The Claims:

1. A method of forming a contact for a photovoltaic (PV) cell, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate of a semiconductor material, the substrate having a plurality of first regions that have a first doping concentration and a plurality of second regions that are adjacent the first regions and have a second doping concentration that is lower than that of the first regions, the first regions and the second regions having the same polarity and being located at a surface portion of the substrate;

depositing a passivation layer over the surface portion;

forming a patterned conductive layer comprising a plurality of conductive regions over the passivation layer such that material of the passivation layer is in contact with the substrate and the conductive regions of the conductive layer, each conductive region completely covering at least one of the first regions and being wider than the at least one of the first regions; and

applying an electric field between at least one of the first regions and the conductive layer in a manner such that a dielectric breakdown of the passivation layer material in contact with the one or more of the first regions and the respective conductive regions is induced while dielectric properties of the passivation layer material in contact with the second regions and the respective conductive regions are preserved;

wherein the method is conducted such that portions of reduced electrical resistance are selectively formed in the passivation layer to facilitate current flow between first regions and respective portions of the conductive layer regardless of alignment precision between the first regions and the respective portions of the conductive layer; and

wherein the first regions are heavily doped regions,

the thickness of the passivation layer is at least 10nm and the step of applying the electric field between at least one of the first regions and the conductive layer comprises applying a voltage of at least 2V.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the method is conducted such that the passivation properties of passivation layer material that is adjacent the formed contact are substantially unaffected.

3. The method of claim 1 or 2 being conducted such that the contact is formed on a rear surface of the PV cell.

4. The method of any one of the preceding claims wherein the step of providing the substrate comprises forming the at least one first region.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the at least one first region is formed using thermal diffusion.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the at least one first region is formed using laser doping.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein forming the at least one first region comprises:

depositing a layer that functions as a dopant source for the at least one first surface portion; and

directing a laser beam selectively towards the first surface portion such that the dopant material diffuses into the substrate and thereby forms the at least one first region.

8. The method of any one of the preceding claims wherein the passivation layer comprises amorphous silicon.

9. The method of any one of the preceding claims wherein the material of the conductive layer is selected based on

the doping property of the at least one first region.

10. The method of any one of the preceding claims wherein the substrate comprises at least one second region that is adjacent the at least one first region and has a doping property that is different to that of the at least one first region, the at least one first region and the at least one second region having the same polarity.

11. The method of any one of the preceding claims wherein the at least one second region has a p-n junction and wherein the at least one first region penetrates through the p-n junction.

12. A method of forming a photovoltaic cell comprising forming a contact for a PV cell using a method in accordance with any one of the preceding claims.

13. A photovoltaic cell formed by the method of claim 12.