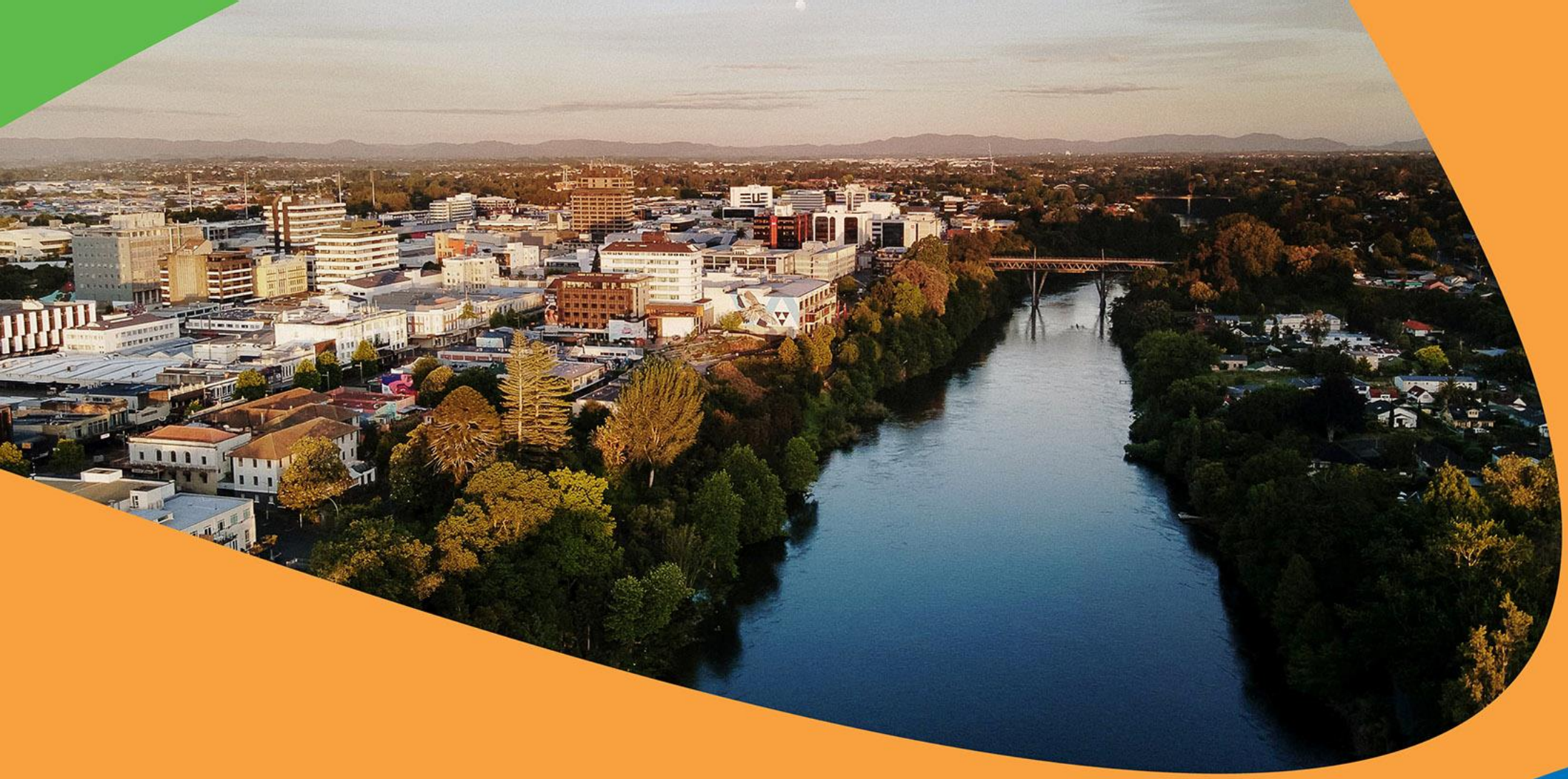


What's next for water

Insights report

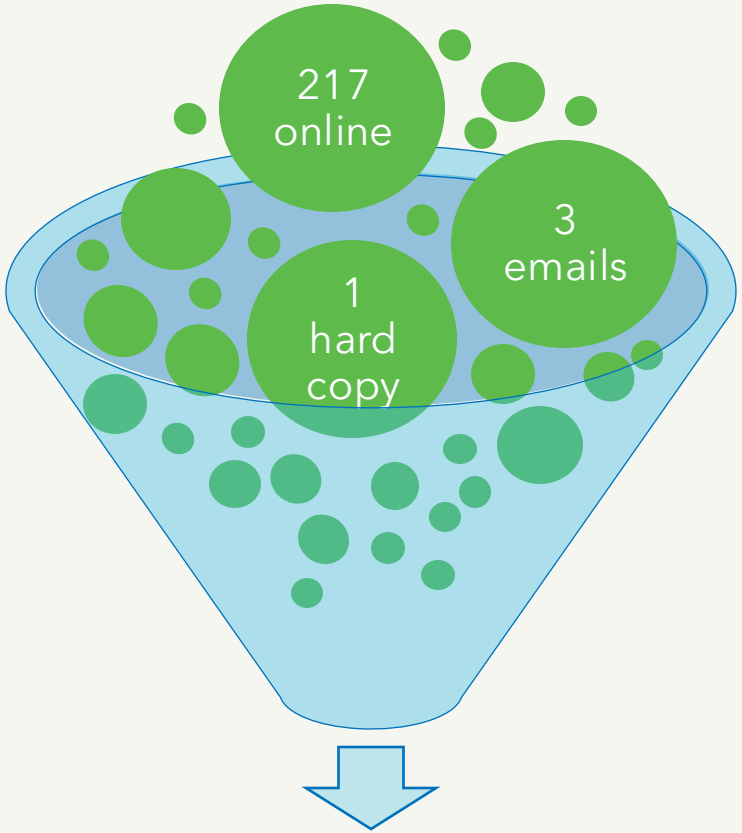
Hamilton City Council
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa

Background

- Nationwide, councils are facing significant challenges in managing and funding water services due to high costs, increased regulatory requirements, and the need for substantial infrastructure investments. Many councils have reached their borrowing limits, leading to postponed upgrades and financial strain.
- To address these issues, the government has directed all councils to explore more cost-effective ways to provide water services, including forming partnerships to achieve greater efficiencies. By September 2025, councils must submit Water Services Delivery Plans that demonstrate compliance with regulations, support for growth, and affordability for ratepayers.
- This year's decision on future waters services for Hamilton is one of the biggest decisions our Council will ever make. Billions of dollars in investment and the ability to deliver the most efficient, sustainable, and environmentally responsible waters service – that's best for our city and the wider region – will depend on decisions made this year. We want our community to help shape these decisions.
- This consultation was live from 24 March to 27 April 2025.
- We received a total of 221 submissions.

Processing feedback

- Respondents were asked one multi-choice question and had two free-text questions where they could expand on their thoughts.
- We directed Hamiltonians to our online survey tool, hosted on Council's Have Your Say page.
  - Any emails or hardcopies were entered into our online survey tool.
  - There were no duplicate submissions – each submission came from a unique name and email.
- Counts and percentages were calculated using Microsoft Excel. Text comments were grouped into themes.



Final submission count: 221

209 individuals
12 organisations

Submission insights

Individual responses

Hamilton City Council
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa

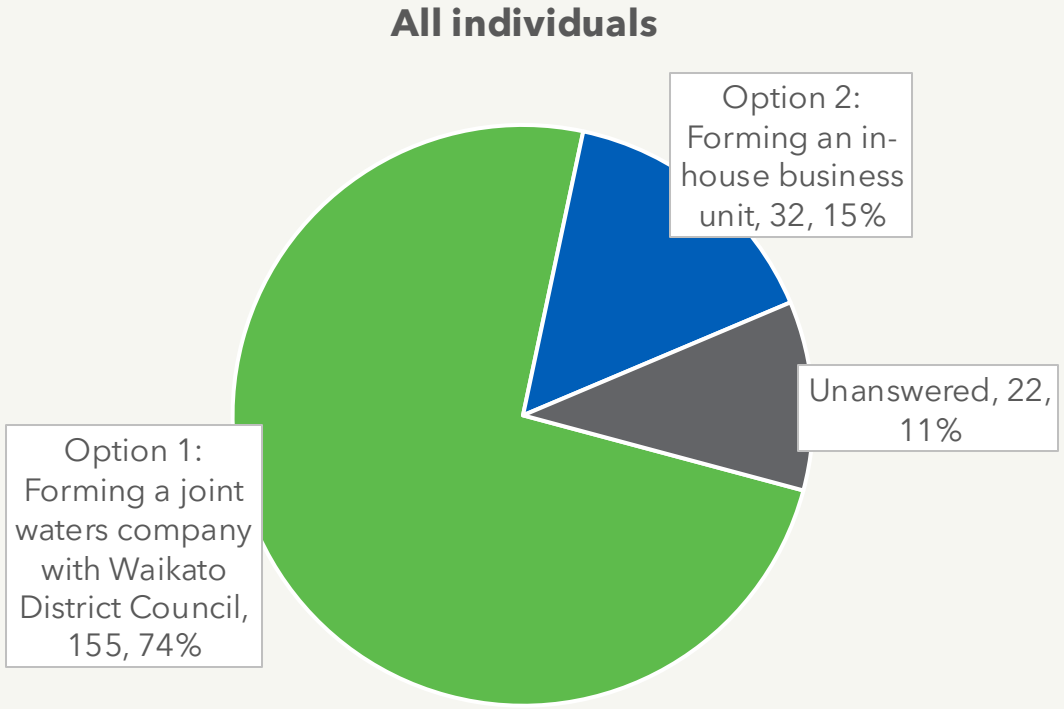
Future of water services

Background

- Hamilton City Council has considered a number of options for how we manage waters in future.
- We presented the community with two final options for their feedback. Respondents could select which of the two options they preferred and were invited to comment on the future of our water services.
  - Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council (Council's preferred option)
  - Option 2: Forming an in-house business unit.

Future of water services

"Which option do you think would be best suited to deliver waters services in the future?"



Future of water services

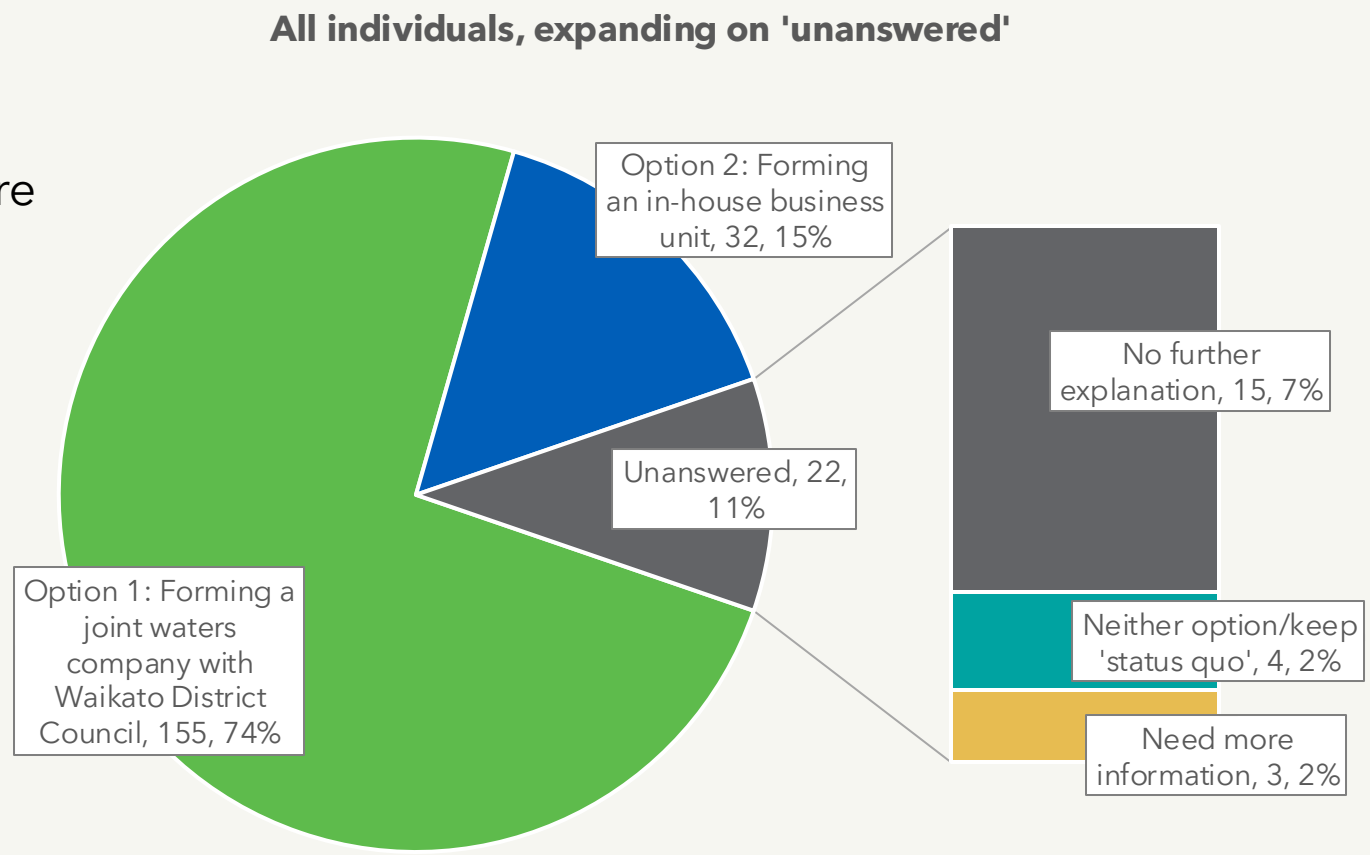
Expanding on ‘unanswered’

Looking into the written responses of those who did not answer this question, we get more detail.

15 respondents did not indicate a preference between the options in their written responses.

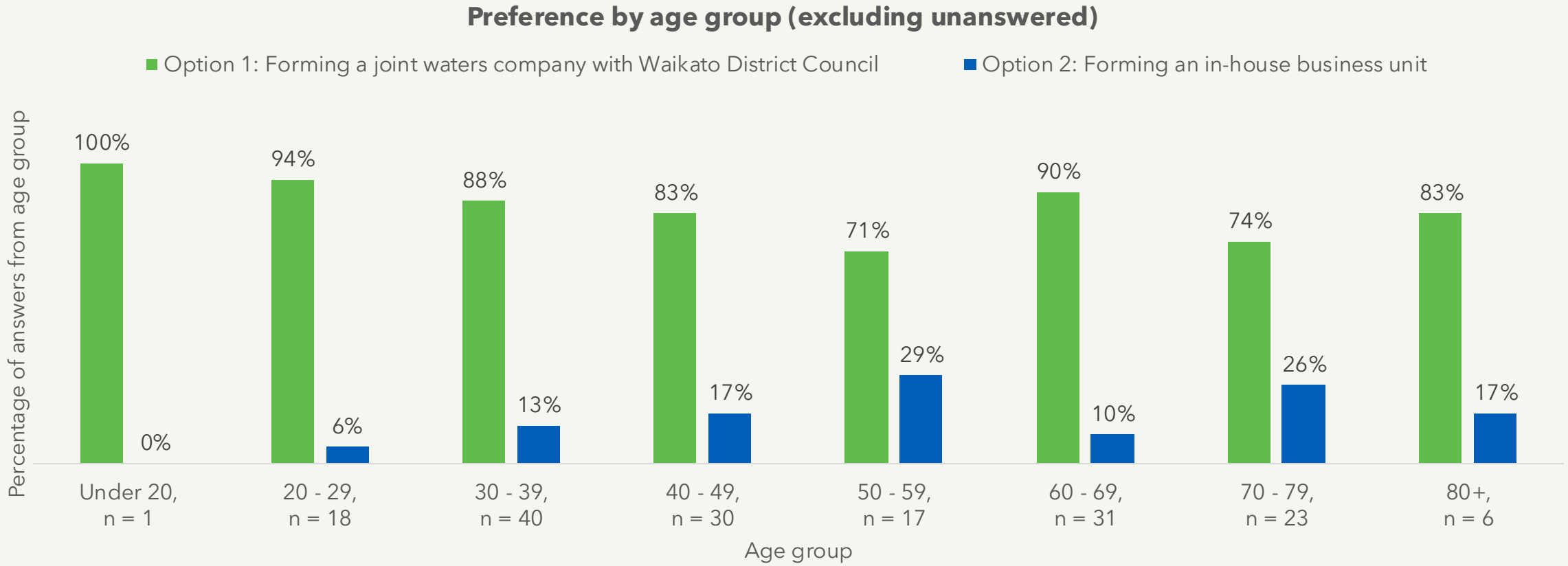
Four respondents did not support either option or wanted Council to continue the status quo.

Three wanted more information before deciding.



Future of water services

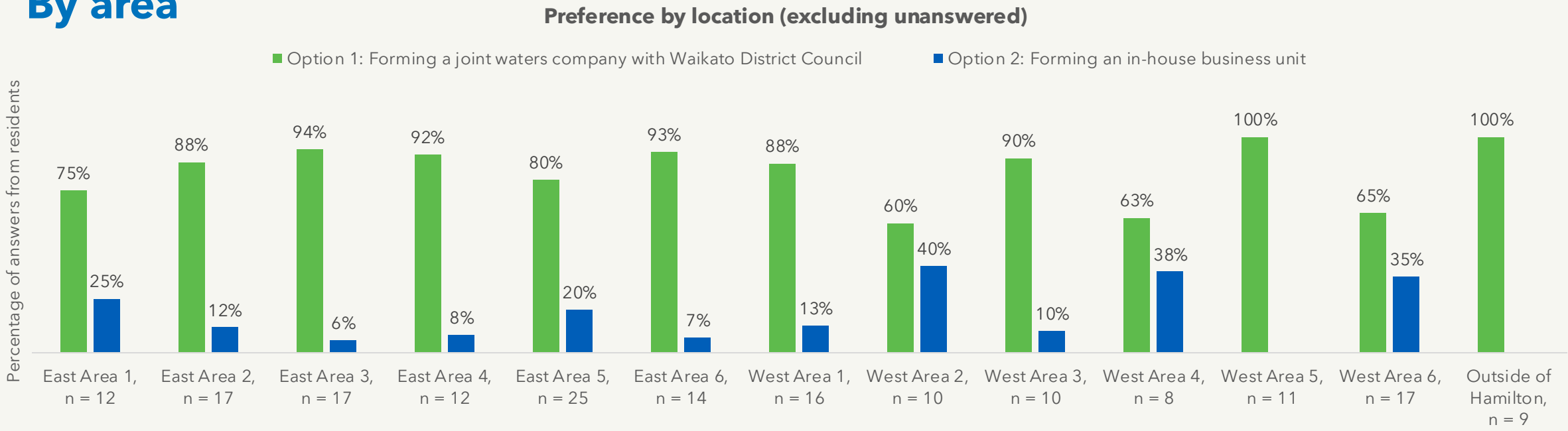
By age group



What's next for water engagement insights – individual submissions

Future of water services

By area



East Area 1	Flagstaff	West Area 1	Avalon, Beerescourt, Forest Lake, Pukete, St Andrews, Te Rapa
East Area 2	Callum Brae, Huntington, Rototuna, Rototuna North	West Area 2	Crawshaw, Grandview Heights, Nawton, Rotokauri, Western Heights
East Area 3	Chartwell, Chedworth, Harrowfield, Queenwood	West Area 3	Aberdeen, Dinsdale, Temple view
East Area 4	Enderley, Fairfield, Fairview Downs	West Area 4	Frankton, Maeroa, Swarbrick
East Area 5	Claudelands, Hamilton East, Peachgrove	West Area 5	Hamilton Central, Hamilton Lake, Hospital, Whitiora
East Area 6	Hillcrest, Ruakura, Riverlea, Silverdale	West Area 6	Bader, Deanwell, Fitzroy, Glenview, Melville, Peacocke

What's next for water engagement insights – individual submissions

Future of water services

Themes from comments



Support forming a joint waters company or oppose an in-house business unit

n = 25

"We are part of the wider Waikato community and it makes sense to join together in a shared vision of how to manage water for the region. This will result in a unified approach and save costs for all parties."



Support an in-house business unit or oppose forming a joint waters company

n = 14

"Keep all Water Services under Hamilton City Council control and don't allow outside interests to take over."



Neither option/keep 'status quo'

n = 9

"Neither. We (HCC area) are better on our own and not as a company either. What we have now works. Option 1: is a watered down version of Three Waters. Option 2: will look like the mess that Auckland has."

These and all other quoted comments in this report are verbatim comments which have been received as part of the Council's consultation process. Quoted verbatim comments were intentionally selected for being representative of the broad views and general sentiments relating to each theme.

What's next for water engagement insights – individual submissions

Introduction of targeted rates

Background

- The government wants more transparency around the cost of waters services. All councils will soon be required to show expenditure and how much revenue is collected for each of the waters services, separately to the other funding councils collect.
- To meet the new government requirements, Council consulted on the proposal to introduce separate rates for each of the waters services – drinking water supply, wastewater, and stormwater. The rates would appear as separate line items on rates bills.
- Respondents were able to leave their thoughts on this proposal in an open comment field, with the prompt "Do you have feedback on Council's proposal to introduce new targeted rates for waters services?"

Introduction of targeted rates

Themes from comments (individual submissions can be represented across multiple themes)

Believe water is currently free
n = 40

"Water should be free that's why people prefer Hamilton over other cities."

"We should not have water rates. Council continuing to treat people of this city as cash cows to drain."

"Why does the council feel it was to charge for a service that has been free for so long generationally it has been managed and supply with out cost"

Support water meters
n = 39

"There needs to be a push towards wider household water metering. People respond to price incentives and can be nudged towards more responsible water usage."

"The only fair method is water meters. How do you propose to differentiate between single households amid multiple occupiers. Elderly are the worst affected."

Support targeted rate
n = 23

"By targeting rates there will be a greater chance that squeezes elsewhere will not affect delivery."

"Have a set rate and not fluctuate as its very hard for renters to pay a fluctuating rate each month"

Oppose water meters
n = 10

Oppose targeted rate
n = 8

Other themes from comments

Not previously mentioned



Invest in future-proof, high quality water infrastructure

n = 27

"I would rather council make investments large enough to do a high quality job that will last versus cutting corners and producing a poor job that inevitably needs to be revisited at additional cost."



Support water conservation/climate action/protect the river

n = 25

"We need to be looking at ways to sustain our awa, our water. Whatever actions go ahead, please ensure we don't continue to path of over consumption."



Critical of 'pet projects'/ wasteful spending, lack of trust in Council

n = 22

"Stop hitting us with massive rate hikes and start managing funds properly. Councils waste money on bloated salaries, failed projects, and endless consultants while basic services suffer."



Would have preferred more information

n = 14

"It's very hard to make an informed decision between the two as the general public doesn't know the full extent of the two options and the implications it can have on rate payers."

What's next for water engagement insights – individual submissions

Other themes from comments

Not previously mentioned



More councils should collaborate/be involved

n = 12

"To me joining up with other Councils is a no-brainer. (And, preferably, more than one). Things like this generally get economies of scale."



Support iwi and mana whenua involvement/ importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations

n = 10

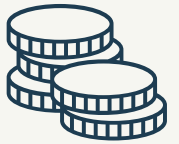
"Partnering with iwi strengthens decision-making, upholds Treaty obligations, and ensures that water governance reflects the needs of all people in the region."



Would like to see wider adoption of water tanks

n = 5

"The collection of water is vital, suburbs and country residents, must have water collection tanks."



Efficiency and cost-effectiveness are key

n = 5

"Must be delivered efficiently and with affordability being a key criteria."

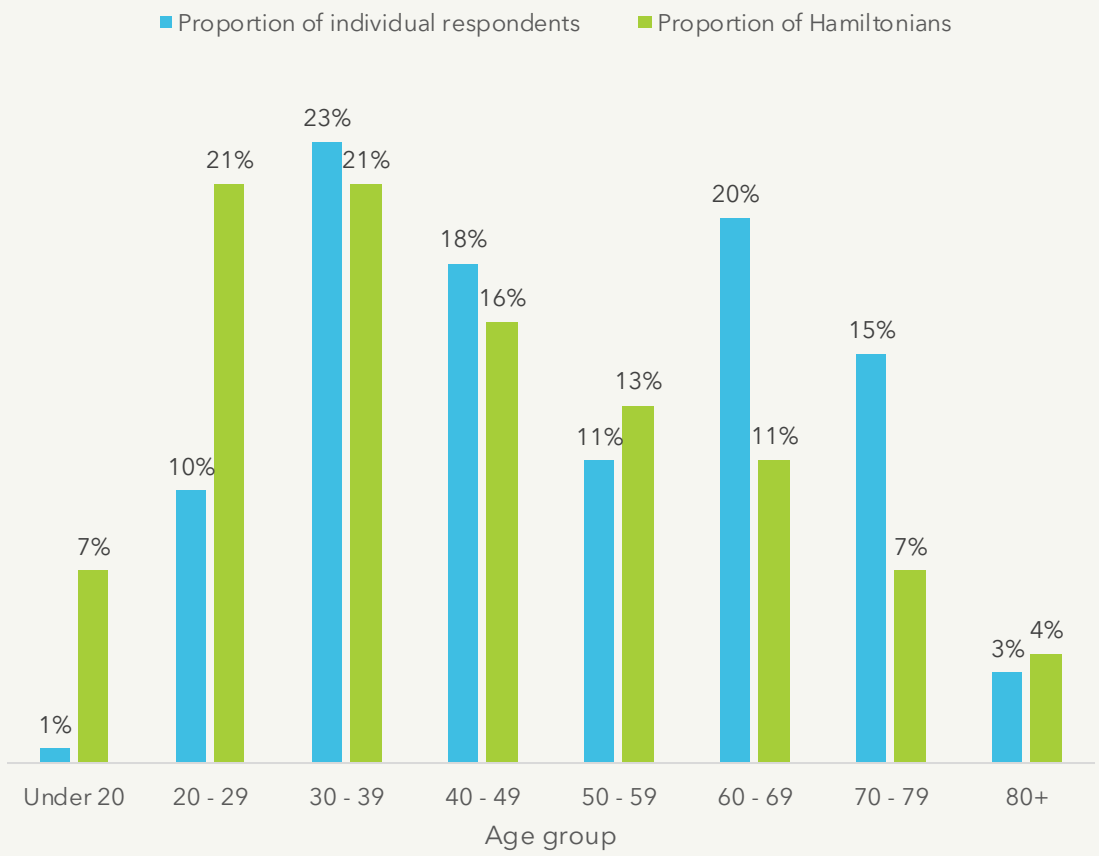
What's next for water engagement insights – individual submissions

Key findings

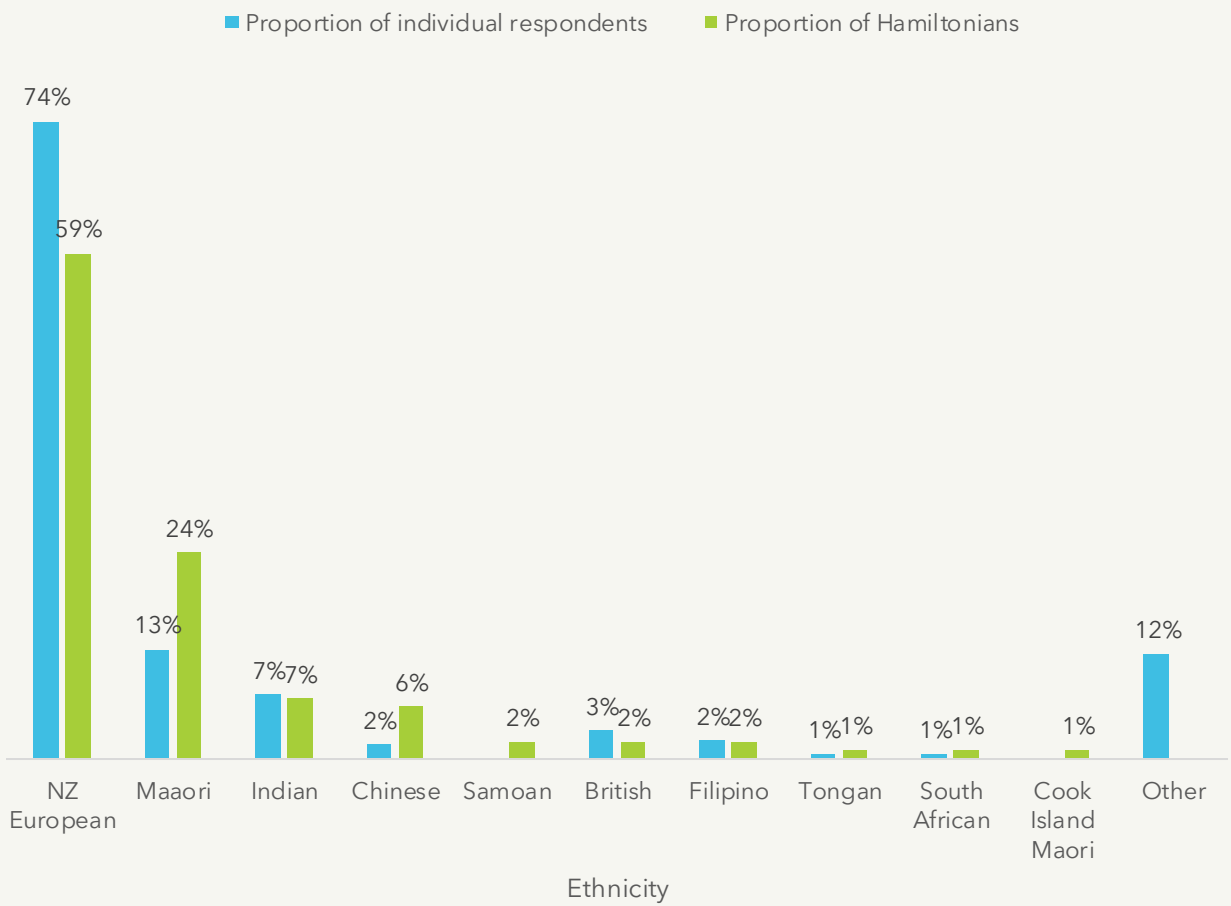
- We heard feedback from 209 respondents writing as individuals
- Most individuals (74%) support Council's preferred option, Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council
    - There was clear support from all age groups. Support for Option 1 was higher for respondents under the age of 40, and lower for respondents in their fifties
    - Support for Option 1 was higher for those East of the river (87%, 84 of the 97 respondents from East areas who noted their preferred option, supported Option 1) compared to those West of the river (78%, 56 of 72)
- Many respondents believed water is currently being provided for free
- Leaving aside those who think water is currently free, there is considerably more support for targeted rates than opposition to targeted rates
- Investment in high-quality and future-proof water infrastructure was important for respondents

About our respondents

Age representation



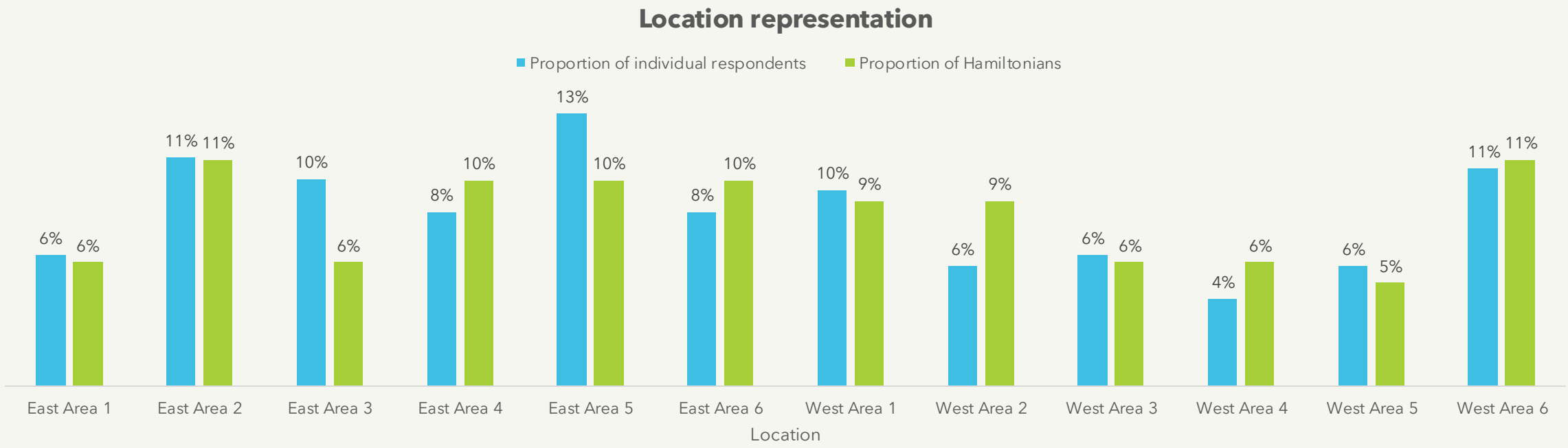
Ethnicity representation



182 of the 209 respondents disclosed their age.
188 disclosed their ethnicity.
Respondents could select more than one ethnicity.

What's next for water engagement insights – individual submissions

About our respondents



East Area 1	Flagstaff	West Area 1	Avalon, Beerescourt, Forest Lake, Pukete, St Andrews, Te Rapa
East Area 2	Callum Brae, Huntington, Rototuna, Rototuna North	West Area 2	Crawshaw, Grandview Heights, Nawton, Rotokauri, Western Heights
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East Area 6	Hillcrest, Ruakura, Riverlea, Silverdale	West Area 6	Bader, Deanwell, Fitzroy, Glenview, Melville, Peacocke

198 of the 209 respondents mentioned their location.
Of these, 189 live in Hamilton.

What's next for water engagement insights – individual submissions

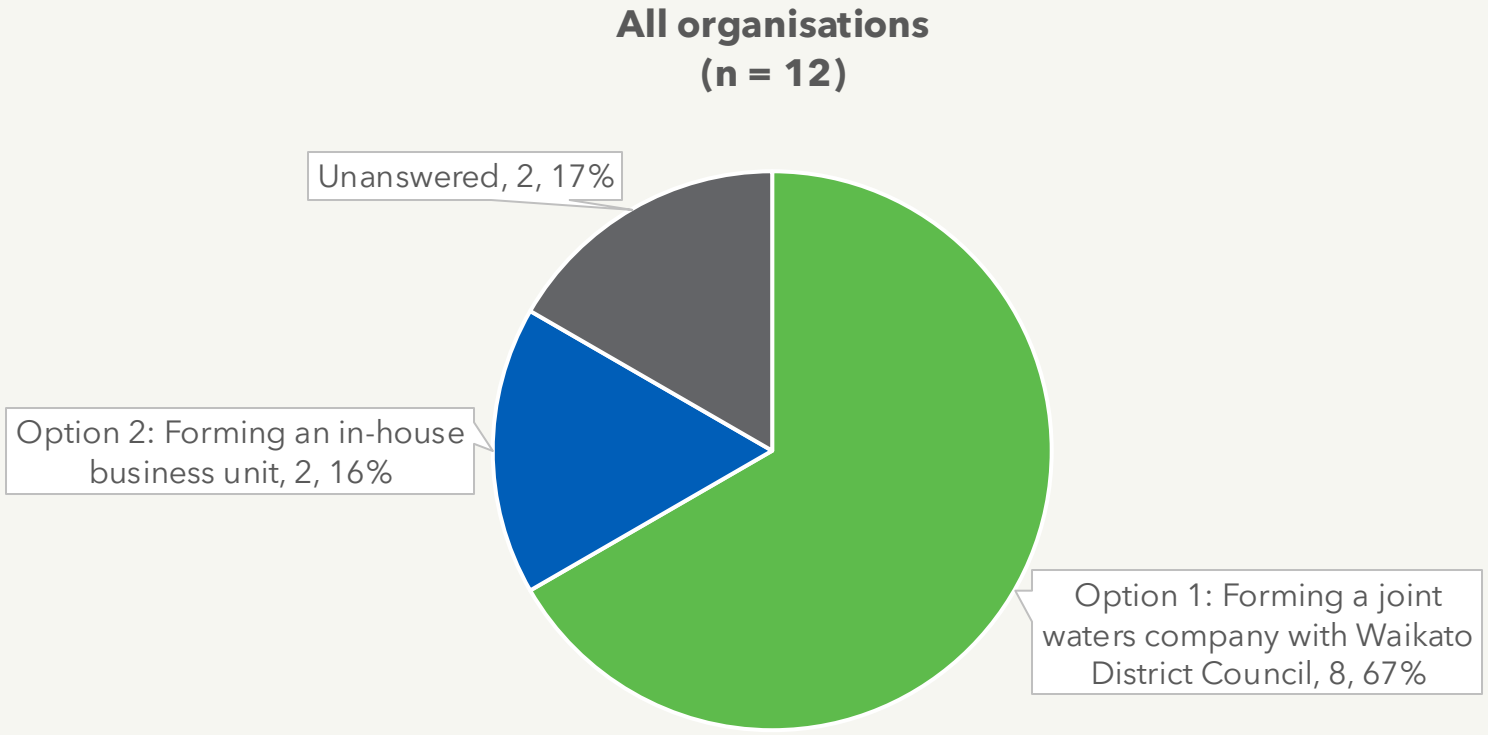
Submission insights

Organisation responses

Hamilton City Council
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa

Future of water services

"Which option do you think would be best suited to deliver waters services in the future?"



Future of water services

Response by organisation

Organisation name	Preferred option
Commercial & Industrial Consultants Ltd	Unanswered
Living Systems Development	Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council
Ngaati Wairere	Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council
Property Council New Zealand	Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council
Te Awa Lakes (TAL)	Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council
University of Waikato	Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council

Organisation name	Preferred option
Uri O Ngamurikaitaua	Option 2: Forming an in-house business unit
Waikato District Council	Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council
Waikato Environment Centre	Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council
Waikato Regional Council	Unanswered
Waikato Wellbeing Project	Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council
The WOW Factor™ War on Waste	Option 2: Forming an in-house business unit

Themes from comments



Support forming a joint waters company or oppose an in-house business unit

n = 7

"[We support] a joint waters company with the Waikato District Council. We see this as an opportunity to enable faster and more effective solutions to the three waters constraints within Hamilton."



Invest in future-proof, high quality water infrastructure

n = 6

"We also support a solution that will enable growth and development within the region, whilst addressing the critical need for future-focused infrastructure."



Support water conservation/climate action/protect the river

n = 5

"[Option 1] allows both councils to work together to protect 150km of the river, something we know is vitally important to both organisations."



Support iwi and mana whenua involvement/ importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations

n = 4

"Purchasing assets will be a right of first refusal to enable Waikato-Tainui options to right."

Key findings

- We heard feedback from 11 respondents writing on behalf of an organisation.
- Most organisational representatives (eight of 11) support Council's preferred option, Option 1: Forming a joint waters company with Waikato District Council.
- This is very similar to the views of individual submitters – 74% of individuals supported Option 1, compared to 67% of representatives of organisations.
- Common themes from comments were also similar to those made by individual respondents - support forming a joint waters company and the importance of investment in future-proof, high quality water infrastructure.
- Many submissions on behalf of organisations spoke to the organisation's area of expertise and included detailed recommendations and pieces of feedback that cannot easily be grouped into general themes.

Submission insights

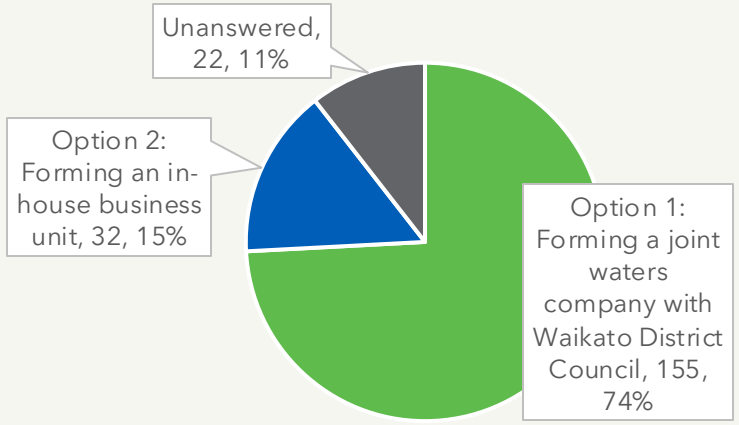
Verbal submitters

Hamilton City Council
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa

How do responses compare?

All submitters vs verbal submitters (individuals)

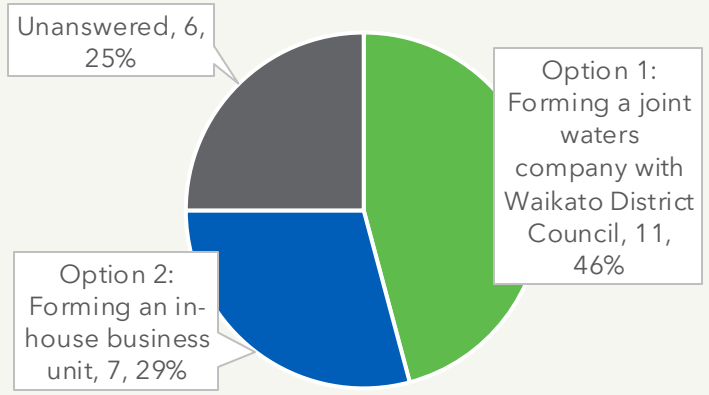
All individuals (n = 209)



Most common themes from comments:

- Believe water is currently free (n = 40)
- Supportive of water meters (n = 39)
- Invest in future-proof, high quality water infrastructure (n = 27).

Individuals wishing to speak to their submission (n = 24)



Most common themes from comments:

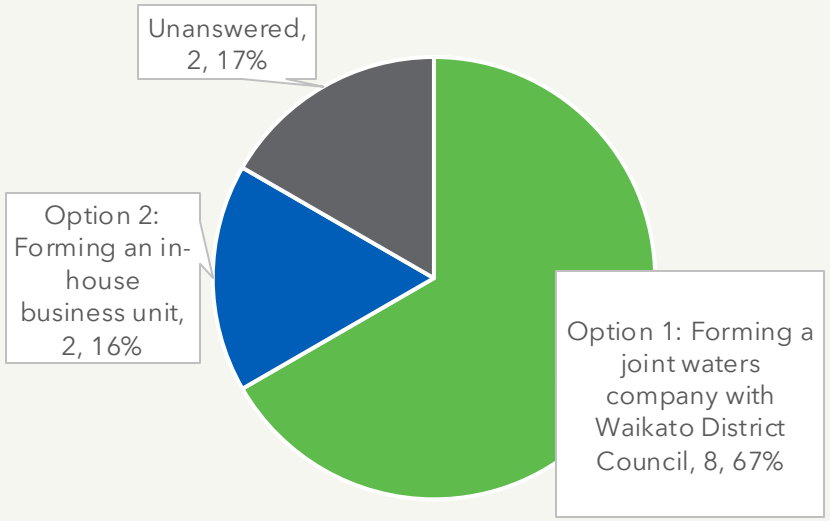
- Supportive of water meters (n = 7)
- Invest in future-proof, high quality water infrastructure (n = 6).

What's next for water engagement insights – verbal submissions

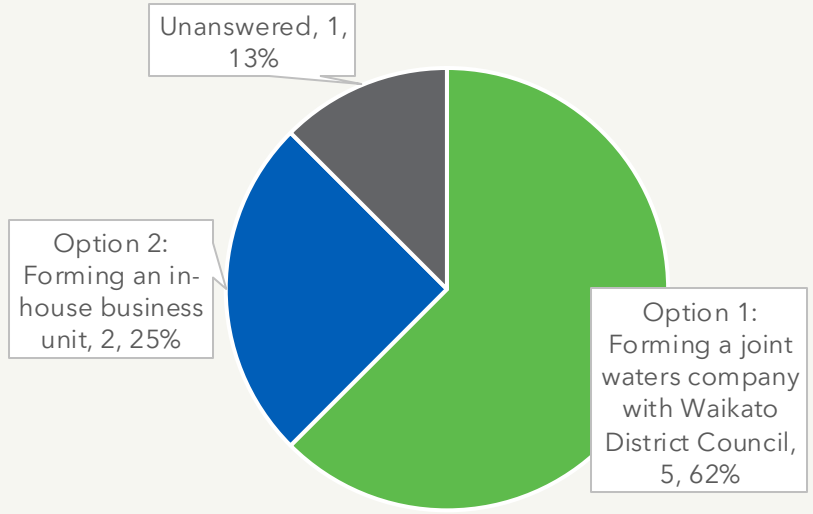
How do responses compare?

All submitters vs verbal submitters (organisations)

All organisations (n = 12)



Organisations wishing to speak to their submission (n = 8)



What's next for water engagement insights – verbal submissions

Engagement results

Hamilton City Council
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa

Engagement results

298,264 reached on social media

- Our social media mentioning the consultation reached a total of 298,264 users across eight posts.
  - Best performance: 64,671 users reached on a single post.
- TikToks about the consultation were viewed 162,852 times.
- We sent 3,037 emails to stakeholders and public sign-ups.

Aware (figures do not include awareness generated by other channels e.g. print media, drop-in sessions).

18,290 views across our waters' website pages

- The main 'Next for Water' webpage was viewed 11,395 times
  - Google ads links were clicked 10,652 times
  - Social media links were clicked 2,940 times
  - Our QR codes were scanned 276 times.
- Our social media was engaged with 1,091 times.

Engaged

221 total submissions

- 1,427 users visited the survey page.
- 217 (15%) completed the digital feedback form online.
- Four provided submissions in an alternative way (email, hardcopy).

Activated

What's next for water engagement insights

Themes from social media

- Facebook gathered more comments than on other platforms such as TikTok and LinkedIn
- Very few comments related to the CCO or in-house business option across platforms
- Comments from Facebook tended to be more negative than official submissions

The most common themes from the comments on Meta (Facebook and Instagram posts) were:



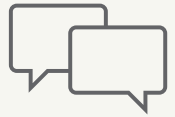
Belief water is currently free



Concern regarding potential of water meters



Critical of 'pet projects'/ wasteful spending, lack of trust in Council



Critical of the consultation process

What's next?

Community consultation

24 March – 27 April

Hearings for verbal submissions

6 May

Deliberations

29 **May**

Final decision

29 May

Hamilton City Council
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa