



STAFF REPORT
Finance

Title: 2019 Budget Process Debrief
Report Number: CORP2019-018
Author: Tony Iavarone & Filipa Reynolds
Meeting Type: Finance & Strategic Planning Committee Meeting
Council/Committee Date: March 18, 2019
File: N/A
Attachments: Appendix A: 2019 Engage Budget Survey Results
Ward No.: City-wide

Recommendation:

1. That Council receive this summary of the budget communications survey as information; and
2. That Council members provide individual feedback on the 2019 budget process as described within CORP2019-018 and in Appendix A to influence the next three year (2020-2022) budget process.

A. Executive Summary

The City requested the public's feedback on the communications related to its 2019 budget. A survey was posted on Engage Waterloo from December 10, 2018 to February 15, 2019. A total of 55 people completed the survey, and as such it is important to note the results of this survey can not be considered scientifically valid, but rather provides a small snap shot into some sentiment regarding the city's communications around its budget.

Among respondents, a few trends can be identified, specifically:

- greater clarity on how the budget is developed;
- a desire to understand how priorities for the community are determined; and
- a desire to have an opportunity to provide input into the city's budget prior to Council approval.

Respondents also noted that:

- the city does a good job of creating a budget where money is spent on things that are important to respondents; and

- the city communicates the budget in a understandable way.

Respondents were also asked to rank which city services were of greatest importance to them. Water services ranked as the most important, with loose leaf collection the least important. The survey also asked, among the services offered by the city, where would respondents like to see more money spend. Roads maintenance, repairs and upgrades was ranked most important with loose leaf collection the least. Staff will consider this feedback as it develops the communication plan for the 2020-2022 budget.

In addition to the public's feedback on communications related to budget, by way of this report (CORP2019-018) staff would welcome feedback from Council on what further improvements can be made to enhance the 2020-2022 budget process. Council members will be asked to answer questions posed in the body of the report live and in person at the Finance & Strategic Planning meeting on March 18, 2019.

B. Financial Implications

None

C. Technology Implications

None

D. Link to Strategic Plan

Corporate Excellence

E. Previous Reports on this Topic

- CORP2018-083 2019 Proposed Budget
- CORP2019-009 2019 Proposed Budget Follow Up

F. Approvals

Name	Signature	Date
Author: Filipa Reynolds		
Author: Tony Iavarone		
Director: Filipa Reynolds		
Commissioner: Keshwer Patel		
Finance: Filipa Reynolds		

CAO



2019 Budget Process Debrief CORP2019-018

The City of Waterloo is committed to developing budgets that strike a balance between being fiscally responsible while also delivering services and programs that provide value to the community. The budget is developed in alignment with Council's strategic plan, which is the guiding document that influences budget priorities.

An important aspect of the budget is communicating it with the community for awareness and understanding. The city sets out to communicate it by sharing details during Council meetings, providing information to traditional media and by posting detailed budget documents on the city's website. (www.waterloo.ca/budget).

To determine the effectiveness of that budget communication, a survey was posted on Engage Waterloo from December 10, 2018 to February 15, 2019. The survey link was promoted on the city's Facebook and Twitter accounts and in a news release. The engagement platform has three levels of interaction – engaged, meaning a person completed the survey; informed, the person visited more than one page of the survey topic; and aware, the person visited the landing/home page of the survey question only.

The budget communications survey saw 55 people complete the survey (engaged), with 145 informed and 288 were considered aware.

Since the number of actual respondents (55) is small, it's important to note the results of this survey can not be considered scientifically valid, but rather provides a small snapshot into some sentiment regarding the city's communications around its budget.

Among respondents, a few trends can be identified, specifically:

- greater clarity on how the budget is developed;
- a desire to understand how priorities for the community are determined; and
- a desire to have an opportunity to provide input into the city's budget prior to Council approval.

Respondents also noted that:

- the city does a good job of creating a budget where money is spent on things that are important to respondents; and
- the city communicates the budget in a understandable way.

Respondents were also asked to rank which city services were of greatest importance to them. Water services ranked as the most important, with loose leaf collection the least important. The city also asked, among the services offered where should it spend

more money. Roads maintenance, repairs and upgrades was ranked most important with loose leaf collection the least.

Public Survey Comments Summary

The comments received through the survey aligned with the charted results.

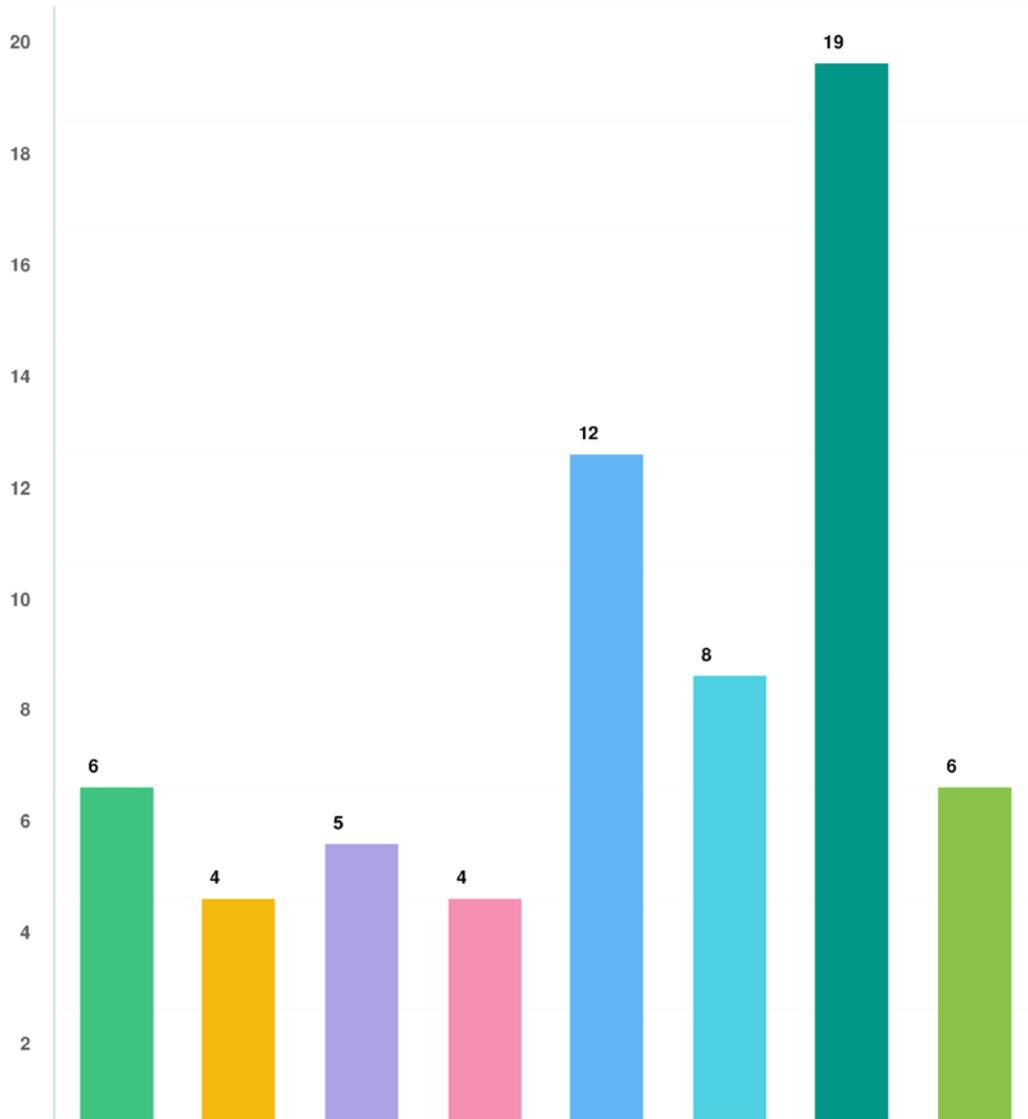
Respondents generally said:

- language used to communicate the budget should be clear and free of jargon;
- they have a desire to better understand how the city determines the priorities that are funded through the budget;
- any tax increases should be reasonable and affordable for residents;
- they have a desire to provide input into the budget prior to its approval by council; and
- the city should continue to communicate the budget in as many channels as possible.

The following charts display a break down of those results and a sample response where available.

Q. What aspect of the communication is difficult to understand (select all that apply)?

If you answered no, what aspect of the communication is difficult to understand.
Select all that apply:



Question options

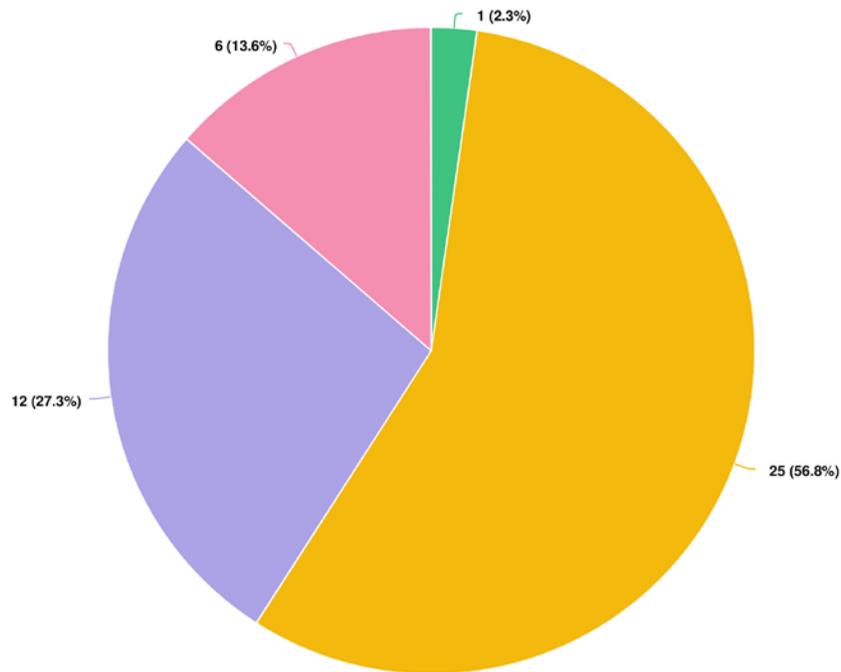
- Too complicated
- Too much detail
- Not enough detail
- Don't understand how this is relevant to me
- How budget was developed (the process)
- Who developed the budget
- How the priorities for the community were determined
- Other

Optional question (50 responses, 0 skipped)

Respondent comment: Rationale for decision making in everyday, easy to understand language.

Q. The city does a good job of creating a budget where money is spent on things that are important to me?

The city does a good job of creating a budget where money is spent on things that are important to me.



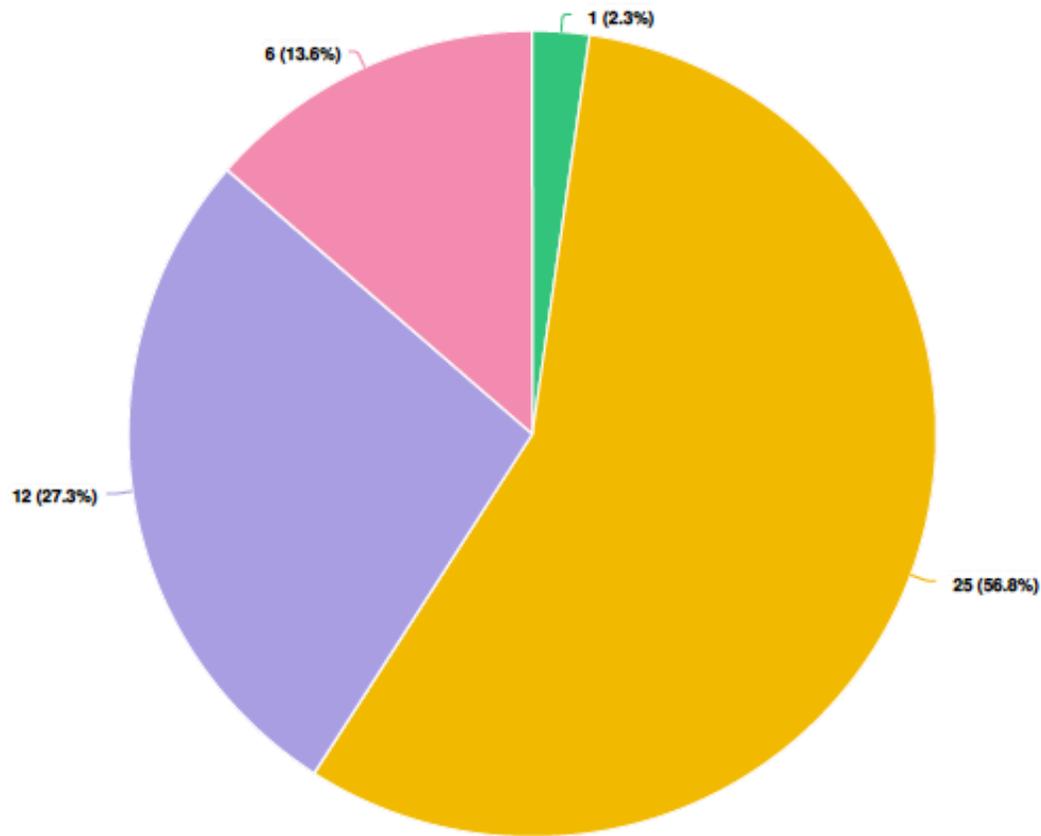
Question options

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Optional question (44 responses, 6 skipped)

Respondent comment: More money needs to be allocated to infrastructure and public works. Existing infrastructure is not in the best condition and now is the time to fix it before it becomes significantly more expensive or we start to see significant failures.

Q. The city does a good job of creating a budget where money is spent on things that are important to me?



Question options

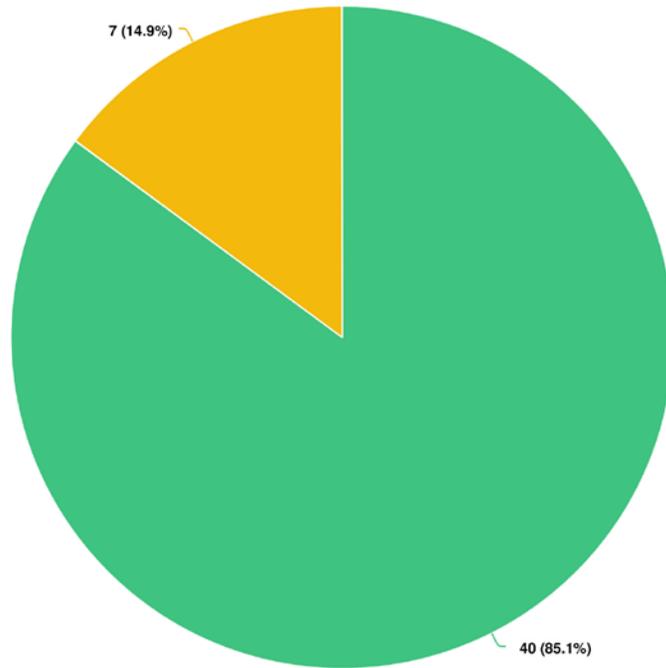
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Optional question (44 responses, 6 skipped)

Respondent comment: More money needs to be allocated to infrastructure and public works. Existing infrastructure is not in the best condition and now is the time to fix it before it becomes significantly more expensive or we start to see significant failures.

Q. Would you like to provide feedback during the development of the budget, prior to council approval?

Would you like to provide feedback during the development of the budget, prior to council approval?



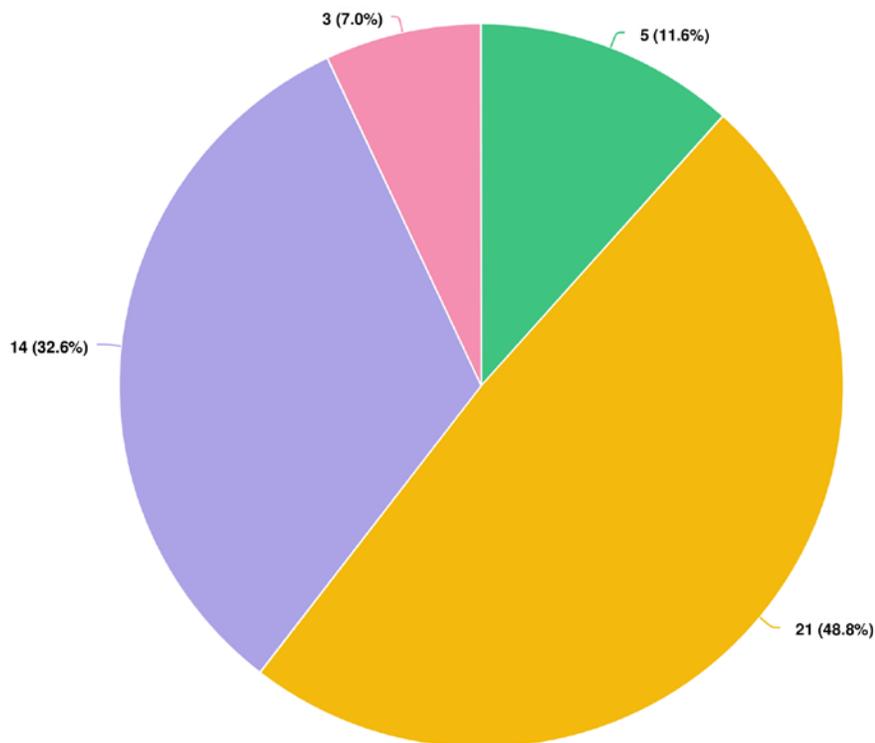
Question options

- Yes
- No

Optional question (47 responses, 3 skipped)

Q. The city communicates the budget in an understandable way?

The city communicates the budget in an understandable way.



Question options

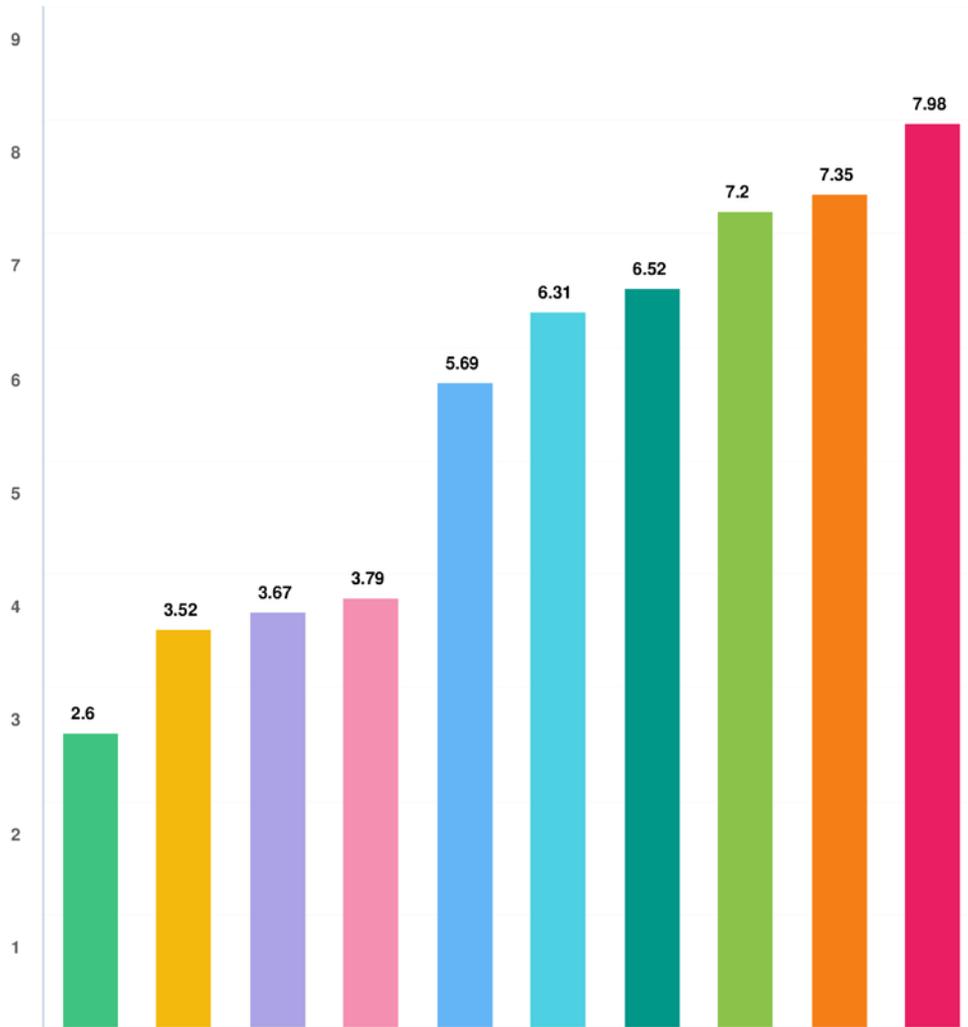
Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Optional question (43 responses, 7 skipped)

Respondent comment: As long as someone is willing to take the time to read the information it's understandable. You can't summarize a budget the size of the city's into a one-page info-graphic.

Q. The city offers a variety of services, please rank the importance of these services to you (with one being most important and 10 being least important)?

The city offers a variety of services. Please rank the importance of these services to you (with 1 being most important and 10 being least important).



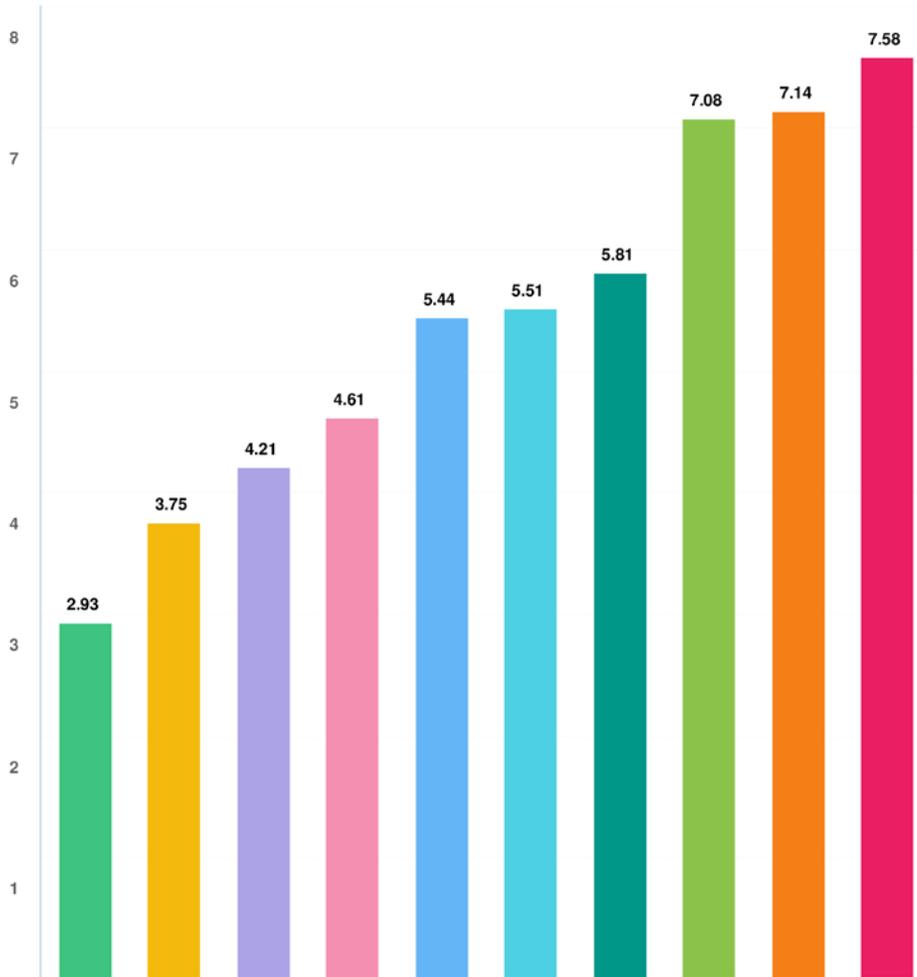
Question options

- Water services (water distribution, wastewater collection and stormwater management)
- Road maintenance, repairs and upgrades
- Snow removal/winter maintenance
- Fire protection services
- Parks and trails maintenance
- Recreation and leisure services
- Libraries
- Bylaw enforcement
- Arts and culture (e.g., Waterloo, Lumen, City of Waterloo Museum)
- Loose leaf collection

Respondent comment: Leaf collection should be discontinued to improve road safety due to people creating hazardous roads and decreasing taxation.

Q. Among the services offered by the city which ones do you think the city should spend more money on? Please rank their importance (with one being the most important and 10 least important)?

Among the services offered by the city which ones do you think the city should spend more money on? Please rank their importance to you (with 1 being most important and 10, least important).



Question options

- Roads maintenance, repairs and upgrades
- Snow removal/winter maintenance
- Parks and trails maintenance
- Water services (water distribution, wastewater collection, stormwater management)
- Fire protection services
- Recreation and leisure services (e.g., swimming programming)
- Libraries
- Bylaw enforcement
- Arts and culture programs (e.g., Waterloo, Lumen, City of Waterloo Museum)
- Loose leaf collection

Respondent comment: I ranked snow removal and road maintenance high, but only because I think services should be expanded, active transportation should be the focus, we spend too much already on facilities for cars.

Feedback from Council on 2019 Budget Process

In 2016, staff and Council provided feedback on what was then the most recently completed budget process - the three-year budget for 2016-2018. As a result of the feedback received and an ongoing approach for continuous improvement, the 2019 budget process contained several improvements including:

- Internal working group established with each of the city's four departments represented by the commissioner and one-to-two directors from each department. Previously the working group was made up of directors only, with check-ins to commissioners. The new process allowed for more clarity and faster decision making.
- Menu list developed to provide flexibility to council for operating budget decisions
- Continued to pair one time capital cost with resultant ongoing operating impacts in order for council to understand true cost of capital decisions
- Created first "Budget in Brief" document to provide key messages in a more interesting and graphical way to council and citizens
- Capital project sheets simplified for the budget book - shortened to half a page
- More data collected in the background in capital project sheets for internal purposes
- Operating impacts of capital added to capital project sheets to continue to better connect longer term impacts of one time capital decisions
- Shortened and simplified operating and capital budget books
- All budget documents available on-line on the city's budget page: www.waterloo.ca/budget
- Business Plan documents improved to highlight specific public engagement initiatives that were undertaken in support of a priority
- Continued approach first implemented in the last budget for Capital Review day to focus council's attention on the capital budget and allow for more in depth discussions related to projects ahead of the formal budget day approval
- Continued approach to provide council and citizens with approximately two months to review budget documents and participate in several (i.e. five) council meetings between release and final approval
- Continued with expedited review and approval of routine lower value capital projects

Taking into account the feedback received from citizens through the online budget communications survey, what council members having been hearing from constituents as well as what council members themselves experienced during the 2019 budget process, staff welcome feedback from council on what further improvements can be made to enhance the 2020-2022 budget process. During the budget debrief, staff will be using polling software for council members to answer questions about the 2019 budget process as well as an open forum for council to provide more detailed feedback about the experience and how it can be improved.

2019 Budget Questions for Council Consideration**Q1: The Budget in Brief was a new publication, was it valuable?**

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

Council: Please provide any additional verbal feedback as to what was:

- Very useful (continue to do)
- Not very useful (stop doing)
- Would like to see added or changed

Q2: Was the Operating Book effective?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

Council: Please provide any additional verbal feedback as to what was:

- Very useful (continue to do)
- Not very useful (stop doing)
- Would like to see added or changed

Q3: Were operating documents easy to find online?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

Council: Please provide any additional verbal feedback as to what was:

- Very useful (continue to do)
- Not very useful (stop doing)
- Would like to see added or changed

Q4: Was the Capital Book effective?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

Council: Please provide any additional verbal feedback as to what was:

- Very useful (continue to do)
- Not very useful (stop doing)
- Would like to see added or changed

Q5: Were capital documents easy to find online?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

Council: Please provide any additional verbal feedback as to what was:

- Very useful (continue to do)
- Not very useful (stop doing)
- Would like to see added or changed

Q6: Was the Business Plan document useful?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

Council: Please provide any additional verbal feedback as to what was:

- Very useful (continue to do)
- Not very useful (stop doing)
- Would like to see added or changed

Q7: Council feedback regarding the various budget meeting dates.

Council: Please provide any additional verbal feedback as to what was:

- Very useful (continue to do)
- Not very useful (stop doing)
- Would like to see added or changed

Q8: Was there an effective variety of promotional channels used to reach the public in a timely way?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

Council: Please provide any additional verbal feedback as to what was:

- Very useful (continue to do)
- Not very useful (stop doing)
- Would like to see added or changed

Q9: Any other Council feedback regarding the budget.

Council: Please provide any other additional verbal feedback as to what was:

- Very useful (continue to do)
- Not very useful (stop doing)
- Would like to see added or changed

Appendix A: 2019 Engage Budget Survey Results

Project Report

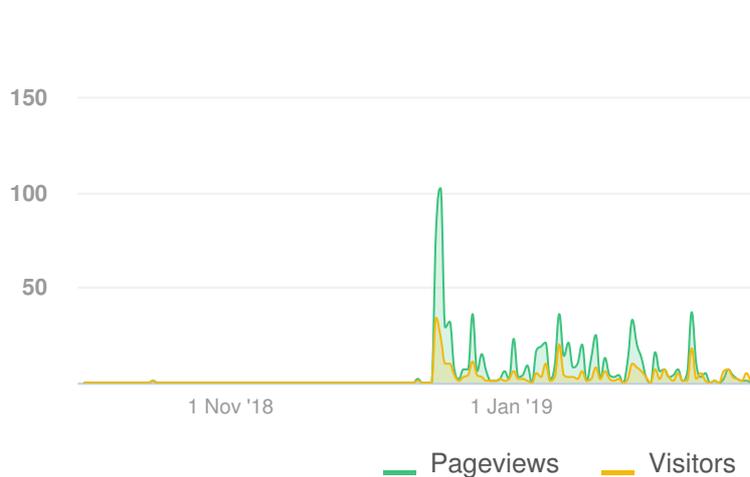
15 August 2018 - 18 February 2019

Engage

What would you like to know about our budget?



Visitors Summary



Highlights

TOTAL VISITS	346	MAX VISITORS PER DAY	34
NEW REGISTRATIONS	4	ENGAGED VISITORS	55
		INFORMED VISITORS	145
		AWARE VISITORS	288

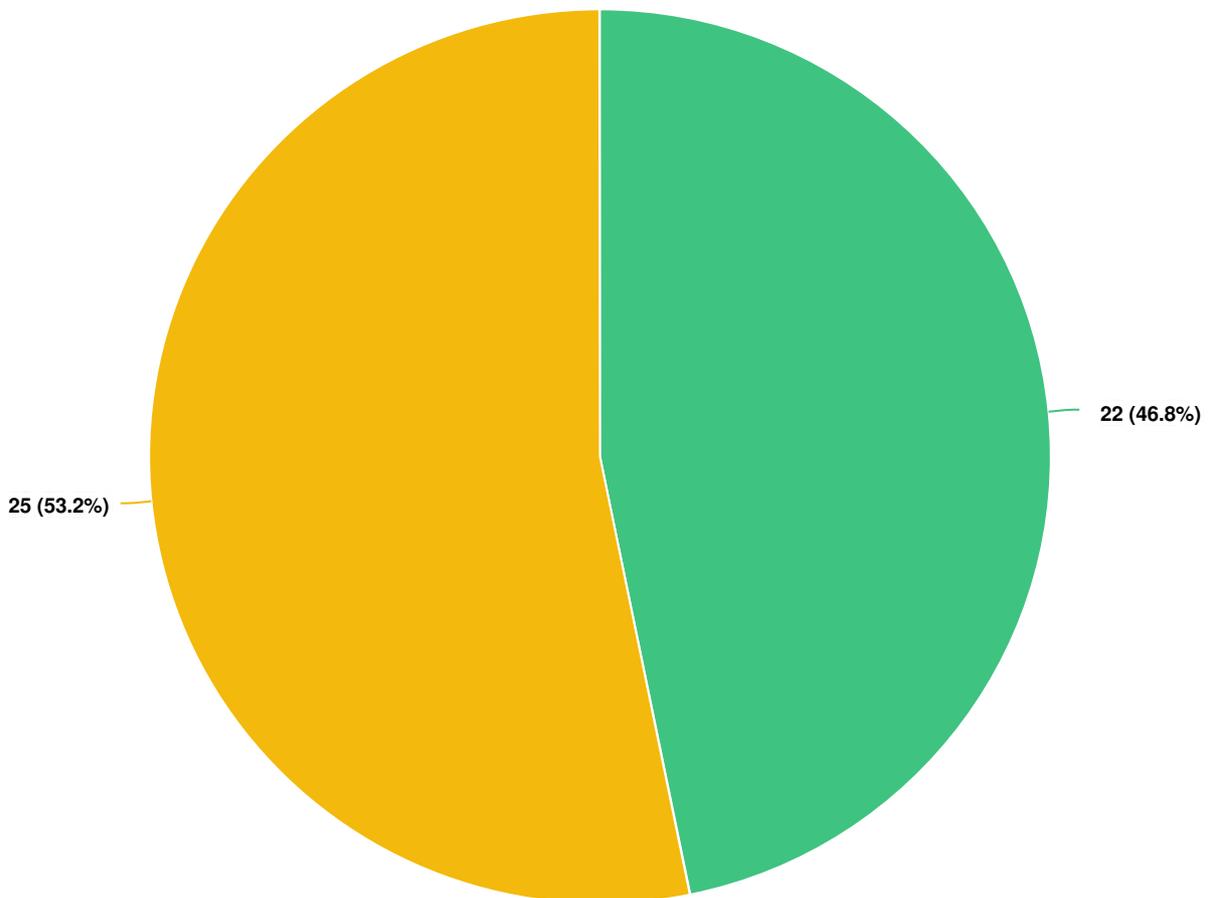
Aware Participants		288	Engaged Participants			55
Aware Actions Performed	Participants		Engaged Actions Performed			
Visited a Project or Tool Page	288		Registered	Unverified	Anonymous	
Informed Participants	145	Contributed on Forums	0	0	0	
Informed Actions Performed	Participants	Participated in Surveys	15	0	32	
Viewed a video	0	Contributed to Newsfeeds	0	0	0	
Viewed a photo	0	Participated in Quick Polls	9	0	1	
Downloaded a document	26	Posted on Guestbooks	4	0	0	
Visited the Key Dates page	18	Contributed to Stories	0	0	0	
Visited an FAQ list Page	0	Asked Questions	2	0	0	
Visited Instagram Page	0	Placed Pins on Places	0	0	0	
Visited Multiple Project Pages	88	Contributed to Ideas	0	0	0	
Contributed to a tool (engaged)	55					

ENGAGEMENT TOOL: SURVEY TOOL

We want to hear from you about our 2019 budget!

VISITORS 98	CONTRIBUTORS 47	CONTRIBUTIONS 50
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The City of Waterloo releases information about its budget in September through to February during budget years. Do you recall seeing, reading, hearing any details about the 2016 to 2018 budget?

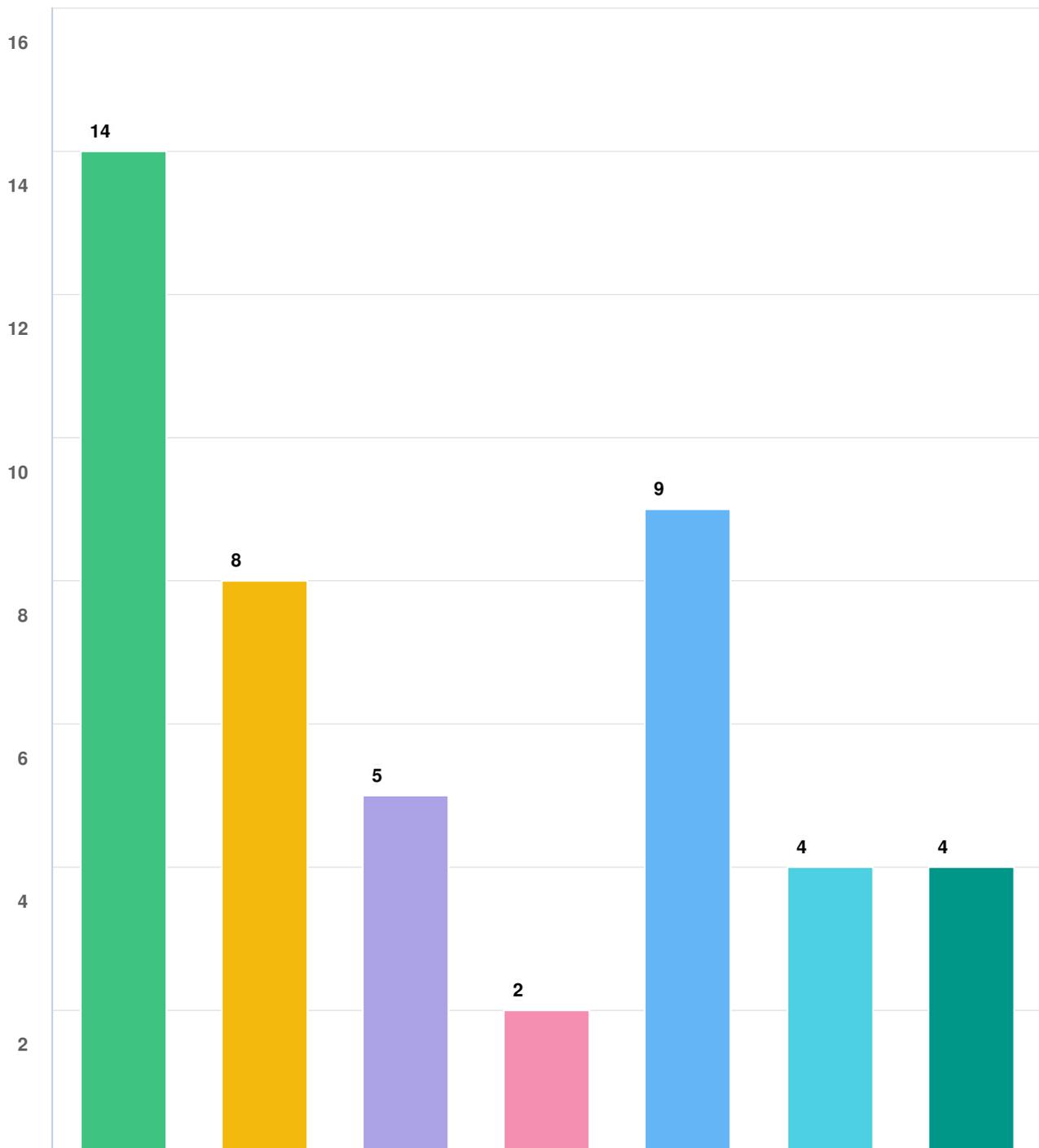


Question options

- Yes
- No

Optional question (47 responses, 3 skipped)

Where did you see/hear information about the 2016 - 2018 budget?

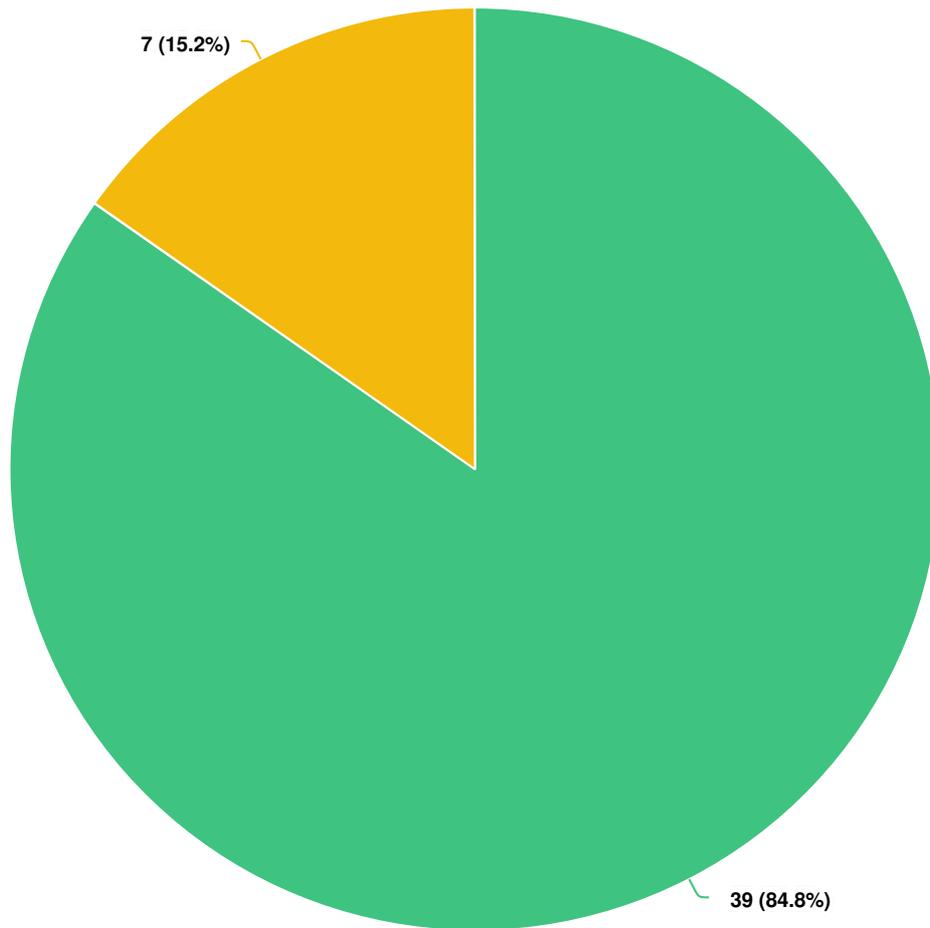


Question options

- The Regional Record
- The Waterloo Chronicle
- 570 News
- CBC KW
- City of Waterloo website (www.waterloo.ca)
- City of Waterloo social media (Facebook, Twitter)
- Other

Optional question (50 responses, 0 skipped)

Would you like more information about the city's budget?

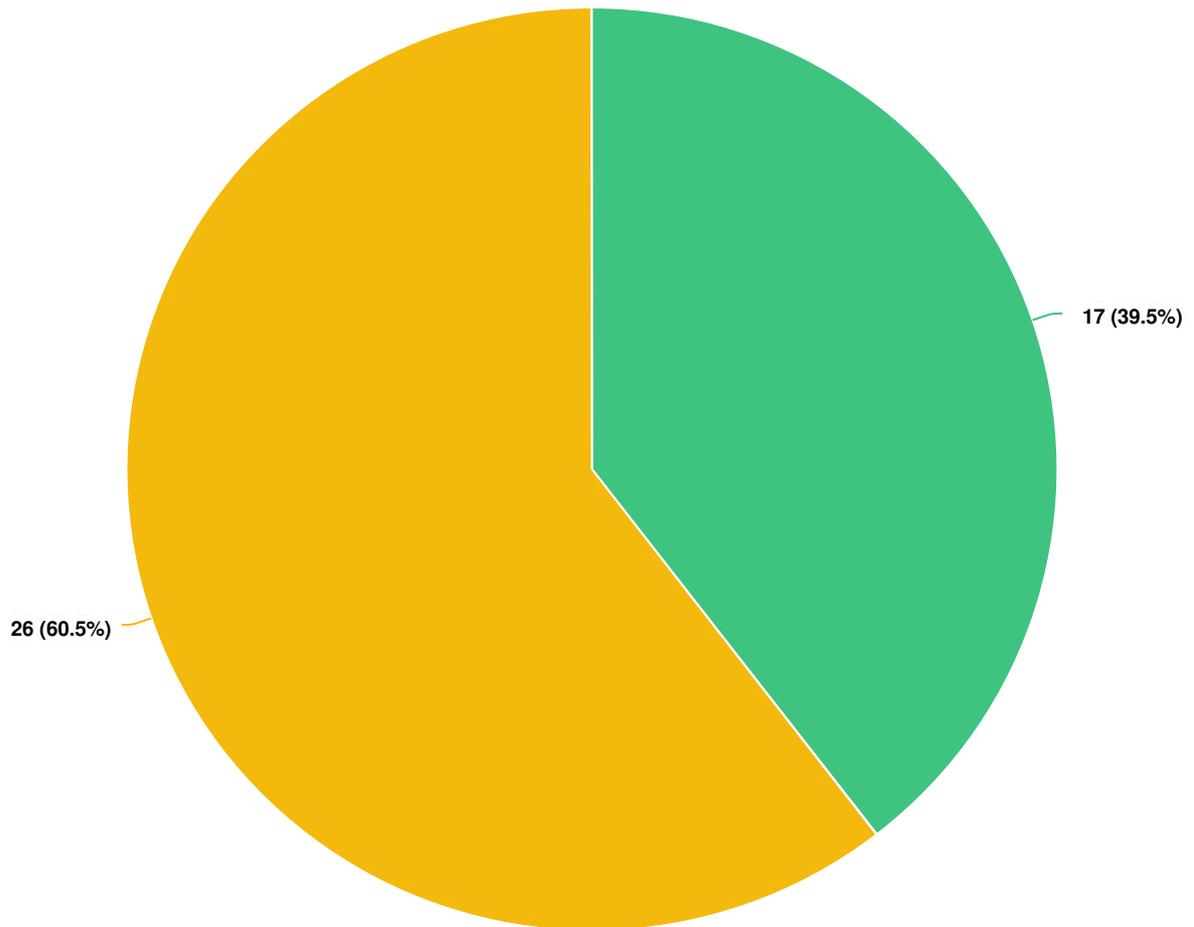


Question options

- Yes
- No

Optional question (46 responses, 4 skipped)

Do you believe the communication about the city's budget is easy to understand?

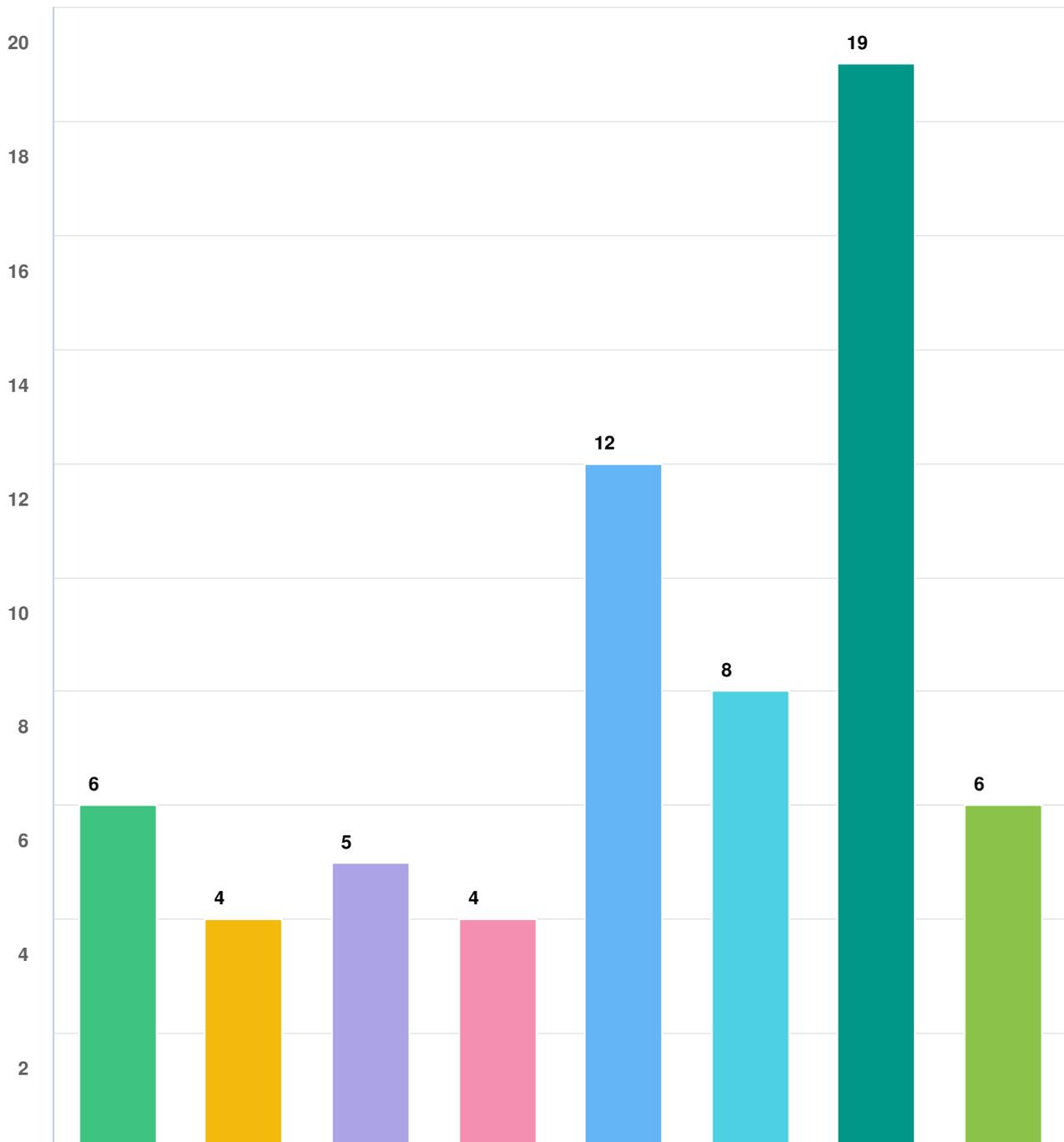


Question options

- Yes
- No

Optional question (43 responses, 7 skipped)

If you answered no, what aspect of the communication is difficult to understand.
Select all that apply:

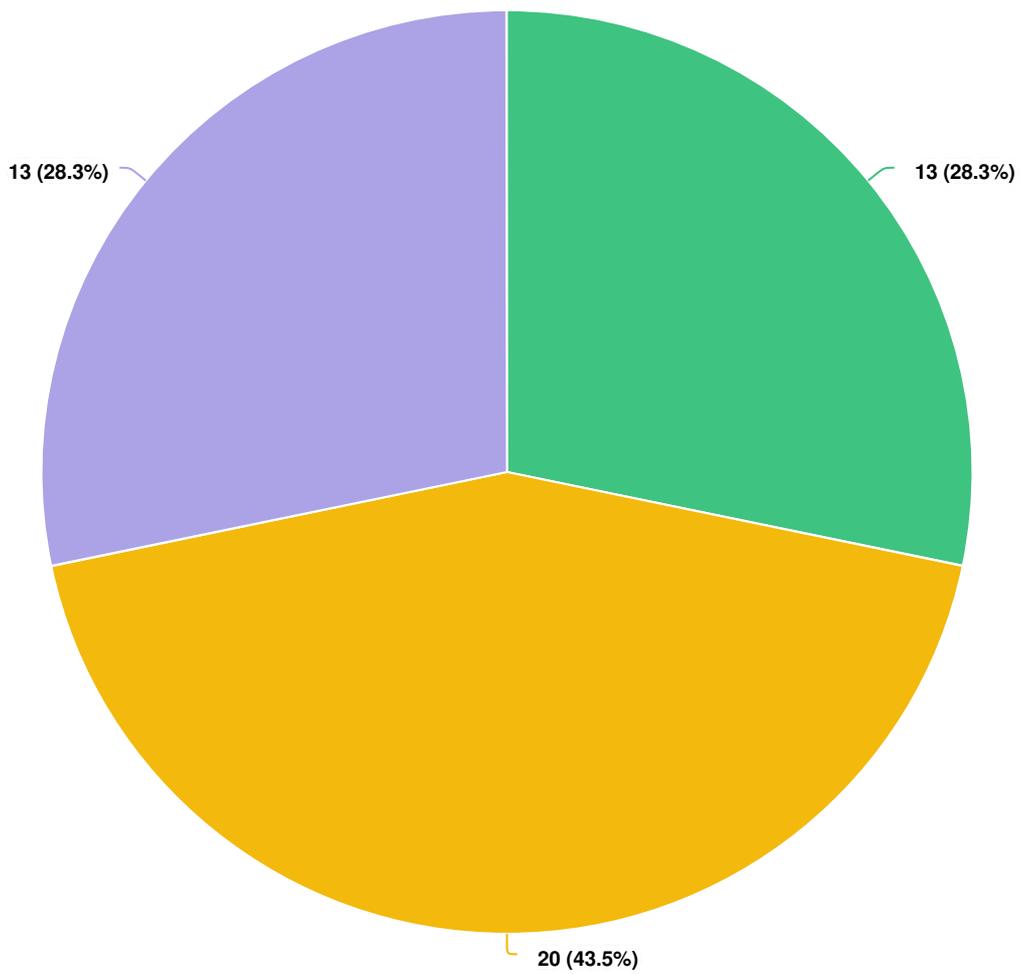


Question options

- Too complicated
- Too much detail
- Not enough detail
- Don't understand how this is relevant to me
- How budget was developed (the process)
- Who developed the budget
- How the priorities for the community were determined
- Other

Optional question (50 responses, 0 skipped)

How important is it that you have the opportunity to provide input into the city's budget?

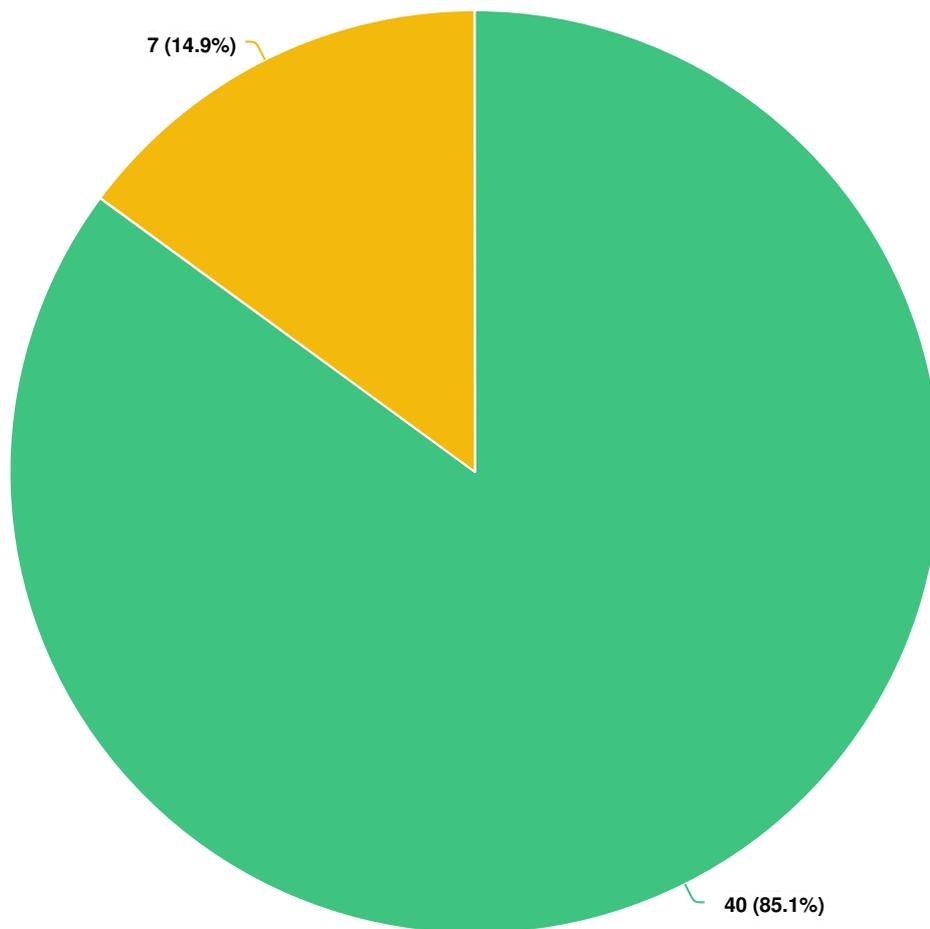


Question options

- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important

Optional question (46 responses, 4 skipped)

Would you like to provide feedback during the development of the budget, prior to council approval?

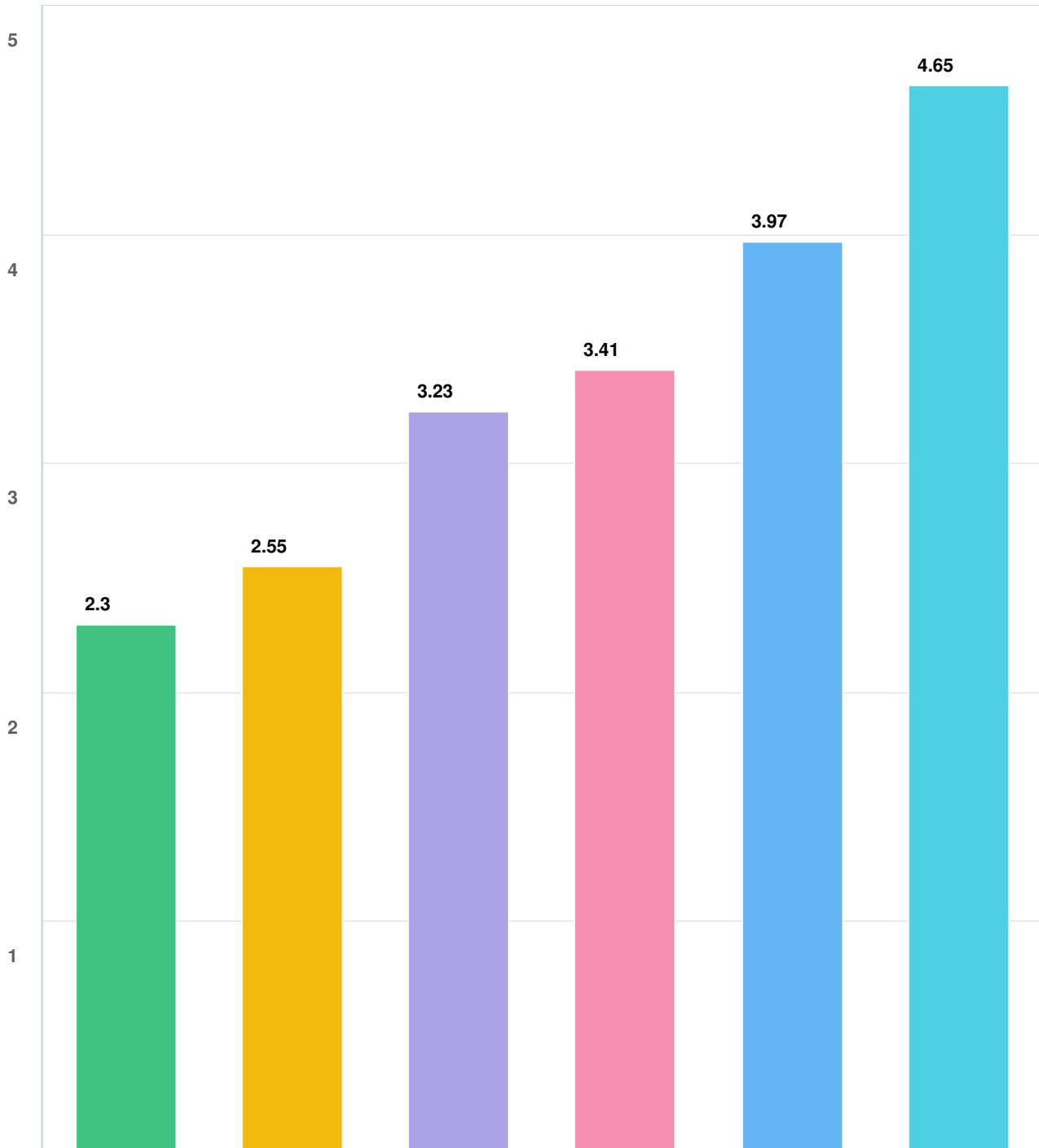


Question options

- Yes
- No

Optional question (47 responses, 3 skipped)

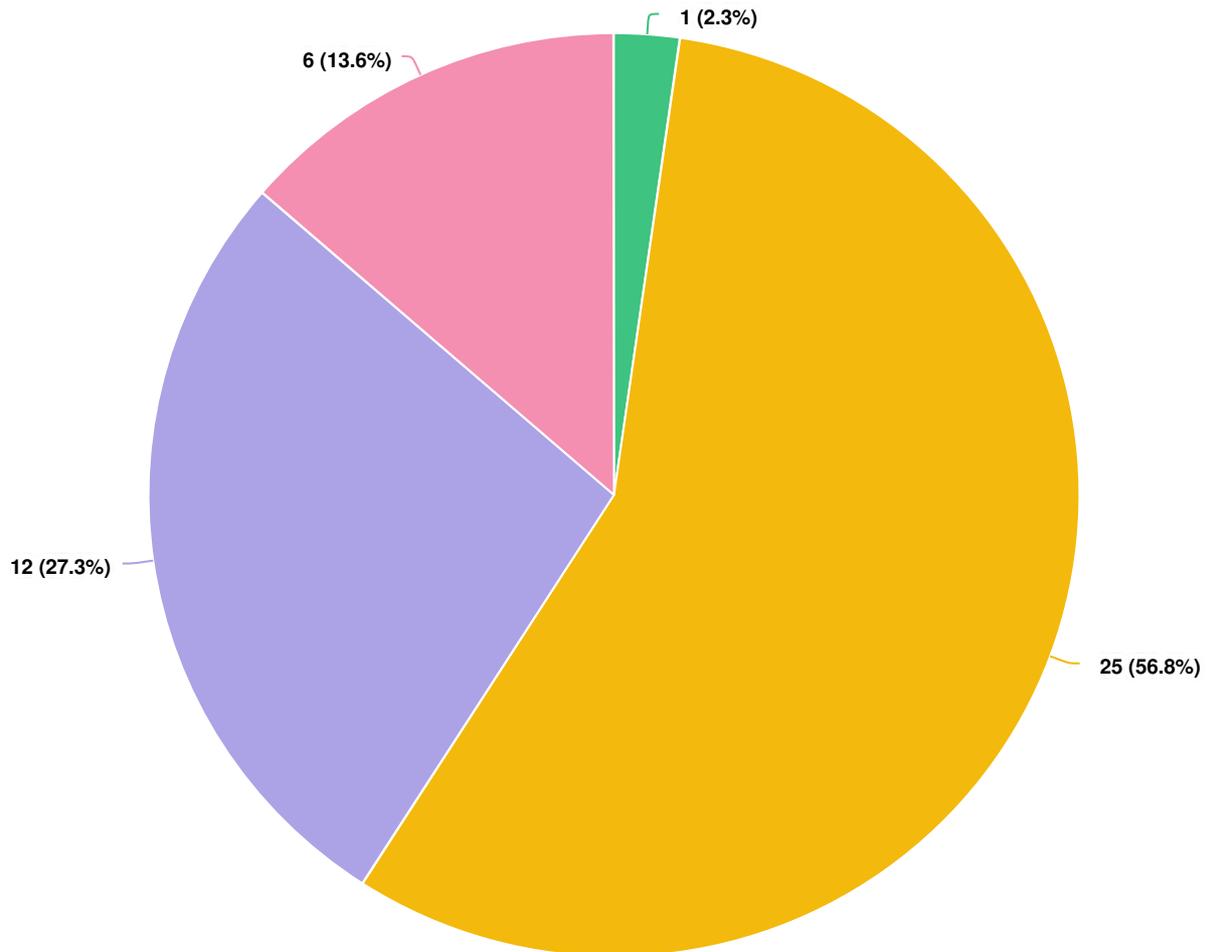
How would you like to receive/view information about the city's budget? Please rank your order of preference (with 1 being your first choice and 6 being your last choice).



Question options

- City of Waterloo website: www.waterloo.ca
- City of Waterloo e-newsletter
- Media stories in the newspaper, radio, tv
- City of Waterloo social media (Facebook, Twitter)
- Presentations by city staff
- Presentations by elected officials

The city does a good job of creating a budget where money is spent on things that are important to me.

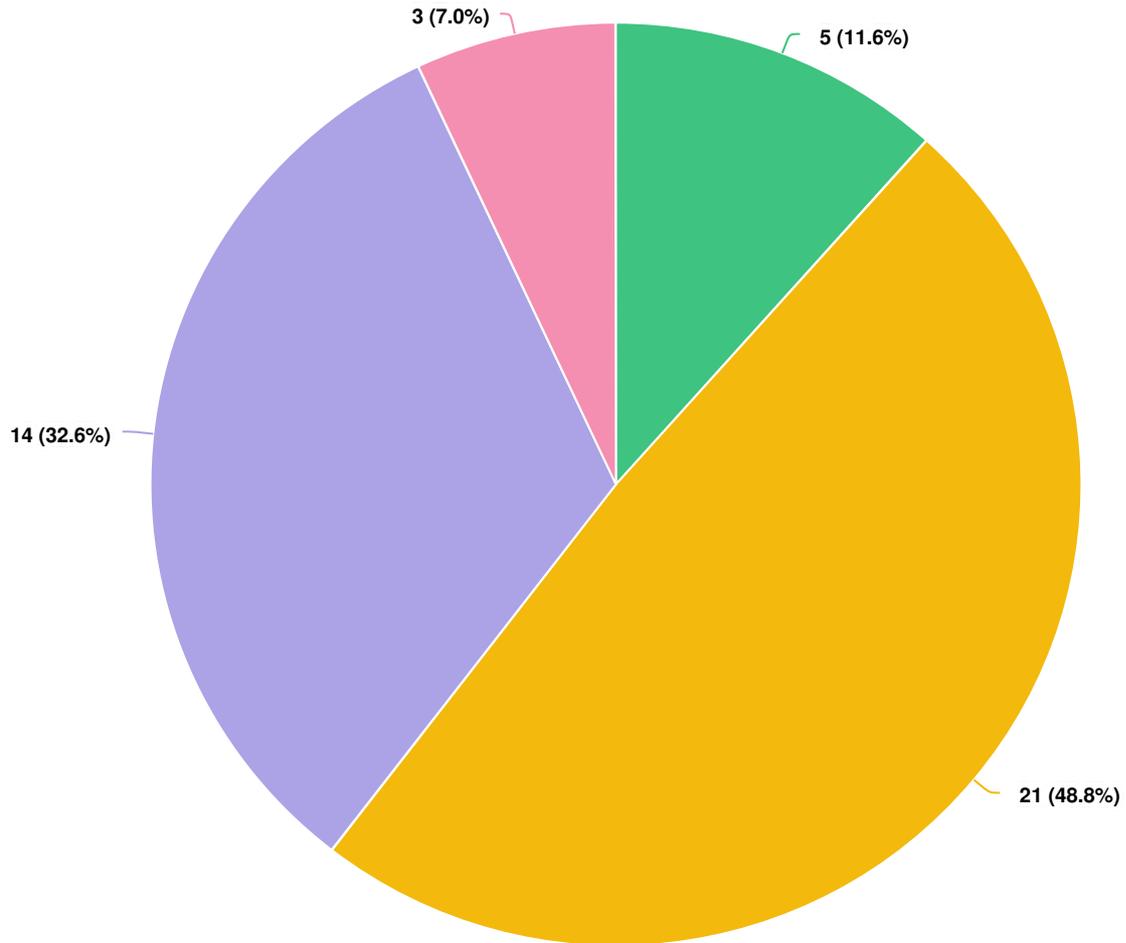


Question options

● Strongly agree ● Agree ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree

Optional question (44 responses, 6 skipped)

The city communicates the budget in an understandable way.

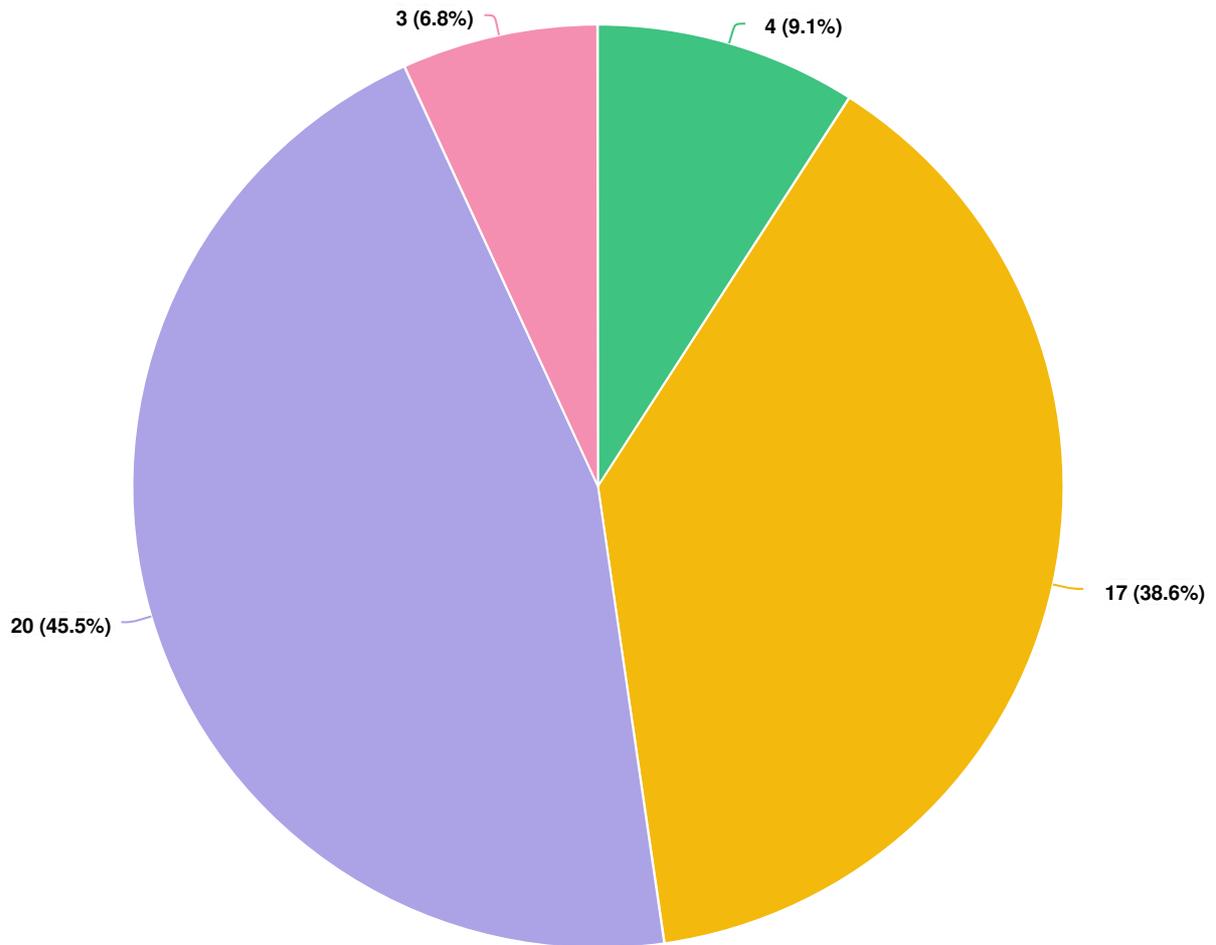


Question options

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional question (43 responses, 7 skipped)

It's easy to find out information about the city's budget.

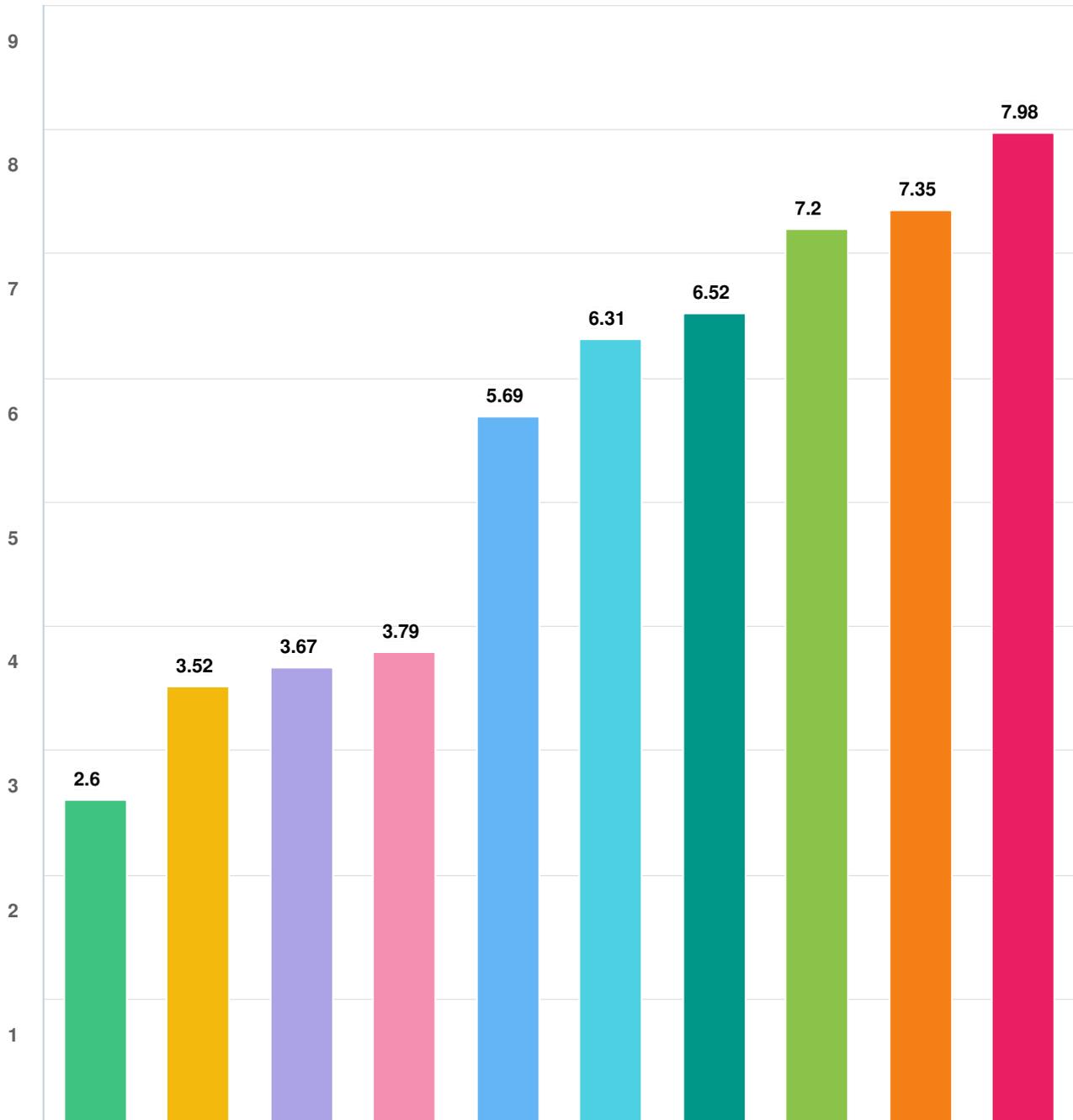


Question options

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional question (44 responses, 6 skipped)

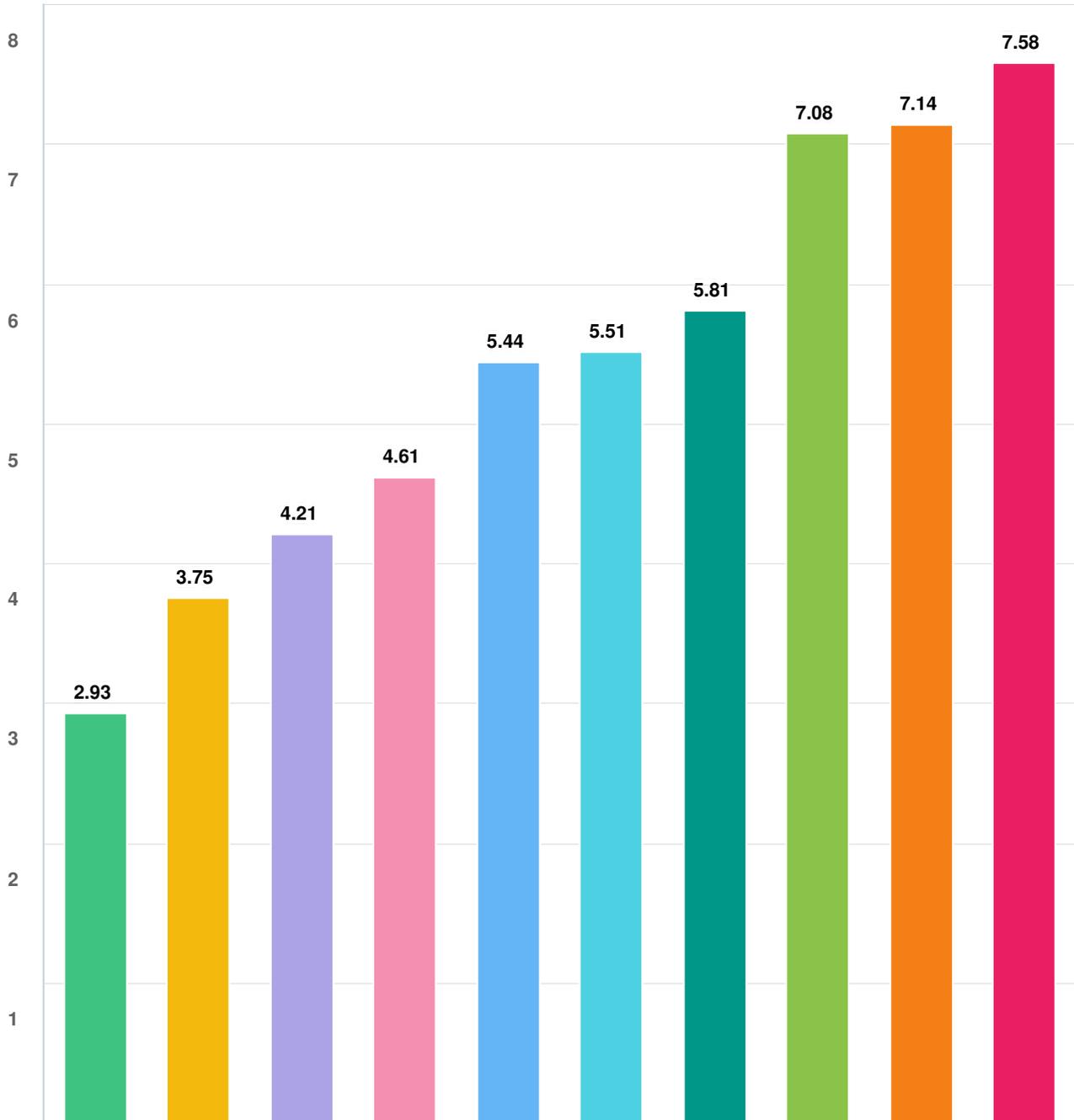
The city offers a variety of services. Please rank the importance of these services to you (with 1 being most important and 10 being least important).



Question options

- Water services (water distribution, wastewater collection and stormwater management)
- Road maintenance, repairs and upgrades ● Snow removal/winter maintenance ● Fire protection services
- Parks and trails maintenance ● Recreation and leisure services ● Libraries ● Bylaw enforcement
- Arts and culture (e.g., Winterloo, Lumen, City of Waterloo Museum) ● Loose leaf collection

Among the services offered by the city which ones do you think the city should spend more money on? Please rank their importance to you (with 1 being most important and 10, least important).



Question options

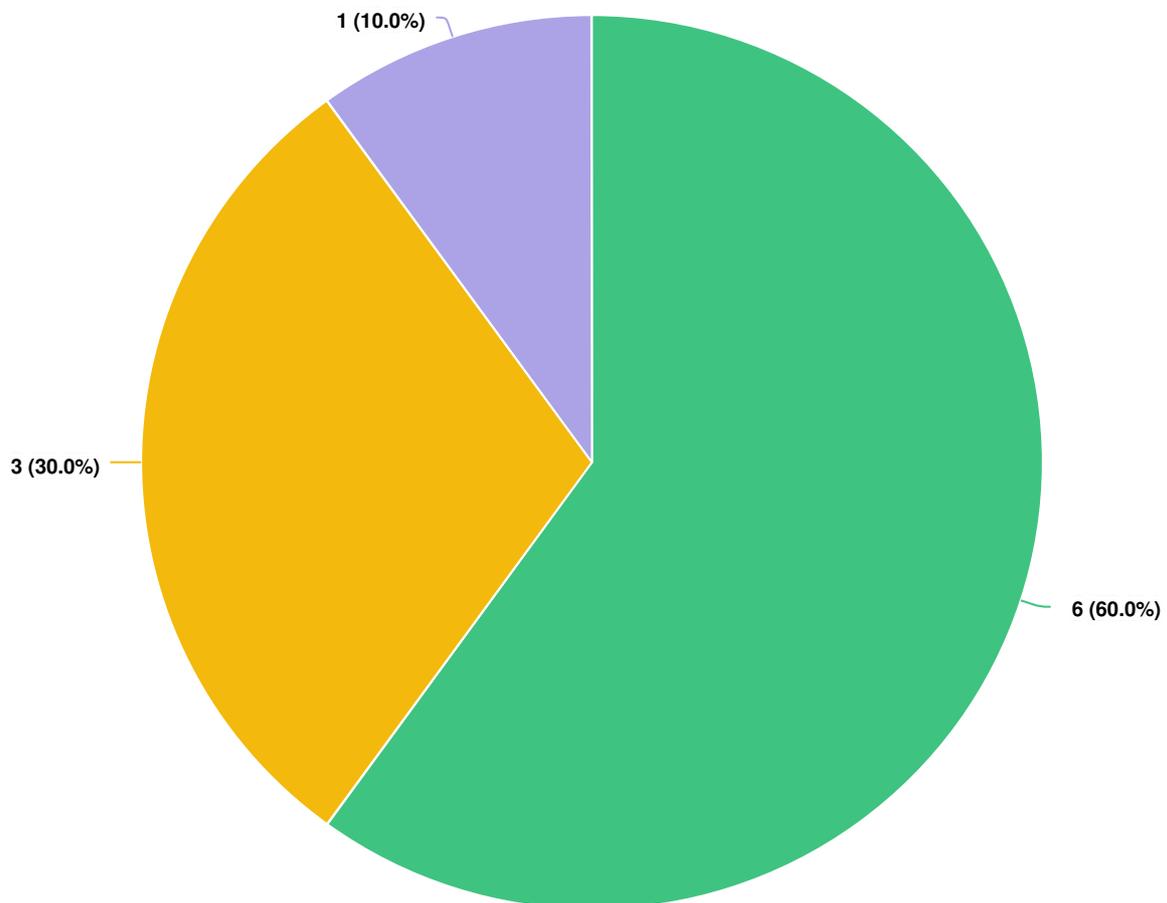
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 ● Libraries
 ● Bylaw enforcement
- Arts and culture programs (e.g., Winterloo, Lumen, City of Waterloo Museum)
 ● Loose leaf collection

ENGAGEMENT TOOL: QUICK POLL

The budget in brief (see document library to the right) is a snapshot of the 2019 budget and is intended to make the budget and budget process more accessible to residents. What do you think?

VISITORS 13	CONTRIBUTORS 10	CONTRIBUTIONS 10
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The budget in brief (see document library to the right) is a snapshot of the 2019 budget and is intended to make the budget and budget process more accessible to residents. What do you think?



Question options

- Just the right amount of information
- Not enough information
- Not interested in this information

(10 responses, 0 skipped)