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CouncilMARK™

Revisited: measuring the effectiveness of New Zealand's local government once more

Abstract

This article reviews the results of the second tranche of assessments for CouncilMARK™, Local Government New Zealand's voluntary quality enhancement programme. Those councils that were reassessed generally showed either a modest improvement or no change in the four priority areas assessed (governance, financial decision making, service delivery and communication). The business and corporate focus of CouncilMARK means that it yields scores that diverge markedly from those obtained by the New Zealand Local Government Survey, which focuses on public and business perceptions of council activities. The implementation of CouncilMARK has not arrested the decline of voter turnout in local body elections. Moreover, there have been no changes to either the programme's priority areas or its procedures that recognise recent local and international research which consistently advocates a more people-focused approach to the activities of local government.

Keywords local government, quality enhancement, reputation, citizen involvement

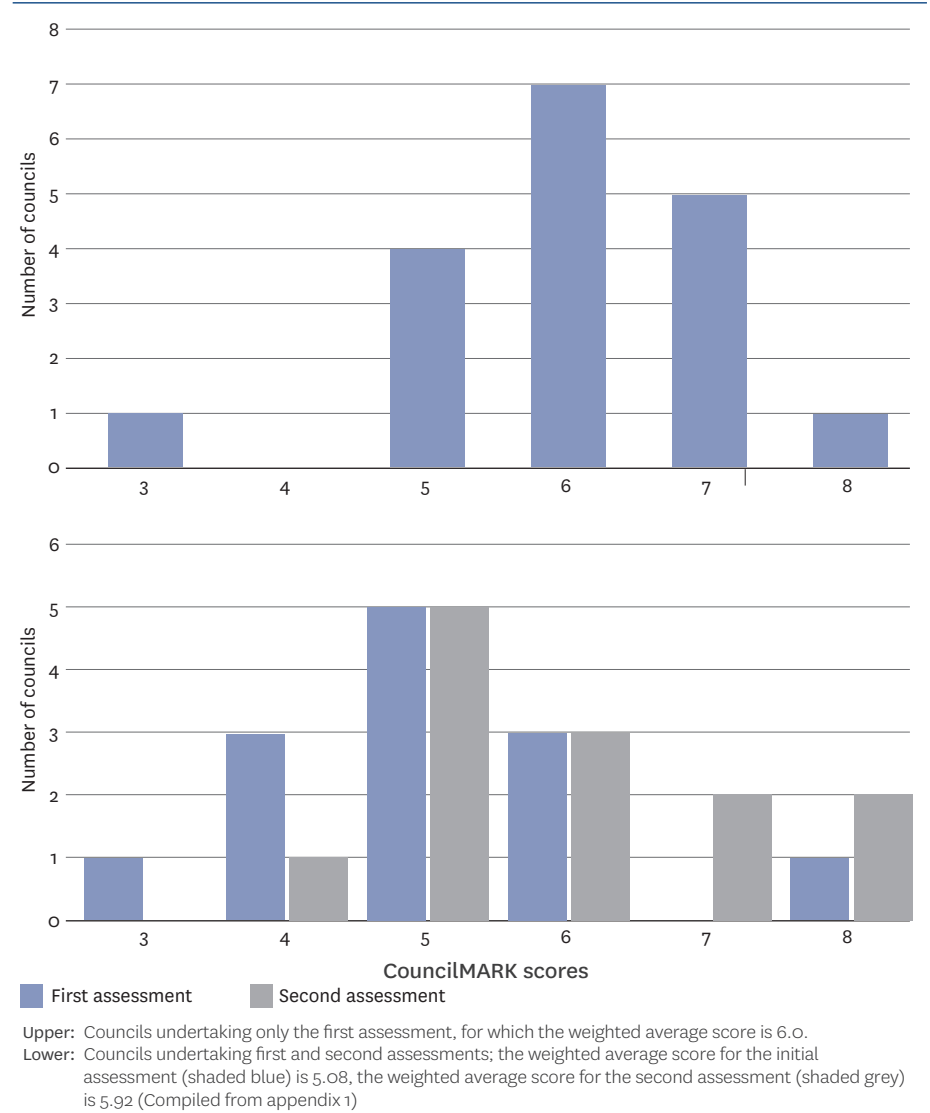
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In August 2016, CouncilMARK™ was introduced by Local Government New Zealand as a voluntary quality enhancement programme for local authorities in New Zealand. The framework and its associated processes are comprehensively described on CouncilMARK's website (Local Government New Zealand, 2023b), including the template to guide the assessors in their work on the four 'priority areas'.¹ Because the final reports were intended to be read by the public, the priority areas originally had 'catchy' titles: 'Leading locally' (LL), 'Investing money wisely' (IMW), 'Delivering what's important' (DWI) and 'Listening and responding' (LAR); recent reports have replaced these titles with corporate-speak: 'Governance, strategy and leadership', 'Financial decision-making and transparency', 'Service delivery and asset management' and 'Communicating and engaging with the public and business'. This change serves to remind the reader that CouncilMARK is rather more focused

on the processes of a council's business rather than on outcomes related to meeting the needs and aspirations of ratepayers, particularly, and other stakeholders more generally. This may account for the discrepancy between CouncilMARK measures and the components of the reputation index developed by the New Zealand Local Government Survey (Local Government New Zealand, 2017): the public and citizens consistently rate councils' performance lower in the survey than do the business-focused assessors in CouncilMARK (see Table 1). That said, case studies based on councils described as 'high-performing' are a welcome recent addition to the CouncilMARK website, although currently only two are featured (Local Government New Zealand, 2023a).

About half of New Zealand's local authorities have participated in CouncilMARK, with the uptake from regional councils being particularly low (only three out of 11), and no unitary councils participating.² About 30 councils participated in an initial CouncilMARK assessment, an analysis of which was published in Hodder (2019). Since 2019 there has been initial involvement in CouncilMARK by four more councils (Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Ōtorohanga District Council, Waitaki District Council and Whanganui District Council). In addition, some of those councils which participated in the initial assessment have made themselves available for re-assessment: this is the focus of this article. The current status of all participants in CouncilMARK is given in Appendix 1, with the participant councils in the second assessment shown in bold type. This table enables a comparison to be made of performance of councils which is not currently provided on the CouncilMARK website, and resembles the approach taken by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA, 2022–23) in respect of quality assessments of tertiary education providers, contrasting with the inter-agency comparisons available in, for example, health (e.g., 'How is my DHB performing?', 2019–22 (Ministry of Health, n.d.)) and the completion of tertiary education programmes (e.g., Tertiary Summary Tables, 2017–21 (Education Counts, 2022)).

Figure 1: Histogram of CouncilMARK scores



Enhancing the capability of local government: the purpose of CouncilMARK
 Motivation for councils to undertake a second assessment will obviously have varied: some will have wished to demonstrate their commitment to a culture of self-improvement; some may have been disappointed with their initial assessment and sought their activities to be seen in a better light by their ratepayers. Conversely, those councils that did not participate in the second assessment may have been satisfied with the way their activities and achievements were portrayed in the first assessment and/or did not consider that a second assessment represented value for money, at least for them. Histograms showing the CouncilMARK scores in the first and second assessments are shown in Figure 1.

The weighted average CouncilMARK score for the first assessment is higher for

those councils that decided not to undertake reassessment (6.0) than for those that decided to undertake reassessment (5.08), suggesting that 'getting a better result' may have been a motivation for reassessment (although see also Figure 2). Interestingly, the average CouncilMARK score after reassessment (5.92) is about the same as for the initial assessment of councils that decided against reassessment.

An analysis of the sentiment of the short overview at the start of each report indicates that the trend of sentiment or tone of this text³ with the CouncilMARK score is less positive for councils that chose not to participate in a second assessment than for councils that chose to participate; this is shown in Figure 2. In other words, the non-participants may have been discouraged from undertaking reassessment by the tone of the initial

Figure 2: Variation of sentiment score of report overview with CouncilMARK score

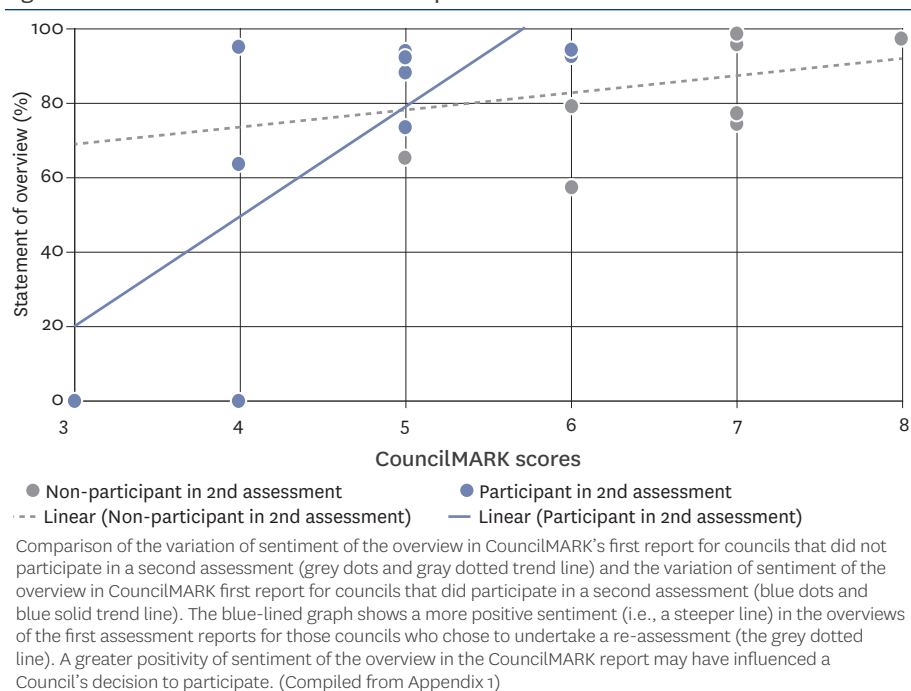
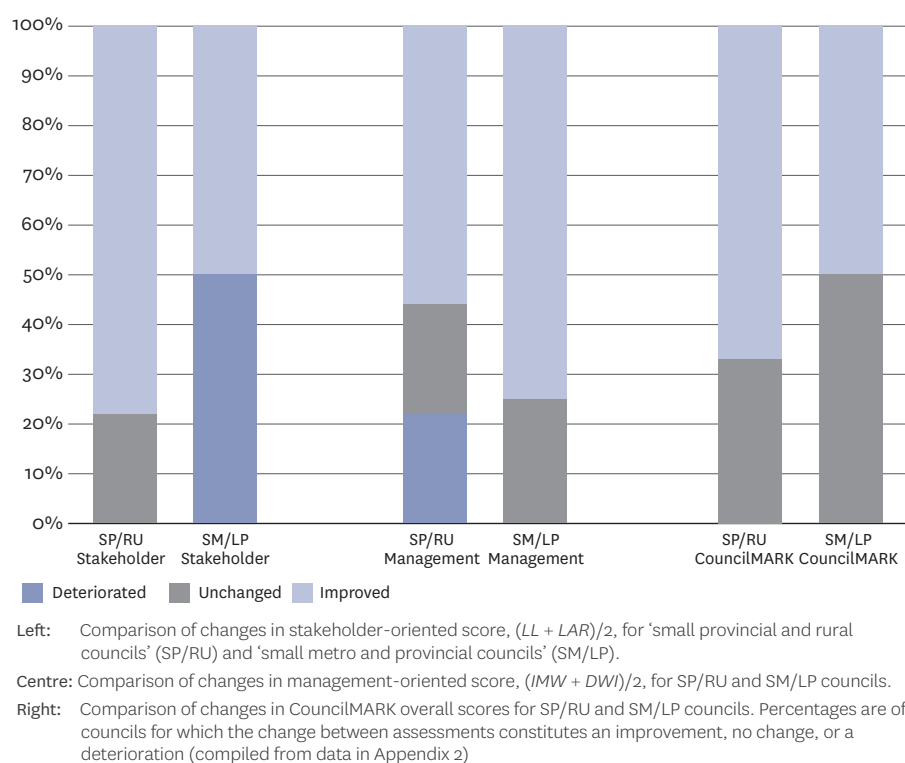


Figure 3: Comparison of changes between assessments by type of council



report rather than the grade awarded in the assessment process.

Comparison of reassessments with initial assessments potentially provide an opportunity to evaluate CouncilMARK as a tool for measuring the capability of councils’ self-improvement in performance over time. As at February 2023, 13 district councils had taken up the opportunity for a second CouncilMARK assessment and

have received the report thereon.⁴ The raw data and changes are shown in Appendix 1, summarised in Appendix 2, with selected comparisons shown in Figure 3.

Appendix 2 reveals that improvement in DWI (‘Delivering what’s important’) – including the marks scores occurred for two-thirds of the councils that were reassessed, leading to an average increase of one unit of score. Variability in council

performance was greatest for IMW (‘Investing money wisely’), with only modest increases in the average scores for LL (‘Leading locally’), IMW and LAR (‘Listening and responding’). There was a modest increase in the average CouncilMARK score. The fact that almost 60% of the councils participating in reassessment achieved a positive change in their overall score – and, moreover, that no participating council decreased its overall score from the initial assessment – suggests that this use of CouncilMARK as a tool for performance improvement may be adding some value. The upward trend for reassessments probably results from some combination of three influences: (1) councils being better prepared and knowing the assessment ‘system’; (2) a concern to show that councils are getting better at what they do; and (3) the councils are performing better.

Figure 3 considers the variation of the parameters related to stakeholder orientation and management orientation and CouncilMARK scores for the two types of council represented in the reassessments, ‘small provincial/rural’ (SP/RU) and ‘small metro/large provincial’ (SM/LP).

More of the SP/RU councils show an increase in the LL and LAR scores (and thereby the ‘stakeholder-oriented score’) than do the SM/LP councils. Conversely, more SM/LP councils show an increase in the DWI score (and thereby the ‘management-oriented score’) than do the SP/RU councils. These differences could result from a greater effort being made by small provincial/rural councils to engage with their communities than small metro/large provincial councils, and/or that the latter are better resourced to manage infrastructure and finance than the former.

Consideration of a correlation between CouncilMARK results with voter turnout

Voter turnout in elections has been declining for some time. Prior to the 2022 local government elections, there was publicity about this in public media, and Local Government New Zealand included on its website a campaign to foster voting. Political commentator Bryce Edwards has recently observed:

Table 1: Comparison of the average scores obtained for the components of a reputation index with those for corresponding components of successive CouncilMARK assessments

Year of survey or assessment	Instrument	Components of reputation index			Overall reputation index (as %)*
		Performance score (P, as %)	Leadership score (L, as %)	Communication score (C, as %)	
2017	Reputation survey	27%	26%	30%	28%
Time ↓		Components of CouncilMARK score			Overall CouncilMARK score (as %)
		$(IMW+DWI)/2$ %	LL %	LAR %	
	2017-2020	CouncilMARK assessment	56%†	56%	64%
2020-2022	CouncilMARK re-assessment	63%‡	64%	69%	66%

* Calculated as $[(0.38 \cdot P) + (0.32 \cdot L) + (0.31 \cdot C)]$

† Values on this line are calculated as percentages, being (CouncilMARK score of component or overall * 100/9). CouncilMARK ratings range from C to A (neither of which has so far been awarded; see asterisk footnote to appendix 1), corresponding to scores ranging from 1.0 to 9.0. The scores are determined from the initial assessments of those councils that underwent re-assessment (data from appendix 1)

‡ Values on this line are calculated as percentages, being (CouncilMARK score of component or overall * 100/9). CouncilMARK ratings range from C to A (neither of which has so far been awarded; see asterisk footnote in appendix 1), corresponding to scores ranging from 1.0 to 9.0. The scores are determined from the results of the reassessment (data from appendix 1)

...there is absolutely no evidence to support the view that the low voter turnout reflects contentment. In fact, there is strong evidence throughout the country that the public's unhappiness with councils has reached an all-time high. Surveys carried out by local authorities show that dissatisfaction with individual councils is very strong this year. For example, in Wellington, when the public were asked this year about satisfaction with Council decision-making, the number of those who are "satisfied" dropped to a new low of only 12 per cent, while those who said they are "dissatisfied" jumped to 52 per cent. Similarly, those who believe that the council makes decisions that are in best interests of the city has plummeted from 50 per cent to just 17 per cent this year. It seems that throughout the country there is a similar level of anger and disenchantment with local politicians, which should dispel any rosy idea that lower voter turnout is in some way positive. Those pushing the 'contentment theory' of low voter turnout also have to grapple with the fact that non-voters are disproportionately made up of the poor and marginalised of society. Evidence shows it's the wealthier demographics that vote in much larger numbers than others. (Edwards, 2022)

The CouncilMARK results for councils that have participated in two rounds of the

assessment provide an opportunity to compare change in voter turnout between the 2019 and 2022 elections with their overall CouncilMARK scores and with the derived parameters (stakeholder-oriented score $(LL+LAR)/2$), and management-oriented score $(IMW+DWI)/2$). From the information in Appendix 1, it can be shown that there is a slight positive trend between the change in voter turnout between the 2019 and 2022 local authority elections and the change in the stakeholder-orientated score (i.e., $(LL + LAR)/2$). This suggests that there might be the weakest of influences of CouncilMARK participation and improved voter turnout. However, there is a strongly negative trend between the change in voter turnout between the 2019 and 2022 local authorities and either the change in the management-oriented score (i.e., $(IMW+DWI)/2$) or the overall CouncilMARK score.

Comparison of CouncilMARK with the reputation survey and independent research findings

Although the negative trends referred to above could be inferred to mean there is an adverse influence of aspects of CouncilMARK on the voter behaviour described in Olsen (2022), a more reasonable interpretation may be that there is no direct association between voter behaviour and CouncilMARK scores. This interpretation is consistent with the mismatch between the reputation survey (which is focused on the perceptions of citizens and businesses) and CouncilMARK

(which is focused on the perceptions of leaders of corporate business), as is apparent from Table 1. Given the current government's expectations that councils will take a 'well-being' approach to their activities, incorporating economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions (see Grimes, 2019) – a position in part at least supported by Taituarā in its proposed 'transition to community connectedness' and 'transition to learning-empowered communities' (Taituarā, n.d.) – it is surprising that CouncilMARK has not been modified to take some account of these expectations.

Instead, CouncilMARK appears to perpetuate the notion that a council should do things *to* its ratepayers and citizens rather than doing things in association *with* its ratepayers and citizens. By comparison, 'Revitalising citizen-led democracy', a theme of the Review into the Future for Local Government (2022, pp.40–53), might have been influenced by recent overseas research, epitomised by the statement in Mangan et al. affirming 'the recognition of a need to move to a more entrepreneurial and problem-solving role of both staff and elected councillors, which recognises and develops the skills of citizens rather than one of overseeing delivery', complemented by the notion of:

developing more co-productive ways of working with citizens ... This finding resonates with the academic literature which suggests that enthusiasm for engaging the public in co-productive

activities has gained significant traction in recent years, particularly with respect to overcoming some of the fiscal pressures that have been imposed by austerity. (Mangan et al., 2016, p.10)

Some testing of the application of these ideas in practice has also been undertaken (e.g., University of Birmingham, 2020; Mussagulova, 2020). Such investigations highlighted – among other matters – the need for professional development of councillors. This is an issue noted as a development needed in New Zealand both by the Review into the Future for Local Government (2022, p.21, recommendation 18) and in an earlier report by the Productivity Commission (2020, p.23).⁵

In addition, research identifies as paramount the commitment by council staff to meeting the needs of citizens, a commitment articulated by Mark Rogers,

chief executive of Birmingham City Council:

it is no longer relevant or acceptable for public sector leaders to promote, let alone deploy, the concept of benevolent municipalism in which the ‘great and good’ (some of whom aren’t always that great or that good) believe that they know what’s best for the citizen. Hierarchical power is, rightly, giving way to networked authority, the roots of which are firmly in the community. We do not exist in our own right. The political leadership is elected and the officers are appointed by the democratically mandated. We are all here to serve others – and that is the only kind of power we are entitled to wield: we rule only in order to serve. (Needham and Mangan, 2014, p.4)

Recent international research and local reviews of local government thus provide an opportunity for CouncilMARK to ‘step up’ and reposition itself as a worthwhile measure of council performance of the things that matter to ratepayers and citizens, rather than continue with its current, very narrow managerial and corporate focus.

1 Templates are available for ‘territorial local authority’, ‘regional authority’ and ‘unitary authority’.

2 There are 11 regional councils (Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Hawke’s Bay, Horizons, Wellington, West Coast, Canterbury, Otago, Southland) and 6 unitary authorities (Auckland, Gisborne, Marlborough, Nelson, Tasman, Chatham Islands), the latter being territorial authorities also fulfilling the function of a regional council.

3 ‘Play around with our sentiment analyzer’, <https://monkeylearn.com/sentiment-analysis-online/>. This online tool gives percentage and polarity of sentiment of text, the latter being either positive, neutral or negative.

4 The initial assessment for Far North District Council in 2017 and the subsequent assessment in 2021 does not show on the CouncilMARK website as at 6 March 2023.

5 In early 2023, Local Government New Zealand launched a professional development programme for council and community board members, Akona, <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/news-and-media/2023-media-releases/akona-our-new-learning-development-programme-is-here>.

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Appendix 1

CouncilMARK™ results as at March 2023

Participating Council (Councils that participated in CouncilMARK re-assessment shown in bold)	Report date	CouncilMARK Priority areas				Council MARK Overall rating*	Sentiment polarity and score (%) of Report Overview	Voter turnout	
		Governance, strategy, and leadership Leading Locally (LL)	Financial decision-making and transparency Investing Money Wisely (IMW)	Service delivery and asset management Delivering What's Important (DWI)	Communicating and engaging with the public and business Listening and Responding (LAR)			2019†	2022‡
Bay of Plenty Regional Council (RC)**	December 2020	6, Better than competent	5, competent	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	6, BBB	+94.3%	43.2%, FPP	
Central Hawke's Bay District Council (SP/RU)	November 2021	8, Stand-out	7, Performing well	7, Performing well	8, Standout	8, AA	(-71.9%)	43.89%	
	October 2018	7, Performing well	4, Variable	3, Areas for improvement	7, Performing well	5, BB	+73.4%	56.7%, FPP	
	Latest-earlier	+1	+3	+4	+1	+3		-12.81%¶	
Dunedin City Council (LM)	February 2019	6, Better than competent	8, Standout	6, Better than competent	7, Performing well	7, A	+95.8%	46.3%, STV	48.21%
								+1.91%	
Environment Canterbury (RC)	August 2018	7, Performing well	6, Better than competent	6, Better than competent	5, Competent	6, BBB	+79.1%	45.0%, FPP	
Far North District Council (SM/LP)	April 2021	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	5, Competent	5, Competent	5, BB	(+79.98%)	41.5%	
	October 2017	4, Variable	5, Competent	4, Variable	6, Better than competent	4, B	N56.4%	47.5%, FPP	
	Latest-earlier	+1	+1	+1	-1	+1		-6.0%	
Greater Wellington Regional Council (RC)	March 2018	6, Better than competent	8, Standout	7, Performing well	8, Standout	8, AA	+97.4%	43.4%, STV	
Hastings District Council (SM/LP)	October 2017	7, Performing well	6, Better than competent	6, Better than competent	7, Performing well	7, A	+74.1%	44.1%, FPP	32.95%
								-11.15%	
Hauraki District Council (SP/RU)	February 2019	8, Standout	5, Competent	7, Performing well	8, Standout	7, A	+98.1%	48.8%, FPP	40.6%
								-8.2%	
Horowhenua District Council (SM/LP)	August 2021	5, Competent	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	6, Better than competent	5, BB	(+52.6%)	45.07%	
	July 2017	4, Variable	5, Competent	4, Variable	5, Competent	4, B	+95.2%	55.9%, FPP	
	Latest-earlier	+1	0	+2	+1	+1		-10.83%	
Mackenzie District Council (SP/RU)	August 2021	5, Competent	3, Areas for improvement	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	4, B	(+79.1%)	54.56%	
	May 2018	4, Variable	5, Competent	4, Variable	5, Competent	4, B	+63.9%	61.4%, FPP	
	Latest-earlier	+1	-2	+1	+1	0		-6.6%	
Manawatū District Council (SP/RU)	October 2019	5, Competent	5, Competent	7, Performing well	6, Better than competent	6, BBB	+94.2%	44.3%, FPP	44.35%
								+0.05%	
Masterton District Council (SP/RU)	February 2021	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	7, Performing well	7, Performing well	6, BBB	(+94.0%)	46.68%	
	October 2017	5, Competent	5, Competent	5, Competent	5, Competent	5, BB	+93.9%	43.9%, FPP	
	Latest-earlier	0	+1	+2	+2	+1		+2.78%	
Matamata-Piako District Council (SM/LP)	July 2017	5, Competent	7, Performing well	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	6, BBB	+81.4%	51.3%, FPP	40.93%
								-10.37%	

CouncilMARK™ results as at March 2023 (continued)

Participating Council (Councils that participated in CouncilMARK re-assessment shown in bold)	Report date	CouncilMARK Priority areas				Council MARK Overall rating*	Sentiment polarity and score (%) of Report Overview	Voter turnout	
		Governance, strategy, and leadership Leading Locally (LL)	Financial decision-making and transparency Investing Money Wisely (IMW)	Service delivery and asset management Delivering What's Important (DWI)	Communicating and engaging with the public and business Listening and Responding (LAR)			2019†	2022‡
Napier City Council □ (SM/LP)	July 2017	7, Performing well	7, Performing well	6, Better than competent	6, Better than competent	7, A	+77.2%	50.8%, FPP	39.54%
									-11.26%
Nelson City Council (SM/LP)	October 2017	4, Variable	4, Variable	5, Competent	5, Competent	5, BB	+90.2%	53.4%, FPP	51.14%
									-2.26%
New Plymouth District Council (SM/LP)	July 2022	7, Performing well	7, Performing well	7, Performing well	7, Performing well	7, A	(+94.4%)		45.1%
	February 2019	6, Better than competent	6, Better than competent	5, Competent	7, Performing well	6, BBB	Not available	45.3%, STV	
	Latest-earlier	+1	+1	+2	0	+1			-0.2%
Northland Regional Council (RC)	In preparation							40.2%, FPP	
Ōtorohanga District Council (SP/RU)***	December 2020	3, Areas for improvement	4, Variable	4, Variable	3, Areas for improvement	3, CCC	N51.0%	47.6%, FPP	44.05%
									-3.6%
Porirua City Council (SM/LP)	July 2017	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	4, Variable	7, Performing well	6, BBB	+56.9%	41.0%, STV	37.3%
									-3.7%
Queenstown Lakes District Council (SM/LP)	July 2017	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	4, Variable	7, Performing well	6, BBB	+79.4%	50.3%, FPP	43.05%
									-7.25%
Rangitikei District Council □ (SP/RU)	June 2022	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	6, Better than competent	5, Competent	5, BB	(+71.6%)		46.0%
	October 2017	5, Competent	7, Performing well	5, Competent	5, Competent	5, BB	+91.9%	47.4%, FPP	+79.4%
	Latest -earlier	0	-1	+1	0	0			-1.4%
Ruapehu District Council □ (SP/RU)	February 2021	5, Competent	5, Competent	5, Competent	7, Performing well	6, BBB	(+48.9%)		48.91%
	July 2017	4, Variable	3, Areas for improvement	6, Better than competent	7, Performing well	5, BB	+88.0%	50.6%, STV	
	Latest-earlier	+1	+2	-1	0	+1			-1.69%
South Taranaki District Council □ (SP/RU)	November 2020	6, Better than competent	5, Competent	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	6, BBB	(+96.9%)		39.3%
	October 2017	6, Better than competent	6, Better than competent	6, Better than competent	5, Competent	6, BBB	+92.5%	48.3%, FPP	
	Latest-earlier	0	-1	-1	+1	0			-9.0%
Tararua District Council □ (SP/RU)	October 2018	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	5, BB	+65.1%	52.1%, FPP	48.11%
									-3.99%
Taupō District Council (SP/RU)	July 2022	6, Better than competent	7, Performing well	6, Better than competent	6, Better than competent	7, A	(+93.8%)		46.05%
	February 2018	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	6, BBB	+92.3%	54.4%, FPP	
	Latest-earlier	+1	+1	+1	0	+1			-8.35%

CouncilMARK™ results as at March 2023 (continued)

Participating Council (Councils that participated in CouncilMARK re-assessment shown in bold)	Report date	CouncilMARK Priority areas				Council MARK Overall rating*	Sentiment polarity and score (%) of Report Overview	Voter turnout	
		<i>Governance, strategy, and leadership</i>	<i>Financial decision-making and transparency</i>	<i>Service delivery and asset management</i>	<i>Communicating and engaging with the public and business</i>			2019†	2022‡
		<i>Leading Locally (LL)</i>	<i>Investing Money Wisely (IMW)</i>	<i>Delivering What's Important (DWI)</i>	<i>Listening and Responding (LAR)</i>				
Upper Hut City Council □ (SM/LP)	November 2021	5, Competent	4, Variable	5, Competent	4, Variable	5, BB	(+86.4%)	43.15%	
	August 2018	5, Competent	4, Variable	5, Competent	5, Competent	5, BB	+91.6%	43.9%, FPP	
	Latest-earlier	0	0	0	-1	0		-0.75%	
Waikato Regional Council (RC)	October 2017	6, Better than competent	8, Standout	7, Performing well	6, Better than competent	7, A	+89.6%		
Waimakariri District Council □ (SM/LP)	July 2020	7, Performing well	8, Standout	7, Performing well	7, Performing well	8, AA	(+91.1%)	44.6%	
	October 2017	8, Standout	7, Performing well	6, Better than competent	7, Performing well	8, AA	Not available	47.0%, FPP	
	Latest-earlier	-1	+1	+1	0	0		-2.4%	
Wairoa District Council □ (SP/RU)	April 2021	6, Better than competent	4, Variable	5, Competent	7, Performing well	5, BB	(+85.3%)	53.2%	
	October 2017	3, Areas for improvement	4, Variable	5, Competent	5, Competent	3, CCC	N46.4%	51.4%, FPP	
	Latest-earlier	+3	0	0	+2	+2		+1.8%	
Waitaki District Council (SM/LP)***	December 2020	6, Better than competent	5, Competent	7, Performing well	7, Performing well	6, BBB	+72.7%	55.8%, FPP	45.5%
								-10.3%	
Whakatāne District Council □ (Small Metro and Provincial)	October 2017	4, Variable	5, Competent	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	5, BB	+88.3%	52.0%, FPP	45.3%
								-6.7%	
Whanganui District Council (SM/LP)***	April 2020	4, Variable	5, Competent	6, Better than competent	5, Competent	5, BB	+96.8%	44.1%, FPP	46.44%
								+2.34%	

* CouncilMARK ratings: C, underperforming; CC, areas of improvement (required in more than 2 areas); CCC, areas of improvement (required in two areas); B, areas of improvement (required in one area); BB, competent; BBB, some areas of strength, overall competent; A, some areas of strength and leadership; AA, strong grades in most priority areas; AAA, exemplary

** Types of council: RC, regional council; SP/RU, small provincial and rural; SM/LP, small metro and large provincial

*** Excluded from any analysis involving 2019 local authority elections because CouncilMARK report post-dated the election

† 2019 Local Authority Election Statistics. Electoral process used: FPP, First-past-the-post; STV, single transferable vote, <https://www.dia.govt.nz/Services-Local-Elections-Local-Authority-Election-Statistics-2019#three>

‡ Final voter turnout results – Vote 22. <https://www.votelocal.co.nz/final-voter-turnout-results/> Data for regional councils were not included in the compilation

¶ The voter turnout in 2022 declined in most council areas, despite pre-election media publicity about historic trends in voter turnout and a campaign by Local Government New Zealand <https://www.votelocal.co.nz/final-voter-turnout-results/>

□ This Council is a member of 'Communities for Local Government' (<https://www.communities4localdemocracy.co.nz/>), which "is a new local government action group committed to working with central government to ensure all New Zealanders have access to safe drinking water and that all of our local communities continue to have a say on the use of assets purchased on their behalf using ratepayer funds". In essence, the group is opposed to the ownership arrangements envisaged in the Three Waters Reform (<https://www.dia.govt.nz/Three-Waters-Reform-Programme>).

Appendix 2

Changes in CouncilMARK™ scores between successive assessments (compiled from Appendix 1).

Participating Council	Type*	Change in scores for CouncilMARK Priority areas				Change in CouncilMARK Overall rating	Changes in derived parameters†	
		Governance, strategy, and leadership Leading Locally (LL)	Financial decision-making and transparency Investing Money Wisely (IMW)	Service delivery and asset management Delivering What’s Important (DWI)	Communicating and engaging with the public and business Listening and Responding (LAR)		Stakeholder oriented score (LL + LAR)/2	Management oriented score (IMW+DWI)/2
Central Hawkes Bay‡	SP/RU	+1	+3	+4	+1	+3	+1	+3.5
Far North ‡	SP/RU	+1	+1	+1	-1	+1	0	+1
Mackenzie‡	SP/RU	+1	-2	+1	+1	0	+1	-0.5
Masterton	SP/RU	0	+1	+2	+2	+1	+1	+1.5
Rangitikei	SP/RU	0	-1	+1	0	0	0	0
Ruapehu‡	SP/RU	+1	+2	-1	0	+1	+0.5	+0.5
South Taranaki‡	SP/RU	0	-1	-1	+1	0	+0.5	-1
Taupō	SP/RU	+1	+1	+1	0	+1	+0.5	+1
Wairoa ‡	SP/RU	+3	0	0	+2	+2	+2.5	0
Average SP/RU	SP/RU	+0.89	+0.44	+0.89	+0.67	+1.0	+0.78	+0.67
Improved	No., (%)	6, (67%)	5, (56%)	6, (67%)	5, (56%)	6, (67%)	7, (78%)	5, (56%)
Unchanged	No., (%)	3, (33%)	1, (11%)	1, (11%)	3, (33%)	3, (33%)	2, (22%)	2, (22%)
Deteriorated	No., (%)	0	3, (33%)	2, (22%)	1, (11%)	0	0	2, (22%)
Horowhenua‡	SM/LP	+1	0	+2	+1	+1	+1	+1
New Plymouth‡	SM/LP	+1	+1	+2	0	+1	+0.5	+1.5
Upper Hutt‡	SM/LP	0	0	0	-1	0	-0.5	0
Waimakariri‡	SM/LP	-1	+1	+1	0	0	-0.5	+1
Average SM/LP	SM/LP	+0.25	+0.5	+1.25	0	+0.5	+0.13	+0.88
Improved	No., (%)	2, (50%)	2, (50%)	3, (75%)	1, (25%)	2, (50%)	2, (50%)	3, (75%)
Unchanged	No., (%)	1, (25%)	2, (50%)	1, (25%)	2, (50%)	2, (50%)	0	1, (25%)
Deteriorated	No., (%)	1, (25%)	0	0	1, (25%)	0,	2, (50%)	0
Average, all participating councils		+0.69	+0.46	+1	+0.46	+0.85	+0.58	+0.73
Improved	No., (%)	8, (62%)	7, (54%)	9, (69%)	6, (46%)	8, (62%)	9, (69%)	8, (62%)
Unchanged	No., (%)	4, (31%)	3, (23%)	2, (15%)	5, (38%)	5, (38%)	2, (15%)	3, (23%)
Deteriorated	No., (%)	1, (8%)	3, (23%)	2, (15%)	2, (15%)	0	2, (15%)	2, (15%)

*SP/RU, Small provincial and rural; SM/LP, Small metro and large provincial

† For details on these parameters, see Hodder (2019)

‡ This Council is one of 30 members of ‘Communities for Local Democracy’ (<https://www.communities4localdemocracy.co.nz/>)