

# Papua New Guinea

## *Ethnicity in Papua New Guinea*

Political factions in Papua New Guinea did not make claims in the name of an ethnic group or experience ethno-political state discrimination. From its independence in 1975 until 2013 no ethno-political groups were active in Papua New Guinea.

Elections have been characterized by competitiveness and inclusive participation. Papua New Guinea's ethnic divisions are plentiful and mostly driven by ethnolinguistic (more than 800 distinct languages are spoken) and geographic divisions. On a global scale, Papua New Guinea has the highest ethnic diversity score (as calculated by <sup>2814</sup>, p.216). The resulting unique ethnic structure makes it unlikely that any group may gain a dominant position within the political system, even on a regional level (<sup>2815</sup>, p.682). For example, attempts to unite the lowlands Papua by creating an ethno-regional consciousness have so far failed and not resulted in the emergence of relevant ethno-regional cleavages. State institutions even benefit from the ethnic diversity as the state forces are ethnically so heterogeneous that they are in most cases rather neutral decision-makers on ethnic issues (<sup>2816</sup>).

Violence between ethnic groups has arisen mostly between competing tribes. The most violent intra-state conflict in Papua New Guinea was the civil war in Bougainville causing between 15.000 and 20.000 deaths. Yet the war should not be primarily understood as an ethno-political conflict since the fighting took place along clan-lines. While the arrival of "foreign" mainland and Australian mine workers seems to have facilitated the escalation of the conflict, one cannot identify particular ethnic cleavages along which the civil war was fought (<sup>2817</sup>). Overall, it would be generally misleading to interpret occasional violent conflicts in Papua New Guinea "as part of an ethnonationalist quest or a competition for regional or national hegemony" (<sup>2818</sup>, p.176).

Following the EPR rules ethnicity is coded as "irrelevant" in Papua New Guinea from 1975 until 2013.

<sup>2814</sup> [Fearon, 2003]

<sup>2815</sup> [Minority Rights Group, 1997]

<sup>2816</sup> [May, 1993]

<sup>2817</sup> [O'Callaghan, 2002]

<sup>2818</sup> [Reilly, 2000]

## *Bibliography*

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## *Political status of ethnic groups in Papua New Guinea*

*From 1975 until 2013*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Papua New Guineans	1.0	IRRELEVANT



Figure 591: Political status of ethnic groups in Papua New Guinea during 1975-2013.

## *Conflicts in Papua New Guinea*

*Starting on 1989-04-06*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Papua New Guinea	BRA		1989-04-06			