

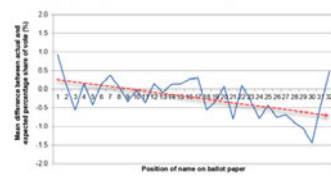
- For Local Board Members and Licensing Trustees, the nan in the first 3 positions had a **30% probability** of being elected but were **elected at almost double that rate = 57%**.
- Put another way, those **105 candidates who always listed in the top three positions on every ballot paper won 20 out of 35 elections** (a 1 in 5 chance) vs the other **323 candidates who only won 15** of the elections (a 1 in 22 chance). That's a 4x probability differential.
- Candidates with surnames starting with just 3 letters, A, B or C, won over 13/123(5) of those Auckland elections (Allan, Amosa, Atkinson, Autaugaava, Batucan, Bonham, Brown, Carter, Catchpole, Churton, Cole, Cooper).
 - More details can be found on <https://beta.nz/alpha-bias-surnames-in-the-top-3-won-50-of-elections>
- urther evidence is also contained in the email attached to Auckland Council [winning minutes](#) confirm the knowledge and prevalence of alphabetical bias to a +/- 1 percentage point difference in both directions = a 2 percentage point swing overall. That is significant in a list of 12 candidates where each candidate is expected to win 8.3% of the vote on average (where one vote is given, such as for Mayor). A 2 percentage point advantage over your rival then becomes a 24% dvantage! (2% / 8.3%)

3.9 Impact on vote share

The first analysis looked at whether ballot paper order had an effect on candidates' vote share. The analysis compared the percentage of votes received by candidates in each ballot paper position with the expected percentage share of votes, absent any order effects.⁷

The difference between actual and expected vote shares can be seen in Figures 1-3. The overall analysis in Figure 1 suggests that being listed first appears to increase a candidate's vote share by an average of 1.0 percentage point. Middle ballot positions deviate from the expected vote share⁸ in a random manner by approximately ±0.5%. Candidates listed in later ballot positions appear to receive slightly lower vote share than expected. However, given the variability across the whole graph, findings presented here should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 1: Mean difference between actual and expected vote share percentages for candidates in each ballot paper position (wards and local boards combined)



It is highly likely, if not certain, that any other council failing to randomise candidate names properly in 2025 is also creating unfair election results.

My email to the Minister is below. The Minister's reply is attached. He has explained that current legislation gives councils the choice by 1 August 2025. It is incredible that such flawed voting methodologies still exist in our electoral legislation, but no council is forced to choose that flawed option.

This is a major democratic issue with a very simple solution – every council should randomise candidate names on ballot papers and supporting candidate information, in line with best and basic practice for any voting process.

It's easy to randomise candidate information on websites and, as evidenced in the Auckland Council meeting minutes, modern printing technology means there is no longer a printing cost barrier to randomisation, either.

Previous elections

9. In 2013 the council resolved to use alphabetical order of names. A key consideration was an additional cost of \$100,000 if the council chose the random order. From 2016 there has been no additional cost to use random order, due to changes in printing technology.

Financial implications

23. There is no additional cost to the printing of voting documents if names are ordered using the random method.

So, with no good reason not to randomise, we must do so to ensure fair elections.

I look forward to your replies.

Kind regards

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 20 March 2025 10:29 am
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Alphabetical bias in council elections

Hi, [REDACTED]

Thanks for speaking before.

As discussed, here is the information I sent to [REDACTED] regarding the alphabetical bias in ~22 council elections in 2022.

I believe this is a major democratic issue with a very simple solution – every council must randomise candidate names on ballot papers and supporting information, in line with best and basic practice for any voting process.

I've left [REDACTED] Cc'd so that he knows I've passed this on, and in case something is already happening with this information.

I can provide more details on which councils did and didn't randomise candidate names, as well.

From: Geoff Neal
Sent: Thursday, 7 November 2024 3:22 pm
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Alphabetical bias in council elections

Afternoon, [REDACTED]

I forgot to send you this big issue which needs tidying up before the 2025 council elections, please.

~56-78 (71%) of Councils randomise candidate names on ballot papers, as is best practice everywhere, forever. That's how you run a fair election.

However, unbelievably, ~22/78 (28%) of Councils list candidates in alphabetical order! Everyone knows AA Auto gets more votes at the top of the Yellow Pages, and this also bias came through incredibly clearly in the election data.

For the Auckland Local Board & Licensing Trust elections, the winners overwhelming came from the first three names with this positional advantage (see [green squares](#) below). This is 35 elections with 5 or more candidates, and 428 candidates in total, and a large number of votes, so a large sample size.

This is a significant democratic and electoral issue that needs to be resolved before the 2025 elections for every Council. What's the best way to fix this, please?

Kind regards

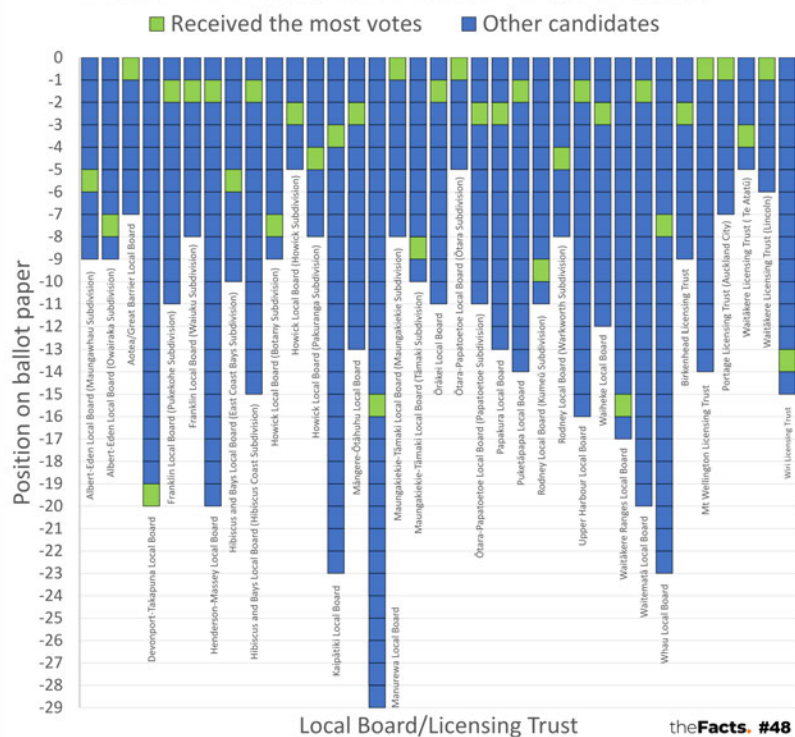
[REDACTED]

<https://thefacts.nz/alpha-bias-surnames-in-the-top-3-won-50-of-elections/>

Alphabetical bias – surnames in the top 3 won >50% of elections

Auckland Local Board + Licensing Trustee Candidate Lists

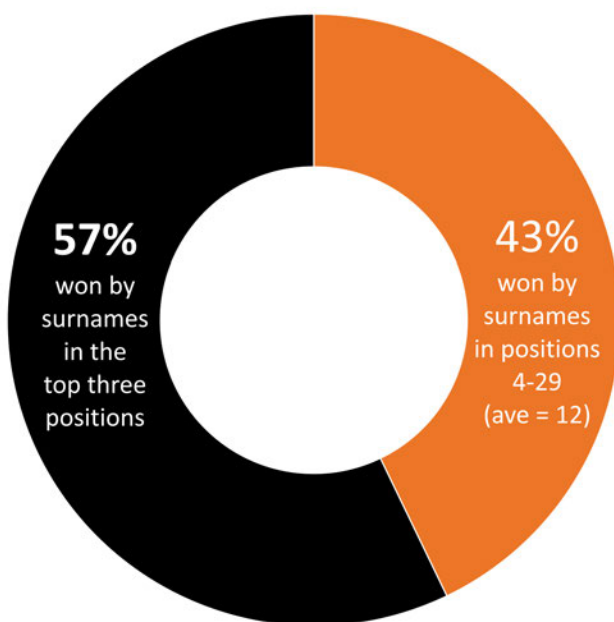
35 elections with 5+ candidates, 428 total candidates, 12.2 average candidates/election



Most Votes Won by Alphabetical Position on Ballot Papers

Auckland Local Board Members + Licensing Trustees

35 elections, 428 candidates, 12.2 average candidates/election, 11 median candidates/election



theFacts. #48



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