



Waipapa
Taumata Rau
**University
of Auckland**

Auckland @15: Shaping the next fifteen years

A snapshot of public views via Pol.is



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What is Pol.is?

- A ‘wiki-survey’ tool – an interactive survey developed by a community of participants
- Participants contribute by voting on statements (agree/disagree/pass) and by adding their own statements for others to vote on. Those who vote similarly on multiple statements are grouped together to form an ‘opinion group’
- Automated opinion mapping finds areas of common ground while also identifying differences between opinion groups
- Pol.is helps identify the different ways people think about issues that affect them and their communities



**Input Crowd,
Output Meaning**



What was the conversation about?

It has been **15 years since the Auckland Super City was established** through the amalgamation of Auckland's seven territorial local authorities and one regional authority. The creation of a city-region was designed to address the difficulties of coordinating and aligning leadership and strategic planning, and enhancing political accountability.

The changes created NZ's largest metropolitan area with a governance structure responsible for region-wide planning and service provision. The goals were to provide:

- Strong regional leadership (establishing a mayoral office) and a cohesive voice representing Auckland
- Joined-up strategic development on region-level initiatives
- Economies of scale in administrative efficiency and service delivery
- Enhance political accountability, improved transparency and decision-making
- Better connection with Auckland public to ensure community interests are represented while maintaining Auckland-wide governance

This public conversation was about looking back at what has been achieved, and importantly – looking forward to what Aucklanders want to see for the future.



Recruitment

Recruitment for the Pol.is survey was primarily via email using the Complex Conversations database, encompassing around 2,500 Auckland-based individuals who previously expressed interest in participating in projects and deliberative conversations run by the Complex Conversations group.

Broader invitations to join the conversation were made via partner databases and social media. People were also encouraged to share the survey link with others.

The survey was open to people who live (or have lived) in Auckland over the past 15 years.

Framing the conversation

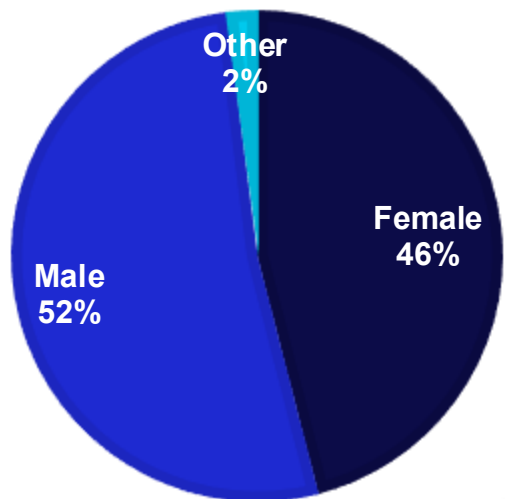
A set of 25 seed statements were entered to start the conversation. These related to how the Super City has fared with regard to issues such as:

- Governance and decision-making
- Public voice and engagement
- Planning and infrastructure
- Business and innovation
- Culture and diversity
- Housing and transport
- Environment and sustainability
- Tourism and amenities

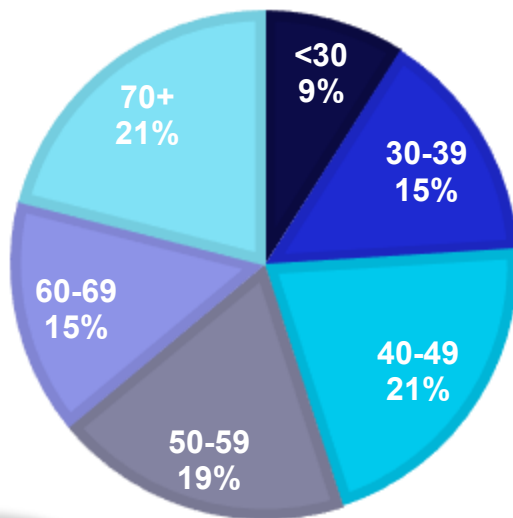
The participants voted on these statements and were prompted to add their own ideas for others to vote on, creating an evolving conversation.

Who participated?*

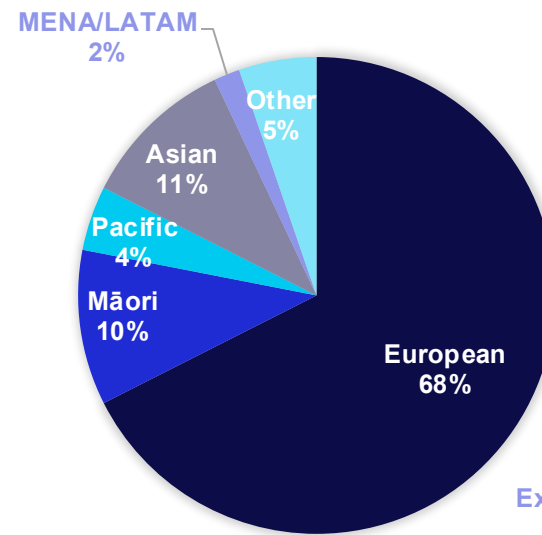
GENDER



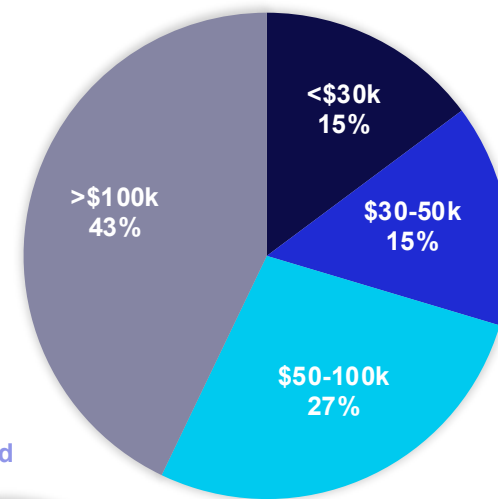
AGE



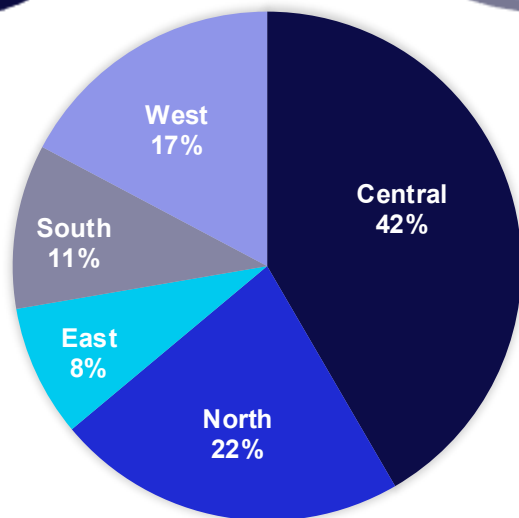
ETHNICITY



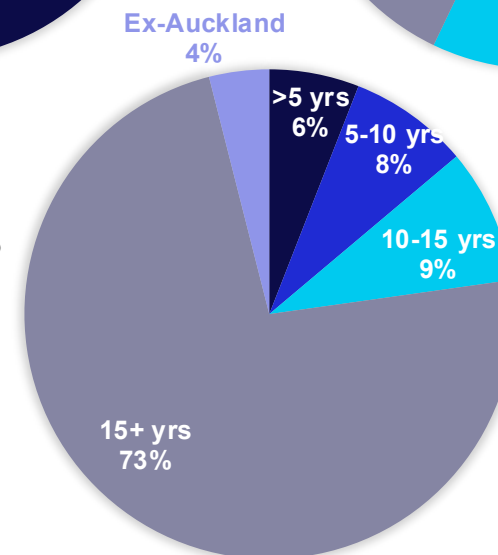
INCOME



WHERE IN AUCKLAND DO THEY LIVE?



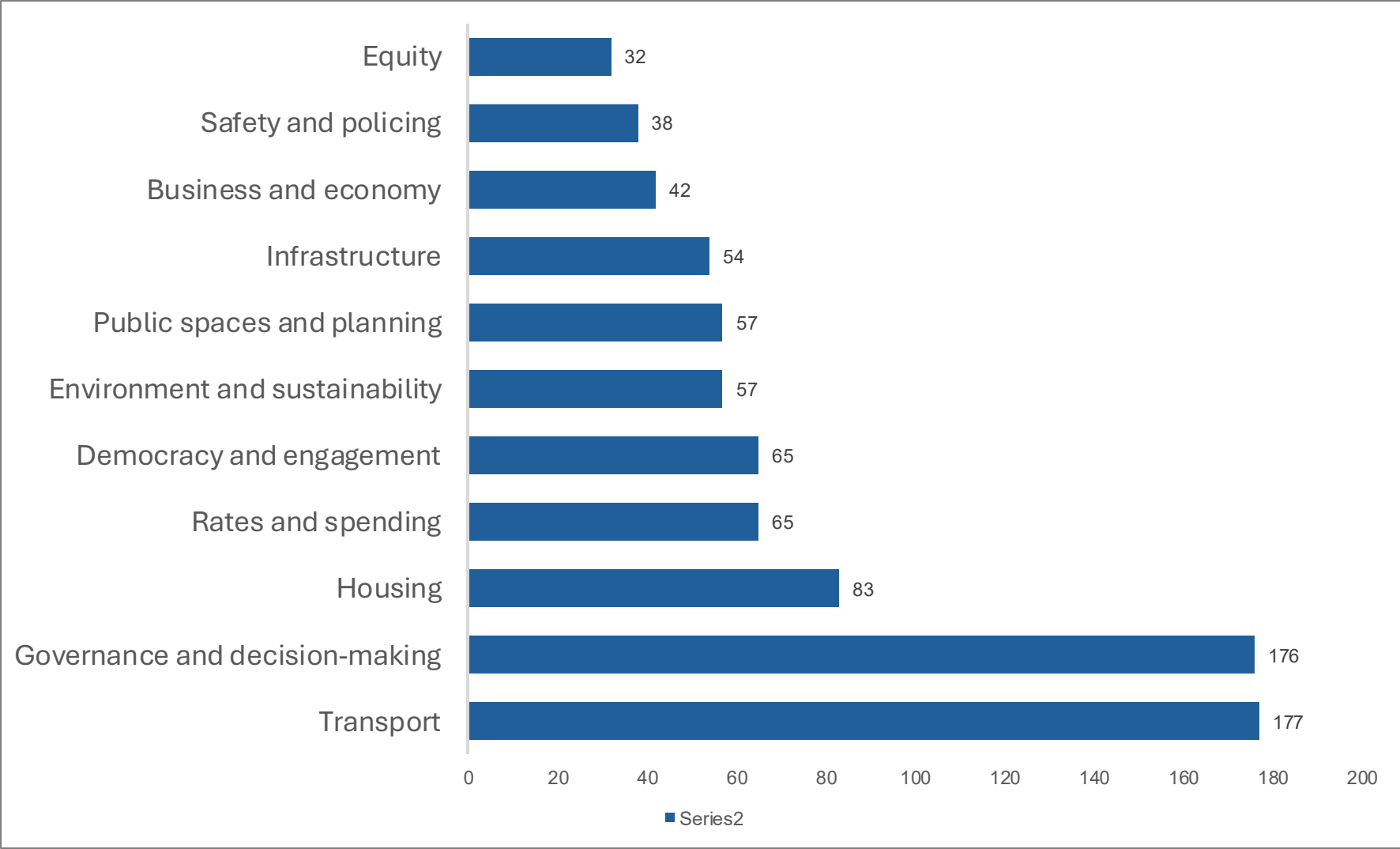
HOW LONG HAVE THEY LIVED HERE?



*The survey was open to people who live (or have lived) in Auckland over the past 15 years

What did they talk about?

Frequency of statements submitted by participants relating to various themes



Participant engagement

575

people
voted

512

people
grouped

46,469

votes were
cast

950

statements were
submitted

80.82

votes per voter on
average

1.71

statements per author
on average

Opinion groups

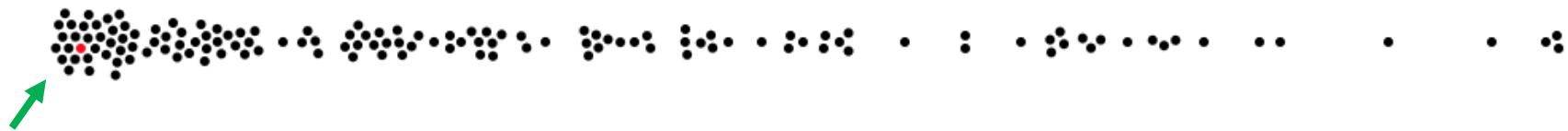
Across 512 total participants, 2 opinion groups emerged. There are two factors that define an opinion group. First, each opinion group is made up of a number of ***participants who tended to vote similarly*** on multiple statements. Second, each group of participants who voted similarly will have ***also voted distinctly differently from other groups***.

Group A: 146 participants

Group B: 366 participants

These two distinct groups differed most notably on urban development, transportation priorities, and cultural values across Auckland.

The Pol.is platform shows how unifying or divisive the conversation is. The dots below represent statements which sit along a spectrum from 'consensus' to 'divisive'. Examples from each end of the spectrum are highlighted.



Many submitted statements showed agreement between groups, based on voting patterns

Consensus statements		Divisive statements	
STATEMENT	OVERALL	A 146	B 366
335 Infill housing development needs to be balanced with green spaces and community amenities	91% 4% 4% (241)	87% 7% 5% (70)	92% 2% 4% (171)

91% of voters agreed that densification needs to be balanced with green spaces and community amenities



Other statements elicited very divergent voting patterns between groups

Consensus statements		Divisive statements	
STATEMENT	OVERALL	A 146	B 366
70 Aucklanders prefer private transport, we understand this means congestion but will live with it to live our lives as we wish	28% 63% 8% (384)	64% 25% 10% (125)	10% 81% 8% (259)

63% of voters disagreed that Aucklanders prefer private transport and could live with congestion, BUT opinion groups differed radically, with 81% of group B disagreeing, compare with only 25% of group A



What did they agree on?

There was overall consensus on a range of topics, with both groups agreeing on the need for:

- Preserving and enhancing the natural environment - harbours, parks, regional parks and urban greenery
- Enabling densification with appropriate infrastructure, including green spaces, built centrally or near transport hubs
- Addressing climate resilience and flooding
- Improving transport*
- Strategic infrastructure planning beyond political cycles
- Strategic planning for Auckland as a hub of innovation to support NZ's economy

*While both groups agreed on the importance of transport for Auckland, they disagreed markedly on what needs to be done

What made the opinion groups distinct?

Group A consistently prioritized traditional development patterns, individual car usage, and expressed concerns about safety and fiscal restraint, while Group B emphasized sustainability, density, cultural diversity, and collective infrastructure investment.

	STATEMENT	OVERALL (512)	GROUP A (146)	GROUP B (366)
18	Auckland is making progress on sustainability, but we need stronger action on climate change and resilience.	 70% 21% 8% (418)	 28% 60% 10% (135)	 90% 2% 7% (283)
56	Diversity is our strength.	 74% 17% 8% (393)	 42% 44% 13% (133)	 90% 3% 6% (260)
132	Defer non-essential projects for a few years to reduce loans. We are spending too much on interest repayments as a proportion of total spend	 34% 39% 25% (369)	 72% 11% 16% (118)	 17% 52% 29% (251)

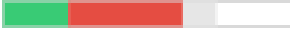
Culture and representation

Cultural perspectives also sharply divided the groups, with Group B showing strong support for diversity, Māori representation, and arts funding, while Group A expressed more scepticism toward these priorities.

STATEMENT		OVERALL (512)	GROUP A (146)	GROUP B (366)
49	Nearly a quarter of New Zealand's Māori population live in Auckland, there should be better representation on Auckland Council for māori	55% 29% 14% (397)	16% 73% 9% (132)	75% 7% 16% (265)
329	Auckland CBD needs more visible demonstrations of our world famous, highly admired Maori culture	59% 27% 13% (305)	21% 65% 13% (98)	77% 9% 13% (207)
14	Auckland's arts, cultural, and events sector needs more investment to compete globally.	63% 20% 16% (414)	37% 47% 14% (135)	75% 7% 17% (279)

Disagreement on transport

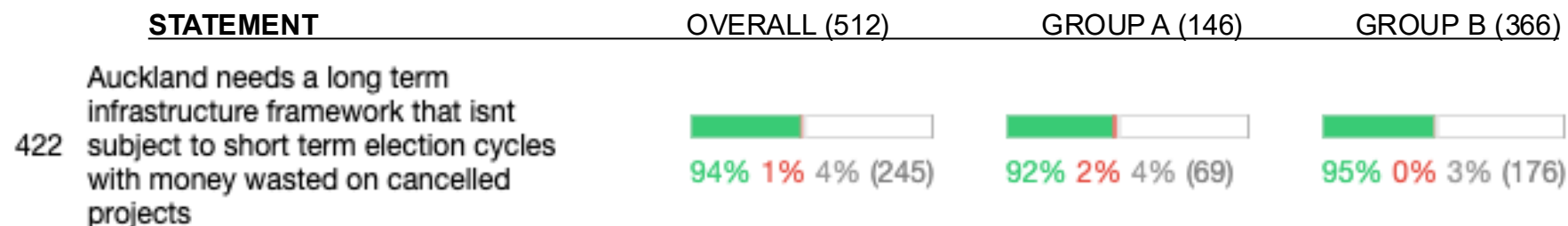
Differences between Group A and Group B emerged on public transport and cycling infrastructure, where Group A showed strong resistance to cycling initiatives and preference for car-centric development while Group B expressed overwhelming support for public transport expansion and active mobility options.

STATEMENT		OVERALL (512)	GROUP A (146)	GROUP B (366)
82	Most people don't want to cycle or walk to work and never will	 36% 55% 7% (393)	 78% 13% 7% (129)	 16% 75% 7% (264)
104	Auckland needs to do more to make cycling more appealing. Bike lanes/cycleways are essential to this because they make cyclists feel safe.	 62% 29% 8% (351)	 14% 76% 8% (113)	 84% 6% 8% (238)
199	The more roads you build, the more cars will be used. Auckland Council should make its number 1 priority to invest in public transport.	 72% 19% 7% (348)	 30% 53% 15% (108)	 91% 4% 4% (240)

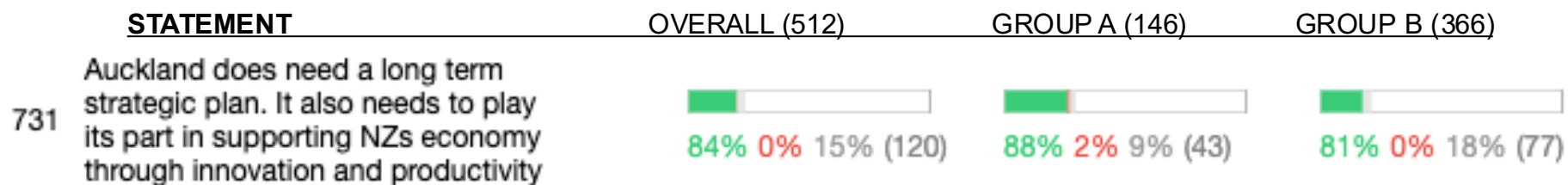
Areas of agreement

Infrastructure and Long-term Planning (example statements)

Strong consensus emerged around the need for effective long-term infrastructure planning that transcends short-term political cycles (94% overall agreement).



This long-term perspective extended to strategic planning for economic development, with agreement that Auckland needs to support New Zealand's economy through innovation and productivity, with 84.2% overall agreement (though fewer voters overall).



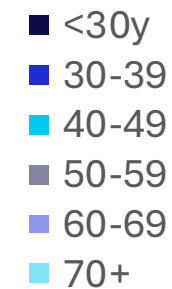
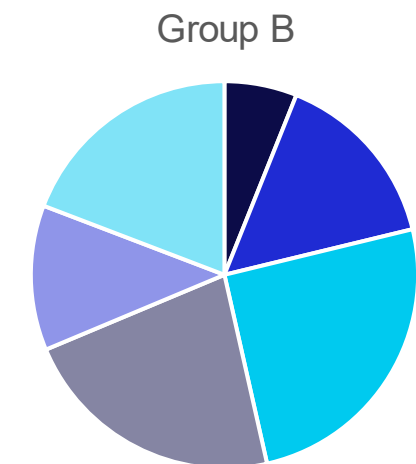
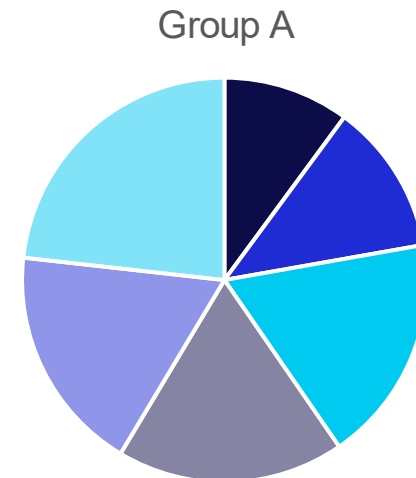
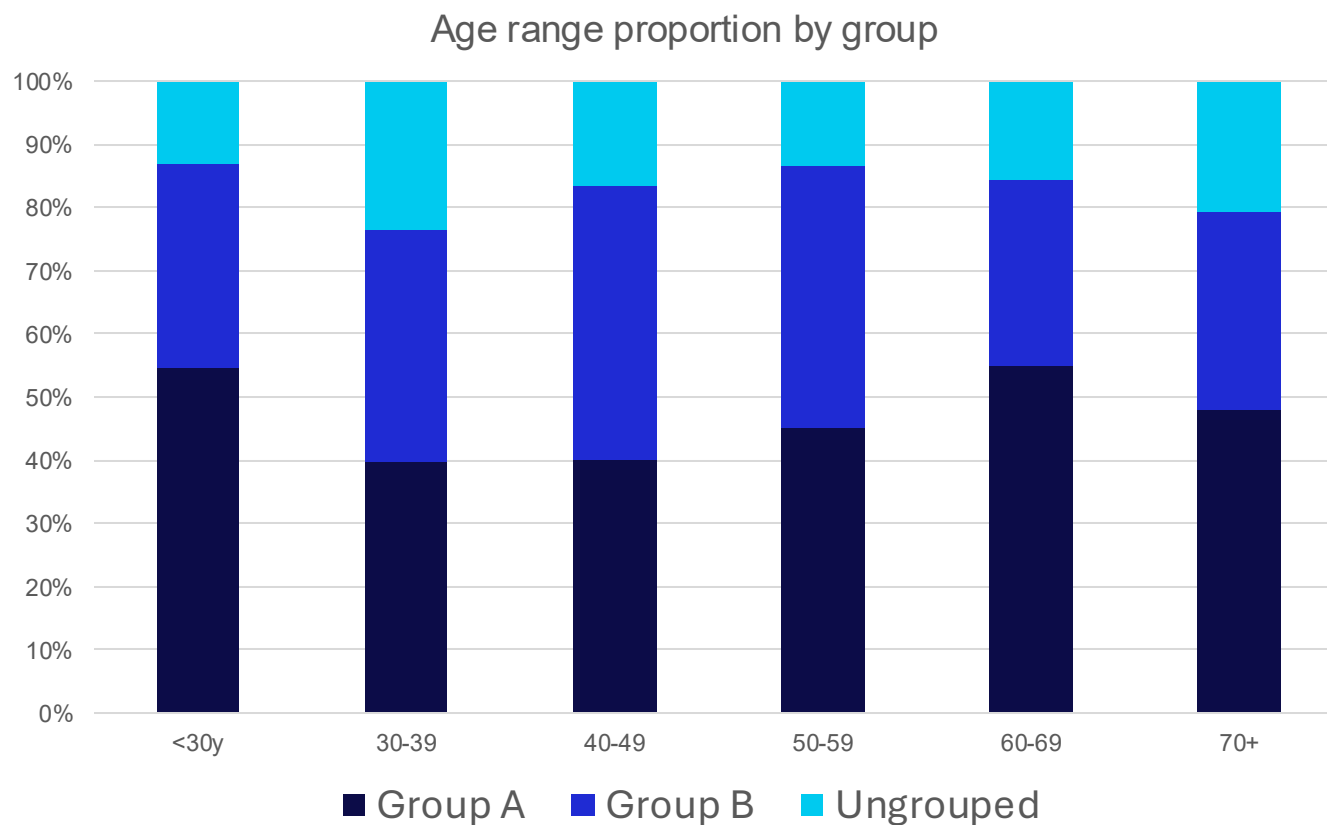
Areas of agreement

Community spaces and social cohesion (example statements)

Participants expressed strong views on the importance of connected neighbourhoods and inclusive public spaces, with walkability and people-centred design emerging as central themes.

	STATEMENT	OVERALL (512)	GROUP A (146)	GROUP B (366)
349	Auckland needs to enhance its blue-green infrastructure (green corridors and stream daylighting) for both flood mitigation and public enjoyment	 81% 5% 13% (295)	 57% 17% 25% (92)	 91% 0% 8% (203)
348	Walkable, people-centred areas and character-filled public spaces make a city attractive to visitors and residents. Auckland needs more of these, not just in the city centre.	 90% 4% 5% (293)	 75% 12% 11% (95)	 97% 0% 2% (198)
80	Neighbourhoods/communities which are easy to traverse on foot or by bike/scooter are appealing to live in and will thrive commercially.	 78% 11% 9% (388)	 51% 31% 16% (130)	 92% 1% 6% (258)
401	We need high-quality best-practice high density development, in the right places, supported by relevant services (e.g. public transport)	 89% 5% 4% (245)	 79% 13% 6% (73)	 94% 1% 4% (172)

Group demographics



Summary of findings

Cultural Identity and Diversity:

- Cultural identity remains a sharp point of division however 64% agree Auckland has a recognisable, multicultural identity.
- Around 70% strongly support celebrating Auckland's Māori and Pacific heritage and investing in cultural diversity and the arts.
- About 30% expressed caution or scepticism about prioritising further cultural investment.

Environment Protection and Sustainability Action:

- Up to 95% support stronger environmental protections, including improved water quality and urban greenery.
- 87% think Auckland's trees and urban greenery need better protection to stop our suburbs becoming unappealing, hot and sensitive to flooding.

Decision making capacity and engagement:

- Only 53% overall felt amalgamation successfully unified Auckland's voice to central government.
- Only 18% felt connected to Council decision-making and just 20% felt amalgamation had improved public engagement.
- Only 32% think Council is providing more strategic and region-wide responses to problems, with most saying there are more ad hoc responses,

Summary of findings (continued)

Housing and Urban Development:

- 91% of those surveyed believe housing intensification must be balanced with green spaces and liveability.
- 90% Participants expressed support for high-quality, best-practice high density development in appropriate locations with supporting services like public transport.

Infrastructure Planning:

- 94% support a long-term infrastructure strategy that transcends political cycles.
- 93% think Auckland needs to consider retreating from flood-prone areas and should prohibit new building in these locations.
- 92% think infill housing development needs to be balanced with green spaces and community amenities.

Innovation and Economic Development:

- 77% believe Auckland must position itself as a global innovation city to attract talent and strengthen its economy.
- 77% also believe Auckland must position itself as a global innovation city to attract talent and strengthen its economy but expressed concern that the city doesn't maximise this advantage compared to overseas cities.

Transport:

- 61% think reducing congestion should be Auckland's top transport priority, even if it means introducing charges on some roads at times when they are most congested.
- 60% think it's easier to get around Auckland on public transport than it used to be.
- 56% think cycling and pedestrian access need more investment.



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