

Office of Local Government

**NSW COUNCILLOR AND CANDIDATE
REPORT 2012
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**



MARCH 2014

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NSW Councillor and Candidate Report 2012 Local Government Elections

Minister's Foreword



As democratic institutions, it is important that councils reflect the communities that elect them.

The NSW Government is committed to tackling this important issue and proactively working to increase the number and diversity of candidates standing for election.

The results of the NSW Councillor and Candidate Survey indicate that, compared with 2008, we have greater diversity in our councils with increased participation and representation rates for some minority groups.

This is a very positive outcome, but, there is still more to be done. We will use the results of the Survey and work with the sector and Local Government NSW to develop and promote mechanisms to increase diversity in councils even further.

Introduction

Are NSW councils a reflection of the local community? In an attempt to answer this question, the Office of Local Government (the Office) has collected data from candidates and councillors involved in the last seven Local Government Elections.

In 2012, 150 of the 152 councils across the State held local government elections. The candidates and councillors responded to thirteen questions on factors such as age, gender, occupation and experience as an elected representative of local government. The responses were then submitted by councils to the Office.

The Councillor and Candidate Report 2012 (the Report) provides analysis of the data provided by 149 of these councils on 4,533 candidates contesting 1,440 positions.

Data Sources

Survey

This report presents findings from 149 of the 150 councils that held elections in 2012. One council did not submit data. Wollongong and Shellharbour City Councils did not hold elections.

NSW data

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Census is the source for all NSW comparisons.

Disclaimer

While the Office has made every effort to ensure the information provided is accurate, its accuracy is subject to the integrity of the data provided by the candidates and councils. The Office is unable to independently verify the information provided by councils.



Community diversity is better reflected in NSW councils in 2012 than it was in 2008, however, there is still work to be done.

We strive to achieve representation which reflects the community in the belief that it will lead to more informed decision making and better outcomes for communities.

The face of NSW Local Government 2012

NSW Councillor and Candidate Survey: 2012 Local Government Elections

Candidate diversity

The Report findings show an increase in participation rates of minority groups compared with 2008.

There was a significant increase in participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those who identify as having a disability.

More women contested the 2012 elections and there was also an increase in candidate numbers from those with a first language other than English.

Councillor characteristics

50-69 year olds make up the majority of councillors and mayors across the State.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors comprise 1.9% of the State's councillors

Nearly three-quarters of councillors are male, as was the case in 2004 and 2008.

8% of councillors identified as having cultural and linguistic diversity.

Previous councillors fare better

Results of the 2012 Councillor and Candidates Survey show that experience counts when it comes to being elected to local government.

Those who had served on a previous council were more successful than those with no experience and they were far more likely to be elected as Mayor.

How our councils compare to our population

| DEMOGRAPHIC | COUNCILLORS (SOURCE: OLG SURVEY) | NSW POPULATION (SOURCE: 2011 CENSUS) |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Male | 73% | 49% |
| Female | 27% | 51% |
| Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander | 1.9% | 2.5% |
| Disability* | 3% | 5% |
| Cultural & Linguistic Diversity** | 8% | 22% |
| Age 18-29 | 4% | 21% |
| Age 30-59 | 58% | 53% |
| Age 60+ | 38% | 26% |

* Office data – identified as having a disability; NSW data – need for assistance with core activities

** Office data – first language; NSW data - Language other than English spoken at home

PROFILES

The typical Councillor

The findings show, the typical councillor is a professional male, aged 60-69 years with English as a first language, who did not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or as having a disability.

The typical Mayor

The typical Mayor is male, English speaking and aged 60-69. As with the typical councillor, he did not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or as having a disability. He has generally served at least two terms on council

“Politics – local, state or federal – is unlikely to ever be fully representative of the wider community as Australia is just too diverse and dynamic. Nevertheless, this should not stop us trying to avoid political homogeneity.” Paul Maginn, Associate Professor Urban/Regional Planning, University of Western Australia

Who nominates and who gets elected?

NSW Councillor and Candidate Survey: 2012 Local Government Elections

The who's who of 2012 candidates and councillors

| 2012 Local Government Elections | CANDIDATES | COUNCILLORS | POPULATION NSW (SOURCE: 2011 CENSUS) |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| Male | 64% | 73% | 49% |
| Female | 36% | 27% | 51% |
| Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander | 2.3% | 1.9% | 2.5% |
| Disability* | 4% | 3% | 5% |
| Cultural & Linguistic Diversity** | 11% | 8% | 22% |
| Age 18-29 | 9% | 4% | 21% |
| Age 30-59 | 59% | 58% | 53% |
| Age 60+ | 32% | 38% | 26% |

* Office data – identified as having a disability; NSW data – need for assistance with core activities
 ** Office data – first language; NSW data - Language other than English spoken at home

The typical candidate is a professional male, aged 50-59 years with English as a first language, who did not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or as having a disability.

The typical councillor differs only in age, being 60-69 years old.

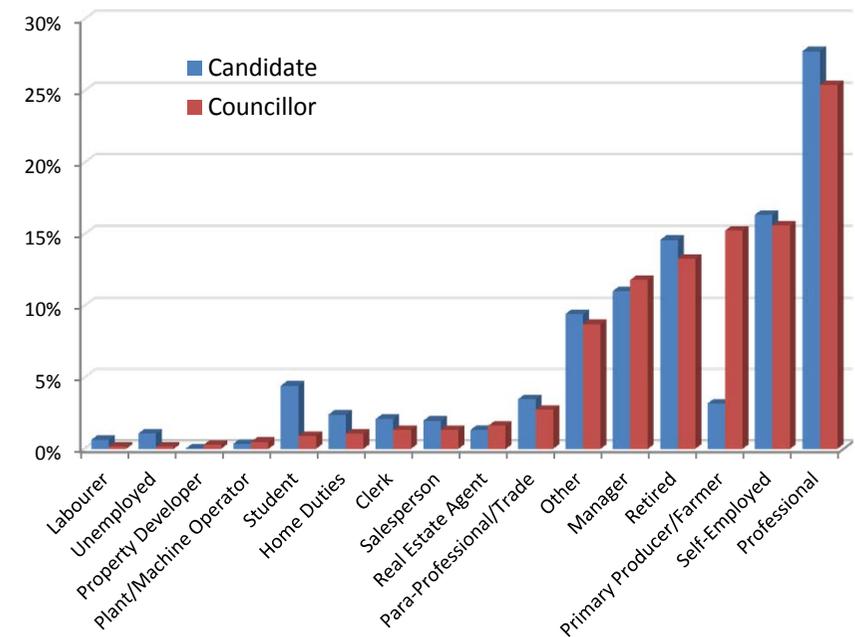
The number of female candidates increased in 2012 by 9% while male numbers were relatively static. Male to female councillor ratios changed little from 2008.

There was a 24% increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates and a 13% increase in the number elected.

The first language spoken by an overwhelming majority of candidates and councillors is English. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity participation and representation percentages increased slightly in 2012.

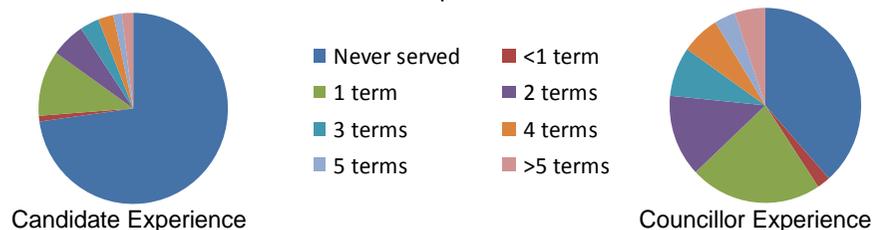
While candidate numbers of those with a disability increased by 23%, the number elected did not increase significantly.

Occupation trends



Experience is valuable but not essential to success

The majority of councillors have previous experience in the role. As the chart below indicates, nearly three-quarters of candidates had no experience in local government; 17% of these candidates were elected and make up 38% of NSW councillors.



Distinct occupational leanings

The majority of candidates and councillors have occupations from a small range of fields. 28% of candidates identified as professionals, comprising the largest occupation group. This proportion is also reflected in the councillor numbers, with one quarter of NSW councillors identifying as a professional.

Self-employed persons were the next largest category of candidates, closely followed by retirees.

Primary producers/farmers were highly successful at the elections. While they made up 3% of the candidature, they ultimately hold 15% of council positions.

Candidates that identified as students tended to be the least successful.

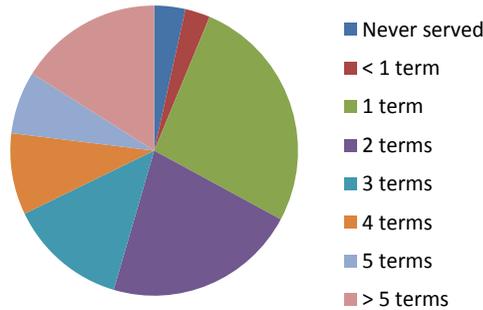
Who is the Mayor?

NSW Councillor and Candidate Survey: 2012 Local Government Elections

Experience still the deciding factor in the mayoral stakes

Mayors are either popularly elected, that is, elected by the community, or elected on an annual basis by the councillors. This pie chart captures all mayors serving in the first year of office, 2012-2013.

A significant 94% of mayors have previous experience as a councillor. Over two-thirds of them have served on a council for two terms or more, as was the case in 2008 and 2004. This data would seem to indicate that experience is a key factor to being elected to this position.



Terms served by mayors

The female mayor



Unlike the significant jump in representation in 2008, 2012 saw a decrease of 4% of women in the mayoral role. Popularly elected female mayors also dropped marginally, from 28% in 2008 to 26% in 2012.

In 2012, 7% of the women elected to council hold the position of mayor – this includes popularly and annually elected positions.

Diversity challenges

The diversity of NSW communities continues to be under-represented in mayoral roles.

In 2012, there were no mayors who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, from a NSW population of 2.5%. This is a decline from 2008 when there were two mayors and 2004 with three mayors in the first year of office.

Despite 28% of the population speaking a language other than English at home, only 6% of Mayors identified as having a language other than English as their first language.

Only 2% of mayors identified as having a disability, 2% less than 2008.



Popular election on the rise

In 2012, thirty four communities across the State elected their own (popularly elected) mayor; six more than in the 2008 election.

Nearly 60% of councils with popularly elected mayors are in regional NSW, the remainder are in the Sydney region.

Professionals lead the way with 26% closely followed by 24% self employed. Primary producers and farmers make up 12% of popularly elected mayors.

A significant 44% of popularly elected mayors are aged between 60-69 with the 50-59 age bracket a distant second at 24%.

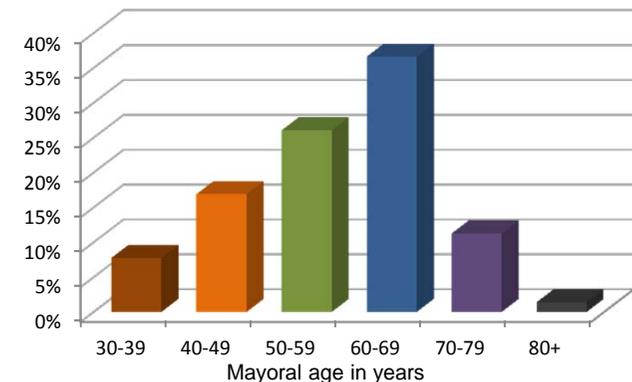
Two of the State's popularly elected mayors have a first language other than English.

In 2012, no popularly elected mayors identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The age factor

50-69 year olds constitute the majority of mayors in NSW, with over 60% of this age bracket holding the position. This is, however, a drop from 2008 and 2004 when nearly three quarters of mayors were within this age range.

Although most mayors are in the older age brackets, one quarter of mayors are younger than 50 years.



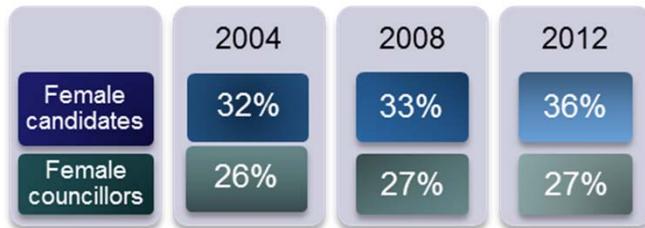
Women in local government

NSW Councillor and Candidate Survey: 2012 Local Government Elections

Only part of the story

The number of women contesting local government elections is still significantly below that of males, with women making up 36% of the candidature in 2012.

While candidate numbers increased from the 2008 elections, the percentage of female councillors in NSW remains at 27%.

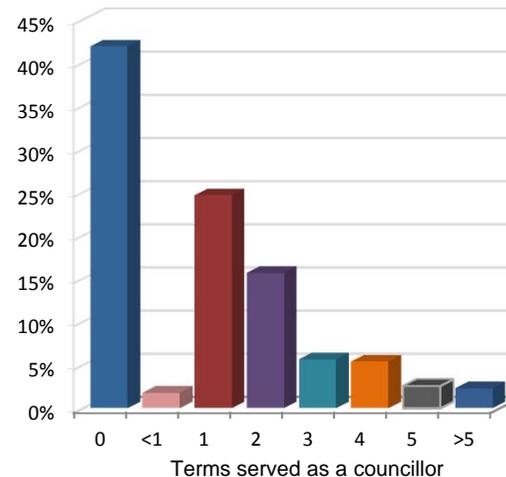


A good mix of new and experienced

79% of 2012 female candidates had never served as a councillor. 13% of these women were successful in being elected and make up 42% of female councillors in 2012.

Women that had served one or two terms make up another 41% of female councillors.

The decreasing experience rate as shown in the chart is similar for males.



Incentives and Barriers

The Australian Local Government Women's Association NSW describes the councillor role of advocate and decision maker, having influence on long term strategic direction and the opportunity to work with a diverse range of people on a wide range of issues, as incentives for women to join local government as an elected representative.

As to why representation is below population percentages, findings from the Local Government NSW Leadership in Local Government Research show that the most challenging issue for most women is balancing their role as a councillor with the demands of employment. This was also a key reason why women decided to leave Local Government.

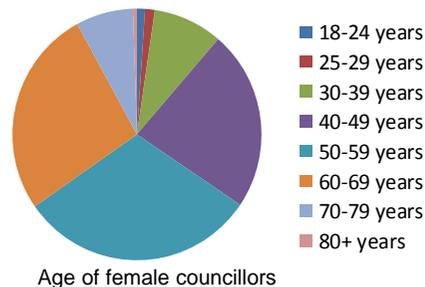
Chamber majorities

As a result of the 2012 elections, eight of the 149 councils surveyed have a majority of female representatives, up by one from 2008. Significantly, all of these councils have a female mayor, four of which were popularly elected. There are five councils that do not have female representation, compared with four in 2008. Five councils have a 50:50 gender split.

Female councillors trend in age

As the chart shows, the majority (81%) of female councillors are aged between 40 and 69. This is reflective of 2004 and 2008 statistics, where 80% of elected female representatives were within this age range.

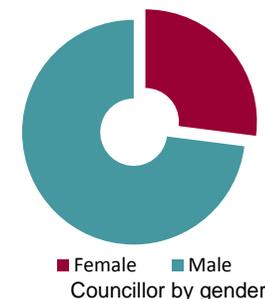
At the ends of the spectrum, four councillors are in the youngest age bracket of 18-24 age bracket and two are in the oldest, aged 80+.



Councillor gender imbalance

Despite women comprising 51% of the State population, only 27% of councillors in NSW are women.

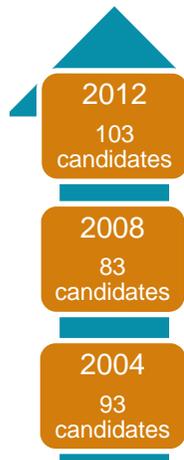
In the mayoral count, 19% of mayors in NSW are women, a drop of 4% from 2008.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation

NSW Councillor and Candidate Survey: 2012 Local Government Elections

Candidates on the rise



Participation in local government elections by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people jumped by nearly a quarter from 2008 to 2012.

This is a significant change from the decrease in candidates from 2004 to 2008.

Councillor numbers also increased, by 12.5%, with 27 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders elected, compared with 24 in 2008.

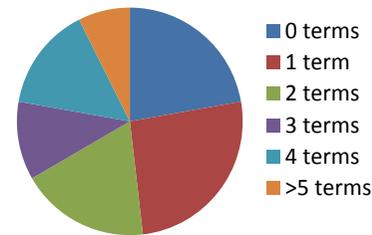
Representation did not meet population averages; 1.9% of councillors are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander compared with 2.5% of the population.

Experience, does it count?

A significant 22% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors are new to local government.

In comparison, 38% of all NSW councillors have no previous experience.

The decreasing experience rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors, as shown below, is similar to that of all NSW councillors, except for a spike in those with 4 terms experience.



Terms served as councillor

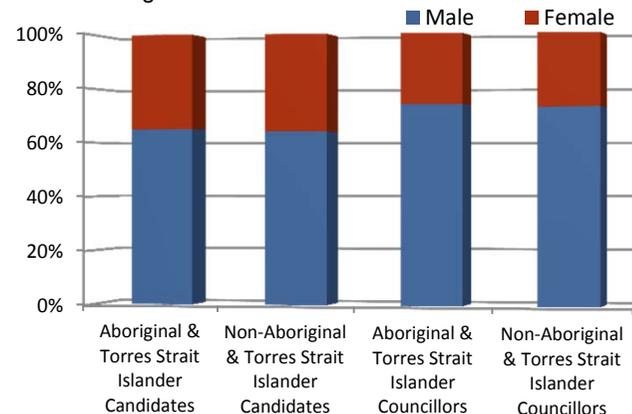
Election profile

2.3% of candidates and 1.9% of councillors identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | Candidate | Councillor |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 65% | 74% |
| Female | 35% | 26% |
| 18 - 29 years | 20% | 15% |
| 30 - 59 years | 50% | 41% |
| 60+ years | 30% | 44% |

Gender trend across the board

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male to female councillor ratios vary by only one percent to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

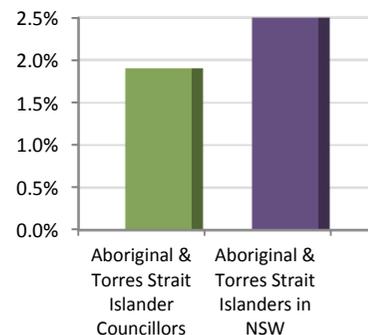


Representation across New South Wales

The percentage of population who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander varies considerably between local government areas.

83% of Aboriginal candidates were from outside the Sydney area, compared with 42% of Torres Strait Islander candidates.

Two councils in the Sydney area have councillors who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander compared with twenty-two councils in the rest of NSW.



Incentives and Barriers

The *Local Councils Belong to Aboriginal People 2* Report, by Janet Gould + Associates 2003, considers there to be a direct relationship between the provision of election information in a timely manner prior to elections, and the level of interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people nominating as candidates in Local Government Council elections.

The report goes on to say Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to become involved if they have information about the democratic process and how they can influence decision making processes.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

NSW Councillor and Candidate Survey: 2012 Local Government Elections

2012

12% candidates
8% councillors

Language no barrier

As in all previously surveyed local government elections, the first language spoken by an overwhelming majority of candidates and councillors is English. However, diversity is evident; in 2012, 585 candidates had a first language other than English and between them have 81 different first languages.

As a percentage of all candidates and councillors, the number with a first language other than English increased slightly.

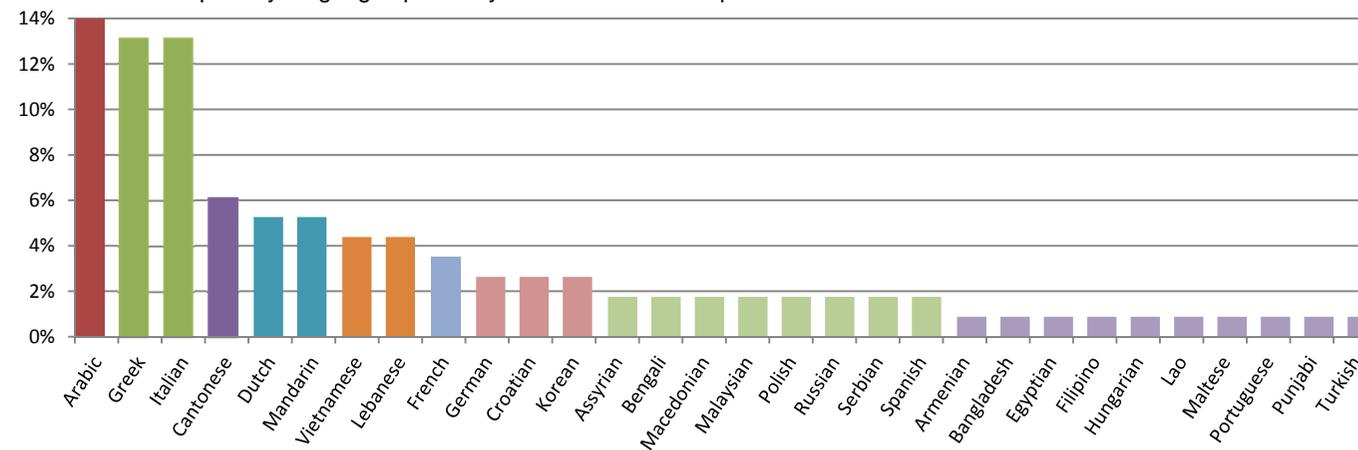
In 2012, 111 councillors identified as having a first language other than English, compared with 98 in 2008.

2008

10% candidates
7% councillors

Diversity of languages

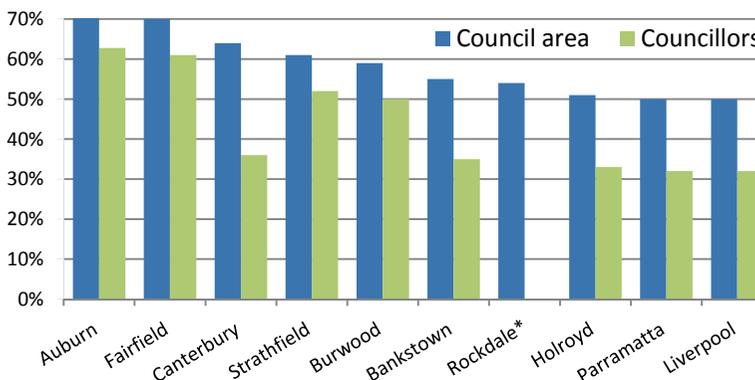
111 (8%) of councillors have a first language other than English, comprising 30 different languages. The chart below shows the distribution of the primary language spoken by the 8% of elected representatives.



Top 10 council areas

Sydney metropolitan has the State's top ten councils for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD). The chart below shows the CALD of these councils as a percentage of its population and the percentage of councillors who identified as having a first language other than English.

*Data not provided by Rockdale City Council



Incentives and Barriers

The Local Government Association of South Australia suggests in its *Fostering Inclusive Representation in the 2010 Local Government Elections Guide*, that getting involved in Local Government provides an opportunity for people from underrepresented groups to take a further step towards being involved in local community leadership, and contributing ideas and thoughts to the decisions about what happens locally.

Council Members from diverse backgrounds can play an important role in enhancing Council understanding of cultural issues, which means decision-making can be better informed.