

The Demographic Characteristics of Auckland Council Candidates and Elected Members

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The demographic characteristics of Auckland Council candidates and elected members

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Executive summary

This report presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of 2016 Auckland Council election candidates, as well as a comparison between candidates and the Auckland adult population (aged 18 years and older).

The analysis shows that, for the 2016 Auckland Council election:

- Female candidates were underrepresented within the total candidate pool. A higher percentage of female candidates were elected than male candidates, however, resulting in a representative balance of male and female elected members.
- The age distribution of candidates tended to be skewed toward older age groups compared to that of the Auckland adult population. Three-quarters (76%) of all candidates were aged 45 years and over, compared to just under half (48%) for the Auckland adult population.
- European candidates were overrepresented within the total candidate pool (76% of all candidates identified as European, compared to 60% of the Auckland adult population). Māori and Pacific Peoples were represented at a similar rate to the Auckland population and Asian candidates were notably underrepresented in the total candidate pool. The latter three broad ethnicity groups were elected at lower rates than European candidates, resulting in an underrepresentation of all three groups amongst elected candidates.
- Candidates were more likely to be born in New Zealand than the Auckland adult population, with 75 per cent of candidates born in New Zealand, compared to 54 per cent of the Auckland adult population.
- Almost one third (29%) of candidates were able to hold a conversation in at least one language other than English. This percentage was somewhat lower amongst elected members (18%). Candidates reported being able to speak a range of languages, with English (100%), Māori (5%), Samoan (5%) and Hindi (3%) being the most common.

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1.0 Introduction

Collecting information on the characteristics of candidates standing for election is an important step in understanding how the experiences, views and cultural backgrounds of all residents are represented in government.

In Auckland, until the 2016 local body elections, no information has been collected directly from candidates on their demographic characteristics.

This report presents a summary of demographic information collected from Auckland Council candidates. These data enable the pool of candidates to be compared to the Auckland population, as well as comparisons to be made between elected and unelected candidates, and between elected governing body and local board members.

Comparisons are made throughout the report between candidates and the Auckland adult population (aged 18 and over). This comparison was chosen – as opposed to Auckland's total population, including children – to reflect as closely as possible the population of Aucklanders who are eligible to stand for election.¹ If the likelihood of standing for election is similar across different sociodemographic groups, one would expect the demographic characteristics of the candidate pool to closely match that of the Auckland adult population.

This report presents information on candidates, in terms of:

- gender
- age
- ethnicity
- country of birth, and
- languages spoken.

Two comparisons are made for each of the demographic variables above:

1. All candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates are compared to the Auckland adult population, aged 18 and over (henceforth referred to as the “Auckland population”).
2. The election rate for each group is compared to the overall average rate of election for all candidates.

Additionally for gender only, elected governing body and local board members are compared to the Auckland population.

¹ Note, this is not a perfect comparison. To stand for Auckland Council, one must be a New Zealand citizen aged over 18 and enrolled on the parliamentary electoral roll. Demographic statistics for the sub-group of Aucklanders who were New Zealand citizens and enrolled on the electoral roll were not available at the time of producing this report.

It is intended that this analysis is repeated in future years to track trends over time and to assist in election planning.

1.1 Method

Information was collected from candidates via both a survey form attached to candidate nomination forms, and through a post-election electronic survey of candidates.²

Completion of both surveys was voluntary and a total of 71 per cent of candidates provided their information (305 out of 432 candidates).³

Note that the voluntary nature of the surveys, and associated non-response from 29 per cent of candidates, means that the percentages reported are an estimate of candidate characteristics only.⁴

Information was collected and analysed by Auckland Council's Research and Evaluation Unit, in collaboration with Auckland Council's Democracy Services Department and the Electoral Officer.

² The results from the post-election survey, summarising candidates' experiences, *Auckland Council candidate survey. A summary of 2016 results*, can be found at <http://www.knowledgeauckland.org.nz/publication/show/1319>. See also: [Auckland Council elections candidate experience survey 2016](#), Auckland Council technical report, TR2017/004

³ A total of 468 nominations were received for the 2016 Auckland Council elections (mayoral, ward and local board issues). Some individuals were nominated for more than one position; the number of unique individuals standing for election was 432.

⁴ To test for potential issues of representativeness, the gender distribution of survey respondents was compared with a subjective coding of candidate gender using official candidate photos. The distributions were almost identical (i.e. 41% of survey respondents stated they were female, whereas 40% of candidates were subjectively coded as female using photographs). This indicates that, for gender at least, the candidates who completed the demographic surveys were representative of the total candidate pool.

2.0 Gender

Candidates were asked to indicate whether they were female, male or gender diverse. A total of 302 respondents answered this question.

2.1 All candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates

Figure 1 shows the percentage of all candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates who identified as female and male.⁵ Note that the 'all candidates' group contains both elected and unelected candidates.

Comparing all candidates with the Auckland adult population (horizontal bars) shows that female candidates were somewhat underrepresented in the 2016 election candidate pool: 41 per cent of all candidates identified as female, compared to 52 per cent of the Auckland population. Conversely, male candidates were overrepresented (59% of all candidates, compared to 48% of the Auckland population).

The sub-group of elected candidates, however, was much more closely matched to the Auckland population. Forty-nine per cent of elected candidates were women, similar to 52 per cent for Auckland as a whole.

Candidate gender distribution

Comparing all candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates to the Auckland population (horizontal bars)

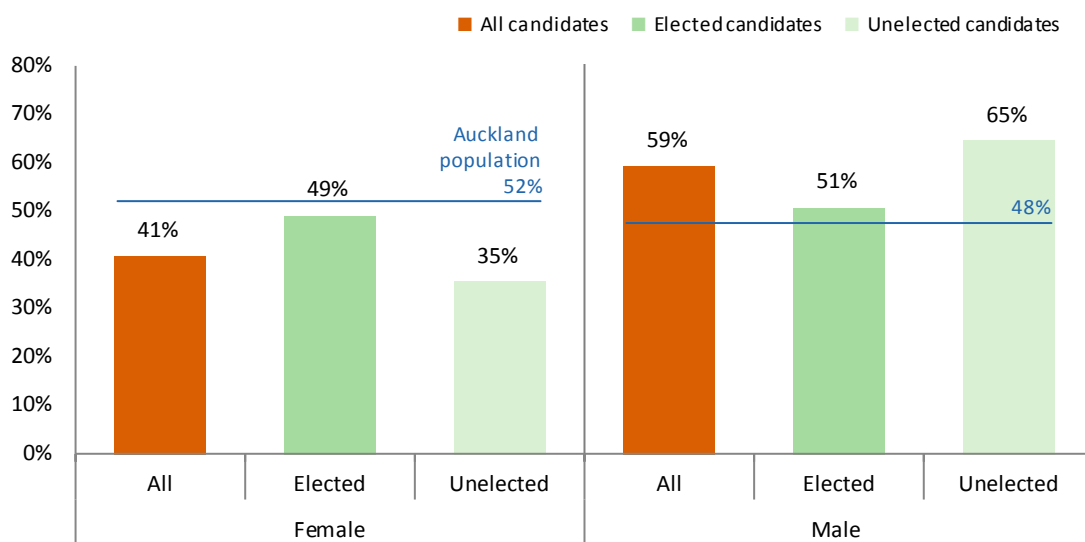


Figure 1. Candidate gender distribution

⁵ No respondents selected 'gender diverse'.

2.2 Election rate

The 'rate of election' for each gender group was investigated by calculating the percentage of candidates within each gender who were elected. This analysis shows that, although fewer female candidates were nominated overall, a greater proportion of women (46%) were elected than men (33%).

Election rate by gender

Comparing the percentage of candidates elected in each gender to the average for all candidates (horizontal bar)

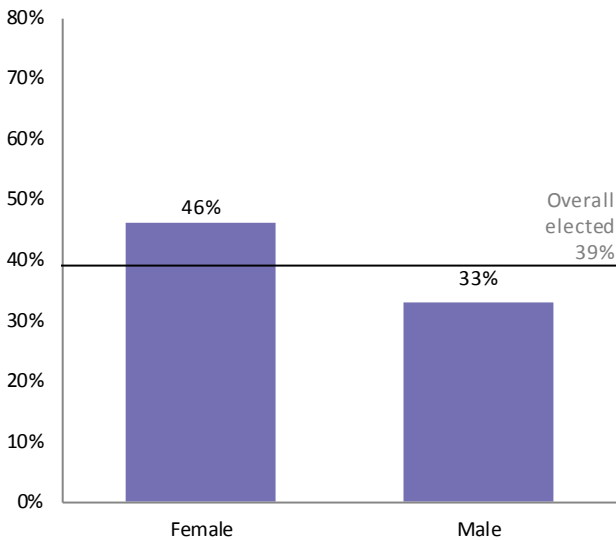


Figure 2. Election rate by gender

2.3 Elected candidates: governing body and local board members

For gender, an additional analysis was conducted focusing on the differences between elected governing body and local board members.

Because the governing body consists of only 21 members, the survey response rate of 67 per cent means that the statistics for this group are unreliable. To bolster the reliability of the statistics for this group, an analysis of elected member photos was conducted. These modified statistics are presented below.⁶ The figures shown for local board members are from survey responses only.

Elected candidates were split into governing body and local board members and the gender breakdown within each group was compared to the Auckland population (see Figure 3). Governing

⁶ Due to the greater subjectivity of assuming elected member age, ethnicity, country of birth and languages spoken, a comparison between governing body and local board members was not possible in subsequent sections.

body members had a greater percentage of men than the Auckland adult population, whereas local board members reflected closely the Auckland population with regard to gender.

Elected candidates: governing body and local board gender distribution

Comparing governing body members and local board members to the Auckland population (horizontal bars)

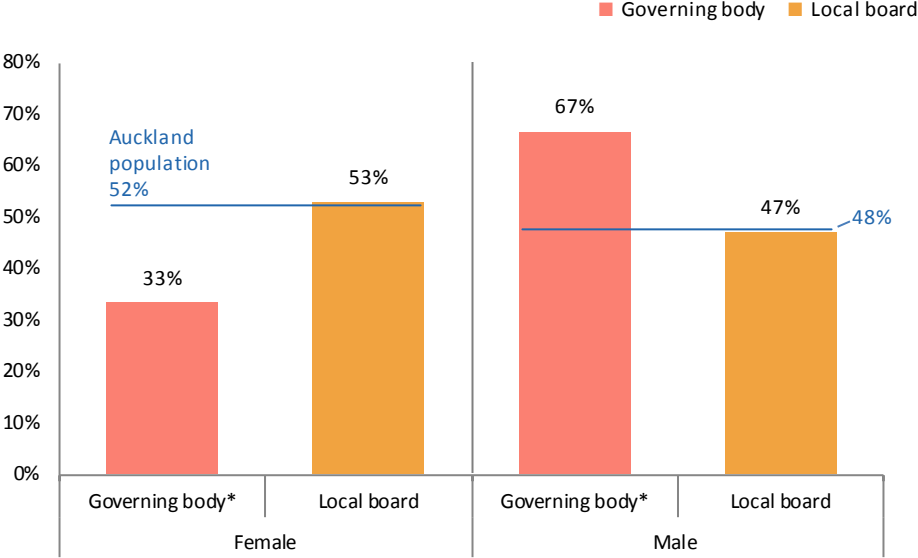


Figure 3. Governing body and local board gender distribution

**As only 14 out of 21 (67%) governing body members completed the demographic survey, the percentages have been corrected for this group using candidate photos.*

3.0 Age

Candidates were asked to indicate their age within broad age bands. A total of 300 respondents answered this question.

3.1 All candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates

Candidates were notably older than Auckland’s adult population. Compared to the Auckland population, candidates were more likely to be aged 45 and older, with the greatest difference seen in the 55-64 age group. Figure 4 shows, for instance, that 29 per cent of candidates were aged between 55 and 64 years of age, whereas only 14 per cent of the Auckland adult population is in this age range.

Looking at the older age groups combined, just over three-quarters (76%) of all candidates were aged 45 years and over, whereas this age group makes up just under half (48%) of the Auckland adult population.

There were no meaningful age differences between elected and unelected candidates.

Candidate age distribution

Comparing all candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates to the Auckland population (horizontal bars)

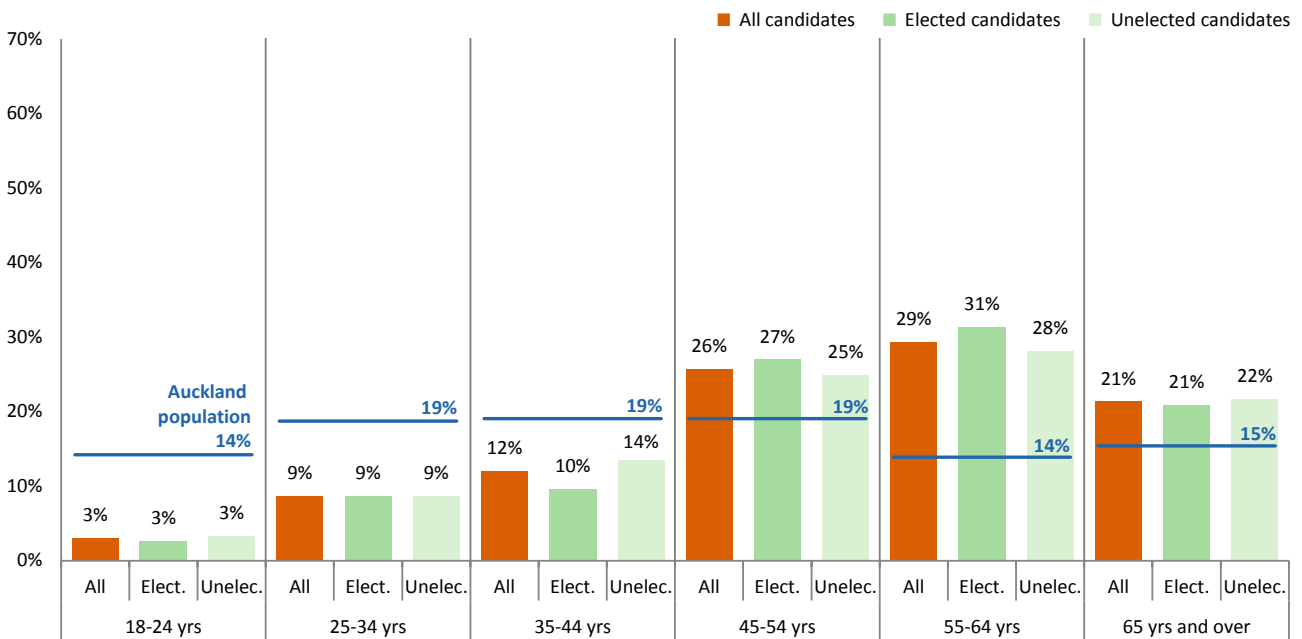


Figure 4. Candidate age distribution

3.2 Election rate

Comparing the percentage of candidates elected within each age group to the average across all candidates shows a reasonably uniform pattern across the age groups.

Two notable differences were seen for candidates in the 18-24 year and 35-44 year age groups. For these groups, the proportions elected – 33 per cent and 31 per cent respectively – were lower than for all candidates overall (39%). The other age groups were all close to the overall election rate for all candidates.

Election rate by age

Comparing the percentage of candidates elected in each age group to the average for all candidates (horizontal bar)

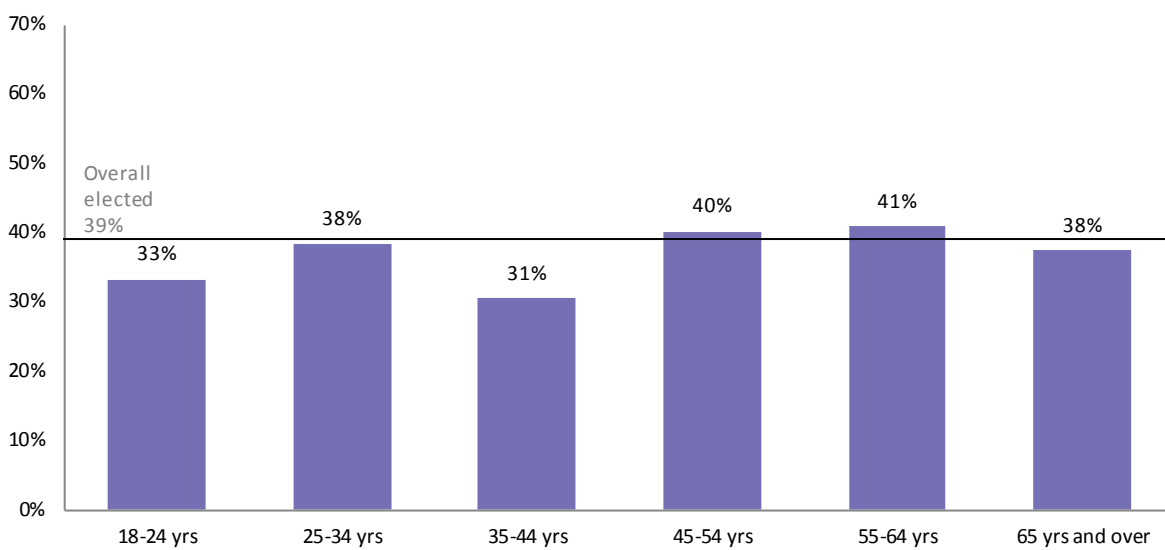


Figure 5. Election rate by age

4.0 Ethnicity

Candidates were asked to indicate their ethnicity. A total of 299 respondents answered this question.

4.1 All candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates

Figure 7 shows the percentage of all candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates who identified with each ethnic group.⁷

Comparing all candidates with the Auckland adult population (horizontal bars) shows that European candidates were overrepresented in the 2016 election (76% of all candidates identified as European, compared to 60% of the Auckland population).

The percentage of all candidates who identified as Māori or Pacific Peoples was similar to the Auckland population. Asian candidates were notably underrepresented, however, with only 10 per cent of candidates identifying as Asian (compared to 23% of the Auckland population).

The differences between candidates and the Auckland population were amplified for elected candidates, however. Among elected candidates, Europeans were more strongly overrepresented, the percentage of Māori and Pacific Peoples was lower than the Auckland population, and Asian candidates were more strongly underrepresented.

Candidate ethnicity distribution

Comparing all candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates to the Auckland population (horizontal bars)

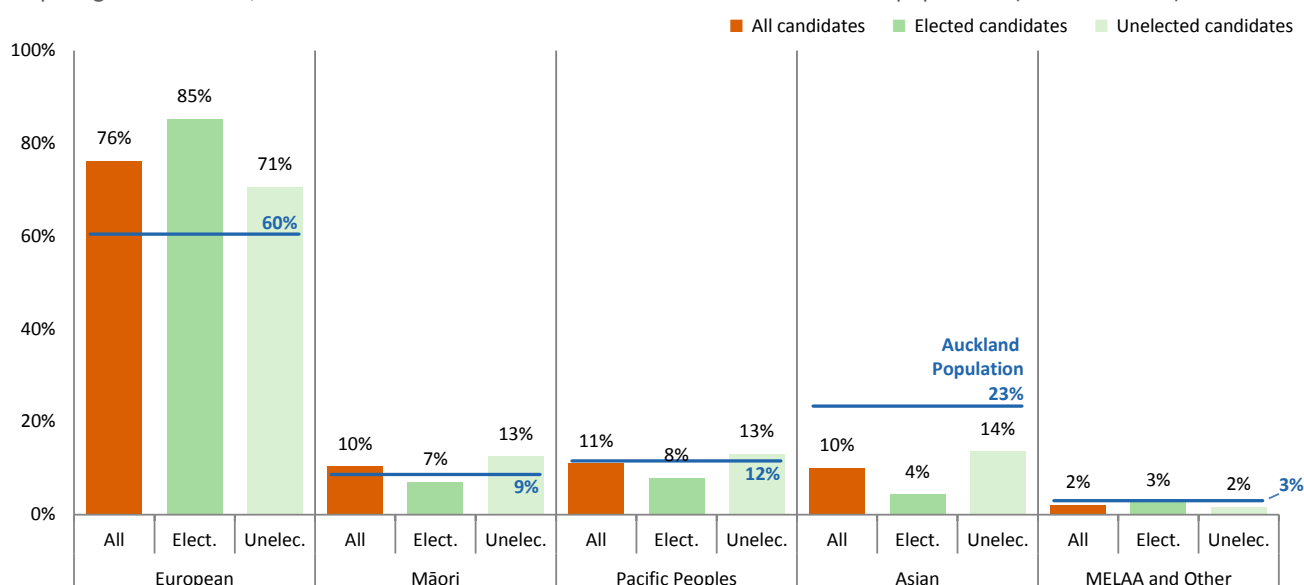


Figure 6. Candidate ethnicity distribution

⁷ Stats NZ level 1 ethnic groups are shown for ease of reading. Similar levels of representation were seen within Pacific (i.e. Samoan, Tongan), and Asian (i.e. Indian, Chinese) ethnicities.

Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA) and other ethnic groups were a small percentage of the candidate pool, and were represented at a similar rate to the Auckland adult population.

4.2 Election rate

Comparing the percentage of candidates who were elected within each ethnic group to the average across all candidates shows that Māori, Pacific and Asian candidates were elected at notably lower rates.

Election rate by ethnicity

Comparing the percentage of candidates elected in each ethnicity to the average for all candidates (horizontal ba

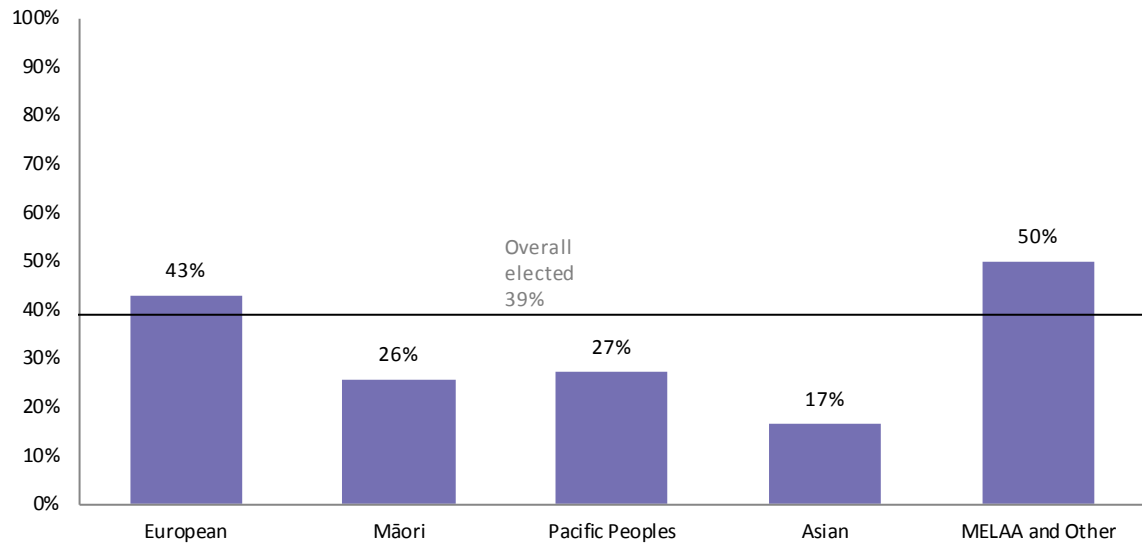


Figure 7. Election rate by ethnicity

5.0 Country of birth

Candidates were asked to indicate whether they were born in New Zealand or overseas. A total of 301 candidates answered this question.

5.1 All candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates

Candidates were more likely to be born in New Zealand than the Auckland adult population, with 75 per cent of candidates born in this country compared to 54 per cent of the Auckland population.

This difference was amplified for elected candidates, with 84 per cent born in New Zealand.

Candidate country of birth distribution

Comparing all candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates to the Auckland population (horizontal bars)

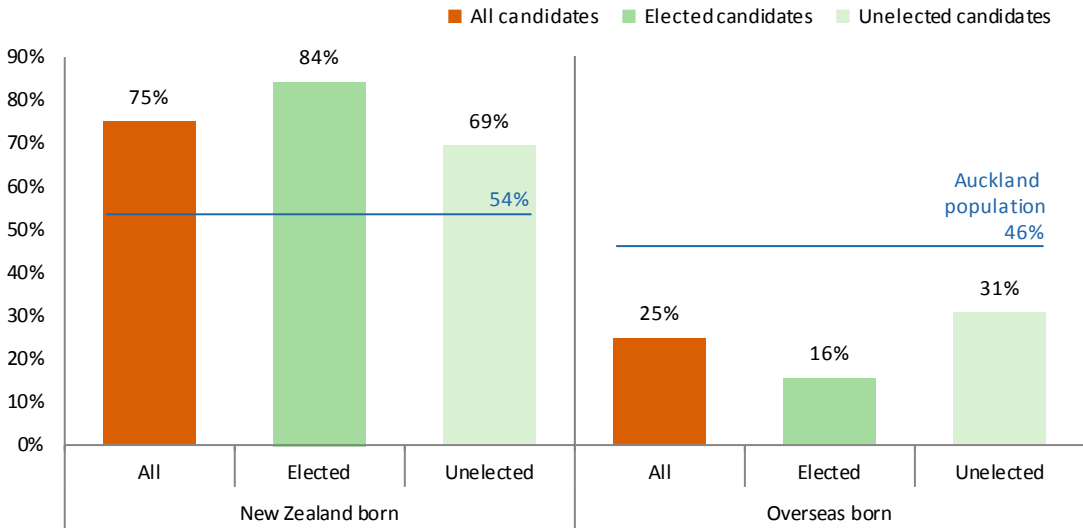


Figure 8. Candidate country of birth distribution

5.2 Election rate

Comparing the percentage of candidates elected within each group to the average across all candidates shows that overseas born candidates were elected at a lower rate than the average for all candidates.

Election rate by country of birth

Comparing the percentage of candidates elected to the average for all candidates (horizontal bar)

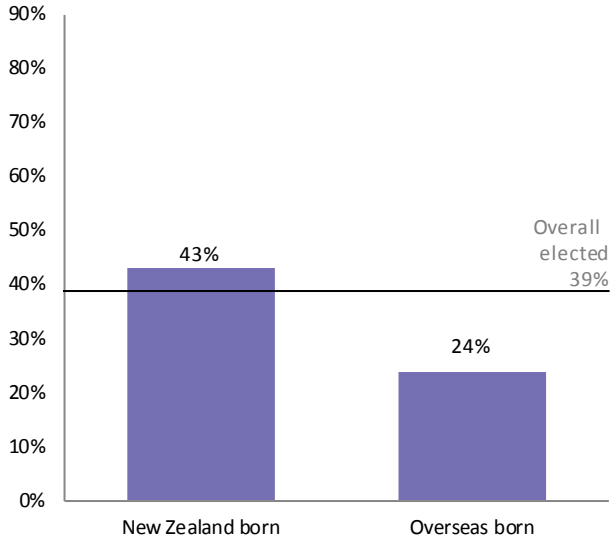


Figure 9. Election rate by country of birth

6.0 Languages spoken

Candidates were asked which languages they could comfortably hold an everyday conversation in. A total of 297 candidates answered this question.

6.1 All candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates

Almost one third (29%) of all candidates reported being able to converse in at least one language other than English.

Comparing the percentage of elected and unelected candidates who reported being able to hold a conversation in at least one non-English language showed that the rate of bi- and multilingualism is higher in unelected candidates. Thirty-six per cent of unelected candidates could converse in at least one non-English language, whereas 18 per cent of elected candidates could do so.

Percentage of candidates who report being able to converse in one or more non-English language(s)

Comparing all candidates, elected candidates and unelected candidates

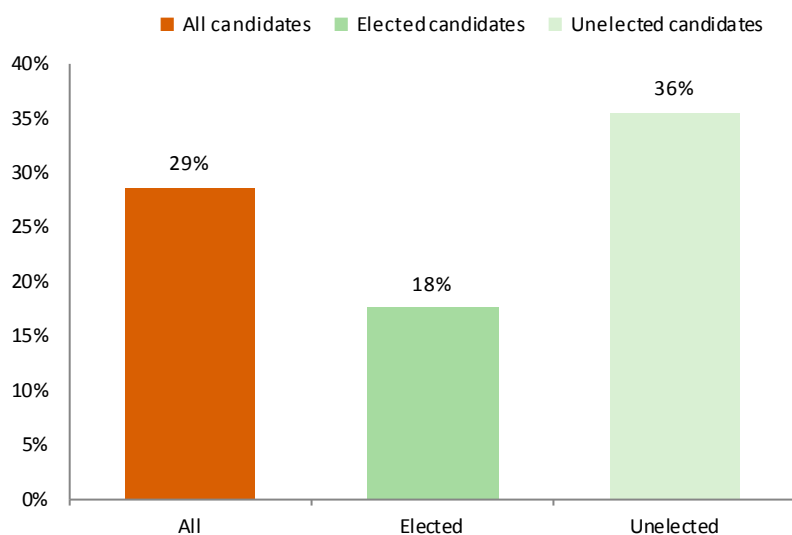


Figure 10. Elected and unelected candidate non-English language ability⁸

Table 1 shows the proportion of candidates reporting being able to hold a conversation in different languages, where at least two candidates selected a language.⁹ All but one candidate answered that they spoke English; however, this was likely a respondent oversight.

Overall, 5 per cent of candidates reported speaking te reo Māori, and 1 per cent New Zealand Sign Language. Samoan and Hindi were also relatively commonly spoken (5% and 3% of candidates, respectively).

⁸ Note, no Auckland-level statistics were available at the time of preparing this report.

⁹ An additional 23 languages were spoken by one candidate each.

Table 1. Languages spoken, by elected and unelected candidates

Language	All candidates	Elected candidates	Unelected candidates
English	100%	100%	100%
Māori	5%	4%	6%
NZ Sign Language	1%	1%	1%
Samoan	5%	5%	5%
Hindi	3%	2%	4%
French	2%	3%	2%
Mandarin	2%	3%	2%
Tongan	2%	0%	3%
Punjabi	2%	1%	2%
Dutch	1%	1%	2%
Cantonese	1%	1%	1%
Chinese (unspecified)	1%	0%	2%
German	1%	0%	2%
Spanish	1%	1%	1%
Arabic	1%	0%	1%
Cook Island	1%	0%	2%
Danish	1%	0%	1%
Fijian	1%	0%	1%
Japanese	1%	2%	0%
Taiwanese	1%	1%	1%

6.2 New Zealand Sign Language speakers

A total of three candidates reported being able to converse in New Zealand Sign Language. These candidates provide an important potential link with Auckland's Deaf community. One of these three candidates was elected to a local board position.

7.0 Summary

This report presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of 2016 Auckland Council election candidates.

The analysis shows that, when compared to the Auckland adult population, the overall candidate pool tended to have higher proportions of male, older, New Zealand European, New Zealand-born candidates.

With regard to ethnicity, the proportions of candidates identifying as Māori and Pacific Peoples was similar to those seen in the Auckland adult population, however the proportion of candidates identifying with one or more Asian ethnic group was notably lower than seen in the Auckland population.

It is intended that this analysis is repeated for the 2019 local body elections to monitor trends over time.

Find out more: phone 09 301 0101, email rimu@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz or visit aucklandcouncil.govt.nz and knowledgeauckland.org.nz