



# Community Satisfaction Survey

## Armidale Regional Council

January 2022



**DRAFT REPORT**

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## Armidale Regional Council

January 2022

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Document Reference: 6278

Version: 05 (Final)



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Armidale Regional Council (ARC) commissioned Taverner Research Group (TRG) to conduct its 2021 Community Satisfaction Survey, as a random and representative telephone survey of 400 residents living within the Armidale region. Surveying was conducted from November 16<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>. The sampling error is  $\pm 4.9\%$  at the 95% confidence level.

### Council Performance

1. Satisfaction with specific Council services was highest for parks, reserves and playgrounds (64% satisfied against just 10% dissatisfied), sporting facilities (60% vs. 8%), waste and recycling (58% vs. 21%), airport operations (56% vs. 8%), libraries (50% vs. 9%), Council pools (50% vs. 9%) and arts, cultural and heritage facilities (50% vs. 12%).
2. Those facilities and services rated most poorly included economic development and attracting new investment (8% satisfied against 60% dissatisfied), planning and development, including DAs (9% vs. 47%), being a well-run and managed Council (10% vs. 68%), home support services (11% vs. 15%), youth facilities and services (16% vs. 22%) and unsealed roads (17% vs. 43%).
3. 17% of respondents were satisfied with Council's overall performance, against 53% dissatisfied and 30% neutral. Council's mean satisfaction was 2.43 (on a five-point scale). This core is just above the lowest overall satisfaction benchmark for NSW regional councils (2.34), and well below the mean for all regional NSW Councils of 3.25.

### Importance of Facilities & Services

4. All facilities and services were considered important to respondents. Those deemed most critical were being a well-run and managed Council (82% critical), waste and recycling (59%), sealed roads (54%),

economic development and attracting new investment (50%), customer service (45%) and DAs and planning (41%). Those facilities that were considered slightly less important included online services (14% critical), arts, cultural and heritage facilities and services (16%), tourism resources and marketing (also 16%), Council pools (19%) and youth facilities and services (21%, together with libraries.)

### Prioritising Facilities & Services

5. When satisfaction scores were ranked against perceived importance (the degree to which satisfaction with specific facilities and services influences overall satisfaction), some key priorities for Council emerged:
  - a. Sealed roads
  - b. Community information and consultation
  - c. DAs and planning
  - d. Economic development and attracting new investment; and
  - e. Being a well-run and managed Council

### Regional Benchmarking

6. When benchmarked against 25 other NSW regional councils, ARC's mean satisfaction ratings were lower on all measures. However, it was close to average on disability access and inclusion, footpaths and cycleways, online services, Council pools, sporting facilities, car parking, and arts, cultural and heritage facilities and services.



## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Council Customer Service

7. 62% of respondents have contacted Council within the previous 12 months. The majority (54%) of most recent contacts were by phone, followed by face-to-face on 21%.
8. Contact satisfaction scores were generally favourable, with 52% saying their latest transaction was handled well or very well in terms of timeliness of responses (against 34% poor or very poor), and 62% well/very well with the way they were treated (against 25% poor/very poor). Scores were slightly less favourable in relation to the process (49% saying it was handled well or very well, against 41% believing it was done poorly or very poorly) and the outcome (49% well/very well vs. 37% poor/very poor).

### Communication With Residents

9. Newsletters or letters were the preferred means for finding out about changes to Council services, policies or activities (37%), followed closely by email (36%), Council website on 20% and social media on 14%.

### Resident Feedback & Future Priorities

10. Despite being generally negative about Council, residents remained enthusiastic about living in the Armidale region. Seventy per cent said they would be likely to recommend living in the Armidale region to others, against 7% not recommending and the balance neutral.
11. Respondents had a broad range of suggestions on ideas to add to the region's appeal to visitors and residents. This includes economic growth, more arts, cultural and entertainment events, more retail diversity, improved roads, footpaths and cycleways, more green space, and protecting the natural environment and additional landmarks/attractions.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

Armidale Regional Council (ARC) has engaged Taverner Research Group (TRG) to conduct benchmarking research on residents living in the ARC local government area (LGA). This research aimed to assess satisfaction with, and priorities towards different Council-managed facilities and services, satisfaction with its customer service, and other issues to assist Council to maintain a high quality of services to its residents.

As per the agreed project brief, the survey addressed the following objectives:

1. Measure perceived importance of and satisfaction with Council-provided services
2. Measure satisfaction with direct contact with Council staff and;
3. Allow benchmarking with other NSW Regional Councils

### 2.2. METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted using a random fixed line and mobile telephone poll of 400 residents aged 18+. Respondents were selected at random from a verified random sample residential telephone database of 4,234 residential landline and mobile telephone numbers within the LGA (with approximately 60% of numbers sourced being mobiles). A survey form was constructed collaboratively between Council management and Taverner Research (see Appendix 1), based on satisfying the above objectives.

Polling was conducted between November 16<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> from Taverner Research's Coffs Harbour and Wollongong CATI call centres. A team of eight researchers called Armidale residents on weekday evenings (excluding Friday) from 3.30pm to 8pm, and on weekends from 10am-4pm. Where phones went unanswered, were engaged or diverted to answering machines, researchers phoned on up to five occasions at different times of the afternoon or evening.

The poll was conducted on a random basis, other than ensuring an adequate mix of respondents across different sub-regions. Respondents were screened to ensure they were aged 18 or over, and were not councillors or permanent Council employees.

Average survey duration was 18 minutes 23 seconds.

Results have been post-weighted to reflect the age and gender profile of the ARC LGA as at the 2016 ABS Census (usual resident profile).

Please note that due to the nature of the survey, not all respondents answered every question. The number of respondents answering each question is marked as "n = XXX" in the graph accompanying that question. Caution should be taken in analysing some questions due to the small sample size.





## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.3. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 1: Gender distribution

**Q4. GENDER**

BASE: TOTAL SAMPLE N=400

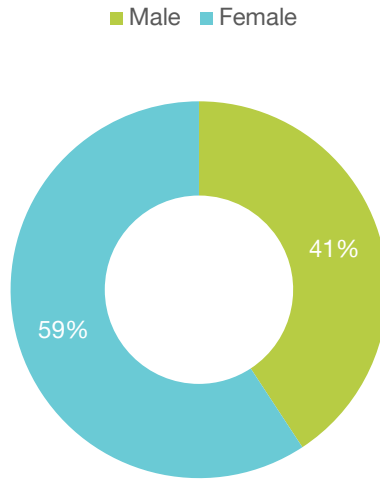
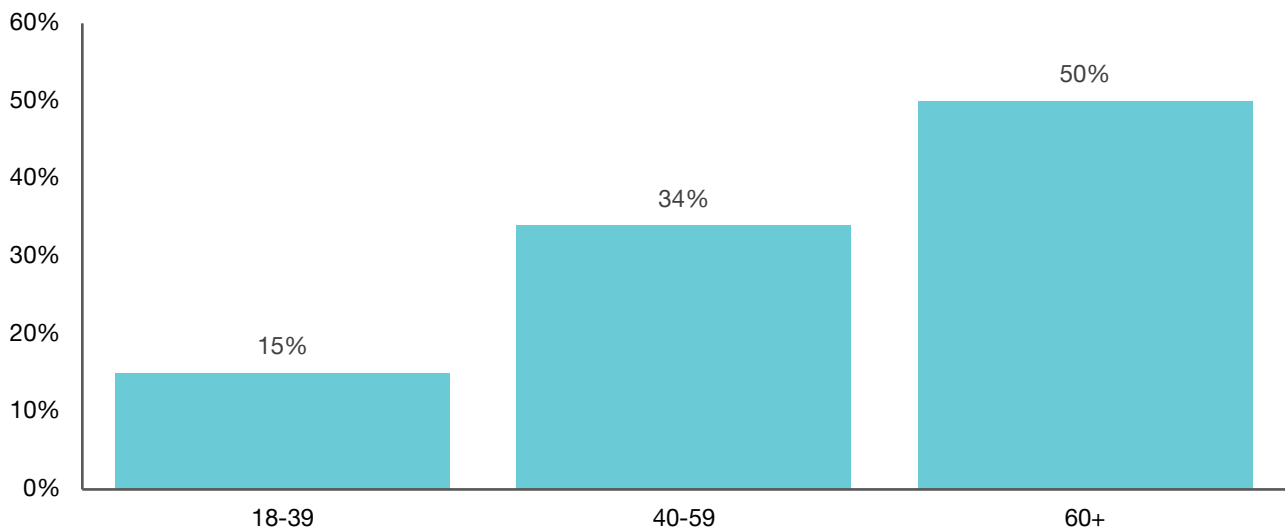


Figure 2: Age distribution

**Q3. AND WOULD YOUR AGE RANGE BE BETWEEN...**

BASE: TOTAL SAMPLE N=400



The survey sample was biased slightly towards females and older residents. However as previously noted, the sample was post-weighted by age and gender to make it representative of the LGAs adult population as per the 2016 ABS Census.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

Figure 3: Years living in the Armidale Regional Council

**Q21. AND HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN THE ARMIDALE REGION?**

**BASE: TOTAL SAMPLE N=400**

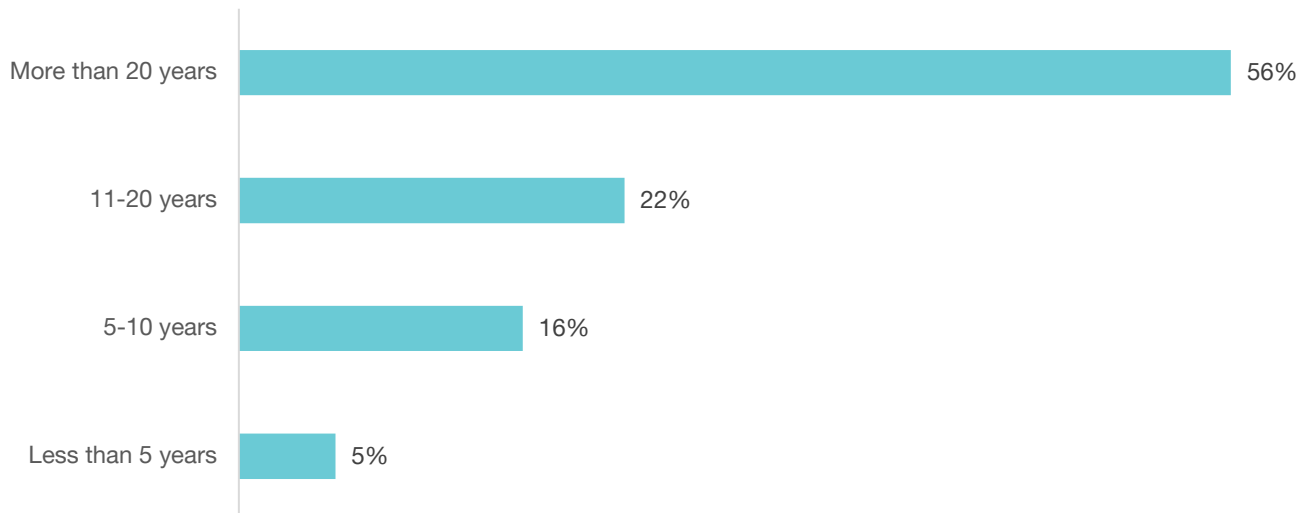
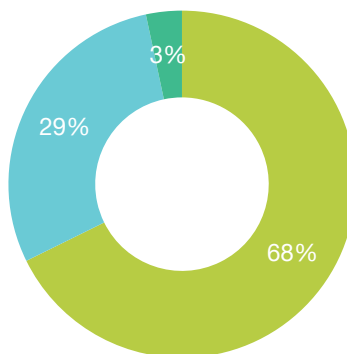


Figure 4: Urban/regional split

**Q20. IS YOUR RESIDENCE IN AN URBAN, RURAL OR VILLAGE LOCATION?**

**BASE: TOTAL SAMPLE N=400**

Urban Rural Village



More than half of all respondents had lived in the Armidale LGA for over 20 years, and almost 80% had lived locally for 11 or more years.

Meanwhile 68% of respondents lived in an urban setting.

Of the overall sample, 86% lived in or around Armidale, with 11% residing in or around Guyra and the balance being from smaller communities.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.4. SAMPLING ERROR

According to the 2016 ABS Census (Armidale LGA resident profile), there are 10,276 residential dwellings in the Armidale LGA. Based on this population, a random sample of 400 adult residents implies a margin for error of  $\pm 4.80\%$  at the 95% confidence level. This means in effect that if we conducted a similar poll 20 times, results should reflect the views and behaviour of the overall survey population to within a  $\pm 4.80\%$  margin in 19 of those 20 surveys.

As Figure 1 (below) shows, the margin for error falls as the sample size rises. Hence cross-tabulations of subgroups within the overall sample will typically create much higher margins for error than the overall sample. For example, within the Armidale adult population a sample size of 100 exhibits a margin for error of  $\pm 9.8\%$ , compared to a sample size of 500 which exhibits a margin for error of  $\pm 5.6\%$  (both expressed at 95% confidence level).

Figure 5: Relationship between the margin of error and sample size



### Statistical Significance

Where differences in this report are classed as significant, this implies they are statistically significant based on independent sample t-scores or other analysis of variation (or ANOVA) calculations. In statistical terms, significant differences are unlikely to have been caused by chance alone.

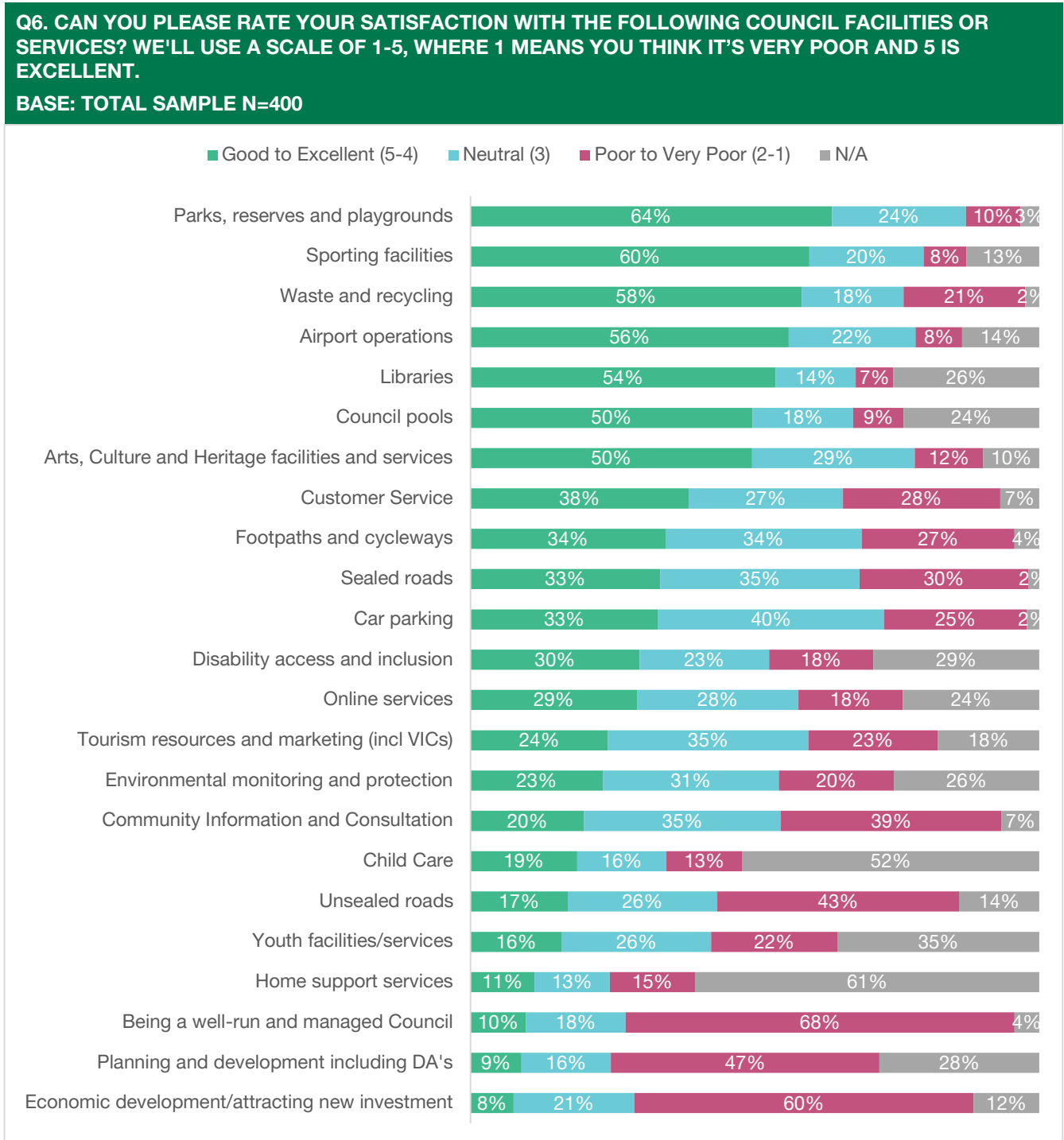


### 3. SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The survey commenced with residents being asked to rate their satisfaction with 23 different facilities and services using a 1-5 satisfaction scaler (where 1= very poor and 5 = excellent). Respondents were asked not to rate services not used by them or their families.

Figure 6, below, shows the proportion of residents rating each facility or service, while Table 1, on the next page, shows the mean (average) score on a 1-5 satisfaction scale.

Figure 6: Satisfaction with Council facilities and services





### 3. SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Table 1: Mean satisfaction scores - facilities and services

	AVERAGE
<b>Libraries</b>	3.97
<b>Parks, reserves and playgrounds</b>	3.74
<b>Sporting facilities</b>	3.74
<b>Council pools</b>	3.68
<b>Airport operations</b>	3.65
<b>Waste and recycling</b>	3.49
<b>Arts, Culture and Heritage facilities and services</b>	3.46
<b>Disability access and inclusion</b>	3.19
<b>Online services</b>	3.14
<b>Child Care</b>	3.14
<b>Customer Service</b>	3.09
<b>Car parking</b>	3.08
<b>Footpaths and cycleways</b>	3.05
<b>Environmental monitoring and protection</b>	3.02
<b>Tourism resources and marketing</b>	3.00
<b>Sealed roads</b>	2.96
<b>Home support services</b>	2.87
<b>Youth facilities/services</b>	2.83
<b>Community Information and Consultation</b>	2.69
<b>Unsealed roads</b>	2.48
<b>Development applications &amp; planning</b>	2.19
<b>Economic development &amp; attracting new investment</b>	2.05
<b>Being a well-run and managed Council</b>	1.99

The two sets of data tell similar stories. Libraries, parks, reserves and playgrounds, sporting facilities, Council pools, airport operations, waste and recycling and arts, cultural and heritage facilities all scores highly (with 50+% good/excellent scores and means of 3.46 or above).

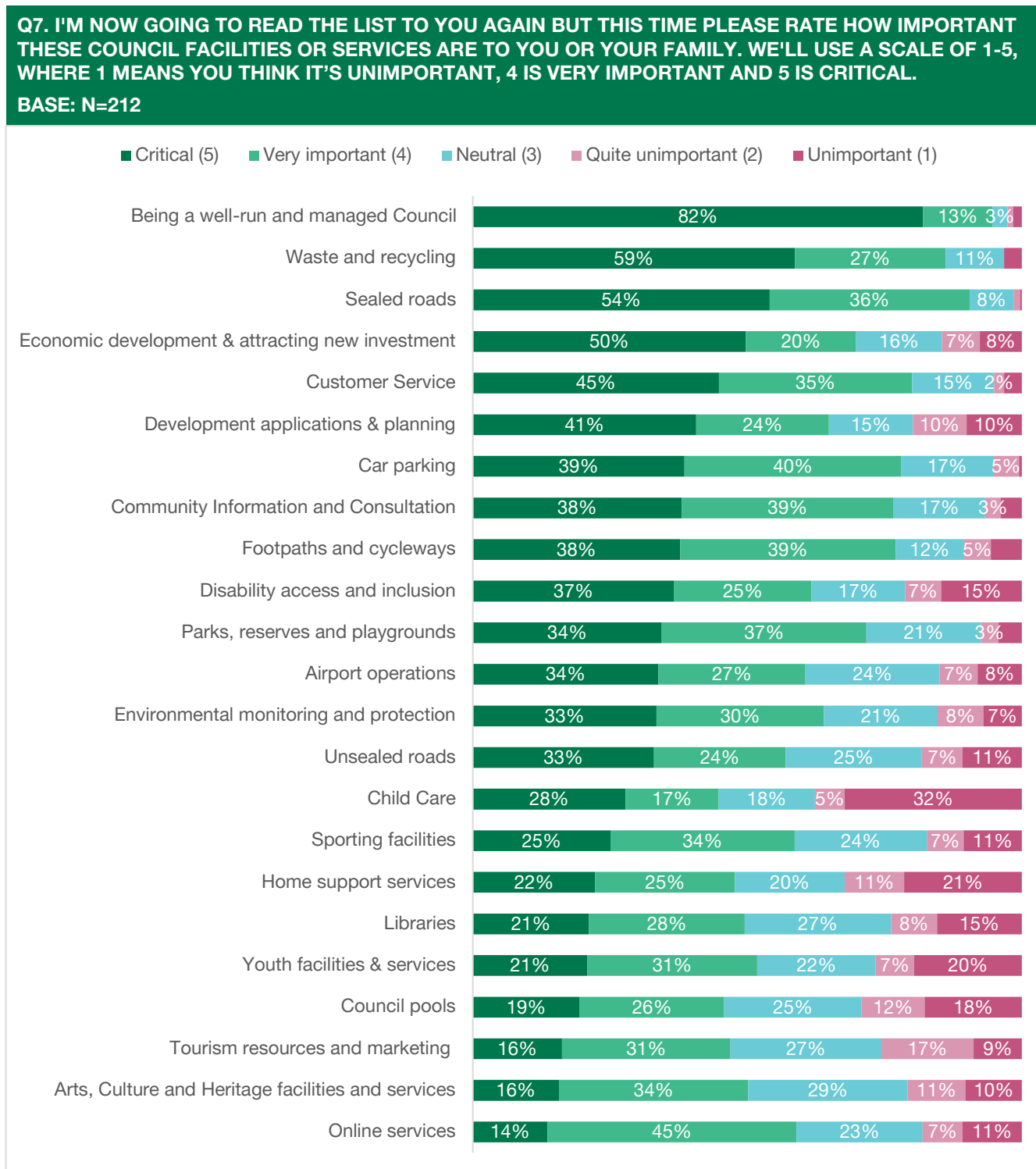
However, eight further scores were below the 3.0 “neutral” benchmark, including, being a well-run and managed Council (1.99 out of 5), economic development/attracting new investment (2.05) and DA and planning (2.19). As is usual in regional Councils, sealed and unsealed roads both scored below the 3.0 neutral mark.



### 3. SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Residents were next asked to rate how important (again on a 1-5 scale) the same facilities and services were to them and their families. As with satisfaction, scores have been ranked by importance (Figure 7, below) and highest to lowest mean score (Table 2, next page):

Figure 7: Perceived importance of Council facilities and services





### 3. SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Table 2: Mean importance scores - facilities and services

	AVERAGE
Being a well-run and managed Council	4.72
Sealed roads	4.43
Waste and recycling	4.38
Customer Service	4.17
Car parking	4.11
Community Information and Consultation	4.04
Footpaths and cycleways	3.99
Economic development/attracting new investment	3.97
Parks, reserves and playgrounds	3.94
Development applications & planning	3.76
Environmental monitoring and protection	3.75
Airport operations	3.71
Disability access and inclusion	3.62
Unsealed roads	3.61
Sporting facilities	3.56
Online services	3.44
Arts, Culture and Heritage facilities and services	3.35
Libraries	3.31
Tourism resources and marketing	3.29
Youth facilities & services	3.26
Council pools	3.18
Home support services	3.16
Child Care	3.03

“Being a well-run and managed Council” was deemed the most important function of Council (4.72 out of 5), followed by sealed roads (4.43), waste and recycling (4.38), customer service (4.17), car parking (4.11) and community information and consultation (4.04).

However, the important thing to note is that all facilities and services were deemed important, with none falling below the 3.0 “neutral” rating.

Figure 8, next page, charts these satisfaction (horizontal axis) and importance (vertical axis) scores into a matrix, to understand where they all sit relative to each other. Note that because the dotted dividing line is arbitrary, the matrix is relative rather than absolute – i.e. designed to distinguish between higher and lower rather than high and low satisfaction and/or importance.



### 3. SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Figure 8: Performance matrix

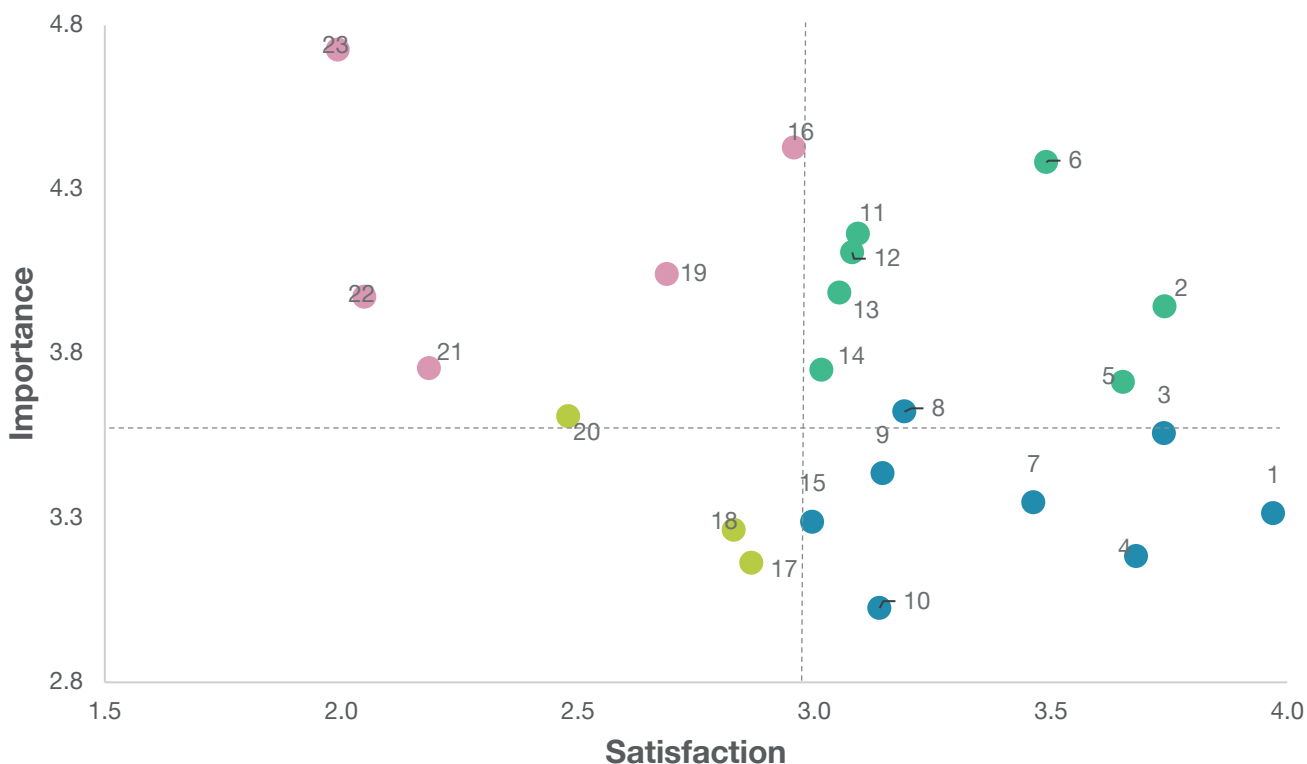


Table 3: Performance matrix, by quadrant

PRIORITIES FOR COUNCIL	STRENGTHS TO MAINTAIN
16 Sealed roads	2 Parks, reserves and playgrounds
19 Community Information and Consultation	5 Airport operations
21 Development applications & planning	6 Waste and recycling
22 Economic development & attracting new investment	11 Customer Service
23 Being a well-run and managed Council	12 Car parking
	13 Footpaths and cycleways
	14 Environmental monitoring and protection
SECOND ORDER ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
17 Home support services	1 Libraries
18 Youth facilities/services	3 Sporting facilities
20 Unsealed roads	4 Council pools
	7 Arts, Culture and Heritage facilities and services
	8 Disability access and inclusion
	9 Online services
	10 Child Care
	15 Tourism resources and marketing (including Visitor Information Centres)





### 3. SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Results for the quadrant analysis shown in Table 3, previous page, can be interpreted as follows:

- The upper right quadrant (higher importance and higher satisfaction) represents current service strengths or **'Strengths to Maintain'**
- The upper left quadrant (higher importance but lower satisfaction) denotes services where satisfaction should be improved or **'Priorities for Council'**
- The lower left quadrant (relatively lower importance and relatively lower satisfaction) represents lower priority service dimensions or **'Second Order Issues'**
- The lower right quadrant (relatively lower importance and high satisfaction) represents Council's **'Opportunities'**. These are services with higher satisfaction, but which are not currently driving overall satisfaction. By highlighting achievements in these areas, Council may be able to increase the link between the two.

This suggests that perceived Council strengths include parks, reserves and playgrounds, airport operations, waste and recycling, customer service, car parking, footpaths and cycleways and environmental monitoring and protection.

However, Council is seen to be falling short in higher importance areas such as sealed roads, community information and consultation, DAs and planning, economic development, and being a well-run and managed Council.

**The fact that so many of the highly visible Council touchpoints scored extremely well, yet "being a well-run Council" scored so poorly, strongly suggests that negative sentiment is associated far more with recent (and highly publicised) leadership instability than it is with any criticism of frontline services.**

It's also important to note that – reflecting both actual *and perceived* performance - less "visible" services (e.g. attracting new investment, where much of the work to attract businesses is done behind the scenes) often score relatively poorly in surveys such as this. It is hence doubly important that Council communicate its policies and achievements in these areas – loud and often – to avoid them "falling underneath the radar".



### 3. SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Finally in this section we look at the gap analysis, which shows the gap between satisfaction/performance and importance. While positive scores – i.e. where performance is higher than importance – are generally rare in community surveys such as this, the ambition should be to keep the negative gap down – and (more importantly still) to reduce it from survey-to-survey.

Table 4: Gap analysis

COUNCIL FACILITY OR SERVICE	SATISFACTION	IMPORTANCE	GAP
Libraries	3.97	3.31	0.66
Council pools	3.68	3.18	0.50
Sporting facilities	3.74	3.56	0.18
Child Care	3.14	3.03	0.11
Arts, Culture and Heritage facilities and services	3.46	3.35	0.12
Airport operations	3.65	3.71	-0.06
Parks, reserves and playgrounds	3.74	3.94	-0.20
Online services	3.14	3.44	-0.29
Tourism resources and marketing	3.00	3.29	-0.29
Home support services	2.87	3.16	-0.30
Disability access and inclusion	3.19	3.62	-0.43
Youth facilities & services	2.83	3.26	-0.43
Environmental monitoring and protection	3.02	3.75	-0.73
Waste and recycling	3.49	4.38	-0.89
Footpaths and cycleways	3.05	3.99	-0.93
Car parking	3.08	4.11	-1.03
Customer Service	3.09	4.17	-1.07
Unsealed roads	2.48	3.61	-1.13
Sealed roads	2.96	4.43	-1.47
Community Information and Consultation	2.69	4.04	-1.35
Development applications & planning	2.19	3.76	-1.57
Economic development & attracting new investment	2.05	3.97	-1.92
Being a well-run and managed Council	1.99	4.72	-2.73

There are actually five services with positive gap scores. However, those with a negative gap of greater than 1 are typically those where residents' expectations are extremely high. (An example here is car parking – where despite a positive satisfaction rating the gap is still >1 due to an extremely high importance score.)

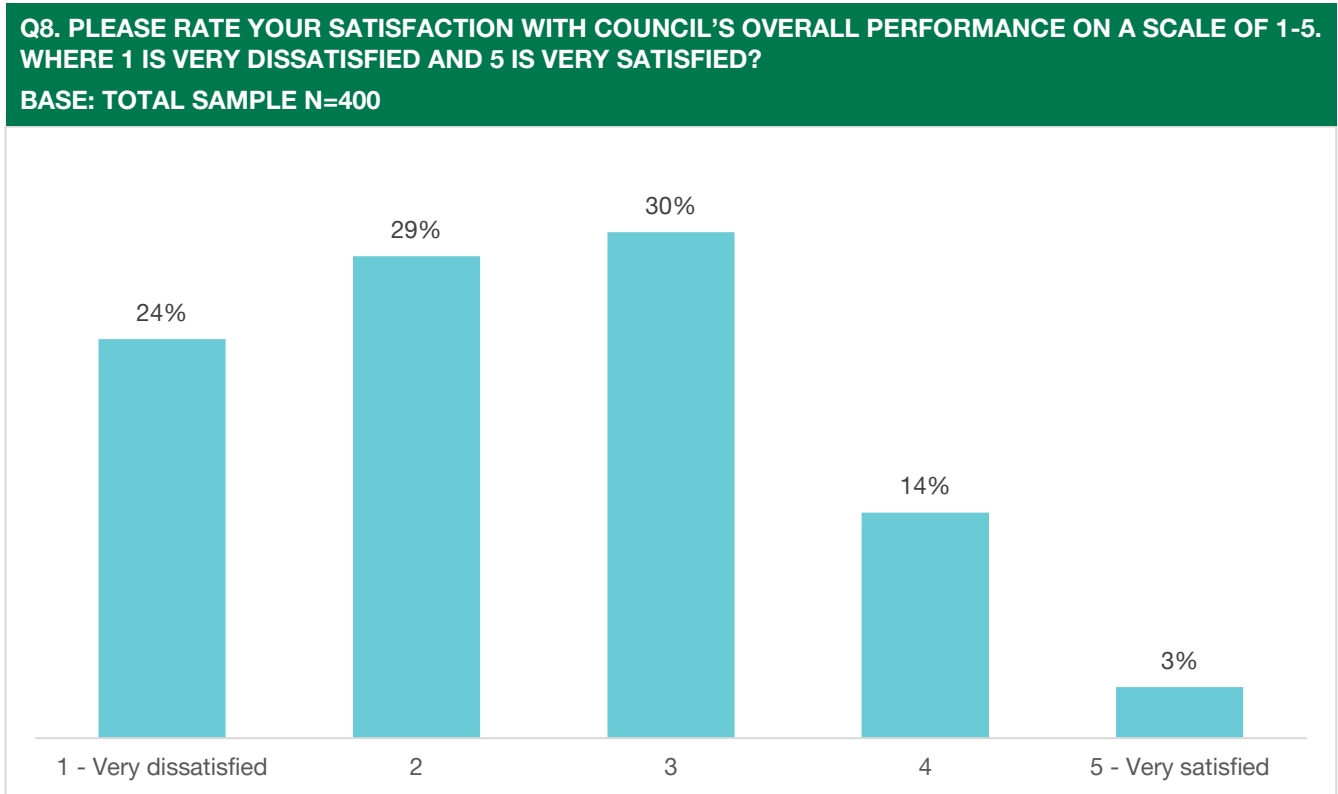
Again though, the key to success here will be to reduce the gaps in subsequent surveys.



## 4. OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH COUNCIL

Residents were next asked to rank their satisfaction with Council’s overall performance, again using a 1-5 satisfaction scale. Results are shown in Figure 9, below:

Figure 9: Overall satisfaction with Council



Just 17% of residents said they were satisfied with Council’s overall performance, against 53% who were dissatisfied for a net satisfaction score of 36%. This is also reflected in the mean satisfaction score of 2.43, well below the “neutral” score of 3.0.

Compared with 31 other regional NSW Councils in our benchmarking system, this mean is the second lowest encountered, and well below the overall mean satisfaction of 3.25.

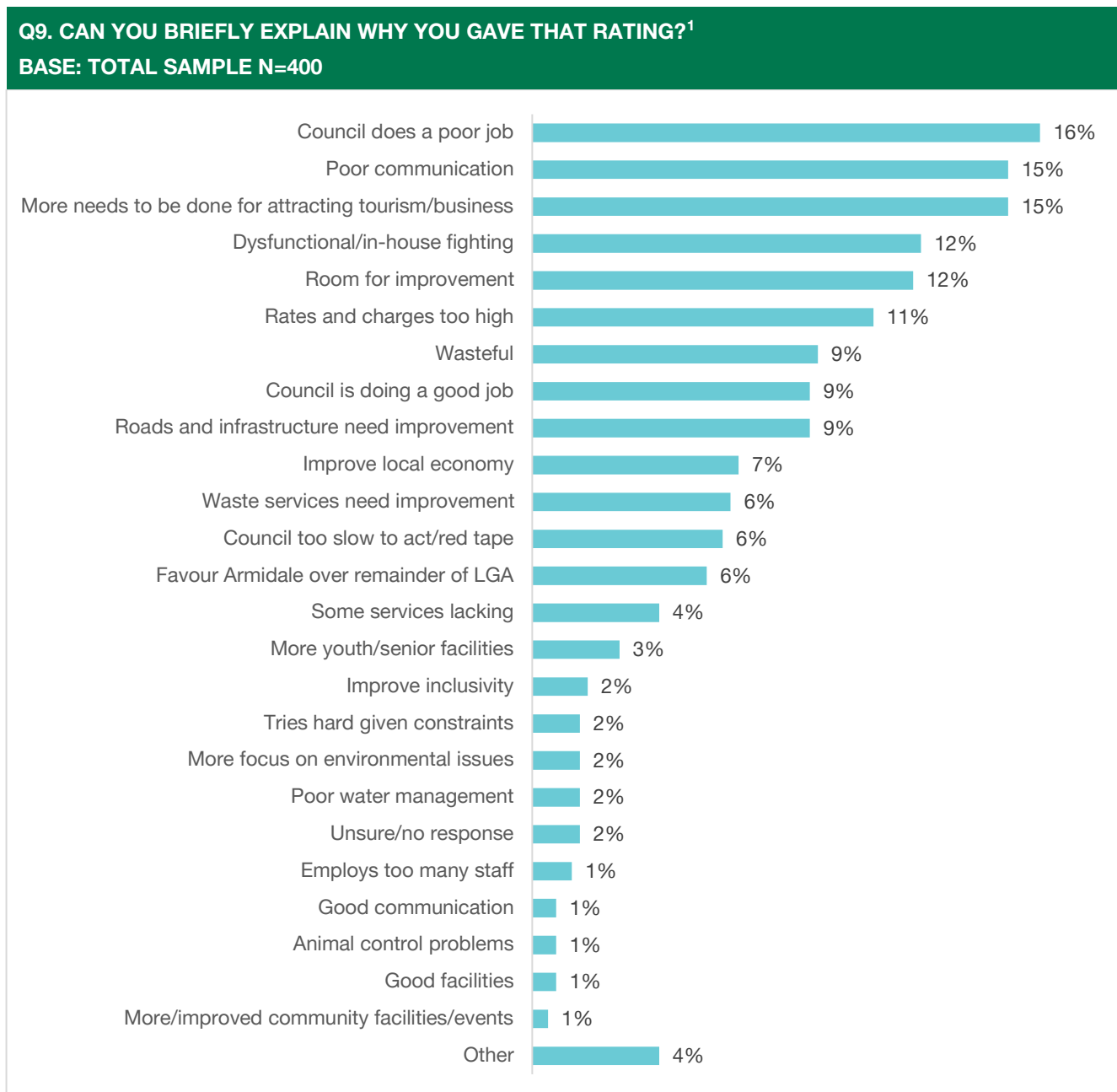
The fact that the overall mean is so low when so many frontline services recorded good/very good satisfaction scores again suggests that resident disquiet is focussed far more on recent instability than with any underlying service delivery issues.

Residents were asked, in an open-ended follow-up question, to briefly explain the reason/s for their overall satisfaction rating. These responses have been coded into themes, which are shown in Figure 10, next page:



## 4. OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH COUNCIL

Figure 10: Reason for overall satisfaction score



These comments highlight some of the issues raised earlier in the survey. Poor communication, a need to attract more businesses to the area, perceptions of in-house fighting and a belief that rates are too high were all prominent themes.

However, 9% felt Council was doing a good job, and a further 2% each said they tried hard given funding constraints, or that the LGA enjoyed good facilities.

<sup>1</sup> Open response question. Please also note that the responses to this question have been coded and summarised by theme.



## 4. OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH COUNCIL

Table 5 shows the relationship between: (a) overall satisfaction with Council; and (b) all the individual facilities and services being rated for satisfaction. This allows us to calculate the derived importance of specific service elements, some of which will have a greater impact on perceptions of overall satisfaction than others.

The closer the correlation coefficient is to 1.0, the stronger it is as a driver of overall satisfaction.

Table 5: Drivers of overall satisfaction

<b>CORRELATIONS</b>	
<b>Being a well-run and managed Council</b>	0.74
<b>Development applications &amp; planning</b>	0.65
<b>Economic development/attracting new investment</b>	0.54
<b>Customer Service</b>	0.52
<b>Community Information and Consultation</b>	0.51
<b>Sealed roads</b>	0.49
<b>Waste and recycling</b>	0.46
<b>Online services</b>	0.44
<b>Unsealed roads</b>	0.44
<b>Environmental monitoring and protection</b>	0.44
<b>Car parking</b>	0.43
<b>Tourism resources and marketing</b>	0.43
<b>Youth facilities/services</b>	0.42
<b>Home support services</b>	0.41
<b>Libraries</b>	0.40
<b>Parks, reserves and playgrounds</b>	0.39
<b>Footpaths and cycleways</b>	0.39
<b>Arts, Culture and Heritage facilities and services</b>	0.38
<b>Disability access and inclusion</b>	0.36
<b>Council pools</b>	0.34
<b>Sporting facilities</b>	0.31
<b>Child Care</b>	0.31
<b>Airport operations</b>	0.22

In the case of ARC, this suggests that the “being a well-run and managed Council” has a significant correlation to overall satisfaction scores – as one would suspect. DAs and planning also appear to be driving overall satisfaction together with (to a lesser extent) economic development and customer service.

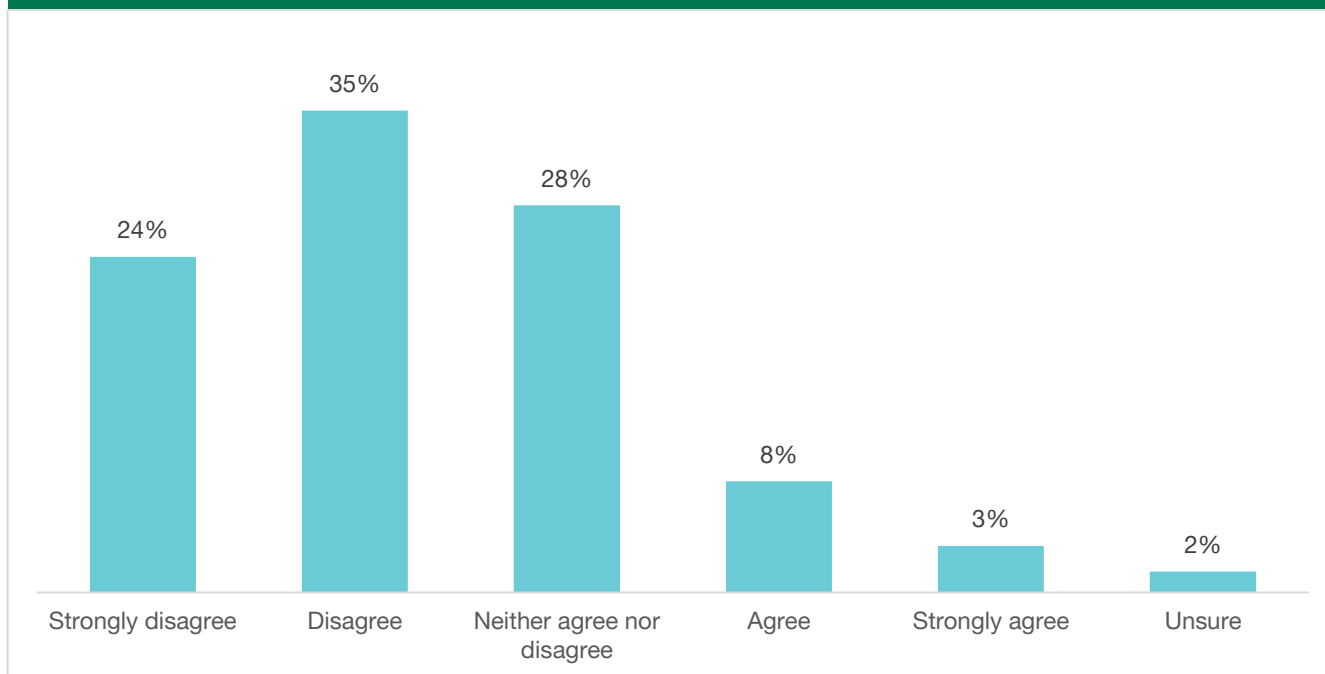


## 4. OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH COUNCIL

Figure 11: Satisfaction with Council allocation of resources

**Q10. AND TO WHAT EXTENT WOULD YOU AGREE OF OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "COUNCIL SPENDS OUR MONEY WISELY".**

**BASE: TOTAL SAMPLE N=400**



Continuing the theme of perceived poor management, only 11% of respondents agreed that Council spent their money wisely – against 59% disagreeing. The mean score was 2.36 (on a 1-5 scale, where 3 is “neutral”).

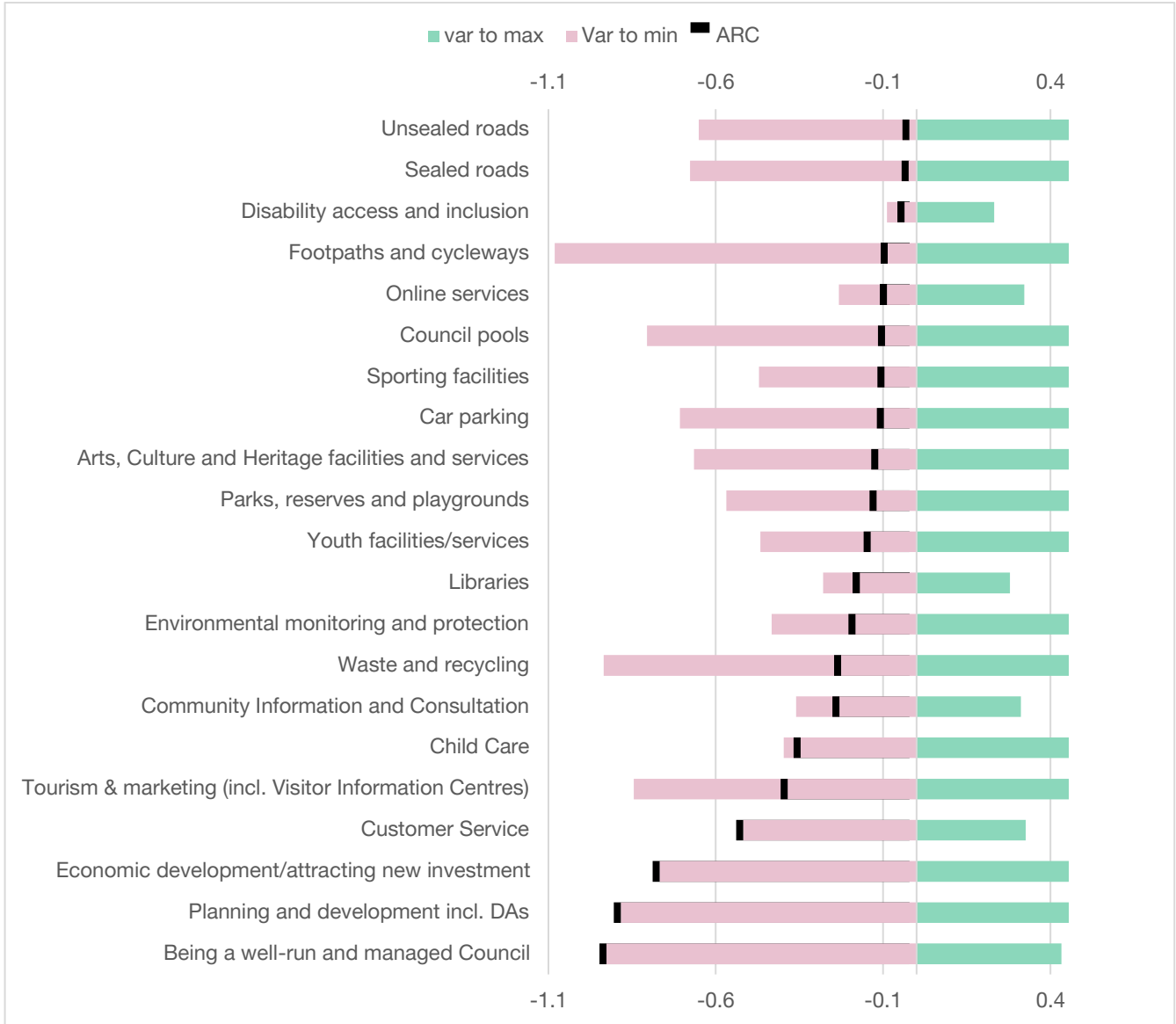
As one would expect, there was a very strong correlation between overall satisfaction with Council and attitudes to this question i.e. the lower a respondent’s overall satisfaction score, the more likely they were to disagree with this statement – and vice versa.



## 5. BENCHMARK AGAINST OTHER COUNCILS

Figure 12, below, shows where ARC sits on our benchmarking table of 25 other NSW regional councils (though obviously not all councils use the same facilities and services.) The length of each line shows the variance in scores between best and worst performing council, while the black line shows ARC’s position for that touchpoint.

Figure 12: Relative performance scores - regional comparison<sup>2</sup>



This suggests that ARC is below its peers on most measures for which comparable data is available.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that 'Airport operations' and 'home support services' have been excluded due to lack of available data for analysis.



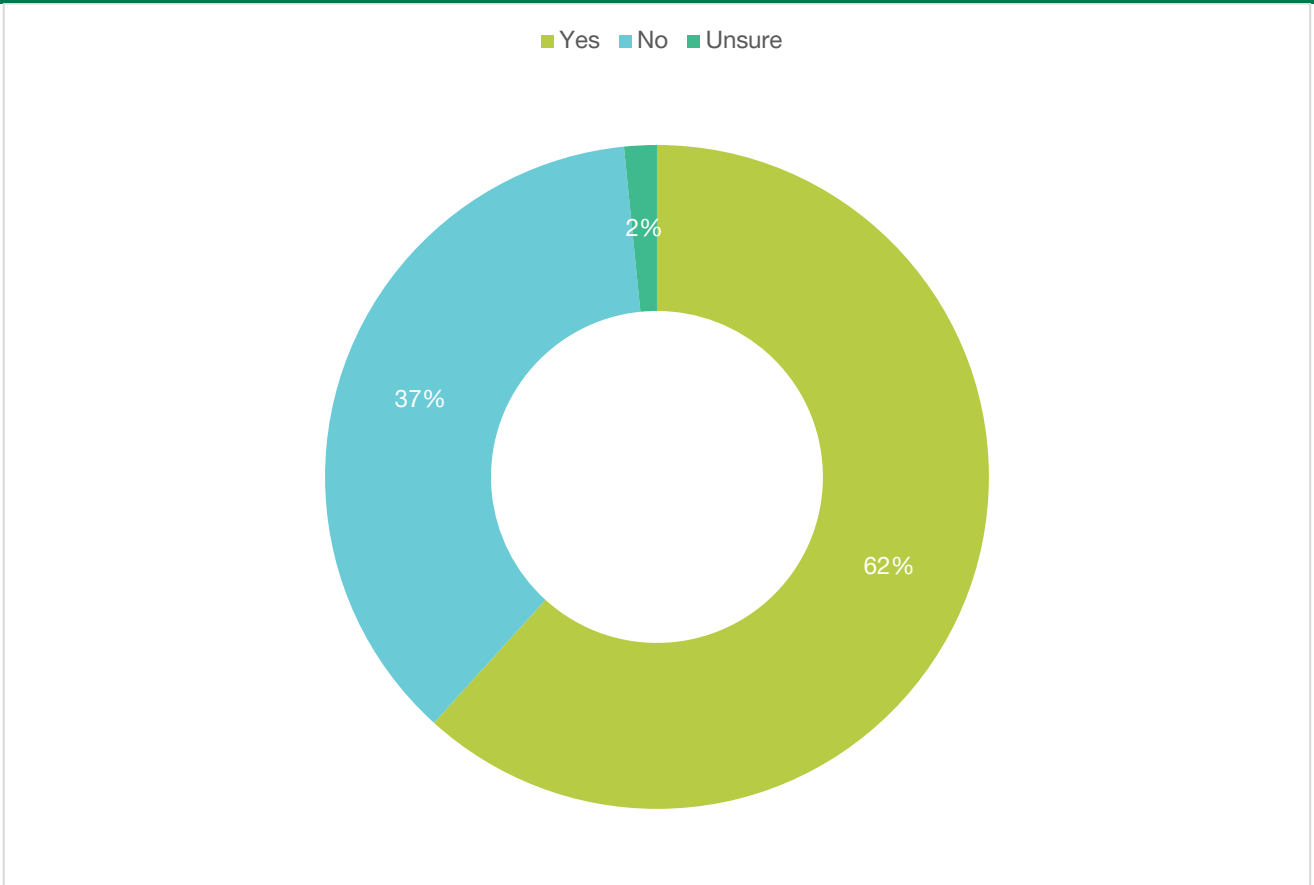
## 6. CONTACT WITH COUNCIL

This section of the report outlines satisfaction from customer service interactions. Figure 13 shows the proportion of residents who had contacted Council within the past 12 months, while Figure 14 (next page) shows the reason for their most recent interaction.

Figure 13: Contact with Council in the previous 12 months

**Q11. NOW (Q2), HAVE YOU CONTACTED COUNCIL WITHIN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?**

**BASE: TOTAL SAMPLE N=400**



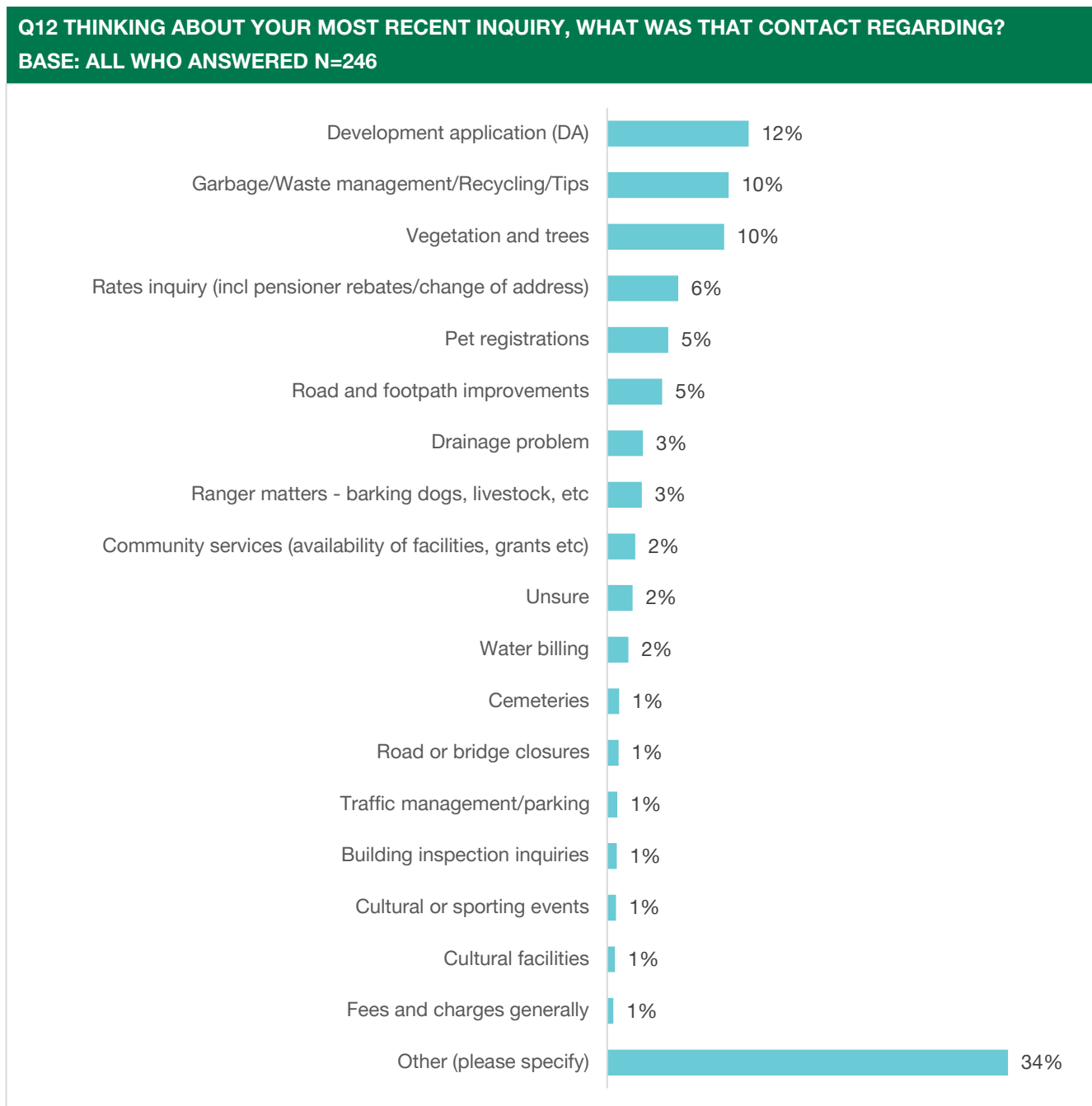
The fact that 62% of respondents had contacted Council, which is not atypical of other Councils for whom we have conducted satisfaction research in 2021, highlights the crucial role played by this tier of government.





## 6. CONTACT WITH COUNCIL

Figure 14: Reason for most recent contact with Council

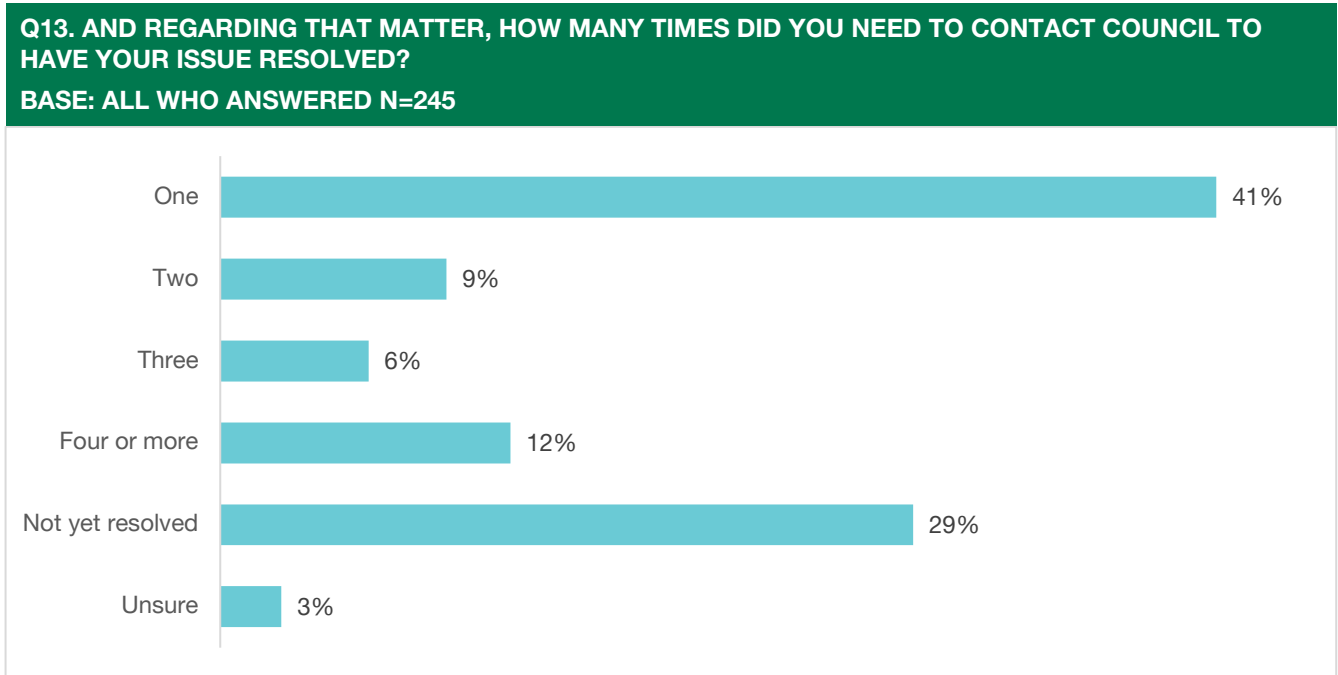


This graph indicates the wide variety of reasons for which people contact Council. While DAs, waste issues and vegetation queries were the most numerous, there was a long “tail” of queries on a huge range of matters. “Other” included everything from queries over dead bats and burst water mains through to mayoral portraits and dog parks.



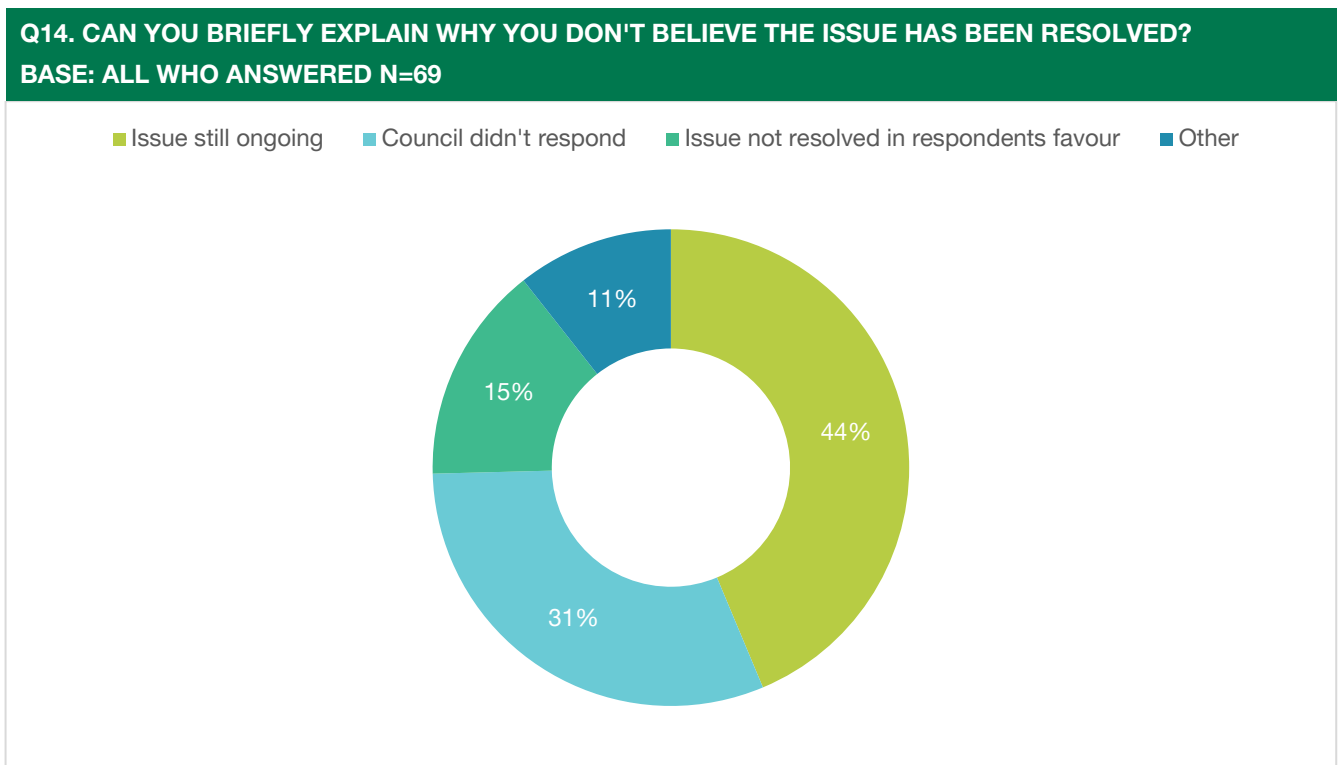
## 6. CONTACT WITH COUNCIL

Figure 15: Number of contacts with Council before issue resolved



Happily, the majority of inquiries were handled with one contact. However, 29% said their issues was not yet resolved. Of these (Figure 16, below), 44% were ongoing while 31% said Council hadn't responded and 15% felt the issue was ongoing because the initial inquiry had not been resolved in their favour.

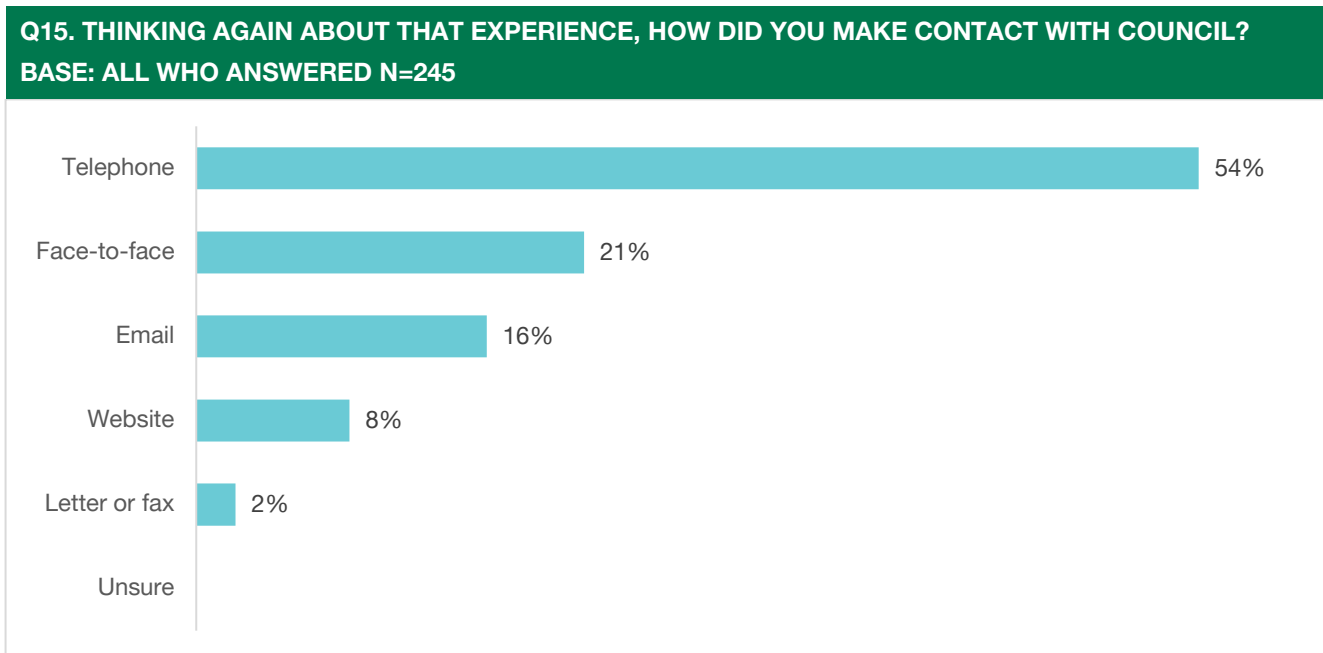
Figure 16: Reason issue considered unresolved





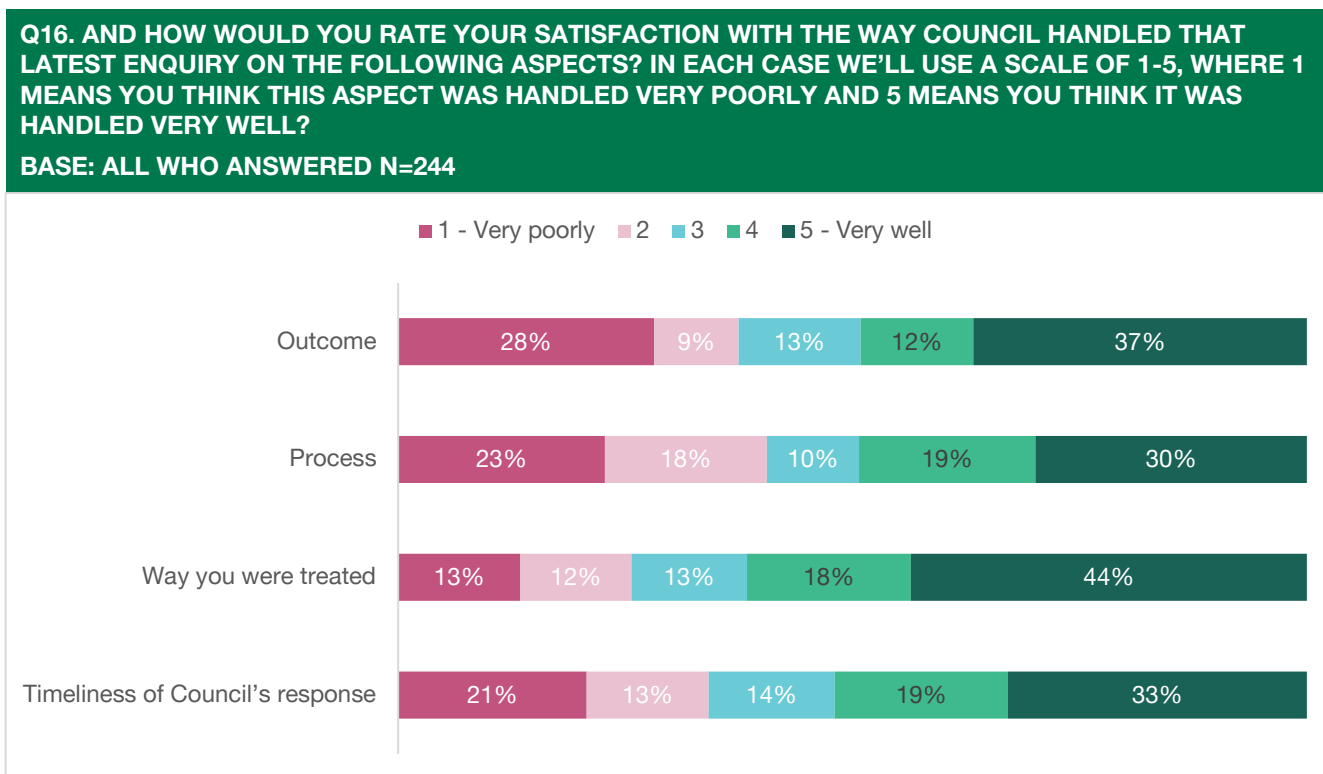
## 6. CONTACT WITH COUNCIL

Figure 17: Mode of contact with Council



Despite the increasing role of online interactions and social media, the vast majority of respondents (75%) still preferred to make first contact via phone or in-person. This is likely to be a combination of habit, but also a belief that speaking to an actual person is more likely to result in prompt action.

Figure 18: Satisfaction with Council handling of inquiry





## 6. CONTACT WITH COUNCIL

Contact satisfaction scores were generally favourable, with 52% saying their latest transaction was handled well or very well in terms of timeliness of responses (against 34% poor or very poor), and 62% happy with the way they were treated (against 25% unhappy). Scores were slightly less favourable in relation to the process (49% saying it was handled well or very well, against 41% believing it was done poorly or very poorly) and outcome (49% well/very well vs. 37% poor/very poor).

However, all mean satisfaction scores were above the “neutral” mark of 3.0, as shown in Table 6, below:

Table 6: Mean scores for Council contact satisfaction

MEASURE	SCORE
Timeliness of Council's response	3.30
Way you were treated	3.66
Process	3.16
Outcome	3.20
Average of four measures	3.33

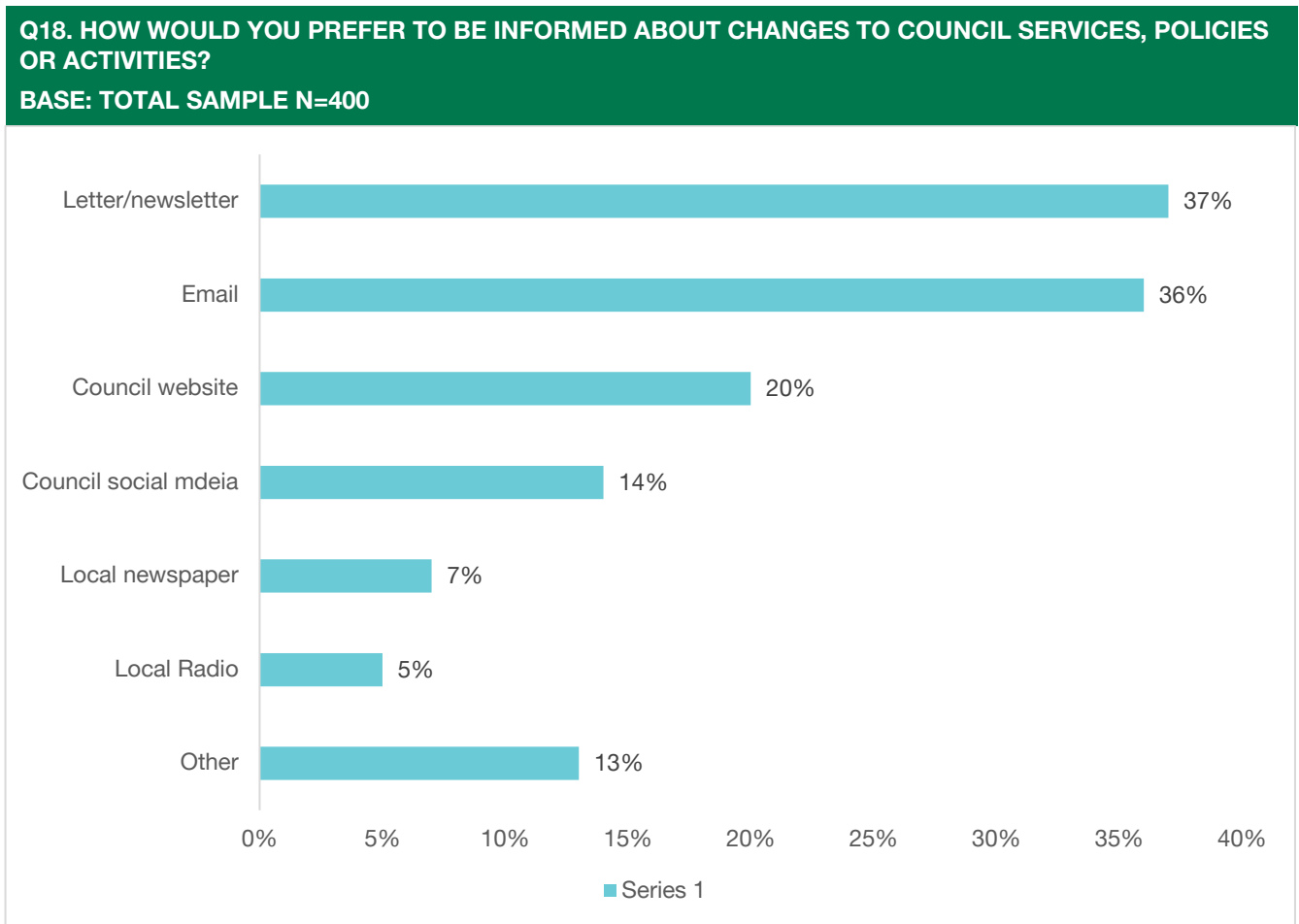
Note that there was a strong correlation between each of these scores and overall satisfaction with Council – suggesting (as with most other Councils) that customer contact plays a pivotal role in residents' wider perceptions of Council competence and/or performance.

Council was also interested in residents' preferred means of communications. Figure 19, below, shows (from an unprompted question) how respondents wanted Council to communicate with them in relation to changes in services, policies or activities:



## 6. CONTACT WITH COUNCIL

Figure 19: Preferred way to find out about changes to Council services, policies or activities



A letter or newsletter was the most widely cited information source (37%), suggesting some old habits die hard. However, this was followed closely by email (36%), meaning Council may wish to find ways of expanding its residents email list and (if not doing so already) using this as a primary means of communication.

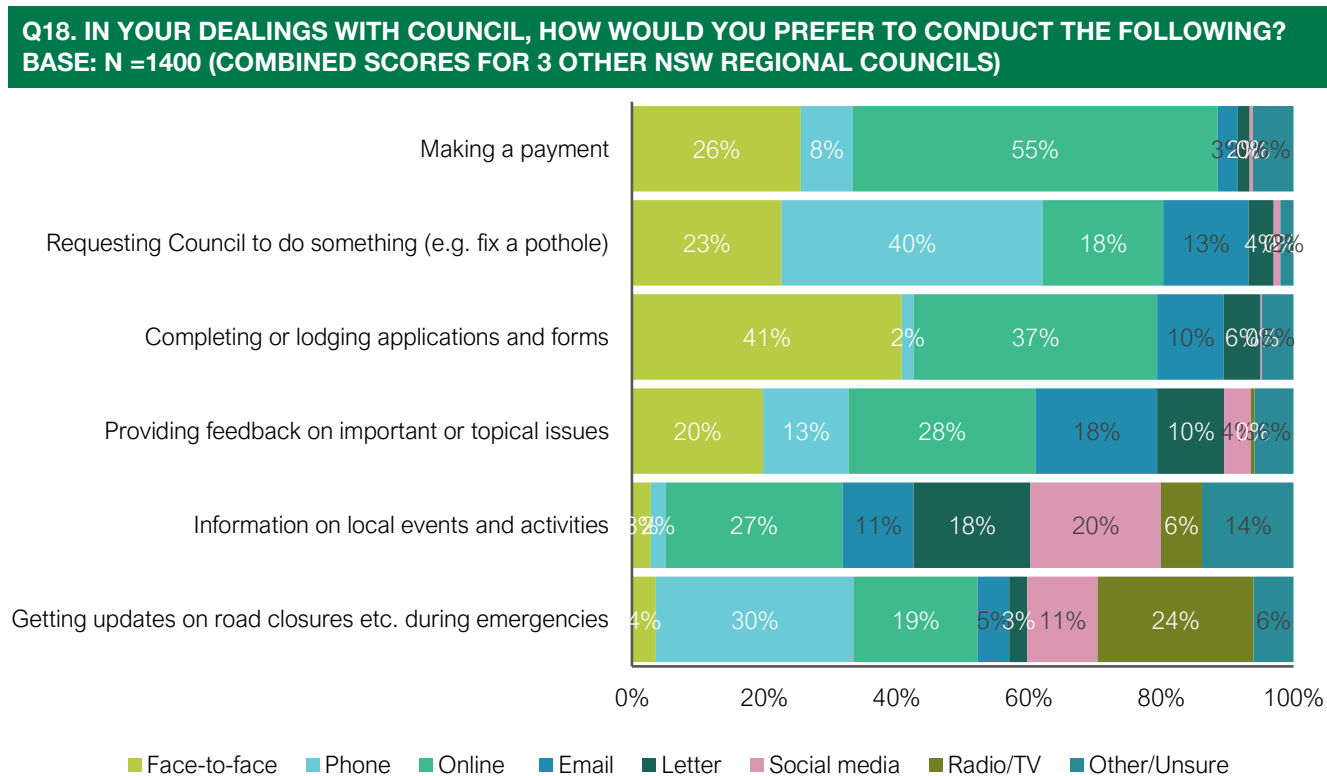
Council’s website was also a popular source for such information, along with social media. Interestingly only 7% chose the local newspaper as a preferred medium for communication (the majority of “other” was local TV).

We have also compiled, from the results of three other NSW regional councils, an indication on how residents like to conduct a range of different interactions. These are shown in Figure 20, below:



## 6. CONTACT WITH COUNCIL

Figure 20: Preferred way to receive information from Council



This suggests major variations in preferred communication techniques depending on type of interaction. While over half of all respondents (55%) preferred to make payments online, phone remains the preferred means for requesting Council to do something (40%) and face-to-face was still preferred for lodging applications and forms (41%, though online also popular at 37%).

Meanwhile the preferred way for providing feedback on topical issues was split relatively evenly between face-to-face (20%), online (28%) and email (18%). Likewise, for finding out about information on local events, with 27% preferring online, 20% social media, and 18% via letter/letterbox drop.

During emergencies, phone, online, social media and radio were all considered important media.

As one would expect, these results were partially age-specific. In particular, younger residents (i.e. those aged 18-39) were much more likely to seek out social media for information on local events, and finding out about road closures etc. during emergencies.

## 7. FUTURE PRIORITIES



The survey concluded with two quality-of-life questions. The first asked respondents to rate, on a 0-10 scale, how likely they would be to recommend living in the Armidale region to others?

Figure 21: Likelihood to recommend Armidale region to others

**Q19. THINKING MORE BROADLY NOW ABOUT THE ARMIDALE REGION AS A WHOLE, HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD RECOMMEND LIVING IN THE ARMIDALE REGION TO OTHERS? WE'LL USE A SCALE OF 0-10, WHERE 0 MEANS NOT AT ALL, AND 10 MEANS EXTREMELY LIKELY.**

**BASE: TOTAL SAMPLE N=400**

■ Extremely likely (10+9+8+7)    ■ Neutral range (6+5+4)    ■ Unlikely (3+2+1+0)



It appears residents' negativity to Council has not affected their enthusiasm for living locally. Some 70% gave a rating of 7 or above, including 30% rating it as a 9 or a 10. And just 7% provided a score of 3 or below, suggesting they were unlikely to recommend. The mean "recommend living in the Armidale region" score was 7.44.

Finally, respondents were then asked if they had seen anything in their travels that they felt would increase Armidale's appeal to visitors or residents. Seventy-one per cent of those surveyed were happy to put forward one or more suggestion: these open-ended responses have been coded into themes, with the results shown in Figure 22, next page:

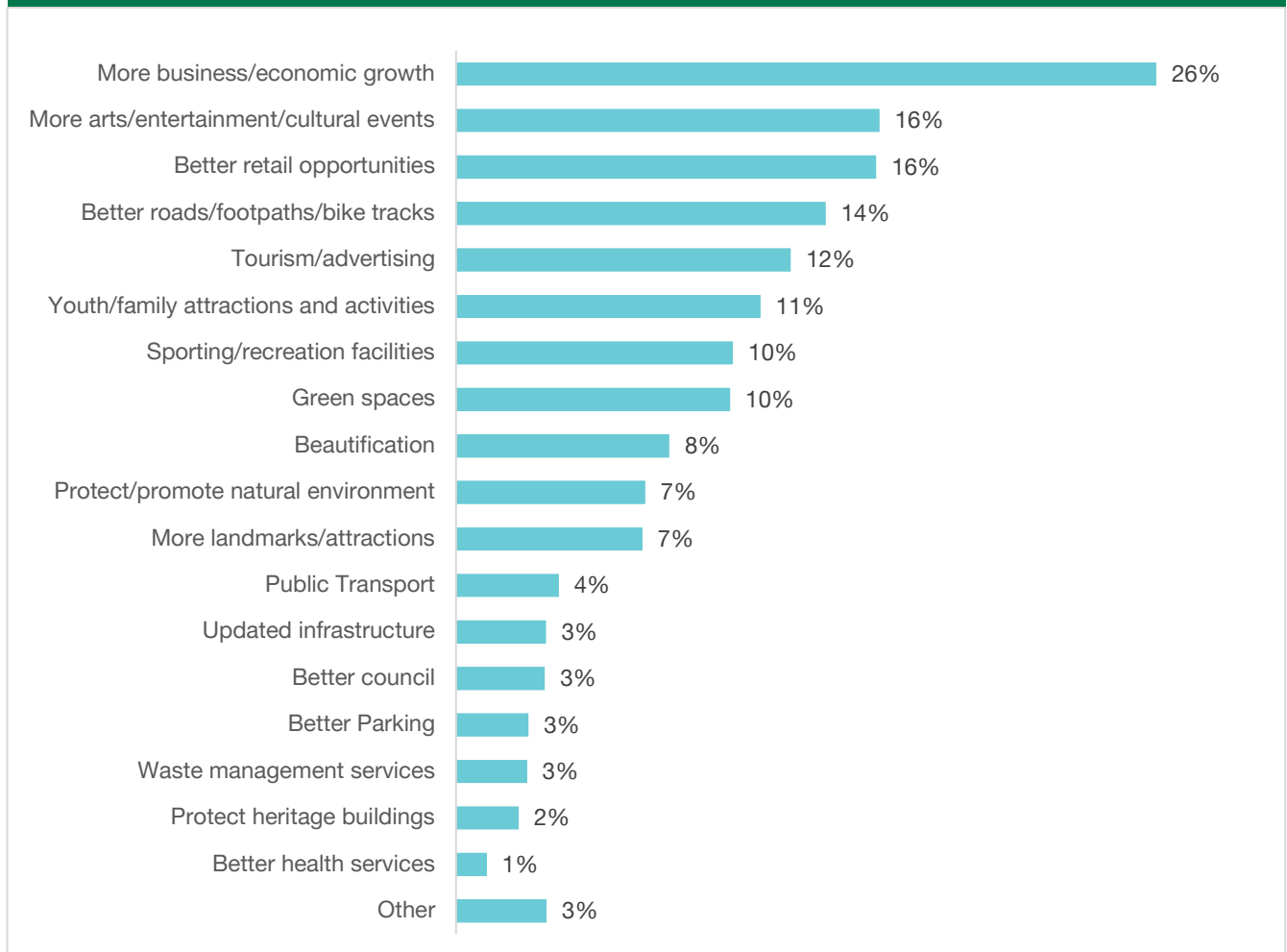


## 7. FUTURE PRIORITIES

Figure 22: ideas that would add appeal to visitors and residents

**Q19A. AND HAVE YOU SEEN ANYTHING IN YOUR TRAVELS THAT YOU THINK WOULD ADD TO ARMIDALE'S APPEAL TO VISITORS OR RESIDENTS?**

**BASE: ALL WHO ANSWERED 'YES' IN Q19A N=289**



Major points raised included attracting more businesses/fostering economic growth (an ongoing theme throughout the survey), attracting more cultural and entertainment events, more retail diversity, improved roads, footpaths and bicycle paths, improved tourism advertising and more activities for families, younger residents/visitors and children. Green space, protection of the natural environment and more landmarks or attractions also attracted multiple proponents.

A full list of comments will be supplied separately to Council.



## 8. APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

**Q1. Hi my name is (name) and I'm calling from Taverner Research on behalf of Armidale Regional Council. Council is conducting a customer satisfaction survey of its residents, and you have been randomly selected to participate. This survey takes around 12 minutes, we're not trying to sell anything and all answers will remain confidential. Would you be willing to assist Council this afternoon/evening?**

If necessary, check that resident is aged 18-plus.

1. Yes
2. No

**(If no, try to arrange a callback. If still no, try to speak to another member of the household. If still no, thank and terminate.)**

**S1. Thanks so much. Before we proceed, I just have a couple of quick qualifying questions. Firstly, can I just confirm you live in the Armidale Regional Council area?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. Yes
2. No      Thank and terminate

**S2. Have you lived in the area for at least 1 year?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. Yes
2. No      Thank and terminate

**S3. And are you or an immediate family member a councillor or permanent employee of Armidale Regional Council?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. Yes      Thank and terminate
2. No

## 8. APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

### Q2. May I have your first name for the survey?

Only so we can refer to you by name

### Q3. And (Q2) would your age range be between?

SINGLE RESPONSE PROMPTED

1. 18-39
2. 40-59
3. 60+

### Q4. Gender

DON'T ASK

1. Male
2. Female

### Q5. And which town do you live in or closest to?

SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED

If not listed ask which of the following is their closest town

1. Armidale
2. Ben Lomond
3. Black Mountain
4. Boorolong
5. Dangarsleigh
6. Ebor
7. Guyra
8. Hillgrove
9. Kellys Plains
10. Lower Creek
11. Llangothlin
12. Wollomombi
13. None of the above    Thank and terminate

**Q6. Thanks (Q2). To get us underway, can you please rate your satisfaction with the following Council facilities or services? We'll use a scale of 1-5, where 1 means you think it's very poor and 5 is excellent. If you don't use the service, just say so and I'll move to the next one. Firstly, how satisfied are you with?**

## 8. APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

**PROMPTED** SINGLE RESPONSE – RANDOMISE ORDER PLEASE. You may need to remind respondent to only rate services they use

### COLUMNS

1. 1 Very poor
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5 Excellent
6. Not applicable

### ROWS

1. Waste and recycling
2. Sealed roads
3. Libraries
4. Parks, reserves and playgrounds
5. Council pools
6. Footpaths and cycleways
7. Environmental monitoring and protection
8. Economic development/attracting new investment
9. Unsealed roads
10. Sporting facilities
11. Tourism resources and marketing (including Visitor Information Centres)
12. Youth facilities/services
13. Arts, Culture and Heritage facilities and services
14. Car parking
15. Home support services
16. Online services
17. Child Care
18. Planning and development including Development applications ( DA's)
19. Community Information and Consultation
20. Being a well-run and managed Council
21. Disability access and inclusion
22. Airport operations
23. Customer Service

## 8. APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

**Q7. I'm now going to read the list to you again but this time please rate how important these Council facilities or services are to you or your family. We'll use a scale of 1-5, where 1 means you think its unimportant, 4 is very important and 5 is critical. So firstly, how important to you or your family is?**

**PROMPTED SINGLE RESPONSE – RANDOMISE ORDER PLEASE.**

### COLUMNS

1. 1 Unimportant
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4 Very important
5. 5 Critical

### ROWS

1. Waste and recycling
2. Sealed roads
3. Libraries
4. Parks, reserves and playgrounds
5. Council pools
6. Footpaths and cycleways
7. Environmental monitoring and protection
8. Economic development/attracting new investment
9. Unsealed roads
10. Sporting facilities
11. Tourism Resources and marketing (incl Visitor Information Centres)
12. Youth facilities/services
13. Arts, Culture and Heritage facilities and services
14. Car parking
15. Home support services
16. Online services
17. Child Care
18. Planning and development including Development applications ( DA's)
19. Community Information and Consultation
20. Being a well-run and managed Council
21. Disability access and inclusion
22. Airport operations
23. Customer Service

## 8. APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

**Q8. Please rate your satisfaction with Council's overall performance on a scale of 1-5. Where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. 1 Very Dissatisfied
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5 Very Satisfied

**Q9. Can you briefly explain why you gave that rating? (Open response)**

**Q10. And to what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Council spends our money wisely".**

**SINGLE RESPONSE PROMPTED (EXCEPT "UNSURE")**

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Unsure

**Q11. Now (Q2), have you contacted Council within the past 12 months?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure

**Q12 Thinking about your most recent inquiry, what was that contact regarding?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. Garbage/Waste management/Recycling/Tips
2. Development application (DA)
3. Building inspection inquiries
4. Rates inquiry (including pensioner rebates and change of address)
5. Water billing
6. Septic tanks
7. Drainage problem
8. Community services (availability of facilities, grants for projects, community events, aged and disabled services etc.)
9. Ranger matters - barking dogs, livestock, etc
10. Vegetation and trees - e.g. requesting council to clear vegetation or mow grass
11. Other parks and gardens
12. Road and footpath improvements

## 8. APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

13. Library
14. Cultural facilities
15. Cultural or sporting events
16. Traffic management/parking
17. Road or bridge closures
18. Fees and charges generally
19. Cemeteries
20. Pet registrations
21. Website content and access
22. Unsure
23. OTHER (specify)

**Q13. And regarding that matter, how many times did you need to contact Council to have your issue resolved?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. One
2. Two
3. Three
4. Four or more
5. Not yet resolved
6. Unsure

**Q14. (If Q13=5) Can you briefly explain why you don't believe the issue has been resolved?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. Issue still ongoing
2. Council didn't respond
3. Issue not resolved in respondents favour
4. OTHER

**Q15. Thinking again about that experience, how did you make contact with Council?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. Telephone
2. Face-to-face
3. Letter or fax
4. Email
5. Website
6. Unsure

## 8. APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

**Q16. And how would you rate your satisfaction with the way Council handled that latest enquiry on the following aspects? In each case we'll use a scale of 1-5, where 1 means you think this aspect was handled very poorly and 5 means you think it was handled very well?**

### COLUMNS

1. 1 Very Poorly
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. Very Well

### ROWS

- A. The timeliness of Council's response
- B. The way you were treated
- C. The process
- D. The outcome

**Q17. In your dealings with Council, how would you prefer to conduct the following?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED (Unless absolutely necessary)**

### COLUMNS

1. Face to face
2. Phone
3. Online/via website
4. Email
5. Letter
6. Social media (Facebook etc)
7. Unsure

### ROWS

- A. Making a payment
- B. Requesting Council to do something (e.g. fix a pothole)
- C. Completing or lodging applications and forms
- D. Providing feedback on important or topical issues
- E. Getting updates on road closures etc. during natural disasters

## 8. APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

**Q18. How would you prefer to be informed about changes to Council services, policies or activities?**

**MULTIPLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. Local Newspaper
2. Local Radio
3. Council Website
4. Council Social Media Pages
5. Newsletters
6. Other (specify)

**Q19. (Q2) Thinking more broadly now about the Armidale region as a whole, how likely is it that you would recommend living in the Armidale Region to others? We'll use a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not at all, and 10 means extremely likely.**

(Scale of 0-10)

**Q19a And have you seen anything in your travels that you think would add to Armidale's appeal to visitors or residents?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. No
2. Yes (specify)

**Q20. And just before we finish, is your residence in an urban, rural or village location?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE UNPROMPTED**

1. Urban
2. Rural
3. Village

**Q21. And how long have you lived in the Armidale region?**

**SINGLE RESPONSE PROMPTED**

1. Less than 5 years
2. 5-10 years
3. 11-20 years
4. More than 20 years

**Q22. Thanks so much (Q2), that's the end of the survey. Armidale Regional Council greatly appreciates your feedback. Did you have any questions about the survey? Just to let you know my manager may call you to confirm this interview was conducted correctly. Thanks again for your time and have a great afternoon/evening.**

**(ISO and conclude)**



## 9. APPENDIX 2: DATA TABLE FOR KEY RESULTS

	Facility or service	Overall Mean	Age			Gender		Urban/Rural	
			18-39	40-59	60+	Male	Female	Urban	Rural + Village
Individual facilities/ Services	Waste and recycling	3.49	3.51	3.33	3.64	3.38	3.60	3.61	3.22
	Sealed roads	2.96	2.99	2.83	3.05	2.96	2.96	3.10	2.65
	Libraries	3.97	4.17	3.85	3.88	3.88	4.04	3.95	4.03
	Parks, reserves and playgrounds	3.74	3.93	3.53	3.72	3.76	3.72	3.72	3.80
	Council pools	3.68	3.72	3.73	3.56	3.57	3.77	3.68	3.68
	Footpaths and cycleways	3.05	3.29	2.99	2.80	3.16	2.96	3.02	3.13
	Environmental monitoring and protection	3.02	3.33	2.90	2.77	3.13	2.89	3.11	2.77
	Economic development/attracting new investment	2.05	2.21	1.90	2.02	1.99	2.11	2.11	1.92
	Unsealed roads	2.48	2.55	2.31	2.59	2.67	2.28	2.69	2.08
	Sporting facilities	3.74	3.81	3.63	3.78	3.61	3.86	3.76	3.69
	Tourism resources and marketing (including VICs)	3.00	3.12	2.90	2.96	3.03	2.96	3.09	2.77
	Youth facilities/services	2.83	2.92	2.63	2.94	3.06	2.60	2.88	2.70
	Arts, Culture and Heritage facilities and services	3.46	3.61	3.43	3.30	3.40	3.52	3.51	3.37
	Car parking	3.08	3.32	2.79	3.08	3.14	3.03	3.06	3.12
	Home support services	2.87	2.61	2.81	3.12	2.74	2.97	2.72	3.17
	Online services	3.14	3.17	3.17	3.07	3.19	3.10	3.16	3.11
	Child Care	3.14	3.02	3.26	3.23	3.20	3.09	3.12	3.17
	Planning and development (including DA's)	2.19	2.29	2.02	2.25	2.18	2.20	2.19	2.19
	Community Information and Consultation	2.69	2.81	2.49	2.74	2.70	2.67	2.73	2.60
	Being a well-run and managed Council	1.99	2.25	1.71	1.97	2.06	1.93	2.00	1.99
Disability access and inclusion	3.19	3.33	3.10	3.11	3.48	2.94	3.15	3.29	
Airport operations	3.65	3.64	3.65	3.69	3.67	3.64	3.61	3.74	
Customer Service	3.09	3.11	3.02	3.16	3.03	3.15	3.06	3.17	
Overall Satisfaction	Satisfaction with Council's overall performance.	2.43	2.63	2.20	2.40	2.39	2.46	2.51	2.26
Customer service satisfaction	Timeliness of Council's response	3.30	3.37	3.25	3.25	2.99	3.59	3.48	2.89
	Way you were treated	3.66	3.66	3.58	3.75	3.45	3.86	3.72	3.52
	Process	3.16	3.23	2.89	3.35	3.07	3.24	3.29	2.85
	Outcome	3.20	3.30	3.08	3.19	3.13	3.27	3.39	2.79



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