

2024 Budget Survey

Executive Summary

December 11, 2023

The 2024 Budget Survey was launched publicly on October 31, 2023 and ran until November 15, 2023. The survey was published online through Survey Monkey and was promoted through the Town of Hay River's Facebook page and at Town Council meetings. Paper copies of the survey were made available to the public at Town Hall for those without internet access. 128 responses were received (none by paper submission) up from 66 in the prior year.

Through a limited sample size, the survey is intended to help gauge public perception of core service performance and prioritization of service provision. It is used as a tool amongst several sources of information to help support Council's decision-making through the budget process. The survey used the same format and core questions as used in the 2023 and 2022 budget surveys. Consistency in the format allows for trend analysis and a better understanding of the impact of decisions and events. New survey questions were asked on wildfire recovery and solid waste tipping fees.

There remains general discontent with the value for dollar for taxes with the suggestion being predominantly to maintain tax levels even if it meant a reduction in services. However, there were generally small improvements to satisfaction levels for the majority of the surveyed functions. Respondents were again most satisfied with Ambulance and Fire, Trucked Water Delivery, and Garbage pickup and again least satisfied with Fire and Flood Preparedness, Roads and Sidewalks, Landfill Management as well as Economic Development and Land Planning.

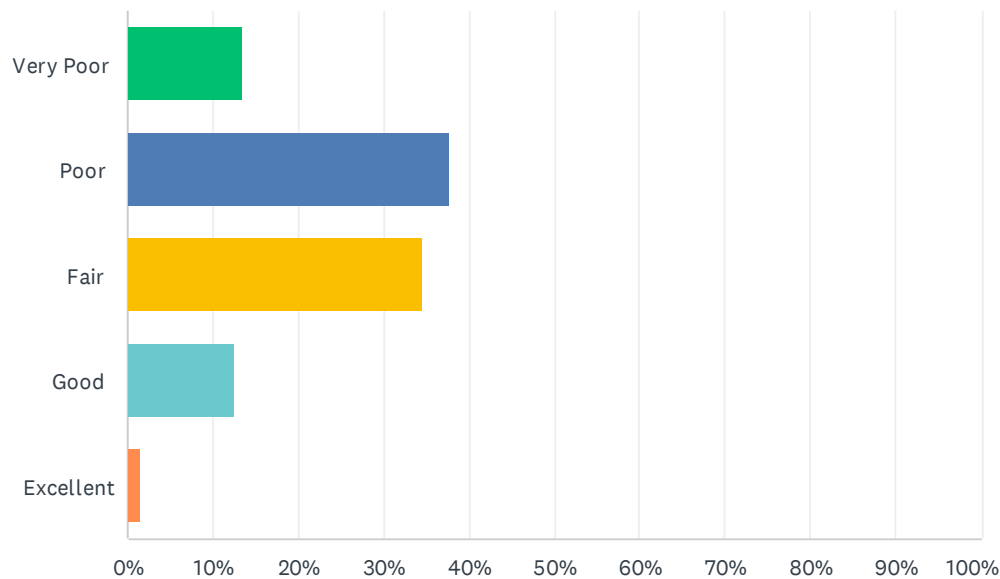
There was moderate support to increase taxes/fees and services or decrease other services to support Fire and Flood Preparedness, Roads and Sidewalk Maintenance, and Utility Services (Water Quality). Responders demonstrated support for decreasing taxes/fees and subsequent services for Bylaw, and to a lesser degree, Recreation and Tourism functions.

Cost of Living overtook Housing and Accommodations as the biggest multi-government issue. Social Issues ranked third and had the largest percentage gain as an issue. Governance and Transparency scored just behind Social Issues.

Respondents conveyed that there was strong support for a user-pay structure for solid waste processing, general support for a cap on Seniors/Disabled Persons property tax exemption, and interest in additional wildfire prevention measures as long as it didn't raise taxes.

Q1 With your property taxes paid to the Town of Hay River in mind, how would you rate the overall value you receive for your tax dollars?

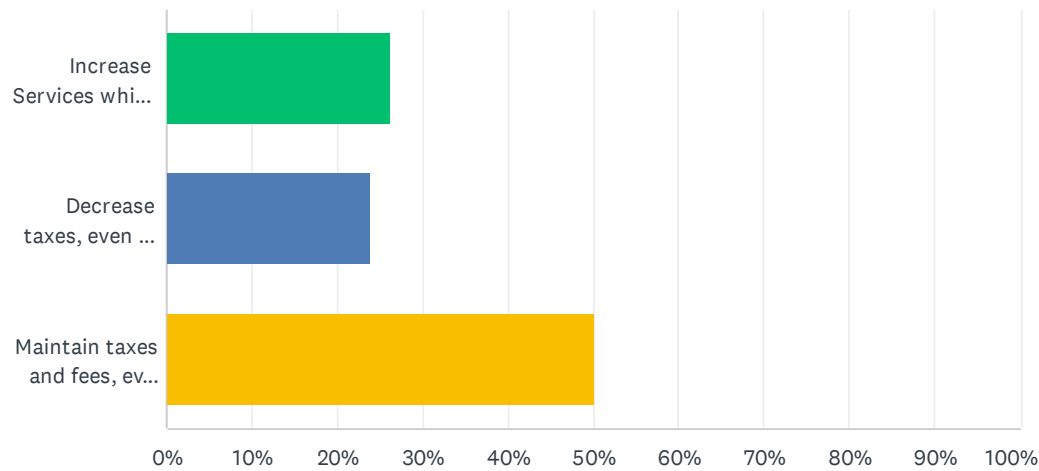
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Poor	13.39%	17
Poor	37.80%	48
Fair	34.65%	44
Good	12.60%	16
Excellent	1.57%	2
TOTAL		127

Q2 When creating the municipal budget and knowing that the budget must balance, which statement comes closest to your viewpoint. The Town should:

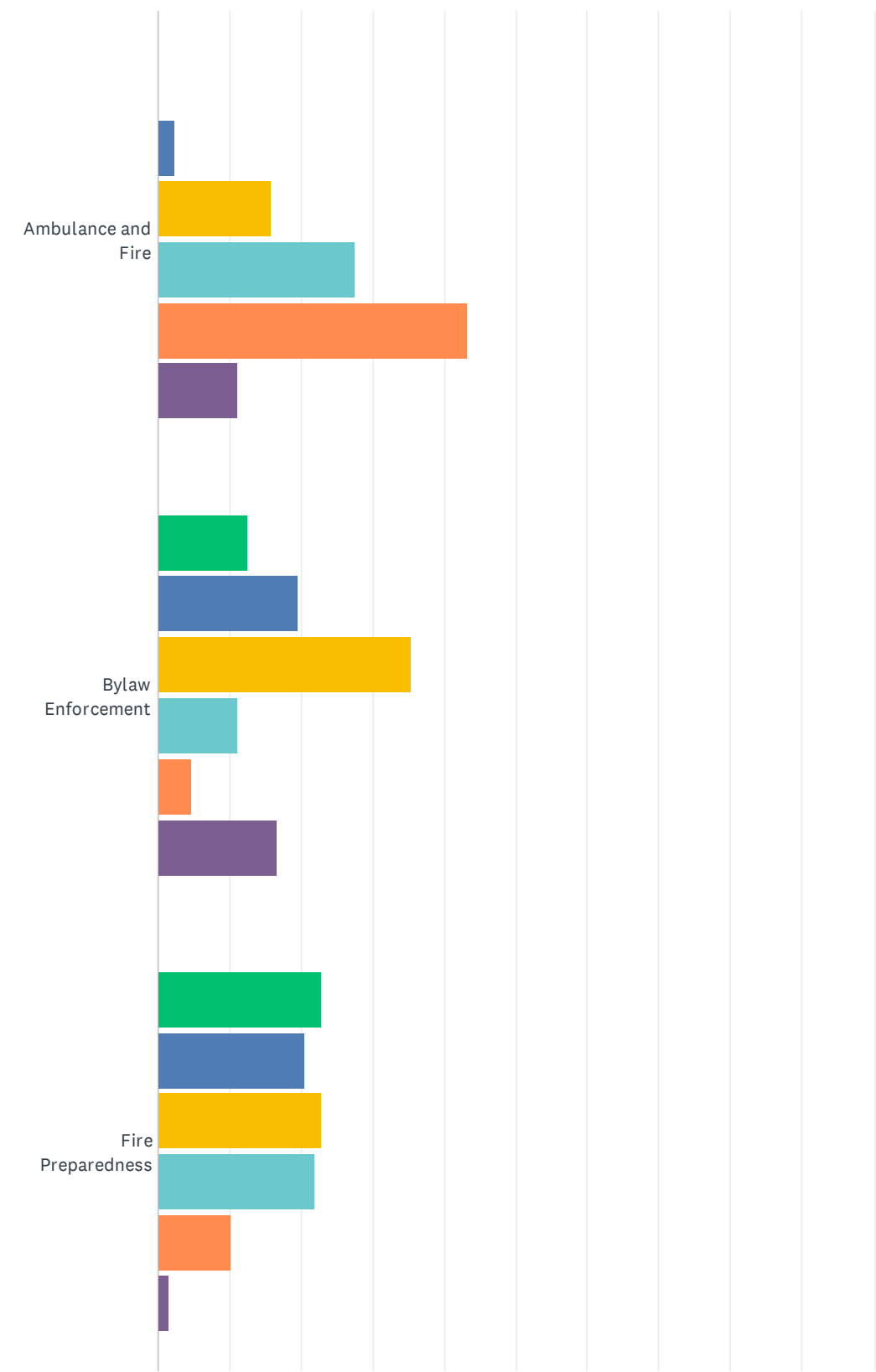
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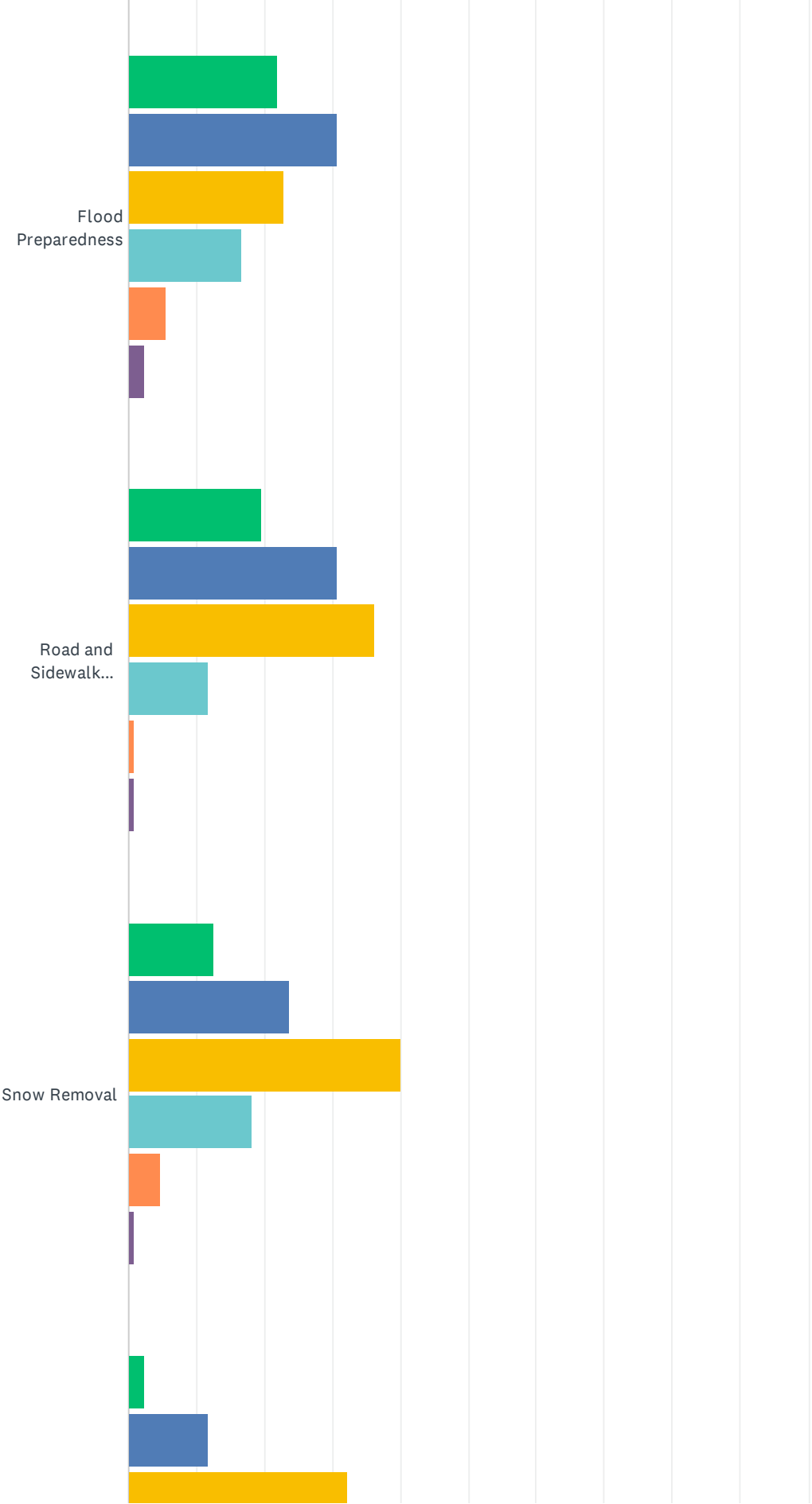


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increase Services while increasing taxes and charges	26.19%	33
Decrease taxes, even if services must be decreased	23.81%	30
Maintain taxes and fees, even if some services reduce to maintain others	50.00%	63
TOTAL		126

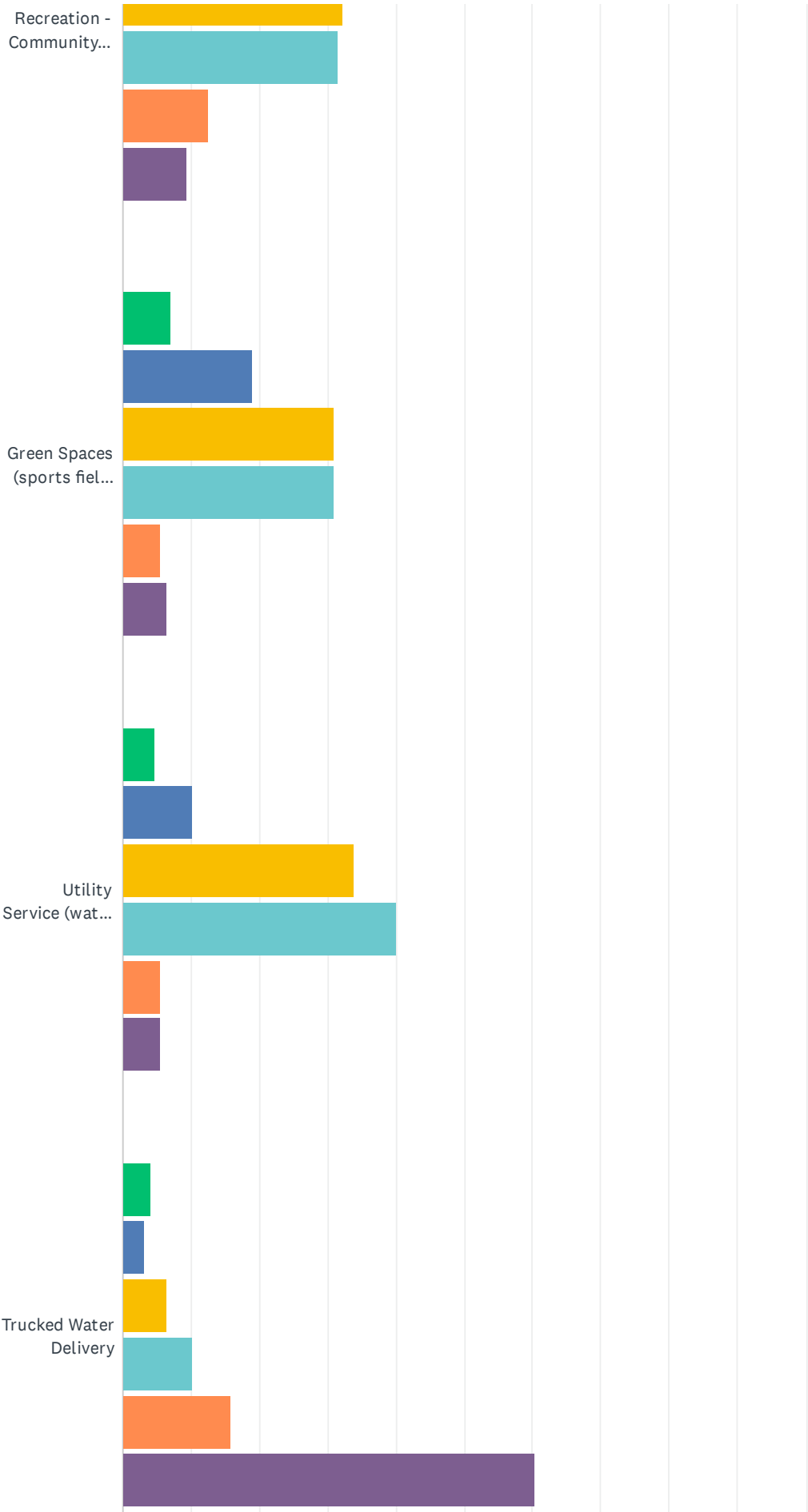
Q3 How satisfied were you with the following specific department's service level:

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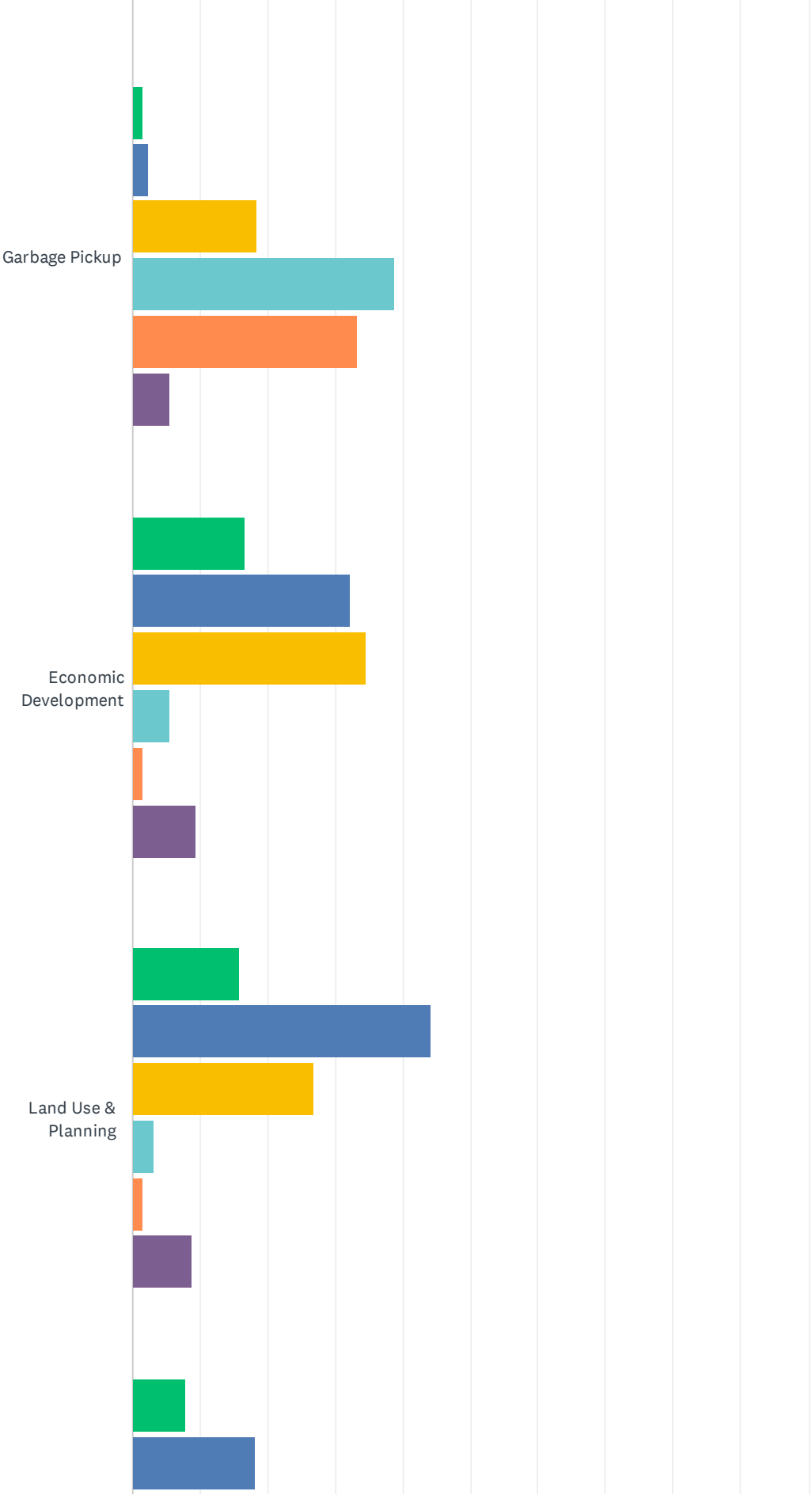




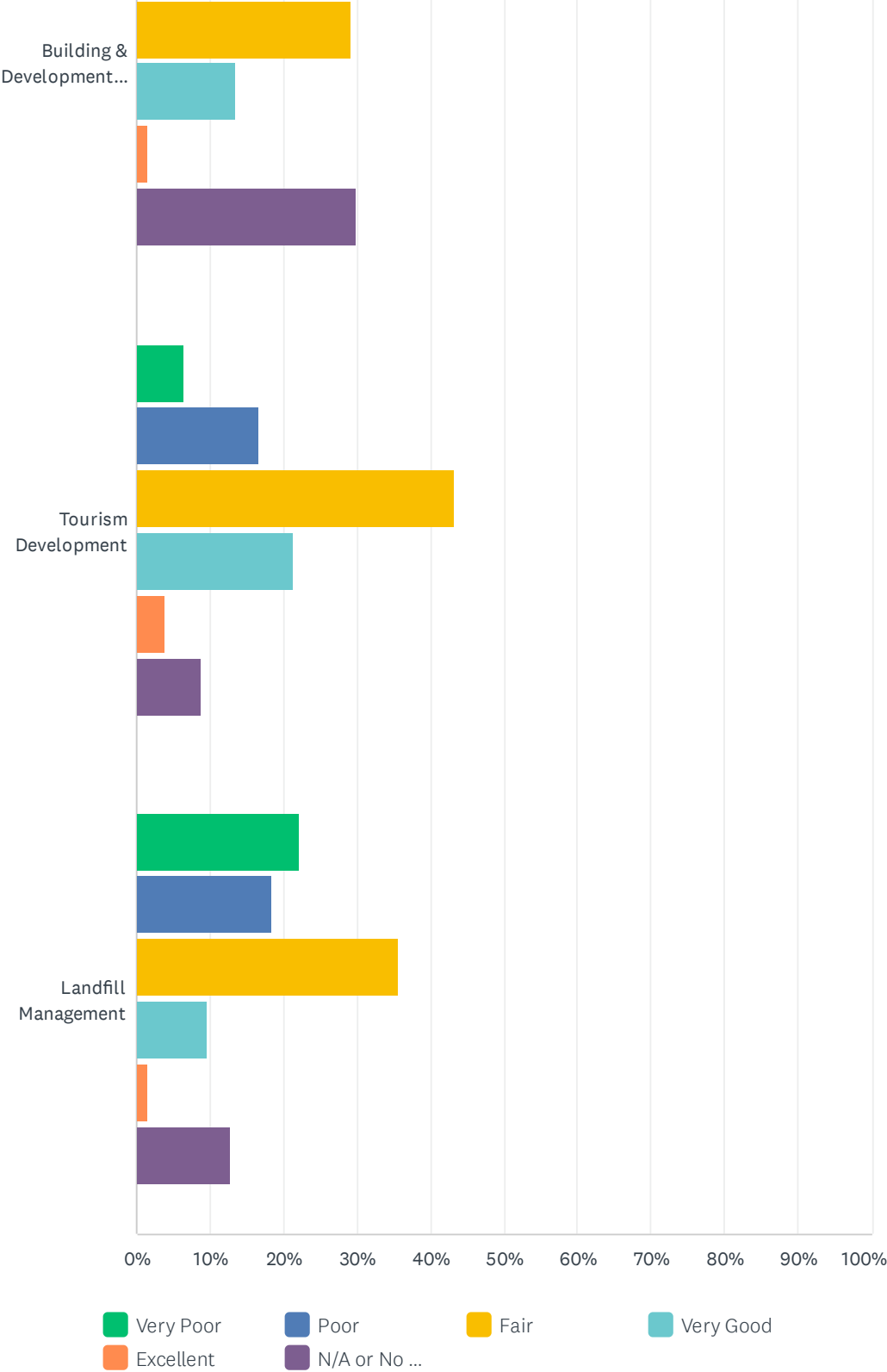
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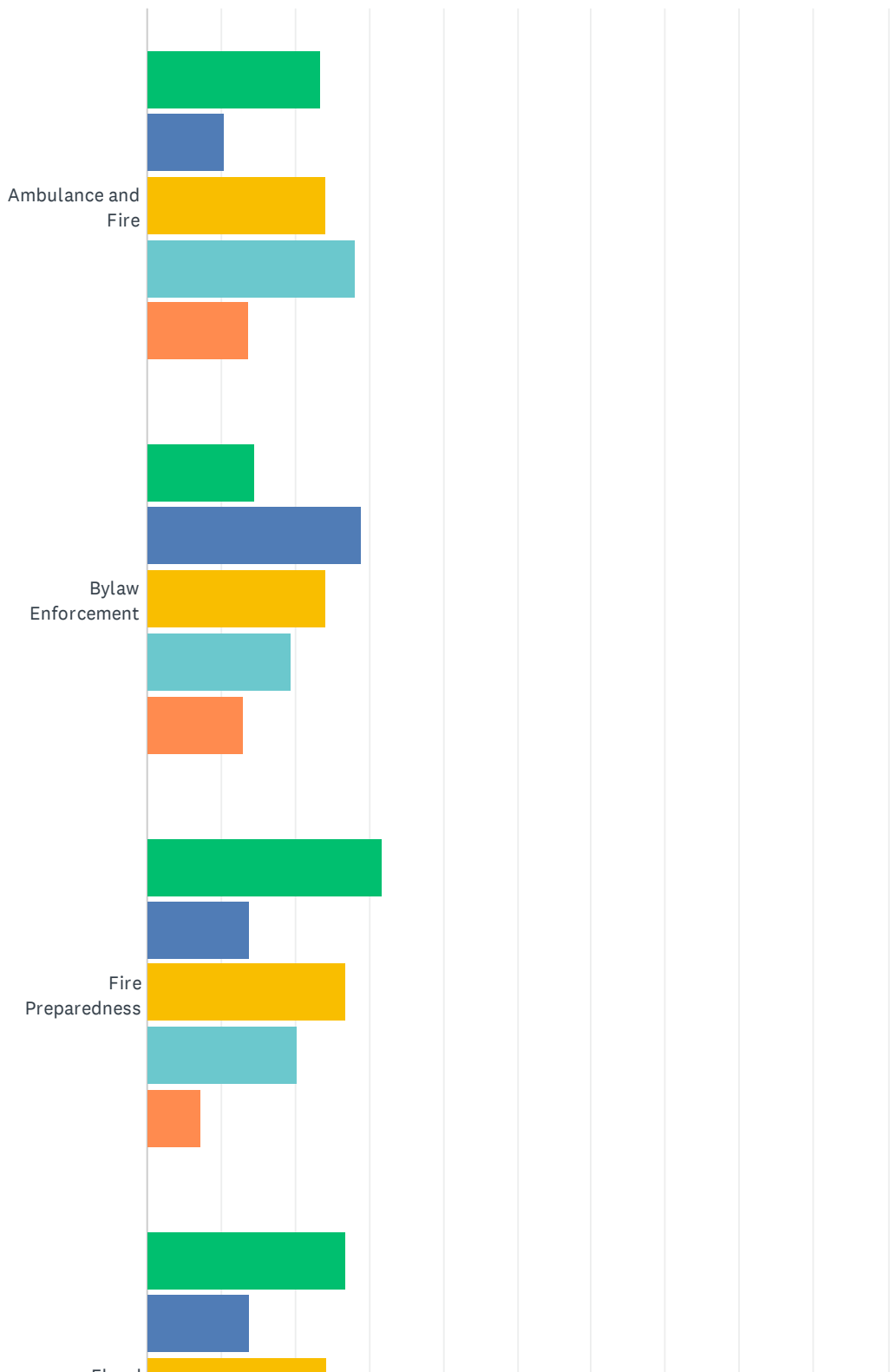


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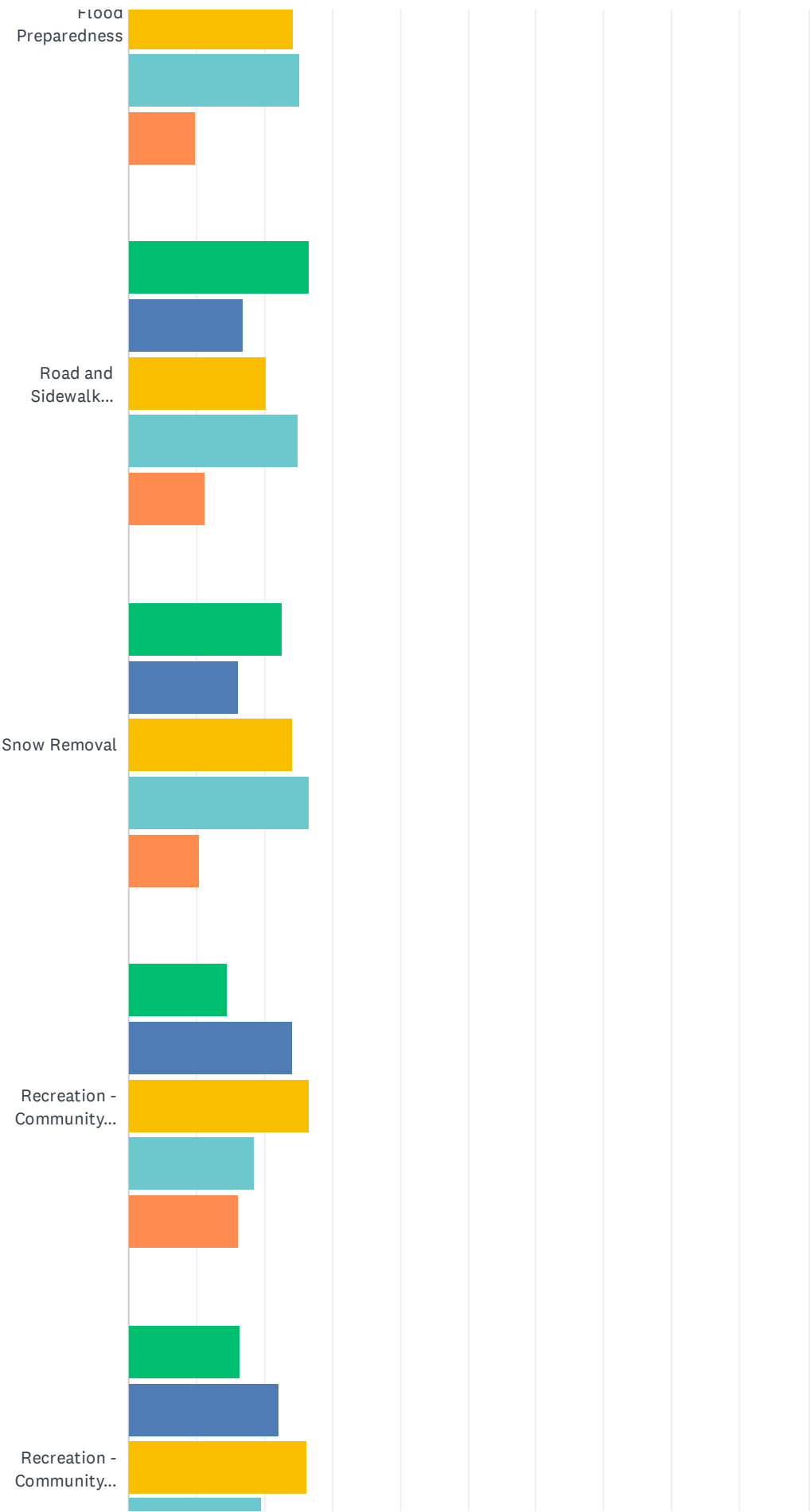
	VERY POOR	POOR	FAIR	VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT	N/A OR NO OPINION	TOTAL
Ambulance and Fire	0.00% 0	2.36% 3	15.75% 20	27.56% 35	43.31% 55	11.02% 14	127
Bylaw Enforcement	12.60% 16	19.69% 25	35.43% 45	11.02% 14	4.72% 6	16.54% 21	127
Fire Preparedness	22.83% 29	20.47% 26	22.83% 29	22.05% 28	10.24% 13	1.57% 2	127
Flood Preparedness	22.05% 28	30.71% 39	22.83% 29	16.54% 21	5.51% 7	2.36% 3	127
Road and Sidewalk Maintenance	19.69% 25	30.71% 39	36.22% 46	11.81% 15	0.79% 1	0.79% 1	127
Snow Removal	12.60% 16	23.62% 30	40.16% 51	18.11% 23	4.72% 6	0.79% 1	127
Recreation - Community Centre (programming)	2.36% 3	11.81% 15	32.28% 41	31.50% 40	12.60% 16	9.45% 12	127
Green Spaces (sports fields and parks)	7.14% 9	19.05% 24	30.95% 39	30.95% 39	5.56% 7	6.35% 8	126
Utility Service (water & sewer quality)	4.72% 6	10.24% 13	33.86% 43	40.16% 51	5.51% 7	5.51% 7	127
Trucked Water Delivery	3.97% 5	3.17% 4	6.35% 8	10.32% 13	15.87% 20	60.32% 76	126
Garbage Pickup	1.59% 2	2.38% 3	18.25% 23	38.89% 49	33.33% 42	5.56% 7	126
Economic Development	16.54% 21	32.28% 41	34.65% 44	5.51% 7	1.57% 2	9.45% 12	127
Land Use & Planning	15.75% 20	44.09% 56	26.77% 34	3.15% 4	1.57% 2	8.66% 11	127
Building & Development Permits	7.87% 10	18.11% 23	29.13% 37	13.39% 17	1.57% 2	29.92% 38	127
Tourism Development	6.30% 8	16.54% 21	43.31% 55	21.26% 27	3.94% 5	8.66% 11	127
Landfill Management	22.22% 28	18.25% 23	35.71% 45	9.52% 12	1.59% 2	12.70% 16	126

Q4 For each of the following departments and with the knowledge the Town must balance its budget, do you feel the service level for each department should:

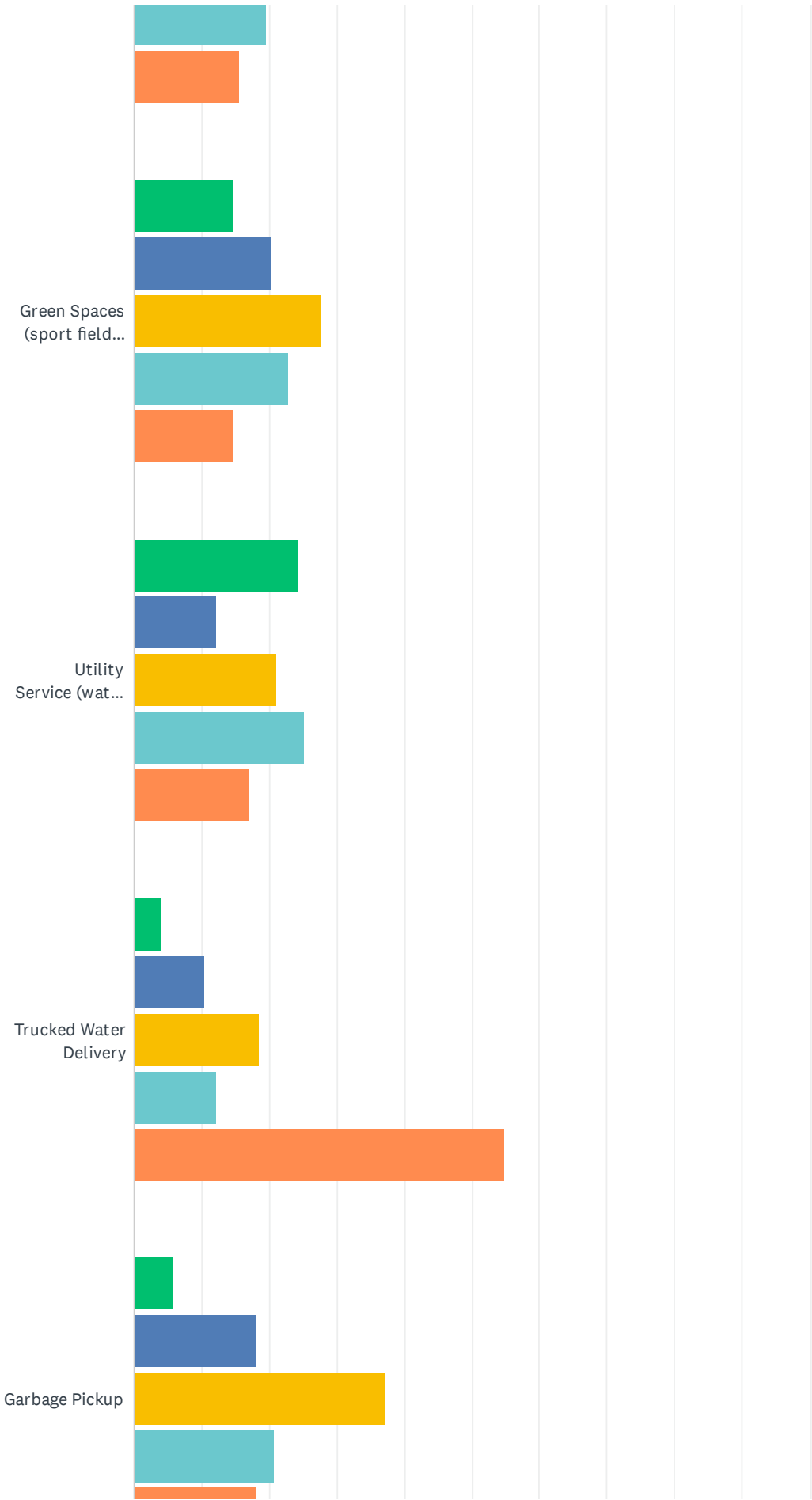
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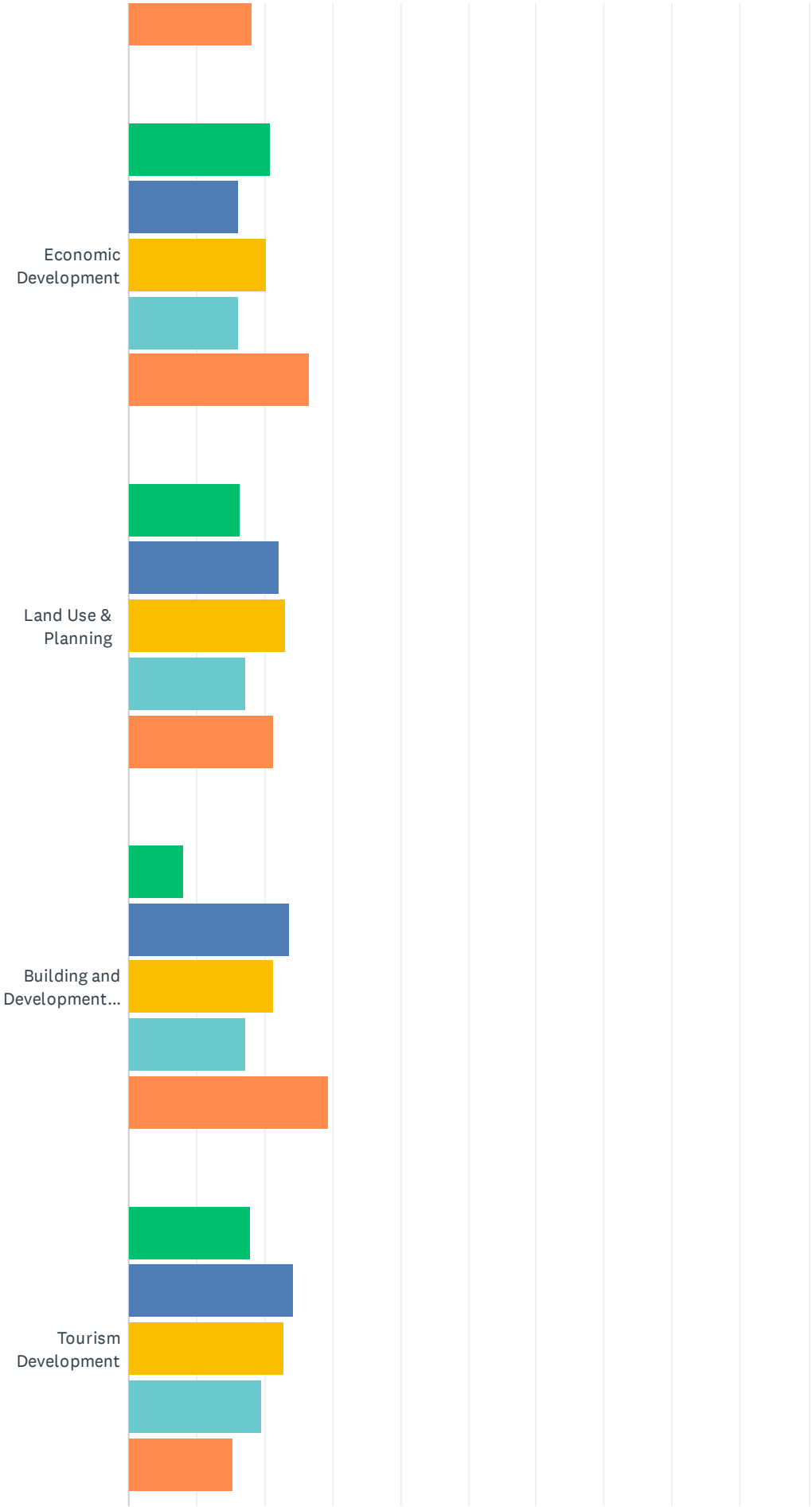
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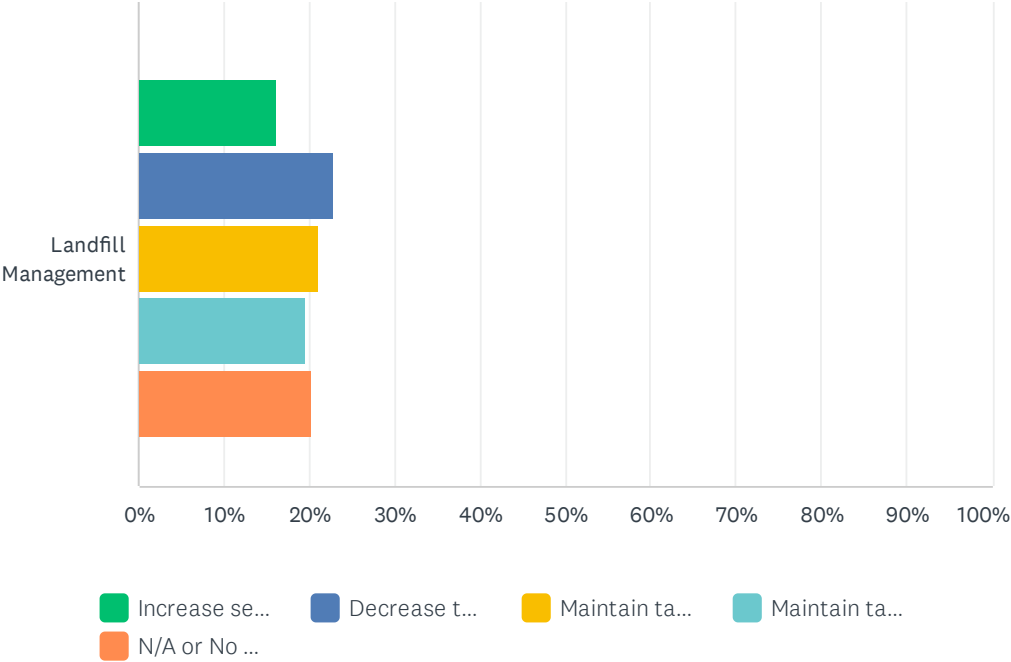
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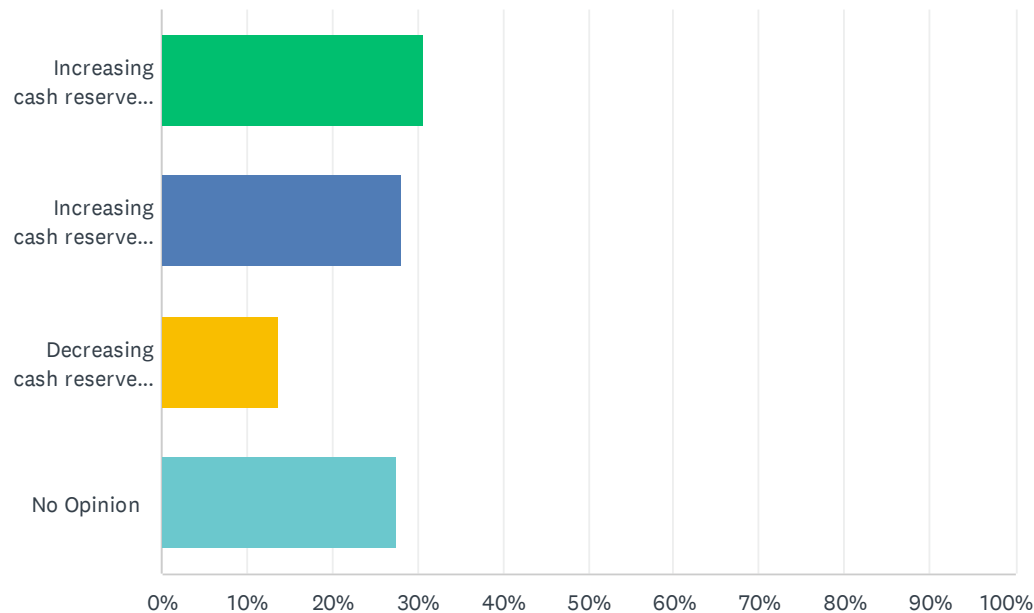


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	INCREASE SERVICES WHILE INCREASE TAXES AND CHARGES	DECREASE TAXES AND FEES, EVEN IF SERVICES MUST DECREASE	MAINTAIN TAXES AND FEES, EVEN IF SERVICES MUST DECREASE	MAINTAIN TAXES AND FEES, EVEN IF SOME SERVICES REDUCE TO MAINTAIN	N/A OR NO OPINION	TOTAL
Ambulance and Fire	23.39% 29	10.48% 13	24.19% 30	28.23% 35	13.71% 17	124
Bylaw Enforcement	14.52% 18	29.03% 36	24.19% 30	19.35% 24	12.90% 16	124
Fire Preparedness	31.71% 39	13.82% 17	26.83% 33	20.33% 25	7.32% 9	123
Flood Preparedness	26.83% 33	13.82% 17	24.39% 30	25.20% 31	9.76% 12	123
Road and Sidewalk Maintenance	26.61% 33	16.94% 21	20.16% 25	25.00% 31	11.29% 14	124
Snow Removal	22.58% 28	16.13% 20	24.19% 30	26.61% 33	10.48% 13	124
Recreation - Community Centre (programming)	14.52% 18	24.19% 30	26.61% 33	18.55% 23	16.13% 20	124
Recreation - Community Centre (availability and condition)	16.39% 20	22.13% 27	26.23% 32	19.67% 24	15.57% 19	122
Green Spaces (sport fields and parks)	14.63% 18	20.33% 25	27.64% 34	22.76% 28	14.63% 18	123
Utility Service (water quality)	24.39% 30	12.20% 15	21.14% 26	25.20% 31	17.07% 21	123
Trucked Water Delivery	4.03% 5	10.48% 13	18.55% 23	12.10% 15	54.84% 68	124
Garbage Pickup	5.79% 7	18.18% 22	37.19% 45	20.66% 25	18.18% 22	121
Economic Development	20.97% 26	16.13% 20	20.16% 25	16.13% 20	26.61% 33	124
Land Use & Planning	16.39% 20	22.13% 27	22.95% 28	17.21% 21	21.31% 26	122
Building and Development Permits	8.20% 10	23.77% 29	21.31% 26	17.21% 21	29.51% 36	122
Tourism Development	17.89% 22	24.39% 30	22.76% 28	19.51% 24	15.45% 19	123
Landfill Management	16.26% 20	22.76% 28	21.14% 26	19.51% 24	20.33% 25	123

Q5 The Town of Hay River pays for the portion of cost infrastructure replacement, with the rest funded through grants and programs Administration applies for. By having cash reserves, the Town is able to pursue funding which often covers 75% of the cost of the infrastructure. This contribution to cash reserves is targeted at \$2M per year based on the most recent 10-year plan. I agree with the following statement:

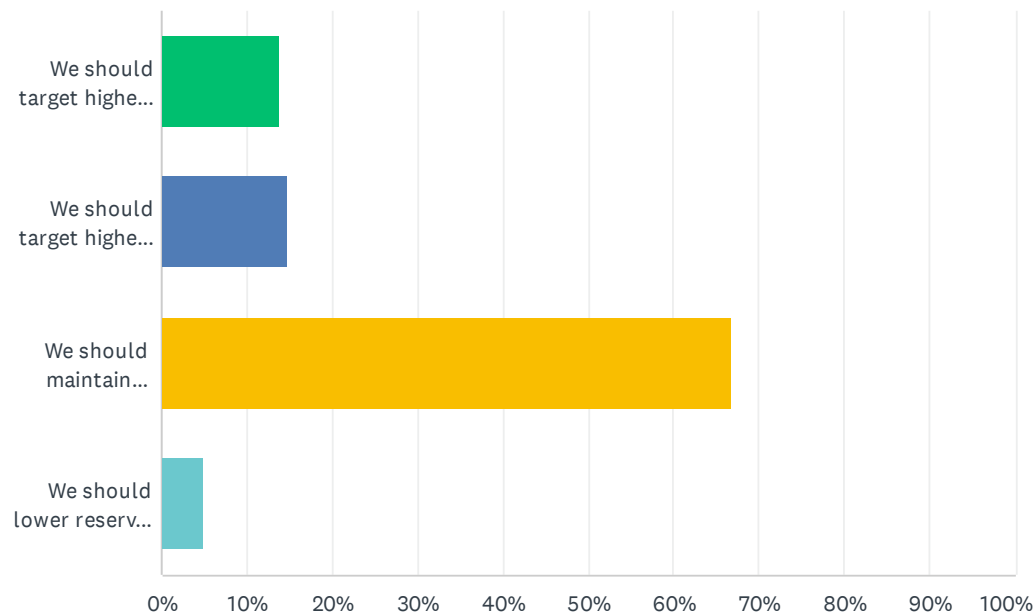
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ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Increasing cash reserve targets, while increasing taxes and charges.		30.65%	38
Increasing cash reserve targets, while decreasing services. decreasing cash reserve target.		28.23%	35
Decreasing cash reserve target, even if infrastructure will suffer.		13.71%	17
No Opinion		27.42%	34
TOTAL			124

Q6 Please select the following statement which best represents your opinion

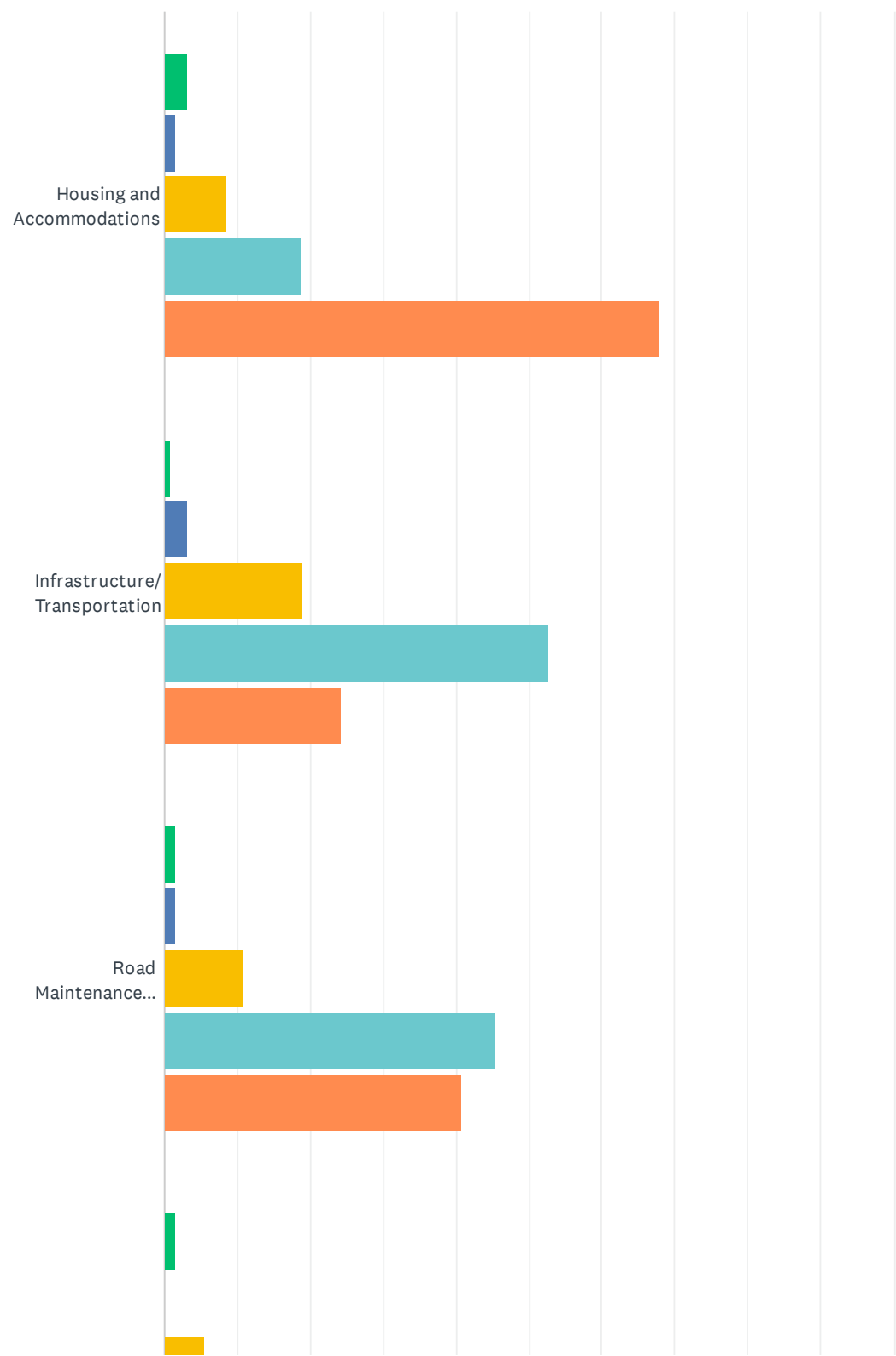
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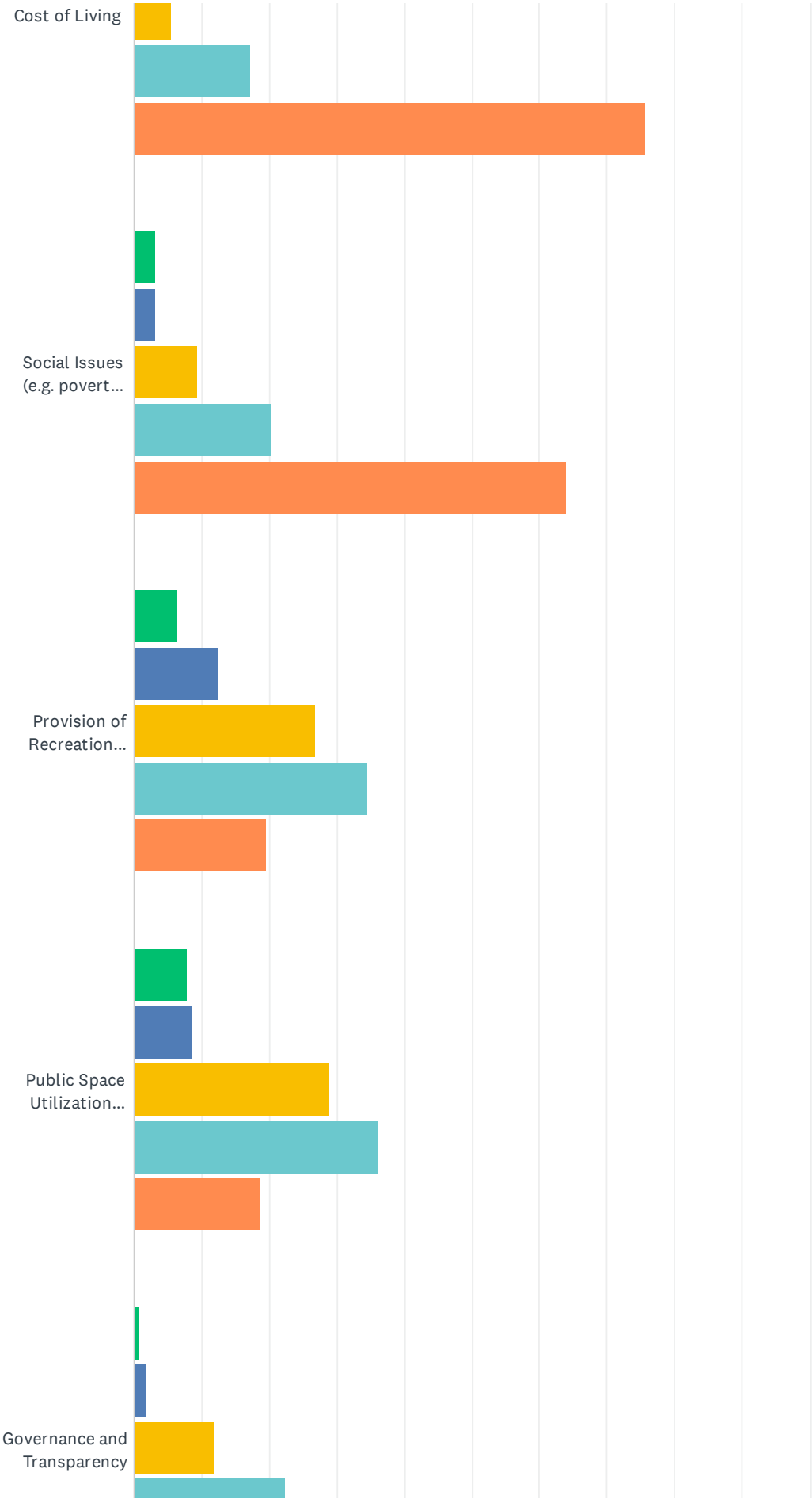
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
We should target higher contributions to reserves by decreasing services	13.82%	17
We should target higher contributions to reserves by increasing taxes and fees	14.63%	18
We should maintain current reserve targets	66.67%	82
We should lower reserve targets, even if this means higher service costs/lower quality infrastructure	4.88%	6
TOTAL		123

Q7 From your perspective, and recognizing that not everything is within Town control, rate the importance of the following issues facing the Town at the present:

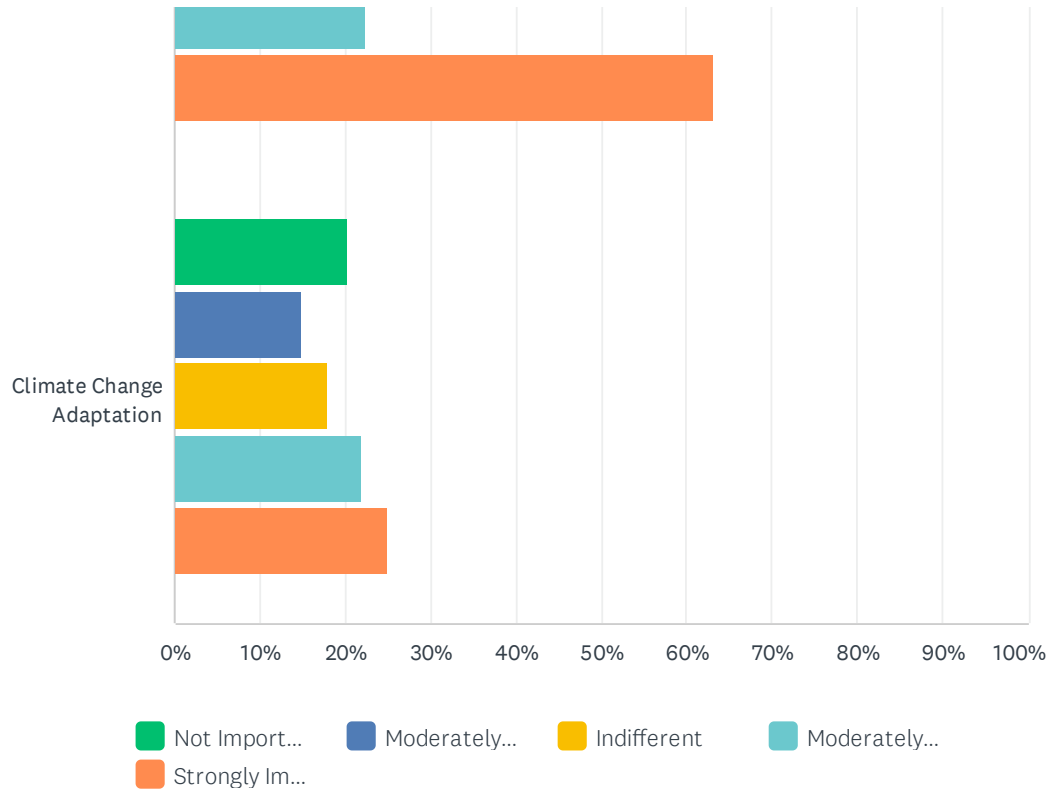
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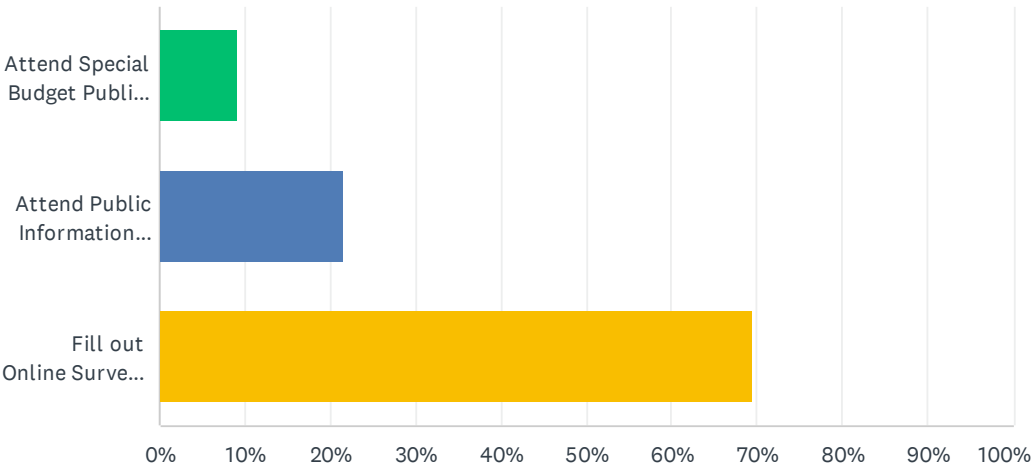
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	NOT IMPORTANT	MODERATELY UNIMPORTANT	INDIFFERENT	MODERATELY IMPORTANT	STRONGLY IMPORTANT	TOTAL
Housing and Accommodations	3.13% 4	1.56% 2	8.59% 11	18.75% 24	67.97% 87	128
Infrastructure/Transportation	0.79% 1	3.15% 4	18.90% 24	52.76% 67	24.41% 31	127
Road Maintenance (road patching, street cleaning, drainage) and Snow Removal	1.56% 2	1.56% 2	10.94% 14	45.31% 58	40.63% 52	128
Cost of Living	1.56% 2	0.00% 0	5.47% 7	17.19% 22	75.78% 97	128
Social Issues (e.g. poverty, social service & resources, childcare)	3.13% 4	3.13% 4	9.38% 12	20.31% 26	64.06% 82	128
Provision of Recreation Facilities	6.30% 8	12.60% 16	26.77% 34	34.65% 44	19.69% 25	127
Public Space Utilization (green space, playground, walking trails)	7.81% 10	8.59% 11	28.91% 37	35.94% 46	18.75% 24	128
Governance and Transparency	0.80% 1	1.60% 2	12.00% 15	22.40% 28	63.20% 79	125
Climate Change Adaptation	20.31% 26	14.84% 19	17.97% 23	21.88% 28	25.00% 32	128

Q8 How would you like to be involved in the next budget process?

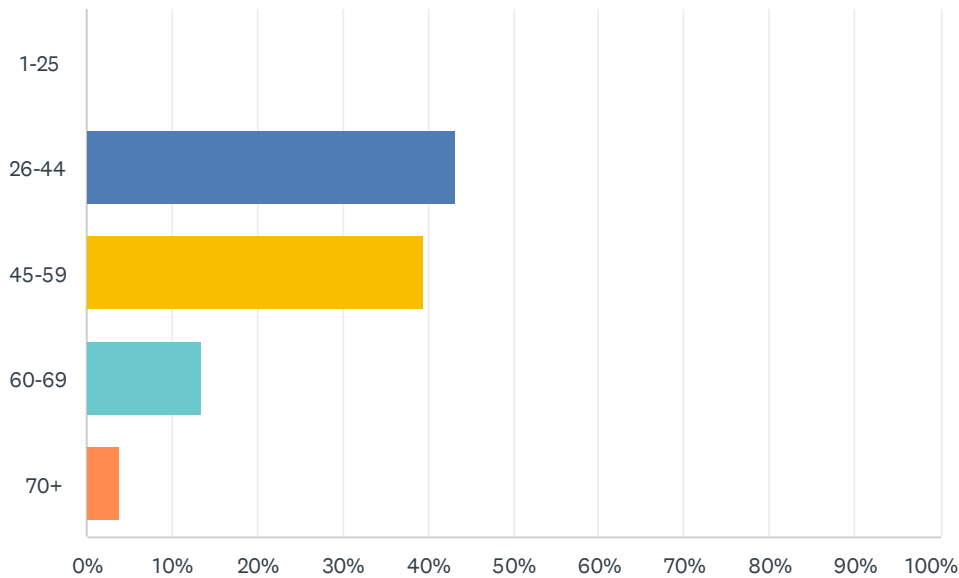
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Attend Special Budget Public Meeting	9.09%	11
Attend Public Information Session	21.49%	26
Fill out Online Surveys, Questionnaires or Budget Tools	69.42%	84
TOTAL		121

Q9 What is your age demographic?

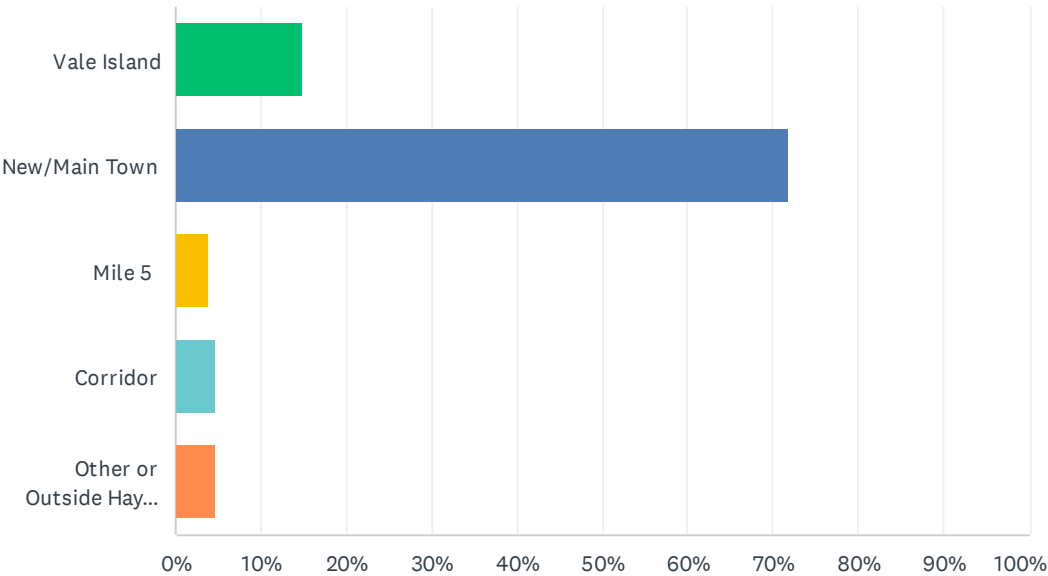
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1-25	0.00%	0
26-44	43.31%	55
45-59	39.37%	50
60-69	13.39%	17
70+	3.94%	5
TOTAL		127

Q10 Where is your primary residence located?

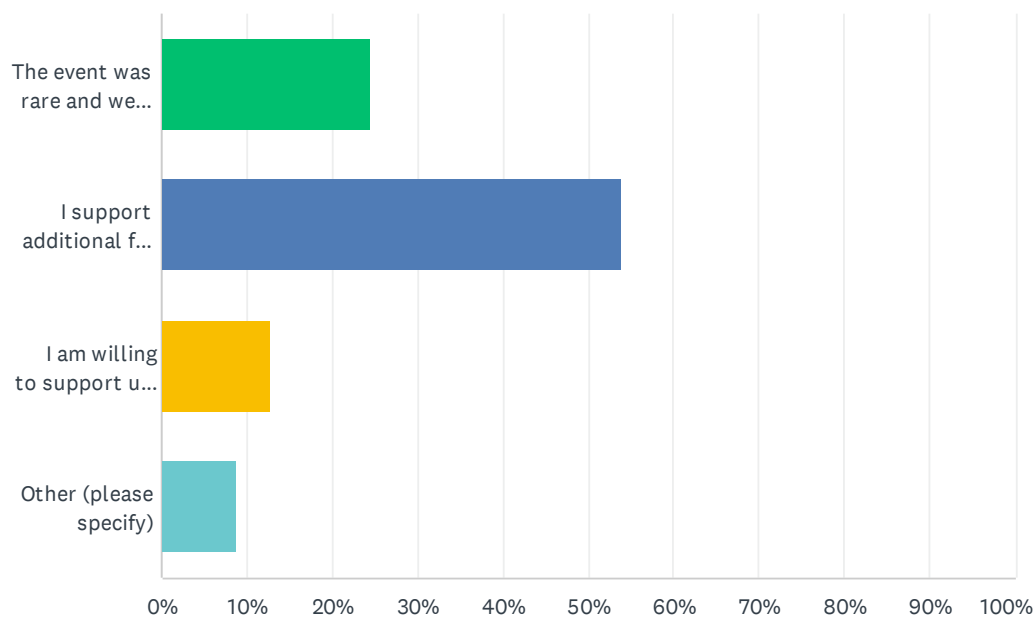
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Vale Island	14.84%	19
New/Main Town	71.88%	92
Mile 5	3.91%	5
Corridor	4.69%	6
Other or Outside Hay River	4.69%	6
TOTAL		128

Q11 The 2023 fires potentially could have caused more damage than it did. Understanding that each \$70,000 increase in expenses is a 1% tax increase, what is your opinion on funding of fire prevention not covered by the Northwest Territories or Canada?

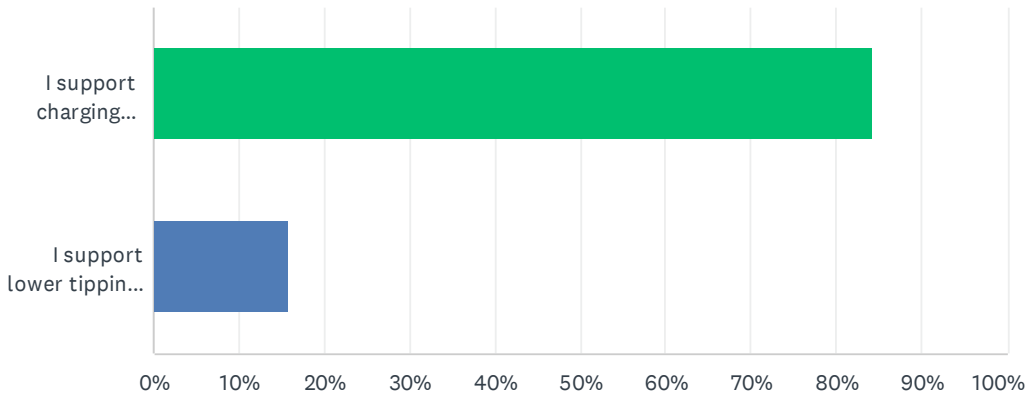
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
The event was rare and we don't need to spend money on additional fire prevention	24.60%	31
I support additional fire prevention measures but only as money becomes available	53.97%	68
I am willing to support up to a 5% tax increase to increase fire prevention measures	12.70%	16
Other (please specify)	8.73%	11
TOTAL		126

Q12 In August 2023, the Town changed the tipping fees at the landfill to more accurately reflect the cost to maintain and operate the site. Keeping in mind that the town must maintain a balanced budget, which of the following statements do you agree with?

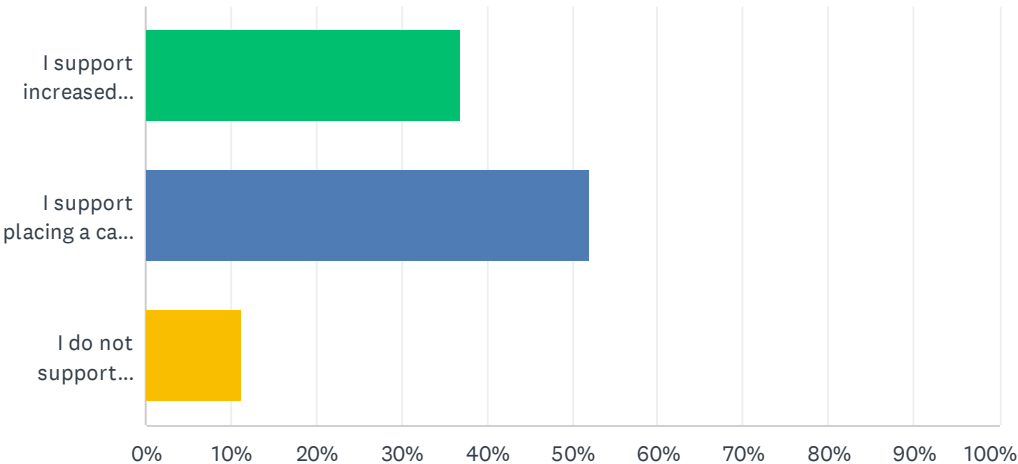
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I support charging tipping fees that recover the cost to operate and maintain the landfill.	84.17%	101
I support lower tipping fees and increasing property taxes to recover the cost to operate and maintain the landfill.	15.83%	19
TOTAL		120

Q13 Residents of the Town of Hay River who are disabled or over the age of 65 can apply to receive exemption from property taxes on eligible property. Ultimately, the Town’s portion of the cost of this exemption is borne by all other taxpayers and has been trending upwards over the past several years. Which of the following statements do you agree with?

Answered: 125 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I support increased property tax rates to support the property tax exemption provided to seniors and disabled persons.	36.80%	46
I support placing a cap on the property tax exemption provided to seniors and disabled persons.	52.00%	65
I do not support providing a property tax exemption to seniors and disabled persons.	11.20%	14
TOTAL		125