

GMOs and Regional Identity

June 2016

In June 2016, 238 people completed an online survey which asked for feedback on two issues.

Firstly, it sought residents' views on Nelson City Council's potential role in managing Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). This issue had been raised in the Draft Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and the results of the survey will supplement other feedback given on the Draft RPS.

Secondly, the survey sought residents' views on what makes the wider Nelson and Tasman regions an attractive place to live, work and do business. The feedback will be used in a project to develop a regional identity for the Nelson/Tasman region. The project is being led by the Nelson Regional Development Agency.

Management of Genetically Modified Organisms

GMOs were defined as organisms which have genetic material, or DNA, that has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally, for example, genetically modified crops or fruit. The introduction to the survey outlined the current process whereby approval for GMOs is decided by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), and explained that the results of the survey will be considered along with case law and potential changes to legislation, to help decide if policies on the control of GMOs are included in the Nelson Plan.

The majority of people preferred that the EPA controls GMO activities. The main reasons given were that the EPA has more expertise and resources than Nelson City Council; that it was a national issue needing a consistent nation-wide approach; and that it was not a local government function.

Table 1: Feedback on management of GMO activities

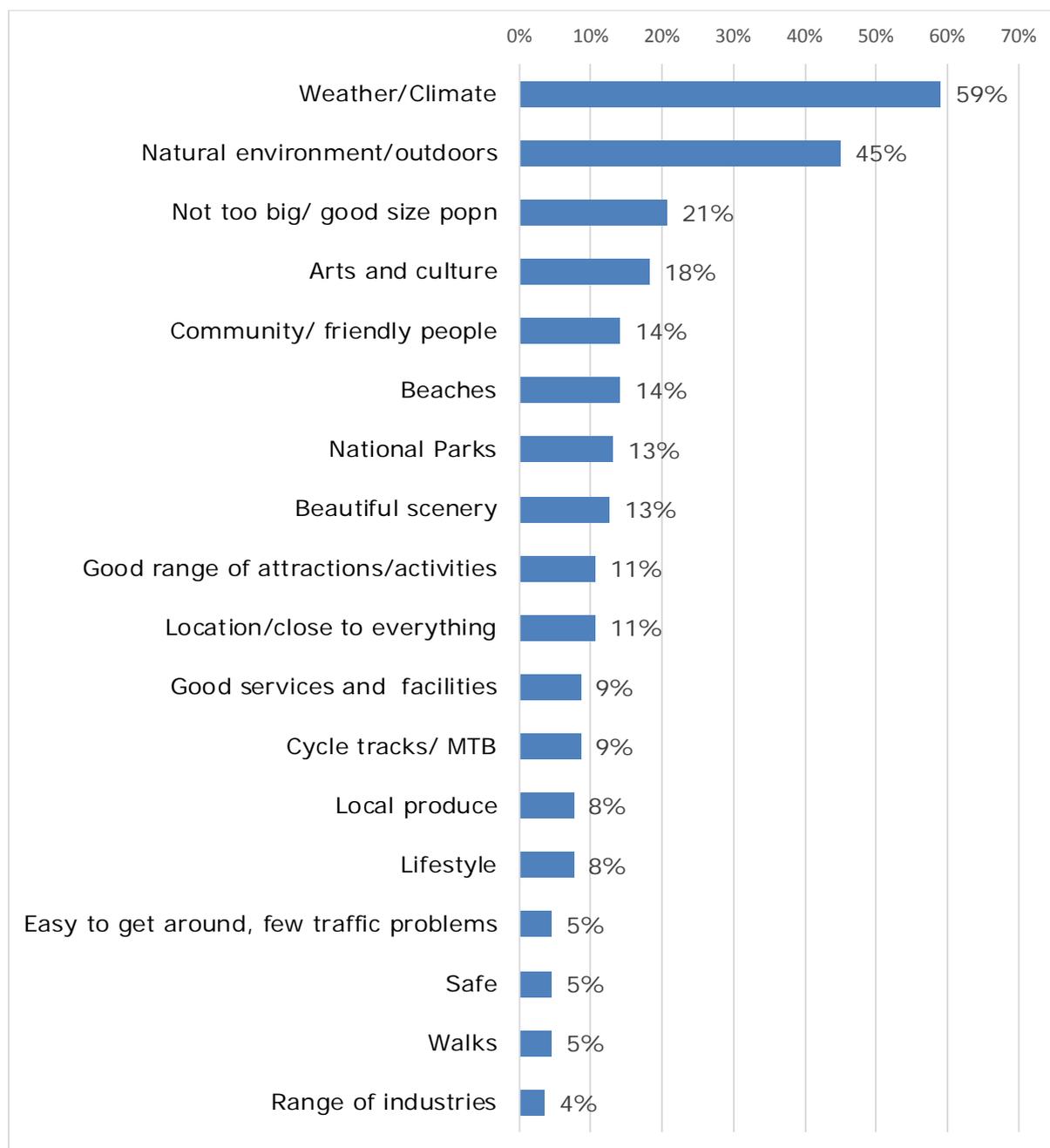
Do you think the following GMO activities should be managed only by the Environmental Protection Authority, or should Nelson City Council also be able to manage the activity?			
	EPA	NCC	Not Sure
Development of GMOs in controlled environments, i.e. laboratories or glasshouses	76%	11%	13%
Field testing of GMOs in outdoor trials	68%	18%	15%
Use of GMOs, largely in rural areas	67%	17%	16%

The main reasons given for preferring Nelson City Council to manage the activity were to make sure that local views, issues and risks are considered.

Regional Identity

In response to an open question, “what makes the wider Nelson and Tasman regions an attractive place to live, work and do business”, 59% of people said the weather/climate and 45% said the natural environment/outdoors. Other popular reasons included its size and population, arts and culture, and its community and friendly people. The beaches, national parks and beautiful scenery were also mentioned as factors that make the area attractive.

Figure 1: Reasons why Nelson/Tasman is an attractive place to live, work and do business



The survey also included a list of statements and asked people to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each one, on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree). There was strong agreement that the Nelson/Tasman region:

- offers a great lifestyle
- is a safe place to raise a family
- has a thriving arts and culture sector
- has friendly, welcoming people and communities
- is a leading exporter of primary products.

Most people tended to disagree that the region:

- is a place that offers opportunities to advance your career
- is best suited to unskilled, non-professional workers
- is conservative and behind the times.

Table 2: Average level of agreement with statements about Nelson/Tasman

Statement	Average rating on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree)
Offers a great lifestyle	8.26
Is a safe place to raise a family	7.92
Has a thriving arts and culture sector	7.44
Has friendly, welcoming people and communities	7.07
Is a leading exporter of primary products	7.02
Is really different and unique compared to other New Zealand regions	6.90
Has a lot more to offer than other New Zealand regions	6.89
Is arty and alternative	6.86
Has a large and strong research and development sector	6.81
Has a lot of great festivals and events	6.78
Is a leading producer of natural and organic products	6.58
Has a lot going on at all times of the year	6.50
Is environmentally focused	6.17
Is quiet and remote	6.13
Has lots of innovative and creative businesses	6.08
Is a good place to set up and operate a business	5.42
Is modern and dynamic	5.41
Is conservative and behind the times	5.13
Is best suited to unskilled / non-professional workers	4.42
Is a place that offers opportunities to advance your career	4.36

Methodology

The survey was open for two weeks between 10 and 24 June 2016. It was sent to 1200 people who have agreed to be part of Nelson City Council's People Panel. Most of the people on the panel have been randomly selected although 30 percent were recruited from a database of residents who previously indicated they would like to give feedback on Council policies and decisions.

There were 238 responses to the emailed survey. The response rate of 20 percent is typical of similar surveys.

The majority of respondents were aged over 40.