

TE KAUNIHERA Ā-ROHE O
ŌTOROHANGA
DISTRICT COUNCIL

ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL SURVEY REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2024-2025





OUR ANNUAL SURVEYS

Ōtorohanga District Council has continued the direction set in the 2021–31 Long Term Plan (LTP), strengthening our focus on community wellbeing, deepening relationships, and ensuring the Ōtorohanga district remains a great place to live, work, and enjoy.

Over the past year, we've continued to work closely with iwi and the wider community, and we've continued building a more future-focused organisation. Planning for growth while protecting what makes our district unique has remained at the heart of our approach.

As we weave our future together in the spirit of kotahitanga, alongside our partners and community, it is important that we take a moment to reflect on how we're doing.

This report marks the fourth Annual Resident and Māori Leaders Surveys. These surveys are designed to listen to the people of Ōtorohanga District and our Iwi/Māori partners, helping us understand how satisfied you are with Council services, assets, performance, and the strength of our relationships. Your feedback is essential in helping us prioritise the improvements that matter most to you.

We use your feedback to track trends and outcomes year by year, to ensure we're moving in the right direction. You can learn more about the goals of this survey and how you think we're doing in the pages that follow.

WE CONDUCT FOUR KEY SURVEYS EACH YEAR:

- Annual Resident Survey
- Annual Library Survey
- Annual Housing for Older Persons Survey
- Annual Māori Leaders Relationship Survey

OUR SURVEY OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE ONE

To provide a clear and comparable understanding of how our community feels about Council's relationships, services, assets, and overall performance.

OBJECTIVE TWO

To identify the key areas where Council can focus on making improvements that matter most to our community.

OBJECTIVE THREE

To track changes in satisfaction over time, helping us measure progress and align our efforts with the goals set out in the Long Term Plan.

ANNUAL SURVEY REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024-2025

OUR SURVEY METHOD

We collected feedback through a variety of methods to ensure everyone had the chance to participate. The Annual Resident and Library surveys were available online, with the full version of the former also printed in the King Country News. Hard copies of both the Annual Residents Survey and Library Survey were provided at our libraries and the Customer Experience Centre at our main office.

Additionally the Library Survey was emailed to our database of active library users and promoted in person to people visiting the library, ensuring both regular and occasional visitors had the opportunity to take part.

For residents living in Council's 'Housing for Older Persons' units, we delivered hard copies of the survey directly. Our friendly Customer Experience team also visited each complex, meeting with residents face-to-face to support them in sharing their thoughts with us.

The Māori Relationship Survey was sent via email to 18 recipients, ensuring their voices were included in our feedback process.

All surveys ran for four weeks, from 1 July to 1 August 2025.



THE MARGIN OF ERROR

The margin of error (MOE) helps us understand how closely the survey results reflect the views of our entire community. It's a useful tool to gauge the accuracy of the survey. A smaller margin of error means we can be more confident that the results represent the overall population, while a larger margin suggests the results may be less reflective of everyone's views.

Generally, a margin of error between 4% and 8% at a 95% confidence level is considered acceptable.

MARGIN OF ERROR FOR EACH SURVEY

The Annual Resident Survey was open to all age groups, though we recognise that those under 14 are less likely to participate.

To calculate the margin of error (MOE) for the survey, we used the 2023 Census data from Statistics New Zealand for residents aged 15 and over, which totals 8,187 people. With 128 submissions received, the margin of error for the Resident Survey is 9%. To reach a margin of error of 8% we needed a minimum of 131 submissions.

Library Survey: This survey targets active library users - those who have used their library card within the last two years. From a total of 1472 active users

(as of June 2023-2025), we received 157 submissions, resulting in a 7% margin of error. To ensure reliable insights, Council aims for a minimum of 120 submissions from our library users.

Housing for Older Persons Survey: This survey was delivered to 28 occupied units, with 17 tenants providing feedback - giving a margin of error of 15%. While we aim for at least 24 responses, we're pleased to note a slight increase from the 16 received last year and the 11 received the year before.

Māori Relationship Survey: Sent to 18 recipients via email, we received 12 responses, resulting in a 17% margin of error. This year's submission numbers marked an increase on last year's 7 submissions. Ideally, we aim to gather at least 16 submissions from a targeted group of 18.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing sunglasses and a dark green sleeveless dress, is sitting on a wooden bench. She is looking out over a bright blue ocean under a clear blue sky. In the background, there is a wooden fence and some distant land. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

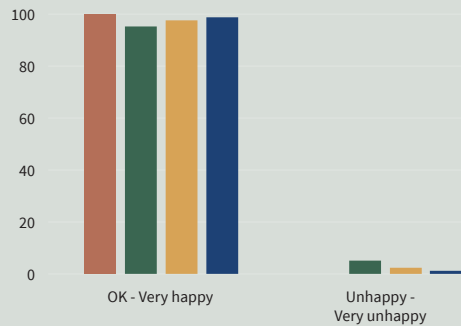
YEAR ON YEAR COMPARISON

YEAR ON YEAR COMPARISON

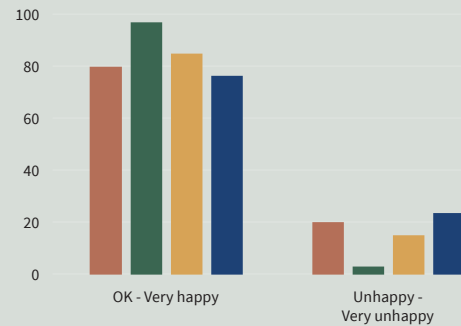
COMBINED SATISFACTION RATING ACROSS BOTH KĀWHIA AND ŌTOROHANGA

2021-2022 Year 2022-2023 Year 2023-2024 Year 2024-2025 Year

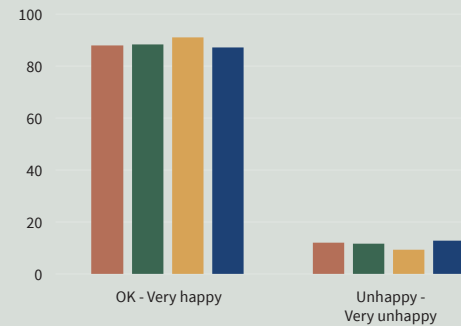
KERBSIDE RUBBISH & RECYCLING



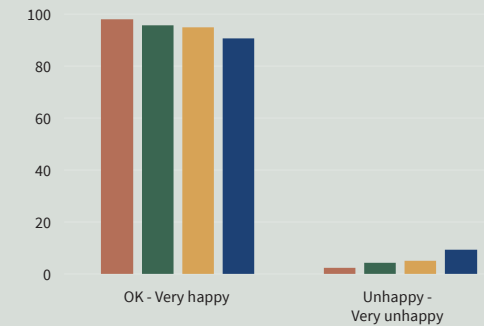
COMMUNICATION



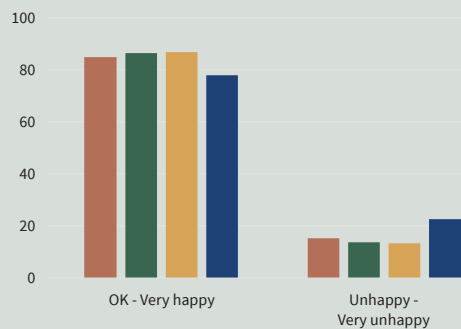
QUALITY OF PARKS AND RESERVES



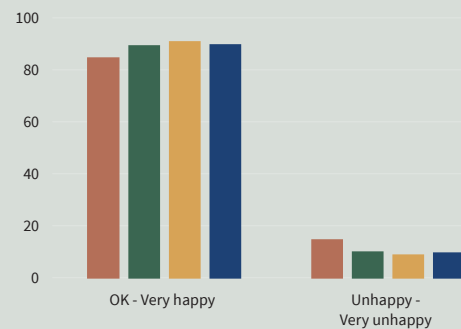
VARIETY OF PARKS AND RESERVES



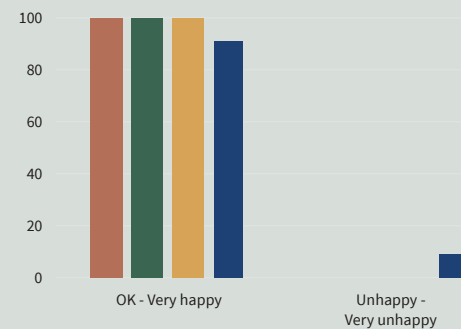
LEVEL OF TRUST IN ŌDC



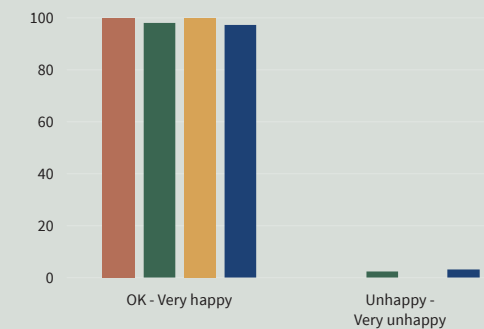
OVERALL ŌDC PERFORMANCE



TRUST OF ŌDC BY MĀORI LEADERS



LIBRARIES



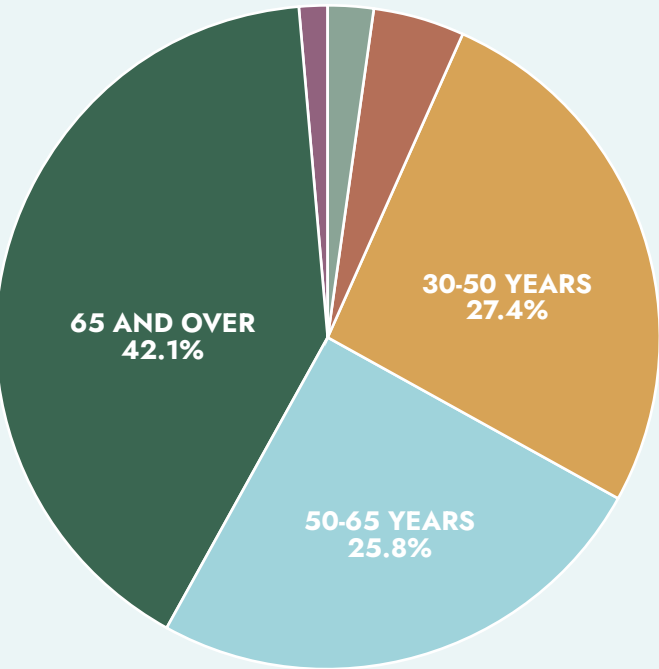
The year-on-year comparison data on this page has been updated from previous reports, which included 'I don't know' responses. To align with our audited Annual Report, we have removed those responses and adjusted the metrics. This approach provides council with a clearer and more accurate understanding of residents' sentiments.

A woman with long red hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a tan bucket hat, is smiling and pushing a young child on a swing. The child is wearing a dark camouflage-patterned shirt and is barefoot. They are in a park setting with a large body of water and mountains in the background. The scene is bright and sunny.

ANNUAL RESIDENT SURVEY

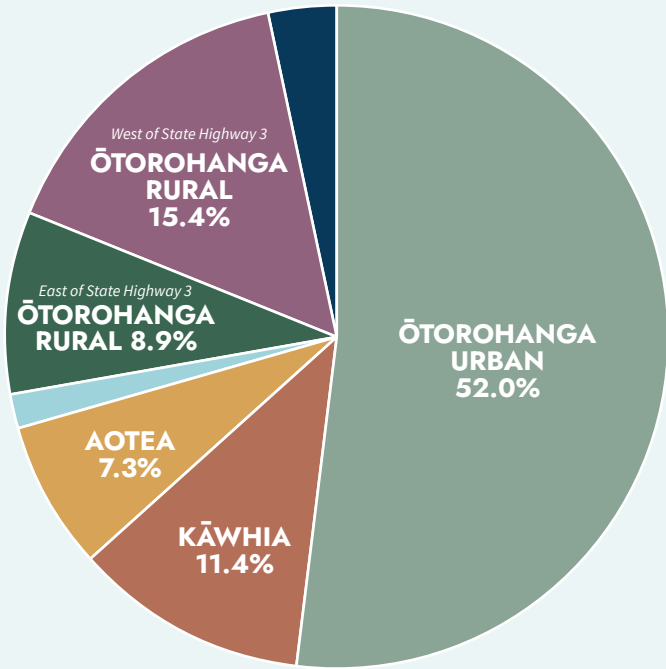
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

WHICH AGE GROUP ARE YOU IN?



- 20-30 4.8%
- 16-20 2.4%
- Would rather not say 1.3%

WHICH COMMUNITY DO YOU PRIMARILY LIVE IN?



- Ōpārau 1.6%
- I'm not sure 3.3%



KERBSIDE COLLECTION RUBBISH AND RECYCLING

THEMED RESPONSES TO KERBSIDE COLLECTION RUBBISH AND RECYCLING

Your feedback this year again highlighted a strong interest in improving kerbside services - particularly moving toward wheelie bins, expanding recycling options, and increasing clarity about what happens to recyclables once collected.

Most of you remain positive about the current collection but see opportunities to modernise the system, make it more convenient, and provide clearer communication. Some suggestions, like soft-plastic collection or organics bins, require regional partnerships, while others are being explored locally.

TRANSITION TO WHEELIE BINS OVER BAGS:

Some of you said it's time to move away from yellow rubbish bags and introduce wheelie bins instead. You see bins as a cleaner, safer, and fairer option - they stop rubbish from blowing around, make it easier for people with long driveways, and bring us in line with what neighbouring districts are already doing.

- "Wheelie bins would be awesome – the Te Awamutu system works well."
- "Bags blow around and make a huge mess when it's windy."

"Small wheelie bins instead of bags would be great – the bags get smelly and messy."

"Happy with the process."

"Overall OK – the recycling could be expanded, but I'm happy with the current service."

EXPAND RECYCLING OPTIONS AND EDUCATION

There is continued interest in expanding what can be recycled - including soft plastics, aluminium, and food scraps - and strong calls for education and transparency around the recycling process.

Residents want clearer guidance on what belongs in each bin and reassurance that recyclables are being processed correctly.

- "Some people put in pizza boxes – is this an education thing?"
- "More clarity on what can be recycled and how Council wants it sorted."

"Would be great to include soft plastics and polystyrene."

IMPROVE COLLECTION PRACTICES AND CONSISTENCY

Some of you noted the need for careful handling during pick-up and greater consistency in timing. While most described the service as good, minor issues such as dropped rubbish or variable pick-up times affect perceptions of reliability.

- “If rubbish is dropped when loading the truck, please pick it up.”
- “Keep a regular schedule – sometimes the timing changes without notice.”

“The service is good, just needs more consistency.”

AFFORDABILITY AND BAG OPTIONS

A smaller group raised concerns about the cost and size of yellow bags, particularly for low-volume households.

Suggestions included smaller bag options or reduced pricing to improve fairness and affordability.

- “Smaller bag options – it takes months to fill a big one.”

“Lower cost of yellow rubbish bags.”



“It happens and appears seamless, so nothing I can think of.”

“I think it’s a good service and goes well.”

WHAT WE'RE DOING ABOUT IT:

Transition to Wheelie Bins Over Bags: Last year, Ōtorohanga District Council and Waitomo District Council jointly commissioned an independent Kerbside Feasibility Study to look at whether wheelie bins would be a good fit for our district. This work was reviewed with elected members and informed the development of our 2024 Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP).

After reviewing the findings, Council has decided not to introduce wheelie bins at this time. While bins offer convenience, the study highlighted several challenges for our district:

- **Wheelie bins increase the amount of rubbish sent to landfill.** Evidence from similar councils shows that bins tend to increase disposal and reduce recycling. Our WMMP focuses strongly on minimising waste, so this finding weighed heavily.
- **Bins shift the cost to everyone - even those who produce very little waste.** Under a wheelie-bin system, every serviced property pays for weekly collection through their rates. People who actively minimise waste would end up subsidising higher waste producers.
- **Bags and crates help keep contamination low.** Wheelie bins for recycling are known to lead to higher contamination, which then increases costs and prevents recyclables from being processed. Crates and bags make contamination easier to spot and manage.

- **The current system supports a strong user-pays approach.** Buying rubbish bags encourages residents to recycle first and dispose only what they need to.

For now, we will continue with bags and crates, as this system best supports waste minimisation, keeps costs fair, and maintains the quality of our recycling operation. However, we will keep reviewing kerbside options as part of our ongoing WMMP work, especially as national standards and funding arrangements evolve.

Recycling and Waste Sorting Concerns: To address concerns about recycling going to landfill, our Communications team is working with the Waste Minimisation Officer to promote an education campaign. This will help explain the recycling process and where your recyclables actually go.

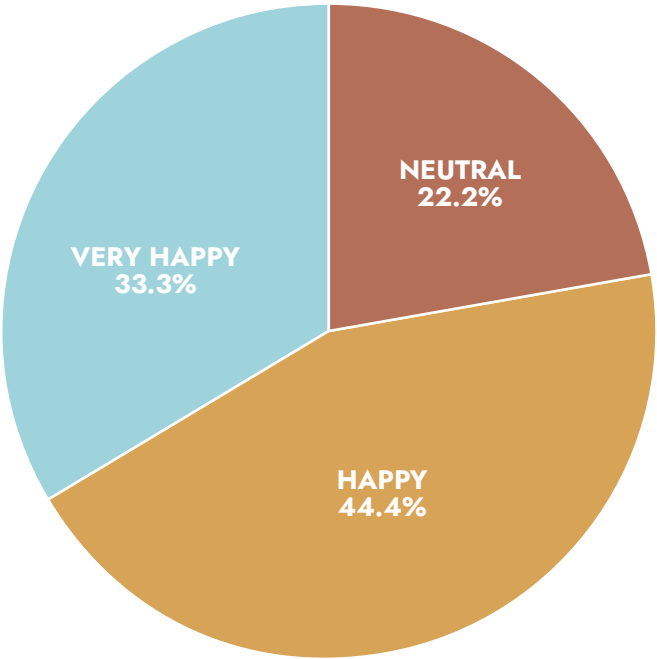
Improve Rubbish Collection Practices: We work closely with our contractors to ensure they deliver the best service possible. However, if rubbish bags or bins are overfilled or break, it isn't the contractor's responsibility to clean up. If you have concerns, we encourage you to use our 'Service Request' system. One way you can do this is by downloading the Antenno App which allows you to take a photo and send us message about the issue or any other council fix it problem you would like to report.

Cost of rubbish bags: While we understand the desire to reduce the cost of rubbish bags, increases in landfill levies by central government mean that we can't lower these fees. Waste services rely on funding, and the "user-pays" model ensures fairness.

WE'RE LISTENING
www.otodc.govt.nz/contact-us



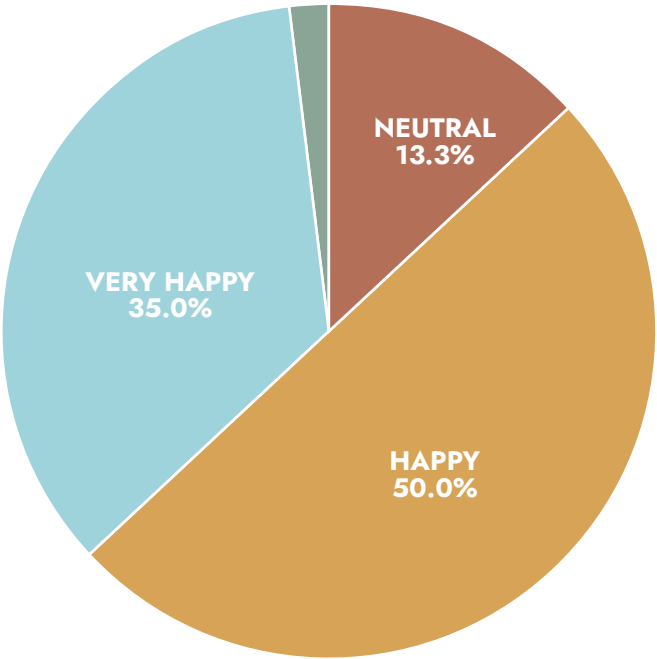
HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE SERVICE OF KĀWHIA KERBSIDE COLLECTION IN THE LAST YEAR?



● Unhappy 0%

● Very unhappy 0%

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE SERVICE OF ŌTOROHANGA KERBSIDE COLLECTION IN THE LAST YEAR?



● Unhappy 1.7%

● Very unhappy 0%



COMMUNICATION

THEMED RESPONSES TO COMMUNICATION

You've told us again this year that good communication matters - not just more of it, but communication that feels open, human, and meaningful.

Your feedback shows a clear appetite for greater insight into Council's work and decisions, and for updates that reach people in ways that suit them - whether online, in print, or in person.

You value the approachable, story-based style of our recent updates and want to see this continue, paired with clear information and transparency about what's happening in your community.

SHOW THE HUMAN SIDE OF COUNCIL

You've shared that you enjoy seeing the people behind the mahi and the everyday effort that goes into serving the community and would like to see more "*behind the scenes*" content and updates that show progress, not just end results.

- "Showcase the hard work going on behind the scenes - people don't realise the depth of what staff do to get projects across the line."
- "Profiles on local staff are awesome - keep them coming."

"The socials are great - I love the human element of those."

BE TRANSPARENT AND TIMELY

A consistent theme was the call for greater transparency about decisions, spending, and projects.

You want to know *what's happening, why, and how it affects you* - and to receive updates earlier in the process.

Transparency is seen as key to building trust and reducing frustration.

- "Be more open and transparent about how rates are spent."
- "Keep people informed before decisions are made - no hidden surprises."

"Explain how community feedback has shaped decisions."

REACH EVERYONE - MULTIPLE CHANNELS MATTER

You would like to see Council keep using a mix of communication channels to ensure everyone stays informed - from social media and Antenno to printed newsletters, email updates, and local newspapers.

Many noted that relying solely on Facebook risks excluding some residents, especially older audiences and rural communities.

"Monthly email newsletters or mailed updates would be great."

- "Facebook is good, but don't rely on it - not everyone is on social media."
- "Keep posting in the newspaper for those who don't use devices."

COMMUNICATE LOCALLY AND CONSISTENTLY

There was a strong call for more community-specific updates - particularly for Kāwhia, Aotea, and rural residents - and for consistent, predictable communication across all channels.

People want clarity on when staff will be in their area and where to find updates about local projects and events.

- “We appreciate when staff visit Kāwhia it would be great to know beforehand when that’s happening.”
- “Council news should also appear in the Te Awamutu paper - we miss information that’s not in our delivery area.”

“More updates about roading, flooding, and recycling improvements.”

BUILD TRUST THROUGH TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Several of you linked communication to trust and participation, saying Council should not only share information but also *close the loop* - letting people know how their feedback influenced outcomes.

There’s an opportunity to strengthen two-way communication and continue encouraging constructive dialogue.

- “Public consultations are vital to encourage trust - it has to go both ways.”
- “Consult more - and let us know what happens next.”

“Be proactive and clear about outcomes from engagement.”



WHAT WE'RE DOING ABOUT IT:

Keeping communication open and accessible

We'll continue to use a mix of communication channels that balance online tools with face-to-face engagement and printed information - ensuring updates are clear, timely, and easy to find.

Sharing the people and stories behind our work

We'll keep highlighting the people, projects, and partnerships that make a difference in our district through short videos, staff profiles, and behind-the-scenes stories that bring our mahi to life.

Being transparent about decisions

Council decisions are made available through formal meeting minutes uploaded to our website as soon as they're prepared.

For matters likely to attract public interest, we'll issue a media release. You can also follow our meetings live on Council's YouTube channel, watch recordings afterward, and see pre and post-meeting updates across Facebook and Instagram.

Reaching you in more ways

Information will continue to be shared through Antenno notifications (high-level updates such as significant consultations, road closures, and service disruptions) as well as through local newspapers, the Āmio newsletter, and in-person visits with our Pop-Up Councils to rural and coastal communities.

Communicating responsibly and cost-effectively

We're committed to communicating in a sustainable way that delivers value for ratepayers. While we use multiple channels to stay connected, it's not possible to share every message everywhere.

We'll keep making key information easy to access and encourage residents to stay connected through the channels that work best for them.



How could Council improve the way it communicates?

“In today’s world you have to cover it all – older people like newspapers, the middle mix uses both, and younger people are online.”

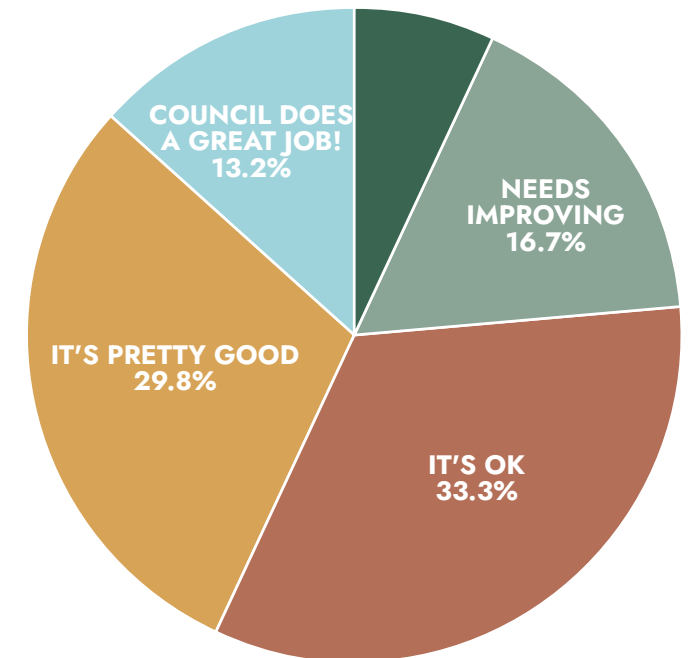
“Council needs to set clear guidelines for when and how the community will be consulted and be transparent about costs and projects.”

“More local news would help – we never hear much from our area councillors.”

“Keep up the Facebook posts showing local staff – those make Council feel approachable.”

“More regular emails”

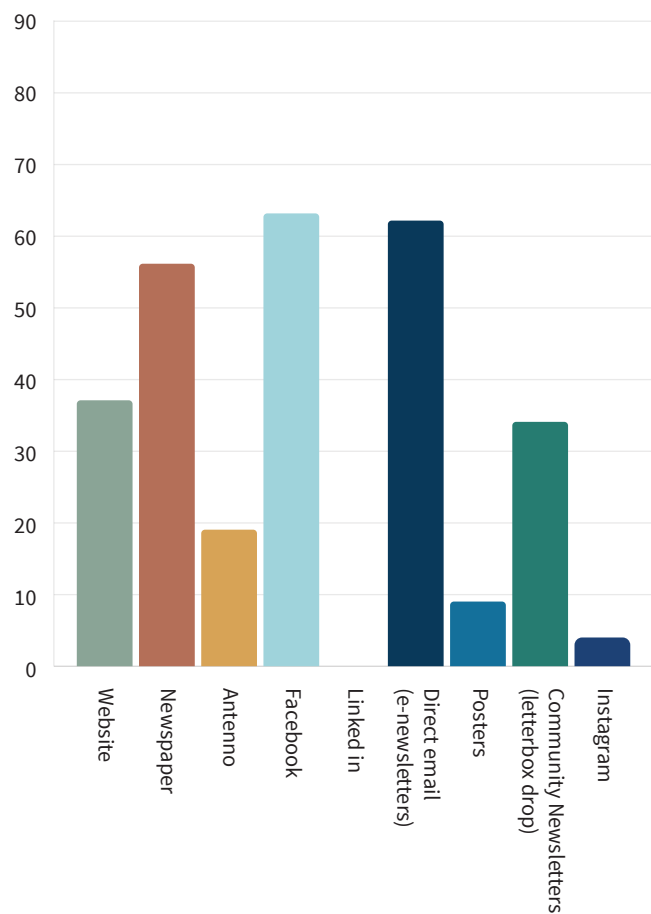
DO YOU THINK ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMUNICATES WELL WITH THE COMMUNITY?



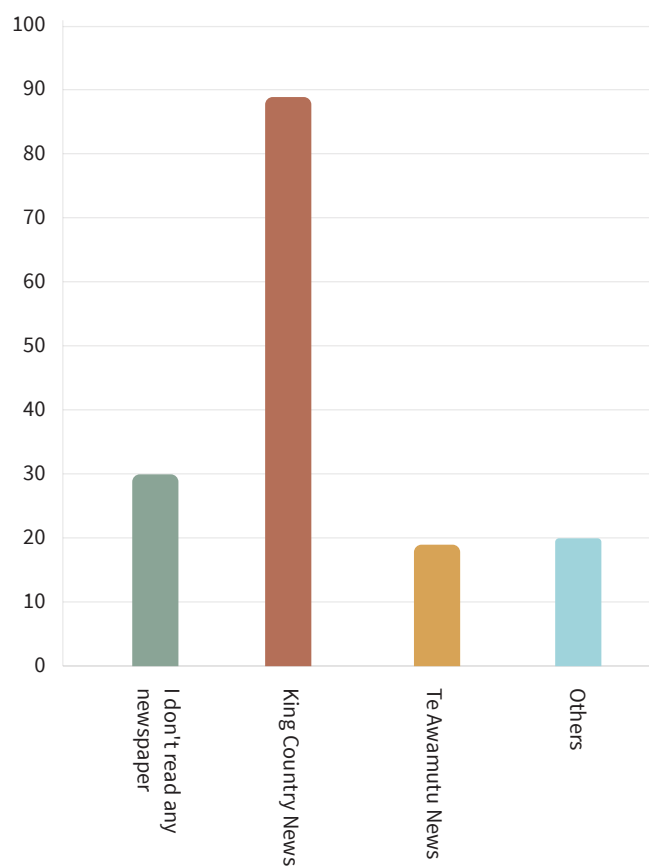
● Not at all

7%

WHAT ARE YOUR PREFERRED WAYS OF RECEIVING COUNCIL COMMUNICATION (UP TO THREE)?

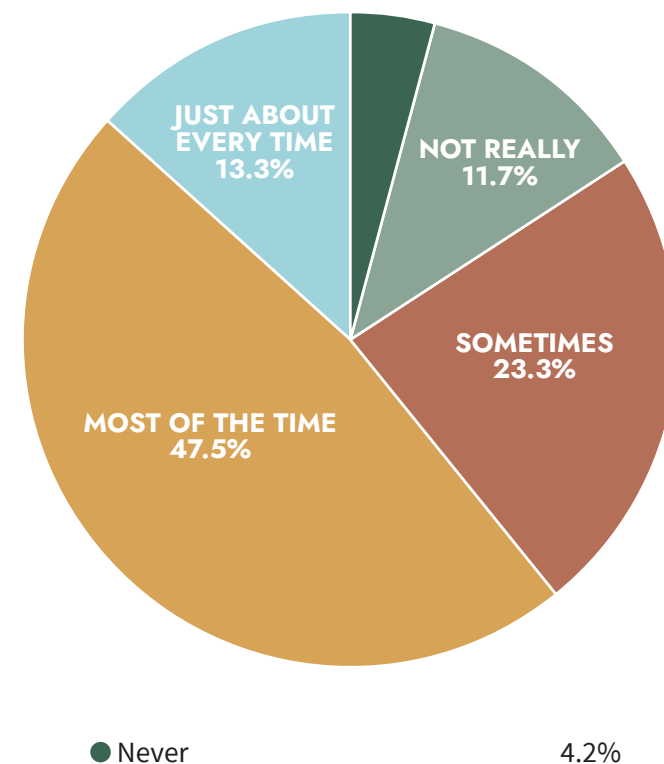


WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING NEWSPAPERS DO YOU READ (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

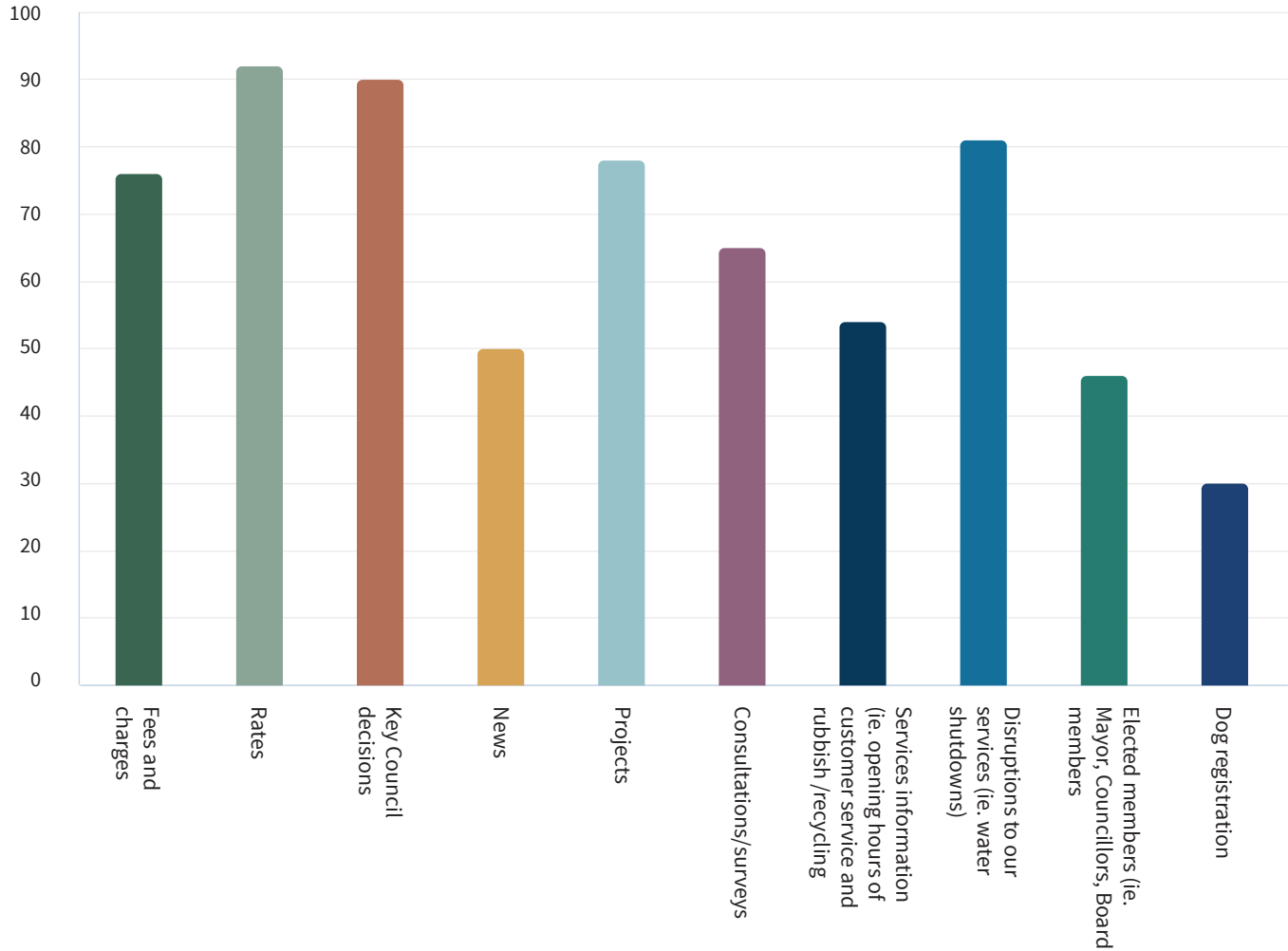


Others included: Waikato Times, Herald, Stuff, NewsHub, The Guardian, Times – many noting these were online.

CAN YOU GET/FIND COUNCIL INFORMATION WHEN YOU NEED IT?



WHAT INFORMATION IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AND YOU WANT TO RECEIVE COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT?



What other topics are important for you to know more about and would like Council to include in future communications?

"More updates about road works, recycling upgrades, and funding changes. Collaboration with tangata whenua and mana whenua"

"Water discussions, safety improvements, and initiatives for our youth"

"How rates are being used"



PARKS AND RESERVES

THEMED RESPONSES TO PARKS AND RESERVES

How could we improve the **VARIETY** of parks or reserves?

Most of you feel Ōtorohanga has a good variety of parks and reserves for its size, offering spaces for both active and relaxed recreation.

Your feedback this year focused less on creating more parks, and more on adding variety and character to what already exists - from fitness trails and fenced dog areas to cultural storytelling and play features that celebrate our district's identity.

VARIETY OF PARKS:

ADD INTEREST AND VARIETY:

Some of you suggested new elements that could make parks more engaging and encourage wider use by different age groups.

- “Add orienteering or treasure hunt features - make it fun to explore all the parks.”
- “A dog agility park would be fabulous.”

“A simple fitness trail along the stopbank walkway would be awesome.”

REFLECT LOCAL IDENTITY:

You have expressed a strong desire for parks and reserves to celebrate Ōtorohanga's unique stories, landscapes, and cultural heritage.

- “The Pou for the history of the stopbanks still hasn't been done - the Kīngitanga connections should be recognised.”

“Add signage in te reo Māori and include historic or educational panels - for example, the history of the Waipā River.”

BALANCING DEVELOPMENT AND NEED:

A few of you noted that while variety is valued, future additions should match population growth and affordability.

- “Depending on housing development, that will determine whether we need more parks or reserves.”
- “Everything's satisfactory for now - just look after what we have.”

“These spaces are always well presented, and maintenance is attended to promptly.”

THEMED RESPONSES TO PARKS AND RESERVES

How could we improve the **QUALITY** of parks or reserves?

This year you have continued to rate the overall quality and presentation of parks highly, with many noting how well-maintained and attractive most spaces are.

Feedback this year focused on cleanliness, accessibility, safety, and maintenance standards, with several practical suggestions to enhance the experience for users.

QUALITY OF PARKS:

KEEP THEM CLEAN, SAFE AND WELL-MAINTAINED

You have praised the upkeep of local parks but asked for consistent attention across all sites - particularly around mowing, bin collection, and pathways.

- “Keep them clean and tidy so they are safe and beautiful.”
- “Parts of Rotary Park and Bob Horsfall Reserve need more frequent mowing.”
- “More rubbish bins along the stopbank and dog areas.”

ENHANCE SAFETY AND COMFORT:

Some of you have asked for an increase in safety and for parks to feel comfortable, and usable throughout the year - including at night or during wet conditions.

- “Have more covered areas for rainy days.”
- “More shade, seats, and colour - make it inviting.”

“Lighting along the stopbank would help people use it safely after work.”

FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY AND ENVIRONMENT

Some emphasised the need for better accessibility and environmental care, from disability-friendly paths to native planting and water quality improvements.

- “Focus on native plantings and increased biodiversity.”
- “The pond at Bob Horsfall Reserve becomes stagnant - needs attention.”

“Better disability access and toilets.”

WHAT WE'RE DOING ABOUT IT:

We're pleased to hear that most of you feel our parks and reserves offer good variety and are well maintained. We also appreciate the practical suggestions you've shared to make these spaces even more welcoming, accessible, and reflective of our district's unique character.

Maintenance and upgrades

We continue to follow a regular maintenance schedule for mowing, equipment checks, and planting across all parks and reserves. Our contractors inspect playgrounds in line with national safety standards, and we prioritise repairs as soon as issues are reported. If you notice something that needs attention, please let us know through our online service request system - this helps us respond faster and keep your spaces safe and tidy.

Shade, seating, and accessibility

We've heard your requests for more comfort and accessibility in our parks. Through the upcoming Long Term Plan development we will explore the opportunity to increase seating and shade where feasible and improve access paths in high-use areas.

Celebrating local identity

As part of our Concept Plans activities we're

exploring opportunities for bilingual and cultural signage that celebrates our district's stories, including the history of the Waipā River and local mana whenua connections. These projects are mana-whenua led and council supported.

Future planning

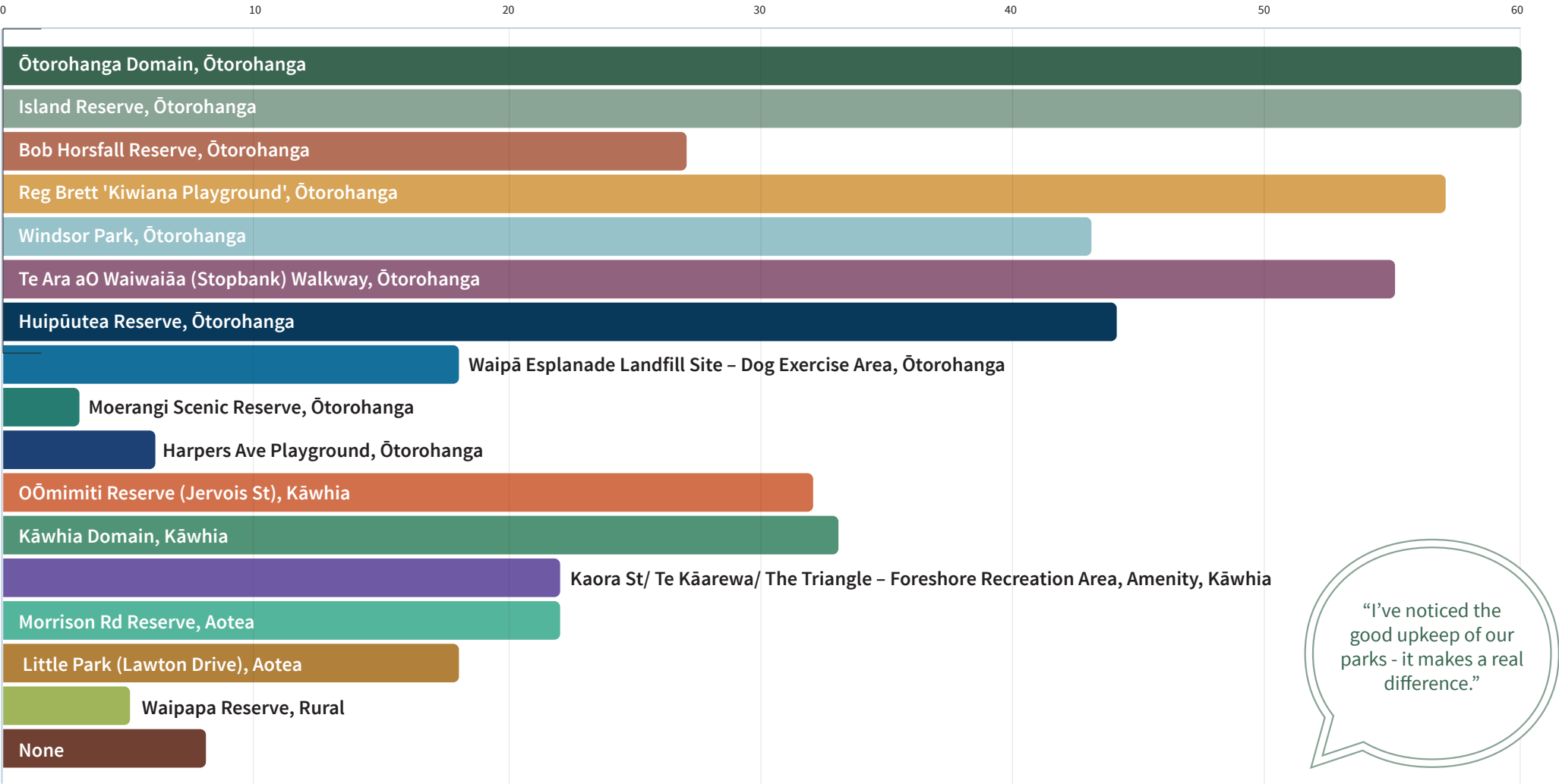
We're excited to create a new fitness park on Mair Street, at the access point to Te Ara a Waiwaiā (Stopbank) Walkway - giving the community a space to be active and enjoy the outdoors together. While the equipment couldn't be placed on the walkway itself due to size and flood protection considerations, the Mair Street location provides an ideal alternative. We're also exploring investment in the district's dog park, including the addition of dog agility equipment to enhance its use and appeal. Both of these projects have been led by the Ōtorohanga Community Board.

Community partnerships

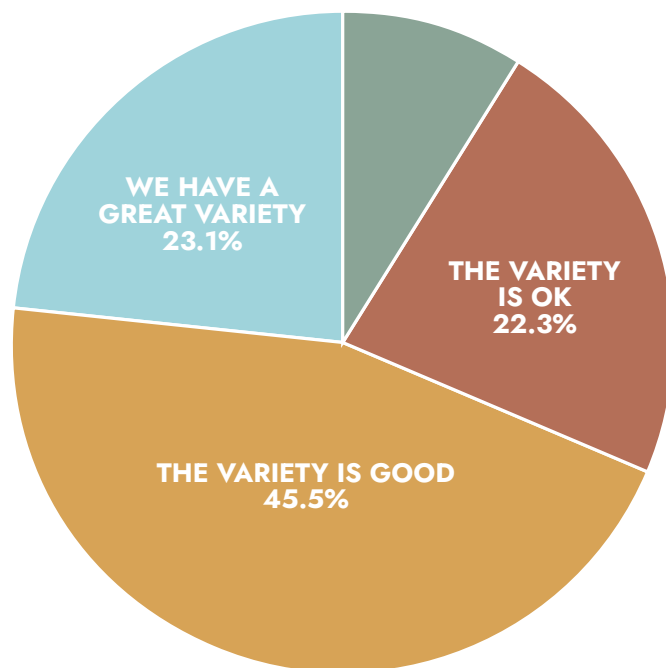
We'll continue to work closely with mana whenua, community groups, schools, and volunteers who help care for our open spaces - from planting projects to reserve upgrades. Together, we can make sure our parks remain safe, beautiful, and enjoyable for everyone.

“I enjoy the Huipūtea Reserve and often meet other people enjoying themselves there.”

PLEASE SELECT ALL THE COUNCIL PARKS AND RESERVES YOU HAVE VISITED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS.

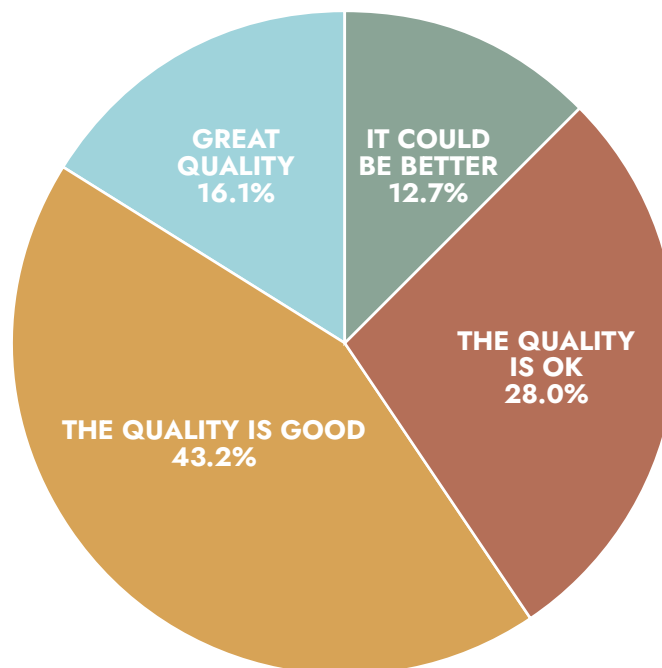


DO YOU THINK THAT THE ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT HAS A GOOD VARIETY OF PARKS AND RESERVES?



● It could be better 9.1%

DO YOU THINK THAT THE ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT HAS A GOOD QUALITY OF PARKS AND RESERVES?



TRUST

THEMED RESPONSES TO TRUST

Trust in Council remains strong among many of you, particularly with those who feel informed and supported through regular communication, community involvement, and positive interactions with staff and elected members.

At the same time, some expressed concerns about transparency, consultation, and decision-making, especially where changes or projects have had visible impacts on the community.

This year's responses highlighted two key themes: trust grows through open communication and follow-through, but it can erode quickly when residents feel unheard or disconnected from Council processes.

Less Positive:
"Important changes should always go to the community first."

TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION:

Trust in Council continues to be closely linked to how openly and consistently decisions, updates, and financial information are communicated. Many of you appreciate the transparency shown through Council's publications, meeting livestreams, and direct updates from councillors and staff.

However, others noted that communication can sometimes feel one-way, with limited visibility of how or why decisions are made - particularly around rates, projects, and consultation outcomes.

- **Positive:** "Council is honest and transparent about their decisions and the reasons behind them."
- **Positive:** "Great communication and community involvement."
- **Less Positive:** "We don't always know who to contact or what decisions have been made."

Less Positive:
"More transparency and less behind-the-door decisions."

POSITIVE PERSONAL INTERACTIONS AND RESPONSIVENESS:

Many of you openly shared that your trust in Council comes from personal experiences with approachable and helpful staff. Positive interactions - whether in person, by phone, or at community events - help build confidence in how Council serves its community.

That said, some still find it difficult to get responses or follow-up on queries, especially where multiple staff or departments are involved.

- **Positive:** "The limited dealings I've had with staff have been truthful and honest - easy communication."
- **Less Positive:** "Hard to get help - often passed on to others or no response."
- **Less Positive:** "Sometimes hard to make contact or get calls back."

Positive:
"Staff are pleasant, helpful, and resolve most issues I've raised."

DECISION-MAKING AND PRIORITIES:

Some of you expressed strong confidence in Council's decision-making and financial management, noting improved communication around the "why" behind decisions. Others raised concerns about how priorities are set and whether decisions reflect community views, especially regarding projects like the logo change or external contracts.

- **Positive:** "Council communicates the 'why' of decisions really well."
- **Positive:** "I trust that people are doing their best with limited resources."
- **Less Positive:** "The logo change felt unnecessary and wasn't well consulted."

LOCAL CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

You noted that **local connection builds trust**, particularly when councillors and community board members are visible and engaged. However, some residents continue to feel disconnected from decision-making or updates relevant to their area.

- **Positive:** "We have good councillors who keep us informed."
- **Positive:** "Consultation and communication have improved over the past 12 months."
- **Less Positive:** "We still feel overlooked in our area and don't always feel listened to."
- **Less Positive:** "There's a lack of contact - I'm not sure who the elected people are."

WHAT WE'RE DOING ABOUT IT:

While we're heartened that many of you continue to express confidence in Council and the people behind our work, we also acknowledge the feedback calling for clearer communication, stronger consultation, and greater transparency in decision-making.

Communication and responsiveness

We've heard that follow-up on queries and updates can sometimes take longer than you'd like. We're strengthening internal systems to make it easier for staff to track, acknowledge, and respond to enquiries across teams. You can also expect to see faster updates posted following Council meetings - through livestreams, post-meeting summaries, and social media highlights — so key decisions are easier to follow in real time.

Transparency in decision-making

You told us you want to understand why decisions are made, not just what they are. We're improving how we communicate the rationale behind Council decisions through clearer explanations in the Āmio newsletter, media releases, and online updates. Where issues attract strong public interest, we'll continue to issue formal statements so residents can see both the context and next steps.

Consultation and engagement

We recognise that we don't always get it right and some recent projects - including the logo change -

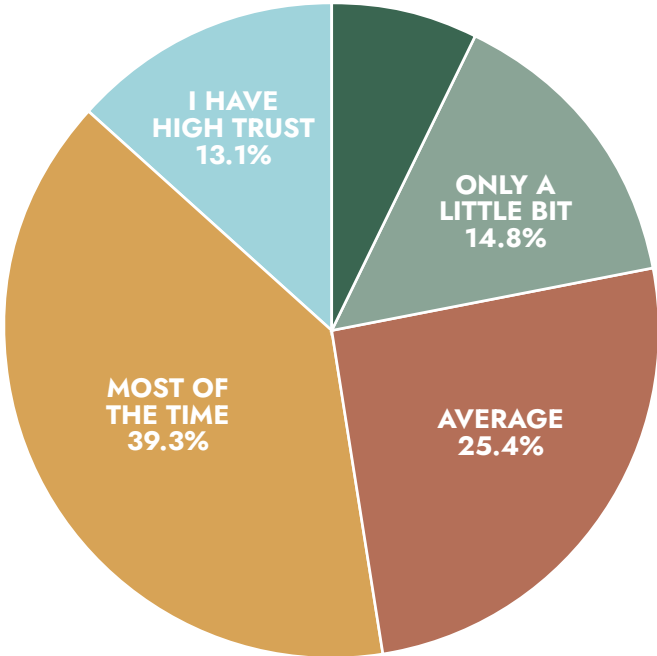
have highlighted the its not always the BIG stuff you want consultation on. We're remain committed to engaging early, clearly outlining what can and can't be influenced, and closing the loop by reporting back on how community input has shaped the outcome.

Balancing expectations and delivery

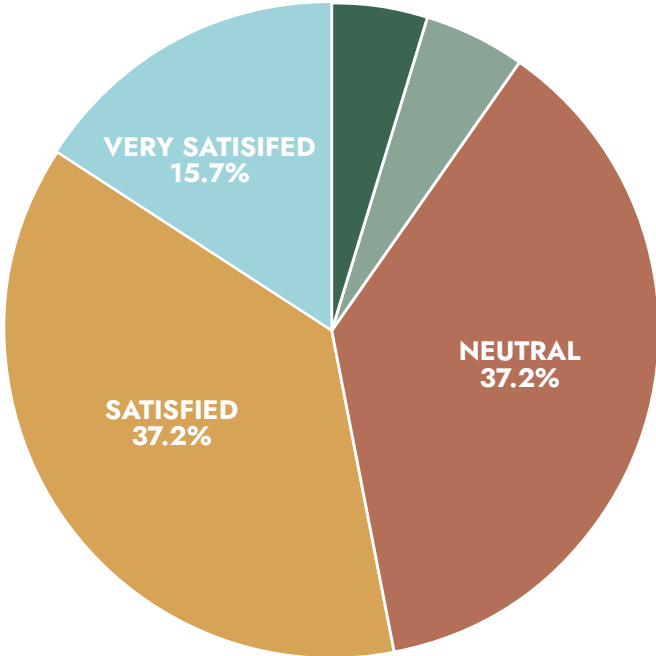
As a small rural council, we deliver many of the same services as larger organisations, often with tighter budgets and smaller teams. We aim to be as efficient and open as possible while ensuring that quality decisions are made in the best long-term interests of our community. We appreciate your patience when timeframes need to be extended and will keep you informed when that happens.

Building and maintaining trust is an ongoing process. We'll continue to strengthen our communication, follow-through, and responsiveness - so that, over time, our actions consistently match the trust you place in us.

HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE
ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT COUNCIL?



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH
THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF
ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT COUNCIL IN
THE LAST YEAR?



ANNUAL LIBRARY SURVEY



THEMED RESPONSES

THEMED RESPONSES TO LIBRARY

Our community continues to value our libraries as a warm, welcoming places. This year's feedback again highlighted how much you appreciate the friendly, knowledgeable staff who help make every visit positive. Many of you also described the library as peaceful, inclusive, and a space where you feel comfortable spending time - whether reading, studying, or simply enjoying a quiet moment.

You also told us how much you value the support you receive when looking for books, using digital services, or navigating the library's systems. Rural delivery, interloans, and email notifications continue to be important services that help keep borrowing easy and accessible.

"The staff are always so friendly and helpful."

"The rural delivery service is a lifesaver - thank you!"

GETTING TO AND AROUND THE LIBRARY

This year, several of you commented on practical improvements that would make it easier to get to and move around the library.

The most consistent theme was parking - both the amount available and how clearly the parking area is signposted. A few respondents also noted the steep slope from the carpark to the Kāwhia library entrance and suggested a clearer or more accessible pathway for mobility users.

We also heard feedback about the internal navigation of the library. While most found the space easy to use, some mentioned difficulty locating specific books or suggested clearer shelf organisation or signage to help new users find their way more easily.

- "Clear signage to the parking area would help."
- "A footpath from the carpark up to the Kāwhia library would make access easier, especially for wheelchairs."

"More parking at the Ōtorohanga branch, please."

"Sometimes I find it hard to locate specific books - the order doesn't flow for me."

"A peaceful, cosy space that feels homely."

FINDING BOOKS YOU LOVE

You shared that the range of books available continues to be one of the things you value most about the library. Many of you praised the diversity of the collection and the steady stream of new titles, especially for children and young readers. Several respondents asked for an even wider selection, noting particular interest in new releases, children's chapter books, and popular genres such as romance and fantasy.

A number of you also highlighted how much you appreciate being able to request books and have staff source them through interloan services when they're not available locally. This continues to be an important part of your reading experience and is used regularly by those seeking specific titles or niche interests.

- "I find [the online resources] hard work, not user friendly."
- "A bigger selection of books would be really good."
- "Please keep getting new release romantasy books - they're my favourite."
- "Love being able to get whole series of chapter books."

"If the library doesn't have a book, staff always do their best to find it."

"I know I'll be helped to find what I need."

LEARNING AND CONNECTING

Your feedback shows that programmes and activities continue to play an important role in how you use and enjoy the library. Many of you praised the children's programmes – especially storytime, holiday activities, and events like Terrific Tales – and told us how valuable they are for tamariki and whānau.

There was also strong interest in expanding opportunities for adults. Several respondents asked for more workshops, evening sessions, or events that support learning, creativity, or connection. Some also suggested clearer promotion of what's on, noting that they sometimes find out about programmes by chance rather than through regular updates.

- “More couches or places to read.”
- “The kids’ activities are great – please continue them.”
- “Some more evening events could be cool.”
- “Perhaps more programmes for adults to learn new skills.”

“Terrific Tales is a great way to engage families and get them reading more.”

“I didn’t know about some of the programmes – more promotion would help.”

SPACES, COMFORT, AND DIGITAL ACCESS

Your feedback this year highlighted a mix of practical improvements that would enhance the comfort and usability of our library spaces. Several respondents asked for more seating options – including comfortable chairs, beanbags, or additional places to sit and read. A small number also noted that some areas, particularly bathrooms and the meeting room kitchen, would benefit from more regular cleaning.

Digital access continues to be an important part of the library experience. Some respondents said they weren't aware of the full range of online services available, while others mentioned wanting clearer guidance on how to use digital platforms, navigate resources, or find items more easily on the shelves.

- “Bathrooms and the kitchen area need more regular cleaning.”
- “I didn’t know about some of the online services – more advertising would help.”
- “Sometimes it’s hard to find specific books – clearer layout or signage could help.”

“More seating would be helpful – especially comfy places to read.”

“The email reminders are so helpful.”



“Having been new users, we find everything about the library and personnel exceptional.”

“I’ve noticed the expansion of offerings - it’s great to see a small town library so progressive.”

WHAT WE'RE DOING ABOUT IT:

Below are the key actions we're taking in response to what you shared with us this year. Many build on progress already underway, while others reflect new ideas and opportunities highlighted through your feedback

Your library experience

We're proud that the library continues to be a warm, welcoming place for our community, and we're committed to maintaining this standard. Our team will keep focusing on friendly, personalised services – especially around helping people find books, navigate digital resources, or get support with research or technical questions.

We'll also continue offering the popular rural delivery and interloan services, which many of you said are essential for staying connected to reading and learning.

Getting to and around the library

We heard your feedback about parking and access. This year we will:

- Review carpark signage to improve visibility from the street
- Monitor demand for parking spaces and consider options where feasible

We'll also continue making small improvements inside the library to help new users find what they

need more easily – including clearer shelf signage and wayfinding where appropriate.

Finding books you love

Your suggestions for the collection are an important part of how we plan future purchasing. This year we will:

- Continue prioritising new releases and high-demand genres (including romance, fantasy, and children's chapter books)
- Keep growing our audiobook and eBook collections
- Use your requests to guide purchasing, particularly for popular or emerging genres
- Maintain strong interloan support so you can access titles from across the region when we don't hold them locally

Your feedback helps shape the diversity of our collection – and we appreciate every suggestion.

Spaces, comfort, and digital access

We heard your suggestions about seating, comfort, and digital support. Given our limited space in both libraries we are limited with options for additional seating and reading areas. Over the coming year we will:

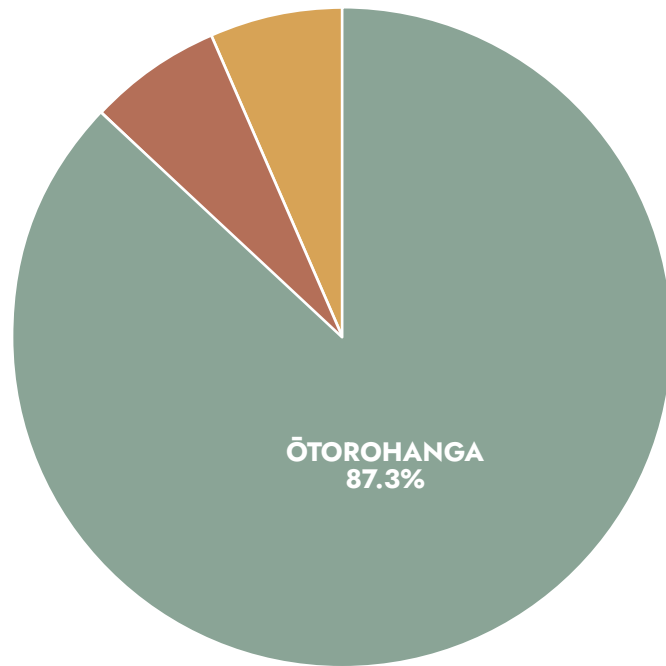
- Review cleaning schedules for bathrooms and shared spaces, with improvements where needed

- Continue to provide support for online services through quick guides, staff help, and promotion of digital resources
- Continue refining signage and shelf layout to make it easier to locate books
- Highlight digital tools, apps, and e-resources in ways that are easy to understand and act on

These improvements will help ensure the library remains welcoming, functional, and accessible for all.



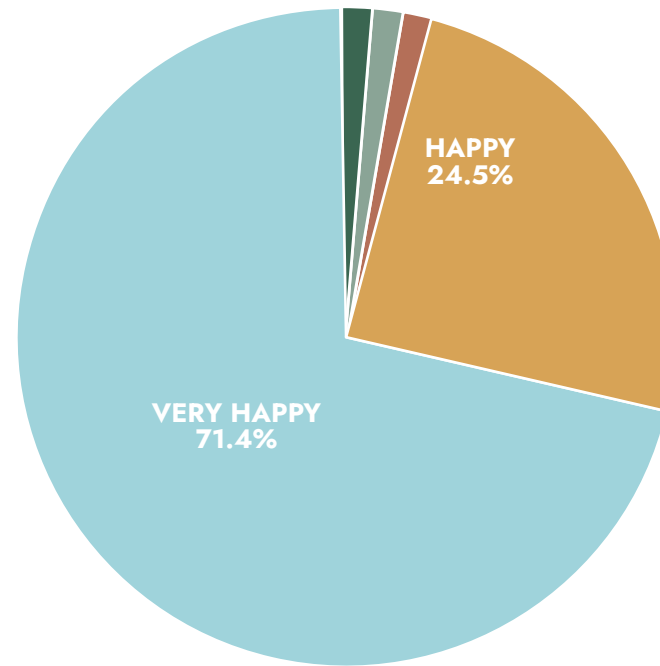
WHICH LIBRARY, IF ANY, DO YOU USE MOST OFTEN?



● Kāwhia 6.4%

● I don't use the library 6.4%

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE OVERALL LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE PAST YEAR?

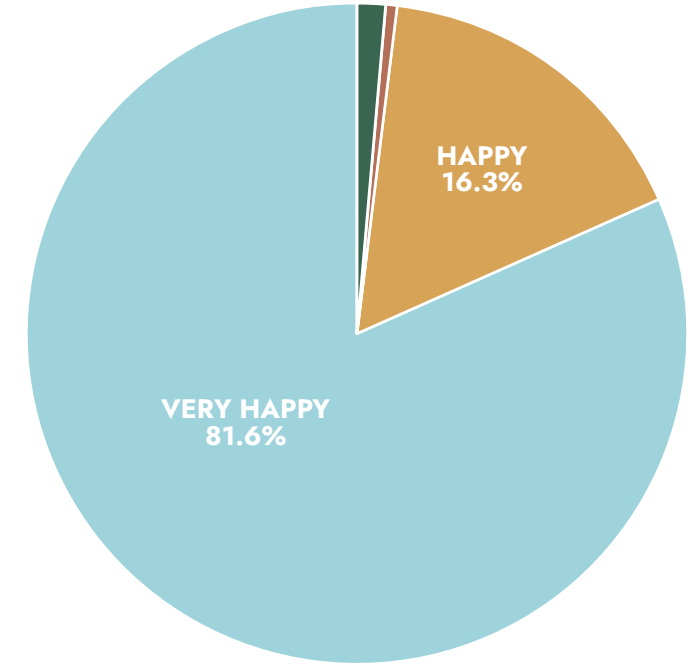


● Very Unhappy 1.4%

● Unhappy 1.4%

● Neutral 1.4%

HOW HAPPY ARE YOU WITH THE SERVICE YOU RECEIVE FROM STAFF?



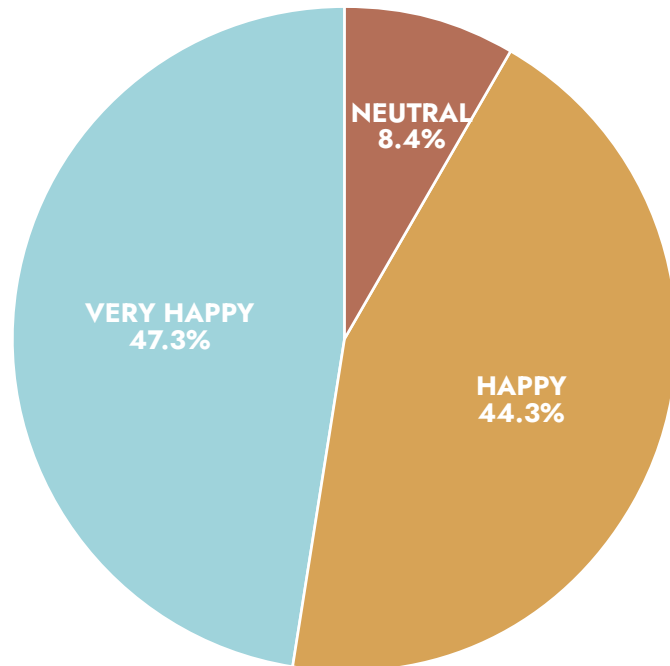
● Very Unhappy 1.4%

● Unhappy 0%

● Neutral 0.7%



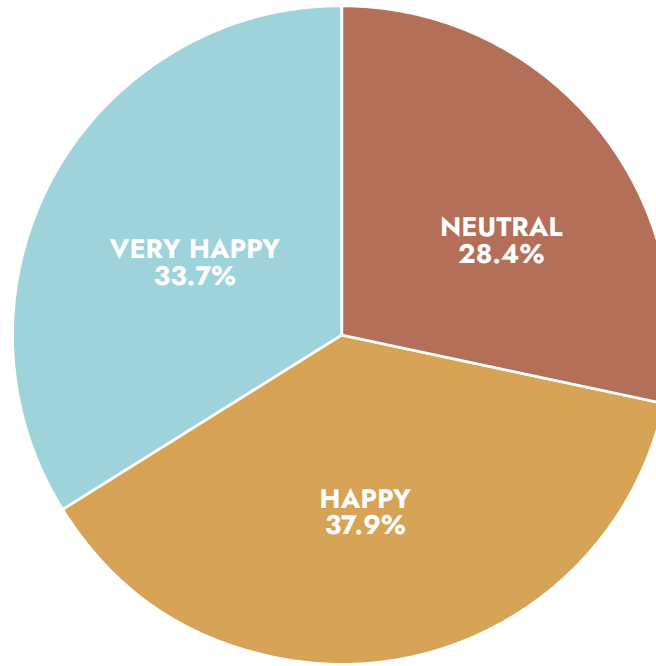
HOW DO YOU RATE THE COLLECTION OF BOOKS, MAGAZINES, DVD'S AND OTHER MATERIALS



● Very Unhappy 0%

● Unhappy 0%

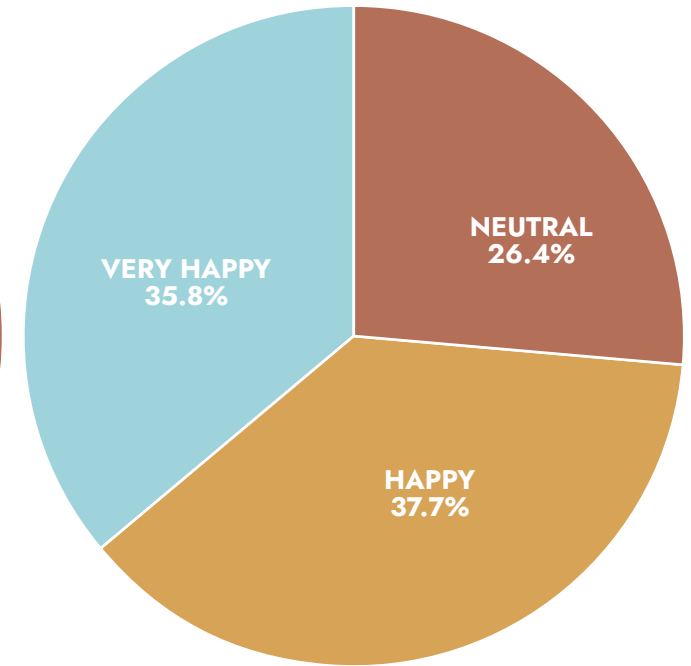
HOW DO YOU RATE THE LIBRARY PROGRAMMES OFFERED? FOR EXAMPLE CLASSES, HOLIDAY PROGRAMMES, STORYTIME, AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMME ETC.



● Very Unhappy 0%

● Unhappy 0%

HOW DO YOU RATE OUR ONLINE RESOURCES? FOR EXAMPLE, THE LIBRARY WEBSITE, APPS, EBOOKS, DIGITAL NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES, DIGITAL RESOURCES...



● Very Unhappy 0%

● Unhappy 0%

A photograph of two elderly women standing in front of a brick house. The woman on the left is leaning on a white concrete pillar, wearing a floral patterned shirt. The woman on the right is standing upright, wearing a white long-sleeved top with dark blue trim and blue trousers, and holding a bag of fruit. The background shows a brick wall and a window.

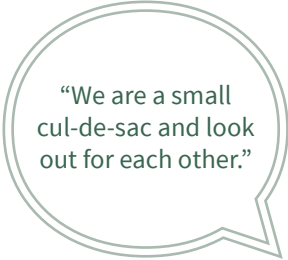
ANNUAL HOUSING FOR OLDER PERSONS SURVEY

RESPONSES

RESPONSES

With 17 responses received from a total of 28 tenants, the feedback this year was again generally positive. While the sample size is small, a few gentle themes emerged across comfort, safety, and shared spaces. As with previous years, some comments related to maintenance items or service requests, which we've already passed on to the team.

Overall, tenants continue to describe their homes as comfortable, warm, and safe, and many expressed strong appreciation for their neighbours and the sense of community within their complexes.



"We are a small cul-de-sac and look out for each other."

COMFORT IN THE UNITS

Most tenants told us they are happy and comfortable in their units. A few noted that winter can still feel chilly despite heat pumps, and others suggested small improvements that would help day-to-day comfort, such as new carpet, drapes, support rails, or an armchair. A couple of comments related to specific maintenance needs (e.g., TV aerial, guttering, bathroom fan), which have been redirected for follow-up.

Common small comfort requests included:

- better warmth in winter
- updated carpet or drapes
- additional bathroom support rails
- trimming trees or palms that block sunlight

FEELING SAFE AT HOME

Safety was consistently rated very highly. Most tenants described their homes as safe, secure, and well looked after. A few practical suggestions were raised, such as improving outdoor access in case of falls or installing a lock box for family access during emergencies. One tenant noted a maintenance issue related to guttering.

Overall sentiment:


Tenants feel safe and supported, and some would value small enhancements that improve peace of mind.

LAWNS, GARDENS & SHARED OUTDOOR SPACES

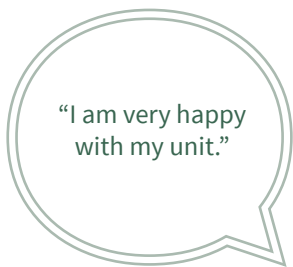
Feedback on communal outdoor areas was mixed. Some tenants were very happy with the upkeep, while others noted that mowing quality and frequency could improve. Several tenants take pride in maintaining their own areas and commented that they still want the shared spaces to look their best.

A few concerns related to:

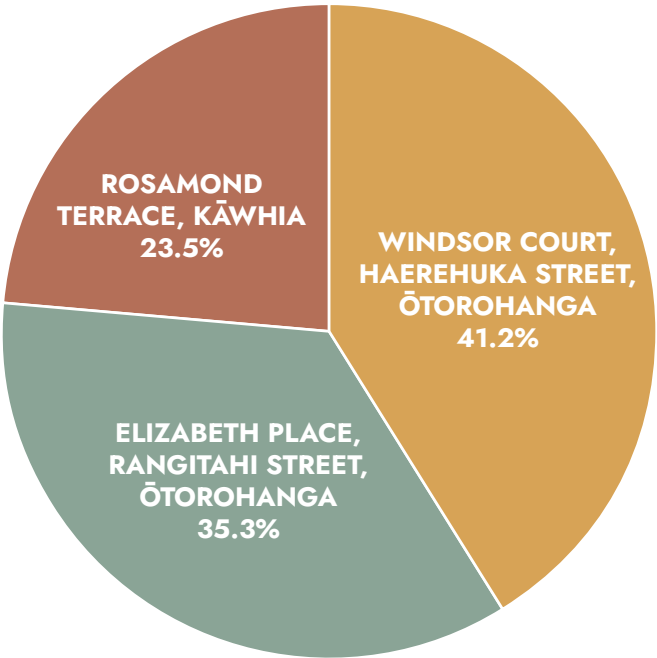
- lawns not being edged properly
- gardens needing more consistent attention
- previously reported issues not yet addressed
- animals disturbing gardens
- desire for seating or a pergola in shared shaded spaces



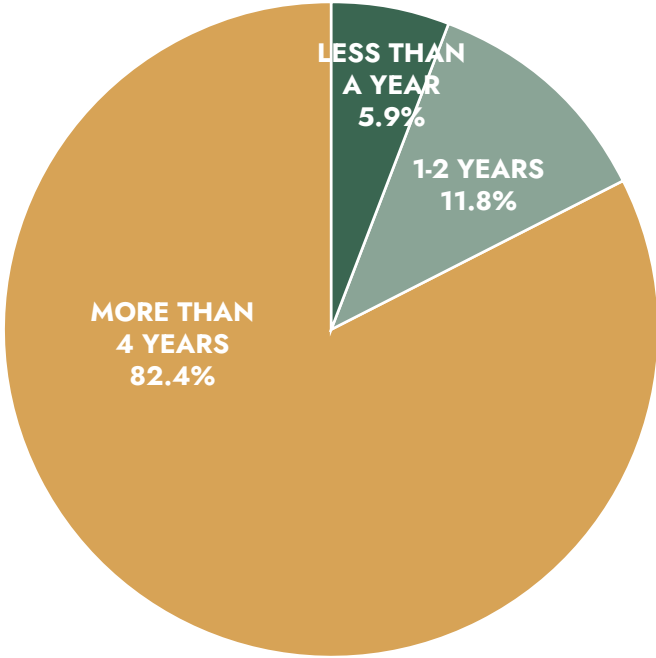
"My compliments to who does the work."



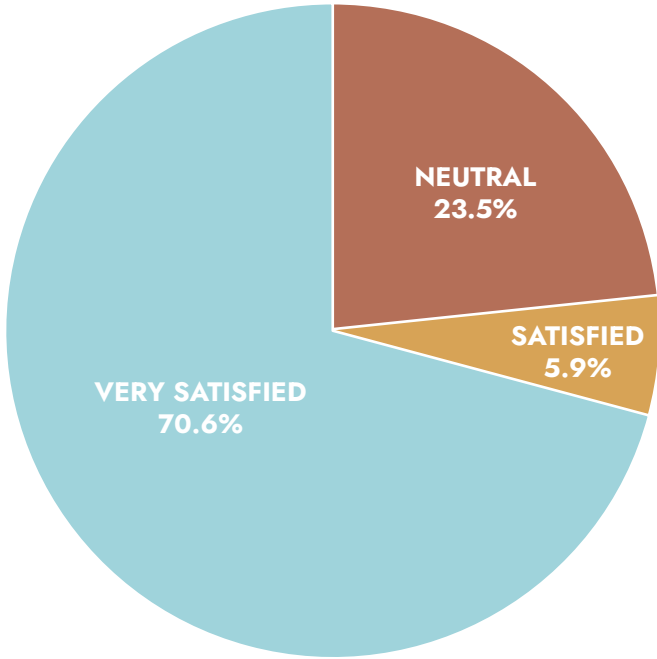
WHICH OF THE HOUSING COMMUNITIES DO YOU LIVE IN?



HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN COUNCIL'S OLDER PERSONS HOUSING?



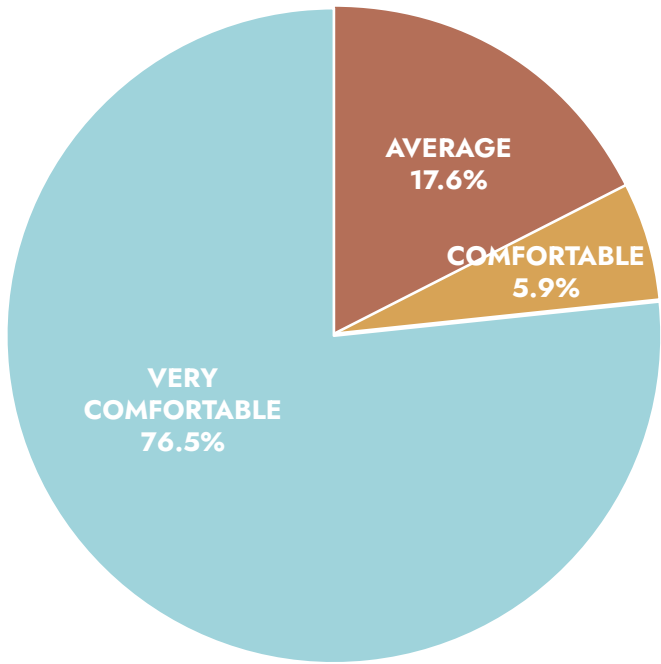
HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE OVERALL CONDITION OF YOUR HOUSING UNIT?



- Very unsatisfied 0%
- Unsatisfied 0%

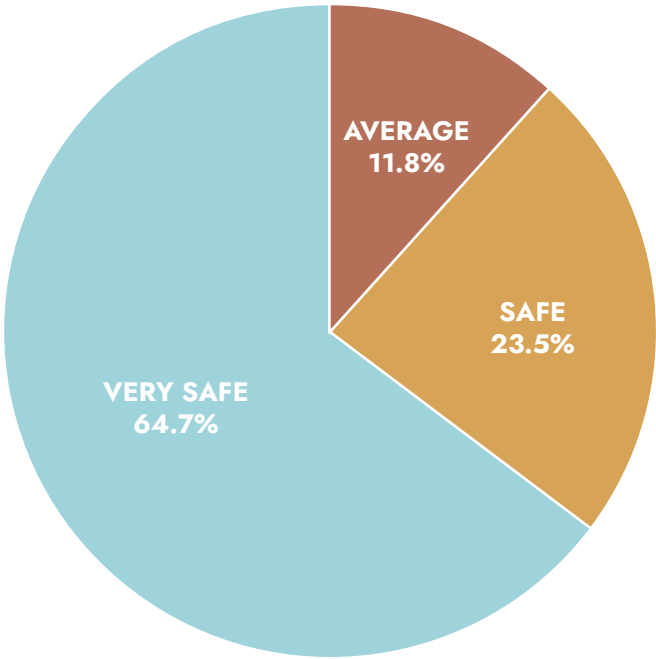


HOW COMFORTABLE IS YOUR UNIT?



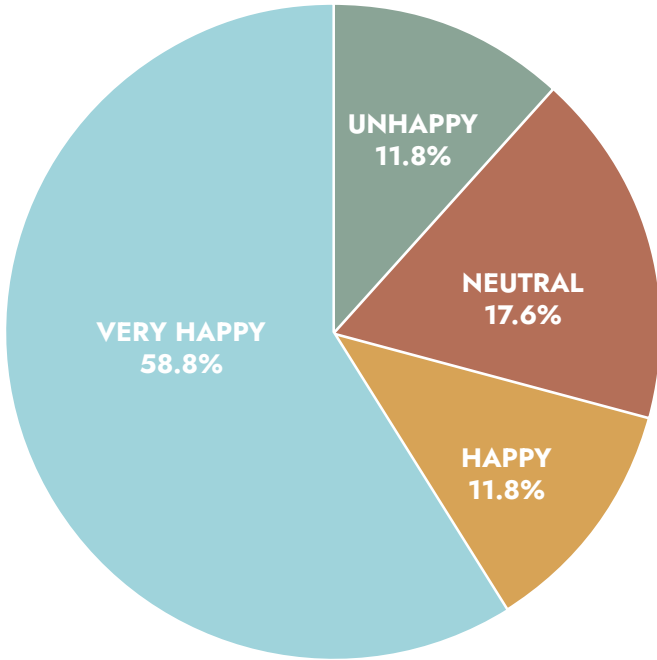
- Very uncomfortable 0%
- Uncomfortable 0%

TO WHAT LEVEL DO YOU THINK YOUR UNIT IS SAFE?



- Very unsafe 0%
- Unsafe 0%

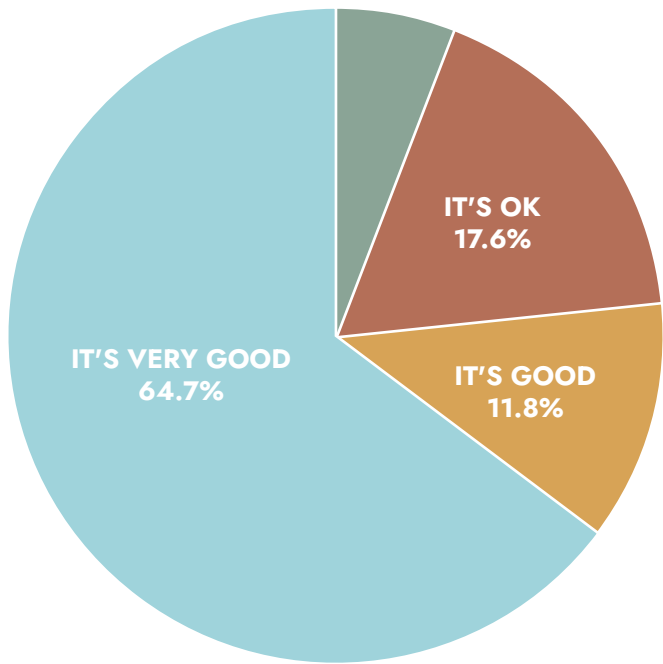
IF YOU HAVE MADE A MAINTENANCE REQUEST IN THE PAST YEAR, HOW HAPPY WERE YOU WITH THE RESPONSE TIME?



- Very unhappy 0%

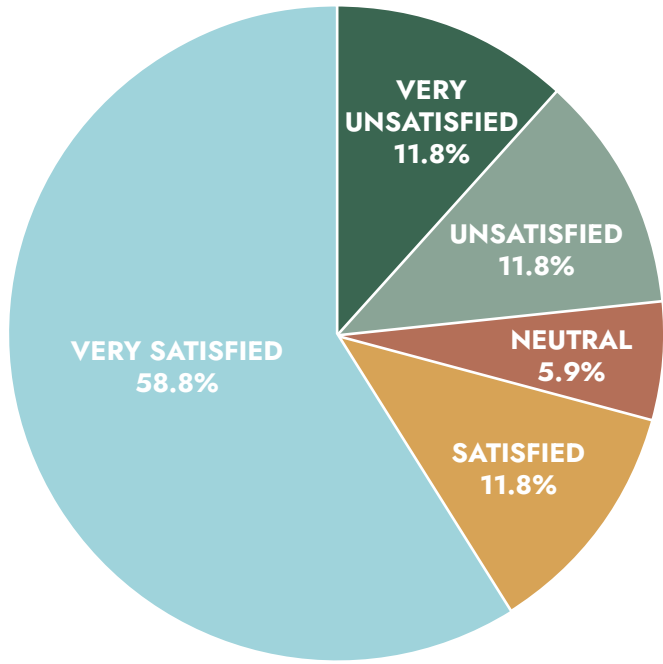


TO WHAT LEVEL DO YOU THINK THAT THE UNIT IS WARM, DRY AND WEATHERTIGHT?

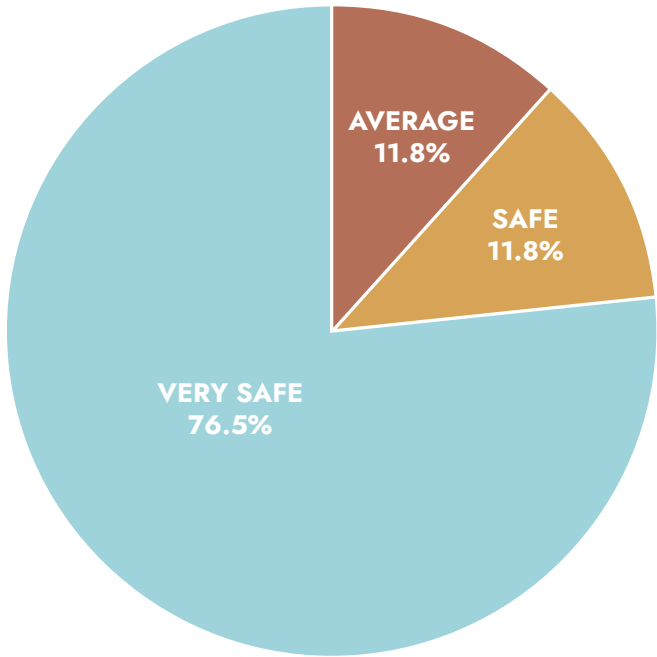


- It's not at all 0%
- It could be much better 5.9%

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE LAWNS AND GARDENS OF COMMUNAL AREAS?



HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL IN YOUR HOUSING COMMUNITY?



- Very unsafe 0%
- Unsafe 0%

MĀORI LEADERS RELATIONSHIP SURVEY



THEMED RESPONSES

Over the past few years, Council has deliberately prioritised strengthening its relationship with iwi, hapū, and Māori communities. This year's feedback reflects that sustained effort. Responses show a high level of trust in Council's intentions and leadership, strong support for the Māori Engagement Framework, and continued appreciation for the visibility of Council leadership at kaupapa throughout the district.

This aligns closely with the findings of the 2024 LGNZ Te Korowai | CouncilMARK assessment, which noted that Ōtorohanga District Council has "made large strides in creating effective partnerships with iwi," highlighting three key contributors to this progress:

- **The contribution of Rangiātea (Māori Ward) councillors**, who bring relationships, tikanga knowledge, and iwi perspectives to the table.
- **Regular face-to-face engagement on marae**, and formal agreements that build trust over time.
- **The establishment of the Kaitakawaenga – Iwi Relations Advisor role**, which has materially strengthened engagement capability across the organisation.

Your feedback this year affirms these improvements, while also identifying opportunities to continue deepening the authenticity and consistency of our relationships.

THEMED RESPONSES TO MĀORI LEADERS RELATIONSHIP SURVEY

The following themes again reflect a strong foundation of trust and engagement between council and iwi/hapū communities, with clear opportunities to deepen collaboration and support.

STRENGTHENED TRUST AND MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS:

Many respondents expressed genuine trust in Council, noting a visible shift in how Council engages – from improved communication to stronger follow – through and a clearer commitment to partnership.

What you told us:

- "There has been a noticeable shift - communication has improved, and relationships are being maintained more consistently."
- "ŌDC has gone above and beyond to repair its relationship with manawhenua and iwi."
- "Authentic relationships start at the top. The Mayor and CE have been shining examples of how this should be done."

Respondents acknowledged not only the intent, but the integrity and consistency of engagement - including regular updates, visible leadership at kaupapa, and respectful processes grounded in tikanga.

VALUE OF VISIBLE, CULTURALLY COMPETENT LEADERSHIP:

The leadership of elected members, the CE, the Mayor, and the Kaitakawaenga was widely acknowledged. Many highlighted the importance of leaders showing up, listening, and demonstrating respect.

What you told us:

- "The Mayor, CE, and Kaitakawaenga are visible at kaupapa in our community."
- "The regular updates from the Kaitakawaenga reflect a genuine commitment to partnership."
- "Leadership during events like Cyclone Gabrielle showed partnership in action."

Feedback recognised how this leadership sets the tone for culturally competent engagement across Council

"Authentic relationships start at the top, and this Council has shown leadership in how to do this well."

IMPORTANCE OF EARLY AND INCLUSIVE CONSULTATION

Several respondents emphasised the value of early engagement, particularly on kaupapa such as Māori wards, cultural heritage sites, or major planning initiatives.

At the same time, respondents noted that iwi capacity is stretched, and communication with wider whānau and hapū is a shared challenge that needs continued attention.

What you told us:

- “Early consultation on council matters has been appreciated - please continue.”
- “Engagement needs to reach the wider iwi membership, not just representatives.”
- “Be patient with iwi response times - many are volunteers with multiple responsibilities.”

Respondents consistently reinforced that early, well-timed conversations support stronger outcomes for everyone.

NEED FOR BROADER, MORE CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

While most feedback recognised improvements, some respondents encouraged Council to continue strengthening communication channels - particularly around formal consultations, submission windows, and project updates.

What you told us:

- “Consultation opportunities need to be better promoted and more inclusive.”
- “Wider whānau need to hear from both Council and their own representatives.”
- “Keep up the regular pānui - it really helps to have visibility.”

Several respondents also encouraged Council to continue strengthening internal cultural competency, ensuring all staff - not just leadership - understand partnership expectations.

“The regular updates from the Kaitakawaenga reflect a genuine commitment to partnership.”

“Being patient with iwi response times is important - many of us are volunteers holding multiple roles.”

“Face-to-face time at marae makes a huge difference.”

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUED CONNECTION, KANOHI KI TE KANOHI

Many reaffirmed the value of in-person engagement and encouraged more opportunities for Councillors and staff to visit marae, attend kaupapa Māori, and meet kanohi ki te kanohi.

What you told us:

- “Book time at each marae on a rotating basis - even a cup of tea builds trust.”
- “More opportunities for iwi to present their mahi to elected members.”
- “Co-governance is the long-term aspiration.”

This feedback emphasises that long-term relationships are strengthened by time, consistency, and shared presence.

WHAT WE'RE DOING ABOUT IT:

Strengthening early engagement and co-design

We will continue to ensure iwi and hapū are engaged at the earliest possible opportunity on kaupapa that affect them, including Māori wards, major community projects, reserves management, spatial planning, and other long-term strategic matters.

Our Māori Engagement Framework and resources will continue guiding this approach as we progress implementation.

Supporting iwi capacity to engage

We understand that iwi representatives often carry multiple roles and responsibilities. This year we will:

- continue discussing options for fair recompense/ resourcing for iwi expertise
- provide clearer notice of consultation windows and engagement opportunities
- explore communication formats that can be easily shared with wider whānau and hapū

This will not remove the broader pressures that iwi face, but it ensures Council contributes constructively to reducing them.

Continuing regular, respectful, and transparent communication

Guided by both iwi feedback and LGNZ recommendations, we will:

- maintain regular pānui and direct updates through the Kaitakawaenga
- continue sharing our three-year work programme with iwi partners
- improve clarity around timing, decision processes, and next steps

These efforts help ensure iwi have visibility over kaupapa early – not once decisions are already underway.

Increasing opportunities for kanohi ki te kanohi engagement

Based on this year's feedback, we will:

- continue attending kaupapa and hui across the district
- explore opportunities for recurring marae-based catchups on a rotating basis
- create more structured opportunities for iwi to present their priorities and projects to elected members

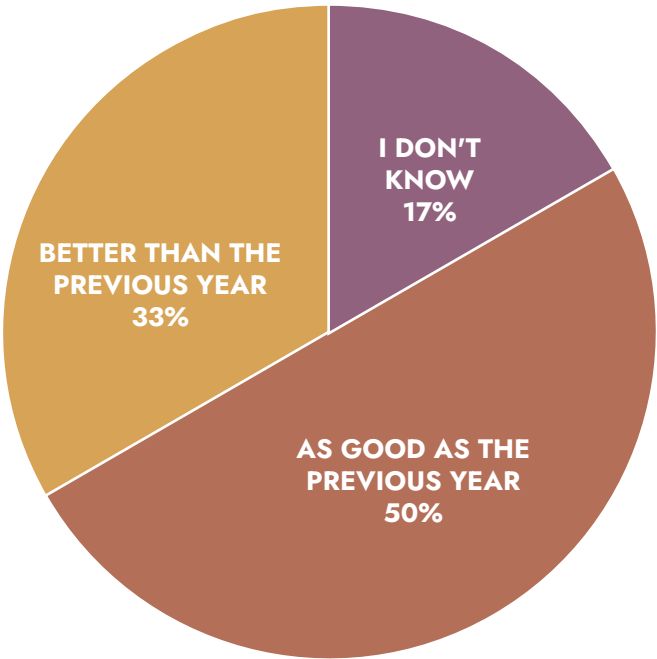
Presence matters – and we will continue to show up.

Embedding cultural competency across the organisation

Consistent with your feedback, we will:

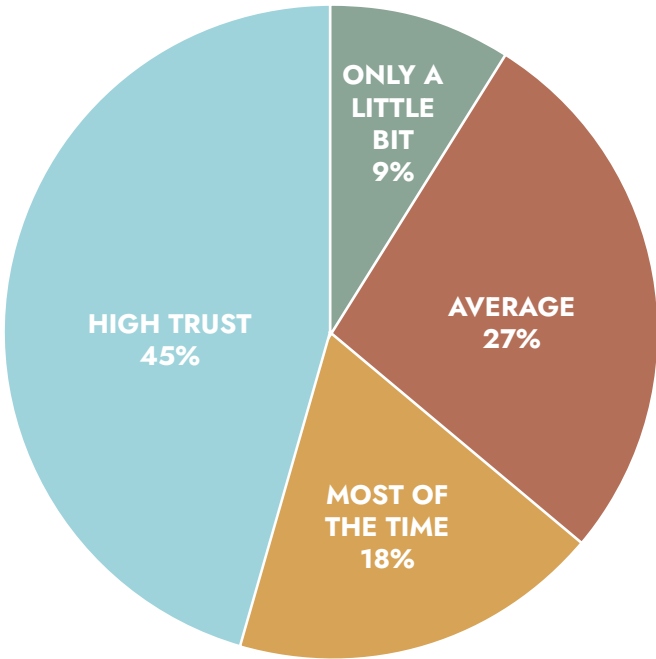
- continue providing cultural capability training for staff
- ensure operational teams understand Council's partnership expectations
- strengthen internal processes so that engagement with iwi is the starting point, not a box to tick

HAS COUNCIL IMPROVED ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH IWI LEADERS COMPARED TO LAST YEAR?



● Worse than previous year 0%

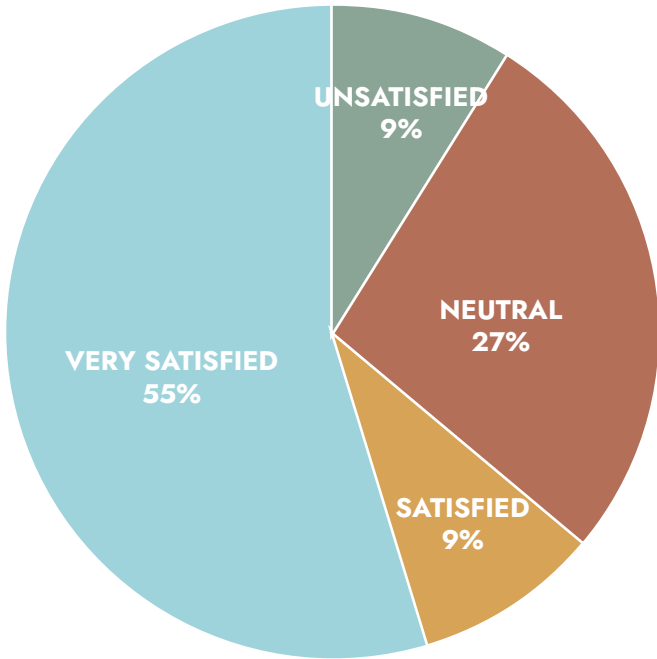
HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THE ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT COUNCIL?



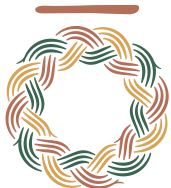
● No trust 0%

HOW DO YOU FEEL THE ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT COUNCIL ARE DOING?

IN BUILDING AND MAINTAINING AUTHENTIC, STRONG, AND PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH IWI LEADERS ACROSS THE ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT AREA (THIS INCLUDES MAYOR, COUNCILLORS, COMMUNITY BOARDS AND STAFF)



● Very unsatisfied 0%



TE KAUNIHERA Ā-ROHE O
ŌTOROHANGA
DISTRICT COUNCIL

WE'RE LISTENING

Whether you need to ask a question, make a request, pass on a compliment or complaint about any of our services, or reach an Elected Member - here's how!

HERE ARE ALL OF THE WAYS YOU CAN CONTACT US:

-  **Online** - www.otodc.govt.nz
-  **Lodge a Service Request** - www.otodc.govt.nz/contact-us/fix-report-a-problem
-  **Phone** - 0800 734 000
-  **Email** - info@otodc.govt.nz
-  **Antenno App** - www.otodc.govt.nz/contact-us/antenno-app
-  **In person** - 17 Maniapoto Street, Ōtorohanga
-  **Post** - PO Box 11, Ōtorohanga 3940
-  **Elected Members** - www.otodc.govt.nz/about-council/mayor-councillors-and-boards
-  **Follow us on Social Media** - www.facebook.com/OtorohangaDistrictCouncil

ŌTOROHANGA DISTRICT COUNCIL

WEAVING THE FUTURE, TOGETHER KOTAHITANGA

Ōtorohanga District Council | 17 Maniapoto St, Ōtorohanga
0800 734 000 or 07 873 4000 | www.otodc.govt.nz



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