

Head Start Options

Rangitikei District Council

July 2026

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2. Head Start & Criteria

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5. Next Steps

Where are we now?

- Agreed last time to look at directions:
 - East
 - West
 - Rural
 - Regional
- Then focus on the impacts of scale
- Community has been asked for their views
- Initial review has been largely using the Head Start criteria as that information is most easily accessible
- Next milestone from here is: 30 July Council meeting

Head Start updates – what is new

- Different representation models can be part of the proposal
- ‘Region’ defined for purposes of Head Start and Spatial planning as existing regions
- If sub-regional then need to address
 - *How does the proposal benefit the region as a whole?*
 - *What is the impact on Councils not included in the proposal?*
- Today’s purpose is to identify the options that are credible and likely to meet the criteria, to keep analysing

Purpose of today

- Focus on strategic direction, and scale
- Look at some indicative options

What we are not doing:

- Not endorsing the submission of a proposal today
- Not choosing a preferred final option today
- Not choosing a preferred direction



Assessment criteria

In the following slides we spend some time looking into the Head Start assessment criteria and what underpins key criteria regardless of the option being considered

Supports the new planning system

Simplifies local governance

Economies of scale

Maintains local voice

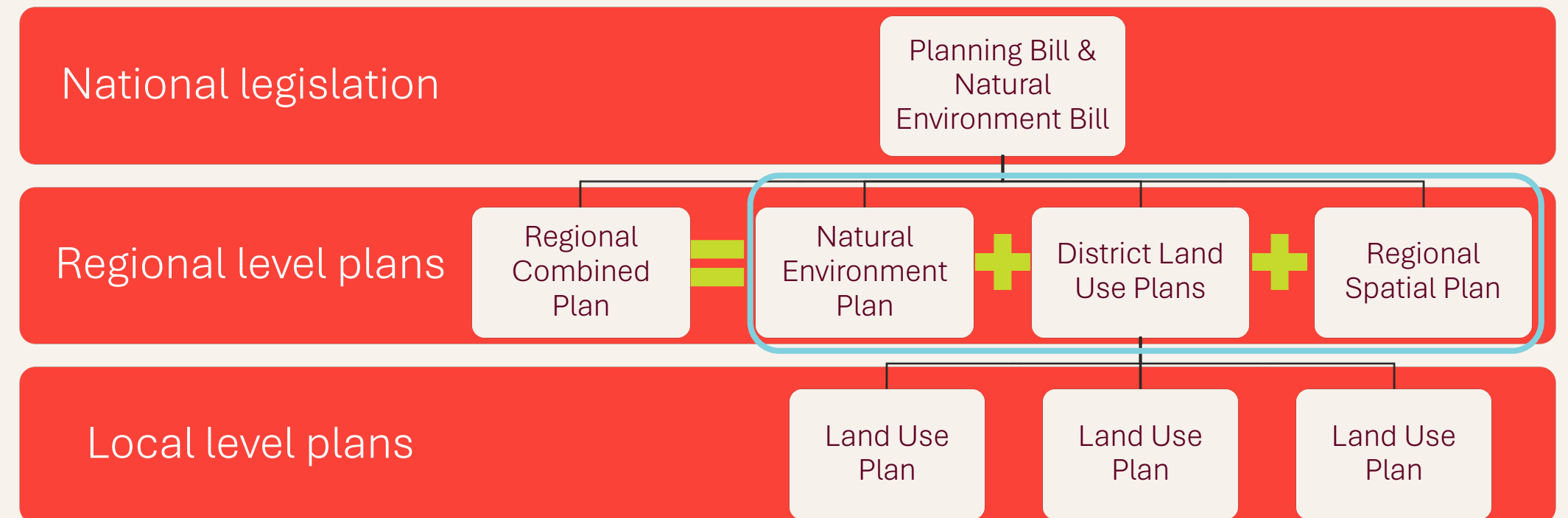
Deliverability

New planning framework – Plans hierarchy

The new planning system has both regional and local plans depending on the local government structure.

The plan hierarchy alongside represents a region with a single Regional Authority and Local Authorities.

Under a Unitary Authority there would be no local Land Use Plans, only a District Land Use Plan.



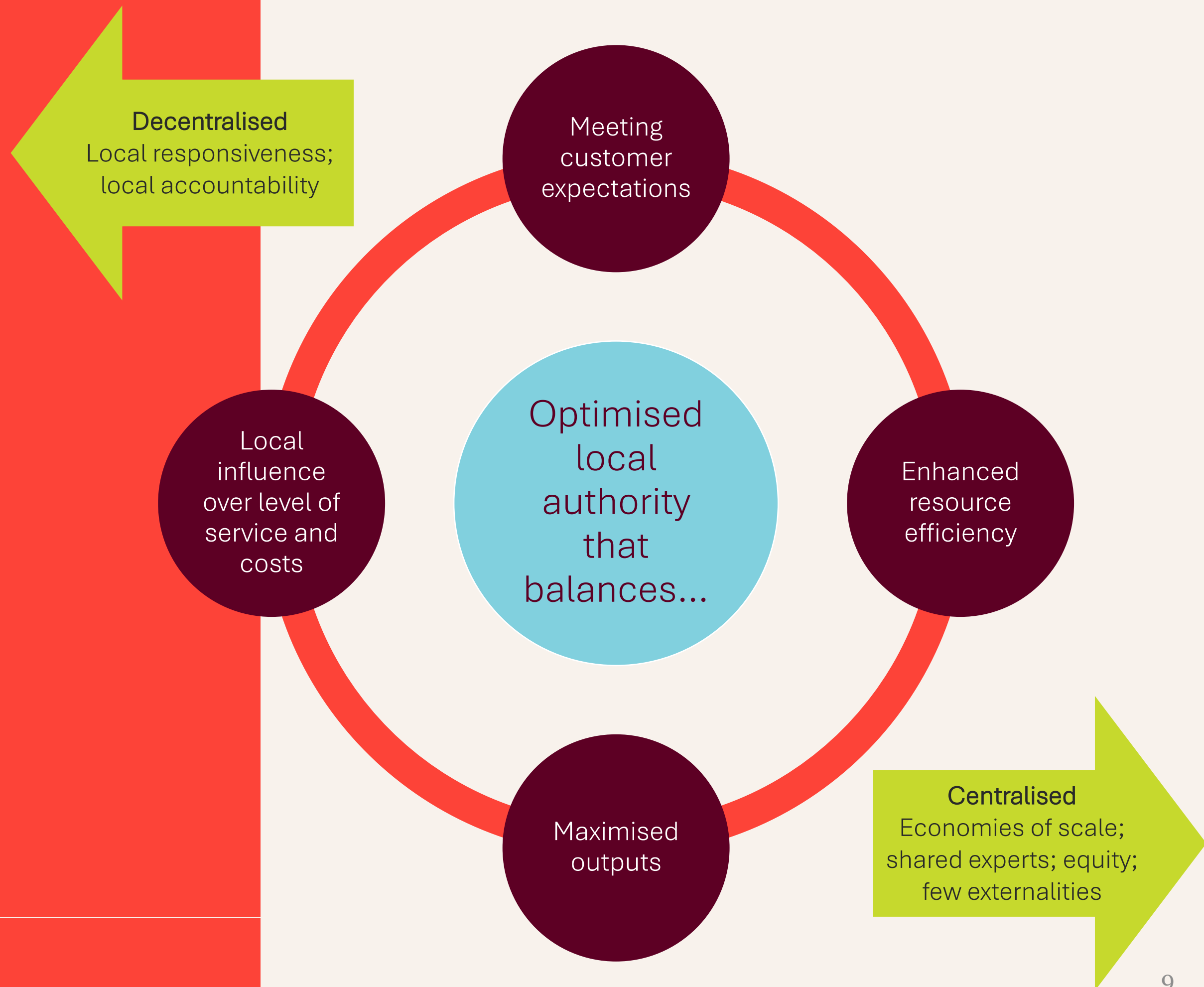
Optimisation challenge

Centralisation supports:

- Resource efficiency and maximised outputs

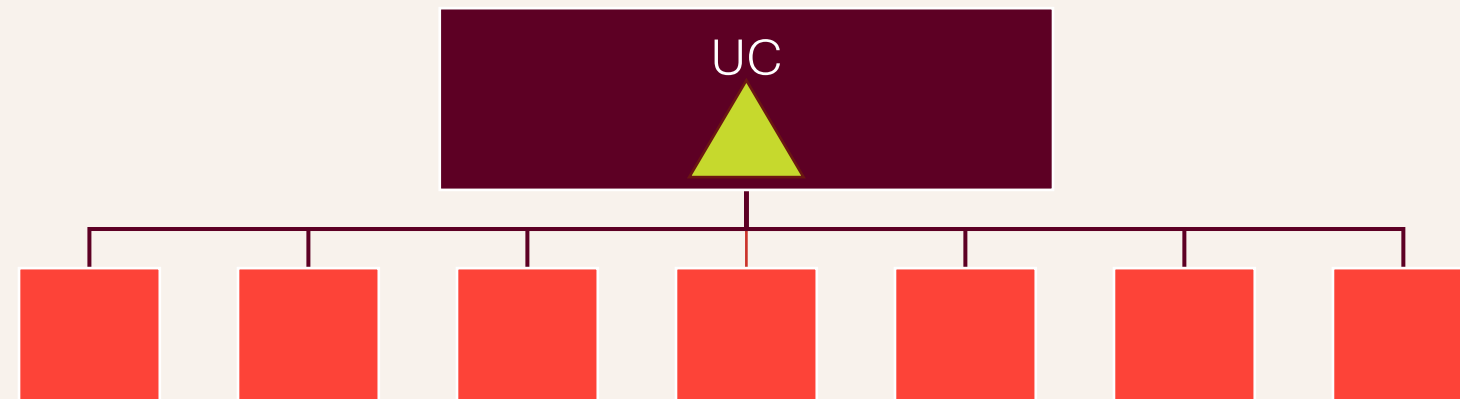
Decentralisation supports:

- Meeting customer needs and enabling local influence over levels of service and costs



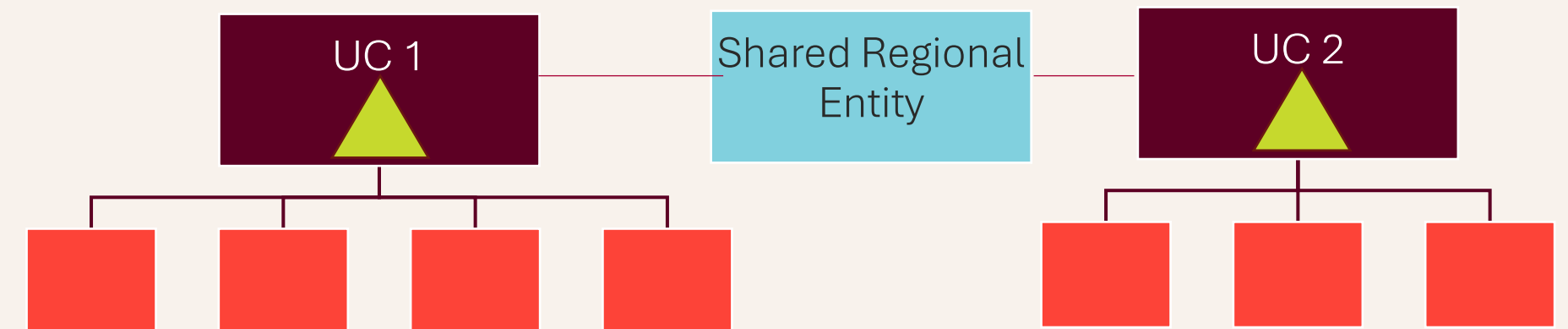
Representation – Summary

Single Unitary



- Simpler governance structure, but more needs to be agreed up front
- Determined **once** at the unitary council level:
 - Whether local bodies exist or not
 - The population each local body represents
 - Level and scope of delegation
 - Function defined in legislation or determined by unitary council
 - Governance only or governance plus service delivery
- Potentially, room to explore setting at the local body level:
 - Iwi involvement and/or representation on local bodies

Two or more Unitaries



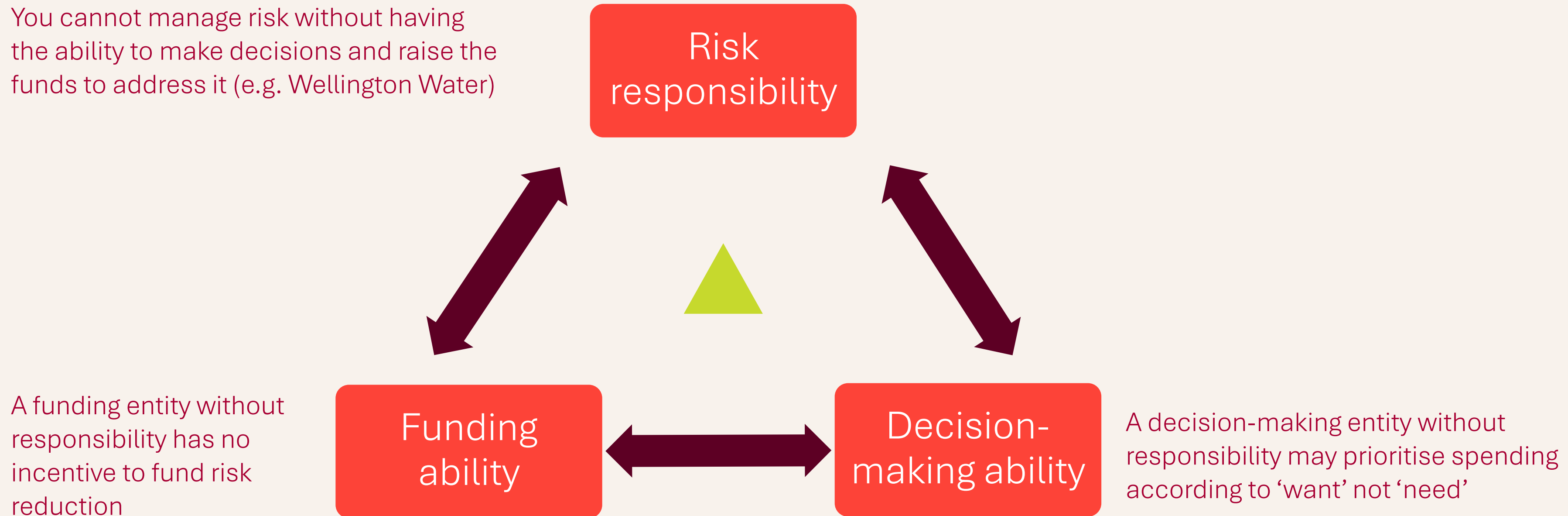
- More flexibility for governance to be defined by each unitary
- Determined **by each** unitary council:
 - Whether local bodies exist or not
 - The population each local body represents
 - Iwi involvement and/or representation on local bodies
 - Level and scope of delegation
 - Function defined in legislation or determined by respective UCs
 - Governance only or governance plus service delivery

Clarity of accountability

Relevant when considering:

- How the regional functions are delivered
- The arrangement between a unitary council and any external entity
- What is delegated to local body level

You cannot manage risk without having the ability to make decisions and raise the funds to address it (e.g. Wellington Water)



Consistent with Head Start criteria



- Strategic priorities
 - Working collaboratively to improve wellbeing
 - Town centre revitalisation
 - Enhancing our community hubs
 - Facilitating growth
 - Connecting with the Central North Island

Horizon Councils' SLG submission

Priorities:

- Local voice and democratic legitimacy
- Service quality and community outcomes
- Affordability and financial sustainability
- Fiscal transparency and accountability
- Partnership with Māori
- Long term, future fit thinking
- Align funding to mandate
- Alignment to national goals

Head Start criteria

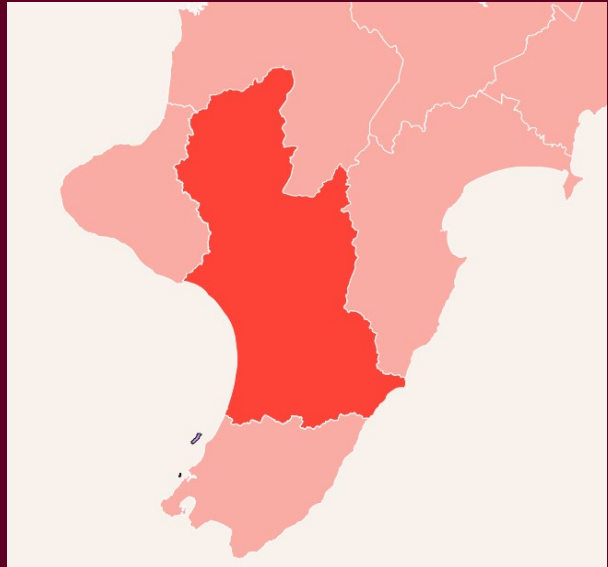
Additional criteria

Criteria:

- Supports the new planning system
- Simplifies local governance
- Economies of scale
- Maintains local voice
- Deliverability

Additional criteria:

- Working collaboratively to improve wellbeing
- Facilitating growth
- Connecting to Central North Island
- Affordability for community and Council sustainability

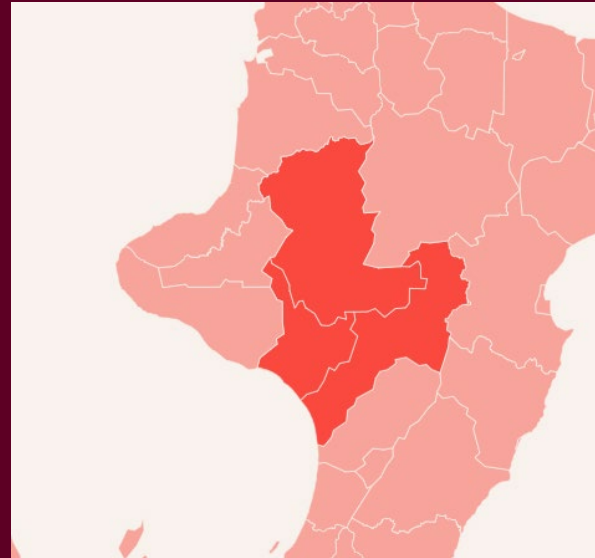


Option 1

Horizons Region

Rangitikei District +

- Ruapehu District
- Palmerston North City
- Manawatū District
- Whanganui District
- Tararua District
- Horowhenua District

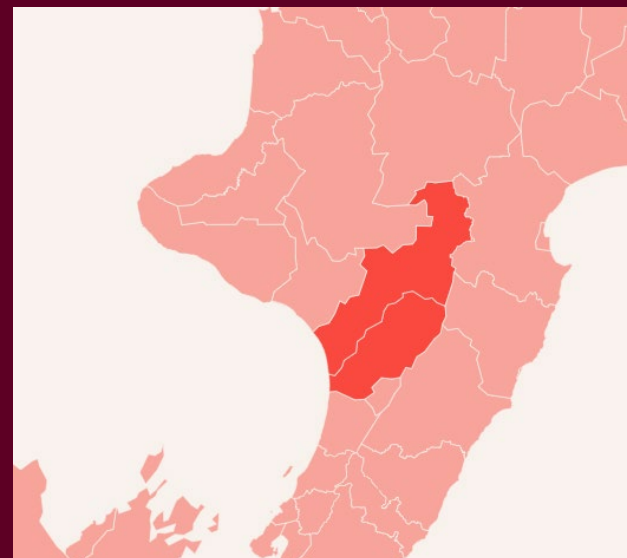


Option 2

West

Rangitikei District +

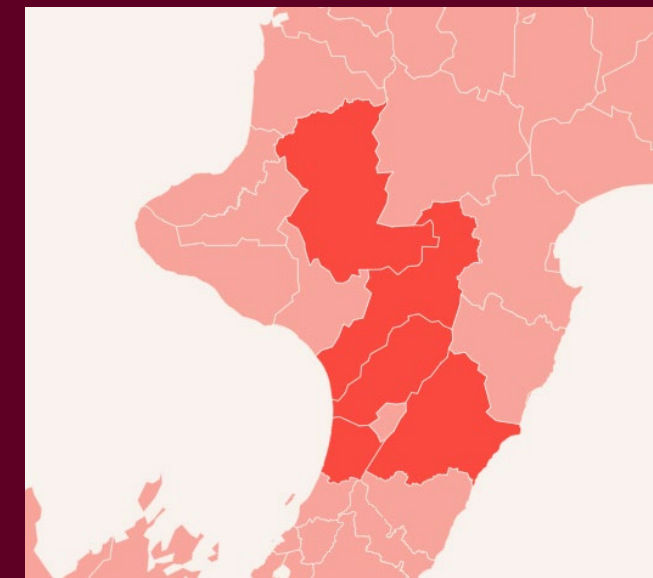
- Whanganui District
- Ruapehu District



Option 3

Rural - tight

- Rangitikei District +
- Manawatū District

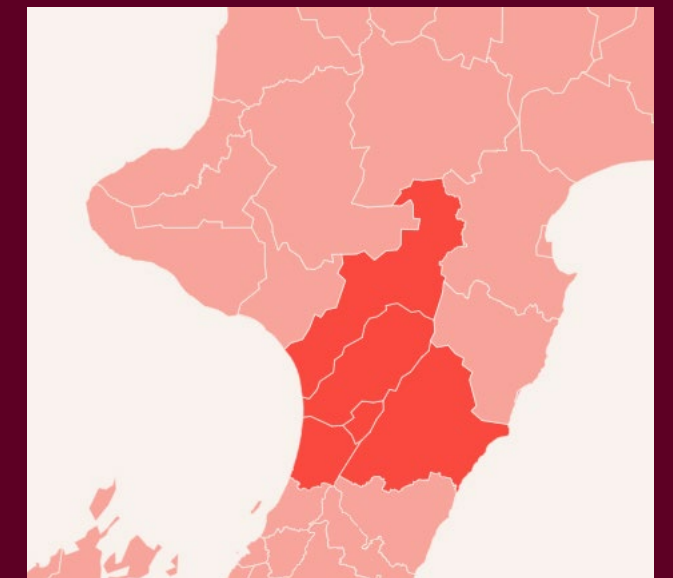


Option 4

Rural - wider

Rangitikei District +

- Manawatū District
- Ruapehu District
- Horowhenua District
- Tararua District

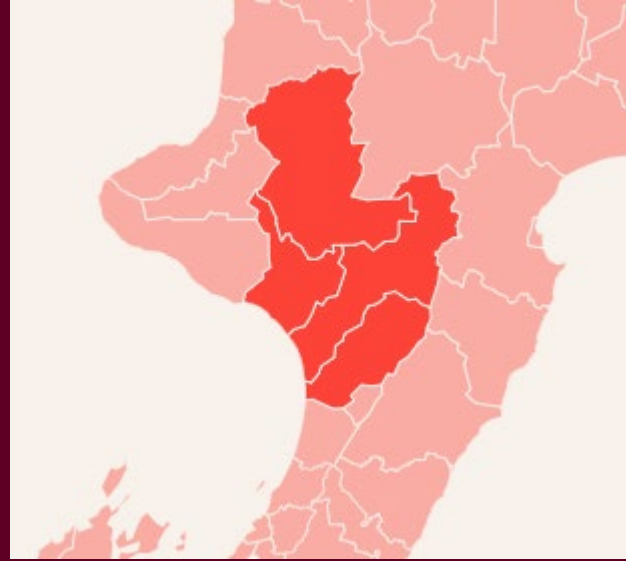
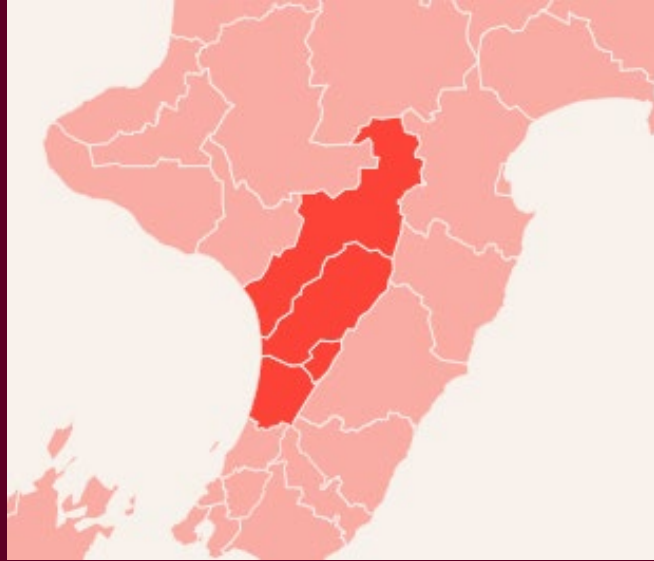


Option 5

East

Rangitikei District +

- Manawatū District
- Palmerston North City
- Tararua District
- Horowhenua District



Option 6

Central Districts +
MDC

Rangitīkei District +

- Palmerston North City
- Manawatū District
- Horowhenua District

Option 7

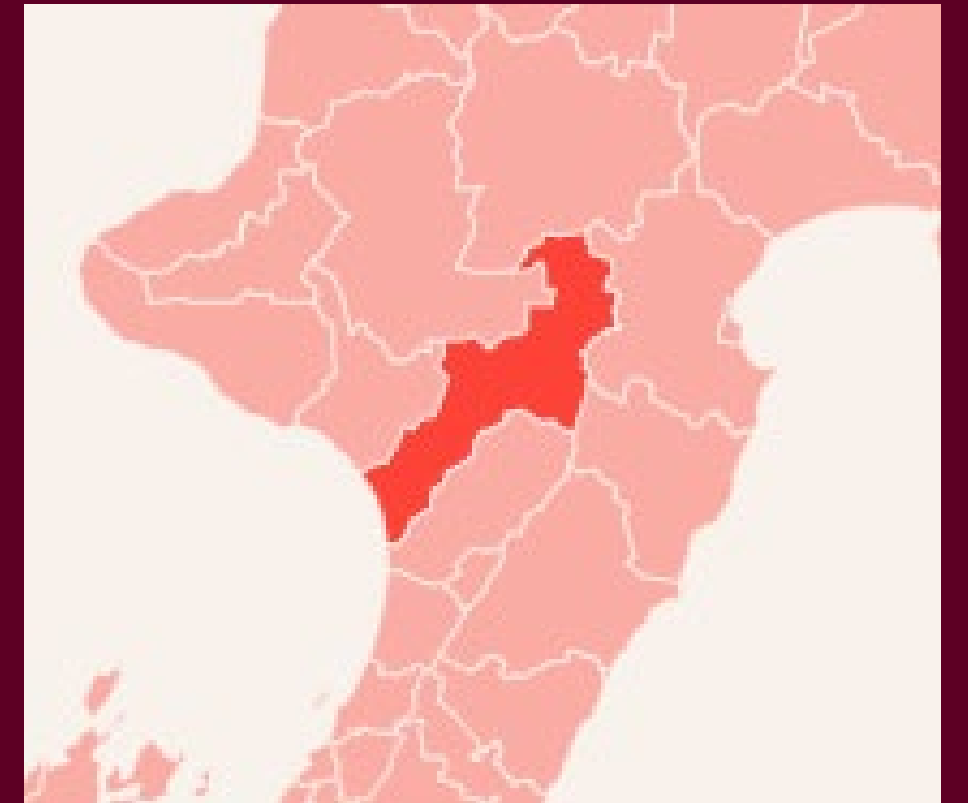
West + MDC

Rangitīkei District +

- Whanganui District
- Ruapehu District
- Manawatū District

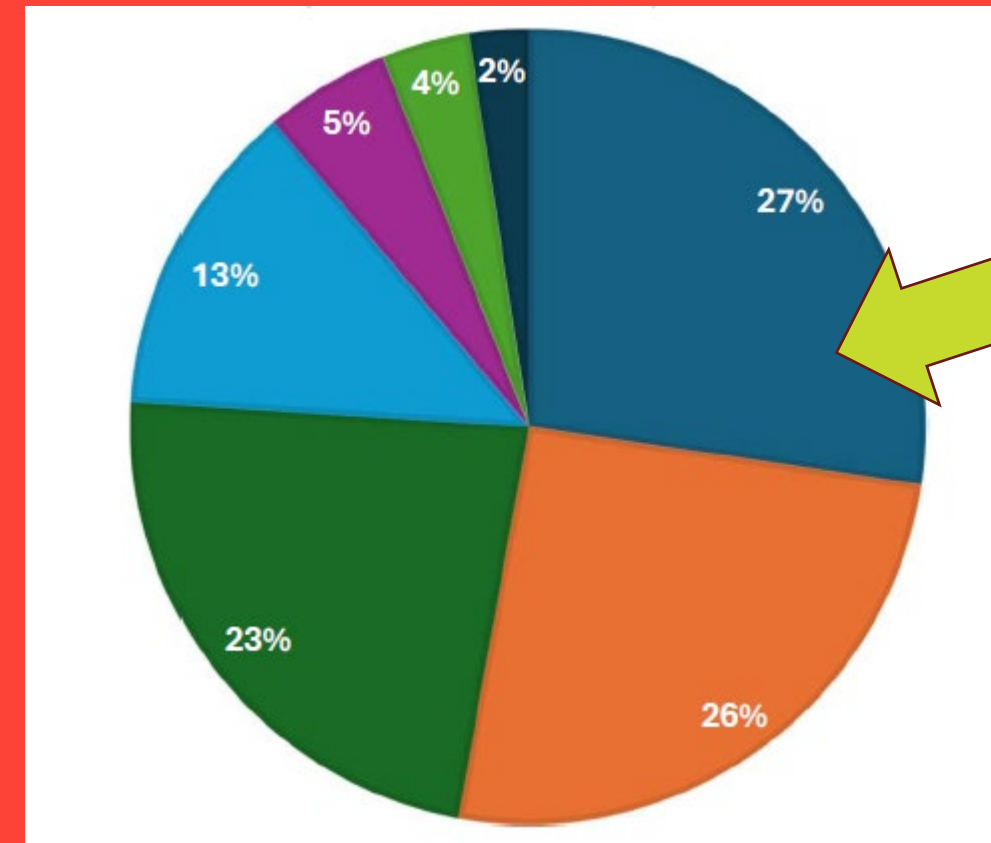
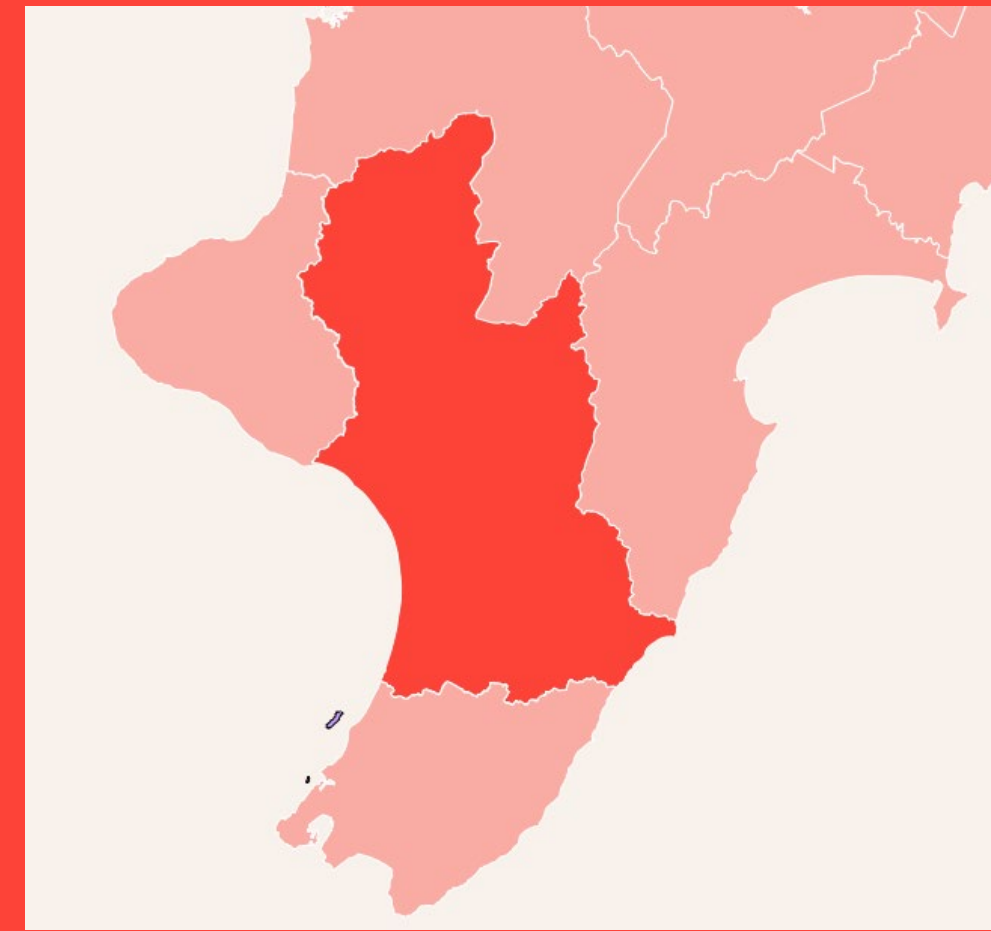
Rangitīkei - A district defined by its land, its scale, and its communities

- Located right in the middle of the Horizons region
- Strong agricultural base, shaping both the economy and way of life
- Communities that are locally anchored, with high reliance on local networks and services
- Strategic location between major centres (Whanganui, Palmerston North), without being dominated by them
- Identity shaped as much by place (the Rangitīkei River, farming landscapes) as by settlements
- Strong local character e.g. Taihape and Bulls



Option 1

Rangitīkei District
Ruapehu District
Palmerston North City
Manawatū District
Whanganui District
Tararua District
Horowhenua District



“Whole
region”

Communities, connections and economic coherence

Q1. Does the option group together communities with aligned needs and expectations of council?

- Wider spread driven by diversity and extreme urban/rural split
- Shared rural character across most of the footprint, only Palmerston North is predominantly urban
- High Māori population share across footprint -> Comparable baseline expectations around iwi/hapū partnership, Te Tiriti commitments, and cultural service design
- Comparable age profiles, only Palmerston North skews materially younger
- Comparable wealth and income profile
 - Household income range: \$93,955 (Ruapehu) to \$125,512 (Palmerston North) – 33% gap
- Broad range of deprivation profiles indicating potentially different priorities
- Growth rates are diverse across the group, indicating potentially different cost pressures

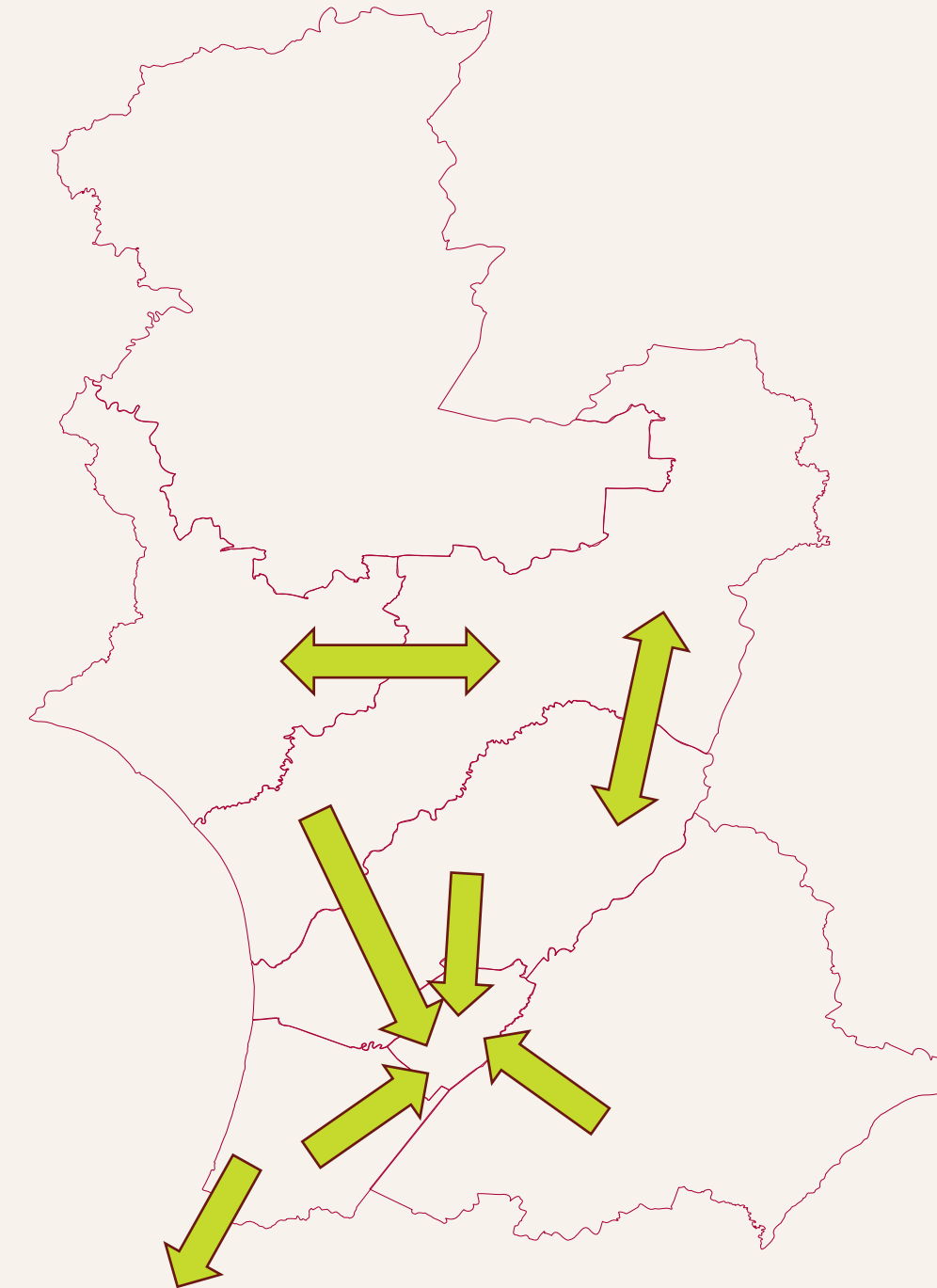
Q2. Will this council make sense economically and functionally?

- Complementary mixed economy and strong freight backbone
- Geographic contiguity and good transport links, North/South and East/West
- Economically complementary more than similar. Agriculturally aligned region, but with a diverse mix of industries.
- Balanced dual-hub structure, with Whanganui and Palmerston North providing services hubs
- Strong road and rail corridors
- Commuter flows are fairly self-contained, both inward and outwards, with slight outward leakage to the south towards Kāpiti and Wellington. Partially integrated labour movement, Palmerston North acts as a hub for the southern part of the region with the northern districts more self-contained
- Large geographic area can cause complexity with service delivery
- Political complexity of unifying seven councils

Journey analysis

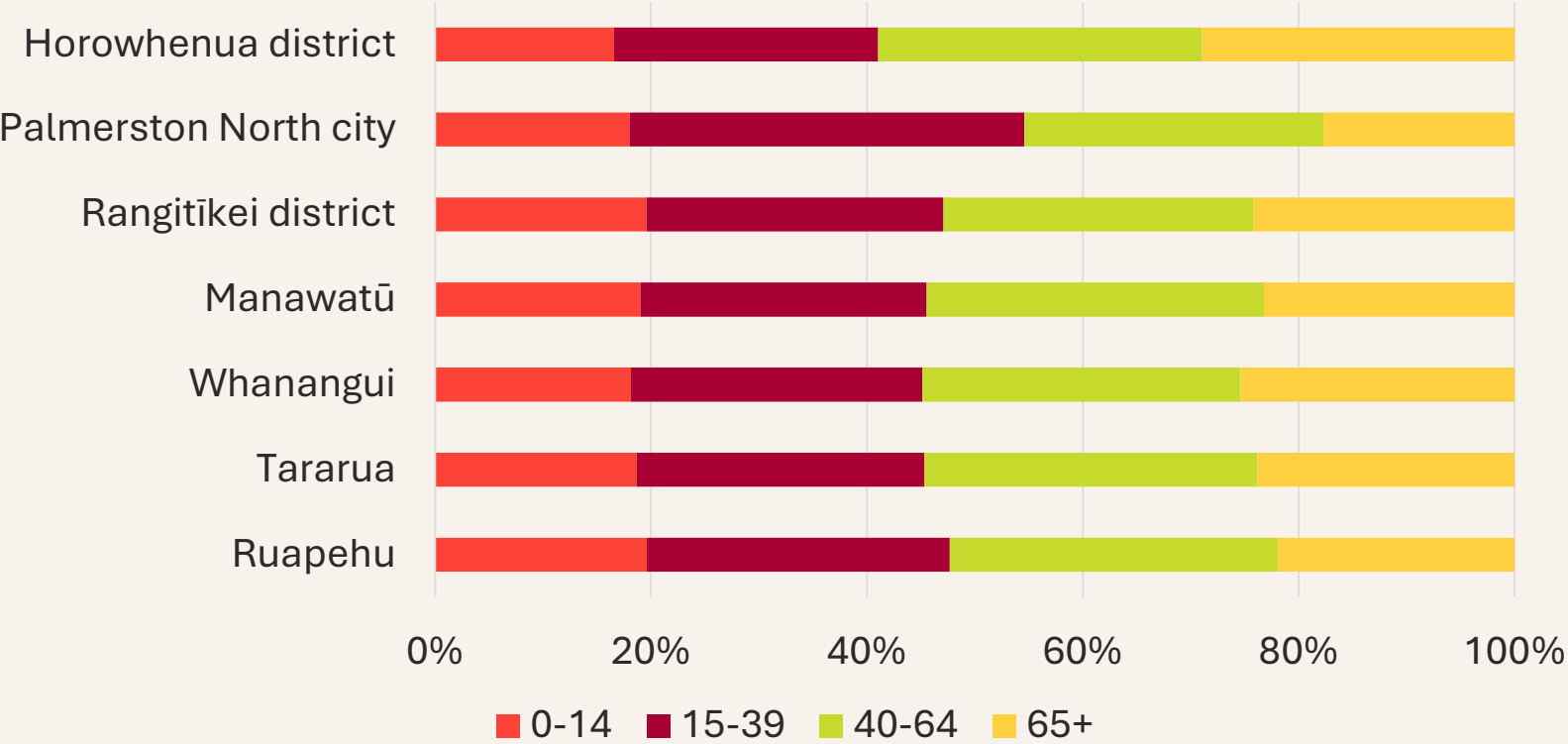
This option captures all major external linkages within a single area, particularly the consistent pull toward Palmerston North. However, most linkages are to Palmerston North rather than between districts, so cohesion is hub-based rather than evenly distributed.

- Multiple districts have meaningful flows to Palmerston North:
 - Rangitikei ~8%
 - Manawatū ~20–30%
 - Horowhenua ~15–25%
 - Tararua ~10–15% (more variable)
- Smaller but still material links:
 - Rangitikei ↔ Manawatū (~5–10%)
 - Rangitikei ↔ Whanganui (~5%)
 - Horowhenua to South (~5-10%)

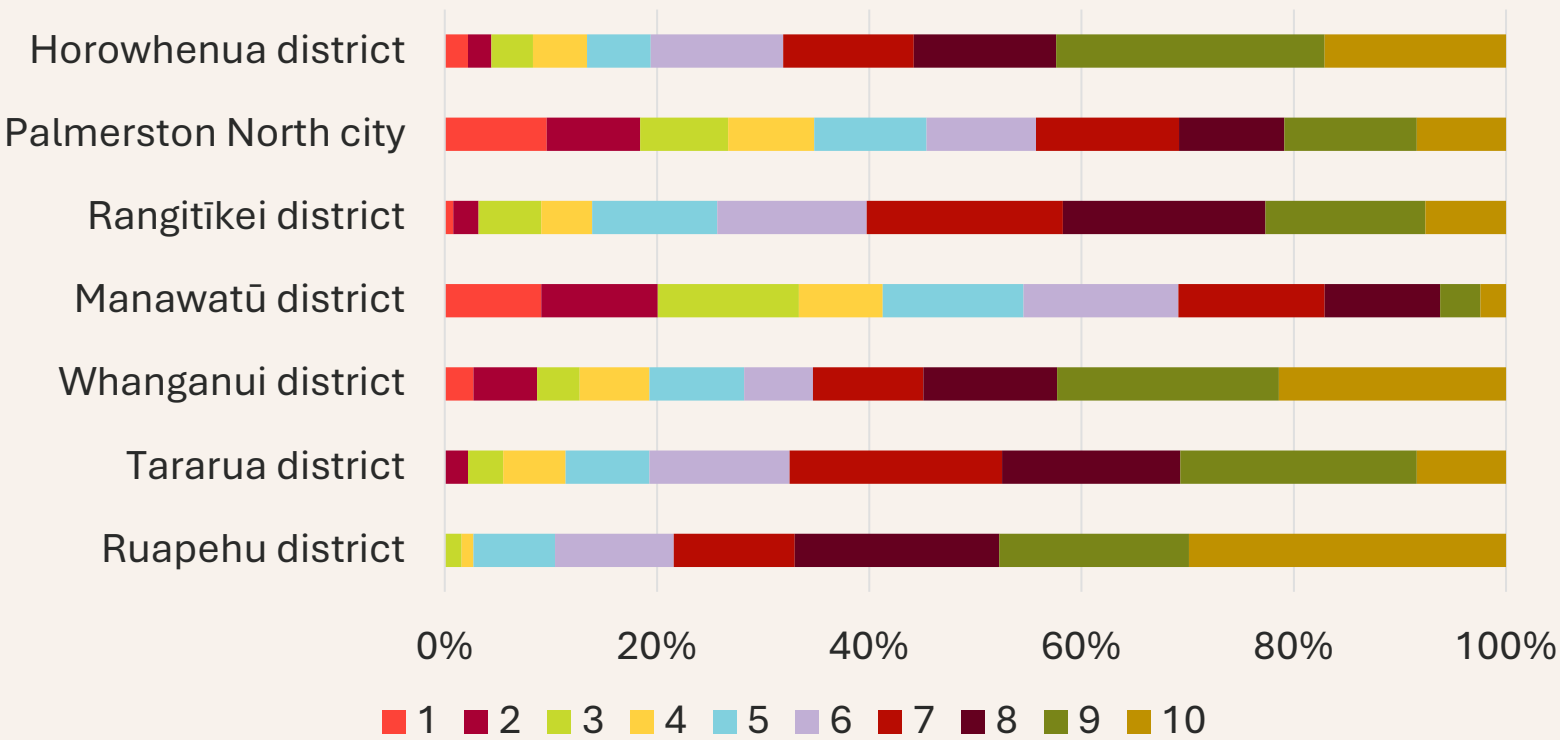


Population Structure: Option 1

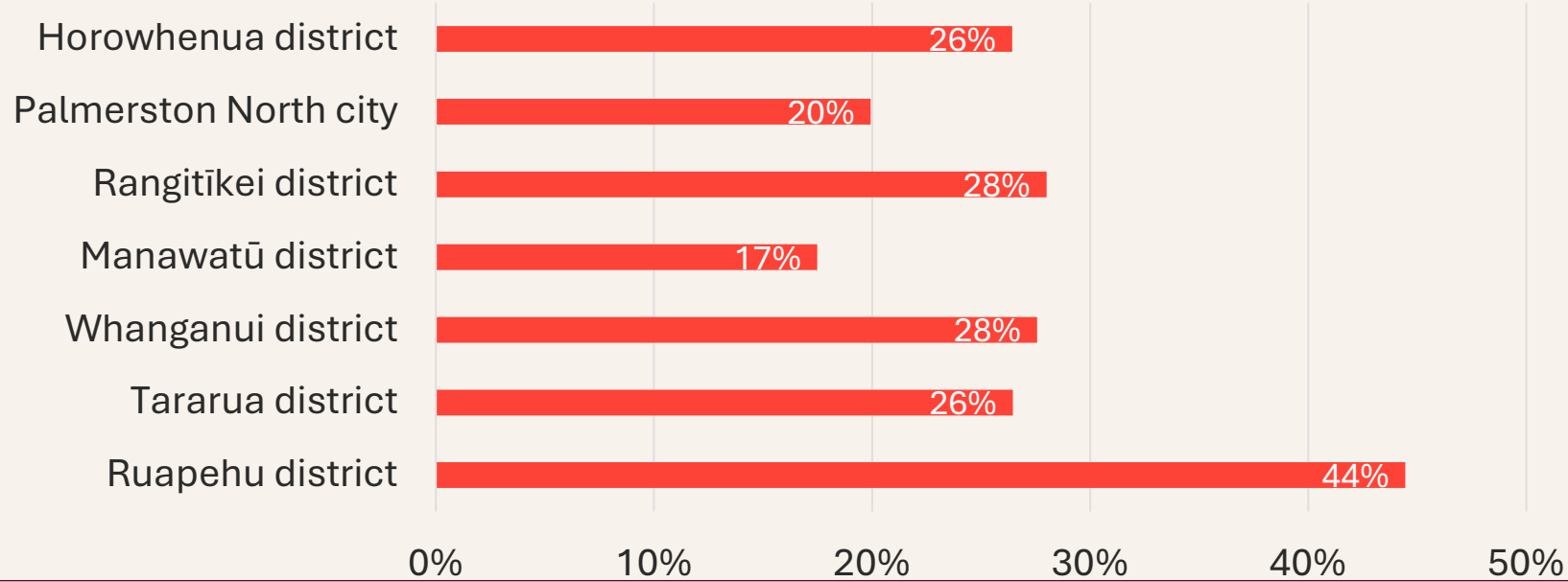
Age structure



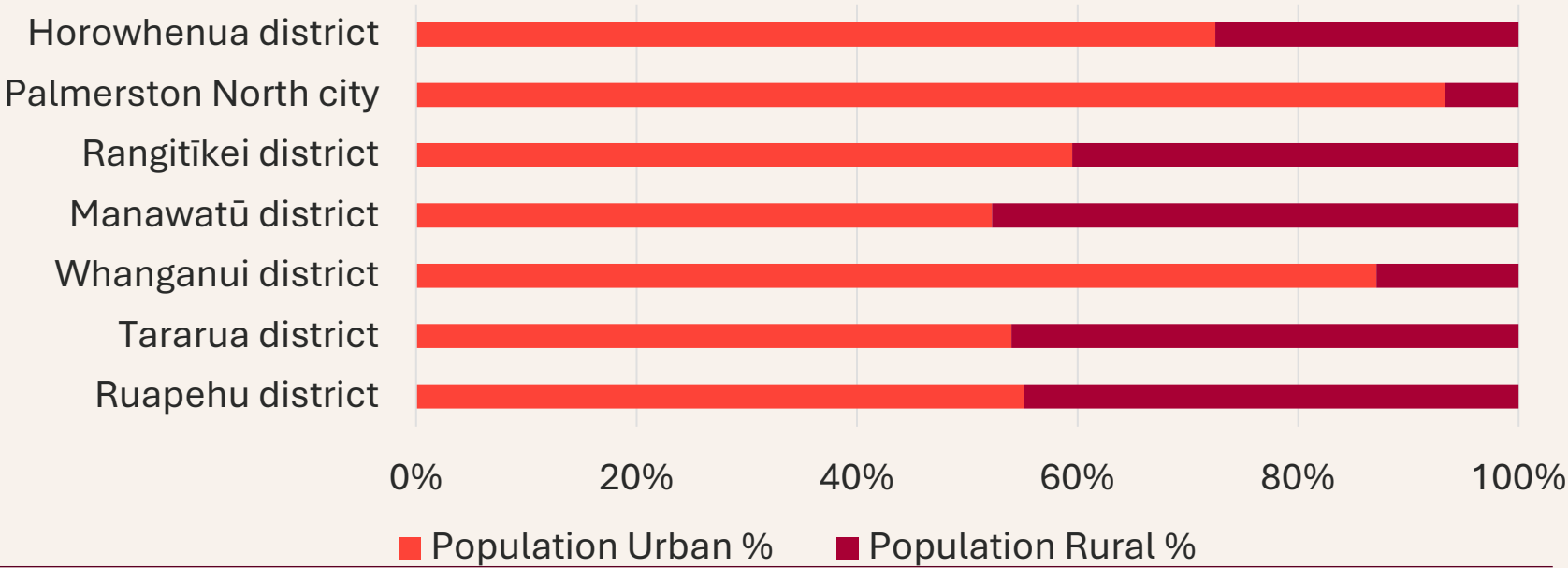
Deprivation profile



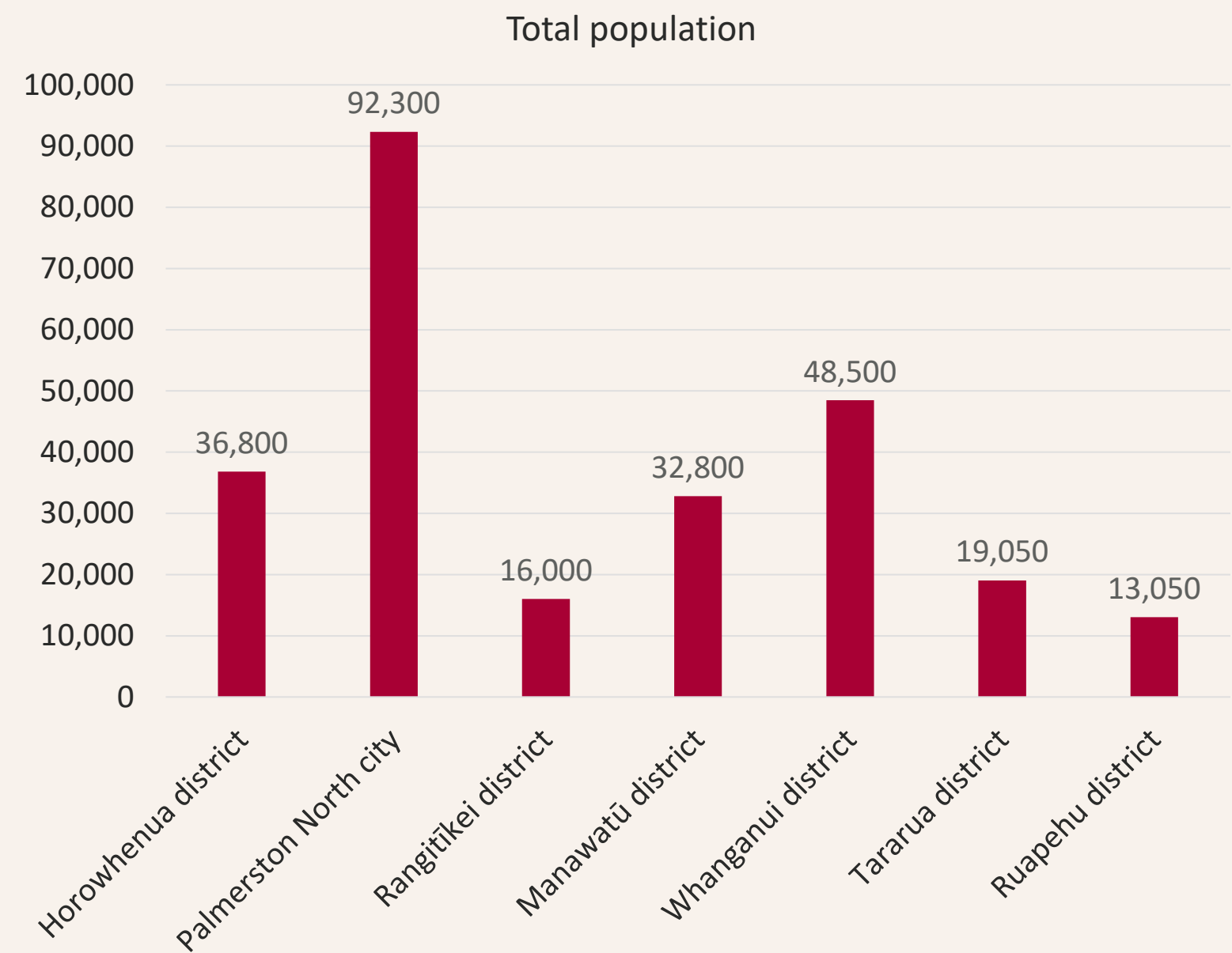
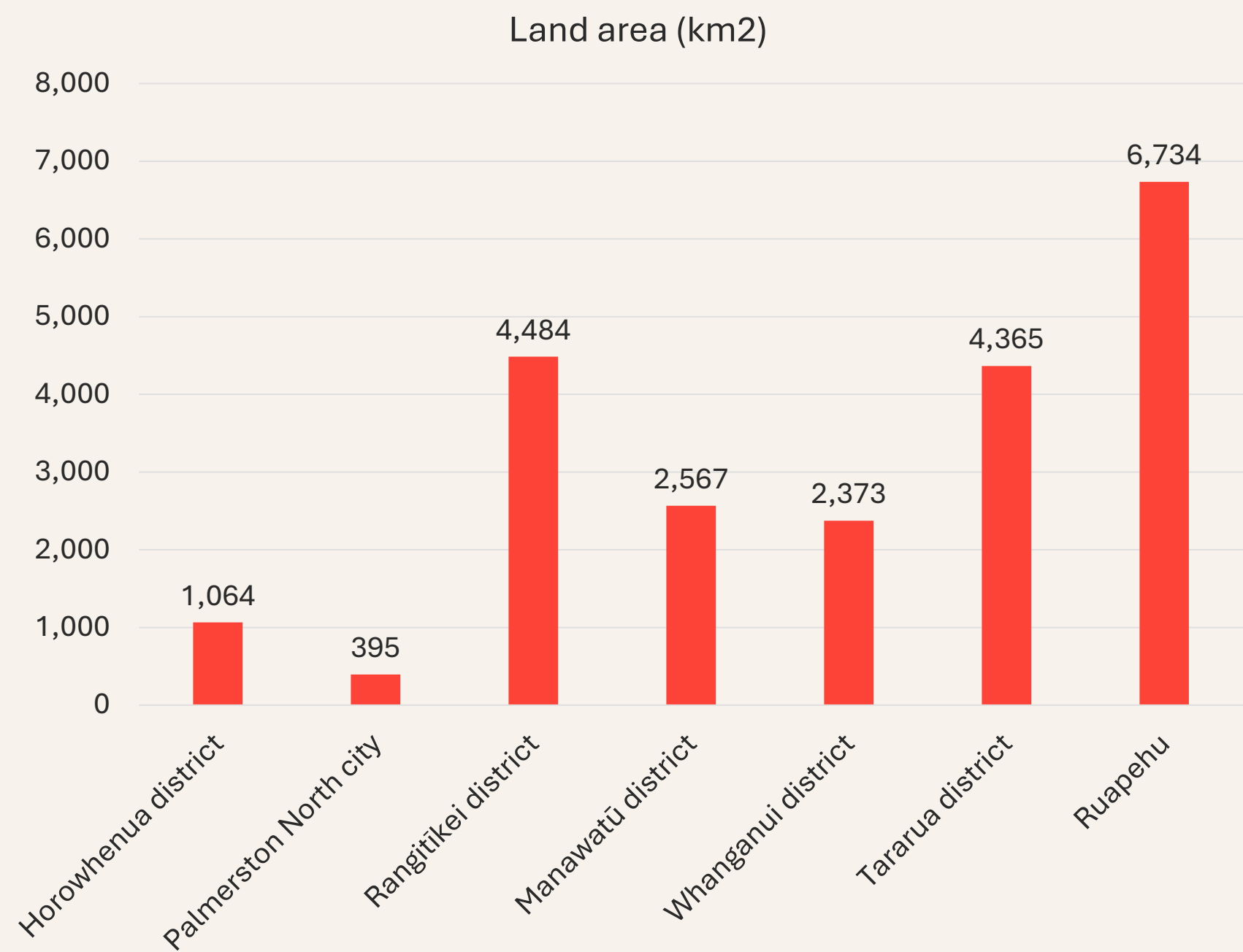
Māori population (%)



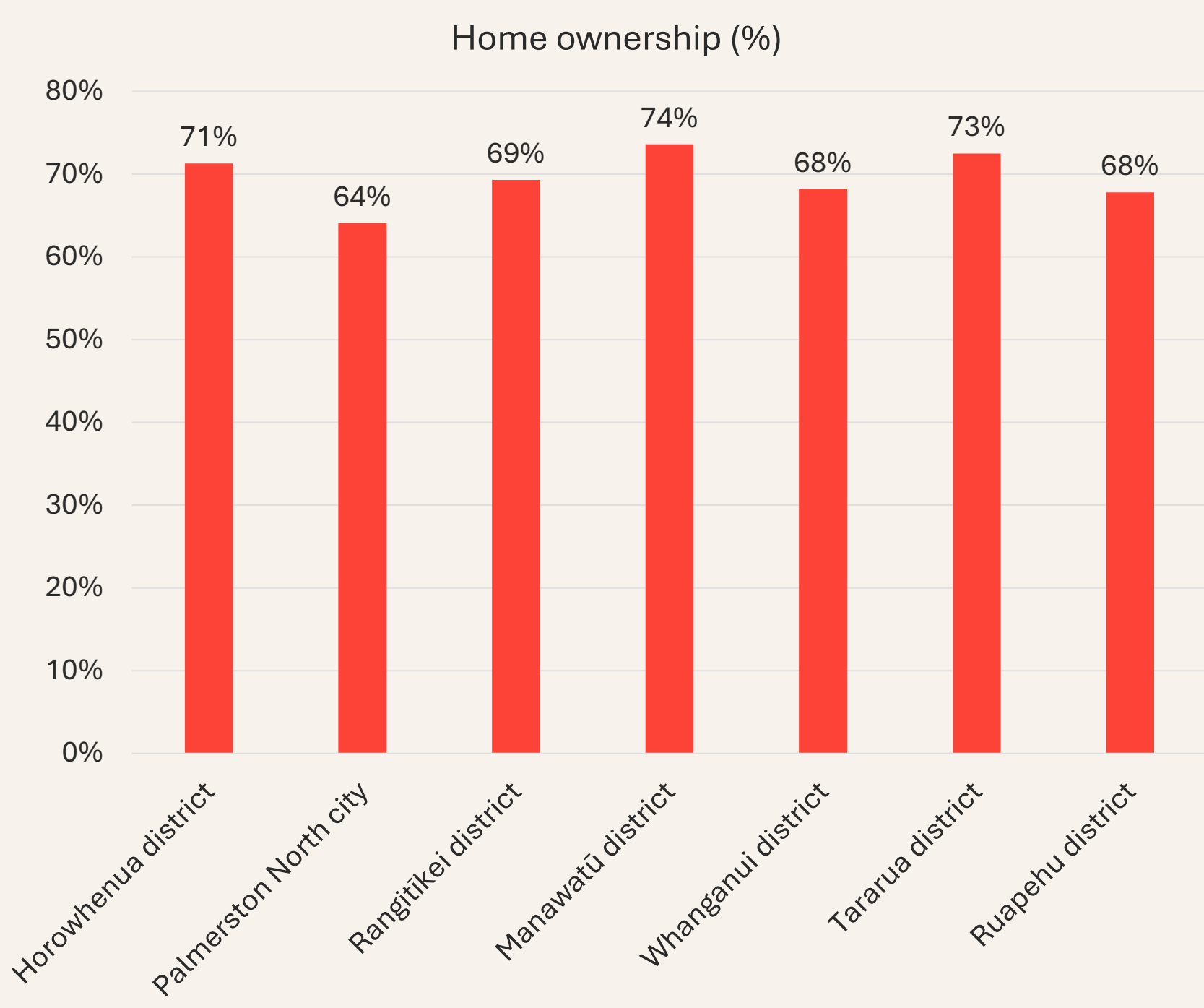
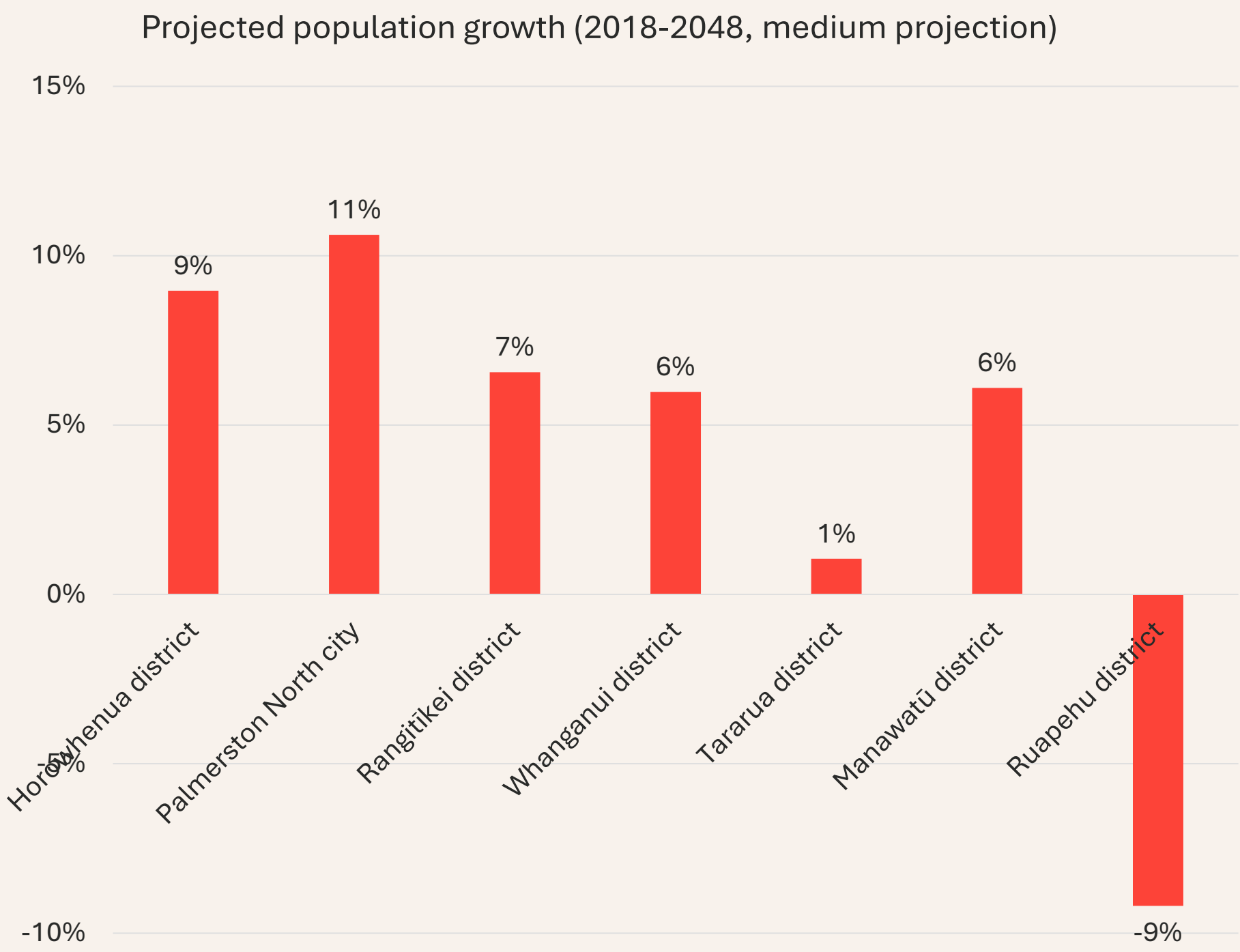
Urban/Rural split



Area Profile: Option 1



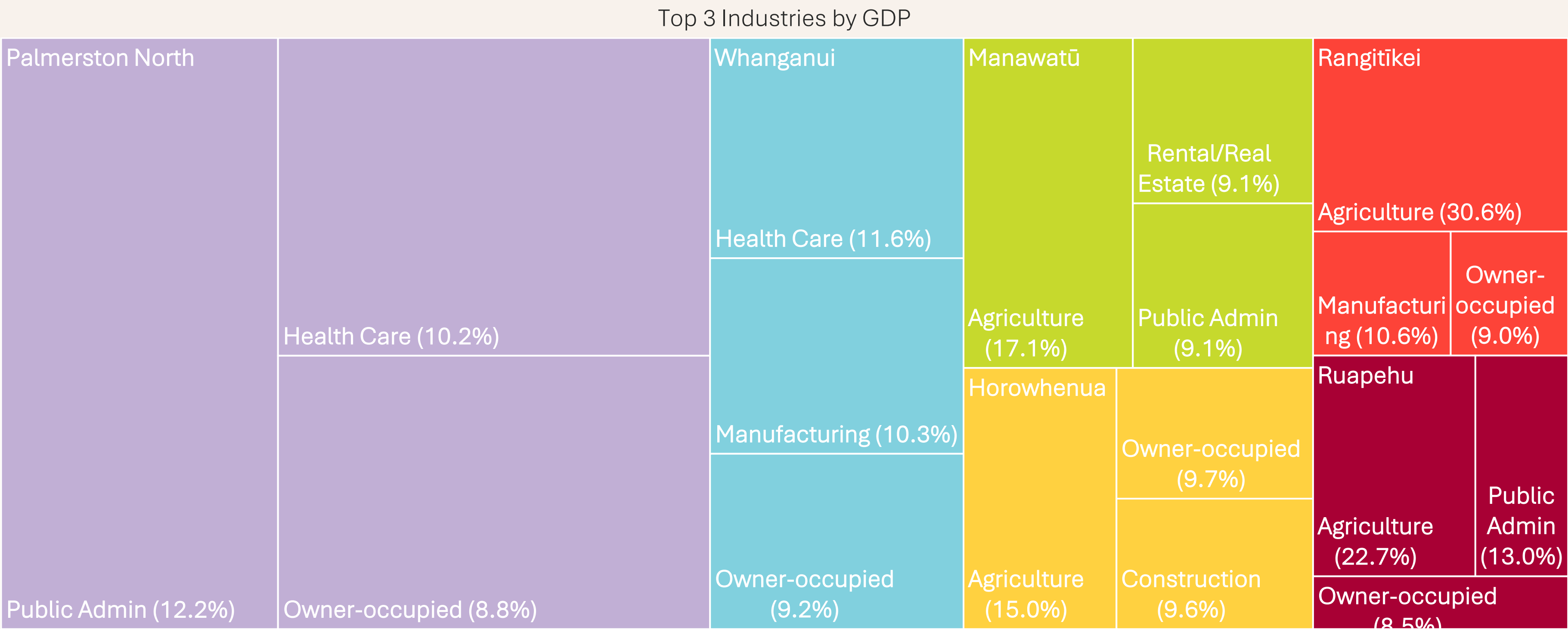
Area Profile: Option 1



Area Profile: Option 1



Top three industries by GDP



Catchment management

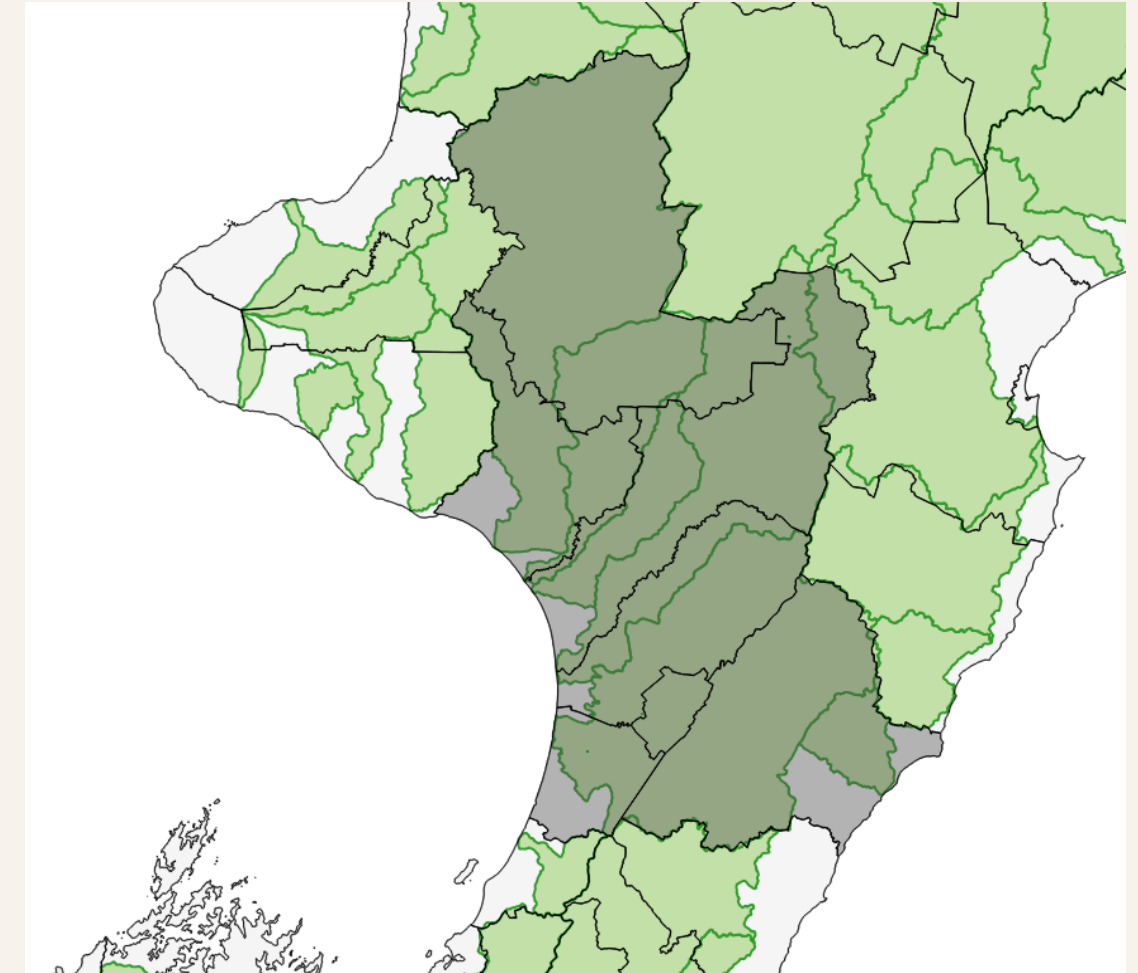
Pros

- Keeps catchments largely intact → strongest basis for managing water quality, flooding, and environmental limits.
- Enables a single regional combined plan linking land use, environmental limits, and infrastructure.
- Supports more coherent long-term infrastructure and corridor planning at regional scale.
- Best fit with new planning system intent.

Cons

- Needs strong internal capability to manage sub-catchment variation within one large system.
- Risk that large scale reduces focus on local catchment-specific issues unless structure is well designed.

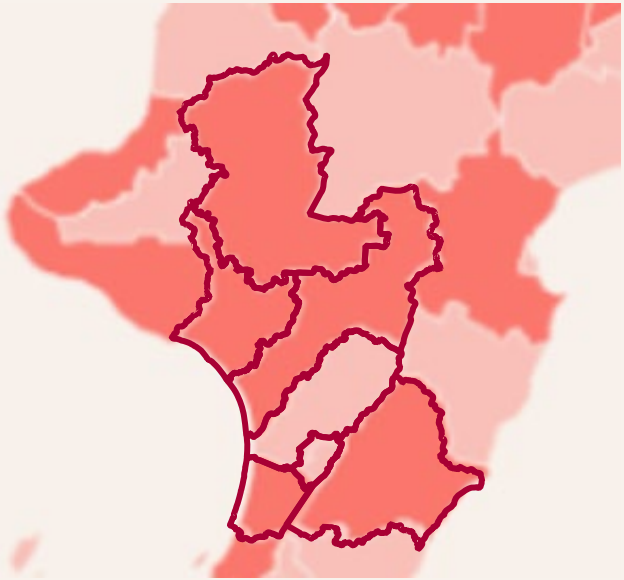
Option 1: All Horizons councils



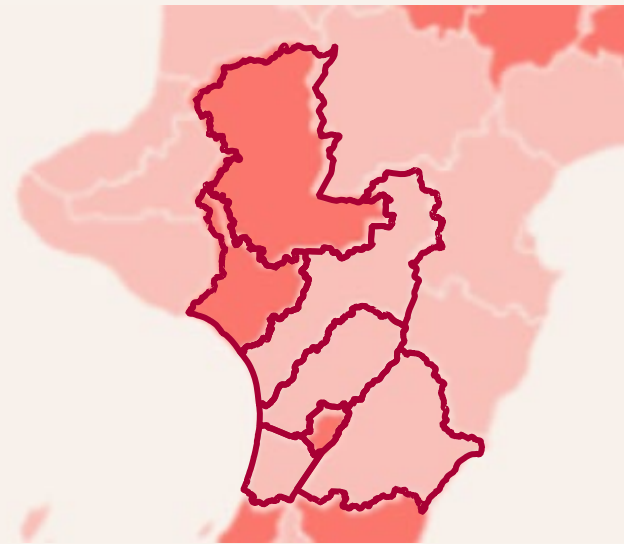
Best option for integrated environmental planning and catchment management but relies on the new authority being able to handle internal variation well.

Representation

District	Total Population	Total Members (Current)	Number of (including Māori wards) Wards	Population per Member
Rangitīkei District	16,030	11	5	1,457
Ruapehu District	13,440	9	2	1,493
Whanganui District	49,200	12	2	4,100
Manawatu District	33,990	11	3	3,090
Palmerston North City	90,550	15	2	6,037
Tararua District	18,940	9	3	2,104
Horowhenua District	38,390	12	5	3,199
Horizons Total	260,540	79	22	-
Wellington City Council	209,800	15	6	13,987
Christchurch City Council	419,200	17	16	24,659
Indicative combined council	260,540	15	-	17,369



Community boards



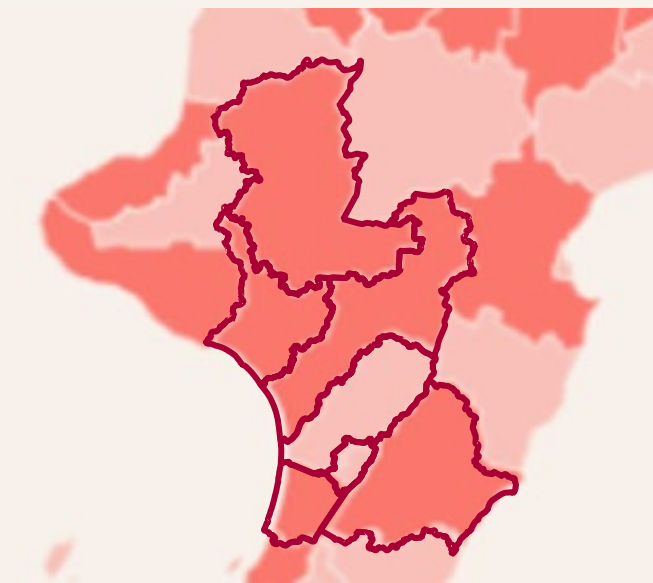
Māori ward referendum outcome

Representation

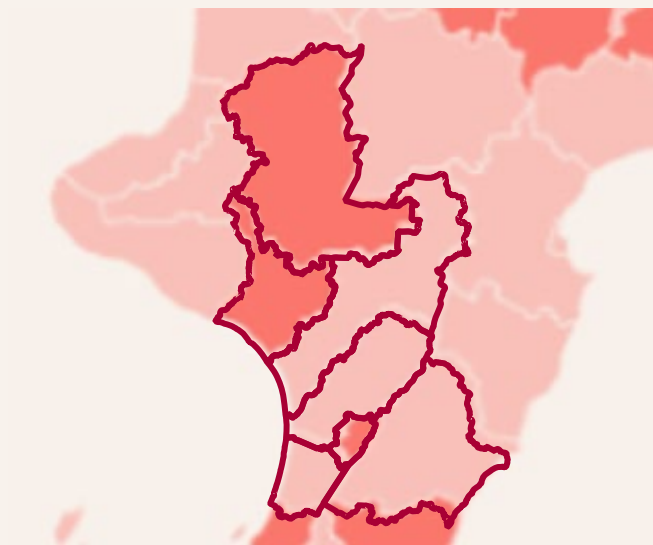
District	Total Population	Members per existing area
Indicative combined council	260,540	15
Rangitīkei District	16,030	1
Ruapehu District	13,440	1
Whanganui District	49,200	3
Manawatu District	33,990	2
Palmerston North City	90,550	5
Tararua District	18,940	1
Horowhenua District	38,390	2

This is based on population only.

Noting that MCERT have said that alternative representation models can be included.



Community boards



Māori ward referendum outcome

Summary of initial assessment

Option 1: Horizons

Supports the new planning system

Simplifies local governance

Economies of scale

Maintains local voice

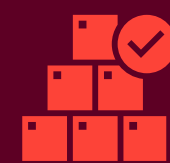
Deliverability

Working collaboratively to improve wellbeing*

Facilitating growth*

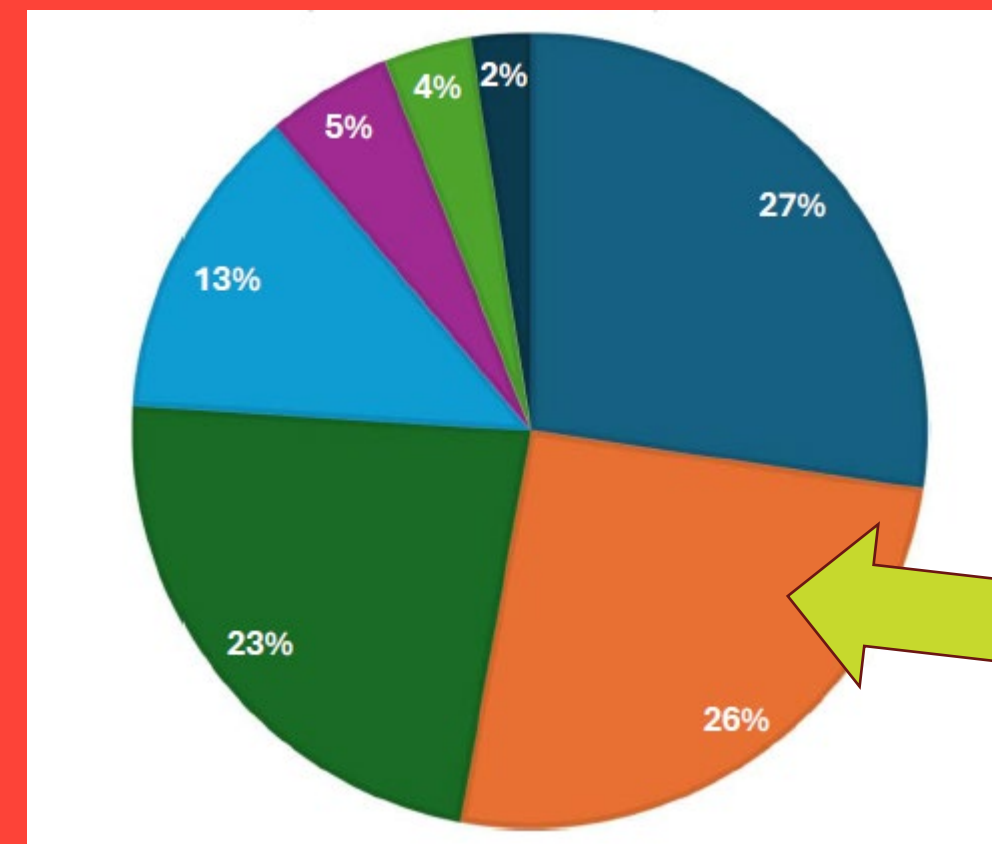
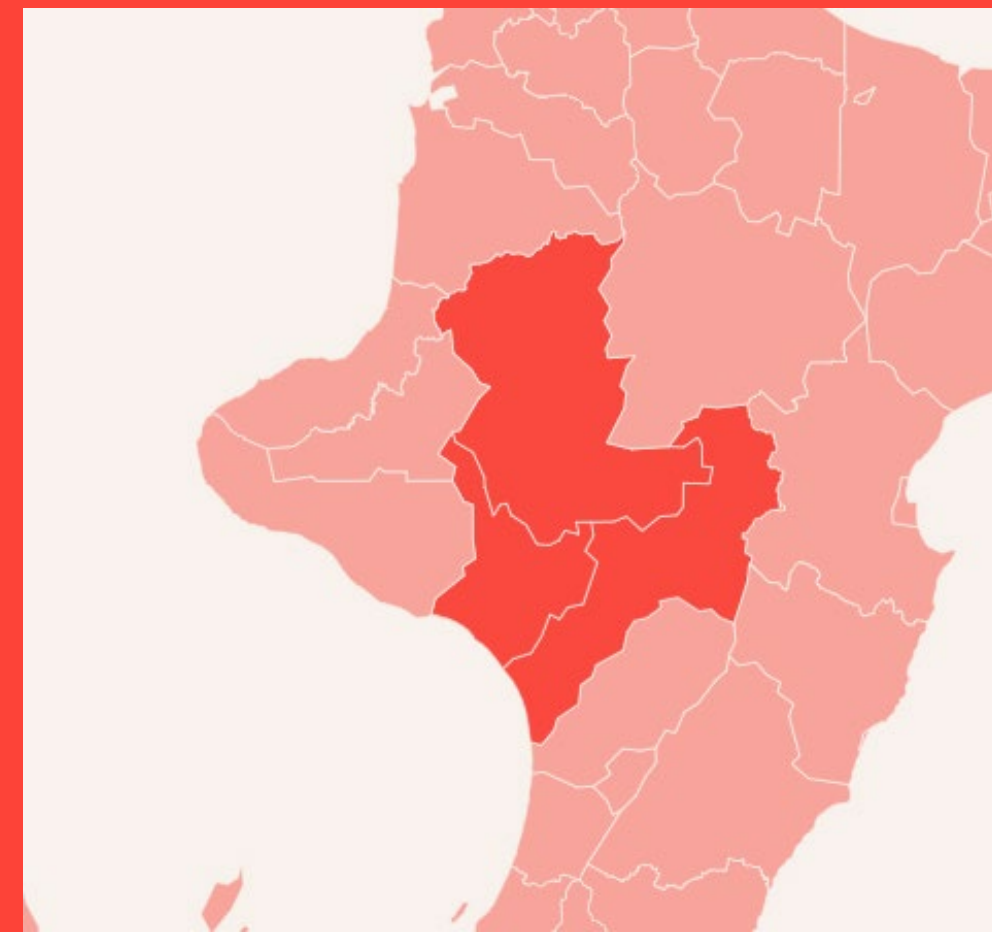
Connecting to Central North Island*

Affordability for community and Council sustainability*



Option 2

Rangitīkei District
Whanganui District
Ruapehu District



"Go West"

Communities, connections and economic coherence

Q1. Does the option group together communities with aligned needs and expectations of council?

- Relatively high Māori population (28%-44%) share across footprint -> Comparable baseline expectations around iwi/hapū partnership, Te Tiriti commitments, and cultural service design
- Similar age structure across districts → comparable core service demand
- Agriculture is a top-three industry across the option, showing common rural/primary sector base
- Movement patterns suggest districts operate independently rather than as one system
- No strong shared hub → weaker alignment in day-to-day economic and service needs

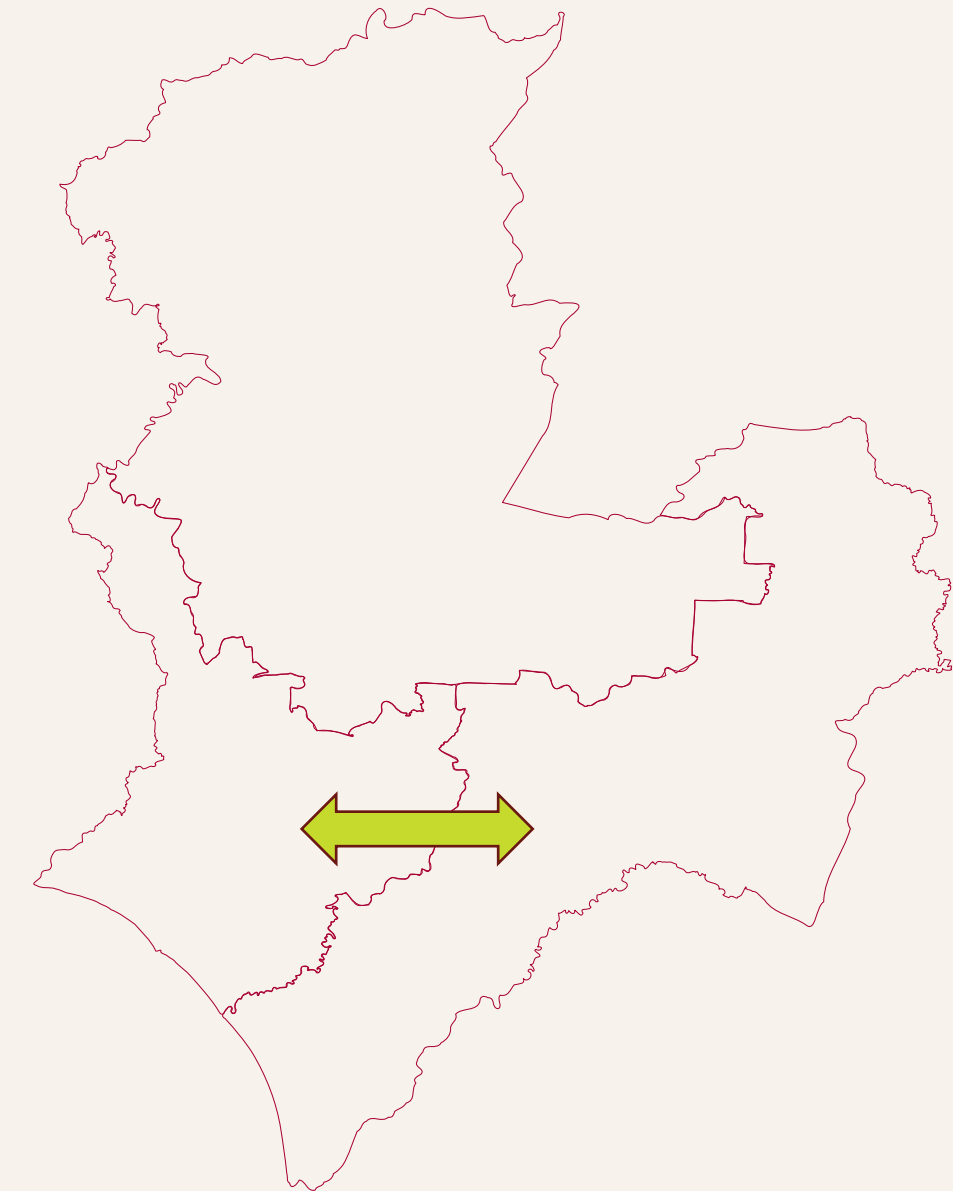
Q2. Will this council make sense economically and functionally?

- Ruapehu and Whanganui have similar deprivation levels, while Rangitikei has lower levels, meaning potentially different expectations around affordability, core service access, and community support.
- Whanganui provides the main economic and service centre
 - Whanganui provides the main scale: 49,200 people, 4,770 businesses, \$2.54b GDP
 - Rangitikei and Ruapehu share a stronger agriculture base
 - Whanganui has a more urban and diversified economy

Journey analysis

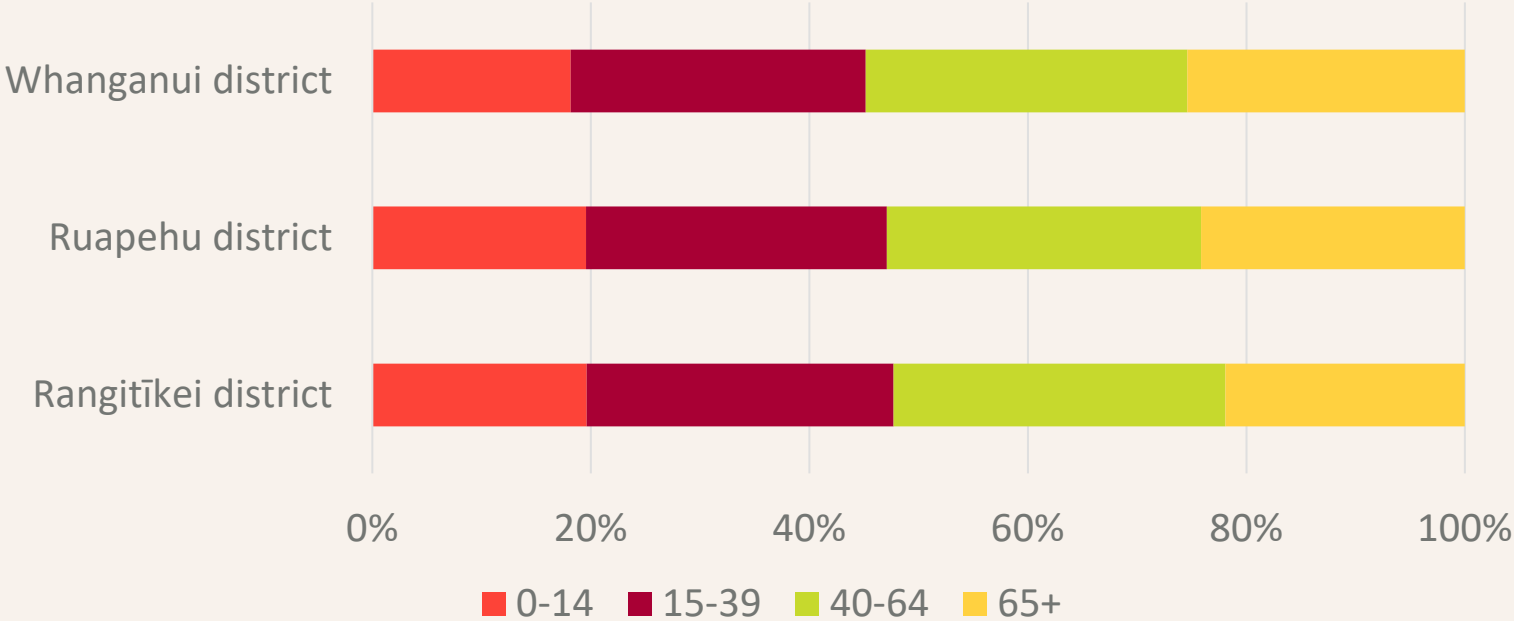
The largest external linkage from Rangitikei (to Palmerston North) sits outside the option, and there are few strong linkages within the grouping.

- Key linkages
 - Rangitikei → Palmerston North ~8% (excluded)
- Limited material flows between included districts:
 - Rangitikei ↔ Whanganui ~5% (borderline)
 - Other links generally <5%

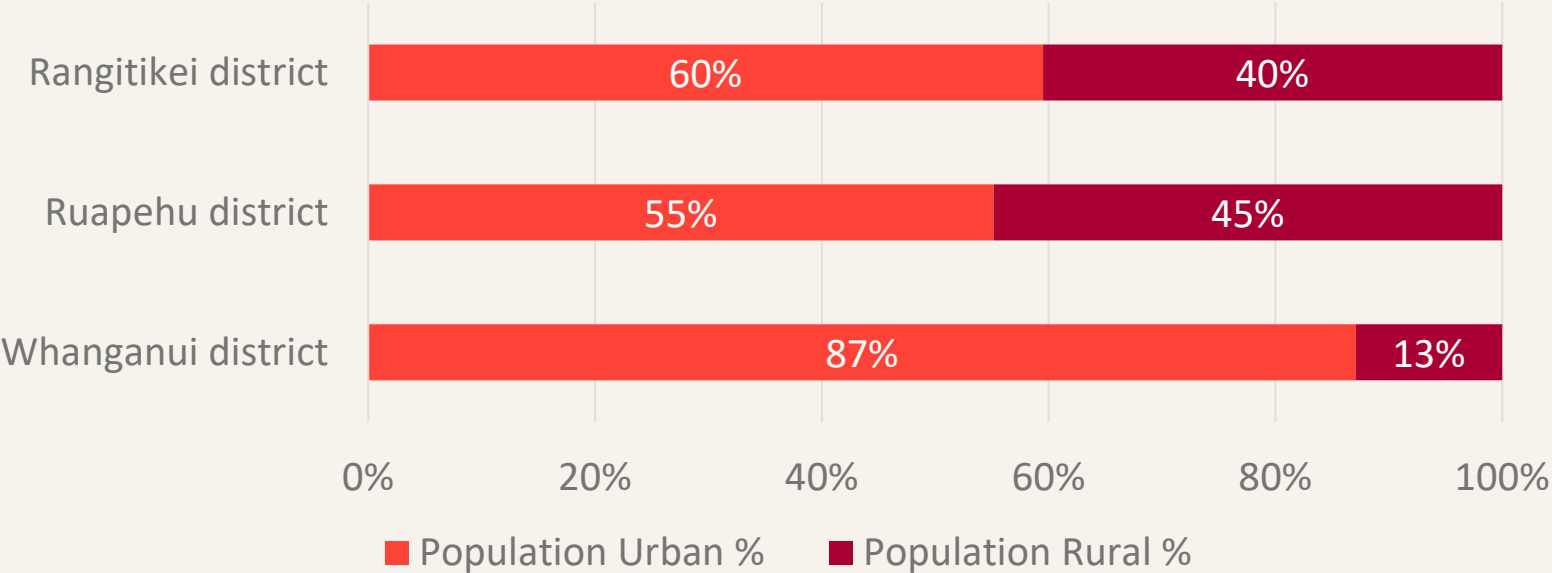


Population Structure: Option 2

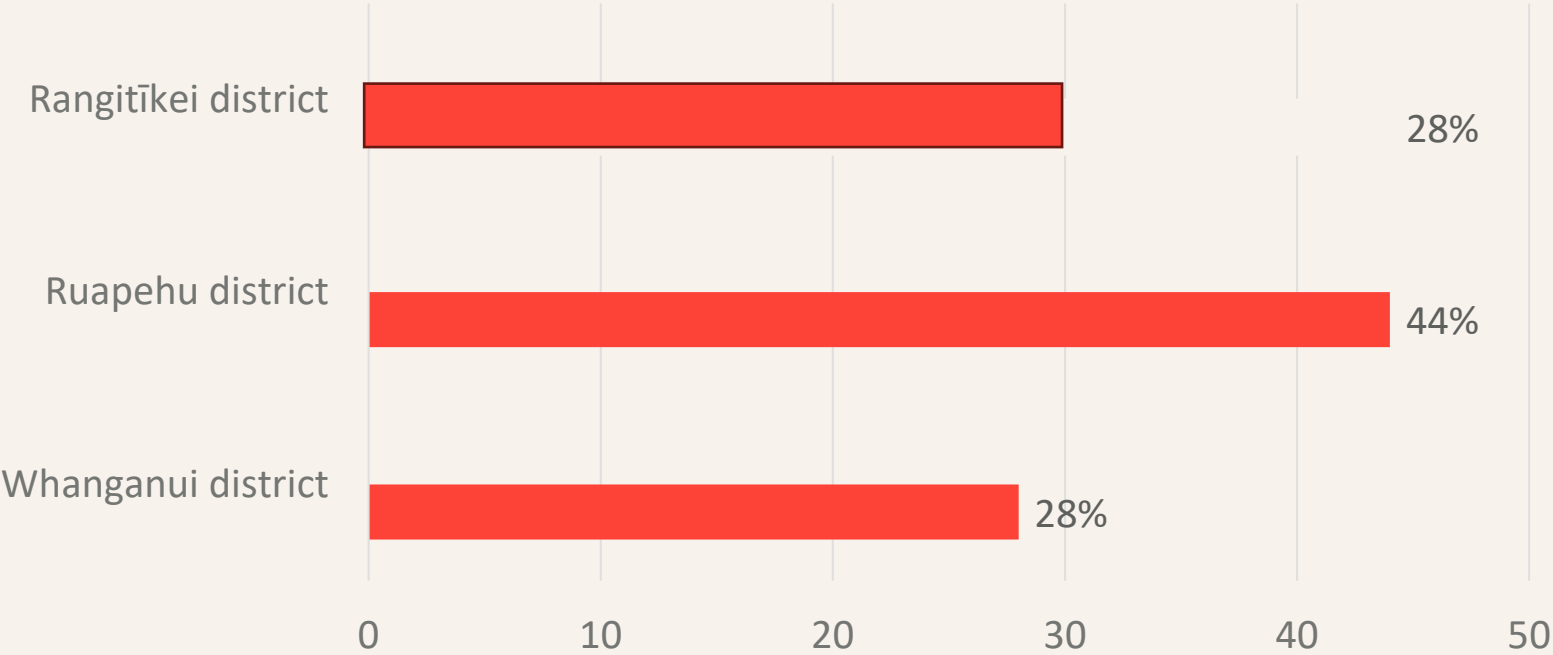
Age Structure Percentage - 2028 Projection



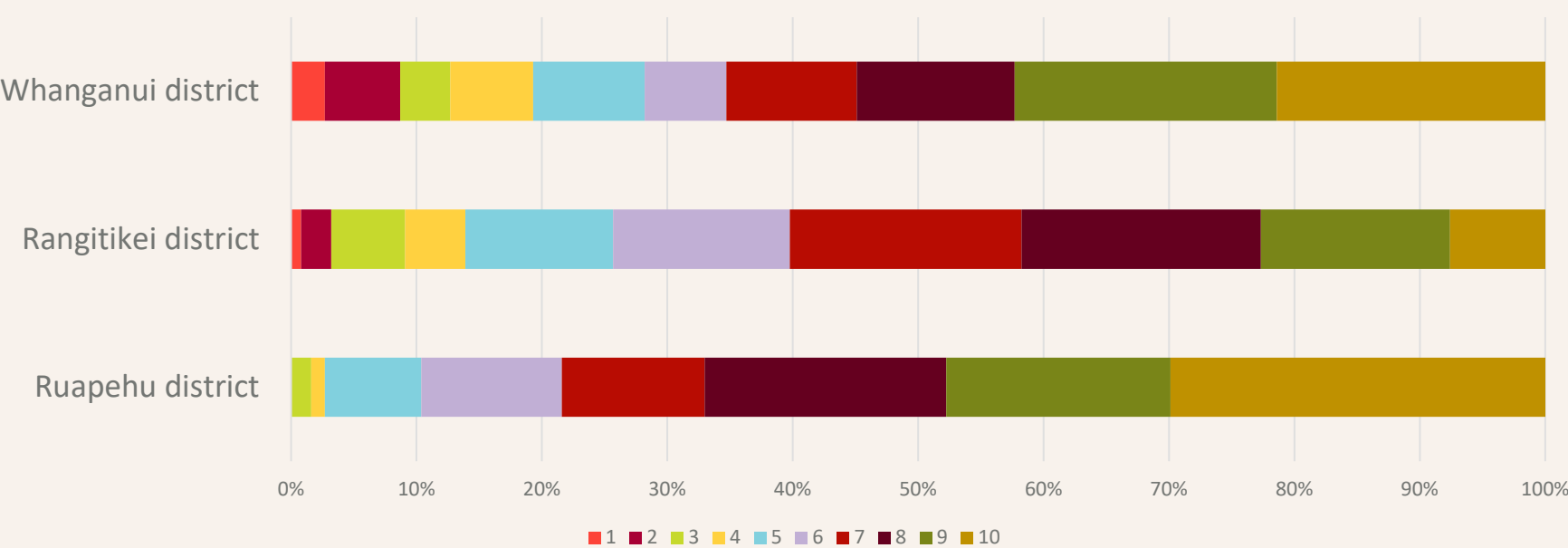
Urban/Rural split (population)



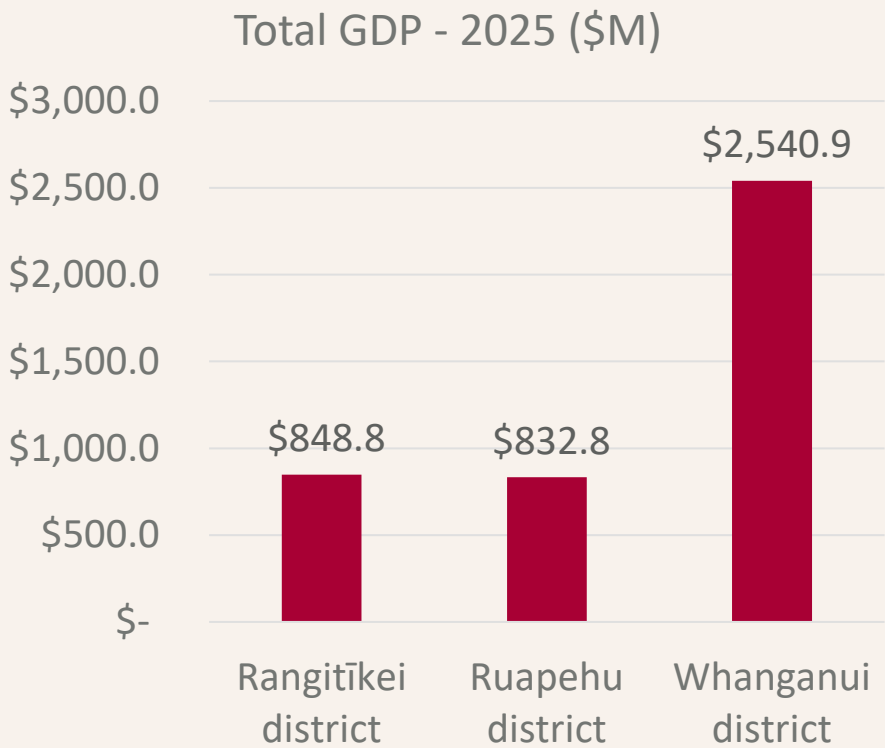
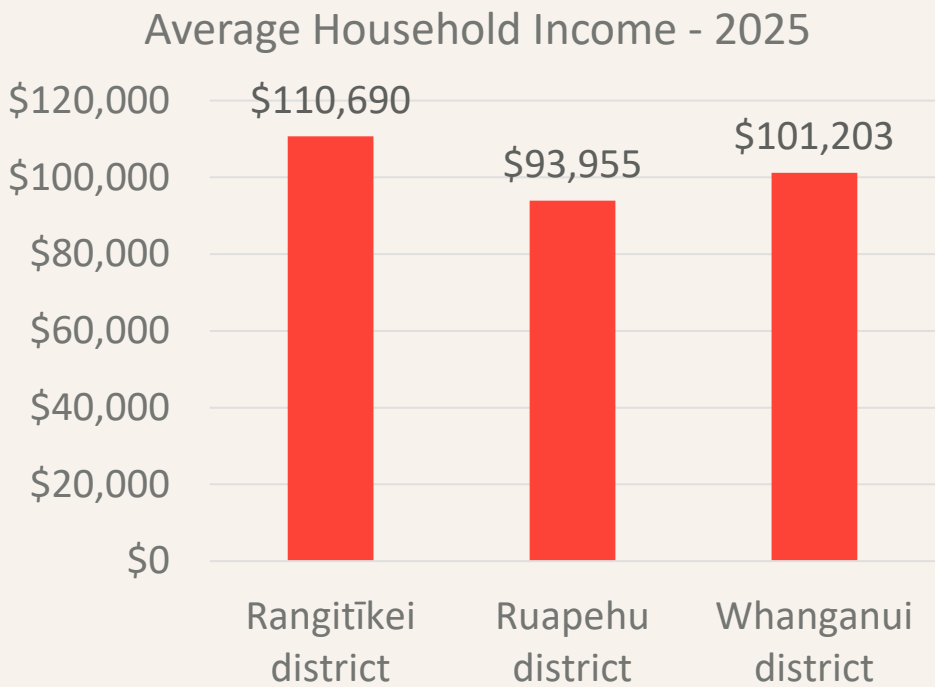
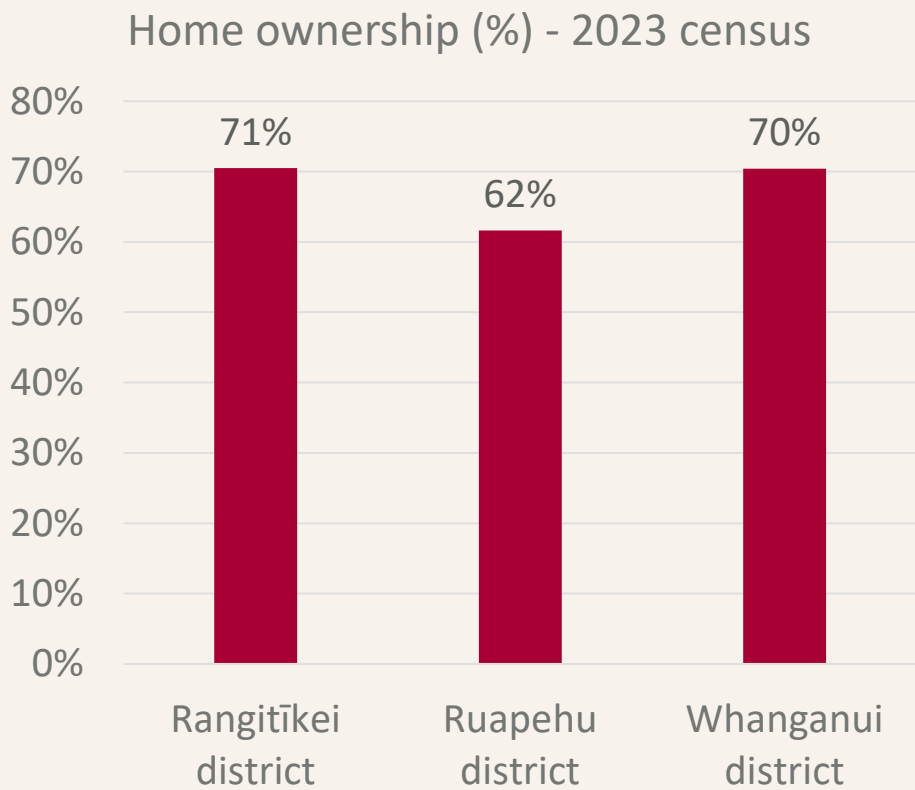
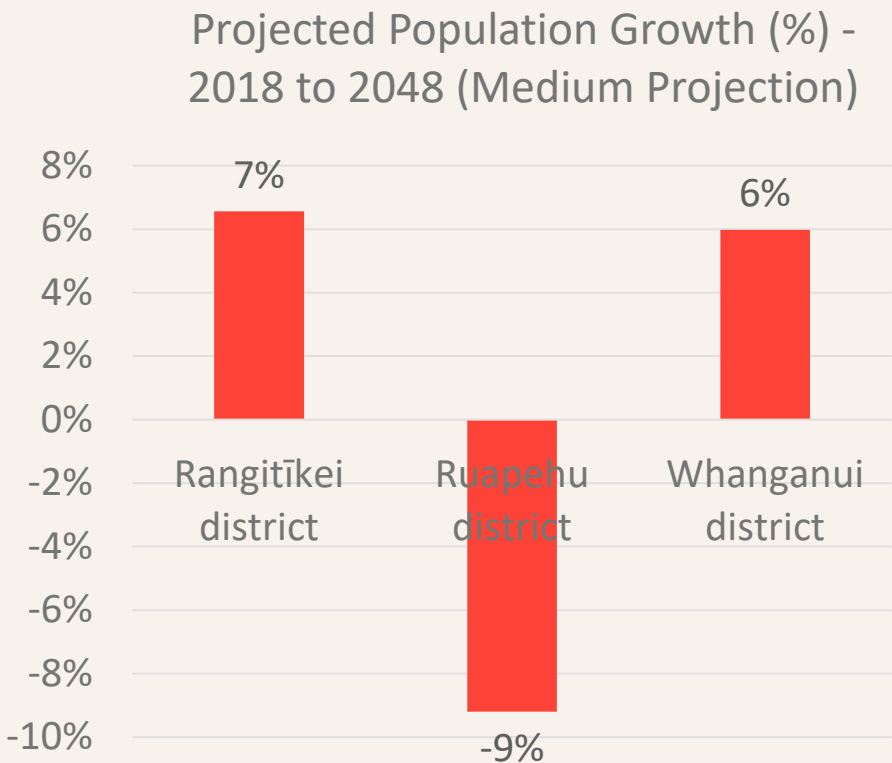
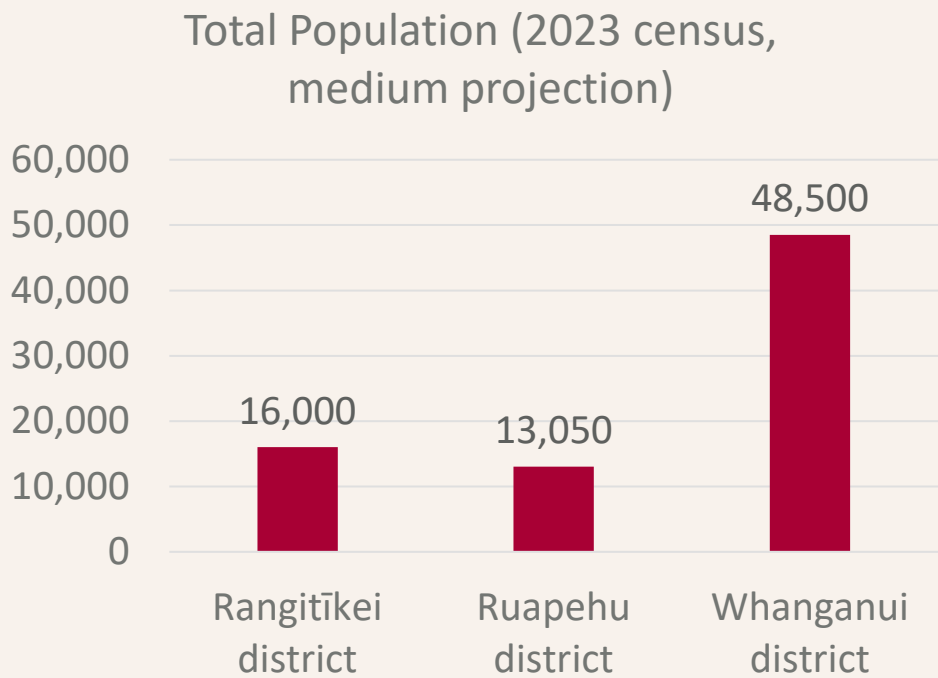
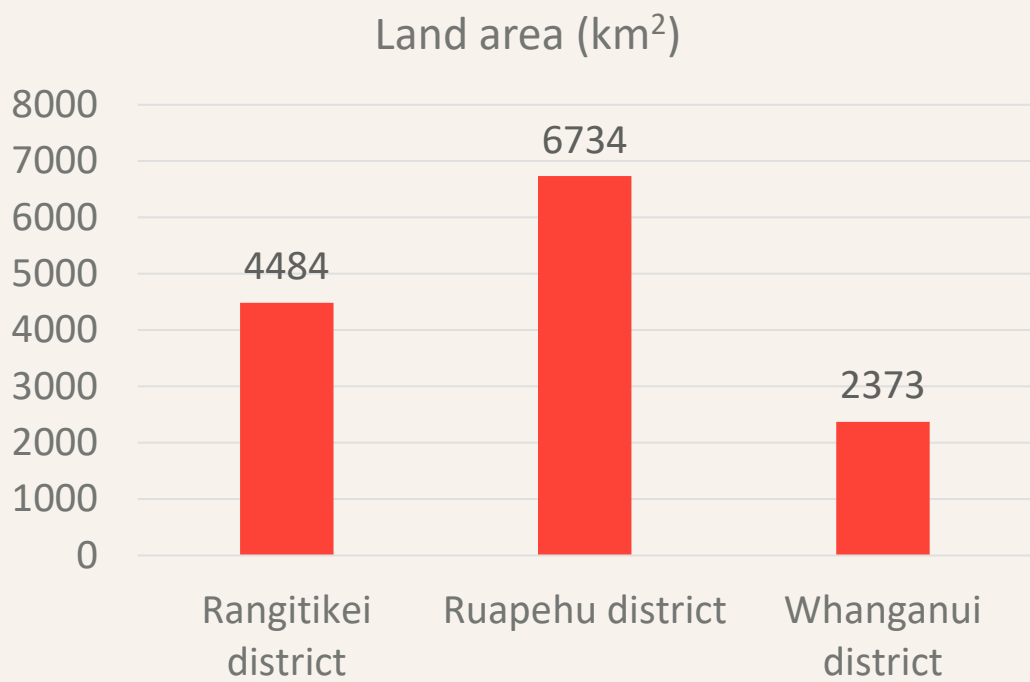
Māori Population Percentage - 2023 Census



Deprivation profile (%)

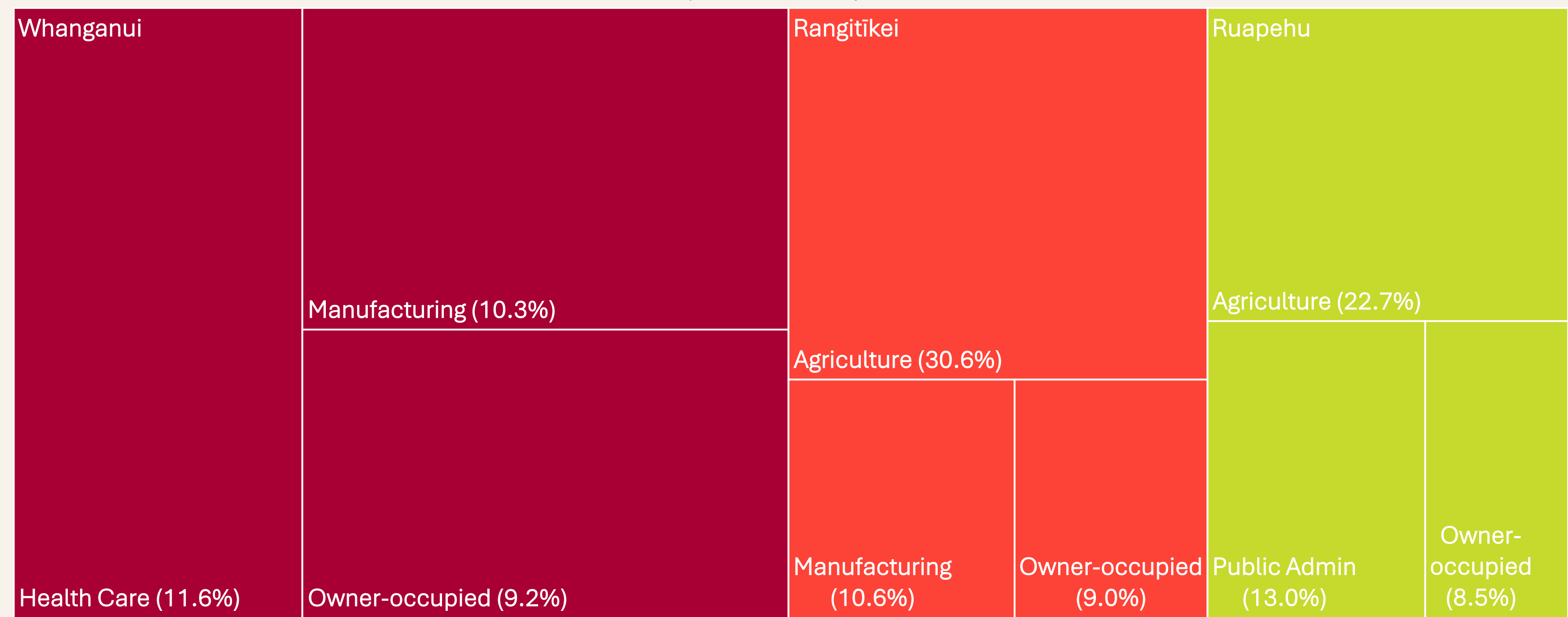


Area profile: Option 2



Top three industries by GDP

Top 3 Industries by GDP



Catchment management

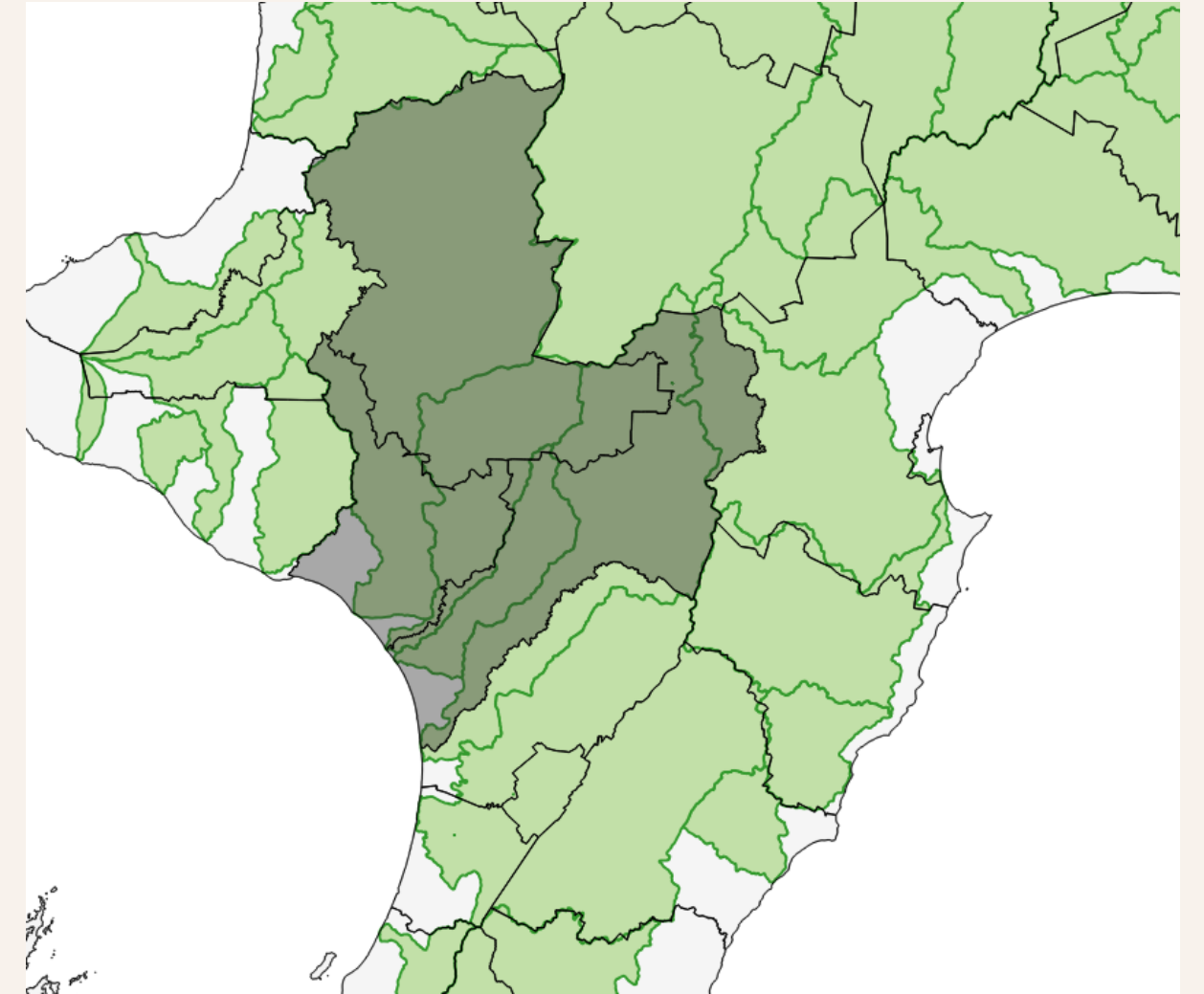
Option 2: Ruapehu, Rangitīkei, Whanganui

Pros

- Provides strong alignment across the western and northern river systems, particularly the Whanganui, Whangaehu and Turakina catchments.
- Captures significant portions of the upper catchments and headwaters originating on Mt Ruapehu.
- Supports integrated management from alpine source areas through to coastal receiving environments for several western catchments.
- Creates opportunities for coordinated management of volcanic, erosion-prone and hill-country environments.

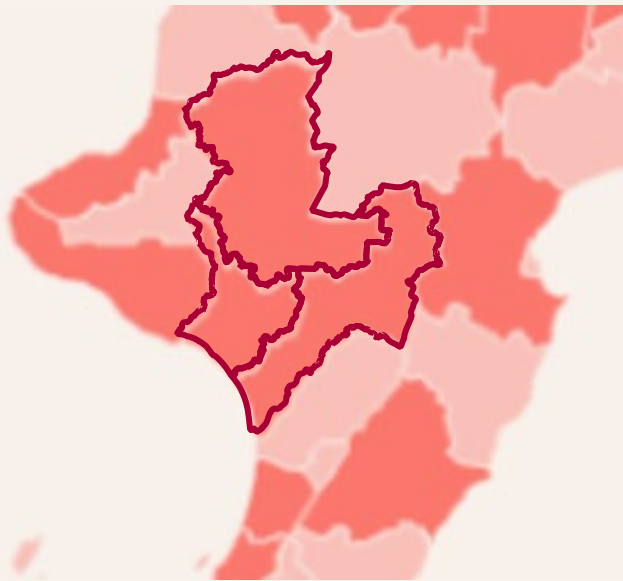
Cons

- The Rangitīkei Catchment is split with Manawatū District Council creating a fragmented management framework for the Rangitīkei River system.
- Some headwaters of the Whanganui systems remain outside the proposed authority (Stratford District Council).
- Excludes major eastern and southern catchments, limiting region-wide ecosystem integration.

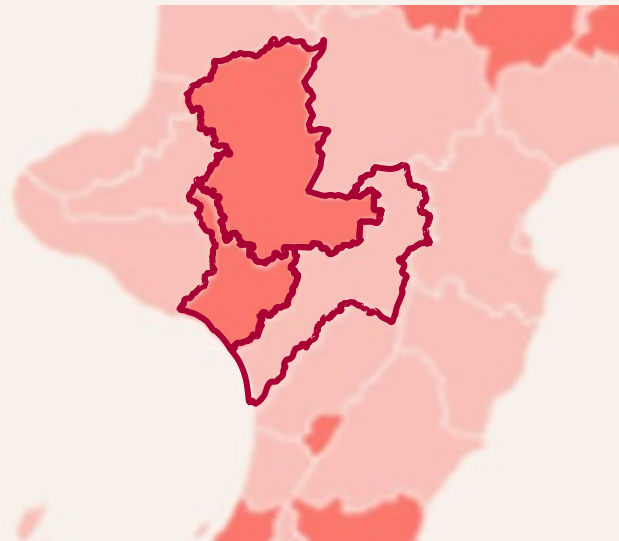


Representation

District	Total Population	Total Members (Current)	Number of Wards (including Māori wards)	Population per Member
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Whanganui District	49,200	12	2	4,100
Ruapehu District	13,440	9	2	1,493
Total	78,670	32	9	-
Rotorua Lakes Council	78,000	10	10	7,800
Far North District	73,600	10	4	7,360
Indicative combined council	78,670	10	TBD	7,867



Community boards



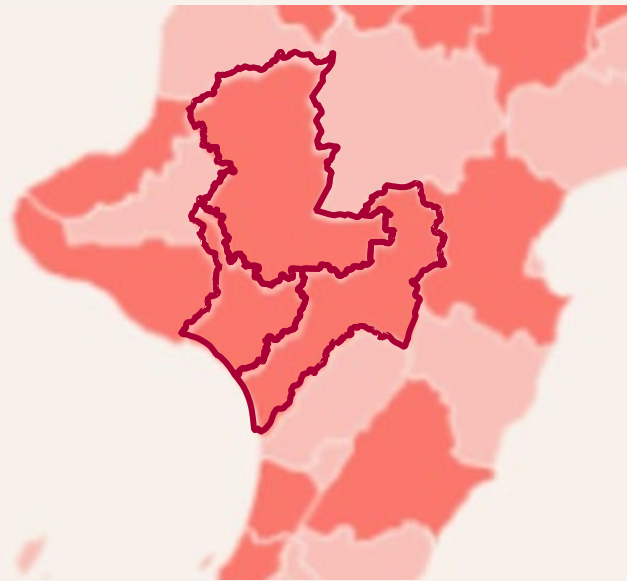
Māori ward referendum outcome

Representation

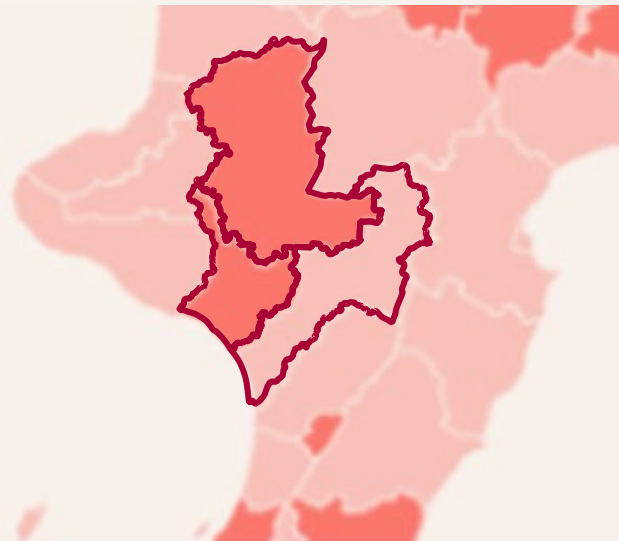
District	Total Population	Members per existing area
Indicative combined council	78,670	10
Rangitīkei District	16,030	2
Whanganui District	49,200	6
Ruapehu District	13,440	2

This is based on population only.

Noting that MCERT have said that alternative representation models can be included.



Community boards



Māori ward referendum outcome

Summary of initial assessment

Option 2: RDC + RuDC WDC

Supports the new planning system

Simplifies local governance

Economies of scale

Maintains local voice

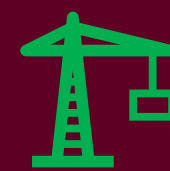
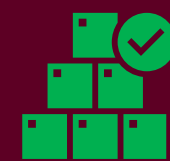
Deliverability

Working collaboratively to improve wellbeing*

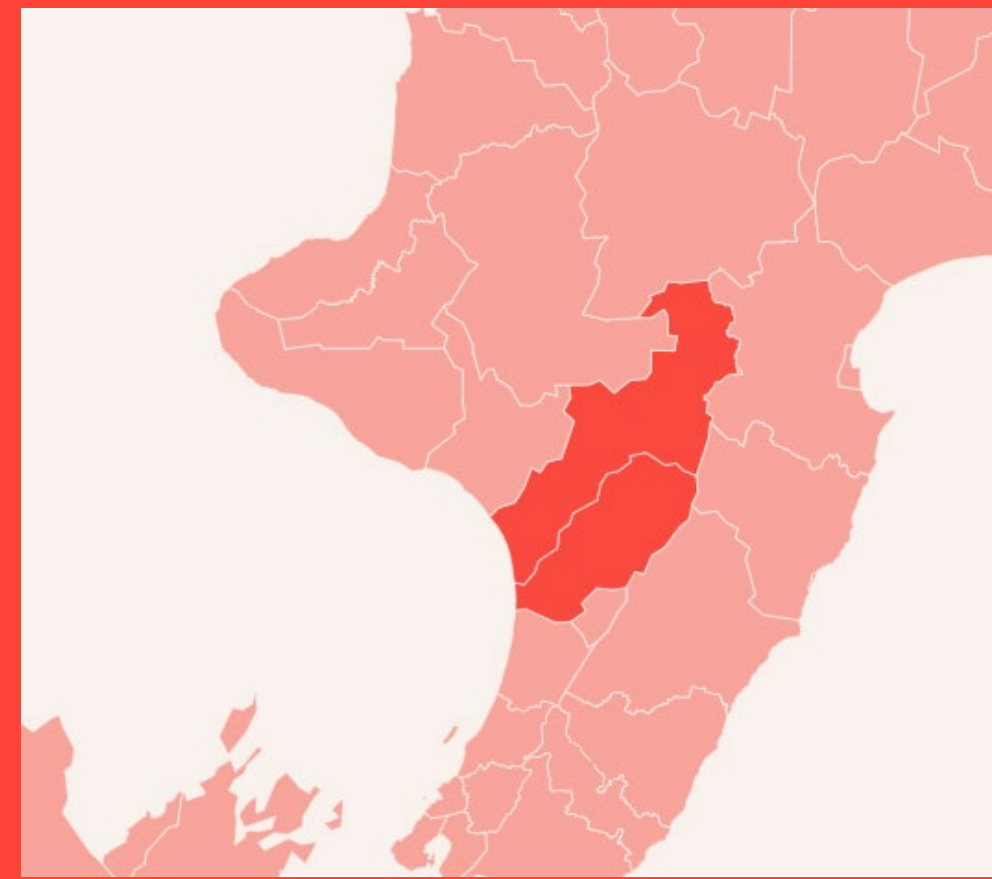
Facilitating growth*

Connecting to Central North Island*

Affordability for community and Council
sustainability*



Option 3



Rangitikei District
Manawatū District

Communities, connections and economic coherence

Q1. Does the option group together communities with aligned needs and expectations of council?

- Strong alignment in structure
 - Both predominantly rural (91–93% rural roads)
 - Similar age profile (~41 years)
 - Shared growth trajectory (+10–12% to 2048)
 - Agriculture-led economies
 - Slightly higher income and ownership in Manawatū → Different expectations on affordability, service levels, and investment
- Key difference in need and expectations
 - Deprivation gap: Rangitikei 60% vs Manawatū 30.9% (deciles 7–10)
 - Māori population: 28% vs 17%

Q2. Will this council make sense economically and functionally?

- Complementary economic structure. Both agriculture-based, but:
 - Rangitikei more intensive (30.6% agriculture)
 - Manawatū more diversified (public admin and real estate)
- Scale imbalance introduces the risk that Manawatū is more than twice the population and ~3 to 4x the development scale
- Risk that Rangitikei becomes a peripheral district rather than an equal partner

Journey analysis

There is a real, two-way linkage between Rangitikei and Manawatū, but significant travel from both districts extends to Palmerston North, which sits outside the option.

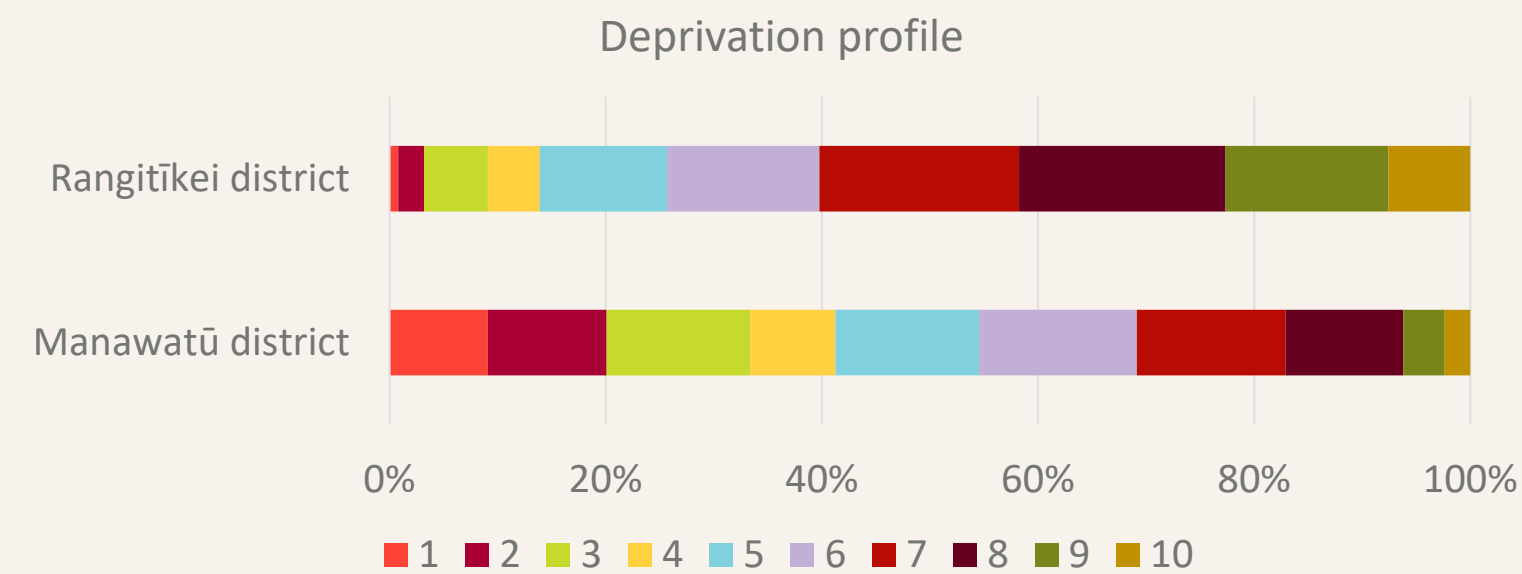
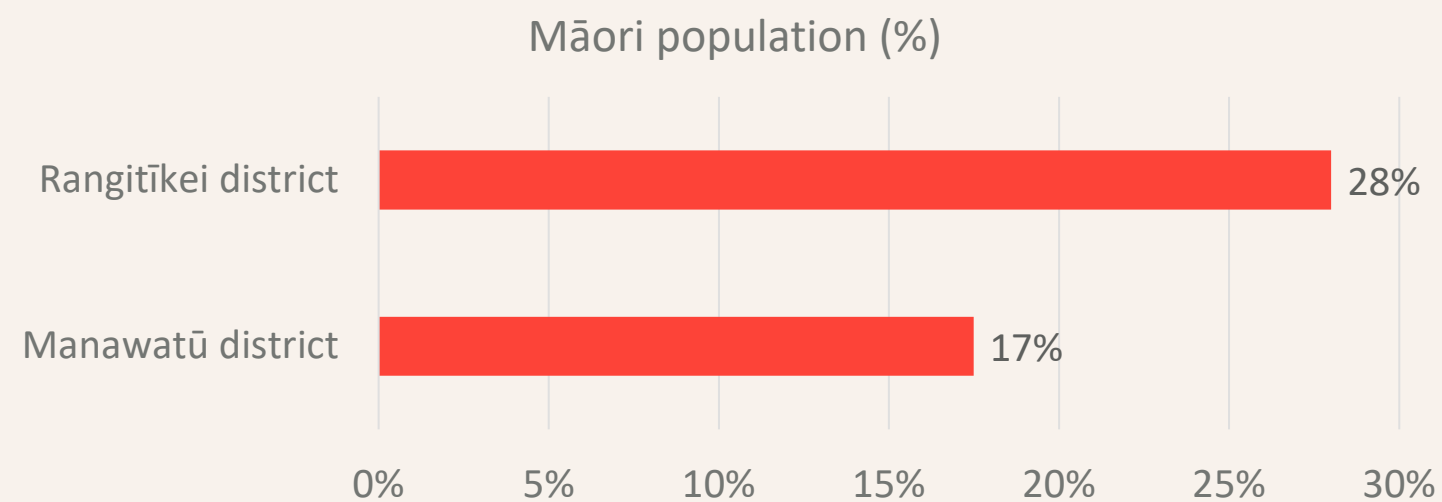
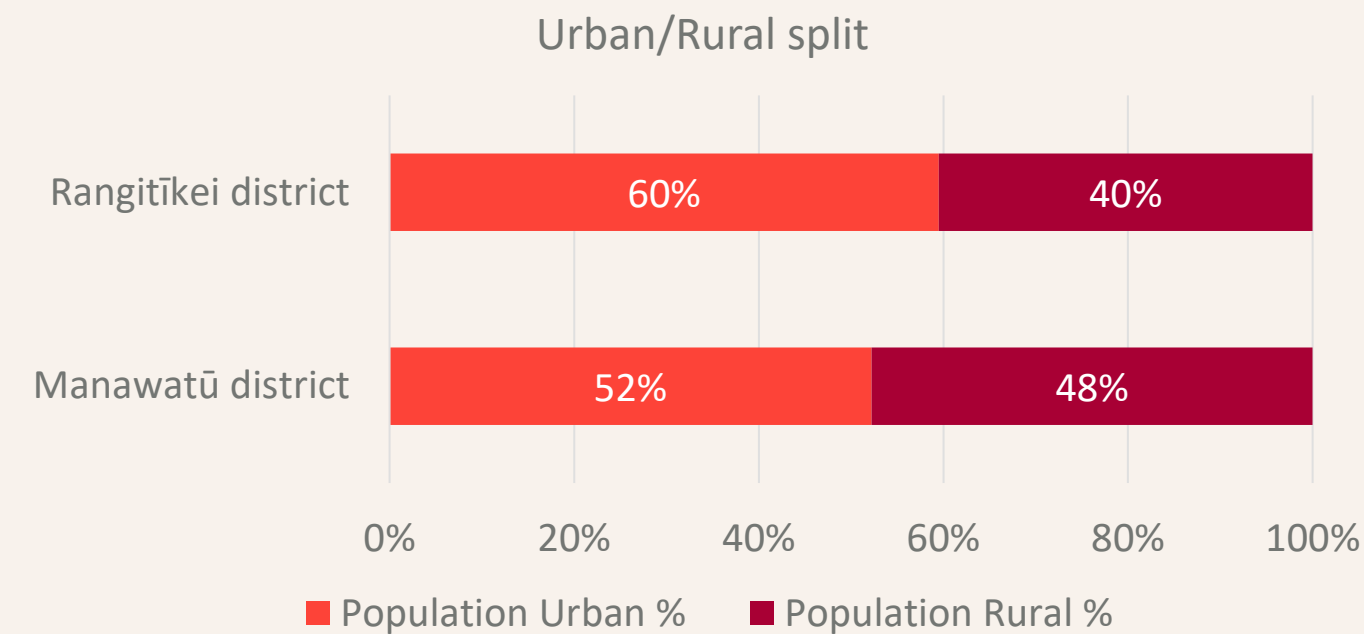
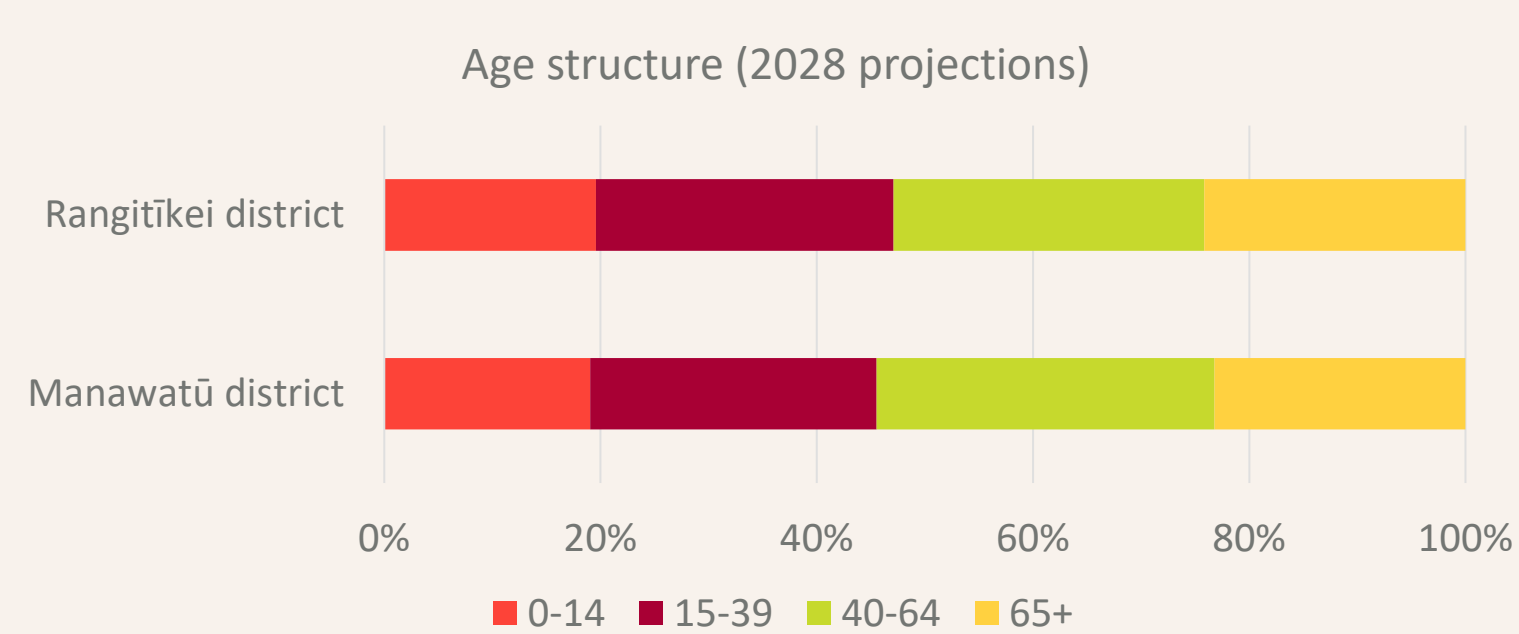
The option partially reflects travel patterns, but omits the main external destination.

- Key linkages

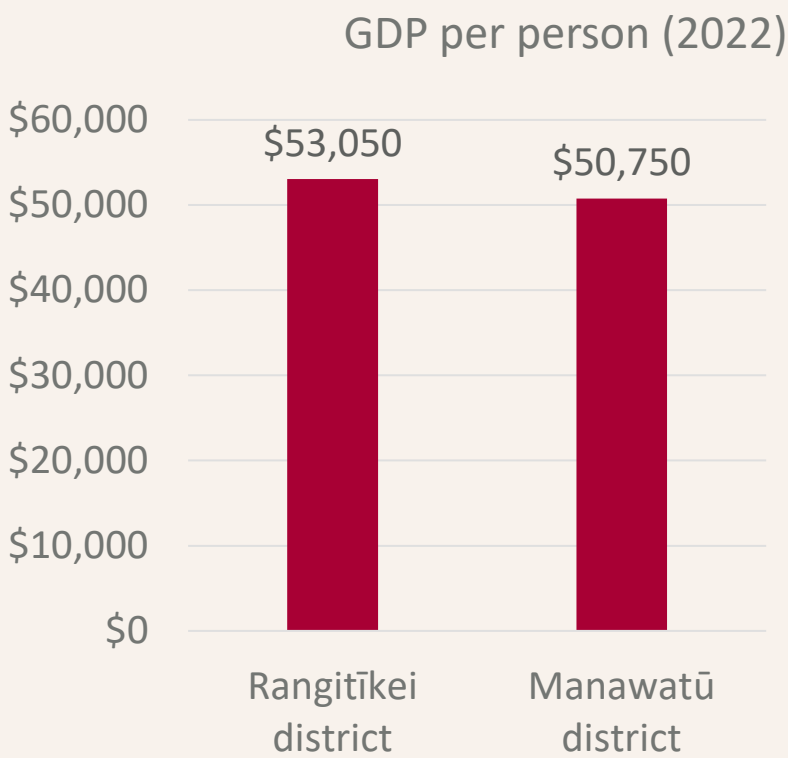
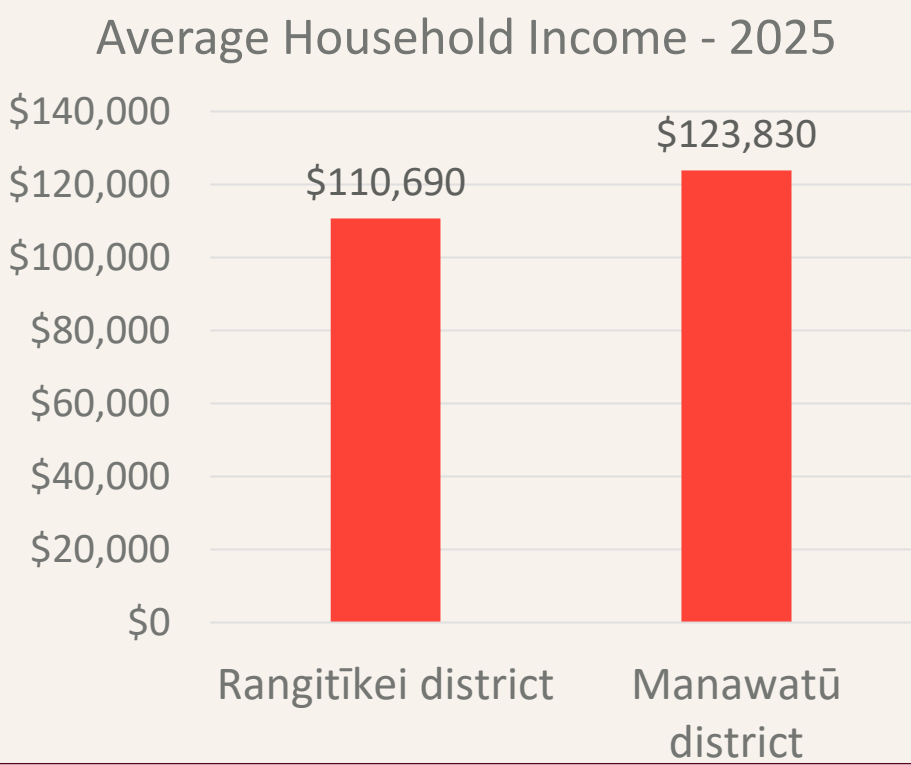
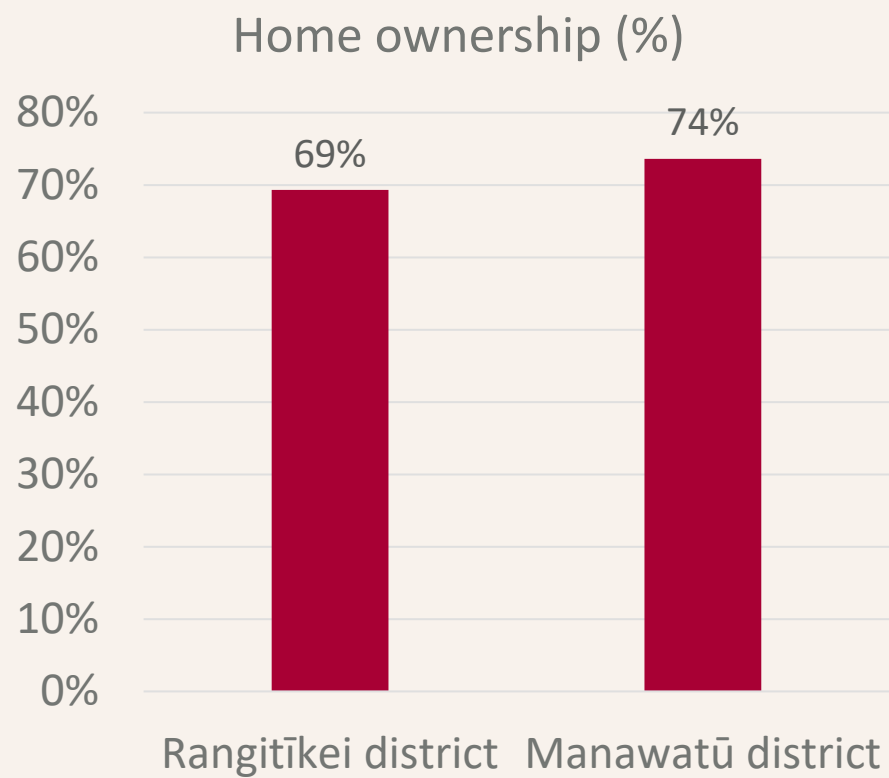
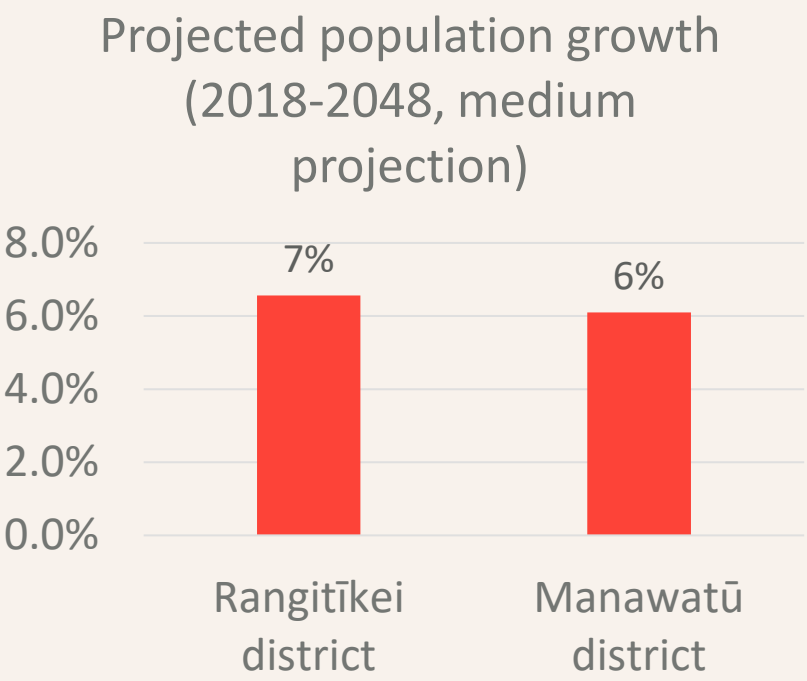
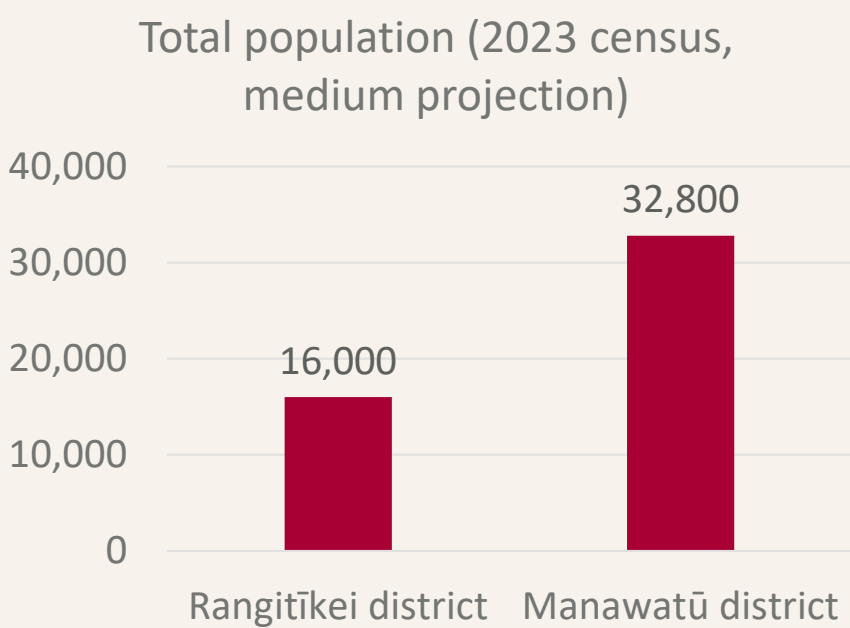
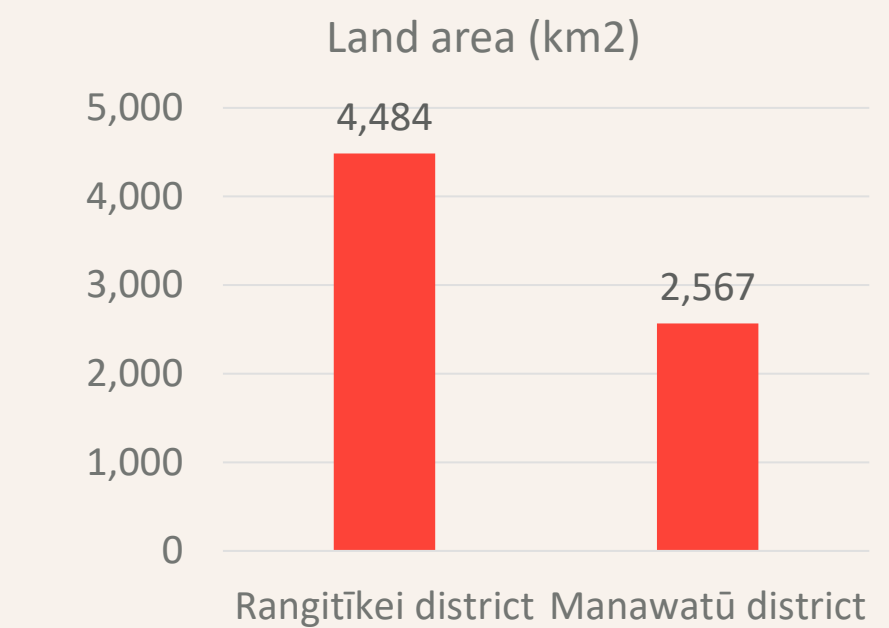
- Rangitikei ↔ Manawatū ~5–10%
- Rangitikei → Palmerston North ~8% (excluded)
- Manawatū → Palmerston North ~20–30% (excluded)



Population Structure: Option 3

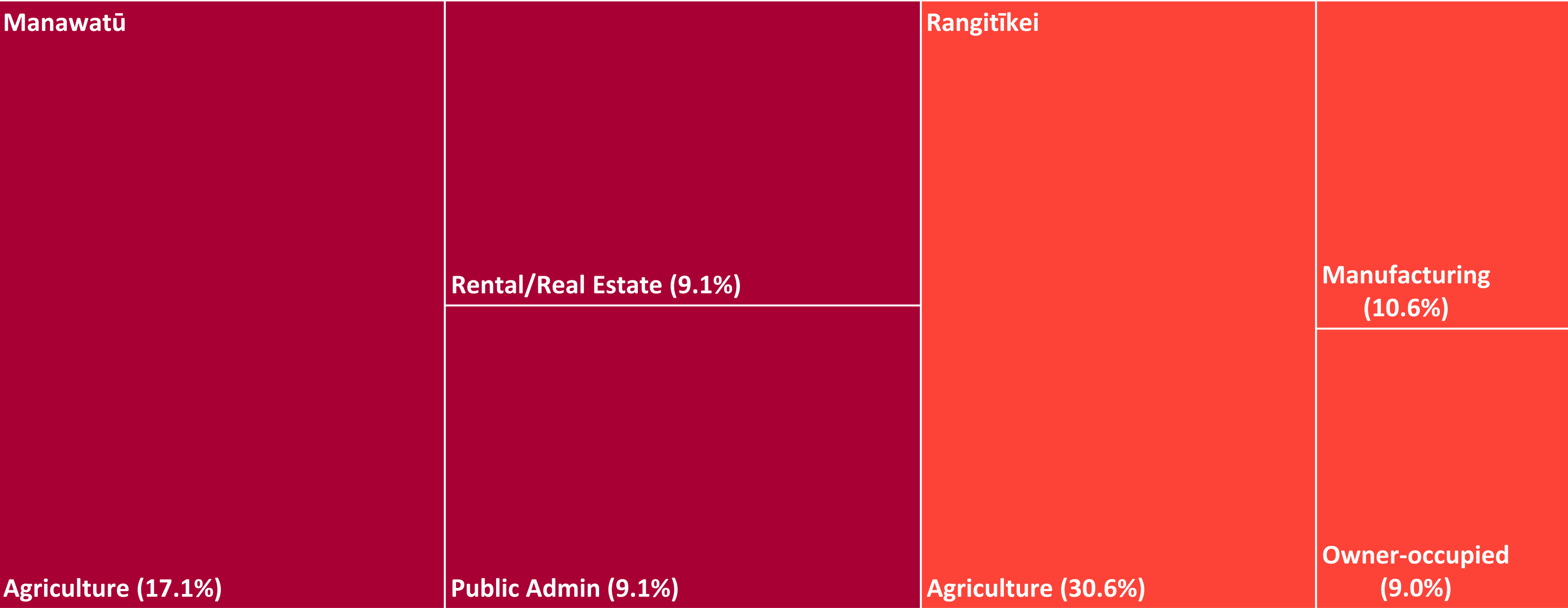


Area profile: Option 3



Top three industries by GDP

Top 3 Industries by GDP



Catchment management

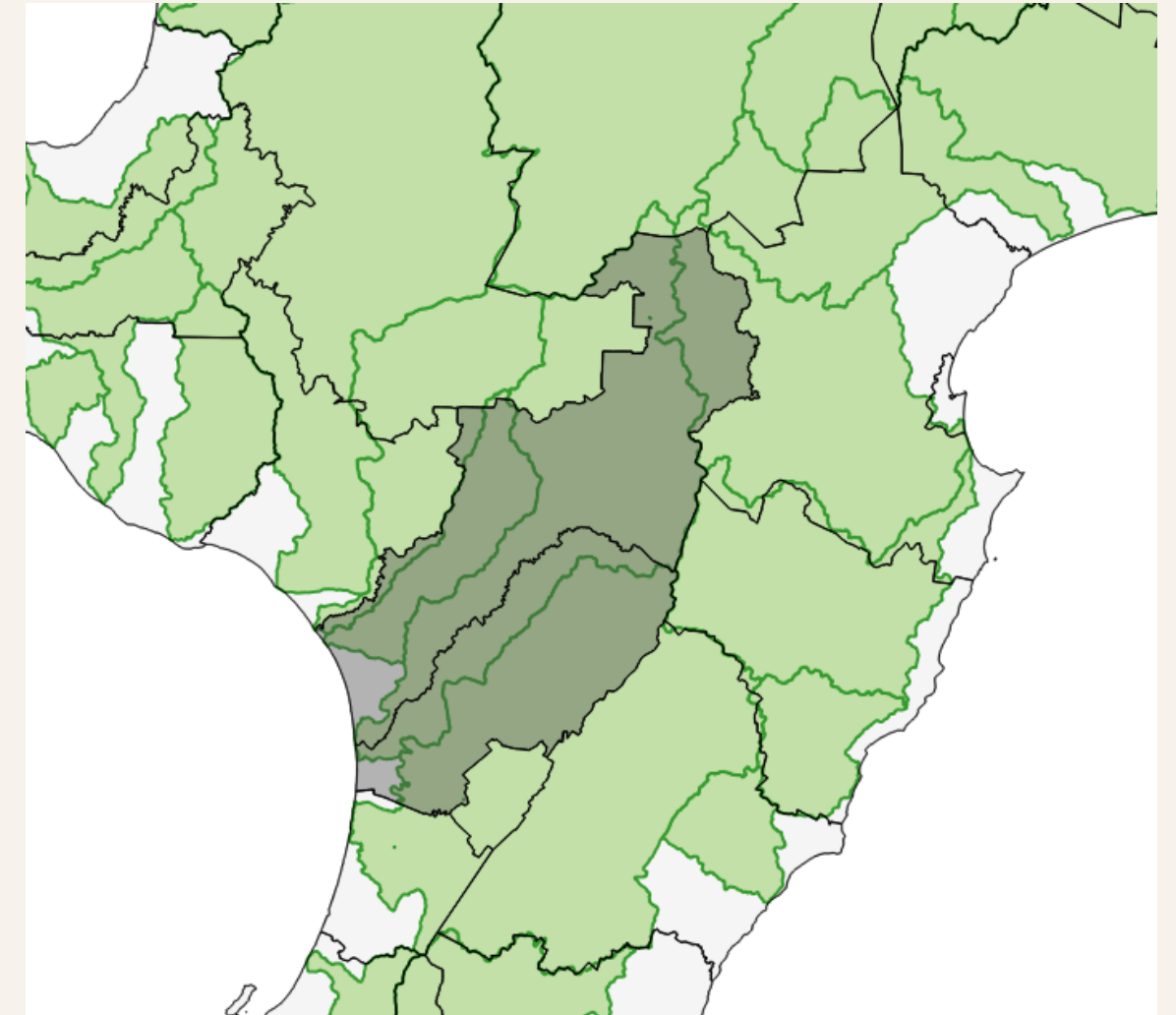
Option 3: Rangitīkei, Manawatū

Pros

- Provides relatively strong integration across the lower and middle reaches of the Rangitīkei and Manawatū systems.
- Aligns closely with existing economic and land-use patterns in the southern part of the region.
- Simplifies management of lower river reaches and productive lowland environments.

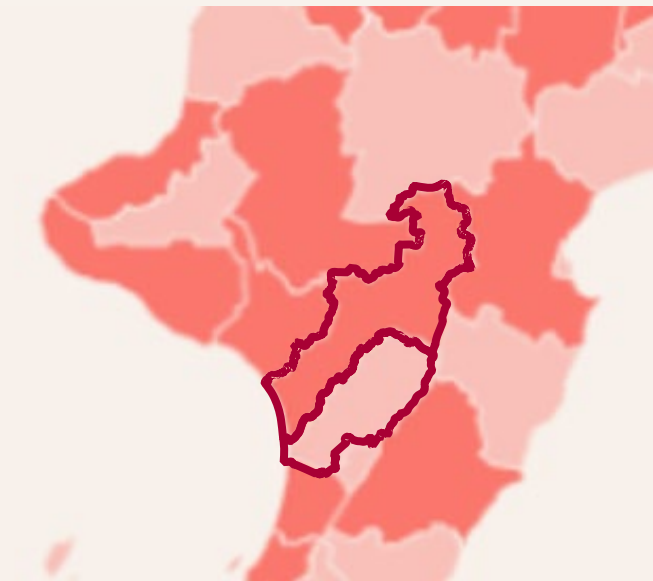
Cons

- Excludes the majority of key headwater areas for both the Rangitīkei and Manawatū systems.
- Leaves significant upstream environmental drivers outside the authority boundary.
- Requires extensive cross-boundary governance arrangements with Ruapehu, Tararua and other neighbouring authorities.
- Does not capture Whanganui, Whangaehu or Turakina catchments.

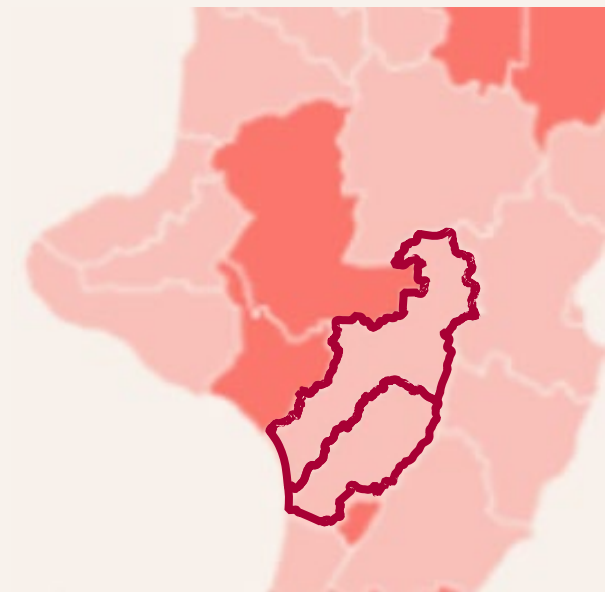


Representation

District	Total Population	Total Members (Current)	Number of (including Māori wards) Wards	Population per Member
Rangitīkei District	16,030	11	5	1,457
Manawatu District	33,990	11	3	3,090
Total	50,020	22	8	-
Whanganui District	49,200	12	2	4,100
Invercargill City	58,000	13	None	4,461
Indicative combined council	50,020	12	TBD	4,168



Community boards



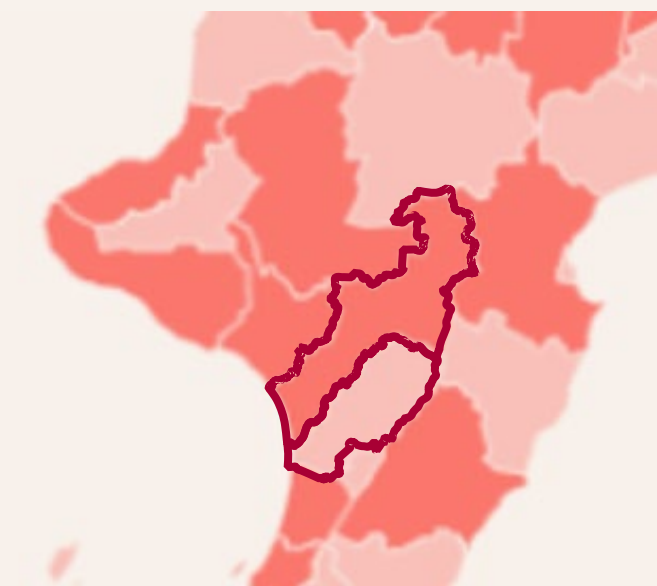
Māori ward
referendum outcome

Representation

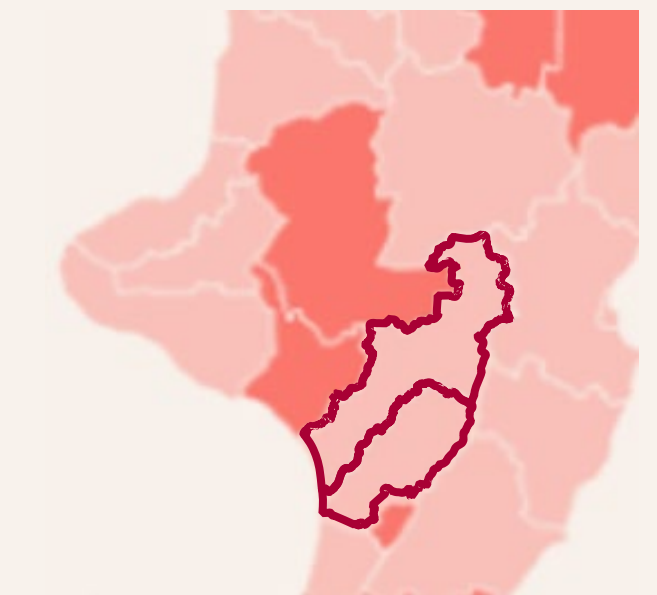
District	Total Population	Members per existing area
Indicative combined council	50,020	12
Rangitīkei District	16,030	4
Manawatu District	33,990	8

This is based on population only.

Noting that MCERT have said that alternative representation models can be included.



Community boards



Māori ward referendum outcome

Summary of initial assessment

Option 3: RDC+ MDC

Supports the new planning system

Simplifies local governance

Economies of scale

Maintains local voice

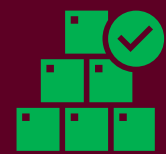
Deliverability

Working collaboratively to improve wellbeing*

Facilitating growth*

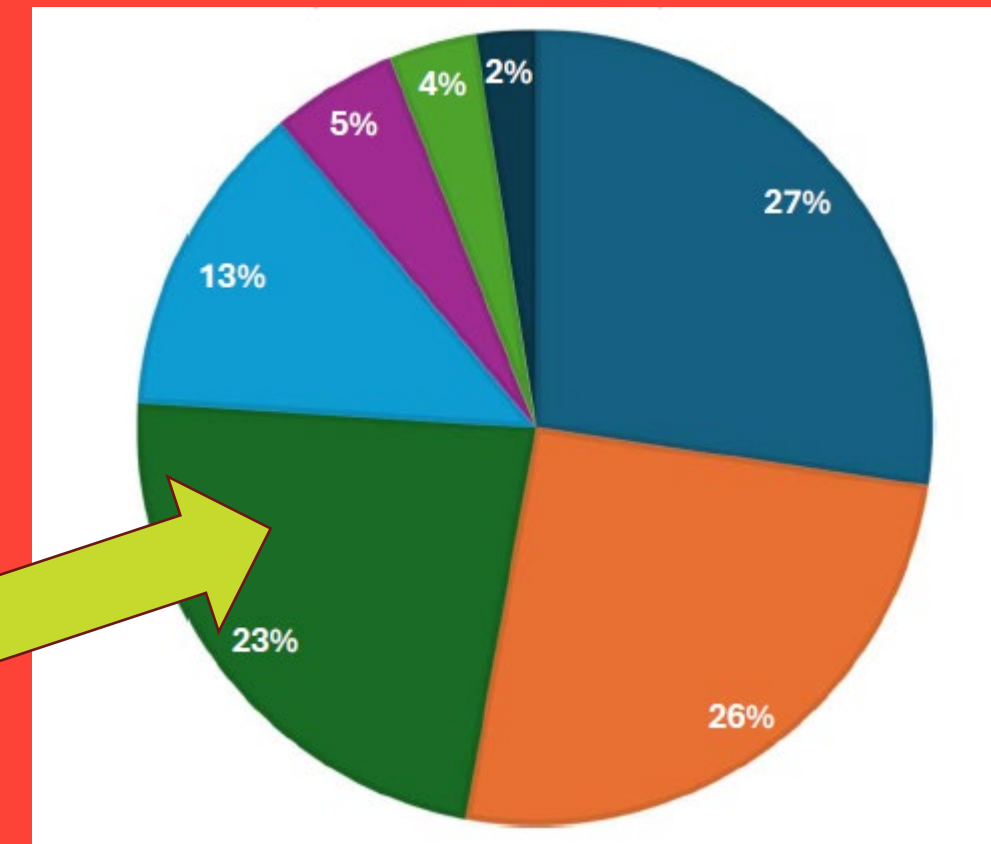
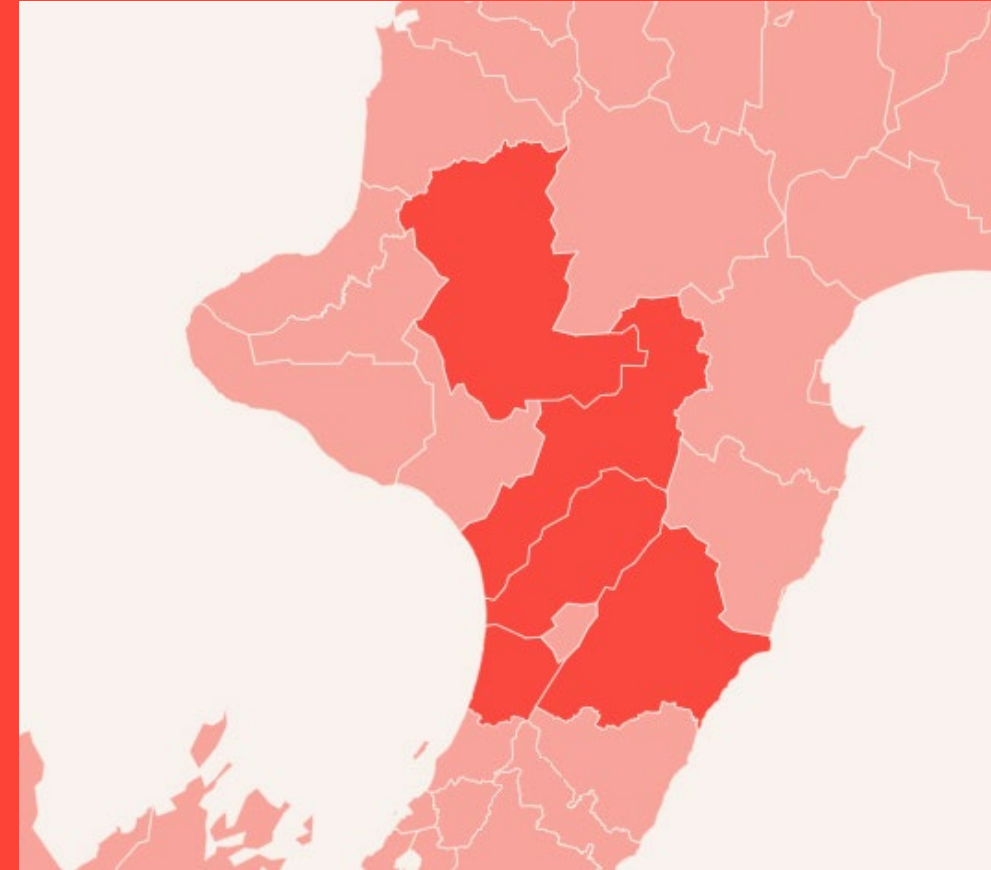
Connecting to Central North Island*

Affordability for community and Council
sustainability*



Option 4

Rangitīkei District
Manawatū District
Ruapehu District
Horowhenua District
Tararua District



Communities, connections and economic coherence

Q1. Does the option group together communities with aligned needs and expectations of council?

- Shared foundations:
 - Rural districts with common service challenges
 - Agriculture-led economies across all five districts
 - Similar aging population profile (median ~40–47 years)
- Very different population growth pressures:
 - Horowhenua 9.0% vs Ruapehu -9.1%
- Potential for difference in need and expectations:
 - Deprivation gap: Ruapehu 67%, Rangitikei 56% vs Manawatū 17% (levels, 8-10)
 - Māori :~44% Ruapehu, 28% Rangitikei vs ~17% Manawatū
 - Higher income and ownership (slightly) in Manawatū→ Different expectations on affordability, service levels and investment

Q2. Will this council make sense economically and functionally?

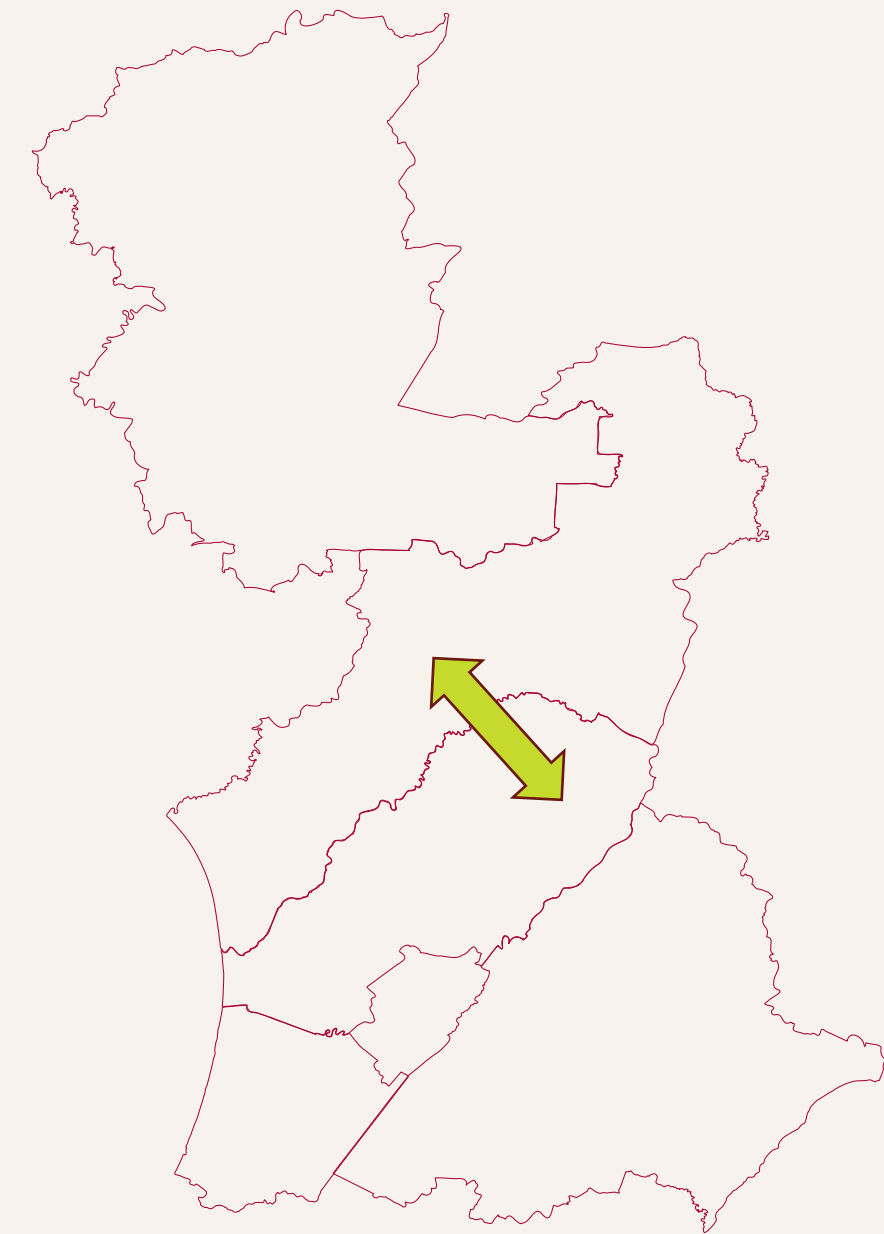
- Agriculture is a top sector across all districts (17–31% of GDP)
 - Manufacturing in Rangitikei and Manawatū supports value-add processing
 - Combined GDP of ~\$5 billion → viable economic scale→ Creates a coherent primary-sector regional economy
- Clear functional geography
 - Forms a north to south corridor (Ruapehu → Rangitikei)
 - Connected via state highways and rail networks
 - Shared infrastructure and supply chain connections
- Palmerston North provides a strong centre
 - Serves as regional service hub for all five districts

Journey analysis

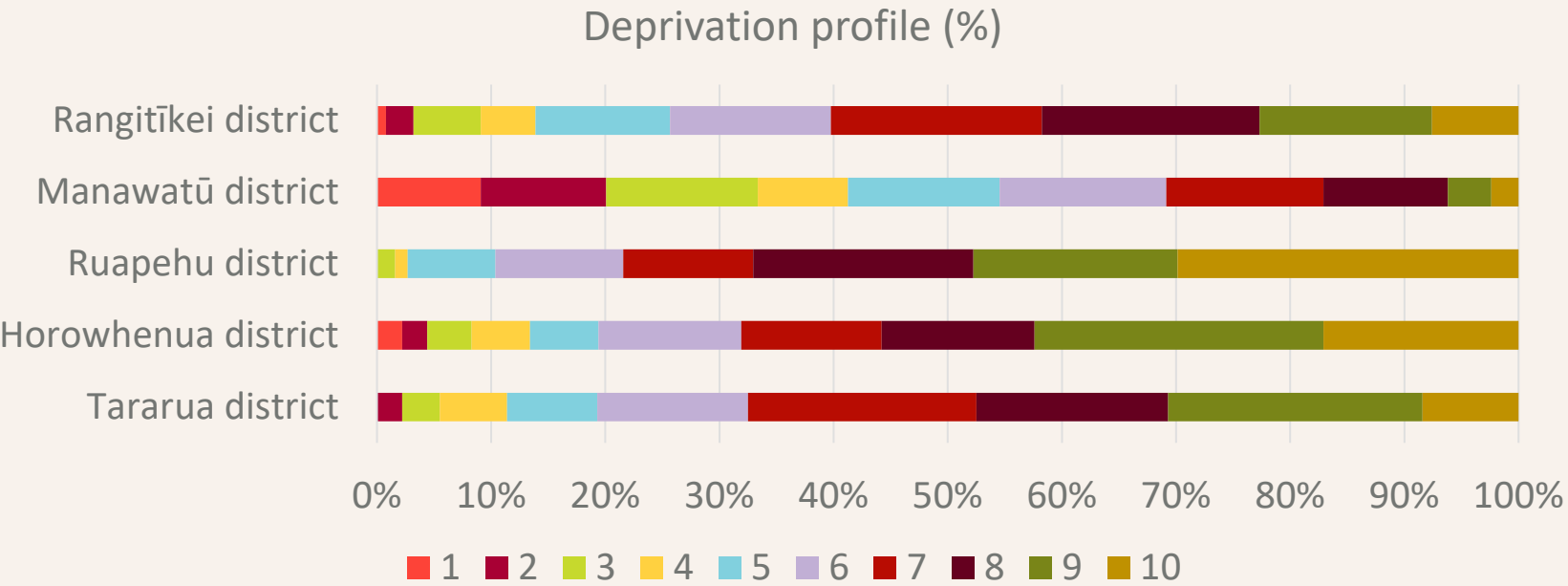
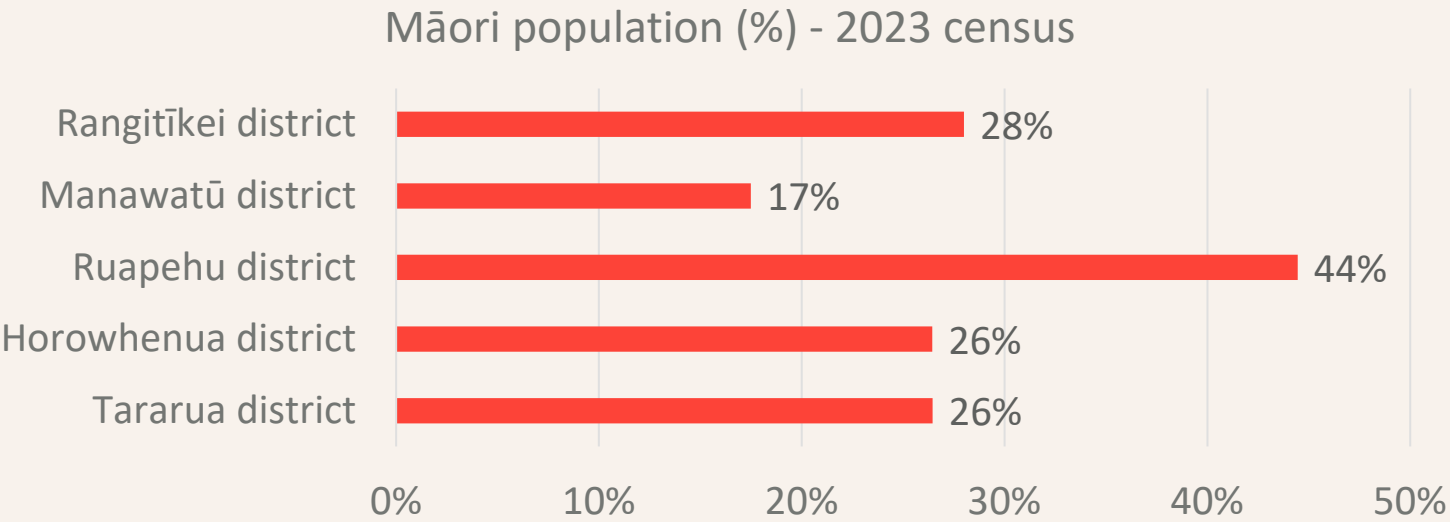
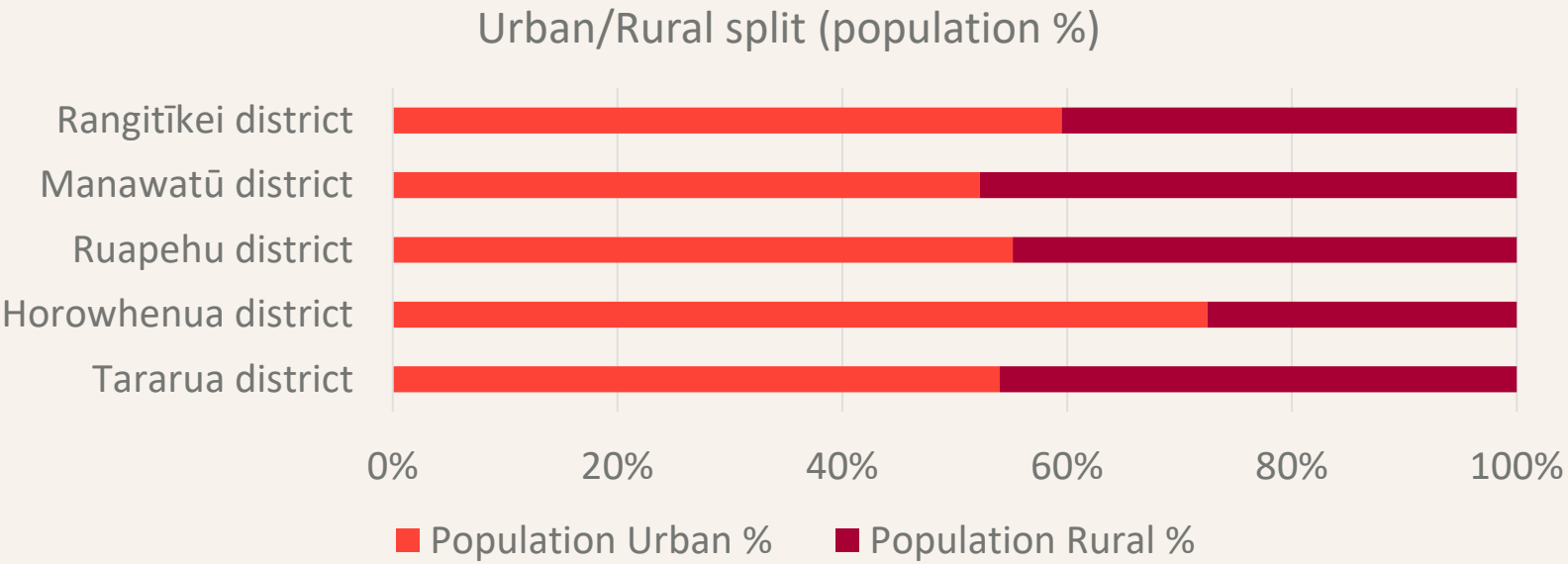
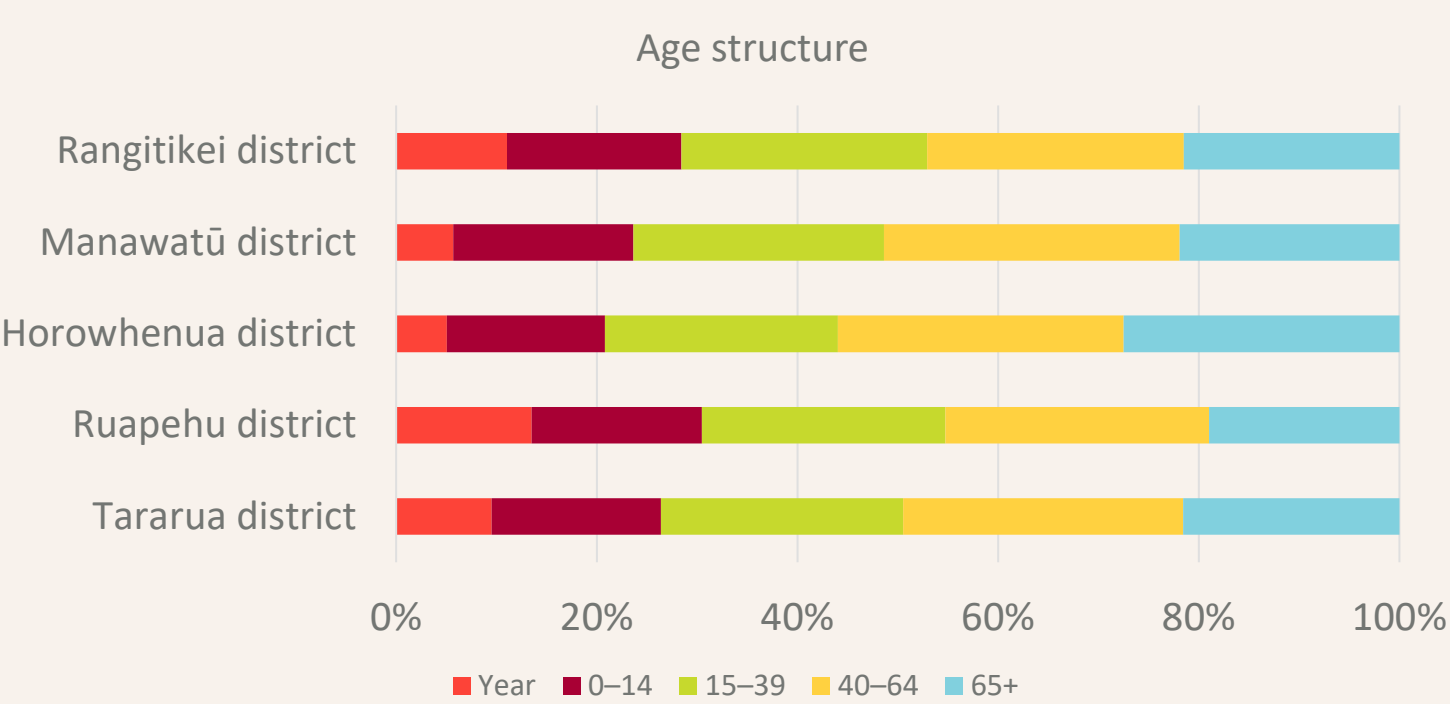
While some internal connections exist, most districts have their largest external linkage to Palmerston North, which is not included.

Key linkages

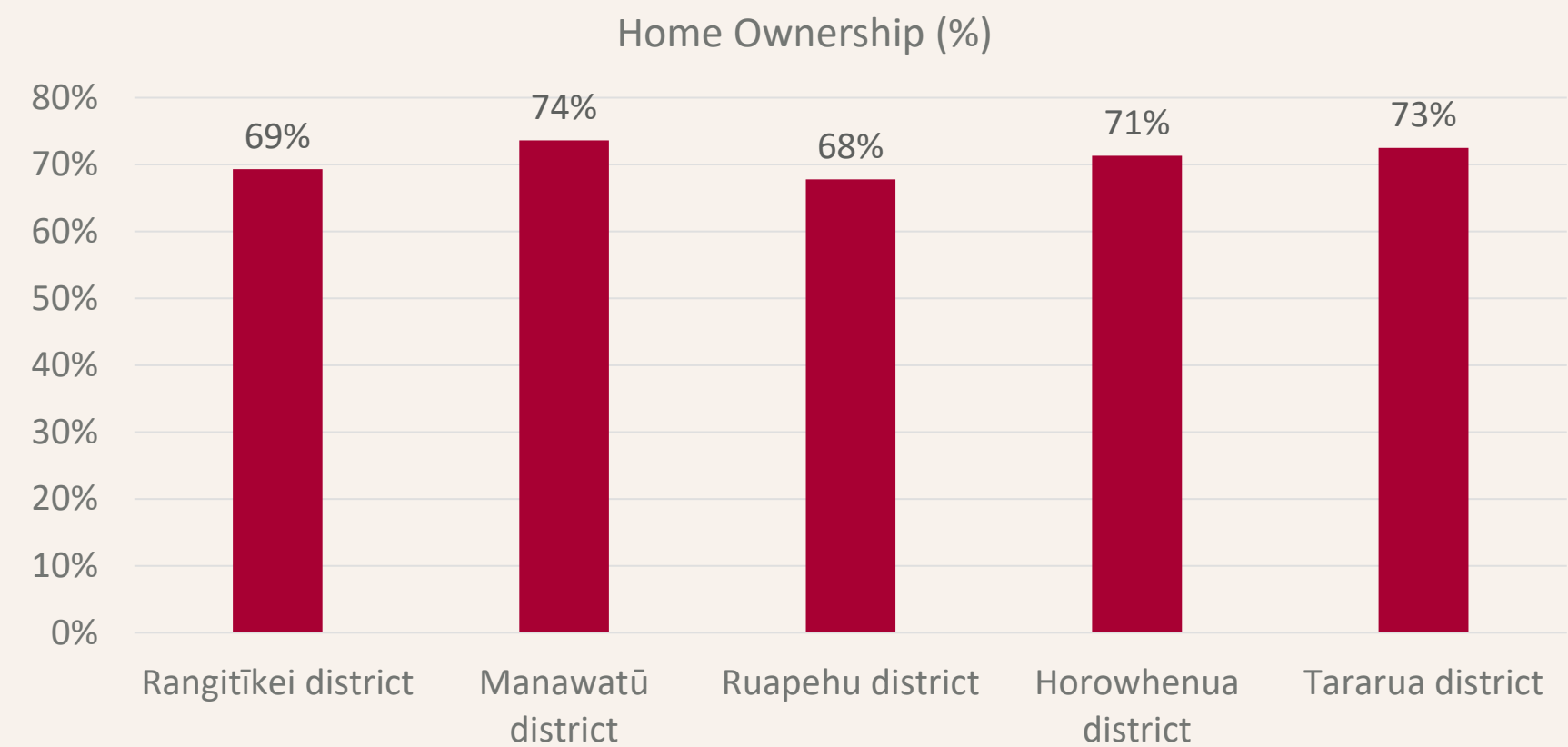
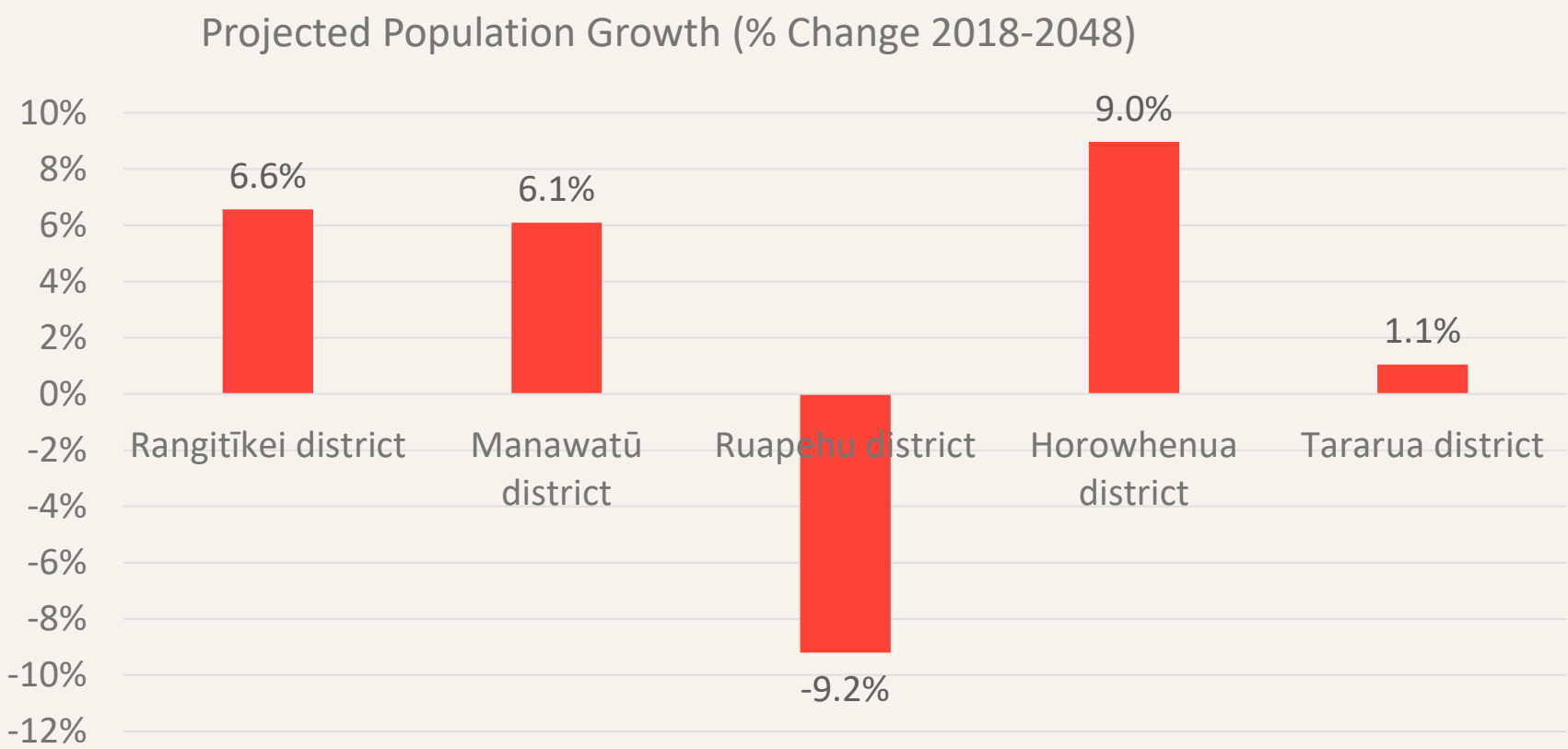
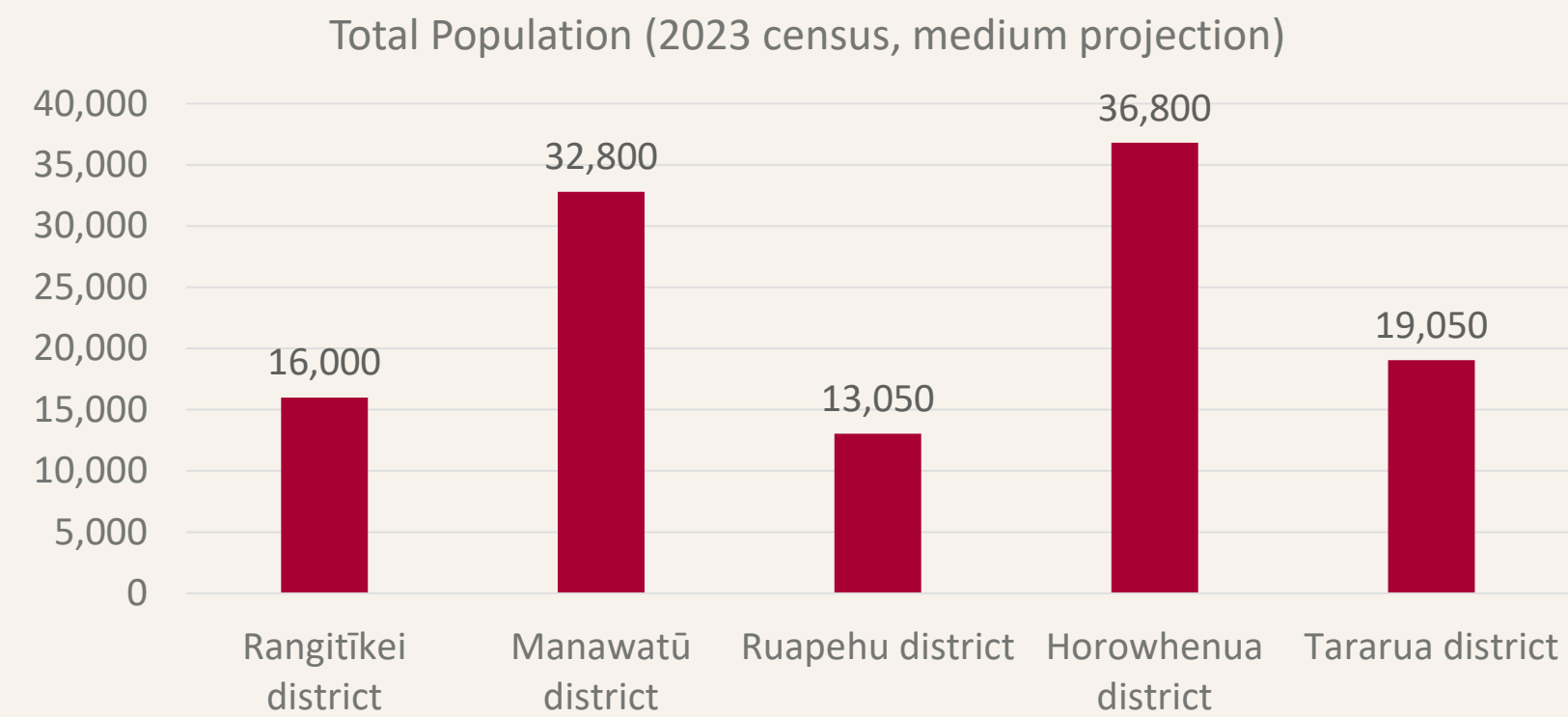
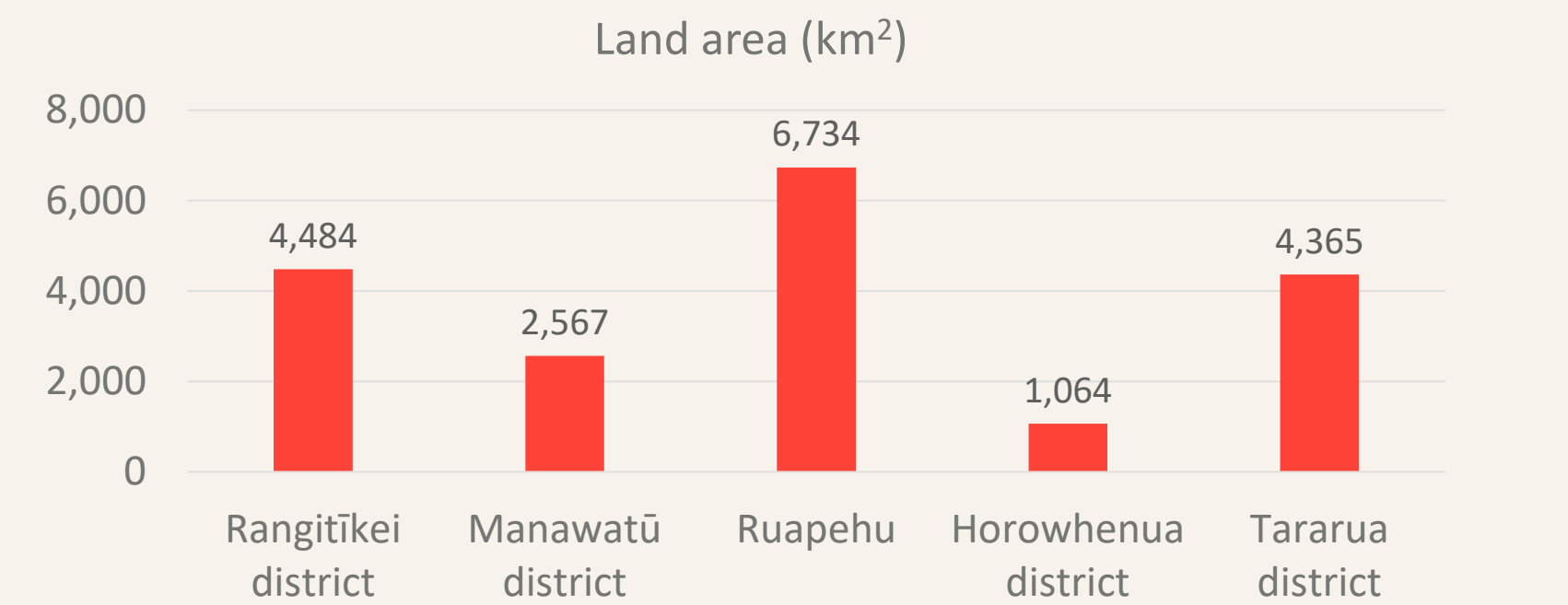
- Strong outward flows to Palmerston North from multiple districts:
 - Rangitikei ~8% (excluded)
 - Manawatū ~20–30% (excluded)
 - Horowhenua ~15–25% (excluded)
 - Tararua ~10–15% (excluded)
- Internal links within the option:
 - Rangitikei ↔ Manawatū ~5–10%
 - Limited other material connections



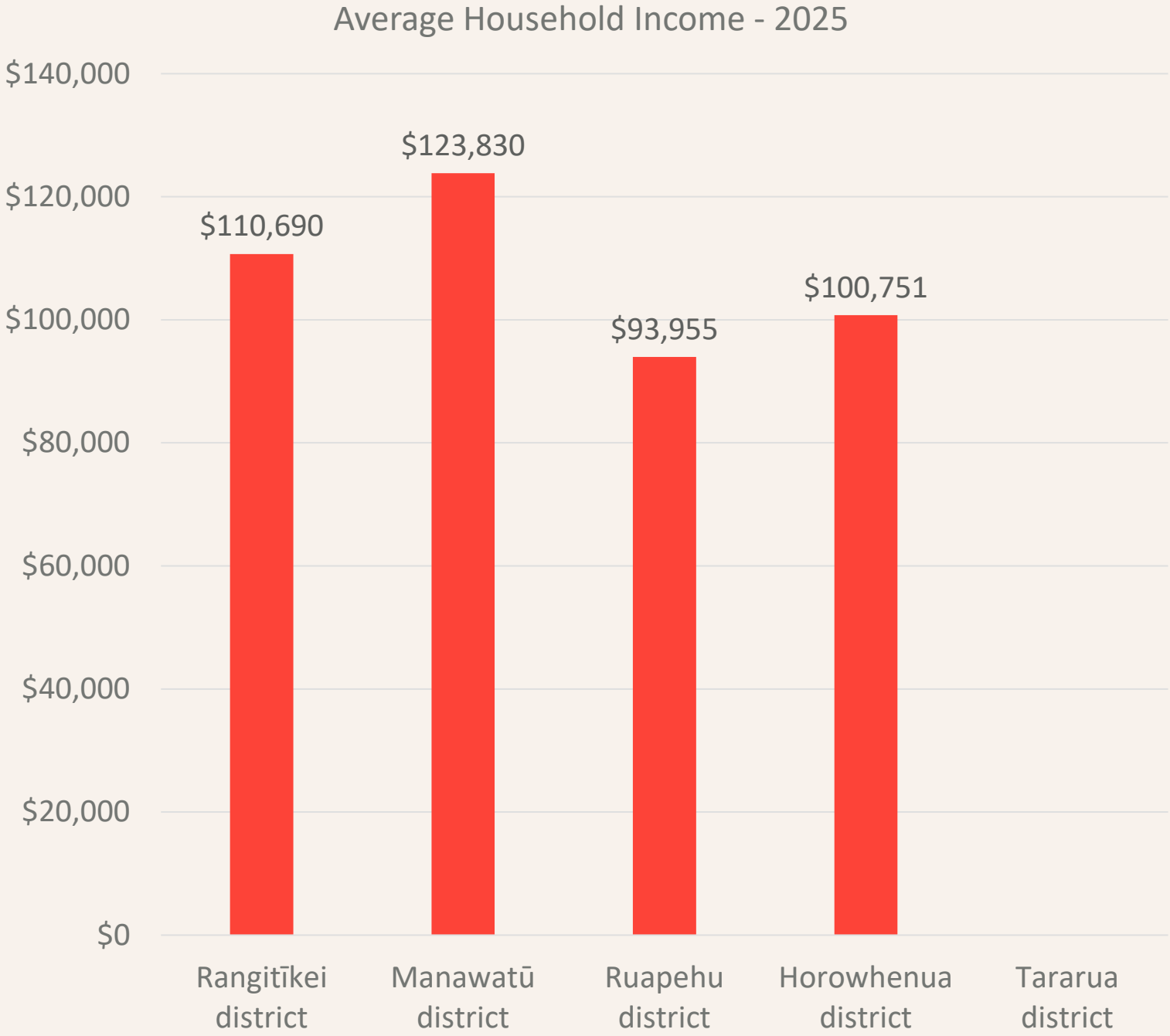
Population Structure: Option 4



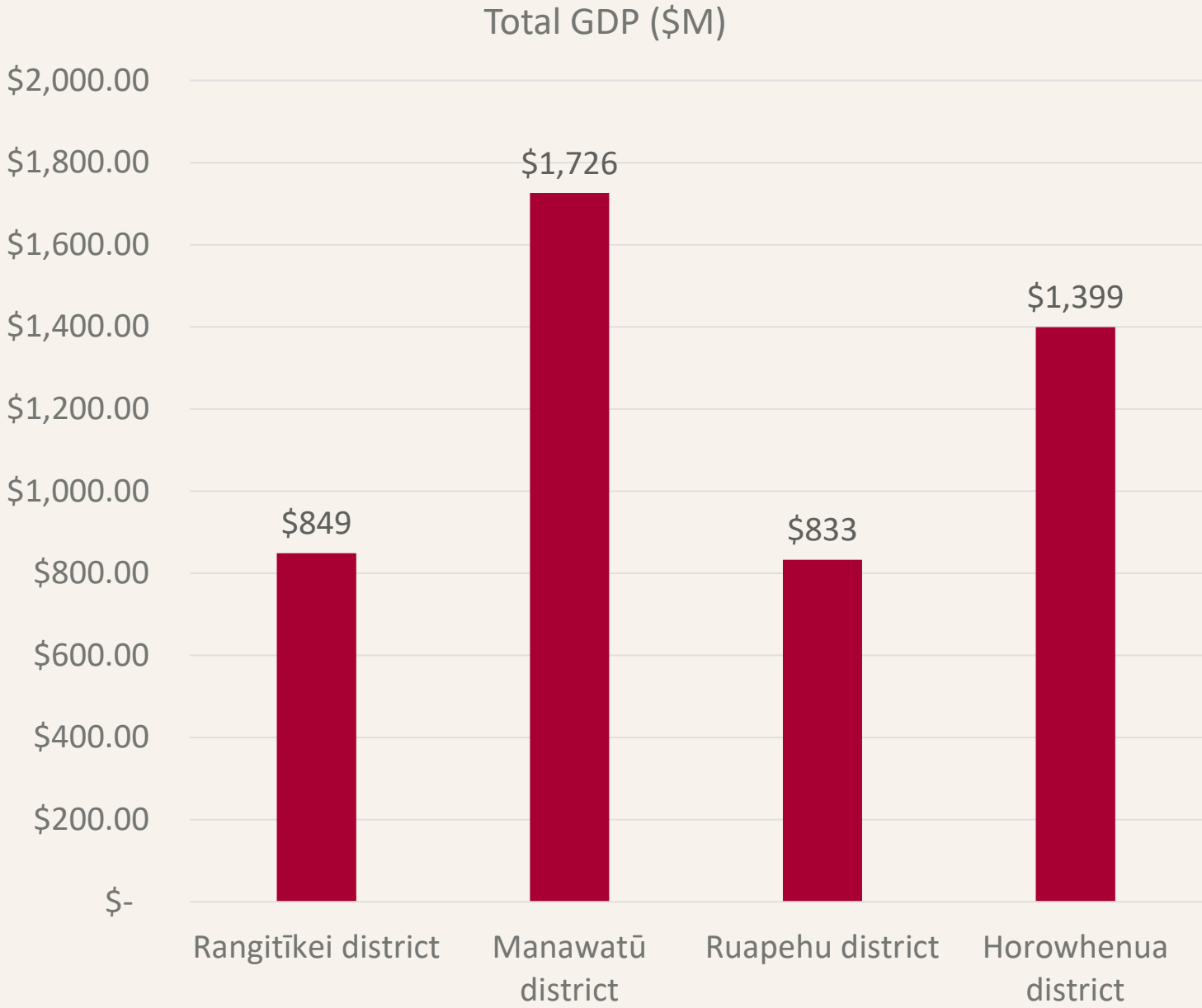
Area profile: Option 4



Business and Income: Option 4

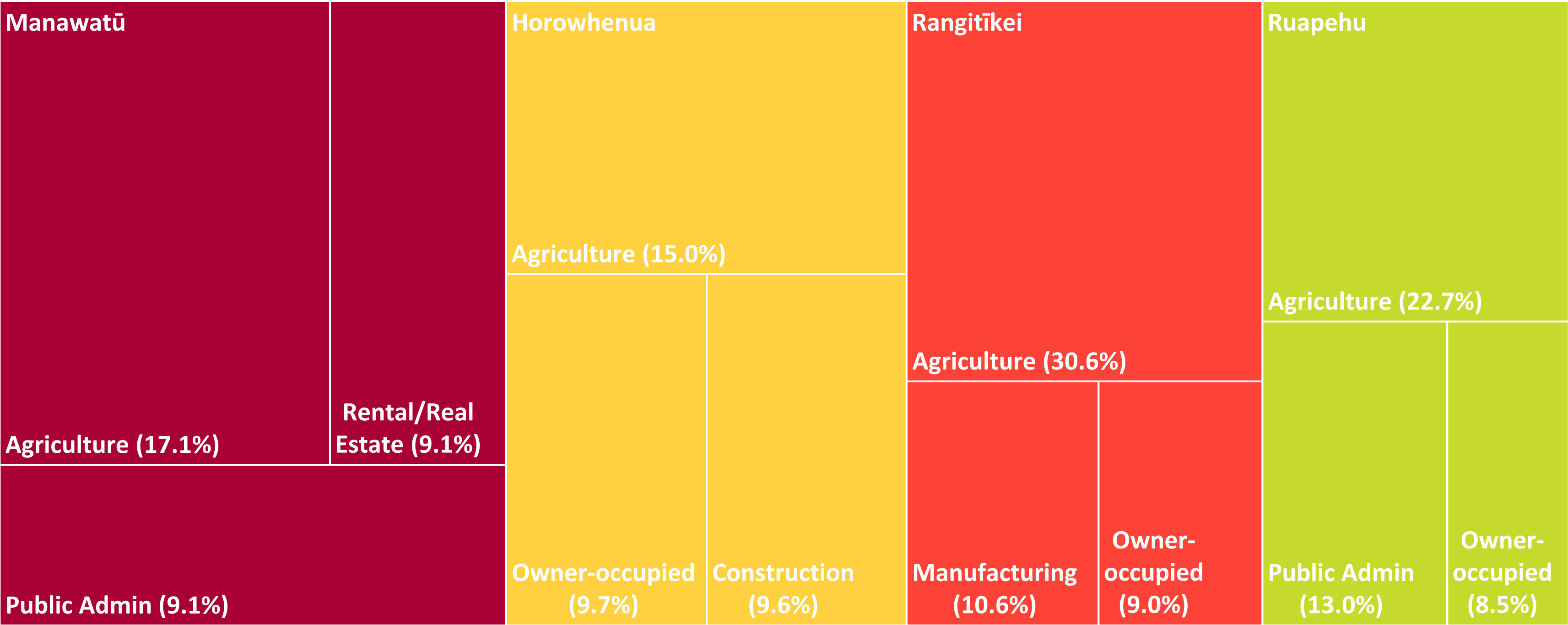


*Data not available for Tararua district



Top three industries by GDP

Top 3 Industries by GDP



Catchment management

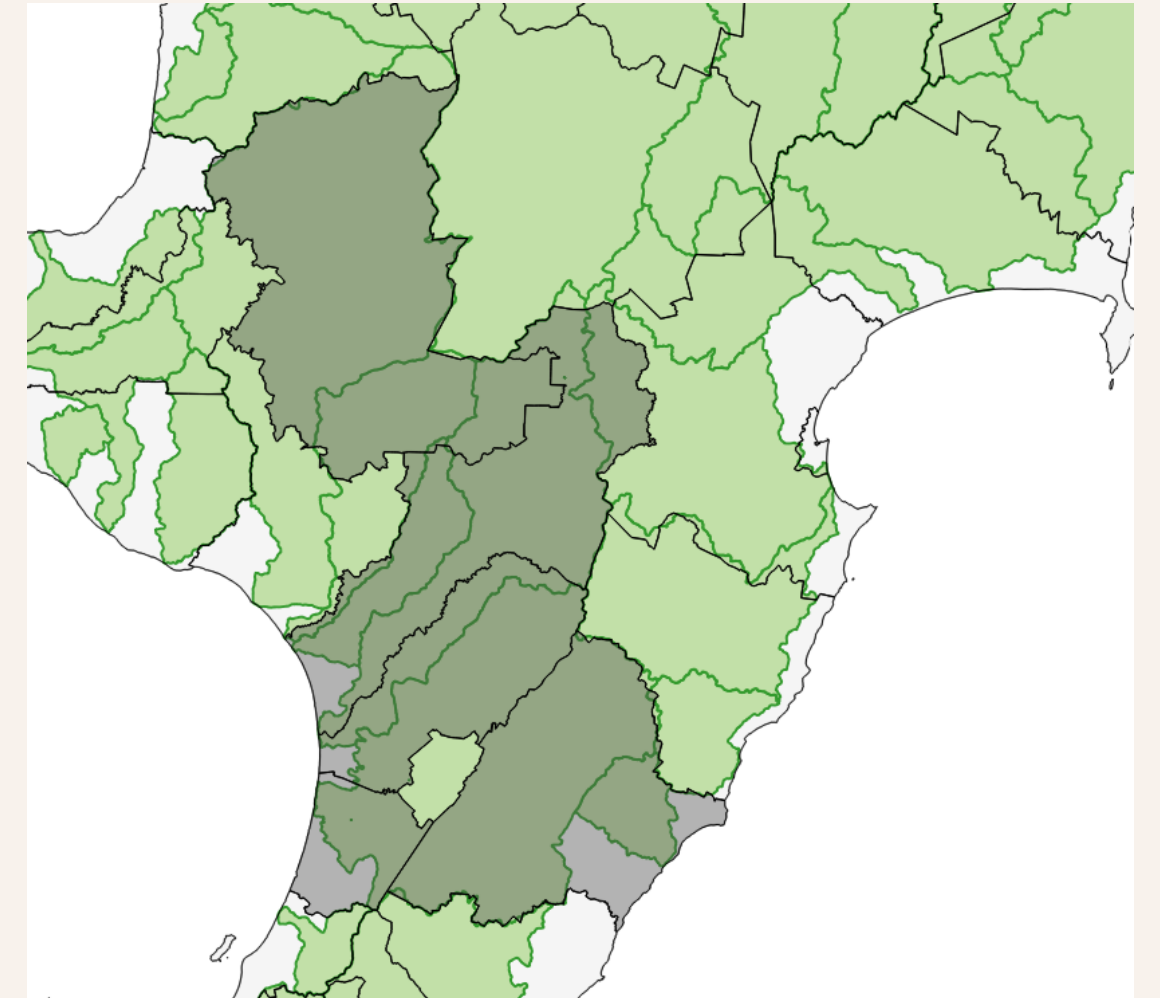
Option 4: Rangitīkei, Manawatū, Ruapehu, Horowhenua, Tararua

Pros

- Captures the majority of the Horizons Region's freshwater systems.
- Provides near-complete management of the Manawatū, Rangitīkei, Turakina and Whangaehu catchments.
- Enables integrated management from headwaters to receiving environments across most major river systems.
- Supports integrated freshwater, biodiversity, climate adaptation and natural hazard management.
- Best reflects ridge-to-sea ecosystem management principles.

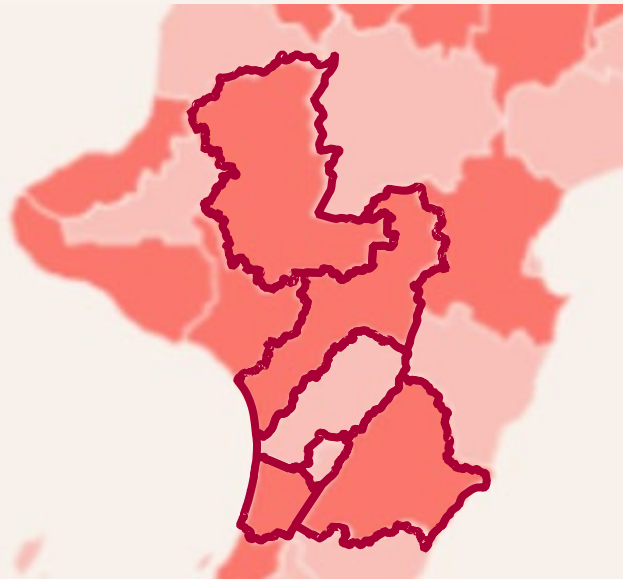
Cons

- Does not fully capture the Whanganui Catchment because lower catchment areas remain within Whanganui District.
- Palmerston North City remains outside the proposed authority and is centrally located within the Manawatū system.
- Larger geographic area may increase governance complexity and organisational scale.

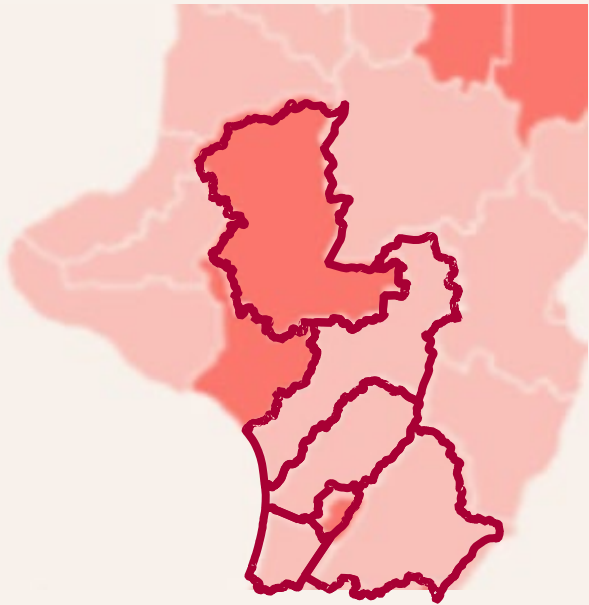


Representation

District	Total Population	Total Members (Current)	Number of (including Māori wards) Wards	Population per Member
Rangitīkei District	16,030	11	5	1,457
Ruapehu District	13,440	9	2	1,493
Manawatu District	33,990	11	3	3,090
Tararua District	18,940	9	3	2,104
Horowhenua District	38,390	12	5	3,199
Total	120,790	52	18	-
Lower Hutt City	114,200	14	6	8,157
Dunedin City	132,800	15	None	8,853
Indicative combined council	120,790	14	TBD	8,628



Community boards



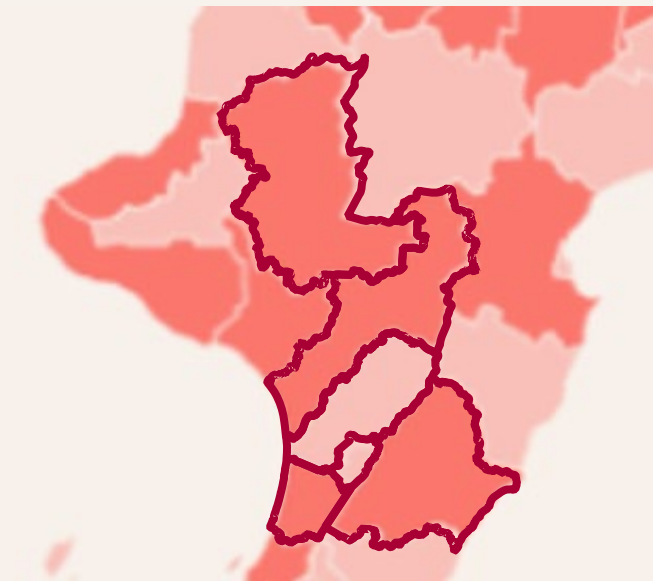
Māori ward
referendum outcome

Representation

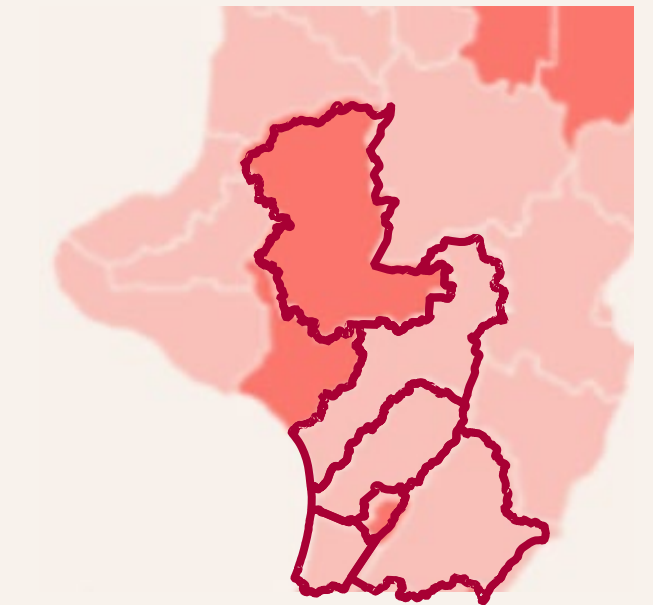
District	Total Population	Members per existing area
Indicative combined council	120,790	14
Rangitīkei District	16,030	2
Ruapehu District	13,440	2
Manawatu District	33,990	4
Tararua District	18,940	2
Horowhenua District	38,390	4

This is based on population only.

Noting that MCERT have said that alternative representation models can be included.



Community boards



Māori ward referendum outcome

Summary of initial assessment

Option 4: RDC + MDC, RuDC, HDC, TDC

Supports the new planning system

Simplifies local governance

Economies of scale

Maintains local voice

Deliverability

Working collaboratively to improve wellbeing*

Facilitating growth*

Connecting to Central North Island*

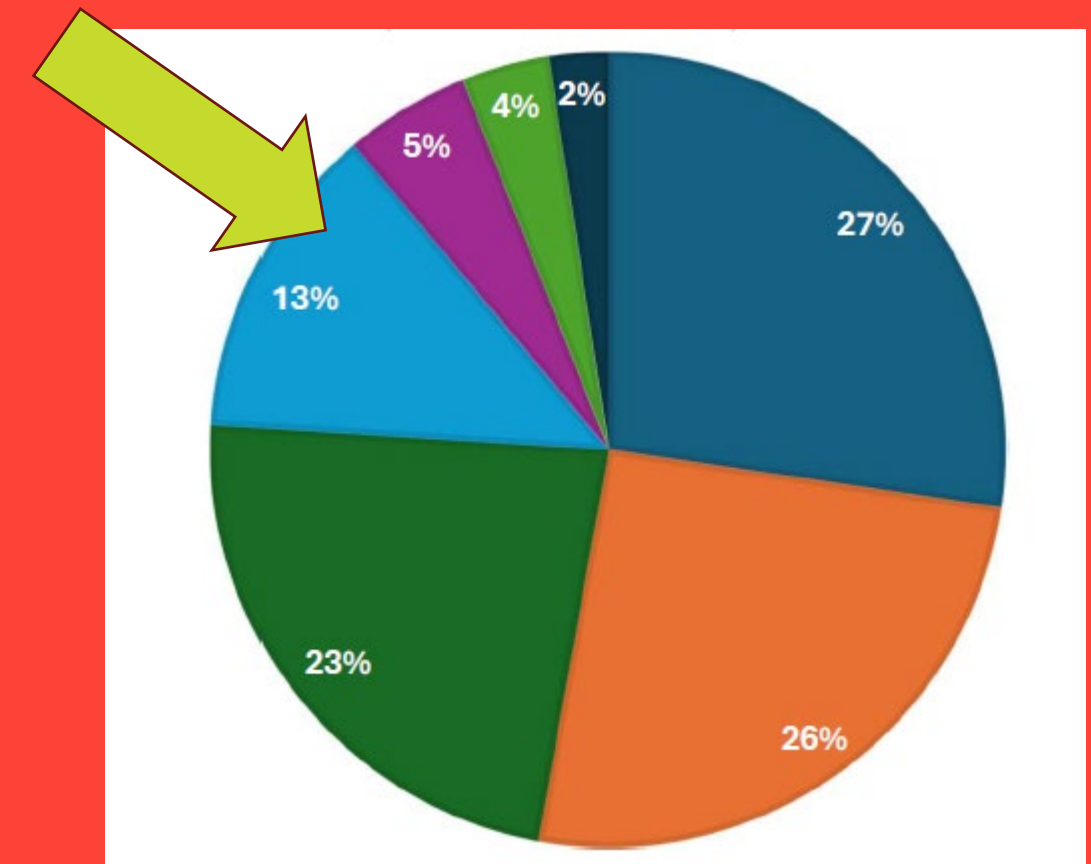
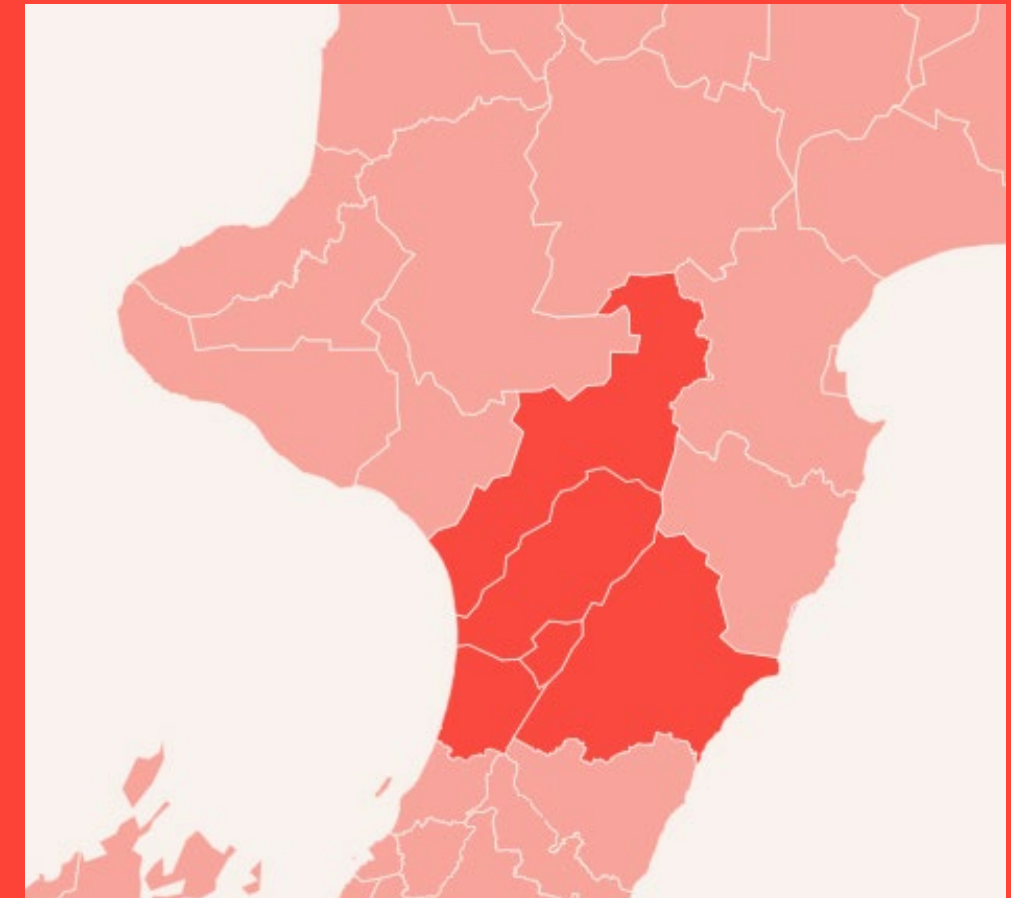
Affordability for community and Council sustainability*



Option 5

Rangitīkei District
Manawatū District
Horowhenua District
Palmerston North City
Tararua District

“Go East”



Communities, connections and economic coherence

Q1. Does the option group together communities with aligned needs and expectations of council?

- More consistent growth profile than other options
- All districts growing: +1.1% (Taranaki) to +10.6% (Palmerston North)
- Shared demographic foundation
 - Working-age population ~61.6% and median age ~40 years → similar service demand profile
 - Reasonably consistent household income (~\$115k average)
 - Supports alignment on core services, infrastructure and long-term planning
- However, clear urban/rural divide in community need
 - Palmerston North = 47% of total population (196,950)
 - Rural districts (Rangitikei, Taranaki, Horowhenua) significantly smaller and more dispersed
 - Could create different expectations around service levels (urban vs rural)

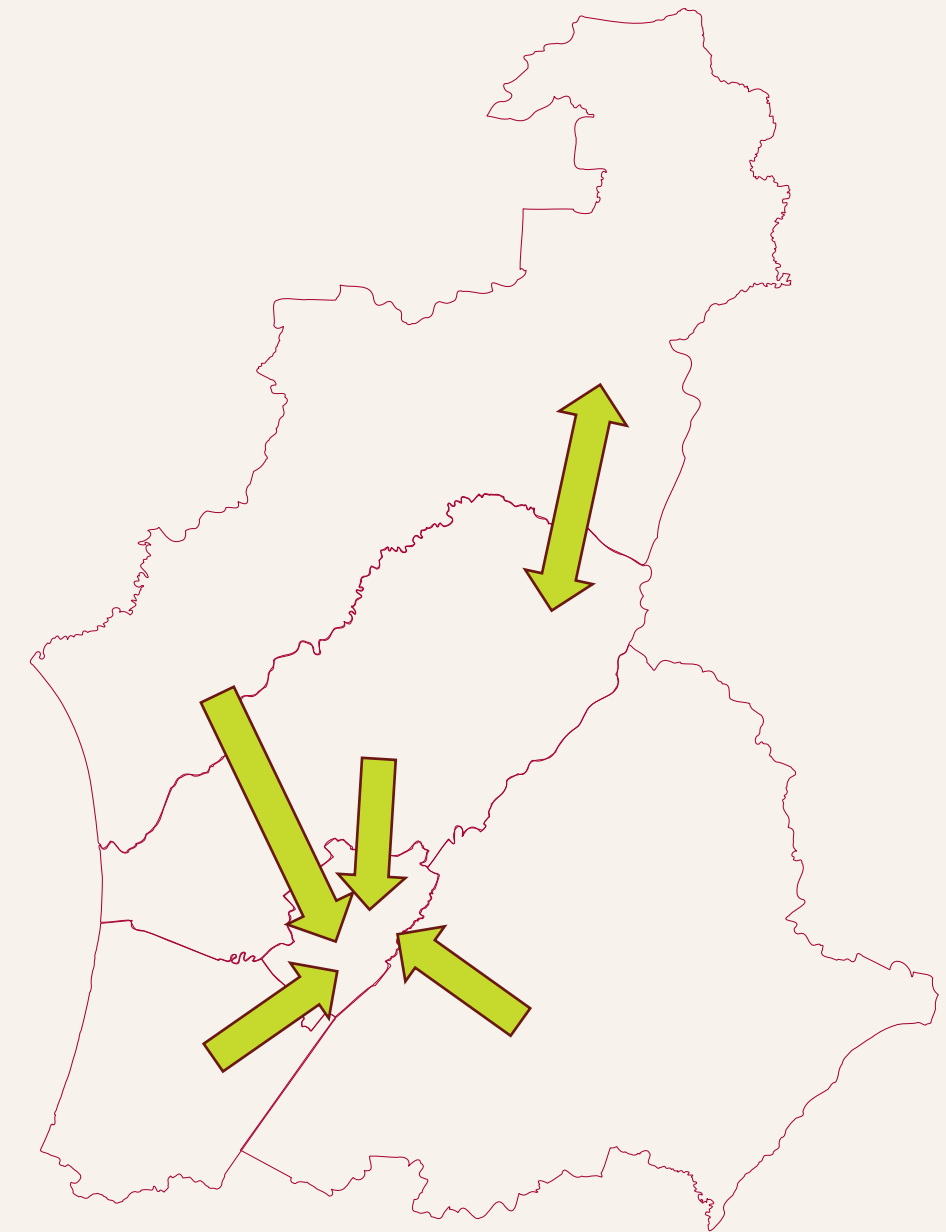
Q2. Will this council make sense economically and functionally?

- Palmerston North could be a hub in hub and spoke model:
 - 47% of total population
 - Hub for health, education, and public administration
 - Employment and services
- Diversified economy combines:
 - Rural agriculture (Rangitikei, Taranaki, Manawatu)
 - Urban services and institutions (Palmerston North)
 - Avg GDP per capita: ~\$54,562
- Strong connectivity and integration
- Integrated transport and economic flows across the region
- Primary risk may be Palmerston North 'dominance'

Journey analysis

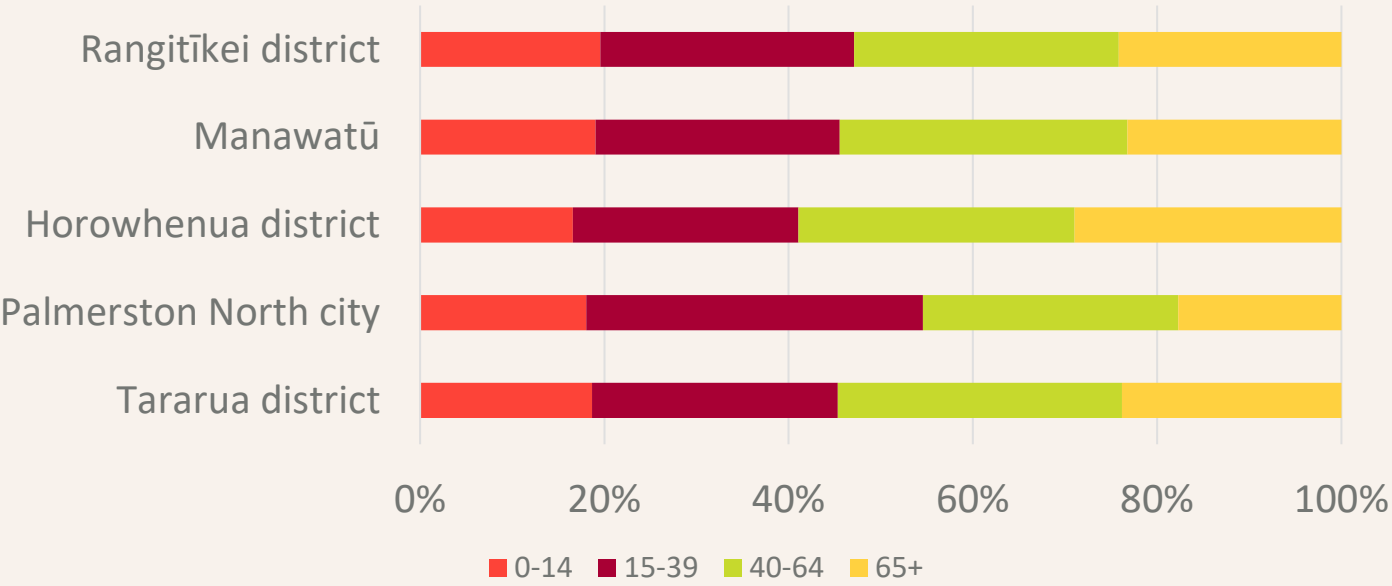
This option brings the largest external destination for multiple districts into the area, converting those flows into internal linkages. Cohesion is strong but centred on Palmerston North, with most connections flowing to one hub rather than between districts.

- Key linkages
 - Rangitikei → Palmerston North ~8%
 - Horowhenua → Palmerston North ~15–25%
 - Tararua → Palmerston North ~10–15%
 - Manawatū ~20–30%
- Smaller links between other districts generally <5–10%

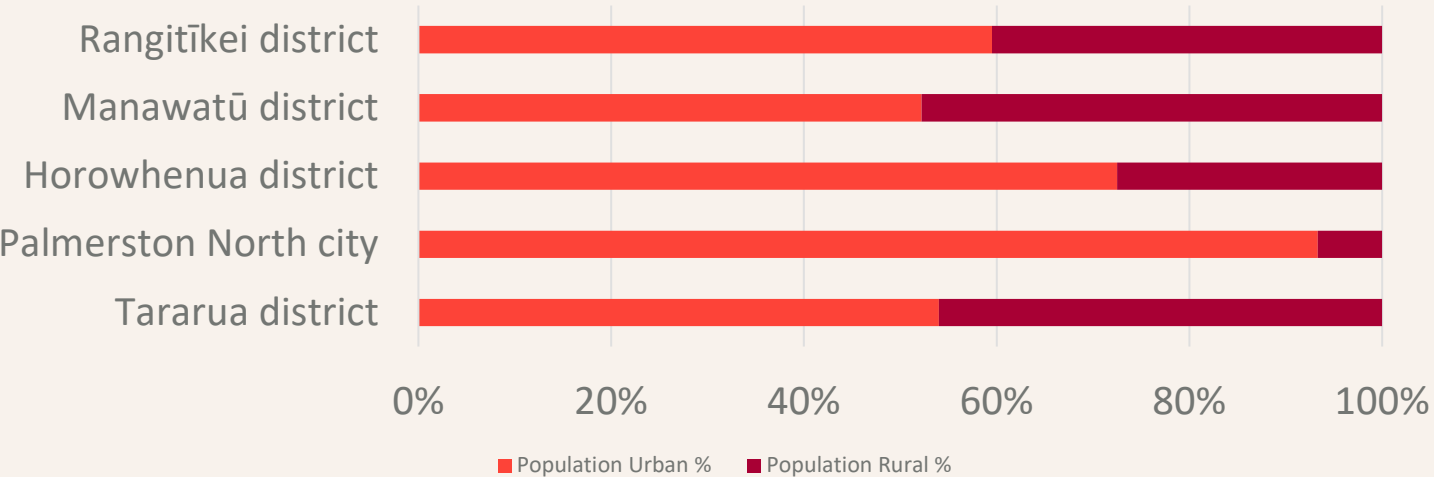


Population Structure: Option 5

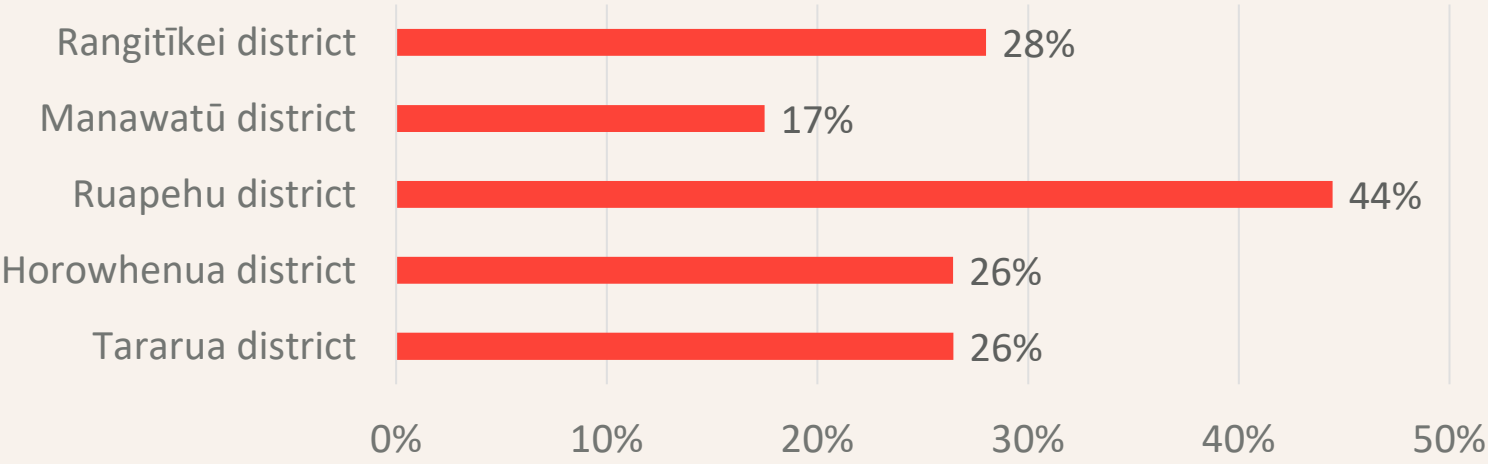
Age structure



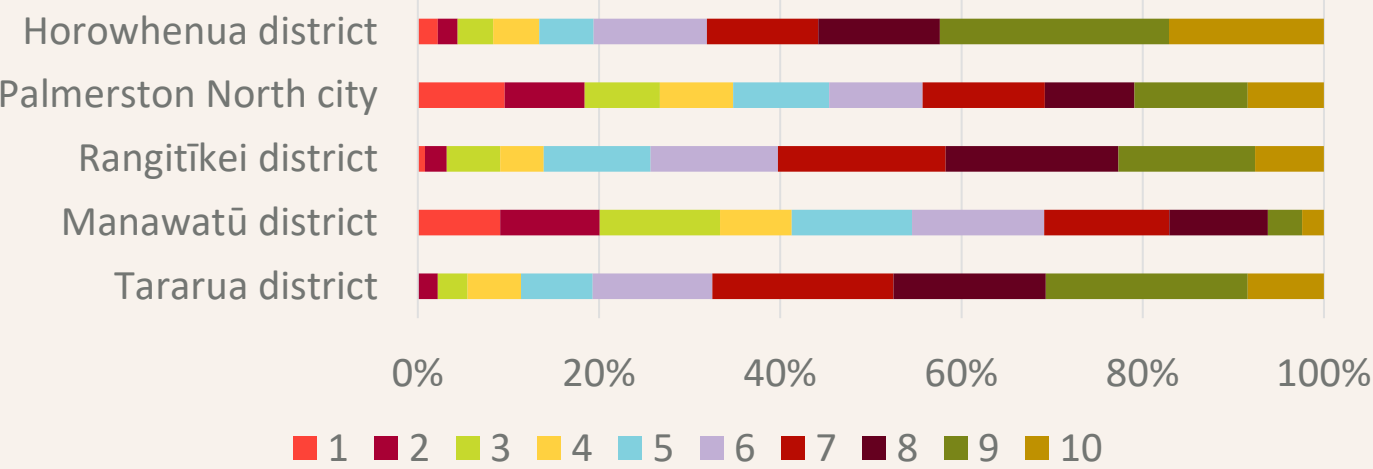
Urban/Rural split (population %)



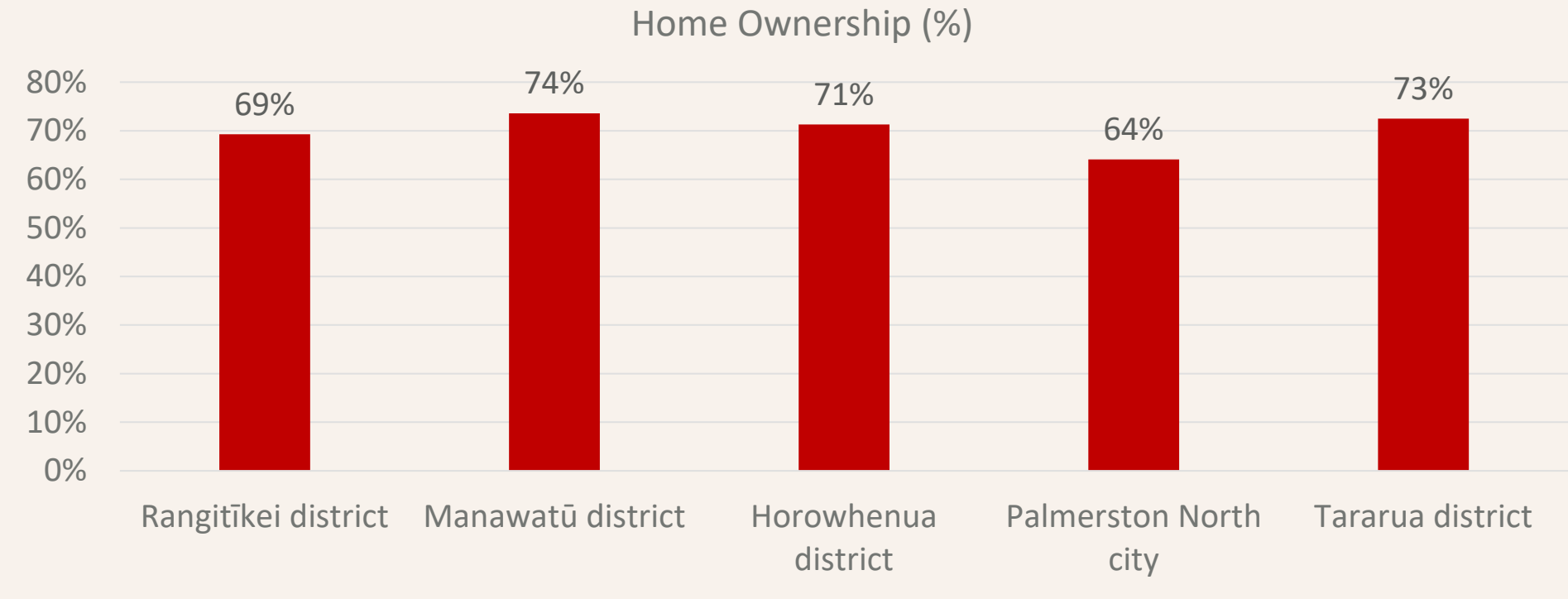
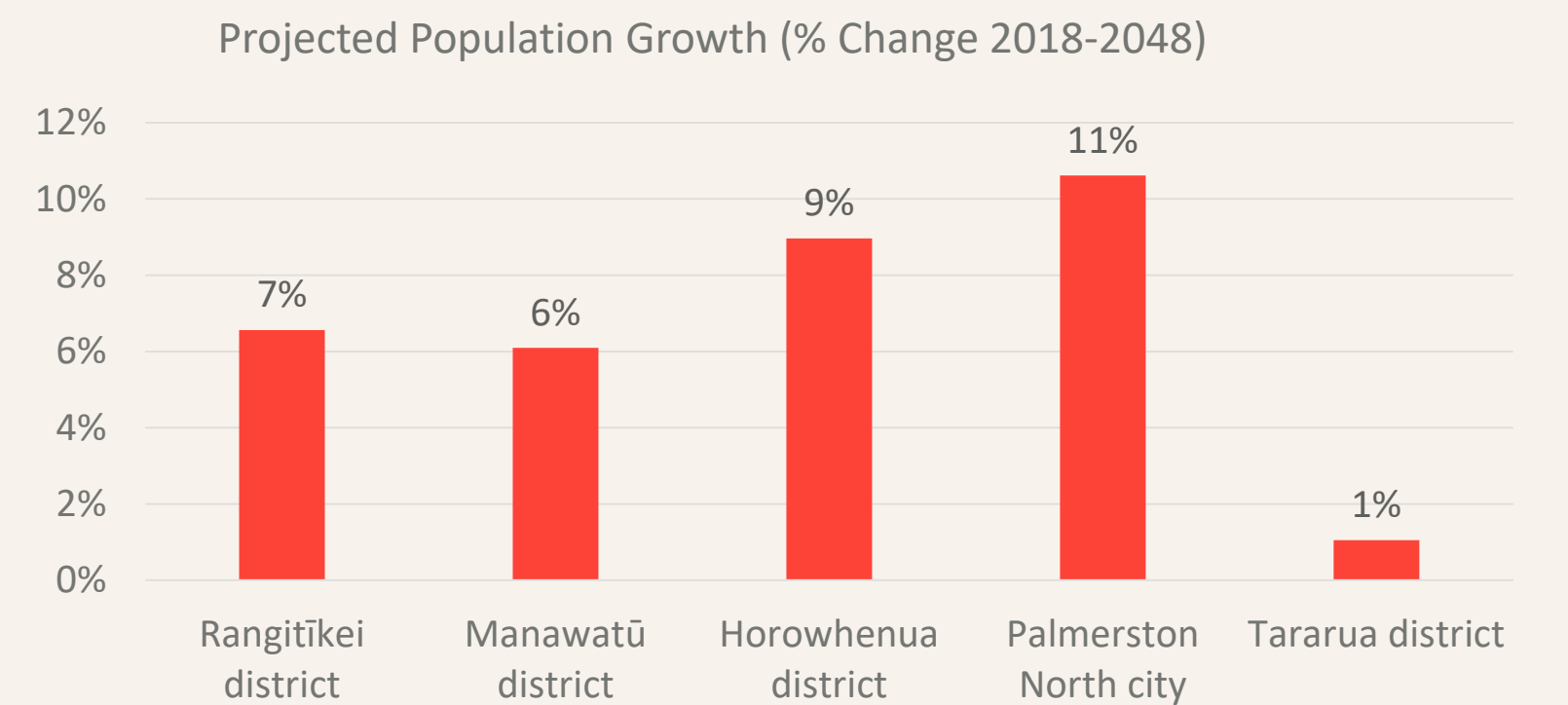
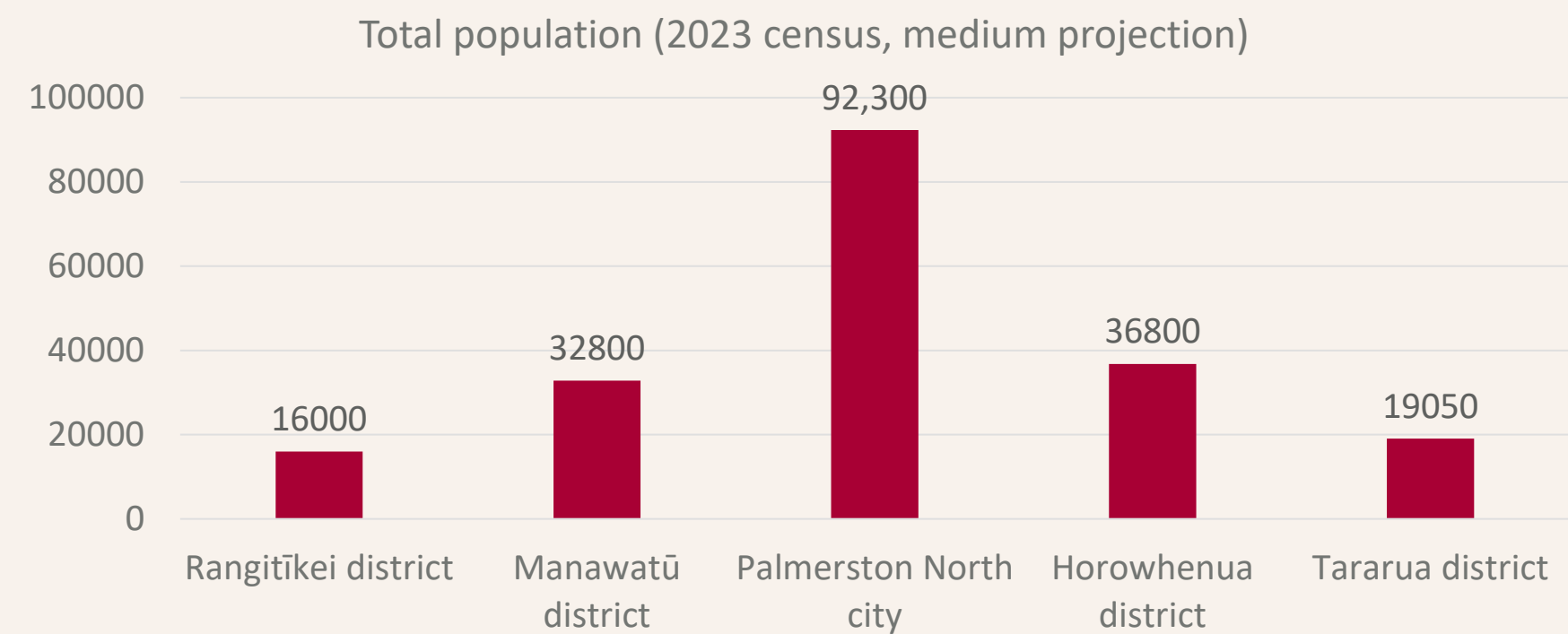
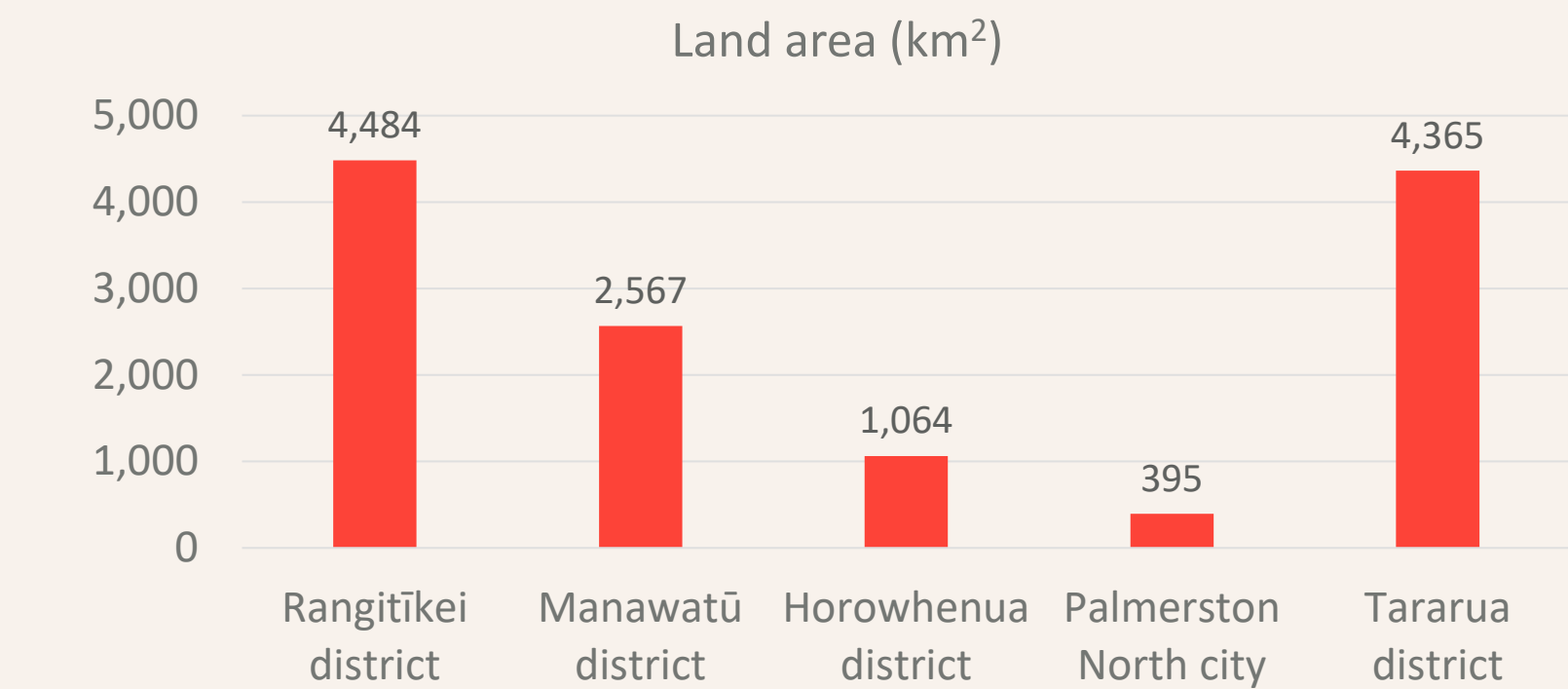
Māori population (%) - 2023 census



Deprivation profile (%)

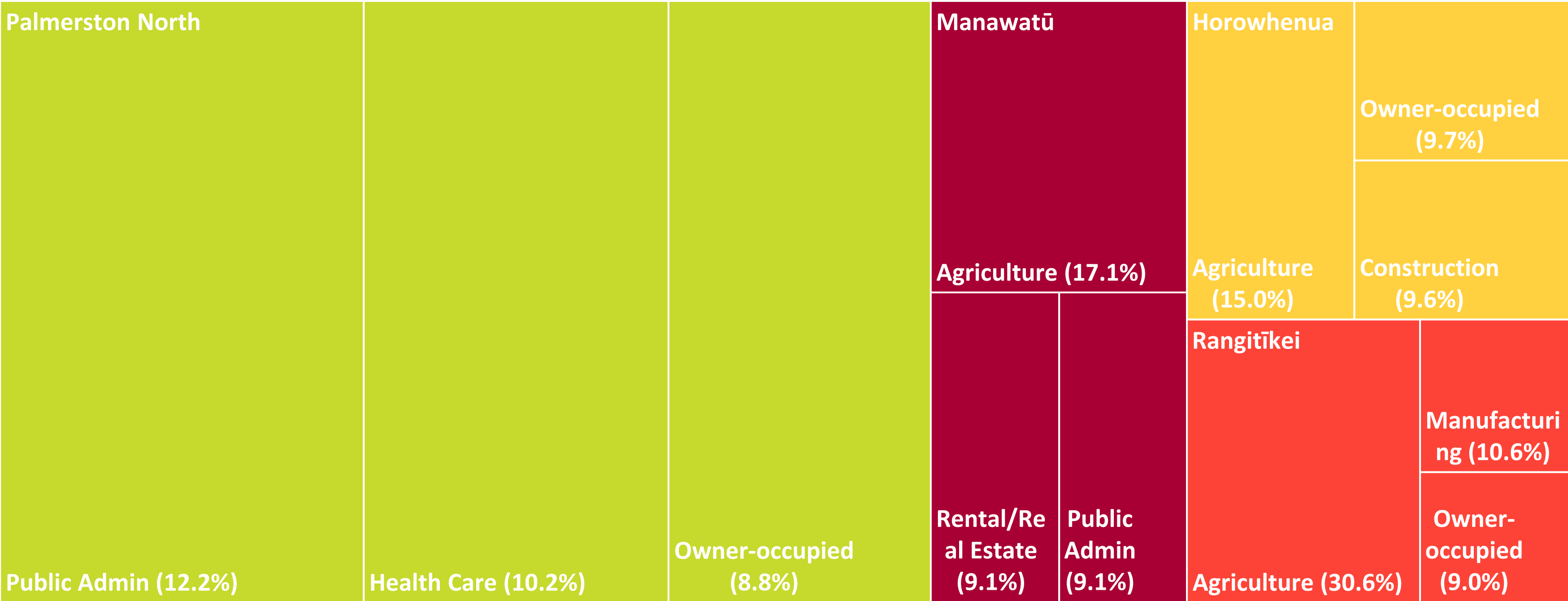


Area profile: Option 5



Top three industries by GDP

Top 3 Industries by GDP



Catchment management

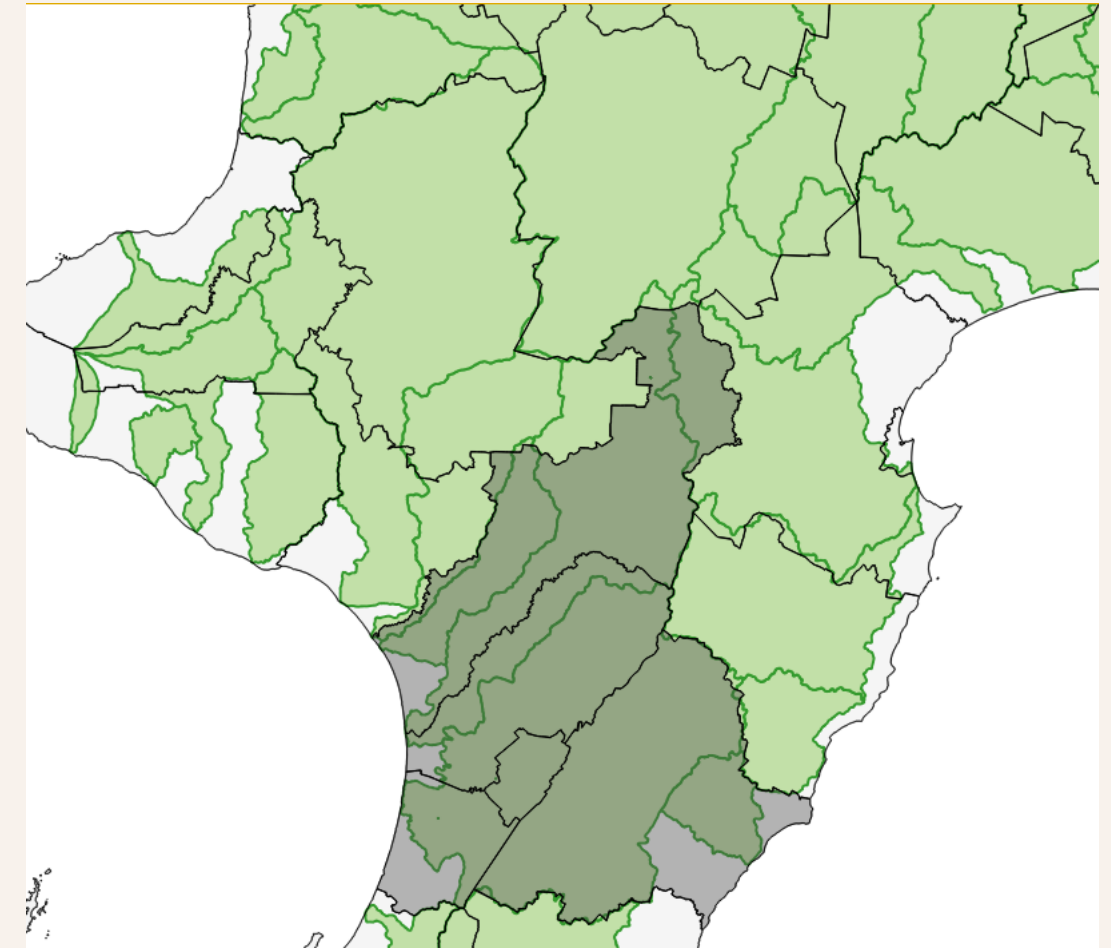
Pros

- Provides strong integration for the Manawatū River system and associated eastern catchments.
- Captures the majority of the southern and eastern Horizons freshwater systems.
- Supports coordinated management of highly productive lowland and hill-country landscapes.

Cons

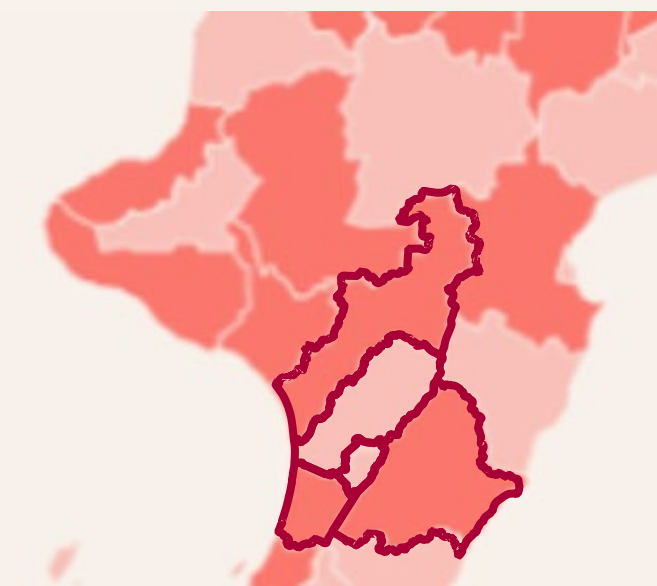
- Excludes Ruapehu District and therefore omits the headwaters of the Rangitīkei, Whangaehu, Turakina and Whanganui systems.
- Creates upstream/downstream management fragmentation.
- Requires cross-boundary arrangements for northern catchments.
- Reduces the ability to manage cumulative effects across complete river systems.

Option 5: Rangitīkei, Manawatū, Horowhenua, Palmerston North, Tararua

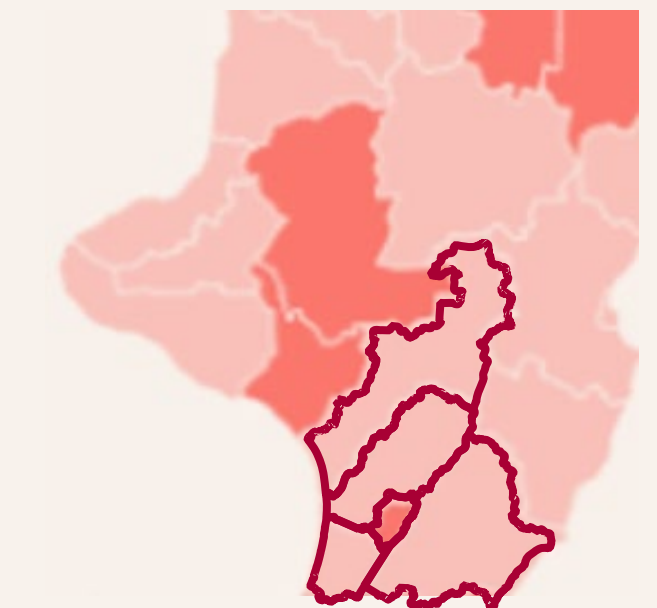


Representation

District	Total Population	Total Members (Current)	Number of (including Māori wards) Wards	Population per Member
Rangitīkei District	16,030	11	5	1,457
Manawatu District	33,990	11	3	3,090
Palmerston North City	90,550	15	2	6,037
Tararua District	18,940	9	3	2,104
Horowhenua District	38,390	12	5	3,199
Total	197,900	58	18	-
Wellington City Council	209,800	15	6	13,987
Hamilton City Council	192,100	14	4	13,721
Indicative combined council	197,900	14	TBD	14,136



Community boards



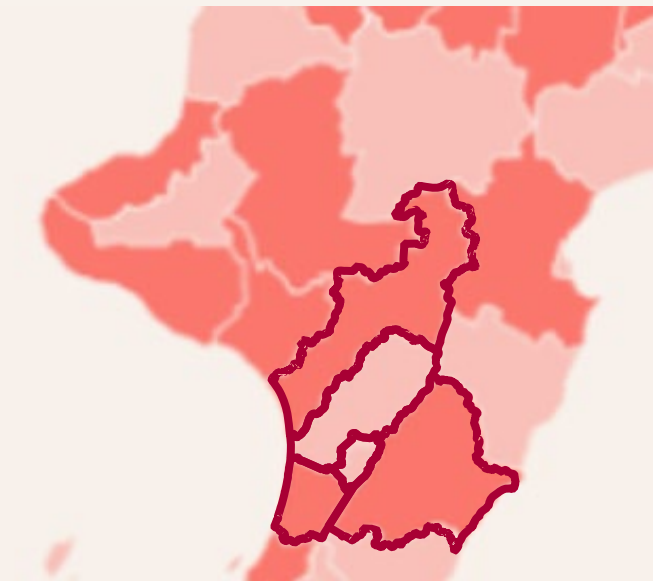
Māori ward referendum outcome

Representation

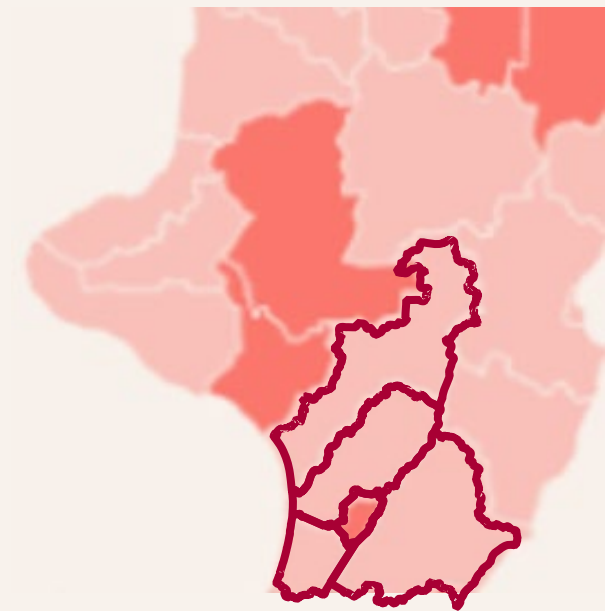
District	Total Population	Members per existing area
Indicative combined council	197,900	14
Rangitīkei District	16,030	1
Manawatu District	33,990	2
Palmerston North City	90,550	6
Tararua District	18,940	1
Horowhenua District	38,390	3

This is based on population only.

Noting that MCERT have said that alternative representation models can be included.



Community boards



Māori ward referendum outcome

Summary of initial assessment

Option 5: RDC+ MDC, PNCC, TDC, HDC

Supports the new planning system

Simplifies local governance

Economies of scale

Maintains local voice

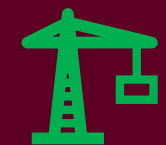
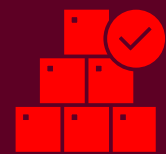
Deliverability

Working collaboratively to improve wellbeing*

Facilitating growth*

Connecting to Central North Island*

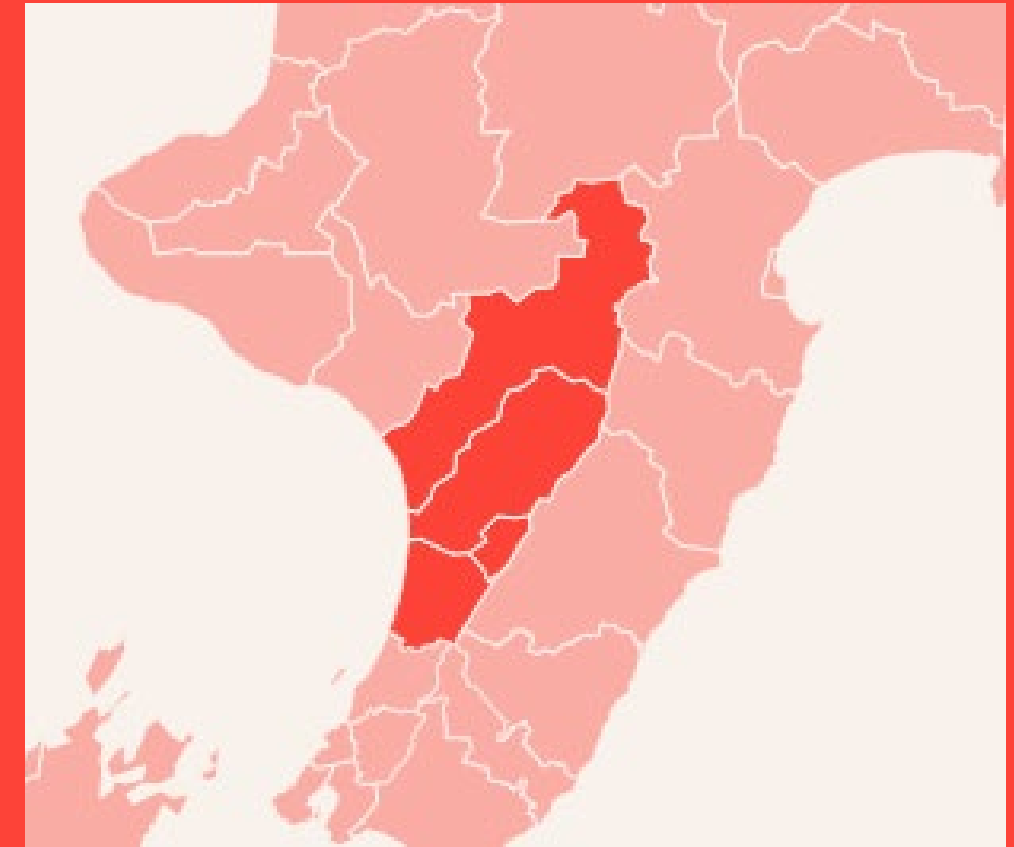
Affordability for community and Council
sustainability*



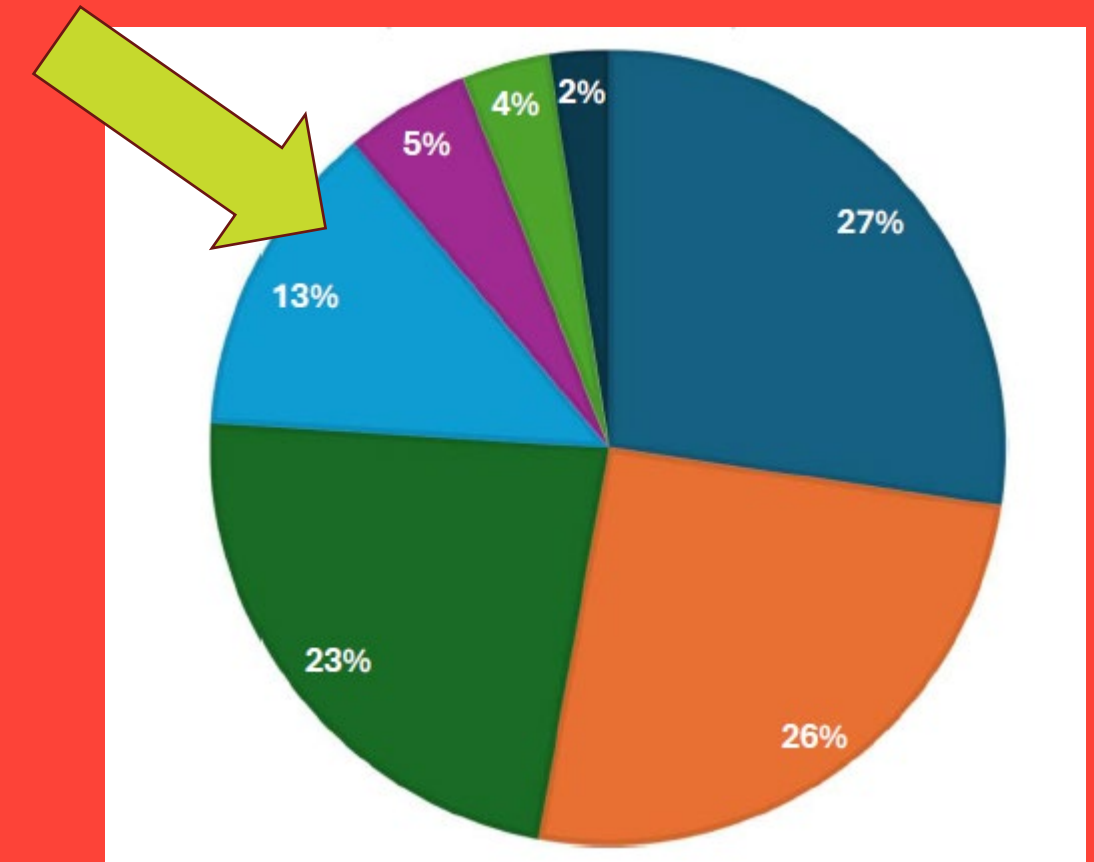
Option 6

Rangitīkei District
Manawatū District
Horowhenua District
Palmerston North City

* Option includes all of Central Districts Water +
Manawatū District



“Go East”



Communities, connections and economic coherence

Q1. Does the option group together communities with aligned needs and expectations of council?

- The option broadly aligns major employment, education, health and service catchments within a single area.
- Journey and service patterns indicate a strong functional region centred on Palmerston North.
- Demographic profiles are broadly comparable.
- Moderate Māori population across the footprint (17-28%), suggesting less variation than other options, but potentially still differing expectations around representation and iwi partnership.
- Household incomes are fairly consistent (\$100k-\$125k) supporting alignment around affordability and service expectations.
- Growth pressures are generally aligned and positive across all areas, creating shared challenges around infrastructure, housing and transport provision.
- However, there remains a clear urban-rural divide between Palmerston North (90+% urban) and the surrounding districts, which may influence priorities and investment expectations.

Q2. Will this council make sense economically and functionally?

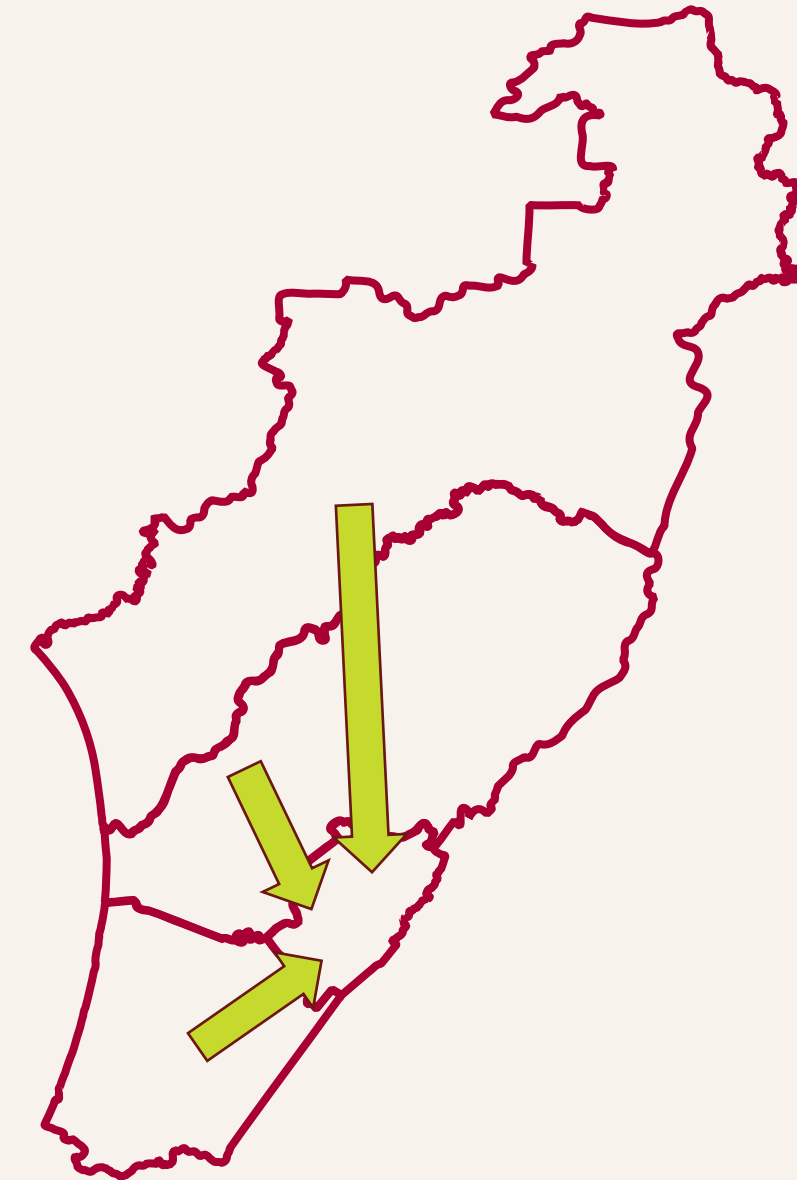
- Strong functional geography centred on Palmerston North as the region's dominant employment, education and service hub.
- The proposed area largely captures the region's functional economic geography, with the overwhelming majority of daily work and education journeys occurring within its boundaries.
- Combines complementary economies, with Palmerston North providing professional, education and public sector activity alongside surrounding agricultural economies.
- Scale is sufficient to support specialist capability.
- Population balance creates some risk of Palmerston North dominating decision-making, representing around half of the combined population.

Journey analysis

The proposed area is highly self-contained, with approximately 99% of work and education journeys remaining within Rangitīkei, Manawatū, Horowhenua and Palmerston North. Only around 1% travel outside the area, primarily to Whanganui and Ruapehu.

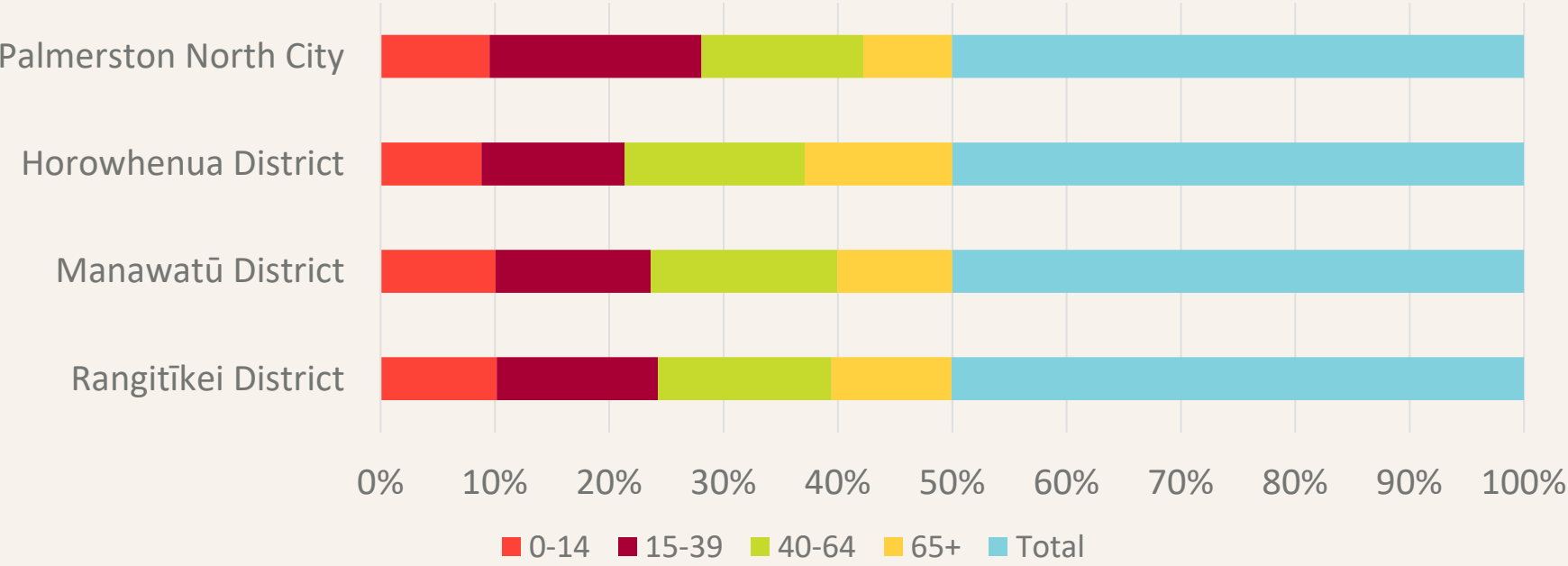
Key linkages

- Strong internal connections to Palmerston North from surrounding districts:
 - Manawatū ~20–30%
 - Horowhenua ~10–20%
 - Rangitīkei ~5–10%
- Very limited material journey flows outside the option (<5% combined)

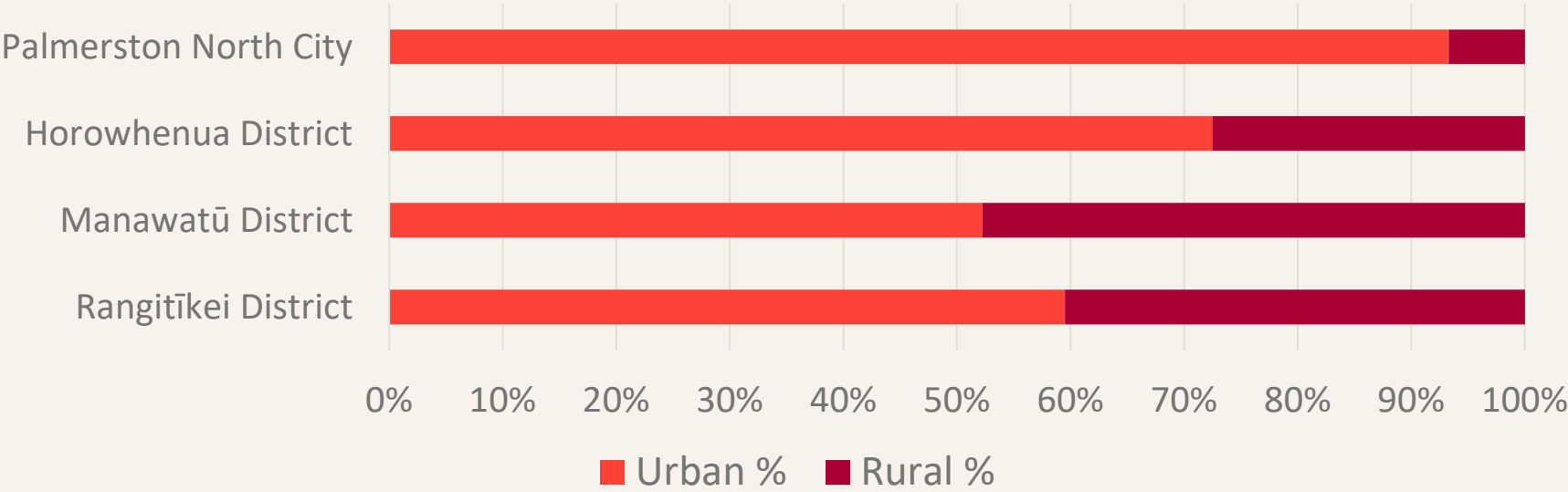


Population Structure: Option 6

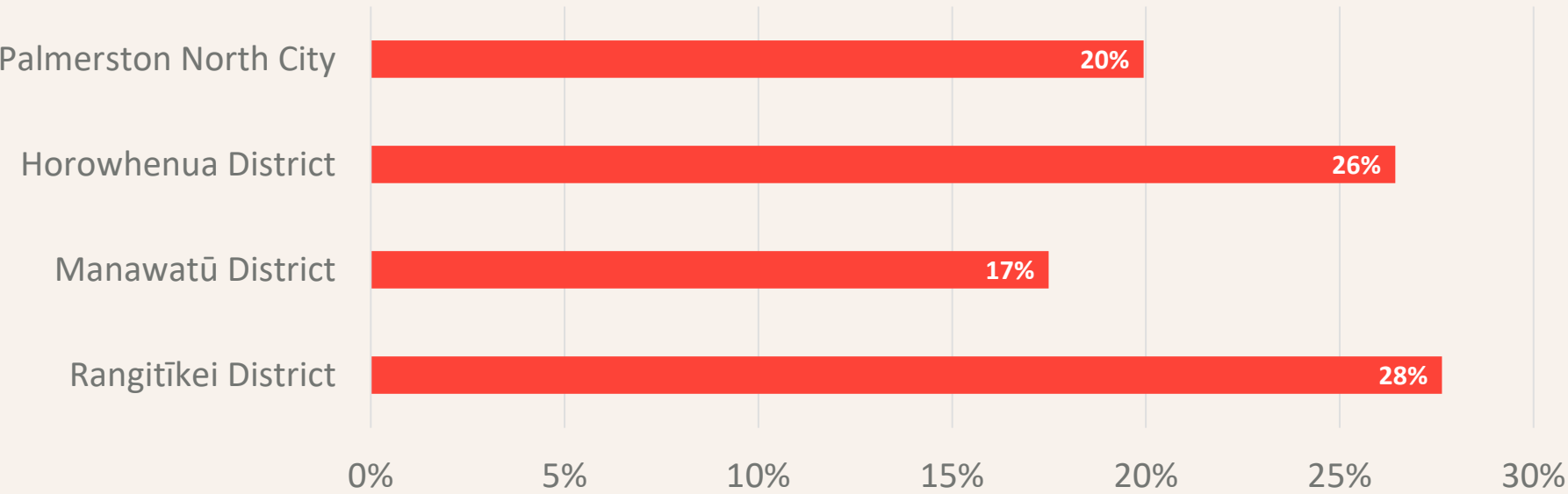
Age structure



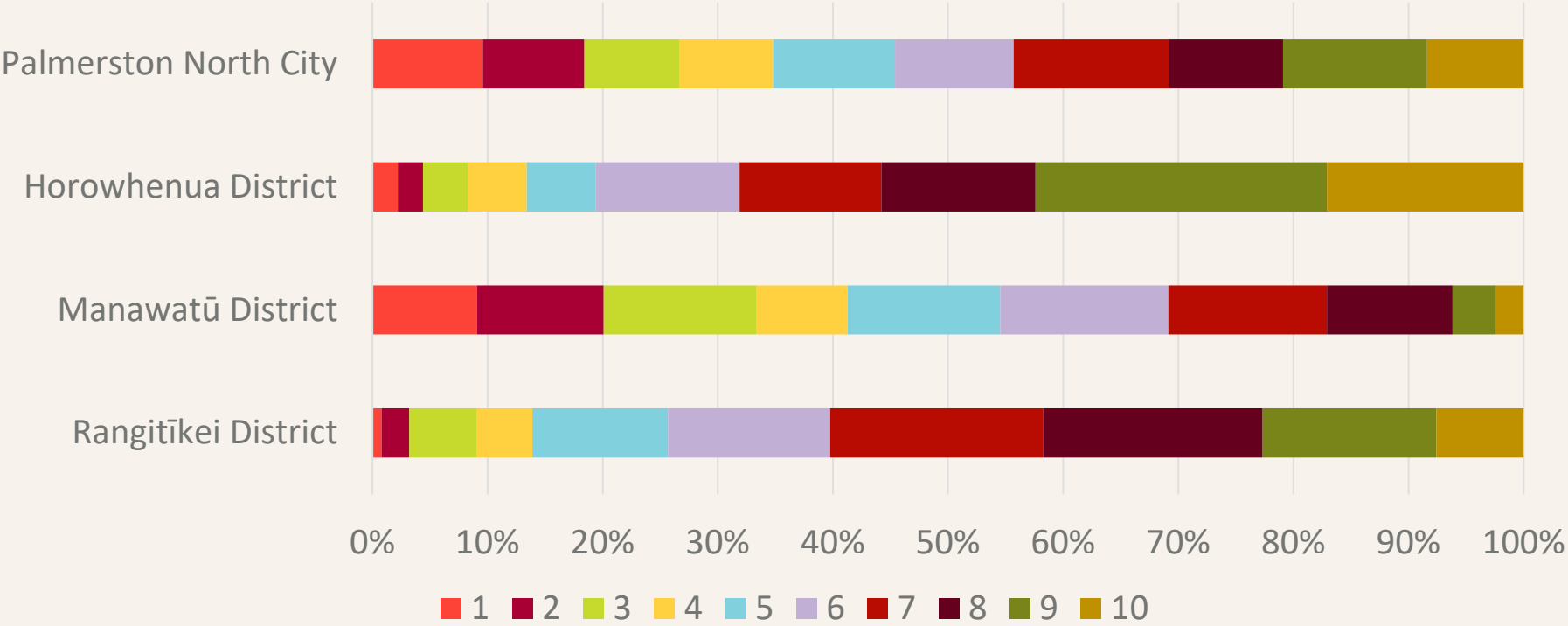
Urban/Rural Split (population %)



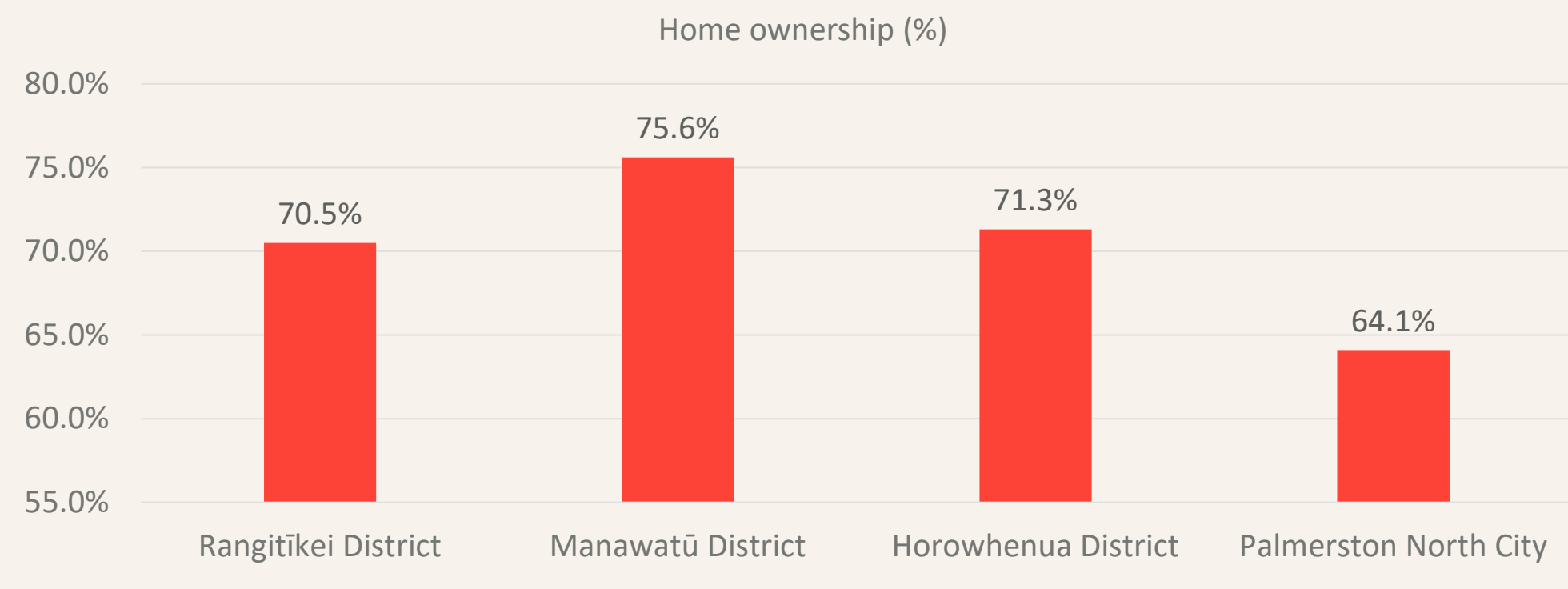
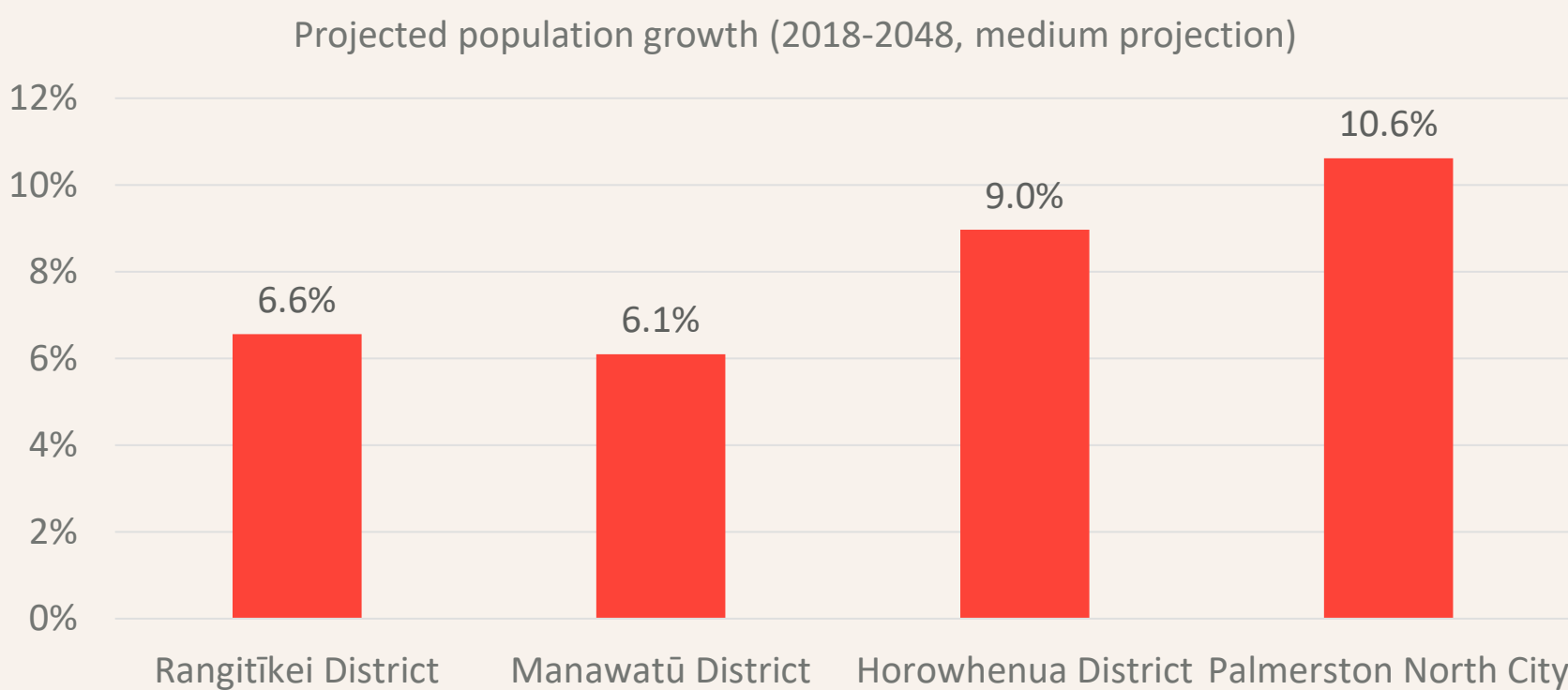
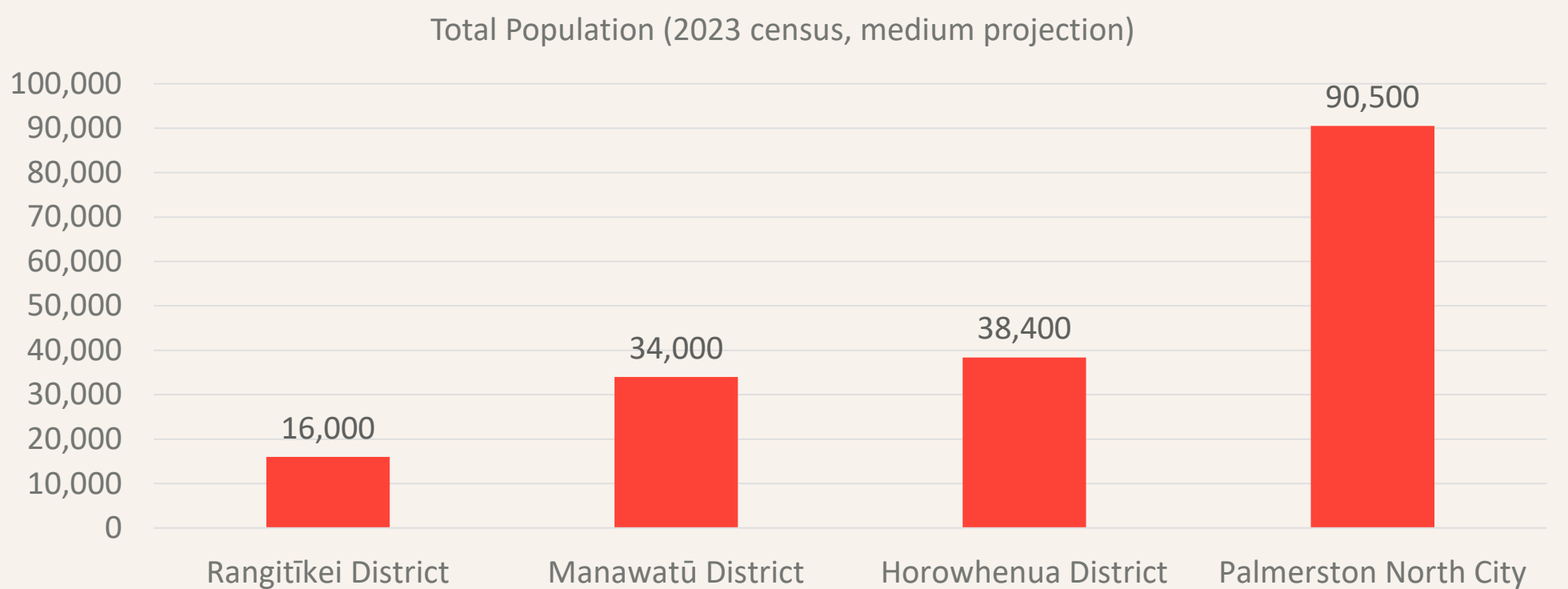
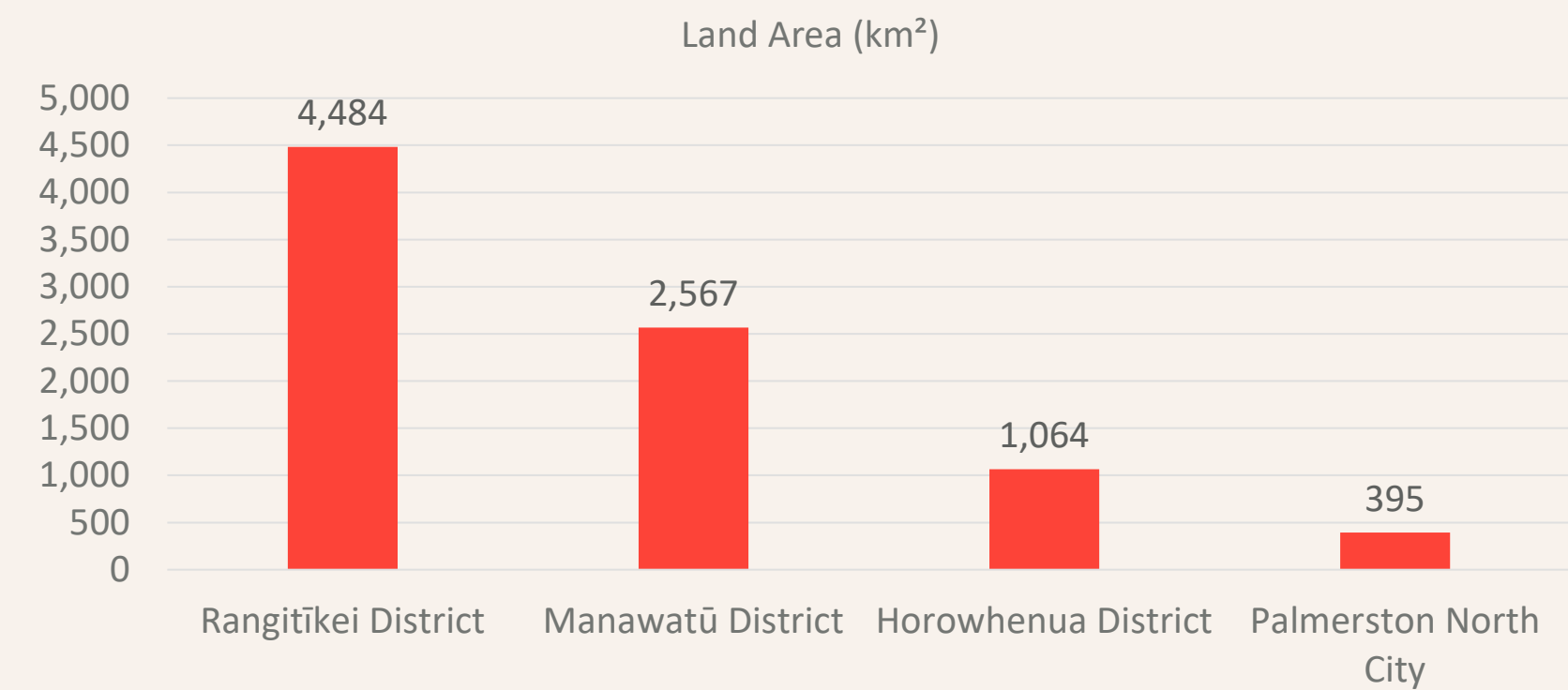
Māori Population (%) - 2023 census



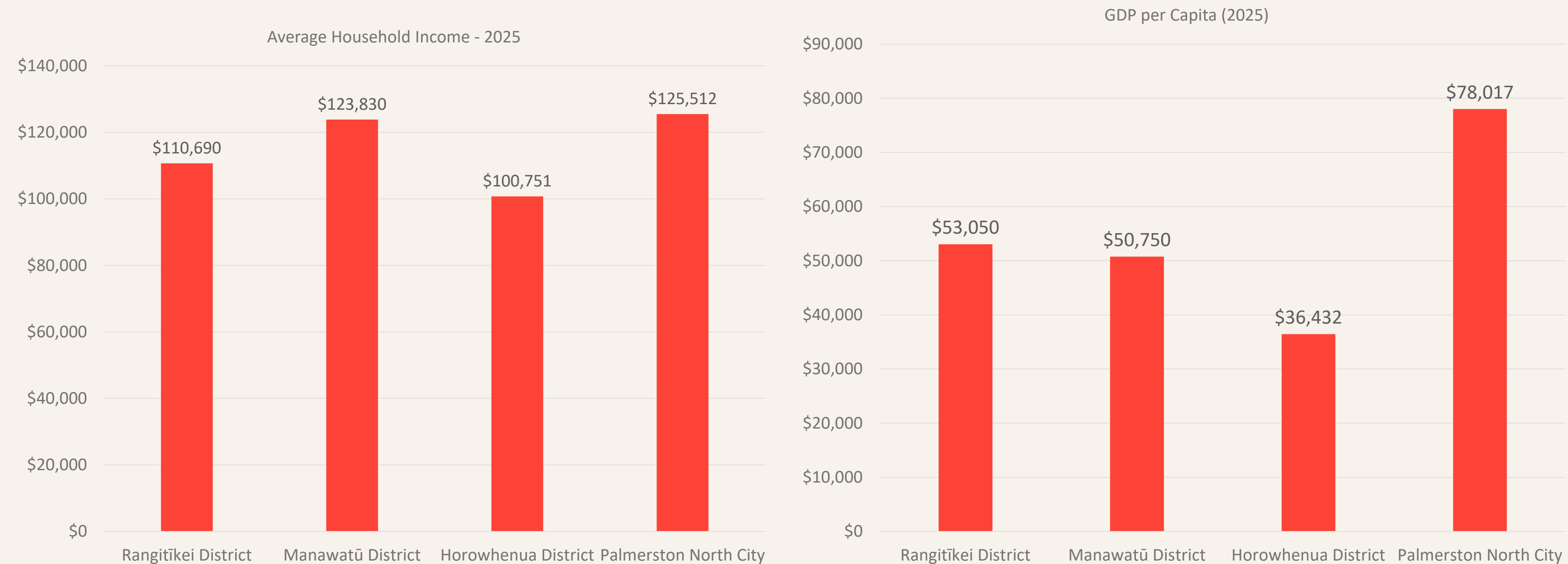
Deprivation profile



Area profile: Option 6

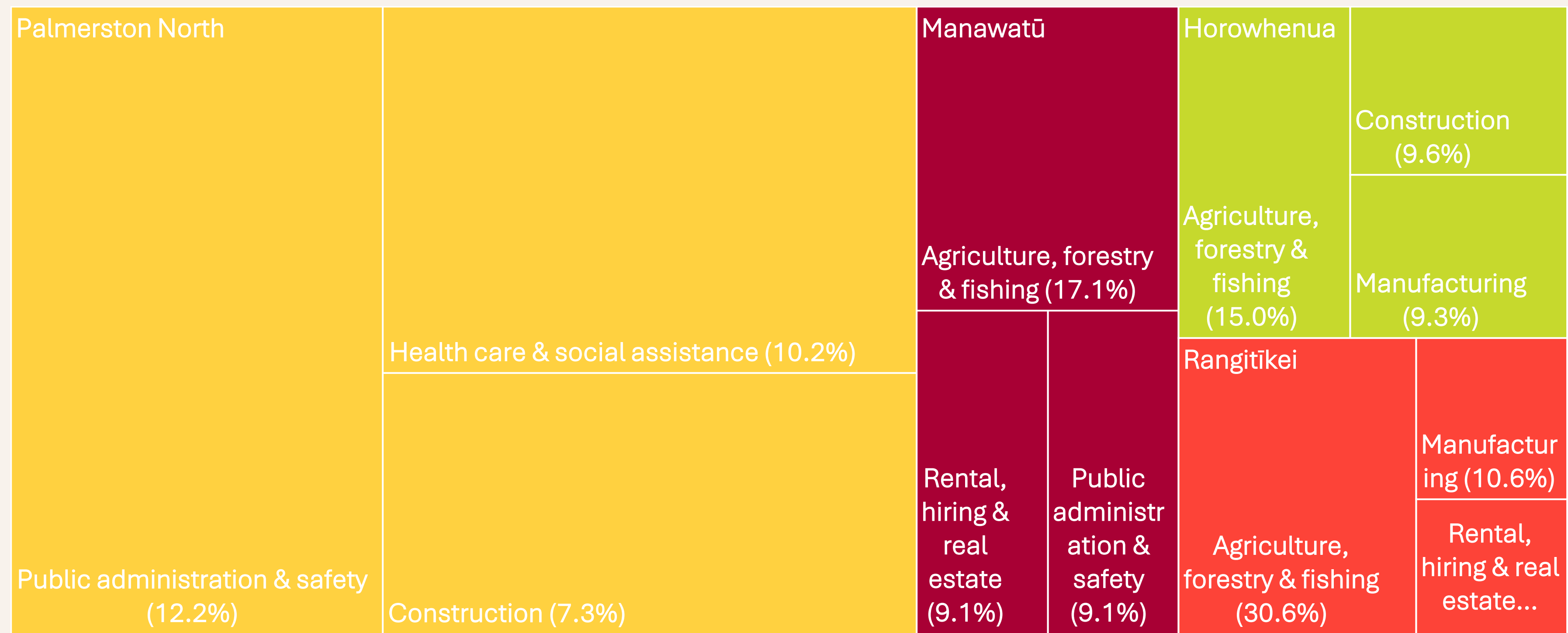


Business and Income: Option 6



Top three industries by GDP

Top 3 Industries by GDP



Catchment management

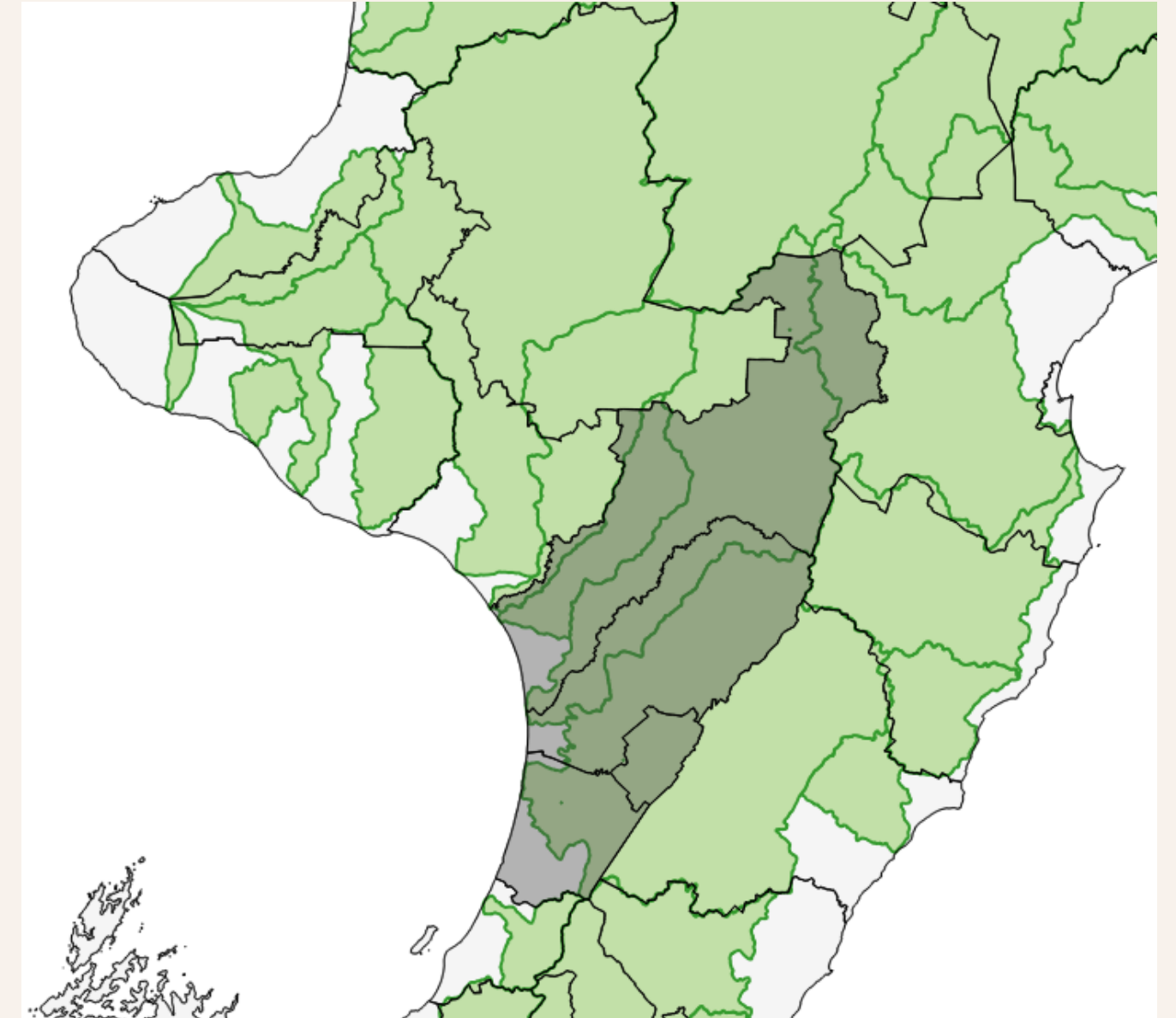
Option 6: Rangitīkei, Manawatū, Horowhenua, Palmerston North

Pros

- Provides strong integration across much of the middle and lower Manawatū catchment, including major urban and growth areas.
- Aligns freshwater management with key population centres, stormwater networks and wastewater infrastructure.
- Captures important floodplain, coastal and receiving environments where cumulative effects are often most evident.
- Supports integrated management of urban growth, land use and freshwater outcomes.
- Reduces fragmentation across several lower catchment and coastal water management areas.

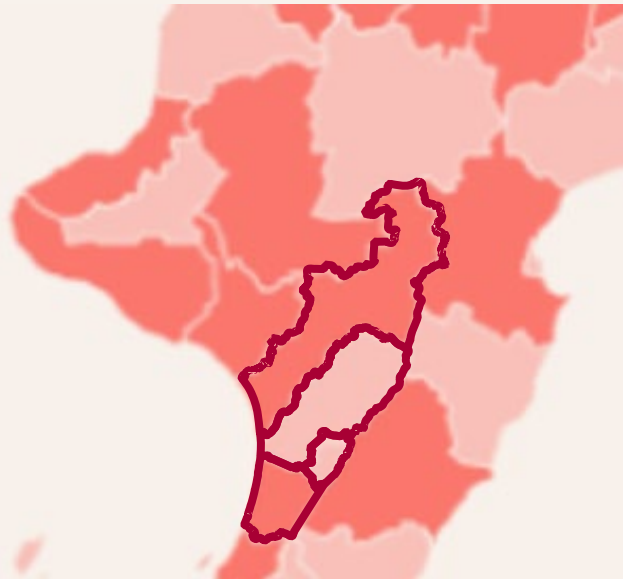
Cons

- Excludes Ruapehu District and therefore omits the headwaters of the Rangitīkei, Whangaehu, Turakina and Whanganui systems.
- Major sources of flooding, erosion and sediment generation lie outside the proposed authority boundary.
- Ongoing cross-boundary arrangements would be required to address catchment-wide issues towards Ruapehu and Tararua.
- Provides limited ability to manage some river systems from source to sea.

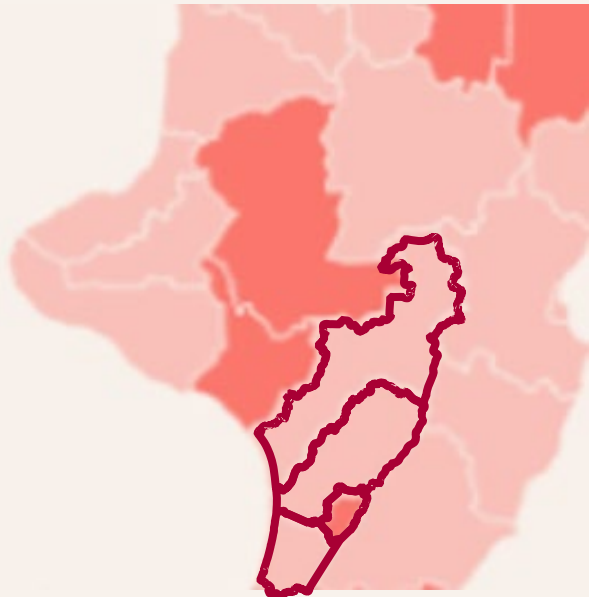


Representation

District	Total Population	Total Members (Current)	Number of (including Māori wards) Wards	Population per Member
Rangitīkei District	16,030	11	5	1,457
Manawatu District	33,990	11	3	3,090
Palmerston North City	90,550	15	2	6,037
Horowhenua District	38,390	12	5	3,199
Total	178,960	49	15	-
Hamilton City Council	192,100	14	4	13,721
Dunedin City	132,800	15	None	8,853
Indicative combined council	178,960	15	TBD	11,931



Community boards



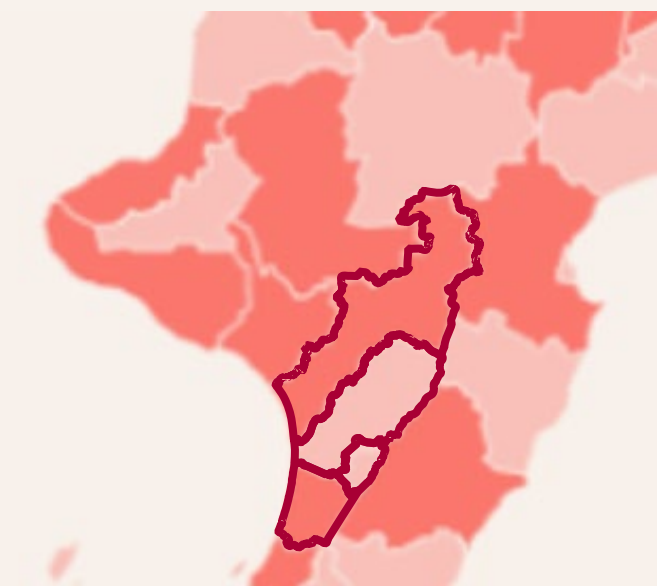
Māori ward
referendum outcome

Representation

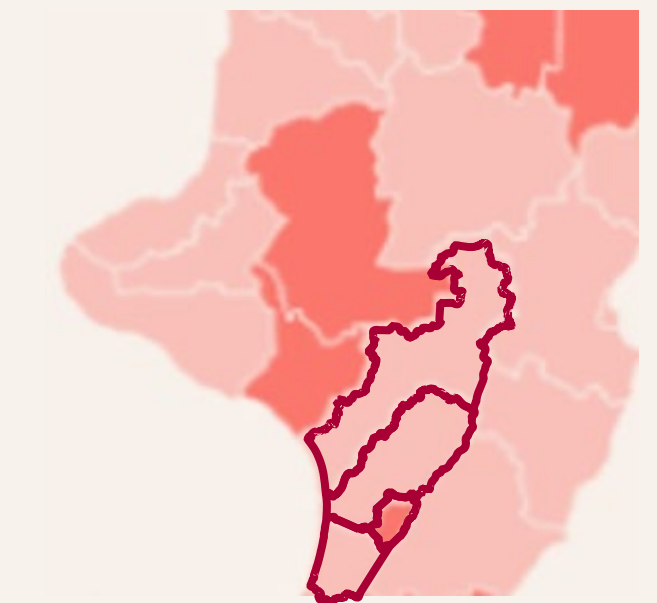
District	Total Population	Members per existing area
Indicative combined council	178,960	15
Rangitīkei District	16,030	1
Manawatu District	33,990	3
Palmerston North City	90,550	8
Horowhenua District	38,390	3

This is based on population only.

Noting that MCERT have said that alternative representation models can be included.



Community boards



Māori ward referendum outcome

Summary of initial assessment

Option 6: RDC+ MDC, HDC, PNCC

Supports the new planning system

Simplifies local governance

Economies of scale

Maintains local voice

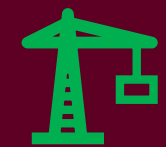
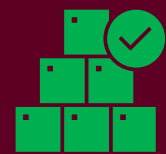
Deliverability

Working collaboratively to improve wellbeing*

Facilitating growth*

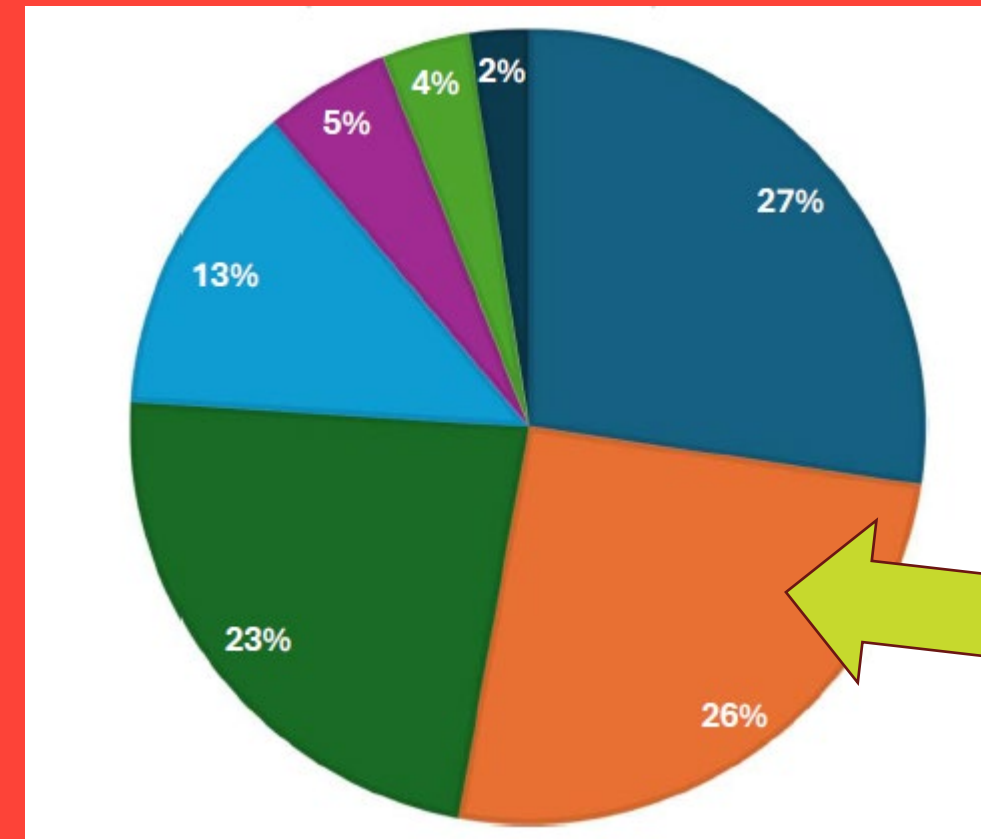
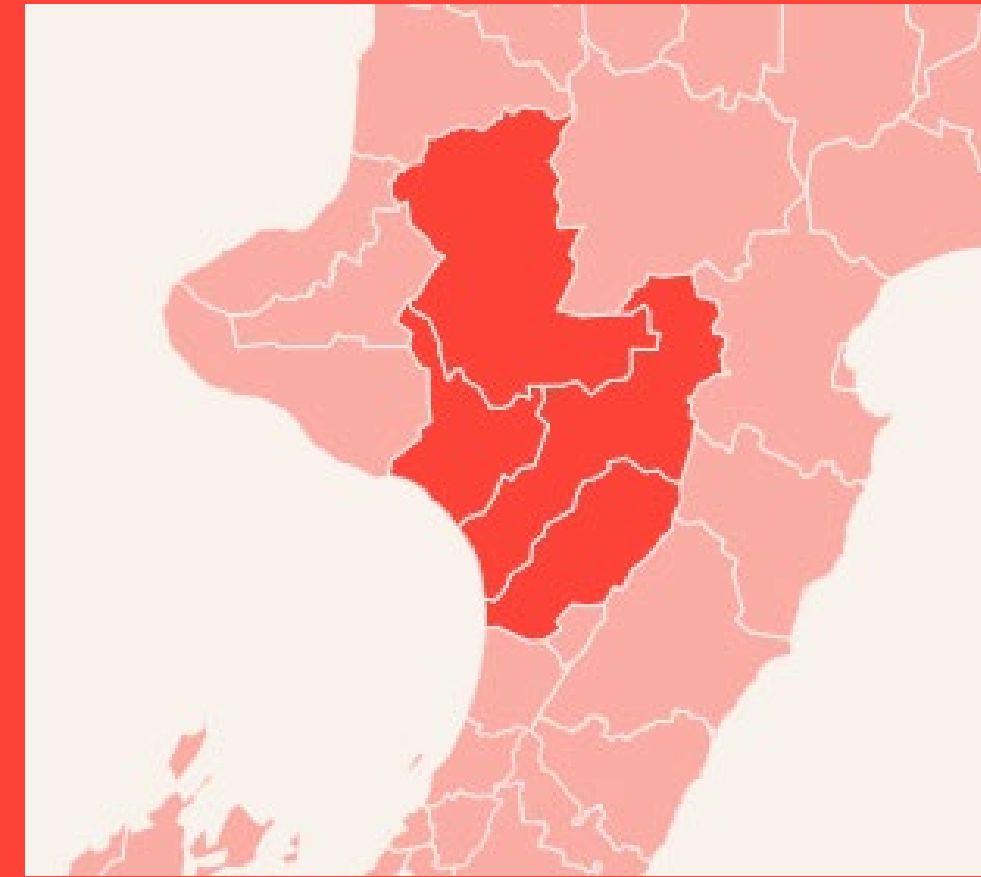
Connecting to Central North Island*

Affordability for community and Council sustainability*



Option 7

Rangitīkei District
Manawatū District
Ruapehu District
Whanganui District



Communities, connections and economic coherence

Q1. Does the option group together communities with aligned needs and expectations of council?

- Shared rural character across much of the footprint, with agriculture remaining an important economic contributor across all districts.
- Similar age profiles suggest broadly comparable long-term service demand and infrastructure needs.
- Significant variation in Māori population share, ranging from around 17% in Manawatū to 44% in Ruapehu, potentially creating different expectations around representation and partnership.
- Notable differences in deprivation, income and growth trends may lead to differing priorities around affordability, investment and levels of service.
- Whanganui introduces a more urban service centre, but no single community dominates to the same extent as Palmerston North in eastern-focused options.

Q2. Will this council make sense economically and functionally?

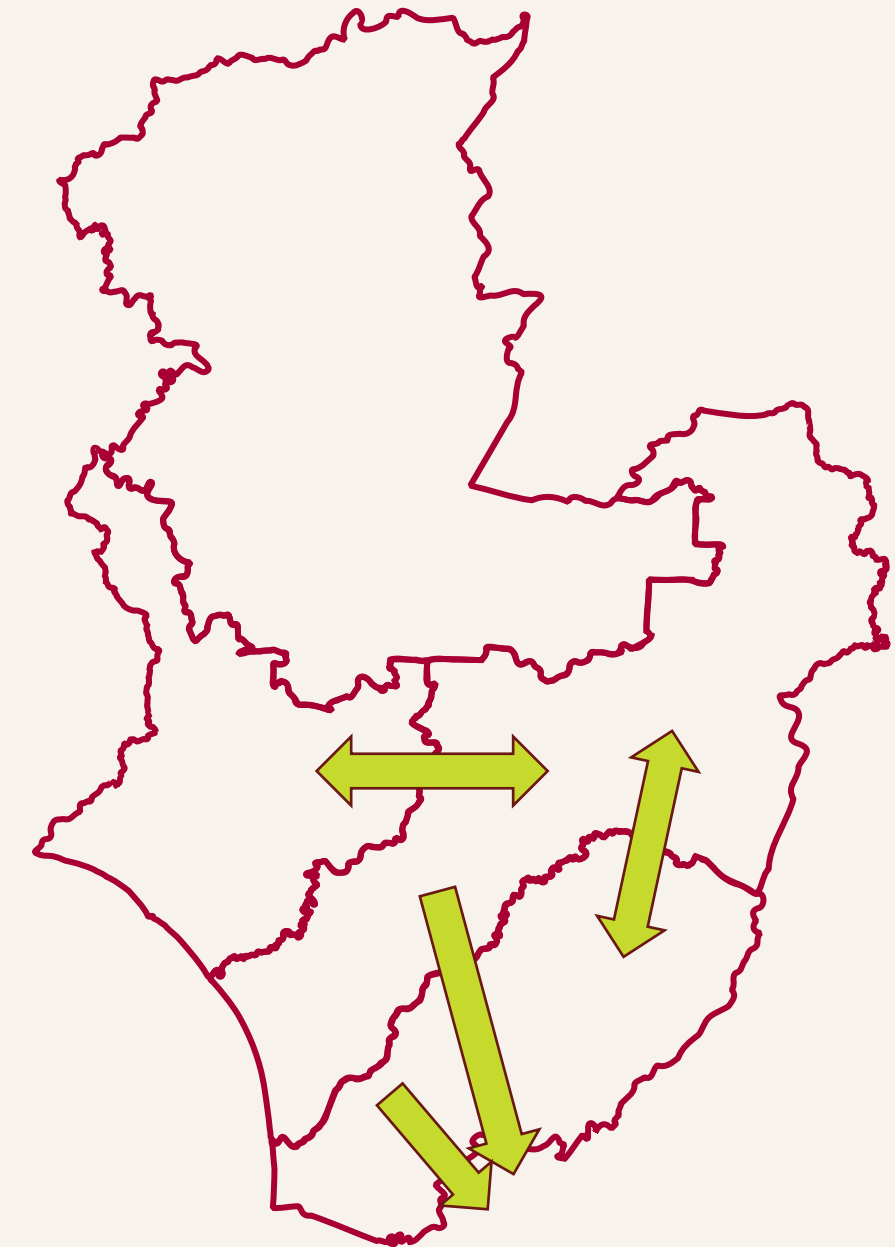
- Rangitīkei plays a bridging role between these different parts of the region, with connections extending in multiple directions.
- Agriculture, manufacturing and processing activities complement each other economically.
- Multiple service centres (Whanganui, Feilding, Taihape) reduce reliance on a single dominant hub.
- Journey patterns suggest the option is better described as several connected sub-regions than a single integrated labour market.
- Palmerston North remains the strongest external destination for Rangitīkei and Manawatū, meaning a significant functional relationship sits outside the boundary.
- Balances scale and local identity more evenly than eastern-focused options, but with weaker economic integration across the whole footprint.

Journey analysis

This option shows Whanganui and Ruapehu operate largely as independent destinations, with little commuting to other districts within the option.

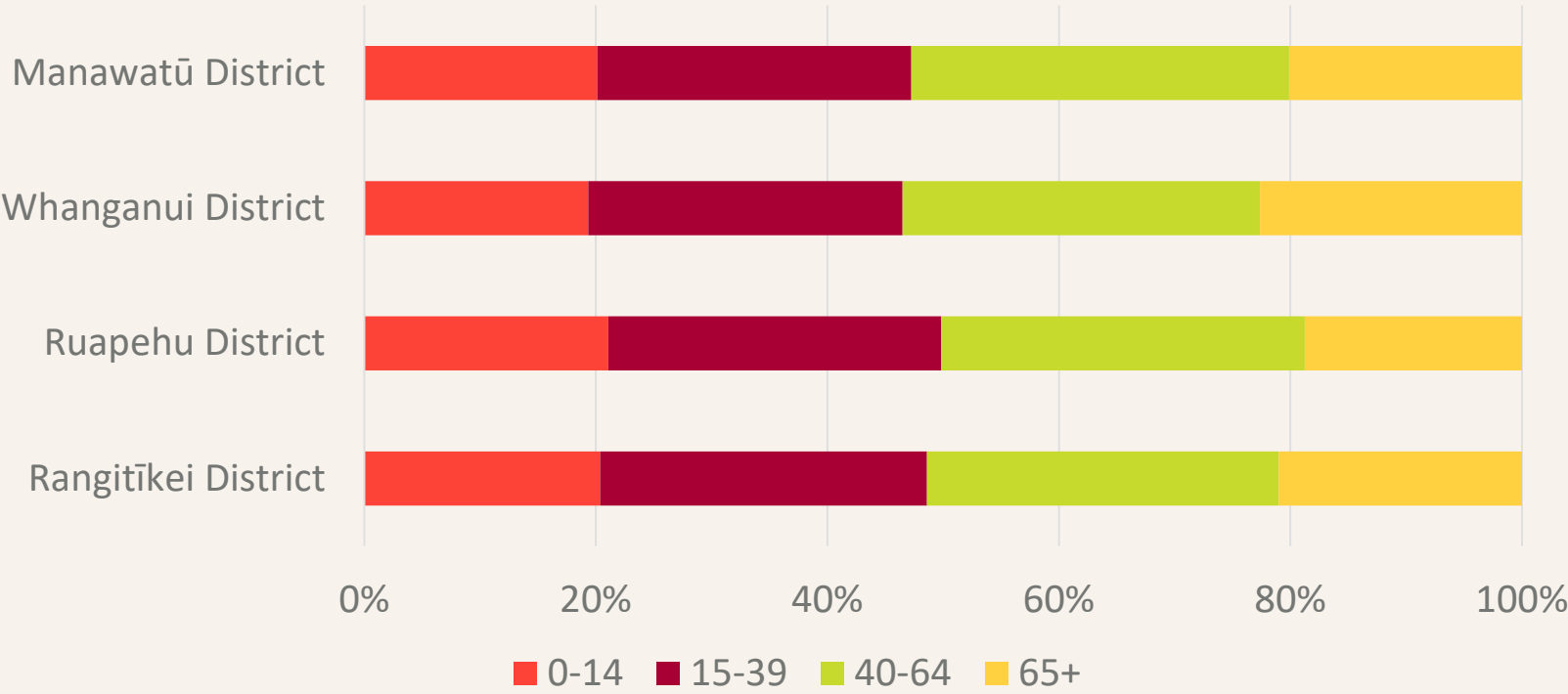
Key linkages

- Strong outward flows to Palmerston North (outside the option):
 - Manawatū ~20–30%
 - Rangitīkei ~5–10%
- Strongest internal connections between:
 - Rangitīkei ↔ Manawatū ~5–10%
 - Rangitīkei ↔ Whanganui ~5%
- Strong self-containment within:
 - Whanganui ~95%+
 - Ruapehu ~95%+

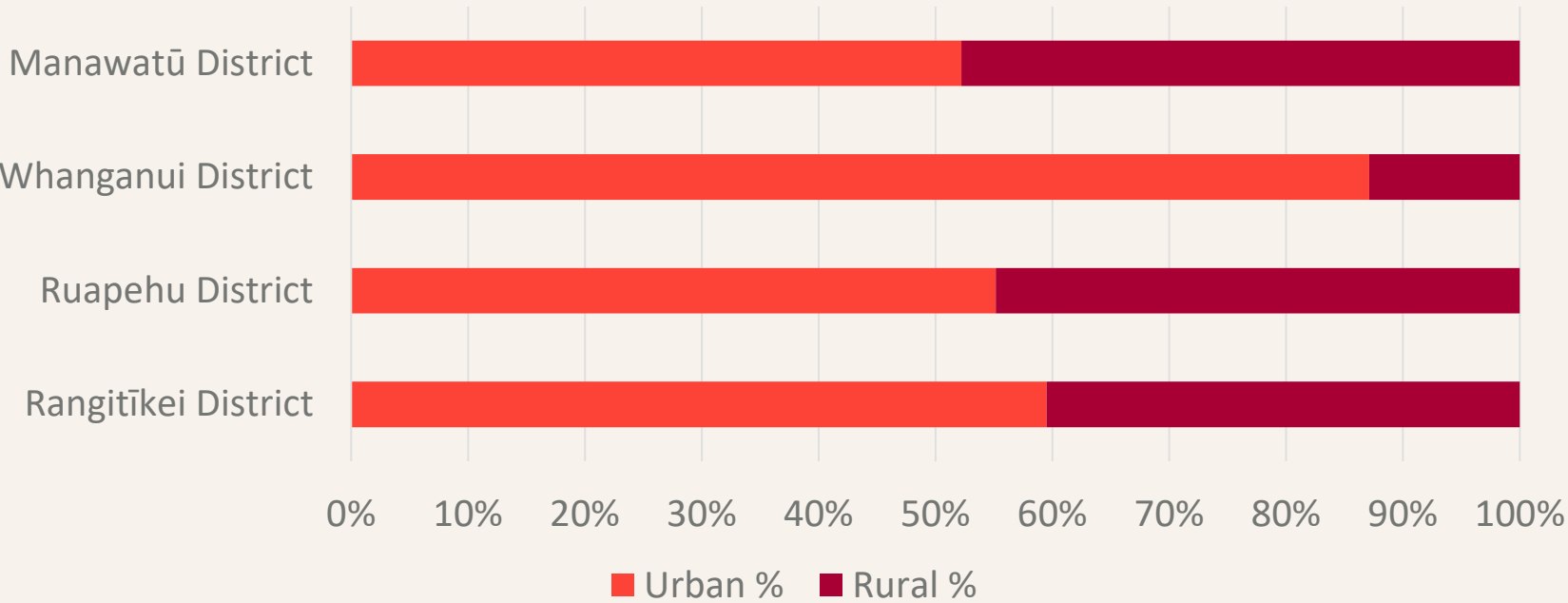


Population Structure: Option 7

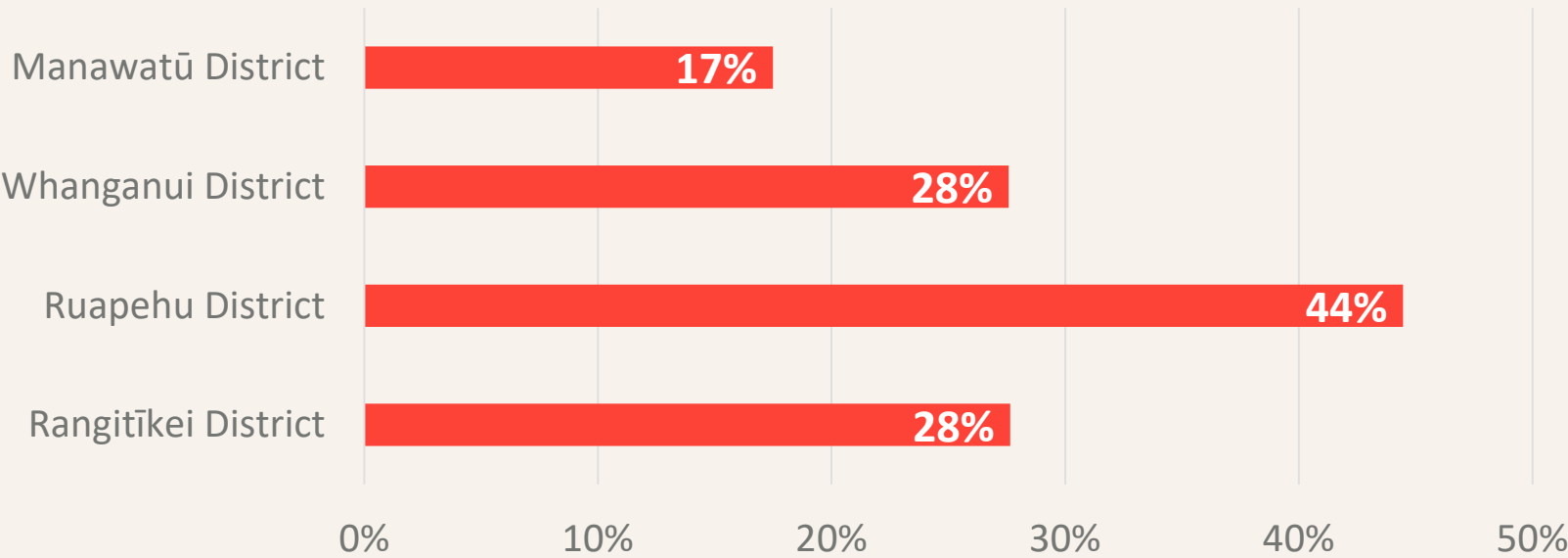
Age structure



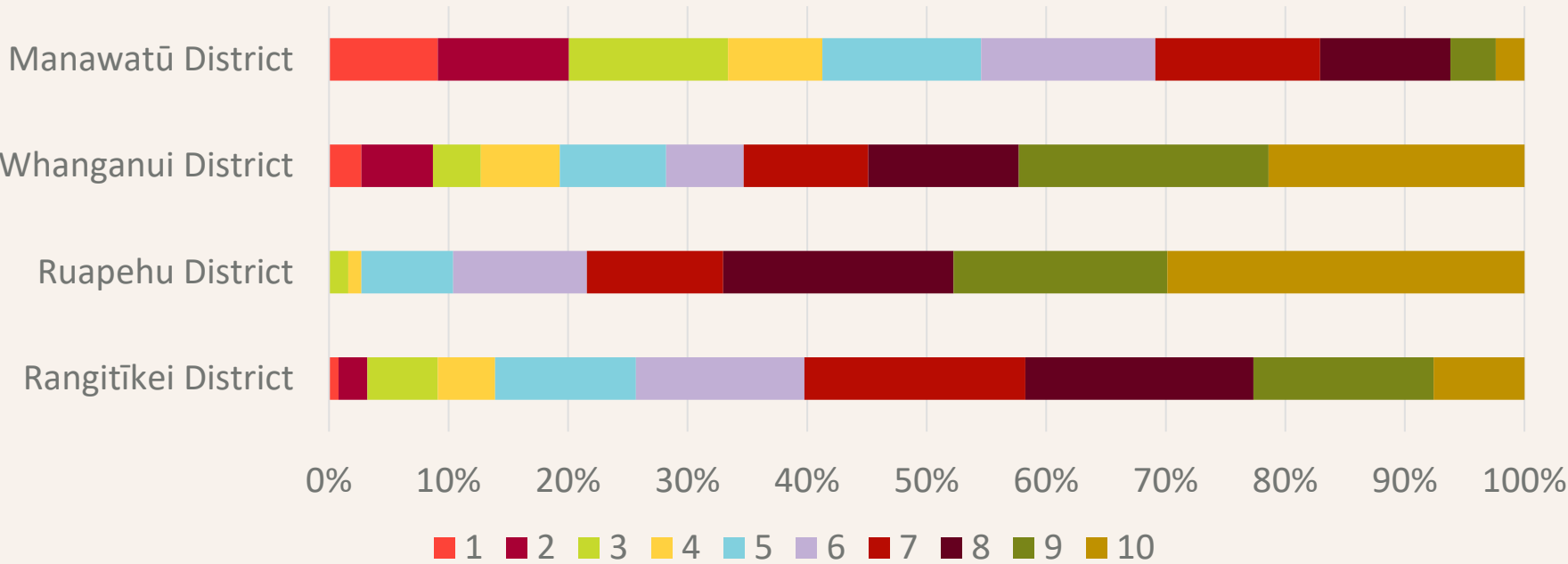
Urban/Rural split



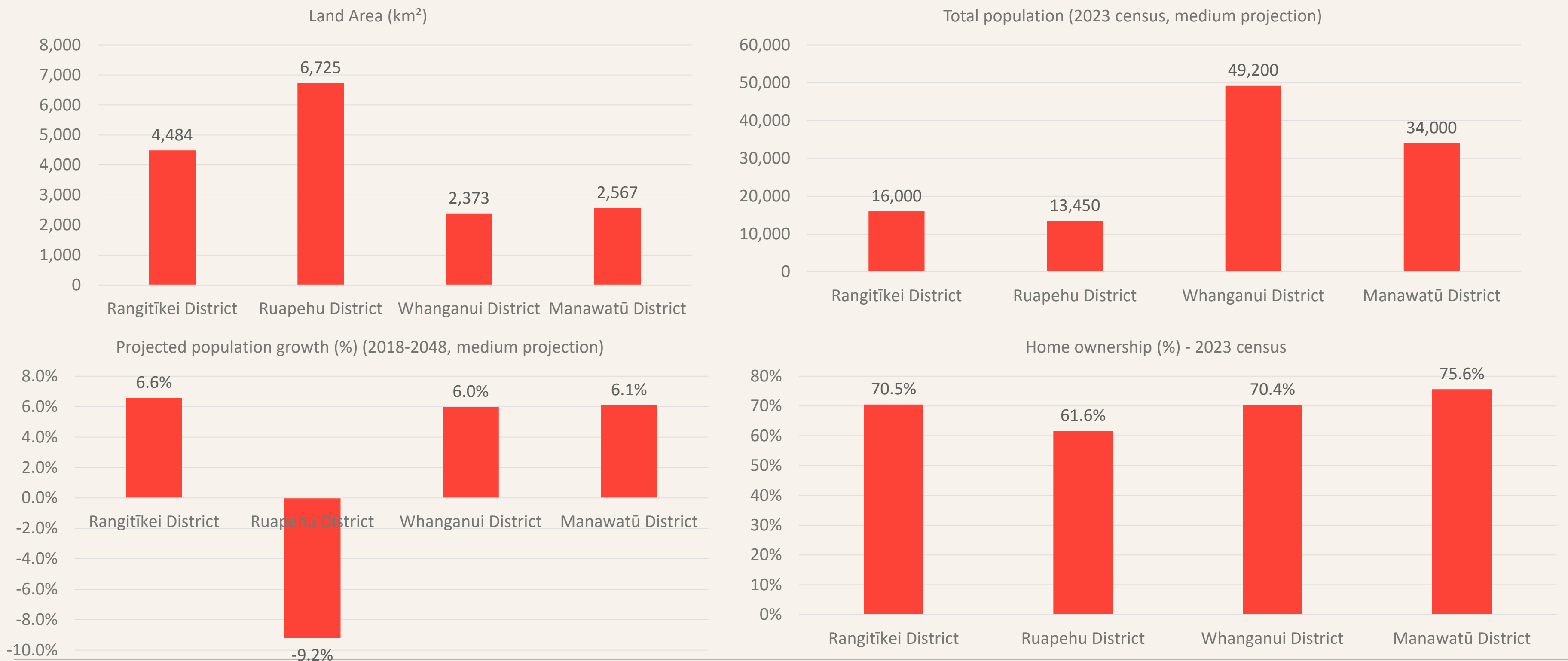
Māori Population (%) - 2023 census



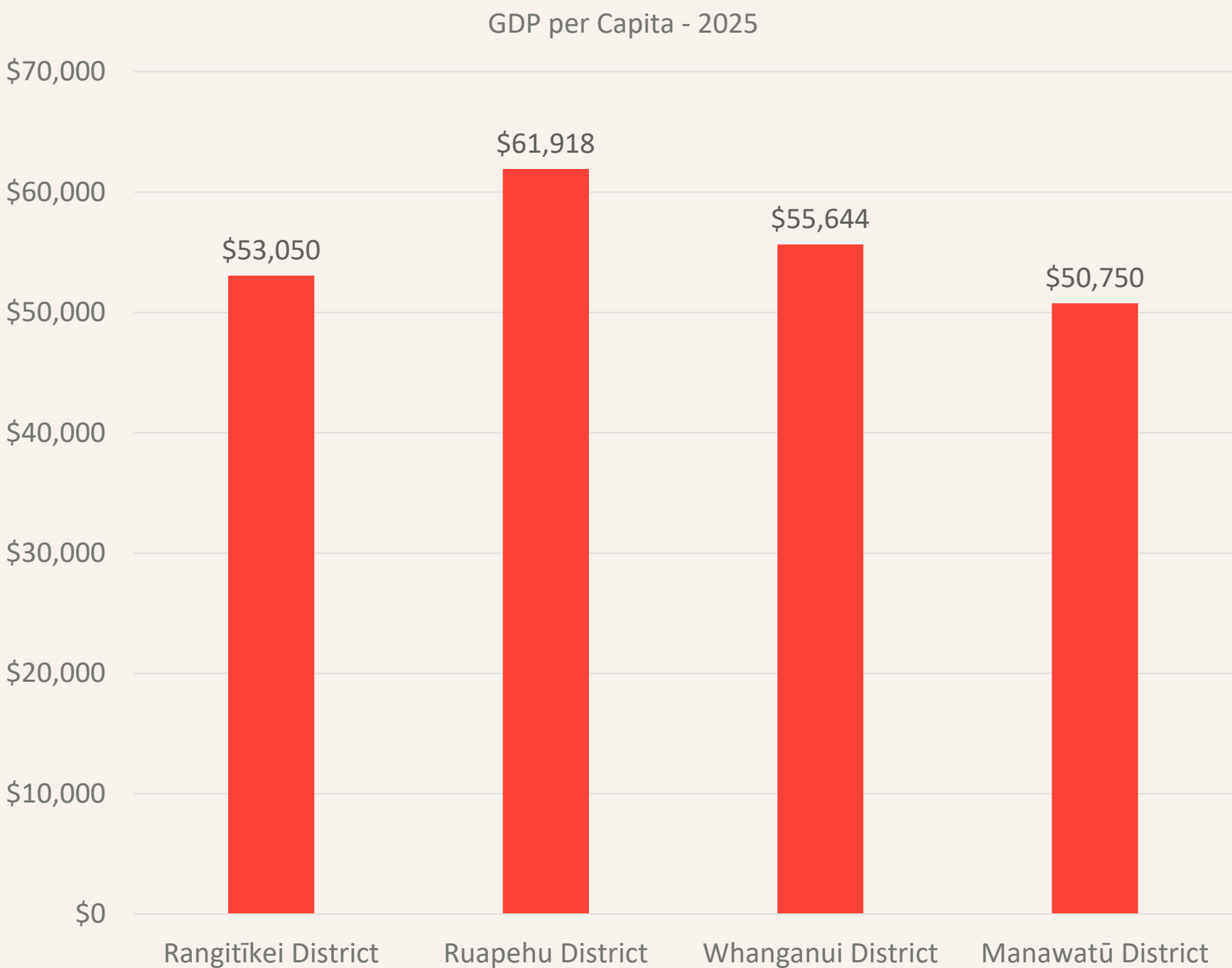
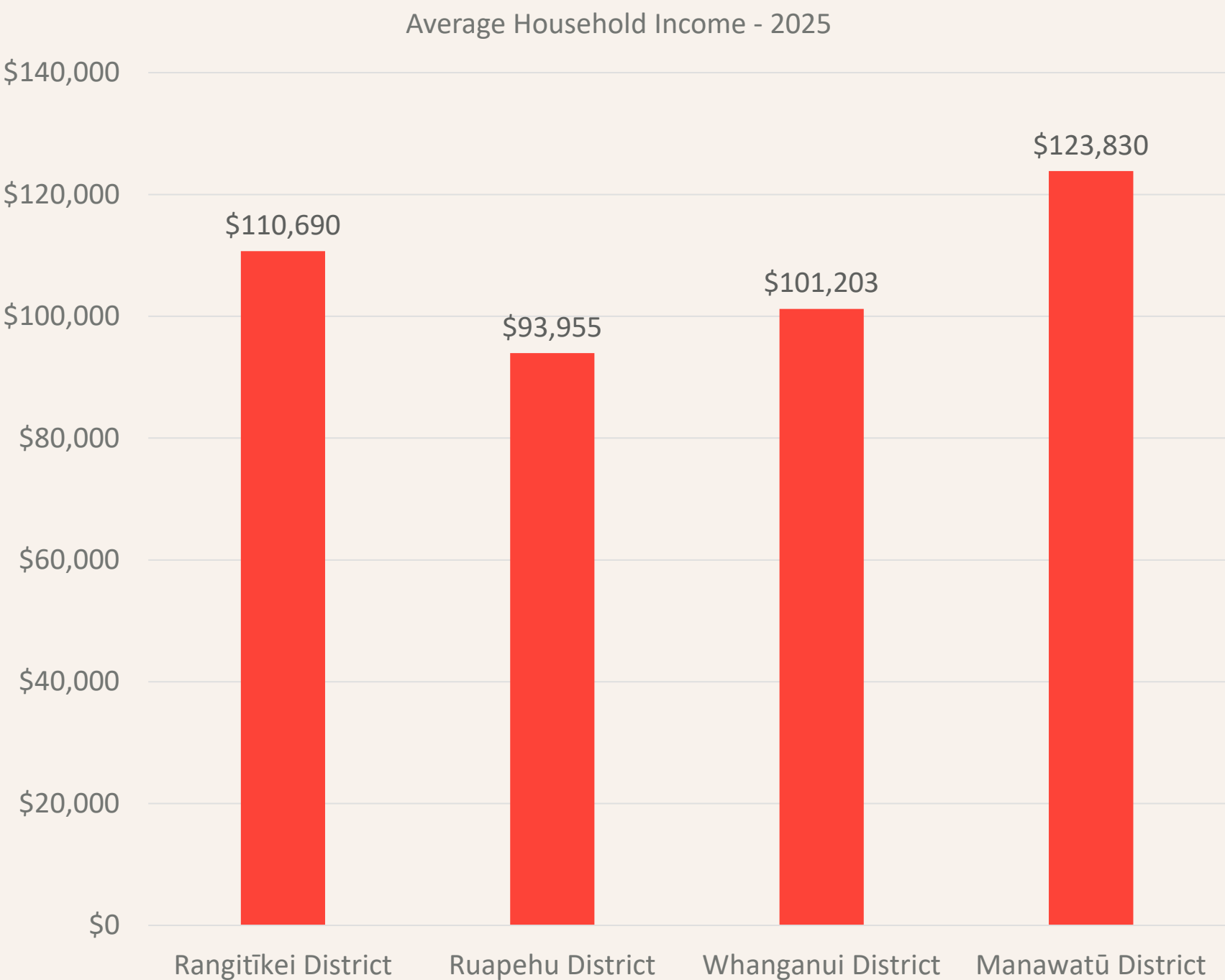
Deprivation profile



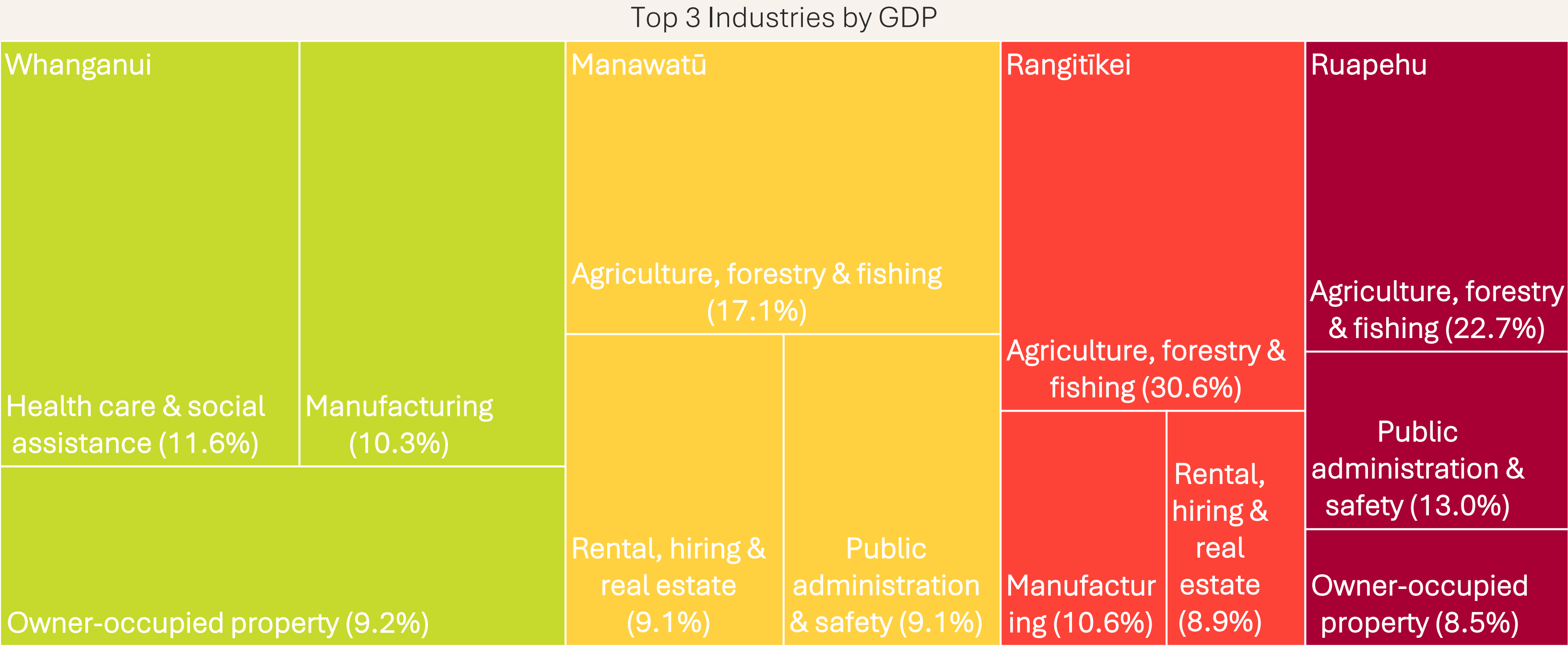
Area profile: Option 7



Business and Income: Option 7



Top three industries by GDP



Catchment management

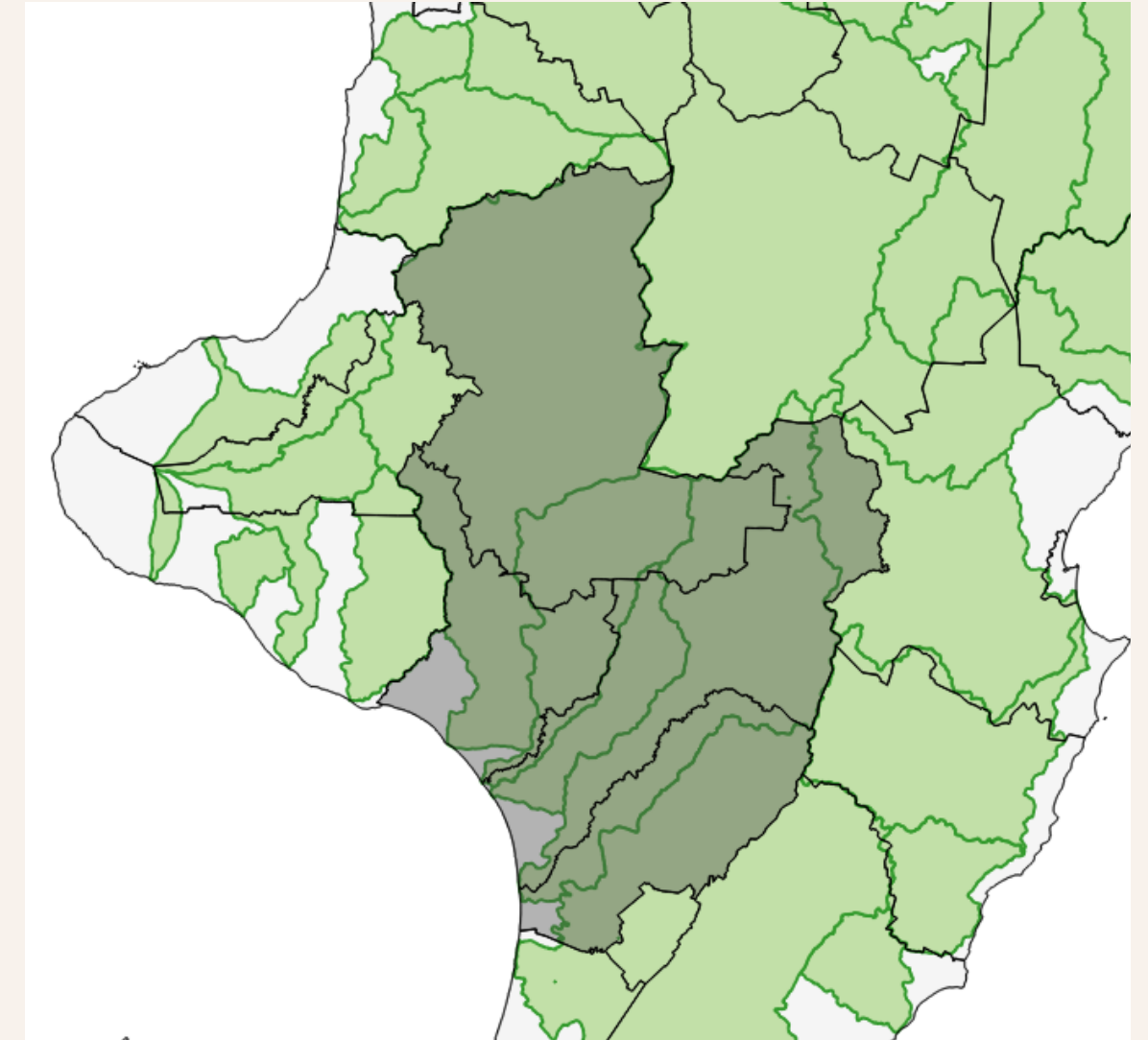
Option 7: Rangitīkei, Manawatū, Ruapehu, Whanganui

Pros

- Captures most of the upper Rangitīkei catchment and associated headwater systems, allowing effective management of upstream environmental drivers.
- Provides strong alignment with the Whanganui, Whangaehu, Rangitīkei and Turakina catchments, enabling more integrated management of western and northern freshwater systems.
- Improves the ability to manage flooding, sediment transport and water quality issues at a catchment scale.
- Includes many of the landscapes and ecosystems responsible for generating freshwater and biodiversity outcomes across the wider area.

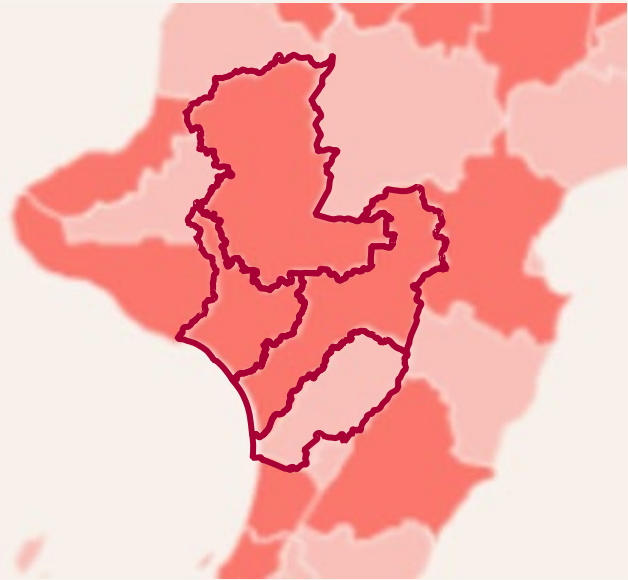
Cons

- The Manawatū catchment remains divided, with important urban, coastal and lower catchment areas lying outside the proposed authority.
- Several catchments would still require cross-boundary management arrangements with neighbouring authorities e.g towards Stratford and Taupo.

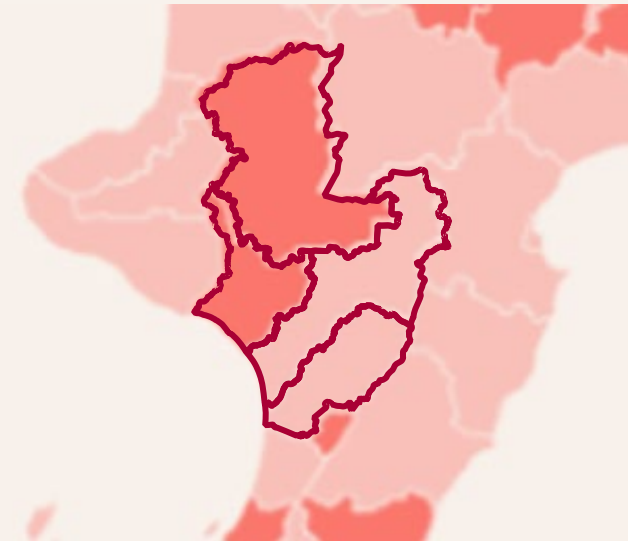


Representation

District	Total Population	Total Members (Current)	Number of Wards (including Māori wards)	Population per Member
Rangitīkei District	16,030	11	5	1,457
Whanganui District	49,200	12	2	4,100
Ruapehu District	13,440	9	2	1,493
Manawatu District	33,990	11	3	3,090
Total	112,660	43	12	-
Lower Hutt City	114,200	14	6	8,157
Indicative combined council	112,660	14	TBD	8,047



Community boards



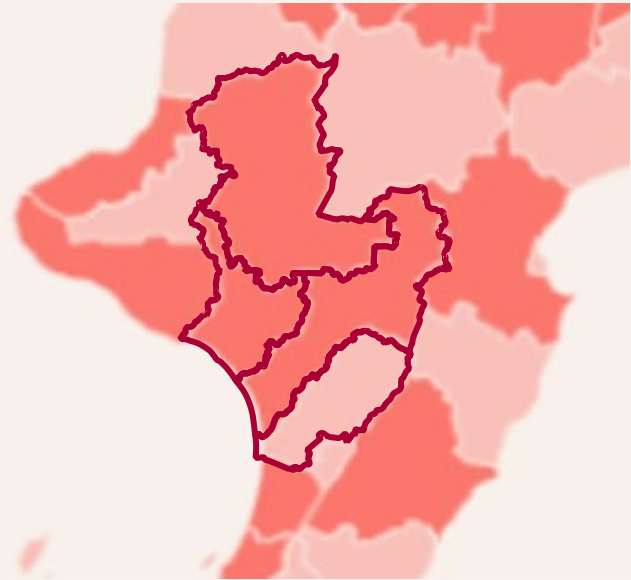
Māori ward referendum outcome

Representation

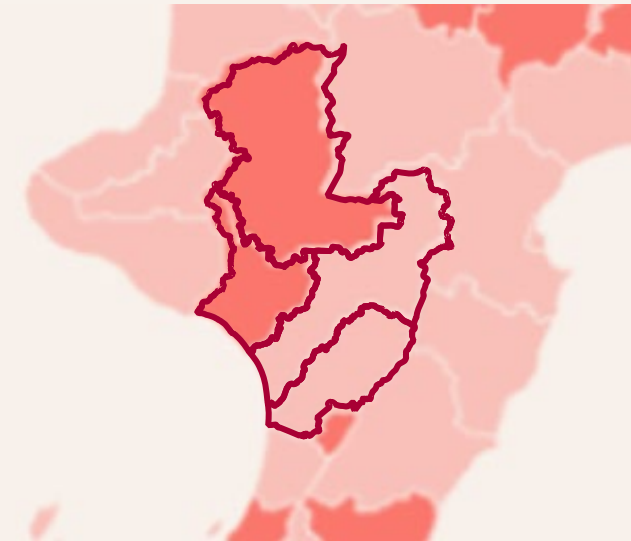
District	Total Population	Members per existing area
Indicative combined council	112,660	14
Rangitīkei District	16,030	2
Whanganui District	49,200	6
Ruapehu District	13,440	2
Manawatu District	33,990	4

This is based on population only.

Noting that MCERT have said that alternative representation models can be included.



Community boards



Māori ward
referendum outcome

Summary of initial assessment

Option 7: RDC+ MDC, RuDC, WDC

Supports the new planning system

Simplifies local governance

Economies of scale

Maintains local voice

Deliverability

Working collaboratively to improve wellbeing*

Facilitating growth*

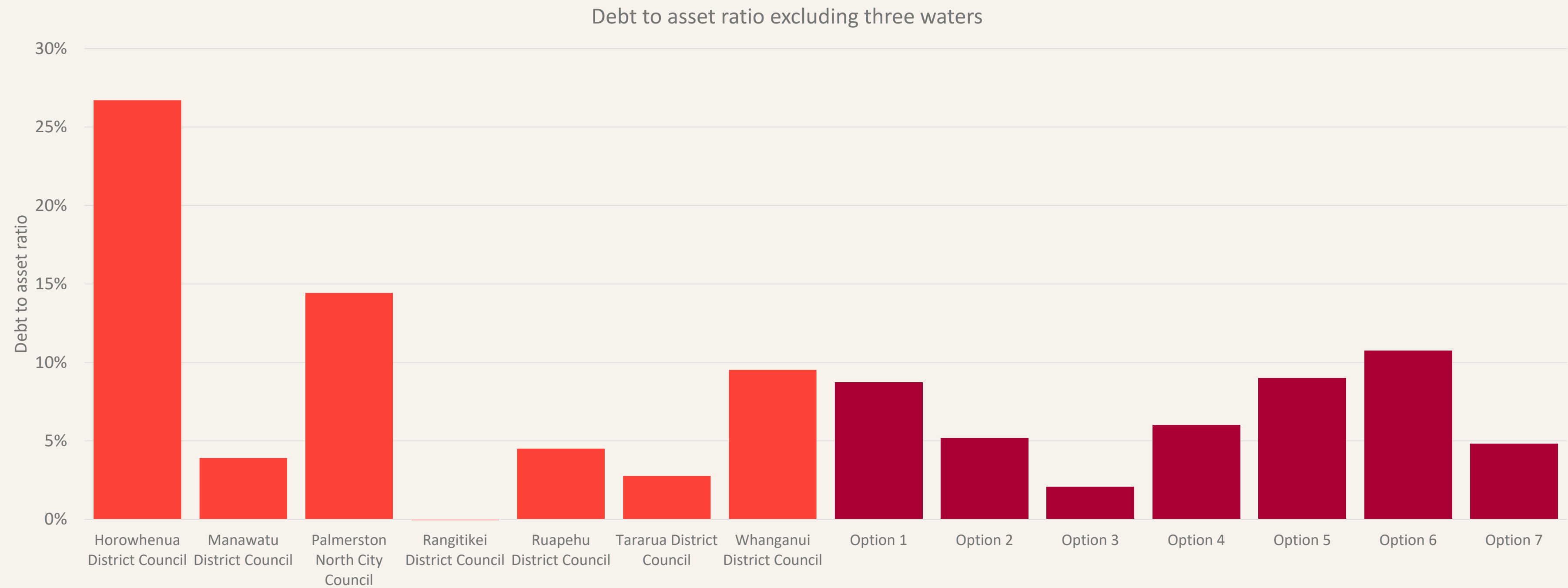
Connecting to Central North Island*

Affordability for community and Council
sustainability*



Debt to asset ratio

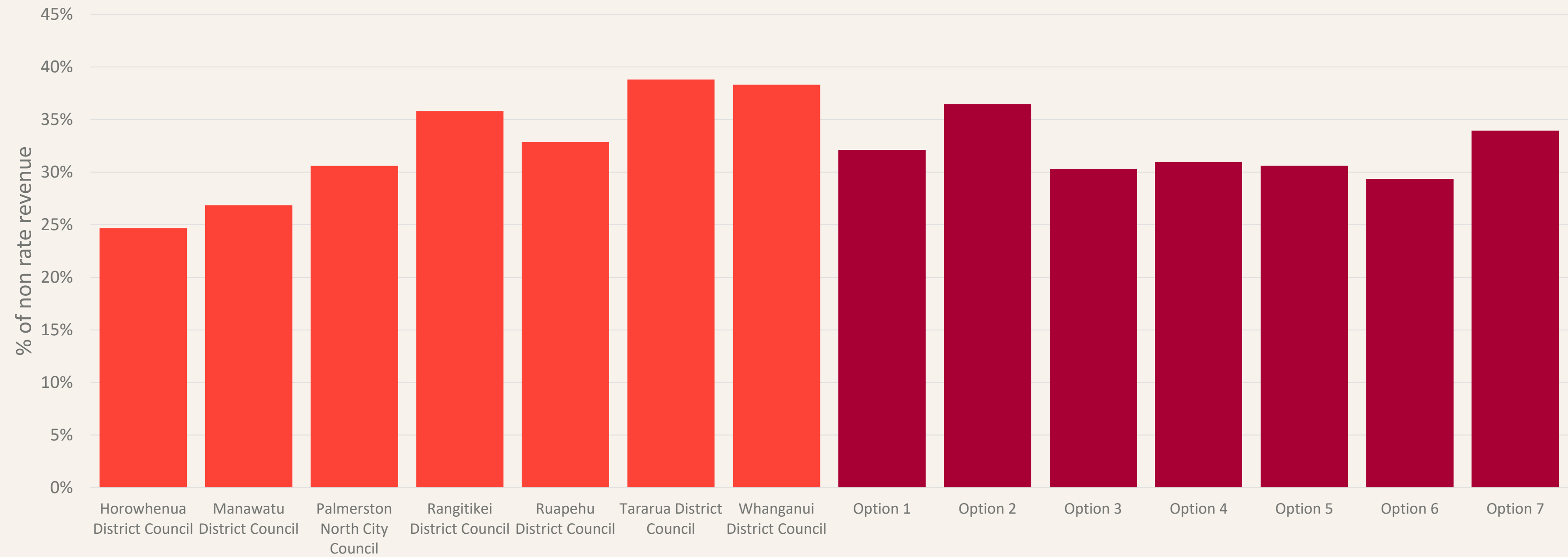
A higher ratio means either more debt has been used to fund capital works or, assets are older and further through useful lives



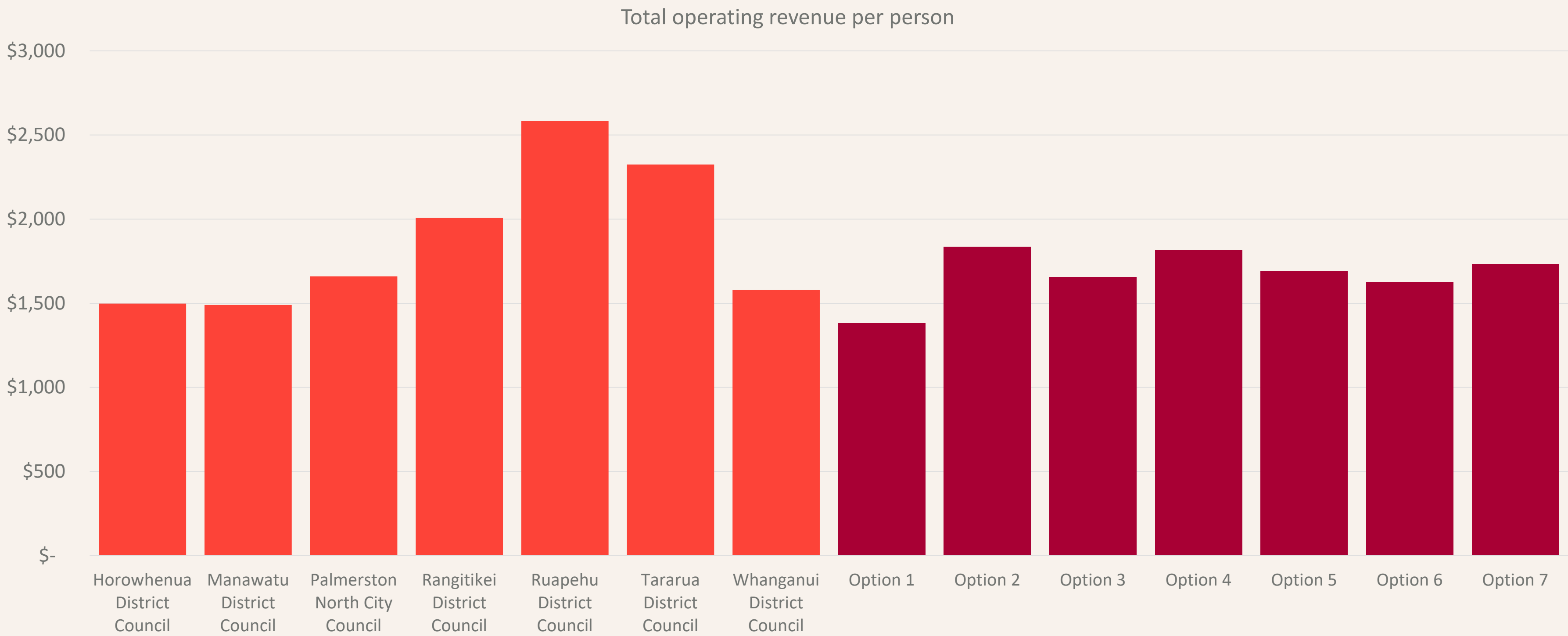
Non rate revenue / Total operating revenue

A higher percentage of non-rate revenue means less reliance on rate revenue

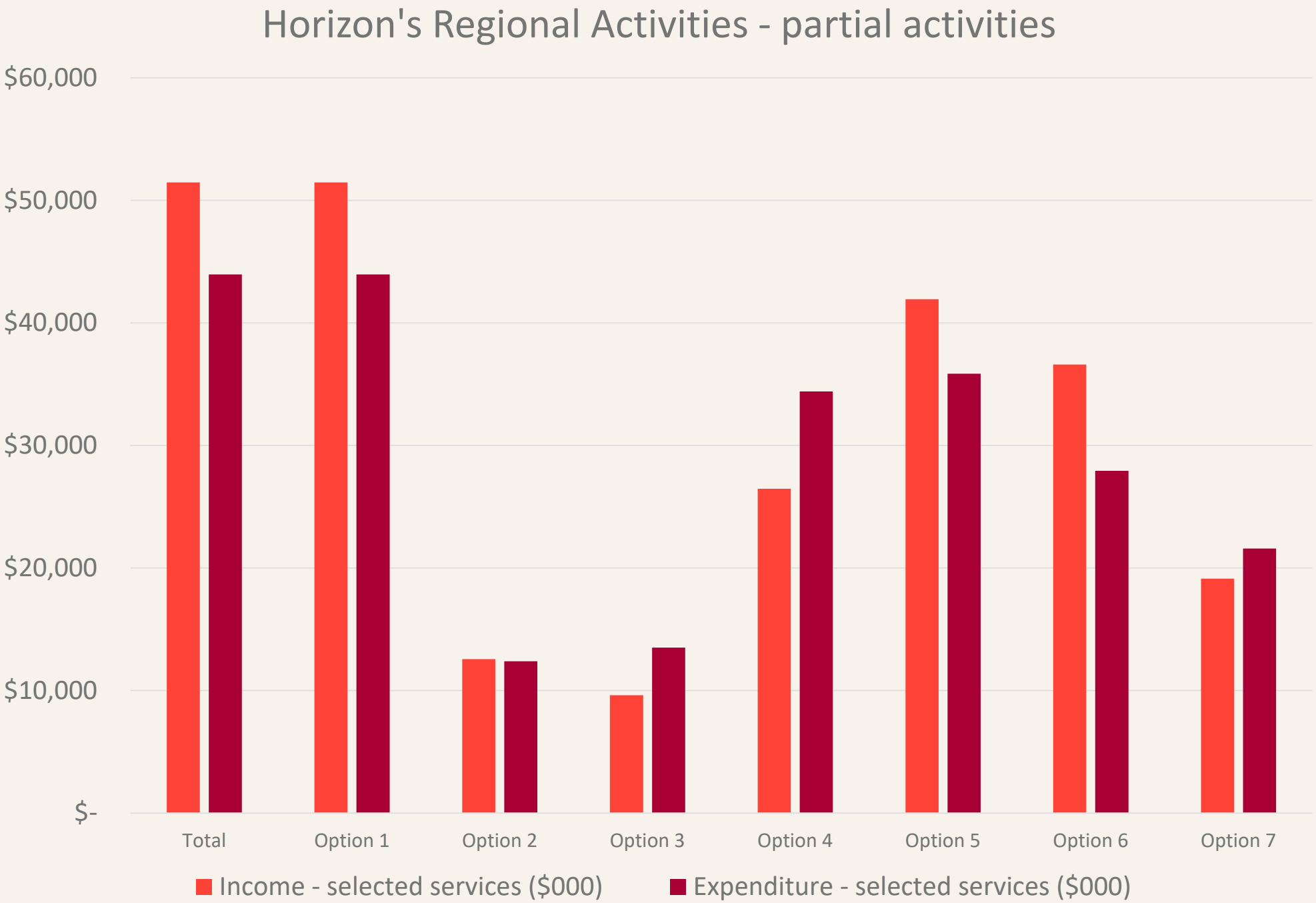
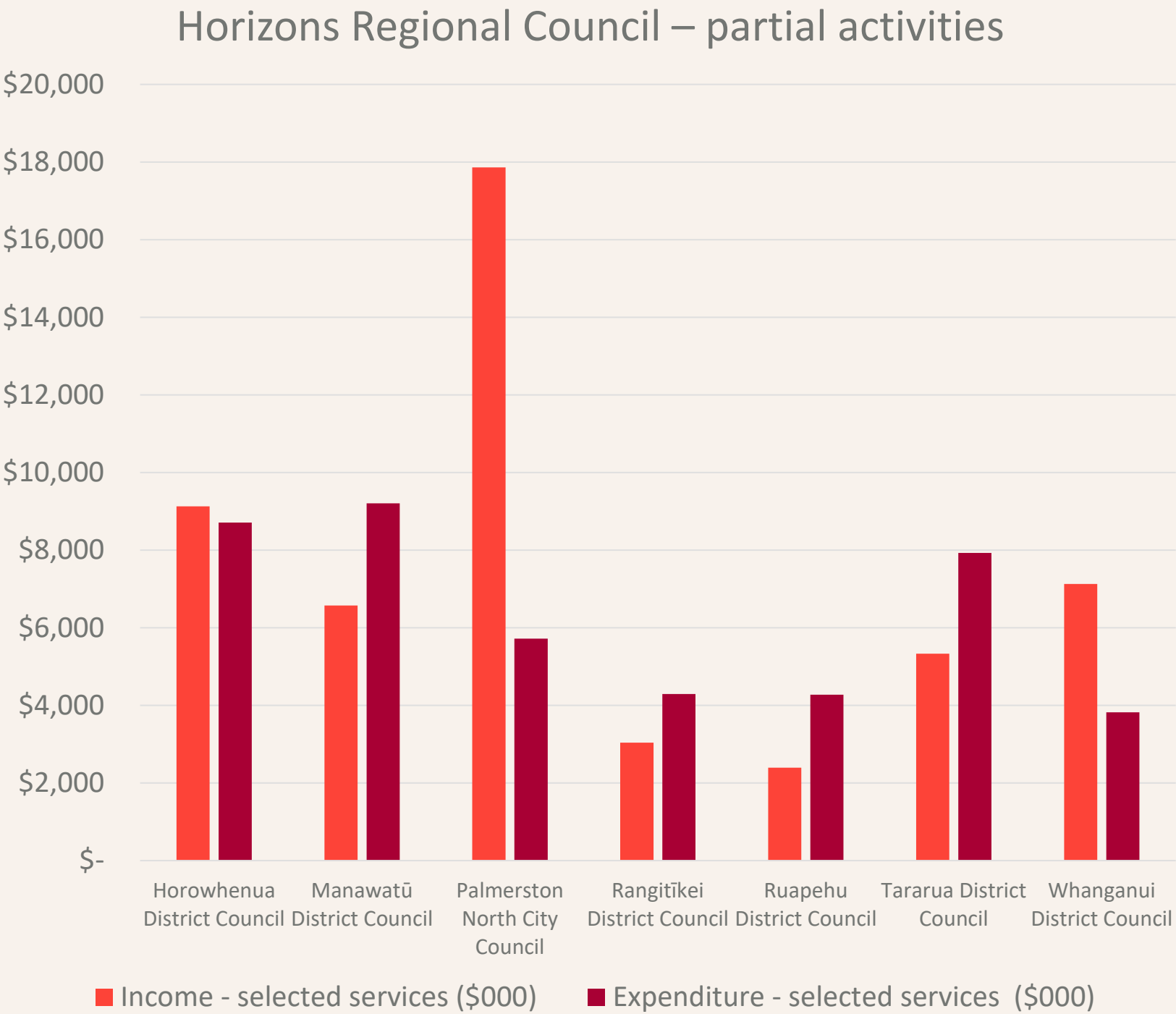
Non-rate revenue as percentage of total operating revenue



Total operating revenue per person

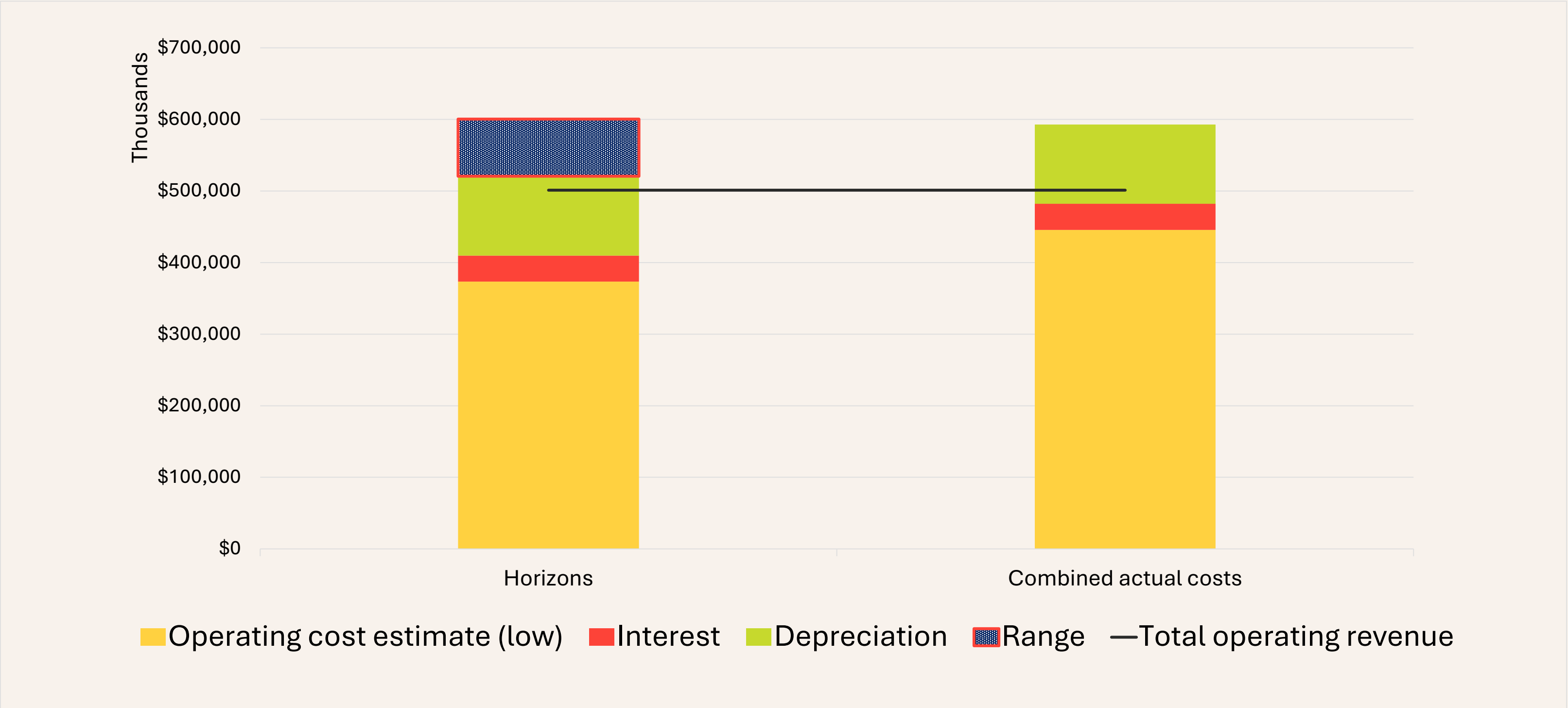


Affordability – Regional Council services



Qualification: Horizons provided expenditure data for some, but not all, functions and activities. While the data represents around half of total expenditure and is considered broadly indicative, conclusions should be interpreted with caution.

Horizon's Regional benchmarking

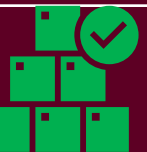
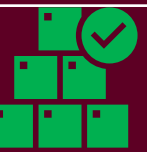
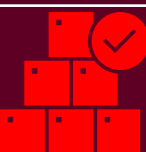
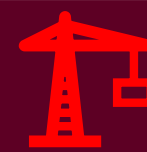
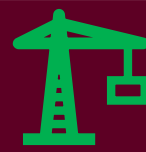


‘Economies of scale’

Concept	Examples	Achievable?
Direct cost savings	One finance system One set of statutory documents	Difficult
Capability benefits	Ability to hire specialist skills Complementary skills across existing councils coming together Workforce resilience	Yes
Strategy and planning	Better procurement leverage Stronger asset management Coordinated infrastructure investment Ability to prioritise investment over a broader area and cost base	Yes

- Realistic cost savings are likely in the order of 5-10% for all options, if at all
- Takes time to achieve and is masked by other factors (e.g. population growth, legislation change)
- Potential cost savings are offset by:
 - Transition costs
 - Increased cost of second-tier local representation
 - Aligning service levels, typically to the highest existing level

Summary of initial assessment

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6	Option 7
Supports the new planning system							
Simplifies local governance							
Economies of scale							
Maintains local voice							
Deliverability							
Working collaboratively to improve wellbeing*							
Facilitating growth*							
Connecting to Central North Island*							
Affordability for community and Council sustainability*							

Increase in scale vs keeping it local

Less councils, larger in size features		More councils, smaller in size features
Simplicity and clarity	V	Flexibility and local variation
Clearer accountability		Greater coordination required between entities
Greater consistency, less duplication		Ability to maintain different local governance arrangements
Benefits of scale		Benefits of being local

Head Start next steps



Get confirmation/update on direction



Complete analysis

Thank you

If you have any enquiries or need more information about the services we provide, don't hesitate to contact us. We look forward to helping you succeed.