

Council

Meeting of 19 November 2025

Business Unit: People and Corporate

Date Created: 07 October 2025

Resident Satisfaction Survey and Benchmark Report 2025

Purpose Te Aronga o te Pūrongo

To present the Resident Survey Final Yearly Report 2024-25 and the Residents Survey Benchmark Report 2024-25 for endorsement, ahead of publication on the MDC website.

Recommendations Ngā Tūtohunga

1. That the Council receive the Resident Survey Final Yearly Report 2024-25 (Appendix 1) and the Residents Survey Benchmark Report 2024-25 (Appendix 2) prepared by Key Research.

AND

2. That Council approve the uploading of these documents to Council's website.

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Approved for submission by:

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1 Background Ngā Kōrero o Muri

- 1.1 The resident satisfaction survey is carried out on a quarterly basis by an external company, Key Research. It is an independent survey, with questions designed to obtain insights and feedback from our community on a range of topics relating to Council's strategic priorities and adopted levels of service.
- 1.2 Many councils across the country carry out resident surveys with another 20 councils also using Key Research. This survey helps council get an understanding of how our residents feel about all aspects of council. This survey helps gauge where council may need to improve and where council is doing well. Council also considers trends in the data to help understand whether individual results are an outlier or indicative of declining satisfaction that may require intervention.
- 1.3 The annual satisfaction survey results are used as performance measures for some Council activities in the Annual Report. The quarterly results are shared across the organisation and many are used as part of quarterly reporting as well as team discussion points. Also some aspects of the survey such as customer services (enquiry handling) satisfaction sits within the Chief Executive's KPIs.
- 1.4 Data collection is managed to achieve defined quota targets based on age, gender, and location (northern and southern communities as well as Feilding community). Post data collection, the sample is weighted to make it representative of key population demographics based on the 2023 census. This means that the survey respondents are demographically and geographically representative of the Manawatū District as a whole.
- 1.5 Key Research is contracted to provide the Manawatū District Council with an annual report, quarterly dashboards, and an annual benchmarking report which rates our Council's performance against the 20 other local authorities that also contract Key Research services for their Resident Surveys.
- 1.6 The margin of error for the survey is between +/- 3.2% and +/-4.4%, meaning that a score within 4 percentage points of the average is not considered statistically to be significantly different from the average.
- 1.7 Once the quarterly report is received, the results are summarised in a presentation to council. This presentation helps council understand how the satisfaction rates are tracking over the year and how they compare to the previous years benchmark. The examples of comments from each survey provide useful insights into the general sentiment of the topics they are referring to. These presentations were at the following council meetings: 21st November 2024, 6th March 2025, 19th June 2025, and 4th September 2025.
- 1.8 Survey comments are analysed and those that require action or response are included within the presentation. The number of actionable comments generally ranges from 1 to 4, but occasionally there are none. Raising awareness of these comments means that council is able to fix an issue, investigate a potential problem or improve residents' satisfaction in a particular space. The actionable comments recorded over this 12-month period, and the council officer responses to these comments are included in Appendix C to this report.

2 Strategic Fit Te Tautika ki te Rautaki

- 2.1 This is largely an operational item. Its purpose is to inform the community about council's performance, as perceived by those residents surveyed. This report most closely aligns with council priority of "Value for money and excellence in local government," as these surveys help council monitor performance, and identify issues with current service performance that may need improvement.

3 Discussion and Options Considered Ngā Matapakinga me ngā Kōwhiringa i Wānangahia

Key findings from the Manawatū DC Residents Survey Final Yearly Report 2024-25 (Appendix A):

- 3.1 The survey results show an increase of 2% in overall satisfaction between 2024 and 2025. Among those respondents who provided a comment, 27% expressed positive views, stating the "*Council is doing a good job*" or that they are satisfied with the Council.
- 3.2 The areas with the largest increases in satisfaction rates between 2024 and 2025 were "the libraries", "Makino pools" and "public toilets". "The libraries" saw a satisfaction rate increase of 14%, sitting at 91% for 2025, likely due to the new space at Te Ahuru Mōwai that opened in July of 2024 and the programs on offer. The "Makino pools" saw an increase of 7% going up to 88%, with recent increases in visitors and bookings.

Key findings from the Manawatū DC Residents Survey Benchmark Report 2024-25 (Appendix B):

- 3.3 Across the 21 Councils that have their resident satisfaction surveys conducted by Key Research, the average (benchmarks) for overall satisfaction, overall reputation, core service deliverables, value for money, performance of elected members, overall waste management, and regulatory services have all declined in 2024/2025 compared with 2023/24.
- 3.4 The Benchmarking Report highlights the following areas in which MDC scored the highest satisfaction rating across those Council's that Key Research surveys:
- Kerbside rubbish collection, 93% (average 81%)
 - Provision for dedicated walkways and cycleways, 68% (average 62%)
 - Availability of parking, 77% (average 61%)
 - Playgrounds, 90% (average 81%)
 - Community centres / halls / buildings, 87% (average 77%)
 - Public swimming pools / aquatic centres, 88 % (average 77%)
 - Food safety and alcohol licencing, 83% (average 61%)
 - District/City is going in the right direction, 74% (average 57%)
- 3.5 Areas where MDC's satisfaction rating was within 5% of the top score:
- Overall reputation, 70% (average 56%, top score 74%)
 - Open/outdoor spaces, 89% (average 82%, top score 94%)
 - Public facilities and open/outdoor spaces, 87% (average 81%, top score 90%)
 - Reliability of water, 92% (average 88%, top score 95%)

- Overall sewerage/ wastewater systems, 92% (average 81%, top score 95%)
- Reliability of sewerage system, 94% (average 87%, top score 96%)
- Maintenance / quality of roads, 66% (average 50%, top score 65%)
- Parks, reserves and green spaces, 91% (average 84%, top score 94%)
- Sports fields, 89% (average 85%, top score 94%)
- Public toilets / public conveniences, 83% (average 69%, top score 86%)
- Dog and animal control, 68% (average 58%, top score 73%)
- Leadership, 68% (average 56%, top score 70%)
- Trust, 61% (average 51%, top score 65%)
- Financial management, 55% (average 42%, top score 60%)
- Quality of service, 74% (average 63%, top score 78%)

3.6 The following were topics where MDC's satisfaction rating has either fallen below the benchmark or remained below the benchmark. Included below is the MDC satisfaction rating, rationale as to why the rating is below the benchmark (if known), and what actions council is taking to help improve these satisfaction scores.

- Enquiry handling, 58% (average 69%, top score 84%)

This is an area where council has sat below the benchmark for the past few years. There was an increase of 1% seen in the satisfaction rate. This area continues to be an area of priority for council and council will continue to work on how our organisation interacts with our customers.

- Taste of water, 62% (average 67%, top score 85%)
- Clarity of water, 78% (average 79%, top score 90%)

While the 2025 results for water taste and clarity sit slightly below the benchmark averages, both remain within a strong performance range and continue to reflect the Council's commitment to maintaining safe, reliable, and high-quality drinking water for the community. It also reflects Council's ongoing focus on continual improvement in water quality and service delivery.

- Flood protection, 55% (average 60%, top score 75%)
- Overall stormwater, 50% (average 63%, top score 87%)

Council have included a significant programme of stormwater upgrades within the Long Term Plan 2024 – 2034 to address ponding and flooding issues being experienced in Feilding and some of the district's village areas such as Halcombe. Long term solutions are currently within the planning stage, with many including significant land tenure and consenting requirements. In the meantime, Council is working to also implement more near-term solutions to provide short term improvements. Examples of planned improvements to stormwater networks include pipeline upgrades, attenuation areas and increasing pumping capacities. Council also continues to proactively consider stormwater impacts from proposed new developments within the district to ensure we are planning infrastructure fit for future.

- Kerbside recycling collection, 76% (average 78%, top score 89%)
- Transfer stations, 72% (average 77%, top score 84%)
- Green waste management, 64% (average 69%, top score 80%)

Council's Waste Management and Minimisation Activity aims to enable a circular economy for all waste streams in the district. For the Manawatū Resource Recovery Centre, a focus in the past year has been to increase the number of available recycling/reuse opportunities offered. In 2024/25, MDC have delivered new recycling opportunities for tyres (sent to the national Tyrewise scheme), green waste (now sent for composting), construction and demolition waste (sent to Central Environmental's construction and demolition waste recycling facility), and Polystyrene (sent to E-Cycle in Palmerston North). We also continue to offer opportunities for Electronic Waste, plastics, metals etc.

The Feilding Community receive a kerbside recycling service delivered by Council's Solid Waste Contractors at Smart Environmental. For 2024/25, a focus has been placed on enforcing the Ministry for the Environment's standardised kerbside recycling rules and ensuring that customers are educated and fully up to date with these recent rules, e.g. no lids on bottles, no soft plastics.

- Safety of the roads, 61% (average 62%, top score 79%)
- Availability of footpaths, 61% (average 64%, top score 76%)

Both above areas have seen a small increase in satisfaction for MDC in 2025 compared to 2024. Many of the safety concerns relate to intersections in Feilding that sit on State Highways. These are challenging for Council to address directly, as we rely on NZ Transport Agency recognition and partnership to develop a long-term plan for improvements — and at present, the issue doesn't meet their high-priority threshold.

Feedback about footpaths mostly comes from rural townships where footpaths don't currently exist. Funding has not yet been secured to address these gaps in the way some communities might expect.

- Building consents, 51% (average 53%, top score 75%)

As this is only 2% under the benchmark it is not considered statistically significant. There has been a lot of uncertainty around current rules in recent months. which has potentially impacted the overall satisfaction for our District.

4 Risk Assessment Te Arotake Tūraru

- 4.1 Not applicable as this report is for information only and much of the data is publicly available via the Annual Report.

5 Engagement Te Whakapānga

Significance of Decision

- 5.1 The Council's Significance and Engagement Policy is not triggered by matters discussed in this report. No stakeholder engagement is required.

Māori and Cultural Engagement

- 5.2 There are no known cultural considerations associated with the matters addressed in this report. No specific engagement with Māori or other ethnicity groups is necessary.

6 Operational Implications Ngā Pānga Whakahaere

- 6.1 Council staff will manage any tasks that arise from any resident satisfaction survey as part of a routine work programme.

7 Financial Implications Ngā Pānga Ahumoni

- 7.1 There are no financial implications with this report, beyond those already being considered by Council as part of the usual Annual Plan and internal improvement processes.

8 Statutory Requirements Ngā Here ā-Ture

- 8.1 The results of the customer satisfaction survey will inform our reporting against Levels of Service and performance measures set in the LTP 2024-34 in accordance with the LGA 2002.

9 Next Steps Te Kokenga

- 9.1 Once received and endorsed by council, these reports will be uploaded to MDC's website, with some supporting information.
- 9.2 As part of making these reports public, council will release a news item on the website.

10 Attachments Ngā Āpitihanga

- Appendix A: Manawatū DC Residents Survey Final Yearly Report 2024-25
- Appendix B: Manawatū DC Residents Survey Benchmark Report 2024-25
- Appendix C: Actionable comments and council responses