



Community Engagement Policy Review 2025 – Community Consultation Phase 1

Detailed Report

Consultation period: 4 August to 15 September 2025

Executive summary

The review

The City of Melbourne (CoM) wants everyone to be able to have their say on decisions that affect them or are of interest to them. We do this through community engagement.

Our **Community Engagement Policy** (the Policy) outlines our commitment and approach to community engagement. We are currently reviewing this policy, and our community engagement practices, to understand what is working well and what we could do better.

Review of the Policy will also inform development of an accompanying internal practice framework detailing our approach to planning, delivering, promoting and analysing engagement projects.

Phase One engagement purpose

To inform a draft updated Policy and practice framework, we spoke to our community and external stakeholders to better understand what is important to them about how and when we engage (i.e. engagement principles, design and methods).

What we heard will inform a draft updated Policy that will be presented back to community and other stakeholders for further feedback in late 2025. This second phase of community engagement will also inform finalisation of the accompanying internal practice framework.

What we did and who we heard from

We spoke to a range of external and stakeholders. The engagement design encompassed a range of methods tailored to each participant groups.

Community

- Community survey on Participate Melbourne
- 179 survey responses (including 80 intercepts)
- 59% CoM residents, 15% visitors, 9% workers and 5% students

Youth

- In-person interview with Youth Advisory Council VIC staff enabled in-depth discussion
- In-depth review of community survey responses from young people (25 respondents aged between 15 and 29 years)
- Additionally, the pre-engagement insights from the 100 young people who participated across two events associated with Council's Melbourne 2050 vision project informed this first phase of community engagement for the Policy review

International students

- Focus group with 11 participants (including representation from Columbia, India, Malaysia, China and Peru)

Local businesses

- In-depth review of community survey responses from business owners (4 survey responses total)
- Note: this low survey response rate reflects a current trend across all CoM community engagement projects, that in, turn indicates a need to better understand how local businesses want to be involved, and a targeted approach and methods to involving this cohort in CoM's community consultations.

- In-depth interview with one Business Precinct Association (interviews offered to 10)

Other external stakeholders

- 9 interviews with Resident Associations and Neighbourhood Houses took place (interviews offered to 18)
- 5 interviews with stakeholders University of Melbourne, River Nile group, YacVic and Ross House and Queer Town took place (interviews offered to an additional 7 stakeholders)
- Focus group with Disability Advisory Committee

What we heard

We asked the community, including youth, international students, and other external stakeholders (e.g. community organisations and resident associations) what is important to them about how and when we engage (i.e. engagement principles, design and methods):

Overarching theme 1: Trust and accountability

Establish and uphold a commitment to listening and acting on feedback to demonstrate accountability and build trust in CoM and motivate participation in future consultations (some consultation currently perceived by some participants as tokenistic and predetermined which damages trust).

Overarching theme 2: Transparency and closing the loop

Establish and uphold a commitment to transparently closing the loop by ensuring community understand how feedback informs CoM decisions and actions. This should include:

- Fair and clear summation of the views expressed by community and who participated
- Succinct and clear rationale for the Council decision made and action taken, including how community feedback and other evidence/factors informed the decision or action taken

Overarching theme 3: Informed participation

Establish and uphold commitment to informed participation, including supplementing text on a webpage with other modes of communications such as infographics and diagrams, online information sessions, short videos and displays on local noticeboards.

Overarching theme 4: Inclusive engagement

Establish and uphold a commitment to inclusive engagement approaches. Based on what we heard through this phase of consultation, inclusive engagement approaches:

- Meet the community where they are (likely to include a combination of online and offline options for most projects)
- Consider cultural, language, psychological and social barriers to participation, particularly for communities who are often underrepresented in consultation processes, and acknowledge the value of external stakeholder partnerships in helping to remove these barriers to ensure all can meaningfully participate
- Offer multiple flexible participation options as standard (to overcome barriers to participation and respect that the community's preferred modes of participation vary project-by-project depending on levels of interest, impact, influence etc.)
- Consider the impact of timing. For example, engaging too late in a project lifecycle or decision-making process can limit how much community input can genuinely shape a decision. Short consultation periods impact who is aware of the opportunity to provide feedback, resources available for raising awareness and opportunities to diversify engagement methods

- Consider the potential impact of consultation fatigue when planning future engagement projects
- Seek participants that are representative of CoM (broadly, or specific groups, depending on the scope and impact of the project)
- Acknowledge the motivation to participate varies
- For example, some participants are primarily motivated by knowing feedback informs decisions, while others seek to meet other community members and feel connection to place. Some are motivated by direct incentives such as gift cards, personal interests or learning about CoM decision making. The reasons some people don't engage at all also vary and should be considered and addressed as appropriate (e.g. time constraints, language or cultural barriers, consultation is not a priority when basic needs and services are unmet).

Overarching theme 5: Communication before, during and after consultation

Improve and diversify communication methods:

- Before a consultation to ensure the community are aware of the opportunity to participate and proactively seek to avoid hearing from the same people
- During a consultation to support informed participation (e.g. dot points and infographics instead of technical documents and long streams of text)
- After a consultation to ensure the community understands what we heard, and how this feedback and other evidence/factors informed decisions

Additional insights: Engaging youth

Varied and fluid motivations and preferences

We heard that, like the broader community, the extent to which youth want to be engaged (and through what methods) varies, and motivations and preferences can also vary depending on the topic and project. For example, through our interview with the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, and CoM's earlier participation in the Voice for Change program, we heard that youth want to be more involved in the design of both engagement processes and CoM work more broadly. The quote '*nothing about us, without us*' captures this sentiment well. Additionally, although young people's motivations to participate shifts frequently, this cohort are generally interested in issues and projects that align with their values.

Offer multiple engagement methods as standard

In terms of specific engagement methods, workshops and other in-person engagement methods enable youth to interact with other young people and can be especially appropriate when value-alignment and motivations are high. However, online methods such as surveys can provide flexibility and ease. Indeed, most of the youth who responded to the online community survey on Participate Melbourne identified online surveys as a preferred method. Thus, a mix of methods is ideal to ensure that this cohort can choose their preferred option.

Diversify communication channels

Both survey and interview feedback highlighted a current issue around youth not being aware of CoM engagements and local government more broadly. We also heard about importance of multi-channel promotional outreach (e.g. social media, youth participation networks, partnering with youth organisations) to ensure our communities of the future are included in the conversation.

Additional insights: Engaging international students

Current perceptions of CoM and local government and other barriers to participation

Through our focus group with international students, we heard that current perceptions and understanding of CoM, local government and community engagement present barriers to participation for this cohort. For example:

- City of Melbourne's profile is low and understanding of council's local government role (and how to get involved) is also currently low.
- For most focus group participants, City of Melbourne is What's on Melbourne.
- Each participant's relationship to government varied based on cultural background.

Opportunities to evolve our engagement methods and communication

The international students we spoke with also identified multiple ways to improve how our engagement methods and communication strategies resonate with this cohort:

- Participants noted their strong connection to university life and many suggested CoM should leverage these existing networks through building partnerships with universities.
- Clear communication of 'what's in it for me' when promoting engagement opportunities (not just financial incentives but social and community connection are also potential motivating benefits).
- No one best method to reach all international students but trusted sources and WhatsApp are particularly popular amongst different cohorts.
- Always ask the question and let individuals decide if they want to be involved rather than assume something is relevant to them.

Additional insights: Engaging local businesses

Low response rate reinforces barriers to participation and more work to be done

In total only four business owners responded to the community survey on Participate Melbourne. This low response rate reflects a current trend across all CoM community engagement projects that, in turn, indicates a need to better understand how local businesses want to be consulted, and a targeted approach and methods to involving this cohort in CoM community consultations.

Open ended survey feedback from the four business owners who did complete the survey reinforces several key barriers that CoM staff who regularly interact with local businesses also highlighted:

- Low trust in CoM more broadly
- A perception that feedback does not make a difference
- Time poor (and thus difficult to attend in-person engagement activities etc.)
- Low awareness of opportunities to participate

Further, online surveys are not always an effective way of collecting feedback from businesses on nuanced or complex issues, and the relevance of CoM community engagement projects to local businesses can be unclear.

A better understanding of business preferences presents a gap to be addressed in the second phase of community engagement for the 2025 policy review.

Additional insights: Engaging with other external stakeholders (e.g. resident associations, community groups, neighbourhood houses, business precinct associations)

Rebuilding trust and partnering in the design and delivery of community engagement

As well as echoing broad themes discussed by the broader community, the other external stakeholders we interviewed shared a desire to partner with CoM in the design and delivery of engagement projects. External stakeholders spoke about the importance of restoring trust and demonstrating reciprocity and accountability by formalising opportunities to collaborate on consultation (without taking advantage of their role within community). Partnering with external stakeholders in this way would also help to more fully realise the value of their networks and expertise in helping CoM to overcome barriers to participation, hear from community members who are often unrepresented in consultation processes and advance towards genuinely inclusive engagement methods.

Limitations of this phase of the 2025 policy review engagement

This first phase of community engagement to inform the policy review encompassed several limitations including:

- The current lack of centralised mechanisms to collect demographic information during in-person engagement activities (e.g. interviews and focus groups) inhibits a complete picture of participant demographic representation in this phase of consultation.
- Several cohorts were underrepresented in the community survey hosted on Participate Melbourne (compared to population quotas) including business owners, people aged between 20-29 years, people who speak a language other than English at home and people born overseas.
- While community survey respondents included residents from across all the municipality, responses varied between neighbourhoods (e.g. 22 responses from CBD residents, compared to 2 responses from Parkville).
- Other high-profile consultations live during the engagement period (e.g. Melbourne 2050 Vision and Council Plan 2025-2029 Phase 1: 19 March to 30 May and Phase 2: 20 August to 21 September).

The limitations and gaps identified here will help to inform the scope and design of the second phase of the policy review engagement, including a particular focus on the cohorts underrepresented in phase one.

Impact

Drawing on the key themes from this phase of community consultation, the draft updated policy will focus on providing more transparency and accountability for how engagement is planned, delivered and reported on as well as attempting to rebuild trust by clearly defining roles and responsibilities across the organisation. The updated policy will also define when, how and with whom we engage and integrate this into a revised spectrum of participation. Additional learnings and insights will be integrated into the development of a practice framework.

Next steps

What we heard will inform a draft updated Policy that will be presented back to community and other stakeholders for further feedback in early 2026. This second phase of community engagement will also inform the development of accompanying internal practice guidelines that details our approach to planning, delivering, promoting and analysing engagement projects. Phase two engagement will include circling back to who spoke with us during phase one, as well as an increased focus on hearing from young people, people who speak a language other than English at home, people born overseas, and local business owners.

Table of contents

Executive summary	2
The project: Community Engagement Policy Review 2025	9
This report.....	9
Phase one engagement purpose and design.....	10
Purpose	10
Engagement design.....	10
Pre-engagement insights.....	11
What we already know about how the community want to engage	11
Voice for Change program: Recommendations for engaging youth	12
M2050 Youth Engagement.....	12
City of Melbourne Aboriginal Melbourne Engagement Framework development.....	13
Findings section 1: Community survey.....	14
What we did and who we heard from	14
What we heard from community.....	14
Current experiences of community engagement	14
Perceptions of performance	15
Improving opportunities to participate: Engagement methods.....	18
Improving how we support informed participation.....	20
Overcoming barriers to participation	21
Motivations and incentives to participate	23
Improving how we report back (also known as closing the loop).....	24
Other suggestions for improvement	26
Findings section 2: Youth	27
What we did and who we heard from	27
Community survey responses from youth	27
1:1 interview with YACVic	27
What we heard from young people	27
Insights from Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)	28
Findings section 3: International students	29
What we did and who we heard from	29
What we heard from international students.....	29
Findings section 4: Local businesses	30
What we did and what we heard	30

Community survey responses from business owners	30
Other insights and building a picture of engaging with local businesses	30
Findings section 5: Other external stakeholders	31
What we did and who we heard from	31
What we heard from external stakeholders	32
Limitations of this phase of engagement	34
Impact	36
Next steps	36

The project: Community Engagement Policy Review 2025

The City of Melbourne wants everyone to be able to have their say on decisions that affect them or are of interest to them. We do this through community engagement.

We run community engagement activities – such as surveys, pop ups and workshops – to seek feedback on our services, projects, plans and policies. Our [Community Engagement Policy](#) outlines our commitment and approach to community engagement. We are currently reviewing this policy, and our community engagement practices, to understand what is working well and what we could do better.

We have previously heard from the community about some of the ways we could improve, including:

- simplifying how we communicate information
- promoting engagements through a broader range of channels
- offering different ways to participate
- making sure activities are inclusive and culturally appropriate
- being more transparent about how community feedback is used.

To build on this feedback, we are conducting two phases of community engagement:

- In **Phase One (August – September 2025)** we are seeking feedback on how we can make it easier for people to participate and be clearer on how community feedback is used. Based on this feedback, as well as consultation with Councillors and learnings from an internal review, we will make changes to our Community Engagement Policy.
- In **Phase One (open early 2026)**, we will share our updated Community Engagement Policy for feedback. We will then finalise and follow this policy in 2026.

This report

Each section summarises what we did, who we heard from, and what we heard from each participant group during Phase 1 of the policy review.

Specifically, the report consists of the following main sections:

- Phase one engagement purpose and design
- Pre-engagement insights
- Findings section 1: Community preferences and barriers
- Findings section 2: Youth
- Findings section 3: International students
- Findings section 4: Local businesses
- Findings section 5: Other external stakeholders
- Limitations of this phase of engagement
- Impact
- Next steps

Phase one engagement purpose and design

Purpose

The purpose of this engagement project is to inform the:

- revision of the CoM Community Engagement Policy (the Policy), and
- the development of an accompanying practice framework that details our approach to planning, delivering, promoting and analysing engagement projects.

During this first phase of the engagement, we spoke to our community and external stakeholders to better understand what is important to them about how and when we engage (i.e. engagement principles, design and methods).

The Community Engagement and Impact team also interviewed staff across CoM and Councillors to better understand their experience with community engagement. We structured these conversations around four topics: barriers, opportunities for improvement, roles and responsibilities and understanding of the current Policy.

Engagement design

The engagement design encompassed a range of methods tailored to key participant groups.

Participant group	Engagement methodology	Engagement method primary objective/rationale
General community (i.e. people who live, work, study or play in the City of Melbourne)	• online survey • intercept survey (across 8 locations in CoM) • two pop up sessions (Community Grocer, Carlton and Boyd Community Hub Southbank)	• broad reach, anonymity and convenience of online surveys • utilise the capacity of pop-ups and intercept surveys to hear from people who may not be already well connected with CoM
Young people (aged between 16 and 25)	• in-depth review of community survey responses from young people • in-depth interview with Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) staff (external stakeholders who directly engage young people)	• better understand the nuances of how this cohort wants to be involved • utilise expertise of external stakeholders such as YACVic in elevating the voice of young people in decision-making • note: Voice for Change program and relevant feedback collected through M2050 Youth Summit (100 young people across two events) provided pre-engagement insights
International students	• focus group	• enable in-depth discussion of perceptions, barriers and opportunities tailored to lived experience of this participant group

Local businesses	• in-depth review of community survey responses from local businesses • in-depth interview with one Business Precinct Association (interviews offered to 10).	• better understand the nuances of how this cohort wants to be involved • note: Local businesses owners identified as a gap and focus area in phase two of the 2025 policy review
External stakeholders	• in-depth one-on-one interviews • focus groups	• enable in-depth discussion of challenges and opportunities, tailored to the experience and context of each diverse stakeholder

Pre-engagement insights

What we already know about how the community want to engage

Over the past 12 months, the City of Melbourne ran more than 50 community engagement consultations, hearing from more than 10,000 people. We are proud of our community engagement but also know that we can improve.

We are particularly interested in ways to increase participation from young people, people born overseas, people who speak a language other than English at home and business owners. We are also interested in how we can make our community engagement processes more transparent – so you the community feel well informed and can see how your feedback is used in CoM decision making.

To ensure the 2025 Policy review builds on what we already know, we have reviewed a range of information:

- Our operational data, including our participant numbers and demographics.
- Participate Melbourne website analytics.
- Community feedback gathered through a range of engagements, including the [2024 Neighbourhood Survey](#) and the [2020 Community Engagement Policy consultation](#).
- Feedback from participants at the [M2050 Summit](#), the [M2050 People's Panel](#) and the [People's Panel on Affordable Housing](#).
- The 2025 Community Satisfaction Survey.

Who we often hear from

- As a capital city, our community includes residents, workers, visitors, students and business owners. Overall, we hear from business owners less frequently than people in the other groups.
- Our resident population is relatively young and multicultural when compared with other municipalities, but people who participate in our engagements don't always reflect this.

How people like to engage

- Community have told us they want lots of different ways to participate, based on what suits them.
- Many people prefer online surveys because they allow them to quickly share feedback when it suits them. However, some people prefer in-person activities to hear from, and connect with, other people.
- Feedback from the People's Panels for M2050 and Affordable Housing show more in-depth activities can increase trust and confidence in the City of Melbourne.

What makes it hard to engage

Community have told us there are several things that can make it harder for them to participate:

- not being aware of opportunities
- limited time – particularly for business owners, workers and those with caregiving responsibilities
- not feeling welcome or included
- finding the information hard to understand
- language barriers
- not feeling confident – either speaking in person or using technology
- not feeling like feedback will make a difference.

These insights informed the design and questions of the community survey on Participate Melbourne that formed part of the first phase of engagement for the 2025 policy review, as well as the questions we asked other external stakeholders during the interviews and focus groups conducted during this phase.

Voice for Change program: Recommendations for engaging youth

In 2024, the Community Engagement and Impact team engaged in the Voice for Change program as part of City of Melbourne's Social Investment Partnership program. This program allowed young participants to provide crucial feedback on the current community engagement process and delivery methods. Through this program, these young people not only developed valuable skills in civic participation and advocacy but also provided recommendations for how our practice could better empower young people to engage with community consultations at City of Melbourne.

These recommendations aim to facilitate:

- Empowering young people and those under 30 years of age with knowledge of the 'how-'s' of participation in CoM decision making.
- Increase accessibility of consultations to young people and U30s by 'going to where they are'.
- Generate community enthusiasm about consultation opportunities through existing trusted youth focused community organisations.

Empower projects to better cater to U30s by co-designing methodologies where possible.

M2050 Youth Engagement

Over several phases of engagement in early to mid 2025, CoM asked all Melburnians to help shape the kind of city we want to be in 2050. This consultation informed a draft M2050 vision and Council Plan 2025-2029 that was presented back to community for feedback August to September 2025. [The Council Plan 2025-29 and M2050 Vision](#) were endorsed by Council on 28 October 2025.

To feed into the 2050 vision process, the Youth team ran two engagement moments with young people aged 16-25 years in May, a Youth Roundtable and a Youth Stream at the M2050 Summit.

We engaged with over 100 diverse young people across the two events, with a mix of residents, workers, students and visitors of Melbourne.

We provided safe and supported, youth-friendly workshops, to ensure young voices are included in the 2050 vision process, and that decisions about Melbourne's future are intergenerationally fair for young people.

Five 'Golden Threads' were identified across the events which will feed into the the M20250 and Council Plan process, as well as guiding CoM's work with young people.

- Youth voice and empowerment

- Educational and economic opportunities
- Affordability and access
- Safety and wellbeing
- Social inclusion and connection

The first of these gold threads, youth voice and empowerment, underscores the desire of young people to be involved in CoM decision-making. The ideas and feedback that underpin this theme included an apt quote: 'nothing about us without us'. This sentiment highlights the importance of better understanding when and how young people want to be engaged, and the opportunity to explore higher levels of involvement such as co-design that contribute towards empower our communities of the future, in addition to more immediate objectives of obtaining their feedback.

The other four remaining threads highlight prominent issues and values for young people in 2025 and thus provide valuable context for the motivations and interests this cohort.

Based on these insights, the first phase of the 2025 policy review sought to hear from City of Melbourne staff who interact with young people regularly (e.g. our youth team), as well as staff from the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria as a key external expert in the youth voice and empowerment space.

City of Melbourne Aboriginal Melbourne Engagement Framework development

The Community Engagement and Impact Team and various CoM work area teams conducting community engagement projects seek specialised advice from our Aboriginal Melbourne branch to guide how we engage Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community.

CoM's Aboriginal Melbourne branch recently updated the CoM Aboriginal Melbourne Engagement Framework.

The Community Engagement and Impact team is liaising with Aboriginal Melbourne on how the updated Community Engagement Policy can best align with this updated Framework, and what tools and resources may be required to realise associated improvements in practice.

Findings section 1: Community survey

What we did and who we heard from

An online survey was available on Participate Melbourne from 4 August to 10 September 2025.

We received a total of 179 survey responses, including 80 in-person intercept surveys.

Staff interacted with approximately 154 community members across 8 intercept survey locations. These locations were across Carlton, Kensington, CBD, Docklands, North Melbourne and Southbank neighbourhoods. We had iPads on hand to fill out surveys on the spot, with an additional option for people to scan the QR code on their own device and fill out at a later time.

Key demographics

- **Residents:** 59% of participants (106) were residents from across CoM's neighbourhoods. The remainder of respondents were mostly visitors (15%), workers (9%) and students (5%).
- **Participation in CoM engagements:**
- 46.4% said they had previously participated in a consultation, 46.4% said they had not, and 7.2% said they were not sure if they had participated in an engagement.
- Notably, 25% of respondents that said they have engaged multiple times over the last 12 months.

Participant diversity

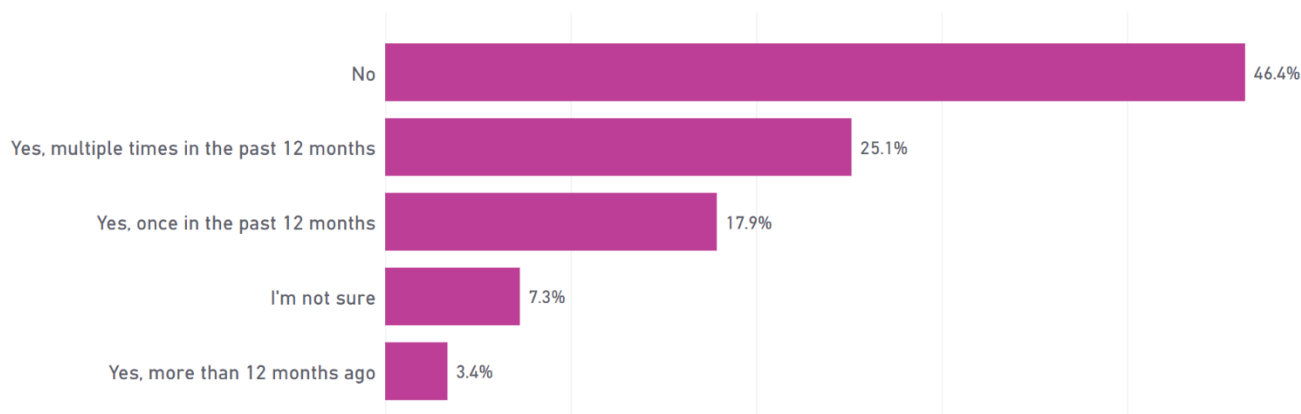
- **Cultural diversity:** 46% of resident respondents identified as born overseas and 29% as speaking a language other than English at home (compared to 55% and 46% respectively across CoM in the 2021 population Census).
- **Under 30 years old:** around 18% of all respondents were under 30 years old (9% of resident respondents) compared with 50% across CoM according to ERP June 2024.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:** 6 respondents (3%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- **Disability:** 13% of respondents identified as a person with a disability, which is close to CoM's estimate in the population based on modelling (11%)
- **LGBTQIA+:** 14% of respondents identified as LGBTQIA+ which is slightly lower than representation across CoM's engagements over the past financial year (around 18% for FY24-25)
- **Gender:** 51% identified as a woman, 43% as a man, 3% as non-binary and the remainder preferred not to answer or did not answer this question

What we heard from community

Current experiences of community engagement

Roughly equal proportions of respondents said that they had (46%) and had not participated (46%) in a CoM consultation before. Of note, over a quarter of respondents said they had participated multiple times in the last 12 months (25%). These proportions remained similar for resident-only respondents.

Question: Have you participated in a City of Melbourne community consultation and engagement activity? (n=179)



Question: Prior participation in City of Melbourne community consultations and activities	Percentage
No	46.4%
Yes, multiple times in the past 12 months	25.1%
Yes, once in the past 12 months	17.9%
I'm not sure	7.3%
Yes, more than 12 months ago	3.4%

Question: Please describe the activities you participated in (n=70)

70 respondents chose to answer this open-ended question and response formats varied widely. Approximately half referred to specific methods (e.g. online survey, workshop), while the other half referred to specific past engagement projects.

Perceptions of performance

Overall, 31% of respondents rated CoM's performance on community consultation and engagement over the past 12 months as good or very good, 15% as average, and 23% poor or very poor – however a large proportion also selected “can't say” (31%). The results were similar for resident-only respondents. However, there were notable differences between respondents that said they had and hadn't participated in a CoM community consultation and engagement before.

Question: How has the City of Melbourne performed on community consultation and engagement in the past 12 months? [All respondents] (n=179)

All participants

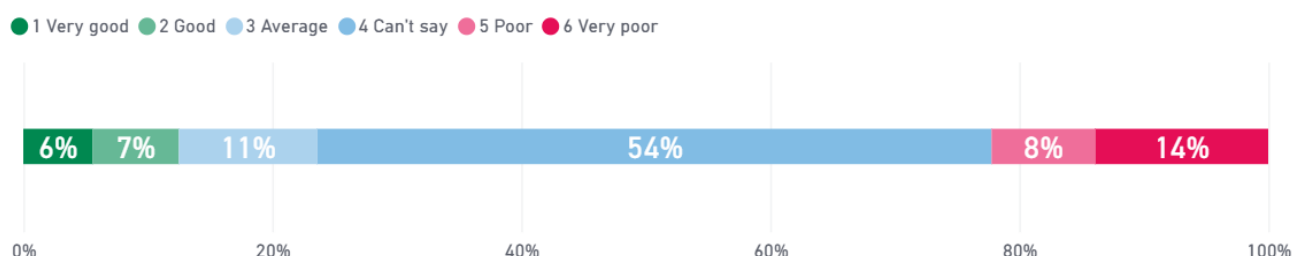


1 Very good 2 Good 3 Average 4 Can't say 5 Poor 6 Very poor



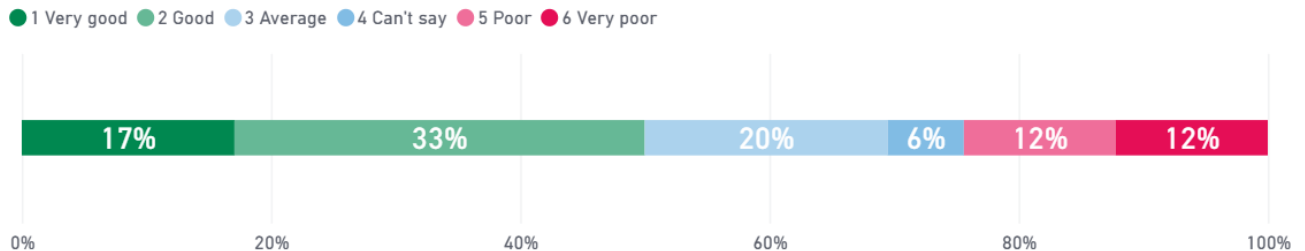
Responses: Rating how City of Melbourne has performed on community consultation and engagement in the past 12 months [all respondents]	Percentage
Very good	11%
Good	20%
Average	15%
Can't say	31%
Poor	10%
Very poor	13%

Question: How has the City of Melbourne performed on community consultation and engagement in the past 12 months? [Have you participated in a City of Melbourne community consultation and engagement activity? = No] (n=83)



Responses: Rating how City of Melbourne has performed on community consultation and engagement in the past 12 months [respondents who have not participated in a City of Melbourne community consultation and engagement activity]	Percentage
Very good	6%
Good	7%
Average	11%
Can't say	54%
Poor	8%
Very poor	14%

Question: How has the City of Melbourne performed on community consultation and engagement in the past 12 months? [Have you participated in a City of Melbourne community consultation and engagement activity? = Yes, multiple times in the past 12 months / Yes, once in the past 12 months / Yes, more than 12 months ago] (n=83)



Responses: Rating how City of Melbourne has performed on community consultation and engagement in the past 12 months [participants who have participated in a City of Melbourne community consultation and engagement activity before]	Percentage
Very good	17%
Good	33%
Average	20%
Can't say	6%
Poor	12%
Very poor	12%

Question: Please tell us why you gave this rating for community consultation and engagement (n=127)

Responses to this question can be grouped as either complementary (i.e. positive) or constructive (i.e. negative). The following provides a summary of common themes in each of these broad categories.

Complementary / positive

- Interactions with staff were good
- Good amount of consultation (e.g. I can have my say on lots of different topics)
- CoM listens and provides genuine opportunities for community to contribute
- Staff I interact with through consultations make a good effort

Constructive / negative

- Don't listen, no follow through / accountability of decision-making, yet to see action or changes based on community feedback
- Process seems biased / untrustworthy / pre-determined
- Not informed / lack of awareness consultations are happening

- Need to improve communication (e.g. keep messaging short and simple, use different or more channels, use dot points instead of long streams of text)
- Samples are not representative of the community (including several comments that participants should be representative of ratepayers and residents in particular, and the demographics of participants should be presented with engagement findings)
- Do not consult enough (e.g. view that e-scooter decision made without sufficient community consultation)
- Time related factors (e.g. not given enough time to participate, activities at wrong times of day)

Improving opportunities to participate: Engagement methods

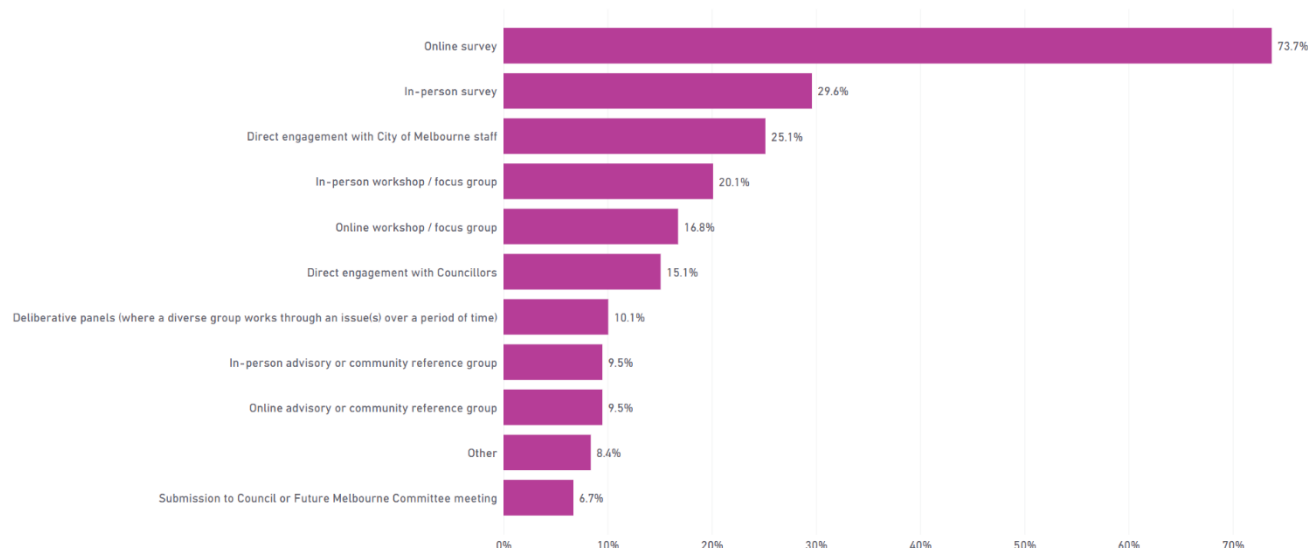
Respondents were asked to select up to three options they would prefer to use to provide feedback.

Online surveys were the most frequently preferred way to provide feedback amongst all respondents. This was consistent across demographic breakdowns, with online surveys clearly being the most frequently preferred methods amongst residents (69%), under 30 years old (84%), 60+ year olds (61%), persons with a disability (74%), overseas born (72%) and those that speak a language other than English at home (72%).

The next most preferred methods varied across different in-person approaches, including in-person surveys (30%), direct engagement with CoM staff (25%) and in-person workshops or focus groups (20%).

After online surveys, respondents who said they **had** participated in a consultation previously showed a clear secondary preference for direct engagement with City of Melbourne staff (35%), while respondents that said they had **not** participated in a consultation second most preferred option was an in-person survey (35%).

Question: What is your preferred way to provide feedback to help inform Council decisions? Select up to three (n=179).



Responses: Preferred ways to provide feedback to help inform Council decisions (select up to three)	Percentage
Online survey	73.7%
In-person survey	29.6%
Direct engagement with City of Melbourne staff	25.1%
In-person workshop / focus group	20.1%
Online workshop / focus group	16.8%
Direct engagement with Councillors	15.1%
Deliberative panels (where a diverse group works through an issue(s) over a period of time)	10.1%
In-person advisory or community reference group	9.5%
Online advisory or community reference group	9.5%
Other	8.4%
Submission to Council or Future Melbourne Committee meeting	6.7%

Question: Please tell us why these are your preferred ways to provide feedback, including whether your preferences differ based on the type of project or issue (n=139)

The format of responses to this open-ended question varied considerably, with some participants referring to general principles or criteria that make specific methods preferred, and others expanding on why they prefer either the online or in-person methods identified in the previous survey question.

In terms of **general criteria that make certain methods preferred**, we heard that:

- Preferred method depends on topic, interest and impact levels etc.
- All methods should be time efficient and flexible (e.g. online methods mean I can provide feedback at a time that works for me)
- All methods should ensure participants are informed before participating
- CoM should offer multiple methods/options as standard for all engagement projects

Respondents who **prefer in person methods** shared the following reasons for their preference:

- Ensure I am heard / more direct / 'info gets to the right person faster' / cannot trust online methods
- Best way to fully express my views (e.g. can talk at length, use body language to help express views)
- Enables immediate feedback and clarification
- Collaborative / opportunity to hear others and discuss and build on ideas with other people
- Can have a 'personal touch'
- Creates opportunity to meet other people, bring people together
- Enable CoM to meet people where they are

Reasons for **preferring online methods** included:

- Convenient, easier to find the time, can do in my own time/when suits me etc.

- More accessible for people with a physical disability, community members with a weakened immune system etc.
- Is recorded/ on the record so cannot be changed or manipulated
- Can provide feedback anonymously
- Allows me to do my own background research beforehand

Some respondents also expanded on their reasons for **preferring online surveys** specifically:

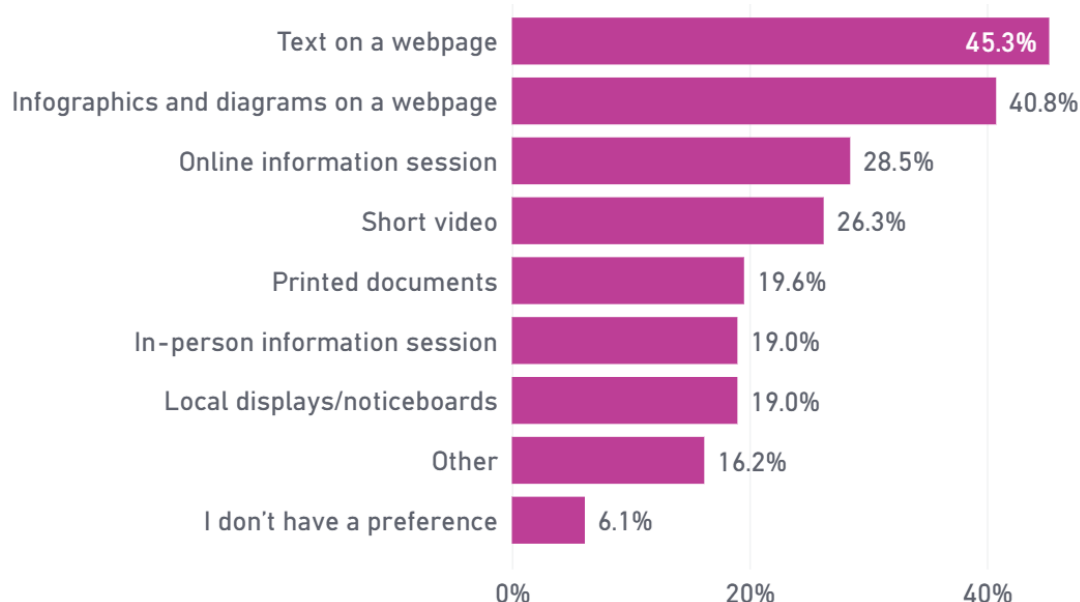
- Easier in general
- More direct (e.g. can more easily articulate points of view)
- Able to capture feedback from more participants so can be more representative

Improving how we support informed participation

It is important to provide clear information about the service, project, plan or policy. We asked survey respondents how they would prefer we present this type of information.

Specifically, respondents were asked to select up to 3 methods from a list or suggest another method. While some methods ranked higher than others, there was no single method was preferred by the majority of respondents. Overall, the results indicate that a range of different methods helps for meeting the needs of different members of our community, including online and offline methods.

Question: It is important we provide clear information about the service, project, plan or policy so that you can give informed feedback. How would you prefer we present this type of information? Select up to 3 (n=179)



Responses: Preferred ways to receive information about services, projects, plans or policies before providing feedback (select up to three)	Percentage
Text on a webpage	45.3%
Infographics and diagrams on a webpage	40.8%
Online information session	28.5%
Short video	26.3%
Printed documents	19.6%
In-person information session	19.0%
Local displays/noticeboards	19.0%
Other	16.2%
I don't have a preference	6.1%

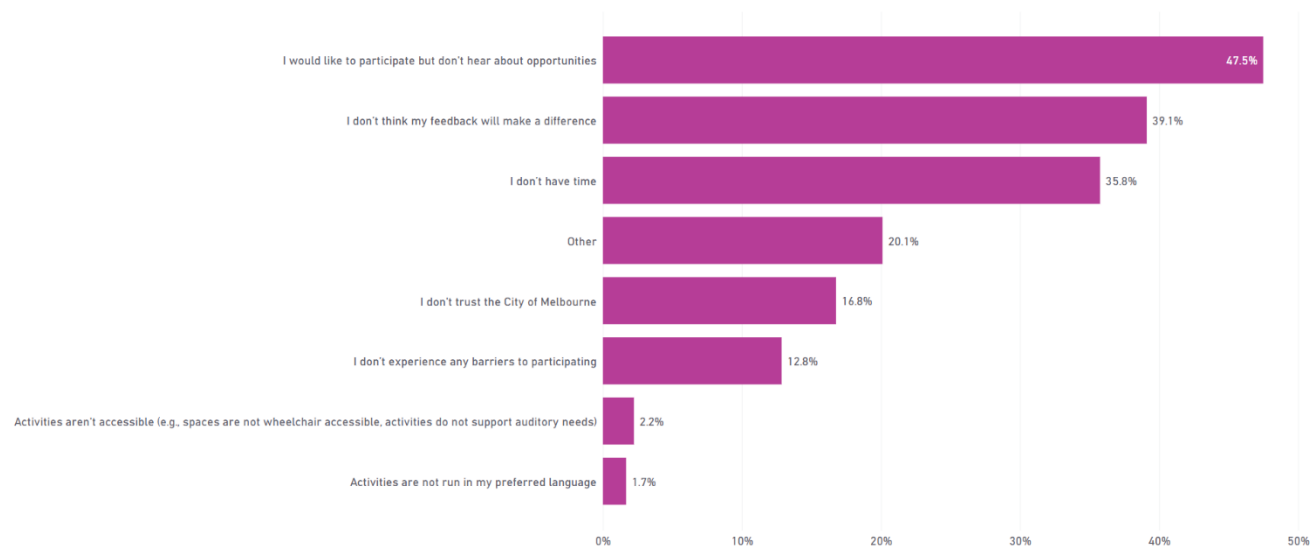
Overcoming barriers to participation

We know there are factors and considerations that can make participating in community consultation and engagement activities hard. We asked survey respondents to tell us more about what barriers might stop them from participating in these activities.

Specifically, we asked respondents to select from a list (no limit) or describe another factor that might stop them from participating in a community consultation and engagement. Some factors were more frequently selected than others. However, overall, no factor was cited by the majority of respondents. This finding indicates that barriers to participation vary amongst community members.

Nonetheless, some trends are evident. For example, over half resident only respondents (51%), and respondents who said they had not participated in a consultation or engagement before (57%), said they would like to participate but don't hear about opportunities. Further, 45% of respondents who had participated before identified the perception that their feedback does not impact decision making as a barrier to participation.

Question: Which of these might stop you from participating in [community consultation and engagement] activities? Select all that apply (n=179)



Responses: Factors that might stop a respondent from participation in community consultation and engagement activities (select all that apply)	Percentage
I would like to participate but I don't hear about opportunities	47.5%
I don't think my feedback will make a difference	39.1%
I don't have time	35.8%
Other	20.1%
I don't trust City of Melbourne	16.8%
I don't experience any barriers to participating	12.8%
Activities aren't accessible (e.g. spaces are not wheelchair accessible, activities do not support auditory needs)	2.2%
Activities are not in my preferred language	1.7%

Question: Please tell us how we can make it easier for you to participate in community consultation and engagement activities (n=120)

The following summarises the main themes and subthemes identified in responses to this question.

- **Ensure awareness of opportunities to contribute**
 - Note many of these survey respondents referred to use of multiple and diverse communication methods (e.g. use text/sms, promote on What's On Melbourne) and several respondents called for a centralized list of all current and future opportunities to participate - 34 comments
- **Listen to and act on previous feedback and build track record of following through on feedback**
- **Build track record of genuine opportunities to contribute, influence etc. (e.g. no pre-determined outcomes).**
 - Note several of these respondents highlighted the importance of consulting early so can genuinely inform outcomes and decisions

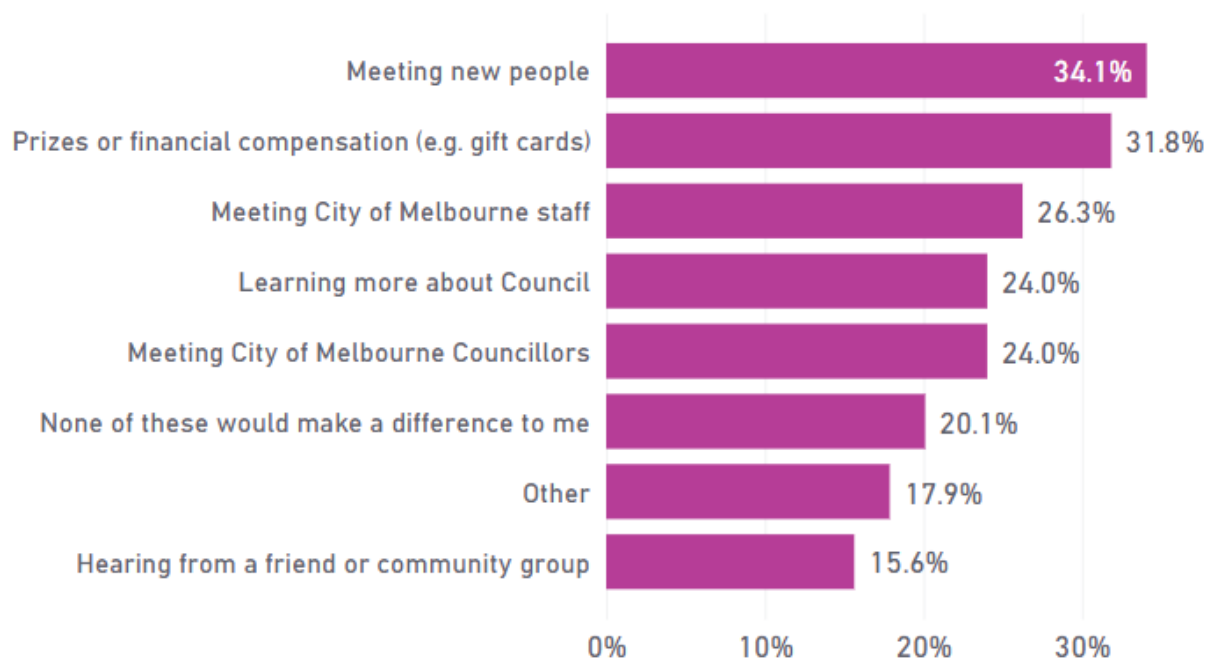
- **Inclusive approaches and methods and listen to everyone** (broad theme, see subthemes below)
 - Simplify language, use plain English and visuals to help explain the words, short and shareable videos etc.
 - Provide multiple alternatives to participate to enable choice and flexibility, e.g. in-person activities at different times of day, both online and in-person options
 - More opportunities to provide feedback in-person and talk to a real person (e.g. small group discussion, intercept surveys)
 - More opportunities online because convenient and accessible
 - Provide more notice of opportunities to contribute
 - Provide incentives to participate

Motivations and incentives to participate

Participating in community consultations and engagement activities provides opportunities for community members to shape CoM projects and decisions. We asked survey respondents what else might encourage them to participate.

Specifically, we asked respondents to select up to 3 options and/or describe something else that would encourage them to participate in community consultation and engagement activities. While some options were more frequently selected than others, overall none were cited by the majority of respondents indicating that there are a range of ways to encourage participation amongst community members.

Question: Aside from having an opportunity to help shape council projects, what else might encourage you to participate in community consultation and engagement activities? Select up to 3 (n=179)



Responses: Factors that might encourage a respondent to participate in community consultation and engagement activities (select up to 3)	Percentage
Meeting new people	34.1%
Prizes or financial compensation (e.g. gift cards)	31.8%
Meeting City of Melbourne staff	26.3%
Learning about Council	24.0%
Meeting City of Melbourne Councillors	24.0%
None of these would make a difference to me	20.1%
Other	17.9%
Hearing from a friend or community group	15.6%

Improving how we report back (also known as closing the loop)

Question: After sharing your feedback or ideas, what information would you like to receive back from City of Melbourne (n=136)

Over a quarter of all comments provided in response to this question referred to providing **information about the actions taken and how those actions were informed by feedback**, making this the most prominent theme overall. Many of these participants also noted that a **summary of what we heard is not sufficient**.

Relatedly, we heard that the following components are important when reporting back:

- **Fair and clear summation of the views expressed by community members (i.e. what we heard, including a summary of how many participated and demographic information (e.g. relationship to CoM, geographic representation))**
- **Succinct and clear rationale for CoM's position, action, decision made etc., including how community feedback and other evidence and factors informed the decision**

We also heard the following general principles are important to community when we report back:

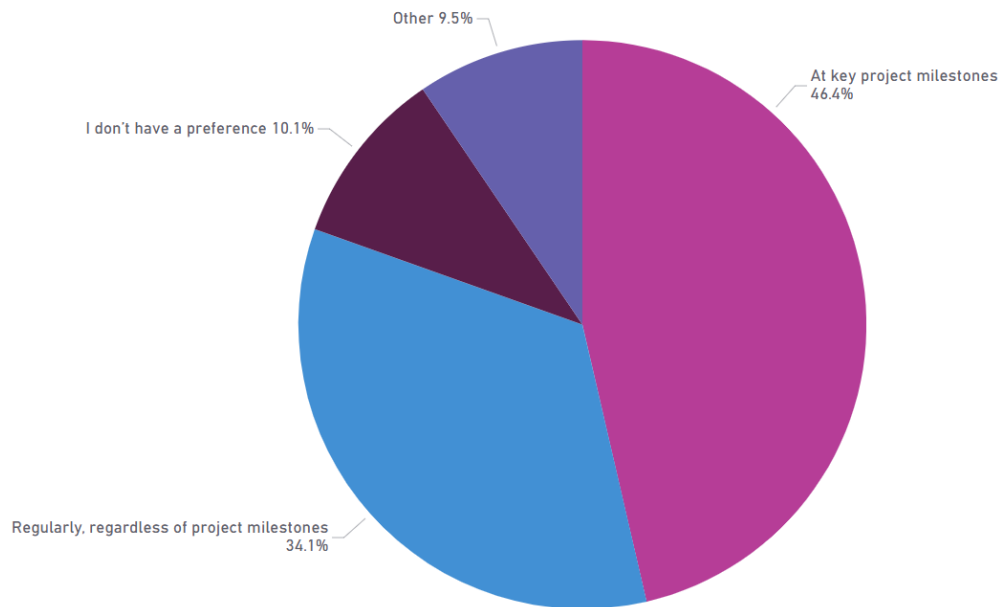
- **Provide a direct response to those who raise specific issues or concerns**
- **Keep it short, concise and short**
- **Be honest and transparent** (note two of these respondents called for CoM to publish de-identified data sets for all projects)
- **Provide regular updates after consultation closes and as project progresses**
- **Include clear information about CoM's responsibility to consult the community**
- **The best way to close the loop depends on the project, the impact the decision will have on community**

Respondents were asked to select from a list up to 3 methods for receiving post-consultation information from CoM and how frequently they would like updates from CoM.

The majority of respondents wanted either regular or milestone-based updates from CoM (total 80%). Receiving these by email was the most preferred option, selected by the majority of respondents (60%).

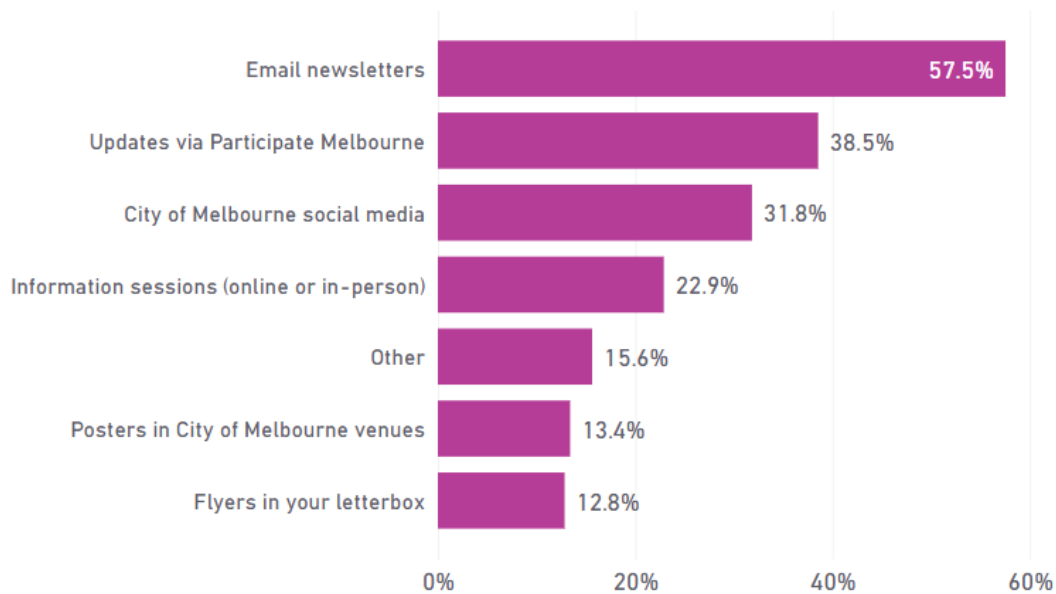
However, there was a wide range of methods amongst the next most frequently cited, indicating that there is a variety of ways our community like to receive updates.

Question: How frequently would you like to receive updates? Select one. (n=179)



Responses: How frequently survey respondents would like to receive updates	Percentage
All key project milestones	46.4%
Regularly, regardless of project milestones	34.1%
I don't have a preference	10.1%
Other	9.5%

Question: How would you like to receive this information? (select up to 3) (n=179)



Responses: How survey respondents would like to receive updates	Percentage
Email newsletters	57.7%
Updates via Participate Melbourne	38.5%
City of Melbourne social media	31.8%
Information sessions (online or in-person)	22.9%
Other	15.6%
Posters in City f Melbourne venues	13.4%
Flyers in your letterbox	12.8%

Other suggestions for improvement

Question: Please share any other ideas about how the City of Melbourne can improve our community consultation and engagement practices (n=100)

Most respondents reiterated experiences and preferences expressed elsewhere in the survey when responding to this question. The following summarises the most common themes respondents emphasised:

- **Better information sharing and transparency** (discussed by over 30 of the 100 respondents who answered this question)
- **Follow through on feedback / accountability of decision making**
- **Diversify methods**
- **Seek representative engagement samples / participants**
- **Inclusive and accessible engagement**

- Foster relationships with partners, community organisations and groups etc.
- Consider timing

Findings section 2: Youth

What we did and who we heard from

Community survey responses from youth

Out of the 179 people who responded to the community survey on Participate Melbourne, 25 total (18%) were aged 15-29 years old. Official population estimates indicate that these age groups combined represent over 40% of CoM's population.

The majority of these responses (18) were collected via an in-person intercept survey with CoM staff. Notably, the only 15-19 year old respondents to the survey were recruited via these in-person intercepts.

1:1 interview with YACVic

A member of CoMs Community Engagement and Impact team interviewed a staff member from the [Youth Affairs Council of Victoria \(YACVic\)](#) as part of the Community Engagement Policy review 2025. As Victoria's peak body and policy advocate for young people and the youth sector in Victorian YACVic's vision is that the rights of young people in Victoria are respected, and they are active, visible and valued in their communities.

What we heard from young people

Due to the small sample size of youth who completed the survey on Participate Melbourne, it is difficult to draw conclusions. However, observations of respondents under 30 years old include:

- The majority had **not** participated in a CoM consultation previously (68%). However, of those that had (4 total), all of them rated CoM's performance as good or very good.
- Out of the 25 respondents under 30 years old, 21 (84%) said they preferred online surveys as a way to provide feedback to help inform CoM decisions (compared to 73% of all respondents preferring only surveys).
- Most (16 out of 25) preferred to receive information via infographics and diagrams on a webpage.
- The main barriers to participation cited were "I would like to participate but don't hear about opportunities" (17 out of 25) and "I don't have time" (15 out of 25).
- 'Prizes or financial compensation' (15 out of 25) and 'Meeting new people' (14 out of 25) were the main factors cited that might help encourage participation.

Qualitative data collected from participants under 30 years old provides anecdotal insights into prospective ways to improve engagement in this cohort.

- *"I think there is room to improve by making consultations more accessible and visible to international students and young people, as sometimes we only hear about opportunities through word-of-mouth. With clearer promotion and more targeted outreach, even more voices could be part of the conversation"* [Please tell us why you gave this rating for community consultation and engagement].

- *“There has been a huge effort for general consultation through the m2050 summit, but I’ve found it difficult to engage on specific issues and decisions I care about.” [Please tell us why you gave this rating for community consultation and engagement]*
- *“I haven’t seen a huge amount of opportunity advertised for people to have their say” [Please tell us why you gave this rating for community consultation and engagement]*
- *“I’d say at least from the community panel for Council Plan project it wasn’t inclusive in regards to the timing. As in having all day sessions in weekends and unable to just do half a day deter people to actually participate because people also have something to do in the weekend.” [Please tell us why you gave this rating for community consultation and engagement]*

Insights from Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)

The following provides a summary of what we heard about the challenges and opportunities of engaging young people through our interview with YACVic. These insights provide considerations for CoMs Community Engagement Policy, and associated practice frameworks.

Challenges

1. Resource constraints

- Deep engagement (e.g. co-design) is resource-intensive and often not feasible.
- Short timelines (e.g. less than 2–3 months’ notice) make recruitment and delivery difficult.

2. Barriers to access and participation

- Application/EOI processes can be exclusionary, especially for marginalised cohorts.
- Systems created by adults often unintentionally exclude young people.
- Accessibility issues: not all young people can attend in person or online—options are needed.

3. Engagement fatigue and misalignment

- Young people’s motivation to participate shifts frequently.
- Engagement efforts often fail to align with youth values, purpose, and impact.
- Desktop research and issue-led conversations lack depth without proper resourcing.

4. Limited reach to underrepresented young people

- Hard to reach young people not already engaged in civics or youth networks.
- Reliance on existing stakeholders can exclude new or diverse voices.

Opportunities

1. Flexible co-design models

- New structure: 3-session model with onboarding, youth-only roundtable, and joint recommendations.
- A middle ground between traditional focus groups and full co-design.

2. Values-driven promotion

- Engagement invitations should clearly state purpose, impact, and logistics (e.g. remuneration, catering, transport).

- Messaging must resonate with young people values and interests.

3. Multi-channel outreach

- Use email, social media, and youth participation networks (e.g. Youth Services Team's network).
- Partner with youth organisations like CMY, The Drum, Smart Justice Network.

4. Incentives and remuneration

- Youth engagement should be paid—recognising time and expertise.
- YACVic operates as a social enterprise offering fee-for-service engagement.

5. Strategic partnerships

- Collaborate with VicHealth and other agencies to co-design youth-focused projects.
- Work with youth services and federal/state offices to support and amplify youth voices.

6. Inclusive design and delivery

- Design sessions with young people ("by us and for us" model).
- Offer multiple formats for participation (online, in-person, hybrid).
- Use referrals and nominations through community groups to reach diverse youth.

Findings section 3: International students

What we did and who we heard from

Staff from the Community Engagement and Impact Team held a focus group with international students. 11 students participated, including representation from Columbia, India, Malaysia, China and Peru.

We structured the focus group conversation in two main parts: (1) current perceptions and experiences and (2) opportunities for improvement.

What we heard from international students

Current perceptions of CoM and local government and other barriers to participation

Through our focus group with international students, we heard that current perceptions and understanding of CoM, local government and community engagement currently present barriers to participation for this cohort. For example:

- The profile of CoM is low and understanding of CoM's local government role (and how to get involved) is currently low.
- For most focus participants, City of Melbourne is What's on Melbourne.
- Participants shared that they have interpersonal relationship with CoM's Manager, International Education, but they don't connect him to the work of CoM.
- Each participants relationship to government varied based on cultural background
- Little connection between community engagement and local government process

Opportunities to evolve our engagement methods and communication

The international students we spoke with also identified multiple ways to improve how our engagement methods and communication strategies resonate with this cohort:

- Participants noted their strong connection to university life and many suggested that CoM should leverage these existing networks through building partnerships with universities.
- Short surveys with the option to respond to just one key question could achieve higher response rates
- Clear communication of 'what's in it for me' when promoting engagement opportunities (not just financial incentives but social and community connection are also potential benefits of interest)
- No one best method to reach all international students but trusted sources and WhatsApp are particularly popular amongst different cohorts
- Always ask the question and let them decide if they want to be involved rather than assume something is relevant to them.

Findings section 4: Local businesses

What we did and what we heard

Community survey responses from business owners

In total only 4 business owners responded to the survey, all via the online survey. This very small sample of business owners prevents statistical analysis on these responses and only anecdotal observations can be made, including:

- No business owner respondents gave a good or very good rating for CoM's performance in consultation and engagement, and 2 out of the 4 respondents rated performance as 'Very Poor'.
- All business owner respondents selected online survey as a preferred method to provide feedback to CoM.
- Barriers to participation cited were "I don't trust the City of Melbourne" (3 out of 4 business owners), "I don't think my feedback will make a difference" (2 out of 4) and "I would like to participate but don't hear about opportunities" (2 out of 4).

Other insights and building a picture of engaging with local businesses

The low response rate from business owners to the community survey presents a limitation of this first phase of the engagement.

The Community Engagement and Impact team offered interviews to 10 Business Precinct Associations and one Association in an interview. Themes and insights from this interview are integrated into the following section that focuses on external stakeholders.

In-depth understanding of how local businesses want to be involved in CoM community consultations presents a gap to be addressed in the second phase of community engagement for this policy review.

Findings section 5: Other external stakeholders

What we did and who we heard from

We identified key external stakeholders based on gaps pre-engagement insights (young people, people who were born overseas and speak a language other than English at home, LGBTQIA+ and people with disability).

We also consulted with Community Wellbeing, Neighbourhood Partners, Stakeholder Engagement Team and Business Precinct Manager to finalise a list of who we should talk to better understand how external stakeholders currently experience CoM engagement processes, and how we can reach and work with these groups better.

We invited these stakeholders to participate in a focus group or interview as part of this phase of the Policy review engagement.

Stakeholders interviewed included:

- East Melbourne Group – *Resident Association*
- Melbourne South Yarra Residents Group – *Resident Association*
- Kensington Association – *Resident Association*
- North Melbourne Public Housing Resident Association – *Resident Association*
- Drill Hall Residents Association - *Resident Association*
- Residents 3000 – *Resident Association*
- Parkville Association – *Resident Association*
- Parkville Gardens Resident Association – *Resident Association*
- East Enders – *Resident Association*
- Kensington Neighbourhood House – *Neighbourhood House*
- River Nile School – *Community Organisation*
- North Melbourne Language & Learning – *Neighbourhood House*
- Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre – *Neighbourhood House*
- North & West Melbourne Precinct Association (N&WMPA) - *Business Precinct Association*
- Youth Affairs Council of Victoria – *Community Organisation*
- Queer Town – *Community Organisation*

We also held a focus group with CoM's Disability Advisory Committee.

What we heard from external stakeholders

We asked interview and focus groups participants to reflect on their experiences with community consultation run by CoM (positive, negative or none). In addition to experiences, we asked what motivated these individuals or groups to get involved with CoM either through consultation or other avenues. Finally, we asked participants to share ideas for ways we can make engagement more accessible for their unique lived experience.

Multiple key themes emerged from these discussions. As summarised below, these themes identify both engagement challenges and opportunities.

Engagement challenges

Accountability:

- Some officers and some Councillors lack visible passion or connection to the city
- CoM needs to clearly articulate its purpose, mission, and commitment to community engagement
- Current engagement policy lacks clarity on consequences of not consulting.

Lack of follow-through damages trust:

- CoM doesn't always report back or close the loop on consultations,
- Past consultations haven't led to visible change
- Lack of feedback mechanisms in local works and consultations
- Lack of follow-up after consultations leads to disengagement.
- Community members are unsure how feedback influences CoM decisions.

Resource and budget limitations:

- Short consultation windows and lead in times limit options for deep engagement (e.g. co-design)
- Limited public spaces for community gatherings

Accessibility and inclusion

- Representation barriers: e.g. online surveys are not accessible or effective for many communities who lack digital literacy and have language barriers
- Over-reliance on "community leaders" can misrepresent broader community views
- Plain language and accessible formats are essential but not consistently used
- Translate complex council terms into everyday language
- Survey language is often loaded or controlling; not the preferred method of engagement
- Lack of remuneration undermines empowerment and respect
- Everyone is focused on their own lived experience, making collective action difficult

Cultural, language, psychological and sociological barriers

- Power dynamics and lack of cultural competency can retraumatize participants
- Application/EOI processes can be exclusionary, especially for marginalised cohorts,
- Systems created by adults often unintentionally exclude young people
- Digital engagement is not preferred by older people

Lack of trust in government

- Disconnection with community, transparency, reciprocity

- Fear and mistrust of government systems (e.g. Centrelink, fines) affect willingness to engage
- Lack of clarity and continuity in CoM touchpoints makes it hard to build lasting relationships, negative interactions with CoM officers or services of any kind (e.g. getting a parking fine, bins not collected, disappointed event experience) will impact the motivation to engage,

Consultation fatigue

- Too many consultations without clear purpose or follow-up, Community members are exhausted from being asked to contribute without recognition or compensation.

Need to invest in relationships with external stakeholders

- External stakeholders fill the gaps in large government systems
- Policy should reflect reciprocity and value community-led work
- Discussions critical to community or organisations are not followed up on
- Community development and bureaucracy are misaligned—social change is the goal, not just compliance.

Engagement opportunities

Accountability

- Project teams presenting directly to the association builds trust and understanding
- Clearly define when consultation is required and what happens if it's skipped,
- Social diversity in engagement helps reduce stigma and ensures inclusive decision-making
- Encourage councillors and officers to attend community meetings and engage directly with residents

Diverse methods

- Include co-design principles and lived experience facilitation in the engagement framework
- Use creative formats like focus groups, visual tools, and storytelling
- Fund community organisations to run engagement processes in ways that work for them
- In-person engagement resonates more with older, young people and diverse communities
- Visuals and images are preferred over written summaries
- Measuring success based on the volume of responses is not meaningful; more to the story than survey numbers

Better communication and information sharing important for accountability, trust, transparency and inclusion

- Value and incentivise participation
- Invest in education and context building

Utilise and invest in existing trusted relationships

- Use trusted channels to reach specific cohorts.
- Co-design and involve external stakeholders and relationship-holders early

Limitations of this phase of engagement

This first phase of community engagement to inform the policy review involved multiple methods tailored to our multiple target participant groups, including interviews and focus groups. However, the current lack of centralised mechanisms to collect demographic information during in-person engagement activities inhibits a complete picture of participant demographic representation in this phase of engagement.

The development of such a mechanism presents a key opportunity for future consideration, especially as community feedback presented in this report emphasises the importance of diversifying our engagement methods to improve the reach and representation of community engagement at CoM.

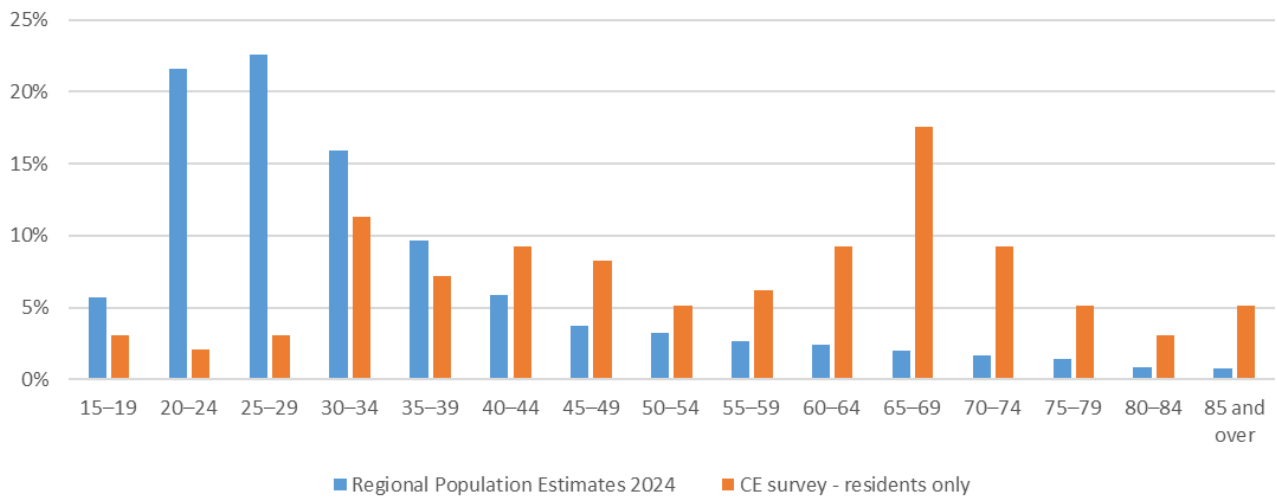
In terms of the community survey hosted on Participate Melbourne, several cohorts were underrepresented in the community survey (compared to population quotas):

- Business owners: Total of 4 business owners were engaged via the survey.
- Persons aged 20-29 years old: 16% (20) of survey participants were in this age cohort, compared with 45% of CoM's population 15 years and over (ABS June 2024, see also detailed age comparison graph below).
- Language other than English at home: 26% (47) survey participants said they speak a language other than English at home compared to 46% of CoM's population (Census 2021).
- Born overseas: 42% of survey respondents (46% of resident respondents) said they were born overseas compared to 55% of the population (Census 2021).
- Place: although survey respondents included residents from across all of CoM's neighbourhoods, the total responses by neighbourhood varied from 22 responses from CBD residents to 2 responses from Parkville residents.

Additionally, it is important to note other high-profile consultations live during the policy review engagement period. For example, intense community engagement to inform the Melbourne 2050 Vision and Council Plan 2025-2029 (Phase 1: 19 March to 30 May and Phase 2: 20 August to 21 September) involved considerable internal resources, while also contributing to potential consultation fatigue amongst the community and other external stakeholders.

The limitations and gaps identified here will help to inform the scope and design of the second phase of the policy review engagement, including a particular focus on the groups underrepresented in phase one.

Age comparison of community survey resident responses against population (Regional population estimate June 2024)



Age group	Regional Population Estimates 2024	Survey participants (residents of CoM only)
15-19	5.7%	2.8%
20-24	21.6%	1.9%
25-29	22.6%	2.8%
30-34	15.9%	10.4%
35-39	9.7%	6.6%
40-44	5.8%	8.5%
45-49	3.7%	7.5%
50-54	3.2%	4.7%
55-59	2.7%	5.7%
60-64	2.4%	8.5%
65-69	2.0%	16.0%
70-74	1.6%	8.5%
75-79	1.4%	4.7%
80-84	0.8%	2.8%
85 and over	0.8%	0.01%

Note: the above percentages do not include participants who did not respond to the question about age, or those who responded, 'prefer not to say'.

Impact

Drawing on feedback from this phase of community consultation, the updated policy will focus on providing more transparency and accountability for how engagement is planned, delivered and reported on as well and attempting to rebuild trust by clearly defining roles and responsibilities across the organisation.

The policy will also define when, how and with whom we engage and integrate this into a revised spectrum of participation. Additional learnings and insights will be integrated into the development of a practice framework.

Next steps

What we heard will inform a draft updated Policy that will be presented back to community and other stakeholders for further feedback in early 2026. This second phase of community engagement will also inform finalisation of the accompanying internal practice Framework that details our approach to planning, delivering, promoting and analysing engagement projects. Phase two engagement will also include circling back to the community members we spoke to in phase one, as well as an increased focus on hearing from youth, people who speak a language other than English at home, people born overseas, and local businesses in particular.