

WHAT IS DRIVING PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

May 2023

Social media discussion levels have increased after the lull that followed the local body elections.

Discussion about the impacts of the Auckland floods and Cyclone Gabrielle were there but other events in Auckland were responsible for the spikes in conversation. The finances of the city under the new mayor generated significant amounts of discussion, as did giving Posie Parker's event the green light and voting to leave LGNZ. While discussion about the Posie Parker event was extremely prominent, most of what was being said did not relate directly back to local government, although the way in which the Auckland council handled the situation was under scrutiny.

While discussion about 3 Waters and its revamp were present, they didn't attract the same levels of attention they had previously.

January's survey took place before the weather events. The results provided a more positive outlook than we have seen in the last two quarters of the survey. Outside of Auckland, April results have dropped in relation to overall satisfaction but are stable for the driver questions of information provision, opportunities to have a say and value for money. Auckland results are down across all measures.

The information presented here provides a holistic view of public perceptions by combining data from a nationally representative sample of New Zealanders with social media trend analysis.

If you would like to unpack this more, get in touch with Liz Morley liz@researchfirst.co.nz



+69%
Discussion levels relating to local government have risen compared with the previous quarter

Discussion relating to local government.

Auckland: Discussion relating to local government over the last quarter was concentrated in Auckland. The Posie Parker event, and the way the council responded to it generated a significant spike in discussion, with a highly polarised range of views expressed.

Wellington: Rail disruption has been a recent driver of discussion. Other infrastructure issues, such as the falling streetlights, also resulted in online discussion.

Hawke's Bay: Not normally featured in this section, but the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle has seen more discussion than usual in this region. How the limited recovery funds should be distributed is currently the focus on a lot of the conversation, as well as longer term considerations such as prevention.

Canterbury: Christchurch City Council launched a 'Be Cool, Not Cruel' campaign to reduce the amount of abuse council staff face. Nitrate levels also featured with a link to ECan.

Otago: Emissions pricing and other environmental regulations were the most discussed topics. Views were polarised.

Northland: Higher discussion levels than usual. Backlash against the decision of Kaipara Mayor Craig Jepson to ban karakia at council meetings led to a 300-strong hīkoi.

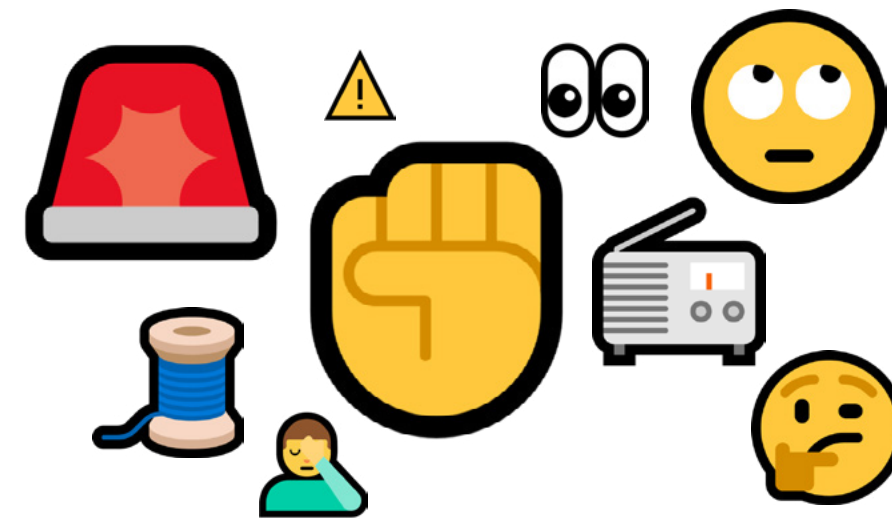
We also asked residents whether they think their councils are getting better or worse in these areas. In line with the results on the previous charts, overall satisfaction is the highest risk area. The proportion

Proportion who think these services have got worse over the last year	Aug-21	Dec-21	Apr-22	Jul-22	Oct-22	Jan-23	Apr-23
Information on decisions that affect your area	20%	23%	21%	27%	30%	13%	20%
Opportunities to have my say	20%	23%	22%	26%	37%	12%	14%
Value for money	35%	41%	37%	46%	46%	34%	38%
Overall satisfaction	27%	29%	29%	38%	35%	19%	27%

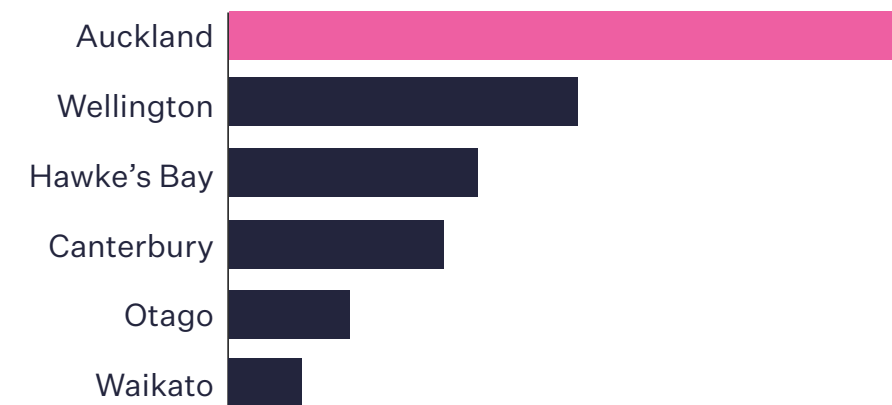
Top trending emojis and keywords

The top trending emojis this quarter reflect negative sentiment toward local government. The fist relates to standing up against local government; the facepalm, eyeroll and thinking face all express disapproval.

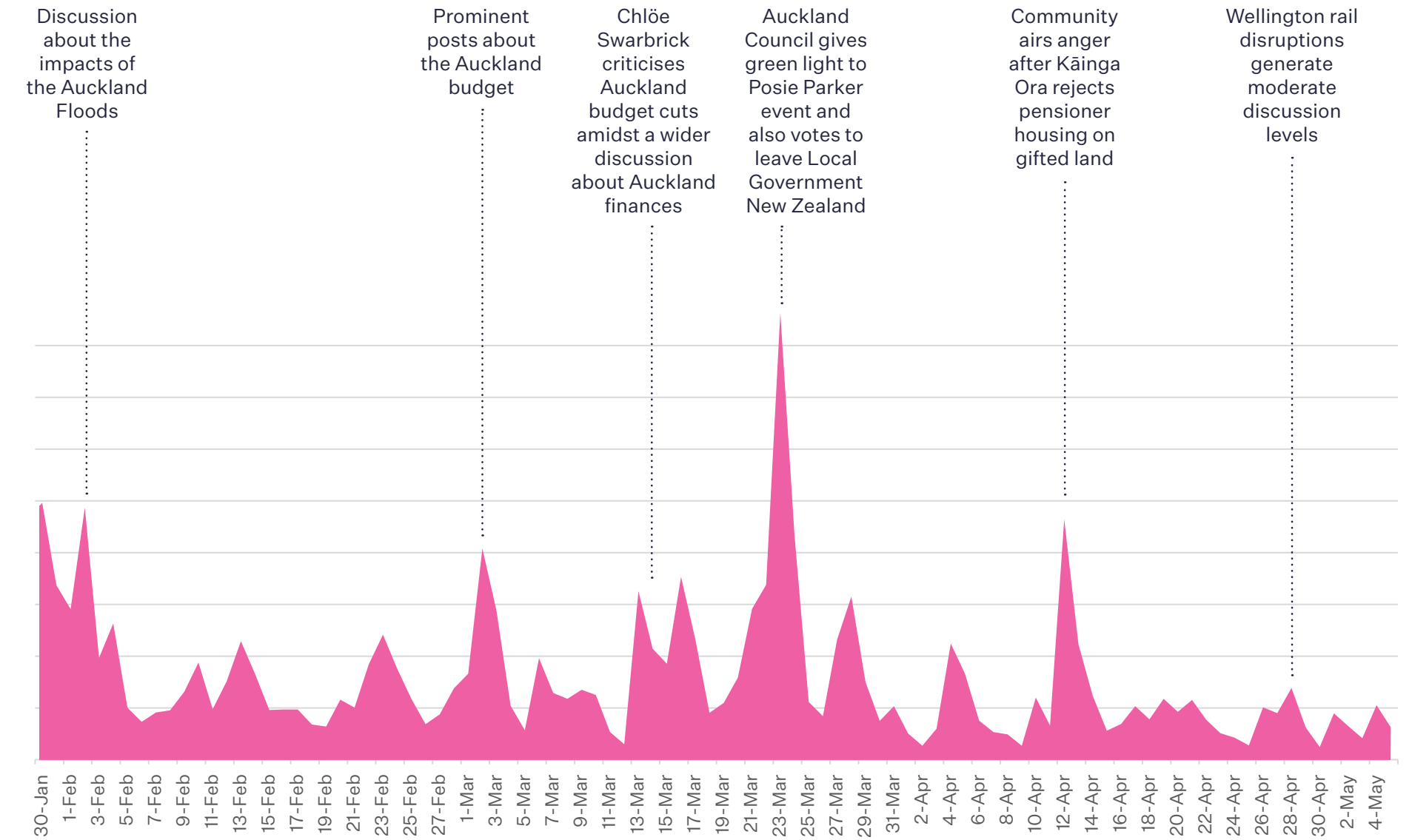
The top trending keywords over the last quarter were distinctly focused on finances, funding and money. This is a combination of the aftermath of the natural disasters bringing the financial position of a number of regions into question, and the continuing cost of living crisis.



Discussion levels by location: weighted for population



that think services are worse overall is up from the last quarter. Perceptions of value for money is a risk area but there is no significant change in perceptions from the last quarter.



Improvement areas: Engagement, Comms and VFM

Perceptions of engagement, communication and value for money are the common key drivers of overall negative perceptions resident feedback surveys.

Results outside of Auckland for these measures are relatively stable against the last quarter. However, the impacts of events in Auckland and perceptions of how they have been managed has seen the Auckland results drop back after a previous upturn in perceptions.

