



Wollondilly Shire Council

Community Research

Prepared by: Micromex Research
Date: July 2023



Research Objectives

In June 2023, Wollondilly Shire Council commissioned Micromex Research to conduct a random telephone survey with 401 residents living in the Wollondilly Shire Council local government area (LGA).

Why?

- Understand and identify community priorities for the Wollondilly Shire Council LGA
- Identify the community's overall level of satisfaction with Council performance
- Assess and establish the community's priorities and satisfaction in relation to Council activities, services, and facilities
- Determine community priorities for the future of the LGA

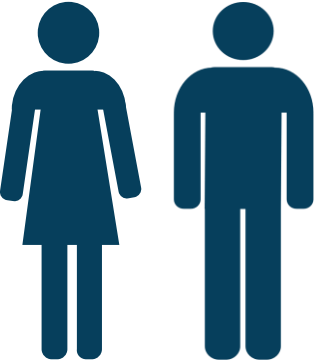
How?

- Telephone survey (landline (n=195) and mobile (n=206)) to N=401 residents
- We use a 5 point scale (e.g. 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied)
- Greatest margin of error +/- 4.9%

When?

- Implementation 20th – 27th June 2023

Gender



Female 51%

Male 49%

Ratepayer status



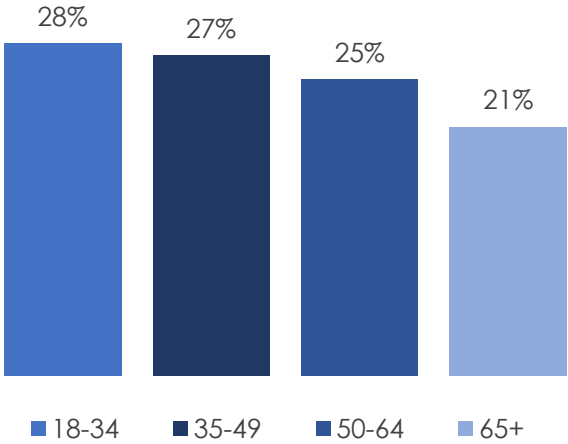
Ratepayer
87%



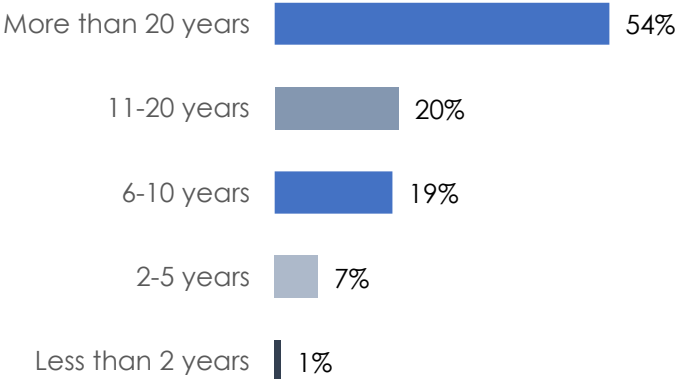
Non-ratepayer
11%

Other: 2%

Age



Time lived in the Wollondilly Shire Area



The Wollondilly Comparative Benchmark was composed from the Council areas listed below:

- Blue Mountains City Council
- Cessnock City Council
- Hawkesbury City Council
- Lithgow City Council
- Tweed Shire Council
- Wingecarribee Shire Council

Base: N = 401
The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2021 ABS Census data for Wollondilly Council.



Living in Wollondilly

Section One

Most Valued Aspects about Living in the Wollondilly Shire Area

Over half of residents value the rural aspect/country living/lifestyle and open spaces of living in the Wollondilly Shire area. While the peace and quiet of the area is valued by nearly a quarter of residents.

Example Verbatims

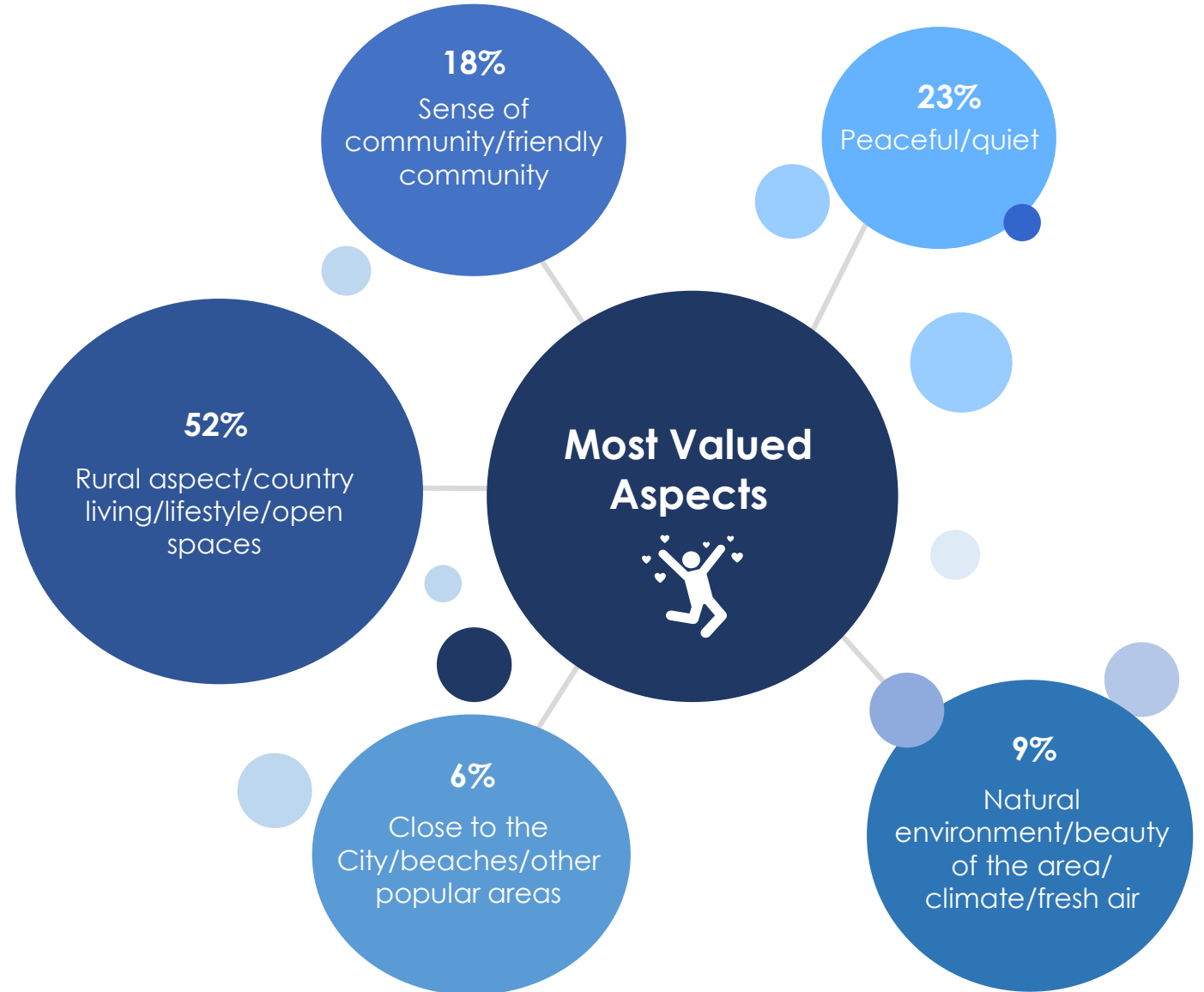
“Semi rural tranquility and open country”

“The natural environment and scenery”

“The friendliness of the community”

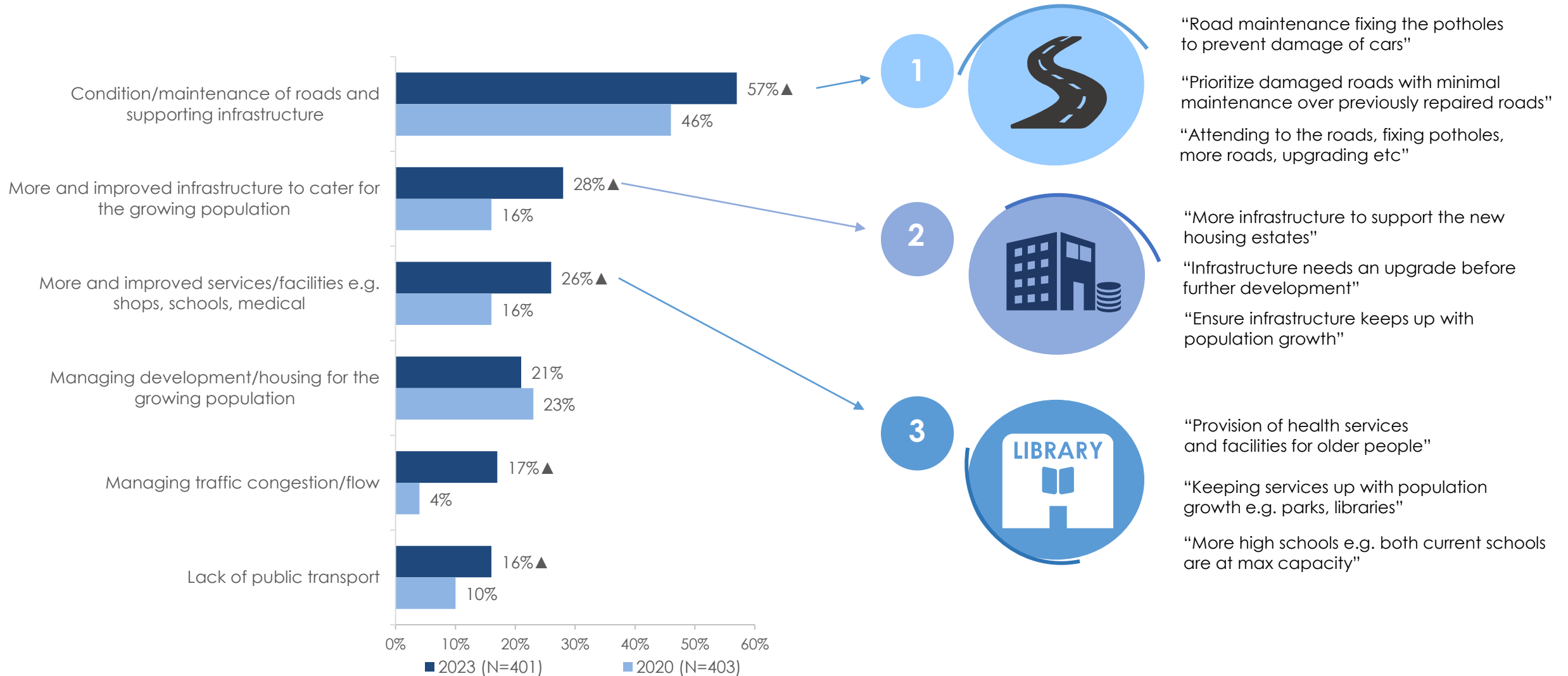
“Close to everything geographically, convenient”

“Peace and quiet and general tranquility”



Top Priority Areas

The top priority area for Wollondilly Shire remains addressing the condition/maintenance of roads and supporting infrastructure which has seen a 11% increase since 2020.



“Road maintenance fixing the potholes to prevent damage of cars”

“Prioritize damaged roads with minimal maintenance over previously repaired roads”

“Attending to the roads, fixing potholes, more roads, upgrading etc”

“More infrastructure to support the new housing estates”

“Infrastructure needs an upgrade before further development”

“Ensure infrastructure keeps up with population growth”

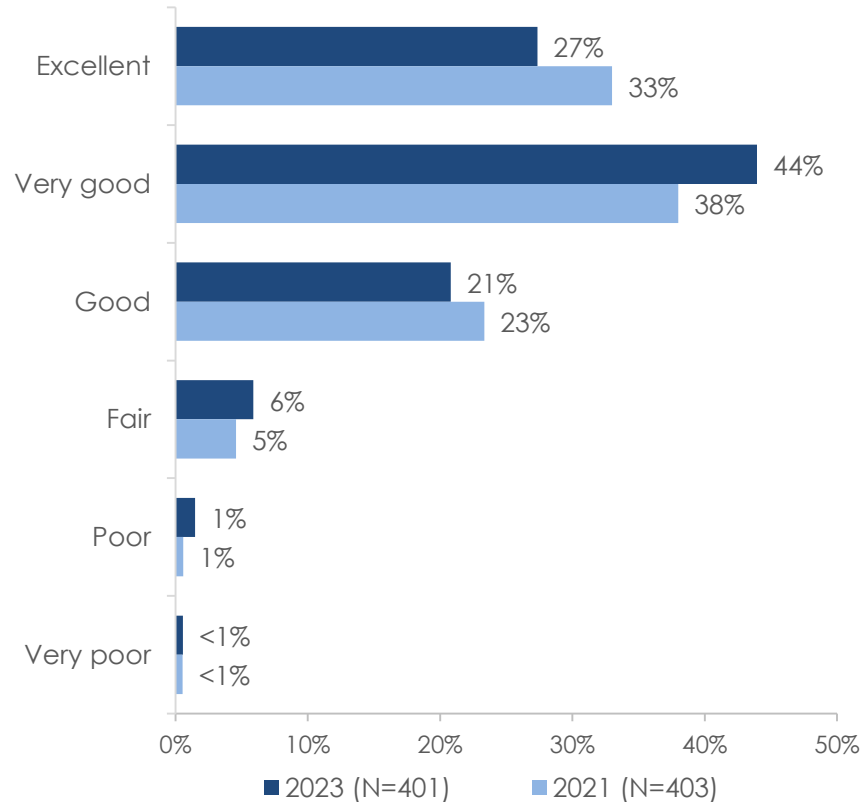
“Provision of health services and facilities for older people”

“Keeping services up with population growth e.g. parks, libraries”

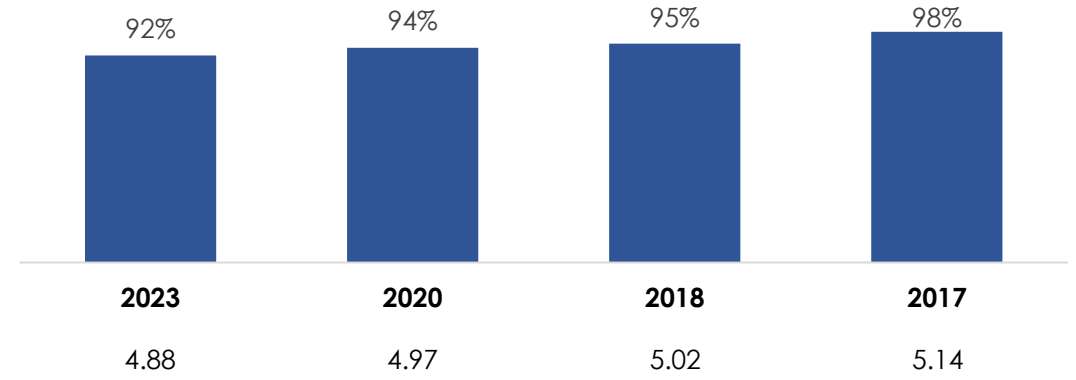
“More high schools e.g. both current schools are at max capacity”

Quality of Life

92% of residents rated their quality of life (QOL) as good to excellent, a slight decline from 2020, but still very consistent with the Micromex LGA Benchmark. Ratepayers had a significantly higher stated level of QOL, and by looking across years, we can see that non-ratepayers have declined in QOL much more rapidly than ratepayers in recent years.



Year on Year Trend
% rated 'good' to 'excellent'



	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean ratings	4.82	4.94	4.79	4.91	4.87	4.97	4.94▲	4.45
Top 3 Box %	91%	93%	93%	93%	89%	94%	93%▲	83%
Base	198	203	112	107	99	83	349	50

	Wollondilly Council	Micromex LGA Benchmark
Top 3 Box %	92%	93%
Mean rating	4.88	4.93
Base	401	31,242

Own Vs. Rent by Year (Top 3 Box%)	Ratepayer vs Non-ratepayer		% Gap
	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	
2017	99%	98%	-1%
2018	96%	96%	0%
2020	95%	90%	-5%
2023	93%	83%	-10%

Scale: 1 = very poor, 6 = excellent

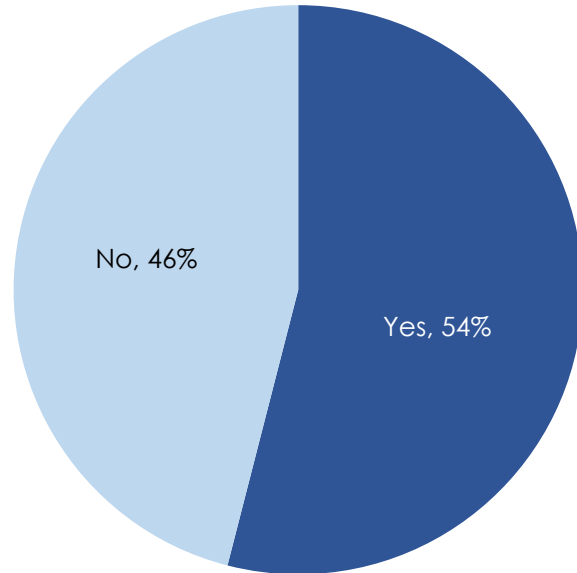
▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (by year/group)



Customer Service

Contact in the Last 12 Months

Over half of respondents contacted Council in the last 12 months, with a slight increase of 2% since 2020.

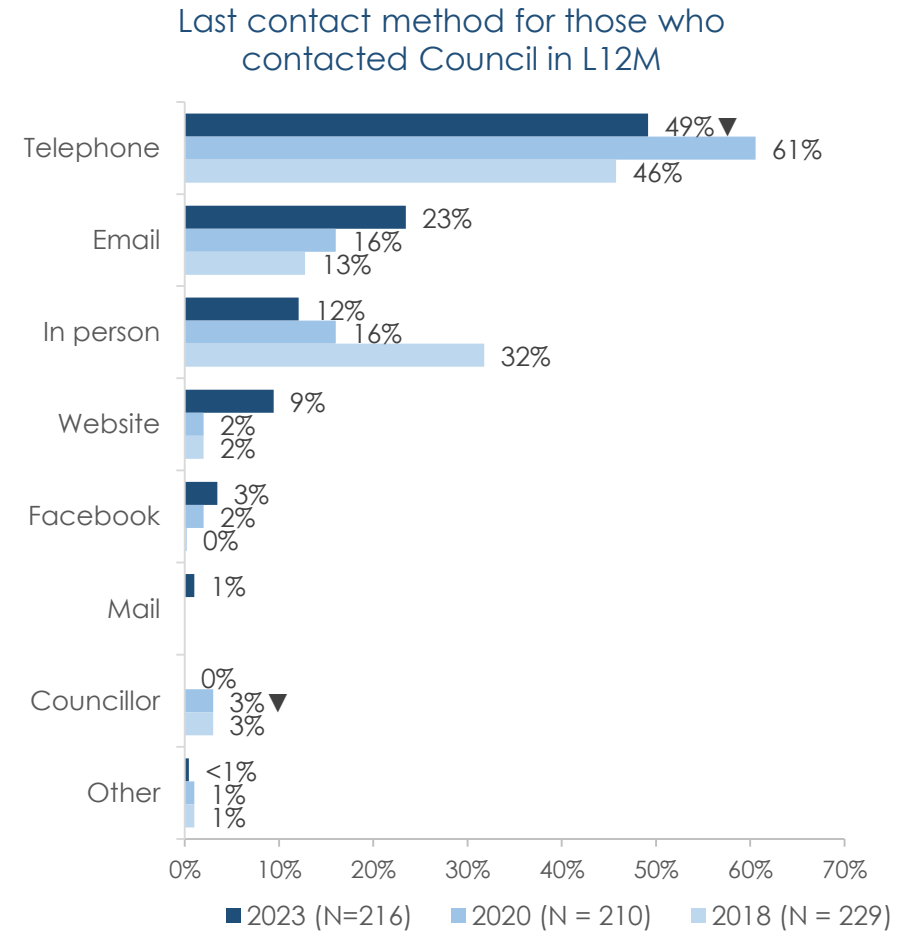
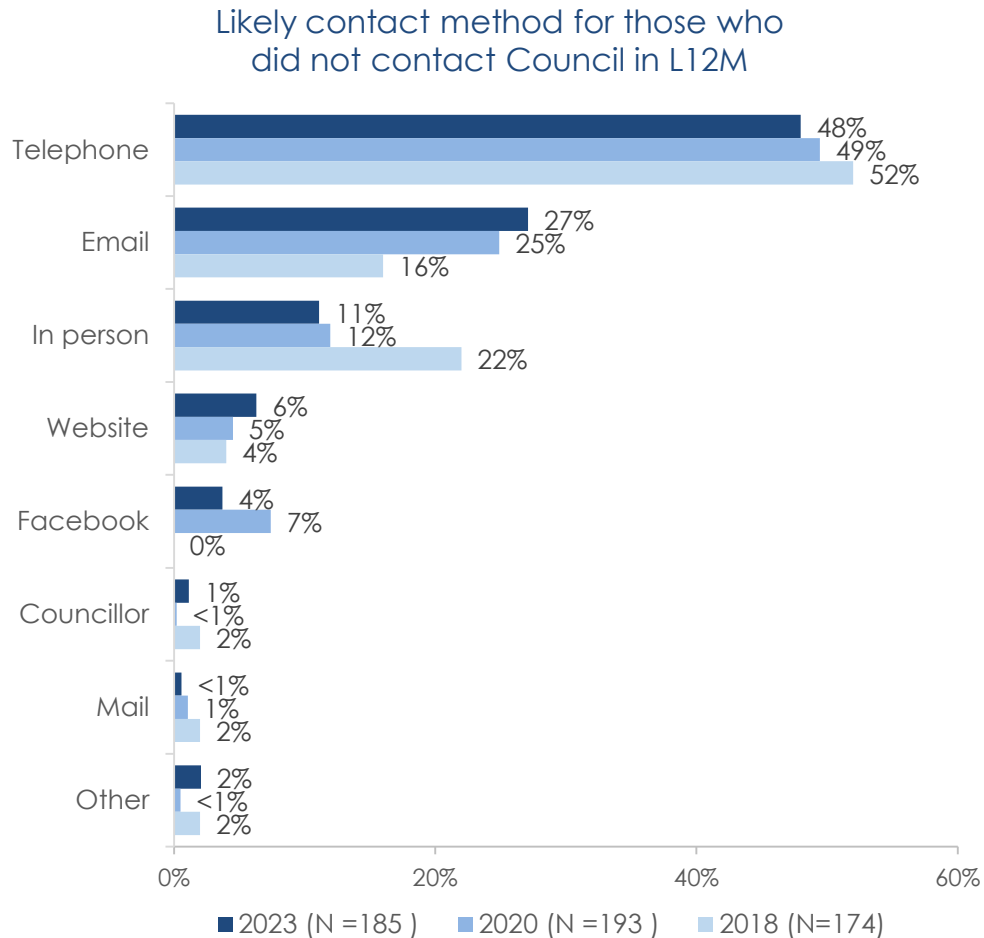


Have you had any contact with Wollondilly Council in the last 12 months?

	Overall 2023	Overall 2020	Overall 2018	Overall 2017	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
'Yes' %	54%	52%	57%	52%	53%	55%	49%	62%	58%	46%▼	57%▲	31%
Base	401	403	403	404	198	203	112	107	99	83	349	50

Method of Contact with Council

Telephone (48%) remains the most likely contact method for those who did not contact Council, and also the most used method for those respondents who previously contacted Council (49%). Email contact has increased in likeliness of use for both groups, while in person contact has decreased significantly over the last 5 years.



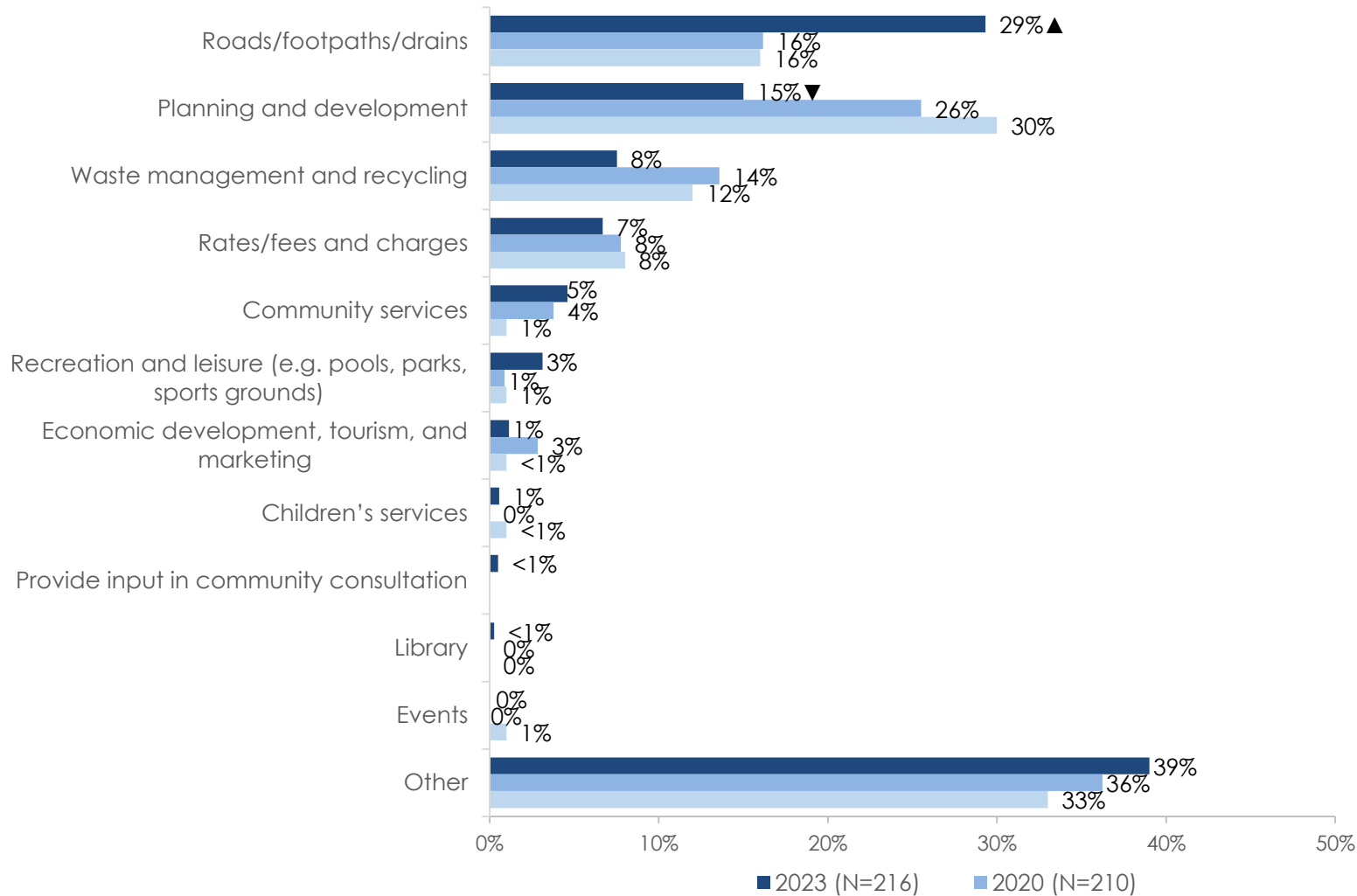
Please see Appendix 1 for results by demographics

▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (compared to 2020)

Q5b. If required, how would you most likely contact Council in the future? :
 Q6a. When you last made contact with Council staff was it by:

Nature of Enquiry

Resident's most common enquiry to Council involved other specified areas. While another common response was about roads, footpaths and drains which has increase by 13% since 2020.



Other specified	Count
Animal management	18
Tree management	12
Pet registration	11
Making a complaint	11
Fire permit	6
Acquiring a grant/approval or certification	6
Flood management/water ways	5
Maintaining streetscapes	5
Maintenance of facilities and amenities	4
Personal matters	3
Traffic management	3
Road management/parking	2
Don't know	2

Base: N = 216

Q6b. What was the nature of your contact?

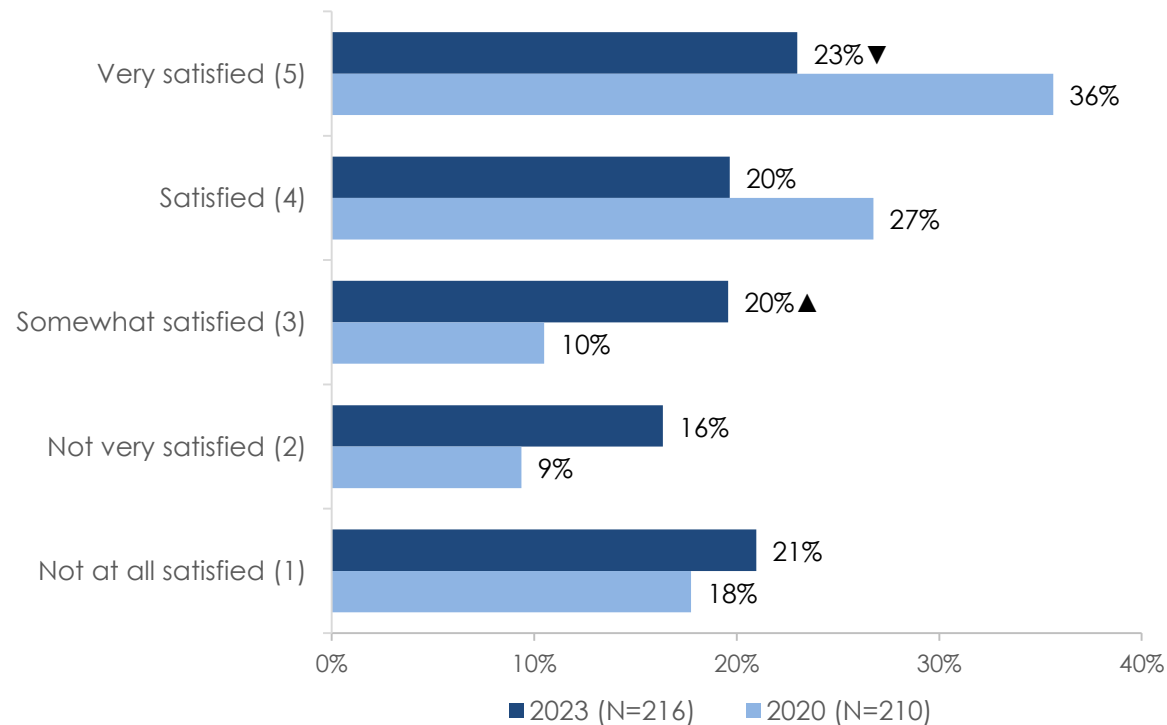
Please see Appendix 1 for results by demographics

▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (compared to 2020) 11

Satisfaction with Contact

Residents' overall satisfaction has significantly declined since 2020. Those who contacted by telephone were significantly more satisfied, while those who contacted via email were significantly less satisfied.

	Overall 2023	Overall 2020	Overall 2018	Overall 2017	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean ratings	3.08▼	3.53	3.35	3.52	3.03	3.13	2.89	3.07	3.20	3.21	3.09	3.01
Top 3 Box %	63%▼	73%	69%	75%	60%	65%	57%	66%	63%	65%	63%	61%
Base	216	210	229	212	104	112	55	66	57	38	200	16



Method of Contact (Q6a)	Telephone	Email	In person	Website
Mean ratings	3.42▲	2.58▼	3.38	2.45
Top 3 Box %	73%▲	48%▼	68%	40%▼
Base	106	51	26	20

Nature of Enquiry (Q6b)	Roads/ footpaths/ drains	Planning and development	Waste management and recycling	Rates/fees and charges	Community services
Mean ratings	2.62▼	2.75	4.38▲	3.96▲	3.83
Top 3 Box %	48%▼	57%	100%▲	93%▲	81%
Base	63	31	16	14	10

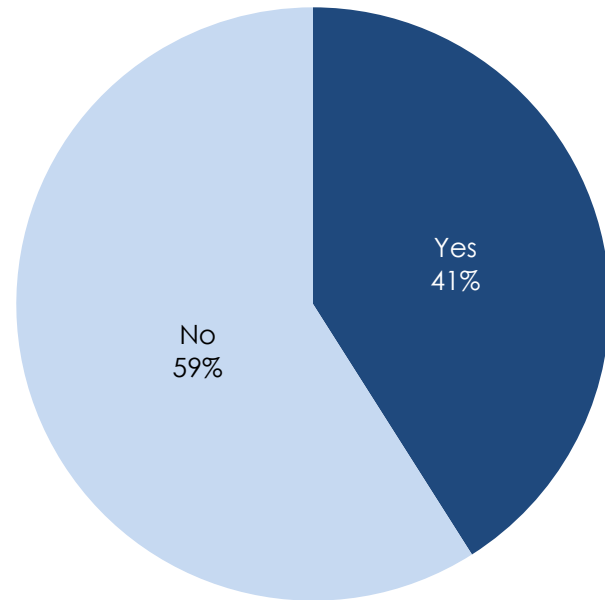
Base: N = 216

Q6c. Overall how satisfied were you with the way your contact was handled?

▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (by year/group)

Specific Information from Council

Less than half of respondents wish to receive specific information from Council (41%). Of this group most respondents want information about general planning/community information (31%) with Council actions/communication also being a highly sought after area.



	Overall 2023	Overall 2020
'Yes' %	41%▲	33%
Base	401	403

	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
'Yes' %	40%	41%	45%	46%	36%	36%	43%▲	23%
Base	198	203	112	107	99	83	349	50

Type of information	Count	N = 164
General planning/community information	51	31%
Council actions/communication	50	30%
Road development/maintenance	39	24%
Development plans	28	17%
Community events	17	10%
Waste management	9	5%
Rate information	9	5%
Public transport management/improvement	7	4%
Infrastructure plans	7	4%
Emergency management plans	6	4%
Construction updates	5	3%
Facility plans	5	3%
Personal matters	3	2%
Environmental protection	3	2%
Updates on playgrounds/parks	2	1%
Traffic management	1	1%

Base: N = 401

▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (compared to 2020/by group)

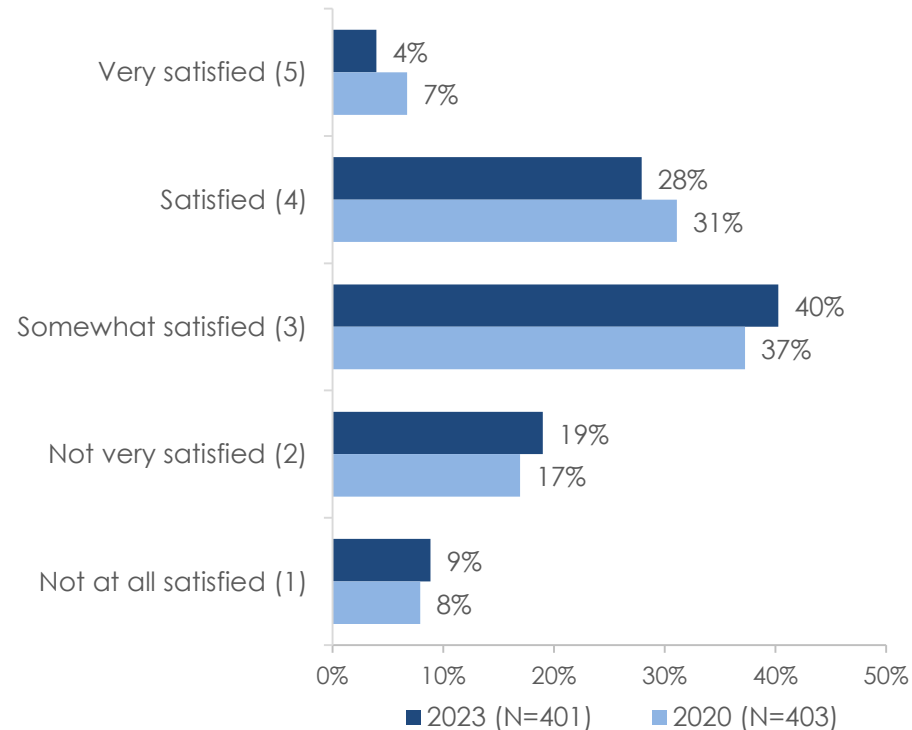
Q8a. Is there specific information you would like to receive from Council?



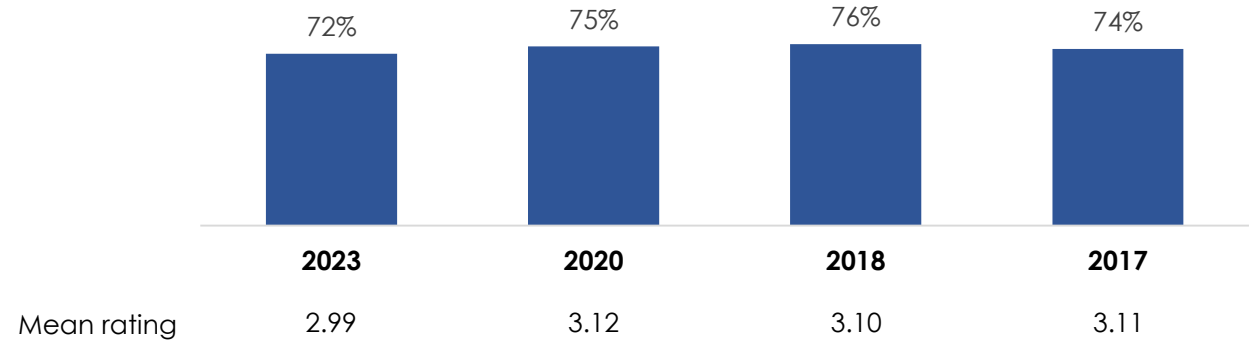
Summary of Council Services/Facilities

Overall Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with the performance of Council has softened since 2020, however not significantly. Satisfaction remains significantly below the Micromex LGA Benchmark. Looking across demographics, females and those over 65 were significantly more likely to be satisfied.



Year on Year Trend
% rated at least somewhat satisfied



	Wollondilly Council	Micromex Wollondilly Comparative Benchmark	Micromex LGA Benchmark*
Top 3 Box %	72%↓	78%	87%
Mean rating	2.99↓	3.19	3.46
Base	401	7,977	92,998

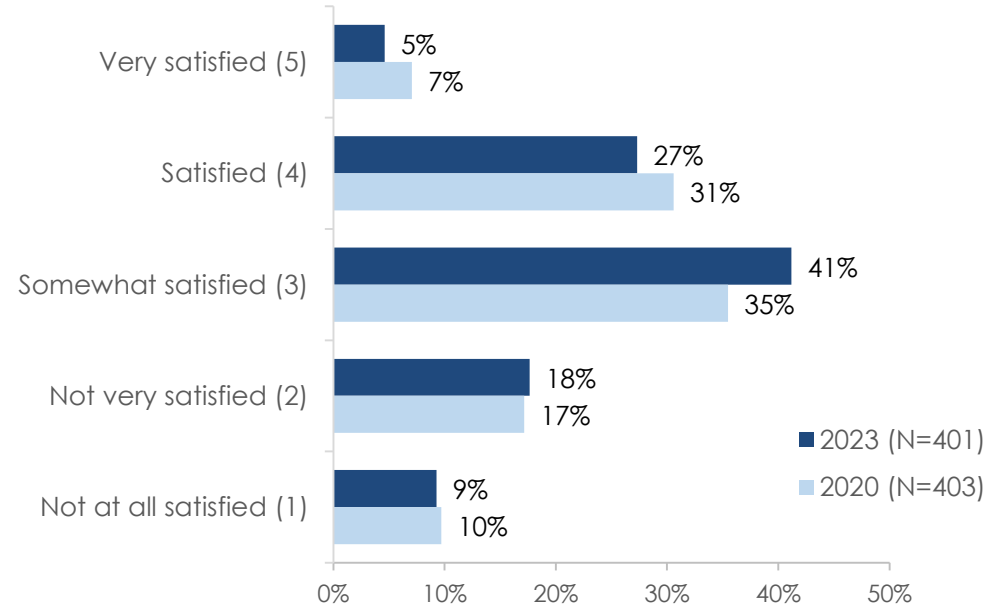
↑↓ = Significantly higher/lower than the Benchmark

	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean ratings	2.86	3.12▲	2.77▼	2.94	3.08	3.26▲	3.00	2.91
Top 3 Box %	69%	75%	66%	72%	75%	78%	73%	68%
Base	198	203	112	107	99	83	349	50

*See Appendix 1 for list of Councils included in Micromex benchmark
Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied
▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (by year/group)

Satisfaction with Councillor Performance

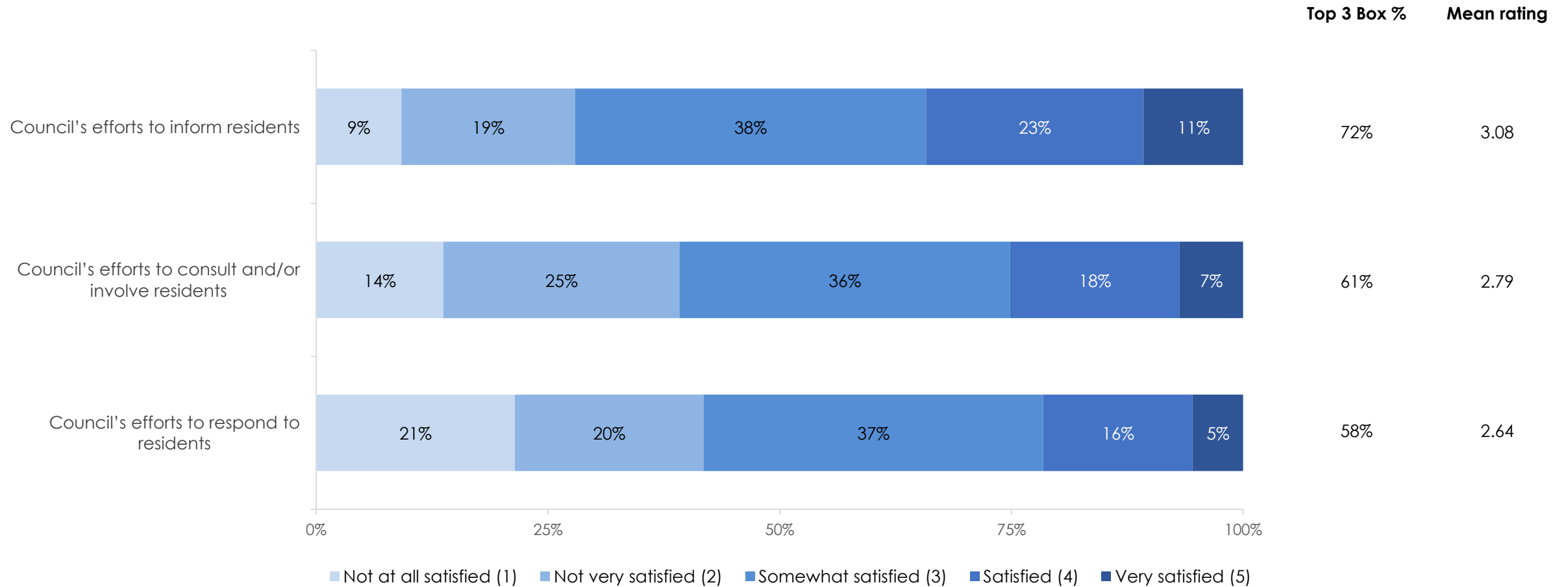
Satisfaction with the performance of Councillors remained steady, with 73% of residents stating they were at least somewhat satisfied. Females and those over 65 (like for overall satisfaction) were significantly more satisfied.



	Overall 2023	Overall 2020	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean ratings	3.00	3.08	2.87	3.14▲	2.84	2.94	3.09	3.21▲	3.03	2.80
Top 3 Box	73%	73%	68%	78%▲	68%	75%	74%	77%	74%	67%
Base	400	403	198	202	112	107	99	82	348	50

Satisfaction with Communication Efforts

The community is generally satisfied with Council's efforts to inform residents, however, there is a noticeable gap regarding efforts to involve and respond to residents. Looking across demographics, residents over 65 were more likely to be satisfied for all communication efforts.



Importance & Satisfaction – Highest/Lowest Rated Services/Facilities

A core element of this community survey was the rating of 28 facilities/services in terms of Importance and Satisfaction. The analysis below identifies the highest and lowest rated services/facilities in terms of importance and satisfaction.

Importance

The following services/facilities received the highest T2 box importance ratings:

Higher importance	T2 Box	Mean
Maintaining Council roads	97%	4.81
Supporting local jobs and businesses	93%	4.68
Emergency planning and management	91%	4.63
Long-term planning for the Shire	90%	4.58
Protecting the natural environment	88%	4.50

The following services/facilities received the lowest T2 box importance ratings:

Lower importance	T2 Box	Mean
Building bike paths	51%	3.45
Library services	54%	3.48
Supporting tourism	56%	3.57
Festival and events programs	58%	3.61
Swimming pools	64%	3.80

T2B = important/very important
Scale: 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important

Satisfaction

The following services/facilities received the highest T3 box satisfaction ratings:

Higher satisfaction	T3 Box	Mean
Ovals and sportsgrounds	87%	3.63
Library services	86%	3.86
Supporting tourism	85%	3.47
Recycling and waste management	82%	3.61
Parks and playgrounds	80%	3.49

The following services/facilities received the lowest T3 box satisfaction ratings:

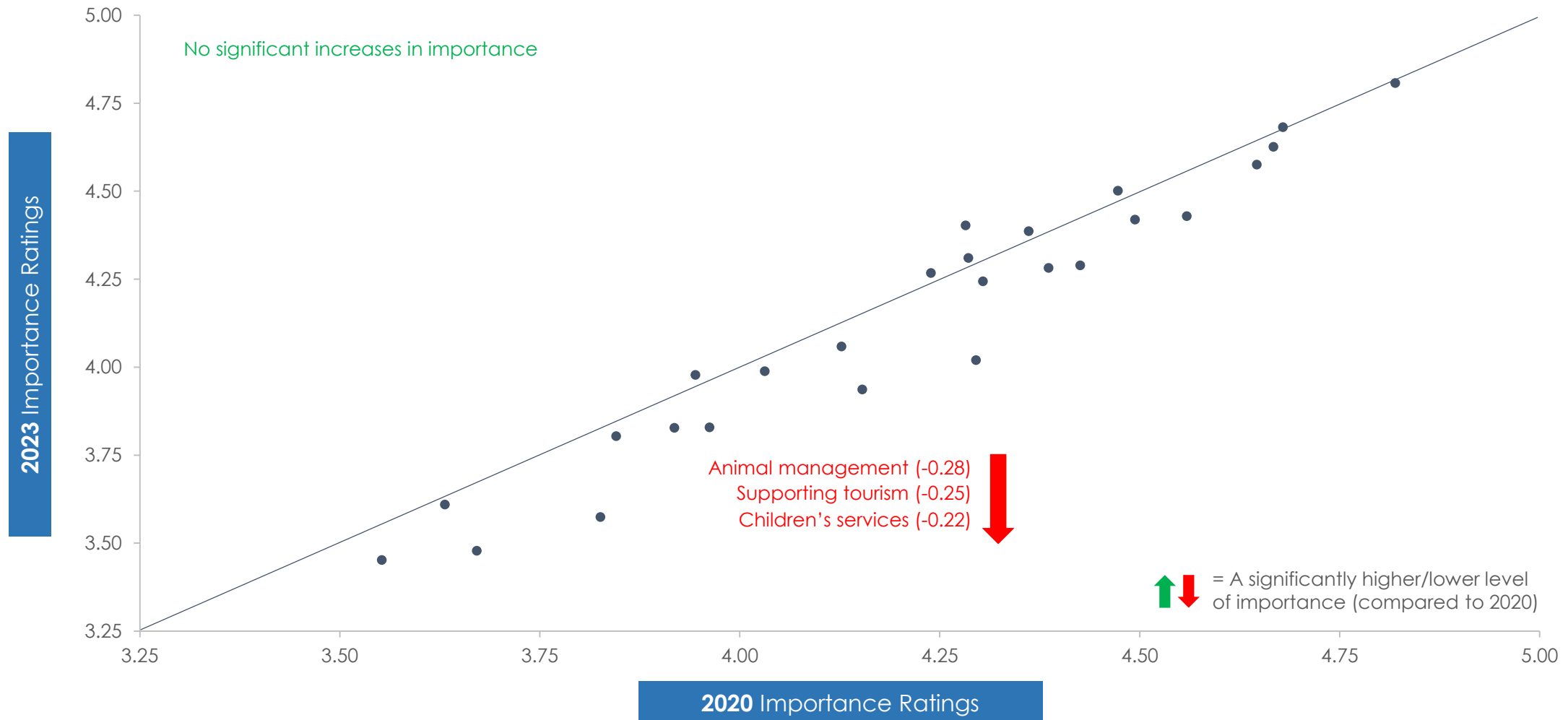
Lower satisfaction	T3 Box	Mean
Maintaining Council roads	25%	1.89
Maintaining footpaths	48%	2.52
Planning and development	49%	2.50
Building bike paths	49%	2.56
Long-term planning for the Shire	53%	2.58

T3B = somewhat satisfied/satisfied/very satisfied
Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

Services and Facilities – Importance: Comparison by Year

The below chart compares the mean importance ratings for 2023 vs 2020.

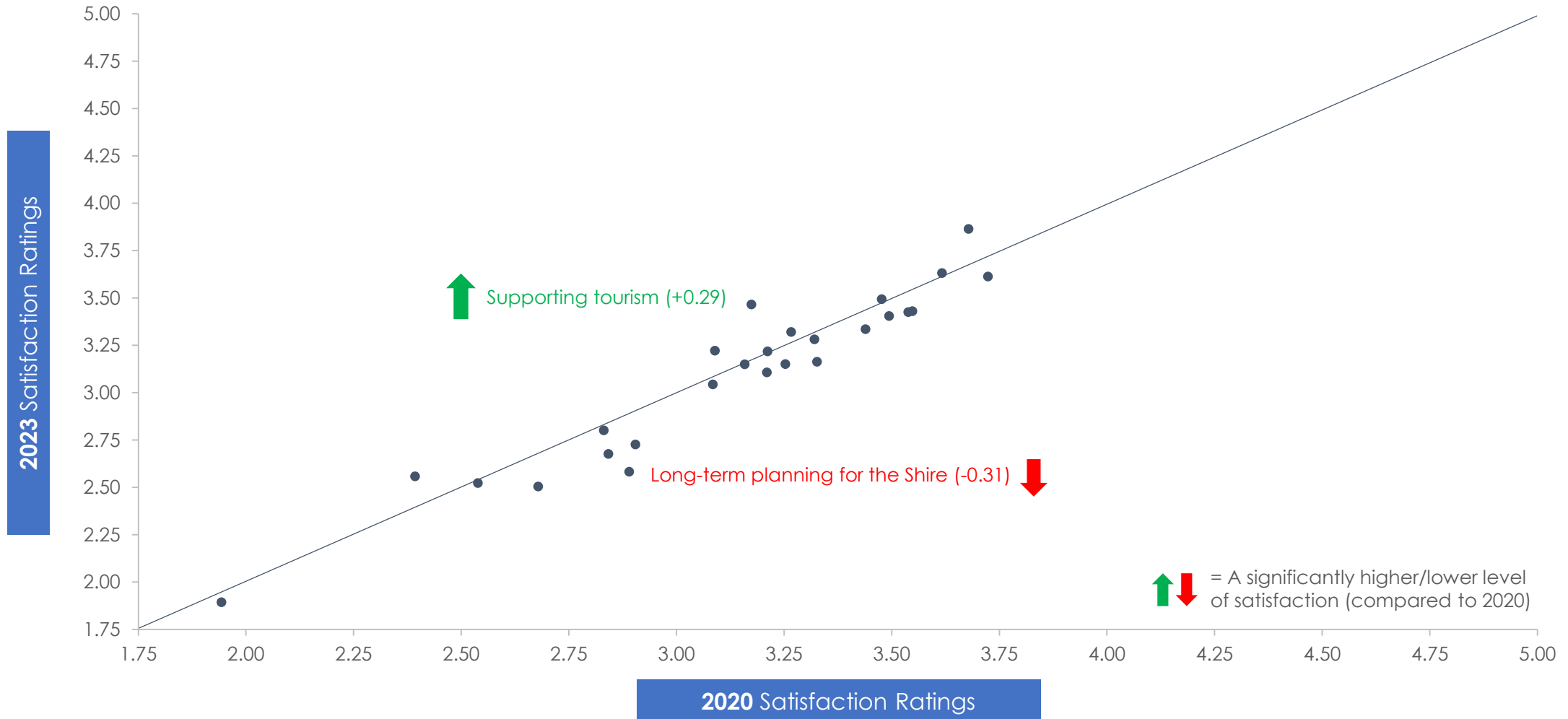
Importance significantly increased for for none of the 28 comparable services and facilities, there were also significant decreases in importance for 3 of the 28 services and facilities.



Services and Facilities – Satisfaction: Comparison by Year

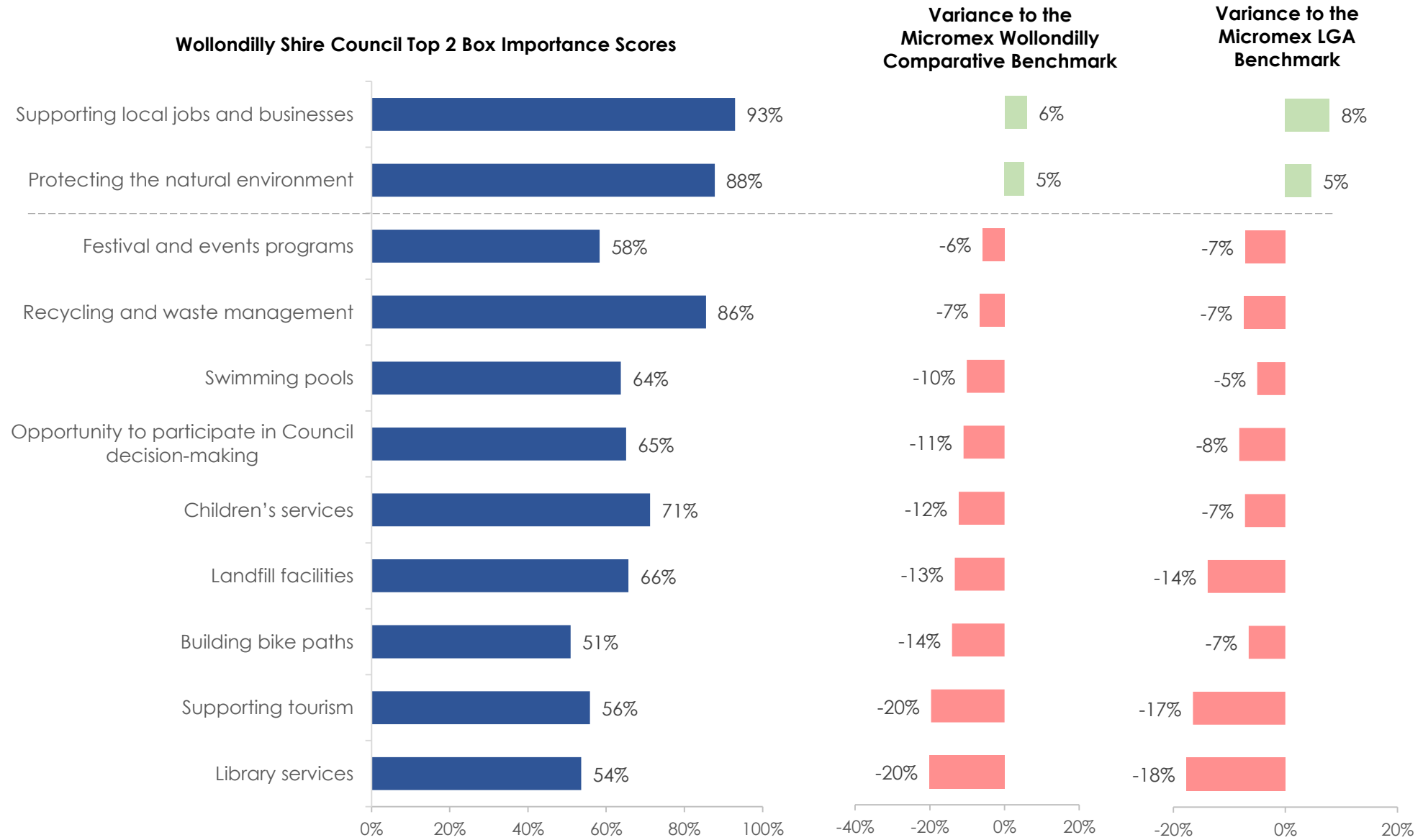
The below chart compares the mean satisfaction ratings for 2023 vs 2020.

Satisfaction significantly increased for 1 of the 26 comparable services and facilities, there were also significant decreases in satisfaction for 1 of the 26 services and facilities.



Summary Importance Comparison to the Benchmark

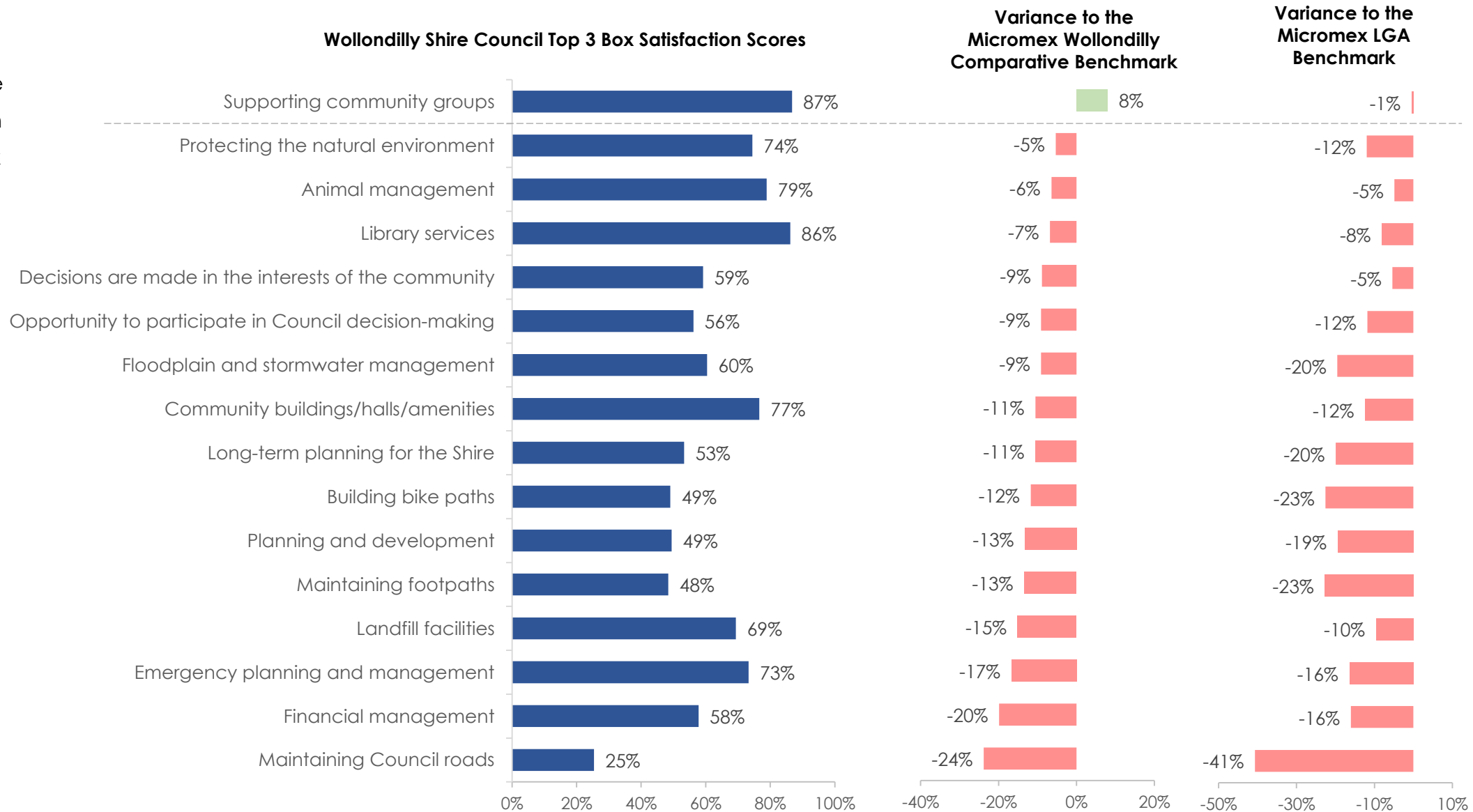
The chart to the right shows the variance between Wollondilly Shire Council top 2 box importance scores and the Micromex Wollondilly Comparative Benchmark. Services/facilities shown in the below chart highlight larger positive and negative gaps.



Note: Only services/facilities with a variance of +/- 5% to the Benchmark have been shown above. Please see Appendix 1 for detailed list
 Top 2 box = important/very important

Summary Satisfaction Comparison to the Benchmark

The chart to the right shows the variance between Wollondilly Shire Council top 3 satisfaction scores and the Micromex Wollondilly Comparative Benchmark. Services/facilities shown in the below chart highlight larger positive and negative gaps.

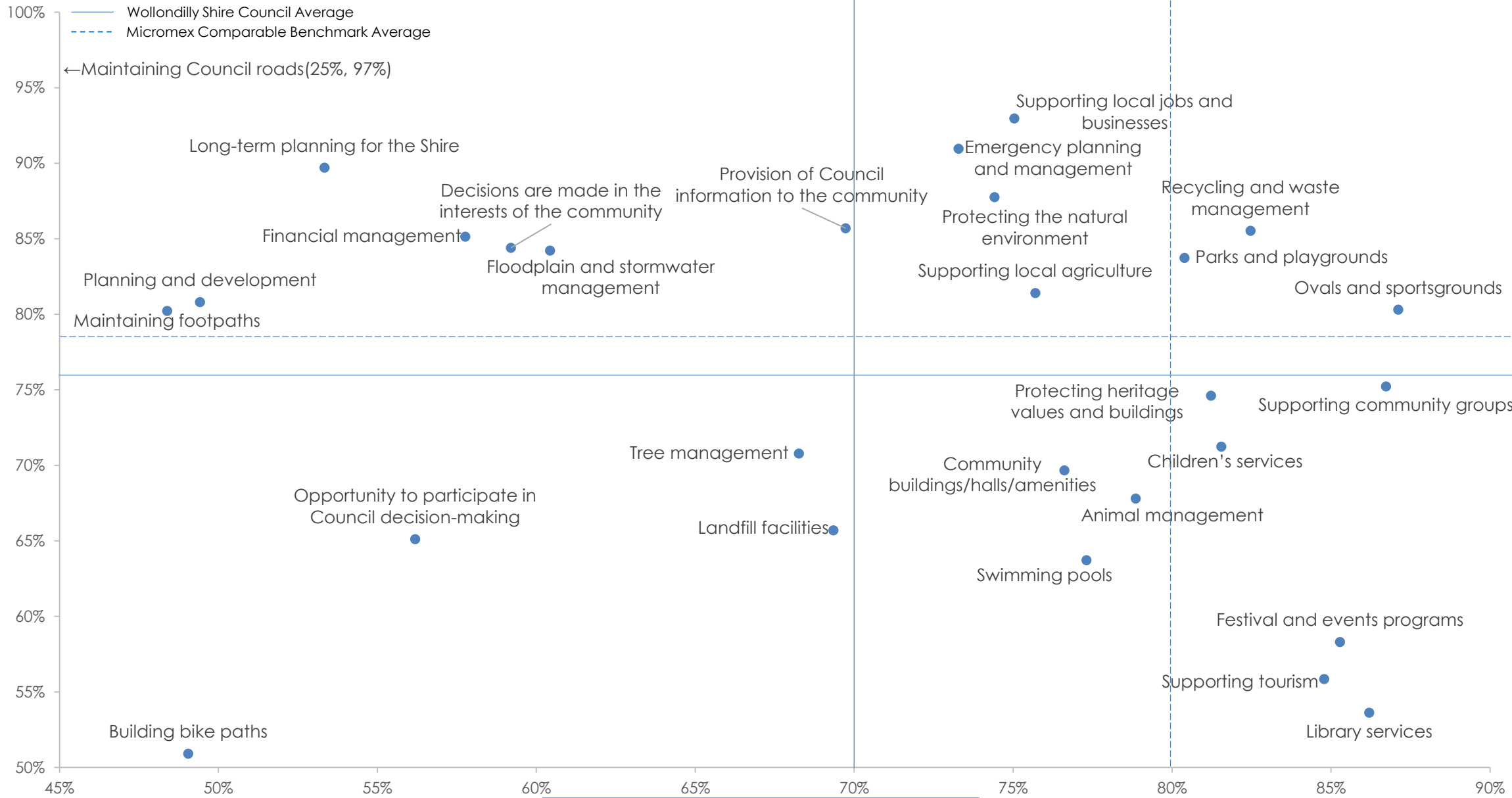


Note: Only services/facilities with a variance of +/- 5% to the Benchmark have been shown above. Please see Appendix 1 for detailed list
 Top 3 box = at least somewhat satisfied



Improve
Higher importance, lower satisfaction

Maintain
Higher importance, higher satisfaction



Importance

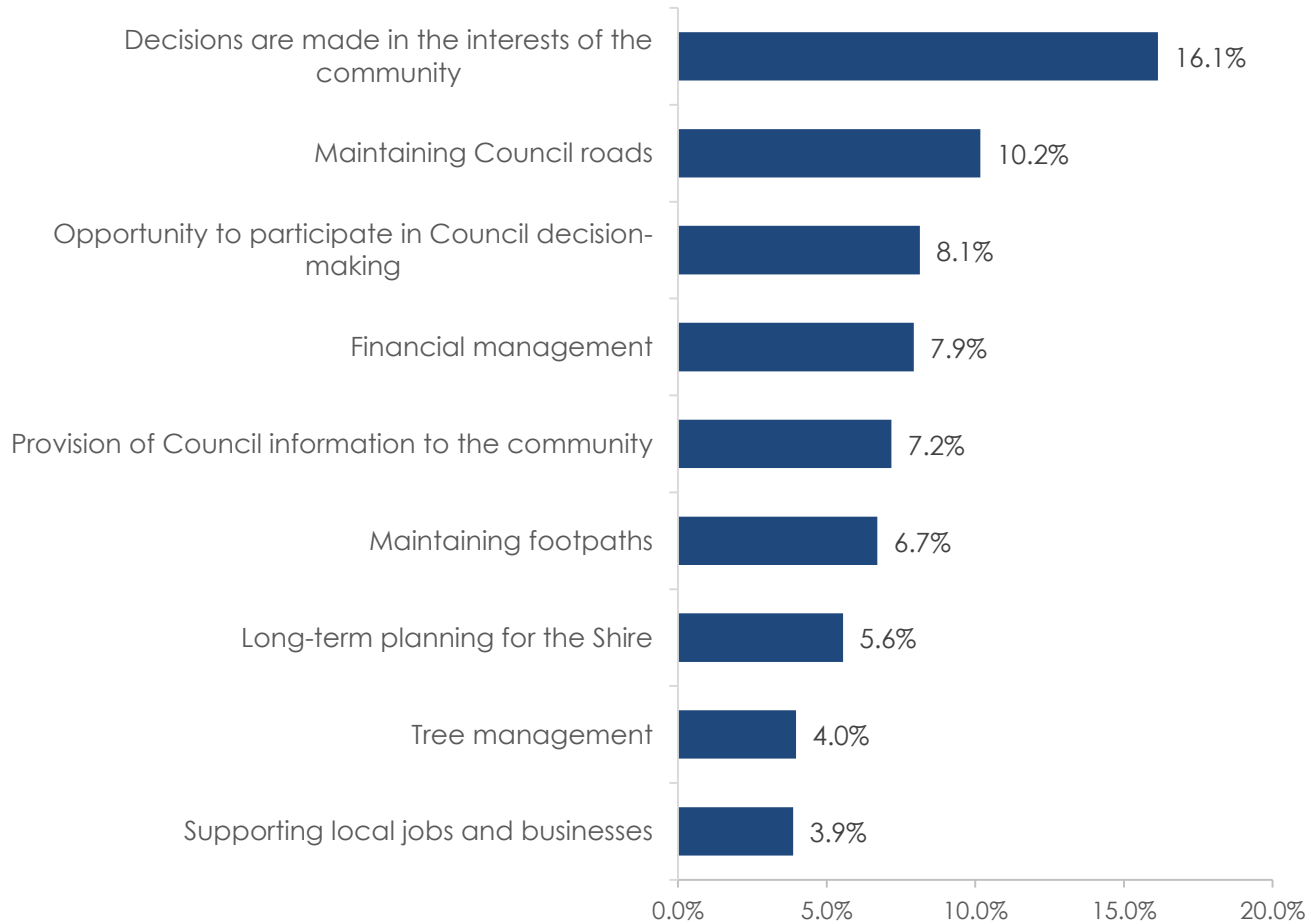
Niche
Lower importance, lower satisfaction

Satisfaction

Social Capital
Lower importance, higher satisfaction

Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction with Council – Services/Facilities

The score assigned to each area indicates the percentage of influence each measure contributes to overall satisfaction with Council. If Council can increase satisfaction in these areas it will improve overall community satisfaction.



The results in the chart to the left identify which services/facilities contribute most to overall satisfaction. If Council can improve satisfaction scores across these services/facilities, they are likely to improve their overall satisfaction score.

These top 9 services/facilities (so 32% of the 28 services/facilities) account for almost 70% of the variation in overall satisfaction. Therefore, whilst all 28 services/facilities are important, only a number of them are potentially significant drivers of satisfaction (at this stage, the other 19 services/facilities have less impact on satisfaction – although if resident satisfaction with them was to suddenly change they may have more immediate impact on satisfaction).

Barriers R² value = 0.454

Optimisers R² value = 0.301

Note: Please see Appendix 1 for complete list

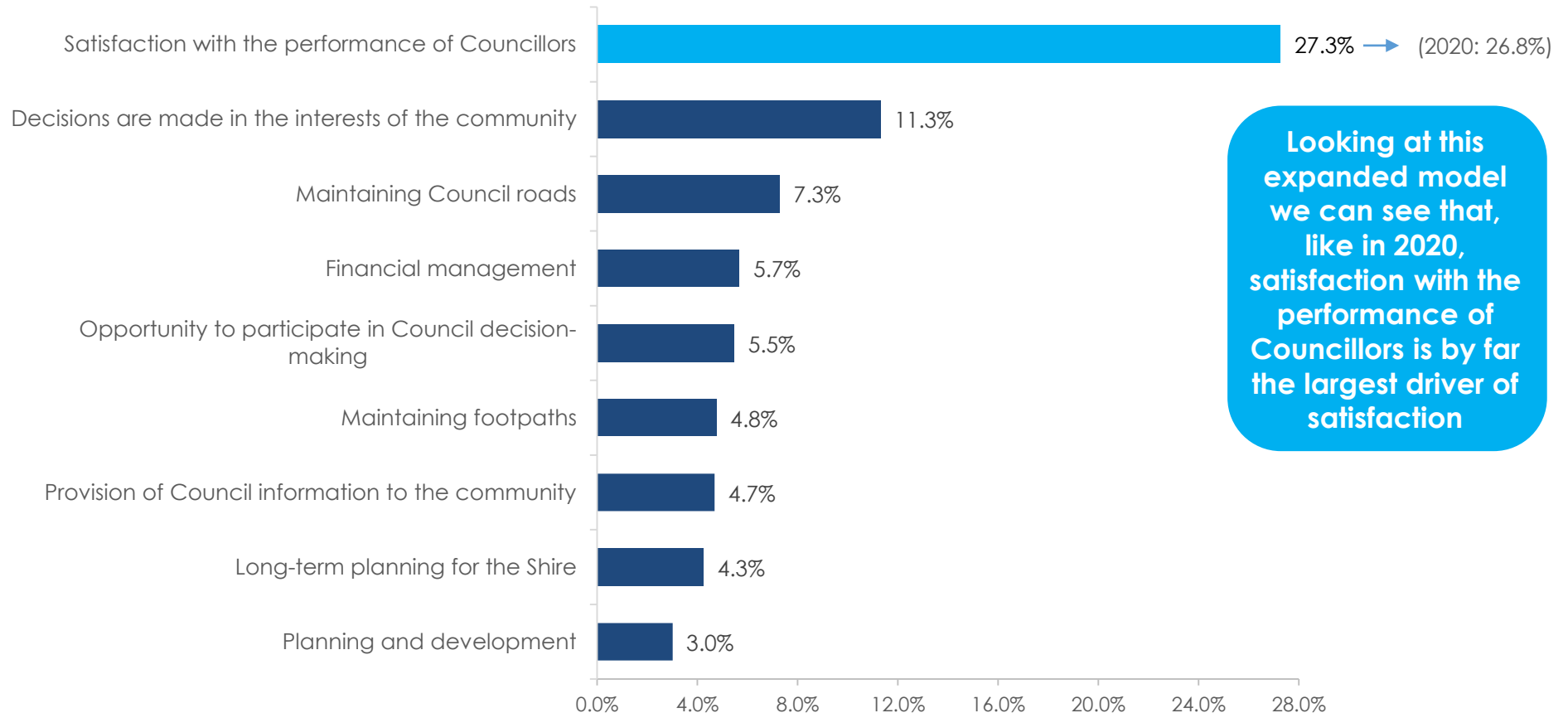
Dependent Variable: Q3a. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues, but across all responsibility areas?

Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction with Council – Expanded Model

The below chart is a re-run of the key drivers contributing to overall satisfaction, but expanding to include “Q3b. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Councillors?” as a potential driver.

‘Satisfaction with the performance of Councillors’ has remained the strongest driver (2023: 27.3%, 2020: 26.8%).

Drivers of Overall Satisfaction: Performance of Councillors added



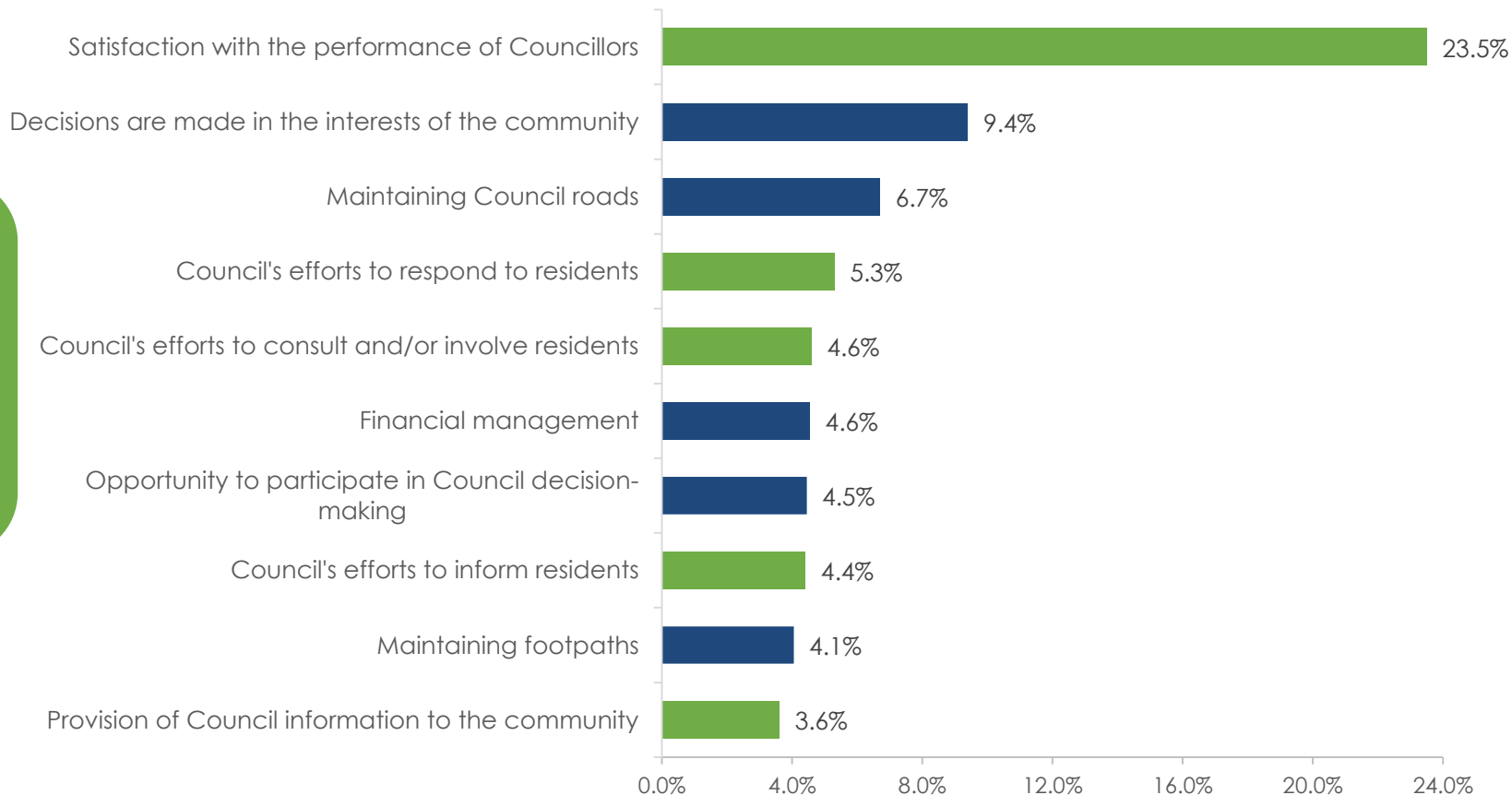
Looking at this expanded model we can see that, like in 2020, satisfaction with the performance of Councillors is by far the largest driver of satisfaction

Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction with Council – Final Model

The below chart is a further expanded model of the key drivers contributing to overall satisfaction, now with the inclusion of satisfaction with Councillor performance and of the three additional measures from Q3:

- Council's efforts to inform residents
- Council's efforts to involve residents
- Council's efforts to respond to residents

Drivers of Overall Satisfaction (Re-run): Top 10



Looking at this final model, Council's efforts to communicate with residents and the performance of Councillors contributes to over 41% of overall satisfaction with Council

Barriers R² value = 0.536

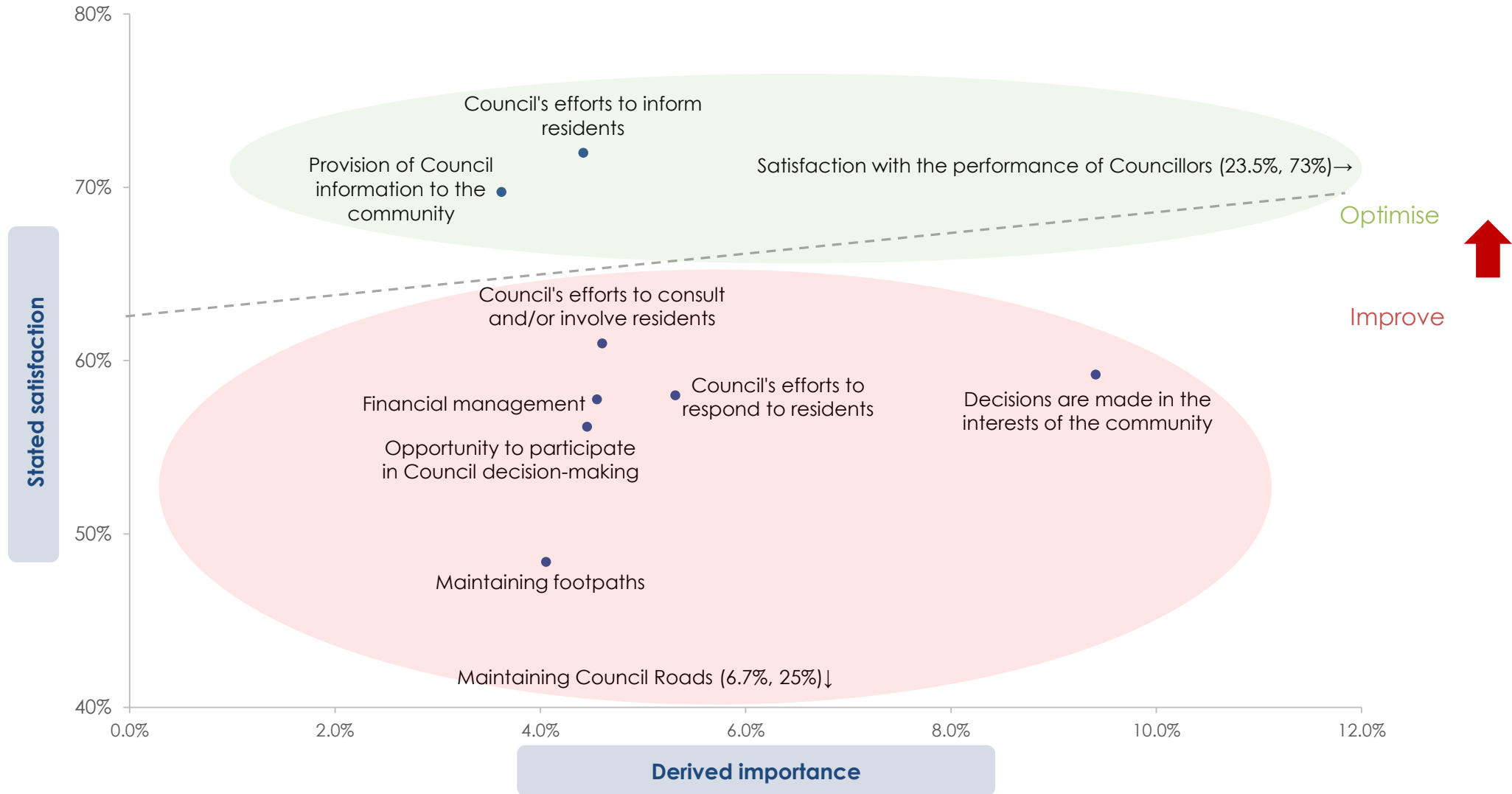
Optimisers R² value = 0.402

Dependent Variable: Q3a. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues, but across all responsibility areas?

Note: Please see Appendix 1 for complete list

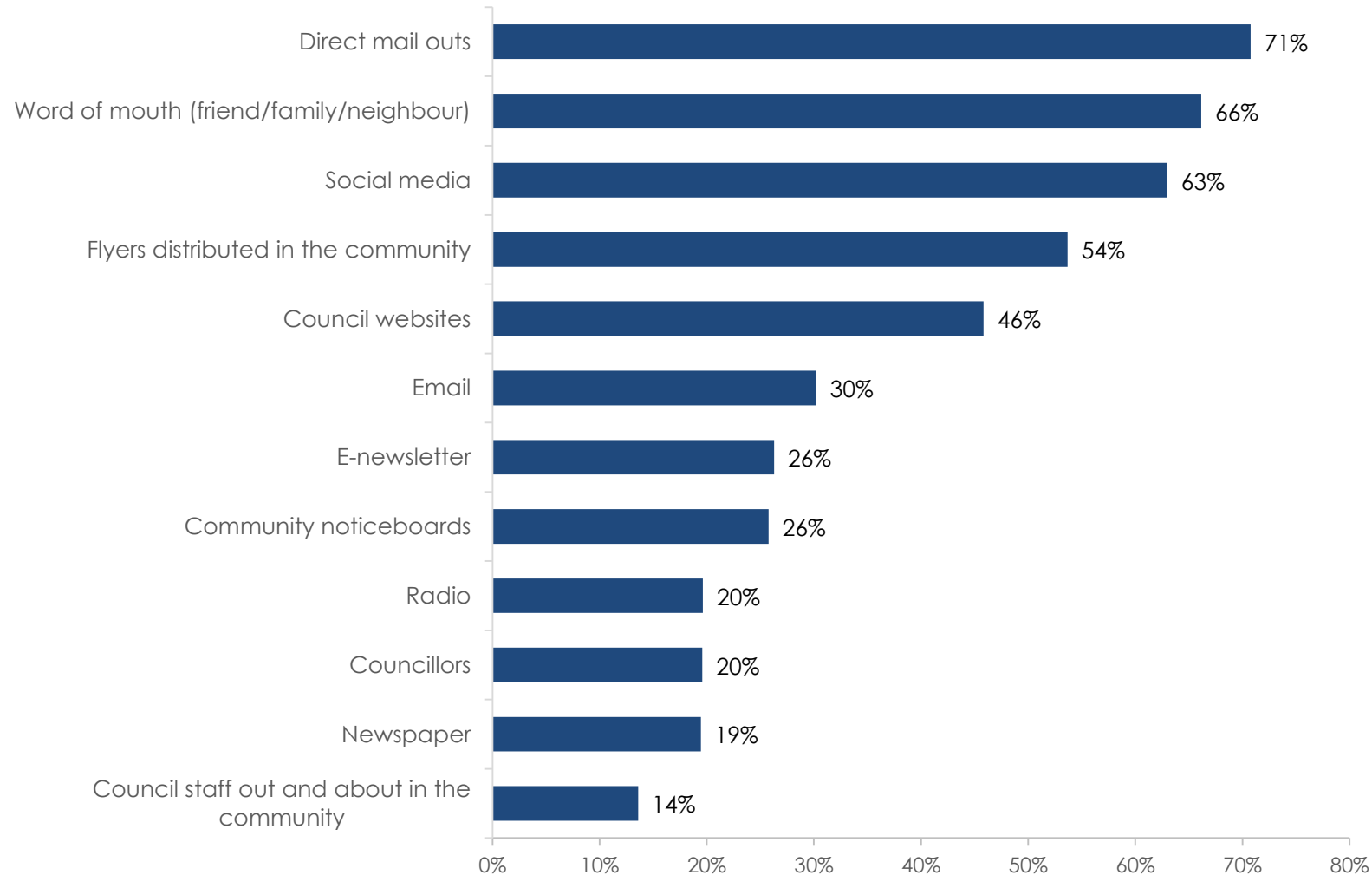
Mapping Stated Satisfaction and Derived Importance Identifies the Community Priority Areas

The below chart looks at the relationship between stated satisfaction (top 3 box) and derived importance (Regression result) to identify the level of contribution of each measure. Any services/facilities below the blue line (shown above) could potentially be benchmarked to target in future research to elevate satisfaction levels in these areas.



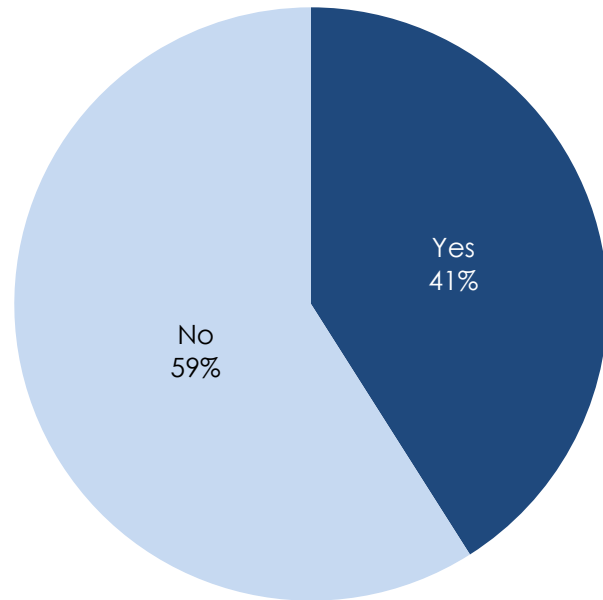
Method of Receiving Information

Direct mail outs is currently the most used method of receiving information from Council.



Specific Information from Council

Less than half of respondents wish to receive specific information from Council (41%). Of this group most respondents want information about general planning/community information (31%) with Council actions/communication also being a highly sought after area.



	Overall 2023	Overall 2020
'Yes' %	41%▲	33%
Base	401	403

	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
'Yes' %	40%	41%	45%	46%	36%	36%	43%▲	23%
Base	198	203	112	107	99	83	349	50

Type of information	Count	N = 164
General planning/community information	51	31%
Council actions/communication	50	30%
Road development/maintenance	39	24%
Development plans	28	17%
Community events	17	10%
Waste management	9	5%
Rate information	9	5%
Public transport management/improvement	7	4%
Infrastructure plans	7	4%
Emergency management plans	6	4%
Construction updates	5	3%
Facility plans	5	3%
Personal matters	3	2%
Environmental protection	3	2%
Updates on playgrounds/parks	2	1%
Traffic management	1	1%

Base: N = 401

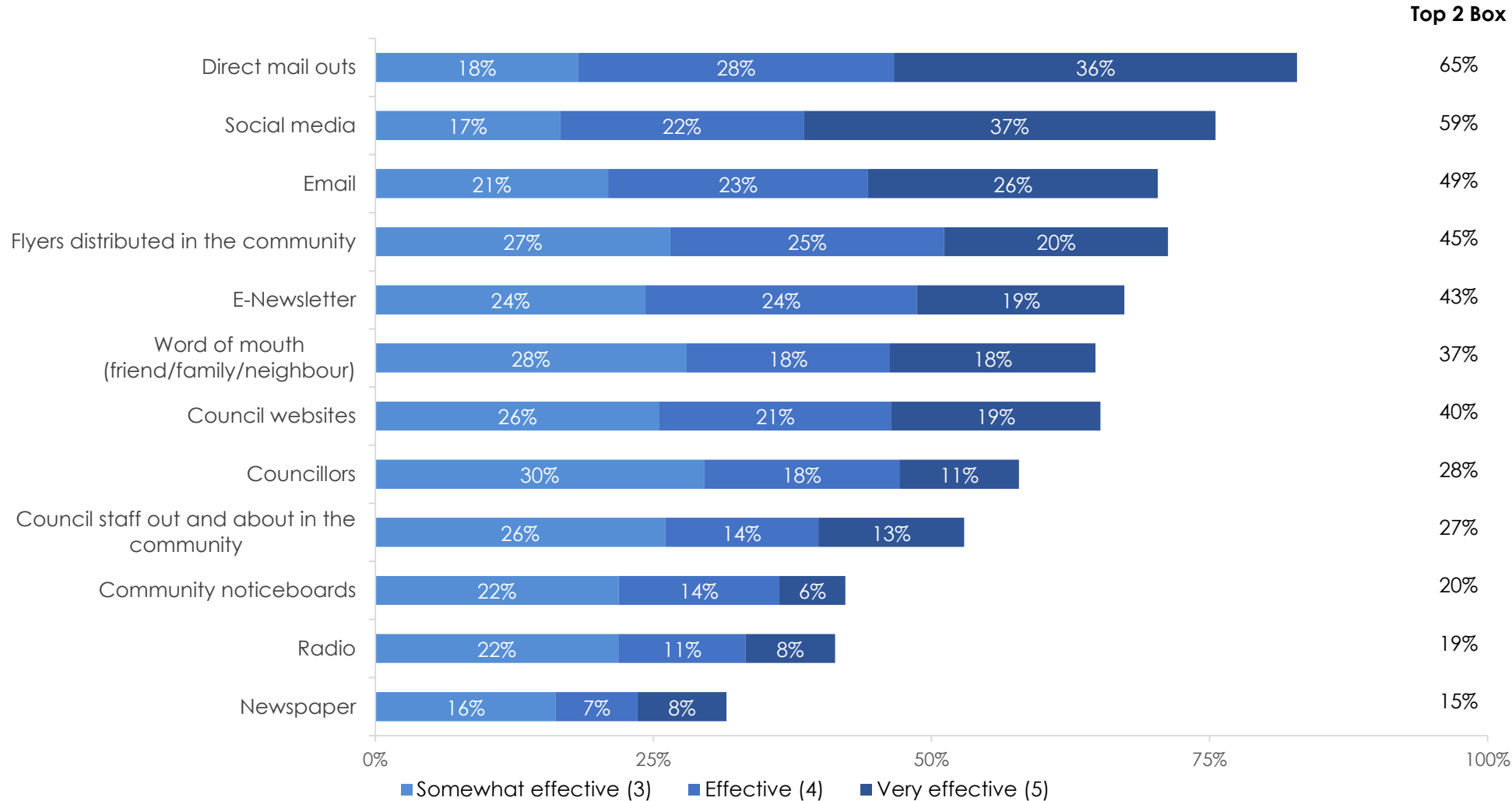
▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (compared to 2020/by group)

Q8a. Is there specific information you would like to receive from Council?

Q8b. What information would you like to receive from Council? 30

Effective Methods Of Communication

Direct mail outs is the most effective method of informing residents, closely followed by social media. Looking across demographics, social media is rated significantly more effective with those under 50 (their highest rated method), and is significantly less effective with those over 50, especially so for residents 65+.



Base: N = 401

Q9. How effective would the following methods be in keeping you informed about what is happening across the Shire?

Scale: 1 = not at all effective, 5 = very effective

Summary Findings



Satisfaction Scorecard

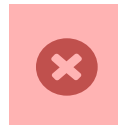
Looking at the satisfaction scorecard, the lowest scoring service areas are 'performance' and 'place and landscape' (particularly planning and development, and Council roads/footpaths/bike paths).



Good performance
(T3B sat score ≥80%)



Monitor
(T3B sat score 60%-79%)



Needs improvement
(T3B sat score <60%)

People	Environment	Performance
Library services	Recycling and waste management	Opportunity to participate in Council decision-making
Festivals and events programs	Landfill facilities	Decisions are made in the interests of the community
Children's services	Tree management	Long-term planning for the Shire
Supporting community groups	Protecting the natural environment	Financial management
Animal management	Emergency planning and management	Provision of Council information to the community
	Place and Landscape	Economy
Parks and playgrounds	Floodplain and stormwater management	Supporting tourism
Ovals and sportsgrounds	Planning and development	Supporting local agriculture
Community buildings/halls/amenities	Protecting heritage values and buildings	Supporting local jobs and businesses
Swimming pools	Maintaining Council roads	
	Maintaining footpaths	
	Building bike paths	

Summary Findings

Overall satisfaction

Overall, 72% of residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of Council over the last 12 months.



Satisfaction with Councillor performance

73% of residents stating they are at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of Councillors.



Council's efforts to inform residents

72% of residents stating they are at least somewhat satisfied with Council's efforts to inform to residents.



Satisfaction with council contact

63% of residents (who had contacted in the last 12 months) are at least somewhat satisfied with the way their contact with Council was handled.



Quality of Life in the LGA

92% of residents rate their quality of life as 'good' to 'excellent' in the Wollondilly Shire LGA.



Where are we now?

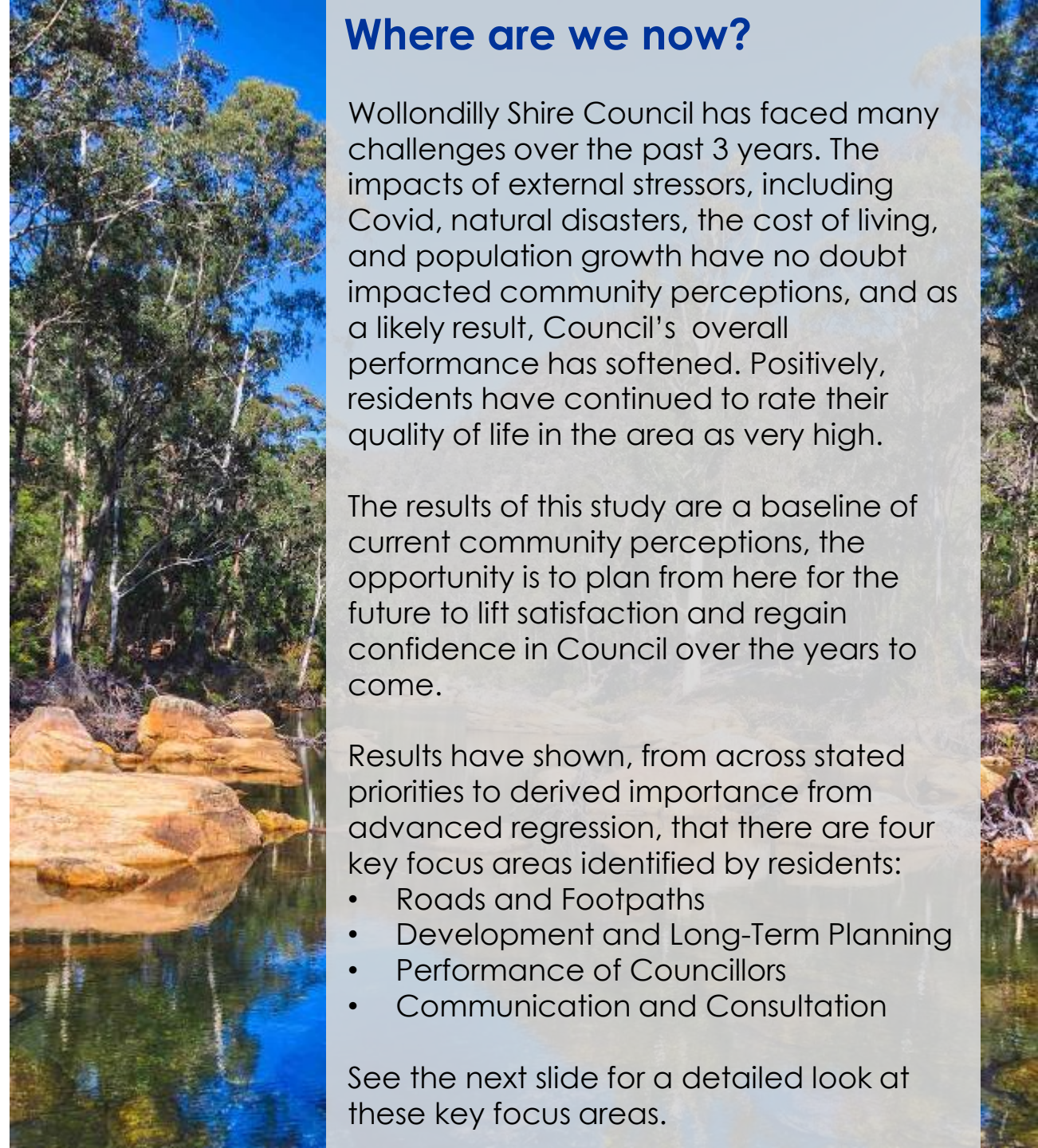
Wollondilly Shire Council has faced many challenges over the past 3 years. The impacts of external stressors, including Covid, natural disasters, the cost of living, and population growth have no doubt impacted community perceptions, and as a likely result, Council's overall performance has softened. Positively, residents have continued to rate their quality of life in the area as very high.

The results of this study are a baseline of current community perceptions, the opportunity is to plan from here for the future to lift satisfaction and regain confidence in Council over the years to come.

Results have shown, from across stated priorities to derived importance from advanced regression, that there are four key focus areas identified by residents:

- Roads and Footpaths
- Development and Long-Term Planning
- Performance of Councillors
- Communication and Consultation

See the next slide for a detailed look at these key focus areas.



Summary Focus Areas

Roads and Footpaths

- 'Maintaining local roads' and 'maintaining footpaths' have the lowest Top 3 Box satisfaction of all measures (25% and 48% respectively), significantly below the Micromex Benchmark.
- When asked about the top priorities for the future of the area in the next 10 to 20 years, well over half of residents (59%) stated the condition/maintenance of roads and supporting infrastructure.
- Looking at our final regression model for drivers of satisfaction, maintaining roads and footpaths both featured in the top drivers.

Development & Long-Term Planning

- Although not identified as a top driver, residents have made it clear in their stated priorities for the future that development and long-term planning are key areas for Council to Focus on.
- Further to this, development and long-term planning had some of the highest Performance Gaps across services/facilities.



Performance of Councillors

- Residents' satisfaction with the performance of Councillors remained at the same level as in 2020.
- Advanced regression analysis identified satisfaction with the performance of Councillors as the highest contributing factor to satisfaction with the perceived performance of Council overall, just as was seen in 2020.

Communication and Consultation

- Councils efforts to communicate and consult with residents are a very strong theme amongst drivers of satisfaction.
- Behind Councillor performance, 'Decisions are made in the interests of the community' is the next highest driver of satisfaction and has one of the highest Performance Gaps across the services/facilities.

Every interaction with Council is an opportunity to increase satisfaction levels

Moving forward, Council should continue to explore resident expectations, especially when regarding long term planning for the region, development, maintenance of roads/footpaths, and the perceived performance of Councillors.