

Public opinion on the proposed Hawke's Bay council amalgamation

Summary of March-April 2015 Colmar Brunton Survey

Table of contents

1.0 Summary.....	1
Key findings.....	1
2.0 Methodology	2
Sampling and post-stratification weights	2
Margin of error and significance testing	2
Additional notes to the reader.....	3
3.0 General appetite for change	4
4.0 Public support for the Commission's proposal.....	6
Possible results of a region-wide referendum	8
5.0 Reasons for supporting the Commission's proposal.....	11
6.0 Reasons for opposing the Commission's proposal	12
7.0 Appendix: Sample profiles	14

1.0 Summary

Colmar Brunton carried out 2,029 Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) and door-to-door interviews with Hawke's Bay, Rangitikei and Taupo residents aged 18 and over from 6 to 22 March 2015. The average interview duration was just under six minutes. The response rates were 35% for the telephone survey, and 80% for the door-to-door survey.

Key findings

Key findings from the survey are as follows:

Support for Local Government Commission's proposal

Overall, 57% of residents were against the proposal and 38% were in favour of it. The remaining residents don't know (5%).

Support for the proposal was higher than average among Hastings residents, whereas Napier and Wairoa residents are more likely than average to oppose it. Support for the proposal among Central Hawke's Bay residents is similar to the average across the whole region. Rangitikei and Taupo residents are more likely than others to say they're unsure.

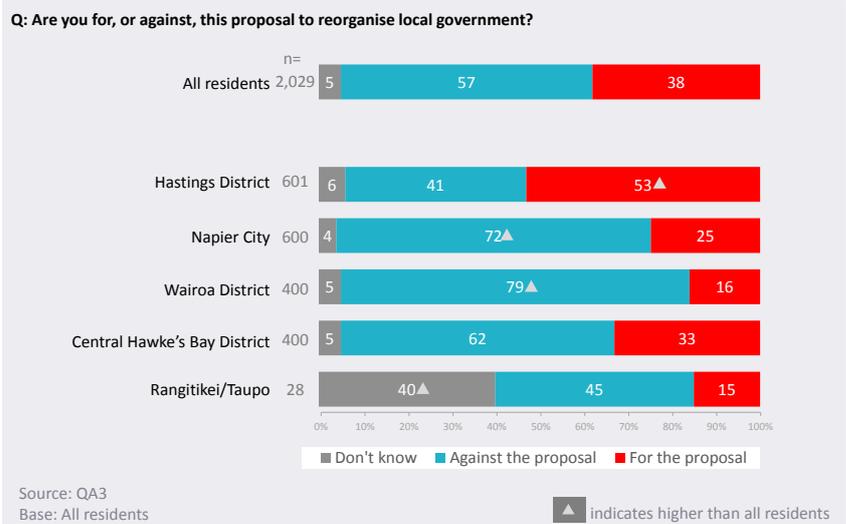
Main reasons for supporting the proposal

The main reasons for supporting the proposal are that it will increase efficiency (36%), and that it will give the region one voice (34%).

Main reasons for opposing the proposal

Overall, a diverse range of reasons are given for opposing the proposal. Around one quarter say the current structure works well (26%), and around two in ten 'opposing' residents give other reasons such as local communities will lose out (23%), each area is distinct (23%), it will reduce local decision making (20%), and there will be cost or debt issues (19%).

OPENESS TO CHANGE, AFTER HEARING DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL, BY AREA



2.0 Methodology

Colmar Brunton carried out 2,029 Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) and door-to-door interviews with Hawke's Bay, Rangitikei and Taupo residents aged 18 and over from 6 to 22 March 2015. The average interview duration was just under six minutes.

Sampling and post-stratification weights

A disproportionate sample scheme was employed to enable separate analysis by area, including Wairoa District, Hastings District, Napier City, Central Hawke's Bay District and areas in Rangitikei and Taupo where regional services are currently provided by the Hawke's Bay Regional Council.

This disproportionate sample was corrected at the weighting stage, so the overall findings are representative of the entire region.

Telephone interviews

The survey used Random Digit Dialling (RDD). An RDD sample frame includes all households with landline telephones, including those with unlisted numbers. Telephone numbers were randomly drawn from known number ranges within Wairoa District, Hastings District, Napier City, Central Hawkes Bay District, and interviewers asked to speak with the person in the household aged 18 years or over who had the next birthday.

A sampling scheme that selects only one person per household is subject to a household size bias, where people from large households have a different chance of being included than people from small households. To correct for this, the telephone data were weighted by household size (defined as the number of eligible respondents who live in the household).

As this was a random sample of the population, small variations will exist between the sample and the New Zealand population. Results have therefore been post-weighted by age, gender, and ethnicity (Māori vs non-Māori) to ensure that overall results represent the population in each sampling area on these variables.

Two thousand and twenty nine telephone interviews were carried out in total. The response rate for the telephone survey was 35%, which is fairly high for a survey of this nature.

Door-to-door interviews

The Commission provided Colmar Brunton with a list of registered voters in Rangitikei and Taupo whose regional services are provided by Hawke's Bay Regional Council. Interviewers approached each house in the two affected areas, and carried out multiple call-backs over a two week period to interview each respondent.

Twenty eight door-to-door interviews were carried out in total. The response rate for the door-to-door survey was 80%.

Margin of error and significance testing

The maximum margin of sampling error is approximately +/- 2.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. This is the sampling error for a simple random sample of 2,029 people. The table on the following page displayed the approximate sampling error for each surveyed area.

NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS AND SAMPLING ERROR BY AREA

	Number of interviews	Maximum margin of error (percentage points)
Wairoa District	400	+/- 4.9
Hastings District	601	+/- 4.0
Napier City	600	+/- 4.0
Central Hawkes Bay District	400	+/- 4.9
Rangitikei and Taupo (combined)	28	+/- 8.4
Taupo	18	+/- 11.0
Rangitikei	10	+/- 13.2

Notes: Margins of error are for a result of around 50%, at the 95% confidence level. Results substantially higher or lower than 50% have smaller margins of error. Sampling error for the Taupo and Rangitikei results were calculated based on a population size of 23 for Taupo and 12 for Rangitikei (this is the total number of registered voters in each area after removing those who have moved away from each area).

Throughout this report, only statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level between sub-groups of the survey population are presented unless otherwise specified. Chi-square tests of difference were used for all subgroup analysis.

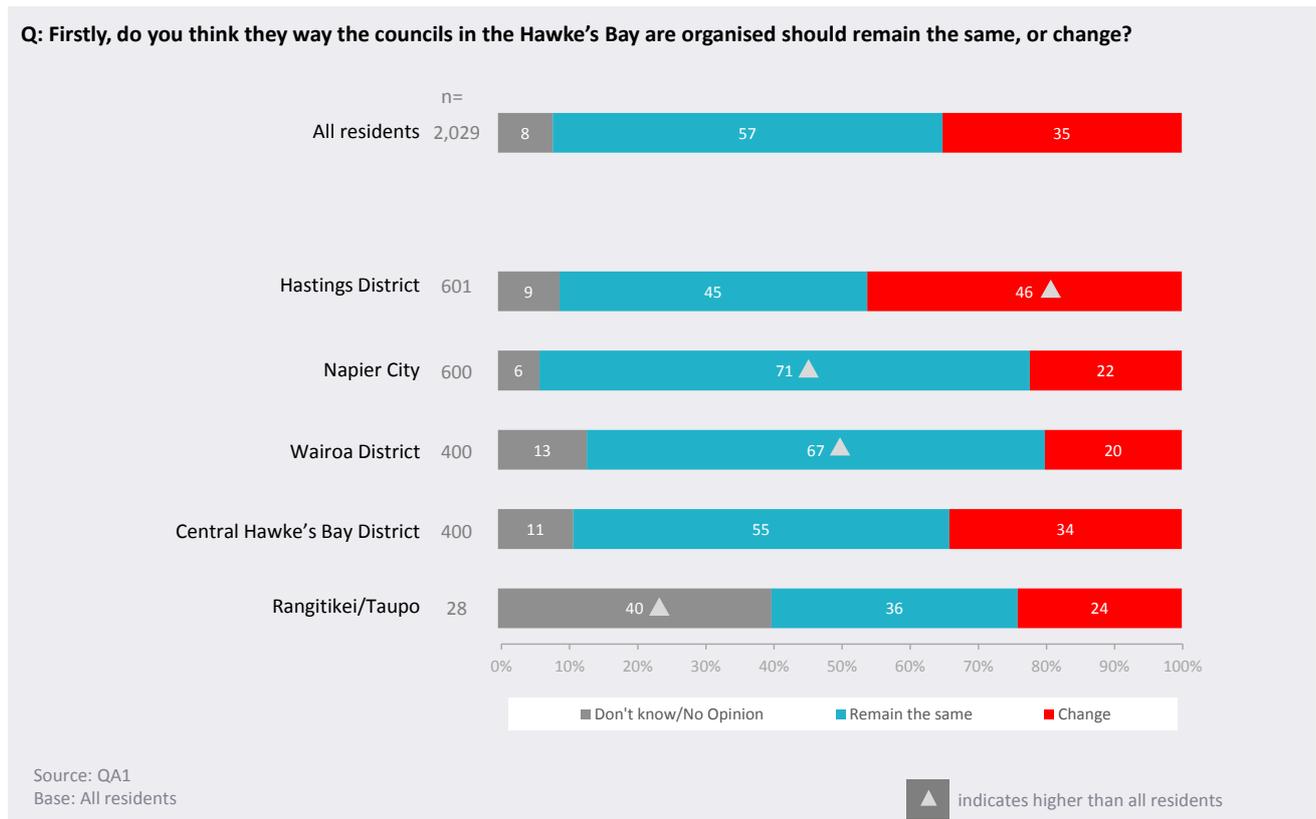
Additional notes to the reader

- Please note that occasionally the percentages in the charts and tables do not add up to 100, or the nett percentages presented within the text of the report. This is because a) some questions ask for multiple responses, or b) each percentage in the charts and tables has been rounded to a whole number. When calculating the nett percentages, only the final result has been rounded to a whole number. This reduces the influence of rounding error in the final result.
- The base sizes shown in the tables and graphs are unweighted (as the statistical reliability of results is determined by unweighted base sizes). The percentages in the tables and graphs use weighted data to ensure the survey results are representative of the population of interest.
- While fieldwork for this survey was taking place, the results of a similar online survey were publically released by an independent party. That survey was carried out online, and employed an online panel sample. In our view the present survey is more robust than an online survey, due primarily to the much wider population coverage of an RDD landline sample frame. An RDD sample frame covers all residents in the area with a landline telephone, including those with unlisted numbers (around 98,700 residents aged 18 years and over with a landline telephone). The online panel sample frame covered only those Hawke's Bay residents who are members of the online panel (around 6,300 residents aged 15+).

3.0 General appetite for change

Before giving residents a description of the Local Government Commission's proposal, interviewers asked each resident whether they thought the way councils in Hawke's Bay are organised should remain the same, or change. The chart below shows general appetite for change among all residents, and among residents in each of the five affected areas.

OPENESS TO CHANGE, BEFORE HEARING DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL, BY AREA



On average, one third of all residents are open to changing the way councils in Hawke's Bay are organised (35%), and almost six in ten want things to remain the same (57%). The rest either don't know or have no opinion (8%).

Support for change is higher than average among Hastings residents, whereas Napier and Wairoa residents are more likely than average to want local councils to remain the same.

Support for change among Central Hawke's Bay residents is similar to the average across the whole region. Rangitikei and Taupo residents are more likely than others to say they're unsure.

Groups more likely than average to want change include:

- NZ Europeans (38%)
- 45 to 54 year olds (41%)
- 55 to 64 year olds (40%)
- Households with a relatively high annual income - \$120,000 per year or more (54%)
- Those 'very likely' to vote in a referendum (39%)

Groups more likely than average to want things to remain the same include:

- Māori (68%)
- Pacific peoples (84%)
- Younger people – aged 18 – 24 years (72%)
- Older people – aged 65 years or more (62%)
- Households with three or more people of voting age (64%)

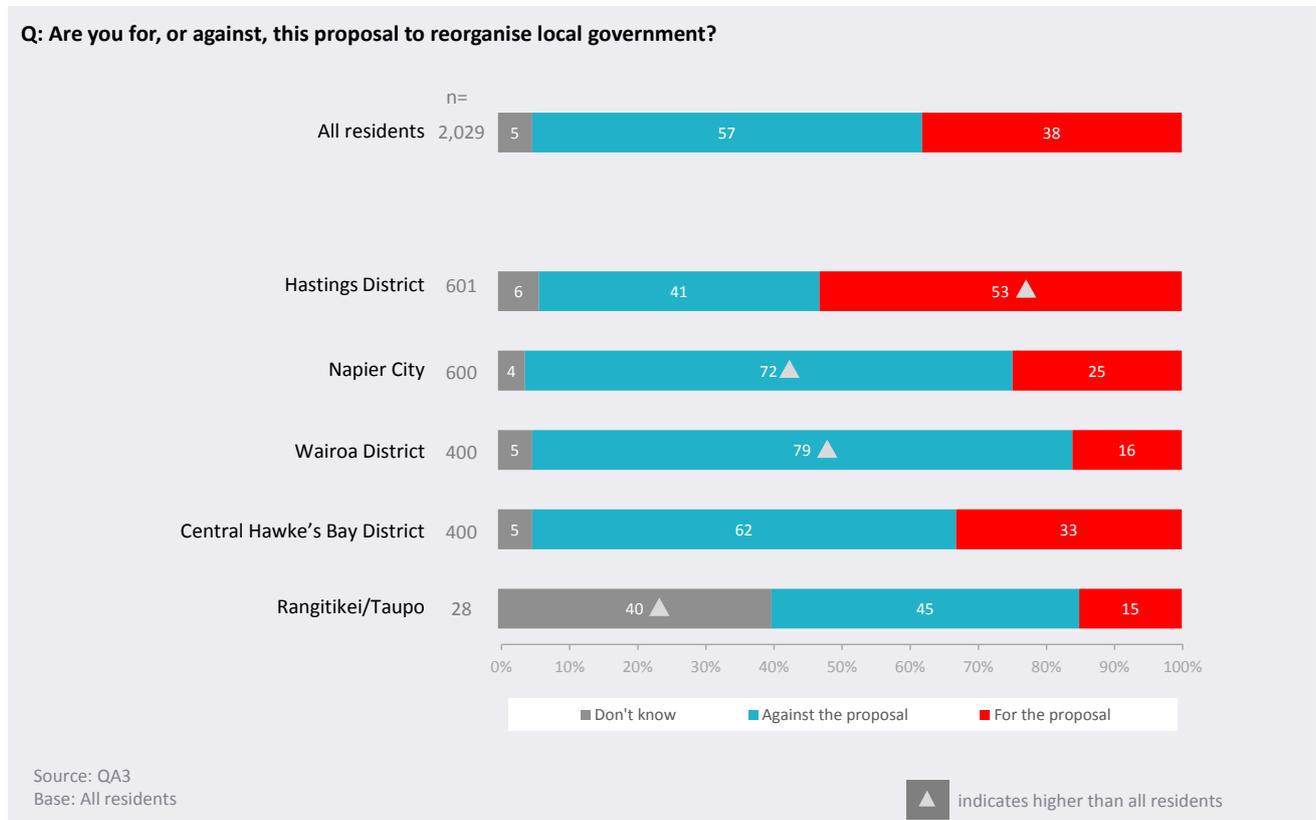
4.0 Public support for the Commission's proposal

Residents were then provided the following description of the Local Government Commission's proposal for reorganising local government.

The Local Government Commission's proposal involves one council for the whole of the Hawke's Bay. This would merge the existing local authorities and the regional council into one authority which would make decisions across the region. Voters would elect one mayor and 18 councillors from wards across the region. A second tier of five local boards would make decisions about local services.

After being provided this information, interviewers asked residents if they were for or against this proposal to reorganise local government in the region. The chart below shows support for and opposition to this proposal among all residents, and among residents in each of the five affected areas.

OPENESS TO CHANGE, AFTER HEARING DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL, BY AREA



Hearing details of the proposal appears to influence some residents towards change, as significantly more residents say they are for the proposal (38%, compared to 35% who had some appetite for change before being provided the proposal). Overall however, a greater proportion of residents are against the proposal than for it, with almost six in ten residents saying they're against the proposal (57%). The remaining residents don't know (5%).

Support for the proposal is higher than average among Hastings residents, whereas Napier and Wairoa residents are more likely than average to oppose it.

Support for the proposal among Central Hawke's Bay residents is similar to the average across the whole region. Rangitikei and Taupo residents are more likely than others to say they're unsure.

Groups more likely than average to support the proposal are:

- Males (44%)
- 25 to 34 year olds (53%)
- Resident with a relatively high household income - over \$120,000 per year (49%)
- Those who 'did not vote' in the last local authority election (54%)

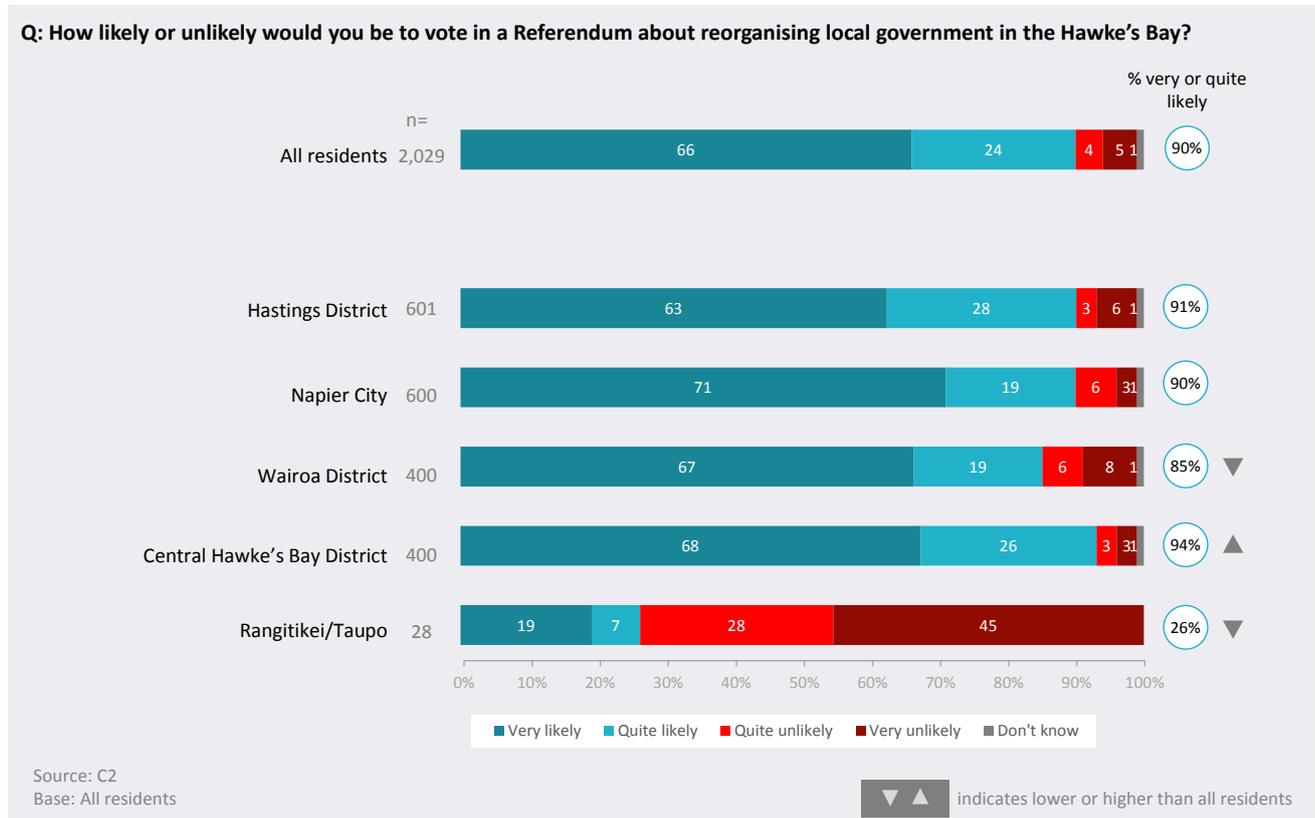
Groups more likely than average to oppose the proposal are:

- Older residents - aged 65 years or over (65%)
- Māori (62%)
- Those who 'voted' in the last local authority election (63%)

Possible results of a region-wide referendum

We asked residents how likely they would be to vote in a referendum on the reorganisation of local government in the Hawke's Bay. As can be seen in the chart below, 90% of residents say they are very or quite likely to vote in a referendum. Likely participation is higher than average in Central Hawke's Bay District, and lower than average in Wairoa District and Rangitikei and Taupo.

LIKELIHOOD TO VOTE IN A REGION-WIDE REFERENDUM



Given usual levels of participation in local government, it's probable that residents are over-estimating their likelihood to vote in a referendum about amalgamation. For example, in 2012 52% and 64% of Nelson and Tasman residents participated in amalgamation referendums, respectively. In Nelson City, participation in the referendum was equivalent to participation in the 2013 local authority elections (also 52%). In Tasman District, participation in the referendum was 1.25 times higher than participation in the 2013 local authority elections (51%). On average across these two territorial authorities, the referendum participation rate was 1.12 times higher than the local authority election participation rate.

Voter turnout for the Hawke's Bay Region, Napier City, and Hastings District 2013 local authority elections was 48%. Participation was higher in Wairoa (62%) and Central Hawke's Bay (55%) Districts. If we assume participation in a Hawke's Bay referendum is broadly similar to the average participation across Nelson City and Tasman District in 2012 (i.e., 1.12 times the voter participation rate), this gives an estimated Hawke's Bay referendum participation rate of between 54% and 69%. This estimate is closest to the proportion of residents in the present survey who say they are 'very likely' to vote (i.e., 66% across the whole region).

Presented on the following two pages are possible referendum results under two different scenarios:

1. If all 'very likely' eligible voters participated in the referendum
2. If all 'quite and very likely' eligible voters participated in the referendum

Overall there is little difference in projected referendum outcome between the two scenarios.

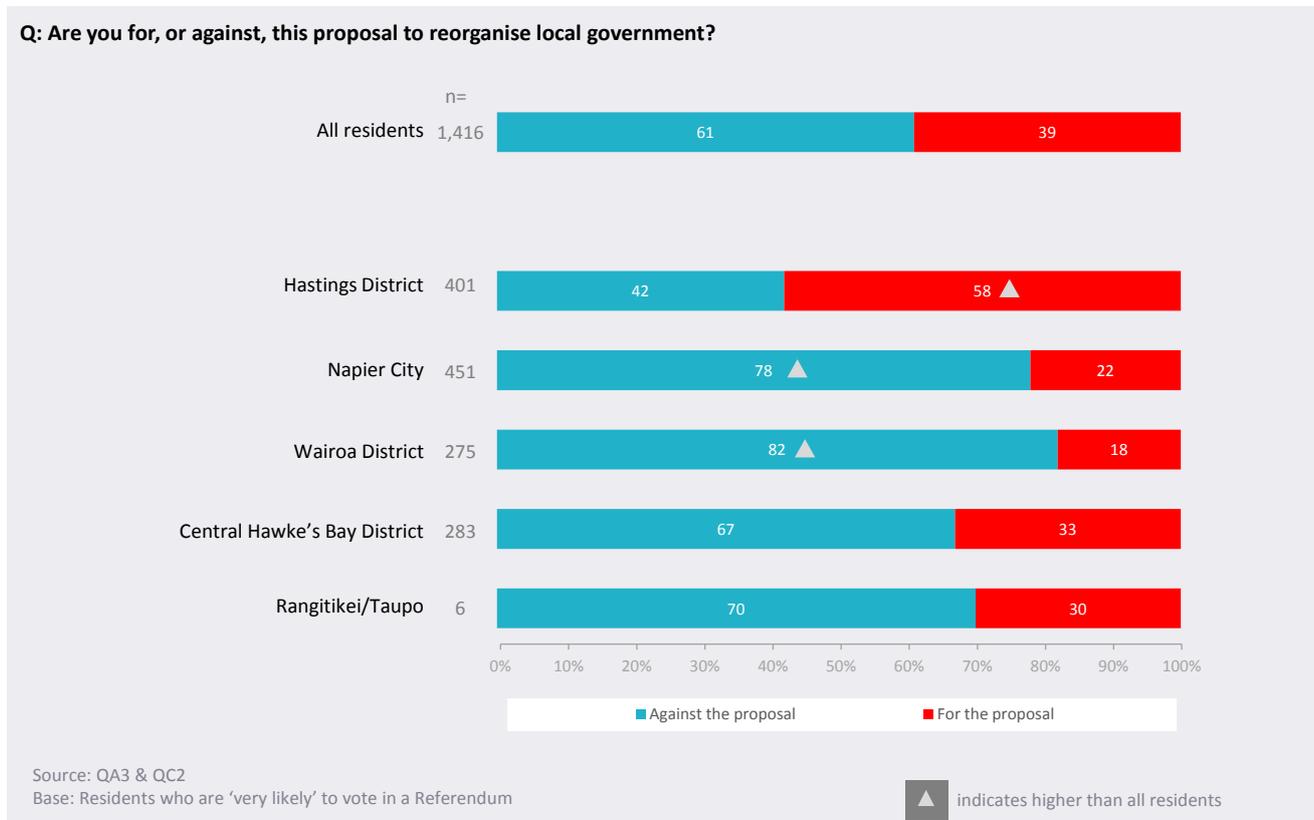
Possible results of a referendum if all ‘very likely’ eligible voters participated

The chart below is based on those who say they are ‘very likely’ to vote in a referendum about reorganising local government in the Hawke’s Bay. Similar to the approach used for a political poll, those who responded ‘don’t know’ are excluded from the base.

If all those who say they are very likely to vote did participate, then around four in ten residents would support the proposal (39%), and almost six in ten would be against the proposal (61%).

Support would be higher than average among Hastings residents, while Napier and Wairoa residents would be more likely than average to oppose the proposal. The level of support among Central Hawke’s Bay and Rangitikei and Taupo residents would be similar to the average (although note the Rangitikei and Taupo result is based on just six residents who say they are very likely to vote in a referendum).

POSSIBLE RESULT OF A REGION WIDE REFERENDUM (VERY LIKELY TO VOTE)



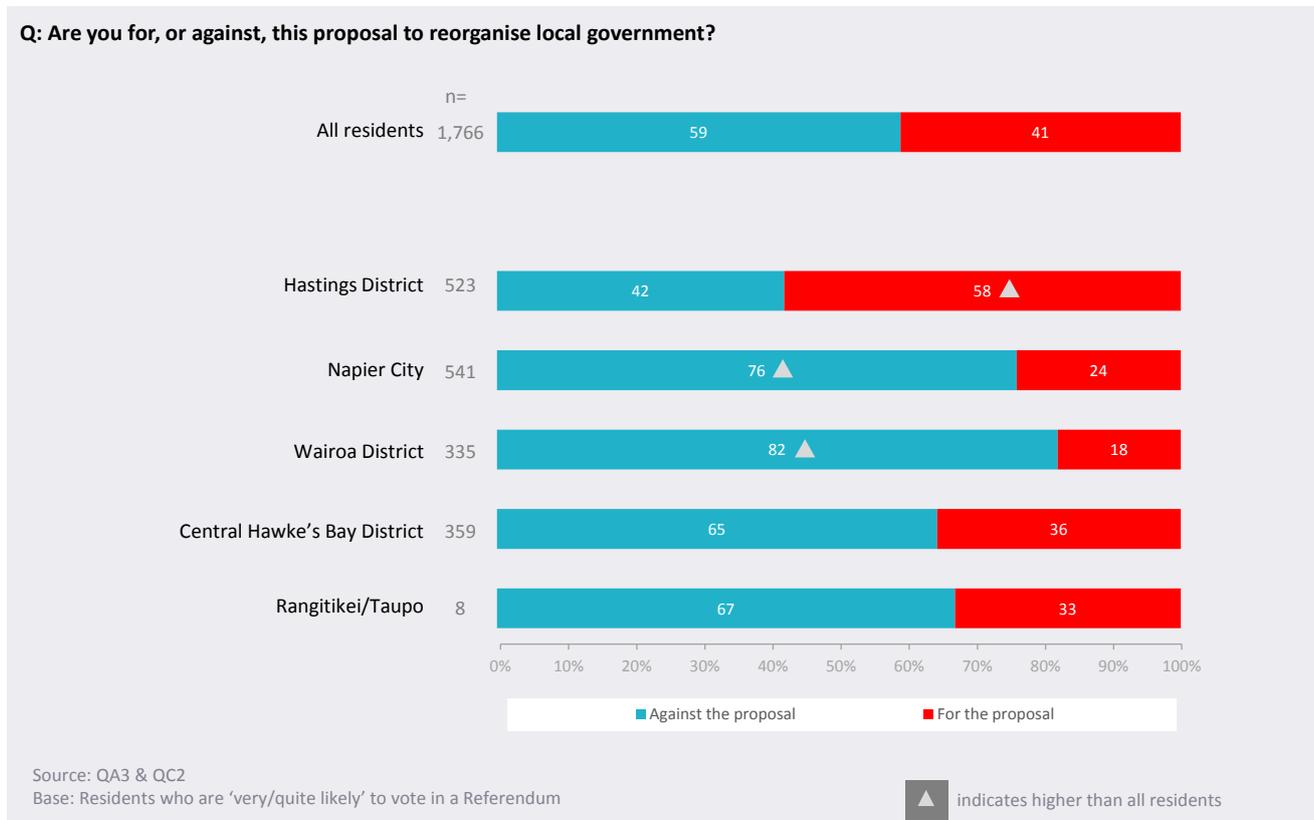
Possible results of a referendum if all 'quite and very likely' eligible voters participated

The chart below is based on those who say they are 'quite' or 'very likely' to vote in a referendum about reorganising local government in the Hawke's Bay. Again, similar to the approach used for a political poll, those who responded 'don't know' are excluded from the base.

If all those who say they are very or quite likely to vote did participate, then around four in ten residents would support the proposal (41%), and almost six in ten would be against the proposal (59%).

Again, support would be higher than average among Hastings residents, while Napier and Wairoa residents would be more likely than average to oppose the proposal. The level of support among Central Hawke's Bay and Rangitikei and Taupo residents would be similar to the average (although note the Rangitikei and Taupo result is based on just eight residents who say they are very or quite likely to vote in a referendum).

POSSIBLE RESULT OF A REGION WIDE REFERENDUM (VERY AND QUITE LIKELY TO VOTE)



5.0 Reasons for supporting the Commission's proposal

Residents who were for the proposal, were asked what their main reason was for supporting it.

MAIN REASONS FOR SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL BY AREA

	All residents %	Hastings District %	Napier City %	Wairoa District %	Central Hawke's Bay District %	Rangitikei and Taupo %
Increases efficiency	36	38	31	20	44	19 (n=1)
Gives one voice for the region	34	35	37	16	23	-
Improves infrastructure and the economy	17	18	13	20	19	19 (n=1)
Reduces the number of councils	16	16	16	22	14	44 (n=2)
Provides better services	13	12	18	19	8	19 (n=1)
All of the above	1	1	2	-	-	-
Other reason	1	1	1	3	2	-
Don't know	2	1	4	2	2	-
Base (n=)	636	305	138	63	125	5

Source: B1

Base: Those who indicated they are for the Local Government Commission's proposal for reorganising local government in Hawke's Bay.

Low base number of respondents in Rangitikei and Taupo, however approximately 80% of residents were interviewed.

Note: Results shown in red are significantly lower than the average for all residents.

- Indicates 0%.

The main reasons for supporting the proposal are that it will increase efficiency (36%), and that it will give the region one voice (34%).

Hastings and Napier residents' main reasons for supporting the proposal are similar to the average.

Wairoa residents have a diverse range of reasons for supporting the proposal. Whereas, Central Hawke's Bay residents' primary reason for support is increased efficiency, and Rangitikei and Taupo residents also have one predominant reason for support - reducing the number of councils.

Groups more likely than average to say the proposal will 'provide better services' include:

- Females (19%)
- Asian residents (55%)
- Residents with a relatively low household income – under \$30,000 per year (25%)

Groups more likely than average to say the proposal will 'give one voice for the region' include:

- Māori (47%)
- Resident with a relatively high household income - over \$120,000 per year (49%)

Those with an annual household income of \$80,001 to \$120,000 are more likely than average to say the proposal will reduce the number of councils (26%), and increase efficiency (54%).

6.0 Reasons for opposing the Commission's proposal

Residents who were against the proposal, were asked what their main reason was for opposing it.

MAIN REASONS FOR OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL BY AREA

	All residents %	Hastings District %	Napier City %	Wairoa District %	Central Hawke's Bay District %	Rangitikei and Taupo %
The current structure works well	26	24	33	14	11	33 (n=4)
Some local communities will lose out under the proposal	23	22	18	47	39	15 (n=2)
Each area is distinct	23	27	21	20	23	30 (n=4)
The proposal will reduce local decision making	20	22	18	24	22	13 (n=2)
There are costs or debt issues associated with the proposal	19	13	27	10	9	9 (n=1)
All of the above	*	1	-	*	1	-
Amalgamation has not been successful in other places i.e. Auckland	1	2	1	*	*	-
Too big an area/too big for one council	1	2	*	1	1	-
Rates will increase	1	2	*	*	-	-
Lack of information	*	-	-	-	2	-
Wairoa should not be included/opposed Wairoa being included	-	-	-	1	-	-
Other reason	2	3	2	1	2	-
Don't know	1	1	1	1	-	-
Base (n=)	1,263	252	437	313	248	13

Source: B2

Base: Those who indicated they are opposed to the Local Government Commission's proposal for reorganising local government in Hawke's Bay. Low base number of respondents in Rangitikei and Taupo, however approximately 80% of residents were interviewed.

Note: Results shown in green are significantly higher than the average for all residents. Results shown in red are significantly lower than the average for all residents.

* Less than 0.5%, but greater than 0%.

- Indicates 0%.

Overall, a diverse range of reasons are given for opposing the proposal. Around one quarter say the current structure works well (26%), and around two in ten 'opposing' residents give other reasons such as local communities will lose out (23%), each area is distinct (23%), it will reduce local decision making (20%), and there will be cost or debt issues (19%).

Reasons for opposing the proposal differ by area. Wairoa and Central Hawke's Bay residents are most likely to oppose the proposal because they believe some local communities will lose out. Napier residents' two main reasons for opposition are that the current structure works well, and there are costs or debt issues associated with the proposal. Rangitikei and Taupo residents' two main reasons for opposition are that the current structure works well, and each area is distinct.

Groups more likely than average to say that 'some local communities will lose out under the proposal' include:

- 55 to 64 year olds (29%)
- Resident with a relatively high household income - over \$120,000 per year (34%)

Groups more likely than average to say that 'there are costs or debt issues associated with the proposal' include:

- 55 to 64 year olds (25%)
- Residents with an annual household income of \$80,001 to \$120,000 (27%)

Older residents aged 65 year or over are more likely than average to say the current structure works well (32%), and rates will increase (2%). And Non-NZ Europeans are more likely than average to say each area is distinct (34%).

7.0 Appendix: Sample profiles and questionnaire

	All residents %	Hastings District %	Napier City %	Wairoa District %	Central Hawke's Bay District %	Rangitikei and Taupo %
Gender						
Male	47	47	46	48	49	49
Female	53	53	54	52	51	51
Age						
18-34	24	24	24	24	20	17
35-54	36	38	35	34	36	39
55 years or over	40	38	41	41	43	44
Ethnicity						
New Zealand European	82	82	85	57	86	73
Māori	18	19	14	54	17	27
Pacific	3	3	3	3	1	-
Asian	2	3	1	1	1	-
Non-NZ European	5	4	6	4	7	4
Another ethnic group	*	*	-	*	-	-
Don't know	-	-	*	-	-	-
Refused	1	*	1	*	*	-
Household income						
Under \$30,000	17	16	17	20	15	-
\$30,001 – 50,000	18	18	16	27	20	-
\$50,001 – 80,000	22	21	21	26	26	28
\$80,001 – 120,000	19	19	20	11	19	27
Over \$120,000	14	15	13	8	11	15
Don't know	6	6	6	4	5	12
Refused	4	3	5	5	4	18
Base (n=)	2,029	601	600	400	400	28

* Less than 0.5%, but greater than 0%.

- Indicates 0%.