

Strategic Engagement Approach

Engagement Summary Report

**Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council**
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

A summary of the findings from March-April engagement period
August 2026

About this project

Participate Pōneke

We want to make it easier for everyone to share their points of view about the Council's projects and plans for our city.

Everyone should be able to have their say on Council projects and decisions that impact or interest them. We do this through community engagement.

We invited Wellingtonians to share their ideas on how the Council engages with communities, and what we can do to improve.

We have used this feedback to develop a draft Engagement Approach for the Council, to strengthen how we listen, collaborate, make decisions, and deliver on what matters most to our communities.

The draft Engagement Approach was developed using information from many sources, including from the community during this engagement

period, desktop research, internal workshops with Council officers, and a workshop with Councillors.

We expect to be ready to test the draft Engagement Approach with the community by September 2026.

Please visit **wcc.nz/participate-poneke** for going updates about this project.

Ngā mihi | Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who contributed their time, ideas and lived experiences towards this project to support the development of the Strategic Approach. We really appreciate it.

Overview of engagement activities

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Engagement activities

We gathered feedback between 16 March – 12 April 2026 using the following methods:



Online survey

Hosted an online survey and received **440** responses and **2513** comments



Pop-ups

Hosted three pop-ups at Waitohi Johnsonville Library, Kilbirnie Library and Bond Street Container



Community workshops

Held three workshops with community in Newtown and Strathmore Park



Interviews

Ran interviews with community groups



Internal workshops and interviews

Ran four internal workshops with staff, workshops with Advisory Groups, and a workshop and interviews with Councillors.

Alongside this data, the development of the Strategic Approach was also supported by a 'current state' review, which identified local and global challenges and opportunities in community engagement.

Taking an equity approach

We know that many people in our communities are underrepresented in feedback processes on Council projects and decisions. This is a well-documented challenge, not just across Aotearoa but internationally. A key finding from this engagement is that the Council needs to do more to hear from diverse audiences. Without this, decisions are not informed by the full diversity of communities in Pōneke, and the city may not reflect their priorities and needs.

The Council has a responsibility to reduce the barriers that prevent communities getting involved in engagement processes. We designed the engagement approach to this project with this in mind, ensuring that we were increasing our focus on communities whose voices are less prominent in feedback processes.

Our approach during this project

As seen on the previous page, we ran a survey on our digital platform Let's Talk – we recognised that through this method, we were more likely to reach respondents already familiar with the platform, with the time and confidence to take part. Most had given feedback before, though 23% had not – a positive result.

To engage under-represented groups, we met people in familiar settings – three pop-ups and three community-centre workshops tied to existing events. Building participation into everyday routines lowered barriers and widened reach, drawing in Māori and Pasifika communities, parents, young people, ethnic communities, and people with disabilities.

In addition, we reached out to community groups that represent underrepresented voices and conducted interviews to better understand their experiences and the experiences of the communities they support.

These conversations allowed us to hear directly about barriers, needs, and priorities. This approach also supported relationship-building, strengthening connections with these groups so we can continue to engage with them more effectively in the future.

While it is important to hear from all communities, we recognise that some face greater barriers to participating in engagement processes. At a time when using resources effectively is more critical than ever, we must be intentional about where we focus our efforts. This means prioritising approaches that enable us to reach not only more people, but a broader and more diverse range of voices, ensuring that those who are often underrepresented have meaningful opportunities to be heard.

Demographics

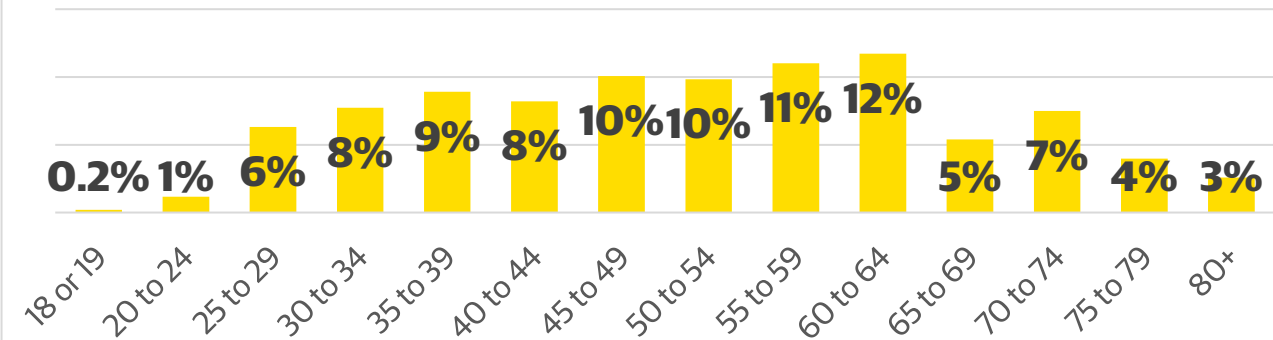
Who took part

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Me Heke Ki Pōneke

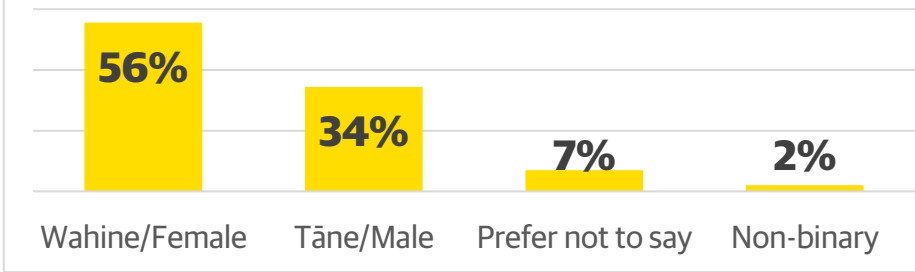


Demographics of survey respondents

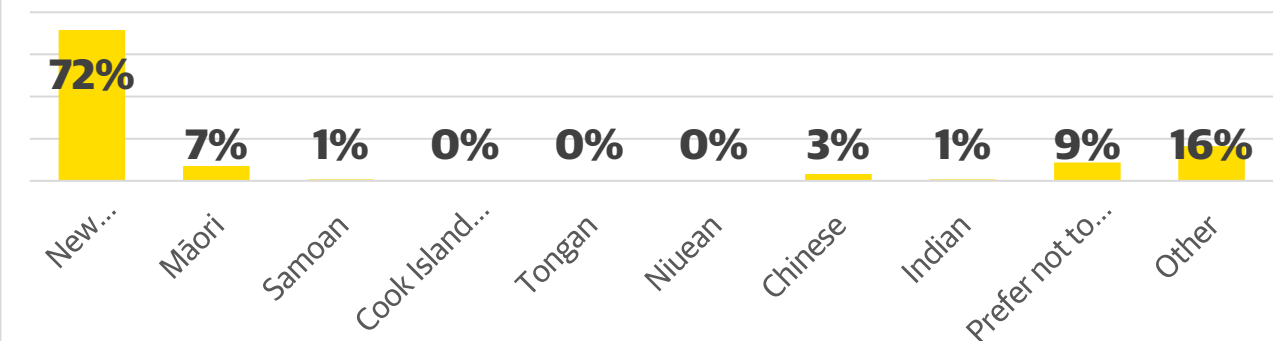
Age group



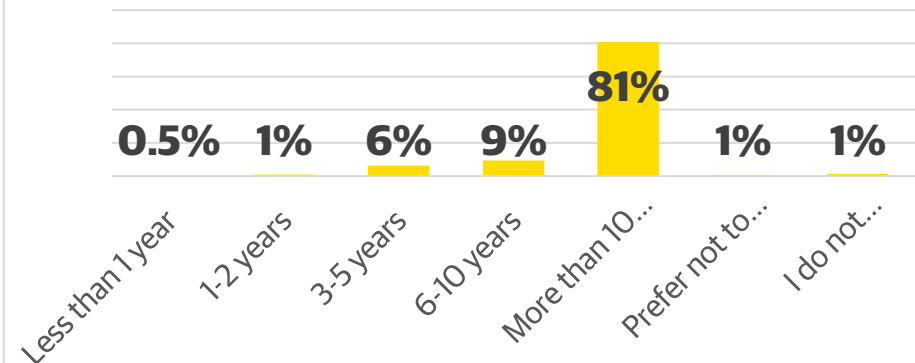
Gender



Ethnicity

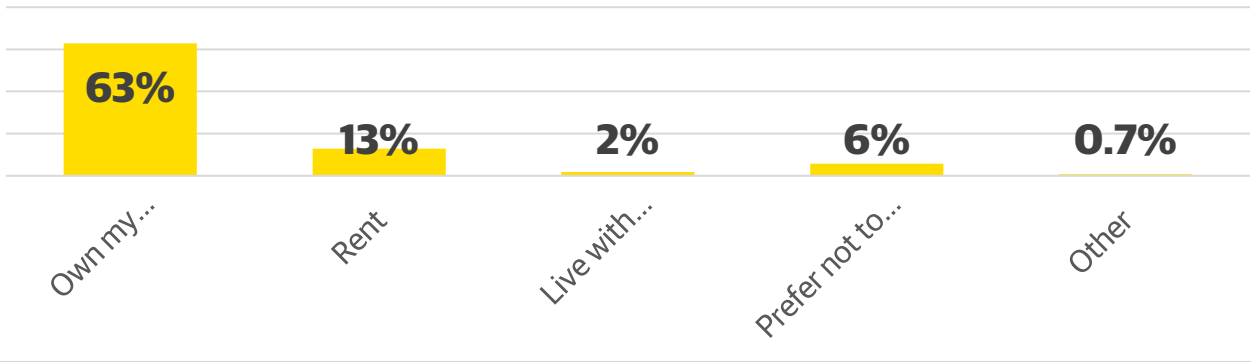


Length of time living in Wellington

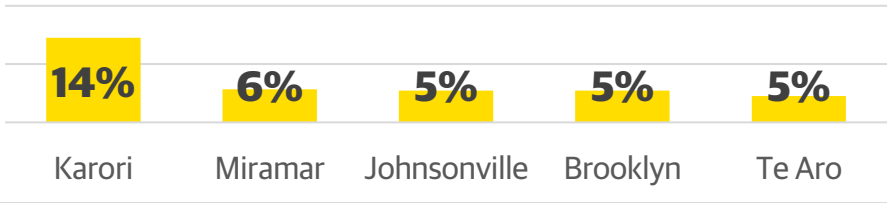


Demographics of survey respondents

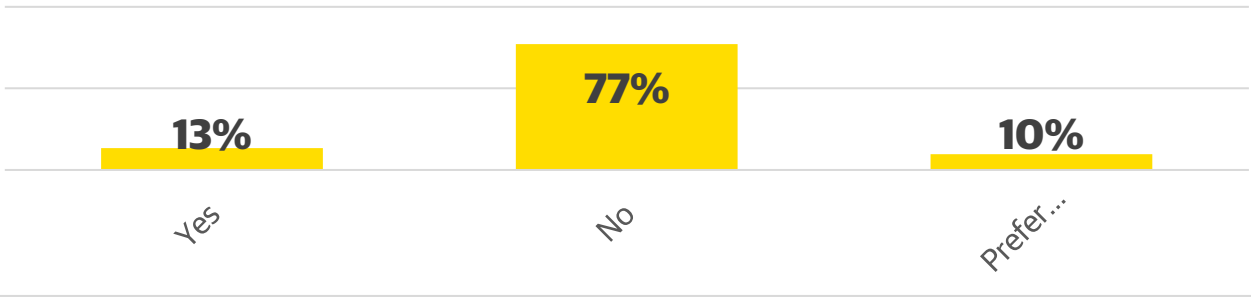
Living situation



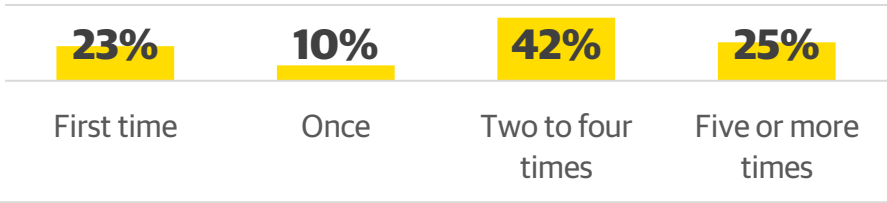
Suburbs with highest number of responses



Do you identify as part of the LGBTQIA+, Takatāpui or Rainbow community?



Number of times provided feedback before



Please note: This demographic data does not include participants and attendees at community events and pop-ups as the data was not collected. We held these at locations that would reduce barriers to attendance for under-served groups.

Summary of engagement findings

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Me Heke Ki Pōneke



Summary of what we heard across all engagement

Experiences were mixed. Many found giving feedback easy and worthwhile, while others distrusted Council decision-making, suspecting predetermined outcomes or little room for real influence. Unclear use of feedback drove frustration and disengagement.

People sought more transparent communication. Clarity on how feedback is used and how decisions are reached, plus plainer explanations of proposals, their impacts, trade-offs, costs, and supporting evidence.

Some praised clear information and easy-to-navigate processes, however, this remained inconsistent.

Communities are diverse, differing in how much information they want and how they prefer to give feedback. Some seek depth, others quick and accessible options.

Preferences were split between digital and in-person methods. Offering multiple ways to engage worked well.

Significant barriers persist for some, including limited time, low awareness, accessibility gaps, and process complexity.

These barriers are increased for underrepresented communities, so engagement does not fully capture Wellington's diversity, even where channels such as online tools serve some people well.

Ongoing relationships were seen as critical to trust. Respondents valued place-based engagement, trusted community networks, and a consistent presence beyond consultation processes, treating communities as long-term partners.

Overall, the findings show clear strengths alongside room to improve, underlining the need for consistent, transparent, and flexible approaches suited to diverse community needs.

Key findings from in-person engagement

We ran three pop-ups in libraries, three community workshops in Newtown and Strathmore Park, and interviews with community groups. The interviews and workshops were aimed predominantly at reaching communities who are less represented in Council feedback processes.

The findings from these in-person opportunities are included in the findings on **pages 25-45**. They are also highlighted on this page for clarity about what we heard most frequently during those conversations.

Building trusted relationships with the community is vital. The Council is often seen as invisible, faceless, and hard to reach, creating a desire for more proactive outreach about available support, such as facilities. Consistent engagement with community groups, through trusted local leaders or attending meetings, would help the Council better understand the context of vulnerable members and specific places. People are also more likely to engage through trusted leaders or networks than directly with the Council.

The Council needs to do more to hear from diverse and under-represented communities. Under-represented communities face structural barriers that require deliberate, equity-focused approaches. The Council needs to be more relevant, approachable, and physically present in community spaces, while improving understanding of its role. Multiple feedback options are needed, including quick and accessible ways to encourage participation. Engagement should occur in safe, familiar spaces where people already gather, with success seen when building on existing community events. However, for those experiencing housing or food insecurity, Council projects are often not a priority.

Many people don't feel connected to the Council. Many don't know what the Council does or who is responsible for what, and this lack of awareness drives disengagement. The Council doesn't feel relevant to people's lives and doesn't do enough to make it relevant. Engagement is more successful when it aligns with and supports people's wellbeing, rather than competing with daily survival pressures.

There were concerns about whether the Council really listens. For some, it is not easy to see how feedback has been listened to and incorporated into

decisions, which is discouraging and can lead to distrust and fatigue. There was a sense for some that they are not taken seriously.

People have a strong connection to place, and community spaces are essential hubs for connection, support, and wellbeing. Immediate, tangible improvements to local places matter more to people than long-term strategies. Community centres are trusted environments where engagement happens naturally and where people feel safe to participate.

Face-to-face is preferred over digital ways of providing feedback, and digital accessibility was seen as in need of improvement.

Engagement processes can be complex, unclear and difficult to navigate alongside daily pressures. Information is often not plain language or clear to people without an existing understanding of the Council and its processes. Only already-engaged participants tend to understand how influence and decision-making works. Uncertainty about what happens to feedback contributes to engagement fatigue.

Detailed findings from across the engagement

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Overview of findings from across all engagement

What we heard	How strong this finding was in the in-person approaches	How strong this finding was in the survey
Across all of the feedback, mixed experiences and preferences were reported		
Respondents described low trust in Council processes and decision-making	●○○	●●●
There were calls for more clarity on how feedback is used and how it shapes outcomes	●●○	●●●
The Council needs to reduce barriers to participation to ensure engagement processes are inclusive and accessible to all	●●●	●●●
There were calls for the Council to build ongoing relationships with the community	●●●	●○○
There were varying views about the information needed to effectively provide feedback	●●○	●●●
Some wished to see increased consideration of community expertise and ideas at an earlier stage	●○○	●○○
Engagement fatigue was a raised as an issue, with a range of factors contributing	●○○	●○○
Promotion was seen as useful for many in driving engagement	N/A – all respondents were asked about promotion	
Preferences around how to provide feedback were mixed, highlighting the importance of providing a range of options	N/A – all respondents were asked about preferences for providing feedback	
There are mixed reasons why people give feedback to the Council on projects and decisions	N/A – all respondents were asked about motivations	

What we asked the community

The findings on the following pages were developed by analysing the information we gathered through the survey, community workshops, pop-ups, and community interviews.

We asked the following questions:

- What comes to mind first when you think about engaging or providing feedback to the Council?
- How do you feel about engaging with Wellington City Council?
- When you think about sharing feedback with Council, what stands out from your experiences?
- What worked well, and what didn't?
- If Council wanted to engage well with you and your community, what would this look like in practice?
- Looking ahead 12–24 months, what would good engagement from Council look and feel like for you?
- Can you share any specific details that influenced your ratings? (Following a question where Council communications during engagements was rated)
- Can you share any specific details that influenced your ratings? (Following a question where Council communications during engagements was rated)
- Is there anything not mentioned above that has made it difficult for you to share feedback and ideas to the Council?
- What makes it hard for you or your community to take part in Council decisions and engagement processes?
- Once you decided to get more involved in a project, how easy was it to engage with Council?
- What does a good, ongoing relationship with Council look like between engagement processes?
- What practical changes would remove those barriers for you or your community and make it easier to participate?
- What would make it easier or more enjoyable to engage with Council on projects you care about?
- Can you provide more detail about your motivations for engaging on those projects or decisions?
- If you selected "I saw some advertising" above, what advertising did you see or hear?
- Is there anything else you'd like us to know about how we can do better at hearing from you and your community?
- Why did you decide to fill out this survey?
- When the Council is seeking feedback or ideas on something that matters to you, what would make it encouraging and easy for you to participate?
- What's the best way for the Council to let you know about important issues or projects?

How to read these findings

Comparing what we heard across methods

By using a mix of surveys, in-person events, and interviews, we were able to reach a wider range of people, with certain themes coming through more strongly depending on the method.

In some cases, feedback was more prominent in the survey, while in others it came through more clearly in the in-person approaches. To reflect this, we have indicated on each page where feedback was heard more strongly using simple markers to show whether a theme was heard more, about the same, or less across the different engagement methods.

Identifying how often we heard each finding

We've used a three-dot system to show how much we heard each finding across our different engagement methods. One dot indicates we heard it a little, two dots show we heard it some, and three dots mean we heard it a lot. This provides a quick visual indication so you can understand what matters to the community at a glance.

- Heard a little ● ○ ○
- Heard some ● ● ○
- Heard a lot ● ● ●
- Didn't hear ○ ○ ○

Example

The following will appear at the bottom of the findings pages to indicate strength of findings. This example shows that we heard a finding a little in the survey and a lot in the in-person methods.

In-person methods ● ● ●
Survey ● ○ ○

Please note: Not every page contains the three-dot system – this is either because the content reflects analysis rather than direct feedback, or because the topic was asked of all respondents, meaning the frequency of themes cannot be meaningfully compared.

Across all of the feedback, mixed experiences and preferences were reported

The key takeaway from all of the feedback we gathered across the survey and in-person methods was that experiences of providing feedback are mixed and our communities' preferences are highly diverse.

While some feedback reflected low trust in decision-making processes and a sense of disillusionment, we also heard positive experiences of participating in engagement. Some found the process of providing feedback to be clear, straightforward, and accessible, even if the outcome was not preferred. For others, the process was difficult and information was hard to find.

- *"I know council takes feedback into account and that any decision is a balancing act that tries to reflect diverse priorities and other evidence on good practice."*
- *"Inaccessible, complicated, long, hard to understand – I never finished providing that feedback and just quit that survey."*

- *"Not always easy to find comprehensible information (especially financial) about the project in question."*

There were experiences reported of people feeling listened to and having positive interactions with staff and Councillors, while others felt dismissed.

- *"The person doing the engagement being very open to hearing what I had to say."*
- *"Council and staff forget that they are not the experts on every issues and that there are many experiences and expert people in the community whose ideas are being dismissed out of hand."*

We heard mixed preferences about how much information about proposals is presented and how, how people would like to provide feedback and hear about opportunities to do so, and what is important to people – reflecting the diversity of needs and expectations across our communities and highlighting the importance of

providing a range of approaches.

Responses also highlighted mixed experiences across the feedback process; while people often appreciated the chance to provide feedback or found the engagement process easy, there was dissatisfaction about what happened with their feedback.

- *"It's good that Council is showing willingness to listen to citizens – the issue of course is whether it actually shows responsiveness to what it learns via its attempts to communicate."*
- *"Staff do a fantastic job of summarising diverse views, a fabulous job of documenting and reporting back and in my view a poor one in terms of altering outcomes."*

This reflects the importance of creating more consistency of experience across the process, for all of our communities.

This page reflects an analysis of what we heard, so the three-dot system has not been used.

Respondents described low trust in Council processes and decision-making

Some respondents described feeling that consultation processes are not genuine, with outcomes perceived to be predetermined regardless of community input. Concerns were raised that feedback exercises are undertaken as a formality or “tick-box” requirement rather than as a meaningful opportunity to influence decisions. Some, despite feeling that giving feedback is an important part of democracy, questioned whether feedback is a waste of time and whether it effects change.

- *“There was a feeling that the Council had already decided what its course of action was going to be prior to seeking feedback.”*
- *“I never have a clear sense of what’s driving council reactions to feedback. I can’t tell if it’s a box-ticking exercise with no effect, or the council is attending closely to feedback.”*

There is a perception among some respondents that staff and Councillors do not engage with submissions instead prioritising their own agendas or “pet projects.”

Although 60% of respondents described themselves as very satisfied, satisfied or neutral in response to the question 'How satisfied were you with the experience of providing feedback to the Council that time?', some inconsistencies in experience were perceived. Respondents raised concerns about how engagement is structured and delivered, particularly in relation to survey design, option development, and staff interactions.

Respondents noted that question wording and limited response options could influence outcomes. Information was sometimes perceived to favour a preferred Council direction. Limited free text and the inability to suggest alternatives were also felt to skew some surveys.

- *“Proposal framing strongly favoured council preferred option which seems to go against the concept of genuine public consultation.”*

Some respondents expressed concerns that aspects of engagement delivery – such as staff capability, and the way processes were run – may influence outcomes.

- *“More scrutiny over Council staff to ensure the info they provide to Council members supports fully informed, effective decision making that benefits the city as a whole.”*

57%* of survey respondents selected “I didn't think my feedback would make a difference” when asked what makes it difficult to provide feedback or ideas, indicating a sense of apathy in the community.

**This percentage was taken as an average across both those who have and those who haven't previously provided feedback.*

There were calls for more clarity on how feedback is used and how it shapes outcomes

People wanted their feedback to be acknowledged, summarised, and to know how it was processed and considered with regards to the decision.

Without hearing what happened with their input within a reasonable timeframe, respondents feel unheard and question whether their feedback is genuinely read, contributes to change and if participation is worth the effort. We heard this can lead to engagement fatigue and a reduced likelihood to participate in the future.

"Communication is variable. Sometimes it feels like lip service, and other times the Council shows how it has taken public opinion into account."

Despite comments reporting that feedback loops have improved, this is inconsistent and there is frustration about not hearing back after providing feedback on projects and decisions. Several responses point to a lack of visibility of what happens after feedback is submitted, including whether the raw data goes to Councillors.

Some respondents noted difficulty accessing collated results, such as overall statistics or breakdowns of survey responses, and uncertainty about how input influenced decisions. It was suggested that a published summary of all feedback provided and how Councillors voted on a decision would increase transparency of the process.

- "There doesn't seem to be an easy way to see the overall collated feedback or stats of those supporting or not supporting the issue at hand."*
- "I'd love to know that my feedback was read by a human... And that it was heeded in some way."*

In response to the survey question "The Council got back to me about how my feedback contributed to the decision":

12% said they agree or strongly agree

17% were neutral

64% said they disagree or strongly disagree

As well as information about the influence of their feedback on decisions, respondents wanted more and clearer information about the decision-making process itself. Participants expressed uncertainty about how Council decisions are made, including a lack of clarity on decision rationale, who is making decisions, and what information is used to make them.

- "I am not sure that the decision-making the Council makes is very clear."*

Many felt it was unclear how different data – such as community feedback and technical advice – are weighted, and what influence community feedback has. There was also confusion about the roles of Councillors, committees, and Council staff.

There were calls for more clarity on how feedback is used and how it shapes outcomes (continued)

Without this clarity, feedback can feel disregarded. Participants also called for **clearer communication about the reasoning behind decisions**, including what information is considered, how conclusions are reached, and how Councillors vote on specific issues.

- *"The decision-making process itself is also not well explained. It is often unclear who ultimately makes the decision, how different types of feedback are weighed, and what influence public engagement actually has."*
- *"More transparency of findings and how a decision will be made."*
- *"The Council rationale for their decisions is not clear. Specifically, what weight will be given to the community feedback."*

In response to the question "The Council was clear about how decisions are made":

18% said they agree or strongly agree

21% were neutral

60% said they disagree or strongly disagree.

The Council needs to reduce barriers to participation to ensure engagement processes are inclusive and accessible for all

Respondents in both the survey and in-person approaches raised concerns about whether current engagement processes enable the Council to hear from a diverse and representative range of Wellingtonians.

Feedback points to both positive experiences of accessibility and clear barriers that make it difficult for some groups to participate.

Some respondents felt that providing feedback is straightforward and that there are accessible ways to engage, particularly through existing channels.

- *"The process of providing feedback and engaging in general is very easy and accessible."*

Others shared that they care about Council decisions and want to provide feedback, but that it can be difficult to do so in practice. Insufficient time, limited formats for participation, the location and timing of events, caregiving responsibilities, and

engagement being held during business hours were all cited as factors that can limit chances to participate.

- *"One small window to provide in person feedback (if you have work commitments, no other chance)."*

Of the survey respondents who had not previously provided feedback on Council projects and decisions:

19% gave the reason "I don't have time"

33% gave the reason "I couldn't attend an engagement at the scheduled time or location".

We heard that for some community members, immediate needs, such as housing and food, take priority over participating in Council feedback processes. Building a presence in community spaces and growing relationships via trusted community members were seen as important to facilitate ongoing opportunities to

participate. We heard from in-person respondents that there is limited visibility of Council within the community and providing feedback was viewed as something that happens elsewhere, rather than something that is accessible and relevant locally.

We heard that engagement is most effective when it fits within people's daily lives and priorities, rather than competing with them. In-person respondents suggested that engagement should support community wellbeing and connection, not just be a way for Council to gather feedback.

Face-to-face and place-based engagement - particularly in locations people already visit - was seen as a meaningful and effective way to make participation easier and more genuine.

Digital engagement can also be difficult for those with disabilities and other access needs. It was suggested that formats where the Council piggy-backs off existing community events have been more successful for reaching people.

The Council needs to reduce barriers to participation to ensure engagement processes are inclusive and accessible for all (continued)

- *"Just popping up where we are – please keep resourcing this, it really helps those of us who are juggling priorities."*

We also heard that engagements and events in spaces where under-represented people gather and feel safe, and a more regular and consistent presence, would help to humanise Council and increase education about Council processes.

- *"Accessibility and equity need to be embedded throughout engagement processes, not treated as an add-on."*

Some felt that current processes may favour those with more time, capacity, or knowledge of Council processes, giving certain groups undue influence and limiting the diversity of input the Council receives. This can result in some voices having disproportionate visibility and influence, particularly through attending meetings, sustained advocacy, or well-organised campaigns and media activity. As a result, there is a concern that

Councillors may be influenced by this, rather than considering broader and more diverse perspectives held across the community. Respondents noted that this dynamic can create a sense that public opinion is more unified than it actually is on divisive topics.

There is also a perception that social and traditional media coverage can amplify certain positions, further shaping how community sentiment is understood.

- *"Small interest groups who say they 'represent' the community when they are actually a tiny minority."*
- *"I think the Council does listen to feedback from surveys but it sometimes seems that people who have the time to attend meetings or are just more persistent sometimes get listened to more. I also think that what appears in social media and other media may have an outsize influence."*

Respondents suggested the use of more deliberative **methods** – such as citizens' assemblies, participatory budgeting, and mini-publics – as ways to strengthen engagement and ensure a more representative cross-section of views.

- *"I encourage the Council to try innovative solutions to participation, such as participatory budgeting and crowdsourcing policies, as well as resident assemblies."*

Overall, respondents emphasised the importance of ensuring engagement processes reach a wide cross-section of the community.

- *"Something to let people who are new or temporary to an area (like refugees or people living for a year in a flat) that their perspectives are just as valid as people who have been in the area for 30 years."*

There were calls for the Council to build ongoing relationships with community

Relationships were seen as an important aspect of community engagement, particularly by those at the in-person workshops and interviews.

Some described the Council as invisible, faceless, and hard to reach. It was suggested the Council should connect more consistently with groups – through trusted community leaders with local knowledge or by attending meetings – to better understand the context of vulnerable communities and specific places. People were also more willing to engage through trusted networks rather than directly with the Council. Community centres were seen as important spaces for engagement as they are already places communities feel comfortable.

Survey responses highlighted the importance of investing in place-based relationships, recognising volunteer efforts, and enabling people to know and trust the staff working on projects.

- *“By building a good relationship and staying in touch on a regular basis and not just when a survey needs to be completed.”*
- *“Engagement is most effective when it is place-based – working through existing community relationships rather than relying solely on centralised or digital channels.”*

Across both in-person engagement and the survey, many emphasised treating communities as long-term partners with valuable expertise, rather than only engaging during feedback periods.

- *“Partner with us in a real way, don’t treat us as communities who need to be engaged but as partners who we work together to achieve common values and long-term outcomes.”*

Some also expressed interest in the Council facilitating connection and relationship-building among communities, including more

collaborative and inclusive approaches that bring people together to work through issues and hear different perspectives. Some participants highlighted the value of bringing together people from different age groups and backgrounds in structured discussions to draw on a wider range of perspectives.

- *“We are a community and we need to work together as a community – maybe you should unless you already do, select people from all age groups including high schoolers & a diverse range of people to invite them into discussion groups or interviews to get their ‘wisdom of the crowd’.”*

It was also suggested the Council could build ongoing relationships by offering support, facilities, and education about its services to community groups.

There were varying views about the information needed to effectively provide feedback

Feedback reflects a range of experiences, with some finding information accessible and others needing to work hard to locate, understand, or interpret it. Respondents highlighted the importance of clear, timely, and well-balanced information to support meaningful engagement.

- *"I remember the information given in the consultation was excellent."*
- *"Further info hidden deep in council documents. Too hard to find."*

Respondents described **difficulty understanding proposals** due to perceptions of complicated language, limited detail, missing context, and unclear explanations of impacts, trade-offs, and decision rationale. There was also uncertainty about how options were developed and what information they were based on, making it harder to make informed submissions.

- *"I felt there was a lack of detailed information about the impacts, benefits, and possible risks."*

- *"In many engagement processes, the information provided is not sufficient to fully understand the issue or the practical implications of the proposal. Key context, constraints, or trade-offs are often missing, which makes it difficult to provide meaningful or informed feedback."*

Many called for more transparent and detailed information, particularly on financial impacts, effects on rates and communities, trade-offs, and the evidence behind proposals. There was also interest in opportunities to engage directly with technical experts, as well as clearer information on how funding is allocated and reallocated if unspent.

- *"Better complete data sets would lead to better more transparent prioritisation of projects which help explain why some work proceeds and others don't."*

- *"Communicating what the funding would otherwise go towards would be informative."*
- *"Information to provide fact-based decision are not available. There should be a lot more transparency around how much initiatives will cost and, if savings, where that will be seen."*

At the same time, feedback reflected a balance between needing concise, digestible information and wanting sufficient detail to make informed decisions. For some, lengthy or complex content was a barrier, while others felt the information did not go far enough.

- *"It's a catch-22 but if you make it easier to provide quick feedback it might not be as thoughtful or considered, but sometimes it does feel like more time than I might feel like devoting to an issue."*

There were varying views about the information needed to effectively provide feedback (continued)

- *"Sometimes the sheer volume of information you need to understand to provide coherent and structured feedback is a barrier."*

Others reported that information was clear, well-structured, and helped them understand proposals and options, highlighting the inconsistency of experiences.

- *"I remember the information given in the consultation was excellent."*
- *"The different decision points and options associated to them were explained clearly."*

Improvements to how information is presented were suggested, including more **visual, simplified, and interactive formats**, while keeping necessary detail.

- *"It would be good for this information to be better organised, so the details of the proposal are clear and easily visualised (while keeping required legal details)."*
- *"Well-designed data visualisation, concise summaries of the challenge a policy seeks to address along with the considered options, while also offering as much of the data underlying the Council's recommendations as possible to be publicly accessible in an easily digestible format would help a lot."*

Although increased and better information was called for, there was a recognition of the costs associated with providing it.

- *"I feel like more information generally could be shared, but understand that equals labour and labour equals money and money is tight."*

Deliberative processes were seen as a way to improve how information is shared with the community and support more considered feedback.

- *"Greater use of open to view representative citizen panels that would intensively examine and report back on key issues."*

Some wished to see increased early consideration of community expertise and ideas

There were calls for community expertise to be heard earlier in the process to enable community to have a meaningful input.

- *"Council and staff forget that they are not the experts on every issues and that there are many experiences and expert people in the community whose ideas are being dismissed out of hand."*
- *"It is also important to better recognise and value the expertise that exists within the community, particularly from people with lived experience of accessibility barriers. Engagement should feel like a partnership rather than a one-way process."*
- *"I see an opportunity to help improve how community knowledge and lived experience can better inform council decision-making."*

The feedback highlights a strong **desire for earlier and more meaningful engagement** before plans or options are already developed. Early engagement is seen as critical to building trust and ensuring community input genuinely shapes outcomes. People want communities to be involved at the idea generation stage, rather than being asked to comment on largely fixed proposals.

- *"Gauging public input earlier in the process would have seen more options provided and more balanced assessment of options."*
- *"Deliberative democratic processes. Being involved before the decisions are made."*
- *"Communities should be asked at the start, and also they should have the opportunity to identify the issues. Their input is often ignored not reflected at all. Sometimes we are asked if we want this or that, but we don't want either."*

- *"There is often a disconnect between community-level insight and formal decision-making processes. Communities can hold rich, longitudinal knowledge (e.g. local survey data, lived experience, social networks), but there are limited structured pathways for this to be meaningfully integrated into council planning and decisions."*

Engagement fatigue was raised as an issue, with a range of factors contributing

Factors that contributed to engagement fatigue included too many opportunities to provide feedback, repeated consultations, complex materials, and not seeing the impacts of feedback. These factors were felt to impact the willingness of even those who are motivated to participate, and some suggested that this was driving low rates of participation and exhaustion for those that do engage.

- *"Please stagger your consultations so they are less overwhelming."*
- *"A lot of mental energy to understand proposals fully, consultation exhaustion, and skewed decisions towards those voices who are loudest or have time to engage."*
- *"The council asks for feedback on lots of random, unconnected stuff all the time. It would make more sense if I knew how all these connected together, or even a note saying 'we're doing this part now and we'll ask you about another part in 3 months'."*
- *"I feel like I'm always giving the same feedback on very similar projects again and again. I am happy to engage but I can see why others get tired."*

Promotion was seen as a useful tool for driving engagement, but preferences varied

Participants most commonly identified **social media, email, and the Let's Talk newsletter** as the main ways they hear about Council engagement opportunities. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn were specifically mentioned, with community Facebook groups, Councillors' posts, and the Council's official page highlighted as key sources of information.

- *"Having it available online with emails when areas I care about are asking for feedback is great."*

Suggestions were made to use social media platforms for presentations and direct engagement with the community. There was some frustration that the Council does not gather social media comments as part of engagement processes.

- *"Go live with a presentation and reply to live comments keep it simple for us to engage."*

Direct emails and texts were suggested to support targeted outreach and raise awareness of upcoming engagements. There was inconsistent reach of the Let's Talk newsletter and awareness of the possibility to sign up to direct emails about topics and locations of interest.

Physical media was seen as an important way to communicate, especially in locations such as libraries or directly at the location for projects with physical locations. Other locations with a lot of foot traffic, like supermarkets or bars, were mentioned.

- *"Physically around the central city, I am never 'checking in' on council platforms to see what's going on."*
- *"I also read information pamphlets at the libraries that remind me and inform me. So don't stop communicating through libraries."*

Trusted community groups were highlighted by some as a key way to hear about opportunities to provide feedback, especially for those with limited internet access.

Not all participants were aware of Council engagement opportunities, and there is an opportunity to make targeted communications more visible and accessible. Some respondents highlighted challenges in hearing about engagement opportunities early enough and in knowing when consultations are taking place. This includes uncertainty about when consultations open or close, as well as when engagement events are happening.

- *"I think that there is a lack of opportunities to gain information about the topics in a TIMELY fashion, well before the deadline for consultation feedback."*

We asked all respondents about promotion, so the three-dot system has not been used.

Promotion was seen as a useful tool for driving engagement, but preferences varied (continued)

- *"It would be good if council communicated a 1-2 year plan of upcoming proposals so when we know when to look out for a post etc."*
- *"I find it really difficult to know when the Council is actively seeking feedback on things that matter to me."*

Of the survey respondents who had not provided feedback on projects and decisions before:

33%

selected "I didn't know how to provide feedback or give my ideas to Council"

57%

selected "I don't know when the Council wants feedback or ideas on something"

This highlights a need for increased promotion and awareness-raising of how and when to get involved in feedback processes.

Of those who had previously provided feedback on projects and decisions

30%

reported that outreach, either via advertising or an invitation, was a reason why they did so.

Preferences around how to provide feedback were mixed, highlighting the importance of providing a range of options

Respondents provided **positive feedback about online engagement tools**, highlighting their convenience, flexibility, and ease of use.

Online engagement, for example through Let's Talk, was reported to enable people to provide feedback in their own time, without needing to attend set meetings. This was particularly important for those balancing work, childcare, or other commitments.

- *"Didn't require being somewhere at a certain time; able to submit feedback at my convenience."*
- *"Quick survey, could complete while in the midst of busy home life caring for young kids."*

The design of the surveys was also highlighted, with many respondents noting that they are easy to use, accessible on mobile devices, and present

clear questions, although login requirements were seen as a barrier. Space for open comments was seen as important to enable people to input their own ideas. Some people wanted to be able to select areas to give feedback on rather than complete a whole survey.

- *"The online feedback forms have become much easier to navigate and understand over the past few years."*
- *"The hassle, however small of registering will put people off commenting."*
- *"Have more options visible at the start of an online form so you don't have to wade through the whole thing serially to get to the one part you care about."*

Others found **surveys to be too long, complex, and time-consuming**, requesting more light touch opportunities to engage, for example pulse surveys.

- *"Inaccessible, complicated, long, hard to understand - I never finished providing that feedback and just quit that survey."*

Pop-ups and workshops were a preference for many and provided opportunities to chat directly with Councillors and Council officers. The use of local venues like community centres and libraries was supported. Practical features that make events more inclusive – such as accommodating children – were noted as helpful in enabling participation.

We asked all respondents about feedback preferences, so the three-dot system has not been used.

Preferences around how to provide feedback were mixed, highlighting the importance of providing a range of options (continued)

- *"Having activities and lollies for my kids to keep them engaged while I had a conversation."*

At the same time, some respondents expressed **discomfort with attending public meetings** or 'town hall'- style meetings. Concerns included environments feeling intimidating, divisive, or dominated by a small number of strong or disruptive voices, which can discourage broader participation.

- *"I have been in some meetings where a few people disrupted and then dominated the discussion."*
- *"I can't face coming along to any in-person community engagement because I expect them to be divisive, people with strong opinions, not listening to each other."*

Some respondents indicated a desire for more regular and approachable **opportunities to connect with Councillors** directly.

- *"Need personal access to Councillors rather than officials."*

Some people value **hearing from others and observing the process**. In-person settings also provided opportunities to hear a range of perspectives and observe how discussions and decisions unfold.

- *"It is also good to hear how other members of the public feel about the proposed changes at in person events."*
- *"The opportunity to listen to other better-informed submitters speak and to observe Council staff during the session."*

Flexibility in how and when people could participate, including outside business hours and through in-person events with whānau-friendly elements, was also important.

We asked all respondents about feedback preferences, so the three-dot system has not been used.

There are mixed reasons why people give feedback to the Council on projects and decisions

Many people are highly motivated by the **desire to positively impact Wellington and its communities** and ensure the Council hears from diverse voices when making decisions. This was underpinned by a strong sense of care for Wellington, including a desire to contribute to the city and its residents and participate in democratic processes.

- *"Providing feedback that is practically helpful and that will benefit myself and communities"*
- *"I'm also motivated by a strong interest in ensuring decisions are inclusive and consider the needs of people who are often overlooked."*
- *"Wanting to support Wellington growing into its full potential to become a thriving, fun, easy to navigate and safe place to live for all."*

Personal impact on themselves, their whānau/family and their community was the most cited reason for participation.

- *"The project involved the safety of the community that I live in."*

Some respondents noted that even when decisions do not align with their personal preferences, contributing their views remains valuable. Engagement can be **empowering**, reinforcing a sense of connection to the city and its future.

- *"I believe in participating in government, even if the outcomes don't match my personal preferences. But, the only way that they can get close to doing so, is for me to participate."*

Particular **interest in or passion about a topic or issue** was another reason many people choose to provide feedback to the Council on projects and decisions.

Others felt **concerned about how the Council has previously made decisions** – they felt that the change in Council created a timely opportunity to influence positive change.

- *"I've been motivated by worry, that perhaps the council isn't doing its job properly."*

We asked all respondents about motivation, so the three-dot system has not been used.

There are mixed reasons why people give feedback to the Council on projects and decisions (continued)

There was a tension between people **wanting to take part** – because they see participation in democracy as important and want to improve the city – and **feeling disheartened** by a sense that the process may not be genuine. Although many people felt disillusioned, hope about how community voice can be reflected in decision-making was also expressed as a motivation for taking part.

- *"I engage because I believe public input should help shape better outcomes. However, that motivation is affected by whether it feels like feedback is genuinely taken into account."*

Based on survey feedback, people were more likely to give feedback because they **opposed** what the Council was proposing. When asked about why they provided feedback on previous projects or decisions:

- **62%** chose "I was opposed to what the Council was proposing"

- **28%** chose "I supported what the Council was proposing".

When it comes to engaging on this project, in addition to the reasons above, other specific reasons cited to participate were:

- the survey's accessibility, as it appeared quick to complete, was available online, and was noticed in public spaces or through advertising and reminders.
- making a spontaneous decision to fill out the survey when seeing an advert, post or email, highlighting the importance of these methods of advertising.
- people saw it promoted by community groups or leaders.
- the prize, which was mentioned by a small number.

In response to the survey question "Thinking about projects or decisions you've provided feedback on, why did you get involved in these?"

- **60%** answered "Because I was passionate about the topic"
- **81%** answered "The project was going to impact me, my whānau or community"
- **62%** answered "I was opposed to what the Council was proposing"
- **28%** answered "I supported what the Council was proposing"
- **10%** answered "I saw some advertising"
- **20%** answered "I was invited to get involved"
- **20%** answered "I was supporting friends, whanau or people who were impacted"

We asked all respondents about motivation, so the three-dot system has not been used.

Ngā mihi

Thank you

Contact the Engagement Team
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Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke