



chatham islands council

Chatham Islands **Residents' Satisfaction Survey Report** 2026

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Executive summary

The annual Chatham Islands residents survey ran again in July/August 2026. The survey runs every year and is important as a measure of how well Council is performing against our targets set out in the Long-Term Plan and Annual Plan.

The 2026 Chatham Islands Residents' Satisfaction survey received 26 responses, a similar number to the previous survey in 2025.

While the sample size is small and findings should be interpreted with caution, results show improvements across most services when compared with last year. The strongest-performing areas were emergency preparedness, environmental services, and community services.

Overall, results suggest that residents are recognising improvements in Council communication and transparency while continuing to identify infrastructure and service delivery challenges as priorities"

Results at a glance

Top performing areas

- Emergency preparedness

Most respondents considered themselves and their households prepared for an emergency event.

- Environmental services

Satisfaction remains relatively strong, with several respondents specifically recognising pest management and environmental initiatives.

- Community services

Satisfaction with community services remains positive overall, with many residents expressing satisfaction with parks, reserves, recreation facilities, and community support services.

Low performing areas

- Unsealed roads

Gravel roads remain one of the lowest-scoring areas. Concerns focused on potholes, corrugations, grading frequency, dust, and vehicle damage.

- Waste management

While staff were praised consistently, concerns remain around recycling outcomes, access to transfer stations, waste disposal options, and stockpiling.

- Water services

Respondents connected to water schemes continue to report concerns regarding water quality, taste, storage, and long-term sustainability.

Notable changes from 2025

The survey was a very close replica to last year's survey, making benchmarking quite straightforward. There are more areas that have increased in satisfaction than decreased. With the exception of water services and level of preparedness in an emergency, other categories increased, in most cases by at least 10%.

Since the 2025 survey, Council has undergone a period of organisational change. While caution is warranted given the small sample size, the increase in satisfaction across several categories may indicate improving resident perceptions of Council performance and communication.

Survey responses

Response rate

The survey received a total of 26 responses. Given the Island's population size, and the exclusion of Councillors and staff members, or those who share a household with staff or Councillors, the smaller response rate is difficult, but not unexpected.

Note that though we clearly specify that no elected members or staff members may complete the survey, historically we've had surveys completed by staff or council members. This year, Mailchimp did not record the email address of those who submitted, so we have no way of knowing whether this happened this year. The survey was anonymous, and therefore we have to operate on trust that only eligible people completed the survey.

In 2025 the survey received 21 responses, so a similar response rate.

Please note that:

- Because the sample size is low, the findings should be treated with some caution. This survey only captures a very small percentage of the Chatham Islands population.
- In some cases, respondents chose to answer 'I have no opinion' rather than rate a service or facility. Where this is the case, these responses have been removed from the analysis and the subtotal of respondents calculated.

Understanding the results

The questions below have been framed according to satisfaction level, therefore, the higher the percentage, the higher the level of satisfaction.

Satisfaction results

Question	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
How confident are you that decisions are made by Council in the best interests of the community?	75%	68%	79%	45%	57%	↑
How sufficient is the level of information provided to the community about our Council's activities?	82%	76%	81%	60%	60%	-
How satisfied are you with the chip-sealed (sealed) roads?	53%	81%	72%	70%	81%	↑
How satisfied are you with the unsealed (gravel) road network?	43%	32%	38%	38%	50%	↑

How satisfied are you with the Council's Waste Management Services - landfill and recycling services and ease of use?	66%	56%	50%	50%	60%	↑
How satisfied are you with the water scheme service? (of those connected)	40%	31%	50%	38%	33%	↓
How satisfied are you with the wastewater scheme service? (of those connected)	75%	67%	75%	80%	60%	↓
How satisfied are you with our community services, including library and dog and animal control services?	65%	53%	73%	63%	86%	↑
How prepared do you think you and your household are for an emergency event (three days of food stored etc) and do you know what to do in such an event?	76%	74%	74%	95%	87%	↓
How satisfied are you with our environmental services? (Environmental services include pest management, consent & compliance, water monitoring and freshwater management).	59%	64%	87%	72%	82%	↑

Key findings

Demographics

The survey asked a number of demographic questions. Notable responses for each category showed:

- 46% of respondents were aged 65 years or older
- Less than 20% were under 45 years old
- Respondents were slightly more likely to be female than male
- 73% identified as European/Pākehā
- 46% identified as Māori (multiple ethnicities could be selected)
- 96% were full-time Chatham Islands residents.

Communication and engagement

Satisfaction with the communication and engagement from Council to the community has increased this year, but is not back up to the levels of 2024 and earlier.

Comments related to communications and engagement were predominantly negative, requesting greater accountability, more updates about key issues (the scampi quota noted in multiple comments), and more opportunities for consultation, engagement (rangatahi and stakeholder specifically noted) and reporting back.

Compared with the strongly negative feedback evident in the 2025 report, 2026 comments show a broader spread of opinion and some more positive observations; "Am liking the new council line up and the transparency".

Satisfaction with Council activities

Regarding infrastructure and work the Council is responsible for, respondents expressed mixed levels of satisfaction.

Roading

Roading remains a significant community issue.

Common themes included:

- Potholes and corrugations
- Dust from unsealed roads
- Need for more frequent grading
- Calls for additional road sealing

- Road safety concerns.

However, there was also positive feedback, including:

"Visitors often comment how lucky we are to have great roads."

Road satisfaction appears broadly similar to 2025, with unsealed roads continuing to attract the highest level of criticism.

Water and wastewater

Feedback from residents connected to water schemes remains mixed.

Common themes:

- Poor taste and quality.
- Need for increased water storage.
- Preference for household rainwater systems.
- Concerns about long-term reliability.

Very few respondents were connected to wastewater systems.

Those who commented generally reported either satisfaction or requests for practical improvements.

Waste management

Waste management generated some of the strongest commentary in the survey.

Respondents consistently praised operational staff.

Comments included:

- Friendly staff.
- Helpful team members.
- Well-maintained facilities.
- Positive feedback regarding Mitre 12 reuse opportunities.

However, some serious concerns were expressed. Recurring issues included:

- Vehicle and scrap metal disposal.
- Limited transfer station access.
- Questions around whether recycling is genuinely occurring.
- Wind-blown rubbish escaping facilities.
- Lack of disposal options for certain waste streams.

Community services

Following a change to an open-text response format in 2025, this year's survey returned to a tick-box list of community services. This resulted in significantly higher response rates and provided a clearer picture of resident awareness and use of Council services.

Community services scored relatively high satisfaction. There were few comments, likely the result of an otherwise satisfied community, but comments focused on requests for better animal control, library provision and lower freight costs for essential items.

Emergency management

Traditionally a high scoring area in the survey, confidence in emergency preparedness dropped significantly this year, but remained one of the top scoring areas of the survey.

However, comments highlighted concern regarding:

- Community preparedness exercises
- Coordination with welfare centres
- Emergency communication pathways
- Relationships between Emergency Management and key community organisations.

Overall sentiment was generally positive, but several respondents want stronger operational engagement and preparedness activities.

Environmental services

Satisfaction with Council's environment services; including pest management, consent and compliance, water monitoring and freshwater management continued to perform well.

Comments were mixed, while some expressed satisfaction at the work done for pest control initiatives, others expressed concern at what could happen if work stops, uncontrolled stock, pest plants and freshwater management. Despite this, environmental services remain one of Council's stronger performing areas.

Closing comments

When asked if they had any final comments, five of the eleven comments were positive, expressing gratitude to the Council and the improvements under new leadership. Particularly noted was gratitude for school artwork in the Council offices and the ability to use Council offices for community and group hui. Some feedback focused more on what would be helpful; asking Council to engage with stakeholders, hold in person community meetings, print the community news and reinstate local radio, one comment expressing hope that Council will soon run better and get back on its feet. The final few comments expressed concerns with the scampi quota issue and Council not working well with central government.

Conclusion

The 2026 Residents' Satisfaction Survey indicates generally improving resident satisfaction across many Council services, particularly community services, environmental services and communication.

Infrastructure-related issues continue to have the greatest impact on overall satisfaction. Roading, water services and waste management remain the areas most frequently identified for improvement.

Although the small sample size requires caution when interpreting results, the findings suggest residents are recognising positive changes while still expecting continued progress in service delivery, communication and long-term infrastructure planning.

Looking ahead, maintaining transparent communication, providing updates on significant governance matters, and continuing to address infrastructure challenges will likely have the greatest impact on future resident satisfaction.