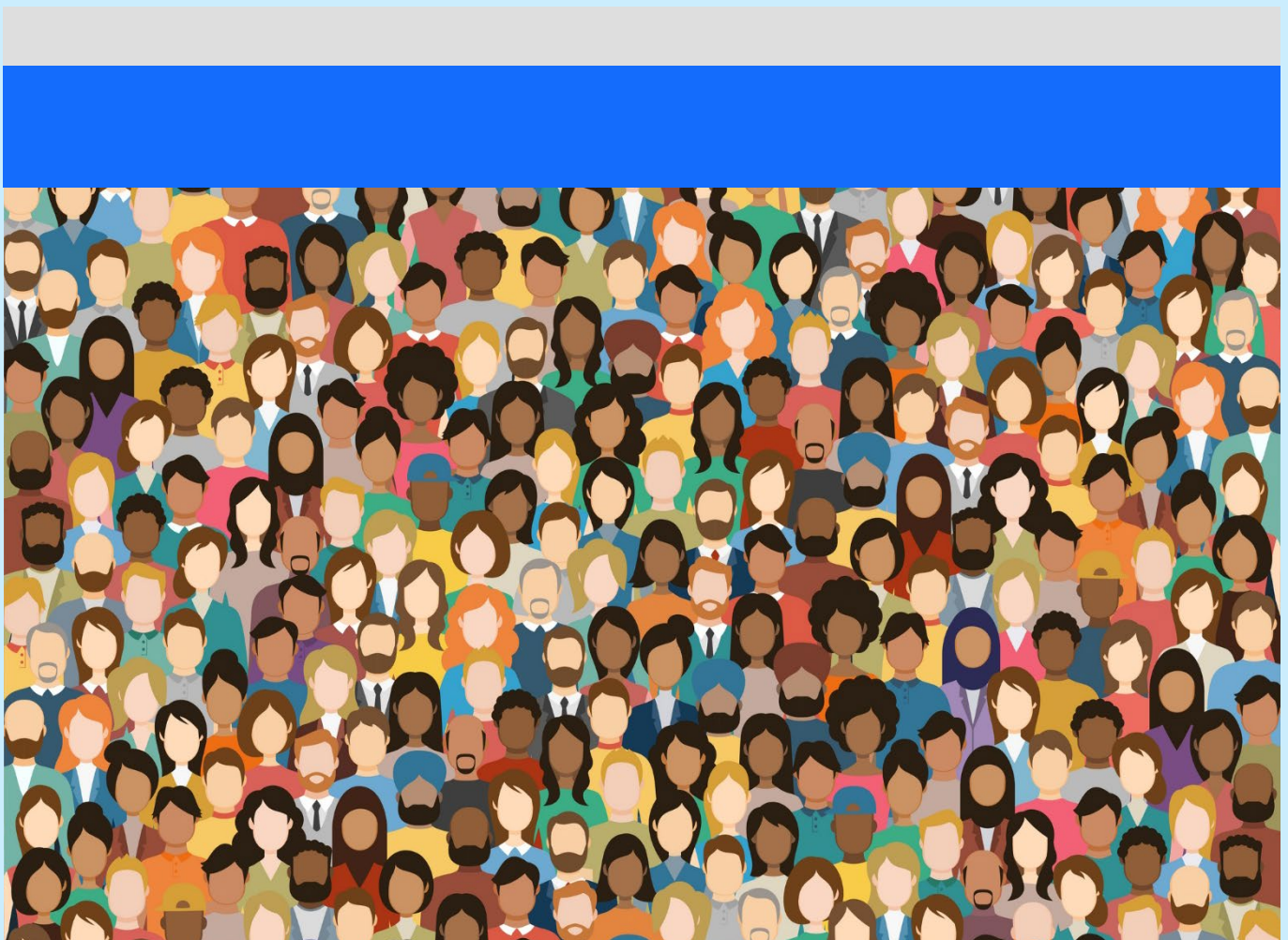


Candidate and Councillor Diversity Report

2024 Local Government Elections

March 2026





Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

Published by Office of Local Government, NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

olg.nsw.gov.au

Candidate and Councillor Diversity Report

First published: March 2026

More information

Office of Local Government

Locked Bag 3015

NOWRA NSW 2541

(02) 4428 4100

olg@olg.nsw.gov.au

Data sources

- [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\) 2021 census data](#)
- [NSW Electoral Commission 2024 election results](#)
- [Report on the administration of the 2024 NSW Local Government Elections – Part One](#)

Copyright and disclaimer

© State of New South Wales through the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure 2026.

Information in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing, March 2026, and is subject to change. For more information, please visit nsw.gov.au/copyright

Contents

1	Quick insights	1
2	Across the State	2
2.1	Elections overview.....	2
2.2	Candidate and Councillor demographics	3
2.3	Participation	5
2.4	The typical councillor	6
3	Women	7
3.1	Demographics.....	7
3.2	Participation and representation by council category	8
4	Mayors	9
4.1	Gender	9
4.2	Popularly elected mayors.....	9
4.3	Demographics.....	10
5	Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people	11
5.1	Region.....	11
5.2	Experience.....	12
6	Language	13
6.1	English as the first language learned to speak	13
6.2	Most common languages other than English.....	14
7	Age	15
8	Disability	16
9	Occupation	17
10	Experience	18
11	Member of a registered political party	19

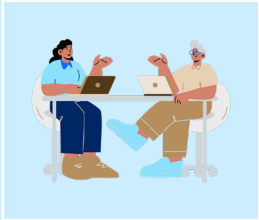
Acknowledgements

The Office of Local Government wishes to thank the NSW Electoral Commission for their invaluable assistance in compiling this report.



1 Quick insights

Candidates



3,772

out of a total of 3,888 candidates reported by the NSW Electoral Commission completed an SIS.*

Councillors



1,283

councillors out of a total of 1292 councillor positions completed an SIS.*

Female councillors



516

councillors are female, an increase from 490 in 2021.


Female mayors



41

out of 128 mayors are female (for the period October 2024 to September 2026).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors



60 (4.68%)

councillors identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

Age



20

councillors are aged between 18 and 24 years old.


Language



75

councillors reported a language other than English as the first language they learned to speak.

Previous experience



38.5%

of elected councillors have had no previous experience.

Profession



Almost 1/3

of candidates and councillors have professional occupations.

* Statistical information sheet.

2 Across the State

2.1 Elections overview

NSW local government elections were held on 14 September 2024. Of the 128 general purpose councils in NSW, 127 councils held elections for 1,289 councillor and 37 popularly elected mayor positions. Central Darling Shire Council was under administration and held its election on 20 September 2025. This saw an additional 3 councillor positions filled, thus bringing the total number of elected councillor positions to 1,292.

Local government elections in the undivided local government areas of Cobar, Warrumbungle, Berrigan, Cowra and Junee were uncontested. For divided councils, uncontested elections occurred in at least one ward in: Greater Hume, Lachlan, Lockhart, Murray River, Murrumbidgee, Penrith, Tenterfield, Uralla and Warren. There was one uncontested seat for a popularly elected mayor in Uralla. Uncontested elections occur when the number of candidates nominated is the same or fewer than the number of councillor positions available for election.¹

In November 2024 by-elections were held in Berrigan, Cowra, Junee and Lachlan Shire as the number of candidates was fewer than the number of councillor positions.

Further detail about the process of holding the local government elections is available in the [Report on the administration of the 2024 NSW Local Government elections](#) published by the NSW Electoral Commission.

¹ NSW Electoral Commission Report on the administration of the 2024 NSW Local Government elections.



2.2 Candidate and councillor demographics

This report provides diversity information gathered from the 3,772² statistical information sheets (SIS) submitted by candidates that stood for 1,292 positions on NSW councils (1,292 includes three elected members of Central Darling Shire Council).³ Diversity information is gathered from the SIS completed by candidates upon nomination. SIS are not mandatory and therefore the number of candidates included in this analysis is fewer than the number of candidates that stood for election as reported by the NSW Electoral Commission in its report. The core diversity groups identified in this report are women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with a disability and those



² This report analyses the 3,772 statistical information sheets received by the Office of Local Government. Due to technical difficulties the Office of Local Government was not able to access the candidate data provided on statistical information sheets from Fairfield or Liverpool City Councils whose elections were conducted by a private provider. However, limited data for the elected councillors from these councils has been included such as gender and if the Mayor was popularly elected. Given the large data set and the high percentage of statistical information sheets received and analysed, the omission of this detailed data is not considered to have a statistically significant effect on the results.

³ There are 1,295 councillors in NSW, however, 3 councillors on Central Darling Shire Council are appointed by the Minister for Local Government. Therefore, 1,292 councillors are elected to office.

with a first language other than English. Representation by age is also considered. Those aged 18-29 are historically underrepresented.

Where comparable data is available, comparisons have been made to the State population. As can be seen in Table 1 below, of the diversity groups traditionally underrepresented in local government only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates and councillors are above the State population percentage.

Table 1: Comparison of candidate and councillor demographics to NSW population

Demographic Characteristics	Candidates	Councillors	NSW Population
Female	42.21%	40.22%	50.60% ⁴
Male	55.49%	58.22%	49.40% ⁵
Gender not stated	2.33%	1.56%	NA
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	4.08%	4.68%	3.40% ⁶
Linguistic diversity	13.65%	11.30%	NA
Age 18-29	7.26%	4.83%	13.0 ⁷
Age 30-59	53.15%	54.64%	39.70% ⁸
Age 60 and over	36.90%	37.33%	23.5% ⁹



⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, NSW 2021 Census All persons QuickStats

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, NSW 2021 Census All persons QuickStats

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (1 July 2022), New South Wales: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population summary

⁷ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/1> pages 20-29

⁸ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/1>

⁹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/1>

2.3 Participation

Canterbury Bankstown Council, a metropolitan council,¹⁰ had the highest number of candidates across NSW with 96 candidates vying for 15 positions representing five wards across the local government area.

Central Coast Council had the largest number of candidates in metropolitan fringe councils with 77.

Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council had the highest number of candidates for a regional town/city with 70.

For rural councils, Coonamble Shire Council and Weddin Shire Council both had 15 candidates.

Federation Council had the highest number of candidates for a large rural council with 40.

Table 2 below shows the number of candidates by region, the number of councillors and the percentage of candidates elected.

Table 2: Candidates and councillors by council category

Category	Candidates	Councillors	Percentage
Metropolitan	1,100	303	28%
Metropolitan Fringe	431	110	25%
Regional Town/City	1,454	370	25%
Rural	184	134	73%
Large Rural	603	378	63%

¹⁰ Following the Australian Classification of Local Governments model, the OLG has classified councils by type into large rural, metropolitan, metropolitan fringe, regional town/city and rural. The groupings are based on broad demographic variables, however it should be recognised that there are often large differences between councils in the same group.



2.4 The typical councillor

The typical 2024 councillor is an English-speaking male aged 50 to 69 with a professional occupation who did not identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island person or as having a disability, and who has had previous experience as a councillor in NSW.

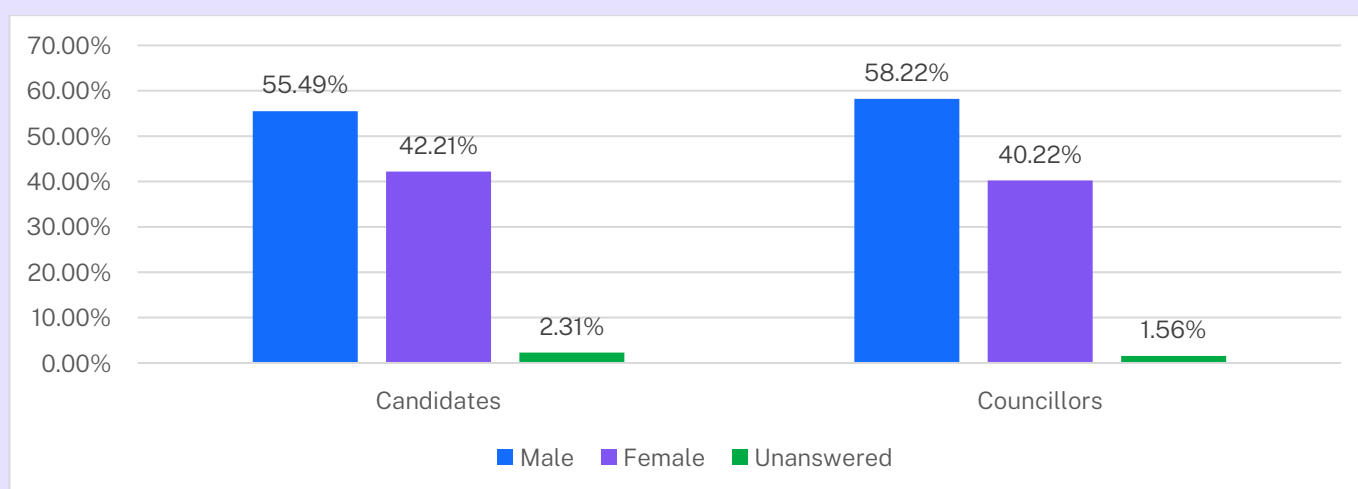


3 Women

In 2024 there were 1,592 female candidates or 42.21% of all candidates. This was lower in number than 2021 when 1,622 women stood for local government election, but a higher percentage than 2021 which saw 42.1% of candidates being female.

In addition, the number of female councillors elected to office increased with 516 women elected to council in 2024 compared to 490 in 2021. This makes 40.22% of councillors being female, an increase from 2021 which was 39.0%.

Chart 1: Candidates and councillors by gender



29 councils have a majority of female representation (up from 25 in 2021) and 5 have parity compared to 2 in 2021. Only one council, Tamworth Regional Council, has no female councillors.

3.1 Demographics

Just over one-third (34.88%) of female councillors have a professional occupation, the most common occupation of all councillors. It was also the most common occupation of female candidates at 32.6%. Self-employed, managers and retirees each represent about 10% of female councillor occupations.



Three-quarters (74.62%) of female candidates and 40.5% of females elected have no experience as a councillor. 31.01% of female councillors have completed at least 1 term as a councillor. Almost one-third (32.03%) of mayors are female. Other than English, Mandarin was the most common first language spoken by female candidates. Greek and Italian are the most common for female councillors.

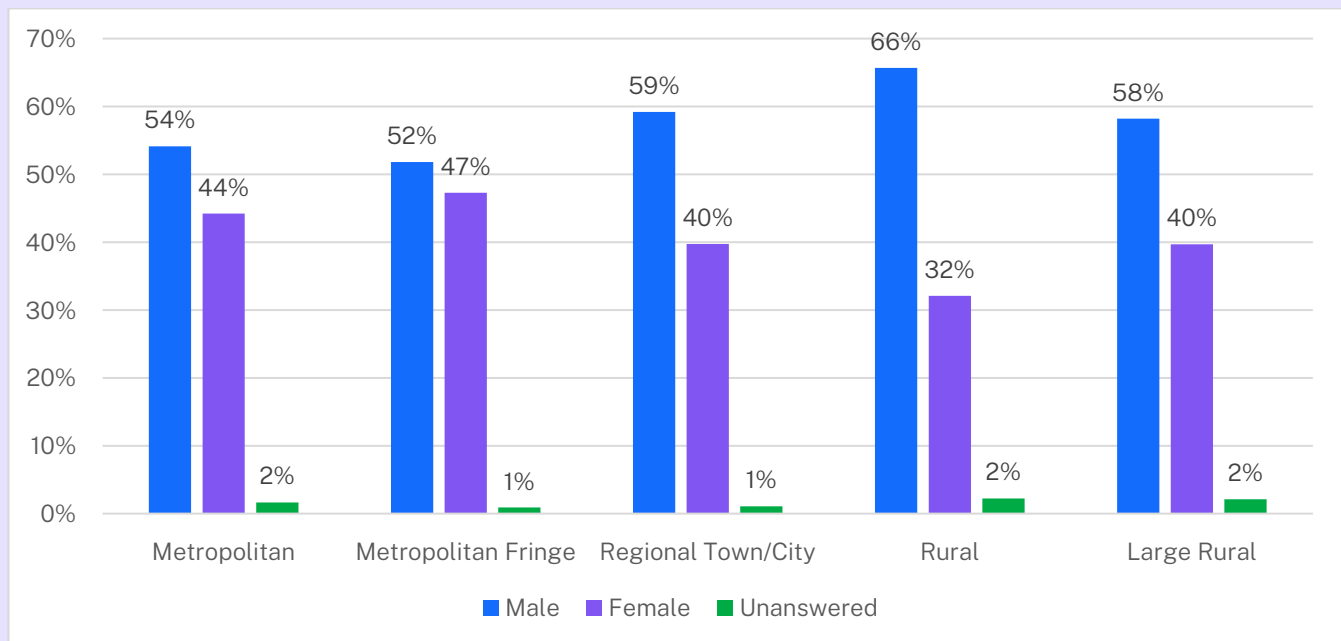
3.2 Participation and representation by council category

In terms of candidates, metropolitan and metropolitan fringe councils had the highest female candidate percentage rate at 45.73% and 45.94% respectively, followed by regional towns/cities at 42.3%, large rural at 35.32% and rural at 34.24%.

Of the fifteen councils with the greatest disparity between male and female representation eight were classified as large rural councils, four were classified as a regional town/city and three were classified as rural. Similar to the 2016/17 and the 2021 local government elections, metropolitan fringe councils have the highest representation of female councillors (47%).



Chart 2: Gender representation of councillors by council category

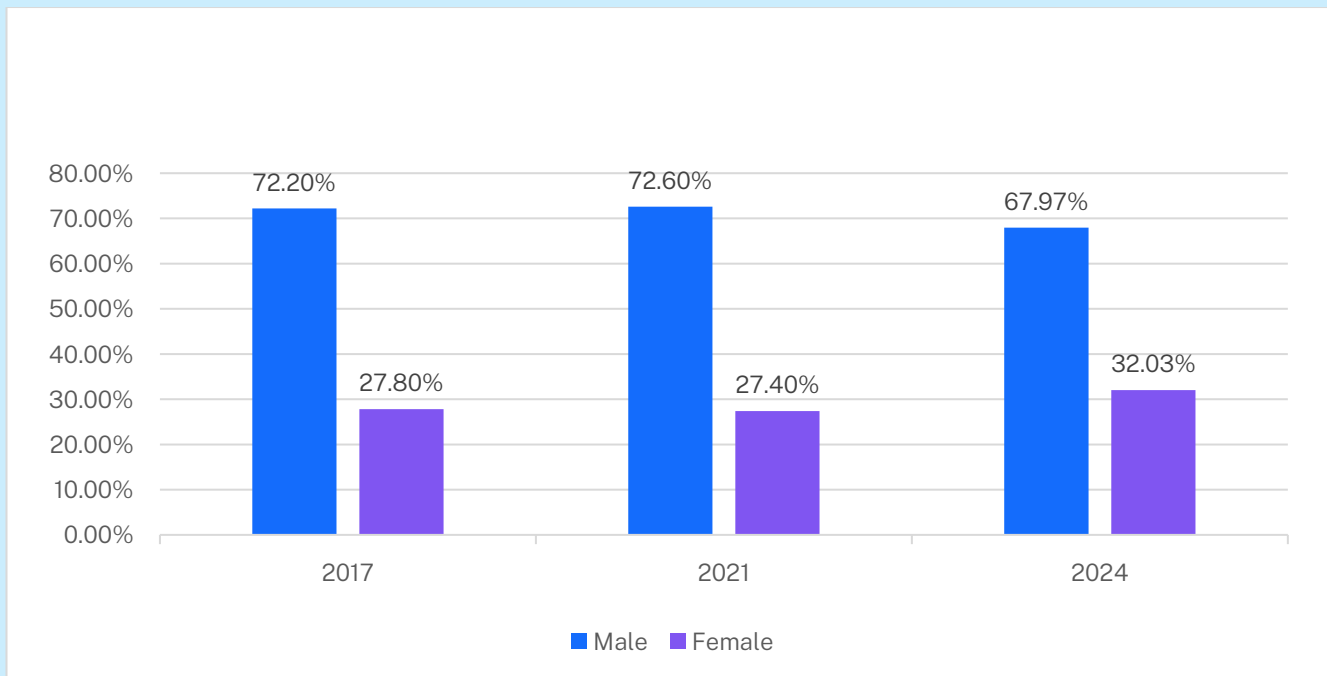


4 Mayors

4.1 Gender

Across NSW, there is a significantly greater proportion of male mayors (84) compared to female mayors (41) (three people chose to not state their gender)¹¹ The highest representation of female mayors is in metropolitan councils, where 41.67% of mayors are female. The lowest is in the 14 rural councils where female mayors only make up 14.0% of mayors. Chart 3 shows that there is less than 1% difference in the gender of mayors elected in 2017 and those elected in 2021. However, the percentage of women mayors increased significantly from about 27% in the two previous elections to 32% in 2024.

Chart 3: Comparison of mayors by gender, 2017, 2021 and 2024 elections

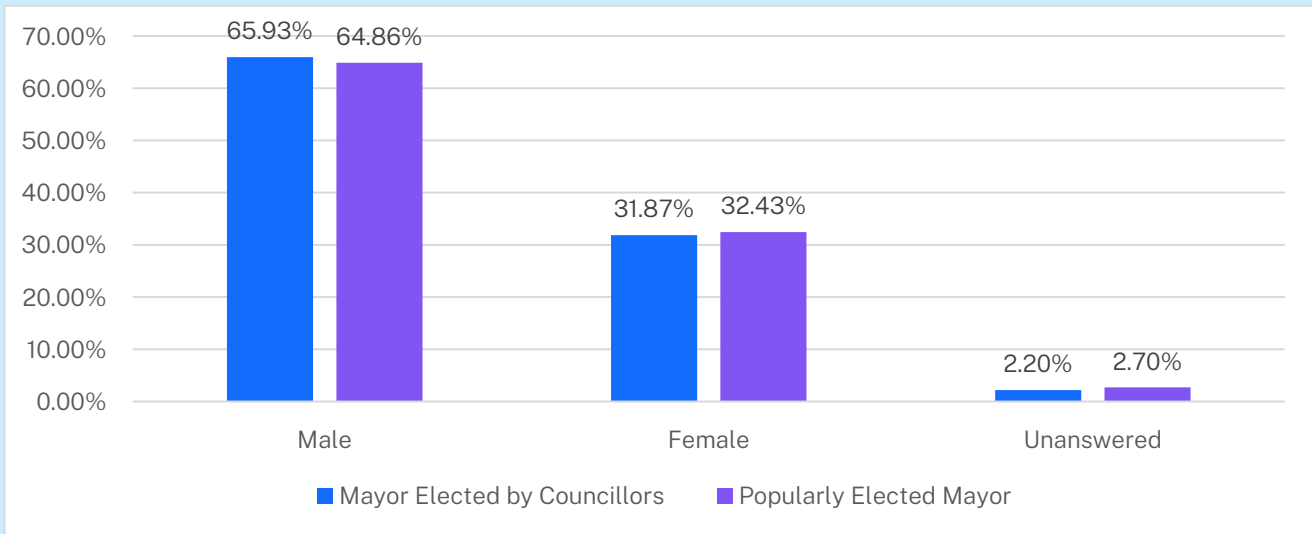


4.2 Popularly elected mayors

Council mayors are either popularly elected, where candidates stand at an election for the position of mayor and are elected by voters, or are elected as a councillor and then elected by their peers at the first meeting of the council following the election. Mayors elected by councillors have a 2-year term, after which another election for mayor is held. 37 councils have popularly elected mayors. Chart 4 demonstrates that female popularly elected mayors constitute a slightly higher percentage of mayors (32.43%) as compared to female mayors elected by councillors (31.87%).

¹¹ This is for the period October 2024 to September 2026. In a council the mayor is elected by councillors the mayoral term is 2 years.

Chart 4: Gender of mayors elected by councillors and popularly elected mayors



4.3 Demographics

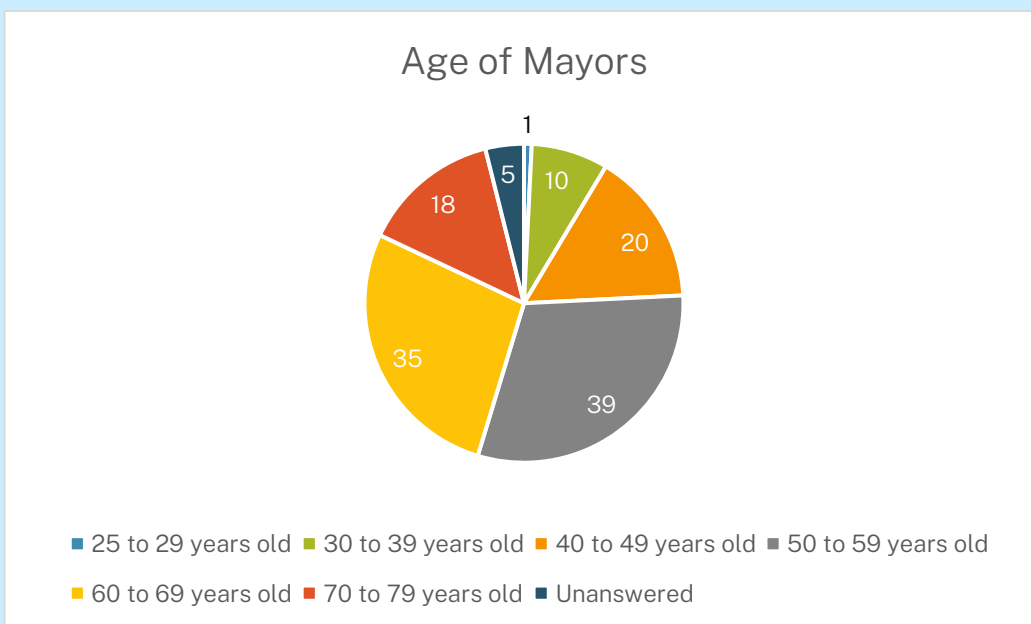
The majority of mayors (57.81%) are aged between 50 and 69, with 50–59 year olds making up the largest demographic at 30.47% (see chart 5 below).

There is 1 mayor aged between 25 and 29.

Three mayors identify as an Aboriginal person.

Two mayors have a first language learned other than English.

Chart 5: Age of Mayors



5 Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people

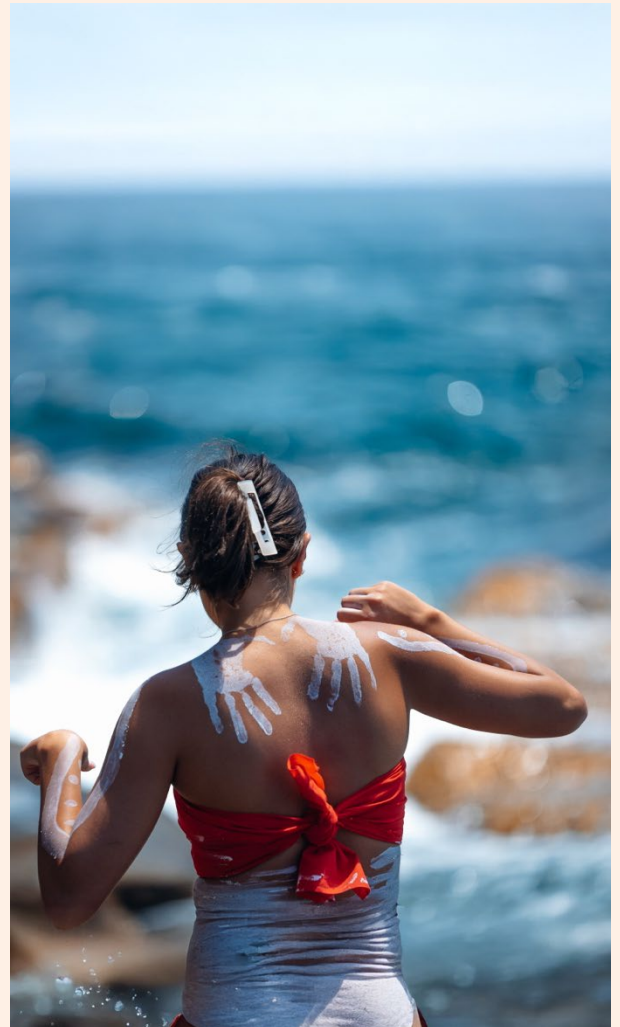
5.1 Region

There were 154 Aboriginal candidates with 59 elected and 1 Torres Strait Islander candidate with 1 elected to council. Across the State, 4.6% of councillors are Aboriginal and 0.08% are Torres Strait Islander.

As can be seen in Table 3, large rural local government areas have the highest percentage of Aboriginal councillors at 8.2%.

Table 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors by council category

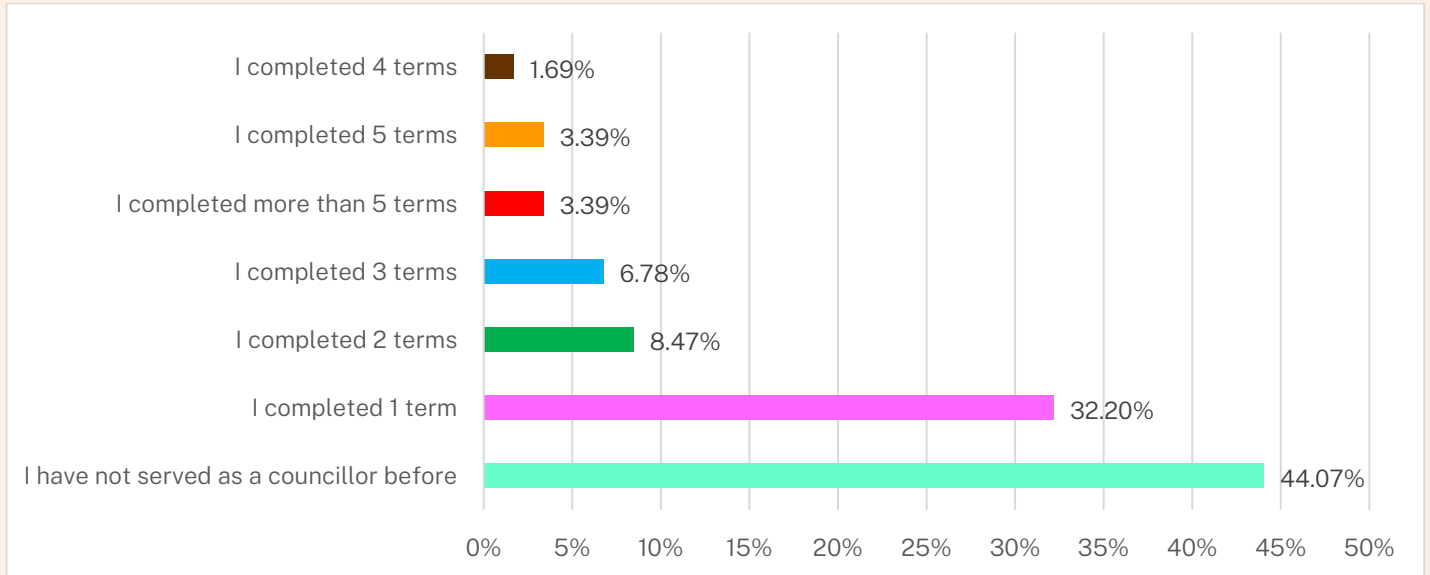
Classification	Aboriginal	Torres Strait Islander	Total	All councillors	Percentage
Metropolitan	2	1	3	303	0.99%
Metropolitan fringe	2	0	2	110	1.82%
Regional town/city	14	0	14	370	3.78%
Rural	10	0	10	134	7.46%
Large rural	31	0	31	378	8.20%
Total	59	1	60	1,295	4.68%



5.2 Experience

As can be seen in Chart 6 below, the significant majority of the Aboriginal councillors have not served as a councillor previously. 32.2% of Aboriginal councillors have served one term as a councillor. The Torres Strait Islander councillor has not previously served on council.

Chart 6: Experience of Aboriginal Councillors



6 Language

6.1 English as the first language learned to speak

Candidates and councillors were asked the first language they learned to speak. English was by far the most common of both. Responses indicate that 86.56% of female and 86.91% of male candidates and 89.34% of female and 88.22% of male elected councillors first language learned to speak was English.



Charts 7 and 8 below show that other than English, Mandarin was the most common language learned to speak other than English of candidates (n=48) and for councillors this was Arabic (n=12).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reports show that in 2021 most people in NSW (67.6%)¹² only spoke in English at home. The data in this report cannot be directly compared to ABS Census data as the ABS collects information on the “languages used at home other than English”. However, there are similarities between candidate and councillor responses and ABS census data. The 2021 census found that the top 5 languages spoken at home other than English in NSW were Mandarin (3.4%), Arabic (2.8%), Cantonese (1.8%), Vietnamese (1.5%), and Hindi (1%).¹³

6.2 Most common languages other than English

Mandarin, Arabic, and Cantonese are 3 of the 5 most common first languages learned to speak other than English by both candidates and councillors.

Chart 7: Other than English the 5 most common first languages learned to speak for candidates

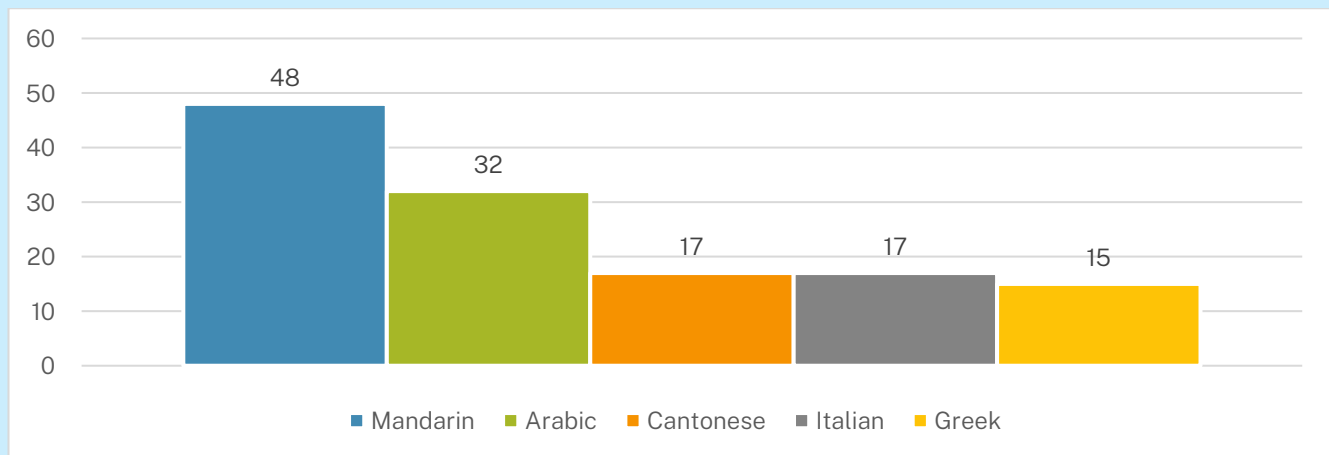
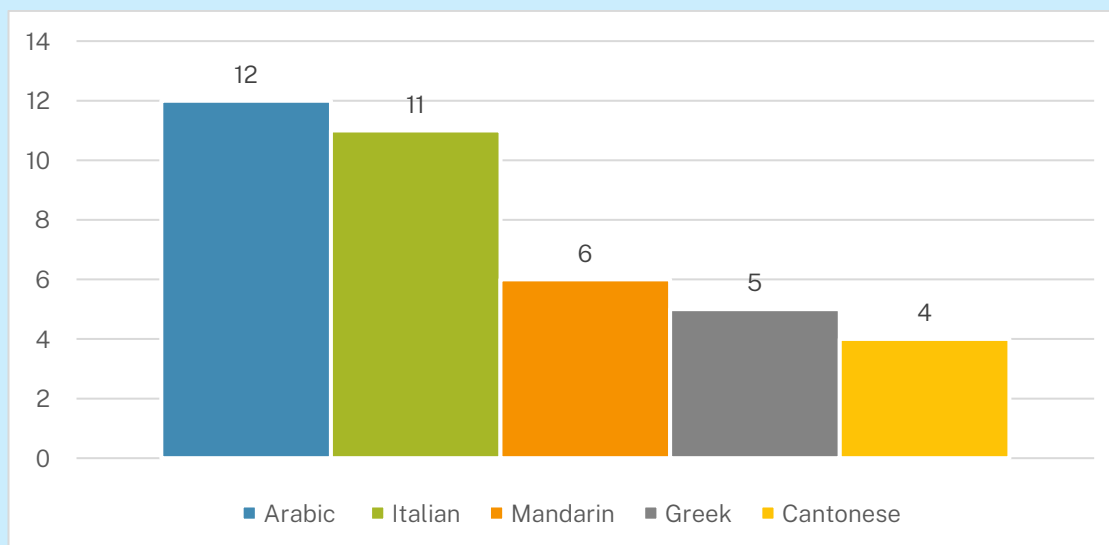


Chart 8: Other than English the 5 most common first languages learned to speak for councillors



¹² <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/1>

¹³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/1>

7 Age

Age of candidates and councillors

Just under half (48.8%) of all councillors are aged between 50 and 69 years, (25.1% are aged 50-59 and 23.69% are aged 60-69). This age bracket also had the highest percentage of candidates (44.86%). The biggest variance between candidate numbers and those elected is in the 18 to 24 year-old age bracket where 143 candidates stood for election and 20 were elected (14%). Males make up the majority of all age groups of candidates and councillors.



Table 4: Percentage of male and female candidates and councillors by age bracket

Age	Female Candidate	Male Candidate	Total Candidates	Female Councillor	Male Councillor	Total Councillors
18 - 24 years	2.83%	4.63%	3.79%	0.78%	2.14%	1.56%
25 - 29 years	3.33%	3.68%	3.47%	3.10%	3.48%	3.27%
30 - 39 years	12.81%	12.23%	12.30%	12.02%	11.38%	11.46%
40 - 49 years	20.29%	17.10%	18.27%	20.54%	16.60%	18.08%
50 - 59 years	23.87%	22.03%	22.59%	26.74%	24.10%	25.10%
60 - 69 years	21.67%	22.79%	22.32%	22.87%	24.63%	23.77%
70 - 79 years	11.31%	13.57%	12.65%	10.47%	12.85%	12.24%
80 years or older	1.88%	1.86%	1.94%	0.97%	1.47%	1.33%
Unanswered	2.01%	2.10%	2.68%	2.52%	3.35%	3.20%

8 Disability

Candidates and Councillors

Reporting indicates that 4.53% of candidates and 3.98% of councillors identify as having a disability. Large rural councils have the highest percentage of councillors who identify as having a disability at 1.48% of all councillors whereas rural councils had the smallest percentage at 0.39%. It should be noted that a comparison cannot be made to the ABS Census data as it collects information that aims to identify people with more severe forms of disability, for example those that need personal support, rather than being a broad measure of people with a disability.¹⁴



¹⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (27 July 2022), Understanding disability statistics in the Census and the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, ABS Website, accessed 18 May 2023

9 Occupation

Most common occupations

Five categories make up 77.16% of councillor occupations; professionals, self-employed, managers, retirees and other. 293 councillors account for the other 22.84% of councillor occupations.

These 5 occupations were also the 5 most common for candidates.

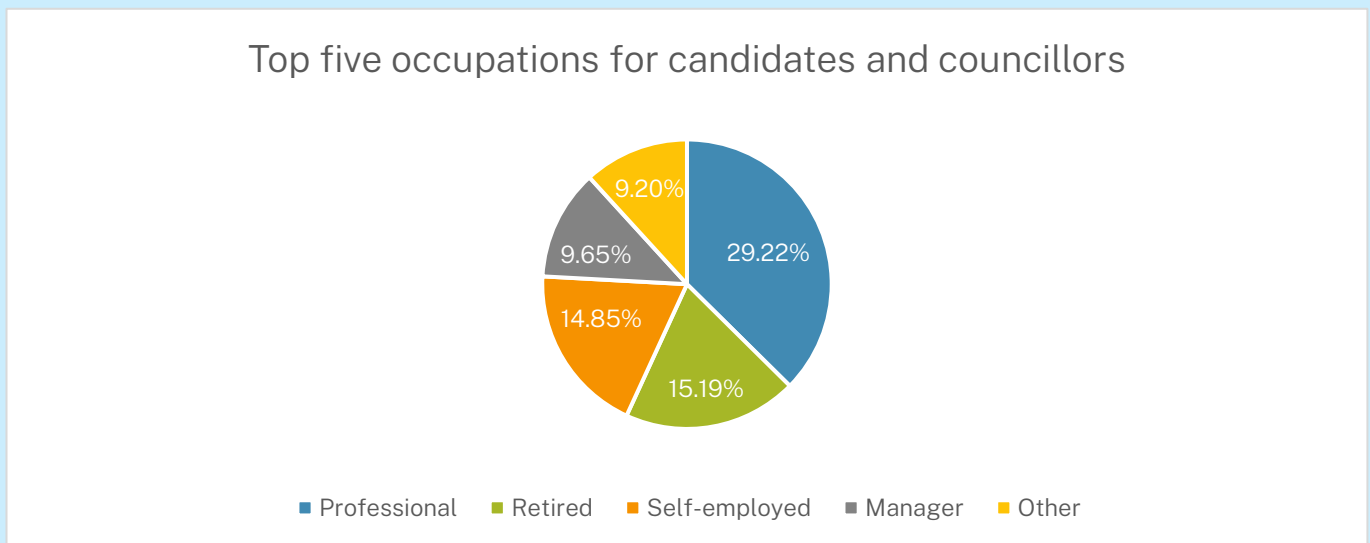
A professional occupation is the most common occupation of all candidates and councillors. ABS 2021 Census data reports the top occupations of employed people aged 15 years and over as professionals (25.8%) and managers (14.6%).¹⁵

Across NSW, primary producers make up 8.26 % of councillors.

Para-professionals/tradespeople, clerks, and those with home duties and salespeople make up about 4.05 % of councillor occupations. All other occupations listed represent less than 1% of councillors.

2 candidates identified as being a property developer;¹⁶ and 1 was elected to council.

Chart 9: Top 5 occupations of candidates and councillors



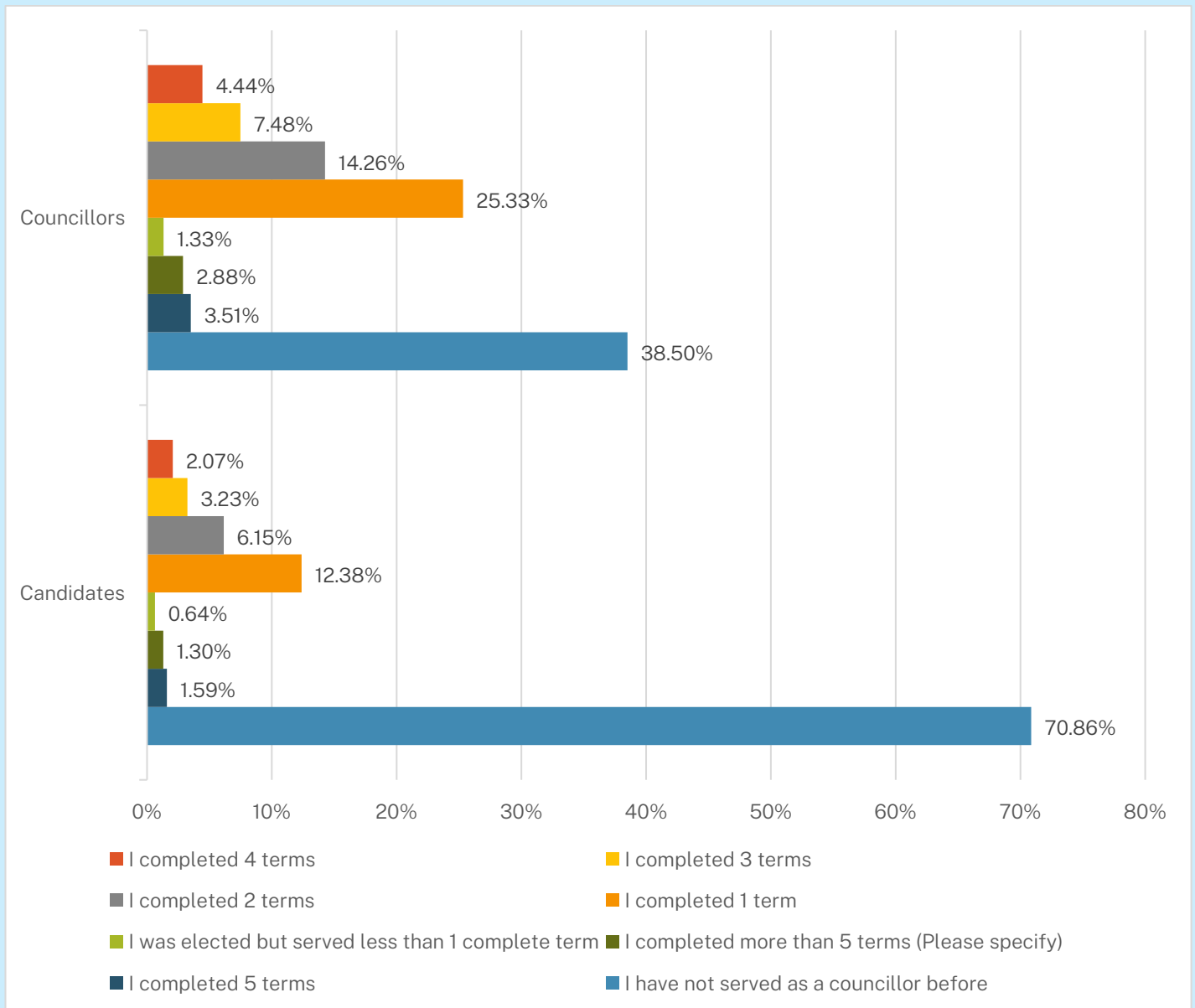
¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics NSW 2021 Census All persons QuickStats

¹⁶ Property developer within the meaning of Division 7 of Part 3 of the *Electoral Funding Act 2018*

10 Experience

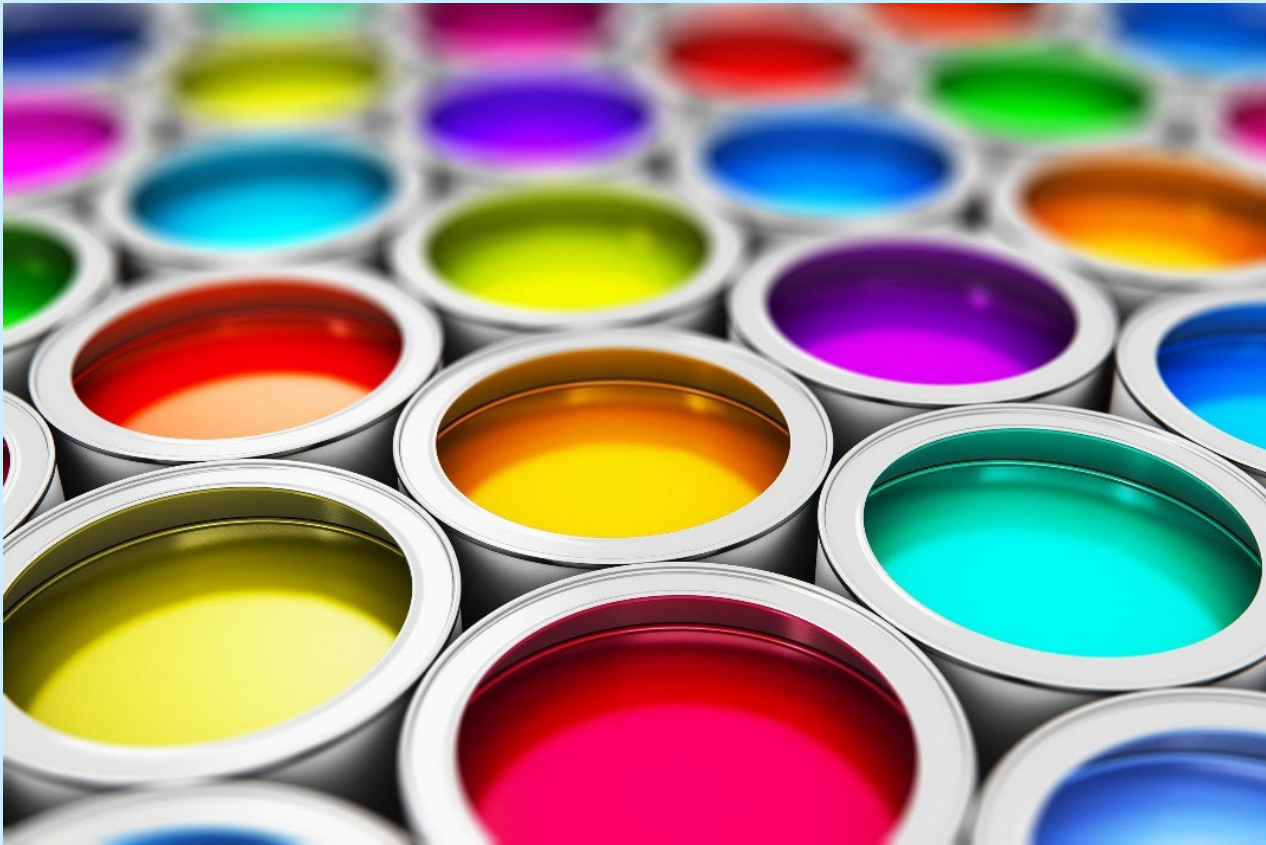
As can be seen in Chart 9, a significant majority of candidates have no previous experience as a councillor. Just over one quarter of all councillors (25.33%) have 1 term’s experience. The highest proportion of councillors have not served on council before at 38.5%. A similar percentage of female (40.50%) and male (37.48%) councillors have no previous experience, but there is a stark contrast between males and females with 1 term’s experience, where the female rate is 31.01% compared to 21.55% of males. About 1% of councillors have served less than one complete term.

Chart 9: Experience of being a councillor



11 Member of a registered political party

43.11% of candidates and 42.32% of councillors identified as being a member of a registered political party.¹⁷



¹⁷ Being political parties registered under the *Electoral Act 2017* or under the *Local Government Act (1993)*.

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Office of Local Government

Locked Bag 3015
Nowra NSW 2541
W: olg.nsw.gov.au



OFFICIAL