



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

RESEARCH

Local Government Candidates Survey: 2022 (summary)

This report summarises demographic characteristics of elected councillors and unelected candidates, focusing particularly on diversity for 2022.

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Background

The Welsh Government, with the support of Data Cymru, carried out a survey of local government election candidates for the May 2022 elections. This was the third survey of local government election candidates, the first survey was carried out following the local government elections in 2012 and the second after the local government elections in 2017.

As part of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, local authorities are required to conduct a standardised survey of Councillors and candidates for election to the office of Councillor in their areas. The survey includes both County and Town and Community Councillors and candidates and asks a prescribed set of questions that included (but was not limited to) questions about sex and gender identity; sexual orientation; language; ethnicity; age; disability; religion or belief; health; education and qualifications; employment; and the role of a Councillor. The survey will be repeated during each ordinary election to track changes in Councillors' and candidates' characteristics over time.

This report summarises demographic characteristics of elected Councillors and candidates who were not elected, focusing particularly on characteristics which signal diversity. It is intended that the information provided will support the Welsh Government and the political parties in the development of policies to increase the diversity of those who stand as County and Community Councillors.

Methodology

The survey was conducted before, during and after the local government elections held on 5 May 2022. The questionnaire was made available to candidates for both County and Community elections as part of their nomination packs. The survey was conducted online, with paper copies available on

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request.

As with the 2017 survey, the 2022 survey was designed to reduce non-response bias from candidates who were not elected by being available prior to the election. Some unique identifiers were collected as part of the questionnaire to allow linkage to candidate records, helping to understand if the candidate was elected following the election. 14% of responses were received before the election, 83% were received after the election.

A total of 1,077 responses were received. Of these, 309 were elected as County Councillors and 444 were elected as Community Councillors, 352 were not elected in either capacity and 116 had an unknown outcome. It should be noted that the numbers do not add up to 1,077 as candidates can stand for, and be elected as, County and Community Councillors at the same time.

The response rate for County candidates was 15% and for Community candidates was 11%. The response rates across all respondents ranged from 40% in Merthyr Tydfil to 1% in the Isle of Anglesey.

Main findings

There were 3,291 County candidates and 6,639 Community candidates in the 2022 local government elections. Overall, 38% of County candidates were elected as County Councillors and 82% of Community candidates were elected as Community Councillors.

Previous experience

Around two-fifths (39%) of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey had stood for election to a County or County Borough Council in the past, and of

this figure around a quarter (26%) had been elected.

Of the 309 candidates elected as County Councillors in 2022, around two thirds (63%) had stood for election as a County Councillor in previous elections and half of the candidates (50%) had been elected previously. Of the 444 Community Councillors elected as County Councillors in 2022, around a third (31%) had stood as a County Councillor in previous elections, and of that figure around a fifth (21%) had been elected previously.

Around a fifth (22%) of County candidates who were not elected in 2022 had also been unsuccessful at election in previous years.

Around half (46%) of candidates who responded to the survey had stood for election to a Community or Town Council in the past; and around two-fifths (42%) had previously been elected.

Of the 444 candidates elected as Community Councillors in 2022, around three-fifths (59%) had stood for election to Community councils previously. Nearly all of these councillors (54%) had previously been elected. Of the 309 candidates elected as County Councillors in 2022, around half (47%) had stood for election as a Community or Town Councillor in previous elections and 45% had been elected previously.

Party affiliation

Of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey, 46% were Independent Councillors, around a third (29%) represented the Welsh Labour Party, around a tenth (11%) represented Plaid Cymru, 6% the Welsh Conservatives, 3% represented the Welsh Liberal Democrats and 3% represented the Green Party.

Of the 309 elected County Councillors that responded to the survey, 46% represented the Welsh Labour Party, 29% were Independent Councillors, 12%

represented Plaid Cymru, 6% the Welsh Conservatives, 5% represented the Welsh Liberal Democrats, and 2% represented the Green Party.

Among the 444 elected Community Councillors that responded, 58% were Independent Councillors, a quarter (25%) represented the Welsh Labour Party, around a tenth (12%) represented Plaid Cymru, 2% the Welsh Conservatives, 2% the Welsh Liberal Democrats, and 1% represented the Green Party.

Sex

Of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey, 40% were female and 60% were male.

Around three-fifths (60%) of the 309 candidates elected as County Councillors in 2022 were male and around two thirds (69%) of the 261 candidates who stood for election as County Councillors in 2022 but were not elected were also male. Among the 444 Community Councillors elected in 2022, around three-fifths were male (57%) and a similar proportion of the 138 Community candidates who were not elected, (58%) were male.

Age

Half of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey (50%) were aged 60 years or over, around two-fifths (38%) were aged between 40 and 59 years, a tenth (10%) were aged between 25 and 39 years and the remaining 2% were aged between 18 and 24 years.

Around half (46%) of elected County Councillors and 56% of elected Community Councillors who responded to the survey were aged 60 years or older. Only a very small proportion of those elected County Councillors (2%) and Community Councillors (1%) were aged between 18 to 29 years. Among the 399 County and

Community candidates who were not elected in 2022, 5% were aged between 18 to 29 years.

Ethnicity

Overall, 96% of the 1,077 candidates reported they were from a White ethnic group.

Only 1% of candidates reported they were from an Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British ethnic group, 1% reported they were from mixed or multiple ethnic groups and around 1% reported they were from Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African ethnic groups. Around 2% of respondents chose not to answer this question.

Religion

Around half (54%) of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey noted their religion as Christian (including all denominations), a further 40% said they had no religion and 3% answered 'other' and provided a range of responses, including Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. The remaining 4% chose not to answer this question.

There was little variation across the answers provided by elected County and Community Councillors and candidates who were not elected.

Sexual orientation

The survey found that 88% of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey identified as 'heterosexual or straight', 6% identified as 'lesbian, gay or bisexual' and the remaining 1% identified as 'any other sexual orientation'.

Among the 309 elected County Councillors who responded, 6% stated they were lesbian, gay or bisexual, while 8% of the 261 County candidates who were not elected in 2022 identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual. The proportion of elected Community Councillors and Community candidates who were not elected in 2022 and who identified as being lesbian, gay or bisexual were 5% and 6% respectively.

Disability

The majority of the 1,077 candidates who responded (82%) reported that they did not consider themselves to be a disabled person, while 14% of candidates did consider themselves to be a disabled person. A small proportion (3%) of respondents indicated that they preferred not to say.

Of the 309 County Councillors who responded, around a tenth (13%) considered themselves to be a disabled person, while 15% of the Community Councillors who responded considered themselves to be a disabled person.

Around a third (35%) of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey indicated that they had at least one health condition or impairment. Of these 379 candidates, around a quarter (26% or 97 respondents) listed conditions or impairments in more than one category. Around a fifth (17%) of all candidates also noted that they had a long-term health condition.

Education

Around two thirds of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey (63%) held a highest qualification equivalent to Level 4 or above (e.g. a degree, post graduate or professional qualification), a further 29% held a qualification equivalent to Level 1-3 and the remaining 5% held no qualifications.

The results were very similar across both elected County and Community Councillors and candidates who were not elected in 2022.

Employment

Around two-fifths (43%) of the 1,077 candidates noted they were employed, either full-time (30%) or part-time (13%), 38% of candidates were retired, a further 14% were self-employed and 2% were unemployed. The remaining 10% provided a range of other responses, including that they were either full-time or part-time students, on maternity leave, long-term sick or disabled, unpaid carers or unpaid workers in a family business.

Of the 309 County Councillors who responded, around a half (47%) were employees, 14% were self-employed, and around a third (32%) were retired. Two-fifths (40%) of the 444 Community Councillors who responded were employees, 13% were self-employed, and 43% were retired.

Around half of all candidates who responded (46%) stated that their current, or most, recent employment was in the public sector (including local government, central government, NHS, education and other public sector), 43% worked in the private sector, 8% worked in the voluntary sector and 1% in 'other' sectors (including agriculture).

Welsh language

A large proportion (91%) of the 1,077 candidates who responded indicated that their preferred language was English, while around a tenth (9%) said their preferred language was Welsh.

The survey indicated that 28% of the candidates that responded could understand spoken Welsh, around a fifth (22%) could speak Welsh, 23% could

read Welsh, and 18% could write in Welsh.

Contact details

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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