



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

**Report No:** 2024-123

**Council Meeting Date:** Regular Council - 02 Oct 2024

**Subject:** 2025 Budget Survey Results

**File:** Budget-2025

## RECOMMENDATION:

**That Report 2024-123 and the 2025 Budget Survey Responses be received as information.**

## BACKGROUND & COMMENTS:

The Township participated in the County wide Budget Consultation Online Survey which launched June 10th and ran through to September 3, 2024. 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.

The survey received 131 responses; inline to the 132 responses received during the 2024 budget survey conducted last year. Of the respondents, 53% heard about the survey through social media, while the 2nd highest was through the insert received with their final tax bill.

### Service Levels

The survey illustrated how property taxes were spent in 2024 and asked residents to indicate whether the same services should be enhanced, maintained or reduced in the upcoming year. The large majority of responses would like to see all services maintained at current levels. (58%)

The more notable areas that were identified for service level enhancements and or reductions were identified as:

#### *Enhancements:*

- Parks and recreation: 42%
- Policing: 25%
- Roads & Bridges: 22%
- Health Services: 27%

#### *Reductions*

- General Government Services: 30%
- Municipal by-law enforcement, licenses and building services: 29%

**The Corporation of the Township of Zorra**

P.O. Box 306, Ingersoll, Ontario N5C 3K5

Tel. (519) 485-2490 • Toll Free 1-888-699-3868 • Fax (519) 485-2520 • E-mail: [admin@zorra.ca](mailto:admin@zorra.ca)

When asked what the respondents thought were the top 5 priorities in their community, Active Living (parks, trails and recreation) ranked the highest. The most notable service areas mentioned are:

1. Active living - parks, trails and recreation (62 respondents)
2. Infrastructure - Roads, bridges and storm water (56 respondents)
3. Safe communities - Police (52 respondents)
4. Affordable housing (38 respondents)
5. Safe communities - Paramedic services (32 respondents)

The budget survey provides a comment section for the service level question, as well as one final open ended comment question. The detailed comments provide added value to the service level rankings and are provided in the attachment to this report.

### **Tax Dollars**

When asked about the overall value received from the Township's tax dollars, 48.1% (63 respondents) of the respondents rated it Fair, while 28.2% (37 respondents) feel they receive poor value (page 19 of 27 of the budget survey document).

### **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 2025 budget.

### **LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

#### **Goal:**

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

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

[2025 ZORRA Budget Survey Responses](#)

# 2025 Budget Survey - Zorra Township and Oxford County

---

## SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

10 June 2024 - 03 September 2024

### PROJECT NAME:

2025 Budget survey

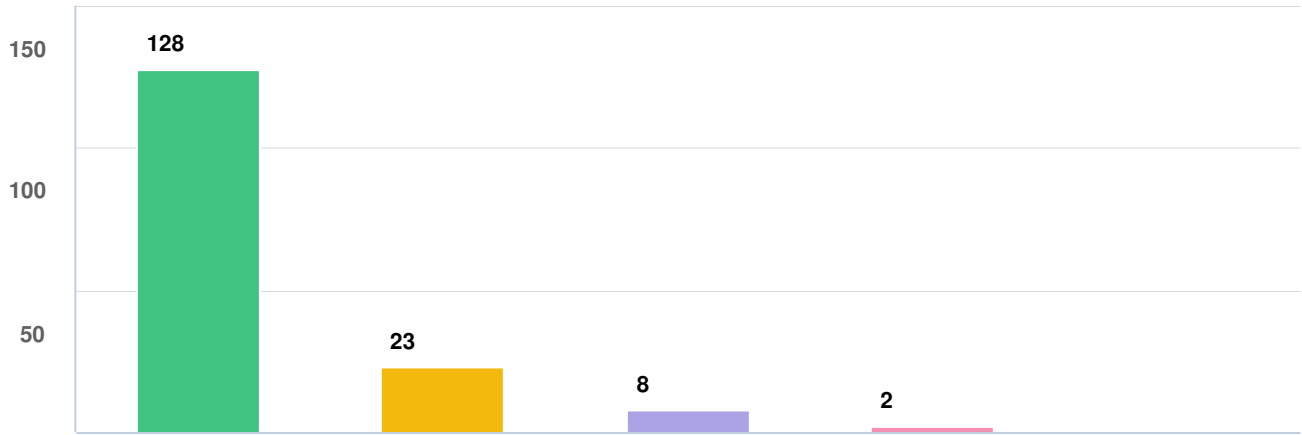


REGISTRATION QUESTIONS



# 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...

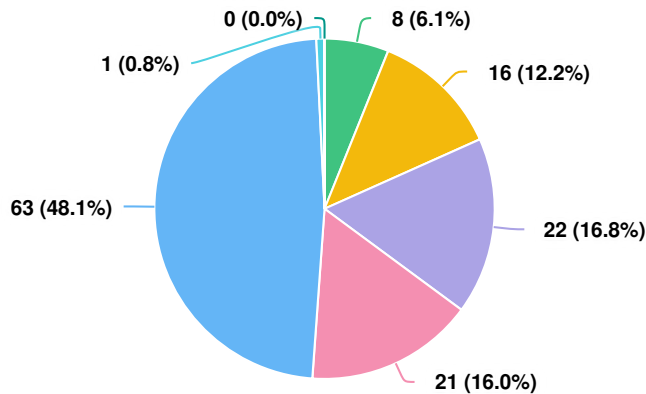


**Question options**

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

Mandatory Question (131 response(s))  
Question type: Checkbox Question

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

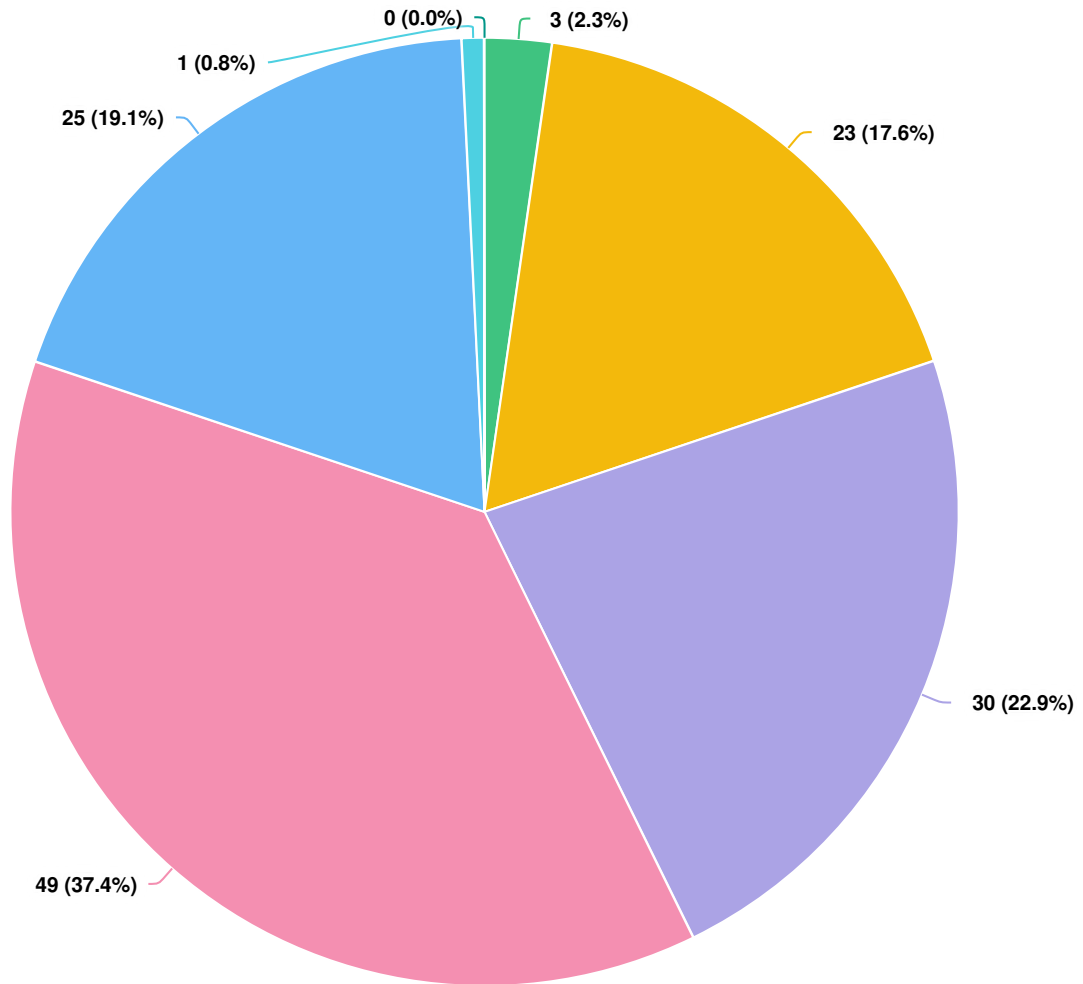


**Question options**

- 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 (131 response(s))  
Question type: Dropdown Question

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

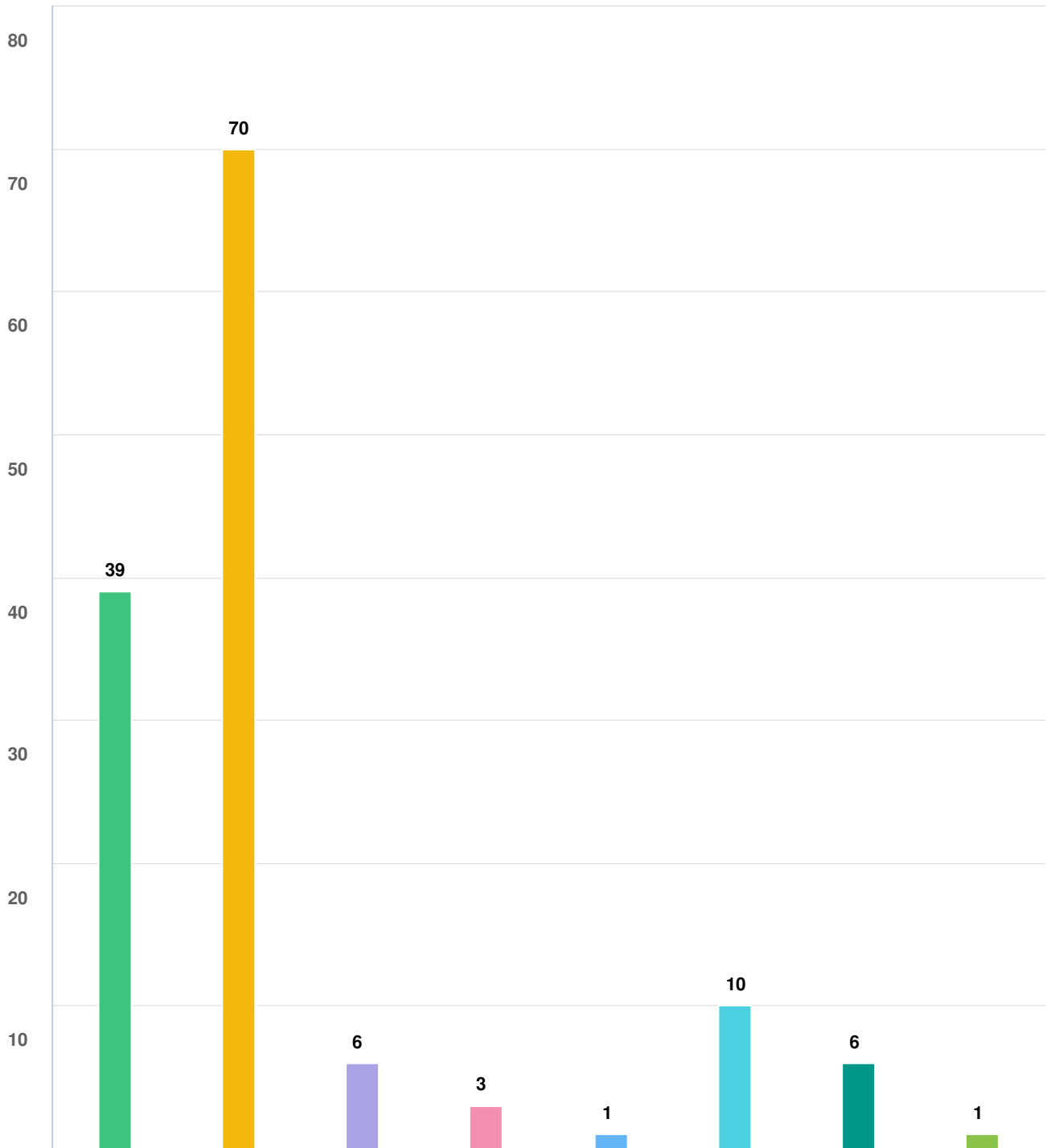


**Question options**

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

Mandatory Question (131 response(s))  
Question type: Dropdown Question

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



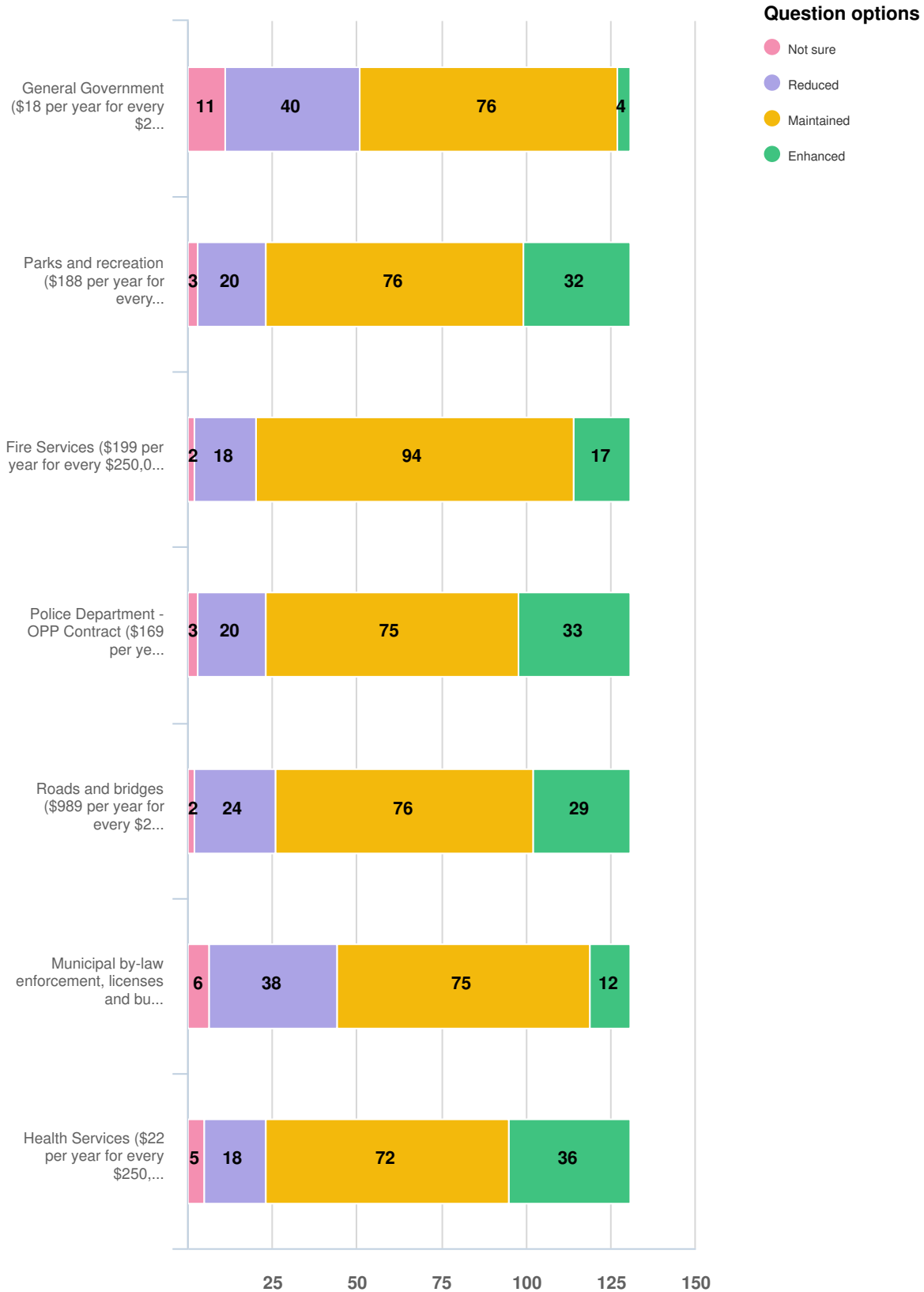
**Question options**

- 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 (131 response(s))  
Question type: Checkbox Question



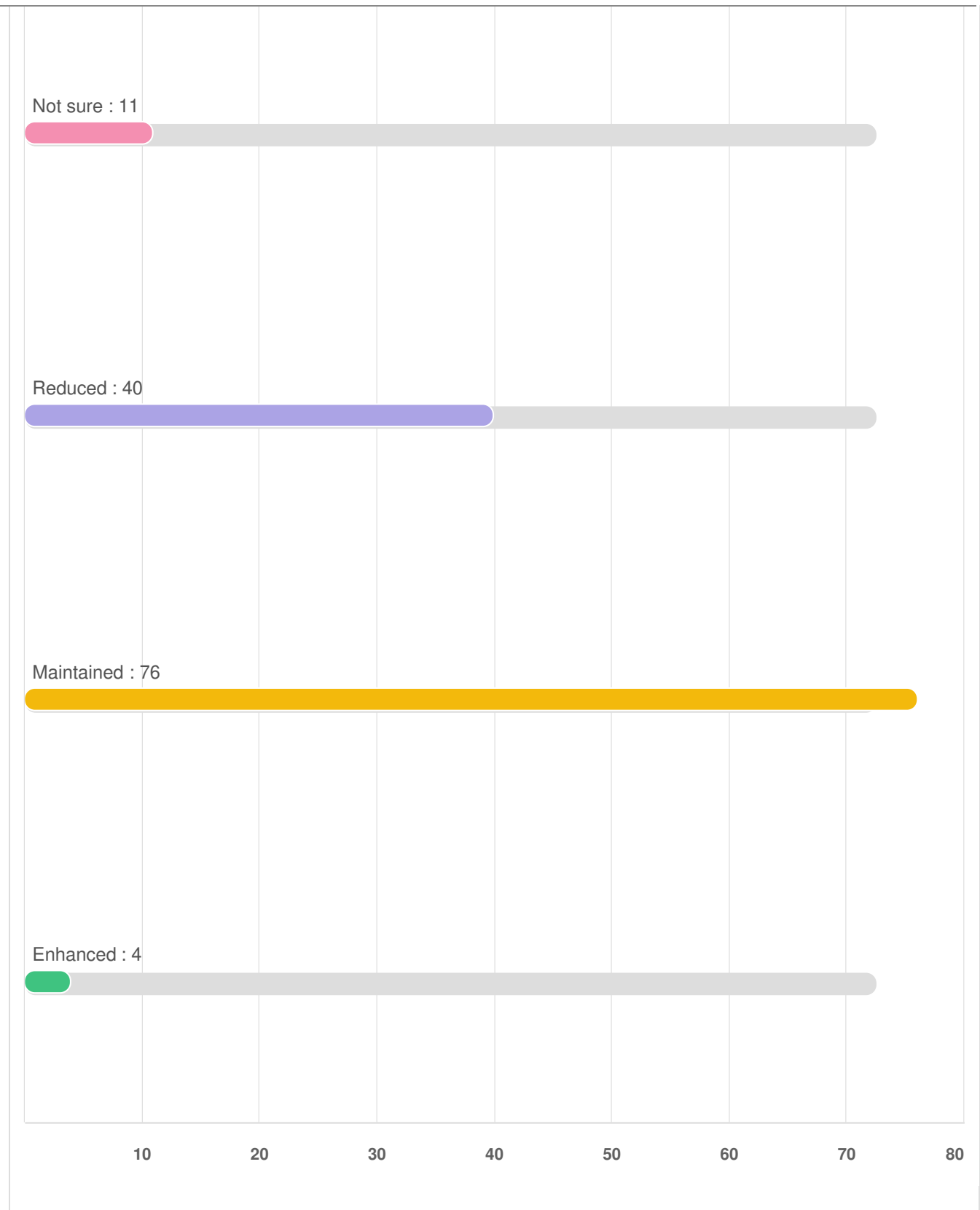
**Q5** | The Township of Zorra provides a variety of services supporting you. The following questions are about services funded through Township of Zorra tax dollars and delivered by the Township. General Government Includes Council, CAO Office, Corporate Ser...

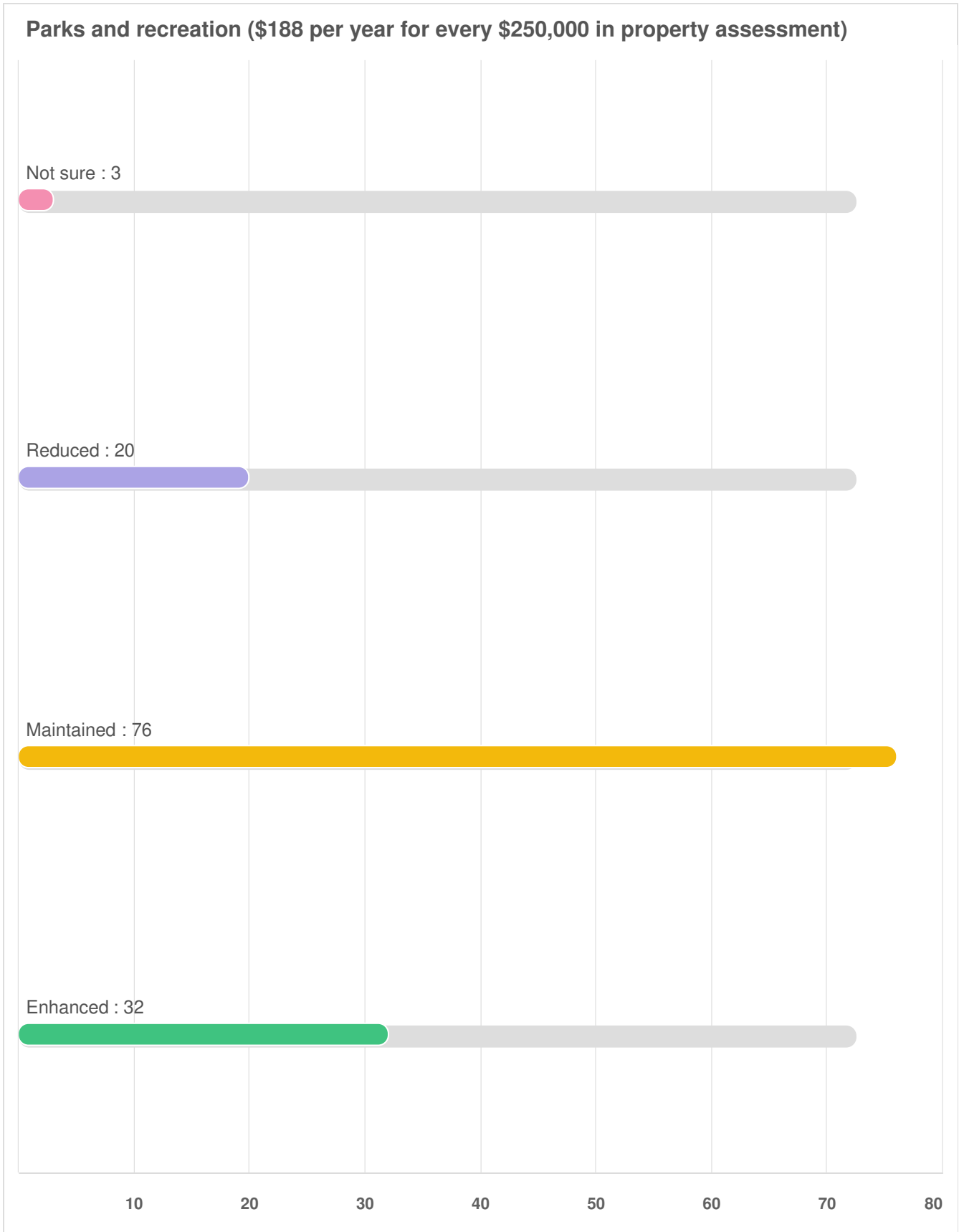


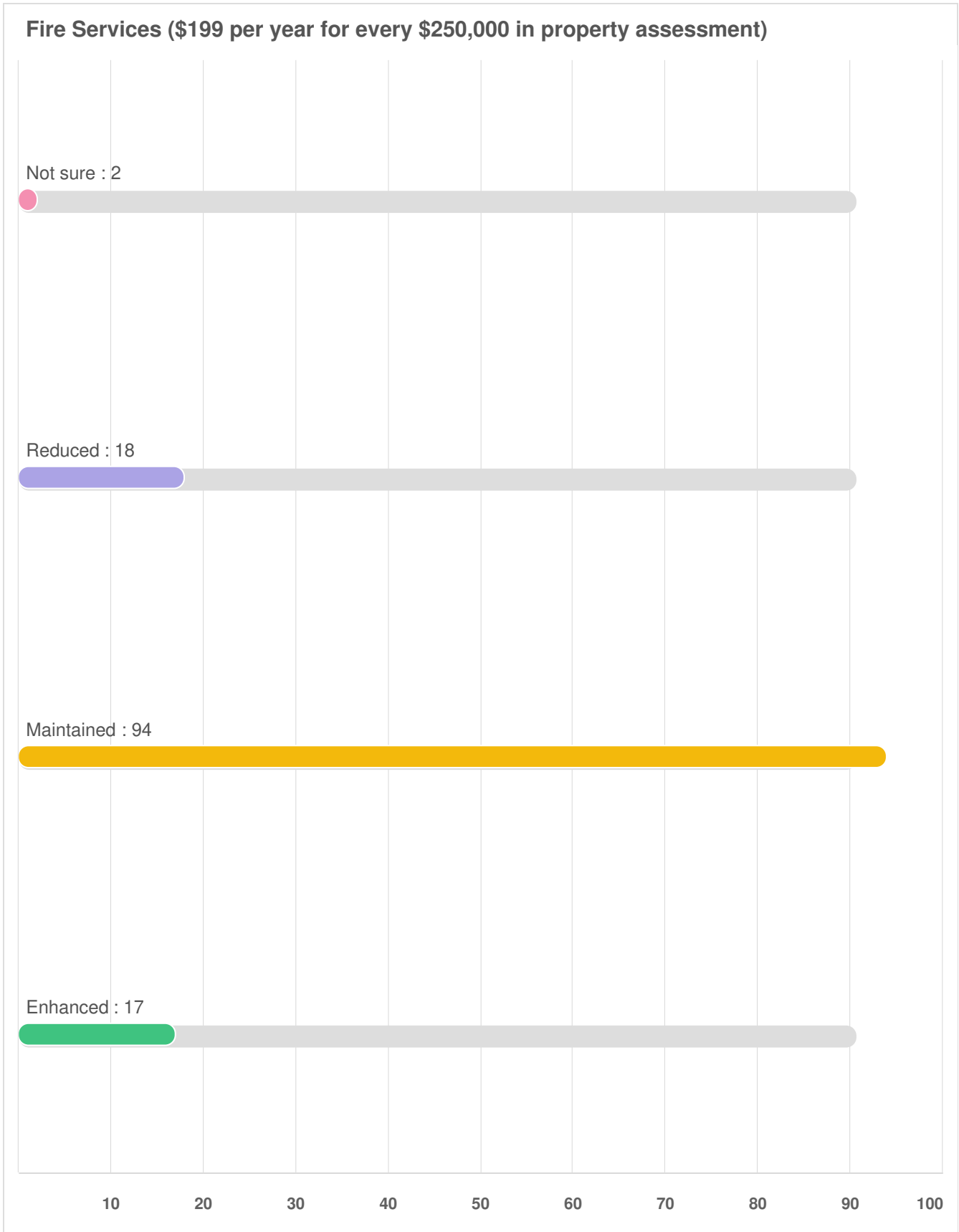
Mandatory Question (131 response(s))  
Question type: Likert Question

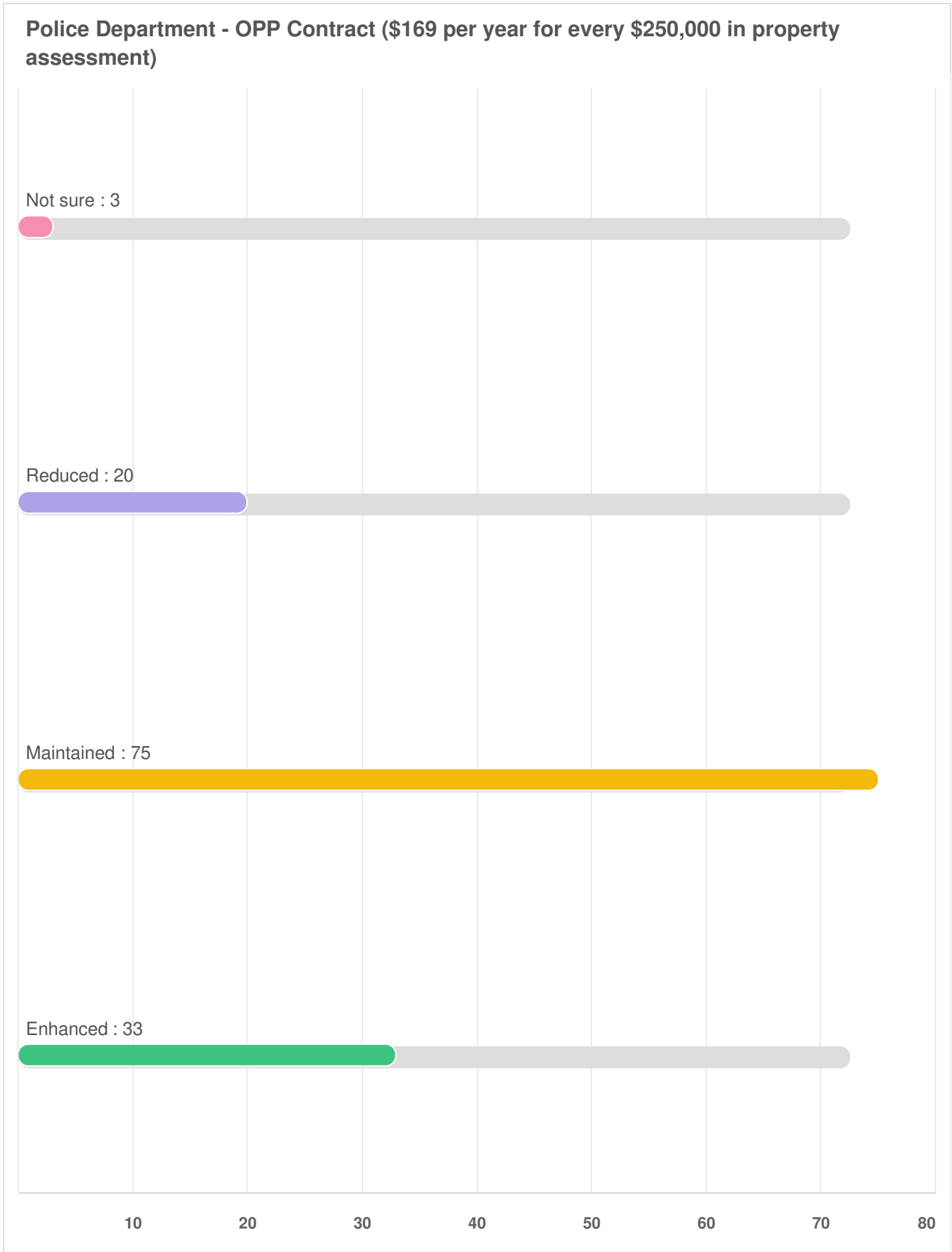
**Q5 | The Township of Zorra provides a variety of services supporting you. The following questions are about services funded through Township of Zorra tax dollars and delivered by the Township. General Government Includes Council, CAO Office, Corporate Ser...**

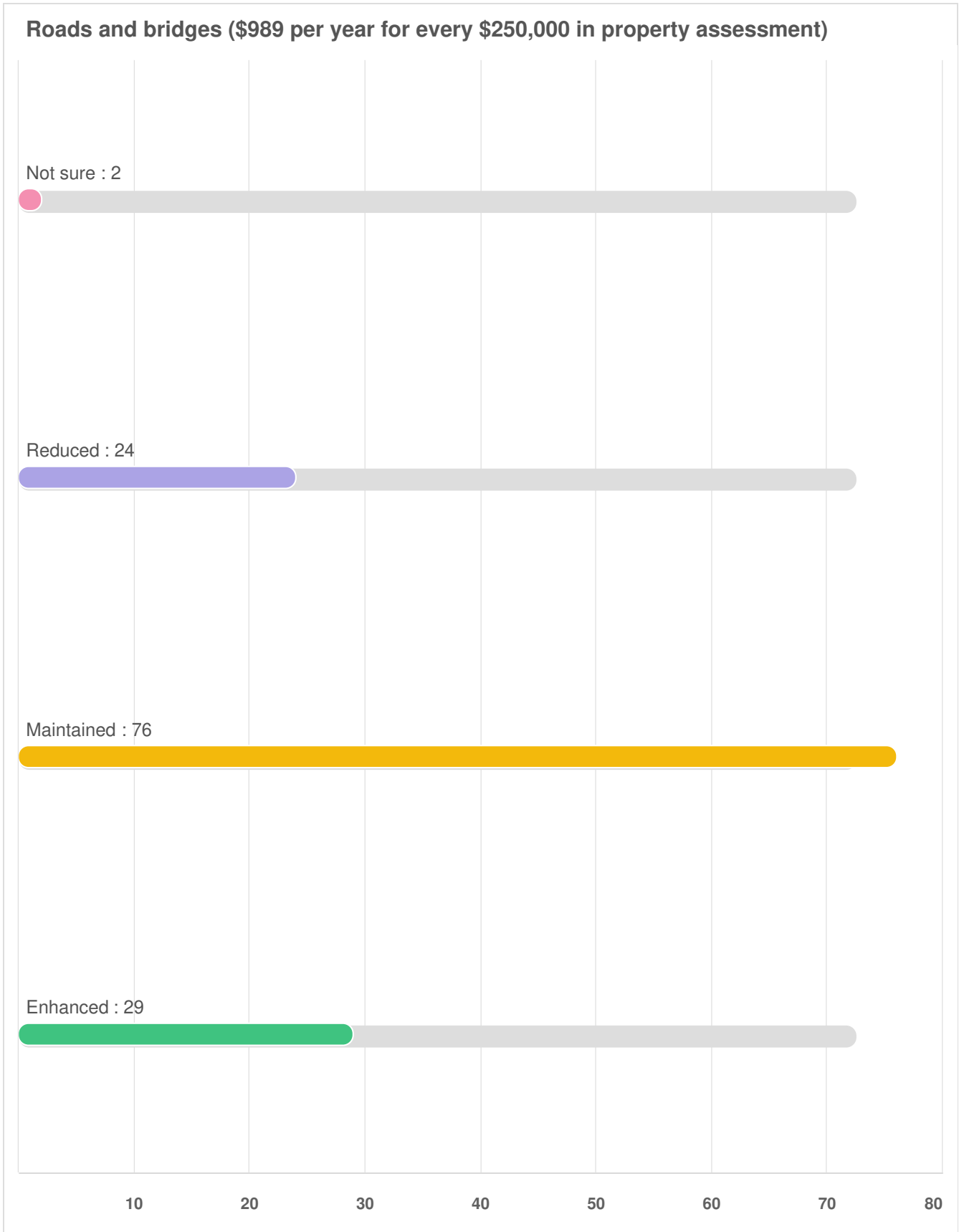
**General Government (\$18 per year for every \$250,000 in property assessment)**

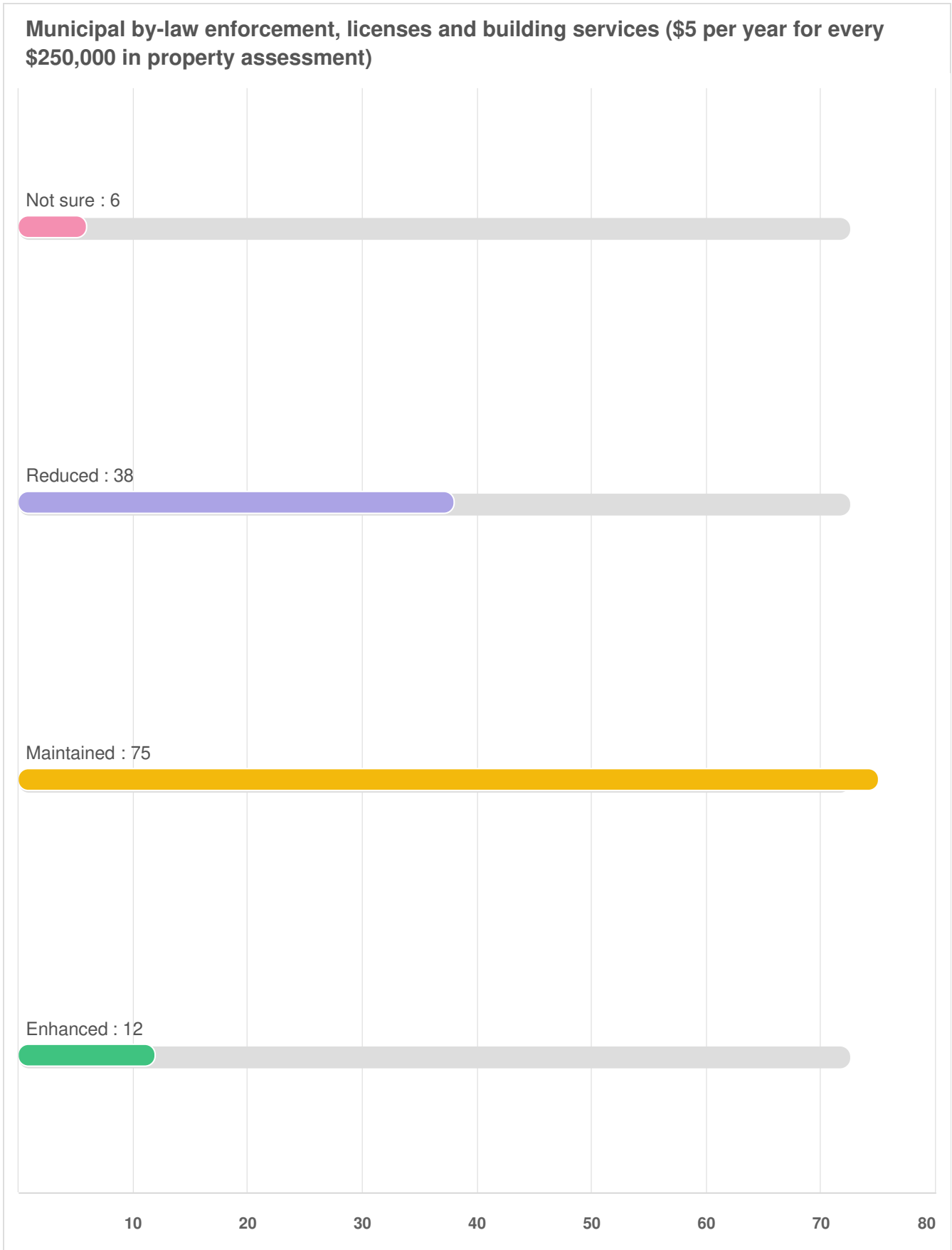




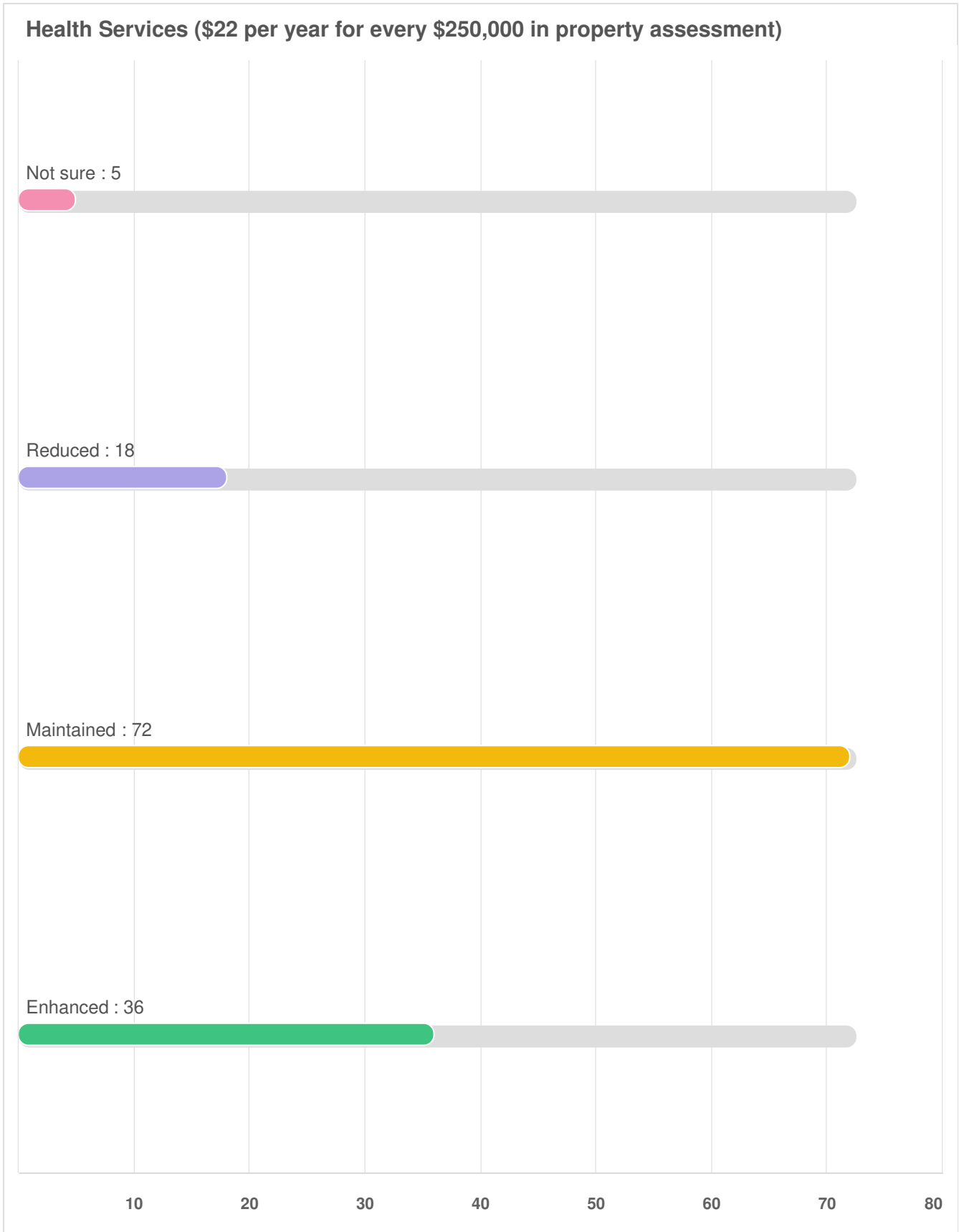












**Q6 Do you have any additional comments about your ratings for these service levels?**

Screen Name Redacted

6/13/2024 12:59 PM

Not sure

Screen Name Redacted

6/14/2024 07:07 AM

The current government spends too much money on facilities vehicles and employees and not enough money on parks and rec. The fire department should have their private Pickleball court moved out of their facility and one built for the entire township to enjoy.

Screen Name Redacted

6/14/2024 10:28 PM

I want to see more money spent on rural road improvements

Screen Name Redacted

6/19/2024 09:14 AM

Police needed in Thamesford High volume of traffic (need reduced speeding measures and increased stop signs)

Screen Name Redacted

6/22/2024 01:14 PM

My road is maintained by East Zorra Tavistock township. In my opinion, my road is better maintained compared to Zorra gravel roads as far as grading and snow plowing.

Screen Name Redacted

7/03/2024 12:00 PM

Township should look to increase park space and connections between them to promote walking and biking trails. Increase in police presence. Increase in by-law enforcement to increase income from infractions.

Screen Name Redacted

7/04/2024 08:30 PM

I've proposed to reduce based on observation.. several areas seem to be overstaffed and padded.

Screen Name Redacted

7/09/2024 12:17 PM

Better road maintenance on dirt roads should be a big priority. The pot holes are out of control and doing damage to vehicles.

Screen Name Redacted

7/10/2024 06:23 PM

Increased funding for recreation programs for youth specifically. Especially camp!

Screen Name Redacted

7/12/2024 10:09 PM

In the last 5 years it seems that almost every township building is now brand new, as well as much of its vehicle fleet. The only buildings that weren't rebuilt were parks & rec buildings such as the thamesford pool or arena, but if a public sector employee worked in

it, it was rebuilt new. I feel it's time that spending be reduced and the savings returned to residents.

Screen Name Redacted

7/13/2024 07:18 AM

level of service should be reduced or at a minimum maintained to keep taxes as low as possible. Everyone is tightening their purse strings and any increase in taxes hurts families and makes it more difficult for businesses.

Screen Name Redacted

7/13/2024 07:44 PM

Roads in Zorra township are not maintained well so why are we paying extra for them

Screen Name Redacted

7/15/2024 12:31 PM

No more capital expenditures.

Screen Name Redacted

7/15/2024 07:59 PM

My biggest concern is for improvement of the safety of our roads.

Screen Name Redacted

7/16/2024 01:45 PM

The township has miss spent our tax dollars over the last few years. How is it ok to build two new builds (township building and public works building) spending millions and millions of dollars on these unnecessary building. The way you have wasted out tax dollars has been disgusting. Then to increase our property taxes to cover township salary increases by 700k.... how are our counselors allowing this.

Screen Name Redacted

7/22/2024 06:50 AM

no

Screen Name Redacted

7/22/2024 06:33 PM

It seems like an excess of employees in the roads department where make work projects are done. Have part time or contract workers.

Screen Name Redacted

7/23/2024 03:12 PM

Speeding is a real problem in our villages and nothing will change unless we have more enforcement. Please hire a secondary officer for Zorra township. We only have 1 per shift patrolling Zorra!

Screen Name Redacted

7/23/2024 07:10 PM

Potholes on rural roads have been an issue.

Screen Name Redacted

7/25/2024 11:09 AM

Taxes went up almost 10% in 2024!!! More than the rate of inflation and way more than my pension increased. Implement additional

---

spending only from savings in an over inflated budget. Did we really need new administration building!!

Screen Name Redacted

7/29/2024 08:01 PM

Seems that bylaws regarding traffic, trailers, motorhomes are rarely enforced in residential areas. Staff should be checking out the violations by inspection. People park EVERY night overnight on the streets. Should not be allowed. Oversized motorhomes and car hauling trailers should not be allowed in residential areas.

Screen Name Redacted

7/30/2024 08:29 AM

Excessive amount of money spent on unnecessary township buildings , bad management of purchase of cold springs , development in Thamesford does not fit , more residential buildings sure , but make it look like they belong here and not downtown Toronto.

Screen Name Redacted

7/30/2024 02:18 PM

I really have no idea what health services encompasses.

Screen Name Redacted

7/30/2024 08:37 PM

Government services should be centralized where possible - eg. common Finance systems and payroll etc. etc etc

Screen Name Redacted

8/06/2024 01:59 PM

Why do the residents have to raise money for anything to do with outdoor recreation facilities

Screen Name Redacted

8/16/2024 11:46 AM

Not sure if this is where I put this in but my concern right now is the amount of accidents that are happening in and around Thamesford. It appears to be 1 or 2 every week...people running STOP sign at highway # and 74. Maybe a round about is needed or a light ?

Screen Name Redacted

8/24/2024 08:31 PM

Zorra Council seems very quick to spent money, please slow down! Let's pay off some debt first before we take on more. We do not need a new arena in Thamesford. No other population our size has 2 arenas. Please do not destroy the Embro community like was done in Thamesford on Middleton St. I support densification - just not poor planning and making a developer from Toronto get rich. Let's make strategic decisions (not rushed ones), as we can't make more land.

Screen Name Redacted

8/25/2024 06:14 PM

Please provide more information of what could be cut or what could be invested in

Screen Name Redacted

8/26/2024 05:23 PM

Like to actually see by-law enforcement. There are way too many dogs that are allowed to bark for longer than 3-5 minutes, with many owners just ignoring their dogs' barking and /or whining/crying. Where's the enforcement on backyard fires because many fires go on, or are started, well past midnight? I can't open my windows on cooler nights because the smoke smell is so strong!

Screen Name Redacted

8/27/2024 12:01 PM

Police service not to be had. Street sweeping once a year No point trying to make and maintain properties just to be charged more in taxes Have less fire taxes if people didn't call 911 for everything because that's only way to be seen in are hospitals and not wait 8hrs.

Screen Name Redacted

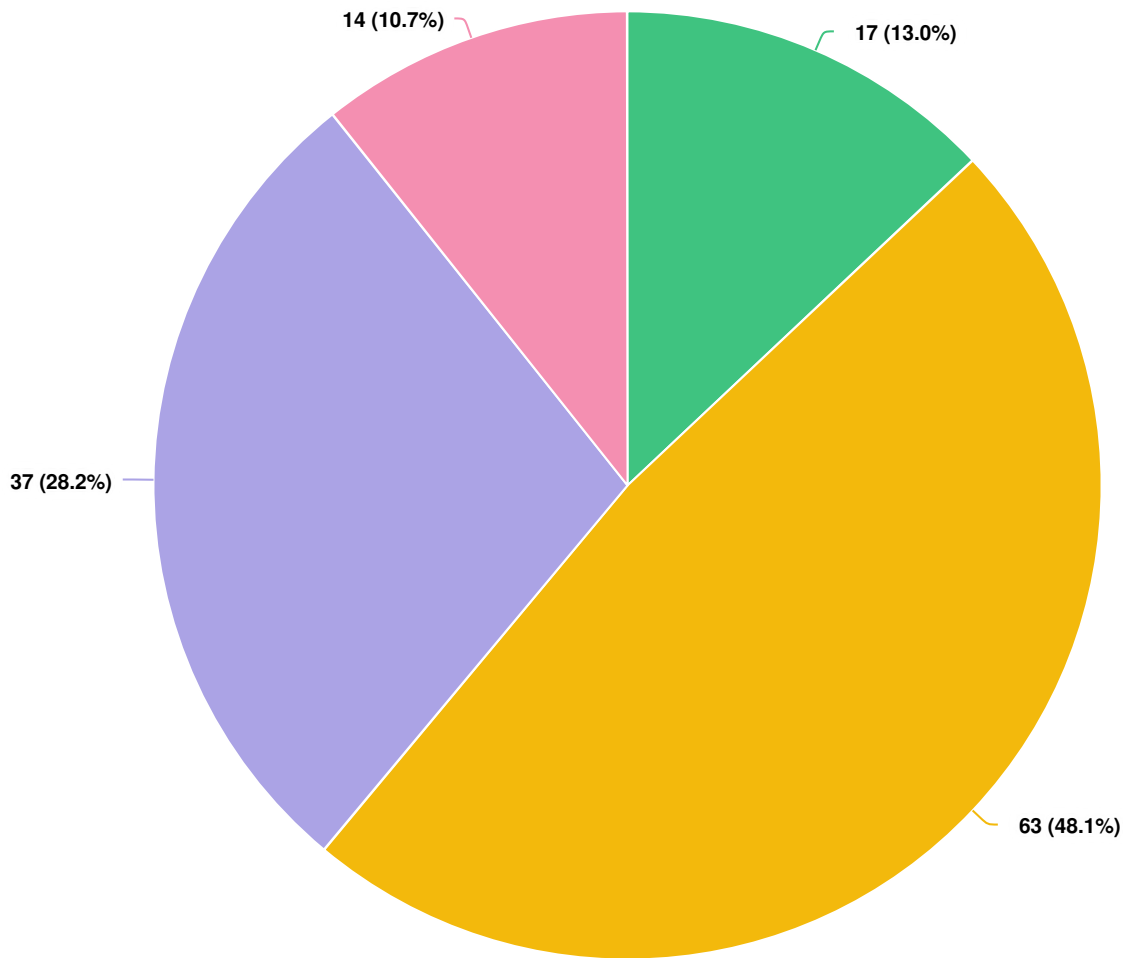
8/29/2024 04:35 PM

No

**Optional question** (31 response(s), 100 skipped)

**Question type:** Essay Question

**Q7** | In 2024, the Township of Zorra share of your municipal taxes for a \$250,000 residential property is \$1,590.\*How would you rate the overall value received from your Township tax dollars?

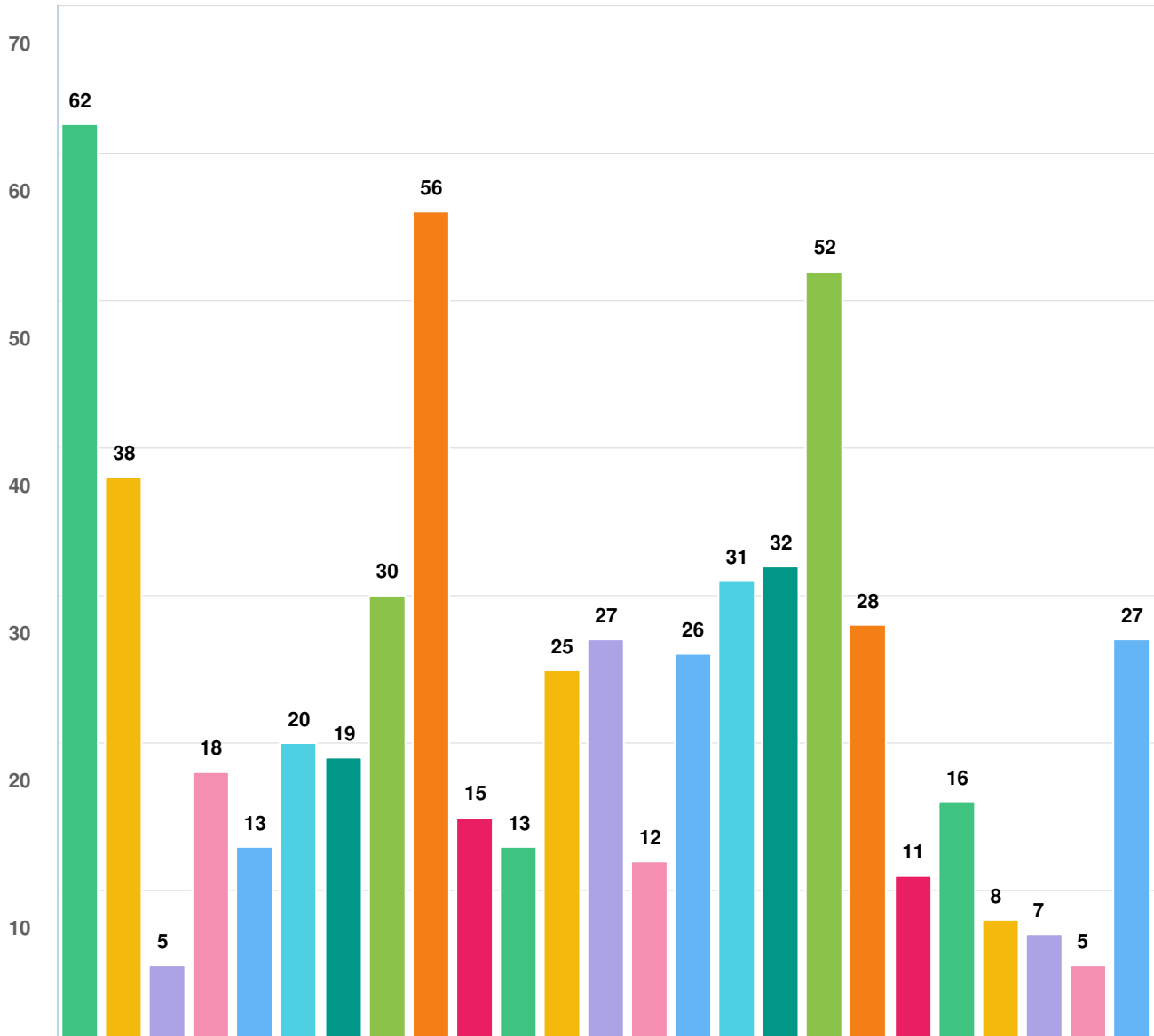


**Question options**

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

Mandatory Question (131 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 5 priorities for your community right now?



**Question options**

- Waste management – Curbside collection (garbage and recycling)
- Waste management - Waste disposal (Landfill)
- Social issues – Poverty
- Safe communities – Fire
- Quality neighbourhoods – Property standards and by-law
- Infrastructure – Water and wastewater
- Economic development
- Downtown revitalization
- Active living – Parks, trails and recreation
- Transit
- Emergency management
- Snow/ice control
- Safe communities – Police
- Public Health (Southwestern Public Health)
- Quality neighbourhoods – Planning
- Library services
- Information - High-speed internet
- Communication and transparency
- Arts and culture
- Social issues – Child care
- Safe communities – Paramedic Services
- Long-term care
- Infrastructure – Roads, bridges and stormwater
- Environment/climate change/sustainability
- Affordable housing

Mandatory Question (131 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?**

Screen Name Redacted

6/13/2024 02:35 PM

Stop with the DEI !

Screen Name Redacted

6/14/2024 07:07 AM

I was only able to pick one of the above categories because after improving our parks and recreational space, the most important thing that the Oxfordcounty Council and Township Of Zorra should be thinking about is austerity. Why is that not an option above? There should be a category that is "maintaining or reducing the budget". I'm blown away that that option is not included in the survey. It goes to show the mentality of the staff that spend our money. The survey in itself seems extremely biased as conservation, reduction and spending constraint are not options that tax payers can choose.

Screen Name Redacted

6/15/2024 09:25 AM

Anything that can be done to make more affordable starter homes, if not, we're going to see a generation gap for people who can't afford to live in Oxford county.

Screen Name Redacted

6/18/2024 10:37 PM

More four way stops on county road 6

Screen Name Redacted

6/20/2024 04:26 PM

Keep affordable housing in areas where it makes sense. Please make smart decisions for our communities and spend our tax money in a way that benefits those who live there and value the quality of life that we know and love in these areas.

Screen Name Redacted

7/03/2024 05:57 PM

Safer downtown , need another set of lights at Stanley and Dundas people are not slowing down coming into town when kids are trying to cross to go to school

Screen Name Redacted

7/04/2024 08:30 PM

It seems each township is trying to build duplicate infrastructure eg. municipal offices. Please consider eliminating one layer of government eg. one county structure , no townships. Politicians always seem to be against this citing closeness to their stakeholders.. but how many actively engage? We have a councillor for our ward who doesn't even live in the ward and none of my neighbours know who he is. County has no accountability to the ratepayers..



---

<p>Screen Name Redacted 7/08/2024 07:49 AM</p>	<p>Eliminate spending on promoting special interest groups</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 7/09/2024 12:17 PM</p>	<p>Bigger emphasis on embro needs. Not sure how to include this. But what is going to be done at the schools for the over population of students. The septic tank backing up. The school board isn't concerned with our childrens education, what can the township do to help make lives for students a bit better</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 7/12/2024 10:09 PM</p>	<p>The Frisbee golf in thamesford was a great idea, hope to see it expanded soon. Please plan population density better, Middleton was a mistake. Rural Canada has space, we have ample opportunity for beautiful neighborhoods with green spaces &amp; trees throughout. Keep greed in check we don't need or want to build on literally every available square inch. Speaking of trees, why aren't there more on township/County property? The new Thamesford fire hall looks so barren.</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 7/13/2024 07:18 AM</p>	<p>i think municipalities are trying to be all things to all people. Create an environment for affordable living and half the list (social / enviro/ safety) becomes less of a tax burden. My monthly mun. tax obligation is now higher then my mortgage payment.</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 7/15/2024 12:31 PM</p>	<p>No more capital expenditures. Zorra did not need a new township office or a county shed. These are all nice but was not a necessity</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 7/15/2024 07:59 PM</p>	<p>support of provincial High speed rail initiatives and also inter-community public transit.</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 7/16/2024 11:22 AM</p>	<p>Internet for rural communities. I see surrounding communities getting fiber optics but not in my area. (Road 62)</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 7/18/2024 08:52 AM</p>	<p>Affordable housing bid a joke to seniord Would be nice to have someone that is concerned about Affordable apartments thst dies mot cist close to \$2000 a month Can the fat cats running our srvices live on \$900 month? 0</p>
<p>Screen Name Redacted 7/22/2024 06:50 AM</p>	<p>Less government. Stop trying to find more services to provide, that will increase the taxes. Taxes are too high.</p>

---

---

Screen Name Redacted  
7/22/2024 01:52 PM

It's time to bring in lower property taxes, your increases have gone to far.

Screen Name Redacted  
7/22/2024 06:33 PM

Immediately stop DEI programs and terminate the person for the county. Drop all DEI from the Safe Communities. Why are you forcing Marxist ideologies that are destructive? Stop the net zero nonsense. There is no climate emergency. Do not purchase electric vehicles or buses. The 2024 tax increase is unacceptable. Reduce services.

Screen Name Redacted  
7/23/2024 03:12 PM

Photo radar! And as mentioned an extra officer for Zorra township per shift.

Screen Name Redacted  
7/23/2024 05:10 PM

Merger with EZt

Screen Name Redacted  
7/25/2024 11:09 AM

Put a lid on spending and STOP treating budgets like a bottomless pit. There is a limit as to how much residents can afford. Stop being leftists .

Screen Name Redacted  
7/29/2024 09:43 AM

Only core services should be provided. Many of the above items are above the core items, and can drive taxes up and out of control.

Screen Name Redacted  
7/29/2024 08:01 PM

New subdivisions need landscaping. The owners should be made to landscape at least the front. In the new subdivision in Thames Springs people are not doing anything.

Screen Name Redacted  
7/30/2024 08:29 AM

Back yard chickens should be aloud

Screen Name Redacted  
7/30/2024 01:17 PM

Reduce wasteful spending.

Screen Name Redacted  
7/30/2024 02:18 PM

Despite what I said above, I believe Zorra does a pretty good job of things. I have found myself disappointed though to see a) the number of gravel pits and the damage and traffic and dangerous driving causes by them, never mind the reclamation worries after all the profits have been made, and b) the spread of Thamesford out in any directions with no new parks or or things to sustain the community and the permission for construction companies to build homes so close together with next to no consideration for parking and such. I don't want Thamesford to become London. Whatever happened to

---

the affordable housing that was supposed to have been built in south Thamesford? Construction companies seem to find loopholes to avoid contractual agreements and that is disheartening.

Screen Name Redacted

8/06/2024 01:59 PM

Stop trying to make cities out of villages

Screen Name Redacted

8/07/2024 10:58 AM

We saw an almost 10% increase in our tax amount this year. This is totally unacceptable. When the economy slows, you need to reduce your spending, just like we had to. That will mean cutting your work force; that's reality. Get out of areas civil government should not be involved in. Get back to the basics.

Screen Name Redacted

8/13/2024 08:07 PM

Less government overreach on private property use, equals higher quality of life of taxpayers.

Screen Name Redacted

8/21/2024 10:58 AM

Add play areas to the neighborhoods.

Screen Name Redacted

8/21/2024 06:32 PM

Road shoulder improvements for safer cycling. Traffic calming (speed and noise) specifically in Embro.

Screen Name Redacted

8/24/2024 08:31 PM

Spend wisely. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this survey.

Screen Name Redacted

8/25/2024 11:03 PM

Photo radar in speed zones 60 km and under. With the proceeds going to the township the ticket was given in

Screen Name Redacted

8/26/2024 06:50 AM

Roundabouts and 4 way stops to make county rd 6 safe for all travellers.

Screen Name Redacted

8/26/2024 05:23 PM

I hope future planners will enlarge the distance between houses from where it is now. On multiple occasions, I have seen sparks from one neighbor's backyard fire land on another's rooftop. I know it wouldn't take much for the roof to burn. During times of drought, why hasn't there been more enforcement of the restriction on backyard fires? When did it become OK to permanently install above-ground pools in the subdivision? Also, the townhouses, along Middleton, do nothing for the aesthetics of the township.

Screen Name Redacted

8/27/2024 12:01 PM

More public schools all the schools are way over full

Screen Name Redacted

8/28/2024 10:59 PM

Housing density does equal affordability nor quality. Building high density neighborhoods in small communities without services will lead to long term social issues and reduces the overall quality of life fir all residents. Rural communities should be allowed to remain rural, and agricultural lands should be protected at all costs. Housing prices fluctuate, always have. But housing will no longer matter when there's no food.

Screen Name Redacted

8/29/2024 04:35 PM

No

Screen Name Redacted

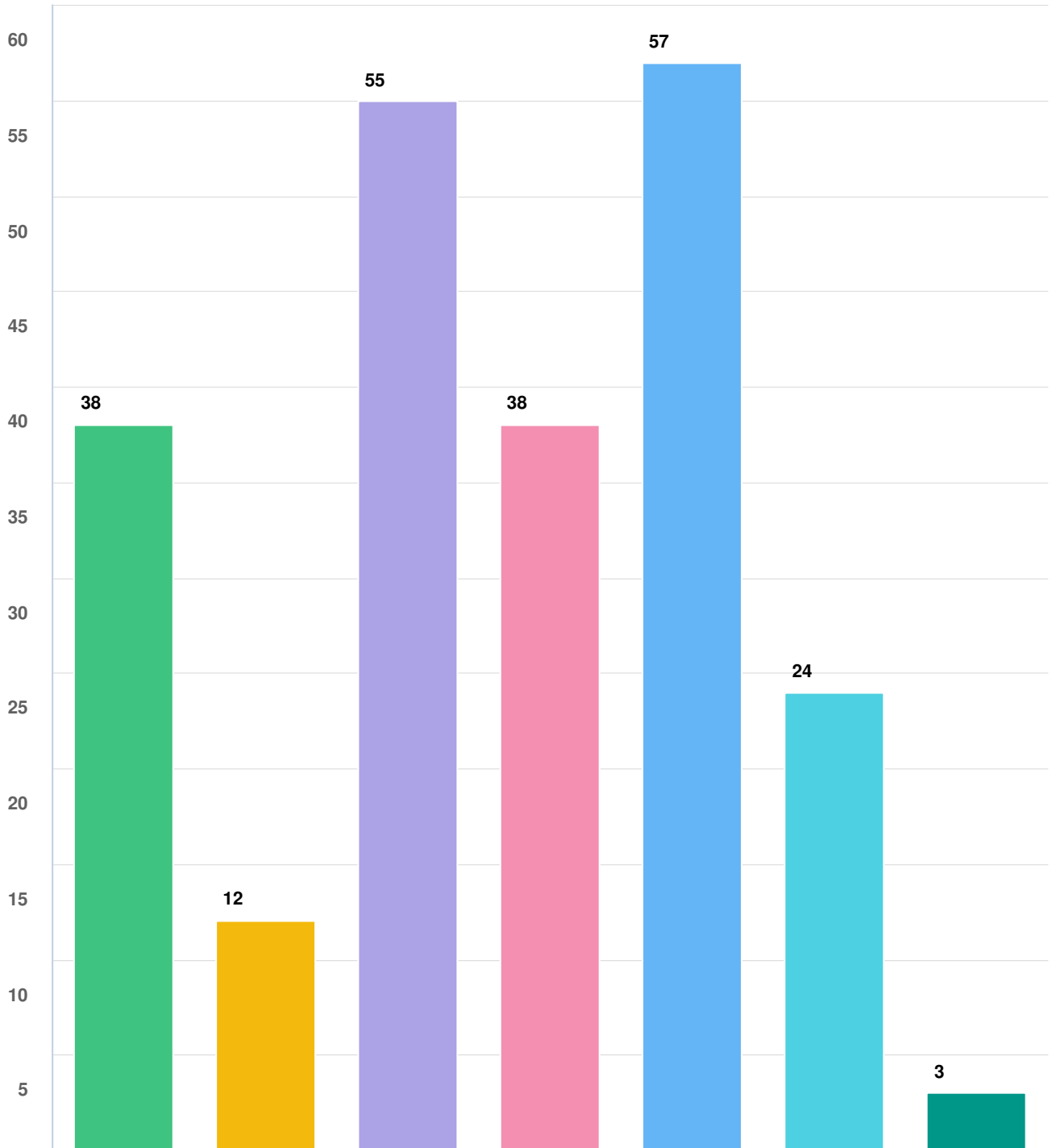
8/29/2024 08:49 PM

After the massive tax increases last please target a 0% increase for next year by reducing services! Stop mailing the Wasteline booklet.

**Optional question** (39 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 budget process. Oxford County and the Township of Zorra set their budgets independently of one another and fund various services that affect ...



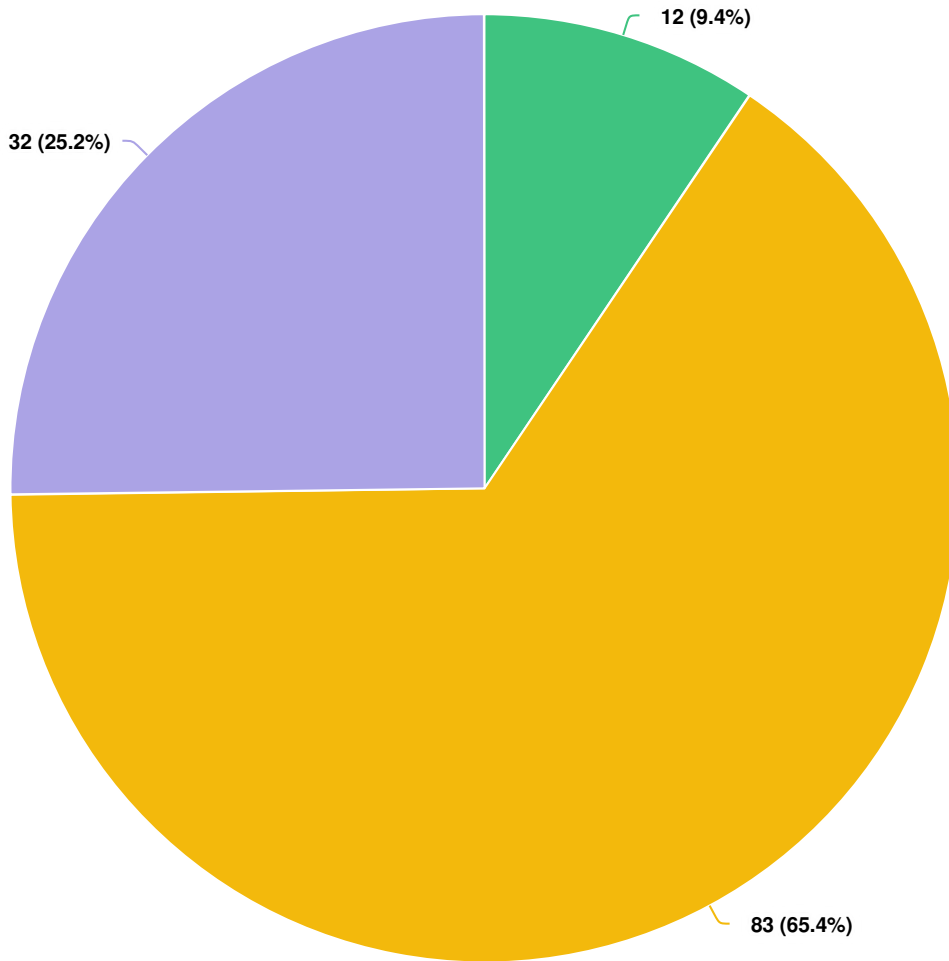
**Question options**

- Other (please specify)
- Local news media (newspaper, radio)
- Newsletter, summary or fact sheet/infographic
- E-mail or e-alerts from website
- Social media
- Council Budget meetings
- Website updates

Optional question (115 response(s), 16 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

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



**Question options**

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

Optional question (127 response(s), 4 skipped)  
Question type: Emoji Question