

# Auckland Local Elections 2019: Candidate Experience

Laura Roberts

June 2020

Technical Report 2020/010



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## Executive summary

After the 2019 Auckland Council elections a survey was conducted to better understand the candidate experience, including the nomination process, awareness of and use of resources, candidate information sessions, the Vote Auckland website and how candidates would like to be notified of election results.

Overall, 37 per cent of candidates (154 of the 423) completed the survey.

### The nomination process

Three in five respondents (61%) were satisfied with the nomination process, with 75 per cent agreeing it was easy to find information about the process and another 79 per cent agreeing this information was accurate. Almost all respondents were able to access most or all of the information they required, however a smaller proportion of older (aged 55+ years) and female respondents agreed with this, compared with younger (aged 18-54 years) and male respondents. Information about the nomination process needed to be provided earlier, with clearer and more detailed information requested.

Three in ten respondents (30%) contacted the Electoral Officer, with fewer (8%) contacting the Auckland Council email address to seek assistance about the nomination process. In both cases about two thirds (65% and 67% respectively) were satisfied with the assistance they received.

More than half of respondents (53%) decided to stand in the six-month period prior to nominations opening, that is, between 1 January 2019 and 18 July 2019. A quarter (26%) decided to stand earlier, on or before 31 December 2018. One in five (21%) decided closer to the election, on or after 19 July 2019, after nominations had opened. Returning candidates tended to decide to stand earlier compared with first time candidates.

Three quarters (74%) said they would be likely to lodge their nomination online in future elections if this option was provided, including 55 per cent who are very likely. About 30 per cent suggested allowing the option of online nominations when asked how the nomination process could be improved generally.

### Resources

Respondents were most aware of, and most had used, the Vote Auckland website, the *Candidate information handbook* and the *What you need to know to stand for council* brochure. Other resources had lower levels of awareness and use, suggesting these need to be publicised better in future elections. Resources, including email communications, were generally perceived to be useful. Almost half of respondents (47%) with special access needs said their unique needs to access resources were not met, indicating more needs to be done in this area.

### Candidate information sessions

Fewer than half of respondents (48%) were aware of the candidate information sessions offered, with 23 per cent of those aware having attended a session, suggesting these need to be better publicised in future elections. A smaller proportion of younger respondents (aged 18-54 years),

females and first-time candidates were aware of the sessions, compared to older respondents (aged 55+ years), males and returning candidates. Among those who attended, 56 per cent found it useful, and another 56 per cent said it had a positive impact on their decision to stand. The sessions were seen as a valuable resource where respondents could access information and ask questions face-to-face.

### **Auckland Council marketing campaign**

Three in five respondents had seen the campaign (62%), most often online, either through social media, the Auckland Council website or online advertising. While a quarter (25%) said the campaign had a positive impact on their decision to stand, 68 per cent were neutral. Many respondents liked that the campaign showed a diverse range of candidates in terms of age and ethnicity, however others felt more needed to be done to encourage and enable minorities and diverse groups to stand. Some respondents felt the campaign started too late, often after individuals had already decided to stand, so could be brought forward in future elections. The impact of the campaign was questioned, with some respondents suggesting more widespread engagement and knowledge about local governance was needed as a first step in order to increase the number and diversity of candidates standing.

### **The Vote Auckland website**

Nearly nine in ten respondents (87%) added to their profile on the Vote Auckland website, with 37 per cent saying they thought this had benefited their campaign. Older respondents (aged 55+ years) were less likely to add to their profile, compared to younger respondents (aged 18-54 years). Three in five respondents (59%) were satisfied with the process of adding information to their profile.

Respondents wanted to be provided more time to supply information for their profile and were frustrated that the deadline for this was extended for some candidates, seemingly disadvantaging those who were not provided this opportunity. There were conflicting views on the amount of information respondents were asked to supply, with some saying this was not enough and others saying it was too much. Some respondents thought more interactive content should be allowed as an option, including video and audio introductions or statements. Respondents also wanted feedback on the reach of their profile based on page views to better understand its impact.

It was questioned how well the site was used by voters as a result of low public engagement in local governance. The website could be improved by allowing searching of candidates by ward or name rather than the current address-based search system, an easier ability to flick through candidate profiles and a page summarising profiles of mayoral candidates.

### **Election results**

When asked how they would like to be notified of election results, more than half of respondents said they would prefer to be phoned (53% selecting this as their first choice), followed by email (37% selecting this as their first choice). Fewer respondents wanted to be notified by website.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Auckland Council plays two key roles in the local government election process: to ensure that statutory requirements around the elections process are met, and to enable all Aucklanders to participate, as voters and/or as candidates.

Local government elections are held every three years under the Local Electoral Act 2001 and its associated regulations, the Local Electoral Regulations 2001. This Act requires councils to appoint an Electoral Officer who is responsible for the conduct of the council elections.

As one way to fulfil its obligations, Auckland Council's Democracy Services and Electoral Officer provide support and resources to all candidates who stand for election in the Auckland Council area. Resources are available online, in hard copy, and face to face through information sessions. Auckland Council hosts the 'Vote Auckland' website which provides information for candidates and voters and also runs a marketing campaign encouraging individuals to stand.

Following the recent 2019 local elections, a survey of candidates was conducted to understand their experience, findings of which are presented in this report. This follows a similar report produced after the 2016 local elections (Allpress and Meares, 2017)<sup>1</sup>. It is expected such a report will be produced following the 2022 local elections and beyond.

This ongoing research process contributes to the evaluation of support and resources provided by Auckland Council's Democracy Services and the Electoral Officer each election. This allows learnings and reflections to be realised and taken forward into planning for future elections, thereby continuing to improve the election experience for all candidates.

The survey was conducted and analysed by Auckland Council's Research and Evaluation Unit (RIMU).

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<sup>1</sup> Allpress, J. A and C Meares (2017). *Auckland Council elections candidate experience survey 2016*. Auckland Council technical report, TR2017/004

## 2.0 Method

All Auckland Council candidates running for Mayor, membership of the Governing Body or local boards were invited to complete an online survey on their experience as a candidate.

The initial invitation was sent via email to all candidates on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019, about a week after polling day which took place on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019. The survey was open for three weeks, with two reminder emails sent to candidates during that time. Ubiquity was used to programme and distribute the survey.

Overall, 37 per cent of all the candidates (154 of the 423 candidates invited to participate) completed the survey. As such, results should be interpreted as indicative only rather than representative of the wider candidate pool.

The survey was anonymous, and aggregated responses are reported to prevent the identification of any individual respondents.

Ethics permission was gained through Auckland Council’s Human Participants Ethics Committee (Application #2019004).

### 2.1 Sample demographics

A breakdown of demographics for respondents who completed the survey is provided below in Table 1.

Broadly speaking, the sample of respondents who completed the survey is largely reflective of the wider population of candidates. There is a slight skew towards females, those of European ethnicity, and those in the 60-69 age group. This is due to members of these groups being slightly more likely to have completed the survey, relative to other groups.

For a full report covering candidate demographics has been produced, please see Auckland Local Elections 2019: The demographic characteristics of candidates (Roberts, 2020).<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: Sample characteristics (n=154)**

Age	n	%
18-29	7	5
30-39	25	16
40-49	29	19
50-59	34	22
60-69	48	31
70-79	11	7
Gender	n	%
Male	81	53

<sup>2</sup> Roberts, L (2020). *Auckland local elections 2019: the demographic characteristics of candidates*. Auckland Council technical report, TR2020/005.

Female	73	47
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
NZ European	129	84
Māori	17	11
Asian	12	8
Pacific	12	8
Other European	6	4
<b>Disability</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	11	7
No	143	93
<b>First time standing</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	82	53
No	72	47
<b>Country of birth</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Born in New Zealand	117	76
Born abroad	37	24

## 2.2 This report

This report is organised into six sections focussing on:

- The nomination process
- Awareness, use of and satisfaction with resources provided
- Candidate information sessions
- Auckland Council’s marketing campaign encouraging individuals to stand
- The ‘Vote Auckland’ website
- Communication of election results.

Subgroup comparison in terms of age, sex and whether the candidate has stood before have been included, to reflect how subgroups respond differently. Specifically, the comparative subgroups are:

- Younger (18-54 years) (n=73) compared to older (55+ years) (n=81)
- Male (n=81) compared to female (n=73)
- First time candidates (n=82) compared to returning candidates (n=72).

Wherever results by subgroup differ by 5 percentage points or more from one another, this is recorded. Please note these analyses should be interpreted as indicative only due to small to moderate sample sizes at the subgroup level. Ethnic group and country of birth are not included in this analysis due to small sample sizes in some groups.

Proportions for each question have been calculated by the number who provided a response, therefore base numbers may vary. Results have not been tested for statistical significance.

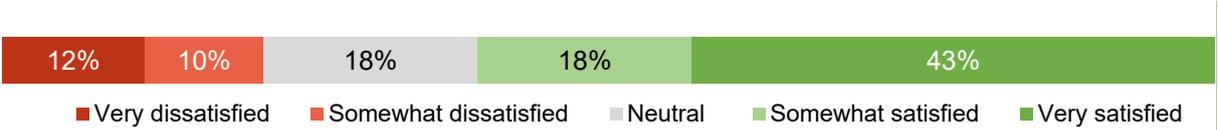
### 3.0 The nomination process

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the nomination process. This included overall satisfaction with the process, ease of finding information, accuracy of information, ability to access information, satisfaction with seeking assistance about the nomination process, when respondents decided to stand, collecting and lodging nomination forms and improvements to the nomination process.

#### 3.1 Satisfaction with the nomination process

Three in five respondents (61%) were satisfied with the nomination process, including 43 per cent who were very satisfied. However, more than one in five (22%) were dissatisfied.

Figure 1. Satisfaction with the nomination process (n=153)

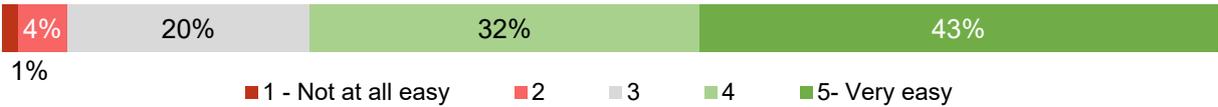


**Subgroup differences:**  
 A greater proportion of respondents standing for the first time were very satisfied (48%) compared with respondents who had stood before (38%).

#### 3.2 Information about the nomination process

Three quarters of respondents (75%) said it was easy to find information about the nomination process, with just 5 per cent indicating this was not easy.

Figure 2. How easy it was to find information about the nomination process (n=150)



**Subgroup differences:**  
 A greater proportion of respondents who had stood before (49%) said this was very easy, compared with respondents standing for the first time (37%).

Nearly four in five (79%) said the information they found about the nomination process was accurate, including 45 per cent who said this was very accurate. Just three per cent said the information they found was not accurate.

Figure 3. Accuracy of information found about the nomination process (n=150)

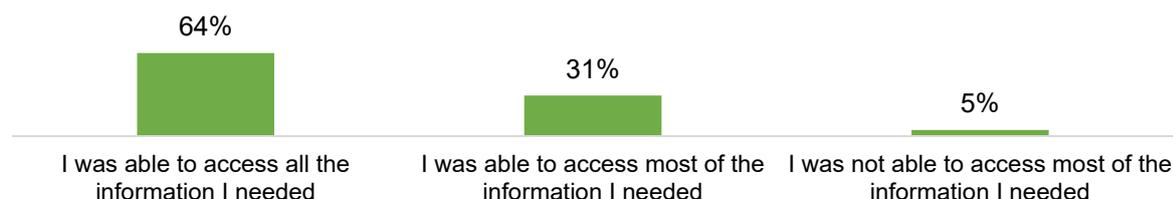


#### Subgroup differences:

A greater proportion of males (49%) said this was very accurate compared with females (42%).

The majority of respondents were able to access all (64%) or most (31%) of the information they needed about the nomination process. Just 5 per cent were not able to access most of the information they needed.

**Figure 4. Ability to access the information needed about the nomination process (n=147)**



#### Subgroup differences:

A greater proportion of males (68%) said they were able to access all the information they needed, compared to females (60%).

A greater proportion of younger respondents (69%) said they were able to access all the information they needed, compared to older respondents (60%).

Respondents who said they were not able to access most of the information they needed about the nomination process were asked why, with 29 respondents providing a comment. Key reasons include:

- A lot of information was provided, which made it difficult to find key information among.
- Information was sometimes provided too late to be useful.
- Difficulty navigating and searching for information on the website, especially for those less digitally confident.
- The nomination form was difficult to complete as instructions or information about how to complete the form were ambiguous.
- Vague information that lacked detail.
- More information was specifically required about where nomination forms could be collected, where nomination forms could be lodged, information about what happens after a nomination is lodged and when and how candidates were to provide information for their online profile.

*There was a lot of information to digest.*

*Information came very late, so it was a bit of a rush to understand it. I had a hard time finding the form, and when I did, I was unclear on a couple of points when filling it out.*

*Because I am not good at operating a computer.*

*Some aspects of the form were ambiguous, and I needed to seek clarification on what was required.*

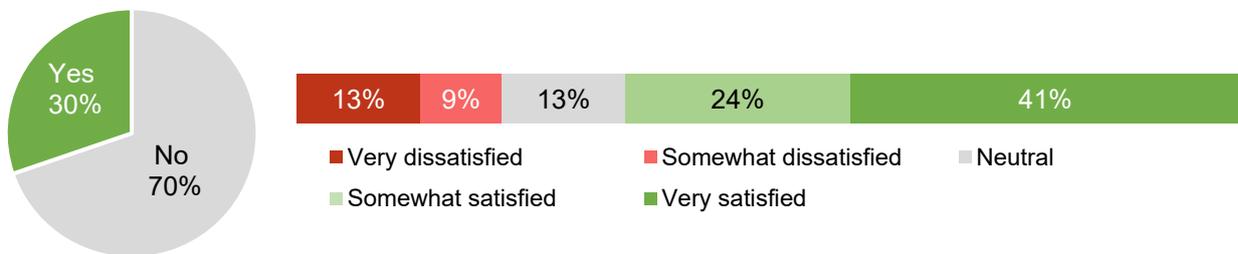
*A lot of the information given was extremely vague.*

*The website took some time to find out how to navigate. The search tool was great for voters but difficult as a candidate to navigate directly to the information needed.*

### 3.3 Seeking assistance about the nomination process

Three in ten respondents (30%) asked for assistance from the Electoral Officer about the nomination process. Of these, about two thirds (65%) were satisfied with the assistance they received, and 22 per cent were dissatisfied.

**Figure 5. Proportion who sought assistance about the nomination process from the Electoral Officer (left, n=152), and satisfaction among those who did (right, n=46)**



#### Subgroup differences:

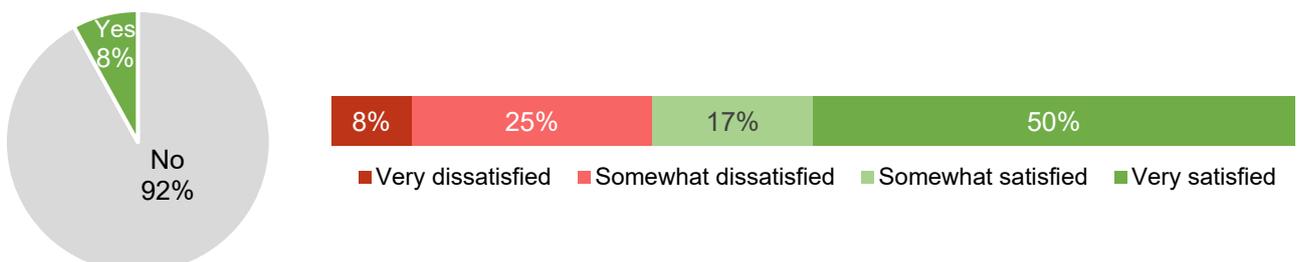
A greater proportion of females (33%) contacted the electoral officer, compared with males (27%).

A greater proportion of older respondents (35%) contacted the electoral officer, compared to younger respondents (25%).

A greater proportion of respondents who had stood before (39%) contacted the electoral officer, compared to respondents standing for the first time (22%).

Just eight per cent of respondents asked for assistance from the Auckland Council Elections email address ([elections@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:elections@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)) about the nomination process. Of these, about two thirds (67%) were satisfied with the assistance they received, a third (33%) were dissatisfied.

**Figure 6. Proportion who sought assistance about the nomination process from the Auckland Council Elections email address (left, n=150), and satisfaction among those who did (right, n=12)**



#### Subgroup differences:

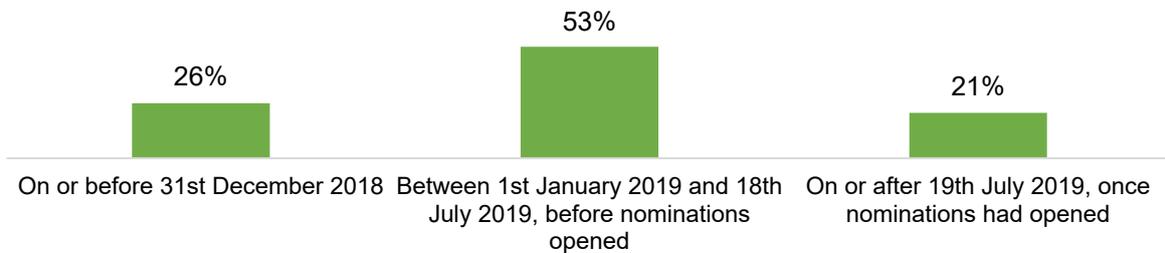
A greater proportion of younger respondents (11%) contacted the Auckland Council Elections email address, compared with older respondents (5%).

A greater proportion of respondents who had stood before (13%) contacted the Auckland Council Elections email address, compared with respondents standing for the first time (4%).

### 3.4 When respondents decided to stand

More than half of respondents (53%) decided to stand in the six-month period prior to nominations opening, that is, between 1 January 2019 and 18 July 2019. A quarter (26%) decided to stand earlier, on or before 31 December 2018. One in five (21%) decided closer to the election, on or after 19 July 2019, after nominations had opened.

Figure 7. When respondents decided to stand (n=154)



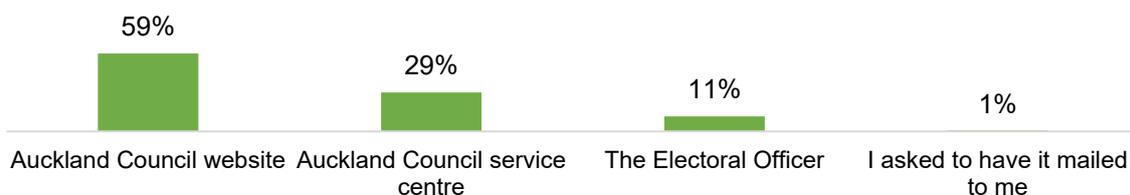
#### Subgroup differences:

A greater proportion of respondents who had stood in the past decided to stand earlier, compared to respondents standing for the first time.

### 3.5 Collecting and lodging the nomination form

Three in five respondents (59%) collected their nomination form from the Auckland Council website, followed by an Auckland Council service centre (29%) and the Electoral Officer (11%). Just one per cent of respondents asked for the nomination form to be mailed to them.

Figure 8. Where nomination form was collected from (n=133)



Three in five respondents lodged their nomination form at an Auckland Council service centre (60%), the remaining two in five (40%) lodged this at the Electoral Office.

**Figure 9. Where nomination form was lodged (n=146)**



Seven in ten (71%) respondents were satisfied with the process of collecting and lodging their nomination form, including half (49%) who were very satisfied. Just 15 per cent were dissatisfied.

**Figure 10. Satisfaction with the process of collecting and lodging nomination form (n=148)**



### 3.6 Online nomination process

Three quarters of respondents (74%) are likely to lodge their nomination online in future elections, if they were to stand again, including more than half (55%) who said they would be very likely. Just 13 per cent said they would be unlikely.

**Figure 11. Likelihood of lodging nomination online in future elections if available (n=148)**



**Subgroup differences:**

A greater proportion of males (57%) said they would be very likely to lodge their nomination online, compared to females (52%).

When respondents were asked what they thought could be improved about the nomination process, three in ten (29%) suggested providing the option for candidates to partially or fully lodge their nomination online. No respondents made comment to suggest they would be against an online nomination process.

*Moving to online would be a big improvement.*

*It would be great if it could be done online, having to go into a Service Centre is a bit of a pain.*

Being able to submit the candidate photo online was mentioned particularly often, followed by candidate statements, forms and the ability to pay online.

*It is absolutely ridiculous in this day and age that I had to print out passport photos to submit with my application. It's a massive waste of time for council to have to scan and upload them for the booklets as opposed to just having an easy electronic file.*

*Being able to complete and submit the nomination online would be a huge improvement, especially the photo.*

However, some respondents did acknowledge security or technical implications of an online system.

*Unless there was certainty the electronic forms would be accepted, I prefer to drop them off*  
*Make it online and protect the content and the image from third party interference*

Others acknowledged that although an online nomination system would be useful, in order to ensure universal access, this should be provided as an option alongside traditional in person nominations.

*Although I've ticked "very likely" to use online registration I'm very concerned that the primary "channel" to register should be in person for reasons to do with universal access.*

*Make the nomination process available online as well as the option to download the form and submit in person to the Electoral Officer.*

### **3.7 Improvements to the nomination process**

Respondents were asked how they thought the nomination process could be improved in future elections, with 69 respondents providing a comment.

A key theme emerged around improvements that could be made to the nomination form, which many respondents commented on. Respondents suggested the nomination form be laid out more clearly and more information or instructions be included on the form, for example information about what details supplied will be used for. Nomination forms could be supplied in other languages to improve accessibility for diverse groups. It should be made easier to collect and lodge nomination forms, in terms of pick up locations and signposting to these. Finally, it was suggested nomination form to be made available earlier.

Several respondents commented that errors had been made in publicly published information about candidates, for example candidate photos, statements, positions, and affiliations. As such an improvement would be ensuring no errors are made in future elections.

It was also suggested that all information is easy to find, access and understand. This means using simple language and minimising the use of jargon, perhaps providing a glossary to assist with this. This also includes making it easier to search for information on the Vote Auckland website.

Finally, ensuring staff have all the information and resources required to assist candidates throughout the nomination process was suggested by several respondents. One respondent went further to suggest each candidate should be assigned a personal contact person they can get in touch with should they require any assistance through the nomination process.

*Accessing direct information for candidates was a mission especially via the council website and also Vote Auckland.*

*Train the staff a lot better. Also make sure they have the necessary information and resources available. Some staff clearly didn't feel confident.*

*Where forms are available, they should be in a place that is clearly marked — I went to the Manukau service centre and could not find them. I had to stand in line and ask the person at the counter, who directed me to some obscure office where a Council staff member was giving them out — unnecessary barrier.*

*There really needs to be a 'what this means', so for example when it asks for contact details, it's unclear about the where it will be published, or in fact, what that means. I'm sure if people know that an email address will be available to polls and the like, then people will list it.*

*It's hard with some of the jargon, if you're a community member standing who is unfamiliar with the system, then a glossary might help.*

*The wrong photo was reproduced in the official information voting handbook for my local board candidate statement.*

*Nomination information should be encouraged in different languages and available at different platforms.*

## 4.0 Resources

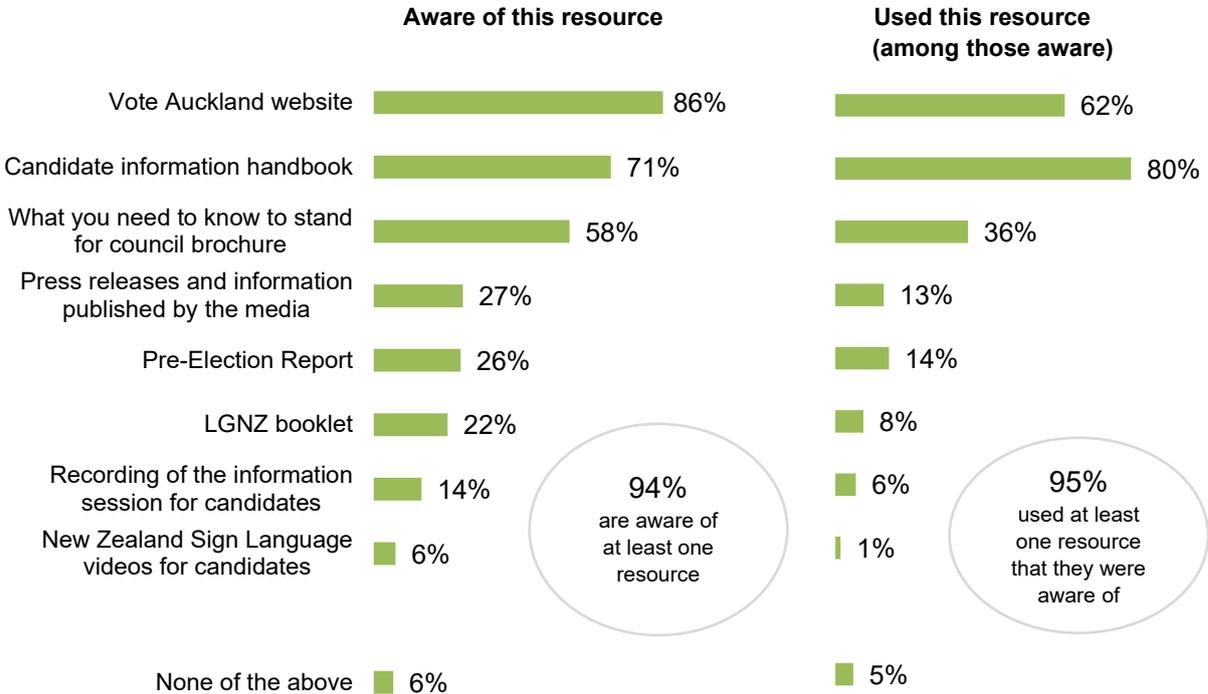
Respondents were asked a series of questions about resources provided by Auckland Council, the Electoral Officer and Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ). This included awareness of resources, use of resources, usefulness of email communications, special access resource needs and improvements to resources provided.

### 4.1 Awareness and use of resources

The three resources respondents were most aware of include the Vote Auckland website (86%), the *Candidate information handbook* (71%) and the *What you need to know to stand for council* brochure (58%). Fewer respondents were aware of other resources available as shown in the graph below, indicating better publicity of these resources may be beneficial. Just six per cent of respondents were not aware of any of the resources.

Among those that were aware of each resource, the most used was the *Candidate information handbook* (80%), followed by the Vote Auckland website (62%) and the *What you need to know to stand for council* brochure (36%). Just 5 per cent of respondents did not use any of the resources they were aware of.

**Figure 12. Awareness of resources available (left, n=154), use of resources among those aware (right, n=145)**



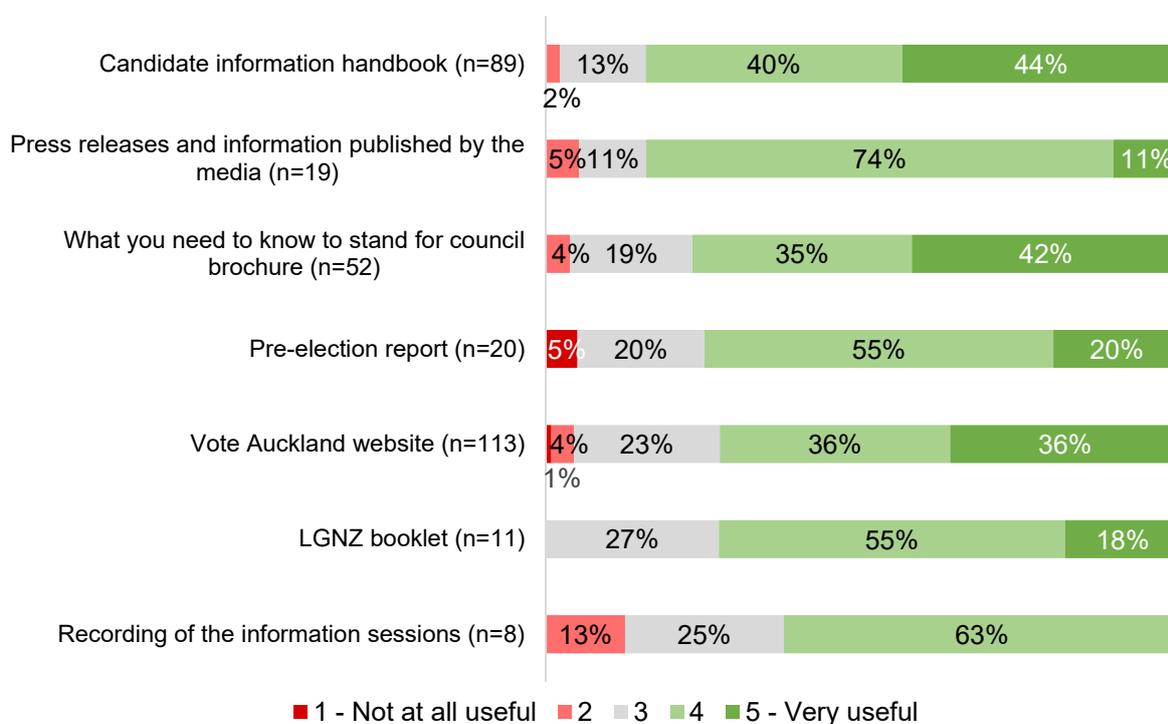
**Subgroup differences:**  
 A greater proportion of females were aware of at least one of the resources (99%), compared to males (90%). Among those aware, a greater proportion of females had used at least one of the resources (99%), compared to males (93%).

A greater proportion of younger respondents were aware of at least one of the resources (100%), compared to older respondents (89%). However, among those aware, a greater proportion of older respondents had used at least one of the resources (100%), compared with younger respondents (90%).

Respondents who had stood before and who were standing for the first time were similarly likely to be aware of at least one of the resources (96% and 92% respectively). Among those aware, a greater proportion of respondents who had stood before used at least one of the resources (99%) compared with respondents standing for the first time (93%).

Generally, most respondents found resources provided to be useful. The two most useful resources were the *Candidate information handbook* and press releases and information published by the media, with 84 per cent rating these as useful.

**Figure 13. Usefulness of each resource among those who used it<sup>3</sup>**

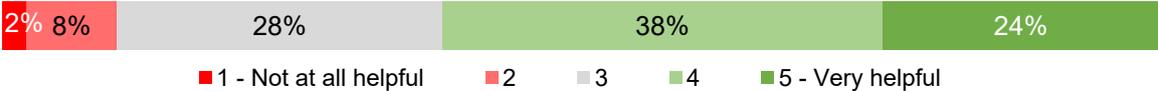


## 4.2 Email communication

More than three in five (62%) respondents found the email communications received during the nomination process from Auckland Council and the Electoral Officer to be helpful, including a quarter (24%) who said these were very helpful. Just 10 per cent did not find these communications helpful.

<sup>3</sup> Please note New Zealand sign language video is not included due to low sample size of those who used it. (n<10)

**Figure 14. Helpfulness of email communication from Auckland Council and the Electoral Officer (n=142)**



**Subgroup differences:**  
 A greater proportion of females said this was very helpful (33%), compared with males (16%).

### 4.3 Special access needs

In total, 19 per cent of respondents said they had special needs in terms of access to resources and information. Among this group, just more than half (53%) said these needs were met, leaving 47 per cent who said their needs were not meant.

Those who said they had special access needs were asked what improvements could be made to ensure that they have their needs met in future elections, with eight respondents providing a comment. One respondent provided a lengthy statement (see below) that highlighted a possible need to ask about information access needs on the nomination form. This would enable the identification of respondents who have special access needs, which is the first step to understanding and meeting these needs.

*There was nowhere on the nomination form to indicate what my access needs were. Counting us means you'll know how many people with access needs put themselves forward, so you create a benchmark and track progress of numbers of disabled candidates. Seeking information from candidates about their access needs would be a helpful question to ask in the nomination papers. Other candidates would see that question and it could help to further normalise the idea in wider society that disabled people might be candidates too. It might even make them realise they need to campaign for votes of disabled voters too. I would want to know that websites with election information on have been designed and tested against web accessibility standards. Often due to election sites being new and temporary creations, they may not be developed to the same standards as permanent sites.*

*Stronger communication with those with disabilities or high health needs.*

## 4.4 Improvements to resources provided

Respondents were asked how resources provided could be improved in future elections, with 55 providing a comment.

Two key suggestions came out that were mentioned by many respondents. Firstly, improving the publicity of resources, so that all candidates were aware of them. Many respondents were not aware of the candidate information sessions especially and would liked to have attended these.

Secondly, the provision of information and resources earlier in the process was frequently mentioned as lacking. Many respondents felt that information was often provided too late for it to be useful. For example, well after campaign planning had taken place. Information about the one stop shops was specifically mentioned as something that candidates should have been aware of earlier. Some respondents suggested offering an information pack which contained all key resources to all candidates as early as possible in the process. This could also be made available upon request by any individuals considering standing well before nominations had opened.

Beyond these, many other suggestions were offered by a smaller number of respondents, these are summarised below.

The format of information and resources was mentioned in various forms. Some respondents felt in person, interactive information sharing, such as the candidate information sessions, was extremely valuable and should receive a greater focus. However, this was currently outweighed by written resources. Other respondents suggested providing more digital formats such as an App, webinars, audio, and more online videos. Several respondents suggested the search function on the Vote Auckland website be improved so it was easier to find relevant information, which was described as somewhat of a challenge. One consideration raised in relation to digital formats was that these should not be used exclusive as not all candidates have access to or feel confident using digital technologies. As such offline resources such as hard copies still need to be made widely available.

In terms of seeking assistance, some respondents asked for clearer contact details of who could be contacted, rather than being directed to a general helpline. One respondent suggested providing an online chat function that candidates could use to seek assistance. Several respondents said that staff providing assistance needed to be better trained so that they were more knowledgeable and able to provide accurate and detailed information on the spot.

Specific information that was requested include a timeline document showing all key dates, better maps of where hoardings are permitted and clearer rules about these, and a resource that clearly explains what local boards do.

*It was frustrating to talk to someone in authority who couldn't answer a question and you were told you'd get a call back.*

*Revise the booklets with a variety of people and make sure they are understandable.*

*Information about voting needs to be up to date much sooner. It took a long time to get all the information up about the One Stop Shops.*

*Better notifications of public meetings. I only found out by accident.*

*The search bar should be improved. Many times, when trying to use it to find information quickly I would get everything except what I was looking for.*

*Many respondents I spoke to had read the information but hadn't fully understood it. I found that conversations were the best way to get across key information — maybe more opportunities for interactive discussions.*

*I think potential respondents need to know more about the role of local boards etc. in simple terms, even in visual format such as video.*

## 5.0 Candidate information sessions

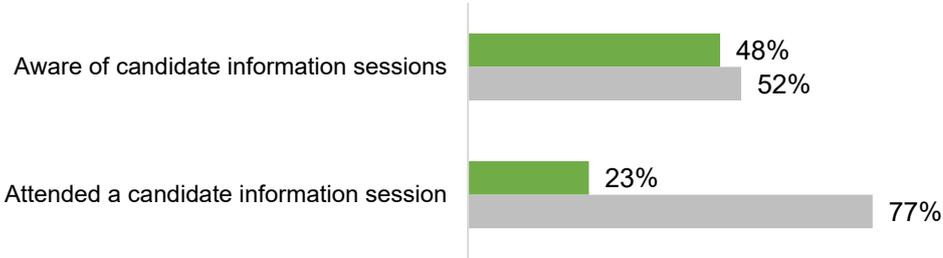
Auckland Council alongside some community organisations provided candidate information sessions. Sessions provided information to prospective candidates, including how Auckland Council works, why communities should get involved in electing council, why stand for council and where to find further information and support to stand for council.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the candidate information sessions. This included awareness, attendance, usefulness, and impact of the sessions.

### 5.1 Awareness and attendance of information sessions

More than half of respondents (52%) were not aware of the candidate information sessions. Among those who were aware, less than a quarter (23%) attended a session.

**Figure 15. Awareness and attendance of candidate information sessions (awareness n=146, attendance n=69)**



#### Subgroup differences:

A greater proportion of males were aware of the sessions (55%), compared to females (41%). However, among those aware a greater proportion of females had attended (29%), compared to males (20%).

A greater proportion of older respondents were aware of the sessions (52%), compared to younger respondents (44%). However, among those aware a greater proportion of younger respondents attended (33%), compared to older respondents (15%).

A greater proportion of respondents who had stood before were aware of the sessions (60%), compared to respondents standing for the first time (37%). However, among those aware a greater proportion of respondents standing for the first time attended (43%), compared to respondents who had stood before (10%).

### 5.2 Usefulness and impact of information sessions

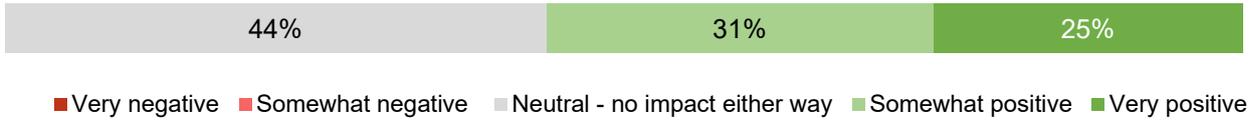
Almost three in five respondents (56%) that attended a session said it was useful, including 31 per cent who said it was very useful. However, more than two in five (44%) were either neutral or found it to be not be useful.

**Figure 16. Usefulness of candidate information sessions (n=16)**



Almost three in five respondents (56%) who attended a session said it had a positive impact on their decision to stand, including a quarter (24%) who said it had a very positive impact. Although no respondents said the session had a negative impact on their decision to stand, 44 per cent were neutral.

**Figure 17. Impact of candidate information sessions on decision to stand (n=16)**



In total, eight respondents who had attended a session provided a comment about this, including the following:

*This was the only way I found key answers on questions that I had. I could not find the answers anywhere online. I also had to get some points cleared as it was vague.*

*Needed to be advertised more widely - no new candidates turned up to the session I attended, only incumbents (and only two of us). The rest were Council staff and members of the community organisation running it.*

*They seemed to be quite uncertain about many aspects of the roles of the elected respondents. Existing elected officials at the meeting were more helpful.*

# 6.0 Auckland Council marketing campaign

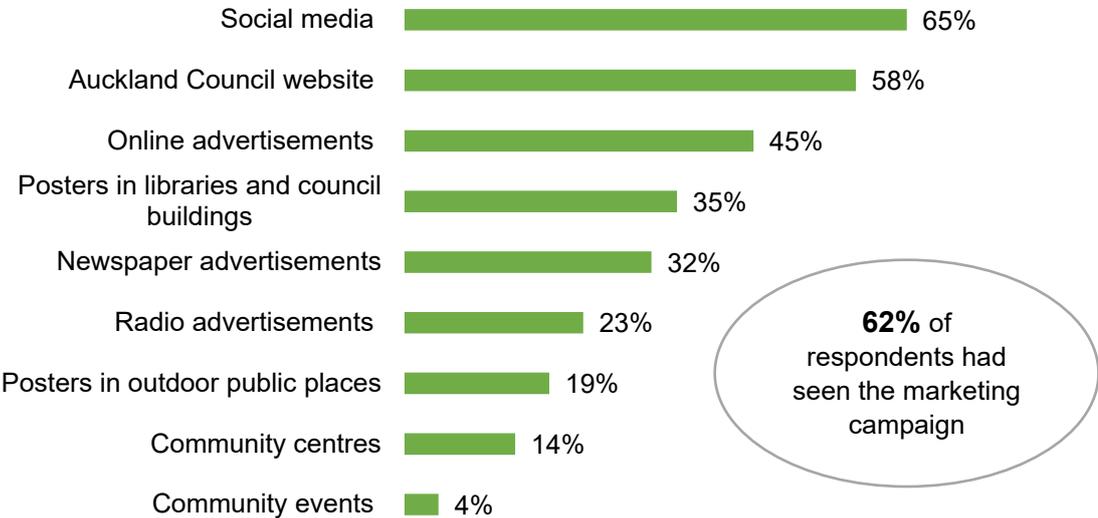
Auckland Council ran a marketing campaign encouraging individuals to stand.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the marketing campaign. This included awareness, impact, and general comments about the campaign.

## 6.1 Awareness of the marketing campaign

In total, 62 per cent of respondents had seen the marketing campaign. This was most often seen online, with the top three channels including social media (65%), the Auckland Council website (58%) and online advertisements (45%).

**Figure 18. Where respondents saw the marketing campaign among those that had seen it (n=91)**



### Subgroup differences:

A greater proportion of older respondents saw the campaign (65%), compared with younger respondents (58%).

A greater proportion of respondent who had stood in the past saw the campaign (76%), compared with respondents standing for the first time (49%).

## 6.2 Impact of the marketing campaign

In total, a quarter (25%) of respondents who saw the campaign said it had a positive impact on their decision to stand, including seven per cent who said it had a very positive impact. Just six per cent said it had a negative impact, with most neutral (68%).

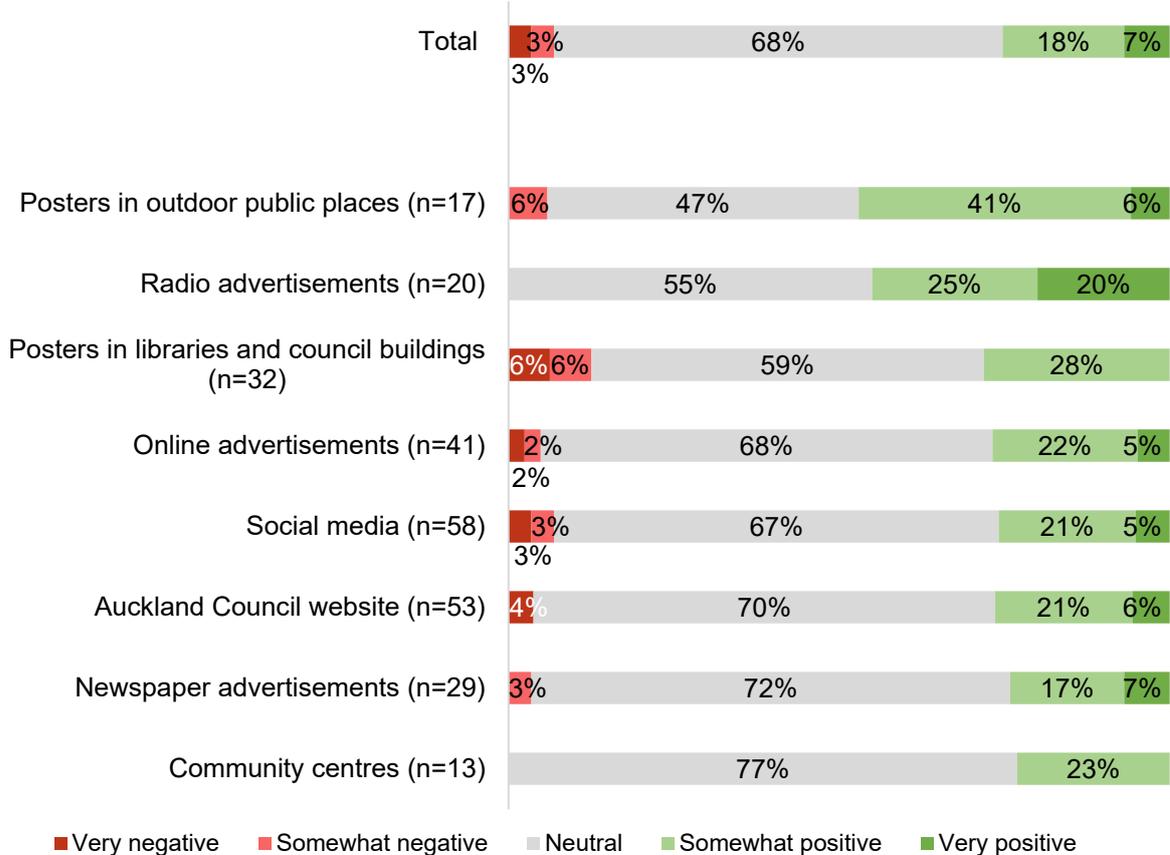
Looking at impact by channel can be used to indicate which channels were most associated with having a positive impact on encouraging individuals to stand. This analysis is indicative

only as respondents may have seen the campaign across multiple channels, all of which may have impacted their decision to stand to varying degrees, effects of which cannot be separated.

Posters in outdoor public places and radio advertisements are associated with the most positive impact, particularly radio advertisements, with 20 per cent of those that had heard these saying it had a very positive impact.

Elements of the campaign which respondents were most aware of; online advertisements, social media and the Auckland Council website all had a very similar moderate impact on encouraging individuals to stand (between 26-27% positive impact).

**Figure 19. Impact of the marketing campaign on decision to stand by channel (n=91)<sup>4</sup>**



**Subgroup differences:**

A greater proportion of older respondents said the campaign had a positive impact (34%), compared with younger respondents (18%).

A greater proportion of respondents standing for the first time said the campaign had a positive impact (34%), compared with respondents who had stood in the past (19%).

<sup>4</sup> Community events is not included in this graph due to a low sample size (n<10)

## 6.3 Comments about the marketing campaign

Respondents were asked to provide any comments they had about Auckland Council's marketing campaign, with 32 respondents providing a comment.

It was well liked that the campaign showed a diverse range of candidates in terms of different ages and ethnicities. However other comments suggested this approach to encouraging minorities to stand was not overt enough, and more should be done to directly target minority and diverse groups.

Several commented that the marketing campaign started too late. Some felt that it commenced after many candidates would have already decided to stand. Others felt it was potentially too late to encourage first time candidates to stand, as there was not enough time for preparation before the election.

Other suggestions for improvement include providing more information about what different roles involve, placing ads in local newspapers, providing a clearer call to action, and generally placing more small ads with a focus on signposting potential candidates to a website or booklets where more information can be found. Others thought ads should include personal stories about why previous candidates decided to stand to feel more relatable.

Some respondents felt a marketing campaign was not enough to encourage individuals to stand due to a more widespread lack of engagement with local governance, which needed to be targeted first. A lack of awareness and understanding about local governance and the roles within it is thought to be a major barrier to more and more diverse candidates standing, which is unlikely to be improved by a marketing campaign.

Another group of respondents felt focus should be put elsewhere, rather than into a marketing campaign. This includes focusing on encouraging more people to vote, especially youth and Māori, or focusing on ensuring a level playing ground among candidates that is less easily influenced by the extent of various campaigns and media influence. One respondent felt it was unclear how positive the impact of the campaign was on encouraging candidates to stand.

*It was a lot for little apparent impact.*

*Great idea, maybe more personal stories about why people stand so that people can relate more directly.*

*Too few people are standing so there's simply not enough engagement in local body politics.*

*A campaign to encourage people to stand for Local Boards/Council could start two years before the election date. Such a long campaign could easily be to encourage credible candidates. Suggest such a long run campaign might effect subsidiary changes of perception e.g. general public knowledge of the roles of Council bodies/functions.*

*It showed a diverse range of possible candidates, and this was reflected in the candidates who stood, and I am proud of that.*

*It needs to happen earlier.*

*I think they are too esoteric. Not obvious enough. Too try hard in terms of "we must tick all minority box" in the pictures. I don't think they are obvious to people what the message is.*

## 7.0 Vote Auckland website

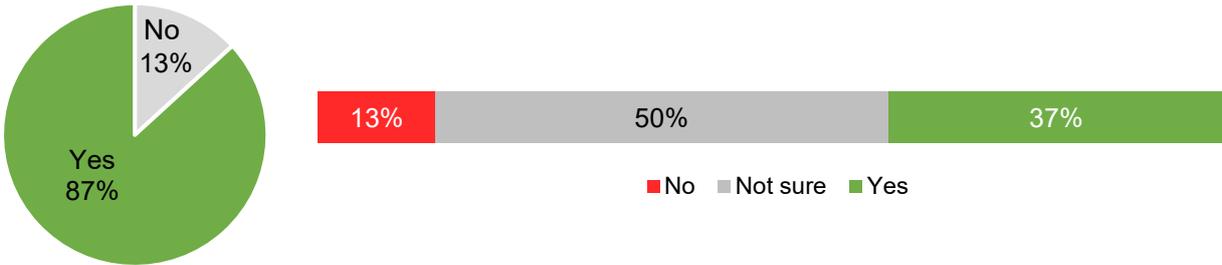
Auckland Council hosted the Vote Auckland website which provided information to both candidates and voters.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the Vote Auckland website. This included use of the website, perceived benefit of the website, satisfaction with the process of adding to the website, and general comments about adding to and using the website.

### 7.1 Use of and perceived benefit of candidate profiles

Candidates were invited to add to their candidate profile on the Vote Auckland website by answering three questions about their campaign. Almost nine in ten respondents (87%) did this. Among those who did, half were unsure if this benefited their campaign (50%). Another 37 per cent thought it had benefitted their campaign.

**Figure 20. Added to profile on Vote Auckland by answering three questions about their campaign (left, n=154), and perceived benefit of this (right, n=132)**



**Subgroup differences:**

A greater proportion of younger respondents (89%) added to their profile, compared to older respondents (83%).

### 7.2 Process of adding to candidate profile

Three in five (59%) respondents were satisfied with the process of adding information to their profile on the Vote Auckland website, including 28 per cent who were very satisfied. Just 12 per cent were dissatisfied with this.

**Figure 21. Satisfaction with the process of adding information to profile on the Vote Auckland website (n=130)**



#### **Subgroup differences:**

A greater proportion of females were very satisfied (32%), compared with males (25%).

A greater proportion of respondents standing for the first time were very satisfied (31%), compared with respondents who had stood in the past (25%).

### **7.3 Comments about adding to candidate profiles**

Respondents were asked to provide any comments they had about adding information to their profile on the Vote Auckland website, with 54 respondents providing a comment. Key comments are summarised below.

The timing around updating profiles was frequently mentioned as an issue. Firstly, respondents felt there was not enough time given to write and submit content for their profile, putting respondents under undue stress to complete this on time. This was alongside similar requests from other organisations such as The Spinoff and Generation Zero which further added to stress of having to provide multiple statements and profiles in a short space of time.

Respondents were unhappy that the deadline for profiles to be submitted was extended for some individuals. Those who submitted their profile on time felt this was providing an unfair advantage to those who made use of the deadline extension. Many respondents were unaware of the deadline extension and the opportunity to update their profile, which again was a source of frustration. Respondents questioned why they were unable to update their profile once the website was live, which would allow information displayed to be as date as possible.

There were conflicting views about the amount of content candidates were able to submit for their profiles. Some respondents thought this was too minimal and the word limit should have been extended allowing for more detailed information to be provided. Others thought the current word limit was generous and opted for a more minimal approach, with profiles acting as a brief summary of each candidate and their campaigns.

The questions respondents were asked to answer on their profile were often said to be too general, not allowing respondents to fully express themselves and their campaigns in enough detail. It was also suggested the questions asked were too leading.

Respondents wanted feedback on their profiles around their reach and page views. It was questioned how well used Vote Auckland was by voters, with suspicion numbers may be low.

Respondents wanted to be able to upload more interactive content to their profiles, including video and audio content. It was felt this would be more accessible to voters rather than long paragraphs of text. Another suggestion was allowing for links to be provided to campaign websites and social media accounts. One candidate also wanted profiles to be available in other languages to further increase accessibility.

Finally, one candidate was dissatisfied that some information provided by candidates was inaccurate or untrue, which it was felt needed to be checked before being published. This

included photos which in some cases were thought to be a poor reflection of how the candidate looks.

*Don't think most of the general public were aware of Vote Auckland. No one I spoke to had heard of it and they are intelligent people.*

*Video messages or introduction of candidates would have been more effective*

*Selected candidates were given a second opportunity to add information after the deadline passed which included more current issues - that made other candidates look out of touch.*

*Would rather there was an option to edit/add info 'on-the-fly' rather than having to send it in a one-off email.*

*Not enough information allowed and candidates' statements too short.*

*I couldn't meet the deadline so wasn't able to put as much information down as I wanted to.*

*I would like to know more about reach of the information I provided.*

*Voters mentioned that the profiles were too long and boring. They just wanted to know what peoples three top things were that they would do if they got in OR three top things they were passionate about.*

*It would be great to know the number of times your profile is viewed to validate its relevance.*

*The questions were too leading and did not allow candidates to express themselves.*

## **7.4 Comments about the Vote Auckland website**

Respondents were also asked to provide any comments they had about the Vote Auckland website generally, with 31 respondents providing a comment.

Many respondents questioned how well used this site was by the public and expected low levels of engagement. Respondents thought the site needed to be more widely publicised to be more useful.

The system for searching for local *candidates* by entering an address was not well liked, with respondents preferring to be able to see a list of wards and click into that which applies to them. Respondents wanted to view profiles for *candidates* in other wards outside of where they lived, and this was difficult with the current tool of searching by address only. A search function should be provided to allow users to directly search for *candidates* by name or ward, rather than by address. Some respondents questioned the privacy and security of having to enter their address to find local *candidates*, which may have deterred some voters from using this function.

Navigation between candidate profiles was difficult, with no ability to easily flick through each profile. A dedicated page for mayoral *candidates* would also be useful.

The branding and logo of the site was said to be dull and unappealing by a small number of respondents. No respondents commented positively about the look and feel of the website.

The website should provide more information to voters about the general functions and responsibilities of different roles, as this would help to better inform voters as they review candidate profiles.

*I thought it was a great tool for people who could be bothered to use it. I'd be interested to know viewership numbers around my individual profile for an assessment of the possible impact it had.*

*Why didn't the Mayoral candidates have a special page since everyone was voting for Mayor?*

*Would have loved to see an option where you could easily click a ward or local board and see the candidates (e.g. don't have to put in your address).*

*The site should have really focused on what they were voting for and educating the community on the roles of the council and local board. I spent most of my time on the campaign trail informing people of the role I was standing for*

*The branding colours are fairly dull and unappealing, and there is not a lot of useful information about respondents and their policies so for a voter, it wasn't a very helpful site. I used the Spinoff Policy Local site to learn more about candidates for my own vote, and recommended this to voters when I was campaigning, as it gave voters a lot more information.*

*It wasn't well designed. You couldn't easily flick between respondents to read their bio. You had to scroll through all the Mayoral candidates and Councillors before you got to Local Board. You should be able to filter, and bios should drop down from home page. It was clunky and performed badly.*

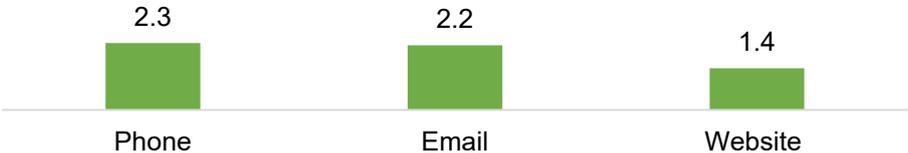
## 8.0 Election results

Respondents were asked how they would like to be notified of election results if they were to run again.

Respondents ranked their first, second and third preferences between phone, email, and website communication. A contact preference index was then created, where first preferences were allocated 3 points, second preferences were allocated 2 points and third preferences 1 point. The total score for each contact method was then standardised to the number of responses ranking each option.

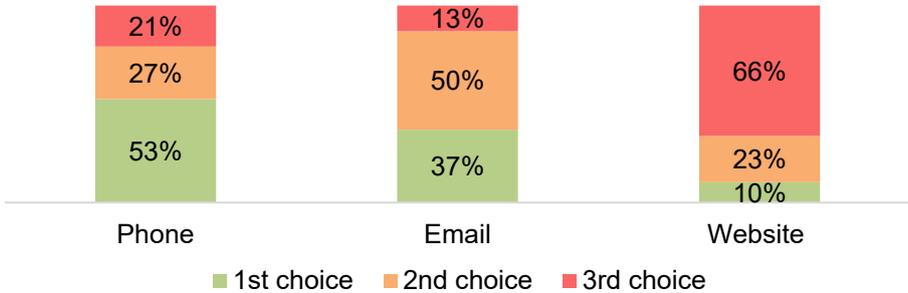
The index shows phone to be the preferred method of contact, followed closely by email. Website was the least preferred option.

**Figure 22. Communication preference to receive election results by index (n=154)**



If we look at the results without indexing respondents' preferences, phone was again ranked as first preference by 53 per cent of respondents (compared to 37% for email and 10% for website).

**Figure 23. Communication preference to receive election results by preference order (n=154)**



**Subgroup differences:**

Females preferred phone (69%), while males preferred email as their first choice (48%).

Both younger (56%) and older (49%) respondents preferred phone as their first choice.

Respondents who had stood in the past preferred phone (65%), while respondents standing for the first time preferred email (44%) as their first choice.

## 9.0 Discussion

The results from this survey indicate that candidates tend to be satisfied with many aspects of the election process and support provided by Auckland Council and the Electoral Office.

However, some clear opportunities for improvement have been identified, often coming up again and again throughout this report. It would be useful to consider these suggestions for improvements when planning for the 2022 local elections, to continually improve the election process for candidates and the support provided to them.

Information and resources need to be better publicised and easier to search for, especially on the Vote Auckland website. Information needs to be clear and detailed but presented in a simple manner with minimum use of jargon. It should also be provided earlier to allow enough time for candidates to access and make full use of information available. More can be done in terms of meeting the needs of those with special access needs to information.

There was an overwhelmingly positive response towards providing the option for online nominations, either completely or partially (i.e. submitting candidate photos online). However, it is important this be provided as an option alongside the current nomination process to not compromise universal access.

The process and regulations for submitting and updating candidate profiles on the Vote Auckland website could be simplified, with more transparency about opportunities and deadlines to update candidate profiles provided to all candidates.

Staff need to be better trained and equipped with all the information and resources required to assist candidates as they go through the nomination and election process.

Although the marketing campaign encouraging individuals to stand had a good reach, its impact was less clear. It was felt in order to increase the number and diversity of candidates standing, public knowledge and engagement in local governance needed to be targeted first. A campaign encouraging public knowledge and engagement in local governance could start early and lead into a more focused campaign encouraging individuals to stand in the lead-up to the election period.

As with the 2016 and 2019 candidate experience surveys, it is expected such a survey and subsequent report will be produced after the 2022 local elections and beyond. This research and evaluation process allows learnings and reflections to be realised and taken forward into future elections, thereby continuing to improve the election experience for all candidates.

# Appendix A: Questionnaire

## Section A: The candidate nomination process

1 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the nomination process?

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral - neither dissatisfied nor satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Don't know / not applicable

2 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all easy and 5 is very easy, how easy was it to find information about the nomination process?

- 1 - Not at all easy
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5- Very easy
- Don't know / not applicable

3 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all accurate and 5 is very accurate, how accurate was the information you found about the nomination process?

- 1 - Not at all accurate
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5- Very accurate
- Don't know / not applicable

4 Did you seek assistance from the Electoral Officer about the nomination process?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

*Ask if 4 = Yes*

5 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the assistance you received from the Electoral Officer about the nomination process?

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral - neither dissatisfied nor satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Don't know/ not applicable

6 Did you seek assistance via the Auckland Council Elections email address - [elections@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:elections@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) - about the nomination process?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Ask if 6 = Yes

7 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the assistance you received when you emailed elections@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz about the nomination process?

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral - neither dissatisfied nor satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Don't know/ not applicable

8 Which of the following statements best reflects your ability to access the information you needed about the nomination process?

- I was able to access all the information I needed
- I was able to access most of the information I needed
- I was not able to access most of the information I needed
- Don't know / not applicable

Ask if Q8 = 'I was not able to access most of the information I needed' or 'I was able to access most of the information I needed'

9 Why were you unable to access all the information you needed about the nomination process? (Optional).

[ ]

10 When did you decide to stand as a candidate for the 2019 local elections?

- On or before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018
- Between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 and 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019, before nominations opened
- On or after 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019, once nominations had opened
- Not sure / don't remember

11 Where did you get your nomination form from?

- Auckland Council service centre
- The Electoral Officer
- Auckland Council website
- I asked to have it mailed to me
- Not sure / don't remember

12 Where did you lodge your nomination form?

- The Electoral Office
- Auckland Council service centre
- Not sure / don't remember

13 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the process of collecting and lodging your nomination form?

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral - neither dissatisfied nor satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Don't know/ not applicable

14 If Auckland Council was allowed to provide the option of lodging your nomination form online in future local elections, how likely or unlikely would you be to use this option if you were to stand again?

- Very unlikely

- Somewhat unlikely
- Neutral - neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely
- Don't know / not applicable

15 How might the nomination process be improved for future candidates? (*Optional*).

[ ]

## Section B: Quality of resources

*Show images of each resource alongside response*

16 Which of the following candidate resources were you aware of?

*Select all that apply.*

- Vote Auckland website
- "What you need to know to stand for council" brochure
- Candidate information handbook
- Recording of the information session for candidates
- LGNZ booklet
- Pre-Election Report
- New Zealand Sign Language videos for candidates
- Press releases and information published by the media
- None of the above

*Pipe responses from Q16 into Q17*

17 Which of the following candidate resources did you use during this election?

*Select all that apply.*

- Vote Auckland website
- "What you need to know to stand for council" brochure
- Candidate information handbook
- Recording of the information session for candidates
- LGNZ booklet
- Pre-Election Report
- New Zealand Sign Language videos for candidates
- Press releases and information published by the media
- None of the above

*Pipe responses from Q17 into Q18*

18 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all useful and 5 is very useful, how useful were each of the following?

- Vote Auckland website
- "What you need to know to stand for council" brochure
- Candidate information handbook
- Recording of the information session for candidates
- LGNZ booklet
- Pre-Election Report
- New Zealand Sign Language videos for candidates
- Press releases and information published by the media

1 – Not at all useful

2

3

4

5 – Very useful  
Don't know / not applicable

19 During the nomination process you received email communications from Auckland Council and the Electoral Officer.

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is very helpful, how helpful were these communications?

1 – Not at all helpful  
2  
3  
4  
5 – Very helpful  
Don't know / not applicable

20 If you had special needs in terms of access to resources and information, were these needs met?

Yes  
No  
Don't know / Not applicable

*Ask if 20 = No*

21 What improvements could be made to ensure that those with special access needs, have their needs met in future elections? *(Optional)*.

[ ]

22 How might the resources provided to candidates be improved for all future candidates? *(Optional)*

[ ]

### **Section C: Candidate Information Sessions**

23 Were you aware of information sessions for candidates being held across Auckland in the lead up to nominations?

Yes  
No  
Not sure

*Ask if 23 = Yes, otherwise skip to section D*

24 Did you attend any of the information sessions for candidates?

Yes  
No  
Not sure

*Ask if 24 = Yes, otherwise skip to section D*

25 Who presented the information session(s) you attended?

Auckland Council  
A community organisation  
Auckland Council and a community organisation together  
Not sure

26 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all useful and 5 is very useful, how useful was the information session(s) for candidates you attended?

1 - Not at all useful

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 – Very useful
- Don't know

27 What impact did the information session(s) you attended have on your decision to stand?

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Neutral – no impact either way
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative
- Don't know

28 If you have any comments about the information sessions for candidates, please write them in the box below. *(Optional)*.

[ ]

#### **Section D: Auckland Council Marketing Campaign**

*Show example images of marketing campaign as a prompt.*

29 Were you aware of Auckland Council's marketing campaign encouraging individuals to stand as a candidate?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

*Ask if 29 = Yes, otherwise skip to Section E*

30 Where did you hear about or see Auckland Council's marketing campaign encouraging individuals to stand? *Select all that apply*

- Newspaper advertisements
- Radio advertisements
- Online advertisements
- Social media
- Auckland Council website
- Posters in libraries and council buildings
- Posters in outdoor public places
- Community centres
- Community events
- Other, please specify [ ]
- Don't know

31 What impact did Auckland Council's marketing campaign encouraging individuals to stand have on your decision to stand?

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Neutral – no impact either way
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative
- Don't know

32 If you have any comments about Auckland Council's marketing campaign encouraging individuals to stand, please write them in the box below. *(Optional)*

[ ]

**Section E: Vote Auckland website**

33 You were invited to add to your candidate profile on the Vote Auckland website by answering three questions about your campaign.

Did you answer the questions to add to your candidate profile on the Vote Auckland website?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

*Ask if 33 = Yes, otherwise skip to Section F*

34 Do you think information you added to your profile on the Vote Auckland website benefitted your campaign?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

35 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the process of adding information to your profile on the Vote Auckland website?

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral – neither dissatisfied nor satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Don't know / not applicable

36 If you have any comments about adding information to your profile on the Vote Auckland website, please write them in the box below. *(Optional)*.

[ ]

37 If you have any comments about the Vote Auckland website generally, please write them in the box below. *(Optional)*

[ ]

**Section F: Election results**

38 If you were to run again for Auckland Council, how would you like to be notified of the election results?

*Please ranks in order of preference from 1-3, where 1 is the most preferred and 3 is least preferred.*

- Phone
- Email
- Website

- Rank*
- 1
- 2
- 3

**Section G: Candidate Information**

Please note, all reporting of demographic information will be at an aggregate level – no individual level information will be shared or released.

39 Is this your first experience of standing for elected office with Auckland Council?

Yes

No

40 What gender do you identify as?

Male

Female

Gender diverse

41 What is your age?

18-19

20-24

25-29

30-34

35-39

40-44

45-49

50-54

55-59

60-64

65-69

70-74

75-79

80-84

85+

42 Which ethnic group(s) do you belong to?

*Select the choice or choices that apply to you.*

New Zealand European

Māori

Samoan

Cook Island Māori

Tongan

Niuean

Chinese

Indian

Other, please state [            ]

43 Which country were you born in?

New Zealand

Other, please state the name of the country [    ]

44 In which languages(s) could you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things?

*Select all that apply*

English

Māori

New Zealand sign language

Other language(s), please state [            ]

45 Do you have a long-term disability (lasting 6 months or more) that stops you from doing everyday things other people can do?

Yes

No



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