

City Centre Residents Survey 2022

Summary of insights from the research report
“Residents perceptions of living in Auckland’s city centre:
2022 survey results” available on Knowledge Auckland

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Background

Auckland's city centre is a significant centre for entertainment, commerce, education and trade, and is home to more than 38,000 residents. These residents make a critical contribution to a vibrant and sustainable city centre – having a strong residential population means that our central city can be more than just a 'central business district'. Residents help sustain a level of activity that support positive perceptions of vibrancy and safety; they attract a different mix of businesses and services to cater to their diverse population; and residential clusters around transport hubs supports efficient land use and low-carbon living by reducing reliance on private vehicles.

There have been significant changes in the central city since Auckland Council's last city centre resident survey in 2016. Key changes include the completion of major public and private construction projects such as Commercial Bay, the opening of newly improved public spaces, such as Te Wānanga, Te Komititanga, Karangahape Road and new spaces across the Wynyard Quarter, and the ongoing construction of the multi-year City Rail Link (CRL) project.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the way people live, work and engage with the city centre. The city centre experienced a disproportionate impact during the pandemic with few tourists, students and workers in the city. The ongoing popularity of remote working means the way people use is very different to pre-COVID.



2022 Residents Survey

The overall objective is to provide an updated understanding of residents' experiences of living in the Auckland city centre in 2022.

Areas of investigation included:

- Reasons for living in the city centre
- Likelihood of living in the city centre in 12 months' time
- Perceptions of inner city living – e.g. sense of community, ease of living, affordability, child friendliness
- Satisfaction with aspects of inner city living – e.g. safety and security, quality of accommodation, ease of moving around the inner city, cleanliness
- Impacts of COVID-19 protections and ongoing construction
- Suggestions for improving the city centre

Survey findings will help council further develop its Development Response approach to support residents through construction disruption, initiatives to improve customer experience in the city centre, and to inform investment prioritisation by the council group. Survey insights will also be used across the council group to help ensure departments and their work programmes are responding to the needs of city centre communities.



A small project team from Auckland Council led by council's Research and Evaluation Unit (RIMU), and the City Centre Programmes Team, developed the questionnaire and map, and worked closely with NielsenIQ on the survey method and sampling.

The project steering group also included representatives from:

- Eke Panuku, as lead agency for the city centre
- Connected Communities, on behalf of Customer and Community Services
- Urban Growth and Development Communications

The research project was reviewed by the Auckland Council Research Ethics Advisory Group.

Method

- This was an online survey using the NZ Electoral Roll as the sample frame.
- The target population was people aged 18 or older who lived within the study area.
- Potential respondents were sent a personalised letter outlining the purpose of the survey and explaining how to complete it online, using the link provided or a QR code. They were also offered the option to request a hard copy questionnaire or a telephone interview.
- In addition to the Electoral Roll sample, open survey links were provided to Auckland Council to share with Auckland Youth Voice, community libraries, ethnic groups, Stats NZ and Auckland University part-way through fieldwork to boost numbers.
- Fieldwork occurred between 23 August and 4 October 2022.

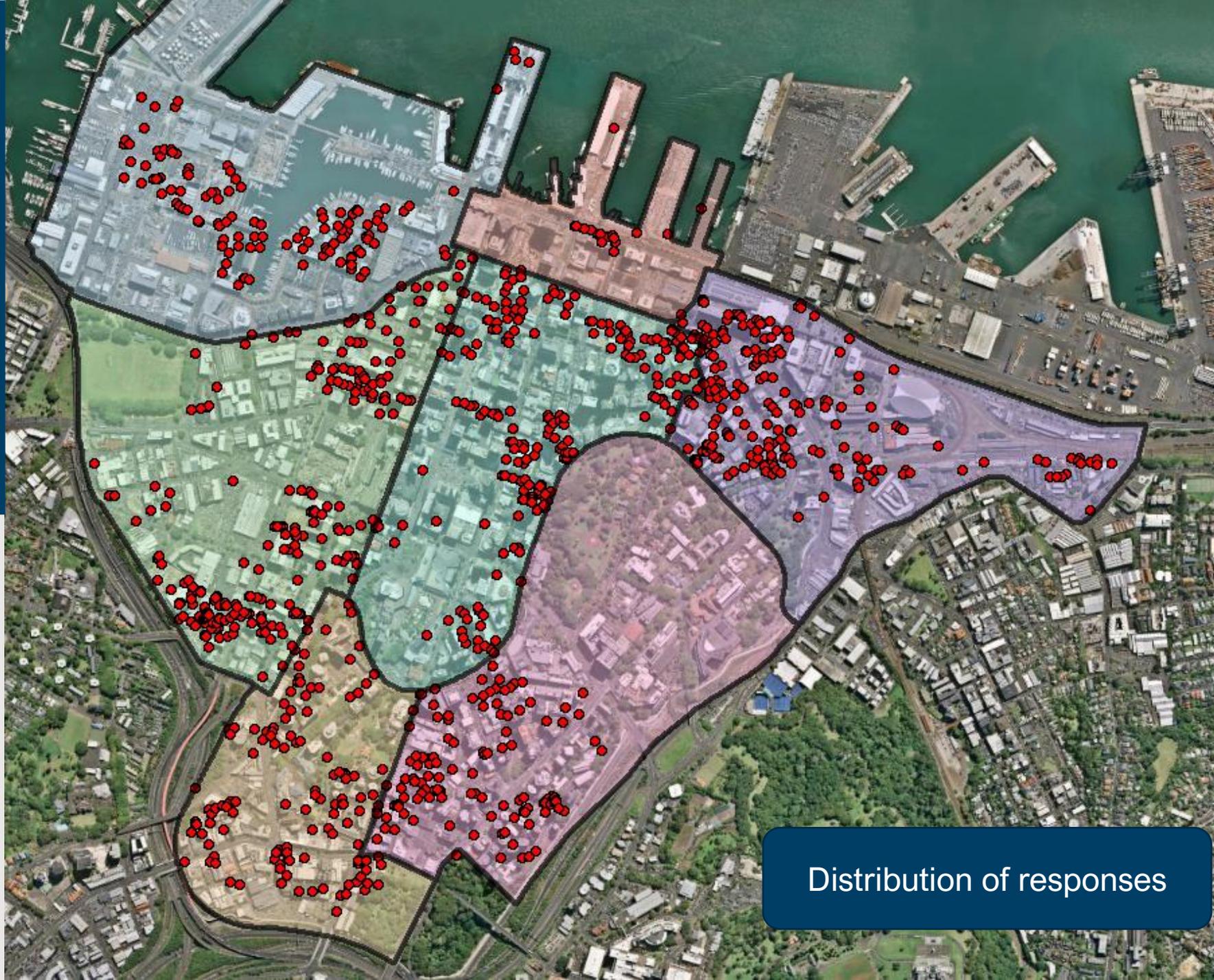




**998 Auckland
city centre
residents
responded**



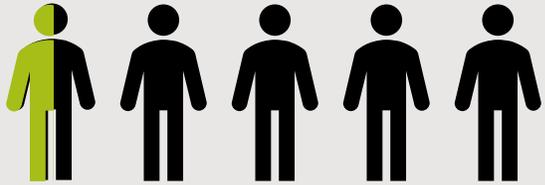
**Main sampling frame:
NZ Electoral Roll**



Distribution of responses

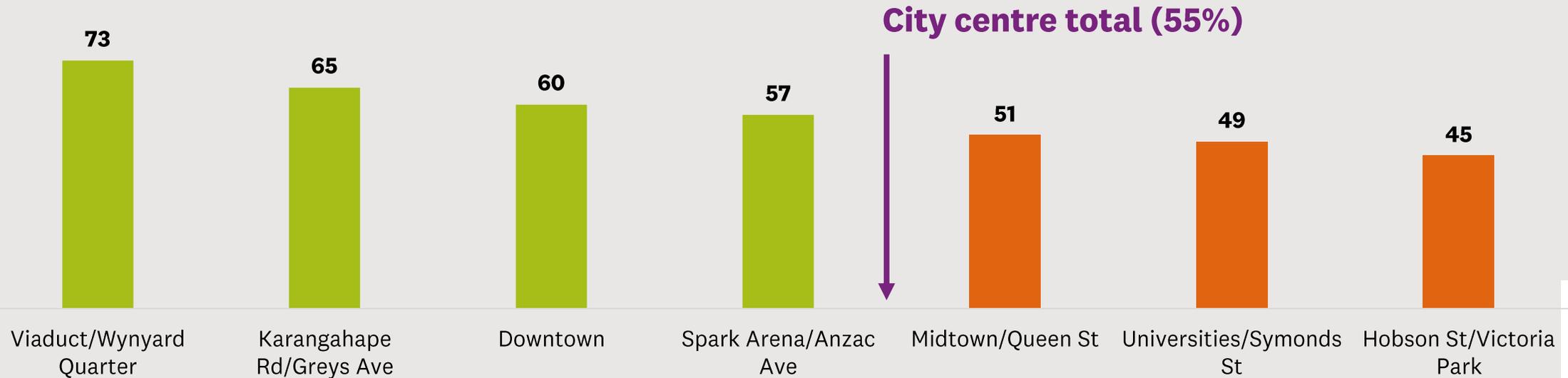


55% of city centre residents like living in the city centre



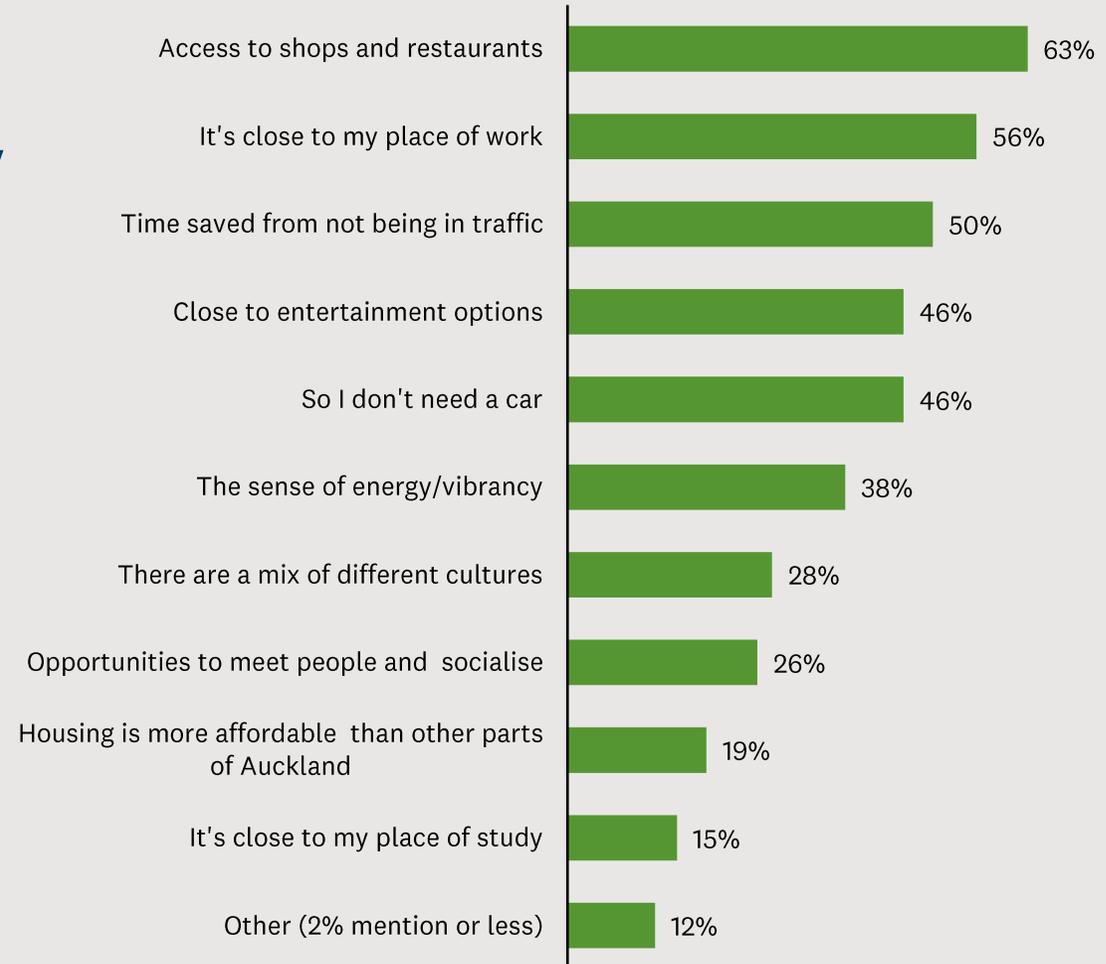
Compared to 77% of 2016 respondents and 72% of 2013 respondents who liked living in the city centre

There were differences by sub-sample area



Main reasons for *liking* living in the city centre

- In addition to the accessibility of amenities such as shops and restaurants (mentioned by 38%), residents who enjoy living in the city centre talked about it being a great place to live, that fits well with their lifestyle (27%).
- ‘Accessibility’ was also mentioned in connection with entertainment (15%).
- Proximity to work (13%) and less reliance on their car (12%) were significant positives for city centre living. Fourteen percent mentioned that there is good, accessible transport.
- A sense of vibrancy (11%) and optimism about the future (9%) also make city living appealing.



What residents said about why they *like* living in the city centre

“I love the culture of Karangahape Rd. Something I hope will remain. Something I hope we can protect for the residents, rather than rubber-stamping every development project that gets offered up.”

Like it a little

Male, 40-44, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 5-10 years

“I really enjoy the immediate community, and support within the community.”

Like it a lot

Female, 30-34, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 2-5 years

“For the closeness of Ponsonby and other inner-city areas, the feel of living in the city, everything available and the diverse community.”

Like it a lot

Female, 50-54, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 2-5 years

“Yes, there is the noise and air pollution issues and increased crime and traffic volumes/ current disruption, but the Auckland city centre still has a lot to offer in terms of the facilities in close proximity.

Key will be how the city is managed over the next 5 years as the rail system/ bus lane/ pedestrian only zones and bus electrification upgrades are completed.”

Like it a lot

Female, 20-24, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 2-5 years

“It’s a great place to live, work and play. Yes, there is some anti-social behaviour... but need to bear in mind available resourcing over COVID period. However, moving forward policing needs to step up, along with social services and address crime/ anti-social behaviour.”

Like it a lot

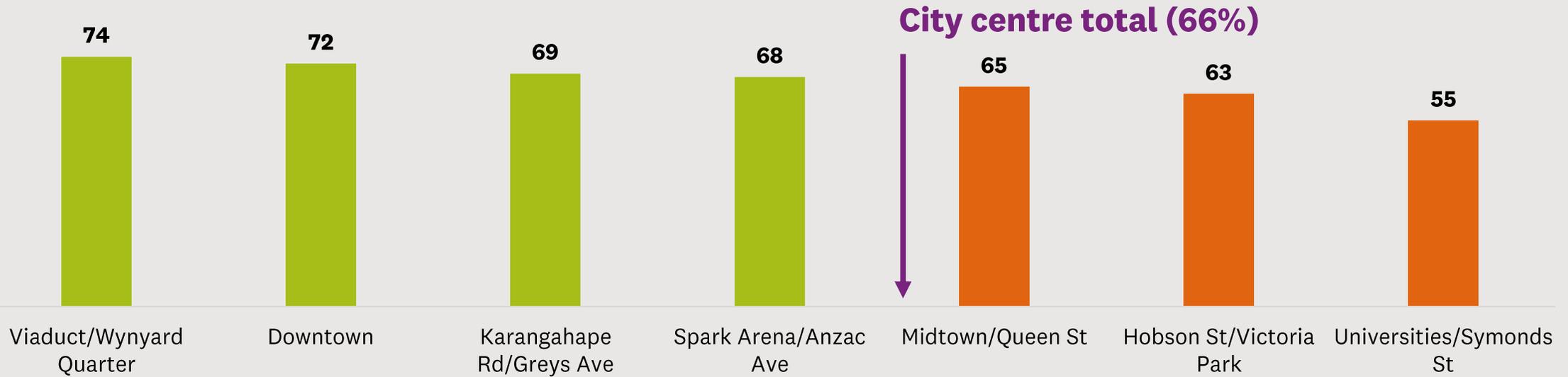
Male, 65-69, Viaduct / Wynyard Quarter, 2-5 years





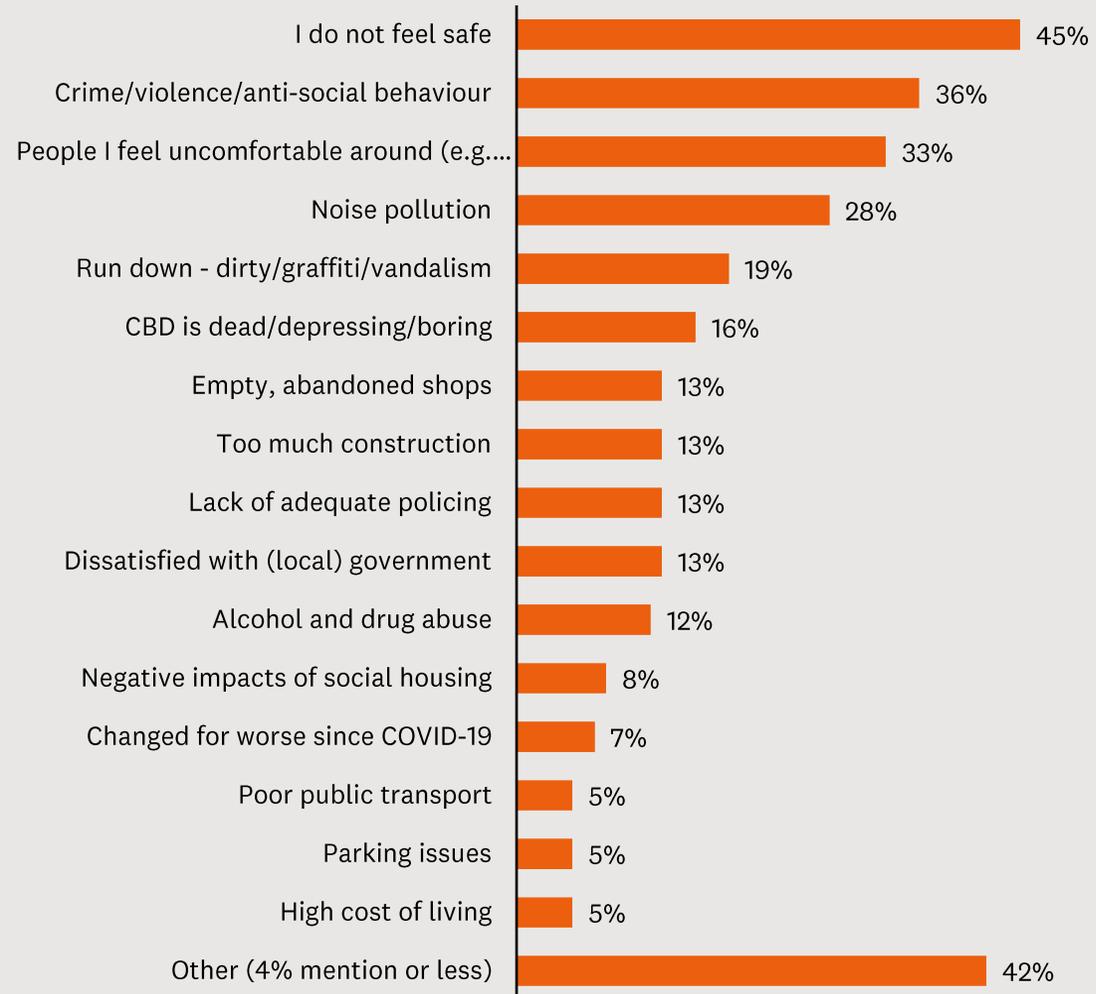
66% of city centre residents thought it was likely they will be living there in the next 12 months

Compared to 77% of 2016 respondents and 66% of 2013 respondents



Main reasons for *disliking* living in the city centre

- Nearly half of the residents who said they do not like living in the city centre and who provided a comment mentioned not feeling safe (45%).
- One in three (36%) commented about anti-social behaviour, crime and violence in the city centre and one in three (33%) commented on the presence of people they do not feel comfortable around (including rough sleepers, beggars, gang members, etc.). Associated with this, 13 per cent commented on the lack of adequate policing in the centre.
- The run-down state of the area received negative comment: in particular, noting a lot of graffiti, vandalism and general dirtiness (19%), along with the depressing aspects of empty and abandoned shops.



What residents said about why they like *dislike* living in the city centre

“It has potential to be great when projects are completed but there is a lot of work to do to keep people safe in the streets.”

Dislike it a little

Female, 40-44, Spark Arena / Anzac Ave, 10+ years

“Area has no sense of pride and place. Severely lacking infrastructure upgrades to make the area feel whole. Poor footpaths, roads, lighting, rubbish tipping makes city feel run down. Some rapid changes such as planter boxes seem like short term measures to a band-aid solution.”

Dislike it a little

Male, 30-34, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 2-5 years

“Crime, no police anywhere, cars speeding and blaring out noise past midnight, rubbish and graffiti everywhere..”

Dislike it a little

Male, 40-44, Spark Arena / Anzac Ave, <1 year

“Living in the city centre used to be a pleasurable experience but this is no longer the case as it is a dangerous and uncertain part of Auckland.”

Dislike it a lot

Male, 60-64, Downtown, 10+ years

“It has nothing going for it, I feel people trade the extra space you would have in a suburban home/flatting situation for apartment living in the city to be close to fun and nightlife. But with all of that gone plus feeling afraid in the city, it’s just not worth it.”

Dislike it a lot

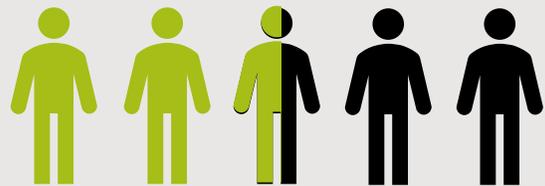
Female, 25-29, Midtown / Queen St, 2-5 years

“Crime is up, violence is up, I have people urinating on my front door and throwing bottles at the house and the police are never around but when you call the police it’s a 50-50 chance they’ll even show up and even when they do, they don’t do anything. Walking into the city is a nightmare because of all the construction so I just don’t bother anymore.”

Dislike it a lot

Male, 40-44, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 5-10 years





Feeling unsafe is the main factor contributing to negative perceptions of city living

Mentioned by 45%

One in three commented about antisocial behaviour, crime and violence in the city centre

One in three commented on the presence of people they don't feel comfortable around

The rundown state of the city centre is a contributing factor to negative opinions, with residents noting a lot of graffiti, vandalism and general dirtiness, and depressing aspects of empty and abandoned shops.



Over half of respondents felt negatively impacted by:

People sleeping rough

Especially Midtown/Queen St residents

People begging on the streets

Especially those aged 40-54 years

Vandalism

Especially those aged 40-54 years

Aggressive, unpredictable or confused behaviour

Especially Universities/Symonds St and Hobson St/Victoria Park residents, and those aged 40-54 and 65+

Noise pollution

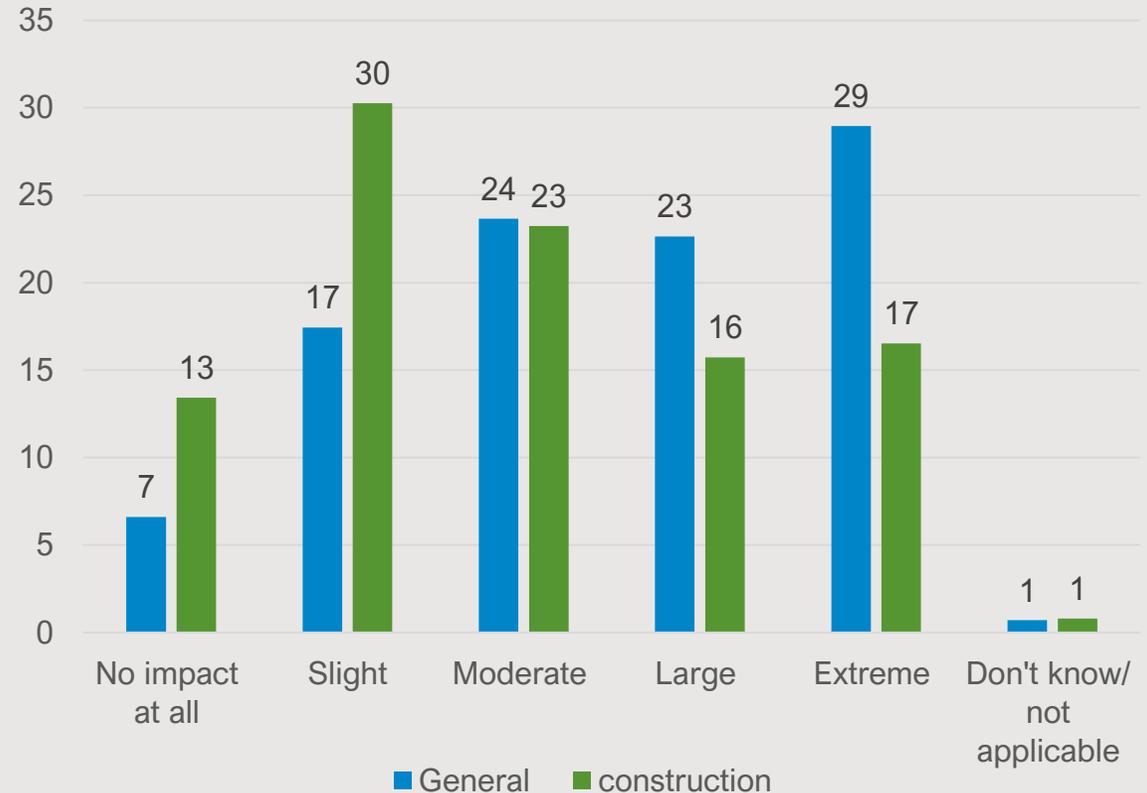
Especially those aged 40-54 years



Noise

- We asked two questions about noise experienced over the previous 12 months.
- It is an issue for many. Noise was the second most common reason people gave for why they dislike living in the city centre (after safety).
- Disruption from construction noise is common, but residents are more severely impacted by the noise from others e.g. fire trucks, police sirens, loudspeakers on / in cars, screaming and yelling - especially at night.

To what extent has noise pollution negatively impacted your experience of living in the city centre in the past 12 months?



Due to all the construction projects at the moment...



68% agreed it's hard to drive around the city centre



54% agreed it's hard to walk around the city centre



31% agreed it's hard to cycle/use a scooter around the city centre

48% of respondents believe council and construction companies are not doing enough to manage construction impacts



Examples of positive comments about efforts by Auckland Council and construction companies to manage the impacts of construction for local residents

“Moving in to the Wynyard 4.5 years ago... you have to accept that here will be building around you. Frankly i think our construction companies are doing a good job of minimising impacts and keeping community informed.”
Male, 65-69, Viaduct / Wynyard Quarter, 2-5 years

“While there was noise and construction immediately outside my apartment for a few months it seemed to be worked on quickly, I don't think there is anything that could have been done to minimise the noise, it was just unfortunately a noisy project”
Female, 30-34, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 2-5 years

“I have not personally been affected. Noise pollution and road closures etc are a small price to pay for living downtown and is to be expected. However, I have read about small businesses being adversely affected by projects such as the CRL and wonder if enough is being done to support them.”
Male, 55-59, Midtown / Queen St, <1 year

“Some degree of temporary inconvenience is unavoidable. I feel like it hasn't been disruptive to me to a problematic extent, and the areas that have been completed (e.g., Quay St) show that it is worthwhile.”
Male, 40-44, Spark Arena / Anzac Ave, 5-10 years

“My life has not been severely impacted by the construction, so the problems that construction comes with are being adequately managed.”
Gender not specified, 20-24, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 2-5 years

“Currently, there are a few managed projects going on in the city right now. Sure, it is an inconvenience at times but, it's only temporary, and as long as there is an open line of communication between Auckland Council, the business owners / operators, and the general public that use daily, or reside in Auckland CBD, there would be absolute chaos (which there isn't) and that is thanks to the Council and Construction companies managing the changes to our city well.”
Male, 50-54, Spark Arena / Anzac Ave, 10+ years



Examples of negative comments by respondents about efforts by Auckland Council and construction companies to manage the impacts of construction for local residents

“No communication with residents. Constant project delays. Dirt and dust is very bad for residents. Constant traffic disruption for those of us that need to drive to schools for pickups etc.”
Female, 40-44, Midtown / Queen St, 10+ years

“Construction delays, poor planning, no insight into how people live in the city, are all pretty clear limitations of the council's ability to change the city and manage construction and large projects.”
Male, 25-29, Universities / Symonds St, 10+ years

“There seems to be what feels like endless disruption, mess, dust, unpredictable access - change or one way to and from - cones, cones and more cones - work seems to be done and redone - it's incredibly difficult to understand the intention and full picture and it seems endless money spent and sometimes wasted.”
Female, 50-54, Viaduct / Wynyard Quarter, 1-2 years

“Some of the road/parking closures are excessive in size and also in their duration. The construction companies should be forced to justify keeping restrictions in place rather than given blanket approval until the project is finished and open for business.”
Male, 50-54, Viaduct / Wynyard Quarter, 10+ years

“It has been extremely inconvenient, the noise is unbearable, parking impossible, we haven't been able to take our car on several occasions due to the blockage of the street. Changes all the time.”
Female, 40-44, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 2-5 years

“Lack of consultation with residents. Consents that allow anti-social work hours i.e. 6:00am till 11pm.”
Male, 50-59, Viaduct / Wynyard Quarter, 2-5 years

“There could be greater consideration for alternative pathways or routes in the city centre.”
Male, 25-29, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 5-10 years



Impacts of COVID-19

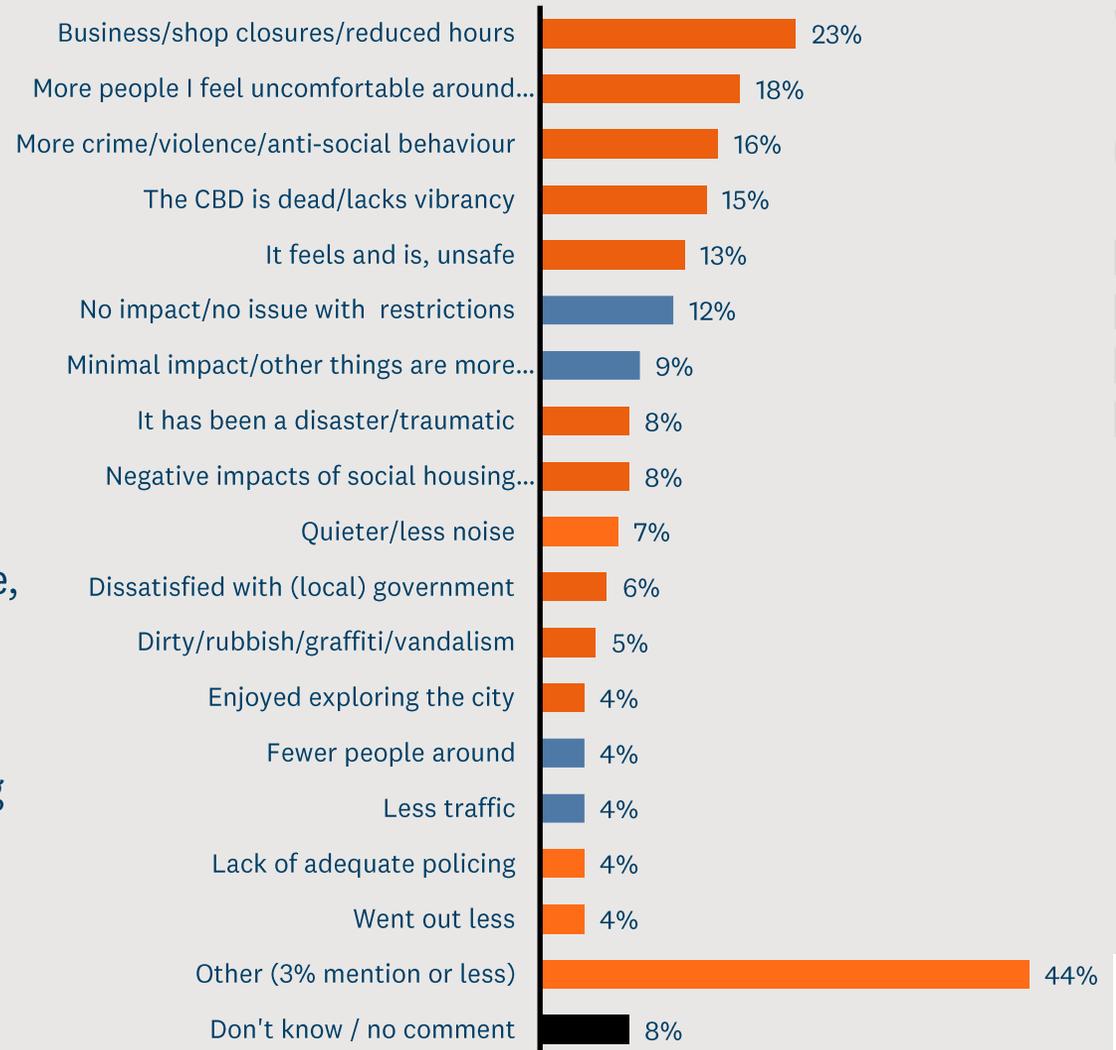
The majority of respondents provided a comment about how COVID-19 and associated restrictions impacted their experience of living in the city centre.

The greatest impact for city centre residents has come from business and/or shop closures or reduced operating hours, mentioned by nearly one in four (23%).

Around one in five (18%) talked of increasing numbers of people being in the city centre, whom they feel uncomfortable around (including mentions of rough sleepers, beggars, gang members, drug dealers and/or addicts). A similar proportion (16%) talked of increased violence, anti-social behaviour and crime in the city centre, and thirteen per cent said the centre – and they – feel unsafe.

The living environment was the third theme, with mentions of the city centre feeling dead (15%) and looking and feeling run down (increased rubbish, graffiti and vandalism evident).

Seven percent commented that the city centre has been quieter (a positive for some, but a sign of a less vibrant centre for others). Some also noted reduced anti-social behaviours.



Examples of positive comments about the impact of COVID-19 on city centre living

“I went to Victoria Park much more often in the August-November lockdown 2021 because it's an open space to be able to exercise which was important during those times. It made me realise how important spaces like that are in the city.”

Female, 20-24, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 2-5 years

“The lifting of restrictions has been good for the CBD. The last year with Covid and restrictions hasn't impacted my experience of living in the CBD too much as retail and hospitality have been open unlike with lockdowns. I hope the CBD can start to rebuild with getting the public back into the city by tidying up Queen Street. It is sad to see what Queen Street has become with the homeless on the streets etc.”

Female, 40-44, Spark Arena / Anzac Ave, 5-10 years

“It has been a positive experience for me. Less traffic, noise and people were about, although I'm sure that's not really great for the city centre economically. Generally enjoyed having the feeling of having the city all to myself..”

Female, 45-49, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 10+ years

“It has been pleasant and much safer without cars! It was a positive experience given a lot of amenities were close by and the area I live in give me the advantage to walk to downtown, Grafton or Ponsonby.”

Female, 25-29, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 2-5 years

“It was much quieter during the lockdowns, especially with nightclubs closed. Disorderly night-time behaviour also decreased during this time, less mess in the weekend mornings to clean up too.”

Female, 30-34, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 5-10 years



Examples of negative comments about the impact of COVID-19 on city centre living

“That was a challenging 12 months and the city itself was just a weird 'haunted' place. I enjoyed less traffic and being able to walk the Pink Path without car noise and pollution, but a city needs people and cafes and restaurants and bars.”

Male, 55-59, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 2-5 years

“The demographic of the central city seems like it's changed, and there seem to be many more rough sleepers/emergency housing tenants in my neighbourhood (this is ok, they need to live somewhere!) but it has made things a little unpredictable on the street and I can imagine some people feel uncomfortable. I feel lucky that most places I go for entertainment or dining survived the pandemic.”

Male, 45-49, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 2-5 years

“Our local businesses have shut down and the ones who've remained open have had to hike their prices astronomically, our buses have been cancelled at alarming rates, vagrancy has skyrocketed everywhere you look, violence further downtown and mid-city has escalated, as well as extreme anti-social behaviour on the streets and on buses (nearly every red citylink bus had an incident).”

Male, 35-39, Karangahape Rd / Greys Ave, 2-5 years

“It was harder to get out in nature as there are fewer parks and less policing of the central city parks meant I felt unsafe to walk around even in the early afternoon sometimes.”

Female, 30-34, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 2-5 years

“Loved the peace and quiet without all the traffic. Less pollution, you could smell a difference. Wish we had electric buses as they cause so many fumes! The city was lovely without them. Unfortunately, homelessness skyrocketed due to the pandemic. My building became home to a lot of social housing. These apartments are cramped, depressing and lack several basic amenities. It's basically become a slum full of gang members. Robberies, rubbish and domestic violence have become major issues right in front of my eyes.”

Female, 25-29, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 5-10 years

“Significantly, the increase in people working from home means that we've lost the critical mass in the city to ensure business viability and safety. There's been no focus on the residents of the city centre and attracting more to the city, more needs to be done to attract and grow the resident base to provide a sustainable number of people moving around the city for it to thrive.”

Male, 20-24, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 2-5 years

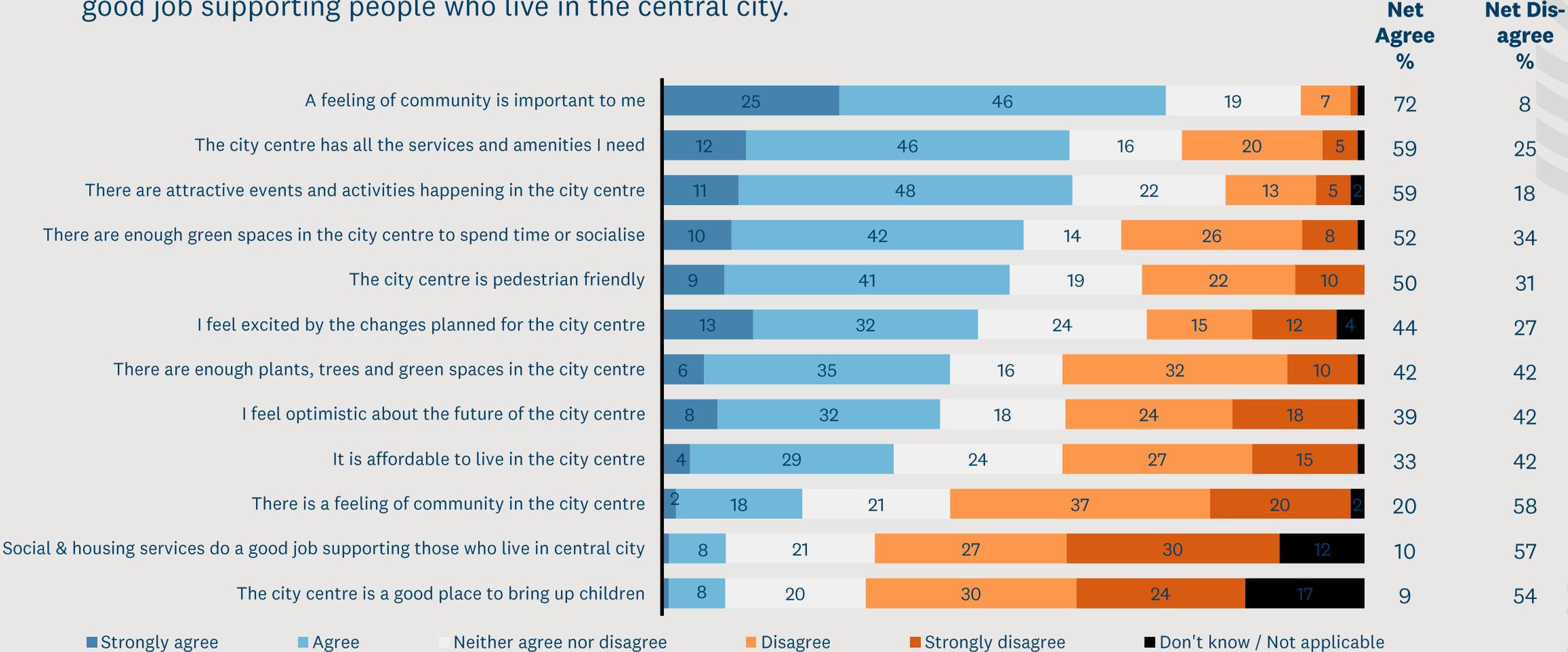
“Reduced business hours. Increased in crime. Further reduction in businesses operation (insolvency). Feeling unsafe of going out during the daytime. Mental wellbeing & health impact due to reduced exercise - fear of crime rates..”

Male, 65-69, Midtown / Queen St, 5-10 years



Feeling of Community

Views were mixed about the changes planned for the centre, affordability and adequacy of green spaces in the city centre. Few (8%) agreed that the city centre is a good place to bring up children (although 27% of those with children under 16 agreed and 51% disagreed). Over half (57%) disagreed that social and housing services do a good job supporting people who live in the central city.



Perceptions of living in the city centre – changes over time

% who agreed with each statement

	2013	2016	2022
A feeling of community is important to me	66	61	72
There is a feeling of community in the city centre	33	25	20
The city centre is pedestrian friendly	72	68	50
There are enough plants, trees and green spaces in the city centre	57	56	42
It is affordable to live in the city centre	-	26	33
The city centre is a good place to bring up children	29	22	9

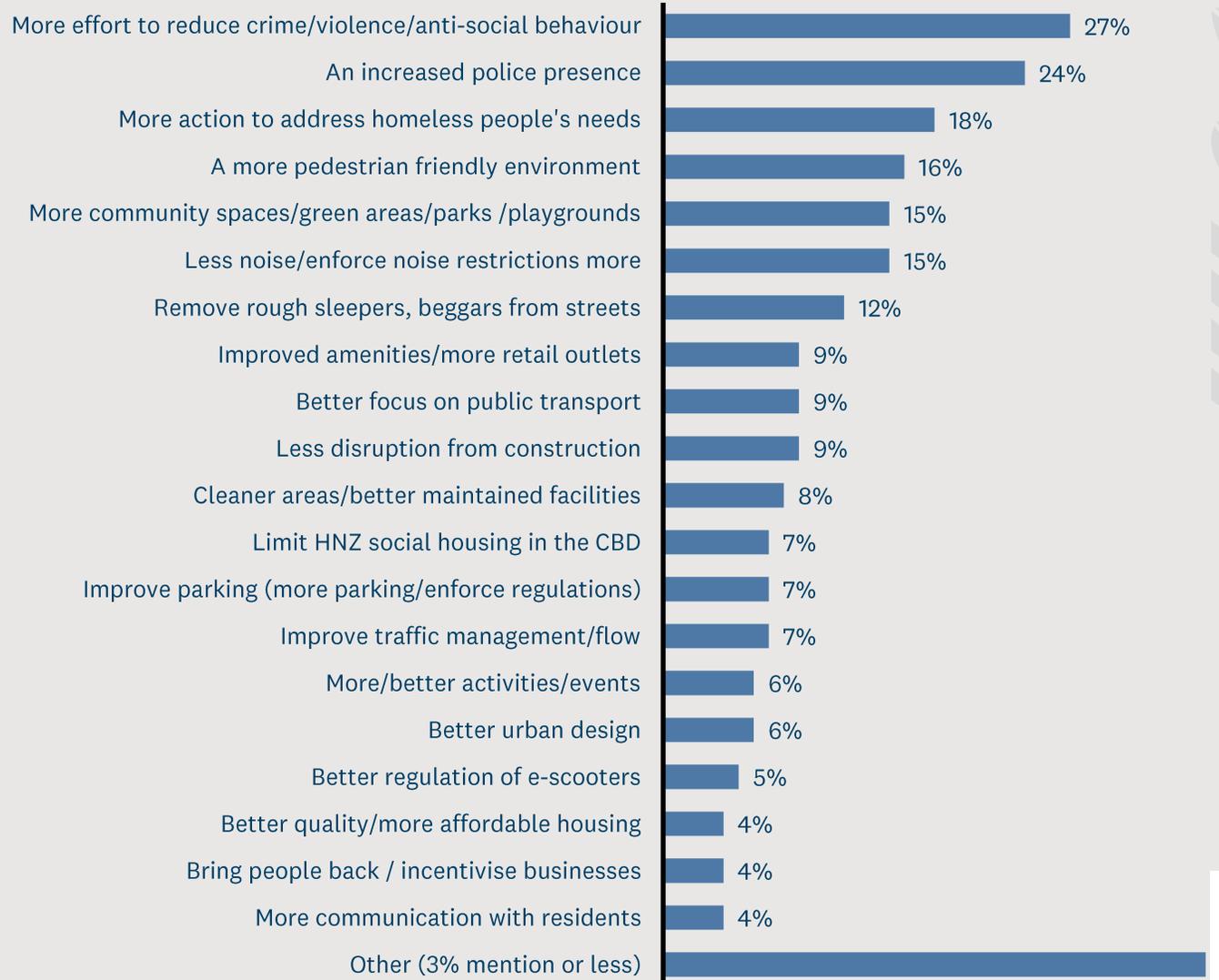


Suggested ways to improve the city centre

86% of respondents made a suggestion to improve the city centre. Reflecting concerns expressed about increased antisocial behaviour, around a quarter of those who commented would like to see greater effort put into reducing crime and violence (27%) and an increased police presence (24%).

Comment was also made about the need to find alternative housing options for rough sleepers and beggars, to remove them from the city streets (12%). Increased social housing in the city centre is believed to have contributed to this issue.

Management of noise is important, with 15% calling for more noise control. The physical living environment is an area for focus: 16% suggested more pedestrian friendly spaces while 15% suggested more community spaces and green areas, etc. Greater focus on cleanliness and facility maintenance (8%) was also suggested.



Examples of comments regarding ways to improve the city centre

"Better police presence in the city centre to discourage unsociable behaviour. Ensure there is safe pedestrian access around the city. Continue the transformation in a manageable fashion."

Female, 65-69, Spark Arena / Anzac Ave, 5-10 years

"Cracking down on graffiti would be a good place to start, to just improve the overall appearance of the city and make it an appealing place for people to start visiting again."

Female, 20-24 Universities / Symonds St, 2-5 years

"Yes!!! Make it safe and, cleaner. Add a playground to Mahuhu Crescent Park - there are so many children in the area, with nowhere to play! Deal with the homelessness and poverty, to keep people off the streets. Pedestrianise even more! And in the far future, move the port as it brings in a lot of pollution and noise."

Female, 40-44, Spark Arena / Anzac Ave, 10+ years

"Make it pedestrian friendly and don't let cars etc. park in places like Fort St to spoil that and ensure cars travel very slowly and that pedestrians have right of way. Make Queen St into a pedestrian environment. Keep cars etc. out. More public spaces, greenery, parks, trees, sunlight drenched places. Ban noisy cars from city. Improve air and noise pollution for residents.."

Female, 70-74, Midtown / Queen St, 10+ years

"More police and crime prevention is needed. The city is really unsafe. My partner hates it when she has to come home late because she feels unsafe. Stop creating more pedestrian zones. There is already too much construction happening and there is already more than enough space for pedestrians. The new spaces are quickly occupied by beggars and gang members making them undesirable to be in anyway.."

Male, 30-34, Midtown / Queen St, 2-5 years

"More support for the homeless and more noise control solutions."

Male, 20-24, Universities / Symonds St, 1-2 years



Examples of comments regarding ways to improve the city centre

"Take a stand on the behaviour of the increasingly unsavoury people just hanging around everywhere. They are menacing. Put more effort into the basics like keeping the streets clean and tidy. Stop trying to get us out cars. It's not viable given the weather conditions that dominate our city-essentially pouring with rain so much. Get the traffic flowing better not making it so slow that it jams everything up. Make parking cheaper and more accessible so people can easily come into the centre from all over Auckland in their cars if they prefer. Public transport is not an option for many. Have more police "walking the street", possibly Māori Wardens.."

Gender not specified, 60-64, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 2-5 years

"Please make some effort to clean the streets. Please find shelters for the homeless. Please make Auckland safe. Stop making those cosmetic changes around the city, please save the money for meaningful projects.."

Male, 45-49, Universities / Symonds St, 2-5 years

"More family friendly pockets safely positioned away from the likes of K' Rd and Viaduct."

Male, 45-49 Spark Arena / Anzac Ave, 10+ years

"Stop putting thousands of social housing tenants in the CBD. My apartment building and many others who've I've spoken to have issue that they cause 90% of the problems in apartment buildings. Vandalism of common property, intimidation in your own building in common areas, drug use and break-ins"

Male, 50-54, Hobson St / Victoria Park, 10+ years

"More police patrols. We noticed less police presence on the ground, and the unsavoury elements got worse and worse, getting more and more aggressive. Housing first initiatives to get people who need assistance off the streets and into secure housing. Investing money into big events, both day and night time events, to lure people back into the CBD, including providing security. Doing days with free parking and public transport to and from the CBD, to encourage visitors.."

Female, 30-34, Midtown / Queen St, 2-5 years



Questions and discussion

