

ANALYSIS OF PAKISTAN'S POSTAL BALLOTS



Introduction to the series on Gallup Electoral Vault

This report is part of a special series that aims to provide the readers interesting findings from Gallup Pakistan's electoral database. The data has been consolidated from the Elections Commission of Pakistan (ECP) data on general elections since the 1970 till the latest general elections held in 2018.

This particular report provides noteworthy information regarding Pakistan's postal voting system, highlighting the significance of the use of postal ballots within the elections and providing an in-depth analysis of the difference between the non-postal and postal votes cast in the 2018 elections with respect to the different parties.

Key Findings

1. In the Pakistan General Elections for 2018, the total number of votes cast from postal ballots amounts to around 107,995 from the four provinces and FATA.
2. In terms of the postal ballot votes for the 2018 general elections, the most votes were cast from Punjab (56%), followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (28%), Sindh (8%), Balochistan (5%) and then FATA (2%).
3. For only 3% of the National Assembly seats (6 seats) was the number of postal ballot paper votes were greater than the winning margin (i.e. the difference in votes between the winning party and the runner-up party for a particular constituency).
4. PTI received the highest number of votes from the postal ballots at 40%, while PML-N received only 16% and Pakistan People's Party got 8%. Independent representatives ranked third highest in terms of postal ballot votes at 12%.
5. Comparison of the 2018 general election results and those from the postal ballot votes from that year shows that in certain cases the postal votes were higher for certain parties while for others it was near the results of the actual general election. For instance, PTI received 32% of the votes in the actual general elections as compared to 40% from the postal votes. However, it can be seen that in the case of PML-N, they received 24% of the votes in the actual elections but received only 16% from the postal ballot votes.

Introduction to Pakistan's Postal Voting System

In Pakistan, for any typical general elections, there are typically two ways of voting: by physically going to the polling station and casting one's vote and through the mail. Postal voting in elections involves the distribution of ballot papers by post and their subsequent return through the post as well.

Major Beneficiaries of Postal Voting

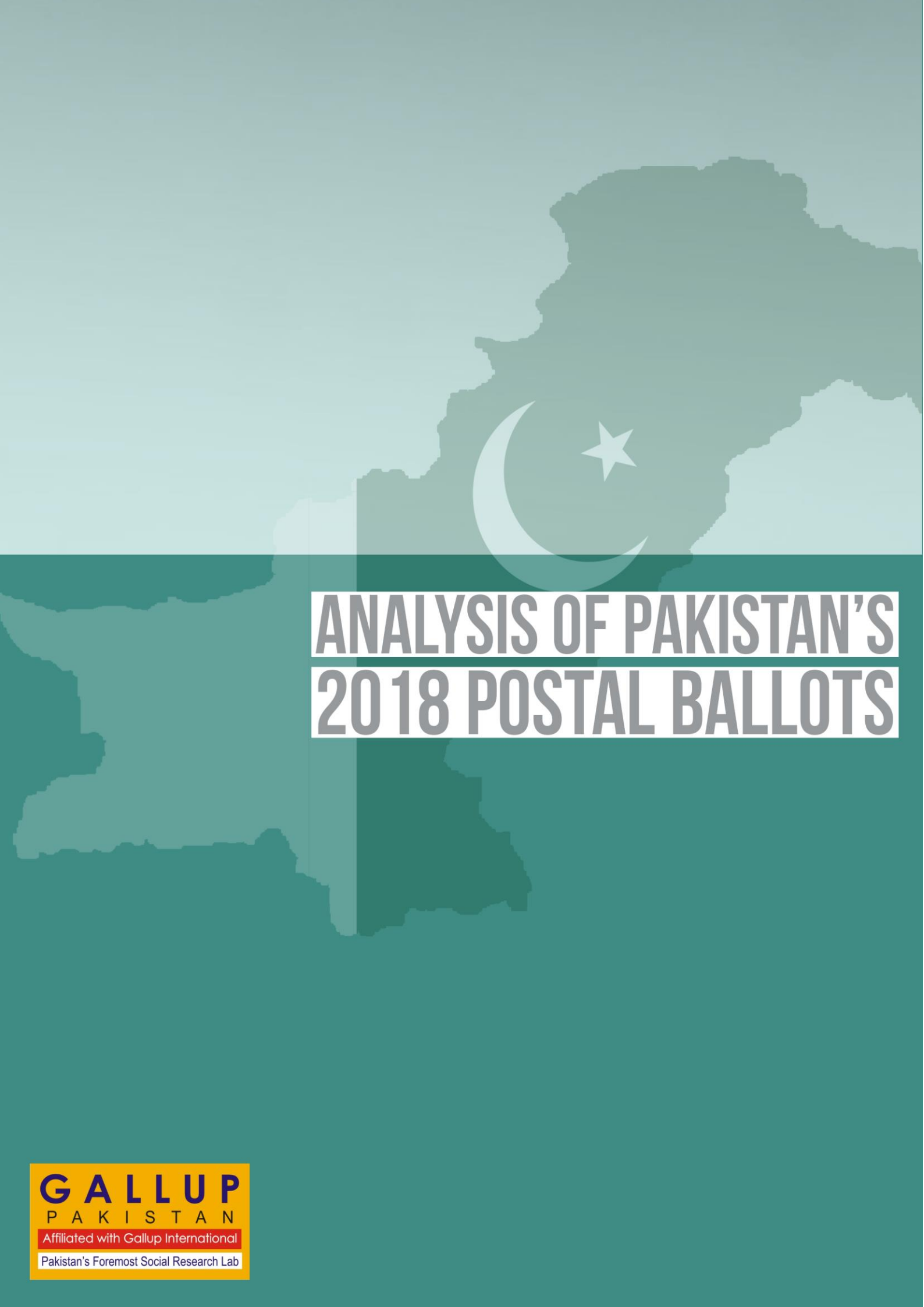
Unlike some other countries, the access to postal voting in Pakistan is limited to certain individuals and this facility is not open to the general public as of yet. According to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), under the law, this facility has only been extended to a certain status of individuals.

Firstly, any person who works in government service or any individual who holds a public office and is stationed away at a place other than where their constituency is located, is eligible to use the facility of postal voting. Similarly, the wife or a person who works in government service or holds any public office or the child/children of such persons who are registered voters and are residing with the person in question (i.e. away from their constituency) are also eligible to use the facility of postal voting. As such, this also applies to members of the Armed Forces. Furthermore, any person who is detained in prison or held in custody at any place within Pakistan is also eligible to vote through post since they would be still considered to be a resident in the electoral area in which they would have been resident if they had not been detained. Additionally, those polling personnel or those people, including Police personnel, appointed by the Returning Officer to perform any duty regarding the election at any polling station that is different from the one where they are required to cast their vote are also allowed to vote through postal voting. Since 2018, the Election Commission of Pakistan has also allowed people who are physically disabled who are unable to travel and those who hold a National Identity Card with a logo for physical disability issued by NADRA (National Database and Registration Authority) to be entitled to vote through postal ballots as well.

Electoral Process for Postal Ballots

Typically for postal voting, first those eligible apply for a ballot paper for voting through postal ballots. Applications for postal ballots in Pakistan are available on a prescribed form available on the ECP's website or may be collected from the Returning Officer of the constituency in question. Every application specifies the name of the elector, their address and their serial number within the electoral roll. Upon receipt of the application by an elector, the Returning Officer is required to immediately send a ballot paper to that elector through post along with an envelope bearing a certification of posting, showing the date as well. This is to be filled in by the proper official from the Post Office at the time of posting. Consequently, the elector, upon receiving their ballot paper for voting by postal ballots, is to record their vote in the prescribed manner. After doing so, the elector is required to post the ballot paper to the Returning Officer in the envelope sent to them so that it can reach before the consolidation of the election results. It is to be noted that voting through postal ballots can only take place within dates specified by the ECP. Additionally, voters who are eligible and to whom postal ballots are issued are not allowed to vote in person at the polling station¹.

¹ "FAQs." PakVoter, <https://pakovoter.org/faq/>



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Analysis of Pakistan's 2018 Postal Ballots

Not many people within Pakistan are too aware about the facility of postal ballots nor has there been a lot of extensive analysis done regarding the significance of postal ballots on the election results. As such, this report aims to undertake the activity of analysing data regarding postal ballots for the 2018 General Elections in Pakistan.

(i) Province-wise analysis

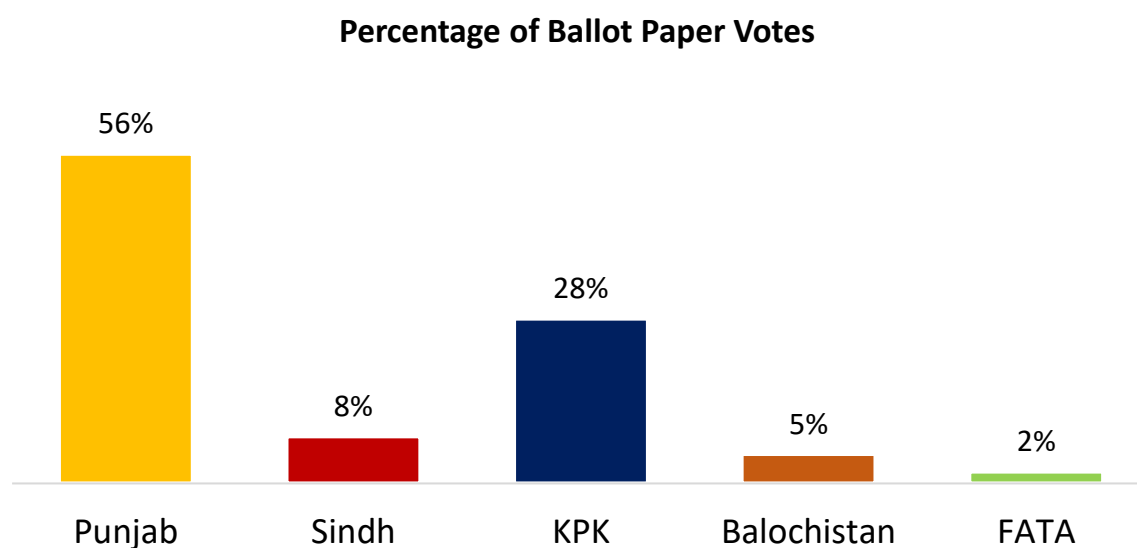
In the Pakistan General Elections for 2018, around 47-48 million votes were cast. Looking at the aggregate data, it can be seen that the most votes were cast in the province of Punjab followed by Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Balochistan and then the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). In terms of the postal ballot votes, the most votes were cast from Punjab, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan and then FATA. Hence, it can be deduced that postal votes may follow the same direction as normal election votes i.e. votes are distributed according to the population – the higher the population, the higher the proportion of postal votes from that area.

The total number of postal ballots amounts to 107,995 votes from the four provinces and FATA. As can be seen in Table 1, out of the postal ballot votes, 56% are from Punjab, 8% are from Sindh, 28% are from KPK, 5% are from Balochistan and 2% are from FATA. These numbers show that people from Punjab employ the use of postal ballots the most while people from Balochistan employ the use of postal ballots the least from amongst the provinces listed. Furthermore, it can be observed that postal ballot votes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were significantly more as compared to the share of non-postal ballot votes from KPK and the national population share. On the other hand, the share of postal ballots from Sindh are significantly lower than the share in the non-postal ballot votes from Sindh.

Table 1

Province	Total Votes	Ballot Paper	Percentage of National Non-Postal Votes	Share of Province in the National Population (Postal Votes)
Punjab	30,801,388	60,655	65%	56%
Sindh	8,307,865	9,179	18%	8%
KPK	6,190,687	30,412	13%	28%
Balochistan	1,676,888	5,432	4%	5%
FATA	478,693	2,317	1%	2%
Total	47,455,521	107,995	100%	100%

Figure 1



(ii) **Who would win if purely postal ballots were considered?**

In some cases, votes through postal ballots can hold a lot of weight and have the potential to overturn the election result for that particular constituency. This can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary Table	NA Seats	NA Seats %
Postal Ballot paper votes are greater than the Winning Margin (<i>Table (i) in Appendix</i>)	6	3%
Postal Ballot paper votes are near than the Winning Margin (between 0-5000 votes) (<i>Table (ii) in Appendix</i>)	29	13%
Postal Ballot paper votes are near than the Winning Margin (5000 + votes)	191	85%
Total	226*	100%

**Information regarding 46 postal ballot paper votes is not available*

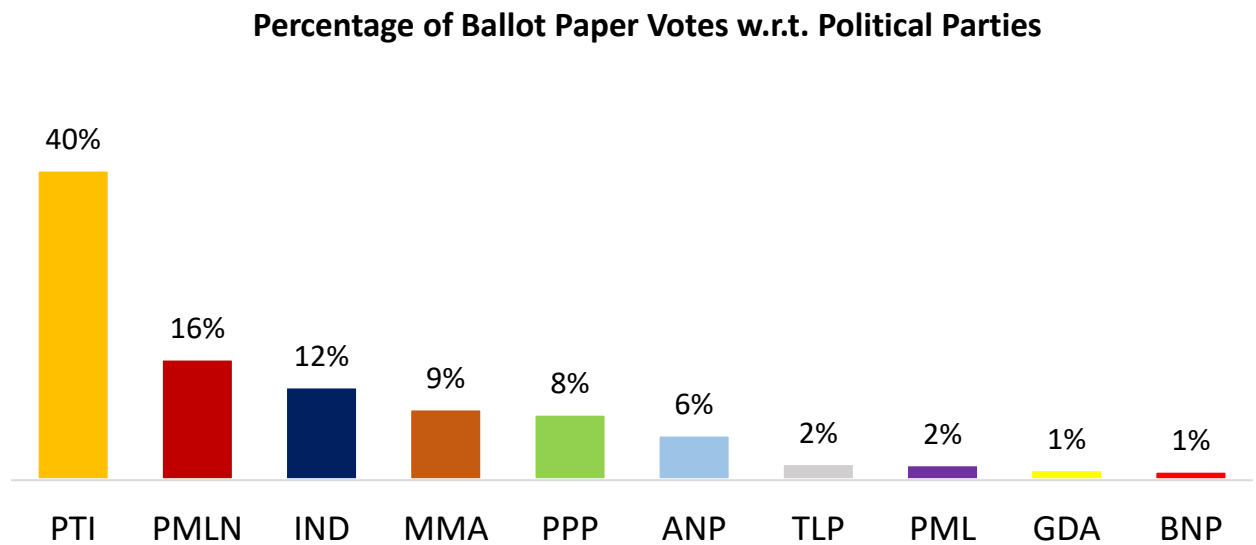
The winning margin is described as the difference in votes between the winning party and the runner-up party for a particular constituency. The above table shows that for 3% of the National Assembly seats (6 seats), the number of postal ballot paper votes were greater than the winning margin and the implications of this may be quite significant. For 13% of the National Assembly seats (29 seats), the difference between the number of votes through postal ballots and the winning margin was near, ranging from a different of 0 to 5,000 votes. Nevertheless, for 85% of the seats (191 seats), the difference between the number of postal votes and the winning margin was greater than 5,000 votes.

Considering the results of the postal voting for the 2018 general elections alone, it was observed that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) got the highest percentage of postal ballot votes, followed by Pakistan Muslim League (N), and them the independents. The results for the top 10 political parties who got the highest amount of votes through the postal ballots is given as follows:

Table 3

Sr#	Party	Votes	Percentage of Votes
1	PTI	40,400	40%
2	PMLN	15,823	16%
3	IND	12,192	12%
4	MMA	9,333	9%
5	PPP	8,661	8%
6	ANP	5,939	6%
7	TLP	2,221	2%
8	PML	2,069	2%
9	GDA	1,435	1%
10	BNP	1,235	1%

Figure 2



The Table 3 and Figure 2 show that PTI received nearly 40% of the postal ballot votes while PML-N received only 16% and independent representatives received 12% of the postal votes. Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) received 9% of the postal ballot votes, followed by Pakistan People’s Party at 8%, Awami National Party at 6%, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan at 2% and so on.

(iii) Comparison of the actual General Elections 2018 results vs. postal ballot results

If we compare the results from the actual Pakistan general elections in 2018 to the results of just the postal ballots for 2018, some differences can be discerned between the two. These differences can be seen in the two tables below where Table 4 shows the top 10 results from the postal ballots while Table 5 shows the top 10 results from the actual general elections in 2018.

Table 4

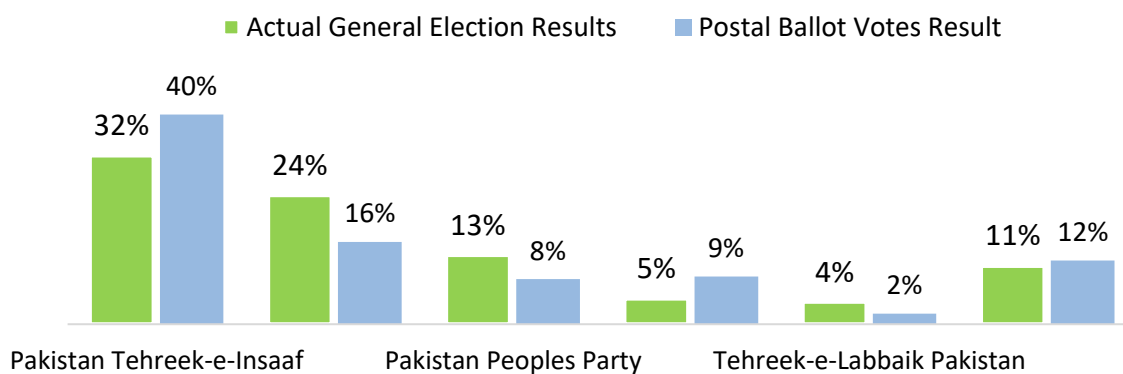
Sr#	Political Party	Postal Ballot Votes	Percentage of Postal Ballot Votes
1	PTI	40400	40%
2	PMLN	15823	16%
3	IND	12192	12%
4	MMA	9333	9%
5	PPP	8661	8%
6	ANP	5939	6%
7	TLP	2221	2%
8	PML	2069	2%
9	GDA	1435	1%
10	BNP	1235	1%

Table 5

Sr#	Political Party	Votes	Percentage of Votes
1	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf	16,903,702	32%
2	Pakistan Muslim League (N)	12,934,589	24%
3	Pakistan Peoples Party	6,924,356	13%
4	Independents	6,087,410	11%
5	Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal	2,573,939	5%
6	Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan	2,234,316	4%
7	Grand Democratic Alliance	1,260,147	2%
8	Awami National Party	815,998	2%
9	Muttahida Qaumi Movement – Pakistan	733,245	1%
10	Pakistan Muslim League (Q)	517,408	1%

Figure 3

Actual General Election vs Postal Ballot Votes Results 2018



Comparing the results of the actual general elections to those from the postal ballots it can be seen that PTI got 32% of the votes in the actual general elections while 40% of the postal ballot votes were for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf party. Similarly, PML-N received 24% of the votes in the actual elections while only 16% of the postal ballot votes were for PML-N. Pakistan People's Party received 13% of the votes in the actual elections versus receiving 8% of the postal ballot votes. However, for the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) party, they received more votes from the postal ballots (9%) than in the actual general elections (5%). Independents also received a slightly higher percentage of postal ballot votes (12%) than in the elections (11%).

Conclusion

Conclusively, it can be seen that postal ballots do hold some level of significance and their inclusion may overturn the results for certain constituencies. Therefore, more focus needs to be directed towards postal ballots and their significance.



APPENDIX

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Appendix

Table (i) – List of constituencies where the number of postal ballot votes was greater than the winning margin for the General Elections 2018

Constituency	Total Polled Votes					Postal Ballot Votes	
	Winner Party Votes	Runner Up Party Votes	Margin (Winner Votes – Runner up Votes)	Winner Party	Runner Up Party	Total Postal Ballot Votes	Winning Margin (Margin – Total Postal Ballot Votes)
NA-10 Shangla	34,070	32,665	1,405	PML N	ANP	2798	(1,393)
NA-21 Mardan-II	78,911	78,876	35	ANP	PTI	448	(413)
NA-190 D.G. Khan-II	72,189	71,964	225	IND	PTI	381	(156)
NA-11 Kohistan/Lower Kohistan/Kolai Pallas Kohistan	15,859	14,148	1,711	MMA	IND	1819	(108)
NA-89 Sargodha-II	114,245	113,422	823	PML N	PTI	860	(37)
NA-13 Mansehra-I	109,282	107,808	1,474	IND	PML N	1496	(22)

Table (ii) – List of constituencies where the number of postal ballot votes was near the Winning Margin (between 0 to 5,000 votes) for the General Elections 2018

Constituency	Total Polled Votes					Postal Ballot Votes	
	Winner Party Votes	Runner Up Party Votes	Margin (Winner Votes – Runner up Votes)	Winner Party	Runner Up Party	Total Postal Ballot Votes	Winning Margin (Margin – Total Postal Ballot Votes)
NA-100 Chiniot-II	76,415	75,579	836	PML N	PTI	619	217
NA-239 Korangi Karachi-I	69,147	68,811	336	PTI	MQM Pakistan	17	319
NA-33 Hangu	28,819	27,968	851	PTI	MMA	497	354
NA-114 Jhang-I	106,043	105,454	589	PTI	PPP	209	380
NA-139 Kasur-III	5,511	4,076	1,435	PTI	MMA	759	676
NA-267 Mastung/Kalat/Shaheed-Sikandarabad	26,645	25,738	907	MMA	BNP	116	791
NA-49 South Waziristan Agency-I Tribal Area-X	7,794	6,606	1,188	MMA	PTI	199	989
NA-268 Chagai/Nushki/Kharan	14,435	12,272	2,163	BNP	MMA	1158	1,005
NA-248 Karachi West-I	35,124	34,101	1,023	PPP	PTI	10	1,013
NA-151 Khanewal-II	111,198	109,520	1,678	PML N	PTI	410	1,268
NA-237 Malir-II	33,289	31,907	1,382	PTI	PPP	112	1,270
NA-73 Sialkot-II	116,957	115,464	1,493	PML N	PTI	174	1,319
NA-22 Mardan-III	58,577	56,318	2,259	PTI	MMA	815	1,444
NA-37 Tank	14,813	12,953	1,860	IND	IND	230	1,630
NA-270 Panjgur/Washuk/Awaran	18,568	16,040	2,528	BAP	BNP (Awami)	619	1,909
NA-118 Nankana Sahib-II	63,818	61,413	2,405	PTI	PML N	343	2,062
NA-182 Muzaffargarh-II	53,054	50,566	2,488	PPP	PAK AWAMI RAJ	234	2,254

NA-98 Bhakkar-II	138,307	133,679	4,628	PTI	IND	2244	2,384
NA-74 Sialkot-III	97,235	93,734	3,501	PML N	PTI	979	2,522
NA-117 Nankana Sahib-I	71,891	68,995	2,896	PML N	IND	322	2,574
NA-241 Korangi Karachi-III	26,706	23,873	2,833	PTI	MQM Pakistan	18	2,815
NA-126 Lahore-IV	105,734	102,677	3,057	PTI	PML N	120	2,937
NA-159 Multan-VI	102,606	99,374	3,232	PTI	PML N	269	2,963
NA-258 Loralai/Musa Khail/ Ziarat/Dukki/ Harnai	42,938	38,457	4,481	BAP	MMA	780	3,701
NA-172 Bahawalpur-III	106,383	101,971	4,412	PML Q	PML N	388	4,024
NA-46 Kurram Agency-II Tribal Area-VII	21,461	16,934	4,527	PPP	PTI	308	4,219
NA-187 Layyah-I	93,903	88,225	5,678	PTI	IND	1192	4,486
NA-264 Quetta-I	14,887	10,071	4,816	MMA	BNP	6	4,810
NA-161 Lodhran-II	121,300	116,093	5,207	PTI	PML N	373	4,834

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Contact Details:

Islamabad : +92 51 2655630

Email: isb@gallup.com.pk

www.gallup-international.com

www.gallup.com.pk