

Ontario Municipal Elections 2018:
Report to Participants on Candidates' Motivations and Opinions

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January 11, 2019

Purpose of the Survey

This report summarizes responses from a survey sent to candidates in Ontario's municipal elections in the Fall of 2018. The objective of the survey is to better understand candidates' backgrounds, their views and opinions on issues in their municipalities, along with the motivations that led them to run for office.

Following the publication of official candidate lists, our research team collected publically-available email addresses from candidates in the lead up to the Fall 2018 municipal election. While this means that our data is not representative of all candidates standing for election, it offers us a large sample from which to study the opinions and motivations of local candidates.

In this survey, we targeted candidates running for the office of mayor or city councillor. Individuals running for other types of office (e.g., in school board elections or as trustees) were not invited to participate.

While most respondents completed the survey in its entirety, in some cases, proportions reported below may not sum to 100% because of missing data.

Sample Characteristics

In total, we invited 3,228 candidates to participate in our survey and received usable data from 1,017 respondents. These respondents came from 159 different municipalities around the province of Ontario.

Our sample is composed primarily of men ($n = 572$; 56.2%), while about three-out-of-ten respondents were women ($n = 300$; 29.5%). Nearly three-quarters of respondents reported English to be their maternal language ($n = 747$; 73.5%); with smaller numbers reporting French ($n = 42$; 4.1%) or another language ($n = 83$; 8.2%).

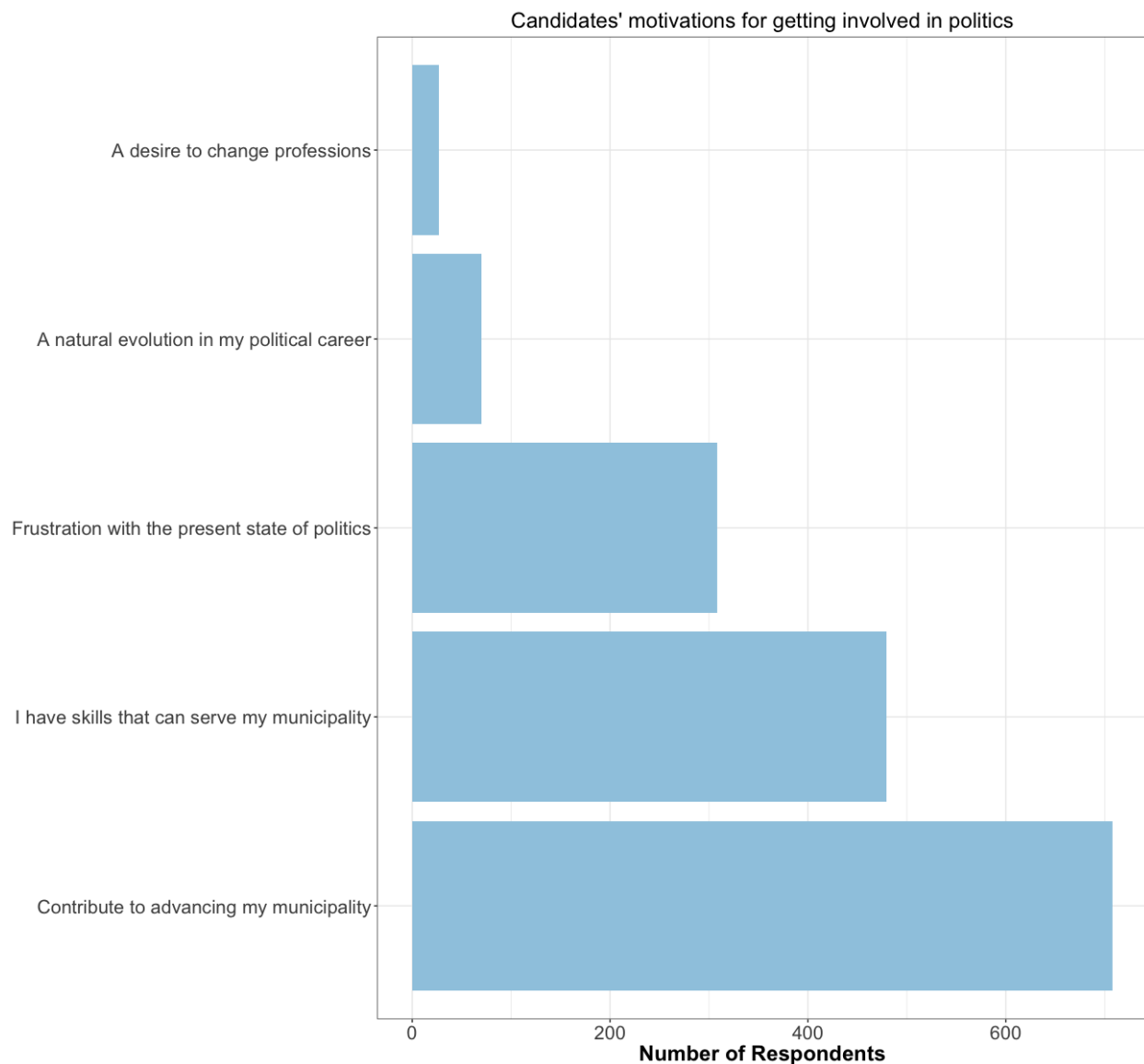
Candidates were primarily older citizens although a number of younger adults responded to our survey. Most respondents were over the age of 50 ($n = 588$; 57.8%) and a small proportion of candidates were younger than 30 years old ($n = 36$; 3.5%). The remaining respondents were between the ages of 30 to 39 ($n = 84$; 8.3%) or 40 to 49 ($n = 166$; 16.3%). Most candidates ($n = 606$; 59.6%) reported having at least some university education.

Candidates' experience in politics varied. The largest group of candidates ($n = 360$; 35.4%) was running in their first election and reported being involved in politics for less than one year. Over 15% of candidates ($n = 161$) reported being involved in politics for between 1 and 5 years, with about 10% ($n = 108$) being involved in politics for between 5 and 10 years. A large proportion of respondents ($n = 289$; 28.4%) reported being involved in politics for more than a decade.

Candidates' Motivation

The figure below presents the motivations candidates reported that led them to run for mayor or city councillor in the election.

Most candidates ($n = 708$; 69.6%) were motivated to make a contribution to improving their municipality, while sizeable minorities of respondents were driven by the frustration with the current state of politics ($n = 30.3\%$) or the belief that they have qualities that can serve their community ($n = 479$; 47.1%). For a small proportion of candidates, their motivation for standing for election was driven by a desire to change careers ($n = 27$; 2.65%) or to develop their political career ($n = 70$; 6.88%).

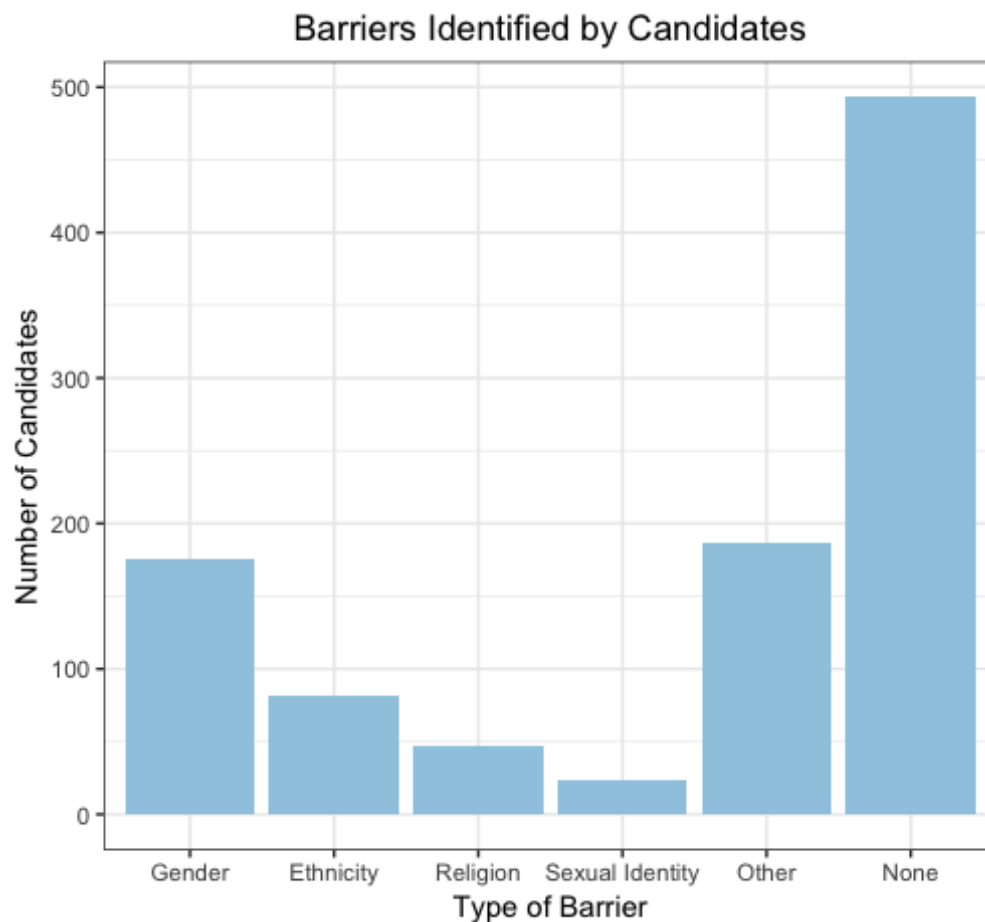


Barriers to Running for Election

We asked participants whether they perceived any barriers to their candidacy as a result of their social backgrounds. Our question format allowed candidates to select multiple barriers.

While a sizeable minority of candidates reported experiencing no barriers at all ($n = 493$; 48.5%), over half of the respondents indicated one or more factors that posed a challenge to their candidacy.

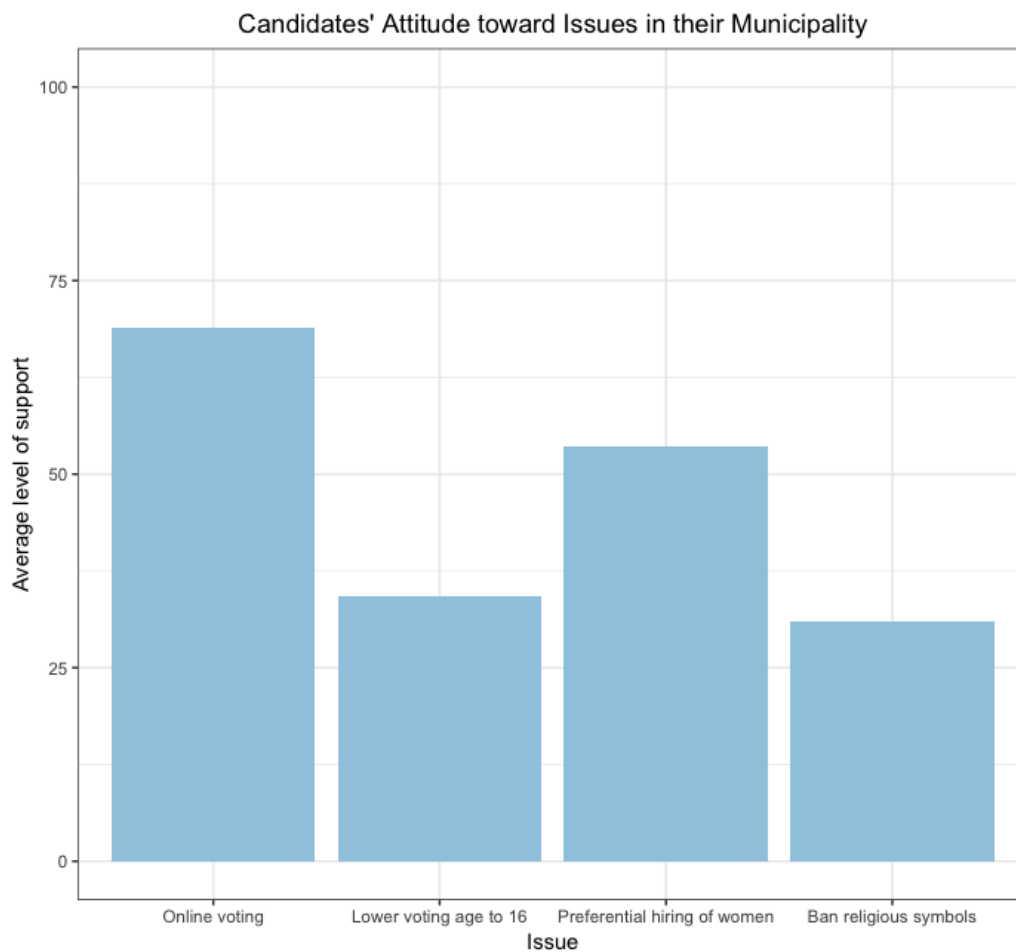
46.3% of women ($n = 139$) reported gender to be a barrier to their candidacy, while 57.8% of visible minority respondents indicated ethnicity was a significant barrier. A smaller number of respondents pointed to religion ($n = 47$; 4.62%) or sexual identity ($n = 23$; 2.26%). Just under one-in-five respondents ($n = 186$; 18.3%) indicated facing barriers other than ethnicity, gender, religion or sexual identity. Though we did not ask about it directly, feedback provided by some respondents suggested that financial considerations presented a significant barrier as well.



Candidates' Opinions on Issues Related to Participation

Finally, candidates were asked their opinions about four different topics. Two of these topics related to voting in municipal elections: support for online voting and lowering the voting age to 16 in municipal elections. The two remaining questions dealt with policies toward certain groups of employees in the municipal administration: preferential hiring policies for women; and, support for banning religious symbols. Candidates were asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with each of these four issues on a scale from 0 (disagree) to 100 (agree).

On average, a majority of candidates supported implementing online voting in municipal elections (average level of support = 68.85) but were strongly opposed to lowering the voting age to 16 (average level of support = 34.26). When it came to deciding on regulations affecting municipal employees, respondents to our survey were split on whether or not to support preferential hiring of women (average level of support = 53.64) but were opposed to implementing a ban on municipal employees wearing religious symbols (average level of support = 30.90).



Acknowledgements

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to all candidates that participated in our survey. The data you provided will allow us to better understand what municipal candidates think about some of the pressing issues facing their municipalities. We hope that this brief overview has been informative.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

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