PAPAIOEA
PALMERSTON
NORTH
CITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: ELECTED MEMBERS

FROM: ANDREW BOYLE

SUBJECT: RESULTS OF THE 2022 RESIDENTS' SURVEY

DATE: 23 NOVEMBER 2022

CC:

Background

Council carries out an annual survey of residents to get an independent understanding of how residents view the Council and its services. This memo summarises the results from the 2022 survey.

For the last four years the survey has been done by KeyResearch.

Every year KeyResearch surveys 400-500 residents randomly selected from the electoral roll. Respondents are contacted by letter, so the survey is not dependent on having a landline phone. Respondents are surveyed in four quarterly batches so that the results are not overly impacted by any one-off events. New respondents are chosen each quarter.

KeyResearch carries out residents' surveys for 18 Councils. A benchmarking report comparing PNCC results with other Councils is in the full Report. Not all services were included in the benchmarking report.

Key Findings

There have been drops in satisfaction over the past year in nearly all areas of Council's reputation and services. Of the 54 areas surveyed: 2 have increased in satisfaction but not significantly, 3 are new measures, 3 have not changed, 12 have dropped but not significantly, and 34 have dropped significantly.

Four year trend data repeats this picture, satisfaction with most areas of Council was fairly steady or increased between 2019 and 2021, but then dropped in 2022.

Other Councils saw similar results. KeyResearch says that *"Most local governments that we conduct Annual Residents' Satisfaction surveys for have recorded a decrease in overall satisfaction, as well as perception of services and facilities and image and reputation measures."*

Given that satisfaction has dropped in many areas (and anecdotally in other Councils as well) it is likely that there are some common reasons behind it. A likely factor is that the national mood is low after several years of Covid-19, tough economic times, and cost of living increases. This is on top of Covid-19 facility closures or restrictions and staff shortages, all directly affecting some Councils' services.

The Westpac McDermott Miller Consumer Confidence Index report (June 2022) supports this, saying that confidence among New Zealand households has plummeted to its lowest levels since the survey began in 1988.

The survey also includes questions on residents' perceptions of Palmerston North. These have all dropped in the last year.

It should be noted that, even if the national mood is a major factor in the decline in residents' satisfaction, the declines are real and do reflect how residents perceive the Council. For whatever reasons, residents are less satisfied with our reputation, value for money, leadership and services than they were one year ago.

The survey looks at two types of measure: Council's reputation (ie, trust, leadership, value for money, etc) and Council's services (ie roading, parks and reserves, control of roaming dogs). It has consistently found that residents are more satisfied with the services than with our reputation. In other words, when people think about "how good the Council is" they do not always think about how good our services are.

Age affects how satisfied residents are with the Council – younger residents (18-34 years) are more dissatisfied and less trusting of Council than older residents (65 years plus).

The survey identifies several priority areas for Council to improve. These include areas where the service has a high impact on Council's overall reputation and a relatively low satisfaction level (ie, there is room for improvement *and* this improvement will make a big difference in how Council is seen by residents.) The main area is roading.

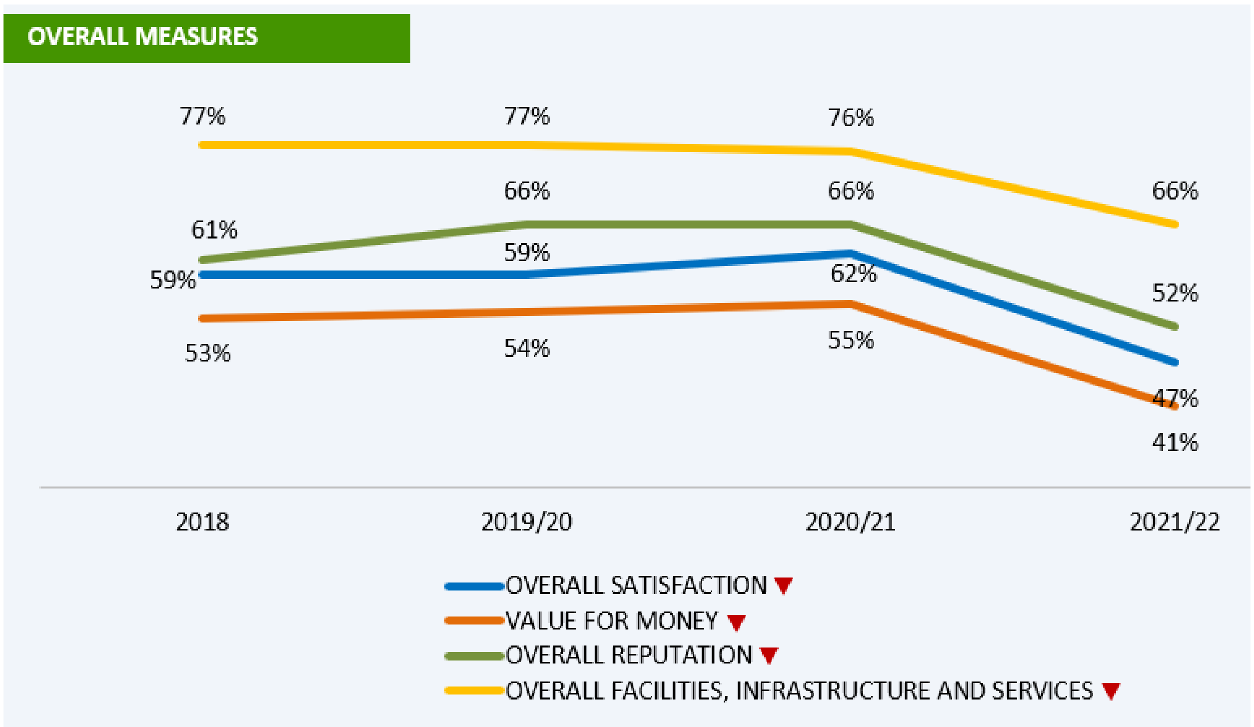
Other priority areas for improvement are more reputational: value for money, trust, leadership, and financial management. Hence Council needs to tell a clearer story to link its well-regarded services to its value for money, trust, and leadership.

And our services are well-regarded. Despite all the declines in satisfaction, most areas of Council still have a majority of residents who are satisfied. In some areas over three quarters of residents are satisfied: public libraries; parks, reserves and green spaces; Regent Theatre; Te Manawa, the Museum, Science Centre and Art Gallery; sewerage system; and kerbside rubbish and recycling collection. If residents are not satisfied with Council's services, they are mostly Neutral. Levels of dissatisfaction with services are relatively low. Other than roading most services have dissatisfaction levels below 15%.

How is Council Performing Overall?

The following chart shows the trends in satisfaction with Council's overall reputation. It reflects two key themes from the survey:

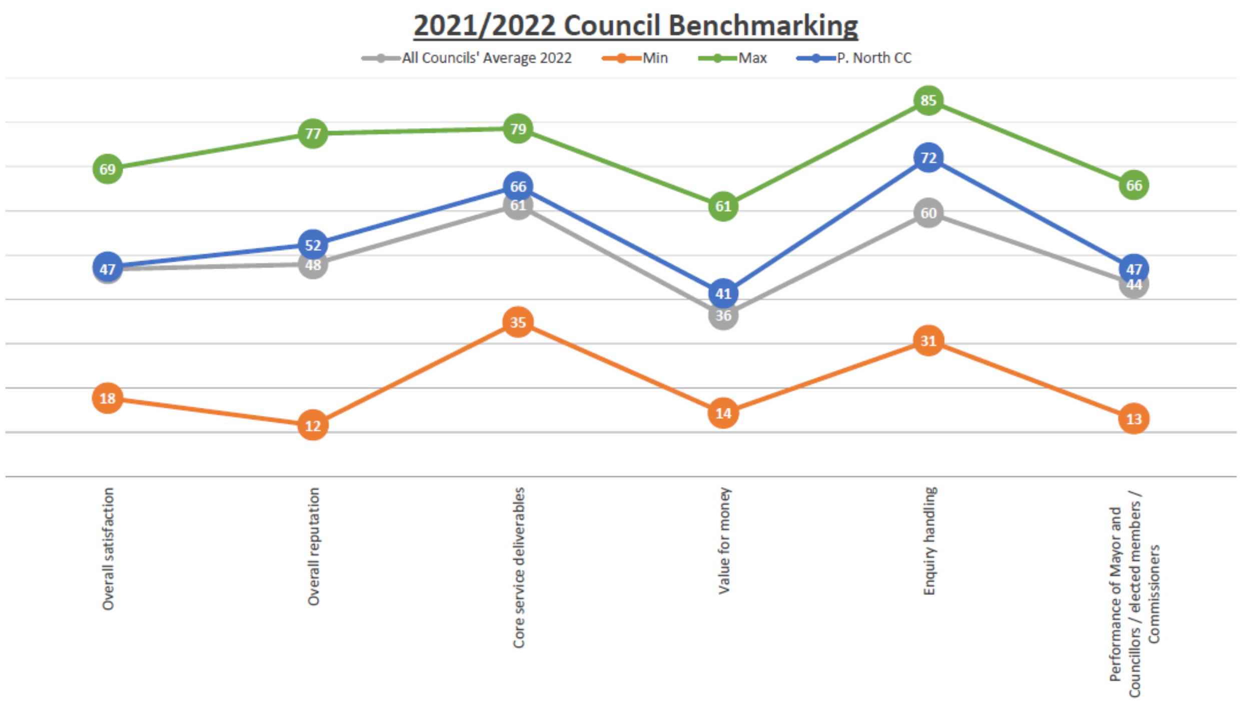
- Satisfaction with Council's reputation and services dropped in 2022
- Satisfaction with Council's services is consistently higher than its reputation.



Age is having a major impact on the respondents' overall satisfaction with Council: 68% of people aged 65+ years are satisfied, compared with 47% aged 35-64 years, and 37% aged 18-34 years.

Over 200 people gave specific comments on the reasons for their satisfaction ratings. The most frequent comment was that rates are too high (17% of the comments). Other frequent comments are that Council needs to improve road maintenance and safety (16%), and Council needs to make better spending decisions (14%). 13% said they had no issues and are happy with the job Council is doing.

The following graph shows that PNCC scores are mostly slightly above the averages for other Councils doing the survey:

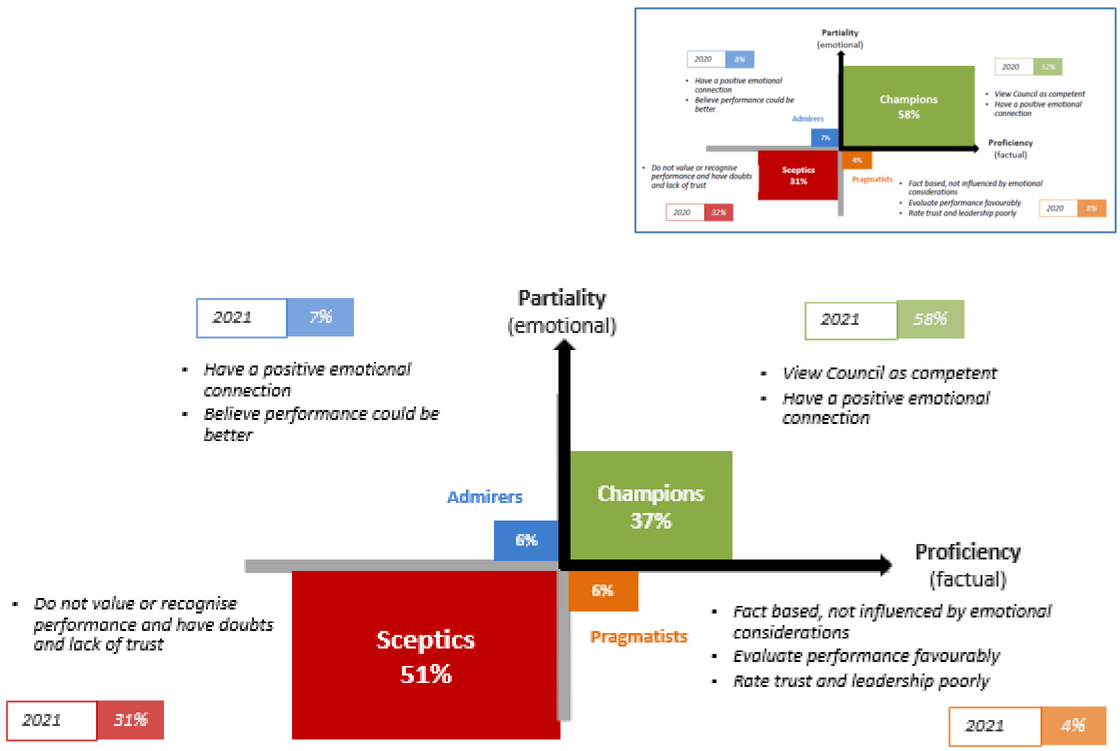

2021/2022 Council Benchmarking
All Councils' Average 2022
Min
Max
P. North CC
69
77
79
61
85
66
47
52
66
41
72
47
48
61
36
60
44
18
12
35
14
31
13
Overall satisfaction
Overall reputation
Core service deliverables
Value for money
Enquiry handling
Performance of Mayor and Councillors / elected members / Commissioners

Reputation

To portray overall reputation, KeyResearch classify the respondents into four groups: Champions, Admirers, Sceptics and Pragmatists. (See the chart for explanations of these.) The groupings are based on respondents' answers to questions right through the survey. The respondents do not select which group they think they fit in.

The biggest group of people are *Sceptics*. They make up 51% of respondents. They distrust Council and do not think it is doing a good job. The next biggest group (37% of all respondents) - are *Champions*. They think the Council is making a positive difference to the City and their lives, and that Council is good at what it does.

These two groups have swapped in size since last year (see inset to the diagram for the 2021 chart), reflecting the drop in satisfaction and trust with Council right across the board.



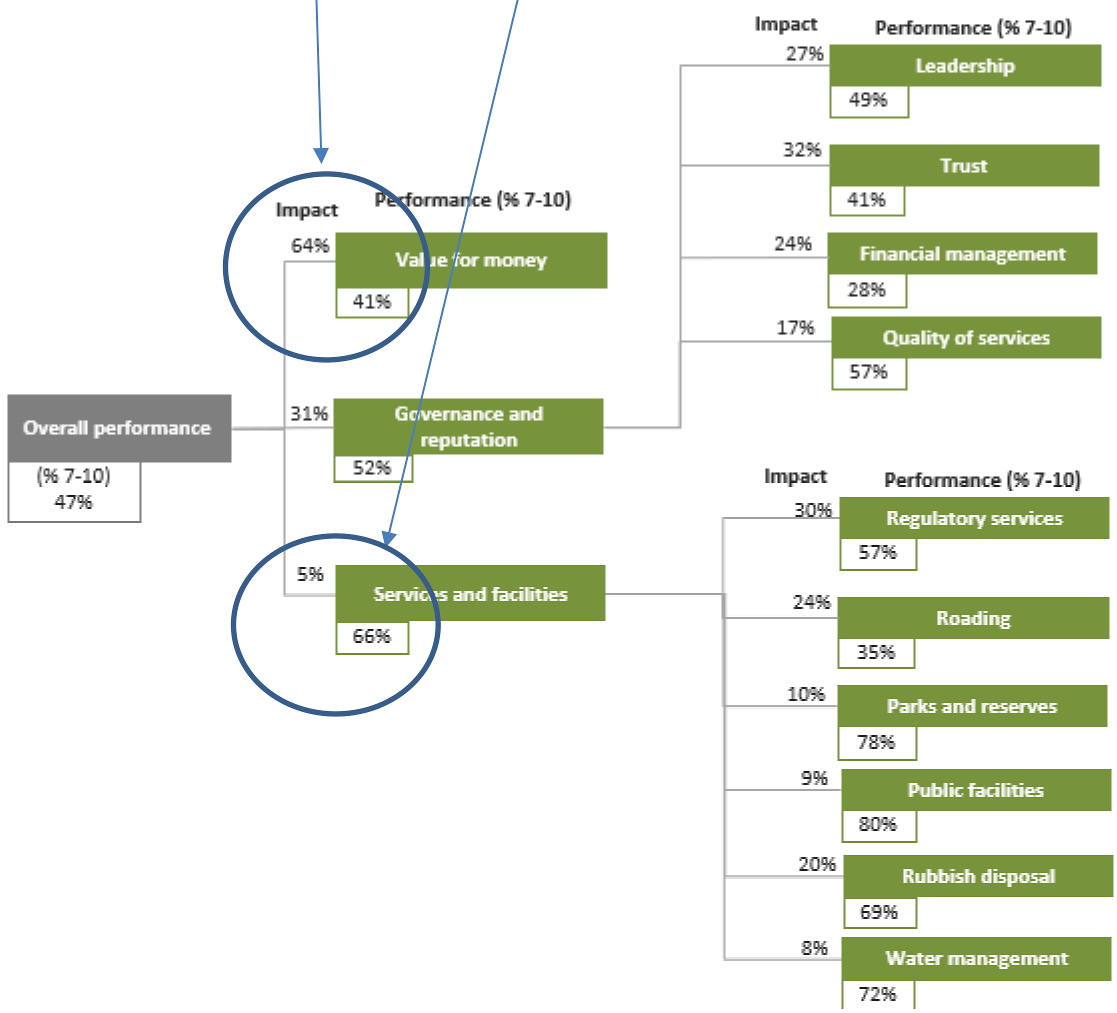
Note that the matrix does not have any neutral middle ground. Many of the Sceptics will be fairly "soft" sceptics, and many of the Champions will be "soft" champions so, as can be seen, can move quickly between quadrants.

PNCC's profile is very close to the average of all Councils in the survey (see Reputation Profile chart on page 72 of the full Report).

Drivers of Perceptions about Council

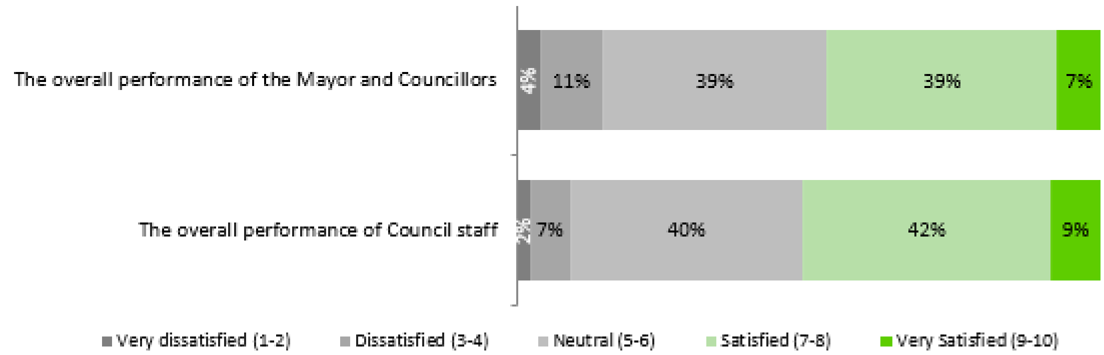
Statistical analysis by KeyResearch shows that when people think about the Council's Overall Performance, the factor that most influences their judgement is Value for Money. Statistically, it shapes 64% of their perception of Council's performance. Governance and Reputation makes up 31% and Services and Facilities 5%. In the previous year Value for Money made up 58% of overall perception, suggesting that affordability is becoming a more important factor in what people think about Council.

And, while a high proportion of people (66%) people are satisfied with Council's services they seem to take these services for granted. Their satisfaction does not flow into their overall perception of Council. As just outlined, what does flow through most is Value for Money, where a lower 41% are satisfied.

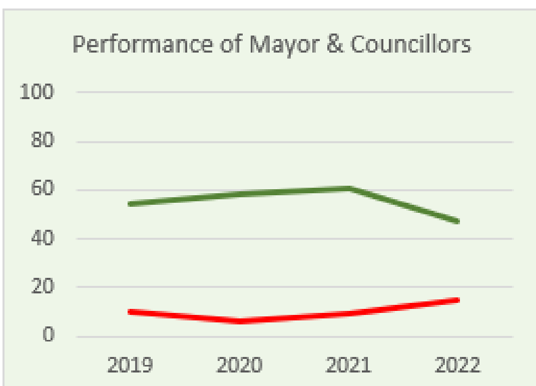


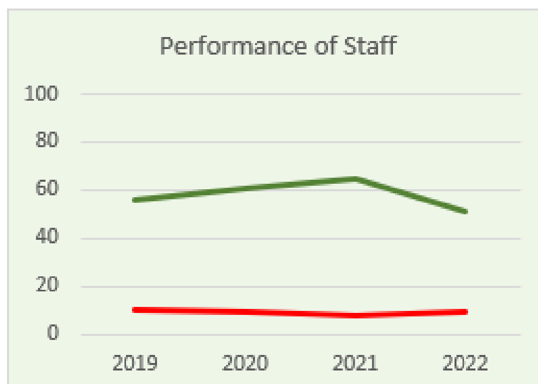
This means the best way to improve the perception of Council's overall performance – and to move people from Sceptics back to Champions - is to increase residents' perception of the value for money Council provides – and the best way to do this is to link their high satisfaction with the services they get from Council to the rates they pay.

Performance of the Mayor, Councillors and Staff



Satisfaction with the performance of Elected Members (47% in 2022) and staff (51% in 2022) is similar, but both have dropped after gradual increases to around 60% in the previous three years. (% satisfied is in **green**; % dissatisfied is in **red**.)

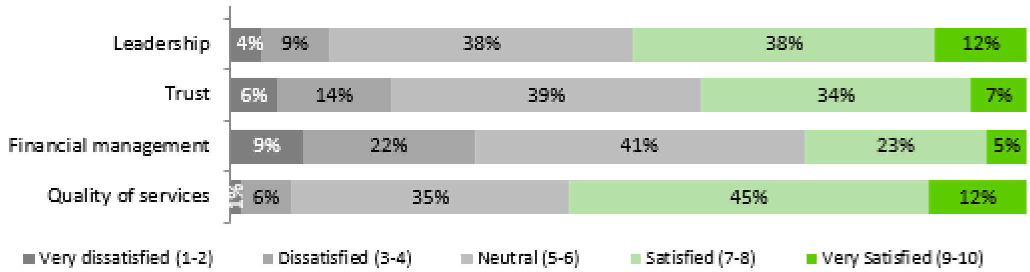




One third of the 180 comments were positive, with around 20% each for better spending decisions and more consultation.

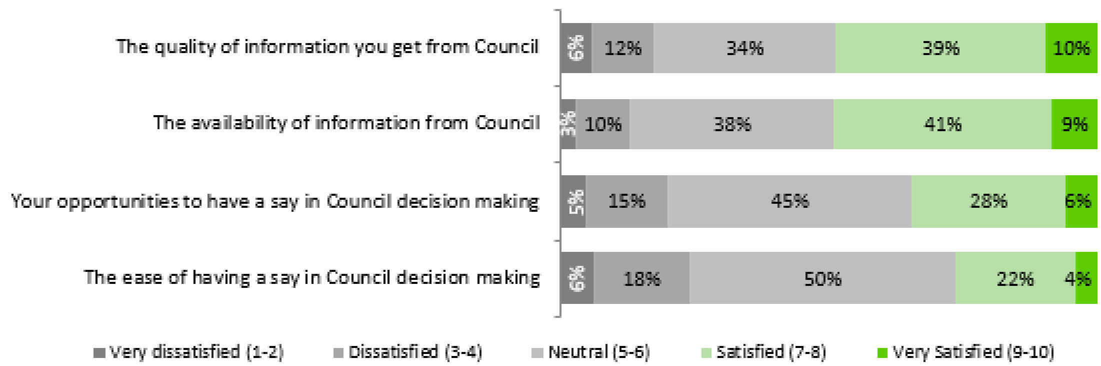
PN residents' satisfaction with the performance of Elected Members is slightly above the benchmarking average. (The staff comparison is not included in the benchmark report.)

The survey looks in more detail at resident satisfaction with leadership, trust, financial management and quality of services. All dropped this year, each by around 15 percentage points. PNCC results are close to average.

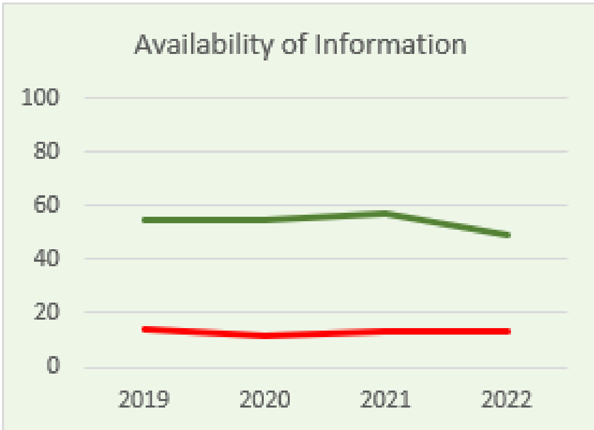


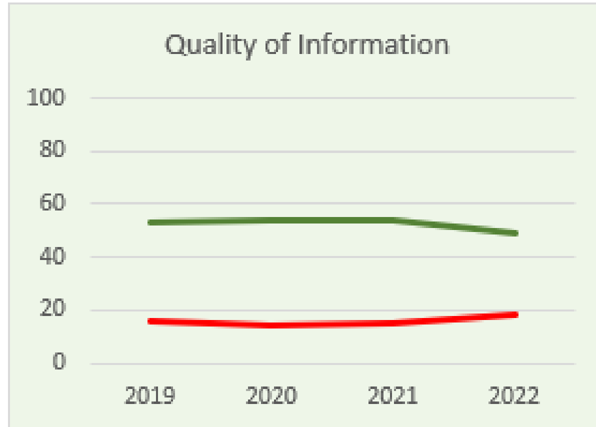
Satisfaction with Financial Management – which is about the perceived quality of Council's spending, not its internal financial services – is one of three areas in the survey where satisfaction is similar to dissatisfaction. (The others are Roading and Having a Say.)

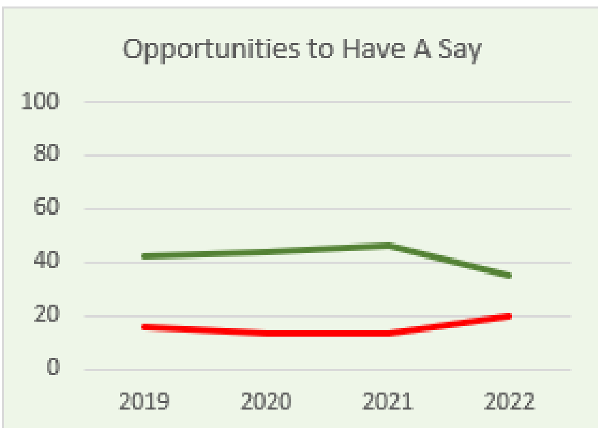
Information and Decision Making

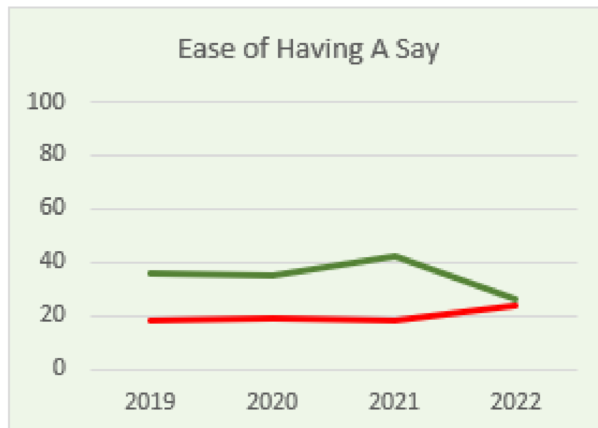


Line graphs show trends in **% satisfied** and **% dissatisfied**.







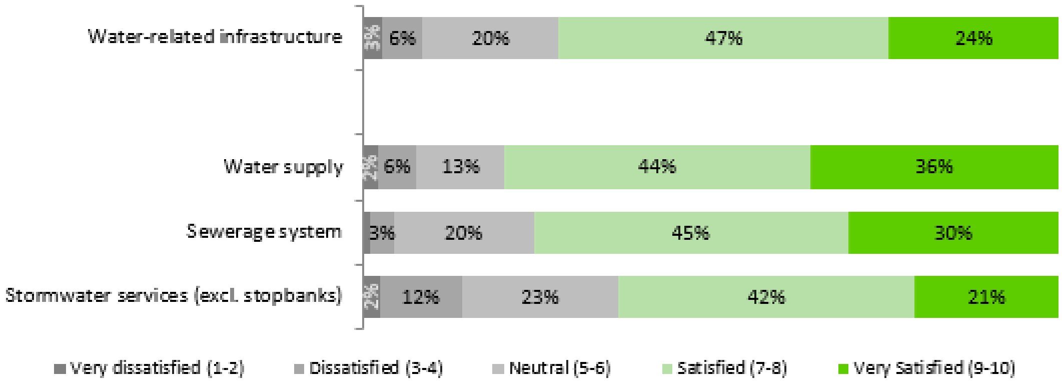


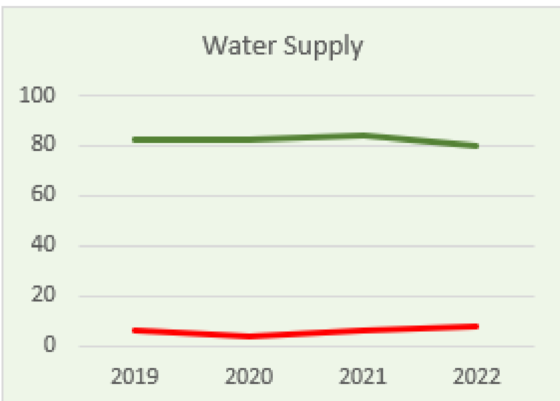
The next few pages look at residents' satisfaction with specific Council services.

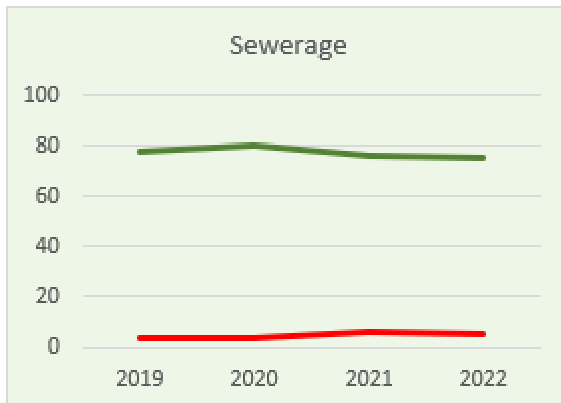
Bar graphs show 2022 results.

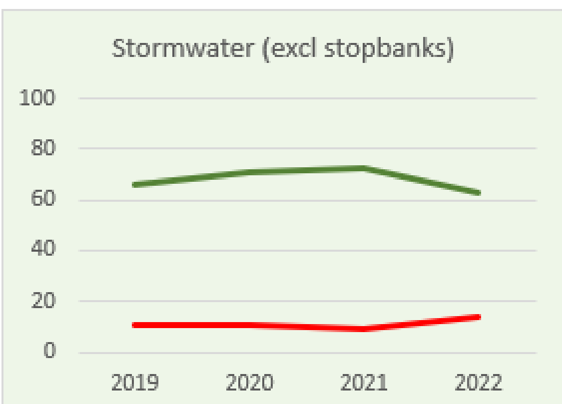
Line graphs show 4-year trends in **% satisfied** and **% dissatisfied**. The percentage for "neutral" has not been graphed.

Three Waters



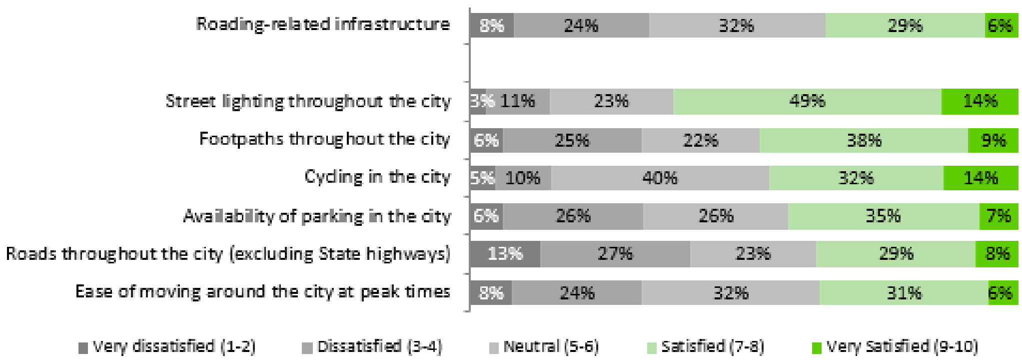


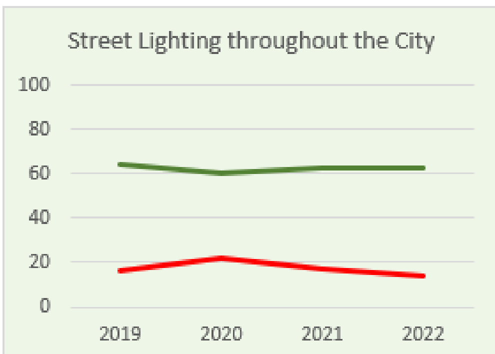


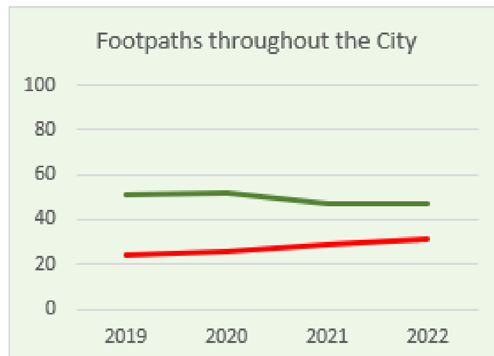


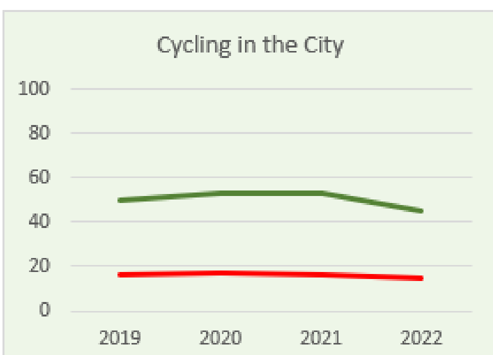
PNCC scores are above average compared with other Councils doing the survey, other than for sewerage services, where it is average.

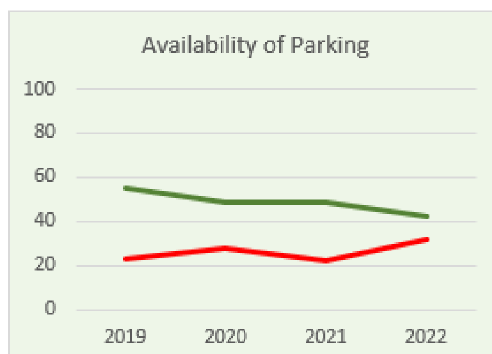
Roading

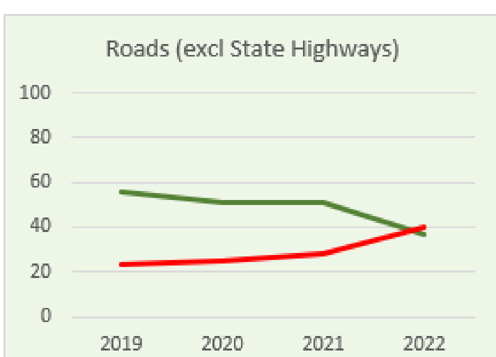

Roading-related infrastructure
8% 24% 32% 29% 6%
Street lighting throughout the city
3% 11% 23% 49% 14%
Footpaths throughout the city
6% 25% 22% 38% 9%
Cycling in the city
5% 10% 40% 32% 14%
Availability of parking in the city
6% 26% 26% 35% 7%
Roads throughout the city (excluding State highways)
13% 27% 23% 29% 8%
Ease of moving around the city at peak times
8% 24% 32% 31% 6%
Very dissatisfied (1-2)
Dissatisfied (3-4)
Neutral (5-6)
Satisfied (7-8)
Very Satisfied (9-10)

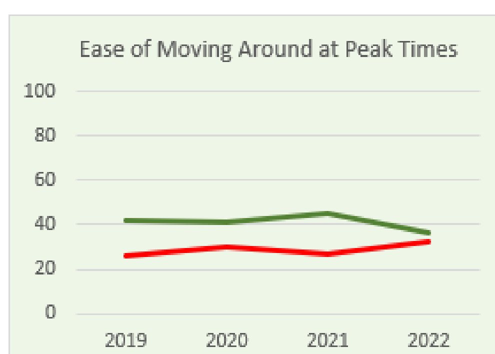

Street Lighting throughout the City
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2020
2021
2022


Footpaths throughout the City
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2020
2021
2022


Cycling in the City
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2020
2021
2022


Availability of Parking
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2020
2021
2022

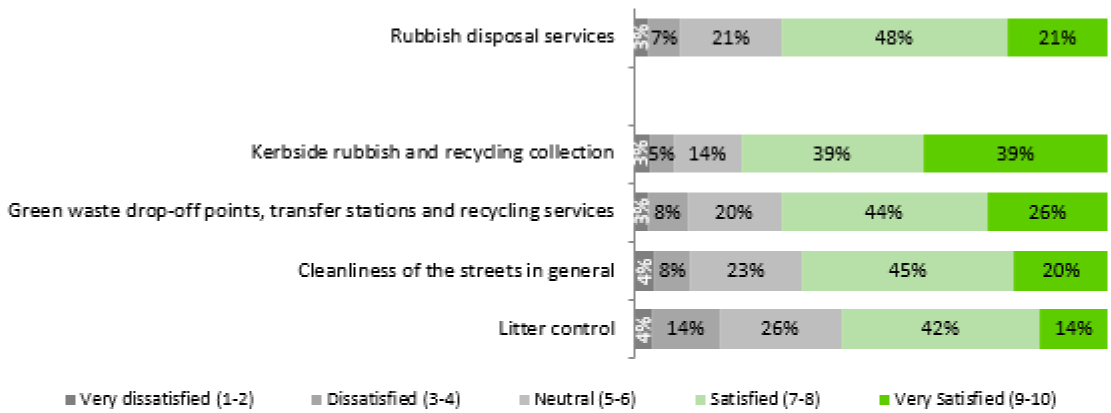

Roads (excl State Highways)
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2020
2021
2022

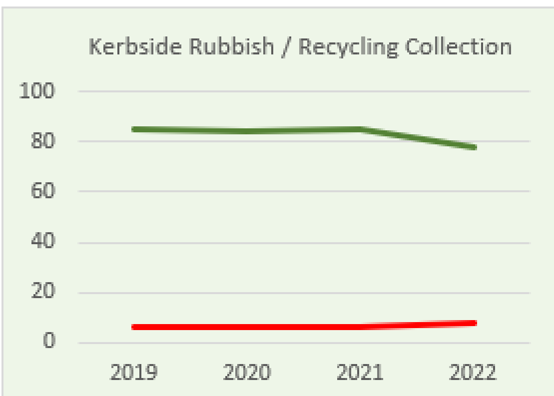

Ease of Moving Around at Peak Times
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2020
2021
2022

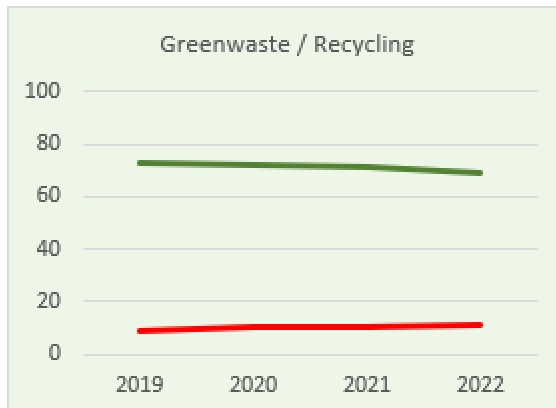
The survey includes open-ended questions for people to explain the reasons behind their satisfaction ratings. Most of the comments around roading were to do with the state of roads and footpaths, including the need for better and quicker maintenance. (Note: although the survey question excluded State Highways, many people probably answered it on the basis of all roads in PN.)

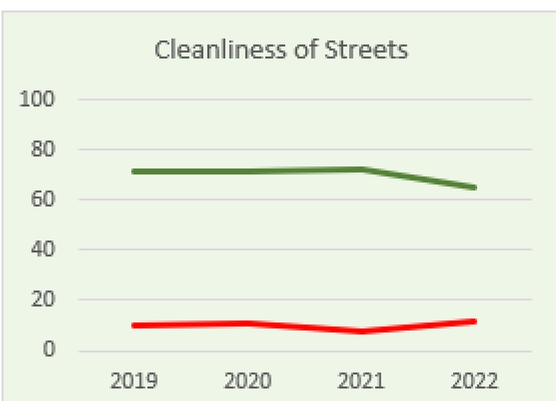
PNCC scores are average or slightly below compared with other Councils doing the survey, other than availability of parking, where it is the lowest score.

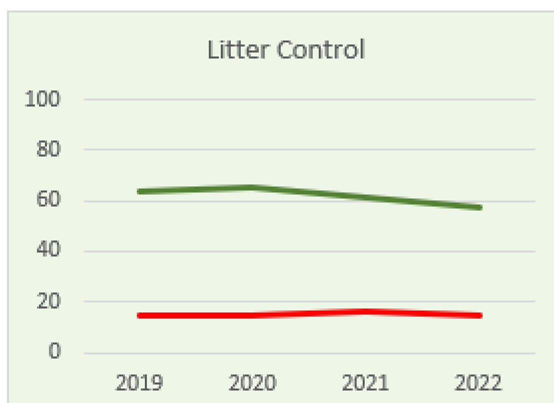
Rubbish Disposal (including street cleanliness and litter control)





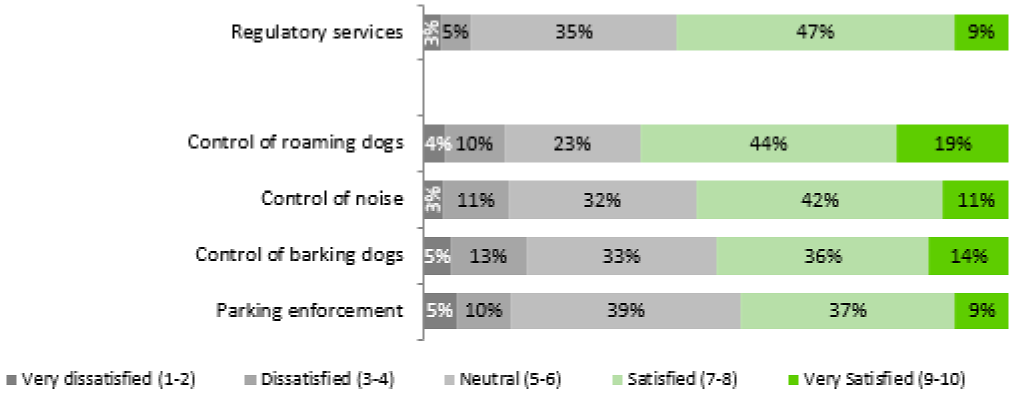


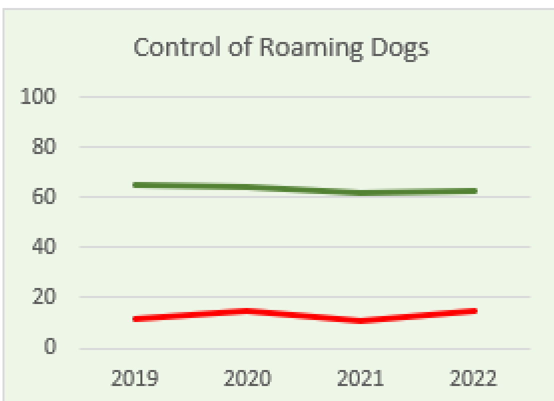


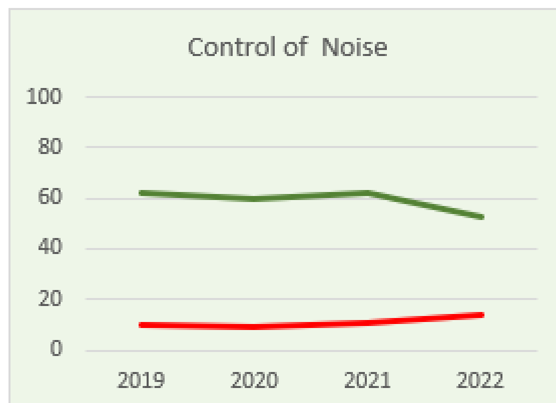


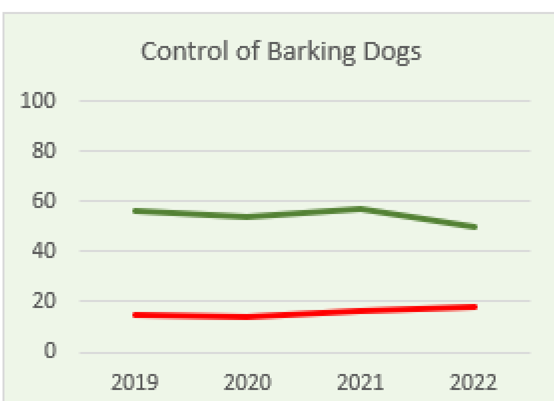
PNCC scores match the average scores for other Councils doing the survey.

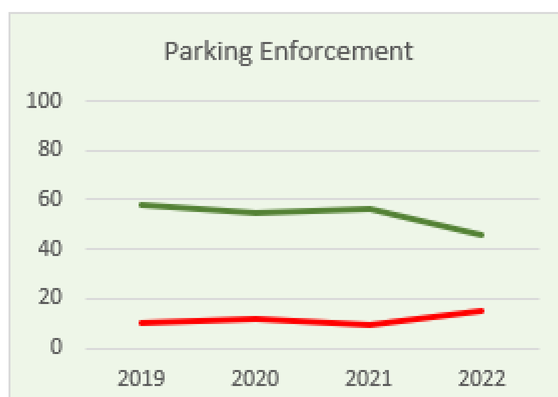
Regulatory Services





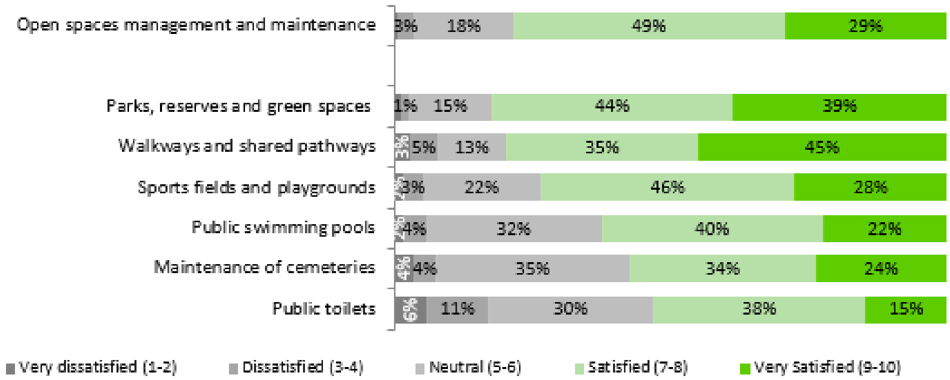


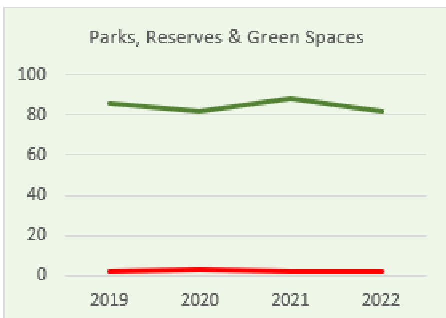


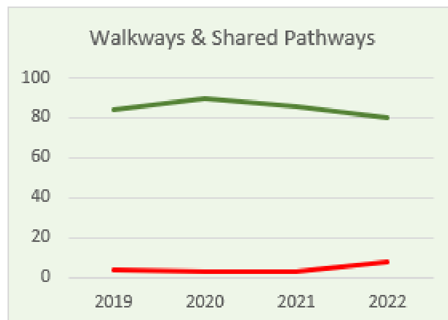


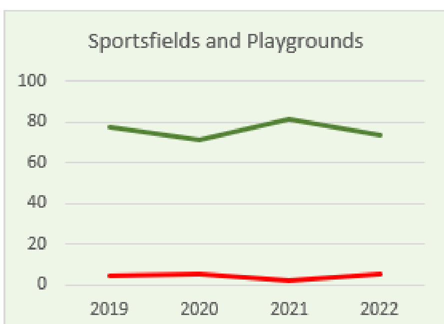
These areas are not included in the benchmarking report.

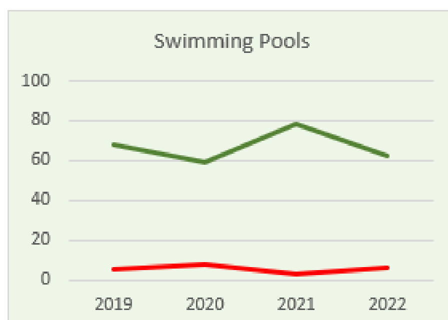
Parks, Reserves and Open Spaces

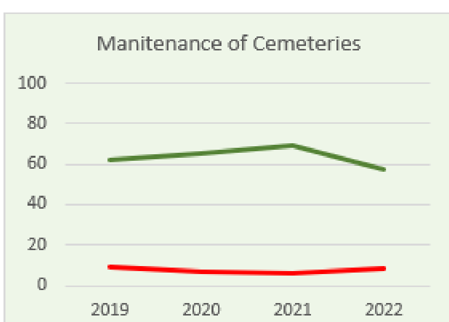


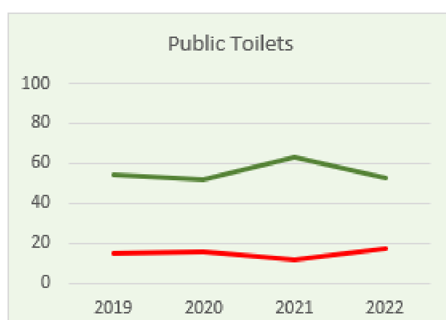






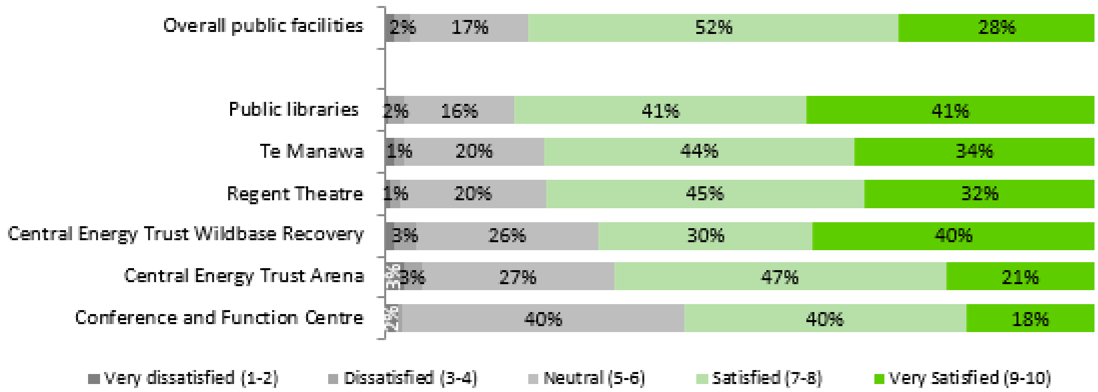


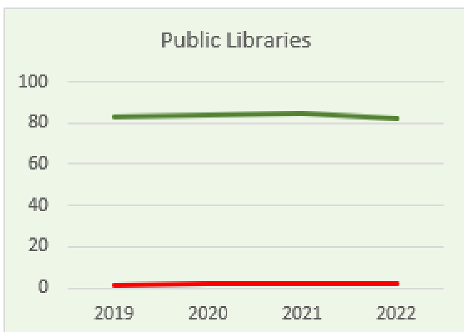


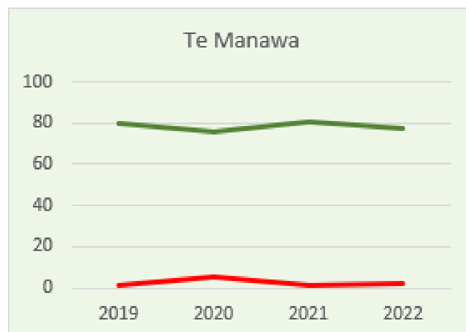


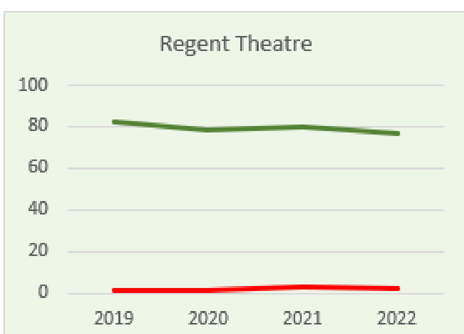
Benchmark scores are average or below – for cemeteries PNCC has the lowest score.

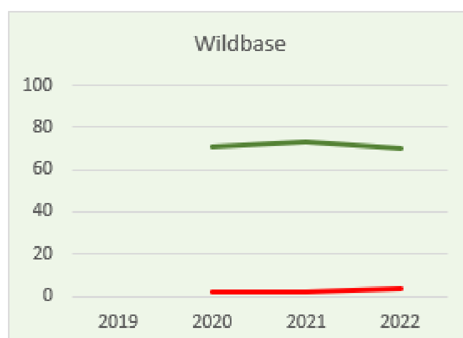
Other Public Facilities

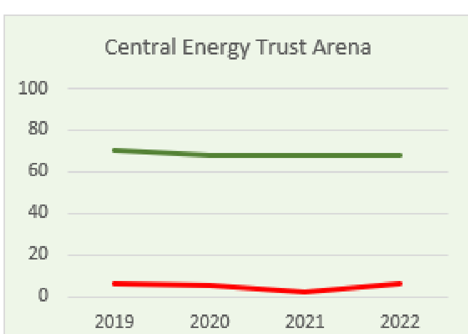


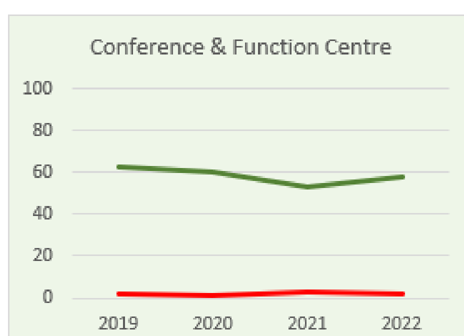




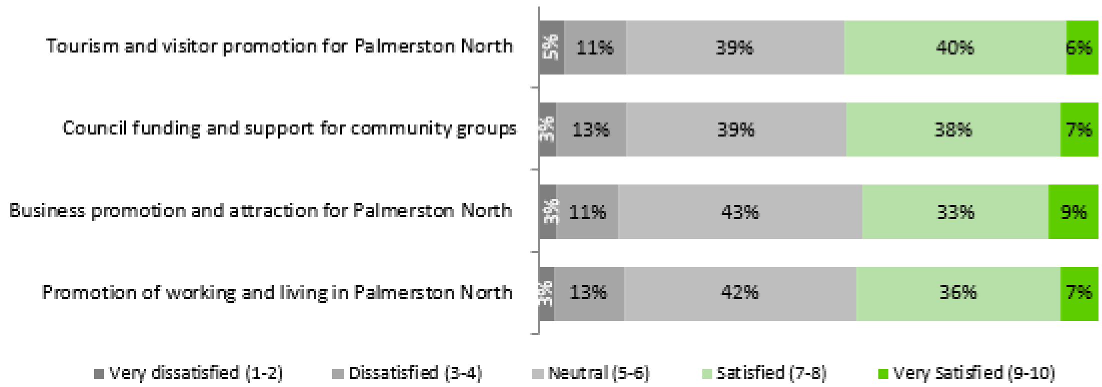


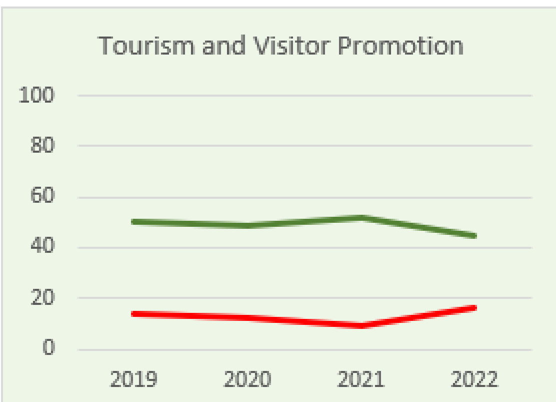


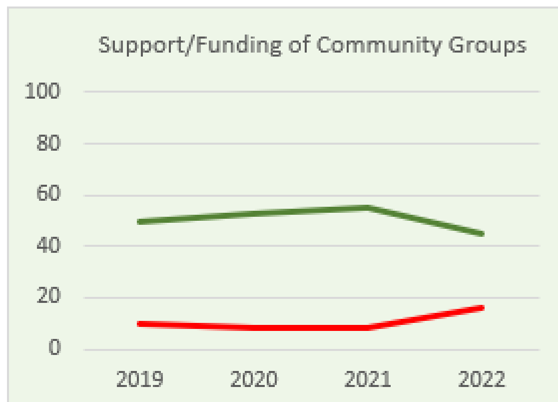


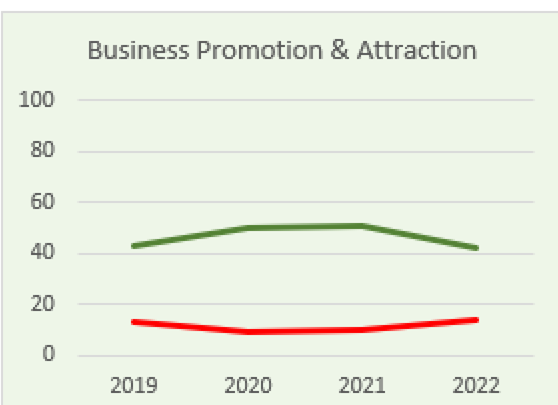


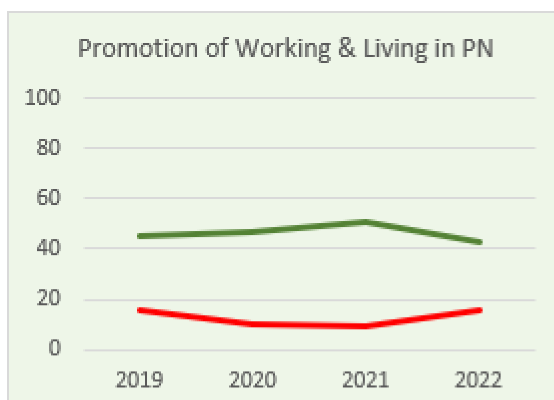
Support for Economic and Community Development



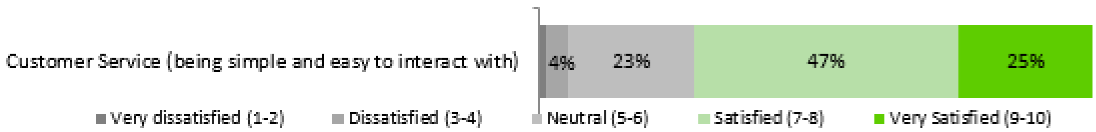


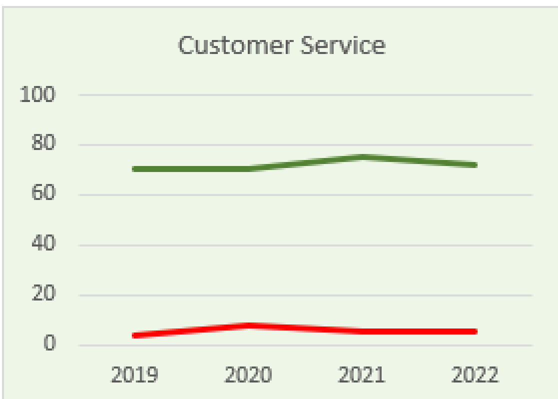




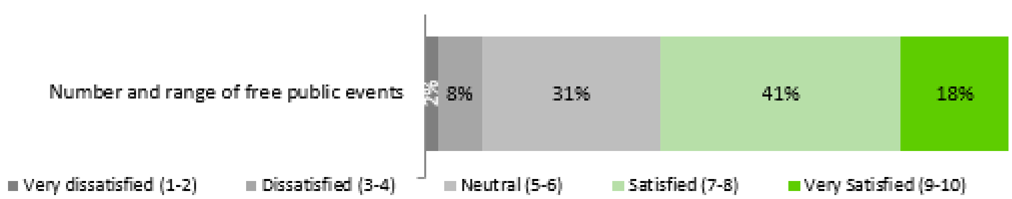


Customer Service





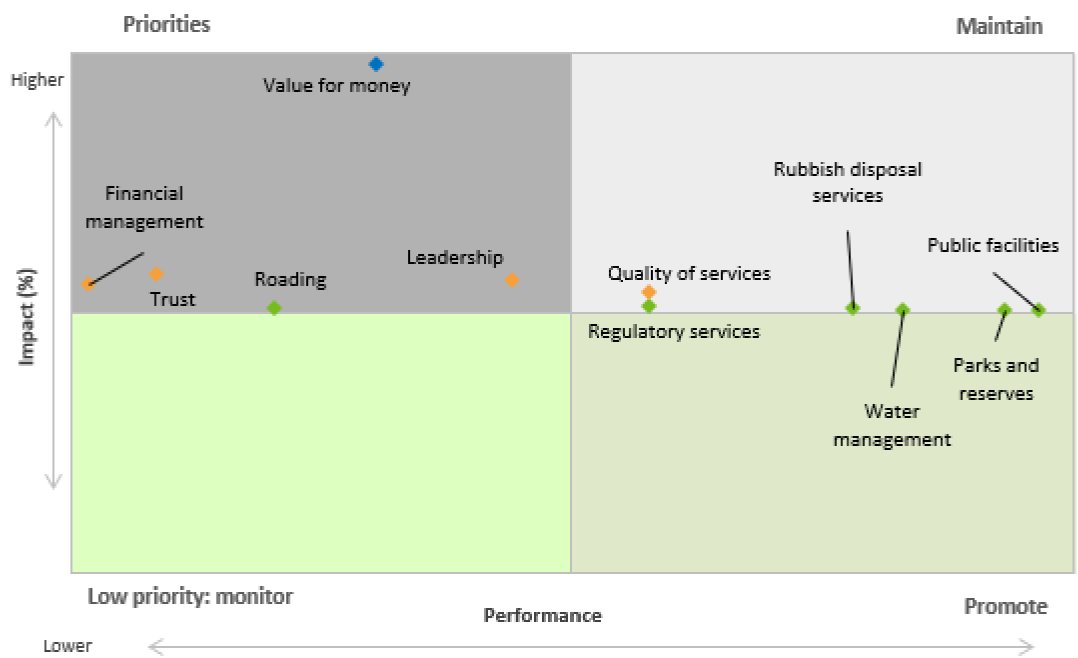
Events



Satisfaction with events is a new question in the 2022 survey so there is no trend data.

Opportunities and Priorities

This is all summed up in the opportunities and priorities matrix. Here there are four quadrants based on the perceived performance and impact of Council services:



Priorities for Council are in the top left quadrant (ie, highest impact, lowest performance) Providing more perceived Value for Money is the main priority – but it is an area where there is no single, simple fix.

KeyResearch said that the survey shows that "*the priorities for the Council include Value for money, and perception of Council reputation measures that include Leadership, Trust and Financial management. Another priority to focus on is Roading.*

"Verbatim comments left by the respondents indicate that low awareness and general disagreement with how rates are spent, as well as not enough effort from Council to consult public before making financial decisions.

"Road maintenance is an area that was commented the most by the respondents over the past year. Some of the issues cited were better maintenance, as well as ensuring that roading infrastructure can keep up with the growing population to accommodate traffic."

The other areas fall into the **maintain** quadrant – these areas have a high impact on Overall Satisfaction so, although performance is currently relatively high, this performance needs to be maintained.

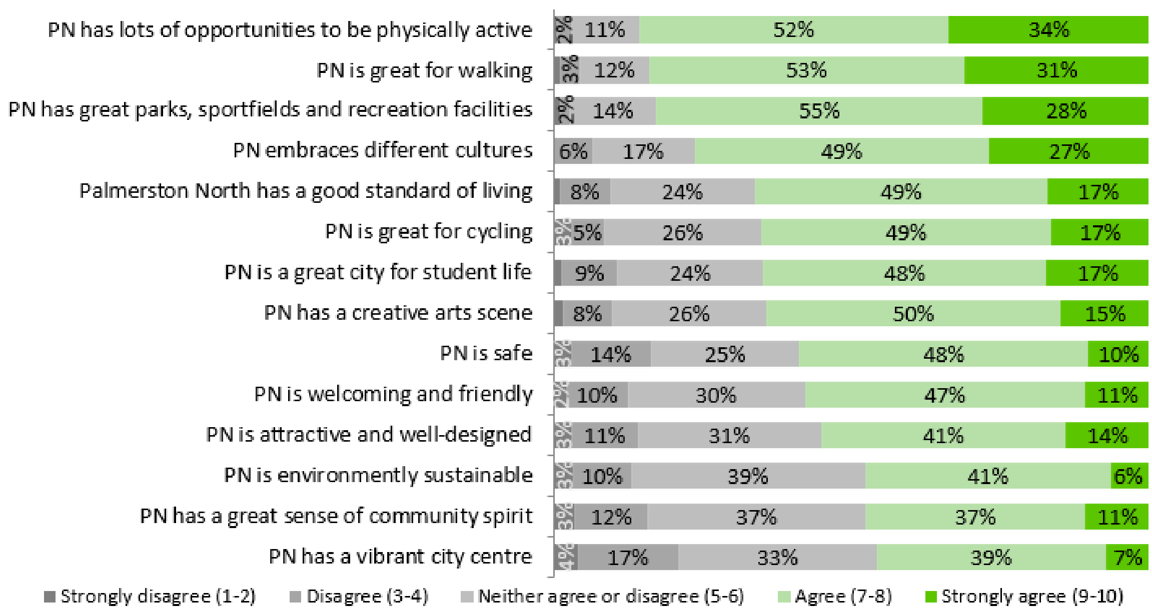
Overall Perceptions of Palmerston North

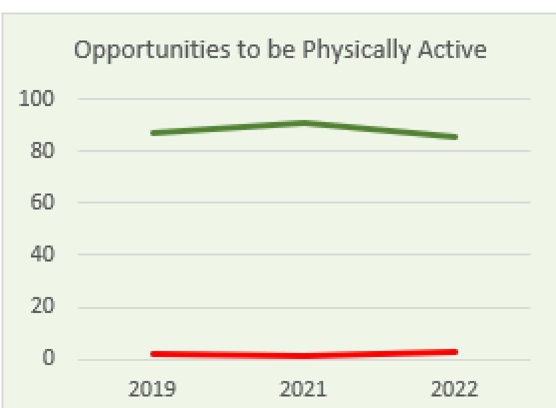
The survey also includes questions about residents' perceptions of Palmerston North. Residents were given a series of statements and asked if they agreed or disagreed.

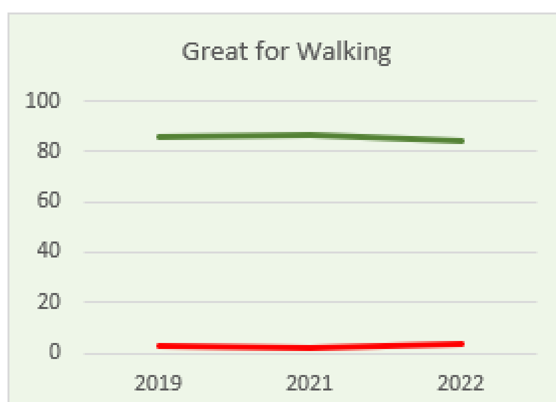
The results show similar patterns to the questions about the Council:

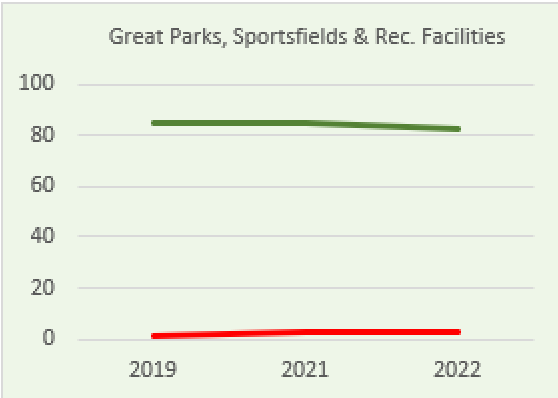
- there was a gradual increase in the previous two surveys and then a drop this year
- positive perceptions far outweigh negative perceptions
- younger people (18-34 years) have more negative perceptions than older people (65 plus years).

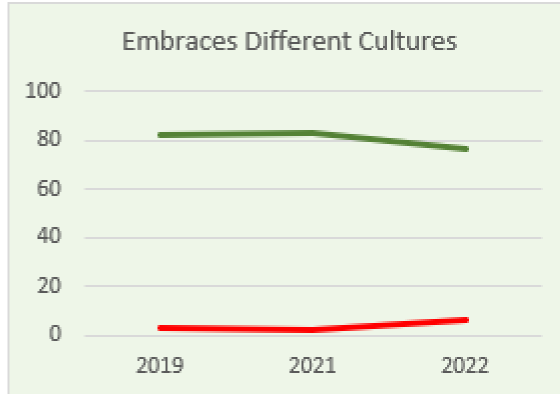
The bar graph shows the 2022 results. The line graphs shows trends. They are in order, with the most positive perceptions first. **Green is % agree**, **Red % disagree**. The questions were not asked in 2020:

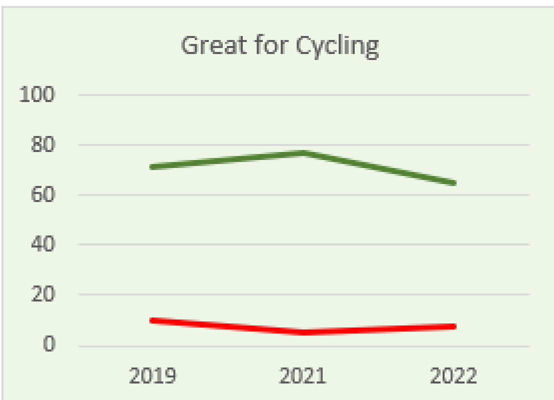


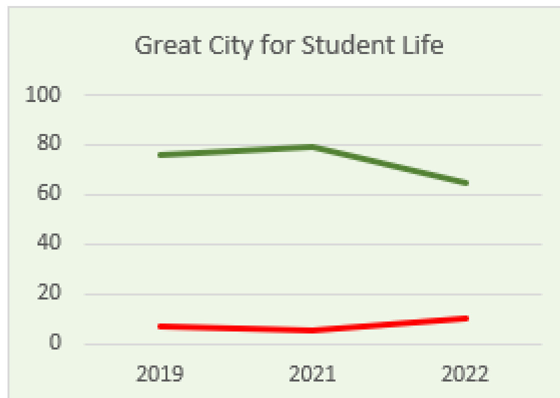


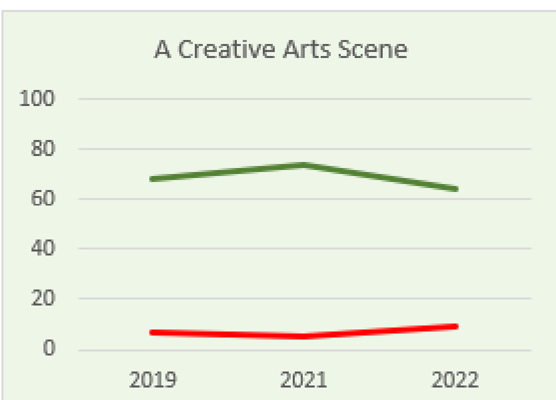


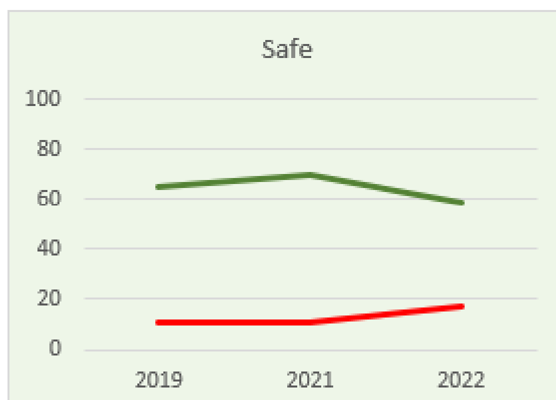

Great Parks, Sportsfields & Rec. Facilities
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2021
2022

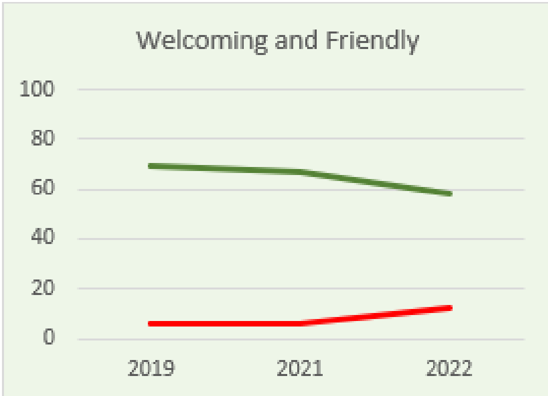

Embraces Different Cultures
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2021
2022

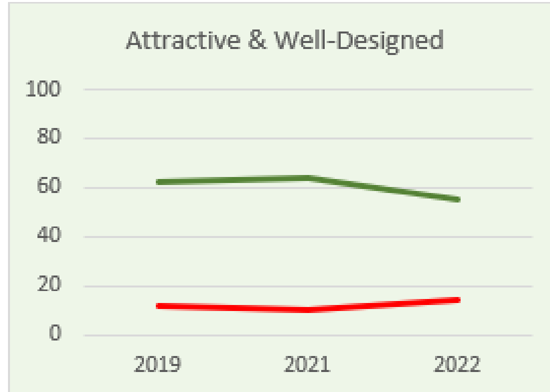

Great for Cycling
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2021
2022

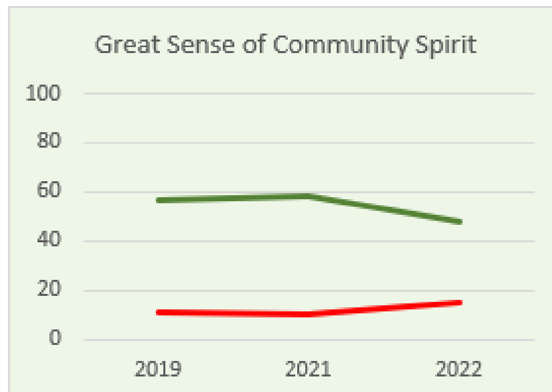

Great City for Student Life
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2021
2022

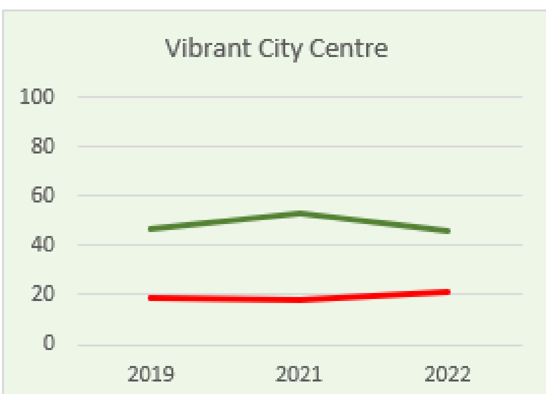

A Creative Arts Scene
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2021
2022


Safe
100
80
60
40
20
0
2019
2021
2022









The question about Palmerston North having a good standard of living was added to the questionnaire in 2022 so there is no trend data.

Methodology Notes

The results are weighted so the survey respondents match the age, gender and ethnicity profile of Palmerston North from the 2018 Census.

The margin of error is 4.5%. This is for the entire sample – margins of error are bigger for sub-samples such as age, ethnicity and ward. You need to consider differences in any results between subgroups with real caution and, for such comparisons, it is best to look for differences that are consistent over the four surveys.

The "Don't Knows" have been excluded from most of the tables and graphs. (If they were left in, services with a high proportion of Don't Knows would have unfairly low satisfaction percentages.) "Neutral" satisfaction ratings have been left in.

Respondents have the choice of filling the survey in online or on paper. If they do not respond they are sent one reminder.

The Benchmarking Report is based on results from 18 Councils who do the same survey. Most (15) of these are District Councils.