout the election process.

The Supervisor of Elections is also responsible for communicating with the political parties, candidates and electoral stakeholders. A comprehensive election calendar was developed by the Elections Office to support the 2025 General Election. This calendar outlined key deadlines and procedures, ensuring that the electoral process was timely, transparent, and well-organised. Stakeholders highlighted the Supervisor of Elections and the Elections Office for their effective and professional management of the process.

The Elections Office led the voter education campaign during the election period. The campaign aimed to raise public awareness of voter registration procedures, voting methods, and general electoral processes, with specific outreach to first-time voters and vulnerable groups. Radio, television, and social media were used. These efforts were aligned with international good practice, emphasising inclusivity, transparency, and accessibility.

Observers noted several challenges faced by the Elections Office. Officials had to work at a fast pace to meet tight postal voting deadlines: there was only a two-day gap between the deadline for postal

and mobile voting requests (17 April) and the final day for issuing postal ballots (19 April). This allowed only a very short period of time for Registering Officers to process requests and dispatch ballots via courier to voters overseas.

The Elections Office is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Elections Act and may refer cases of alleged misconduct to the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service. The Anti-Corruption Commission, which is mandated to investigate offences such as bribery and misuse of office under the Anti-Corruption Act, was noted as having limited visibility during the election period.

Several complaints were lodged regarding the size and placement of campaign signage. Despite guidelines from the National Roads Authority and the Department of Planning that are intended to prevent safety hazards, stakeholders reported to the mission that there were numerous infractions.¹⁰ Some candidates claimed they were unaware of the updated regulations.

Allegations of vote-buying were reported to the mission, suggesting that some candidates or their supporters offered gifts, food, appliances, or money in exchange for votes. Although these allegations remained unsubstantiated, the Elections Office reminded the public that such actions are serious offences under the Elections Act and may result in disqualification, fines, or imprisonment. The Elections Office confirmed that any complaints received would be forwarded to the police for investigation.

Recommendation: Complaints and appeals: In addition to the complaints form that was introduced for the 2025 General Election, publish an adjoining complaints and appeals policy for election-related matters with clear procedures, deadlines and decision pathways outlined.

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

The right to vote is regulated by the Constitution and by legislation. The fundamental requirements are that a voter is a Caymanian citizen and has attained 18 years of age. Exercise of the right to vote is subject to being registered to vote. In order to register, the person must be resident in the Cayman Islands at the time of registration, and they must have been resident for at least two of the four years immediately before registration. Persons who have not attained the age of 18 when an election is called but who will do so by polling day are permitted to register to vote.

Disqualifications from voting include having been convicted of an election offence; and having been legally “*certified to be insane or otherwise adjudged to be of unsound mind*”, in accordance with section 91 of the Constitution. People are also deprived of their right to vote when sentenced to a term in prison of 12 months or more. When sentenced, the voter is removed from the register during the next quarterly revision and must subsequently apply to re-register after completion of their prison term.

¹⁰ These included unauthorised signs on roads, non-compliant sign dimensions, and violations of setback requirements. Complaints were made by candidates to the Elections Office.

The right to vote, as permitted under international law, is reserved to citizens. However, the rules on the attainment of citizenship, as set out in the British Nationality Act and immigration law, can result in lengthy periods before being granted citizenship. The consequence of this is that, of a total population of around 90,000 people, only approximately 45 per cent are Caymanian, with the other 55 per cent unable to participate in elections, despite some of the non-Caymanians having long-term residence in the jurisdiction.

Revision of the rules on the right to vote has been recommended by the Constitutional Commission. In 2018, in advance of negotiations leading to a measure of constitutional amendment in 2020, the Commission proposed changes to the disqualification of voters who are currently disenfranchised due to serving prison terms in excess of 12 months, as well as a change in the residency requirements for voting.¹¹ These recommendations have not yet been acted upon.

Recommendation: Prisoner Voting Rights: Reassess the blanket restriction on voting for those serving a prison sentence of more than 12 months.

VOTER REGISTRATION

The Elections Office of the Cayman Islands is responsible for voter registration for general elections. Operating under the Supervisor of Elections, the office employs six Registering Officers, who are responsible for several districts each.

Voter registration is voluntary and continuous, requiring eligible citizens to actively register to vote through an application to the registration office. As of 1 April 2025, the Register of Electors recorded 25,643 voters, an increase of 2,034 since the 2021 General Election. The Elections Office coordinates with the General Registry for death notices, the Immigration Department for residency status, the postal service, and utility providers to provide an updated register.

The register is updated quarterly, and available online and in hard copy via the Elections Office. It includes personal data such as voters' names, addresses, and occupations. Some individuals reportedly avoid registration to protect their personal data or avoid being called for jury service, though this could not be verified.

The deadline for registration for the 2025 General Election was 15 January 2025. This was extended from the original deadline of 1 January 2025. The revised list of electors was published on 29 January, followed by a 21-day public review period. During this time, the public could submit claims or objections. Voters were able to check their information at the Elections Office or online. There were 3,000 changes made to the register after the review period. The final Register of Electors was published on 1 April 2025 and was used in the 30 April 2025 General Election.

¹¹ [Report of the Constitutional Commission](#), 27 June 2018, the Constitutional Commission's response to requests for comments on potential revisions of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009.

In January 2025, the Elections Office received complaints regarding false residential claims by individuals seeking to register or transfer to districts where they did not reside. These were handled with increased vigilance, and questionable applications were subject to further scrutiny. Suspected fraudulent cases were referred to the police for investigation.

Despite a few reports from candidates about specific inaccuracies in the final list and a feeling among a few that the registration deadline should have been closer to Election Day, the Elections Office and district Registering Officers demonstrated professionalism and diligence under tight deadlines. Most stakeholders expressed confidence in the accuracy of the voters' list and the process met international transparency standards.

THE RIGHT TO STAND FOR ELECTION AND CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Caymanian citizens, aged 21 years and above, domiciled and resident in the jurisdiction, are entitled to contest an election to Parliament. The residence requirements are quite onerous. Caymanians born in the territory must have resided in the jurisdiction for at least seven years prior to nomination day, while those born elsewhere, must have resided in the Cayman Islands for at least 15 of the preceding 20 years. No candidate may have been abroad for more than 400 days in the seven years immediately before nomination. These are, arguably, unreasonable restrictions on the right to stand for election.¹²

Persons who have been sentenced to more than 12 months in prison, or convicted of any offence involving dishonesty, are disqualified from membership of Parliament and accordingly disqualified from contesting elections. The Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Law (2018 Revision) provides for expungement of criminal records after a subsequent crime-free period but contains a specific exclusion preserving criminal records for disqualification from election. A review of this legislation is to be undertaken by the Law Reform Commission, which offers an opportunity to consider extension of expungement to individuals who may wish to contest elections, enhancing the choice of candidates available to voters.

Another disqualification from membership of Parliament is allegiance to a foreign state, effectively dual citizenship actively acquired by a Caymanian. Holding public office or being bankrupt also disqualify someone, as does legal certification *"to be insane or otherwise adjudged to be of unsound mind"* according to section 62 of the Constitution.

There were 59 candidates registered to contest the election, one of whom subsequently withdrew. Of the 58 candidates who were on the ballot papers, the majority of these candidates were nominated by political parties: 13 by the PPM, 12 by the CINP, and 10 by TCCP. There were 23 independent candidates contesting the election.

¹² [General Comment 25 to the ICCPR](#), paragraph 15, states that *"Persons who are otherwise eligible to stand for election should not be excluded by unreasonable or discriminatory requirements such as education, residence or descent..."*.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The official nomination of candidates, referred to as Nomination Day, was held on 3 March 2025 from 08:00h to 15:00h. All candidates, regardless of party affiliation or independent status, were required to register individually. Each candidate was obliged to submit a refundable deposit of CI\$1,000 and to file a declaration of interests with the Standards in Public Life Commission before nomination.

Under section 29(5) of the Elections Act, candidates must be nominated by at least two individuals who are registered electors in the same electoral district where the candidate intends to stand. Nomination by individuals not registered in the relevant district at the time of signing is an offence on the part of the nominator, carrying a fine of up to CI\$2,000.

One candidate was nominated by an individual who was not on the voter register in the relevant district at the time of nomination. The nominator was on the revised list, but as this was still under revision, the nominator was therefore not on the official voter register. The matter was investigated by the Elections Office who acknowledged the discrepancy but stated that there was no provision in the legislation to disqualify the candidate over the nominator's status at the time of nomination. Section 29A of the Elections Act allows the Supervisor of Elections to seek a declaration from the Grand Court regarding the qualification or disqualification of a candidate, but this section does not apply to the qualifications of a nominator. As a result, the candidate remained in the race and was on the ballot paper.

The election campaign was regulated by the Elections Act, officially commencing on Nomination Day and concluding the day before Election Day. While the formal campaign period lasted approximately eight weeks, the mission was informed that some candidates had begun campaigning earlier, some as early as two years prior.

There was no official code of conduct for candidates. A voluntary code of conduct was provided by the Elections Office as a guide for political parties, candidates and their agents in assisting with the orderly conduct of the election process.

The campaign environment was competitive, vibrant, and peaceful. Activities included rallies, public meetings, door-to-door canvassing, social events, and widespread use of posters and billboards. The campaign period allowed voters to familiarise themselves with the candidates and party platforms, however, the length of the campaign, including activity prior to Nomination Day, contributed to instances of candidate fatigue, and increased campaign expenses.

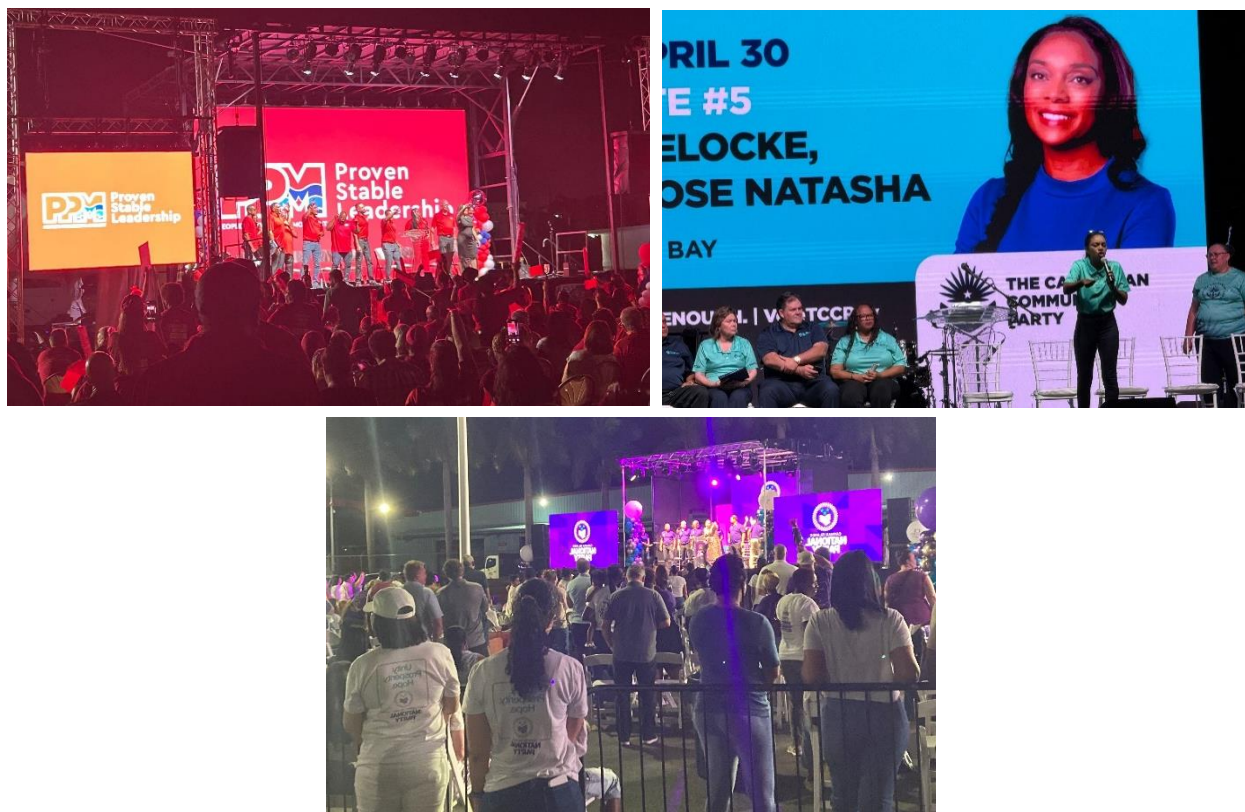
The mission attended rallies across multiple constituencies, organised by the three main political parties. These rallies were large in scale, often drawing hundreds of attendees. Securing a space to hold rallies operated on a first-come, first-served basis, a practice criticised by some independent

candidates. Notably, the 2025 election marked a shift from previous cycles that were more heavily influenced by independent candidates, with this campaign dominated by the three main parties.

Political debates organised by the Chamber of Commerce played an important role in promoting informed voter engagement. These debates offered a platform for candidates to present their policy positions and address national concerns. A leadership debate, moderated by the Chamber of Commerce, enabled party leaders to articulate their visions on critical issues.

All three main parties issued detailed manifestos outlining their proposed policy agendas. Prominent campaign topics included immigration, environmental protection, cost of living, education, transport infrastructure, affordable housing, and access to healthcare. TCCP engaged youth through targeted initiatives, such as youth councils and debates.

Fundamental rights to the freedoms of expression and assembly, protected under the Constitution, were respected. While minor complaints were registered, the campaign was conducted in a peaceful and inclusive manner. To preserve the integrity of the process, campaigning was prohibited on Election Day, and all campaign materials, including posters and signage, were required to be removed in advance, contributing to a calm and orderly atmosphere.



**Campaign rallies for the three competing political parties.
Clockwise: PPM, TCCP, and CINP.**

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign finance emerged as one of the most contentious issues amongst stakeholders who met with the mission. In the Cayman Islands, campaign finance regulations for general elections are governed by the Elections Act in sections 64-73, which outlines spending limits, election expenses reporting requirements, and penalties for non-compliance. Whilst many stakeholders informed the mission that the campaigning unofficially began well before Nomination Day, only expenditures during the official campaign period are regulated.

Donations over CI\$10,000 must be declared, and campaign expenditure is limited to CI\$40,000 per candidate during the official campaign period. Most candidates that the mission met with criticised this spending cap as outdated and insufficient, given rising campaign costs. Independent candidates also noted inequity, as political parties can spend CI\$40,000 per candidate, amplifying their overall campaign capacity.

Legally, candidates may receive donations from individuals and legal entities (including overseas donations, private donors and political parties). International guidelines advise that political parties should be restricted in their ability to receive funding from foreign sources. Candidates cannot receive donations from the state or an anonymous source.

Only successful candidates must submit a detailed return of all campaign expenditure to the Supervisor of Elections within 35 days after the announcement of results. The Supervisor publishes a summary of the declaration rather than a full overview, and this summary report is publicly accessible online and in person for inspection. While this requirement promotes a degree of post-election financial accountability, the current framework lacks critical mechanisms. Expenditures made before Nomination Day are not regulated or required to be reported, creating a transparency gap. This has raised concerns among stakeholders, as significant funds may be spent prior to the official campaign period, including on media, printing, office space, and staffing.¹³ This significantly limits transparency and enforcement.

Whilst the Election Office is responsible for receiving the financial reports, they do not have the power and capacity to investigate candidates' income and expenditure in detail. There is no designated body responsible for reviewing, validating, or investigating discrepancies in campaign finance declarations. The Commission for Standards in Public Life maintains a public register of interests, but there is no requirement for candidates or political parties to submit, publish, or have audited reports of

¹³ The UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) (2003) Article 7(3) calls for states to enhance transparency in the funding of election campaigns and promote accountability in public office. OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission (2010) – Guidelines on Political Party Regulation “There should be an independent body mandated to oversee compliance with political finance regulations, including investigating infractions and imposing sanctions.” Article 8: Financial reports should cover all relevant periods and actors, including pre-campaign spending.

donations or expenditures before polling day. Despite recent efforts of the Election Supervisor and others to reform the campaign finance regulations, no action has been taken to date.

As mentioned above, no laws regulated spending, reporting, or donation limits for the referendum campaign. This regulatory void raises concerns about the potential for unregulated and undisclosed funding to influence outcomes and undermine fairness.

The Cayman Islands' campaign finance laws lack transparency, accountability and oversight, comprehensive regulation and enforcement, particularly outside the official campaign period and in referendum contexts. To promote transparency, ensure equity among candidates, and align with international best practices, legal reforms are needed.¹⁴

Recommendation: Transparency and accountability in campaign finance: Review the campaign finance regulations, including the reporting requirements for candidates who are not elected, the expenditure limit for candidates, the lack of regulations regarding foreign donors, and reporting accrued campaign costs.

MEDIA

Several guidelines and protocols govern media interactions and reporting in the Cayman Islands. The Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression. However, under the Elections Act, there is no provision for free broadcast time or printed advertisement space for political parties or candidates. As a result, media access during election campaigns is primarily determined by the ability to purchase airtime or advertising space at commercial rates. On their own initiative, Radio Cayman, a public radio station, invited every candidate to take part in a 15-minute interview free of charge.

The media environment is vibrant and competitive, including print, online outlets, and private and public radio and television stations.¹⁵ There is an increasing use of social media, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp. The media is regulated by the Utility Regulation and Competition Office.

Candidates utilised both traditional and online media platforms during the campaign. Several candidates reported to the mission that high advertising costs limited their media access. Media outlets confirmed that advertising slots were sold on a first come, first served basis, with rates published transparently online. The mission also received complaints of political parties using social media influencers to promote themselves or discredit opponents, resulting in disinformation. Despite the increase in the use of social media in the electoral campaign, there are no laws regulating the use of digital and social media.

¹⁴ Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (2002): United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) Article 7(3).

¹⁵ Media outlets include several national newspapers, multiple radio stations (including a government-owned broadcaster and four commercial stations), as well as the Cayman News Service (an online news platform) and Compass TV.

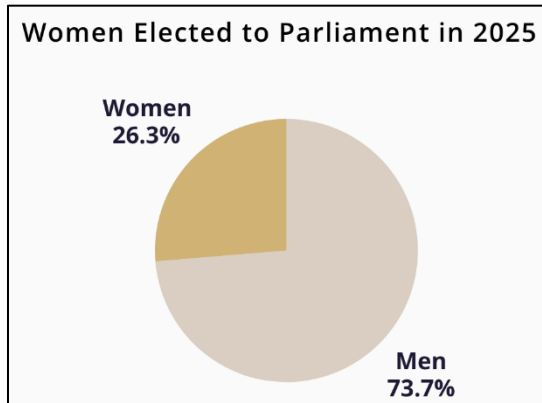
Section 11 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, media freedom, right to information and prohibits censorship of means of communication. The Elections Act prohibits political content on polling day and restricts offensive or inflammatory advertising. Media representatives are also prohibited from entering polling stations on Election Day.

The Cayman Islands generally uphold freedom of expression.¹⁶ There is no evidence of systematic state censorship or suppression of political views. However, the lack of a binding media code of conduct and mechanisms to address election-related disinformation represents a shortfall in meeting international best practices. There is no legislation ensuring balanced media coverage or public information in referendums.¹⁷ Guidelines have been proposed to ensure fair media coverage, but enforcement mechanisms are still under development.

Recommendation: Balanced, fair and impartial media coverage: Adopt a media code of conduct for elections.

THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

There are no formal legal barriers, in principle, restricting the political participation of women, but there is, in practice, a significant under-representation of women in Parliament. Five women were elected in the 2025 General Election among the 19 members of the new Cayman Islands Parliament, representing just 26 per cent of the membership, the same proportion as in the previous legislature. TCCP had two women elected among their four parliamentarians (50 per cent); while the PPM had also two women, but among seven MPs (28 per cent); and the Cayman Islands National Party (CNIP) had one among four (25 per cent). There was no woman among the four independent parliamentarians elected.



There were 58 candidates contesting the elections, of whom 19 were women, representing 33 per cent of candidates overall. TCCP had the highest proportion of female candidates, at 50 per cent of their 10 candidates. They were followed by the PPM, with five female candidates among 13 nominees, representing 38 per cent of their nominees; while the CINP included four women among their 12 candidates, representing 33 per cent of their slate. Just five women contested the election as independent candidates, compared with 18 men, representing less than 20 per cent of the independent candidates.

¹⁶ In line with Article 19 of the ICCPR. The presence of diverse media outlets reflects a degree of alignment with international standards on media pluralism.

¹⁷ Contrary to recommendations made by the Venice Commission.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was extended to the Cayman Islands in 2016, but the affirmative action provisions have not yet been utilised to advance the political participation of women. In 2024 the CEDAW Committee clarified the obligation upon state parties to achieve equal and inclusive participation of women in public life, through fifty-fifty parity in all decision-making systems.¹⁸ This includes political life.

Recommendation: Equality of women: Consider the introduction of affirmative action measures to support the candidature of more women. It may be valuable to learn what steps other small jurisdictions have taken in this area.

THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The domestic legal framework explicitly recognises the political rights of persons with disabilities. In a general protection of equality, the Bill of Rights in the Constitution, in section 16, prohibits discrimination on grounds that include disability. The Disabilities (Solomon Webster) Act (2016) additionally specifies that persons with disabilities are entitled to the opportunity to vote, to be elected to public office and to participate fully in public life.

Nonetheless, in the broader context of the evolution of the rights of persons with disabilities under international law, extension of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the Cayman Islands would further enhance their legal rights of persons with disabilities, mandating removal of discrimination on grounds of intellectual capacity, which would enhance political rights.

Exemplary efforts were made during the course of this election to ensure that the right to vote was vindicated for the community of persons with disabilities. Several options existed in law and in practice to ensure that all persons entitled to vote were facilitated to do so.

Recommendation: Equal political participation of persons with disabilities: Extend the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the Cayman Islands.

POSTAL AND MOBILE VOTING

In the 2025 Cayman Islands General Election, postal and mobile voting mechanisms played an important role in ensuring inclusive participation for voters unable to attend polling stations on Election Day.¹⁹

Postal voting was available to registered voters residing abroad or with verified travel plans. The Elections Office began issuing ballots on 10 March, with the application deadline set for 17 April 2025. A total of 1,036 postal ballots were issued, almost double the 582 issued in the 2021 General Election,

¹⁸ CEDAW General Recommendation No 40. on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, 25/10/2024, [CEDAW/C/GC/40](#).

¹⁹ Rules 12-17 of the Elections Act (2022 Revision) cover the procedures in relation to the issuing of postal ballot papers.

demonstrating a marked increase in demand. The final batch of 148 international ballots was dispatched on 19 April, just two days after the deadline for applications. All postal ballots were required to be received by Election Day (30 April) to be counted. The Elections Office invested in prepaid return envelopes and courier services to facilitate timely returns and should be commended for their efficiency in sending out over 1,000 ballots in a short period of time.

Mobile voting was available to voters unable to attend polling stations due to illness, hospitalisation, age, physical incapacity, or occupational commitments. Applications for mobile voting closed on 17 April, with 1,500 voters registered for mobile voting. Mobile voting was conducted between 22 and 25 April, both at static locations and through house-to-house visits in each polling district. On 26 April, the Elections Office carried out a mopping up exercise, visiting people's homes who had not had the chance to vote across those four days and were registered as mobile voters. The mission observed mobile voting in six districts, both visiting static mobile voting locations and being present for house-to-house voting. The Elections Office administered this process in a professional and efficient manner.

The level of advanced voting participation was approximately 10 per cent of the total number of registered voters, 2,536 out of 25,643.

VOTING ON ELECTION DAY

Election Day was held on 30 April 2025 and was conducted in a calm, orderly, and peaceful manner. Voting took place across 65 polling stations in the 19 electoral districts, in both Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac.

Polling stations generally opened on time at 7:00h and closed promptly at 18:00h. Polling stations were staffed with a Presiding Officer and two poll clerks. Strict protocols were in place to maintain the integrity of the vote, including prohibitions on electronic devices within polling stations and bans on alcohol sales during voting hours.

The professionalism and preparedness of the polling staff was evident to the observers, as were the high levels of transparency, organisation, and efficiency in place during voting. Significant efforts were made to ensure accessibility for voters with disabilities. Polling stations provided step-free access, accessible booths, and wheelchairs.

The mission observed election procedures in 27 polling stations across all 19 electoral districts, including Cayman Brac. Three polling stations were observed twice giving a total of 30 polling station observations. The mission assessed the overall conduct of the opening, voting, and counting as very good, demonstrating effective planning, execution, and adherence to international norms.

Party agents were present in all polling stations that the observers visited on Election Day. Domestic observers were present in four out of 30 observations undertaken in polling stations. Police were

stationed at every polling station and at the counting centres, performing their duties in compliance with the law and were not seen to interfere in the process.

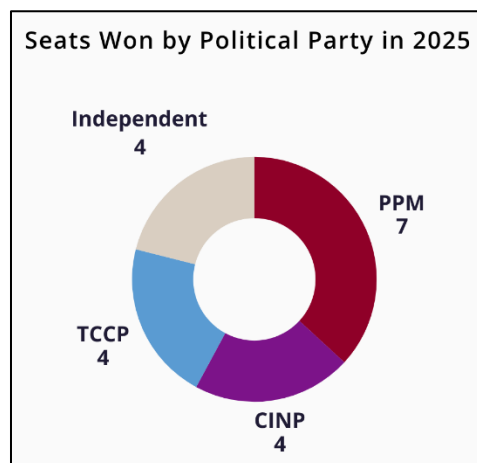
Election officials acted professionally and transparently, and procedures were followed in line with the election law and procedures. Election observers were granted access without restriction. Minor complaints received by the Election Supervisor included the presence of campaign signage on Election Day, and reports of candidates or agents lingering near polling stations.

Prisoners sentenced to less than 12 months and those on remand are eligible to vote. Of the 224 incarcerated individuals in the Cayman Islands, only two were eligible, and both declined to vote, despite voter education being provided in the facility.

The Election Day was conducted in a well-organised, transparent manner and peaceful manner with no incidents reported. The Elections Office successfully implemented postal and mobile voting and upheld election-day procedures.

COUNTING AND RESULTS

The counting process was conducted with a high level of professionalism and transparency, providing the public with live, real-time updates at the command centre managed by the Elections Office. The count itself was not open to the public, or the media. Party agents and candidates had access and were present in every counting centre observed. The count for each polling station was conducted by the Returning Officer in a designated counting centre. The mission observed counting in five counting centres across four districts, including Cayman Brac. The process of closing and counting was assessed as very good.



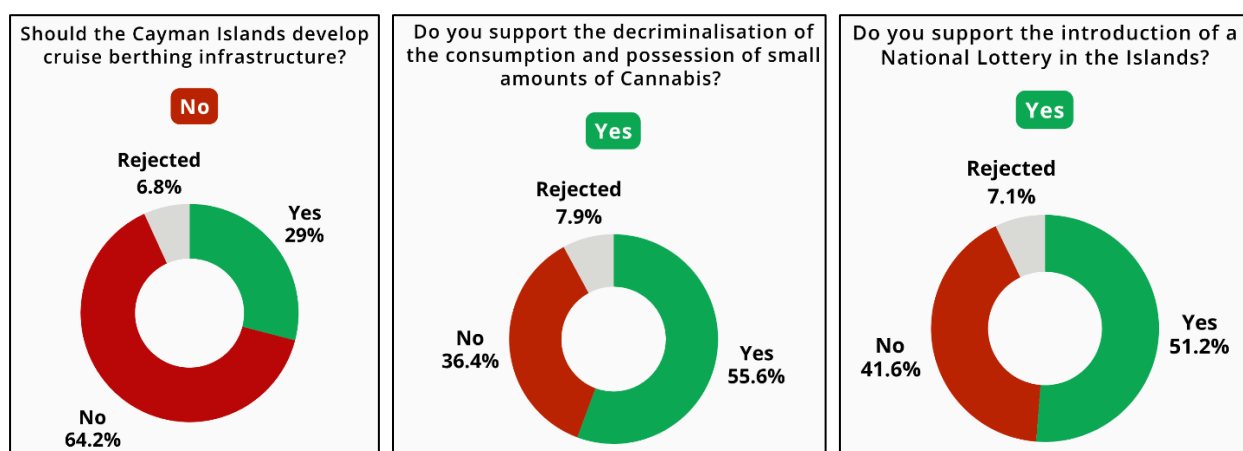
Postal ballots were not centrally counted; rather, they were opened and processed by the Returning Officers in accordance with section 22 of the Elections Act. Postal ballots were verified and then mixed with both mobile and polling station ballots prior to the official count.²⁰ The count finished in most centres after midnight. Post-count reconciliation procedures confirmed that the number of accepted ballots matched the number counted. The counting for the referendums and the General Election occurred simultaneously and each ballot was displayed to party agents and candidates present for transparency.

²⁰ In accordance with a recommendation from the 2017 CPA BIMR report, postal and mobile ballots were mixed with Election Day ballots during the counting process, to protect voter anonymity.

The PPM won the highest number of seats at seven out of 19, though it was not enough to form a government as they did not achieve an overall majority. The CINP and TCCP secured four seats each. In 2025 there was a significant reduction in the number of seats secured and votes cast for independent candidates when compared to 2021. In 2025 four independent candidates were elected and all independent candidates secured a total of 26 per cent of the vote, whilst in 2021 independents won 12 seats and received a total of 79 per cent of the vote.

The Cayman Islands witnessed a peaceful election day with no incidents reported during the polling, counting or announcement of results.

With no party securing a majority (10 out of 19 seats), a coalition government was formed after negotiations comprising the four MPs from TCCP, the four from CINP and three of the independent MPs. This coalition is known as the National Coalition for Caymanians (NCFC). The new government was sworn in on 6 May 2025, with André Ebanks as the new Premier in a ceremony officiated by the Governor.



The referendum results saw a majority vote 'no' on the question of cruise berthing infrastructure, and a majority vote 'yes' for both the introduction of a national lottery and the decriminalisation of the consumption and possession of small amounts of cannabis. Full results are listed in the charts above.

ELECTORAL JUSTICE

Access to dispute resolution mechanisms is facilitated throughout the electoral process in an effective manner, with enhancements added since the last election. Judicial remedies are available for some matters, with administrative measures available for others. Investigatory powers for complaints of electoral offences are vested in the Police Service, while prosecutorial decisions lie within the jurisdiction of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Procedures for claims and objections within the process of voter registration are set out in sections 15-18 of the Elections Act. A Notice of Claims and Objections for each district in the 2025 General Election was published in late February, with a hearing date for all districts on 14 March. Familiar to stakeholders, and transparent, the procedures were scrutinised by the Chief Magistrate who served as the revising officer.

Disputes as to the nomination of a candidate may be addressed to the Grand Court. The new Elections (Applications Under Section 29A) Rules (2025) regulate the use by the Supervisor of Elections of the power to seek a declaration from the Grand Court that a person who has been nominated as a candidate does not qualify to be a candidate. Petitions must be presented within nine days after nomination, with ten days for the disputed candidate to respond. The case must be heard within 35 days from the nomination date. This process was not used during this election.

No legal avenue is available to anyone other than the Supervisor of Elections to challenge the qualifications of a candidate prior to polling, with recourse available to others only after the election by way of election petition. Jurisdiction for election petitions, complaining of the undue election of a member of the Cayman Islands Parliament, lies with the Grand Court. Such a petition may be filed by anyone who voted or had the right to vote at the election, a candidate, or someone who claims that they should themselves have been elected. The case must be initiated within 21 or 28 days after the election, depending upon the grounds for the application. If the judge finds the candidate guilty of corrupt or illegal practice, or of corruption in general, the election result will be set aside.

During the campaign period, complaints regarding electoral matters may be submitted to the Elections Office, with online forms facilitating this. Fewer than ten complaints were received by the Elections Office during the course of the campaign and were largely for relatively minor matters. Complaints alleging commission of election offences were then referred to the Police, with complaints on posters and billboards referred to the relevant planning and road authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Good practice in the conduct of referendums:** Consider the drafting of comprehensive legislation to regulate the conduct of referendums, reflecting international good practice.
2. **‘One person, one vote’ the vote of one elector should be equal to the vote of another:** Revise the constituency boundaries before the next General Election to advance the equality of the vote.
3. **Equality of women:** Consider the introduction of affirmative action measures to support the candidature of more women. It may be valuable to learn what steps other small jurisdictions have taken in this area.
4. **The principle of independent election observation:** Consider legal regulation of the roles and responsibilities of election observers, both domestic and international, clarifying the independent nature of their work.
5. **The right to privacy:** Consider law reform to protect the right to privacy in the dissemination of voter registration data.
6. **Transparency and accountability in campaign finance:** Review the campaign finance regulations, including the reporting requirements for candidates who are not elected, the expenditure limit for candidates, the lack of regulations regarding foreign donors, and reporting accrued campaign costs.
7. **Equal political participation of persons with disabilities:** Extend the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the Cayman Islands.
8. **Balanced, fair and impartial media coverage:** Adopt a media code of conduct for elections.
9. **Complaints and appeals:** In addition to the complaints form that was introduced for the 2025 General Election, publish an adjoining complaints and appeals policy for election-related matters with clear procedures, deadlines and decision pathways outlined.
10. **The right to vote:** Amend the rules on the printing and recording of the serial number of the ballot paper, to ensure absolute secrecy as to the identity of the voter.
11. **Prisoner voting rights:** Reassess the blanket restriction on voting for those serving a prison sentence of more than 12 months.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The CPA BIMR Election Observation Mission wishes to express its gratitude to all in the Cayman Islands who supported the work of the Mission, including election officials, candidates and civil society organisations. We are also grateful to our team of observers and analysts for taking part.

CPA BIMR ELECTION OBSERVATION SERVICES:

The first objective of the BIMR Strategy is to strengthen parliaments and the skills of their members. As part of this work, CPA BIMR facilitates election observations when invited to do so.

For more information about these services, please contact the CPA BIMR Secretariat at:
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