

Public Services and Government

National Survey of Local Government Candidates and Councillors, 2007

Local Government & Public Service Reform Research Branch (Scottish Government),
Improvement Service and COSLA

This document summarises the findings of two surveys of candidates who stood for election to local government at the elections in May 2007. One was carried out with successful candidates (i.e. councillors) and the other with unsuccessful candidates. The surveys were undertaken by the Improvement Service and Scottish Government respectively, with support from COSLA. They repeat similar surveys done following the 2003 elections and their main aims were to: gather information on the characteristics councillors and those choosing to stand for election; explore whether or not reforms introduced following the 2003 elections have impacted on how representative local government candidates are of their local communities; examine candidates' motivations and experiences of standing; and, for councillors only, to gather information on their early experiences in office in 2007.

Main Findings

- While the number of councillors elected under the new proportional system in 2007 remained the same as under first-past-the-post in 2003, at 1,222, the number of candidates standing for election fell by almost 40% from 4,195 in 2003 to 2,606 in 2007.
- The number of new faces elected to Scotland's councils, however, was substantially increased from previous years. In 2003 three quarters (76%) of incumbents were re-elected to their seats, whereas in 2007 this had dropped to half (51%).
- The proportion of candidates who were female fell between 2003 and 2007, although the proportion elected was virtually unchanged. While this means that there has been no increase in the representation of women on Scotland's councils in 2007, women standing in 2007 nevertheless stood a greater chance of success than in the previous two elections.
- Between 2003 and 2007, the average age of councillors fell slightly from 55 to 54, although new councillors were, on average, five years younger than their re-elected counterparts.
- The ethnic backgrounds of responding councillors is roughly proportional to the ethnic background of Scotland's population overall (1.9% of councillors stated that they came from non-white backgrounds compared to 2% of the Scottish population and 3.2% of unsuccessful candidates).
- Both councillors and unsuccessful candidates were generally standing for civic minded reasons. The most commonly cited reasons for standing were 'interest in community', 'to improve services and/or the local area', 'to make changes to the council or the way it is run', 'sense of duty and public service' and 'to promote party objectives'.
- Among both unsuccessful candidates and councillors, large proportions felt that the position of candidates' names on the ballot papers affected the number of votes they received.
- The majority of responding councillors were satisfied that the induction they were offered was adequate.
- Opinion was split among councillors regarding whether they would like to have the opportunity to gain a more formal qualification or recognition of the work they undertake as a councillor.

Introduction

Historically, Scotland's elected members have not been demographically representative of their communities for a variety of complex reasons. A number of commissions and groups have looked at this issue in recent years, all underpinned by the assumption that the widest possible range of people should be encouraged to serve as councillors to ensure that councils are representative of the communities they serve.

The Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 provided for a number of initiatives designed to improve democratic participation and widen the range of people who become involved in local government. These include the introduction of:

- Single Transferable Vote (STV)¹, which it was hoped would make it easier for a wider range of people to be elected because of the higher degree of proportionality between votes cast and seats won;
- New remuneration arrangements (a salary of £15,452 for basic councillors²) to replace the system of allowances, with the aim of making council membership a viable option for more people than the previous arrangements did;
- A one-off severance scheme for councillors who chose to stand down at the 2007 election to recognise long-service, acknowledge that councillors had not been eligible to join an occupational pension scheme and to recognise that councillors may not want to continue their council career given the fundamental changes that were being introduced in 2007. It was anticipated that the scheme would also play its part among the measures to widen access to local government membership by leading to a higher level of 'turnover' in 2007 than is traditionally the case at local government elections; and
- The lowering of the minimum age for candidates from 21 to 18 years old.

Alongside this, in 2005, the report of the widening access to council membership progress group set out action points and headline recommendations for how the widening access agenda could be taken forward, highlighting the need for multilateral action across a diverse range of bodies from local authorities and political parties to the Scottish Trades Union Congress and schools, as well as the Scottish Government.

Following the 2007 elections, surveys of local government candidates (both those that were elected and those that were unsuccessful) were undertaken by the Improvement Service and Scottish Government respectively, with support and advice from COSLA. They repeated surveys undertaken following the 2003 elections, on that occasion by COSLA and the then Scottish Executive respectively, and presented an opportunity to explore, among other things, the early impact of the measures provided for in the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 and other initiatives on how representative local government candidates are of the wider Scottish population.

The Improvement Service has published a report entitled "Scotland's Councillors 2007", detailing the findings of the elected member survey only. The Scottish Government has published a report entitled "National Survey of Local Government Candidates 2007" detailing principally the findings from the survey of unsuccessful candidates but drawing on the findings from the elected members survey where it has been appropriate to make comparisons between successful and unsuccessful candidates and to compare their profiles with population survey data to present a picture of how representative all candidates are of the Scottish population. Both reports are summarised in this research findings summary. Links to the full research reports are provided at the end of the document.

Aims & Objectives

The two surveys were undertaken separately because their aims necessarily differed in some respects.

The principle aims of the surveys were to gather evidence to inform our understanding of: the impacts of reforms introduced following the 2003 elections that were intended to widen access to council membership; and, candidates' motivations and experiences of standing for election, with a view to informing preparations for future elections and any further policy development in this area as appropriate.

In addition the surveys sought to provide an up to date profile of current councillors to help the project partners understand their needs and provide support as appropriate. As part of this the elected members survey collected information on council experience and sought to explore councillors' views on induction, training and development.

¹ To replace the first past the post system.

² The majority of Scotland's councillors are basic councillors. There are higher salary levels for senior councillors and council leaders.

Method

The questionnaires were developed jointly by the Scottish Government, Improvement Service and COSLA during April and May 2007 and were designed to be compatible as far as possible with: each-other; with the 2003 questionnaires; and with other Government surveys in order to facilitate comparisons between unsuccessful candidates and elected members (both in 2007 and since 2003) and between all candidates and the wider Scottish population.

All 2,606 candidates who stood at the 2007 local government elections (1,384 unsuccessful candidates, 1,222 elected members) were sent a paper copy of either the candidates survey or elected member survey as appropriate with a prepaid envelope for return and an option to complete it online should they prefer. The questionnaires were in the field from May to September 2007.

The responses to the candidate survey were entered into an electronic database by Lindata Services Ltd and the analysis was conducted by Scottish Government researchers.

The responses to the elected members survey were entered into an electronic database by ADS and the analysis was conducted by William Maloney of Newcastle University.

Response

Eight hundred and four responses were received to the unsuccessful candidates survey, representing a response rate of 58.1%. Seven hundred and fifty five responses were received to the elected member survey, representing a response rate of 61.8%. The equivalent figures in 2003 were 67.6% and 60.5% respectively.

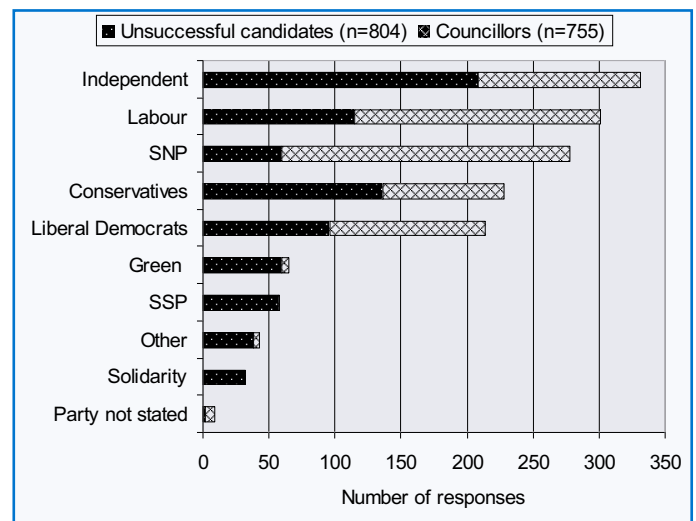
The surveys received a positive response from most political parties, as well as Independents. As shown in Table 1, more than half of the councillors from each party and 66.3% of Independents and 'Others' responded to the elected members survey; while more than half of unsuccessful candidates from all parties apart from the SSP and Solidarity responded to the unsuccessful candidates survey alongside 57.1% of Independent candidates and 54.1% of 'Others'.

Table 1 Response rates by party, 2007

Party	Unsuccessful Candidates		Councillors	
	(%)	Number	(%)	Number
SNP	82.2	60/73	60.1	218/363
Labour	66.5	115/173	53.4	186/348
Green	65.2	60/92	62.5	5/8
Lib Dems	58.2	96/165	71.1	118/166
Cons	57.6	136/236	64.3	92/143
SSP	45.6	57/125	100	1/1
Solidarity	39	32/82	n/a	n/a
Indep't	57.1	208/364	66.3	128/193
Other	54.1	38/74		
Not stated	n/a	2	n/a	7
All	58.1	804/1,384	61.8	755/1,222

Figure 1 shows the affiliations of all candidates who responded to one or other questionnaire. The proportions who responded to one or other survey from each party are similar to the proportions of candidates who stood for each party overall.

Figure 1 Political affiliation of candidates who responded to either the unsuccessful candidates or elected members survey (n = 1,559)

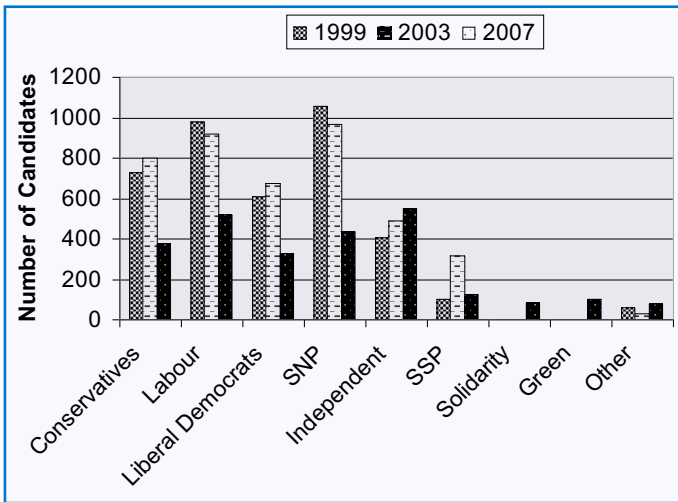


Findings

Who Stood for Election?

While the number of councillors elected under the new proportional system in 2007 remained the same as under first-past-the-post in 2003 at 1,222, the **number of candidates** standing for election fell by almost 40% from 4,195 in 2003 to 2,606 in 2007 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Number of Candidates in Council Elections by Party, 1999 – 2007



This has been attributed to the tactic, principally within the larger parties, of fielding fewer candidates to avoid first preference votes being split among too many candidates (Bochel & Denver, 2007). By contrast smaller parties tended to field a larger number of candidates in 2007, anticipating a greater chance of success under STV than under the old first-past-the-post system.

Those elected were considerably more likely to have served as councillors in the past than those who were unsuccessful (54% versus 27% in our surveys). Of those who had previously served, the average tenure of their previous service was 10 years. Two respondents had served as councillors for 41 years (Table 2).

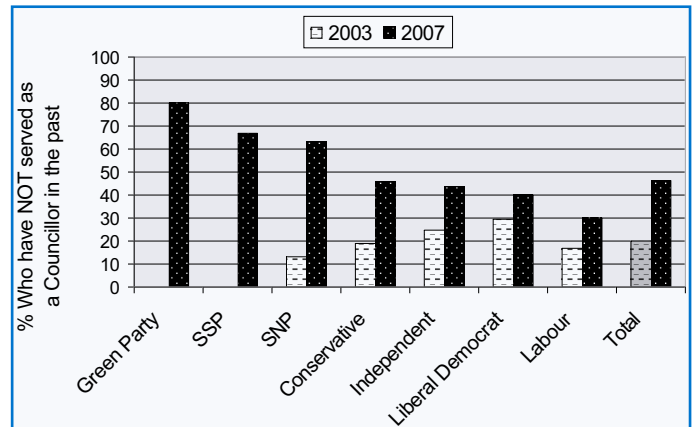
Table 2 Previous council service and years served as a councillor

Have you previously served as a councillor (n=751)	
Yes	54.1% (406)
If YES, years served as a councillor (n=395)	
1-4	29.6% (117)
5-9	32.2% (127)
10-14	13.9% (55)
15-19	11.9% (47)
20-24	7.3% (29)
25-29	2.8% (11)
30-34	1.3% (5)
36	0.5% (2)
41	0.5% (2)
Average	10.3
Longest serving	41 years (2)

The number of **new faces** elected to Scotland's councils, however, was substantially increased from previous years. In 2003 three quarters (76%) of incumbents were re-elected to their seats, whereas in 2007 this had dropped to half (51%) (Bochel & Denver 2007, p.10).

Figure 3 shows the overall increase in the number of new faces among council members between 2003 and 2007 and how this is broken down by political affiliation.

Figure 3 Councillors who were new to council membership by political affiliation, 2003 and 2007 (%)



The proportion of candidates who were female fell by 5 percentage points between 2003 and 2007, although the proportion elected was virtually unchanged at 21.6% (down from 21.8% in 2003³). As with the reduction in the overall number of candidates, this trend was most evident among the larger parties. Bochel & Denver (2007) propose two explanations for this: either, in reducing the number of candidates that larger parties put forward, women lost out; or, that women were previously more likely to stand as 'paper candidates', i.e. in unwinnable wards, and because under STV there is less need for such candidates, fewer women stood.

While this means that there has been no increase in the **representation of women** on Scotland's councils in 2007, women standing in 2007 nevertheless stood a greater chance of success than in the previous two elections (see Table 3). Men also stood a greater chance of success in 2007 compared with previous years due to the smaller number of candidates competing for the same number of councillor positions, however, the gap in the likelihood of men and women being elected if they stood has narrowed. There was only 2.6 percentage points difference between the proportion of female and male candidates elected in 2007, whereas the equivalent differences for 1999 and 2003 were 6.1 and 8.5 percentage points respectively.

Table 3 Percentage of female and male candidates elected in 1999, 2003 and 2007*

	1999	2003	2007
Total number of females elected	281	267	267
% of Female candidates elected	26.6	23	44.9
% of Male candidates elected	32.7	31.5	47.5

* Data source: Bochel & Denver (1999, 2003 and 2007)

The **age** profile of local government candidates tends to be older than the general population. In 2007 only 10% of unsuccessful candidates and 5% of councillors were aged 18-34 compared to 27% of Scotland's adults. Conversely, 60% of unsuccessful candidates and 68% of councillors were aged between 45-64 compared to only 33% of the adult population.

The average age of unsuccessful candidates rose slightly between 2003 and 2007 from 51 years to 52.5. Over the same period the average age of councillors fell slightly from 55 to 54, although new councillors were, on average, five years younger than their re-elected counterparts (52 and 57 years respectively). Among councillors only the Green party members have an average age below 50. Independent and 'Other' candidates have the oldest average age (57 and 59 respectively).

³ Source: Electoral Reform Society, *Local authority elections in Scotland 2007*.

Table 4 Age profile of unsuccessful candidates, councillors and the population

Age	Unelected candidates	Councillors	Population*
18-24	4	1	12
25-34	6	4	15
35-44	16	11	19
45-54	21	28	18
55-64	38	40	15
65-74	13	14	11
75+	2	1	9
Average	53	54	-
Youngest	18 (2)	21 (1)	-
Oldest	87 (1)	79 (2)	-

* Population figures drawn from GRO Scotland (2007)

Taking the findings on gender and age alongside the findings on the number of 'new faces' on Scotland's councils, it appears that, although there has been considerable success in bringing new faces to council membership, these new faces are not substantially different to the old ones in terms of their age or gender; the average councillor continues to be a male in his mid-50s.

Of the respondents who indicated their **ethnic background**, 3.2% of unsuccessful candidates (25 individuals) came from non-white backgrounds and 1.9% of councillors (14 individuals). This is roughly proportional to the ethnic background of Scotland's population overall, where 2% are from non-white backgrounds (see Table 5).

If, however, we exclude respondents who stated they were of 'mixed' backgrounds the picture is less representative. Among the Scottish population, 1.9% have ethnic minority (excluding mixed) backgrounds, compared with 2.7% of unsuccessful candidates and 1% of councillors. While the numbers are extremely small, Table 5, below, shows that, from the data collected in these surveys, most of Scotland's ethnic minorities are represented among candidates but only candidates from the Indian and Pakistani communities were actually elected to become councillors. Of these, all are male councillors.

Since 2003 the proportion of responding unsuccessful candidates from non-white backgrounds has increased from 2% to 3.3%. However the percentage of responding councillors of non-white backgrounds has remained similar, as it was 2% in 2003 compared to 1.9% in 2007.

Table 5 Candidates' ethnic background

	Unsuccessful Candidates (n=784)	Councillors (n=746)	Scottish Pop.*
Scottish	77% (604)	87.8% (655)	85.3%
Other British	14.4% (113)	7.6% (57)	4.4%
Irish	0.8% (6)	1.5% (11)	0.8%
Other White	4.6% (36)**	1.2% (9)	2.0%
Any Mixed background	0.5% (4)	0.9% (7)	0.1%
Indian	0.5% (4)	0.3% (2)	0.4%
Pakistani	1.3% (10)	0.4% (3)	0.6%
Bangladeshi	-	-	0.1%
Chinese	0.1% (1)	-	0.2%
Other Asian background	-	-	0.3%
Black Caribbean	0.1% (1)	-	0%
Black African	0.4% (3)	-	0.2%
Any other background	0.3% (2)	0.3% (2)	0.1%

* Figures for population from Scottish Executive (2007)

** The majority of these respondents went on to state that they were of mixed Scottish and other backgrounds.

Local government candidates tend to be considerably more **educated** in terms of formal qualifications than the wider population. In 2007 52% of unsuccessful candidates and 47% of councillors held a degree, postgraduate qualification and/or professional qualification compared with 24% of the Scottish population (see Table 6).

Table 6 Highest educational qualification of candidates and the Scottish population 2007 (%)

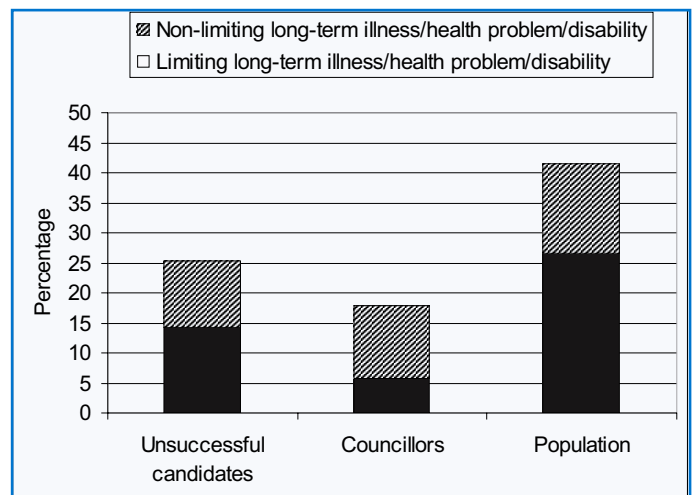
Highest Education Qualification	Unsuccessful candidates	Councillors	Population†
None*	7	10	25
Other	5	3	
'O'/Standard Grade, GCSE, SVQ/NVQ 1/2 or equivalent	10	12	19
Higher/'A' Level, SVQ/NVQ 3 or equivalent	14	15	22
HNC/HND, SVQ/NVQ 4 or equivalent	13	13	10
Degree	23	26	24
Postgraduate qualification, SVQ/NVQ 5 or equivalent	10	6	
Professional qualification eg teaching, accountancy	19	15	

In terms of **relationship status**, councillors and unsuccessful candidates are more likely to be married or in a civil partnership than the population (73% and 62% compared to 53% respectively). This is likely to be due to the

over-representation of people aged 55-64 among unsuccessful candidates and councillors.

Around 25% of unsuccessful candidates and 18% of councillors have a long-term **health** issue. These figures are considerably lower than the 41.5% of the population who are affected by long-term illness, health problem or disability (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Long-term illness/health problems/disability among candidates and the Scottish population, 2007 (%)



The same proportions of unsuccessful candidates and councillors live with or have **responsibility for children** aged 0-16 (24% and 23% respectively). Directly comparable data for the Scottish population are not available due to slightly different question wording.

Councillors are as likely to have **caring responsibilities** for someone who is sick, disabled or elderly as the wider Scottish population (13% and 12% have this responsibility respectively). A greater proportion of unsuccessful candidates (17%) provide care for someone who is sick, disabled or elderly.

With regard to **housing tenure**, councillors and unsuccessful candidates are also much more likely to own their home than the Scottish population (78% and 88% compared to 65% respectively).

In terms of **employment status**, only 33% of unsuccessful candidates and 34% of councillors are economically inactive (e.g. unemployed, retired, in full time education, unable to work through sickness or disability), compared to 48% of the population. Notably, both unsuccessful candidates and councillors are more likely to be self-employed than the wider population.

The majority of both unsuccessful candidates and councillors work in professional or senior manager/administrator posts. Small proportions of responding unsuccessful candidates and councillors work in routine and semi-routine manual occupations (11% and 8% respectively) compared with 30% of the wider population.

Local Government candidates for election are considerably less likely to work in the private sector than the wider population. Of those in employment, 40% of unsuccessful candidates and 47% of councillors work in the private sector compared with 70% of the Scottish population. It is not clear if working in the public sector encourages people to stand for election, or if people who are likely to stand for election seek out public sector jobs.

The average number of hours per week that (employed) councillors reported spending in paid employment (excluding council business) was 28 hours. When council business is included this figure rises to 62 hours per week (i.e. 34 hours on council business)

Forty nine per cent of councillors in paid employment (excluding self-employment) are granted some paid leave to undertake their council duties (30% in 2003). A further 26% were permitted time off for council business without pay (see Table 7).

Table 7 Employed Councillors situations with regard to taking time off from paid employment to conduct councillor duties

Situation	% (no.)
Employer allows unlimited paid time off	11% (27)
Employer allows limited paid time off	38% (89)
Employer allows unlimited unpaid time off	11% (25)
Employer allows limited unpaid time off	15% (35)
Never Asked for Time Off for Council Business	11% (26)
Employer will not allow time off for council business	3% (6)
Other	12% (29)
Base	237

Reasons for Standing

Unsuccessful candidates and councillors were asked to choose their most important reasons for standing, ticking all categories that applied.

The most common reasons selected by both councillors and unsuccessful candidates were 'interest in community' (selected by 75% of all candidates), 'to improve services and/or the local area' (67%), 'to make changes to the council

or the way it is run' (59%), 'sense of duty and public service' (46%) and 'to promote party objectives' (39%).

Of the 179 (22.3%) unsuccessful candidates, and 84 (11.1%) councillors who only stated one reason for seeking election, the most common answer was still 'an interest in the community'. However it is interesting that councillors were more likely than unsuccessful candidates to give more than one reason for standing. It could be that candidates with more than one purpose in mind have a greater chance of winning, however, the data available here cannot confirm this or otherwise.

Roughly half of unsuccessful candidates (49.7%) and 71% of councillors said they were aware of any public information designed to encourage people to stand for election. Among unsuccessful candidates who had not stood previously, 43% were aware of the information and, of these, 31% said that it influenced their decision to stand "A little" or "A lot", but the majority said it had no impact at all. The information influenced the decisions of Independent unsuccessful candidates and councillors to seek election more than those from political parties.

It is not clear whether the introduction of salaries for councillors has encouraged people to stand who would not have otherwise stood. Ten percent of both unsuccessful candidates and councillors stated that pay was one factor in their decision to stand, however, we don't know if this proportion may have been the same in 2003 prior to the introduction of the salary because of changes in the way this question has been asked in 2007. In 2003 respondents were asked an open question regarding their main reason for standing and, as might be expected, nobody cited pay as their **main** factor.

Experiences of Standing

Only 4% of unsuccessful candidates were very confident of winning the seats, while a further 32% were quite confident. SNP candidates were generally the most confident; Solidarity and SSP unsuccessful candidates the least.

Among both unsuccessful candidates and councillors, large proportions felt that the position of candidates' names on the ballot papers affected the number of votes they received. This view was more pronounced among candidates standing in wards where their party had put forward more than one candidate, with 84% of unsuccessful candidates and 82% of councillors in this situation stating that it affected the number of votes 'a little' or 'a lot'. Among all unsuccessful candidates and councillors, only 23% and 22% respectively felt that the

position of candidates' names on the ballot papers did not at all affect the number of votes they received.

High percentages of unsuccessful candidates (81%) and councillors (96%) attended the count. Exactly half of councillors and only 42% of unsuccessful candidates who attended the count felt that they had received enough information regarding the process and/or an adequate explanation of the results. More experienced candidates were less likely than new candidates to feel they had received enough information, perhaps due to the changes in the electoral system.

Despite being unsuccessful, 60% of candidates stated that they will definitely or probably seek election in the future. Female unsuccessful candidates are less likely to intend to stand again than their male counterparts. Unsuccessful candidates from Labour and SNP were more likely to rule out standing again than those from other parties. Councillors were not asked this question.

Induction (Councillors Only)

Councillors (both those that were newly elected and those who had served before) were asked whether they were aware of the *2007 Councillors Induction Pack: A Reference Handbook for New & Returning Councillors* produced by the Improvement Service. Just over two thirds of responding councillors were aware of the pack (see Table 8), while 30% were not and 2% didn't know.

Table 8 Are you aware of the availability of the 2007 Councillors Induction Pack: A Reference Handbook for New & Returning Councillors?

	% (no.)
Yes	68% (495)
No	30% (216)
Don't Know	2% (15)
Base	726

Three quarters of newly elected councillors thought that the local induction programmes they were being offered were adequate. Eighteen percent did not and 8% didn't know (see Table 9).

Table 9 If you were elected for the first time in May 2007, do you think that the local induction programmes that you are being offered is adequate?

	% (no.)
Yes	74% (279)
No	18% (68)
Don't Know	8% (32)
Base	379

New and returning councillors were asked (in an open question) if there was any additional training or guidance that would be beneficial to newly elected councillors. There were a wide variety of responses, but the most frequently cited were the following:

- *Finance* – “how financial statistics work so that members fully understand the financial impact”; “better financial training”; “local government finance”; “more training in financial affairs”.
- *Information Technology* – “IT training (to a very significant extent)”; “more computer training would help”.
- *Council Procedures and Protocols* – “council meeting procedures”; “council procedure/protocol in relation to the chamber”; “overview of dos and don't in the council”; “role play session in council chambers to familiarise each new councillor as to procedures and general cut and thrust of the job”.

Training & Development (Councillors Only)

Councillors who had been re-elected were asked about the training and development opportunities they had had in the last 12 months, whether they would like to have the opportunity to gain a more formal qualification or recognition of the work they undertake as a councillor and, if yes, what level they'd like the qualification to be set at.

The most commonly cited training and development opportunities were: attending seminars/conferences (61%); attending member development programmes (37%); receiving skills training (24%); and completing a training needs questionnaire (22%) (see Table 10).

Table 10 If you have been re-elected, please indicate which of the following training and development opportunities have you had in the last 12 months?

Training & Development opportunities	% (no.)
Received a Personal Development Plan	6% (26)
Completed a Training Needs Questionnaire	22% (91)
Attended Seminars/Conferences	61% (248)
Received Mentoring/Coaching	6% (24)
Attended Member Development Programmes	37% (150)
Received Skills Training (IT, Charing ...)	24% (96)
None	15% (61)
Other Learning	3% (13)
Base	406

Opinion was relatively split among responding councillors over whether they would like to have the opportunity to gain a more formal qualification or recognition of the work they undertake as a councillor. Almost half would like this opportunity, while almost 40% wouldn't and 14% didn't know (see Table 11).

Table 11 If it were available, would you like to have the opportunity to gain a more formal qualification or recognition of the work you undertake as a councillor?

	% (no.)
Yes	48% (354)
No	38% (275)
Don't Know	14% (101)
Base	730

Of those who responded 'yes' almost half (46%) would like the qualification to be a stand alone independent qualification, while 18%, 15% and 9% respectively would like it to be a credit towards an undergraduate degree, postgraduate degree or Higher (or equivalents) (see Table 12).

Table 12 (If responded 'Yes' to above) What level would you like the qualification to be set at? (n=326)

	% (no.)
A credit towards a Higher level/SVQ 3	9% (29)
A credit towards an undergraduate degree	18% (58)
A credit towards an postgraduate degree – Masters/SQV 5	15% (49)
A stand alone independent qualification	46% (149)
Don't know	12% (39)
Other	1% (2)

Conclusions

The Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 provided for a number of initiatives designed to improve democratic participation and widen the range of people who become involved in local government. The large overall drop in the number of candidates between 2003 and 2007, however, appears to have blunted the capacity of these measures to bring about significant improvements in the demographic representativeness of candidates on this occasion as parties have grappled with their tactics under the new system. It is perhaps not surprising that, with such a drop in the overall number of candidates, there was in fact less room for new faces among candidates in the larger parties than in 2003. Smaller parties did, however, benefit from STV and took the opportunity to field a larger number of candidates under the new proportional system.

Despite the slight drop in the proportion of new faces among all candidates, among those who were actually elected there were significantly more new faces, i.e. people who had not served as councillors before, than in 2003. The data from these surveys suggest, however, that, while new councillors were on average five years younger than their re-elected counterparts, the average councillor continues to be a white male in his mid-fifties.

It is likely that, as experience of the new system and awareness of the new arrangements grows, so analysis of patterns in candidature in future elections should yield more insight into the impact of the reforms.

The majority of responding councillors were satisfied that the induction they were offered was adequate, although many suggested additional training or guidance that would be beneficial to newly elected councillors. The most frequently cited topics for this were finance, IT and council procedures and protocols.

Almost half of responding councillors would like to have the opportunity to gain a more formal qualification or recognition of the work they undertake as a councillor, however, 38% would not and 14% did not know so no clear consensus emerged from the survey on this issue.

If you have any enquiries about social research, please contact us at:

Scottish Government Social Research
3H (N)
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ
Tel: 0131 244 4943
Fax: 0131 244 7567
Email: socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch

The two research reports summarised in this research finding are available as web only documents at:

“National Survey of Local Government Candidates, 2007” Scottish Government.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/>

“Scotland’s Councillors 2007” Improvement Service.

http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/component/option,com_docman/Itemid,43/task,do/.

This document (and other Research Findings and Reports) and information about social research in the Scottish Government may be viewed on the Internet at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>

The site carries up-to-date information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government. Subjects covered include transport, housing, social inclusion, rural affairs, children and young people, education, social work, community care, local government, civil justice, crime and criminal justice, regeneration, planning and womens issues. The site also allows access to information about the Scottish Household Survey.

