



GENERAL ELECTION 2024

FAFEN'S BRIEFS

Representation in Pakistan's Elections (2002-2024)

February 2025



This publication is a part of Free and Fair Election Network's (FAFEN's) General Elections 2024 Brief Series offering a comprehensive overview of electoral engagement, participation trends, etc. that can inform future electoral reforms and policy decisions aimed at enhancing inclusivity and representation.

SUMMARY

This report examines the impact of fluctuating turnout and Pakistan's First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) electoral system on the level of representation of the country's general elections from 2002 to 2024. The findings show that while lower voter turnout is a key concern, the impact of systemic dynamics on electoral representation is even more substantial. The FPTP system determines the winner without considering proportional representation in the election results. This has resulted in a significant representation deficit in the electoral results of successive elections.¹ The following findings underscore this point:

In the National Assembly elections since 2002,

- Barring the 2013 and 2018 elections, in all other general elections, less than half of registered voters cast their votes.

In 2024, over 66 million (52%) registered voters abstained from voting. The effects of voter abstention were evident in the constituency-level results. Of the 265 constituencies where elections were held,

- The winning candidates collectively secured support from 21 percent of all registered voters.
 - None of the constituencies returned a winner with the support of a majority (more than 50 percent) of the registered voters.
 - In 63 constituencies, the winners secured support ranging between 25-50 percent of registered voters.
 - In 202 constituencies, the winners secured support from less than 25 percent of the registered voters.
- In every general election except 2008, losing candidates collectively received more votes than the winners. In GE-2024, 45 percent of voters supported the winners, while 53 percent voted for other candidates. The votes of three percent of voters were counted as invalid.²

Beyond the aggregate figures, the vote shares of winners at the constituency level exhibited considerable variation. Of the 265 constituencies for which elections were conducted in 2024,

- In six constituencies (2%), winning candidates received less than 25 percent of the votes cast in their respective constituencies.

¹ To see the impact of the representation deficit on party positions, see, 2024 National And Provincial Elections: Votes Polled and Party Shares In Votes and Seats <https://fafen.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/FAFEN-Brief-Party-Votes-and-Seats-Share-GE2024.pdf>

² The percentage numbers are rounded here and elsewhere in the report for easier reading and the aggregate numbers may reflect the rounding effect.

- In 190 (72%) constituencies, the winning candidates secured between 25-50 percent of the votes cast in their respective constituencies.
- In 69(26%) constituencies, winning candidates received more than 50 percent of the votes polled in their respective constituencies.

The provincial assembly election results reflected overall national trends, with some regional variations.

- In 499 (85%) constituencies, winners secured support from less than 25 percent of registered voters. Only two constituencies(one in Sindh and one in Balochistan) recorded winners who garnered support from over 50 percent of the registered votes.
- Across 466 (79%) constituencies, winners secured 25-50% of the polled votes, while only 107 (18%) exceeded 50%.

Regional Variations:

- In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, the aggregate votes polled by winning candidates constituted 16 percent of the registered voters and 41 percent of the total votes polled.
- In the Punjab Assembly, the aggregate votes polled by the winning candidates constituted 20 percent of registered voters and 39 percent of the total votes polled.
- In the Sindh Assembly, the aggregate votes polled by the winning candidates constituted 22 percent of registered voters and 51 percent of the total votes polled.
- In the Balochistan Assembly, the aggregate votes polled by winning candidates constituted 18 percent of registered voters and 39 percent of the total votes polled.

MEASURING REPRESENTATION

Representation is a key determinant of a democracy's health, ensuring that diverse political voices are reflected in governance. Without broad and fair representation, democratic legitimacy weakens, and large segments of the electorate may feel excluded.

Pakistan's FPTP system, though simple, is predicated on determining the winner rather than the proportionality. The system is oblivious to vote splitting among multiple candidates, wherein winners can secure seats with only a small fraction of the total vote.³ This leaves many voters unrepresented, as ballots cast for losing candidates do not contribute to legislative representation, highlighting a critical challenge to ensuring inclusive and effective democracy. Furthermore, in its present form, the system does not consider voters who have abstained from voting. The convergence of these two factors creates a gap between the electorate and its representatives, which poses a risk to the legitimacy of electoral outcomes.

To measure the system's representation quotient, this brief evaluates winning candidates' votes as a proportion of registered voters and polled votes. The evaluation was carried out at two levels: constituency and assembly.

- **At the constituency level**, the brief assesses the winner's share as the proportion of registered voters and votes polled in the constituencies of their respective national or provincial assemblies.
- **At the assembly level**, this brief examines the winners' (elected members) tally of votes as a proportion of registered voters and as a proportion of polled votes in the five most recent general elections in Pakistan, that is, GE-2002 to GE-2024.

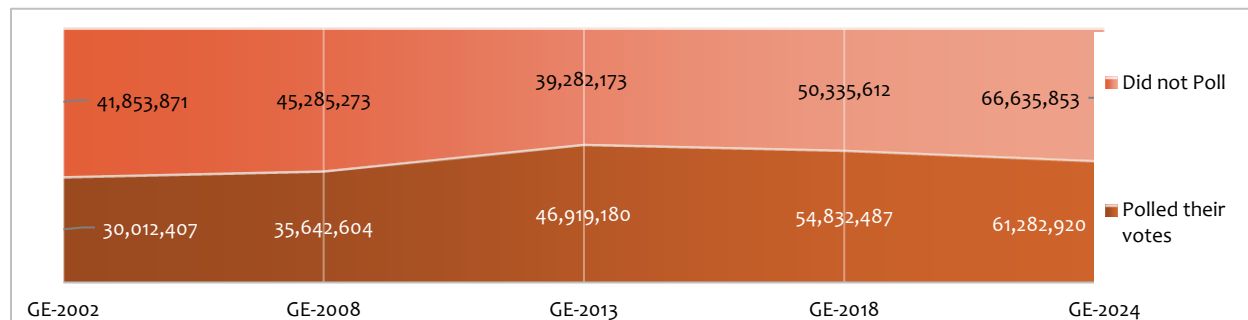
The analysis below depicts the nature of representation in both national and provincial assemblies to better ascertain the representational dynamics of the country's democracy in general and elections in particular. The brief aims to spur a constructive and informed debate on electoral reforms that would enhance not only citizens' participation but also their representation in parliament, provincial assemblies, and local governments.

³ For example, a candidate polling 99,999 votes will still be a loser if another were to secure 100,000.

1. National Assembly: Elections and Representation

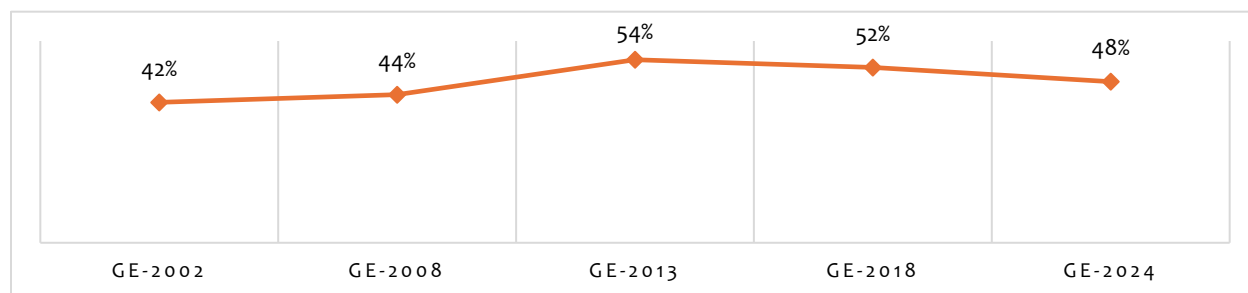
Since GE-2002, the absolute number of polled votes has consistently increased. The number of votes doubled, from 30,012,407 in GE-2002 to 61,282,920 in GE-2024. However, as shown in the figure below, the number of voters who did not poll their votes has also increased consistently in all elections except 2013.

Figure 1. Participating and Non-Participating Voters GE-2002 to GE-2024



Despite the increase in the number of registered voters, the number of voters who abstained from voting decreased from 45,285,273 in GE-2008 to 39,282,173 in GE-2013. This resulted in a significant increase in turnout (percentage of registered voters who voted) from 44% in GE-2008 to 54% in GE-2013).⁴

Figure 2. Voters Turnout GE-2002-2024



Since 2013, the number of voters who did not poll rose subsequently in the elections of 2018 and 2024, culminating in a decline in the turnout rate to 52 percent in GE-2018 and further to 48 percent in GE-2024. While the voters who polled their votes in the 2018 and 2024 elections rose, the number of registered voters who did not poll their votes rose more drastically. Barring GE-2013 and GE-2018, more than half of the country's registered voters were not sufficiently motivated to use their right to vote.

⁴ Regional turnout trends have been covered in greater detail in GE-2024: Brief on Assessing Demographic and Gender Turnout Dynamics; https://fafen.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/FAFEN_Brief-on-Assessing-Demographic-and-Gender-Turnout-Dynamics.pdf

1.1. Constituency-level Representation

In GE-2024, elections were held for 265 of the 266 National Assembly constituencies. For the remaining seat, NA-8 Bajaur, a by-election was held to elect a member.

Given that each constituency has its own elections, the dynamics of representation also vary from one constituency to another. To capture the variance, this subsection categorizes the level of representation of individual constituencies by assessing the winners' votes as a proportion of registered and polled votes.

1.1.1. National Assembly Constituencies by Winners' Share of Registered Voters

Table 1 categorizes National Assembly constituencies based on winners' share of registered voters. This classification helps to assess the level of electoral representation participation in different constituencies as a proportion of registered voters. Overall, 63 out of 265 constituencies (24%) had winners securing 25 to 50% of registered voters' support. The majority of constituencies (202 out of 265, or 76%) had winners securing less than 25% of registered voters' support.

Table 1: National Assembly Constituencies by Winners' Share of Registered Voters

Region	Less than 25%	25% to 50%	More than 50%	Total
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	42	2	-	44
ICT	3	-	-	3
Punjab	106	35	-	141
Sindh	35	26	-	61
Balochistan	16	-	-	16
Total	202	63	-	265

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), winners of 42 constituencies secured less than 25% of registered voters' support, while only two constituencies saw winners with a 25–50% share. No constituency had a winner with more than 50% support. In the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), all three constituencies fall in the less than 25% category.

Punjab had 106 constituencies where the winner's share was less than 25%, while 35 constituencies recorded a winner's share between 25% and 50% of the registered voters. No constituency had a winner securing more than 50% of registered voters.

Sindh showed a mixed pattern, with 35 constituencies having a winner with less than 25%, and 26 constituencies where the winner secured between 25% and 50% of registered voters. All 16 constituencies of Balochistan fall in the less than 25% category.

Overall, of 265 constituencies, no constituency had a winning candidate, securing more than 50% of the total registered voters' support. This indicates a pattern of low voter turnout and a fragmented vote base.

1.1.2. National Assembly Constituencies by Winners' Share of Polled Voters

Table 2 classifies National Assembly constituencies based on the share of polled votes (actual vote cast) that went to the winning candidate in each region of Pakistan. The

winner's votes as a proportion of the polled votes provide insights into the competitiveness of elections and the level of electoral mandate secured by winners.

Overall, 69 (26%) of 265 constituencies had winners securing an absolute majority (more than 50%) of polled votes. Nearly three-fourths of the constituencies (190 out of 265, or 72%) had winners who secured between 25% and 50% of the polled votes. In the remaining six constituencies, the winner secured a seat garnering less than 25 percent of the polled votes.

Table 2. National Assembly Constituencies by Winners' Share of Polled Voters

Region	Less than 25%	25% to 50%	More than 50%	Total
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa		24	20	44
ICT		2	1	3
Punjab	1	124	16	141
Sindh		30	31	61
Balochistan	5	10	1	16
Total	6	190	69	265

- In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), winners in 24 constituencies secured between 25% and 50% of polled votes, while 20 constituencies saw winners with more than 50% of the polled votes.
- In ICT, two constituencies had winners with a 25% to 50% share, whereas one constituency recorded a winner with more than 50% of the total votes polled.
- Punjab had 124 constituencies where winners secured 25% to 50% of polled votes, while 16 constituencies saw winners receiving more than 50%. Only one constituency had a winner with less than 25% of polled votes.
- Sindh had a relatively balanced split, with 30 constituencies in the 25% to 50% range and 31 constituencies where the winner secured more than 50% of the polled votes.
- Balochistan had 10 constituencies, with winners securing between 25% and 50%, while one constituency recorded a winner with more than 50% of the polled votes. However, five constituencies returned winners with less than 25% of the polled vote, the highest among all the provinces.

Compared to Table 1 (winners' share of registered voters), Table 2 suggests that while many winners did not secure a majority of the total registered voters, a significant portion (26%) secured support from the majority of those who voted. This highlights the competitive nature of elections in most constituencies, with a notable number of winners securing a clear mandate among polled voters even if their share of registered voters remains low.

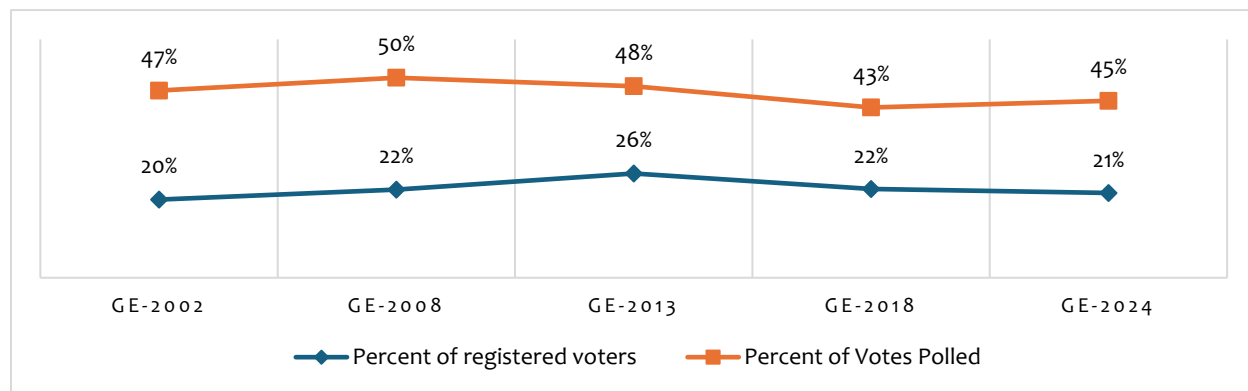
1.2. National Assembly: Levels of Representation (2002-2024)

This subsection analyzes the cumulative share of votes secured by all the assembly members from 2002 to 2024. The members' shares were assessed as proportions of

registered and polled votes to understand the level of direct representation of the assemblies in terms of voters' choices.

A look at this breakdown shows that representation as a percentage of votes fluctuated constantly. Starting at 47 percent in GE-2002, the proportion peaked at 50 percent in GE-2008, falling slightly to 48 percent in GE-2013, before dipping further to 43 percent in GE-2018, rising slightly again to 45 percent in GE-2024.

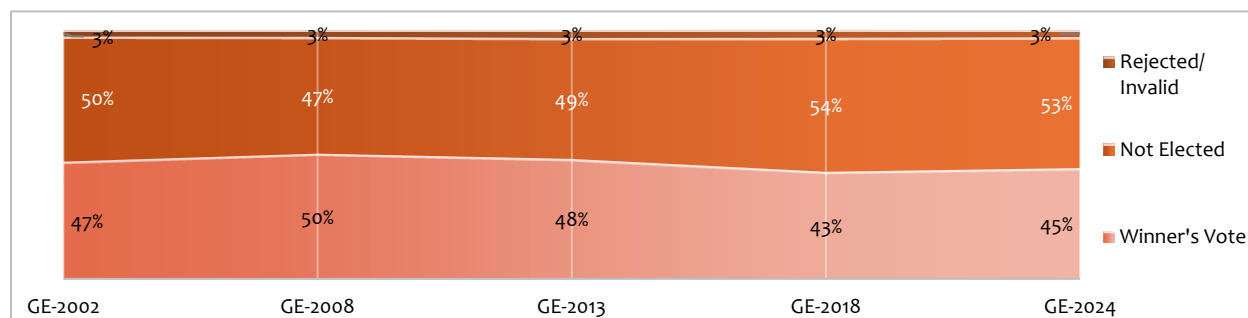
Figure 3: Representation as a Proportion of Registered Voters & Votes Polled



Since GE-2002, barring GE-2013, the cumulative proportion of votes secured by the members of the assembly constituted less than a quarter of the registered voters. In GE-2002, the proportion of all members' votes constituted 20 percent of the registered voters. The proportion peaked at 26 percent in GE-2013 and declined in 2018 and 2024.

Members' votes, as a proportion of polled votes, reflect more significant variation than they do as a proportion of registered voters. The figure below captures the representation of assemblies in terms of members' shares of polled votes since GE-2002.

Figure 4: Representation in National Assembly



The winner's share of polled votes has fluctuated over the years. It peaked at 50 percent (17,948,597) in GE-2008, indicating a relatively strong mandate for victorious candidates in that election. However, this share declined to 48 percent (22,627,347) in GE-2013 and further dropped to 43 percent (22,627,347) in GE-2018, the lowest in the analyzed period. In GE-2024, the winner's share rebounded slightly to 45 percent (27,295,447), but it remains significantly lower than the levels seen in the 2000s.

This decline suggests that elections have become more competitive, with no single party or candidate securing an overwhelming number of votes. The increasing number of votes garnered by non-winning candidates reinforces this observation. In GE-2002, 50 percent (15,093,752) of votes were cast for losing candidates, and this proportion remained relatively stable until GE-2018, when it rose to 54 percent (29,407,050), marking the first time a majority of voters supported losing candidates. For GE-2024, this figure stood at 53 percent (32,218,270), indicating a continuation of this trend.

Another important point is the consistent 3 percent rate of rejected and invalid votes for each election. While this percentage appears small, it translates to 1.7 million rejected votes in GE-2024. This raises questions about whether voter education, ballot design, or electoral processes require adjustments to reduce invalid votes.

Overall, the data highlight a shift in Pakistan's electoral landscape toward greater competition and vote fragmentation, with winners securing a shrinking share of the total polled votes. This dynamic reinforces the need for electoral reforms to ensure more representative outcomes that reflect voters' choices and interests.

2. Provincial Assemblies: Elections and Representation

The section on provincial assemblies examines electoral representation trends across Pakistan's four provinces, highlighting variations in voter participation and winners' vote share. While each province presents a unique electoral dynamic, common patterns emerge, such as a low winner's vote share as a proportion of registered voters and significant disparities in voter engagement. Most constituencies saw winners secure seats with less than 25% of the registered vote, reflecting fragmented electoral outcomes. Additionally, the share of polled votes won by candidates varied widely, with some provinces showing greater consolidation and others experiencing increased competition.

2.1. Constituency-level Representation

At the constituency level, the analysis reveals that, in most provincial assembly elections, winners secured seats with relatively small vote shares, often below 25% of registered voters. Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had the highest number of such constituencies, while Sindh and Balochistan saw slightly higher winner's vote proportions.

When assessing the assembly members' share of polled votes, the majority of constituencies recorded winners with between 25% and 50% of the vote, with only a few exceeding the 50% threshold.

2.1.1. Provincial Assemblies' Constituencies by Winners' Share of Registered Voters

The winner's share, as a proportion of registered voters in the four provincial assemblies, reveals significant regional variations. Of the 590 constituencies, 499 (85%) had winners securing less than 25% of the registered voters' support, with Punjab (266) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (108) contributing the most to this category.

Table 3: Provincial Assembly Constituencies by Winners' Share of Registered Voters

Region	Less than 25%	25% to 50%	More than 50%	Total
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	108	5		113
Punjab	266	30		296
Sindh	82	47	1	130
Balochistan	43	7	1	51
Total	499	89	2	590

Meanwhile, 89 constituencies (15%) saw winners secure between 25% and 50%, with Sindh (47) and Punjab (30) having the highest numbers in this range. Only two constituencies recorded winners' shares exceeding 50% of registered voters' support, one each in Sindh and Balochistan.

2.1.2. Provincial Assemblies' Constituencies by Winners' Share of Polled Votes

The percentage of votes garnered by victors in provincial constituencies exhibited considerable variation across constituencies and provinces. Of the 590 constituencies, 466 (79%) had winners securing between 25% and 50% of polled votes, with Punjab (262) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (102) leading in this category. Winner's share of polled votes exceeded 50% in 107 (18%) constituencies. More than half (62) of these were in Sindh, followed by Punjab (24) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (10).

Table 4: Provincial Assembly Constituencies by Winners' Share of Polled Votes

Region	Less than 25%	25% to 50%	More than 50%	Total
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	1	102	10	113
Punjab	10	262	24	296
Sindh		68	62	130
Balochistan	6	34	11	51
Total	17	466	107	590

Meanwhile, only 17 (3%) constituencies had a winner's share of polled votes below 25%, with Punjab (10) and Balochistan (6) having the most instances.

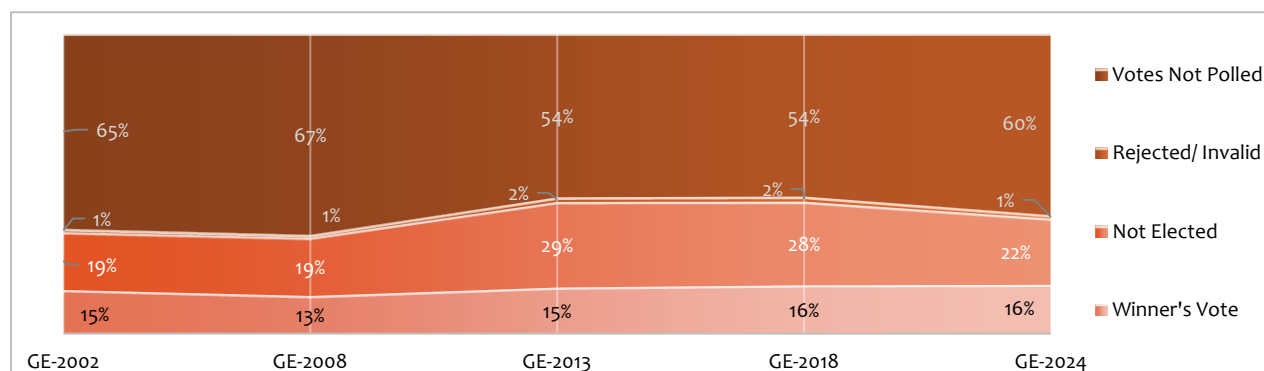
2.2. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly: Levels of Representation (2002-2024)

Electoral trends in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2002-2024) show a consistent winner's vote share of around 15-16% of registered voters, peaking at 16 percent in GE-2018 and GE-2024. Votes for non-elected candidates surged in GE-2013 and GE-2018, indicating greater competition, but declined in GE-2024. Among polled votes, the winners' share varied between 34-42 percent, reflecting a competitive political landscape.

2.2.1. Representation as a Proportion of Registered Voters

The figure below presents representation as a proportion of registered voters in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from 2002 to 2024, illustrating the percentage of votes secured by winning candidates, those cast for non-elected candidates, votes not polled, and rejected/invalid ballots as a proportion of polled votes.

Figure 5: Representation as a Proportion of Registered Voters – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

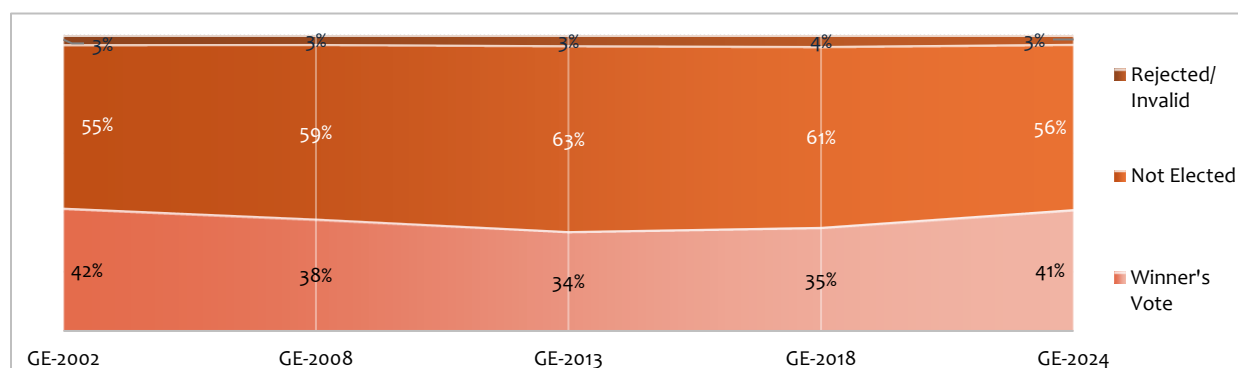


- The winner's vote remained at around 15-16% of the registered voters in most elections. In GE-2024, winners' votes constituted 16 percent of the registered voters.
- The not-elected/unrepresented vote share increased significantly in GE-2013 (29%) and GE-2018 (28%), suggesting greater competition or vote fragmentation. The proportion of non-represented votes decreased in GE-2024 (22%).
- Rejected/Invalid Votes generally remained low, fluctuating between 1-2%, with a slight peak in 2013 and 2018.
- The proportion of abstaining voters peaked in 2008 (67%), likely because of political instability and security concerns. It declined significantly in GE-2013 (54%) and GE-2018 (54%), suggesting higher engagement, rising again in GE-2024 (60%), which could indicate voter fatigue or a lack of strong mobilization.

2.2.2. Representation as a Proportion of Polled Votes

The figure below measures representation as a proportion of polled votes in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from 2002 to 2024, illustrating the percentage of votes secured by winning candidates, those cast for non-elected candidates, and rejected/invalid ballots as a proportion of polled votes.

Figure 6: Representation as a Proportion of Polled Votes - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



- The winner's vote share fluctuated between 34 percent (GE-2013) and 42 percent (GE-2002), reaching 41 percent in 2024.
- The proportion of votes cast for non-elected candidates peaked at 63 percent in GE-2013 but declined to 56 percent in 2024.
- Rejected/invalid votes remained relatively stable at 3-4% over the years.

The 2024 elections show an increase in the winner's vote share compared with 2013 and 2018, suggesting a shift in voter consolidation. However, a significant percentage of votes went to losing candidates, reflecting a competitive multiparty landscape.

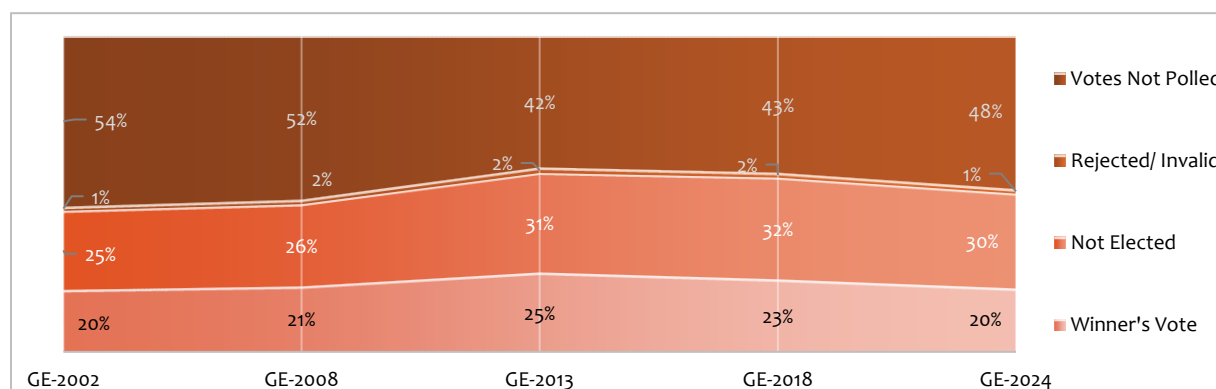
2.3. Punjab Assembly: Levels of Representation (2002-2024)

In the Punjab Assembly (2002-2024), the winner's vote share among registered voters peaked at 25 percent in GE-2013 but dropped to 20 percent in GE-2024. Votes for non-elected candidates consistently surpassed the winner's share, peaking at 32 percent in GE-2018 and settling at 30 percent in GE-2024. Voter turnout remained low, with nearly half (48%) of registered voters abstaining in GE-2024. Among polled votes, the winner's share declined from 43 percent (GE-2002-2013) to 39 percent in GE-2024, while votes for non-elected candidates rose, reflecting increased electoral competition.

2.3.1. Representation as a Proportion of Registered Voters

The figure below presents representation as a proportion of registered voters in the province of Punjab in general elections from 2002 to 2024, illustrating the percentage of votes secured by winning candidates, those cast for non-elected candidates, votes not polled, and rejected/invalid ballots as a proportion of polled votes.

Figure 7: Representation as a Proportion of Registered Voters – Punjab



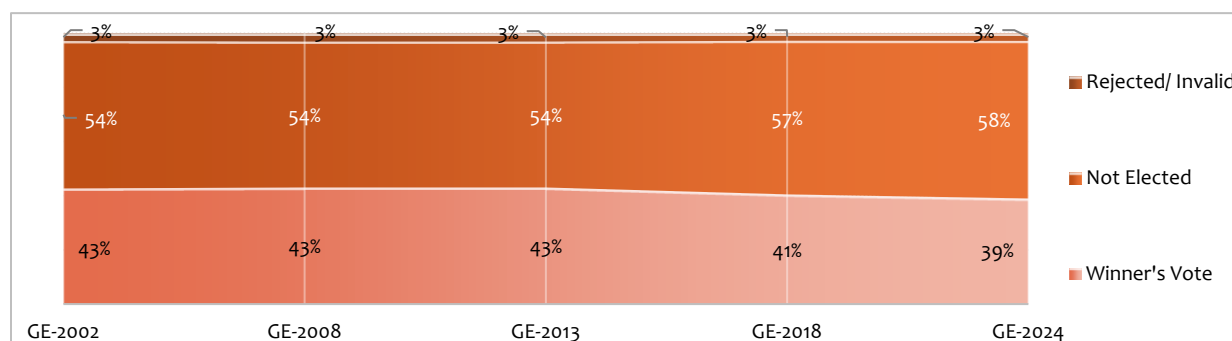
- The winner's vote share among registered voters peaked at 25 percent in 2013 but declined to 20 percent in 2024, similar to 2002.
- Votes for non-elected candidates remain higher than the winner's vote share, reaching a peak of 32 percent in 2018 before settling at 30 percent in 2024.

- Rejected/invalid votes remained minimal, fluctuating between 1-2%.
- Votes not polled remained a major factor, though lower than in 2002 (54%), nearly half (48%) of registered voters did not cast their vote in 2024,

2.3.2. Representation as a Proportion of Polled Votes

The figure below presents representation as a proportion of polled votes in the province of Punjab in general elections from 2002 to 2024, illustrating the percentage of votes secured by winning candidates, those cast for non-elected candidates, and rejected/invalid ballots as a proportion of polled votes.

Figure 8: Representation as a Proportion of Polled Votes - Punjab



- The winner's vote share among the polled votes declined from 43 percent (2002-2013) to 39 percent in 2024, the lowest in this period.
- Votes for non-elected candidates increased from 54 percent (2002-2013) to 58 percent in 2024, indicating growing electoral competition.
- Rejected/invalid votes remained consistent at 3% across all elections.

The declining winner's vote share indicates a more fragmented electorate, with a larger proportion of polled votes going to losing candidates.

2.4. Sindh Assembly: Levels of Representation (2002-2024)

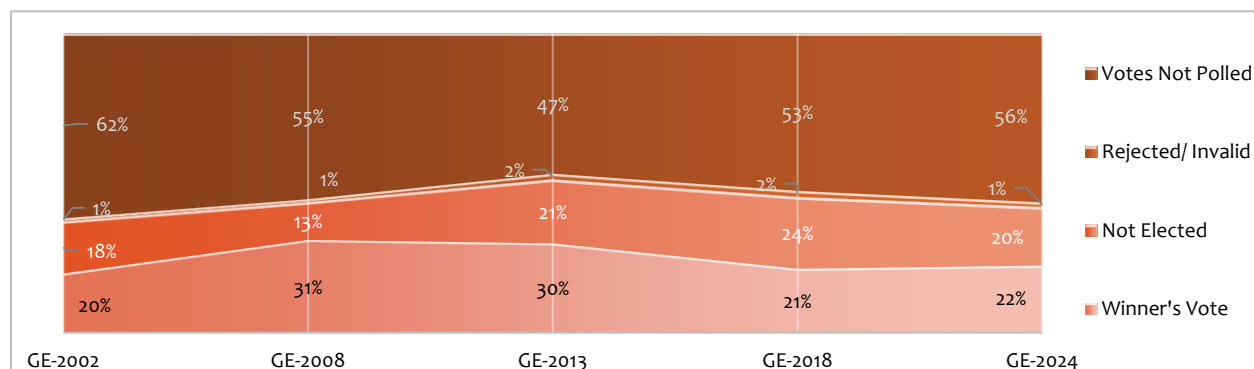
From 2002 to 2024, the winner's vote share among registered voters peaked at 31 percent in GE-2008 but declined to 22 percent in GE-2024. Votes for non-elected candidates fluctuated, reaching 24 percent in GE-2018 and dropping to 20 percent in GE-2024. Voter turnout remained low, with the highest numbers recorded in 2002 (62%) and 2024 (56%). Among the polled votes, the winner's share was highest in GE-2008 (69%) but dropped to 45 percent in GE-2018 before recovering slightly to 51 percent in GE-2024. Unelected vote shares peaked at 51 percent in GE-2018 but declined in GE-2024.

2.4.1. Representation as a Proportion of Registered Voters

The figure below presents representation as a proportion of registered voters in the province of Sindh in general elections from 2002 to 2024, illustrating the percentage of

votes secured by winning candidates, those cast for non-elected candidates, votes not polled, and rejected/invalid ballots as a proportion of polled votes.

Figure 9: Representation as a Proportion of Registered Voters – Sindh

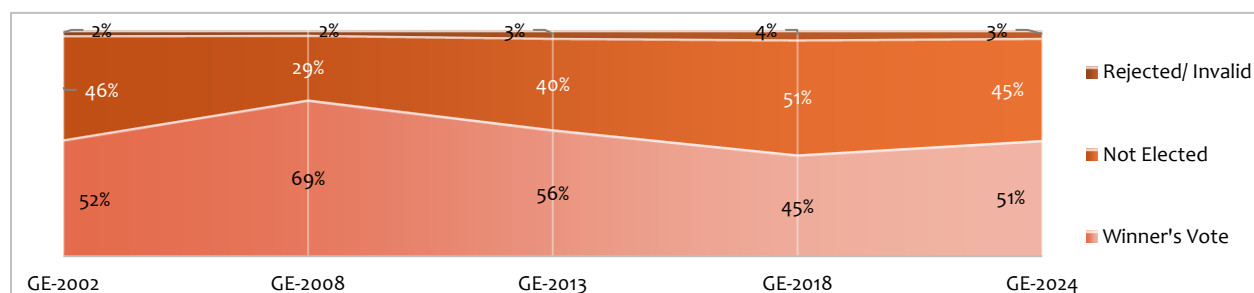


- The winners' vote share, as a proportion of registered voters, peaked at 31 percent in 2008. The winners' share declined in successive elections and was recorded at 22 percent in 2024.
- The proportion of votes for non-elected candidates fluctuated, reaching 24 percent in 2018 before dropping to 20 percent in 2024.
- Votes not polled remained highest in 2002 at 62 percent, fluctuating continuously across subsequent elections, reaching its lowest in GE 2013 at 47 percent, before rising further and reaching a high of 56 percent in GE-2024, showing a decline in participation.
- The number of rejected/invalid votes fluctuated between one percent and two percent.

2.4.2. Representation as a Proportion of Polled Votes

The figure below presents representation as a proportion of polled votes in the province of Sindh in general elections from 2002 to 2024, illustrating the percentage of votes secured by winning candidates, those cast for non-elected candidates, and rejected/invalid ballots as a proportion of polled votes.

Figure 10: Representation as a Proportion of Polled Votes - Sindh



- The highest winners' vote share (69%) was witnessed in 2008, reflecting strong voter consolidation, whereas 2018 marked a period in which their vote share reached the lowest (45%). The 2024 winner's vote share (51%) improved compared to 2018 but remained below the 2008 and 2013 levels.
- Unelected vote shares fluctuated, peaking at 51 percent in 2018 and decreasing to 45 percent in 2024.
- Rejected/invalid votes fluctuated between two percent and four percent 2-4% across elections.

This data suggests varying degrees of political consolidation and fragmentation over the years, with 2024 reflecting a more competitive but slightly consolidated voting pattern than 2018.

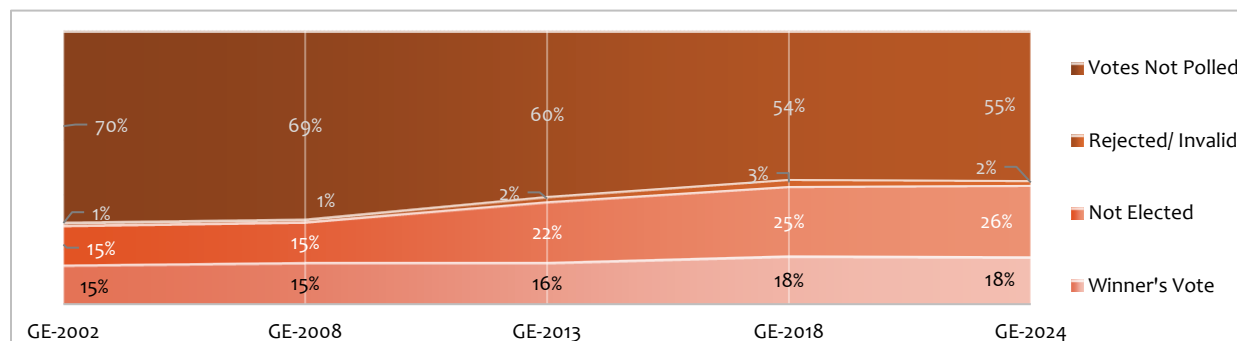
2.5. Balochistan Assembly: Levels of Representation (2002-2024)

In the Balochistan Assembly (2002-2024), the winners' vote share among registered voters remained low (15-18%). Voter turnout has improved significantly, as the proportion of abstained voters has decreased from 70 percent in 2002 to 55 percent in 2024. Simultaneously, the share of non-elected candidates peaked at 26 percent in 2024, the highest in two decades. Among the polled votes, the winner's share fluctuated between 39-49 percent, reaching its lowest (39%) in 2013, 2018, and 2024. The not-elected vote share rose to 57 percent in 2024.

2.5.1. Representation as a Proportion of Registered Voters

The figure below presents representation as a proportion of registered voters in the province of Balochistan in general elections from 2002 to 2024, illustrating the percentage of votes secured by winning candidates, those cast for non-elected candidates, votes not polled, and rejected/invalid ballots as a proportion of polled votes.

Figure 11: Representation as a Proportion of Registered Voters - Balochistan



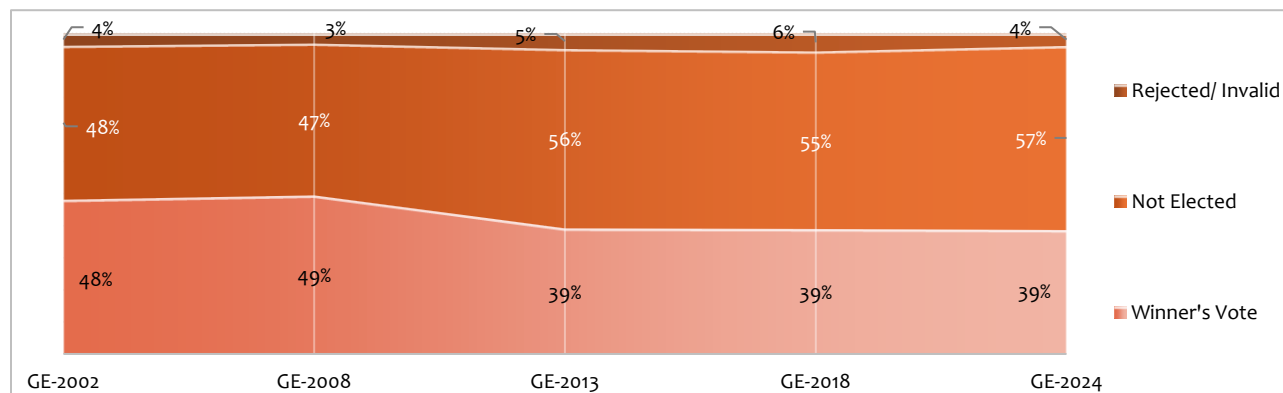
- The winner's vote share among registered voters stayed low between 15-18 percent, indicating that a significant portion of registered voters either voted for other candidates or did not vote.
- Votes not polled remained high, although they declined from 70 percent in 2002 to 55 percent in 2024, suggesting a gradual increase in voter participation.
- The share of non-elected candidates as the proportion of registered voters peaked at 26 percent in 2024, the highest in the last two decades.
- The number of rejected/invalid votes fluctuated between one percent to three percent.

Overall, the data highlights persistent voter apathy, with nearly half of registered voters not participating in 2024, despite improvements compared to past elections.

2.5.2. Representation as a Proportion of Polled Votes

The figure below presents representation as a proportion of polled votes in the province of Balochistan in general elections from 2002 to 2024, illustrating the percentage of votes secured by winning candidates, those cast for non-elected candidates, and rejected/invalid ballots as a proportion of polled votes.

Figure 12: Representation as a Proportion of Polled Votes - Balochistan



- The winners' vote share in polled votes fluctuated between 39 percent and 49 percent, with the lowest share recorded in 2013, 2018, and 2024 (39%).
- The not-elected vote share increased, reaching 57 percent in 2024, showing stronger competition against winning candidates.
- Rejected/invalid votes peaked at 6 percent in 2018 but dropped to 4% in 2024, indicating a possible improvement in ballot processing.

The declining winner's vote share and vote share of unelected candidates suggest increasing political competition and voter diversification.

CONCLUSION

The First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) is often considered the simplest and most cost-effective electoral system. However, concerns regarding its representation deficit have led to calls for reforms to enhance the representative aspects of elections. Debates on the shortcomings of the system in countries such as India and the United Kingdom often focus on this issue. Similarly, Pakistan's FPTP system faces systemic concerns, along with the additional element of declining turnout in recent elections.

First, examining the electoral results since 2002 shows that even though the absolute number of votes polled has increased steadily, rising from 30 million in 2002 to 61.2 million in 2024, voter turnout has fluctuated, peaking at 54 percent in 2013 before declining to 48 percent in 2024. Voter disengagement is reflected in the growing gap between those who did not vote and those who did. While 61 million voters came out to vote, over 66 million registered voters abstained from voting in 2024.

Second, the FPTP system continues to yield fragmented electoral outcomes, wherein none of the winning candidates secured support from more than 50 percent of registered voters. In terms of polled votes, winners in only 69 (26%) of the National Assembly constituencies secured an absolute majority. As a result, the choices of 53 percent of the 61 million who voted were not represented in the assembly formed following the 2024 elections.

These numbers highlight the representation deficits of the FPTP system. As elections grow more competitive due to the rising number of political parties and independent candidates contesting general seats, voters' choices have become more diversified. In its current form, the FPTP's systemic limitations do not account for votes cast for non-winning candidates and voters who did not cast their votes.

There is a need to reassess the effectiveness of the current FPTP system in delivering more representative legislatures and governments. The findings emphasize the growing need for electoral reforms to enhance voter engagement, improve representational fairness, and address disparities in political participation across demographics and regions.