



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report To: Council

From: Andy Scott, Director, Strategic Initiatives & Business Development

Date: March 27, 2023

Report No: ES-004-23

Subject: 2023 Citizen Engagement Survey Results

Recommendation: IT IS RECOMMENDED that Council receive this information and consider the results during the setting of future strategic objectives and during future budget deliberations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Town of Milton conducted a statistically valid citizen engagement survey and supplemental focus groups in late 2022, early 2023.
- It is intended that these results establish a benchmark and that this type of community engagement be repeated in the future to measure changes.
- Overall, residents are satisfied with the level of service provided and the value for tax dollars received.
- Staff will leverage these results to support the realization of the recommendations within the customer service strategy.
- Results will be considered during the development of the Towns next set of strategic priorities.

REPORT

Background

The 2020-23 Council Staff work plan identified Service Innovation as a corporate priority requiring dedicated focus. A number of activities were identified during the work plan creation which if realized would support the achievement of this priority.

Identified activities included:

- Collect feedback from residents and businesses on their service priorities
- Build and enhance data and information to assist Council and staff in evidence-based decision making.

Background

To achieve the activities identified, staff first conducted an environmental scan looking at the approach other municipalities have taken to build a consistent feedback tool with residents. Staff also looked within at prior community engagement activities.

In the Fall of 2022 staff initiated a competitive procurement process to secure the services of a third party consultant who could conduct a community wide, statistically valid survey. The scope of this engagement required 600 randomized telephone responses to achieve a high degree of statistical validity as well as the collection of a robust set of respondent demographics to allow for analysis to be filtered by relevant geography as well as by equity indicators.

Forum Research Inc. were the successful bid applicants and quantitative fieldwork was conducted in late 2022. This quantitative data collection was then supplemented by four focus groups that were convened in January 2023 and hosted virtually. Focus group participants were recruited from those residents who completed the telephone survey and were groups by election Ward to explore ward specific issues and opportunities. To enable equitable virtual access, residents participating in the Ward 1 focus group were offered alternative access options to address concerns that might be encountered in areas without access to high-speed internet. None of the participants required accommodation and all residents who wished to participate were able to do so.

Analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data was finalized in early 2023 and presented to Council through a workshop held on Feb. 17, 2023. The web stream is available on Milton Council's YouTube page. .

Discussion

The following is a high level summary of the resulting analysis. For a greater level of analysis, which includes the identification of ward specific results which are statistically significant, please see the Appendix A - 2023 Citizen Engagement Survey Results.

The analysis of the survey demonstrates an overall positive level of satisfaction with the services offered by the Town, while also highlighting some specific areas for future focus and consideration.

Community Attributes

Residents report safety, a feeling of belonging and the overall appearance of the community as attributes they are most satisfied. The attributes which require further consideration and analysis include building on the strategic growth planning and road planning/mobility.

The level of satisfaction with 'road planning and mobility' currently sits at 42%. Surveys conducted in 2017 and 2019 to inform budget priorities also identified investments in our road network as a priority amongst Milton residents. These budget focused surveys were conducted by Nanos Research and were also statistically valid. As such we are seeing a consistent trend across historical community engagements which can be first dated back to a 2013 survey. Within that statistically valid survey 'road network, the ability of Milton's roads to accommodate traffic' received a 33% satisfaction rate.



Discussion

Satisfaction with Municipal Services

77% of respondents state they are satisfied with the quality of services provided by the Town. This is a 2% reduction when looking at the results collected back in 2013. When comparing our 2023 result to other Ontario municipalities, Milton sits just below the mid-point with a range between 93% and 73%. In comparison to wider population trends, Milton is ahead of the Canadian trend. Pollara Strategic Insights conducts periodic Canada-wide research on satisfaction with municipal governments, and in 2022 they found 60% of Canadian residents are satisfied with the quality of services provided by their respective municipal government.

Municipal services that were identified by Milton residents as having a high degree of satisfaction are Milton Fire and Rescue Services, Milton Public Library and the Town-operated parks, sports fields, walking paths and trails.

Municipal services which were identified as having the least level of satisfaction were public transit and development and building permit applications/approvals. Staff already have activities planned for 2023 which are expected to improve satisfaction levels. In 2023, the Town is updating the Milton Transit Service Master Plan while also procuring new public transit vehicles for future service growth. While being recognized by BILD as the most efficient municipality to process development applications and permits, the Town continues to make process improvements that include launching a new building permit online portal in 2023.

Taxation, Value for Money and Infrastructure Saving

The majority of residents (77%) responded that they receive good or very good value for tax dollars and 73% believe their property taxes should be about the average or greater than other GTA municipalities. The majority of respondents also believe the Town should be maintaining its existing service levels even if that means taxes and user fees need to increase to maintain them.

Residents strongly support funding be set aside to replace infrastructure in the future to ensure existing service levels can continue to be provided in the future.

Top of Mind Issues

When asking residents what are the single biggest issues facing the town. Almost half (48%) of residents identified a topic which related to transportation. 40% identified a topic linked to development and infrastructure. Further research is necessary to understand why these topics were selected and if geographic and/or demographic variations in response exist. This will allow for future mitigation strategies to be developed and considered.

Service Usage and Interactions

45% of residents now suggest their primary mode of interaction with the Town is via online services with 60% suggesting that if they are looking to seek information about the Town they would do so via the Town's digital channels. When the same question was posed in 2013 33% suggested their primary source of information was the Town's website. This demonstrates a continual shift by the community to seek our digital platforms over other non-digital service and information offerings.

Discussion

The Town has already developed plans to become a digital-first organization with Council endorsing the Town's Digital Modernization strategy in the fall of 2022.

Residents report an overall satisfaction rate of 68% based on their last interaction with the Town. When looking at the Canada-wide Pollara study conducted in 2022, residents from across Canada reported a 55% overall satisfaction rate. While this result shows there is room to improve, it also demonstrates Milton residents report a rate of satisfaction in municipal services 13% higher than residents from across Canada.

When seeking feedback on each element of a customer service interaction, residents report greater levels of satisfaction in respectfulness, knowledge, timeliness of response and ease in finding and understanding information.

Equity Analysis

In addition to the responses collected, each respondent was asked a series of demographic questions. This permits a level of equity analysis to be conducted which will identify where levels of satisfaction differ across demographic themes which are known to individually or collectively affect residents who are at risk of exclusion.

Themes include:

- Age
- Gender
- Tenure
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Net Income
- Household size
- Children residing in the home
- Home ownership

It is intended that this analysis be conducted in the future and shared across the Town's leadership teams to continue applying equity and inclusion in program planning so that enrolment results demonstrate a degree of statistical significance.

Future Uses

This research was conducted with a multitude of uses in mind. Supporting the overall achievement of the Council Staff work plan was a primary consideration, but the need to engage the community on levels of satisfaction in municipal services was identified as a deliverable in the Town's Customer Service Strategic Plan.



Discussion

Establishing a statistically valid, corporate-wide, baseline of analysis supports future planning and allows divisions who wish to conduct service specific program planning to supplement this research in a more targeted manner.

Finally, with the commencement of a new term of Council, the need to sunset our existing Council Staff Work Plan and create a new future-focused strategic plan is the next step to identify Milton's priorities. This research will support Council and the Town's leadership in identifying our corporate priorities, and aligning those priorities with community sentiment. It is intended that this analysis informs priority setting and that by replicating this research in the future, it supports measurement, public reporting, and accountability efforts.

Financial Impact

The results of the Citizen Engagement Survey will be considered in future strategic planning initiatives, with any financial impacts identified through master plans or other studies and/or future capital and operating budgets for Council consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Scott
Director, Strategic Initiatives & Business Development

For questions, please contact: Andy Scott

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Attachments

Appendix A – 2023 Citizen Engagement Survey Results

Approved by CAO
Andrew M. Siltala
Chief Administrative Officer

Recognition of Traditional Lands

The Town of Milton resides on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people. The Town of Milton shares this land and the responsibility for



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the water, food and resources. We stand as allies with the First Nations as stewards of these lands.

Town of Milton

Citizen Engagement Survey

February 2023

Prepared by:  **FORUM**
RESEARCH INC.



Reporting Considerations

TOP2 / BTM2 Groupings

Top 2 (TOP2) and Bottom 2 (BTM2) reference the collected TOP2 positive and BTM2 negative responses, respectively where applicable. For example, a TOP2 grouping referred to as “satisfied” may be the combined result of “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied,” whereas a grouping of “not satisfied” (BTM2) may be the combined result of “not very satisfied” and “not at all satisfied.”

Rounding

Due to rounding, numbers presented throughout this document may not add up to the totals provided. For example, in some cases, the sum of all question values may add up to 101% instead of 100%. Similar logic applies to TOP2 and BTM2 groupings.

Multi-mentions

In some cases, more than one answer option is applicable to a respondent. Multiple mention questions allow respondents to select more than one answer category for a question. For questions that ask for multiple mentions (e.g., “*What are the qualities or features of Milton that make it livable?*”), it is important to note that the percentages typically add to over 100%. This is because the total number of answer categories selected for a question can be greater than the number of respondents who answered the question.

NET Groupings

In some instances, similar answer options are grouped into subcategories referred to as “NET”. For example, traffic/congestion, roads, public transit, lack of parking, and CN Rail Hub are all answer options that can be grouped as NET: Transportation Items. The NET percentage describes the proportion of respondents who selected any transportation items, while the percentage for each individual item describes the proportion of respondents who selected that specific transportation item. Similarly to multi-mentions, the percentages for each individual item will typically add up to more than the NET percentage.

Reporting Considerations

Question Framework

The footnote on each page indicates the related question from the survey questionnaire, the sample framework used in the analysis, and the sample size of the related data.

Qualitative Limitations

The normal limitations of qualitative research discussions must be kept in mind.

- Participants were selected on a non-random basis and their views cannot be regarded as quantifiably projectable to any specific population, cohort or universe.
- The information obtained may be viewed as an indication of what attitudes exist but not of the extent to which these attitudes are represented in any defined population.
- Finally, group discussions are not 'unreliable surveys'. They are essentially idea generating vehicles where any avenue of information, which appears to evoke useful ideas or problem-solving suggestions, is pursued and reported.

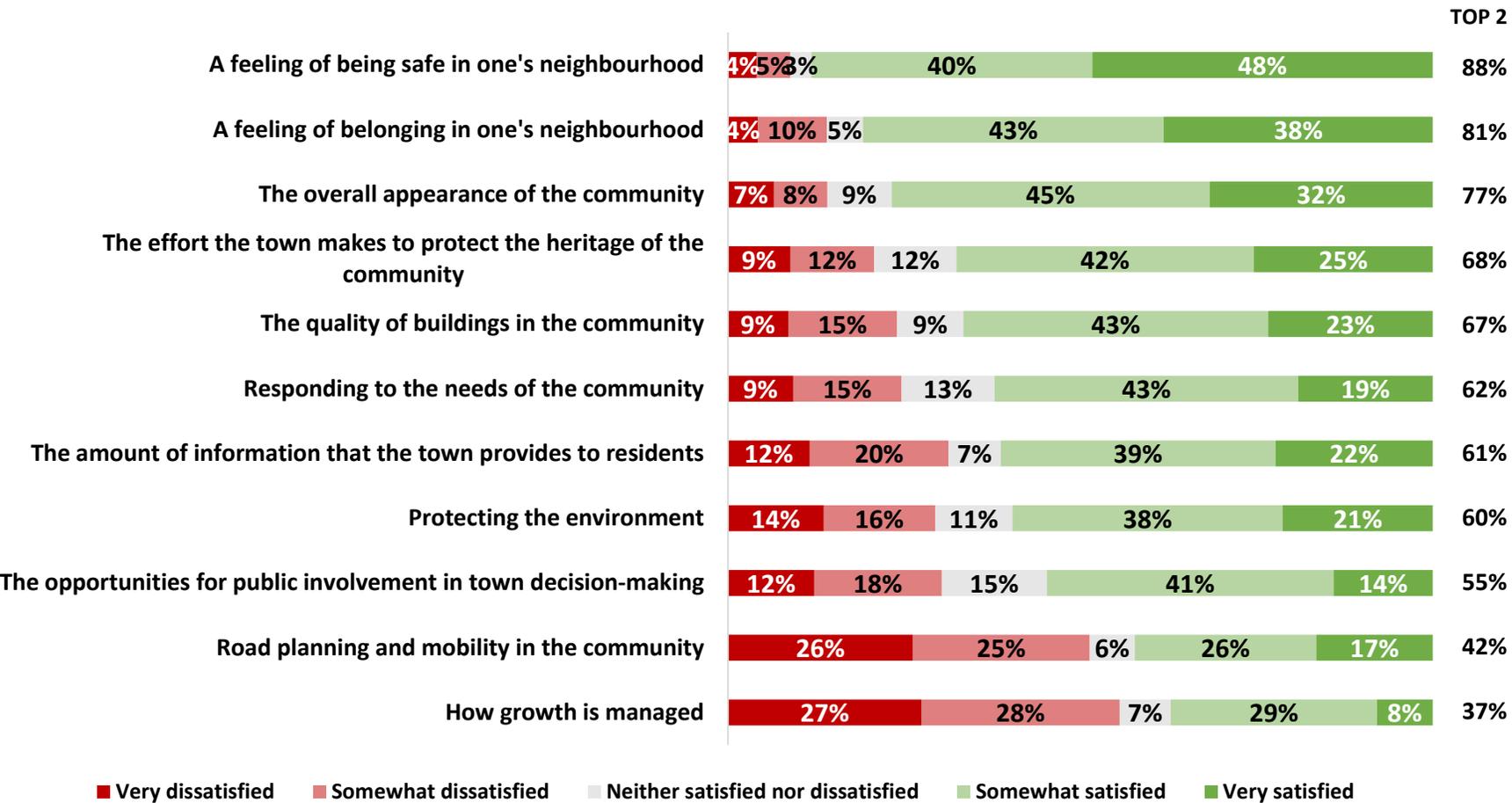
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Priorities and Planning



Satisfaction with Milton Attributes

Respondents are most likely to be somewhat or very satisfied with a feeling of being safe in their neighbourhoods (TOP2: 88%).



Respondents are most likely to be satisfied with a feeling of being safe in one's neighbourhood (TOP2: 88%).

- A feeling of being safe in one's neighbourhood is the top attribute among respondents from Ward 1, Ward 3, and Ward 4. Respondents from Ward 3 are more likely to be satisfied with this attribute compared to those from Ward 2.
- Respondents from Ward 2 are most satisfied with the overall appearance of the community (TOP2: 88%).

This is followed by a feeling of belonging in one's neighbourhood (TOP2: 81%).

Respondents are least satisfied with how growth is managed in Milton, with 55% of respondents being somewhat or very dissatisfied.

This is followed by road planning and mobility in the community, with 51% of respondents being somewhat or very dissatisfied.

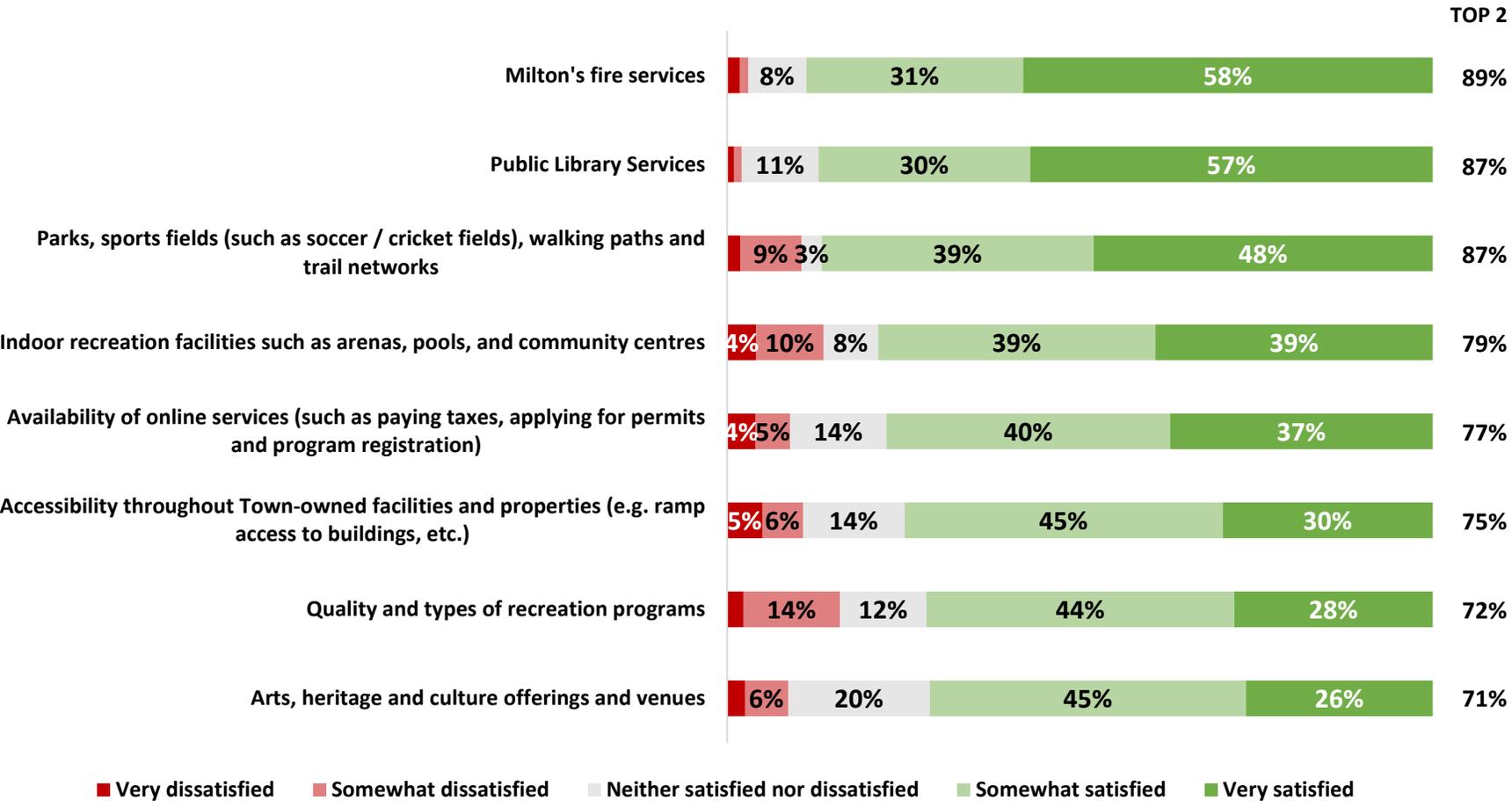
Q5. I am going to read a list of attributes about the Town of Milton. For each one, please tell me if you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the performance of the Town for each one. What about...

Sample Size: Ranging from n = 548 to 598 (Telephone)

Base: All respondents (Excluding "don't know" and "prefer not to say")

Satisfaction with Services (1/2)

In general, respondents are satisfied with the performance of the Town of Milton on various services.



Respondents are most likely to be satisfied with Milton's fire services, with 89% saying they are somewhat or very satisfied.

- Milton's fire services has the highest levels of satisfaction for respondents from Ward 1 and Ward 2. Public library services has the highest satisfaction among respondents from Ward 3 and Ward 4.

This is followed by public library services, and parks and sports fields, at 87% each.

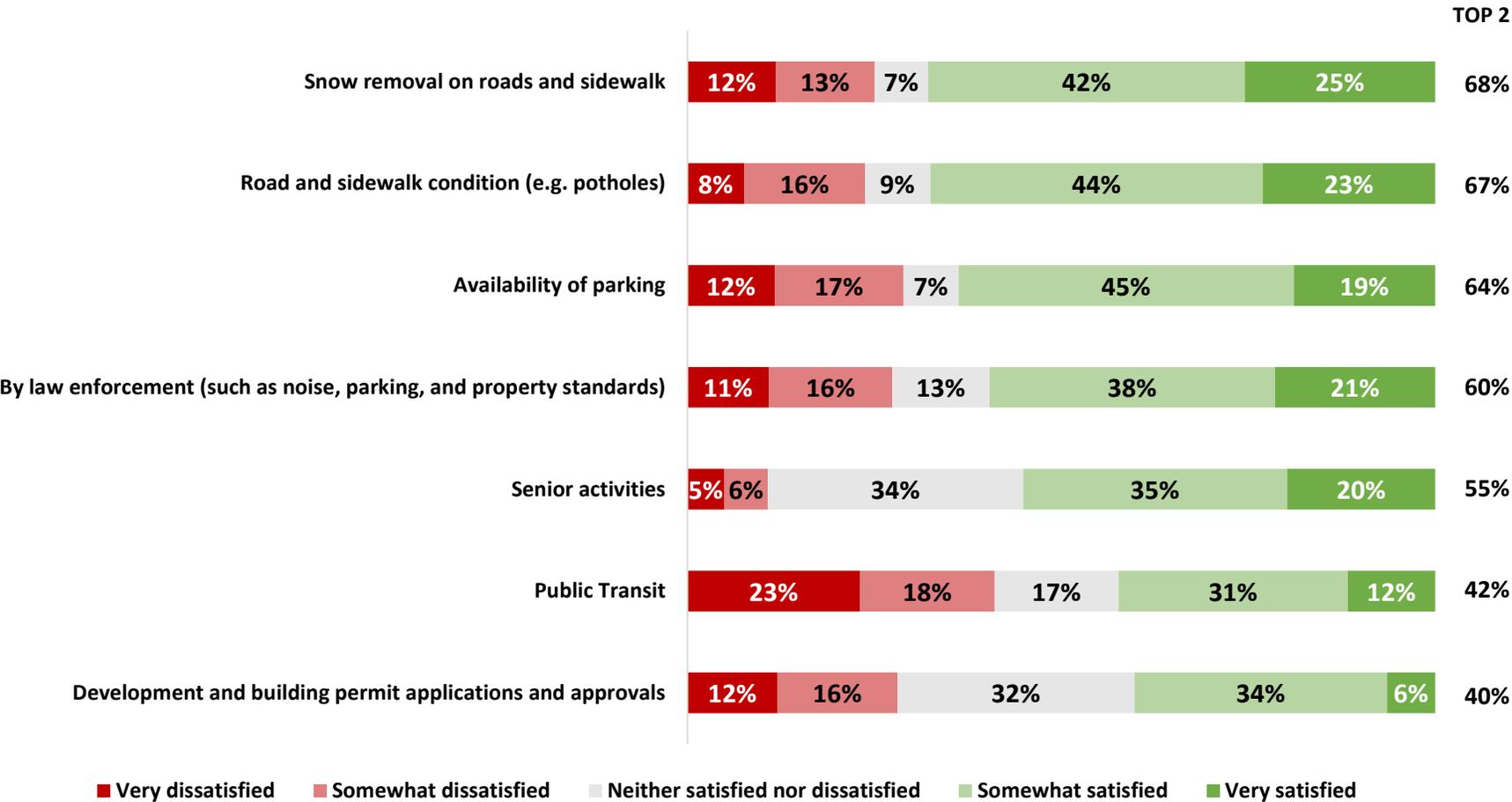
Q6a/b. And using the same scale, would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the performance of the Town of Milton on each of the following services?

Sample Size: Ranging from 447 to 595 (Telephone)

Base: All respondents (Excluding "don't know" and "prefer not to say")

Satisfaction with Services (2/2)

Respondents are least satisfied with development and building permit applications and approvals, public transit.



Respondents are least satisfied with development and building permit applications and approvals, with 40% saying very or somewhat satisfied.

This is followed by public transit at 42%, and satisfaction with senior activities is the third lowest at 55%.

- When only looking at those aged 55 and above, 67% of are satisfied with senior services.

Qualitative findings

Public transit and transportation was a major issue that was discussed. Participants from all wards felt like public transit could be improved because:

- Up to date bus schedules are difficult to find
- Some experience limited accessibility to town run programs due to limited public transit
- Having multiple cars has become a necessity due to lack of public transit

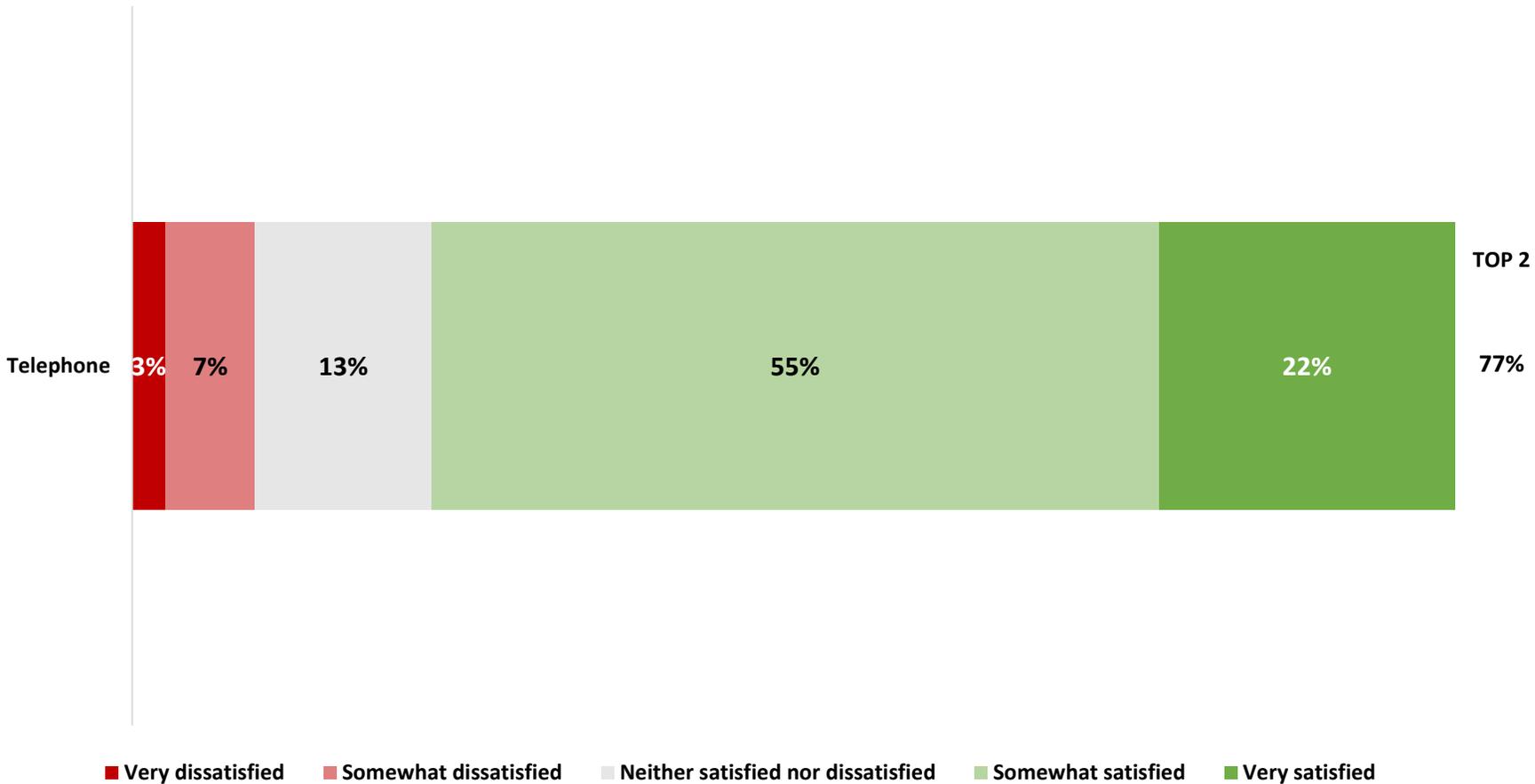
Q6a/b. And using the same scale, would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the performance of the Town of Milton on each of the following services?

Sample Size: Ranging from 447 to 595 (Telephone)

Base: All respondents (Excluding "don't know" and "prefer not to say")

Overall Satisfaction with Services

Respondents are satisfied with the overall quality of services provided by the Town of Milton.



Respondents from telephone survey are satisfied with the overall quality of services provided by the Town of Milton, with 77% saying somewhat or very satisfied.

- Respondents from Ward 3 were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the overall quality of services provided by the Town (TOP2: 92%) compared to residents from Ward 1 (TOP2: 77%) and Ward 2 (TOP2: 72%).

Comparisons to Ontario Municipalities:

- Oakville (2022): 93%
- Guelph (2019): 89%
- Thunder Bay (2019): 81%
- Mississauga (2019): 81%
- Whitby (2020): 79%
- **Milton (2022): 77%**
- London (2022): 77%
- Owen Sound (2021): 75%
- Brampton (2019): 73%

Q8. How satisfied are you with the overall quality of services provided by the Town of Milton?

Sample Size: n = 599 (Telephone)

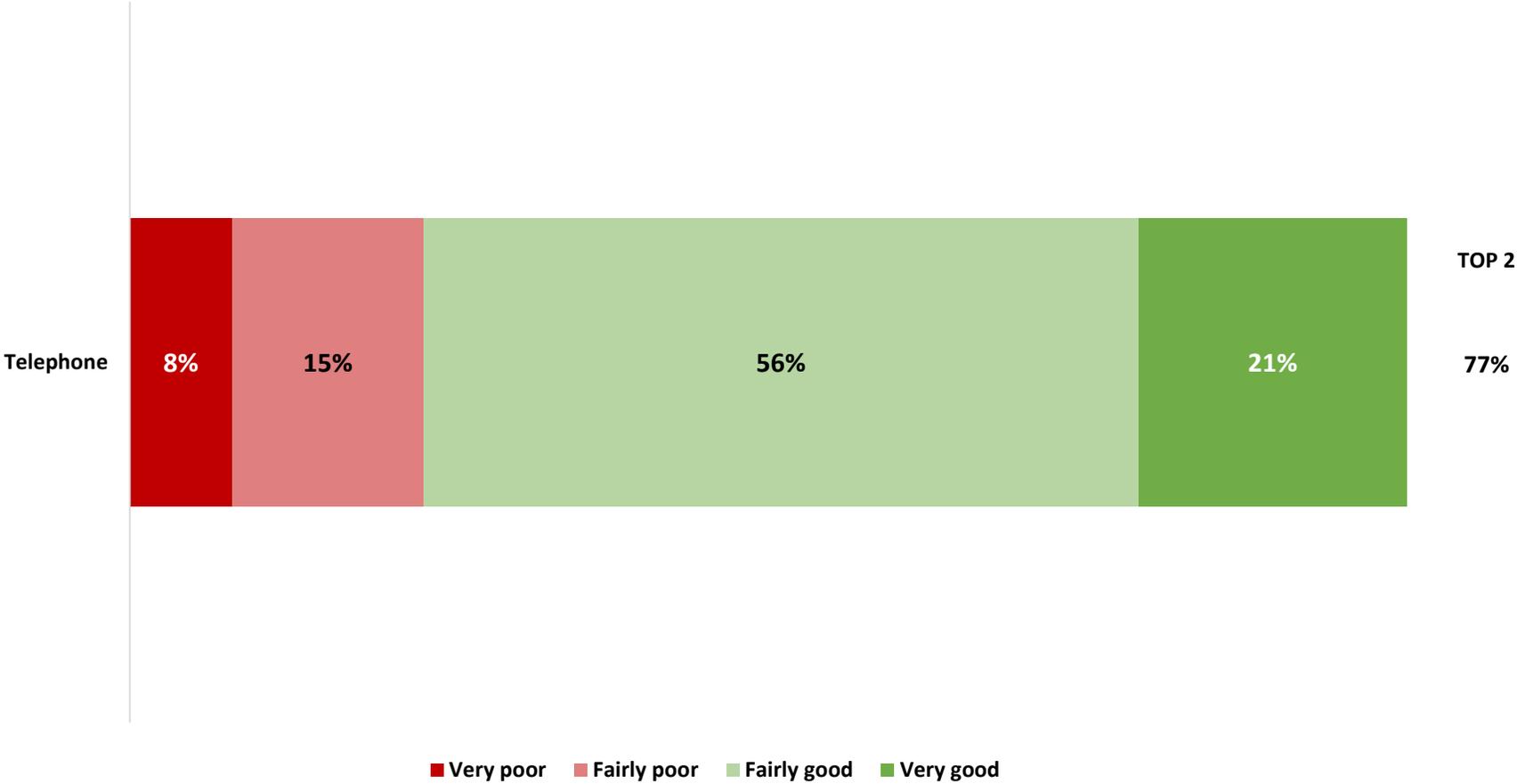
Base: All respondents (Excluding "don't know" and "prefer not to say")

Gap Analysis: Summary

Primary Areas for Improvement	Secondary Areas for Improvement	Primary Areas for Maintenance	Secondary Areas for Maintenance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development/building permit applications/approvals • Availability of parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By-law enforcement • Snow removal • Senior activities • Road/sidewalk conditions • Public transit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire services • Parks, sports fields, walking paths, trail networks • Arts, heritage, culture offerings/venues • Availability of online services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and types of recreation programs • Indoor recreation facilities • Public library

Value for Tax Dollars

The majority of respondents say they receive good value for their tax dollars.



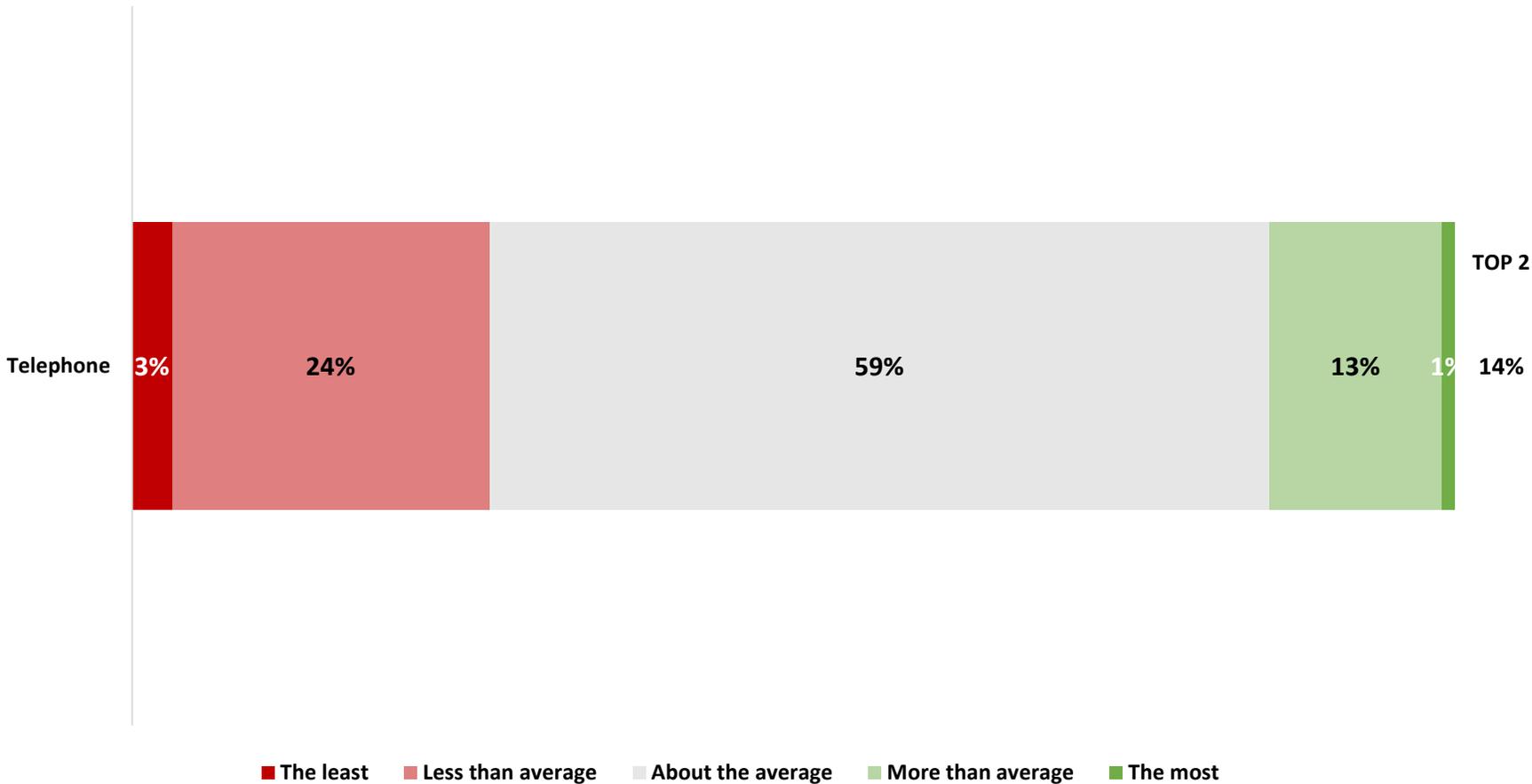
Comparisons to Ontario Municipalities:

- Oakville (2022): 85%
- Whitby (2020): 84%
- Guelph (2019): 80%
- **Milton (2022): 77%**
- Brampton (2019): 77%
- London (2022): 76%
- Owen Sound (2021): 75%

Q7a. Thinking about the programs and services you receive from the Town of Milton, would you say that, overall, you receive very good, fairly good, fairly poor, or very poor value for tax dollars?
 Sample Size: n = 584 (Telephone)
 Base: All respondents (Excluding "don't know")

Property Taxes

The majority of respondents think Milton residents should pay about the average with respect to property taxes compared to other GTA municipalities.



The majority of telephone respondents think Milton residents should pay about the same in terms of property taxes compared to other GTA municipalities (59%).

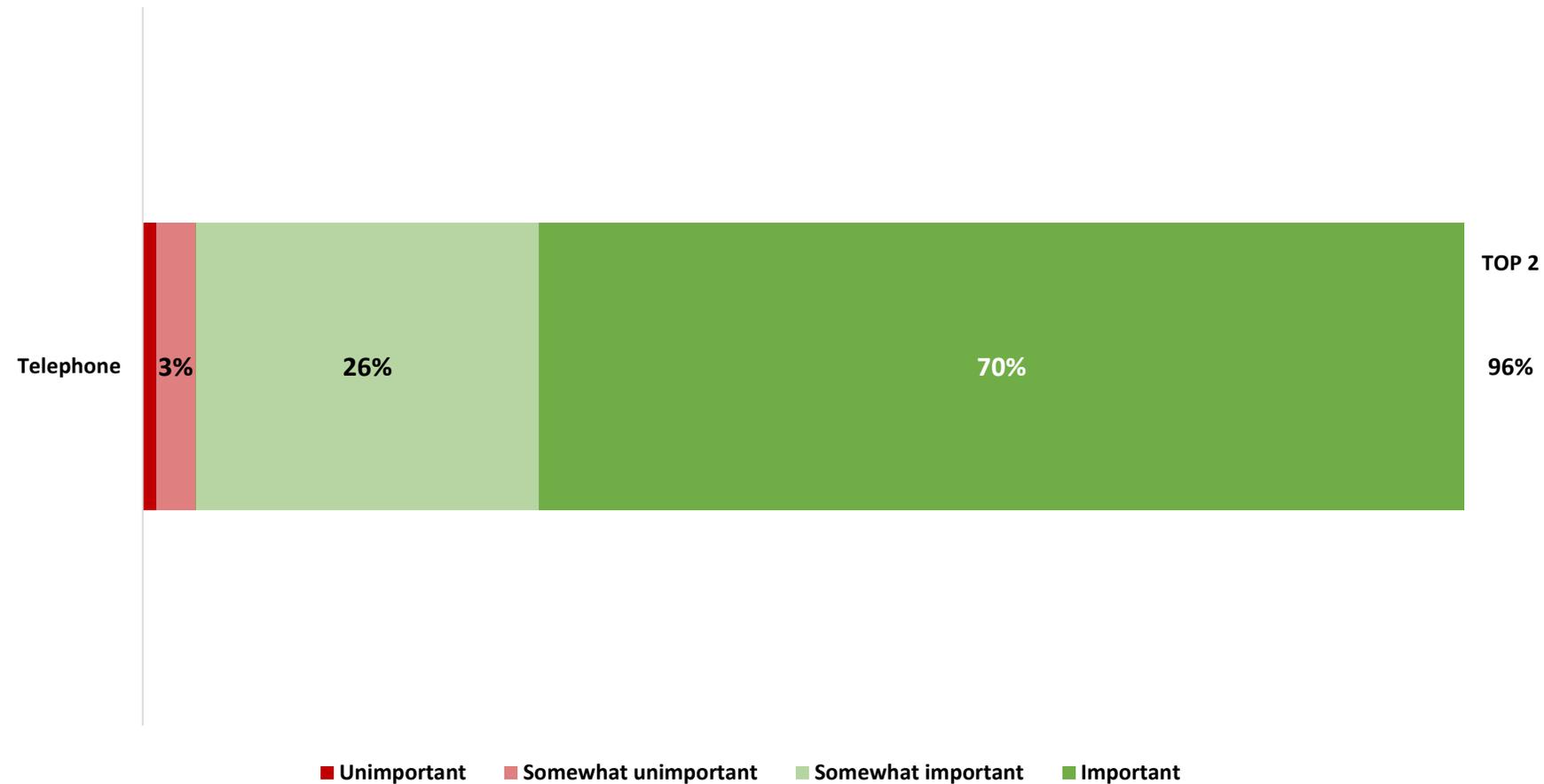
Only 1 in 7 (TOP2: 14%) think residents should pay more than average or the most property taxes compared to other GTA municipalities.

Q7b. Assuming that there is a direct relationship between property taxes and service levels, that is the more taxes you pay the more services will be provided, compared to other GTA municipalities, how much do you think Town of Milton residents should pay with respect to property taxes per household?

Sample Size: n = 557 (Telephone)
Base: All respondents (Excluding "don't know")

Funding for Infrastructure

The vast majority of respondents think it is important that funding be set aside to replace infrastructure to ensure existing levels of service can be provided in future years.



Respondents consider it somewhat important/important that funding be set aside (TOP2: 96%).

- Respondents from Ward 4 are more likely to consider it important that funding be set aside to replace infrastructure such as roads and buildings to ensure existing levels of service can be provided in future years (84%) compared to respondents from Ward 2 (62%).

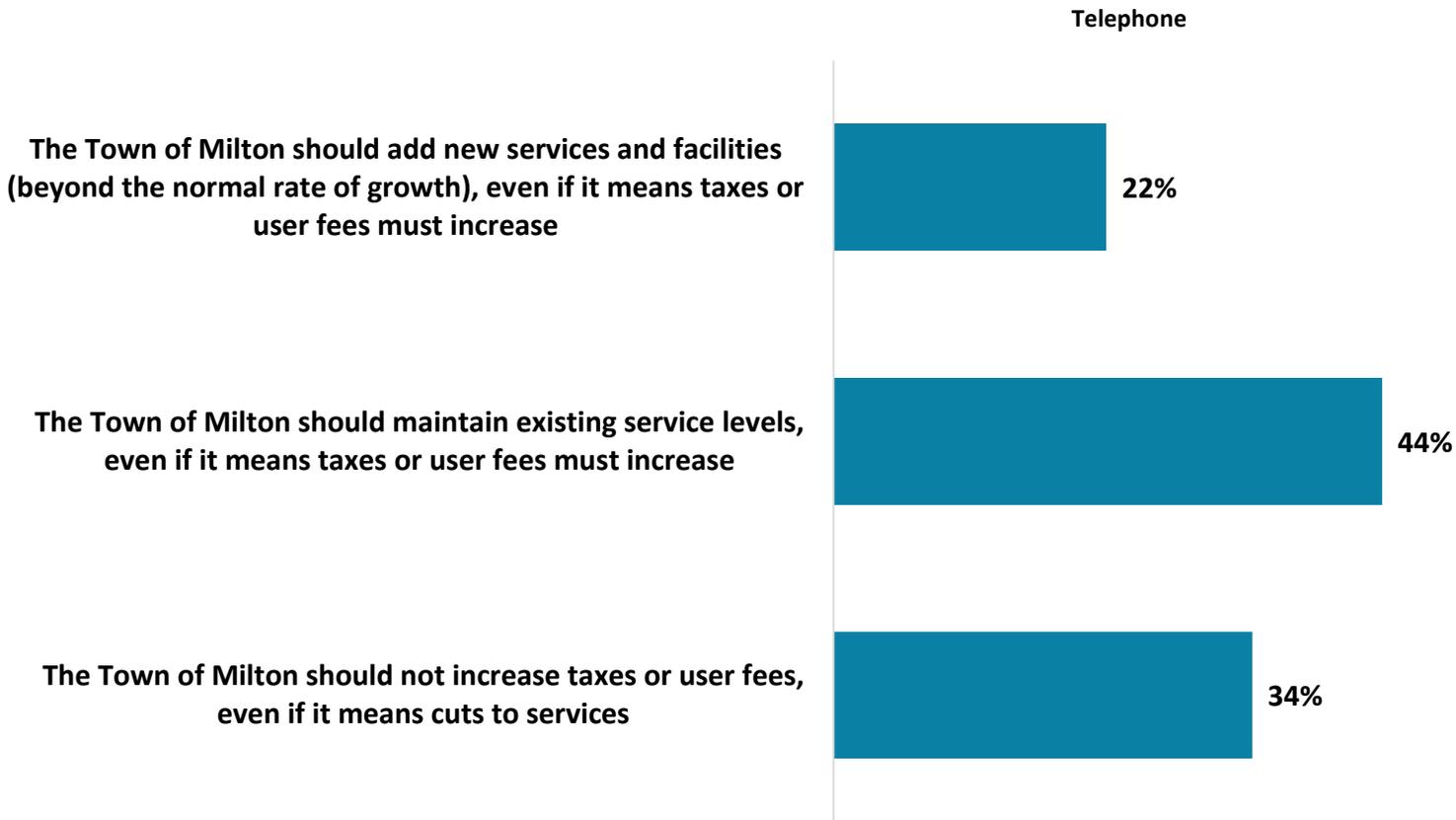
Qualitative finding:

Most focus group participants were happy with the conditions and upkeep of the town infrastructure. Although, some residents felt the current infrastructure is being underutilized.

Q7c. How important is it to you that funding be set aside to replace infrastructure such as roads and buildings to ensure existing levels of service can be provided in future years? Is it...
Sample Size: n = 587 (Telephone)
Base: All respondents (Excluding "don't know")

Balancing Services and Taxes/Fees

Respondents were most likely to say that the Town of Milton should maintain existing service levels, even if it means taxes or user fees must increase.



Over 2 in 5 (44%) of telephone respondents say the Town of Milton should maintain existing service levels, even if it means taxes or user fees must increase.

This is followed by a third (34%) saying taxes and user fees should not be increased, even if it means cuts to services.

The least common view is to add new services and facilities, even if it means taxes or user fees must increase (22%).

Qualitative findings:

Most participants from the focus groups felt they would be ok with an increase in taxation for improved infrastructure, services, and development with certain conditions;

- That the increase in taxes is gradual
- Transparency about what that money is being used for
- Tangible/observable changes as a result
- And there is evidence of a firm plan for the distant future
- A way for the residents to meaningfully contribute

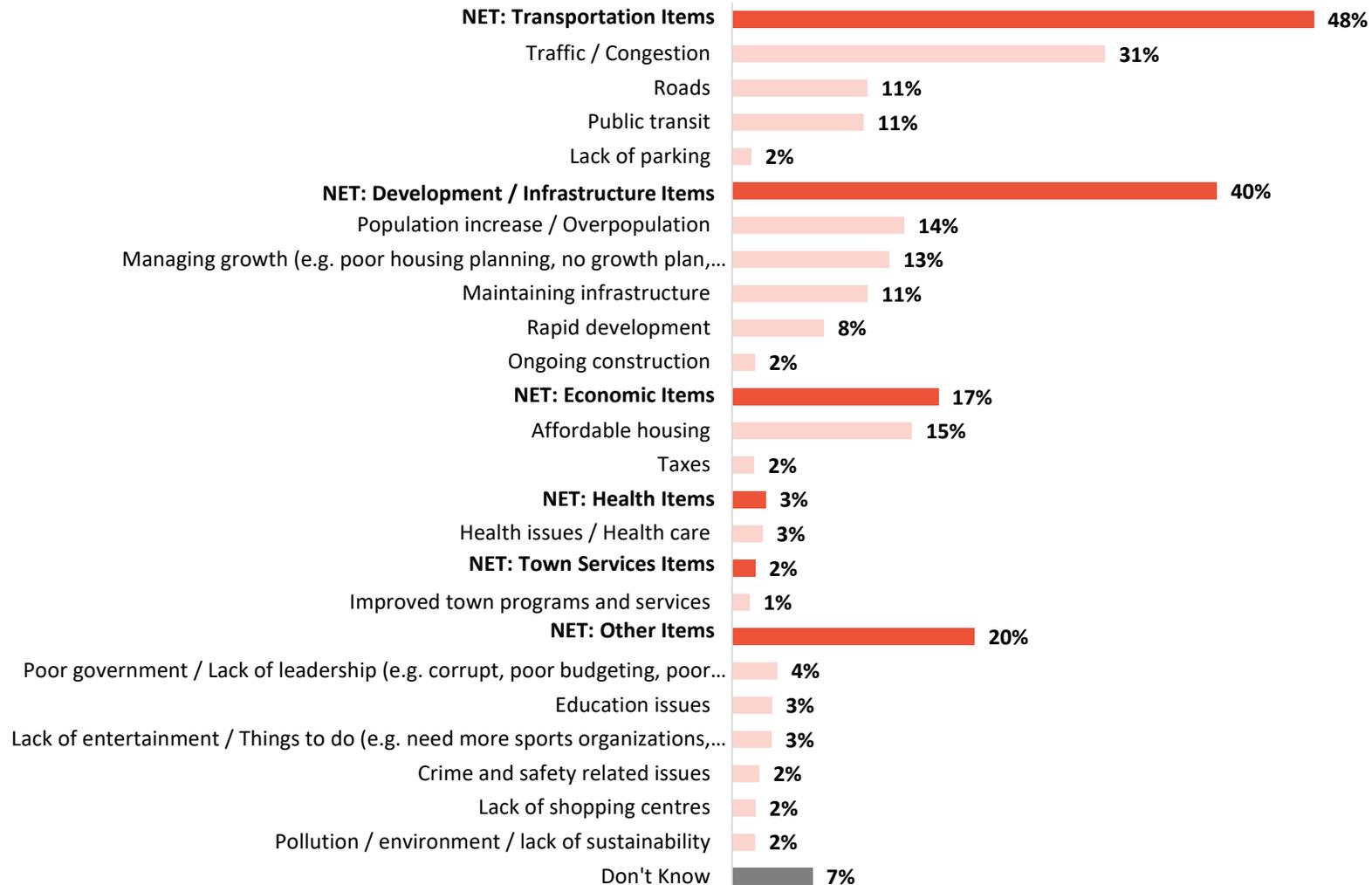
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Top of Mind Issues



Top of Mind Issues

Around half of Milton residents (48%) mentioned transportation-related items as the single most important issue facing the town today, with 3 in 10 (31%) specifically mentioning traffic and congestion as an issue in Milton.



Transportation items are the top most important issues facing Milton today according to residents (48%), specifically traffic and congestion (31%).

This is then followed by development and infrastructure items (40%), such as population increase (14%) and managing growth (13%).

Economic items are also a common important issue according to Milton residents (17%), especially in regards to affordable housing (15%).

Qualitative findings:

With the rapid growth the town has seen, focus group participants felt like the town is overlooking the issues of cars and parking. Many participants felt traffic congestion is becoming an increasing issue in the town.

- Challenge of driving down small streets which allow parking on both sides
- Lack of communication from the town about road closures

Q1. In your opinion, what is the single most important issue facing Milton today? (Mentions <2% not shown)

Sample Size: n=598 (Telephone)

Base: All respondents

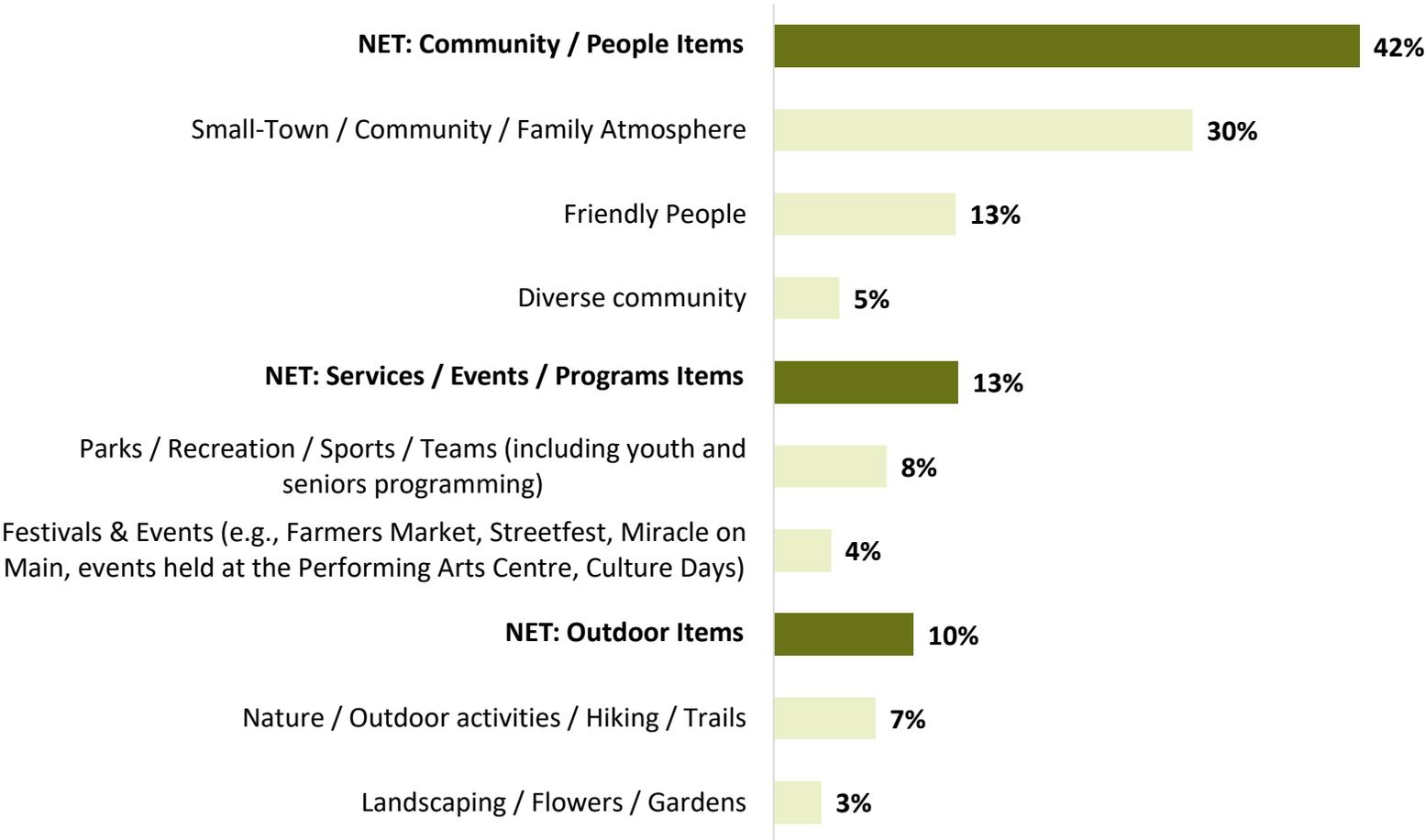
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Livability



Qualities of Livability

The community and the people of Milton are the top reasons why residents find Milton to be livable, with 3 in 10 (30%) specifically mentioning the small-town and family atmosphere.



Community and People items are the top qualities of Milton that residents say make it livable (42%), specifically the small-town/community/family atmosphere (30%).

This is then followed by Service/Events/Programs items (13%), such as parks/recreation/sports/teams (8%).

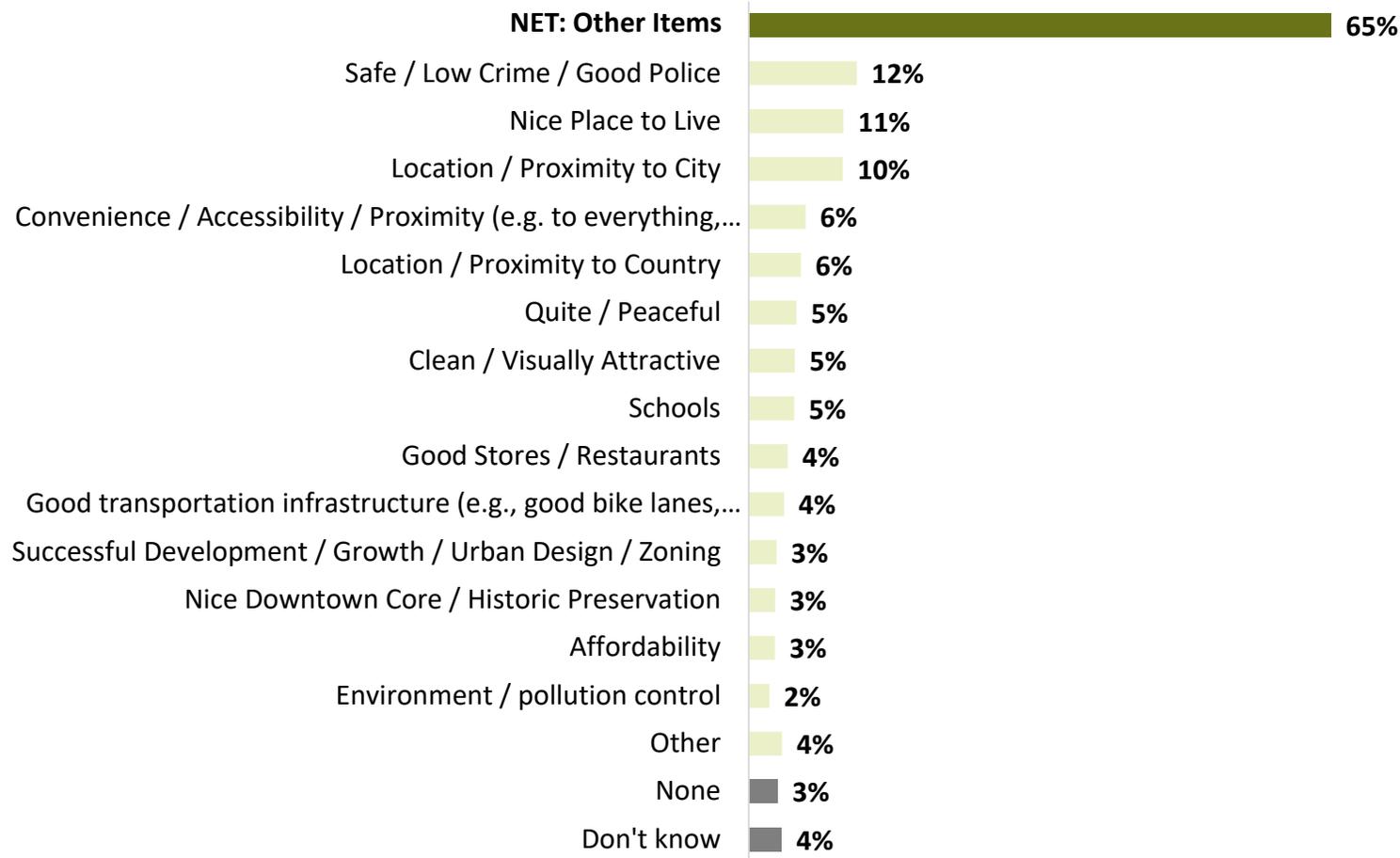
Qualitative finding:

Some focus group participants felt it's really the community fostered in Milton that makes it a wonderful place to live. Many mentioned the small town feeling of Milton. The way Milton embraces diversity which makes the town feel like home for some.

Most participants mentioned the expansive green space as one of the most important things that makes Milton special. Many pointed to the preservation of Milton's natural assets, such as the escarpment and lakes, as what the Town of Milton does right.

Qualities of Livability (cont'd)

Among the other items, safe / low crime / good police was mentioned by 1 in 10 (12%) as a quality that makes Milton livable.



Under 'Other' items, Safety and low crime rates is a quality that makes Milton livable (12%).

This is followed by Milton being a nice place to live at 11% and proximity to the city (10%).

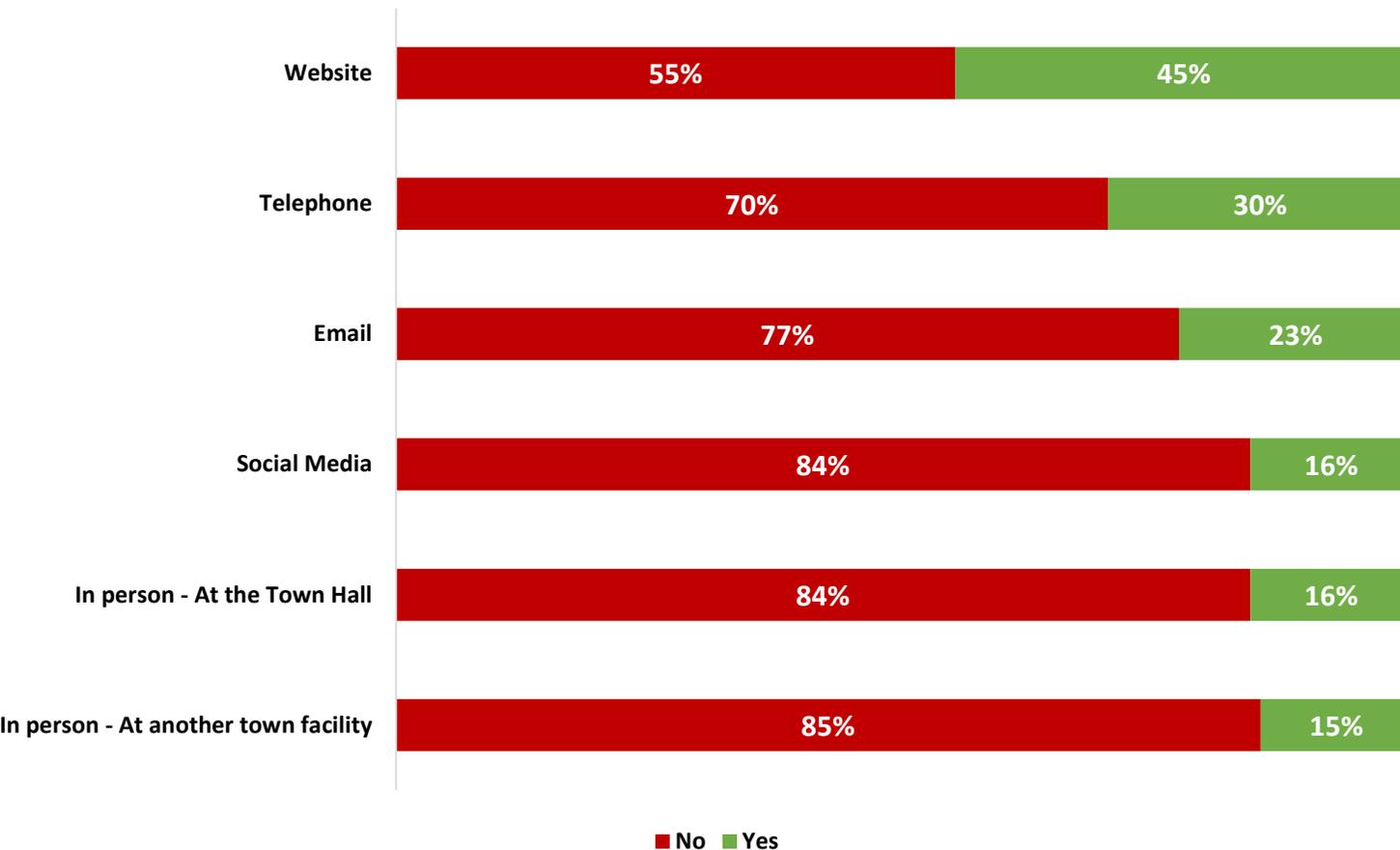
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Information and Service Usage



Interaction with the Town

Respondents have most commonly interacted with the Town of Milton using the Town's official website.



The most common method of interacting with the Town of Milton is through website, with 45% of telephone respondents using this method in the past 12 months.

This is followed by interactions through telephone (30%) and email (23%).

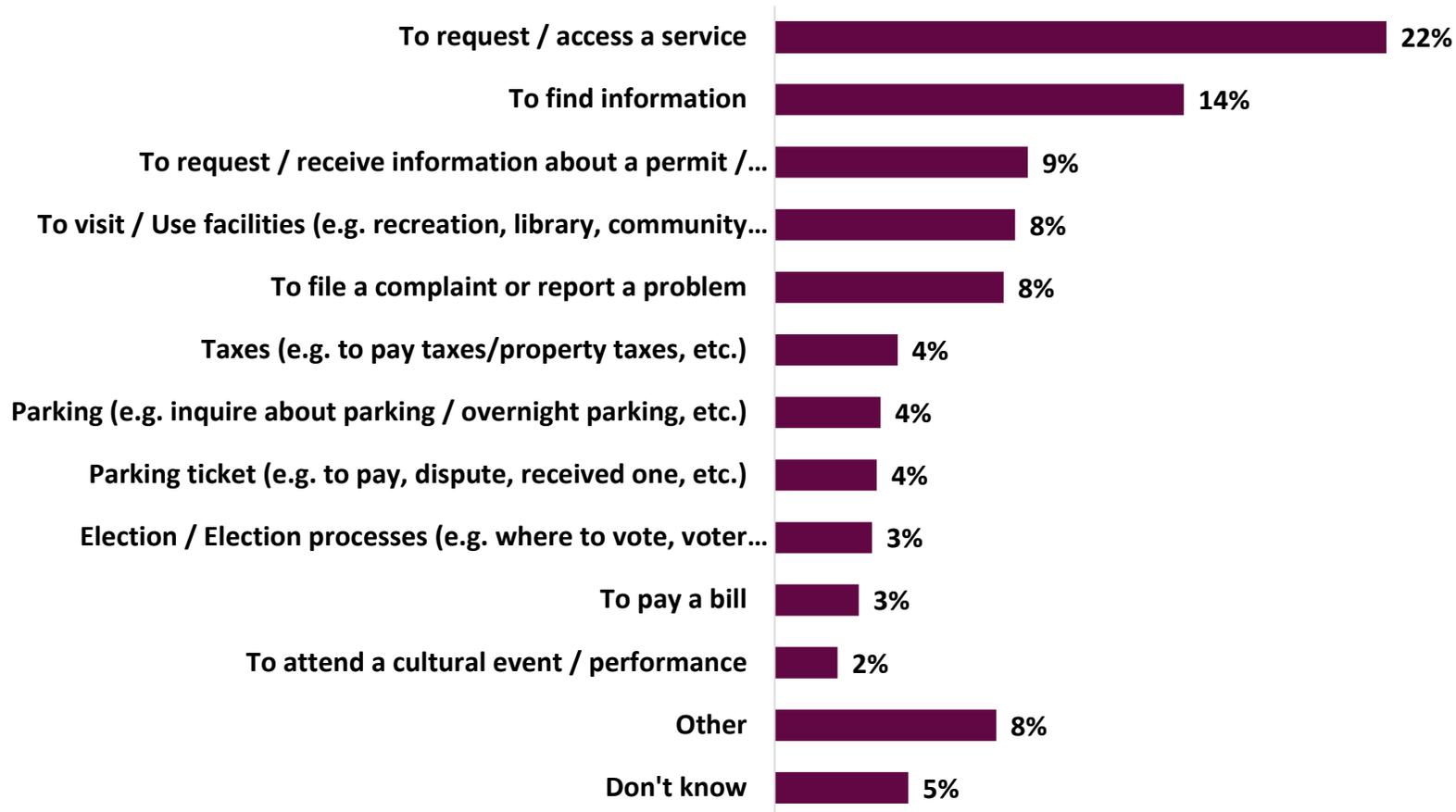
Q53a. In the past 12 months, have you interacted with the Town of Milton using any of the following methods?

Sample Size: n = 586 to 598 (Telephone)

Base: All respondents (Excluding "don't know" and "prefer not to say")

Reason for Interaction

The most common reasons for residents' most recent interaction with the Town of Milton are to request/access a service and to find information.



Telephone respondents were most likely to interact with the Town of Milton to request/access a service at 22%, followed by to find information (14%).

- Finding information is the most common reason for Ward 2, 3, and 4 respondents' most recent interaction with the Town of Milton.

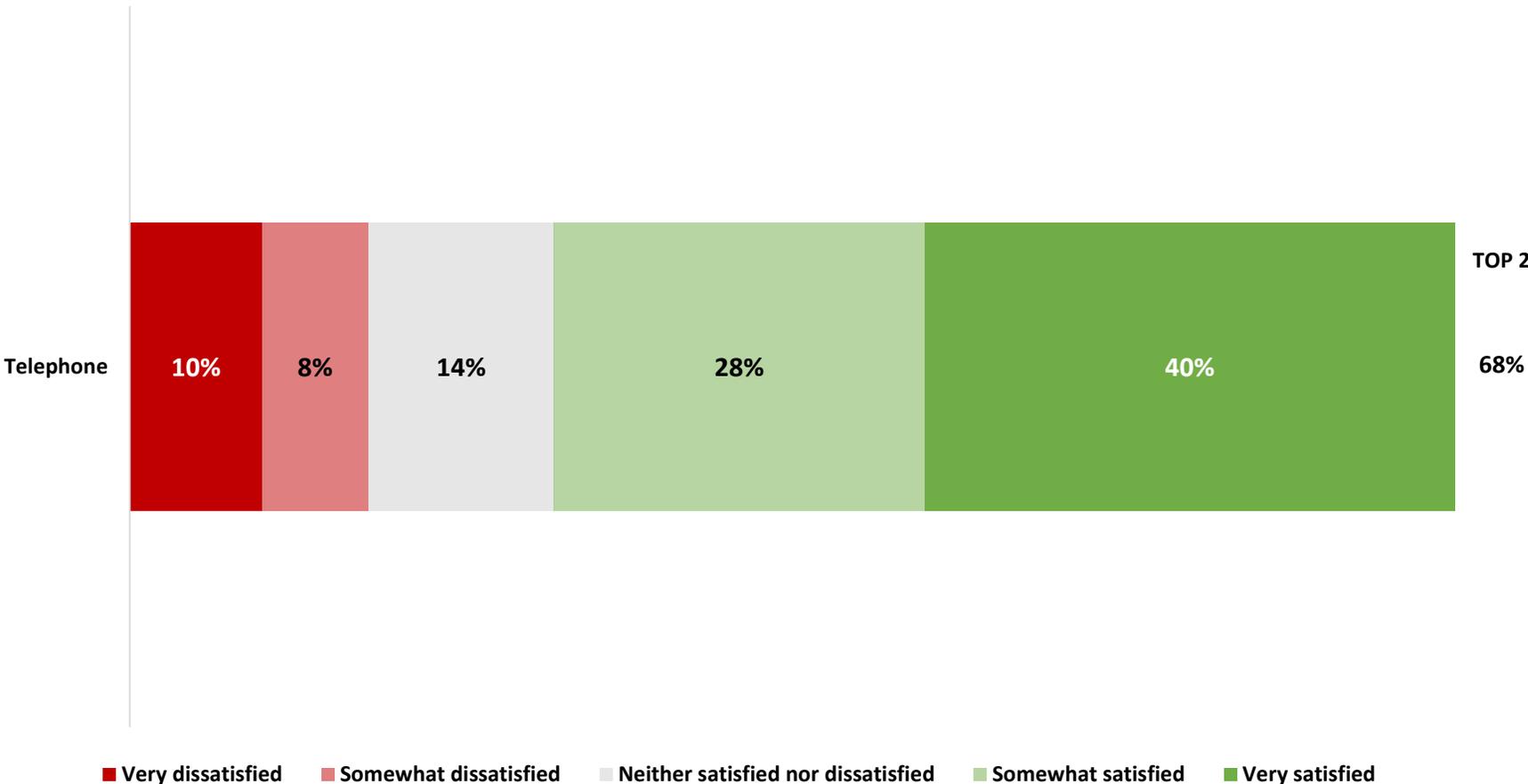
Q55a. These next few questions focus on your most recent interaction with the Town of Milton. What was the primary reason for your most recent interaction with the Town of Milton? (Mentions <2% not shown)

Sample Size: n = 381 (Telephone)

Base: Respondents who interacted with the Town

Overall Satisfaction with Interaction

The majority of respondents are satisfied with their most recent interaction with the Town of Milton.



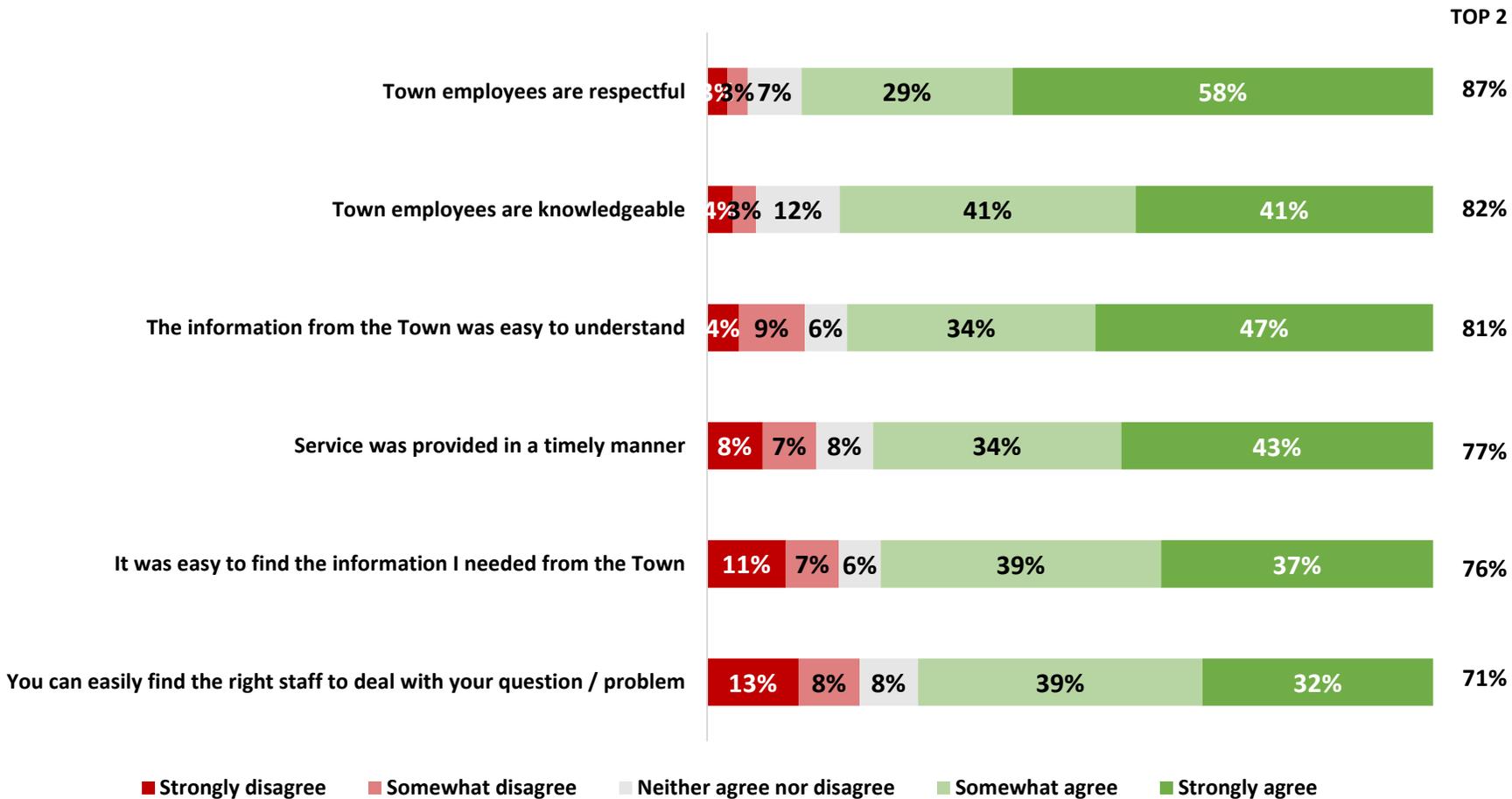
68% (TOP2) of respondents are satisfied with the service received during their most recent interaction with the Town of Milton

- Respondents from Ward 3 are significantly more likely to be satisfied (TOP2: 85%) with their most recent interaction with the Town of Milton compared to respondents from Ward 1 (TOP2: 65%).

Q56. And still thinking about the most recent interaction you had with the Town of Milton... Overall, were you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the service that you received?
Sample Size: n = 392 (Telephone)
Base: Respondents who interacted with the Town in the past 12 months (Excluding "don't know" and "prefer not to answer")

Perceptions of Aspects of Interaction

In general, the majority of respondents had positive attitudes with different aspects of their last interaction with the Town of Milton.



TOP 2

While 68% (TOP2) of respondents are satisfied with the overall satisfaction of their interaction, more respondents have a positive perception of the various aspects of the interaction.

Respondents are most likely to agree that the Town employees are respectful, with 87% somewhat or strongly agreeing with this statement.

- Town employees being respectful had the most positive attitudes among respondents in Ward 1 (TOP2: 88%) and Ward 2 (TOP2: 95%).
- For respondents in Ward 3, the information being easy to understand received the most positive response (TOP2: 96%).
- For respondents in Ward 4, town employees being knowledgeable received the most positive response (TOP2: 91%).

Qualitative findings:

Interactions with town staff were inconsistent in quality. While some participants insisted town staff were easy to work with and always went above and beyond to help residents solve any issue, others found staff dismissive and unresponsive.

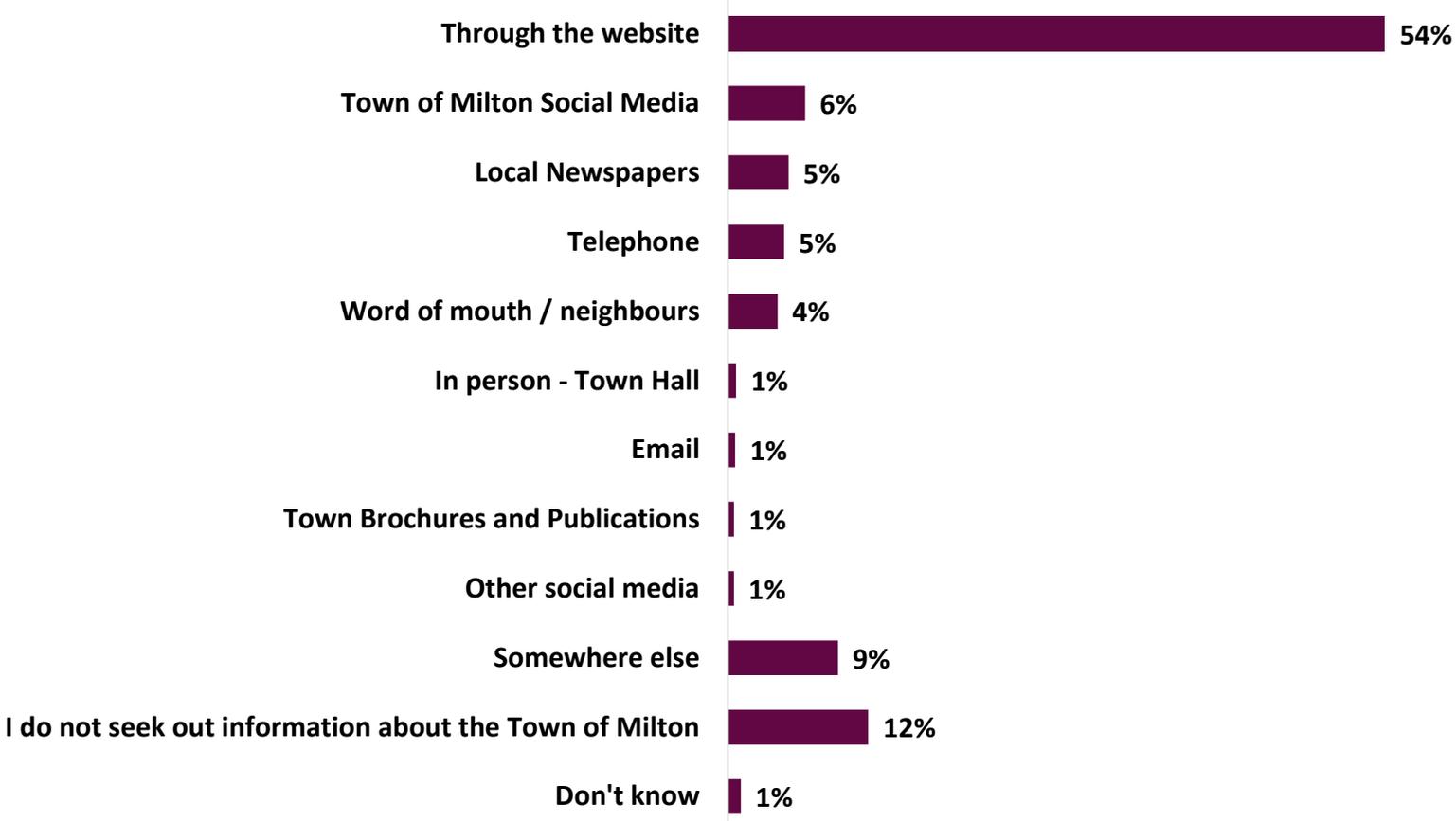
Q57. And still thinking about the most recent interaction you had with the Town of Milton, do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements?

Sample Size: Ranging from n = 369 to 391 (Telephone)

Base: Respondents who interacted with the Town in the past 12 months (Excluding "don't know" and "prefer not to answer")

Source of Information

Respondents most often find information about the Town of Milton through the website.



The website is the most common source of information for the Town of Milton residents, with 54% saying they most often find information about the Town through the website.

One in ten (12%) respondents indicated that they do not seek out information about the Town of Milton.

Qualitative findings:
While the Town website is generally well liked, a few participants mentioned having difficulty finding the hours of operation for town programmes and facility availability. Furthermore, participants wished for more prominent advertising of events, programmes, and activities offered.

Q63. How do you most often find information about the Town of Milton?
Sample Size: 595
Base: All respondents (Excluding refused responses)

Questions?

