



WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM 2013

A Colmar Brunton Report

Wellington City Council and other councils have been seeking public feedback on a plan for local government reform in the region. As part of this process a leaflet called “Wellington—Your Choice” was distributed. The leaflet describes various models of regional governance—in particular a single-tier model, a two-tier model and the status quo. The public were invited to make submissions on these models.

Submission processes, like those used by the Council, play a crucial role in making decisions about change in the region. However, the people that make submissions are sometimes very passionate about the issues at stake and their views may not represent the wider populace. As such, Wellington City Council commissioned Colmar Brunton to carry out an online survey of Wellington City residents to explore their views on the governance structures covered in the submission documents. We asked a representative sample of 503 residents to complete the online survey which covered the same questions included in the governance submission form.

This report contains the results for the survey and includes analyses aimed at exploring Wellingtonians views of local governance and measuring their preference for local government models in the region. Conclusions and key statistics are provided in the summary on the following pages.



Over half of residents agree that the structure of local government should change.

- Fifty-two percent of residents said they either strongly agreed or agreed that the current structure of local government in Wellington should change. These residents hold this view because they think there are currently too many councils and an amalgamated Council could offer financial efficiencies. Only 15% disagree that the structure needs to change and 30% are neutral.

Wellington residents prefer the Single-tier model of local government.

- Forty-three percent of residents prefer the Single-tier model, 37% prefer the Two-tier model and 18% prefer the Status quo.
 - Those residents who prefer the Single-tier model tend to hold their preference more strongly (25%) than residents who prefer the Two-tier model (5%).
 - If change were inevitable (in other words, if residents had to choose an option apart from the status quo), 50% of residents would prefer the Single-tier model, 46% would prefer the Two-tier model and 4% would prefer another model entirely.
- There is a link between pre-existing awareness of the local government models and preference. Those who have some awareness of the models tend to prefer the Single-tier model (47%) over the Two-tier model (35%). Whereas, residents who are unaware of the models prefer the Two-tier model (42%) over the Single-tier model (34%).
- Residents mainly associate important features of local government with the Single-tier model (rather than with the Two-tier model), except for offering a local voice which is strongly associated with the Two-tier model.
- Belief in the importance of economic development and key infrastructure drives desire for change, whereas belief that 'local voice' is important is strongly associated with a desire for the status quo.
- Almost one half (49%) of Wellington residents say they think the Wairarapa should be excluded from a reformed local government structure (only 29% say they think it *should* be included and 22% are unsure).

- Five hundred and three Wellington City residents completed the survey online between 22 and 26 April 2013.
- All respondents are members of Colmar Brunton's online panel. The sample was drawn in proportion to Statistics New Zealand age by gender counts for Wellington City residents.
- The questions in the survey were a replication of the Council's submission document and adapted for use as an online survey by Colmar Brunton.
- The average duration for respondents to complete the survey was 11 minutes and 22 seconds.
- The sample includes both ratepayers (68%) and non-ratepayers (30%; a further 2% were unsure if someone in their residence paid rates).
- All subgroup differences mentioned in this report are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.



503
online
interviews



22-26
April 2013



Average
duration:
11min, 22
sec



68%
ratepayers,
30% non-
ratepayers



RESIDENTS' PREFERENCES FOR CHANGE

Absolutely

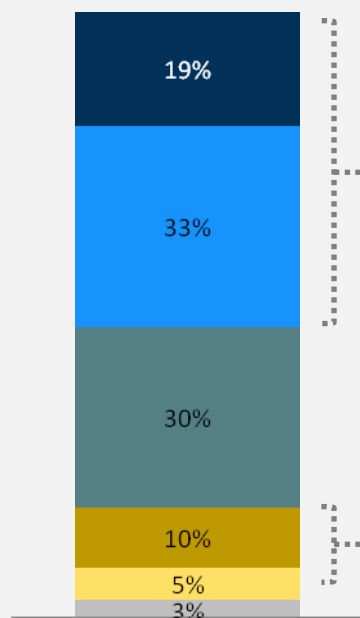
POSITIVELY

ME HEKE KI PŌNEKE
WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Wellington

Over half (52%) of residents agree that the current local governance structure needs to change

How much do you agree or disagree that the current local governance structure needs change?



- Don't know
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

More than half of residents (52%) agree that the structure of local governance needs change. The main reasons for change are:

- Residents believe that there are currently too many councils (33%)
- The cost or financial efficiencies gained from amalgamation (30%)
- Residents believe that there is a need for regional leadership (17%)

Fewer than 1 in 5 residents (15%) disagree that the structure of local governance should change. The main reasons not to change are:

- Residents fear that a loss of 'local voice' or local perspective (30%)
- Residents believe that current structure is working fine (29%)
- Residents fear that a 'one size fits all' approach will not work for everyone in the region (12%)

What do residents say?: Quotes from those who favour change to local governance

“ To make decision making in the region more streamlined and have less bureaucracy holding up progress of economic development. ”

“ Too much duplication of services and numbers of people representing small numbers of people, too much bureaucracy to over come to get Planning Decisions for example. ”

“ Strong leadership and well informed are needed so the region can move ahead. ”

“ Too many cooks spoil the broth. A simpler structure will hopefully make decision making simpler ”

What do residents say?: Quotes from those who oppose change to local governance

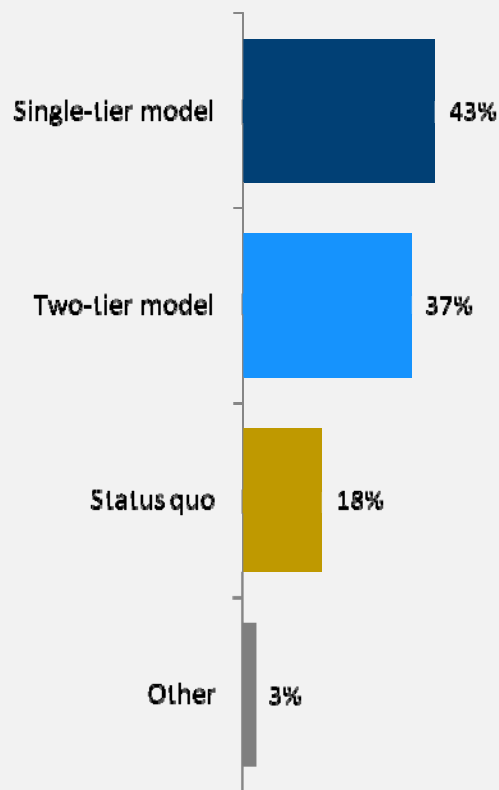
“ Wellington's current city councils are all quite different from each other, socially and geographically. ... there would be little or no benefit from them merging. ”

“ The Wellington region is working well now. A larger Council won't achieve efficiency gains... A larger council will be less democratic and responsive to local conditions. ”

“ The city would lose it's suburb identities and 'voice', and current cities would lose the same. There would also be too much emphasis on big projects (that would be over-budgeted and under-delivered), as well as smaller projects losing out (i.e. local parks and services). ”

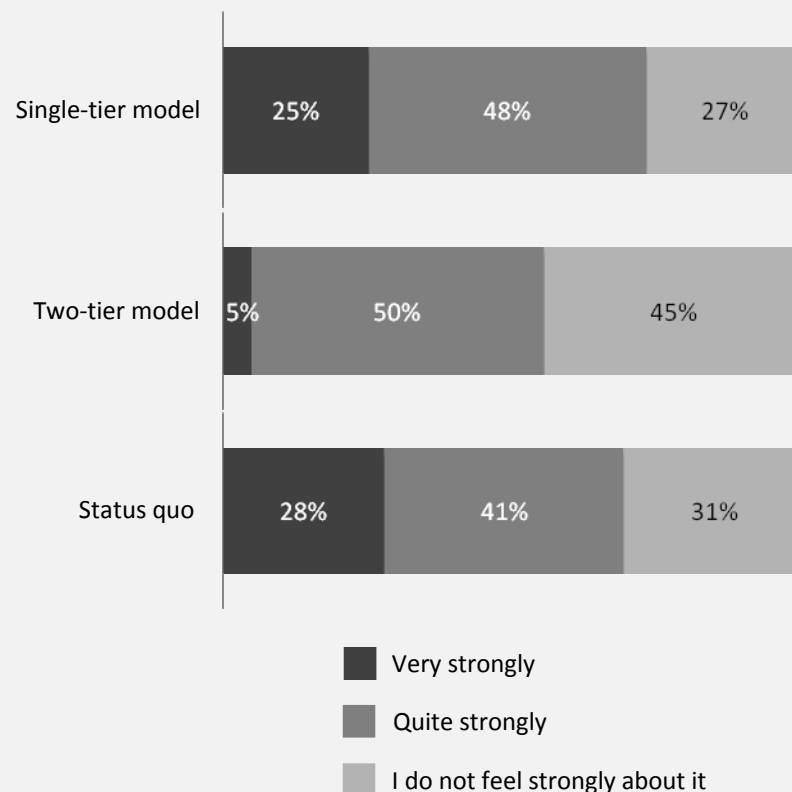
Eight in ten residents would prefer one of the two newly proposed models— 43% would prefer the Single-tier and 37% would prefer the Two-tier model

Which model do you prefer for local government in the Wellington region?



Source: B5. Which do you prefer for local government in the Wellington region?
Base: All residents (n=503)

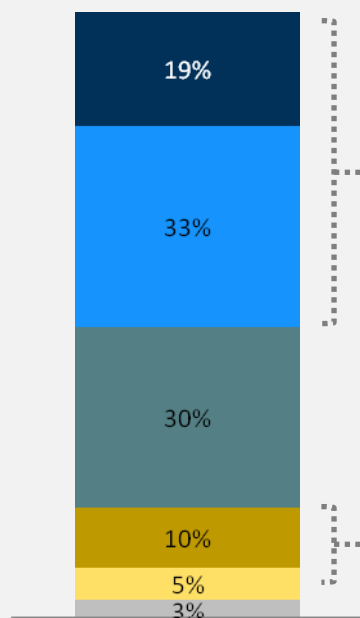
How strongly do you feel about your preference?



Source: B5b. How strongly do you feel about your preference?
Base: Residents who prefer the Single-tier model (n=216), the Two-tier model (n=187), and the Status quo (n=90)

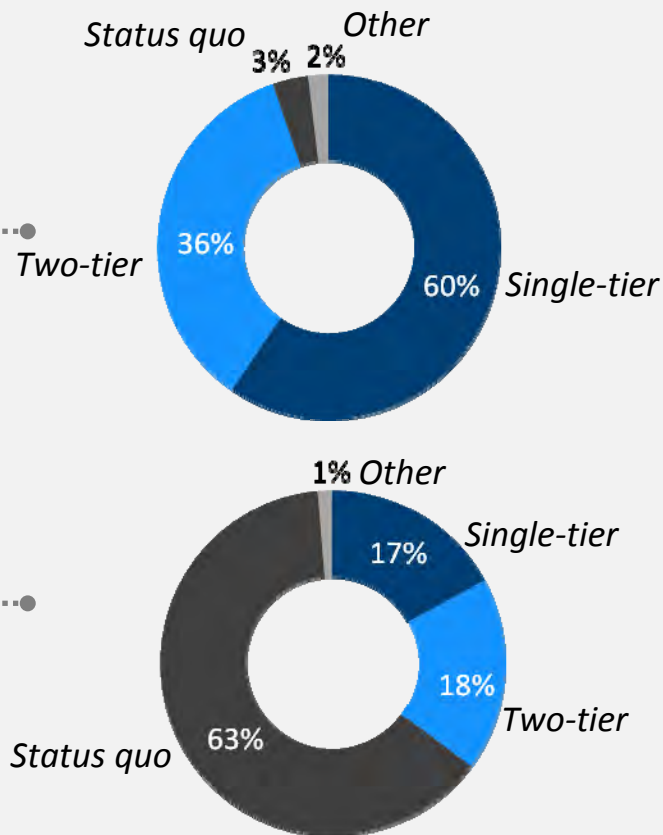
60% of residents who want change would prefer the Single-tier model. 36% of residents, who initially did not support change, would prefer one of the models once the models have been described to them in the survey.

How much do you agree or disagree that the current local governance structure needs change?



- Don't know
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

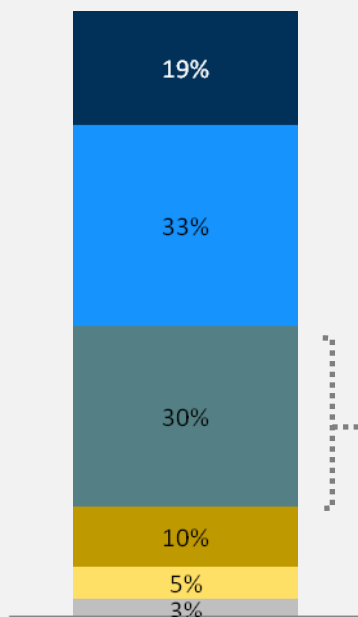
Which model do you prefer for local government in the Wellington region?



Source: B5. Which do you prefer for local government in the Wellington region?
Base: Residents who Agree that local governance should change (n=26); and those who disagree (n=76)

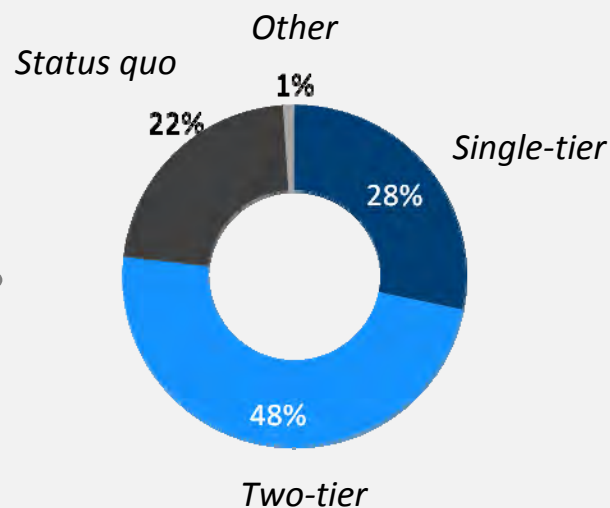
Whereas those who are neutral about the need for change tend to support a Two-tier model when asked to review the models (48%).

How much do you agree or disagree that the current local governance structure needs change?



- Don't know
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Which model do you prefer for local government in the Wellington region?



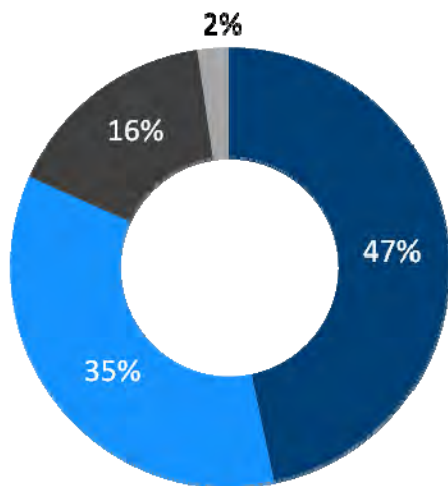
Source: B5. Which do you prefer for local government in the Wellington region?

Base: Residents who are neutral on the need for change

Residents who are already aware of the proposed local government models tend to prefer the Single-tier model, but those who are not aware tend to prefer the Two-tier model

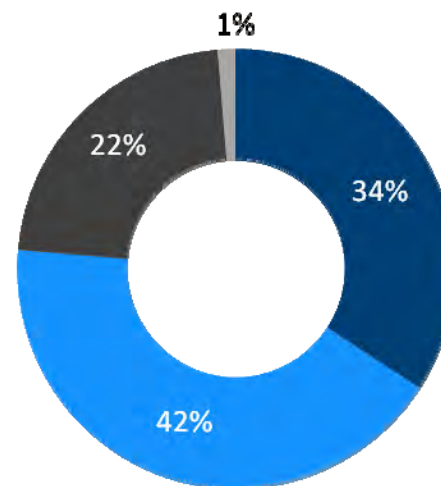
Pre-existing awareness of local government models is associated with a preference for a Single-tier model

Aware of at least one of the models



Base: All aware of at least one of the two models (n=348)

Not aware of either model



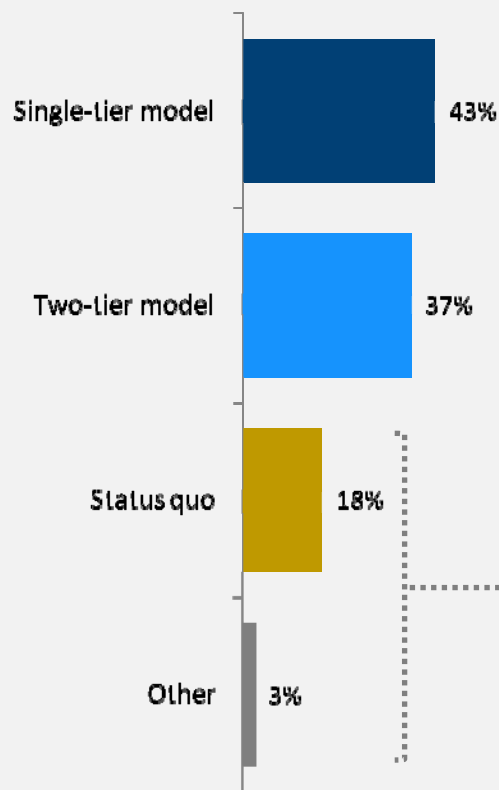
Base: not aware of the models prior to doing the survey (n=152)

- Prefer the Single-tier model
- Prefer the Two-tier model
- Prefer the Status quo
- Prefer another model

Note: awareness of only one model (which is rare at 3%) is not associated with preference towards it.

If change were inevitable, those who prefer the Status quo or another model are more likely to prefer the Two-tier model

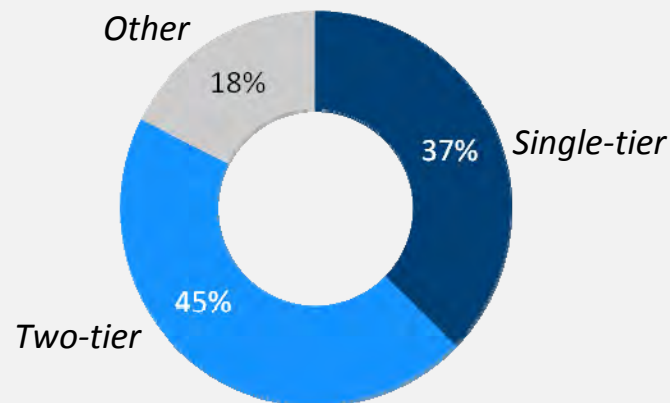
Which model do you prefer for local government in the Wellington region?



Source: B5. Which do you prefer for local government in the Wellington region?

Base: All residents (n=503)

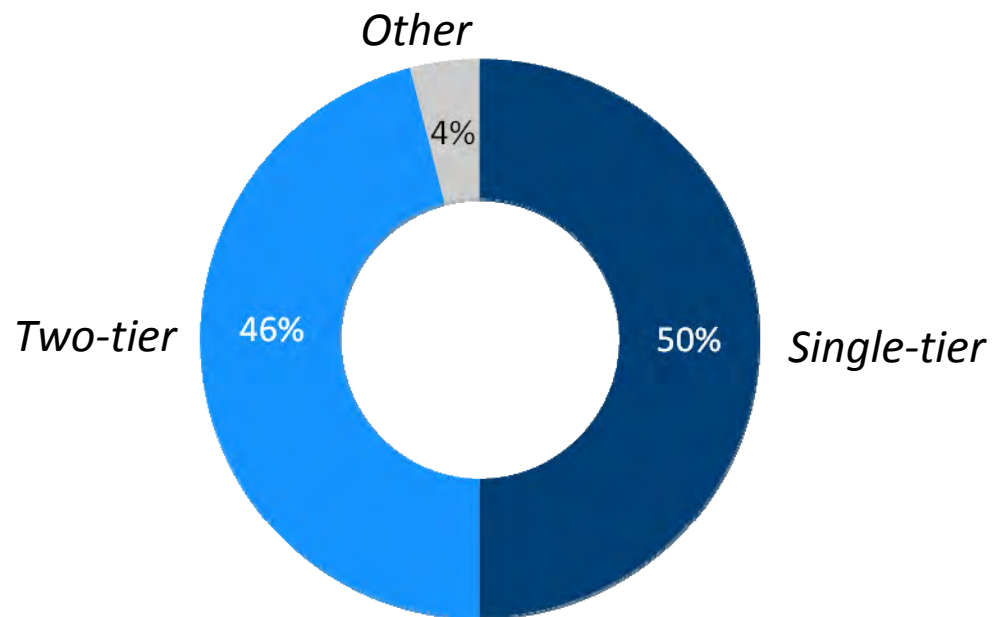
Which local government model would they prefer if they had to choose?



Source: B9. Please imagine a scenario where local government had to re-organise and could not remain the same. This scenario may not occur, but if it did, we would be interested to see which option you prefer. If change had to occur you would prefer...

Base: Residents who prefer the status quo or another model (n=102)

Taken as a whole, if change were inevitable, half of residents would prefer the Single-tier model, 46% would prefer the Two-tier model and 4% would prefer another model





RESIDENTS' VIEWS OF THE REFORM FEATURES

Absolutely
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WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL **Wellington**

Residents rank 'Key infrastructure planned and delivered in an integrated way' and 'Services delivered as efficiently as possible' as the most important reform features

Importance rankings of local government reform features

Average ranking score (from 0-100)



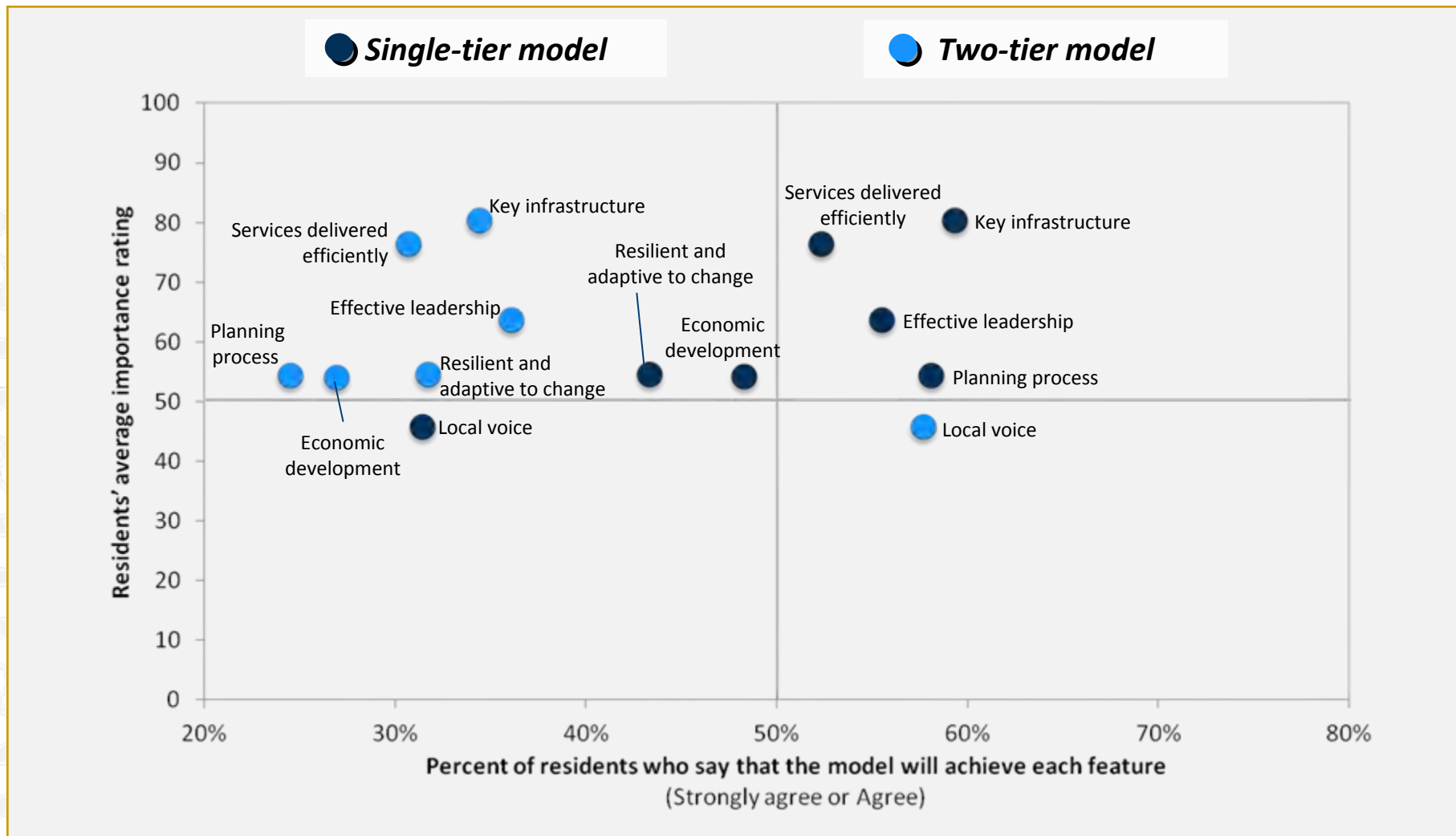
Percent who say that the feature is...
most important least important

Key infrastructure planned and delivered in an integrated way	38%	3%
Services delivered as efficiently as possible	22%	4%
Effective leadership for your region	10%	9%
Ensuring your region is resilient and adaptive to changing circumstances	8%	18%
A simple and effective planning process	3%	17%
An effective and integrated approach to economic development	7%	18%
A local voice and access to decision making about your community	12%	31%

Source: A3 Please imagine that [insert most important] represents 100 because it is the most important, and [insert least important] represents 0 because it is the least important. Now please think about each remaining item below and assign each one a value from 1 to 99 depending on how important it is.

Base: All residents (n=503)

Residents mainly associate important features of local government with the Single-tier model (rather than with the Two-tier model), except for offering a local voice

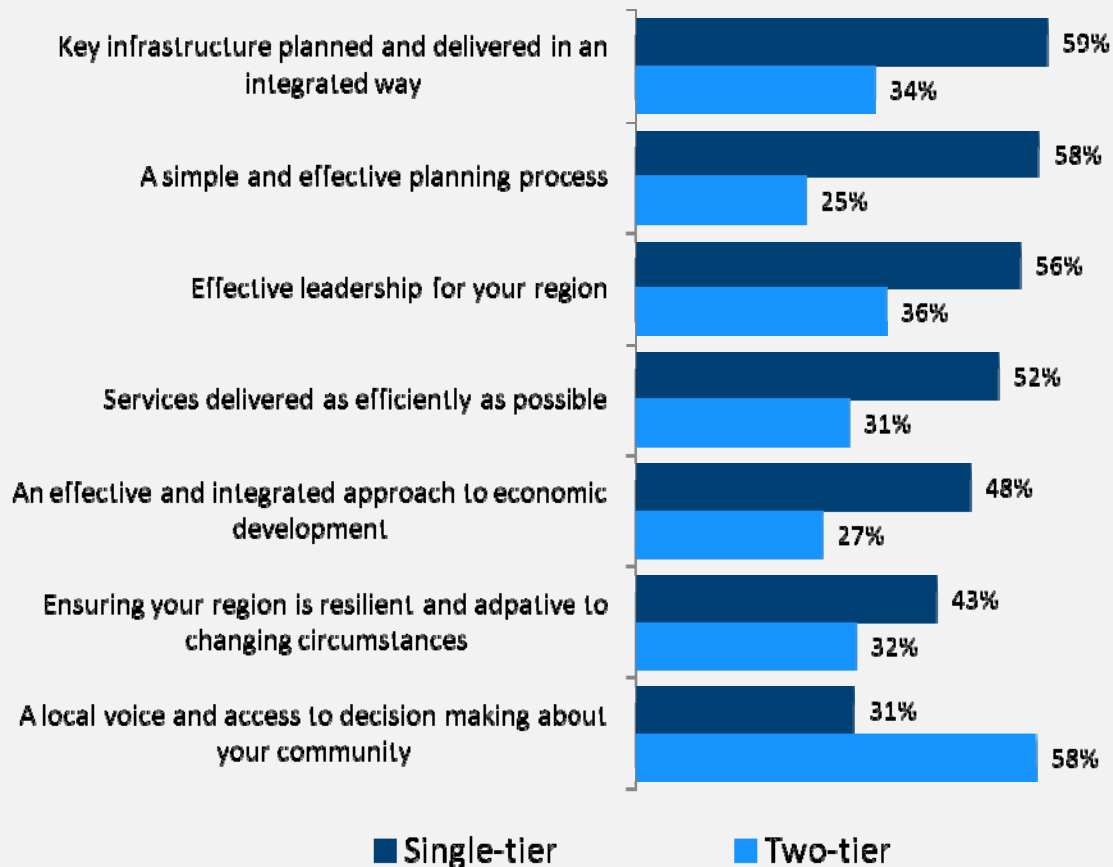


Source: A1. We'd like you to think about the future of local government in the region. Which of these is **most important to you**?; Bloop. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree that each model will deliver...

Base: All residents (n=503)

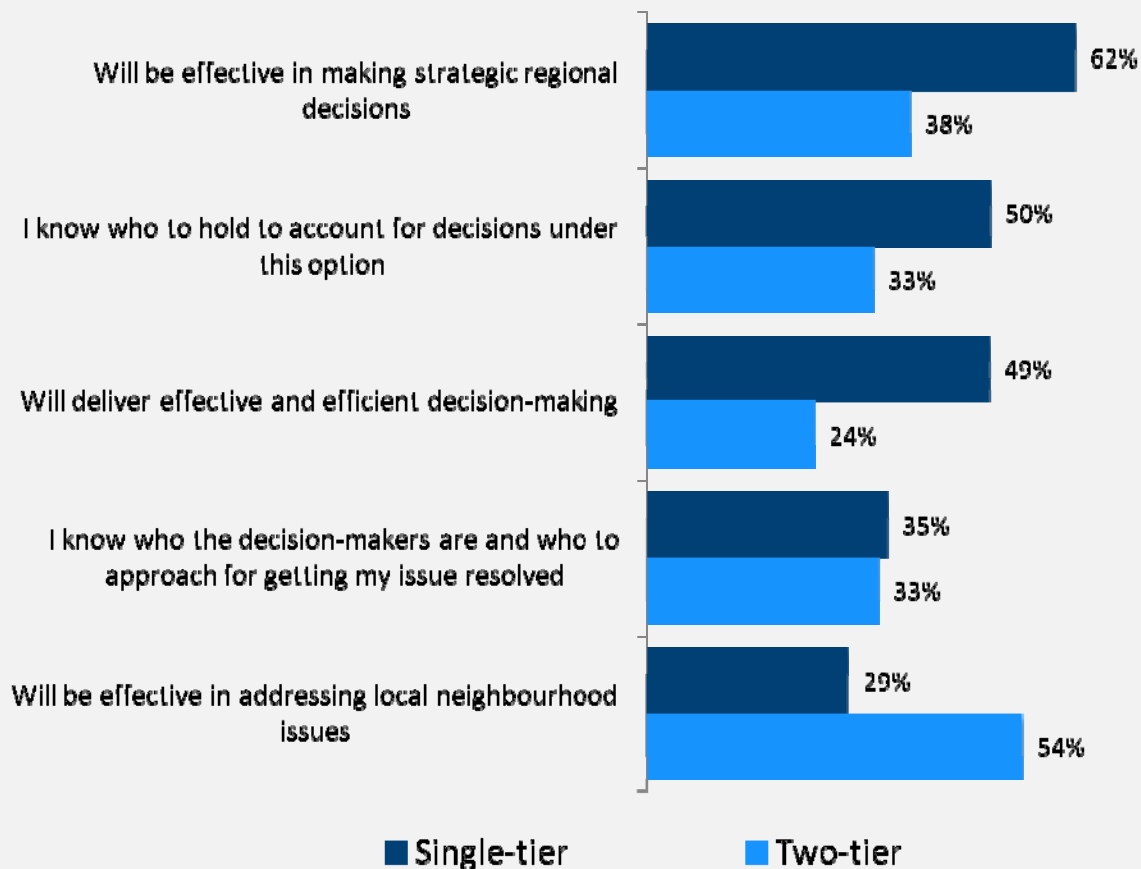
Residents say that the Single-tier model is more likely to deliver all reform features than the Two-tier model, except providing a local voice

*How much do you agree that each model will deliver...?
 (percent who strongly agree or agree)*



More residents agree that the Single-tier model will be effective for regional decision-making, knowing who to hold to account and delivering effective decision-making compared to the Two-tier model

*How much do you agree that each model will deliver...?
(percent who strongly agree or agree)*





AWARENESS OF THE REFORM MODELS

Absolutely

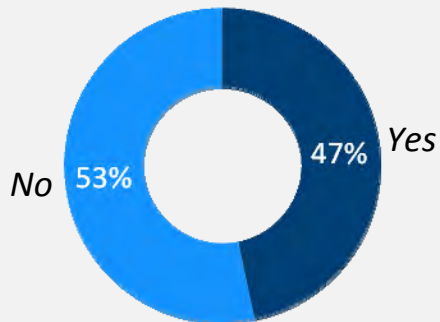
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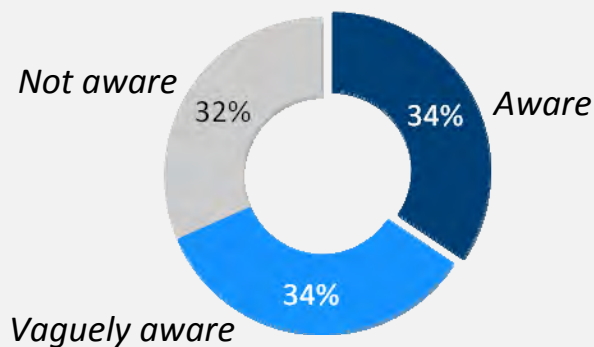
Just under half of residents have seen the leaflet that explains the different models. Slightly more residents are aware of the single-tier model than the two-tier model.

Recall seeing the leaflet outlining options for local governance

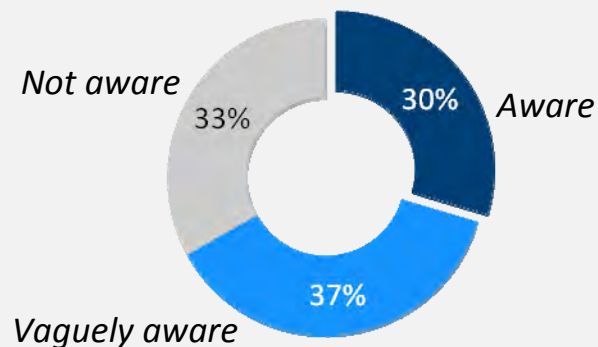


Residents' awareness of the single- and two-tier models

Single-tier model



Two-tier model



Source: B1. Do you recall seeing a leaflet entitled 'Wellington: Your Choice – options for local governance'. An image of the leaflet is included below. B2. Before doing this survey today, how aware were you of each of these two options?

Base: All residents (n=503)



INCLUSION OF THE WAIRARAPA

Absolutely

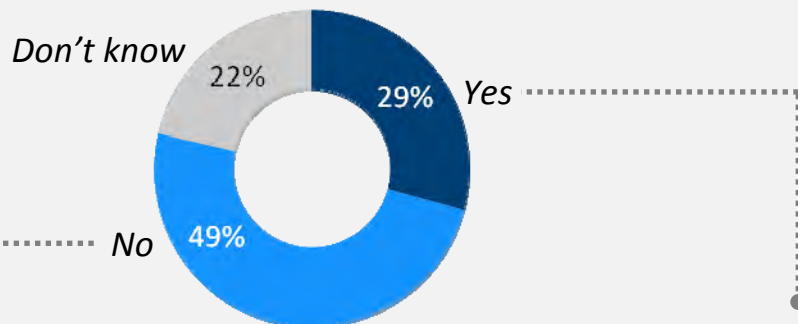
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WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Wellington

Slightly less than half of residents *do not* think that the Wairarapa should be included in a reformed regional council

Should the Wairarapa be included in a regional council?



The main reasons why residents say Wairarapa should not be included:

- Wairarapa is not sufficiently close geographically to include (37%)
- Wellington and Wairarapa have different issues and priorities (27%)
- Wairarapa is a rural area and Wellington is an urban area (13%)
- Wairarapa is a region or province in its own right (10%)

The main reasons why residents say Wairarapa should be included:

- Wellington and Wairarapa are part of the same region, therefore should share a Council (25%)
- Wellington and Wairarapa share similar issues and priorities (18%)
- Wairarapa is geographically close to Wellington and should be included (14%)
- By including the Wairarapa, it would increase economic benefits across the region (7%)

Source: B7. Regardless of whether or not you prefer change, if change did happen, do you believe the Wairarapa should be included or not included in a regional council for the region?

Base: All residents (n=503)



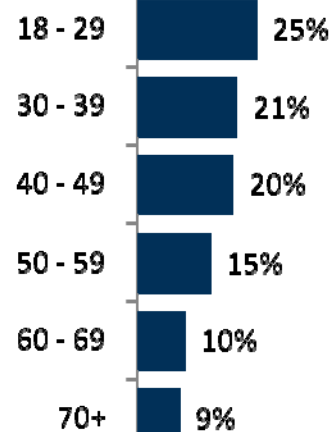
RESPONDENT PROFILES

APPENDIX

GENDER



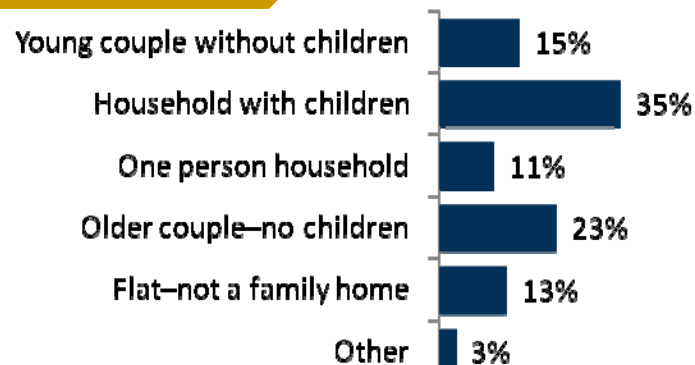
AGE



RATEPAYER STATUS



HOUSEHOLD STATUS



HOUSEHOLD INCOME

