



## **Making Elections an Accountability Platform: Report on Election Day Monitoring**

Government Watch (G-Watch)  
23 May 2022

**Photo:** People checking their names in the voters' list and lining up to vote for the May 9, 2022 elections in Tejero Elementary School in Barangay T. Padilla, Cebu City.

**Acknowledgement:** Thank you to the G-Watch accountability frontliners in Cebu, Southern Leyte, Agusan del Sur, Naga City, Puerto Princesa, Marawi City, and San Miguel, Bohol who conducted the Election Day Monitoring. Thank you also to Accountability Research Center (ARC) ([www.accountabilityresearch.org](http://www.accountabilityresearch.org)) for its continuing support and assistance to G-Watch's action research on strategic approaches to accountability.

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## **Making Elections an Accountability Platform: Report on Election Day Monitoring**

Last May 9, 2022, Filipinos cast their ballot for the national and local elections. A total of 65,831,792 registered voters were expected to cast their ballots in 37,216 voting centers or polling areas with a total of 105,174 clustered precincts all over the country.

According to the [report](#) of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), as of the morning of May 11, the partial voter's turnout was 80.38%, one of the highest in Philippine history. COMELEC also reported that 98.76% of all Election Returns (a total of 107,785) have already been transmitted and counted, the fastest ever since elections have been automated in the country in 2010.

[Government Watch \(G-Watch\) accountability frontliners](#) have conducted an Election Day Monitoring as part of G-Watch's efforts [to make elections an accountability platform](#). For G-Watch, the elections can only be an accountability platform if the electoral process is honest, peaceful, orderly and safe.

Using a simple and easy-to-use [monitoring tool](#), G-Watch monitoring checked compliance to standards on the following:

- Basic processes and mechanisms;
- Health and safety protocols; and
- Voter's entitlements.

The standards are set in the [guidelines](#) promulgated by the Commission on Elections, the country's election manager.

G-Watch election day monitoring covered 226 precincts in 32 polling areas in seven (7) localities all over the country, namely: in Cebu, Palawan, Southern Leyte, Bohol, Lanao del Sur, Agusan del Sur, and Naga City. G-Watch accountability frontliners conducted physical observation of polling places and precincts and interviewed a total of 111 voters, with at least three (3) voters per precinct.

In sum, the election day monitoring of G-Watch indicates that while there were a few incidences of non-compliance in almost every standard that was monitored, the level of compliance to process and voters entitlements standards remained relatively high in the monitored polling areas. However, the level of compliance to health and safety protocols was relatively low, especially in the observation of physical distancing and in the filling out of health declaration forms.

There were also critical voter's entitlements standards with high non-compliance. These are on: (1) voter's receipt for the ballot cast, and (2) for voters to personally feed their ballots into the VCM, with both having 16 incidences of non-compliance. The target timeframe of 5 to 30 minutes was also not followed (15 incidences of non-compliance), thereby validating media reports of long queues and delays. In addition, mechanisms for complaints and feedback were

not observed in a lot of areas. G-Watch monitors also noted incidences of non-compliance to inclusivity measures, such as accessible polling places for marginalized sectors. Finally, while there are no clear and convincing evidence of fraud and cheating, incidences of non-compliance to rules, regulations and standards, cases of election-related violence that even prompted failure of elections in 14 barangays in Lanao del Sur and the worsening of vote-buying leave a considerable stain in the integrity of the 2022 Philippine electoral exercise.

Presented below is the detailed result of G-Watch’s election day monitoring.

### Basic processes and mechanisms

In general, the electoral process in the 32 polling areas monitored complied with basic processes and mechanisms set by COMELEC. On the average, the compliance level of the polling areas observed vis-à-vis the 14 process standards monitored is 92%.

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Compliant</b>	<b>Non-compliant</b>
1. Polling place opens at 6:00AM	29 (91%)	3 (9%)
2. Polling place closes at 7:00PM	30 (93.75%)	2 (6.25%)
3. There is a Voters' Assistance Desk (VAD) where voters secure their precinct and sequence numbers and assigned room or clustered precinct.	30 (93.75%)	2 (6.25%)
4. There is a List of Voters posted where voters can check their names.	32 (100%)	0 (0%)
5. There are Emergency Accessible Polling Places (EAPP) for persons with disabilities, senior citizens and heavily pregnant voters.	23 (72%)	9 (28%)
6. There is a Board of Election Inspectors (BEI) per precinct.	31 (97%)	1 (3%)
7. There are three members of the BEI: a chair and two members.	32 (100%)	0 (0%)
8. There are Vote Counting Machines (VCMs).	32 (100%)	0 (0%)
9. Taking of photos of filled-out ballots is not allowed.	31 (97%)	1 (3%)
10. There are information posters posted in conspicuous areas on instructions to voters and/or Dos and Don'ts in voting.	22 (68.75%)	10 (31.25%)

11. There is a desk or a mechanism where voters can file complaints or issues.	16 (50%)	16 (50%)
12. There is a desk or mechanism where voters can give feedback and suggestions.	16 (50%)	16 (50%)
13. Police are not allowed inside the polling places.	29 (91%)	3 (9%)
14. There are independent election observers.	30 (94%)	2 (6%)
<b>Average</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>8%</b>

There are three (3) (out of 14) standards monitored that were complied with in all observed polling areas. These are as follows:

- There is a List of Voters posted where voters can check their names.
- There are three members of the BEI: a chair and two members.
- There are Vote Counting Machines (VCMs).

While all of the polling areas monitored have Vote Counting Machines, it was commonly observed that these machines malfunctioned frequently. This validates reports of media and an independent international election observers' group, the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL). ANFREL [reported](#) that 1.76% of clustered precincts were affected by technical issues, such as "failure of at least 1,867 vote counting machines (VCMs) or related SD cards on election day, a much greater number than in the 2016 or 2019 elections."

In general, polling places opened and closed on time, with 91% (29 out of 32) of the polling areas opening at 6:00AM and 93.75% (30 out of 32) closing at 7:00PM. In cases where there are still voters in line by 7:00PM, they were still allowed to cast their votes.

Thirty (30) of the 32 polling areas monitored (or 93.75%) had a Voters' Assistance Desk (VAD) where voters secured their precinct and sequence numbers and assigned room or clustered precinct. Only 72% (23 out of 32) had Emergency Accessible Polling Places (EAPP) for persons with disabilities, senior citizens and heavily pregnant voters.



Only 1 polling area (3%) did not have a Board of Election Inspectors (BEI) per precinct. This was in Marawi City, where there was only one BEI for the whole polling area.

In 31 out of 32 polling areas monitored (97%), taking of photos of filled-out ballots were not allowed. There were 10 polling areas (out of 32 or 31.25%) that did not have information posters on instructions to voters and/or Dos

and Don'ts in voting posted in conspicuous areas, which is a basic easy-to-comply requirement.

Out of 32 polling areas, 29 (91%) were compliant to the rule of not allowing police inside, and 3 (9%) were not compliant. Thirty (30) or 94% of polling areas had independent election observers such as LENTE and PPCRV.

The standards with most non-compliance in polling areas are the following:

- There is a desk or a mechanism where voters can file complaints or issues. (50%)
- There is a desk or mechanism where voters can give feedback and suggestions. (50%)



Voters approaching the Voters' Assistance Desk in R.V. Maramba Elementary School, Naga City.

This signals the lack of attention to mechanisms for feedback and grievance redress that could be helpful in addressing issues during elections.

### Health and safety protocols

The level of compliance to health and safety protocols is relatively low - at an average of 59%.

The compliance level of three health and safety protocols standards were below 50%. Almost all polling areas (30 out of 32 or 94%) did not require voters to fill out COVID-19 declaration forms. Physical distancing was not observed in 78% (25 out of 32) of the polling areas. In 20 out of the 32 polling areas (or 62.5%), there were no barriers between electoral workers and voters.

Standards	Compliant	Non-compliant
1. Physical distancing is observed.	7 (22%)	25 (78%)
2. There is hand sanitation before entry.	23 (72%)	9 (28%)
3. Wearing of face masks is followed.	28 (87.5%)	4 (12.5%)
4. Temperature is checked.	27 (84%)	5 (16%)
5. Filled-out COVID-19 declaration forms are required.	2 (6%)	30 (94%)
6. There are barriers between electoral workers and voters.	12 (37.5%)	20 (62.5%)
7. There are medical personnel.	25 (78%)	7 (22%)

8. There are anti-COVID-19 marshals.	21 (66%)	11 (34%)
9. There is an Isolation Polling Place (IPP) where voters with temperature of 37.5 degrees Celsius and above will be brought to vote.	26 (81%)	6 (19%)
<b>Average</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>41%</b>

Long lines and overcrowding made it hard for people to observe physical distancing. One cause of this might be the frequent malfunctioning of VCMs which makes it longer for people to cast their votes. Another is that in some polling areas, the number of VCMs available were not enough to accommodate thousands of voters assigned in the area.



Scenes from the polling precincts in San Miguel, Bohol (left), Sibagat, Agusan del Sur (center), and Puerto Princesa, Palawan (right).

Wearing of face masks was still followed in 28 out of the 32 polling places monitored (87.5%). 27 polling places (84%) conducted temperature checks, and in 26 places (81%), there were Isolation Polling Places (IPP) where voters with a temperature of 37.5 degrees Celsius and above were brought to vote.

In 78% (25 out of 32) of the polling places, there were medical personnel present, and 72% had hand sanitation before entry. Anti-COVID-19 marshals were also present in 21 out of 32 polling places (66%).

### Voter's entitlements

There are eight (8) voter's entitlements monitored by G-Watch. Most of the time, these are complied with as per the 111 voters in 32 polling areas interviewed by G-Watch. The average level of compliance on voter's entitlement monitored is 93%.

Standards	Compliant	Non-compliant
1. The voter is provided with a clean ballot.	111 (100%)	0 (0%)

2. The voter is provided with a ballot secrecy folder.	110 (99%)	1 (1%)
3. The voter is provided with a marking pen.	111 (100%)	0 (0%)
4. The voter feeds his/her own ballot into the VCM.	95 (85.6%)	16 (14.4%)
5. There is a voter's receipt for the ballot cast.	98 (88%)	13 (12%)
6. The voter's receipt is reviewed by the voter before the voter deposits the receipt in a receptacle.	95 (85.59%)	16 (14.41%)
7. The voter's right forefinger nail are stained with indelible ink after s/he cast his/ her ballot.	107 (96%)	4 (4%)
8. The entire voting process for a voter lasted between 5 minutes to 30 minutes only.	96 (86.5%)	15 (13.5%)
<b>Average</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>7%</b>

There are two (2) (out of 8) standards that are complied with in all polling areas. These are:

- The voter is provided with a clean ballot.
- The voter is provided with a marking pen.

The standards with highest incidences of non-compliance are the following:

- The voter feeds their own ballot in the VCM. (16 out of 111 voters or 14.4%)
- The voter's receipt is reviewed by the voter before the voter deposits the receipt in a receptacle. (16 out of 111 voters or 14.4%)
- The entire voting process for a voter lasted between 5 minutes to 30 minutes only. (15 out of 111 voters or 13.5%)

There were voters interviewed (16 of the 111 or 14.4%) who said they did not feed their own ballot into the VCM. Instances of machine malfunction were reported in Southern Leyte. COMELEC gave the voters who were not able to personally feed their own ballot to the VCM the option to still vote and authorize COMELEC to collect the ballots for batch feeding once the machines were fixed.



In Marawi, some voters were not aware that they should be able to review the receipt for the ballot that they had cast. In Cebu, there was an instance wherein one voter was not given another ballot when the VCM did not accept their ballot, contrary to COMELEC rules regarding this.

There were also 16 voters who were not able to review the receipts before depositing them into the receptacle. There were 15 voters interviewed



who took longer in casting their ballot, beyond COMELEC’s target time of 5 minutes to 30 minutes. While most of the voters interviewed (96 out of 111) only took 5 to 30 minutes to complete the entire voting process, it was noted that many spent more than an hour lining up to vote. This corroborates [reports](#) of long queues in many areas that some sectors even called for an extension of voting hours on May 9.

It was observed that senior citizens and PWD voters took more time to vote since they were being assisted by their relatives. Another factor contributing to long lines and overcrowding was due to the malfunctioning of some VCMs.

There was 1 of the 111 voters interviewed who was not provided with a ballot secrecy folder. There were 4 voters (out of 111 or 4%) who did not have their right forefinger nail stained with indelible ink after they cast their ballot.

### Other Issues

One respondent in Agusan del Sur reported incidences of vote buying, but did not give further details about it. There were also voters who were not able to find their names in the voters’ list.

In Cebu, it was noted that while there were poll watchers present, they did not react when there were non-compliance in the standard voting process. In one precinct in Marawi, there were no available personnel in the Help Desk to assist voters.

In Puerto Princesa, distribution of sample ballots inside the polling places was observed. But the people distributing them were arrested by the police.



Puerto Princesa G-Watcher interviewing a voter at the polling place.

Observation of minimum health protocols, such as physical distancing, were not followed. This might be due to problems in the vote counting machines, and the number of precincts in a cluster. One suggestion is to lessen the number of precincts in every cluster to avoid overcrowding. Another is that COMELEC should have new VCMs to replace those that encountered issues to avoid delays and possible fraud.

Apart from G-Watch, other groups and stakeholders had also monitored the elections and found the results to be reflective of the general will.

ANFREL, for example, [congratulated](#) the COMELEC in its interim statement “for holding the largely peaceful polls.” While it did admit that “concerns about (the polls’) trustworthiness have arisen,” ANFREL still maintained that the outcome was “seemingly representative of the will of the Filipino people.”

The School of Statistics of the University of the Philippines (UP) also [issued](#) a statement to dispel doubts regarding the poll numbers, claiming that the consistent 68:32 ratio between the two leading presidential contenders Bongbong Marcos and Leni Robredo is insufficient proof of fraud since it “can be explained by Statistics”. The Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) also [released](#) a statement to address the same statistical issue upon consultation with experts from Ateneo de Manila University.

On May 21, COMELEC released a preliminary result of its Random Manual Audit (RMA). As per [report](#), votes cast during the May 9 elections has so far matched 99.9% of the automated election returns (ERs) for national and selected local elective positions. This is based on the 128 of the total 757 clustered polling precincts randomly selected for checking in the 45-day RMA. COMELEC’s RMA is being conducted in partnership with the Philippine Statistics Authority, election watchdogs [Legal Network for Truthful Elections](#) (LENTE), [National Citizens’ Movement for Free Elections](#) (NAMFREL), the [Philippine Institute of Certified Accountants](#) (PICPA) and the audit professionals group ISACA Manila chapter.

Like in the past elections, reports on incidences of vote-buying have been rampant. G-Watch’s initial review of anecdotal evidence and reported cases indicates that vote-buying has worsened this election in terms of its geographical reach and the amount of money involved. Even areas like Naga, where vote-buying was never rampant, had to contend with this electoral problem, prompting a multi-sectoral initiative called ‘Nagueno Kontra Bakal Boto’ led by the local government of Naga and the Naga City People’s Council.

The Philippine Star [reported](#) that COMELEC has so far received 1,173 vote-buying complaints through the electoral commission’s official Facebook page and email address, as well as through partners Integrated Bar of the Philippines and Legal Network for Truthful Elections. COMELEC also reported that so far, it has confirmed and verified 12 vote-buying cases lodged before its Law Department.

The other documented accounts of vote buying in the 2022 elections was from ANFREL in its interim report based on “conversations with voters”. Claiming that the practice was “commonplace during campaign events”, the poll watchdog stated that the going rate for an individual voter was between Php100 to Php2,000 (US\$2 to US\$40). But with no witness willing to come out in the open, the task of documenting, preventing and addressing vote buying remains as challenging as ever.

Similar to the past elections also, there have been numerous reports of incidences of election-related violence during the conduct of the 2022 polls.

The Military [reported](#) 15 incidences of election-related violence on May 9, which according to the COMELEC is below the 60 confirmed incidences in 2019, indicating a more peaceful election day this time around. However, due to incidences of violence, COMELEC had to [declare](#) a failure of elections in 14 barangays in three towns of Lanao del Sur that are set to conduct their special elections this coming May 22.

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