

DWER Corporate Research 2021 Community Insights



March 2021

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Scope of Engagement



Background and Objectives

In 2020, DWER undertook a benchmark survey of community attitudes 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 year's consultation were to monitor:

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



Research Approach

An online survey was conducted with residents across Western Australia (WA), between the 16th November and 20th December 2020. A **final sample of n=601** was achieved, providing a **margin of error of +/- 4.00%**, at the 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

	2021			
	Metro		Regional	
	n=	Unweighted %	n=	Unweighted %
Male	189	47	86	43
Female	211	53	115	57
18-34	121	31	39	27
35-54	142	36	75	37
55+	137	33	87	40
Total	400		201	

Summary of Key Insights - *Community*



Key Insights

Community awareness and perceptions of DWER have improved

- Prompted **awareness of DWER has increased** however it is still not top of mind as one of the organisations responsible for coordinating and managing the State's water and environmental resources.
- Community **perceptions of DWER's water, environment and waste management have all improved**, with more positive ratings from both the metro and regional areas of WA.
- **Awareness and understanding of several DWER initiatives has increased this year**, specifically the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) which launched in 2020, Be Groundwater Wise and Own Your Impact.
- While awareness of Own Your Impact has strengthened this year, most likely due to promotional activity that occurred in early 2020, Own Your Impact is currently being phased out and replaced with WasteSorted (which launched in late 2020). This seems to be gaining some headway with the WA Community, with four-in-ten currently recalling the WasteSorted program.



Key Insights

While the order of priority of specific water and environmental issues is the same, some issues were less of a 'major' concern this year

- Most West Australians are concerned about **land and water pollution and how waste is managed**.
- **Water security remains a concern** for the community – including the protection of drinking water, water quality, management of groundwater and investment in water projects to address the drying climate.
- However, compared to last year, they **weren't as likely to be 'very concerned'** about a number of these issues - notably the recycling of waste, water security and investment in water projects to address the drying climate, clearing of land and air pollution.

There are likely to be a number of factors contributing to this year's results

- The launch of some key initiatives in 2020 (Container Deposit Scheme and WasteSorted campaign) and business as usual promotion of Be Groundwater Wise has improved people's confidence that actions are being taken to address these issues.
- While not owned by DWER, Water Corporation's Climate Change campaign has likely contributed to stronger overall ratings this year, given that people don't necessarily distinguish between DWER and Water Corporation. The first phase of the campaign, which ran during the data collection period, included messaging about the impacts of climate change on WA's water supply and the various actions currently being undertaken to address this (e.g., seawater desalination, wastewater recycling to replenishment groundwater, etc).
- COVID-19 shifting the community's concerns and focus towards health, job creation and economic recovery.



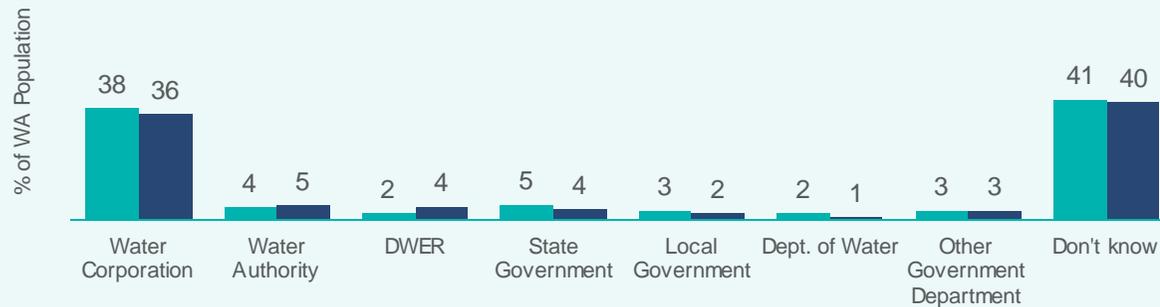
Awareness and Understanding of DWER Services, Roles and Responsibilities



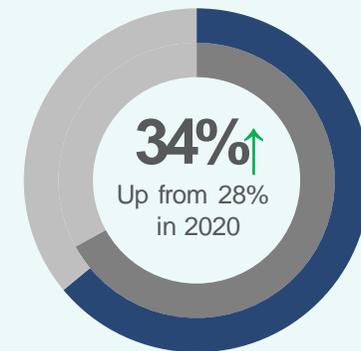
Prompted awareness of DWER has increased this year, however it still isn't top of mind

Unprompted Recall of Organisations Responsible for Water/Environment | Top 7

■ 2020 ■ 2021



Prompted Recall of DWER



	2020	2021
Metro	29%	35% ↑
Regional	23%	31%

2021 n= 601 | 2020 n= 601

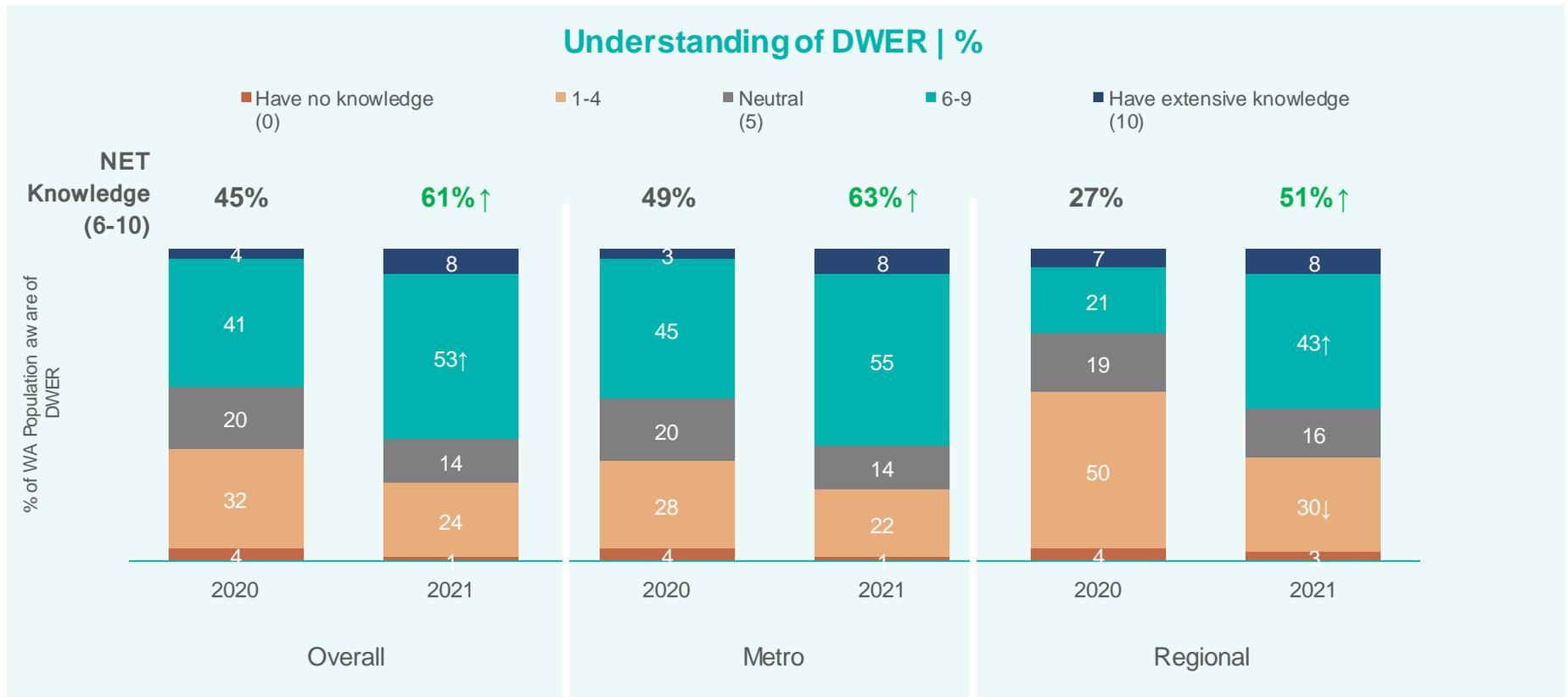
Q3: Which organisations are responsible for coordinating and managing the state's water and environmental resources, including responsibility for water and environmental planning, licensing and legislation and community education about how to improve be?

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

↑ ↓ Significant difference to 2020 scores at 95% confidence

Compared to last year, the community feels more informed about DWER's purpose, roles and responsibilities

Both Metro and Regional West Australians are more knowledgeable about DWER compared to last year and the knowledge gap between metro and regional has narrowed.



2021: WA n=201 | Metro n=140 | Regional n=61

2020: WA n=161 | Metro n=115 | Regional n=46

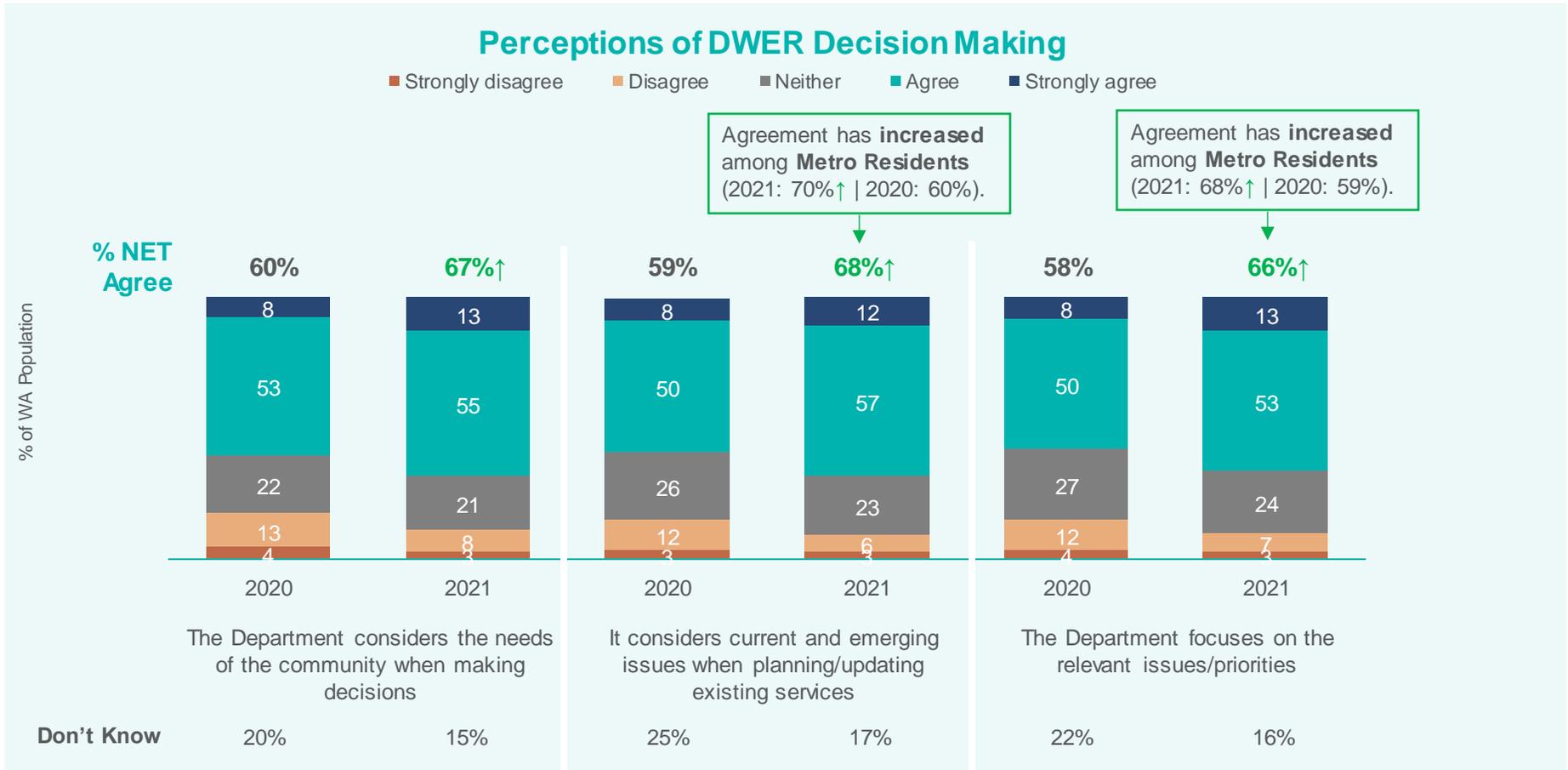
Q5: How would you rate your level of understanding of the purpose, roles and responsibilities of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, also known as DWER?

↑↓ Significant difference to regional scores at 95% confidence

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

The community also rated DWER's decision making more positively this year

This has largely been driven by Metro Residents, who compared to last year are more likely to agree that DWER focuses on the relevant issues/priorities and considers current and emerging issues when planning and updating existing services.



2021: n=505 | 490 | 495

2020: n=485 | 454 | 468

Q10 Thinking now about how DWER makes its decisions, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

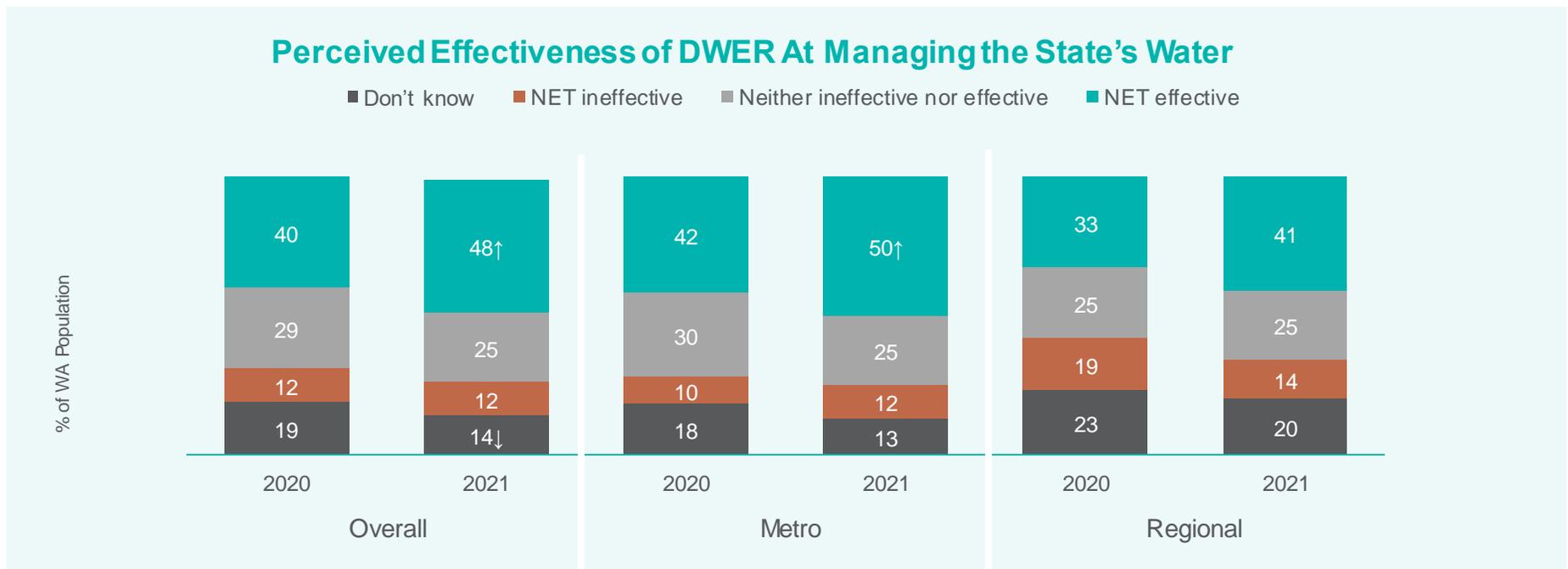
↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 scores at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

Perceived Effectiveness – Water Management



The proportion of people who rate DWER's water management as effective has increased, particularly in the metro area



2021: n= 601 | 400 | 201

2020: n=601 | 401 | 200

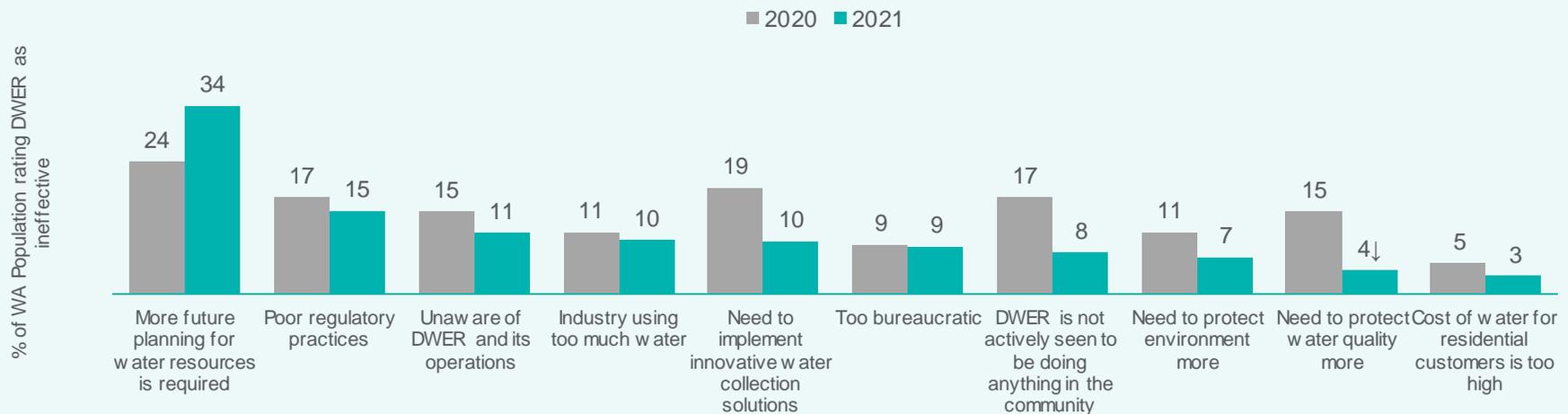
Q6a: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 scores at 95% confidence

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

Those who rate DWER's water management as ineffective would like to see more focus on water security

Reasons for Perceived Ineffectiveness of DWER's Management of Water | Top 10



2021: n= 58 | 2020: 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?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 scores at 95% confidence

In their own words...

More Future Planning for Water Resources is Required

“Overdrawing water from aquifers should be stopped. Increase the amount of recycled treated water for drinking.” **Metro Resident**

“More community availability of sustainable water solutions. Make it mandatory for all new buildings to have water tanks plumbed in for water use.” **Regional Resident**



Poor Regulatory Practices

“People in communities don't seem to change their bad habits when it comes to waste and recycling. It should start with companies to stop producing products that are bad for the environment, so they are not available at all. Whatever DWER is doing it is having no impact at the moment.” **Metro Resident**

“It seems that not all are treated equally. Bigger business are using water in the middle of the day without consequences, while other residential users get fined for accidentally having sprinklers on, on the wrong day.” **Regional Resident**



Unaware of DWER and its Operations

“They are very quiet in the community with getting information to the public, I had no idea that they were a thing.” **Metro Resident**

“I've never heard of them before!” **Metro Resident**



In their own words...

Industry Using Too Much Water

“Water usage in commercial areas is a problem. It seems to be used in an unproductive manner.”

Metro Resident

“Industry use far too much water in my opinion. More should be done to restrict how much they use.”

Regional Resident



Implementing Innovative Water Collection Solutions

“We don’t have enough water to supply our state and not enough is being done to bring down water from the north which gets plenty in the wet season.” **Metro Resident**

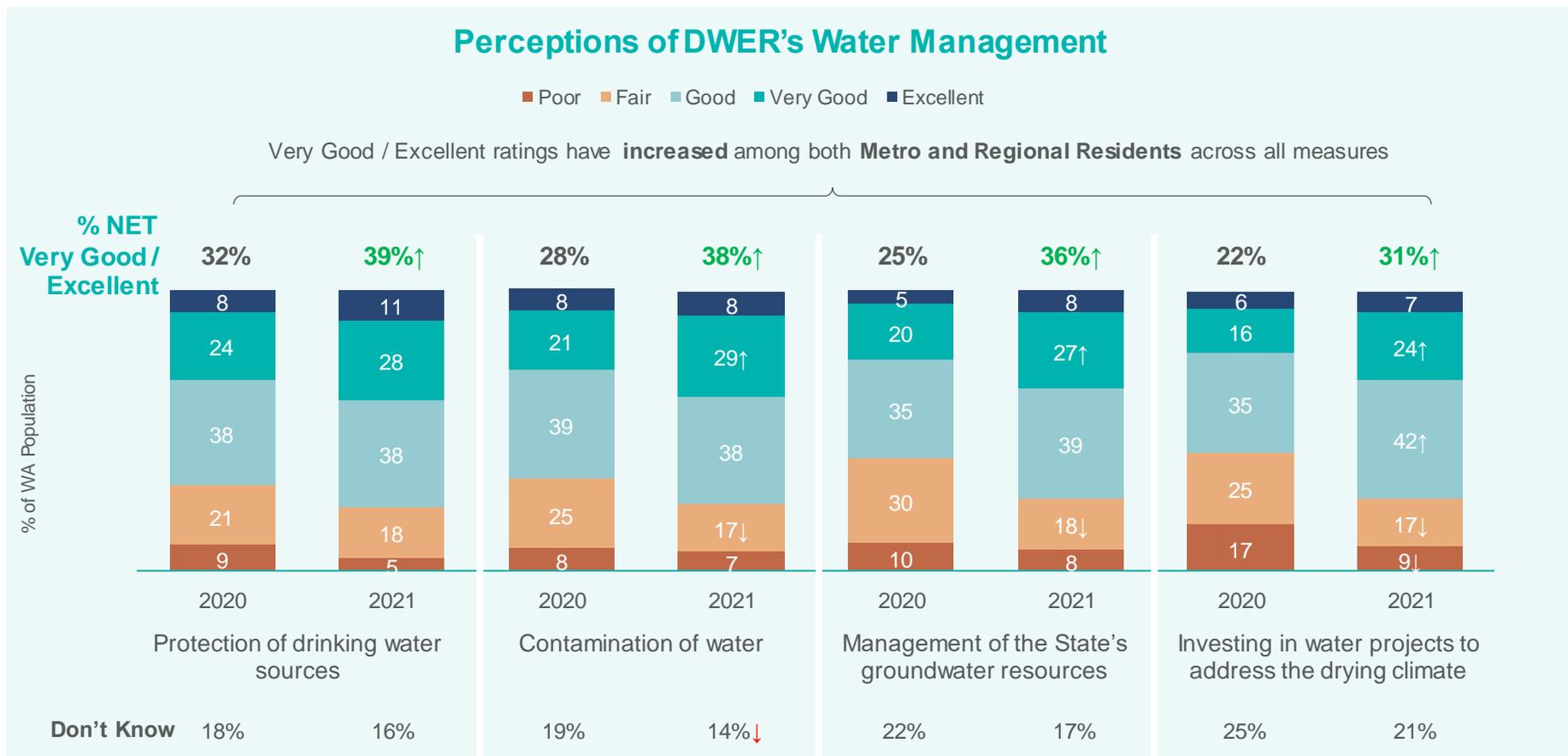
“I’ve read about severe droughts in some parts of WA which is affecting crops and livestock – are DWER doing anything about this? Something needs to be done to help these people out!”

Regional Resident



West Australians were more positive about DWER's water management across a number of criteria this year

This is likely to have been positively influenced by Water Corporation's Climate Change campaign, which was running in the lead up and during the interviewing period.



2021: n=498 | 509 | 486 | 462

2020: 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 2020 scores at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

More positive ratings of DWER's water management came largely from the metro area, with some improvements also in Regional WA

While not owned by DWER, Water Corporation's Climate Change campaign could be contributing to stronger overall ratings. Core messaging within the campaign highlights the impacts of climate change on WA's water supply and the various actions currently being undertaken to address this (e.g., seawater desalination, wastewater recycling to replenishment groundwater, etc).



NET Very Good / Excellent

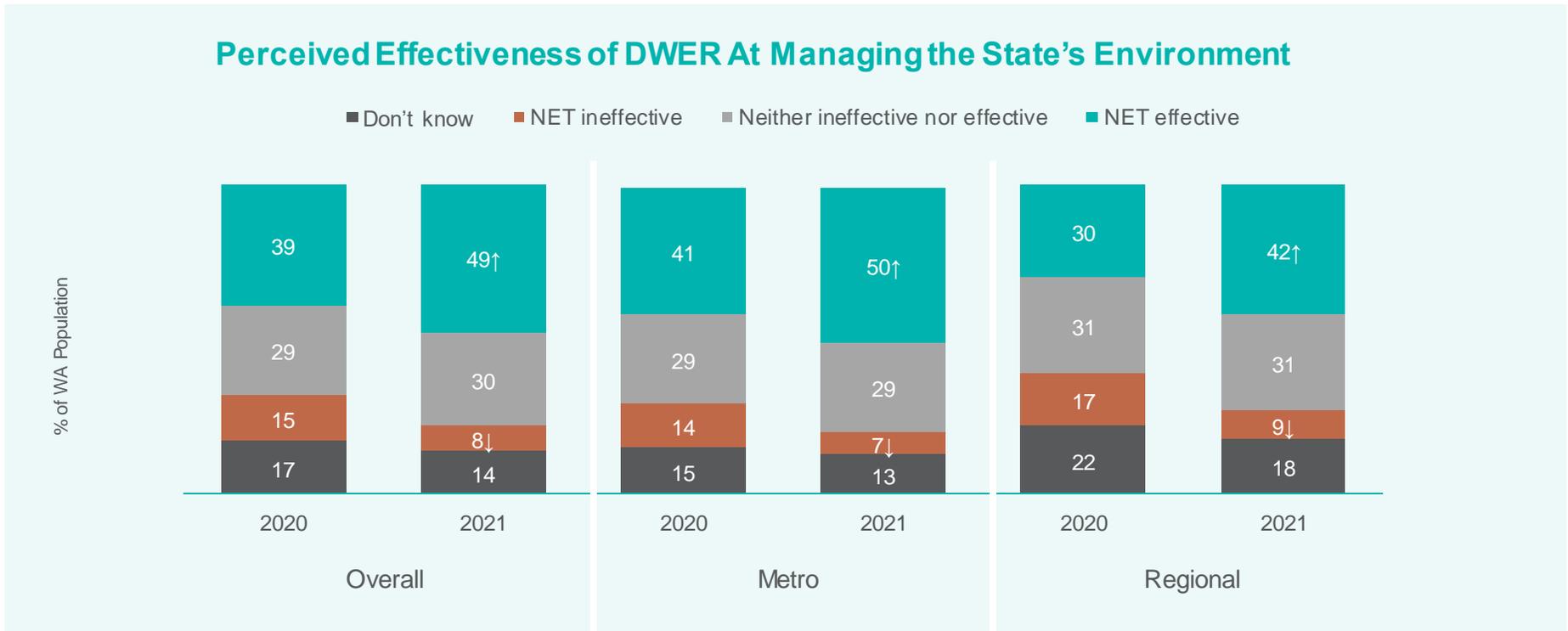
	Metro		Regional	
	2020	2021	2020	2021
 Protection of drinking water sources	33	40↑ <small>(sig at 90% confidence)</small>	30	35
 Contamination of water	29	39↑	28	34
 Management of the state's ground water resources	26	37↑	21	30
 Investing in water projects to address the drying climate	23	31↑	18	31↑

Perceived Effectiveness – Environmental Management



The community also rated DWER's environmental management more positively than last year

Perceptions improved in both the metro and regional area.



2021: n=601 | 400 | 201

2020: n= 601 | 401 | 200

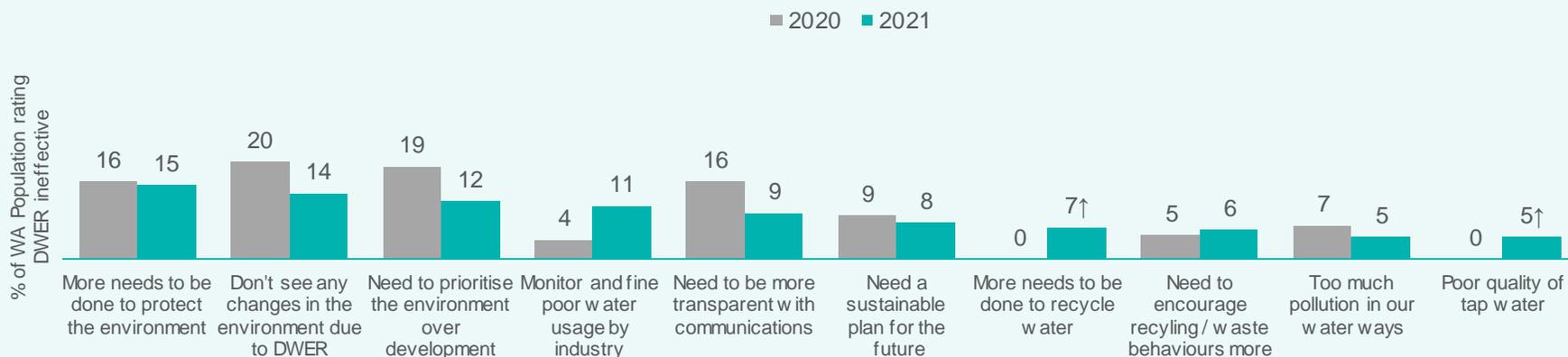
Q7a: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's environment for sustainable productive use?

↑↓ Significant difference to regional scores at 95% confidence

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

Lack of visibility of DWER activities and wanting to see more being done to protect the environment continue to be key reasons why people rate DWER's environmental management as ineffective

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



2021: n=41 | 2020: 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?

Scores under 5% not shown

Don't Know responses removed.

In their own words...

More Needs to be Done to Protect the Environment

“Let’s just look at the Roe highway debacle, both financially and environmentally - cleared important environmentally fragile land and then poisoned it with huge amounts of lime which was then removed and revegetation – DWER did nothing to delay destruction.” **Metro Resident**

“Roads are cutting off natural waterways; more tree planting is required; reclaiming and rehabilitating salt affected land needs to happen as well.” **Regional Resident**



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

“There is no indication that they have achieved anything worthwhile except costing the Government millions of dollars in wages and benefits whilst pretending to be doing something.” **Metro Resident**

“I haven’t really seen anything change.” **Regional Resident**



Need to Prioritise the Environment over Development

“Because all the trees are being cut down in my town for development.” **Regional Resident**

“The tearing down of bushland to build residential housing is getting worse on a weekly basis. The environment doesn’t stand a chance while this keeps happening.” **Metro Resident**



In their own words...

Monitor and Fine Poor Water Use

“Irrigation of agriculture is wasting a lot of water. Make industry water wise and fine them when they’re not.” **Metro Resident**

“Really need to regulate ground water usage by big companies which should be able to recycle their own water waste. There are salinity issues in agriculture and there should be mandatory nature corridors in broad acre farming and new subdivisions that are built.” **Metro Resident**



Need to be More Transparent with Communications

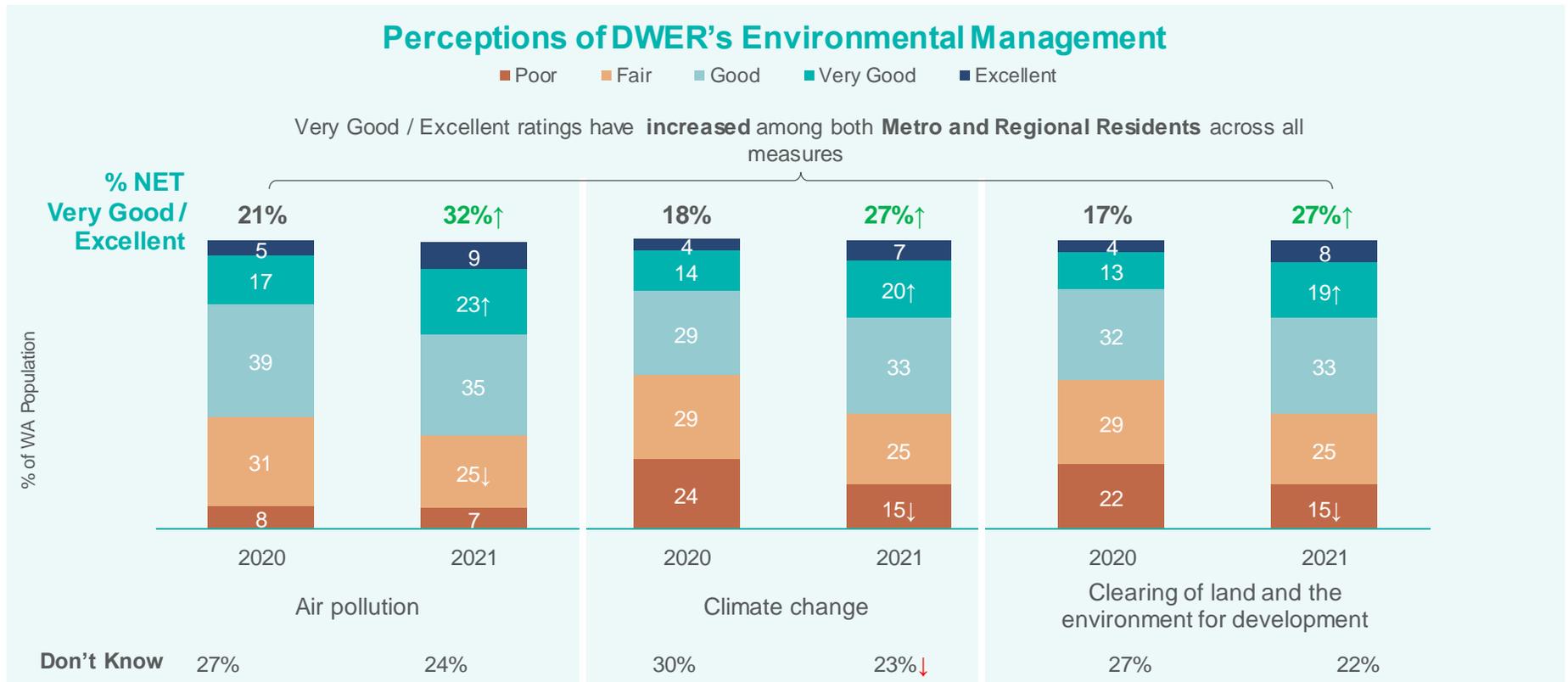
“They need to provide more information on what DWER is doing to manage resources in WA.” **Metro Resident**

“When big projects that are going to impact the environment come up, there is very little information about the pro's and con's of the project put forward to the public to make an informed judgement.” **Metro Resident**



Compared to 2020, the community now rates DWER's management of air pollution, climate change and land clearing more favourably

However, more than a quarter of residents do not feel sufficiently informed to rate DWER's performance in managing these issues.



2021: n=447 | 455 | 460

2020: 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 2020 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

Overall perceptions of DWER's management of key environmental issues have improved in both Metro and Regional WA

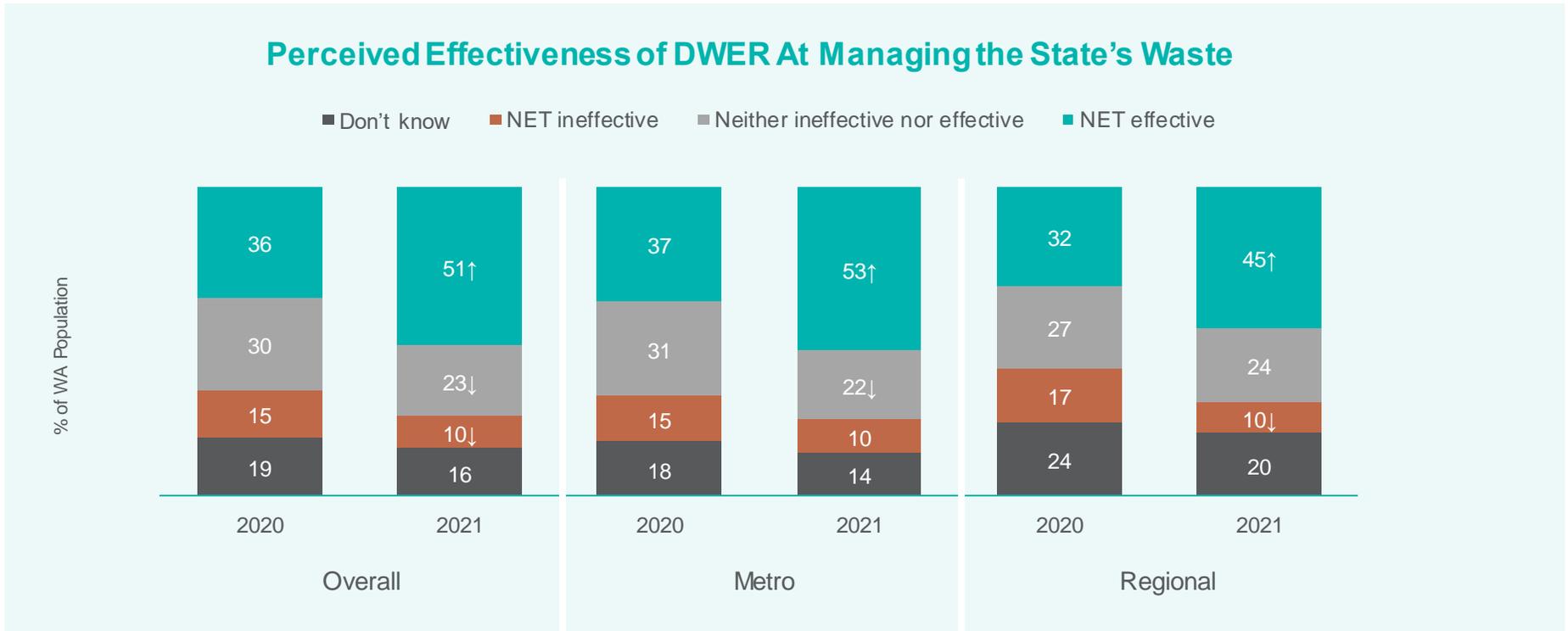


NET Very Good / Excellent

	Metro		Regional	
	2020	2021	2020	2021
 Air pollution	24%	34%↑	12%	26%↑
 Climate change	20%	27%↑	10%	28%↑
 Clearing of land and the environment for development	18%	27%↑	15%	26%↑

The proportion of people who rated DWER's waste management as effective has increased

Metro and Regional Residents were both more likely to rate DWER's waste management as effective this year.



2021: n= 601 | 400 | 201
 2020: n= 601 | 401 | 200

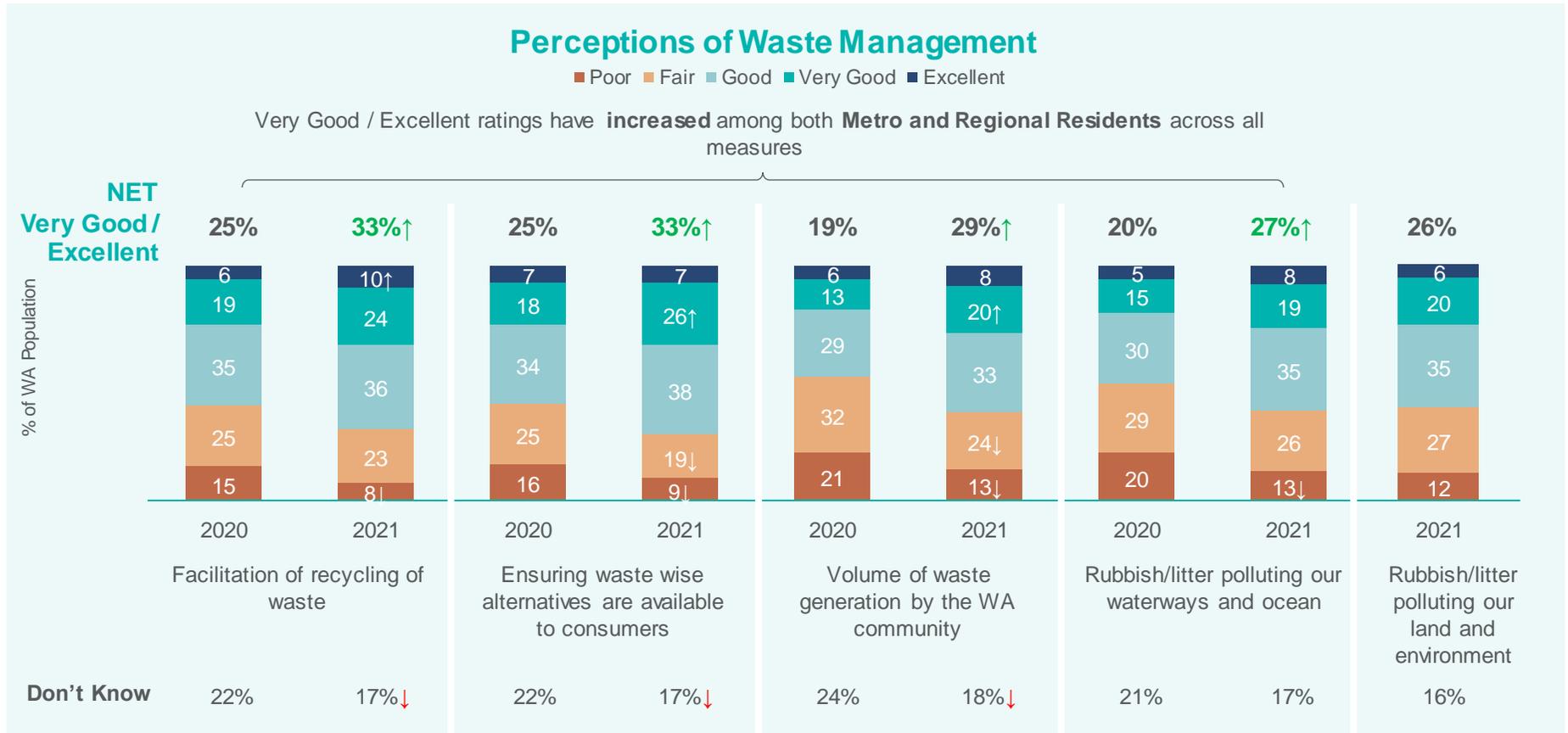
Q8: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in setting the framework for better management of waste including improving the reuse and recycling of waste products?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 scores at 95% confidence

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

The community rated DWER's management of a number of waste related issues more positively this year

A smaller proportion of 'don't know' ratings also suggests that people felt more informed and comfortable rating DWER's performance.



2021: n= 491 | 494 | 483 | 494 | 495
 2020: 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 2020 scores at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

Rubbish/litter polluting our land and environment was not asked in 2020

Improvements in both Metro and Regional WA contributed to stronger overall ratings

Improvements in perceptions of facilitating the recycling of waste has likely been contributed to by the recent roll out of the Containers for Change Scheme across WA. This has also likely had a halo affect across other measures. Other initiatives such as Own Your Impact, FOGO kerbside collection roll-outs and WasteSorted are also likely contributing to improved ratings this year.



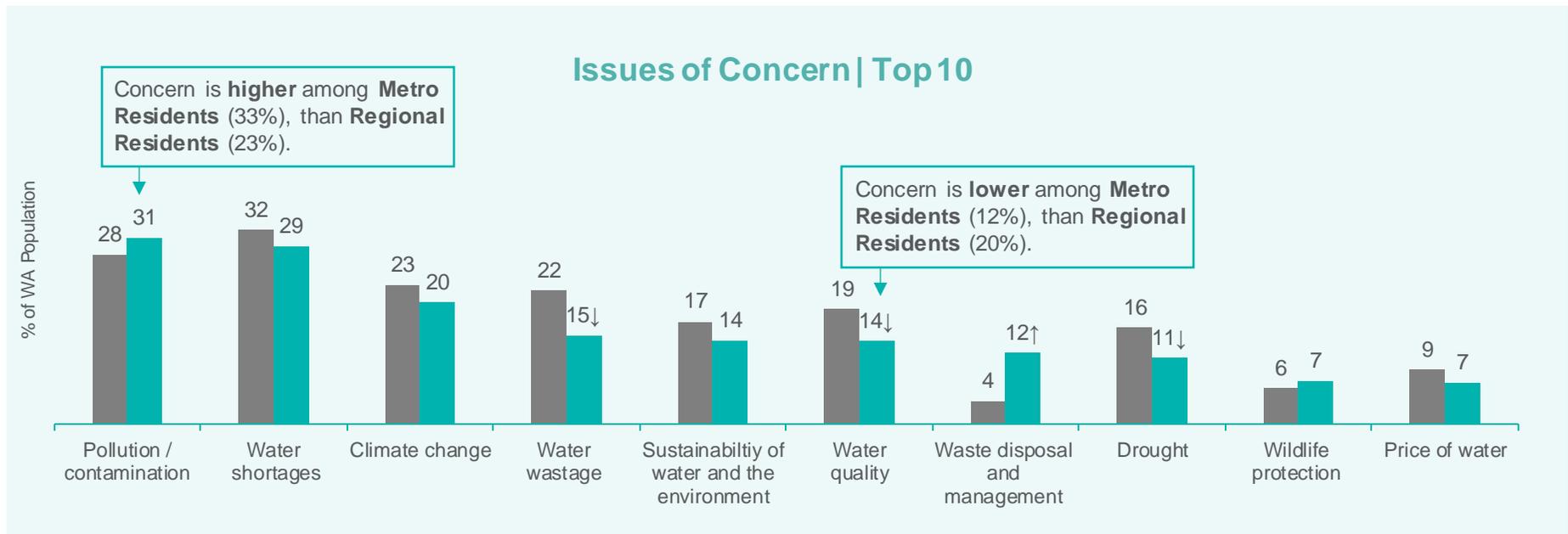
NET Very Good / Excellent

	Metro		Regional	
	2020	2021	2020	2021
 Facilitation of recycling of waste	25	33↑	24	35↑
 Ensuring waste wise alternatives are available to consumers	25	33↑	24	34↑
 Volume of waste generation by the WA community	20	29↑	15	28↑
 Rubbish/litter polluting our waterways and ocean	21	27↑ <small>(sig at 90% confidence)</small>	16	27↑
 Rubbish/litter polluting our land and environment	-	26	-	26

Attitudes Towards Water and Environmental Issues



Top of mind, pollution and water shortages continue to be the key water and environmental concerns for West Australians



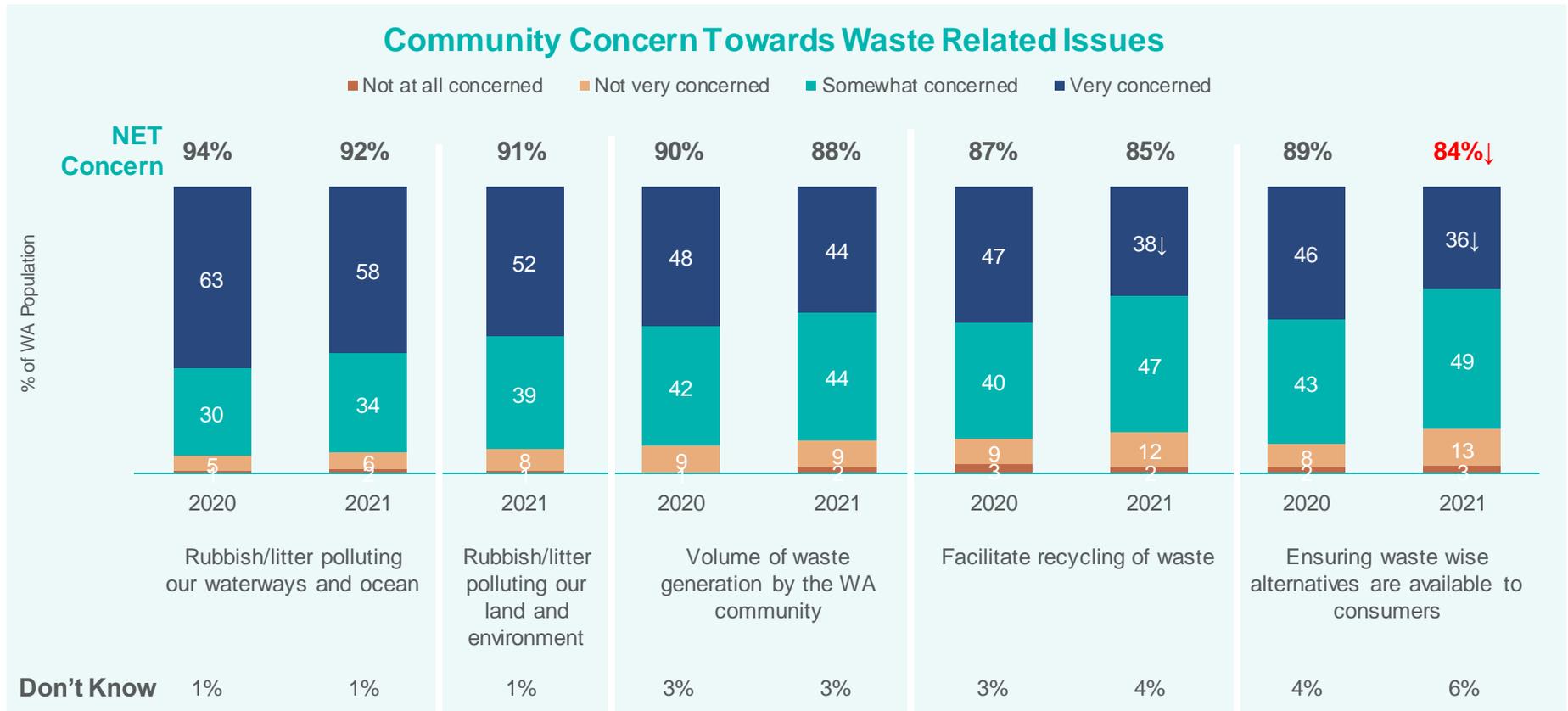
2021: n=601 | 2020: n=601

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 2020 scores at 95% confidence

Most West Australians are concerned about land and water pollution and how waste is managed

Facilitating the recycling of waste is not as big a concern this year, most likely due to Containers for Change and WasteSorted launching in 2020. Ensuring waste wise alternatives are available to customers is less of a concern to Metro Residents compared to last year (2021: 85%↓ | 2020: 90%).



2021: n=577 | 586 | 588

2020: n=584 | 587 | 591

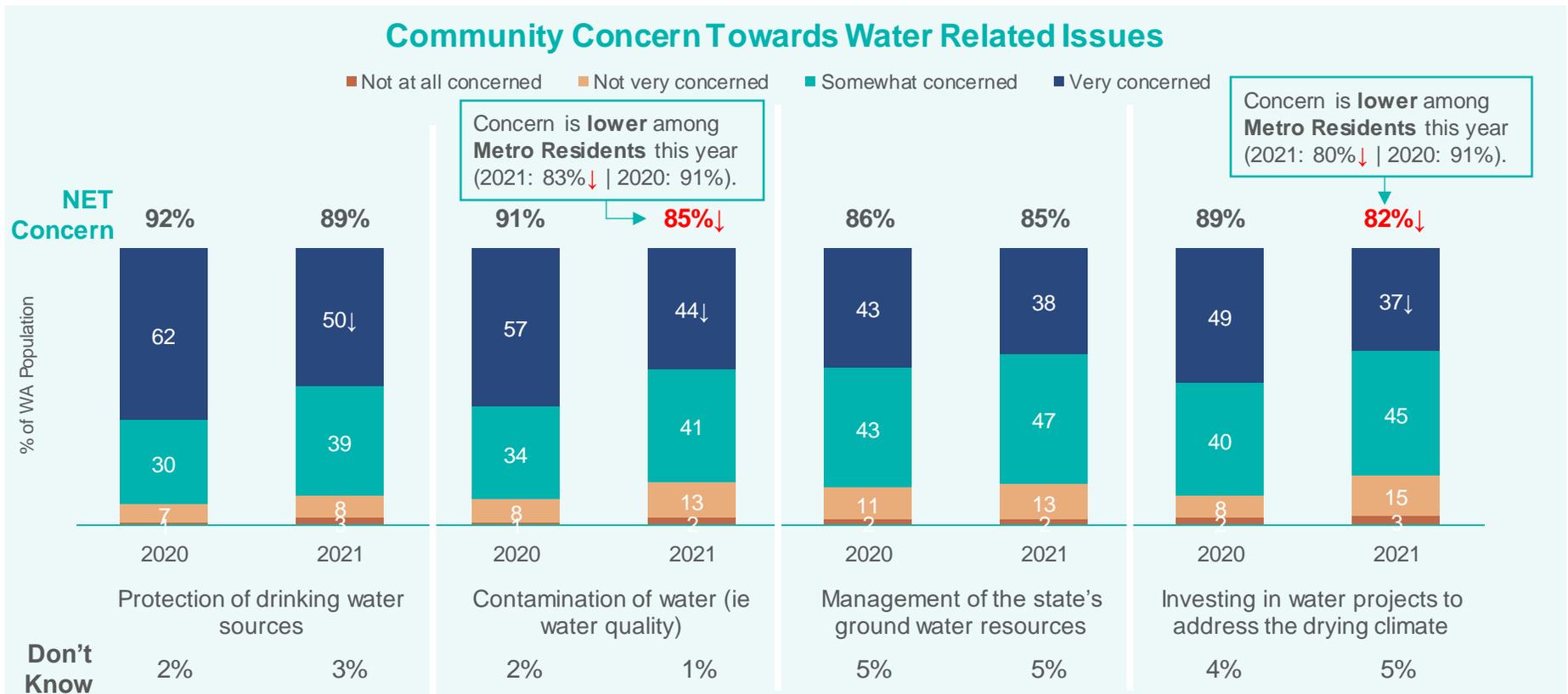
Q2r: How would you rate your level of concern, if any, about each of the following?

Don't know responses have been removed

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

Water security continues to be a key concern for the community

While the proportion of WA Residents concerned about water contamination and investing in water projects to address the drying climate has declined, largely driven by Metro Residents, they both remain key issues.



2021: n=584 | 593 | 570 | 567
 2020: n=590 | 591 | 570 | 576

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

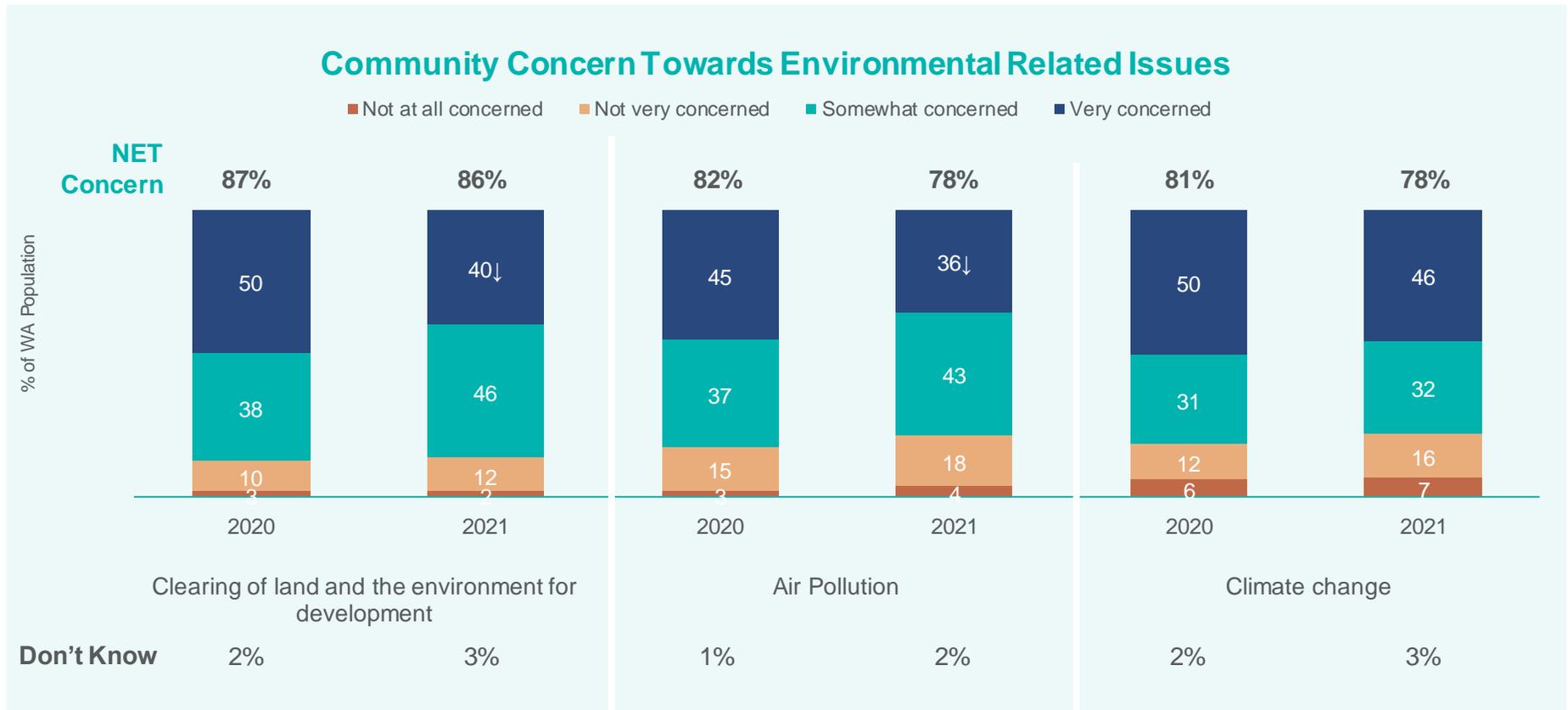
↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 scores at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed

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

West Australians are also concerned about a number of environmental issues

However, concern about the clearing of land and air pollution is not as high as last year. Concern about climate change has softened among Metro Residents this year, (2021: 76%↓ | 2020: 82%).



2021: n=577 | 586 | 588

2020: n=584 | 587 | 591

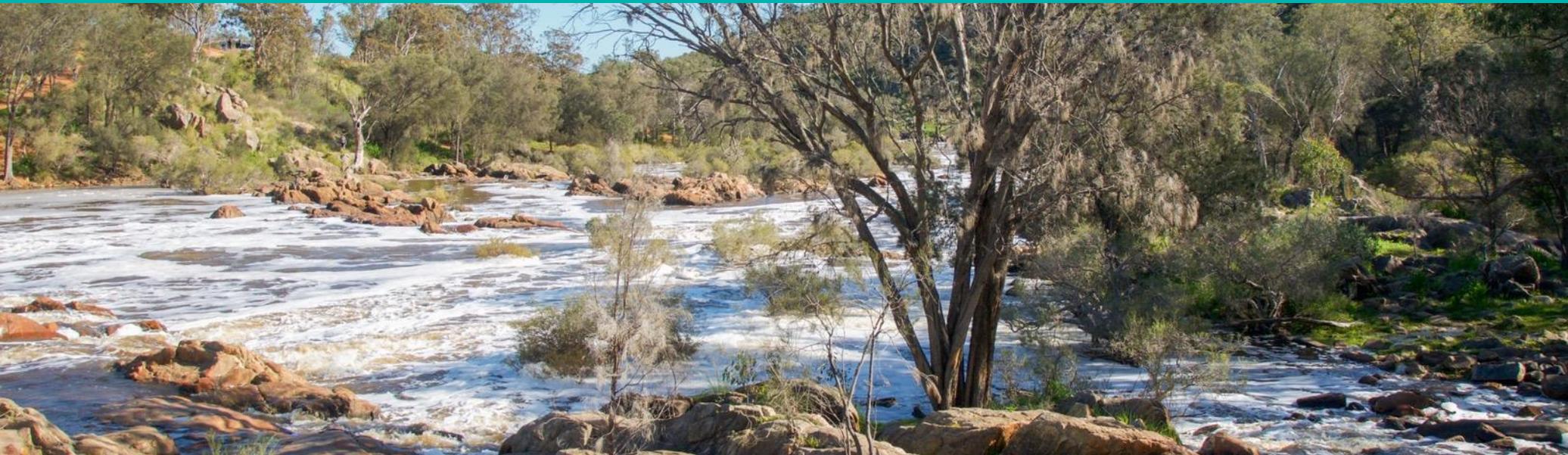
Q2r: How would you rate your level of concern, if any, about each of the following?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 scores at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed

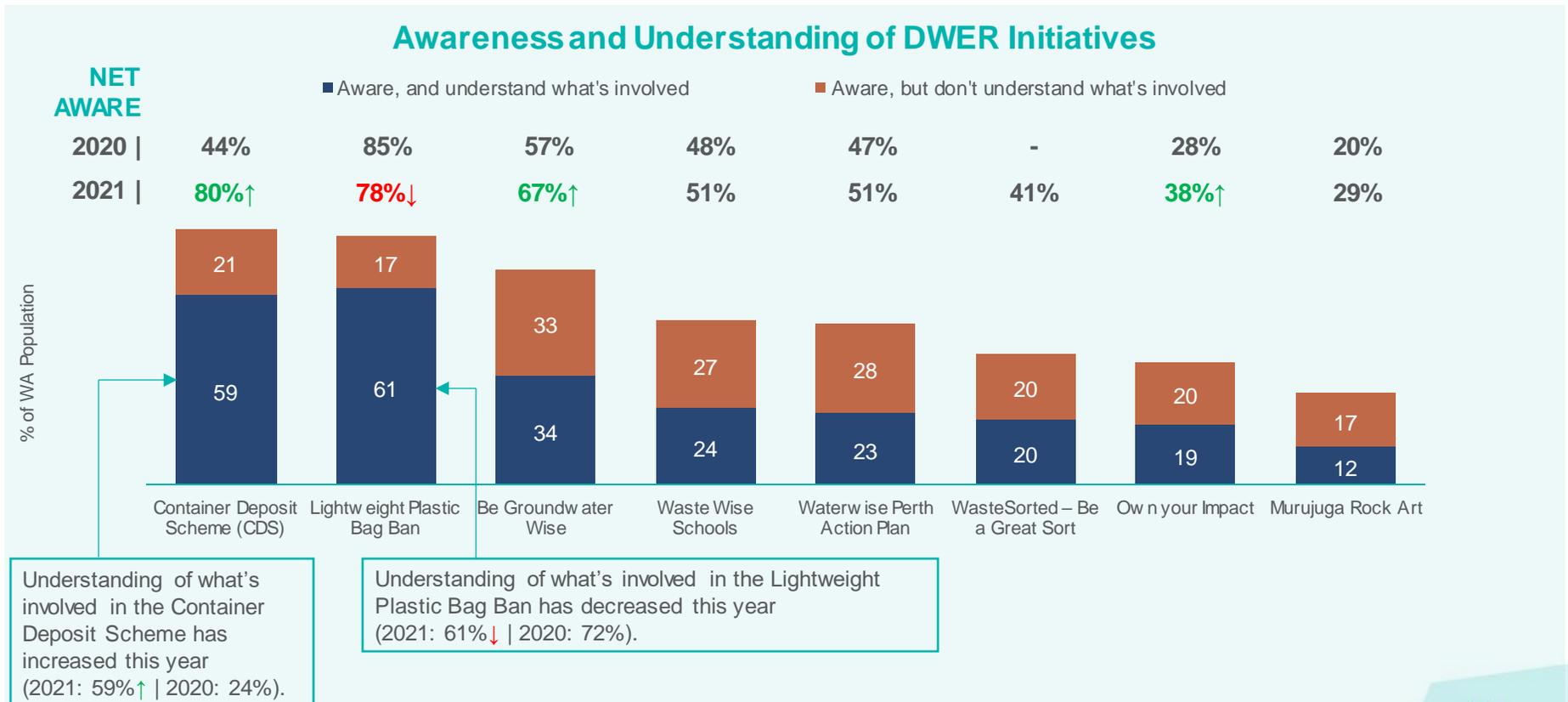
Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

Awareness of Key Initiatives



Awareness and understanding of the Container Deposit Scheme, Be Groundwater Wise and Own Your Impact has increased this year

However, awareness and understanding of DWER initiatives continues to be varied and limited, with most only aware of the Container Deposit Scheme and Lightweight Plastic Bag Ban.



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