

DWER Corporate Research 2020 Community Insights



March 2020

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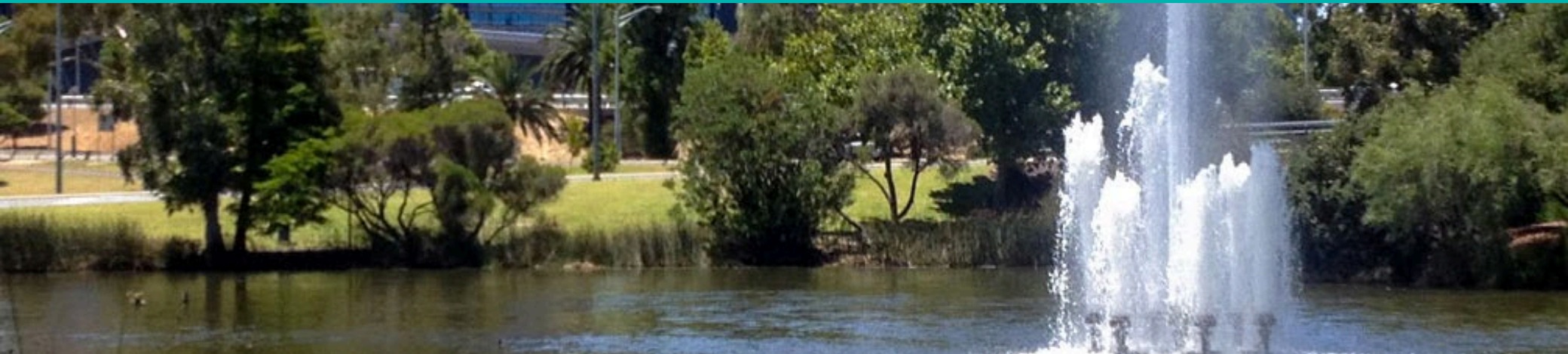
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Scope of Engagement



Government of Western Australia
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation



Background and Objectives

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) undertakes an annual survey of its stakeholders to monitor stakeholder perceptions of DWER, including a KPI measure of the Department's effectiveness at managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use.

In 2020, DWER wished to expand its consultation to benchmark perceptions of DWER among the WA community, in line with a set of Corporate research objectives designed to inform:

- Corporate risk management, environmental scanning and business planning
- Outcome based management/KPI reporting
- Adaptive management of functions and initiatives

The core objectives of this consultation were to:

1. Quantify awareness of DWER and understanding of its purpose, roles and responsibilities
2. Benchmark perceived effectiveness of managing the State's water and environmental resources for sustainable productive use;
3. Quantify attitudes towards water and environmental issues;
4. Benchmark perceptions of DWER's performance in relation to key water and environmental issues;
5. Measure perceptions of DWER's decision making; and
6. Measure awareness of key initiatives.



Research Approach

An online survey was conducted with residents across Western Australia (WA), between the 20th of January and the 6th of February 2020. A **final sample of n=601** was achieved, with a **margin of error of +/- 4.00%**, at a 95% confidence interval. The data has been weighted in line with 2016 ABS data, to be representative of the WA population.

A breakdown of the final sample is detailed below.

WA Community Survey | Sample Composition

	Metro		Regional	
	n=	%	n=	%
Male	196	49%	103	52%
Female	205	51%	97	48%
18-34	130	33%	52	27%
35-54	141	35%	74	37%
55+	168	42%	90	44%
Total	401	67%	200	33%

Summary of Key Insights - *Community*



Government of Western Australia
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation



Key Insights

Overall Perceptions of DWER

- DWER is not top of mind when people are asked which organisations are responsible for coordinating and managing the state's water and environmental resources. Only one in four say they have heard of DWER once prompted. This is not surprising, given that programs and initiatives are not typically DWER branded.
- It is worth noting that as a result of low awareness of DWER, a large proportion of the community did not feel adequately informed to rate DWER across a number of criteria (over one-fifth of the community for some attributes).
- Three-in-five agree that DWER considers the needs of the community, current/emerging issues and relevant issues/priorities in its decision making.
- However there is limited awareness of what DWER is doing to manage specific water, environmental and waste management issues.
- Awareness and understanding of key water and environmental programs and initiatives is limited beyond the lightweight plastic bag ban.



Key Insights

Perceived Effectiveness – Water & Environmental Management

- Four-in-ten residents feel DWER is effective at managing the State's water and environmental resources for sustainable productive use.
- A similar proportion rate DWER as effective in setting the framework for better management of waste.
- Key reasons for perceived ineffectiveness in managing the State's water and environmental resources include:
 - WATER MANAGEMENT - Inadequate planning for future water resources and solutions as well as poor regulatory practices
 - ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT – DWER being too development focused and needing to do more to protect the environment
 - WATER AND ENVIRONMENT - Lack of visibility about any positive impacts DWER is having



Attitudes Towards Water & Environmental Issues

- Water shortages are a key water and environmental concern, with contamination close behind.
- Water pollution and protection of drinking water sources are key water specific concerns,
- A large proportion of the community is also concerned about waste generation, waste management, clearing of land for development and climate change. This is not surprising given the recent waste focus in the media and on programs such as *War on Waste*.

Awareness and Understanding of DWER Services, Roles and Responsibilities

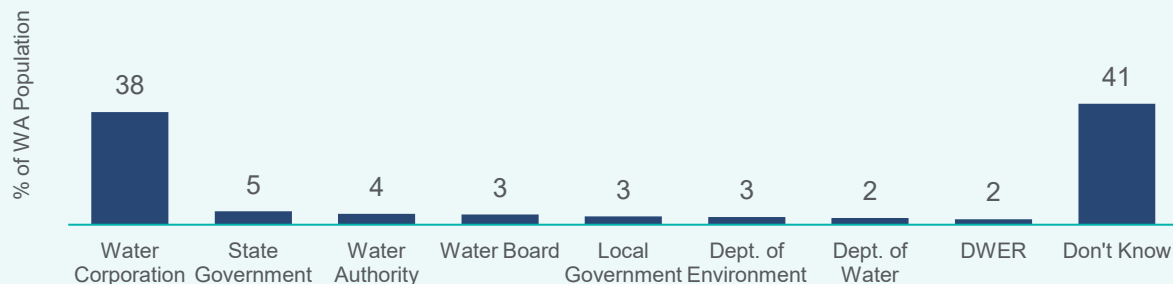


One-in-four WA residents are aware of DWER once prompted

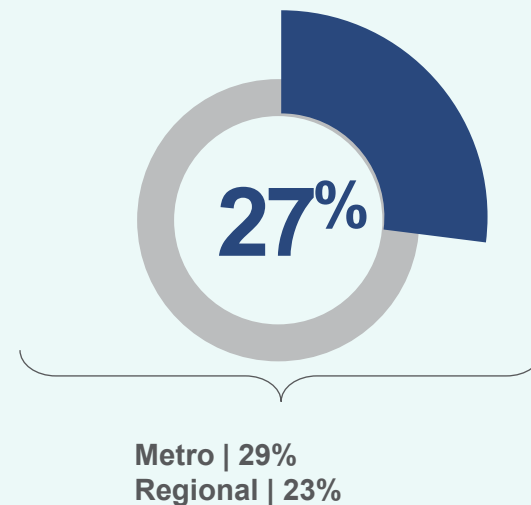


However, DWER is not top of mind. People most commonly think of Water Corporation when asked to name organisations responsible for coordinating and managing the state's water and environmental resources.

Unprompted Recall of Organisations Responsible for Water/Environment | Top 8



Prompted Recall of DWER



Overall n= 601

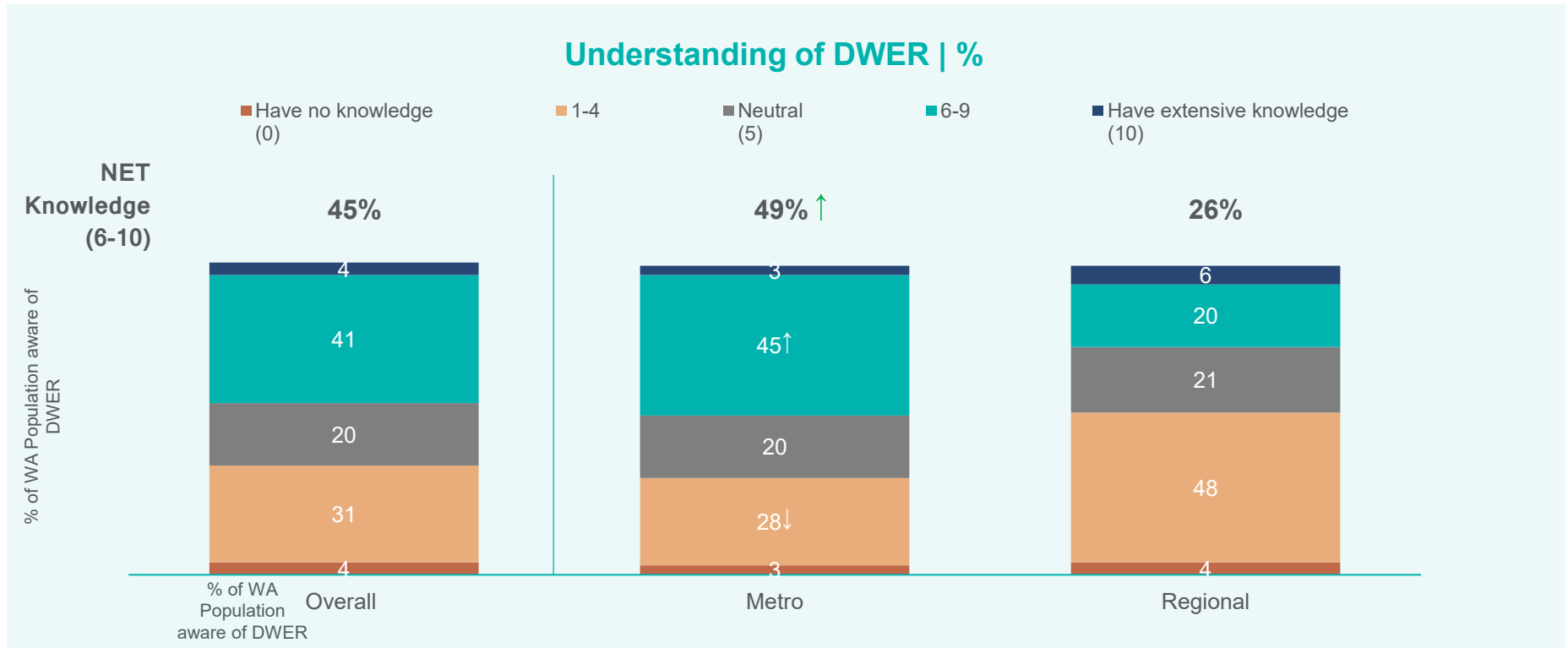
Q3: Which organisations are responsible for coordinating and managing the state's water and environmental resources, including responsibility for water and environmental planning, licensing and legislation and community education about how to improve be?

Q4: Prior to today, have you heard of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, also known as DWER?

↑↓ Significant difference to metro scores at 95% confidence

Half of WA residents believe they understand the purpose, roles and responsibilities of DWER

Knowledge of DWER is significantly higher among metro residents, suggesting a knowledge gap currently exists among regional residents.



WA n=161 | Metro n=115 | Regional n=46

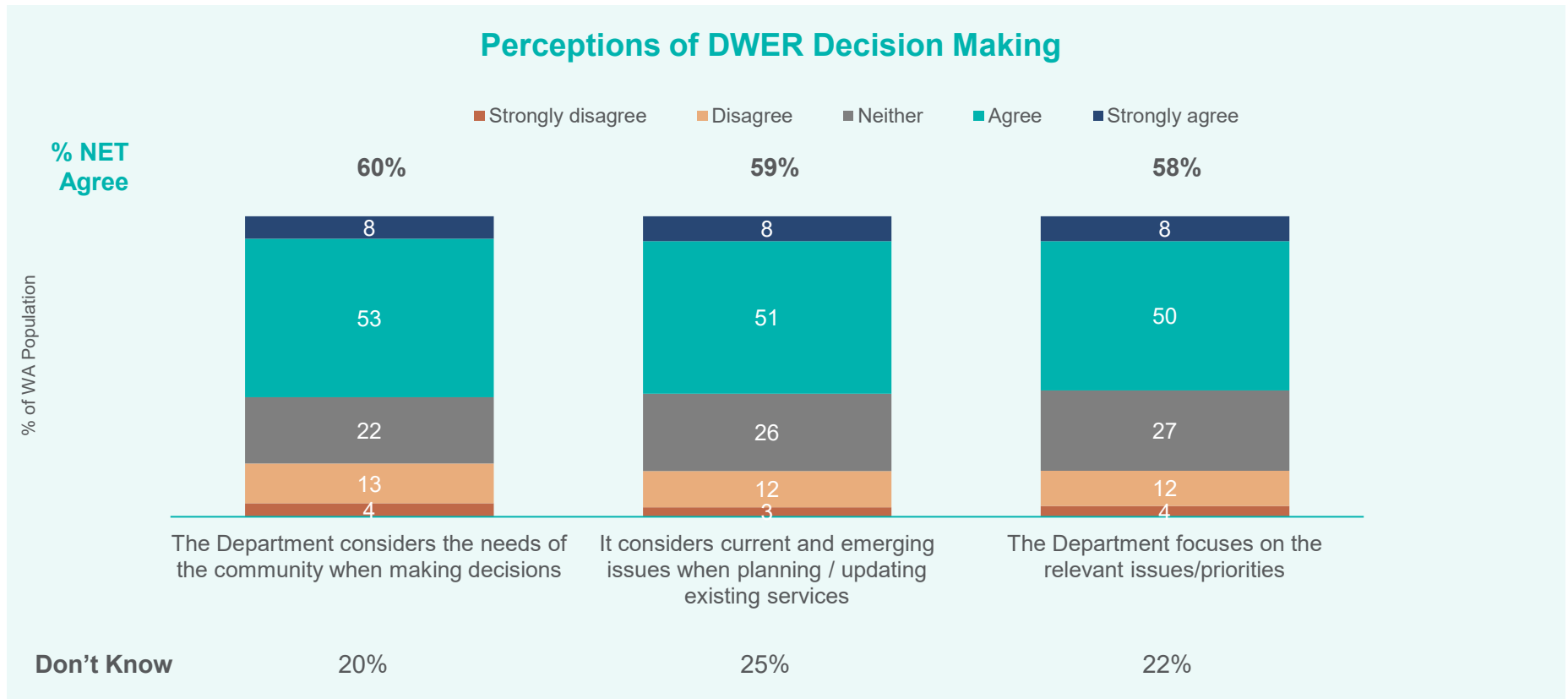
Q5: How would you rate your level of understanding of the purpose, roles and responsibilities of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, also known as DWER?

↑↓ Significant difference to regional scores at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data

Three-in-five WA residents feel that DWER considers the needs of the community when making decisions

A similar proportion feel that DWER is focused on relevant issues and considers current and emerging issues.



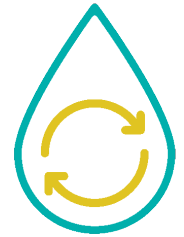
n=485 | 454 | 468

Q10 Thinking now about how DWER makes its decisions, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the follow statements?
Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

Perceived Effectiveness – Water Management

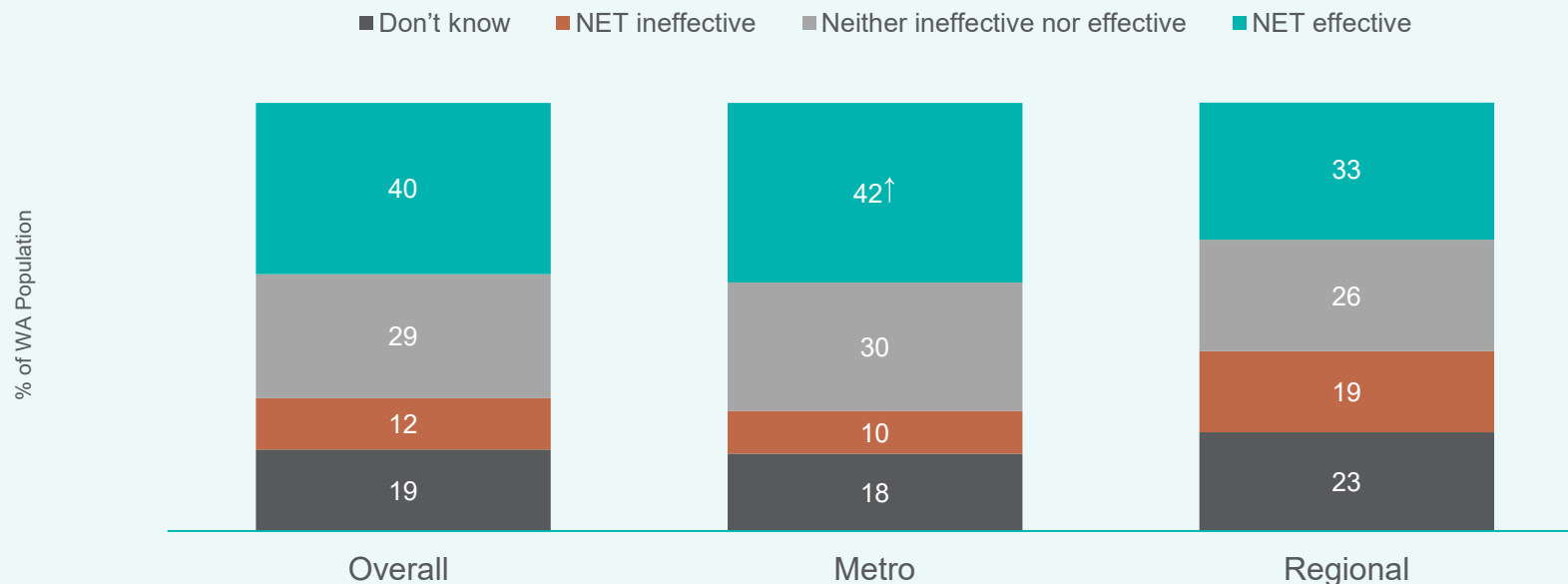


Two-in-five WA residents feel DWER is effective at managing the State's water resources for sustainable productive use



Perceptions of effective management are significantly higher among metro residents compared to regional residents.

Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing the State's Water



n=601 | 401 | 200

Q6a: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use?

↑↓ Significant difference to regional scores at 95% confidence

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

Not focusing on future water resources and solutions are key reasons for perceptions of ineffectiveness



Reasons for Perceived Ineffectiveness of DWER's Management of Water | Top 5



24%

**More Future Planning
for Water Resources is
Required**



18%

**DWER is not Actively
Seen to be Doing
Anything in the
Community**



17%

**Poor Regulatory
Practices**



15%

**Implementing
Innovative Water
Collection Solutions**



15%

**Unaware of DWER and
its Operations**

% of WA Population rating DWER as ineffective

n=68

Q6b. Why do you rate DWER's management of water for sustainable productive use as ineffective? What are the things you would like to see improved?

In their own words...

More Future Planning for Water Resources is Required

“With the unsustainable tapping of groundwater used by large mining corporations (BHP, Fortescue) in deserted areas such as the northern Goldfields of WA. I would like to see harsher water restrictions in place for those corporations, as they are destroying the natural aquifer of the area.” – Metro

“Water is becoming scarcer, and no real solutions are provided.” - Metro



DWER is not Actively Seen to be Doing Anything in the Community

“There is so much water wastage in Western Australia, particularly by agriculture and big businesses.” – Regional

“If they don’t publicly show their achievements it looks like nothing is happening.” - Metro



Poor Regulatory Practices

“They are concerned with today’s problems to be politically expedient. They are hamstrung by the overall (federal) government’s lack of long-term support.” - Regional

“They place restrictions for watering lawns and gardens automatically (not well policed) but allow hand-held hoses anytime.” - Metro



In their own words...

Implementing Innovative Water Collection Solutions

"Plans for future catchment of water... the Kimberley region gets excessive amount of rain during their cyclone/wet season when the southern areas need the water during their dry summer season." – Regional

"Much of rural WA's water safety and quality is under threat from fracking. Why haven't they banned fracking?" – Regional

"Water regulations should be put in place to ensure better drought relief practices." - Metro



Unaware of DWER and its Operations

"Considering I've never heard of it; I would think it is not doing its job." – Metro

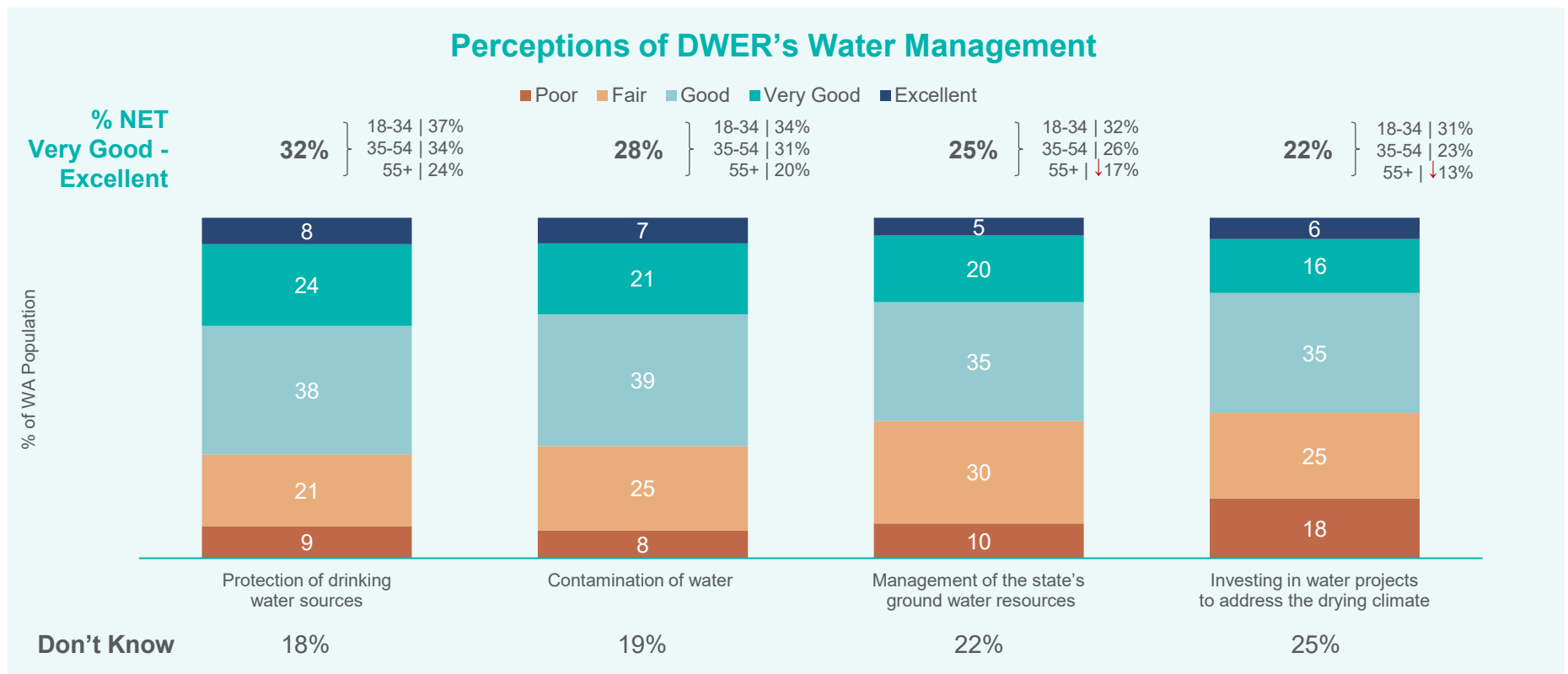
"Because I have never heard of them or heard of anything they have done." – Regional

"I have only heard of DWER since I was applying for jobs on a government website. Other than this I don't know anything about them. I know more about Sea Shepherd than government regulations." - Metro



One-in-four community members rate DWER as very good or excellent at managing the state's water across a range of criteria

However, a large proportion of the community did not feel informed enough to comment on DWER's performance. Perceptions of DWER's performance is higher among younger audiences.



n=488 | 483 | 467 | 445

Q9r: Based on everything you have seen, heard or experienced, how well do you feel that DWER is performing regarding the management of the following?

↑↓ Significant difference to other age brackets at 95% confidence

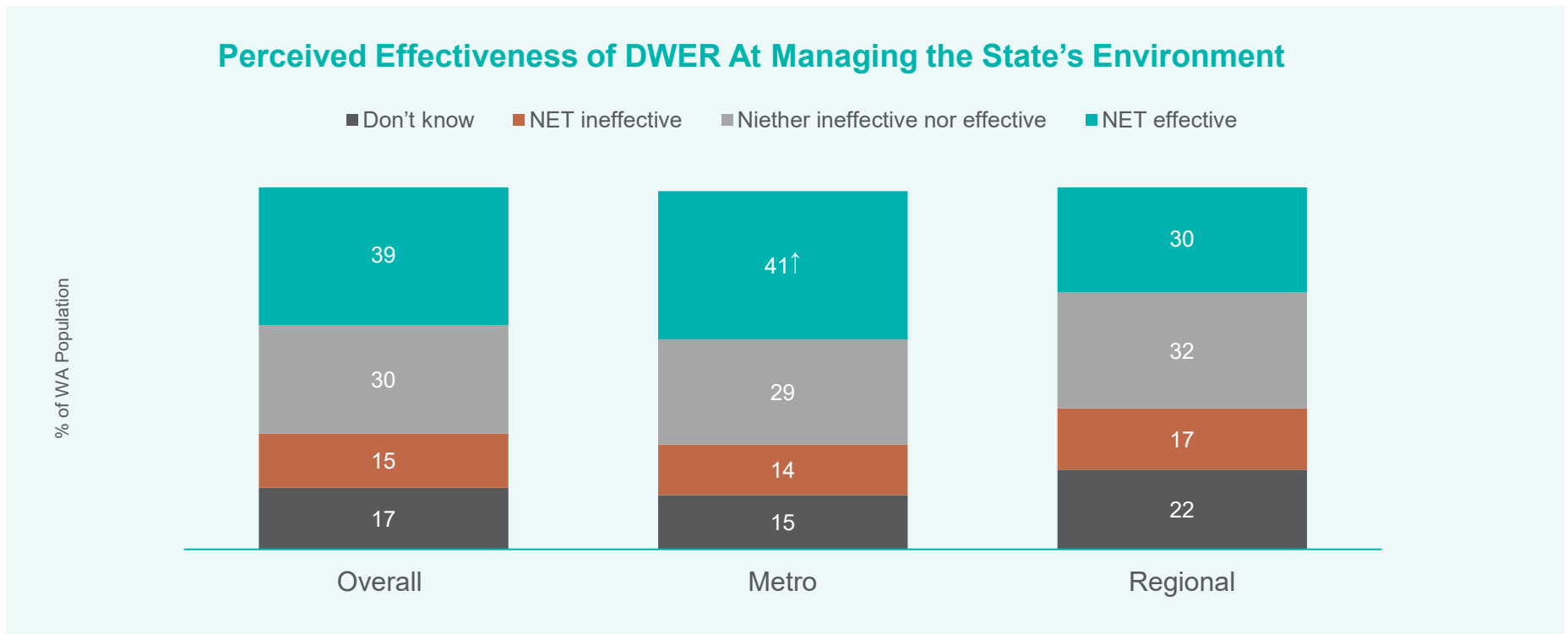
Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

Perceived Effectiveness – Environmental Management



Two-in-five WA residents feel DWER is effective at managing the State's environmental resources for sustainable productive use

Perceptions of effective management are significantly higher among metro residents.



n= 601 | 401 | 200

Q7a: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's environment for sustainable productive use?

↑↓ Significant difference to regional scores at 95% confidence

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

The main reasons why people rate DWER's management of the State's environment as ineffective relate to not seeing any positive impacts and wanting to see more being done to protect the environment



Reasons for Perceived Ineffectiveness of DWER's Management of the State's Environment | Top 5



20%

**Don't See Any
Changes in the
Environment Due to
DWER**



19%

**Need to Prioritise the
Environment over
Development**



16%

**More Needs to be
Done to Protect the
Environment**



16%

**Need to be More
Transparent with
Communications**



13%

**Don't Know Much
About Their Operations**

% of WA Population rating DWER ineffective

n=79

Q7b: Why do you rate DWER's management of the environment for sustainable productive use as ineffective? What are the things you would like to see improved? Please provide as much detail as possible.

Don't Know responses removed.

In their own words...

Don't See Any Changes in the Environment Due to DWER

"I can't see much improvement anywhere, and one never hears about any projects being undertaken." - Metro

"The rate at which the general public freely waste water is catastrophic and efforts to curb the behaviour is minimal and ineffective." - Metro



Need to Prioritise the Environment over Development

"There is so much water wastage in Western Australia, particularly by agriculture and big businesses." - Regional

"Industry uses too much of our water supplies." - Metro



More Needs to be Done to Protect the Environment

"A permanent water restriction needs to be in place with harsh penalties for repeat offenders and strict monitoring." – Metro

"Not enough greening in residential areas, too much land clearing, not enough management of pollutants into the waterways especially from agriculture." - Metro



In their own words...

Need to be More Transparent with Communications

"Get out to the communities and talk, and then you will see the differences between them are." - Regional

"Again, I don't see anything in the papers or TV or anyone talking about the benefits they are doing for the environment." – Regional

"I never heard of any of the projects going on." - Metro



Don't Know Much About Their Operations

"They are not very visible." - Metro

"If DWER is to be recognised for their work they need to be more accountable to the community and let us know their work." – Regional

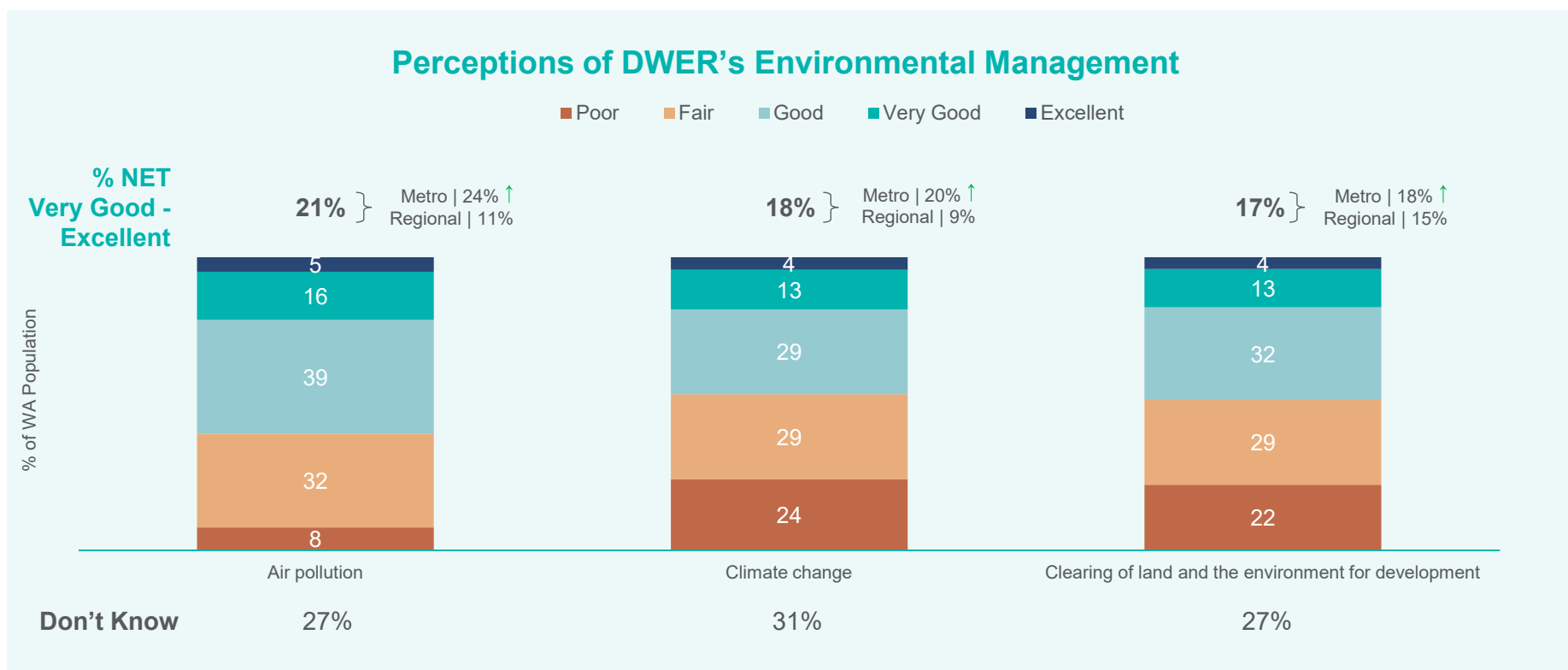
"That an entity I have not heard of is apparently managing our most vital resource - something in that sentence is not right." - Regional



Only a small proportion of the community is aware of what DWER is doing in relation to key environmental issues.



Metro residents rate DWER's management of air pollution, climate change and land clearing more positively than regional residents. However a large proportion of the community is uninformed.



n= 434 | 413 | 435

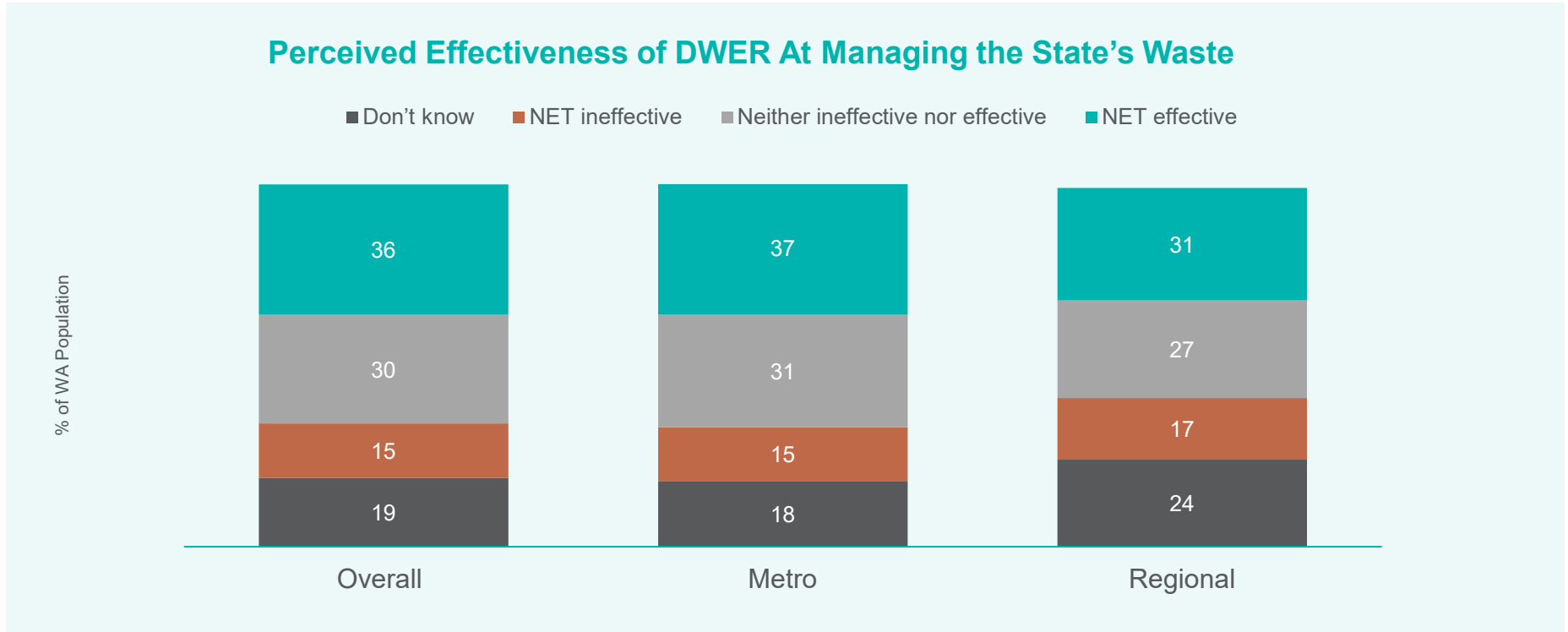
Q9r: Based on everything you have seen, heard or experienced, how well do you feel that DWER is performing regarding the management of the following?

↑↓ Significant difference to regional scores at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

A third of WA residents feel DWER is effective at setting a framework to better manage the State's waste



n= 601 | 401 | 200

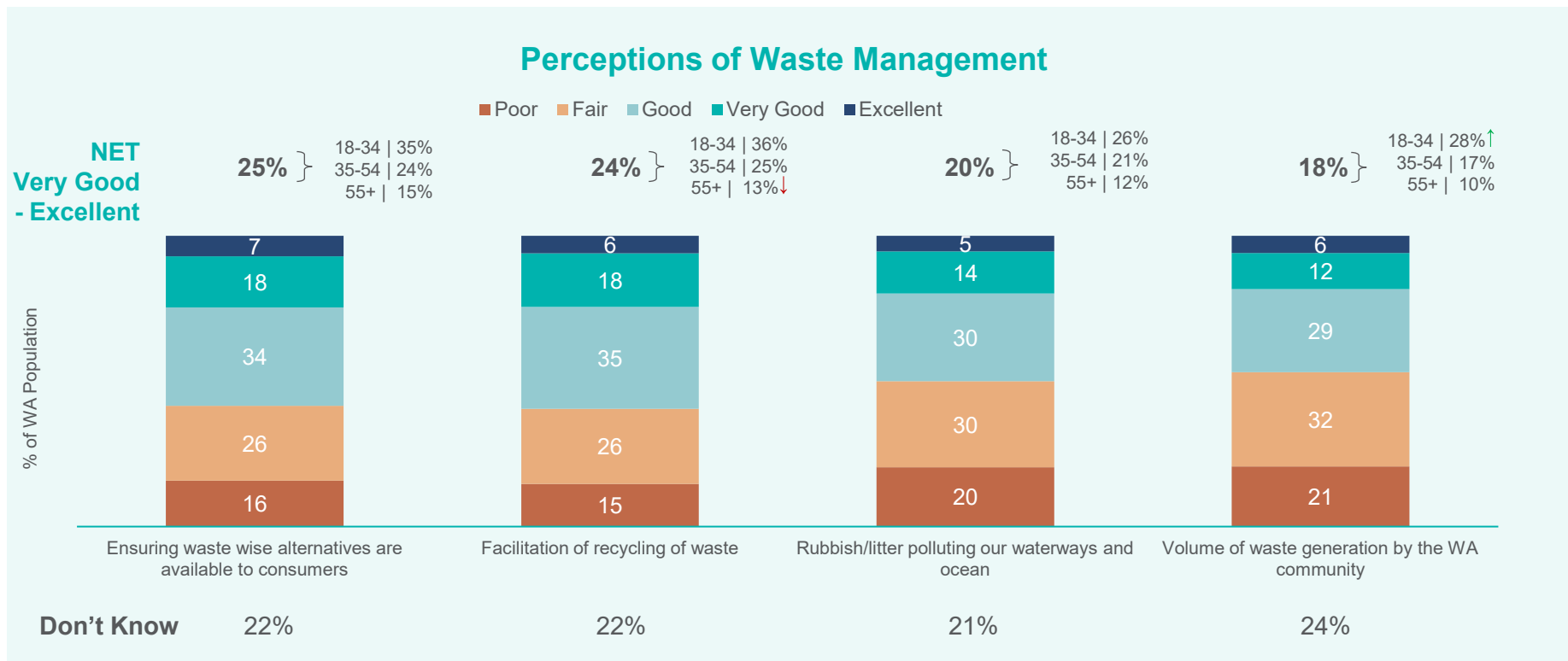
Q8: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in setting the framework for better management of waste including improving the reuse and recycling of waste products?

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

There is limited awareness of DWER's waste management activities



Those aged 18 to 34 are more positive about DWER's waste management performance activities. However one-in-four members of the community do not feel informed enough to provide a rating.



n= 467 | 468 | 473 | 455

Q9r: X- Based on everything you have seen, heard or experienced, how well do you feel that DWER is performing regarding the management of the following

↑↓ Significant difference to other age brackets at 95% confidence

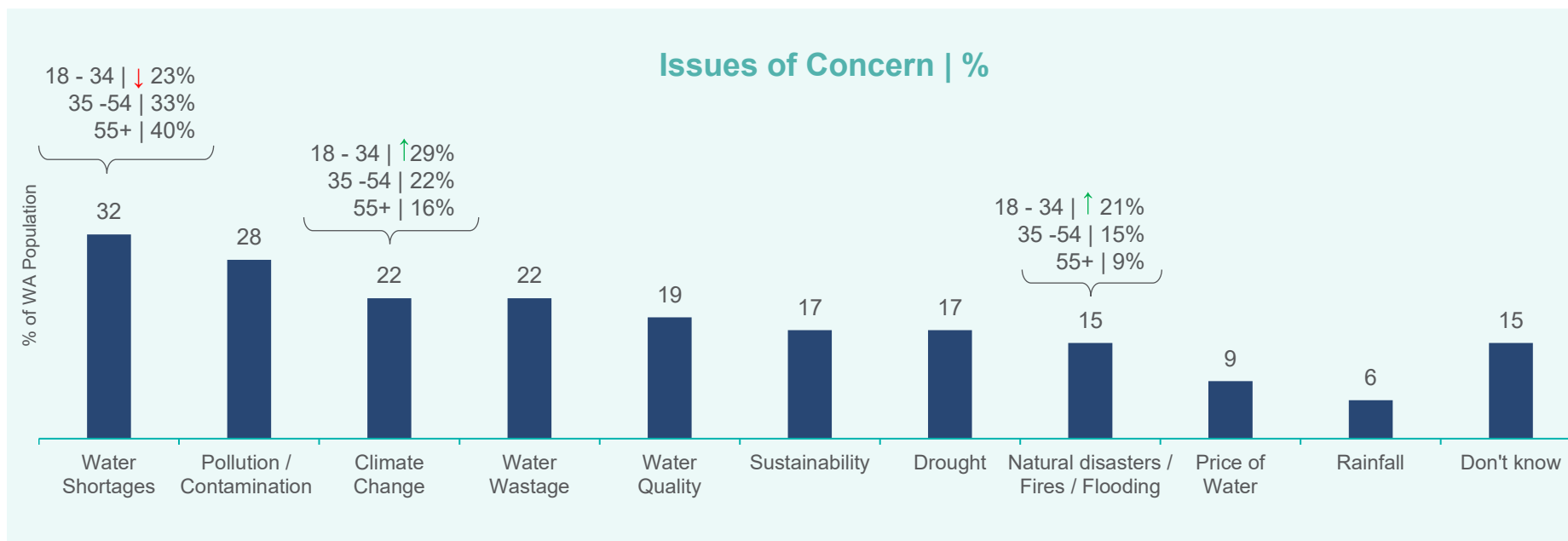
Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

Attitudes Towards Water and Environmental Issues



Overall, water shortages are a key water and environmental concern, with pollution close behind

Those aged 18-34 years of age are more concerned about climate change and natural disasters, while those aged over 55 are more concerned about water shortages.



Overall n= 601 | Metro n= 401 | Regional n= 200

Q1: Thinking about water and the environment, what are the key issues that you are concerned about? Please list up to 3 key issues/concerns.

↑ ↓ Significant difference to overall scores at 95% confidence

Don't know/I have no concerns responses have been removed

In their words...



Water Shortages

"Farmers not having enough water."

- **Metro**

"Overuse of limited water resources."

- **Regional**

"Perth's lack of rain causing the city to run out of water." - **Metro**

"Running out of drinking water."

- **Metro**

"Water shortages for rural areas."

- **Metro**

"Lack of rainfall to sustain growing population." - **Metro**



Pollution/Contamination

"The air we breathe is polluted and a danger to our health." - **Metro**

"Plastic in the sea and oceans."

- **Regional**

"Access to clean water." - **Metro**

"Pollution and emissions." - **Region**

"Microplastics and unknown health implications." - **Metro**

"Water and soil pollution." - **Metro**



Climate Change

"Animal habitats disappearing."

- **Metro**

"Flooding prone areas to fire prone areas." - **Regional**

"Changes in extreme temperatures across Australia." - **Metro**

"Are we planning enough ahead?"

- **Metro**

"The loss of the amount of ice in the North and South Poles." - **Metro**

"I'm concerned about the carbon footprint we are leaving behind."

- **Metro**

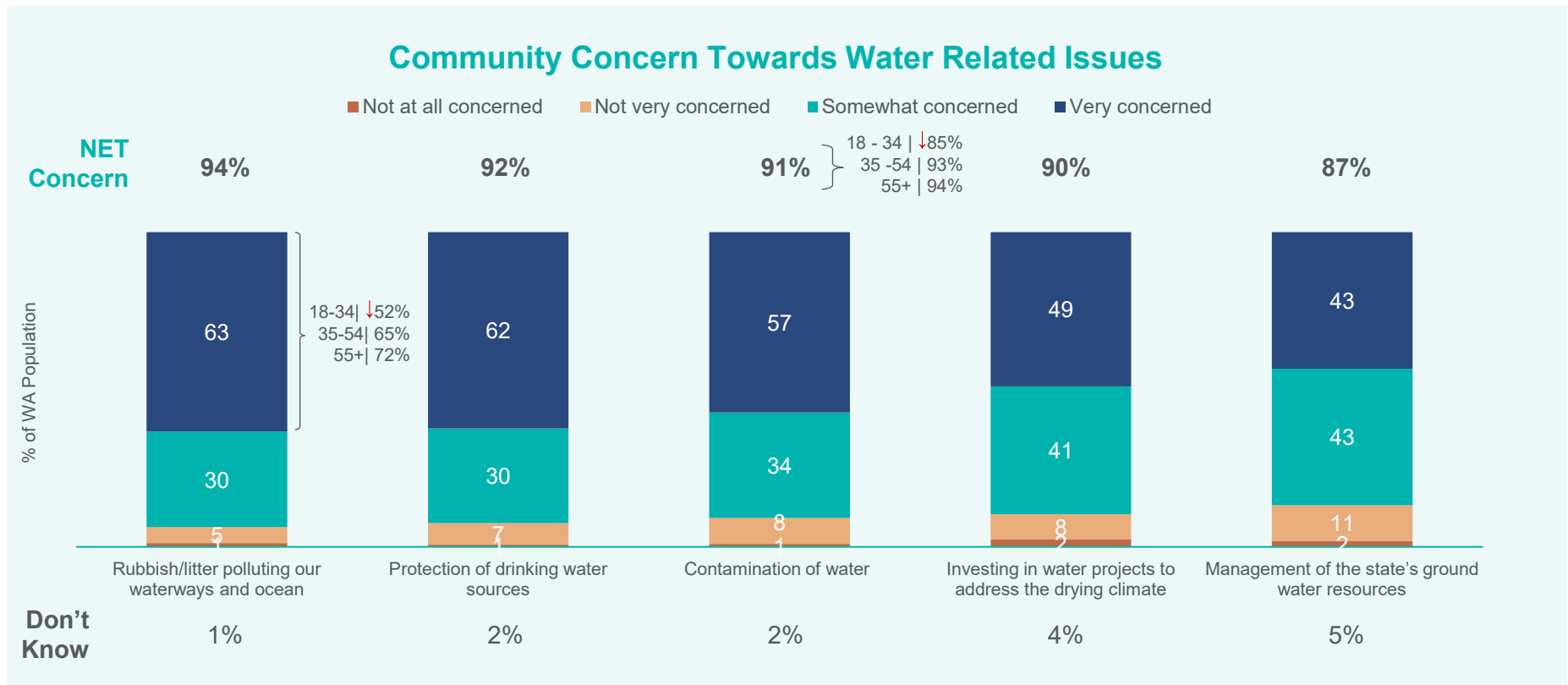
n= 511

Q1: Thinking about water and the environment, what are the key issues that you are concerned about? Please list up to 3 key issues/concerns

Pollution of waterways and protection of drinking water sources are key water related concerns



Concern about water related issues is relatively consistent across demographics, however those aged between 18 and 34 are somewhat less concerned about water contamination than other ages.



n=594 | 590 | 591 | 576 | 570

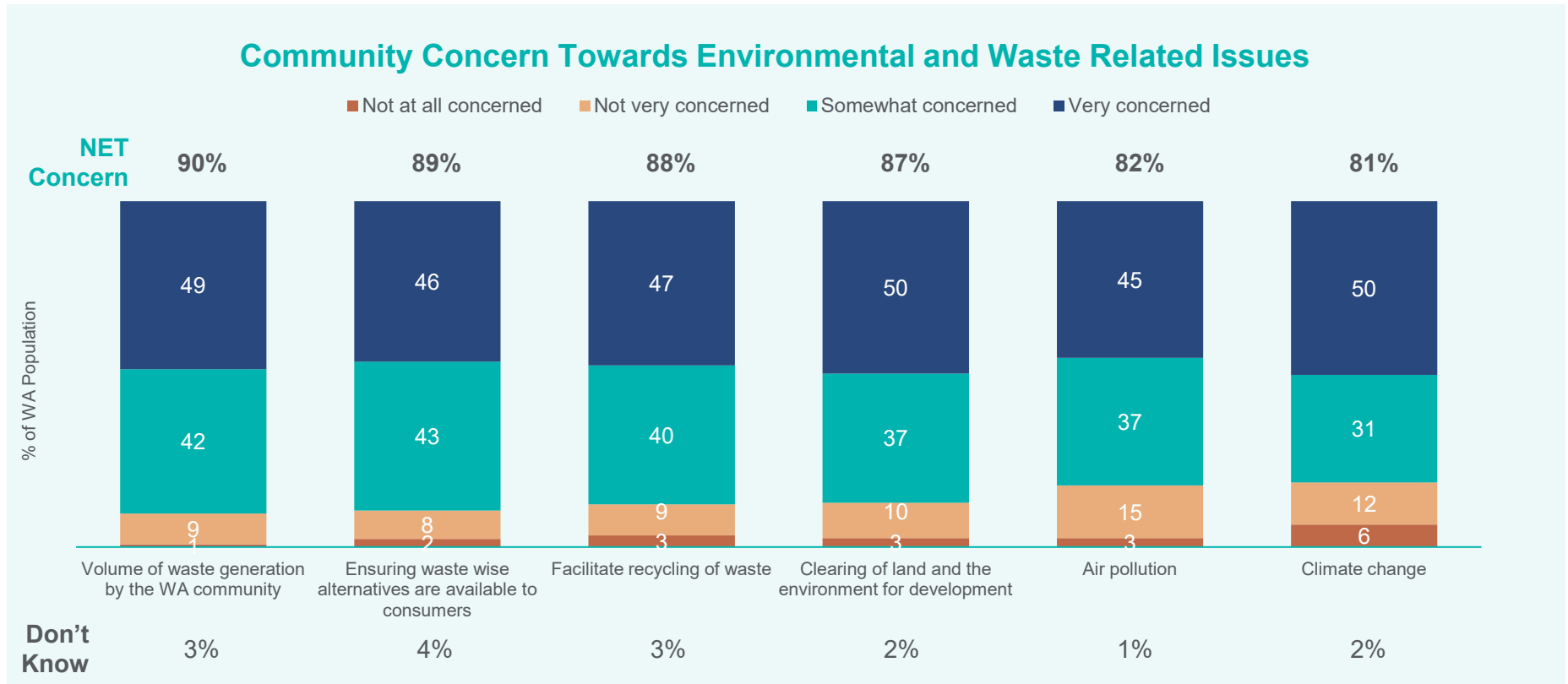
Q2r: How would you rate your level of concern, if any, about each of the following?

↑↓ Significant difference to other age brackets at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

There are also concerns about a range of environmental and waste related issues



n=580 | 576 | 582 | 584 | 591 | 587

Q2r: How would you rate your level of concern, if any, about each of the following?

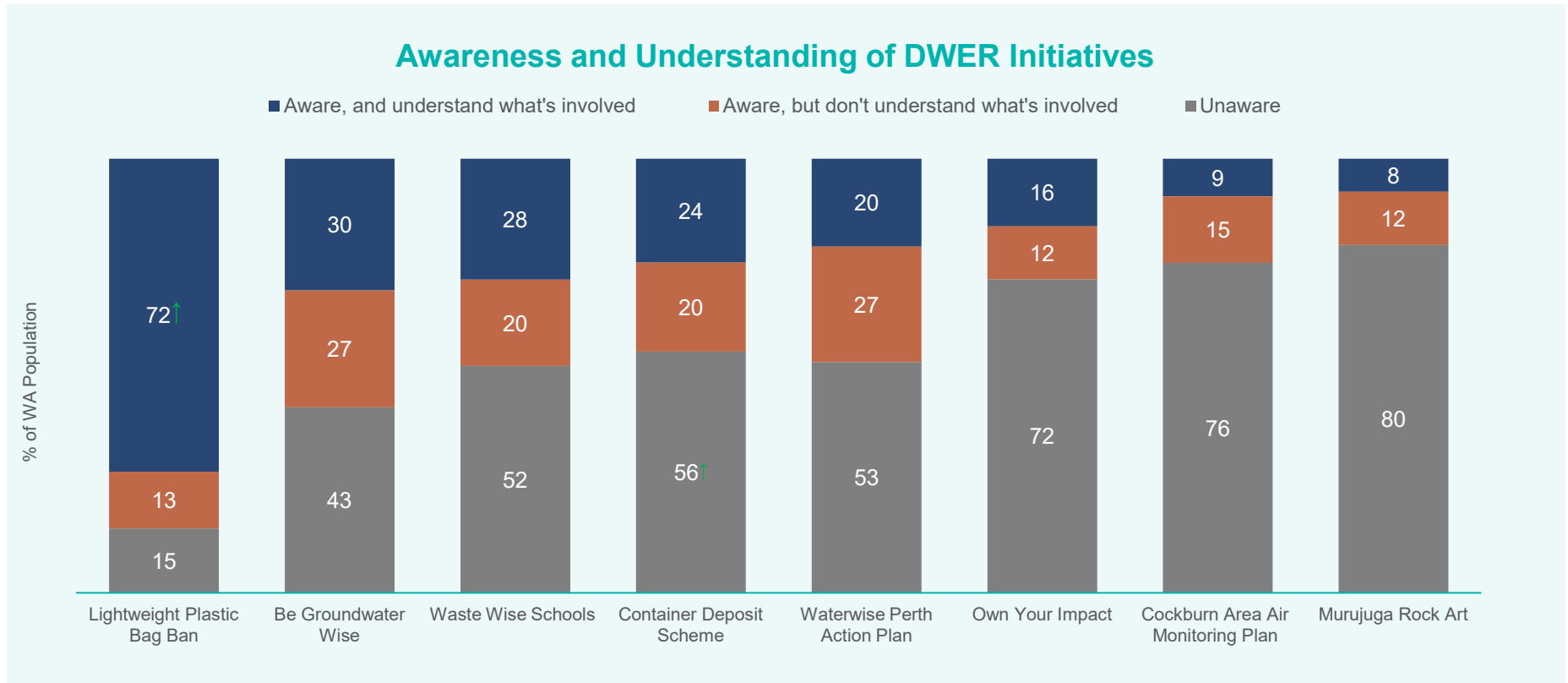
Don't know responses have been removed

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

Awareness of Key Initiatives



Awareness and understanding of key water and environmental programs is limited beyond the lightweight plastic bag ban



n=601

Q11r: Which of the following programs have you seen or heard about before today, specifically in WA

↑↓ Significant difference at 95% confidence level

Metrix Consulting
Melbourne | Perth | Sydney
metrixconsulting.com.au

