

What We Did



Introduction

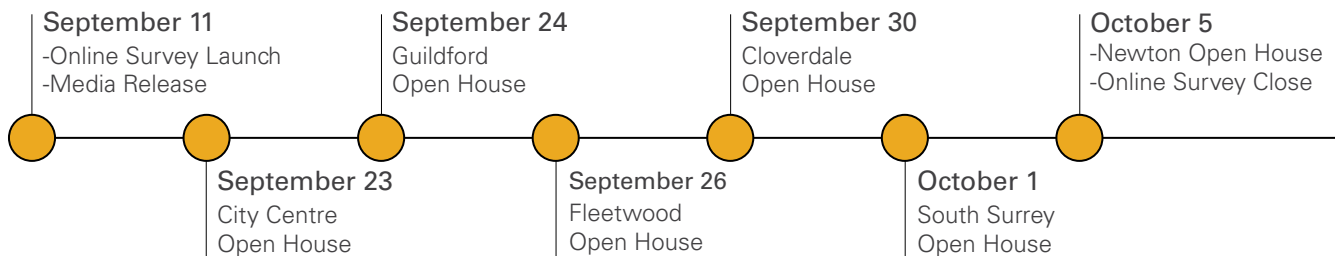
This What We Heard report is a summary of the results of the city-wide engagement for the 2024 budget that took place from September 11 to October 5, 2023. Community members had the opportunity to attend any of six in-person open houses and complete an online survey to learn about the budget process 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 2024 budget year.

Engagement Timeline

Engagement Phase 1: Planning (August to September 2023)

Engagement Phase 2: Implementation (September to October 2023)

Events:



Engagement Phase 3: Analysis and Reporting (November 2023)

How we engaged and informed the community



By the Numbers



3,371

Engagement Interactions

2,865 survey respondents
506 open house engagements

An engagement interaction is defined as an individual that has participated in the 2024 budget engagement process by attending an open house event (including intentional and walk-by interactions) and completing the survey.



50,725

Informed Community Members

5,609 engagement page and website visits
5,518 CitySpeaks panel members
39,384 emails sent to eNews subscribers
214 direct social media engagements through clicks, reactions, comments, and shares

“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



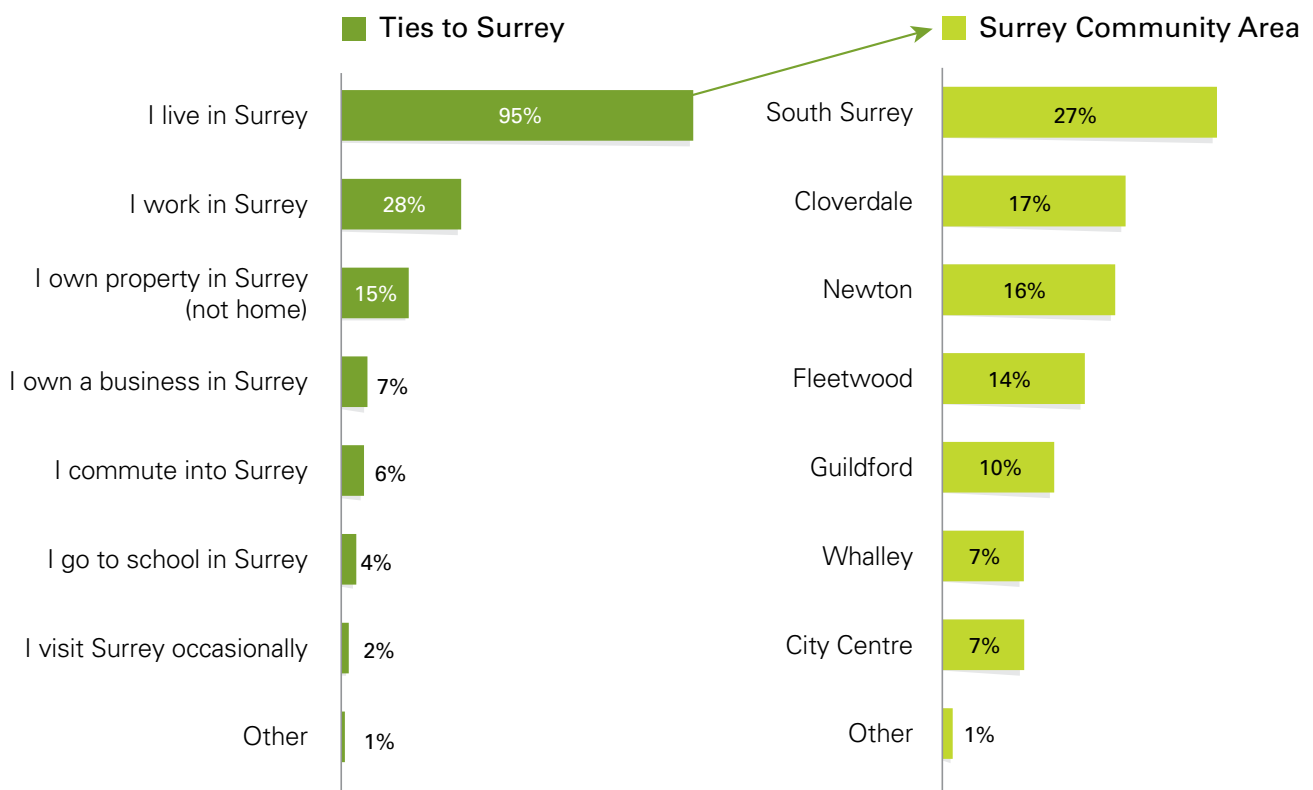
This strong engagement turnout demonstrates a high, and ongoing interest in the City budget process.

Survey Results

Who We Reached

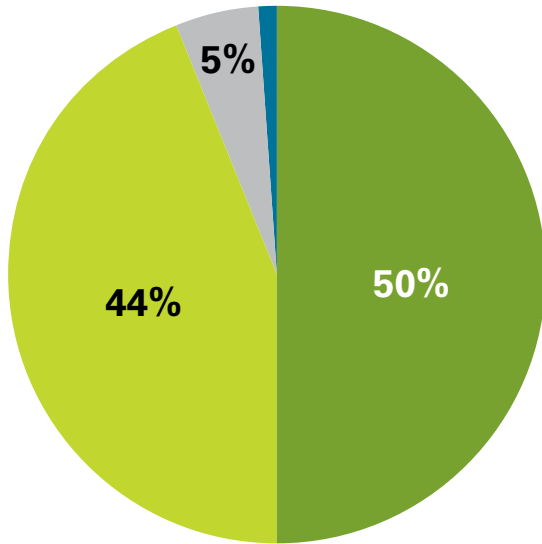
Surrey is a diverse community. City of Surrey's Public Engagement Strategy strives to achieve representative participation. Demographic information is collected in surveys to evaluate who is participating and which voices may be over or underrepresented. The budget engagement likely under represented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

Location

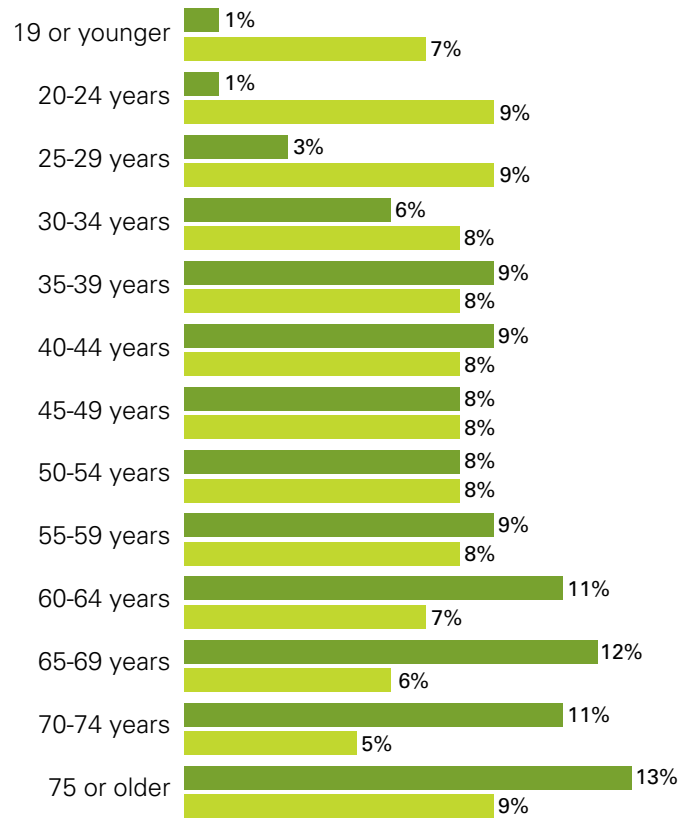


Gender and Age

■ Female ■ Non-binary/other
■ Male ■ Prefer not to answer

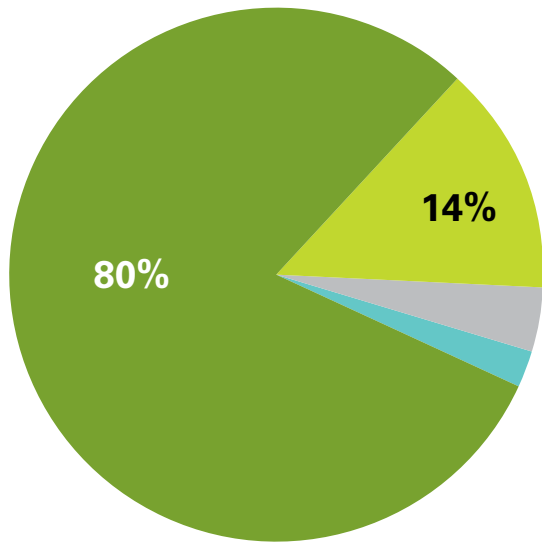


■ Survey
■ Census

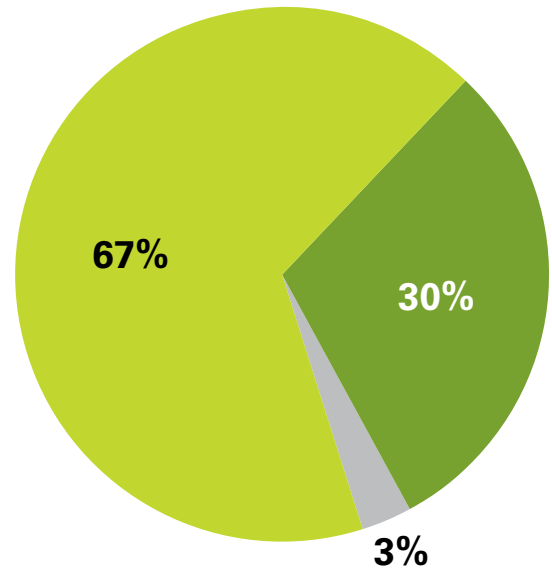


Household Demographics

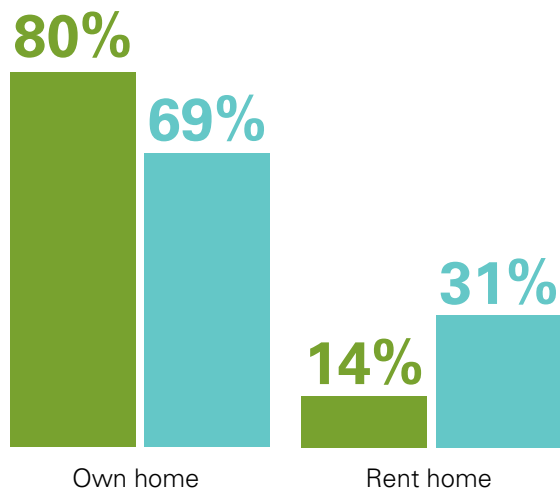
- Own home
- Rent home
- Other
- Prefer not to say



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



- Survey
- Census

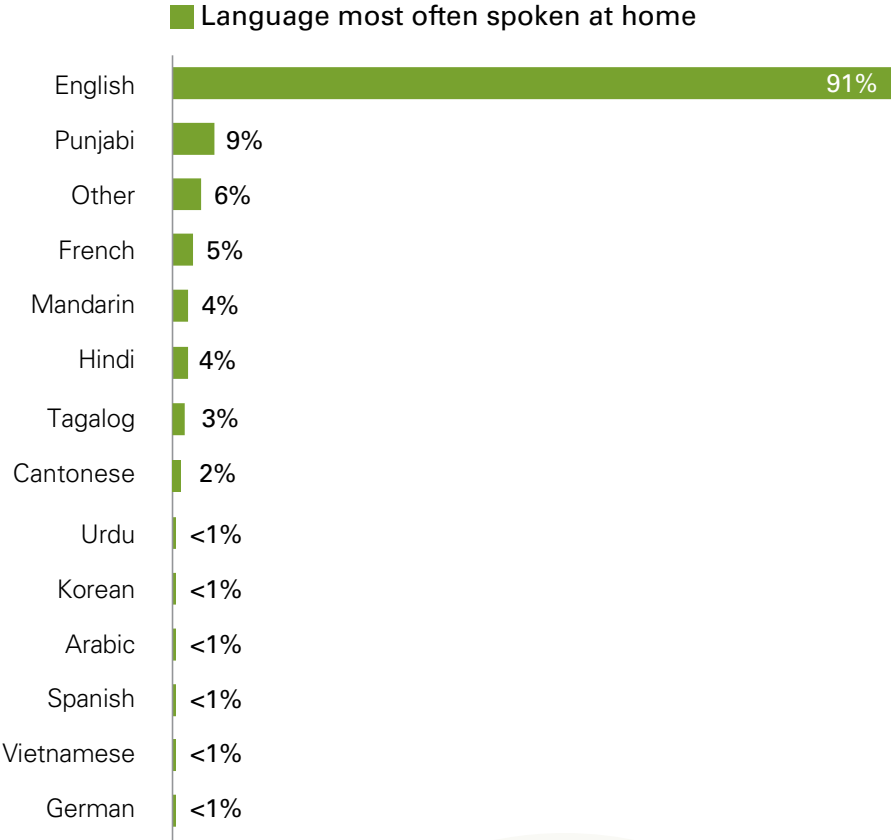


Self-Identification

Number of Respondents

Visible minority	362	(15%)
Immigrant	325	(13%)
Low Income	242	(10%)
Person with a disability	198	(8%)
LGBTQ2S+	100	(4%)
Indigenous	41	(2%)
Refugee	9	(<1%)
Student	47	(2%)
Prefer not to answer	295	(12%)

Language



What We Heard

We asked respondents to provide feedback on community priorities and funding options for the 2024 budget.

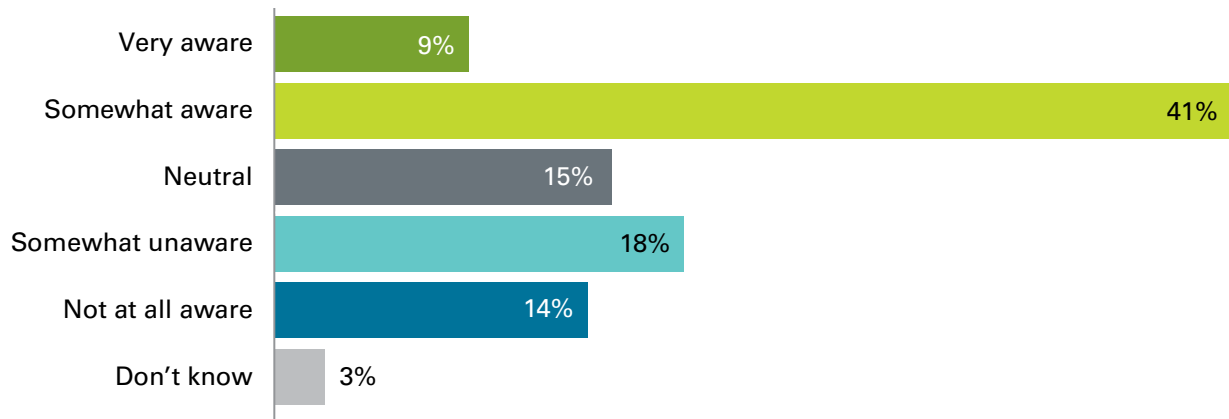


Awareness of Budget and Budget Process

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 was higher this year than budget 2023 by 8%.

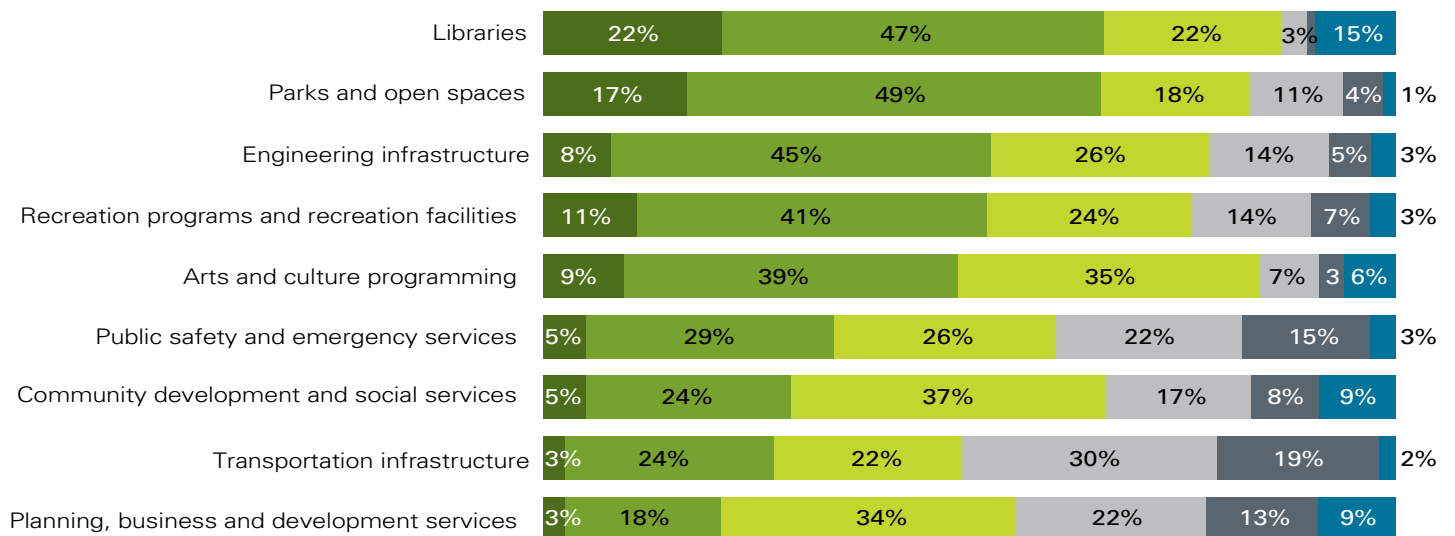
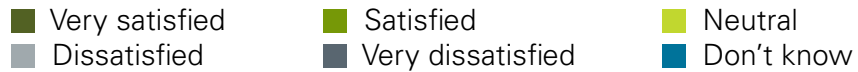
Please rate your levels of awareness about how and where budget dollars are spent.



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.

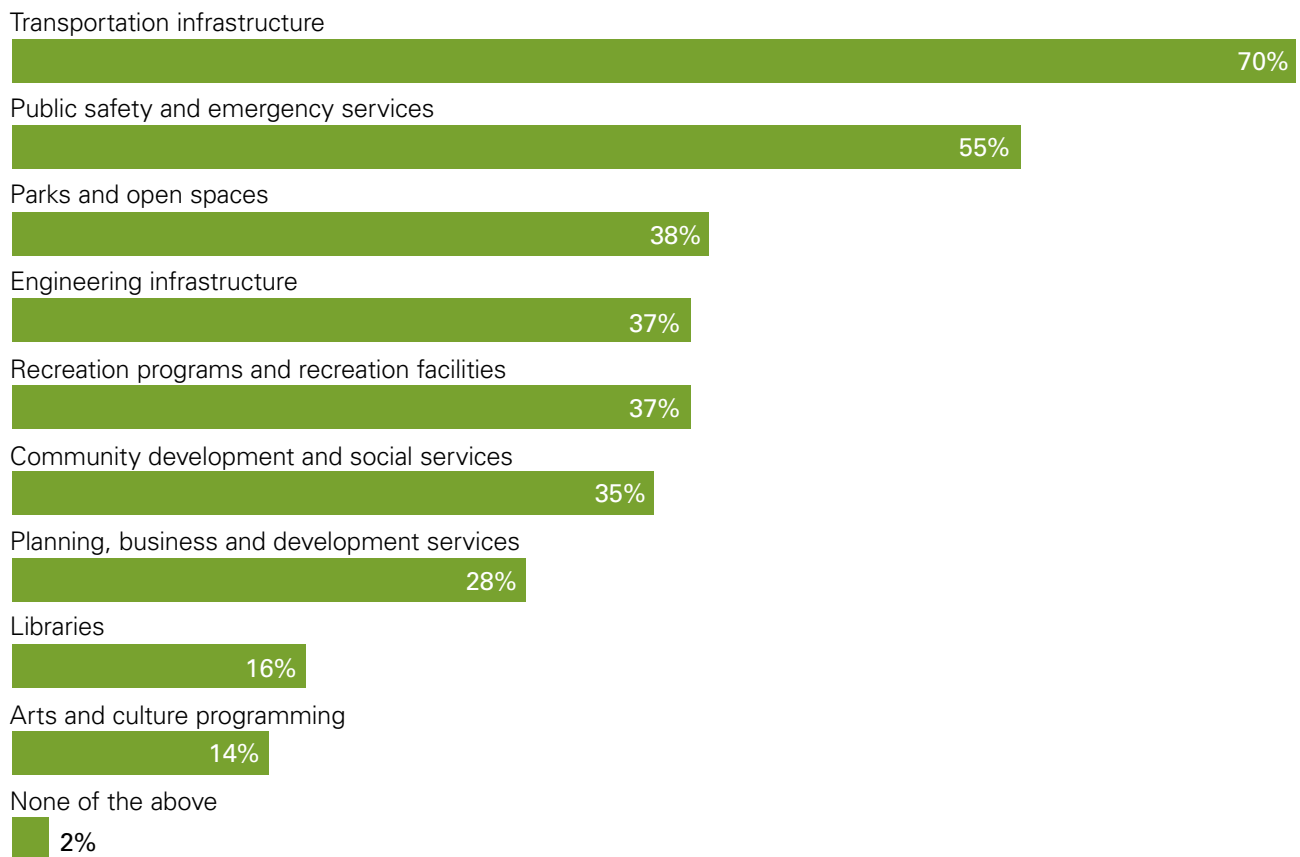
Libraries, parks and open spaces, and engineering infrastructure ranked the highest.



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?

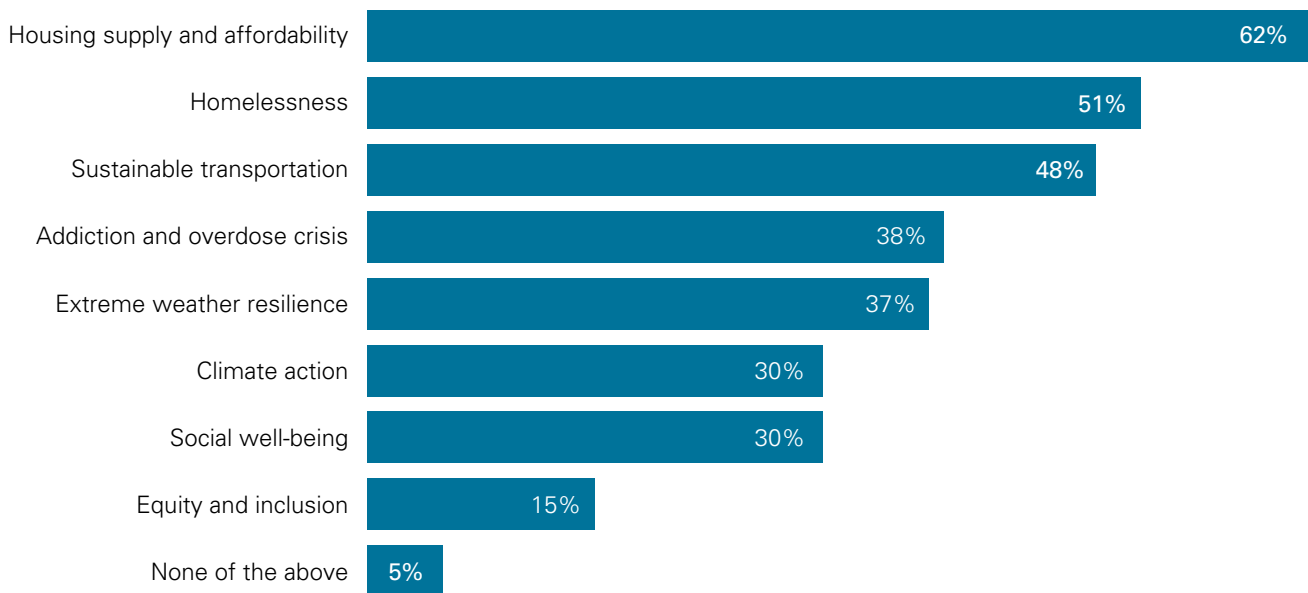
Transportation infrastructure, public safety and emergency services were prioritized the highest.



Emerging Priorities

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

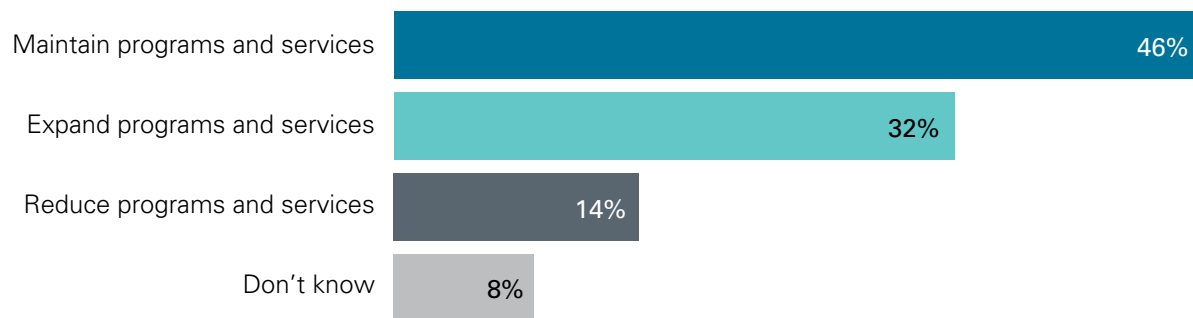
Housing supply and affordability, homelessness and sustainable transportation were ranked the highest.



Balancing the Budget

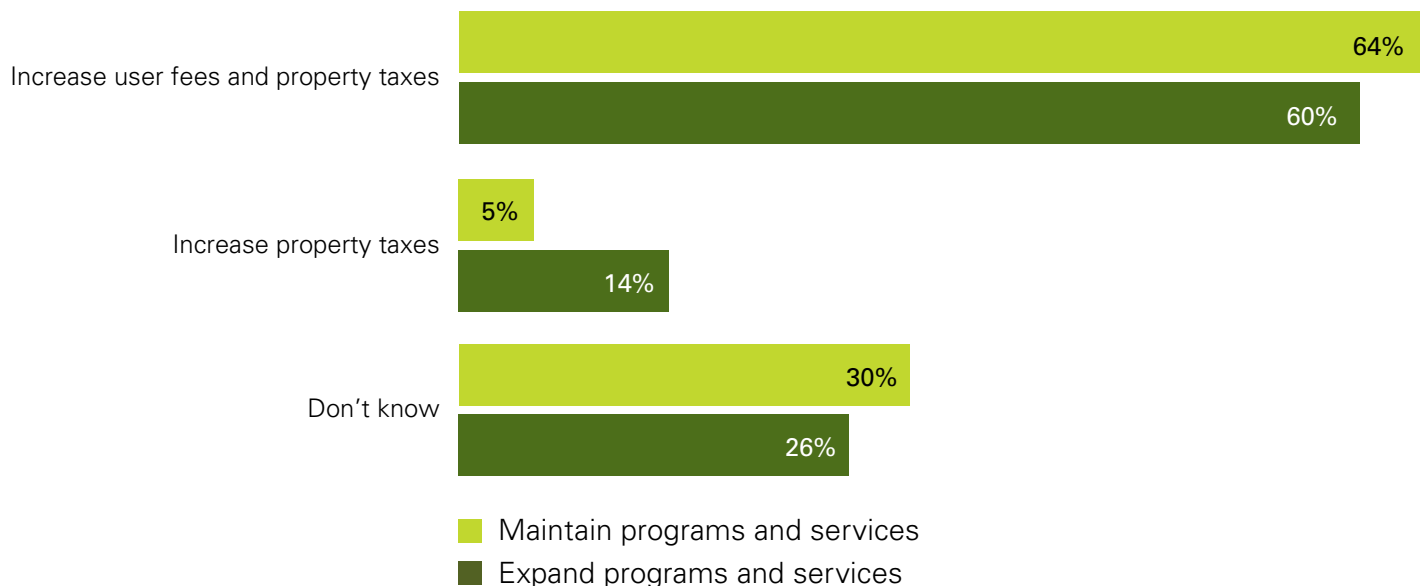
In order to balance the budget while maintaining services and addressing new and growing priorities, the City will consider a combination of funding options. Should the City expand, maintain, or reduce the programs and services that it offers?

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.

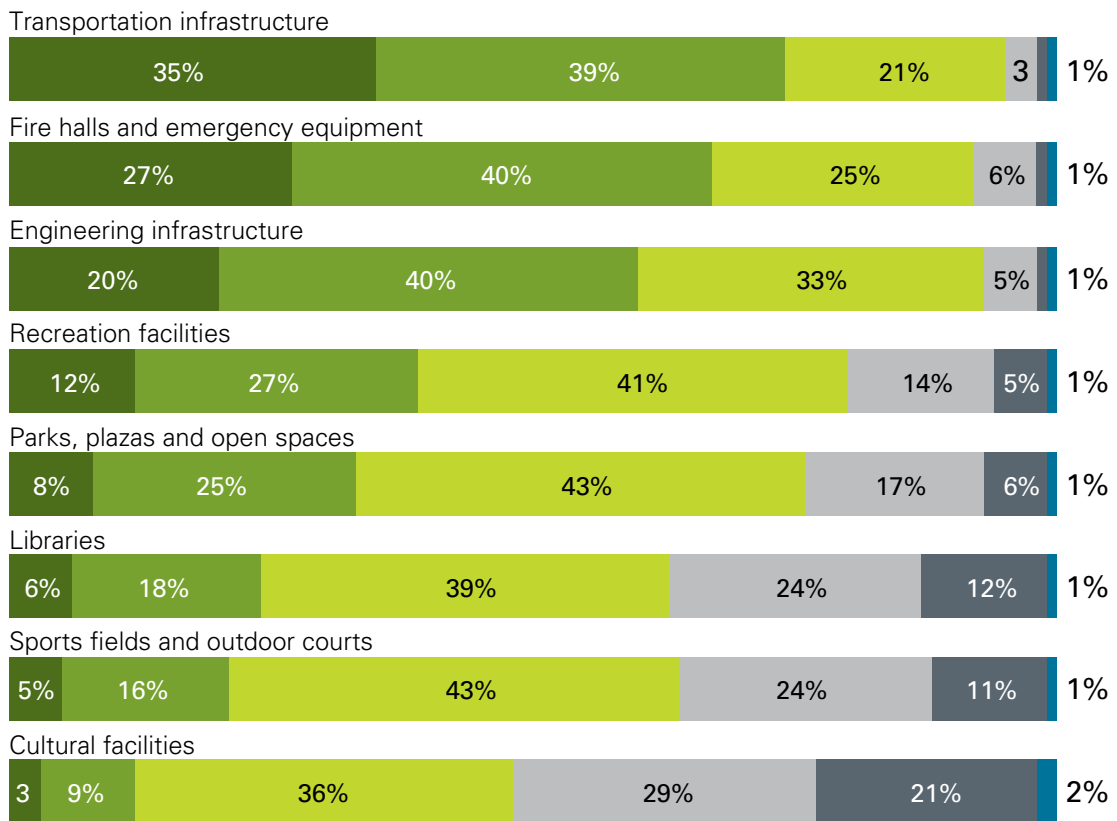


Capital Investment Priorities

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



Business Community Consultation

Surrey’s business community was consulted as an important stakeholder during Surrey’s 2024 budget engagement. Two roundtable discussions captured priorities from Surrey’s various chambers of commerce and business associations.

Top investment priorities for the business community included engineering infrastructure, transportation infrastructure and public safety (closely reflecting public input from the survey and open houses).



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

77%

The different sources of revenue for the City

56%

How and when the public can provide input

51%

The services, programs and initiatives that the City offers

48%

The budget development process and how Council decisions are made

48%

The difference between the operating and capital budgets

31%

Other

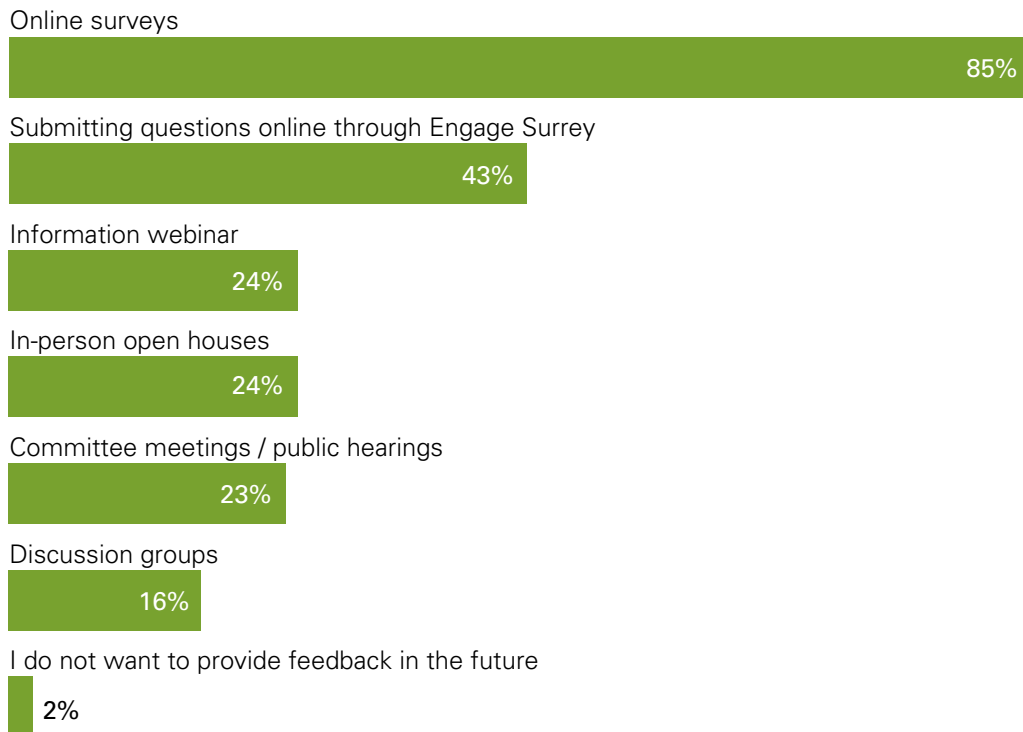
2%

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 selection of verbatim open-ended comments received in the survey from respondents. For a full summary of the comments see the [corporate report](#).

1. Police and Public Safety

- Policing and emergency services are the highest of priorities.
- We need adequate policing. Number one is the safety of Surrey's citizens.
- Police budget is a high priority. If we are not feeling safe not much else matters.
- Need to increase resources for community policing and resolve the RCMP-Surrey Police issue without further delay.
- Surrey Police Service is the way forward and makes sense for the city of this size and growing.
- Please don't waste money on Surrey police service. We don't need an expensive police force. Our biggest concern is still not knowing how much the Surrey Police Service is going to cost us as tax payers.

2. Community Services and Amenities

- Supporting Recreation Centres and Libraries is essential as they are a foundational part of a healthy community and creates equitable access for all residents.
- We need more community spaces and events to help people come together.
- Surrey needs more pools, sport courts and schools.
- Parks, recreation options and programs for families, children and youth are vital because those growing up in Surrey deserve more.
- We need more libraries and library services!
- Can we consider building community centres combined with public school facilities?
- The population of Surrey is growing very fast but it looks like recreational facilities are not.
- We need to invest in schools, rec centers, and public transit. Developers need to pay their share to support these.



3. Taxes and Affordability

- Reduce property taxes.
- For the budget to balance itself, explore other alternatives rather than increasing property tax.
- There must be a better way to generate funding other than increasing taxes and user fees.
- Property taxes in Surrey are fairly low and home owners should be pulling their weight more when it comes to contributing for services we all use.
- Raise property taxes on luxury housing, not on ordinary middle class residents. Property taxes aren't progressive enough.
- My dollars only go so far, between, federal, provincial & municipal governments I have no more to give.
- I think it's unfair to raise property taxes and other fees. We are already struggling and making it difficult for making ends meet. I feel for our seniors and young generations.

4. Roads and Transportation

- Infrastructure, we need better transportation such as road systems & transit.
- The City has many roads that need upgrading and repairs.
- Surrey is growing rapidly. Need sustainable transportation infrastructure to move people around efficiently.
- We need more public transit in Surrey.
- I would love to see more protected bike lanes.
- Make the city more walkable.

5. Internal and External City Processes

- City needs to stay within its jurisdiction and provide the core services it's supposed to.
- Improve productivity rather than taxes.
- Need to reduce spending on non essential activities.
- Reducing costs and overhead should be a priority. Consolidate, eliminate and reduce overlap.

6. Additional Themes

Addressing homelessness, mental health, and addiction

- Homeless is a real big problem and drug use.
- I believe we need to invest more in the people who don't vote - homeless and children - in order to improve and maintain the overall functioning of our society and improve the health, safety and prosperity of all in the future.
- More money should be spent on providing shelters for homeless, and affordable social housing should be a priority in the City.

Improving open spaces, greenery, and parks across the City

- New neighborhoods should have green space & walkable areas...we need neighborhoods that bring people together.
- Please make providing parks a priority.
- We lose too many trees in development.
- Parks, sports fields and recreation are very important!

Addressing climate change and sustainability

- More resources should go to protecting and enhancing Surrey's natural areas.
- The City must take emergency action on the climate emergency (reduce fossil fuel use by buildings/transportation) and support mitigating features such as mature tree protection, expanding green spaces, reduce heat islands and provide all neighborhoods with easy access to greenspaces.
- Preparing for climate disaster(s) and a changing environment are most important.

Concern around population growth and increasing diversity

- The growth in the city needs to be at a pace that can keep the quality of living here from decreasing.
- Central Surrey lacks adequate amenities for a growing population.
- Stop the growth and expansion as too populated now.
- Keep up infrastructure for a growing population.

Improving equity and community wellbeing

- As a new immigrant to Canada, please allocate some budget in protecting race of minority and set up a service where they can go and take help.
- Culture events, equality in the city.
- With an aging population a "seniors lens" needs be applied to almost all investments.
- The need for more services for disability access.

Future budget processes

- Please use clear layman words, be transparent in the decisions and background to the decision, and be more decisive.
- Share the budget with residents of Surrey, in an easy to understand format.
- Would be good to know our monies are being spent responsibly.

Transportation infrastructure, policing and public safety, engineering infrastructure (including roads and transportation), community amenities (such as recreational facilities) and housing were top priorities that were identified by respondents for the City to consider as part of the upcoming budget.

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 20 for consideration in developing the draft 2024 budget.

The draft budget will be available for public comment before Council considers final adoption in early 2024 (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 2024 budget engagement.

How to Stay Involved

For updates and more information on the results and engagement that took place, please visit surrey.ca/budget2024.

