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**Submitted by:** Diane Larder, Director of Finance

**Report No:** 2023-124

**Council Meeting Date:** Regular Council - 04 Oct 2023

**Subject:** 2024 Budget Survey Results

**File:** Budget-2024

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That Report 2023-124 and the 2024 Budget Survey Responses be received as information.**

**BACKGROUND & COMMENTS:**

The Township participated in the County wide Budget Consultation Online Survey which began in June and ran through to the end of August. It was promoted through the Township and County websites, the Township's social media platforms, local media and tax bill inserts.

Meaningful and effective public engagement improves the quality of decisions made, facilitates citizen understanding of issues and government process, fosters respect for the views of others and increases support, understanding and ownership of decisions made.

There were 163 responses received of Zorra Township, an increase of 288% from the last survey conducted in 2021 to inform the 2022 Budget. The full results of the survey are attached for Council's information.

The survey illustrated how property taxes were spent in 2023 and asked residents to indicate whether the same services should be enhanced, maintained or reduced in the upcoming year. The large majority of responses want to see all services maintained at current levels. When asked about the overall value received from the Township's tax dollars, 73.5% of the respondents rated it Fair to Good. (page 20 of 28 of the budget survey document)

Residents were asked to identify their top three priorities in their community.

The most common options chosen were (page 21 of 28 of the budget survey document):

- Safe Communities-Police Services - 36
- Active living - Parks & Trails - 35
- Affordable Housing - 35
- Active Living -Recreation - 25
- Infrastructure - Roads & Bridges - 23

Respondents who submitted comments through the 2024 Budget Survey are provided as part of this report. Reference Schedule A attached.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There is no direct financial impact to the current budget; however, survey results referenced in the report will be considered in determining the 2024 budget and tax levy.

### LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

#### Goal:

We are an engaged community that values all members and actively encourages involvement, engagement, openness and transparency.

### ATTACHMENTS:

[Schedule A-Zorra Budget Survey Response](#)

#### Approved By:

Diane Larder, Director of Finance  
Karen Martin, Director of Corporate Services

#### Status:

Approved - 27 Sep 2023  
Approved - 27 Sep 2023

# 2024 Budget Survey - Zorra Township and Oxford County

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## SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

14 June 2023 - 01 September 2023

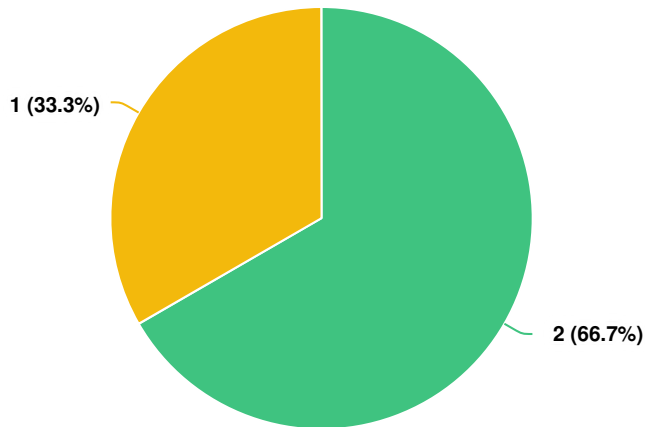
### PROJECT NAME:

2024 Budget Survey



REGISTRATION QUESTIONS

**Q1 | Postal Code**



**Question options**

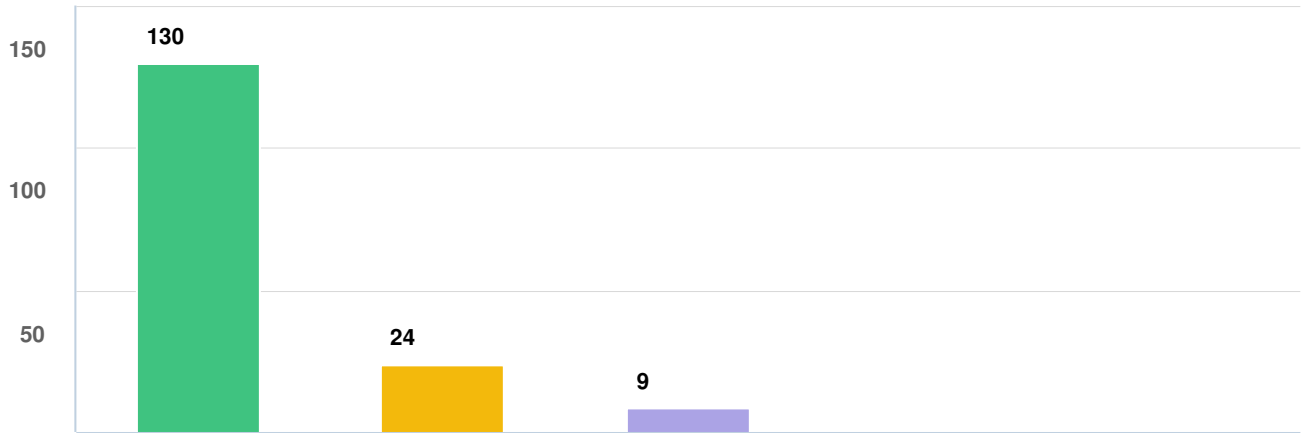
- Thamesford, ON, N0M2M0
- Lakeside, ON, N0M2G0

*Mandatory Question (3 response(s))*  
*Question type: Region Question*



# SURVEY QUESTIONS

**Q1** Questions about youLet’s get to know each other. Understanding who you are will help us determine who in our municipality c...

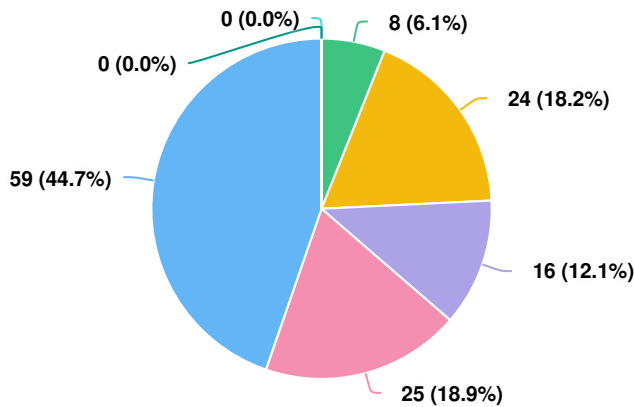


**Question options**

- Resident
- Operate a business
- Live nearby and use municipal services (e.g., recreation facilities)
- Prefer not to say / none of the above
- Other (please explain)

Mandatory Question (132 response(s))  
Question type: Checkbox Question

**Q2** How many years have you lived in the Township of Zorra?

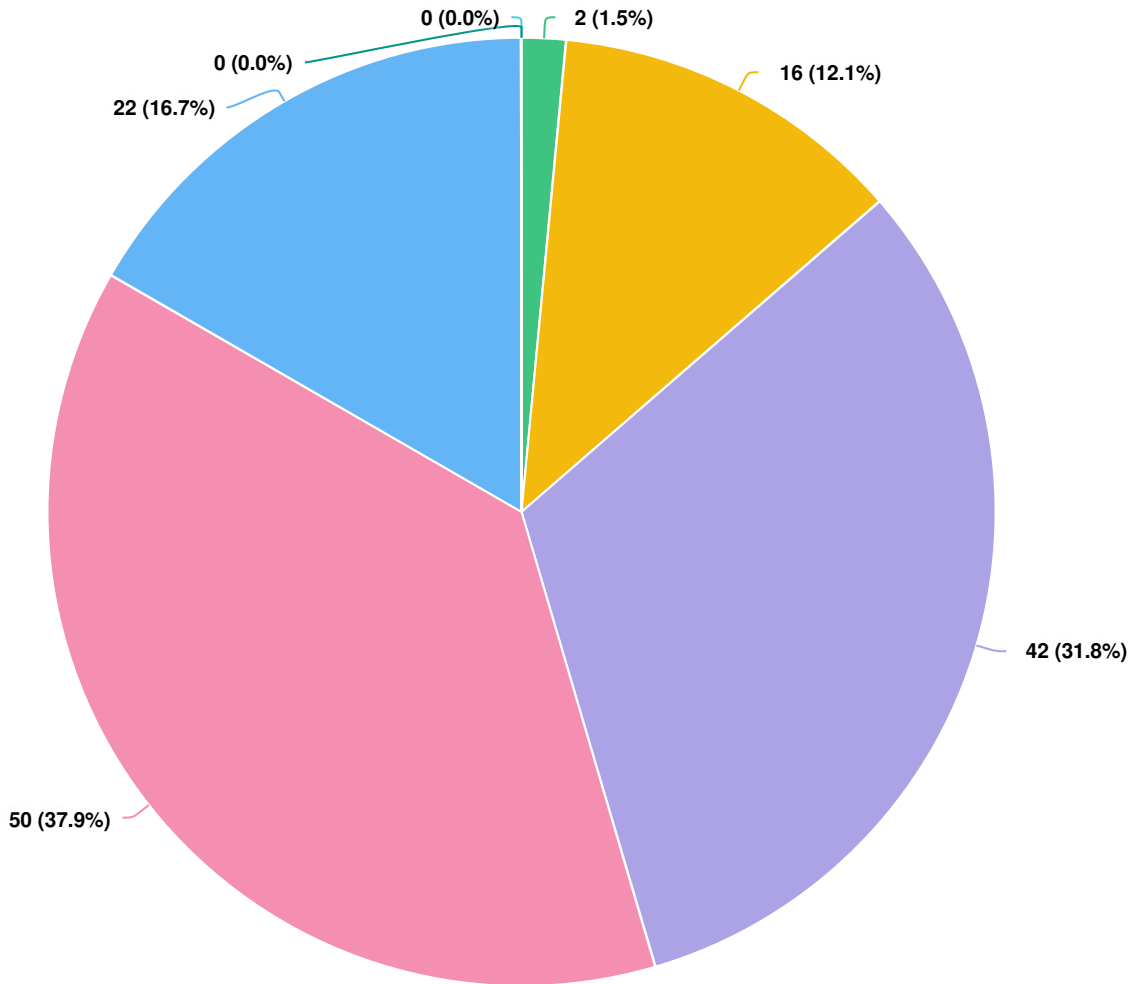


**Question options**

- Less than two years
- 2-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- More than 20 years
- Not a resident
- Prefer not to say

Mandatory Question (132 response(s))  
Question type: Dropdown Question

**Q3** In what age category do you fall?



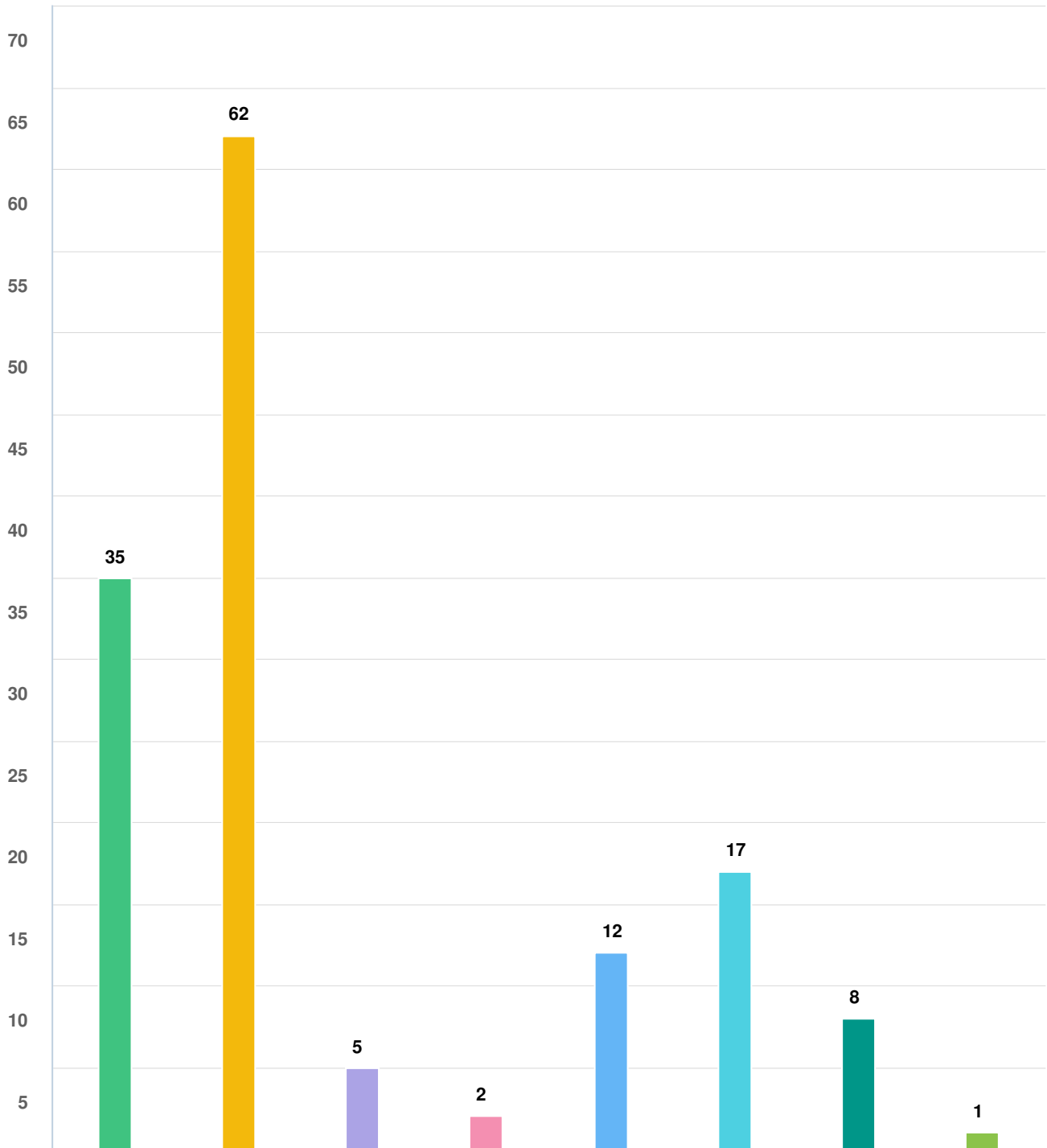
**Question options**

- 15-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-64 years old
- 65+ years old
- Under 15 years old
- Prefer not to say

Mandatory Question (132 response(s))  
Question type: Dropdown Question



**Q4** How did you hear about this survey? Please check all that apply.

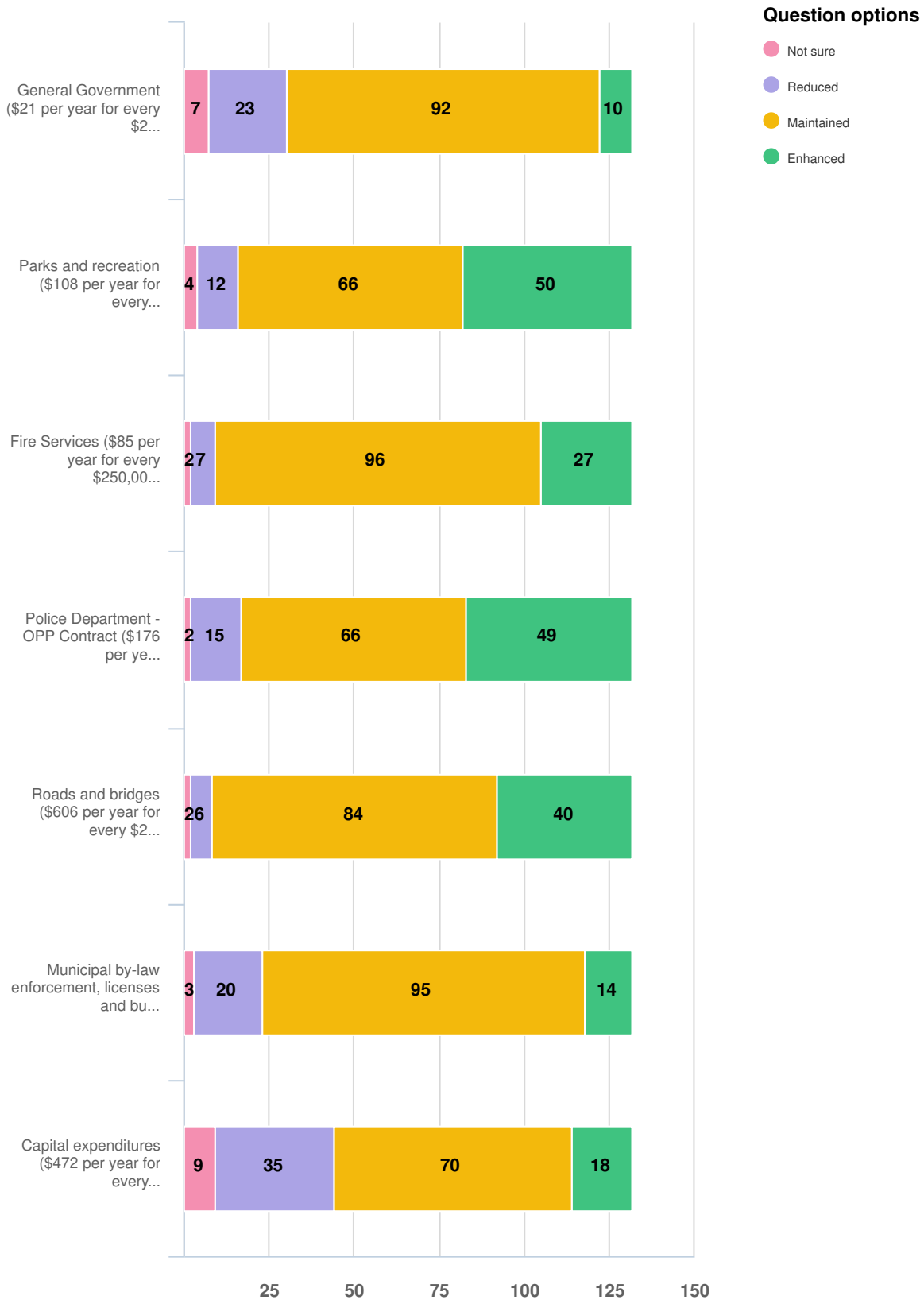


**Question options**

- Flyer, notice or bill insert from Township of Zorra
- Social media
- News media (newspaper, radio, etc.)
- Council meeting or updates
- E-mail
- Website or web ad
- From someone else
- Other (please specify)

Mandatory Question (132 response(s))  
Question type: Checkbox Question

**Q5** | The Township of Zorra provides a variety of services supporting you. The following questions are about services funded through Township of Zorra tax dollars and delivered by the Township. General Government Includes Council, CAO Office, Corporate Ser...

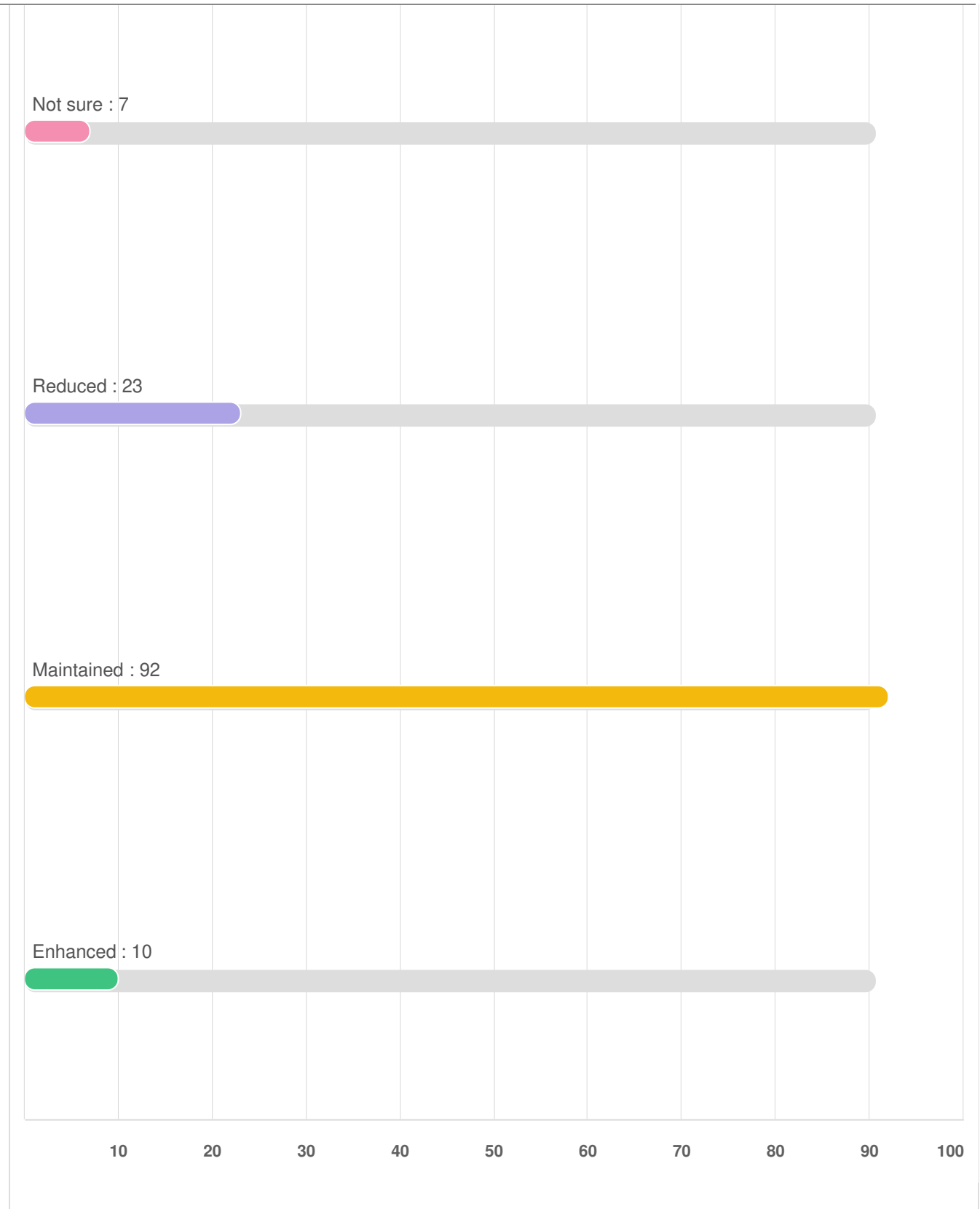


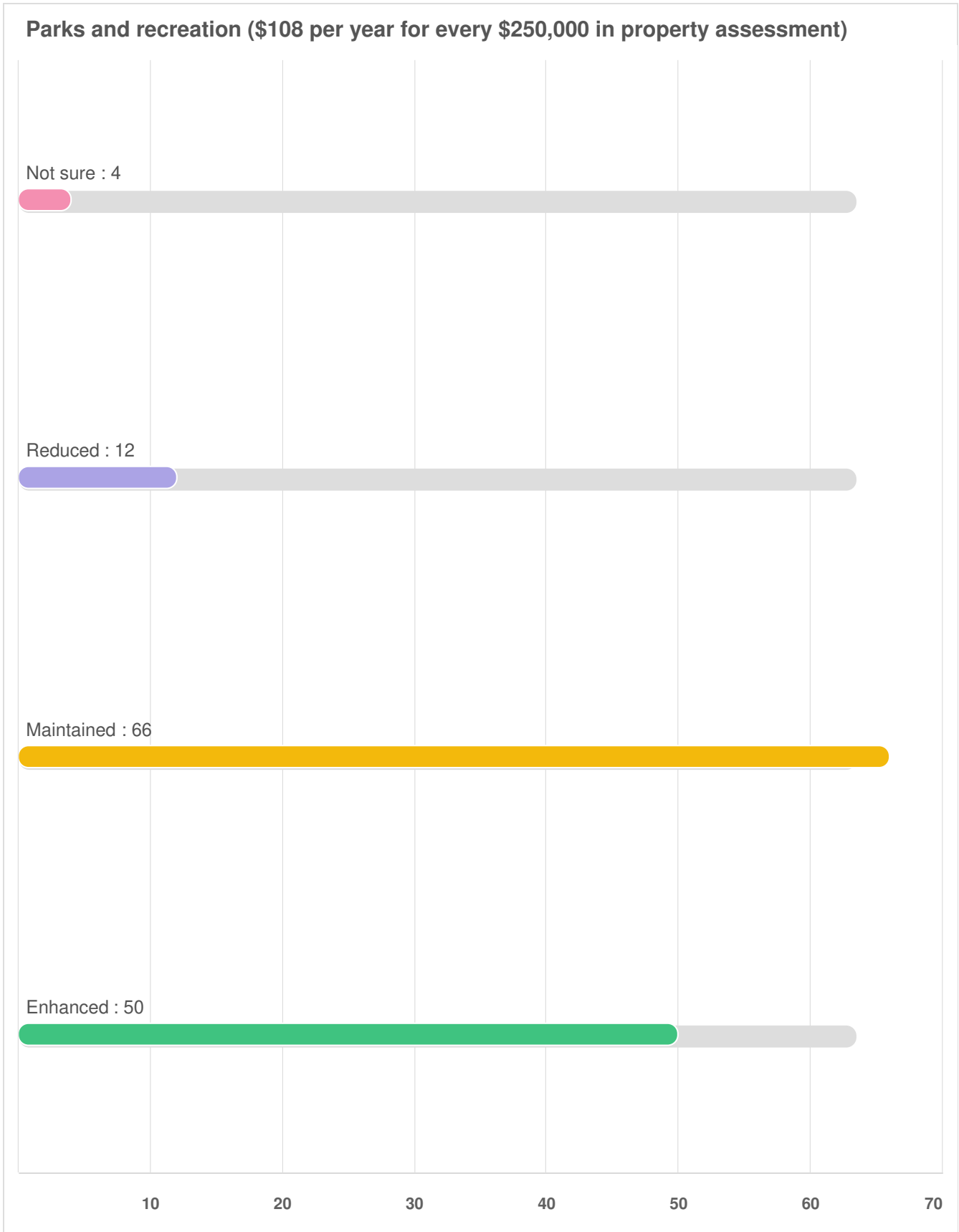
Mandatory Question (132 response(s))

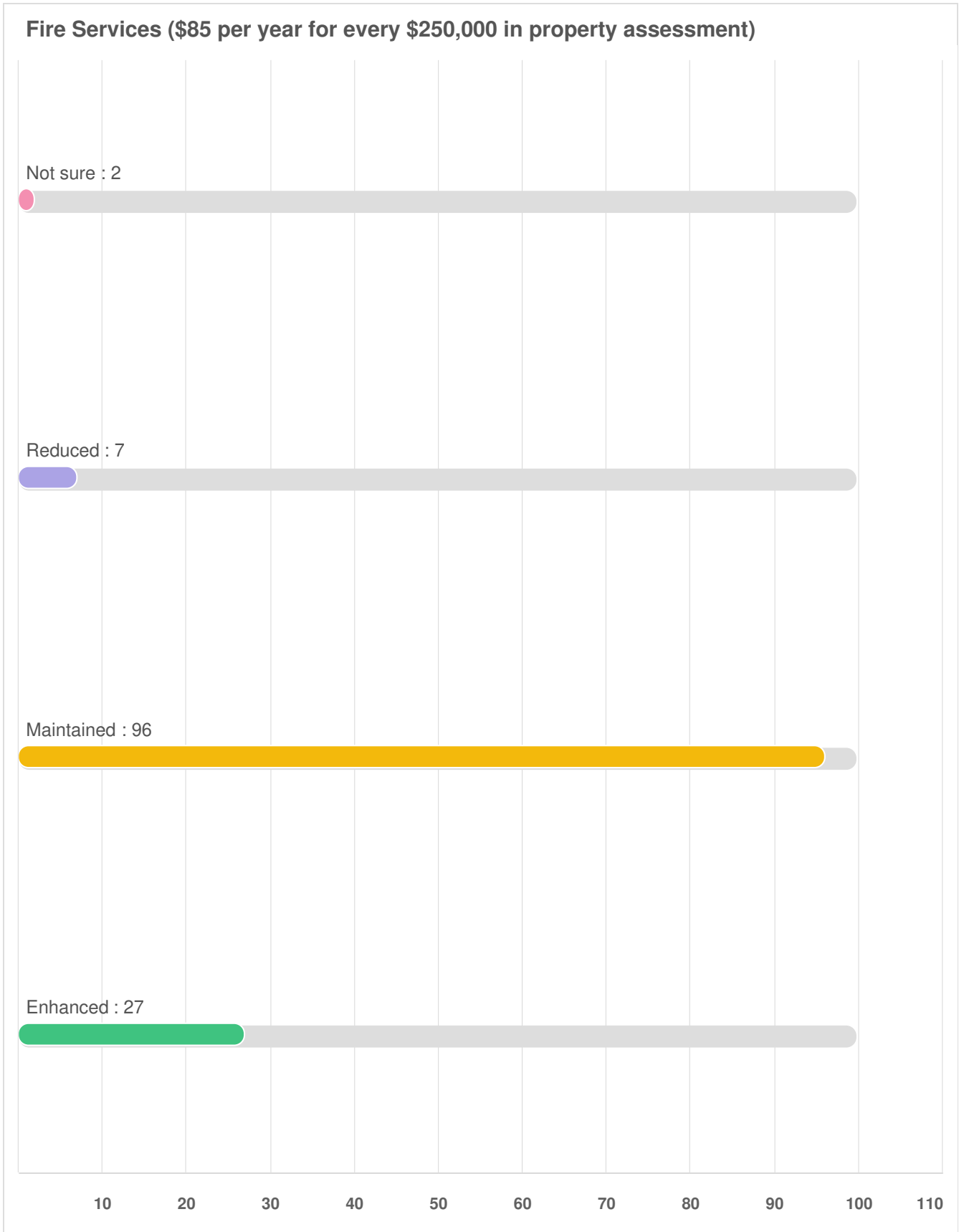
Question type: Likert Question

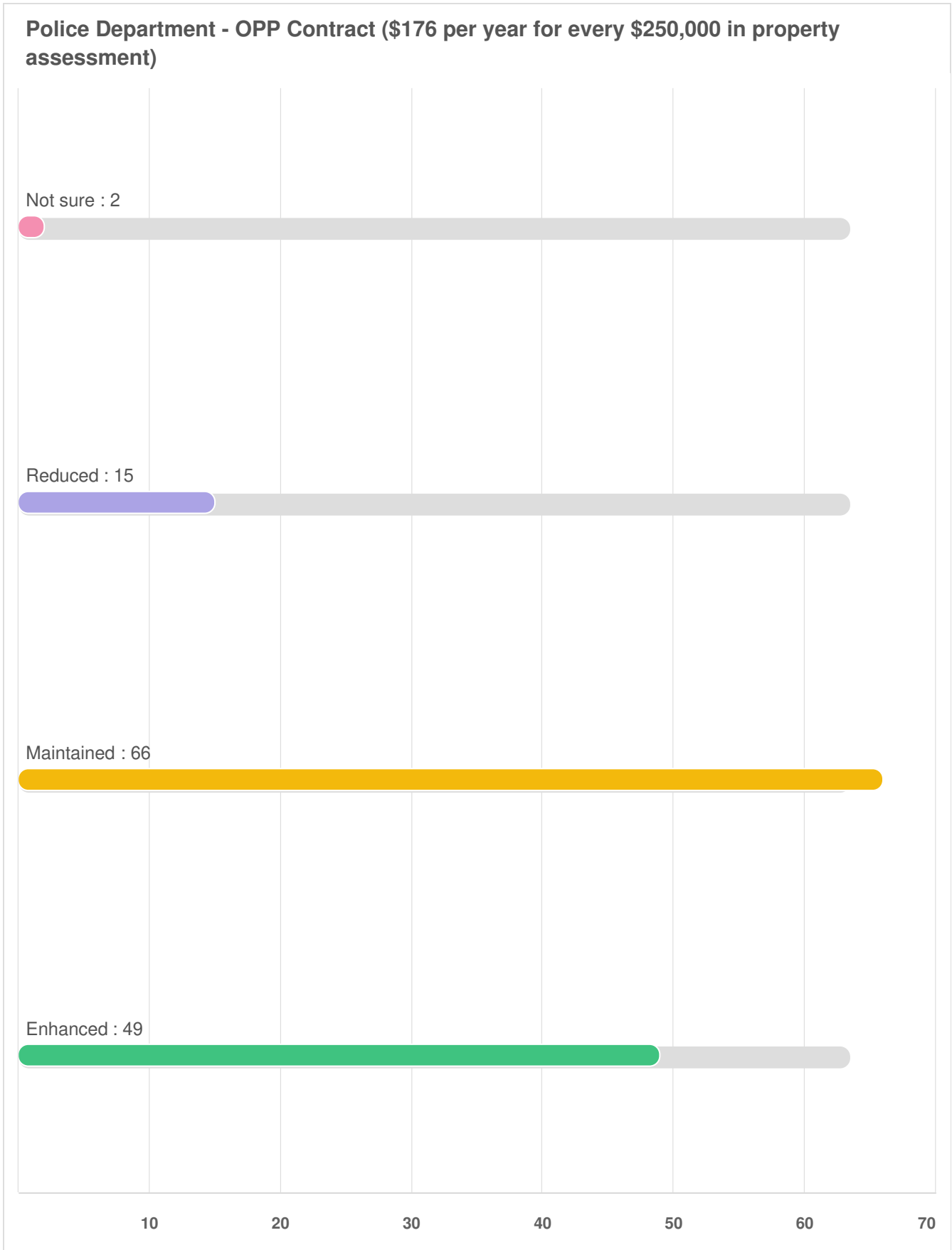
**Q5 | The Township of Zorra provides a variety of services supporting you. The following questions are about services funded through Township of Zorra tax dollars and delivered by the Township. General Government Includes Council, CAO Office, Corporate Ser...**

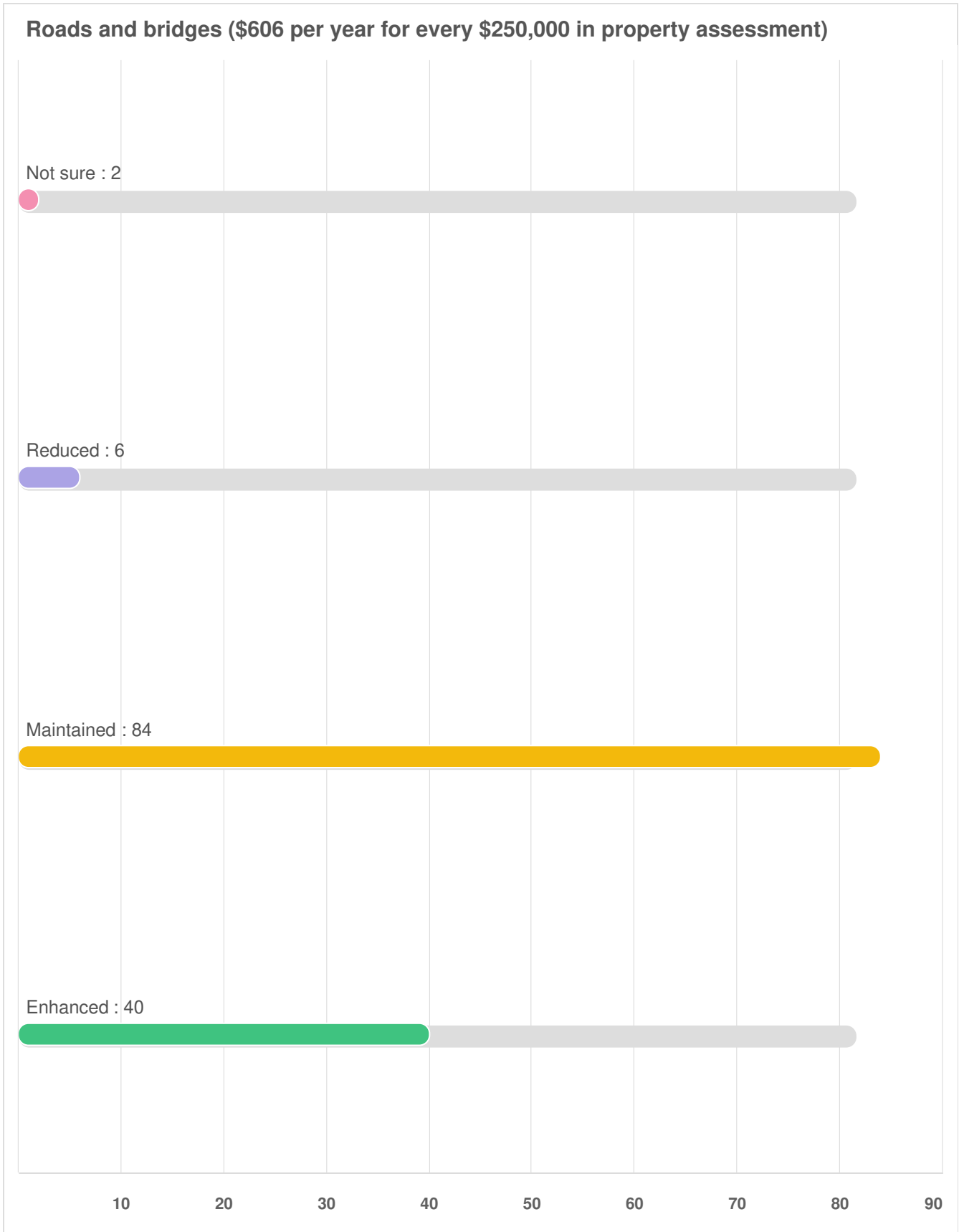
**General Government (\$21 per year for every \$250,000 in property assessment)**





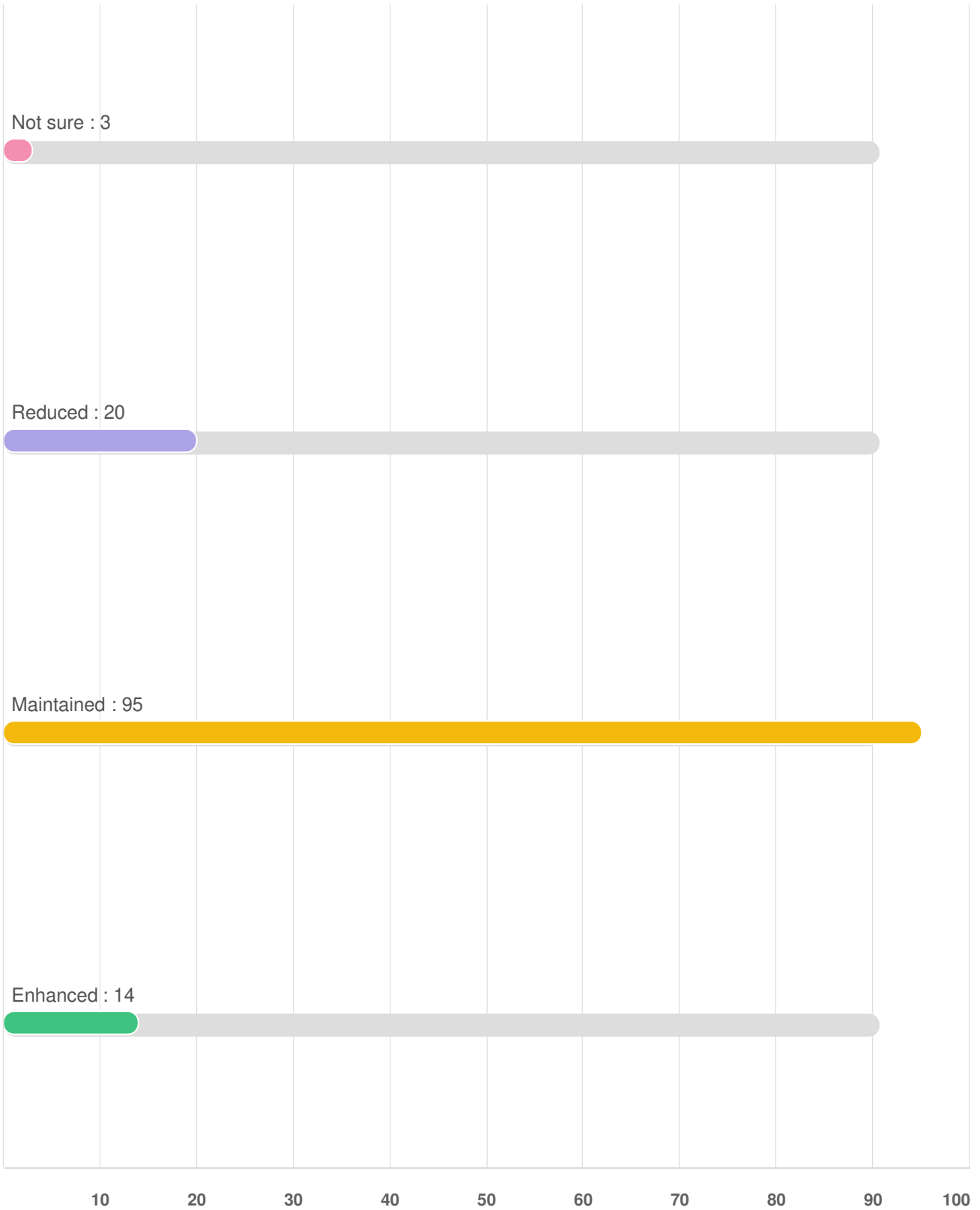


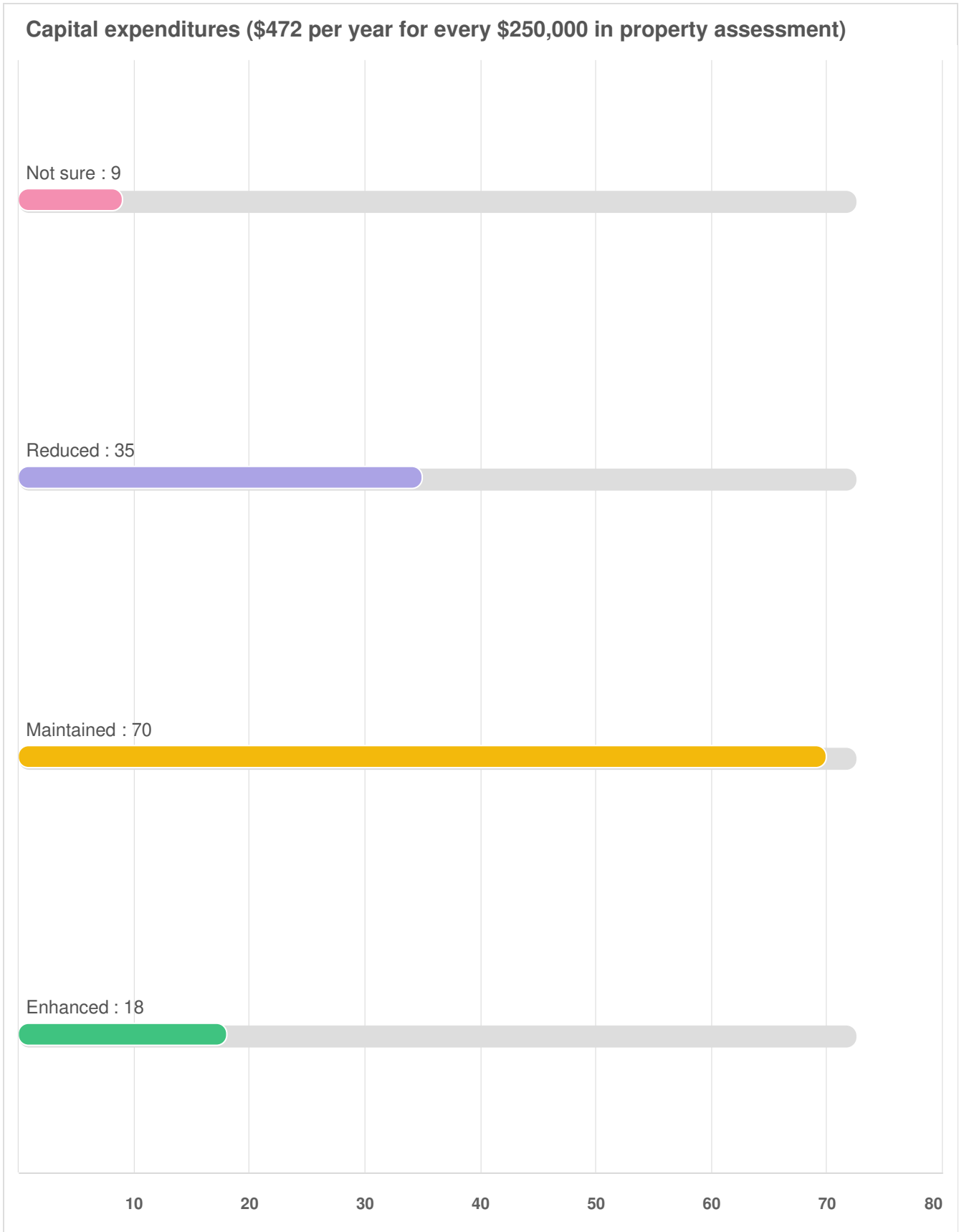






**Municipal by-law enforcement, licenses and building services (\$2 per year for every \$250,000 in property assessment)**





**Q6 Do you have any additional comments about your ratings for these service levels?**

Screen Name Redacted

6/16/2023 08:55 AM

FEEL THAT MORE EFFORT SHOULD BE PUT INTO INCREASING AND MAINTAINING RECREATION AND GREEN SPACES IN THE TOWNSHIP. BETTER JOB OF CONTROLLING OVER RUN ON PROJECT EXPENSES AND ASSURING PROJECTS ARE FULLY COMPLETED IN A TIMELY MANNER.

Screen Name Redacted

6/19/2023 09:37 PM

There needs to be a third party looking into how Zorra spends parks and recreation funds within the township. Where buildings are placed within township. If everything is going to Thamesford then taxes should reflect that.

Screen Name Redacted

6/19/2023 11:27 PM

Thamesford doesn't have any parks. They're garbage. Put in a grocery store

Screen Name Redacted

6/21/2023 06:41 PM

Increased budget should be allowed in order to use proper gravel for our roads rather than the Sandy mess that is currently used. It is more expensive to try and fix a road that hasn't been gravelled with the proper aggregate.

Screen Name Redacted

6/22/2023 06:31 AM

The township is well run.

Screen Name Redacted

6/22/2023 02:48 PM

I feel as a resident of Thamesford that the policing is lacking, particularly considering the volume of theft.

Screen Name Redacted

6/22/2023 02:47 PM

All of the townships within the County could save more money (up to 150,000 annually) by switching Fire and Emergency services to a regionalized system under Oxford County. More consistency in coverage, as well as more consistency in fleet and updates needed as well as buying power for cheaper up front purchase pricing.

Screen Name Redacted

6/22/2023 03:59 PM

I would like to see the township purchase a street sweeper as once a year is not adequate service. It will also help in the surface water making it to the storm sewer system as opposed to sitting in the roadway. We should also consider a trail system of some sort. With the amount of tax income from the Thamesford area I find it hard to believe the township does not fund a tennis court and basketball court.

Screen Name Redacted

6/23/2023 01:43 PM

Level of service seems good for all these areas

Screen Name Redacted

6/24/2023 07:46 AM

I feel fire services should be enhanced because the EMS bases are closing (Embro) or at reduced staffing due to EMS being utilized as stop gaps for our failing provincial health system rather than emergency services.

Screen Name Redacted

6/24/2023 09:17 AM

Roads maintenance has failed miserably in last 10 years. Consider privatization of public works

Screen Name Redacted

6/24/2023 07:39 PM

Everyone is on a tight budget. I would like to see how you are saving in all of these areas.

Screen Name Redacted

6/27/2023 01:46 AM

Increase police presence in the hamlet of Lakeside. Make Lakeside a Community Safety Zone pertaining to drivers. Repair County Rd. 92 between Lakeside and Medina because it crumbles away as you drive on it.

Screen Name Redacted

6/27/2023 06:44 AM

Parks and recreation management need to be monitored more closely. Thamesford gets special treatment for all areas they take care of and Embro is completely ignored.

Screen Name Redacted

6/28/2023 08:46 AM

I asked for capital expenditures be enhanced because I'm hoping something can be done to acquire and develop the Beachville quarry site. I personally would like to see it set aside for community recreational use with a dog area, walking/biking paths and a garden site similar to Bloedel Conservatory in Vancouver where an old quarry was turned into a public garden. I think Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington has a really good system of year-round use, exhibits and pricing that could be a model.

Screen Name Redacted

6/30/2023 05:20 PM

Not enough is being done to police violations of the building code, noise by-laws, and outdoor backyard fires. It looks like the township needs to increase its police and fire departments because there has been a large increase in new residents.

Screen Name Redacted

7/03/2023 10:33 AM

More money should be put towards providing social services, ie. establishing medical centres in towns other than Thamesford.

Screen Name Redacted

7/04/2023 06:55 PM

Town council can stop speculating on property and do the right thing by taking 5 acres for a new school like any other town does as it grows so the school doesn't end up full of portables

Screen Name Redacted

7/12/2023 10:54 AM

There needs to be more police presence dealing with crime in Thamesford

Screen Name Redacted

7/13/2023 08:49 AM

The gravel roads need attention. Potholes and dust. The service of these roads has dropped in the last few years.

Screen Name Redacted

7/13/2023 09:11 AM

Offer subsidies to invite new amenities like gas station and Tim Hortons in Innerkip

Screen Name Redacted

7/13/2023 12:52 PM

Maintenance of the inside and outside of buildings.

Screen Name Redacted

7/24/2023 06:17 PM

OPP do not appear to have much of a presence in Zorra Township; it may be necessary to increase funding for this and other emergency services (i.e. EMS, mental health)

Screen Name Redacted

7/26/2023 06:16 PM

Snow plowing on main road (road 78) is poor.

Screen Name Redacted

7/28/2023 04:15 PM

Road and bridge maintenance is at a very low level. Too many dump trucks running around like go-carts.

Screen Name Redacted

8/06/2023 07:56 PM

The hot water in Thamesford arena dressing rooms frequently doesn't work. The water is ice cold. It's been like that for at least 5 years! Needs attention.

Screen Name Redacted

8/08/2023 08:02 PM

More services are needed to support women who are affected by abuse and for affordable housing that the municipality could add. The county seems to be responsible for this, but they aren't doing enough.

Screen Name Redacted

8/09/2023 08:08 AM

Increase funding for police - rise in breaks ins and theft

## 2024 Budget Survey - Zorra Township and Oxford County : Survey Report for 14 June 2023 to 01 September 2023

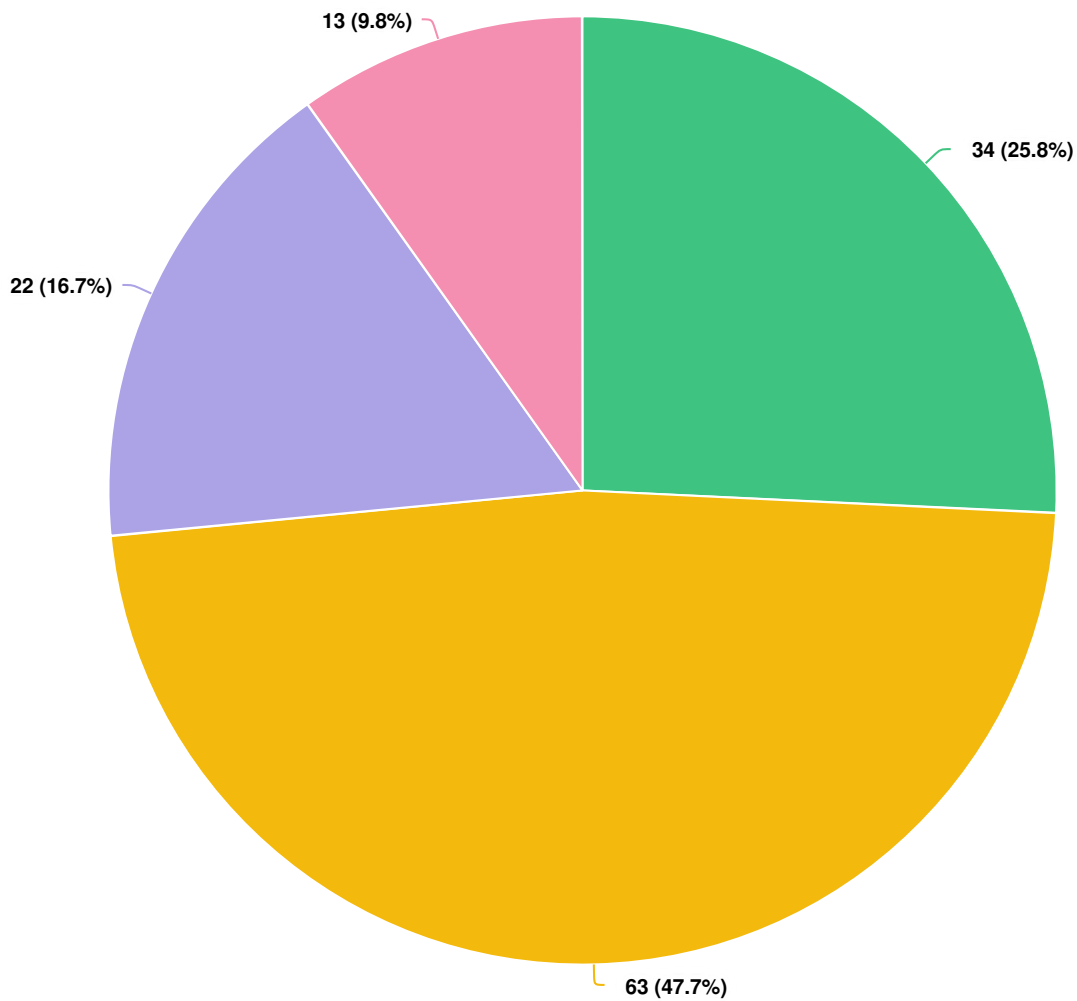
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<p>Screen Name Redacted 8/09/2023 09:10 PM</p>	<p>If there is agreement to build a multi service facility (school, library, area) I would support enhancing the amount of funds!</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 8/12/2023 10:34 PM</p>	<p>Police needs more. Seeing more crimes and when calling the OPP we are told not enough staff to cover. Parks and recreation are needed. Tavistock for example has gotten 3 major sub divisions with NO increase of green space or playgrounds. We are becoming over overcrowded.</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 8/22/2023 09:02 AM</p>	<p>Rebuild the 29th Line road bed from the muck, clay and slop that it is now.</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 8/23/2023 10:06 AM</p>	<p>Parks &amp; Recreation should be increased to start providing cultural support, beginning with what was recommended in the master plan done two terms ago. Creating a youth council should take a high priority, one that is fully inclusive (engage Wellkin, Early Years, libraries in creating it) and that has a mandate to comment on all Township services, not just rec &amp; culture.</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 8/28/2023 04:51 PM</p>	<p>As to 'other expenses': with other options to use rather than a cemetery, I'd like to see my tax funds go elsewhere in the budget and I feel the same about Thamesford Medical Clinic. We go elsewhere for medical.</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 8/29/2023 09:38 AM</p>	<p>Roads ... 1) Gravel in the winter on the roads seems excessive. 2) Sweeping roads in spring should be done earlier and more often to ensure clean up. 3) Weeds along curbs and road in residential areas needs municipality's attention. As residents, we clean gravel and weeds up in front of our own house, but the condition of the overgrown-with-weed-curbs around town are awful. 4) Good job on train track repairs, but clearly this is an ongoing problem in the area; neighbouring communities are even worse.</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 8/30/2023 09:24 PM</p>	<p>It would be easier to give my opinion if I knew percentages given to each department as well as dollar value</p>

**Optional question** (35 response(s), 97 skipped)

**Question type:** Essay Question

**Q7** | In 2023, the Township of Zorra share of your municipal taxes for a \$250,000 residential property is \$1,470.\*How would you rate the overall value received from your Township tax dollars?

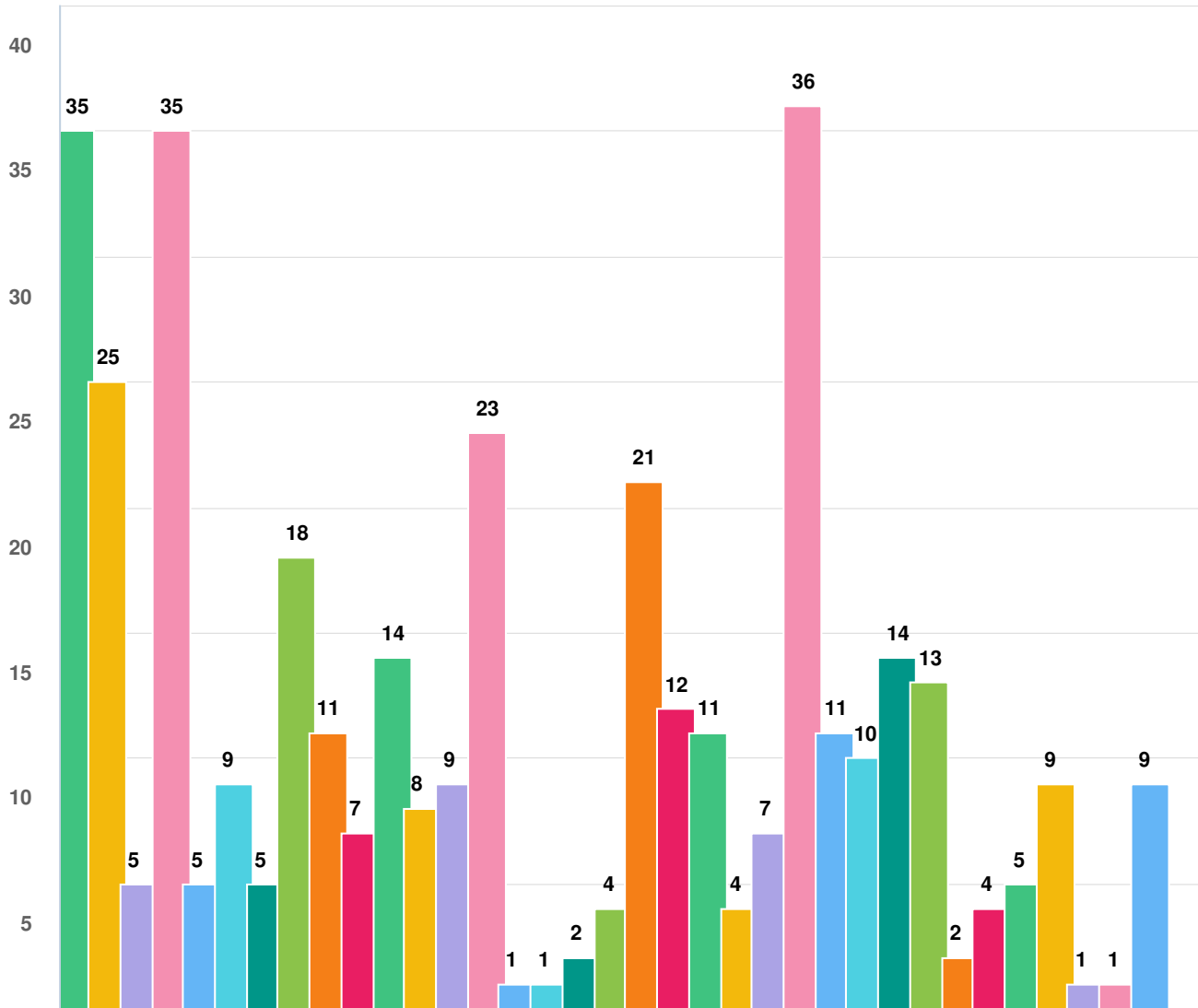


**Question options**

- Not sure / need more information
- Poor
- Fair
- Good

Mandatory Question (132 response(s))  
Question type: Radio Button Question

**Q8 | Other comments and suggestions** Now it's your chance to provide additional information relevant to building next year's budget. What would you say are the top 3 priorities for your community right now?



**Question options**

- Transit
- Other (please specify)
- I don't know
- Waste management – Waste disposal (Landfill)
- Waste management – Recycling/diversion
- Waste management – Curbside collection
- Transparency and communication
- Transit – Inter-regional transportation
- Social issues – Poverty
- Social issues – Child care
- Snow/ice control
- Safe communities – Paramedic Services
- Safe communities – Police
- Safe communities – Fire
- Quality neighbourhoods – Property standards and by-law
- Quality neighbourhoods – Planning
- Public Health (Southwestern Public Health)
- Long-term care
- Library services
- Infrastructure – Water
- Infrastructure – Wastewater
- Infrastructure – Stormwater
- Infrastructure – Roads & bridges
- Information – High speed internet
- Forestry/wetlands preservation
- Environment/climate change/sustainability
- Emergency management
- Economy
- Economic development
- Downtown revitalization
- Community engagement
- Arts and culture
- Affordable housing
- Active transportation
- Active living – Recreation
- Active living – Parks & Trails

Mandatory Question (132 response(s))

Question type: Checkbox Question



**Q9 | Are there any further comments or suggestions you would like us to consider for Oxford County or the Township of Zorra budgets for 2024?**

Screen Name Redacted

6/16/2023 08:55 AM

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS NEEDED BUT ALSO NEEDS TO BE LOCATED IN LOCATIONS THAT WILL BEST HELP THOSE NEEDING THE SPACE. LOW INCOME HOUSING IS POINTLESS IF THERE ARE NOT AMENITIES AND SERVICES CLOSE BY WITH PUBLIC TRANSIT TO ALLOW FOR JOB, MEDICAL, GROCERY AND OTHER SERVICES TO BE ACCESSED.

Screen Name Redacted

6/19/2023 09:37 PM

Money spent (capital, recreation, parks, etc) in Zorra township should serve to better the whole township or be representative in how it is spent. I live in Embro, I am taxed the same percentage however the parks, recreation opportunities. While Thamesford is bigger and should have more parks, which they do, there shouldn't be limited funding to ones in Embro. Also to note the taxes coming from businesses, particularly farms, are very high within a short distance of Embro. Farm families use the facilities please consider this when funding services in the township.

Screen Name Redacted

6/19/2023 11:27 PM

GROCERY STORE IN THAMESFORD

Screen Name Redacted

6/21/2023 06:45 AM

Curbing the amount of stealing and break and entering

Screen Name Redacted

6/21/2023 03:27 PM

Move all school buses to electric power.

Screen Name Redacted

6/22/2023 02:48 PM

A need to consider a roundabout at the 119 south & highway 2 intersection. Also consideration for a second crosswalk at Stanley St. & highway 2. As to economic development, with the growing population of Thamesford it would nice to see council actively encouraging a grocery store to build in the town.

Screen Name Redacted

6/22/2023 03:59 PM

Don't sell off land and assets without a full study of the pros and cons.

Screen Name Redacted

6/24/2023 07:46 AM

You need to find more affordable long term care beds. I work as an RPN at a local hospital and make less money then PSW's at

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Woodingford Lodge. You have people living for months in acute care beds that are brought to the hospital simply because they need nursing home care and there aren't any beds and their family has failed to plan for this stage in the geriatric patients life. Also stop taking prime farm land for subdivisions. Build up not out, utilize vacant and abandoned spaces within Woodstock.

Screen Name Redacted

6/24/2023 10:00 AM

A grocery store and another school would be great improvement to our growing community

Screen Name Redacted

6/24/2023 09:57 AM

incentives to attract a grocery store

Screen Name Redacted

6/24/2023 07:39 PM

Our school sizes are an issue. I know there are a couple schools coming but we are bursting at the seams everywhere. More portables is a bandaid not a fix. We need to pro rate our numbers and build accordingly.

Screen Name Redacted

6/30/2023 05:20 PM

Why is Zorra building a childcare center? Why isn't that being done by a private company? For the amount of money we pay out for waste/recyclables pick-up, we should get a garden waste pickup, too.

Screen Name Redacted

7/04/2023 06:55 PM

Lower the taxes on residents, every day is getting harder and harder !  
Need some tighter spending saving for rainy days

Screen Name Redacted

7/05/2023 10:04 AM

Would be nice in this time of peoples needs and the ever increasing cost of everything to for once not have huge tax increases

Screen Name Redacted

7/05/2023 06:16 PM

I wish that Elgin Health Unit did not merge with Oxford. Not as good. Less for Oxford now. Staff have to drive to both areas to support programs.

Screen Name Redacted

7/12/2023 10:54 AM

There should be more housing for seniors to be supported but able to stay in their community

Screen Name Redacted

7/13/2023 12:52 PM

Bylaw enforcement of property weed control. Downtown.  
Maintenance of buildings.

Screen Name Redacted

I'm surprised that mental health is not a noted priority for 2024, as it is

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7/24/2023 06:17 PM

an increasingly concerning issue in many facets of society. As a taxpayer, I'm noticing that there could be increases in some funding as a direct result of unmet mental health needs, such as housing, long-term care, EMS, community planning, parks and recreation, and by-law enforcement.

Screen Name Redacted

7/26/2023 06:16 PM

Green bin/organic waste program to divert more from landfill. Ideally a biogas facility that can be used to power other services (example waste water treatment facility) is needed.

Screen Name Redacted

7/29/2023 09:47 AM

Drop ALL funding and actions for DEI.

Screen Name Redacted

8/03/2023 09:31 AM

It is interesting to note that the closest detox facility in Oxford County is in Simcoe or other counties. It is beyond time to address the combined problem of homelessness, mental health and addiction problems that are facing our County.

Screen Name Redacted

8/03/2023 10:34 AM

Need to recycle compost

Screen Name Redacted

8/06/2023 04:59 PM

having option were my tax for school could go to anywhere but public school system it is discussing what they are doing to the kids

Screen Name Redacted

8/06/2023 07:56 PM

Trail development in Oxford and Zorra. ATV trails? Legalization on municipal, rural roads.

Screen Name Redacted

8/07/2023 01:03 PM

Gravel roads are so poorly maintained it's embarrassing. Grading and gravel need to be performed in a more professional and timely manner.

Screen Name Redacted

8/08/2023 08:02 PM

Apply more money for identifying and preserving our heritage.

Screen Name Redacted

8/09/2023 08:08 AM

Opt out of paying for public schools if you homeschool, increasing police funding, adequate housing for the poor, not allowing the spraying of round up (glyphosate), community gardens initiatives, community classes for food preservation (canning, growing, preserving), initiatives for local farmers to feed to community,

## 2024 Budget Survey - Zorra Township and Oxford County : Survey Report for 14 June 2023 to 01 September 2023

Screen Name Redacted

8/09/2023 09:10 PM

Zorra Township rocks! Thank you to those would work for our township and those in Oxford County! We are fortunate to have forward thinkers who live and work here!!

Screen Name Redacted

8/10/2023 05:30 PM

You can stop the drag shows and pandering to special interest groups under the guise of being inclusive. Put the money towards something that benefits all residents.

Screen Name Redacted

8/11/2023 03:16 PM

Why should tax dollars be spent on child care when there are private companies that have to fund them selves?

Screen Name Redacted

8/11/2023 08:33 PM

Licensed child care in Embro is needed. There's a high demand for care and not enough supply.

Screen Name Redacted

8/12/2023 10:34 PM

More pressure on developers in sub divisions to be responsible for putting in green space and playgrounds to accommodate all the new housing development. With the increase of residents police is more crucial as well.

Screen Name Redacted

8/18/2023 12:30 AM

Curbside leaf pick up

Screen Name Redacted

8/22/2023 09:02 AM

The "gravel" you re getting form our owned pit is mostly a mucky clay and grit, not real gravel. The south end of the 29th Line is a mess and no amount of grading will solve a non existent road bed. Either rebuild it or pave it. And why does our county not have an ever increasing amount of paved roads, once paved, maintenance is easier. When I drive Perth and Huron counties, multiple "backroads" are in fact paved. Why not in Oxford? Also, if you even paved an approach skirt to all railway crossings, such longer paved sections allow cars to slow down on pavement instead of creating a mass of potholes by braking on the gravel section that is currently there. These skirts or aprons would help road maintenance and the drivers using the road.

Screen Name Redacted

8/27/2023 06:14 PM

Climate: every time we sit in our vehicles at a traffic light with no traffic in sight, I wonder why with todays technology the lights are not controlled to monitor traffic not just on a time sequence! Do you know how much fuel would be saved and pollution reduced? Would like to see natural gas piped to rural areas so we are not being continually gouged by fuel suppliers!

## 2024 Budget Survey - Zorra Township and Oxford County : Survey Report for 14 June 2023 to 01 September 2023

Screen Name Redacted

8/27/2023 08:22 PM

Tough decisions to be made for sure

Screen Name Redacted

8/28/2023 09:39 AM

Responsible growth, redevelop within urban boundaries and save farmland for food production

Screen Name Redacted

8/29/2023 09:38 AM

Attracting new business to Thamesford ... ie grocery store, new restaurants, Giant Tiger.

Screen Name Redacted

8/30/2023 10:09 PM

Round about at corner of rd. 84 and county rd. 6. It's a very dangerous corner with too many accidents. Something needs to be done to protect residents.

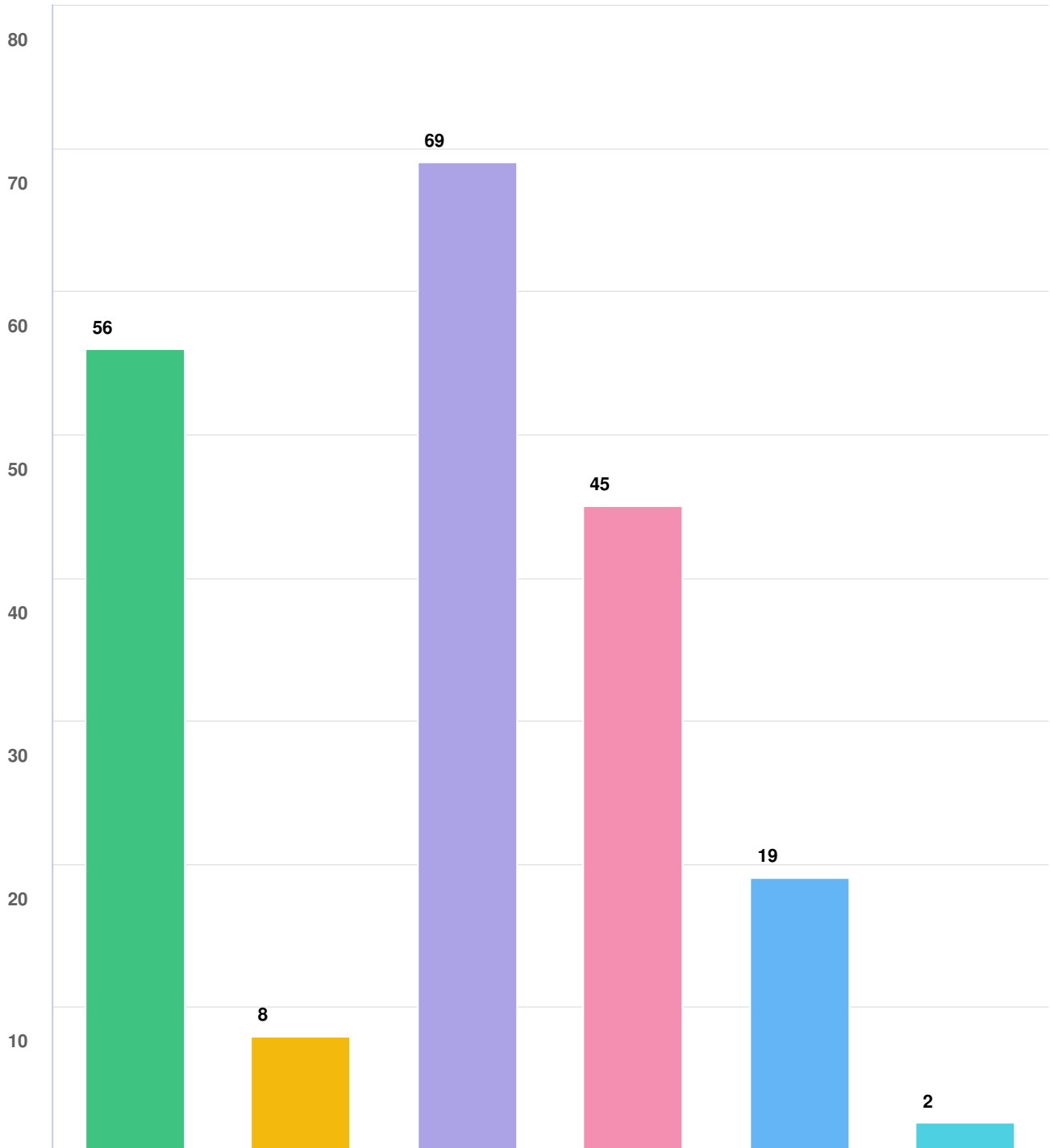
Screen Name Redacted

8/31/2023 07:52 AM

I would love to see an actual nature walking trail "loop" throughout the town.

**Optional question** (40 response(s), 92 skipped)**Question type:** Essay Question

**Q10** In addition to this survey, there are other opportunities for the public to be engaged and informed on the 2024 Budget. Oxford County and the Township of Zorra set their budgets independently of one another and fund various services that affect you...



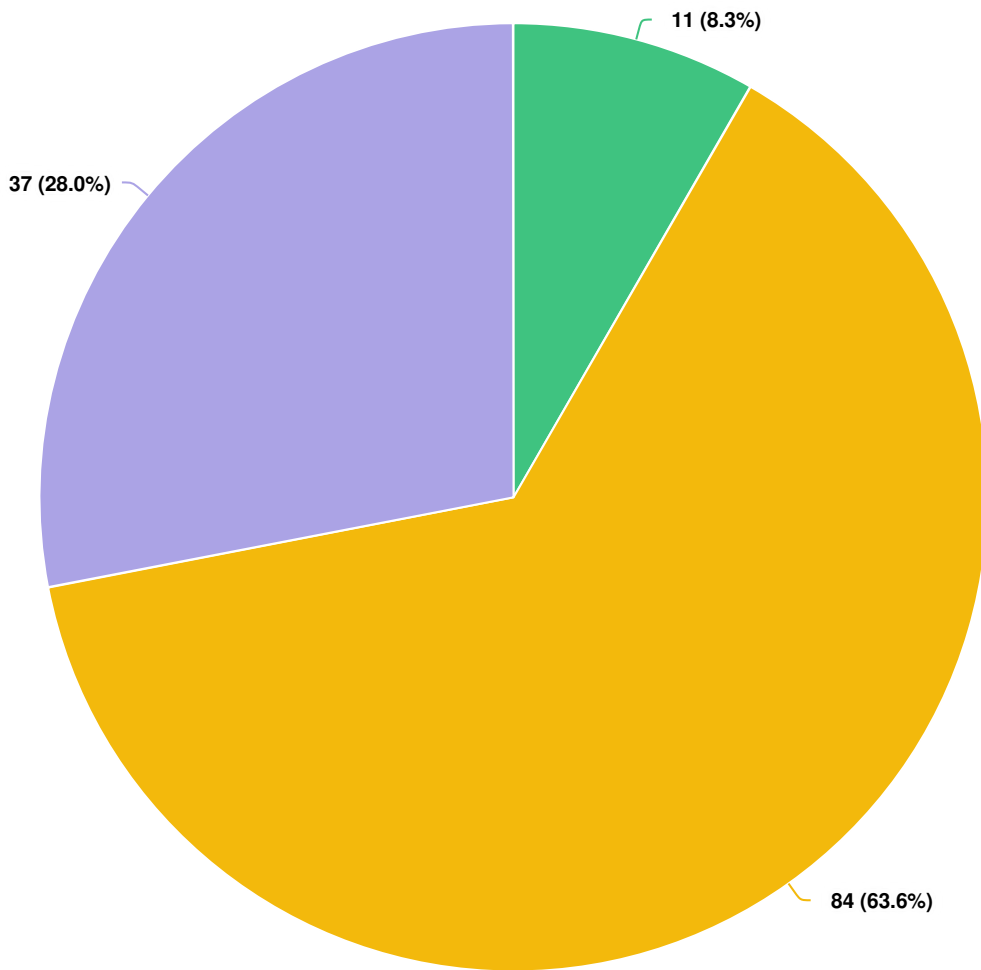
**Question options**

- Other (please specify)
- Read summary document or fact sheet/infographic
- E-mail or e-alerts from website
- Social media
- Council Budget meetings
- Website updates

Optional question (121 response(s), 11 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

**Q11 | How would you rate this survey?**



**Question options**

- Great survey!
- It was OK
- Could be better

Optional question (132 response(s), 0 skipped)  
Question type: Emoji Question