

# West Haven, CT

2027 PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

## Citywide Survey Results Summary

May 2026

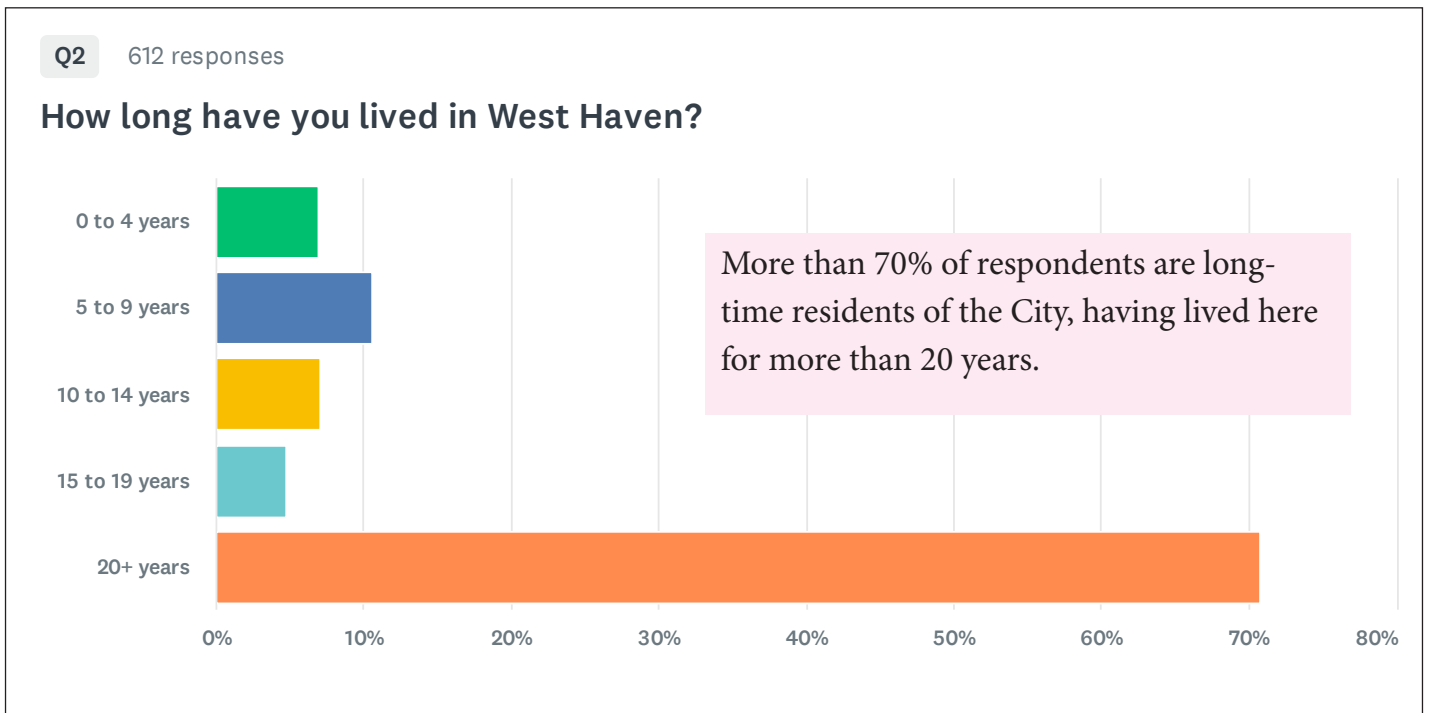
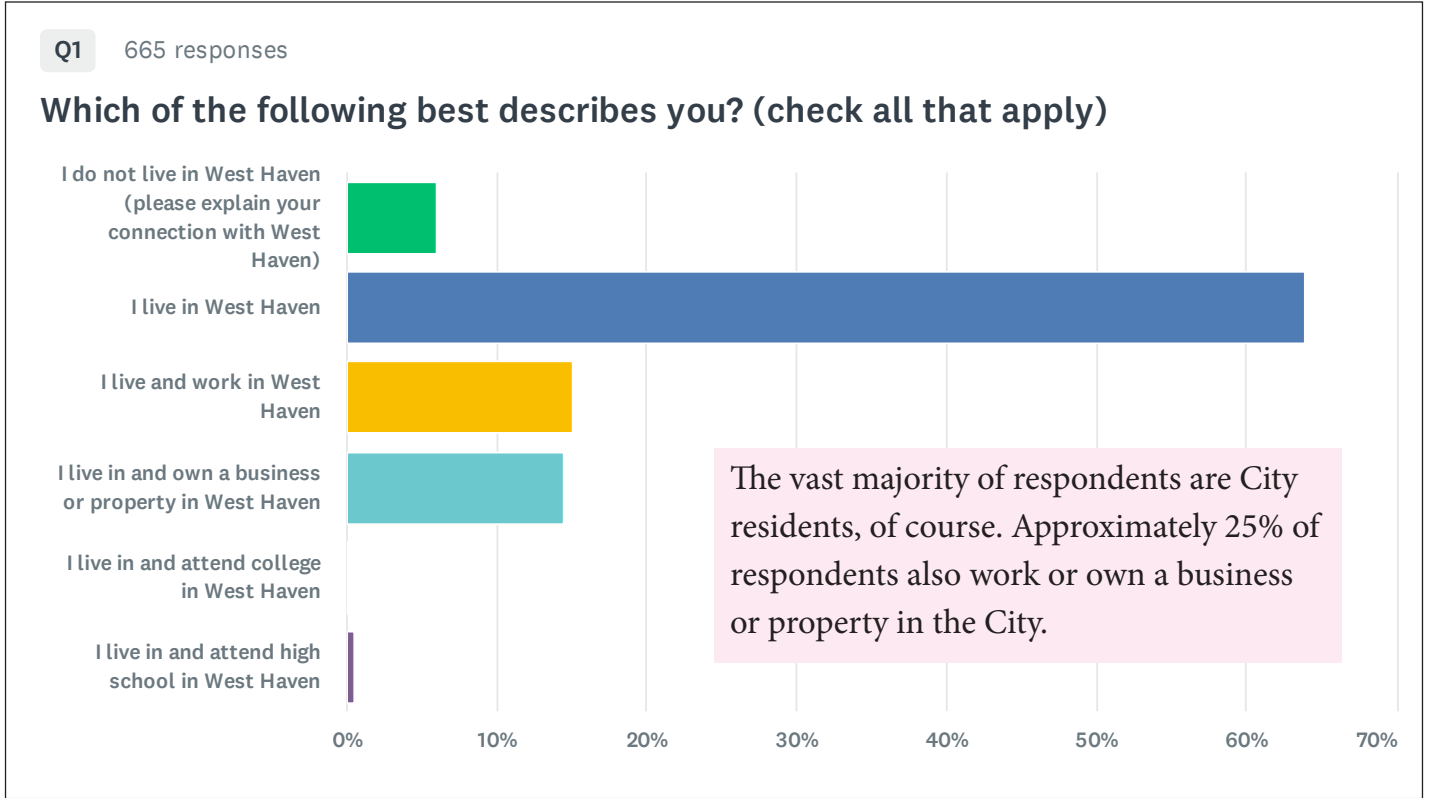


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## Q1-Q4. Demographics of the Survey Respondents

Thank you to the approximately 600 people who completed the Citywide Survey. Those people who checked off the “I do not live in West Haven” box on Question 1 were not shown the remaining demographic questions. The majority of non-residents report that they work in West Haven.

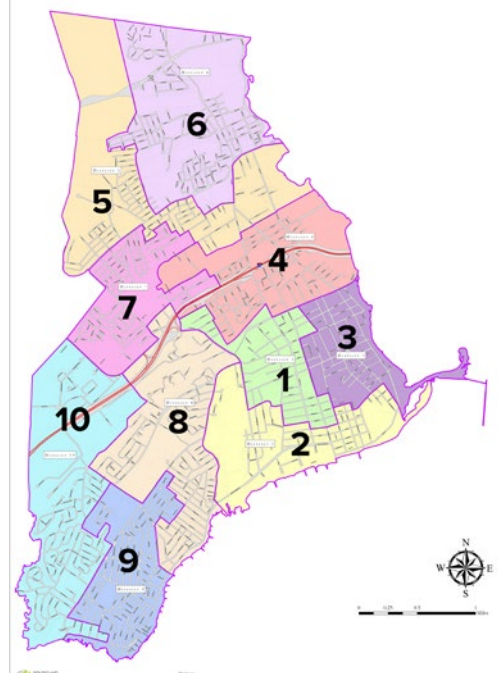
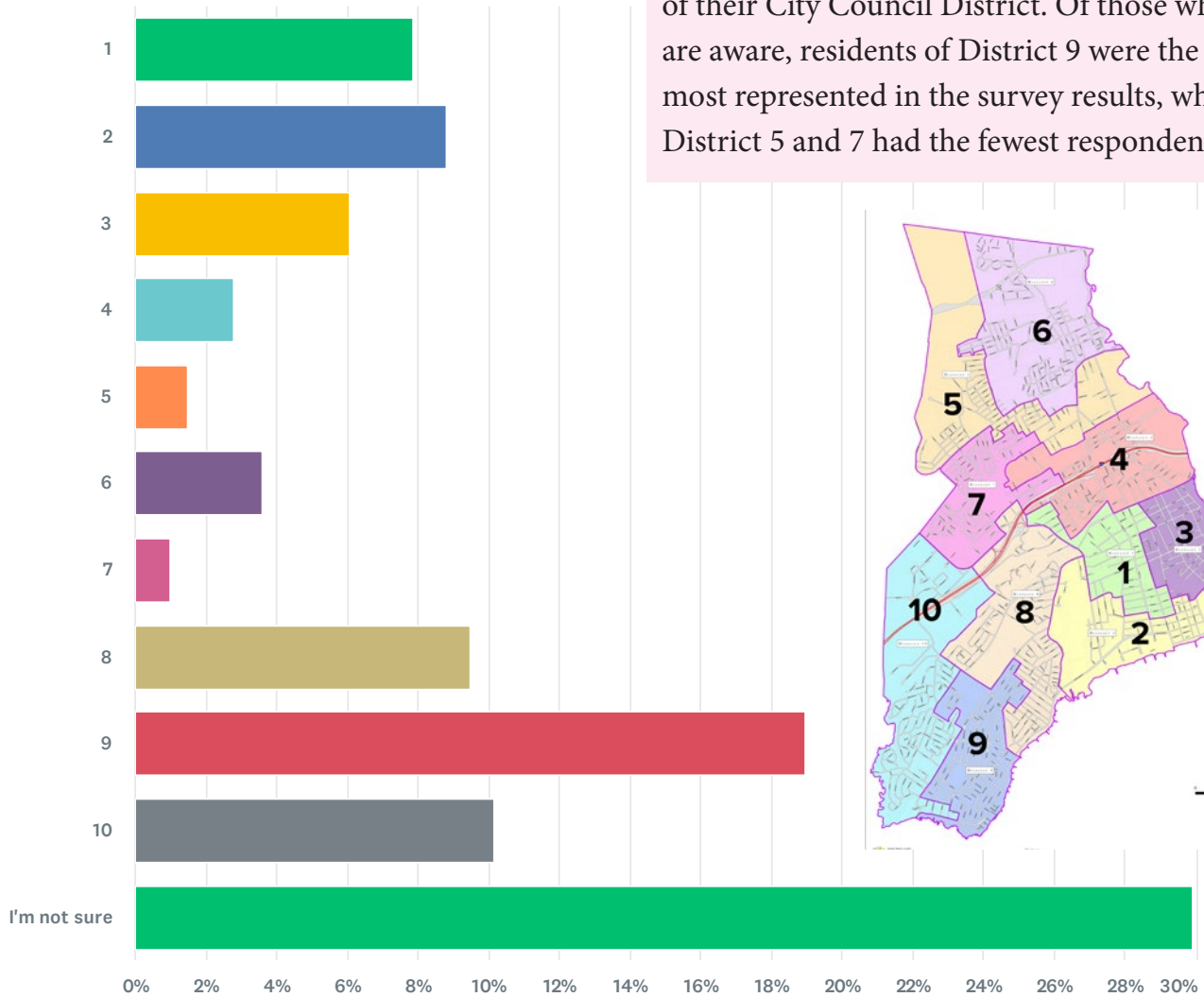


# Demographics of the Survey Respondents

Q3 612 responses

## In which City Council District do you live?

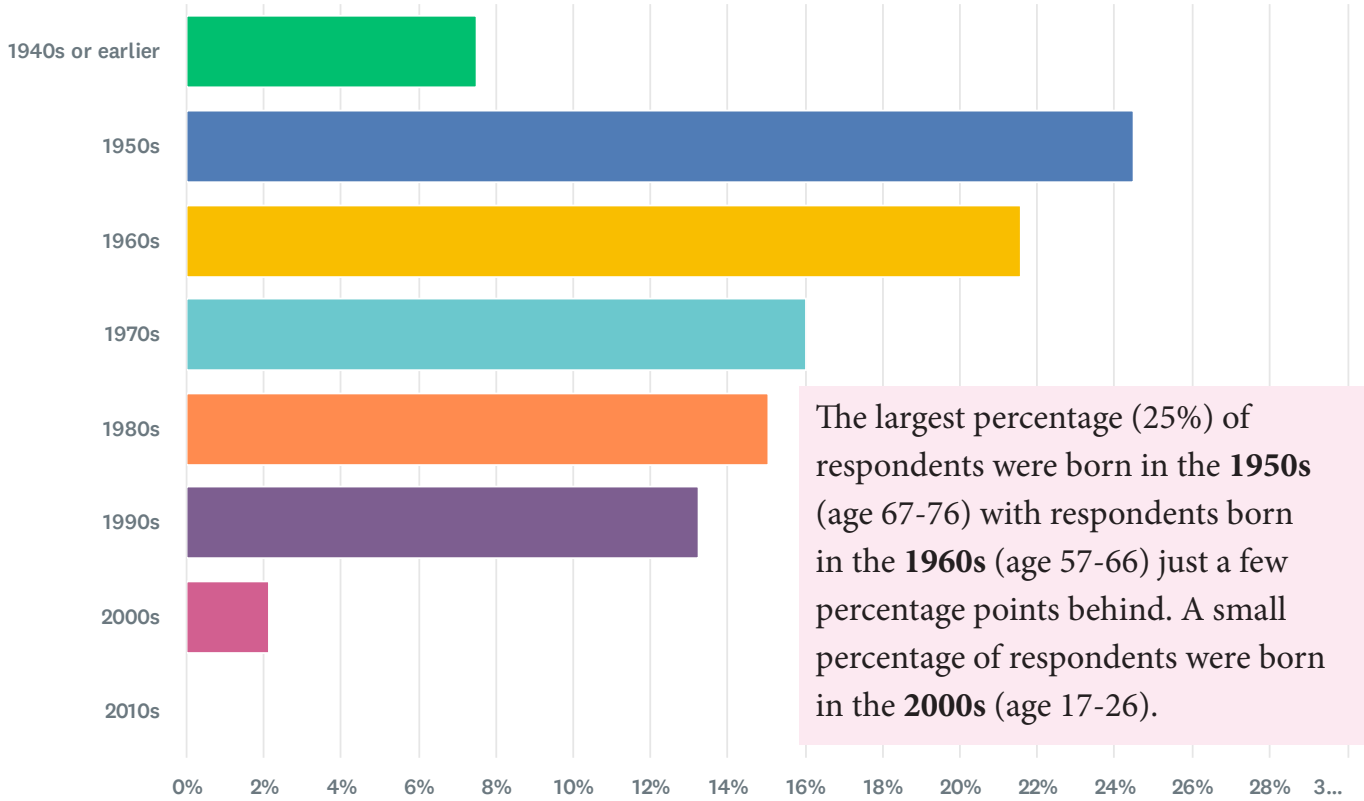
Approximately 30% of residents are not sure of their City Council District. Of those who are aware, residents of District 9 were the most represented in the survey results, while District 5 and 7 had the fewest respondents.



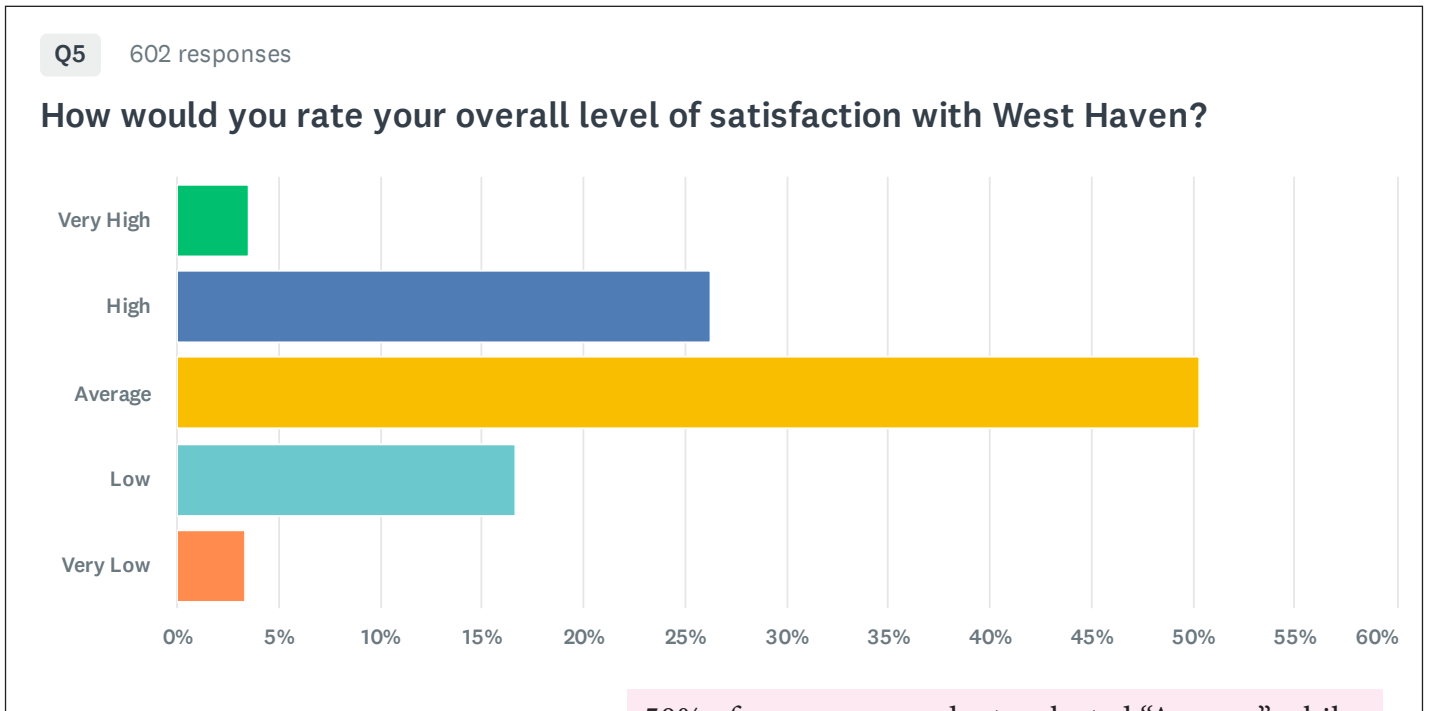
# Demographics of the Survey Respondents

Q4 612 responses

In which decade were you born?



### Q5. How would you rate your overall level of satisfaction with West Haven?



50% of survey respondents selected “Average” while 35% selected “High.” Approximately 16% selected “Low.” The responses to the subsequent questions might help explain these results.

## Q6. What do you like most about West Haven?

### Core Attractions

- **The Shoreline and Beaches:** By far the most common response, residents cited the beaches, Long Island Sound, and the boardwalk/walking paths as the city's greatest assets. Many specifically mentioned the beautiful shoreline and the bird sanctuary.
- **Community Spirit:** There is a strong Westie pride. Residents frequently noted how the community comes together during crises or to support neighbors in need.
- **Diversity:** Many respondents value the City as a melting pot with a diverse population, variety of cultures, and unpretentious atmosphere.

### Governance and Growth

- **The Current Administration:** Numerous residents expressed confidence in the Mayor, citing her motivation, transparency, and the visible improvements/revitalization occurring under her leadership.
- **City Services:** Praise was given to the City's emergency services (police and fire), the Public Works Department, and the Library system.
- **Potential:** Several residents noted they like the City's potential and the fact that improvements are finally being made to update the City's value.

### Location and Lifestyle

- **Accessibility:** Residents appreciate the proximity to major highways (I-95 and I-91), train stations (Metro-North), and neighboring cities like New Haven and New York City.
- **Walkability:** Certain areas, particularly Downtown and near the Green, were highlighted for being very walkable and providing easy access to shopping and municipal buildings.
- **Recreation and Dining:** The variety of local restaurants (especially Italian and pizza), summer festivals, and parks/playgrounds were frequently mentioned as highlights.

*“What I love most about West Haven is its people — and the variety of experiences, neighborhoods, and perspectives that make the town feel connected in its own special way. I believe this is what makes West Haven stand out and one of a kind.”*

## Q7. What needs the most improvement in West Haven?

### Economic and Fiscal Concerns

- **Business Development:** There is a strong desire for more commercial and industrial businesses to expand the tax base and reduce the burden on residential homeowners.
- **High Taxes:** Numerous residents expressed that property taxes and the mill rate are too high, making it difficult to afford living in the city.
- **Vacant and Stalled Projects:** Many comments were about the need to develop abandoned properties, specifically citing the former The Haven site, the Armstrong building, and vacant storefronts on Campbell Avenue.

### Infrastructure and Cleanliness

- **Roads and Sidewalks:** Potholes and crumbling road conditions were among the most frequent complaints. Many residents also called for the repair or addition of sidewalks and better street lighting.
- **Blight and Property Maintenance:** Respondents frequently noted blighted properties, citing a lack of upkeep by absentee landlords and a need for stricter code enforcement.
- **Litter and Trash:** Significant concerns were raised regarding litter on streets and beaches, the need for more public trash cans, and better city-wide cleaning services.

### Urban Revitalization

- **Downtown/Center District:** A vast majority of respondents identified Downtown and Campbell Avenue as needing a major makeover to attract more high-end or upscale shops, restaurants, and cafes.
- **Shoreline Development:** While many value the beach, they noted a need for better amenities, such as clean permanent restrooms, more family-friendly activities, and better-maintained parking lots.
- **Allingtown Area:** Residents in this neighborhood feel neglected, citing a lack of services like a library or grocery store and concerns over the University of New Haven's expansion.

### Public Safety and Quality of Life

- **Crime and Safety:** Residents expressed concerns over rising crime, drug use in public spaces, and unruly behavior at the boardwalk and green.
- **Traffic and Noise:** Reckless driving, speeding, and noise pollution from loud car exhausts and motorbikes were cited as significant nuisances.
- **Youth Activities:** There is a perceived lack of "third spaces" or constructive activities for teenagers and youth, leading to calls for better community centers or enrichment programs.
- **Housing Issues:** Comments were split between the need for more affordable housing and a desire to stop the development of more apartments in favor of owner-occupied homes.

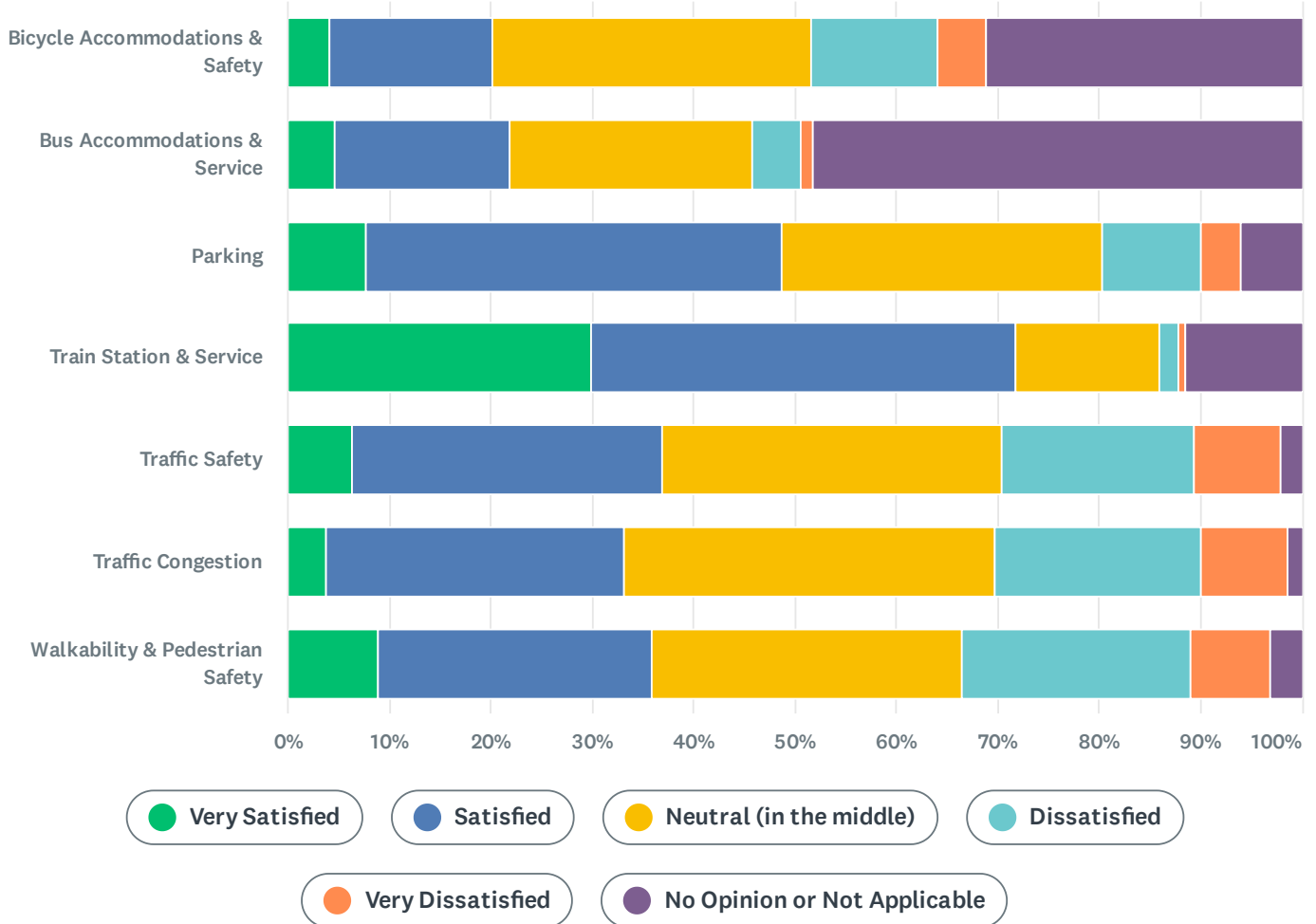
### Governance and Services

- **Transparency and Professionalism:** Some residents called for better communication from City Hall, more transparency in budgeting, and a reduction in perceived nepotism within City departments.
- **Public Services:** Improvements are desired for the public school system, library facilities (including a branch for Allingtown), and social services for the homeless and veterans.

## Q8. Topic: Transportation

Q8 588 responses

Rate your overall level of satisfaction with the following Transportation topics in West Haven:



The topic that received the most satisfaction (“Very Satisfied” and “Satisfied” combined at 70%) was **Train Station & Service**. Many respondents selected “No Opinion or Not Applicable” for the categories of **Bicycle Accommodations & Safety** and **Bus Accommodations & Services**, most likely because they do not use these modes of transportation.

## Q8. Topic: Transportation (Summary of Open-Ended Comments)

### Traffic Safety and Enforcement

- **Reckless Driving:** Residents frequently reported high rates of speeding, running red lights, and ignoring stop signs.
- **Target Areas:** Ocean Avenue was repeatedly cited as dangerous due to speeding, racing, and loud mufflers. Other problematic areas include First Avenue, Elm Street, and Jones Hill Road.
- **Enforcement Needs:** Many respondents called for increased police presence and stricter ticketing. Some suggested traffic cameras, speed tables, or flashing stop signs to curb dangerous behavior.
- **Non-Vehicular Hazards:** There is significant frustration with groups of youths on bikes or dirt bikes blocking traffic and riding recklessly.

### Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure

- **Sidewalk Deficiencies:** A major theme is the lack of sidewalks, particularly in the northern part of the city and West Shore area. Residents noted that existing sidewalks are often broken, uneven, or obstructed by overgrown bushes and parked cars.
- **Safe Connectivity:** Many feel it is unsafe to walk or bike to work or school because of narrow roads and a lack of dedicated bike lanes.
- **Shoreline Assets:** While the boardwalk is praised, residents requested it be extended and better protected from motorized scooters and mopeds.

### Public Transit and the Train Station

- **Train Station Amenities:** Multiple residents requested coffee service or concessions at the train station.
- **Parking Issues:** There are frequent complaints about inadequate parking at the train station, with calls for more spaces and the allowance of overnight parking in all lots.
- **Bus Services:** Feedback included requests for bus shelters to be replaced, better route information, and improved connections between the train station and other city areas.

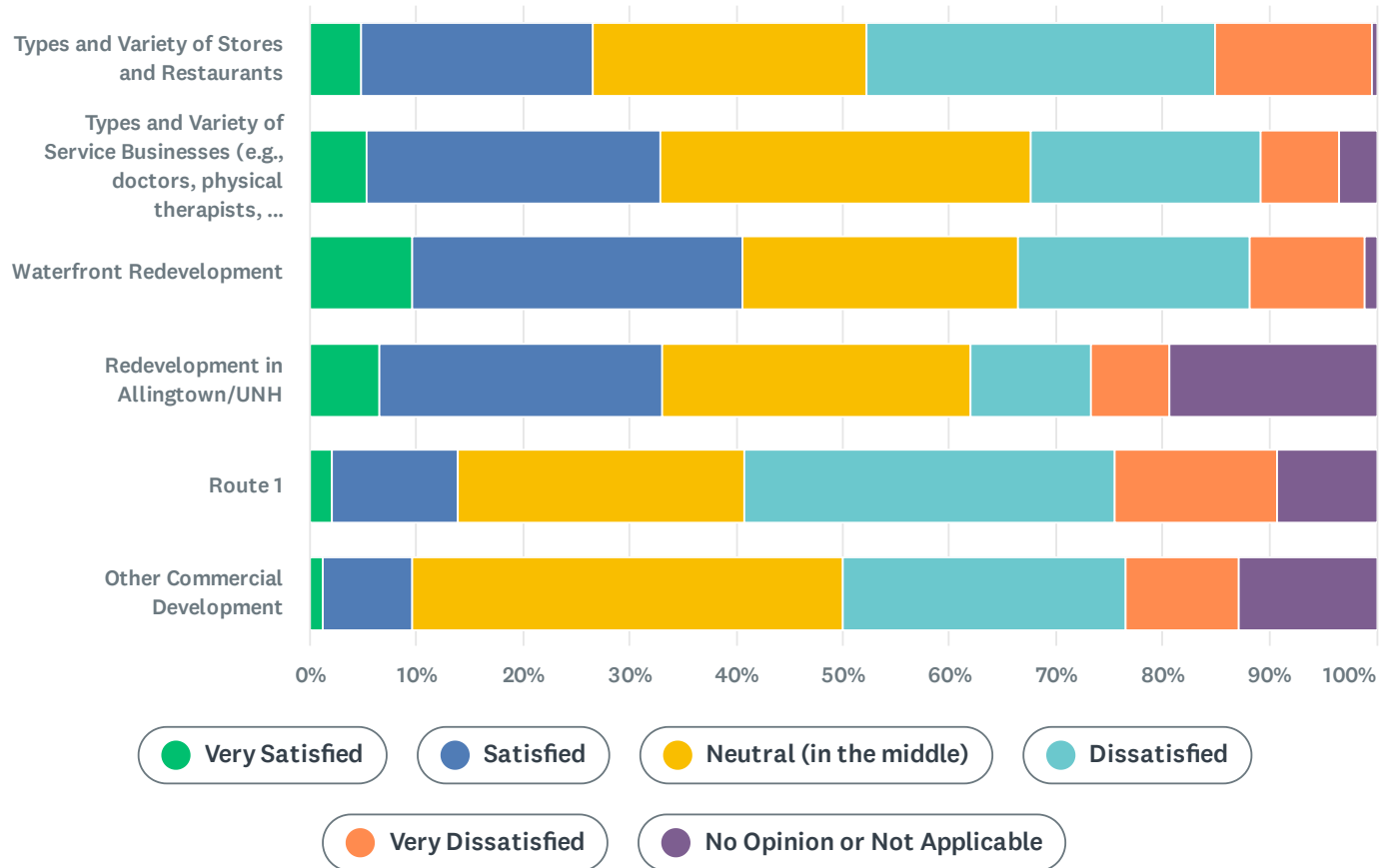
### Congestion and Traffic Management

- **Bottlenecks:** Significant congestion was noted at the Kimberly Ave Bridge, Saw Mill Road, and the I-95 ramps.
- **Signal Optimization:** Residents suggested that traffic light timing should be re-evaluated at major intersections like Campbell Avenue and Elm Street to improve flow.

## Q9. Topic: Economic Development

Q9 572 responses

Rate your overall level of satisfaction with the following Economic Development topics in West Haven:



The subtopic that received the most satisfaction (“Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied” combined at 40%) was **Waterfront Redevelopment**. However, almost as many respondents (approximately 30%) were either “Very Dissatisfied” or “Dissatisfied” with this subtopic.

## Q9. Topic: Economic Development (Summary of Open-Ended Comments)

### Commercial Variety and Business Mix

- **Excess of Certain Businesses:** A common complaint is the oversaturation of smoke shops, vape shops, liquor stores, nail salons, and dollar stores, which residents feel detract from the City's appeal.
- **Desired Establishments:** Residents expressed a strong desire for more diverse options, including coffee shops, bakeries, specialty boutiques, upscale restaurants, and family-friendly entertainment.
- **Regional Comparisons:** Many respondents favorably compared neighboring towns like Milford, Orange, and Branford to West Haven, noting that they often leave the West Haven to shop or dine elsewhere.

### The Shoreline and Waterfront

- **Mixed Progress:** While some residents are pleased with recent improvements like the Riva restaurant and the demolition of the Debonair, others feel development is moving too slowly.
- **Jimmie's:** There is some disappointment regarding the New England Brewing Co. deal and the long-standing issues surrounding the now-closed Jimmie's of Savin Rock.
- **Development vs. Preservation:** Opinions are split on shoreline housing; some want more mixed-use development, while others strongly oppose condominiums that block beach views and prefer preserving open space.

### Target Areas for Improvement

- **The Haven:** This property is frequently cited as a disgrace and a blight that needs immediate attention and an updated plan.
- **Route 1 (Boston Post Road):** Residents described this area as run down compared to sections of the road in Orange and Milford.
- **Downtown/Campbell Avenue:** The City Center is seen as needing a face lift and a more welcoming atmosphere to become a destination for families.
- **Allingtown and UNH:** While some appreciate the revitalization near the University of New Haven (UNH), others worry about the university monopolizing buildings and taking property off the tax rolls.

### Economic Concerns and Policy

- **Tax Base:** A primary goal for many residents is to attract big businesses and commercial development to help offset the heavy tax burden on homeowners.
- **Pace of Development:** There is a recurring sentiment that the City is too slow to approve projects and complete demolitions of eyesores.
- **Housing Balance:** Some residents criticized the constant building of apartments and condos, suggesting that the City needs more actual businesses and community spaces instead.

## Q10. Do you have any ideas for the site of The Haven project?

### Mixed-Use Development

A significant portion of respondents suggested a "live, work, play" model. Common proposals include:

- **Retail and Dining:** Small shops, boutiques, and waterfront restaurants with outdoor seating.
- **Residential Components:** High-end or market-rate condominiums and apartments, often situated above retail spaces.
- **Specific Anchors:** Several residents explicitly mentioned Stew Leonard's, breweries, or food halls as ideal tenants to draw visitors.

### Recreation and Public Space

Many residents prioritized keeping the waterfront accessible to the public rather than restricted to private owners.

- **Outdoor Activities:** Suggestions include a new boardwalk, walking and biking paths, splash pads, and dog parks.
- **Parks and Environment:** Some prefer the land remain undeveloped as a waterfront park, a wildlife sanctuary, or a coastline resiliency project to protect against flooding.
- **Sports Facilities:** Proposals include an indoor sports complex (similar to Chelsea Piers), a hockey rink for the University of New Haven (UNH), or a municipal par-three golf course.

### Entertainment and Culture

To make West Haven a destination, residents suggested:

- **Performance Venues:** An outdoor amphitheater for concerts, a movie theater, or a live performance playhouse.
- **Family Fun:** Mini-golf, an aquarium, an arcade, or a "Savin Rock II" amusement area.

### Residential Concerns and Restrictions

Housing is a fairly divisive topic among survey participants:

- **Opposed to Housing:** Some residents are opposed to new housing and apartments, citing concerns about overcrowding and the burden on city resources. Several respondents requested no affordable housing, advocating instead for luxury condos or senior-living communities (55+).
- **Support for Housing:** Conversely, some residents emphasized the need for more medium-density communities or affordable units to address housing needs.

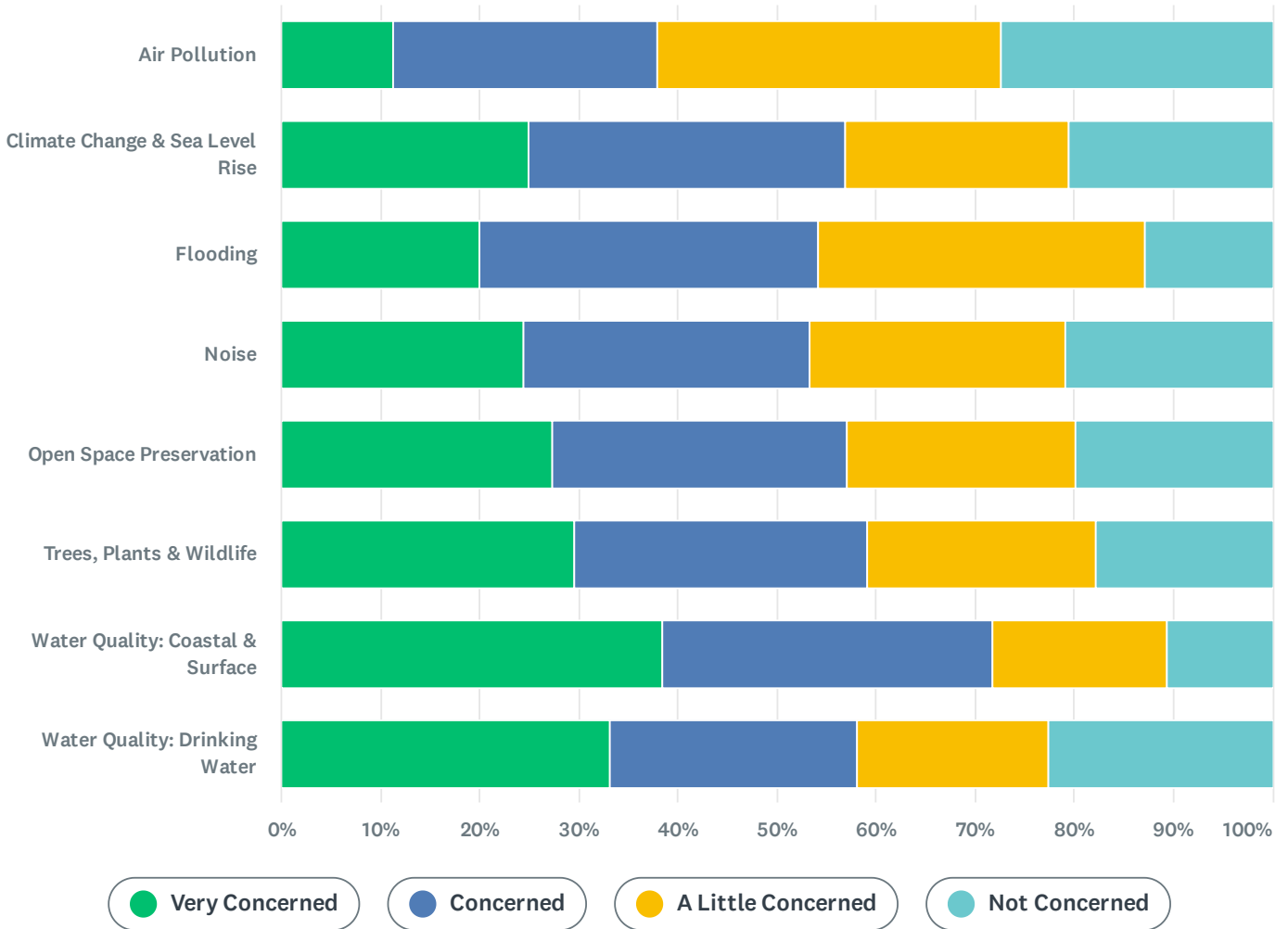
### Major Concerns

- **Traffic Congestion:** Many noted that traffic on Elm Street and the Kimberly Avenue bridge is already terrible and must be addressed before any major development proceeds.
- **Tax Revenue:** There is a strong desire for the property to be a tax-paying entity to reduce the burden on local homeowners, with several residents warning against letting non-profit universities (like Yale or UNH) take the land off the tax rolls.

## Q11. Topic: The Environment

Q11 561 responses

Rate your level of concern about these Environmental topics in West Haven:



Respondents are most concerned about **Water Quality: Coastal & Surface**, with approximately 70% being “Very Concerned” or “Concerned.” **Trees, Plans & Wildlife** is next, followed by **Climate Change & Sea Level Rise**.

## Q11. Topic: The Environment (Summary of Open-Ended Comments)

### Coastal and Water Management

- **Beach Erosion and Resilience:** Many residents are worried about beach erosion and the City's preparedness for rising sea levels and future storms. While some appreciate the addition of dunes and fencing, others criticize past sand replenishment efforts as ineffective.
- **Water Quality:** Concerns were raised regarding drinking water occasionally appearing brown and tasting poor, with some residents calling for the removal of fluoride.
- **Shoreline Protection:** There is a strong call to protect the bird sanctuary and maintain the intertidal ecosystem, which some feel has been damaged by excessive development and sand movement.

### Noise and Light Pollution

- **Vehicular Noise:** A predominant concern is noise pollution from loud motorcycles, cars with modified exhausts, and drag racing, particularly along Ocean Avenue and near the beaches.
- **Commercial and Social Noise:** Residents mentioned noise issues related to Airbnb rentals, raves on Bull Hill Lane and at the beach, and loud music from bars.
- **Light Pollution:** Some respondents noted that excessive lighting from storefronts and parking lots creates glare and disrupts the community's character.

### Open Space and Wildlife

- **Habitat Loss:** Several comments criticized the knocking down of woods for housing, noting that wildlife—including coyotes and rabbits—is increasingly being pushed into residential yards.
- **Preservation vs. Development:** Residents urge the City to preserve remaining open space and create pocket parks rather than building on small, vacant lots that contribute to a feeling of overcrowding.
- **Vegetation:** While some residents appreciate the cutting back of vegetation to improve water views from the boardwalk, others emphasized the need for more trees and the planting of native, indigenous species to prevent erosion and support pollinators.

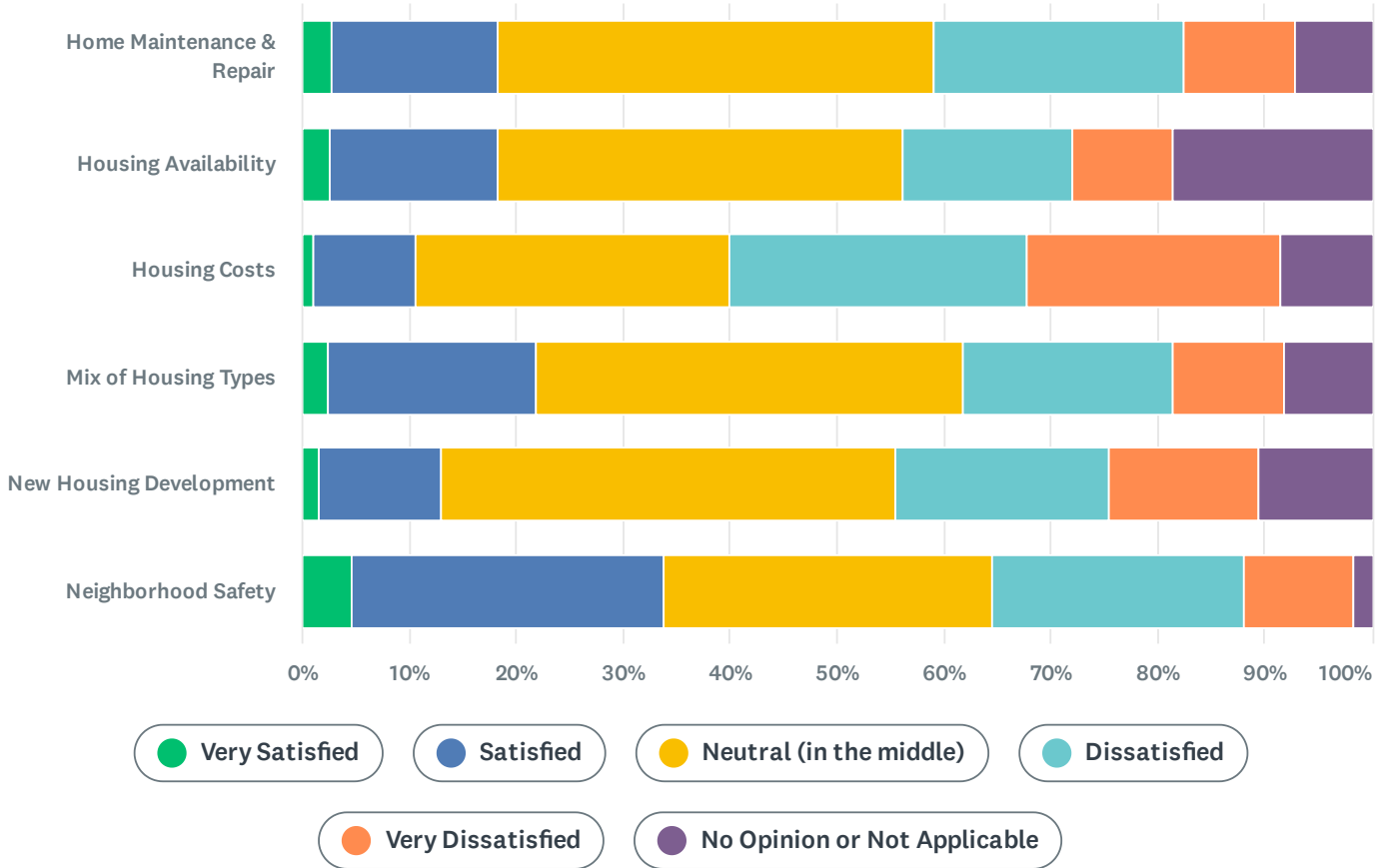
### Pollution and Infrastructure

- **Litter and Dumping:** There are reports of significant litter along the beaches, marshes, and high school grounds, as well as an increase in illegal dumping.
- **Sewer Concerns:** Multiple residents expressed concern over the sewage treatment plant, mentioning frequent sewage smells and the potential for water pollution in the Sound.
- **Flooding:** Basement flooding in areas like Peck Avenue is a growing issue, which some residents attribute to rising underground water levels near the shore.

## Q12. Topic: Housing & Neighborhoods

Q12 555 responses

Rate your level of satisfaction with these Housing & Neighborhood topics:



Respondents are generally most satisfied with **Neighborhood Safety** out of all of the subtopics. Residents are generally dissatisfied with **Housing Costs**, which is a issue nationwide. The chart shows that many respondents were “Neutral (in the middle)” on most, if not all, of the subtopics.

## Q12. Topic: Housing & Neighborhoods (Summary of Open-Ended Comments)

### Blight and Property Maintenance

- **Widespread Neglect:** A primary concern is the number of unkempt properties, characterized by overgrown grass, boarded-up windows, and houses in general disrepair.
- **Absentee Landlords:** Residents frequently blame "slumlords" and absentee owners for failing to maintain rental units and for allowing "hoarder homes" to exist without consequence.
- **Enforcement Gaps:** Many respondents believe the City's blight enforcement is inadequate, suggesting that officials should proactively identify violations rather than waiting for neighbor complaints.
- **Junk and Litter:** Specific complaints include cars being used for trash storage, junk-filled yards that attract rats, and furniture graveyards in certain areas.

### Housing Development and Density

- **Opposition to New Housing:** There is significant pushback against further apartment complexes, condos, and multi-family units, with residents stating the city is already overcrowded and congested.
- **Aesthetics and Design:** Some residents dislike the raised ranch style being built on small, subdivided lots, arguing these homes lack character and don't fit the aesthetics of established neighborhoods.
- **Impact on Services:** Multiple comments suggest that high-density housing is a drain on services like police and fire without generating enough tax revenue to compensate.
- **Preservation of Open Space:** Residents expressed a desire to stop squeezing houses on every inch of land to preserve what little open space remains.

### Affordability and Taxes

- **High Property Taxes:** Residents strongly feel that property and car taxes are too high relative to the services and safety provided, with some considering moving to nearby towns like Milford for better value.
- **Difficulty for Locals:** While home values have risen, lifelong residents, Millennials, and Gen Z report being priced out of the city, finding market rates and taxes unattainable even on decent salaries.
- **Senior Options:** There is a noted lack of housing options for seniors who wish to downsize but remain in West Haven.

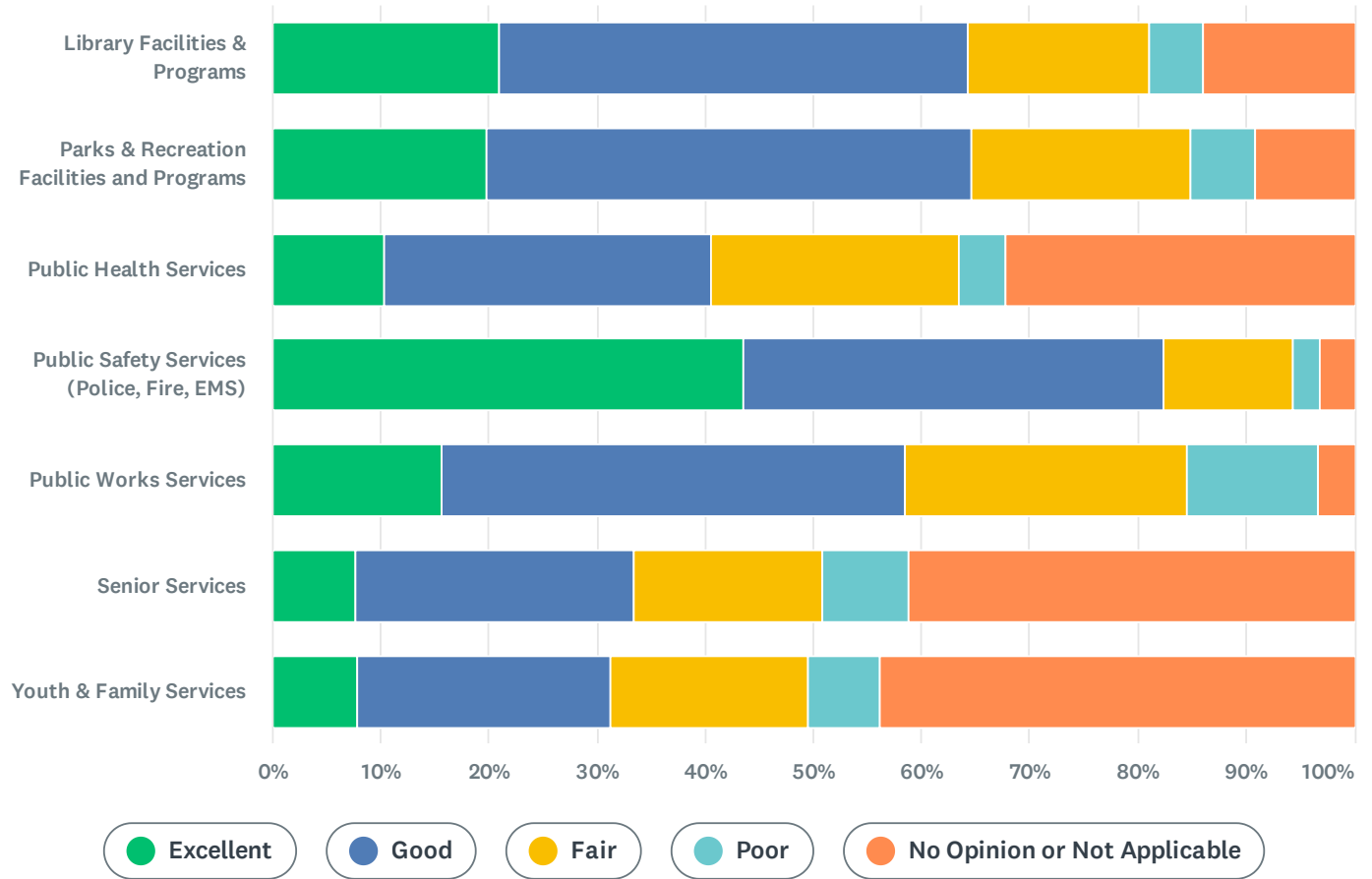
### Neighborhood Safety and Quality of Life

- **Rising Crime Concerns:** While some feel safe in their specific pockets (like West Shore), many are worried about frequent car break-ins, thefts, shootings, and street takeovers.
- **Noise Pollution:** Neighborhood peace is often disrupted by loud music, unruly mobs of kids, and motorcycles or mopeds tearing through residential neighborhoods.
- **Zoning and Variances:** Some residents expressed concern regarding the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), suggesting that the variance approval process should be tightened to prevent developers from bypassing rules.

## Q13. Topic: City Facilities & Services

Q13 552 responses

Rate the following City facilities and services:



**Public Safety Services** received the most “Excellent” ratings out of all of the subtopics. Generally speaking, all of the other City facilities and services were also well-regarded by the majority of respondents. However, all of the subtopics received some “Fair” and “Poor” ratings. The open-ended comments on the next page provide some insights.

## Q13. Topic: City Facilities & Services (Summary of Open-Ended Comments)

### Public Safety (Police, Fire, and EMS)

- **Visibility and Enforcement:** There is a strong desire for more visible patrolling; residents note that officers do not seem to be in areas that would deter crime.
- **Structural Efficiency:** Multiple respondents questioned the necessity of having three separate fire districts and multiple fire chiefs for a city of 50,000, calling for a more consolidated and efficient system.
- **Police Interactions:** Many residents praise the WHPD and First Shore FD for their hard work under stressful conditions. Some report unfavorable interactions with dispatch and officers.
- **Ambulance Costs:** Some residents expressed frustration with AMR (the ambulance service) for being out-of-network for many insurance companies, leading to high out-of-pocket costs that discourage people from calling for help.

### Library and Community Resources

- **Allingtown Branch:** A recurring complaint is the loss of the Allingtown library. Residents are demanding its return, noting that its absence leaves a significant portion of the City without local resources.
- **Funding and Space:** The Main Library on Elm Street is described as underfunded and too small for a city of West Haven's size compared to neighboring towns like Milford or Orange.
- **Human Services:** While the City's social worker received high praise, residents feel she needs an assistant to adequately support the unhoused population.

### Public Works and Infrastructure

- **Snow Removal:** Opinions on snow plowing are divided; some residents are grateful for the speed of removal, while others complain about plows leaving dead-end streets partially cleared or damaging curbs.
- **Sanitation and Maintenance:** There is a call for more frequent bulk trash pickups to prevent illegal dumping and for more trash cans along the beach and Bradley Rock area to manage pet waste.

### Parks, Recreation, and Youth Services

- **Youth Engagement:** A major theme is the lack of activities for teenagers. Residents are asking for a dedicated youth center and more robust after-school programming to keep kids off the streets.
- **Park Maintenance:** Recent improvements to the Parks and Recreation website and adult exercise programs were praised. Residents noted that smaller pocket parks often lack basic maintenance like weed trimming.
- **Beach Facilities:** A common frustration is that beach bathrooms are rarely open, and the removal of the local skate park (replaced by parking) has left children without a safe place to ride.
- **Senior Services:** Residents are eager for the new Senior Center to open, but some noted that current programs can feel inaccessible due to limited transportation and changing instructors.

## Q14. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

### Economic Development & Taxes

- **Tax Burden:** A recurring theme is the high property tax burden, with many calling for lower taxes to prevent long-term residents from leaving.
- **Business Growth:** Residents urged the city to become more business-friendly and attract a variety of industries—including tech, corporate, and high-end retail—to offset the tax burden on homeowners.
- **Downtown Revitalization:** Many described Downtown as an eyesore, suggesting a complete overhaul with mixed-use buildings (shops below, condos above) and better quality restaurants.
- **University Contributions:** There are calls for the University of New Haven (UNH) to compensate the City for property removed from the tax rolls.

### Public Safety & Quality of Life

- **Crime & Policing:** Respondents requested an increased police presence to address car thefts, loitering, and unruly youth. Opinions on traffic cameras are mixed, with some wanting more and others viewing them as ineffective.
- **Blight Enforcement:** Many comments highlighted a need for aggressive enforcement of blight laws to clean up run-down properties and eyesores such as the deteriorating building that housed Jimmie's.
- **Youth & Senior Services:** There is a strong call for more affordable youth programs to keep kids off the streets and away from trouble, as well as better tax breaks and services for senior citizens.

### Shoreline & Housing

- **Waterfront Development:** The shoreline is widely seen as the City's star asset. Suggestions for its future include a new boardwalk, a splash pad, kayak racks, and more restaurants, while others warned against overdevelopment to protect natural areas like Sandy Point.
- **Housing Concerns:** This is a polarizing topic; some residents demand no more luxury condos or multi-family homes, while others advocate for more housing and one-bedroom units to attract young workers and grow the tax base.
- **Short-Term Rentals:** Several residents called for stricter ordinances or a total ban on Airbnbs and short-term rentals.

### Administration & Governance

- **Leadership:** Many respondents praise the Mayor for her professionalism, transparency, and ability to secure state grants.
- **Planning:** Residents called for a more cohesive and comprehensive long-term development plan that doesn't stop and start between administrations.