

WHAT IS DRIVING PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

May 2024

In this quarter, debate about the direction of the new government and how this relates to local body representation has been widespread.

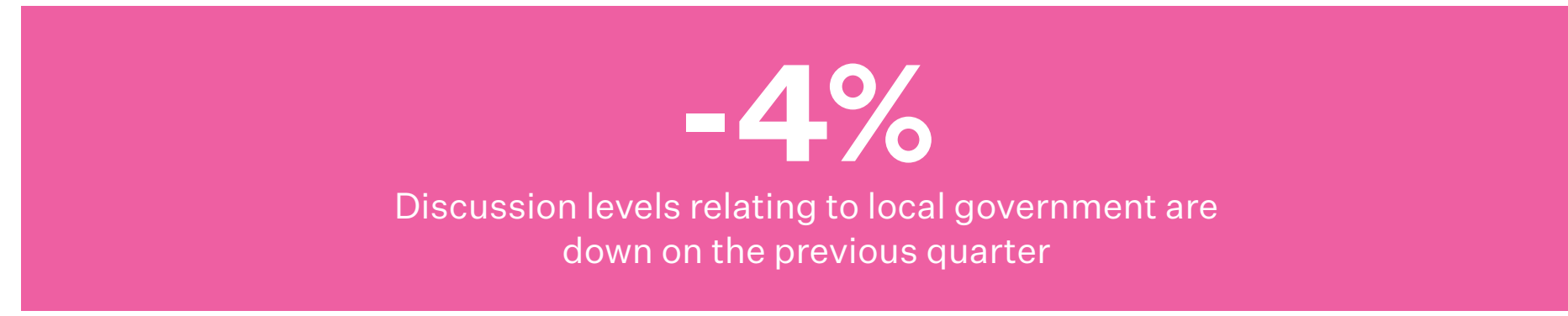
The proposals for significant rates increases in most regions were also a large driver of discussion, as was the related issues of water services and replacing Three Waters.

There has also been significant discussion around the place of Council supported LGBTQIA+ events and rainbow crossings, with a distinctly polarised response. With financial situations so tight, there has been widespread discussion around the vandalism to the crossings; whether the money would be better spent elsewhere, or if standing up to these acts is more important.

The top news story for generating discussion came from the NZ Herald: *Drag queen reading group Rainbow Storytime cancels nationwide tour amid ongoing protest by Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki.*

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



Discussion relating to local government.

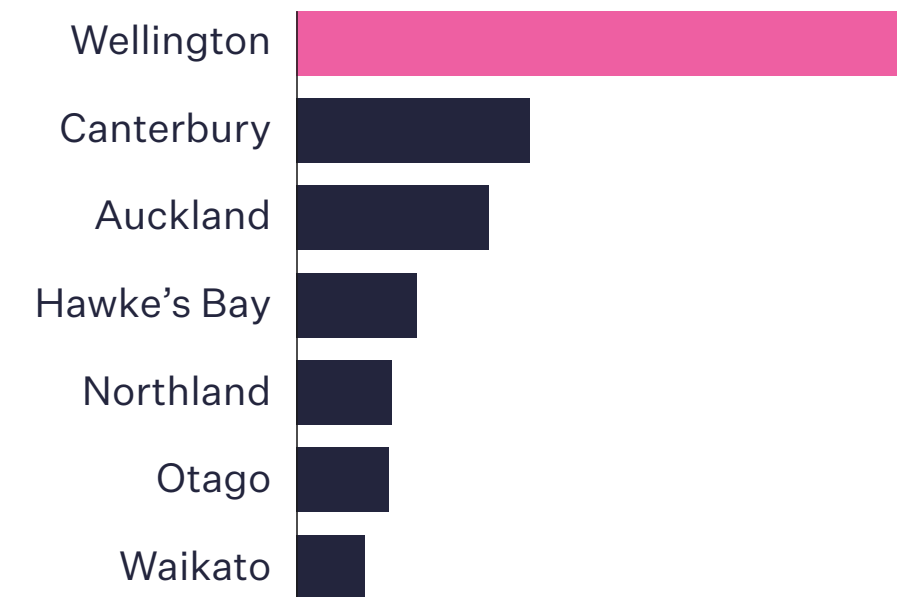
Wellington: Disputes with central government over transport. Financial issues including the cancelled Reading Cinema deal. Mayor Tory Whanau received mixed commentary again with a ranking as least popular Mayor across the country in a recent survey.

Auckland: City finances, water, rates and how new central government policy will impact the region. Discussion about a new stadium in the city was also popular.

Canterbury: Rates increases and city finances. This led to a shift against the previously near-universally popular stadium as the costs become apparent.

Hawke's Bay: Rates increases. This led some to look at how much Council employees were being paid.

Discussion levels by location: weighted for population



Top trending emojis and keywords

The top trending emojis related to discussions about the rainbow crossings, drag queens in libraries and Winston Peters calling out a booklet about sexuality. As these are distinctly polarising issues, we also saw more positive emojis for local government than we normally would.

The top trending keywords related to the financial situation of local government bodies and significant rates increases, including connecting issues like expenses and pay.



Improvement areas: Engagement, Comms and VFM

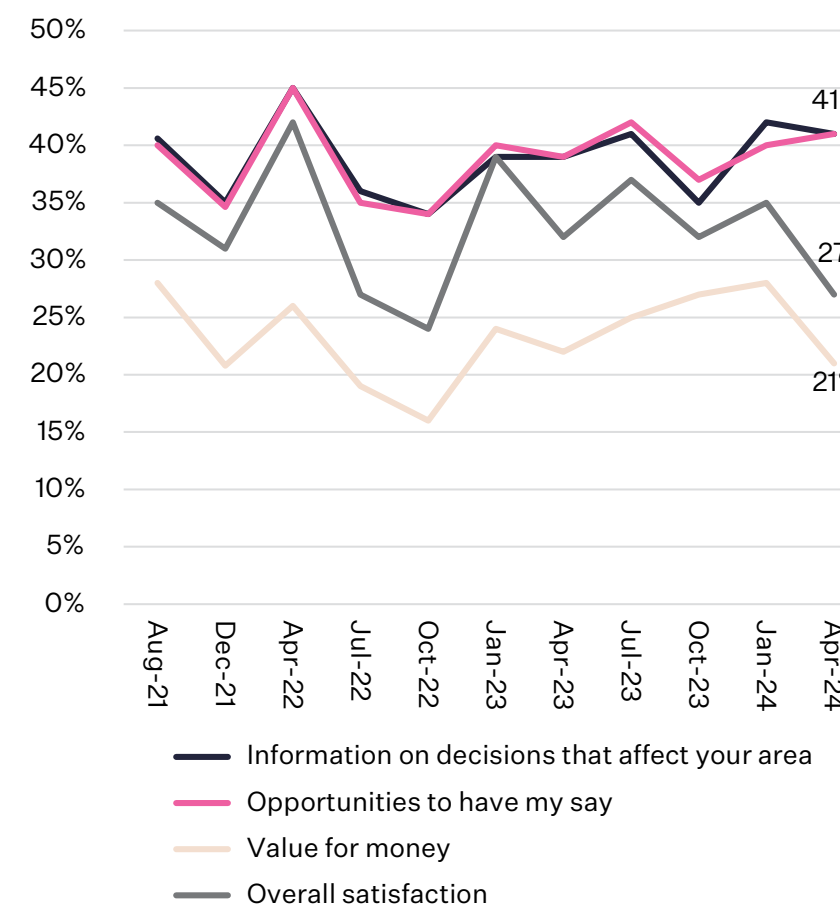
Perceptions of engagement, communication and value for money are the common key drivers of overall negative perceptions resident feedback surveys.

Perceptions of communication and engagement are stable for this quarter when compared to the January results. However, the impact of proposed significant rates increases has led to a sharp drop in perceptions of value for money.

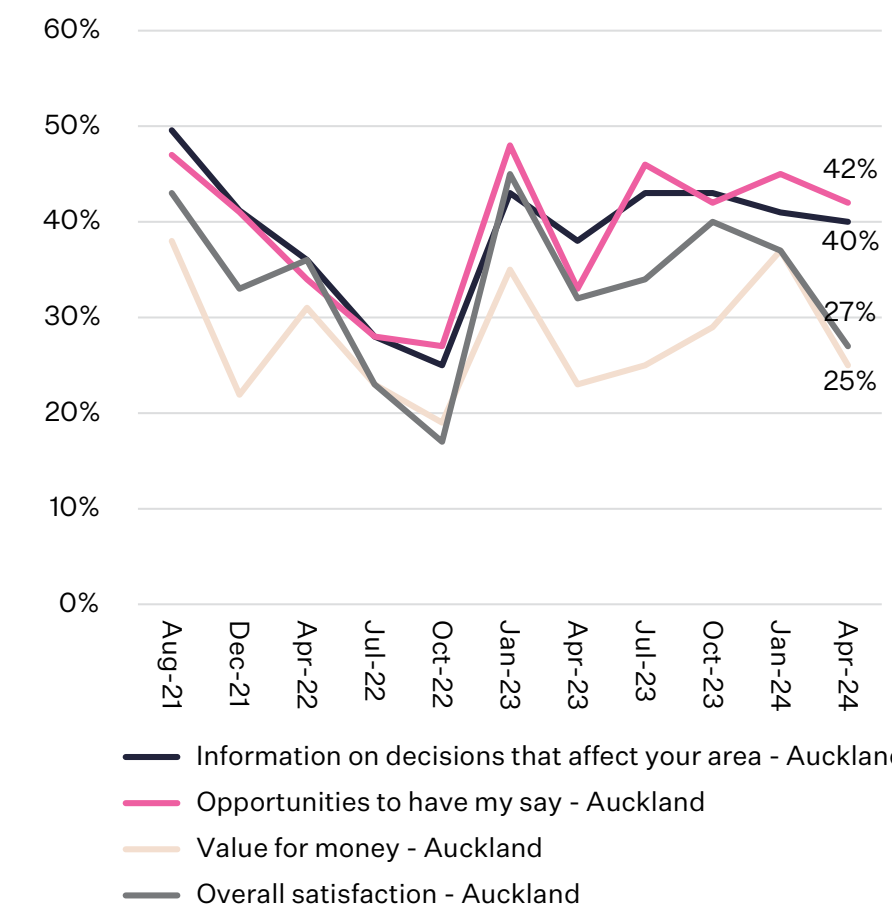
Value for money is clearly the strongest driver of overall satisfaction with Councils at the moment, and we see a corresponding drop in positive perceptions there.

We also ask 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 have been consistent over the last few quarters but we now see the strength of the value for money perceptions driving more negative results.

Satisfaction: Outside Auckland



Satisfaction: Auckland



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

