

DWER Corporate Research 2023 Customer Survey

March 2023



Government of Western Australia

Department of **Water and
Environmental Regulation**



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Scope of Engagement



Background and objectives

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) undertakes an annual survey of its stakeholders to monitor their 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.

Since 2020, the survey has included feedback from three key stakeholder groups:

- **Stakeholders** – people and organisations with influence on the success of the Department's policy, budget bids and initiatives, and whose acceptance of DWER's proposed changes is often critical to delivering outcomes.
- **Customers** – people who interact with DWER across a range of services and have a mostly transactional relationship with the Department.
- **WA community** – the West Australian general population.

The following report details the findings of the Customer survey.

The core objectives of this year's survey of DWER Customers were to monitor:

- overarching perceptions of DWER as an organisation.
- perceived effectiveness of DWER's water, environmental and waste management.
- perceptions of DWER's knowledge, expertise and decision making.
- DWER's communications and engagement with Customers.
- customer experience in relation to specific dealings with DWER.
- attitudes towards water and environmental issues.



Research approach

Metrix conducted an online survey of DWER Customers, sourced from an initial database of 6,251 contacts. Customers were sent an email from the Director General inviting them to participate in the survey. Each email included a unique link to prevent unauthorised or repeat entries.

The survey achieved a final sample of n=306.

Fieldwork was conducted from 28 September to 8 December 2022.

A summary of the final valid sample and sample composition is summarised below.

Customer Group	2023		
	% of Total Profile	% Sample	n=
Water Licensees	41%	48%	146
Clearing Permit Customers	18%	18%	56
Industry Licensing Customers	9%	14%	43
Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessment Customers*	6%	11%	34
Environmentally Interested Customers*	9%	9%	29
Water Information Customers	15%	9%	29
Contaminated Sites Customers*	2%	2%	5
Controlled Waste Customers*	2%	2%	5
Waste Levy Customers*	0%	0%	1
Total			306

Please note that some Customers were classified across multiple Customer groups.

*For analysis and reporting purposes, Contaminated Site Customers, Controlled Waste Customers, Waste Levy Customers, Environmentally Interested Customers and Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessment Customers have been combined to create an 'Other Customer Group'.

Summary of Key Insights - *Customers*



Summary of Key Insights 2023

Insight

Implications

More positive Customer perceptions of DWER

- Overall, Customers rated DWER more positively this year, in terms of how decisions are made and also the timeliness of communications and final outcomes.
- Over eight-in-ten feel their interactions with DWER are the same, if not better, than their interactions with other government organisations.
- Among the small proportion who have used Environment Online, over half say it has improved their interactions with DWER.
- Over time, the proportion who agree that DWER is finding sustainable ways for development to occur has improved in relation to water licensing and waste management.
- The perceptions of Water Licensees have seen the biggest improvements since 2020.

An increased focus on **simplifying Customer interactions** with DWER (e.g. Environment Online project as part of Streamline WA, Reduced Reporting Burden Pilot) are having a positive impact on overall perceptions. These should remain a focus for the Department under its new Operating Model.

The planned migration of more data to **Environment Online** and appointment of a Program Director should help to increase uptake and continue to improve the experience of dealing with DWER.

Water priorities continue to dominate what is important to Customers

- Future water sources remain a key priority for Customers, both planning and investing in new sources as well as protecting and managing existing groundwater and drinking water sources.
- Specific environment and waste related issues such as pollution of waterways/ocean/land, climate change and recycling are also a priority for most Customers. However, Customers were less likely to rate DWER as effective in environmental and waste management this year.

Align any communications about current and planned strategies and programs with how they address specific environmental, waste and water issues of concern. For example, how the strategy to *develop and implement new water resource legislation to provide for sustainable water management in the face of climate change* will help to address water security into the future and how *banning e-waste disposal to landfill by 2024* will facilitate the recycling of waste.

Consider the **strategic role of 'water'** as part of your Business Planning. Despite the Department shifting more of its focus towards climate change, waste and other environmental issues, water related priorities are still important to a large proportion of your Customers, as well as Stakeholders and the Community.

Summary of Key Insights 2023

Insight

Implications

Access and timeliness issues still impact the experience and how Customers feel about DWER

- Despite recent improvements, the ease of accessing DWER services, timeliness of communications, relevance of information provided, and timeliness of outcomes still receive relatively low ratings (less than one in three Customers rate these as excellent or very good) and contribute to negative overall perceptions of DWER.
- The perceived experience of dealing with DWER differs greatly depending on the reason for the interaction. For example,:
 - those who have interacted for water allocation applications and the provision of data or water information are more positive about their experience
 - those interacting with DWER for an application of Pt IV Environmental Impact Assessment, application for clearing permit or environmental-related policy development rated their experience less positively than others.

Continue to **prioritise the implementation of key strategies in the 2022-26 Strategic Plan** which can improve the customer journey. For example *Engage and lead in the development and implementation of Streamline WA initiatives* and *Focus on improving the approval processes and timelines for industries that promote sustainable development*.

A **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)** system would help to deliver a more consistent experience and help to address the challenges faced by Customers in terms of understanding their needs and timeliness of response and approvals.

A review of **communication templates** (eg emails, EDMs) could also help to manage expectations and deliver a more consistent experience.

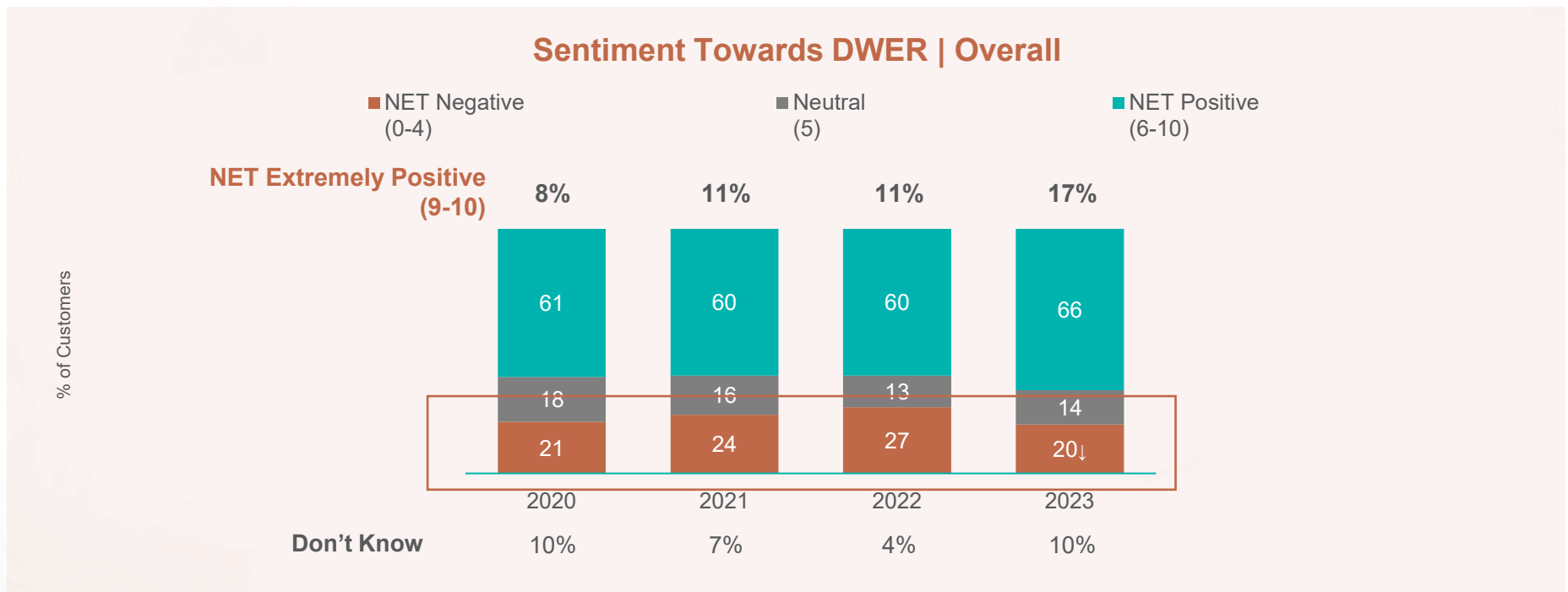
Overall Perceptions of DWER



Overall Customer sentiment towards DWER has improved this year



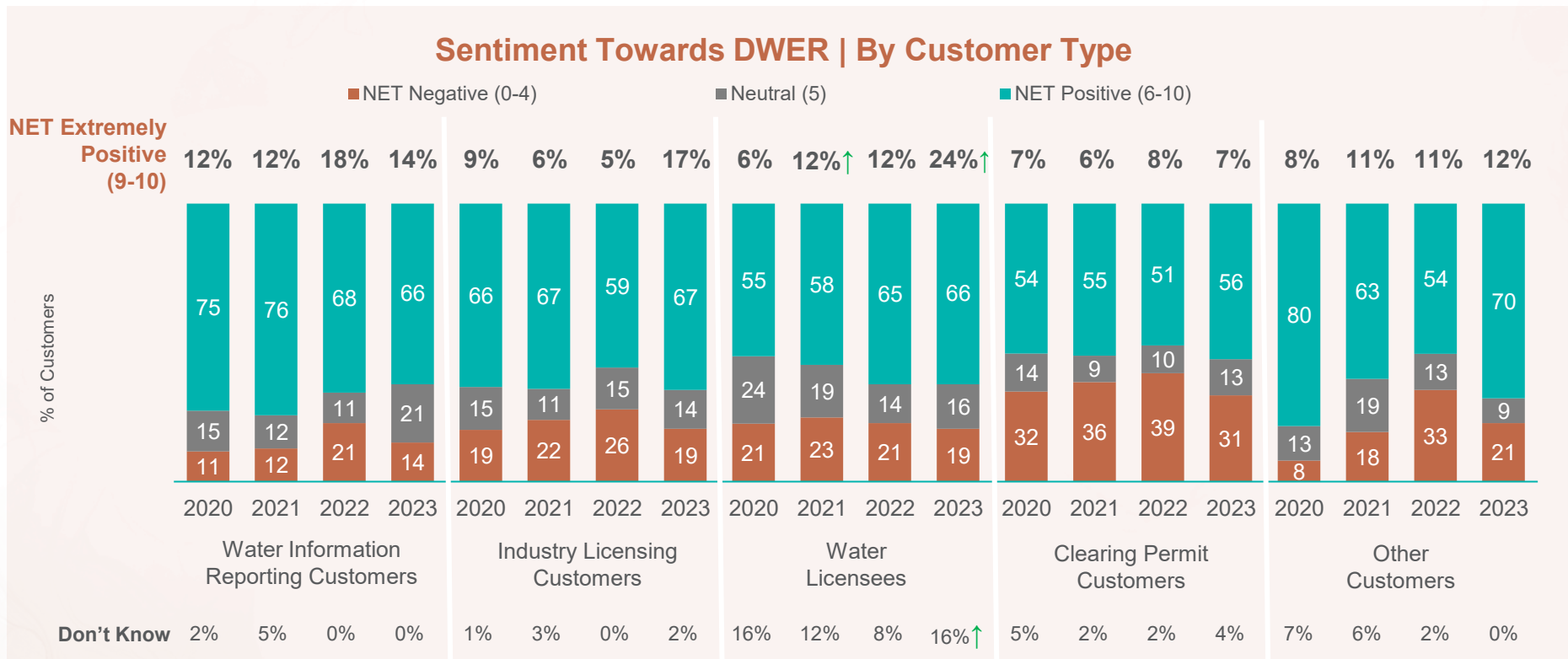
The proportion of positive ratings has increased while the increasing proportion of negative ratings since 2020 has arrested.



2023: n=276 | 2022: n=294 | 2021: n=408 | 2020: n= 626
 Q7. Overall, how do you feel about the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation as an organisation?
 ↑↓ Significant difference to the previous waves data at 95% confidence
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data

The proportion of negative ratings has declined slightly across most Customer groups

The perceptions of Water Licensees held steady this year but have seen the biggest improvement over time. Clearing Permit Customers continue to rate DWER less favourably than other Customer groups. Water Information Reporting Customers have become slightly less favourable towards DWER over time. Index for Biodiversity, Environmentally Interested and Contaminated Sites Customers each contributed to an improvement in ratings from Other Customers.



2023: n= 29* | 42* | 122 | 54 | 67
 2022: n= 28* | 39* | 119 | 61 | 61
 2021: n= 42* | 63 | 169 | 95 | 84
 2020: n= 102 | 97 | 264 | 176 | 40*

Q7. Overall, how do you feel about the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation as an organisation?

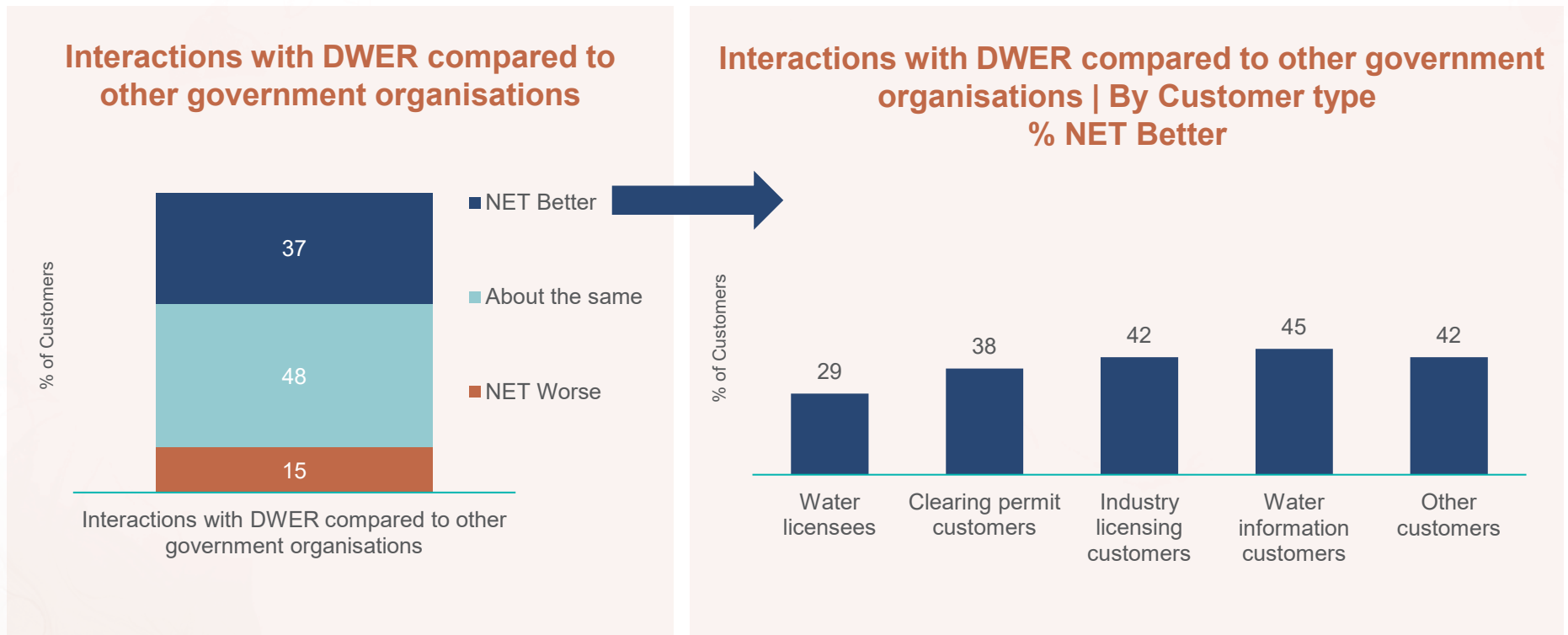
↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 data at 95% confidence

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

*Caution: results indicative only due to sample size

Four-in-five Customers feel their interactions with DWER are the same, or better, than their dealings with other government organisations

Water licensees are the Customer group that is least likely to rate their interactions with DWER as better than other government organisations.



2023: n= 305 | 146 | 56 | 43 | 29 | 71

Q18d: Overall, how would you rate your interactions with DWER compared to other government organisations that you deal with? Your interactions with DWER are...

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

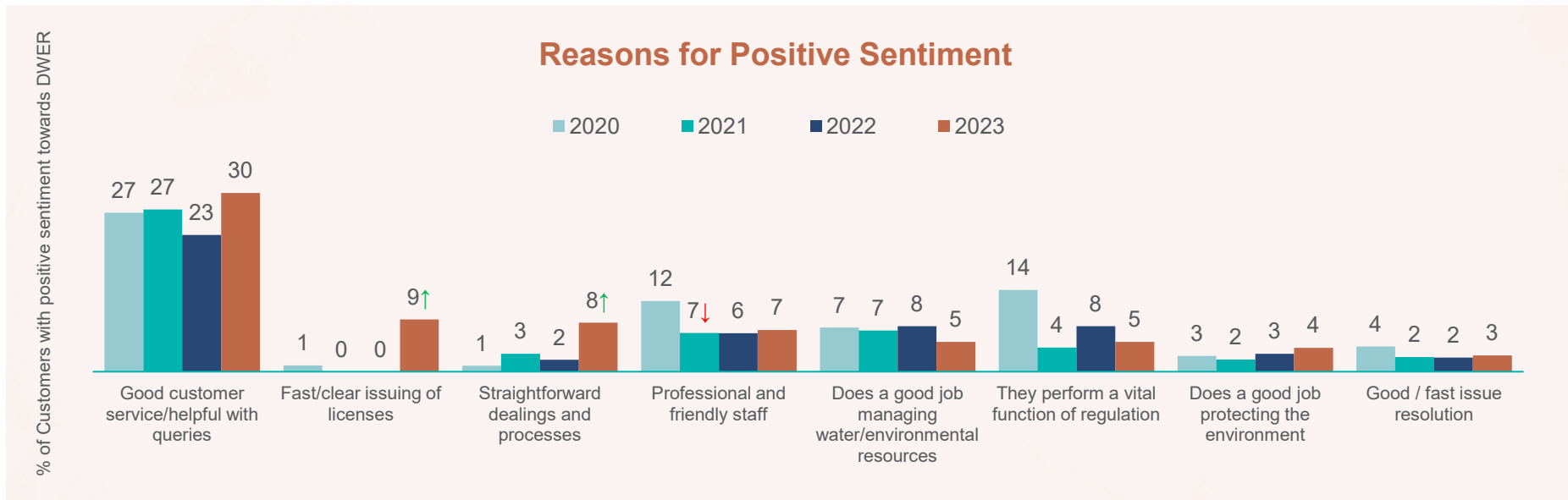
↑ ↓ Significant difference to 2021 data at 95% confidence

*Caution results indicative due to small sample

Note: Q18d was only asked in 2023.

Note: don't know responses have been removed from charted data.

Customers were more likely to cite good customer service, timely approvals and ease of dealing with DWER as reasons for positive sentiment this year



2023: n=182 | 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 3% are not charted

In their own words...

Good customer service



'I usually get my queries answered promptly and the staff always seem enthusiastic to help.'
Water Information Reporting Customer

'The department has become extremely positive to deal with. Their vision and attendance to issues are flawless. Having dealt with many government departments over the years in different fields, we find this department and its direction and implementations above par. In particular, the leadership quality and values are to be noted, appreciated and respected.'
Water Licensee

'Quick response when dealing with level 1 alerts for potable water testing. Good suggestions and advice for remedy actions.'
Industry Licensing Customer

Fast/clear issuing of licenses



'The licensing portal was relatively easy to use.' **Industry Licensing Customer**

'Although I have minimal contact overall, the processes and timeframes are satisfactory.' **Clearing Permit Customer**

'Very supportive of the extension of my license and explained what I needed to do in simple terms. They have always been easy to work with.' **Water Licensee**

'All communications were clear; officers were willing to meet to resolve issues related to licence renewal.' **Other Customer**

In their own words...

Straightforward dealings/processes

'Were easy to deal with for our approval process. Always communicated promptly and were helpful making suggestions to facilitate the process.' **Industry Licensing Customer**

'My contact, though limited, was straightforward and easy as it was only submitting annual water usage.' **Water Licensee**



Professional and friendly staff

'All staff with whom I had interactions were very polite and extremely helpful.' **Water Licensee**

'Knowledgeable staff who have been happy to work to understand technical issues and look for workable options within the remit of their guidelines.' **Clearing Permit Customer**

'Proactive and responsive.' **Water Information Reporting Customer**



Does a good job at managing water/environmental resources

'It is reassuring to me that WA has an integrated government department for the management of environmental resources.' **Water Information Reporting Customer**

'Good management of water table.' **Water Licensee**

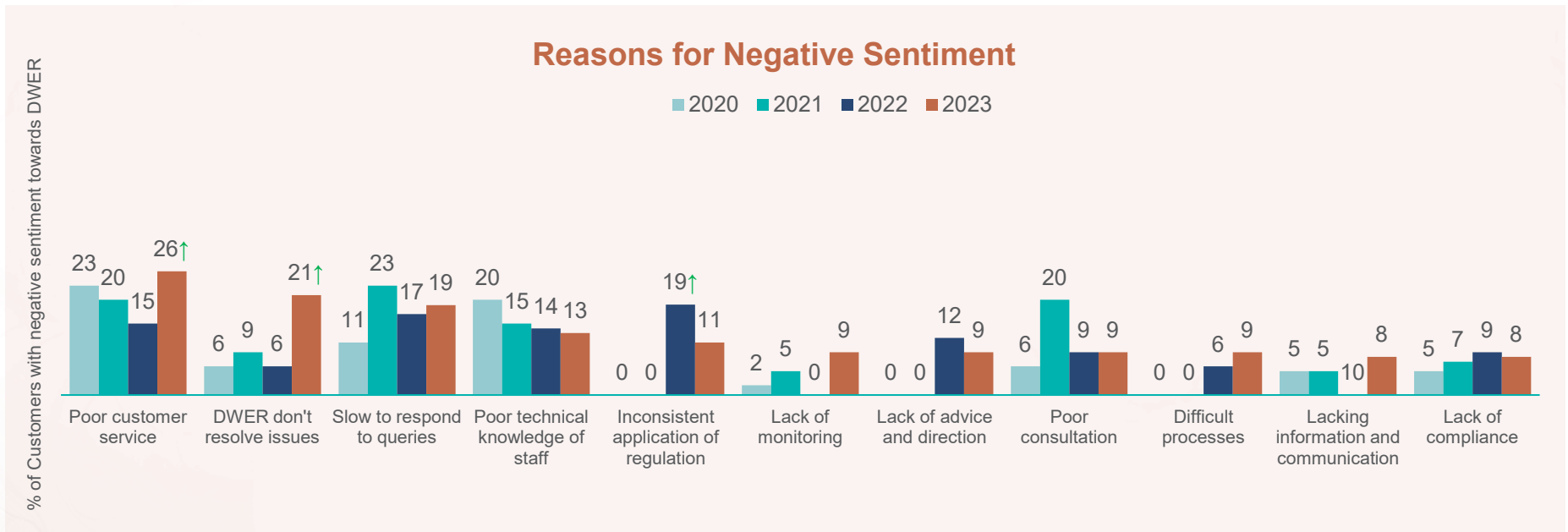
'Very good experience with the water component regionally (Bunbury). Less so with the environmental component.' **Other Customer**



Poor customer service and not resolving issues are driving negative overall perceptions of DWER



Given that good customer service is a key reason for positive sentiment, this suggests there is inconsistency in the service that Customers are experiencing.



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 8% are not charted

In their own words...

Poor customer service

'DWER staff will not answer questions directly and are difficult to get a straight answer from.' **Water Licensee**



'Poor service, overall. Time that it takes for assessments or feedback is always too long. You start dealing with one officer & soon move on & you have to bring a new officer along. The risk-based assessment approach seem way too conservative & there is a lack of knowledge for the officers involved in the assessment. When you are now paying large sums of money for assessments & licencing, this is not value for money.' **Industry Licensing Customer**

'I am involved in the Development Industry and the organisation does not have a customer-focused culture. More focus is required on providing advice/response in a timely manner, with set agreements(SLAs) with Department of Planning, and directly to proponents. This behaviour gives DWER a poor brand right across the industry and with other related government departments.' **Clearing Permit Customer**

DWER does not resolve issues

'DWER have not incorporated any of the suggestions and comments I have made in the past 12 months on their policies and procedures when DWER have sought public comment. DWER have not prosecuted unlawful clearing when it has been obvious to the community that it has been unlawful and resulted in unacceptable impact. DWER appear to be extremely reluctant to prosecute anything but the most egregious cases of unlawful clearing, and even then, the penalties are woefully inadequate and out of proportion to the environmental harm done. They are in no way a deterrent to further similar unlawful action from these or other perpetrators. DWER have not been adequate and competent protectors and stewards of our environment. The concerned community are greater protectors of the environment than DWER.' **Other Customer**



'[DWER] is a roadblock rather than a facilitator. Also avoids taking responsibility for matters that are important to our community.' **Clearing Permit Customer**

In their own words...

Slow response to queries

'The assessment of applications has slowed considerably. It is noted in correspondence with DWER that applications can be 'sitting on the manager's desk waiting to be reviewed for 2 months or more'. Or the correspondence replies from DWER-EPA section hold no information/update on an application, just the brief generic one line statement. I will provide an update regarding the status as soon as I can. No reply was received.' **Water Licensee**



'Poor levels of staffing have led to very limited progress on assessing my applications.' **Industry Licensing Customer**

Poor technical knowledge of staff

'The Department appears massively under resourced, under skilled, and led by personal opinion and ideology that is not in accordance with legislation. The Department appears to back away from rational and scientifically proven negotiation in relation to waste licensing and instead relies upon interpretation of guidelines and the personal opinion of some staff.' **Other Customer**



'DWER support of the Southern Forrest Irrigation Scheme. DWER data was not current, the water was not there as shown by CSIRO. In this age of climate change and decreasing rainfall, is this not something DWER should be monitoring? The local community were well aware of the lack of water, they had observed water flow in the record Brook/Donnelly river, majority of the year there was NONE, it had been slowly decreasing over several years. This scheme was stopped by people concerned with the ENVIRONMENTAL, financial and social implications. Obviously DWER were not. More research, less politics needed.' **Water Licensee**

Inconsistent application of regulations

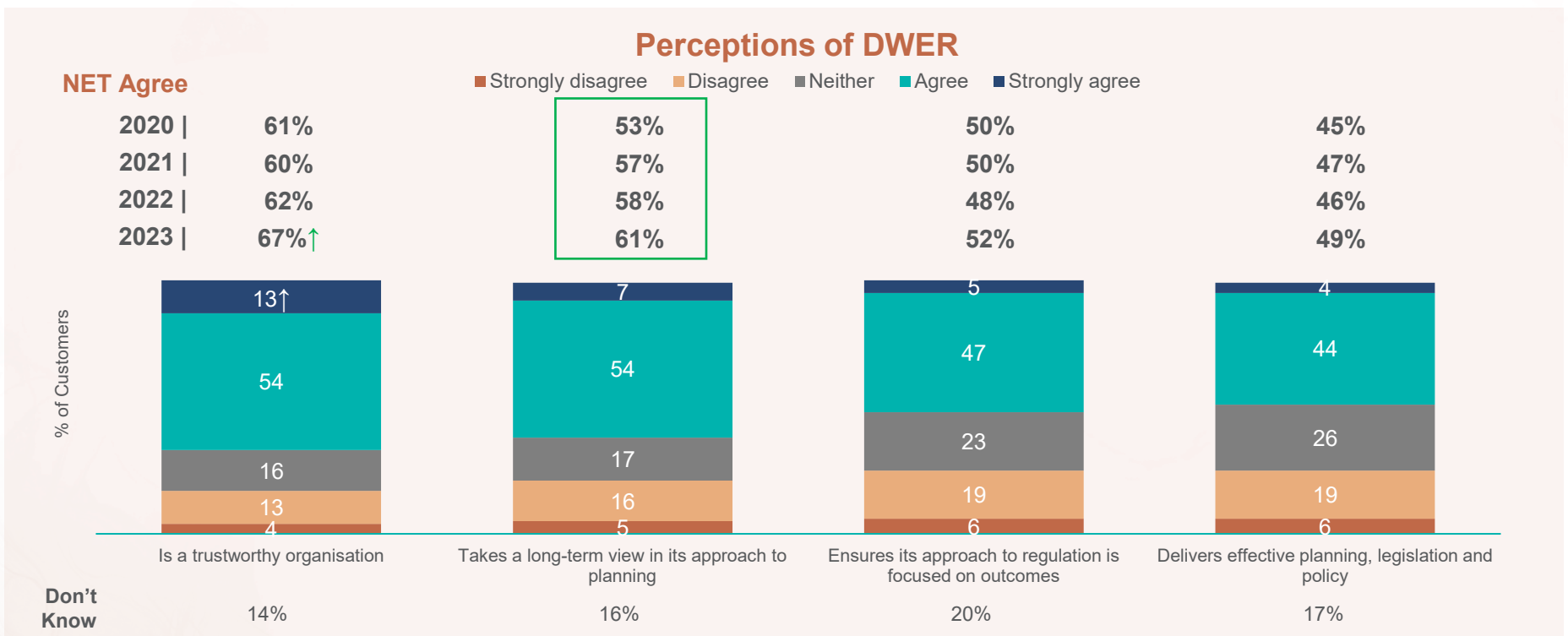
'They have regulations but do not enforce them. As an LGA, we try to stop people from clearing TEC's. But they do it anyway and DWER just sends a 'that's wrong, don't do it again' letter, even when [it's] prove[n] the landowners knew prior that they were not allowed to clear TEC's. Why have the regulations and ask us to uphold them if there is no penalty when private landowners do what they like.' **Other Customer**



Over time, Customers are more likely to agree that DWER is trustworthy and takes a long-term view to planning

The extent to which Customers agree that DWER’s approach to regulations is focused on outcomes and that it delivers effective planning, legislation and policy has held relatively steady since 2020.

Environmental Customers were less likely to agree that DWER takes a long-term view in its approach to planning, than water Customers (Environmental: 49% | Water: 64%). This is consistent with what we saw in 2022.



2023 : n= 264 | 256 | N/A | 244 | 254
 2022 : n= 276 | 253 | 236 | 242 | 264
 2021 : n= 374 | 340 | 348 | 332 | 338
 2020 : n= 590 | 508 | 531 | 515 | 532

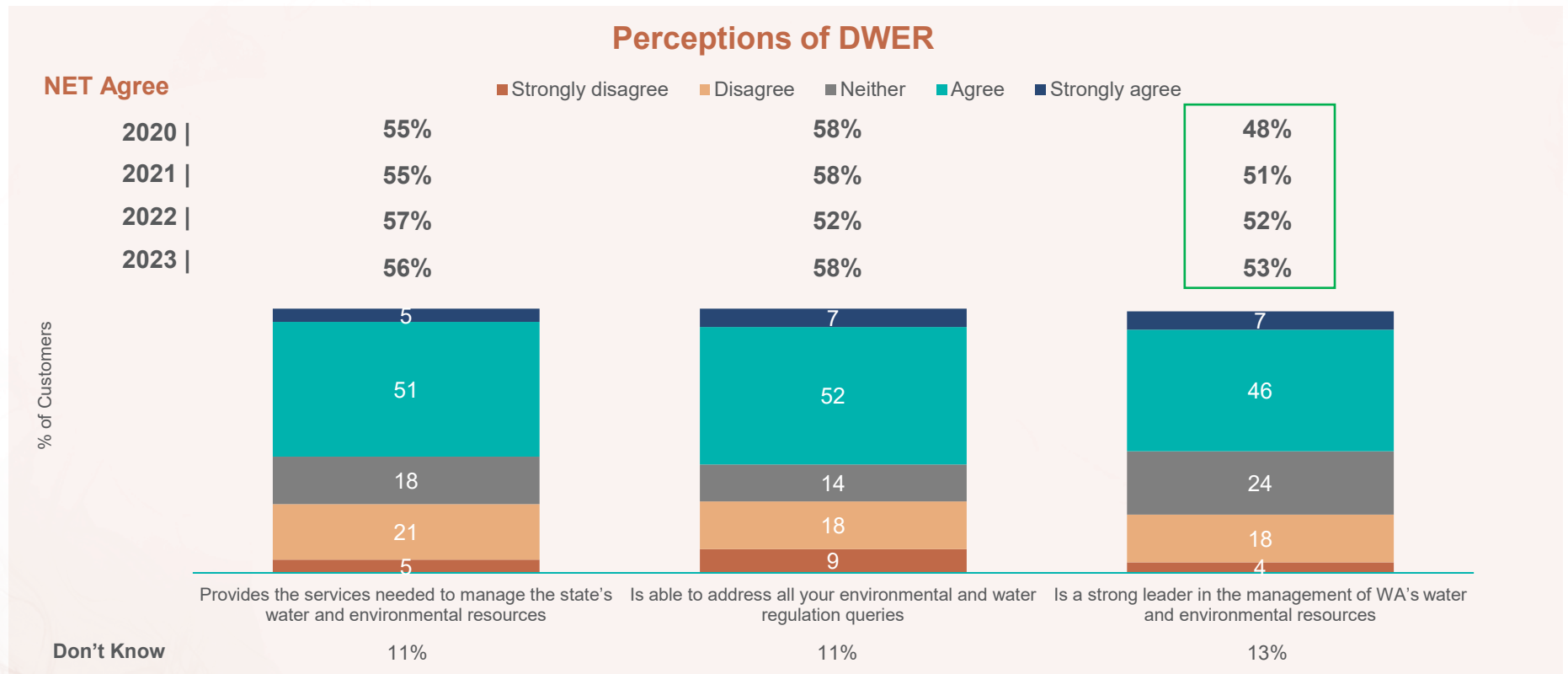
Q17. Based on everything you have seen, heard or experienced, to what extent do you agree or disagree that DWER

↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 results at 95% confidence

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

The perception that DWER is a strong leader in WA's water and environmental management has improved since 2020

Perceptions that DWER is a strong leader in the management of WA's water and environmental resources is significantly lower among Customers with environmental dealings, than those with waste or water dealings (Environmental: 42% | Waste: 49% | Water 55%).



2023: n= 271 | 272 | 267
 2022: n= 269 | 276 | 266
 2021: n= 377 | 364 | 363
 2020: n= 595 | 595 | 572

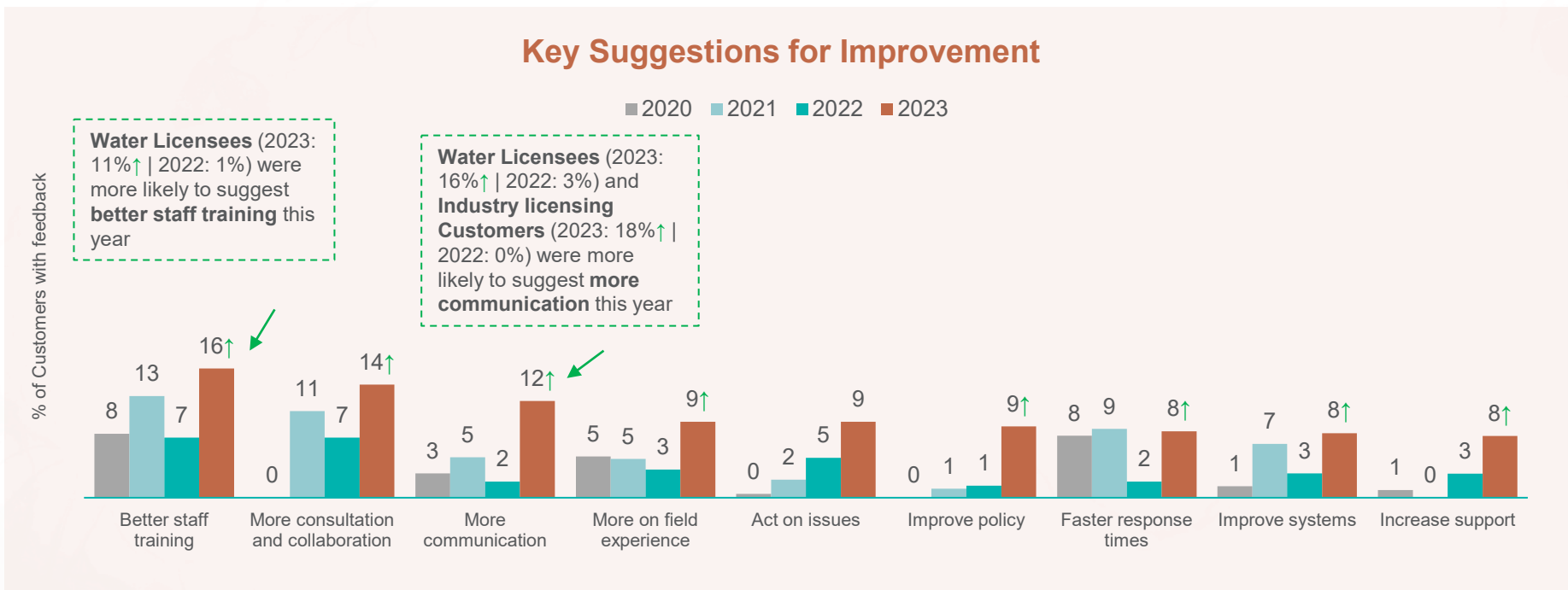
Q17. Based on everything you have seen, heard or experienced, to what extent do you agree or disagree that DWER

↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 results at 95% confidence

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

More staff training, and collaboration and communication with Customers were key suggestions for improvement this year

Customers were also more likely to suggest an improvement in policies, systems and support to improve response times and resolve issues.



2023: n=170 | 2022: n=202 | 2021: n=270 | 2020: n=430

Q24: Thank you for your feedback about DWER. Please provide any other suggestions for how DWER could improve its services and relationship with you/your organisation.

Please provide your suggestions for improvement in as much detail as possible.

↑↓ Significant difference to the 2022 results at 95% confidence

Don't Knows have been excluded

Responses under 8% are not charted

In their own words...

Better staff training

'More training on communication for all DWER staff. Better DWER document control (for example, submissions).' **Water Licensee**

'Departmental staff are too closeted in their own world already. Their failure to recognise defects in their processes of traditional management is their greatest weakness. The Department need to take some old problems and go deeply into investigating them themselves.' **Water Information Reporting Customer**

More collaboration

'Have enough staff with the correct skills and knowledge to do their jobs properly. Visit areas outside Perth (other than the Pilbara) to get a real understanding of the poor infrastructure and issues. Stop ignoring the appalling water management issues within remote communities.' **Clearing Permit Customer**



'You must have consultation, communication & more understanding of irrigators' needs.' **Water Licensee**

More communication

'Attend to business/applications with a timely, open and transparent response. Explain why a complaint is never attended to, and the outcome communicated in a way that encourages complainants to feel valued.'

Industry Licensing Customer



'Acknowledge receipt of email and respond, even if simply to say the information has been received and filed appropriately.'

Water Licensee

In their own words...

Visit sites / more on field experience



'Speak directly to the people on the ground.' **Water Licensee**

'Provide one assessing officer per mine site, rather than a different one per application. Continuity and site knowledge is very helpful during an assessment. Perhaps DWER personnel need to spend time at a mine site?' **Industry Licensing Customer**

'Developing policy to streamline permitting is fine, but when it is applied inconsistently, and officers are inexperienced with little site or practical experience, policy initiatives are a waste of time.' **Clearing Permit Customer**

Act on issues



'The City reported a formal complaint to Pollution Watch in April 2022 regarding clearing of native vegetation by Main Roads and hasn't heard the final outcomes from the investigation or received any communication since the initial meeting onsite. Suggest that investigations include some updates to the complainant every couple of months with expected timeframes.' **Clearing Permit Customer**

'Do a better job of protecting and sustaining the environment. Enforce compliance with legislation. Be consistent in decision making. Require proponents to do the background work at their cost in all applications rather than doing the work for them (for example, biological/flora/fauna surveys). Listen to and implement more of the suggestions and request of the environmental community.' **Other Customer**

Perceived Effectiveness – Waste Management



Last year's improvement in ratings of effectiveness of DWER's waste management was not sustained, returning to 2021 levels

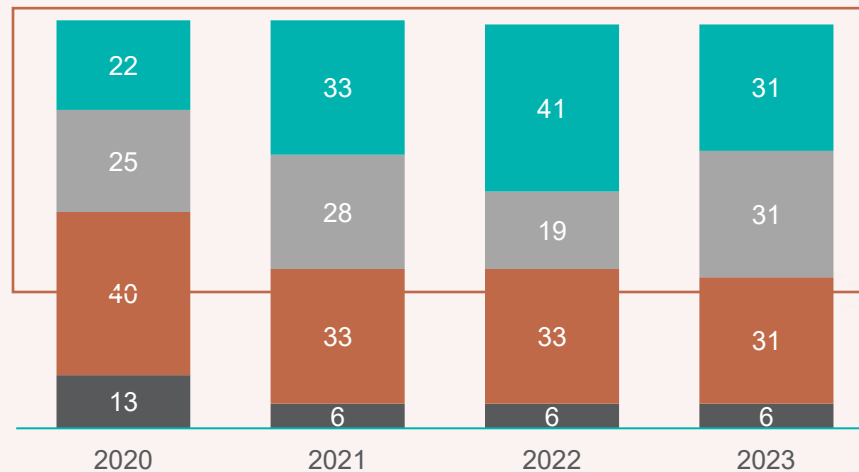


Communication of the various waste-related initiatives and plans from the 2022-26 Strategic Plan, such as the implementation of WA's *Waste Strategy*, and programs such as the *State Waste Infrastructure Plan* and WA's *Plan for Plastics* and the *ban of e-waste from landfill by 2024*, could help to shift perceptions in future years.

Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing the State's Waste | Overall

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

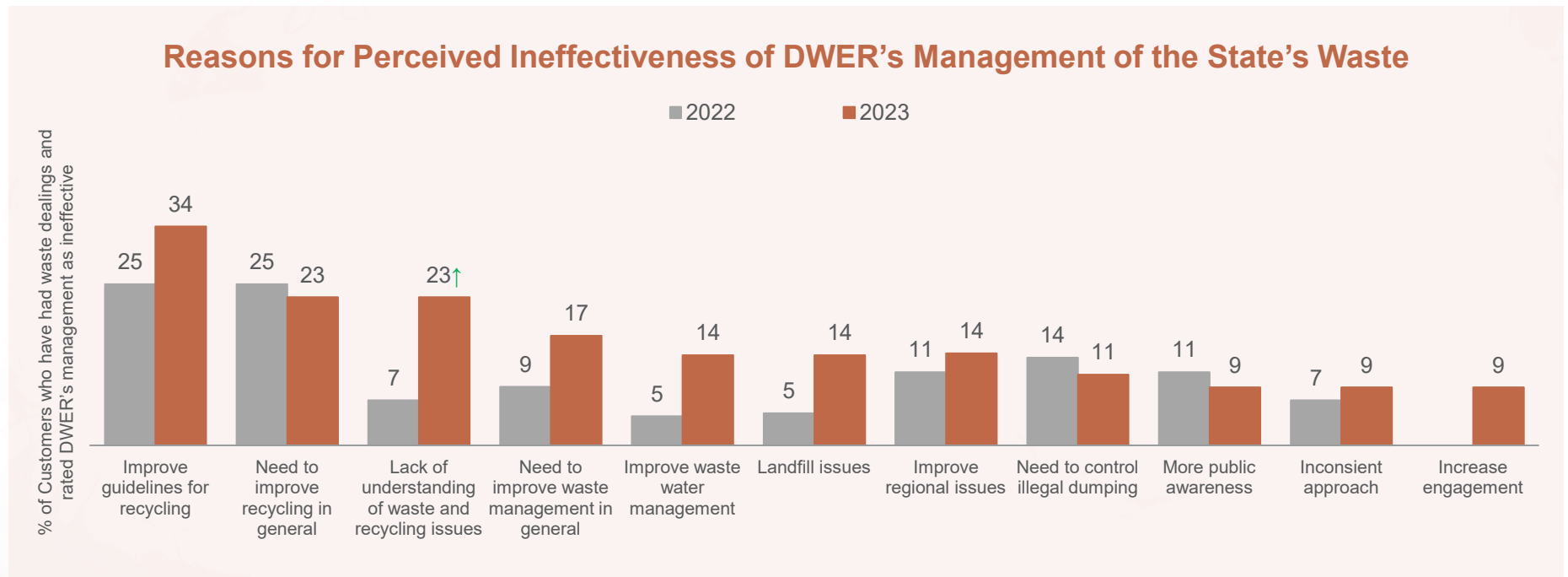
% of Customers with waste dealings



2023: n=64 | 2022: n=63 | 2021: n=90 | 2020: n= 103

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?

Insufficient guidelines and recycling practices and a perceived lack of understanding of waste and recycling issues are driving perceptions that DWER's waste management is ineffective



2023: n=35 | 2022: n=44*

Q16b. Why do you rate DWER's setting of the framework for better management of waste as ineffective? What are the things you would like to see improved?

NEW QUESTION ASKED IN 2022

↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 data at 95% confidence

*'Increase Engagement' is a new code for 2023

In their own words...

Improve guidelines for recycling

'There is no clear long-term strategic approach, just reactive. It's taken 10 years to produce compost facility guidelines and [it's] still not final. No clear plan for landfill levy increases (\$/t or geographic area). All policy and measures metro focused. Where is the state waste infrastructure plan?' **Clearing Permit Customer**



'Hampered by guidelines and policies that inhibit the ability for effective waste reuse strategies to actually be approved/implemented. Too risk adverse to support innovation in this area.' **Water Information Reporting Customer**

'Still allowing landfill to take place with outdated regulations. Current landfill tips do not operate to best practice policy in Australia.' **Water Licensee**

Need to improve recycling in general

'Would like to see product and packaging initiatives implemented to simplify waste streams in WA. It is a complex marketplace, but one example is plastic lids - do we really need so [many] different varieties? Recycling labelling also needs to be improved.' **Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessment Customer**



'Lots of chatter about recycling but as soon as you leave the metro area that stuff goes out the window!' **Water Licensee**

Lack of understanding of waste and recycling issues

'We don't see how they are reusing plastics ? Or where it goes after collection Also at our waste centre you have to pay for anything to recycle it should be free for people to to do the right thing.' **Water Licensee**



In their own words...

Need to improve waste management

'Due to the fact that I see 350,000 tonnes of waste from both metropolitan and regional municipalities come past my back door every year to be dumped in a mega dump in an idyllic rural setting (that is 20 B-doubles or putrid waste every day). If every council were responsible for its own waste and transport of waste to other people's backyards prohibited, then individual councils would be forced to act rather than handball the problem.'

Environmentally Interested Customer



'The only option is for transporters to pay the permits or a tax. I see rubbish blowing up the road from Suez in Landsdale, not really helpful to environment.' **Controlled Waste Customer**

Improve waste-water management

'Water waste ex Mining appears to be not handled adequately in the northern parts of our state.' **Water Licensee**

'Much more use of recycled water.' **Water Licensee**



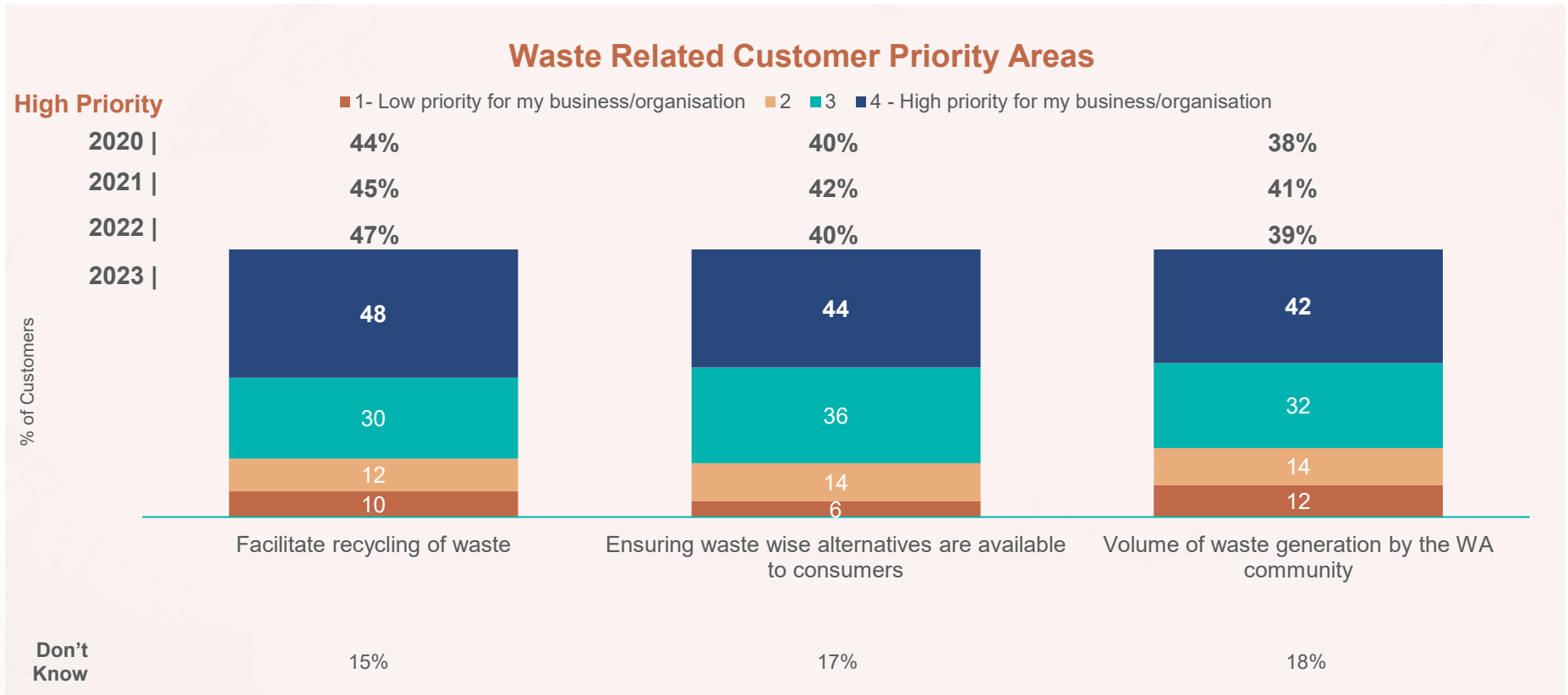
Landfill issues

'Still allowing landfill to take place with outdated regulations. Current landfill tips do not operate to best practice policy in Australia.' **Water Licensee**

'Too many different policies across State and Local Governments. Recycling is a bit of a joke as so much just goes into landfill. Better labelling and information is required to tell what should be recycled via the yellow bin and what should go into the red bin.' **Clearing Permit Customer**



Customers continue to rate most waste issues as similar in terms of overall priority



2023: n= 268 | 270 | 254
 2022: n= 266 | 262 | 255
 2021: n= 392 | 383 | 376
 2020: n= 581 | 574 | 568

Q26: And to what extent are each of the following considered a priority by your business/organisation for DWER to focus on regarding the management of our state's water and environmental issues?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 data at 95% confidence

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

Rubbish/Litter polluting out land and environment

Perceived Effectiveness – Environmental Management

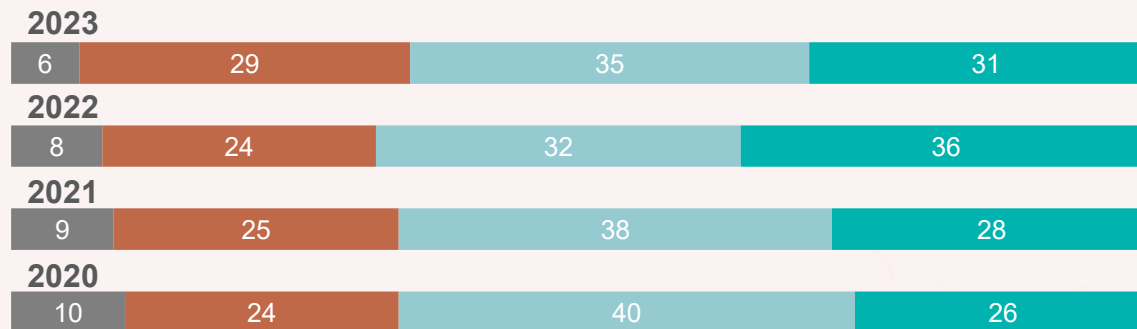


This year, there was a slight shift towards DWER being seen by Customers to tend towards development rather than environmental protection

Customer differences remain similar to previous years, with Clearing Permit Customers more likely to say that DWER tends towards environmental protection (46%), while Other (Environmentally Interested) Customers are more likely to feel that DWER tends towards development (68%).

Development vs Environmental Protection Favourability | Overall

■ Don't know ■ Tends towards development ■ Gets the balance about right ■ Tends towards protection of the environment



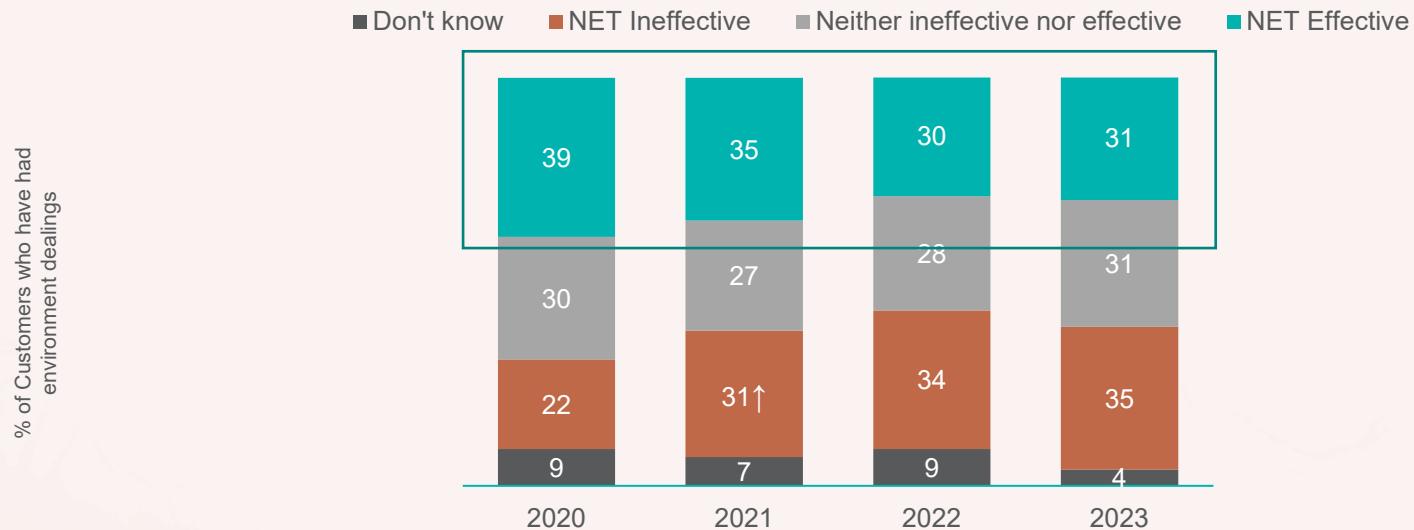
% of Customers who have had environment dealings

2023: n=127 | 2022: n=140 | 2021: n=197 | 2020: n=326
 Q13: From your experience with and understanding of the Department, would you say that overall it...?
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 results at 95% confidence

Three in ten Customers feel that DWER effectively manages WA's environment for sustainable productive use, which is on par with last year's results

Although the decline in perceived effectiveness has arrested, it remains lower than in 2020.

Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing the State's Environment | Overall



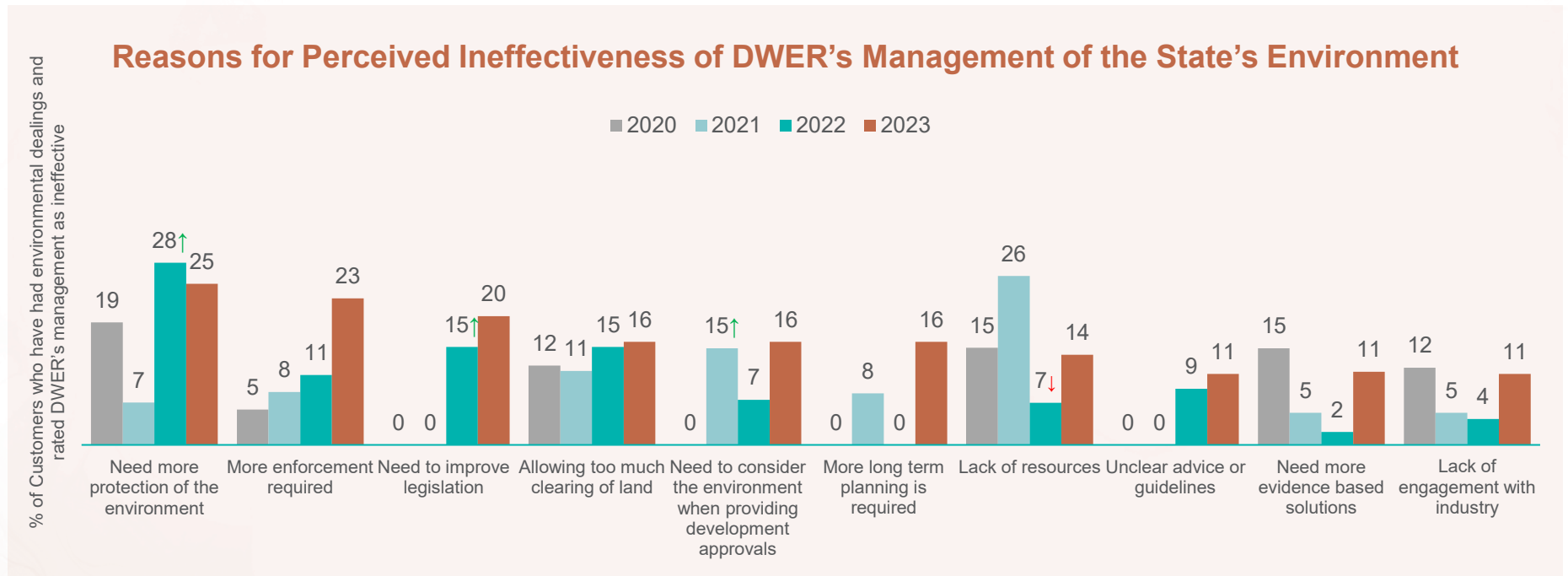
2023: n=127 | 2022: n=140 | 2021: n=197 | 2020: n= 326

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

↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 results at least 95% confidence

Concerns about protection of the environment, and lack of enforcement are the reasons for perceived ineffectiveness of DWER's environmental management this year

Compared to last year, Customers cited a broader range of reasons for perceived ineffectiveness.



2023: n=44* | 2022: n=46* | 2021: n=61 | 2020: n= 73

Q15. 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
Responses under 11% are not charted

↑↓Significant difference to 2022 results at least 95% confidence

In their own words...

Need more protection of the environment

'The legislation that DWER works with needs to be strengthened with a view to enhancing protection of the natural environment. There needs to be more scrutiny that what a developer says they will do as a mitigating factor is actually done. Where offsets are considered, they need to make a real difference to the overall environment. Revegetation should not be accepted as a legitimate mitigation action as not all plant species can be returned to the revegetated area.' **Environmentally Interested Customer**



*'The department appears to be hamstrung by competing objectives - political motives, driven by powerful backers versus administering and driving change of the legislation. As such, it fails to deliver improvements in the EP Act with respect to protection and conservation of the environment - major loopholes in the Act remain and seem to be off limits for overhaul, all the while streamlining approvals is the key focus. Improvements: fixing the loopholes, e.g. S51 and the Clearing Principles - a simple change of words and emphasis would amount to a huge difference, e.g. in Schedule 5, native vegetation **must** not be cleared rather than native vegetation **should** not be cleared.'* **Clearing Permit Customer**

More enforcement required

'As my previous comments - land owners knowingly clear TEC's and DWER does not penalize them, just sends education letters, even to repeat offenders.' **Clearing Permit Customer**

'Lack of compliance and enforcement issues relating to the growth of native vegetation clearing.' **Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessment Customer**

'Failure to monitor and ensure compliance with native vegetation clearing permits and failure to act when members of the public report wrongdoing to pollution watch.' **Environmentally Interested Customer**

'From what I see licence conditions are weak. The conditions are often not SMART making them difficult to enforce and when they do get reports of breaches, or licence conditions are clearly being disregarded, the enforcement of compliance is weak.' **Water Licensee**

In their own words...

Need to improve legislation

'Unfortunately, the system is flawed (i.e. offsets) which allows continual clearing, even TEC's when there are no like-for-like trade-offs. DWER are bound by the current legal framework which must be quite distressing and demoralising for those who are trying to protect the environment.' **Clearing Permit Customer**



'There is lack of harmonising with Federal legislation and policy; the proposed changes to state policies and legislation do not seem to have been based on evidence or data but rather on proposed sentiment from certain stakeholders only. This does not promote or service to provide confidence in the regulator.' **Industry Licensing Customer**

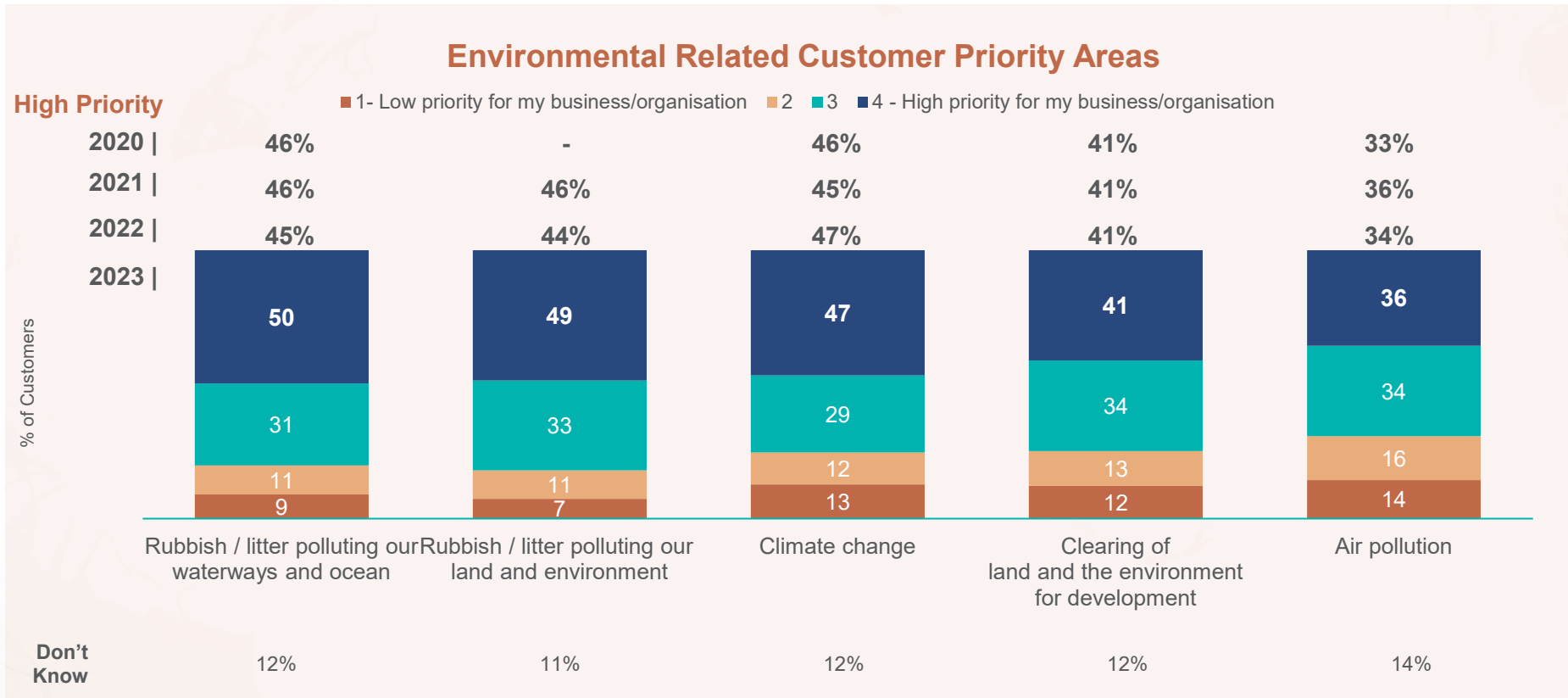
Allowing too much clearing of land

'We wanted a stronger Native Vegetation policy - we are pessimistic that the policy as written can make a big enough difference. We are dismayed at the level of clearing being approved - the cumulative impacts on our environment seem to be ignored. Our native vegetation - in a biodiversity hot spot - is under threat of death by a thousand cuts. There needs to be a greater recognition that the protection of our remaining biodiversity is extremely important and that we have already lost too much.' **Clearing Permit Customer**



'The state focus on individual plants and animals could be time and money that is better spent at a local/regional landscape level. Clearing applications are reviewed under several different areas, EPA, WAPC, Permits etc, and almost all are approved, many with conditions that are not effective or enforced. State management of offsets is poor and doesn't deliver environmental outcomes as intended.' **Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessment Customer**

The extent to which Customers rated specific environmental issues as a priority was similar to last year



2023: n= 261 | 268 | 272 | 252 | 264
 2022: n= 261 | 260 | 264 | 255 | 251
 2021: n= 390 | 390 | 385 | 384 | 379
 2020: n= 600 | 598 | 610 | 568 | 579

Q26: And to what extent are each of the following considered a priority by your business/organisation for DWER to focus on regarding the management of our state's water and environmental issues?

↑ ↓ Significant difference to 2021 data at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data
 Rubbish/Litter polluting out land and environment

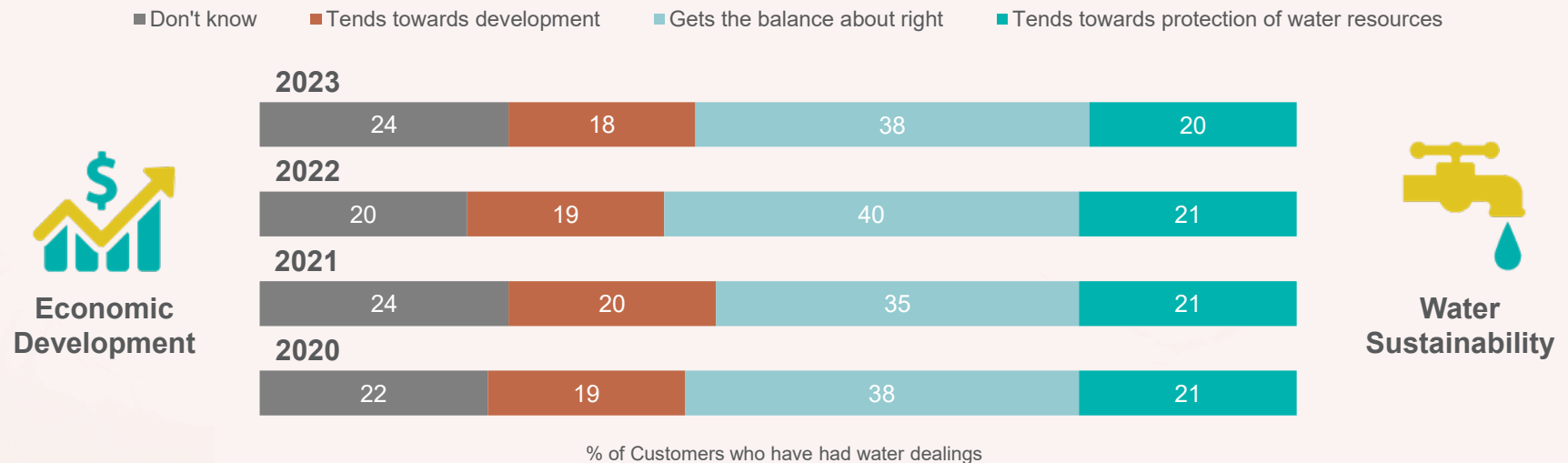
Perceived Effectiveness – Water Management



Similar to previous years, four in ten Customers say DWER strikes the right balance between water protection and development

An opportunity still remains to better inform Customers about DWER's water operations, with one in four Customers unable to provide a rating. This is highest among Water Licensees at almost one in three.

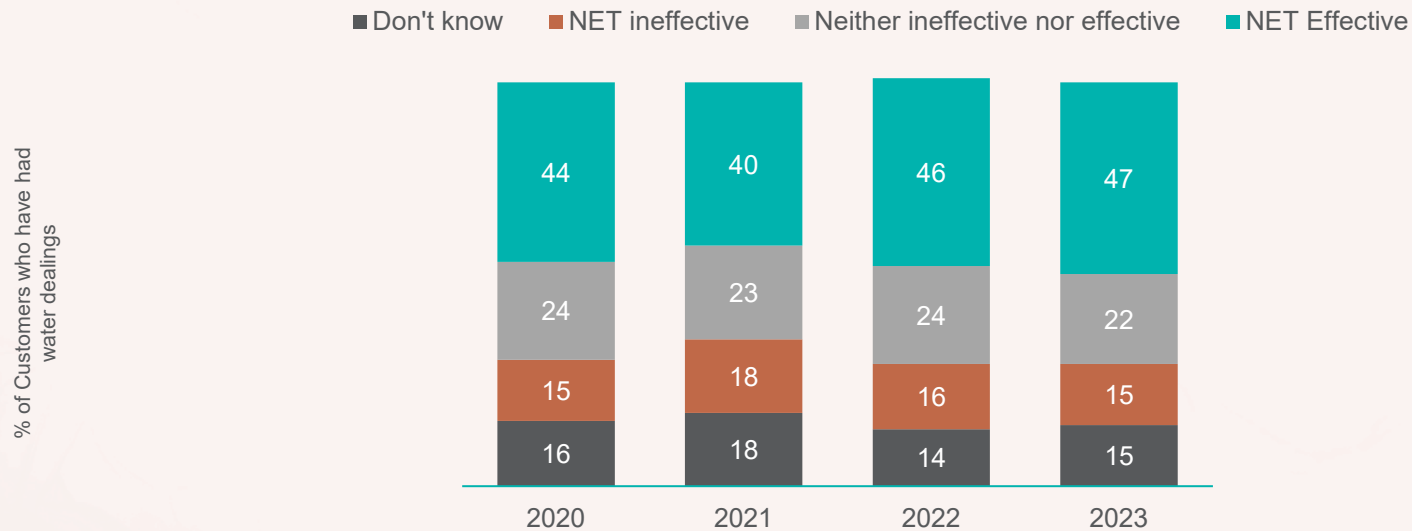
Development vs Water Protection Favourability | Overall



2023: n=226 | 2022: n=226 | 2021: n=329 | 2020: n=561
 Q10. From your experience with and understanding of the Department, would you say that overall it ...?
 ↑ Significant difference to 2021 results at 95% confidence

Similar to last year, almost half of Customers believe DWER is effective at managing WA's water for sustainable productive use

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



2023: n=226 | 2022: n=226 | 2021: n=329 | 2020: n=561

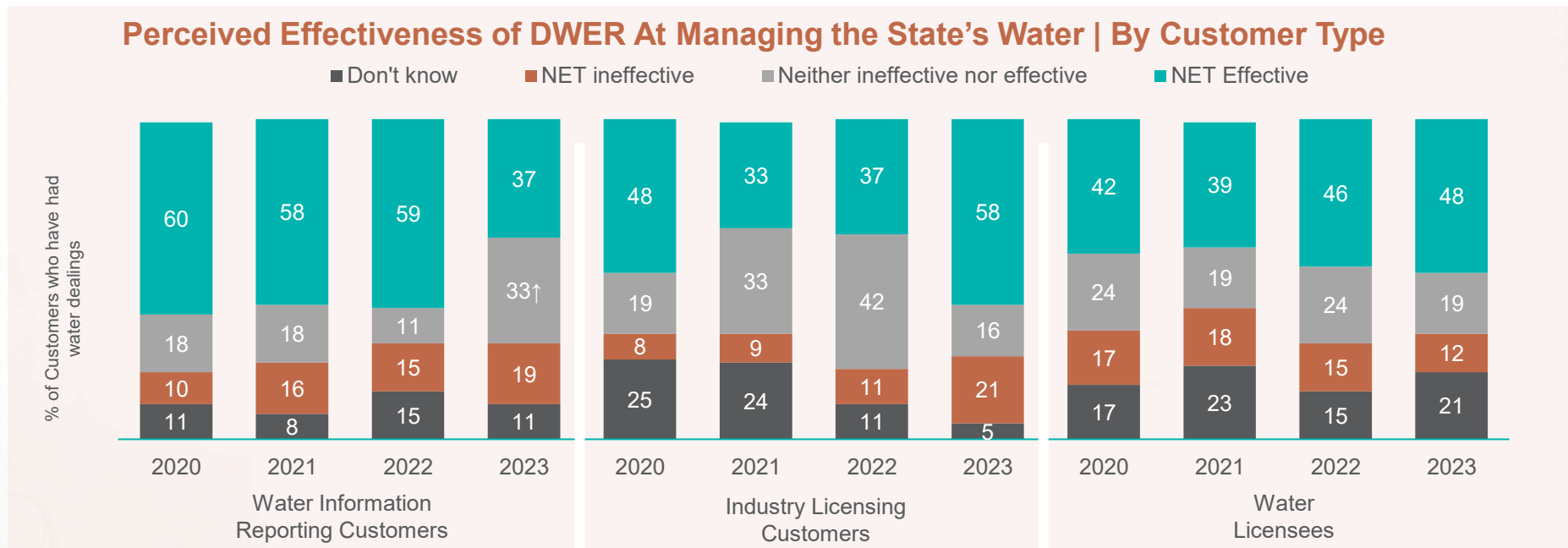
Q11: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 data at 95% confidence

Industry Licensing Customers are more likely than other Customer groups to rate DWER's water management as effective, a shift from previous years



Historically, Water Information Reporting Customers have provided the highest proportion of effective ratings. However, an increase in the proportion of Water Information Reporting Customers who feel indifferent about DWER's effectiveness this year has resulted in fewer 'effective' ratings. The results are indicative only, given small sample sizes.



2023: n= 27* | 19* | 137
 2022: n= 27* | 19* | 123
 2021: n= 38* | 33* | 185
 2020: n= 96 | 48 | 301

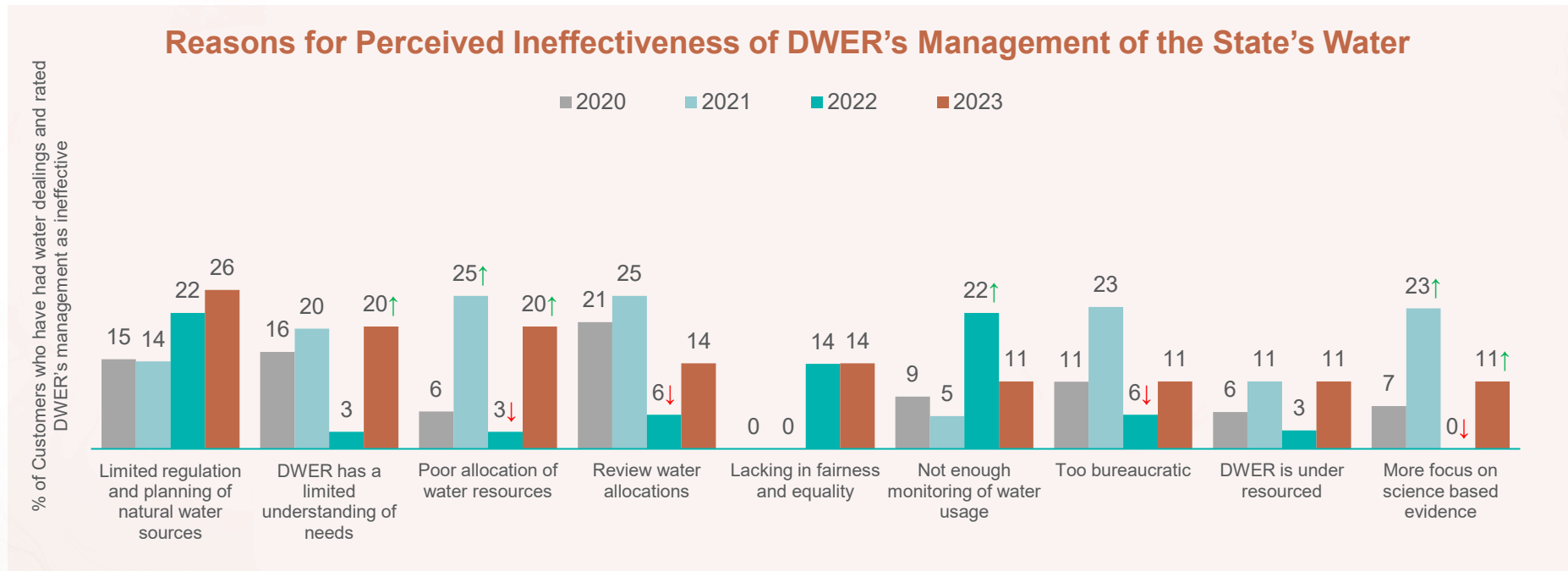
Q11: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 data at 95% confidence

*Caution results indicative due to small sample

The key reasons why Customers rate DWER's water management as ineffective are a perceived lack of regulation and planning, limited understanding of Customer needs and poor allocation of water resources

Insufficient monitoring of water usage was less top of mind this year.



2023: n=45 | 2022: n=36 | 2021: n=56 | 2020: n=82

Q12: 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?

Please provide as much detail as possible.

Note: scores under 11% not shown

↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 results at least 95% confidence

In their own words...

Limited regulation and planning of natural water sources

'I think the State Government should be looking long term (thirty to forty years, at least) for sustainable water for WA, as population growth in this state will continue and I don't believe our ground water use for urban growth is sustainable in a drying climate, having an impact on horticulture and other ground water users.' **Water Licensee**



'Again, they do not penalise landowners for clearing of waterways and catchments. They allow big corps like ALCOA to take so much water no one else can have their full allocations and the DAM never fills up.' **Other Customer**

DWER has a limited understanding of needs

'Fundamentally DWER is largely reactive to water issues and water planning. The Department's understanding of climate impacts on water resources is very poor. Therefore, these factors combine to make it almost impossible for DWER to adequately manage the water resources in a strategic, informed, planned and coordinated fashion. The reliance on in-house science and expertise is also a major issue for the Department, as industry has no confidence in the ways that DWER then regulates and manages water science, through to water allocations - they are seen as judge, jury and executioner. Many water plans rely on internal expertise, and then industry sees that DWER has done the water science, produced the answer, and done the altered water allocations. Building trust in this process requires: genuine partnerships and investment into collaborative, arms-length research by universities, better investments into social partnerships and community-led water science and then into water allocation.' **Water Information Reporting Customer**



In their own words...

Poor allocation of water resources

'More environmental checks on the construction of dams on watercourses. Putting a barrier on a watercourse has an automatic ecological impact. How are large dams still being constructed in the state without bypass for aquatic fauna? More information is required on the impact that taking groundwater will have on the quality of our water resources. There seems to be limited data on the Water Information Network on water quality. When users take more water or are inefficient with their water use, the department doesn't appear to step in to fix this. There are developments close to water resources that should have a better buffer (waste sites). The taking of water from surface water systems seems to have failed to effectively measure the ecological and social water requirements of the systems. Too much focus is placed on the economic benefits of the water resource.' **Water Information Reporting Customer**



Review water allocations

'Consider the circumstances of allocation holders and consider each application with those circumstances having relevance.' **Other Customer**

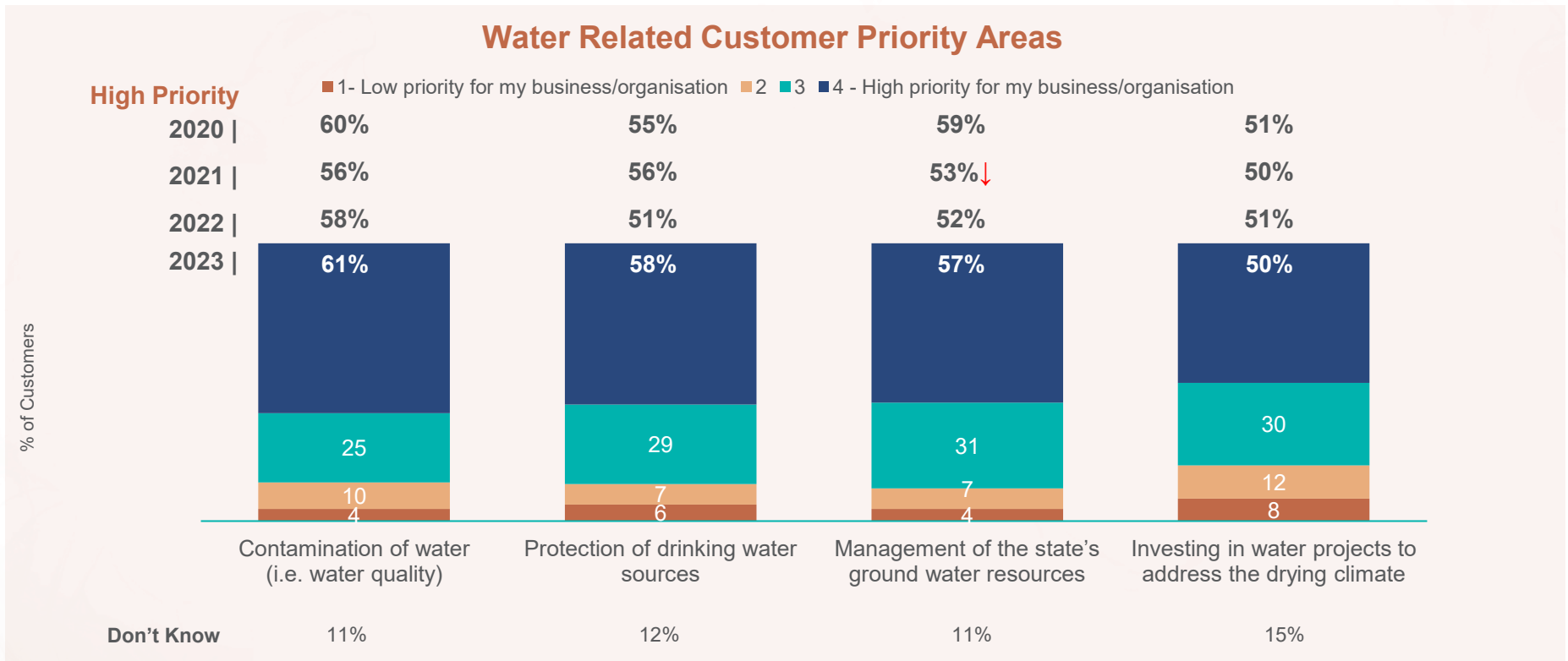
'Department policies are developed with the correct intent. However, allocation limits do not reflect the actual sustainable limit of water that can be taken from a resource without impacting GDE's or downstream users. No groundwater or surface water plans, or their allocation limits, have been reviewed for over 10 years. There are adaptive and modern methods for managing water resources that are not being considered, essentially due to budget restraints and staffing, resulting in water resources not being managed effectively. Future planning looks primarily at urban development over agricultural use. Farmers should not be penalised for water service providers constructing bores near the coast, creating saline interface risks. New urban developments should be able to use third pipe solutions, stop creating grassed verges and encourage rainwater harvesting and living streams to manage stormwater. Currently the approach is to take water off farmers to support nice landscaping in new urban areas.' **Clearing Permit Customer**



Managing existing water sources (groundwater and drinking water) continues to be a key priority for Customers



Protection of drinking water and management of groundwater resources has increased as a priority this year.

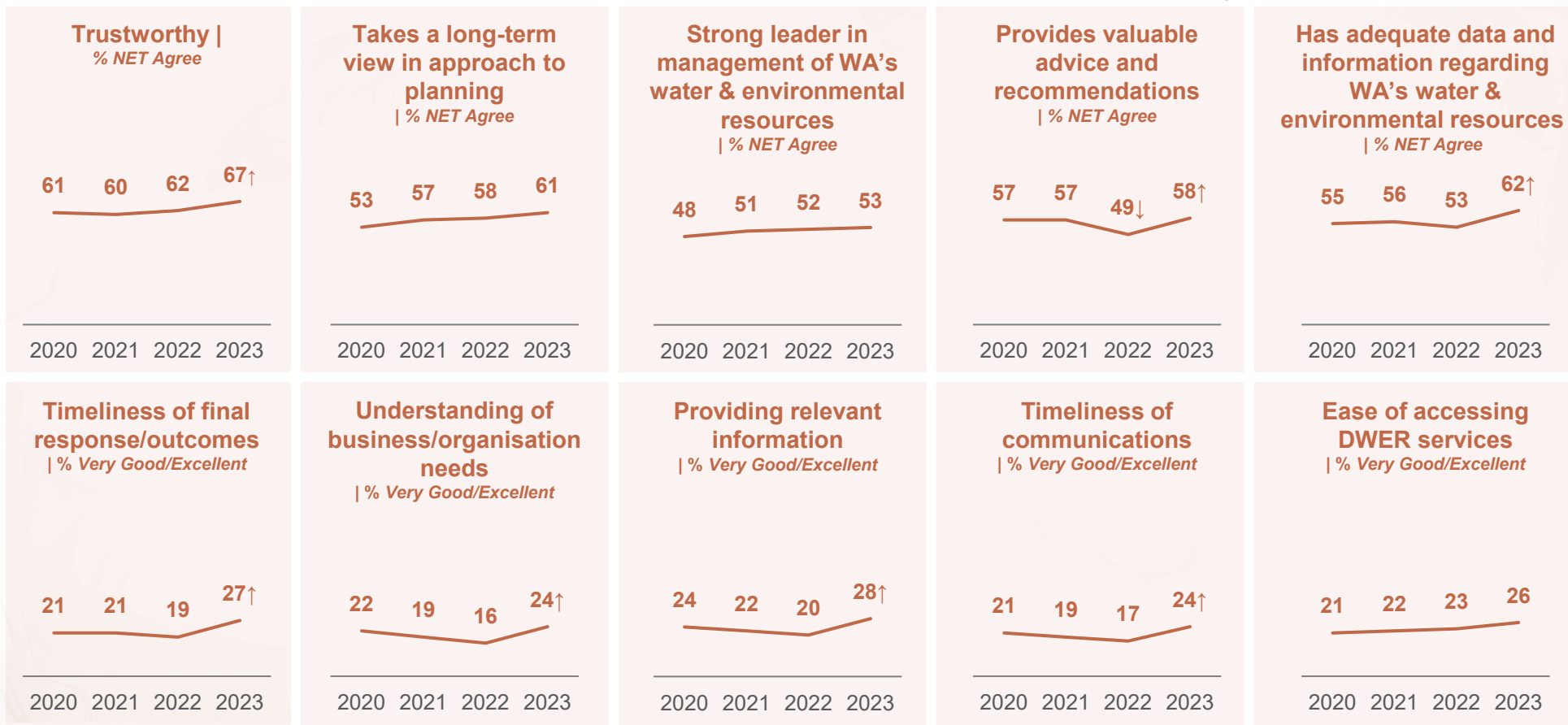


2023: n= 273 | 269 | 272 | 259
 2022: n= 274 | 273 | 274 | 265
 2021: n= 397 | 394 | 397 | 390
 2020: n= 619 | 618 | 614 | 605
 Q26: And to what extent are each of the following considered a priority by your business/organisation for DWER to focus on regarding the management of our state's water and environmental issues?
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 or 2021 data at 95% confidence

Customer Experience



Improvements in Customer perceptions of DWER’s decision making, timeliness of outcomes and communications have contributed to more positive overall sentiment this year



2023 : n= 264 | 256 | 276 | 266 | 243 | 26 | 256 | 267 | 273 | 274
 2022 : n= 276 | 253 | 266 | 273 | 239 | 275 | 263 | 259 | 271 | 273
 2021 : n= 374 | 340 | 363 | 368 | 335 | 378 | 357 | 361 | 378 | 378
 2020: n= 590 | 508 | 572 | 578 | 518 | 589 | 582 | 580 | 591 | 602

Q17. Based on everything you have seen, heard or experienced, to what extent do you agree or disagree that DWER Q18A. And to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about DWER’s knowledge and expertise in the management of the state’s water resources and environment Q22B. And how would you rate DWER’s performance in managing their relationship with you and your business/organisation, across each of the following areas?

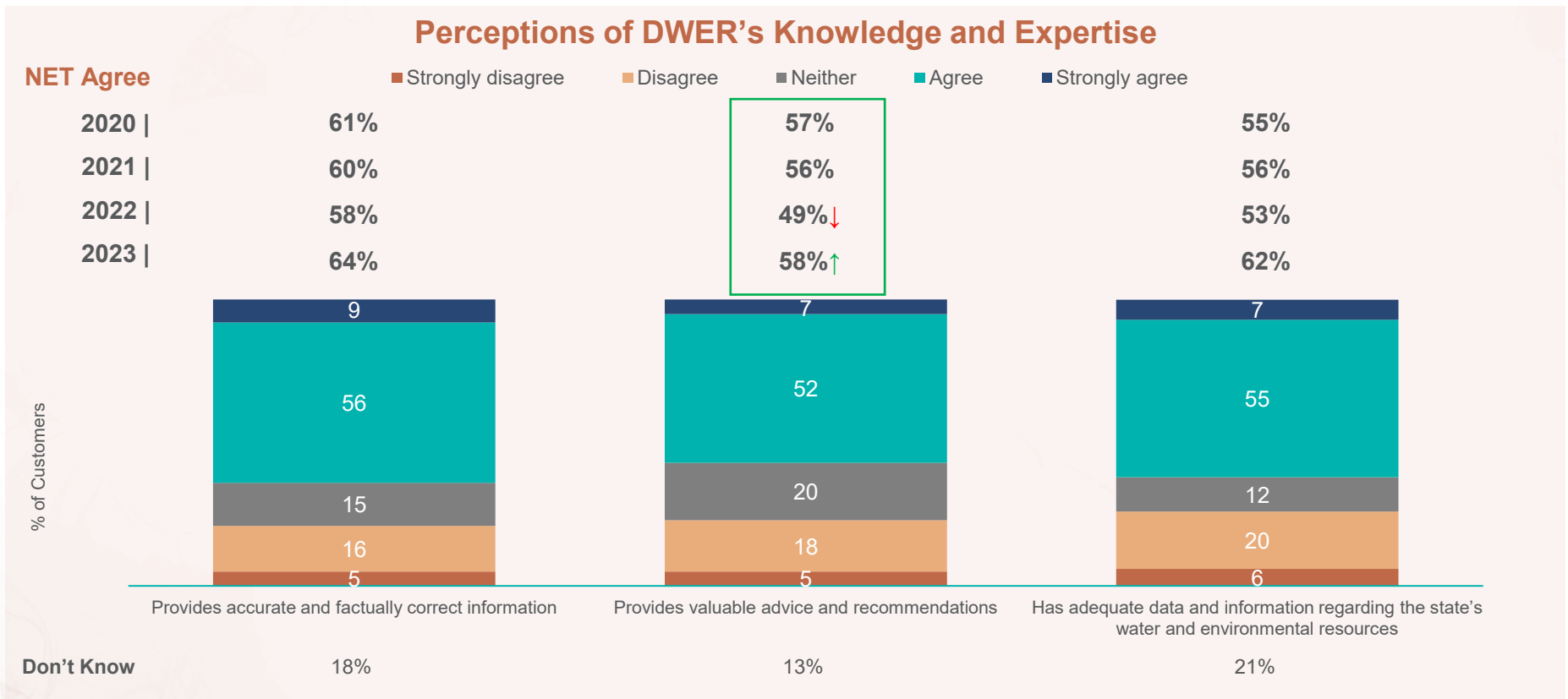
Q23. Still thinking about your interactions with DWER, how would you rate the following

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

↑↓ Significant difference to previous year data at 95% confidence

The proportion of Customers who agree that DWER provides valuable advice and recommendations has recovered following a decline last year

Perceived adequacy of data and information has improved over time.



2023: n=252 | 266 | 243
 2022: n= 255 | 273 | 239
 2021: n= 361 | 369 | 335
 2020: n= 553 | 578 | 518

Q18A. And to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about DWER's knowledge and expertise in the management of the state's water resources and environment

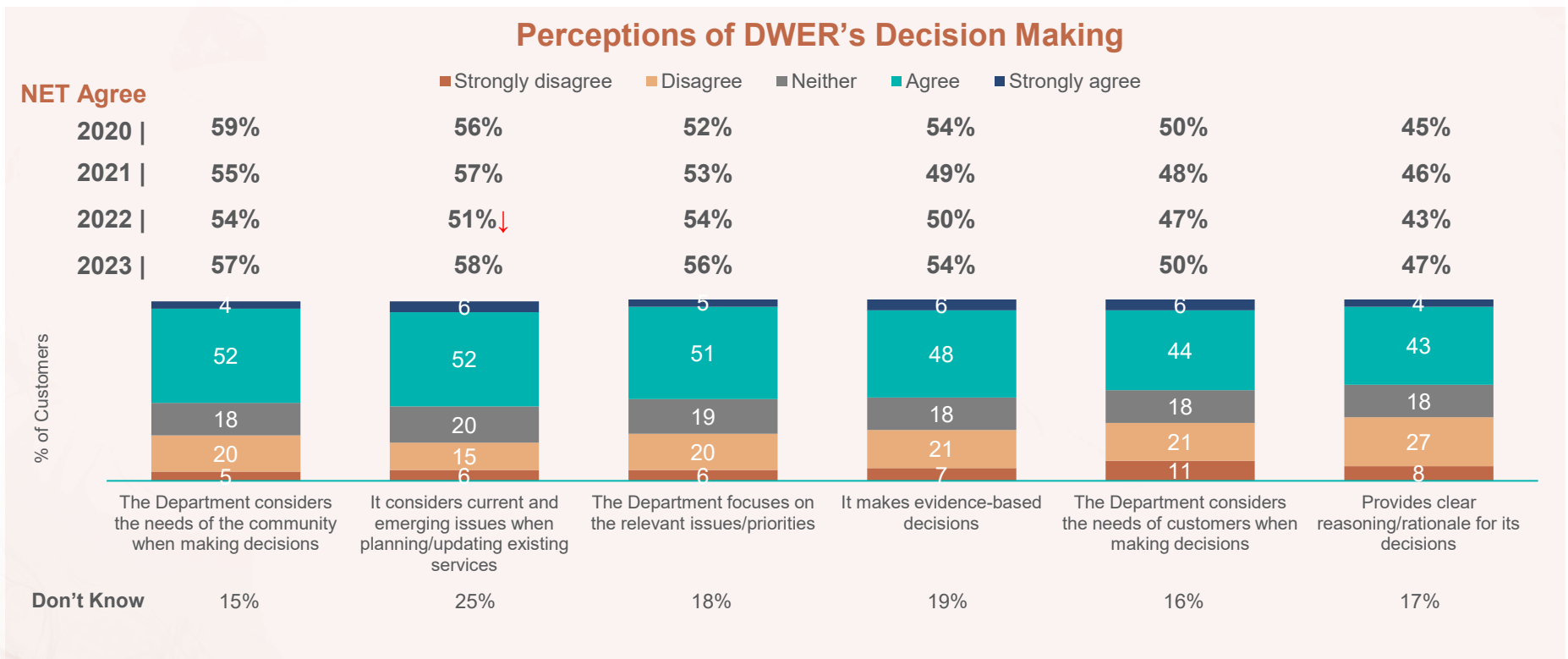
↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 data at 95% confidence

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

Customer ratings of most aspects relating to decision making held steady this year

However, perceptions that the Department considers the needs of the community (2022: 75% | 2023: 48% ↓) and considers current and emerging issues when planning (2022: 82% | 2023: 52% ↓) have eased significantly this year among Water Information Customers.

Perceptions that DWER focuses on relevant issues and priorities is lower among Customers with environment dealings, than those with water or waste dealings (Environment: 46% | Water: 57% | Waste: 53%).



2023: n=260 | 231 | 252 | 248 | 257 | 255
 2022: n=252 | 232 | 250 | 238 | 256 | 257
 2021: n=356 | 325 | 320 | 334 | 370 | 345
 2020: n=563 | 500 | 533 | 519 | 572 | 548

Q18B. Thinking now about how DWER makes its decisions, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

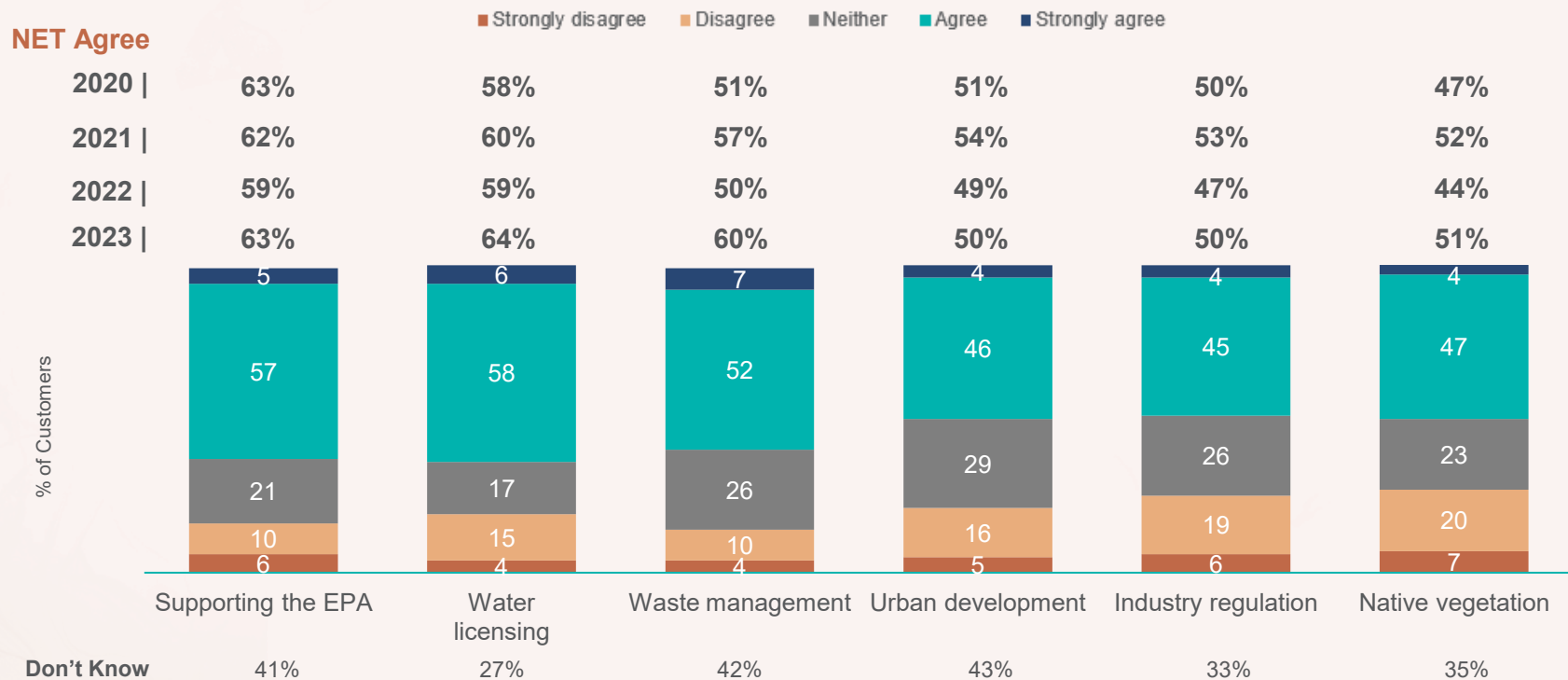
↑ ↓ Significant difference to 2021 data at 95% confidence

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

Agreement that DWER is finding sustainable ways for development to occur have improved the most in relation to water licensing and waste management



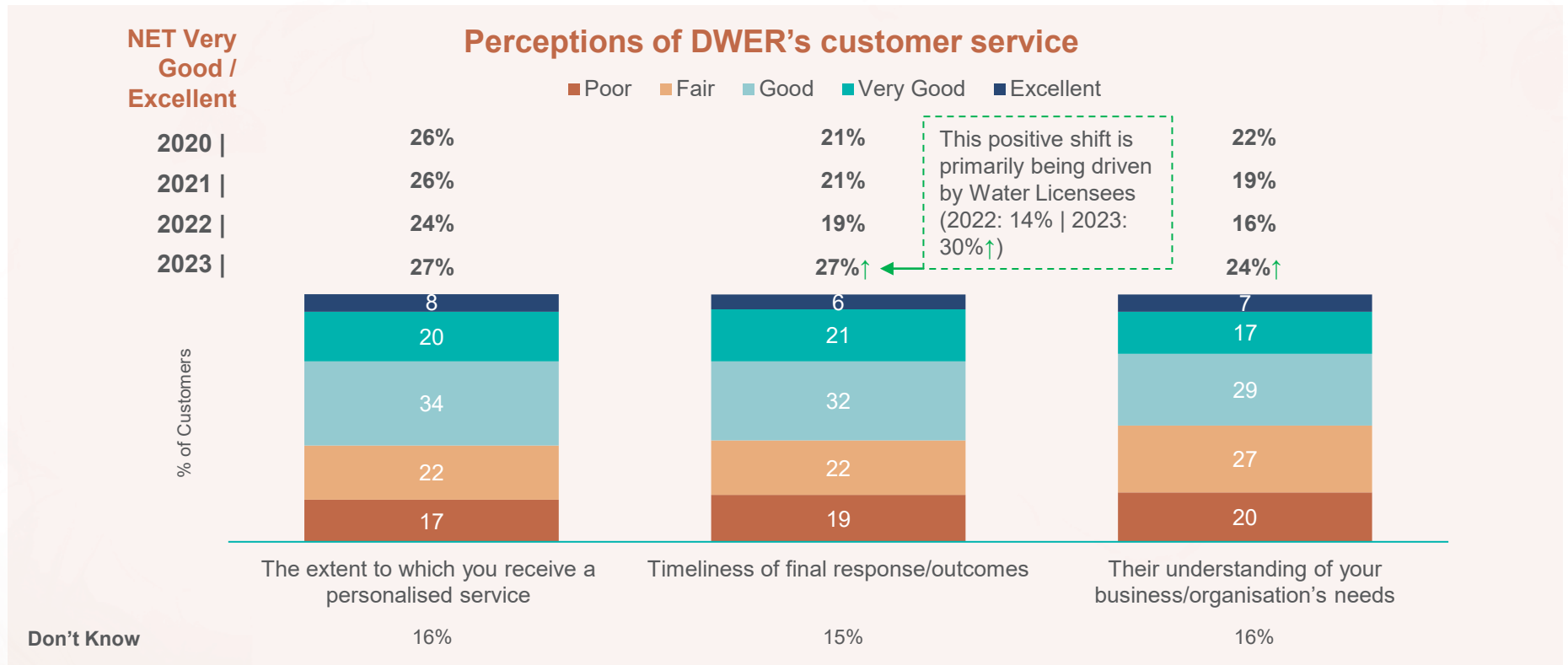
Perception that DWER is Solutions Focused Including Finding Sustainable Ways for Development



2023: n=182 | 223 | 178 | 173 | 206 | 200
 2022: n=197 | 231 | 181 | 190 | 210 | 206
 2021: n=270 | 334 | 259 | 250 | 301 | 296
 2020: n=427 | 545 | 373 | 389 | 456 | 481

Q28. And to what extent do you agree or disagree that DWER is solutions focused including finding sustainable ways for development to proceed in each of the following:
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data

This year, Customers rated DWER's understanding of business needs and timeliness of final response more positively



2023: n= 256 | 261 | 256
 2022: n= 266 | 275 | 263
 2021: n= 361 | 378 | 357
 2020: n= 574 | 589 | 582

Q22B. And, how would you rate DWER's performance in managing their relationship with you and your business/organisation, across each of the following areas?

Q23. Still thinking about your interactions with DWER, how would you rate the following

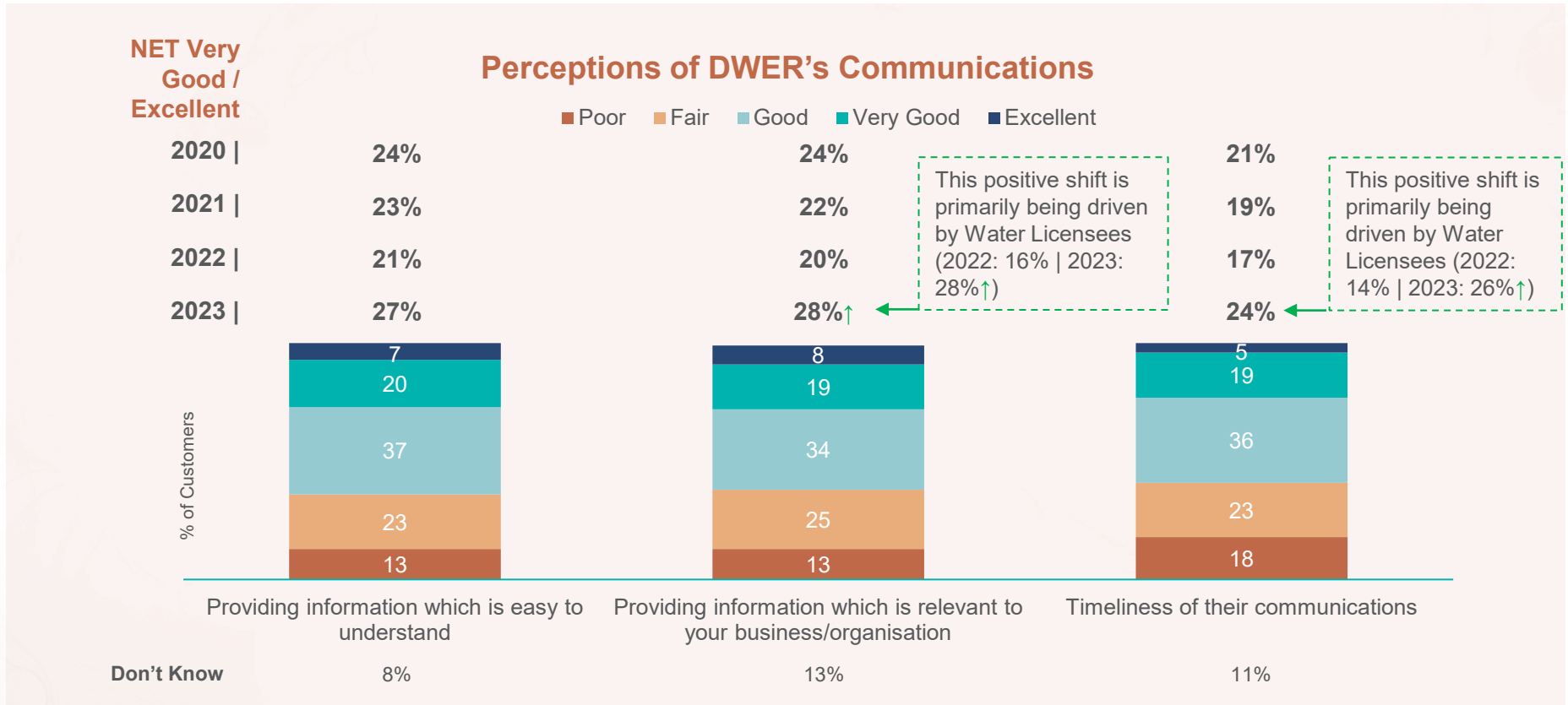
↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 data at 95% confidence

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

Scores may equal +/- 1% due to rounding

Customers were also more positive about DWER's communications

Timeliness and relevance of information both recovered following a downward trend in Customer ratings over the last two years.



2023: n= 280 | 267 | 273
 2022: n= 276 | 259 | 271
 2021: n= 389 | 361 | 378
 2020: n= 610 | 580 | 597

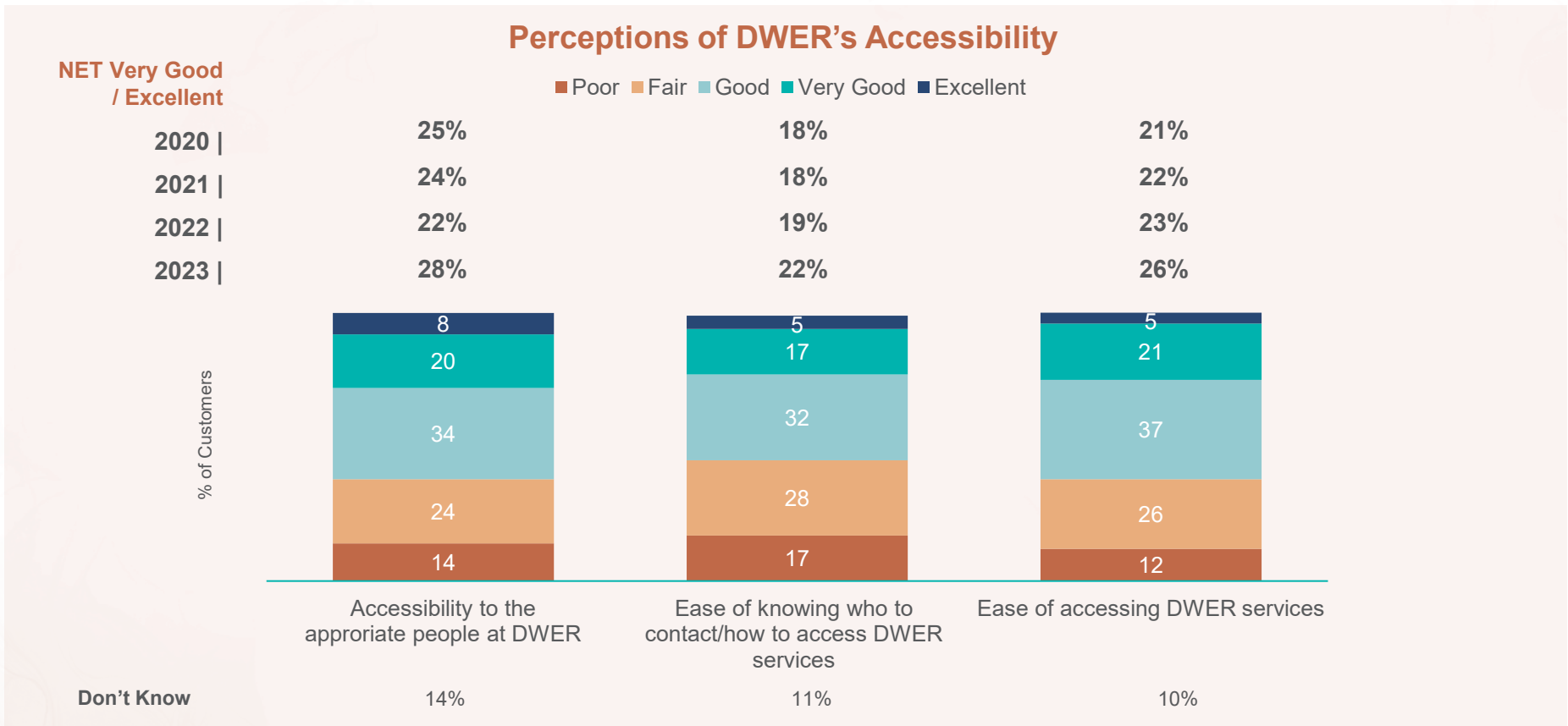
Q22B. And, how would you rate DWER's performance in managing their relationship with you and your business/organisation, across each of the following areas?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 data at 95% confidence

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

However, perceived accessibility to DWER has held steady and is still relatively low

Less than three in ten rate *access to services* and *knowing who to access* as very good or excellent.



2023: n=264 | 271 | 274
 2022: n=269 | 277 | 273
 2021: n= 369 | 379 | 378
 2020: n= 581 | 598 | 602

Q22B. And, how would you rate DWER's performance in managing their relationship with you and your business/organisation, across each of the following areas?

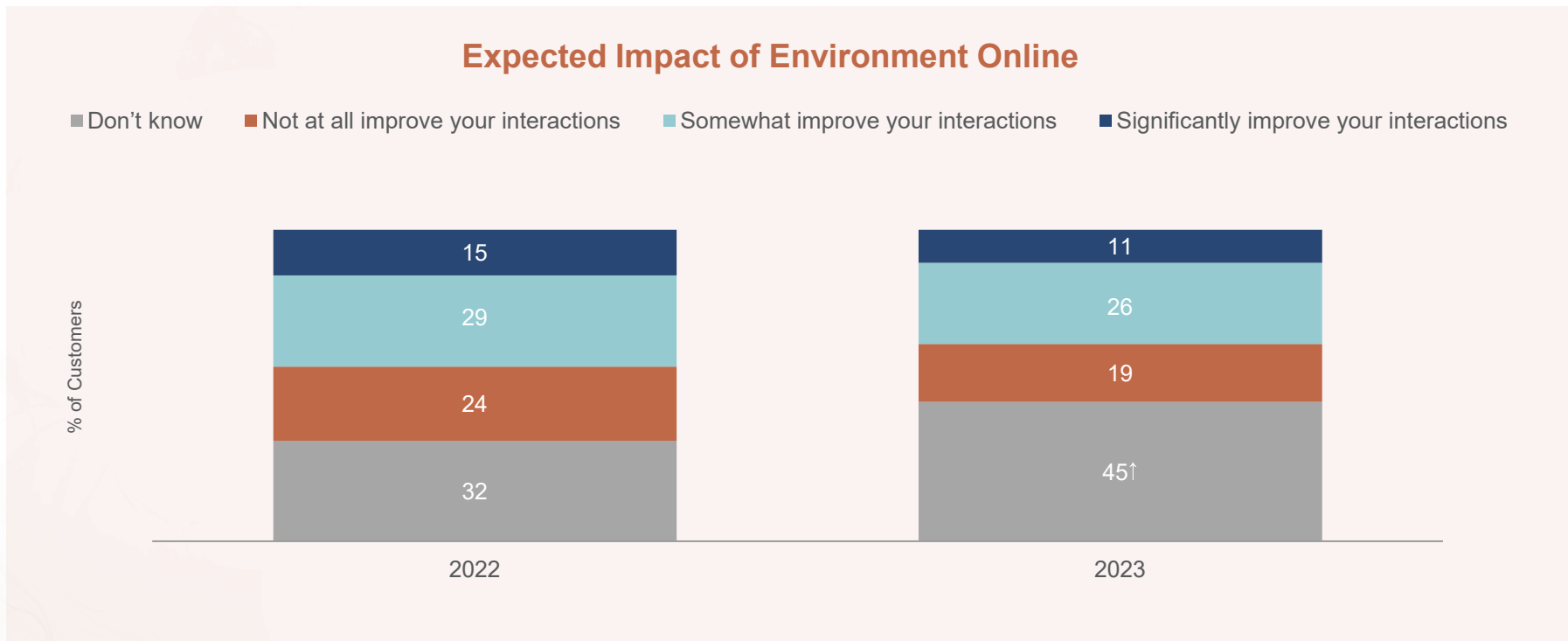
Q23. Still thinking about your interactions with DWER, how would you rate the following

↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 data at 95% confidence

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

Scores may equal +/- 1% due to rounding

Half of Customers are unsure to what extent *Environment Online* will improve their interactions with DWER



2023 n=273 | 2022 n=307

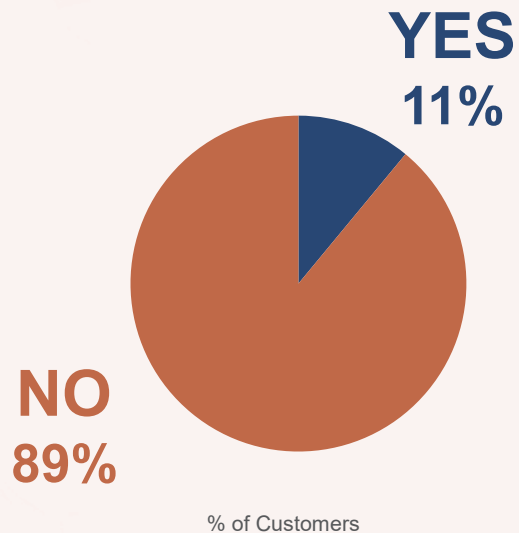
NQ10: DWER is developing a new digital one-stop-shop for environmental assessments, approvals, and compliance, called Environment Online.

To what extent do you think an online portal will improve your interactions with DWER and its services

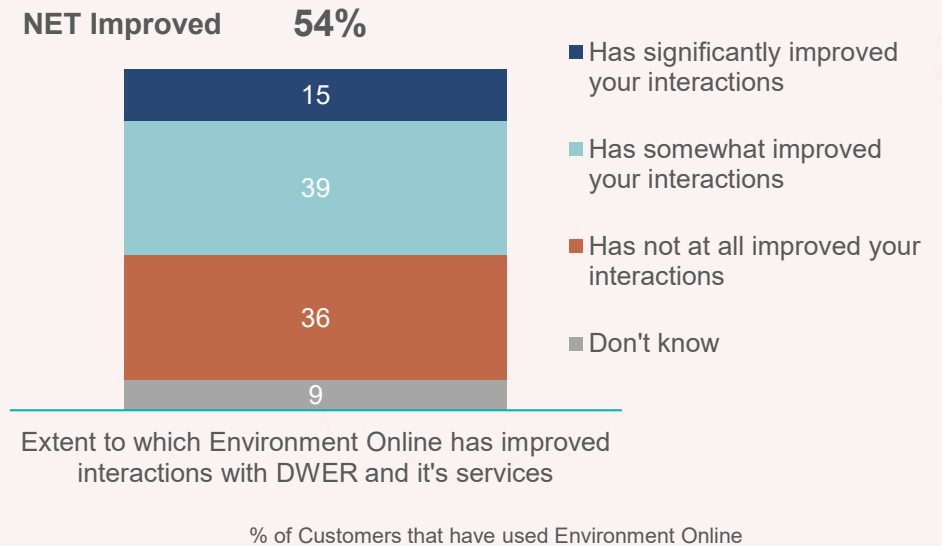
↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 scores at 95% confidence

Although only a small proportion of Customers have used *Environment Online*, most feel it has improved their interactions

Use of Environment Online



Perceptions of Environment Online



2023 Overall n=306 | Have Used Environment Online n=33*

NQ10a: DWER has developed a new digital one-stop-shop for environmental assessments, approvals, and compliance, called Environment Online. Have you used Environment Online yet?

NQ10b: To what extent has Environment Online improved your interactions with DWER and its services?

*Caution results indicative due to small sample

There is considerable variation in the customer experience depending on the reason for dealing with DWER

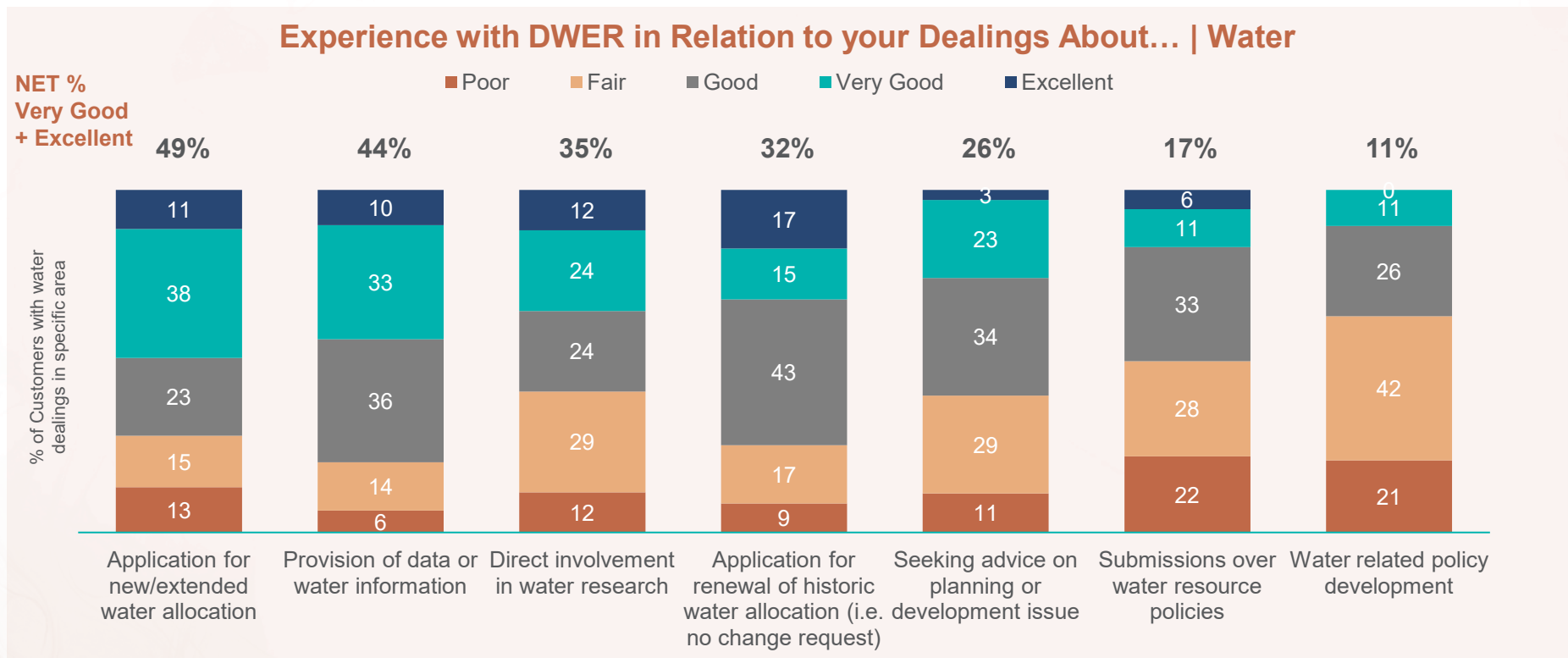
% Very Good + Excellent Ratings in Dealings with DWER

Water Dealings		Environment Dealings		Waste Dealings	
Application for new/extended water allocation	49%	Reporting/seeking advice on a contaminated site	28%	Waste-related policy development	21%
Provision of data or water information	44%	Application of Pt IV Environmental Impact Assessment process	26%	Seeking advice on a waste-related planning or development issue	19%
Direct involvement in water research	35%	Providing comment on public consultations	25%	Providing comment on public consultations	10%
Application for renewal of historic water allocation (no change request)	32%	Application for licence/works approval	24%		
Seeking advice on planning or development issue	26%	Application for clearing permit	23%		
Submissions over water resource policies	17%	Reporting pollution	20%		
Water-related policy development	11%	Seeking advice on a planning or development issue	19%		
		Application to transport/receive controlled waste	13%		
		Environmental-related policy development	8%		

% of Customers

n= 53 | 73 | 17* | 47 | 35* | 18* | 19* | 25* | 19* | 24 | 62 | 40 | 15* | 36 | 8* | 26 | 14* | 26* | 10*
 Q18c: How would you rate your experience with DWER specifically in relation to your dealings about...?
 Don't know responses have been removed from charted data
 *Caution results indicative due to small sample

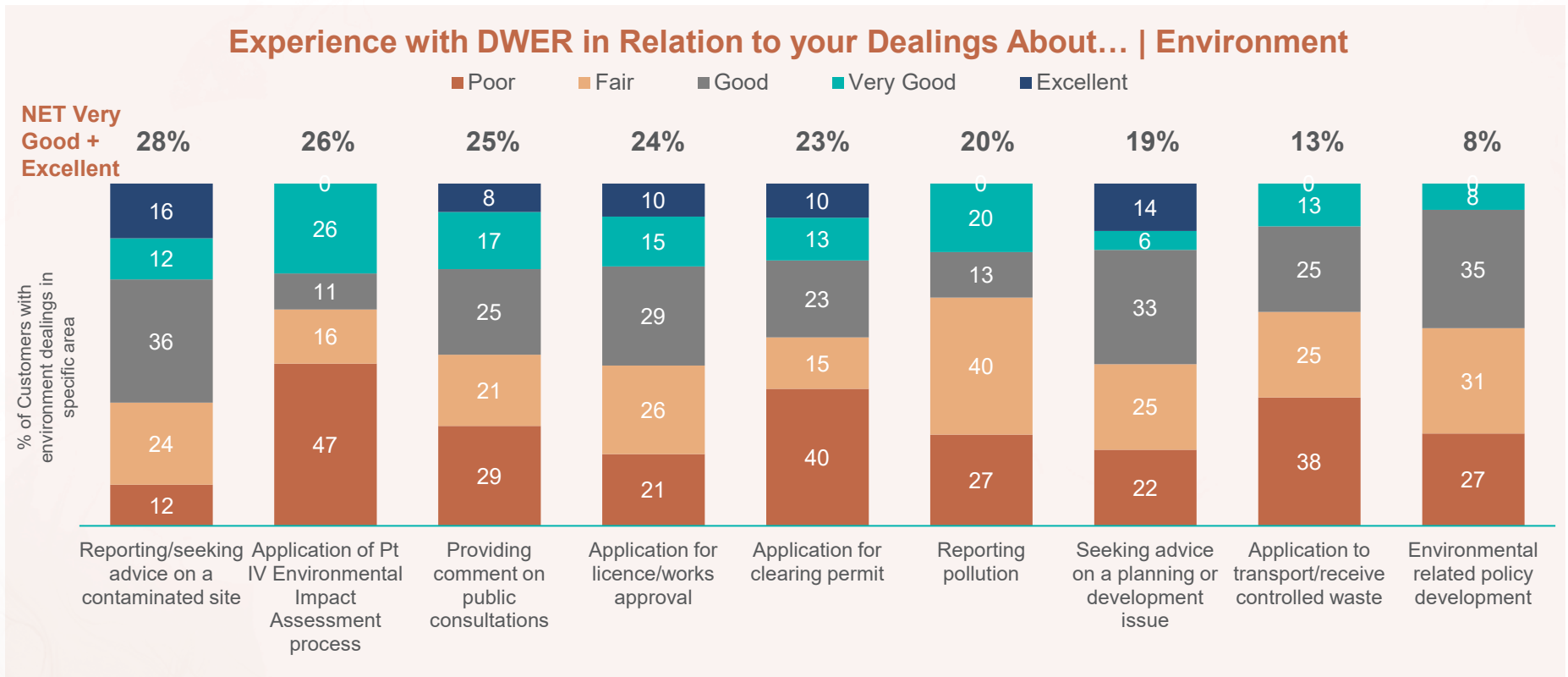
Those who have interacted for water allocation applications and the provision of data or water information are more positive about their experience than those who have interacted with DWER for other reasons



n= 53 | 73 | 17* | 47 | 35 | 18* | 19*
 Q18c: How would you rate your experience with DWER specifically in relation to your dealings about...?
 Don't know responses have been removed from charted data
 *Caution results indicative due to small sample

Only a quarter (or less) Customers rate their experience as very good or excellent; there is an opportunity to improve customer experience across all environment-related dealings

Almost half of those Customers who interacted with DWER about an Application of Part IV Environmental Impact Assessment rated their experience as 'poor'.



n= 25 | 19* | 24 | 62 | 40 | 15* | 36 | 8* | 26

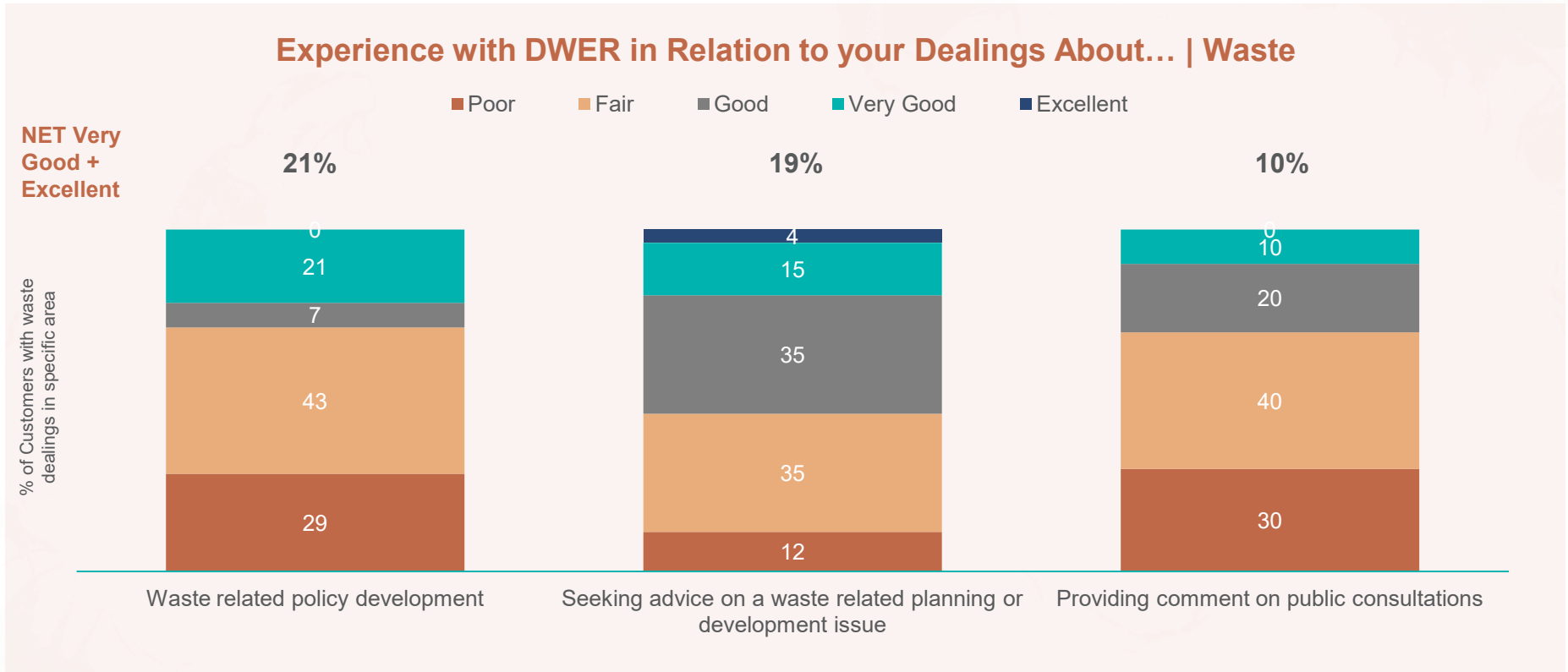
Q18c: How would you rate your experience with DWER specifically in relation to your dealings about

Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

*Caution results indicative due to small sample



Similarly, Customers largely rated their waste-related dealings as poor or fair



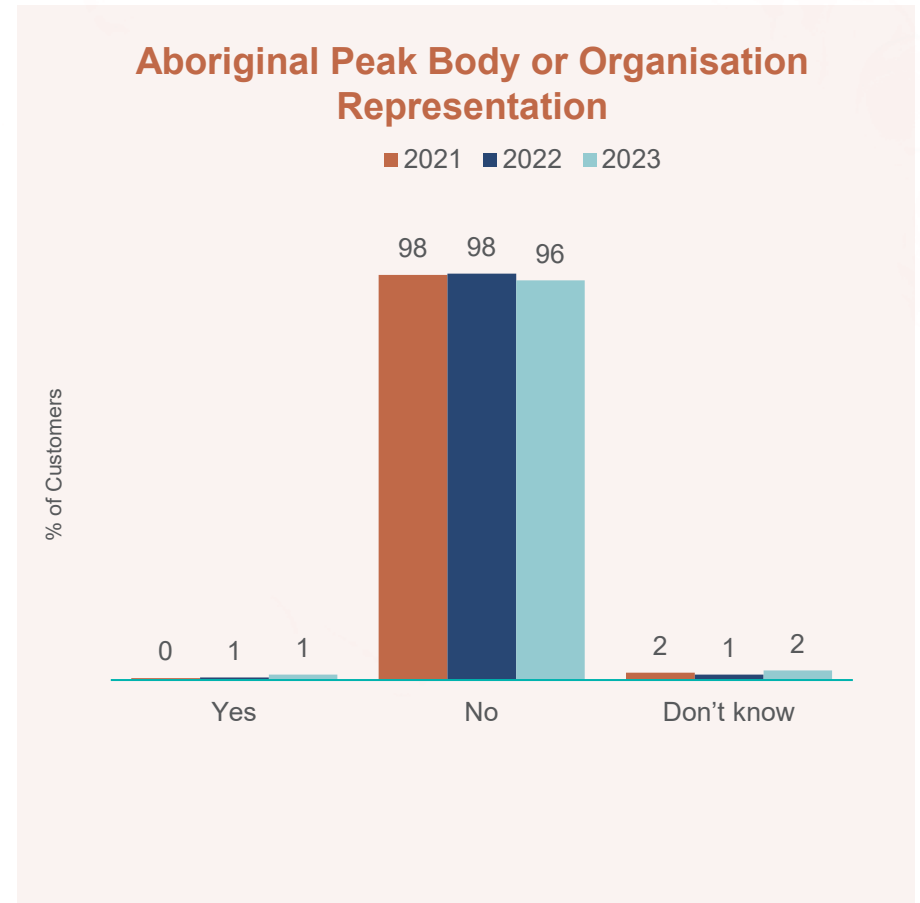
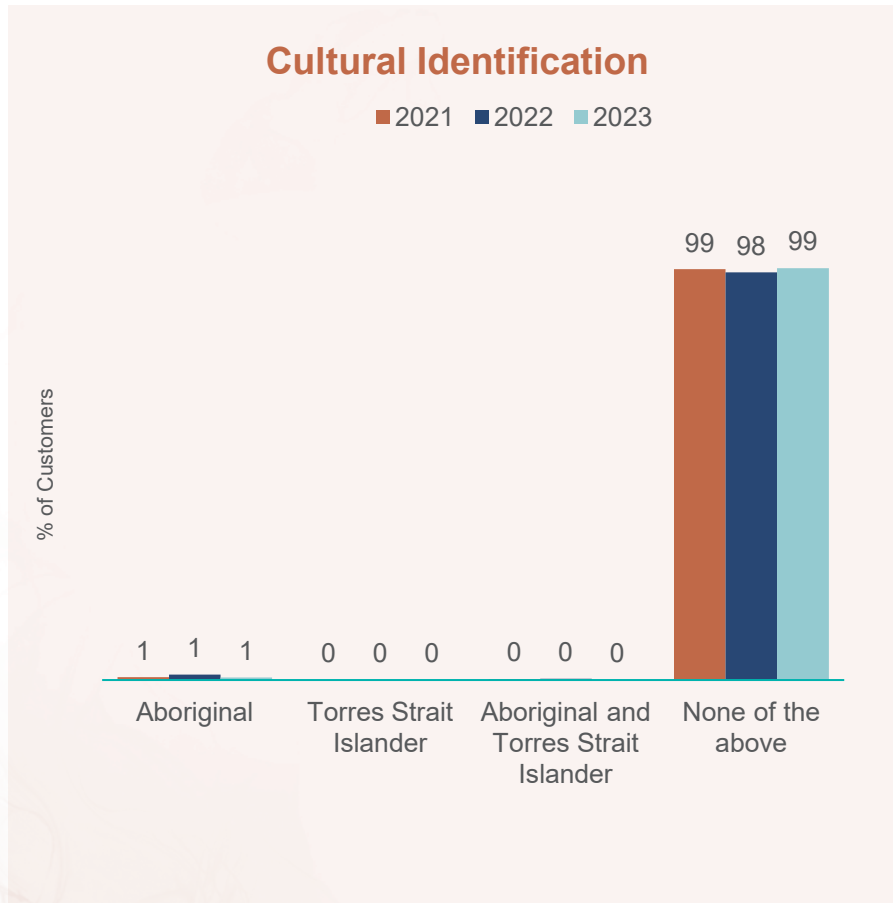
n= 14* | 26 | 10*
Q18c: How would you rate your experience with DWER specifically in relation to your dealings about
Don't know responses have been removed from charted data
*Caution results indicative due to small sample

Sample Profile



Sample profile

Due to the small sample of stakeholders who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or representatives, it was not possible to analyse their results separate to the main sample.



2023: n=306 | 2022: n=307 | 2021: n=441
 NQ1. Do you identify as?
 NQ2. Do you represent an Aboriginal Organisation or Peak Body?
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 data at 95% confidence
 Note: NQ1 and NQ2 were **not** asked in 2020

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