

Background Information –

A3 summaries of background reports about the community outcomes and activity groups - prepared for Strategic Direction workstream of LTP 2027

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- City demographics and overview
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- Urban Development
- Waste



Wellington city: Demographics

2023 Census statistics - All statistics sourced from StatsNZ unless otherwise stated

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Population

209,900

estimated population
as of June 2024



85,000

estimated number of dwellings*



Gender

48.2%

97,641 identify as male

1.3%

2,673 identify as having
another gender

50.5%

97,641 identify as female



Rainbow / LGBTIQ+ identification

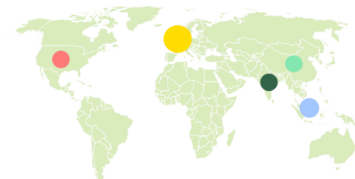
11.3%

18,237 adults aged 15 or older in Wellington
city are LGBTIQ+, vs 4.9% nationally – the
highest in NZ

Places of birth

- 65.4%: 131,685 born in NZ
- 34.6%: 69,690 born overseas

Top five overseas birthplaces

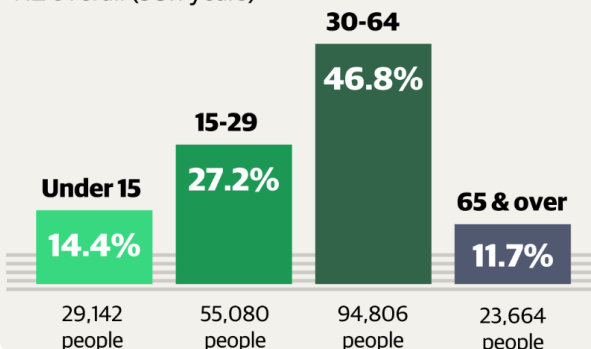


- North-West Europe: 9.5%
- South-East Asia: 4.9%
- Southern & Central Asia: 4.5%
- North-East Asia: 3.8%
- The Americas: 3.1%

Sources: Statistics New Zealand (Aotearoa Data Explorer). Highlighted whole numbers rounded to the nearest 2 significant figures, decimals rounded to 1 decimal place. Note that these figures may be different from other reporting, e.g. the number of 'dwellings' is a different measure from the number of 'rating units' (83,714 per the Annual Plan 2025/26)

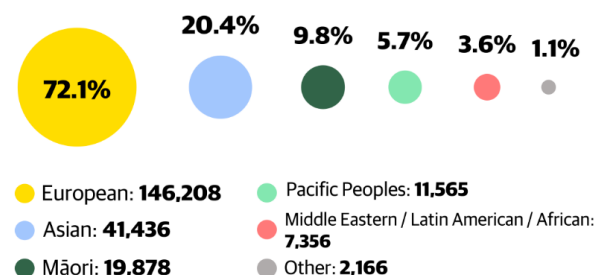
Age distribution

34.9 years is the median age - younger than for
NZ overall (38.1 years)



Ethnicity

Level 1 ethnic groups*



*People may belong to more than one ethnic group.

Increasing ethnic diversity since 2013:



Disability

16%

According to the Household
Disability Survey 2023,
approximately 84,000 people in
the Wellington region are disabled
(in line with the national rate of 17%)

In the Census 2023, the most
common identified activity
limitations in Wellington city were to
do with difficulty remembering/
concentrating, and walking/
climbing stairs



Wellington city: Outcome overview

2023 Census statistics - All statistics sourced from StatsNZ unless otherwise stated

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City composition

45,132

number of **homeowner
households** in the city –
vs **31,848 renter
households***

58.6%

of households own the
dwelling they usually live in
– vs 66% for NZ overall

20,619

number of households
with **dependent
children** in the city

27.6%

of households have
dependent children –
vs 32.6% for NZ overall

30,129

number of **businesses**
in the city as at
February 2024

56.3%

of filled jobs are in **high-
value/knowledge-
producing services** –
vs 32.2% in NZ overall

Quality of life

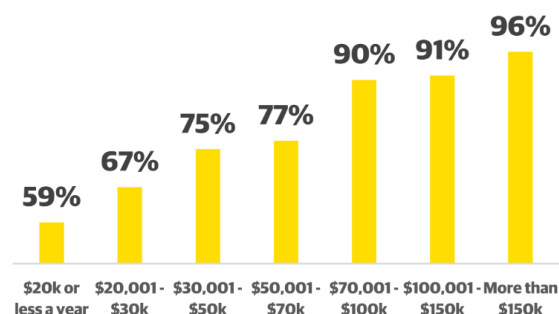
81%

of Wellingtonians rated their
overall quality of life positively,
down from 89% in 2022 (RMS '25)



Experiences in the city vary between groups

For example, as household income decreases so does
quality of life – and groups that are less wealthy on
average (e.g. by age, ethnicity) also tend to have less
favourable outcomes in a range of domains.



Quality of life by household income

(% of Wellingtonians who say they have a good quality of life)

Sources: Statistics New Zealand, Residents Monitoring Survey
2025, Quality of Life 2024, Infometrics

Income

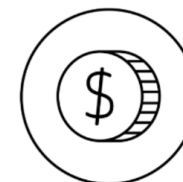
Median annual household income

\$146,500

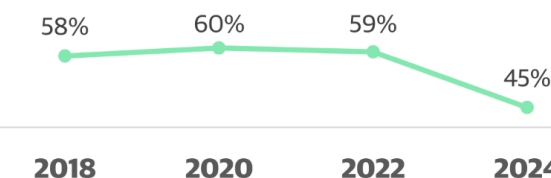
Wellington region

vs \$123,000

New Zealand overall



Percent that say they have enough or more than
enough money to meet everyday needs (QoL '24)



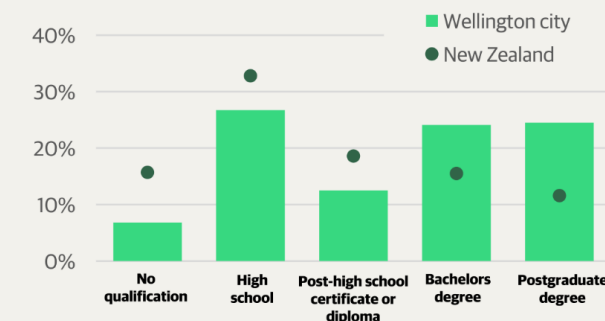
Economy

All statistics represent change over the year-to-date December 2025
(Infometrics Quarterly Economic Monitor)



Education

48.6% of Wellingtonians aged 15 or over have a
Bachelor's degree or higher as their highest
qualification, vs 27.1% for New Zealand overall



53,028 Wellingtonians in full-time or part-time
study (24.0% study participation – vs 26.2% in NZ)

Key System Issues and Opportunities – LTP Context

System-level pressures shaping what can be delivered, at what pace, and with what trade-offs over the LTP.

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Core system pressures

Financial sustainability & affordability

- Rising costs, high renewal demand, limited debt headroom.
- Cost-of-living pressures heighten scrutiny and constrain choices.

Ageing & misaligned assets

- Large portfolio of ageing, single-purpose, hazard-exposed assets.
- High renewal/operating costs reduce flexibility.

Delivery capacity & complexity

- Competing priorities, interdependencies, reform uncertainty.
- Limits pace and scale of change; requires sequencing and focus.

Accessibility & equity gaps

- Accessibility is a system-wide enabler or barrier.
- Persistent gaps for disabled people, Māori, young people, rainbow communities, lower-income households.

Climate change, resilience & hazard risk

- Increasing weather and seismic risk raises costs and constrains investment.
- Resilience must be embedded across decisions.

Economic pressures & affordability

- Employment volatility, high costs, central city vibrancy concerns.
- Shapes demand, affordability expectations and wellbeing.

Trust, confidence & engagement

- Low trust affects engagement and willingness to accept trade-offs.
- Increases delivery risk for visible or disruptive change.

Governance, coordination & reform uncertainty

- Ongoing central government reform complicates planning and delivery.
- Heightens need for flexibility, clarity of roles, and prioritisation.

Pre-election report: reinforcing challenges

Rates affordability

- Rising living costs; limited funding tools.
- Trade-offs unavoidable without new funding approaches.

Caring for infrastructure

- Ageing, hazard-exposed infrastructure needing major investment.
- Disruption and cost pressures affect communities.

Involving the community

- Low trust, polarisation, uneven participation.
- Ongoing challenge to build inclusive engagement.

Central government reform

- Shifting legislative settings increase uncertainty and cost.
- Drives discussion on collaboration and funding reform.

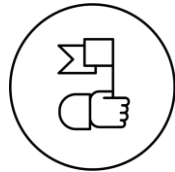
What this means for the LTP

- Not all outcomes can progress at once.
- Greater emphasis on prioritisation, sequencing, transparency, system-wide thinking, and trust-building.

"A welcoming and diverse, creative city"

Strategic Challenge

Wellington's shared cultural and social foundations are under strain, limiting the city's ability to foster belonging, cohesion, and a strong, inclusive identity



Declining cultural identity and civic pride



Reduced perception as a creative city



Less connected to the central city



Māori perspectives not fully integrated



Some communities still feel excluded



Progress on accessibility inconsistent

Wellington's sense of shared culture and social unity weakening

Improving cultural outcomes requires more than just supporting the arts



Improving accessibility



Genuine partnerships with Māori



Fostering inclusion / meaningful engagement



Revitalising city centre / Coordinated placemaking

Public perceptions



- Wellington's **cultural identity is weakening**, with residents feeling the city is "not as strong as it has been" despite strong pride in being an arts and cultural capital.
- People want accessible, community-centred cultural spaces**, calling for affordable venues, strong arts infrastructure, and better access for local creatives.
- Culture is seen as essential to wellbeing, identity, and city vibrancy**, with strong support for te ao Māori visibility, diverse creative voices, and the arts as a driver of social connection and urban revitalisation.

76% Agree that Wellington has a culturally rich and diverse arts scene (RMS 2025)



45% Feel a sense of pride in the way Wellington looks and feels (RMS 2025)



75% Agree that Māori culture and te reo is visible at Council's community facilities (RMS 2025)



19% Agree that Wellington is the events capital of New Zealand (RMS 2025)



71% Feel welcome and included in cultural events and activities in Wellington (RMS 2025)

29% Agree that the city centre is lively and attractive (RMS 2025)

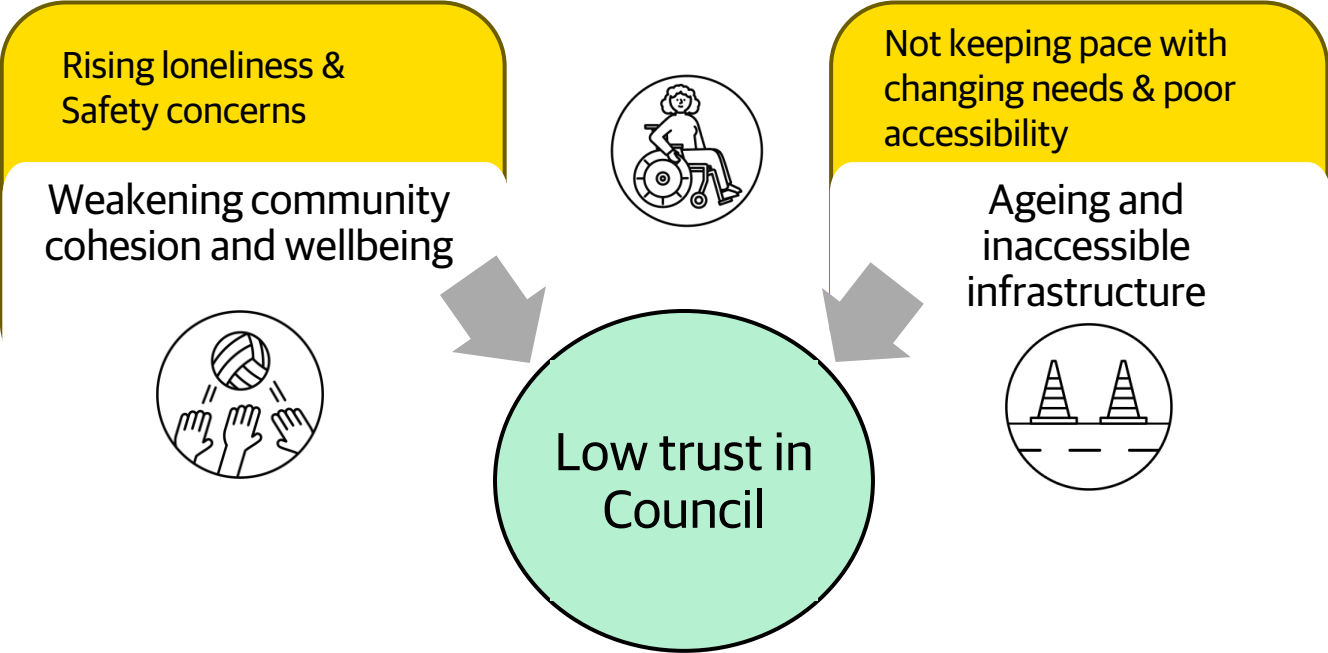


“A city of healthy and thriving whānau”

Strategic Challenge

Wellington is facing three distinct interconnected pressure systems:

- Increased loneliness, lower quality of life, and safety concerns, weakening community cohesion and wellbeing
- Ageing and inaccessible infrastructure limits inclusion
- Low trust in the Council reduces engagement and slows collective action, making it harder to address key challenges



Reduces engagement and makes it harder to address key challenges



Rebuild connections



Strengthen trust



Modernise facilities and services

Public perceptions



- **Growing social inequality** and concerns about safety, especially in Wellington’s central city after dark.



- Residents emphasise the **need for improved housing, transport, and community connection** to enhance wellbeing.



- People want Wellington to be an inclusive, vibrant city with **welcoming public spaces for all**.
- Use of sports facilities remains steady, with self-directed activities like walking and cycling popular.
- Residents stress the importance of **community support, accessible facilities, and services for vulnerable groups**.

81%



Report a positive quality of life (QoL 2024)

27%

Express trust in local government (e.g. WCC and councillors) (QoL 2024)

43%



Feel a sense of community in their neighbourhood (QoL 2024)

15%



Frequently feel lonely over the past year (QoL 2024)

41%



Feel safe in the CBD after dark – nighttime safety stagnating, daytime safety dropping (82% feel safe during the day (RMS 2025))

44%

of key facilities have poor physical access. (Needs assessment to inform Te Awe Māpara)

“An innovative business friendly city”

Strategic Challenge

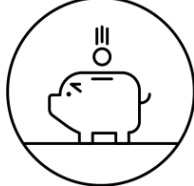
Wellington faces a systemic challenge to its economic resilience, marked by a prolonged downturn, reliance on a narrow economic base, declining city-centre vitality, and mounting pressures on small businesses



Regulatory complexity



Rising unemployment and inequality



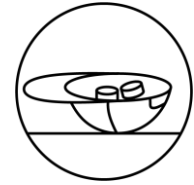
Declining city centre



Small business struggles & reduced foot traffic



Public sector dependency



Increasing perception of crime / safety issues

Systemic economic resilience issue

Need for a coordinated, whole of city response



Economic diversification



City revitalisation

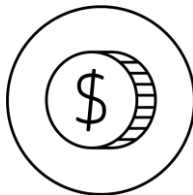


Smoother regulation experiences



Inclusive and resilient future

Public perceptions



• Living and enjoying the city is **too expensive** – rates, parking, rent, and fees make everyday life and going out harder.



• Jobs and opportunities don't reach everyone – **too many people face barriers to work**, training, and education.



• The **city centre feels less safe and less fun** – cost, safety concerns, and limited low-cost options put people off.

• **Local businesses are struggling to grow** – high costs, rates, and red tape make it harder to invest, innovate, and survive.

-0.4%



Change in Wellington city provisional GDP for the YTD Dec 2025 (Infometrics)

7.3%



Increase in Jobseeker support recipients in Wellington city for the YTD Dec 2025 (Infometrics)

45%



Say they have enough or more than enough money to meet everyday needs (QoL 2024)

29%



Of jobs in Wellington city are in the public sector for the YTD Mar 2024 (Infometrics)

5.1%



Average annual unemployment rate in Wellington city for the YTD Dec 2025 (Infometrics)

48.6%

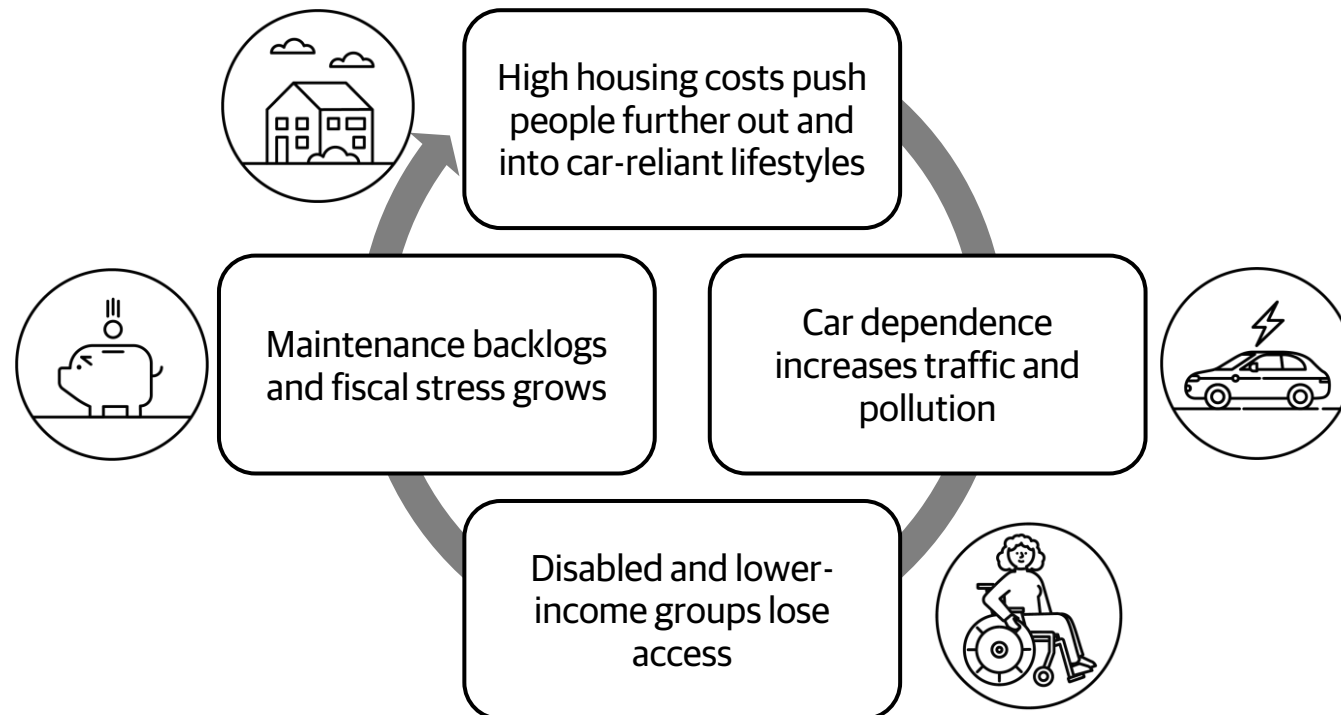


Proportion of Wellington city residents aged 15+ who hold a Bachelors level qualification or above (Census 2023)

"A liveable and accessible, compact city"

Strategic Challenge

The city is experiencing a reinforcing cycle where housing pressures, transport congestion, ageing infrastructure, and climate impacts compound one another and disproportionately affect vulnerable communities



Wellington can't fix things by looking at housing, transport, infrastructure, and climate change separately



Resilient infrastructure



Encouraging more people to use public and active transport



An inclusive future

Public perceptions

- Stakeholders stress the **need for controlled urban development, improved housing conditions, accessible public amenities, and better transport options** in Wellington.
- There is **support for sustainable, connected, and inclusive city planning**, prioritising public transport, active travel, and resilient infrastructure.
- Concerns include **housing affordability, accessibility for disabled people, and the impact of parking charges on vulnerable groups**.
- Climate change awareness is high**, with calls for stronger action on sustainability, improved waste management, and emergency preparedness to build a resilient city.

5.7



Housing affordability has improved since its peak of 7.9 (ratio = avg house value:avg household income) (Infometrics)

62%



of people with activity limitations agree it is easy to get around the city on public transport, the same as overall (RMS, 2025)

18.3%



Avg weekly rent as a percent of avg household income (improved in past 2 years) (Infometrics)

27%

Of facilities have significant building issues like leaks, while 25% have insufficient capacity

44%

Of facilities have poor accessibility into or through the spaces, while 38% are not inclusive of diverse needs

34%

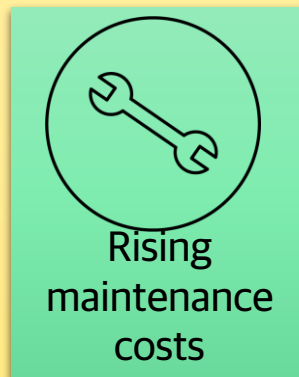
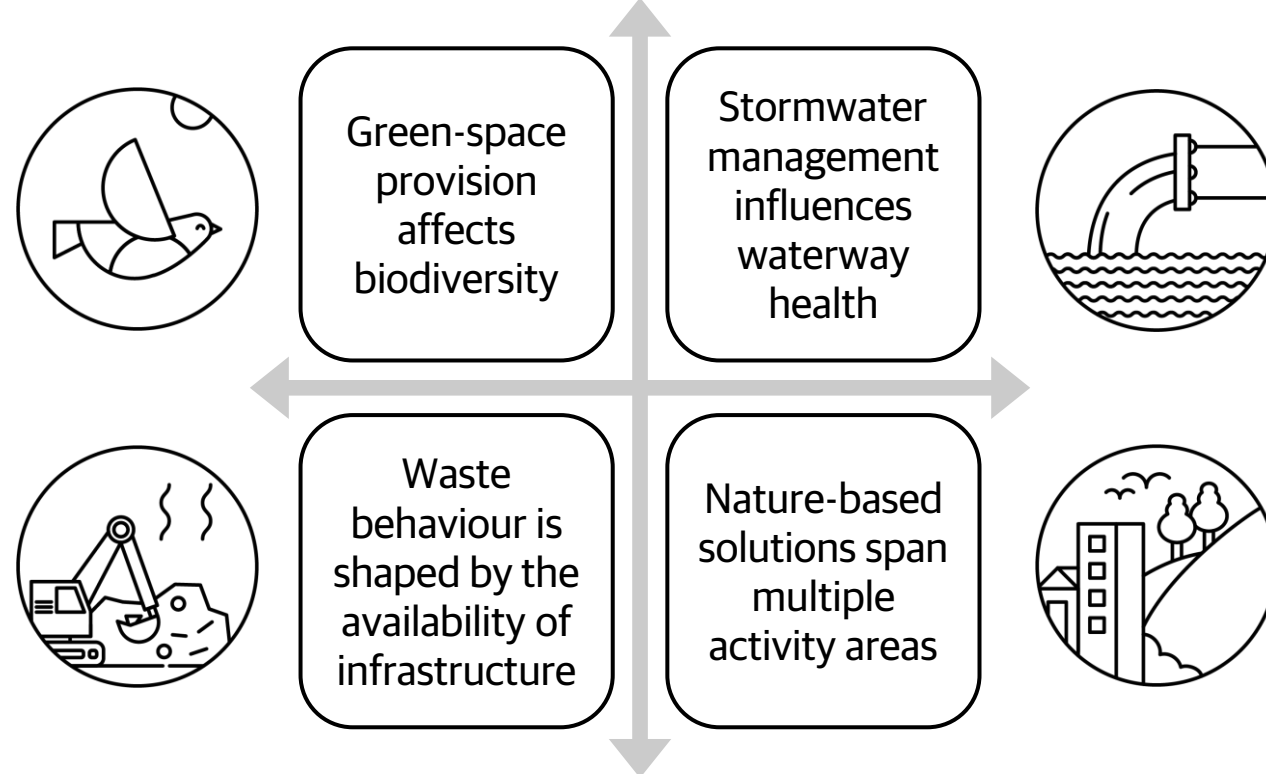
Of Wellington's emissions come from on-road transport (Emissions inventory 2025)

"A city restoring and protecting nature"

Strategic Challenge

Wellington is making progress across many individual environmental programmes, but these efforts are not yet operating as part of a fully integrated system

Environmental outcomes are interconnected



Rising maintenance costs



Ageing infrastructure



Climate impacts



Growth pressures

Need for system-wide coordination

Public perceptions



- Wellington residents **value environmental wellbeing**, urging action on climate change, water protection, and habitat restoration.
- They **support investments in water infrastructure, waste reduction, and nature-based solutions like urban tree planting**.
- Community efforts and partnerships with mana whenua are valued**, with calls for Council leadership in emissions reduction and sustainable planning to ensure the city's resilience and prosperity.

71%



Perceive water pollution as a problem in Wellington city (QoL 2024)

71%

Perceive landslides as a problem in Wellington city (QoL 2024)

50%

Say we are not ready to face various climate change impacts (QoL 2024)

94%

Say the infrastructure investment to adapt to extreme weather events is somewhat or very important (QoL 2024)

75+%



Satisfaction with various green and open spaces (RMS 2025)

55%



More native bird encounters since 2011

What the Council does

- Organises and supports a range of community arts and culture events and festivals.
- Maintains, owns and operates the key venue infrastructure for the performing arts, an integrated network of creation, rehearsal, performance, and recording venues (theatres, concert halls, auditoria, other spaces, dance studios, music recording studios), as well as providing tenancies in some of this infrastructure, such as Te Whaea.
- Funds and owns key museums and art galleries (managing more than 600 works), as well as other key visitor attractions.
- Regulates heritage protections, seismic strengthening, venue regulation, noise regulation, organisation of street activity, alcohol and traffic management regulation, health and safety requirements and resource consents.
- Collaborates with various stakeholders for the benefit of arts and culture activities.
- Funds art, culture and events, and runs Toi Pōneke arts centre as an art and cultural space and the Hannah Playhouse.

Why this matters

Wellington's arts and creative sector brings together diverse organisations and individuals who engage millions of people each year. Their creative, environmental, and intellectual activities support wellbeing and strengthen community connection.

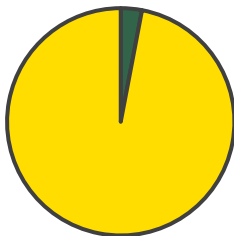
Investment in the arts strengthens social cohesion, stimulates economic activity, and celebrates diverse cultural narratives. Arts and culture represent a key area of interest for tangata whenua; a dynamic cultural meeting point; and are a builder and reinforcer of "community", promoting inclusion of all people and cultures.

Arts and culture activities and events attract tourists, which boosts the local economy. Cultural events and visitor attractions generate significant visitor spending which supports the city's businesses including retail, hospitality, and accommodation providers.

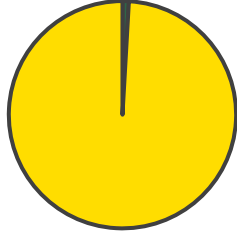
Budget

Percent of total council spend

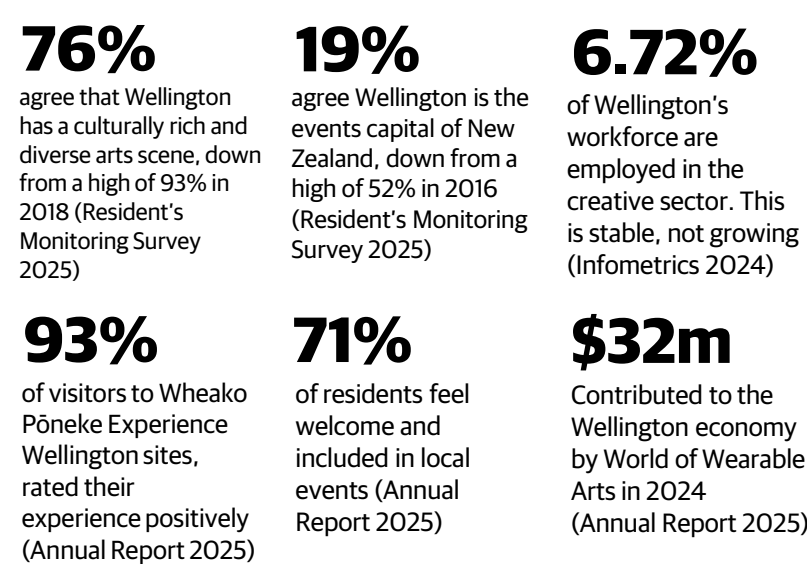
Opex – 3%



Capex – 0.9%



Key indicators and trends



Council investment enables arts and culture



Public perspectives

In recent consultations, residents have raised the importance of equitable, accessible and inclusive access to the city's art and cultural events and other creative opportunities: Residents raise the essential role of arts, heritage, and cultural initiatives in fostering community identity, pride, and vibrancy. They raise concerns about the affordability of cultural participation, the impact on rates and spending priorities, and the need to balance investment in cultural wellbeing with fiscal responsibility.

Artists and creative workers have raised concerns about the precarity of creative careers in Wellington. Stakeholders suggest more could be done to support sustainable employment in the arts, including affordable studio spaces, professional development, and integration with economic development strategies.

Mana whenua perspectives

Tā kai Here partners emphasise that arts and culture are central to expressing Māori identity and wellbeing in Wellington. Their feedback calls for Māori stories, language, and creative practices to be visible and valued across the city's cultural life. They want to see genuine co-design in public art, events, and place-making, with iwi involved from the outset. They highlight the need for targeted support for ngā toi Māori (Māori arts), including direct funding, opportunities for Māori artists, and the integration of te reo and tikanga in Council programmes.

Top three Challenges

Structural pressures on arts & culture provision and funding

- Arts and culture remain important to Wellington, but the city's cultural prominence is under pressure
- Declining confidence in Wellington as an events capital and increasing competition signal structural challenges to provision as well as funding.
- Structural pressures relate to relevance, reach, and accessibility – how arts and culture provision is shaped, sustained and delivered – not funding issues alone
- Funding is constrained and fragmented, with strong reliance on Council investment, limiting sector resilience
- Sustaining Wellington's creative capital status requires reshaping provision and diversifying funding.

Under-performing and costly arts and culture assets

- Many Council-owned arts and culture assets are costly to operate, ageing, and under-utilised.
- Low utilisation results in high cost per user and an unsustainable subsidy burden.
- The current asset portfolio has evolved over time and is not well aligned with current strategic outcomes or changing community needs.
- Legacy operating models and siloed management limit coordination, performance, and impact
- There is increasing pressure to demonstrate clear public value and target investment more effectively.

Barriers to inclusion and equitable access in arts and culture participation

- Persistent barriers limit participation in arts and culture for Māori, disabled people, and other under-represented groups.
- Accessibility issues remain significant, with a need to embed inclusive design and co-creation across all activity.
- Current funding and engagement approaches do not consistently reflect Wellington's diverse communities.
- Smaller and emerging groups feel under-represented in funding and decision-making processes.
- Creative careers are increasingly precarious, highlighting gaps in affordable spaces, support, and long-term sustainability.

See the Art and Culture background report for additional challenges and further detail. Information prepared March 2026.

What the Council does

The Council operates a broad network of facilities, including:

- 12 public libraries that support literacy and learning
- 25 community centres, including a central city youth hub
- 131 lease facilities, enabling leaseholders to deliver activities
- 94 public toilets and sports pavilions/beach changing rooms
- 2 cemeteries, in Mākara and Karori

A number of these facilities are pre-identified for emergencies.

The Council also:

- Supports access to affordable housing in partnership with Te Toi Mahana (more than 1,800 homes for over 3,000 tenants) and facilitates affordable rental through Te Kāinga.
- Funds Community Outcomes grants of \$5.47m annually

The Council delivers:

- Safety and wellbeing initiatives, including CCTV
- Food, alcohol, dog licenses, permits for trading, environmental and hazardous complaints, litter infringements and compliance.
- Welfare response and social response in emergencies

Why this matters

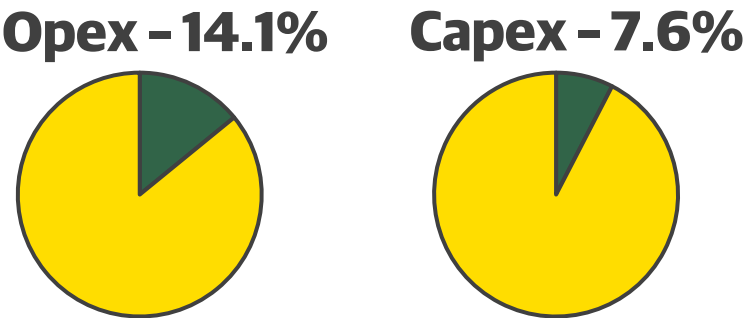
Community facilities are essential social infrastructure that provide welcoming spaces for people to connect, participate, learn, create, and support their overall wellbeing. Through programmes, services, and accessible facilities, the Council helps foster physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.

Robust public health consenting and compliance activities uphold high standards in food safety, alcohol licensing, and environmental protection.

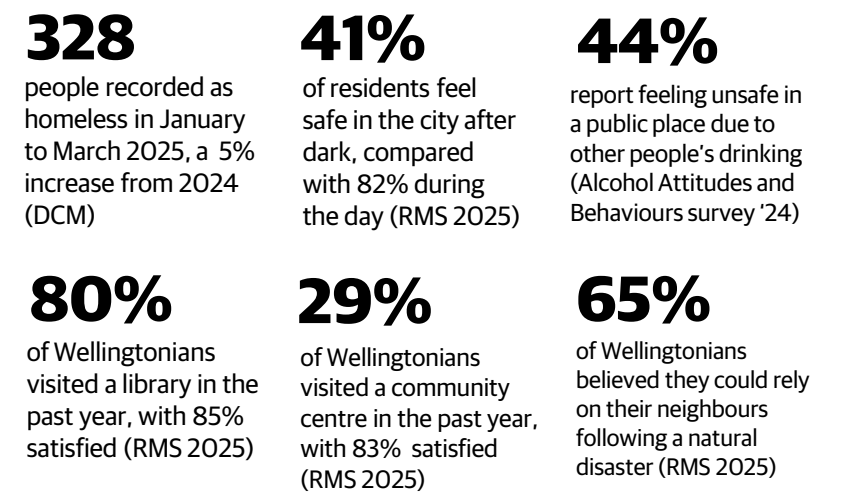
Council-run burial and cremation services protect public health and the environment, while providing respectful, professional support for bereaved families through facilities such as chapels and a range of service options.

Budget

Percent of total council spend



Key indicators and trends



Public perspectives

Submissions on the 2024-34 LTP, surveys, advisory groups , highlight:

- the importance of maintaining and upgrading libraries, recreation centres, and other community hubs to ensure they remain accessible and fit for purpose.
- the need for facilities to cater to diverse communities, including improvements for people with disabilities and spaces that reflect cultural diversity.
- whether investments in facilities were balanced against other pressing needs, suggest a phased approach or prioritisation of high-use venues.
- increased need for provision of social and affordable housing
- the importance of upgrading existing housing stock to meet modern standards.

Mana whenua perspectives

Feedback from Tākai Here partners consistently emphasise the importance of genuine partnership, cultural recognition, and social programmes that reflect Te ao Māori and a holistic approach to wellbeing. Tākai Here representatives have called for the Council to be open to new ways of doing things based on mātauranga Māori, and to measure success for cultural wellbeing.

Top three Challenges

Addressing gaps, overlaps and condition of community facilities network within financial constraints

Research and analysis to develop Te Awa Mapara, The Council's Community Facilities Plan (2023) found:

- The majority of facilities are standalone, small, and single-purpose, limiting flexibility to respond to changing and diverse community needs.
- Facilities are not evenly spread across the city; some communities being underserved while others have underused resources.
- Nearly half of facilities, have poor accessibility in and through the spaces. Most facilities do not reflect te ao Māori cultural narratives, histories or te reo facility names or signage.
- Operating and maintenance costs for facilities have increased by 45 percent over the past seven years.

Declining perceptions of public safety and worsening social challenges in Wellington

- Social challenges such as rough sleeping, begging, and antisocial behaviour linked to substance use contribute to this sense of insecurity.
- Homelessness is rising. Home ownership rates in Wellington remain low, while, the shortage of public housing is acute, with 656 people on the waiting list.
- These challenges highlight the critical need for affordable housing solutions and more efficient, effective and joined-up interventions to address homelessness.
- We do not have a Local Alcohol Policy which could help address issues relating to alcohol harm (and provide more certainty in alcohol licencing).

Resourcing and coordination issues in emergency management

- Around 200 staff are registered and trained to work in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) during emergencies, which is sufficient for small-medium scale events, but may be inadequate for large scale or long duration incidents.
- There is no consistent, citywide framework for activating community facilities for emergency roles. This creates avoidable delay and uncertainty in major events.

What the Council does

- The Council delivers economic development through:
- WellingtonNZ (destination marketing, major events, business support)
 - CCOs (Experience Wellington, Zoo, Cable Car, Sky Stadium)
 - Infrastructure and placemaking (transport, housing, safety)
 - Innovation hubs, Māori business support, international relations
 - Targeted initiatives: City Growth Fund, Business Improvement Districts



Why this matters

Economic development helps communities adapt to change and maintain long-term wellbeing. A strong economy delivers more jobs, higher household incomes, and improved public services.

Global trends such as tech innovation, climate change, and shifting trade shape city competitiveness and resilience. Wellington also faces added pressures, including weakened population growth, housing challenges, and unmet infrastructure needs.

Communities emphasise that economic development is also about quality of life, equitable access to employment, and inclusive opportunities. Supporting sustainable businesses, fostering innovation, and shifting to a low-carbon economy helps build a vibrant, resilient city. Council initiatives (major events, tourism promotion, business support) help stimulate spending and support jobs in visitor-related sectors. Wellington's mean household income reached \$166,000 in 2024, reflecting a highly skilled workforce in high-paying sectors. Investments like the Courtenay Precinct plan, major events, and Tākina strengthen city vibrancy, attract visitors, and boost local economic activity.

Budget

Percent of total council spend

Opex – 5.9%

Capex – 2.1%



Key indicators and trends

2,684

businesses engaged via WellingtonNZ. \$131m event expenditure, \$201m direct economic impact (Annual Report 2024/25)

627k

local event attendees in Wellington (Annual Report 2024/25)

29%

the proportion who agree that the city centre is lively and attractive has declined from 80% in 2019 to 29% in 2025 (RMS 2025)

4.8%

unemployment in Wellington, the national rate is 5% (Infometrics)

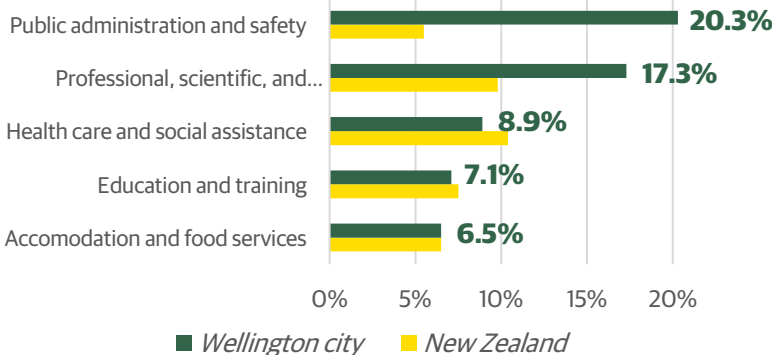
2%

increase in average Wellington annual household incomes (Annual Report 24/25)

44%

of the Council's total rates come from commercial rate payers

Top five industries by employment (% of filled jobs, Infometrics)



Public perspectives

Many Wellingtonians, are worried about the Council's spending priorities and the city's direction during the economic downturn. There are widespread concerns about rising rates, affordability, and the need for fiscal responsibility. Cleanliness issues, safety concerns, retail vacancies and emptier streets are detracting from the city's vibrancy and economic vitality. The Wellington Chamber of Commerce strongly opposes the commercial rates differential and also questions the Council's spending priorities. Wellington's advisory groups emphasise that inclusive, affordable, and accessible economic development is essential for long-term prosperity, highlighting that supporting diverse entrepreneurs, improving accessibility, and investing in creative and culturally representative initiatives strengthens innovation, attracts talent, and builds a resilient local economy.

Mana whenua perspectives

The Tākai Here partners place a strong emphasis on advancing Māori enterprise as a cornerstone of Wellington's economic development, advocating for the growth of Māori businesses, entrepreneurship, and innovation. They want genuine partnership with the Council, where Māori are co-creators of economic opportunity and growth, and where the success of Māori enterprise is recognised as integral to Wellington's prosperity.

Top three Challenges

High concentration in a few sectors, opportunities to leverage strengths and diversity

- Wellington's economy relies heavily on a few sectors like government, professional services, and finance, making it vulnerable to economic shocks and restructure changes.
- Shifts in consumer behaviour, remote work, and global disruptions add pressure, causing job insecurity and reduced confidence, especially in construction and tourism.
- Despite some positive signs, the city's growth and resilience depend on greater economic diversification. Opportunities in tech, screen and creative industries are being supported.
- Wellington can unlock more inclusive economic growth by strengthening engagement with diverse communities, supporting Māori and locally led businesses, and removing accessibility barriers so all residents can fully participate in and benefit from the city's economy.

Decline in central city vibrancy, high costs to operate, and impacts of construction on businesses

- Ongoing economic downtown reflected in retail vacancies, emptier streets, and concerns about cleanliness and safety have eroded the city's vitality, as highlighted by both residents and business groups.
- Rising insurance, operating, and compliance costs add to the burden, making it harder for businesses to remain viable during periods of disruption.
- Businesses frequently express concerns about the impacts of construction and the lack of proactive engagement during planning and upgrade phases.

Building climate resilience, and opportunities for growth through innovation

- The city's economic wellbeing may be affected in the future by both the level of resilience to physical impacts, such as adverse weather events, and by the economic consequences of investing in resilience and recovery from increasingly frequent and intense weather events.
- Addressing climate change remains fundamental to economic stability, given its intersection with equity, housing, and social wellbeing, and is integral to Wellington's capacity to adapt and support inclusive, sustainable economic growth.
- Climate resilience and innovation opportunities can be a driver for greater economic diversity.

See the Economic Development background report for additional challenges and further detail. Information prepared March 2026.

What the Council does

The Council looks after, maintains and upgrades:

- 4,390.7 hectares of parks and reserves, beaches
- 391 km of walking and biking tracks.
- 200,000 m² of horticultural areas
- 42 coastal structures
- 1.3 million visitors to the Wellington Gardens per year
- Planting 110,000 indigenous plants per year
- On-land stormwater, including roads and parks

The Council supports and partners with:

- Mana whenua, including co-managing [Mātai Moana Reserve](#), Taputeranga Island and Te Kopahou.
- Over 120 volunteer environmental groups.
- Tiaki Wai Metro Water
- Funds conservation organisations, Zealandia Māra o Tāne and Te Nukua Wellington Zoo.
- Funds Capital Kiwi and Predator Free Wellington.

Why this matters

Parks, beaches, reserves, and conservation organisations are important to Wellingtonians. They support native biodiversity and strengthen resilience to extreme weather, while providing valuable spaces for recreation, physical activity, and connecting with nature and one another. They are valued for enhancing physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing, fostering joy, learning, and active living.

Green spaces provide habitats, support soil formation, and absorb rainwater - reducing flood risk and easing pressure on stormwater systems. Restoration planting, pest control, and conservation efforts protects native species and ecosystems. Stormwater management plays a critical role in protecting public health and safety by preventing flooding through a network of pipes, culverts, and overland flow paths that manage rainwater runoff from urban surfaces like roads and roofs.

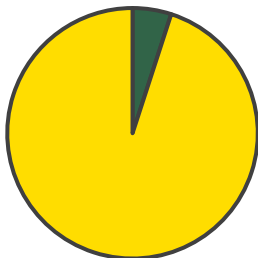
Budget

Percent of total council spend

Opex - 12.4%



Capex - 5%



Key indicators and trends

90%

agree connection to nature improves their quality of life (Residents Monitoring Survey 2025)

82%

of households are within a 10-minute walk of a neighbourhood park (Te Whai Oranga Pōneke)

70-85%

satisfaction with most green spaces incl. botanic gardens, forested areas, and walkways/trails (Residents Monitoring Survey 2025)

8 in 10

believe negative effects of climate change are already being felt in Wellington (Climate Action Monitor 2025)

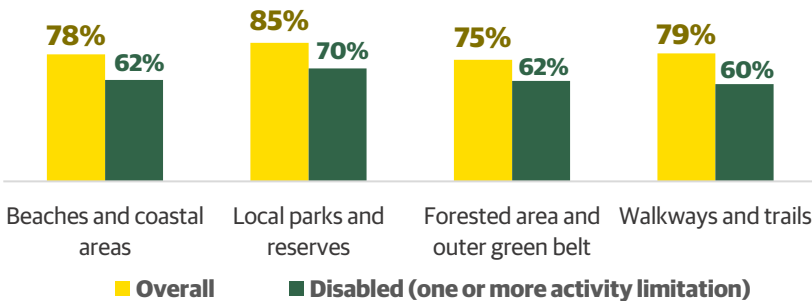
41%

satisfaction with the stormwater system - a slight increase on 2024, but remains low compared to pre-2021 rating (RMS 2025)

71%

of Wellingtonians say water pollution is a problem in Wellington city (Quality of Life 2024)

Percent who agree access to each green/open space is easy
Resident's Monitoring Survey 2025



Public perceptions

Wellingtonians strongly value parks, beaches, and natural environments, consistently calling for more greening, such as new parks, pocket parks, tree-lined streets, and accessible open spaces. There is strong public support for biodiversity initiatives, including pest control, restoration programmes and native planting. Residents also emphasise the need for improved stormwater and water-quality management, responsible recreation that protects wildlife, and ensuring climate- and nature-based initiatives remain equitable and accessible for all.

Mana whenua perspectives

The Tā kai Here partners emphasise genuine partnership and early co-design in environmental management, seeking well-resourced collaboration that reflects Māori cultural and ecological values. They advocate for authentic integration of mātauranga Māori, such as traditional naming, cultural practices, and protection of wāhi tapu, alongside shared decision-making and co-governance of key open spaces. Their priorities include restoring waterways, protecting coastal ecosystems, achieving ambitious biodiversity and climate goals, and ensuring Māori perspectives guide conservation efforts across parks, reserves, and attractions like Zealandia and Wellington Zoo.

Top three Challenges

Maintaining open space network with increasing cost pressures and high community expectations

- As community expectations increase, we are facing pressure on maintaining our existing services and maintenance budgets for our existing assets. Decisions regarding service levels will become increasingly challenging and complex in the coming years.
- In some areas, there is a disconnect between community members and Council regarding the levels of service, enforcement, or the provision of amenities. Wellington's engaged residents present further opportunities to improve our parks, beaches and open spaces.

Equitable, inclusive and accessible green spaces

- Some densely populated and high-deprivation lack trees and nearby parks or reserves, resulting in significant gaps in access despite overall high green space per person.
- Rising costs and challenges with rates affordability make it increasingly difficult for the Council to manage, maintain, and improve the distribution and access to parks, beaches, and open spaces.
- Accessibility barriers include inconsistent wayfinding, navigation, and lack of accessible trail maps further hinder use for disabled people and others.
- Not all Wellingtonians feel safe, welcome, or able to access parks and open spaces due to barriers such as absence of public toilets, transport difficulties, safety concerns, and spaces not feeling inclusive or welcoming.

Adapting parks, beaches, and conservation organisations for climate change

- Parks, beaches, and conservation organisations are facing more frequent and intense extreme weather events, such as storms, floods, droughts, and coastal erosion, posing growing risks of damage, disruption to services, and loss of ecosystem health.
- Ageing waterfront infrastructure and a mix of adaptation measures needed (e.g., ecosystem restoration, improved stormwater management, relocating vulnerable assets) to prevent negative impacts and build resilience as climate change worsens.

What the Council does

The Council manages an extensive and diverse network of recreational facilities and services. This includes:

- 7 public swimming pools
- 4 indoor recreation centres
- 12-court Ākau Tangi Sports Centre.
- 44 natural sports fields and 11 artificial turfs,
- 107 playgrounds and 7 skate parks
- Two fitness centres, a 'Learn to Swim' programme, athletics track, tennis and netball courts
- Specialised facilities such as a marina, seven public boat ramps, a boat harbour and an 18-hole golf course
- LeisureCard programme

The Council maintains strong relationships with Sport NZ, Regional Sports Organisations (RSOs), and Nuku Ora to support the broader sport ecosystem.

Why this matters

Recreational opportunities support improving the quality of life for residents. Providing a diverse range of facilities and programmes create an environment where people can engage in activities that bring joy, relaxation, and a sense of community, which helps build a stronger, more resilient community.

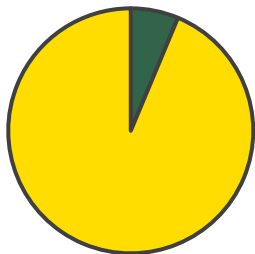
Offering a variety of activities to keep residents active and engaged supports enabling physical activity and social interaction, which are key components of a healthy lifestyle.

Recreational activities also provide opportunities for people to connect with one another, fostering a sense of belonging and community spirit. Activities such as sports leagues and competitions not only strengthen social ties but also promote inclusivity and diversity within the community.

Budget

Percent of total council spend

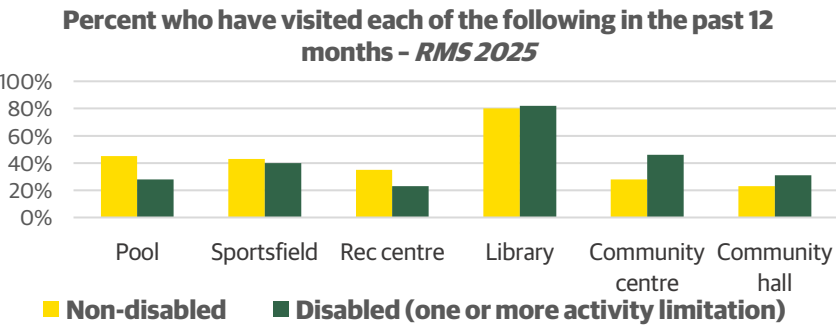
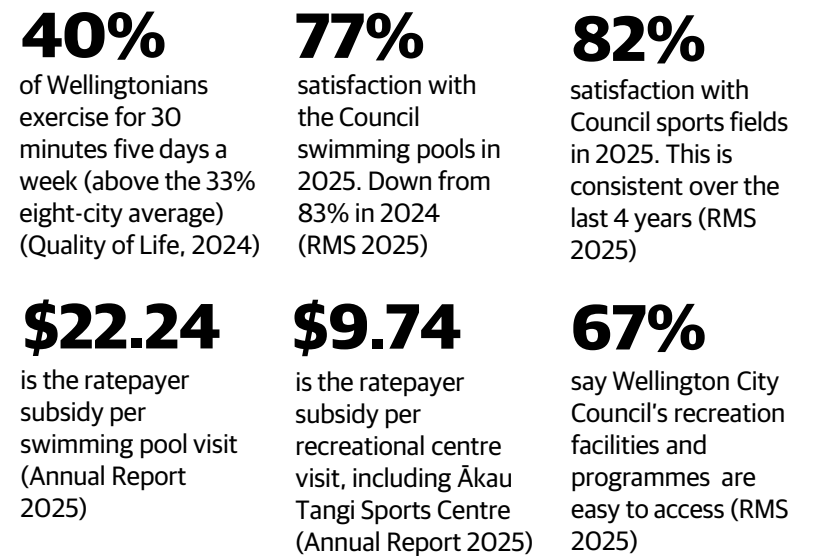
Opex – 6.3%



Capex – 2.1%



Key indicators and trends



Public perspectives

Public consultation on the Te Awe Māpara Community Facilities Plan (2023) highlighted strong community support for recreation facilities as vital spaces for connection, wellbeing, and active participation. Feedback emphasised the importance of maintaining and upgrading existing facilities to ensure they remain accessible, inclusive, and fit for purpose. Respondents highlighted barriers such as affordability, physical accessibility, and geographic gaps in provision, particularly in areas underserved by recreation infrastructure. There was a clear call for smarter investment in multi-use, flexible venues that cater to diverse needs and evolving recreation trends.

Mana whenua perspectives

Tā kai Here partners strongly advocate for increasing the visibility of te reo Māori and Māori culture in recreation spaces, through bilingual signage, Māori names, and culturally resonant wellbeing initiatives. Partners also support programming that revives traditional Māori games and play practices. Inclusion must go beyond physical accessibility to encompass emotional and cultural safety, ensuring facilities feel welcoming for Māori and other diverse communities.

Top three Challenges

Ageing infrastructure, financial constraints, and geographic disparity in recreation provision

- Much of the city's facilities are old, outdated and deteriorating. Many require renewal or replacement and are no longer fit-for-purpose.
- Rising operational and maintenance costs strain budgets, often leading to deferred upgrades, reduced service quality.
- Economic factors (e.g. inflation and insurance costs) also limit residents spending as well as the Council's spend.
- Provision of facilities is uneven across the city, with geographic disparity creating equity gaps in recreation provision.

Changing patterns of recreation and greater diversity of needs

- Changing recreation patterns and greater diversity of needs require facilities and services that can accommodate a wide range of users and uses; e.g. static programming has proven insufficient in engaging younger demographics.
- Many facilities lack features that enable full participation for people with disabilities, older adults, and culturally diverse communities.
- Barriers to inclusion remain for some user groups and cultures (including Māori), beyond the physical, with the need to identify and deliver opportunities for all.

Addressing climate resilience and sustainable development

- Many recreation assets are in areas at considerable risk from environmental risks such as sea-level rise, flooding, earthquakes, tsunamis, and storm surges.
- Upgrading facilities to meet resilience standards increasingly costly (inflation, insurance, consenting, construction costs).
- Sustainability issues with high energy and water use by outdated facilities, with retrofitting and decarbonisation costly. Balancing sustainability with affordable pricing (and rates capping) increasingly difficult as a result. Sentiment for legacy and gifted facilities further complicate.

See the Recreation background report for additional challenges and further detail. Information prepared March 2026.

What the Council does

699km of road pavements	984km of footpaths	82km of bike lanes
3553 retaining walls	59 bridges	4 tunnels
8 bus lanes	1311 public bus stops	4,200 on-street central city carparks

NZTA Waka Kotahi manages state highways.

GWRC provides public transport, operated by Metlink

- Strategic long-term planning for the local transport network's current and future needs.
- Allocation of street space within road reserves.
- Managing road corridors, transport infrastructure and public parking.
- Operating the transport network.
- Promoting of traffic safety, walking, biking, and public transport usage and ensuring the city's transport system is safe for all users.

Why this matters

A well-functioning transport network is critical to the city's economy and people's quality of life; supporting community wellbeing, access, safety, resilience, and reducing emissions.

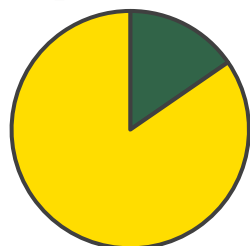
The Council's current strategic priority is to transform the transport system to move more people with fewer vehicles.

Transport and urban development are closely interlinked. Good planning helps transport and urban development work together to enhance liveability, accessibility, and sustainability.

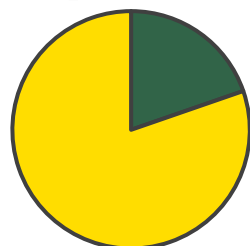
Budget

Percent of total council spend

Opex – 15.4%



Capex – 19.7%



Key indicators and trends

71%

of residents are satisfied with walking in the central city (Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey (PWTS 2023-2025))

34%

of residents are satisfied with cycling on roads with bike lanes in the central city and 24% were satisfied with cycling on roads with no bike lanes (PWTS 2023-2025)

19%

of people working from home in 2023, increased from 8% in 2018 – affecting (reducing) peak demand (Census 2023)

\$226 m

annual social cost from injuries from crashes during the 2015-2024 period (Crash Analysis System)
\$280m social cost of air pollution related health impacts (HAPINZ)

\$30 m

annual cost of congestion of travel to, from and within Wellington City (Greater Wellington State of Transport Report, 2025)

34%

of city's gross emissions are from on-road transport (Wellington City GHG Emissions Inventory 2025)

How people in Wellington travel to work

19%

on foot



5%

by bike



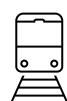
21%

by public bus



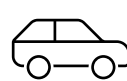
4%

by train



44%

driving a private vehicle



5%

passenger in a private vehicle

Census 2023.

Wellington has substantially higher rates of walking, biking, and public transport usage as the main mode of transport to get to work, as compared to other New Zealand cities (Census 2023).

Public perspectives

Wellingtonians consistently call for a transport system that is safe, reliable, accessible, and less dependent on private vehicles, with strong support for better public transport, safer walking environments, and reduced emissions. Residents rated well walking safety and access to public transport, but showed low satisfaction with biking safety and public transport reliability and affordability. Concerns include construction impacts, the need for better alignment between land use and transport, and the differing experiences of disabled people and other groups. Advisory groups also emphasise early engagement, inclusive design, and transport services that better support cultural needs, family-centred travel, safety, and the priorities of youth and diverse communities.

Mana whenua perspectives

Tā kai Here partners want to continue to be involved in transport projects to enable cultural narrative and expression and economic opportunities for Māori and iwi, as well as supporting low emissions and sustainable transport.

Top three Challenges

Transport planning and investment misalignment

- Over time, many documents and decisions have been made, but there's no fully integrated transport plan connecting specific programmes / projects.
- Funding priorities have shifted significantly, leading to a substantial reduction in resources available for walking, cycling and public transport projects.
- To enhance the reliability of public transport, consideration of the role of Harbour Quays within the network is needed.
- The RONS project will impact the surrounding transport network. This will create additional costs to ensure local connectivity.

Increasing costs of infrastructure, ageing assets and impacts from severe weather events

- The proportion of transport assets nearing or past their useful life has increased markedly, while the aging water assets also undermine the road structure, causing deterioration.
- The difficult terrain and reclaimed land means Wellington has more structures to support road surfaces. A high number of these structures are at risk of failure in a major hazard event.
- Coastal and steep terrain means we have more structures and there is greater risk that more frequent weather events will result in more slips and maintenance costs.
- New Zealand's roading material costs, especially bitumen and aggregates, have experienced significant upward pressure over the past 5 years.

Challenges in shifting more trips from private vehicles to walking, cycling and public transport

- The council's current strategic response to address congestion, carbon emissions, and air pollution includes encouraging greater uptake of active and public transport.
- Road safety concerns, inadequate walking and cycling infrastructure, and the city's challenging natural topography discourage many residents from choosing these alternatives.
- Public transport concerns include reliability and affordability.
- Factors such as the distance between homes and key destinations, and connectivity to public and active transport networks continue to drive dependence on private vehicles.

See the Transport background report for more detail.
Information prepared March 2026.

What the Council does

Strategic Planning and Regulation, including setting direction and rules for development, identifying areas for growth or change, and planning the infrastructure needed to support housing and economic activity. It issues land use, subdivision and building consents and gives long-term climate adaptation planning and advice.

Urban Regeneration and Infrastructure Delivery, including upgrading suburban centres, road corridors and city parks, managing and facilitating major development projects such as Te Ngākau Civic Square, leasing and partnering on developments such as Te Kāinga affordable apartment rentals, managing surplus Council land sales and targeted redevelopments such as the old Johnsonville Library site.

Asset and Building Management, including managing Council building acquisition, maintenance, construction, and disposal, and administering relevant regulations. We also own and upgrade 1,900 social housing units through Te Toi Mahana and oversee the earthquake-prone building programme.

Partnerships and Emergency Preparedness, including liaising with Tiaki Wai Metro Water on priority investment areas, integrated water management, and preparing for emergencies.

Why this matters

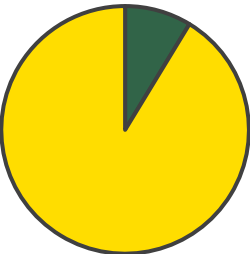
Government legislation sets many council functions relating to urban development. Wellingtonians also show ongoing support for an active Council role in enabling urban growth in areas with good access to transport, services, parks and existing infrastructure. The shape and change of urban form is important to many city goals, such as efficient and low-carbon transport options, housing supply, resilience to natural hazards.

These functions are changing through government changes to the Building Act, Local Government (Water Services) Act, Climate Change Response Act, new Planning Act and Natural Environment Act, new Emergency Management Act, and new and amended national direction.

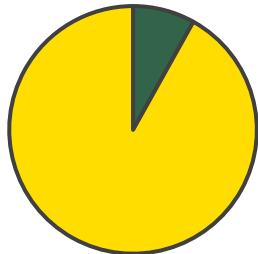
Budget

Percent of total council spend

Opex – 8.7%



Capex – 8.1%



Key indicators and trends

0.9% pa

population growth in Wellington City per year for the last 25 years (Census 2023). Projected % elderly to increase, and children to slightly decrease

255k

people living in Wellington City by 2054 in current median population projections (Sense Partners 2025)

5.8x

in 2025, the average Wellington City house value was 5.8x the average household income (Infometrics)

33.5%

of employed people in the Wellington region work hybrid (mix of WFH and at workplace) (Household Labour Force Survey, 2024)

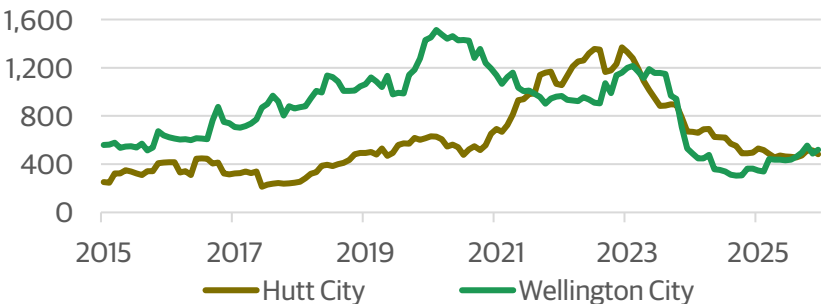
13.4%

CBD office overall vacancy rate in July 2025 (From CBRE July and September 2025)

40k

new homes are commercially feasible to be built in Wellington City as at July 2024 (Internal estimate)

Number of new homes consented per year (1yr rolling avg)



The Hutt's district plan changes, which came into force in 2019, enabled medium density housing and saw resulting growth in new residential consents (as compared to Wellington, which saw a decline). Wellington's plan changes occurred in late 2024, and we see early indications of growth in 2025 (as compared to the Hutt, which remains stable).

Public perspectives

General support for city growth to be mostly within existing areas, but with local input to planning. There's support for more housing but disagreement on where and how to enable it. People like development that makes neighbourhoods pleasant and enhances parks and natural areas. There are concerns that existing infrastructure may not handle projected growth. Integration of te ao Māori is supported. In principle support for reducing emissions and increasing resilience, but not necessarily support for specific and effective actions. There are also calls for better alignment between land use and transport planning.

Mana whenua perspectives

The Tāka Here partners outline in their strategies intent to improve housing and urban development opportunities that are accessible, affordable and equitable. Māori stakeholders generally support urban development that is climate-resilient, inclusive, and reflective of te ao Māori (Māori world) and taha Māori (Māori perspective). There is a strong expectation and desire for early, genuine engagement and shared decision-making or co-design, especially on housing, culturally significant precincts and venues, and central city redevelopment.

Top three Challenges

Lack of affordable housing for lower income residents

- First home buyers are benefitting from recent drops in house prices, and rental prices have stabilised. However, housing supply and affordability to buy and rent for those on lower incomes (including single income earners, retirees, students, and service workers) remains an ongoing challenge.
- The lack of affordable housing constrains social and economic opportunities and makes it harder to attract and retain workers. This affects workforce stability and local businesses. The public housing waitlist currently sits at 684 applicants.

Infrastructure affordability and resilience challenges impact urban growth and regeneration

- Wellington faces high construction costs due to its challenging terrain, complex engineering requirements, and infrastructure needs, which limits the affordability and scale of high-density developments and strains the city's resilience to natural hazards and insurance risks.
- City infrastructure, including electricity networks, is under pressure, with upgrade costs often passed on to developers, and there is a significant underinsurance gap for Council assets, leaving Wellington vulnerable to major events.
- Climate change poses increasing risks such as storms and flooding, but while residents support action, many are reluctant to bear the costs, and the Council lacks authority to require asset relocation or remove existing use rights.

Public perception of safety and vibrancy continues to decline

- Public perception of the city centre has sharply declined, with concerns about safety, visible homelessness, substance use, and anti-social behaviour.
- The declining quality and maintenance of public spaces has exacerbated these negative perceptions and may deter people from living in or developing high-density areas.
- However, the Council's ongoing investments in urban regeneration, including new civic buildings, upgrades to public spaces, and thoughtful urban design, are intended to help reverse these trends and restore vibrancy to the city centre.

See the Urban Development background report for additional challenges and further detail. Information prepared March 2026.

What the Council does

- Provides and manages waste services and infrastructure, incl. kerbside collection of rubbish and recycling, recyclables processing and public litter bins around the city.
- Manages the Southern Landfill, incl. the transfer station, landfill operations, and composting facilities and part ownership of Spicer Landfill.
- Operates the Tip Shop and Recycle Centre.
- Oversees management of closed landfills, including gas monitoring and management.
- Works with regional partners, mana whenua and the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) on significant waste management and minimisation projects.
- Partners with community partners for resource recovery.
- Works with community organisations to undertake community education, business engagement, and fund waste minimisation projects through the Waste Minimisation Fund.

Why this matters

Waste touches all aspects of how we live, work and play in our city, having long-term impacts on our environment, health, and carbon emissions.

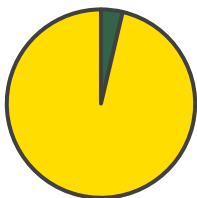
Reducing waste extends the life of the landfill, reducing costs, emissions, odour, and the need for more land. Effective waste management prevents pollution and stops harmful substances from contaminating air, water, and soil. It also safeguards public health by ensuring rubbish is handled safely and does not attract pests and become a source of disease.

Waste services create job opportunities and enables economic activity, including supporting businesses that focus on composting, recycling and reuse. Maintaining clean and tidy public spaces makes the city more attractive and improves the quality of life for everyone.

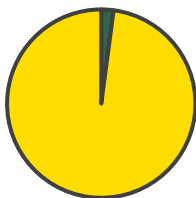
Budget

Percent of total council spend

Opex - 3.7%



Capex -2.1%



Waste minimisation, disposal & recycling management is funded by user fees (not including waste minimisation levy fund of about \$4m per annum)

Key indicators and trends

~80%

are satisfied with WCC kerbside rubbish and recycling collection service (Residents Monitoring Survey 2025)

37%

increase in total waste to landfill since 2009 - from 1,466 T/week to 2,015 T/week (SWAP 2025)

5%

reduction in city's waste emissions (incl. wastewater) from 2024 to 2025 (GHG Emissions Inventory, 2025)

15,889

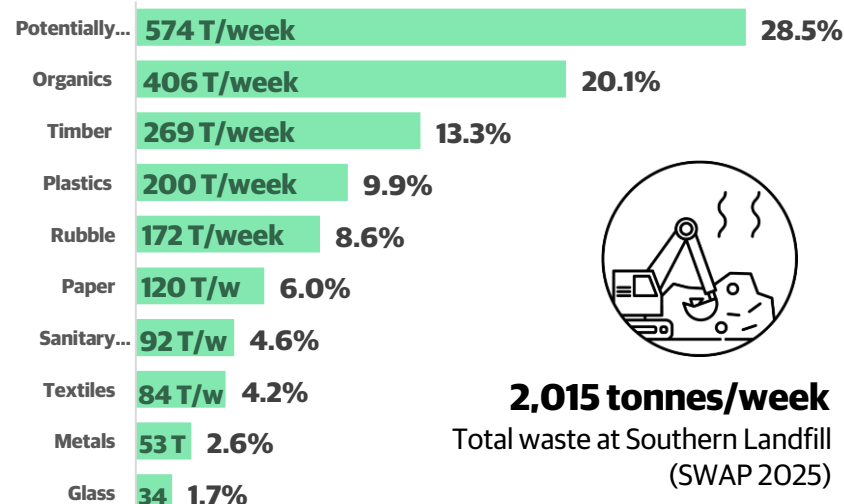
tonnes of waste diverted from landfill in 2024/25. This did not meet the KPI of 20,000 tonnes (Annual Report)

59.2%

of household waste is organics and 64.2% of combined kerbside rubbish is potentially divertible (SWAP 2025)

184%

increase in construction and demolition waste from 2009 to 2025- from 99 to 281 T/week (SWAP 2025)



Public perspectives

During consultation, submitters overwhelmingly endorsed the Zero Waste Strategy's four zero-waste objectives, noting that reducing waste (especially organic waste and plastics) will cut pollution and carbon emissions. Many cited the need to "design out" waste and keep resources in use. Some residents also raise questions about affordability, emphasising that new waste initiatives must be efficient and fair.

Mana whenua perspectives

Tā kai Here partners have made it clear that they strongly support reducing waste in Wellington. During the development of the Zero Waste Strategy, Tā kai Here representatives consistently pushed for bolder circular economy and waste-reduction measures.

Top three Challenges

Changing context in landfill management

- High costs are involved in operating landfills, especially with increased compliance costs. This makes creating new landfill capacity increasingly expensive. Future decisions will need to be made to balance the affordability of disposing waste, with the ongoing operating costs of the landfill.
- While emissions from the landfill make up most of the Council's scope 1 emissions, ongoing methane-reduction efforts and future biogas opportunities could further cut emissions and generate additional energy and revenue.

Gaps in resource recovery infrastructure

- Wellington lacks sufficient resource recovery infrastructure, meaning many materials that could be reused or repurposed still end up in landfill. The Reuse Repair and Share Report provides a stocktake of resource recovery initiatives happening across Wellington and recommendations for the Council to consider.
- Initiatives like FillGood and the Tip Shop show what's possible, but without broader infrastructure the Council will struggle to meet diversion targets and reduce reliance on landfill.
- Construction and demolition waste is rapidly increasing, driven by limited processing options and urban intensification, and the Council is supporting solutions such as the new West Gully facility and potential future C&D recovery services.

Cost and other barriers make it difficult for community and business participation in waste minimisation

- Businesses and consumers need to share responsibility for waste minimisation by changing production and consumption habits to reduce waste at source.
- Systemic issues from cash and time poor consumers driving consumption of single-use, disposal convenience products, exacerbated by the lack of easy, affordable and accessible alternatives.
- Lack of kerbside organics collection is hampering efforts to encourage reduction of organic wastes going to landfill.

See the Waste background report for additional challenges and further detail. Information prepared March 2026.