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# EUDO CITIZENSHIP OBSERVATORY

## *ACCESS TO ELECTORAL RIGHTS*

### *SURINAME*

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June 2015



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European University Institute, Florence  
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# Access to Electoral Rights

## Suriname

*Ngo Chun Luk and Hamied Ahmadali*

### 1. Introduction

Suriname (officially the Republic of Suriname, *Republiek Suriname*) has been an independent State since 25 November 1975. Anchored in the current Constitution, which was adopted in 1987,<sup>1</sup> is the principle that ‘all political power is vested in the people and shall be exercised in accordance with the Constitution’.<sup>2</sup> Representation of the people in the political democracy is made by ‘general, free and secret elections’.<sup>3</sup> Free elections, according to Polanen, reflects the absence of any outside influences on the voter in the determination of his or her choices.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, he describes secret elections as meaning that ‘no one need know how the voter has cast his vote’.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Polanen notes that Suriname also respects the principle of general elections, meaning that ‘all citizens may exercise their right to vote’ without discrimination.<sup>6</sup>

In Suriname, the franchise is primarily governed by the Constitution<sup>7</sup> and the Electoral Law.<sup>8</sup> Other important legislative documents include the Electoral Decree,<sup>9</sup> and the Decree Political Organisations.<sup>10</sup> The Constitution establishes legislative representative bodies in national (National Assembly, *De Nationale Assemblée*),<sup>11</sup> regional and local levels.<sup>12</sup> Electoral Districts play a key role in the elections for these bodies. For the national elections, Suriname is divided into ten Electoral Districts (*Kiesdistricten*).<sup>13</sup> The boundaries for the Electoral Districts correspond to the boundaries of the administrative Districts of Suriname.<sup>14</sup> For elections at the local level, the Electoral Districts are further divided into individual constituencies (*ressorten*).

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<sup>1</sup> The Constitution was last amended in 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Article 52(1) Constitution.

<sup>3</sup> Article 52(2) Constitution.

<sup>4</sup> See S.F. Polanen (1988), “The Electoral System of the Republic of Suriname”, Paramaribo, p. 10 (<http://www.elections-suriname.info/pdf/Electoral%20system%20suriname.pdf>).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> S.F. Polanen, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Grondwet van de Republiek Suriname [Constitution of the Republic of Suriname] (hereinafter: Constitution), S.B. 1987 no. 116 ([http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalElectoralLawsDB/docs/SUR\\_Constitution\\_consolidated-1992-EN.pdf](http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalElectoralLawsDB/docs/SUR_Constitution_consolidated-1992-EN.pdf))

<sup>8</sup> Wet van 29 september 1987, houdende regels voor de verkiezingen van leden voor de volksvertegenwoordigende lichamen in Suriname [Law of 29 September 1987 containing the rules for the election of the members of the peoples’ representative organs in Suriname] (hereinafter: Electoral Law), S.B. 1987 no. 62 ([http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalElectoralLawsDB/docs/SUR\\_ElectoralLaw\\_consolidated-20100310-NL.pdf](http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalElectoralLawsDB/docs/SUR_ElectoralLaw_consolidated-20100310-NL.pdf))

<sup>9</sup> Staatsbesluit van 12 november 1987, houdende vaststelling van voorschriften ter uitvoering van de ‘Kiesregeling’ [State Decree of 12 November 1987, laying down rules for the implementation of the ‘Electoral

Only members of the National Assembly and the local legislature (Local Councils, *Ressorraden*) are directly elected by the people.<sup>15</sup> The seats in the regional legislature (District Councils, *Districtsraden*) are determined by the results of the elections for the Local Councils which are part of the relevant Electoral District.<sup>16</sup> Thus, all legislative bodies of Suriname are – directly or indirectly – determined by the population. The President, as Head of State of Suriname, as well as the Vice President, are indirectly elected, as they are appointed by the legislature after the elections for the legislative bodies.<sup>17</sup>

The Constitution of 1987 is silent with regard to the possibility of holding referenda. The practice is, however, not uncommon in Suriname. A clear example of this is the Constitution itself. The draft Constitution was written in March 1987. A referendum was held in September of the same year, in which the population voted to approve the Constitution.<sup>18</sup> As there is no legislation in place on holding referenda in Suriname, this issue will not be addressed in the rest of this report.

Section 2 will give a brief overview of the electoral history of Suriname, particularly highlighting significant events therein. Section 3 will look at the eligibility of persons in respect of the exercise of active and passive voting rights. Section 0 will briefly look at the procedures for the exercise of franchise in Suriname, especially the registration process and the voting proper. Before this, a brief description of the most important bodies related to elections in Suriname will be given here below (section 0).

### *Relevant electoral bodies*

A number of key bodies and councils have been given a role by the Constitution and the Electoral Law in the popular elections in Suriname. This section will briefly look at the composition of these bodies, the appointment or election of its members, and their roles during the electoral process. The following bodies will be examined: the National Assembly, the Districts and *ressorts*, and the President, the Independent Electoral Council, and the polling stations.

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Law’] (hereinafter: Electoral Decree), S.B. 1987 no. 82 [http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalElectoralLawsDB/docs/SUR\\_ElectoralDecree\\_consolidated-1996-NL.pdf](http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalElectoralLawsDB/docs/SUR_ElectoralDecree_consolidated-1996-NL.pdf) )

<sup>10</sup> Decreet van 22 september 1987, houdende regels voor politieke organisaties [Decree of 22 September 1987, containing the rules for political organisations] (hereinafter: Decree Political Organisations), S.B. 1987 no. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Article 55 Constitution.

<sup>12</sup> Article 161 Constitution.

<sup>13</sup> Article 24(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. The (Electoral) Districts of Suriname are (in order of population): Paramaribo, Wanica, Sipaliwini, Nickerie, Commewijne, Para, Marowijne, Saramacca, Brokopondo, and Coronie.

<sup>15</sup> Articles 57 and 163 Constitution.

<sup>16</sup> Article 162 Constitution.

<sup>17</sup> Article 91 Constitution.

<sup>18</sup> See Organisation of American States (2005), ‘Report of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Suriname. Parliamentary and Presidential Elections 2005’, CP/doc.4140/06, Organisation of American States, Washington, DC, p. 1 ([http://www.oas.org/sap/docs/permanent\\_council/2006/cp\\_doc\\_4140\\_06\\_eng.pdf](http://www.oas.org/sap/docs/permanent_council/2006/cp_doc_4140_06_eng.pdf) ).

The National Assembly is the legislative representative body on the national level. Its members are directly elected by the citizens of Suriname,<sup>19</sup> for five-year terms.<sup>20</sup> Its membership is determined by a proportional representation system.<sup>21</sup> The National Assembly consists of 51 seats,<sup>22</sup> which is divided among the Electoral Districts in the following manner:

<i>Table 1. Division of seats in the NA<sup>23</sup></i>	
<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>Number of seats in the NA</b>
Paramaribo	17
Wanica	7
Nickerie	5
Commewijne	4
Sipaliwini	4
Brokopondo	3
Marowijne	3
Para	3
Saramacca	3
Coronie	2

On a regional and local level, Suriname is divided into District and *ressorts* respectively. The legislative representative body on the regional level are the District Councils. The number of seats in each District Council is determined on the basis of the population of the relevant district.<sup>24</sup> The current number of seats in the District Councils are:

<sup>19</sup> See Article 57 Constitution.

<sup>20</sup> Article 56(1) Constitution.

<sup>21</sup> Article 61(1) Constitution. For an explanation of details of how the seats of the National Assembly are allocated based on the results of the elections, see S.F. Polanen, op. cit., pp. 22–24.

<sup>22</sup> Article 61(1) Constitution.

<sup>23</sup> See Article 9 Electoral Law. See also Organisation of American States (2010), ‘Final Report of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission for the General Elections in the Republic of Suriname on May 25, 2010’, CP/doc.4532/11, Organisation of American States, Washington, DC, p. 8 ([http://www.oas.org/es/sap/docs/deco/2010/SURINAME\\_%20MAY25\\_%202010\\_e.pdf](http://www.oas.org/es/sap/docs/deco/2010/SURINAME_%20MAY25_%202010_e.pdf)).

<sup>24</sup> See Article 11(5) Electoral Law.

*Table 2. Number of seats in District Councils (as of 2010)<sup>25</sup>*

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>Number of seats in District Council</b>
Paramaribo	21
Wanica	21
Nickerie	11
Coronie	7
Saramacca	9
Commewijne	9
Marowijne	9
Para	9
Brokopondo	9
Sipaliwini	11

The members of the District Councils are not directly elected. Instead, the seats of each District Council are assigned to the political parties represented in the respective Electoral District, proportionate to the number of seats attained by the political parties in the local elections.<sup>26</sup> The term of office of District Council members is five years.<sup>27</sup>

The Local Councils represent the electorate in the local legislative process. The number of *ressorts* in each (Electoral) District is determined in the Decree Division Ressorts,<sup>28</sup> there are currently 62 *ressorts*.<sup>29</sup> As with the District Council, the number of seats allocated for each Local Council is determined by the population of the respective *ressort*.<sup>30</sup> As of 2010, there are a total of 752 seats in all Local Councils of Suriname combined.<sup>31</sup> The term of office of Local Council members is similarly five years.<sup>32</sup> The members of the Local Councils of each *ressort* are elected based on the system of ‘first-past-the-post’ or plurality, i.e. they are determined based on the number of votes each candidate has received.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>25</sup> See Centraal Hoofdstembureau (2010), ‘Verslag naar aanleiding van de algemene verkiezingen van 2010 van de Republiek Suriname’, Centraal Hoofdstembureau, Paramaribo, p. 45 (<http://www.verkiezingen.sr/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CHS-Verslag-2010.pdf>).

<sup>26</sup> Article 11(4) Electoral Law.

<sup>27</sup> Article 11(2) Electoral Law.

<sup>28</sup> Decree of 16 October 1987, governing the division of the districts into *ressorts* and the determination of the borders of these *ressorts* (Decree Division Ressorts), S.B. 1987 no. 67.

<sup>29</sup> See Decree Division Ressorts and Article 17 Electoral Decree.

<sup>30</sup> See Article 10(3) Electoral Law.

<sup>31</sup> See Centraal Hoofdstembureau, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>32</sup> Article 10(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>33</sup> Article 163 Constitution. See also B. Ahmadali, ‘Het Kiesstelsel en de werking van de Kieswet van de Republiek Suriname. Summiere weergave in verband met voorbereiding en organisatie van de Algemene-

The President is the Head of State of Suriname. The President is not directly elected by the population. Instead, the procedure for the appointment is as follows. The President (as well as the Vice-President) is appointed by a qualified majority of the National Assembly (2/3, or 34 seats).<sup>34</sup> If no Presidential candidate receives the required qualified majority after two sessions, the (Vice-) President is appointed by the United People's Assembly (*Verenigde Volksvergadering*). The candidate who receives a simple majority in the United People's Assembly – consisting of all the members of the National Assembly, the District Councils, and the Local Councils – is appointed (Vice-) President,<sup>35</sup> for a term of five years.

Within the electoral process, the President has a number of tasks, including:

- The President appoints the members of the Independent Electoral Council (*Onafhankelijk Kiesbureau*),<sup>36</sup> and the Central Polling Authority (*Centraal Hoofdstembureau*);<sup>37</sup>
- The President decides on various administrative appeals in the electoral process, including the correction of the voters' list,<sup>38</sup> the registration of political organisation,<sup>39</sup> the validity of the list of candidates,<sup>40</sup> as well as the date of candidacy and the Election Day;<sup>41</sup>

Four other bodies play an important role in the electoral process. Each *ressort* has at least one polling station (*stembureau*).<sup>42</sup> The polling stations are charged with the administration of the process of voting on the Election Day,<sup>43</sup> as well as the counting of the results in the relevant polling station.<sup>44</sup> The Main Polling Station (*Hoofdstembureau*), of which one is established in each Electoral District,<sup>45</sup> determines the results of the elections in the relevant district, on the basis of the results received from the polling stations in the Electoral District concerned, as well as the allocation of seats in the District Councils to the political organisations.<sup>46</sup>

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Vrije- en Geheime verkiezingen' [The Electoral System and the Operation of the Electoral Law of the Republic of Suriname. A Brief Description in Connection With Preparation and Organisation of the General, Free and Secret Elections], p. 4 ([http://www.elections-suriname.info/nl/juridisch\\_raamwerk/pdf/Het%20Kiesstelsel%20en%20de%20werking%20van%20de%20Kieswet.pdf](http://www.elections-suriname.info/nl/juridisch_raamwerk/pdf/Het%20Kiesstelsel%20en%20de%20werking%20van%20de%20Kieswet.pdf)); Organisation of American States (2005), op. cit., p. 4; S.F. Polanen, op. cit., pp. 10–11.

<sup>34</sup> See Article 181(2)(b) Constitution. See also B. Ahmadali, op. cit., p. 4; Organisation of American States (2005), op. cit., p. 4; Organisation of American States (2010), op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Article 181(2)(b) Constitution.

<sup>36</sup> Article 1 Electoral Law.

<sup>37</sup> Article 29 Electoral Law.

<sup>38</sup> Article 19 Electoral Law.

<sup>39</sup> Article 36 Electoral Law.

<sup>40</sup> Article 52, 68, and 83 Electoral Law.

<sup>41</sup> See Articles 85 and 86 Electoral Law.

<sup>42</sup> Article 25(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>43</sup> See *inter alia* Articles 92 to 112 Electoral Law.

<sup>44</sup> See Articles 113 to 121 Electoral Law.

<sup>45</sup> Article 26(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>46</sup> Article 124 Electoral Law.



The Central Polling Authority is tasked with the registration of political organisations,<sup>47</sup> determines in the first instance the validity of the candidate lists,<sup>48</sup> and determines the final results of the national, regional, and local elections and the seat allocations in the corresponding representative bodies.<sup>49</sup> Finally, the Independent Electoral Council oversees the entire electoral process, and ratifies the election results.<sup>50</sup>

## 2. Historical Background

Suriname became a colony of the Netherlands in 1667, when the British colonisers traded their colonial establishments in Suriname for the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam (the current New York City). The indigenous peoples (*Inheemsen*),<sup>51</sup> who were already residing in Suriname at the time, have historically been neglected and left to their own accord.<sup>52</sup> The development of Suriname as a plantation colony, and the peace accords concluded between the coastal indigenous peoples and the Dutch colonisers meant that slaves, mostly from the West-African coast, were massively imported to work the plantations. Some of these slaves fled into the interior, becoming known as the Maroons (*Marron*).<sup>53</sup> It is important to take note of these two ethnic groups, as their enfranchisement has not been as smooth as for other ethnic groups in Suriname (see below). The descendants of the non-Maroon slaves became the Creole.

The abolition of slavery in Suriname in 1863 saw the Dutch colonisers resorting to indentured labour in plantation work, particularly from India, Java (now Indonesia), and China. The descendants of these indentured labourers – the Indo-Surinamese (*Hindostani*, *Hindoestanen*), Javanese Suriname (*Javanen*), and Chinese Surinamese respectively – form a large part of the current Surinamese population.

<sup>47</sup> See Articles 31 *et seq.* Electoral Law.

<sup>48</sup> See Articles 46-51, 62-68, and 78-82 Electoral Law.

<sup>49</sup> Articles 128-131 Electoral Law.

<sup>50</sup> Article 1(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that the Surinamese ‘indigenous peoples’ is an umbrella term for a diverse group of villages and clans. Some of the most important of them, as listed by Dobbeleir et al., are the Arawaks and Caribs along the coast, and the Tiriyós, Wayanas, and Akurios in the interior. See C. Dobbeleir et al. (2008), ‘De politieke mobilisatie en organisatie van vijf etnische groepen in Suriname’ [The political mobilisation and organisation of five ethnic groups in Suriname], University of Gent, Ghent, p. 5 (<http://users.skynet.be/bk284617/de%20politieke%20mobilisatie%20en%20organisatie%20van%20vijf%20etnische%20groepen%20in%20Suriname.pdf>).

<sup>52</sup> See M. Bruin (2008), ‘Erken ons! VIDS en OIS, de stem van Inheemsen in Suriname’ [Recognise us! VIDS and OIS, the voice of the natives in Suriname], Master’s Thesis, Utrecht University, Utrecht, pp. 29–34 (<http://suriname.wedd.de/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=473>); C. Dobbeleir et al., *op. cit.*, p. 7; Organisation of American States (2001), ‘Final Report of the OAS Special Mission to Suriname (1992-2000)’, CP/doc.3438/01, Organisation of American States, Washington, DC ([http://www.scm.oas.org/idms\\_public/ENGLISH/hist\\_01/cp08079e04.doc](http://www.scm.oas.org/idms_public/ENGLISH/hist_01/cp08079e04.doc)).

<sup>53</sup> As with the indigenous peoples, the Surinamese Maroons encompass diverse groups of people, the most important of whom are the Saramaka, the Matawai, the Aluku/Boni, the Paramaka, the Kwinti, and the Ndjuka; see C. Dobbeleir et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 12–13; Organisation of American States (2001), *op. cit.* These peoples are sometimes referred to as the Bushinengues (*Bosnegers*).

1866 saw the first foundations of political representation in Suriname. On April 5<sup>th</sup> of that year, the ‘Colonial Parliament’ (*Koloniale Staten*) was introduced. Nine of its thirteen members were elected, while the remaining four members were appointed by the governor.<sup>54</sup> The appointed membership in the Colonial Parliament was discontinued in 1901.<sup>55</sup> However, only a marginal part of the population was enfranchised at the time, as the right to vote was linked to an individual’s income (more precisely, the amount of taxes paid).<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the abolition of slavery did not immediately lead to enfranchisement of the former slaves (assuming they met the financial threshold), as they did not enjoy their full ‘civil rights’ until after ten years of ‘government supervision’.<sup>57</sup> Women also remained disenfranchised until the introduction of universal suffrage in 1948 (see below).<sup>58</sup>

Following the events of World War II, and Queen Wilhelmina’s address to the Dutch population in 1942 promising a reorganisation of the Dutch Kingdom, universal suffrage was introduced in Suriname in 1948.<sup>59</sup> In 1954, the Kingdom of the Netherlands was created, based on the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (*Statuut voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*),<sup>60</sup> and Suriname became an autonomous country within the Kingdom. Due in part to registration difficulties, most of the Indigenous peoples and the Maroons resident in the interior remained disenfranchised until 1963.<sup>61</sup>

On 25 November 1975, Suriname left the Kingdom of the Netherlands and became an independent State. The first general elections in Suriname after its independence were held in 1977.<sup>62</sup> However, on 25 February 1980, the military overthrew the elected government and suspended the constitution.<sup>63</sup> This period of military rule, which lasted until 1987, also saw the tragic events of December 1982, when the military authorities ‘cracked down, arrest[ed] and kill[ed] 15 prominent opposition leaders, including journalists, lawyers, and trade union leaders’.<sup>64</sup> It was not until 1987 that free elections were held once again under a new (current) Constitution.<sup>65</sup> Free elections have since been held in 1991, 1996, 2000, 2005, and 2010.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>54</sup> See C. Dobbeleir et al., op. cit., p. 18; Organisation of American States (2001), op. cit.

<sup>55</sup> Organisation of American States (2001), op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> See C. Dobbeleir et al., op. cit., p. 18; W.H.A. Romondt (1923), ‘De ontwikkeling van het kiesrecht in Suriname’ [The development of the franchise in Suriname], *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 99.

<sup>57</sup> W.H.A. Romondt, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>58</sup> See for example J.J. Lewis, ‘International Woman Suffrage Timeline’ ([http://womenshistory.about.com/od/suffrage/a/intl\\_timeline.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/suffrage/a/intl_timeline.htm)); ‘Vrouwen stemrecht niet vanzelfsprekend’ [Woman Suffrage not self-evident], *Boks.sr*, 8 January (<http://www.boks.sr/2015/01/08/vrouwen-stemrecht-niet-vanzelfsprekend/>). Compare also J. van de Walle (1975), *Een oog boven Paramaribo. Herinneringen* [An Eye above Paramaribo. Memories], Amsterdam, Em. Querido’s Uitgeverij, p. 131 ([http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/wall006oogb01\\_01/](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/wall006oogb01_01/)).

<sup>59</sup> See C. Dobbeleir et al., op. cit., p. 19; Organisation of American States (2001), op. cit.; S.F. Polanen, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> Wet van 28 oktober 1954, houdende aanvaarding van een statuut voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden [Law of 28 October 1954, containing acceptance of a charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands] (hereinafter: Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands), Stb. 1954, 503 (<http://www.arubaforeignaffairs.com/afa/readBlob.do?id=704>).

<sup>61</sup> See M. Bruin, op. cit., p. 31; C. Dobbeleir et al., op. cit., p. 19; Organisation of American States (2001), op. cit.

<sup>62</sup> H.K. Fernandes Mendes (1989), *Onafhankelijkheid en parlementair stelsel in Suriname. Hoofdpijnen van een nieuw en democratisch staatsbestel.*, Zwolle, W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink, p. 201.

<sup>63</sup> See Organisation of American States (2010), op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

The most recent elections in 2010 saw the participation of four political parties,<sup>67</sup> and five combinations of political parties.<sup>68</sup> The 2010 elections saw a voter turnout of 244,523 persons, or 75.38% of the total number of eligible voters.<sup>69</sup> The elections saw five political parties represented in the representative bodies:

<b>Political combination</b>	<b>party /</b>	<b>Seats in NA</b>	<b>Seats in DC (DR)</b>	<b>Seats in LC (RR)</b>
Mega Combinatie (MC)		23	64	420
Nieuw Front (NF)		14	23	153
Volksalliantie		6	9	60
A-Combinatie (AC)		7	18	107
Democratie en Ontwikkeling in Eenheid (DOE)		1	2	7

### 3. Eligibility

Article 57 of the Surinamese Constitution limits enfranchisement for the National Assembly to Surinamese nationals resident in Suriname (see also Article 3 Electoral Law). For regional and local elections, voting rights are similarly limited to resident Surinamese nationals (Articles 4 and 6a Electoral Law). For the exercise of active voting rights, the residency requirement must be fulfilled before the 25<sup>th</sup> day before the ‘day of candidature’.<sup>71</sup> To stand as a candidate for the elections of members of the National Assembly, a candidate must have had his or her domicile in the (Electoral) District which they are standing as a candidate for at least two years immediately prior to the elections.<sup>72</sup> For the regional and local representative bodies, candidates must have their domicile in the relevant District or *ressort*.<sup>73</sup> To be elected as President or Vice-President, the candidate must have had his or her domicile in Suriname for at least six years.<sup>74</sup> The following paragraphs are therefore exclusively applicable to Surinamese nationals who also fulfil the residency requirement.

<sup>67</sup> The four political parties participating individually in the 2010 elections were the *Democratie en Ontwikkeling in Eenheid* (DOE), the *Democratische Unie Suriname* (DUS), the *Nationale Unie* (UN), and the *Permanente Voorspoed Republiek Suriname* (PVRs). See *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> The five combinations were the *Volksalliantie*, the *Nieuw Front* (NF), the *Mega Combinatie* (MC), the *BVD/PVF Combinatie*, and the *A-Combinatie* (AC). See *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> See Centraal Hoofdstembureau, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>70</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 61; Organisation of American States (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>71</sup> See Articles 3 and 4 Electoral Law.

<sup>72</sup> Article 61(2) Constitution.

<sup>73</sup> Article 162 Constitution.

<sup>74</sup> Article 92(2) Constitution.

Against a trend of immigrant enfranchisement in Latin America,<sup>75</sup> non-Surinamese residents do not have voting rights in Suriname. Many of the factors identified as contributing to immigrant franchise of its neighbours are absent in Suriname.<sup>76</sup> Thus, Escobar notes the relationship between the level and composition of immigration, and the immigrant franchise.<sup>77</sup> Conversely, the 2012 Census in Suriname shows that over 90% of the population is Surinamese.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, the international influence in Suriname is restricted compared to the Latin American countries.<sup>79</sup> What may have also contributed to this lack of immigrant enfranchisement is the nature of politics and elections in Suriname. Many authors note that Surinamese political parties are rooted in ethnic lines, much more than along political ideology.<sup>80</sup> Thus, few non-ethnic political parties exist in Suriname to fight for immigrant enfranchisement.

Similarly, Suriname has not known much major discussion of enfranchisement of non-resident Surinamese citizens. A possible explanation here as well is the low number of the Suriname diaspora with Surinamese citizenship. For example, in 2014, there were as few as 5,898 Surinamese citizens residing in the Netherlands –less than 0.04% of the Dutch population.<sup>81</sup> In recent years, voting rights for ethnic Surinamese have been discussed in the context of the ‘Diaspora’ status (Person of Surinamese Origin, *Persoon van Surinaamse Afkomst*).<sup>82</sup> However, in the final text of the PSA Act, voting rights for these persons were explicitly excluded from the PSA status.

<sup>75</sup> See C. Escobar (2015), ‘Immigrant enfranchisement in Latin America: From strongmen to universal citizenship’, *Democratization*.

<sup>76</sup> See for example *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> See Statistics Suriname (2012), ‘Definitieve Resultaten Census 8 Vol. 1’ [Final Results Census 8 Vol. 1], p. 26 (<http://www.statistics-suriname.org/index.php/statistieken/downloads/category/30-censusstatistieken-2012?download=109:presentatie>).

<sup>79</sup> Thus for example, Suriname has not signed, ratified, or acceded to the 1990 UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Escobar notes that most Latin American have ratified this treaty, see C. Escobar, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>80</sup> See M. Bruin, *op. cit.*, pp. 34–35; C. Dobbeleir et al., *op. cit.*, p. 31; P. Van Maele (2009), ‘Politieke decentralisatie in Suriname: op weg naar subsidiariteit onder impuls van de Inter-American Development Bank?’ [Political Decentralisation in Suriname: towards subsidiarity driven by the Inter-American Development Bank?], Masterproef politieke wetenschappen, afstudeerrichting Internationale politiek, Ghent University, Ghent, pp. 33–34 (<http://www.scripriebank.be/scriptie/politieke-decentralisatie-suriname-op-weg-naar-subsidiariteit-onder-impuls-van-de-inter-ame>).

<sup>81</sup> Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [Statistics Netherlands] (2014), ‘Bevolking: geslacht, leeftijd en nationaliteit op 1 januari’ [Population; gender, age and, nationality on January 1], StatLine Database, (<http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=03743&D1=0&D2=0&D3=0,129,173&D4=1&HD=150508-1604&HDR=T,G3&STB=G1,G2>).

<sup>82</sup> See ‘Possible voting rights for Surinamese in Diaspora’, *Stabroek News*, 7 November (<http://www.stabroeknews.com/2012/archives/11/07/possible-voting-rights-for-surinamese-in-diaspora/>); ‘Ingezetenschap: diasporawet bijt nationaliteitswet’ [Residence: Diaspora Act bites Nationality Law], *Waterkant*, 13 December (<http://www.waterkant.net/suriname/2012/12/13/ingezetenschap-diasporawet-bijt-nationaliteitswet/>); ‘Actief kiesrecht en grondbezit vaag zichtbaar in conceptwet PSA’ [Active voting rights and land rights vaguely visible in draft legislation PSA], *Dagblad Suriname*, 30 April (<http://www.dbsuriname.com/dbsuriname/index.php/actief-kiesrecht-en-grondbezit-vaag-zichtbaar-in-conceptwet-psa/>).

An interesting situation arises with regard to certain Dutch nationals (of Surinamese origin). Under Article 5(2) of the *Toescheidingsovereenkomst Suriname*,<sup>83</sup> certain categories of persons with the Dutch nationality were granted the right of unconditional admittance to Suriname for the individual and his or her family, at any time, and to be treated in all respects as a Surinamese citizen while in Suriname.<sup>84</sup> How this provision is to be interpreted has been an issue of debate. Those favouring a generous interpretation of this provision argue that the beneficiaries of this right should be granted all civil (and political) rights, such that the distinction between Surinamese and Dutch citizen would only be relevant under international law for these persons.<sup>85</sup> This would include active and passive voting rights. The issue of enfranchisement of these categories of Dutch citizens has not yet been clarified by the Surinamese Courts. Nonetheless, other rulings concerning the interpretation of the ‘right of unconditional admittance’ and ‘equal treatment as Surinamese’ seem to lend credence to this (wide) interpretation.<sup>86</sup> This may not matter in practice, as the Surinamese government has not applied the special rights granted by Article 5(2) of the *Toescheidingsovereenkomst Suriname*.<sup>87</sup>

### Age

For the exercise of active voting rights, persons must have reached the age of 18 years prior to or on the day of the elections. This applies for both elections for the National Assembly, as well as for the elections for the Local Councils.<sup>88</sup>

To stand as a candidate for the National Assembly (national elections), the District Councils, and the Local Councils, a candidate must have reached the age of 21 prior to or on the date of the elections.<sup>89</sup> To stand as a candidate for President or Vice-President, both of whom are elected by the National Assembly, a candidate must have reached the age of 30 years.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Toescheidingsovereenkomst inzake nationaliteiten tussen het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden en de Republiek Suriname [Agreement between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Suriname concerning the assignment of nationality] (hereinafter: *Toescheidingsovereenkomst Suriname*), Trb. 1975, 132 (<http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBV0003487/>, in Dutch).

<sup>84</sup> See Article 5(2) *Toescheidingsovereenkomst*. See also H.A. Ahmadali (1998), *De Toescheidingsovereenkomst inzake nationaliteiten tussen Nederland en Suriname* [The Agreement between the Netherlands and Suriname concerning the assignment of nationality], The Hague, Sdu Uitgevers, pp. 73, 238–250; H.A. Ahmadali (2001), ‘Toescheidingsovereenkomst: Interpretatieconflict rechten Surinaamse Nederlanders’ [Agreement on Assignment of Nationality: Interpretation conflict on rights of the Surinamese Dutch], *Migrantenrecht*, Vol. 16, No. 7, pp. 237-240.

<sup>85</sup> See for example VSN and SP (2009), ‘Afspraak is afspraak. Een enquête naar de Toescheidingsovereenkomst Suriname – Nederland’ [A deal is a deal. An inquiry into the Allocation Agreement Suriname – Netherlands], Report of the *Vereniging Surinaamse Nederlanders* and the Dutch Socialist Party, September (<http://rotterdam.sp.nl/sites/rotterdam.sp.nl/files/archief/myinclude/docs/090923%20rapport%20enquête%20toescheidingsovereenkomst%20Suriname%20herzien%20def.pdf>).

<sup>86</sup> See Kantonrechter in het Eerste Kanton, 23 May 2001, A.R. No 994674, *Surinaams Juristen Blad*, September 2002, pp. 39-44; Kantonrechter in het Tweede Kanton, 13 June 2002, A.R. No. 014650, *Surinaams Juristen Blad*, September 2002, pp. 45-49; Hof van Justitie 3 August 2007, *Surinaams Juristen Blad*, September 2007, nr. 2, pp. 95-110.

<sup>87</sup> See further VSN and SP, op. cit.; H.A. Ahmadali and N.C. Luk, op. cit.

<sup>88</sup> See Articles 3 and 4 Electoral Law.

<sup>89</sup> This has been confirmed by the Central Polling Authority in their official report of the 2010 elections, where they also concluded that it was unconstitutional to require candidates to meet the age requirement on the day of candidacy. See Centraal Hoofdstembureau, op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>90</sup> Article 92 Constitution.

*Mental disabilities*

Mental disability does not automatically lead to disenfranchisement. According to Article 6(c) of the Electoral Law, persons may be precluded from the exercise of their active voting rights if they have been deprived of the disposition or control of their goods by a definitive court ruling, on the basis of insanity or debilitation of faculties.<sup>91</sup> Mental disability also precludes the exercise of passive voting rights, as Article 59 of the Constitution explicitly excludes persons who, *inter alia*, cannot make use of their active voting rights due to mental disability from standing as candidates.

*Persons convicted of criminal offences*

Equally, convictions for criminal offences do not lead to automatic disenfranchisement. The Electoral Law contains two exclusionary grounds relevant with regard to criminal convictions. The first ground is where the individual has been deprived by a definitive court ruling of his or her voting rights.<sup>92</sup> The second ground is where an individual has been legally deprived of his or her freedom,<sup>93</sup> e.g. in the case of incarceration. Thus, either of these two grounds will deprive an individual of his or her right to cast their vote. As regards passive voting rights, only the former ground, i.e. disenfranchisement by definitive court ruling, leads to one's inability to stand as a candidate.<sup>94</sup>

The aforementioned leads to two troubling conclusions. Firstly, the Constitution clearly allows persons who are legally incarcerated to stand as candidates in the elections, possibly leading to their membership in a representative body.<sup>95</sup> Secondly, and perhaps more troublesome, is the fact that any kind of legal detention is sufficient to bar one's access to the voting booth. As Jadnanansing notes, this means that a person who is detained pending his or her trial will not be able to vote, even if he or she is later acquitted. Similarly, a person who is incarcerated, but later exonerated in appeal will not be able to vote pending his or her appeal.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> This is the case, for example, where a person is placed under guardianship under Article 486 Civil Code of Suriname.

<sup>92</sup> Article 6(a) Electoral Law.

<sup>93</sup> Article 6(b) Electoral Law.

<sup>94</sup> See Article 59 Constitution.

<sup>95</sup> See C. Jadnanansing (2015), 'Betekent achter slot en grendel, vergrendeling kiesrecht?', *StarNieuws* (<http://www.starnieuws.com/index.php/welcome/index/nieuwsitem/27027>).

<sup>96</sup> See *ibid*.

#### 4. Exercising electoral rights

As mentioned above, Suriname does not provide for enfranchisement of non-resident Surinamese citizens, or for non-citizen residents in Suriname. Therefore, the descriptions below do not apply to these categories of persons.

##### *Registration procedures: becoming a voter*

Registration as a voter takes place automatically. Under Article 13 of the Electoral Law, the Minister charged with Internal Affairs is tasked with the creation and daily maintenance of the Voter Registry. The Minister is assisted in this by the legislator, as the Civil Registry records of Persons Cards or the automated database of the Central Persons Registry may be regarded as the Voter Registry, to the extent that these two records regard eligible voters.<sup>97</sup>

A list of eligible voters is created for each national and local election. This list indicates the voters eligible to cast their votes in the particular electoral district or *ressort* for the elections of the National Assembly and the Local Councils respectively.<sup>98</sup> This list is made available to the public at the Ministry of Internal Affairs from the 30<sup>th</sup> day prior to the ‘closing’ of the list,<sup>99</sup> i.e. 30 days prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> day prior to the Day of Candidacy.<sup>100</sup> Every eligible voter is entitled to confirm whether they have been (correctly) placed on the list(s) of eligible voters.<sup>101</sup>

If an eligible voter considers that he or she has incorrectly been omitted from the list, or his or her information is incorrect, the individual may apply to the Minister of Internal Affairs for correction of the relevant list. The application must be submitted at the latest prior to the ‘closing’ of the list. The Minister decides on the application within five days of receipt thereof.<sup>102</sup> The decision of the Minister will immediately be notified to the applicant, and it will be made public by publication in the Government Advertiser.<sup>103</sup> An interested party may appeal to the President against this decision of the Minister within five days of announcement.<sup>104</sup> The decision of the President, which is to be made within 5 days of the appeal, is similarly notified to the interested party and the public.<sup>105</sup> A final appeal of the decision of the President is possible within 10 days of its announcement at the Cantonal Judge.<sup>106</sup> Any person may intervene within six days of the aforementioned period.<sup>107</sup> The appeal and intervention is free of court fees.<sup>108</sup> The Cantonal Judge gives its decision within 21 days of the appeal.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Article 14 Electoral Law.

<sup>98</sup> Article 16(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>99</sup> Article 16(2) Electoral Law.

<sup>100</sup> Article 16(5) Electoral Law.

<sup>101</sup> Article 16(4) Electoral Law.

<sup>102</sup> Article 17(2) Electoral Law. The template for the application form is governed by Article 15 Electoral Decree (Template XVII). The forms are available to the public free of charge, see Article 17(3) Electoral Law.

<sup>103</sup> Article 18 Electoral Law.

<sup>104</sup> Article 19(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>105</sup> Article 19(2) Electoral Law.

<sup>106</sup> Article 20(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>107</sup> Article 21(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>108</sup> Article 22(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>109</sup> Article 21(2) Electoral Law.



*Registration procedures: becoming a candidate*

The Surinamese legislature has given political parties/organisations a central role in the registration of candidates for the elections of the National Assembly, District Councils and Local Councils. The process starts with the registration of a ‘political organisation’ at the Central Electoral Committee. Only political organisations with legal personality may participate in the electoral process.<sup>110</sup> The application to register a political organisation has to be submitted by two persons granted power of attorney by the political organisation concerned.<sup>111</sup> These individuals must provide proof of the power of attorney, as well as a number of documents prescribed by the Decree Political Organisations.<sup>112</sup> These include the proof of a decision within the internal structure to apply for registration, the statutes of the political organisation, and the decision of the President approving the statutes.<sup>113</sup> The application for registration may be submitted between the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> day prior to the Date of Candidacy (Article 31(4) Electoral Law). The Electoral Law allows for political organisations to form combinations for the purpose of the elections.<sup>114</sup> In that case, all the political organisations in the combination must fulfil the requirements of the Electoral Law and the Decree Political Organisations.<sup>115</sup> The registration may be refused for a number of reasons, including conflict of the party symbol with the symbols of the flag or coat of arms of Suriname,<sup>116</sup> and the non-fulfilment of the required documents.<sup>117</sup>

On the Day of Candidacy for the national elections, political organisations that are registered in the public registry may submit a list of candidates for the elections of National Assembly at the relevant Main Polling Stations.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, registered political parties may, on the Day of Candidacy for the local elections, submit lists of candidates for the Local Councils,<sup>119</sup> as well as for the District Councils, at the relevant Main Polling Stations.<sup>120</sup> The lists must meet a number of formal requirements, including signature of the list(s) by the board of the political organisation,<sup>121</sup> the number of candidates allowed on a list,<sup>122</sup> declarations in writing of the candidates of their will to stand as candidates on the relevant list,<sup>123</sup> and registration by two persons granted the power of attorney thereto.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> See Article 1 Decree Political Organisations.

<sup>111</sup> Article 31(2) Electoral Law.

<sup>112</sup> Article 31(2) Electoral Law.

<sup>113</sup> Article 7(2) Decree Political Organisations.

<sup>114</sup> See Articles 7 and 31(3) Electoral Law.

<sup>115</sup> See Article 7 Electoral Law. See also B. Ahmadali, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Article 35(1)(b) Electoral Law.

<sup>117</sup> Article 35(1)(d) Electoral Law and Article 7(3) and (4) Decree Political Organisations.

<sup>118</sup> Article 38(1) Electoral Law. See B. Ahmadali, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>119</sup> Article 54(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>120</sup> Article 70(1) Electoral Law. See B. Ahmadali, op. cit., p. 8. It should be noted that the elections for the National Assembly, as well as for the Local Councils (and thus also indirectly for the District Councils) take place simultaneously. See Organisation of American States (2010), op. cit., p. 15; S.F. Polanen, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>121</sup> Articles 39(1), 55(1), and 71(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>122</sup> Articles 42, 58, and 74 Electoral Law. For the elections for the National Assembly and the Local Councils (*Ressortraden*) the maximum number of candidates on a list is equal to the number of seats up for election, with the possibility of including up to ten substitute-candidates. For the Regional Councils (*Districtsraden*), the maximum number of candidates is equal to the number of seats up for election plus ten.

<sup>123</sup> Articles 43(1), 59(1), and 75(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>124</sup> Articles 44(1), 60(1), and 76(1) Electoral Law.



In case of non-conformity with the requirements stipulated in the Electoral Law, the Main Polling Station (of the relevant constituency) may invalidate the list or remove candidates from the list.<sup>125</sup> Appeal to the President is possible within three days of the decision of the Main Polling Station.<sup>126</sup>

### *Casting the vote*

At least three days prior to the election, all eligible voters (according to the list of eligible voters) will be sent a polling card.<sup>127</sup> Those who have not received or have lost their polling card, may apply to their *Districts-Commissaris* (District-Commissioner)<sup>128</sup> for a replacement polling card, on showing their identity sufficiently.<sup>129</sup> Under Article 97(2) Electoral Law, only persons in the possession of a polling card are allowed to vote. Article 97(2) makes one exception: in the case of persons who do not have a polling card as referred to in Article 90(4) Electoral Law, they may be allowed to vote if they can identify themselves with their Surinamese ID card, passport or driving licence, and they appear on the list of voters. According to B. Ahmadali, however, the polling card only functions as a formal invitation to vote; all eligible voters must be able to identify themselves with one of the aforementioned identification documents, and be on the voters list to be allowed to vote.<sup>130</sup>

Eligible voters may only cast their votes at their designated polling station.<sup>131</sup> Although Article 25(5) of the Electoral Law allows for rules to be established regarding voting for the members of the National Assembly at polling stations other than the designated polling station (in which case the voters would be entitled to vote at any polling station within their designated Electoral District), no such rules have been established. This possibility does not exist for voting in the local elections.

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<sup>125</sup> Articles 50, 66, and 81 Electoral Law.

<sup>126</sup> Articles 52, 68, and 83 Electoral Law.

<sup>127</sup> Article 90(1) Electoral Law.

<sup>128</sup> It should be noted that the *Districts-Commissaris* is the highest administrative office on the District level (see Articles 174 and 175 Constitution; see also P. Van Maele, *op. cit.*, p. 52), and is *ex officio* the president of the Main Polling Station of the corresponding Electoral District (Article 26(3) Electoral Law). In this report, the *Districts-Commissaris* is translated as District-Commissioner.

<sup>129</sup> Article 90(4) Electoral Law.

<sup>130</sup> See B. Ahmadali, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>131</sup> Article 25(4) Electoral Law.

On the day of the elections, eligible voters who have identified themselves are checked for ink marks on their hands.<sup>132</sup> Only if they do not have any such marks are they allowed to vote, after dipping the little finger of their left hand into the ‘electoral’ ink.<sup>133</sup> The president of the polling station then reads the name of the voter and his number on the voters’ list,<sup>134</sup> after which the voter is handed the folded, signed and stamped ballots.<sup>135</sup> The voter then casts his votes on the ballots for the national and/or local elections.<sup>136</sup> The ballots for the national elections are blue, and the ballots for the local elections are white.<sup>137</sup> On the ballots for the national elections, the candidates are listed under their respective political parties. At the top of each list of candidates for the political party, the logo of the political party and a photograph of the leader of the candidate list is shown.<sup>138</sup> Voters may only vote for one candidate on the ballot for the national elections, by marking the white circle in the black box next to the candidate’s name with a red pencil;<sup>139</sup> any other marks on the ballot makes the ballot invalid.<sup>140</sup> For the local elections, the same method of voting applies, with the exception that the voter may vote for up to the number of seats available in the relevant *ressort*.<sup>141</sup> A voter may request another ballot, if he has made a mistake on the ballot. This may only be requested once; the returned ballot is made unusable.<sup>142</sup>

Eligible voters may only vote in person. The Electoral Law makes an exception for three categories of persons.<sup>143</sup> Firstly, eligible voters who are appointed as members of polling stations outside of their electoral district may vote by proxy. Similarly, eligible voters who are part of the Police Force or National Army and on a service mission outside of their electoral district may exercise their franchise by proxy. Finally, members of the Independent Electoral Council, the Central Polling Authority, as well as eligible voters appointed as supervisor or auditor by the Independent Electoral Council may vote by proxy. Only eligible voters on the voters’ list assigned to the same polling station may be asked to vote on behalf of the aforementioned categories of persons.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Article 98(2) Electoral Law.

<sup>133</sup> Article 98(3) Electoral Law. See also Organisation of American States (2010), op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>134</sup> Article 98(4) Electoral Law.

<sup>135</sup> Article 98(5) Electoral Law.

<sup>136</sup> Article 99 Electoral Law. It should be noted that Article 64 Constitution mandates that the term of office of the national, regional and local representative bodies should coincide as much as possible. The practice thus far has been for the elections for the National Assembly to take place together with the local elections.

<sup>137</sup> See Organisation of American States (2005), op. cit., p. 5; S.F. Polanen, op. cit., p. 12. See also Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken (2015), ‘Nodig om te stemmen’ [Requirements to vote] (<http://www.verkiezingen.sr/nodig-om-te-stemmen/>).

<sup>138</sup> See S.F. Polanen, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>139</sup> Article 99(b) Electoral Law.

<sup>140</sup> See Article 120(2) Electoral Law.

<sup>141</sup> Article 99(a) Electoral Law.

<sup>142</sup> Article 101 Electoral Law.

<sup>143</sup> Article 110(1) Electoral Law. It should be noted that *inter alia* Ahmadali, and the Organisation of American States only mention two groups of persons eligible to vote by proxy, see B. Ahmadali, op. cit., p. 9; Organisation of American States (2010), op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>144</sup> Article 101(2) Electoral Law.

## 5. Conclusion

Since its independence from the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1975, Suriname has had democratic general elections – with the exception of the period of military rule between 1980 and 1987. All Surinamese citizens resident in Suriname are enfranchised for the election of the members of the national, regional and local representative bodies. Members of the National Assembly and of the Local Councils are directly elected, while members of the District Councils are indirectly determined by the results of the local elections. As of 2015, neither non-resident Surinamese citizens, nor non-citizen residents in Suriname are enfranchised.

Resident citizens are eligible to vote, in general, if they have reached the age of 18 years, and have not been disenfranchised for reasons of mental illness or court judgment. To stand as a candidate, the individuals must reach the age of 25 (or 30 for the President or Vice-President), and have had their domicile in Suriname for a determinate period of time (two years for the National Assembly, six years for the (Vice-) President).

For each election, a list of eligible voters is compiled on the basis of a Voter Registry kept by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Voters are called to cast their vote at designated polling stations by way of polling cards sent via Main Polling Stations. Exercise of one's passive voting rights (i.e. standing as a candidate) is slightly different in Suriname. Political organisations have been given a central role (particularly for the elections for the National Assembly) by the legislature. Only registered political organisations may submit lists of candidates for the national, regional and local elections. On the day of the elections, eligible voters cast their votes for the national and local elections concurrently. For the national elections, they may cast one vote for their preferred candidate on the (blue) ballot, while for the local elections, they may cast as many votes as the number of seats up for election in the relevant *ressort* (on the white ballot). After the voting has ended, the polling stations, Main Polling Stations, and Central Polling Authority determine the results of the elections and the allocation of seats in the relevant representative bodies. The final results are audited by the Independent Electoral Council, who also publishes the binding results.

