

HCC 2018 Representation Review

Submission made by Deborah Fisher

Before I make a decision on an issue I will first read provided and available information such as staff papers and survey results. Then I will look to see if there are any relevant research papers regarding the issue. The main representation issue seems to center on ward size/at large with concerns about diversity, candidate quality. Some suggest that paying councillors more or city wide elections will get better quality candidates. Money does not always buy quality and the larger the population in an electorate the higher the campaign allowance is, making it difficult for many quality candidates to stand. The main papers that I have used to help inform my decision are based on council elections in the USA and UK county council and central government elections. I do believe there are enough similarities regarding diversity for the US papers to at least be a guide on the subject. The only major difference appears to be that the US require candidates live in the district they stand in. I have found it difficult to find any countries other than New Zealand and Australia that do not have this requirement or something similar regarding work and/or time. For this reason the UK information has been used to inform candidate location and voter choice.

Vote Choice in Suburban Elections - J Eric Oliver & Shang E Ha

The Context Matters: The Effects of Single-Member versus At-Large Districts on City Council Diversity - Jessica Trounstein & Melody E Valdin

Geolocation and voting: Candidate-voter distance effects on party choice in the 2010 UK general election in England - Kai Arzheimer, Jocelyn Evans

Candidate geolocation and voter choice in the 2013 English County Council elections - Kai Arzheimer and Jocelyn Evans

These papers show

- Larger populations are less engaged in politics
- Larger wards favour incumbents
- The smaller a ward becomes the more involved voters become
- Smaller wards offer better chances for diversity but only if there is a concentration of populations
- Those most likely to vote are homeowners and long term residents
- Candidate proximity to voters affects choice

Proponents for more wards and at large voting both argue their system will achieve diversity and better quality candidates. Three wards are possibly not enough to adequately achieve diversity but the demographics of the North, West and East areas of the city are more likely to do this than the current two wards. At Large elections may provide for more diverse candidates but much like the mayoral campaign tends to favour those with more funds and could force the diversity out with potential candidates unable to financially compete. Given that both systems provide potential for more diversity and quality candidates perhaps a mixed system should be further considered in the future. The 2016 Mayoral election had 7 candidates, 1 does not appear to have seriously campaigned, 1 only stood for mayor and of the 5 remaining candidates 4 were elected to council. As those running for mayor are more likely to be elected to council this group seem like a logical “at large” vote that as part of a mixed system would allow candidates from smaller wards more opportunity to fairly compete for votes.

Twelve wards along the lines of the communities identified would be ideal but a dream for another day. A five ward split with three east wards and two west would be my next suggestion but again not an option you are likely to consider. So as the most likely to be considered option, I support the 3 ward split identified as option 4 in discussion papers and proposed by east ward by-election candidates with 4 councillors from each Ward.

A three ward system would potentially spread the number of candidates standing more evenly between wards and give voters a better opportunity to evaluate fewer candidates. Under an at large system the last election would have seen voters required to evaluate 41 potential candidates. Under the current system east ward voters were faced with 25 candidates.

Representation Review Pre-Consultation Survey

How do you want to choose your Councillors?

At Large	38%
2 Wards	21%
Mixed	20%
More Wards	20%

At Large 38% vs 2 or more wards 61%

Status Quo 21% vs Change 78%

When the same question was asked in the phone survey only two choices were given, Status Quo 33% or At Large 60%. Perhaps the phone survey results more accurately reflect a desire for change than a preference to At Large elections.

The 2016 Council elections saw all 6 of the east ward councillors elected from the northern suburbs. The demographics for this area are high income, high homeownership, larger population of 65+ and mostly European. How can they possibly have any realistic idea of what day to day life is actually like for those living in other areas of their ward where the demographics are low income, high rentals, younger population and mixed ethnicity? Some may have come from hard times and have empathy but it's not the same these days it's much harder! When you suggest an increase of \$300 per household is absorbable you do so from the perspective of your communities. Increases of just \$10 can make a huge difference to those from other communities that you represent and it appears that the recent rate increase has increased rents by approximately \$7 per week.

So why are the northern suburbs so heavily represented on council?

People often prefer to vote for people they know, that are from their community and that they can identify with. In the 2016 council elections of the 25 east ward candidates 12 were from the northern suburbs, 7 from the rest of the east ward, 4 from outside the ward and the location of the remaining 2 are unknown. Also possibly a factor is that 3 candidates from the area stood for Mayor. Could the fact that on average northern candidates spent \$13,375 campaigning while those from the south of the ward spent on average \$3,691. Even removing the two large mayoral campaigns which will clearly have been a determining factor in these candidates gaining council seats the average spend in the north is still \$1,635 more than others from the ward.

Are there no decent candidates from the south of the east ward?

Although not as many candidates from this area stand as from the northern suburbs the pool appears to include business owners, accountants and university professors. It does seem that there are quality candidates from this area although I note that many of them were not of European descent.

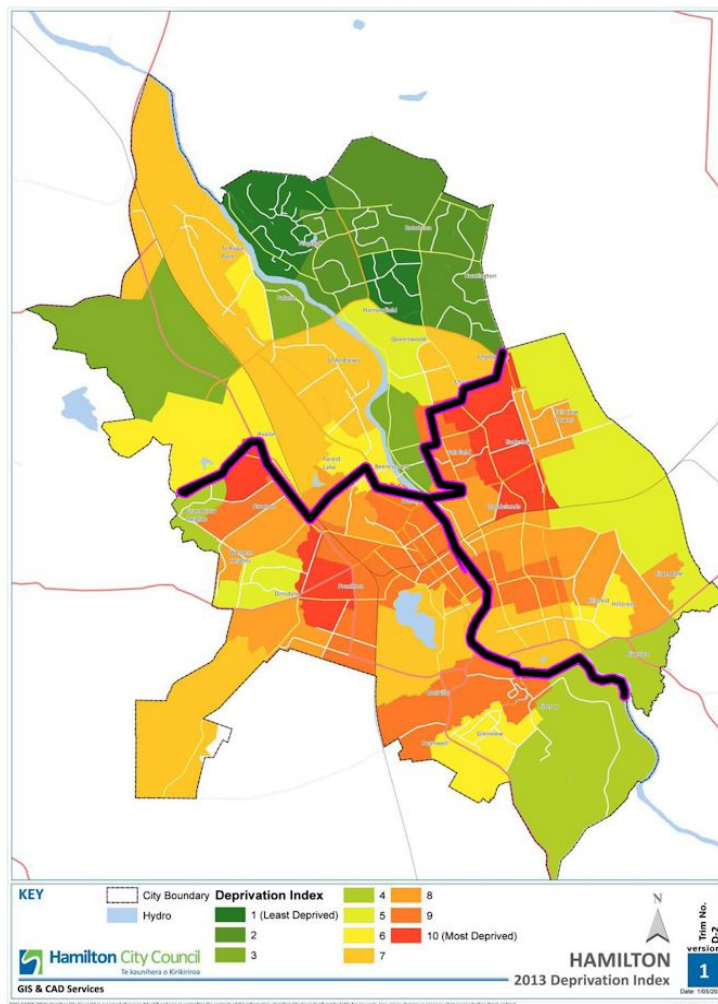
The demographics from the northern suburbs suggest that they are likely to have higher voter turnout and more likely to vote for candidates from their area. Lower voter turnout from other communities disadvantages candidates from those areas. There are distinct differences between the communities in the north and south of the east ward and grouping these communities together provides an advantage to one and a barrier to the other gaining local representation on council.

Please give further consideration to a 3 ward electoral system. Our communities deserve a fair chance to be represented on council.

New Zealand Deprivation Index (Census 2013)

The New Zealand Deprivation Index is updated after each census and combines census data relating to income, home ownership, employment, qualifications, family structure, housing, access to transport and communications. The country is then profiled (from 1-10) based on deprivation scores, with 1 representing the areas with the least deprived scores, and 10 the areas with the most deprived scores (*this is the reverse of the school decile rating system*).

- Northern areas of Hamilton including East Areas 1, 2 and 3 and West Area 1 are characterised by having low to medium levels of deprivation.
- Southern areas of Hamilton including East Area 4, 5 and 6 and West Areas 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are characterised by having medium to high levels of deprivation.



Item 15

Attachment 3

Vote Choice in Suburban Elections - J Eric Oliver & Shang E Ha

Residents of smaller suburbs are generally more interested in politics, more likely to recognise local candidates, and more likely to know a candidate personally.

Those most likely to vote?

..... generally conform to conventional wisdom: homeowners and to a lesser extent, long-term residents are more likely to be interested in local politics, know about candidates, be mobilised, and report that issues influenced their vote choice.

As in the cross-tabulation, community size remains one of the most important determinants of local electoral politics. People in larger suburbs are, on average, less interested in politics, less knowledgeable of city council candidates, and are less likely to be mobilised during the campaign.

In larger place, challengers seem to have a harder time, possibly because voters are less interested or more difficult to reach, thus making credible campaigns more difficult and expensive to run. Such handicaps require challengers in larger places to expend even more resources mobilising voters and finding issues to connect with.

In suburbs that are larger or less diverse, voters are less informed about or interested in local politics and tend to support incumbents more often. However, as a suburb diminishes in size, its voters become more animated by issues, involved in local politics, and are more likely to support challengers for office.

The Context Matters: The Effects of Single-Member versus At-Large Districts on City Council Diversity - Jessica Trounstein & Melody E Valdini

One of the most persistent findings by scholars of urban politics is that single-member district elections increase descriptive representation of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups on city councils. This effect has been found to be particularly strong for African Americans. Districts have also been found to be beneficial to Latinos. These statistical findings have been supported by extensive case study and historical research as well. In sum, the literature concludes that “the effect of ... districts is unequivocally ... greater equity”.

The literature on the representation of women finds precisely the opposite effect for single-member districts. While there are some exceptions, the vast majority of the research has concluded that districts are either meaningless or disadvantageous for women candidates.

Conclusions

One final possibility in explaining the benefit of districts for female and minority council membership is the attraction of running in a district versus citywide election. Districts might aid racial and ethnic minorities because more traditionally underrepresented candidates choose to run in district races. **If the organizing, fundraising, and campaign costs are substantially different between districts and citywide races, this may well be a factor.** Furthermore, it remains to be explained why some cities elect more women than others: it does not appear to make a substantial difference whether women run in district or at-large electoral systems. Nonetheless, we believe that we have taken a step forward in explaining the effect of electoral systems on underrepresented groups. By taking advantage of the institutional variation across cities in the United States, we have gained a more nuanced understanding of the representation of women and racial and ethnic minorities. Single-member district systems can increase diversity only when underrepresented groups are highly concentrated and compose moderate portions of the population. These factors are most important in an arena where polarized voting predominates and where groups leverage their population size to achieve descriptive representation. In addition, the effect of the electoral system is not constant across all people of color, nor is it constant across both genders; race and gender interact to produce different results. Our findings demonstrate the need for caution when making declarations of the benefit or detriment of institutional settings; while the electoral rules certainly have an effect, the context in which they are employed is also crucial to gain a complete understanding.

Geolocation and voting: Candidate-voter distance effects on party choice in the 2010 UK general election in England - Kai Arzheimer, Jocelyn Evans

There is therefore strong evidence that voters prefer local candidates. In that sense, we are interested in measuring empirically varying localness between the voter and the respective candidates, and as a first step most likely a distance measure. The most obvious loci for measuring relative locality between candidate and voter should be residence. Simply put, if localness matters for the reasons outlined above, then *ceteris paribus* a voter should prefer a candidate who lives closer to them than one who lives at a greater distance. This is intuitively appealing. As Lewis-Beck and Rice noted, **a candidate in closer proximity to a voter will be more likely to be known to some degree 'personally' to the voter, can be expected to have similar concerns to the voter at local level, and will see the community resonate with them.**

In social science terms, distance could also be interpreted as indicating a relative position based upon a socio-economic index such as class, relative district wealth or another comparator. The role of social and locational context in determining voting behaviour has been well studied elsewhere, finding voters to be as influenced by their social environment and territorial position as by individual characteristics

Candidate geolocation and voter choice in the 2013 English County Council elections - Kai Arzheimer and Jocelyn Evans

Abstract

The degree of 'localness' of candidates, including their residential location, has long been theorised to influence voters at election time. Individual-level tests of distance effects in the 2010 British general elections demonstrated that, controlling for standard explanations of vote, the distance from a voter's home to that of the candidate was negatively associated with the likelihood of voting for that candidate. To test this theory in a sub-national electoral context more likely to produce distance effects than a national election, this paper builds upon previous analysis by using the 2013 English County Council elections.

Conclusion

Distance matters for County Council elections. There is evidence that voters view representatives at the local level in terms of whether they are 'from here' or 'from elsewhere'.