



Mackenzie District Council Resource And Building Consents Processes Survey 2019-20

Research Report | July 2020





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Key Findings





42% of respondents that applied for building consents were satisfied with the quality of the service they received.

- The performance target of >80% satisfaction has not been met.
- This has been declining since 2018 and is now at its lowest point since 2016.



20% of applicants that applied for resource consents were satisfied with the quality of the service they received.

- The performance target of >80% satisfaction has not been met.
- This has been declining since 2018 and is now at its lowest point since 2016.



The levels of satisfaction with Council staff have been declining since 2018. This year there is a further decline in overall satisfaction levels for all consents applicants. The decline is likely related to the key areas for suggested improvement that include:

SUGGESTION FOR IMPROVEMENT	Building Consent	Resource Consent
Improve communication before and during the application process	✓	✓
Process applications in a timely manner	✓	✓
Review the fees structure	✓	✓
Improve consultant and staff knowledge base	✓	✓
Have one inspector per consent	✓	
Simplify the process of application	✓	
Have more consistent application rules		✓
Have a more reasonable approach		✓

Context and Method



2.1 Context

The resource and building consents survey for Mackenzie District Council provides an efficient way to understand experience of the consents process, identify service improvements, and monitor satisfaction levels over time.

Having been used to assess building and resource applicants' perspectives since 2016, the survey allows for consistent trend analysis to identify changes in satisfaction levels.

2.2 Method

The questionnaire was developed by Research First for the 2015-16 survey and has been repeated yearly since.

It uses an online method of a short series of 5-point scale questions to measure satisfaction or agreement and includes one open ended question where respondents are invited to list suggested improvements to the consents service.

In 2020, it was agreed between Mackenzie District Council and Research First to better differentiate between building and resource consents in order to more fully understand the satisfaction and perspectives of those who had applied for both.

2.3 Sampling

Email addresses are available for most applicants that apply for consent through Mackenzie District Council. All applicants for resource or building consent in the period from 1st July 2019 to 19 June 2020 for which email addresses were held were invited to provide feedback via an online survey.

After de-duplicating the full database to ensure an applicant only received the survey once, emails were sent to 255 applicants. Reminders were sent periodically to those who had not yet completed the survey and it was eventually closed on 14th July 2019 with 65 unique applicants, 3 of whom had applied for both building and resources consents.

This represents a 25% response rate which is very reasonable for a survey of this kind and is on par with response rates in 2019 (24%) and 2018 (24%).¹

With the relatively high response rate, results are a robust indication of service performance. However, the sample sizes are low, therefore comparisons between sample type and years should be viewed with caution.

Please also note that each of the three respondents that had applied for both resource and building consents were included as two unique respondents when reporting the overall total, and were also counted as unique in the building and resource consents categories. This differs from previous years, when questions did not delineate between the types of consent applied for.

¹ To increase response rates it is recommended that the 2020-21 survey is conducted through two survey points (for example in November and June) allowing people to provide feedback closer to their service experience which will also improve data quality.

Table 2.1. 2020 Sample outcome

Building consents	66%	48
Resource consents	25%	20
Total	68 ²	

² While only 65 unique applicants responded to the survey, an additional 3 respondents have been added to the total because those who applied for both building and resource consents (n=3) were counted as unique for the overall total.

Results in Detail



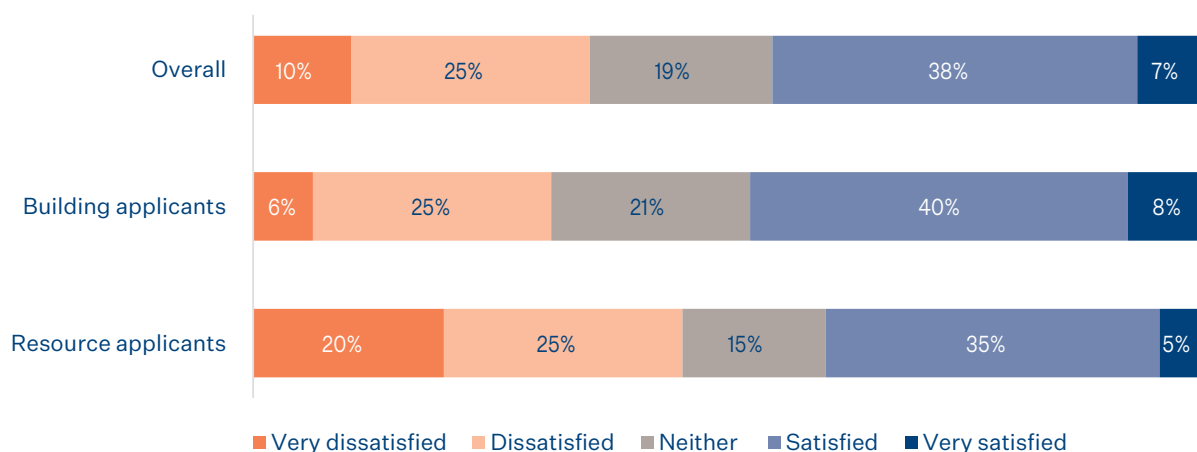
3.1 Helpfulness and Accessibility of Council Staff

In 2020, overall 45% of consents applicants were satisfied with the helpfulness and accessibility of Council staff. 48% of building applicants were satisfied while 40% of the resource consent applicants were satisfied.

Satisfaction levels with Council staff show a decreasing trend over 2018, 2019 and 2020. This year's satisfaction levels are at the lowest point for building applicants since 2016, although for resource applicants satisfaction levels remain stable (41% in 2019 and 40% in 2020).

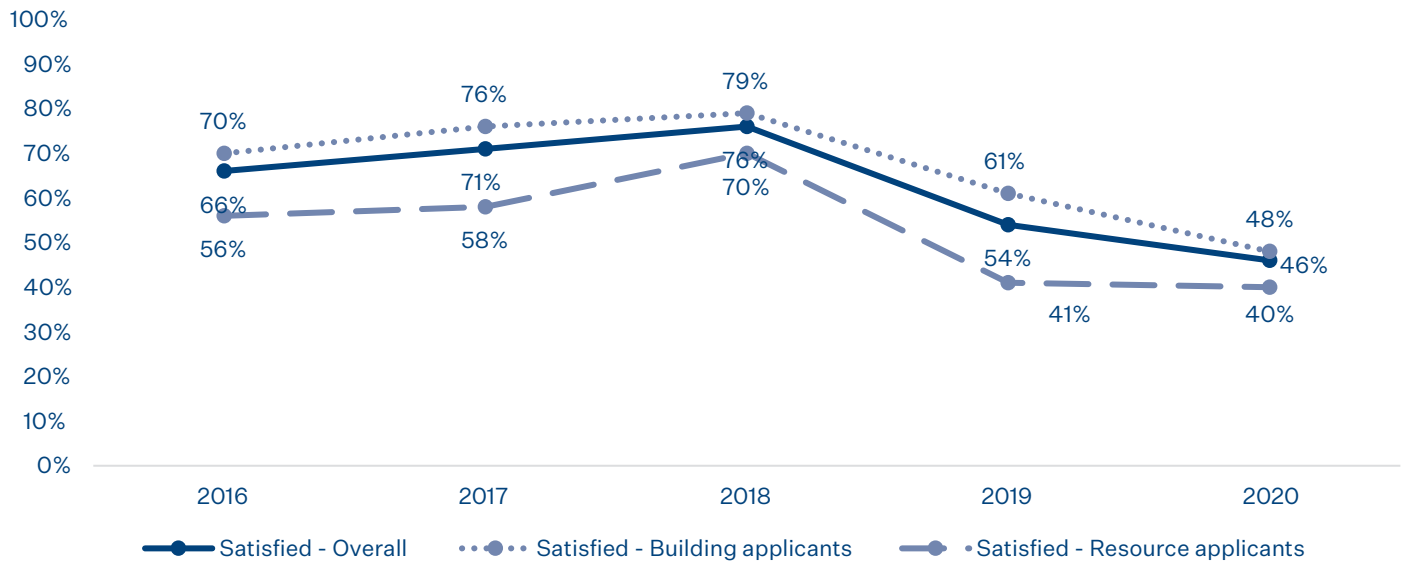
“ The planners need to actually take into consideration what the application is for rather than just asking for more information and getting the applicant to pay for expensive reports that are not required.... They seem to hide behind process rather than wanting to make decisions.

Figure 3.1 Level of satisfaction with helpfulness and accessibility of Council staff - 2020



Base: 2020 (Overall n=68, Building n=48, Resource n=20)

Figure 3.2 Satisfied with helpfulness and accessibility of Council staff – Trend Analysis



Base: 2020 (Overall n=68, Building n=48, Resource n=20; 2019 (Overall n=79, Building n=46, Resource n=22); 2018 (Overall n=67, Building n=42, Resource n=23); 2017 (Overall n=126, Building n=75, Resource n=38); 2016 ((Overall n=108, Building n=74, Resource n=34).

3.2 Charges and Time Commitments

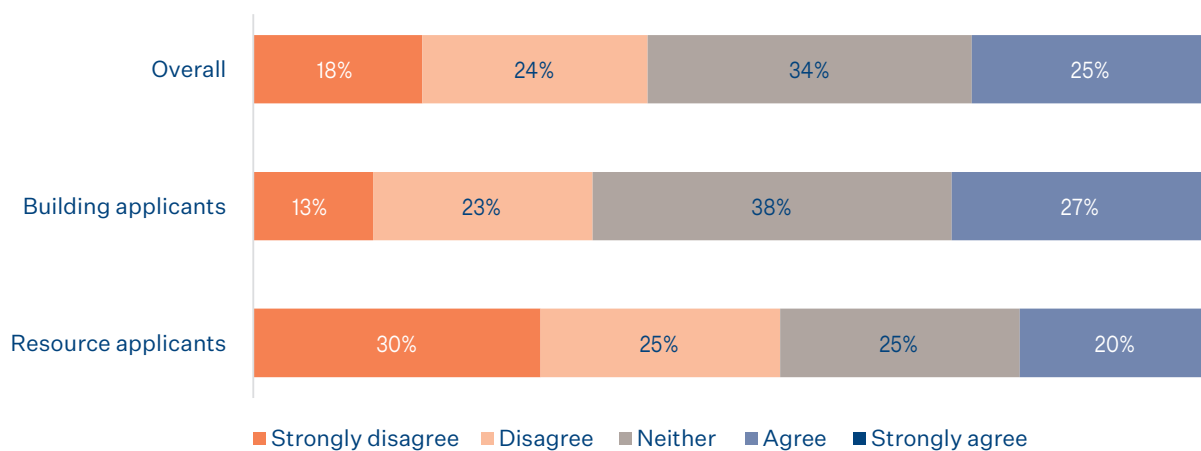
When asked about costs, 25% of applicants agreed that charges and time commitments were reasonable, fair and in line with expectations. A third neither agreed nor disagreed, while 41% disagreed.

When broken down by category, 27% of building applicants agreed the costs were reasonable while 20% of the resource consent applicants were satisfied.

Scores of charge and time commitments show a decline compared with 2019. Results in 2020 are at their lowest point for all consents categories since 2016. It is worth noting that none of the 2020 applicants stated that they strongly agreed that the Council’s charges and time commitments were reasonable.

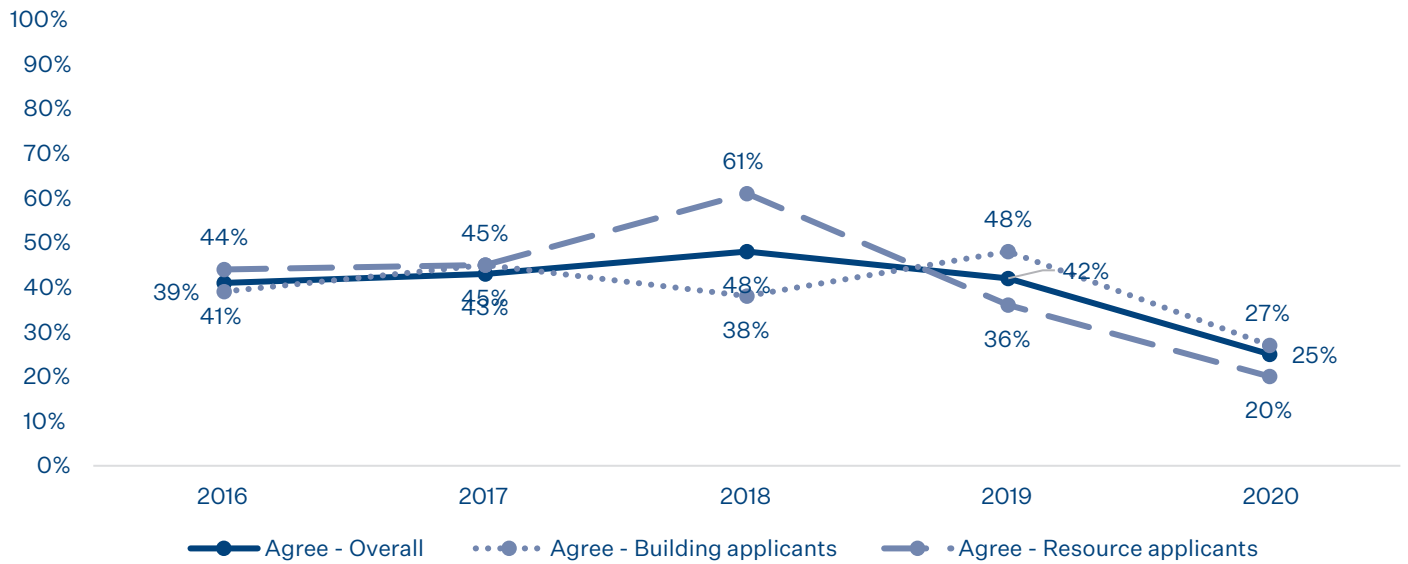
“ The costs with resource consenting and any amendments are ridiculous and show huge [flaws] in the over-regulation of the resource management act.

Figure 3.3 Agreement that charges and time commitments were reasonable, fair and in line with expectations - 2020



Base: 2020 (Overall n=68, Building n=48, Resource n=20)

Figure 3.4 Agreement that charges and time commitments were reasonable, fair and in line with expectations – Trend Analysis



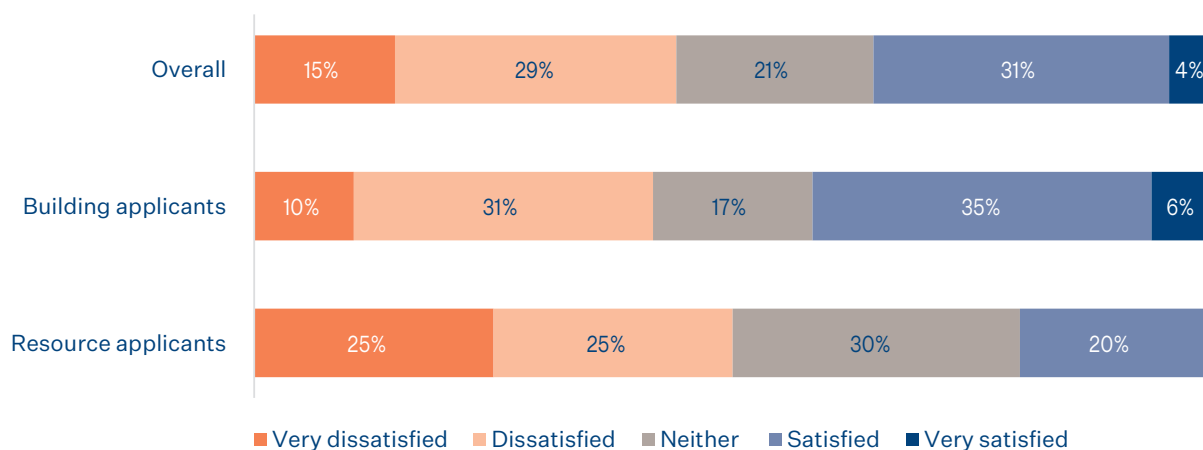
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3.3 Quality of Service

Around a third (35%) of the applicants were satisfied with the quality of service received. Overall satisfaction levels have fallen since 2018 and are at their lowest point since 2016 results.

- 42% of building consents applicants were satisfied in 2020; this represents a 15% decrease from last year.
- The overall satisfaction levels of those applying for resource consents have fallen to 20%, with no participants stating that they were very satisfied.
- Performance targets have not been achieved. Mackenzie District Council had a target of 80% satisfaction for both resource and building consents.³

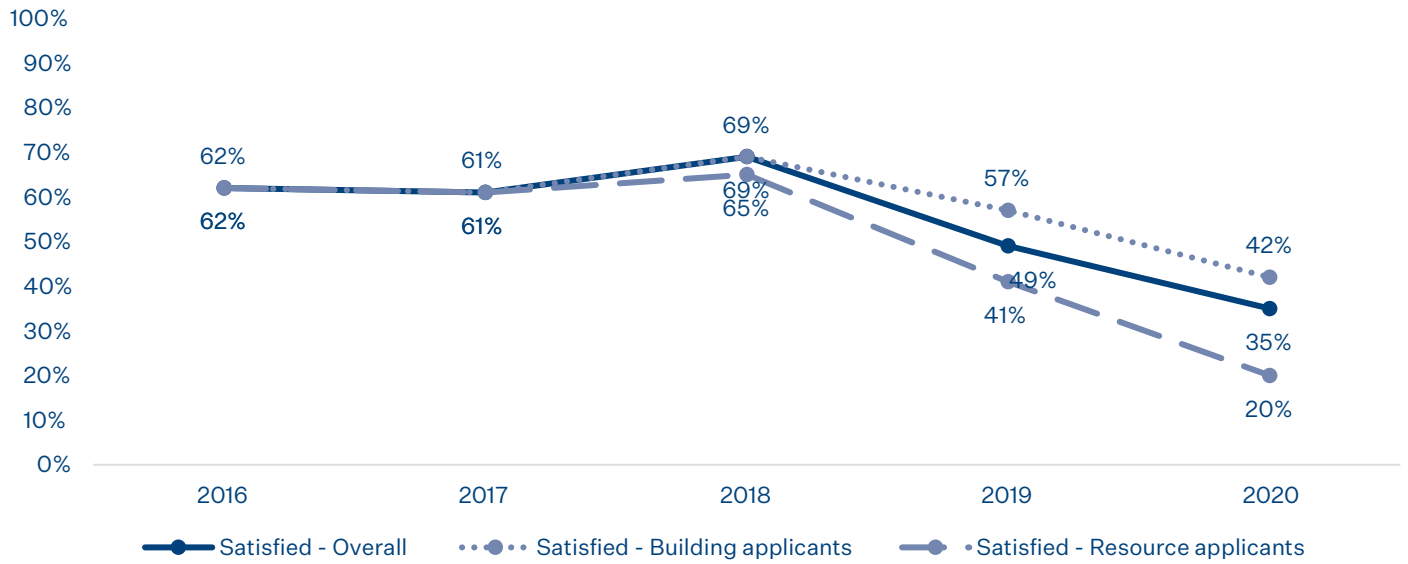
Figure 3.5 Satisfaction with quality of service received - 2020



Base: 2020 (Overall n=68, Building n=48, Resource n=20)

³ In the Mackenzie Council's Long Term Plan 2018 - 28, the goal for customer satisfaction is >80% in the processing of both building and resource consents

Figure 3.6 Satisfied with quality of service received – Trend Analysis



Base: 2020 (Overall n=68; Building n=48; Resource n=20); 2019 (Overall n=79, Building n=46, Resource n=22); 2018 (Overall n=67, Building n=42, Resource n=23); 2017 (Overall n=126, Building n=75, Resource n=38); 2016 ((Overall n=108, Building n=74, Resource n=34).

3.4 Areas for Improvement

The most prevalent suggestions for improvement from the 2020 respondents concerned communications and applications timelines. When asked what improvements could be made to the consents process, 22% of applicants said no improvements were needed or were happy with their interactions with the Council.

The most common improvements suggested were:

- Simplify the process of application and process applications in a timely manner
- Review the fees structure
- Improve the knowledge base of the staff

Charges should be in comparison with the reason for the consent, e.g. [a consent for a] new fireplace is same cost as a building.

It seemed that any issues were addressed one at a time as opposed to being informed of them all at once so they could be dealt with collectively in one hit.

Table 3.7 Suggested areas of improvement - 2020

Suggestion	Building (n)	Resource (n)	Overall (%)
Better communication before/during process	13	8	31%
Nothing/had a good experience	13	2	22%
Shorter/clearer timeframes	8	5	19%
Review fees	6	4	15%
Improve knowledge-base of consultants and internal staff	6	3	13%
Simplify processes	7	0	10%
Reduce amount of irrelevant/already-answered questions	6	1	10%
Process consents locally	6	0	9%
Accept electronic documents/improve online processes	4	1	7%
More consistent/clearer application of rules	0	5	7%
More reasonable approach	0	5	7%
Better staff attitude	2	1	4%
Keeping the same inspector/consultant throughout	3	0	4%
More staffing resources/support	1	2	4%
Other	2	1	4%
No comment/don't know	1	1	3%
Total number of respondents	48	20	68



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