

DWER Corporate Research 2022 Community Insights



February 2022

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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 stakeholder perceptions of DWER, including a KPI measure of the Department's effectiveness at managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use. Metrix Consulting has been engaged to conduct the survey since 2020, with this report detailing the 2022 results.

In 2020, DWER wished to expand its consultation to benchmark perceptions of DWER among the broader WA community. The survey was designed to align with a list of Corporate research objectives to inform corporate risk management, environmental scanning and business planning; outcome-based management/KPI reporting; and adaptive management of functions and initiatives. Metrix Consulting has been engaged to conduct the survey since 2020.

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 18th October 2021 and 11th January 2022. A **final sample of n=604** 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	197	49	104	52
Female	206	51	97	48
18-34	131	33	53	26
35-54	142	35	73	36
55+	130	32	75	37
Total	403		201	

Summary of Key Insights - *Community*



Key Insights

Community

Overall Sentiment Towards DWER

- At a state-wide level, most of the improvements in perceptions of DWER between 2020 and 2021 were sustained this year. Positively:
 - 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% statewide).

Perceptions of Water Management

- **Water security** remains a key concern in the metro area and regional WA.
- Positively, **investment in water projects to address the drying climate** has seen the biggest uplift since 2020. This is reflective of the Government's investment in critical infrastructure such as the Denmark pipeline, new water treatment plants in the Mid West and announcement of a new desalination plant in the metro area. Water Corporation's ongoing Climate Change campaign (with a recent focus on messages about groundwater) could also be contributing to stronger overall ratings.
- Those who rate DWER's water management as ineffective are calling for **more innovative solutions**, not just future planning per se.



Key Insights

Community

Perceptions of Environmental Management

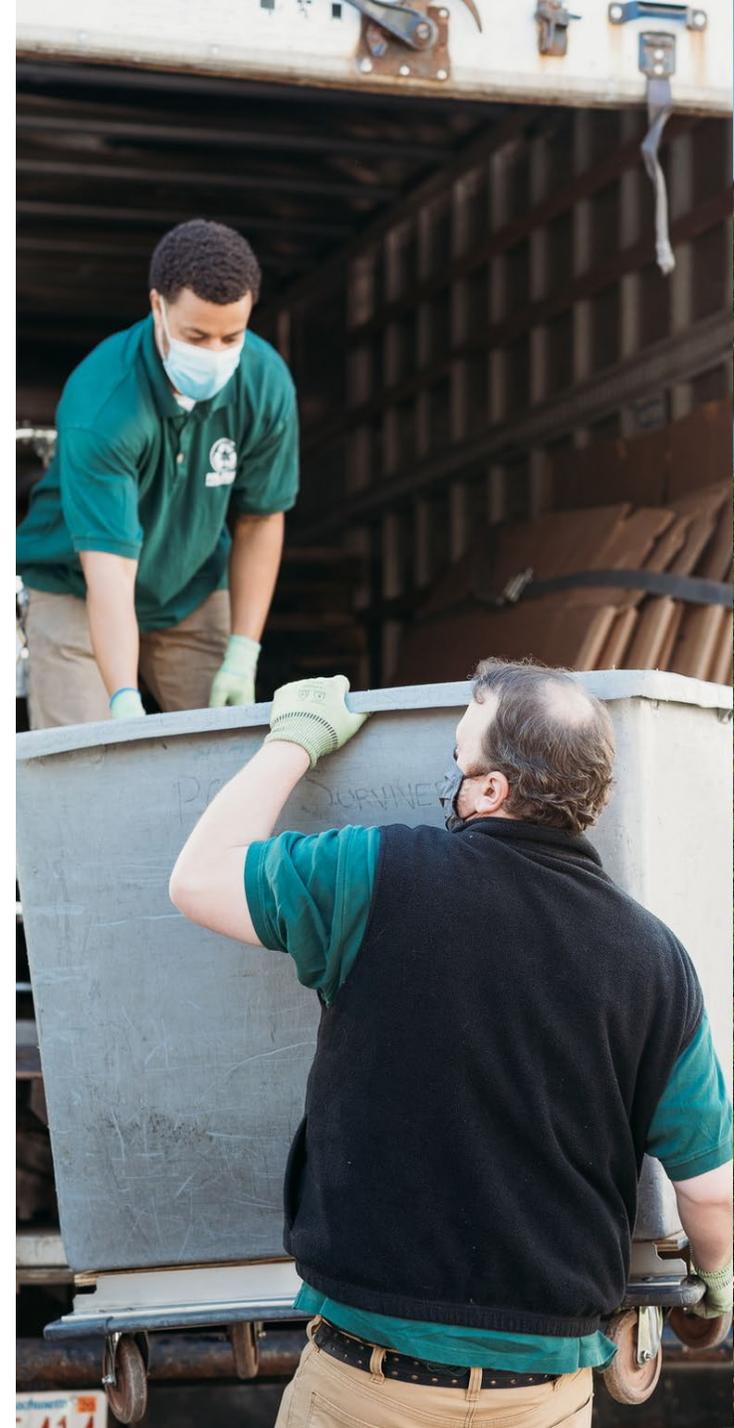
- Concerns about the clearing of land, air pollution and climate change have returned to 2020 levels after a dip last year.
- People who rate DWER's environmental management as ineffective want to see more support for **recycling** and a **sustainable plan** for the future.

Waste Management

- Community concern about **pollution, volume of waste generation** and the **recycling of waste** remain high.
- Last year's improvements in perceptions of the facilitation of recycling, ensuring waste wise alternatives are available, volume of waste generation and pollution of waterways and oceans held steady this year.

DWER Initiatives

- 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.



Awareness and Understanding of DWER Services, Roles and Responsibilities



Unprompted awareness of DWER remains low, with many unaware of the organisation/s responsible for water and environmental resource management

Top of mind, regional West Australians were less likely to mention Water Corporation this year (20%), while their mentions of DWER have increased (12%). Last year's increase in prompted awareness in the metropolitan area wasn't sustained, returning to 2020 levels.



2022 n= 604 | 2021 n= 601 | 2020 n= 601

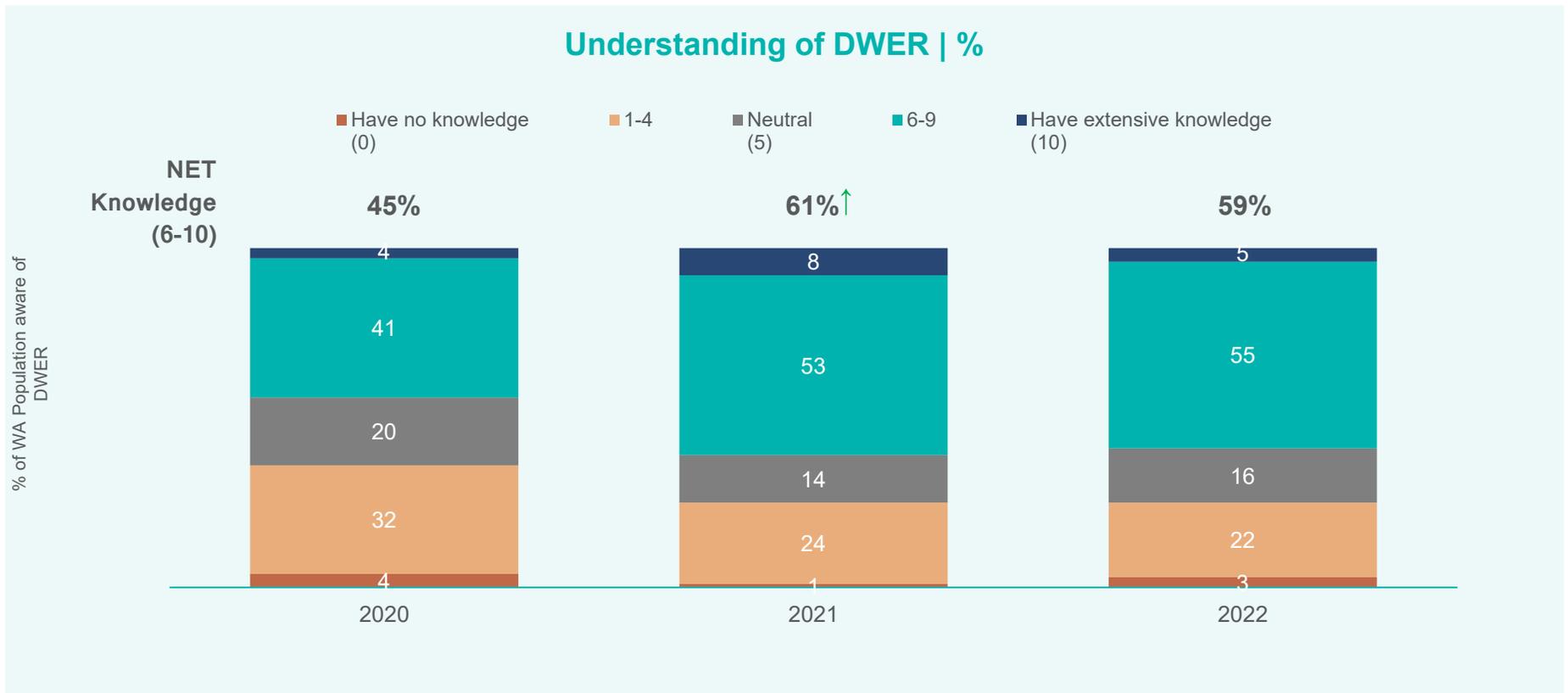
Q3: Which organisations are responsible for coordinating and managing the state's water and environmental resources, including responsibility for water and environmental planning, licensing and legislation and community education about how to improve be?

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

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

Stated understanding of DWER's purpose remains stable at a state level

Understanding has increased among those living in regional WA, whereas in the metro area, stated understanding of DWER has returned to 2020 levels following an increase in 2021.



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?

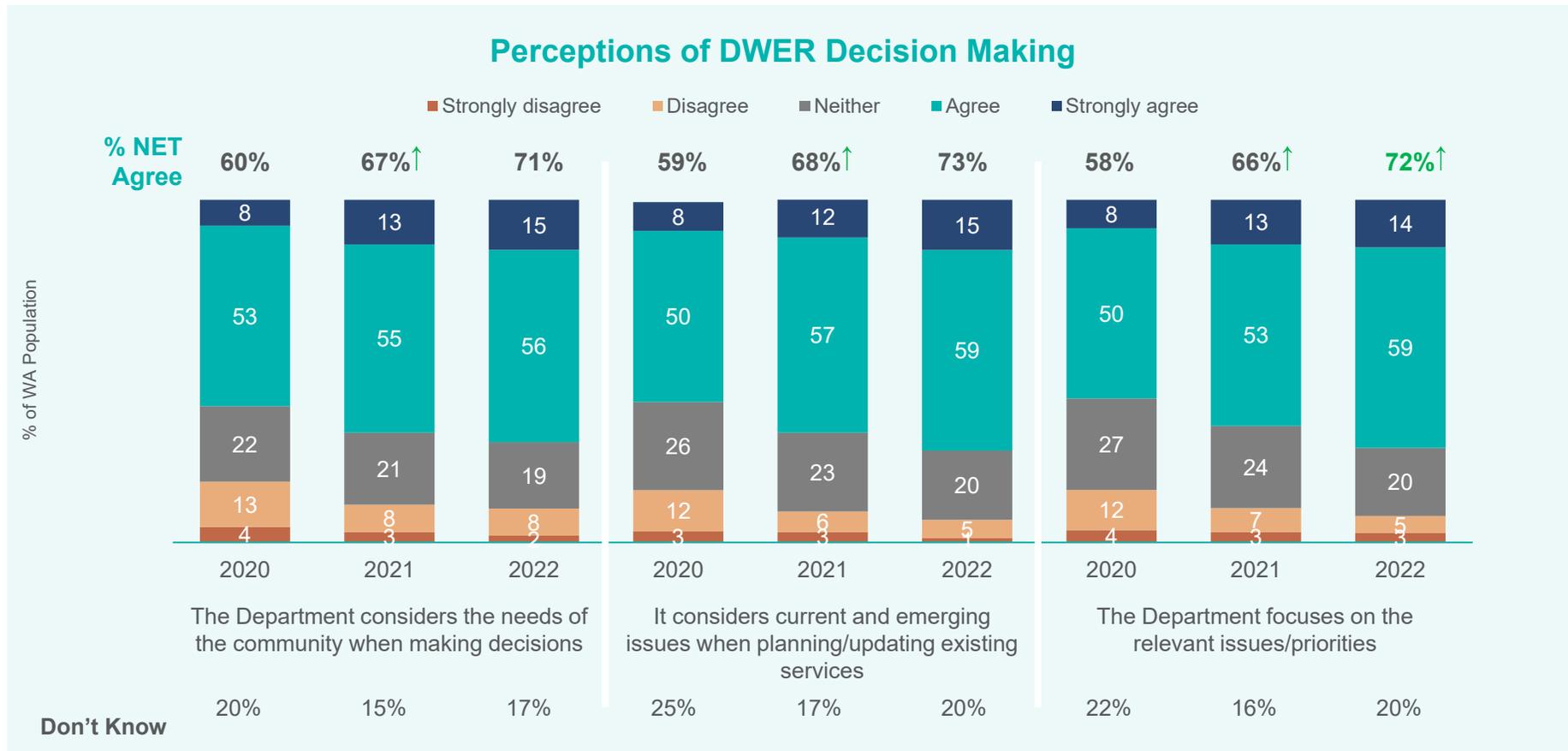
↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 or 2021 scores at 95% confidence

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

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



Historically, perceptions were lower among people living in regional WA. In 2022 positive perceptions amongst regional residents have risen to similar levels seen in the metropolitan area.



2022: n=503 | 482 | 487
 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 follow statements?

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

Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

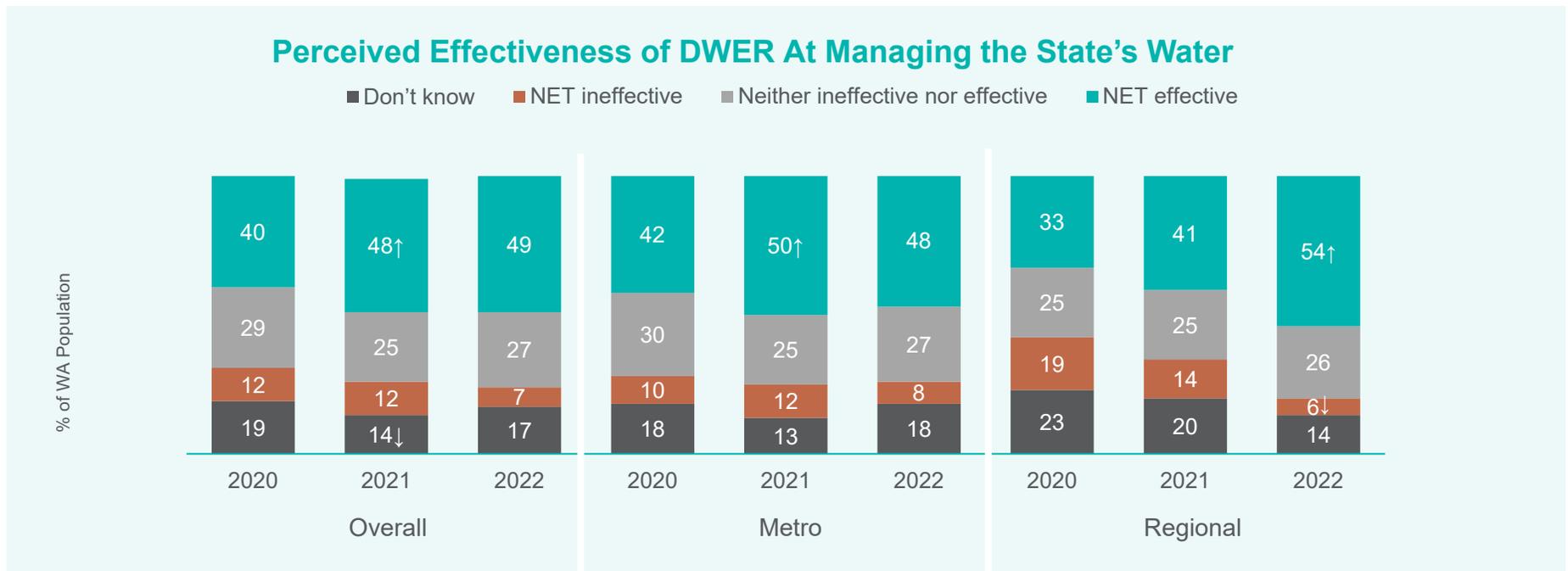
Perceived Effectiveness – Water Management



Overall perceptions of DWER's effectiveness at managing the state's water are comparable year on year at a state level



Perceived effectiveness has increased amongst regional residents. This could be influenced by the greater levels of awareness and understanding of DWER's role and purpose in regional areas.



2022: n= 604 | 403 | 201
 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 2021 scores at 95% confidence

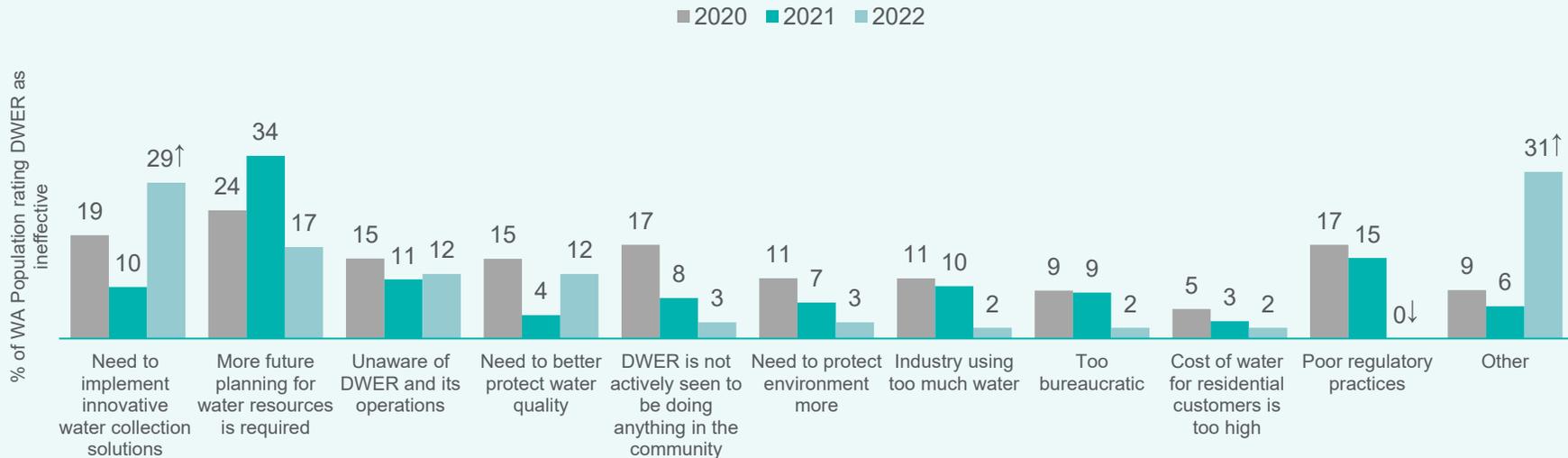
Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

Those who rate DWER's water management as ineffective would like to see more innovative planning of water solutions



Focus has shifted towards innovative solutions, not just future planning per se.

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



2022: n=38 | 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 2021 scores at 95% confidence

In their own words...

Need to Implement Innovative Water Collection Solutions

"I would like to see more facilities where wastewater gets recycled to drinking water again by using alternative sources of energy." **Metro Resident**

"Water management should be done correctly e.g., dam walls which restrict natural flow. Australian owned water for Australian people. Early education of water responsibility. The list goes on." **Regional Resident**



More Future Planning for Water Resources is Required

"No-one knows who they are, for a start. everyone thinks Water Corp is the one responsible for all that. But given there is a perfectly good and FULL dam in the SW that would cost FAR LESS to desalinate than ocean water, I think that is a totally wasted resource - speaking volumes about the waste and poor management by this department." **Metro Resident**

"The ground water resources are very low each summer and do not appear to be re filling with winter rains. Ground water should be left alone as it is needed by the earth in its normal state." **Regional Resident**



Unaware of DWER and its Operations

"I have never heard of them before, so it shows how effective they are." **Metro Resident**

"Can't be doing too good, never heard of them." **Metro Resident**



In their own words...

Need to Better Protect Water Quality

“There is a lot more they could be doing to make sure tap water is filtered properly and removing chlorine and other dangerous chemicals.” **Metro Resident**

“Our water supply , in the area we live is disgusting, at times you can taste the sewerage from faecies, it’s totally foul.” **Metro Resident**



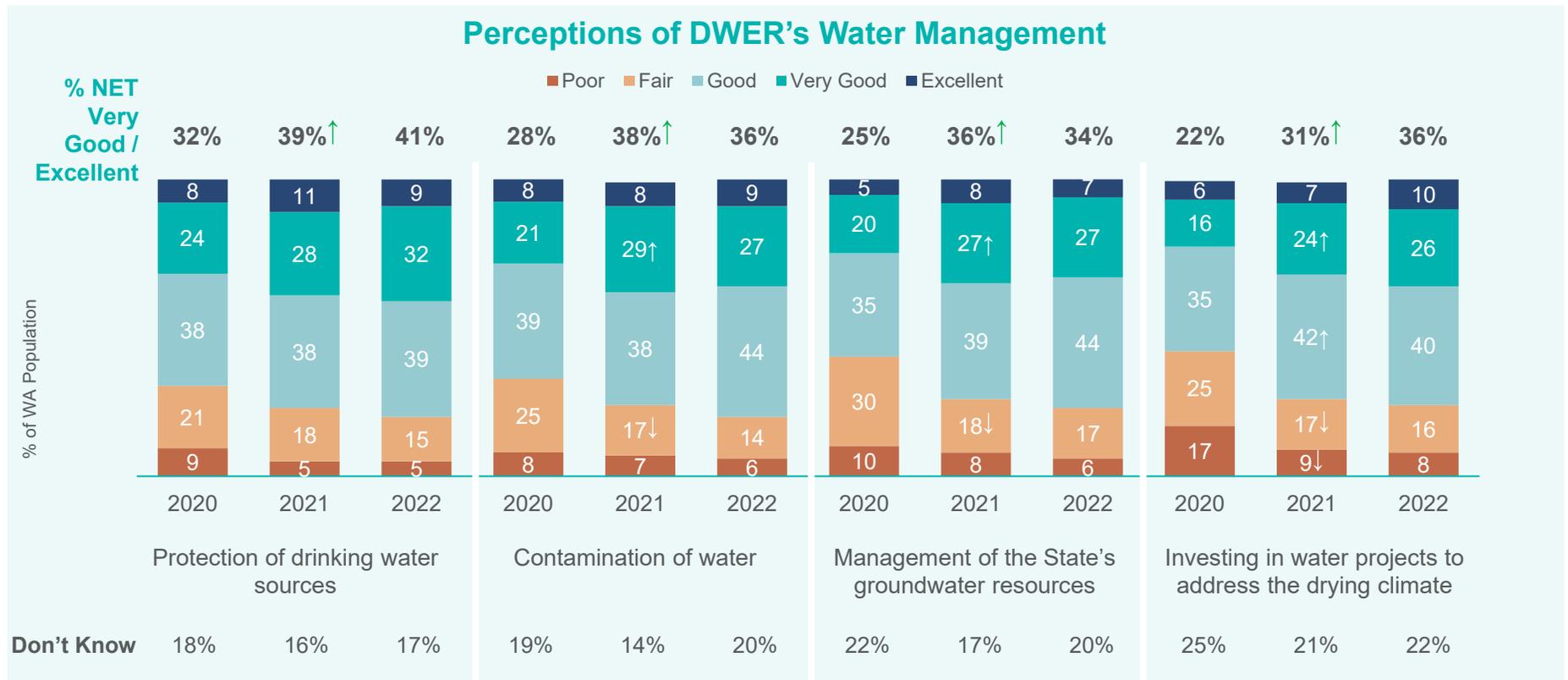
DWER is not Actively Seen to be Doing Anything in the Community

“Don’t see much of the water ways protected. I’d like to see more effort in protecting our fresh water ways from both big dams and going salty. Also, desalination plants surely can’t be the answer for our water.” **Metro Resident**



Last year's improvement in perceptions of DWER's water management were maintained

Positive perceptions of DWER's water management have increased amongst regional residents. Investment in water projects to address the drying climate has seen the biggest uplift since 2020, reflective of the Government's investment in critical infrastructure such as the Denmark pipeline, new water treatment plants in the Mid West and announcement of a new desalination plant in the metro area. Water Corporation's ongoing Climate Change campaign (with a recent focus on messages about groundwater) could also be contributing to stronger overall ratings.



2022: n=504 | 485 | 487 | 471
 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

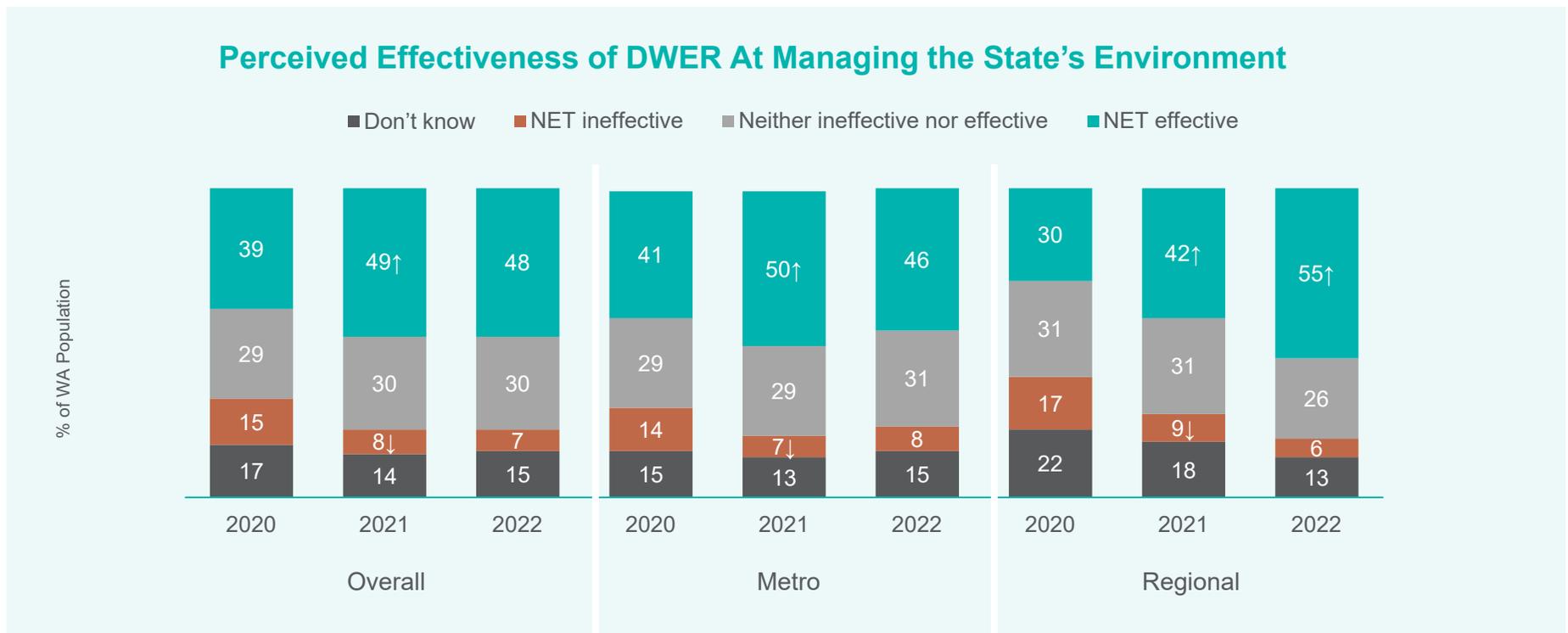
Perceived Effectiveness – Environmental Management



Perceptions of DWER's effectiveness at environmental management are comparable year on year at a state level



As with perceptions of water management, perceived effectiveness has increased more among regional residents this year.



2022: n=604 | 403 | 201

2021: n=601 | 400 | 201

2020: n=601 | 401 | 200

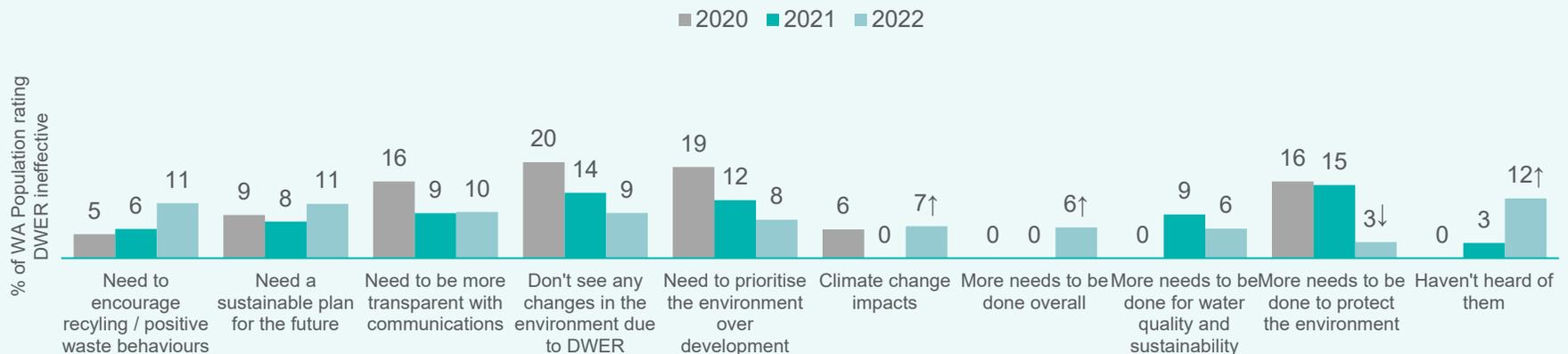
Q7a: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's environment for sustainable productive use?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 scores at 95% confidence

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

People who rate DWER's environmental management as ineffective want to see more support for **recycling** and a **sustainable plan** for the future

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



2022: n=37 | 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?

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

Scores under 5% not shown

Don't Know responses removed.

In their own words...

Need to Encourage Recycling and Positive Waste Behaviours

“Work with shires to have more bins and recycling bins around walkway and parks and in bush so people have somewhere to put rubbish instead of throwing it on the ground.” **Regional Resident**



Need a Sustainable Plan for the Future

“Greater emphasis on longevity and the health of the population over profit.” **Metro Resident**

“Unable to keep pace with population growth- need new and innovative means of treating waste.” **Regional Resident**



Need to be More Transparent With Communications

“There is no noticeable publicity about what DWER do. There is still litter along our beaches and waterways, waste products still seem to be entering our waterways. The local Shire seems to be the only organisation trying to monitor the waterways. I would be interested in attending their education programs but have not heard them advertised. They have not given any education in schools that I am acquainted with.” **Regional Resident**



“I don't know of any initiatives they are running and I feel like it should be public knowledge.” **Metro Resident**

In their own words...

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

"Nothing seems to change; we just hear about worsening conditions but no immediate action plans."
Metro Resident

"DWER is not doing enough, political interference." **Metro Resident**



Need to Prioritise the Environment Over Development

"Too much land clearing and approval of projects that knowingly will damage the environment, often in exchange for offsets that may not be sufficient or equal in value of what is being damaged or destroyed."
Metro Resident

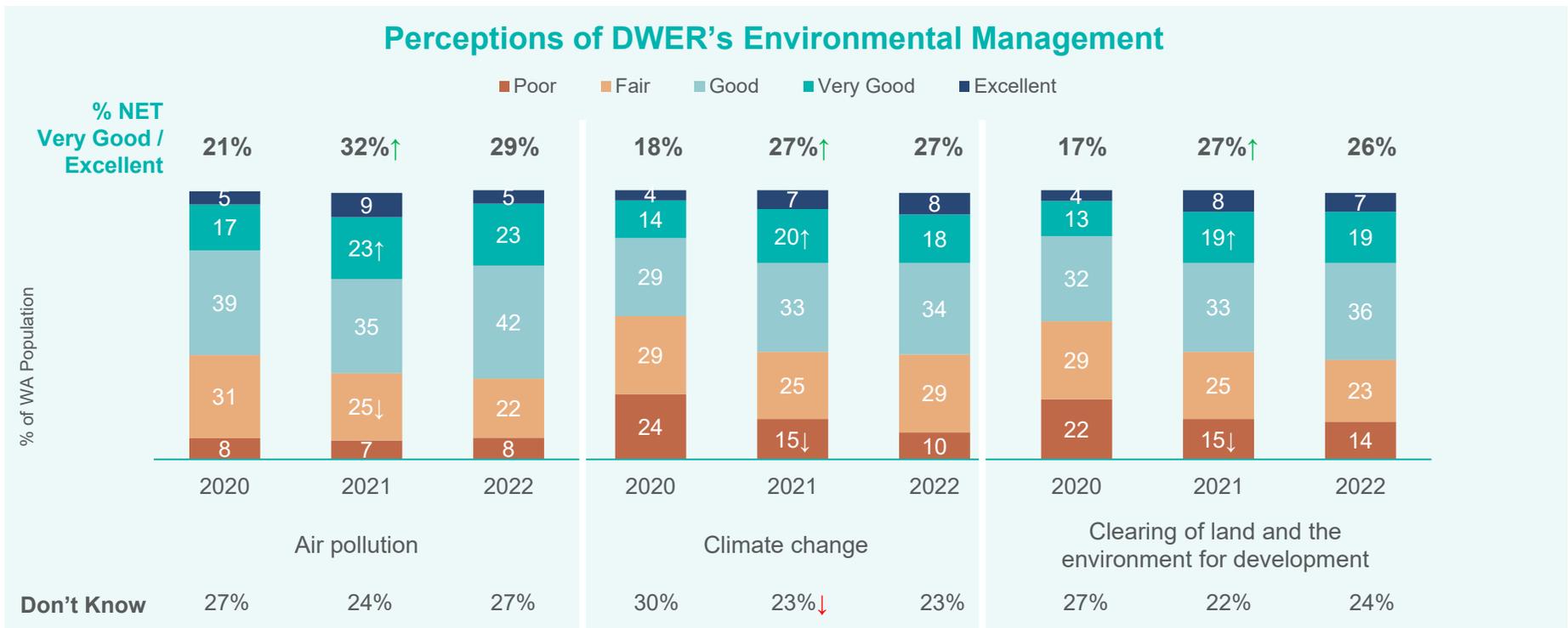
"If more and more buildings, roads, houses freeways, footpaths, cover the soil of which rain is supposed to penetrate the soil, no amount of expert management will do much good until the basic cause is looked at, such as uncover the soil so the rain can penetrate it. So, less people, no immigration for 50 years or more, back to basics and then the environment can maybe catch up." **Regional Resident**



Perceptions of DWER's management of air pollution, climate change and land clearing held ground this year after an increase in 2021



However there are still a quarter of residents do not feel sufficiently informed to rate DWER's performance in managing these issues.



2022: n=447 | 469 | 461

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 or 2021 scores at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

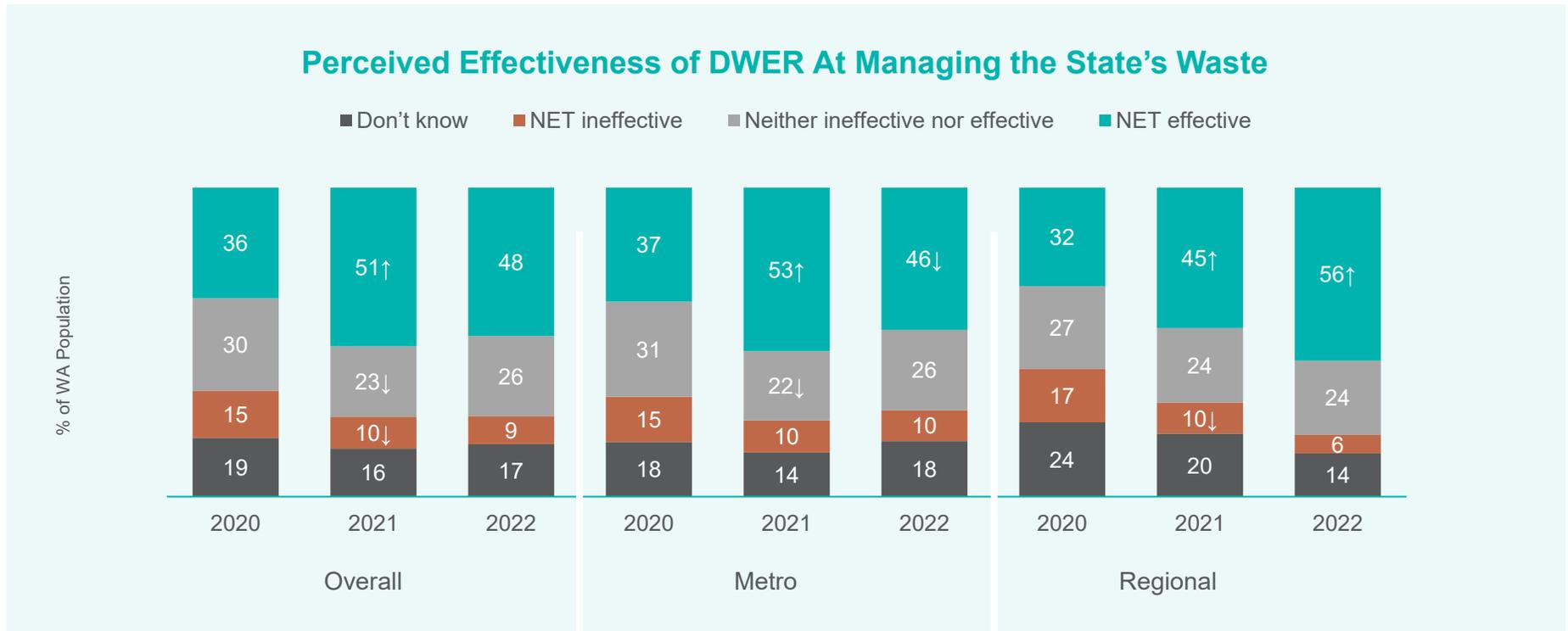
Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

Perceived Effectiveness – Waste Management



Last year's improvement in perceptions of effective **waste management** was maintained at a state-wide level

Metropolitan ratings are weaker this year (though still higher than 2020) whilst regional ratings have improved.



2022: n= 604 | 403 | 201

2021: n= 601 | 400 | 201

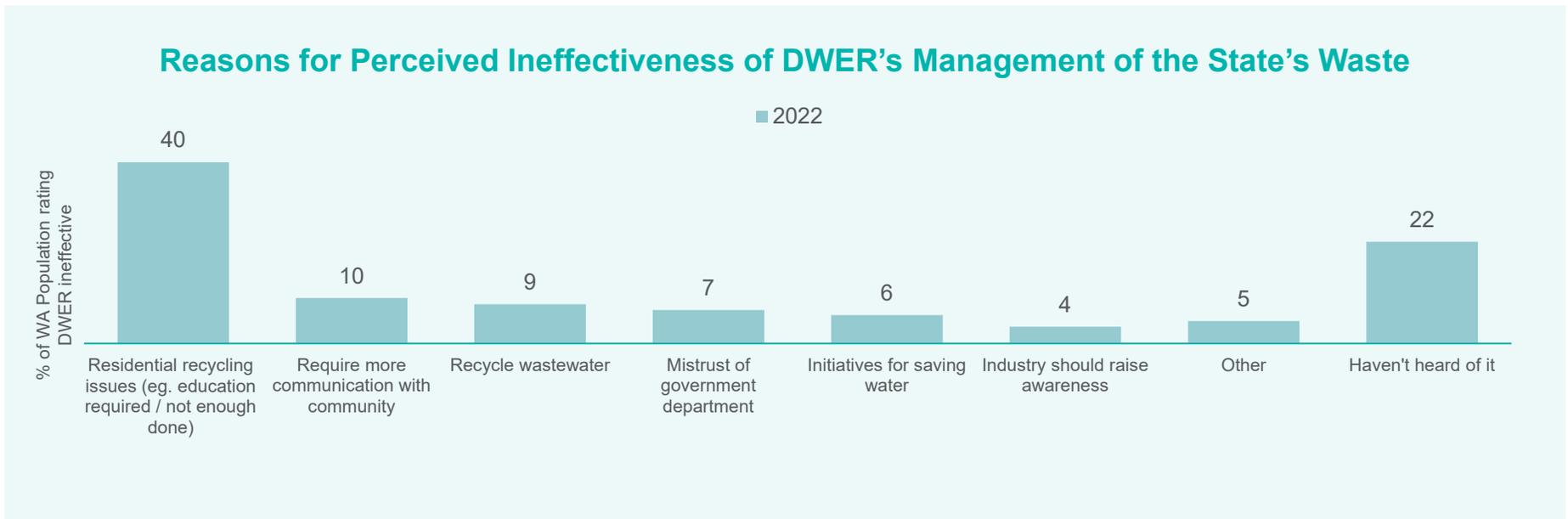
2020: n= 601 | 401 | 200

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 2021 scores at 95% confidence

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

A large portion of people attribute DWER's ineffectiveness at managing the state's waste to **residential recycling issues** and want to see more done here



2022: n= 46

Q8b: 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? Please provide as much detail as possible.
New Question - was not asked in previous years

In their own words...

Residential Recycling Issues (e.g. education required / not enough done)

"We aren't doing enough recycling. We keep whingeing about our lack of recycling. Build the infrastructure to cope with recycling." **Metro Resident**

"I hear on a regular basis of recycling garbage trucks dumping their loads into landfill. Why do we as consumers waste our time to sort if this happens?." **Regional Resident**



Require More Communication with the Community

"Perhaps specific measurable key performance targets for the regulation and treatment of community waste." **Metro Resident**



Recycle Wastewater

"Total reclamation of wastewater, including rainwater run-off." **Regional Resident**

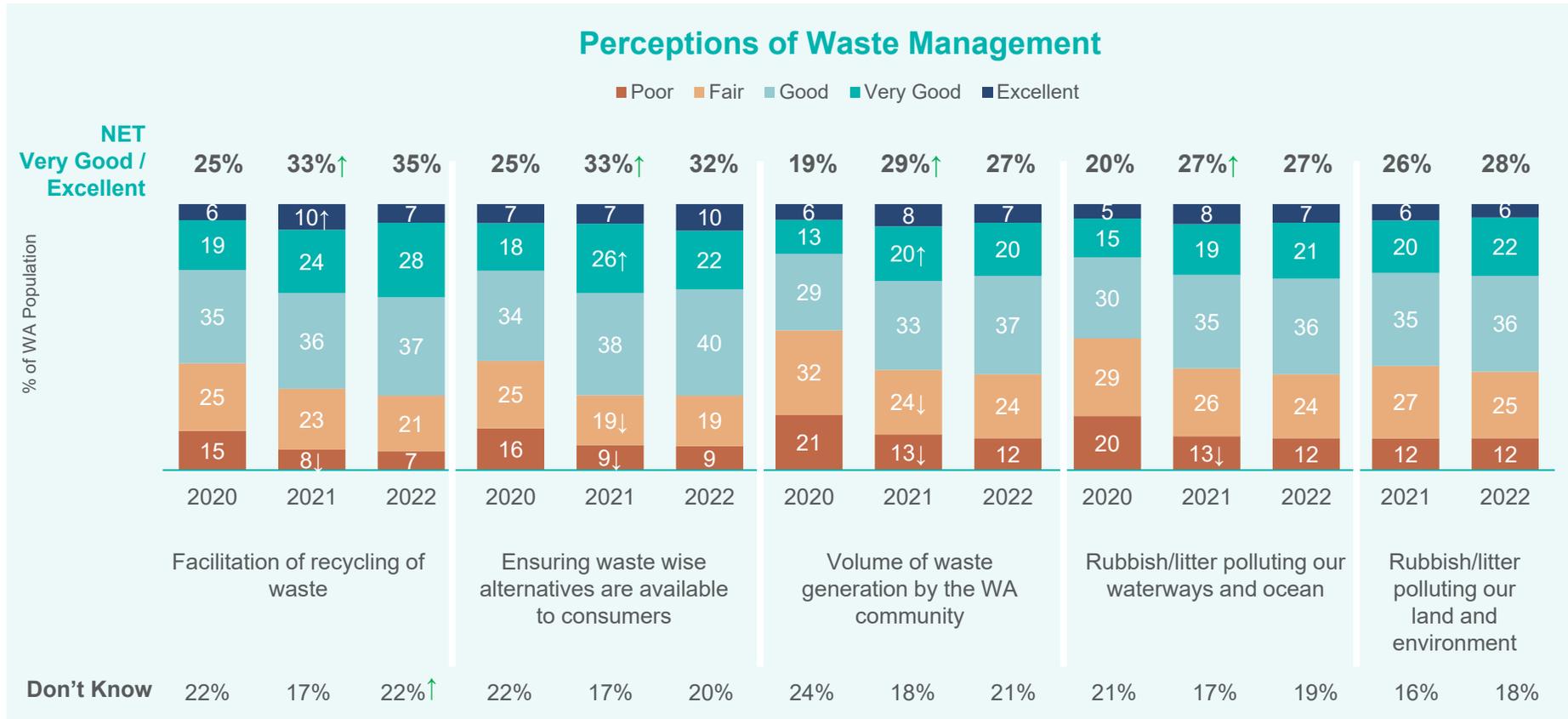
"Water re usage is very important. It helps recycle the wastewater and helps with water supply shortage." **Metro Resident**

"I don't think they are doing enough to encourage re usage of wastewater. Rainwater tanks should be encouraged and ways to recycle household water." **Metro Resident**



Improvements in perceptions of specific aspects of waste management last year were sustained in 2022

Perceptions of DWER's waste management have improved in Regional WA. Metropolitan perceptions regarding the volume of waste generation by the WA community returned to 2020 levels after some improvement last year.



2022: n= 477 | 483 | 478 | 491 | 492
 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 and 2021 scores at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

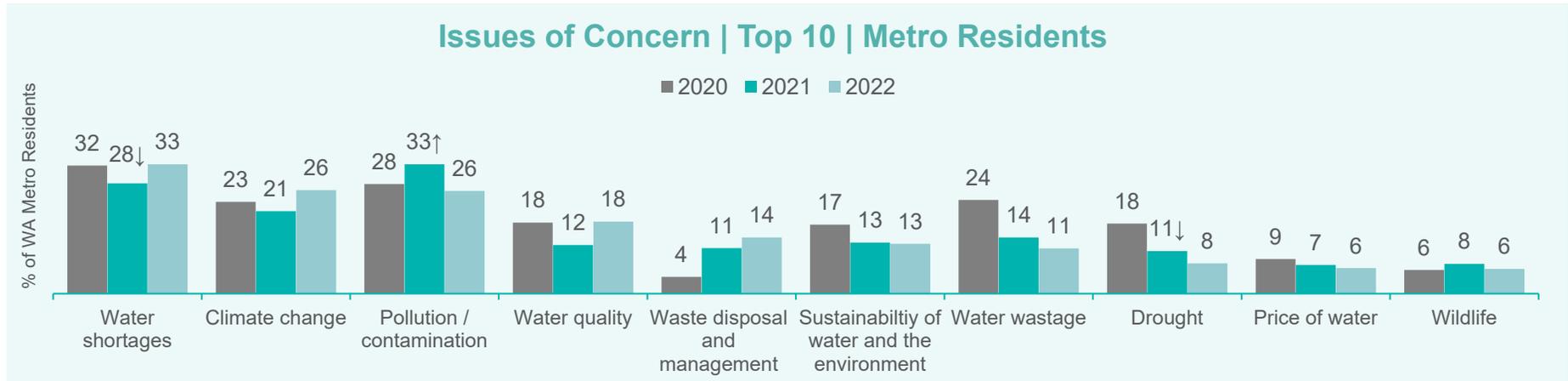
Rubbish/litter polluting our land and environment was not asked in 2020

Attitudes Towards Water and Environmental Issues



Top of mind, **water shortages** and **pollution** continue to be the key water and environmental concerns

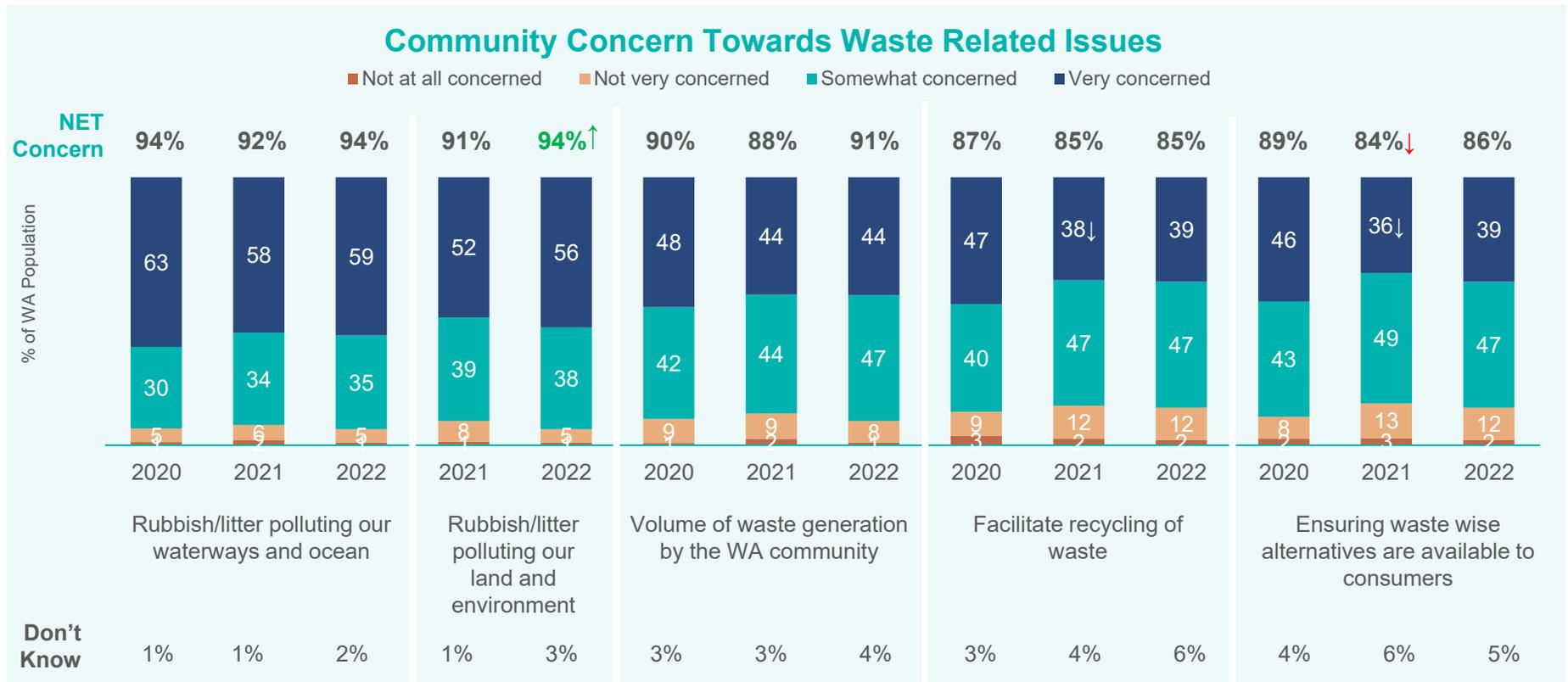
Pollution/contamination was more top of mind in regional WA this year. Water shortages were still the second most common issue raised but not as commonly mentioned as last year. This is likely to have been influenced by WA's notably wet winter and investment in new infrastructure in regional areas.



2022: Metro n=403 Regional n=201 | 2021: Metro n=400 Regional n=201 | 2020: Metro n=401 Regional n=200
 Q1: Thinking about water and the environment, what are the key issues that you are concerned about? Please list up to 3 key issues/concerns.
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 or 2021 scores at 95% confidence

Community concern regarding waste related issues is similar to last year, though concern about land pollution has increased

Concern is strongest regarding land and water pollution and the volume of waste that is generated by the WA community.

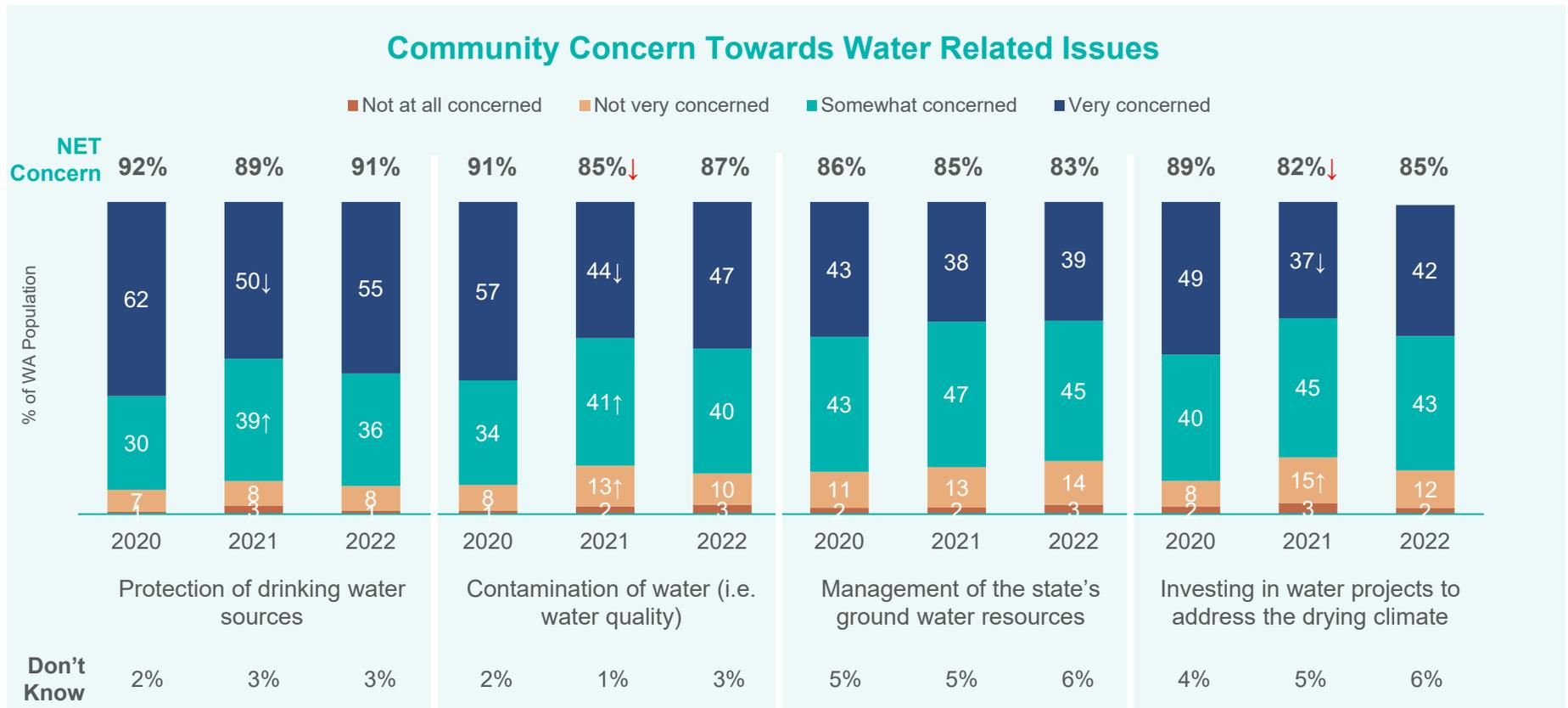


2022: n=589 | 588 | 582 | 568 | 574
 2021: n=595 | 593 | 581 | 578 | 564
 2020: n=594 | 580 | 582 | 576

Q2r: How would you rate your level of concern, if any, about each of the following?
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 or 2021 scores at 95% confidence
 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 water related concern for the community

However, the proportion who say they are 'very concerned' remains lower than in 2020.



2022: n=586 | 587 | 571 | 564

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?

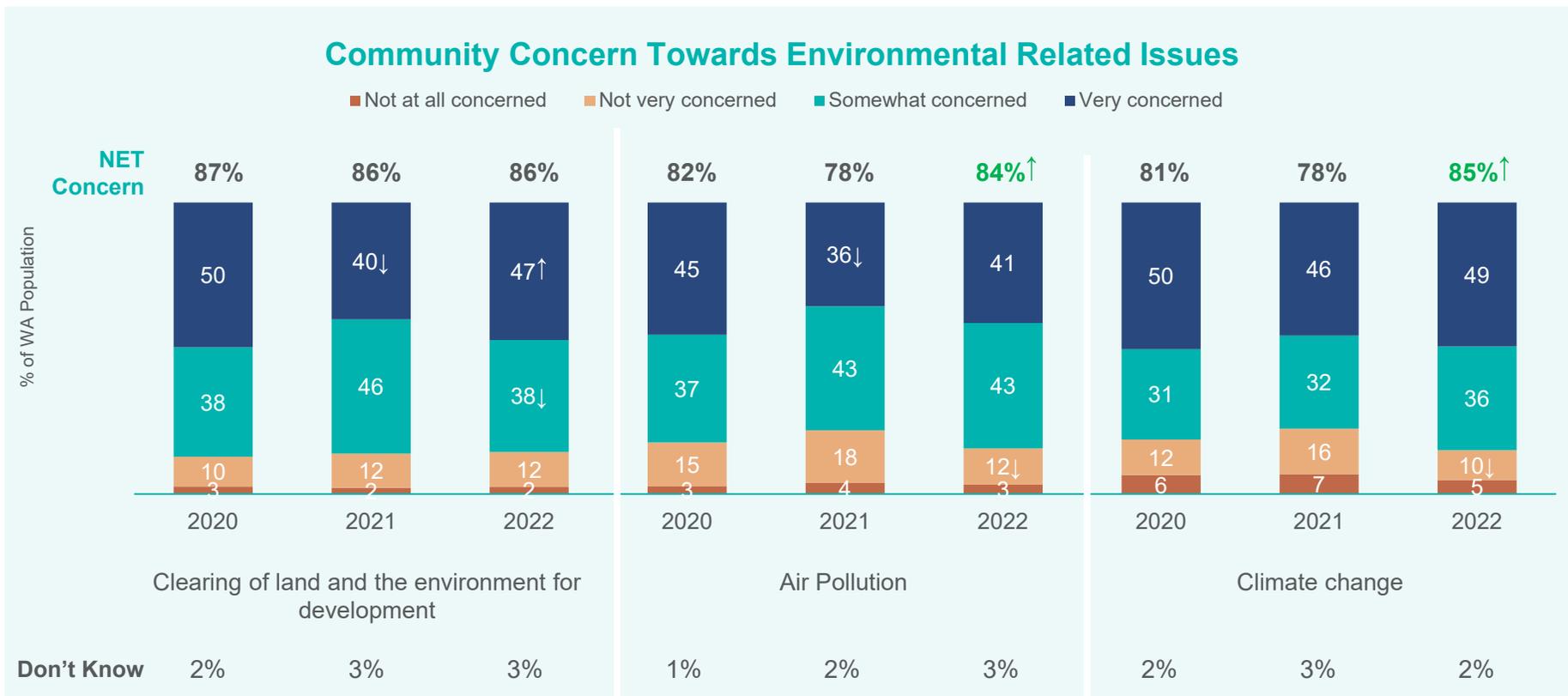
↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 or 2021 scores at 95% confidence

Don't know responses have been removed

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

Concern about **environmental issues** has returned to 2020 levels after a dip last year

This reflects an increase in the conversation about climate change and environment in the last 12 months. For example, media attention on governments and businesses setting net zero emission targets, the release of Australia’s Long Term Emissions Reduction Plan, United Nations Climate Change Conference, release of the Climate Change Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).



2022: n=585 | 588 | 590
 2021: n=577 | 588 | 586
 2020: n=584 | 591 | 587

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

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

Don't know responses have been removed

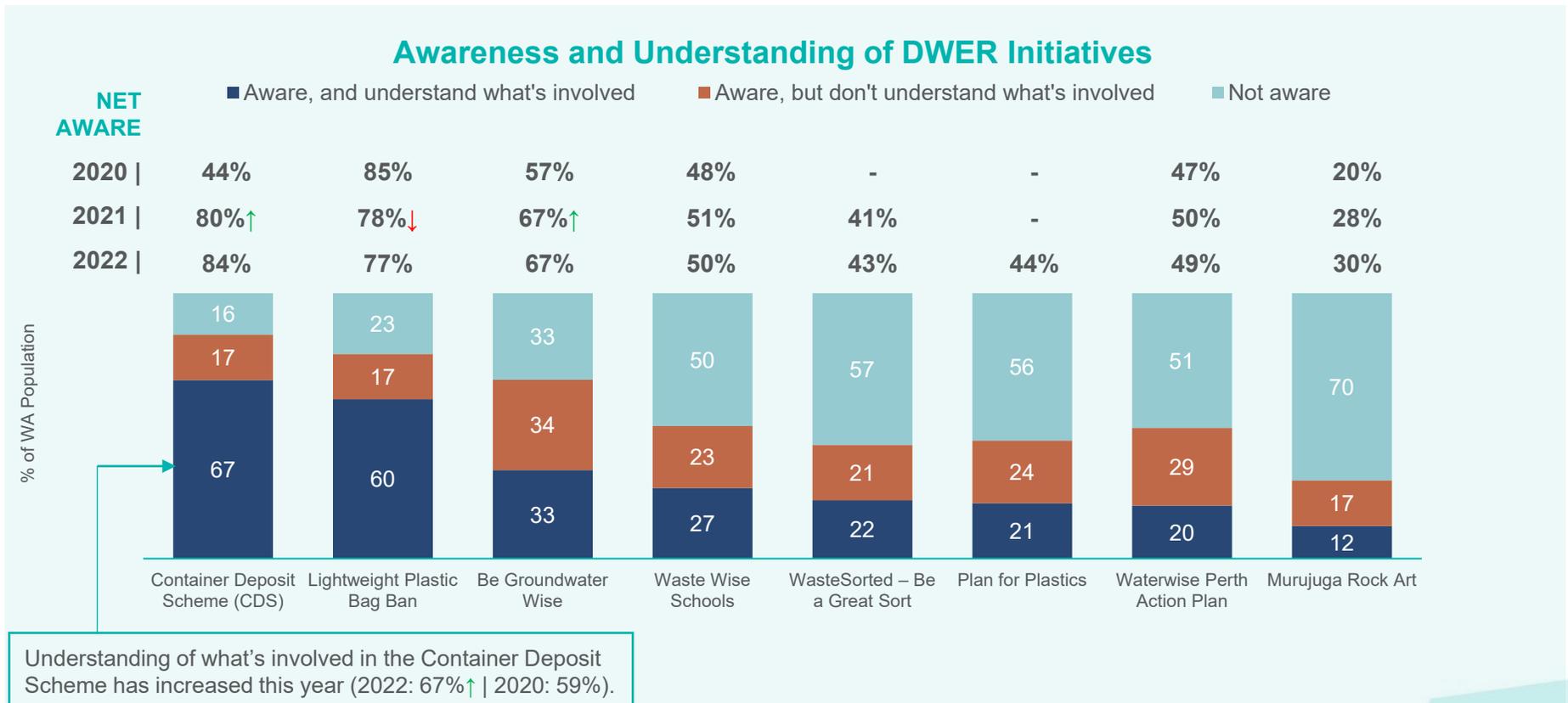
Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

Awareness of Key Initiatives



Community awareness of key DWER initiatives is 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.



Metrix Consulting
metrixconsulting.com.au

