

# WHAT IS DRIVING PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

Jan 2024

The Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier's review of eight Councils in relation to concerns on closed door meetings was released at the end of the previous reporting period. We had expected to see an impact on perceptions of satisfaction with residents' opportunities to have their say. However, figures are up from the October report.

On the whole, satisfaction levels have improved from October with the trend line over the year looking consistent in terms of overall perceptions.

Following a slow quarter where focus was on the election, online discussion over the summer quarter has been slower again and, as usual, presents a more negative view of resident sentiment. People are predominantly using it as a channel to express discontent. The squeaky wheels are useful as an early warning system for what might become a movement of discontent.

The most consistent discussion across the period came from Wellington with comment on financial management, certain actions from the Mayor and further friction over Māori representation.

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](mailto:liz@researchfirst.co.nz)



## Discussion relating to local government.

**Wellington:** City budgets (again) and perceptions of financial mismanagement. Mayor Tory Whanau received mixed commentary.

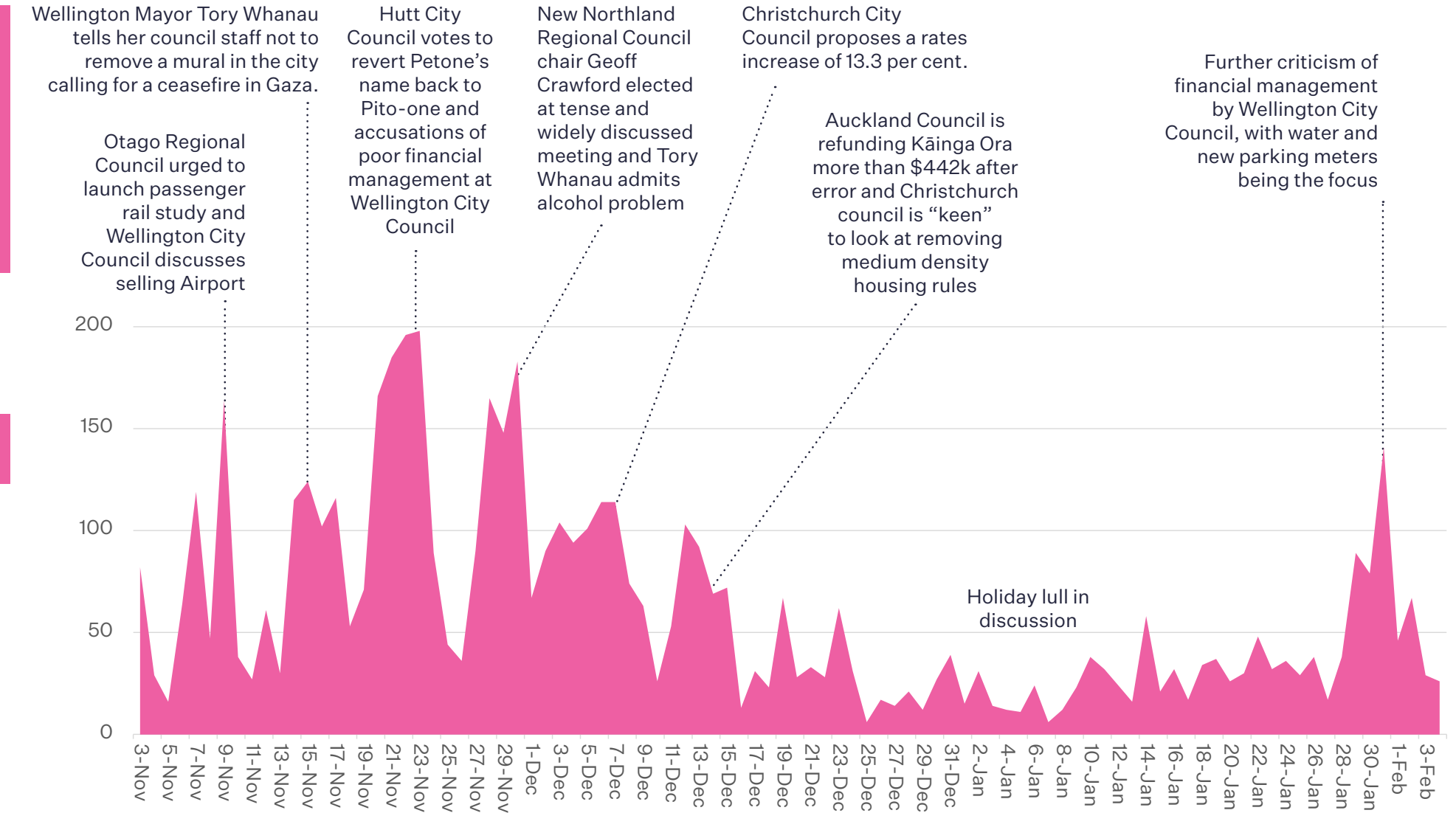
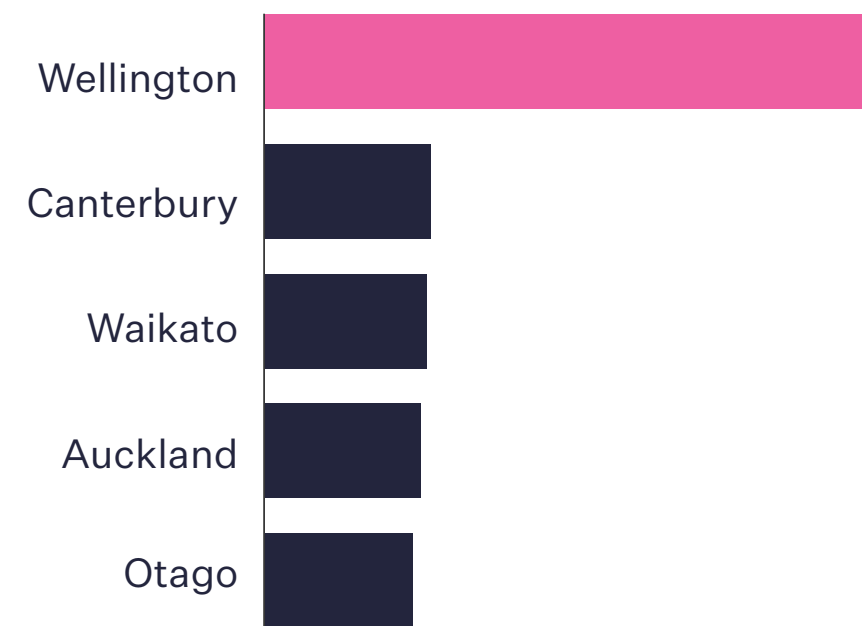
**Auckland:** Possible congestion charges, issues related to expansion of the city and resistance to intensification.

**Canterbury:** Resignation of CCC CEO Dawn Baxendale. The initiative by the Mayor to explore the possibility to bringing the Commonwealth Games to the city was met with distinct skepticism online.

**Otago:** The Dunedin City Council votes on whether to fly the Palestinian flag from city buildings and whether to endorse Christchurch mayor Phil Mauger's call for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas drew some attention. Passenger rail was the most discussed local issue.

**Waikato:** Hamilton City Council proposes a 25.5% rates increase for 2024-2025, causing a notable backlash.

## Discussion levels by location: weighted for population



## Top trending emojis and keywords

The top trending emoji was the pensive face, which in this case was related to the general feeling of discontent related to local government. Common appearances on this list such as, folded hands, concerned face and face palm, all indicate dissatisfaction with local government.

Mining approved by Hauraki District Council, which could harm an endangered frog species, caused a frog emoji to trend.

The top trending keywords related to a variety of connected issues, with the name change in the Hutt and Iwi representation both leading discussion. Other themes such as accountability and consultation were also prominent.



## Improvement areas: Engagement, Comms and VFM

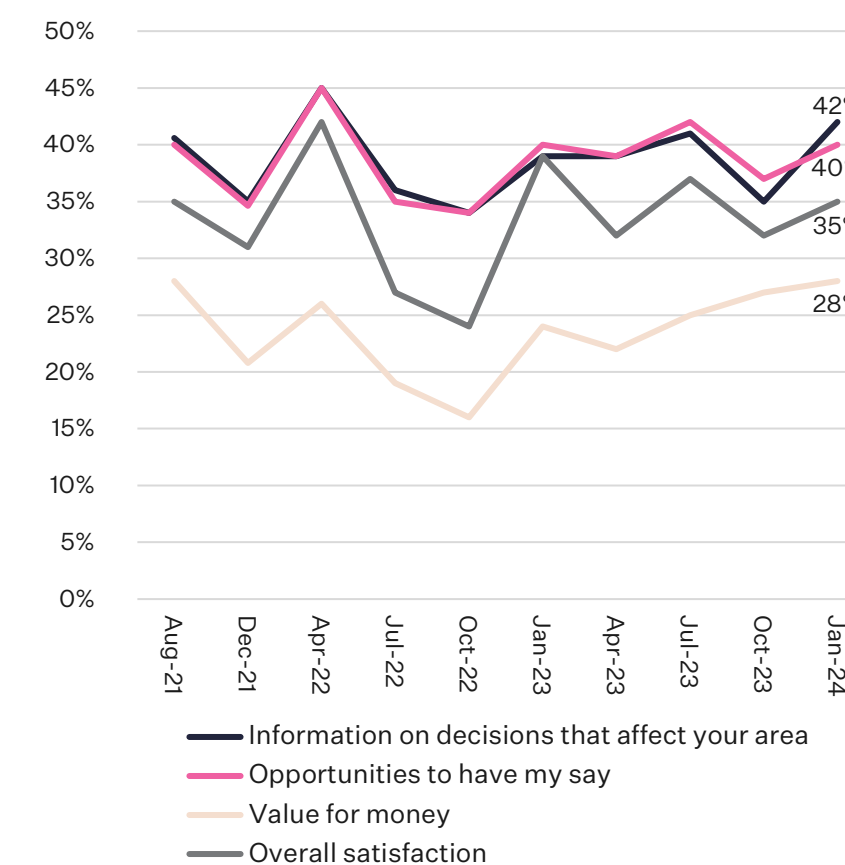
Perceptions of engagement, communication and value for money are the common key drivers of overall negative perceptions resident feedback surveys.

Outside of AKL results perceptions are more positive than in October. Overall there is a very slight upward trend across the year. Auckland's results remain consistent with the annual trend showing perceptions have not shifted dramatically.

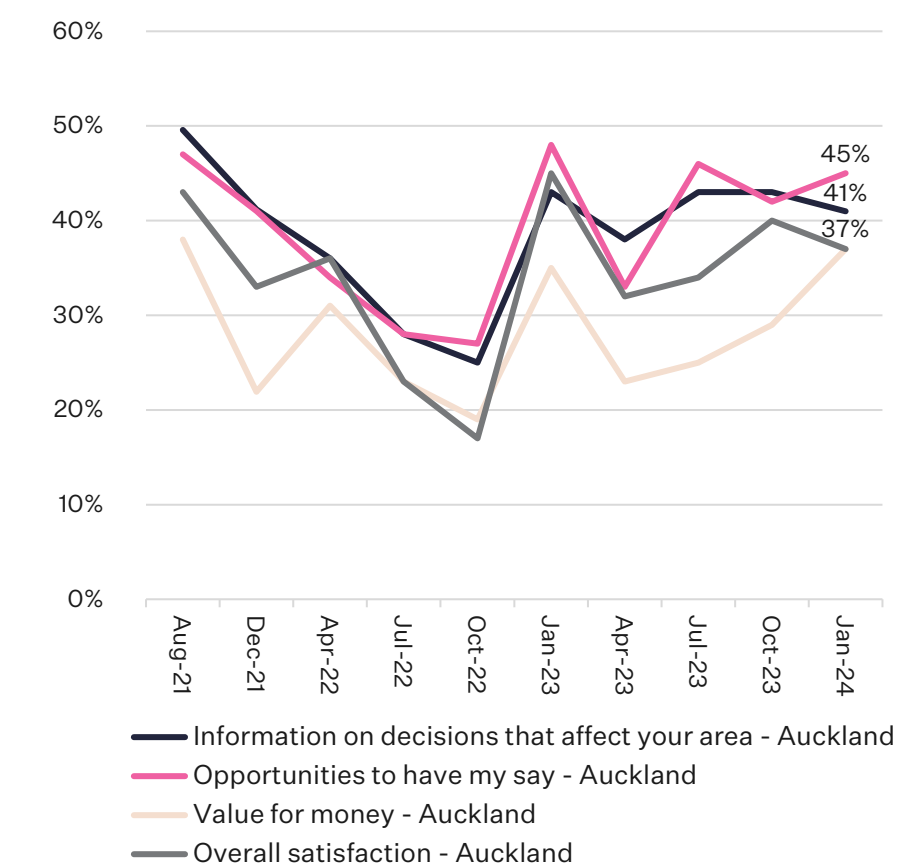
We also asked residents whether they think their councils are getting better or worse in these areas.

The chart shows the proportion who think they got worse; therefore we are looking for low results and a downward trend to show improvement in perceptions. Results are consistent with the last few quarters. With many Councils entering LTP consultations, it will be interesting to see if these results change.

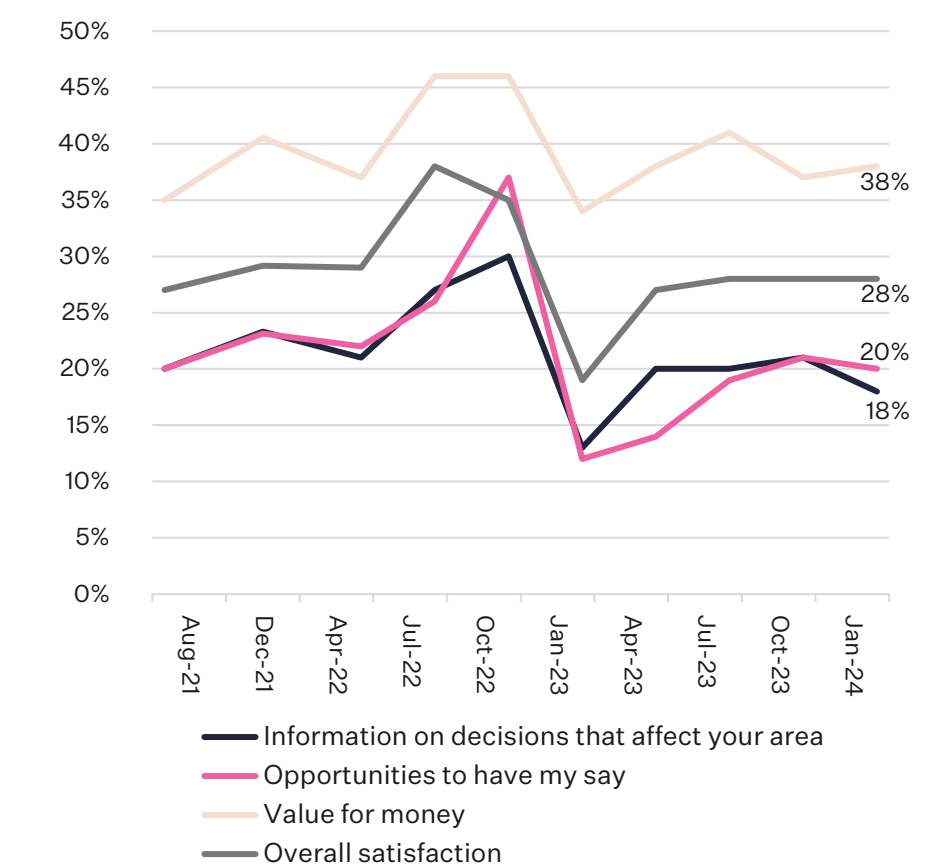
## Satisfaction: Outside Auckland



## Satisfaction: Auckland



## Proportion who think these services have got worse over the last year



in association with

