IFLA Nominations Survey: Results

In order to support reflection on how to improve IFLA's nominations and elections process, a survey was run between 29 November 2023 and 17 January. This was distributed among IFLA Members, Affiliates, Volunteers, and all those who made a nomination, or stood for a role in our latest elections process. It gathered insights into where people sought information, and how much they used different resources, and how useful they found them.

Key highlights include:
- E-mailing represents by some way the most used means of finding out about the nominations and elections process in the first place. The website is important too, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), potentially as it is more easily translated.
- The website is also crucial for finding out more about the process, and the elections guide was well used
- Generally, it was reported as being difficult to get nominators and nominees to fill in forms, suggesting a potential area for improvement
- There was strong support for the idea of a pre-nominations phase

1. Overall shares of responses

A total of 474 responses were received, although not all respondents answered each question. A set of totals are provided in the table on the right.

We can see that almost 2/3 of respondents identified as IFLA members, followed by 28% as volunteers. Only 7% described themselves as affiliates, and 3% as none of the above.

The biggest single share of responses came rom Europe (a third), followed by North America and Asia-Oceania. The smallest share of responses came from the MENA region (3%).

## Table 1: Breakdown of respondents by region

Type of Respondent	IFLA Member	62%
	IFLA Volunteer	28%
	IFLA Affiliate	7%
	None of the above at present	3%
Region	Asia-Oceania	21%
	Europe	33%
	LAC	7%
	MENA	3%
	North America	27%
	Sub-Saharan Africa	9%
Nominator or Nominee	I nominated someone for a position	36%
	I was nominated for a position	48%
	I wanted to nominate someone, but couldn't	9%
	I wanted to be nominated, but couldn't find a nominator	7%

Meanwhile, almost half of respondents reported having been nominated for a position (we subsequently talk about 'successful nominations', meaning that the nominee became an official candidate, whereas 'unsuccessful nominations' are those that aren't validated). Over a third of respondents described themselves as nominators.

2. Overall results

The first questions focused on how respondents found out about the nominations and elections (N&E) process. Respondents could choose as many as appropriate of e-mails, the IFLA website, word of mouth and social media. The goal here was to find out what first made people aware of the elections, as a crucial step towards participation. Maximising awareness is a key first step towards maximising the number of candidates.

**Graph 2a: How did you find out about the nominations and elections process?**
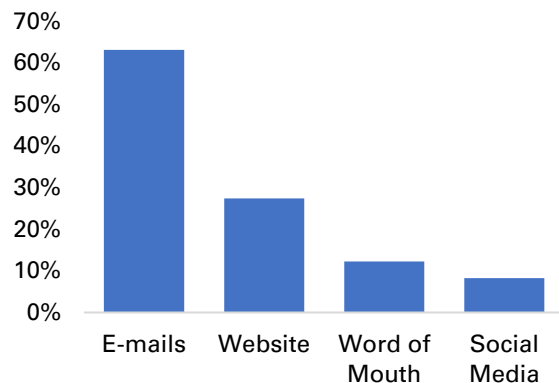
The data (Graph 2a) shows that e-mails are by a long way the most usual way to find out about the elections, with almost 2/3 of respondents doing so in this way. The website informed just over 25%, while word of mouth played a role in 1/8 of case, and social media in just 8%. As is also mentioned below, however, what this does not tell us is what channels could have been effective in reaching those who did not find out about the election.

Secondly, we asked about how people subsequently informed themselves about the election process, in order to understand habits, and where people might look: the website, the elections guide, the statutes, mailings, and asking a friend. Respondents were asked to say whether they used each resource 'a lot', 'somewhat', 'a little', 'not at all', or 'I did not know it existed'. These were then turned into scores from 5-1, and averages calculated. Therefore, a higher score implies more intensive use. Graph 2b presents the data, showing that the website and mailings were the most intensively used. The elections guide came a little further back, although still scored around 'somewhat' on average, while use of 'asking a friend' was lower still. The lowest level of use was o the Statutes.

Graph 2b: How far did you use...
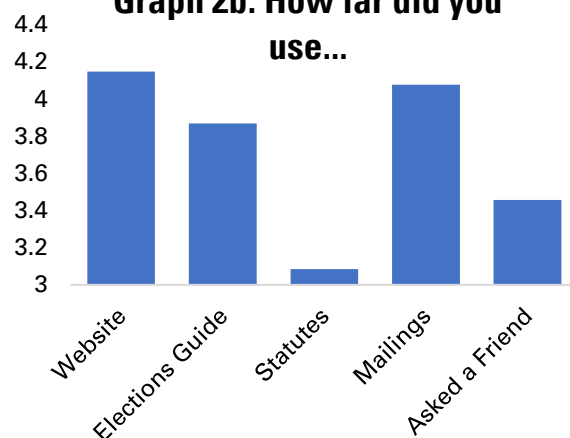
The next set of questions looked at experiences, and how easy it was to carry out specific tasks. These focused respectively on nominators (how easy it was to find candidates, and to get them to fill in nominee forms), and nominees (how easy it was to find nominators, and get them to fill in the relevant forms.

## Graph 2c: How easy was it to…
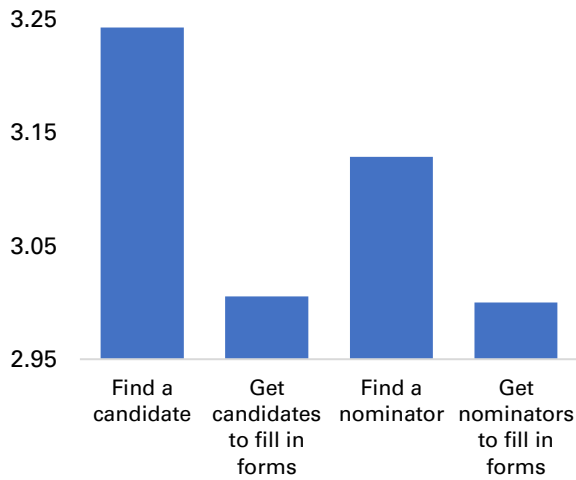
Once again, we used a scale from very easy (5) to very difficult (1), with the numbers making it possible to calculate averages. Graph 2c presents these figures. Overall, these are relatively low, only a little over 'neutral' (3) on average, with the highest for how easy it was for nominators to find candidates. It was harder, in contrast, for nominees to find nominators.

More concerning still, the average scores for the ease of getting nominators and nominees to fill in forms was 3 (neutral) – this already highlights a priority for future work.

A final set of questions tested the idea that a pre-nominations phase could be helpful. Respondents were asked if they supported the idea, and then if they would use it.

As graph 2d shows, early 80% indeed supported the idea of such a phase, and 72% said that they would likely use it. A further 11% would be happy with the idea of a list even if they didn't use it, while only 9% indicated any sort of opposition. Overall, this represents a strong indication of support for developing a pre-nominations phase.

Graph 2d: Views on a pre-nominations phase
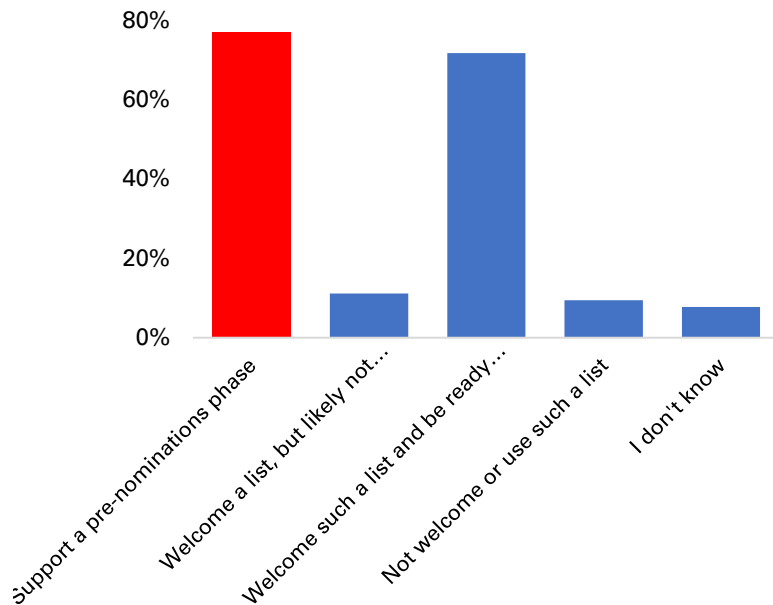
The following sections offer a breakdown of the data by type of respondent (member vs volunteer), region, and whether they were nominators or nominees.

3. Finding out about the Nominations and Elections (N&E) process

A first set of questions focused on the way in which nominators and nominees found out about the N&E process.

Graph 3a looks at this, broken down by whether respondents reported being nominators or nominees. We can see that while e-mail is the single most prominent way of finding out about the nominations process, this is higher for nominators (IFLA members and affiliates, generally) than for nominees. Nominators are also slightly more likely to use the website than nominees, while word of mouth and social media play a bigger role for nominees than nominators.

Graph 3a: I found out about the N&E process by... (Nominator/Nominee)
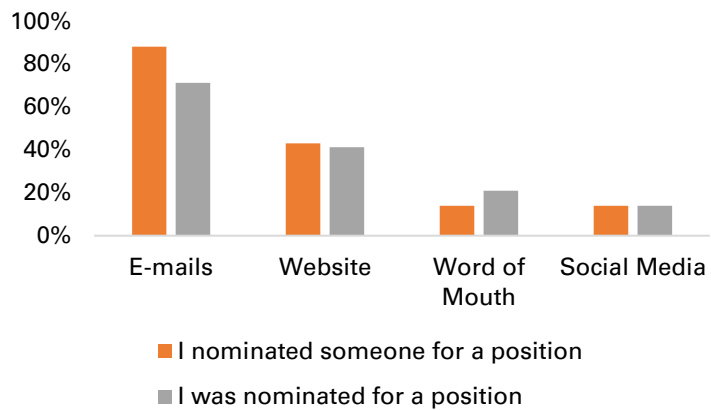
Meanwhile, looking at the figures according to whether people primarily identified as an IFLA Member or volunteer, volunteers were more likely to have used each source to find out about the N&E process than members.

Graph 3b: I found out about the N&E process by. .. (Members/Volunteers)
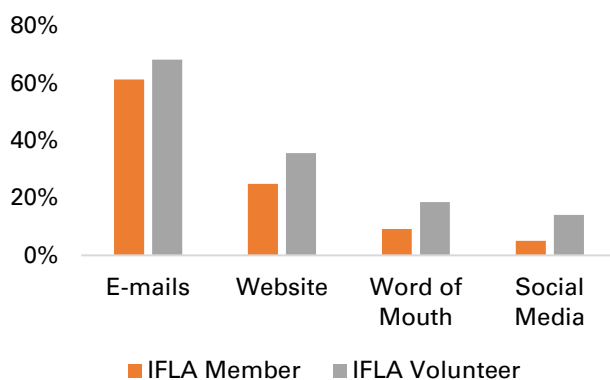
These results are perhaps not surprising. Nominees – especially when they are not already serving for IFLA, are perhaps less likely to receive IFLA communications than members, and to rely more on other sources. Meanwhile, volunteers – who have committee structures as an information channel, in addition to periodic member mailings – also logically tend to get more information through these, or networks within IFLA. The question this raises of course, is how to reach the people who may not already be on IFLA's e-mail lists or visit IFLA's website otherwise. Should we be trying to encourage more access through word of mouth, or can we bring more people to our mailing lists?

Graph 3c looks at the situation by region. Once again, e-mail is the most common means in all regions of finding out about the N&E process. It is most important in MENA (followed by Asia-Oceania), and least so in LAC (followed by North America).

The region where people are most likely to find out about the process from the website is Asia-Oceania, followed by LAC, while MENA and NA are least likely to use it. Word of mouth matters most in Europe and North America, while social media is most important in LAC and Asia-Oceania.

These figures of course focus on those people who actually found out about, and so any conclusions about what those who might have been interested if they had known will tend to be speculative. Nonetheless, the power of getting into people's inboxes, including in less well represented regions (especially MENA) is clear. While the website plays a role, this remains less important as a way of finding out about the process in the first place in all regions. The fact that word of mouth is strongest in Europe and North America may be due to the density of networks there, while Latin America demonstrates the power of social media to reach people.

Graph 3c: I found out about the N&E process by... (Regions)
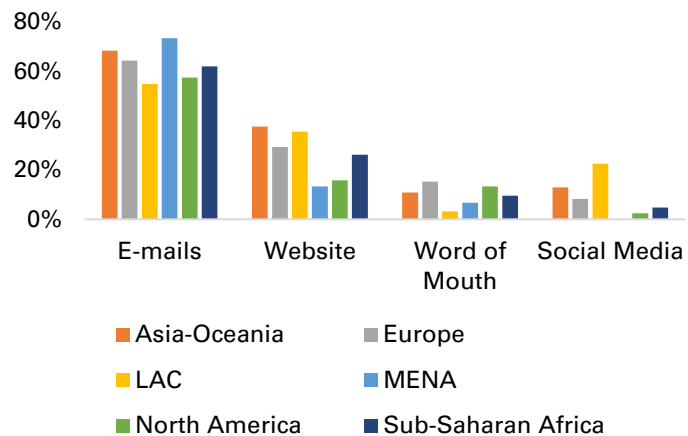
Overall, this implies that it may be interesting in future to try to adapt elections communications to habits in different regions to maximise impact.

Graph 4a: How far did you use the following... (nominators/nominees)
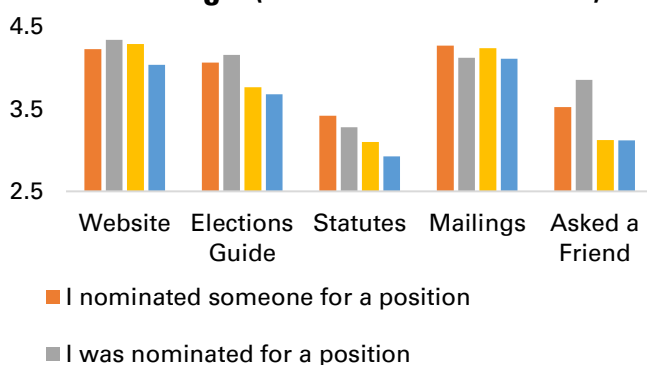

4. How much did you use different tools?

The next questions asked respondents about how far they used the different tools and materials in the course of their participation in the elections process. Graph 4a provides figures for nominators and nominees, as well as unsuccessful nominators and nominees this time. Higher scores indicate higher use.

Concerning those who successfully nominated or were nominated, the results echo those in section 3 above, with nominators more likely to use mailings, while those being nominated used publicly available tools such as the website and the elections guide. Nominators were more likely to use the Statutes, while nominees where more likely to have asked a friend.
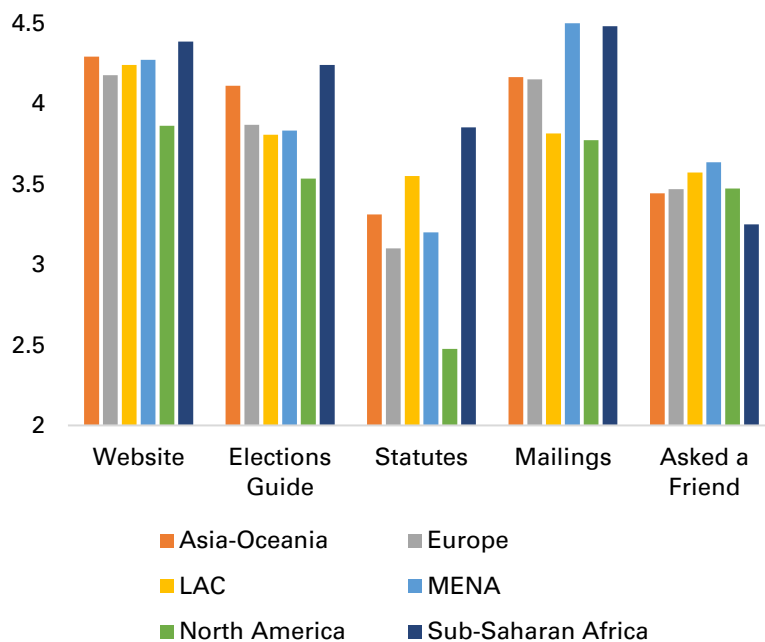
Meanwhile, among unsuccessful nominators/nominees, the most interesting trends are that they tended to make less use of the elections guide, or the possibility to ask friends. It is possible to interpret this data as showing that the elections guide helped nominators and nominees be more successful. Another conclusion is that the power of peer networks could also help deliver higher success rates.

Graph 4b looks at embers and volunteers. As with Graph 3b, volunteers were more likely to use each of the tools available, with the smallest gap in the case of mailings, and the largest in the case of the elections guide. Given the apparent link between use of the guide and success, more promotion next time could help.

Graph 4b: How far did you use the following... (Members/Volunteers)

Legend: IFLA Member, IFLA Volunteer
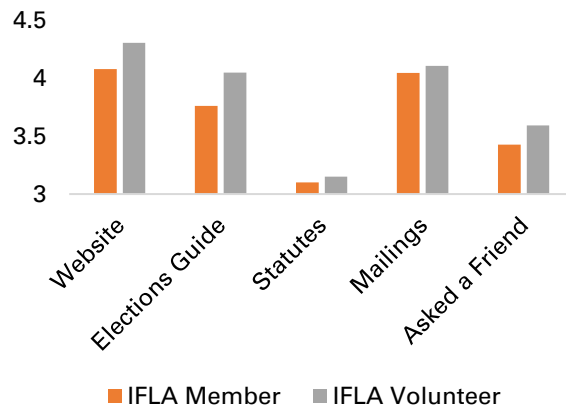
Graph 4c: How far did you use the following... (Regions)

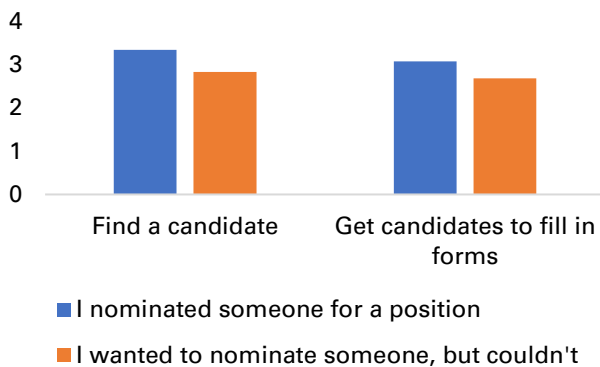Legend: Asia-Oceania, Europe, LAC, MENA, North America, Sub-Saharan Africa

Graph 4c then looks at the situation across regions, highlighting interesting differences. We can see that the most intensively used tool was the website in the case of Asia-Oceania, Europe, LAC and North America, while it was mailings in the case of MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa. Across the board, the elections guide was the third-most used resource, and the statutes the least (except in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa). Interestingly, asking friends was most common in MENA and LAC, but least used in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In terms of conclusions, this tends to underline the value of making sure that we have clear and accessible materials, with a focus on user-experience. The value of the Statutes setting out rules clearly should not be disregarded, and there may be scope to do more to encourage peer exchange in order to offer (reliable) advice.
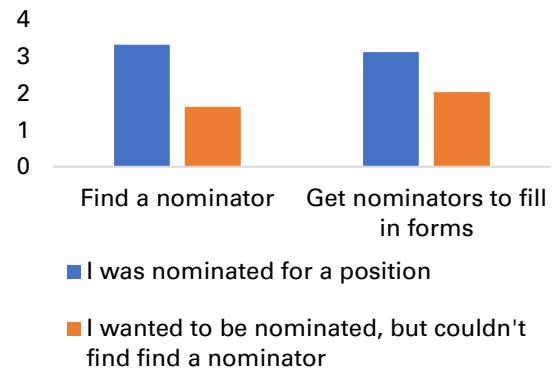
5. How easy was it to…

The final main question asked about how easy respondents found different processes. Graphs 5a and 5b looks at nominators and nominees respectively, both successful and unsuccessful. Unsurprisingly, those who nominated (or were nominated) successfully found the process of finding candidates and getting them to fill in the relevant forms easier than those who were unsuccessful.

### Graph 5a: How easy was it to… (nominators)

- I nominated someone for a position
- I wanted to nominate someone, but couldn't

Graph 5b: How easy was it to… (nominees)

- I was nominated for a position
- I wanted to be nominated, but couldn't find find a nominator

What perhaps is more interesting is the low average scores in general for how easy it was to do these things, with averages only just above 'neutral' in all cases. This does imply that there is a challenge with the process around filling in forms in general:

Looking then at the relative answers for members and volunteers (Graph 5c), it is notably what while members report it being easier to find candidates than those reporting to be volunteers (potentially due to better knowledge of association members or institution staff), volunteers reported being better at getting other candidates to fill in forms, as well as to find nominators. This implies a greater familiarity with IFLA processes and how

Graph 5c: How easy was it to… (Members, Volunteers)

- IFLA Member
- IFLA Volunteer
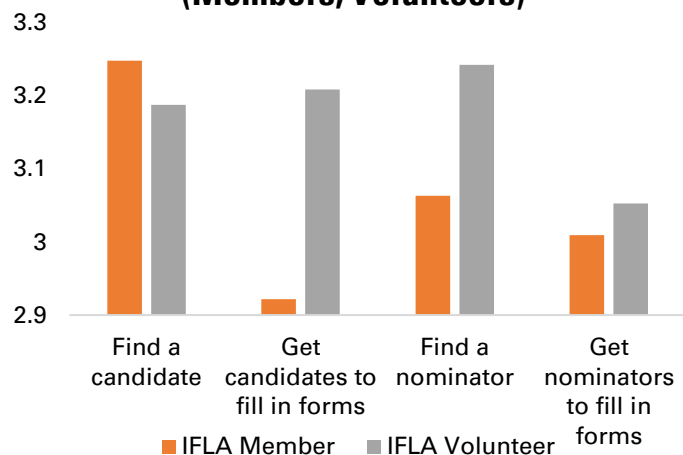
to make these work. Nonetheless, they often struggled to get nominators to fill in forms. In addition, the same point can be made as above – that the averages here are nonetheless low, and indeed members at least were more likely to say that it was difficult (rather than easy) to get candidates to fill in forms.

Overall, from this, it implies that members in particular would benefit from a simpler means for candidates to fill in forms, but that the process as a whole of finding candidates and completing forms could be made easier.

Graph 5d: How easy was it to... (Regions)
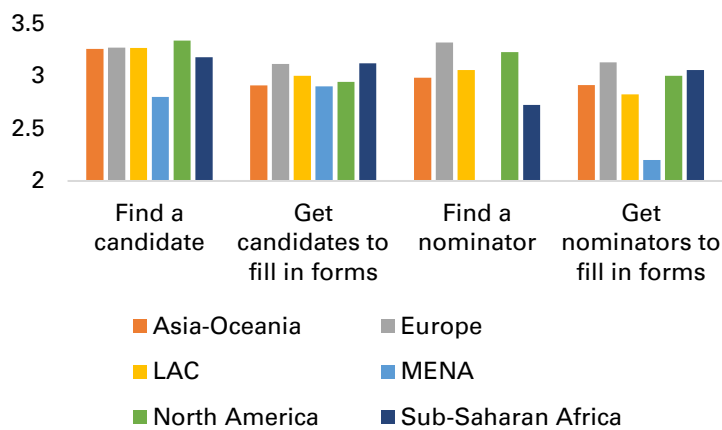
Finally, looking at the regions (Graph 5d), North Americans and Europeans found it marginally easier to find candidates to nominate, while MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa tended to find it less easy. Getting nominees to fill in forms as most difficult in Asia-Oceania and MENA.

Among nominees, Europeans and North Americans found it easier to find nominators, while MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa found it hardest.

Meanwhile, MENA and LAC candidates found it hardest to get nominators to fill in forms. Once again, it is worth noting that in no area were scores for ease-of-use particularly high.

In terms of conclusions, this does point to the difficulty of making connections between nominators and nominees being particularly challenging in MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa, while everyone would benefit from easier processes.

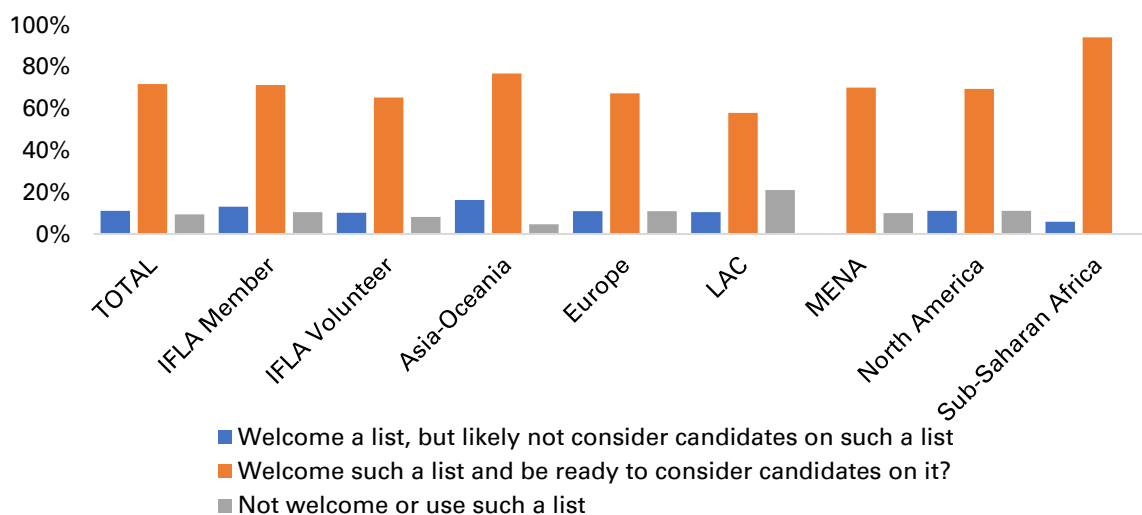# 6. Should we have a pre-nominations phase?

Linked to the previous question, we also asked whether respondents would favour a pre-nominations phase, the results were overwhelmingly positive. As Graph 6a shows, there was particularly strong support from members (as opposed to volunteers), North America and LAC, and amongst nominators (as opposed to nominees). Interestingly, this implies that there may be an unmet demand, among nominators, for good candidates to nominate, while (perhaps logically) those who did come forward as candidates didn't feel such a strong need for extra support.

Graph 6a: Would you support a pre-nominations phase?
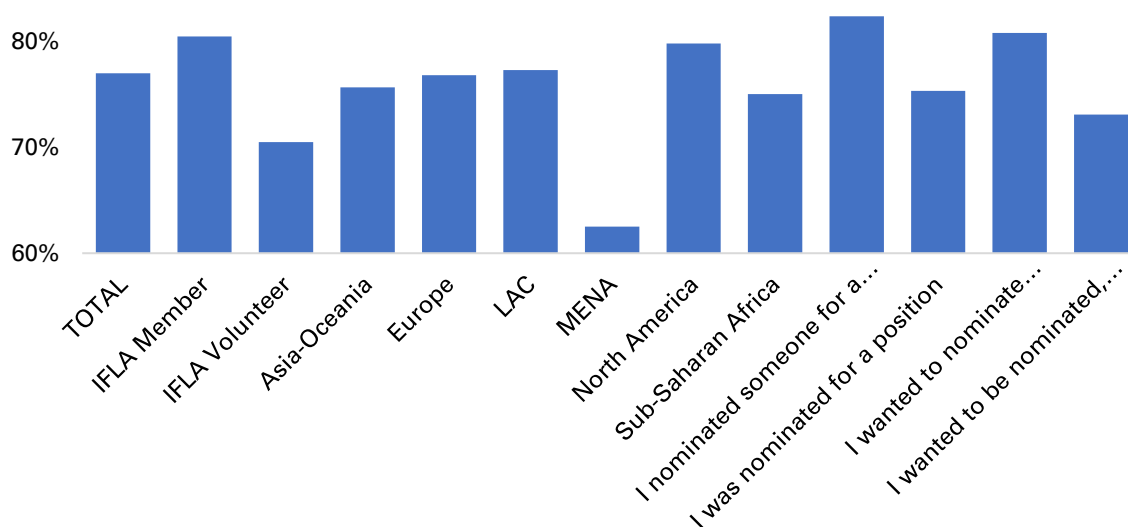
In terms of whether potential nominators would use such a list to identify candidates to support, almost ¾ of respondents said they would consider names on there. Members were more likely than volunteers to say that they would, while Sub-Saharan African, Asia-Oceania and MENA respondents were more likely to say they would use it. The lowest share saying they would use a list was in LAC (only 58%), with the region also having the largest share saying the would not welcome such a list (21%).

Graph 6b: Attitudes towards a pre-nomination list

■ Welcome a list, but likely not consider candidates on such a list
■ Welcome such a list and be ready to consider candidates on it?
■ Not welcome or use such a list

Overall, this does seem to indicate that a pre-nominations list would be worth the effort, even if it may not help resolve issues around under-representation of certain regions. It is worth noting at least that LAC (the least enthusiastic about pre-nominations lists) had the third highest score when it came to how easy it was to identify candidates.