

2021 ANNUAL COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

June 2021



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Executive summary

Metropolis Research was commissioned by the City of Darebin to conduct the *Annual Community Satisfaction Survey*. The survey was first conducted in 1999.

The *Annual Community Survey* has traditionally been conducted as a door-to-door, interview style survey. Due to the lockdowns and social distancing requirements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct the survey as a face-to-face, doorstep interview survey again this year. Consequently, the survey was conducted as a telephone interview for the second consecutive year.

The surveying was all completed over three weeks in May 2021 and includes a sample of 1,000 respondents.

The 95% confidence interval around these results is plus or minus 3.1% at the 50% level.

Satisfaction with the performance of the Darebin City Council across all areas of responsibility ([overall performance](#)) declined 2.3% this year, down from 7.07 to 6.91 out of a potential ten.

Overall satisfaction with Council remains at a “good” level, with the result this year almost identical to the long-term average satisfaction since 1999 of 6.94.

Satisfaction with Darebin City Council’s overall performance is almost identical to the metropolitan Melbourne average of 6.92 as recorded in the 2021 *Governing Melbourne* research conducted independently by Metropolis Research in January 2021.

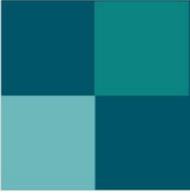
More than four-fifths (84.7% down from 87.5%) of respondents were satisfied with Council’s overall performance, whilst 8.0% (up from 6.1%) were dissatisfied.

There was some statistically significant variation in satisfaction with Council’s overall performance observed across the municipality, with respondents from Kingsbury/Bundoora measurably more satisfied than average and at a “very good” level.

There was some notable variation in satisfaction with Council’s overall performance observed by respondent profile, with the following pattern evident:

- ⊗ **Higher than average satisfaction** - young adults (aged 18 to 34 years), senior citizens (aged 75 years and over), rental (both public and private) households, and new and newer residents of Darebin (less than five years in Darebin) tended to be more satisfied.
- ⊗ **Lower than average satisfaction** – middle-aged and older adults (aged 45 to 74 years), homeowners and mortgagees, and long-term residents of Darebin (ten years or more) tended to be less satisfied than average.

It is noted again this year that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reduced the number of new residents in the municipality, down from 10.8% in 2019 to 1.2% this year. This will have materially affected overall satisfaction over the last two years, as new residents have always recorded measurably higher than average satisfaction with Council.



The issues most associated with lower satisfaction with Council’s overall performance for the respondents raising these issues included building and development, communication, roads, and parking. Respondents who raised these issues, on average, rated overall satisfaction with Council at “poor” levels.

The services most associated with lower satisfaction with Council’s overall performance included the maintenance and cleaning of shopping strips, green waste recycling, and garbage collection. In other words, respondents dissatisfied with these services were the least satisfied with Council’s overall performance.

Consistent with the small decline in satisfaction with Council’s overall performance, the average satisfaction with the five aspects of [governance and leadership](#) decreased by 3.4% this year, down from 7.10 to 6.86, although it remains at a “good” level.

Metropolis Research notes that satisfaction with aspects of governance and leadership, particularly those around communication and consultation have declined in several municipalities surveyed in 2021.

Respondents rated as “very good” Council’s support of diversity, inclusion, and fairness (7.58). This result strongly suggests that Council is effectively engaging with its diverse and multicultural community.

Respondents rated as “good” the core aspects of governance and leadership including communicating its programs and services (6.82), making decisions in the interests of the community (6.81), lobbying, and making representations on key issues (6.57), and community consultation and engagement (6.51).

There were 15 [Council services and facilities](#) included in the survey, and the average satisfaction with these services and facilities was stable this year 7.52 this year, a “very good” level. It is important to note that this average satisfaction with services and facilities was measurably and significantly higher than satisfaction with Council’s overall performance (6.91).

Of the 15 services and facilities, only footpath maintenance and repairs (6.66) reported a satisfaction score lower than overall satisfaction with Council.

There was a decline in satisfaction with [Customer service](#) this year, with “overall satisfaction with the customer service experience” declining 8.5% to 6.98, which is a “good” down from a “very good” level. Satisfaction with the “final outcome” also declined somewhat this year, down 2.7% to 6.87, although it remains “good”.

Almost three-quarters (70.4%) of respondents reported that they were given clear timeframes and point of contact when they first contacted Council with their query. More than four-fifths (83.7%) reported that their query was resolved either after one, or two to three contacts. Almost two-thirds (64.7%) reported that their query was resolved within the timeframes provided.





There were two aspects of [planning and development](#) included in the survey this year. Satisfaction with the appearance and quality of new developments (6.41 down from 6.51) and satisfaction with the number of new developments (6.08 down from 6.29). Satisfaction with both declined marginally but not measurably this year.

The [perception of safety](#) in the public areas of the City of Darebin during the day increased marginally this year, up 1.1% to 8.37 out of 10. This result was measurably lower than the metropolitan Melbourne average of 8.71. Just 2.6% (up from 2.5%) of respondents felt unsafe in the public areas of the municipality during the day.

The perception of safety in the public areas of the municipality at night also increased measurably this year, reversing most of the decline recorded last year, down 3.5% to 6.74. This result was marginally but not measurably lower than the metropolitan Melbourne average of 6.98. Three-quarters (77.2% up from 73.6%) of respondents felt safe in the public areas of the municipality at night, whilst 14.2% (down from 16.8%) felt unsafe.

It is noted that female respondents felt measurably and significantly (11.6%) less safe in the public areas of Darebin at night than male respondents.

When asked to rate their agreement with seven statements about [getting around in the local area](#), approximately three-quarters or more of the respondents agreed with all seven statements, with the strongest average agreement for “my street is pleasant and beautiful for me to walk in” (7.44) and the lowest agreement for “I am satisfied with Council’s performance providing information about and promoting cycling and walking in Darebin” (6.48).

The [top issues for the City of Darebin “at the moment”](#) remain building, housing, planning and development (9.6%), parks, gardens, and open spaces (5.9%), traffic management (5.8%), street lighting (4.0%), street trees (4.0%), footpath maintenance and repairs (3.9%), and parking (3.9%).

Taken as a whole, the *Community Survey* this year continues to report a “good” level of satisfaction with the overall performance of Darebin City Council, its governance and leadership performance, customer service, and a “very good” level of satisfaction with the delivery of most of the 15 included services and facilities.

The major issues of community concern continue to include roads and traffic, car parking, and the nature and extent of new housing development occurring in Darebin, as well as some issues with street lighting, street trees, and parks and gardens. These issues all appear to exert at least a mildly negative influence on community satisfaction with the performance of Darebin City Council for the respondents who raise the issues.

There were no issues that emerged in the City of Darebin this year that appear to have to be significant factors impacting on the community’s satisfaction with the performance of Council.