

# DWER Corporate Research 2022

## Stakeholder, Customer & Community Insights



**February 2022**

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# Scope of Engagement





# Research Overview

DWER undertakes annual Stakeholder, Customer and Community research to fulfil KPI reporting requirements and inform business planning. This includes:

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

This report summarises the 2022 findings across all three audiences. Standalone reports for each audience have also been provided.



# Research Objectives

The specific informational objectives of this year's research were to monitor:



	Stakeholders	Customers	Community
Overarching perceptions of DWER as an organisation	✓	✓	
Awareness and understanding of DWER services, roles and responsibilities	✓	✓	✓
Perceived effectiveness of managing the State's water and environmental resources for sustainable productive use	✓	✓	✓
Perceptions of DWER's knowledge, expertise and decision making	✓	✓	✓
Perceptions of the Department's communications and engagement	✓	✓	
Attitudes towards water and environmental issues	✓	✓	✓
Awareness of key initiatives			✓

# Scope of Engagement



**Online and  
telephone survey**

n=396 achieved sample



**Online survey**

n=307 achieved sample



**Online survey**

n=604 achieved sample  
(n=403 metro, n=201  
regional WA)

Data collection: 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

A more detailed description of the scope of engagement and methodology for each of the Stakeholder, Customer and Community surveys is provided in the detailed report for each key audience.



# Summary of Key Insights – Stakeholders, Customers and Community



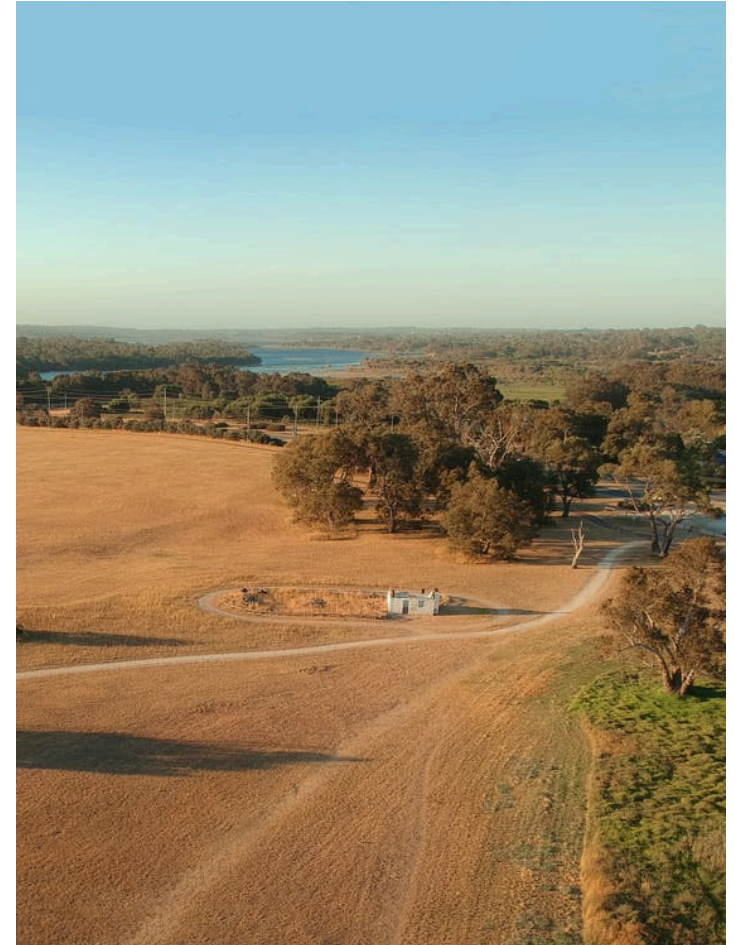
# Key Insights

DWER's stakeholder management framework and increased focus on relationship management since 2019 continues to have a positive impact on Stakeholder perceptions

## Stakeholders

- Since 2020, Stakeholder perceptions that DWER **provides valuable advice and recommendations** and that **DWER is easy to deal with** have improved.
- **Engagement, responsiveness** and **good long-term relationships** were more top of mind as reasons for positive ratings of DWER this year.
- The overall perceptions of **Top Priority/Key Stakeholders** (the most actively relationship managed people and organisations with influence over the Department's policy, budget bids and initiatives) have improved in the last two years. They were also more favourable about DWER's **water management** this year and of the balance it achieves between **environmental management** and development.

These results suggest that despite the transition to new Relationship Managers for many Stakeholders in the last 12 months, this has been well managed and not had a negative impact on overall perceptions of DWER.





# Key Insights

However, transactional Customer perceptions of DWER were less positive this year and sentiment continues to vary depending on the type of customer

## Customers

- The proportion of customers who say they **feel negative** towards DWER has incrementally increased across most customer types since 2020.
- As a result, the proportion of customers who feel that DWER provides **valuable advice and recommendations** or that it **considers current and emerging issues** has declined.
- Customer Perceptions of the Department's ability to effectively **manage the state's environment** for sustainable productive use is also trending downwards.
- Reasons for negative sentiment are a combination of:
  - DWER's **decision making** – specifically perceptions of unfair regulations and an inconsistent approach to how these are applied, limited focus on the environment, not providing enough advice and direction and not being sufficiently practical or flexible in its approach.
  - **Customer service and relationship management** themes– a perceived lack of understanding of business needs, timeliness of response/final outcomes, lack of transparency, poor consultation and limited digital capacity are contributing to an unsatisfactory relationship with DWER.
- **Clearing Permit Customers** are still the least satisfied; their satisfaction with their relationship with DWER is weaker than it was in 2020 and they are still the most likely to rate DWER as very difficult to deal with. They are more likely than other customers to feel that DWER tends towards environmental protection over development.
- **Industry Licensing Customers** are also less positive about their relationship with DWER this year - they are increasingly feeling that DWER is tending towards protection of water over development.
- Unlike other customer groups, overall sentiment towards DWER among **Water Licensees** has incrementally improved. They also feel more informed about DWER's purpose, roles and responsibilities, even though their self rated knowledge remains lower than other customer types.

This reinforces the need to consider what customer service and relationship management looks like for DWER in the context of the Department being both a service provider and regulator. Consider the reasons for negative sentiment to address the challenges Stakeholders and Customers face in relation to DWER's decision making processes (e.g. the timeliness of decisions/approvals and clearer explanations about why certain decisions are made).

# Key Insights

At a community level, most of the improvements in perceptions of DWER between 2020 and 2021 were sustained this year

## Community

- Community perceptions of **how DWER makes its decisions** have continued to improve. In the last two years, the proportion of people who feel that DWER focuses on relevant and emerging issues and considers the needs of the community have increased.
- **Regional Western Australians** were more positive about DWER and its water, environmental and waste management this year.
- Prompted **awareness of DWER** held steady at three in ten this year, although top of mind recall of DWER as one of the organisations responsible for coordinating and managing the State's water and environmental resources is still low (5% state-wide).
- Community awareness of **DWER initiatives** was steady this year, led by awareness and understanding of the *Container Deposit Scheme* and *Lightweight Plastic Bag Ban*.
- Over four in ten say they are aware of the *Plan for Plastics* which launched this year.
- The proportion of people saying they **understand the CDS** has increased as the scheme enters its second year.

Consider whether DWER branded communications about key initiatives could help to improve community awareness of DWER as a key organisation responsible for managing the State's water and environmental resources.



# Key Insights

There are opportunities to address the reasons why DWER is considered ineffective in its core water, environmental and waste management functions

## Stakeholders, Customers, Community

- **Water security** (management of the state's groundwater resources, protecting drinking water sources and investing in projects to address the drying climate) remains a priority for all three audiences.
- Perceptions that DWER's long term planning and monitoring / enforcement of water use are inadequate continue to be driving the view that DWER is ineffective at **managing the state's water resources**. Lack of a balanced approach and being too reliant on modelling rather than actual data is also contributing to a perception that DWER's water management is not fair or equitable.
- In terms of environmental management, **climate change** has increased in importance this year among Stakeholders. This is not surprising given an increased focus on Climate Change and environment on the issues agenda for Business and Government in the last 12 months.
- Being too focused on development (allowing too much clearing of land, the environment not being sufficiently protected) lack of a strategic approach and lack of enforceable policies were the key reasons for DWER's **environmental management** being described as ineffective this year. As a result, it was common for customers to say they wanted to see a change in the legislation and more consistency in the approvals processes.
- Although Stakeholders, Customers and the Community are increasingly favourable about DWER's effectiveness in **managing the state's waste**, there is still a large proportion of the community concerned about rubbish polluting our land and waterways and about the volume of waste being generated. Suggestions to improve the effectiveness of DWER's waste management include:
  - more support for LGAs and industry to meet their waste strategy targets.
  - increased support for recycling and (e.g., education, guidelines) and initiatives to optimise the recycling process more generally.



# Key Insights

**Although the transition to new Relationship Managers appears to have been handled well, Stakeholders continue to experience challenges with the timeliness of response to their business needs**

## Stakeholders

- Among Top Priority/Key Stakeholders, ratings of **access to appropriate people at DWER** were not as high this year. Positively, this does not appear to have impacted negatively on overall perceptions but is likely due to the transition to new Relationship Managers this year. This reinforces the need to keep building on these relationships this year.
- The **timeliness of communications and decisions** continue to receive lower ratings than other aspects of DWER's customer service and relationship management.
- Stakeholders therefore most commonly said they would like to see **more resources** to improve the timeliness of decision making and communications, more engagement, as well as better access to the right people at DWER.
- This year, they also commonly wanted to see an improvement in the online experience, including better resolution of online issues. Over half of all stakeholders believe an **online portal (Environment Online)** will improve their interactions with DWER.

Consider how best to incorporate Stakeholder feedback about access and timeliness of response into your Stakeholder Management plans and continue to share any lessons learned as part of the quarterly Corporate Executive relationship management forums.



# Key Insights

**Transactional customers also experience issues with ease of access and timeliness of response to their requests and applications**

## Customers

- Opportunities exist across all elements of customer service, with poor and fair ratings making up approximately half of ratings. Improving the **timeliness of outcomes and communications** and **making it easier** for customers to know who to contact/how to access DWER services should be key priorities.
- Over four in ten customers feel that **Environment Online** will improve their interactions with DWER, suggesting this could help those seeking greater online capacity. However, one in three are unsure if it will have a positive impact and others still expect more face to face engagement opportunities.

Focus on making it easier for Customers to interact with the Department. Ensure clear communications when Environment Online is launched and be prepared to manage expectations, as some Customers may be resistant to change and still expect to speak directly with staff.



# Overall Perceptions of DWER



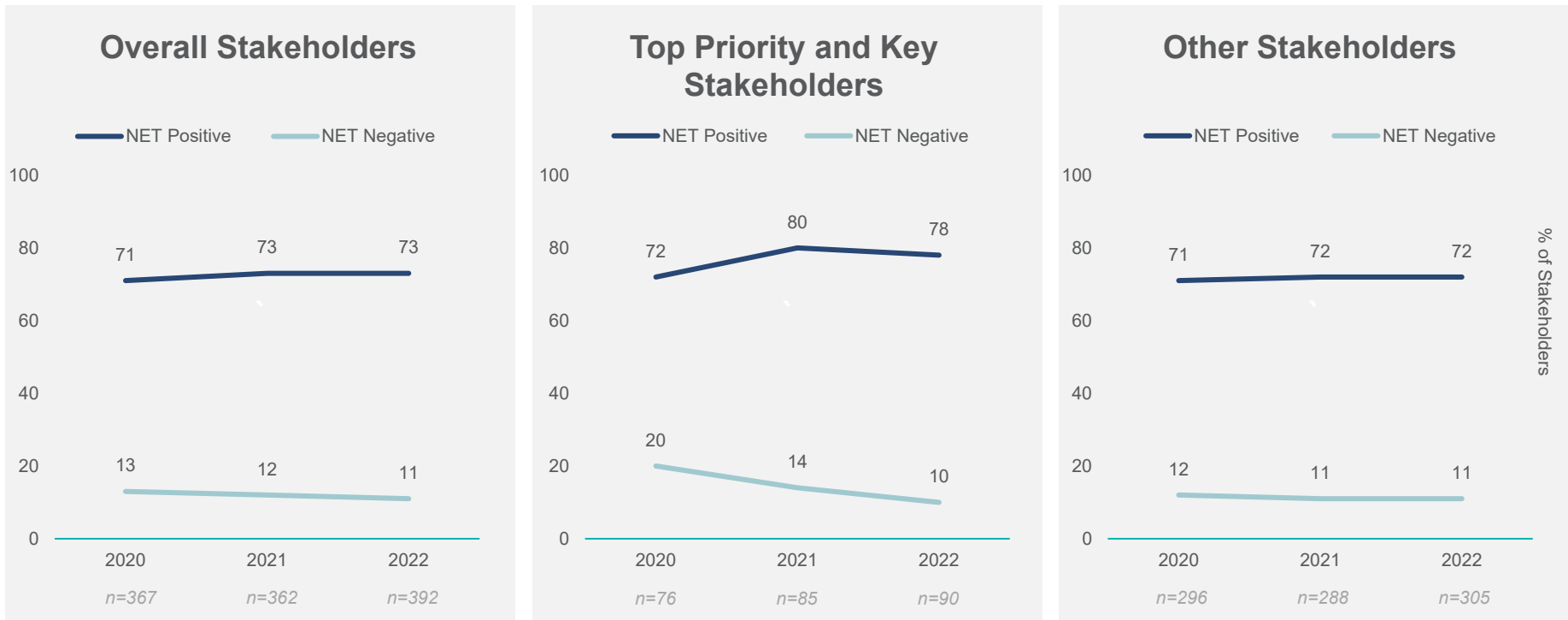




# Stakeholder impressions of DWER are still largely positive

Top Priority and Key Stakeholders are the most positive and their perceptions have improved in the last two years (the proportion who say they feel negative towards DWER has halved from 20% to 10%).

## Stakeholder Sentiment Towards DWER



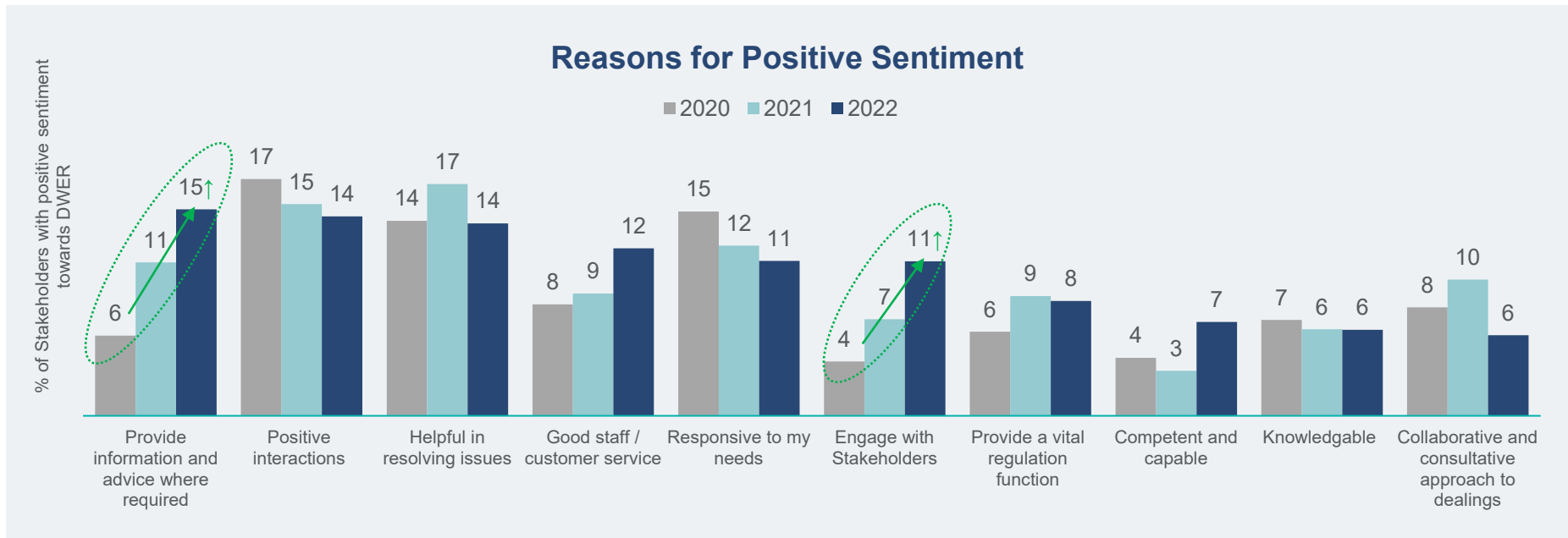
Excludes *don't know* responses

Q6. Overall, how do you feel about the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation as an organisation?

# Year on year, there has been an increase in the proportion of Stakeholders who cite DWER's **engagement** and ability to **provide information and advice** as reasons for positive overall sentiment



This is particularly prevalent among waste related stakeholders who were more likely to comment on DWER's **good staff/customer service** (2022: 16%↑ | 2021: 7%) and **engagement with stakeholders** (2022: 12%↑ | 2021: 5%).



2022: n= 289 | 2021: n=266 | 2020: n=262

Q7. Why is that?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 results at 95% confidence

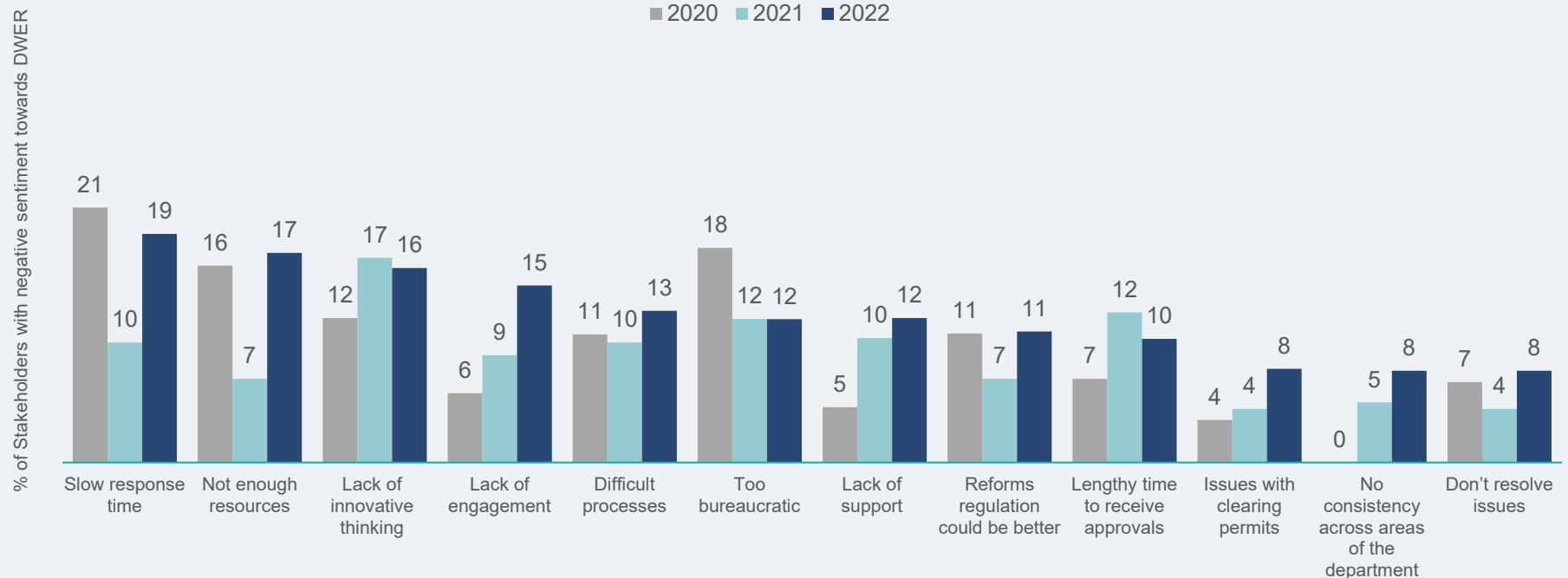
Scores under 6% not shown.

# However **slow response times** and **lack of resources** have resurfaced as the top two reasons for negative sentiment this year



Lack of engagement also remains an issue for some Stakeholders, even though it has improved for others.

## Reasons for Negative Sentiment



2022: 42\* | 2021: 43\* | 2020: 49\*

Q7. Why is that?

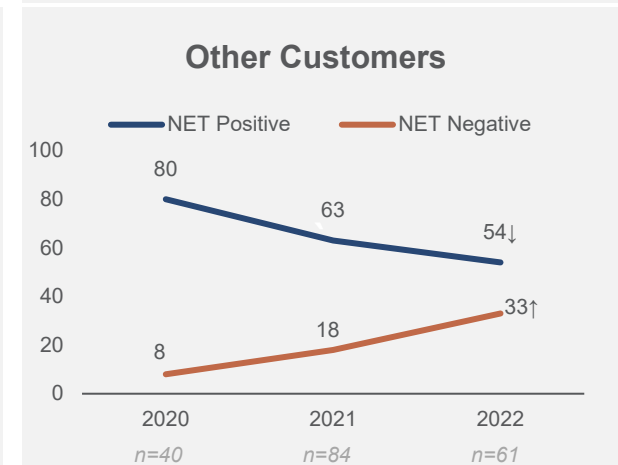
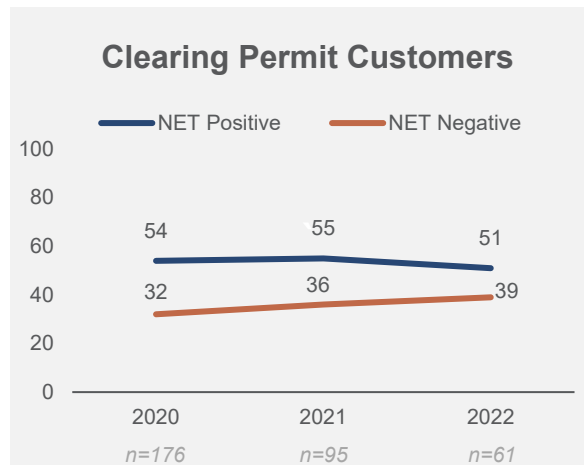
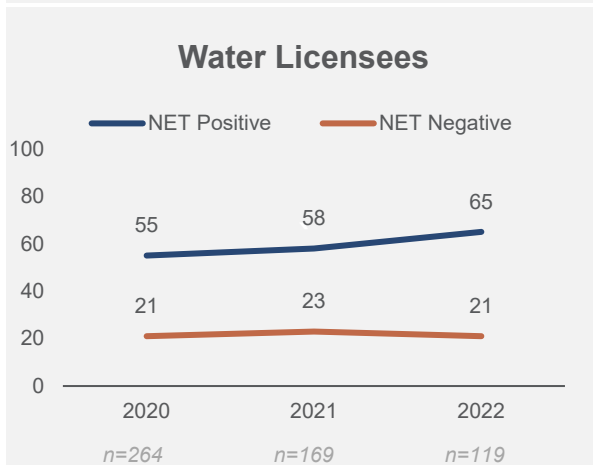
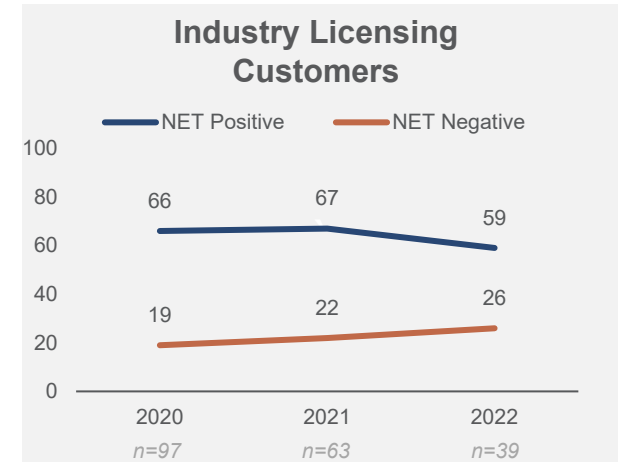
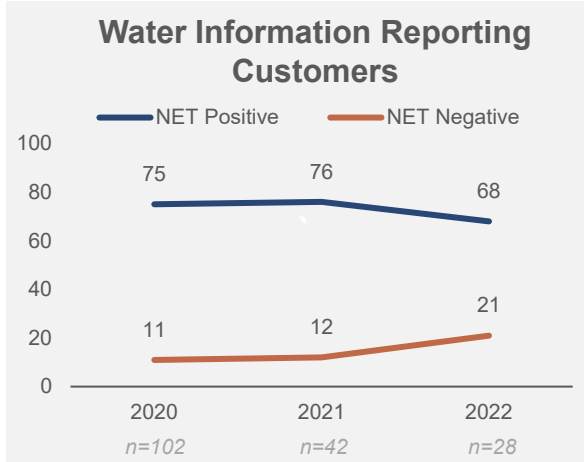
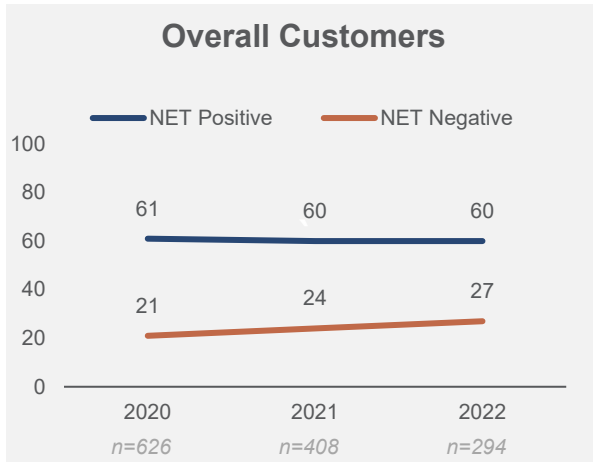
↑ Significant difference to 2021 results at 95% confidence

Scores under 8% not shown.



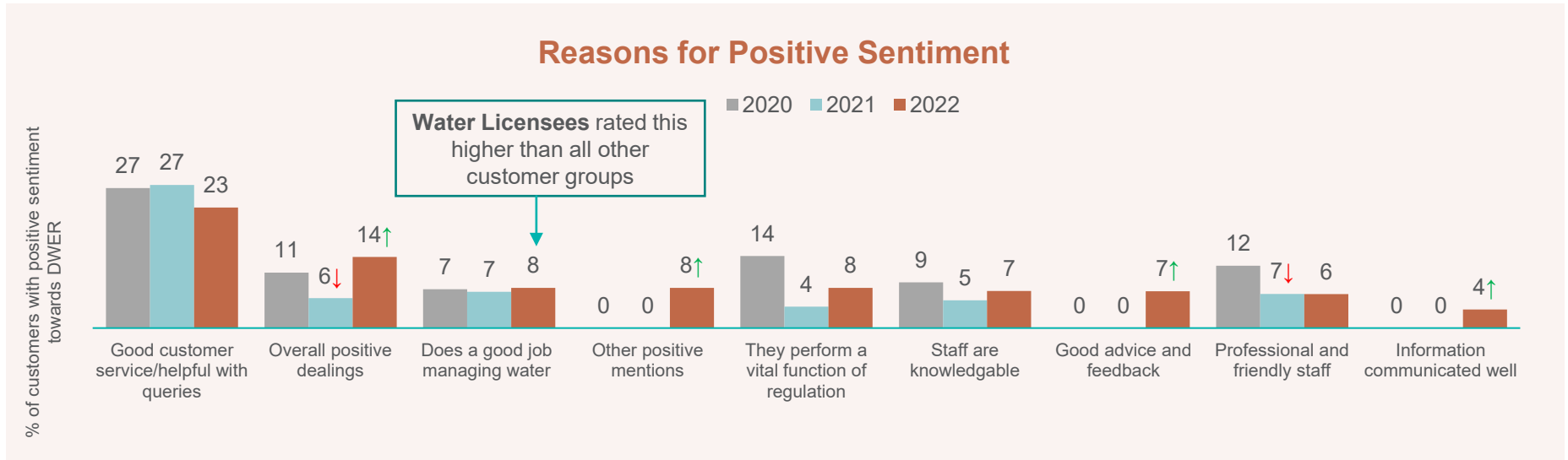
# Transactional **customer** perceptions of DWER have softened across most customer groups, except Water Licensees

## Overall Sentiment Towards DWER



# Good customer service continues to be the key driver of positive overall customer perceptions of DWER

This year, customers were more likely to mention positive overall dealings, good advice and feedback from staff as reasons for positive sentiment.



2022: n=170 | 2021: n= 246 | 2020: n=379

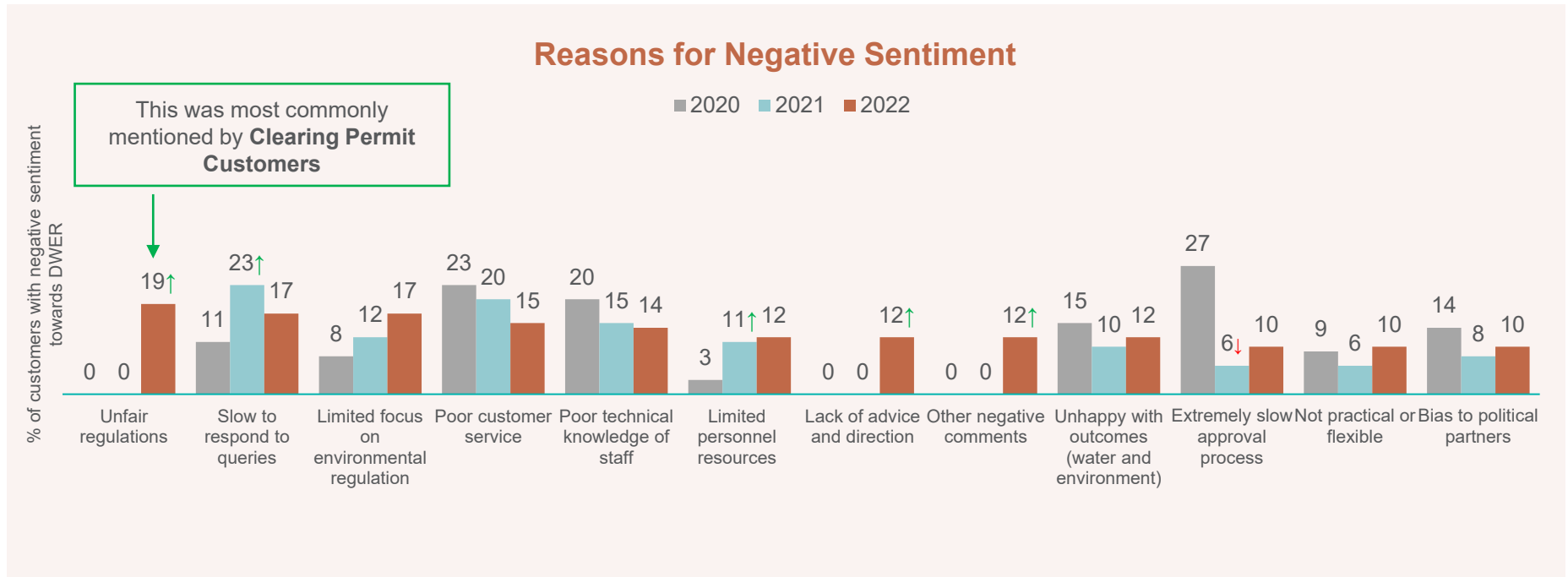
Q8. Why is that? – Positive

↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 or 2021 results at 95% confidence

Responses under 4% are not charted

# Customers with a negative impression of DWER most commonly cited **unfair regulations** and **slow response times** as the reasons why

Having a limited focus on environmental regulation has increased as a reason for poor overall perceptions of DWER.



2022: n=78 | 2021: n= 98 | 2020: n=132

Q8. Why is that? – Negative

↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 and 2021 results at 95% confidence

Responses under 10% are not charted

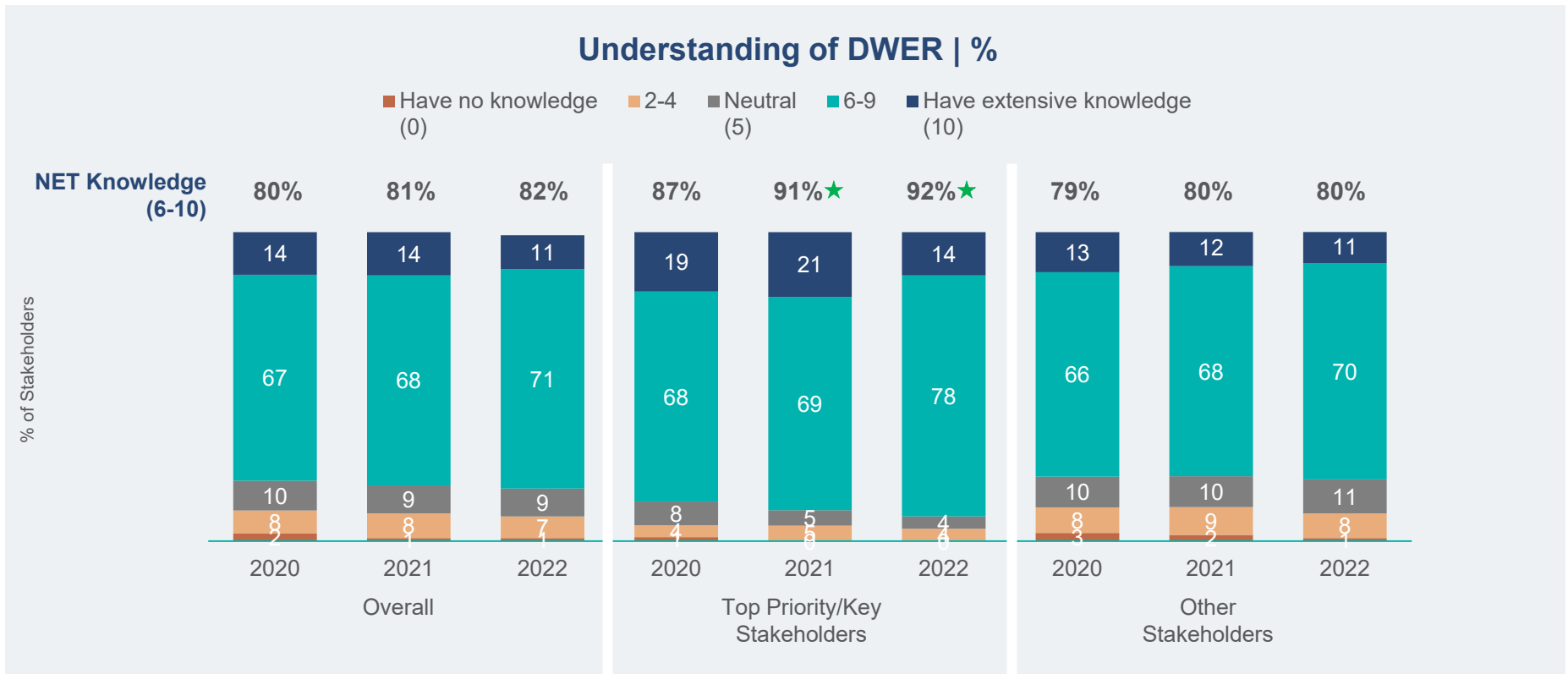


# Awareness and Understanding of DWER Services, Roles and Responsibilities



# Similar to previous years most Stakeholders have some understanding of **DWER's purpose**, roles and responsibilities

Top Priority/Key Stakeholders continue to have a better perceived understanding of DWER's roles and responsibilities than Other Stakeholders. Those who had interactions with DWER within the last six months are also more informed (NET Knowledge 86%) than those who had dealings over 6 months ago (70%). Those who deal with DWER more frequently also feel more informed.



2022: Overall n=396 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=90 | Other Stakeholders n=309

2021: Overall n=365 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=85 | Other Stakeholders n=291

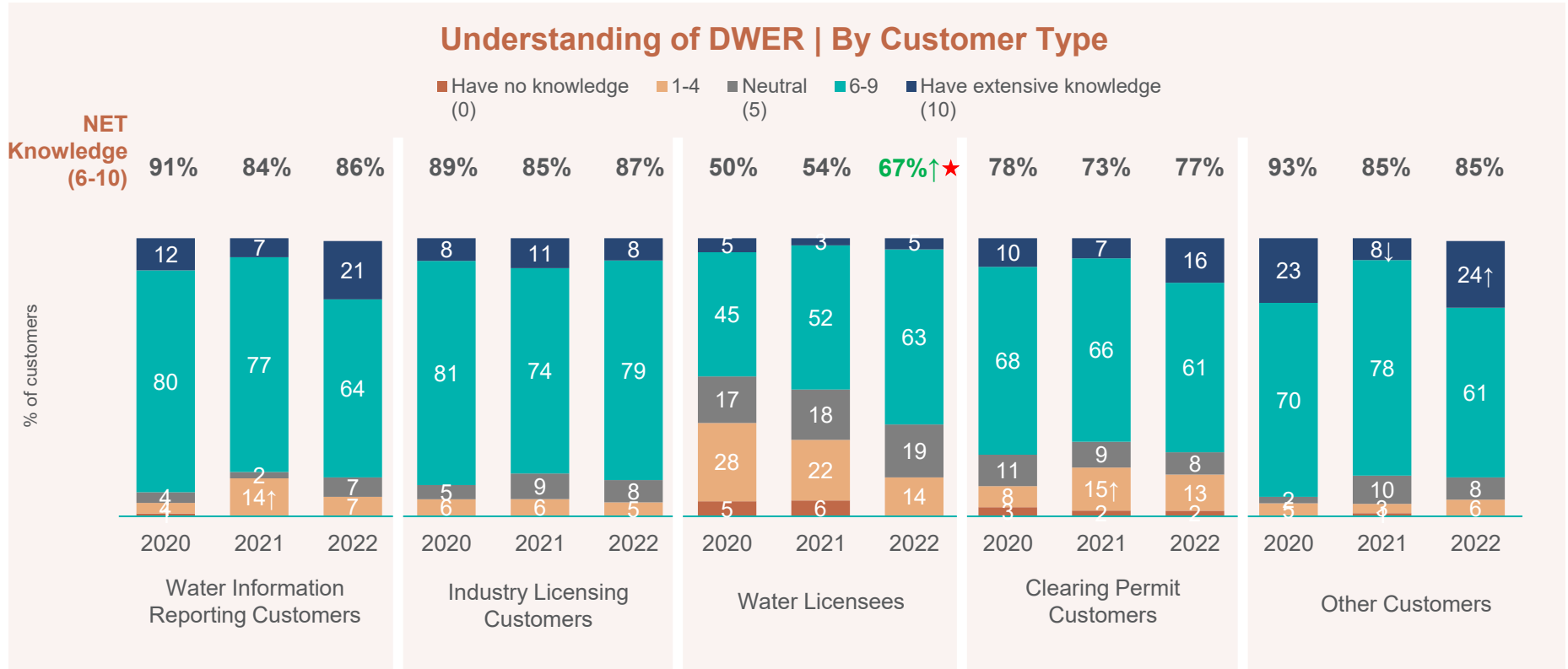
2020: Overall n=374 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=78 | Other Stakeholders n=301

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 Other Stakeholders at 95% confidence

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

# Knowledge of DWER's purpose has improved among Water Licensees although they remain less informed than other customer groups



2021: n= 28 | 39 | 129 | 62 | 62

2021: n= 44 | 65 | 193 | 97 | 89

2020: n= 104 | 98 | 316 | 185 | 43

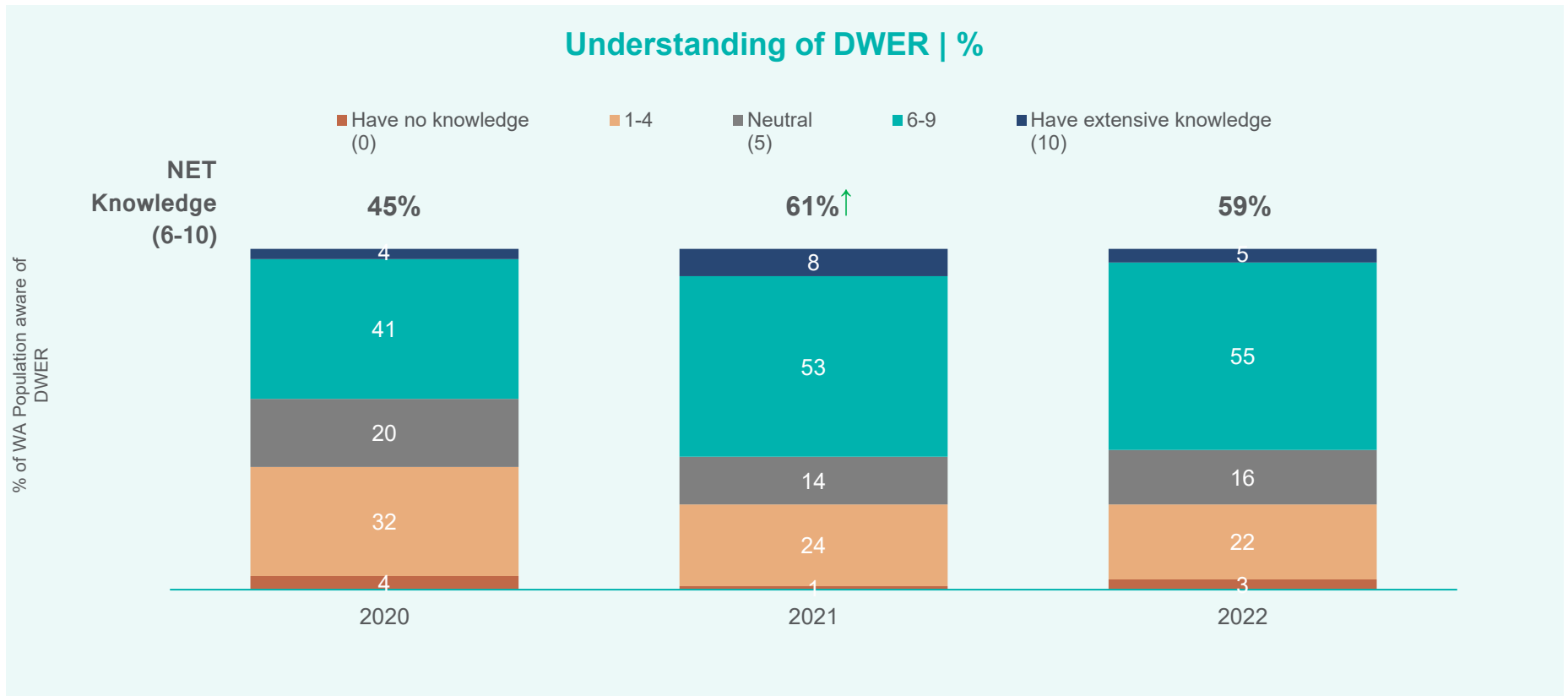
Q6: Prior to participating in this survey, how would you rate your level of understanding of the purpose, roles and responsibilities of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation?  
Results may not equal by +/- 1% due to rounding

★ Significant difference to other Customer Groups results at 95% confidence

↑ Significant difference to 2021 results at 95% confidence

\*Caution: results indicative only due to sample size

# Stated understanding of DWER's purpose held steady after an increase last year



2022: WA n=200 | Metro n=108 | Regional n=92  
 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 2020 or 2021 scores at 95% confidence

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

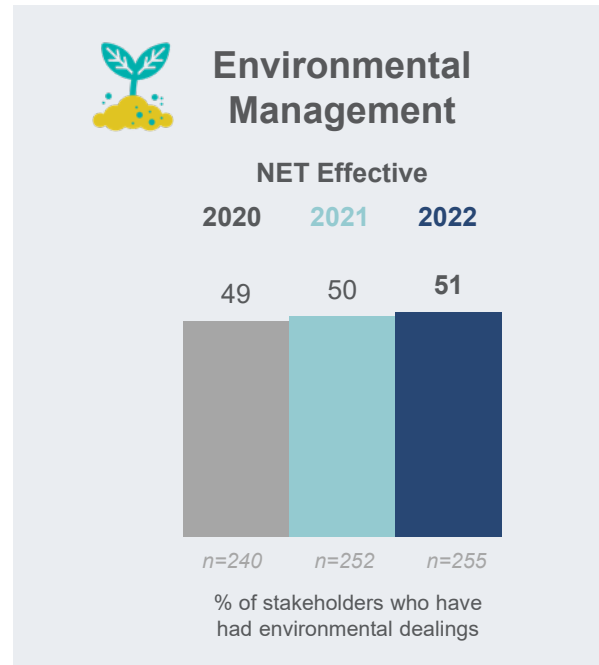
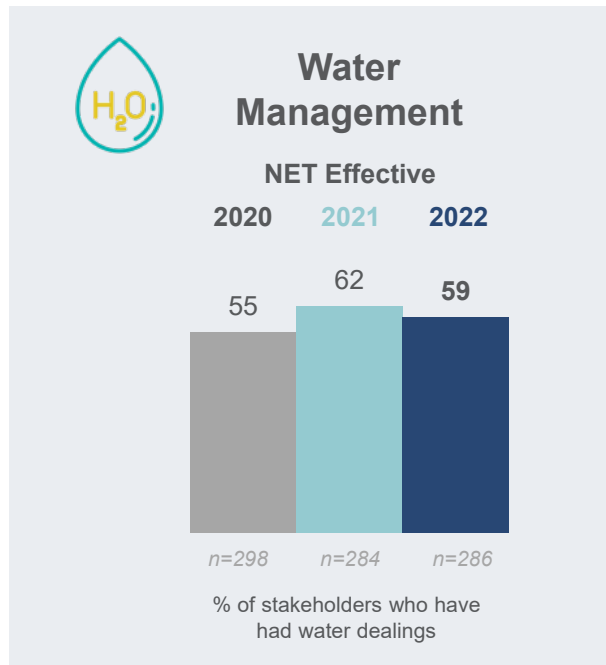


# Perceived Effectiveness – Water, Environmental and Waste Management



# Water management continues to receive the highest ratings from Stakeholders. Perceptions of **waste** management are improving.

## Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing... | % NET Effective



Q11. From your experience with and understanding of the Department, would you say that overall it ...?

Q14. Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's environment for sustainable productive use?

Q16. 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?

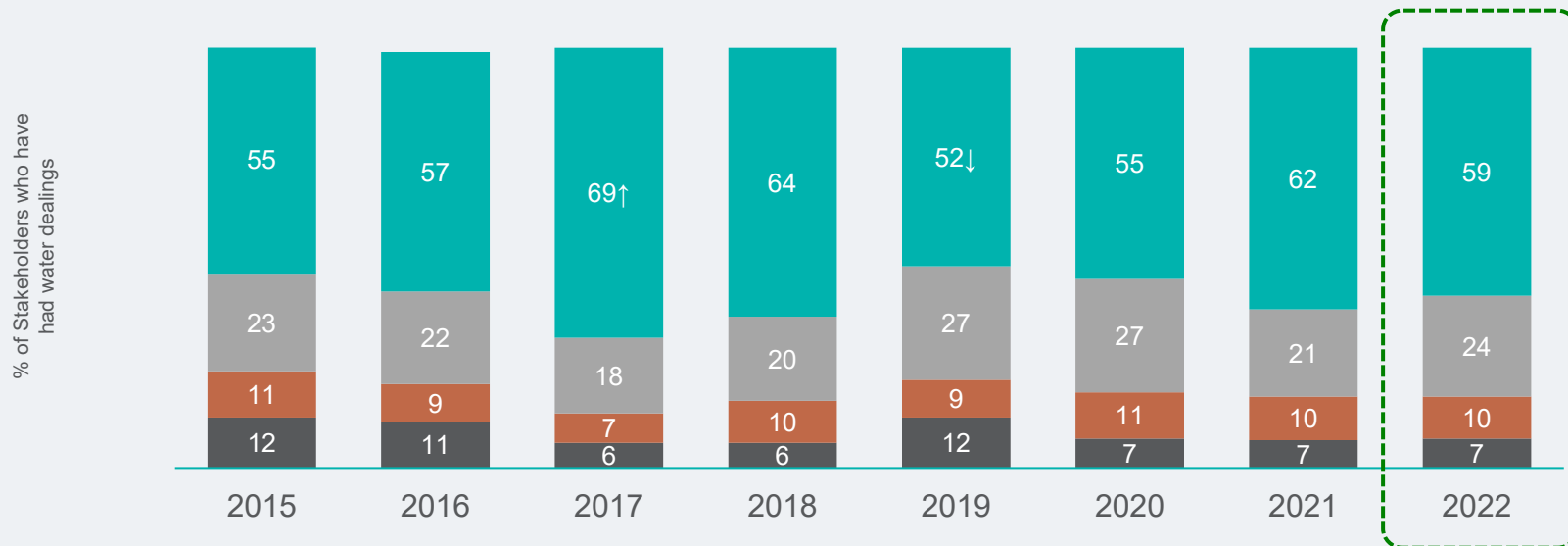
# This year's KPI is statistically on par with last year's result – six in ten stakeholders rated DWER as **effective** in managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use



The dip in *Net Effective* ratings between 2021 and 2022 is not statistically significant.

## Water KPI | Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing the State's Water

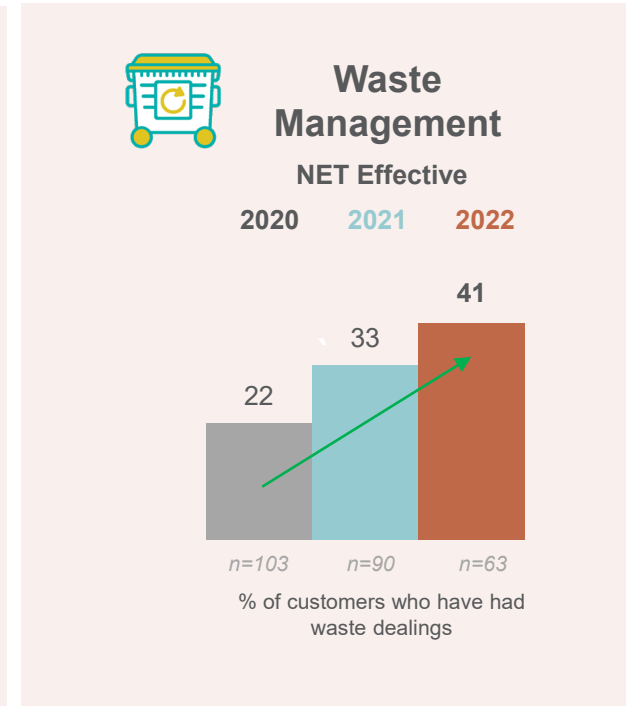
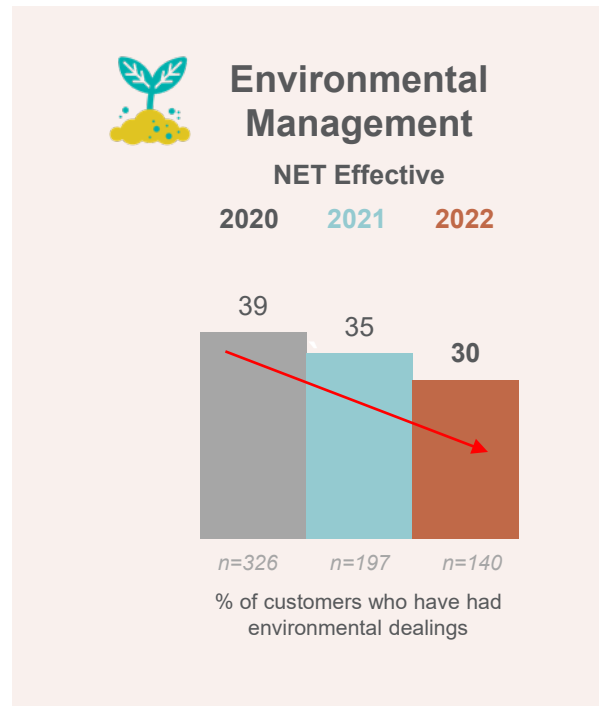
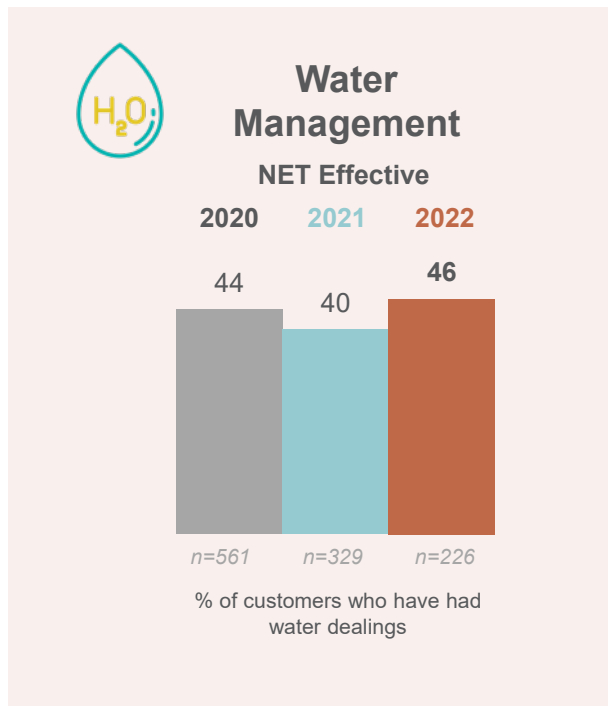
■ Don't know ■ NET ineffective ■ Neither ineffective nor effective ■ NET effective



2022 n=286 | 2021 n= 284 | 2020 n=298 | 2019 n=250 | 2018 n=233 | 2017 n=319 | 2016 n=263 | 2015 n=279  
 Q11. From your experience with and understanding of the Department, would you say that overall it ...?  
 Scores may equal 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# Customer perceptions of DWER's **waste** management continue to trend upwards while perceived effectiveness of **environmental** management has declined

## Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing... | % NET Effective



Q11: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use?

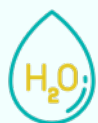
Q14: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's environment for sustainable productive use?

Q16: 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?



# Community perceptions of how DWER is performing its core functions held ground after last year's improvements

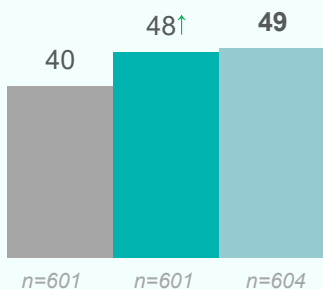
Community perceptions of DWER's effectiveness in water, environmental and waste management are all more positive than they were in 2020.



## Water Management

NET Effective

2020 2021 2022



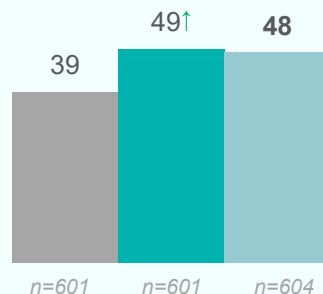
% of WA population who have had dealings with DWER



## Environmental Management

NET Effective

2020 2021 2022



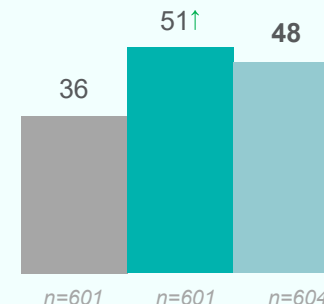
% of WA population who have had dealings with DWER



## Waste Management

NET Effective

2020 2021 2022



% of WA population who have had dealings with DWER

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

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

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 or 2021 scores at 95% confidence

# Key Issues/Suggestions for Improvement –



## Water Management

Key reasons for perceived ineffectiveness are:

- Perceived lack of long-term planning
- Inadequate monitoring and enforcement of water usage
- Lack of a balanced/fair and equitable approach
- Too much reliance on modelling
- Need for more focus on regional and remote issues
- Lack of innovative solutions



## Environmental Management

Commonly cited issues are:

- Allowing too much clearing of land
- Being too focused on industry development
- Lack of a strategic approach
- Lack of enforceable policies
- Not enough monitoring of water use

**Industry Licensing Customers** increasingly feel that DWER is tending towards protection of water over development.



## Waste Management

Stakeholders would like to see:

- More support for LGAs and industry to meet their waste strategy targets
- Regulation regarding waste and recycling in particular.

Customers and the community would like to see more support for recycling eg education, guidelines, plans.

# Perceptions of DWER's Decision Making & Relationship Management



# Consistent with previous years, two in three Stakeholders are satisfied with their **current relationship** with DWER

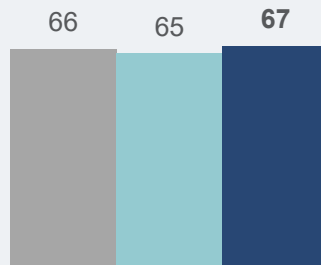


## Satisfaction with Relationship with DWER | NET Satisfied

### Overall

2020 2021 2022

#### NET Satisfied

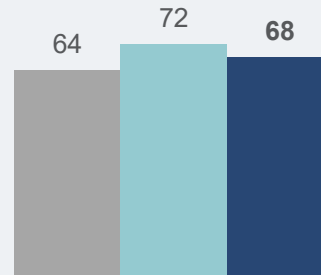


	2020	2021	2022
Neutral	24%	22%	23%
NET Dissatisfied	10%	13%	10%

### Top Priority/Key Stakeholders

2020 2021 2022

#### NET Satisfied

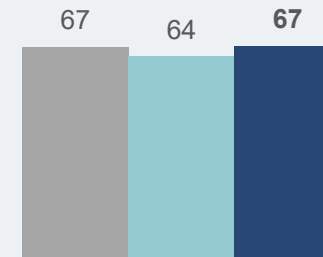


	2020	2021	2022
Neutral	23%	18%	21%
NET Dissatisfied	13%	11%	10%

### Other Stakeholders

2020 2021 2022

#### NET Satisfied



	2020	2021	2022
Neutral	24%	24%	23%
NET Dissatisfied	10%	13%	10%

% of Stakeholders

2022: Overall n=395 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholder n=90 | Other Stakeholders n=308  
 2021: Overall n=360 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholder n=84 | Other Stakeholders n=287  
 2020: Overall n=370 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholder n=78 | Other Stakeholders n=297  
 Q19. Overall, how would you rate your current relationship with DWER?  
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data



# Some elements of Stakeholder interactions with DWER have improved, others have weakened

## Stronger

- ✓ DWER provides valuable advice and recommendations (*Stakeholders: 69% vs 62% agree*)
- ✓ DWER is easy to deal with (*Stakeholders: 62% vs 48% very easy*)

## Weaker

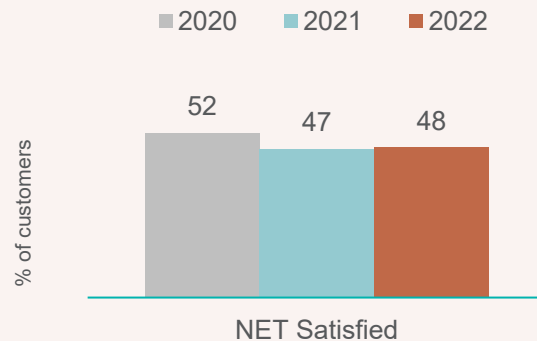
- ❖ Provides the services needed to manage the state's water and environmental resources (*Stakeholders: 57% vs 65% agree*)
- ❖ Access to appropriate people at DWER (*Top Priority/Key Stakeholders: 42% vs 56% very good/excellent*)



# Customer **satisfaction** with DWER was steady overall and still differs by customer group

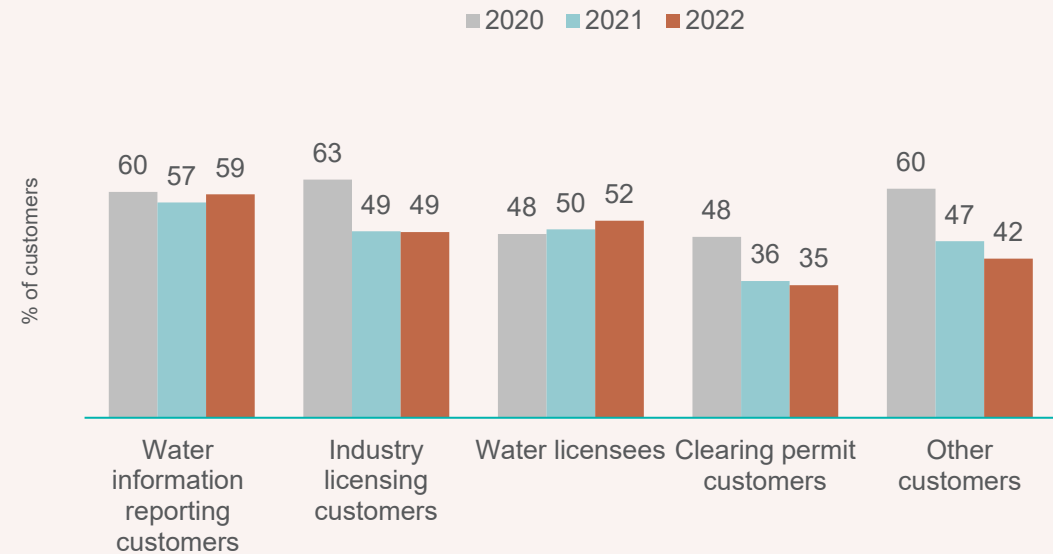
Clearing Permit Customers continue to be the least satisfied with their relationship with DWER and satisfaction remains weaker among Industry Licensing Customers and Clearing Permit customers than in 2020.

## Satisfaction with Relationship with DWER | Overall



	2020	2021	2022
Neutral	28%	30%	29%
NET			
Dissatisfied	19%	23%	23%

## Satisfaction with Relationship with DWER | By Customer Type % NET Satisfied



2022: n= 301 | 27\* | 39 | 124 | 62 | 62

2021: n= 426 | 44 | 65 | 179 | 97 | 88

2020: n= 670 | 104 | 97 | 299 | 178 | 43

Q19. Overall, how would you rate your current relationship with DWER?

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

\*Caution results indicative due to small sample

# Reflective of weaker overall perceptions, Customers were **less positive** about some aspects of their interactions with DWER

## Weaker

- ❖ DWER provides valuable information and advice (*Customers: 49% vs 57% agree*)
- ❖ Considers current and emerging issues (*Customers: 51% vs 57% agree*)



# Community perceptions of how DWER makes its decisions have continued to improve

## Improvements

- The Department considers the needs of the community when making decisions (*71% agree vs 60% agree in 2020*)
- It considers current and emerging issues when planning/updating existing services (*73% agree vs 59% agree in 2020*)
- The Department focuses on the relevant issues/priorities (*72% agree vs 58% agree in 2020*)





# Specific aspects of relationship management and customer service consistently receive lower ratings

## Perceptions of DWER's Relationship Management, Customer Service and Communications (% Very Good/Excellent)



	Stakeholders	Customers
	2022	2022
Ease of accessing DWER services	29%	23%
Ease of knowing who to contact/how to access services	29%	19%
Timeliness of final response/outcome	28%	19%
Speed of responding to your business needs	29%	18%
Understanding of your business needs	29%	16%
Timeliness of communications	29%	17%
Proactive communications	27%	17%

**57% of stakeholders and 44% of customers think Environment Online will improve their interactions with DWER**

# Priority Focus Areas



# Water security is still the key priority; Climate change has increased as a priority for Stakeholders

% High Priority	Stakeholders	Customers
	2022	2022
Management of the state's ground water resources	68%	52%
Protection of drinking water sources	66%	51%
Investing in water projects to address the drying climate	64%	51%
Climate change	64% ↑	47%
Contamination of water (i.e. water quality)	61%	58%
Clearing of land and the environment for development	52%	41%
Facilitate recycling of waste	51%	47%
Rubbish/litter polluting our waterways and ocean	47%	45%
Rubbish/litter polluting our land and environment	45%	44%
Ensuring waste wise alternatives are available to consumer	45%	40%
Volume of waste generation by the WA community	45%	39%
Air pollution	32%	34%

# Pollution and waste generation are key environmental concerns for the WA community

% Net Concern	Community
	2022
Rubbish/litter polluting our land and environment	94% 
Rubbish/litter polluting our waterways and ocean	94%
Volume of waste generation by the WA community	91%
Protection of drinking water sources	91%
Contamination of water (i.e. water quality)	87%
Ensuring waste wise alternatives are available to consumers	86%
Clearing of land and the environment for development	86%
Facilitate recycling of waste	85%
Investing in water projects to address the drying climate	85% 
Climate change	85% 
Air pollution	84% 
Management of the state's ground water resources	83%

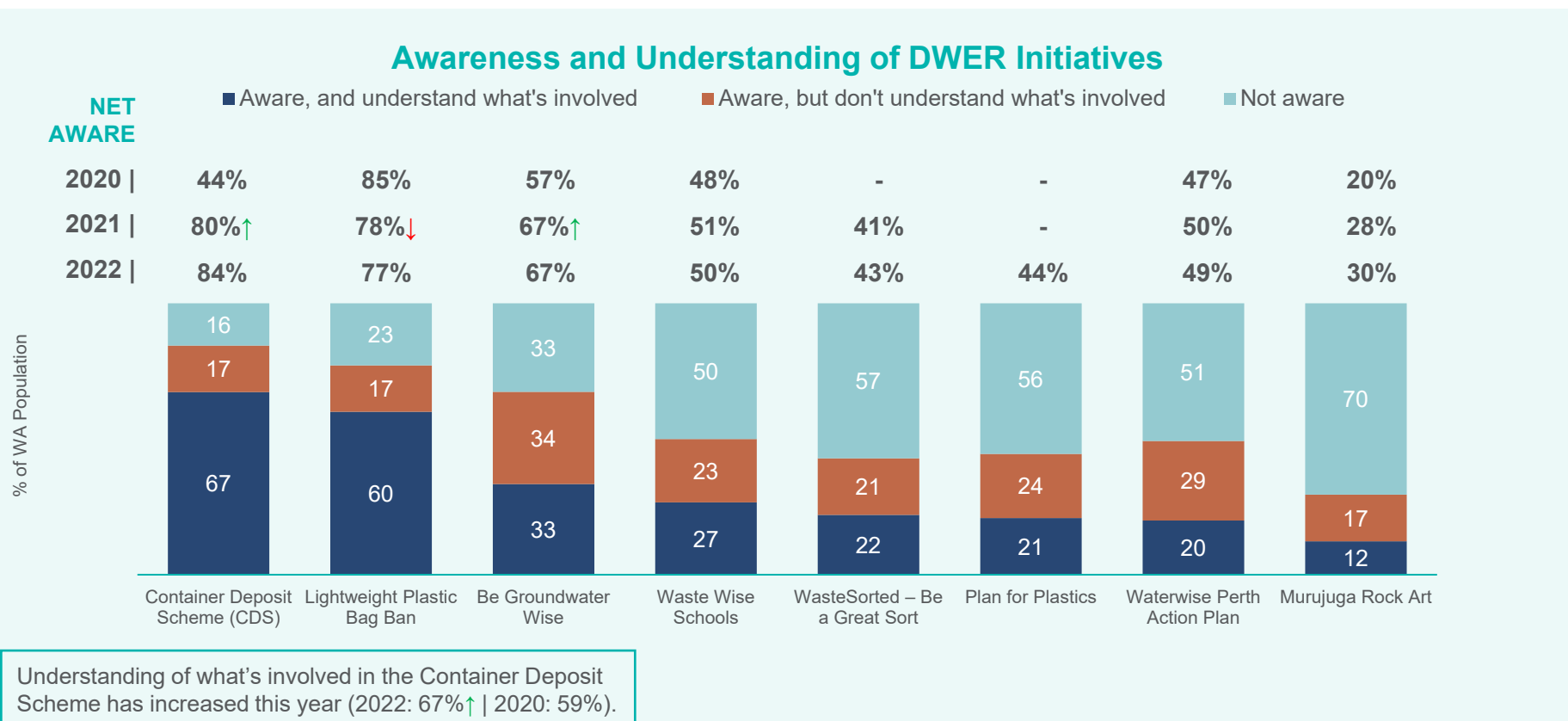
# Awareness of Key Initiatives





# Community awareness of key DWER initiatives held steady, with understanding of CDS improving as the scheme enters its second year

Awareness and understanding of the *Container Deposit Scheme* and *Lightweight Plastic Bag Ban* continue to lead. Over four in ten say they are aware of the *Plan for Plastics* which launched this year.



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