

# Budget 2025 SURVEY

JUNE 2024



**WHAT  
WE  
LEARNED**



# Background

## Understanding our community's views on Service Levels

Town residents and businesses were invited to check-in prior to developing the 2025 Budget, which is the final year of the Town's four-year budget. The information gathered from the community during this engagement will help Council understand how the community feels about various service levels and will be one piece of the information that helps them make decisions about adjusting the budget for 2025.

There were two different opportunities for participants to provide feedback in the initial phase of the 2025 Budget Engagement, which was open May 23 through June 9, 2024:

- Survey
- Visioner Idea Board

## Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to complete the Budget 2025 survey. Community involvement is a priority for the Town and survey responses help Council and Administration understand what services are a priority to the community and will help shape decisions around service level adjustments for the 2025 Budget.

## Our Goals

1. To educate the community on how tax dollars support various Town services and understand whether the community feels the allocation of dollars for each service area is appropriate.
2. Identify potential areas for service level changes in order to help inform Council in making budget decisions around service levels for the 2025 Budget year.

2024

## TIMELINE



Phase 1: Survey and Visioner Idea Board open to the community for input.



2025 Budget What We Learned Report presented to council and available to the community.



Phase 2 engagement (if required): community will have the opportunity to provide feedback on any proposed 2025 service level changes.

## Survey Respondent Data

- There were 945 total survey participants.
- Of these, 925 responded as "Yes" to Q: 'Do you live, rent, or operate a business in the Town of Okotoks?'
- As such, 20 survey participants have been removed from our statistics and the 925 remaining respondents are referred to as participants or 'Town Respondents' for the remainder of this report.
- Results have been rounded to remove decimal places. As a result, adding up values may not exactly equal the total expected.
- To improve readability, bars with values less than 5% may not have the value shown.

# Community Engagement


Through the community engagement process and the Town's four guiding engagement principles (as part of the Town's Community Engagement Policy), we are committed to listening to what the community has to say, and share how the input gathered contributes to Town projects and decisions.

## Who did we engage?

- Okotoks residents and business owners.
- Shape Our Town registered members, who have indicated an interest in Budget and Taxes.
- Citizen Panel, a group of engaged citizens who signed up to be contacted for public consultation opportunities.
- In an effort to provide more equitable access to participate, information and surveys were available at the Recreation Centres and Seniors Centre, and invitations to participate were sent out to several different agencies and social service groups through the Community & Social Development team.
- High School students were invited to participate through an email to schools.

## LEVEL OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This project falls within the **CONSULT** level.

 **925**  
Residents or business owners who live or work in Okotoks and completed the survey.

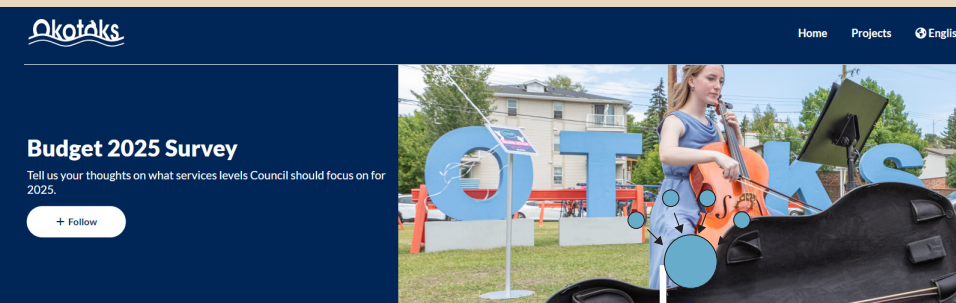
 **40**  
Contributions on the visioner idea board.

 **1911**  
Community members visited the budget engagement page.

 **65**  
People signed up to follow the project. Of those 97% were new followers.

 **569**  
Comments provided on the open ended value for taxes question.

 **62%**  
Increase in participation over the last budget survey done in 2022, which had 582 responses.



	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<b>GOAL</b>	To provide balance and objective information to assist the public in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives and decisions.	To work with public to make sure concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
<b>PROMISE</b>	"We will keep you informed."	"We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision."	"We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision."	"We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible."	"We will implement what you decide."

# PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

The Town of Okotoks is committed to the following guiding principles every time we engage with the public. These are the foundations of our practice.



## ACCOUNTABLE

We uphold commitments made to the public. We evaluate our processes and outcomes, in order to learn from our experiences, track our progress, and improve over time.



## TRANSPARENT

Clear, timely and complete information is provided to share processes and decisions.



## EQUITABLE

Diverse opportunities are provided so that perspectives and ideas from all interested parties are considered.



## RELATIONAL

We value the people we are engaging with and put them in the center of our processes, building relationships, understanding and trust.



# Overview & Highlights

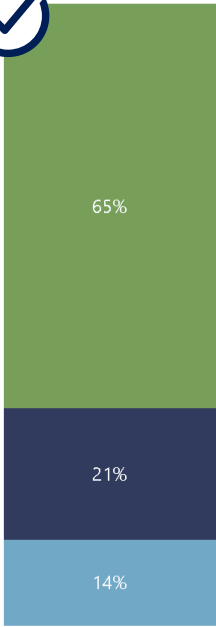
★ 69%

Survey participants said they feel they receive “fair”, “good” or “very good” value for their taxes.



On average across all evaluated services, “Services should remain the same” was the most common preference from survey participants (n=65%).

That said, below outlines the following services that had the highest percentage of participants requesting either an increase or decrease in services in 2025.



- Decrease services
- Increase services
- Services should remain the same (n=925)




## Top 5 Service decreases

Survey participants ranked these as the most important areas to consider decreasing services:

-  1. Environment (33%)
-  2. Arts & Culture, Programs, Events & Library (32%)
-  3. Permitting & Planning (20%)
-  4. Transit (18%)
-  5. Community & Social Development (17%)

## Top 5 Service increases

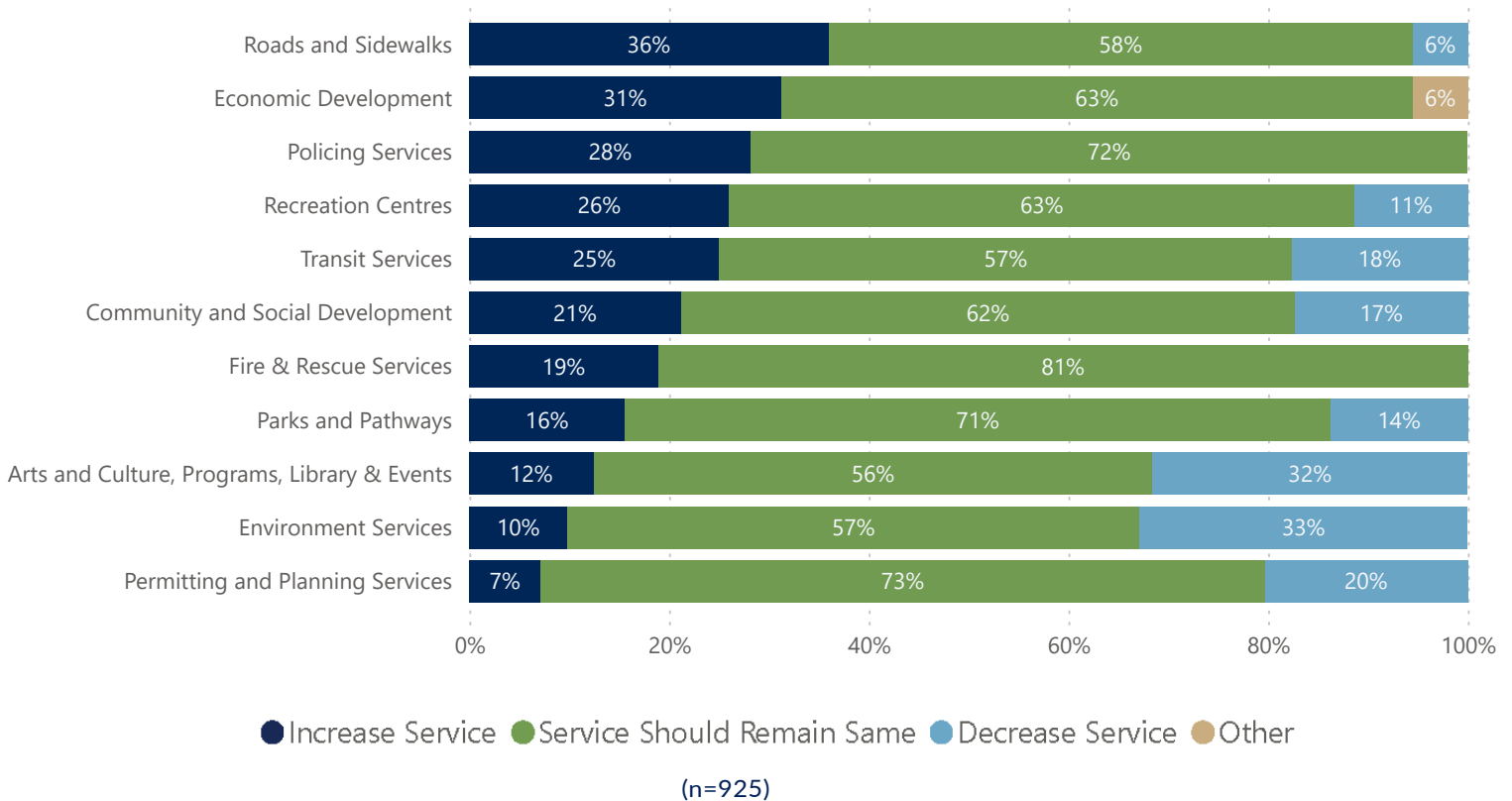
Survey participants ranked these as the most important areas to consider increasing services:

-  1. Roads & Sidewalks (36%)
-  2. Economic Development (31%)
-  3. Policing Services (28%)
-  4. Recreation Services (26%)
-  5. Transit (25%)

# Service Level Adjustment Preferences

## Desired Changes to Variable Service

Participants were asked to rate their preference for how the Town should allocate funds (increase, decrease, or remain the same) for each variable service in 2025. Each question included a description of each service and what tax dollars support. Overall, the results show most participants want spending for most services to remain the same.

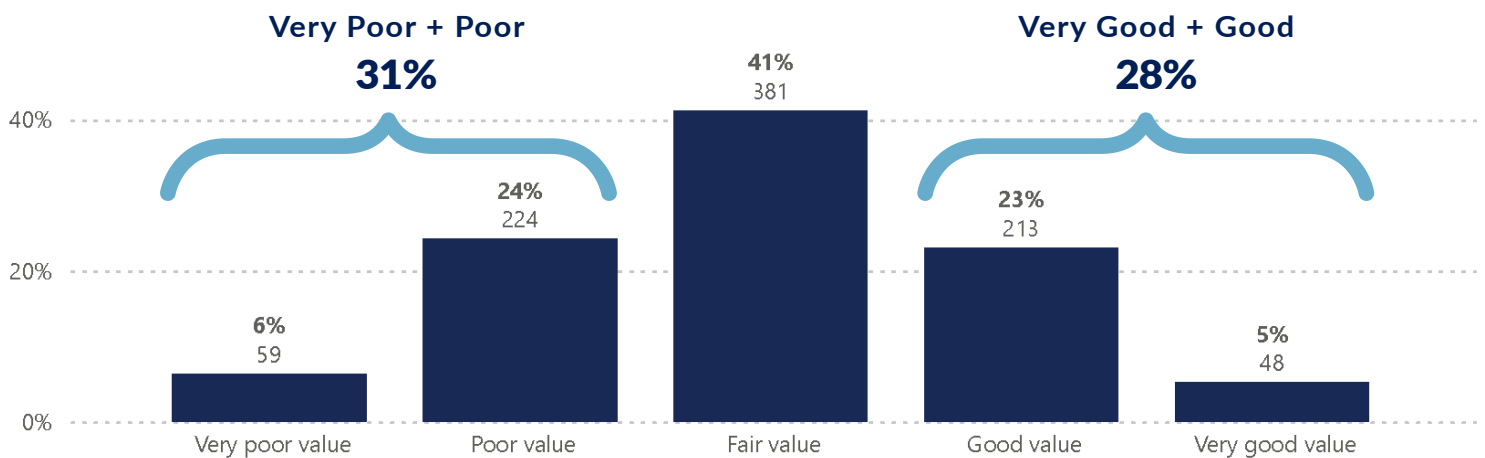


### Notes:

1. Policing services (RCMP and Municipal Enforcement) and Fire & Rescue services have a set standard, which requires the Town to maintain a minimum level of service that includes 24-hr police, fire and emergency services. For these services choices were limited to increase services or to keep them the same.
2. Economic Development services are funded primarily by business license fees; therefore, options were limited to increase services or keep them the same. Responses for "other" were collected as written feedback and were a mix of alternative service adjustment preferences.

# Value for taxes

Thinking about all the Town programs and services covered by your property taxes, rate the overall value for services that are available to you.



n=925; Very Poor + Poor = 283 respondents (31%); Fair = 381 respondents (41%); Good + Very Good = 261 respondents (28%). Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

## Perceived Value Received for Taxes Paid (Fair, Good, Very Good)



**69%**

Respondents who feel they receive "fair", "good" or "very good" value for their taxes<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Compared to the 2022 Citizen Satisfaction Survey:

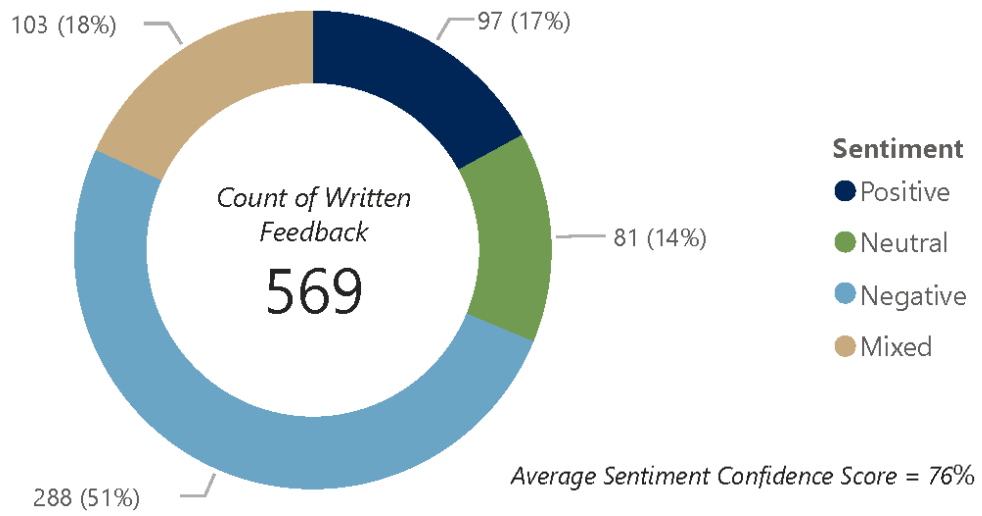
- There has been a decrease on both ends of the ranking (i.e. "good/very good" vs "poor/very poor"), with the majority of survey respondents selecting "fair".
- The percentage of households who indicated their value for taxes was fair or better has decreased from 85% to 69% (an 16% decrease). It should be noted that this survey included a "very poor" option, which was not part of the Citizen Satisfaction survey scale.

Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Overall value for taxes Sentiment

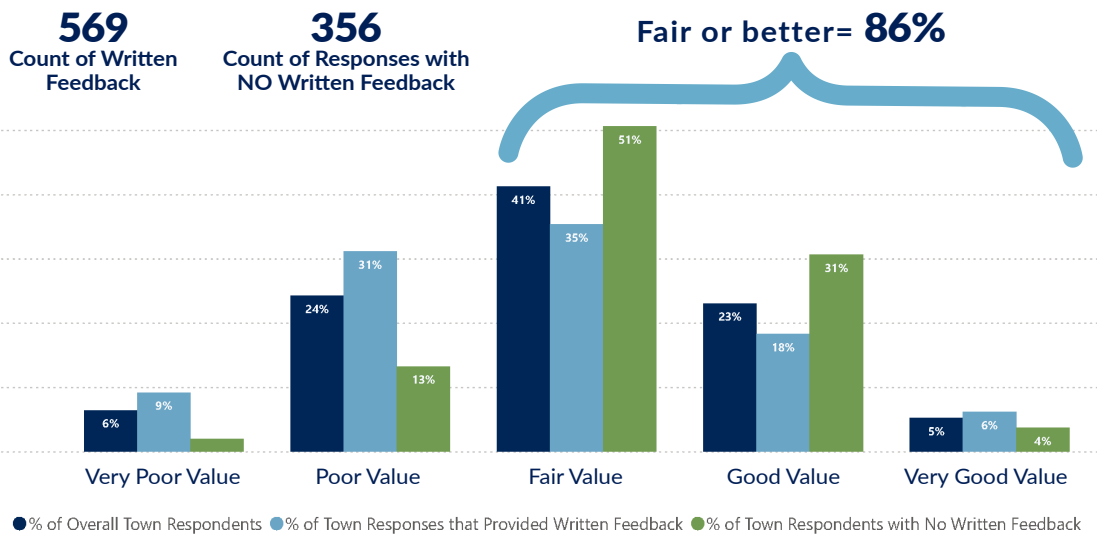
## Based on respondent feedback

After rating their value for taxes, all respondents were asked what the main reason was for their rating. Many reasons were given, with many answers containing multiple pieces of feedback on various services, priorities, and spending practices. Below is the overall sentiment of the responses, which indicates the overall emotional tone. Of the written feedback collected, an exercise was conducted to review and group comments by theme.



**86%**

Of those who elected not to provide written feedback, the data suggests that they are more satisfied with the value for services (86% - "fair" or better) compared to those who did provide written feedback (59% - "fair" or better).



(n=925)

Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.



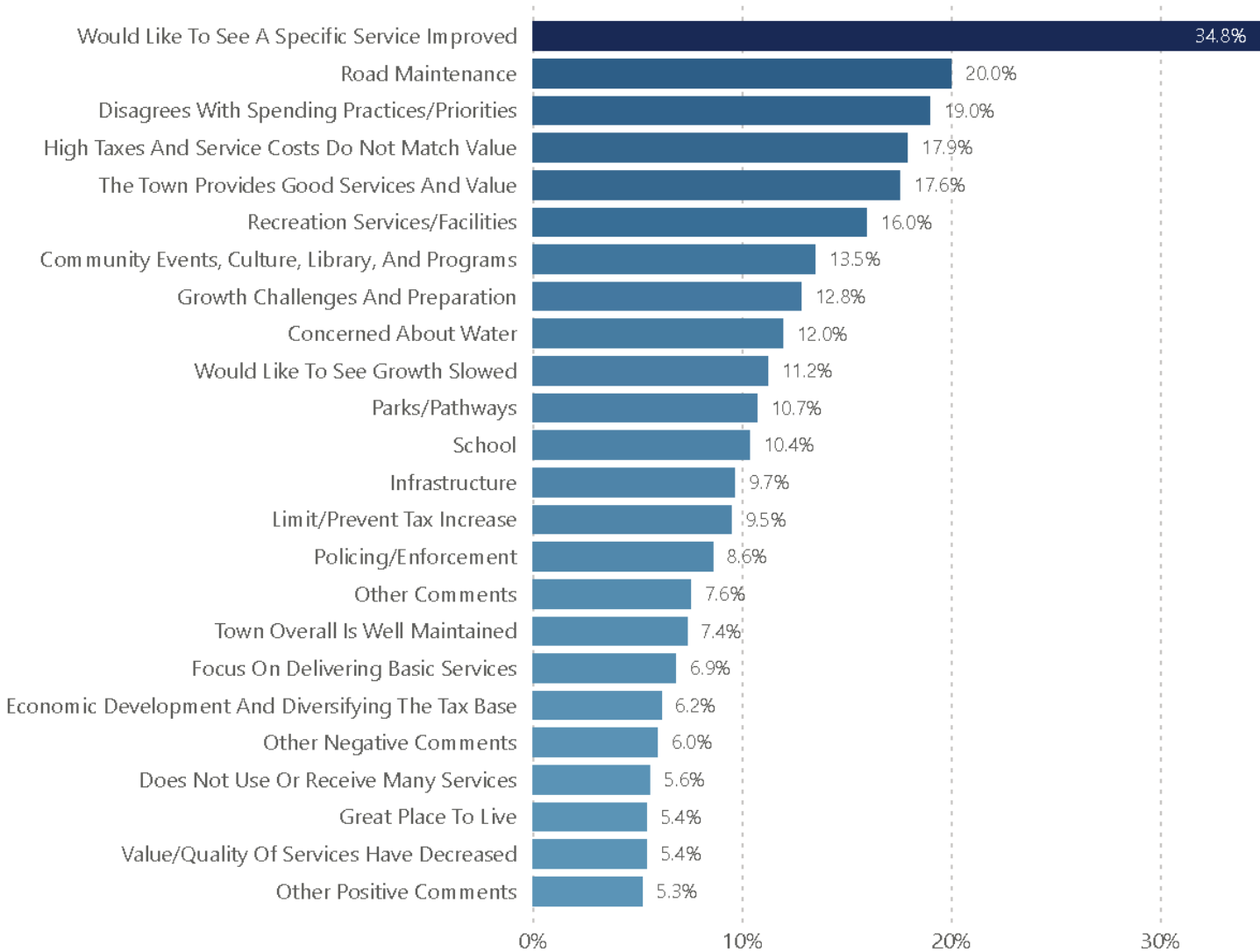
# Overall value for taxes

## Reasons for rating

General summary of what participants talked about by theme



**569**  
Comments



Values may sum to more than 100% as multiple mentions were allowed. Values of less than 5% not shown (n=569)

# Overall value for taxes Themes by Sentiment

## Themes by positive sentiment

Many of the written responses included multiple themes. The top themes below were the ones mentioned most often in comments that were evaluated with an overall **positive** sentiment—the sentiment is not necessarily applied to the theme itself, but rather the overall tone of the comment. In some cases, the overall comment had a positive sentiment, but it could also have mentioned a specific request for a service improvement.



*Values may sum to more than 100% as multiple mentions were allowed. Values of less than 5% not shown*

(n=97)



### Top 5 Themes

1. Good services and value
2. Well-maintained overall
3. Great place to live
4. Events, programs, culture & library
5. Parks & Pathways

Although multiple reasons were given, the top themes by **positive** sentiment (n=97) are that the Town provides a good level of services and good value for taxes (51.5%), the town is well-maintained overall (29.9) and the town is a great place to live (24.7%).

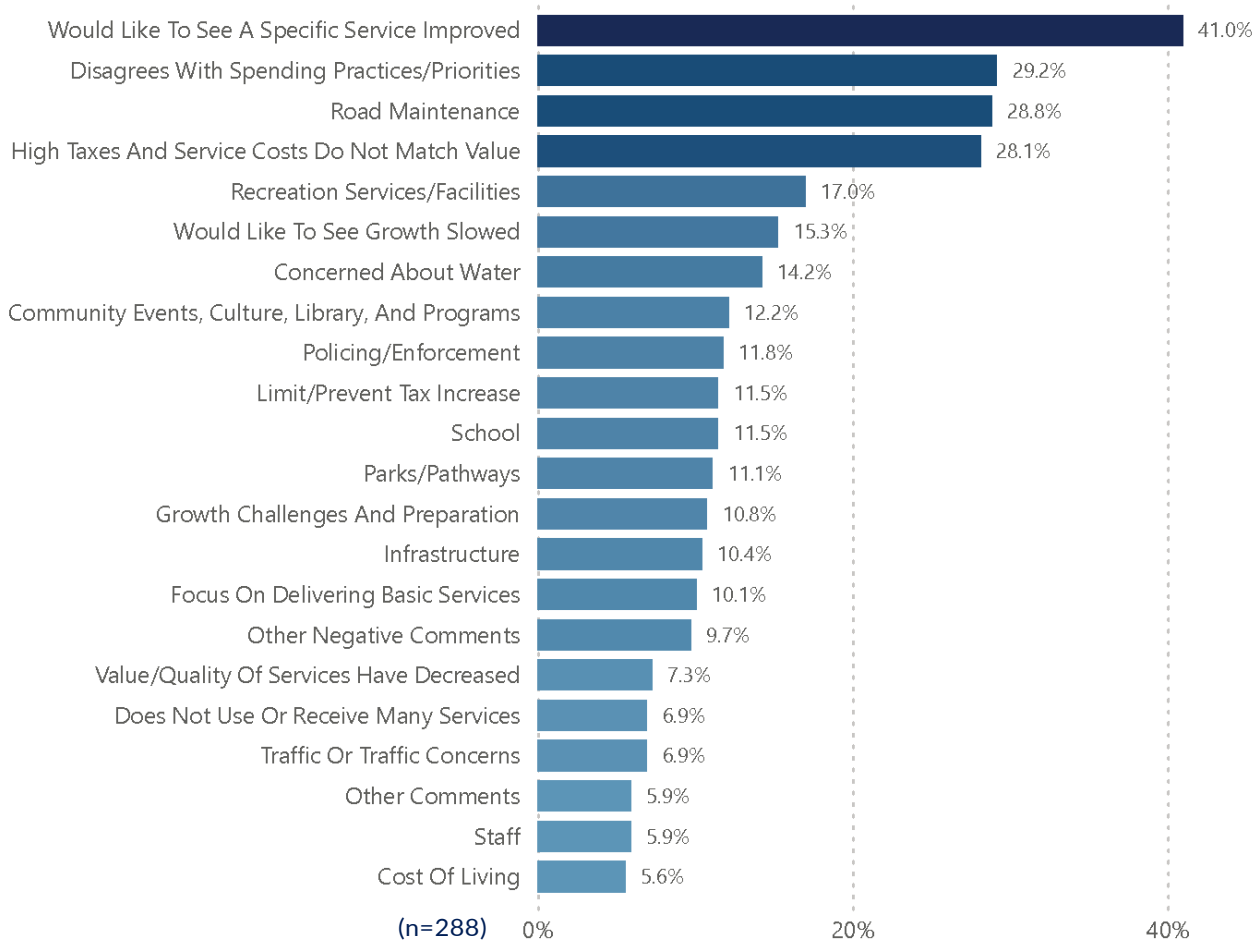
The specific service areas that were mentioned most frequently among comments with an overall positive sentiment were Events, Programs, Arts/Culture, Library (15.5%) and Parks & Pathways (12.4%).

# Overall value for taxes

## Themes by Sentiment

### Themes by negative sentiment

Many of the written response included multiple themes. The top themes below were the ones mentioned most often in comments that were evaluated with an overall **negative** sentiment—the sentiment it is not necessarily applied to the theme itself, but rather the overall tone of the comment.



Values may sum to more than 100% as multiple mentions were allowed. Values of less than 5% not shown



#### Top 5 Themes

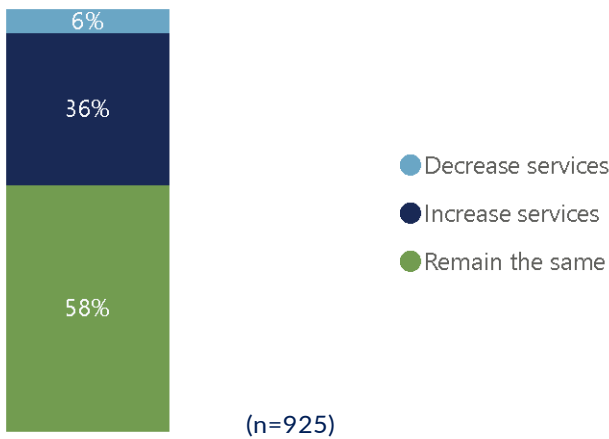
1. Specific service improved
2. Disagree with spending practices or priorities
3. Road maintenance
4. High Taxes & Service costs don't match value
5. Recreation Services & Facilities

41% of themes by **negative** sentiment (n=288) indicate a desire to see a specific service improved. Additionally, 29.2% also indicate they do not agree with current spending practices or felt that the Town is not focused on the right priorities, and 28.1% felt that taxes were too high or that the value for taxes is lacking.

The specific service levels that were mentioned most frequently were Road Maintenance (28.8%) and Recreation Services/Facilities (17%).

# Roads & Sidewalks

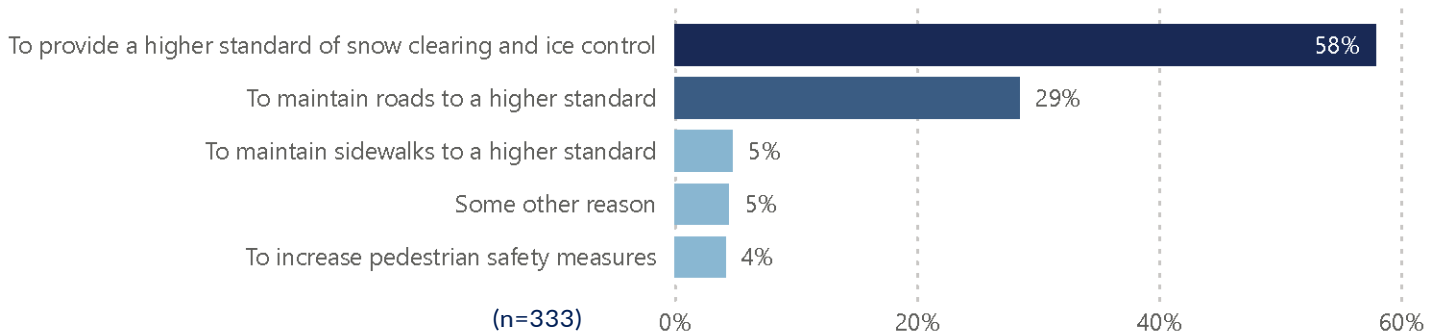
## How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Roads and Sidewalks?



**#1**  
Top service area to consider increasing in 2025.

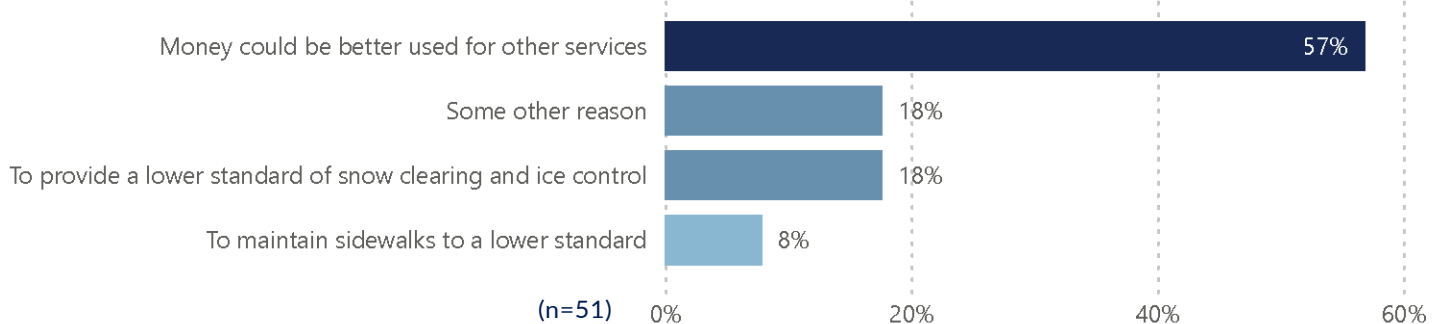
Of all the services asked about on the survey, participants indicated that Roads & Sidewalks was the top area to consider increasing services in 2025, at 36%.

### Rationale for increasing Roads and Sidewalks services



### Rationale for decreasing Roads and Sidewalks services

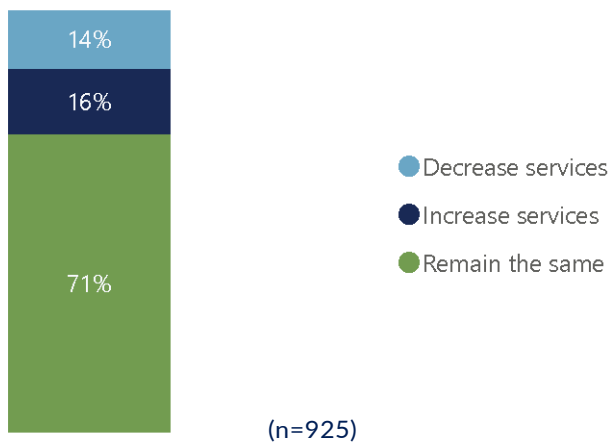
Note: Two alternate choices provided were not selected at all. Those include: Maintain roads to a lower standard (i.e. potholes, paving, sealing cracks), and provide lower standards of pedestrian safety measures on roads (i.e. signage, crosswalks).



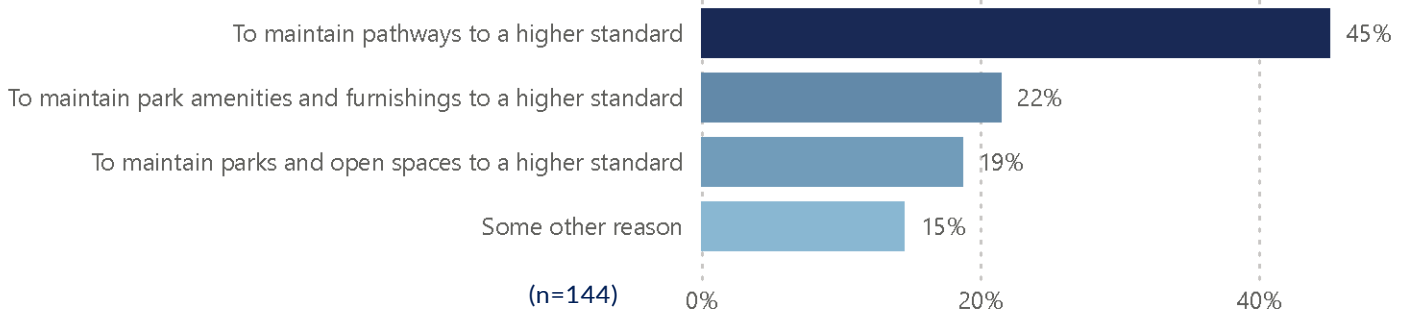
Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Parks & Pathways

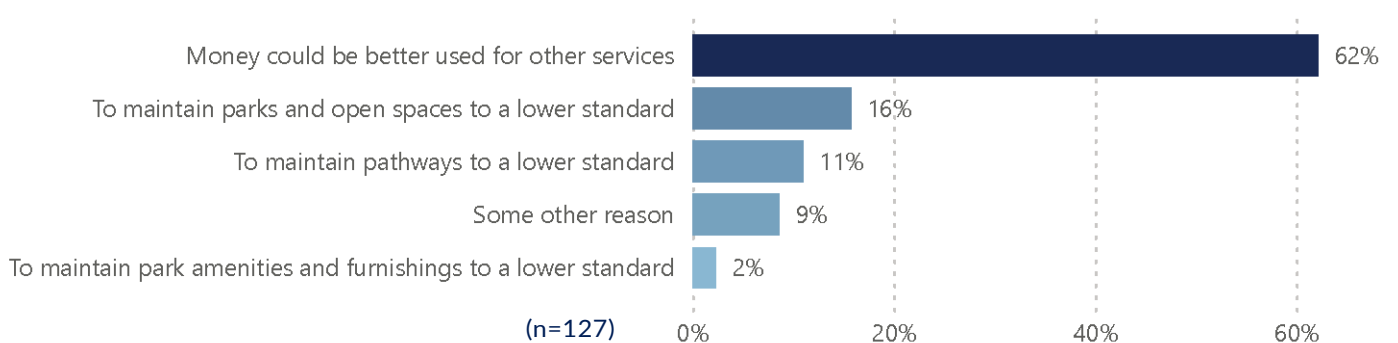
## How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Parks and Pathways?



### Rationale for increasing Parks and Pathway services



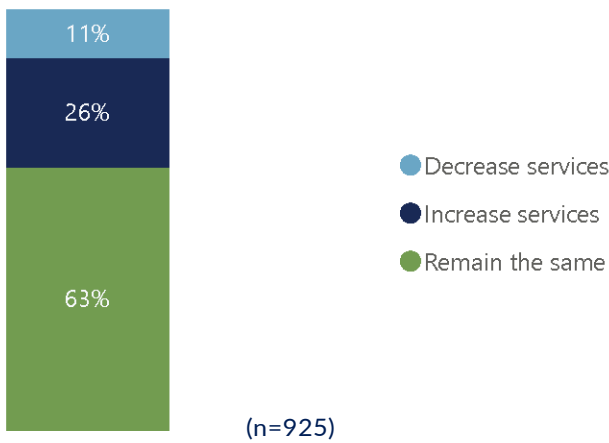
### Rationale for decreasing Parks and Pathway services



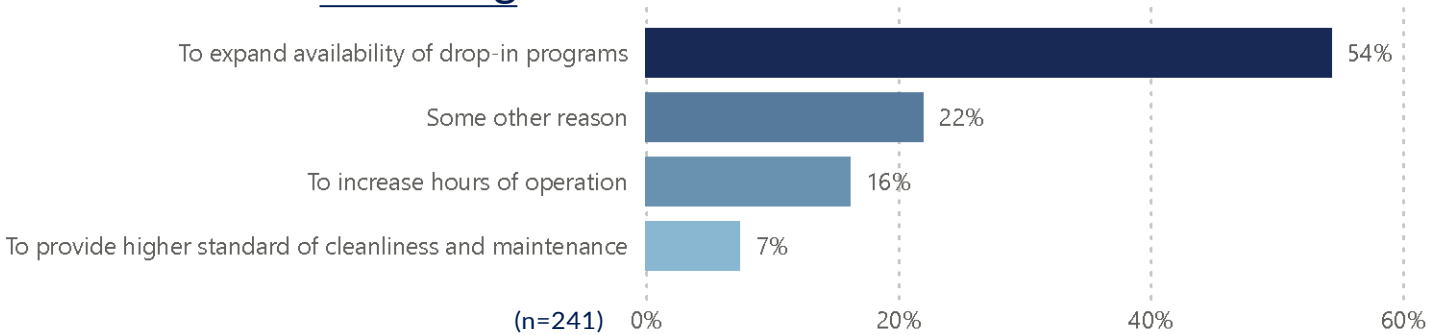
Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Recreation Centres

## How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Recreation Centres?

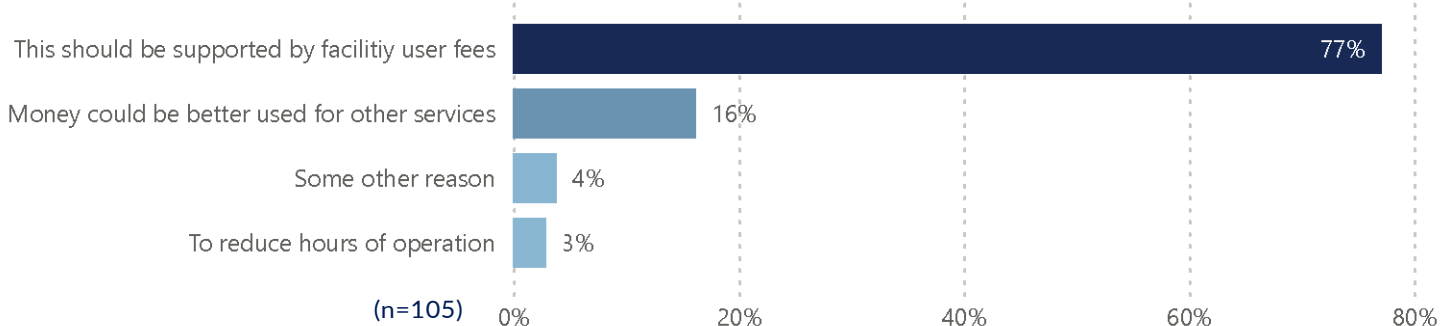


### Rationale for increasing Recreation Centre services



### Rationale for decreasing Recreation Centre services

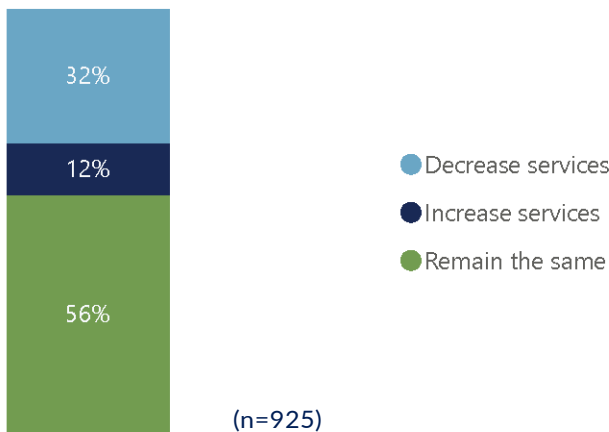
Note: Two alternate choices provided were not selected at all. Those include: Reduce availability of drop-in programs (i.e. swimming, skating, hockey, gym time) and provide lower standard of maintenance and cleanliness in facilities.



Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Arts, Culture, Programs, Library & Events

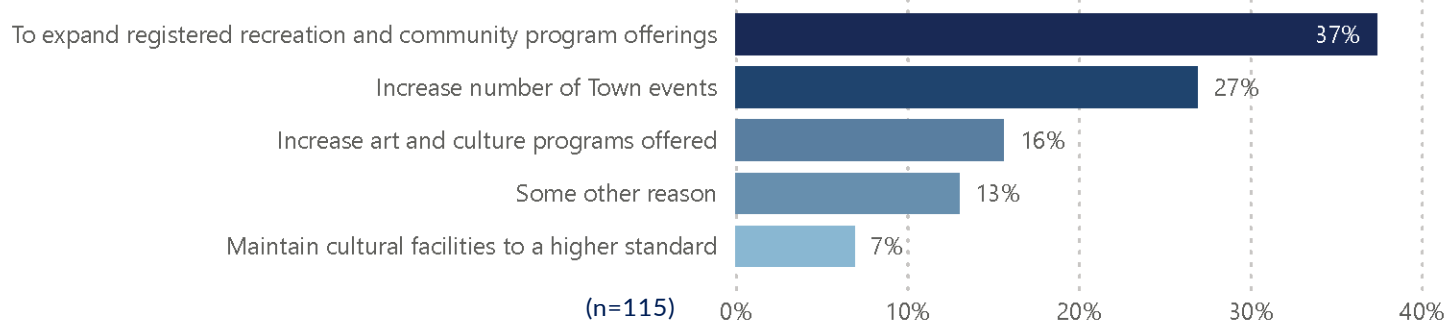
## How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Arts and Culture, Programs, Library & Events?



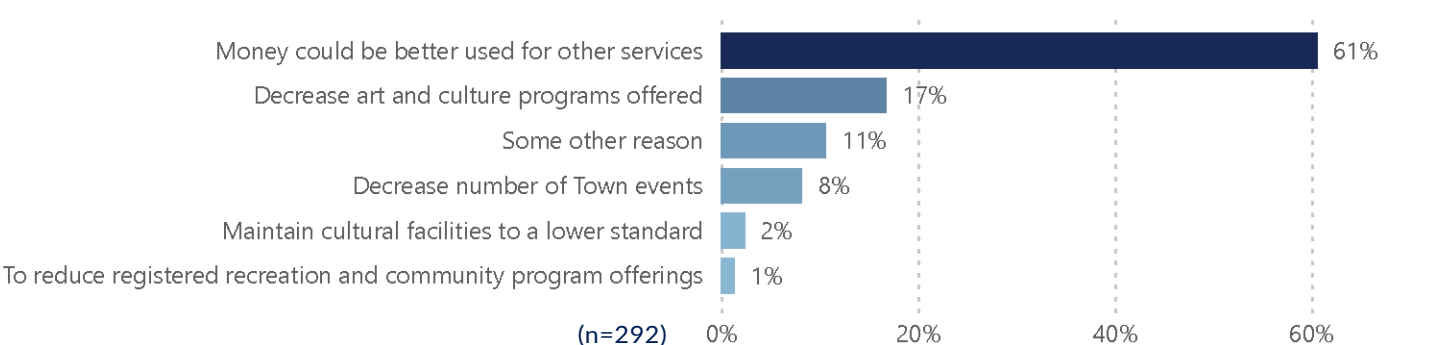
**#2**  
Feel that this service area should decrease in 2025.

Of all the services asked about on the survey, participants indicated that Arts & Culture, Events, Programs and the Library services was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important area to consider decreasing services in 2025, at 32%.

### Rationale for increasing Arts, Culture, Programs, Library & Event services



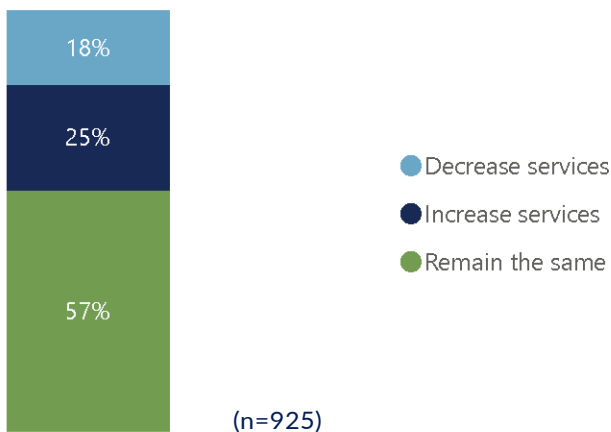
### Rationale for decreasing Arts, Culture, Programs, Library & Event services



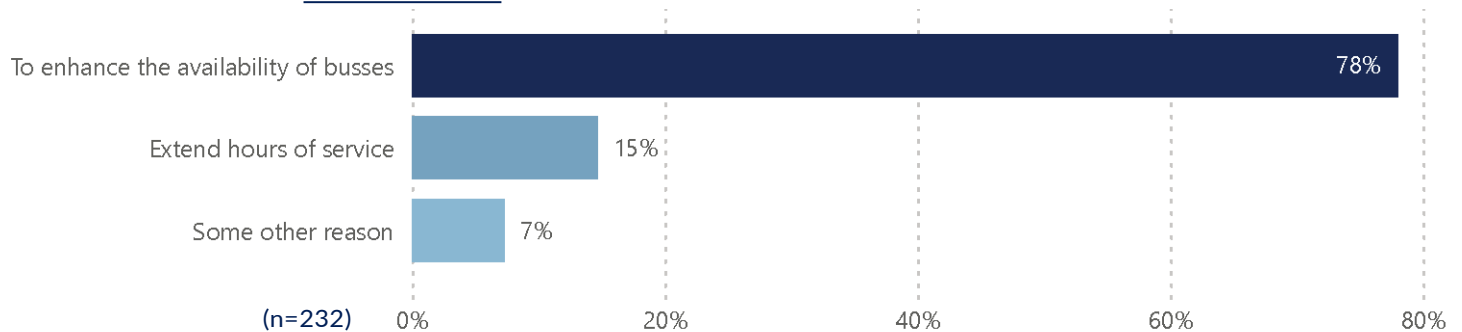
Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Transit

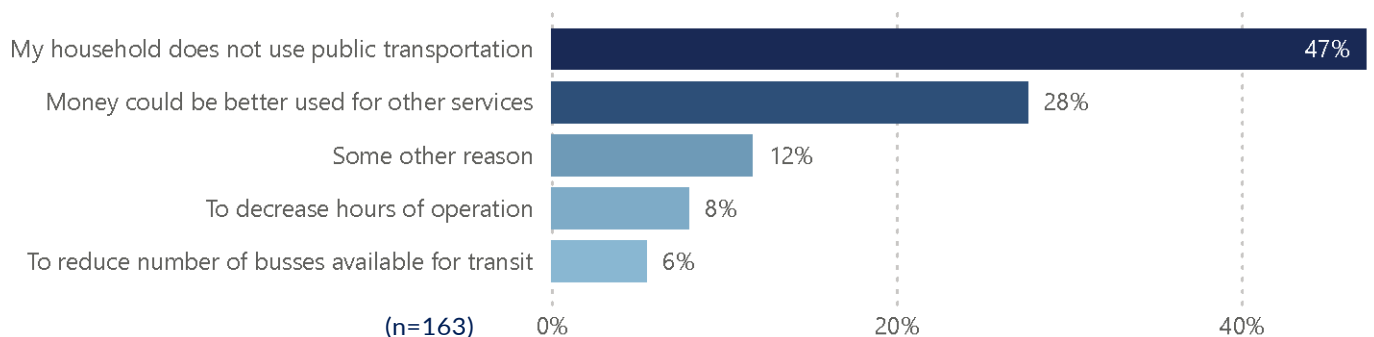
## How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Transit Services?



### Rationale for increasing Transit services



### Rationale for decreasing Transit services

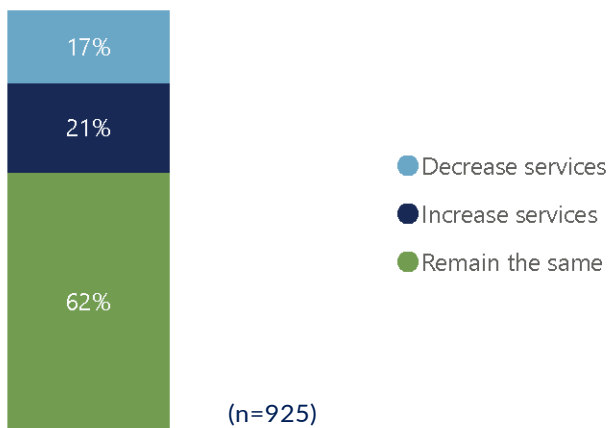


Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

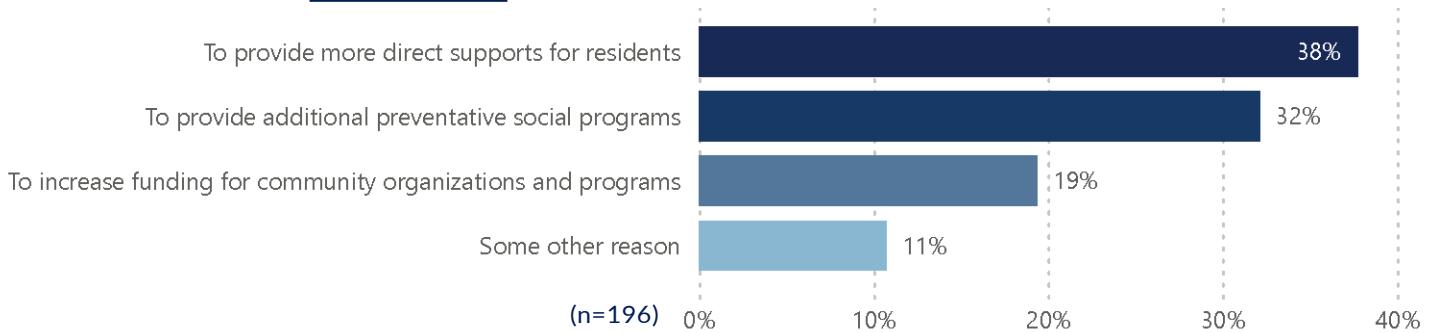


# Community & Social Development

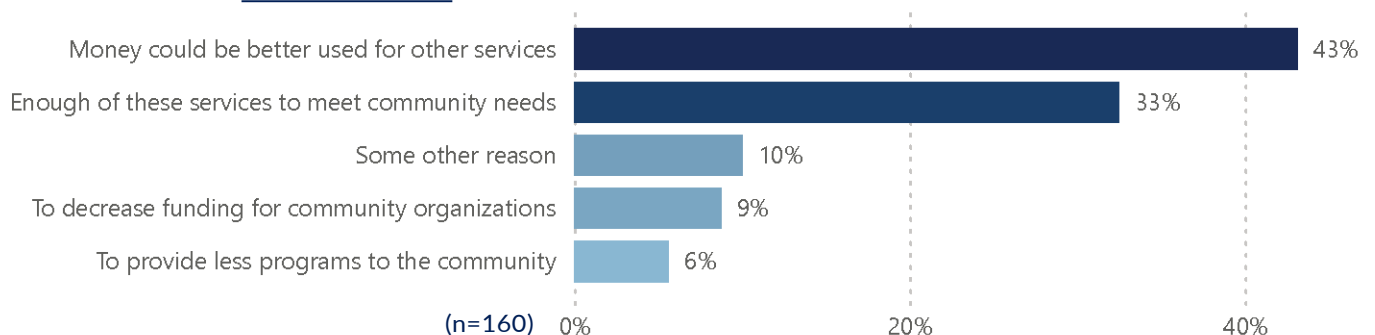
## How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Community and Social Development?



### Rationale for increasing Social & Community Wellness services



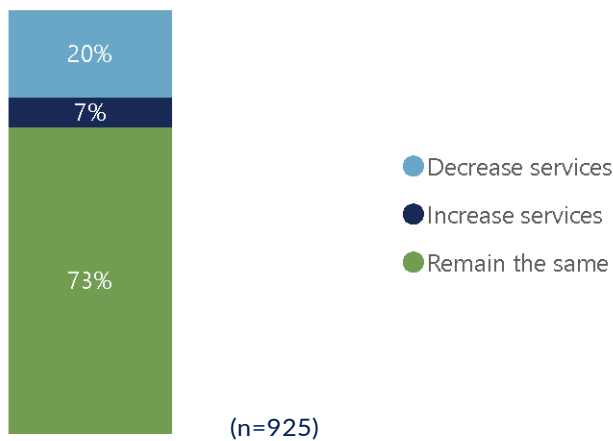
### Rationale for decreasing Social & Community Wellness services



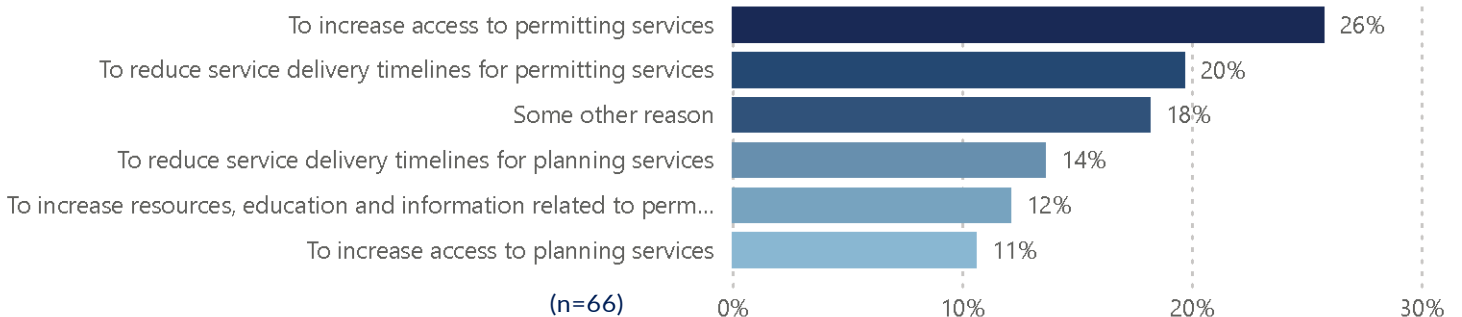
Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Permits & Planning Services

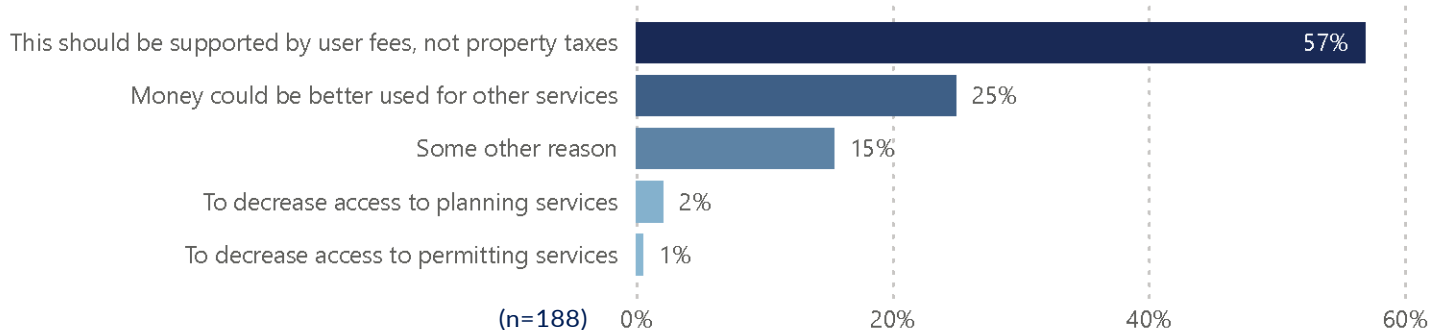
How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Permitting and Planning Services?



## Rationale for increasing Permits & Planning services



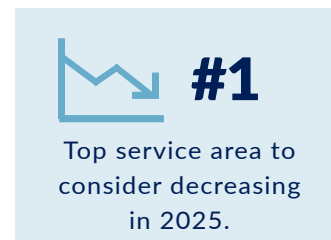
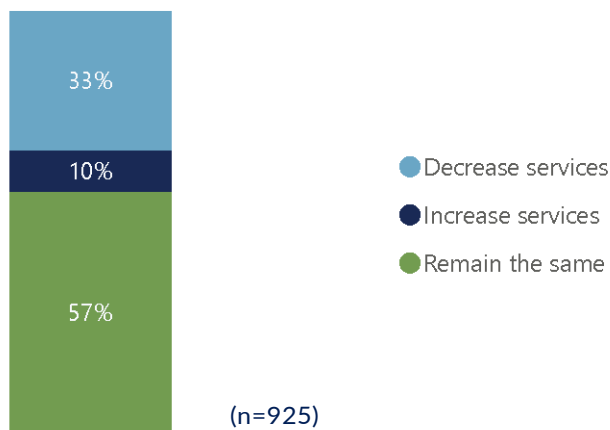
## Rationale for decreasing Permits & Planning services



Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

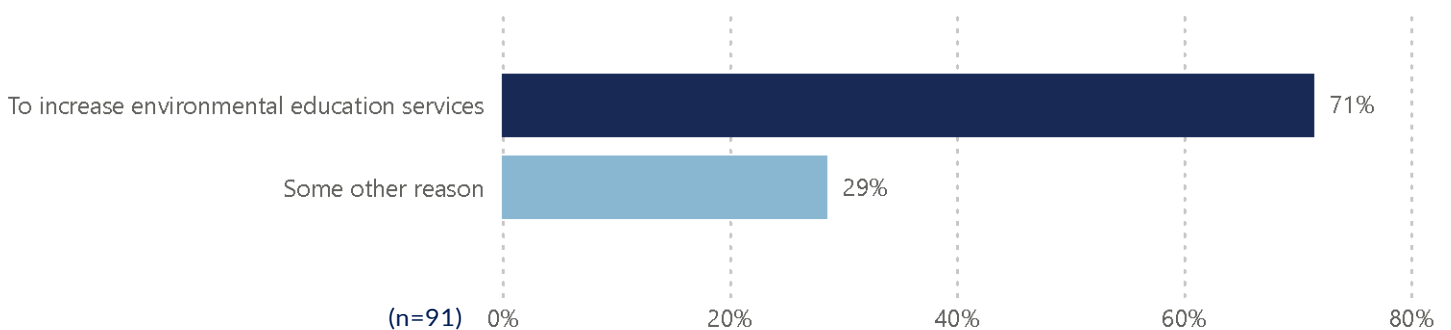
# Environment Services

## How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Environment Services?

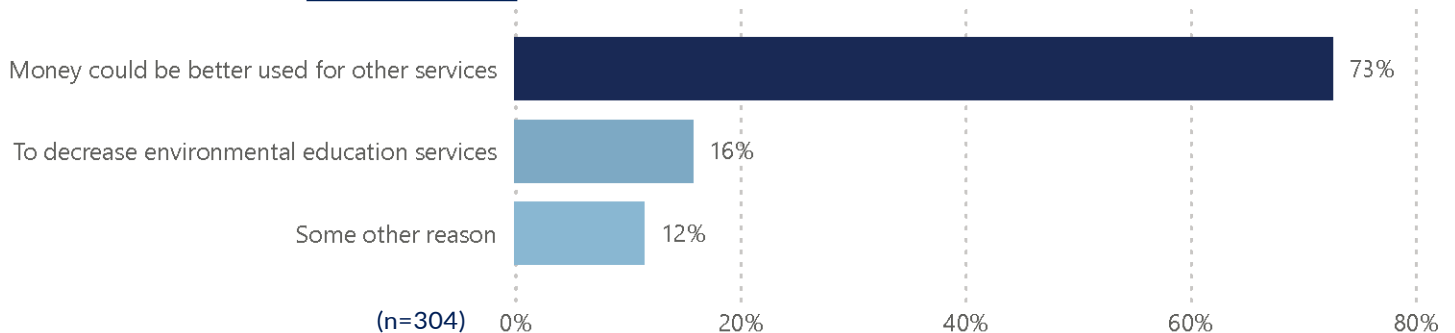


Of all the services asked about on the survey, participants indicated that Environment services was the top area to consider decreasing services in 2025, at 33%.

### Rationale for increasing Environment services



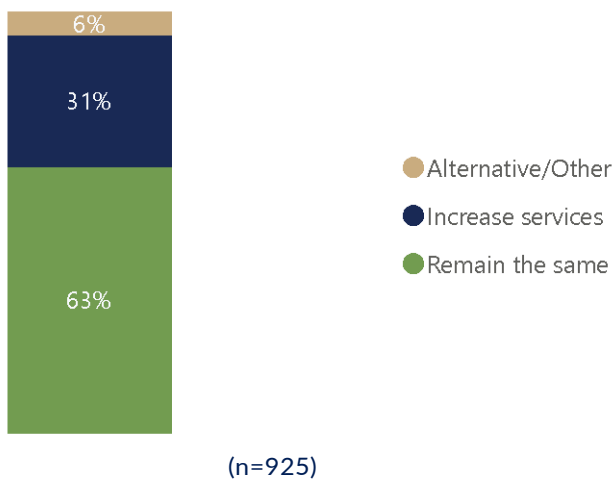
### Rationale for decreasing Environment services



Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Economic Development

## How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Economic Development<sup>1</sup>?



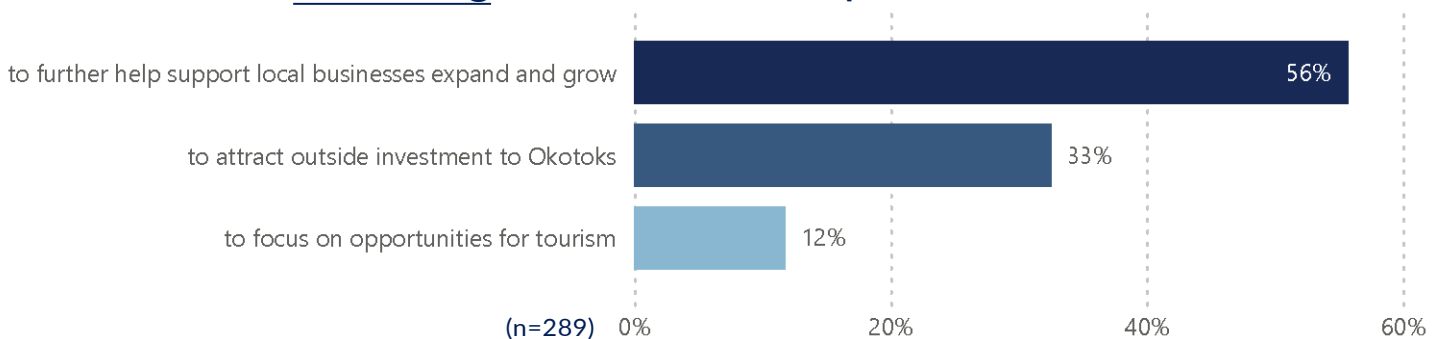
**OPEN 10.8%**  
 Are a business owner or own a business property in Okotoks

### Business Owners

Of the total 925 respondents that took the survey, 100 (10.8%) indicated they were either a business owner or owned a business property in Okotoks. Of those 100, 44% indicated an interest in increasing Economic Development services.

1. Economic Development services are funded primarily by business license fees; therefore, options were limited to increase services or keep them the same. Responses for "other" were collected as written feedback and were a mix of alternative service adjustment preferences.

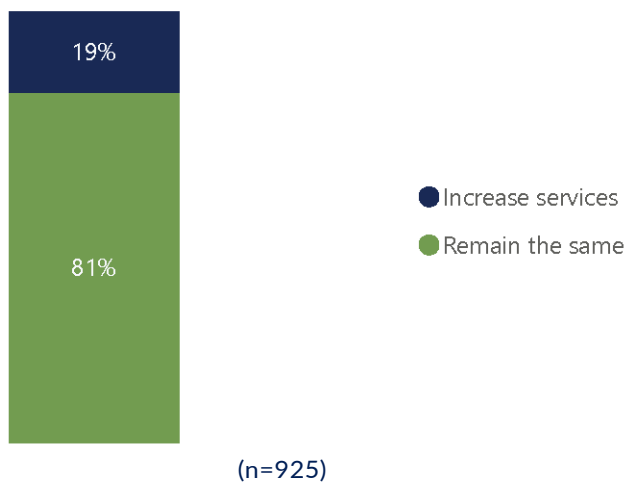
## Rationale for increasing Economic Development services



Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Fire & Rescue Services

How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Fire & Rescue services?



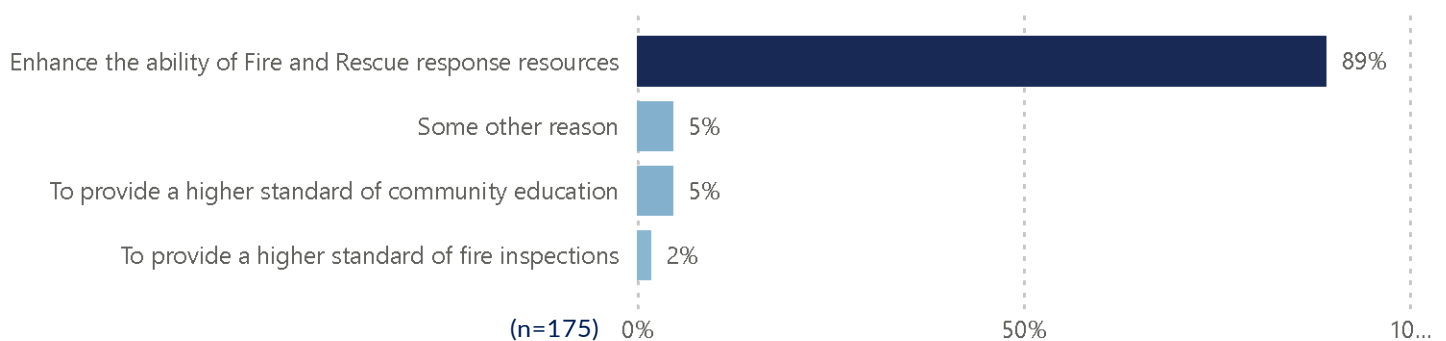
**81%**

Feel that Fire & Rescue services should remain the same.

## High % say keep service same

Of all the services asked about on the survey, Fire & Rescue services was the #1 service that survey participants indicated should stay the same in 2025.

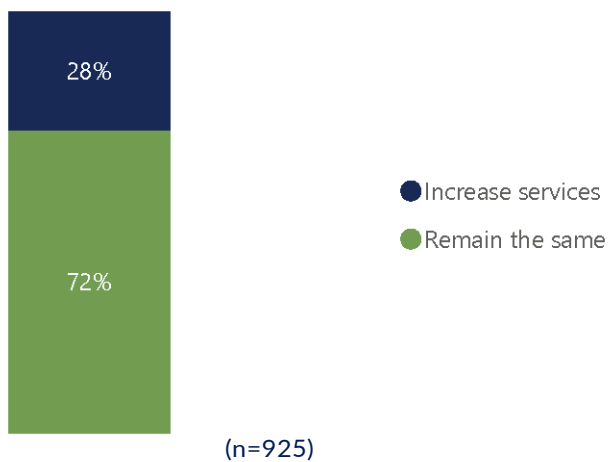
## Rationale for increasing Fire & Rescue services



Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Policing Services

## How would you adjust the service levels in 2025 for Policing services?

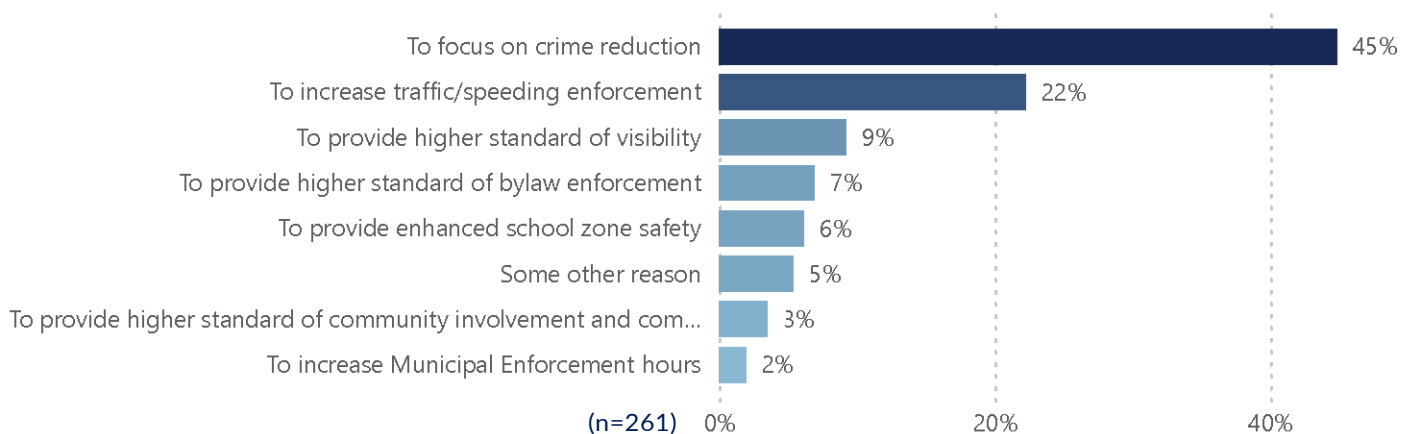


### #3

Feel that Policing services should increase in 2025.

Of all the services asked about on the survey, participants indicated that Policing services was the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important area to consider increasing services in 2025, at 28%.

## Rationale for increasing Policing services




Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Visioner Idea Board

If you could choose one area, program or service that you believe would contribute the most to the community, what would it be?



- Roads & Sidewalks
- Parks & Pathways
- Recreation Facilities
- Transit
- Events
- Arts & Culture
- Programs
- Social Services & Co...
- Fire & Rescue
- Policing



## Sentiment

**25%** Positive

**12.5%** Negative

**62.5%** Neutral

9 June, 2024  
Diana A says:

"Upgrade the old playgrounds; they are hazardous and not inclusive, only for kids from 5-12; what about toddlers and kids with disabilities?"

👍 2 🗳️ 1

9 June, 2024  
aftica says:

"A moratorium on all new developments. This council is letting developers destroy our beautiful, small town. Enough is enough."

👍 2 🗳️ 1

9 June, 2024  
TooWOKe-Otoko says:

"Focus on the practical: snow clearing / road safety, water management, bylaw enforcement, etc. Enough ideological promotion of degeneracy."

👍 1 🗳️ 1

9 June, 2024  
Justice Inruaux says:

"Add a W as a prefix to the name of the town. I'd suggest doing it in a ribbon hill/hills. Embrace and lean into the progressive ideology."

👍 1 🗳️ 3

9 June, 2024  
tannislynn says:

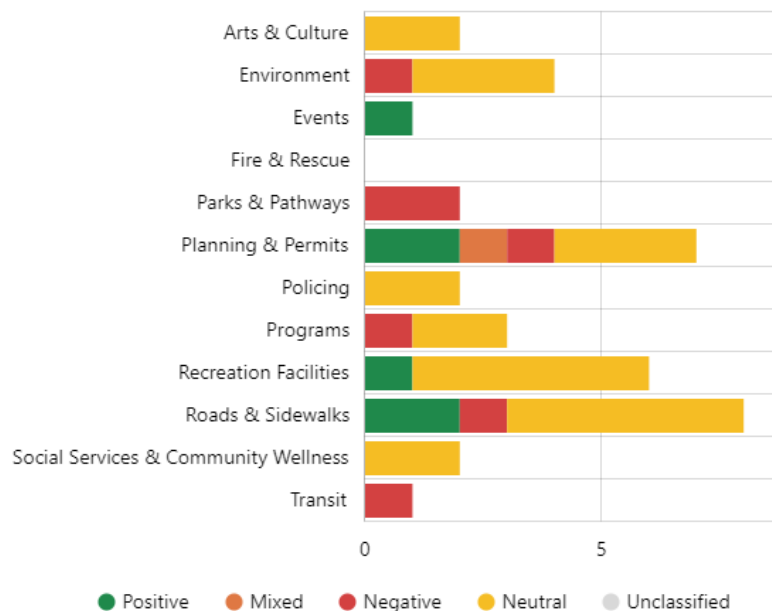
"Rec center upgrades/expansion"

👍 1 🗳️ 0

7 June, 2024  
Jasmellow says:

"Stop building new communities until we have figured out the water issues"

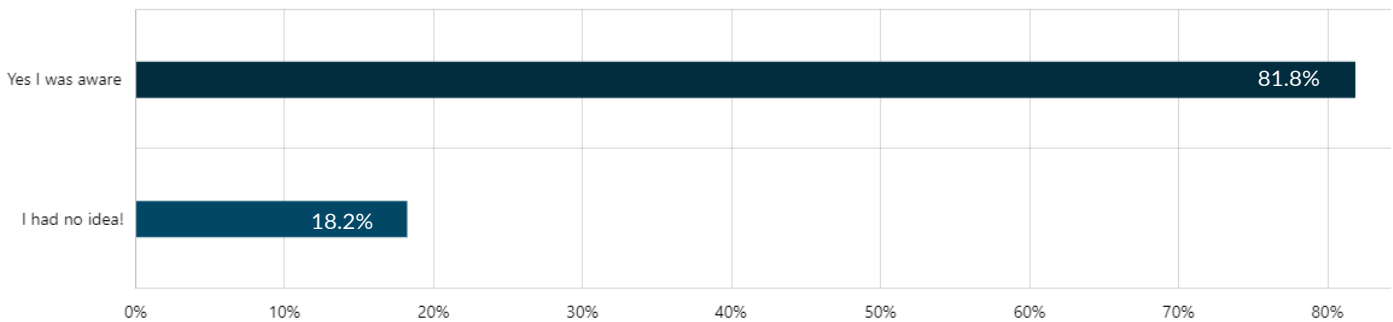
👍 0 🗳️ 0



to see the full list of ideas, visit [ShapeOurTown.Okotoks.ca/BUDGET-2025](https://ShapeOurTown.Okotoks.ca/BUDGET-2025)

# Quick Poll

## Did you know that the Town collects funds on behalf of the Province of Alberta to pay for education?



This is called a requisition and does not go to the Town or support municipal services. It is passed on directly to the Province of Alberta to pay for education.

### Alberta Regional Statistics Dashboard<sup>1</sup>

### Okotoks Budget Engagement Survey 2024

Population Groups <sup>2</sup>	Proportion	Population Groups	Proportion
20-34	21.3%	18-34	12%
35-44	21.1%	35-44	28%
45-54	20.9%	45-54	27%
55-64	15.9%	55-64	17%
65+	20.8%	65+	15%

### Survey Population

\*Population figures from the Alberta Regional Dashboard have been scaled accordingly. Survey respondents were allowed to select "Prefer Not to Answer", which equated to approximately 1% of survey respondents. No weighting has been applied to the data collected to match proportions to population. Overall, there is a small statistical difference (using a significance value of .05) between survey data and the population data collected from the Alberta Regional Dashboard. This difference is most notable between the ages of 18 to 54 and should be considered when interpreting results.

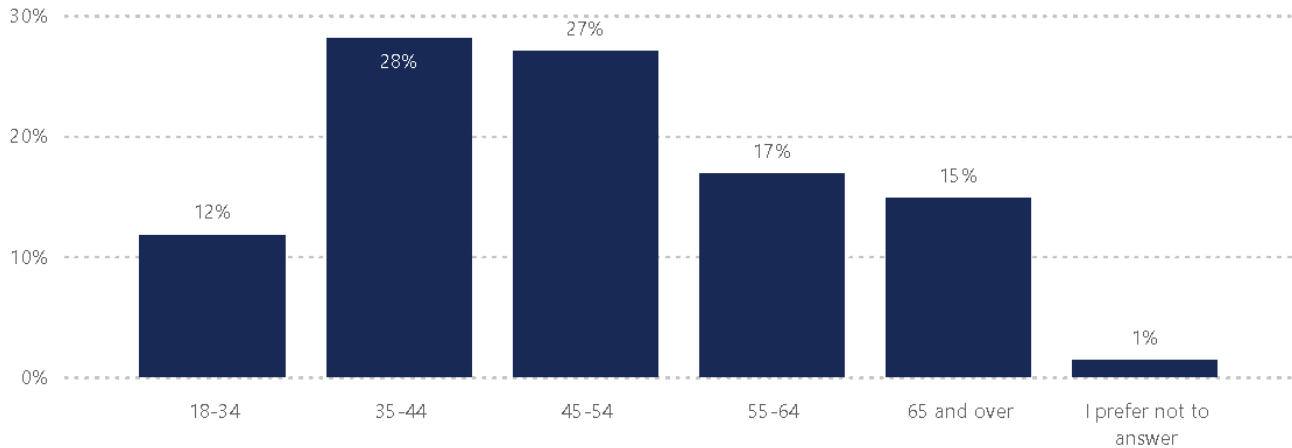
<sup>1</sup> Government of Alberta. (2022). Okotoks Population Data. Alberta Regional Dashboard. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/okotoks/population/#/custom/age-pyramid/?for=2022>

<sup>2</sup> Population groupings from the 2024 Budget Engagement Survey do not perfectly align to Statistics Canada groupings below the ages of 34 but have been matched as closely as possible.



# Survey Demographics

## Participants by age

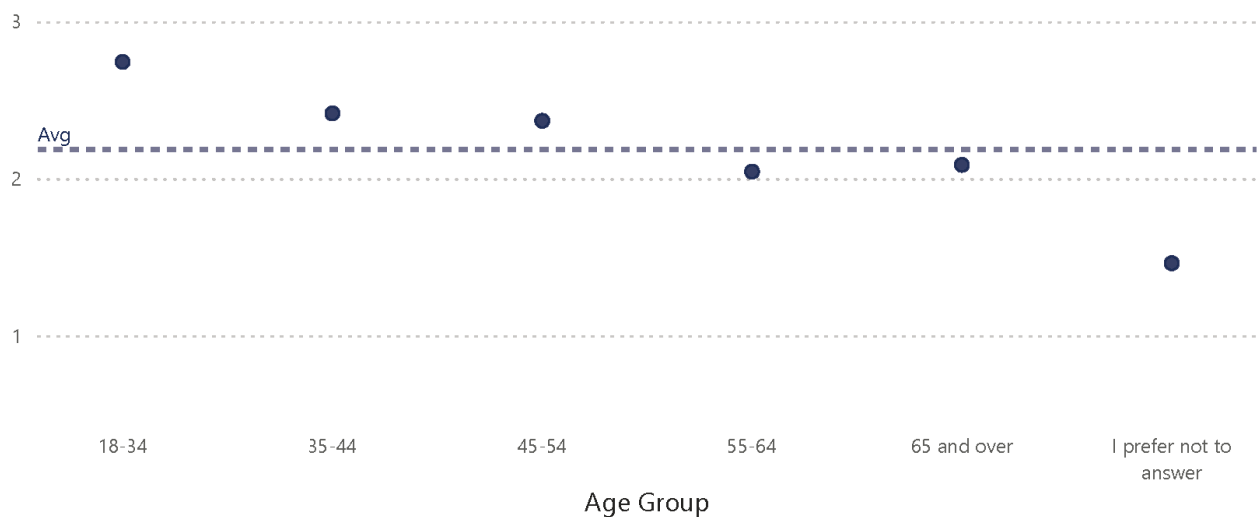


## Survey Population and Data Collection

For a population size of approximately 32,000, aiming for a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the typical sample size needed is ~380. This estimate is based on standard sample size formulas and would be fairly accurate for the population size of the Town of Okotoks.

## Average Preferred Service Increase Adjustments per Person

The "18-34" age group has the highest proportion of votes for "increasing services" (2.743), indicating that they are most likely to vote for increases compared to other age groups, when normalized by sample size.

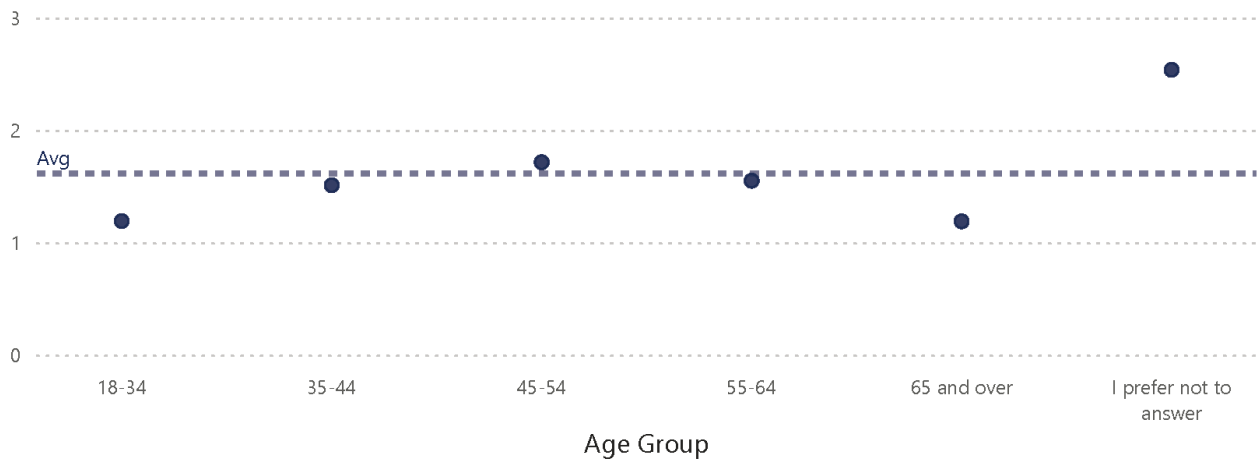


# Survey

## Demographics

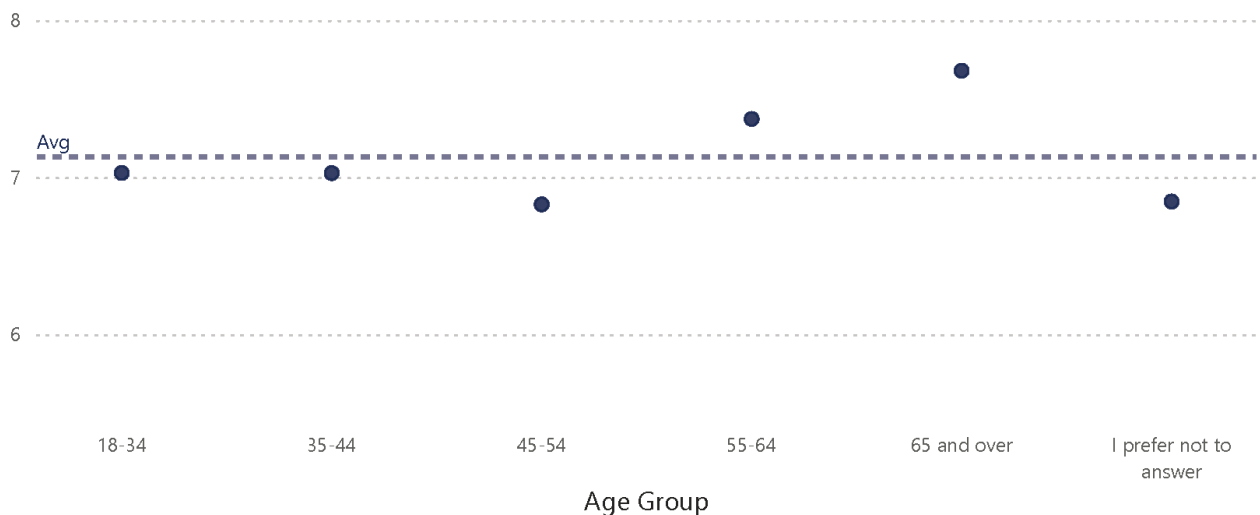
### Average Preferred Service Decrease Adjustments per Person

The “45-54” age group has the second highest proportion of votes to “decrease services” (other than prefer not to answer), indicating that they are among the most likely to vote for decreases compared to other age groups, when normalized by sample size.



### Average Preferred Service to Keep Services the Same per Person

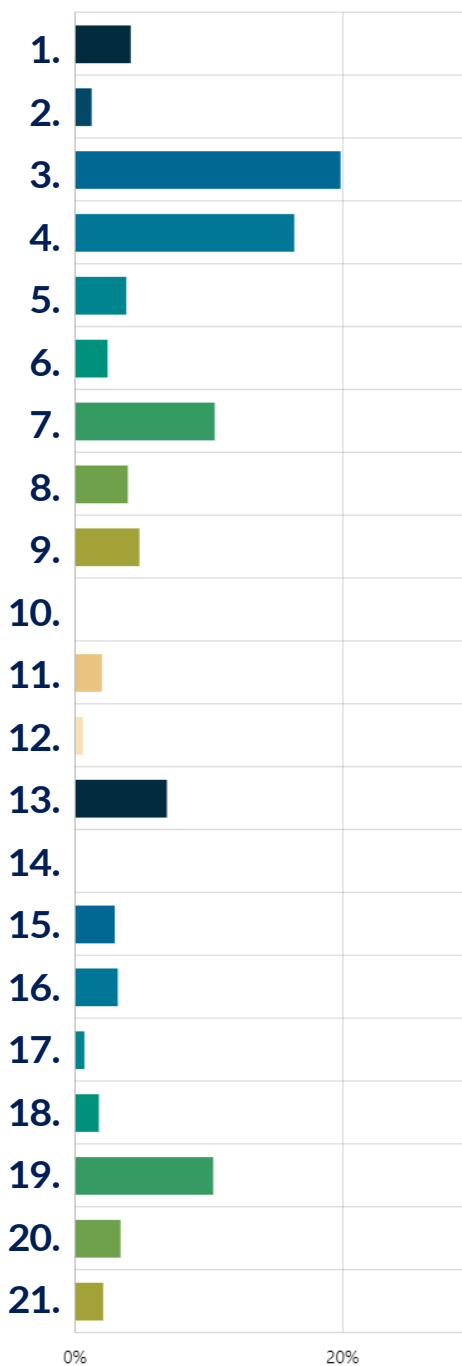
The age group 65+ has the highest proportion of votes to “keep services the same” (7.679), indicating that they are most likely to vote to keep things the same compared to other age groups, when normalized by sample size.



# Survey

## Demographics

### Neighbourhood



1. Okotoks Air Ranch, Ranchers Rise
2. Central Heights
3. Cimarron (e.g. Meadows, Park, Grove, Vista, Springs, Estates)
4. Crystal Shores, Crystalridge, Crystal Green
5. D'Arcy Ranch
6. Downey Ridge
7. Drake Landing
8. Heritage Okotoks (Downtown), Okotoks Business Park, Lineham, South Railway
9. Mountainview
10. Northgate Commercial Centre
11. Rosemont
12. Sandstone
13. Sheep River (e.g. Heights, Cove, Ridge), Hunters Glen
14. Southbank Business Park
15. Suntree
16. Tower Hill
17. Okotoks Country Residential (annexed land)
18. Wedderburn
19. Westridge, Westmount
20. Woodhaven
21. Other

# Survey Demographics



## Do you have dependents that live in your household?

Dependents	Count	Percentage
No dependents	286	30.9%
1 dependent	166	18.0%
2 dependents	267	29.0%
3 dependents	96	10.4%
4 or more dependents	52	5.6%
I prefer not to answer	58	6.3%

## Which of the following categories applies to your total household income before taxes in 2023?

Income Range	Count	Percentage
Under \$20,000	4	0.4%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	26	2.8%
\$40,000 to \$59,999	44	4.8%
\$60,000 to \$79,999	49	5.3%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	80	8.7%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	104	11.2%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	99	10.7%
\$150,000 or more	291	31.5%
I prefer not to answer	228	24.7%

Values may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

# Survey Demographics

**Please indicate what best fits your current situation, related to living in Okotoks.**

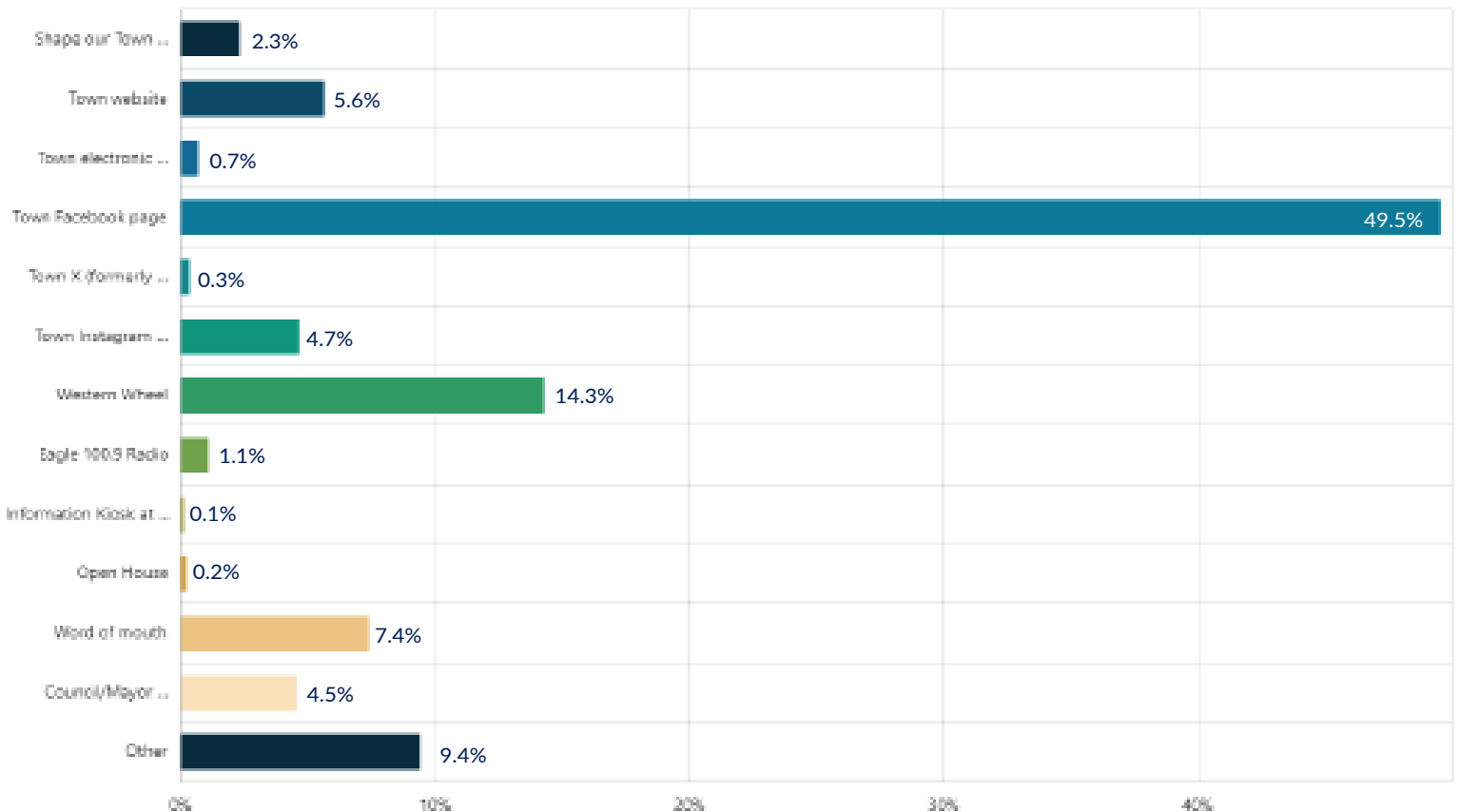
Living Situation	Count	Percentage
Live in Okotoks and own my own residence	870	94.1%
Live in Okotoks and rent a residence	36	3.9%
Live in Okotoks, but do not rent or own a residence	8	0.9%
Own a residence, but do not live in Okotoks	5	0.5%
Other	6	0.7%

**What best explains your current situation related to operating a business in Okotoks?**

Income Range	Count	Percentage
Own a business in Okotoks but I rent the business property	29	3.2%
Own a business property in Okotoks, but rent this property out to another business	2	0.2%
I own and operate the business and property in Okotoks	69	7.6%
None of the above	780	85.3%
Other	34	3.7%

# Getting the word out & Inviting Participation

## How did you hear about the opportunity to participate in the budget process?



Over the course of the online engagement, the opportunity to participate was communicated across a wide variety of channels including Eagle 100.9 radio advertisements, electronic signage on roads and in Town facilities, and Western Wheel advertising. Various organic and paid advertisements were featured on Town social media channels. Direct email campaigns also invited participation from our Citizen Panel and Shape Our Town (online engagement platform) members interested in Budget and Taxes.

In an effort to provide more equitable access to participate, information and print copies of surveys were available at Recreation Centres and the Seniors Centre, and invitations to participate were sent out to several different agencies and social service groups through the Community & Social Development team.

# Next Steps

**2024****Q2**

Present engagement findings to Council at the Regular Council Meeting on June 24.

**SEP****Q3**

Phase 2 engagement on proposed service level changes for 2025, if required.

**NOV****Q4**

Learn how your input was used during budget deliberations, as Council decides on any final service level adjustments or changes that will be made for 2025.

