

Whangarei District

**YOUTH  
ADVISORY  
GROUP**

*Youth*  
SURVEY REPORT  
PŪRONGO RANGAHAU  
TAITAMARIKI

2022



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# FOREWORD

# KUPU WHAKATAKI

## TĒNĀ KOUTOU KĀTOA,

The Youth Advisory Group (YAG) undertook this project to better understand the wants and needs of youth in Whangārei. In this report we've summarised the feedback, highlighted key points from the data and identified gaps that exist for young people. The recommendations that we've made to Whangarei District Council are all informed by what youth told us they want to see.

Whether you are a decision maker, local business owner or a part of the community we hope you can learn from the insights shared and help us to make Whangārei a place where youth feel included and valued.

This report is a starting point for young people to collectively advocate for better youth outcomes. 61% of those that participated in our survey felt that their voices weren't heard by local government. This document aims to elevate those voices.

Ngā mihi nui, nā

Anna Jungwin and Darius Martin-Baker  
WDC Youth Advisory Group 2022



# OVERVIEW

# TIRŪHANGA WHĀŪUI

In 2021, the Youth Advisory Group (YAG), a group of 12 young people that provide advice to Council, set out to undertake a project that would have an impact for young people living in Whangārei.

The challenge for the group was to find a project that fit with the advisory group's terms of reference. The group decided that a youth survey would be a useful project that could be used to inform future Council decisions.

The survey questions were designed by the Youth Advisory Group and were based around the mahi of Council as well as aligning with the **YAG Focus Areas 2021-2024**.

The target audience was youth living in Whangārei District aged between 12 and 24. The group encouraged participation by incentivising the survey with prizes. Demographic information on gender, age range, ethnicity and area were gathered.

## METHODOLOGY

YAG members prepared and ran the survey in November 2021, leading to this report.

The survey was conducted online through the Whangārei District Council (WDC) website. It was promoted on Instagram and Facebook social media pages, in addition to YAG's individual and collective networks.

## THE SURVEY CENTRED AROUND THE ADVISORY GROUP'S FOCUS AREAS:



Supporting the development of youth inclusive spaces



Promoting youth events and services



Increasing youth involvement with Council



Advocating for sustainability



Striving for inclusion and diversity.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## NGĀ TŪTŪHUTANGA

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THAT COUNCIL:



Work with Northland Regional Council to improve access to public transport, specifically by creating bus routes to more areas in Whangārei (including beaches, rural townships, and popular areas such as Okara) as well as increasing hours and frequency of the buses.

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Increase safety through environmental design, such as brighter lighting, more surveillance/monitored cameras, and providing spaces that are designed to be safe.

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Provide more entertainment and amenity options, such as sports infrastructure and safe spaces with environmental design.

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Provide safe places for youth. Characteristics of a safe space include shelter and warmth, an authority that is not constantly scrutinising but present to deal with undesirable behaviour. The space could have segmented areas within a large open area so that people will have privacy but still feel connected to everyone else. It would be inclusive of all and be available for use most of the day.

# LEARNINGS FROM THE PROJECT

## NGĀ AKORANGA MAI I TE KAUPAPA

We identified the following learnings that should be considered for future surveys:

- Increase reach and advertising of the survey through schools
- Have fewer themes and keep surveys targeted
- Have pre-made social media content including video for members to share
- Allow enough time for people to respond
- Have printable and digital survey forms
- More questions linked to disabled, LGBTQI+ and homeless youth in Whangārei.

### CHALLENGES OF COVID-19

Our original intent was to conduct the survey online, promote it through our connections and be present at popular community events as well as hold pop up events in town.

COVID-19 health measures meant that many community events were cancelled, and in-person pop up events were not possible. This meant that we could only conduct and promote the youth survey online.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### NGĀ MIHINUI

We want to especially acknowledge and thank those who participated in the survey and provided their valued thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

We also want to thank those who helped with the survey and the report: Councillor Connop, WDC staff from the Community Development and Communications teams, and the Youth Advisory Group members of 2021 and 2022.

# FINDINGS NGĀ KITENGA

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

This survey received 546 responses (compared to 720 responses in the 2012 survey).

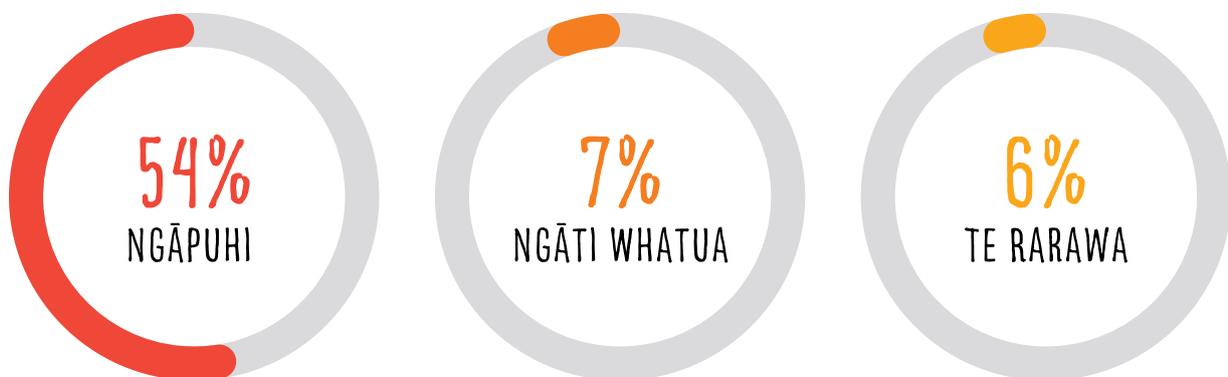
Many of the demographic-related questions were set as open text so that respondents could describe in their own words how they identified themselves.

### ETHNICITY

Respondents self-identified as:



From those who identified as Māori/Pasifika, the predominant hapū/iwi affiliations were:



There were 23 hapū/iwi self-identified in total.

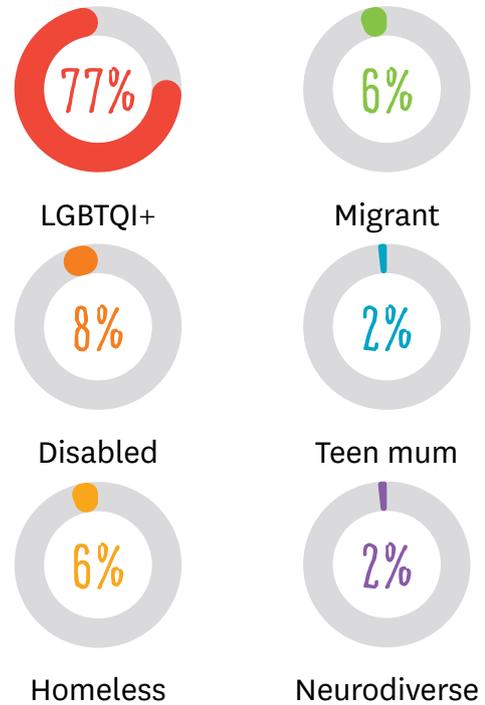
## AGE OF RESPONDENTS

There was a modest spread across the target age range of 12-24 years.



## COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

Of the 546 responses, 175 people identified as belonging to a 'community of interest'.



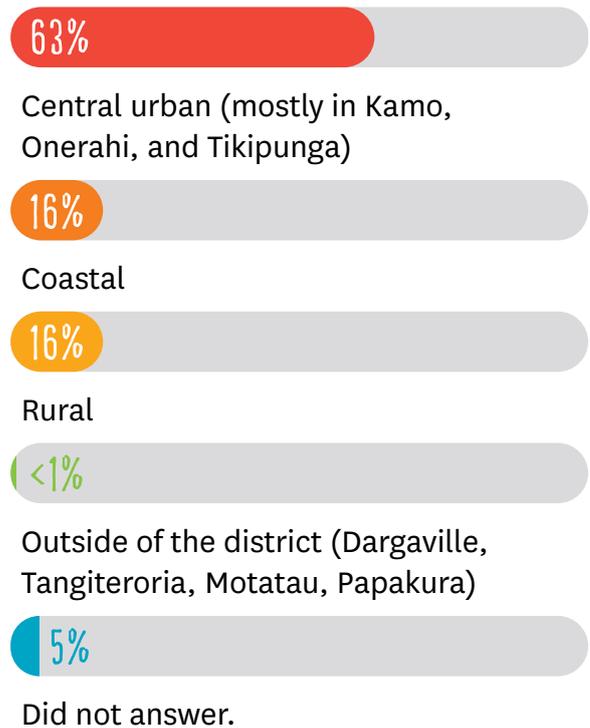
## GENDER IDENTITY



- 64% ● Female
- 26% ● Male
- 6% ● Not stated
- 4% ● Gender-fluid
- 2.7% Non-binary
- 1.3% They, agender, demi-girl, gender-faun, gender-fluid

## WHERE RESPONDENTS LIVE

A third of respondents represented rural or coastal communities.



# THEMES

The survey featured 7 themes:



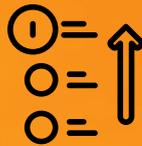
NEIGHBOURHOOD



USE OF AMENITIES



SAFETY



YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP PRIORITIES



HOUSING



KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
AND ENGAGEMENT WITH COUNCIL



TRAVEL



Each theme asked participants to state how much they agreed with set statements, and open text fields were provided for comments and suggestions.



## VIEWS ON NEIGHBOURHOOD

This theme asked respondents to reflect on their own neighbourhood or suburb, rather than Whangārei as a whole.

Most respondents were happy with their neighbourhood (65%) with 26% being neutral.

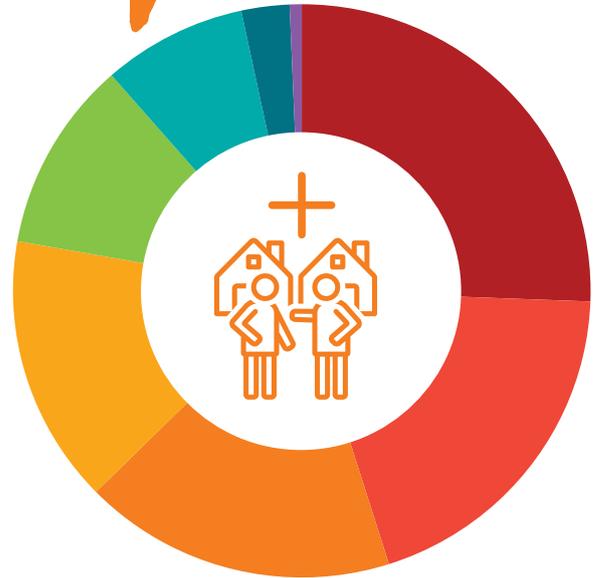
However, 62% felt that there were not enough things to do in their neighbourhood. Only 15% agreed with the statement that there were lots of things to do.

When asked about safety, 60% agreed that they felt safe in their neighbourhood, but 40% disagreed or were neutral.

In terms of accessing public transport, the majority (44%) said that it was difficult to access or non-existent in their area.

When asked what participants would like to add to their neighbourhood, 340 out of 546 respondents (62%) provided comments. Transport options rated highest, followed by more infrastructure and amenities in outlying areas.

IF YOU COULD ADD SOMETHING TO YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, WHAT WOULD IT BE?



- 26% ● Modes of transport
- 19% ● Sports infrastructure
- 17% ● Recreational spaces
- 15% ● Shops, restaurants and cafes
- 11% ● Youth centre
- 8% ● Safety measures and police presence
- 3% ● Community initiatives and events
- 1% ● More natural areas/trees planted

“Some proper facilities for homeless people living in Whangārei, and also more activities for teenagers, I think that’d definitely help improve crime rates in Whangārei.”

“Public Transport. There is absolutely none, so as a kid if you can’t drive and/or parents aren’t able to transport you there is no way to get anywhere.”

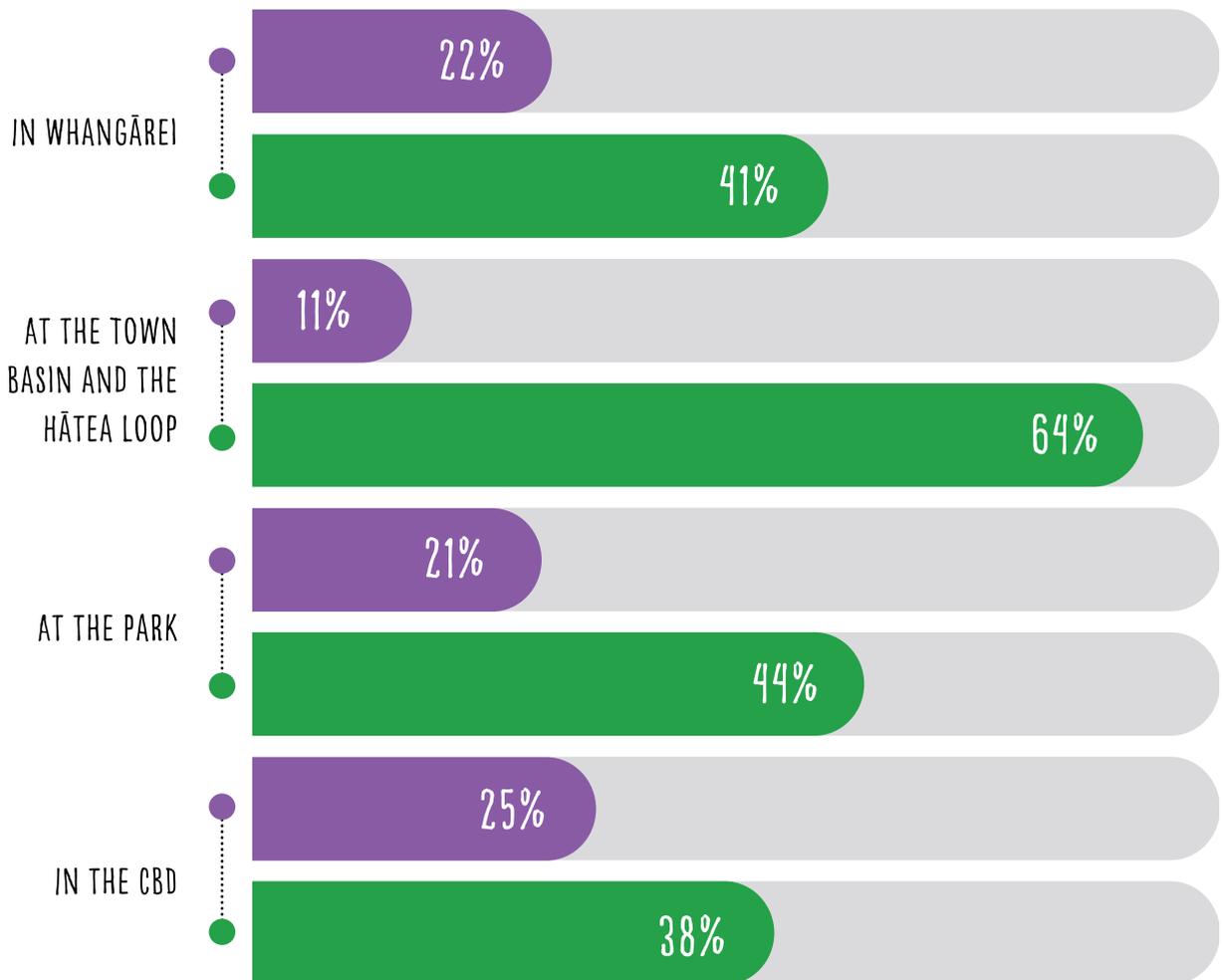


## VIEWS ON SAFETY IN WHANGĀREI

Participants were asked whether they felt safe in the city centre, at parks, at the town basin/Hātea Loop and Whangārei overall.

While respondents felt safest at the Town Basin/Hātea Loop, almost a quarter of respondents on average did not feel safe in the district.

### SAFETY ACROSS WHANGĀREI...



- I feel unsafe
- I feel safe

When asked how Whangārei could be made safer, 242 out of 546 respondents (44%) provided suggestions. Of these, 128 people (53%) said an increase in security patrols and presence would make a difference, and 63 people (26%) wanted better lighting, monitored cameras and safety through environmental design.

## HOW COULD WHANGĀREI BE MADE SAFER?

More police presence and enforcement, more CitySafe and security, coverage area and hours overall

53%

Safety through design, lighting, monitored cameras etc

26%

Safe spaces and things to do for young people

8%

Behaviour change and education

7%

Need more people around

3%

Improve safety at Rose Street bus stop

2%

Better dog control

1%

The qualitative data collected shows that some of those who feel unsafe in Whangārei have had personal encounters with verbal and physical harassment and abuse.

“We have to keep each other safe when we’re in town, and sometimes it’s really hard to enjoy ourselves when we’re fearing for our safety... something that I find comforts me is when security is near...”

“more lights... If it was busier later at night in the city center I would also feel safer being there after 6pm. If the library, a well-known safe area was open later. If there was a youth centre open late.”



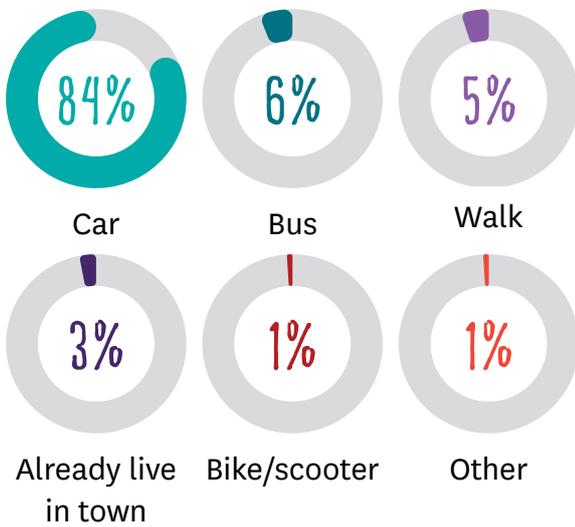
Pohe Island Skatepark,  
Riverside



## TRAVEL WITHIN WHANGĀREI

Responses were gathered to find what modes of transport participants use to get around – how they get into town, how they get to school, work, or training, and how often they use the public bus.

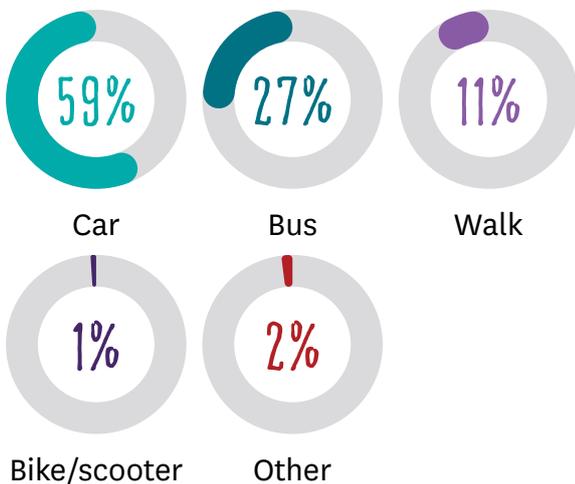
### HOW DO YOU USUALLY GET TO TOWN?



### HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE A PUBLIC BUS?



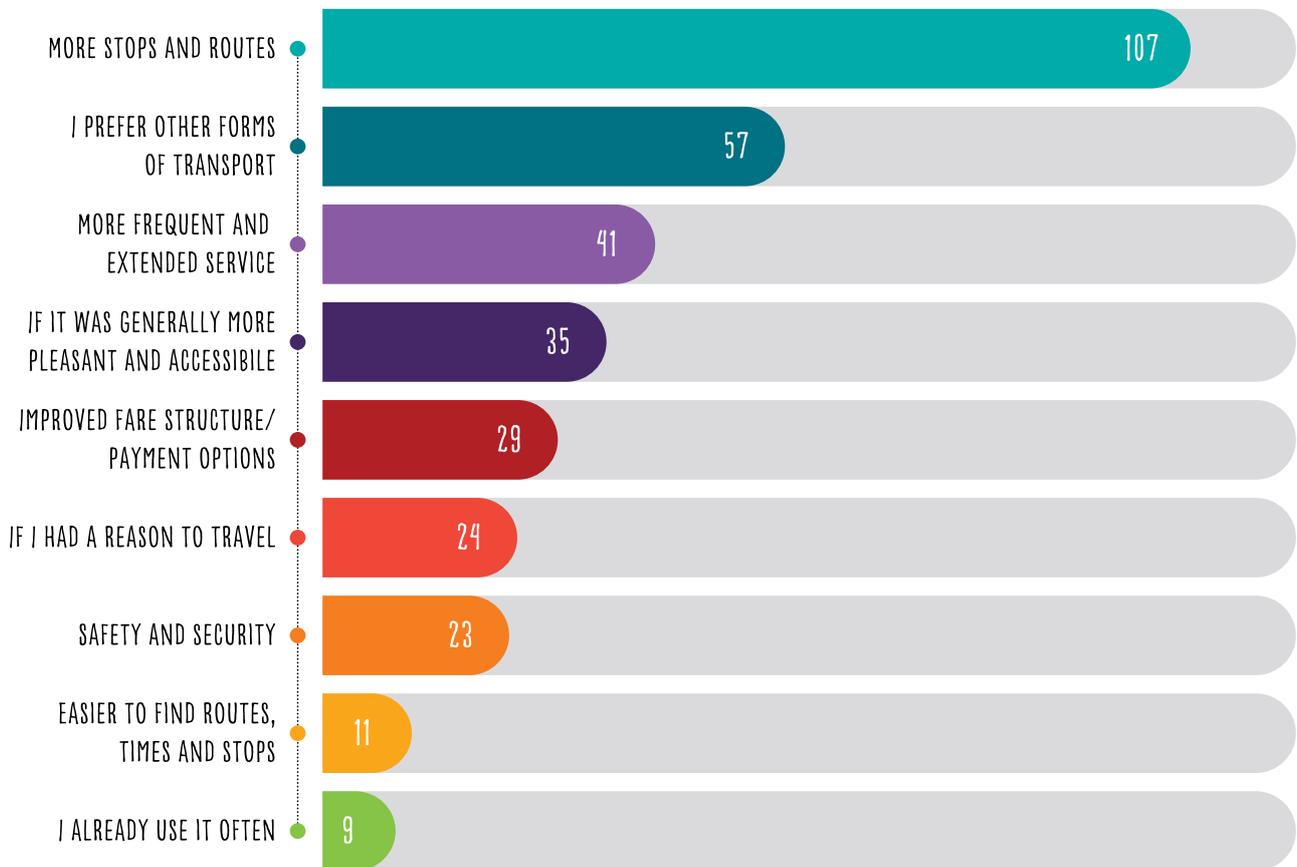
### HOW DO YOU USUALLY GET TO SCHOOL, WORK OR TRAINING?



- 52% ● Never
- 25% ● A few times a year
- 9% ● Almost daily
- 8% ● Weekly
- 6% ● Monthly



## WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU USE THE PUBLIC BUS MORE?



“If I could catch one bus to multiple different neighborhoods instead of having to get off in town and take another bus.”

“I rely on the CityLink bus service in Whangārei as someone who can't afford driving lessons... but the service isn't frequent enough. I and so many others spend a lot of time sitting waiting at Rose Street. Saturday's are even worse, making it difficult to get around town for any Saturday markets with busses on a reduced time table, and Sundays being a no show with no busses.”



## USE OF EXISTING AMENITIES

Participants were asked to state how often they visit or use key local amenities. 'Town' and the Okara Shopping Centre were visited most regularly (daily or weekly).

### HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT OR USE KEY LOCAL AMENITIES



#### TOWN

– most visited *daily or weekly*



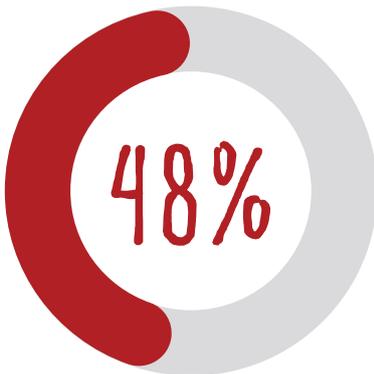
#### OKARA SHOPPING CENTRE

– most visited *daily or weekly*



#### SHARED PATHS

– most visited *monthly or a few times a year*



#### HĀTEA LOOP

– most visited *a few times a year*



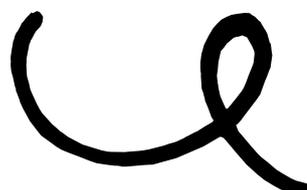
#### PARKS

– most visited *a few times a year*



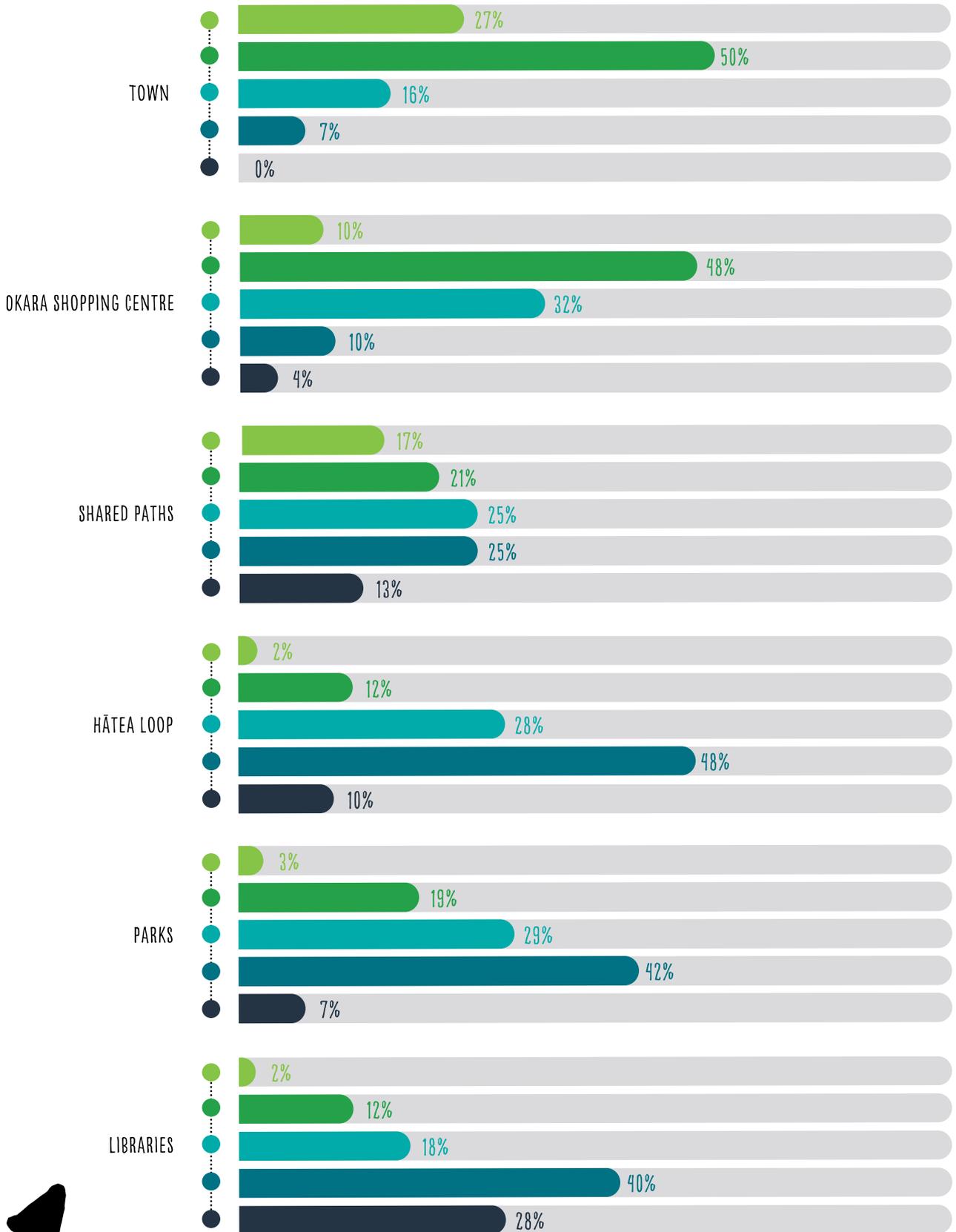
#### LIBRARIES

– most visited *a few times a year*



Breakdown of use by:

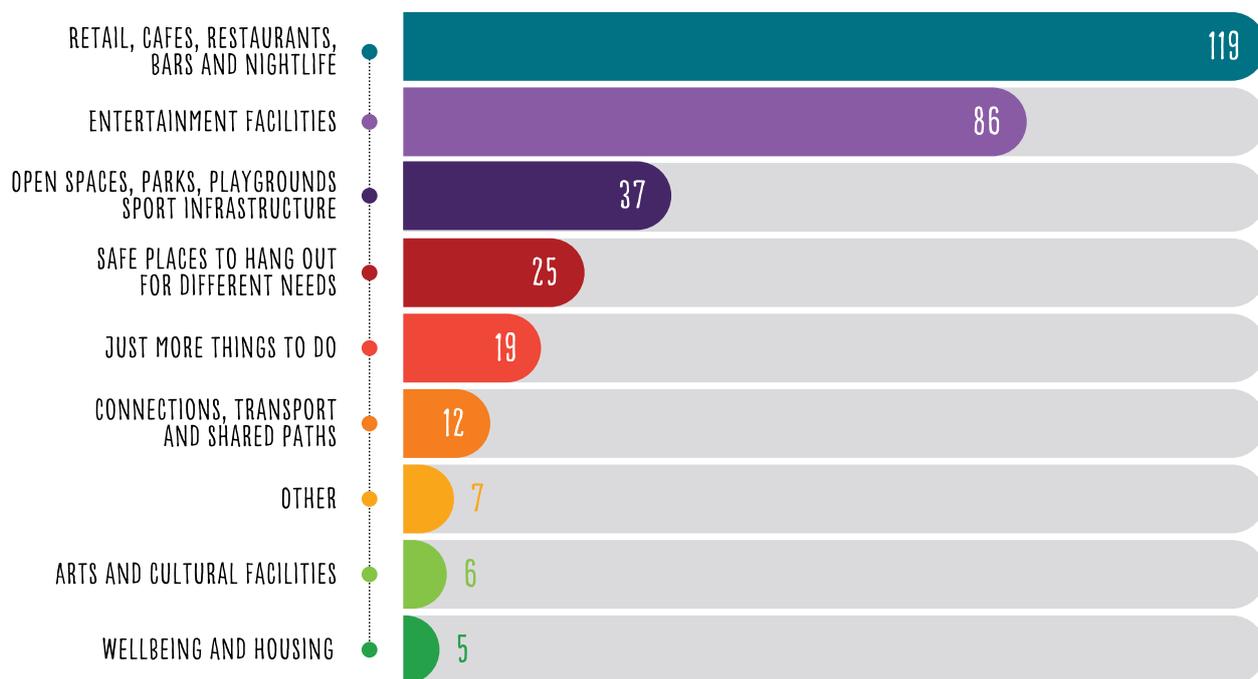
- Daily use
- Weekly use
- Monthly use
- A few times a year
- Never



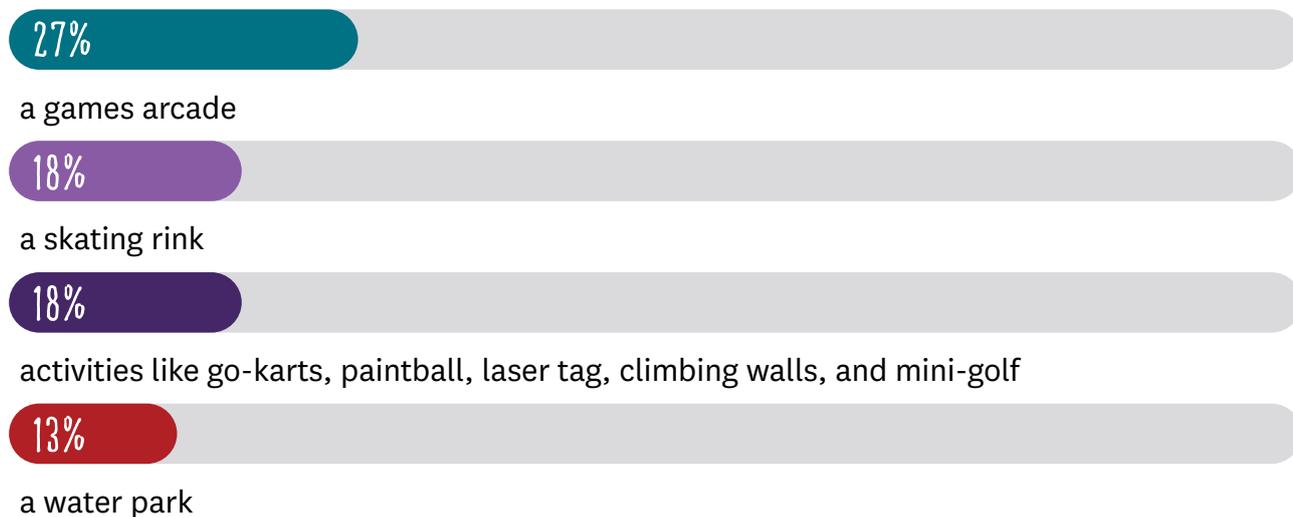
When asked what facilities participants would like to see in Whangārei, 316 out of 546 respondents provided comment. Overall, the theme seemed to be places to hang out and meet/make friends in a safe and constructive way, whether that was at a mall, basketball court, or youth space.

The majority (119 responses or 38%) wanted improved retail and eateries. An indoor mall rated highly, along with greater variety in stores and cafes.

## WHAT OTHER TYPES OF PLACES WOULD YOU LIKE IN WHANGĀREI?



Just over a quarter of commenters wanted more entertainment facilities. These covered a broad range with the most common requests being:



Comments noted the need for more amenities overall with good variety, and that they needed to be affordable for young people and easily accessible. It was also made clear that amenities needed to be age-relevant, that there is not “one size fits all” for youth. A “playground for older teens” not just young children was mentioned and is reflected in the entertainment facilities mentioned.

“more activities. Like night markets would be a fun way to spend a Friday or Saturday night, with locals selling different foods and different stalls.”

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“A big youth center with a skate park, a cheap takeaway shop, study area, sports court and activities areas.”

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“An arcade with pool music and food. The bowling place is too far and means catching two busses just to get there.”

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“I think more places like the library where it feels like a safe welcoming place to hang out, like more parks or public youth centers would be awesome.”

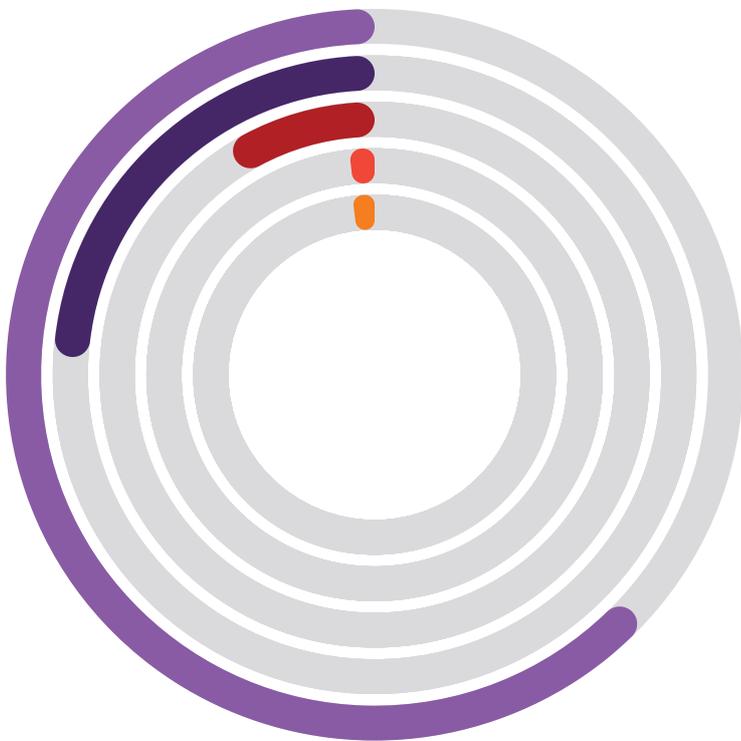




## HOUSING

This section of the survey sought to understand how concerned young people were about housing and how important the topic was to them – 96% agreed it was important.

HOW IMPORTANT IS HOUSING TO YOU?



63% ● Extremely important

24% ● Very important

9% ● Important

2% ● Not that important

2% ● Not at all important

When asked about events and services participants would like to see in Whangārei for youth, 16% wanted to see more wellbeing, housing, and social support.

The qualitative data collected showed many references to housing being an area of concern for youth and their whānau. One suggestion from a participant which illustrates this is to have:

“A boarding house where kids in need can go and the house will help with education or getting jobs and getting a license whilst also giving youth a place to live if they need.”

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Other participants said that they wanted:

“more housing availability for our homeless whānau.”

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“more help for the housing problem, it is really getting out of hand in Whangārei, and it really promotes poverty in house as well.”

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“Housing support for young youth that have children at a young age.”

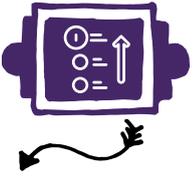
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“Systems to help those who are in unstable housing and live in poverty with support and resources to help them continue education.”

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“Socialised housing so we can afford to live here.”

Many participants echoed that they would like to see more affordable housing. It was also recognised that many respondents suggested support as they transition into adulthood, this included advice on access to housing and funding / budgeting information.



## IMPORTANCE OF YAG PRIORITIES

Whangārei District Council's Youth Advisory Group identified these priorities for 2021-2024 and participants were asked how important the priorities were to them:



Supporting the development of youth inclusive spaces

IMPORTANT

86%

NOT IMPORTANT

14%



Promoting youth events and services

IMPORTANT

87%

NOT IMPORTANT

13%



Advocating for sustainability

IMPORTANT

95%

NOT IMPORTANT

5%



Striving for inclusion and diversity.

IMPORTANT

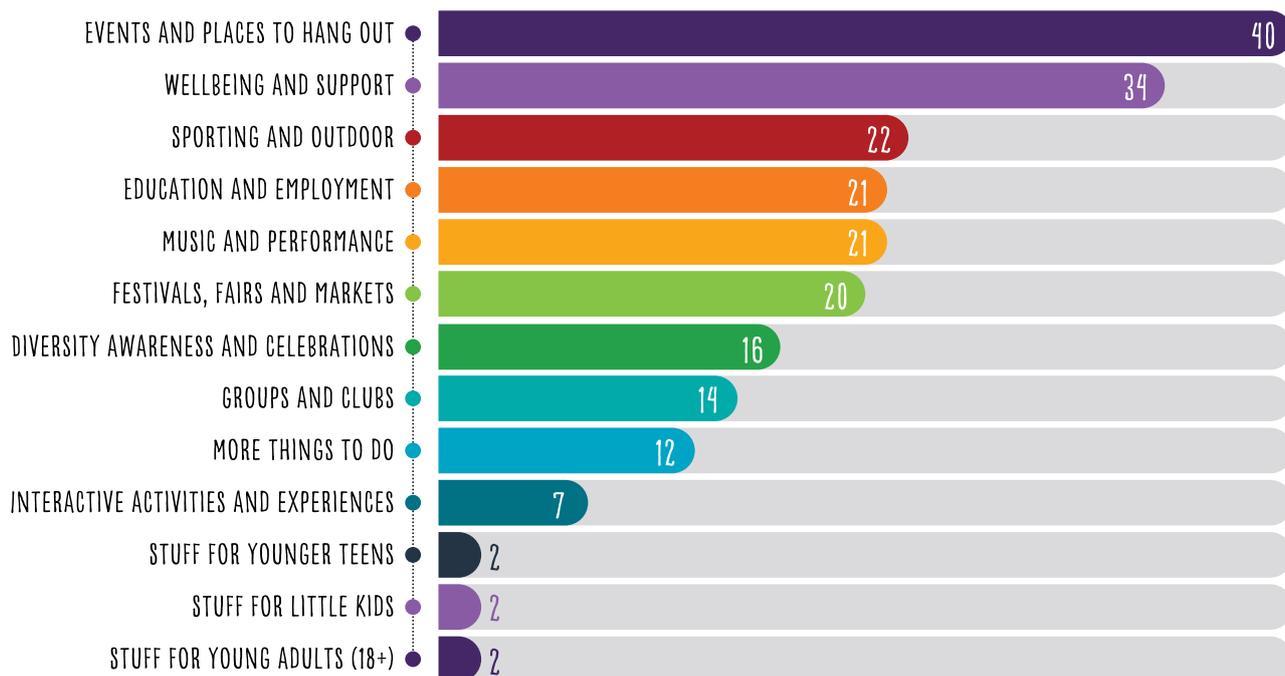
94%

NOT IMPORTANT

6%

Participants were also asked what type of youth events and services they would like to see in Whangārei. Of the 213 comments provided, the top response (40 or 19%) was to have more events and spaces where young people can hang out and make new friends, followed by more support with wellbeing and housing.

IF ANY, WHAT TYPE OF YOUTH EVENTS AND SERVICES DO YOU WANT TO SEE MORE OF IN WHANGĀREI?



“...when things get a little tough even just getting away from your parents is nice but I can't do that much because there's no safe space for me to go...”

“Community groups and safe places for teens to hang out after school would be awesome. Best way to reach out to struggling teens but also to build better relationships and fun activities for disadvantaged teens.”

“more mental health. There is a lot that youth needs to be educated on such as topics that would be considered too adult. There is a big problem with alcohol and drug abuse in youth and I think there needs to be safe spaces where kids can open up about it or find help. Not talking about counselling.”



## KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ENGAGEMENT WITH COUNCIL

This section of the survey sought to understand whether young people felt they knew about Whangarei District Council and local government in general, and if they felt their voices were heard by Council.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT COUNCIL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT?



- 37% ● Little
- 28% ● Some knowledge
- 20% ● Nothing
- 11% ● A lot
- 4% ● Everything

DO YOU THINK YOUR VOICES ARE HEARD BY COUNCIL?



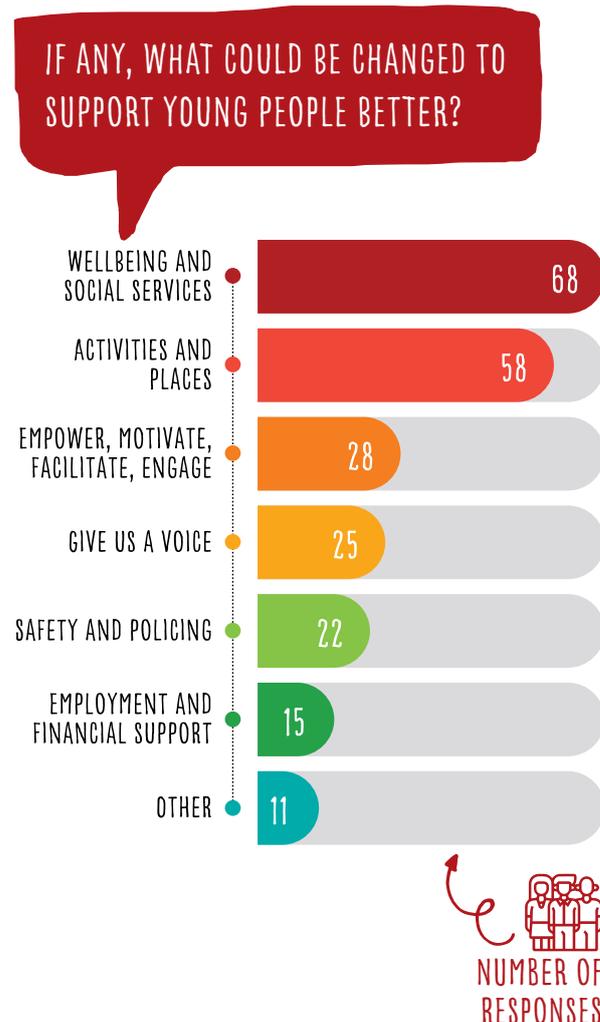
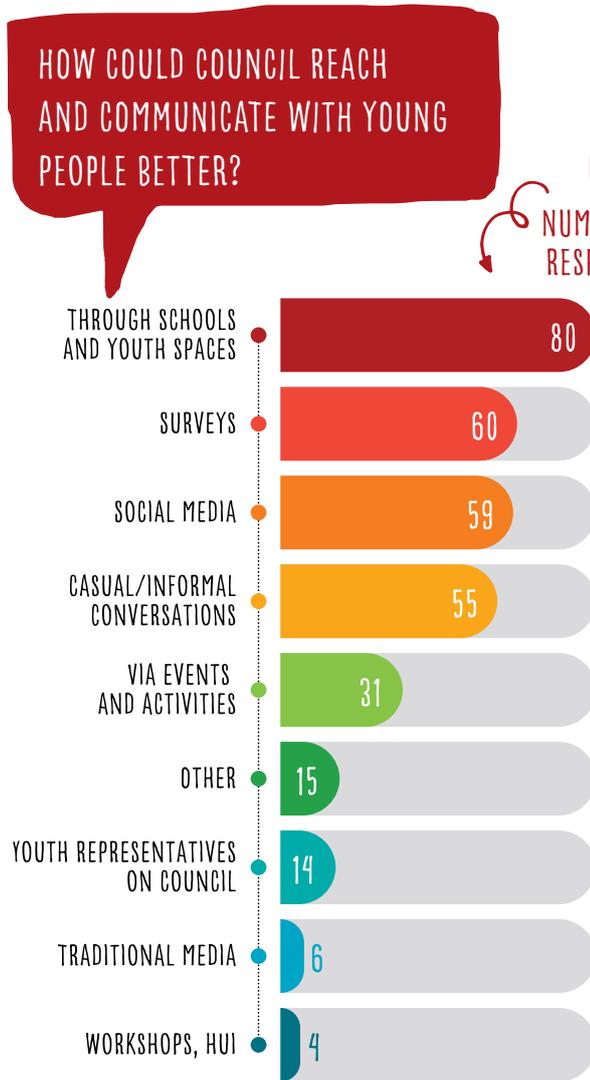
- 31% ● Rarely
- 30% ● Never
- 30% ● Sometimes
- 7% ● Mostly
- 2% ● Definitely

15% Only 15% felt they understood the role of local government and Council

9% Only 9% felt their voices were heard by Council

Participants were asked how Council could reach and communicate with young people better. Of the 324 responses to this question, through schools and youth spaces came out on top (80 or 25%). Of note, many commented around the desire for building a relationship through face to face interaction.

When asked what could be changed to better support young people in Whangārei, 223 comments were received. Most wanted to see more wellbeing and social services (particularly around mental health and housing support), as well as activities and places to hang out at.



“Health and well being, advice, help, counselling, mental health, suicides, drugs and substance abuse, violence and gang affiliation.”

“To be heard to be listened to and made a priority. Because at the moment we just feel like the annoying generation that’s messing everything up but if we had things to do maybe things would change.”

# LAST WORDS

## NGĀ KUPU WHAKAMUTUNGA

*"This is a place that SHOULD be affordable, safe and wonderful to live in. We need better social programs, public spaces and housing. We need less of a threatening police presence on our streets, less tolerance of bigotry and violence, and more tolerance of diversity."*

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*"To have a safe, friendly and fun city is all I'd want."*

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*"...If you are really reading this, thanks. (I have my doubts)"*





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