

Head Start Early Engagement

June 2026

Key Messages

Feedback from the early engagement indicates a broad level of alignment across the community on the outcomes people want to see from local government reform and reorganisation. At the same time, there are clear differences in how these outcomes are prioritised, reflecting the varying lived experiences of respondents.

Across questions on priorities, concerns, and guiding principles, respondents consistently emphasised practical and tangible outcomes. These included more coordinated planning and infrastructure delivery, maintaining current levels of service delivery, localism, and affordability.

How respondents prioritised these outcomes was influenced by where they live. Christchurch residents tended to focus on affordability, infrastructure, coordination, and how the system would work in practice. In contrast, respondents from elsewhere in Canterbury, particularly the Selwyn and Waimakariri districts, placed greater emphasis on maintaining local representation, identity, and a sense of community. This likely reflects differing lived experiences of growth across the region, with associated pressures more evident in Christchurch, while nearby districts have benefited from proximity to the city while remaining separate and retaining a strong sense of local identity.

The feedback suggests that growth, and the pressures that come with it, is a key factor shaping respondents' views. Feedback from Christchurch residents pointed to the pressures they are experiencing as a result of growth and tended to frame local government reform as a way of responding to its impacts on the city. In contrast, respondents from the districts were more likely to emphasise the local benefits of growth, including a stronger sense of community and a distinct local identity.

Concerns about reform and reorganisation were closely aligned with the outcomes respondents prioritised. Across all respondents, the most significant concerns related to planning decisions, particularly whether they would reflect local needs and priorities, as well as affordability and clarity in decision making. Christchurch residents were more likely to raise concerns about transition costs and risks, and about how assets and resources would be managed and shared. Respondents elsewhere in Canterbury were more concerned about loss of local voice and identity, and about the fair distribution of funding and resources.

While respondents were able to identify potential trade-offs associated with reform, no single concern emerged as dominant. The most common response was that respondents did not see major trade-offs, and among those who did, concerns were spread across service levels, resource allocation, community input, and flexibility. This suggests a generally balanced and considered view of the potential impacts.

Overall, early engagement shows broad agreement across the community on what matters most from local government reform, including better planning and infrastructure, affordable and reliable services, and a meaningful local voice. Taken together, the feedback points to strong common ground on the desired outcomes, alongside a clear need to balance regional coordination with local responsiveness.

Who did we hear from?

Community Board*	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Not Stated***	7	0.1%
Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū Banks Peninsula	280	4%
Waitai Coastal-Burwood-Linwood	1160	16%
Waipuna Halswell-Hornby-Riccarton	1173	16%
Waimāero Fendalton-Waimairi-Harewood	1242	17%
Waipapa Papanui-Innes-Central	1168	16%
Waihoru Spreydon-Cashmere-Heathcote	1689	23%

Ward*	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Not Stated***	7	0.1%
Banks Peninsula	280	4%
Burwood	378	5%
Cashmere	795	11%
Central	360	5%
Coastal	465	6%
Fendalton	409	6%
Halswell	640	9%
Harewood	488	7%
Heathcote	579	8%
Hornby	185	3%
Innes	530	7%
Linwood	317	4%
Papanui	278	4%
Riccarton	348	5%
Spreydon	315	4%
Waimairi	345	5%

*Indicative only. These numbers have been prepared using the suburb information provided by respondents.

***Not stated includes respondents who live in Christchurch but did not provide which suburb they live in.

Who did we hear from?

Location	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Elsewhere in Canterbury	420	6%
Selwyn	211	3%
Waimakariri	175	2%
Hurunui	11	0.1%
Kaikoura	1	0.01%
Ashburton	16	0.2%
Timaru	1	0.01%
Waitaki	1	0.01%
Elsewhere in New Zealand	42	0.6%
Auckland	8	0.1%
Central Otago	2	0.02%
Grey	1	0.01%
Hawkes Bay	2	0.02%
Lower Hutt	1	0.01%
Marlborough	6	0.08%
Manawatū-Whanganui	2	0.02%
Nelson	4	0.05%
Southland	3	0.04%
Tasman	3	0.04%
Taupō	1	0.01%
Tauranga	1	0.01%
Thames-Coromandel	1	0.01%
Wellington	4	0.05%
Westland	1	0.01%
Queenstown Lakes	2	0.02%
Outside of New Zealand	18	0.2%
Australia	10	0.1%
Canada	2	0.02%
South Korea	1	0.01%
United Kingdom	5	0.06%

Who did we hear from?

Number of Respondents by Age

Age	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Not Stated	402	6%
Under 18 years	1	0.01%
18 – 24 years	54	1%
25 – 34 years	389	5%
35 – 49 years	1,229	17%
50 – 64 years	2,158	30%
65 – 79 years	2,567	35%
80 years and over	504	7%

Number of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Not Stated	449	6%
Male	3,432	47%
Female	3,376	46%
Non-binary / another gender	47	1%

Number of Respondents by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
NZ European	5865	80%
Māori	348	5%
Pacific Peoples	84	1%
Asian	250	3%
Middle Eastern, Latin American & African	79	1%
Other European	535	7%
Other	455	6%

Number of Respondents by Time Living in Christchurch

Time living in Christchurch	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Not Stated	34	1%
Less than a year	30	0.4%
1 – 3 years	203	3%
4 – 5 years	217	3%
6 – 9 years	433	6%
10 – 20 years	1135	17%
More than 20 years	4678	70%

Number of Respondents by Submitter Type

Submission Type	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Individuals	7,247	99%
Organisations	56	1%

Why do we collect demographic information?

It is important that we understand both who we have and have not heard from when we consult on issues that affect everyone in the city. We include a standard set of demographic questions across our consultations that help us better understand this. These questions are optional; submitters do not have to answer them to make a submission.

Where possible, we align the questions we ask with the information that StatsNZ collects via the census. This ensures that we are capturing the information that is consistent with the national approach to reporting on demographics but also enables us to benchmark and understand whether we have heard from a representative group of submitters.

Awareness of Proposed Changes

Feedback from respondents revealed varying degrees of awareness and understanding about the proposed changes for local government and what these mean for Christchurch and Canterbury.

A third of respondents reported having a good understanding or feeling very well informed. In contrast, 55% said they had only a basic understanding or had heard about the changes but did not fully understand what they would mean. Together with those who had not heard about the changes until providing their feedback, these groups account for more than two thirds of respondents.

Table 1: How would you rate your understanding of what these proposed changes mean for local government in Christchurch and Canterbury?		
Total Respondents: 7,303		
Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
I feel very well informed <i>(e.g. I have a strong understanding, including details and implications)</i>	489	7%
I have a good understanding <i>(e.g. I understood the main ideas and what it could involve)</i>	1889	26%
I have a basic understanding <i>(e.g. I had a general idea but limited knowledge of the details)</i>	2965	41%
I have heard about it but don't really understand it <i>(e.g. I had heard the term 'Head Start' but didn't know what it meant)</i>	986	14%
I hadn't heard about it until today	940	13%
Don't know	34	0.5%

Overarching Guiding Principles

Respondents were asked to provide feedback on the principles they believe should guide the Council's approach to local government reform and reorganisation.

Overall, the feedback highlighted a range of views on what is important. All principles were selected by more than 50% of respondents, with the exception of strengthening the local economy, jobs, and capability, which was selected by slightly fewer (48%).

Table 2: Which of the following principles do you think should guide Christchurch's approach to considering merging with other councils? (Select all that apply)

Total Respondents: 7,302

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	4,924	67%
Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered	4,712	65%
A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers	4,603	63%
Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making	4,524	62%
Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated	4,381	60%
Investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately	4,353	60%
Local services should be maintained or improved, with strong local delivery	4,220	58%
Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability	4,137	57%
Local identity and sense of community should be maintained	3,847	53%
The approach should strengthen the local economy, jobs, and capability	3,498	48%
Other	618	8%
Don't know	76	1%

Geographic analysis reveals that there is a relationship between where a respondent lives and the principles that they consider should guide the city’s approach to local government reform and the head start process.

Christchurch Residents

Respondents living in the city expressed different priorities compared with those elsewhere in Canterbury and outside of Canterbury. City residents were more likely to identify simpler, faster decision making with clearer accountability (57%), improved environmental and natural resource management (61%), accessible, locally delivered essential services (65%), fair investment and funding, with costs shared appropriately (61%), and improved planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes (68%) as important principles that should guide the city’s approach.

In contrast, city residents were less likely than those living outside the city to consider ensuring communities retain meaningful local representation and decision making (62%) and maintaining local identity and sense of community (52%) as important guiding principles.

Sub-city analysis shows that there is some clear variation across wards in what people see as important guiding principles. Places like Banks Peninsula and Linwood tend to lean more toward local representation, identity, and service delivery, whereas others like Halswell and Harewood are more focused on efficiency, affordability, and faster decision making. Overall, it suggests that there is a balance to be struck between community focused priorities and system level outcomes.

Table 3: Most important guiding principle with higher or lower support by ward (relative to other wards)

Note: Where no data is reported for a ward, this indicates that respondents in that ward were neither more nor less likely than those in other wards to identify the principles as most important.

Ward	More likely to support as the most important guiding principle	Less likely to support as the most important guiding principle
Banks Peninsula	- Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making - Local services should be maintained or improved, with strong local delivery - Local identity and sense of community should be maintained - Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated	Investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately
Burwood		- Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated - Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated

Cashmere	• Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered • Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated • Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	• Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability
Central		• A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers
Coastal		
Fendalton		• Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making • Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated • Local services should be maintained or improved, with strong local delivery • Local identity and sense of community should be maintained
Halswell	• Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability	• Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making • Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated • Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered • Local services should be maintained or improved, with strong local delivery • Local identity and sense of community should be maintained
Harewood	• A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers • Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability	• Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated
Heathcote	• Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated • Local identity and sense of community should be maintained	
Hornby		
Innes		• Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated

Linwood	Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making	- Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated - Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability
Papanui		
Riccarton	- Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered - Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers
Spreydon		Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability
Waimairi	Investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately	

For those who live in Christchurch, the overall pattern is broadly consistent regardless of length of residence. Subtle differences included recent residents tend to place relatively greater emphasis on environmental management and planning and infrastructure outcomes, while longer-term residents showed slightly stronger support for affordability, funding fairness, and local representation.

Residents Elsewhere in Canterbury

Those living elsewhere in Canterbury reflected a different set of priorities for guiding the city's approach. These respondents were more likely to emphasise the importance of communities retaining meaningful local representation and decision making (67%), as well as maintaining a strong sense of local identity and community (58%).

In contrast, they were less likely (relative to other respondents) to prioritise simpler, faster decision making with clear accountability (47%), improved environmental and natural resource management (48%), accessible and locally delivered essential services (58%), fair investment and funding with costs shared appropriately (48%), and improved planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes (59%) as important principles for guiding the city's approach.

Greater Christchurch

When considering the responses from a Greater Christchurch point of view, some clear differences emerge across the three areas. Christchurch City residents place more emphasis on planning, infrastructure, environmental management, and funding, while Selwyn and Waimakariri residents are more likely to prioritise local representation and maintaining community identity. Overall, district responses tend to lean more toward community focused priorities, whereas city responses place relatively more weight on coordination, investment, and system efficiency.

These differences are likely, at least in part, shaped by lived experience of how the Greater Christchurch built environment has evolved over the past decade. In particular, growth in surrounding districts over this period has occurred alongside the city's development, with the pressures of that combined growth more evident in Christchurch, while nearby districts have benefited from their proximity to the city while remaining separate and retaining their own local identity.

Table 4: Principles that should guide Christchurch's approach by Greater Christchurch TA			
Response	Christchurch City	Selwyn District	Waimakariri District
Total Respondents	6,730	211	175
Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	68%	59%	58%
Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered	65%	56%	63%
A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers	63%	57%	62%
Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making	62%	69%	68%
Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated	61%	47%	50%
Investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately	61%	46%	53%
Local services should be maintained or improved, with strong local delivery	58%	57%	66%
Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability	57%	48%	49%
Local identity and sense of community should be maintained	52%	59%	61%
The approach should strengthen the local economy, jobs, and capability	48%	40%	49%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%

Most Important Guiding Principles

As well as selecting all of the principles they considered should guide the Council's approach, respondents were also asked to indicate which they viewed as most important. Across all respondents, a focus on affordability and improved value for ratepayers (19%), alongside improved planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes (19%) were identified as the top priorities. These were followed by the importance of retaining meaningful local representation and decision making (13%), highlighting the strong emphasis placed on affordability, effective planning and service delivery, and maintaining local voice.

Table 5: You told us that you would like to see the principles below guide Christchurch's approach to considering merging with other councils. In your view, which of these is the most important?

Total Respondents: 7,226		
Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers	1401	19%
Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	1387	19%
Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making	967	13%
Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated	664	9%
Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability	567	8%
Investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately	536	7%
Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered	515	7%
Local services should be maintained or improved, with strong local delivery	454	6%
The approach should strengthen the local economy, jobs, and capability	315	4%
Local identity and sense of community should be maintained	278	4%
Other	142	2%

Christchurch Residents

Where a respondent lives influenced which principle they considered most important. Those living in the city were more likely than respondents elsewhere in Canterbury or outside the region to prioritise a focus on affordability and improved value for ratepayers (20%), as well as better coordination of planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes (19%), as the key principles guiding the Council's approach.

In contrast, city-based respondents were less likely than those in other parts of Canterbury or outside the region to prioritise the following principles:

- Maintaining or improving local services with strong local delivery (6%)
- Ensuring communities retain meaningful local representation and decision making (13%)
- Preserving local identity and sense of community (4%)

Again, at a sub-city level, there was some geographic variation in the principle that respondents felt is the most important, as outlined in Table 6. These differences suggest that views are influenced by both respondents lived experiences and the physical and built environments in which they live. In many cases, these perspectives are consistent with findings from other engagement activities and research.

Table 6: Most important guiding principle with higher or lower support by ward (relative to other wards)

Note: Where no data is reported for a ward, this indicates that respondents in that ward were neither more nor less likely than those in other wards to identify the principles as most important.

Ward	More likely to support as the most important guiding principle	Less likely to support as the most important guiding principle
Banks Peninsula	• Local services should be maintained or improved, with strong local delivery • Local identity and sense of community should be maintained • Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated	• A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers • Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated • The approach should strengthen the local economy, jobs, and capability
Burwood	• Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered	• Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated
Cashmere	• Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated	• Investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately
Central	• Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	

Coastal	Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making	Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability
Fendalton	A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers	- Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making - Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated
Halswell		Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making
Harewood	- A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers - Investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately	Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated
Heathcote		
Hornby		
Innes	Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making
Linwood	Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered	Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated
Papanui	Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making	
Riccarton	- Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered - Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers
Spreydon	Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated	
Waimairi		

Residents Elsewhere in Canterbury

In contrast to the city, respondents living elsewhere in Canterbury were more likely to prioritise principles related to local governance and community identity. In particular, they emphasised that communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making (21%), and that local identity and sense of community should be maintained (8%%).

They were also less likely to support a focus on affordability and improved value for money (14%), and investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately as the most important guiding principle than other respondents.

There was some variation across districts. Respondents in Hurunui were more likely to view simpler, faster decision making with clear accountability as an important guiding principle compared to other respondents. Those in Selwyn were more likely to prioritise maintaining local identity and sense of community. In Waimakariri, respondents were less likely to prioritise local identity, but more likely to emphasise the importance of maintaining meaningful local representation and decision making.

Greater Christchurch

Analysis across the three Greater Christchurch council's also shows some clear differences in the most important principles across the three areas. Christchurch City respondents are much more likely to prioritise affordability and funding, while Selwyn and Waimakariri place stronger emphasis on local representation, and in Selwyn's case, local identity. Overall, district responses lean more toward community based priorities, whereas city responses place relatively more weight on cost, coordination, and investment related principles.

This differences once again reinforce that the responses from different areas are likely shaped by how people experience growth across Greater Christchurch. The responses reflect that city residents are more directly exposed to pressures such as increasing demand on infrastructure, funding, and coordination, which tends to bring affordability and planning to the fore. By contrast, residents in Selwyn and Waimakariri tend to experience more of the local benefits of growth, which may make community representation, identity, and local service delivery feel more important.

Table 7: Principles that should guide Christchurch's approach by Greater Christchurch TA			
Response	Christchurch City	Selwyn District	Waimakariri District
Total Respondents	6,663	207	173
Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	19%	19%	18%
Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered	7%	5%	9%
A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers	20%	13%	16%

Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making	13%	20%	23%
Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated	9%	7%	8%
Investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately	8%	3%	2%
Local services should be maintained or improved, with strong local delivery	6%	10%	6%
Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability	8%	8%	7%
Local identity and sense of community should be maintained	4%	10%	5%
The approach should strengthen the local economy, jobs, and capability	4%	2%	5%

Concerns about Local Government Reform

Feedback on concerns about local government reform reflected a strong alignment with the principles respondents believe should guide the Council's approach.

More than a third of respondents indicated that they are concerned about reform resulting in planning decisions that don't reflect local needs or preferences (36%) and rates increases (35%), while just over a quarter are concerned about reduced accountability or transparency in decision making (25%) and just under a quarter expressed concern about how assets, debt, and resources will be shared (23%) and reduced local voice and representation (21%).

Table 8: What concerns you the most about local government reform? (Select up to three)		
Total Respondents: 7,302		
Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Planning decisions that don't reflect local needs or preferences	2619	36%
Rates increasing	2540	35%
Reduced accountability or transparency in decision making	1799	25%
Uncertainty about how assets, debt, and resources are shared	1654	23%
Reduced local voice and representation	1543	21%
More red tape or slower decisions	1404	19%
Funding might not be shared fairly between communities	1391	19%
Less responsive and locally tailored decision making	1177	16%
Transition costs and disruption	1165	16%
Services might not work as well or respond as quickly	1032	14%
Loss of identity and community character	820	11%
Reduced value for money	704	10%
Other (please specify)	406	6%
Don't know	108	1%

Christchurch Residents

Christchurch residents indicated they are most concerned about rates increasing (35%) and planning decisions that don't reflect local needs or preferences (36%), and they were least concerned about reduced value for money (10%) and loss of identity and community character (11%).

Table 9: What concerns you the most about local government reform? (Select up to three)		
Total Respondents: 7,302		
Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Planning decisions that don't reflect local needs or preferences	2,391	36%
Rates increasing	2,358	35%
Reduced accountability or transparency in decision making	1,685	25%
Uncertainty about how assets, debt, and resources are shared	1,560	23%
Reduced local voice and representation	1,374	20%
More red tape or slower decisions	1,305	19%
Funding might not be shared fairly between communities	1,263	19%
Less responsive and locally tailored decision making	1,078	16%
Transition costs and disruption	1,088	16%
Services might not work as well or respond as quickly	965	14%
Loss of identity and community character	716	11%
Reduced value for money	649	10%

Christchurch residents were more likely to report that they are concerned about reduced accountability or transparency in decision making (25%), transition costs and disruption (16%), and uncertainty about how assets, debt, and resourced are shared (23%) than respondents who don't live in Christchurch. In contrast, they were less likely to report concern about loss of identity

and community character (11%), reduced local voice and representation (20%), and funding not being shared fairly between communities (19%).

Residents Elsewhere in Canterbury

Respondents who live elsewhere in Canterbury were more likely to report that they are concerned about reduced voice and local representation (32%), loss of identity and community character (19%), and funding not being shared fairly between communities (23%) than respondents who live in the city or outside of Canterbury. They were less likely to report concerns about uncertainty about how assets, debt, and resources are shared (15%) and reduced accountability and transparency in decision making (19%).

Greater Christchurch

Analysis of how respondents across greater Christchurch responded to this question reveals that Christchurch residents tend to be more concerned about how local government reorganisation would work in practice, particularly around decision making, transition risks, and how assets and resources would be managed. In contrast, those living elsewhere in Canterbury are more focused on what it could mean for their local communities, including the potential loss of voice, identity, and a fair share of funding. Across all three TAs, respondents also expressed concern about potential rates increases (though this was more pronounced in Christchurch City and Waimakariri), reduced value for money, and planning decisions that may not reflect local needs or preferences.

Table 10: What concerns you the most about local government reform by Greater Christchurch TA			
Response	Christchurch City	Selwyn District	Waimakariri District
Total Respondents	6,730	211	175
Planning decisions that don't reflect local needs or preferences	36%	38%	41%
Rates increasing	35%	27%	39%
Reduced accountability or transparency in decision making	25%	19%	19%
Uncertainty about how assets, debt, and resources are shared	23%	14%	15%
Reduced local voice and representation	20%	35%	29%
More red tape or slower decisions	19%	14%	18%
Funding might not be shared fairly between communities	19%	25%	21%
Less responsive and locally tailored decision making	16%	21%	16%

Transition costs and disruption	16%	11%	14%
Services might not work as well or respond as quickly	14%	13%	9%
Loss of identity and community character	11%	19%	20%
Reduced value for money	10%	11%	10%

Central Government Priorities

Acknowledging that the government has outlined a number of intended outcomes for local government reform and reorganisation, respondents were asked to rank the importance of these goals in the context of Christchurch and Canterbury. Overall, respondents identified more efficient services and improved planning for infrastructure and key services as the top priority, followed by simpler governance, fewer councils and less duplication, maintaining a genuine local voice for communities, and lastly, supporting the new planning system.

These rankings suggest that respondents are primarily focused on outcomes they see as having a direct and tangible impact on their day-to-day lives. In contrast, there appears to be less emphasis on objectives more closely aligned with implementing central government policy, indicating that local priorities are being driven more by practical considerations than by policy alignment.

Table 11: Please rank the following goals in order of importance for Christchurch and Canterbury, in your view, with 1 being the most important.										
Total Respondents: 6,206										
Response	Overall Priority	Total Score	1		2		3		4	
Simpler governance, fewer councils, and less duplication	2	16,728	1,644	26%	1,499	24%	1,296	21%	1,767	28%
More efficient services and planning for infrastructure and key services	1	19,141	2,235	36%	2,462	40%	1,306	21%	203	3%
Supports the new planning system and avoids disruption to key planning and infrastructure work	4	12,009	357	6%	1,173	19%	2,386	38%	2,290	37%
Maintaining a genuine local voice for communities within any new structure	3	15,478	1,970	32%	1,072	17%	1,218	20%	1,946	31%

Competing Priorities

Respondents were asked whether there are any competing priorities that may arise as a result of local government reform and reorganisation that would concern them.

The most common response was that they did not see major trade-offs, with 15% selecting that option. Among those who did identify a concern, responses were relatively evenly distributed across a range of issues, including impacts on service levels, resource allocation, community input, and local flexibility. This suggests that there is no single dominant concern but rather a spread of sensitivities across potential trade-offs and competing priorities.

Table 12: Which one of the competing priorities below would concern you the most?		
Total Respondents: 7,302		
Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
I don't see major trade-offs, the outcomes are compatible	1068	15%
Cost savings that lead to changes to current service levels	946	14%
Changes to how resources are allocated across communities, with some areas receiving more or less than they do now	924	13%
Faster planning processes, with less opportunity for community input	877	13%
More standardised services across bigger areas, with less flexibility to tailor to local needs	838	12%
Efficiency gains that lead to a reduced emphasis on local representation and community voice	803	12%
Cost savings that lead to changes to investment in infrastructure	613	9%
Simpler structures, with more decisions made centrally rather than locally	485	7%
Don't know	403	6%

Appendix One: Responses for Christchurch Residents Only

Awareness of Proposed Changes

How would you rate your understanding of what these proposed changes mean for local government in Christchurch and Canterbury?		
Total Respondents: 7,303		
Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
I feel very well informed <i>(e.g. I have a strong understanding, including details and implications)</i>	435	6%
I have a good understanding <i>(e.g. I understood the main ideas and what it could involve)</i>	1,718	26%
I have a basic understanding <i>(e.g. I had a general idea but limited knowledge of the details)</i>	2,754	41%
I have heard about it but don't really understand it <i>(e.g. I had heard the term 'Head Start' but didn't know what it meant)</i>	905	13%
I hadn't heard about it until today	890	13%
Don't know	29	0.4%

Overarching Guiding Principles

Which of the following principles do you think should guide Christchurch's approach to considering merging with other councils? (Select all that apply)		
Total Respondents: 7,302		
Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	4,585	68%
Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered	4,381	65%
A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers	4,259	63%
Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making	4,150	62%
Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated	4,103	61%
Investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately	4,074	61%
Local services should be maintained or improved, with strong local delivery	3,885	58%
Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability	3,858	57%
Local identity and sense of community should be maintained	3,520	52%
The approach should strengthen the local economy, jobs, and capability	3,240	48%
Other	547	8%
Don't know	67	1%

Most Important Guiding Principles

You told us that you would like to see the principles below guide Christchurch's approach to considering merging with other councils. In your view, which of these is the most important?		
Total Respondents: 7,226		
Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
A focus on affordability alongside improved value for ratepayers	1,317	20%
Planning, growth, and infrastructure outcomes should be improved and better coordinated	1,288	19%
Communities should retain meaningful local representation and decision making	852	13%
Environmental and natural resource management should be improved and coordinated	621	9%
Decision making should be simpler, faster, with clear accountability	513	8%
Investment and funding should be fair, with costs shared appropriately	526	8%
Essential services should remain accessible and locally delivered	483	7%
Local services should be maintained or improved, with strong local delivery	407	6%
The approach should strengthen the local economy, jobs, and capability	297	4%
Local identity and sense of community should be maintained	240	4%
Other	119	2%

Concerns about Local Government Reform

What concerns you the most about local government reform? (Select up to three)		
Total Respondents: 6,730		
Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Planning decisions that don't reflect local needs or preferences	2,391	36%
Rates increasing	2,358	35%
Reduced accountability or transparency in decision making	1,685	25%
Uncertainty about how assets, debt, and resources are shared	1,560	23%
Reduced local voice and representation	1,374	20%
More red tape or slower decisions	1,305	19%
Funding might not be shared fairly between communities	1,264	19%
Less responsive and locally tailored decision making	1,078	16%
Transition costs and disruption	1,088	16%
Services might not work as well or respond as quickly	966	14%
Loss of identity and community character	716	11%
Reduced value for money	649	10%
Other (please specify)	369	5%
Don't know	103	2%

Central Government Priorities

Please rank the following goals in order of importance for Christchurch and Canterbury, in your view, with 1 being the most important.										
Total Respondents: 5,720										
Response	Overall Priority	Total Score	1		2		3		4	
Simpler governance, fewer councils, and less duplication	2	14,298	1,535	27%	1,393	24%	1,189	21%	1,603	28%
More efficient services and planning for infrastructure and key services	1	17,694	2,081	36%	2,277	40%	1,180	21%	182	3%
Supports the new planning system and avoids disruption to key planning and infrastructure work	4	11,051	330	6%	1,064	19%	2,214	39%	2,112	37%
Maintaining a genuine local voice for communities within any new structure	3	14,147	1,774	31%	986	17%	1,137	20%	1,823	32%

Competing Priorities

Which one of the competing priorities below would concern you the most?		
Total Respondents: 6,411		
Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
I don't see major trade-offs, the outcomes are compatible	1007	16%
Cost savings that lead to changes to current service levels	895	14%
Changes to how resources are allocated across communities, with some areas receiving more or less than they do now	796	12%
Faster planning processes, with less opportunity for community input	818	13%
More standardised services across bigger areas, with less flexibility to tailor to local needs	769	12%
Efficiency gains that lead to a reduced emphasis on local representation and community voice	733	11%
Cost savings that lead to changes to investment in infrastructure	571	9%
Simpler structures, with more decisions made centrally rather than locally	446	7%
Don't know	376	6%