

New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey 2023

Amy Knight and Nic Guerrero





Funded from the
Building Research Levy



1222 Moonshine Rd, RD1, Porirua 5381
Private Bag 50 908, Porirua 5240
New Zealand
branz.nz

© BRANZ 2024
ISSN: 1179-6197



Preface

This is the 13th BRANZ New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey report. The data presented was collected by surveying new house owners regarding the performance of their builder. The objective of the survey is to provide a measure of a homeowners' perceived quality of their house and perceived quality of the builder-client relationship. The survey has been carried out annually since 2011 and has established a time series reflecting the performance of the building industry from the homeowner's perspective.

This report is designed for various audiences, including designers, architects, builders, and people considering building a new house. Additionally, it will be beneficial for government entities in assessing some of the challenges and opportunities within the residential construction industry.

Acknowledgements

This work was funded by the Building Research Levy.

We would like to thank everyone who filled in the survey and returned it to BRANZ. The project would not be possible without those new house owners who took the time to fill in our survey.



New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey 2023

BRANZ Study Report SR492

Authors

Amy Knight and Nic Guerrero

Reference

Knight, A., & Guerrero N. (2024). *New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey 2023* (BRANZ Study Report SR492). BRANZ Ltd.

Abstract

This report presents the results of the 13th annual New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey. The survey uses a sample of New Zealand's housing consents to understand how new house owners rate their builder and how satisfied they are with the builder's performance. It excludes spec builds (a house built without a specific committed buyer) and houses built by family members where this can be identified from consent data. Overall, new house owners rated their builder's performance highly. They were highly satisfied with their builder's ability to deliver a timely, high-quality build that is in great condition on the day they move in in addition to seeing their new build as good value for money. Although new house owners are overall fairly satisfied with their builder's work, there are some areas that need improvement. New house owners reported being most dissatisfied with the standard of finish of their new home, and the service provided by their builder after they had moved in. The 2023 New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey included some new items regarding the importance of certain house features such as the size and character of the home and having a detached house with a garden/lawn.

Keywords

New houses, builder performance, franchises, independent builders, defects, designers, input into house design, builder, contract, dispute costs, call-backs, satisfaction.



Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. METHODOLOGY	3
3. RESULTS.....	4
3.1 Beginning of the build.....	4
3.2 Contracts, packages and value	5
3.3 Input costs and prime cost (PC) sums.....	8
3.4 Ratings of builder performance.....	11
3.5 Choosing a builder.....	15
3.6 Defects and call-backs	17
3.7 Inputs on house design	19
3.8 Important features of a house.....	21
4. CONCLUSION	26

Figures

Figure 1. New house owners' reasons for building a house instead of buying a house. 4	
Figure 2. Percentage of new house owners who used a franchise builder..... 5	
Figure 3. Percentage of new house owners who had built previously. 5	
Figure 4. Percentage of new house owners who purchased a house-only versus house and land package..... 6	
Figure 5. Type of contract new house owners had with their builder..... 6	
Figure 6. Percentage of perceived exclusions from contracts. 7	
Figure 7. Percentage of new house owners who had a dispute with their builder over cost. 7	
Figure 8. Value of new house owners' builds. 8	
Figure 9. Expectations of input cost increases after build completion. 9	
Figure 10. Perception of costings for PC sums	9
Figure 11. Perceptions of some cost-related elements of a new build.....	10
Figure 12. New house owners' average rankings of builder performance.....	11
Figure 13. New house owners' average ranking of builder performance over time.....	11
Figure 14. New house owner ratings of their builder's performance.	13
Figure 15. New house owner ratings of builder performance by builder type.	14
Figure 16. Likelihood new house owners would recommend their builder to others.	15
Figure 17. How new house owners chose their builder.	15
Figure 18. Important features in new house builders.....	16
Figure 19. Likelihood new house owners would recommend their builder to others.	17
Figure 20. Call-backs for defect repair after first occupancy.	17
Figure 21. Call-backs for defect repair after first occupancy by trade.	18
Figure 22. Call-backs for defect repair after first occupancy by trade and defect type.	18
Figure 23. New house owners' expectations of defects.	19



Figure 24. Percentage of new house owners who had input into the design of their house.19

Figure 25. Type of input new house owners had into the design of their house.20

Figure 26. Percentage of new house owners who asked their builder to use a specific material.20

Figure 27. Type of materials chosen by new house owners for their build.21

Figure 28. Important house features selected by new house owners.21

Figure 29. Important house features ranked by importance by new house owners.....22

Figure 30. Percentage of new house owners who were talked out of house features they wanted.23

Figure 31. New house owner ratings of agreement with house-related items.....25



Executive summary

The main findings of this report are as follows:

- New house owners rated their builder's performance highly. The majority reported they would recommend their builder to others (61%).
- Respondents were most happy with the overall quality of their home, the condition of their home they day they moved in and the timeliness of completion.
- Most new house owners:
 - used a franchise builder (66%)
 - built a home for the first time (71%)
 - had chosen a house-only package (76%) over a house-and-land package
 - had a build valued at under \$600,000 (58%).
- The most common reason reported for building instead of buying an existing house was the desire for less maintenance (37%) and specific requirements that were not catered to by houses on the market (37%).
- When asked what features were important in choosing their builder, most respondents reported looking for examples of high-quality work, a good reputation, fixed price certainty and timely completion.
- Over a third of new house owners (39%) reported choosing their builder based on the quality of their previous work such as show homes.
- Disputes over final cost were relatively uncommon (16%). Disputes tended to focus on completion dates, variations and defects.
- Most new house owners called back a tradesperson to repair defects after first occupancy (86%). The most common type of defect was installer related (tradesperson error) rather than product related. Painters, plumbers and electricians were the tradespeople who were called back the most to repair defects.
- The house features that were ranked as the most important to new house owners were the size and character of their house and having a detached house with a garden/lawn.



1. Introduction

The BRANZ New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey aims to understand how builders perform in Aotearoa New Zealand from the perspective of their clients. The survey has been running annually since 2011. The survey was originally developed due to a lack of measures of the quality of outputs from the construction industry. The annual cross-sectional nature of this survey and its consistent methodology allows us to monitor trends regarding new builds in Aotearoa across time.

The survey measures new house owners' perceived quality of their new build, the builder-client relationship and the build process overall. This survey also collects data on more subjective items such as the value of the build, whether the house owner had built previously, whether there were call-backs for defect repair and whether a franchise builder was employed.

It is important to gather insights into builder performance directly from new house owners so we can understand where areas of improvement may lie and recognise where builders are excelling. A comprehensive understanding of these areas will contribute to strengthening builder-client relationships through enhanced communication and mutual understanding.

Definition of 'builder'

New house owners were informed in the letter accompanying the survey form how we defined the term 'builder' for this survey. For the New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey and the results presented within this report, the term 'builder' refers to all people involved in the build process. This includes (but is not limited to) any office staff within the building company, the project manager and any subcontractors. This definition allowed us to survey new house owners about the whole build process from their first dealings with the builder during the buying process through to the fixing of defects after first occupancy.



2. Methodology

The methodology for the BRANZ New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey has largely remained consistent over the years since its inception in 2011. This consistency enables us to compare results, benchmark performance and analyse changes over time. Traditionally, the survey was distributed via a paper-based questionnaire. However, following a successful trial in 2017, we transitioned to sending postcard invitations that directed respondents to complete the survey online. As an incentive for participation, recipients were entered into a draw to win one of several Prezzy cards.

A sample of 6,756 new house owners was identified from consents taken out between March 2022 and April 2023. This period was selected to represent houses that were completed in the 2023 calendar year, assuming that a house typically takes 9–10 months from consent to completion. The sample focuses on detached housing because of the postcard-based nature of the survey.

Addresses were removed from the sample when the owner was also listed as the builder of another house in the sample or the builder was listed as the owner. The latter indicates a speculative ('spec') build, where the house is built without a specific committed buyer.

The survey sample consisted of the following regions:

Auckland (5%)	Bay of Plenty (7%)	Canterbury (28%)	Hawke's Bay (3%)
Manawatu-Wanganui (7%)	Marlborough (2%)	Nelson (2%)	Northland (6%)
Otago (5%)	Southland (2%)	Taranaki (2%)	Tasman (7%)
Waikato (13%)	Wellington (8%)	West Coast (1%)	N/A (2%)

BRANZ received 547 returned and completed surveys, which have been used for the analysis represented in this report. The response rate was just over 8%. We will continue to assess our current recruitment/incentive strategy and see whether any updates/improvements can be made for the next version of this survey.



3. Results

This section presents the findings of the New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey 2023 organised in eight subsections:

1. Beginning of the build
2. Contracts, packages and value
3. Input costs and prime cost (PC) sums
4. Ratings of builder performance
5. Choosing a builder
6. Defects and call-backs
7. Inputs on house design
8. Important features of a house

3.1 Beginning of the build

The questions in this section explore the decisions made by the client before their build and their previous experience in having a house built.

Why did the respondents choose to build?

New house owners were asked to select their reasons for building a new house, rather than buying an existing one. Figure 1 shows that the most common reasons selected were they wanted less maintenance (37%), their specific requirements were not met by existing houses (37%) or they owned an empty section (31%).

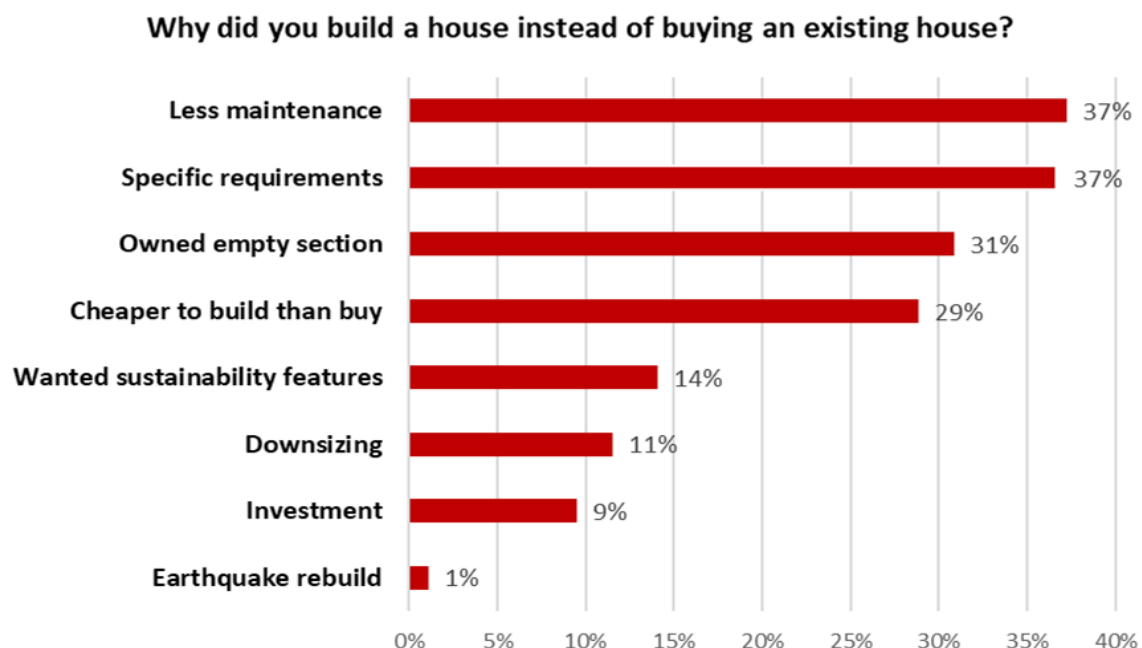


Figure 1. New house owners' reasons for building a house instead of buying a house.

How many respondents used franchise builders?

Most respondents (66%) reported using a franchise builder for their house (Figure 2). Of those who used a franchise, the most popular franchise was GJ Gardner (20%). Other franchises of note were Jennian Homes (8%), Signature Homes (8%) and Mike Greer Homes (6%). Looking back to previous years, there has been a slight increase in new house owners who used franchise builders (66% in 2023 versus 62% in 2022).

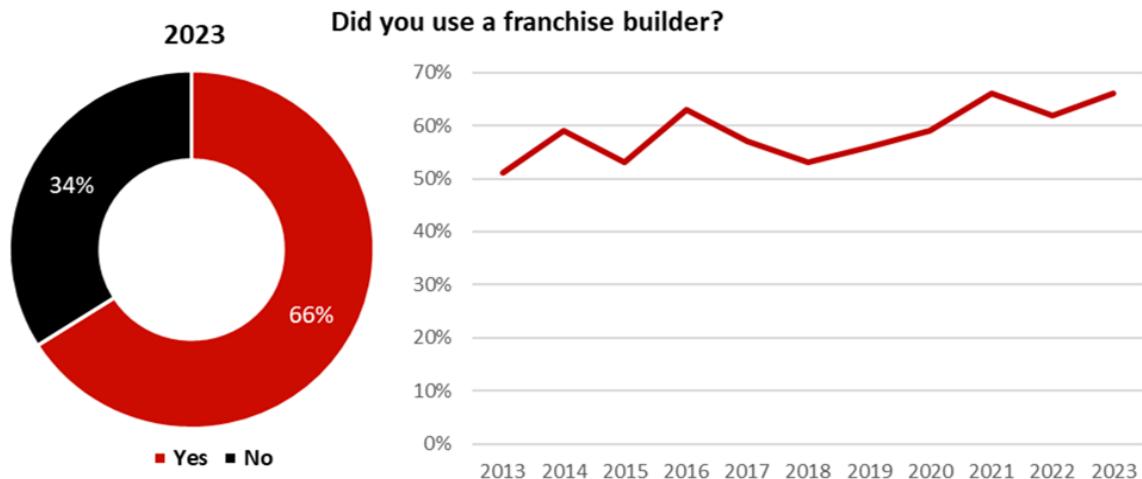


Figure 2. Percentage of new house owners who used a franchise builder.

How many respondents had built a house previously?

For most respondents (71%), this was the first house they had built (Figure 3), while just under a third of respondents (29%) indicated that they had built a house before.

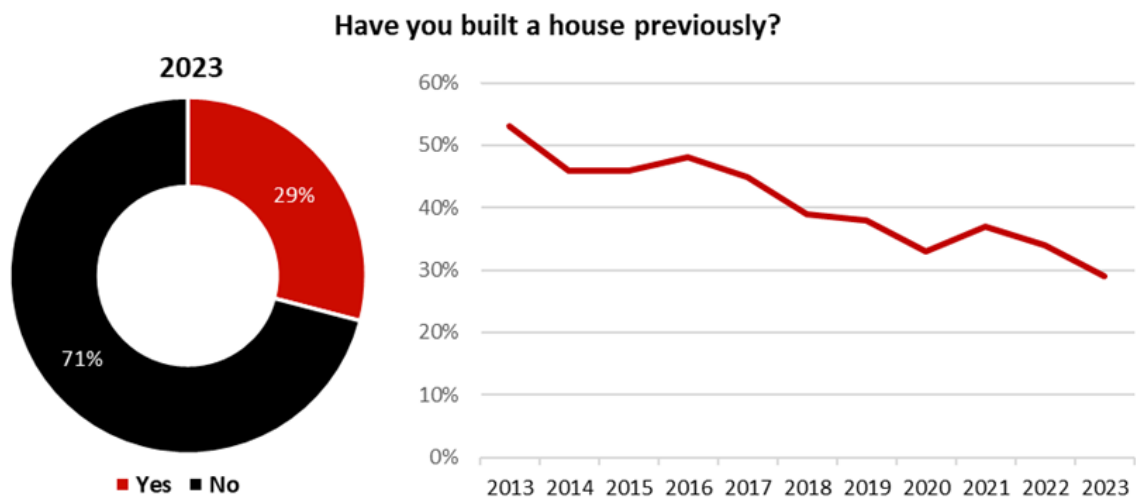


Figure 3. Percentage of new house owners who had built previously.

Compared to previous years, the percentage of new house owners who have built a house before is steadily decreasing. In 2013, over half of respondents (53%) reported they had built before compared to just 29% in the present year's findings.

3.2 Contracts, packages and value

This section covers the agreed-upon details of the new build – what type of contracts house owners had, whether they felt there were exclusions, the value of their build and whether there was a dispute over the final cost.

What type of house packages were most common amongst respondents?

Most respondents reported purchasing a house-only package (Figure 4) for their new build (76%). The house and land package group only includes respondents who were involved in the new build from the consent stage. Over time, the amount of people purchasing house and land packages has increased (9.5% in 2014 versus 31% in 2023).

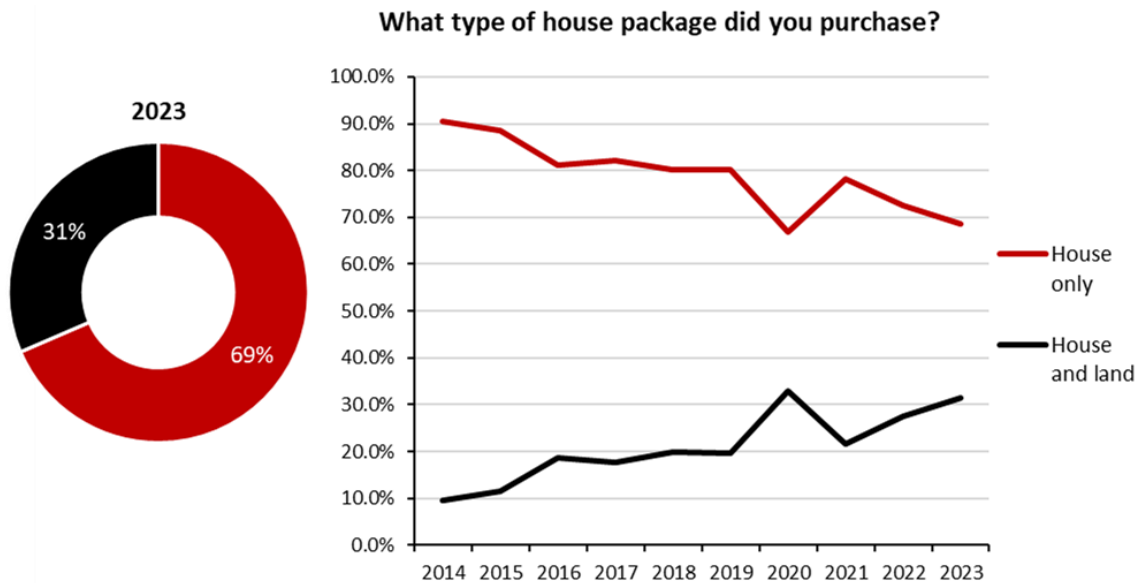


Figure 4. Percentage of new house owners who purchased a house-only versus house and land package.

Clients who chose a house and land package after the consent was issued (spec build) were excluded from the survey sample to capture the end-to-end building process.

What type of written contract did clients have with their builder?

Since 2015, it has been a requirement to have a written contract with a builder for all work that will cost more than \$30,000.¹ We asked respondents what type of contract they had (Figure 5). Fixed price, fixed price (with input cost increases) and house and land contracts were equally as popular, with 24% of respondents using each of these types of contracts with their builder. Design and build (17%) was also a commonly reported type of contract. Cost plus (1%) and Labour only (1%) were also reported.

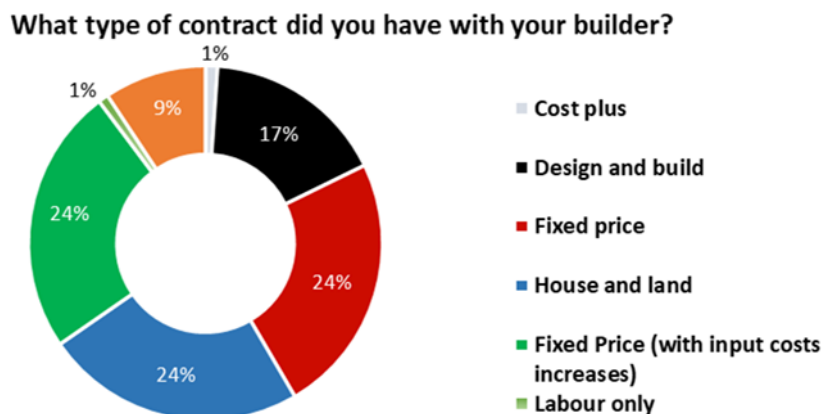


Figure 5. Type of contract new house owners had with their builder.

Did respondents feel anything was excluded from their contract?

Respondents were asked if anything was excluded from their contract that they felt should have been included. As shown in Figure 6, most house owners did not feel anything had been excluded (74%).

¹ www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/why-contracts-are-valuable



Was anything excluded from your contract that you thought should have been included?

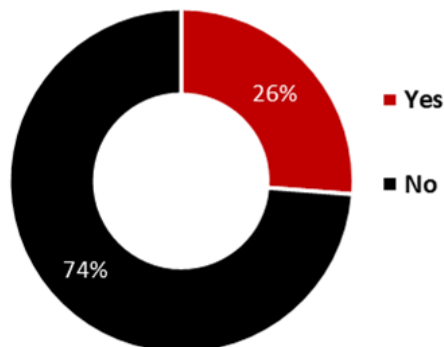


Figure 6. Percentage of perceived exclusions from contracts.

Of the 26% of respondents who felt that there had been some items excluded from their contract, the most mentioned exclusions were:

- landscaping (reported by 31% of those who described exclusions)
- fencing (12%)
- concrete, driveways (10%)
- water/septic tanks, drainage (10%)
- internet, power points, TV aerials, electricity (8%)
- clean-up of construction site. (6%)
- hot water tanks, heating (heat pumps etc,) (6%)
- letterboxes (5%)
- kitchen items (benchtops, splashbacks etc.) (4%)
- hardware (taps, cabinet handles etc.) (4%)
- decking (4%).

Did new house owners have a dispute with their builder over final cost?

The majority of respondents (84%) did not have a dispute with their builder about the final cost (Figure 7). The amount of disputes over final cost has remained consistent over the past 4 years with 14%, 15%, 15% and 16% of respondents reporting disputes, respectively.

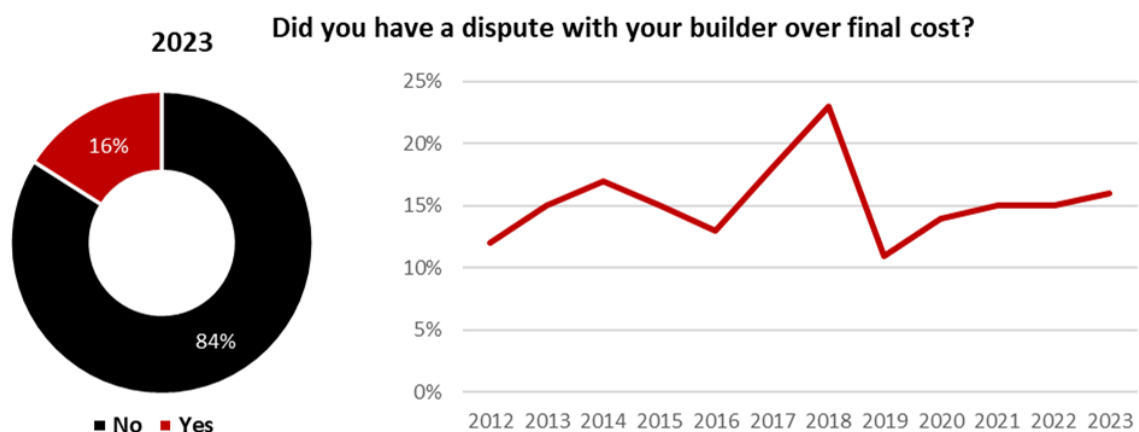


Figure 7. Percentage of new house owners who had a dispute with their builder over cost.



For the 16% who did report a dispute, these tended to focus on:

- charges for variations (reported by 20% of those who described disputes)
- items that were left incomplete (16%)
- items that were not included in the contract, causing additional costs (15%)
- builder not meeting completion date and penalties for not meeting completion dates (12%)
- additional charges for items believed to be included in the contract (12%)
- items going beyond the prime cost (PC) sum, particularly when the client considered the PC sums were unrealistically low (9%)
- incorrect materials/products used (9%)
- defects that haven't been fixed (7%).

What was the value of the build?

Respondents were asked about the value of their build. As seen in Figure 8, most respondents had spent less than \$600,000 (52%) compared to those who had spent more than \$600,000 (47%). Very few spent less than \$250,000 (1%).

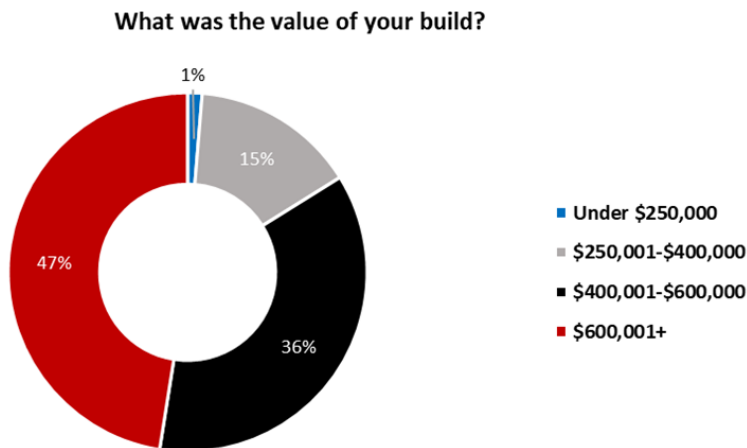


Figure 8. Value of new house owners' builds.

3.3 Input costs and prime cost (PC) sums

This section addresses more details of the costs involved in a new build such as input costs and PC sums.

Were increases in input costs expected?

Input costs are cost increases incurred after the contract end date and are outside the control of the builder. These increases are often due to changes in market conditions affecting the availability and supply/demand for materials and subcontractors.

Respondents were asked if they expected any input cost increases. As shown in Figure 9, the most frequent response was that input cost increases were as expected (31%), while a quarter did not report an increase (25%). Of those who did not expect cost increases and did report an increase (59%), 41% felt the increases were more than expected compared to just 7% who thought they were less than expected.



The input cost increases after build completion were:

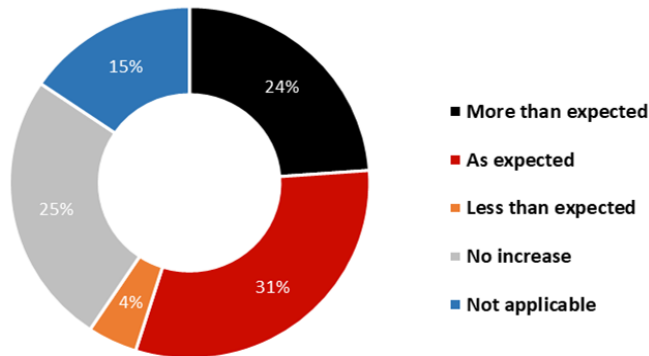


Figure 9. Expectations of input cost increases after build completion.

How accurately did respondents find their PC sums were costed?

Prime cost (PC) sums are amounts included in the contract as allowances for items where the actual cost is not known at the time of signing the contract – for example, the price fluctuation of kitchen appliances or the specification of items (such as taps) by a client at a later date.

Figure 10 shows how accurately costed respondents felt their PC sums were. Most survey respondents felt that their costed PC sums were close to actual cost (65%). Overall, 25% of respondents felt their PC sums were under costed, which is higher than the 10% of respondents who felt their PC sums were over costed.

The costing for your PC sums were:

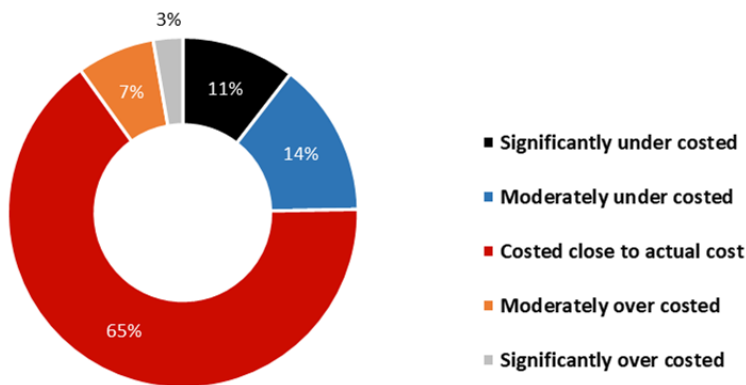


Figure 10. Perception of costings for PC sums

How did respondents find the cost-related aspect of their build process?

Respondents were asked to rate on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) how much they agreed with five statements regarding cost and budgetary aspects of their build process. Figure 11 shows these findings. For the most part, respondents felt that they had a good experience in managing the contractual process, variations during the build process and their budget.

When asked if they felt pressured to sign the build contract, even if they weren't totally happy with it, most respondents disagreed (68%). Only a small minority of individuals agreed with the statement (12%). Most participants felt that they did not have an excessive number of variations during the build process (58%), and just under a fifth agreed that they did (18%).



When asked if they thought they had made sacrifices throughout their build process due to cost increases, just over half disagreed (55%) and only a quarter of respondents agreed (24%). When asked if their budgetary constraints impacted the satisfaction they felt with their new home, just under half of respondents disagreed (46%), while only 22% of respondents agreed.

The only area where respondents were more mixed is where we asked if the bank was easy to work with and understanding of cost increases. There were a large majority of participants who either did not work with a bank or neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement (54%). Of the respondents who gave a definite answer (46% of total sample), the majority agreed with the statement (67%) and a minority disagreed (33%).

To what extent do new house owners agree that:

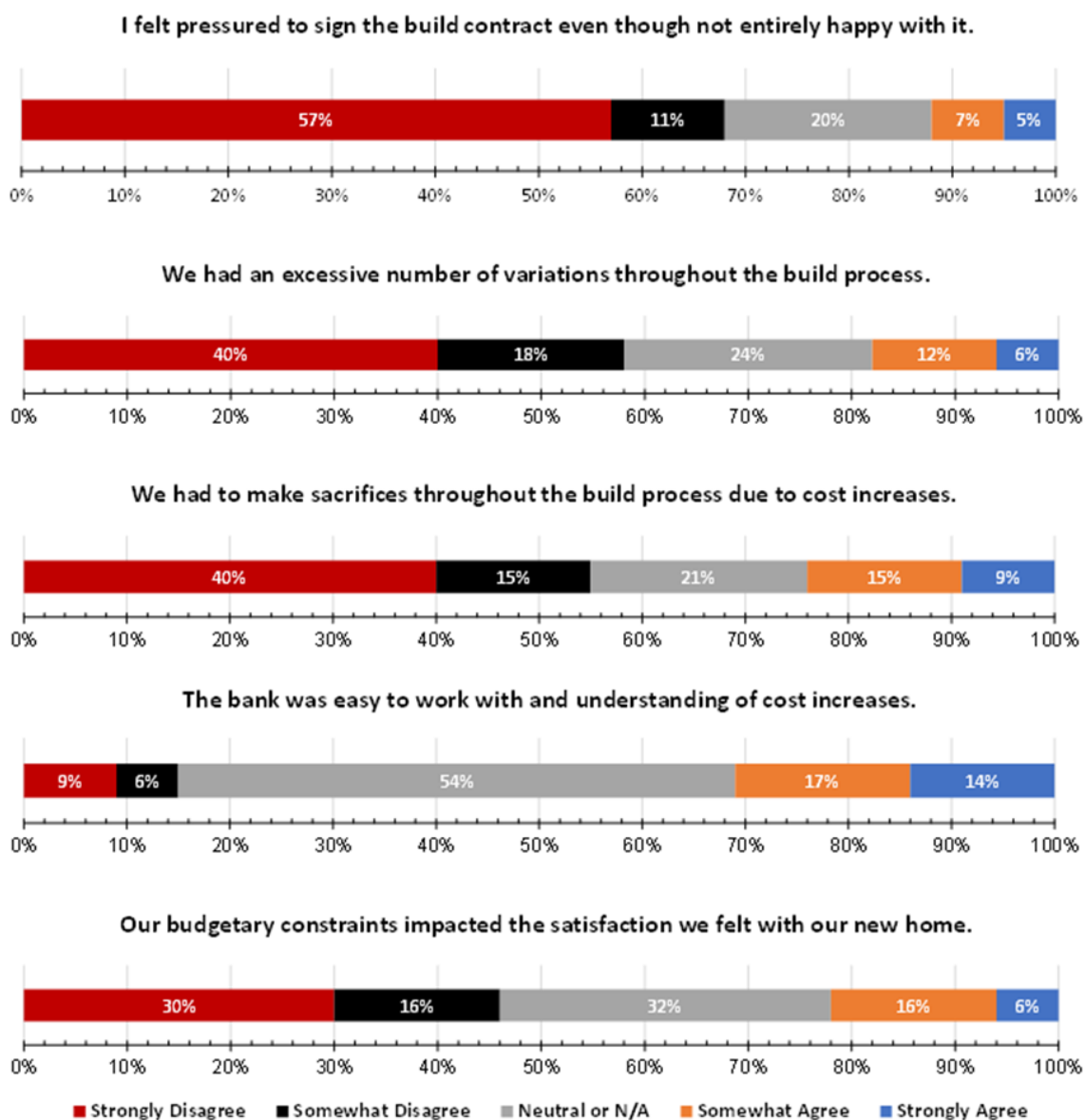


Figure 11. Perceptions of some cost-related elements of a new build.



3.4 Ratings of builder performance

New house owners were asked to rate aspects of their builder's performance and the build process. There were 12 items in total were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from very poor (1) to very good (5).

How did respondents rate their builder/the build overall?

To obtain an overall ranking for each category, averages for each ranking were calculated across all 12 performance items. These averages are illustrated in Figure 12. For the average performance score depicted, the Likert scale was converted to numerical values (1 = very poor, 5 = very good), and these values were averaged across all responses, yielding an overall average performance score. As shown in Figure 12, most new house owners thought their builder's performance was good (28%) or very good (39%). A small group of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their builder's performance (16%). However, just under a fifth of new house owners thought their builder's performance was poor (17%).

How did new house owners rate their builder's performance?

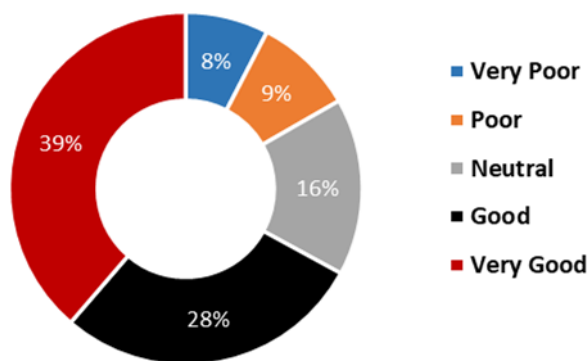


Figure 12. New house owners' average rankings of builder performance.

Over time, satisfaction with builder performance has steadily declined (Figure 13). Over the last 2 years, there has been a consistent downward trend, with builder performance being ranked 4.01, 3.85 and 3.80 for 2021, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

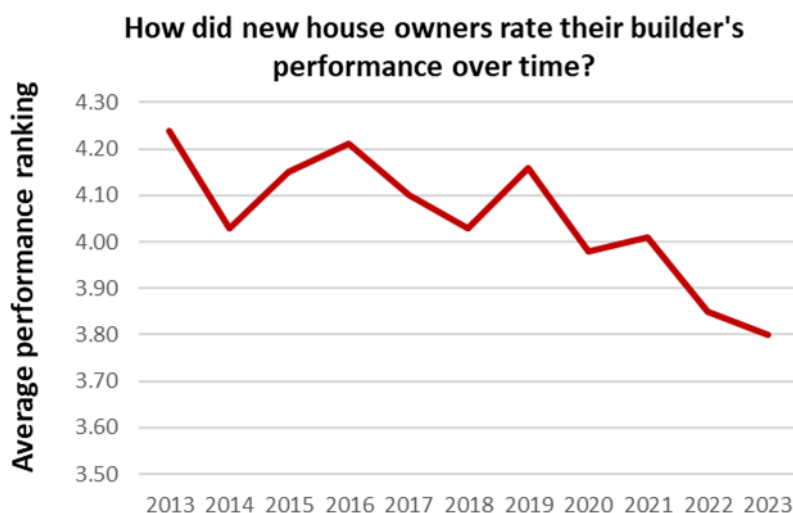
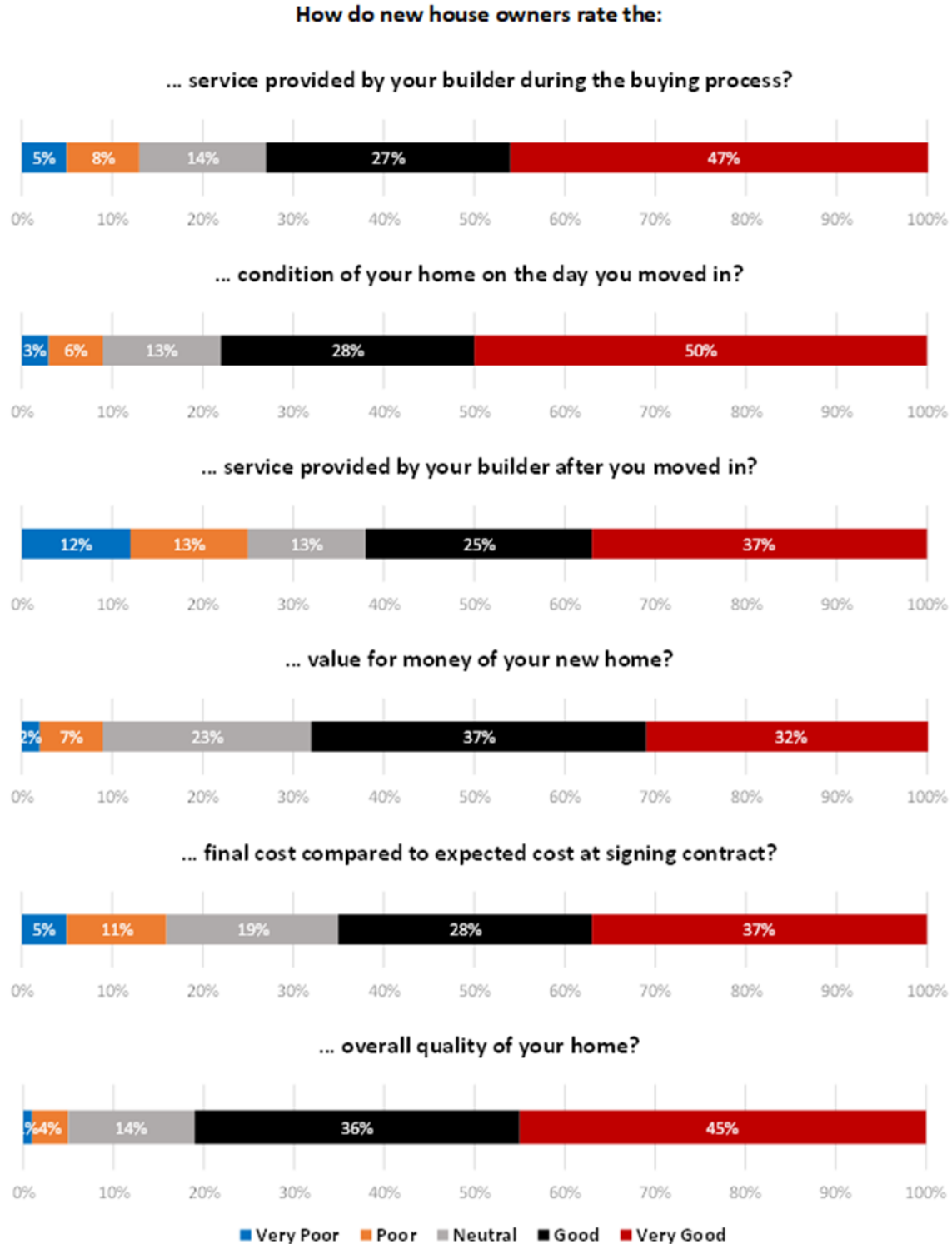


Figure 13. New house owners' average ranking of builder performance over time.



What were respondents most satisfied and dissatisfied with about the build process?

Figure 14 shows how respondents rated performance across 12 items related to the build process. Positively, most new house owners rated their builder's performance as good or very good across all 12 items.



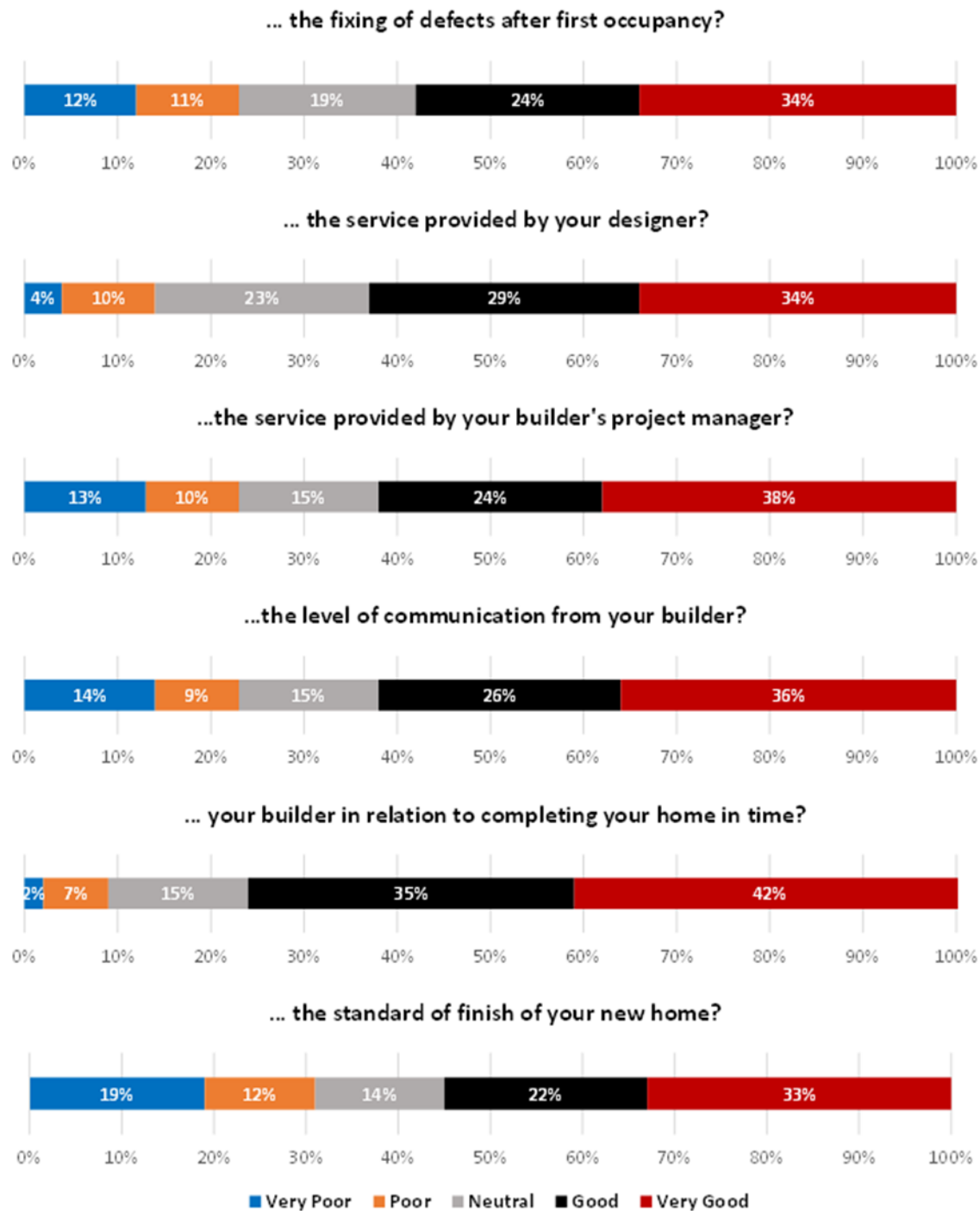


Figure 14. New house owner ratings of their builder's performance.

The build process aspects that new house owners rated the best were:

- the overall quality of their home (81% good/very good)
- the condition of their home the day they moved in (78%)
- their builder in relation to completing their home on time (77%).

Looking at these ratings overall, the construction industry was rated well across all 12 items. However, we must take note of the items where builder performance/build aspects were rated the most poorly. Therefore, there are a few areas that potentially require some improvements.



The poorest-rated aspects of a builder's performance/the build process was:

- the standard of finish of their new home (31% poor/very poor)
- the service provided by their builder after they moved in (25%).

The three measure new house owners rated measures equally as poor were:

- the fixing of defects after first occupancy (23%)
- the service provided by their project manager (23%)
- the level of communication from their builder (23%).

Is there a difference in performance ratings depending on the type of builder?

New house owners rated their builder's performance well regardless of the type of builder. When grouped by the type of builder (Figure 15), there is no consistent difference between the ratings of franchise builders and independent builders. Looking at differences between builder types, new house owners rated independent builders slightly higher (good or very good) than franchise, but this difference is small (69% versus 66%). At the other end of the scale, new house owners rated franchise builders slightly lower (poor or very poor) than independent, but this difference is also small (18% versus 13%).

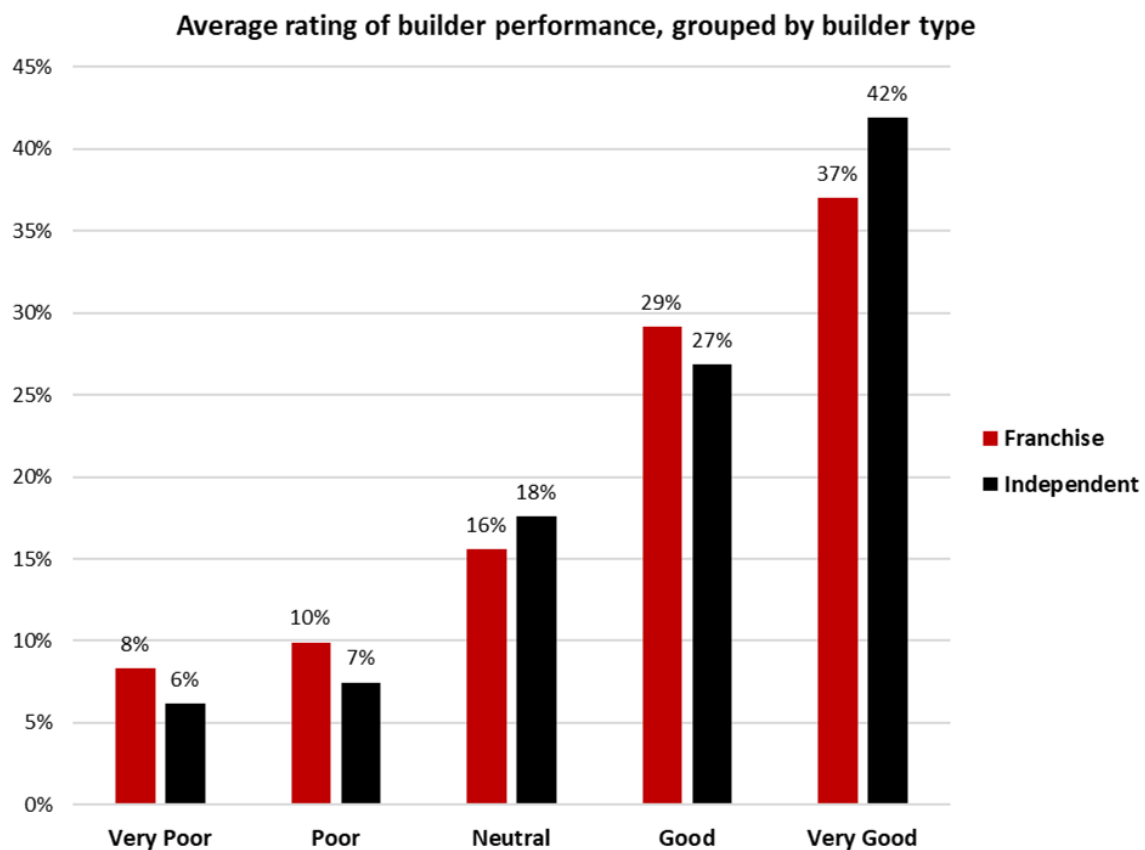


Figure 15. New house owner ratings of builder performance by builder type.

Would homeowners recommend their builder to others?

Respondents were asked how likely they would be to recommend their builder to others (Figure 16). Most were somewhat or extremely likely to recommend their builder to others (61%). Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) rated themselves as unlikely to recommend their builder.



How likely are you to recommend your builder to others?

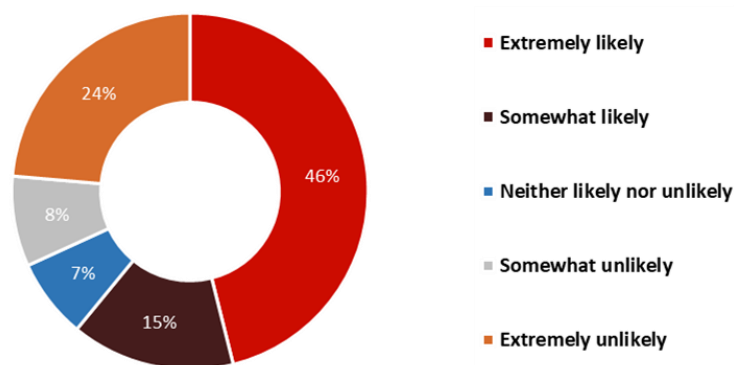


Figure 16. Likelihood new house owners would recommend their builder to others.

3.5 Choosing a builder

Survey participants were asked to select all methods they used when choosing a builder for their new house. As shown in Figure 17, the most selected method of choosing a builder was based on the builder's show home (39%). The next most common methods of selecting a builder were through recommendations from friends or family (19%), through advertisements on TV, in newspapers or online (14%) or the builder owned the land they wanted to build on (13%).

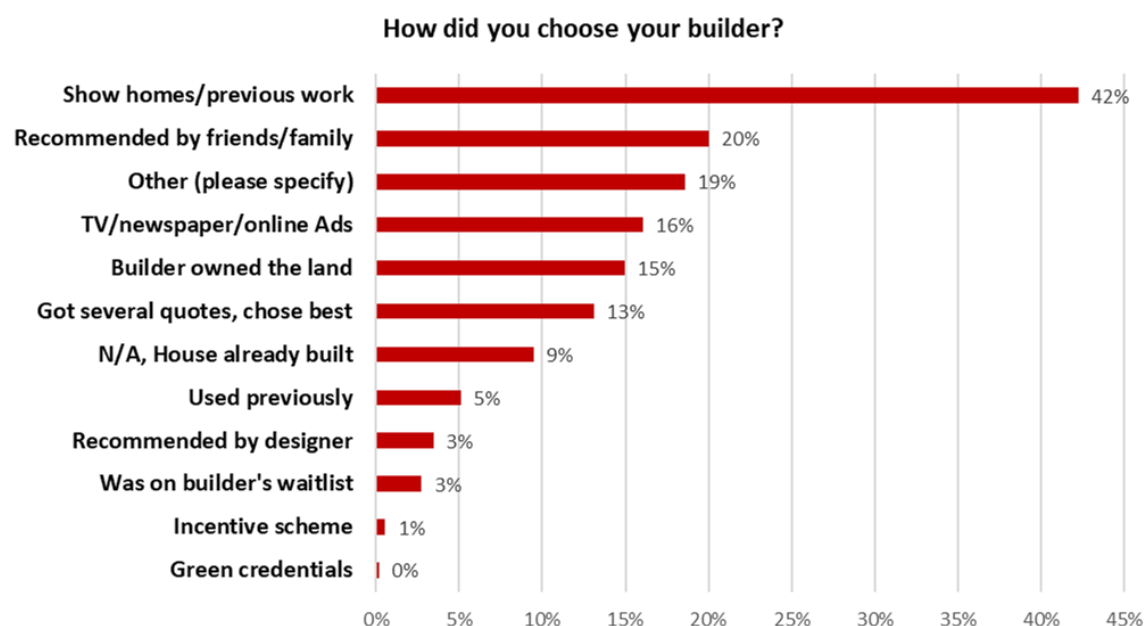


Figure 17. How new house owners chose their builder.

We examined the answers of the 19% of respondents who provided written comments on their choice of builder. These suggested that some respondents chose their builder because they had offered the best price while others did so based on a professional recommendation from someone in the industry. A substantial number of these respondents reported not having a choice of builder as the type of land, house plans, developer or franchise had already assigned them one. Lastly, one group of respondents chose their builder because they had a pre-existing relationship with them. This relationship could take various forms, with recommendations coming from



neighbours, friends, their partner or a family member. Builders also appeared to be chosen based on personal characteristics, with statements referring to trustworthiness, flexibility, likeability and reputation being frequently mentioned.

What are important features when choosing a builder?

Respondents were asked to select all features that were important to them when choosing a builder (Figure 18).

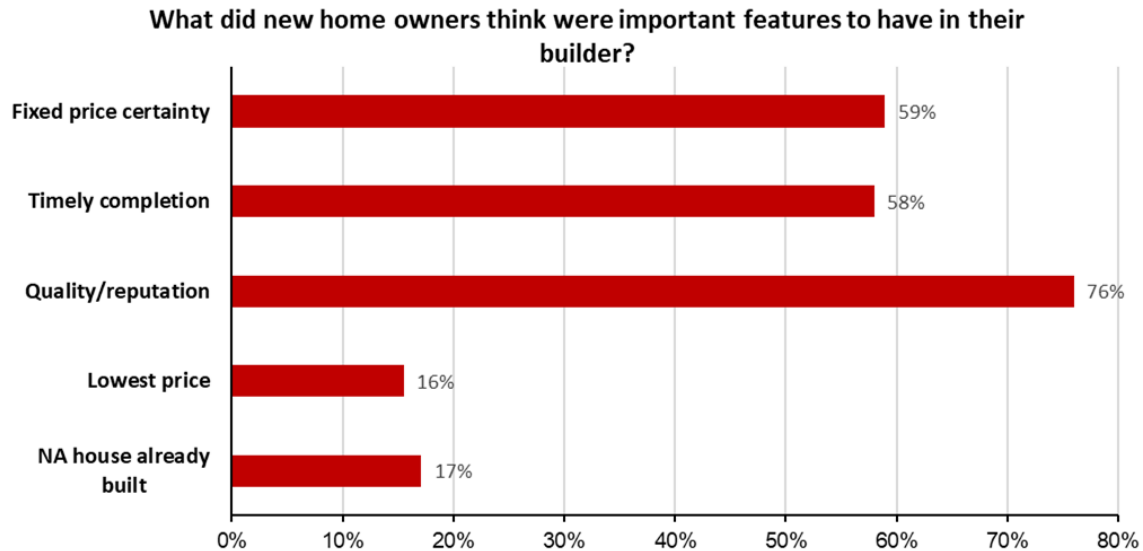


Figure 18. Important features in new house builders.

Most respondents selected quality and reputation as the most important feature in their chosen builder (76%). Fixed price certainty (59%) and timely completion (58%) were also commonly selected as important features of their builder.

Historically, there has always been a high proportion of new house owners who have selected quality/reputation as an important feature of their builder, so we asked a follow-up question in this year's survey to ask what quality means to them. Through examining these responses, these were the main themes of quality:

- **High standards:** New house owners spoke frequently of the importance of an experienced builder who had good attention to detail and good workmanship.
- **Good communication:** Builders who communicated clearly, followed plans and had a good relationship with their client were seen to be of good quality.
- **Durability of materials:** A popular definition of quality related to the materials and products that the builder used.
- **No shortcuts, no cutting corners:** These were common expressions used by new house owners expressing they wanted their job done well and were often willing to pay a higher amount of money to avoid any shortcomings

Would homeowners recommend their builder to others?

Respondents were asked how likely it would be for them to recommend their builder to others (Figure 19). Most people rated themselves as likely to recommend their builder to others (61%). Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) rated themselves as unlikely to recommend their builder. Negative comments were focused on deficiencies in the service, lack of supervision of subcontractors, poor communication disputes over defects and delayed completions.



How likely are you to recommend your builder to others?

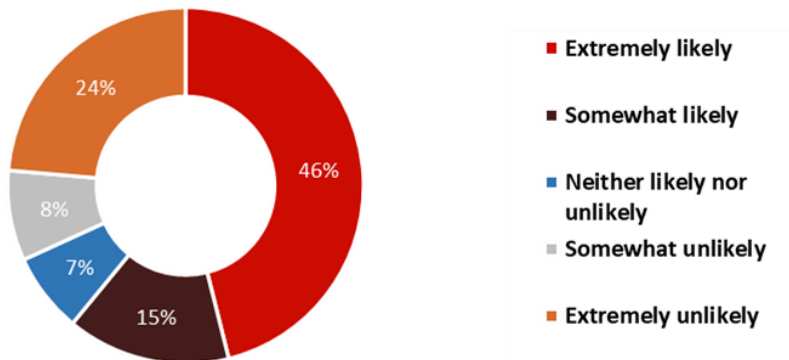


Figure 19. Likelihood new house owners would recommend their builder to others.

3.6 Defects and call-backs

This section covers defects and call-backs – what type of trades were called back, what type of defects were they called back for and what client expectations of defects were.

Did new house owners call a tradesperson back to repair defects?

Respondents were asked if they had to call back their builder or any other tradesperson to repair defects after first moving in. These results are shown in Figure 20. Most new house owners reported having to call back tradespeople to repair defects (86%).

Did you call back your builder, or any other trade, to repair defects after first occupancy?

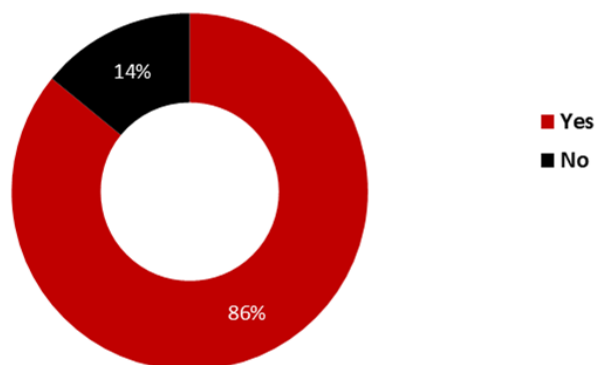


Figure 20. Call-backs for defect repair after first occupancy.

What type of tradespeople are being called back for repairs?

New house owners who reported they had to call back a tradesperson for repairs were also asked to specify what tradesperson they called back. These findings are presented in Figure 21. Over half of those who had to call back a tradesperson reported calling back painters (68%), plumbers (63%) and electricians (62%) to repair defects. Roofers (42%) and tilers (40%) were the trades called back the least.

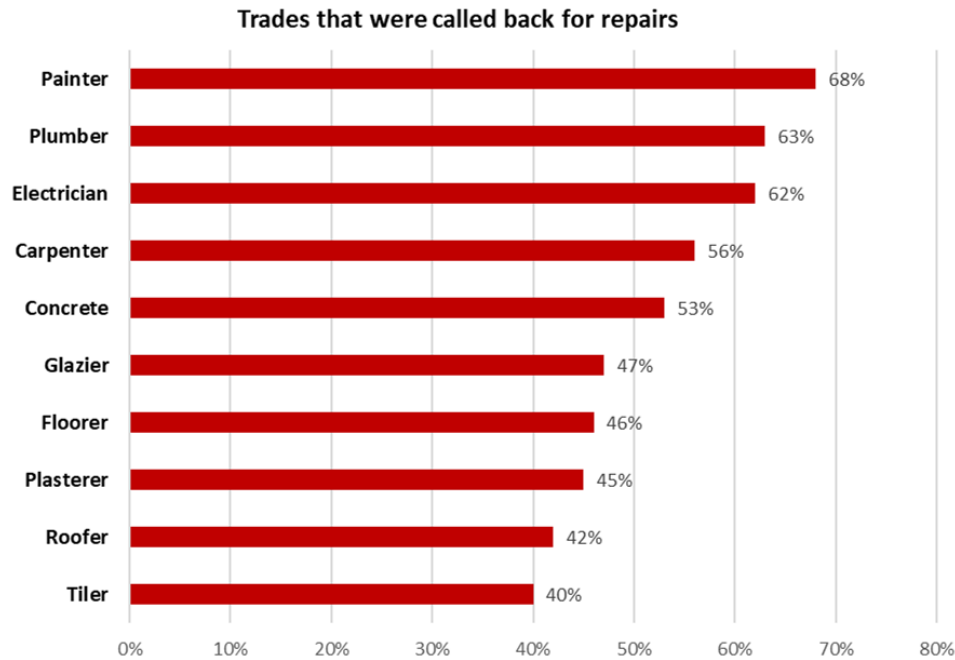


Figure 21. Call-backs for defect repair after first occupancy by trade.

What type of defects are tradespeople being called back to repair?

New house owners were asked to classify the type of defect they called a tradesperson back to repair – installer-related defects (error by the tradesperson) or product-related defects (faulty product/material). Respondents could also state they were unsure if they didn't know which category their defect fitted into (Figure 22).

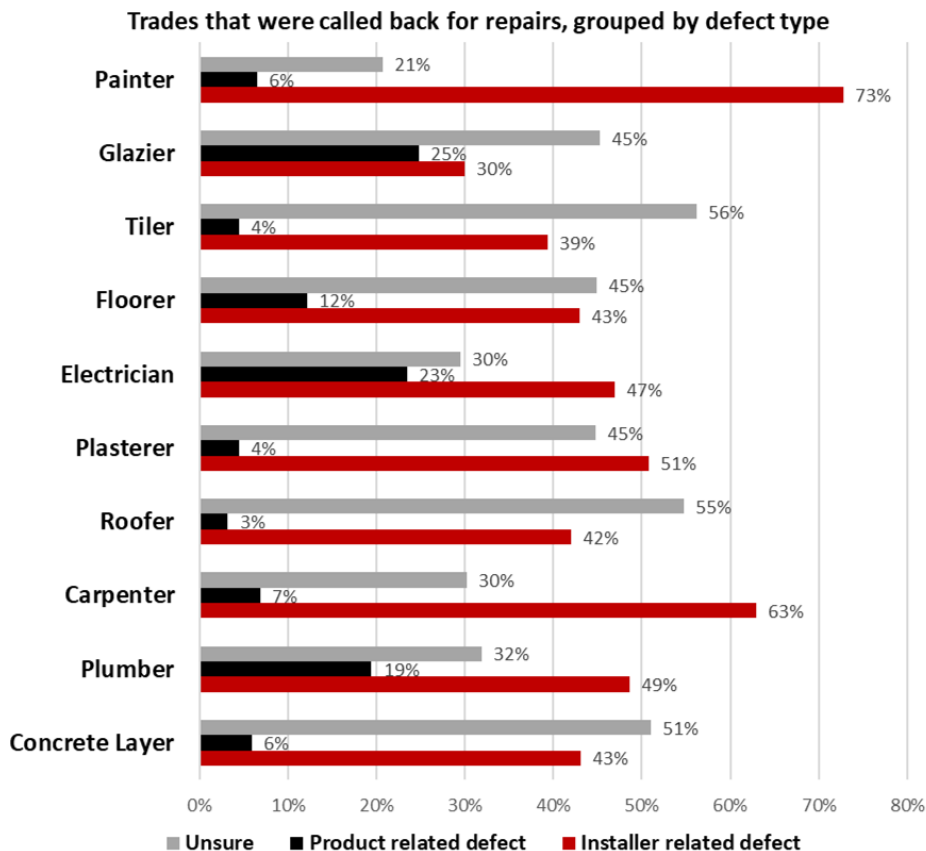


Figure 22. Call-backs for defect repair after first occupancy by trade and defect type.



Most call-backs across all trades were for installer-related defects and were highest for painters (73%) followed by carpenters (63%), plasterers (51%) and electricians (29%). Product-related defects were highest for electricians (15%) followed by glaziers (12%) and plumbers (12%).

How did the number of defects match up to house owners' expectations?

Survey respondents were asked to rate how much they expected the number of defects that they had in their new home. These findings are shown in Figure 23. The largest group of respondents thought there were more defects than they expected (42%) and the second-largest group were not surprised and expected the number of defects in their home (33%). More positively, almost a quarter of house owners believed that there were fewer defects than expected (25%).

Defects relative to house owner expectation

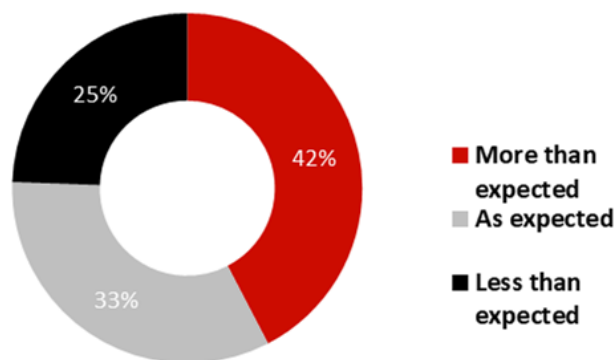


Figure 23. New house owners' expectations of defects.

3.7 Inputs on house design

This section covers the inputs that new house owners had into their new build, specifically into the design and materials used for their house.

What type of design input did new house owners have for their new build?

New house owners were asked if they had design input into their new house. As shown in Figure 24, most respondents reported they did have design input before their house was built (82%).

Did you have design input into your house before it was built?

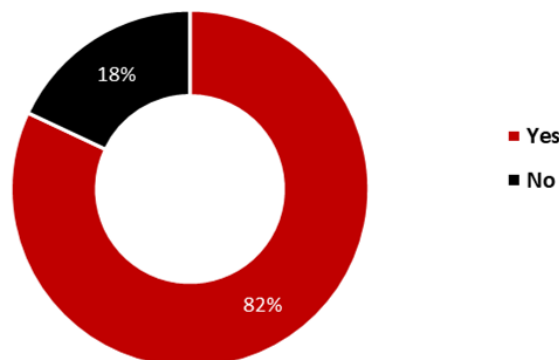


Figure 24. Percentage of new house owners who had input into the design of their house.



If they stated they did have design input, they were then asked what this was. As Figure 25 shows, most people reported that they had selected their design from the builder's standard plans with some changes (52%). The next most popular design involvement was working with the builder's in-house design team to create their plans (30%). Only 2% of respondents reported selecting their design from the builder's standard plans with no changes. These findings align with insights in section 3.1 suggesting new house owners build a new house rather than buying as houses currently on the market do not cater to their specific requirements.

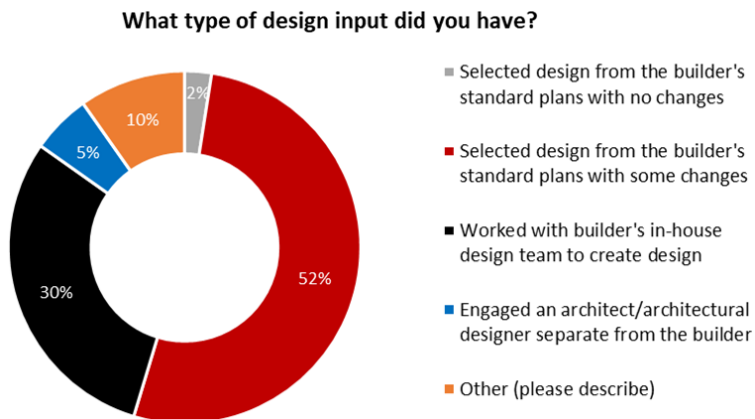


Figure 25. Type of input new house owners had into the design of their house.

What materials did new house owners choose for their new build?

New house owners were asked if they had requested that their builder use a specific type of material (certain type of cladding, insulation, windows etc.). There was an almost even split of those who did (45%) and did not (55%), as shown in Figure 26.

Did you ask your builder to use a specific type of material?

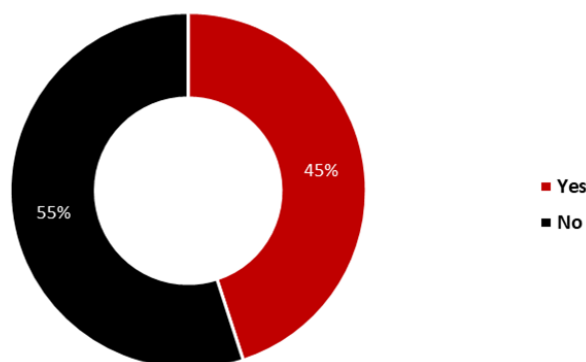


Figure 26. Percentage of new house owners who asked their builder to use a specific material.

What type of materials were new house owners asking for?

Those who stated they did ask for a specific material were then asked to select all materials they had chosen for their new build. These findings are shown in Figure 27. Of those who made a request, a large majority reported choosing the cladding (82%). Less than half of new house owners made decisions about the windows (48%), the roof and wall cladding (45%), the insulation (36%) and the joinery (28%). A small group of respondents reported choosing the framing (9%) used in their new build.

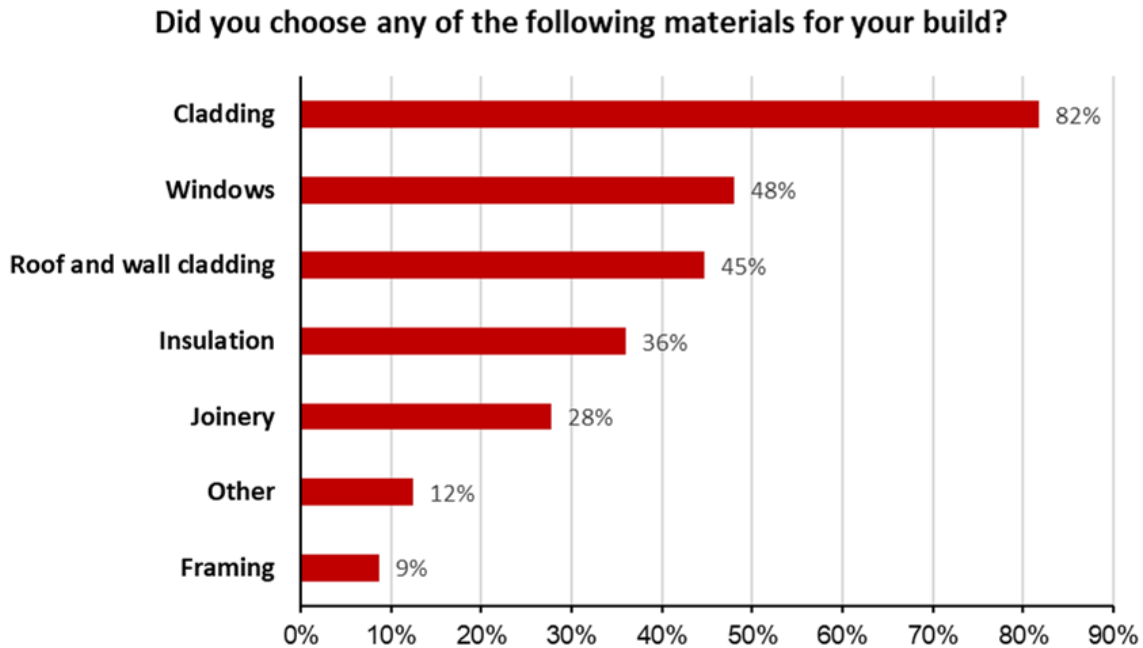


Figure 27. Type of materials chosen by new house owners for their build.

3.8 Important features of a house

This section looks at what house features were most important to new house owners for their new build.

What features were most important for new house owners to have in their new build?

New house owners were asked to select all house features they considered important when choosing/designing their new house. These findings are presented in Figure 28.

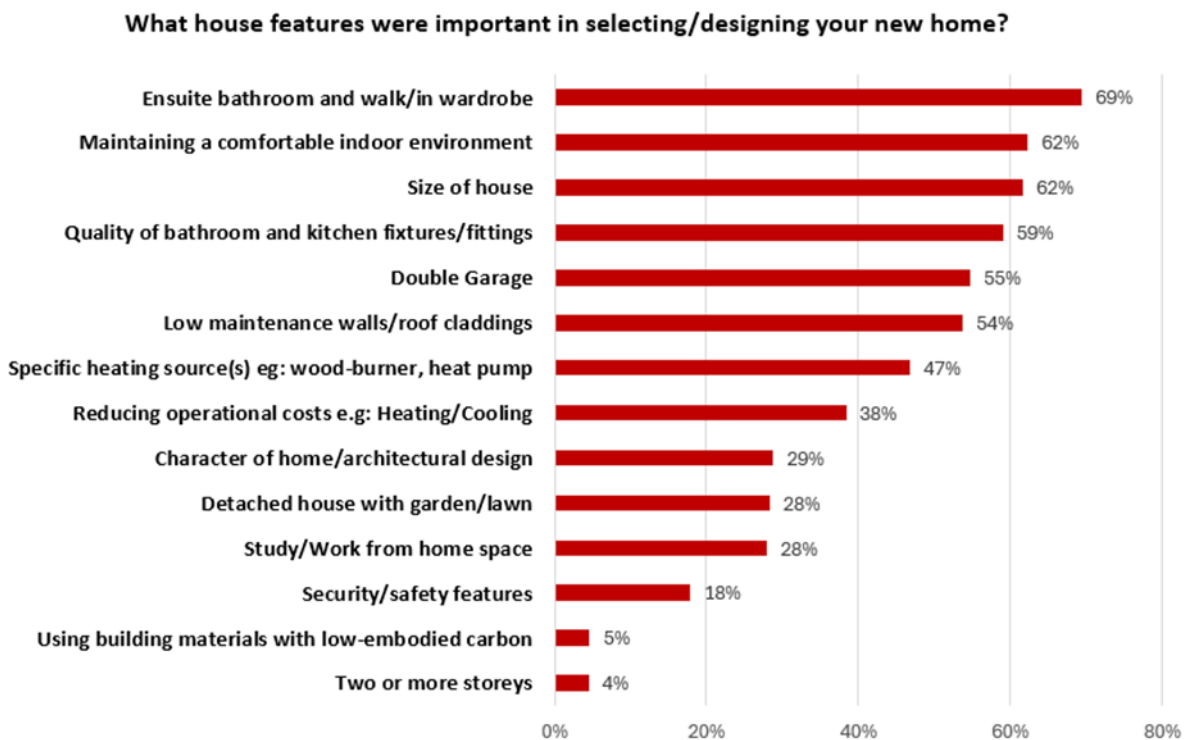


Figure 28. Important house features selected by new house owners.



The most important features (those chosen the most by new house owners) were ensuite bathroom and walk-in wardrobe (69%), comfortable indoor environment (62%) and the size of their house (62%). Less important features (those chosen the least by new house owners) were security/safety features (18%), using materials with low embodied carbon (5%) and having two or more storeys (4%).

Once new house owners had selected their most important house features, they were asked to rank these selected features from most important to least important. These findings are presented in Figure 29. Lower numbers indicate a higher average importance ranking and vice versa.

The three most important house features as ranked by new house owners were the size of their house (3), the character/architectural design of their house (3.1) and having a detached house with a garden/lawn (3.5). In contrast, the three least important house features as ranked by new house owners were security/safety features (6.1), using materials with low embodied carbon (5.8) and having a study/work from home space (5.7).

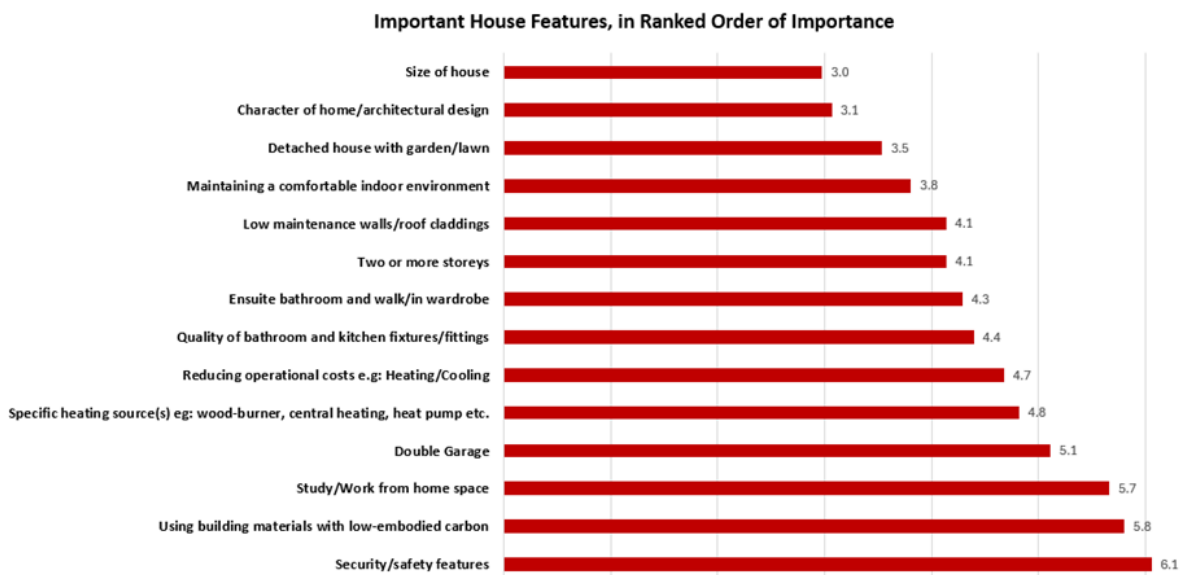


Figure 29. Important house features ranked by importance by new house owners.

Were there any house features that house owners wanted but were talked out of having by their builder or designer?

New house owners were asked if they were talked out of having any house features by their builder or designer. As shown in Figure 30, the majority of house owners felt they were not missing any house features they wanted (70%).

The 30% who felt they had been talked out of house features were asked to specify which features. These features mainly involved:

- windows
- attics
- size of rooms
- doors (particularly sliding and bifold doors)
- sustainability features (mainly solar-related items)
- colours
- tiling



- garages
- cladding
- roof/ceiling design (many reported being talked out of cathedral ceilings, skillion roofs or monopitch roofs)
- heating options (extra heat pumps, HVAC systems, underfloor heating).

Were there any house features you were talked out of by your builder/designer?

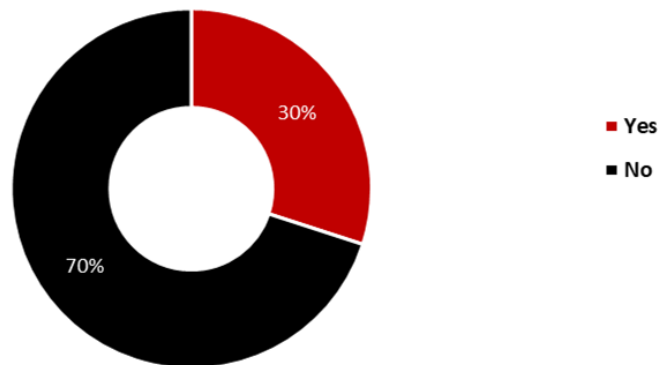


Figure 30. Percentage of new house owners who were talked out of house features they wanted.

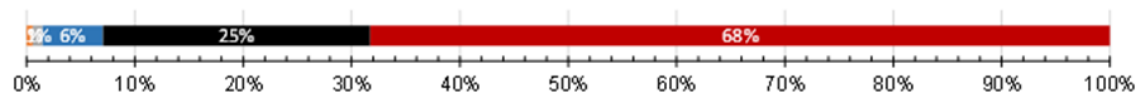
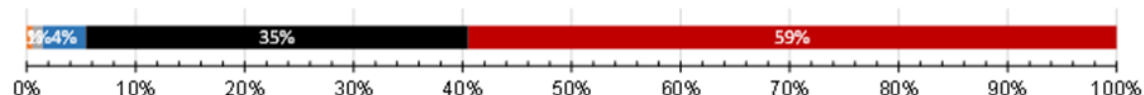
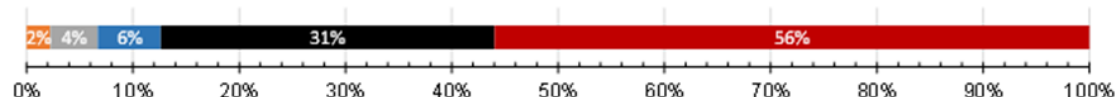
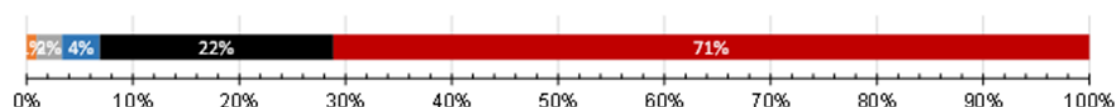
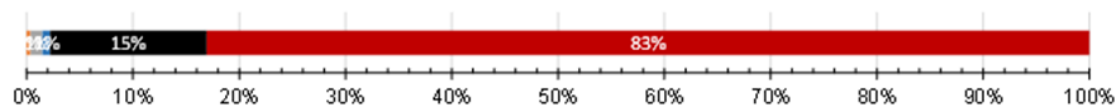
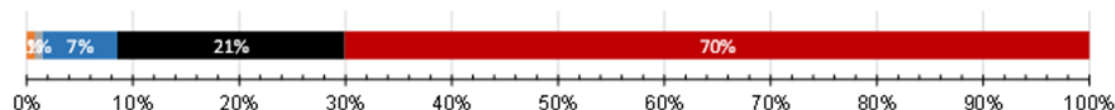
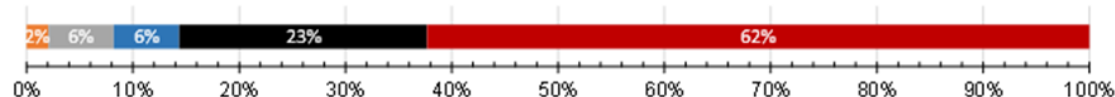
How happy are respondents with their new home?

Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with 13 items regarding the end outcome of their new home. These findings are displayed in Figure 31.

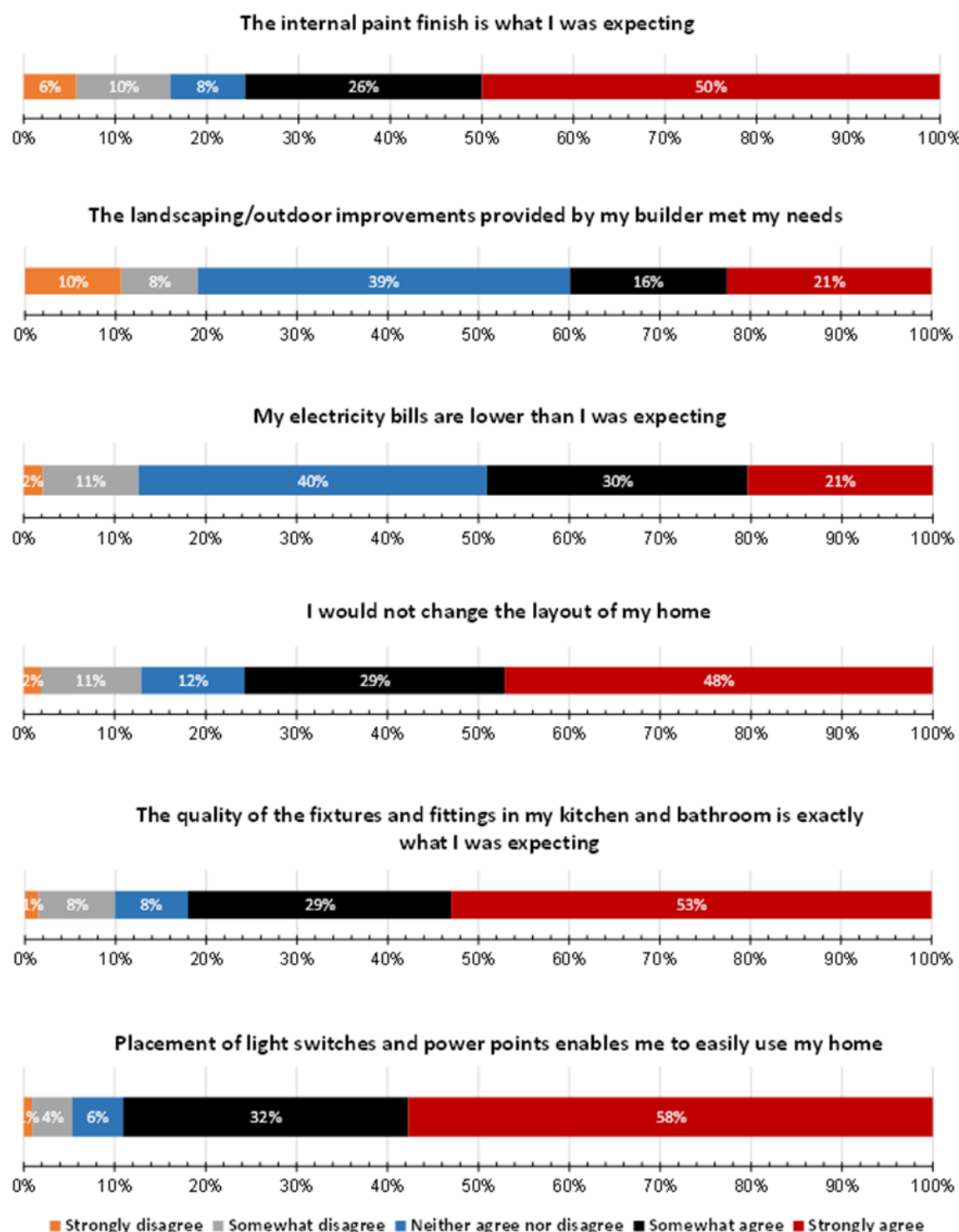
The questions asked by the survey can be split into three categories. Firstly, we asked about aspects specific to the perceived performance of their new home. These included how easily it was to heat their new home, whether their new home stayed warm overnight and if their electricity bill was cheaper than expected. Secondly, we asked about the more functional aspects of their new home. These included storage, size of living room, window size and placements that maximise natural light and views. Finally, we asked respondents about the workmanship of some of the features of their new home. These included paint finish in their new home, landscaping improvements as part of the build and the quality of kitchen and bathroom fittings and fixtures.

Overall, there is a high level of agreement (somewhat/strongly agree) across all 13 items. The items with the highest percentage of agreement concerned the amount of natural light throughout the day (98%), the home staying warm overnight (95%), the home being easy to heat (93%) and the sufficiency of space in the living area (93%).

None of the 13 items received a substantial level of disagreement from new house owners. Relative to other items, respondents disagreed the most that the landscaping provided by their builder met their needs (18%), the internal paint finish met expectations (16%), electricity bills were lower than expected (13%) and they would not change the layout of their home (13%).

**To what extent do new house owners agree that:****My home is easy to heat****My home stays warm overnight****There is sufficient room for storage in my home****The space provided for the main living area is sufficient****My home gets good natural light throughout the day****The size and placement of windows maximises my views****I would not change any of the colours of my home**

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

**Figure 31. New house owner ratings of agreement with house-related items**



4. Conclusion

The 13th annual New House Owners' Satisfaction Survey continues its tradition of assessing how new house owners evaluate their builder's performance and the build process overall. This edition of the survey introduced two new questions regarding important house features and ranked order of significance.

House features deemed important by most new house owners included having an ensuite bathroom and walk-in wardrobe, a comfortable indoor environment and the size of the house. When asked to prioritise house features, respondents ranked the size and character of the house as well as the desirability of having a detached house with a garden/lawn as the most important.

New house owners ranked their builder's performance well overall but rated their performance lower regarding the fixing of defects, level of communication and timely completion of their build. Respondents were most satisfied with the value for money of their builder, the overall quality of the home and the condition of their home the day they moved in. Most house owners would recommend their builder to others without being asked. However most negative comments focused on deficiencies in service, lack of supervision of subcontractors, poor communication and disputes over defects.

Call-backs for defect repair remain high at 86% of the builds in this survey, with painters, plumbers and electricians being the most frequently called back tradespeople. The prevalent type of defect reported was installer-related rather than product-related.

In selecting their builder, the most significant cited method was reviewing the builder's previous work such as show homes, closely followed by recommendations from family and friends. The most important attributes of a builder identified by this year's respondents included reputation and quality of work. Respondents indicated they place great value on the trustworthiness, flexibility and likeability of a builder, with affordability being another key consideration.

Overall, the construction industry in Aotearoa is performing well through the eyes of new house owners. These insights into builder performance will assist us in enhancing builder-client relationships through improved communication and mutual understanding.