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COMMUNITY SURVEY

Prepared for :
**South Taranaki
District Council**

Prepared by :
PublicVoice

Final Report – 2025/26

Prepared by PublicVoice Limited

This report was produced by PublicVoice Limited, in partnership with the South Taranaki District Council. The analysis combines quantitative survey research with qualitative thematic coding to provide evidence-based insights for resident satisfaction and service delivery.

About PublicVoice

PublicVoice Limited is a leading research and engagement consultancy headquartered in Wellington, New Zealand. We specialise in public policy research and consultation, providing services to various local and central government agencies throughout New Zealand. To learn more about our work, please visit www.publicvoice.co.nz.

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1 Executive Summary

This report presents findings from the South Taranaki District Council 2025/26 Residents Satisfaction Survey. A total of 488 residents responded to the postal survey across Wave 1 (October-December 2025) and Wave 2 (February-March 2026), providing feedback on Council services, governance, and overall performance.

1.1 Key Findings Summary

The table below provides an overview of satisfaction and agreement levels across all service areas, along with key qualitative insights from resident feedback.

Service/Measure	Key Findings	%
Overall Performance		
Council performance as organisation	Strong overall performance with staff praised as helpful, professional, and approachable. Follow-up communication after reporting issues particularly valued by residents.	91%
Elected members (Mayor & Councillors)	Residents appreciated the Mayor's visibility at community events and Council's collaboration with other Taranaki councils. Positive engagement through Community Boards also noted.	92%
Governance		
Decisions represent best interests	Residents called for greater public consultation before decisions are made, with many feeling smaller towns outside Hāwera are sometimes overlooked. Concerns about equitable distribution of resources across the district.	85%
Opportunity to participate in decisions	Feedback emphasised the need for more surveys and polls, improved communication via social media and mail, and better advertising of meetings and consultation opportunities.	92%
Know where to access information	Suggestions included making the website easier to search, using email newsletters to reach ratepayers directly, and utilising local newspapers as an alternative to digital channels.	93%
Community Services		
Hāwera Aquatic Centre	Users praised the facility but raised concerns about changing room cleanliness, entry costs, and a desire for more activities for children. Pool temperature and dated appearance also mentioned.	90%
Public libraries	Highest satisfaction of all services - a well-loved community asset. Feedback covered printing costs and requests for additional study spaces. Libraries consistently mentioned as an area where Council performs well.	96%
Public toilets	More frequent cleaning and better stocking of supplies (toilet paper, soap, hand towels) requested. Graffiti and vandalism concerns raised, along with requests for more facilities in various locations.	87%
Parks, reserves and playgrounds	Requests for splash pads or water play areas, BBQ facilities, and improved playground equipment. Better lawn mowing and duck pond improvements also requested. Some compared facilities to neighbouring districts.	92%
Cemeteries	Generally well maintained with positive feedback. Concerns raised about lawn care, entranceway conditions, fallen headstones, and rabbit damage. Many encouraged Council to keep up the good work.	95%

Service/Measure	Key Findings	%
Animal control services	Concerns about slow response times, inadequate follow-up on complaints about aggressive or stray dogs, and a desire for stronger enforcement measures. Small sample of users (n=42).	69%
Three Waters		
Water supply	Water taste and quality the main concern - described as earthy, dirty, or overly chlorinated. Many residents have installed filters or purchase bottled water. Council praised for keeping water under local control.	87%
Wastewater/sewerage	Highest satisfaction of Three Waters services. Some residents concerned about ageing pipes needing replacement and requests for service extensions to unconnected areas. Core infrastructure maintenance emphasised.	95%
Stormwater management	Drain cleaning frequency the main issue - blockages and flooding during heavy rain commonly mentioned. Frustration expressed about long-standing drainage problems remaining unresolved despite repeated complaints.	80%
Infrastructure		
Council roads	Lowest satisfaction of all services. Pothole repairs and repair quality key concerns - patches don't last and same issues reoccur within weeks. Strong concerns about contractor performance and accountability.	61%
Waste Services		
Refuse bin collection	Fortnightly collection and bin sizes the main concerns - red bins considered too small for families, with requests for return to weekly pickup. Food waste bin practicality and transfer station costs also raised.	77%
Recycling services	Requests for expanded recycling options, weekly collection, and better education about what can be recycled. Rural access to recycling facilities and transfer station improvements also mentioned.	87%
Council Contact		
Recent contact with Council	Poor follow-up and lack of response the main issues - unreturned calls, unanswered emails, and unresolved issues. While some staff praised as helpful, concerns about knowledge gaps and navigating Council processes raised.	75%

Note: Percentages show overall satisfaction/agreement (Neutral + Satisfied/Agree + Very satisfied/Strongly agree).

Key findings derived from survey responses and qualitative analysis. n=488 total respondents across Wave 1 and Wave 2.

Table 1: Key findings summary with qualitative insights

1.2 Historical Tracking

The table below presents year-on-year tracking of key satisfaction and agreement measures from 2022/23 to 2025/26. Only metrics with comparable questions across survey years are included.

Category	Service/Measure	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Change	
Overall Performance	Council performance as organisation	89%	88%	83%	91%	+8	▲
	Elected members (Mayor & Councillors)	92%	91%	82%	92%	+10	▲
Governance	Decisions represent best interests of District	71%	77%	64%	85%	+21	▲
	Opportunity to participate in decisions	81%	76%	70%	92%	+22	▲
	Know where to access Council information	87%	85%	85%	93%	+8	▲
Community Services	Hāwera Aquatic Centre	-	91%	94%	90%	-4	↘
	Public libraries	96%	98%	98%	96%	-2	↘
	Public toilets	82%	85%	79%	87%	+8	▲
	Parks, reserves and playgrounds	93%	94%	92%	92%	0	●
	Cemeteries	97%	94%	95%	95%	0	●
	Animal control services	73%	74%	69%	69%	0	●
Three Waters	Water supply	87%	86%	85%	87%	+2	↗
	Wastewater/sewerage	97%	97%	96%	95%	-1	●
	Stormwater management	85%	82%	90%	80%	-10	▼
Infrastructure	Council roads	59%	58%	69%	61%	-8	▼
Waste Services	Refuse bin collection	88%	90%	79%	77%	-2	↘
	Recycling services	88%	89%	83%	87%	+4	↗
Contact	Recent contact with Council	78%	85%	81%	75%	-6	▼

Note: Overall satisfaction/agreement = Neutral + Satisfied/Agree + Very satisfied/Strongly agree combined.

Change shows percentage point difference from 2024/25. ▲/▼ = change ≥5 points; ↗/↘ = change 2-4 points; ● = stable (±1 point).

Table 2: Historical tracking of satisfaction measures (2022/23 to 2025/26)

1.3 Key Findings

Areas of Notable Improvement (2025→2026):

Governance measures showed the most substantial improvements this year. Satisfaction with opportunity to participate in Council decision-making increased from 70% to 92% (+22 points), while agreement that Council decisions represent the best interests of the District rose from 64% to 85% (+21 points). Satisfaction with elected members (Mayor and Councillors) also lifted significantly from 82% to 92% (+10 points), and satisfaction with Council performance as an organisation improved from 83% to 91% (+8 points).

Satisfaction with public toilets improved by 8 points (79% to 87%), and knowledge of where to access Council information rose from 85% to 93% (+8 points).

Areas of Concern (2025→2026):

Council roads remain the lowest-rated service at 61% satisfaction, with 39% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction. While this represents a decline of 8 points from the 2024/25 result of 69%, it is broadly consistent with the longer-term pattern (Council roads satisfaction sat at 58-59% in 2022-2024).

Stormwater management showed the largest decline of any service, dropping from 90% to 80% (-10 points). Satisfaction with recent contact with Council also declined from 81% to 75% (-6 points), with qualitative feedback highlighting concerns about lack of follow-up and slow action on complaints.

Consistently High Performance:

Public libraries remain the highest-rated service at 96% satisfaction. Wastewater/sewerage (95%), cemeteries (95%), and parks, reserves and playgrounds (92%) all maintained strong levels of satisfaction. Recycling services improved modestly from 83% to 87% (+4 points).

Overall Council Performance:

Overall perceptions of Council improved notably. Both satisfaction with Council performance as an organisation (91%) and satisfaction with elected members (92%) reached their highest levels in the tracked period, reflecting broadly positive sentiment about Council's direction and leadership.

Key themes from open feedback:

Residents most commonly highlighted infrastructure, parks, libraries, waste services, and communication as areas where Council is performing well. Parks and gardens were singled out as particularly well-maintained across the District, with the new Hāwera library described as a welcoming, state-of-the-art community hub. Community events, the Mayor's visibility and approachability, and the value of Community Boards also featured prominently in positive feedback.

On the improvement side, roads and footpaths dominated, with pothole repairs and repair quality a particular focus - respondents frequently called for better materials, higher contractor standards, and a "fix it once, fix it right" approach. Governance concerns centred on spending priorities, equitable investment across smaller towns such as Manaia, Pātea, Waverley and Eltham, and a desire for more genuine public consultation. Rates affordability remained a consistent financial concern, with many residents asking Council to focus spending on core services during tough economic times. Stormwater drainage, water quality, and refuse collection frequency rounded out the most commonly raised improvement themes.

2 Methodology

2.1 About This Report

This report presents the final results of the 2025/26 South Taranaki District Council (STDC) Residents Satisfaction Survey, combining responses from **Wave 1** (October-December 2025) and **Wave 2** (February-March 2026).

Key points for this final report:

- Results are based on the combined Wave 1 and Wave 2 dataset (n=488)
- Results are presented unweighted, with sample composition compared against 2023 Census data in this section
- The survey covers all four wards and all Long-Term Plan (LTP) performance measures and Key Performance Measures

2.2 Survey Design

Questionnaire Development

The 2025/26 survey instrument represents a redesign from previous years, developed in consultation with STDC to improve data quality and respondent experience. Key changes include:

Streamlined question set: The survey was reduced from 72 questions (2024/25) to approximately 17 core questions, plus conditional follow-up items. This reduction was designed to:

- Improve completion rates by reducing respondent burden
- Enhance data quality through reduced survey fatigue
- Maintain coverage of all LTP performance measures and Key Performance Measures

Revised rating scales: The survey moved from 1-10 scales (used in 2024/25) to 5-point scales. This change:

- Reduces cognitive burden for respondents
- Provides clearer differentiation between satisfaction levels
- Aligns with contemporary survey methodology best practice

Satisfaction scale categories (5-point):

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neutral
4. Satisfied
5. Very satisfied

A “Don’t know / Not applicable” option was also available for respondents unable to rate a particular service. This sits outside the 5-point scale and is excluded from satisfaction calculations.

Agreement scale categories (5-point):

6. Strongly disagree
7. Disagree
8. Neither agree nor disagree
9. Agree
10. Strongly agree

As with the satisfaction scale, a “Don’t know / Not applicable” option was available but is not part of the 5-point scale and is excluded from agreement calculations.

Skip Logic and Conditional Questions

The online and paper survey instruments include skip logic to route respondents through relevant sections based on their service usage and contact with Council. For example:

- Contact satisfaction questions appear only for those who contacted Council
- Service improvement suggestions appear for those rating services below “Satisfied”

2.3 Data Collection

Sampling Frame

The sample was drawn from the electoral roll for the South Taranaki District. Proportionate stratified random samples were selected for each wave to ensure representation across all four wards:

- Te Hāwera Ward (including Hāwera and Normanby)
- Taranaki Coastal Ward (including Warea, Ōpunakē, and Manaia)
- Pātea Ward (including Pātea, Waverley, and Waitōtara)
- Eltham-Kaponga Ward

To ensure one survey per household, the samples were deduplicated by address prior to mailout.

Collection Method

Both waves employed a **postal survey methodology**, with respondents able to complete the survey either on paper or online. Each mailing included:

- Personalised cover letter explaining the survey purpose
- Paper questionnaire with return postage paid
- Instructions for online completion (available as an alternative)

Fieldwork Periods

Wave 1 fieldwork was conducted between **late October and early December 2025**. The timing was selected to avoid the local body election period (concluded 11 October 2025) and to maximise response rates before the Christmas holiday period.

Wave 2 fieldwork was conducted between **February and March 2026**, with the official close date of 31 March 2026 extended over the Easter long weekend to capture late returns.

Response Rates

Wave 1 achieved 253 completed responses, with all responses received via postal return. Wave 2 added further responses, with most completions received online and a smaller number via postal return.

After data cleaning, duplicate detection, and application of inclusion standards, the combined final dataset comprises **488 usable responses** across both waves.

2.4 Sample Composition

Respondents skew older and are weighted toward Te Hāwera Ward relative to the district population. The table below compares the achieved sample against 2023 Census data on key demographic characteristics.

Characteristic	Survey sample	2023 Census
Aged 65+	39%	24%
Female	55%	49%
Māori	17%	29%
Te Hāwera Ward	57%	48%

Table 3: Sample composition compared with 2023 Census

Implications for interpretation: Results should be read with the understanding that the sample over-represents older residents, women, and residents of Te Hāwera Ward, and under-represents Māori. Where this is likely to materially affect a finding, we have noted it in the relevant section.

2.5 Weighting Approach

Post-stratification weighting to 2023 Census targets (age, gender, ward) was tested to assess whether sample composition was materially affecting headline results. Across 37 satisfaction and agreement metrics, only one metric shifted by more than 3 percentage points when weighted, with all other metrics sitting within 1-2 points of the unweighted values - well inside the margin of error.

Given the small difference between weighted and unweighted results, and in consultation with STDC, results are **reported unweighted** throughout this report. This approach was selected for simplicity of interpretation, noting that the core findings do not change materially under either approach.

2.6 Comparison with Previous Methodology

The 2025/26 survey methodology differs from the 2024/25 survey in several important ways:

Aspect	2024/25 Survey	2025/26 Survey (Wave 1 + Wave 2)
Sample size	n=406	n=488
Collection method	Mixed method (postal invitation to online, email, paper)	Postal methodology (paper and online options)
Response rate	15%	16%
Rating scales	1-10 scales	5-point scales
Question count	72 questions	17 core questions
Fieldwork timing	August 2024 - March 2025	October 2025 - March 2026
Weighting	Post-stratification weighting to Census	Unweighted (post-stratification tested; minimal impact on headline results)

Table 4: Comparison of 2024/25 and 2025/26 survey methodology

Implications for Trend Comparisons

Due to the methodology changes, direct year-on-year comparisons between 2024/25 and 2025/26 results should be interpreted with caution. The changes in rating scales mean that percentage results are not directly comparable:

- **2024/25:** “Satisfaction” combined ratings of 5-10 on a 10-point scale (Neutral + Satisfied + Very satisfied)
- **2025/26:** “Satisfaction” combines Neutral + Satisfied + Very satisfied on a 5-point scale

Where comparisons are drawn in this report, they are presented as indicative of directional trends rather than precise changes.

2.7 Data Processing

Quality Assurance

All responses underwent quality checking to identify and remove:

- Test responses and incomplete surveys
- Duplicate submissions
- Responses with no meaningful data

Duplicate Detection

To maintain the integrity of the online response dataset, we implemented a metadata-based duplicate detection process. Each online response was assessed against others using three signals:

- **IP address** (network identifier)
- **Device fingerprint** (browser, operating system, and browser language combined)
- **Respondent demographics** (ward and age group)

Potential duplicates were classified into three risk levels:

- **HIGH:** same IP address, same device fingerprint, and matching demographics. Very likely the same person submitting more than once.
- **MEDIUM:** same IP address combined with either the same device fingerprint or matching demographics. Likely the same person.
- **LOW:** shared IP address only, with different demographics. Typically reflects separate household members sharing an internet connection, so these cases were retained.

Within each HIGH or MEDIUM duplicate group, the most complete response was kept and the others removed. Where multiple complete responses existed in a group, the earliest complete submission was retained. This process produced a full changelog for audit purposes.

Partial Response Handling

Rather than excluding all incomplete surveys outright, partial responses were reviewed against a completeness threshold. Respondents who had answered at least 10 of 21 key questions (roughly equivalent to working through the satisfaction and infrastructure sections) were retained in the final dataset. Partials falling below this threshold were removed.

This approach preserves meaningful input from respondents who engaged substantively with the survey but did not reach the final question, while excluding cases with too little data to contribute reliably to the analysis.

Open-Ended Response Coding

Open-ended responses were coded thematically using a combination of:

- Automated classification using natural language processing
- Manual review and verification of coded themes

This approach enables systematic analysis of qualitative feedback while preserving the richness of resident comments.

2.8 Statistical Notes

Margin of Error

At n=488 responses, the overall margin of error for this report is approximately $\pm 4.4\%$ at a 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups (e.g., individual wards, age groups) will be larger due to smaller sample sizes and should be interpreted with appropriate caution, particularly for smaller subgroups such as users of animal control services (n=42).

Interpretation of Results

Results are presented as percentages of valid responses (excluding “Don’t know” and non-responses unless otherwise stated). Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to exactly 100%.

Reporting Conventions

Throughout this report:

- **Satisfaction rate:** Percentage selecting Neutral, Satisfied, or Very satisfied (consistent with STDC LTP performance measure definitions)
- **Agreement rate:** Percentage selecting Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, or Strongly agree
- Sample sizes (n) are provided for each analysis to indicate data reliability

3 Sample Demographics

This section summarises the demographic characteristics of survey respondents for the 2025/26 STDC Residents Satisfaction Survey, combining Wave 1 and Wave 2.

3.1 Demographic Summary

The combined survey achieved 488 usable responses. Key characteristics:

- **Geographic coverage:** All four wards represented (Te Hāwera 57%, Taranaki Coastal 18%, Eltham-Kaponga 13%, Pātea 12%)
- **Age profile:** 39% aged 65+, lower representation of 18-34 age group (15%)
- **Gender:** 55% female, 45% male
- **Ethnicity:** 83% European/NZ Pākehā, 17% Māori
- **Response channel:** 100% invited via postal mailout (paper and online completion options)

The sample skews older and is weighted toward Te Hāwera Ward relative to the district population. A comparison of sample composition against 2023 Census data is provided in the Methodology section.

3.2 Ward Distribution

All four wards are represented. Te Hāwera Ward contributed 57% of responses, with the remaining wards each contributing between 12-18%.

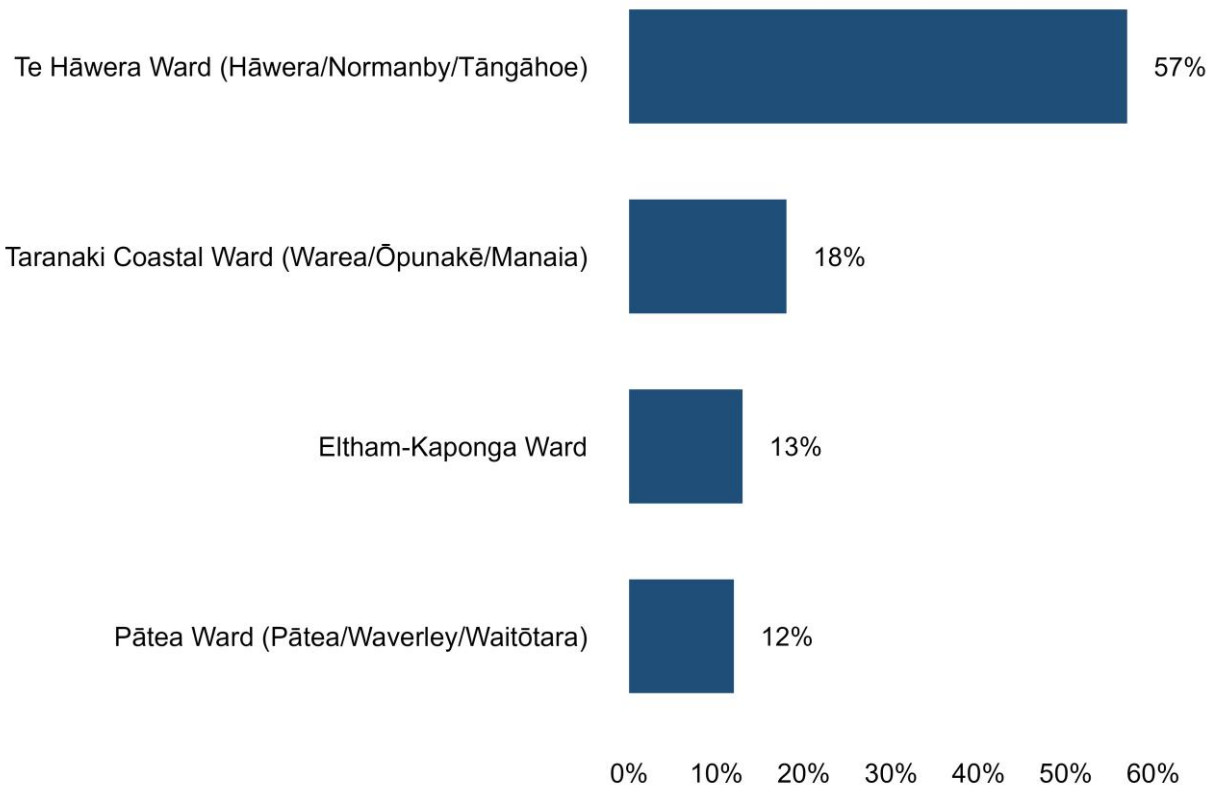


Figure 1: Distribution of survey respondents by ward (n=488)

3.3 Age Distribution

Older residents are well-represented, with those aged 65+ comprising 39% of respondents. The 50-64 age group represented 26%, followed by 35-49 (19%) and 18-34 (15%).

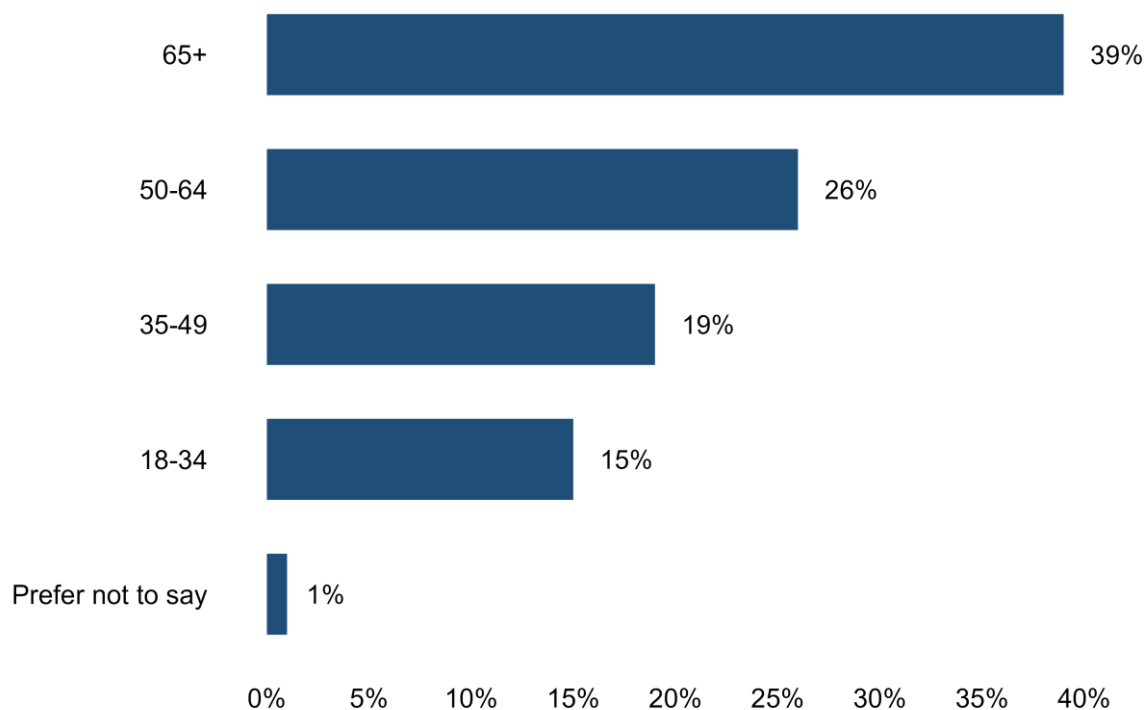


Figure 2: Age distribution of survey respondents (n=488)

3.4 Gender Identity

Female residents comprised 55% of respondents, with males at 45% (n=449 responses to this question).

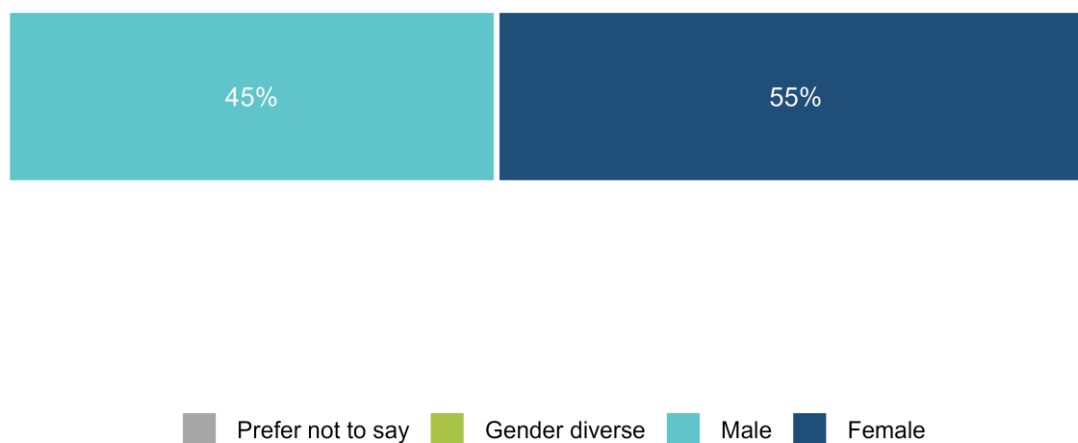


Figure 3: Gender identity distribution of respondents (n=449)

3.5 Ethnicity

The majority identified as European/NZ Pākehā (83%), with Māori at 17% (n=461 responses; multiple selections permitted).

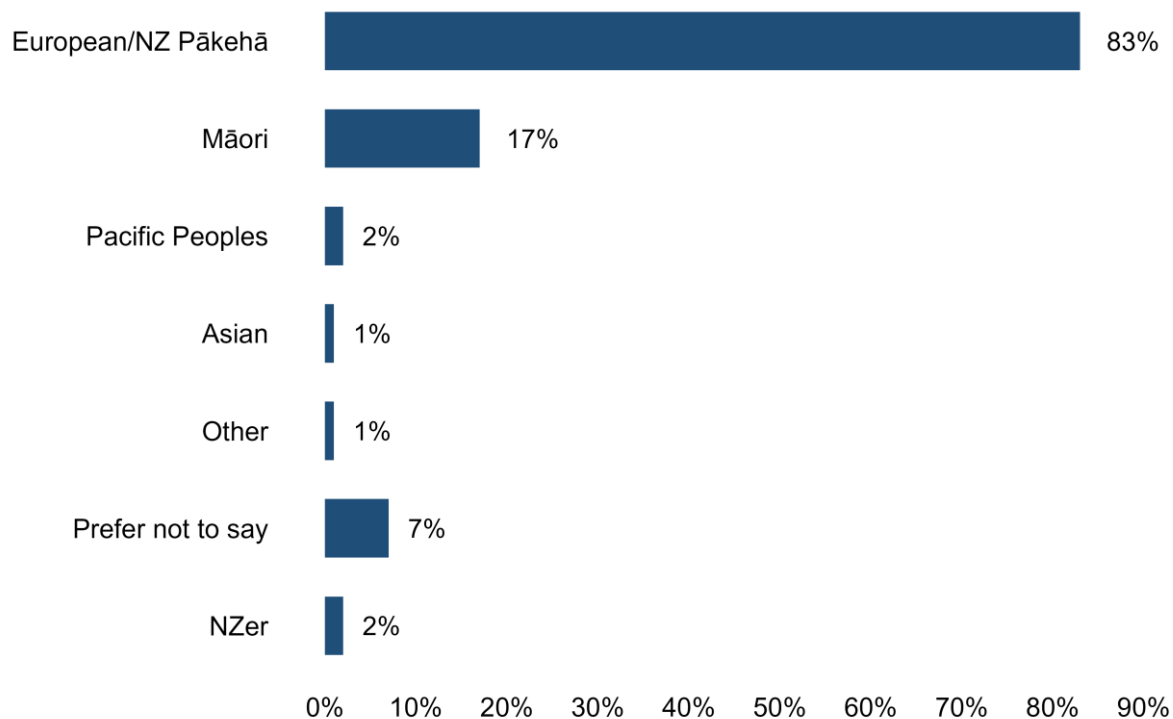


Figure 4: Ethnic diversity of survey respondents (n=461)

4 Council Contact

This section examines residents' contact with South Taranaki District Council in the past 12 months. The analysis covers rates of contact, reasons for contacting Council, and satisfaction with the contact experience. The findings presented reflect the combined 2025/26 survey dataset, collected via postal survey.

4.1 Contact with Council

In the 2025/26 survey, 53% of respondents (n=261) indicated they had contacted Council in the previous 12 months, while 47% (n=227) had not made contact. This represents a majority of residents having some form of interaction with Council services during the survey period.

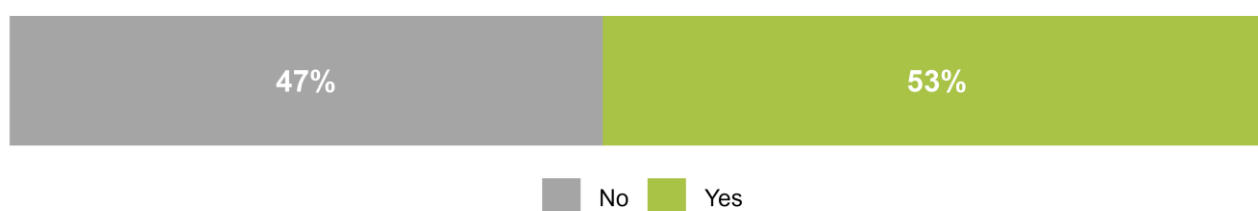


Figure 5: Council contact in last 12 months (n=488)

4.2 Reasons for Contacting Council

Among the 260 respondents who indicated their reason for contacting Council, waste collection was the most common reason at 25% (n=66), followed by rates enquiries at 22% (n=56) and road/infrastructure issues at 21% (n=54).

Animal control accounted for 17% of contacts (n=44), while water/wastewater issues represented 14% (n=36) and building/planning consents 13% (n=35). Smaller volumes of contact related to other service requests (5%, n=13), noise control (3%, n=9), grounds and vegetation (2%, n=4), library services (2%, n=4), and facility hire (1%, n=3).

As this was a multiple-choice question where respondents could select all applicable options, the percentages reflect the proportion of those who contacted Council selecting each reason, and totals may exceed 100%.

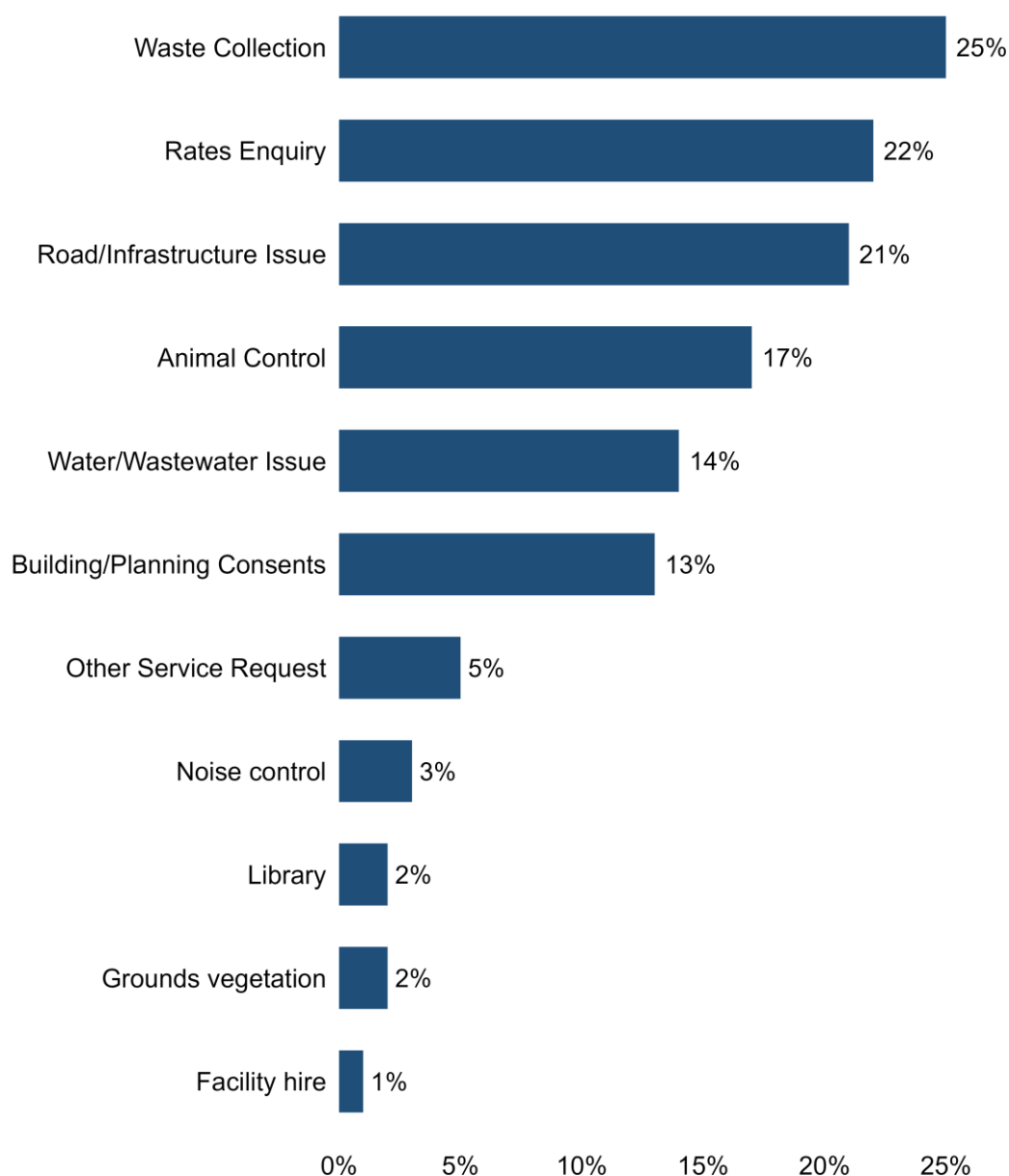


Figure 6: Reason for contacting Council (n=260 respondents who made contact)

4.3 Other Reasons for Contacting Council

67 respondents selected 'Other' and provided additional detail when asked why they contacted Council. These free-text responses were reviewed and, where a clear match existed, reassigned to the appropriate category. 32 responses were back-coded to existing categories (for example, dog registration reassigned to animal control, flooding to water/wastewater, and street lighting to road/infrastructure), and a further 20 formed the basis of four new standalone categories now shown in Figure 6: noise control (9 mentions), library (4), grounds and vegetation (4), and facility hire (3). Two responses were excluded as non-substantive.

The 13 responses listed in Table 5 are the remaining 'Other' cases - genuinely diverse one-offs that do not map to any existing or newly-created category.

Other Contact Reason	Frequency
Aquatic Centre	1
Cemetery	1
Chimney Smoke/Clean Air Policy	1
Complaint Process About Te Paepae o Aotea	1
Drone Usage in Public Parks and Beaches with the Councils Property Manager. ...	1
Error on Council Calendar	1
Flooding Caused by Neighbour	1
Flooding at Front Drive.	1
Food License for Community Group	1
General Inspection/Follow-Up of Activities Needed to Clear Residual Mess, ...	1
Job Query	1
Official Information Request	1
People Squatting on Land Near a Cemetery	1

Table 5: Other reasons for contacting Council

4.4 Contact Type by Demographics

Analysis of contact reasons by demographic groups reveals some notable patterns.

Age-based patterns:

Younger residents (18-34) were more likely to contact Council about waste collection (31%) than older age groups. The 35-49 age group showed the highest rates of contact regarding road/infrastructure issues (28%), rates enquiries (25%), and animal control (25%).

Water/wastewater issues were raised notably more often by older residents (20% among 65+, compared to 8% for 18-34 year olds), while animal control contacts declined with age (25% among 35-49 year olds versus 10% among 65+).

Gender-based patterns:

Male respondents showed higher rates of contact regarding water/wastewater issues (19% vs 10% for females) and road/infrastructure issues (23% vs 19%). Female respondents were slightly more likely to contact Council about rates enquiries (21% vs 19% for males). Animal control contact was similar across genders (17% each).

Ward-based patterns:

Te Hāwera Ward had the highest rate of waste collection contacts (33%), while Eltham-Kaponga Ward showed elevated rates of contact about rates enquiries (31%). Taranaki Coastal Ward stood out for water/wastewater issues (23%) and building/planning consents (19%). Pātea Ward showed higher rates of contact for road/infrastructure issues (21%) and water/wastewater issues (18%).

Contact Type by Age, Gender and Ward

Contact Type	Age				Gender		Ward				Total
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Eltham-Kaponga	Te Hāwera	Taranaki Coastal	Pātea	
Waste Collection	31% n=8	25% n=13	29% n=23	21% n=20	25% n=26	25% n=34	9% n=3	33% n=48	19% n=10	18% n=5	25% n=66
Rates Enquiry	19% n=5	25% n=13	18% n=14	23% n=22	19% n=20	21% n=29	31% n=10	20% n=29	23% n=12	18% n=5	22% n=56
Road/Infrastructure Issue	23% n=6	28% n=15	19% n=15	19% n=18	23% n=24	19% n=26	22% n=7	22% n=33	15% n=8	21% n=6	21% n=54
Animal Control	19% n=5	25% n=13	19% n=15	10% n=10	17% n=18	17% n=23	19% n=6	17% n=25	15% n=8	18% n=5	17% n=44
Water/Wastewater Issue	8% n=2	9% n=5	12% n=10	20% n=19	19% n=20	10% n=13	16% n=5	10% n=14	23% n=12	18% n=5	14% n=36
Building/Planning Consents	15% n=4	17% n=9	9% n=7	15% n=14	16% n=17	11% n=15	9% n=3	13% n=19	19% n=10	11% n=3	13% n=35
Other Service Request	-	11% n=6	-	7% n=7	3% n=3	5% n=7	-	5% n=8	8% n=4	4% n=1	5% n=13
Noise control	12% n=3	2% n=1	2% n=2	3% n=3	4% n=4	4% n=5	-	5% n=7	2% n=1	4% n=1	3% n=9
Library	-	-	4% n=3	1% n=1	1% n=1	2% n=3	3% n=1	1% n=1	-	7% n=2	2% n=4
Grounds vegetation	-	-	1% n=1	3% n=3	1% n=1	1% n=2	3% n=1	-	2% n=1	7% n=2	2% n=4
Facility hire	4% n=1	2% n=1	1% n=1	-	1% n=1	1% n=2	-	2% n=3	-	-	1% n=3

Note: Percentage of each demographic group who selected this option. Rows sorted by Total (most used first). Multiple options could be selected.

Table 6: Contact type by age, gender and ward

4.5 Satisfaction with Council Contact

Among the 259 respondents who provided a satisfaction rating for their contact with Council, 75% reported being satisfied (combining Neutral, Satisfied, and Very satisfied responses). However, 25% expressed dissatisfaction (11% very dissatisfied, 14% dissatisfied), indicating room for improvement in the contact experience. This represents a 6-point decline from the 2024/25 result of 81%, and the qualitative feedback outlined below helps explain why.

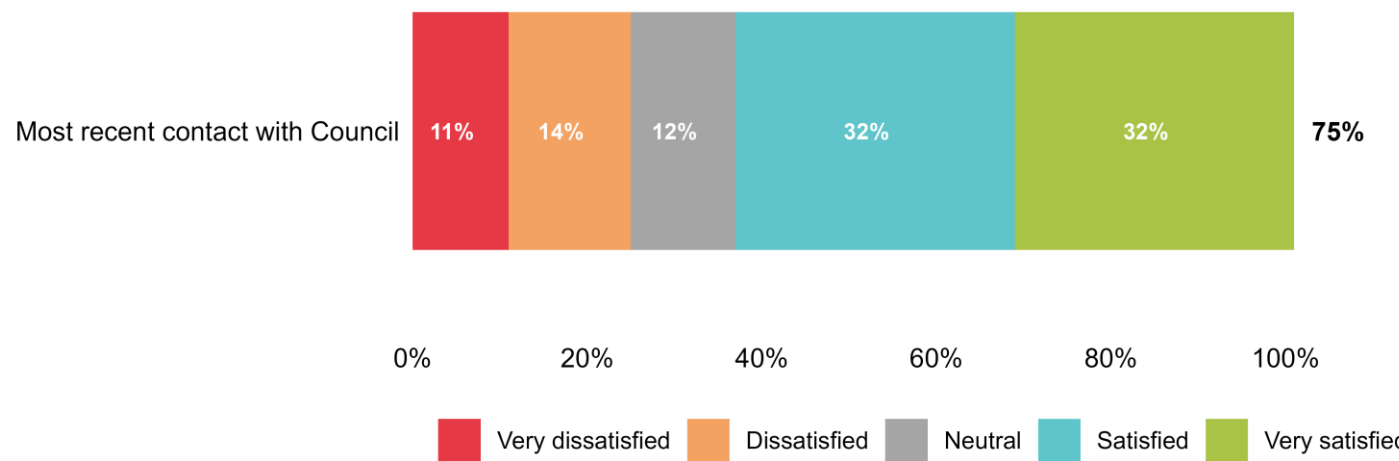


Figure 7: Satisfaction with Council contact (n=259)

Age-based patterns:

The 18-34 age group showed the highest contact satisfaction at 85% (n=26), followed by the 50-64 age group at 81% (n=79). The 65+ age group recorded 71% satisfaction (n=97), while the 35-49 age group showed the lowest at 67% (n=52).

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed higher satisfaction (79%, n=134) compared to male respondents (73%, n=104).

Ward-based patterns:

Pātea Ward showed the highest satisfaction with Council contact at 86% (n=28), followed by Te Hāwera Ward at 76% (n=146) and Taranaki Coastal Ward at 75% (n=52). Eltham-Kaponga Ward showed notably lower satisfaction at 61% (n=33), which may warrant further investigation to understand factors affecting contact experience in this area.

Overall Satisfaction: Contact Satisfaction by Demographics											
Service	Age				Gender		Ward				Total
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Eltham-Kaponga	Te Hāwera	Taranaki Coastal	Pātea	
Contact with Council	85% n=26	67% n=52	81% n=79	71% n=97	73% n=104	79% n=134	61% n=33	76% n=146	75% n=52	86% n=28	75% n=259

Note: Overall satisfaction = Neutral + Satisfied + Very satisfied. Ranked by Total satisfaction.

Table 7: Contact satisfaction by age, gender and ward

4.6 Feedback on Council Contact

The dominant theme from respondents who contacted Council was slow or inadequate follow-up. This included unreturned calls, unresolved complaints, and being told issues had been completed when they had not actually been addressed. Many reported having to follow up multiple times before any action was taken, with some noting issues going unresolved for years across a range of service areas including drainage, roading, building consents, rubbish collection, and dog registration. These experiences help explain why contact satisfaction dropped 6 points to 75% this year, and why 25% of respondents who made contact expressed outright dissatisfaction.

Alongside follow-up concerns, respondents raised issues about specific Council processes such as rates rebates and building consents, poor road and pothole maintenance, and dissatisfaction with waste collection services. A smaller but notable group praised the helpfulness, friendliness and professionalism of front desk and phone staff, though others felt they were fobbed off or stonewalled, particularly when dealing with specific departments. The pattern of lower satisfaction in Eltham-Kaponga Ward (61%) and the 35-49 age group (67%) likely reflects these experiences with follow-up and departmental responsiveness.

The coded responses identified **Customer Service** as the dominant category with 87 mentions. The most frequently raised specific concerns were no response or follow-up to enquiries (25 mentions), slow or inadequate action on complaints (23 mentions), and the need to improve communication and follow-up processes (15 mentions). Staff knowledge and helpfulness lacking (7 mentions) and building consent process problems (5 mentions) also featured, alongside 5 positive mentions of helpful and efficient staff.

Other themes included **Roading and Infrastructure** (12 mentions), **Animal Services** (8 mentions, predominantly about slow response to reports of roaming or barking dogs), **Rates and Financial** concerns (7 mentions), **Waste Services** (7 mentions, including bins not emptied properly), and **Three Waters** (6 mentions) - with the latter relating to stormwater drainage issues including flooding, blocked drains, and disputes over drainage between neighbouring properties.

Theme	Frequency
Customer Service	87
Concern: No response or follow-up to enquiry	25
Concern: Slow or inadequate action on complaints	23
Consider: Improve communication and follow-up processes	15
Concern: Staff knowledge and helpfulness lacking	7
Concern: Building consent process problems	5
Support: Helpful and efficient staff	5
Consider: More accessible and approachable service	4
Concern: Dog registration process issues	3
Roading & Infrastructure	12
Concern: Road surface condition	5
Concern: Footpath condition and maintenance	4
Concern: Poor quality road repairs and patching	3
Animal Services	8
Concern: Animal control slow response and poor follow-up	4
Concern: Barking dogs not resolved	4

Theme	Frequency
Rates & Financial	7
Concern: Rates not reflecting services received	4
Concern: Rates affordability	3
Waste Services	7
Concern: Bins not emptied properly or missed	4
Concern: Green waste bin cost and service issues	3
Three Waters	6
Concern: Stormwater drainage and flooding	6
Governance & Leadership	4
Concern: Council does not listen to residents	4
Community Engagement	3
Concern: Information hard to find or not provided	3

Table 8: Themes from contact feedback

5 Council Services

This section examines residents’ use of and satisfaction with Council services. The analysis covers service usage patterns and satisfaction levels for community services including the Hāwera Aquatic Centre, public libraries, public toilets, parks and reserves, cemeteries, and animal control services.

5.1 Council Services Used

Respondents were asked which Council services they had used in the last 12 months. Parks, reserves and playgrounds were the most commonly used service (63%, n=308), followed by public libraries (61%, n=299) and public toilets (56%, n=274). Cemeteries were used by 32% of respondents (n=154), while the Hāwera Aquatic Centre was used by 28% (n=136). Animal control services had the lowest usage at 9% (n=43), with 11% (n=56) indicating they had not used any of these services.

As this was a multiple-choice question where respondents could select all applicable options, the percentages reflect the proportion of respondents selecting each service, and totals may exceed 100%.

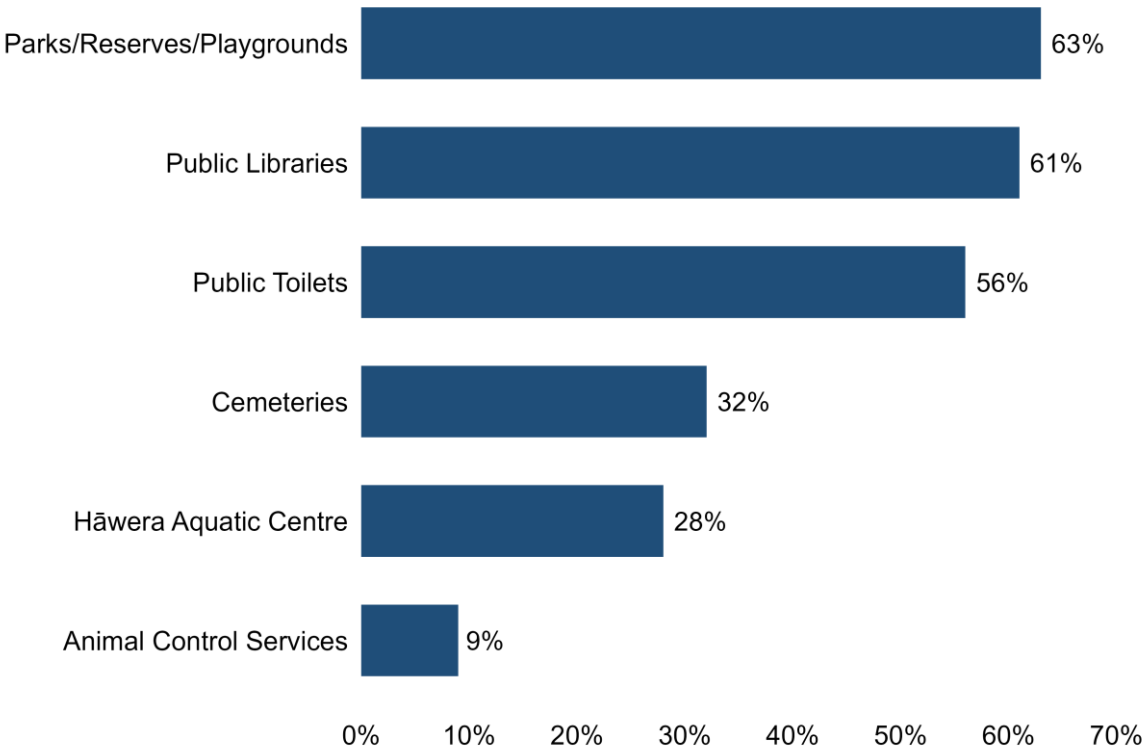


Figure 8: Council services used in last 12 months (n=488)

5.2 Services Usage by Demographics

Analysis of service usage by demographic groups reveals patterns in how different segments of the community engage with Council services.

Age-based patterns:

Younger residents (18-34 and 35-49) showed higher usage of parks, reserves and playgrounds (77% and 81% respectively) compared to older age groups (64% for 50-64, 48% for 65+). The Hāwera Aquatic Centre showed similar patterns with higher usage among younger residents (40% for 18-34, 49% for 35-49) compared to older residents (17-21%).

Cemetery usage increased with age, from 19% among 18-34 year olds to 33-36% among those aged 35 and over.

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed higher usage of public libraries (70% vs 50% for males) and parks/reserves/playgrounds (66% vs 58%). Male respondents showed slightly higher usage of cemeteries (34% vs 29% for females).

Ward-based patterns:

Te Hāwera Ward showed the highest usage of the Hāwera Aquatic Centre (39%), which is expected given its location. Taranaki Coastal Ward showed the highest public toilet usage (64%), while Eltham-Kaponga Ward had the highest library usage (72%).

Services Usage by Age, Gender and Ward

Service	Age				Gender		Ward				Total
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Eltham-Kaponga	Te Hāwera	Taranaki Coastal	Pātea	
Parks/Reserves/Playgrounds	77% n=58	81% n=74	64% n=81	48% n=92	58% n=117	66% n=163	62% n=40	67% n=186	58% n=51	53% n=31	63% n=308
Public Libraries	55% n=41	69% n=63	63% n=79	59% n=113	50% n=101	70% n=172	72% n=47	63% n=173	51% n=45	58% n=34	61% n=299
Public Toilets	61% n=46	68% n=62	52% n=66	50% n=95	58% n=116	56% n=137	58% n=38	55% n=151	64% n=56	49% n=29	56% n=274
Cemeteries	19% n=14	34% n=31	36% n=45	33% n=63	34% n=68	29% n=71	28% n=18	37% n=102	23% n=20	24% n=14	32% n=154
Hāwera Aquatic Centre	40% n=30	49% n=45	21% n=27	17% n=32	25% n=50	30% n=74	8% n=5	39% n=107	17% n=15	15% n=9	28% n=136
Animal Control Services	8% n=6	10% n=9	8% n=10	9% n=17	7% n=15	10% n=25	6% n=4	9% n=24	12% n=11	7% n=4	9% n=43

Note: Percentage of each demographic group who selected this option. Rows sorted by Total (most used first). Multiple options could be selected.

Table 9: Services usage by age, gender and ward

5.3 Community Services Satisfaction

Respondents who had used Council services were asked to rate their satisfaction on a five-point scale from Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied. The overall satisfaction figure combines Neutral, Satisfied, and Very satisfied responses.

Public libraries achieved the highest satisfaction (96%, n=295), followed by cemeteries (95%, n=146) and parks/reserves/playgrounds (92%, n=299). The Hāwera Aquatic Centre recorded 90% satisfaction (n=136), while public toilets achieved 87% (n=266). Animal control services had the lowest satisfaction at 69% (n=42), based on a small sample of users.

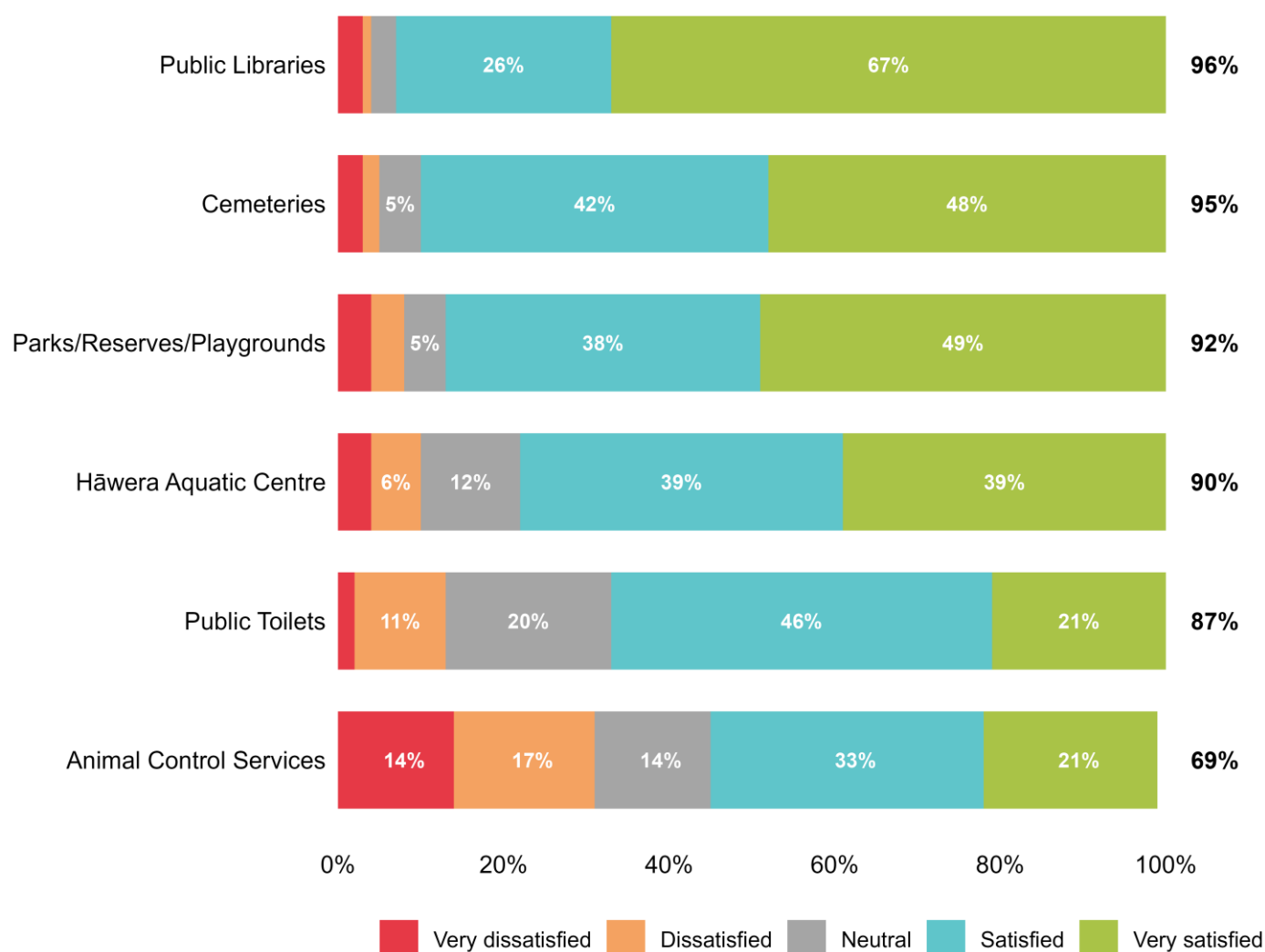


Figure 9: Community services satisfaction (n varies by service)

5.4 Community Services Satisfaction by Demographics

Analysis of satisfaction by demographic groups reveals patterns in how different segments of the community experience Council services.

Age-based patterns:

Older residents generally reported higher satisfaction across most services. The Hāwera Aquatic Centre showed satisfaction increasing with age, from 83% among 18-34 year olds to 97% among those aged 65+. Public toilets showed a similar pattern, with satisfaction ranging from 79% (35-49) to 92% (65+).

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed slightly higher satisfaction with public libraries (98% vs 95% for males) and cemeteries (96% vs 94%). Satisfaction with the Hāwera Aquatic Centre and public toilets was broadly similar across genders.

Ward-based patterns:

Pātea Ward showed the lowest satisfaction with public toilets (76%) compared to other wards (84-93%), and the lowest satisfaction with animal control services (25%, n=4). Eltham-Kaponga Ward showed notably lower satisfaction with the Hāwera Aquatic Centre (60%), though this was based on a very small sample of users (n=5).

Overall Satisfaction: Community Services by Demographics

Service	Age				Gender		Ward				Total
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Eltham-Kaponga	Te Hāwera	Taranaki Coastal	Pātea	
Public Libraries	93% n=41	97% n=63	99% n=77	95% n=111	95% n=100	98% n=169	96% n=46	96% n=170	96% n=45	100% n=34	96% n=295
Cemeteries	100% n=13	94% n=31	98% n=42	93% n=59	94% n=64	96% n=68	89% n=18	96% n=94	95% n=20	100% n=14	95% n=146
Parks/Reserves/Playgrounds	91% n=57	92% n=72	95% n=78	91% n=89	91% n=113	93% n=159	90% n=40	92% n=178	94% n=50	94% n=31	92% n=299
Hāwera Aquatic Centre	83% n=30	87% n=45	93% n=27	97% n=32	90% n=50	91% n=74	60% n=5	91% n=107	87% n=15	100% n=9	90% n=136
Public Toilets	82% n=45	79% n=62	92% n=65	92% n=89	88% n=111	87% n=135	84% n=37	88% n=145	93% n=55	76% n=29	87% n=266
Animal Control Services	60% n=5	78% n=9	60% n=10	76% n=17	71% n=14	68% n=25	75% n=4	65% n=23	91% n=11	25% n=4	69% n=42

Note: Overall satisfaction = Neutral + Satisfied + Very satisfied. Ranked by Total satisfaction.

Table 10: Community services satisfaction by age, gender and ward

5.5 Public Libraries

Satisfaction with Library Services

Public libraries achieved the highest satisfaction among all community services at 96% (n=295). Satisfaction was consistently high across all demographic groups, reaching 99% among 50-64 year olds and 100% among Pātea Ward residents.

Feedback on Library Services

Feedback reflected the strong satisfaction results, with respondents offering mixed but largely positive views. Where improvement suggestions were offered, they focused on practical service enhancements rather than fundamental concerns: the cost of printing, requests for more study spaces and desks with a dedicated technology area, better book selection and rotation for younger readers, and parking limitations. A smaller group raised concerns about antisocial behaviour and loitering, with suggestions including relocating sections of the library or introducing a dress code. The most critical strand of feedback related not to the service itself but to the cost of the new building, with some respondents viewing the spend as an over-budget vanity project that took priority over core infrastructure, and several also objecting to te reo Māori naming of the facility.

Theme	Frequency
Community Facilities	19
Support: Library services positive feedback	7
Consider: Library service improvements	6
Concern: Library antisocial behaviour and loitering	3
Concern: Library cost of new building and spending priorities	3
Customer Service	2
Concern: Staff knowledge and helpfulness lacking	2

Table 11: Themes from library services feedback

5.6 Cemeteries

Satisfaction with Cemetery Services

Overall satisfaction with cemetery services was 95% (n=146). Satisfaction was consistently high across all demographic groups, with 100% satisfaction recorded among 18-34 year olds and Pātea Ward residents.

Feedback on Cemetery Services

Consistent with the high satisfaction score, feedback was relatively light in volume. Where concerns were raised, they centred on maintenance standards slipping, particularly around lawn care, upkeep of headstones, and overgrown entranceways. Pest control emerged as a distinct issue, with several respondents mentioning rabbits burrowing into graves. Specific local issues included locked gates at the Manaia cemetery, sunken graves, and the need for more trees.

A notable group of respondents simply encouraged Council to keep up the good work, noting that cemeteries are generally well kept. This positive tone, combined with the 95% satisfaction score, suggests cemetery services are performing well overall, with maintenance consistency the main area to monitor.

Theme	Frequency
Environment & Amenity	14
Concern: Cemetery maintenance and pest issues	9
Support: Cemetery services well maintained	5

Table 12: Themes from cemetery services feedback

5.7 Parks, Reserves and Playgrounds

Satisfaction with Parks and Playgrounds

Overall satisfaction with parks, reserves and playgrounds was 92% (n=299). Satisfaction was high across all wards, ranging from 90% (Eltham-Kaponga) to 94% (Taranaki Coastal and Pātea). The 50-64 age group showed the highest satisfaction (95%).

Feedback on Parks and Playgrounds

The strong 92% satisfaction rating masks two distinct narratives in the feedback. Many respondents praised the quality and upkeep of parks, reserves and playgrounds, describing them as well kept, clean and enjoyable spaces for families and children, with King Edward Park frequently singled out for positive mention. At the same time, a substantial group called for modernisation and upgrades. The most common specific requests were upgraded playground equipment, splash pads or water play areas, BBQ and picnic areas, covered shelters, improved lighting, and more toilets near play areas.

Several respondents noted that while the gardens and some parks are well maintained, play facilities compare poorly to those in neighbouring districts such as New Plymouth and Stratford, and specifically flagged the state of the duck pond at King Edward Park in Hāwera as needing attention. Equity between towns was a recurring thread, with calls for better playground investment in Waverley, Normanby, Manaia, Eltham and Ōpunakē, where respondents highlighted the need for better equipment, shade, seating, toilets, and weed control. Maintenance concerns focused on the frequency of mowing and weeding, with some noting that contractor work is not being adequately monitored.

Theme	Frequency
Environment & Amenity	51
Consider: Upgrade park and playground facilities	18
Support: Parks and gardens well maintained	11
Concern: Park lawn mowing and weeding insufficient	9
Concern: Parks and playground equipment outdated	9
Consider: Improve specific parks in smaller towns	4

Table 13: Themes from parks and playgrounds feedback

5.8 Hāwera Aquatic Centre

Satisfaction with Hāwera Aquatic Centre

Overall satisfaction with the Hāwera Aquatic Centre was 90% (n=136), a 4-point decline from the 2024/25 result of 94%. Satisfaction increased with age, rising from 83% among 18-34 year olds to 97% among those aged 65+. Pātea Ward residents recorded 100% satisfaction (n=9), while Eltham-Kaponga Ward showed notably lower satisfaction (60%, n=5), though both figures are based on very small samples.

Feedback on Hāwera Aquatic Centre

The small decline in satisfaction is reflected in the qualitative feedback, which was more critical in tone than for most other community services. The dominant concerns related to cleanliness and the condition of changing rooms, with respondents describing them as dirty, cold, and outdated. Ageing facilities in need of renovation or upgrade, issues with mould and ventilation, and unfavourable comparisons with other centres such as Stratford were common. Several respondents also raised concerns about water temperature and accessibility, and the need for better family changing rooms.

Staff attitude and management emerged as a distinct and significant strand of feedback. Respondents described rude or disengaged staff and lifeguards, and some linked this to a negative work environment

and management culture. Several noted that families and schools are travelling to Stratford for swimming lessons as a result, and called for better swimming lesson availability and quality. Pricing was the third major concern, with respondents describing entry and lesson costs as too high compared to other centres around the country, and asking for discounts for local South Taranaki residents.

Constructive suggestions included extending the outdoor pool season, offering more activities and attractions for children, and creating a more welcoming and fun environment. A smaller group did speak positively about the centre, highlighting it alongside other well-maintained community facilities.

Theme	Frequency
Community Facilities	45
Consider: Aquatic Centre improvements	19
Concern: Aquatic Centre condition and maintenance	10
Concern: Aquatic Centre staff attitude and management	9
Concern: Aquatic Centre pricing too high	5
Support: Aquatic Centre positive experience	2

Table 14: Themes from Hāwera Aquatic Centre feedback

5.9 Public Toilets

Satisfaction with Public Toilets

Overall satisfaction with public toilets was 87% (n=266), up 8 points from 79% in 2024/25 and representing one of the largest improvements across all services. Satisfaction was highest among older residents (92% for both 50-64 and 65+) and lowest among the 35-49 age group (79%). Pātea Ward showed notably lower satisfaction (76%) compared to other wards (84-93%).

Feedback on Public Toilets

Despite the improved satisfaction score, public toilet feedback was the highest-volume of any community service question, with cleanliness the dominant theme. Respondents called for more frequent and thorough cleaning, particularly in Hāwera, Pātea, and Waverley, and better stocking of essentials such as toilet paper, soap, and hand towels. Upgrades or modernisation of older facilities, including those near the water tower, were also commonly requested, along with extended opening hours and improved signage.

Many respondents asked for additional public toilets in areas currently lacking them, with specific mention of smaller towns and parks, and several called for reopening or replacement of toilets that have been closed. Vandalism and graffiti were raised as persistent concerns, contributing to facilities feeling dirty, unsafe or unwelcoming, and several respondents suggested practical remedies such as timed automatic doors, modern anti-vandalism designs, better lighting, and facility upgrades. The lower satisfaction in Pātea Ward (76%) aligns with feedback from that area about cleanliness and facility condition in smaller towns.

Theme	Frequency
Community Facilities	118
Concern: Public toilet cleanliness and condition	62
Consider: Public toilet upgrades and access	46
Concern: Public toilet vandalism and graffiti	10
General Priorities	3
Consider: Improve timeliness of repairs and maintenance	3

Table 15: Themes from public toilets feedback

5.10 Animal Control Services

Satisfaction with Animal Control Services

Overall satisfaction with animal control services was 69% (n=42), the lowest among community services and based on a small sample of users. Satisfaction varied considerably across demographic groups, with Taranaki Coastal Ward recording the highest satisfaction at 91% (n=11), while Pātea Ward recorded 25% (n=4). These small sample sizes mean the results should be interpreted with caution.

Feedback on Animal Control Services

The low satisfaction score aligns with strongly worded feedback about enforcement and responsiveness. Respondents most commonly called for faster response times, better follow-up on complaints, and stronger enforcement action against aggressive or roaming dogs. Several noted that dangerous dogs remain in the community despite repeated complaints, and some described feeling unsafe walking in their neighbourhoods or taking children to shared spaces as a result. Persistent barking issues and dog attacks that did not result in any apparent follow-up were also common concerns, with respondents reporting they never heard back about the outcome of their reports.

Practical suggestions included increasing staffing levels and patrols, capping dog numbers per household, offering subsidised desexing, ensuring unregistered dogs are identified and addressed, and introducing compulsory obedience training. A number of respondents raised fairness concerns, noting that responsible dog owners pay registration fees while problem owners face little consequence. Dog registration process issues also came through, including confusing paperwork, threatening letters about unpaid fees sent in error, and a call for the registration process to be fully available online.

A small number of respondents expressed satisfaction with the service, praising increased staffing levels and suggesting that greater focus is also needed on tethered, abused and hidden animals.

Theme	Frequency
Animal Services	35
Concern: Animal control slow response and poor follow-up	12
Consider: Stronger enforcement of dog bylaws	8
Concern: Dogs roaming and not contained	5
Concern: Aggressive and dangerous dogs not dealt with	4
Consider: More animal control officers and patrols	4
Concern: Animal control officer conduct issues	2

Table 16: Themes from animal control services feedback

6 Three Waters

This section examines residents’ satisfaction with Council’s three waters services: water supply, wastewater/sewerage, and stormwater management. These essential infrastructure services are critical to community wellbeing and represent significant Council investment.

6.1 Three Waters Satisfaction Overview

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with each of the three waters services on a five-point scale from Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied. The overall satisfaction figure combines Neutral, Satisfied, and Very satisfied responses.

Wastewater/sewerage achieved the highest satisfaction (95%, n=336), followed by water supply (87%, n=399). Stormwater management recorded the lowest satisfaction among the three waters services at 80% (n=364), and also showed the largest decline of any service this year, dropping 10 points from 90% in 2024/25.

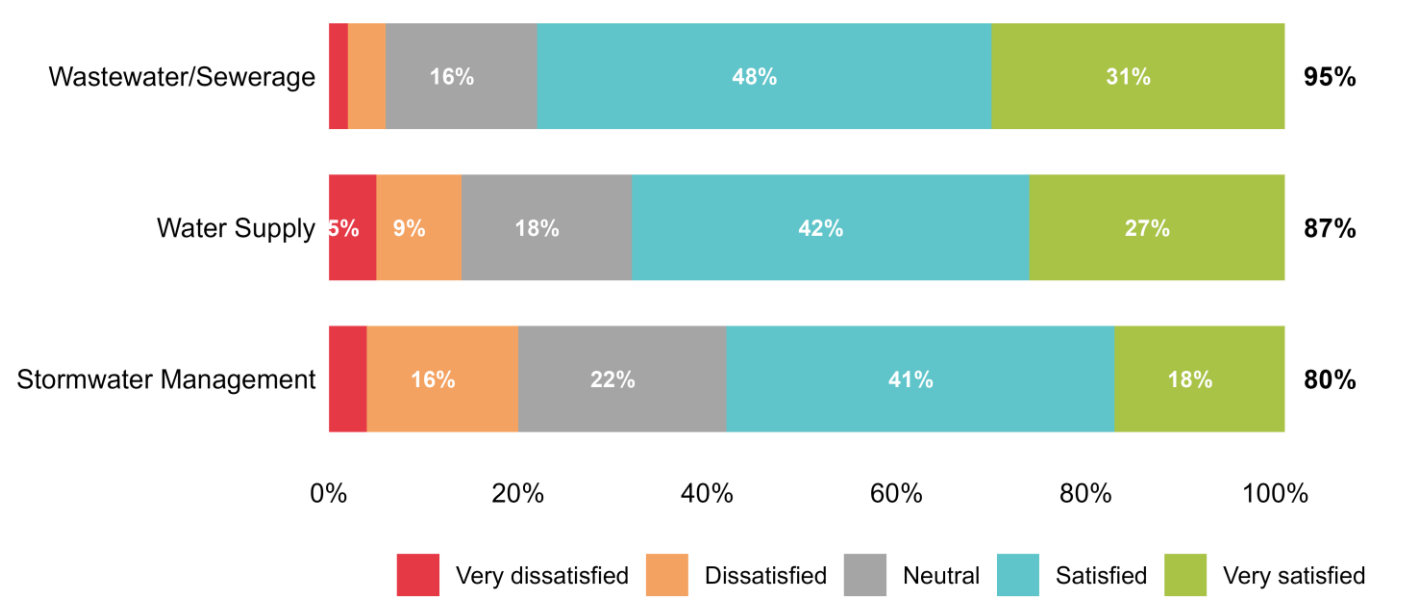


Figure 10: Three waters satisfaction (n varies by service)

Overall Satisfaction: Three Waters by Demographics											
Service	Age				Gender		Ward				Total
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Eltham-Kaponga	Te Hāwera	Taranaki Coastal	Pātea	
Wastewater/Sewerage	96% n=53	93% n=61	94% n=77	95% n=141	94% n=136	96% n=173	95% n=44	95% n=213	95% n=43	89% n=36	95% n=336
Water Supply	81% n=59	89% n=70	86% n=103	89% n=162	85% n=163	89% n=204	82% n=50	91% n=246	84% n=61	74% n=42	87% n=399
Stormwater Management	75% n=55	85% n=66	82% n=87	80% n=152	77% n=142	83% n=190	76% n=46	82% n=222	82% n=55	71% n=41	80% n=364

Note: Overall satisfaction = Neutral + Satisfied + Very satisfied. Ranked by Total satisfaction.

Table 17: Three waters satisfaction by age, gender and ward

6.2 Water Supply

Satisfaction with Water Supply

Overall satisfaction with Council-provided drinking water was 87% (n=399).

Age-based patterns:

Satisfaction was relatively consistent across age groups, ranging from 81% (18-34) to 89% (35-49 and 65+).

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed slightly higher satisfaction (89%) compared to male respondents (85%).

Ward-based patterns:

Te Hāwera Ward recorded the highest water supply satisfaction at 91% (n=246). Pātea Ward showed notably lower satisfaction at 74% (n=42), while Eltham-Kaponga (82%, n=50) and Taranaki Coastal (84%, n=61) were in between. The lower satisfaction in Pātea Ward may warrant further investigation into localised water quality or supply issues.

Feedback on Water Supply

The headline 87% satisfaction figure masks persistent concerns about drinking water quality. Respondents frequently described the water as having a poor taste, smell, or appearance, with words like earthy, muddy, dirty, and overly chlorinated recurring throughout the feedback. Many noted the water is undrinkable without a filter, and some reported resorting to purchasing bottled water. Specific towns flagged for quality issues included Eltham, Waverley, Hāwera, and Manaia, which aligns with the lower satisfaction seen in Pātea Ward (74%, which covers Waverley and Pātea) and Eltham-Kaponga Ward (82%). Several respondents expressed frustration that water quality issues have persisted for years without being adequately resolved.

Beyond quality, a range of other concerns came through. Water supply cost and charges were flagged, particularly for rural and farm water, fixed charges on properties not using water, and inconsistent metering policies. Low water pressure, leaking or bursting pipes, and poor communication or lost reports when leaks were reported were also raised, with some respondents specifically criticising the performance of contractor Veolia. Several called for more regular pipe maintenance, renewal, and forward planning for water infrastructure.

A substantial group of respondents expressed clear satisfaction with the water service overall, with many praising the Council for keeping water services in-house and maintaining what they regard as good water quality. This split in sentiment helps explain how water supply can sit at 87% satisfaction while also generating consistent quality complaints.

Theme	Frequency
Three Waters	84
Concern: Water quality issues	56
Concern: Water pipe leaks and bursts	9
Concern: Water supply cost and charges	7
Concern: Water pressure issues	6
Support: Satisfaction with water services	6
General Priorities	7
Consider: Improve timeliness of repairs and maintenance	4
Consider: Prioritise infrastructure over nice-to-haves	3

Theme	Frequency
Rates & Financial	6
Concern: Rates not reflecting services received	3
Concern: Value for money from rates	3
Governance & Leadership	3
Concern: Council does not listen to residents	3

Table 18: Themes from water supply feedback

6.3 Wastewater and Sewerage

Satisfaction with Wastewater Services

Overall satisfaction with wastewater/sewerage services was 95% (n=336), the highest among the three waters services.

Age-based patterns:

Satisfaction was high across all age groups, ranging from 93% (35-49) to 96% (18-34).

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed slightly higher satisfaction (96%) compared to male respondents (94%).

Ward-based patterns:

Eltham-Kaponga, Te Hāwera and Taranaki Coastal Wards all recorded 95% satisfaction, with Pātea Ward slightly lower at 89% (n=36).

Feedback on Wastewater Services

Consistent with the strong 95% satisfaction result, wastewater feedback was relatively light in volume and focused on targeted infrastructure concerns rather than widespread service failure. The most common theme was the age and condition of wastewater pipes, with respondents calling for upgrade, replacement, and renewal of ageing infrastructure to keep up with population growth and prevent blockages and backups. Several described frustrating experiences dealing with Council over liability for blockages, slow response times, and the cost burden placed on residents for problems they felt were Council's responsibility.

Extending the wastewater network to currently unserved areas emerged as a distinct theme, with Larlin Drive flagged repeatedly as a specific location where connection to the main sewer line is needed due to issues with septic systems. Several respondents also linked wastewater issues to stormwater and flooding problems during heavy rain. Better public education on what should and should not go down drains was suggested.

A number of respondents expressed satisfaction with current wastewater services, and several emphasised that Council should prioritise this kind of core infrastructure maintenance over what they see as non-essential spending.

Theme	Frequency
Three Waters	31
Concern: Wastewater pipe condition and blockages	12
Consider: Extend wastewater network to unserved areas	8
Support: Satisfaction with water services	5
Concern: Stormwater drainage and flooding	3
Consider: Improve stormwater maintenance and capacity	3
Rates & Financial	4
Concern: Rates not reflecting services received	4
General Priorities	3
Consider: Prioritise infrastructure over nice-to-haves	3

Table 19: Themes from wastewater services feedback

6.4 Stormwater Management

Satisfaction with Stormwater Management

Overall satisfaction with stormwater management was 80% (n=364), the lowest among the three waters services and representing the largest decline of any measure in this year’s survey (down 10 points from 90% in 2024/25).

Age-based patterns:

The 35-49 age group showed the highest satisfaction (85%), while the 18-34 age group recorded the lowest (75%). The 50-64 and 65+ age groups showed 82% and 80% satisfaction respectively.

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed higher satisfaction (83%) compared to male respondents (77%).

Ward-based patterns:

Te Hāwera and Taranaki Coastal Wards recorded the highest stormwater satisfaction at 82% (n=222 and n=55 respectively). Pātea Ward showed the lowest satisfaction at 71% (n=41), followed by Eltham-Kaponga Ward at 76% (n=46). These variations may indicate localised drainage issues requiring attention.

Feedback on Stormwater Management

Stormwater generated the largest volume of feedback across the three waters services, and the qualitative narrative helps explain the 10-point decline. The overwhelming theme was maintenance frequency: respondents called for more regular and proactive cleaning of drains, grates, gutters, sumps and culverts to keep them clear of leaves, debris and rubbish, particularly during autumn and before heavy rain events. Many linked blockages directly to surface flooding in their streets and on their properties, with several noting they currently have to clear drains themselves because the service is not keeping up.

A substantial number of respondents raised concerns about inadequate stormwater infrastructure capacity rather than just maintenance, including a lack of stormwater connections in certain areas and issues with neighbouring properties diverting stormwater. Rural roadside drainage was flagged by several respondents as needing more targeted and careful work, and there were calls to avoid planting deciduous trees near drains. A number of respondents expressed frustration about long-standing drainage issues remaining unresolved despite repeated complaints, which connects directly to the customer service concerns about lack of follow-up raised elsewhere in the survey.

The lower satisfaction in Pātea Ward (71%) and Eltham-Kaponga Ward (76%) aligns with the strength of feedback about unresolved localised drainage issues and suggests targeted attention in these areas would be valuable.

Theme	Frequency
Three Waters	149
Consider: Improve stormwater maintenance and capacity	90
Concern: Stormwater drainage and flooding	55
Support: Satisfaction with water services	4
General Priorities	8
Consider: Improve timeliness of repairs and maintenance	5
Consider: Better contractor oversight and quality control	3
Roading & Infrastructure	7
Concern: Rural road maintenance inadequate	4

Theme	Frequency
Concern: Road surface condition	3

Table 20: Themes from stormwater management feedback

7 Roads and Infrastructure

This section examines residents’ satisfaction with Council roads. Road infrastructure is a core Council responsibility and represents a significant area of community interest and investment.

7.1 Roads Satisfaction Overview

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with Council roads on a five-point scale from Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied. The overall satisfaction figure combines Neutral, Satisfied, and Very satisfied responses.

Council roads recorded the lowest satisfaction of all services measured in this survey at 61% (n=480). This was notably lower than other infrastructure-related services such as stormwater management (80%) and represents an area requiring attention. The result represents an 8-point decline from 69% in 2024/25, though it is broadly consistent with the longer-term pattern of 58-59% recorded in 2022-2024.

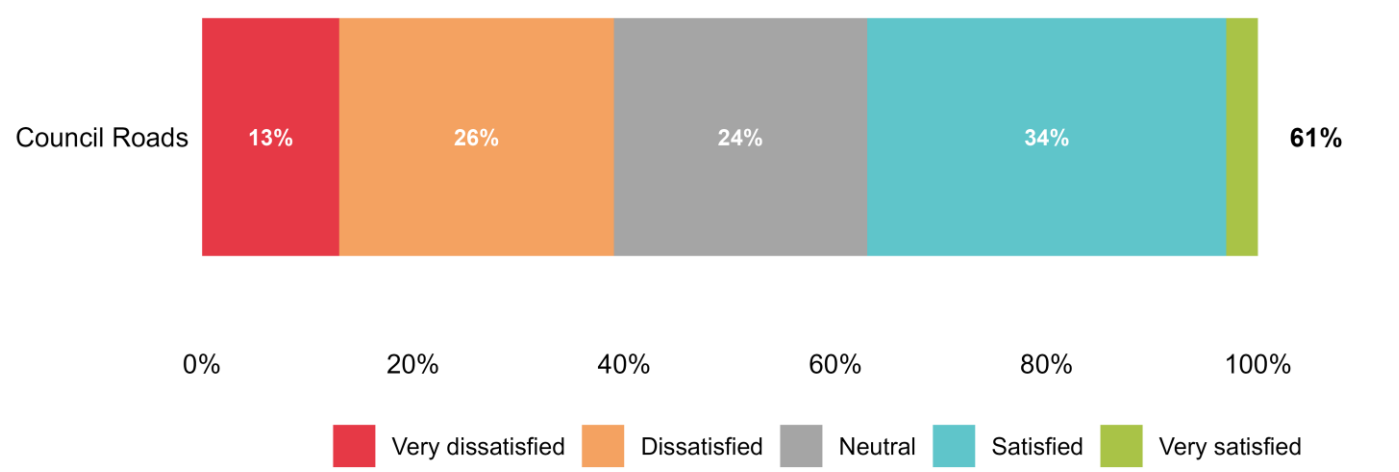


Figure 11: Roads satisfaction (n=480)

Overall Satisfaction: Infrastructure by Demographics											
Service	Age				Gender		Ward				Total
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Eltham-Kaponga	Te Hāwera	Taranaki Coastal	Pātea	
Council Roads	60% n=75	60% n=87	53% n=124	66% n=189	62% n=199	58% n=243	57% n=65	61% n=271	51% n=86	78% n=58	61% n=480

Note: Overall satisfaction = Neutral + Satisfied + Very satisfied. Ranked by Total satisfaction.

Table 21: Roads satisfaction by age, gender and ward

7.2 Council Roads

Satisfaction with Council Roads

Overall satisfaction with Council roads was 61% (n=480), with 39% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction (13% very dissatisfied, 26% dissatisfied).

Age-based patterns:

The 65+ age group showed the highest satisfaction (66%), while the 50-64 age group recorded the lowest (53%). The 18-34 and 35-49 age groups both showed 60% satisfaction.

Gender-based patterns:

Male and female respondents showed similar satisfaction levels (62% and 58% respectively).

Ward-based patterns:

Pātea Ward recorded the highest roads satisfaction at 78% (n=58). Taranaki Coastal Ward showed the lowest satisfaction at 51% (n=86), followed by Eltham-Kaponga Ward at 57% (n=65). Te Hāwera Ward recorded 61% satisfaction (n=271). These variations may indicate localised road condition issues requiring targeted attention.

Feedback on Council Roads

Roads generated by far the largest volume of qualitative feedback of any service area in the survey, and the strength of concern is consistent with it being the lowest-scoring service overall. The dominant theme was potholes and the poor quality of road repairs. Respondents frequently described patching work as failing within days or weeks and requiring repeated fixes, with many calling for Council to use higher-quality materials and hold contractors to better standards. A “fix it once, fix it right” sentiment came through strongly, with several respondents suggesting local tradespeople would do better work, and criticising the practice of awarding contracts to the cheapest bidder.

Contractor performance was a distinct and significant strand. Respondents called for Council to enforce higher workmanship standards, use better materials, hold contractors accountable for lasting results, and properly inspect and sign off completed work before acceptance. Specific local roads and intersections were repeatedly cited as examples of poor contractor performance.

Safety concerns were widespread, with respondents raising dangerous intersections and calling for roundabouts or traffic lights, particularly at the Glover Road and Turuturu Road intersection. Frustration with recent speed limit changes, inadequate road signage, narrow roads, and the need for speed bumps near schools and busy areas also came through. Heavy truck traffic on roads not built to handle such use was flagged as accelerating road damage.

Rural roading concerns were prominent. Respondents highlighted persistent potholes, inadequate drainage, narrow carriageways, unsealed sections lacking dust mitigation, and repairs that do not last. A number questioned whether rural ratepayers receive equitable value given the limited services and maintenance they experience compared to urban areas, which aligns with the lower satisfaction in Taranaki Coastal Ward (51%). Road widening on narrow rural and urban roads, and the upgrade or removal of dangerous one-lane bridges, were frequent requests.

Footpath condition was also raised extensively, including uneven surfaces, insufficient width, overgrown vegetation, and accessibility issues for elderly residents, mobility scooter users, and families with young children. Calls for new footpaths in areas currently lacking them, particularly on busy roads in Hāwera’s outer suburbs such as Turuturu Road and Larlin Drive, featured, along with calls for better maintenance in Manaia, Kaponga, and Eltham.

Roadworks management came through as a further source of frustration, with cones and signage left in place long after work is completed, multiple roads worked on simultaneously causing disruption, and jobs

not finished to a satisfactory standard. A smaller group of respondents acknowledged that Council is making efforts and mentioned pothole repairs and general maintenance as ongoing areas of focus.

Theme	Frequency
Roading & Infrastructure	360
Concern: Road surface condition	143
Concern: Poor quality road repairs and patching	80
Consider: Better contractor standards and accountability	35
Concern: Speed signage and road safety issues	27
Consider: Road widening and bridge upgrades	23
Concern: Rural road maintenance inadequate	19
Concern: Roadworks management issues	17
Concern: Footpath condition and maintenance	9
Support: Satisfaction with roads	7
General Priorities	39
Consider: Improve timeliness of repairs and maintenance	32
Consider: Prioritise infrastructure over nice-to-haves	7
Governance & Leadership	13
Concern: Spending priorities questioned	10
Concern: Council does not listen to residents	3
Rates & Financial	7
Concern: Value for money from rates	4
Concern: Rates not reflecting services received	3
Customer Service	5
Concern: Slow or inadequate action on complaints	5
Three Waters	5
Concern: Stormwater drainage and flooding	5

Table 22: Themes from roads feedback

8 Waste Services

This section examines residents’ satisfaction with Council’s waste services: refuse bin collection and recycling services. These services are essential to community wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

8.1 Waste Services Satisfaction Overview

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with each waste service on a five-point scale from Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied. The overall satisfaction figure combines Neutral, Satisfied, and Very satisfied responses.

Recycling services achieved higher satisfaction (87%, n=399) compared to refuse bin collection (77%, n=386). The category average of 82% places waste services in the mid-range of Council services. Refuse bin collection has declined from 90% in 2023/24 to 79% in 2024/25 and 77% this year, suggesting the concerns around the current service model are sustained rather than new.

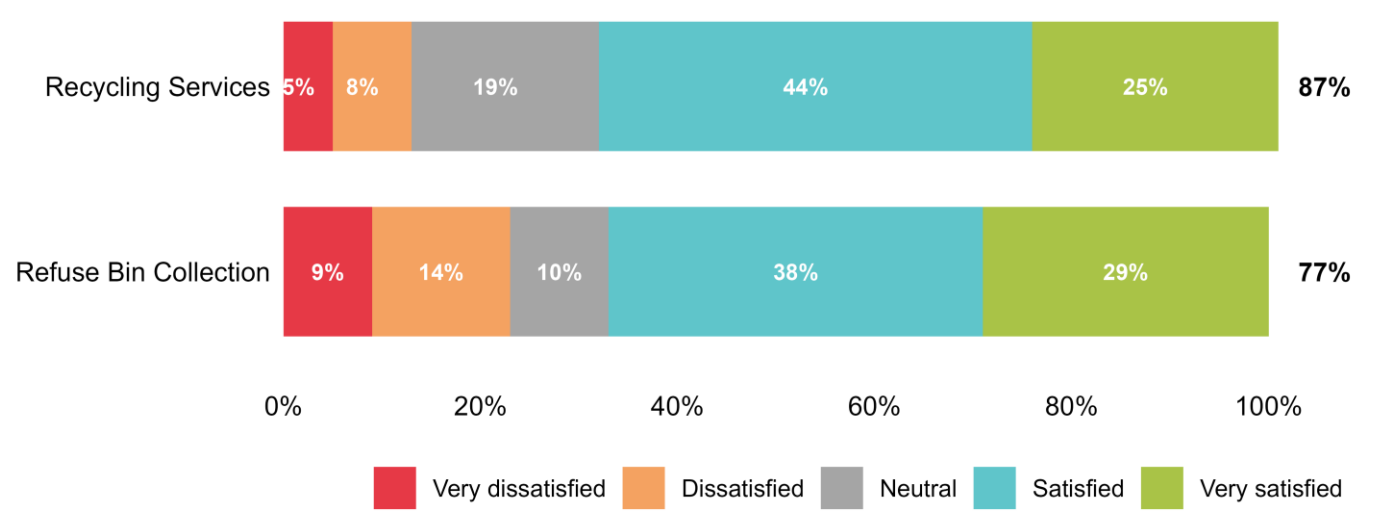


Figure 12: Waste services satisfaction (n varies by service)

Overall Satisfaction: Waste Services by Demographics											
Service	Age				Gender		Ward				Total
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Eltham-Kaponga	Te Hāwera	Taranaki Coastal	Pātea	
Recycling Services	82% n=61	82% n=71	88% n=109	92% n=154	86% n=163	90% n=206	87% n=53	88% n=240	88% n=64	88% n=42	87% n=399
Refuse Bin Collection	58% n=59	62% n=69	78% n=98	90% n=156	74% n=158	81% n=196	79% n=48	74% n=240	84% n=55	81% n=43	77% n=386

Note: Overall satisfaction = Neutral + Satisfied + Very satisfied. Ranked by Total satisfaction.

Table 23: Waste services satisfaction by age, gender and ward

8.2 Refuse Bin Collection

Satisfaction with Refuse Bin Collection

Overall satisfaction with refuse bin collection was 77% (n=386), with 23% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction (9% very dissatisfied, 14% dissatisfied).

Age-based patterns:

Satisfaction increased notably with age, from 58% among the 18-34 age group to 90% among those aged 65+. The 35-49 and 50-64 age groups showed intermediate satisfaction at 62% and 78% respectively.

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed higher satisfaction (81%) compared to male respondents (74%).

Ward-based patterns:

Taranaki Coastal Ward recorded the highest refuse collection satisfaction at 84% (n=55), followed by Pātea Ward at 81% (n=43) and Eltham-Kaponga Ward at 79% (n=48). Te Hāwera Ward showed the lowest satisfaction at 74% (n=240).

Feedback on Refuse Bin Collection

The dissatisfaction visible in the quantitative data, particularly among younger residents (58% for 18-34, 62% for 35-49), is directly explained by the qualitative feedback. The dominant theme was collection frequency and bin size. A large number of respondents called for a return to weekly pickups or larger bins, noting that the current smaller red bins with fortnightly collection are inadequate for larger households and families with children, particularly when nappies are involved. Many described overflowing bins, hygiene problems such as maggots and rodents, unpleasant smells, illegal dumping, and the additional cost of dump runs to manage excess waste. This aligns closely with the much lower satisfaction among younger age groups, who are more likely to have young families.

Bins not being collected from certain addresses or streets, or not being fully emptied during collection, was another common concern, along with bins being damaged or carelessly handled, and frustration with strict rules around bin placement and contamination (noted as particularly difficult for elderly residents). Rural residents raised the lack of kerbside collection as a distinct issue, with several noting the impracticality of transporting bins long distances to collection points while still paying rates.

The food scraps bin service attracted notable criticism, with respondents describing it as impractical, wasteful of money, and unnecessary, and some calling for it to be discontinued in favour of a return to weekly general rubbish collection. Green waste bin cost and service issues featured, with many suggesting it should be included in rates rather than charged separately. Transfer station costs were flagged as too high, with some warning that high disposal costs are contributing to fly-tipping around the district.

A number of respondents raised the fairness of rates in relation to waste services, feeling they are paying rates without receiving adequate service. A smaller group did express satisfaction with current waste services, noting the rubbish and recycling systems are working well.

Theme	Frequency
Waste Services	162
Concern: Refuse collection frequency inadequate	61
Concern: Refuse bin size inadequate	51
Concern: Bins not emptied properly or missed	13
Concern: No kerbside collection for rural properties	13
Support: Satisfaction with waste services	6

Theme	Frequency
Concern: Green waste bin cost and service issues	5
Concern: Recycling rules and limitations	5
Concern: Food waste bin service unwanted	4
Concern: Transfer station costs too high	4
Rates & Financial	9
Concern: Rates not reflecting services received	9

Table 24: Themes from refuse bin collection feedback

8.3 Recycling Services

Satisfaction with Recycling Services

Overall satisfaction with recycling services was 87% (n=399), the higher of the two waste services and up 4 points from 83% last year.

Age-based patterns:

Satisfaction increased gradually with age, from 82% among 18-34 and 35-49 year olds to 92% among those aged 65+. The 50-64 age group showed 88% satisfaction.

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed slightly higher satisfaction (90%) compared to male respondents (86%).

Ward-based patterns:

Satisfaction with recycling services was consistently high across all wards, ranging from 87% (Eltham-Kaponga) to 88% (Te Hāwera, Taranaki Coastal and Pātea).

Feedback on Recycling Services

Despite the higher satisfaction rating, recycling feedback was substantial in volume and contained a consistent set of suggestions. The most common theme was frustration with strict enforcement of rules around accepted materials and bin compliance, which many respondents felt was overly punitive. The restriction to plastics 1, 2 and 5, and the inability to recycle lids and bottle caps, came through as specific frustrations, along with calls for expanded recycling options including soft plastics, batteries, electrical goods and glass. Clearer signage and better education about what can be recycled were commonly requested.

Collection frequency and bin size were raised alongside refuse concerns, with respondents noting the bins are too small for fortnightly collection, particularly for larger households. Some called for weekly collections. Rural access was a distinct and significant theme, with respondents frustrated that rural properties and some edge-of-town areas are not covered by kerbside recycling despite residents paying rates. Extending service boundaries, improving access to transfer stations and drop-off points, and extending transfer station hours were all suggested.

Transfer station costs were raised as a barrier for items not collected kerbside, and some respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the food scraps bin, calling for it to be reconsidered. Bins not being emptied properly or being missed was also raised. A substantial group provided positive feedback on current waste services, noting the systems are working well, though some flagged the fortnightly glass bin collection as insufficient during holiday periods.

Theme	Frequency
Waste Services	103
Concern: Recycling rules and limitations	35
Concern: Refuse collection frequency inadequate	18
Concern: Refuse bin size inadequate	15
Concern: No kerbside collection for rural properties	10
Support: Satisfaction with waste services	10
Concern: Transfer station costs too high	6
Concern: Bins not emptied properly or missed	5
Concern: Food waste bin service unwanted	4

Table 25: Themes from recycling services feedback

9 Governance and Overall Performance

This section examines residents' perceptions of Council governance and overall performance. These questions use a five-point scale from Strongly disagree to Strongly agree. The overall satisfaction figure combines Neutral, Agree, and Strongly agree responses.

9.1 Governance Overview

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with three aspects of Council governance: whether decisions represent the best interests of the District, opportunities to participate in decision-making, and knowledge of where to access Council information.

Satisfaction levels were high across all governance measures, and represent a strong year-on-year lift. Knowing where to access Council information recorded the highest satisfaction at 93% (n=443, up from 85%), followed by satisfaction with opportunities to participate at 92% (n=435, up from 70%, the largest improvement of any measure this year). Satisfaction that decisions represent the best interests of the District recorded the lowest result at 85% (n=431, up from 64%).

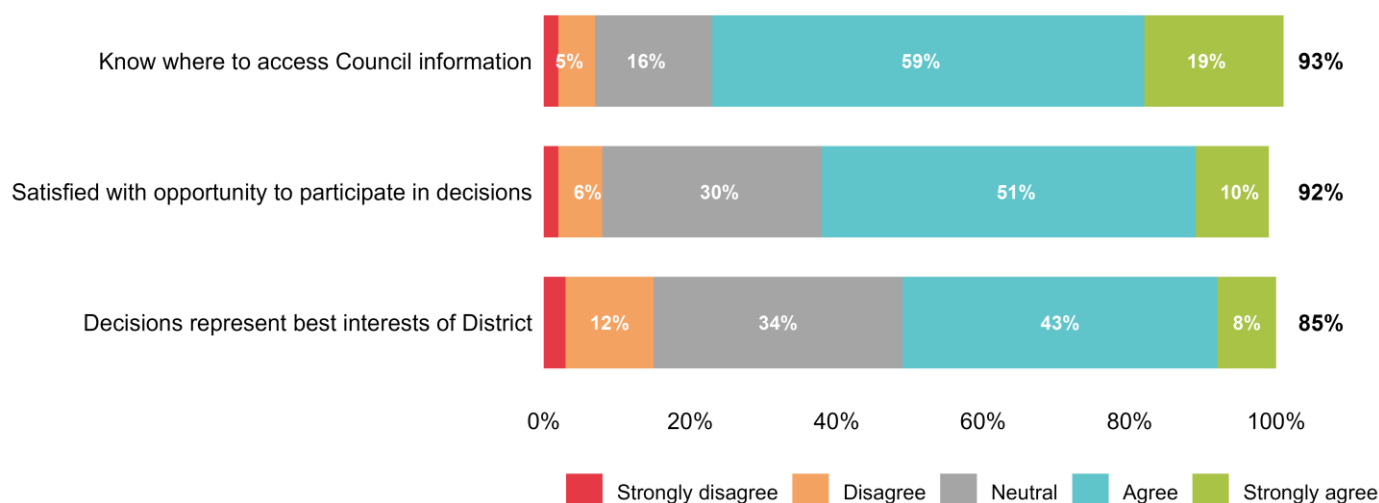


Figure 13: Governance satisfaction (n varies by question)

Overall Agreement: Governance by Demographics											
Question	Age				Gender		Ward				Total
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Eltham-Kaponga	Te Hāwera	Taranaki Coastal	Pātea	
Know where to access Council information	92% n=65	92% n=84	93% n=115	95% n=175	94% n=189	93% n=229	93% n=59	94% n=250	90% n=81	94% n=53	93% n=443
Satisfied with opportunity to participate in decisions	92% n=62	87% n=82	91% n=117	95% n=169	91% n=185	93% n=222	95% n=60	93% n=245	86% n=81	92% n=49	92% n=435
Decisions represent best interests of District	83% n=60	79% n=81	82% n=117	93% n=168	83% n=183	89% n=223	85% n=61	87% n=249	78% n=74	89% n=47	85% n=431

Note: Overall agreement = Neutral + Agree + Strongly agree. Ranked by Total agreement.

Table 26: Governance satisfaction by age, gender and ward

9.2 Decisions Represent Best Interests of District

Satisfaction with Council Decision-Making

Overall satisfaction that decisions made by Council represent the best interests of the District was 85% (n=431), the lowest of the three governance measures but up 21 points from 64% in 2024/25. Of those dissatisfied, 12% selected Disagree and 3% selected Strongly disagree.

Age-based patterns:

The 65+ age group showed the highest satisfaction (93%), while the 35-49 age group recorded the lowest (79%). The 18-34 and 50-64 age groups showed 83% and 82% satisfaction respectively.

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed higher satisfaction (89%) compared to male respondents (83%).

Ward-based patterns:

Pātea Ward recorded the highest satisfaction at 89% (n=47), followed by Te Hāwera Ward at 87% (n=249). Taranaki Coastal Ward showed the lowest satisfaction at 78% (n=74), which may indicate localised concerns about representation or decision-making priorities.

Feedback on Decision-Making

Although the quantitative result represents a substantial improvement, the qualitative feedback on decision-making was among the highest-volume of any question in the survey, suggesting that residents who engaged with the question still have plenty to say about how decisions are made. The dominant theme was genuine public consultation: respondents called for Council to do more listening and less telling, with many feeling that current consultation processes are tokenistic and that decisions are often made before public input is sought. Suggestions included online polls, more accessible information channels, informal community meetings, and open-ended feedback opportunities rather than limited tick-box options, particularly to reach different age groups and outlying areas.

Transparency in decision-making was a closely related theme. Respondents called for clearer and more accessible communication with the public, plain language, and fuller consultation with ratepayers before major projects and spending decisions are finalised, with several expressing concern that decisions are being made without adequate public input or that information is selectively presented.

Spending priorities featured heavily in the decision-making feedback, with many respondents concerned about what they see as extravagant or unnecessary projects, including the new library, the Hāwera i-SITE, cycleways, and decorative features. The call was consistently for greater fiscal restraint, maintaining existing infrastructure, and fairer distribution of investment. Equity across the district was a related thread, with respondents from Manaia, Pātea, Waverley, Eltham, Ōpunakē, and Kaponga feeling smaller towns are being neglected in favour of Hāwera and calling for fairer distribution of funding, services, infrastructure maintenance, and events. The lower satisfaction in Taranaki Coastal Ward (78%) aligns with these concerns.

A distinct strand of feedback expressed opposition to te reo Māori in council signage, building names, and communications, with some respondents calling for English to be prioritised and arguing that bicultural initiatives, iwi consultation, and Māori wards are unnecessary. Others went the other way, expressing support for Māori partnership and representation, concern about the removal of Māori wards, and calls for meaningful iwi input beyond ceremonial roles. Calls to reduce Council staffing, cut management costs, reduce reliance on external consultants, and trim bureaucratic red tape also came through.

Positive feedback recognised Community Boards and consultation processes working well, praised Council for standing up to central government on issues such as water management and seabed mining, and acknowledged collaborative work with other Taranaki councils.

Theme	Frequency
Governance & Leadership	254
Consider: More genuine public consultation	94
Concern: Council does not listen to residents	58
Consider: Better transparency in decision-making	36
Concern: Spending priorities questioned	23
Consider: Smaller towns need more attention	16
Consider: Reduce council staffing and overheads	12
Concern: Opposition to te reo Maori and bicultural initiatives	9
Support: Community boards and consultation working well	3
Support: Maori partnership and representation	3
Community Engagement	33
Consider: More social media and digital engagement	10
Concern: Information hard to find or not provided	9
Consider: Use local newspapers and letterbox drops	5
Consider: Email updates to ratepayers	3
Consider: Improve council website usability	3
Consider: Provide print and non-digital information options	3
Rates & Financial	16
Concern: Rates not reflecting services received	7
Concern: Value for money from rates	5
Concern: Rates affordability	4
General Priorities	8
Consider: Prioritise infrastructure over nice-to-haves	8
Community Facilities	6
Concern: Library cost of new building and spending priorities	6
Waste Services	4
Concern: Refuse collection frequency inadequate	4
Environment & Amenity	3
Consider: Upgrade park and playground facilities	3

Table 27: Themes from decision-making feedback

9.3 Opportunity to Participate in Decisions

Satisfaction with Participation Opportunities

Overall satisfaction with opportunities to participate in Council decision-making was 92% (n=435), up 22 points from 70% last year and the largest improvement of any measure in the survey.

Age-based patterns:

The 65+ age group showed the highest satisfaction (95%), while the 35-49 age group recorded the lowest (87%). The 18-34 and 50-64 age groups showed 92% and 91% satisfaction respectively.

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed slightly higher satisfaction (93%) compared to male respondents (91%).

Ward-based patterns:

Eltham-Kaponga Ward recorded the highest satisfaction at 95% (n=60), followed by Te Hāwera Ward at 93% (n=245) and Pātea Ward at 92% (n=49). Taranaki Coastal Ward showed the lowest satisfaction at 86% (n=81).

9.4 Access to Council Information

Knowledge of Where to Access Information

Overall satisfaction that respondents know where to access Council information when they want it was 93% (n=443), the highest of the three governance measures and up 8 points from 85% last year.

Age-based patterns:

Satisfaction was consistent across age groups, ranging from 92% (18-34 and 35-49) to 95% (65+).

Gender-based patterns:

Male and female respondents showed near-identical satisfaction (94% and 93% respectively).

Ward-based patterns:

Pātea Ward recorded the highest satisfaction at 94% (n=53), followed by Te Hāwera Ward at 94% (n=250). Taranaki Coastal Ward showed the lowest satisfaction at 90% (n=81), with Eltham-Kaponga Ward at 93% (n=59).

Feedback on Information Access

While 93% of respondents were satisfied they know where to find Council information, the feedback identified plenty of room to improve how it is delivered. Suggestions split roughly evenly between digital and non-digital channels. On the digital side, respondents frequently described the Council website as difficult to navigate, outdated, and hard to search, and suggested improvements including better search functionality, more common terminology, AI chatbots, and keeping content up to date. Several noted it is often unclear which department or person to contact. Greater use of social media, live-streaming meetings, online polls, apps such as Antenno, and Facebook were also suggested, along with easier access to online services like dog registration.

On the non-digital side, respondents emphasised that not everyone has internet access or the ability to navigate online systems, and suggested alternatives including community noticeboards, library displays, printed booklets, and regular email newsletters to ratepayers similar to what New Plymouth Council does. The loss of local newspapers was flagged as creating a gap in public information, with calls for greater use of letterbox drops and any remaining local press.

Specific issues raised included information being hard to find or poorly publicised, lack of awareness about available services, insufficient communication during infrastructure works or consultations, and poor accessibility for those without digital skills. Poor advertising of council elections came through as a distinct concern.

A substantial group of respondents expressed clear satisfaction with current communication, praising tools such as the Antenno app, email responsiveness, the 24/7 phone service, and the Mayor's public profile, and noting appreciation for regular updates and community engagement.

Theme	Frequency
Community Engagement	60
Concern: Information hard to find or not provided	16
Consider: Improve council website usability	9
Support: Good communication from council	9
Consider: Provide print and non-digital information options	8
Consider: Use local newspapers and letterbox drops	8
Consider: More social media and digital engagement	6
Consider: Email updates to ratepayers	4
Governance & Leadership	7
Consider: Better transparency in decision-making	4
Concern: Council does not listen to residents	3
Customer Service	4
Consider: More accessible and approachable service	4

Table 28: Themes from information access feedback

9.5 Overall Council Performance

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with two aspects of overall Council performance: STDC as an organisation, and elected members (Mayor and Councillors).

Both measures achieved high satisfaction - 91% for STDC performance as an organisation (n=445) and 92% for elected members (n=421) - indicating strong overall satisfaction with Council. Both measures lifted substantially from 2024/25, up 8 and 10 points respectively. STDC performance reached its highest level in the tracked period, while satisfaction with elected members returned to its 2022/23 peak of 92%.

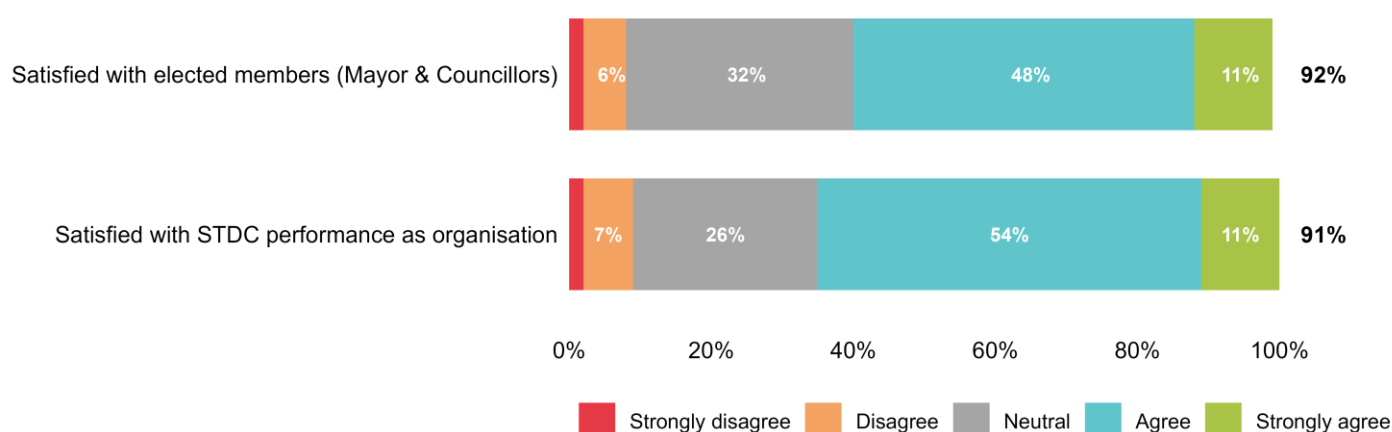


Figure 14: Overall performance satisfaction (n varies by question)

Overall Agreement: Overall Performance by Demographics											
Question	Age				Gender		Ward				Total
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Eltham-Kaponga	Te Hāwera	Taranaki Coastal	Pātea	
Satisfied with elected members (Mayor & Councillors)	91% n=56	88% n=80	92% n=113	95% n=167	90% n=184	95% n=222	92% n=59	93% n=240	87% n=77	93% n=45	92% n=421
Satisfied with STDC performance as organisation	93% n=61	86% n=85	91% n=118	93% n=176	88% n=196	94% n=233	90% n=61	91% n=255	86% n=78	96% n=51	91% n=445

Note: Overall agreement = Neutral + Agree + Strongly agree. Ranked by Total agreement.

Table 29: Overall performance satisfaction by age, gender and ward

9.6 STDC Performance as an Organisation

Satisfaction with Council Performance

Overall satisfaction with STDC's performance as an organisation was 91% (n=445).

Age-based patterns:

Satisfaction was high across all age groups. The 18-34 and 65+ age groups showed the highest satisfaction (93%), while the 35-49 age group recorded the lowest (86%). The 50-64 age group showed 91% satisfaction.

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed higher satisfaction (94%) compared to male respondents (88%).

Ward-based patterns:

Pātea Ward recorded the highest satisfaction at 96% (n=51), followed by Te Hāwera Ward at 91% (n=255) and Eltham-Kaponga Ward at 90% (n=61). Taranaki Coastal Ward showed the lowest satisfaction at 86% (n=78).

9.7 Elected Members Performance

Satisfaction with Mayor and Councillors

Overall satisfaction with the performance of elected members (Mayor and Councillors) was 92% (n=421).

Age-based patterns:

The 65+ age group showed the highest satisfaction (95%), while the 35-49 age group recorded the lowest (88%). The 18-34 and 50-64 age groups showed 91% and 92% satisfaction respectively.

Gender-based patterns:

Female respondents showed higher satisfaction (95%) compared to male respondents (90%).

Ward-based patterns:

Te Hāwera Ward recorded the highest satisfaction at 93% (n=240), with Pātea Ward also at 93% (n=45) and Eltham-Kaponga Ward at 92% (n=59). Taranaki Coastal Ward recorded the lowest satisfaction at 87% (n=77).

10 Overall Feedback

This section presents findings from two open-ended questions that invited respondents to provide general feedback on Council's performance. These questions complement the specific service-related feedback presented throughout the report.

10.1 Areas Where Council is Performing Well

Respondents were asked: "What are the main areas where Council is performing well?"

A total of 365 thematic mentions were identified across responses and coded into themes. Taken as a whole, respondents most commonly highlighted infrastructure, parks, libraries, waste services, and communication as areas where Council is performing well, alongside recreational facilities, community activities, and the general provision of basic services. The themes below show how these positive mentions break down, and they map closely to the services that scored highest in the quantitative satisfaction measures.

General Satisfaction was the most commonly mentioned category, with 82 mentions. This included general satisfaction with Council (46 mentions), appreciation of the District's community facilities and investment (20 mentions), and direct statements that Council is doing a good job overall (16 mentions). Many respondents noted that the district is well maintained and a pleasant place to live, with services such as water, roads, rubbish collection, libraries, parks and community facilities all being kept up, and that Council is relatively easy and helpful to deal with.

Environment and Amenity received 74 mentions. Parks and gardens being well maintained was the dominant theme (60 mentions), reflecting the 92% satisfaction recorded for parks, reserves and playgrounds. Respondents described them as well kept, clean and enjoyable spaces for families and children, and often highlighted the good upkeep of other community facilities such as libraries, pools and public toilets alongside. Beautification of main streets and town entrances (11 mentions) and appreciation for walkways and cycle paths (3 mentions) also featured.

Community Facilities received 44 mentions, led by positive feedback on library services (34 mentions) and the Hāwera Aquatic Centre (10 mentions). The new Hāwera library was singled out repeatedly as a welcoming, state-of-the-art community hub, with several describing it as a source of community pride. This is consistent with libraries achieving the highest satisfaction of any service at 96%.

Governance and Leadership was mentioned positively 32 times, including praise for Community Boards and consultation working well (12 mentions) and the Mayor and councillors being seen as approachable and visible in the community (9 mentions). This aligns with the strong improvements in governance scores this year, with satisfaction with elected members lifting to 92% and confidence that decisions represent the District's best interests rising 21 points to 85%.

Three Waters services received 25 positive mentions, primarily reflecting general satisfaction with Council's water services and appreciation that water services have been kept under local control. This is consistent with wastewater/sewerage (95%) and water supply (87%) both performing well in the quantitative data, even if water quality concerns persist in specific towns.

Waste Services received 24 positive mentions, reflecting satisfaction with current refuse and recycling arrangements. This sits alongside the 87% satisfaction with recycling services and 77% with refuse bin collection, noting the recurring concerns about collection frequency and bin size.

Economic Development was raised positively 23 times, with community events and activities the most valued aspect (16 mentions), followed by mentions of attracting new businesses and revitalising smaller towns.

Community Engagement received 22 positive mentions, with good communication from Council being the dominant theme (18 mentions) alongside specific praise for the Antenno app (4 mentions). This ties to the 93% agreement that residents know where to access Council information.

Customer Service received 15 positive mentions, all relating to helpful and efficient staff, with front desk and phone staff particularly praised for their pleasant manner and professionalism.

Theme	Frequency
General	82
Support: General satisfaction with council	46
Support: Good community facilities and investment	20
Support: Council doing a good job overall	16
Environment & Amenity	74
Support: Parks and gardens well maintained	60
Consider: Beautify main streets and town entrances	11
Support: Walkways and cycle paths appreciated	3
Community Facilities	44
Support: Library services positive feedback	34
Support: Aquatic Centre positive experience	10
Governance & Leadership	32
Support: Community boards and consultation working well	12
Support: Mayor and councillors approachable	9
Concern: Spending priorities questioned	5
Consider: Reduce council staffing and overheads	3
Consider: Smaller towns need more attention	3
Three Waters	25
Support: Satisfaction with water services	25
Waste Services	24
Support: Satisfaction with waste services	24
Economic Development	23
Support: Community events and activities valued	16
Consider: Attract new businesses to the district	4
Consider: Revitalise smaller towns	3
Community Engagement	22
Support: Good communication from council	18
Consider: Use Antenno app more effectively	4
Customer Service	15
Support: Helpful and efficient staff	15
Rates & Financial	15
Concern: Rates affordability	11
PublicVoice	50

Theme	Frequency
Concern: Value for money from rates	4
Roading & Infrastructure	6
Support: Satisfaction with roads	6
Animal Services	3
Support: Satisfaction with animal control	3

Table 30: Themes from 'performing well' feedback

10.2 Areas Where Council Could Do Better

Respondents were asked: “What are the main areas where Council could do better?”

A total of 467 thematic mentions were identified across responses. Improvements needed to roads, footpaths, and general maintenance dominated the feedback, along with better communication and consultation with the community, and more prudent use of ratepayer money with a focus on keeping rate increases minimal. Many also called for greater investment in smaller towns such as Manaia, improved local health and community services, support for local businesses, and attention to issues such as affordable housing, tidiness of properties and streetscapes, and reducing reliance on external consultants.

Governance and Leadership was the most commonly mentioned category, with 116 mentions. Specific concerns included spending priorities (32 mentions), the view that smaller towns need more attention (21 mentions), a perception that Council does not listen to residents (17 mentions), opposition to te reo Māori and bicultural initiatives (15 mentions), calls for more genuine public consultation (12 mentions), and requests to reduce council staffing and overheads (11 mentions). The strength of feedback here is notable given that governance measures actually improved the most this year, suggesting residents recognise progress while also wanting more.

Roading and Infrastructure was the second most mentioned area with 99 mentions, consistent with the 61% roads satisfaction figure being the lowest of any service. Road surface condition was the primary concern (43 mentions), followed by footpath condition (22 mentions), speed signage and road safety issues (14 mentions), rural road maintenance (8 mentions), and poor quality road repairs and patching (6 mentions). The “fix it once, fix it right” sentiment that runs through the roads section shows up strongly here.

Environment and Amenity received 56 mentions, including concerns about town amenity and tidiness (15 mentions), park lawn mowing (14 mentions), requests for park and playground upgrades (14 mentions), outdated playground equipment (7 mentions), and beautification of main streets (6 mentions). Town tidiness concerns particularly focused on smaller towns such as Manaia, with issues around overgrown sections, abandoned vehicles on berms, and insufficient bylaw enforcement.

Rates and Financial concerns were raised 43 times. Rates affordability was the dominant theme (31 mentions), with respondents urging Council to keep increases as low as possible by focusing spending on core services and infrastructure rather than non-essential projects. Concerns that rates do not reflect services received (6 mentions) and value for money (6 mentions) also featured, particularly from rural ratepayers and smaller towns who feel they pay significant rates for minimal services.

Economic Development was raised 40 times, with more community events and activities (19 mentions) and attracting new businesses to the District (16 mentions) being the main focus areas, along with supporting local contractors and businesses (5 mentions). Respondents linked business attraction to broader improvements such as better infrastructure, health services, schools, housing, and family-focused amenities.

General Priorities received 23 mentions, including calls to prioritise infrastructure over nice-to-haves (17 mentions) and improve timeliness of repairs and maintenance (6 mentions). The message was consistent: focus on core roads, water, sewerage, and stormwater during tough economic times, and maintain existing infrastructure well.

Customer Service concerns were raised 21 times, including calls to improve communication and follow-up processes (9 mentions) and concerns about the building consent process (5 mentions), slow action on complaints (4 mentions), and the need for more accessible and approachable service (3 mentions). These themes align closely with the 6-point decline in contact satisfaction to 75%.

Three Waters concerns were raised 21 times, led by stormwater drainage and flooding (10 mentions), water quality issues (8 mentions), and improving stormwater maintenance and capacity (3 mentions). This is consistent with stormwater management showing the largest satisfaction decline of any service (90% to 80%).

Community Facilities received 16 mentions, including concerns about the cost of the new library building, public toilet cleanliness and upgrades, and requests for Aquatic Centre improvements.

Waste Services were raised 13 times, primarily regarding refuse collection frequency (10 mentions), with the weekly versus fortnightly collection debate coming through here as well as in the service-specific feedback.

Theme	Frequency
Governance & Leadership	116
Concern: Spending priorities questioned	32
Consider: Smaller towns need more attention	21
Concern: Council does not listen to residents	17
Concern: Opposition to te reo Maori and bicultural initiatives	15
Consider: More genuine public consultation	12
Consider: Reduce council staffing and overheads	11
Consider: Better transparency in decision-making	8
Roading & Infrastructure	99
Concern: Road surface condition	43
Concern: Footpath condition and maintenance	22
Concern: Speed signage and road safety issues	14
Concern: Rural road maintenance inadequate	8
Concern: Poor quality road repairs and patching	6
Consider: Better contractor standards and accountability	3
Consider: Road widening and bridge upgrades	3
Environment & Amenity	56
Concern: Town amenity and tidiness issues	15
Concern: Park lawn mowing and weeding insufficient	14
Consider: Upgrade park and playground facilities	14
Concern: Parks and playground equipment outdated	7
Consider: Beautify main streets and town entrances	6

Theme	Frequency
Rates & Financial	43
Concern: Rates affordability	31
Concern: Rates not reflecting services received	6
Concern: Value for money from rates	6
Economic Development	40
Consider: More community events and activities	19
Consider: Attract new businesses to the district	16
Consider: Support local contractors and businesses	5
General Priorities	23
Consider: Prioritise infrastructure over nice-to-haves	17
Consider: Improve timeliness of repairs and maintenance	6
Customer Service	21
Consider: Improve communication and follow-up processes	9
Concern: Building consent process problems	5
Concern: Slow or inadequate action on complaints	4
Consider: More accessible and approachable service	3
Three Waters	21
Concern: Stormwater drainage and flooding	10
Concern: Water quality issues	8
Consider: Improve stormwater maintenance and capacity	3
Community Facilities	16
Concern: Library cost of new building and spending priorities	5
Concern: Public toilet cleanliness and condition	4
Consider: Public toilet upgrades and access	4
Consider: Aquatic Centre improvements	3
Waste Services	13
Concern: Refuse collection frequency inadequate	10
Concern: Recycling rules and limitations	3
Animal Services	7
Consider: Stronger enforcement of dog bylaws	4
Concern: Dogs roaming and not contained	3
Community Engagement	7
Concern: Information hard to find or not provided	4
Consider: Improve council website usability	3
General	5
Support: General satisfaction with council	5

Table 31: Themes from 'could do better' feedback

10.3 Summary of Key Themes

The open-ended feedback reveals several consistent threads running across both positive and improvement-focused responses, and these threads connect directly to the quantitative results throughout the report.

Strengths identified by respondents:

- Parks, reserves and library services are highly valued community assets, reflected in satisfaction scores of 92% and 96% respectively
- Council is generally seen to be performing well, with staff praised as helpful and efficient, supporting the 91% overall organisational performance rating
- Community facilities and investment are widely appreciated, with the new Hāwera library, pools, and well-maintained reserves frequently cited
- Community Boards and the Mayor's approachability are positively regarded, contributing to the 92% agreement with elected member performance
- Community events, waste services and water services all received strong positive feedback, aligning with the high recycling (87%), wastewater (95%), and water supply (87%) satisfaction scores

Areas identified for improvement:

- Governance and leadership concerns, particularly around spending priorities, equity between towns, and the consultation process, remain front of mind even as governance scores have lifted substantially
- Road surface condition, pothole repair quality, and footpath maintenance are significant concerns across the District, reinforcing the 61% roads satisfaction score
- Calls for more genuine public consultation and better responsiveness to resident input persist, and connect to the lack of follow-up theme driving the contact satisfaction decline
- Rates affordability remains a key financial concern, with the call to focus on core services during tough economic times consistent across service-specific and general feedback
- Stormwater drainage, water quality in specific towns, and refuse collection frequency round out the most commonly raised improvement themes, each connecting to a specific quantitative signal: the 10-point stormwater decline, ward-level water supply variation, and the sustained lower satisfaction with fortnightly refuse collection among younger age groups

These findings provide context for interpreting the quantitative satisfaction data presented throughout this report and highlight priority areas for Council's consideration in service planning and delivery.