

Permit & Business Licence Improvement Survey

November 2025

Final Report

1.0 Introduction

The Permit and Business Licence Improvement Survey was conducted as part of the "Taking Care of Businesses" project, aiming to gather targeted customer feedback and help the City improve its licensing and permit services.

The feedback gathered covers the overall customer experience, specific experiences (with Business Licences, Development Permits and Building Permits), satisfaction with timelines and service levels, and the use of research tools and resources. The insights provided by respondents will be used by the City to inform improvements to relevant services.

2.0 Methodology

The Permit and Business Licence Improvement Survey was conducted online and distributed to customers via email, targeting those who used Building Permit, Development (Zoning) Approval Permit, and/or Business Licence services in 2025.

From November 15th to November 30th, 2025, a total of **218** recent customers responded to the Permit & Business Licence Improvement Survey. This report contains results for all closed-ended questions.



As this is a non-random online survey, a margin of error is not reported for these results. If a probability sample had been used, results for a random sample of n=218 would be accurate to ± 6.6 percentage points (19 times out of 20).

3.0 Key Insights

Overall Satisfaction is Positive: Three-in-five respondents (60%) are satisfied (somewhat/very) with their overall experience with permit/licensing services in 2025, with 40% being very satisfied.

Licence Services Receive Strong Ratings: 67% of Business Licence users are satisfied with their experience, and most provided positive ratings for each aspect of the Business Licence process.

The City Website is the Primary Research Tool: It is used by over two-thirds (69%) of respondents when first deciding to start their projects, making it the most heavily utilized resource for initial research.



Direct Staff Contact Resources are Valued and Helpful: Emailing City staff (77% rated somewhat/very helpful) and calling City staff (70%) are rated as the most helpful resources, with high awareness (49%, 47% respectively) and strong usage among those aware.

Satisfaction Varies Significantly by Service Type: While Business Licence users report high satisfaction (67%), satisfaction drops dramatically for Development Permit (30%) and Building Permit (33%) users, indicating an inconsistent customer experience across services.

Strong Concerns About Review Consistency: Only 32% agree that reviews are consistent between different Development Planners, and 31% agree reviews are consistent between different Safety Code Officers, potentially undermining confidence in the review process.

Processing Time Expectations are Misaligned: The service level for interior alteration development permits is 30 days, and 60 days for changes to existing building permits. Most are dissatisfied with these services levels. Among them, about half (44-45%) believe 15 days is a reasonable wait time.

Business Licences:

67% satisfied overall

- Strong ratings across all *process aspects* (66-77% agreement)
- 69% satisfied with customer service
- Lower awareness of support resources beyond email/calls (76% aware of at least one resource)
- Fewer required to take additional steps (28% docs, 9% redrawn plans)

Development Permits:

30% satisfied overall

- Mixed agreement on process aspects; only 32% agree on reviewer consistency
- 34% satisfied with customer service
- Higher use of professional advice (48%) and specialized meetings
- More required to take additional steps (53% docs, 23% redrawn plans)

Building Permits:

33% satisfied overall

- Mixed agreement; only 31% agree on Safety Code Officer consistency and 37% agree with ease of pre-application contact
- 39% satisfied with customer service
- 51% agree wait times for additional information review are reasonable
- More required to take additional steps (50% docs, 21% redrawn plans)

4.0 Detailed Findings

4.1 Service Usage & Frequency

Among those surveyed, three-in-four (77%) used services for a Business Licence, two-fifths (40%) for a Building Permit, and nearly one-third (29%) for a Development Approval Permit (see Figure 1).

Most had used permit or licencing services multiple times in the past (see Figure 2), with nearly one-quarter (23%) using services five or more times per year. About two-fifths (42%) had only used these services once.

Those who used Business Licence services in 2025 are about 2x more likely to have been using the service for the first time, compared to those using permit services, with half (49%) stating this was the first time using these services.

Figure 1. Which services did you use in 2025? Please select all that apply.

218 Responses

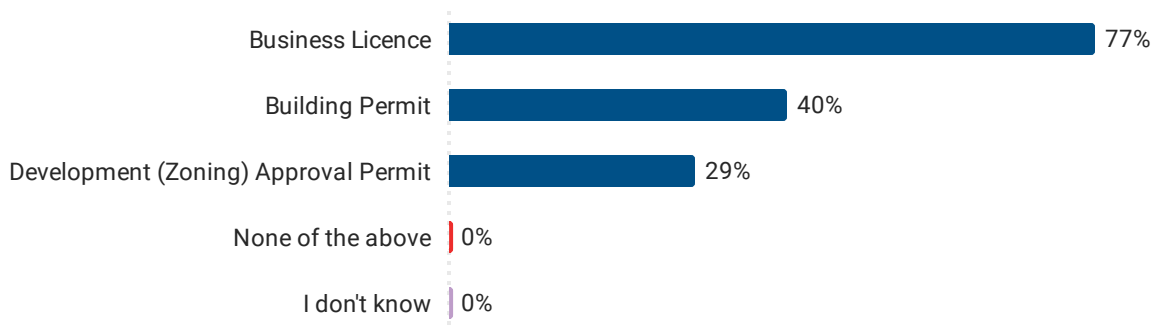
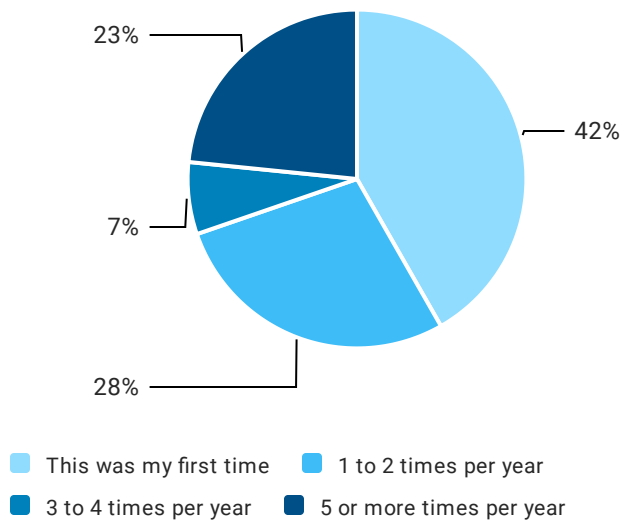


Figure 2. How often do you use permit or licencing services?

218 Responses



Service(s) Used:	Business Licence	Development Permit	Building Permit
1st time	49%	25%	25%
1-2 / year	30%	14%	22%
3-4 / year	6%	9%	9%
5+ / year	15%	52%	44%

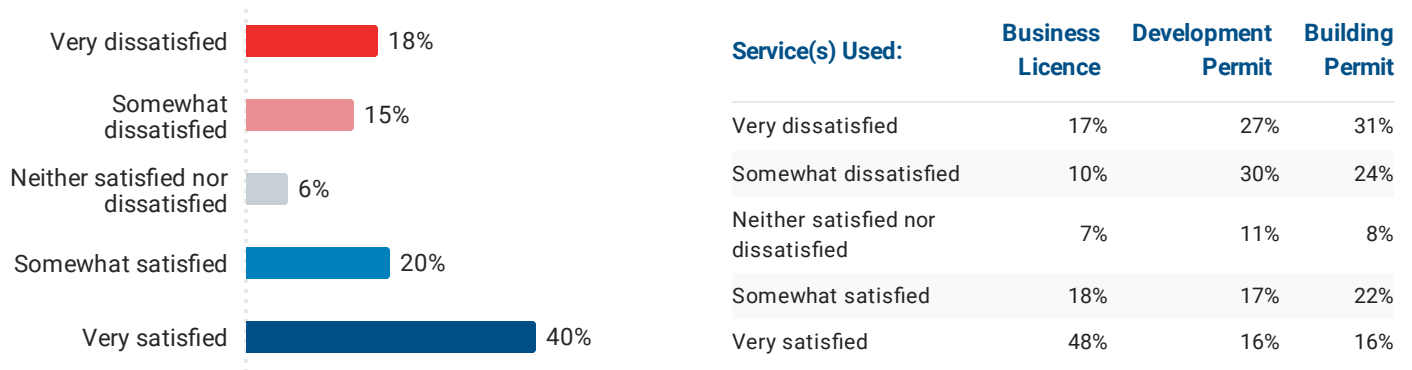
4.2 Overall Permit & Licensing Service Experience

A slight majority (60%) are somewhat/very satisfied with their overall experience with permit/licensing services in 2025 (see Figure 3), with two-fifths being very satisfied (40%). Ratings of overall experiences diverge based on whether Permit or Business Licence services are used, with the latter receiving much stronger ratings.

Among Business Licence service users, the majority are somewhat/very satisfied (67%) with their overall experience. For Permit services, much fewer indicated they are satisfied (33% Development Permits; 38% Building Permits) with their overall experience.

Figure 3. How would you rate your overall experience with the City's permit or licensing service in 2025?

218 Responses



Additional cross-tabulation analysis shows that...

- Those using licence/permit services **5+ per year** are less likely to be somewhat/very satisfied with their overall experience in 2025 (43% vs. 66% among less frequent users).

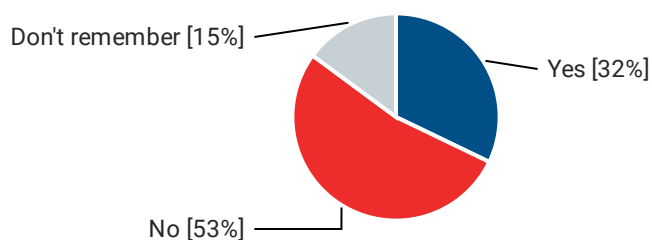
4.3 Applying for Permits Before Business Licence

Among Business Licence service users (n=168), one-third applied for permits before applying for their Business Licence, while about half did not (see Figure 4).

Overall satisfaction is slightly lower among those who did apply for permits (61% somewhat/very satisfied) before applying for their Business Licence (69% satisfied among those not applying for permits). It is unclear if these results indicate a causal relationship or instead which projects are foreseen to be more complex and challenging.

Figure 4. Did you apply for permits before applying for your business licence?

168 Responses

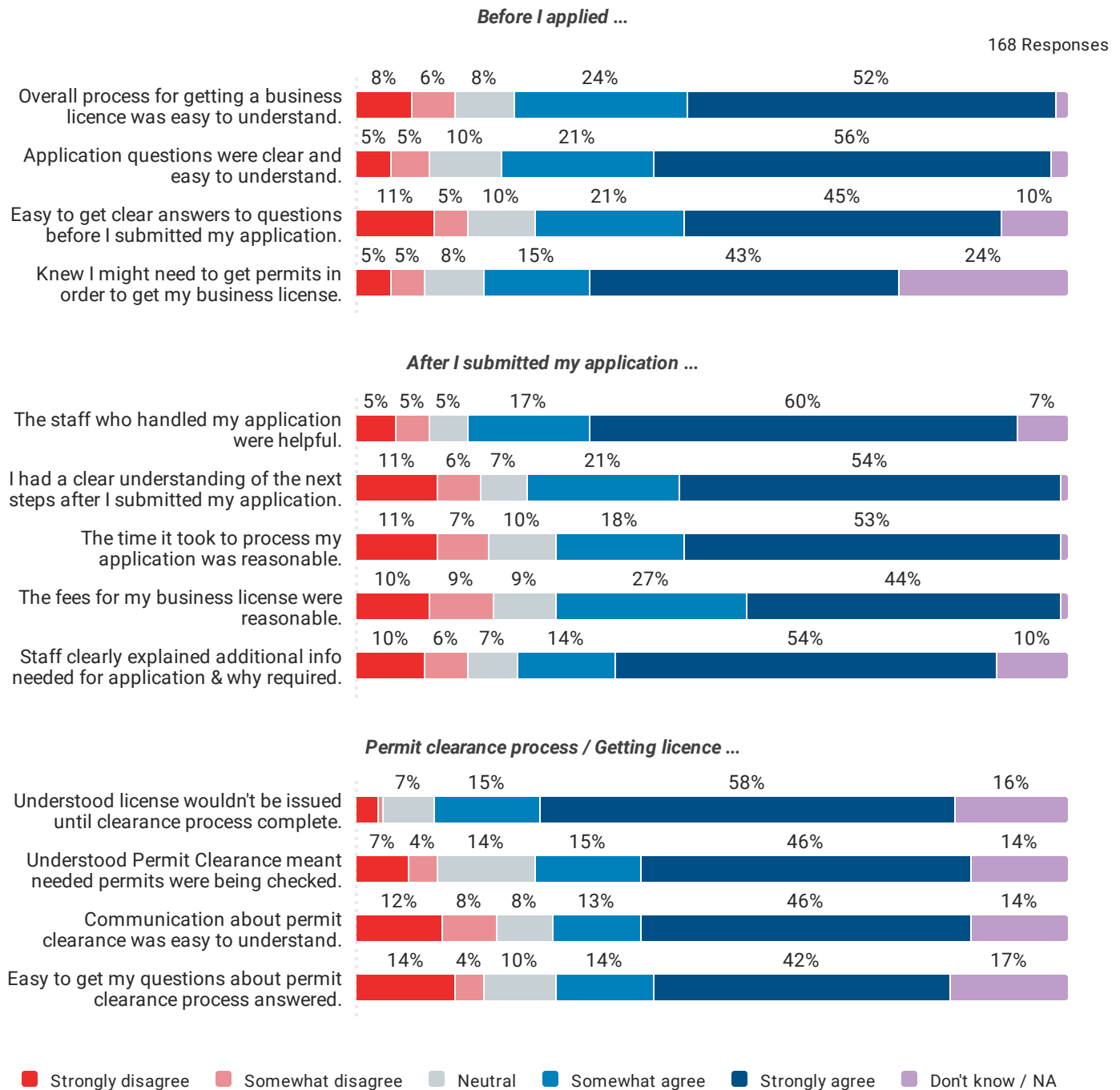


4.4 Process Experience Ratings: Business Licences

Among Business Licence service users (**n=168**), each aspect of the business licence process received positive ratings; most respondents (55-77%) somewhat/strongly agree with each statement below (Figure 5).

Relative to other items, fewer agreed regarding communication about the permit review process being easy to understand (59% somewhat/strongly agree) and ease of having questions answered about the permit clearance process (55% agree). Frequent users of services are also less likely to agree with items about the permit clearance process and getting licences.

Figure 5. Do you agree/disagree with the following about your business licence experience in 2025?

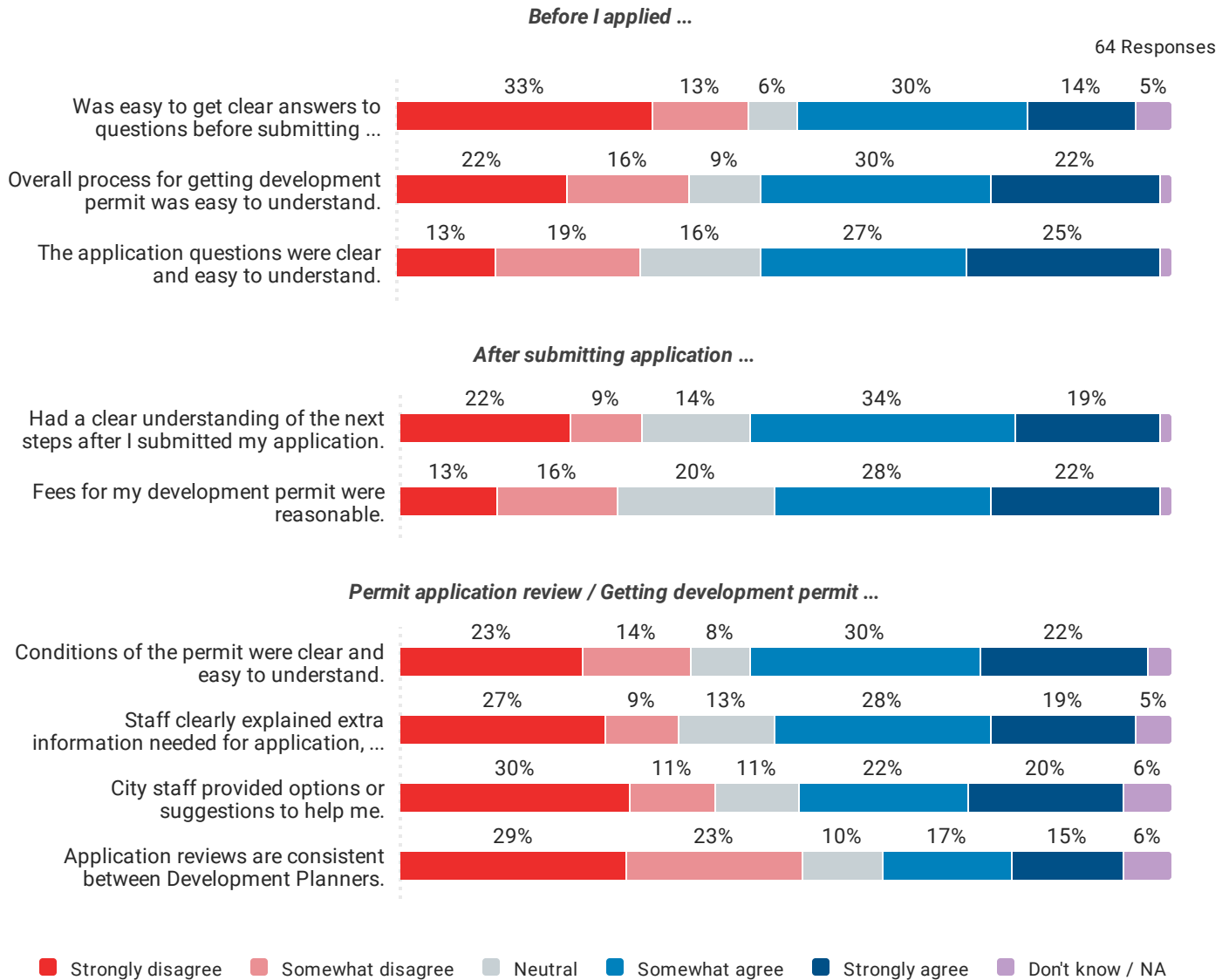


4.5 Process Experience Ratings: Development Permits

Agreement is mixed about the following aspects of the Development (Zoning) Approval Permit overall experience. Among Development Permit service users ($n=64$), there is stronger agreement around having a clear understanding of steps after submitting an application (53% somewhat/strongly agree), that application questions are easy to understand (52% agree), and that the overall process is easy to understand (52% agree).

There is stronger disagreement that application reviews are consistent between Development Planners (52% somewhat/strongly disagree) and that it's easy to get questions answered before submitting (45% disagree).

Figure 6. Do you agree/disagree about your Development (Zoning) Approval Permit experience in 2025?



4.6 Satisfaction with Service Levels: Development Permits

Most Development Permit service users (**n=64**) are either somewhat or very dissatisfied (61%) with current Development (Zoning) Permit service levels (see Figure 7), and are half as likely to be somewhat or very satisfied (30%).

Among those somewhat or very dissatisfied with current service levels (**n=39**), 44% say it should reasonably take no longer than 15 days to obtain a Development Permit (see Figure 8). Excluding the 18% selecting other, the mean length dissatisfied respondents consider to be reasonable to obtain a Development Permit is approximately 16 days.

Figure 7. How would you rate your satisfaction with these service levels?

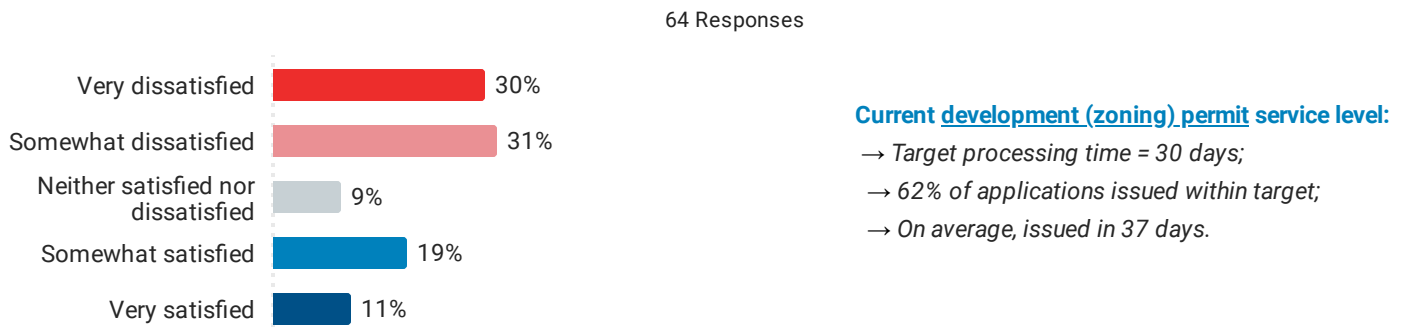
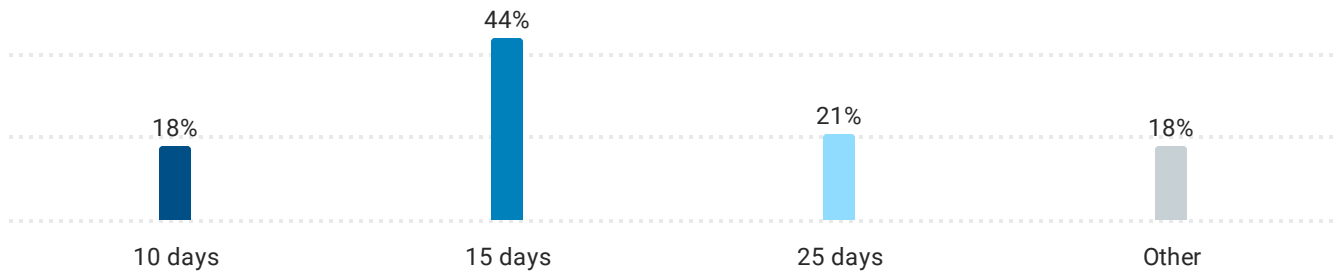


Figure 8. What is the longest it should reasonably take to obtain a development permit? [Among dissatisfied in Figure 10]

This includes the time from when a complete application is submitted to when a permit is issued.

39 Responses

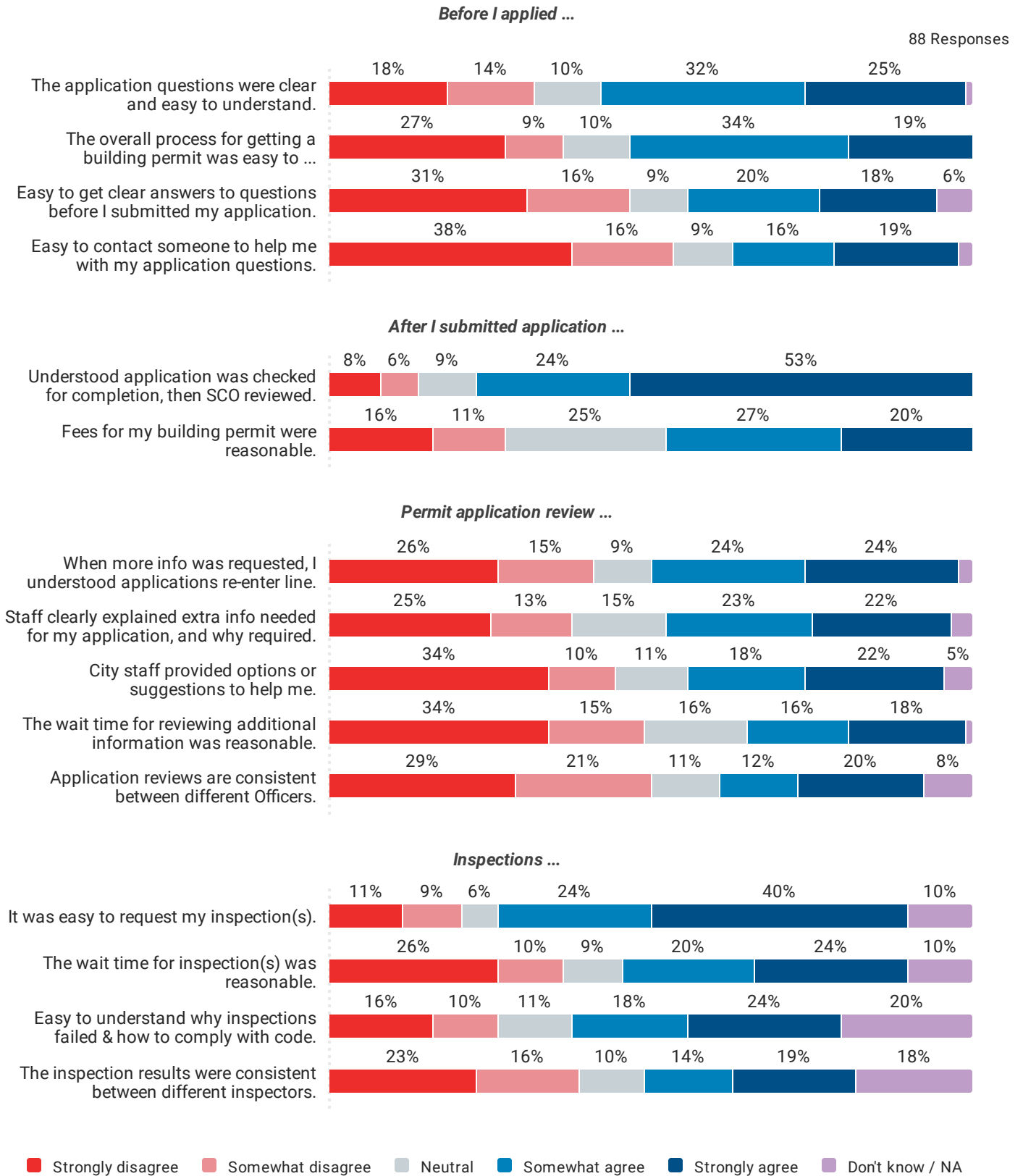


4.7 Process Experience Ratings: Building Permits

There is mixed agreement regarding the following aspects of the Building Permit (Changes to Existing Buildings) experience (see Figure 9 on following page). Among Building permit service users (**n=88**), three quarters agree (77% somewhat/strongly agree) that they understood their application would (a) be checked for completion, and (b) reviewed by a Safety Code Officer.

Disagreement is stronger around application review consistency between different Safety Code Officers (50% somewhat/strongly disagree), the ease of contacting someone to ask questions pre-application submission (53% disagree) and having those questions clearly answered (47% disagree), and wait times for reviewing additional information (49% disagree).

Figure 9. Do you agree/disagree about your Building Permit (Changes to Existing Buildings) experience in 2025?



4.8 Satisfaction with Service Levels: Building Permits

Among Building permit service users (**n=88**), one third (33%) are somewhat or very satisfied with current Building Permit service levels (see Figure 10); most are somewhat or very dissatisfied (56%).

Among those somewhat or very dissatisfied with current service levels (**n=53**), about half (45%) say it should reasonably take no longer than 15 days to obtain a Building Permit (see Figure 11). Excluding the 23% who selected other, 22 days is the mean time dissatisfied respondents consider as the longest reasonable to obtain a Building Permit.

Figure 10. How would you rate your satisfaction with the current service level?

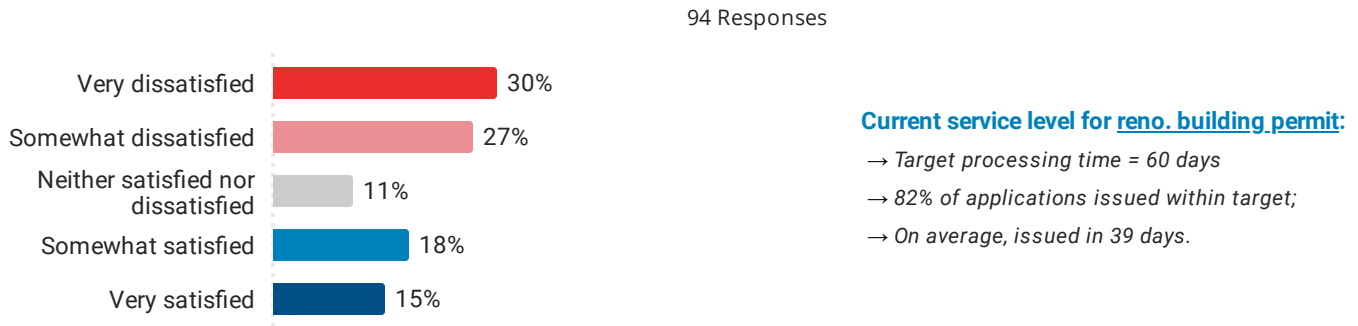


Figure 11. What is the longest it should reasonably take to obtain a building renovation permit? [Among dissatisfied in Figure 8]

This includes the time from when a complete application is submitted to when a permit is issued.

53 Responses



4.9 Satisfaction with Customer Service Level

Nearly two-in-three respondents are satisfied (63% somewhat/very) with the current customer service level, with over one-third very satisfied (36%) (see Figure 12).

Two-fifths (39%) say the City meets their service standard most of the time, while one-fifth (21%) say that City responses to email/voicemail, within 48-business hours, rarely or never occurs (see Figure 13).

Figure 12. How would you rate your satisfaction with the current service level?

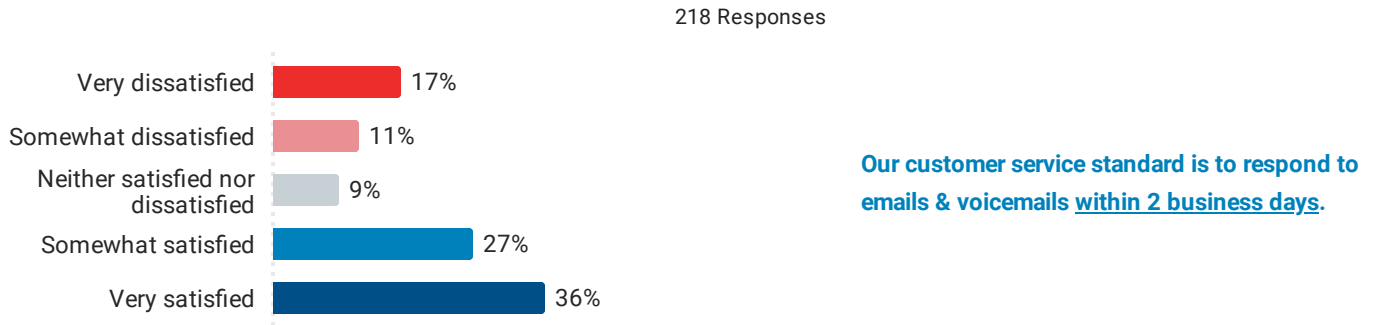
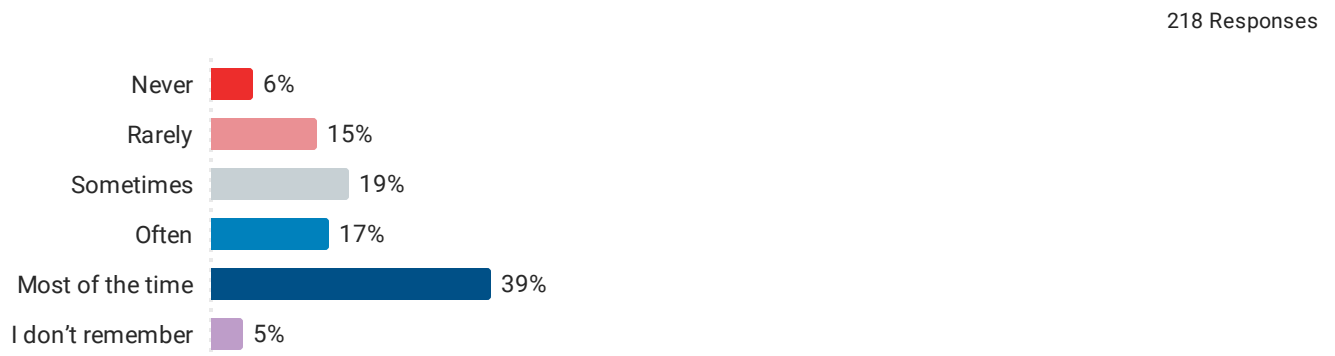


Figure 13. In your experience, how often does communication from the City meet the service standard?



Cross-tabulation analysis shows that...

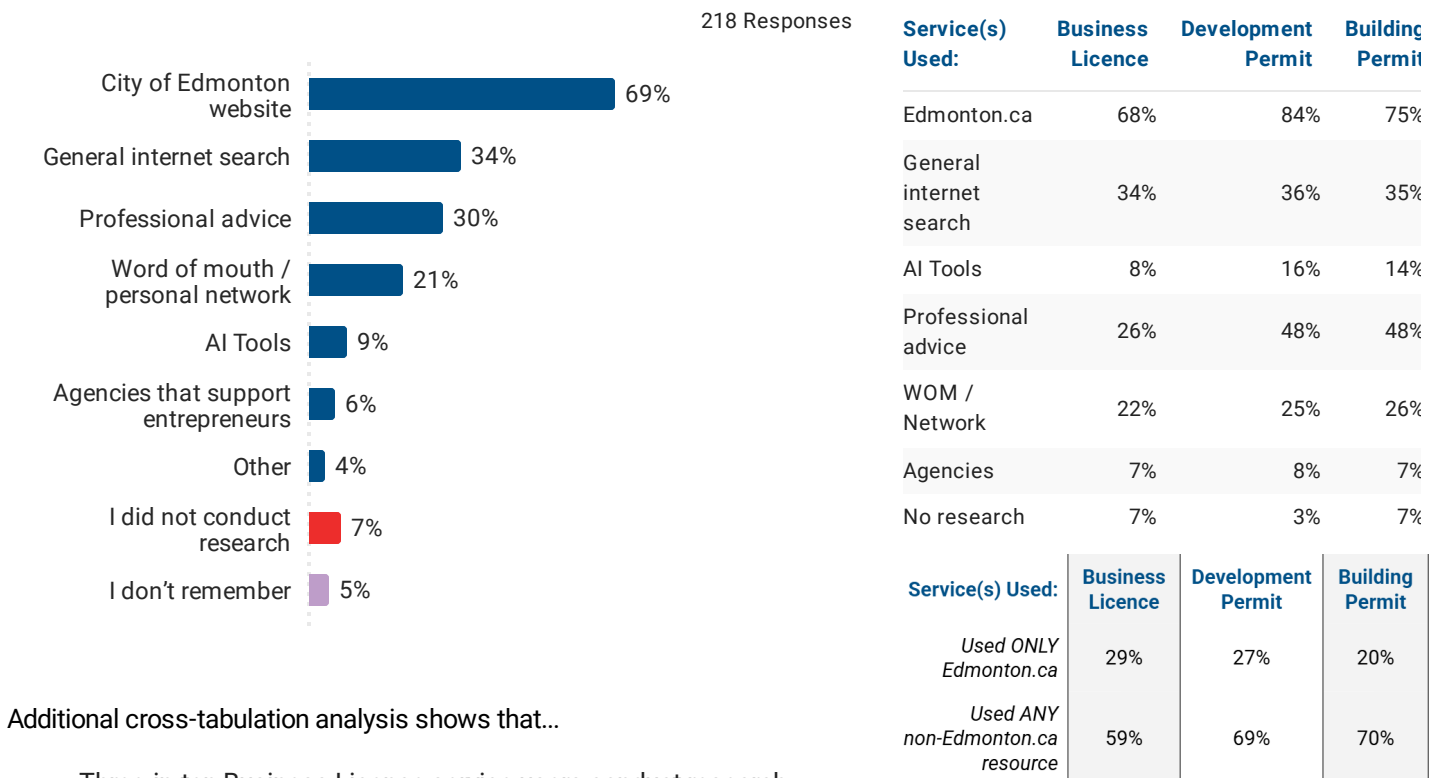
- There is very strong overlap between overall satisfaction with services and satisfaction with current customer service levels, as 92% of those somewhat/very satisfied overall are also somewhat/very satisfied with customer service levels.
- Those using Business Licence services are about twice as likely to be somewhat/very satisfied with customer services levels (69%; compared to 34% among Development and 39% among Building Permit service users).

4.10 Research Tools

When first deciding to start projects, the most used research tool is the City of Edmonton website – used by over two-thirds (69%) of respondents (see Figure 14).

Three-fifths (60%) selected another tool listed below (not including the City of Edmonton website), with general internet searches (34%), professional advice (30%), and word of mouth or personal networks with business experience (21%) being the next most commonly used tools after the City Website. AI tools are currently used by about one-in-ten (9%), while 7% did not conduct research at this project phase.

Figure 14. When you first decided to start your project, which research tools did you use? Please select all that apply.



Additional cross-tabulation analysis shows that...

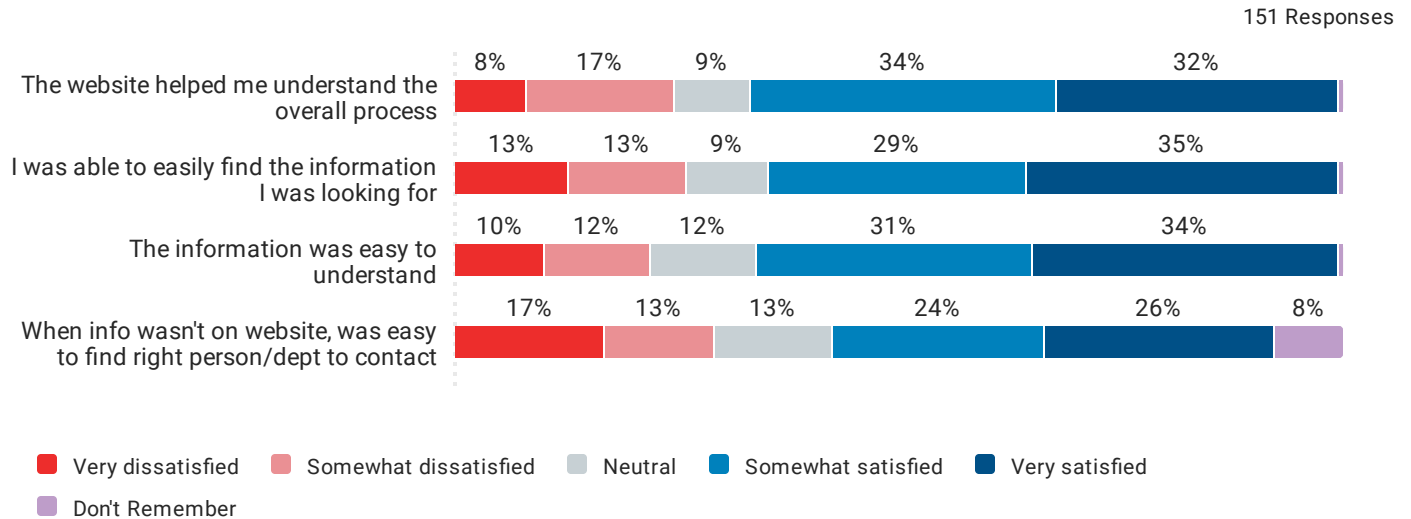
- Three-in-ten Business Licence service users conduct research using ONLY Edmonton.ca (29%; compared to 21% of Building, 27% of Development Permit service users).
- Fewer Business Licence service users conduct research using ANY non-Edmonton.ca tools (59%; compared to 70% of Permit service users).
- Business Licence service users are about half as likely to utilize professional advice (26%; compared to 48% of Permit service users) or AI tools (8%; compared to 14% of Building, 16% of Development Permit service users).

4.10 Edmonton.ca Information Ratings

Among those who conducted research for their project using the City of Edmonton website (**n=151**), users are generally satisfied with the information they found (see Figure 15). Some ratings below may indicate gaps tool that could be addressed, as Edmonton.ca is the most commonly used research tool.

Nearly three in ten (29%) are somewhat or very dissatisfied with the ease of finding the right person or department to contact when information needed isn't on Edmonton.ca – while one-quarter are dissatisfied with the ease of finding information (26% dissatisfied) and the website helping them understand the overall process (25% dissatisfied).

Figure 15. How satisfied are you with the information on the City of Edmonton website (Edmonton.ca)?



Cross-tabulation analysis shows that...

- Those using Business Licence services tend to have stronger satisfaction with City of Edmonton website information: 70% are satisfied (somewhat/very) that it helped them understand the overall process and 70% were satisfied that the information was easy to understand (compared to about half of permit users).

4.11 Resources Awareness & Usage

The vast majority (80%) are aware of at least one of the below (see Figure 16) resources available to provide project support. Among all respondents, the most commonly used resources are emailing City staff (49% overall; 58% of those aware), calling City staff (40% overall; 47% of aware), and calling 311 (40% overall; 45% of aware).

Among those aware of at least one of the following resources (n=171), every respondent reported having used at least one with their project (see Figure 17). Raising awareness of these tools is critical to increasing uptake of these tools, particularly for tools with lower awareness and targeting business licence service users (among whom awareness is broadly lower).

Figure 16. Were you aware of any of the following resources to help with your project? Please select all that apply.

218 Responses

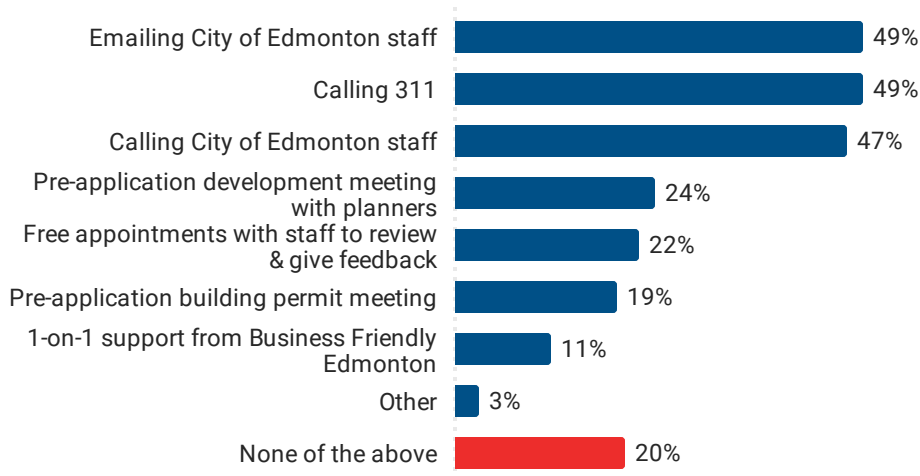
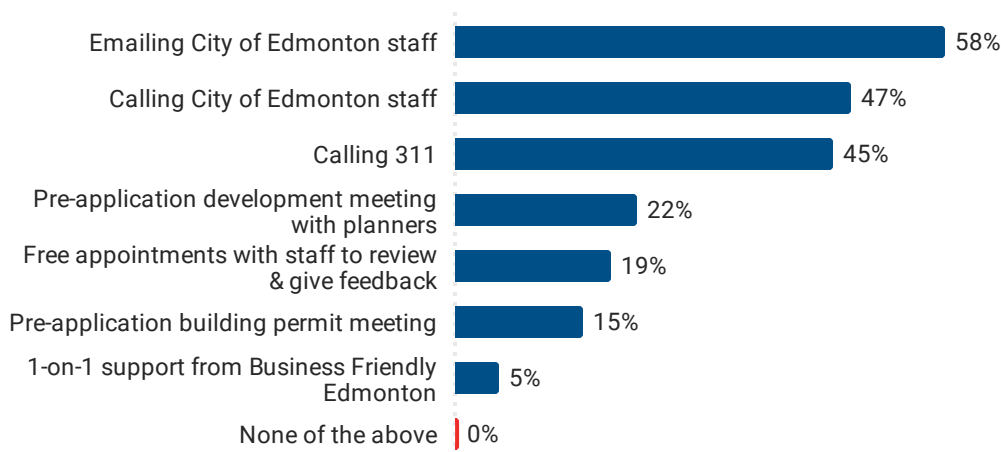


Figure 17. Have you ever used any of these resources to help with your project? Please select all that apply.

171 Responses



Cross-tabulation analysis shows that...

- Business Licence service users are less than half as likely to be aware of resources outside of emailing/calling City staff or 311 (26% are aware of other tools; compared to 57% of Permit service users).
- One-quarter of Business Licence service users are unaware of any of the resources above (24%; compared to 7% of Building, 3% of Development Permit service users).

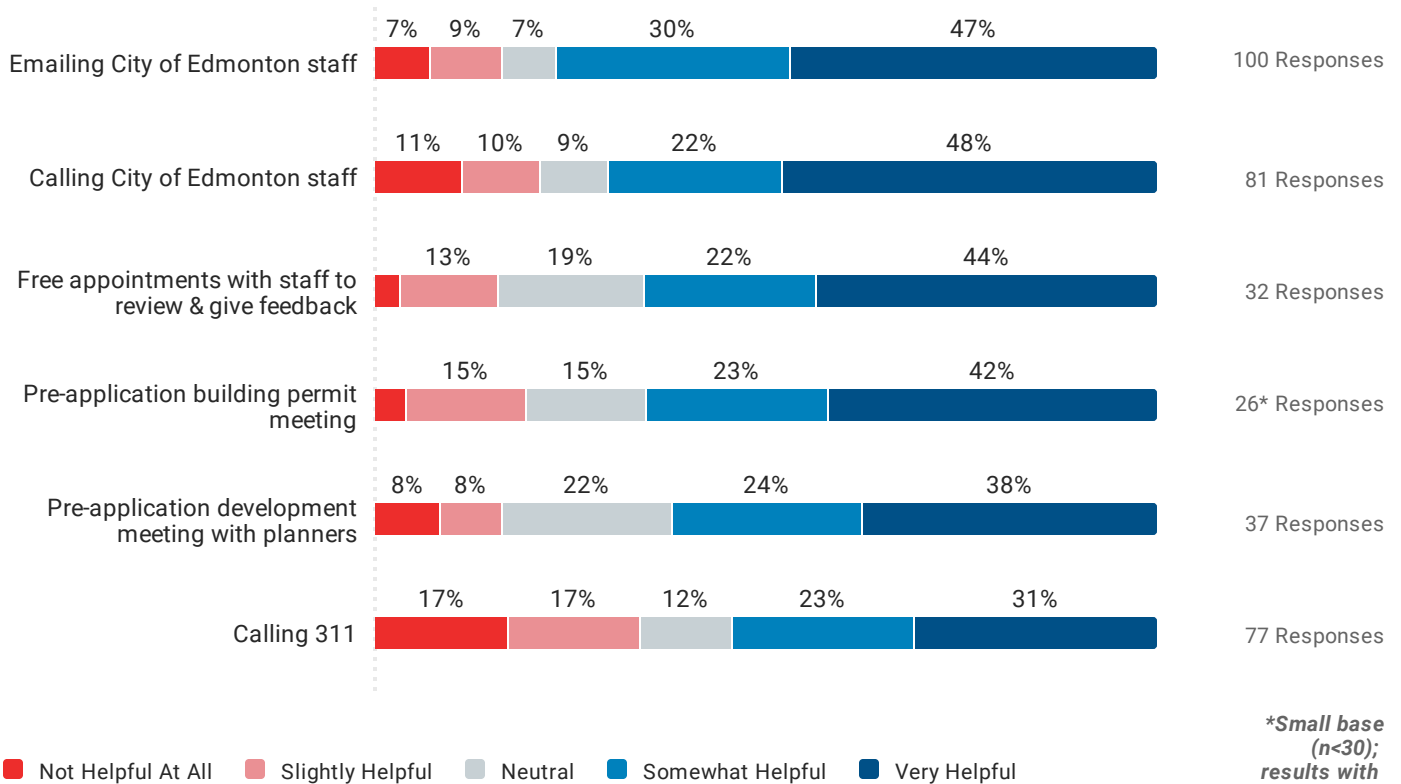
4.12 Resources Helpfulness

Two of the three most used resources are rated as the two most helpful with the permit and/or licencing process: emailing City staff (77% very/somewhat helpful) and calling City staff (70%).

Calling 311 received softer helpfulness ratings, but this may be expected due to the less specialized nature of the service. Higher awareness of other resources would help manage expectations that services users could have of 311 (i.e., if calling a 311 agent it is one of few resources they are aware of).

Figure 18. Please rate how helpful each resource was with the permit and/or licensing process:

Note: Resources with fewer than 15 responses are not shown.



**Small base (n<30); results with caution.*

4.13 Project Support Needs

Licence and permit service users desire additional support most during the application review process and providing information (39%), the waiting period after submitting (32%), understanding the overall process at the start (31%), and the inspection process (28%) - though many want help at other stages as well (see Figure 19).

The three items respondents indicate would have been most helpful are easily bookable phone/virtual meetings with application reviewers (49%), easily having live chats with City staff on Edmonton.ca before submitting their application (47%), and live chats with application reviewers after submitting (46%; see Figure 20 below).

Figure 19. During the project, when did you wish you had more help? Please select all that apply.

218 Responses

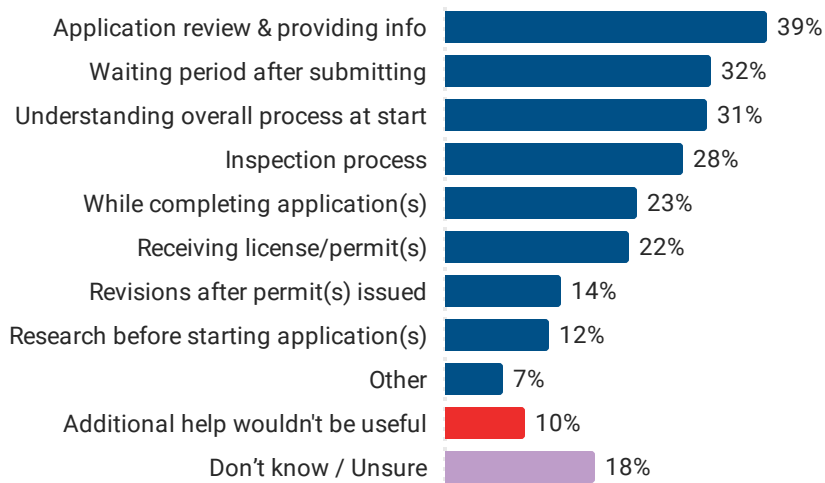
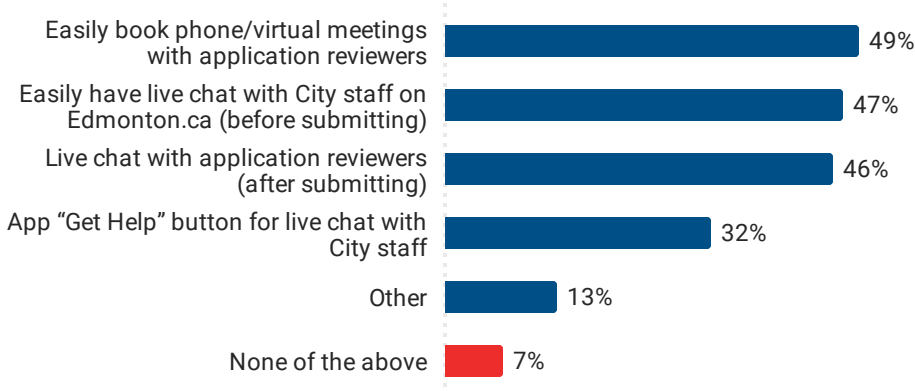


Figure 20. Which of these would have helped? Please select all that apply.

158 Responses



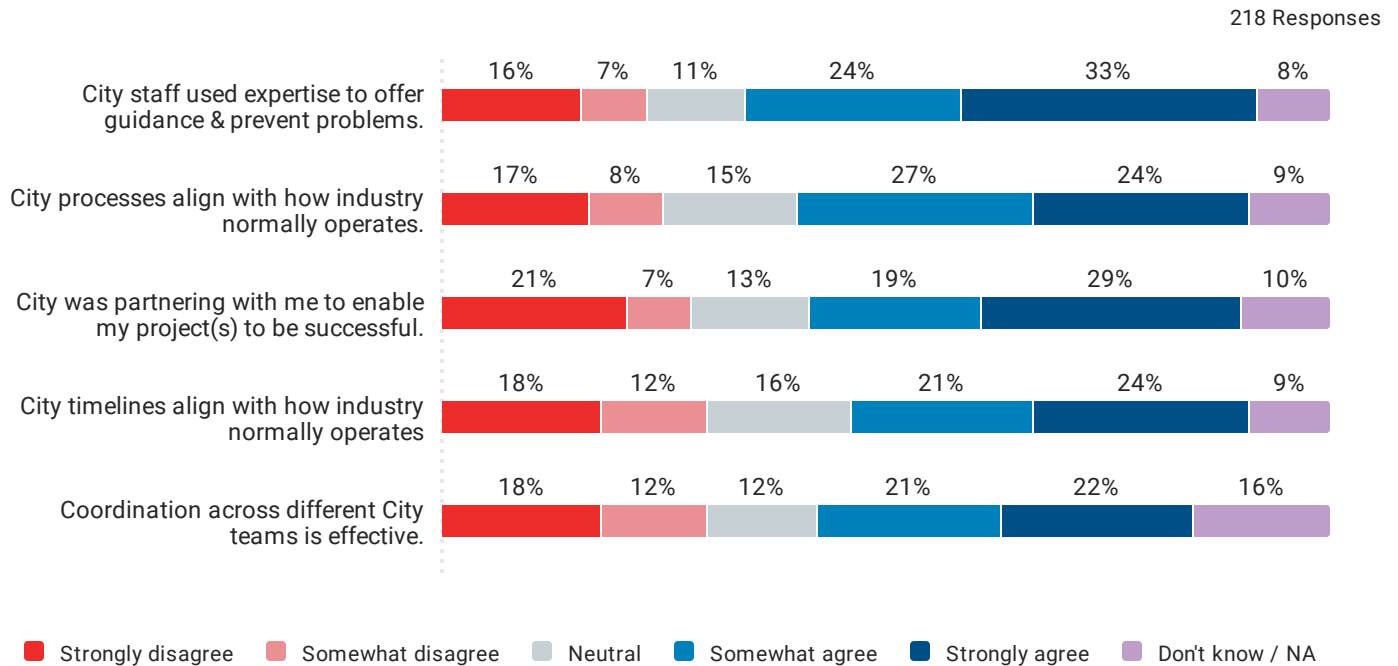
Cross-tabulation analysis shows that...

- Those using Business Licence services are more likely to be unsure when they wished they'd had more help (21%; compared to 5% of Permit service users).
- Permit service users are about two times more likely to indicate they'd wanted more help during the application review process and waiting period after submitting their application.

4.14 City Support Ratings

Agreement is strongest around City staff using their expertise to offer guidance and prevent predictable problems – 58% of either somewhat or strongly agree. Less than half somewhat or strongly agree that City timelines align with how their industry normally operates (45%) and that coordination across different City teams is effective (42%).

Figure 21. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Cross-tabulation analysis shows that...

- Business Licence services user agreement levels (somewhat/strongly) are, on average, ~20% higher than agreement levels of Development and Building Permit service users.
- Business Licence users are more likely to somewhat/strongly agree (51%) that City timelines align with industry norms (24% Building Permit users; 22% Development Permit users).
- Frequent service users (5+ per year) are less likely to somewhat/strongly agree that timelines align with industry norms (29%) and that coordination across City teams being effective (27%).

4.15 Additional Steps & Impacts

While most did not undergo additional steps as part of their project, 37% were required to submit additional documents requiring additional support and 14% were told to get a professional to re-do drawings (see Figure 22). Those using Permit services are over two times more likely to have had one of the following apply to their projects, with most being required to do at least one.

These additional steps are typically viewed as having a negative impact on projects (see Figure 23). While this also applies to Business Licence service users specifically, these users are two-to-three times more likely to say these steps had a positive impact on their project (compared to Permit service users).

Figure 22. Did any of these apply to your project(s)? Please select all that apply.

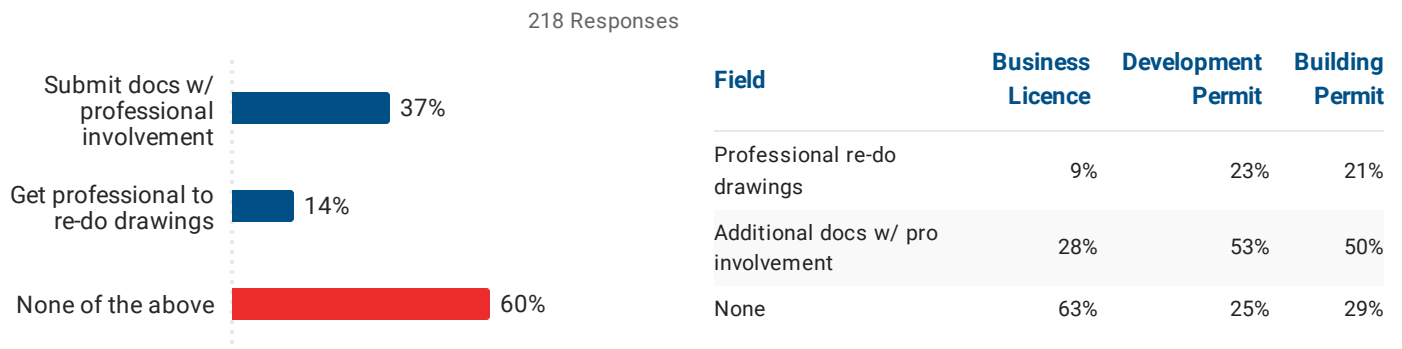
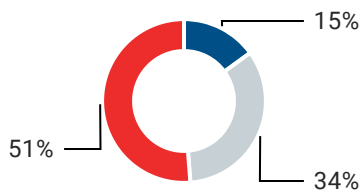


Figure 23. How would you rate the impact of these additional steps on your project?

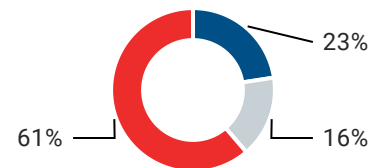
Submit additional documents with professional involvement
80 Responses



■ Positive impact ■ No impact
■ Negative impact

Told to get paid professional to re-do drawings

31 Responses



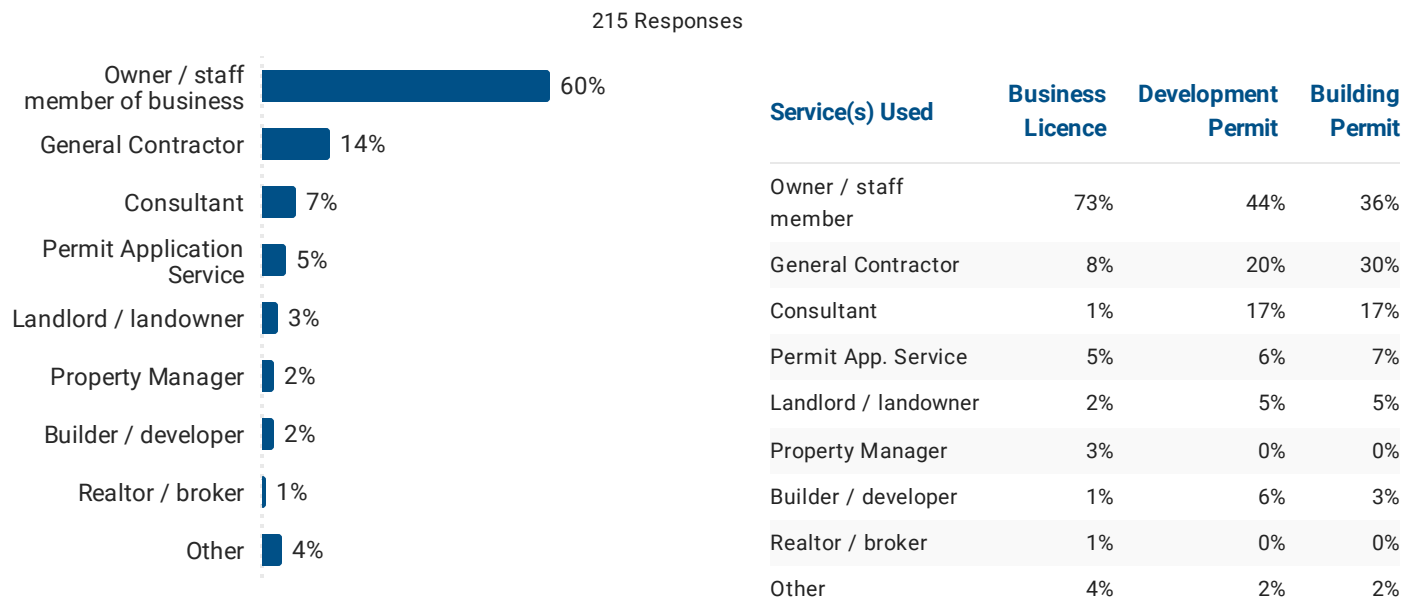
■ Positive impact ■ No impact
■ Negative impact

4.16 Role While Using Permit/Licence Services

The majority of respondents (60%) are owners or staff members of a business (see Figure 24).

Other roles more commonly used by respondents to describe themselves are General Contractor (8% of Business Licence Users; 20-30% of Permit Service Users), Consultant (17% of Permit service users), and Permit Application Service (5%). The vast majority (84%) of respondents fell into one of these four categories.

Figure 24. How would you normally describe yourself when using permit or licensing services?



Have questions?
We're here to help.

Email: **research@edmonton.ca**



edmonton.ca/surveys



edmonton.ca/insightcommunity

Edmonton