



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Election FAQs: Timor-Leste

2022 Presidential Elections

March 19, 2022

Asia-Pacific

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

2011 Crystal Drive | Floor 10 | Arlington, VA 22202 | USA | www.IFES.org

March 14, 2022

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Election Snapshot..... 1

When is Election Day? 1

What is the legal regulatory framework governing the presidential elections? 1

Who administers presidential elections in Timor-Leste?..... 1

What are the competencies of the president of Timor-Leste?..... 2

Who are the candidates for the election? 2

When is the election campaign period?..... 3

Who may vote in this election?..... 3

How many registered voters are there? 4

How many polling stations are there? 4

How many poll workers will there be at each polling station? 4

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots? 4

What precautions against COVID-19 will be taken? 5

How and when are the results tabulated for the election? 5

Who can observe the election? 5

Who provides security for the election?..... 6

How are election disputes resolved? 6

Is out-of-country voting allowed?..... 6

How is the second round of the election organized? 6

About IFES in Timor-Leste 7

Disclosure 7

Election Snapshot

- Election Day: March 19, 2022
- Registered voters: 859,613
- Polling stations in-country: 1,491
- Poll workers: 16,200
- Physical distancing: one meter
- Candidates: 16

When is Election Day?

On Jan. 14, 2022, the president of the Republic of Timor-Leste announced that presidential elections in Timor-Leste will be held on March 19, 2022. If no candidate wins more than half of the valid votes, a run-off election will be held on April 19 between the two candidates receiving the largest numbers of valid votes.

What is the legal regulatory framework governing the presidential elections?

The three principal laws governing the election were amended in 2021. The president of the Republic of Timor-Leste promulgated the sixth amendment to Law No. 07/2006 on Election of the President on July 14; the third amendment to Law No. 05/2006 on Election Management Bodies on July 28; and the first amendment to Law No. 06/2016 on Voter Registration on Sept. 8.

The amended electoral management bodies law gives the independent National Election Commission (*Comissão Nacional de Eleições*) the power to approve government-proposed election codes of conduct and limited powers to review government-issued election decrees. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, amendments to the Presidential Election Law provide for parallel (absentee) voting in Dili and for voting processes for voters in COVID-19–related isolation or quarantine. This law also now requires the individual re-examination of all votes declared invalid at the national tabulation center.

Ten government decrees defining the implementation processes for these laws were promulgated between Jan. 10 and Jan. 14, 2022.

Who administers presidential elections in Timor-Leste?

Timor-Leste's two election management bodies are the National Election Commission (*Comissão Nacional de Eleições*, CNE) and the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (*Secretariado Técnico de Administração Eleitoral*, STAE).

The CNE is an independent body of seven commissioners appointed for five-year terms. Commissioners may be reappointed once. The president of the Republic of Timor-Leste appoints one member; the National Parliament appoints three (of whom one must be a woman); the government appoints one; and one is elected from among judicial magistrates and one from

among public prosecutors. The National Parliament then elects one member to serve as the president of the CNE. Currently, two members are women.

The CNE's major task is to supervise the STAE's work to ensure that constitutional and legal norms are followed and that citizens are treated lawfully and equally. It also ensures that political contestants are free to campaign. The CNE supervises municipal-level tabulations of election results and compiles a provisional national results tabulation for review by the Supreme Court. It handles procedural complaints and notifies the public prosecutor of apparently illegal electoral acts. The CNE also provides civic education programs.

The STAE is a government body within the Ministry of State Administration. It is led by a civil servant with the rank of director general. The STAE is responsible for implementing all electoral activities. This includes the drafting of electoral regulations, compilation and management of the voter register, provision of electoral information to voters, procurement of electoral supplies and equipment, administration of voting and counting of ballots and conduct of out-of-country voting.

What are the competencies of the president of Timor-Leste?

Under the Constitution of Timor-Leste, the president's competencies include the following, among others:

- To promulgate laws within 30 days after passage by the National Parliament;
- To veto laws within 30 days of passage by the National Parliament and to return them for further consideration;
- To appoint and swear in the prime minister;
- To dismiss a prime minister whose program the National Parliament has rejected twice consecutively;
- To appoint and dismiss senior government members and officials;
- To dissolve the National Parliament if a government cannot be formed or a state budget passed;
- To act as supreme commander of the Defense Force, wage war and make peace;
- To request that the Supreme Court review the constitutionality of laws and regulations; and
- To submit issues of national interest for public referendums.

How long is the president's term of office?

The presidential term of office is five years. The president may be re-elected once. The winner of the 2022 presidential election will be sworn in as president of the Republic of Timor-Leste on May 20, 2022.

Who are the candidates for the election?

Candidates stand as individuals, rather than as representatives of political parties, although some are backed by parties. On Feb. 14, 2022, the Court of Appeal announced that 16 of the 17 prospective candidates who had submitted applications for candidacy by the Feb. 4 deadline had met all qualifications to contest the election, including providing the names and signatures

of 5,000 registered voters in support of their candidacy. On Feb. 17, the Court of Appeal determined by lottery the order of candidates on the ballot paper:

1. Isabel da Costa Ferreira: Independent
2. Hermes da Rosa Correia Barros: Independent
3. Maria Ângela Freitas da Silva: Labor Party
4. Rogério Tiago de Fatima Lobato: Independent
5. Anacleto Bento Ferreira: Timor Democratic Republic Party
6. Francisco Guterres (Lú-Olo): Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor
7. Maria Helena Lopes de Jesus Pires: Independent
8. Tito da Costa Cristovao (Lere Anan Timur): Independent
9. Armanda Berta dos Santos: National Unity of the Sons of Timor Party
10. Antero Benedito da Silva: Independent
11. Constancio da Conceicao Pinto (Terus): Independent
12. Virgilio da Silva Guterres (Lamukan): Independent
13. Martinho Germano da Silva Gusmão: United Party for Development and Democracy
14. Jose Ramos Horta: National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction Party
15. Felisberto Araujo Duarte: Independent
16. Mariano Assanami Sabino Lopes: Democratic Party

This is the largest number of candidates for a presidential election in Timor-Leste; the four women candidates represent the largest number women contesting for the presidency.

For each candidate's their number on the ballot, name, symbol and photograph will appear horizontally, in that order, on the ballot, followed by a square in which voters mark their choice. Candidates will provide their photographs and are free to use any symbol they choose.

When is the election campaign period?

Candidates may campaign for election during the 15-day period between March 2 and March 16, 2022. The National Election Commission oversees the conduct of the campaign of each candidate and approves a campaign schedule defining where and when each candidate holds campaign events.

Who may vote in this election?

Citizens of Timor-Leste who are at least 16 years of age may register to vote. However, a person is not included in the voter register for an election unless the person is at least 17 years of age on the date of the election. Persons with a "clearly and publicly known mental disability"* or whose electoral rights have been removed through the sentence of a court are not eligible to register to vote.

Registered voters may cast their ballots at a polling station within the geographic area for which they are registered by showing their voter registration card. Voters who do not have voter

* Law on Presidential Elections as amended to 2021, Article 5(b).

registration cards may cast ballots at a polling station if their name appears on the voter register for that station and they show a national ID card or passport. Voters who work, study or live in Dili for other reasons but are registered to vote elsewhere may request special registration for this election to vote in one of three “parallel voting” centers in Dili. Additionally, registration for out-of-country voters is open for Timorese citizens otherwise qualified to vote who reside in the geographic areas of responsibility of the Timor-Leste diplomatic missions and consular offices in Australia, Portugal, South Korea and the United Kingdom.

How many registered voters are there?

There are 852,500 voters registered within Timor-Leste who are eligible to vote in the presidential election. Additionally, 7,113 people are registered as out-of-country voters. Therefore, the total number of registered voters is 859,613 (413,899 women and 445,714 men).

The total number of registered voters is 9.6 percent more than the number registered for the early parliamentary election of 2018. Registrations increased the most in Dili (14.0 percent), diaspora (13.9 percent) and Manufahi (11.1 percent). The smallest increases were in Ermera (4.7 percent), Viqueque (7.2 percent) and Bobonaro (7.4 percent).

How many polling stations are there?

On Feb. 17, 2022, the Technical Secretariat for Election Administration (STAE) announced that 1,491 polling stations would be located in 1,191 polling centers in Timor-Leste, with nine additional polling centers and polling stations abroad. This is an increase of 556 polling stations and 504 polling centers over the 2017 presidential election.

The number of polling stations and centers is fixed for this election; however, the STAE may change the locations until 10 days before Election Day (i.e., until March 9, 2022).

Polling stations will be open for voting between 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Election Day.

How many poll workers will there be at each polling station?

On Election Day, each polling center will be led by a president, and each polling station within that polling center will be managed by a secretary who supervises up to nine polling staff. However, polling stations may operate with a minimum of six staff. Overall, 16,200 staff are expected to work in polling centers on Election Day.

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

The Republic of Timor-Leste is not yet a signatory to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Persons with a physical or visual disability may appoint a person of their choice to assist them in voting. Instructions to polling officials require that they bring persons with disabilities, along with the elderly and pregnant women, to the front of the queue of those waiting to vote. There are no specific facilities to support persons with disabilities in registering to vote or in voting. It is not known how many persons with disabilities are registered to vote.

What precautions against COVID-19 will be taken?

The Technical Secretariat for Election Administration (STAE) will implement some measures to combat the potential spread of COVID-19 on Election Day. “Parallel voting” centers will be open in Dili, so voters registered in other municipalities do not have to travel on crowded public transport to vote in the areas where they are registered. General public health rules currently require people to wear masks in public spaces, sanitize their hands when entering public buildings and maintain one-meter social distancing. STAE will issue polling centers with some masks and sanitizer for use by voters and election staff. Election staff conducting polling in high-risk areas, such as in hospitals and isolation centers, will be issued personal protective equipment.

There are no specific rules in place for candidates’ campaign mass rallies and other events in relation to COVID-19.

How and when are the results tabulated for the election?

After the close of voting on Election Day, ballots will be counted and tabulated in each polling center. Initially, the secretary of each polling station within the center will count and secure unused and cancelled ballot papers. The ballot boxes are then opened, the ballot papers from all voting stations within the polling center are mixed, the votes are counted and the results are tabulated and publicly displayed.

The tabulation records from all polling centers within each municipality are then amalgamated at municipal tabulation centers. The committees tabulating these votes are chaired by the municipal directors of the Technical Secretariat for Election Administration (STAE) and comprise the presidents of all polling centers in the municipality and officials appointed by the STAE. A municipal delegate of the National Election Commission (CNE) supervises their work. Within two days after the Election Day (by March 21, 2022), each municipal tabulation committee must send the results of its tabulation to the CNE, which then has 72 hours from the receipt of municipal tabulations to verify them (by March 24) and a further 72 hours to complete and publicize a provisional national tabulation of the election results (by March 27).

Following review of the tabulation records and consideration of any appeals, the decision of the Court of Appeal on the election result will be published in the state gazette on April 1.

Who can observe the election?

National and international observers may observe the election once they are accredited by the Technical Secretariat for Election Administration. Applications must be received 10 days prior to Election Day and require only the name of the observer organization, proof of the observer’s identity (a copy of a national observer’s voter card or an international observer’s passport), proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 and a signature and photographs for the observer accreditation card. A government decree defines the rights and responsibilities of observers. Accreditation may be withdrawn for a breach of this decree or other laws of Timor-Leste.

Who provides security for the election?

Election security is primarily the responsibility of the Timor-Leste National Police. Unless requested to act in response to emergencies or legal breaches, police cannot approach nearer than 25 meters from each polling station. The Timor-Leste Defense Force may also have a role under its responsibilities for crisis management, intra-government cooperation and maintaining civil order.

How are election disputes resolved?

Alleged breaches of election law, regulations, codes of conduct or procedures can be referred to the National Election Commission (CNE) for decision. In polling stations, complaints about election operations are addressed in the first instance by a vote of a station's polling officials, who may consult the Technical Secretariat for Election Administration (STAE). If unsatisfied, a complainant may then refer the complaint to the CNE, which must rule within 72 hours of receipt. The CNE has specifically defined responsibilities in relation to appeals against STAE decisions on the registration of voters.

The CNE is required to refer alleged criminal breaches to the public prosecutor. Decisions of both the CNE and STAE can be appealed to the Supreme Court. Appeals against the provisional national election results published by the CNE can be lodged with the Supreme Court within 24 hours of their publication. The functions of the Supreme Court are currently being implemented by the Court of Appeal.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

The Technical Secretariat for Election Administration (STAE) has announced that out-of-country voting will be available at Timor-Leste diplomatic missions or consular offices in Darwin, Melbourne and Sydney, Australia; Lisbon and Porto, Portugal; Seoul, South Korea; and Dungannon, London and Oxford in the United Kingdom. Voters must be on the voter register compiled for the areas covered by these missions or offices and vote in person on Election Day.

How is the second round of the election organized?

If no candidate receives at least 50 percent plus one of the valid votes in the first round of the presidential election, a second round will be held on April 19, 2022. On April 1, the Court of Appeal will announce on the names of the two candidates who won the largest number of votes and who will contest the second round. The election campaign will last 15 days, from April 2 to April 16.

The procedures for the second round of the election will be the same as for the first, including the use of the same polling centers and polling stations. The results of the second round, determined by the Court of Appeal following its consideration of any appeals, will be published in the state gazette on May 2, 2022.

Resources

- Constitution of Timor-Leste ([English](#) | [Tetum](#) | [Portuguese](#))
- Government of Timor-Leste Law No. 06/2016 on Voter Registration as amended to 2021 ([English](#) | [Portuguese](#))
- Government of Timor-Leste Law No. 05/2006 on Election Management Bodies as amended to 2021 ([English](#) | [Portuguese](#))
- Government of Timor-Leste Law No. 07/2006 on Election of the President as amended to 2021 ([English](#) | [Portuguese](#))
- Government of Timor-Leste Presidential Election Calendar ([English](#) | [Portuguese](#))
- Polling Center President's Handbook ([English](#) | [Tetum](#))
- Polling Center Secretaries' Handbook ([English](#) | [Tetum](#))

About IFES in Timor-Leste

Since 2001, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has been a key partner in strengthening the development of Timor-Leste's electoral sector. IFES conducted programming around the 2004-2005 local elections, 2017 parliamentary elections, 2018 snap elections and currently, the 2022 presidential elections. IFES' programming focuses on inclusive civic and voter education, strengthening media engagement, technical support to election management bodies and supporting disability access monitoring.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Timor-Leste election authorities as of March 14, 2022, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any International Foundation for Electoral Systems policy or technical recommendations.