

Investigating What Aucklanders' Changing Preferences Mean For The Provision Of Community Services

Report prepared for Auckland Council by

gravitasOPG

April 2026

Understanding Aucklanders' changing preferences

This research explored how Aucklanders' expectations, preferences and patterns of participation in community services and facilities are changing, and what these changes may mean for future planning and provision.

The project combined multiple sources of insight, including:



**Auckland
population
survey**



**Community
walkalongs**



**World Cafes
with community
participants**



**Service provider
survey**



**Key informant
interviews**

Together, these stages explored:

- how people currently use community services and facilities
- barriers and drivers of participation
- changing expectations around access, location, delivery and inclusion
- implications for future planning and investment.

The findings are intended to support longer-term thinking about how Auckland's community services and facilities can remain relevant, accessible and responsive to changing community needs.



How expectations are changing

The research suggests a number of broad shifts in how Aucklanders think about, use and experience community services and facilities. The 'Past expectations' column illustrates the traditional assumptions that have commonly shaped planning, while the research indicates expectations are increasingly shifting towards those shown on the right.



Traditional approach



Emerging expectations

Community facilities primarily support organised activities and programmes

Community facilities are increasingly expected to support broader social outcomes e.g. connection, wellbeing, belonging and everyday community life

Participation is structured, regular and programme-led

Participation is increasingly flexible, casual, self-directed and shaped around everyday life

Access is mainly about physical proximity

Access is also shaped by affordability, confidence, awareness, cultural fit and ease of participation

One-size-fits-all provision can meet most needs

Different communities expect different participation styles, environments and delivery approaches

Services are planned as individual facilities or assets

Services are increasingly expected to work as part of a connected and complementary network

Local provision is always preferred

People are willing to travel for higher-quality, specialist or destination experiences

Community facilities are judged mainly by what they provide

Facilities are also judged by how welcoming, visible and easy to use they feel

Participation pathways are assumed to be clear

Many Aucklanders rely on visible, low-pressure and low-commitment entry points into participation

What these changes mean for future planning

- **Planning approaches may need to become more flexible and adaptable** as participation patterns and community expectations continue to evolve.
- **Future provision may need to balance local access with quality and specialisation** rather than assuming all services should be delivered in the same way or in the same locations.
- **Access may need to be understood more broadly than physical proximity alone**, including visibility, confidence, affordability, transport and ease of participation.
- **Future planning may increasingly need to balance consistency with local responsiveness**, recognising that different communities experience services, participation and access differently.
- **Future investment decisions may increasingly involve trade-offs** between reach, flexibility, quality, specialisation and equitable access.
- **There may be growing value in designing services around how people actually live and participate** rather than around traditional programme or facility models.



What this could require from Council

- **Different services may need to be planned and delivered in different ways**, recognising that some support everyday local use while others serve more specialised or destination roles.
- **Future provision may rely more on services, facilities and providers working together as a connected network**, rather than operating separately.
- **There may be growing importance in making services easy and comfortable to use**, including welcoming spaces, clear information, simple navigation and flexible ways to participate.
- **Libraries, local hubs and other high-use services may play an increasingly important role as everyday entry points into community participation**, connection and support.
- **Facilities and programmes may need greater flexibility to respond to changing community needs and participation patterns over time.**
- **Future decision-making may increasingly involve balancing competing priorities**, including local access, quality, equity, flexibility and long-term sustainability.
- **Participation may need to be understood as more than a single interaction**, with awareness, confidence, relevance and ongoing engagement all shaping whether people take part.





Our starting point

Auckland is a fast-growing, increasingly diverse city, with its population expected to exceed 2.3 million by 2052¹. As the city grows and its communities evolve, so too do the expectations Aucklanders hold about the community services and spaces available to them. Ensuring that Auckland Council's community services remain equitable, inclusive and fit-for-purpose requires a clear understanding of how people's needs, behaviours and preferences are shifting.

Emerging trends such as climate adaptation, increased cultural diversity, rising urban density and widening socio-economic inequities are changing how Aucklanders live, connect and use their neighbourhoods. At the same time, people are seeking more meaningful local experiences, greater flexibility in how they access services and facilities that support wellbeing and connection in daily life. These shifts create both pressures and opportunities for how Council plans, funds and delivers community places.

To support this, Auckland Council commissioned research to explore Aucklanders' changing expectations in relation to community places and services. The aim was to generate robust, evidence-based insights to inform future investment, planning and service delivery, ensuring Council can respond proactively and strategically to the city's changing social landscape.

Findings from this research will help guide the improvement of the Community Facilities Network Plan (CFNP), as identified under the recent CFNP policy assessment. The insights will provide a strong foundation for aligning Council's approach with the evolving needs and aspirations of Aucklanders.

1. Auckland Growth Scenario 2023 <https://www.knowledgeauckland.org.nz/publications/auckland-growth-scenario-2023-version-11-ags23v11-data/>

Context for the research

Community Facilities Network Plan Context

This research was commissioned to support Auckland Council's long-term planning for community services and facilities as part of the wider Community Facilities Network Plan. The Plan considers how community facilities and services may need to adapt over time in response to population growth, changing participation patterns, demographic change and evolving community expectations.

Future Trends Context

Auckland Council's Future Trends report identified a range of trends likely to influence future demand for community spaces and services. These included:

- increasing demand for flexible and multi-purpose spaces
- growing participation in informal and self-directed activities
- increasing diversity across communities and households
- greater emphasis on accessibility, convenience and inclusion
- growing interest in co-located and networked service models
- increasing pressure on traditional provision approaches due to financial and land-use constraints.

These trends highlight the importance of understanding not only what services are provided, but also how Aucklanders experience, access and use them in everyday life — and how these factors may shape future participation and provision needs.



1. Auckland Council's Community Facilities Network Plan - www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/content/dam/ac/docs/plans/community/community-facilities-network-plan.pdf

Objectives

Undertake a study that investigates what Aucklanders' changing preferences mean for how community services are accessed and delivered in Auckland in the future

1

Identify changing preferences

Identify how Aucklanders' changing preferences affect where, when and how they would like to access community services (i.e. testing different dimension of choice).

2

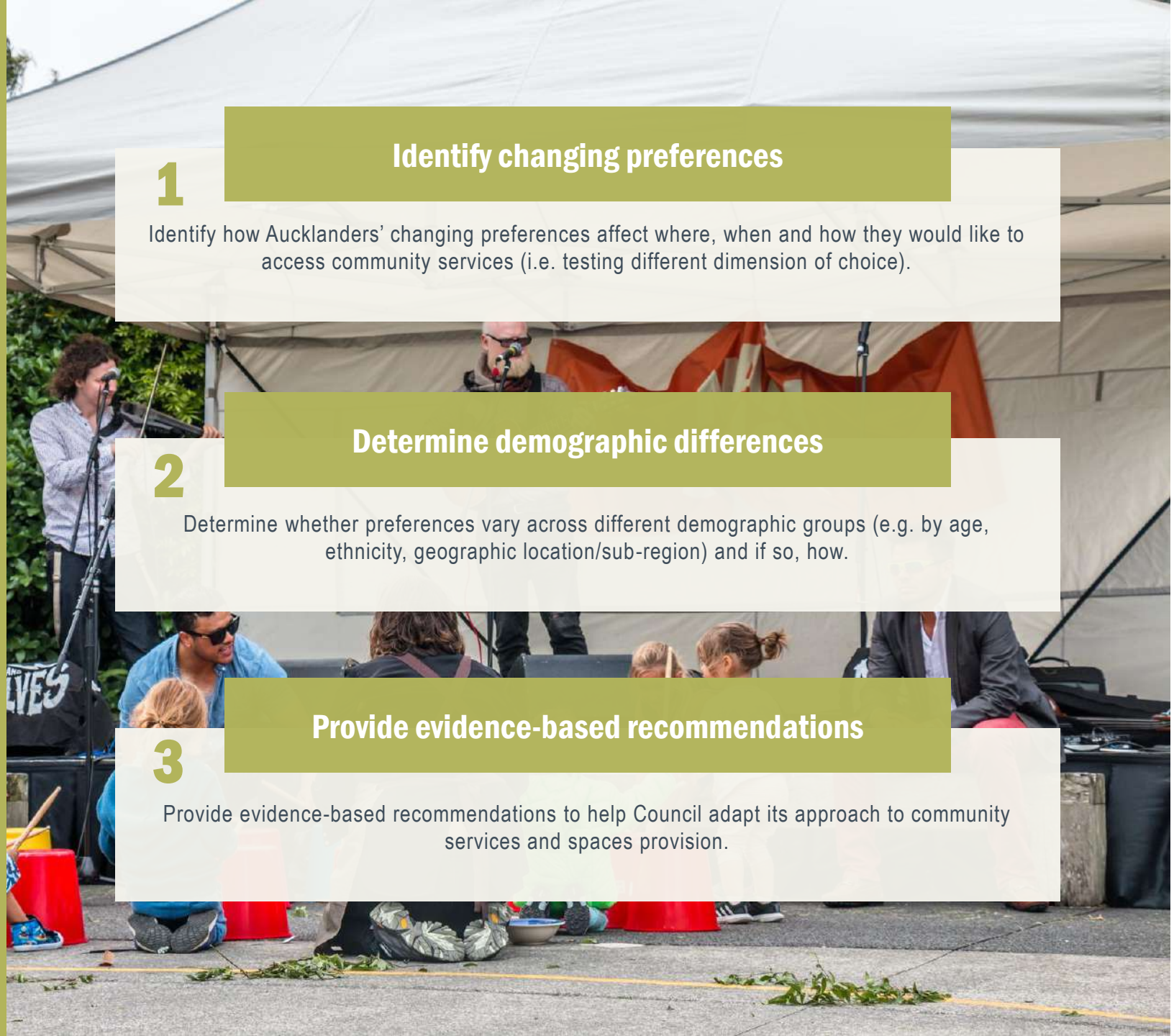
Determine demographic differences

Determine whether preferences vary across different demographic groups (e.g. by age, ethnicity, geographic location/sub-region) and if so, how.

3

Provide evidence-based recommendations

Provide evidence-based recommendations to help Council adapt its approach to community services and spaces provision.



Research approach

A five-stage approach was used to design, deliver and report the research programme. Each stage built on the previous, generating connected insights that explore current behaviours, identify future aspirations and validate findings at scale.

Desk research



Prepare

Establishment of a strong foundation for the project by building shared understanding, clarifying the context and aligning on purpose. It sets the stage for meaningful engagement and effective decision-making later in the process.

- Project initiation meeting
- Desk research
- Collaborative design workshop
- Ethics review process

Qualitative research



Understand

Engagement with key informants, subject matter experts and the public to build a rich understanding of current use, challenges, unmet needs and priorities.

- Key informant interviews
- Community walkalongs
- Service provider survey

Quantitative research



Measure

Gathering of robust, quantifiable data from a representative sample of Aucklanders to understand preferences, behaviours and priorities. This stage will also test and scale the ideas and innovations generated by the Envision phase, providing a strong evidence base for future planning and investment.

- Online survey

Reporting



Analyse, Report

Synthesise insights from all stages into a clear, actionable report with evidence-based recommendations.

Ongoing communication, collaboration and feedback

Data collection methods



**Key informant
interviews**



**Community
walkalongs**



**Service provider
survey**



World cafes



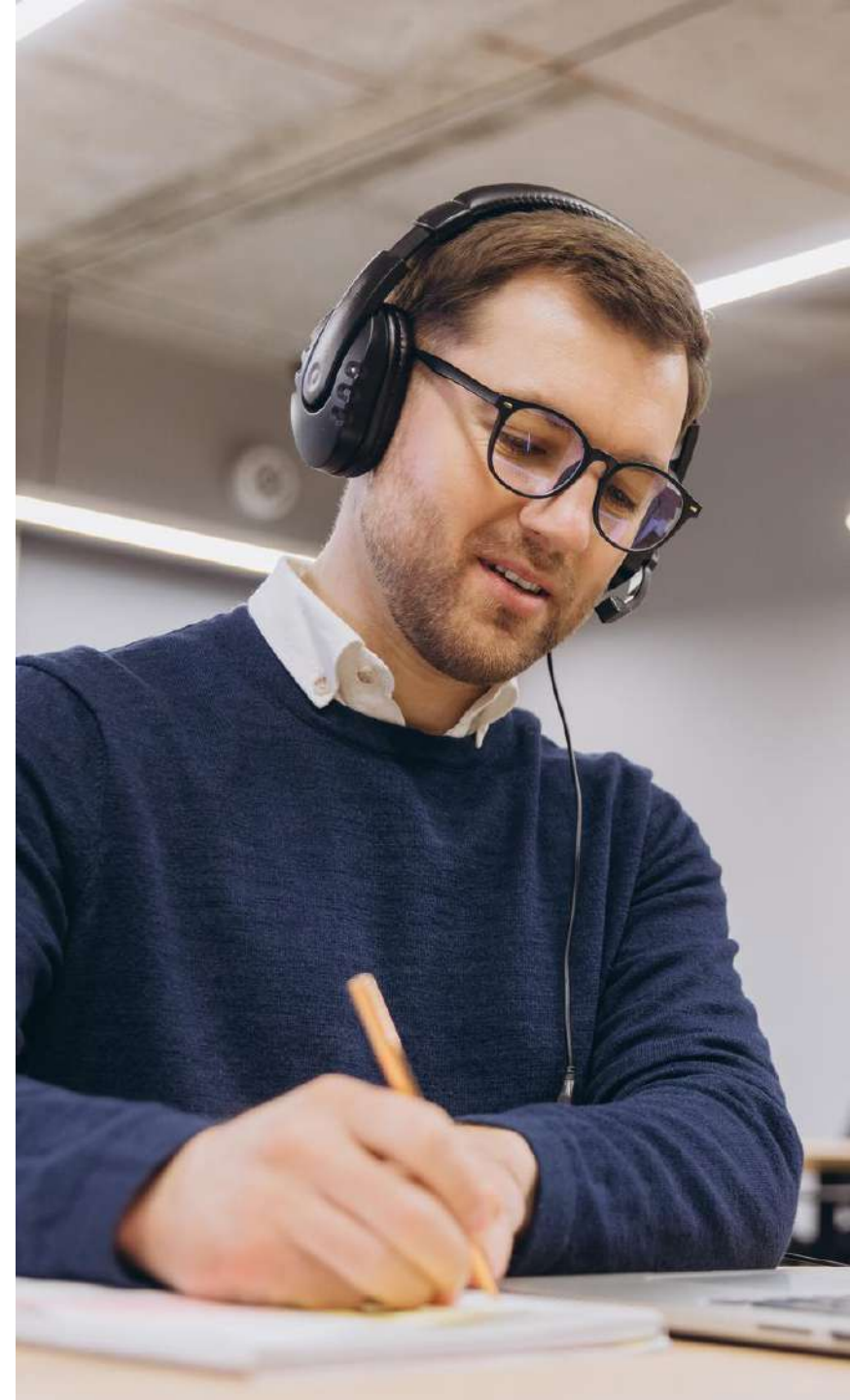
**Population
survey**

Stage	Understand	Understand	Understand	Envision	Measure
Purpose	To gather in-depth insights from key informants and sector experts	To understand lived experience of facilities in real-world settings	To capture experiences of organisations delivering services from Auckland Council facilities	To explore community perspectives, ideas and priorities in a collaborative setting	To quantify preferences and priorities across Auckland
Participants	N=12 in-depth interviews	N=12 participants	N=237	N=63 participants across three sessions	N=2,019 Aucklanders
Coverage/sample	Range of external and internal (Council) service providers and sector experts	Conducted across multiple Auckland locations and with a demographic mix of Aucklanders	Venue hirers, community hirers, leaseholders and programme providers	25 different demographic and behavioural groups drawn from across Auckland	Representative sample of Auckland residents, with quotas by age, gender and ethnicity
What it provided	Strategic perspectives, system-level insights, emerging issues	First-hand insights into access, usability, comfort and navigation	Operational realities, challenges, future readiness, support needs	Collective perspectives, aspirations and trade-offs	Population-level insights and prioritisation



Key informant interviews

- Key informant interviews are in-depth, one-on-one conversations with people who have direct experience of delivering, managing or working within community facilities and services. This included a range of stakeholders such as service providers, community organisations, facility managers and sector representatives.
- Participants were selected because they brought expert or frontline perspectives, often with a detailed understanding of:
 - how services are delivered in practice
 - who is using (and not using) services
 - emerging trends and changing needs within communities
 - the operational and system-level challenges involved.
- Interviews were semi-structured, allowing for consistent coverage of key topics while also providing flexibility to explore issues of relevance to particular stakeholders in greater depth. This enabled participants to share both practical experience and broader reflections based on their role and expertise.
- Twelve key informant interviews were conducted, six with Auckland Council staff/teams and six with external organisations.
- Overall, this method provided depth and expertise to complement community perspectives, insight into how the system functions in practice and a clearer understanding of constraints, opportunities and trade-offs shaping future provision.





Community Walkalongs

- Community walkalongs involved researchers walking with participants through their local community facilities and spaces such as libraries, parks, community centres and nearby streets.
- Participants were local residents and were selected to ensure a mix of demographic groups - for example families, older adults, young people, migrants and those with accessibility needs. Participants were invited to walk routes that were familiar to them including places they regularly visit, pass by or deliberately avoid.
- As participants move through these spaces, they talk about:
 - how they use (or don't use) local facilities
 - what they notice, value or find frustrating
 - what makes a place feel welcoming, visible or easy to access
 - what they might change or improve.
- Walkalongs were conducted in October and November 2025 with each taking between one and a half and two hours. Information was collected via notes and audio recordings of discussions (with participants' permission)
- For this research, walkalongs were used to understand how people encounter, interpret and navigate community facilities in real life. They also highlighted how awareness is often shaped by visibility and familiarity.
- This method provided place-based insight into how community facilities and services are experienced in context and a clear understanding of barriers and missed opportunities.



Walkalong locations and demographic profile

- **Albany**
 - Young male (18-24 years)
- **Auckland CBD**
 - LGBTQI+
- **Glen Innes**
 - Beneficiary/lower income female
- **Glenfield**
 - Mobility issues
- **Henderson**
 - Māori parent
- **Howick**
 - Asian migrant with English as a less familiar language
- **Mangere**
 - Single parent household; beneficiary/lower income
- **Mt Albert**
 - Retired male
- **Otara**
 - Pacifika female youth (18-24 years)
- **Pukekohe**
 - Family with older children
- **Warkworth**
 - Family with younger children
- **Westgate/Massey**
 - Indian male



World Cafes

- World Café workshops are facilitated group discussions designed to help people explore ideas, reflect on different perspectives and develop more considered views over time.
- Three World Café workshops were run in November/December 2025, each with five small tables and five participants at each table. Participants took part in a series of short, focused conversations, facilitated by members of the GravitasOPG project team. After each round, participants moved to a new table, where they built on earlier discussions.
- Participants were a diverse mix of Aucklanders, including people from different age groups, cultural backgrounds, life stages and levels of engagement with community services. This mix was intentional as it allows ideas to be tested, challenged and refined through conversation.
- Each table focused on a specific topic or question:
 - What services and activities matter most in the future
 - Navigating community services
 - When, where and how should services be provided
 - Spaces that work well for everyone
 - What services fit well together.
- The session concluded with a trade-off exercise to identify service/facility priorities.
- Overall, this method provided deliberated, future-focused insights rather than quick reactions, a deeper understanding of why people hold certain preferences and evidence of how views evolve when people engage with different perspectives.



Demographic/behavioural groups ('tables') included

- Māori
- Pacific Peoples
- East Asian
- New migrants
- Those living in high density housing
- Those with limited access to community facilities/services
- Parents of young children
- Digitally-excluded/offline by choice
- Youth (18-24 years)
- Older people (65 years +)
- Low users of community facilities/services
- High users of community facilities/services
- Lower income households
- LGBTQI+
- Those with a disability



Service Provider Survey

- An online survey was conducted with organisations delivering services from Auckland Council facilities, including venue hirers (n=194), community partners (n=19), leaseholders (n=19) and programme providers (n=5). The survey was distributed in November 2025 and closed in mid-January 2026.
- The survey captured providers' day-to-day experience of using facilities and working with Council, including:
 - how spaces are used and who they serve
 - suitability, availability, cost and condition of facilities
 - how well current arrangements support service delivery
 - key challenges, pressures and future demand.
- The survey was designed to surface delivery patterns and system issues rather than produce population estimates, with findings interpreted comparatively across provider types. Consistent themes across groups provided confidence in the insights.
- Overall, the survey provided a practical view of how facilities support service delivery, insight into operational challenges and constraints and evidence to inform future planning and improvements.



Population Survey

- A representative online survey of Aucklanders was conducted to understand current use, preferences and priorities for community services and facilities. The survey was carried out in February/March 2026, with a final sample size of n=2,019.
- Interviewing quotas were set to ensure a representative sample by gender, age, ethnicity and local board.
- The survey explored:
 - how often people use community services and facilities
 - what types of services and activities they value
 - preferences for access, location and service delivery
 - perceptions of quality, accessibility and inclusion
 - priorities and trade-offs for future provision.
- The survey provided a quantitative evidence base to test and scale insights from the qualitative research, ensuring findings reflected the views of Aucklanders more broadly.
- Overall, this method provided robust, population-level insight into preferences and behaviours, a basis for comparing different groups and communities and evidence to inform future planning and investment decisions.

Dimensions of Choice

- This report is structured around a set of “dimensions of choice” identified in the project brief as important to understanding how Aucklanders make decisions about community services and facilities. The dimensions recognise that participation is shaped by a range of connected factors, including:
 - the role and purpose community services play in everyday life (‘Scope’)
 - how services are delivered (‘Service Delivery’)
 - where they are located (‘Location’)
 - how easy they are to discover, access and navigate (‘Access’)
 - how facilities and spaces are organised and connected (‘Configuration’)
 - whether services feel welcoming, inclusive and relevant to different communities (‘Equity and Inclusion’).
- Together, these dimensions provide a practical way of understanding the conditions that support or limit participation. Decisions about using services are often shaped by how multiple factors work together in everyday life including travel time, visibility, opening hours, cost, confidence and sense of belonging. The dimensions also reflect wider shifts including:
 - growing demand for flexible and multi-purpose spaces.
 - increasing expectations for convenience and accessibility
 - more diverse participation patterns and community needs
 - stronger emphasis on social connection, inclusion and wellbeing
 - increasing use of networked and co-located service models.
- Using the dimensions of choice as the structure for this report allows findings from the different research methods to be brought together in a consistent and integrated way. It also helps move beyond identifying what people want, toward understanding the wider conditions that shape participation, access and use. While the dimensions are presented separately, they are closely connected in practice. Aucklanders experience community services holistically, with many findings sitting across multiple dimensions.



Equity and Inclusion

Who feels these services work for them?



Location

Where are services located?



Scope

What services are available?

Dimensions of Choice



Access

How easy are services to discover, access and navigate?



Service Delivery

How are services experienced and delivered?



Configuration

How are spaces designed and organised?

Key themes

Scope: Aucklanders are increasingly seeking informal, flexible and self-directed use

Findings relating to Scope show that Aucklanders increasingly expect community services to support a broad range of practical, social and wellbeing needs while also enabling more flexible and informal patterns of use. Community services are often valued not just for the specific activities they provide but for the wider role they play in supporting connection, belonging, learning and everyday life.

The research shows:

- Community facilities are increasingly expected to support multiple functions and needs at the same time.
- Everyday practical value is a key driver of use, particularly for libraries and community hubs.
- Participation is shifting away from structured programmes, toward more informal, flexible and self-directed use.
- Everyday services are expected to be easy to access locally, while more specialised facilities are seen as destinations people are prepared to travel to.
- Expectations of community services extend beyond traditional service delivery to include broader social, cultural and community outcomes.



Key themes:

Access: Aucklanders' participation is shaped less by availability and more by how easy services are to find, understand and access

Findings relating to Access show that participation is shaped not only by whether services exist but by how easy they are to discover, understand, reach and use in everyday life. Access is influenced by a combination of practical, physical, social and informational factors, with visibility, convenience and confidence all playing an important role in whether people engage with services.

The research shows:

- Access depends on more than physical availability, with transport, time, cost, visibility and confidence all influencing participation.
- Awareness is often passive, with fragmented information systems making services harder to discover and navigate.
- Visible and easy-to-understand spaces are more likely to be discovered and used.
- In-person access remains important, particularly for people with lower digital confidence, language barriers or more complex needs.
- Feelings of safety, comfort and social acceptance strongly influence whether people feel able to use a space or service.



Key themes:

Service Delivery: Aucklanders value access and responsive services over who owns and who operates a facility

Findings relating to Service Delivery show that Aucklanders are often less focused on who delivers a service than on whether it is easy to access, welcoming, reliable and responsive to their needs. The quality of the experience, the way people are treated and how services operate in practice strongly influence whether people choose to engage and return.

The research shows:

- The quality and experience of services matters more to most people than who delivers them.
- In-person services and human interaction remain important for trust, confidence and connection.
- Flexible, low-barrier and responsive service models are increasingly valued.
- Welcoming environments, friendly staff and positive experiences strongly influence participation.
- Partnership delivery models are generally accepted when services feel open, trusted and inclusive.
- Digital channels are seen as complementing rather than replacing in-person delivery.
- Providers identified growing pressures relating to cost, demand, maintenance, staffing and access to space.
- There is growing value placed on more connected and coordinated service experiences, particularly for people with more complex or overlapping needs.



Key themes:**Location: Aucklanders prefer everyday services close to home but are willing to travel for larger and specialised facilities**

Findings relating to Location show that where services are located plays a major role in whether and how people use them. Aucklanders value services that are convenient, visible and connected to everyday life, while also recognising that different types of services serve different roles across the network.

The research shows:

- Everyday services are expected to be easy to access close to home (within a 5-15 minute drive).
- People are more willing to travel for larger, specialised or less frequently used facilities.
- Convenience and integration with daily routines strongly influence participation.
- Co-location with transport, shops and other destinations supports visibility and use.
- Different communities have different location needs depending on population, transport access and local context.
- Visibility and familiarity influence whether facilities are discovered and used.
- Location decisions need to reflect the different roles services play across the wider network.
- Highly centralised provision can improve efficiency and choice but may reduce local accessibility and connection.



Key themes:

Configuration: Aucklanders increasingly prefer flexible, multi-purpose over single-use, standalone facilities

Findings relating to Configuration show that Aucklanders value facilities that are easy to understand, flexible to use and able to support a range of different activities and users. There is no single preferred facility model, with preferences varying depending on the purpose of the space, the needs of users and the type of experience people are seeking.

The research shows:

- Flexible, multi-purpose spaces are increasingly valued over highly specialised or single-purpose facilities.
- People value spaces that support both planned activities and informal, incidental use.
- Co-located services and hubs can improve convenience, visibility and efficiency.
- Larger hubs are seen as offering greater choice and functionality but can also feel crowded, impersonal or harder to navigate.
- Smaller local facilities are often valued for their familiarity, accessibility and sense of community connection.
- Facilities are expected to balance local character with network-wide consistency and usability.
- Different services and communities require different configuration approaches rather than a single standard model.



Key themes:

Equity and Inclusion: Aucklanders' participation is shaped by demographics and familiarity with services, with some groups experiencing multiple overlapping barriers to access and participation

Findings relating to Equity & Inclusion show that Aucklanders do not experience community services in the same way. Participation is shaped by factors such as age, culture, language, disability, confidence, income and familiarity with services, with some groups experiencing multiple overlapping barriers to access and participation.

The research shows:

- Experiences of community services vary significantly across different groups and communities.
- Familiarity and confidence strongly influence whether people feel services are “for people like me”.
- Barriers to participation are often cumulative, particularly for those already less connected to services.
- Language, communication and digital confidence can affect people's ability to access and navigate services.
- Feelings of safety, comfort and cultural relevance strongly influence participation.
- Flexible, low-cost and informal opportunities can help reduce barriers to entry.
- Representation, visibility and culturally responsive design help people feel welcomed and included.
- Inclusive provision requires more than physical accessibility alone and must consider social, cultural and emotional dimensions of access.



Report outline

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How to use this report

This report brings together findings from across the Changing Preferences research programme to provide a strategic overview of how Aucklanders experience, access and use community services and facilities.

Findings are organised around the “Dimensions of Choice” framework used throughout the research programme. While presented separately, many findings are interconnected and sit across multiple dimensions.

Additional stage-specific reports and presentations are available on request for readers seeking more detailed findings from individual research components.

Key informants and community walkalongs:

- Understand Stage Summary Presentation (November 2025)

World cafes:

- Envisage Stage Summary Presentation (December 2025)

Service providers:

- Experiences and Perceptions of Service Providers (Full Report) (February 2026)

Dimension of Choice: Scope

- *What types of community services do Aucklanders currently use?*
- *What types of community services do Aucklanders want to access, and how often do they want to access them?*



Scope Summary: What Community Services Are Expected To Include, Support And Enable

Findings relating to Scope show that Aucklanders increasingly expect community services to support a broad range of practical, social and wellbeing needs while also enabling more flexible and informal patterns of use. Community services are often valued not just for the specific activities they provide but for the wider role they play in supporting connection, belonging, learning and everyday life.

The research shows:

- Community facilities are increasingly expected to support multiple functions and needs at the same time.
- Everyday practical value is a key driver of use, particularly for libraries and community hubs.
- Participation is shifting away from structured programmes, toward more informal, flexible and self-directed use.
- Everyday services are expected to be easy to access locally, while more specialised facilities are seen as destinations people are prepared to travel to.
- Expectations of community services extend beyond traditional service delivery to include broader social, cultural and community outcomes.



Community facilities are expected to support a broad range of roles and services

- One of the clearest findings across the qualitative work is that Aucklanders do not think about community facilities in narrow functional terms. Libraries are not just for borrowing books, pools are not just for swimming and community halls are not just spaces to hire. Instead, these spaces are understood as supporting a combination of practical, social, emotional and developmental needs at the same time.
- Providers and key informants consistently described community services as delivering broader social and community benefits beyond their primary purpose. Community facilities staff highlighted contributions to social connection, cultural exchange, neighbourhood cohesion and preventative outcomes such as reducing isolation or anti-social behaviour. Similarly, key informants from the arts sector described arts venues not just as places for creative activity but as supporting participation, identity, inclusion and shared experience. Recreation providers reinforced this broader role, emphasising that facilities contribute to mental, social and emotional wellbeing as much as physical health:

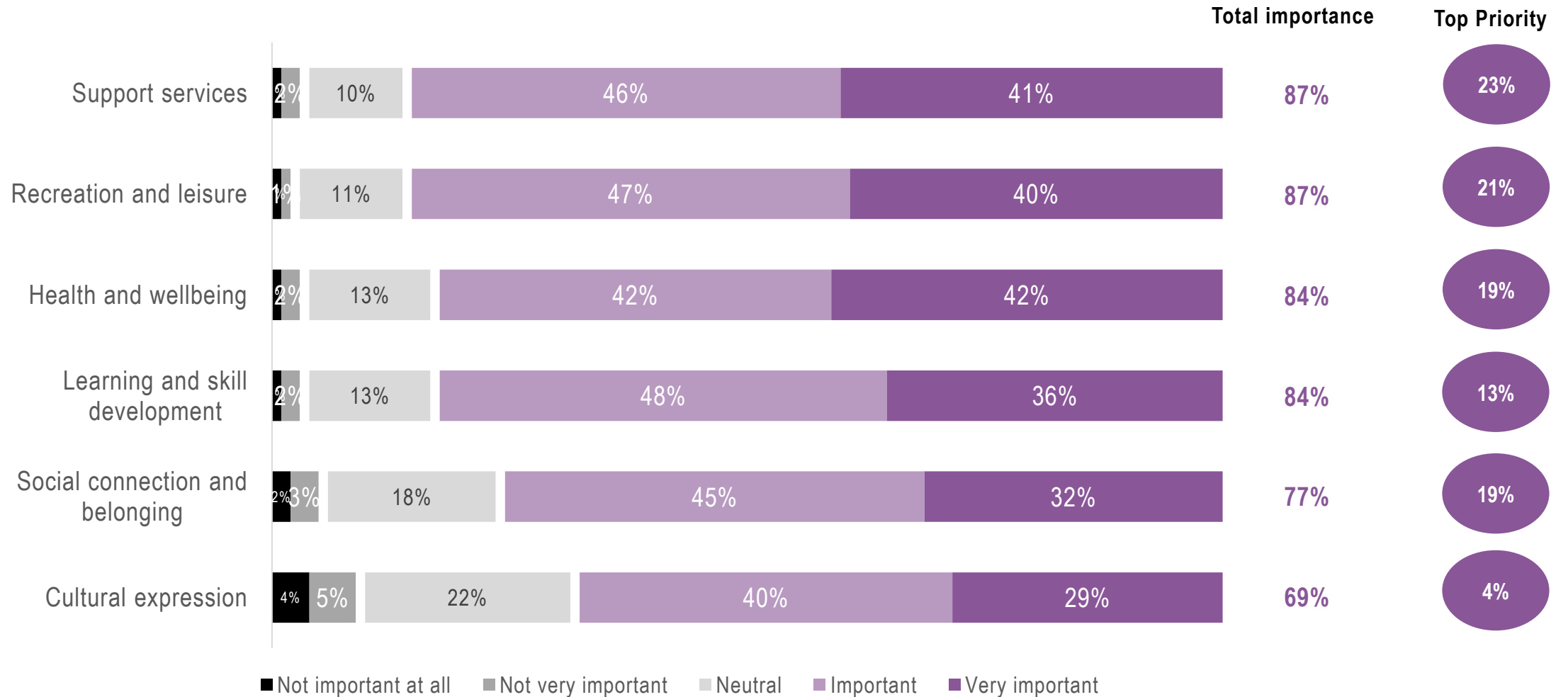
It's the physical side of things, but it's ... mental, social and well-being as well. (Key informant interview)

The predominant reason they come is to get active and get moving for the health benefits, but then you get all the connections they make and the sense of community. (Key informant interview)

- This highlights the increasingly recognised role of community services as contributing to the overall fabric of community life. Rather than being valued solely for delivering a single activity or outcome, facilities and services are often experienced as supporting multiple social, cultural, wellbeing and community functions at the same time.
- The survey findings provide strong quantitative validation of this. Aucklanders rate all potential roles of community services as important/very important, with consistently high scores across support services (for example, advice, help navigating services) and recreation/leisure (both 87%), health and wellbeing and learning (84%), social connection (77%) and cultural expression (69%) (see following slide). And there is no clear dominant priority, with even the highest-ranked role (support services) selected as the top priority by only a minority (23%). This reinforces that Aucklanders are not asking services to specialise; they are expecting them to deliver across multiple roles at once.

Aucklanders want to access a wide range of community functions

Importance of Council facilities/services in supporting community functions



Q5.1: How important do you think it is for Council community facilities and services to support the following?

Q5.2: Which one of these should be the core priority for Council-provided community facilities?

Base: n=1,999–2,004 (All respondents excluding 'don't know' responses)

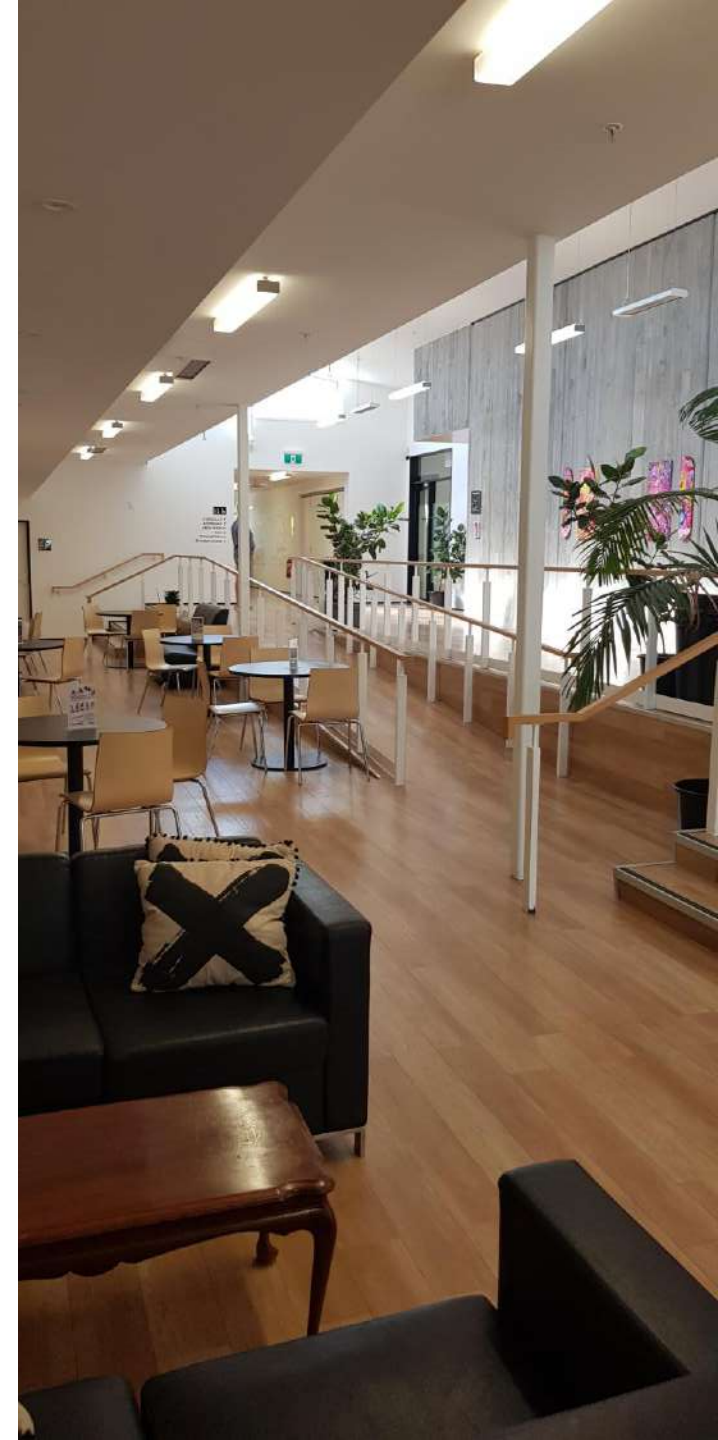
Social connection and belonging are at the heart of what people want from community services

- Across all qualitative sources, social connection emerged as one of the most consistent purposes of community services. Facilities are valued not only because they offer activities but because they create opportunities for people to interact, build relationships and feel part of something larger than themselves.
- Importantly, this connection is often created through informal, everyday interactions, rather than formal programmes. Key informants described the importance of regular, low-pressure opportunities to connect such as shared spaces, local events or simply being around others in a familiar environment. This was particularly evident in community-led and neighbourhood-based services:

There's no charge there. It's about having a sense of belonging. (Key informant interview)

We go around to different various reserves and parks and we do things like neighbourhood barbecues. It doesn't matter whether only two people turn up. Those two people probably never knew each other – and then it just spreads from there. (Key informant interview)

- These findings suggest that the value of community services is often less about what is formally delivered and more about the social environment they enable.
- This helps explain why physical community facilities continue to play a critical role, even as digital options become available and expand. The relational and experiential aspects of connection are not easily replicated online.



Community services are valued for their practical, everyday usefulness

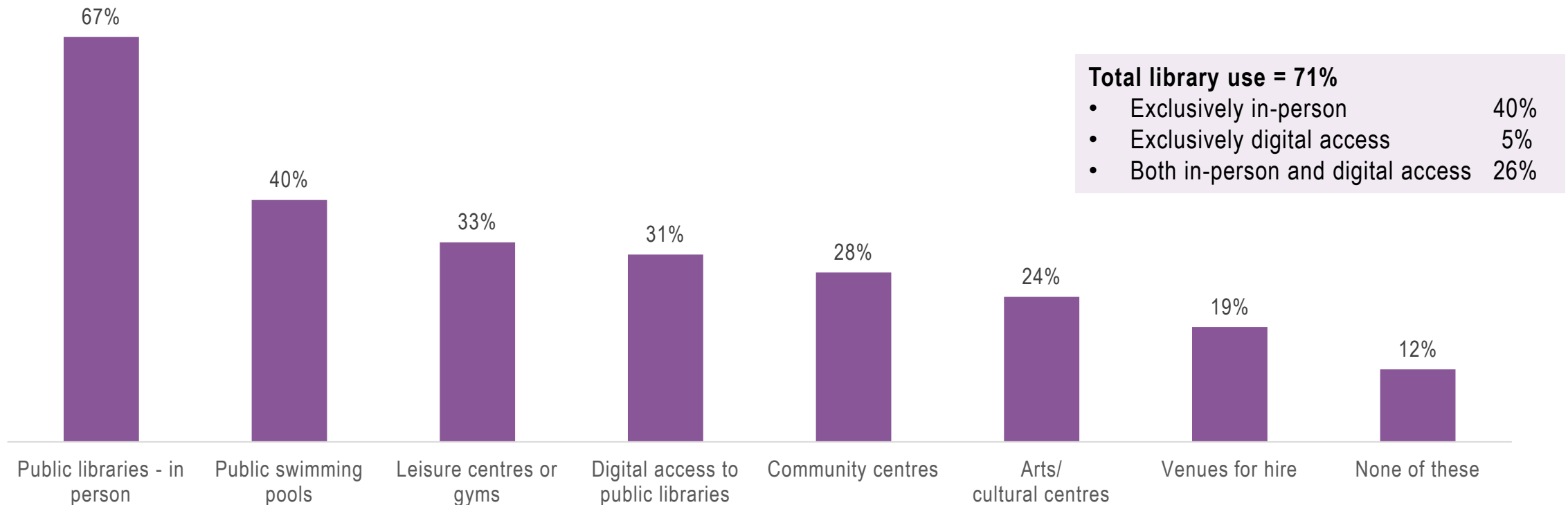
- A second strong theme is that engagement with community services is driven less by aspiration and more by practical, everyday value. People tend to use services that are visible, affordable, familiar and easy to incorporate into their daily lives.
- Libraries, pools and leisure centres stand out in this regard. These facilities are seen as reliable and easy to access, low cost or free and offering multiple functions in a single visit. For example, libraries were described as places to access:
 - computers and Wi-Fi
 - information and advice
 - study and work space
 - community notices and services
 - as well as books and programmes
- Similarly, pools were described as an affordable family outing, particularly compared with other paid leisure activities, and as a space that accommodates a wide range of users simultaneously.
- This practical value is clearly reflected in usage patterns, where a small number of highly functional services dominate – see following slide.



Libraries dominate as the primary point of engagement, with more specialised facilities used by smaller groups

Council community facilities and services used/attended in the last 12 months

- Survey data suggests a hierarchy of use – a small number of universally-used services (libraries), a middle layer of regularly used services (pools, gyms) and a long tail of more targeted or occasional-use facilities.
- This suggests that facilities don't all play the same role. Some act as everyday, high-frequency touchpoints while others have a more situational or niche role.
- The relatively low share of 'none of these' responses reinforces that most Aucklanders have some touchpoint with Council services, even if limited.

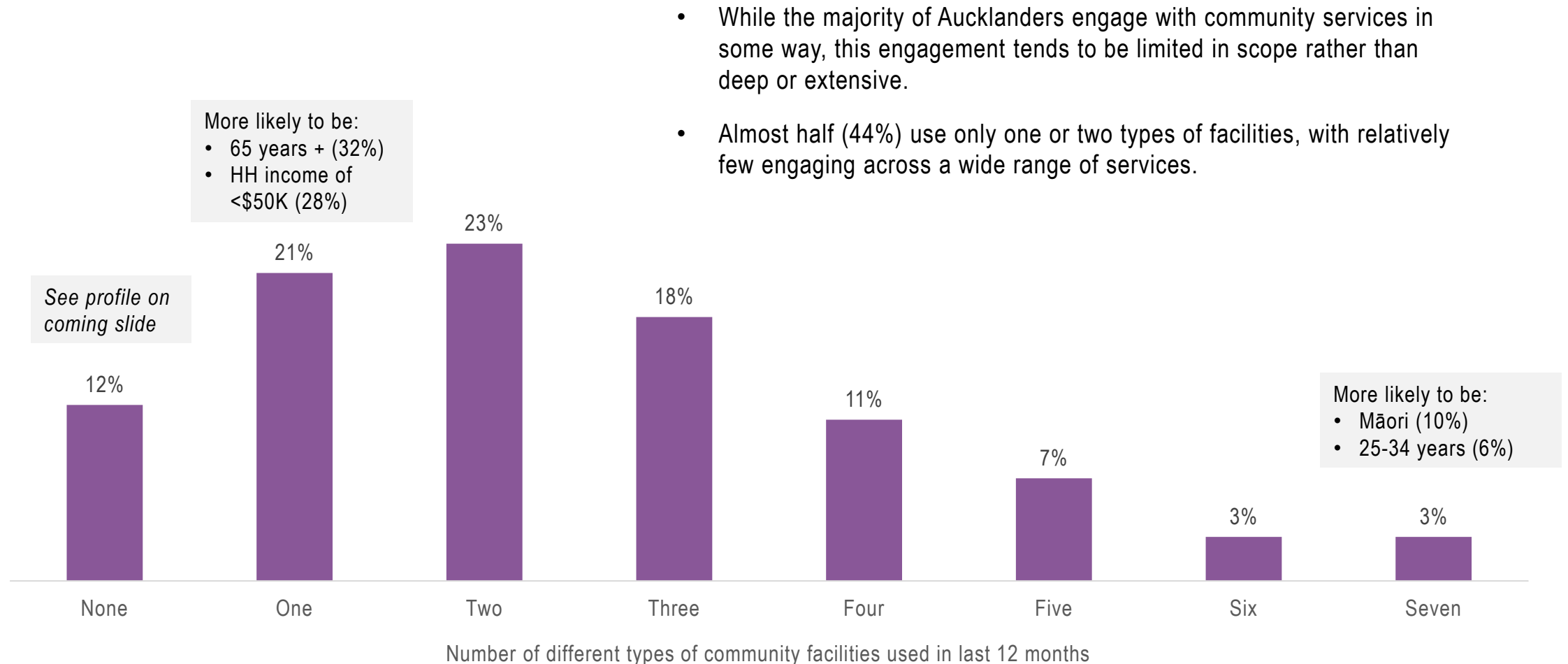


Q1.1: In the last 12 months, which of the following Council community facilities or services have you used or attended?

Base: n=2,019 (All respondents)

While many Aucklanders engage with community facilities, most use only a narrow part of the network

Number of different Council community facilities and services used/attended in the last 12 months



Q1.1: In the last 12 months, which of the following Council community facilities or services have you used or attended?

Base: n=2,019 (All respondents)

People tend to engage with community services selectively, based on relevance and need

- The pattern observed in the previous slide suggests that many Aucklanders use community services as needed rather than engaging broadly across the full network.
- Qualitative findings reinforce this. Participants described using services at particular life stages, when a specific need arose or when something convenient was available, rather than actively seeking to engage with multiple services.
- Different services also serve different purposes and patterns of use. Some, such as libraries, are used frequently and flexibly as part of everyday life, while others are accessed more occasionally or for more specific activities.
- This highlights the importance of understanding the different roles facilities and services play within the wider network, rather than assuming all are used in the same way.



Preferences are shifting towards informal, flexible and self-directed use

- Both the qualitative and quantitative research findings show a shift away from structured, programme-led participation toward more informal, flexible and self-directed use of community services. This is particularly evident in sport and recreation where providers described a move away from traditional organised formats toward more casual participation:

People want to do it at their own time with their own friends and their own rules. (Key informant interview)

It's just people's lives in terms of the time they have available to attend things. I felt like it was a lot more free pre CO VID. Post COVID it just feels like life has just gone super busy. (Key informant interview)

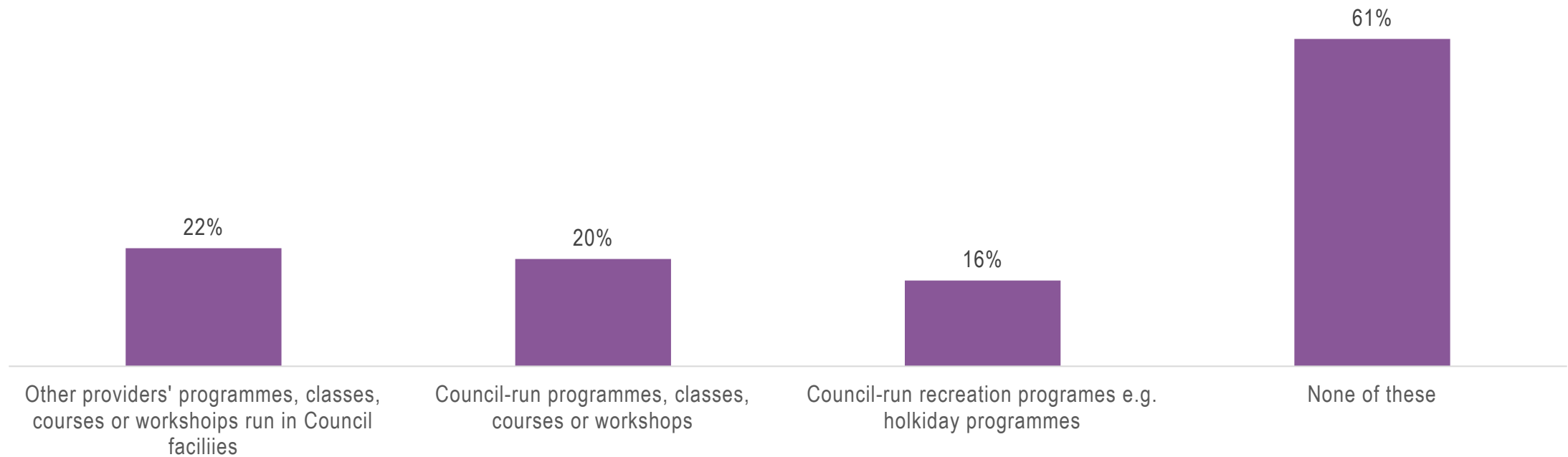
- Similar patterns were observed in other areas:
 - increased demand for casual access to space. Participants expressed frustration that facilities are often booked in large blocks, limiting casual use. There is growing demand for shorter, flexible access alongside feedback that many spaces are not set up to support drop-in or informal use.
 - growth in community-led or self-organised activities, evidenced through increased interest in hiring spaces for own activities
 - less reliance on fixed schedules or formal commitments – evidenced by a shift away from organised sport and long-term commitments to casual participation and ‘turn up when it suits’ behaviour.

That's a lot of the Asian community - they want to play basketball with their friends at the time they want to and with whom they want. We have 24-hour facilities because people want to shoot basketball hoops at 10:00 at night with their friends. (Key informant interview)

- The survey provides strong confirmation of this shift:
 - 61% of Aucklanders have not attended any structured Auckland Council-run programmes in the past year (see following slide)
 - participation across all programme types remains relatively low (16%–22% of Aucklanders).
- There is little difference between attendance of Council-run and externally delivered programmes, suggesting that the issue is not about delivery model but about changing preferences for how people want to engage. This indicates that community services are increasingly expected to enable use, provide flexible access and support self-directed activity rather than relying primarily on structured programming.

A smaller share of Aucklanders are engaged with Council-facilitated structured programmes

Council-facilitated programmes attended in the last 12 months



Q1.2: In the last 12 months, have you or your children attended ...?

Base: n=2,019 (All respondents)

Different groups use services in different ways – and not all are equally well served

- There is no single “community services user.” Instead, patterns of use vary significantly by life stage, cultural context, household type and level of need. Qualitative findings from the World Café sessions highlight distinct patterns:
 - Families with children prioritise affordable, flexible and shared activities
 - Older adults seek routine, connection and accessible environments
 - Young people prefer informal, social and self-directed use
 - Migrant communities use services for connection, confidence and cultural expression.
- Survey data reinforces these differences (*see following slides*):
 - Participation in programmes and recreation is most likely among families, Māori and Pacific communities
 - Older adults (65+) are under-represented across many services
 - NZ European populations are less likely to engage across several service types.
- These patterns show that differences in facility/service use are not random, but reflect how well services align with the needs, preferences and circumstances of different groups.



Community facilities serve distinct audiences rather than a single typical user

Community facility/service user profiles



Public library in person (67%)

- Travel mainly by PT/active modes (73%)
- Asian (72%)
- Disability (61%)
- Rural cluster (59%)
- Oldest child 18 years + (58%)



Leisure centres or gyms (33%)

- Māori (45%)
- Pacific Peoples (44%)
- 18-44 years (41%)
- Family with children at home (39%)
- NZ European (29%)
- Disability (27%)
- HH income <\$50K (27%)
- Oldest child 18 years + (25%)
- Couple only, no children (23%)
- 45-64 years (26%) or 65 years + (13%)



Public swimming pool (40%)

- Youngest child aged <5 years (63%) or 5-12 years (64%)
- Māori (56%)
- Pacific Peoples (53%)
- Families with children at home (53%)
- 25-44 years (49%)
- Southern cluster (47%)
- NZ European (36%)
- Mainly use PT or active modes (33%)
- HH income <\$50K (32%)
- Rural cluster (31%)
- Live alone (29%)
- Couple only, no children (26%)
- 45-64 years (36%) or 65 years + (20%)

Statistically significantly **more likely** to be used by these respondents

Statistically significantly **less likely** to be used by these respondents

Community facilities serve distinct audiences rather than a single typical user

Community facility/service user profiles



Digital access to
public libraries
(31%)

- Youngest child aged 5-12 years (36%)
- Females (33%)
- NZ European (33%)
- Males (28%)
- Southern cluster (25%)
- Pacific Peoples (19%)
- Youngest child aged 18 years + (18%)



Community
centres (28%)

- Māori (38%)
- Western (36%) or Central (33%) clusters
- Family with children at home (32%)
- NZ European (26%)
- Southern (22%) or Rural (17%) clusters
- Couple only, no children (20%)



Arts, cultural
centres (24%)

- Central cluster (32%)
- 25-34 years (29%)
- Use mainly PT or active modes (29%)
- Southern (19%) or Rural (16%) cluster
- 65 years + (17%)
- HH income <\$50K (16%)



Statistically significantly **more likely** to be
used by these respondents

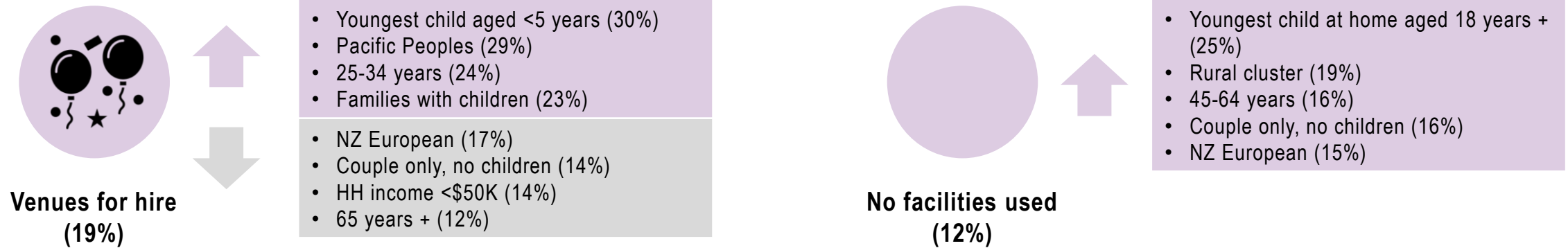
Statistically significantly **less likely** to be
used by these respondents

Q1.1: In the last 12 months, which of the following Council community facilities or services have you used or attended?

Base: n=2,019 (All respondents)

Community facilities serve distinct audiences rather than a single typical user

Community facility/service user profiles



- These profiles illustrate that community facilities are reaching different communities. This suggests that a single, standardised approach to provision will not meet the diversity of needs across Auckland.
- Rather, Auckland Council's network of community facilities needs to be understood as a system of complementary roles, where each facility type serves distinct audiences and purposes rather than trying to serve everyone equally.
- The profiles also suggest some equity implications, with some groups (for example, families, Māori and Pacific communities, younger adults) more strongly represented in certain services, while others are underrepresented or not engaging at all.

Council-facilitated programmes primarily attract centrally-located families with young children

Community facility/service user profiles



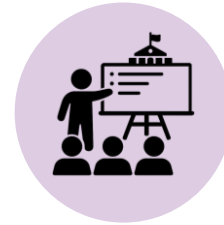
Other providers' programmes, classes, courses run in Council facilities (22%)

- Youngest child aged 5-12 years (32%)
- Māori (31%)
- 35-44 years (28%)
- Family with children at home (28%)
- Central cluster (27%)
- Asian (24%)
- HH income \$50-\$75K (16%)
- Living as couple only, not children (14%)
- 65 years + (12%)



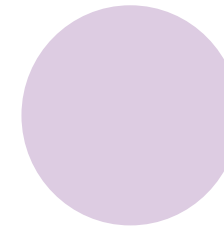
Council-run recreation programmes (16%)

- Youngest child aged 5-12 years (34%)
- Māori (28%)
- 25-34 years (27%)
- Families with children at home (24%)
- Males (23%)
- NZ European (13%)
- Rural cluster (11%)
- HH income <\$50K (10%)
- 45-64 years (14%) or 65 years + (7%)
- Flatters (6%)



Council-run programmes, classes, courses or workshops (20%)

- Youngest children aged <5 years (37%) or 5-12 years (33%)
- Māori (31%)
- Family with children at home (27%)
- 18-34 years (27%) or 35-44 years (24%)
- Asian (24%)
- Males (23%)
- Central cluster (23%)
- NZ European (16%)
- HH income <\$50K (14%)
- Living as couple only, no children (10%)
- Rural cluster (10%)
- 65 years + (7%)



Not attended any programmes (61%)

- 65 years + (81%) or 45-64 years (70%)
- Couple only, no children at home (75%) or live alone (71%)
- Flatters (74%)
- Rural cluster (74%)
- HH income <\$50K (69%)
- NZ European (67%)
- Females (63%)

Q1.1: In the last 12 months, which of the following Council community facilities or services have you used or attended?

Base: n=2,019 (All respondents)

Some services are increasingly meeting essential and unmet needs

- Community services are increasingly being used to meet needs beyond their original purpose, particularly for vulnerable populations. Across the qualitative research, there were several examples of people using facilities such as libraries and community centres not just for their intended functions, but as safe, accessible places to meet a range of everyday needs including access to warmth and shelter, safety and a sense of dignity, information, advice/support and opportunities to connect with others. Libraries in particular play an important everyday community role.
- Key informants also highlighted growing levels of social isolation and mental health need, with community facilities playing an increasingly important role in supporting connection, confidence and a sense of belonging.
- For some individuals, particularly those experiencing financial hardship, social isolation or unstable housing, these services are not simply “nice to have”, they are an essential part of how they get through the day. Libraries in particular were frequently described as spaces where people can:
 - spend time without needing to pay
 - access digital services and information
 - feel safe and welcomed regardless of their circumstances.
- While they were not originally designed to meet these types of needs, community services are increasingly acting as part of the wider social infrastructure, particularly in contexts where other systems (for example, housing, social services, cost of living pressures) are under strain.
- This role is often informal and unstructured, sitting alongside the primary functions of the facility rather than being explicitly designed or resourced.

Some services are increasingly meeting essential and unmet needs

- It also places additional expectations on facilities and staff, who may be supporting individuals with complex needs without necessarily having the mandate, training or resources to do so.
- This highlights that the value of community services extends beyond participation in activities, to include their role in supporting inclusion, resilience and basic wellbeing within communities.

Kids that play on the streets do bad things and that was something my mum didn't want us to be around. So she put us into these community activities and music groups and sports teams to keep us active and busy. (Walkalong participant)

The building we live in, the rooms are small and the building has no grass so that has an effect on the kids. They need to get out, go somewhere, somewhere safe. (Walkalong participant)

Did you see how many people are in there [the library]? The library is definitely a crucial part of the community. Libraries are helping people get out and about in their community. If [libraries] were gone, they'd be sitting by themselves at home. (Walkalong participant)

For families with struggles, it's good for them to have a place where they can come and educate themselves – good books for the kids, for families who can't afford to buy books and magazines. (Walkalong participant)

Sometimes I'll just come and sit [in the library] to shelter from the rain. (Walkalong participant)

Those who are homeless in the areas where there are libraries and rec centres and pools, they tend to go there because it's warm and dry. (Key informant interview)

Overall, expectations are broadening – and becoming more community-shaped

- The research findings illustrate that Aucklanders increasingly expect community services to:
 - serve multiple functions and needs at the same time
 - provide practical, everyday value
 - reflect the needs of diverse communities
 - support connection, wellbeing and inclusion.
- This represents a significant shift from service-led provision (what is offered) toward community-shaped use (how people actually engage),
- A further nuance from the interviews and walkalongs is that Aucklanders are not necessarily asking for more buildings. More often, they want existing places to feel more active, visible and useful in everyday life. This includes a greater variety of things happening within facilities, more family-friendly and all-weather activity, and environments that feel lively enough to encourage people to stay rather than simply pass through.





Scope: Strategic Implications

- **Future provision should increasingly reflect the multi-purpose role community facilities play in practice**, supporting a wider range of functions and needs rather than single-purpose use.
- **Service provision is likely to place greater emphasis on informal, flexible and self-directed patterns of participation**, alongside structured and programme-led models.
- **High-use, everyday services (particularly libraries) play an important role in overall engagement**, and may warrant recognition as key components of the wider network.
- **Future provision should balance broad reach with responsiveness to the needs of specific communities and under-served groups**, ensuring services work both for the general population and for groups with different needs and expectations.
- **Relevance and fit remain critical**, meaning services should align with the interests, expectations and lived realities of different communities, not just be available.



Scope: Operational Implications

- **Consider whether the mix of services and activities reflects how people actually engage**, including sufficient support for informal, drop-in and self-directed use alongside structured programmes.
- **Programming approaches may increasingly need to support shorter-duration and lower-commitment participation**, including casual, drop-in and one-off activities.
- **Review the current service mix against different life stages and community needs**, identifying where provision is well aligned and where there may be gaps.
- **Clarify the role different services play within the wider network**, recognising that some provide broad everyday value while others serve more specific purposes.
- **Consider whether high-use services are appropriately equipped and supported for the role they currently play**, particularly where they act as major access points into the wider network.
- **Review whether services feel relevant and accessible to different communities and under-represented groups**, including whether there are gaps in culturally or age-relevant provision.

Dimension of Choice: Location

- *Where do Aucklanders prefer community services to be located?*
- *How far are Aucklanders willing to travel to access community services?*
- *How do Aucklanders prefer travelling to access services?*



Location Summary: Where Community Services Should Be Located

Findings relating to Location show that where services are located plays a major role in whether and how people use them. Aucklanders value services that are convenient, visible and connected to everyday life, while also recognising that different types of services serve different roles across the network.

The research shows:

- Everyday services are expected to be easy to access close to home (within a 5-15 minute drive).
- People are more willing to travel for larger, specialised or less frequently used facilities.
- Convenience and integration with daily routines strongly influence participation.
- Co-location with transport, shops and other destinations supports visibility and use.
- Different communities have different location needs depending on population, transport access and local context.
- Visibility and familiarity influence whether facilities are discovered and used.
- Location decisions need to reflect the different roles services play across the wider network.
- Highly centralised provision can improve efficiency and choice but may reduce local accessibility and connection.



Location matters most for regular and everyday use

- Local provision matters most for services used regularly, casually or as part of everyday life. Participants repeatedly described valuing services that are close to home, easy to reach without too much planning and practical to incorporate into daily routines.

I come here quite a bit to the doctor and things. This area would be my local. (Walkalong participant)

Most of the facilities I use tend to be around my house – not more than about 10-15 minutes drive. (World Café participant)

I hardly go out of the CBD. You have everything you need in the CBD. (World Café participant)

- In the qualitative work, local services were often described not just as more convenient, but as more realistic and sustainable to use over time. People might be willing to travel further occasionally, but regular use depends heavily on local availability.
- This aligns with the Access findings, where being close to home was one of the strongest proximity-related drivers of use of community services, while proximity to work or shopping was less important. Rather than repeating that analysis here, the key implication for Location is that everyday services need to be distributed locally if they are to be used regularly and equitably.
- Several walkalong participants made clear that, even where a facility existed elsewhere in the network, this did not make it interchangeable with a nearby option. Distance, effort and the fit with everyday routines all shaped whether a service felt realistically usable. In Warkworth, for example, the absence of a nearby recreation facility was experienced as a real local gap despite options existing further south. This reinforces that, for many users, “available somewhere in Auckland” is not the same as “available to me”.



Aucklanders distinguish between local-use services and destination services

- As a result, participants implicitly distinguished between services they expect to access locally and frequently and those they are willing to travel further for because they are more specialised, higher quality or used less often.
- Local-use services tend to be those that are routine, low-cost or free, used with children, easy to access casually and/or part of everyday or weekly life. The qualitative work suggests an implicit threshold for this type of use, with people generally expecting these services to be within a short travel time (around 5–15 minutes drive). In contrast, destination services tend to be those that are less frequently used, more specialised, higher-profile and more likely to justify travel because of their scale, uniqueness or quality.
- This distinction came through strongly in the walkalongs. Participants were often willing to travel to particular pools, arts venues or specialist facilities where they felt there was something distinctive on offer. However, they did not see this as a substitute for local access to everyday services.
- In the central city walkalong, destination-style facilities were valued as important city assets, but there was still recognition that everyday services need to be close to where people live. One participant described the Tepid Baths as an exceptional facility and “an amazing asset,” while also making clear that it is not interchangeable with more local provision.
- At the same time, people make trade-offs between proximity and quality when choosing between similar services. For example, in East Auckland, one participant preferred a library further away because of its environment:

Travel wise, Botany library is nearer, but the environment here [at Howick library] is much better. (Walkalong participant)

- Together, this suggests that location decisions need to reflect different roles across the network, while also recognising that quality and experience can influence willingness to travel.



Quality influences willingness to travel but does not remove the need for local access

- Participants were willing to travel further for some services when they perceived them to be better quality, better maintained, more welcoming or better suited to their needs. .

Even though I live closer to [the Glen Innes library], I prefer to use the St Heliers library. It's got a lot more variety of books and I also enjoy reading magazines. There is a bit more comfort there and a quiet place for me to look through my emails. I might drop my books off here [at Glen Innes library] as it's closer, but I prefer St Heliers. (Walkalong participant)

- People may travel when the perceived value is high enough, but this should not be interpreted as reducing the importance of local provision. Instead, the implication is that local services need to be good enough to remain viable local choices, while destination services need to offer something distinctive enough to justify travel.



There is support for a complementary network rather than identical provision everywhere

- Aucklanders do not appear to expect every service to be available in every place. Rather, the research points to a preference for a complementary network, where some services are distributed locally and accessed frequently and others are more centralised or specialized.
- The research suggests the network works best when different services play different roles across Auckland. In the Location context, this means that planning should focus on what should be close to home versus what can reasonably serve a wider catchment, and what kinds of travel users are realistically willing to make for different service types.
- The provider survey also supports this more differentiated view of location. Providers are not all delivering the same kinds of services, nor serving the same groups, and many operate through different arrangements with Auckland Council rather than a single model.
- This suggests that location planning should not be based solely on equal geographic spread, where similar services are replicated evenly across all areas regardless of how they are used. While this approach supports consistency, it does not necessarily reflect how people actually engage with different types of services. Instead, location decisions should be grounded in a clearer understanding of service function, recognising that different services play different roles within the network.
- Expected frequency of use is a key determinant of how close a service needs to be, with high-frequency, low-effort activities (e.g. libraries, informal recreation, community hubs) requiring local provision to remain accessible and sustainable. Lower-frequency, higher-value activities (for example, specialist facilities, larger venues) are able to support longer travel distances.
- Location planning also needs to consider who the intended users are and how they are able to travel, recognising that different groups have different levels of mobility, time constraints and access to transport.



Hubs and co-location can strength location value, but only when well-placed

- While co-location will be covered in more detail in the Configuration section, the research suggests there is an important location-related benefit to hubs and clustered services. Participants often responded positively to locations where multiple services could be accessed in one trip, especially when these were easy to get to, visible and functionally connected to everyday destinations. In Pukekohe for example, the combination of library, café, arts centre and meeting rooms made the hub feel convenient and family-friendly:
It's like a one-stop place... library, food, information ... (Walkalong participant)
- In Glenfield, the hub's value was linked not just to what was there but to the fact that it sat on strong transport connections and could support multiple needs in one place.
- This suggests that well-located hubs can strengthen convenience and support multi-purpose trips, particularly when connected to transport and everyday destinations.



Different services and different users require different locational strategies

	Typical location expectation	Who this matters most for	Implications for planning
Everyday/high-frequency services	Close to home, easy and convenient to access on a regular basis, often integrated into daily routines	Families, frequent users, those with limited time or complex schedules	Ensure strong, consistent local provision within neighbourhoods to support repeat and sustained use
Low cost/casual/drop-in activities	Local, visible and easy to access without planning or booking, supporting spontaneous participation	Time-poor users, younger families, those seeking flexible or low-commitment options	Prioritise widespread distribution and ease of access over scale, ensuring availability across local areas
Specialist or higher value services	Greater willingness to travel where services offer higher quality, uniqueness or a broader range of options	More engaged users, those seeking specific activities or experiences	Locate strategically to serve wider catchments, ensuring quality and distinctiveness justify travel
Social, cultural and community-led activities	Preferably located within or near the communities they serve, with strong alignment to local identity and needs	Māori, Pacific, Asian communities, local community networks	Ensure services are embedded within communities and reflect local context, rather than centrally located by default
Youth/young adults	More willing to travel, but strongly influenced by transport access, safety and relevance of the offer	Young people, students, early-career adults	Locate near transport corridors, town centres or places where young people already gather
Users without access to private transport	Strong reliance on local provision or locations that are easily accessible by public transport	Older adults, lower-income groups, some disabled users	Ensure equitable distribution of services and prioritise locations that are well connected by public transport

Provider feedback reinforces the importance of having the right services in the right places

- The service provider survey reinforces that location is not just about user preference but about where services can realistically be delivered, with providers consistently identifying access to suitable facilities and spaces as a key constraint.
- Availability of appropriate space is a critical determinant of where services operate, with providers reporting that suitable venues are not always available in the areas where demand exists, some facilities lack the equipment, layout or condition required to deliver services effectively, and demand for space often exceeds supply, particularly at peak times.
- This means that location is shaped as much by supply as by demand, with services sometimes located where space is available rather than where they are most needed. As a result, there may be mismatches between where services are delivered and where demand is highest, and some communities may be underserved not because of lack of need, but because of lack of suitable space.
- Location decisions therefore need to consider service delivery viability alongside user access, ensuring that providers can access the types of spaces they need, facilities are located in areas where services can be sustainably delivered and there is sufficient capacity to respond to growth in demand.





Location: Strategic Implications

- **Future location planning is likely to require a more role-based approach**, recognising that different services require different spatial distribution depending on their function, frequency of use and intended users.
- **Strong local provision for everyday, high-frequency services is likely to remain important**, particularly for libraries, community hubs and informal recreation spaces.
- **Future provision models are likely to work best as complementary networks rather than uniform distribution models**, with local services supported by larger and more specialised destination facilities.
- **Location planning will increasingly need to reflect actual patterns of use and travel behaviour**, recognising that willingness to travel varies significantly by service type.
- **Location decisions will increasingly need to align with service delivery approaches and facility capability**, ensuring services are supported by fit-for-purpose spaces.
- **Future planning approaches will need to remain responsive to differences across population groups**, including variations in mobility, transport access and time constraints.



Location: Operational Implications

- **Future planning is likely to need to respond to gaps in nearby services**, particularly in areas where participants described travelling long distances for basic or everyday activities.
- **Maintaining the quality and usability of local facilities is likely to remain important in reducing unnecessary travel elsewhere**, particularly where participants reported avoiding local options due to poor condition, comfort or suitability.
- **Destination or specialist services are likely to work best where they offer a clear reason to travel**, through higher-quality facilities, unique activities or specialised experiences.
- **Location decisions are likely to work best when services are located where people already spend time**, making them easier to combine with everyday activities and routines.
- **There is likely to be continued value in strengthening existing multi-service hubs**, particularly where people can access several services or activities within one trip.
- **Improving access to suitable spaces in areas experiencing pressure on facilities is likely to remain important**, particularly where providers identified limitations in availability, condition or suitability.

Dimension of Choice: Access

- *Do Aucklanders prefer services to be delivered in-person or digitally when feasible?*
- *When would Aucklanders prefer accessing services?*
- *What are the reasons for accessing community services?*



ACCESS

Access Summary: How Aucklanders Discover, Reach And Use Community Services

Findings relating to Access show that participation is shaped not only by whether services exist but by how easy they are to discover, understand, reach and use in everyday life. Access is influenced by a combination of practical, physical, social and informational factors, with visibility, convenience and confidence all playing an important role in whether people engage with services.

The research shows:

- Access depends on more than physical availability, with transport, time, cost, visibility and confidence all influencing participation.
- Awareness is often passive, with fragmented information systems making services harder to discover and navigate.
- Visible and easy-to-understand spaces are more likely to be discovered and used.
- In-person access remains important, particularly for people with lower digital confidence, language barriers or more complex needs.
- Feelings of safety, comfort and social acceptance strongly influence whether people feel able to use a space or service.



Access is shaped not just by availability but by effort required to navigate the system

- A consistent finding from the World Café sessions is that engaging with community services often requires active effort. Rather than being easy to find and intuitive, information about services is spread across multiple platforms, inconsistent and difficult to navigate. As a result, participation depends not only on availability, but on people's willingness and ability to invest effort in finding and interpreting information.
- Access to community services is shaped by a chain of interconnected factors including transport, time, cost, awareness and reliability. When these combine, they create a tipping point where participation no longer feels worth the effort. This might include needing to:
 - take multiple buses or make indirect journeys
 - allow extra time to find parking or navigate unfamiliar facilities
 - check opening hours that do not align with their schedule
 - search across multiple channels to find information.

I used to come to here but I don't do that anymore because the chances of being able to find a park are really, really slim. And to get public transport from my place is a minimum of two buses. (Walkalong participant)

- When these factors occur together, services are often not worth the effort, particularly for lower-priority or discretionary activities.
- Many of these barriers are not visible when looking at the system from a planning perspective. For example, a facility may appear accessible because it is nearby, open and available, but this does not reflect how it is experienced in practice. Participants described how access depends on a sequence of steps - becoming aware of a service, getting there easily, finding it open at the right time and feeling comfortable using it. If any part of this journey feels difficult or uncertain, the service is often not used.
- As a result, access is best understood as a user journey made up of multiple touchpoints rather than a static measure of provision such as the number or location of facilities. Improving access requires attention to the end-to-end experience, not just individual elements in isolation.

Access is shaped not just by proximity, but by how easy services are to reach and use

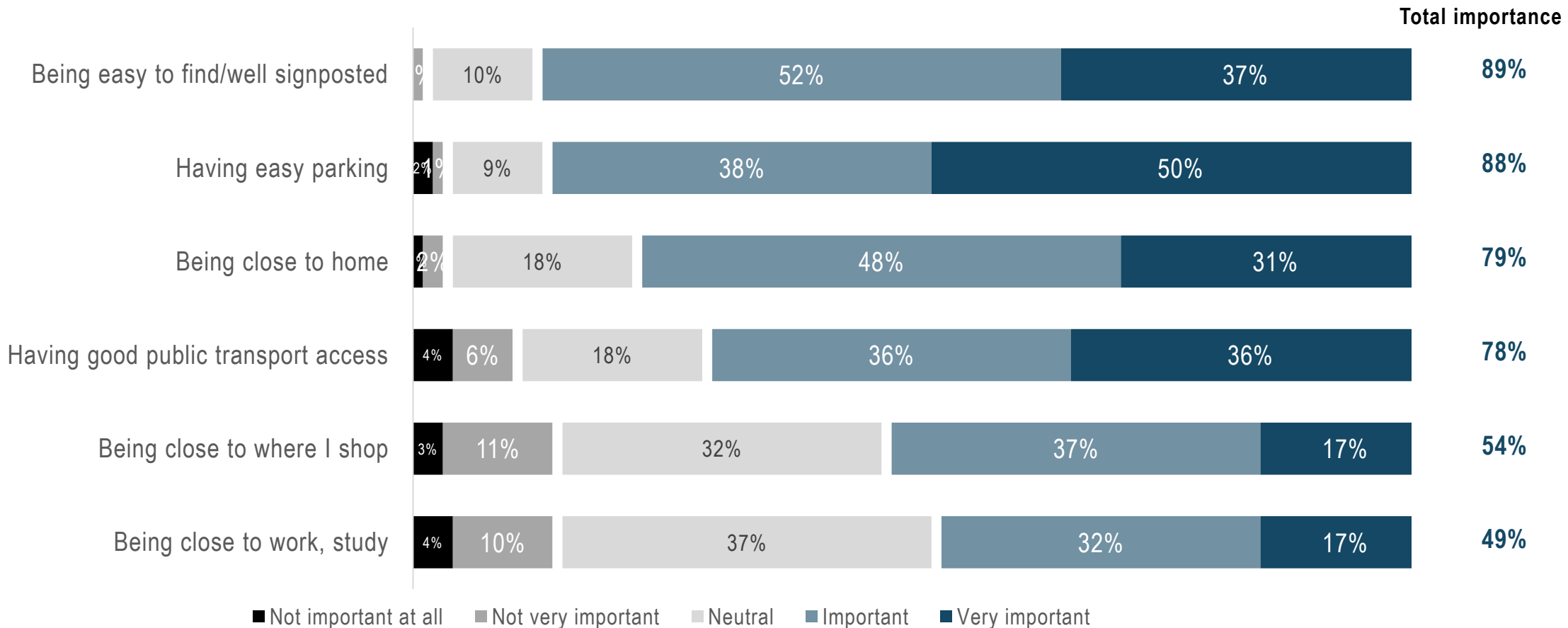
- While proximity of services/facilities is important, participants consistently described how distance alone does not determine whether a service is used. Instead, access is shaped by how easy it is to incorporate a visit into everyday routines.
- The factors that matter most vary depending on the type of service, frequency of use and purpose of the visit. For example, convenience and integration into daily routines were particularly important for frequently used services such as libraries, while parking and journey reliability were more important for activities involving equipment, children or longer stays.
- Participants highlighted the importance of:
 - being able to reach services via a direct, simple journey
 - having reliable and convenient parking
 - travel times feeling reasonable for the activity involved.
- Services are more likely to be used consistently when they are easy to reach and fit naturally into everyday routines through factors such as proximity, direct transport connections and reliable parking. This is strongly reinforced by the quantitative data on the following slide
 - 89% say being easy to find/well signposted is important/very important
 - 88% say easy parking is important/very important
 - 79% say being close to home is important/very important.



Proximity matters most at a local level, with closeness to home outweighing work or shopping locations

Making it easier to use community services

- However, proximity to shops (63%), work/study (67%) and public transport access (86%) significantly more important for those living in high density areas



Q4.1: How important are the following in making it easier for you to use community services and facilities?

Base: n=1,962–2,006 (All respondents excluding 'don't know' responses)

Time, cost and flexibility shape whether services are actually used

- Participants consistently described how time pressures and competing responsibilities shape whether they engage with community services. Even where services are valued and accessible, they are often not prioritised if they require planning, travel time or fixed commitments.

You've got work, kids, everything else going on... so unless it's really easy, you just don't end up going. (World café participant)

If it's something I can just drop into, I'll go. But if I have to plan it or book it, I probably won't. (World café participant)

By the time you organise it, get there and pay for it, it's just a bit too much effort. (Walkalong participant)

- From an access perspective, services need to support low-effort, low-commitment participation. This is consistent with both qualitative accounts of time pressure and competing priorities, and quantitative findings showing strong appeal of drop-in and flexible access (see following slide).
- Flexibility also relates to when services are available. Participants highlighted the importance of having multiple time options including evenings and weekends, rather than a single fixed schedule. This allows services to fit more easily around work, caregiving and other commitments.
- Cost acts as an additional and compounding impact on access. Participants described how free or low-cost services are used regularly and without hesitation, whereas paid services require more consideration.
- Cost also interacts with time and effort. For example, travelling further for a cheaper option is typically not done, and paying for a service is less appealing if the overall experience requires significant time or coordination.

I'm wanting to get my daughter into swimming lessons but it's half an hour, 45 minutes in traffic to the nearest pool and, on top of that, the cost is \$28 a lesson. I'm just not sure it's worth it. (Walkalong participant)



Discovery of services is largely passive, shaped by visibility, not active searching

- Awareness of community services is largely passive rather than active. People rarely set out to search for services unless they already know what they are looking for. Instead, awareness is triggered through incidental exposure, for example seeing a facility while passing, encountering information through social media or hearing about it from others. This reflects how information is experienced in practice:
 - fragmented across multiple channels
 - not always visible at the point of need
 - difficult to navigate or interpret.
- As a result, people tend to default to services they already know, rely on chance discovery or miss opportunities altogether.
- Awareness is driven by visibility, not active intent. Services that are seen and clearly signposted are far more likely to be used, while those that are less visible are often overlooked.
- This means that services need to be visible and present in people's everyday environments, not just available, in order to be discovered and used.
- The quantitative findings (*see following slide*) reinforce this lack of a single, dominant pathway for awareness. Social media (53%) and search engines (52%) are the most commonly used information sources. However, no single source stands out as most trusted. Because people are exposed to information across multiple channels but do not rely heavily on any one source, awareness of services tends to be broad but shallow and requires users to piece together information themselves.

*I drive past here all the time. I just thought it was like an old station or a factory.
(Walkalong participant)*

Unless I go into that community centre and look at the posters and talk to the people who work there, I don't actually know what happens there. And I wouldn't really do that. (Walkalong participant)

You have to go looking for information. It's not just obvious, right there. (World café participant)

If this [arts facility] closed, how would I feel? I wouldn't feel anything because I didn't know it existed. (Walkalong participant)

Even when you're outside looking at the building, you don't really know what goes on there. You don't go "oh, there's the library." (Walkalong participant)

It's very hidden, quite off the beaten track. I didn't know where the entrance was. (Walkalong participant)

Some people don't even know that we have a library here because of how it's in a hidden spot. (Walkalong participant)

Social media and online search dominate awareness, but no single information source stands out as most trusted

Awareness and trusted information sources

Sources of information about Auckland Council services, facilities and activities	All sources used	Most trusted source	Significantly Different in Total Sample – All Sources Use
Social media – Facebook, Instagram, TikTok	53%	18%	Aged 25-44 years (63%), female (59%), families with children (56%), esp. youngest child <5 years (68%)
Google and other search engines	52%	21%	Asian (61%), aged 25-44 years (59%)
Word of mouth from family and friends	37%	8%	Females (41%)
Event websites such as AucklandLive, Our Auckland, Eventfinda	34%	15%	Central cluster (41%), HH income \$150k+ (41%), youngest child 5-12 years (40%)
Auckland Council website	31%	19%	Asian (37%), males (35%)
Email notifications or e-newsletters from venues	23%	6%	Aged 45 years+ (29%)
Posters, flyers, noticeboards and signs	22%	3%	Central cluster (26%), females (24%)
Community newspapers and newsletters	12%	2%	Rural cluster (21%), aged 45 years+ (18%)
AI	10%	3%	Aged 18-34 years (21%), Māori (19%), disability (18%), youngest child <5 years (17%), male (14%)
Radio	8%	1%	Aged 65 years+ (13%)
Talking to staff at Council facility	7%	1%	Māori (11%),
Don't look for information about services/facilities	5%		Aged 65 years+ (10%), HH income<\$50K (8%)

Q1.4: How do you usually find out about Auckland Council community services, facilities or activities?

Q1.5: Which would be your one most trusted source of information about Auckland Council community services, facilities or activities?

Base: n=2,019 (All respondents)

Information requires effort – and that reduces engagement

- Participants described how finding out what is available often requires checking multiple sources, navigating unclear websites and interpreting limited or inconsistent information.
- Even small amounts of effort at this stage can reduce engagement, particularly for lower-priority activities, people with limited time and/or those unfamiliar with the system.

Unless you actually reach out because you need a service or a support group, you don't really know what's available. For example there could be a library here already and I'm just not aware of it. (Walkalong participant)

- As seen in the previous slide, digital channels play a key role in awareness, particularly social media, Google search and event websites. However, participants highlighted several limitations:
 - information overload (especially email)
 - lack of clarity about what is relevant. Participants described being exposed to large volumes of information but not being able to quickly determine what applies to them, especially when content is presented in generic formats such as long lists of activities or programmes. As a result, people tend to skim rather than engage deeply, defaulting to familiar options and missing others altogether.
 - difficulty navigating fragmented platforms as no single platform provides a complete picture.

I won't even look at [emails]... delete, delete, delete. (Walkalong participant)

I know all of that stuff's available online, but you've got to go looking for it. (Walkalong participant)

There is so much information, sometimes it's overwhelming. It's a minefield. If you went straight to the Auckland Council web site, there is so much information. And if you start digging into one thing or another, there are often technical issues. I tend to just give up. (World Café participant)

Together, these issues mean that while information is widely available, it is not always easily usable, requiring people to interpret, filter and connect information themselves before they can act.

Information requires effort – and that reduces engagement

- Participants described a tension between ease of use and trust in different information sources. Tools like Google and social media are widely used because they are quick and convenient but they are not always seen as the most reliable. In contrast, official sources such as Council websites are often considered more trustworthy, but harder to navigate and use. As a result, people often rely on what is easiest rather than what is most trusted.
- For some communities, access is also shaped by language and communication barriers. Key informants working with migrant communities highlighted the importance of multilingual information and support options, including phone-based support, while also noting that digital-only approaches are insufficient for many users. This suggests that access is not only about making information available but making it understandable and usable for people with different levels of language confidence and digital familiarity.
- Preferences also vary by group with younger people, families and women relying more on social media and older and rural-based service users relying more on physical signage and community-based sources. This reinforces that awareness strategies need to be multi-channel.



Physical visibility and in-place information are critical

- Participants consistently highlighted the importance of clear signage, visible activity and information available at the point of use. This is strongly supported by the survey data, with 89% saying that being easy to find/well signposted is an important contributor to making community services/facilities easy to use.
- A consistent theme across the walkalongs was the importance of being able to visually understand what is happening inside a facility before entering. Participants often relied on visual cues to decide whether a space felt active, welcoming and relevant to them. Where activities were visible - through windows, open layouts or clear internal sightlines, participants described feeling more confident about entering, more curious about what was on offer and more likely to consider using the space in the future.

If you can see people inside doing things, you kind of know what it's about... it feels easier to just go in. (Walkalong participant)

- In contrast, where buildings appeared closed or did not look like a Council facility from the outside, participants often assumed the space was not open to the public, activities were private or not for them or that they would need prior knowledge or permission to enter. This created a psychological barrier even where access was technically open.
- Seeing activity inside a facility functions as a form of real-time, low-effort information as it shows what kinds of activities take place, who is using the space (is it for people like me?) and what level of formality or commitment is expected (including practical issues such as dress code.).

Sometimes you walk past and you don't know what it is. But if you could see in, you might think, oh that looks good. (Walkalong participant)

- Visibility substitutes for formal information, particularly for casual users, those without prior experience of community facilities (new migrants for example) and those who lack confidence in unfamiliar environments.



You can't make out what it is. Nothing tells you what it does and there are no council signs. (Walkalong participant)

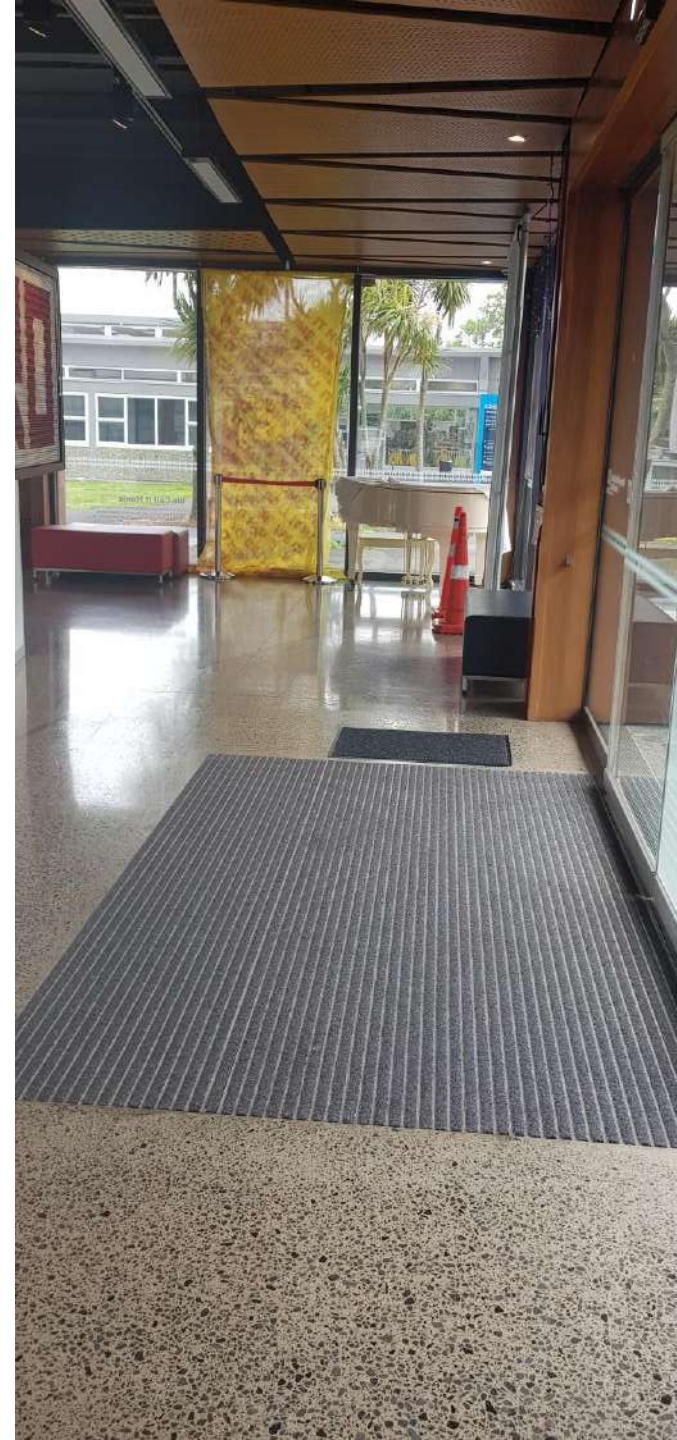
I don't think it is advertised well enough for people to know what it is. If I didn't now this was here and I just walked past, I wouldn't know what it is. (Walkalong participant)

Feeling welcome, safe and included is critical to access and ongoing use

- Across all qualitative workstreams, participants emphasised that access is not just about physical entry, but about whether a space feels welcoming, safe, inclusive and “for people like me.”
- The quantitative data (*see following slide*) strongly reinforces the importance of these factors:
 - 96% say clean, well-maintained spaces are important/very important
 - 94% say spaces that feel safe are important/very important
 - 92% say friendly, knowledgeable staff are important/very important
 - 92% say feeling welcome regardless of who you are is important/very important.
- These are among the highest-rated factors across the entire survey, indicating that welcoming and inclusive environments are fundamental expectations.
- Participants frequently highlighted the role of staff in shaping first impressions, confidence and overall experience. Positive staff interactions were described as reassuring and enabling. In contrast at facilities where staff were absent or difficult to find, participants were less engaged:

If someone says hello or helps you, it makes a big difference. Otherwise you don't know what to do. (Walkalong participant)

If there is no-one around, you feel like you're trespassing on private property – like you are not actually meant to be there. (Walkalong participant)



Access depends not just on whether people can enter a space, but whether they feel comfortable, confident and welcome to do so

- Participants described feeling more comfortable in spaces where they could see people like themselves, recognise cultural or community cues and feel that they “fit” in terms of age, cultural identity, family situation or level of experience with community services.
- While physical safety is critical, participants also described the importance of social and emotional safety. This includes feeling comfortable asking questions, able to participate without judgement and confident navigating the space. For some groups, including young people, disabled participants, and culturally diverse communities, this was particularly important.

If you don't know how it works, you feel a bit awkward – like you're in the wrong place. (Walkalong participant)

The colours and designs - it makes me feel happy. It's embracing our Pacific Island culture. When I see Pacific Island patterns like this it's really cool that they're promoting our culture, and inheritance like this and I feel like I belong here, like I'm allowed inside. (Walkalong participant)

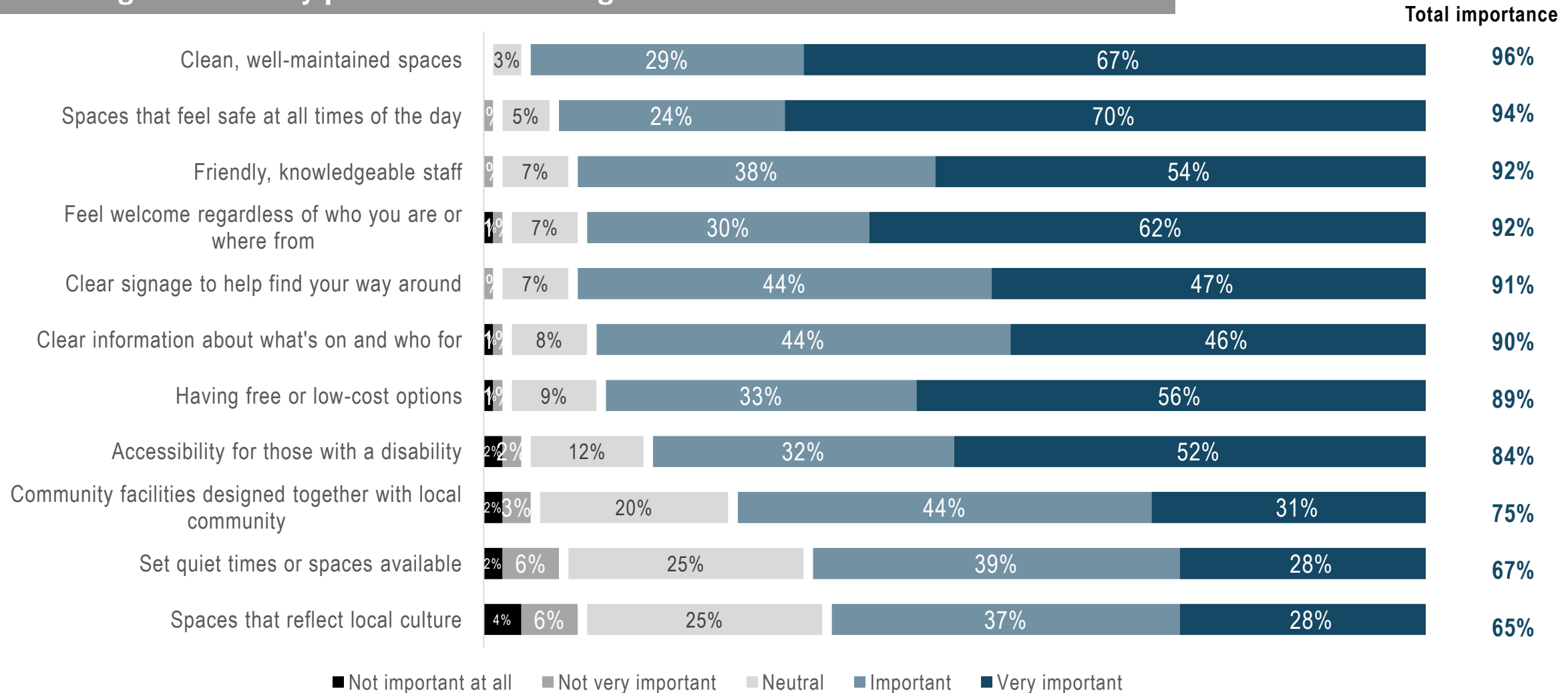
- The quantitative data shows 84% say accessibility for those with a disability is important. Findings from the qualitative research suggest this extends beyond physical design to include ease of navigating the space, clarity of layout and availability of support if needed as making spaces feel welcoming.
- For some users, access is determined by the availability of basic amenities such as showers, toilets, kitchen facilities and places to rest. Without these, facilities cannot meet essential needs, limiting their usefulness for those most in need. In addition, for some groups, particularly those experiencing homelessness, highly visible or busy locations can feel uncomfortable or unsafe due to stigma. As a result, people may actively avoid these spaces, even when services are available.

Homeless by and large, there's quite an element of shame attached to homelessness. And so they tend not to gravitate to where there are lots of people. (Key informant interview)

Welcoming environments are built on getting the fundamentals right.

Basic conditions - safety, cleanliness and staff - are the strongest drivers

Making a community place feel welcoming and inclusive



Q2.1: Thinking about community facilities, particularly those you have used, how important are the following in making a place feel welcome and inclusive?

Base: n=1,979–2,005 (All respondents excluding 'don't know' responses)

Access barriers are experienced differently across groups, reflecting different life contexts and constraints

	Key barriers experienced	Impact on access/behaviour
Working age adults	Limited time, competing priorities, fixed schedules, fatigue after work	Engage opportunistically rather than regularly; prioritise convenience and drop-in options; less likely to commit to scheduled activities
Families with young children	Travel effort, cost (especially for multiple children), need for safe and easy environments, managing logistics	Prefer nearby, low-cost, multi-use spaces; visits are often short and purpose-driven; less likely to travel far
Young people	Lack of spaces that feel relevant or welcoming, social dynamics (who else is there), limited independent transport	Engagement influenced by atmosphere and peer presence; more likely to disengage if spaces feel “not for them” or lack visible activity
Older adults	Preference for familiarity, reliance on clear and accessible information, lower use of digital channels, mobility considerations	More likely to use known and trusted services; may miss opportunities if information is unclear or primarily online; value staff support and ease of navigation
People without access to a car	Complex or time-consuming journeys, reliance on public transport, limited flexibility in timing	Access largely restricted to local facilities; less able to attend activities requiring travel, multiple connections or late finishes; more sensitive to journey effort
Culturally diverse communities	Lack of cultural relevance, language barrier, uncertainty about how services work, limited representation	Lower confidence engaging with unfamiliar spaces; more likely to use services that feel culturally familiar or where others like them are present
New or less confident users	Lack of awareness, hesitation to try unfamiliar spaces; first experiences strongly shape future use	Hesitation to enter or try new spaces; rely on visible, active, easy-to-understand environments; first experience is critical to future use



Access: Strategic Implications

- **Access approaches will need to address the full participation experience, from awareness through to use.**
- **Reducing multiple small barriers is likely to remain important in improving participation**, recognising that access is often most constrained where issues such as transport, cost, confidence and awareness combine.
- **Access is strongly shaped by how simple and dependable services feel to use**, including how easily people can reach, enter and participate in them.
- **Facilities are likely to work best when they feel open, welcoming and easy to understand**, with design, activity and communication helping signal accessibility and relevance.
- **Access models will increasingly need to support informal and low-commitment participation**, recognising that many people prefer, or rely, on drop-in and flexible engagement.
- **Future access approaches will need to remain responsive to differences across population groups**, including variations in life stage, mobility, transport access, confidence and cultural expectations.



Access: Operational Implications

- **Improving the visibility and clarity of facilities is likely to remain important in supporting participation**, helping people quickly recognise what a space is for and whether it is intended for them - through clearer signage, wayfinding and visible activity.
- **Making information about services simpler and easier to connect across platforms is likely to improve access.**
- **Reliable and low-effort access to facilities is likely to remain important**, including practical factors such as parking availability, safe and clear routes from transport and reducing complexity in how people enter spaces.
- **Opening hours are likely to work best when aligned with how people live and work**, including consideration of evenings, weekends and consistency so access feels predictable and dependable.
- **Staff are likely to continue playing an important role in enabling access**, particularly when they are visible, approachable and able to support first-time or less confident users in navigating spaces and services.
- **Comfortable, safe and inclusive environments are likely to remain important in supporting participation**, particularly for people with different sensory, mobility or confidence needs.
- **High-use facilities such as libraries are likely to continue playing an important role as entry points into the wider service network**, helping people discover other services, activities and community support available nearby.



Dimension of Choice: Configuration

- *Do Aucklanders have a preference for how facilities are configured?*
- *Do Aucklanders have a preference for how the space is utilised?*

Configuration Summary: How Facilities And Spaces Are Organised

Findings relating to Configuration show that Aucklanders value facilities that are easy to understand, flexible to use and able to support a range of different activities and users. There is no single preferred facility model, with preferences varying depending on the purpose of the space, the needs of users and the type of experience people are seeking.

The research shows:

- Flexible, multi-purpose spaces are increasingly valued over highly specialised or single-purpose facilities.
- People value spaces that support both planned activities and informal, incidental use.
- Co-located services and hubs can improve convenience, visibility and efficiency.
- Larger hubs are seen as offering greater choice and functionality but can also feel crowded, impersonal or harder to navigate.
- Smaller local facilities are often valued for their familiarity, accessibility and sense of community connection.
- Facilities are expected to balance local character with network-wide consistency and usability.
- Different services and communities require different configuration approaches rather than a single standard model.



People naturally group services into a small number of ‘hub-types’ that reflect how they are used

- In the World Café sessions, participants consistently described community facilities not as collections of individual services, but as coherent “hub types” where complementary activities sit together. These groupings reflect how people use services in practice, with certain combinations seen as more intuitive, convenient and valuable than others (*see right hand panel*).
- These clusters are not defined by service categories alone, but by how activities relate to each other - whether they serve similar needs, are used at similar times or support a shared purpose. When services align in this way, facilities feel more intuitive and usable. Grouping is considered logical where there is:
 - **Shared purpose:** Services that meet related needs (for example, learning, support, recreation) are expected to sit together.
 - **Aligned patterns of use:** Activities that are used at similar times or in similar ways feel more natural to combine.
 - **Complementary roles:** Services that support or reinforce each other (e.g. study + digital access + advice) create added value.
 - **Clear identity and function:** Facilities that have a clear “sense of what they are for” are easier to navigate and engage with.
- Participants were less supportive of combinations that felt forced or lacked a clear connection between activities. Simply increasing the number of services in one place did not necessarily improve usability and in some cases made facilities harder to navigate and understand.
- This suggests that effective co-location is not about scale, but about bringing together services that make sense together from a user perspective.

Example hubs



Learning and digital access hub

- Used for learning, focus, accessing information
- Includes libraries, study spaces, digital access, quiet work areas



Social support and community connection hub

- Used for connection, support and navigating life needs
- Includes advice services, community organisations, meeting spaces, informal gathering areas



Arts, culture and creative hubs

- Used for expression, identity and participation in creative activities
- Includes performance spaces, studios, cultural programming



Recreation and activity hubs

- Used for physical activity, wellbeing and social interaction
- Includes sports, fitness, youth activities

The network needs consistent foundations, with local expression at each site

- Participants expressed a clear desire for community facilities to reflect the identity, culture and needs of their local area. Spaces that feel distinctive, culturally relevant and connected to their community were seen as more welcoming and meaningful.

Each community has its own personality and I feel [each facility] should reflect the local community that they're serving. What works in Manukau probably won't work in Orewa. (World Café participant)

- At the same time, there was a strong expectation that facilities should be easy to recognise, understand and navigate. Consistency in layout, signage and basic functionality helps reduce uncertainty and makes it easier for people to use different facilities with confidence.
- This creates a tension between character and consistency. Both are important but need to be carefully balanced.

Local character supports:

- Sense of belonging and identity
- Cultural relevance and visibility
- Community ownership and pride
- A more welcoming and inclusive feel

Consistency supports:

- Ease of navigation and wayfinding
- Confidence using unfamiliar facilities
- Clear expectations of what's available
- A more accessible, predictable experience

- This points to a network model of consistent foundations with local expression, enabling people to move confidently between facilities while still reflecting local community identity.



Informal, café-like spaces play a key role in making facilities feel welcoming and usable

- Across the World Café and walkalong sessions, the presence of a café or café-like space emerged as a simple but powerful feature of well-functioning community facilities. While not always essential in itself, it was consistently associated with spaces that felt welcoming, comfortable and easy to spend time in. Spaces that included informal, café-like areas were often described as feeling more like community hubs than service facilities.
- These types of spaces support informal use, social interaction and longer stays, allowing people to use facilities in a more flexible and self-directed way.
- Participants often described the value of being able to “just be” in a space - not only attending a programme or service but having somewhere to sit, meet others or spend time between activities.
- Cafés also serve as a socially safe and low-pressure gateway into community facilities, enabling incidental discovery of other services once people are inside.

I wouldn't intentionally walk in here [arts centre], but I'd come for the café, then if I had spare time I might look around and find out what's happening inside. (Walkalong participant)



Café-like spaces support:

- Informal social connection
- Longer and more flexible use of facilities
- A sense of comfort and ease
- Use across different age groups and needs
- A more active and visible atmosphere

A cafe would be fantastic. Have it open, benches and tables, comfortable as well for people to just come and sit. People that use the café could be exposed to what's happening at the library, the art centre, exhibitions. A one stop shop. (Walkalong participant)

There is clear support for bringing services together – but only when the mix feels logical and manageable

- The survey findings show strong support for co-located models, especially where a few services are located together in a single facility (80% of respondents found this configuration appealing – see following slide). Large multi-service hubs were also positively received, but slightly less strongly (73%).
- This pattern is reinforced by the qualitative findings. Participants frequently valued arrangements where several related functions could be accessed in one place, particularly where this created a sense of convenience, efficiency and ease. Libraries were often cited as good examples of this, especially where they were already operating as more than book-lending space, for example including community activities, study space, informal gathering, advice services, digital access and family programmes. In these cases, the facility was seen not simply as a library, but as a multi-functional local hub.
- There was also support from key informants for the idea of more intentionally integrated community hubs. Key informants working with migrant and refugee-background communities, for example, described the value of having multiple forms of support and community infrastructure in one place rather than expecting people to navigate a fragmented system. The underlying idea was not just convenience but that a hub could function as a place where people know they can go and find what they need.
- However, support for co-location was not unconditional. Qualitative participants were clear that multi-service hubs only work well when the overall arrangement feels coherent and easy to navigate. People were generally more positive about smaller-scale co-location than very large hub models, suggesting that, while integration is valued, size can introduce challenges. As hubs become larger or more complex, they risk creating confusion, crowding and a loss of clarity about what is available and where. In the World Café sessions in particular, participants did not advocate for “more services in one place” as an end in itself, rather, they emphasised the importance of how services are combined and organised.

A playground. That would fit out there alongside the library and the café. It would be like a one stop place. Somewhere to have something to eat and drink, go to the library then the kids could play in the playground while you're having a coffee, the toilets are over there (Walkalong participant)

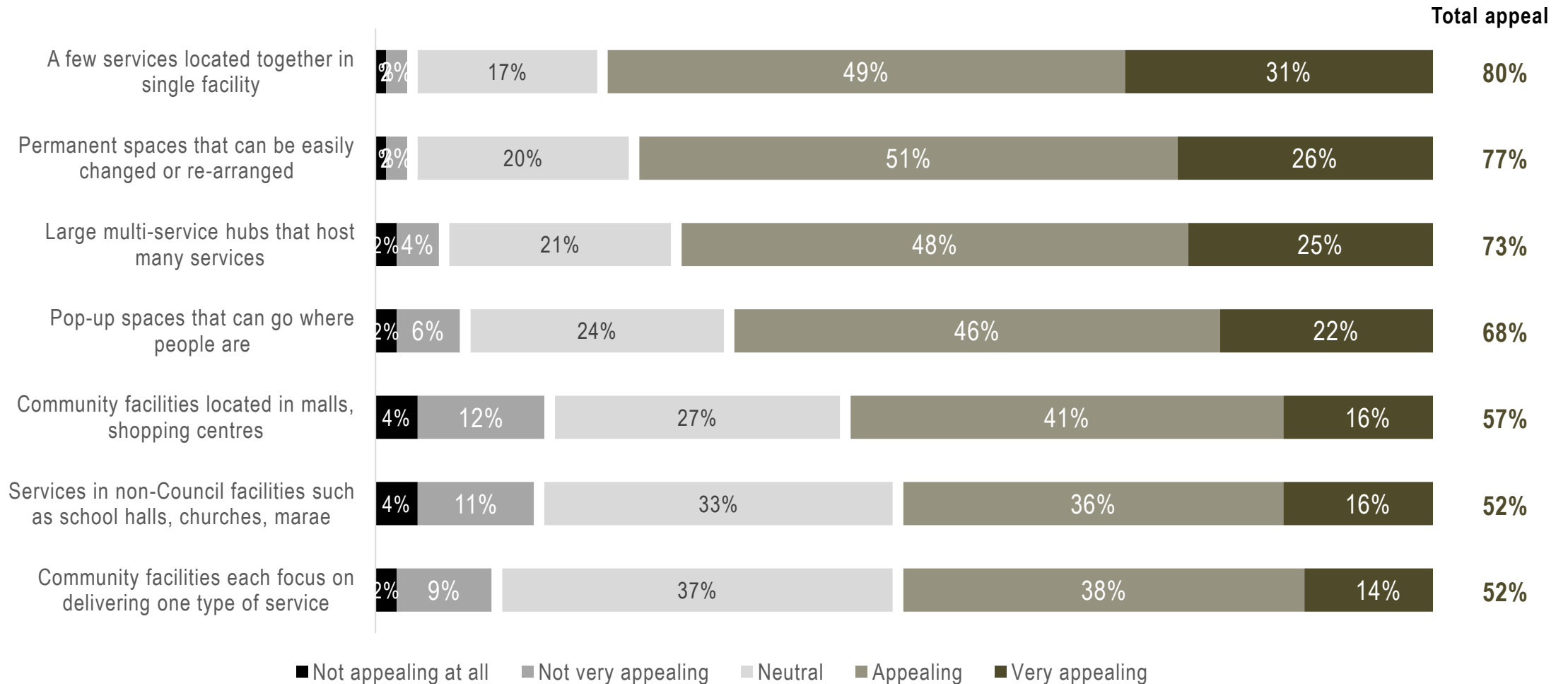
A library is meant to be a place of knowledge so putting the information centre, the Citizen's Advice Bureau and the library together might be quite suitable. It would be the place to go for anything you needed to know. (Walkalong participant)

It is so annoying having to go to so many different facilities. Having a bit of everything in one place, something for everyone, would mean less travel and also create a nice atmosphere. (World Café participant)

Not a gym with a library. A gym is not very family-friendly. You can't walk in there with your three-year-old after you've been to the library. (Walkalong participant)

Smaller-scale co-location and flexible spaces are most appealing configurations

Appeal of different service configurations



Q3.1: Thinking about your own needs, how appealing are the following options to you?

Base: n=1,979–2,001 (All respondents excluding 'don't know' responses)

Community facilities serve distinct audiences rather than a single typical user

Community facility/service user profiles



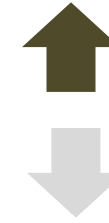
- Very regular service users (88%)
- HH income of <\$50K (75%)

A few services located together in a single facility (80% appealing)



- 35-44 years (78%)
- Central cluster (78%)
- Family with children at home (78%)
- NZ European (70%)
- HH income of <\$50K (67%)
- Live alone (63%)
- Never use community services (61%)
- 65 years + (52%)

Large multi-service hubs that host many services (73%)



- Family with children at home (80%)
- HH income <\$50K (70%)
- 65 years + (65%)
- Never used community services (64%)

Permanent spaces that can be easily changed or re-arranged (77%)



Statistically significantly **more likely** to be used by these respondents

Statistically significantly **less likely** to be used by these respondents

Community facilities serve distinct audiences rather than a single typical user

Community facility/service user profiles



Pop-up spaces that can go where people are e.g. pop-up library container (68% appealing)



- Very regular service users (75%)
- Aged 25-34 years (74%)
- Central cluster (73%)
- Families with children at home (72%), especially those younger than 5 years (80%)



- NZ European (64%)
- Northern cluster (60%)
- 65 years + (50%)



Services delivered in non-Council facilities such as school halls, churches or Marae (52% appealing)



- Māori (71%)
- Pacific Peoples (63%)
- Very regular service users (60%)
- Families with children at home (60%), especially aged 5-12 years (68%)



- NZ European (46%)
- Northern cluster (45%)
- HH income <\$50K (45%)
- Those who live alone (41%) or as a couple only (43%)
- Aged 65 years + (37%)



Community facilities located in malls or shopping centres (57% appealing)



- Asian (64%)
- NZ European (53%)
- Never use community services (48%)
- Rural cluster (47%)



Community facilities focused on delivering one type of service only (52% appealing)



- Very regular service users (64%)
- Aged 18-34 years (63%)
- Māori (63%)
- Families with children at home (56%), especially youngest child aged 5-12 years (65%)



- NZ European (49%)
- Aged 45-64 years (47%) or 65 years+ (36%)
- HH income of <\$50K (44%)
- Rural cluster (41%)



Multi-service hubs are valued for their convenience and efficiency but also enhance visibility and enable service discovery. However size can create access and comfort challenge

Benefits of multi-service hubs

	Benefit of hubs	One main benefit
Convenience/saves time	55%	30%
Easy to find where services located	49%	10%
Increased awareness of other services	46%	10%
Better value for money from rates	43%	15%
Creates community focal point	42%	9%
More opportunities for social connection	36%	8%
Better co-ordination between services	36%	4%
More choice	35%	6%
More specialist staff available	26%	5%
No benefits	2%	

Concerns of multi-service hubs

	All concerns re. hubs	One main concern
Not enough parking	50%	23%
Crowding	47%	16%
Noise/over-stimulation	38%	10%
Poorly managed	31%	10%
Less privacy when using services	28%	8%
Poorly maintained	27%	7%
Longer distances to travel to facility	24%	9%
Feeling unsafe, uncomfortable around others	22%	11%
Loss of local character	14%	4%
No concerns	11%	

Q3.2: When thinking about large, multi-service hubs, what do you see as the main benefits?

Q3.3: Which of these would be the main benefit for you?

Q3.4: What concerns do you have about co-located or multi-service facilities?

Q3.5: Which of these would be the main concern for you?

Base: n=2,019 (All respondents)

Configuration works best when spaces are flexible enough to support multiple uses over time

- The value of flexible, multi-use space was a common themes across participants. The quantitative data shows strong appeal (77%) for permanent spaces that can be re-arranged or adapted for different activities and users.

Facilities or spaces that cater to different demographics – kids can have a play area so they are not disturbing the students or the oldies having their computer class. There is room for all of them. (World Café participant)

- This was expressed in different ways across the research. Community facility managers described the need for spaces that can be programmed in different ways and adjusted in response to changing community demand. One participant noted that library shelving should be movable so that library space can be converted more easily into event or activity space when needed. Others emphasised the importance of spaces being able to host programmes, cultural events, workshops and informal use, depending on need.
- This includes the need to support both active and quieter forms of use within the same facility. Participants described valuing spaces where they could take part in programmes or social activity, but also access calmer areas for reading, thinking, waiting or simply spending time. This balance was seen as particularly important in making facilities feel usable and welcoming to a wider range of people.
- Participants also highlighted the value of strong connections between indoor facilities and surrounding outdoor space. Access to nearby parks, seating and green areas was seen as making facilities more comfortable, flexible and appealing, particularly for families and longer visits. Those living in high density housing especially appreciated access to good quality green space.



Internal layout and logic are critical; people respond strongly to whether a facility is ‘easy to read’

- One of the clearest findings from the walkalongs is that people are highly sensitive to the internal logic and how easy it is to understand a facility. They notice whether a place feels obvious or confusing, open or closed off, coherent or fragmented.
- This came through strongly in reactions to entrances, internal arrangement and the visibility of activity. In several walkarounds, participants described facilities as hard to read from the outside, unclear in purpose or difficult to interpret once inside. Some buildings were described as looking like offices, private premises, schools or “back entrances”, rather than clearly public community places.

It doesn't say 'entrance' to me. It actually looks more like a back door. It wouldn't attract me to walk in. (Walkalong participant)

- This matters for configuration because it shows that a facility's arrangement is not neutral. The way a building is laid out, the way activities are shown or hidden, and the way different parts of the facility relate to each other all shape whether people feel confident enough to enter and use the space.

The gate is closed and it doesn't have a sign. It doesn't feel like it's open to the public. (Walkalong participant)

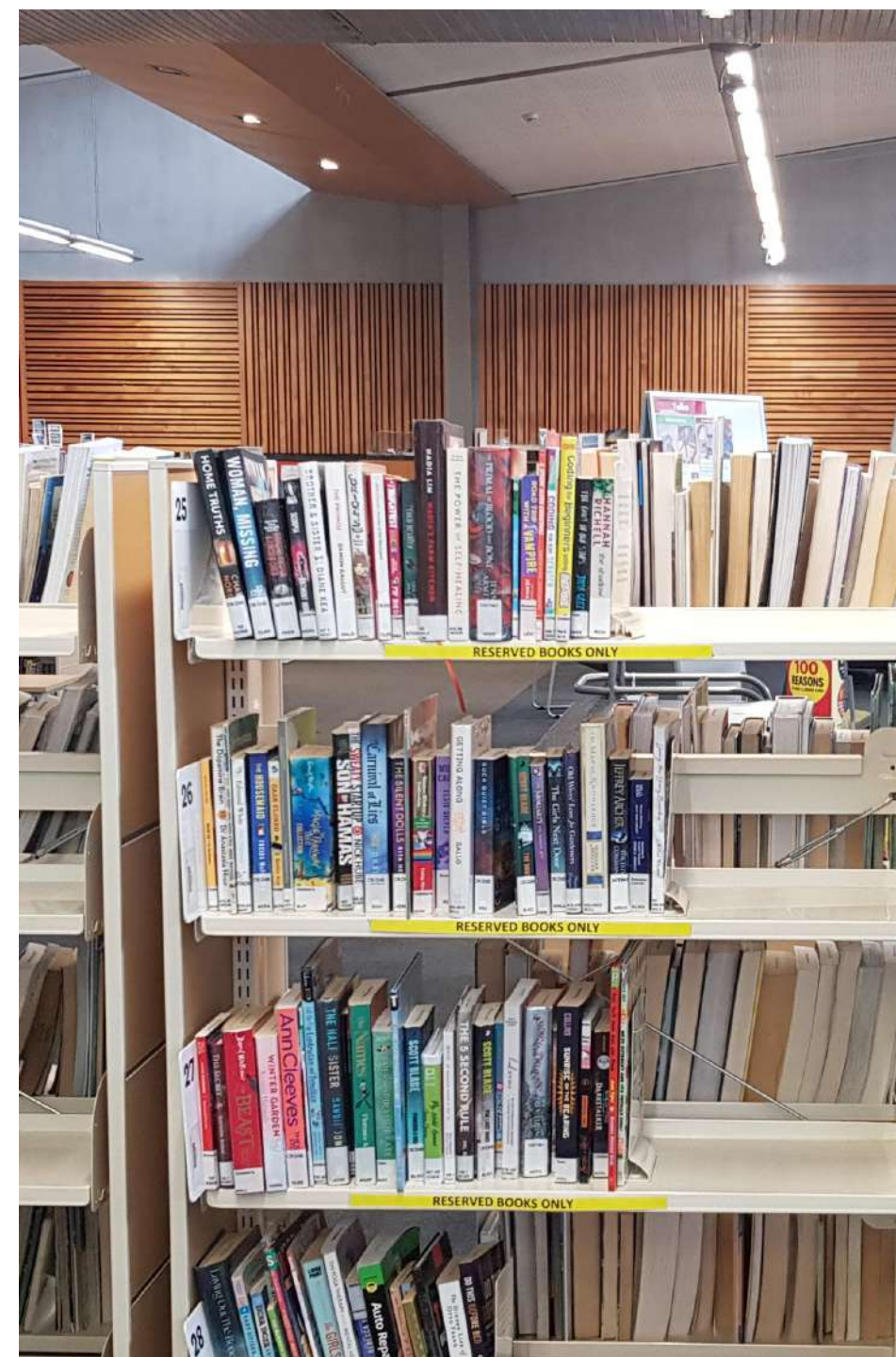
- By contrast, when the purpose of a space was visible and activity could be seen, participants often responded much more positively. At the Ellen Melville Centre, for example, participants described how the arrangement of seating, open space and adjacent activity made the place feel easy to use and naturally welcoming.
- Community hubs that clearly showed what was happening inside, or that made it obvious that they were public-facing places, were more readily understood as places to enter, explore and return to. This was especially apparent where signage, open doors, visible activity or display material helped make the function of the facility legible.

Examples of uninviting facades identified by walkalong participants



Spaces need to feel like they fit the people and activities they are meant to serve

- Participants also responded strongly to whether a facility felt like a good fit for the kinds of people, cultures and activities associated with it. This is partly a matter of welcome, but it is also a configuration issue because it relates to how the space is set up, what kinds of use it appears to support and whether the physical environment matches community expectations. Examples included cultural facilities that felt static rather than active (for example, Te Oro in Glen Innes), libraries that felt too open for quiet use (for example, the Central library) and community spaces that felt more like offices or private buildings than gathering spaces (for example, Uxbridge Centre in Howick, Franklin Centre in Pukekohe).
- Participants were particularly attuned to whether a facility had been configured around the needs of its primary users. Parents noticed whether children had enough space and whether family use had been thought through. Young adults noticed whether spaces felt relevant to them or stuck in an older model. Migrants and newer residents noticed whether community centres were visible, understandable and easy to enter. This suggests that configuration is not only about flexibility, but also about fitness for purpose.



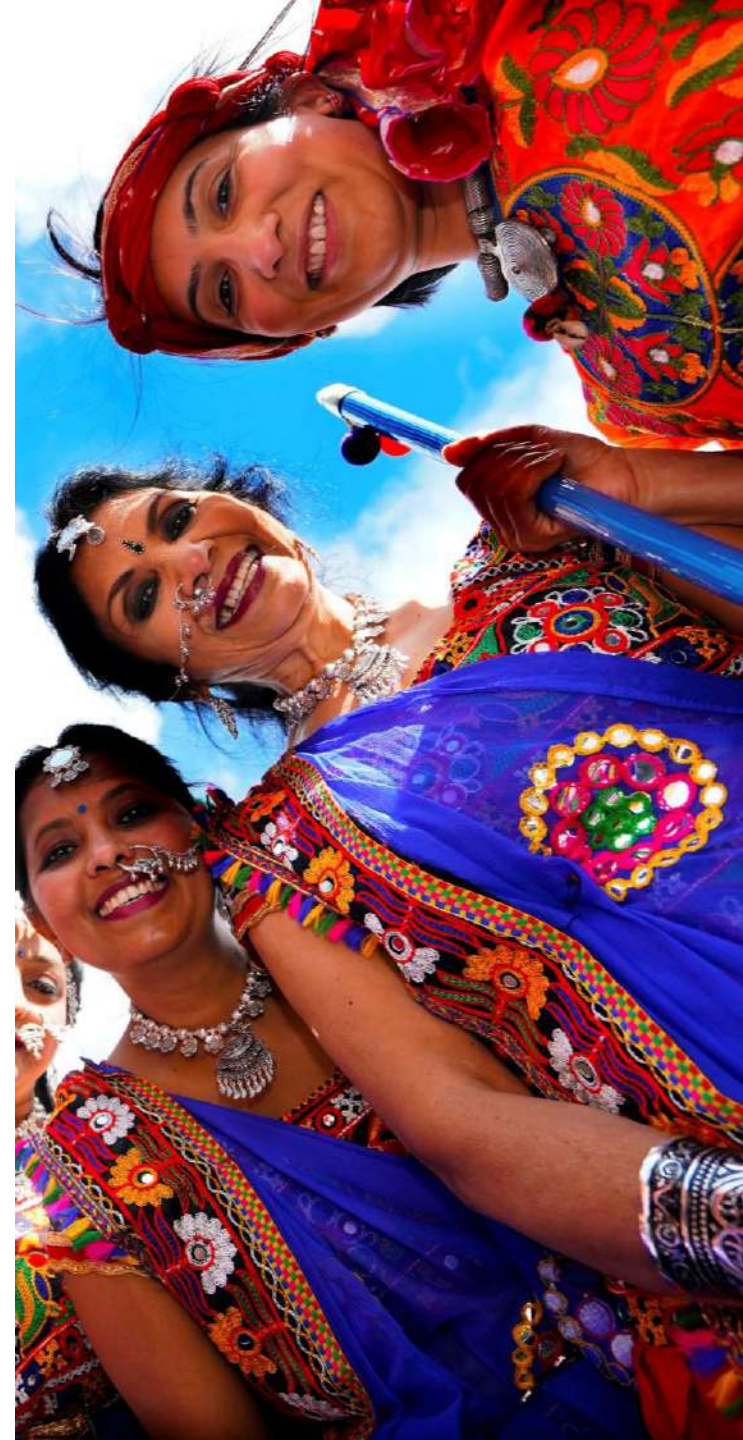
Larger hubs offer benefits but size introduces risks that need to be actively managed

- Participants also responded strongly to whether a facility felt like a good fit for the kinds of people. The quantitative data shows that large multi-service hubs are broadly appealing and participants see clear benefits in them, including convenience, easier discovery of services and the ability to support multiple needs in one trip.
- However, the research also points to real trade-offs. The larger and more complex a facility becomes, the greater the risk that it feels:
 - crowded, too busy or overstimulating
 - hard to navigate
 - impersonal
 - overly institutional
 - lacking in privacy or calm.
- These concerns were especially apparent in the walkalongs where participants reflected on crowding, internal confusion, noise or the sense that some spaces felt more like systems to navigate than places to comfortably spend time (e.g. Te Oro in Glen Innes).
- This means that, to be successful, multi service hubs need to be configured carefully, with attention to zoning, quiet and active areas, circulation and wayfinding, visibility without chaos and the inclusion of spaces for privacy and low-stimulation use.



Configuration decisions should be locally responsive, not standardised

- Finally, the research strongly suggests that there is no single ideal facility configuration that will suit every suburb or community. What works well in one area may not work in another. Participants and key informants repeatedly emphasised the importance of local context, local demographics and local use patterns.
- Community facility managers were explicit that a “cookie cutter” approach does not work. Different communities have different “rhythms”, different age mixes, different cultures of use and different expectations of shared space.
- This matters for configuration because choices about whether to co-locate, how much flexibility to build in, what kinds of spaces to prioritise, whether to design for family, youth, seniors or mixed use and how open or structured a facility should feel need to be grounded in the actual community the facility is intended to serve.





Configuration: Strategic Implications

- **The value of co-located services is likely to depend more on how well services and spaces are integrated than on the number of services provided**, with greater importance placed on environments that feel clear, connected and easy to navigate.
- **Facilities are likely to work best when designed as integrated community hubs rather than simply shared buildings**, where services and experiences feel connected rather than operating independently under one roof.
- **Flexibility is likely to remain an important design principle**, ensuring spaces can adapt to changing community needs while still remaining appropriate and fit for their main users and activities.
- **Facilities are likely to be most effective when people can easily understand what they are, what is available and how to use them**, through intuitive layouts, visibility and clear spatial organisation.
- **There is likely to be increasing value in designing spaces that support both planned and informal participation**, including structured programmes alongside drop-in, incidental and observational use.
- **Configuration approaches are likely to work best when adapted to local communities and patterns of use rather than applied uniformly across all locations**, while still maintaining consistent principles around usability, flexibility and integration.



Configuration: Operational Implications

- **Improve visibility and movement within facilities.** Facilities are likely to work best when people can easily see where to go, what is happening and how different spaces connect, for example through clearer sightlines, intuitive layouts and visible activity from key circulation areas.
- **Adapt spaces to support a wider range of uses.** Existing facilities are likely to need more flexible layouts, movable furniture and multi-purpose spaces that can support both structured programmes and informal use.
- **Create a better balance between busy and quiet spaces.** Larger or higher-use facilities are likely to work better when different activity types are separated in ways that reduce noise, crowding and overstimulation for different users.
- **Make priority user groups visible in the design of spaces.** Facilities are likely to feel more welcoming and usable when spaces for children, young people and other key groups are easy to identify and designed around how those groups actually use them.
- **Present co-located services as one connected community hub.** Where multiple services share a site, there is likely to be value in creating a more joined-up experience through shared entrances, coordinated information and clearer internal connections.
- **Improve facilities that feel closed, unclear or unwelcoming.** Facilities are likely to feel more accessible when public use is clearly signalled from outside, entrances are obvious and spaces feel active, open and easy to enter.



Dimension of Choice: Service Delivery

- *What range of delivery options do Aucklanders prefer to access?*

Service Delivery Summary: How Community Services Are Experienced And Delivered

Findings relating to Service Delivery show that Aucklanders are often less focused on who delivers a service than on whether it is easy to access, welcoming, reliable and responsive to their needs. The quality of the experience, the way people are treated and how services operate in practice strongly influence whether people choose to engage and return.

The research shows:

- The quality and experience of services matters more to most people than who delivers them.
- In-person services and human interaction remain important for trust, confidence and connection.
- Flexible, low-barrier and responsive service models are increasingly valued.
- Welcoming environments, friendly staff and positive experiences strongly influence participation.
- Partnership delivery models are generally accepted when services feel open, trusted and inclusive.
- Digital channels are seen as complementing rather than replacing in-person delivery.
- Providers identified growing pressures relating to cost, demand, maintenance, staffing and access to space.
- There is growing value placed on more connected and coordinated service experiences, particularly for people with more complex or overlapping needs.



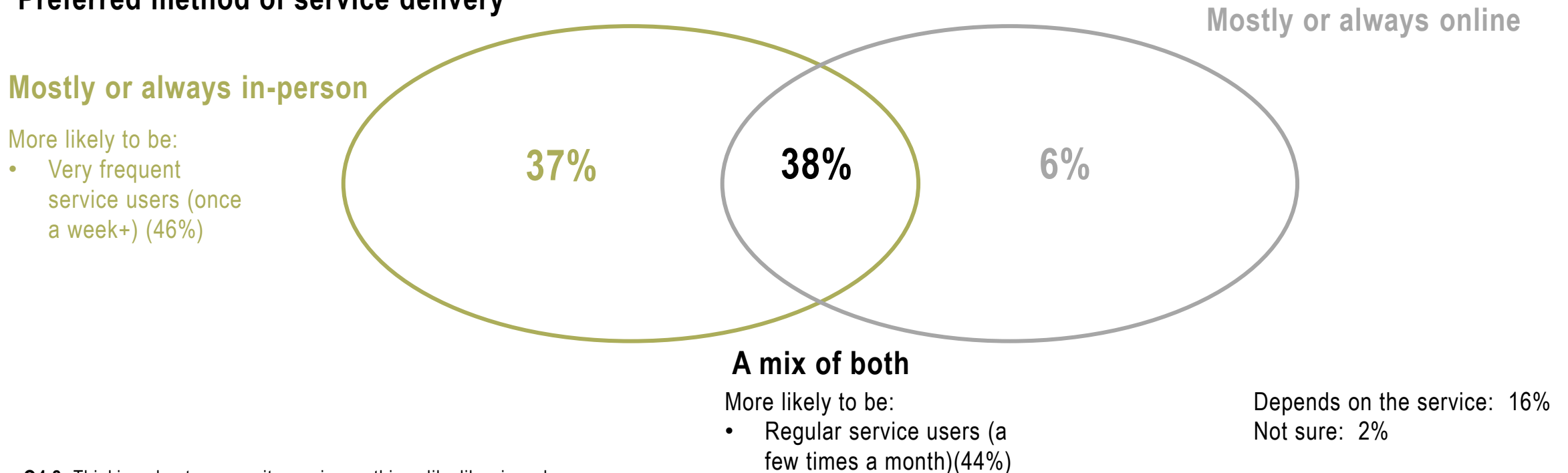
In-person services remain central, with digital playing a complementary role

- Preferences for how services are delivered are strongly weighted toward in-person engagement, with 37% preferring mostly or always in-person and a further 38% preferring a mix of in-person and online. Only 6% prefer mostly or always online.
- This indicates that while digital channels are widely used, they are not seen as a substitute for physical services, particularly where services involve interaction, support or shared experiences. Qualitative findings reinforce this, with participants describing the value of in-person services in terms of social connection, immediacy of support, the ability to ask questions and engage informally.

There's just something special about coming physically into a library. (Walkalong participant)

If you want to get out of the house, catch some fresh air and have some 'me' time, you know you can just come here [to the library]. It's nice to see the same old faces but you might also make a new friend, someone talking the same language as you. (Walkalong participants)

Preferred method of service delivery



Q4.2: Thinking about community services – things like libraries, classes, fitness programmes and advice services – which do you generally prefer?

Base: n=2,019 (All respondents)

Service experience and setting matter more than provider

- The qualitative research identified that people tend not to distinguish strongly between who delivers a service. What matters more is whether it is visible, welcoming, easy to access and meets their needs. The quality and experience of delivery is more important than whether services are provided directly by Council or through partners.
- The acceptability of alternative delivery settings depends partly on whether they are perceived as neutral and open. While schools and community venues were often seen as acceptable partnership locations, some participants were more cautious about church-based settings unless it was clearly signaled that the space and service were open to everyone.

*Religion is big, particularly for Pacific Islanders, and having something that's not church-related in a church environment, I would feel really uncomfortable with that. Having something like yoga or arts and crafts, I feel like that's inappropriate to do in a church environment.
(Walkalong participant)*



Flexible, low-commitment participation is increasingly important

- There is strong demand for flexible participation models, particularly those that reduce the need for planning, booking or ongoing commitment. This is clearly reflected in the quantitative data (see *following slide*):
 - 79% say drop-in options are important
 - 68% say extended opening hours are important
 - 50% say after-hours access is important.
- While demand for drop-in and extended hours is broad, after-hours access appears more targeted, with higher interest among younger adults, Māori, Pacific and Asian communities and very regular users.

Some of the libraries are only open in the daytime. If you're a working person, currently you can't actually get to any of them even if you wanted to. (World Café participant)

If it's something I can just drop into, I'll go, but if you have to plan it, I won't. (World Café participant)



Strong interest in flexible access, led by drop-in options and extended opening hours. After hours access appeals to specific groups

Interest in flexible access options



Drop-in options *(no need to book)*

79% important
(4% not important)

(No group significantly more likely to be interested)



Extended opening hours

68% important
(7% not important)

Interest highest among:

- Asians (76%)
- Those aged 35-44 years (74%)
- Families with children at home (72%)



Providing after-hours access

50% important
(17% not important)

Interest highest among:

- Pacific Peoples (68%), Māori (64%) or Asian (61%)
- Those aged 18-24 years (67%) or 25-34 years (64%)
- Very regular service users (60%)
- Central cluster (58%)
- Families with children at home (56%)

Service providers are already adapting delivery models but are constrained by cost, space and system settings

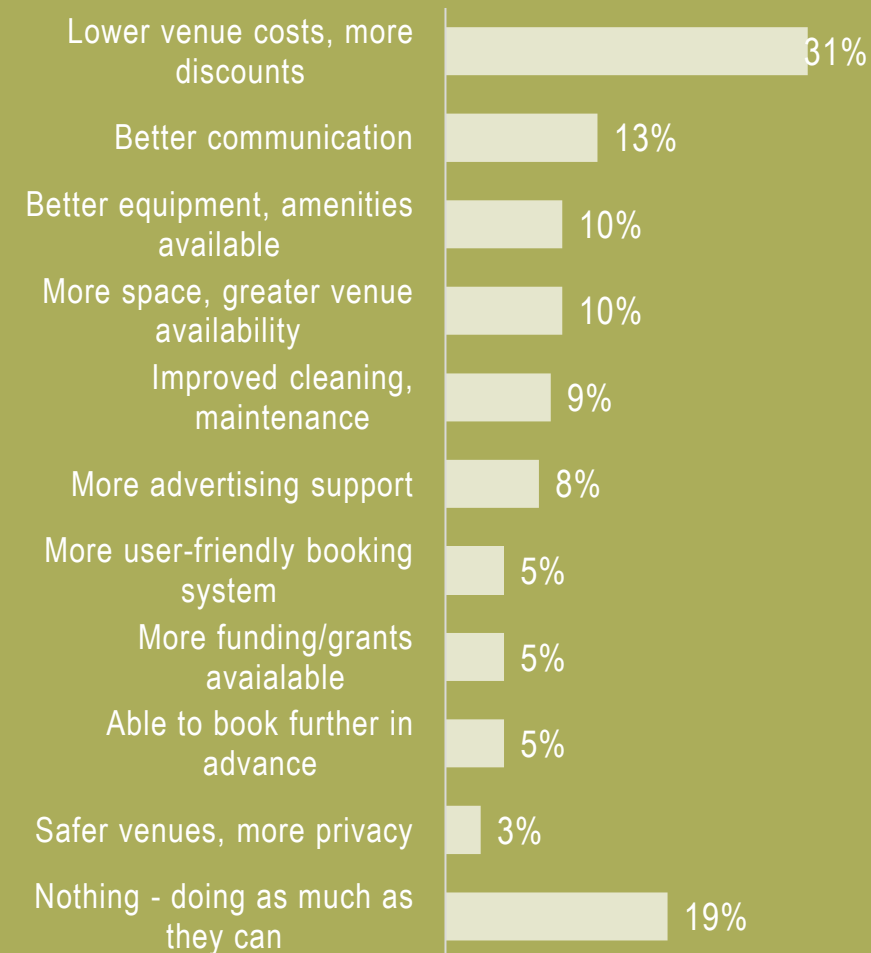
- Service providers deliver a wide and overlapping mix of services, often using Council facilities in flexible and multi-purpose ways, with many organisations delivering multiple types of activities rather than a single, defined service.
- Providers are actively adapting how they deliver services in response to changing needs, including diversifying activities and events (13% of venue hirers), increasing their online presence (8%), collaborating with other community groups (7%) and offering more flexible or diverse classes (community partners).
- However, the ability to adapt delivery models is strongly shaped by practical constraints, including cost (the single greatest challenge for venue hirers), availability of suitable spaces and maintenance and condition of facilities (particularly for leaseholders).
- Access to appropriate and available space is a critical enabler of service delivery, with providers reporting that demand is growing for more sessions, more venues and larger or more suitable spaces. Facilities actively shape what providers are able to offer. Limitations in space, condition or equipment can constrain delivery. In contrast, well-designed and maintained facilities enable a wider range of activities and more effective services. Currently some spaces lack the equipment or amenities needed to deliver services effectively (for example, Wi-Fi, storage, soundproofing, parking) and poor or delayed maintenance can make parts of facilities unusable or unappealing.
- Cost pressures are shaping what providers can offer and what users are able to access, with funding limitations and financial pressures identified as the most common challenge across providers. Users are increasingly requesting lower-cost or free options, placing additional pressure on providers already managing funding and capacity constraints.



Service providers are already adapting delivery models but are constrained by cost, space and system settings

- Providers' capacity to respond to changing demand is constrained, with relatively low levels of preparedness reported (*see following slide*). This suggests that, while change is recognised as necessary, the ability to implement it is uneven.
- A significant proportion of providers are not currently making changes, with around a quarter (24%) of venue hirers reporting that they are not taking action in response to emerging trends. This reinforces that adaptation is occurring, but not universally, and is often incremental rather than transformational. This reflects the constraints within which providers are operating. Limited capacity, funding uncertainty and system barriers mean that, even where there is willingness to adapt, the scope for change is often restricted.
- Providers consistently identify Council's role as removing practical barriers as opposed to directing service delivery, particularly in relation to lowering venue costs (31%), improving communication (13%), increasing availability of space (10%) and improving maintenance and basic amenities (10%) (*see graph on right*). Overall, providers are not looking for Council to direct or control service delivery, but to remove practical barriers and create the conditions that enable them to operate effectively.
- System and process issues also influence how services are delivered, with providers highlighting slow approval processes (funding, leases, maintenance), lack of certainty around funding and lease arrangements and challenges with communication and continuity of Council staff. These factors reduce confidence, constrain forward planning and limit the ability to trial or evolve delivery approaches. Short-term funding arrangements, lack of clarity around leases and delays in decision-making also limit providers' ability to plan ahead, invest in services or respond proactively to changing community needs.

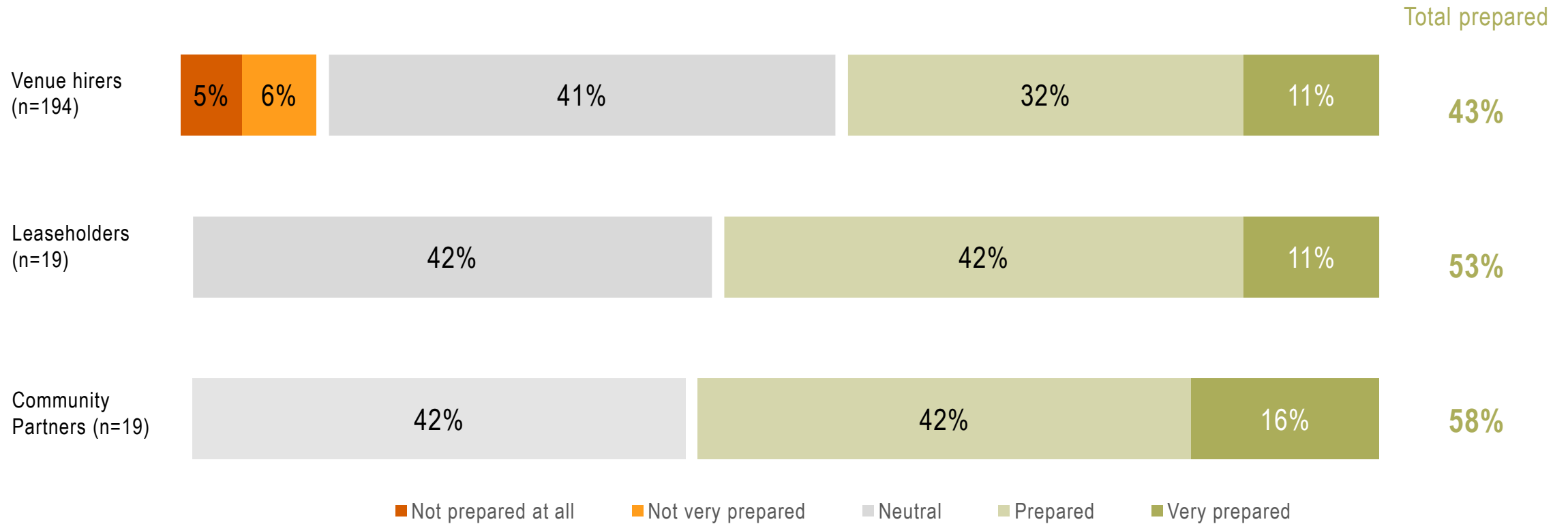
How can Council help you better meet your organisation's needs?



Base: N=194 (All venue hirers)

No provider types reported a high level of preparedness to respond to the emerging trends impacting service delivery

How prepared is your organisation or group to respond to these changes?





Service Delivery: Strategic Implications

- **Position Council's role as enabling and supporting service delivery across the network.** Future provision is likely to place increasing emphasis on maintaining trusted, accessible and functional spaces while reducing barriers related to cost, space availability and facility management.
- **Reduce system-level barriers that make service delivery harder.** Future delivery models are likely to work best where processes, access arrangements and facility systems are simpler, clearer and easier for providers to navigate.
- **Support more flexible and adaptable delivery models.** Future provision is likely to involve a broader mix of in-person, online, hybrid, structured and drop-in formats that better reflect how people participate in community life.
- **Align delivery approaches with the nature of the service being provided.** Future provision is likely to continue prioritising in-person delivery where trust, relationships and shared experience matter most, while using digital channels to complement and extend access where appropriate.
- **Support a broader mix of delivery approaches across the network.** Different facilities, organisations and delivery models are likely to serve different community needs within the wider network rather than operating through a single standardised approach.



Service Delivery: Operational Implications

- **Expand flexible participation options.** Facilities and providers are likely to place greater emphasis on casual and short-format activities that allow people to participate without long-term commitment.
- **Use digital tools to support service participation where appropriate.** Online booking, information and digital resources are likely to increasingly complement face-to-face delivery and support smoother participation.
- **Simplify booking and space allocation processes.** More flexible use of facilities is likely to require simpler booking systems, easier casual access and greater availability of shared or unprogrammed spaces.
- **Reduce cost barriers to accessing activities.** Lower-cost entry points, trial sessions and shorter booking options are likely to support broader participation and reduce barriers to trying activities.
- **Improve the adaptability and useability of spaces.** Facilities are likely to work best when they can support a wider range of activities through flexible layouts, movable furniture and practical amenities such as Wi-Fi, storage and AV equipment.
- **Support providers to test and adapt delivery approaches.** Short-term access to spaces and simpler approval or booking processes are likely to help providers respond more easily to changing community needs and participation patterns.
- **Improve communication and coordination with providers.** Clearer communication around availability, processes and facility management is likely to support more responsive and effective service delivery.
- **Prioritise practical improvements that support reliable service delivery.** Reliable maintenance, clean and functional spaces, better access and improved availability are likely to have a significant impact on providers' ability to deliver services effectively.

Dimension of Choice: Equity & Inclusion

- *What barriers to accessing services are Aucklanders currently experiencing?*
- *What makes community services welcoming to Aucklanders?*



Equity and Inclusion Summary: Who Community Services Work Well For

Findings relating to Equity & Inclusion show that Aucklanders do not experience community services in the same way. Participation is shaped by factors such as age, culture, language, disability, confidence, income and familiarity with services, with some groups experiencing multiple overlapping barriers to access and participation.

The research shows:

- Experiences of community services vary significantly across different groups and communities.
- Familiarity and confidence strongly influence whether people feel services are “for people like me”.
- Barriers to participation are often cumulative, particularly for those already less connected to services.
- Language, communication and digital confidence can affect people’s ability to access and navigate services.
- Feelings of safety, comfort and cultural relevance strongly influence participation.
- Flexible, low-cost and informal opportunities can help reduce barriers to entry.
- Representation, visibility and culturally responsive design help people feel welcomed and included.
- Inclusive provision requires more than physical accessibility alone and must consider social, cultural and emotional dimensions of access.



Many feel services are designed for them, but gaps remain for less engaged users

- Survey results show that the majority of respondents (71%) feel that Council facilities and services are designed for people like them (*see following slide*). However, this overall result masks important variation across different groups.
- Those most likely to feel well served tend to be regular or very frequent users of facilities, as well as families with children and Māori respondents. In contrast, those who feel services are not designed for them are significantly more likely to use facilities seldom or never, and are more likely to experience a range of barriers to access.
- This highlights a key dynamic - facilities tend to work best for those who are already engaged, while those on the margins are less likely to feel that services are relevant to them.
- Participants who are familiar with facilities often describe them positively and feel confident navigating them. By contrast, those with less experience are more likely to express uncertainty, hesitation or limited awareness of what is available, which in turn reduces their likelihood of engaging.

There are people within the community who don't [engage]. It's not because there are no services around. They have a lack of access because they might not have the language, or they don't know how to access those services. The most important part is helping people get to know where they can access those services, building their confidence. (Key informant interview)

The library is part of Kiwi day-to-day life, so when [people] see themselves reflected there, it makes a real difference. When they see themselves, they feel they've been valued, they've been welcomed. (Key informant interview)

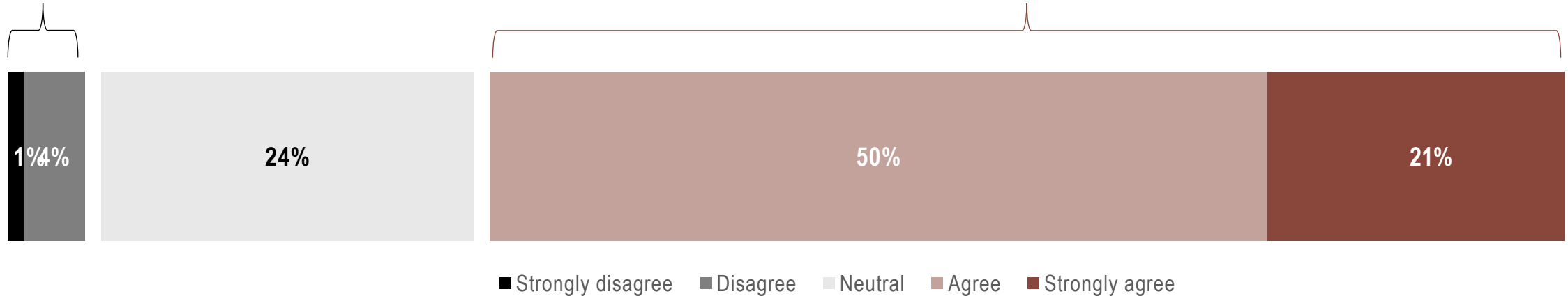


Many feel services are designed for them, but gaps remain for less engaged users

Council facilities and services currently designed for people like me

Total disagree: 5%

Total agree: 71%



More likely to be ...

- Seldom (10%) or never (13%) use services

More likely to be ...

- Regular facility/services users (58%)

More likely to be ...

- Very regular facility/services users (47%)
- Māori (39%)
- With a disability (27%)
- Families with children at home (24%)

Doesn't feel designed 'for me' because:

- ✗ Lack of emphasis on other cultures/not designed for whole community (n=21)
- ✗ Lack of services I'd use/lack of variety (n=19)
- ✗ Unsafe (n=9)
- ✗ Expensive to use (n=9)
- ✗ Poor accessibility/too far away (n=9)
- ✗ Poor opening hours (n=8)
- ✗ Don't feel welcome (n=8)
- ✗ Poor communication/lack of information (n=7)

Q2.2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that Auckland Council community facilities and services are currently designed for people like you?

Base: n=1,967 (All respondents, excluding 'don't know' responses)

Inclusion depends on offering multiple ways to engage, not a one-size-fits-all model”



Young people want:

- Informal, social, drop-in spaces where they can spend time without commitment
- Visible activity that signals ‘something is happening’
- Spaces that reflect local culture
- Ability to observe before joining
- Spaces that feel owned by them rather than controlled

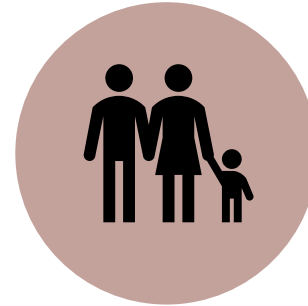
You need to entertain them, give them more space and activities to do. It gives them somewhere to go instead of just being bored. (World Café participant)



Older adults want:

- Simple, familiar and easy-to-navigate spaces
- Predictable environments that support routine use
- Calm, low-stimulation settings
- Clear purpose and visible points of entry (e.g. reception, staff presence)

For someone like my mum, it’s about the contact. It’s about communication and interactions. (World Café participant)



Families with children at home want:

- Flexible, practical spaces that accommodate children
- Ability to combine activities in one visit
- Visible, easy-to-access family areas
- Environments where children can move, play and participate alongside adults
- Spaces that reflect local culture

I just want my kid to have some fun and to meet other kids. (Walkalong participant)

Libraries with kids' zones are good, especially if I want to go there but I've got my daughter with me. (Walkalong participant)



Rural residents want:

- Local, familiar spaces embedded in everyday routines
- Multi-purpose hubs that bring services together
- Spaces that support a range of uses in one place
- Environments that feel connected to the local community context

Inclusion depends on offering multiple ways to engage, not a one-size-fits-all model”



Māori want:

- Spaces that feel alive, relational and culturally grounded
- Environments that support connection, shared experience and visibility of activity
- Opportunities for participation rather than passive use
- Spaces that reflect identity and belonging



Migrant communities want:

- Welcoming, inclusive environments that support connection
- Activities that enable language development and social interaction
- Set quiet times or spaces available
- Clear visual cues about what is available and how to participate
- Opportunities to build confidence gradually

It's not just a language barrier. Some people don't have confidence. It's very hard for them to ask for help. (Key informant interview)



Pacific Peoples want:

- Spaces that support group use, gatherings and shared experiences
- Spaces that reflect local culture
- Environments that feel warm, social and community-oriented
- Flexibility for collective and intergenerational activities
- Spaces that enable hosting and participation together



People with disabilities want:

- Spaces that are easy to navigate and use independently
- Clear layouts and wayfinding
- Environments that minimise effort and uncertainty
- Sensory-aware design (lighting, noise, crowding)
- Consistency and predictability

Feeling a service has been designed for me starts before we even get there. Is there accessible parking? Signage is very important. I need to know my access needs have been thought about, not just by the building but by the people running it. (Key informant interview)



Equity and Inclusion: Strategic Implications

- **Design services with non-users as well as current users in mind.** Future provision is likely to place greater emphasis on reducing barriers for people who are less engaged or less likely to currently use community services and facilities.
- **Treat inclusion as more than physical access.** Future facilities and services are likely to work best when people feel safe, welcomed, comfortable and confident using them, not just physically able to enter them.
- **Make services easier to understand and navigate.** Clearer information, visible activity and more intuitive spaces are likely to help reduce the confidence and prior knowledge currently needed to participate.
- **Recognise that different communities have different expectations and participation preferences.** Future provision is likely to require a wider range of participation styles, including informal, social, structured, individual and group-based use.
- **Support gradual and low-pressure pathways into participation.** Many Aucklanders are likely to engage more comfortably through casual, observational or drop-in participation before committing to more structured involvement.
- **Ensure cultural relevance and representation are visible.** Inclusion is likely to be strengthened when spaces, programmes, language and staffing visibly reflect the diversity of Auckland's communities.
- **Balance universal provision with more targeted approaches.** While community facilities should remain broadly accessible, future provision is likely to require more deliberate responses to the needs of under-represented or less well-served groups.



Equity and Inclusion: Operational Implications

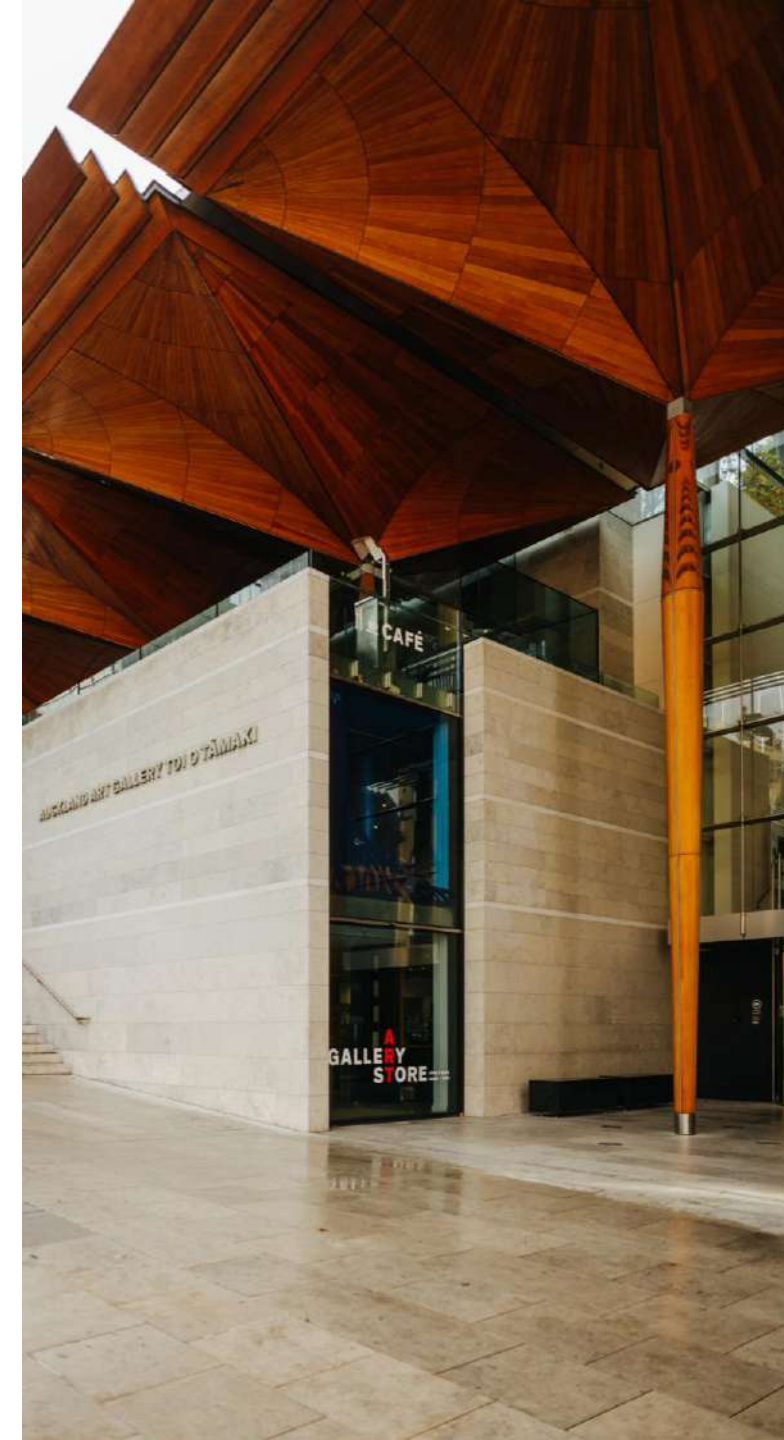
- **Improve visibility of what services are available and how to take part.** Clear signage, visible activity and simple information at entry points are likely to help people understand what is offered and how to participate.
- **Create more welcoming and socially comfortable environments.** Facilities are likely to feel more inclusive when they are easy to enter, feel safe and reduce uncertainty for new or less confident users.
- **Provide low-pressure ways for people to get involved.** Casual, drop-in and observational participation options are likely to help people engage gradually before committing to more structured activities.
- **Adapt spaces to better reflect the needs of different groups.** Facilities are likely to work best when they include spaces and environments that support a wider range of ages, cultures, family situations and accessibility needs.
- **Strengthen cultural visibility and relevance within facilities.** Spaces are likely to feel more inclusive when cultural identity and diversity are reflected through programming, partnerships, language and the physical environment.
- **Improve accessibility in practical, everyday ways.** Addressing barriers such as cost, opening hours, transport access and ease of movement within facilities is likely to make services more usable for a wider range of people.
- **Support navigation through people as well as physical design.** Visible staff, volunteers or community connectors are likely to help people feel more confident understanding what is available and how to engage.
- **Strengthen outreach to under-represented communities.** Partnerships, targeted promotion and delivery in familiar or trusted settings are likely to help services connect with people who are less likely to currently participate.



Priorities for Investment

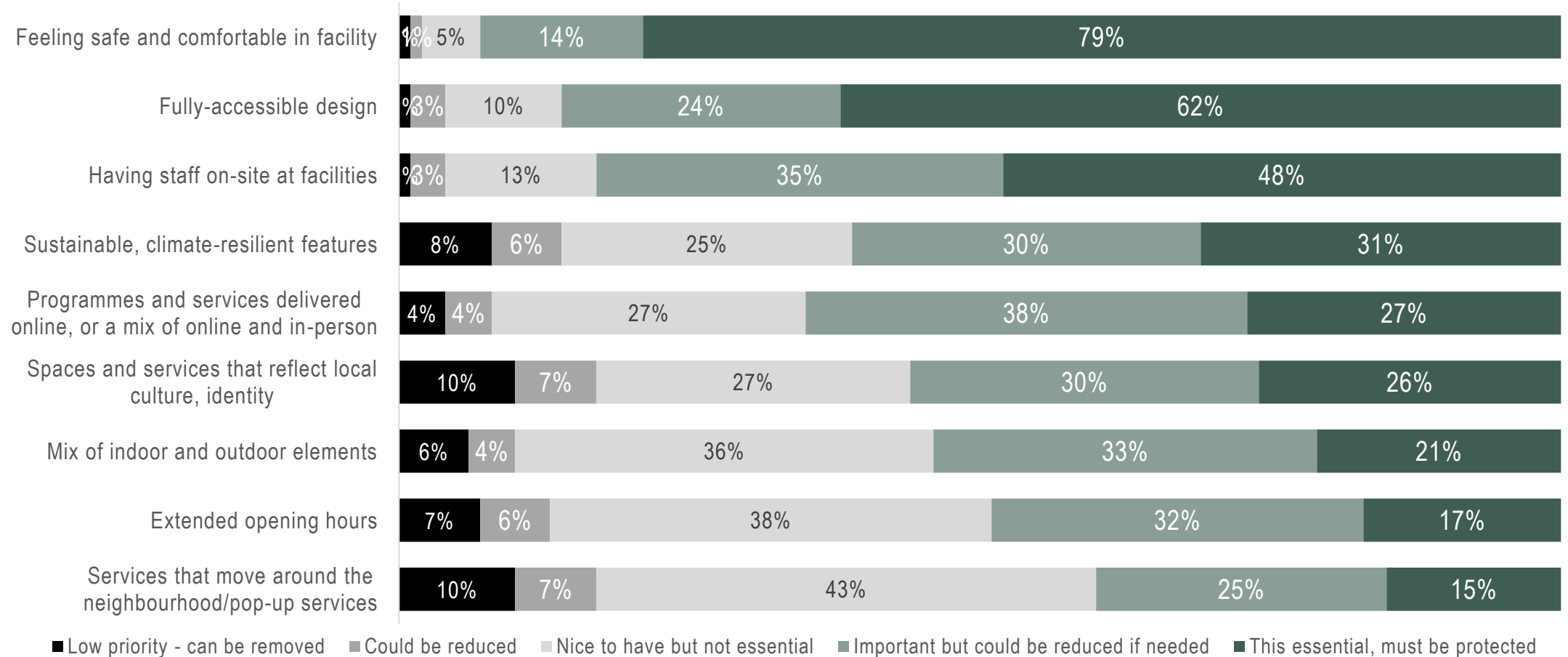
When trade-offs are required, Aucklanders prioritise core universal features over enhancements

- To explore what should be prioritised when resources are limited, World Café participants were asked to make trade-offs between different types of services and features. Participants consistently prioritised features that enable broad, everyday use over more specialised or additional offerings. Core elements such as safety, accessibility, extended opening hours and spaces that support social connection were seen as essential and non-negotiable.
- This pattern is also reflected in the survey results (*see following slide*), which show strongest support for protecting core features that enable access, safety and everyday use. In contrast, more supplementary or targeted features, including digital or hybrid services, pop-ups or highly tailored offerings, were more readily deprioritised when choices had to be made.
- This reveals a clear hierarchy: ensuring services are fundamentally usable, safe and inclusive comes before expanding into more innovative or specialised models.



Safety, accessibility and staffed facilities are top priorities – reinforcing the focus on core, universal features

Perceptions of where Council should focus investment



Q6.1: Please indicate how Council should prioritise each of the following when planning a new facility or making changes to an existing facility, if resources are limited.

Base: n=1,943–2,004 (All respondents excluding 'don't know' responses)

What is considered as essential differs across population groups

Profile of those more or less likely to consider priority essential



Feeling safe and comfortable at a facility – 79% essential



- Females (86%)
- NZ European (81%)
- 18-24 years (68%)
- Males (68%)



Fully-accessible design (e.g. step-free access, accessible toilets, clear signage) – 62% essential



- HH income <\$50K (72%)
- Females (70%)
- Youngest child <5 years (66%)
- NZ European (66%)
- Asian (53%)
- Males (50%)
- Youngest child aged 5-12 years (50%)



Having staff on-site at facilities – 48% essential



- Very regular service users (56%)
- 18-24 years (37%)



Sustainable, climate-resilient features – 31% essential



- Very regular service users (42%)
- Aged 25-34 years (38%)
- Females (34%)
- Males (26%)

What is considered as essential differs across population groups

Profile of those more or less likely to consider priority essential



Programmes and services delivered online, or a mix of online and in-person – 27% essential

- Very regular service users (39%)
- Māori (35%)
- Central cluster (32%)
- Females (29%)

- Males (23%)
- Northern cluster (19%)
- Flatters (15%)



Spaces and services that reflect local culture and identity – 26% essential

- Māori (38%) and Pacific Peoples (36%)
- Aged 25-34 years (36%)
- Very regular service users (34%)

- NZ European (23%)
- Aged 45-64 years (21%) or 65 years + (13%)
- Couple only, no children at home (20%)
- Rural cluster (18%)
- Never use community services (16%)



A mix of indoor and outdoor elements – 21% essential

- Māori (35%)
- Very regular service users (30%)
- 25-34 years (28%)

- NZ European (18%)
- Couple only, no children at home (15%)
- Northern cluster (14%)
- 65 years + (11%)



Extended opening hours – 17% essential

- Very regular service users (30%)
- Central cluster (22%)
- Māori (28%)
- Aged 25-34 years (26%)

- NZ European (14%)
- 45-64 years (13%) or 65 years+ (8%)

What is considered as essential differs across population groups

Profile of those more or less likely to consider priority essential



Services that move
around
neighbourhoods/
pop-up services –
15% essential



- Māori (25%) and Pacific Peoples (23%)
- Very regular service users (24%)
- Aged 25-34 years (23%)
- Those with a disability (20%)
- Families with children at home (18%)



- NZ European (12%)
- Aged 45-64 years (11%) or 65 years + (7%)
- Northern cluster (9%)
- Living as a couple only, no children at home (9%)



Trade-offs are guided by a clear logic of value, reach and risk

Analysis of the World Café discussions identified several consistent principles underpinning how participants approached trade-offs and prioritisation.

Maximising Value for Money

Prioritising services where the benefits are clear, visible and widely experienced, rather than those perceived as costly with less tangible impact.

Distinguishing Provision from Enhancement

Expecting good design, accessibility and functionality to be a baseline standard, not an optional “add-on”

Focusing on Core vs Supplementary Functions

Protecting what is seen as Council’s essential role (e.g. safe, accessible, usable spaces), while viewing additional features as secondary.

Prioritising in-person connection

Valuing services that bring people together physically, with digital seen as a way to support — but not replace — in-person experiences.

Supporting Universal, High-Use Services

Favouring services that work for many people, across different groups and life stages, over those designed for narrower audiences.



Minimising risk and unintended consequences

Avoiding decisions that could exclude certain groups, reduce usability or create unintended negative impacts.

Avoiding Duplication

Deprioritising services that are perceived to already exist elsewhere, particularly where alternatives are easily accessible.

Core features that enable access and participation are consistently protected

Services most likely to be deprioritised are those seen as supplementary, niche or less essential

Prioritised services share common characteristics:

- Essential to participation
- Support in-person interaction and connection
- Used frequently by a wide range of people
- Universal rather than targeted
- Practical and functional
- Central to the purpose of the facility

Sacrosanct – no groups were willing to trade off:

- Extended opening hours
- Family-friendly amenities
- Fully accessible design
- Safety and social comfort

Services were **more likely to be sacrificed** when they were perceived as:

- Enhancements or 'nice to haves' rather than core provision
- Costly with limited or unclear benefit
- Already available through other providers
- Targeted to specific or niched audiences
- Primarily digital or remote in nature
- Difficult to deliver universally or equitably
- Design features framed as optional rather than standard
- Carrying risks of unintended consequences

Examples most commonly identified for sacrifice:

- Mobile and pop-up services
- Spaces with strong or specific cultural identity
- Hybrid or online programming
- Indoor-outdoor connection features
- Sustainable or climate-resilient upgrades
- Enhanced way-finding and navigation



Conclusion

What this means for future provision

Aucklanders’ expectations of community services are shifting in clear and consistent ways. Across the research, there is a clear move toward more flexible, visible, locally responsive and inclusive services, alongside a continued expectation that the basics are done well.

Taken together, these findings point to the need for a more deliberate, system-level approach to how services are planned, designed and delivered.

Implications for Auckland Council

Shift from programme-led to participation-led provision	Design the network as a system of complementary roles	Prioritise visibility and ease of use	Build consistency with local identity	Focus investment on the fundamentals
There is a move away from structured, programme-led participation toward more informal, flexible and self-directed use. This requires a stronger focus on enabling access, adaptability and low-commitment participation, alongside more traditional programmed activities.	Different facilities serve different purposes, from local, everyday access points to destination-style assets. Planning should reflect this, with a clear understanding of the role each facility plays within the wider network, rather than applying a single model across all sites.	Awareness of services is largely passive and shaped by what people see and encounter in everyday life. Making services visible, well-signposted and easy to navigate is critical to ensuring they are discovered and used.	There is a strong expectation that facilities reflect the character and needs of their local communities, while also being easy to recognise and use across the network. This points to a model of consistent foundations with local expression.	Core elements such as safety, cleanliness, accessibility and welcoming environments are the strongest drivers of use. Ensuring these are delivered consistently is likely to have a greater impact than investing in additional features or services.

Delivering on these shifts will require not just changes to individual services, but a more integrated approach to how the network is designed, coordinated and experienced as a whole.

Appendix



Population survey sample profile

Age	Share of sample
18-24 years	10%
25-34 years	21%
35-44 years	24%
45-64 years	31%
65 years +	13%

Gender	Share of sample
Female	60%
Male	39%
Gender diverse	1%

Ethnicity	Share of sample
NZ European	63%
Asian	23%
Māori	12%
Pacific Peoples	10%
MELAA	2%
Other	<1%

Living situation	Share of sample
Family with children at home	45%
Couple only, no children at home	23%
Live alone	15%
Extended family/multi-generational household	10%
Flatting/boarding	7%



Age of youngest child at home	Share of sample
Younger than 5 years	28%
5–12 years	37%
13-17 years	20%
18 years or older	15%

Note: Multiple responses to this question permitted, consequently table may total more than 100%

Population survey sample profile

Geographic cluster	Share of sample
Central	31%
Southern	23%
Western	17%
Northern	17%
Rural	12%

Main mode of transport	Share of sample
Private vehicle	80%
Public transport	15%
Active modes	4%
Ride-share services	1%

Disability	Share of sample
No	78%
Yes	21%
Prefer not to say	1%

Annual household income	Share of sample
\$0 income	1%
\$1-\$25,000	4%
\$25,001-\$50,000	11%
\$50,001-\$75,000	12%
\$75,001-\$100,000	13%
\$100,001-\$125,000	11%
\$125,001-\$150,000	12%
\$150,001-\$200,000	12%
More than \$200,000	10%
Don't know	3%
Prefer not to say	11%

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