



ELECTED MEMBERS' CENSUS 2022

// The profile of people elected at the 2022 local government elections

// NOVEMBER 2023





Ko Tātou LGNZ.

Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) provides the vision and voice for local democracy in Aotearoa New Zealand, in pursuit of the most active and inclusive local democracy in the world. We want local democracy to thrive. We support and advocate for our member councils across New Zealand, ensuring the needs and priorities of their communities are heard at the highest levels of central government. We also promote the good governance of councils and communities, as well as providing business support, advice, and training to our members.

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Executive summary

Since 1998, we've undertaken a census of elected members following each triennial election. Why? Because knowing who our elected representatives are, and why they stood, is crucial to ensuring our diverse communities are represented.

The 2022 survey results are in: and the data is overwhelmingly positive. Along with increased gender and ethnic diversity, a trend first identified in 2016, the census shows that elected members are becoming younger, are increasingly likely to be female and are more likely to be Māori. These trends are an encouraging sign that our local democracy is becoming more inclusive.

The information will be key to helping us not only improve understanding of local government at a community level, but also in assisting future policymakers and legislators looking to change the local government system.

If you would like more information, please contact Dr Mike Reid at mike.reid@lgnz.co.nz.

www.lgnz.co.nz

Key stats 2022

45.5%

The proportion of women elected to local government.

40%

The percentage of members elected for the first time, compared to 41% in 2019.

21.6%

The number of members who identify as Māori, up from 14% in 2019.

55%

The median age of elected members

14.6%

The percentage of members under the age of 40, up from 13.2% in 2019.

39%

The share of members who stated that to "serve their community" was their main reason for standing.

32%

The share of members for whom being an elected member is their primary occupation.

64.5%

The share of members who are university graduates, up from 44% in 2019.

38%

The number of members who are caring for children and young people, up from 24% in 2016.

Introduction

In April 2023, questionnaires were sent to all mayors, chairs, councillors, local board members, and community board members. Of the 1607 questionnaires emailed to our members, 411 were completed and returned – a response rate of approximately 25%, giving the results a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of plus/minus 4%. The response rate of 25%, approximately half the response received in previous surveys, has limited the ability to analyse data below the national level. There is a strong alignment between the type of elected body that respondents represent, and the overall distribution of elected members (see “Profile of respondents”), which means that there is little to no systemic bias in the sample.

Summary of key findings

The 2022 census highlights a number of significant and inter-related trends. The first is that elected members are becoming younger. The second, and related, trend is that there is a more than one in five chance that an elected member will identify as Māori. Key findings are:

- The median age of members has fallen to 55 years, from between 55 and 60 in 2019.
- The percentage of members aged 65 years and older has fallen from 45% in 2016 to 24%.
- The percentage of members under the age of 40 has more than doubled from 7.2% in 2016 to 14.6%.
- Almost half of the men elected to local government are 61 and older (49%), while the percentage of women over the age of 61 is 27%.
- Associated with the younger profile, more members have tertiary qualifications (38%, an increase of 6% since 2019) and are the primary carers of children (38%, up from 24% in 2019).
- The percentage of members who identify as Māori or who are of Māori descent has increased from approximately 14% in 2019, to 21.6%.
- Members who are Māori tend to be younger (22.5% are under the age of 41, compared to 14.6% for all members) and are more likely to be female (57%).
- Members elected to Māori wards and constituencies represented 27% of all Māori members.
- The biggest population cohort of Māori members is aged 51 – 55 (20%). The second biggest cohort is aged 56 – 60 (17%).
- Approximately 5% of members identified as non-binary and gender non-conforming or preferred not to say (as this was the first time the question was asked, we have no comparative data).
- The proportion of women elected in 2022 was 45%.¹
- The number of members who own their own home is 88%, compared to a national average of 64%.

¹ See footnote 3 for more information on methodologies used for identifying the proportion of women in local government.

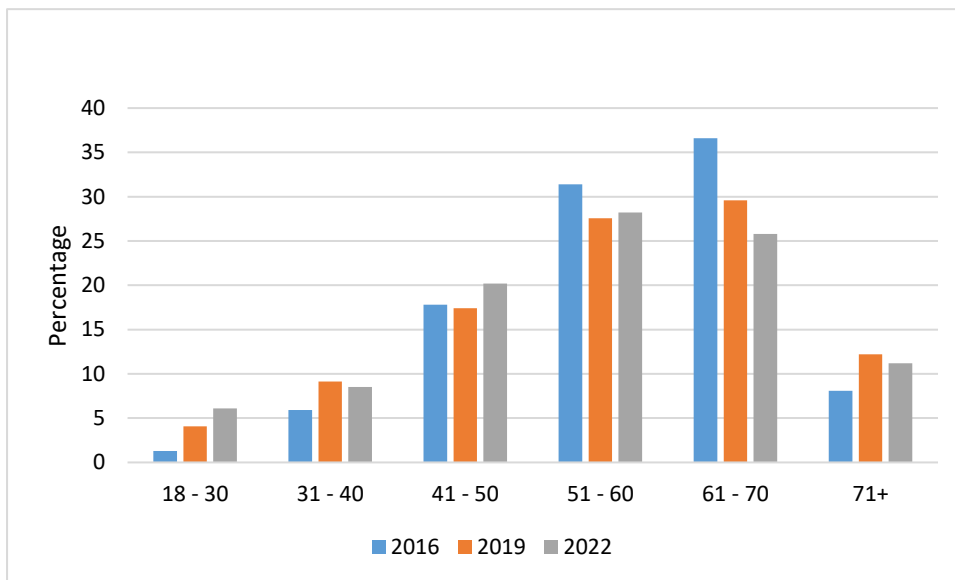


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- The most common reason given for standing for local government was “to serve my community” and respondents’ most important priority once in office was to “represent and advocate for the interests of constituents”.

Age

The traditional view of councils is that they are largely made up of members from older age groups. While it continues to be true that elected members are, on average, older than the general population, the age gap is diminishing at a relatively fast rate. In recent elections both the median and average age has fallen, see figure 1.

Figure 1 Elected members age by cohort

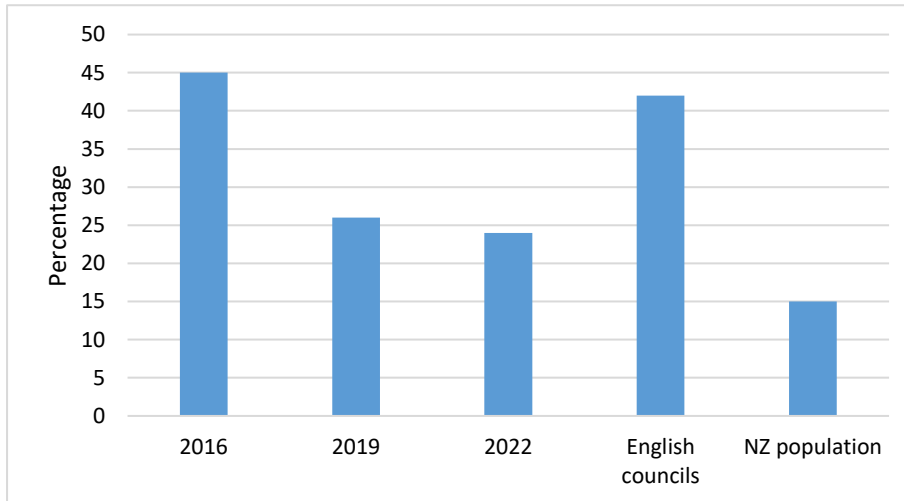


- The median age of members elected in 2022 is approximately 55 years, compared to 55-60 in 2019. By comparison, the average age of elected members in England is 60.
- The percentage of members under the age of 45 years is 23%, compared to 16% in England.
- Since 2016, there has been a notable increase in the proportion of members in the 18-30, 31-40, and 41-50 age groups.
- Commensurately, the share of members older than 61 years has declined from 41.8% in 2019 to 37%.
- The share of members under the age of 40 has doubled since 2016, and the share of members under the age of 50 has grown by almost 20%, see table 1.

Table 1 Increase in younger members (percentage)

	2016	2019	2022
Under 40	7.2	13.2	14.6
Under 50	25	30.6	34.8

Figure 2 **Members 65 years and older**

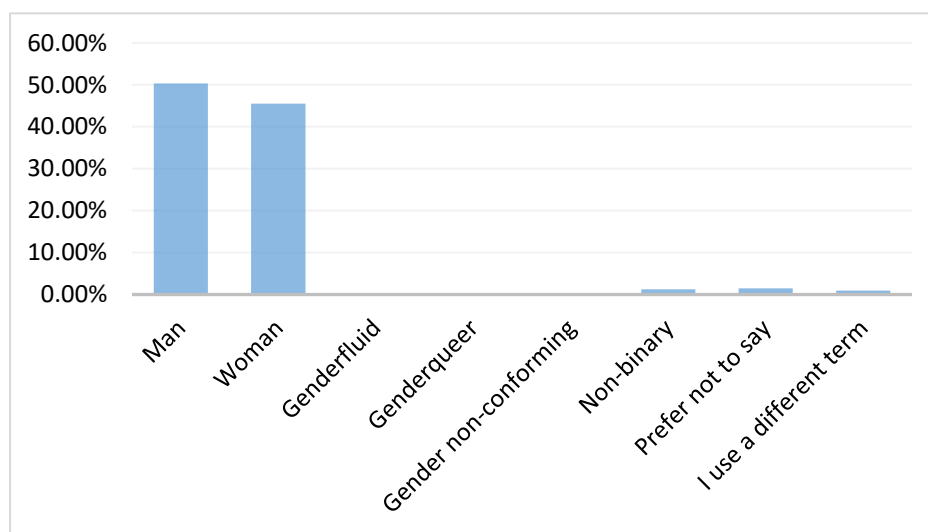


- Figure 2 highlights the significant demographic change in the makeup of local government since 2016, when 45% of members were 65 years and older. In contrast, the proportion of elected members aged 65 years and older in 2022 has fallen to 24%.
- By comparison, the proportion of elected members in local government in England over the age of 60 years is 45%.
- The proportion of elected members 65 and older (24%) is higher than the proportion of people older than 65 in the general population (15%).
- The proportion of Māori members aged 65 and over is 12.35, approximately half the average for all members. Similarly, the proportion of female members 65 and over is also less than the total share, at 13.9%.

Gender

For the first time, the Census gave elected members options that allowed them to identify as non-binary or gender non-conforming, see figure 3.

Figure 3 Gender of respondents²

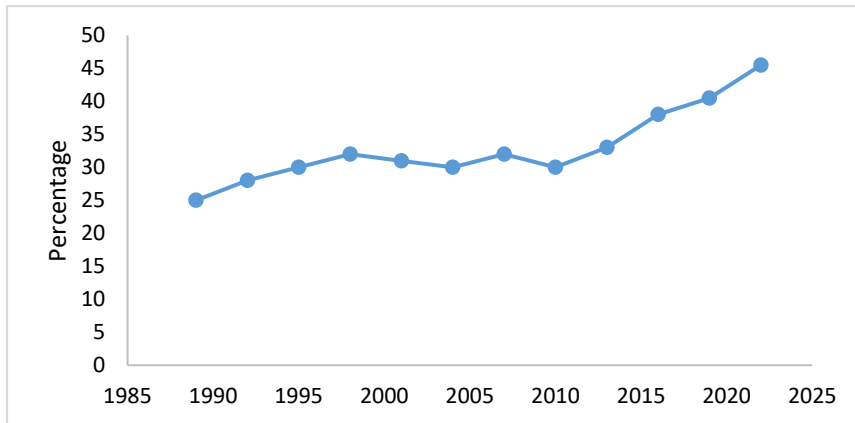


- 50% of all members identified as male and 45.5% identified as female.³ Approximately 2.5% of members identified as non-binary and gender non-conforming. Approximately 2.5% preferred not to say.

² Graph includes a margin of error of plus/minus 4%

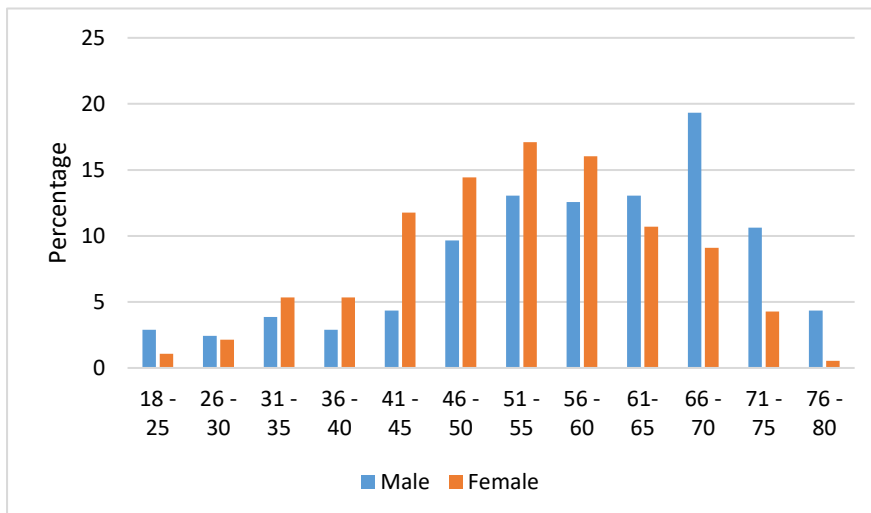
³ Due to the 4% margin of error, the number of members who identify as women may vary between 41 and 49% (at least 95% of times). The Department of Internal Affairs' recent analysis of the 2022 election results calculates the number of women elected to local government at 39%, see https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Services-Local-Elections-Local-Authority-Election-Statistics-2022?OpenDocument. This figure is based on an analysis of names correlated, where necessary, with photos and other relevant information. The approach does not allow for non-binary responses.

Figure 4 Representation of women since 1989



- Figure 4 highlights the increase in the share of women elected to local government, especially since 2010.

Figure 5 Male and female members by age

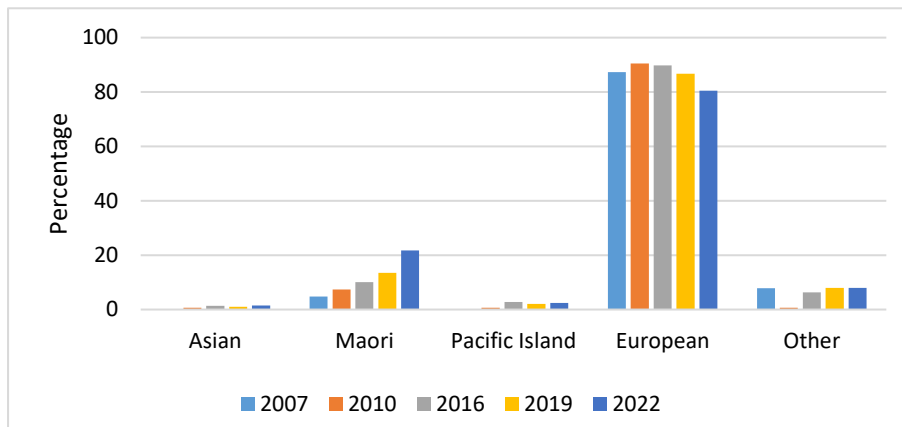


- Figure 5 highlights the different age profile of male and female members. Male elected members tend to be concentrated in the older age cohorts, with close to 50% older than 61. Women elected members tend to be found in the younger cohorts.

Ethnicity

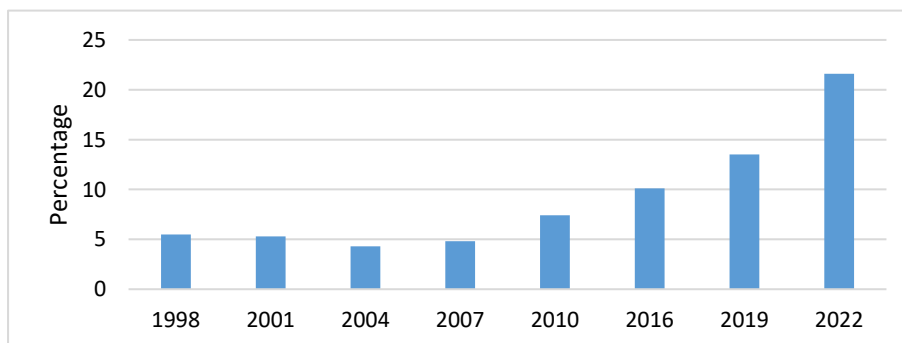
Compared with previous trienniums, the number of elected members who identify as Māori following the 2022 elections has significantly increased, see figure 6.

Figure 6 Ethnic diversity 2007 - 2022⁴



- Figure 6 tracks the composition of elected members according to their ethnicity since 2007. The two major trends have been a decline in the share of members who identify as European, and an increase in members who identify as Māori, see also figure 7.
- The share of members who identify as Asian and Pasifika is likely to be less than the actual number, as most members are concentrated in a single council, Auckland Council.

Figure 7 Māori elected members⁵

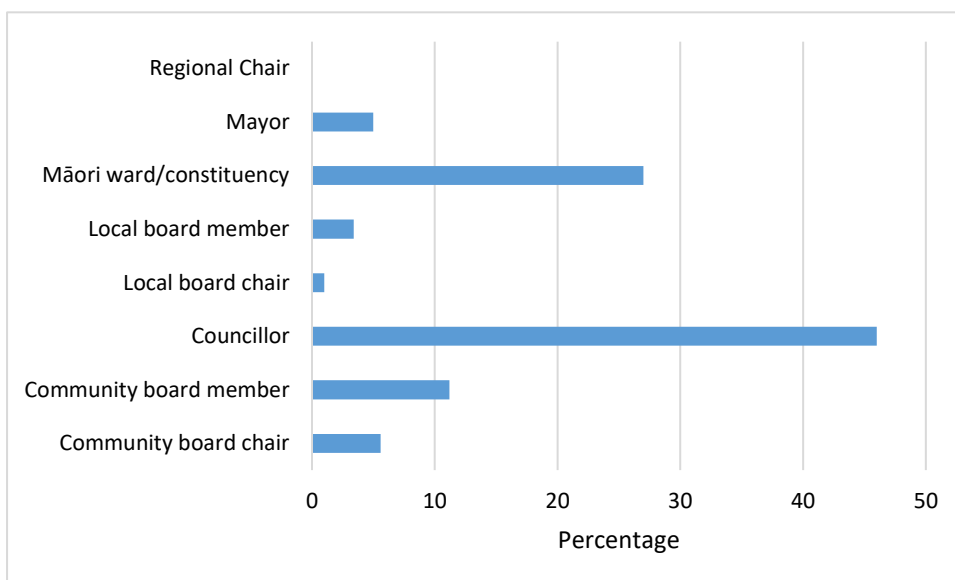


⁴ The Elected Member Census uses the same definition of Māori as used in the New Zealand census, namely, members with Māori whakapapa and members who identify as Māori.

⁵ Data prior to 2010 available data is limited to councillors and mayors. From 2010 the data set has included local and community board members. Survey results for 2013 are unavailable.

- The proportion of members who identify as Māori has increased from 13.5% in 2019 to 21.6% in 2022.
- Since LGNZ initiated the post-election census of members, the lowest share of members who are Māori was in 2004 (Please note that since 2010, local board and community board members have been included in the census).
- Approximately 54% of the respondents who identified as Māori were first time members, with women making up 57% of all Māori members.

Figure 8 Māori members: positions⁶

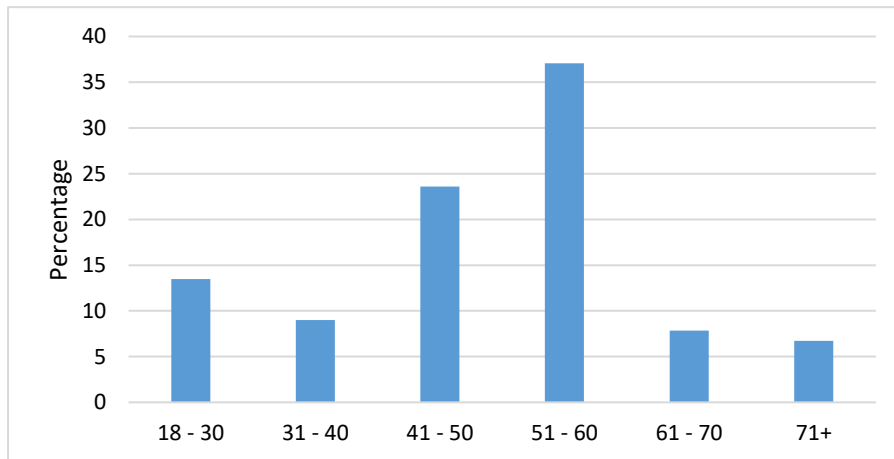


- Figure 8 shows that the largest group of Māori respondents (46%) identified as ward or at-large councillors.
- Members elected to Māori wards or Māori constituencies made up 27% of all Māori members, the second largest group.⁷
- The third largest group of Māori members were elected to community boards (11%).

⁶ With a margin of error of 4%, positions that have a small number of incumbents might not be accurately represented. For example, NZ has 11 regional council chairs, at least two of whom identify as Māori, but are not reflected in the sample.

⁷ Electoral divisions in territorial authorities are called wards, while electoral divisions in regional councils are called constituencies.

Figure 9 Māori elected members: age



- The largest cohort of Māori elected members is the 51 to 60-year-old cohort (see figure 9), which is similar to the size of the cohort in the general population of members.
- Almost 14% of Māori members are in the 18 to 30-year-old cohort, compared to only 6% of all members.

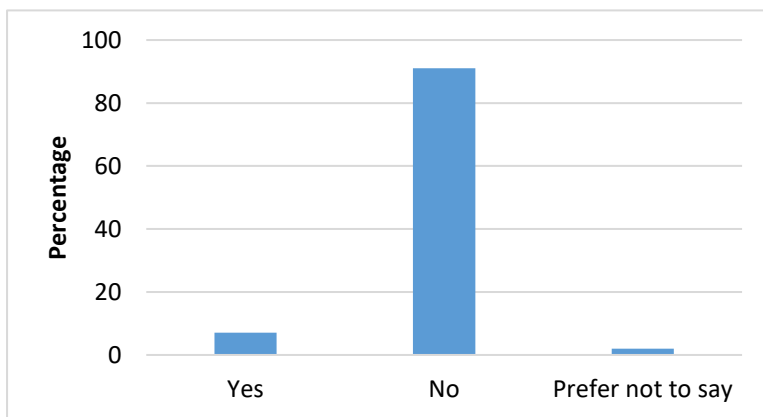
Other characteristics

To provide a more detailed picture of those elected to govern New Zealand's communities, the Census also asked members for information on whether they had a disability, were members of the LGBTQIA+ community, whether they owned their place of residence, and whether they were the primary caregivers of children.

Disability

The 2022-2025 census, for the first time, asked members whether they had a disability, see figure 10.

Figure 10 Members with a disability

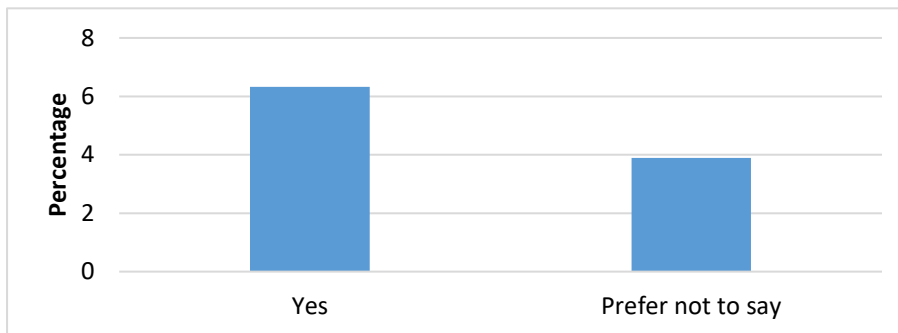


- Approximately 7% of members stated that they had a disability. This is less than the share of people in the general community with some form of long-lasting impairment which is 24% (see the Briefing to the Minister of Disability Issues).

LGBTQIA+

For the first time, since the census has been conducted, the 2023 census asked members whether they were LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual). The result is set out in figure 11.

Figure 11 Members who belong to the LGBTQIA+ community

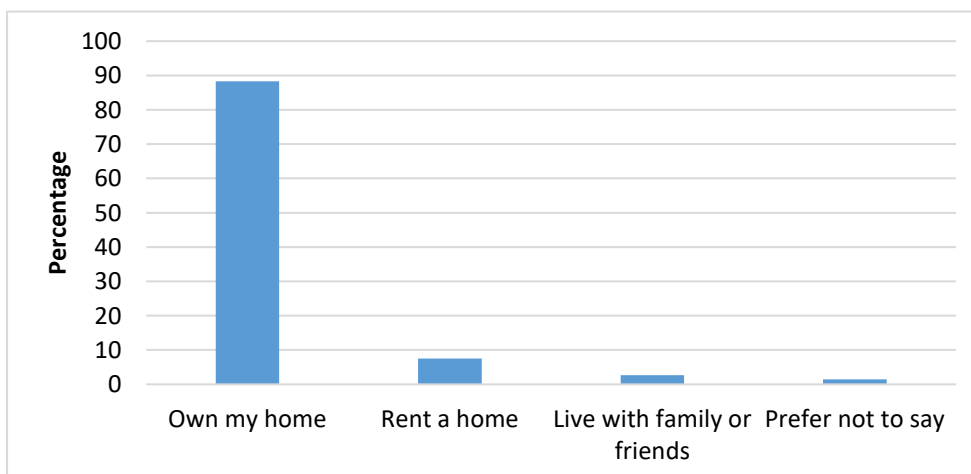


- The proportion of members who stated that they belonged to the LGBTQIA+ community was 6.3%. In comparison, the percentage of people who state that they belong to the LGBTQIA+ community in the general population is 4.2% (Statistics NZ).
- A number of respondents (3.9%), preferred not to say.
- Amongst Māori respondents, 8% stated they belonged to the LGBTQIA+ community, with 6% preferring not to say.

Housing

For the first time, the 2022 Elected Member Census asked members whether they owned their own property, see figure 12.

Figure 12 Proportion of members who own their place of residence

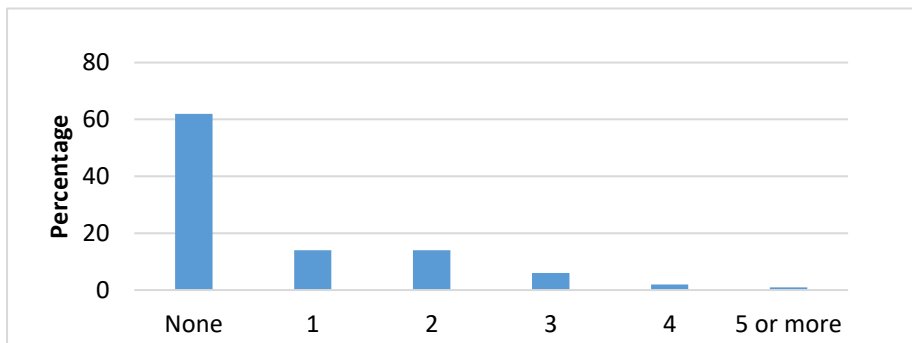


- When asked if they owned the house in which they lived, approximately 88% of members answered in the affirmative. This compares to a New Zealand home ownership rate of 64% (Statistics NZ, 2018).
- The share of members who were renters was 7.5%.

Caring for children

The census asked members whether they were the primary carer for any young people aged under 17 years. The purpose of this question is to provide an information base to assist with evaluating whether councils are “carer-friendly” environments for prospective candidates, see figure 13.

Figure 13 Members caring for children



- The number of members caring for children, whether as parents or caregivers, is 38%. This is higher than the proportion of caregivers in 2016, which was 24%.
- Less than 9% of members care for three or more children. The number of members caring for one and two children is distributed equally, at 14% each.
- 46% of women elected members answered that they are caring for children compared to 31% of men.

Table 2 Characteristics of carers

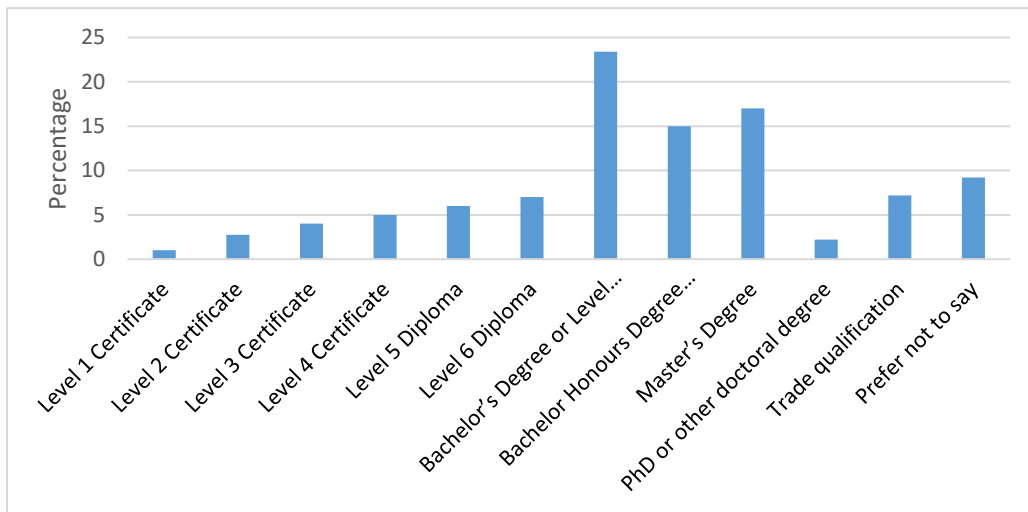
Single parent	7.28%
Shared with a partner or ex-partner(s)	82.12%
Shared with another whānau member(s) such as a grandparent, sibling, or other relative(s)	6.62%
Shared with a paid caregiver(s)	1.32%
Prefer not to say	2.65%

- Most members who have caregiving responsibilities (see table 2) state that they share those responsibilities with another member of their whānau.
- The number of members with sole responsibility for caring for children was just over 7%.

Education

The census asked members what their highest level of educational qualification was. As elected members become younger, they also appear to hold more tertiary level qualifications, see figure 14.

Figure 14 Highest levels of education



- The percentage of elected members who hold a bachelor's degree or equivalent (see figure 14) is roughly 38%, compared to approximately 32% in 2019 and 27% in 2016. The equivalent percentage for all New Zealanders is 29%.
- In 2022, 17% of members held a master's degree (up from 10% in 2016 and 2019). This compares to 5% of the general population.
- The proportion of members with a trade qualification was 7.23%. This is down slightly on the percentage in 2016, which was nearly 11% (see table 3).

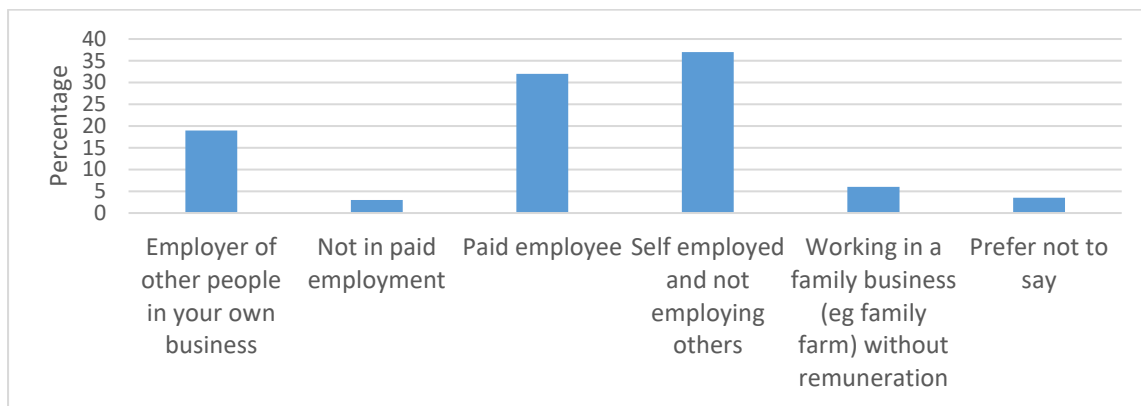
Table 3 The trend in post-secondary qualifications

	2016	2019	2022
Bachelor's degree	27.0%	32.14%	38.36
Master's degree	10.2%	10.17%	17.21
PhD	1.2%	2.16%	2.24
Trade qualification	10.9%	8.64%	7.23

Main occupation and primary source of income

The Census asked members to state whether being an elected member is their primary occupation, or whether they have another primary occupation in addition to their role as an elected member. The largest proportion (32%) of respondents stated that their main occupation was being an elected member. This is down slightly from 2019 where the proportion was 35%. The figure in 2016 was 30%. Figure 15 describes members' occupations in addition to their role as an elected member.

Figure 15 Occupation(s) in addition to the role of elected member



- Men (24%) are more likely to be employers with their own businesses, than women (14%). Māori respondents stated they were paid employees (48%), compared to the average of all respondents (32%)

Income

Remuneration can be a major factor in a person's decision whether to stand for local government or not. Understanding the degree to which members rely on their elected member salary for income is helpful for LGNZ when advocating about remuneration on members' behalf, see table 4.

Table 4 Trends in main income sources

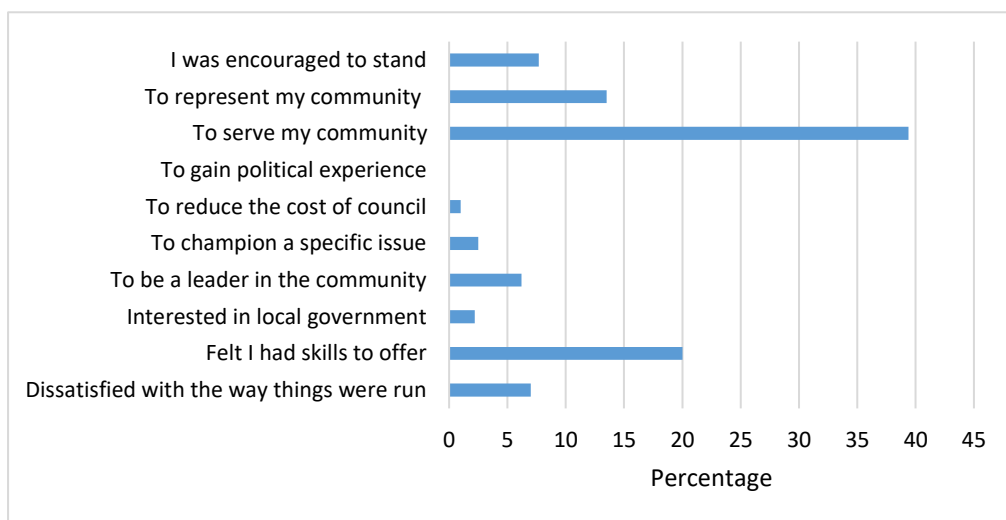
Source	2010 (%)	2016 (%)	2019 (%)	2022(%)
Self-employment	32	33	25.16	24
Wages	26.9	26	30.37	23
Elected members' salary	20.2	23	28.3	39
Government benefits/superannuation	10	8	4.70	4
Other		4.4	3.3	6.5

- Not surprisingly, the increase in the number of members who identified their primary occupation as being an elected member was matched by an increase in the number of members who stated that their primary source of income was their elected member's salary.
- The share of elected members whose main source of income is wages or elected member salaries has increased from 20.2% in 2010 to 39% in 2022.
- Women (45%) are more likely to state that their remuneration for being an elected member was their main source of income than men (34%). Men are more likely to receive income from their own business (27%) compared to women (20%).
- Since 2010, the number of members whose main source of income was self-employment has fallen from 32% to 24%. A similar trend exists for members who stated that their primary source of income is from benefits or superannuation.

Members' main reasons for standing & priorities

The census asked members to describe their main reasons for standing and their priorities. Understanding the reasons that motivate people to stand for office helps LGNZ to design programmes and campaigns to encourage more people to stand in the future. Respondents were given eight options and asked to indicate which option best described their reason for standing, see figure 16.

Figure 16 Main reason for standing



- The most cited reason for standing, given by almost 40% of members, was “to serve my community”. The second most cited reason, given by 20% of respondents, was that they “believed they had skills to offer. The third most given reason was to “represent my community”.
- Although not asked to identify their main reason, most respondents to the 2016 and 2019 surveys also gave “to serve my community” as the main reason for standing.
- When asked for the reason why they stood to be a councillor in England (LGA 2022), the most popular reason was also “to serve my community”, chosen by 85% of respondents.

The survey also asked respondents to indicate the level of priority they attached to a pre-determined list of priorities for elected members. While all priorities were regarded as having a level of importance, table 5 looks specifically at the degree to which they are regarded as very or extremely important by members.

Table 5 Priorities as an elected member

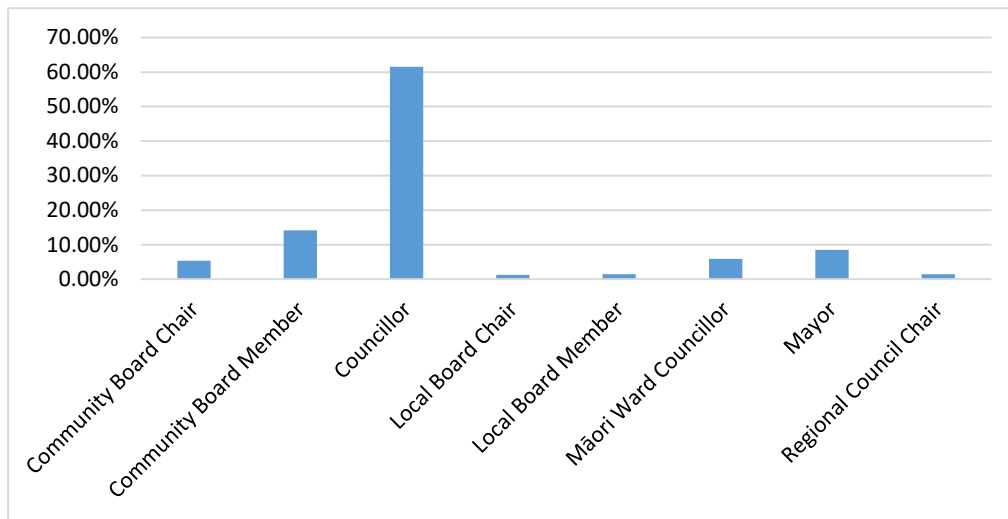
Priorities	Very/extremely important
Representing and advocating for the interests of constituents	95.98%
Ensuring that decision-making is transparent and accountable	92.26%
Supporting the wellbeing of the residents in my city, district or region	88.5%
Ensuring all members of the community can engage with council	87.25%
Managing the financial resources in a responsible and sustainable manner	87.04%
Building and maintaining infrastructure	86.46%
Collaborating with local organisations and businesses to address issues	85.43%
Ensuring that public services operate efficiently and effectively	85%
Promoting environmental sustainability	79.95%
Ensuring the community is resilient and responding to climate change	75.38%
Building and maintaining positive relationships with iwi and hapū	70.16%
Building relationships with central government	61.68%
Promoting and supporting economic development and job creation	50%
Promoting and supporting the arts and cultural activities	41.23%

- The activity that respondents gave the highest level of importance, standing out from all others, was to “represent and advocate for the needs and interests of constituents”. Almost 96% of respondents agreed that it was very or extremely important.
- Also receiving significant support, 92.26% of respondents agreed that transparency and accountability were very or extremely important.
- Supporting the wellbeing of residents was the third most important priority. The two least important priorities were economic development and supporting arts and cultural activities.

Profile of respondents

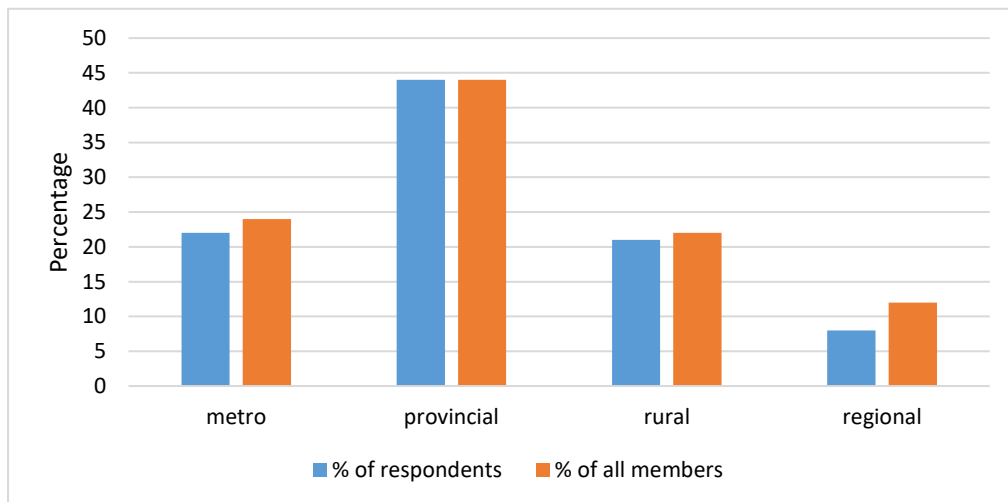
Respondents were drawn from all aspects of New Zealand’s local government system and the different roles contained within it, see figure 17.

Figure 17 Profile of respondents 2022



The sample was also analysed to see how closely it reflected the urban-rural split within local government, see figure 18.

Figure 18 Comparison of respondents to members



- To assess whether there is any bias towards large or small councils, or to urban or rural councils, figure 18 compares the number of respondents drawn from each sector with the number of members within each sector.
- LGNZ groups councils into four sectors: metropolitan councils, which are primarily urban; provincial councils which are a mix of city and rural; rural councils, which are primarily rural and/or small towns; and regions (regional and unitary councils).
- Table 6 shows a strong alignment between the percentage of respondents from each sector and the percentage of members elected to each sector.

Table 6 Ratio of respondents to the overall population of elected members

	Proportion of respondents%	Proportion of all elected members%	Total number of all elected members
Councillors	62	52	833
Community Board Members	14	27	438
Local Board Members	1.2	8	129
Mayor	8.5	4	66
RC chairs	1.5	1	11
Community Board Chair	14.1	7	110
Local Board Chair	1.2	1.3	21

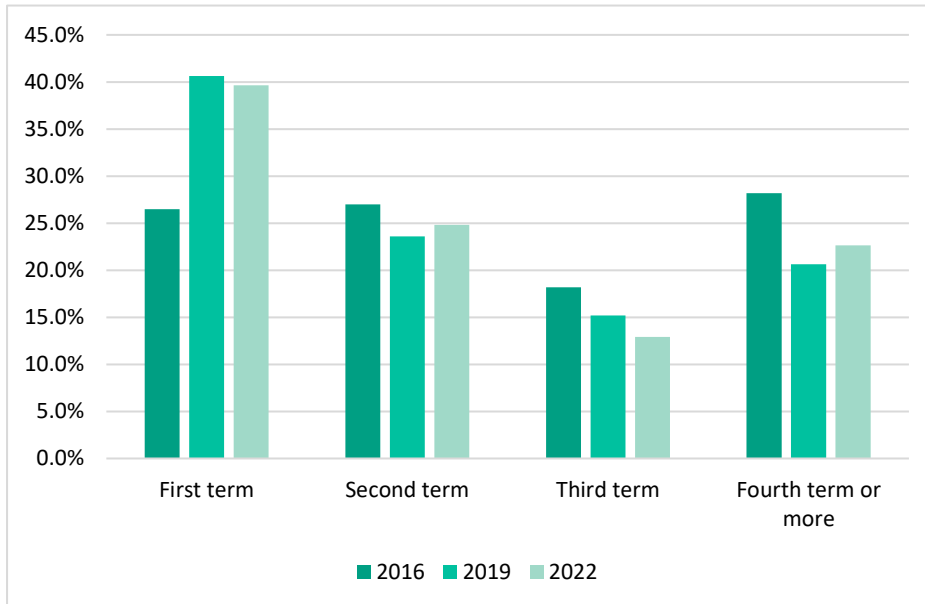
NB Figures exclude Tauranga City Council which did not hold an election.

- There is a slight over-representation of councillors. Territorial and regional councillors make up 62% of survey respondents, whereas their proportion in local government is 52%.
- There is a material under-representation of community board members who make up 14% of respondents but 27% of all elected members. However, community board chairs are over-represented.
- Local board members, who constitute 8% of all members, are also under-represented, constituting 1.2% of the sample.
- Mayors make up 8.5% of respondents, but only 4% of all members.

Previous experience

Respondents were asked whether they were elected to local government for the first time in 2022 or were returning with previous experience. The answers highlight what appears to be a trend that began in 2019, namely, an increase in the proportion of members elected for the first time, see figure 19.

Figure 19 Member experience 2016 – 2022



- Since 2016, when 26% of members were elected for the first time, the percentage of first timers has increased significantly. In 2019, 41% of members stated that they were elected for the first time. A similar proportion of members was elected for the first time in 2022, 40%.
- The fact that on average, 40% of members are elected for the first time has implications for the governing capacity and capability of councils.

The rate of turnover is such, that in many councils, a large share of members, if not a majority, will have little understanding of how the council works and how the relationship between members and officials should work. They will also have little understanding of how policy and decision-making works, which is a challenge given that work on the next long-term plan will begin less than a year after the elections.

LGNZ is addressing this need by offering elected members access to Ākona, our online learning and development platform. Ākona provides a range of learning and development resources for members and is actively expanding the range of topics. For more information go to <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/news-and-media/2023-media-releases/akona-our-new-learning-development-programme-is-here/>



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