

What We Did



Introduction

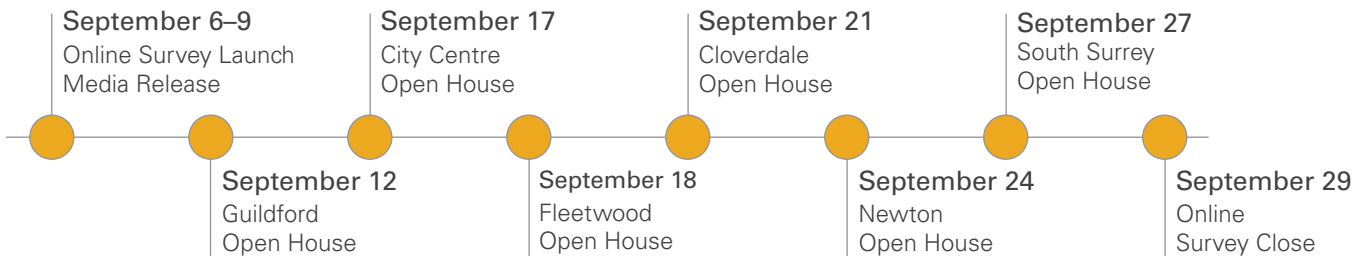
This What We Heard report is a summary of the results of the city-wide engagement for the 2025 budget that took place from September 6 to 29, 2024. Community members had the opportunity to attend any of six in-person open houses and complete an online survey to learn about the budget process and share feedback on community priorities and preferred funding options. Feedback from this engagement will help inform Council on community priorities and budgeting options for the 2025 budget year.

Engagement Timeline

Engagement Phase 1: Planning (August to September 2024)

Engagement Phase 2: Implementation (September 2024)

Events:



Engagement Phase 3: Analysis and Reporting (November 2024)

How we engaged and informed the community



By the Numbers

3,378



Engagement Interactions

2,782 survey respondents

596 open house engagements

An engagement interaction is defined as an individual that has participated in the 2025 budget engagement process by attending an open house event (including intentional and walk-by interactions) and completing the survey.

100,876



Informed Community Members

6,154 engagement page and website visits
(including 33 visits to the Punjabi page)

6,914 CitySpeaks panel members

71,983 emails sent to eNews subscribers

15,825 community members reached
through social media posts

“Informed” is defined as an individual that has made at least one visit to the engagement website, received a direct email, or engaged through social media.



Advertising

16 digital billboard advertisements throughout Surrey

6 community newspaper ads, social media ads and a media release

11 pull up banner displays and posters in libraries and recreation centres

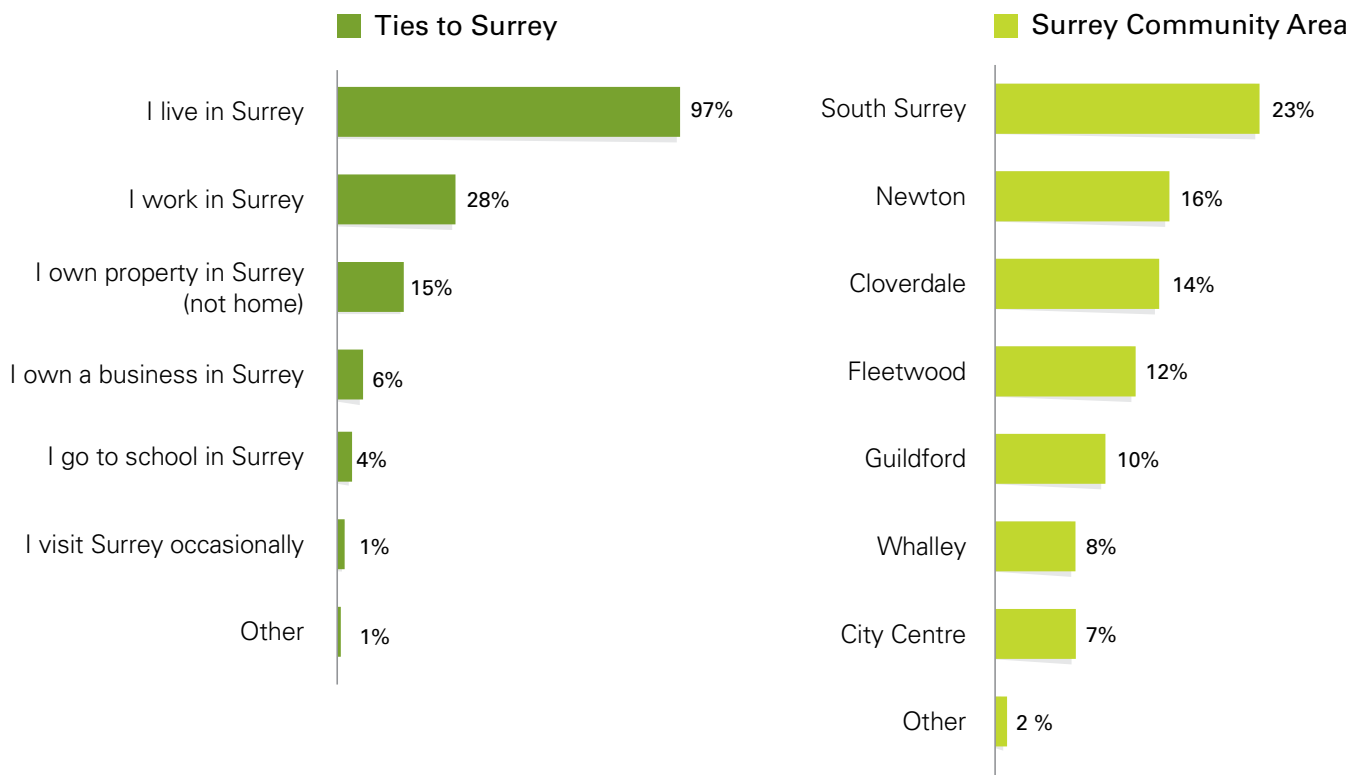
This strong engagement turnout demonstrates a high, and ongoing interest in the City budget process.

Survey Results

Who We Reached

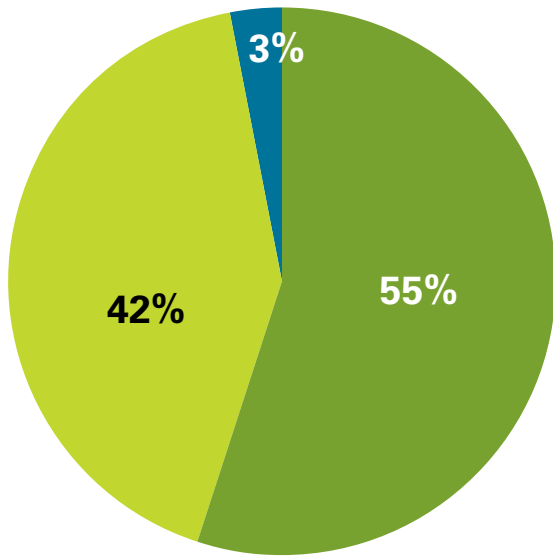
Surrey is a diverse community. City of Surrey's Public Engagement Strategy strives to achieve representative participation. Demographic information is collected in surveys to evaluate who is participating and which voices may be over or underrepresented. The budget engagement likely under represented the views of younger populations, renters, South Asians, Punjabi speakers and immigrants.

Location

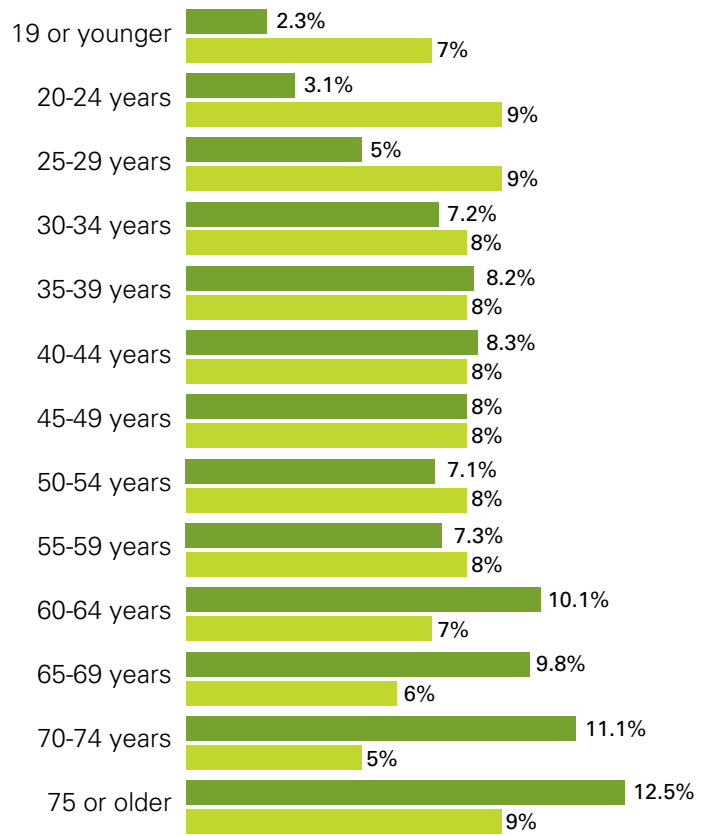


Gender and Age

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary/other

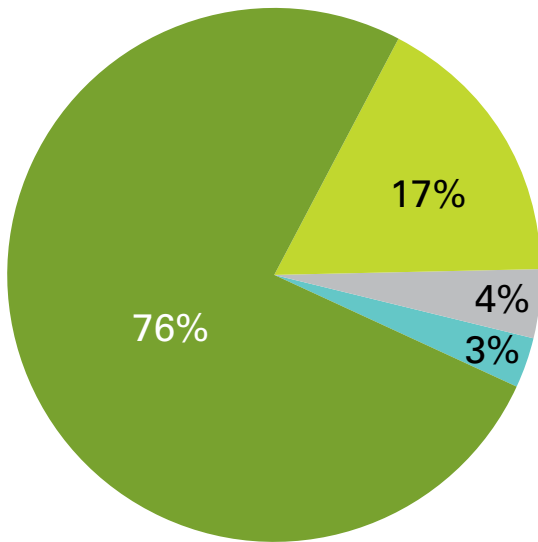


- Survey
- Census

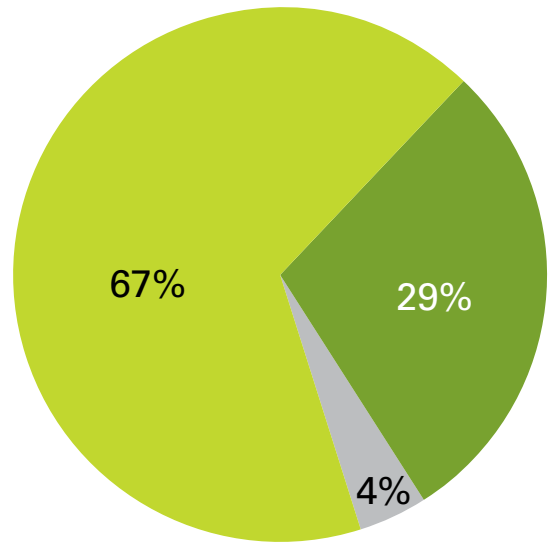


Household Demographics

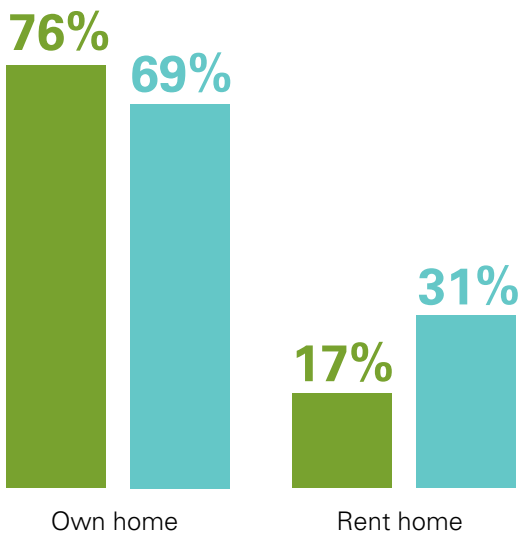
- Own home
- Rent home
- Other
- Prefer not to say



- Children living in household
- No children living in household
- Prefer not to say



- Survey
- Census

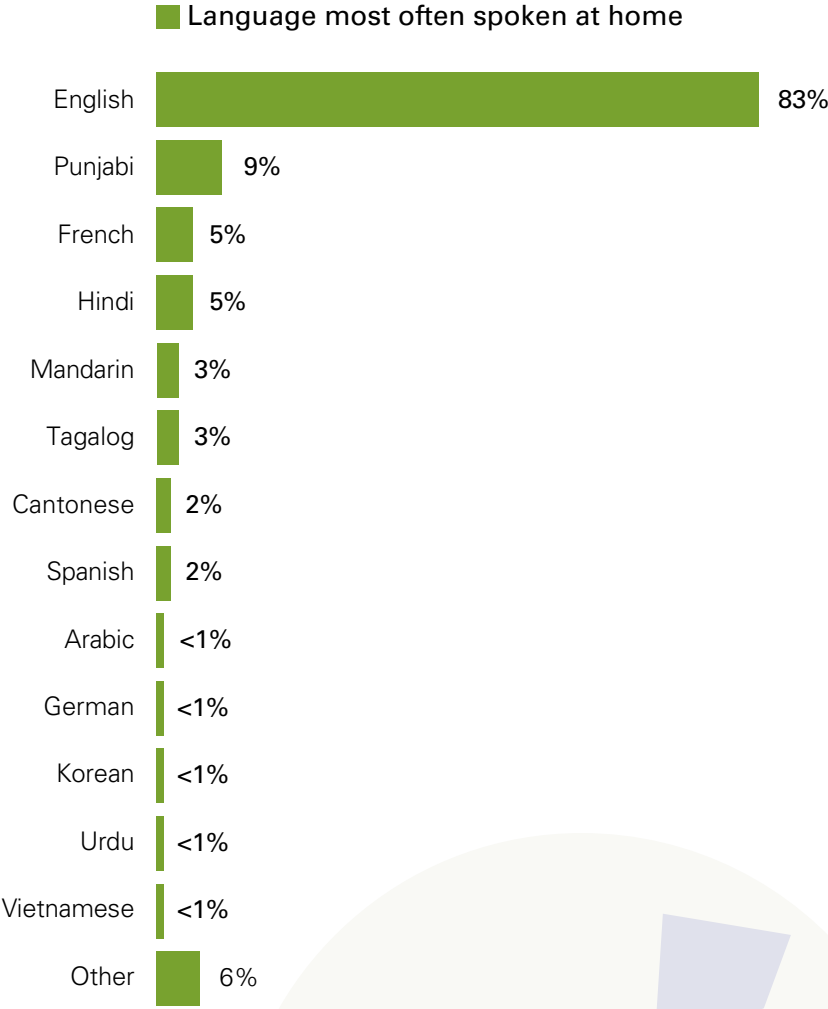


Self-Identification

Number of Respondents

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Visible minority | 353 (14%) |
| Immigrant | 345 (14%) |
| Low Income | 225 (9%) |
| Person with a disability | 218 (9%) |
| LGBTQ2S+ | 116 (5%) |
| Indigenous | 48 (2%) |
| Refugee | 11 (<1%) |
| Student | 67 (3%) |
| Prefer not to answer | 266 (11%) |

Language



What We Heard

We asked respondents to provide feedback on community priorities and funding options for the 2025 budget.

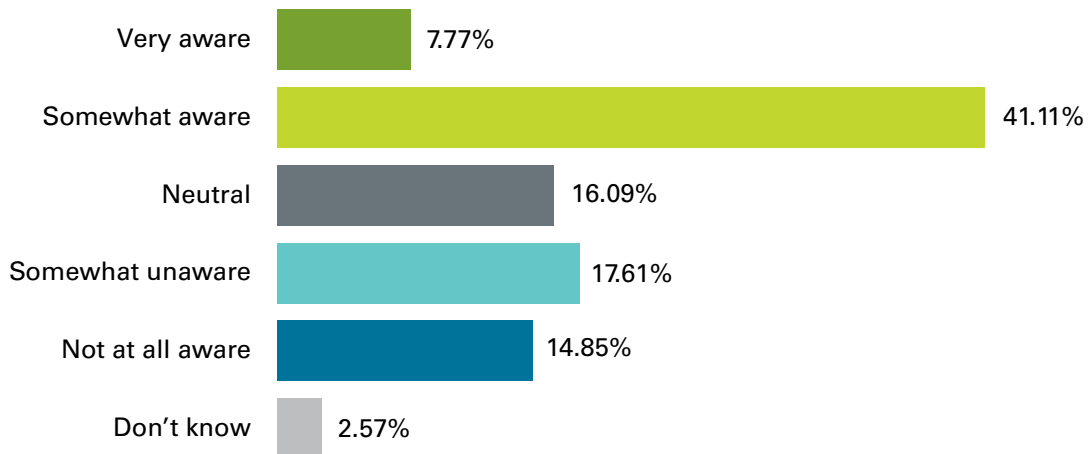


Awareness of Budget and Budget Process

The City is working to provide more information to community members on the budget process and to gather feedback to help inform the next budget.

Awareness of the budget and process has increased since the City's first budget engagement in 2023.

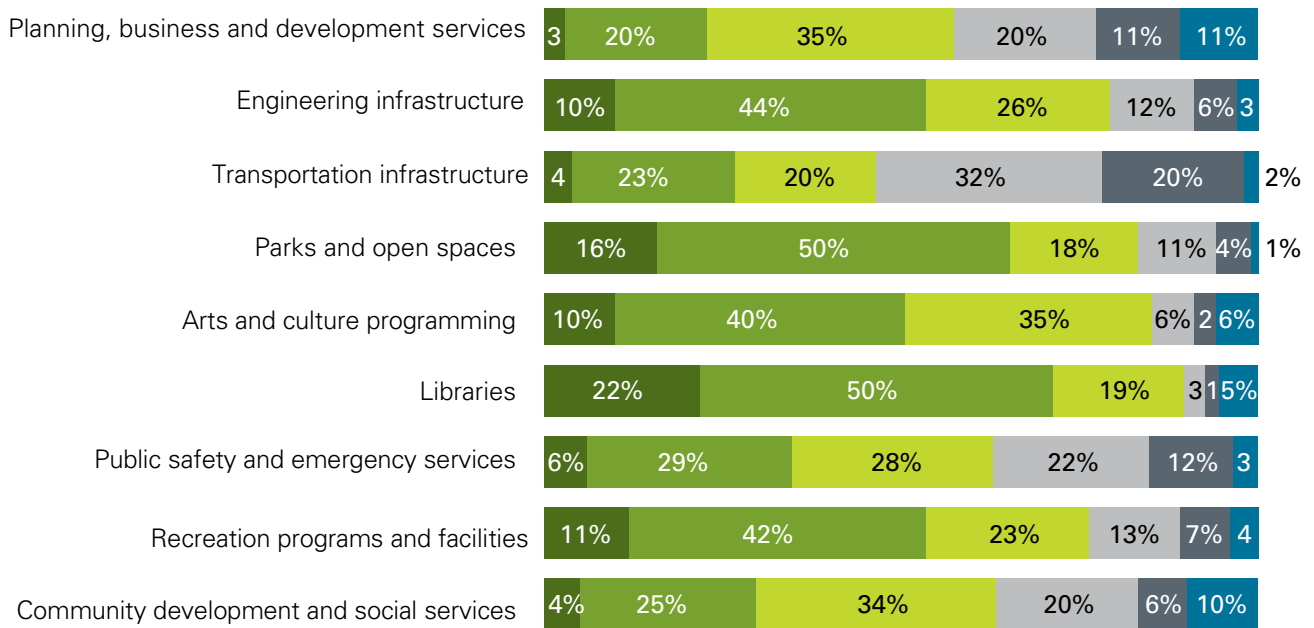
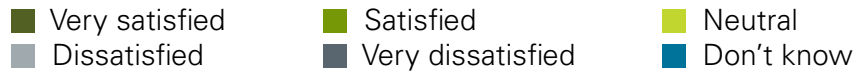
Please rate your levels of awareness about how and where budget dollars are spent.



Satisfaction with Services, Amenities and Infrastructure

The City funds and operates many services, amenities and infrastructure projects. Please rate how satisfied you are with each of the following.

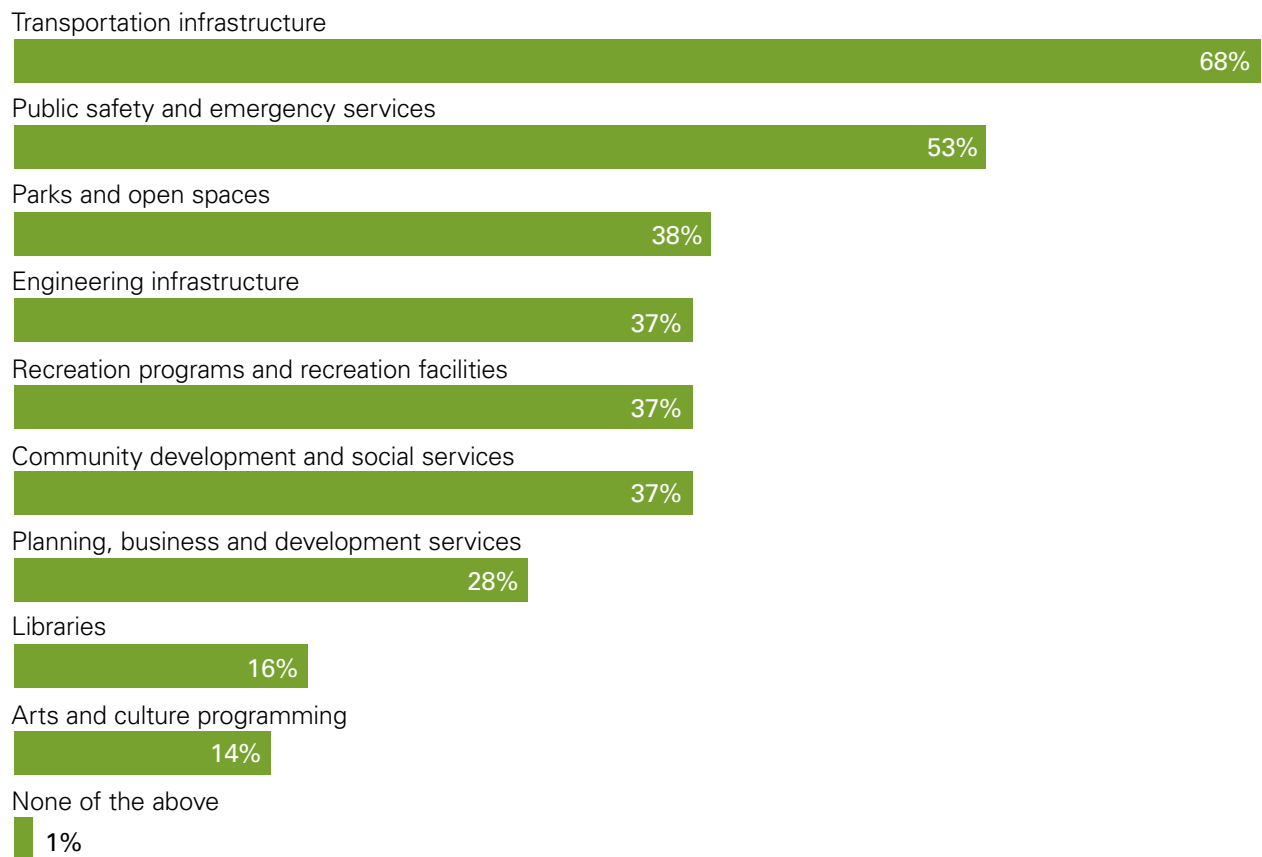
Libraries, parks and open spaces, and engineering infrastructure ranked the highest.



Future Investments in Services, Amenities and Infrastructure

Considering these services, amenities and infrastructure projects are competing for funding dollars, in what areas would you like to see more investment?

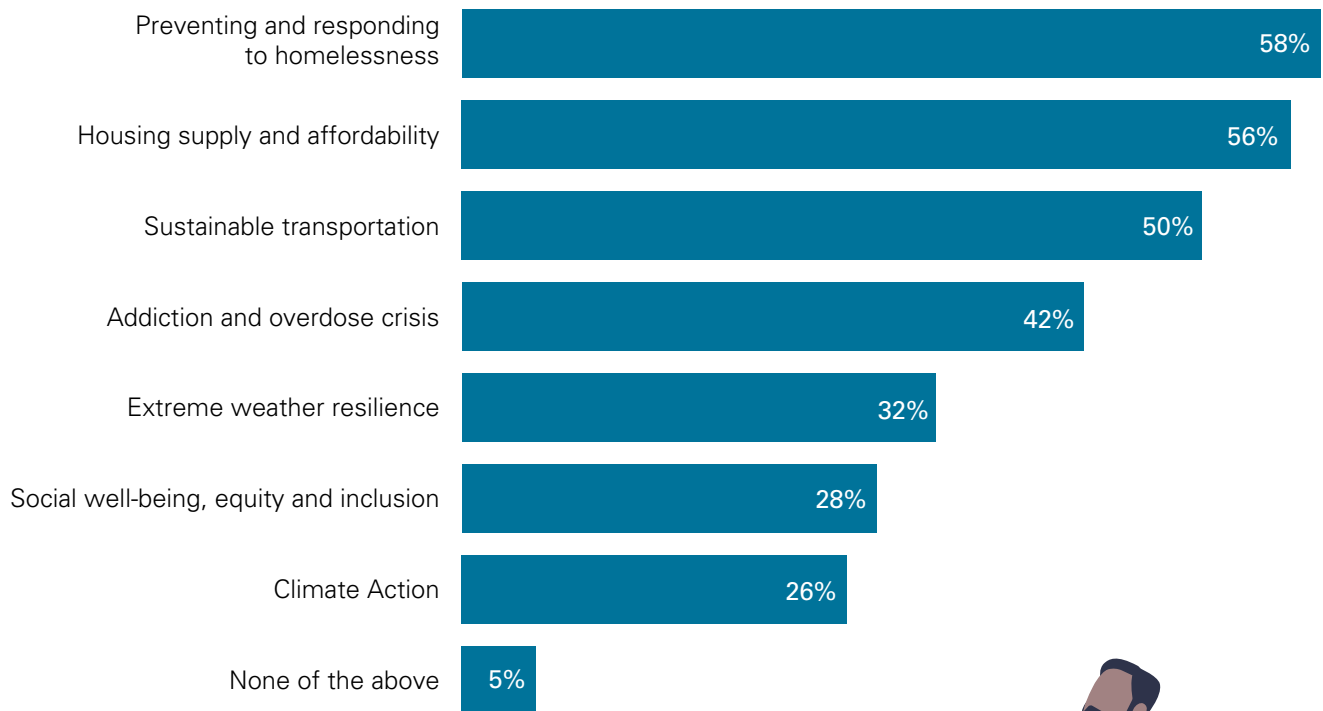
Transportation infrastructure, public safety and emergency services were prioritized the highest.



Emerging Priorities

The City is also responding to new and growing community priorities. In what areas would you like to see more investment?

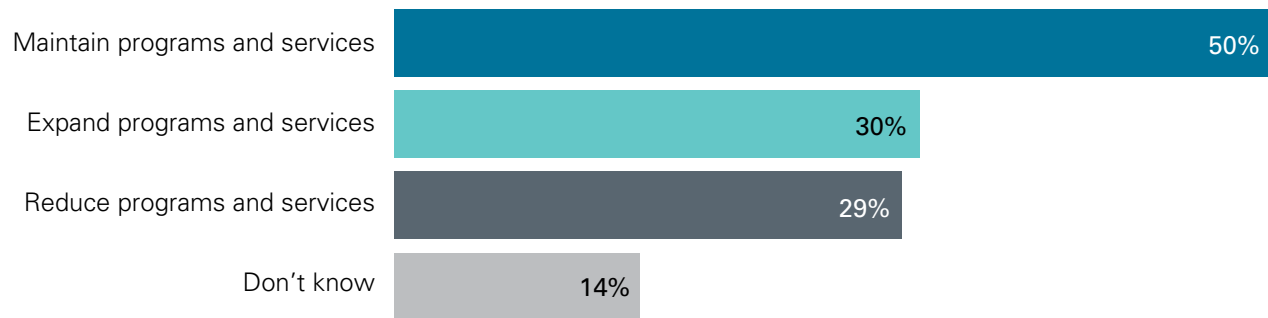
Preventing and responding to homelessness; housing supply and affordability; and sustainable transportation were ranked the highest.



Balancing the Budget

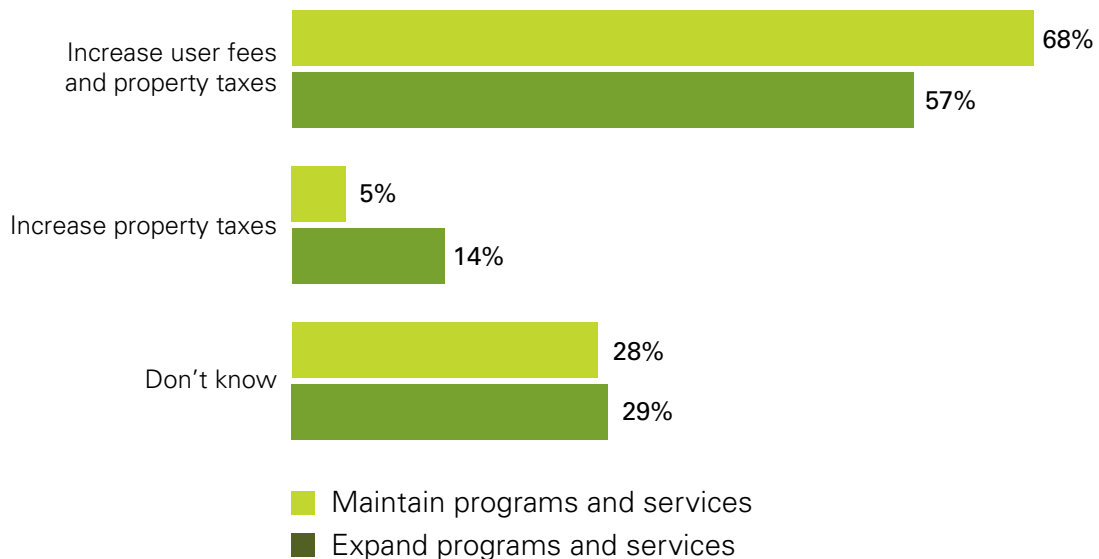
In order to balance the budget while maintaining services and addressing new and growing priorities, the City will consider a combination of funding options. Should the City expand, maintain, or reduce the programs and services that it offers?

Maintaining the current service level received the most support.



Since the City is required to balance its budget, how should programs and services be funded?

Maintaining the current service level through a combination of funding sources was the preferred funding option. This was also the preferred funding option for those who answered that the City should expand programs and services.

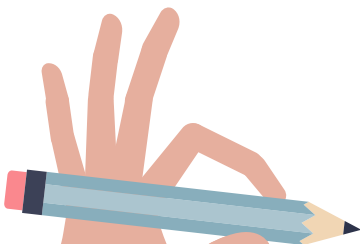
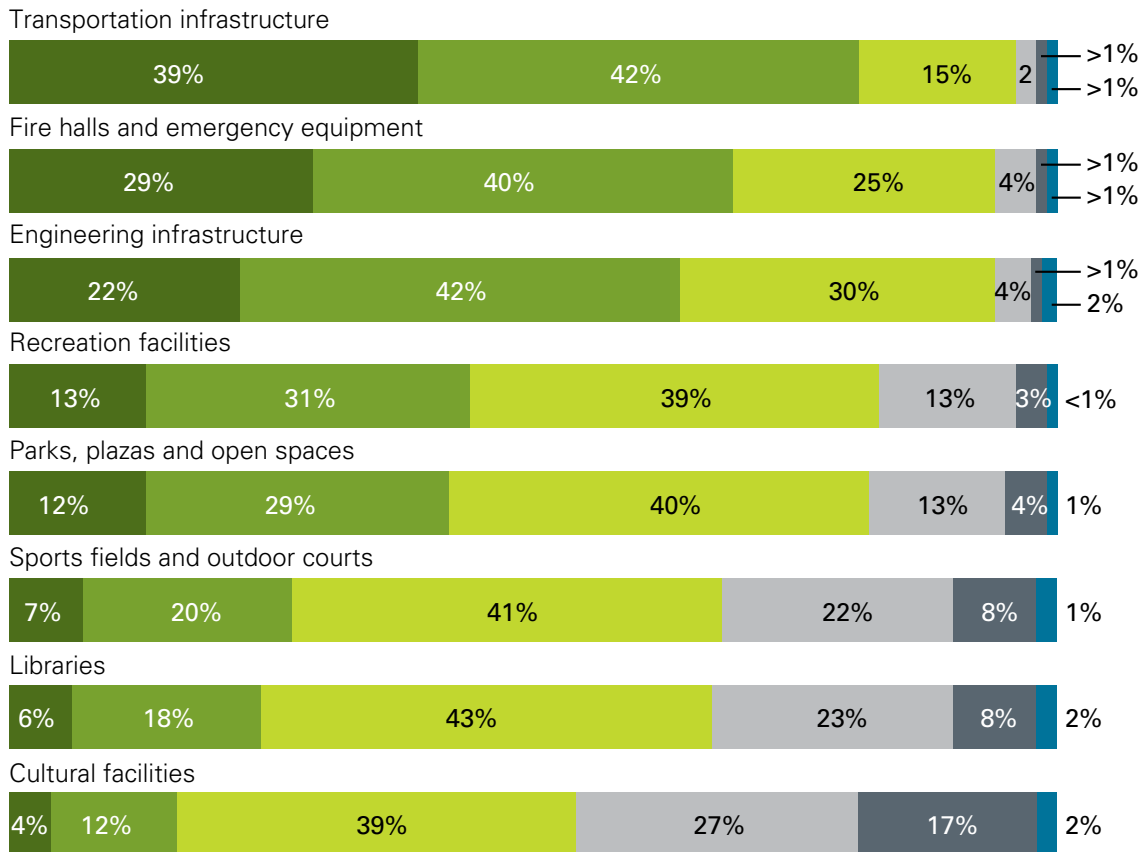


Capital Investment Priorities

Please rate how the City should prioritize the following capital investments based on how important they are to you.

Transportation infrastructure, fire halls and emergency equipment and engineering infrastructure ranked as the top priorities.

- Highest priority ■ High priority ■ Moderate priority
- Low priority ■ Lowest priority ■ Don't know



Future Engagement

The City is committed to conducting ongoing budget engagement year after year.

When it comes to future budgets, what would you like to have more information about?

The majority of respondents would like more information about how tax dollars are allocated across different departments and services.

How tax dollars are allocated across different departments / services

70%

The different sources of revenue for the City

54%

The services, programs and initiatives that the City offers

45%

How and when the public can provide input

44%

The budget development process and how Council decisions are made

41%

The difference between the operating and capital budgets

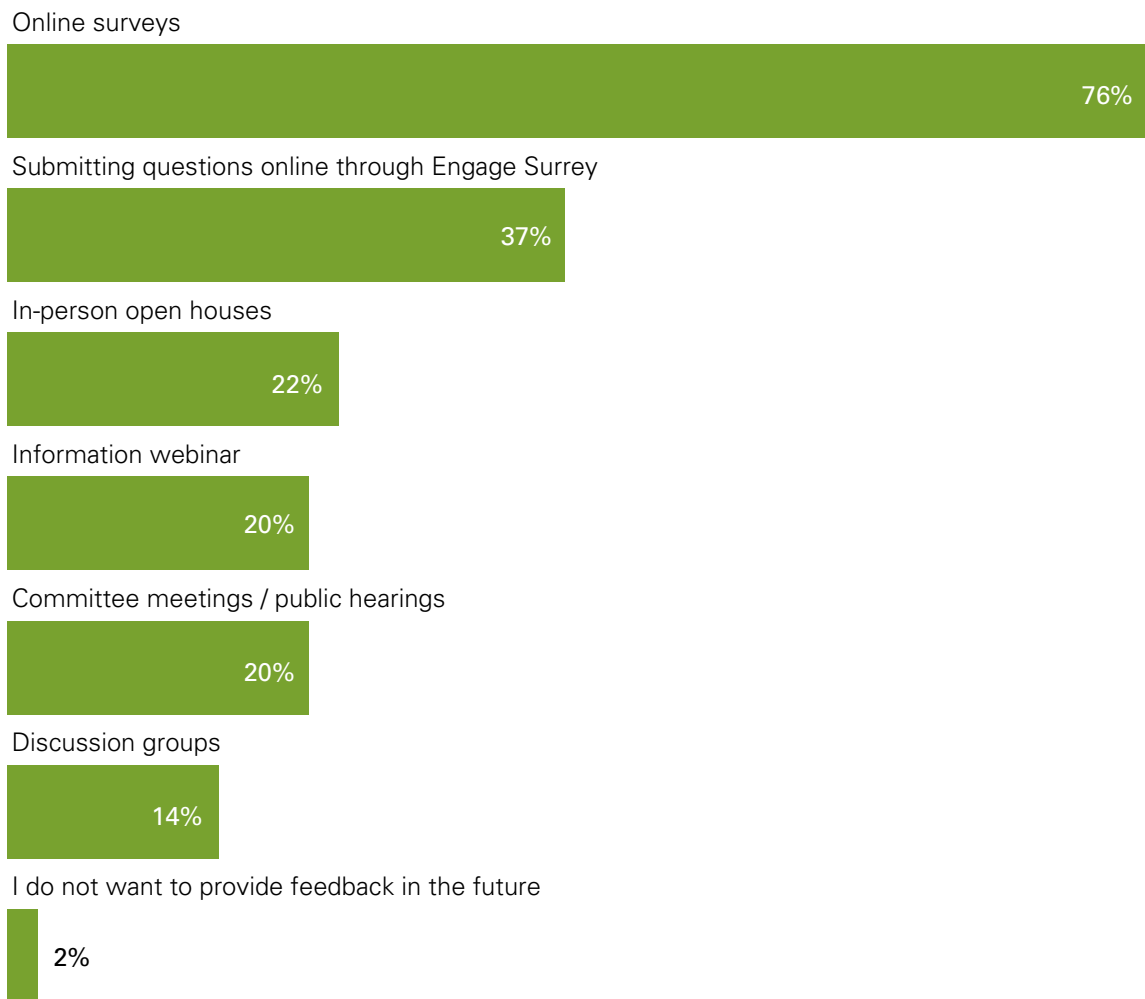
27%

None of the above

5%

How do you want to provide feedback on future on budget engagements?

Online surveys are the preferred option for providing feedback.



Comment Key Themes

The following is a summary of themes from the open-ended comments received in the survey from respondents.

For a full summary of the comments see the [corporate report](#).

1. Budget and Financial Management

The majority of comments expressed the desire to lower and improve the stability of taxes. The overall sentiment expressed was dissatisfaction with current financial management and decision-making at the City level. There were comments of concern on City spending, the cost of the transition to the Surrey Police Service and an aspiration for more fiscal responsibility and transparency.

Respondents shared concerns over the high and increasing property taxes. To reduce the strain of property taxes on residents, there were a number of suggestions to shift towards implementing more user fees and cutting non-essential services and amenities.

2. Community Services and Amenities

Respondents highlighted a variety of services and amenities as priorities for the City to invest in through the next budget. In particular, respondents identified the need for essential community services and infrastructure (such as schools, healthcare and housing) followed by access to arts programs, recreation facilities and green spaces.

Respondents consistently shared comments around a growing increase in Surrey's population which has strained the quality and space in community centre pools, gyms and recreational programs. This growth has resulted in overcrowding, long waitlists and other barriers for the community to access amenities. Respondents suggested improving and increasing investment in sustainable infrastructure, public transit and services.



3. Roads and Transportation

Respondents brought up the need to address chronic traffic congestion through road expansions as well as improve the timing of traffic lights and night time road work. Also mentioned was the need to expand the operation of buses and SkyTrain in high-growth areas like Fleetwood and Cloverdale. There was a general sentiment to prioritize repairing roads and maintaining infrastructure over large capital and beautification projects until existing needs are met.

Respondents suggested the City expand bike lanes and walking paths that are separated from traffic for safety, while maintaining adequate lanes for vehicles. Respondents spoke to generally improving public safety and accessibility for seniors and those with disabilities through better sidewalks and transit.

Commonly, comments were framed around efficiently meeting the needs of a growing population—offering options for transportation, reducing commute times and mitigating congestion on the roads.

4. Housing and Cost of Living

Responses conveyed a general sentiment of concern for greater affordability and a desire for more affordable housing options, both rentals and ownership. Comments also highlighted concerns about homelessness and lack of wraparound support services. There were expressions of worry about overcrowding, general crime and strain on public resources.

Comments reflected challenges around crime and called for greater investment in mental health, addiction services, schools, transportation and other critical public services to address homelessness.

Respondents expressed concerns about rapid development and population growth outpacing infrastructure and public services.

Overall, the feedback highlighted a need for the City to carefully balance growth, affordability and quality of life for its residents.

5. City Processes and Efficiencies

Respondents shared a number of opinions on City processes, including the role of bylaw enforcement and municipal regulations. A common recommendation was more strict bylaw enforcement, especially around parking infractions, unpermitted construction and collecting fees from unregistered secondary suites.

Concern was also expressed around the City's budgeting practices and called for a balanced budget without increasing taxes and fees on residents.

A number of respondents agreed that tax collection should be more representative of the number of people and families living in a home. A number of respondents encouraged the City to increase building permit costs and better regulate new development particularly in allowing more density and rental units to accommodate a growing Surrey population.

6. Additional Themes

Addressing climate change

A number of comments voiced that climate change is a top priority, noting the role of the City in addressing climate change and mitigating its impacts, for example by investing in public transit and incentivising buildings to transition to cleaner energy sources. Respondents want to see the City leading in prioritizing investment in sustainable infrastructure, green spaces, and community services and adopt climate-smart practices. Reflected was the need for more climate-resilient infrastructure and adaptations, such as mitigating extreme heat indoors and the high cost of cooling homes.

Population Growth

Some respondents shared concern over the rate of new development, immigration and overcrowding in Surrey. Comments expressed that the City should play a more active role in regulating growth to ensure that people have adequate access to housing and jobs. There is a consistent sentiment to slow down housing development until the necessary infrastructure is in place.

Healthcare and schools

Respondents emphasized the need for improved access to health care, and more hospitals and medical staff in Surrey. Some feedback expressed concern over the rapid expansion of housing without corresponding infrastructure and service improvements, such as schools.

Future Budget Processes

Respondents shared their priorities for future budget processes, including easily accessible and digestible information about the budget (including its development and outcomes). A number of respondents commented that they are not as well-informed as they would like to be and recognized that they could learn more. There was also a shared sentiment for more decisive action—efficient and timely implementation—from the City after the budget is developed each year. Respondents noted that transparency in budget allocation and community engagement in decision-making processes are essential for fostering trust and ensuring that the budget reflects the needs and priorities of all Surrey residents.

Respondents' top priorities for the 2025 budget include the following:

Top 3 Core Services and Program Priorities: transportation infrastructure, public safety and emergency services, and parks and open spaces.

Top 3 Emerging Issue Priorities: preventing and responding to homelessness, housing supply and affordability, and sustainable transportation.

Top 3 Capital Investment Priorities: transportation infrastructure, fire halls and emergency equipment, and engineering infrastructure.

To balance the budget, the preference was to do so by maintaining current services through a combination of increasing property taxes and user fees. However, open ended comments revealed general opposition to tax increases and concern over the rising cost of living.

The full engagement results were included in a corporate report submitted to Surrey City Council on November 18 for consideration in developing the draft 2025 budget.

The draft budget will be available for public comment before Council considers final adoption in early 2025 (target timeframe).

City of Surrey's **Public Engagement Strategy** is modeled after the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) guidelines and best practices.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2025 budget engagement.

How to Stay Involved

For updates and more information on the results and engagement that took place, please visit surrey.ca/budget2025.

