

Auckland Council's Governance Structure People's Panel Survey Final Report

March 2024



Survey Methodology



Methodology

Survey invites
were sent to
12,932 panel
members via
email

10%*
(n=1,268)
finished the
survey

*this is a typical response
rate

Fieldwork:
27 Feb 24
to
Mar 4

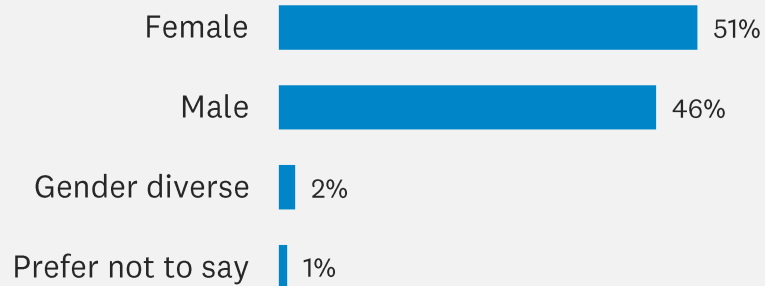


Sample Profile

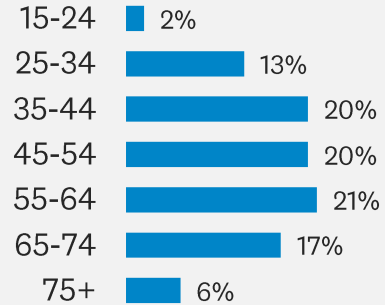
The survey sample was skewed towards Aucklanders who are female, older (those aged 30+), and European.



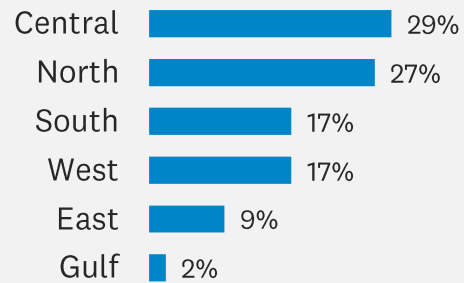
Gender



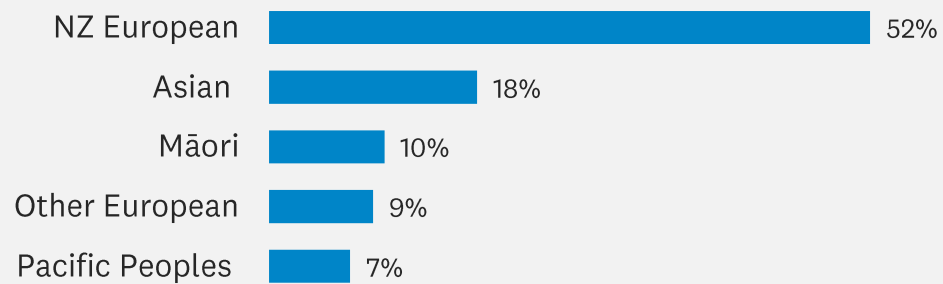
Age



Area



Ethnicity



In this report, we look at results at an **overall level**, as well as by the following **groups**:

Local boards and Wards

Local boards proposed for **amalgamation** vs. not proposed for amalgamation

Size of local boards: small boards (pop less than 75K), medium boards (pop 75-89K), large boards (pop 90K+)



Results summary



SUMMARY



Knowledge of local boards and the Governing Body is low:

- Only 1 in 5 respondents feel knowledgeable about their local board and the Governing Body (20% and 18%, respectively). Compare this to 58% who feel they are knowledgeable about the NZ Government.
- When council's decision-making structure was explained to respondents only 24% of respondents rated themselves as having been knowledgeable about who makes what decisions at council.

Perceptions of local boards and Governing Body are fairly low – but knowledge is key:

- Those who are knowledgeable of how decisions are made at Auckland Council are more likely to have favourable perceptions of their local board and the Governing Body
- Those from smaller local boards are more likely to agree that their local board understands local issues (49%).

	Local Boards <i>Total % agree</i>	Governing Body <i>Total % agree</i>
Understands local issues (LB) / issues facing Auckland (GB)	41% (56% among 'knowledgeable' respondents)	34% (47% among 'knowledgeable' respondents)
Takes action on local issues (LB) / Auckland issues (GB)	28% (41%)	22% (32%)
Provides opportunities for you to have your say about local issues (LB) / about shaping Auckland (GB)	23% (37%)	25% (38%)
Provides enough information for you to have your say	18% (28%)	20% (32%)
Makes the right decisions	17% (28%)	11% (17%)

There is keen appetite to learn more about Elected Representatives:

- 3 in 5 respondents would like to learn more about their Elected Reps (63% for local boards, and 60% for the Governing Body)

SUMMARY



Local board proposed changes:

- More respondents support (42%) than oppose (26%) the proposal to reduce the number of local boards, although a third (32%) remain undecided (rated 'neutral' or 'I don't know').

Support for proposed local board changes (total 42% support):

- *Feedback suggests that the main reasons for support are reductions in cost, complexity, and less competing interests.
- Local Boards that aren't proposed for amalgamation are more supportive (47%). Support is highest in Rodney (68%), Howick (53%), and Franklin (49%) local boards.

Opposition to local board changes (total 26% oppose):

- *Feedback suggests the main reasons for opposition are reductions in understanding and responsiveness to local issues, and impacts on community engagement and effective representation. There are also concerns that many boards proposed for merger are too different, or that one merged board may dominate the other.
- Local boards that are proposed for amalgamation are more opposed (32%). Opposition is highest in Ōtara-Papatoetoe (44%) and Waitākere (40%) local boards.

Ward proposed changes:

- Overall, 24% feel the existing ward structure works well. Those who are 'knowledgeable' about council decision making are more likely to agree that the existing ward structure works well (38%).
- Only 15% support councillors being elected regionally. Those from central wards Waitemata (21%) and Albert-Eden (19%) are the most supportive areas. The key reason for support is a more regional focus.
- Reasons for opposition include a loss of community connection and consideration of local needs, and stronger potential political party influence.

** Feedback sourced from stakeholders and members of the community (including the People's Panel)*

Knowledge of Government and Local Government

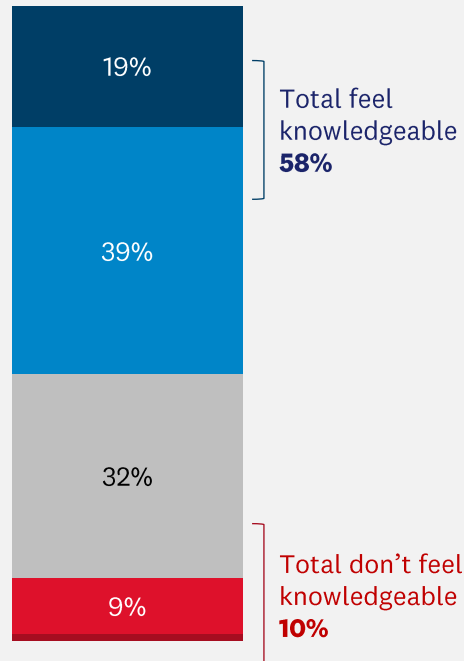


Knowledge of Government and Local Government

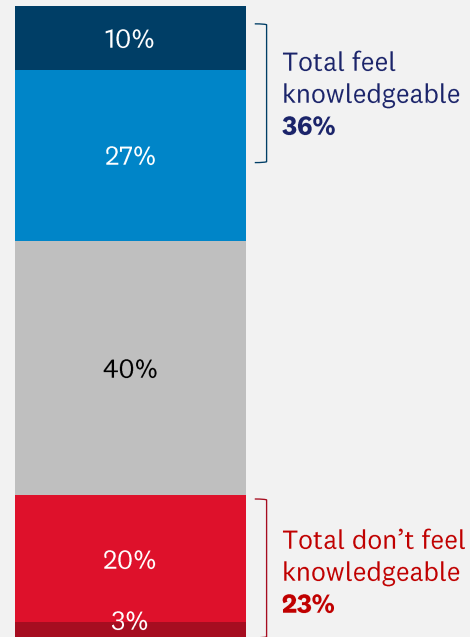
The majority (58%) of respondents feel knowledgeable about the New Zealand Government, they feel less knowledgeable about Auckland Council overall (37%). 1 in 5 or less feel knowledgeable about local boards (20%) and the Governing Body (18%).



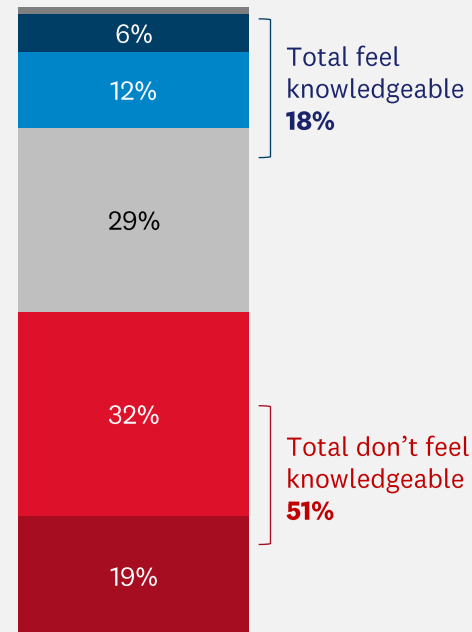
58% feel knowledgeable about the **NZ Government**



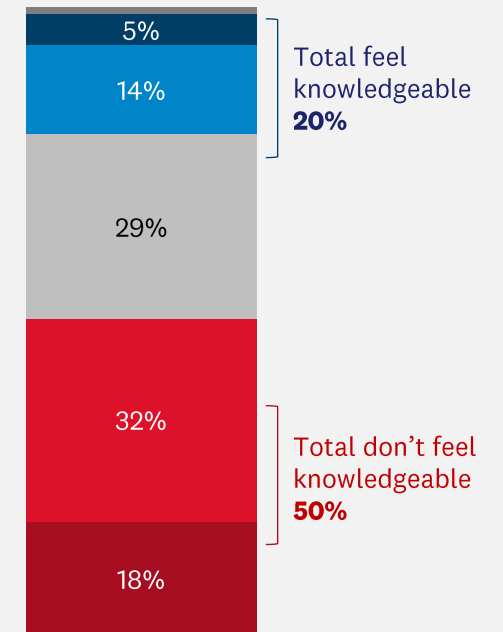
36% feel knowledgeable about **Auckland Council**



18% feel knowledgeable about **Governing Body**

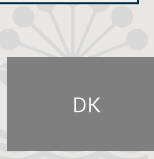


20% feel knowledgeable about the **Local Boards**



BASE: All respondents (n=1,269)

Q: First we'd like to ask about your knowledge of Government and Local Government. How much, if anything, do you feel you know about...



Knowledge of decision making at Auckland Council



In the survey we introduced the Governing Body and local boards to respondents, as below...

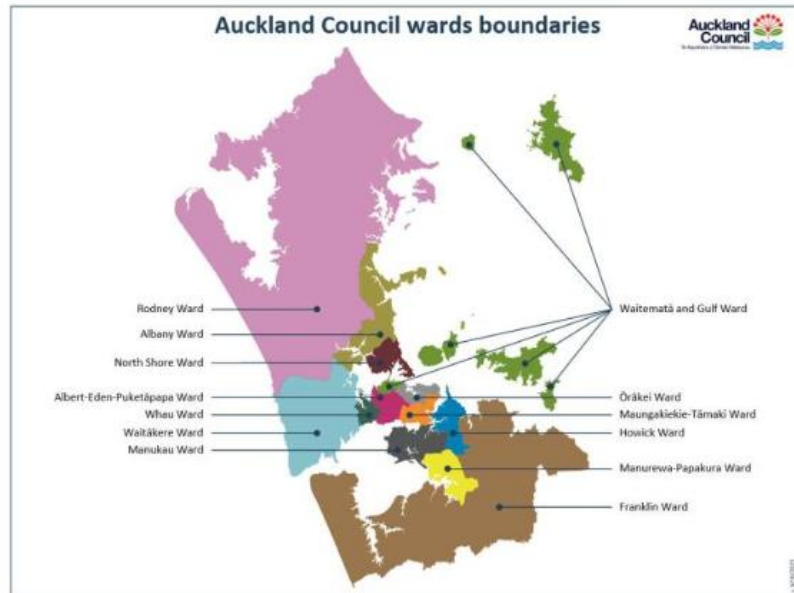


Auckland Council has **two complementary decision-making** parts:

1) The Governing Body

The Governing Body looks after **Auckland as a whole**, they take care of **regional matters** that affect all of Auckland. The Governing Body is made up of:

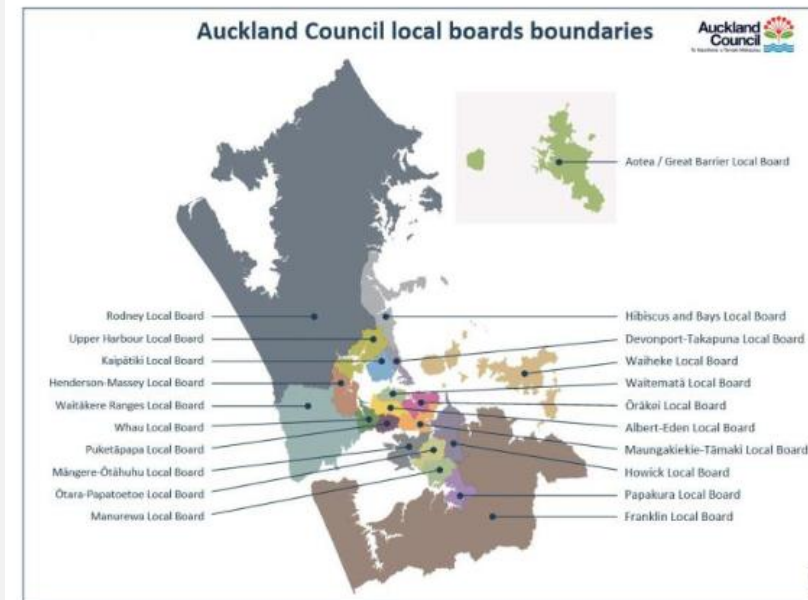
- The mayor, and
- 20 councillors who represent 13 Auckland wards



(Examples of what the Governing Body does: deciding on regional strategies, policies and plans, bylaws, licensing, and consenting, setting rates, and local board funding, governing Council Controlled Organisations, and looking after regional parks, and rubbish and recycling)

2) 21 Local Boards

Our 21 local boards look after **local communities**, they take care of the matters that are **important to their local communities**. Each local board has between five and nine members representing their area.



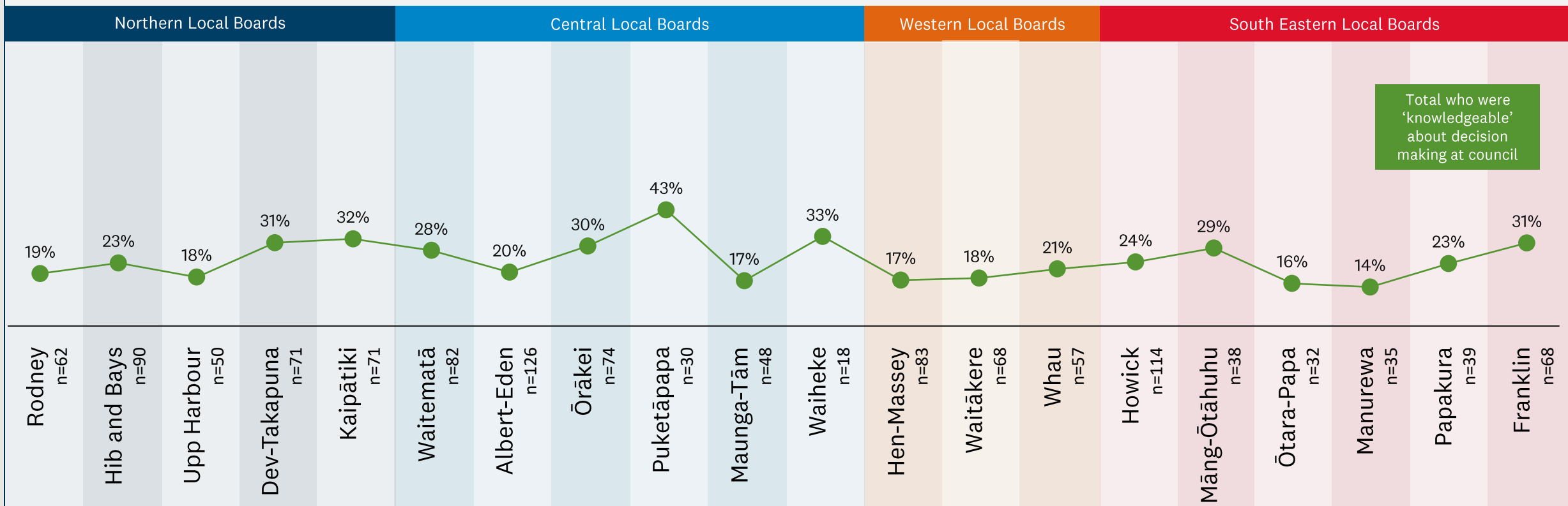
(Examples of what local boards do: deciding on local board plans, looking after local libraries, parks, and community centres, local events, environmental protection, and community grants, inputting into regional strategies, policies, plans, and bylaws, and community engagement, consultation and advocacy)

... they then rated their knowledge of decision making

Overall, 24% were knowledgeable about decision making at Auckland Council. Knowledge was highest among those in Puketāpapa (43%), Waiheke (33%), Kaipātiki (32%), Devonport-Takapuna (31%), and Franklin (31%).



Knowledge of who makes what decisions at Auckland Council:



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: Before today, how knowledgeable were you about who makes what decisions at Auckland Council?

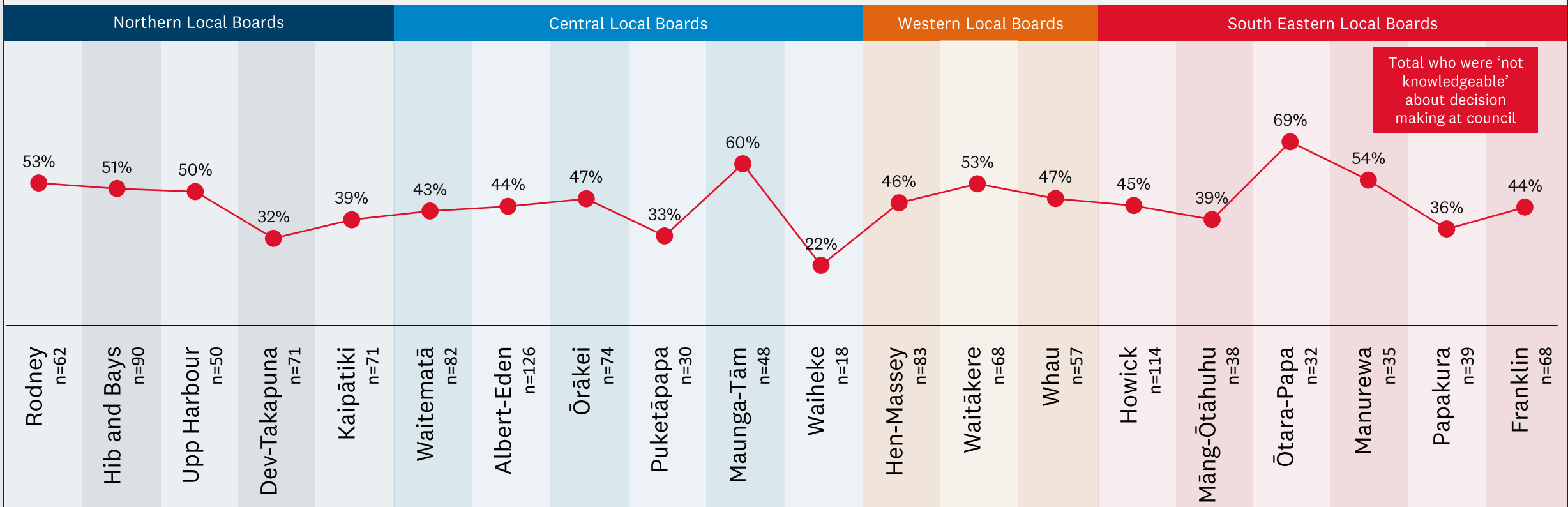


46% were not knowledgeable about decision making

Respondents from Ōtara-Papatoetoe (69%) and Maungakiekie-Tāmaki (60%) local boards were more likely to say they were not knowledgeable.



Knowledge of who makes what decisions at Auckland Council:



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: Before today, how knowledgeable were you about who makes what decisions at Auckland Council?



Perceptions of the Governing Body and local boards



Overall perceptions of elected representatives

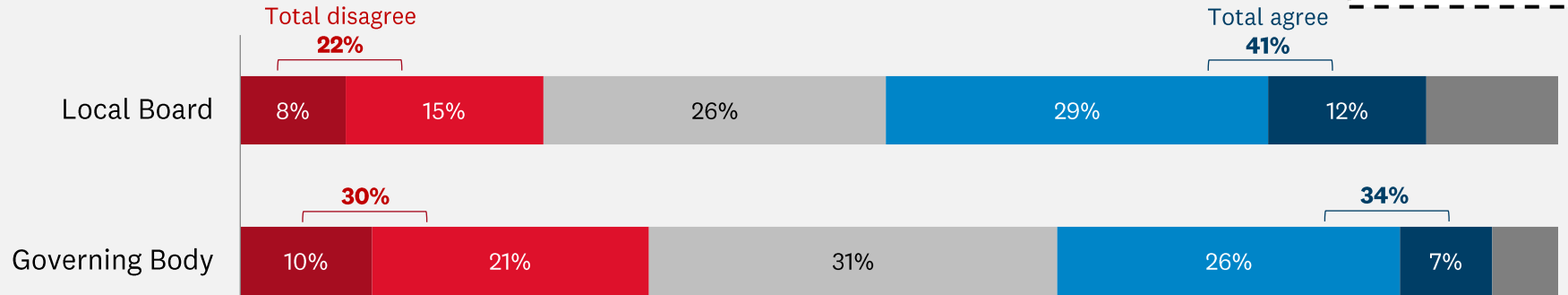
Respondents perceive that local boards better understand the issues and takes more action on them than the Governing Body.



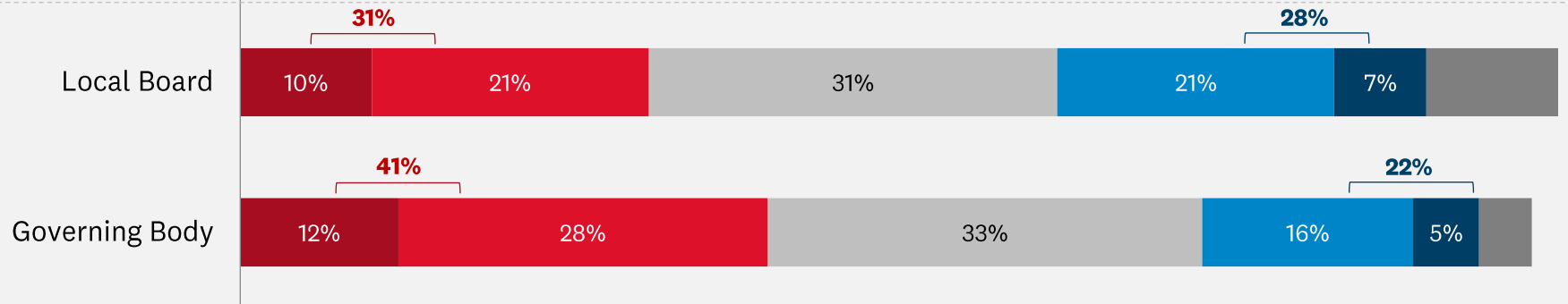
Perceptions of Elected Representatives:

Those from **smaller local boards** are more likely to agree (49%)

Understands local issues (LB) / issues facing Auckland (GB)



Takes action on local issues (LB) / Auckland issues (GB)



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: How much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local board? Your local board:

Q: How much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Governing Body? The Governing Body:



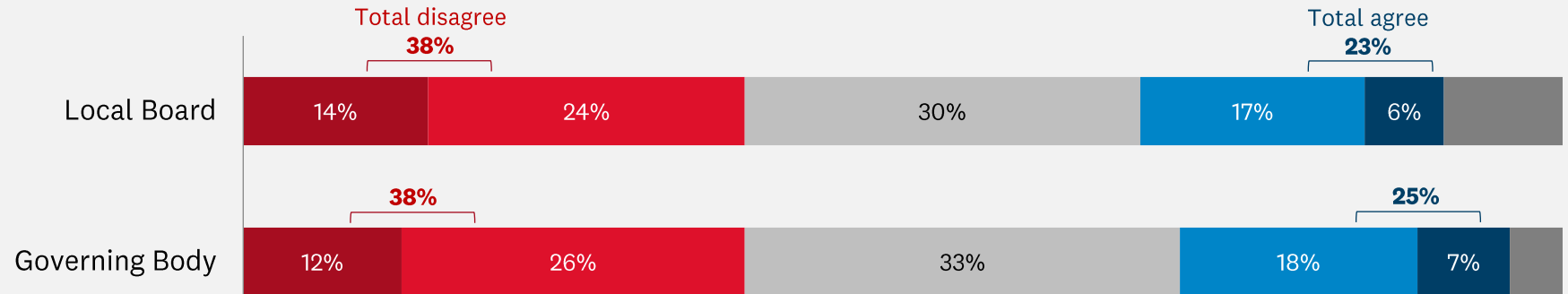
Overall perceptions of elected representatives

More respondents disagree than agree that elected representatives provide opportunities for them have their say, and enough information to have their say.

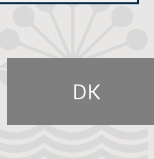
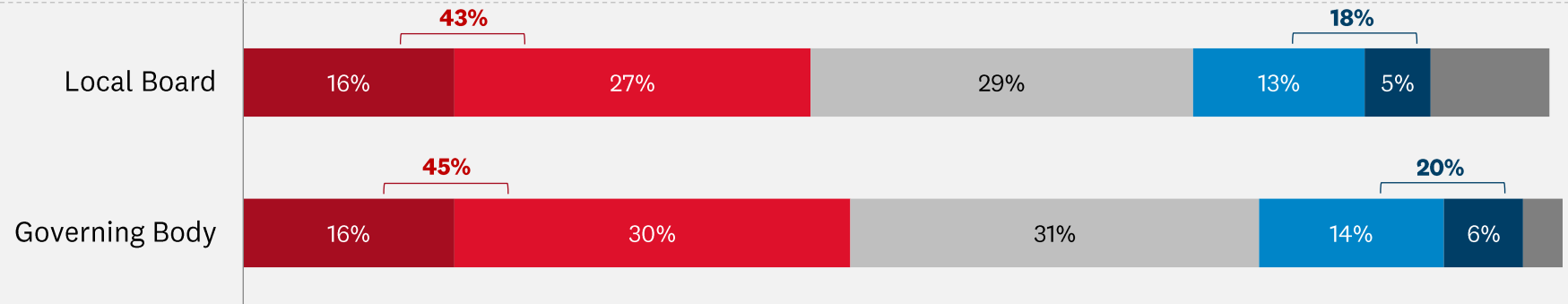


Perceptions of Elected Representatives:

Provides opportunities for you to have your say about local issues (LB) / about shaping Auckland (GB)



Provides enough information for you to have your say



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: How much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local board? Your local board:

Q: How much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Governing Body? The Governing Body:

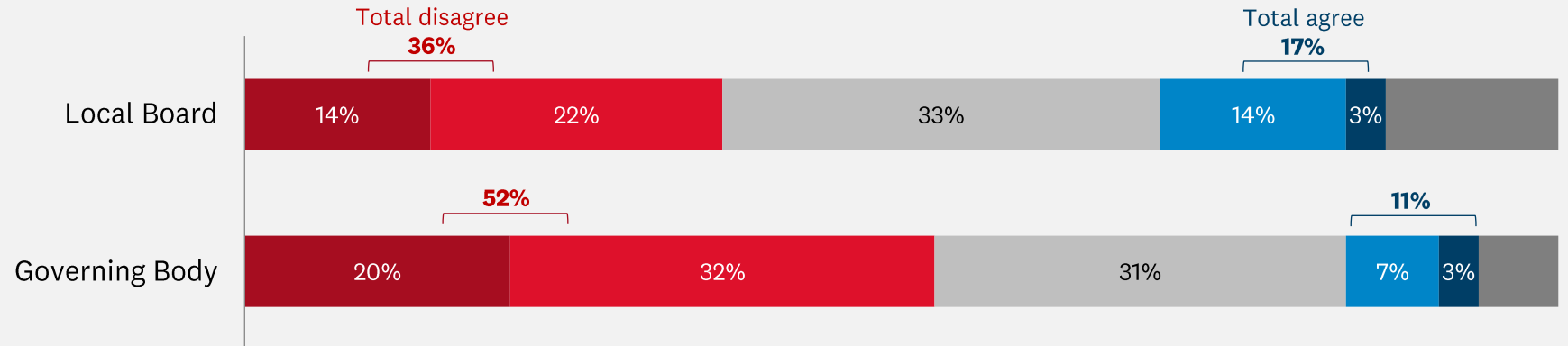
Overall perceptions of elected representatives

Very few respondents agree that elected members make the right decisions.



Perceptions of Elected Representatives:

Makes the right decisions



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: How much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local board? Your local board:

Q: How much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Governing Body? The Governing Body:



Knowledge is key

Those who were knowledgeable of how decisions are made at Auckland Council are more likely to have favourable perceptions of their local board and the Governing Body.



Lowest agreement % Average agreement % Highest agreement %

Perceptions of **local board** by knowledge levels:

	Before today, how knowledgeable were you about who makes what decisions at Auckland Council?		
Agreement that your local board...	Total Unknowledgeable about how decisions are made at council (1+2) n=581	Total Neutral about how decisions are made at council (3) n=376	Total Knowledgeable about how decisions are made at council (4+5) n=304
Understands local issues	29%	49%	56%
Takes action on local issues	19%	33%	41%
Provides opportunities for you to have your say about local issues	13%	27%	37%
Provides enough information for you to have your say	10%	22%	28%
Makes the right decisions	11%	18%	28%

Perceptions of **Governing Body** by knowledge levels:

	Before today, how knowledgeable were you about who makes what decisions at Auckland Council?		
Agreement that the Governing Body...	Total Unknowledgeable about how decisions are made at council (1+2) n=581	Total Neutral about how decisions are made at council (3) n=376	Total Knowledgeable about how decisions are made at council (4+5) n=304
Understands issues facing Auckland	24%	38%	47%
Takes action on Auckland issues	15%	24%	32%
Provides opportunities for you to have your say about shaping Auckland	19%	25%	38%
Provides enough information for you to have your say	12%	22%	32%
Makes the right decisions	8%	11%	17%

BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: Before today, how knowledgeable were you about who makes what decisions at Auckland Council?

Q: How much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local board?

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Governing Body?



Local board perceptions by local board

In general, perceptions towards local boards are highest among respondents in Waiheke, Puketāpapa, and Kaipātiki, Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, and Papakura local boards. Perceptions are lowest among those in Maungakiekie-Tāmaki, Upper Harbour, Waitematā, and Ōtara-Papatoetoe.



Agreement that ‘Your local board:’

Lowest agreement %

Average agreement %

Highest agreement %

	Total	Northern Local Boards					Central Local Boards						Western Local Boards			South-Eastern Local Boards					
		Rodney	Hib and Bays	Upp Harbour	Dev-Takapuna	Kaipātiki	Waitematā	Albert-Eden	Ōrākei	Puketāpapa	Maunga-Tām	Waiheke	Hen-Massey	Waitākere	Whau	Howick	Māngere-Ōtāhuhu	Ōtara-Papatoetoe	Manurewa	Papakura	Franklin
Understands local issues	41%	50%	44%	36%	49%	54%	30%	34%	43%	57%	19%	78%	35%	51%	30%	42%	45%	28%	37%	49%	46%
Takes action on local issues	28%	34%	27%	18%	27%	41%	18%	25%	38%	50%	8%	61%	27%	37%	25%	29%	39%	16%	23%	36%	21%
Provides opportunities for you to have your say	23%	27%	20%	10%	23%	27%	13%	19%	26%	47%	15%	56%	19%	22%	23%	24%	34%	9%	26%	31%	24%
Provides enough information for you to have your say	18%	21%	18%	10%	20%	25%	13%	17%	19%	27%	6%	44%	14%	19%	9%	18%	29%	9%	14%	26%	16%
Makes the right decisions	17%	19%	13%	12%	14%	27%	9%	13%	19%	27%	6%	33%	20%	19%	14%	18%	26%	19%	20%	26%	13%
	n=1,268	n=62	n=90	n=50	n=71	n=71	n=82	n=126	n=74	n=30	n=48	n=18	n=83	n=68	n=57	n=114	n=38	n=32	n=35	n=39	n=68

BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: How much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local board?



Governing Body perceptions by ward:

In general, perceptions towards the Governing Body are highest among those in Rodney, Albert-Eden-Roskill, and Manuwera-Papakura wards. Perceptions are lowest among those in Maungakiekie-Tāmaki, Waitākere, and Franklin wards.



Agreement that ‘The Governing Body:’

Lowest agreement %

Average agreement %

Highest agreement %

	Total	Northern Wards			Central Wards				Western Wards		South-Eastern Wards			
		Rodney	Albany	North Shore	Waitemata and Gulf	Albert-Eden-Roskill	Ōrākei	Maunga-Tam	Waitākere	Whau	Howick	Manukau	Manuwera-Papakura	Franklin
Understands issues facing Auckland	34%	32%	31%	34%	37%	34%	41%	33%	30%	33%	34%	33%	35%	31%
Provides opportunities for you to have your say	25%	31%	25%	25%	30%	23%	23%	21%	23%	32%	25%	30%	29%	22%
Takes action on Auckland issues	22%	24%	20%	25%	18%	26%	23%	10%	18%	25%	24%	23%	23%	18%
Provides enough information for you to have your say	20%	23%	21%	21%	19%	23%	18%	17%	17%	16%	20%	24%	23%	18%
Makes the right decisions	11%	15%	12%	9%	8%	15%	7%	4%	11%	11%	11%	10%	19%	4%
	n=1,258	n=62	n=138	n=141	n=105	n=155	n=74	n=48	n=151	n=57	n=114	n=70	n=75	n=68



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Governing Body?

Interest in learning more about Elected Representatives

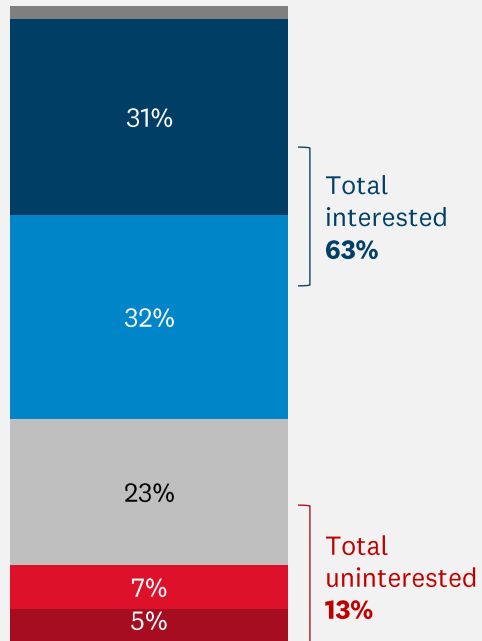


Interest in learning more about elected representatives

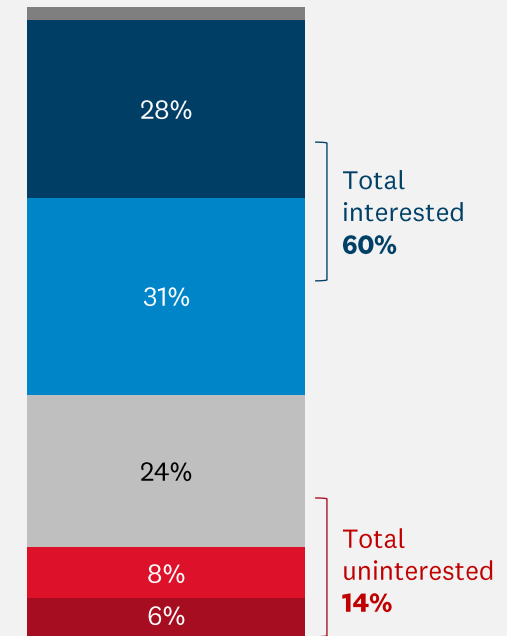
63% of respondents are interested in learning more about their local board, and 60% are interested in learning more about the Governing Body.



Interest in learning more about your **local board**:

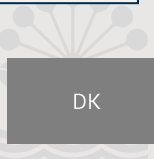


Interest in learning more about the **Governing Body**:



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: How interested are you in knowing more about the following elected representatives?



Engagement and Contact



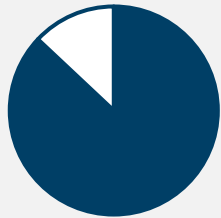
Just over half have had some contact with elected reps

Most respondents (87%) have voted in council elections before and over half (56%) say they have had their say in a council consultation. The most common ways of having contact with an elected representative are by 'email, post, or visiting an office' (29%), and 'seeing an elected representative at an event' (27%).

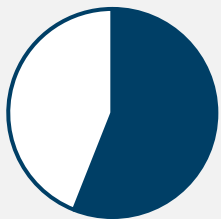


Engagement with council:

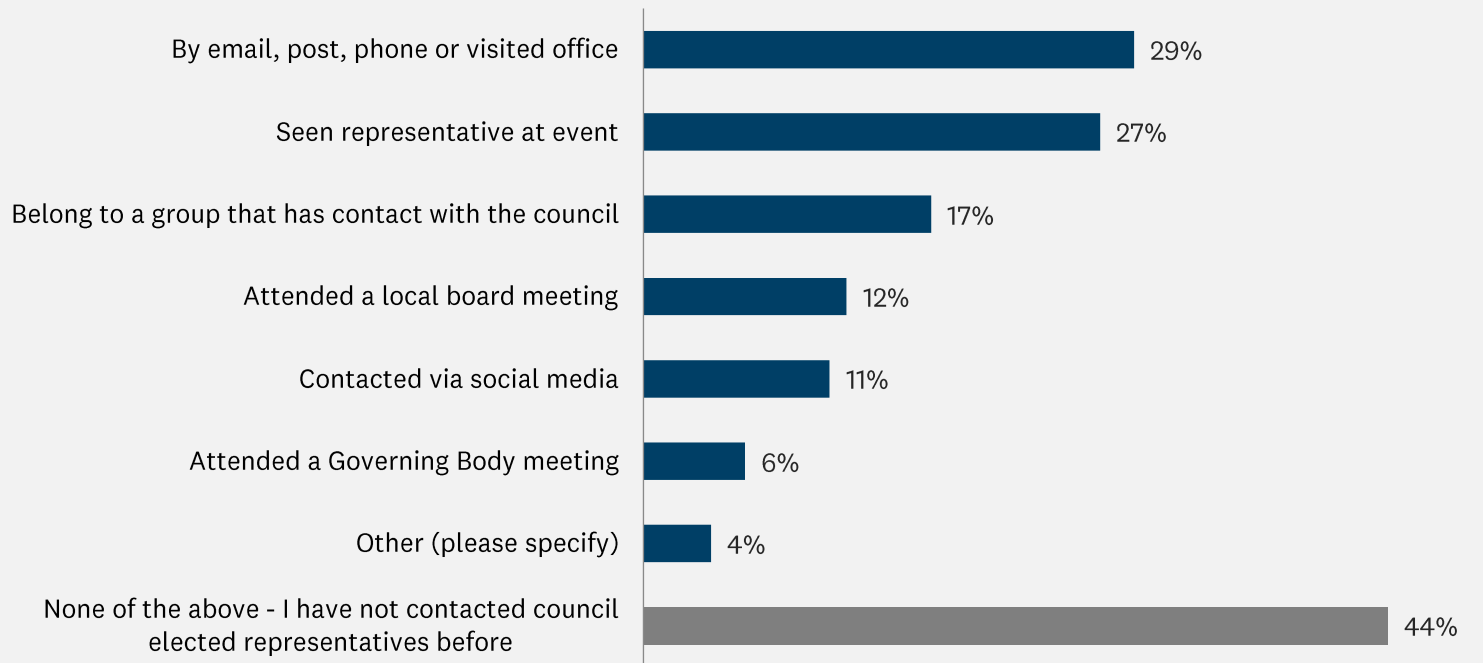
87% have **voted** in council elections before:



56% have **had their say** before:



Contact with council elected representatives:



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: Have you voted in council elections before?

Q: Have you had your say on a Auckland-wide or local matter before – for example through a consultation?

Q: Which of the following types of contact, if any, have you had with your council elected representatives?

Local board proposed changes



We introduced the local board reorganisation as follows:



“The council is currently **considering making changes** to its decision-making structure to make it simpler, more effective for local communities, and within the same overall cost.

Council currently has 21 local boards, the proposal is to have **fewer local boards** and for them to be **more empowered**. The overall number of elected members would reduce slightly in the boards that are merged.

Local boards that could be merged include:

- Hibiscus & Bays with Upper Harbour
- Henderson-Massey with Waitākere Ranges
- Manurewa with Papakura
- Ōtara-Papatoetoe with Māngere-Ōtāhuhu
- Albert-Eden with Puketāpapa
- Kaipātiki with Devonport-Takapuna

Other local boards that represent distinct communities would probably stay as they are e.g. rural areas like Rodney and Franklin, and our island boards (Waiheke and Aotea Great Barrier).”

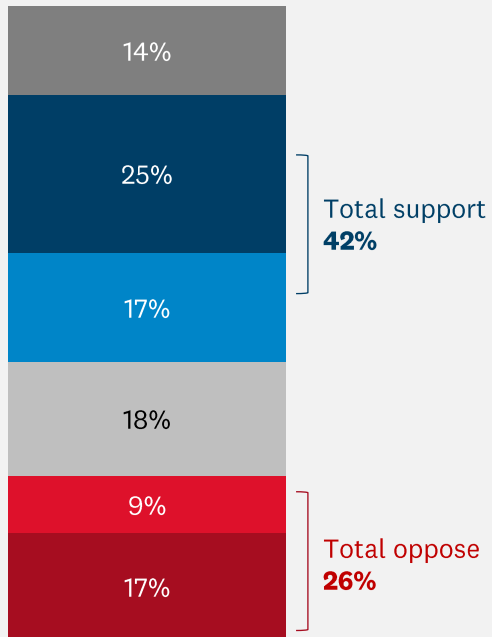


42% support the reorganization proposal



Those who support the proposed changes tend to mention reductions in cost, complexity, and less competing interests. The main reasons for opposition are reductions in understanding and responsiveness to local issues, and impacts on community engagement and effective representation. There are also concerns that many boards proposed for merger are too different, or that one merged board may dominate the other

Support for reducing the number of boards:



Reasons for support*:

- Reducing costs
- Reducing the complexity of the structure
- Potential for less competing interests

Reasons for opposition*:

- Impact on effective representation
- Impact on community engagement and connection (particularly south)
- Less understanding of local issues
- Less responsive to local needs
- One merged board could dominate and the other would lose out
- Some merged boards are just too different

Other key points*:

- Pacific and Māori feel the current model isn't providing effective representation for them
- Effective representation is needed for rural and island communities so their needs aren't drowned out
- There were suggestions to reduce number of boards further or remove entirely

* Feedback sourced from stakeholders and members of the community (including the People's Panel)

BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: What is your level of support for reducing the number of boards?

Q: Do you have any comments about the number and structure of local boards?

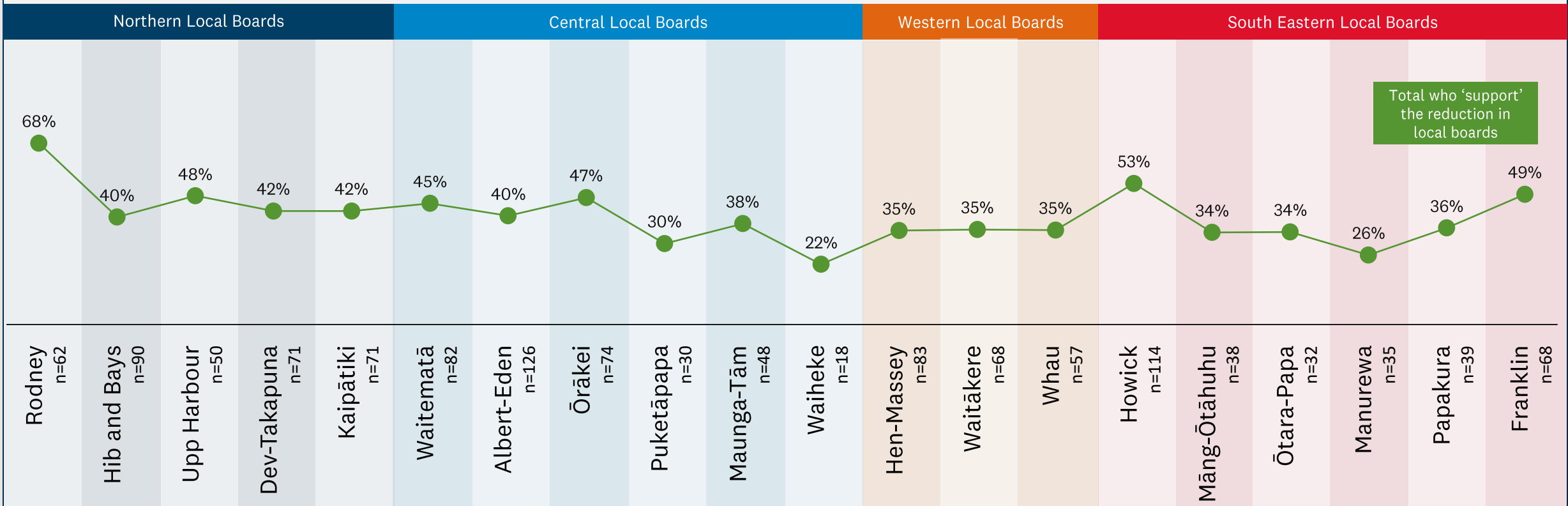


Support for reorganisation proposal by local board

Overall, those in Local boards that are not proposed for amalgamation are more supportive of the proposal (47%). Support is highest in Rodney (68%), Howick (53%), and Franklin (49%) local boards.



Support for reducing the number of boards:



Total who 'support' the reduction in local boards

BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)
Q: What is your level of support for reducing the number of boards?

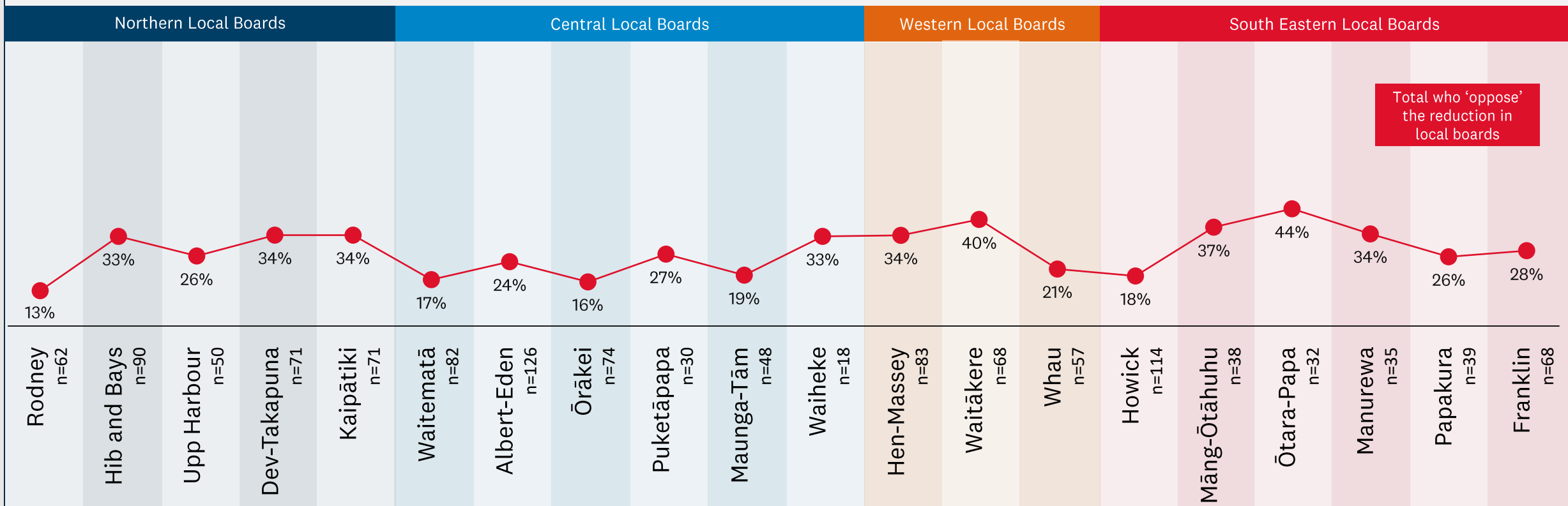


Opposition to reorganisation proposal by local board

Overall, those in local boards that are proposed for amalgamation have more opposition for the proposal (32%). Opposition is highest in Ōtara-Papatoetoe (44%), and Waitākere (40%) local boards.



Opposition to reducing the number of boards:



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: What is your level of support for reducing the number of boards?



How should local boards be more empowered



Many people commented they didn't know enough about the role of local boards or the funding arrangements to be able to answer this question. Those who did provide recommendations said that they could have stronger governance roles with CCOs (particularly AT), more budget and autonomy in decision-making, and greater oversight of local contractors.

*How should boards be more empowered?

Stronger governance roles with CCOs – particularly AT

E.g. decision making over local transport matters

More budget and more flexibility with it

Including setting staff structures and decisions about part-time / full-time members

More autonomy in decision-making

Decisions on land and asset sales, local reserves, sport fields, playgrounds, stormwater management and local initiatives

Greater oversight of local contractors

I.e. those who understand local needs

“Have a decision-making power regarding local infrastructure and approve the funding for projects under certain threshold.”

“Funding for community organisations needs to rest more with the local boards.”

“Speed limits, road maintenance, roadside parking in the newer housing areas.”

“Gain more community voice and really understand what the needs are. This way the decisions that are made are done so collaboratively.”

“Greater regulatory autonomy.”

* Feedback sourced from stakeholders and members of the community (including the People’s Panel)

BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: Considering the concept of more empowered local boards, are there any decisions that you believe your local board should be able to make for your community, but currently lacks the authority to do so?



Wards proposed changes



Overall, 24% feel the existing ward structure works well

Those from the North Shore ward (35%) are the positive about the ward structure, while Maungakiekie-Tāmaki is the least positive. Only 15% support councillors being elected regionally, those from Waitemātā (21%) and Albert-Eden (19%) are the most supportive areas



Agreement that:

Lowest agreement %

Average agreement %

Highest agreement %

	Total	Northern Wards			Central Wards				Western Wards		South-Eastern Wards			
		Rodney	Albany	North Shore	Waitemata and Gulf	Albert-Eden-Roskill	Ōrākei	Maunga-Tam	Waitākere	Whau	Howick	Manukau	Manuwera-Papakura	Franklin
The existing number of councillors and ward structure works well	24%	23%	26%	35%	22%	21%	28%	13%	20%	18%	20%	24%	27%	24%
Support councillors being elected at an Auckland-wide level	15%	10%	12%	11%	21%	19%	14%	13%	15%	16%	16%	16%	16%	12%
	n=1,258	n=62	n=138	n=141	n=105	n=155	n=74	n=48	n=151	n=57	n=114	n=70	n=75	n=68

Those who are 'knowledgeable' about council decision making are more likely to agree that the existing ward structure works well **(38%)**



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: How well do you think the existing number of councillors and ward structure works to represent you and your community?

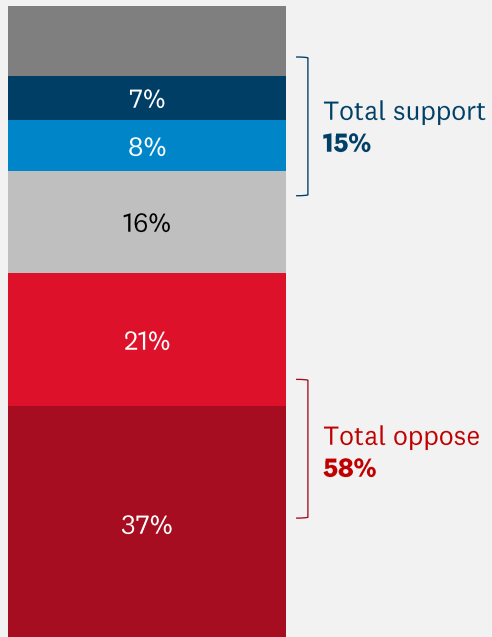
Q: What is your level of support for councillors being elected at an Auckland-wide level (instead of at a ward level as they currently are)?

Key reasons for supporting / opposing ward changes



A key reason for supporting councillors at Auckland-wide level is a more regional focus. Reasons for opposition include a loss of community connection and consideration of local needs, and the fact that political party influence could be stronger.

Support electing councillors at Auckland-wide level:



*Reasons for support:

- There would be a more regional focus
- Potential for cost savings – would require councillors to be well prepared and able to act wholistically
- More focused on priority issues

*Reasons for opposition:

- Loss of community connection and consideration of local needs – particularly for under-represented communities
- Political party influence may be stronger
- Potential for representatives to only come from wealthy areas

*Other key points:

- Ratio of wards to councillors should be 1:1
- Return to the pre-amalgamation model – more local management
- Differing views about having dedicated Māori seats on council

**Feedback sourced from members of the community (including the People's Panel), and stakeholders*

BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: What is your level of support for reducing the number of boards?

Q: Do you have any comments about the number and structure of local boards?



Any questions?

Contact the People's Panel Team at
peoplespanel@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz



Appendix



Governing Body perceptions by ward:

In general, perceptions towards the Governing Body are highest among those in Rodney, Albert-Eden-Roskill, and Manuwera-Papakura wards. Perceptions are lowest among those in Maungakiekie-Tāmaki, Waitākere, and Franklin wards.



Agreement that ‘The Governing Body:’

Lowest agreement % per statement

Average agreement % per statement

Highest agreement % per statement

	Total	Northern Wards			Central Wards				Western Wards		South-Eastern Wards			
		Rodney	Albany	North Shore	Waitemata and Gulf	Albert-Eden-Roskill	Ōrākei	Maunga-Tam	Waitākere	Whau	Howick	Manukau	Manuwera-Papakura	Franklin
Understands issues facing Auckland	34%	32%	31%	34%	37%	34%	41%	33%	30%	33%	34%	33%	35%	31%
Takes action on Auckland issues	22%	24%	20%	25%	18%	26%	23%	10%	18%	25%	24%	23%	23%	18%
Provides opportunities for you to have your say	25%	31%	25%	25%	30%	23%	23%	21%	23%	32%	25%	30%	29%	22%
Provides enough information for you to have your say	20%	23%	21%	21%	19%	23%	18%	17%	17%	16%	20%	24%	23%	18%
Makes the right decisions	11%	15%	12%	9%	8%	15%	7%	4%	11%	11%	11%	10%	19%	4%
	n=1,258	n=62	n=138	n=141	n=105	n=155	n=74	n=48	n=151	n=57	n=114	n=70	n=75	n=68

BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Governing Body?

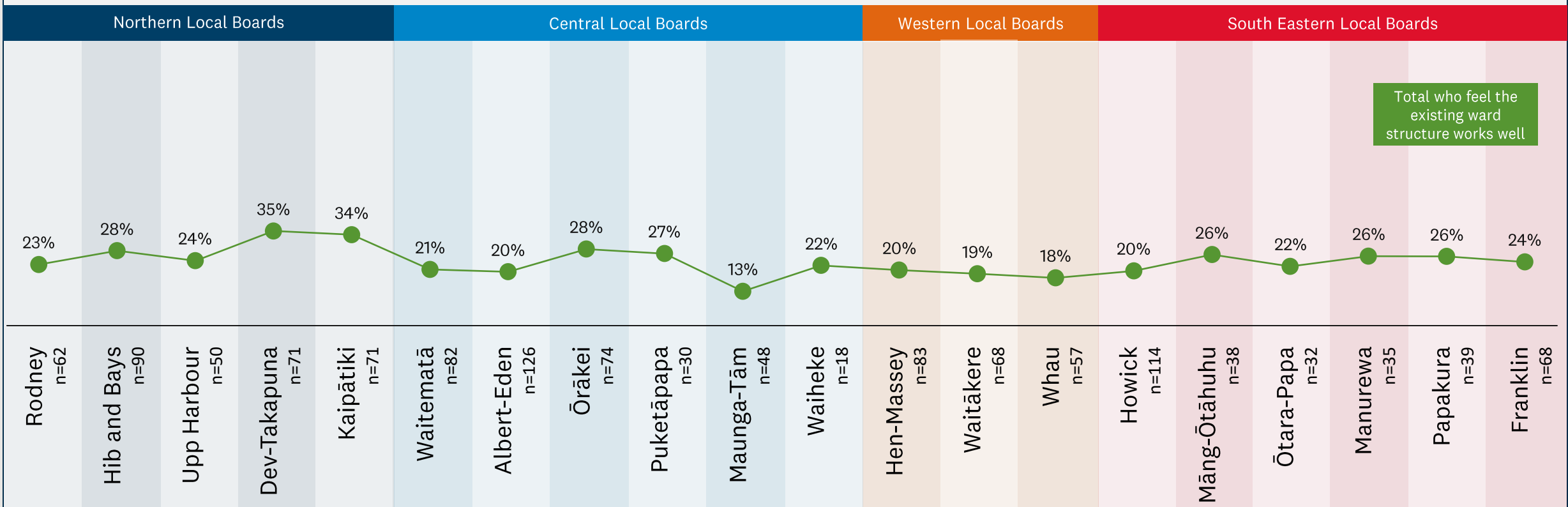


Overall, 24% feel the existing ward structure works well

Those from Devonport-Takapuna (35%) and Kaipātiki (34%) are the most positive areas.



Feels that the existing number of councillors and ward structure works well:



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: How well do you think the existing number of councillors and ward structure works to represent you and your community?

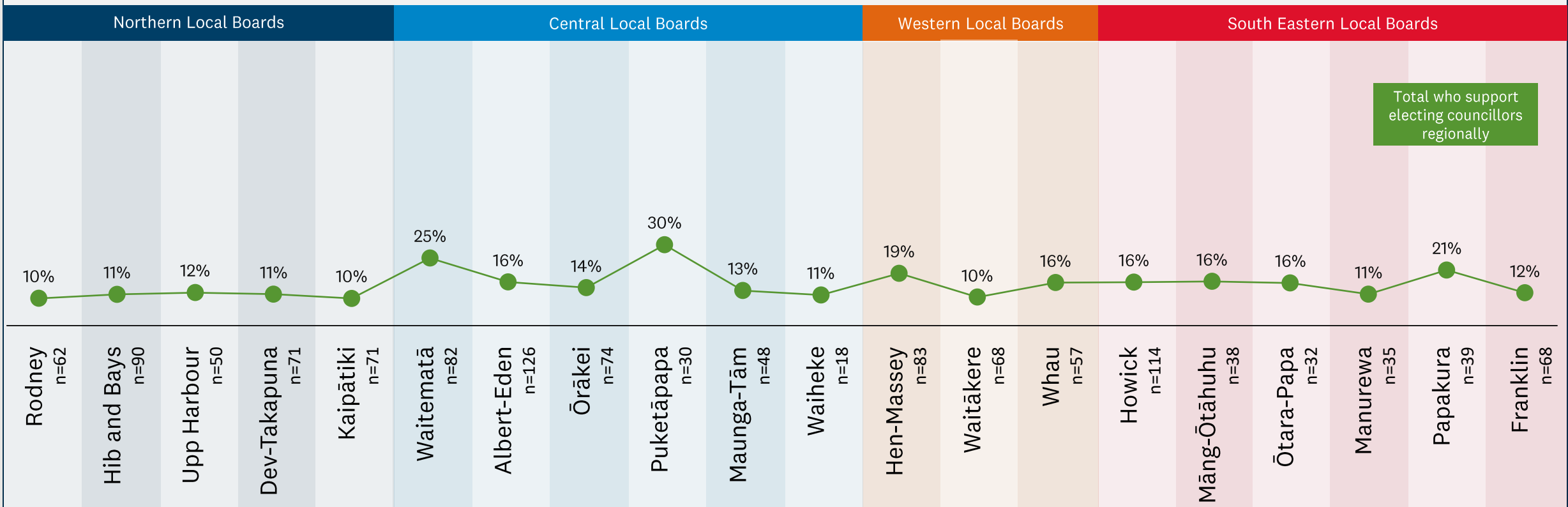


Only 15% support councillors being elected regionally

Those from Puketāpapa (30%) and Waitemata (25%) are the most supportive areas.



Support for councillors being elected at an Auckland-wide level:



BASE: All respondents (n=1,268)

Q: What is your level of support for councillors being elected at an Auckland-wide level (instead of at a ward level as they currently are)?

