

# Auckland Local Elections 2019: The demographic characteristics of candidates

Laura Roberts

March 2020

Technical Report 2020/005



Research and  
Evaluation Unit

**RIMU**



# Auckland Local Elections 2019: The demographic characteristics of candidates

March 2020

Technical Report 2020/005

Laura Roberts

Research and Evaluation Unit (RIMU)

Auckland Council  
Technical Report 2020/005

ISSN 2230-4525 (Print)  
ISSN 2230-4533 (Online)

ISBN 978-1-99-002208-1 (Print)  
ISBN 978-1-99-002209-8 (PDF)

This report has been peer reviewed by the Peer Review Panel.

Review completed on 9 March 2020  
Reviewed by one reviewer

Approved for Auckland Council publication by:

Name: Eva McLaren

Position: Manager, Research and Evaluation (RIMU)

Name: Alison Reid

Position: Manager, Economic and Social Research and Evaluation (RIMU)

Date: 9 March 2020

#### Recommended citation

Roberts, L (2020). Auckland local elections 2019: the demographic characteristics of candidates. Auckland Council technical report, TR2020/005

© 2020 Auckland Council

Auckland Council disclaims any liability whatsoever in connection with any action taken in reliance of this document for any error, deficiency, flaw or omission contained in it.

This document is licensed for re-use under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

In summary, you are free to copy, distribute and adapt the material, as long as you attribute it to the Auckland Council and abide by the other licence terms.



## Executive summary

In 2019, a total of 423 candidates stood in the Auckland local body elections. The demographic characteristics of 298 of those candidates (70%) are summarised below and are compared with results from the 2016 local body elections. As information was not received from all candidates, results are indicative.

Demographic information was provided by the candidates via a hard copy form that was included in their candidate nomination pack.

The information presented in this report provides an insight into how representative candidates are of the broader Auckland adult population aged 18 years and over (using data from the 2018 Census of Population and Dwellings), and how this has changed since 2016. This analysis can be used to evaluate council's efforts towards increasing the diversity of candidates.

### Gender

In 2019, almost three in five candidates for whom we received demographic information were male (58%) and about two in five were female (42%). This suggests female candidates were slightly under-represented based on the Auckland adult population aged 18 years and over (49% male and 51% female at the 2018 Census).

The gender split among 2019 candidates was consistent with that seen in 2016.

### Age

Candidates tended to be older, with almost half (47%) aged 55 years or older, including about one in three (29%) who were aged 55-64 years. Young candidates were in the minority with just 13 per cent of candidates aged 18-34 years. Comparing this with the Auckland adult population suggests an over-representation among candidates aged over 45 years, and an under-representation among those aged 18-34 years.

However, candidates tend to be slightly younger on average in 2019, compared with 2016. This shown by a seven percentage point increase in candidates aged 35-44 years, and a commensurate decrease in candidates aged 45 years or older.

### Ethnicity

About four in five candidates were New Zealand European (79%), followed by Māori (16%), Pacific People (14%) and Asian (11%). A very small group (1%) were in the Middle Eastern, Latin American and African (MELAA) category.

Comparing ethnic group profile to the Auckland adult population illustrates a higher proportion of candidates who were New Zealand European and Māori, and an under-representation of candidates who were Asian and MELAA/other.

Compared with 2016, the proportion of candidates who were Māori increased significantly from 10 per cent to 16 per cent. The proportion who were Pacific Peoples increased slightly, but not significantly, from 11 per cent to 14 per cent.

### **Country of birth**

Around four in five candidates were born in New Zealand (78%), up slightly but not significantly from 2016. This indicates a strong over-representation of candidates born in New Zealand, and an under-representation of those born abroad, when compared against the Auckland adult population (51% born in New Zealand).

### **Other language spoken**

Seven per cent of candidates spoke Samoan, 5 per cent spoke Māori and 3 per cent spoke French or Mandarin. Just 1 per cent were fluent in New Zealand Sign Language.

The proportion of candidates that spoke Māori or Samoan is significantly larger than that among the Auckland adult population by three percentage points each. About a quarter of candidates (23%) spoke more than one language, with 31 languages represented in total, demonstrating diversity among candidates. Results for languages spoken are largely unchanged in 2019, compared with 2016.

# Table of contents

1.0	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Method.....	2
1.2	Note on elected status of candidates.....	2
1.3	Reporting.....	2
2.0	Gender.....	3
2.1	Gender compared with the Auckland adult population.....	3
2.2	Gender in 2019 compared with 2016.....	3
3.0	Age.....	4
3.1	Age of candidates compared with the Auckland adult population.....	4
3.2	Age in 2019 compared with 2016.....	5
4.0	Ethnicity.....	6
4.1	Ethnic group compared with the Auckland adult population.....	6
4.2	Ethnic group in 2019 compared to 2016.....	7
5.0	Country of birth.....	8
5.1	Birthplace compared with the Auckland adult population.....	8
5.2	Birthplace in 2019 compared with 2016.....	9
6.0	Languages spoken.....	10
6.1	Languages spoken compared with the Auckland adult population.....	10
6.2	Languages spoken in 2019 compared with 2016.....	11
6.3	Number of languages spoken by candidates.....	11
7.0	Summary.....	12

## 1.0 Introduction

Understanding the demographic characteristics of candidates who stand in elections is an important element of understanding how the experiences, views and cultural background of residents are represented in local government in Auckland.

Auckland Council's Democracy Services unit, the Electoral Office and Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) aim to increase the diversity of electoral candidates by providing information, resources, a marketing campaign and a candidate nomination process that is inclusive and responsive to Auckland's diverse population. Understanding candidate demographics is an important aspect of evaluating efforts towards increasing the diversity of candidates.

Demographic information was collected directly from Auckland Council candidates for the first time in the 2016 local body elections. See Allpress & Osborne, 2017 for results<sup>1</sup>.

This report provides a similar summary of the demographic characteristics of Auckland Council candidates who stood in the 2019 local body elections.

Findings from 2019 are compared with those from 2016 to explore changes over time. We expect a similar analysis will be conducted in future elections to establish a time series, allowing an understanding of trends.

The demographics of candidates who stood in the 2019 elections are also compared with the demographics of the Auckland adult population (defined as those aged 18 years and older) sourced from the 2018 Census. 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<sup>2</sup>. If the likelihood of standing as a candidate is similar across different demographic groups, we would expect the demographic characteristics among candidates to closely match that of the Auckland adult population. Such a comparison allows us to better understand which demographic subgroups of residents are over-represented or under-represented among candidates.

This report presents information on candidates, in terms of:

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

---

<sup>1</sup> Allpress, J and Osborne, B (2017). *The demographic characteristics of Auckland Council candidates and elected members*. Auckland Council technical report, TR2017/017

<sup>2</sup> 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.



## 1.1 Method

Demographic information was provided by the candidates via a hard copy form that was included in their candidate nomination pack. Completion of this form was voluntary, and 70 per cent of candidates provided their information (298 out of 423 candidates). This includes 24 who provided partial information, that is, they left some questions incomplete. As a result, the total sample for some questions is less than 298.

The voluntary nature of the demographic form and associated non-response from 30 per cent of candidates, means that the percentages reported are an estimate of candidate demographics only. Information was collected and analysed by Auckland Council's Research and Evaluation Unit (RIMU), in collaboration with Auckland Council's Democracy Services Department and the Electoral Office.

## 1.2 Note on elected status of candidates

This report presents results for candidates who were elected as well as those who were not elected.

Unlike the 2016 study, we were not able to fully ascertain who was elected and who was not, due to changes in the administrative process when the demographic forms were distributed within the candidate nomination packs.



In the 2016 election all candidate demographic forms included a unique ID that enabled us to subsequently identify whether or not a candidate had been elected. However, in 2019 less than half (47%) of the completed candidate demographic forms that we received included the required unique ID. This subsample is too small to infer robust results.

## 1.3 Reporting

Throughout this report, significance testing (two sample T-test) has been employed where comparisons are made between the demographics of candidates in 2019 with that in 2016, and between the demographics of candidates in 2019 with the demographics of the Auckland adult population.

A statistically significant difference is defined as a one in which we are 95 per cent confident that the difference has not occurred due to natural variation alone.

Throughout the report the term 'significant' is used to describe a statically significant difference. The arrows below are used to visually describe a significant difference on graphs.

-  A significant increase, or a significantly higher result.
-  A significant decrease, or a significantly lower result.

## 2.0 Gender

Almost three in five, or 58 per cent, of candidates were male. This leaves about two in five, or 42 per cent of candidates, who were female. None identified as gender diverse.

Figure 1. Gender of candidates (n=289)

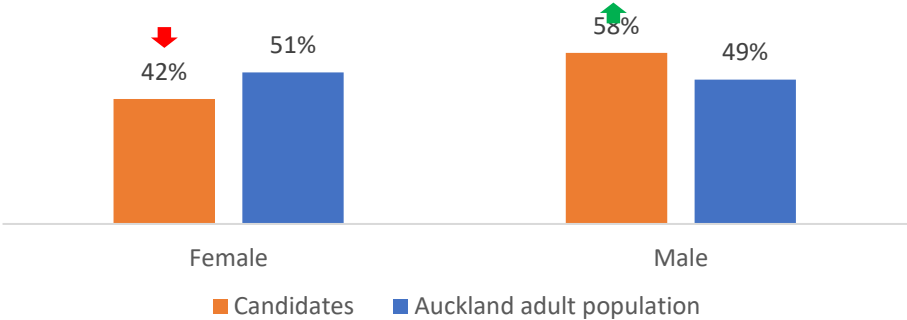


### 2.1 Gender compared with the Auckland adult population

The proportion of candidates who were male (58%) is significantly larger than among the Auckland adult population (49%). Meanwhile the proportion of candidates who were female (42%) is significantly smaller than that among the Auckland adult population (51%).

This suggests female candidates were under-represented among electoral candidates.

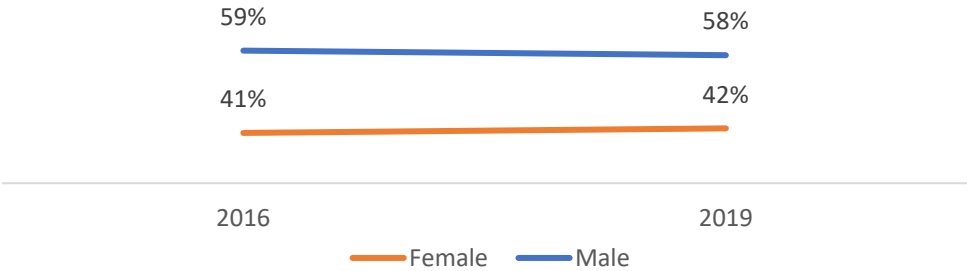
Figure 2. Gender of candidates compared to the Auckland adult population (candidates n=289).



### 2.2 Gender in 2019 compared with 2016

The gender split among candidates in 2019 is consistent with that seen in 2016.

Figure 3. Gender of candidates in 2019 compared with 2016 (2016 n=302, 2019 n=289)



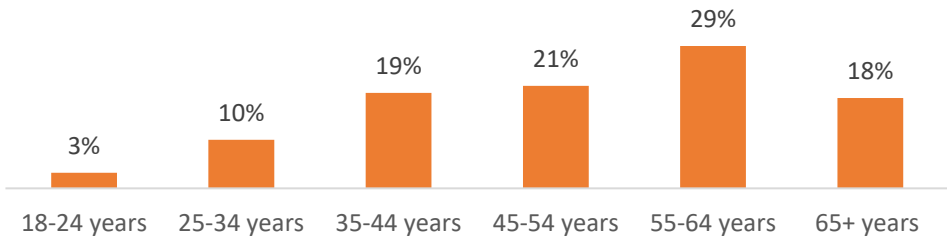
### 3.0 Age

Candidates tended to be older, with almost half (47%) aged 55 years or older.

The most common age group for candidates was between 55 to 64 years, with around one in three candidates represented within in this age band (29%).

Young candidates were in the minority, with just 13 per cent of candidates aged 34 years or younger.

**Figure 4. Age of candidates (n=285)**



#### 3.1 Age compared with the Auckland adult population

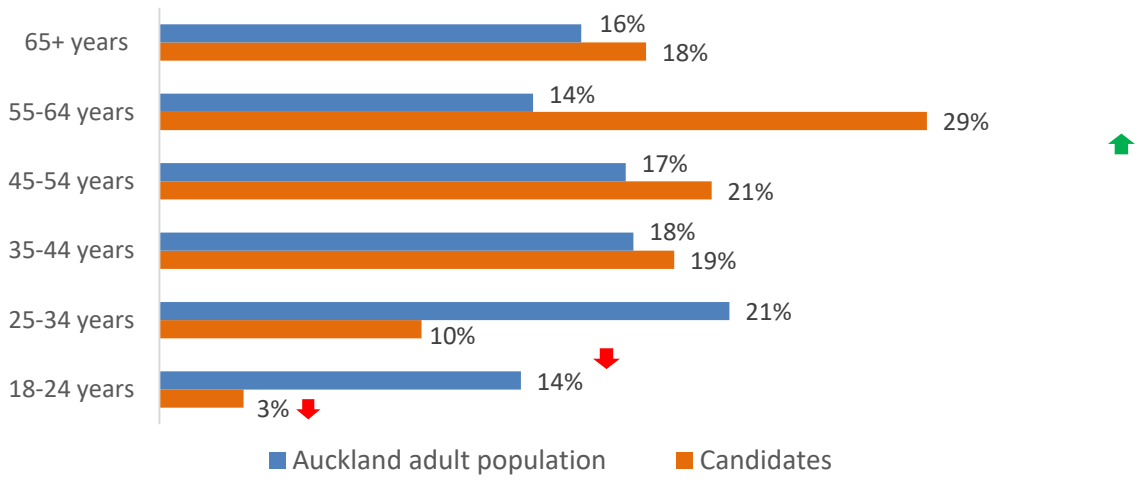
The graph below shows a discrepancy between the age distribution of candidates, compared with the age distribution of the Auckland adult population.

The proportion of those aged 55-64 years is significantly larger among candidates (29%) compared with the Auckland adult population (14%).

Meanwhile the proportion of those aged 25-34 years and those aged 18-24 years are significantly smaller among candidates (10% and 3% respectively), compared to the Auckland adult population (21% and 14% respectively).

These results suggest that those who are older were over-represented among candidates, and those who are younger were under-represented among candidates.

**Figure 5. Age of candidates compared with the Auckland adult population (candidates n= 285)**



### 3.2 Age in 2019 compared with 2016

The age distribution of candidates has shifted slightly in 2019, compared to 2016.

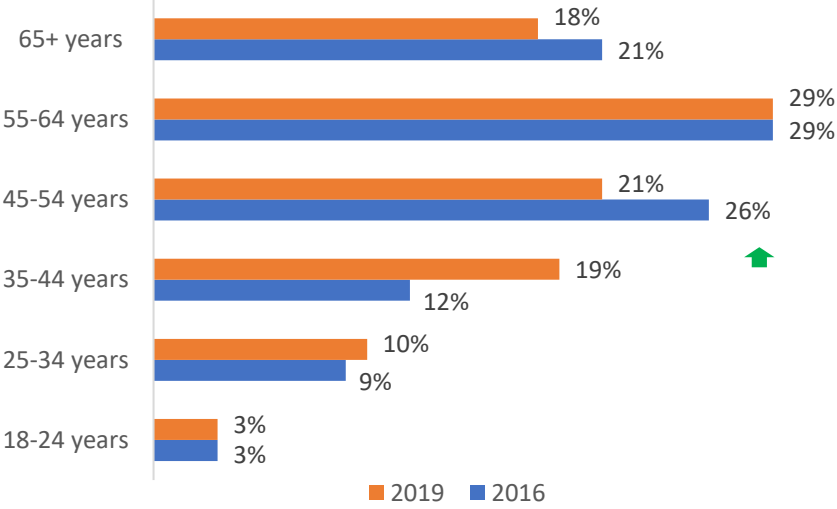
The most notable shift is a significant increase in the proportion of candidates aged 35-44 years in 2019 (19%), which has increased by seven percentage points from 2016 (12%).

Conversely, in 2019 a lower proportion of candidates were aged 45-54 years (21%), compared with 2016 (26%), representing a non-significant decline of four percentage points.

The proportion of candidates aged 65+ has also declined slightly from 21 per cent in 2016, to 18 per cent in 2019, representing a non-significant decline of three percentage points.

These results indicate candidates in 2019 tended to be younger than those in 2016.

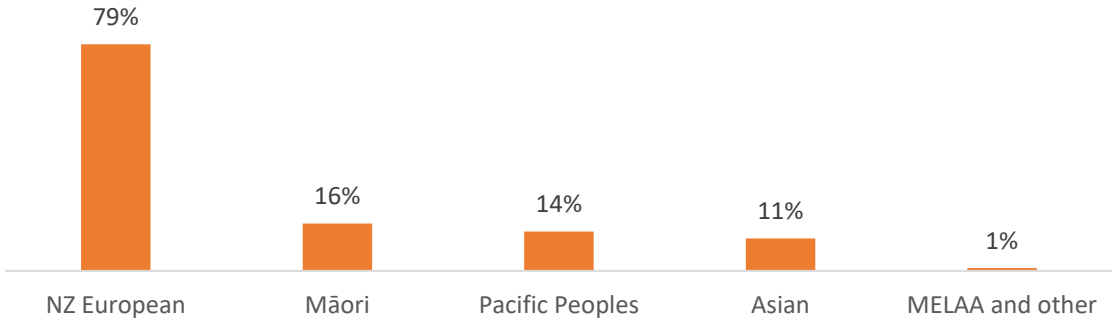
**Figure 6. Age of candidates in 2019 compared with 2016 (2016 n= 302, 2019 n =285)**



## 4.0 Ethnicity

About four in five, or 79 per cent of candidates were New Zealand European, the largest ethnic group represented among candidates. This was followed by Māori (16%), Pacific Peoples (14%) and Asian (11%). Just one per cent were in the Middle Eastern, Latin American or African (MELAA) or other.

Figure 7. Ethnic group of candidates (n=292)



### 4.1 Ethnic group compared with the Auckland adult population

There was a discrepancy between the ethnic group composition among candidates compared with that among the Auckland adult population.

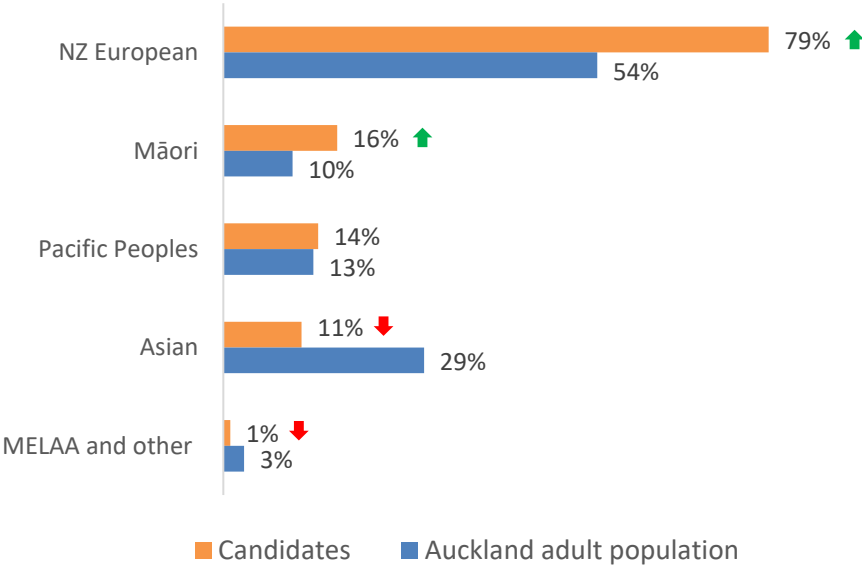
The proportion of NZ European’s was 25 percentage points higher among candidates (79%), compared with the Auckland adult population (54%). Similarly, the proportion of Māori was six percentage points higher among candidates (16%), compared with the Auckland adult population (10%). Both differences were statistically significant.

Conversely, the proportion of those who identified as Asian was 18 percentage points lower among candidates (11%), compared to with the Auckland adult population (29%). The proportion of those who identified as MELAA/other was two percentage points lower among candidates (1%), compared with the Auckland adult population (3%). Both differences were statistically significant.

These results suggest that NZ European and Māori ethnicities are relatively over-represented among candidates. Meanwhile, those of Asian or MELAA/other ethnicities are under-represented among candidates.

The proportion of candidates who identify as Pacific Peoples is very similar among candidates (14%) compared with the population of Auckland adults (13%).

**Figure 8. Ethnic group compared to the Auckland adult population (candidates n=292)**



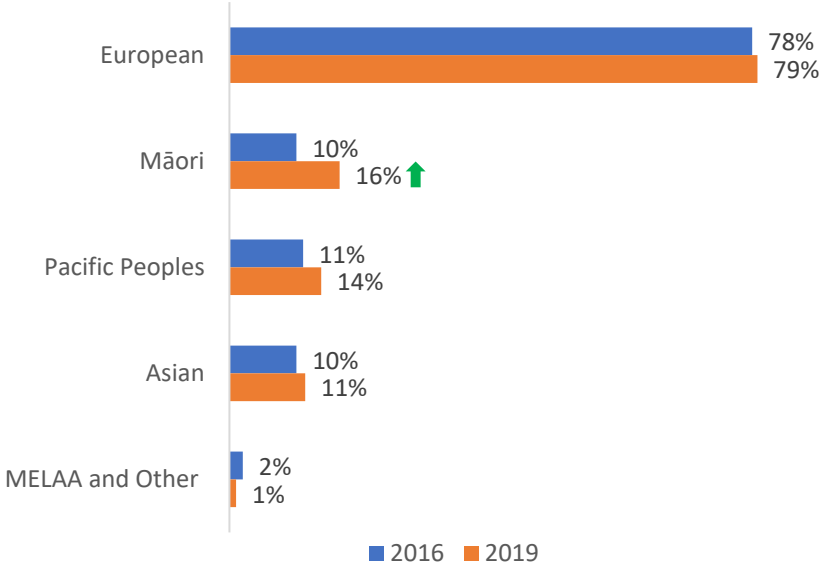
**4.2 Ethnic group in 2019 compared to 2016**

The ethnic group composition of candidates has shifted slightly in 2019, compared with 2016. The most pronounced shift is an increase in the proportion of Māori candidates, which has increased significantly from 10 per cent in 2016, to 16 per cent in 2019.

The proportion of Pacific Peoples has increased slightly but not significantly from 11 per cent in 2016, to 14 per cent in 2019.

The proportion of NZ European, Asian and MELAA/Other have all stayed reasonably constant.

**Figure 9. Ethnic group of candidates in 2019 compared to 2016 (2016 n=302, 2019=292)**

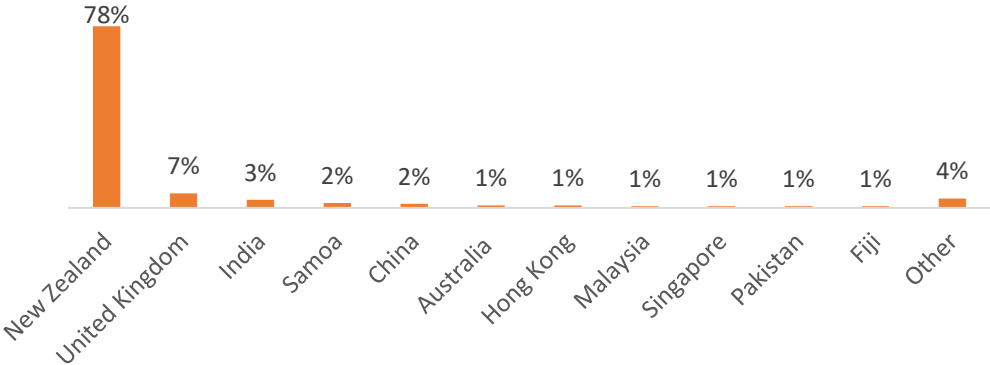


## 5.0 Country of birth

Almost four in five candidates (78%) were born in New Zealand, and 22 per cent were born elsewhere. Following New Zealand, other frequently given countries of birth include the United Kingdom (7%), India (3%), Samoa (2%) and China (2%).

There is a long tail of other countries of birth, indicating diversity in terms of the birthplace of candidates.

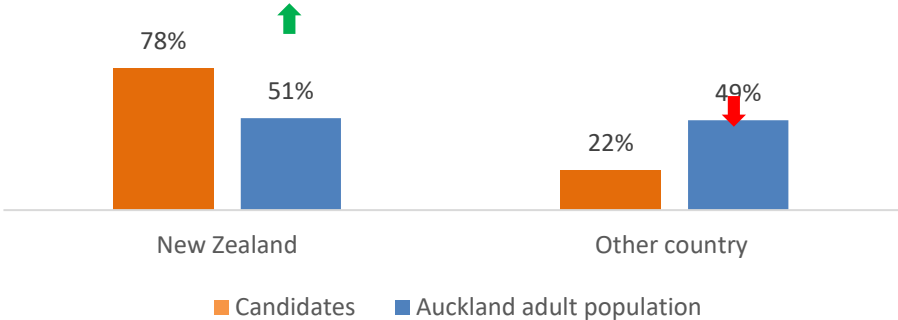
**Figure 10. Country of birth (n=289)**



### 5.1 Birthplace compared with the Auckland adult population

The proportion of those born in New Zealand was 27 per cent points higher among candidates (78%) compared with that among the Auckland adult population (51%) – this difference is statistically significant. This indicates an over-representation of candidates born in New Zealand, and an under-representation of candidates born elsewhere.

**Figure 11. Birthplace of candidates compared to the Auckland adult population (candidates n=289)**

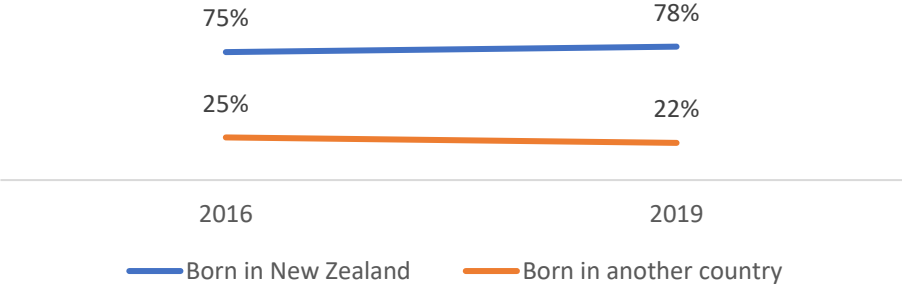


### 5.2 Birthplace in 2019 compared with 2016

The proportion of candidates born in New Zealand has increased slightly from 75 per cent in 2016, to 78 per cent in 2019. While the proportion of candidates born abroad has decreased slightly from 25 per cent in 2016 to 22 per cent in 2019.

Although not statistically significant, this shift suggests the under-representation of candidates born abroad has become slightly more pronounced since 2016.

**Figure 12. Birthplace of candidates in 2019 compared to 2016 (2016 n=301, 2019 n=289).**



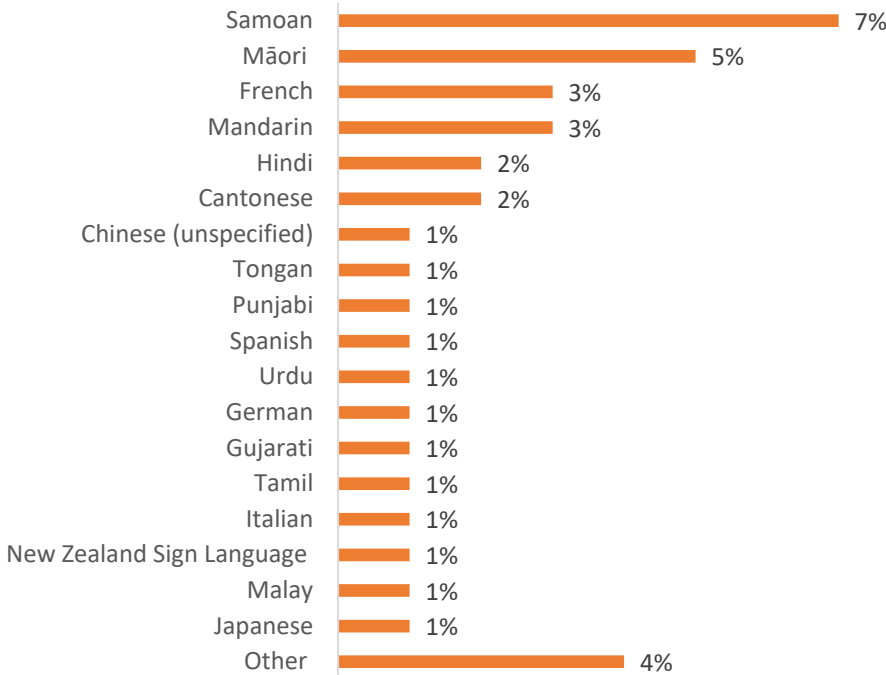


## 6.0 Languages spoken

Apart from English, candidates most often reported speaking Samoan (7%), Māori (5%), French (3%), Hindi (2%) and Cantonese (2%).

In total, candidates reported speaking 31 languages. This represents diversity in terms of the breadth of languages spoken by candidates.

Figure 13. Languages spoken by candidates (n=292)



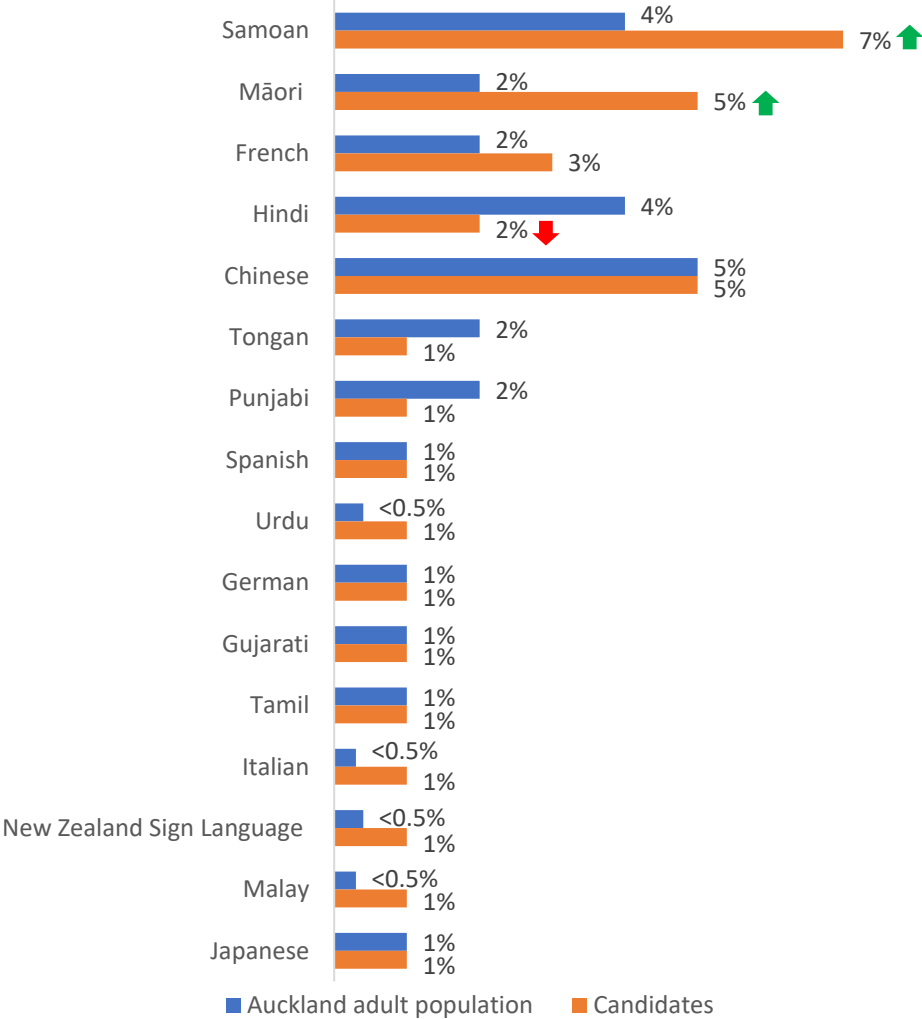
### 6.1 Languages spoken compared with the Auckland adult population

The proportion of candidates that spoke Samoan (7%) and Māori (5%) is significantly higher than that among the Auckland adult population (4% and 2% respectively).

Conversely the proportion of candidates that spoke Hindi (2%) is significantly lower than that among the Auckland adult population (4%).

Candidates were slightly but not significantly more likely to speak New Zealand Sign Language (1%), compared with the Auckland adult population (<0.5%).

**Figure 14. Languages spoken by candidates compared with the Auckland adult population (candidates n=292)**



**6.2 Languages spoken in 2019 compared with 2016**

There were no significant changes in the proportion of candidates in 2019 that spoke each of the languages shown above, compared with that among candidates in 2016.

In terms of the official languages of New Zealand, the proportion of candidates in 2019 that spoke both Māori (5%) and New Zealand Sign Language (1%) was unchanged from that in seen in 2016.

**6.3 Number of languages spoken by candidates**

Three quarters of candidates (76%) spoke one language, with just less than a quarter (23%) that spoke more than one language.

## 7.0 Summary

This report presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of 2019 Auckland Council election candidates.

The analysis indicates that, when compared to the Auckland adult population, the overall candidate pool tended to have a higher representation of male, older, New Zealand European or Māori, New Zealand-born candidates.

Pasifika representation is good, with a similar proportion of Pacific Peoples among candidates compared with the Auckland adult population. However Asian, MELAA and other ethnicities are less represented.

Since 2016, the most notable shifts include a higher proportion of Māori and younger people within the candidate pool. Although there is still some way to go towards more balanced representation, this indicates a shift in the right direction.

It is intended that this analysis is repeated in the 2022 local body elections to continue to monitor trends over time.



**Find out more:** phone 09 301 0101, email [rimu@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:rimu@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) or visit [aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) and [knowledgeauckland.org.nz](http://knowledgeauckland.org.nz)