



**Municipal term of office
public engagement
What We Heard**

October 2022



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Engagement process

The purpose of this engagement was to gather public feedback to help the Yukon government determine whether to amend the *Municipal Act* to change the terms of office for municipal and local advisory councils from three to four years.

The engagement process was hosted on Engage Yukon. The engagement was from September 1–28, 2022. In total, the questionnaire received 149 completed responses from Yukon residents.

Background

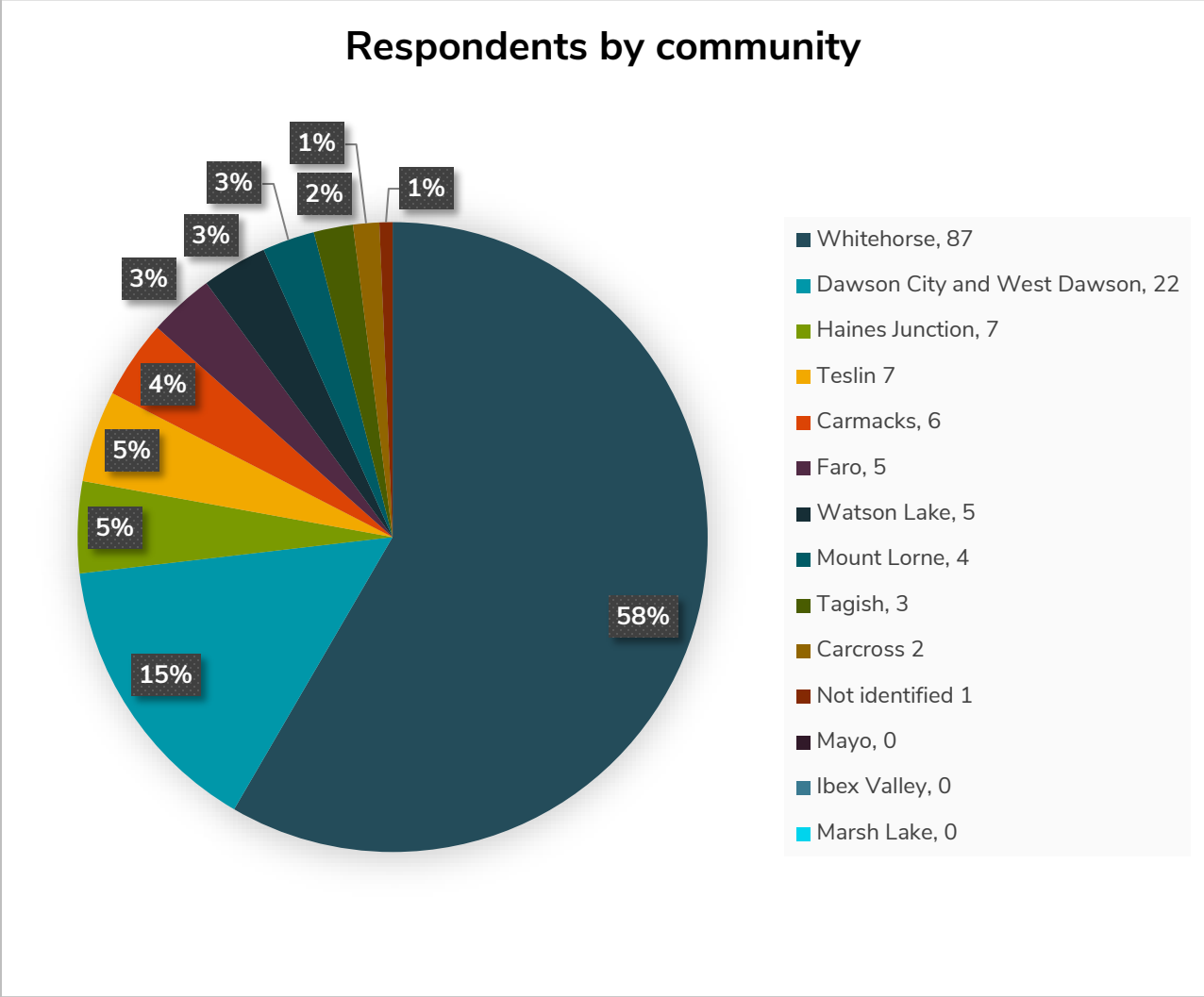
The Association of Yukon Communities represents municipalities and local advisory councils in the Yukon. The Association unanimously passed a resolution at its 2022 Annual General Meeting in May. The resolution calls on the Government of Yukon to increase the current three-year term of office for municipal councils to four years prior to the October 2024 general elections. This would affect the term of office for:

- mayors and councils. (Elected officials of the incorporated municipal governments of Carmacks, Dawson, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo, Teslin, Watson Lake and Whitehorse); and
- members of local advisory councils. (Elected members for councils in the unincorporated communities of Ibex Valley, Marsh Lake, Mount Lorne, Tagish and Carcross/South Klondike.)

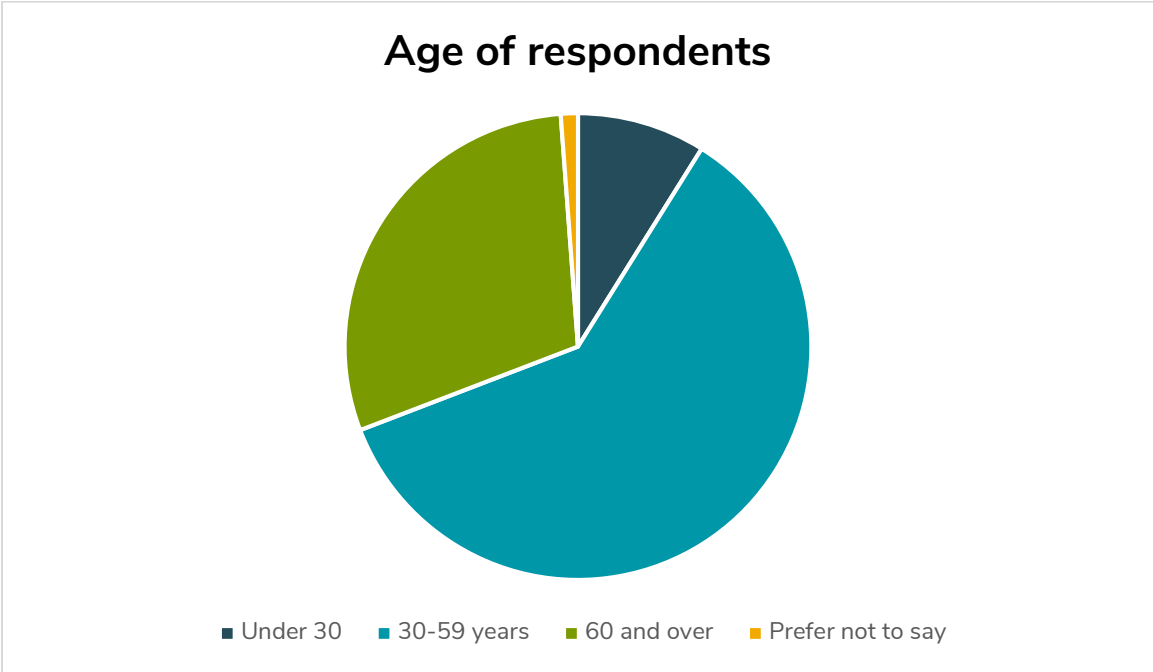
What we heard

Demographics

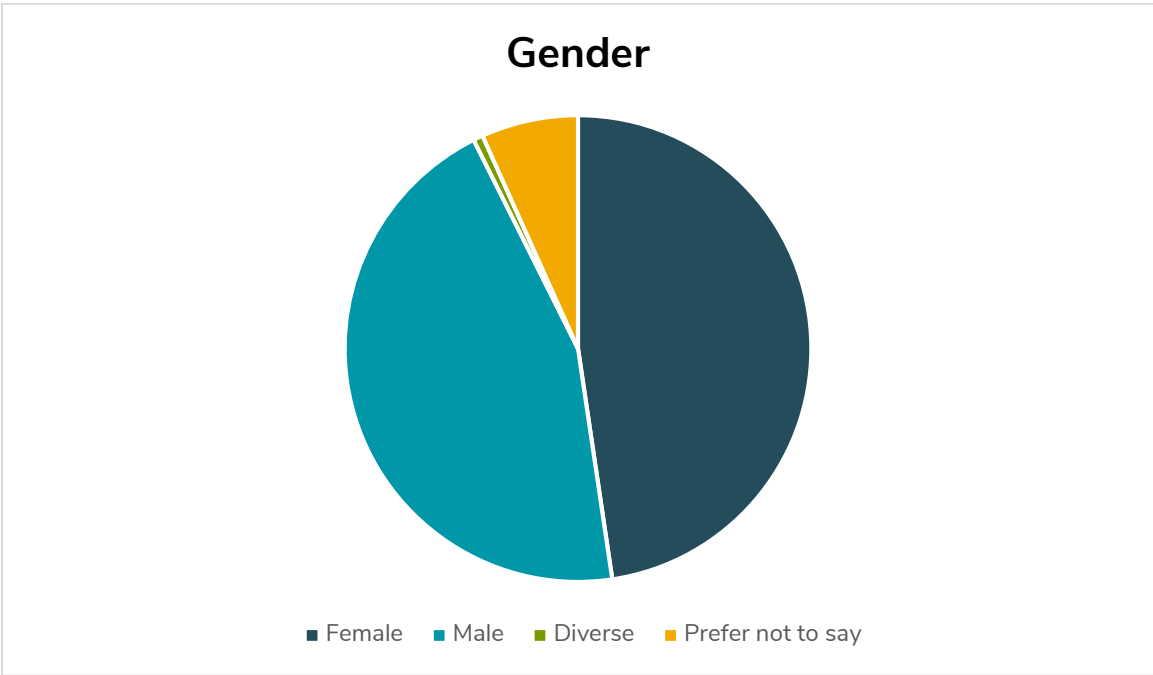
The public engagement process did not receive responses from all ridings. More than half the responses were from Whitehorse residents.



People under 30 represented the smallest group of responders. No one under 18 years of age responded. People in their 30s (40 individuals) and 40s (40 individuals) had the highest response rate.



Gender identification was 48 percent female, 45 percent male, 1 percent diverse and 7 percent preferred not to say.



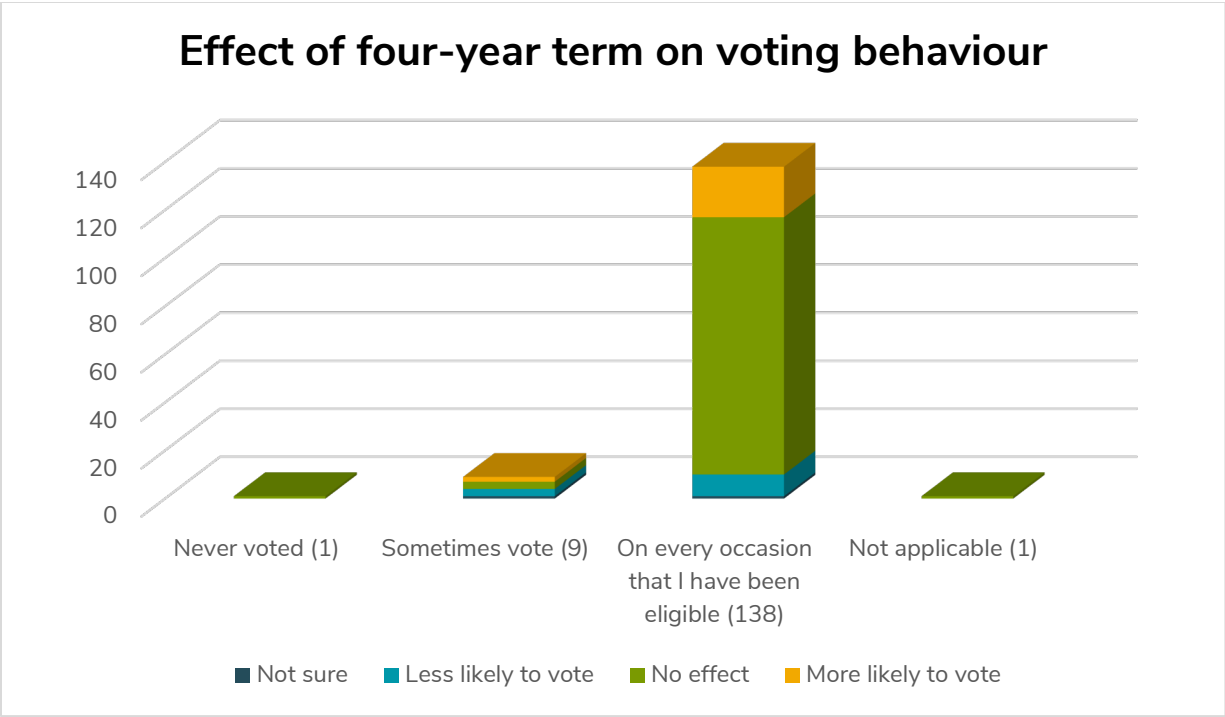
Responses

Asked “Do you support the change in the term of office for municipal and local advisory councils from three years to four years?”, 62.41% of respondents support a four-year term of office; 34.22% do not support a four-year term, and 3.35% were not sure.

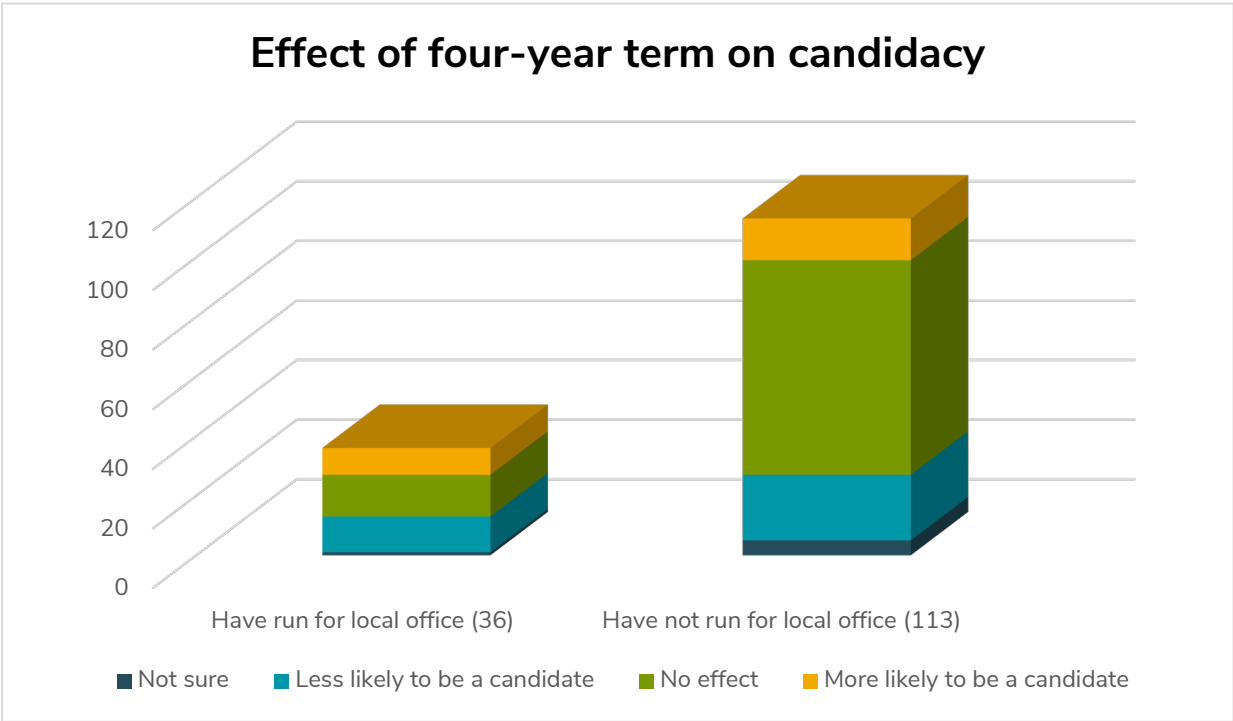
Of Whitehorse respondents, 67.8% support a four-year term, while 54% of respondents outside of Whitehorse support the longer term.

Respondents identifying as female were more likely than male to disagree with a longer term (40.8 percent versus 25 percent). Of respondents who were gender diverse or preferred not to identify, 45 percent disagreed with a four-year term. Where the “no” respondents provided comments, only one specified gender as a reason.

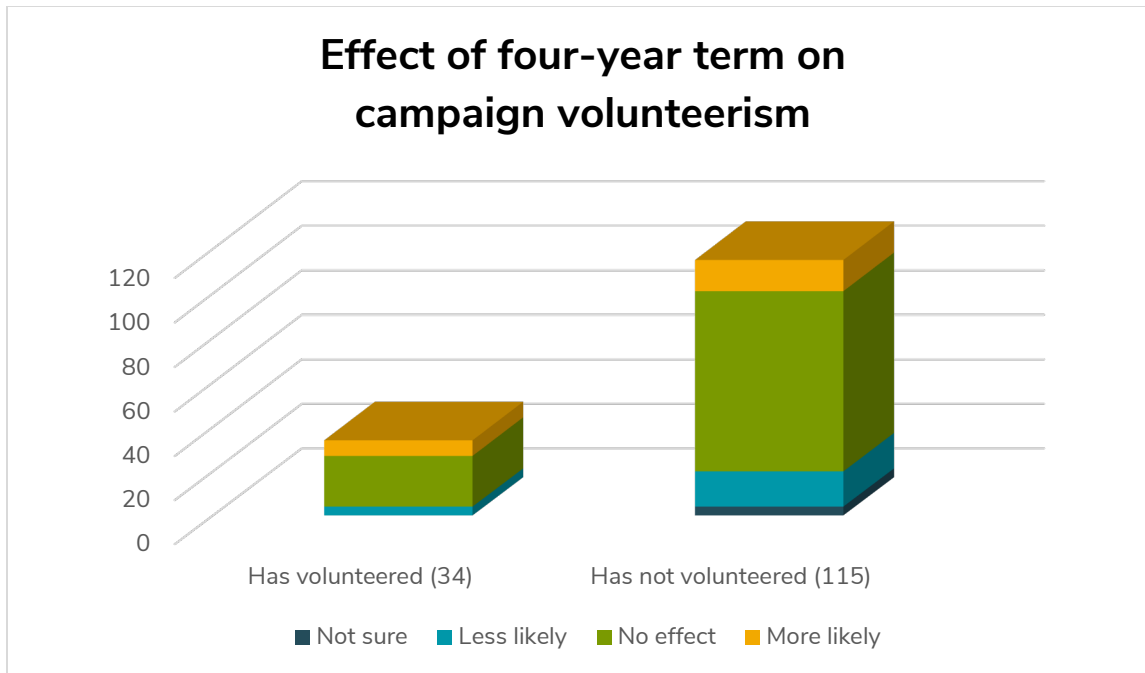
Voting behaviour is unlikely to change with a four-year general election cycle. Most respondents voted whenever they were eligible to, and would be as or more likely to vote in the future.



Most respondents had not run for office at the municipal or local advisory council level in the Yukon. Of those who had run for office, 33 percent would be less likely to do so with a four-year term.



Most respondents had not volunteered on municipal or local advisory council election campaigns in the Yukon. Changing the term of office for municipal government and local advisory councils from three years to four years does not have an effect on most respondents' behaviour.



Themes

Common themes emerged in comments left by respondents:

- A four-year general election cycle is consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions.
- Less frequent elections will save administrative work and budget.
- Election fatigue could be reduced with less frequent general elections and less overlap with other levels of government.
- A longer term of office allows a council to plan and achieve more. With less frequent transition periods and less frequent shifts into “election mode”, many commenters said councils would have the time, continuity and stability to advance priorities and complete initiatives.

“A four-year term allows councils to complete more initiatives and spend a relatively smaller portion of their terms getting up to speed.”

- A longer term of office could make council complacent or stagnant, or be a disincentive to timely action.

“Councils should be refreshed at the current rate. This more regular turnover offers more opportunities for people to run for councils, and that people and effectiveness don't get stale.”

- Inability to replace an ineffective council for an additional year is a concern. Without a recall mechanism and accountability structures of other levels of government, commenters said more frequent elections are a safeguard.

“Three years provides a bit of a safety net in the event that most or all councillors are acclaimed, or there are too many conflict-of-interest issues for municipal governments to be effective.”

- Other concerns were the existing frequency acclamation and the likelihood that it would increase; a longer term giving an advantage to incumbents; and the quality of candidates.

“Small municipalities need to figure out how to make councils more attractive and incentivize more diverse residents to run.”

- A longer term of office could deter candidates from running. Family responsibilities and financial restraints can make it difficult for a candidate to commit to four years.

“A four-year term would rule out a percentage of good citizens from standing for office, especially those with families.”

- Several commenters proposed two-year terms, or staggered four-year terms as alternatives. One asked for a limit to terms served.

What's next?

This feedback will help the Yukon government determine whether to amend the *Municipal Act* to change the terms of office for municipal and local advisory councils.

