

# Barbados General Election

11 February 2026



The Commonwealth

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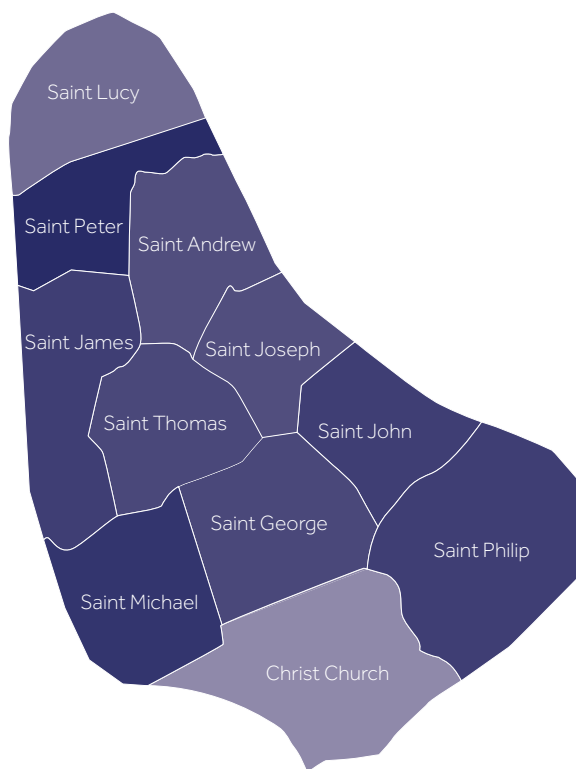
Commonwealth Secretariat  
Marlborough House  
Pall Mall  
London SW1Y 5HX  
United Kingdom  
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# Map of Barbados





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# Acronyms and abbreviations

BANGO	Barbados Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
BBS	Barbados Broadcasting Service
BFP	Bajan Free Party
BLP	Barbados Labour Party
BSP	Barbados Sovereignty Party
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBC	Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation
CBLP	Conservative Barbados Leadership Party
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CET	Commonwealth Expert Team
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	civil society organisation
DLP	Democratic Labour Party
EBC	Electoral & Boundaries Commission
FAQ	frequently asked questions
FoD	Friends of Democracy
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MP	member of parliament
NNP	New National Party
PCP	People's Coalition for Progress
PWDs	persons with disabilities
RB	Reform Barbados
ROPA	Representation of the People Act
SB	Solutions Barbados
UN	United Nations
UPP	United Progressive Party



# Letter of transmittal

## **Commonwealth Expert Team Barbados General Election**

**11 February 2026**

**16 February 2026**

### **Dear Secretary-General,**

As Lead of the Commonwealth Expert Team (CET) deployed to observe the General Election held in Barbados on 11 February 2026, I am pleased to submit to you our Final Report.

This mission is of particular significance, as it marks the first time that Barbados has invited international election observation, and the first occasion on which the Commonwealth has been invited to observe an election in the country. The Team was honoured to support this important milestone in Barbados' democratic journey.

The Team's overall assessment is that the electoral process was conducted in a peaceful, orderly and transparent manner, and that the results reflect the will of the people who voted. While voter turnout, at approximately 41 per cent, was lower than in previous elections, we were encouraged by the orderly participation of citizens and the calm and respectful atmosphere that prevailed throughout polling day. We also commend the professionalism and preparedness of polling officials, as well as the constructive role played by party agents.

This report is informed by consultations with a wide range of national stakeholders, including electoral officials, political actors, civil society representatives and members of the media, as well as the Team's observation of key stages of the electoral process, including polling, counting and results procedures.

The Team highlights a number of priority areas for consideration aimed at strengthening the transparency, inclusivity and efficiency of future electoral processes. In particular, the Team underscores the importance of measures to enhance the accuracy and integrity of the voters' register, including closer institutional coordination between the Electoral and Boundaries Commission,

the Registry of Births and Deaths, and immigration authorities to ensure timely updates regarding deaths and migration status.

The CET also notes the need to address legal and procedural ambiguities relating to voter registration, including the automatic inclusion of eligible citizens upon attaining the age of 18, while ensuring that the integrity and accuracy of the register are preserved. Greater transparency in electoral data, including the publication of disaggregated voter information by age and gender, would further strengthen public confidence.

The Team further emphasises the importance of ensuring that final voters' lists are published and shared with stakeholders in a timely manner ahead of polling, and of strengthening public communication and voter education initiatives. In this regard, extending the period for civic education and awareness-raising may contribute to addressing declining voter turnout and fostering broader citizen participation.

The Team also recognises the importance of reinforcing the institutional independence and public visibility of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, including through administrative measures that enhance its autonomy in the execution of its functions.

The Team encourages the Government of Barbados and key electoral stakeholders to consider the recommendations contained in this report, which are offered in a constructive and forward-looking spirit to support the continued strengthening of democratic processes. We also encourage the Commonwealth Secretariat to remain engaged, including through its capacity development initiatives such as the Commonwealth Elections Professionals (CEP) Programme.

In accordance with our mandate, I hereby submit our detailed findings and recommendations in the attached report. We trust that these will contribute to ongoing efforts to enhance electoral integrity and inclusive democratic governance in Barbados.

On behalf of the CET, and in my own name, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Commonwealth for the opportunity to support Barbados in this historic democratic exercise.

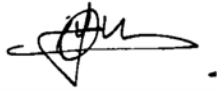
I also wish to extend my gratitude to the members of the Team for their professionalism and dedication, and to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for its invaluable support throughout the mission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S Flood-Beaubrun". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**Mrs Sarah Lucy Flood-Beaubrun**

# Observers' signatures



Orrette Fisher  
Former Director of Elections, Electoral Commission of Jamaica  
Jamaica



Hon Justice (Rtd) Amraphael Mbogholi Msagha  
Former Court of Appeal Judge and Principal Judge of the High Court  
Kenya



Terry Dale Ince  
Development specialist and human rights advocate  
Trinidad and Tobago



# Executive summary

At the invitation of the Government of Barbados, the Commonwealth Secretary-General deployed an Expert Team to observe the Parliamentary Elections held on 11 February 2026. The Team's mandate was to assess the electoral process against Barbados' domestic legal framework and its commitments to democratic principles, including those embodied in the Commonwealth Charter. The Team conducted its work in an atmosphere of openness and co-operation and wishes to commend the people and authorities of Barbados for their longstanding commitment to democratic governance, the rule of law and constitutional order.

Barbados has a proud tradition of peaceful, competitive elections and stable institutions. The 2026 elections were conducted in a calm and orderly environment, reflecting the maturity of the country's democratic culture. Voters were able to exercise their franchise freely, and the process benefited from professional election administration, transparent procedures at polling stations and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms.

## Legal and institutional framework

The elections were administered within a clear and established constitutional and legislative framework, principally governed by the Constitution and the Representation of the People Act Cap. 12 (1991). The laws provide for universal adult suffrage, regular elections and secret balloting. The Team found that the legal framework was broadly consistent with international standards for democratic elections. However, certain areas would benefit from modernisation and consolidation to enhance clarity, accessibility and alignment with contemporary best practice.

The Electoral & Boundaries Commission (EBC) generally continued to enjoy public confidence as an independent body responsible for overseeing the conduct of elections. The Commission demonstrated professionalism and preparedness in its operational planning, logistics and training of polling officials. Stakeholders generally expressed trust in its integrity, though its competence was at times brought into question. There were, however, widespread complaints of errors on the Voters' List. The Team notes positively the collaborative approach between the EBC and other state agencies, including security services, which contributed to a smooth electoral process.

## Voter registration and voter education

Barbados maintains a system of continuous voter registration, allowing eligible voters to be added to the electoral list on an ongoing basis. The Team observed that the voter register was widely challenged for not being as credible and inclusive as expected. Mechanisms were in place for public inspection and correction of entries. Some concerns were raised regarding the integrity of the register, and continued efforts to enhance transparency in list maintenance, including clearer communication on updates and revisions, would further strengthen public confidence.

The EBC undertook voter education initiatives. There was little evidence of voter education being conducted by civil society. There were campaigns to encourage voters to verify their status on the list. There were also public information campaigns on voting procedures, polling station locations and relevant dates. The Team observed that voter awareness of electoral procedures was generally high, reflecting both effective communication and Barbados' history of regular elections. Nonetheless, additional targeted outreach, particularly to young and first-time voters, could help deepen civic engagement and participation.

## Nomination of candidates and campaign environment

The process for the nomination of candidates was conducted in accordance with the law and was reportedly transparent and orderly. Political parties and independent candidates were able to register and contest without undue hindrance. The requirement for nomination papers, supporting signatures and a financial deposit was applied consistently. Stakeholders did not raise substantive concerns regarding candidate eligibility or procedural fairness, though some suggested the period for nomination be extended.

The Team received complaints from some stakeholders that the practice of the subscription of the nomination papers was tedious and could be made more efficient.

The campaign period was competitive and largely peaceful. Political parties and candidates were able to campaign freely, express their views and assemble without restriction. Freedom of expression and association were respected. Public rallies, community meetings and media engagements were held across the country. The tone of the campaign, while at times robust, remained within the bounds of democratic discourse. The Team commends political actors and their supporters for their restraint and for promoting peaceful participation.

## Media environment

Barbados benefits from a pluralistic media landscape, including state-owned and private media houses as well as online platforms. The Team observed that political actors had opportunities to access media outlets to present their policies and programmes. While stakeholders expressed varied perceptions regarding the balance of coverage, the overall environment enabled the dissemination of diverse viewpoints.

The increasing role of social media in campaigning was evident in 2026, as in many democracies. Digital platforms were used extensively for political messaging and voter engagement. While these platforms expand opportunities for participation, they also present challenges related to misinformation and the regulation of campaign spending. The Team encourages continued dialogue among stakeholders on developing appropriate safeguards that protect freedom of expression while promoting transparency and accountability in digital campaigning.

## Polling day and counting process

Polling day was conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner. The Team observed procedures at a representative sample of polling stations across several constituencies. Opening procedures were generally followed in accordance with established guidelines. Polling staff demonstrated professionalism and a clear understanding of their roles. Materials were available, and polling stations opened on time.

The voting process was transparent and efficient. Voters were identified and verified against the electoral list, ballots were issued appropriately and the secrecy of the vote was preserved. The layout of polling stations was generally adequate to ensure both accessibility and confidentiality. Provisions for elderly voters and persons with disabilities were observed in several locations; however, the Team notes that physical accessibility could be enhanced in some venues to ensure full inclusivity.

The closing and counting procedures were conducted transparently, in the presence of party agents. Ballots were counted at the tabulation centres in accordance with the law, and results were recorded and transmitted through established channels. Party representatives were given the opportunity to observe and raise concerns; however, these agents had not consistently accompanied every stage of the process at all stations observed. The Team did not observe any systematic irregularities and found that the procedures contributed to confidence in the integrity of the outcome.

## Inclusion and participation

The 2026 elections reflected Barbados' strong record of inclusion. Women were visible as candidates, election officials and voters. While women's representation in public life continues to evolve, ongoing measures to encourage gender balance in political participation would further enrich the democratic process. Youth engagement was evident, though sustained civic education and leadership development initiatives may help broaden their active involvement in politics beyond voting.

The Team also recognises the importance of ensuring all segments of society, including persons with disabilities, are able to participate effectively. While notable efforts have been made, continued attention to practical measures such as improved accessibility of polling venues, and consideration of alternative voting arrangements where feasible, would further strengthen inclusivity.

## Overall assessment and recommendations

The Commonwealth Expert Team concludes that the 2026 general election in Barbados was conducted in a credible, transparent and peaceful manner. The process reflected the will of the people and upheld the fundamental democratic principles to which Barbados is committed. The professionalism of the EBC, the constructive engagement of political stakeholders and the orderly participation of voters are deserving of commendation.

At the same time, the Team offers recommendations aimed at supporting the continued strengthening of Barbados' electoral framework. These include consideration of legislative reforms to modernise electoral laws; mechanisms to improve accuracy of the voters' list; enhanced public communication regarding voter registration processes; further measures to promote equitable access to media; development of guidelines addressing digital campaigning; and continued efforts to improve accessibility and broaden participation among underrepresented groups.

The Team emphasises that these recommendations are made in a spirit of partnership and respect. Barbados' democratic institutions are resilient and well established. By building on the positive features observed and addressing areas for incremental reform, Barbados can continue to serve as a model of democratic stability and good governance within the Commonwealth and beyond.

The Commonwealth reiterates its appreciation to the government, security agencies, the EBC, political actors, civil society, the media and the people of Barbados for their co-operation and hospitality. The Team expresses confidence that the findings and recommendations contained in this report will contribute constructively to the ongoing development of Barbados' democratic processes.

## Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Type of recommendation
<b>Chapter 2: Political background</b>		
1	Conduct a national consultation on whether legal provisions governing early election calls may be adjusted to allow, among other things, adequate time for voter register verification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
2	Enhance public education campaigns encouraging proactive verification of voter registration status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
3	Publish detailed explanations of voter list revisions, including removals and reinstatements, to mitigate mistrust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
4	Review the framework governing parliamentary subventions, ensuring transparent and equitable access and decision-making around public funding to political parties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
5	Develop clearer statutory safeguards addressing use of state resources in campaign contexts, including guidance on ministerial announcements during election periods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
6	Encourage cross-party dialogue on formalising a Political Code of Conduct, including voluntary commitments exceeding statutory minima.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
7	Strengthen oversight mechanisms protecting neutrality of the public service, including public reporting channels for alleged breaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Policy</li> </ul>
8	Review nomination procedures to reduce administrative burdens, including extending the time for nomination, reconsidering the mandatory physical presence of four supporting voters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
9	Provide clearer guidance, advance briefing and training to parties and prospective candidates to avoid last-minute procedural complications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
10	Enact comprehensive political party and finance legislation, including donor disclosure and third-party spending rules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
11	Enact comprehensive political party registration, including rules around composition, structure, legal application to election authority, financial audits, minimum membership thresholds, party constitution and governance rules, commitment to constitutional order, financial transparency, unique name, physical office and registration fees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
12	Publish party and candidate expense returns in an accessible online database.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
13	Strengthen enforcement of existing reporting deadlines, including proportionate sanctions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> </ul>
14	Promote transparency regarding campaign contributions and expenditure within a stipulated time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
15	Encourage institutional dialogue on strengthening parliamentary oversight, particularly following landslide electoral outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>

(Continued)

No.	Recommendation	Type of recommendation
16	Consider mechanisms enhancing minority party voice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
17	Develop a multi-stakeholder post-election review process, involving political parties, civil society and electoral authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
18	Enhance publication of institutional decision-making rationales, particularly regarding contentious administrative decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
19	Institutionalise regular engagement with domestic and international observers, embedding election observation as standard democratic practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 3: Legal framework and electoral administration</b>		
20	Consolidate and modernise electoral legislation to enhance coherence, reduce fragmentation across multiple statutes and regulations, and improve accessibility for stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> </ul>
21	Review the Representation of the People Act and subsidiary regulations to identify procedural gaps, ambiguities, and areas requiring alignment with contemporary electoral practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> </ul>
22	Undertake a timely review of constituency boundaries, in accordance with constitutional provisions, to ensure compliance with principles of equal suffrage and periodic delimitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
23	Reinforce public confidence in the independence of the EBC through enhanced transparency in decision-making and public communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> </ul>
24	Publish detailed operational reports after each election cycle, including voter registration statistics, complaints received and remedial measures taken.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
25	Consider the publication of periodic external audits of electoral operations, including voter list management and procurement processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
26	Consider structured multi-stakeholder consultation mechanisms, including with political parties and civil society, particularly on voter register maintenance and boundary review processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
27	Strengthen ongoing voter education programmes, with targeted outreach on registration requirements and the right to vote.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
28	Clarify eligibility requirements for first-time voters, particularly regarding the linkage between national ID issuance at 16 and voting rights at 18.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
29	Partner with civil society, youth organisations and educational institutions to improve voter awareness among young and first-time voters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
30	Deploy multimedia campaigns closer to polling day explaining procedures, rights and available assistance for vulnerable voters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
31	Encourage proactive investigation of credible allegations of corrupt practices, to reinforce deterrence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> </ul>

(Continued)

No.	Recommendation	Type of recommendation
32	Develop a structured post-election stakeholder dialogue process, to address systemic concerns and lessons learned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
33	Implement measurable performance indicators for electoral management, to track improvements over successive election cycles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
34	Enhance transparency surrounding voter list updates and boundary reviews, as confidence in these areas is central to institutional trust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
35	Leverage the Barbados Identity Management Systems framework to improve data integrity and voter verification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
36	Explore secure digital innovations, including electronic register management systems and internal results transmission mechanisms (subject to stakeholder consultation).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
37	Ensure that technological reforms are accompanied by adequate safeguards, training and public education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 4: Participation and inclusion</b>		
38	Promote systems for voter assistance for persons who are blind, physically incapacitated, unable to read or otherwise challenged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
39	Undertake a review of the legal framework governing political participation to ensure full alignment with Barbados' international treaty obligations, particularly under ICCPR, CEDAW, CERD, CRC and CRPD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
40	Strengthen implementation mechanisms for rights guaranteed in law to ensure practical accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> </ul>
41	Enhance public awareness of participation rights through co-ordinated civic education initiatives referencing constitutional and statutory protections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
42	Continue promoting gender balance and inclusive recruitment practices while ensuring competence-based deployment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
43	Establish structured financial and capacity-building support mechanisms for women candidates, including access to campaign finance, mentorship networks, and leadership training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
44	Encourage political parties to adopt internal gender equity policies, including transparent nomination processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
45	Enhance collection and publication of gender-disaggregated electoral data to inform policy development and monitor progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
46	Promote multi-stakeholder engagement, including collaboration between the Bureau of Gender Affairs, political parties and civil society, to strengthen outreach and support systems for women candidates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
47	Consider systems to engage the private sector to address gender disparities in campaign financing support with a view to reducing structural inequalities affecting women's candidacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>

(Continued)

No.	Recommendation	Type of recommendation
48	Standardise accessibility requirements across all polling stations, ensuring uniform physical access in line with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
49	Expand voting accommodations to include support for persons with visual impairment, including assistive tools and alternative voting arrangements for persons with diverse disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
50	Introduce advance voting on Special Voting Day as an option for PWDs, where feasible, to reduce barriers on polling day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
51	Develop accessible voter education materials in Braille, large print, audio, and other formats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
52	Enhance training for election officials on consistent facilitation of assistance and accompaniment procedures while safeguarding ballot secrecy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
53	Conduct and share with stakeholders an accessibility audit of election facilities and processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
54	Strengthen collaboration between the EBC and disability advocacy organisations to improve outreach and inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
55	Integrate structured civic education into the formal school curriculum, promoting early understanding of democratic processes and civic responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
56	Develop targeted voter outreach campaigns aimed at first-time and young voters, addressing apathy and political disengagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
57	Encourage political parties to create structured youth consultation mechanisms to better reflect lived experiences in policy platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
58	Explore mechanisms for strengthening youth representation, including advisory youth councils linked to parliamentary processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
59	Enhance public reporting on youth voter turnout trends, to support evidence-based interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
60	Promote platforms for intergenerational political dialogue, aimed at restoring trust and responsiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
61	Develop formal mechanisms for structured engagement between the EBC and civil society organisations, particularly during election periods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
62	Encourage domestic election observation initiatives, supported by accreditation frameworks and information-sharing protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>

(Continued)

No.	Recommendation	Type of recommendation
63	Facilitate civil society involvement in voter education, inclusion advocacy and electoral transparency initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
64	Strengthen collaboration with women's organisations and community-based groups to broaden inclusive participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
65	Enhance transparency in electoral processes by creating multi-stakeholder consultation platforms prior to and following elections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 5: The campaign and the media</b>		
66	Advance implementation of a comprehensive access to information framework, strengthening institutional transparency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
67	Encourage adoption of a voluntary election period media code of conduct, supported by multi-stakeholder consensus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
68	Enhance transparency around allocation and monitoring of broadcast time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
69	Promote public media literacy campaigns addressing misinformation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
70	Promote equitable access to publicly owned media, ensuring balanced and impartial coverage during election periods, especially for smaller parties and independent candidates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
71	Strengthen dialogue between the EBC and media stakeholders, particularly during election periods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
72	Review and modernise the Broadcasting Time Allocation Regulations 1990 to ensure contemporary relevance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
73	Ensure transparency and fairness in allocation of state broadcast time to qualifying political parties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
74	Clarify (political) content standards across broadcast platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
75	Develop a coherent framework addressing digital campaigning, including transparency in online political advertising.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
76	Consider harmonised regulatory standards across traditional broadcast and digital platforms, ensuring consistent safeguards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
77	Establish monitoring and rapid-response mechanisms to address misinformation while safeguarding freedom of expression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
78	Strengthen public media literacy programmes, focusing on identifying misinformation and protecting electoral integrity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
79	Enhance co-operation on cross-border digital information flows, consistent with cybercrime legislation and international co-operation norms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
80	Encourage timely and proactive communication by the EBC to counter misinformation and reinforce institutional trust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>

(Continued)

No.	Recommendation	Type of recommendation
81	Promote regular multi-stakeholder consultations on media and campaign practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
82	Encourage greater transparency in political communication funding and sponsorship disclosures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
83	Undertake post-election reviews of the media environment, incorporating lessons learned and stakeholder feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter 6: Voting, counting and results transmission</b>		
84	Improve procedures for identifying and removing deceased or ineligible voters from the preliminary list, with enhanced verification mechanisms to prevent erroneous deletions and ensure greater accuracy in the final register and reliable voter turnout figures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
85	Authorise the Electoral & Boundaries Commission to use bulk mailings bearing its own official stamp or seal, thereby reinforcing public confidence in the Commission's independence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
86	Amend legislation to eliminate uncertainty by mandating the automatic and immediate registration of all individuals who turn 18, ensuring comprehensive coverage of eligible young voters, in accordance with the practice employed in earlier legislation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> <li>• Political</li> </ul>
87	Explore options to minimise inadvertent disenfranchisement, including potential provisional verification safeguards (subject to legal reform).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
88	Strengthen inter-agency collaboration between the Registry of Births and Deaths, the Barbados Immigration Department and the Electoral & Boundaries Commission to provide timely and accurate data on deaths and migration, thereby supporting precise decisions on voter removals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
89	Advance the publication date of the final voters' list – or adjust the special voting schedule – to ensure the final voters' list is shared with all political parties and candidates before special voting begins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
90	Discontinue the practice of including the elector's ID number on the ballot paper counterfoil to further safeguard the secrecy of the vote.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
91	Publish the final voters' list and later the election results disaggregated by sex and age, making it publicly accessible to promote transparency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
92	Establish a standardised procedure to assist voters unable to locate their designated polling station, such as providing polling officials with an online search tool to verify voter status and direct them to the correct location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
93	Ensure all polling station buildings and rooms provide appropriate facilities for voters with physical disabilities, including a pre-election audit to identify sites requiring temporary wooden ramps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
94	Increase the ballot paper font to assist voters with visual impairments in identifying and selecting their preferred candidate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>

(Continued)

No.	Recommendation	Type of recommendation
<b>95</b>	Add each party's colour and/or symbol or other identifying mark for the candidate, such as a photograph, next to the candidates' names on the ballot paper to enable illiterate voters to participate independently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
<b>96</b>	At the end of special voting and voting for foreign service employees overseas, require polling staff to complete an official form recording the number of ballots cast at each station. This form should be agreed and signed by party agents present, with the original retained by the Electoral & Boundaries Commission and copies provided to agents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>
<b>97</b>	Conduct counting at individual polling stations rather than at centralised centres to enhance transparency, strengthen ballot security, expedite result announcements and reduce opportunities for speculation or mistrust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal/Regulatory</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Administrative/Technical</li> </ul>

# 1. Introduction

This introductory chapter begins with a summary of the Commonwealth election observation methodology and concludes with an overview of this methodology as applied to the 2026 Barbados general election. It provides readers with vital background information on the context in which Commonwealth Expert Teams (CETs) operate.

## 1.1. International election observation methodology

Since 1980, the Commonwealth has observed more than 200 elections in 40 countries. International election observation serves several purposes, including:

- Promoting the openness and transparency of the electoral process;
- Deterring improper practices and attempts at fraud;
- Enhancing public confidence in the process, thereby contributing to acceptance of election results;
- Diffusing political tensions through diplomacy and mediation; and
- Strengthening international standards on electoral best practices.



*Members of the CET meeting with the President of Barbados, His Excellency, the Most Honourable Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey D Bostic FC MVO*

## 1.2. The Revised Commonwealth Guidelines: key provisions

The Revised *Commonwealth Guidelines for the Conduct of Election Observation in Member Countries* ('the Revised Guidelines') were agreed by Heads of Government at the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London, United Kingdom. The key provisions are outlined below.

### 1.2.1. CETs are independent of the Secretariat

Members of the CET are invited by the Secretary-General in their personal capacity as eminent Commonwealth citizens, not as representatives of any member country, government or political group.

### 1.2.2. Observers, not monitors

Unlike some citizen observer groups (monitors), which are permitted to intervene or offer assistance to electoral officials in a limited manner, Commonwealth observers – as with all international observers – cannot and do not interfere in any way with any aspect of the electoral process.

### 1.2.3. Taking forward CET recommendations

The Revised Guidelines encourage member countries to establish 'domestic mechanisms', such as multi-stakeholder meetings or committees, to review and take forward recommendations made by a CET.

### 1.2.4. Whole-of-election-cycle approach

Election observation is ideally not a stand-alone activity. Where possible, the Secretariat seeks to support stakeholders in the implementation of these recommendations through a range of methods, including the production of expert publications, the training of election management body staff and the facilitation of peer-to-peer knowledge exchange – and, crucially, through bespoke technical assistance to national stakeholders upon the submission of a formal request.

## 1.3. The strength of CETs

While all international election observer missions adhere to the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, each organisation's methodology has slight variances that reflect its unique strengths. The strength and value of Commonwealth observer missions lie in three key characteristics.

### 1.3.1. Eminent observers

While CETs are smaller in size than some other international observer missions, they comprise eminent persons from across the Commonwealth in their respective fields of expertise, such as senior politicians; electoral commissioners; election experts; diplomats; and human rights, legal and media experts. The biographies of all observers can be found in Annex I.

### 1.3.2. Diversity and peer-to-peer learning

CETs reflect the geographical diversity of the Commonwealth itself, with observers selected from each of the world's continents. This inculcates a genuine spirit of peer-to-peer learning on election administration and democratic reform.

### 1.3.3. Political mediation through the Chair's Good Offices

CETs are normally chaired by a former Head of State, a senior politician or senior diplomat and also senior electoral experts. These persons are invited based on careful consideration of a number of factors that ensure they are a 'good fit' for the election in hand. The respect afforded to such high-profile leaders allows CET chairs to enter into a 'Good Offices' role in instances of post-election political disputes and non-acceptance of election results. Such Good Offices roles have played a vital part in ensuring peaceful transitions between governments on many occasions.

More information on the role and mandate of observers can be found in the *2019 Commonwealth Handbook on Election Observation*. For more information on the Commonwealth's efforts to promote democracy, please visit the Commonwealth Secretariat website.

## 1.4. Deployment of a CET to the 2026 general election in Barbados

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Hon. Shirley Botchwey, constituted a CET (or 'the Team') for the general election held on 11 February 2026 in Barbados, following an invitation from the Hon. Mia Amor Mottley SC MP, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and National Security.

## 1.5. CET composition

The CET was led by Sarah Lucy Flood-Beaubrun, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations; and Speaker of the House of Assembly of Saint Lucia.

The Team comprised four eminent persons drawn from across the Commonwealth. Experts brought together a diversity of expertise in the fields of electoral management, law, civil society and politics, among others. A two-person staff team from the Commonwealth Secretariat supported the Team in-country, with further assistance provided from Commonwealth headquarters in London. A full list of members can be found in Annex I.



*Members of CET and the Commonwealth Secretariat Staff Team*

## 1.6. Terms of reference

The mandate and agreed terms of reference for the CET were as follows. The CET will:

- Assess the extent to which the elections are conducted in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Barbados and with relevant international and regional commitments, including those reflected in Commonwealth principles and the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation;
- Examine those aspects of the electoral process that may affect its credibility, transparency, inclusiveness and peacefulness, including the legal framework; the work and independence of the Electoral & Boundaries Commission (EBC); voter registration; candidate and party nomination; campaigning; media and information environment; the role of state institutions and security agencies; participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities (PWDs); and polling, counting, tabulation and announcement of results;
- Provide an independent and evidence-based assessment of whether the various stages of the process contribute to elections that are transparent, competitive and credible, identifying both good practices and areas for potential improvement;

- Submit a report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who may take relevant action and/or forward the CET Report to the Government of Barbados, the EBC and other stakeholders. The CET will also be free to propose such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections during the report.

## 1.7. Activities

The Team was in Barbados from 5 to 17 February 2026. The announcement of the CET was made on 5 February (Annex II).

The CET met with a broad range of stakeholders, including the President HE the Most Honourable Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey D. Bostic FC MVO; the Honourable Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley SC MP; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business the Honourable Kerrie D. Symmonds MP; Chair of the EBC Ramon Alleyne; the Honourable Chief Justice Leslie Haynes QC; Speaker of the House of Assembly His Honour Arthur Eugene Holder SC MP; Attorney General the Honourable Dale Dermot Marshall SC MP; Human Rights Commissioner Dr Kerryann Ifill; Commissioner of Police Richard Boyce; Leader of the Democratic Labour Party Ralph Thorne KC; Acting Director of Public Prosecutions Alliston Seale SC; the diplomatic community; Caribbean Community (CARICOM) election observers; political parties; media houses; representatives of academia; and civil society organisations representing the interests of young people, women and persons with disabilities.

On 11 February, members of the Team were able to deploy to 29 of the 30 constituencies (see Table 4 for constituency names). On deployment, Experts observed voting, counting, transmission of results from polling stations in those areas and tabulation at the constituency level.

On 13 February, Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Hon. Shirley Botchwey, issued a public statement warmly congratulating the people of Barbados on the successful conduct of the 2026 general election, and noted the peaceful participation, civic engagement and clear expression of the popular will as reflected in the results.

The CET proposed recommendations, as captured in this report, which was completed in Bridgetown before the Team's departure on 17 February 2026, for transmission to the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

## 2. Political background

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the political context for the 2026 general election in Barbados. This is the first election to which the Government of Barbados has invited international and regional observers.

### 2.2. Historical background

Barbados' political context in the 2026 elections had been shaped by a long history of colonial exploitation and labour struggle that eventually produced strong democratic institutions. The island was established as an English (later British) colony in 1627 and governed initially through proprietary rule. Its economy was built on sugar and chattel slavery, with severe exploitation persisting through slavery (abolished in 1834) and post-emancipation 'apprenticeship' and low-wage labour systems.

Social unrest (notably the 1876 confederation riots and the 1937 labour mobilisations) was pivotal in expanding political rights, leading to universal adult suffrage in 1951 and independence in 1966. Since independence, Barbados has been widely regarded as a stable parliamentary democracy with competitive elections, strong adherence to constitutionalism and peaceful transfers of power, traditionally dominated by two major parties: the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and the Democratic Labour Party (DLP).

The transition to a parliamentary republic in 2021, replacing the British monarch with a Barbadian president, did not alter the core electoral framework. For election observers, key relevance lies in the country's strong democratic norms, high institutional capacity and historical sensitivity to labour rights and political inclusion, which continue to influence voter engagement and political discourse.

### 2.3. Economic environment and politics

Barbados is a services-led, tourism-dependent economy that has grown as visitor demand has normalised following the impact of Covid-19. This includes high cruise tourism, visitors attending cultural events and the famous Soup Bowl site popular with surfers.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated real gross domestic product growth of about 4.0 per cent in 2024, with average inflation of 1.4 per cent. Growth is expected to moderate, with the Central Bank of Barbados projecting around 2.7 per cent growth in 2025 and the IMF projecting 2.1 per cent in 2026. Policy priorities focus on resilience and competitiveness rather than commodity-led expansion.

Politically, the BLP frames these outcomes as evidence of progress under its home-grown reform agenda (including the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation programme and related fiscal/institutional measures), while seeking to manage distributional pressures through consultative mechanisms – most notably the 2022 Social Compact on Prices, which used temporary value-added tax/import duty relief and mark-up limits on selected staples to address cost-of-living concerns. Public expectations around affordability, service reliability and climate resilience have further elevated delivery on energy and water security. The Government of Barbados targets a 100 per cent renewable, carbon-neutral energy system by 2030, and the 2024 debt-for-climate resilience swap has been presented as enabling increased investment in resilience priorities, including water and wastewater infrastructure.

In opposition, the DLP and other critics have continued to emphasise cost-of-living pressures and taxation (including value-added tax) as central political issues. At the same time, the governing party's clean-sweep victories in the 2018 and 2022 elections have enabled rapid policy passage but reduced formal parliamentary scrutiny in the absence of an elected opposition leader (until a BLP member crossed the floor in each case and became the appointed leader of the opposition – and the single opposition member in the House of Assembly). This has increased the need for transparency, oversight institutions and consultative governance in sustaining legitimacy.

## 2.4. Contemporary political context

Barbadian society predominantly comprises persons of African descent, with an estimated resident population of approximately 280,000. Barbados is a member of, among other groups, CARICOM and the Commonwealth. English is the official language and is used in public administration and services. Barbados' general elections are parliamentary, with candidates contesting 30 single-member constituencies for seats in the House of Assembly (with party leaders typically presenting themselves as prospective prime minister).

Electoral competition is historically anchored in the two main parties – the BLP and the DLP – although smaller parties and independents also contest elections.

The judicial system is rooted in the common law tradition, and the Caribbean Court of Justice sits, as the apex court in its appellate jurisdiction, as the final court of appeal.

## 2.5. Current environment

### 2.5.1. Campaign environment

Barbados is characterised as a country that regularly conducts competitive elections and generally upholds civil liberties, supporting an overall expectation of a peaceful campaign environment. Despite the 11 February 2026 general election being called less than a month prior (17 January 2026), political activity was visible across Barbados, with multiple parties and candidates contesting, using a mix of rallies, walkabouts and community meetings. Elections according to the law were due to be called on or before January 2027. According to the Constitution of Barbados, the Parliament shall stand dissolved no later than every five years from the first sitting of Parliament. By virtue of Section 61 of the Constitution, 'subject to the provisions of subsection (4), Parliament, unless sooner dissolved, shall continue for five years from the date of its first sitting after any dissolution and shall then stand dissolved.'

In the lead-up to nomination day (27 January 2026), public debate featured claims by opposition and emerging parties that aspects of the electoral environment, particularly concerns relating to the voters' register and the compressed timetable, risked undermining confidence in the process. Election authorities reported operational readiness and proceeded with nominations. Claims progressed through formal administrative steps, with election authorities publicly reaffirming the integrity of the process. The final voters' list was released on Friday 6 February 2026.

In the end, 93 candidates were nominated, including the two largest slates from the BLP and the DLP, alongside smaller parties, independent candidates and alliances. The campaign included points of friction typical of a competitive contest, especially around the placement of campaign materials.

In January 2026, the Barbados Light & Power Company publicly warned parties and supporters against placing posters and signage on utility poles owing to risks to safety for the public and line workers, and urged removal of unauthorised materials; parties responded by referencing internal guidelines such as the need to avoid improper placement and use of nails, staples or unsafe mounting practices and affirmed that traffic signs and restricted public assets were off-limits for signage but that signage-appropriate spaces, including private property with the owner's consent, campaign offices, temporary frames and other lawful advertising locations, were suitable.

These issues, amplified through social media and local reporting, have contributed to ongoing debate about responsible campaigning and the need for clear, consistently applied rules.

Concerns regarding a 'level playing field' in Barbados were addressed in part through the legal framework governing political broadcasts during an election period (see Chapter 5: The campaign and the media).

### 2.5.2. Political participation

In Barbados, public debate has underscored how the broader political finance environment can affect perceptions of fairness in political participation. The 2024 *Report of the Parliamentary Reform Commission* notes that the annual political party subvention is currently payable only to parties that have won a seat in

the House of Assembly and records that, following the 2018 and 2022 general elections, the subvention was payable only to the governing party in the absence of a parliamentary opposition.

In May 2025, national commentary in the press highlighted a dispute regarding parliamentary subventions between the major parties and argued that it exposed the absence of comprehensive campaign finance regulation, including clearer transparency rules. Separate civil society commentary during the 2022 election period similarly emphasised that legislation specifically addressing campaign finance had not yet been enacted and advocated reforms to strengthen accountability and public confidence in the electoral contest.

### 2.5.3. Access to information

Stakeholders have voiced concerns including:

- Delays in advancing a comprehensive, enforceable access-to-information framework (including the continued development of an Access to Information Bill), which may limit structured public access to official records;
- The limited scope of routinely published political finance information, where the legal framework and public reporting are more clearly oriented towards candidate election expense returns and summaries rather than comprehensive, party-level financing and donor transparency;
- The extent to which the EBC's internal deliberations and decision-making rationale are proactively disclosed, given that public-facing reporting exists (including general election reporting) but broader disclosure norms may be strengthened by a fully operational access-to-information regime.

### 2.5.4. Use of state resources for campaigns

Several stakeholder concerns in Barbados focus less on specific incidents and more on the structural risk of an 'incumbency advantage' in a setting with limited campaign finance regulation prohibiting the use of public resources for partisan purposes. These conditions may generate controversy when government communications, ministerial visits or high-visibility announcements during an election period are perceived to blur the line between normal state functions and the electoral interests of the incumbent.

The General Orders, Order 3.18.1, prohibit public officers and employees from 'participat[ing] actively in politics,' including being adopted as a candidate, canvassing, acting as an agent or sub-agent, holding office in a political organisation or speaking at political meetings. They also restrict participation in politically or administratively oriented broadcasts without prior approval.

## 2.6. Key campaign issues for the 2026 general election

Key campaign issues for the 2026 general election included the following.

### 2.6.1. Election timing and voters' list

In the lead-up to the 11 February 2026 general election, political debate in Barbados intensified around the early timing of the poll and the integrity of the voters' list, both of which became central campaign issues. The opposition DLP, led by Ralph Thorne, and other opposition stakeholders had formally called for a postponement of up to 30 days, arguing that this was a 'snap election' – called more than a year before it was constitutionally due in 2027 – with a compressed timeframe that they argued limited the EBC's ability to adequately audit and correct the electoral register. As mentioned above, the announcement of the election date was made in accordance with statutory provisions.

In response to mounting public scrutiny and to protect confidence in the process, the government invited election observers from CARICOM and The Commonwealth. The issue of the accuracy of the final voters' list and the short lead-time to polling day remained contentious, with opposition calls for postponement and the possibility of legal action contributing to an intense public debate over electoral administration, transparency and trust in the process. No legal action was initiated by the opposition.

### 2.6.2. Cost of living and the economy

Media reporting from the campaign trail highlighted policy pledges centred on immediate relief measures (including cash support and tax relief) as well as longer-term interventions aimed at cushioning households and strengthening economic resilience. Campaign discourse linked domestic affordability pressures to global price shocks and imported inflation, while disputing the adequacy and targeting of government responses.

### 2.6.3. Crime and public safety

Crime and public safety, especially gun violence, was another campaign issue. Reporting on recent crime trends emphasised the role of firearms in serious violence and framed public safety as a pressing governance challenge requiring both enforcement and preventive responses.

Against this context, campaign messaging included proposals for institutional strengthening of policing and prosecution capacity, and publicly reported initiatives such as the establishment of a dedicated gun court, alongside other measures aimed at improving the effectiveness of law enforcement and case processing.

### 2.6.4. National infrastructure

The campaign environment reflected public concern around water reliability, sewage and wastewater treatment, drainage and the upkeep and resilience of key networks, issues amplified by climate variability and extreme rainfall events.

### 2.6.5. Role of the opposition

The 2022 general election resulted in the governing BLP party winning all 30 seats in the House of Assembly, generating sustained public debate about scrutiny, oversight and the functioning of parliamentary opposition in practice.

In the final weeks of the February 2026 election campaign, the role of the opposition became a central point of debate, particularly concerning the restoration of parliamentary oversight after two successive 'clean sweeps' by the ruling BLP.

Within this context, several contesting parties framed their participation in 2026 explicitly around restoring political balance, strengthening accountability and avoiding a repeat of a one-party parliament. This theme intersected with wider calls for improved transparency in public decision-making and stronger checks and balances.

#### Competing visions for the opposition

- **The DLP's resurgence.** The **DLP** under Thorne positioned itself as the only credible alternative to the BLP, promising to lower taxes and pass anti-gang legislation. It argued that it had 'built quietly' over the previous two years to present a full slate of capable candidates.
- **Emergence of third parties.** New groups like **Friends of Democracy (FoD)** explicitly campaigned for the role of a 'strong and vibrant opposition'. FoD leader Karina Goodridge opined that many voters felt that there had been no true representation for years and that a more varied slate of candidates would motivate participation.
- **Concerns regarding vote-splitting.** Political analysts warned that the fragmentation of anti-BLP votes between the DLP and smaller parties weakened the opposition's chances of securing any seats at all, potentially inadvertently helping the incumbent BLP maintain its dominance.

#### Government perspective

- **Firm leadership vs 'wait-and-see'.** Prime Minister Mia Mottley defended her government's performance as providing 'firm leadership' and stability in uncertain times. The BLP campaign often contrasted its 'seasoned team' and record of delivery with what it described as a 'wait-and-see' or unready opposition.

### 2.6.6. Global economics and security

Global economic conditions featured in the campaign narrative, given Barbados' exposure to external shocks through tourism demand, imported food and fuel prices, international interest rates and global supply chain disruptions. The IMF's published programme review for Barbados (2025) reflects this vulnerability by situating domestic performance within an external environment where global dynamics materially influence inflation, growth and financing conditions.

In addition, climate security and disaster risk continued to shape economic discourse. As a result, the campaign environment linked domestic development priorities to international finance, climate adaptation and the country's positioning within wider geopolitical and economic uncertainty.

## 2.7. Contesting parties and candidates

A total number of 93 candidates contested the 11 February 2026 general election. The contesting parties and candidate slates included independents, the incumbent BLP and the main opposition DLP, alongside newer or smaller parties and alliances – namely, the FoD, the People's Coalition for Progress (PCP) (a coalition involving the New National Party (NNP), the United Progressive Party (UPP) and the Conservative Barbados Leadership Party (CBLP)), Barbados Sovereignty Party (BSP), Solutions Barbados (SB), the Bajan Free Party (BFP) and Reform Barbados (RB).



*Members of CET meeting with the Prime Minister of Barbados, The Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, S.C., MP*

**Table 1. Contesting parties and candidates**

Party	Acronym	Party leader
Barbados Labour Party	BLP	Mia Mottley (Leader)
Democratic Labour Party	DLP	Ralph Thorne (Leader)
Friends of Democracy	FoD	Karina Goodridge (President)
People's Coalition for Progress	PCP	Coalition of NNP/UPP/CBLP (multiple leaders) Corey Beckles, Founder and President of CBLP Ambrosia Grosvenor, Chair of UPP Kemar Stuart, Founder and President of NNP
Solutions Barbados	SB	Grenville Phillips II (President)
Barbados Sovereignty Party	BSP	Michael Thompson (General Secretary)
Bajan Free Party	BFP	Alex Mitchell (Leader)
Reform Barbados	RB	Steve Prescott (Leader)

## 2.8. Results of elections 1966–2026

Table 2. Barbados election results 1966–2026 (colour denotes victorious party)

Year	Voter turnout	BLP result	DLP result	Third party
2026	41% <sup>1</sup>	30 seats; 69.83%; Mia Mottley	0 seats; 27.31%; Ralph Thorne	
2022	42.97%	30 seats; 69.26%; Mia Mottley	0 seats; 26.41%; Verla Da Peiza;	
2018	59.56%	30 seats; 73.47%; Mia Mottley	0 seats; 21.8%; Freundel Stuart	
2013	62.02%	14 seats; 48.22%; Owen Arthur	16 seats; 51.30%; Freundel Stuart	
2008	63.54%	10 seats; 47.16%; Owen Arthur	20 seats; 52.55%; David Thompson	
2003	56.88%	23 seats; 55.80%; Owen Arthur	7 seats; 22.09%; Clyde Mascoll	
1999	63.36%	26 seats; 64.87%; Owen Arthur	2 seats; 35.08%; David Thompson	
1994	60.89%	19 seats; 48.34%; Owen Arthur	18 seats; 38.33%; David Thompson	1 seat; 12.77%; Richard Haynes; NDP
1991	63.72%	10 seats; 43.03%; Henry Forde	18 seats; 49.77%; Erskine Sandiford	
1986	76.70%	3 seats; 40.37%; Bernard St John	24 seats; 59.45%; Errol Barrow	
1981	71.58%	17 seats ; 52.22%; Tom Adams	10 seats; 47.13%; Errol Barrow	
1976	74.09%	17 seats; 52.69%; Tom Adams	7 seats; 46.44%; Errol Barrow	
1971	81.62%	6 seats; 42.41%; Bernard St John	18 seats; 57.40%; Errol Barrow	
1966	79.70%	8 seats; 32.60%; Grantley Adams	14 seats; 49.56%; Errol Barrow	2 seats; 10.13%; Ernest Mot- tley; BNP

Note: The 1966 general election was held 27 days prior to independence, under a two-member constituency method whereby each voter had two votes.

1 CBC (2026) 'Voter Turnout Holds Steady at 41% Despite Participation Concerns'. 13 February. [www.cbc.bb/news/local-news/voter-turnout-holds-steady-at-41-despite-participation-concerns/](http://www.cbc.bb/news/local-news/voter-turnout-holds-steady-at-41-despite-participation-concerns/)

**Table 3. Candidate breakdown by party, 2026 general election**

• <b>Barbados Labour Party (BLP):</b> 30 candidates
• <b>Democratic Labour Party (DLP):</b> 30 candidates
• <b>Friends of Democracy (FoD):</b> 12 candidates
• <b>People's Coalition for Progress (PCP):</b> 12 candidates
• <b>Bajan Free Party (BFP):</b> 3 candidates
• <b>Solutions Barbados (SB):</b> 1 candidate
• <b>Barbados Sovereignty Party (BSP):</b> 1 candidate
• <b>Reform Barbados (RB):</b> 1 candidate
• <b>Independents:</b> 2 candidates



*Members of CET meeting with the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Ralph Thorne KC*

## 2.9. Political code of conduct

There was no election-specific code of conduct for political parties for the 2026 general election.

In Barbados, expected standards of campaign behaviour are framed primarily through (i) the electoral offences regime (offences include intimidation, undue influence, bribery/treating and false statements about candidates) and (ii) public service neutrality and ethics rules that restrict political activity by public officers.

A number of stakeholders pointed to vote-buying and treating as a significant concern. They indicated that they had heard instances of this occurring in previous elections, particularly to woo younger voters, but no evidence was presented to confirm these allegations, either in previous elections or in the 11 February 2026 election.

## 2.10. Election security

There were no reported security incidents on nomination day or on election day.

Election security arrangements were implemented primarily through the Barbados Police Service, with security resourcing and deployment co-ordinated to support key electoral milestones. The risk profile for the 11 February 2026 general election in Barbados was low to moderate, with the principal security considerations arising related to the general public safety environment (particularly firearm-related violence) and the management of election day order at nomination centres, polling stations and counting venues.

Recent reporting indicated that Barbados had faced sustained concern regarding gun violence and organised criminal activity, with policing strategies explicitly framed around firearm-related crime and the disruption of gangs and drug trafficking networks.

Election day security was governed by a clear legal framework regulating conduct at and near polling stations. The Election Offences and Controversies Act establishes election day offences and restrictions (including provisions addressing undue influence and other corrupt practices, and rules designed to prevent disruption and preserve order). (See Chapter 3: Electoral framework and administration.)

Stakeholder concerns during the 2026 cycle focused less on expectations of election unrest and more on whether administrative disputes, particularly surrounding the electoral roll, could elevate tensions or undermine confidence in the process. The CET observed that election day and the days immediately thereafter were marked by the peaceful acceptance of the election results.



*Members of CET meeting with the Police*

## 2.11. Recommendations

### **Electoral timelines and voters' list integrity**

- Conduct a national consultation on whether legal provisions governing early election calls may be adjusted to allow, among other things, adequate time for voter register verification.
- Enhance public education campaigns encouraging proactive verification of voter registration status.

- Publish detailed explanations of voter list revisions, including removals and reinstatements, to mitigate mistrust.

### **Level playing field and political competition**

- Review the framework governing parliamentary subventions, ensuring transparent and equitable access and decision-making around public funding to political parties.
- Develop clearer statutory safeguards addressing use of state resources in campaign contexts, including guidance on ministerial announcements during election periods.
- Encourage cross-party dialogue on formalising a Political Code of Conduct, including voluntary commitments exceeding statutory minima.
- Strengthen oversight mechanisms protecting neutrality of the public service, including public reporting channels for alleged breaches.

### **Candidate nomination procedures**

- Review nomination procedures to reduce administrative burdens, including extending the time for nomination, reconsidering the mandatory physical presence of four supporting voters.
- Provide clearer guidance, advance briefing and training to parties and prospective candidates to avoid last-minute procedural complications.

### **Campaign finance transparency**

- Enact comprehensive political party and finance legislation, including donor disclosure and third-party spending rules.
- Enact comprehensive political party registration, including rules around composition, structure, legal application to election authority, financial audits, minimum membership thresholds, party constitution and governance rules, commitment to constitutional order, financial transparency, unique name, physical office and registration fees.
- Publish party and candidate expense returns in an accessible online database.
- Strengthen enforcement of existing reporting deadlines, including proportionate sanctions.
- Promote transparency regarding campaign contributions and expenditure within a stipulated time.

### **Opposition, accountability and parliamentary balance**

- Encourage institutional dialogue on strengthening parliamentary oversight, particularly following landslide electoral outcomes.
- Consider mechanisms enhancing minority party voice.

### **Public trust and democratic resilience**

- Develop a multi-stakeholder post-election review process, involving political parties, civil society and electoral authorities.
- Enhance publication of institutional decision-making rationales, particularly regarding contentious administrative decisions.
- Institutionalise regular engagement with domestic and international observers, embedding election observation as standard democratic practice.

# 3. Electoral framework and administration

## 3.1. Electoral/legal framework and key legal issues

Barbados administers elections through a comprehensive array of legal instruments. These include:

- **Constitution of Barbados (as amended)**. Supreme legal framework establishing constitutional rules relevant to elections, including provisions relating to the EBC and constituency boundary review.
- **Representation of the People Act (ROPA), Cap. 12 (as amended)**. The core statute governing nominations, polling, counting, election officers, offences and the 'Rules for the Conduct of House of Assembly Elections' (Second Schedule).
- **Representation of the People (General Elections) Allocation of Broadcasting Time Regulations, 1990**. Subsidiary rules on allocating broadcast time during campaigns.
- **Barbados Identity Management Act, 2021**. Framework for the National Registration System, supporting voter registration and identity verification.
- **National Registration Act, 2015**. Statutory basis for national registration, overseen by the chief registering officer within the EBC's remit.
- **Representation of the People (Registration of Voters) Regulations, 1990**. Procedures for registering voters and maintaining the voters' list.
- **Election Offences and Controversies Act, Cap. 3 (and Rules, 1959)**. Provisions for electoral offences and dispute resolution, including petitions.
- **Public Order Act, Cap. 168A**. Regulations on public meetings and marches, also covering offences like incitement to racial hatred.
- **Barbados Identity Management Systems Act, 2021**. Modern digital identity system featuring chip-enabled Trident ID cards, superseding legacy methods.

## 3.2. House of Assembly elections

The House of Assembly comprises 30 members, each elected from a single-member constituency under a first-past-the-post system. Parliament's maximum term spans five years from its first sitting post-dissolution, with writs returnable within 90 days thereafter.

The president appoints the prime minister from house of assembly members best able to command majority confidence, as leader of government business in the house and head of government.

According to s.43 and s.44(1) of the Constitution of Barbados, a candidate may qualify for House of Assembly election if the person (s. 43):

- (i) Is a citizen of Barbados of at least 21 years old;
- (ii) Satisfies such residence requirements (if any) as may be prescribed by Parliament;

With both subject to the following (s.44(1)):

- (i) Not by virtue of their own act under any acknowledgement of allegiance, obedience or adherence to a foreign power or state;
- (ii) Not certified to be insane;
- (iii) A person not otherwise adjudged to be of unsound mind under any law in force in Barbados;

- (iv) Not under sentence of death imposed by a court in any part of the Commonwealth;
- (v) Not serving (or under a suspended execution of) a sentence of imprisonment exceeding six months imposed by such a court;
- (vi) Not an undischarged bankrupt.
- (vii) Not holding or acting in the office of judge, director of public prosecutions or auditor-general;
- (viii) Not disqualified by or under any law in force in Barbados relating to corrupt or illegal practices at elections;
- (ix) Not disqualified by or under any law in force in Barbados by reason of having made (or subscribed) a false declaration of qualification to be elected.

ROPA provides, in the Second Schedule, under House Assembly Election Rules, the procedure for the nomination of candidates.

### 3.3. Barbados Electoral & Boundaries Commission

Section 41A of the Constitution provides for the establishment of an Electoral & Boundaries Commission (EBC) for Barbados.

The EBC is made up of five members: a chair, a deputy chair and three other members.

The president appoints the chair and two other members of the EBC acting on the recommendation of the prime minister after consultation with the leader of the opposition. The deputy chair and one other member are appointed by the president acting on the recommendation of the leader of the opposition after consultation with the prime minister (Section 41B(3) on the staff of the EBC).

Section 41C of the Constitution sets out the functions of the EBC, which include, among others:

- (i) The registration of voters and the conduct of elections in every constituency (and matters incidental thereto); and
- (ii) The review of constituency boundaries and related recommendations.

The EBC informed that it received an adequate subvention for the conduct of the elections.

The delimitation of boundaries was last done in 2002. The CET was informed that the Cabinet Office was the line ministry for the EBC. Postal services employees were deployed to support the enumeration exercise. The voter notices were sent by the EBC. Under the Barbados postal system, bulk mail bears the stamp of the line ministry from which the mail is sent. In the case of the mailing of the voter notices, these envelopes bore the official stamp of the Cabinet Office, the line ministry of the EBC.

The use of postal services workers for the enumeration and the use of the Cabinet Office official stamp on the EBC bulk mail raised concerns in some quarters about the independence of the EBC from the government.

**Table 4. Electoral constituencies in Barbados**

No.	Constituency	Registered voters	Seats	Polling stations
1	City of Bridgetown	6,717	1	11
2	Christ Church East Central	9,790	1	11
3	Christ Church West Central	8,862	1	10
4	Christ Church East	10,109	1	11
5	Christ Church South	8,320	1	10
6	Christ Church West	8,366	1	10

*(Continued)*

**Table 4. Electoral constituencies in Barbados (Continued)**

No.	Constituency	Registered voters	Seats	Polling stations
7	St. Andrew	9,201	1	13
8	St. George North	9,244	1	9
9	St. George South	10,366	1	13
10	St. James Central	8,066	1	11
11	St. James North	7,810	1	9
12	St. James South	10,640	1	7
13	St. John	9,355	1	15
14	St. Joseph	7,407	1	13
15	St. Lucy	8,834	1	12
16	St. Michael Central	6,493	1	9
17	St. Michael East	8,587	1	12
18	St. Michael North East	8,778	1	9
19	St. Michael North West	7,059	1	10
20	St. Michael North	8,087	1	10
21	St. Michael South Central	7,038	1	11
22	St. Michael South East	8,378	1	9
23	St. Michael South	6,523	1	11
24	St. Michael West Central	7,136	1	8
25	St. Michael West	7,404	1	12
26	St. Peter	9,530	1	11
27	St. Philip North	10,931	1	9
28	St. Philip South	11,795	1	8
29	St. Philip West	10,825	1	10
30	St. Thomas	11,657	1	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>263,308</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>300</b>

Source: EBC Preliminary List.

### 3.4. Recruitment and training of election staff

Under Section 33 of ROPA, the EBC (after consultation with the supervisor of elections) appoints a presiding officer for each polling station (including at foreign services missions). The supervisor of elections appoints the poll clerks for each station. All stations were reportedly adequately staffed. The CET was informed that the training and operational guidance were delivered through the supervisor of elections in accordance with Section 30(1)(a)).

### 3.5. Voter education

The role of the EBC in voter education is highlighted in its official *Report on Barbados General Election 2022*. In 2026, the EBC held an 'ongoing registration outreach programme,' which used print and electronic media to encourage registration, updates of address and readiness for the election, including reminders on identification requirements, voting procedures and offences, and on the availability of assistance for blind, physically incapacitated, illiterate or otherwise challenged voters.

The EBC also used direct elector communications (circulars) to inform voters of their assigned polling districts and polling stations and confirmed that voters could locate their polling stations through the EBC website by querying its chatbot.

Through its website, the EBC provided a range of resources, including downloadable registration-related forms and online frequently asked questions (FAQs). Information on polling centres, district registration, nomination and counting centres, and the EBC and its processes, as well as contact details, were readily accessible, as were previous EBC self-assessment reports from previous elections.

The EBC maintains an official social media presence to disseminate notices and updates to the public. Its Facebook page features FAQs and instructional videos from prior elections and registration drives. EBC's Instagram account and YouTube channel also supported voter education.

### 3.6. Right to vote

To vote in a general election in Barbados, a person must be registered as an elector and, on the qualifying date, be:

- (i) a citizen of Barbados aged 18 years or over who has resided in the relevant constituency for at least three months; or
- (ii) a Commonwealth citizen aged 18 years or over who has resided in Barbados for at least three years immediately before the qualifying date and has resided in the relevant constituency for at least three months (subject to the foreign service elector provisions) (ROPA, Section 70).

### 3.7. Election offences

Barbados' legal and administrative framework stipulates the following requirements.

- (i) Opposing and rejecting intimidation, harassment, threats and other conduct that interferes with the free exercise of the franchise (including 'undue influence' and other corrupt/illegal practices), and prohibitions on disruptive conduct in the vicinity of polling stations;
- (ii) Recognition and respect for competing parties, their candidates and agents, including refraining from conduct that unlawfully obstructs campaigning or suppresses lawful political participation;
- (iii) Opposing and rejecting intimidation or harassment of media workers and interference with election-related reporting, recognising the media's lawful role in political debate and scrutiny;
- (iv) Avoidance of inflammatory behaviour that could escalate community tension, including coercive or threatening rhetoric that could amount to intimidation or undue influence in an electoral context;
- (v) Refraining from politically directed misuse of public office and public resources, reinforced by the neutrality obligations and restrictions on political activity applicable to public officers under the public service framework and General Orders;
- (vi) Ensuring campaign publications comply with election publication requirements (including identification requirements) and avoiding false statements that may constitute an offence.

### 3.8. Dispute resolution and election petitions

Barbados operates under a common law legal system. Disputes are primarily resolved through the EBC, and election petitions may subsequently be addressed through the Election Court.

Election petitions in Barbados are governed by the following.

- The Constitution of Barbados, which guarantees the right to free and fair elections and provides for judicial oversight of electoral disputes.
- ROPA, which sets out detailed rules governing elections, including procedures for challenging election results.
- The Election Offences and Controversies Act (Cap. 3), providing for presentation of petitions, hearing and trial.

The following fall under Part IV of the Election Offences and Controversies Act.

**Section 36(1)** provides that no election of a member to serve in the House of Assembly and no return to the House of Assembly shall be questioned except by a petition complaining of an undue election or undue return presented in accordance with the Act.

**Section 37(1)** identifies persons entitled to present an election petition, including the following.

- A person who voted or had the right to vote in the election.
- A person claiming to have been a candidate at the election.

The petition must be presented against the elected or returned member at the election, or, in appropriate cases, the returning officer.

**Section 38** also establishes strict time limits for filing an election petition following the return of the writ.

The Act also provides that an election petition may be brought on several grounds, including:

- irregularities or illegal practices during the electoral process;
- corrupt practices such as bribery, treating or undue influence;
- ineligibility of a candidate;
- errors in counting or tabulation of votes; or
- non-compliance with electoral laws that materially affect the outcome of the election.

The petitioner must generally demonstrate that the alleged wrongdoing had a substantial impact on the election result.

**Section 39** provides that each election petition be tried by an Election Court, comprising three judges. Petitions must be filed within 21 days of the declaration of results.

**Section 44** provides that:

- (i) An election petition shall be tried in open court without a jury and notice of the time and place of trial shall be given in the prescribed manner not less than 14 days before the day of trial.
- (ii) The Election Court may in its discretion adjourn the trial from time to time, but the trial shall, so far as is practicable consistently with the interests of justice in respect of the trial, be continued from day to day on every lawful day until its conclusion.
- (iii) The trial of an election petition shall be proceeded with notwithstanding the prorogation of Parliament.
- (iv) On the trial of an election petition complaining of an undue election and claiming the seat for some person, the respondent may give evidence to prove that that person was not duly elected in the same manner as if he had presented an election petition against the election of that person.
- (v) Where on the trial of an election petition it appears that there is an equality of votes between any candidates at the election and that the addition of a vote would entitle any of those candidates to be elected, the Election Court shall determine the election of any such candidate to be void.

**Section 46** provides that, upon determining an election petition, the court may:

- Declare an election void;
- Confirm the validity of an election;
- Declare another candidate duly elected; or
- Grant other relief as permitted by law.

Decisions of the Election Court may be appealed to the Court of Appeal and ultimately to the Caribbean Court of Justice.

The CET was informed that few charges of election offences had ever been brought. However, there were many unsubstantiated allegations of vote-buying, prohibited by Section 6 of the Election Offences and Controversies Act.

Barbados has had two prominent cases of election disputes decided by the courts: Eddy Ventose v. Chief Electoral Officer et al. (2018) and Philip Catlyn v. The Attorney General and the President (2022).

### 3.9. Recommendations

#### **Electoral framework and legal reform**

- Consolidate and modernise electoral legislation to enhance coherence, reduce fragmentation across multiple statutes and regulations, and improve accessibility for stakeholders.
- Review ROPA and subsidiary regulations to identify procedural gaps, ambiguities and areas requiring alignment with contemporary electoral practice.
- Undertake a timely review of constituency boundaries, in accordance with constitutional provisions, to ensure compliance with principles of equal suffrage and periodic delimitation.

#### **Independence and governance of the EBC**

- Reinforce public confidence in the independence of the EBC through enhanced transparency in decision-making and public communication.
- Publish detailed operational reports after each election cycle, including voter registration statistics, complaints received and remedial measures taken.
- Consider the publication of periodic external audits of electoral operations, including voter list management and procurement processes.
- Consider structured multi-stakeholder consultation mechanisms, including with political parties and civil society, particularly on voter register maintenance and boundary review processes.

#### **Voter education and public communication**

- Strengthen ongoing voter education programmes, with targeted outreach on registration requirements and the right to vote.
- Clarify eligibility requirements for first-time voters, particularly regarding the linkage between national ID issuance at 16 and voting rights at 18.
- Partner with civil society, youth organisations and educational institutions to improve voter awareness among young and first-time voters.
- Deploy multimedia campaigns closer to polling day explaining procedures, rights and available assistance for vulnerable voters.

#### **Dispute resolution and electoral justice**

- Encourage proactive investigation of credible allegations of corrupt practices, to reinforce deterrence.

#### **Institutional confidence and public trust**

- Develop a structured post-election stakeholder dialogue process, to address systemic concerns and lessons learned.
- Implement measurable performance indicators for electoral management, to track improvements over successive election cycles.
- Enhance transparency surrounding voter list updates and boundary reviews, as confidence in these areas is central to institutional trust.

### **Use of technology and modernisation**

- Leverage the Barbados Identity Management Systems framework to improve data integrity and voter verification.
- Explore secure digital innovations, including electronic register management systems and internal results transmission mechanisms (subject to stakeholder consultation).
- Ensure that technological reforms are accompanied by adequate safeguards, training and public education.

# 4. Participation and inclusion

This chapter examines citizen participation and inclusion in the electoral process, highlighting opportunities and challenges for civil society organisations (CSOs), youth, women and PWDs during the 2026 general election.

## 4.1. The legal framework for political inclusion and participation

The legal framework for political participation in Barbados is based primarily on the following:

- Constitution of Barbados;
- ROPA, Cap. 12;
- Barbados Identity Management Systems Act, 2021;
- Representation of the People (General Elections) Allocation of Broadcasting Time Regulations, 1990;
- Election Offences and Controversies Act, Cap. 3;
- Elections Offences and Controversies Rules, 1959;
- Representation of the People (Registration of Voters) Regulations, 1990.

Barbados has also acceded to or signed major international treaties, including:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD);
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

## 4.2. Women's political inclusion

In the 2022–2026 Administration, women held:

- Eight of 30 House of Assembly seats (26%) and
- Six of 21 Senate seats (29%).

Prime Minister the Hon. Mia Amor Mottley, now in her third term, became the first woman to lead Barbados. The Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs oversees gender affairs, with the Bureau of Gender Affairs embedding gender considerations across national plans and policies.

The DLP's Democratic League of Women advanced gender equality in policy and manifestos. The BLP Women's League addressed similar areas for the BLP, including fundraising, hosting events and advocacy campaigns.

A UN Women Beijing +30 Report on the 30 years since the 1995 *Beijing Declaration* commended successive Barbadian governments for prioritising gender equality. Achievements have included a strengthened Family Conflict Intervention Unit, a new Sex Crimes and Trafficking Unit and specialised training for judges, magistrates and police on gender-based violence. Female candidacies have risen steadily in number in general election.

The National Organisation of Women co-ordinates women's groups island-wide. The Tracking Progress Barbados system gathers data on social issues, naming gender equality among its three priorities. As in other countries in the region, gender-based violence and access to credible disaggregated data are among the challenges facing authorities and CSOs.

There is no legal provision nor policy – such as temporary special measures, quotas or legislated minimum thresholds – to promote women’s participation in politics nor in Parliament.



*Members of CET meeting with the National Organisation of Women*

**Table 5. Composition of electorates in Barbados by sex**

No.	Constituency	Male	Female	Total	Male share (%)	Female share (%)
1	City of Bridgetown	3,525	3,192	6,717	52.48	47.52
2	Christ Church East Central	4,433	5,357	9,790	45.29	54.71
3	Christ Church West Central	4,143	4,719	8,862	46.78	53.22
4	Christ Church East	4,813	5,296	10,109	47.61	52.39
5	Christ Church South	3,953	4,367	8,320	47.51	52.49
6	Christ Church West	3,894	4,472	8,366	46.56	53.44
7	St. Andrew	4,613	4,588	9,201	50.14	49.86
8	St. George North	4,418	4,826	9,244	47.79	52.21
9	St. George South	4,943	5,423	10,366	47.69	52.31
10	St. James Central	3,820	4,246	8,066	47.37	52.63
11	St. James North	3,750	4,060	7,810	48.02	51.98
12	St. James South	4,789	5,851	10,640	45.01	54.99
13	St. John	4,706	4,649	9,355	50.30	49.70
14	St. Joseph	3,703	3,704	7,407	49.99	50.01
15	St. Lucy	4,356	4,478	8,834	49.31	50.69
16	St. Michael Central	3,210	3,283	6,493	49.44	50.56

*(Continued)*

**Table 5. Composition of electorates in Barbados by sex (Continued)**

No.	Constituency	Male	Female	Total	Male share (%)	Female share (%)
17	St. Michael East	4,171	4,416	8,587	48.58	51.42
18	St. Michael North East	4,220	4,558	8,778	48.07	51.93
19	St. Michael North West	3,489	3,570	7,059	49.42	50.58
20	St. Michael North	3,826	4,261	8,087	47.33	52.67
21	St. Michael South Central	3,311	3,727	7,038	47.05	52.95
22	St. Michael South East	4,026	4,352	8,378	48.05	51.95
23	St. Michael South	3,169	3,354	6,523	48.59	51.41
24	St. Michael West Central	3,339	3,797	7,136	46.79	53.21
25	St. Michael West	3,710	3,694	7,404	50.11	49.89
26	St. Peter	4,616	4,914	9,530	48.43	51.57
27	St. Philip North	5,167	5,764	10,931	47.28	52.72
28	St. Philip South	5,440	6,355	11,795	46.12	53.88
29	St. Philip West	5,002	5,823	10,825	46.21	53.79
30	St. Thomas	5,509	6,148	11,657	47.26	52.74
<b>Total</b>		<b>126,064</b>	<b>137,244</b>	<b>263,308</b>	<b>47.87</b>	<b>52.13</b>

Source: EBC provisional list published on 19 January 2026.

Stakeholders agreed gender posed no entry barrier to political parties, though advancement to senior party positions has proved uneven. There seems to be no structured mentoring for female candidates, although some suggested Prime Minister Mottley's political success could inspire more women to enter the political space.

Women's groups commented that the EBC could improve its education and support. Other stakeholders said private sector campaign financing favoured male candidates, rendering campaigns cost-prohibitive for women. Women stakeholders mentioned that the B\$250 nomination fee was not a deterrent to women's participation.

### 4.3. Persons with disabilities

According to Census data, approximately 5.3 per cent of people in Barbados are living with disabilities (2010 figures), though some estimates suggest higher rates. Up to 90 per cent of this group are unemployed, and young people living with disabilities are often unevenly provided for across the country.

The National Disabilities Unit facilitates, advocates and promotes the advancement and empowerment of PWDs, and, among other projects, conducts regular surveys of PWDs to improve services. The Ministry of Health and Wellness maintains specialist centres to assist PWDs and persons with special medical needs.

The Barbados Council for the Disabled is the leading organisation advocating for this community, an umbrella organisation of 17 affiliated groups.<sup>2</sup> Its projects include improving mobility access to hurricane shelters, improving teaching resources for children living with learning disabilities and the Fully Accessible Barbados Project, which aims to improve access and provisions for PWDs throughout the country (including public transport and access to tourist attractions).

<sup>2</sup> Barbados Council for the Disabled (2026) <https://barbadosdisabled.org.bb/>

Barbados has ratified the CRPD and the 2013 Marrakesh Treaty for on access to materials for visually impaired persons. The 2023–2030 National Policy for Persons with Disabilities allocates 10 per cent of new state housing to PWDs and boosts civil society funding by 40 per cent. The Declaration of Bridgetown, issued by the XVI Ministerial Forum for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean 2024, highlights the need for social protection systems to be sustainable and accessible.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2025 enshrines provisions for equal treatment, access, non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation. It provides for teacher training, infrastructure upgrades and individual education plans and a B\$5,000 fine for misuse of parking spaces. The Act primarily provides for the visually impaired voters, with fewer provisions for other forms of disability.

Despite the Act's existence, the CET was informed that PWDs faced challenges exercising their franchise in some locations, as accessibility varied significantly across constituencies. In some polling stations, the CET saw ramps to accommodate wheelchairs. There were no tactile ballots or accessible voting devices, and there was no formal sign language interpretation support. Voter accompaniment to PWDs was allowed, though it may have compromised ballot confidentiality.

The EBC Manual of Instructions for Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks and Returning Officers and Election Clerks Sections 50–54 outlines the process for votes recorded by the Companion of a Voter. It was published by the chief electoral officer of Barbados, in January 2026. The CET observed that presiding officers followed the procedures established by the EBC to assist PWDs.



*Members of CET meeting with the Barbados Council for the Disabled*

#### 4.4. Youth

The Caribbean ranks among the world's youngest regions, with one-third of Barbadians aged 24 or younger. Leading parties maintain youth wings: the DLP's Young Democrats and the BLP's League of Young Socialists.

The Division of Youth Affairs was established in 1995 and is responsible for youth development. The Youth Development Programme works to support persons ages nine to 29. The *National Youth Policy*<sup>3</sup> was

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Family, Culture, Youth and Sports (2011) 'National Youth Policy of Barbados'. <http://drugservice.gov.bb/fileadmin/filesYouth/downloads/BarbadosNationalYouthPolicy.pdf>

developed in 2011. This mainstreams youth affairs across different ministries and departments, sets targets for projects including youth business development and sports, and outlines the funding allocated to these projects. The Policy references political participation, with two priorities: educating young people on political processes and encouraging politicians to interact regularly with youth. Legislation does not provide quotas for youth seats in Parliament.

Political parties appeared to be the principal actors encouraging youth engagement in the political process in 2026. Many stakeholders signalled growing youth voter apathy. Some youth suggested there was no structured forum for youth consultation in policy processes, nor forums to bring youth lived experiences to bear on policy formation. Some youth reflected low levels of trust in political leaders. Youth suggested that cases of apathy may be attributed to perceptions of unkept campaign promises, their challenges with high youth unemployment and the lack of forums for youth political empowerment. There were suggestions that youth were more susceptible to cases of vote-buying; however, the CET received no evidence to suggest that this has occurred.

#### 4.5. Civil society organisations

Article 20 of the Constitution of Barbados guarantees freedom of expression and the right to receive and communicate information without interference. Civil society groups, including trade unions, are active in Barbados, with a diversity of social causes and advocacy groups working at local and national levels. CSOs and CSO umbrella groups collaborate with and contribute to dialogues held by the Commonwealth, CARICOM and the UN across a range of areas. The primary umbrella organisation is the Barbados Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (BANGO).

Government collaboration with CSOs includes the Social Partnership of Barbados, a tripartite agreement operational since 1993 to encourage dialogue between the government, employers and workers to resolve labour disputes.<sup>4</sup> In all areas related to freedom of expression and belief, and associational and organisational rights, Barbados scores the maximum 4/4 on the Freedom House's Freedom in the World index.

#### 4.6. Recommendations

##### Right to vote and inclusivity

- Promote systems for voter assistance for persons who are blind, physically incapacitated, unable to read or otherwise challenged.
- Undertake a review of the legal framework governing political participation to ensure full alignment with Barbados' international treaty obligations, particularly under ICCPR, CEDAW, CERD, CRC and CRPD.
- Strengthen implementation mechanisms for rights guaranteed in law to ensure practical accessibility.
- Enhance public awareness of participation rights through co-ordinated civic education initiatives referencing constitutional and statutory protections.

##### Women's political inclusion

- Continue promoting gender balance and inclusive recruitment practices while ensuring competence-based deployment.
- Establish structured financial and capacity-building support mechanisms for women candidates, including access to campaign finance, mentorship networks and leadership training.
- Encourage political parties to adopt internal gender equity policies, including transparent nomination processes.
- Enhance collection and publication of gender-disaggregated electoral data to inform policy development and monitor progress.

<sup>4</sup> ILO (2025) 'The Social Partnership of Barbados'. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/social-partnership-barbados>

- Promote multi-stakeholder engagement, including collaboration between the Bureau of Gender Affairs, political parties and civil society, to strengthen outreach and support systems for women candidates.
- Consider systems to engage the private sector to address gender disparities in campaign financing support with a view to reducing structural inequalities affecting women's candidacy.

### **Persons with disabilities**

- Standardise accessibility requirements across all polling stations, ensuring uniform physical access in line with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2025.
- Expand voting accommodations to include support for persons with visual impairment, including assistive tools and alternative voting arrangements for persons with diverse disabilities.
- Introduce advance voting on Special Voting Day as an option for PWDs, where feasible, to reduce barriers on polling day.
- Develop accessible voter education materials in Braille, large print, audio and other formats.
- Enhance training for election officials on consistent facilitation of assistance and accompaniment procedures while safeguarding ballot secrecy.
- Conduct and share with stakeholders an accessibility audit of election facilities and processes.
- Strengthen collaboration between the EBC and disability advocacy organisations to improve outreach and inclusion.

### **Youth political participation**

- Integrate structured civic education into the formal school curriculum, promoting early understanding of democratic processes and civic responsibility.
- Develop targeted voter outreach campaigns aimed at first-time and young voters, addressing apathy and political disengagement.
- Encourage political parties to create structured youth consultation mechanisms to better reflect lived experiences in policy platforms.
- Explore mechanisms for strengthening youth representation, including advisory youth councils linked to parliamentary processes.
- Enhance public reporting on youth voter turnout trends, to support evidence-based interventions.
- Promote platforms for intergenerational political dialogue, aimed at restoring trust and responsiveness.

### **Civil society engagement**

- Develop formal mechanisms for structured engagement between the EBC and CSOs, particularly during election periods.
- Encourage domestic election observation initiatives, supported by accreditation frameworks and information-sharing protocols.
- Facilitate CSO involvement in voter education, inclusion advocacy and electoral transparency initiatives.
- Strengthen collaboration with women's organisations and community-based groups to broaden inclusive participation.
- Enhance transparency in electoral processes by creating multi-stakeholder consultation platforms prior to and following elections.

# 5. The campaign and the media

## 5.1. The campaign

The campaign environment for the 11 February 2026 general election in Barbados was generally peaceful, competitive and vibrant, characterised by high-visibility public events, door-to-door mobilisation and intense media engagement across traditional and digital platforms. No major incidents of violence, intimidation or widespread hate speech were reported, with parties adhering to legal norms on campaigning, though public discourse occasionally sharpened around economic pressures.

Campaigning was resource-intensive, featuring heavy use of billboards, radio and social media, alongside traditional rallies and motorcades. Voter turnout concerns and the accuracy of the voters' register emerged as live issues, particularly for opposition voices.

The environment allowed broad participation, with women and youth actively involved in rallies and online discourse, though civil society calls for clearer campaign-finance disclosure persisted. Overall, the campaign reinforced Barbados' reputation for orderly democratic contestation.

## 5.2. The media

The media landscape comprises both independent and state-owned outlets. There are three major newspapers, in addition to online platforms. The most popular outlets are detailed in Table 6.

**Table 6. Main media houses in Barbados**

Ownership	Primary media types	Media house	Notable brands/outlets
State	TV, radio, digital, Pay-Tv	Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)	CBC TV 8, 98.1 The One, Q 100.7 FM, 94.7 FM, MCTV
Private	Radio	Barbados Broadcasting Service (BBS)	BBS FM 90.7, Faith 102.1 FM
Private	Digital, e-paper	Barbados Today Inc.	<i>Barbados Today</i> (online news portal and e-paper)
Private	Radio, digital	Starcom Network Inc.	VOB 92.9 FM, Hott 95.3 FM, The Beat 104.1 FM, Life 97.5 FM
Private	Print, digital	The Barbados Advocate	<i>The Barbados Advocate</i> (daily newspaper)
Private	Print, digital	The Nation Publishing Co. Ltd	<i>Daily Nation</i> , <i>Weekend Nation</i> , <i>Saturday Sun</i> , <i>Sunday Sun</i>

The CET was informed that the key media landscape was as follows:

- **TV monopoly.** The state-owned **CBC TV 8** remains the only legally licensed terrestrial television station in Barbados.
- **Dominant private players.** **The Nation Publishing** and **Starcom Network** (both part of the One Caribbean Media group) remain the leading private entities in terms of revenue and audience reach for print and radio, respectively.
- **Digital-First Growth.** Digital-first outlets like **Barbados Today** have become prominent online news sources and gained significant market share by focusing exclusively on digital-first reporting.
- **Regional Hubs.** Barbados also hosts regional media organisations such as the **Caribbean Media Corporation** and the **Caribbean Broadcasting Union**, which provide subscription news and broadcasting services across the wider Caribbean.

Under the Constitution and further to Section 68 of ROPA, the EBC established the Representation of the People (General Elections) (Allocation of Broadcasting Time) Regulations 1990.

ROPA provides that, during an election period, no broadcasting time for political broadcasts shall be made available by broadcasters to any person except under and in accordance with the ROPA regulations. No political broadcast may be made on polling day or the day preceding polling day.

Barbados election administration and legal framework place limits on who may be inside polling stations. Under these rules, media coverage is not permitted within polling stations. EBC public guidance from 2022, also applied in the 2026 general election, was that electronic and communication devices (e.g., smartphones and smart watches) were prohibited in polling stations, reducing the possibility of in-station photography and recording.

The Representation of the People (General Elections) Allocation of Broadcasting Time Regulations, 1990 Cap 12 Regulation 4(4) provides that, 'broadcasting time must be made available by broadcasters free of charge for the allocations of broadcasting time made by the Commission under this regulation.'

Regulation 4(1) provides that political parties have the right to benefit from free election broadcasts during the campaign period provided that no fewer than 10 of their members are validly nominated candidates for the election.

Regulation 4(2) provides for:

- (a) two broadcasts of not more than 15 minutes duration and a third and final broadcast of not more than 30 minutes duration, to the political party which qualifies for an allocation under paragraph (1) of this regulation, and which commanded the support of the majority of the membership of the House of Assembly immediately prior to the last dissolution of Parliament.
- (b) one broadcast of not more than 15 minutes duration and a second and final broadcast of not more than 30 minutes duration, to the political party which qualifies for an allocation under paragraph (1) of this regulation and which commanded the support of the majority of the opposition membership of the House of Assembly immediately prior to the last dissolution of Parliament;
- (c) one broadcast of not more than 15 minutes duration, to any other political party which qualifies for an allocation under paragraph (1) of this regulation.

Stakeholders expressed no concerns regarding formal censorship. Media houses stated that editorial decisions were made with care to avoid allegations of perceived imbalance and potential defamation. Some political parties complained that there was an imbalance in media coverage of their campaign, while the media houses considered that they had taken extra measures to ensure they had complied with their statutory obligations regarding coverage to political parties.

### 5.2.1. Code of conduct for the media

At the time of writing, Barbados does not have an election-specific media code of conduct. In practice, standards for election reporting are shaped by general professional ethics and electoral broadcast rules that regulate political content during an election period.

### 5.2.2. Role of social media

Some stakeholders affirmed that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp allowed political actors to communicate directly with voters, reduce dependence on traditional gatekeepers and rapidly correct rumours that may otherwise circulate unchallenged. The EBC has publicly emphasised that misinformation can undermine public confidence in the electoral process, prompting it to issue clarifications and public statements to reinforce trust in electoral administration.

Other stakeholders suggested that existing legislation did not adequately address new media and its potential to be the source of offences under the Election Offences and Controversies Act, since this legislation was not designed specifically for the contemporary platform environment.

A further concern raised is the role of diaspora-based voices and cross-border information flows: content created or amplified abroad may influence domestic perceptions while complicating enforcement and accountability. The Cybercrime Act 2024 provides a framework to address cross-border cybercrime. Even so, the extraterritorial nature of many online actors and platforms continues to create practical constraints, reinforcing the importance of timely official communication, credible institutions and public-facing media literacy efforts during election periods.

### 5.3. Recommendations

#### **Media, information and access to information**

- Advance implementation of a comprehensive access to information framework, strengthening institutional transparency.
- Encourage adoption of a voluntary election period media code of conduct, supported by multi-stakeholder consensus.
- Enhance transparency around allocation and monitoring of broadcast time.
- Promote public media literacy campaigns addressing misinformation.
- Promote equitable access to publicly owned media, ensuring balanced and impartial coverage during election periods, especially for smaller parties and independent candidates.
- Strengthen dialogue between the EBC and media stakeholders, particularly during election periods.

#### **Broadcast and political advertising regulation**

- Review and modernise the Broadcasting Time Allocation Regulations 1990 to ensure contemporary relevance.
- Ensure transparency and fairness in allocation of state broadcast time to qualifying political parties.
- Clarify (political) content standards across broadcast platforms.

#### **Social media and digital information environment**

- Develop a coherent framework addressing digital campaigning, including transparency in online political advertising.
- Consider harmonised regulatory standards across traditional broadcast and digital platforms, ensuring consistent safeguards.
- Establish monitoring and rapid-response mechanisms to address misinformation while safeguarding freedom of expression.
- Strengthen public media literacy programmes, focusing on identifying misinformation and protecting electoral integrity.
- Enhance co-operation on cross-border digital information flows, consistent with cybercrime legislation and international co-operation norms.
- Encourage timely and proactive communication by the EBC to counter misinformation and reinforce institutional trust.

#### **Transparency and public confidence**

- Promote regular multi-stakeholder consultations on media and campaign practices.
- Encourage greater transparency in political communication funding and sponsorship disclosures.
- Undertake post-election reviews of the media environment, incorporating lessons learned and stakeholder feedback.

# 6. Voting, counting and results transmissions

## 6.1. The preliminary voters list

The EBC published the preliminary voters' list on 19 January 2026 for the 11 February general election, in line with Section 13 of ROPA, which requires an updated voters' list to be published by 31 January each year to serve as the official list for the election year.

The 19 January 2026 list included voters who had registered after the publication of the 15 January 2025 list as well as names added or deleted after house-to-house enumeration conducted between August and September 2025.

The CET was informed that the house-to-house enumeration had been conducted with the assistance of postal workers under the supervision of the registering officer for each constituency.

The enumerators sought to ascertain the following information from the residents of each household.

- The names and ages of each resident.
- Whether anyone had moved in or out of the household.
- If any member of the household had passed away.
- Whether any member of the household had been living overseas for five consecutive years.
- The names of any residents who had recently reached the age of 18, or would have done so by 31 December 2025.

A list of 8,291 voters to be removed from the January 2025 list was generated by the EBC on 23 November 2025. This list included individuals reported as deceased, as well as those deemed no longer eligible as a result of not being resident in the country for five or more years.

The CET was informed that, if residents were not available at the time of the enumerator's visit, a callback card was left at the residence. This card bore the contact information for the Electoral Department, so that the householder could call and make arrangements for the enumerator to return at a time convenient to the resident.

The EBC noted that, after the publication of the 8,291 names, several appeals were made to voters to check the list and if necessary to lodge an objection. In the cases where no contest was made, the final voters' list did not include these deleted names.

## 6.2. The final list

The 17 January election announcement and 18 January writ triggered a special 19-day registration period under Section 18(1)(a) of ROPA. During this period, the EBC urged voters via media to verify the accuracy of their name, address and designated constituency and polling station.

During this claims and objections period, reports were made to the EBC, and were reflected in the media, that there were inaccuracies on the list that, including the following:

- Persons removed as dead were still alive;
- Persons still on the list were deceased;
- Persons on the previous list who should be on the current list did not appear on the current list;

- Persons on the previous list appeared on the new list but not in the same constituency or polling division even though there was no change of address;
- Persons requesting transfers appeared at the original address or at an address different from that requested.

The practice applied by the EBC in previous elections, of persons being automatically transferred to the electoral list on attaining the age of 18 was not initially followed. Instead, the EBC applied Section 17 (2)(c) of ROPA and the Registration of Electors Regulation, which required such individuals to apply for inclusion using Form 1. This reportedly led to confusion among youth, resulting in some completing the application process while others assumed they were automatically transferred to the electoral list.

The EBC made efforts during the claims and objection period to address some of the discrepancies raised. The EBC decided, after complaints and questions were raised about the 19 January published preliminary list, to reinstate the names of voters who had been removed on the grounds of being deceased, in those cases where the EBC did not have evidence of the death certificate prior to the publication of the final list. In addition, the EBC took the decision to revert to the previous practice applied in earlier elections, to automatically include 18-year-old persons, without them being required to make the Form 1 application.

The final list, updated on 6 February 2026, contained 271,205 eligible voters. The country's population is 269,090 based on the 2021 Census. The integrity of the voters' list remained the most contentious issue going into the election, and led to multiple complaints around disenfranchisement, a bloated list and a lack of confidence in the EBC's ability to produce an accurate final voters' list.

### 6.3. The election

Barbados is divided into 30 constituencies. Data on the number of polling districts and polling divisions is yet to be released by the EBC. Polling stations were located in schools, churches, halls, community centres and public buildings. The CET visited 75 polling stations on election day, observing the opening, voting, closing and tabulation processes.

### 6.4. Special polling day

On 4 February there was special voting for security forces and poll workers, although these persons also had the option to vote on the main election day. Approved names of special voters were removed from the main list and placed by the EBC on this special list. Special voting occurred at one location per constituency, with ballots for each elector placed in a designated envelope for the specific constituency and polling station. The ballots cast were placed in a ballot box that was then sealed in the presence of electoral officials and candidate agents. These boxes were transported under police guard to a secure location at the EBC.

On election night, these boxes were transferred under police escort to counting centres and added to the votes cast on election day.

On 4 February the final list was not yet published and stakeholders expressed concern that ineligible special voters might have cast ballots on the special polling day. The CET was unable to obtain information on the final tallies of ballots cast in each constituency on Special Polling Day.

### 6.5. Election day

#### 6.5.1. Opening of the poll

The CET observed that, at the start of polling, voters were in line at most of the polling stations. During polling day, queues outside most polling stations were non-existent or did not exceed 10–15 people. The queues appeared generally longer at the start and close of polls and voters generally remained calm and peaceful while waiting in line.

Polls opened at 6:00 a.m. and closed at 6:00 p.m. CET teams observed adequate staffing – the presiding officer and two clerks, as well as officials at the door who helped with sanitising, voter management and information desks. Generally, the stations also had one to three candidate agents and a police presence. Before the opening of the polls, the presiding officer showed the empty boxes to the candidate agents and any voters then present at the polling station. The ballot boxes were then padlocked and secured with plastic tie straps and displayed in full view of the voters, officials and agents. There were ample supplies of all election related materials.



*CET Lead meeting with Electoral Officials on Election Day*

### 6.5.2. The voting process

In most instances, booths were positioned so that voters' backs were visible to staff to deter photography, without breaching the secrecy of the ballot.

If a voter did not have an ID but was on the list in the station, EBC photo ID records present in boxes at each station were consulted by the presiding officer, and the voter was allowed to vote in the cases where his/her name was in those records. In no case observed was a person whose name was not on the voters list allowed to vote.

The process observed followed that stipulated in the *ROPA Manual of Instructions for Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks*. One voter at a time approached the desk of the first poll clerk and presented ID (or other government issued ID), and the first clerk announced the voters' details. The clerk wrote on a blank slip the voter ID number and sex and gave it to the voter. A second clerk took this slip from the voter and placed it in stacks for male and female to later tally disaggregated voting by sex. This second clerk announced, verified and noted the voter's name on his/her voters list for that polling station, and the candidates' agents also verified the voter names on their list.

Presiding officers tore the ballot paper from the ballot book, wrote the voter's ID number on the counterfoil and then stamped the ballot with the EBC official mark, gave it to the voter, provided guidance on marking and folding (to ensure the EBC stamp affixed was visible after marking and folding and before deposit in the ballot box) and oversaw booth-to-ballot box deposit for each voter.

The CET was informed that counterfoil numbering was employed to provide evidence in the case of a legal challenge. These materials were secured post-polling in a secure vault in the Supreme Court for a period

of two years and accessible only with a court order. However, some stakeholders expressed fear that this may compromise the secrecy of the ballot, and the CET was informed that this may have deterred some stakeholders from exercising their right to vote.

Voters were orderly. Officials applied procedures efficiently as per the *ROPA Manual of Instructions*. However, assistance for voters whose names were not on the lists at the polling station varied. In some cases, polling officials made calls to the returning offices and facilitated checking on the constituency master lists or the EBC website. In other cases where the voter's name was not on the list at the station, the voter was so informed without the officials taking any further action.

### 6.5.3. Special needs and assistance to voters

Elderly voters, pregnant voters and voters needing special assistance were given priority access; in some but not all cases, seating was available and offered to these persons as they waited. Most stations were at ground level. A few stations lacked ramps; where there were stairs, persons in wheelchairs or those who were otherwise impaired were assisted at times by EBC staff and their companions, and at other times only by their companions and others, to their polling station.

Assisted voting followed the *ROPA Manual of Instructions for Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks* as it relates to procedures for PWDs. Some voters were accompanied by a registered companion, who was able to support the voter after duly verifying their status to the presiding officer. Some voters appeared to face challenges in casting their vote because the font on the ballot paper was too small. Others appeared to have difficulty identifying their preferred candidate because of the absence of the party name on the ballot paper. A few voters observed had difficulty reading. In cases where the presiding officer assisted, he/she thereafter made a note and recorded instances of such assistance. Presiding officers did not provide guidance if the voter was unable to identify which party the candidate on the ballot was from.



*CET Lead on Election Day*

### 6.5.4. Use of electronic devices

The CET observed that the 'no use of electronic devices' policy was generally enforced, with voters being required to surrender their devices prior to casting their vote.

### 6.5.5. Security

Police provided professional, non-intrusive reassurance; there were no unlawful gatherings, campaigning or intimidation observed.

### 6.5.6. Closing and counting

In keeping with the law, the presiding officer announced the close of the poll at 6:00 p.m., and a police officer stood at the end of the line, ensuring that only voters in line at the close were allowed to vote.

No preliminary counts occurred at the polling station. Adhesive seals signed by staff and candidate agents were affixed over the opening of the ballot boxes in the presence of the candidate agents and polling staff. Reconciliations were carried out by the presiding officer for all supplies, for spoilt and unused ballots, for numbers of male and female voters and for all forms that recorded the assistance provided for voters on polling day. Materials were then packaged, sealed and delivered to the returning officer.

Boxes were taken by bus or, in the case where the polling station was in the same premises as the counting centre, by foot, always with a police officer, polling staff and agent escort, to the counting centre. The CET was informed that, since space on the buses was limited, not all candidate agents were permitted to accompany the ballot boxes by bus, hindering oversight by each candidate agent of the ballot box of the station to which they had been assigned by the candidate. The start of the count was in some cases up to two to three hours after the close of poll as counting centres awaited the delivery of the ballot boxes.

At the counting centres, returning officers verified the candidate agents present for the count. On receipt of the ballot boxes, returning officers integrated the special and foreign services ballots into the ballots cast on polling day. The count of each box was carried out by two EBC officials in the presence of candidate agents. At the end of the count, the returning officer for each constituency declared the candidate polling the most votes winner.

### 6.5.7. Voter turnout

Official EBC reports were not available at the time of writing. Unofficial figures reported 101,838 votes being cast, from a possible 271,205 registered voters.<sup>5</sup> The population of Barbados is approximately 269,000 (last Census conducted 2021). There was considerable consternation about voter apathy, and the decreasing numbers of voters exercising their franchise over the last several elections. Some suggest the numbers mask the fact that the voters list is bloated and in need of full revision.



*Members of CET observing the tabulation process*

<sup>5</sup> NationNews (2026) 'EBC: Final Vote Tally Still Pending'. <https://nationnews.com/2026/02/13/ebc-final-vote-tally-still-pending/>

## 6.6. Election results

Official results from the EBC were not published by the EBC at the time of writing.

The reports carried in the local media are as follows:<sup>6</sup>

- **BLP:** 71,109 total votes (69.83%) | **30 seats**
- **DLP:** 27,808 total votes (27.31%) | **0 seats**
- **FoD:** 1,424 total votes (1.40%) | **0 seats**
- **Voter turnout:** Approximately **37.5 to 41 per cent**<sup>7</sup>

## 6.7. Recommendations

### Voters' list management

- Improve procedures for identifying and removing deceased or ineligible voters from the preliminary list, with enhanced verification mechanisms to prevent erroneous deletions and ensure greater accuracy in the final register and reliable voter turnout figures.
- Authorise the EBC to use bulk mailings bearing its own official stamp or seal, thereby reinforcing public confidence in the EBC's independence.

### Final voters' list

- Amend legislation to eliminate uncertainty by mandating the automatic and immediate registration of all individuals who turn 18, ensuring comprehensive coverage of eligible young voters, in accordance with the practice employed in prior to 2018.
- Explore options to minimise inadvertent disenfranchisement, including potential provisional verification safeguards (subject to legal reform).
- Strengthen inter-agency collaboration between the Registry of Births and Deaths, the Barbados Immigration Department and the EBC to provide timely and accurate data on deaths and migration, thereby supporting precise decisions on voter removals.

### Special voting

- Advance the publication date of the final voters' list – or adjust the special voting schedule – to ensure the final voters' list is shared with all political parties and candidates before special voting begins.

### Polling station operations

- Discontinue the practice of including the elector's ID number on the ballot paper counterfoil to further safeguard the secrecy of the vote.
- Publish the final voters' list and later the election results disaggregated by sex and age, making it publicly accessible to promote transparency.
- Establish a standardised procedure to assist voters unable to locate their designated polling station, such as providing polling officials with an online search tool to verify voter status and direct them to the correct location.

### Accessibility and inclusivity

- Ensure all polling station buildings and rooms provide appropriate facilities for voters with physical disabilities, including a pre-election audit to identify sites requiring temporary wooden ramps.
- Increase the ballot paper font to assist voters with visual impairments in identifying and selecting their preferred candidate.

<sup>6</sup> Barbados Today (2026) 'Decision 2026 Election Pulse: The Results'. <https://barbadostoday.bb/elections-2026/>

<sup>7</sup> GBM (2026) 'Holiday Declared in Barbados After Election Marked by Low Turnout'. <https://www.greaterbelize.com/holiday-declared-in-barbados-after-election-marked-by-low-turnout/>

- Add each party's colour and/or symbol or other identifying mark for the candidate, such as a photograph, next to the candidates' names on the ballot paper to enable illiterate voters to participate independently.

### **Closing and counting**

- At the end of special voting and voting for foreign service employees overseas, require polling staff to complete an official form recording the number of ballots cast at each station. This form should be agreed and signed by party agents present, with the original retained by the EBC and copies provided to agents.
- Conduct counting at individual polling stations rather than at centralised centres to enhance transparency, strengthen ballot security, expedite result announcements and reduce opportunities for speculation or mistrust.

# Annex I. Composition and biographies of the CET

## Head of the Expert Team

### **Sarah Flood-Beaubrun**

Sarah Flood-Beaubrun is a Saint Lucian lawyer and senior politician who has previously held the positions of Minister of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations; Minister of Home Affairs and Gender Relations; Minister for External Affairs; and Speaker of the House of Assembly. She has gained respect throughout the region as a defender of human rights and citizen dignity, including by delivering multiple speeches on good governance. In addition, she is Founder of the Caribbean Centre for Family and Human Rights, and from 2008 to 2012 served as Deputy Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission of Saint Lucia to the United Nations.

## Commonwealth Expert Observers

### **Hon. Justice Amraphael Mbogholi Msagha**

Honourable Justice Msagha is a senior jurist, retired Court of Appeal Judge and former Principal Judge of the High Court of Kenya, with over three decades of legal experience. Justice Msagha has been deployed on multiple prior election observation missions and has previously served as a Special Envoy for the Commonwealth Secretary-General. He also serves as a patron and board member of a number of organisations.

### **Orrette Fisher**

Orrette Fisher had a 23-year tenure at the Electoral Commission of Jamaica, a decade of this service as the Director of Elections, with the role including the administration of four national elections. He has both served on and chaired election observation missions in three continents and now works as an elections management and training consultant. He has an MBA from the University of the West Indies, Mona.

### **Terry Dale Ince**

Terry Dale Ince is a development specialist, consultant, rights advocate and Founder and Convener of the CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to taking part in human rights and gender equality advocacy, she both lectures on practical applications of CEDAW and serves on the board of national and international organisations. She has been a recipient of the Trinidad and Tobago National Medal for the Development of Women.

## Commonwealth Secretariat on-the-ground staff support

Professor Michelle Scobie (Staff Team Lead) is Adviser and Head of the Secretary-General's Good Offices and Head of the Caribbean Political Section in the Governance and Peace Directorate of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London.

Abubakar Abdullahi is a Peace and Development Officer in the Governance and Peace Directorate of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London.

## Commonwealth Secretariat remote support staff

Anita Collins, Political Adviser, Good Offices and Caribbean Political Section

Mukhtar Adesunkanmi, Political Officer, Good Offices and Caribbean Political Section

Emmanuel Anie-Akwetey, Political Officer, Good Offices and Caribbean Political Section

Jordan Neal, Assistant Research Officer, Good Offices and Caribbean Political Section

Linford Andrews, Adviser and Head, Electoral Support Section

Lindsey Adjei, Programme Officer, Electoral Support Section

Madonna Lynch, Executive Officer, Electoral Support Section

Tiffany Chan, Programme Assistant, Governance and Peace Directorate

Sune Kitshoff, Senior Communications Officer, Communications

# Annex II. Pre-arrival statement

The Commonwealth Expert Team (CET) will be led by Mrs Sarah Flood-Beaubrun, former Speaker of the House of Assembly of Saint Lucia and senior attorney at law. The CET also comprises three other eminent Commonwealth election experts, with expertise in politics, elections, media, law and civil society.

Announcing the team's departure, Secretary-General Botchwey said:

Our presence in Barbados to observe the upcoming General Election is significant as it marks the first time the Commonwealth has deployed election experts to the country. It reaffirms our commitment to democratic resilience, and our support for credible, transparent and inclusive electoral processes.

"We stand in solidarity with the people of Barbados and support their aspirations and democratic choices, acting independently and impartially to help ensure that their collective will is freely expressed.

"I extend my sincere appreciation to these eminent Commonwealth citizens who have embraced this significant assignment in support of the people of Barbados."

The Commonwealth Expert Team (CET) will arrive on 5 February and will meet key stakeholders, including the Electoral & Boundaries Commission, political parties, civil society groups, the media, the diplomatic community and other international and citizen observers.

As Head of the Expert Team, Mrs Flood-Beaubrun will submit a report containing the team's findings and recommendations to the Secretary-General for her consideration and action.

The CET will be supported by Commonwealth Secretariat staff led by Prof. Michelle Scobie, Adviser and Head of the Secretary-General's Good Offices and the Caribbean section.

The CET will depart Barbados on 17 February.

Commonwealth Expert Team members are:

Head of the expert team

- **Mrs Sarah Flood-Beaubrun.** Former Speaker of the House of Assembly of Saint Lucia and founder of the Caribbean Centre for Family and Human Rights. She previously served as Deputy Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission of Saint Lucia to the United Nations and is an experienced Commonwealth election observer.

Commonwealth expert observers

- **Hon. Justice Amraphael Mbogholi Msagha.** Retired Court of Appeal Judge and former Principal Judge of the High Court of Kenya. He is an experienced Commonwealth election observer, and he has also served as a Special Envoy for the Commonwealth Secretary-General.
- **Mr Orrette Fisher.** Former Director of Elections at the Electoral Commission of Jamaica overseeing four elections. He has served on and chaired election observation missions in three continents and now works as an elections management and training consultant.
- **Ms Terry Dale Ince.** Development specialist, consultant, rights advocate from Trinidad and Tobago, and the founder of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee of Trinidad and Tobago. She is the recipient of the Trinidad and Tobago National Medal for the Development of Women and an experienced Commonwealth election observer.

## Annex III. CET deployment plan

Region	Observers	Constituencies
<b>Central</b>	Sarah Lucy Flood-Beaubrun Michelle Scobie	Christ Church West; Christ Church West Central; Christ Church South; Christ Church East Central; Christ Church East; St Philip North; St Philip South; St Philip West; St. George North; St George South
<b>South Coast</b>	Terry Dale Ince Abubakar Abdullahi	City of Bridgetown; St. Michael South St Michael East; St Michael South Central; St Michael Central; St Michael Southeast; St Michael Northeast; St Michael North; St Michael Northwest St Michael West; St Michael West Central
<b>East Coast</b>	Hon. Justice (ret.) Amraphael Mbogholi Msagha Orrette Fisher	St John; St. Joseph; St Thomas; St James North; St James South; St James Central; St Peter; St Andrew; St Lucy

**Commonwealth Secretariat**

Marlborough House, Pall Mall  
London SW1Y 5HX  
United Kingdom

[thecommonwealth.org](http://thecommonwealth.org)