



INFORMATION ACCESS - COMMUNITY STUDY REPORT

INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSION NSW › AUG 2025



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SECTION 1

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY



The **main objective** of the study is to explore public awareness and experiences of information access rights among the general public, and to inform strategic decisions that promote positive engagement with the relevant jurisdictions and agencies.

2025 marks the first wave of the survey managed by Fiftyfive5, following many years under Woolcott Research.

With this transition, the study has undergone some changes, meaning that results are not always directly comparable with previous years.

Key changes include:

- **Methodology:** transition from CATI to online surveys
- **Sample sizes:** significantly increased to improve robustness
- **Questionnaire alignment:** consistent wording and answer options across jurisdictions, where relevant and possible
- **Question and code frames:** revised to ensure clarity, ease of response, and suitability for online completion

Six individual surveys were conducted — one for each jurisdiction. While each survey was run separately, the alignment of questionnaires allows for comparisons across most questions between jurisdictions.

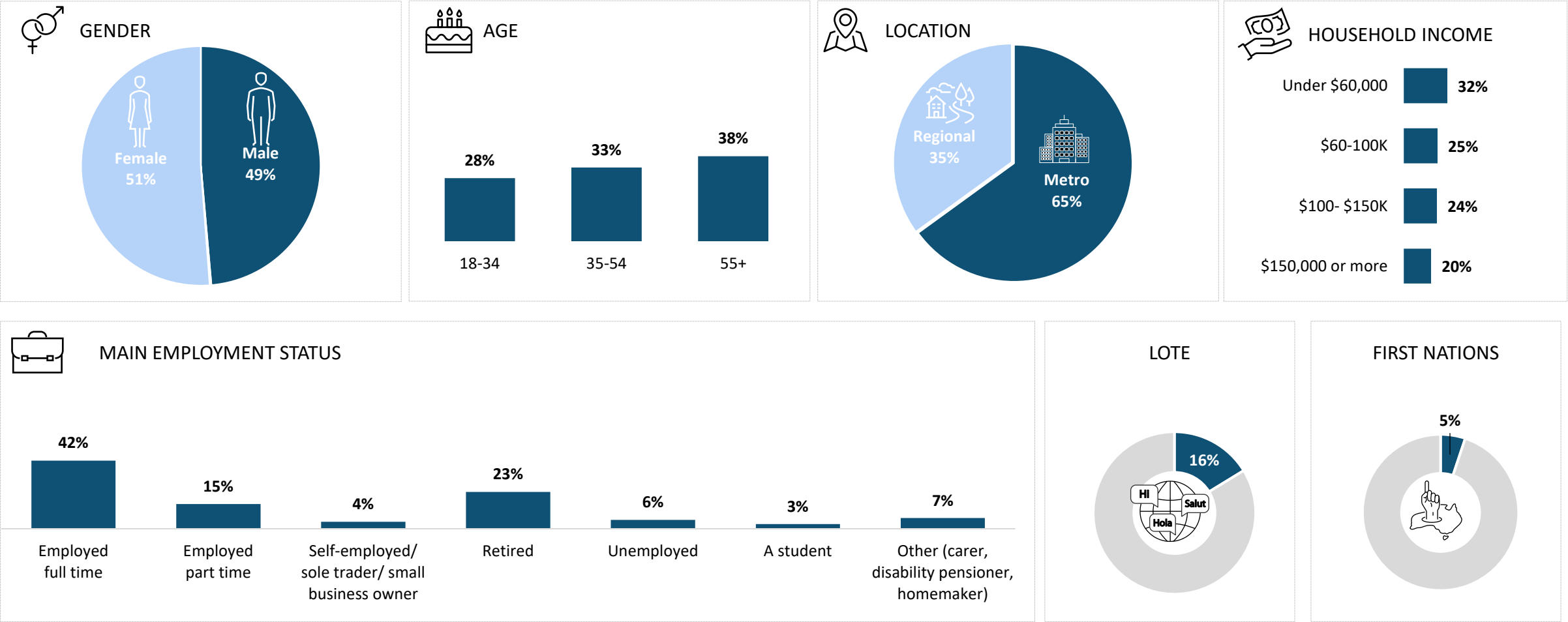
Each survey was conducted online and took **approx. 5-10 minutes**, depending on awareness and previous experiences.

For each jurisdiction, we **targeted a representative sample** by age, gender, and metro vs regional proportions. For the Federal survey state/ territory proportions were also considered.

Following fieldwork, each jurisdiction’s **results were weighted** proportionately to their own population data to ensure representativeness of the findings within each jurisdiction.

Jurisdictions	Final sample, n=
Federal	1,098
NSW	916
VIC	903
QLD	919
WA	929
ACT	910

TO ENSURE A SAMPLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NSW POPULATION, WE USED ABS DATA TO GUIDE SAMPLING AND APPLIED POST-FIELDWORK WEIGHTING TO CORRECT FOR ANY IMBALANCES

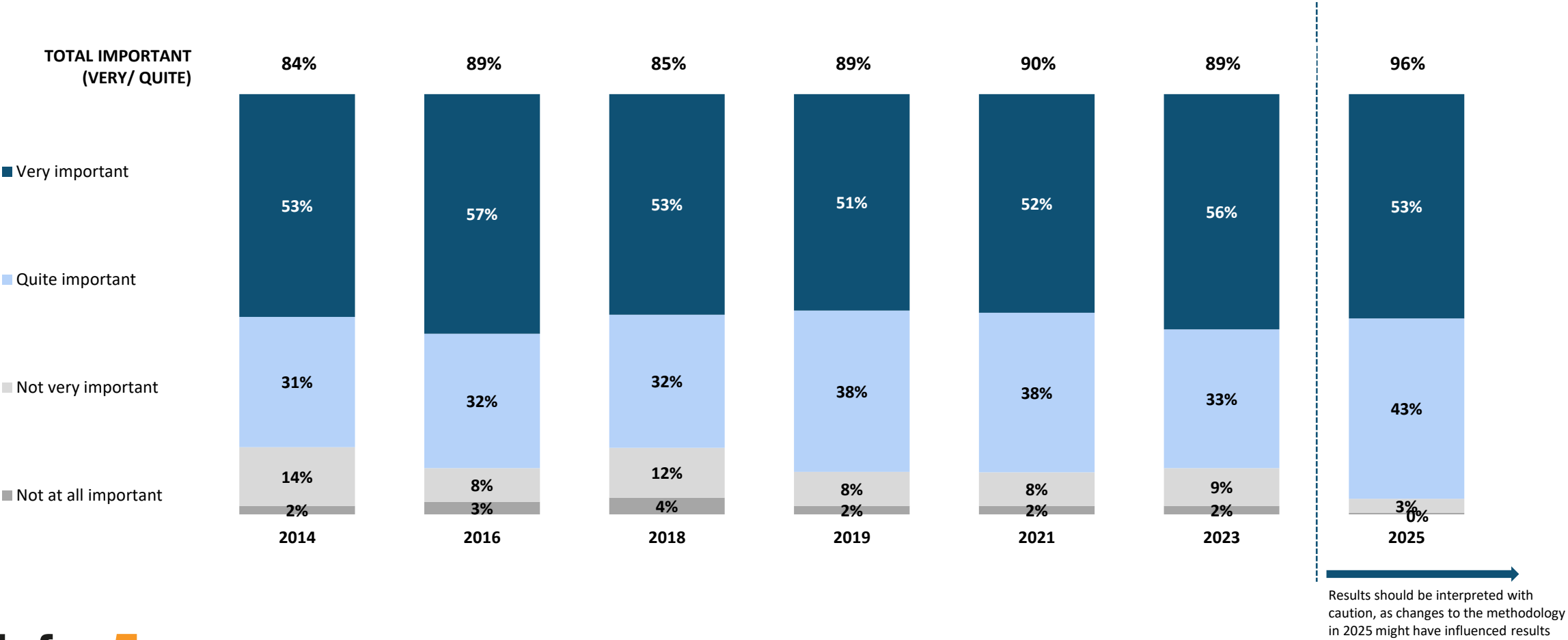


SECTION 2

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES TO ACCESSING GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

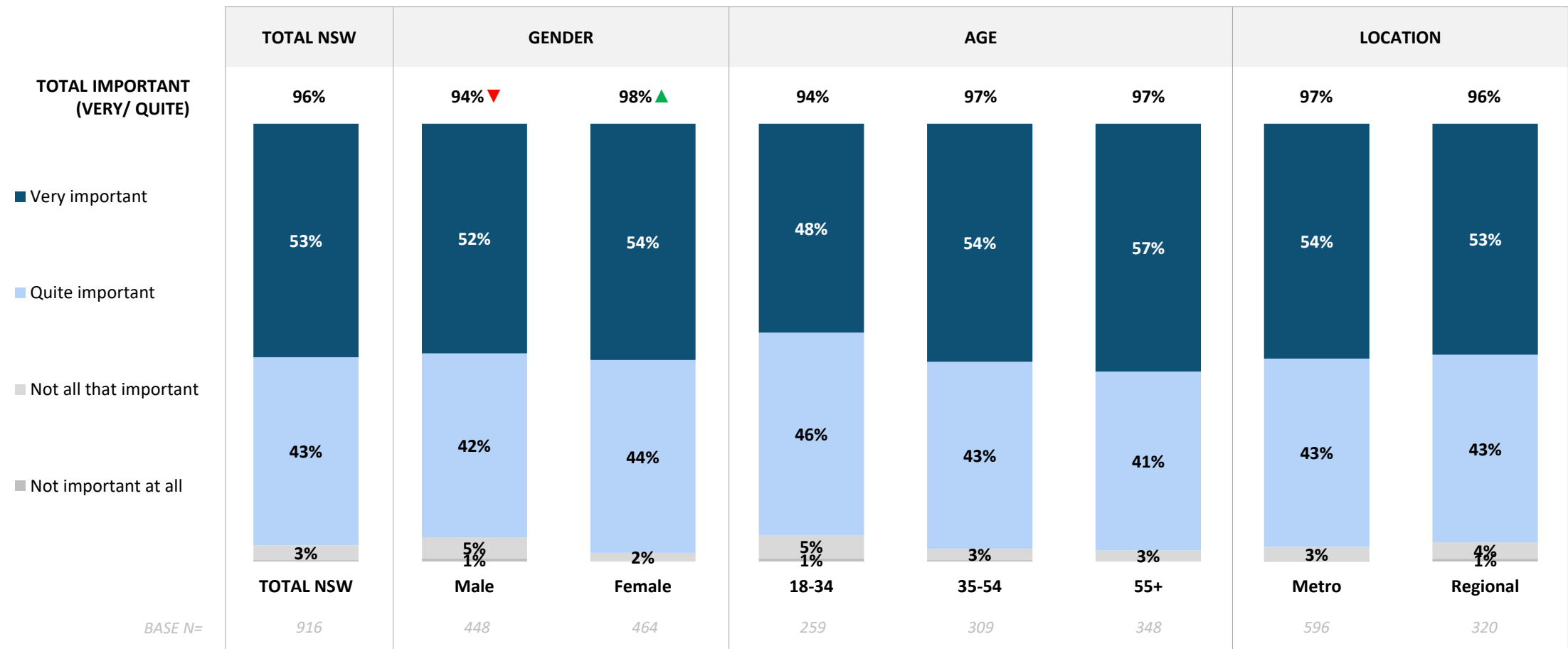
IN LINE WITH PREVIOUS YEARS, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY RATE THE RIGHT TO ACCESS ANY GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION AS IMPORTANT, INCLUDING OVER HALF WHO FIND IT VERY IMPORTANT

How important do you believe it is to have the right to access any government-held information?



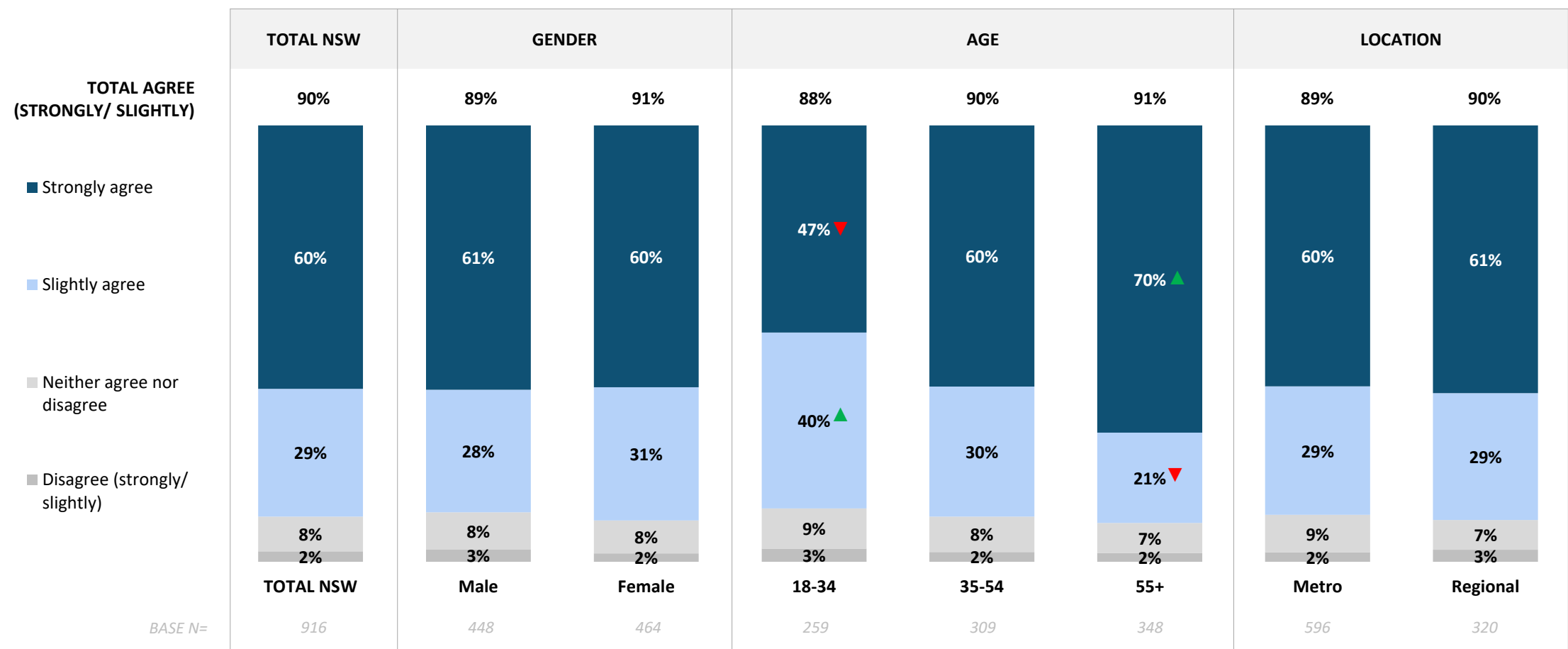
ALL GROUPS, REGARDLESS OF AGE, GENDER, OR LOCATION, BELIEVE THAT THE RIGHT TO ACCESS GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT, INCLUDING OVER HALF RATING IT AS VERY IMPORTANT

How important do you believe it is to have the right to access any government-held information?



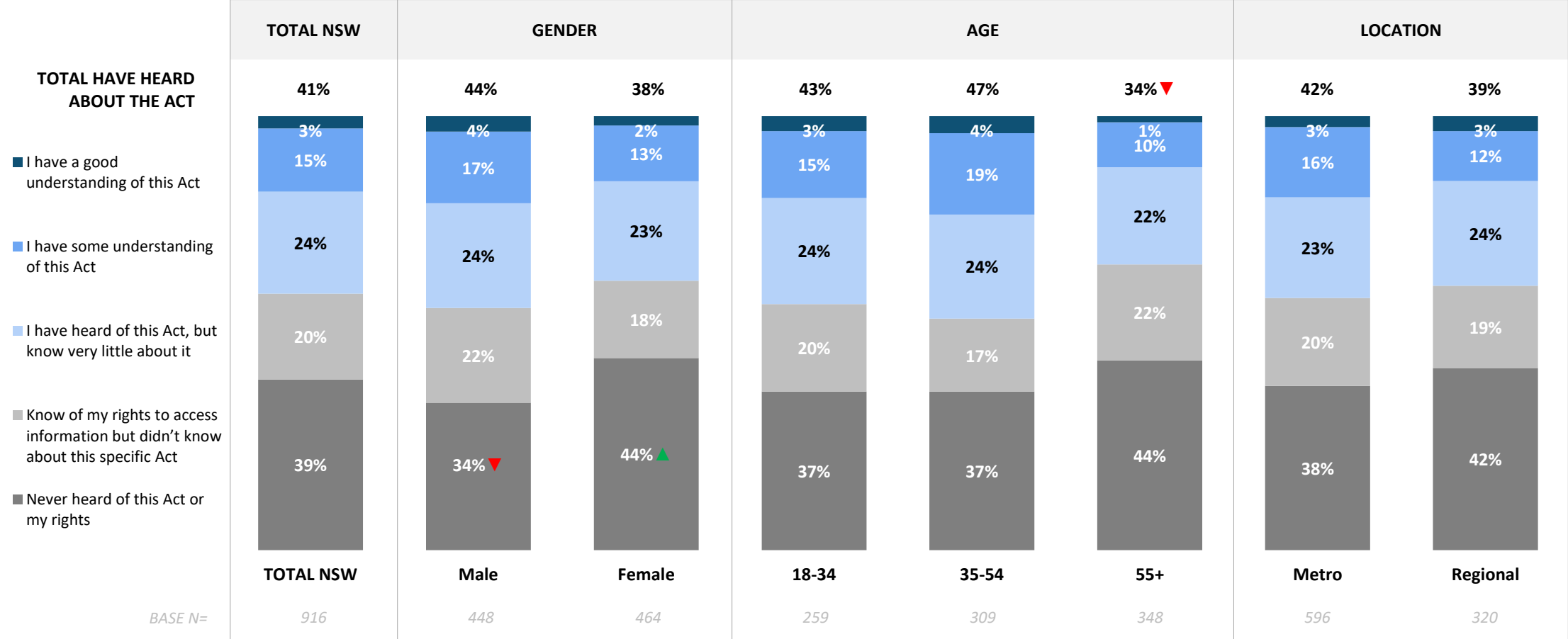
THE MAJORITY (90%) AGREE THAT ALLOWING PUBLIC ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION IS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY – WITH OLDER GENERATIONS SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO STRONGLY AGREE

To what extent do you agree or disagree that public access to government information improves government transparency and accountability?



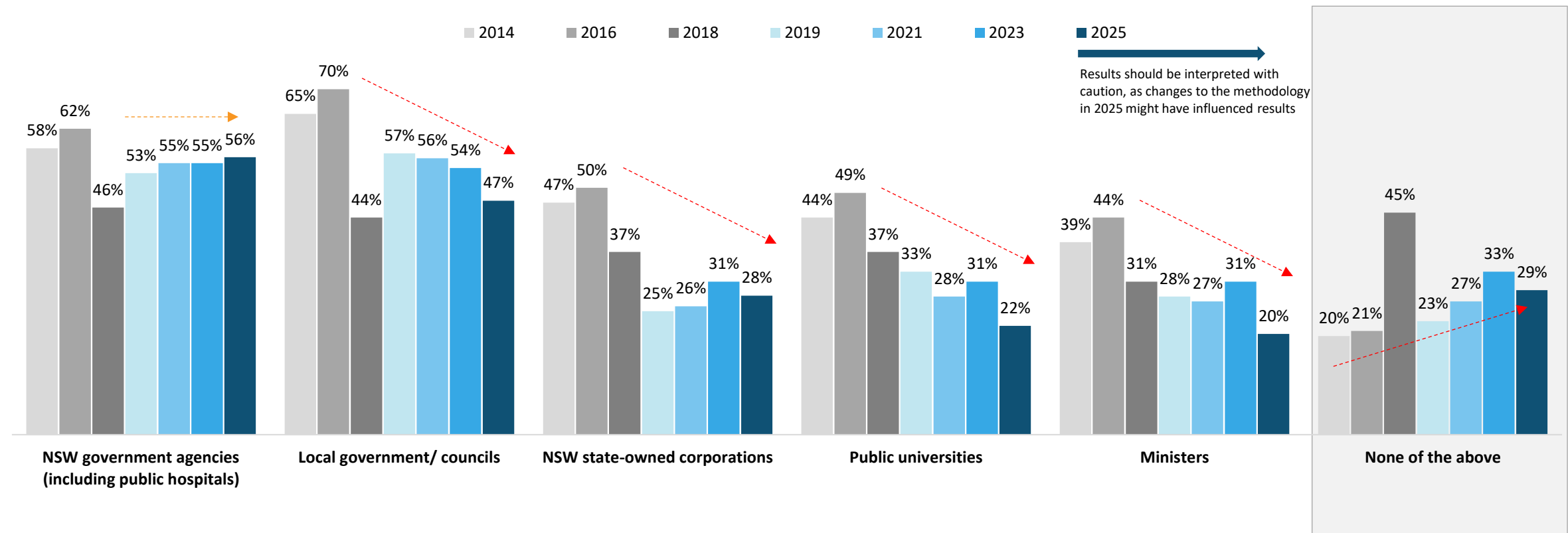
DESPITE THE PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE, LESS THAN HALF ARE AWARE OF THE RELEVANT ACT IN NSW, WITH 50% HAVING NEVER HEARD OF THE ACT OR THEIR RIGHTS. THIS GAP IS PARTICULARLY PRONOUNCED AMONG OLDER GENERATIONS AND FEMALES

Are you aware that the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) (commonly known as the GIPA Act) gives the public the right to access information held by the NSW Government and NSW Government agencies?



PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM SPECIFIC NSW GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS HAS GENERALLY DECLINED SINCE 2014. HOWEVER, RECOGNITION OF THIS RIGHT REMAINS ABOVE 50% FOR NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES (INCLUDING PUBLIC HOSPITALS), DESPITE A DIP IN 2018

From which of the following organisations are you aware that you have the right to access information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) (commonly known as the GIPA Act)?



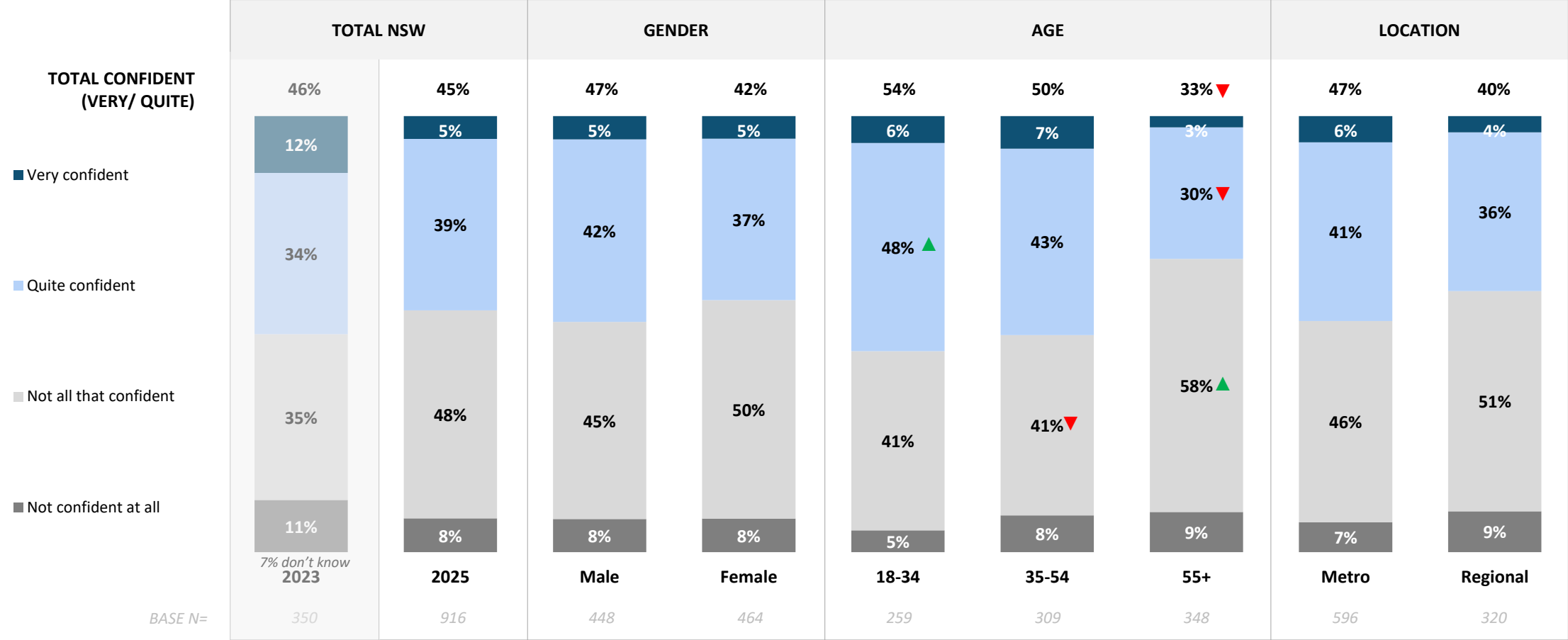
UNDERSTANDING OF RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM DIFFERENT GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS VARIES WIDELY. OVER HALF ARE AWARE OF THEIR RIGHT WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, BUT ONLY 20% RECOGNISE THIS RIGHT WITH MINISTERS. DIFFERENCES ARE NOTABLE BETWEEN AGE GROUPS, GENDERS, AND LOCATION

From which of the following organisations are you aware that you have the right to access information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) (commonly known as the GIPA Act)?

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Metro	Regional
NSW government agencies (including public hospitals)	56%	59%	53%	52%	55%	60%	59%	51%
Local government/ councils	47%	48%	47%	45%	47%	49%	48%	45%
NSW state-owned corporations	28%	32%	25%	20% ▼	32%	31%	30%	25%
Public universities	22%	21%	23%	21%	24%	21%	25% ▲	17% ▼
Ministers	20%	24% ▲	17% ▼	13% ▼	22%	24%	21%	19%
None of the above	29%	27%	31%	29%	29%	30%	26%	35%
BASE N=		448	464	259	309	348	596	320

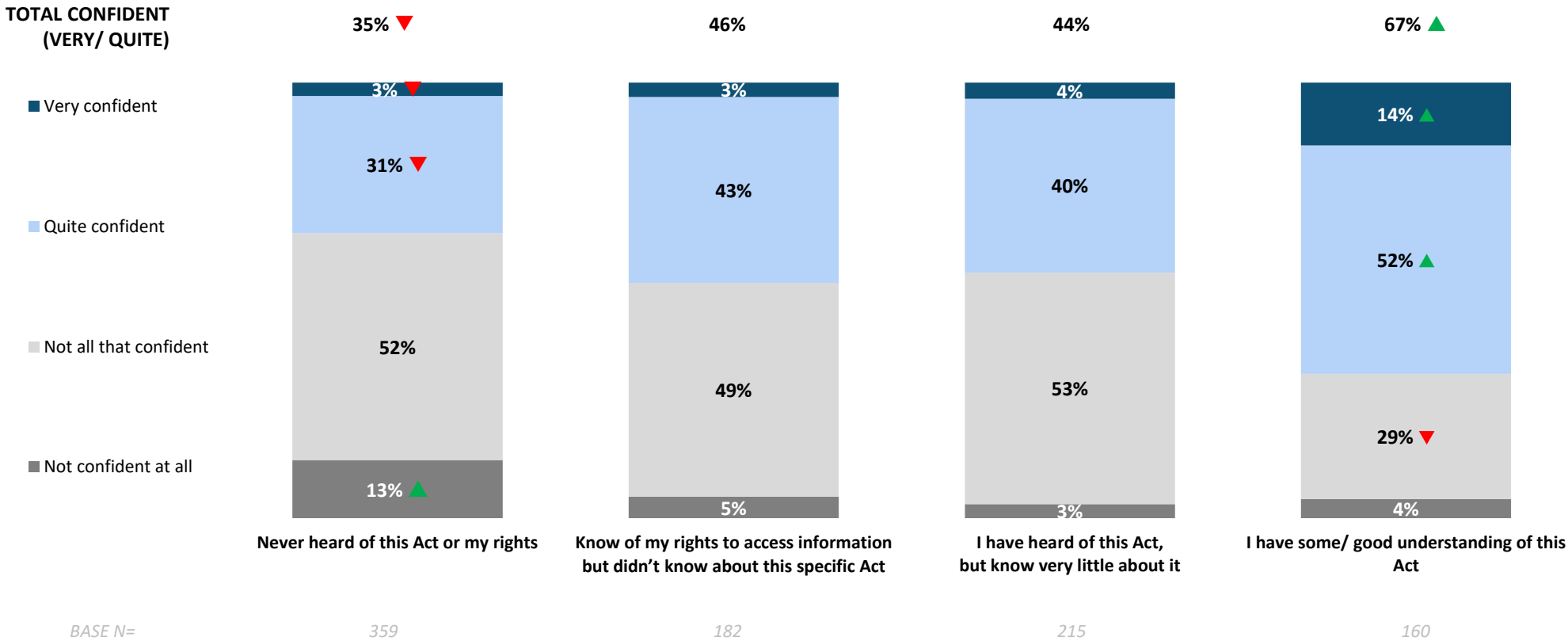
IN LINE WITH 2023, LESS THAN HALF ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE GIPA ACT WILL ALLOW THEM ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE BY THE NSW GOVERNMENT AND AGENCIES. CONFIDENCE IS PARTICULARLY LOW AMONG THOSE AGED 55+ YEARS

How confident are you that the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) (commonly known as the GIPA Act) will allow you access to information about how decisions are made by the NSW Government and NSW Government agencies?



CONFIDENCE THAT THE ACT WILL ALLOW ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASES WITH GREATER FAMILIARITY OF THE ACT

Confidence that the Act will allow access to information about how decision are made by familiarity of the Act





Raising awareness of the Act is essential for building trust in the public's ability to access information about government decisions

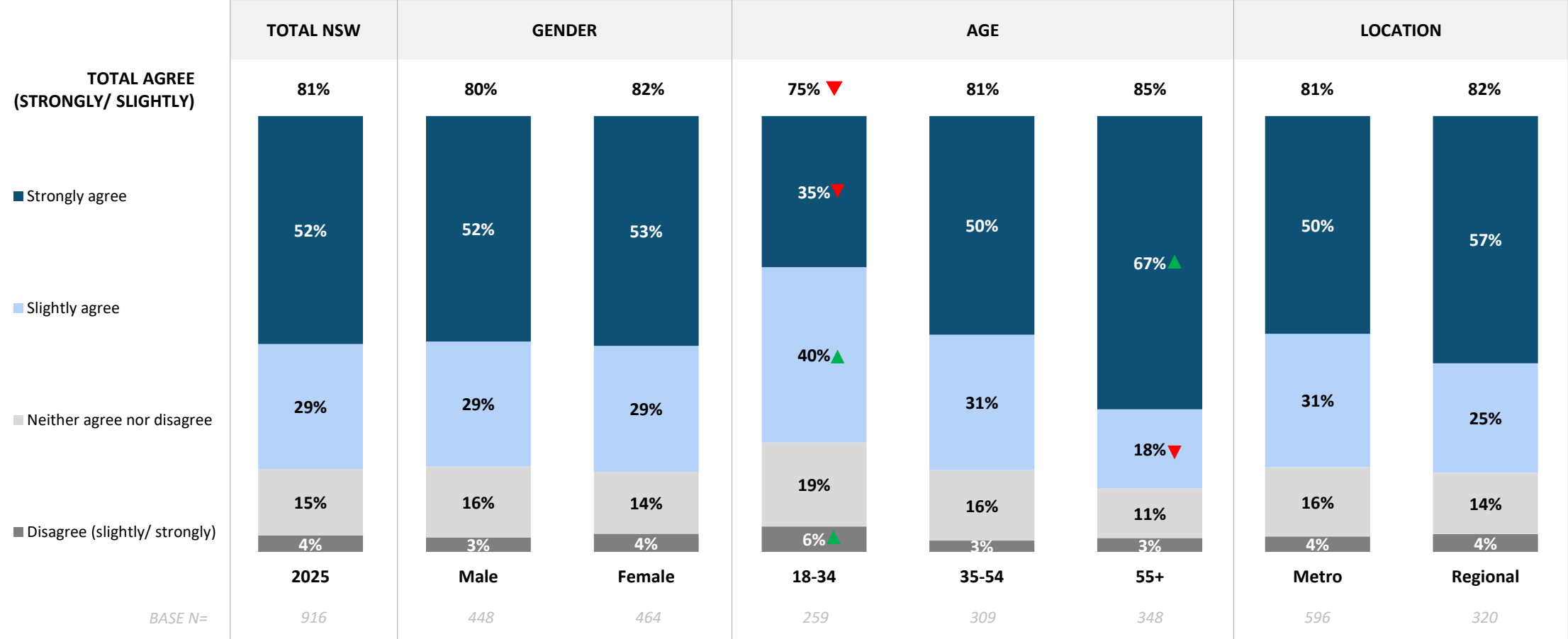
ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ARE KEY PUBLIC INTEREST FACTORS TO CONSIDER. HOWEVER, SIGNIFICANT GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES EXIST, WITH YOUNGER RESIDENTS PRIORITISING THE ABILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO DECISIONS AND OBTAIN BETTER SERVICES COMPARED TO THOSE AGED 35 AND ABOVE

What main public interest factors do you think the NSW Government and NSW Government agencies should take into account when deciding whether to release information?

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Metro	Regional
Ensuring that government remains accountable to the people	67%	69%	65%	55% ▼	68%	76% ▲	64% ▼	73% ▲
Ensuring governments are more transparent about their spending	42%	43%	41%	35% ▼	43%	47%	43%	41%
Providing access to your own information	41%	41%	41%	32% ▼	37%	51% ▲	42%	40%
Providing information to promote fairness and justice	33%	33%	33%	36%	38%	26% ▼	33%	32%
Ensuring that public office holders act with integrity	31%	32%	30%	24% ▼	29%	38% ▲	31%	30%
Ensuring that the public can contribute to significant decisions that affect the community as a whole	24%	20% ▼	28% ▲	36% ▲	20%	20% ▼	25%	23%
Enabling citizens to obtain better service delivery by government	24%	21%	26%	29% ▲	26%	17% ▼	25%	22%
Ensuring access to environmental information and decision making	12%	12%	12%	18% ▲	10%	11%	12%	13%
	BASE N=	448	464	259	309	348	596	320

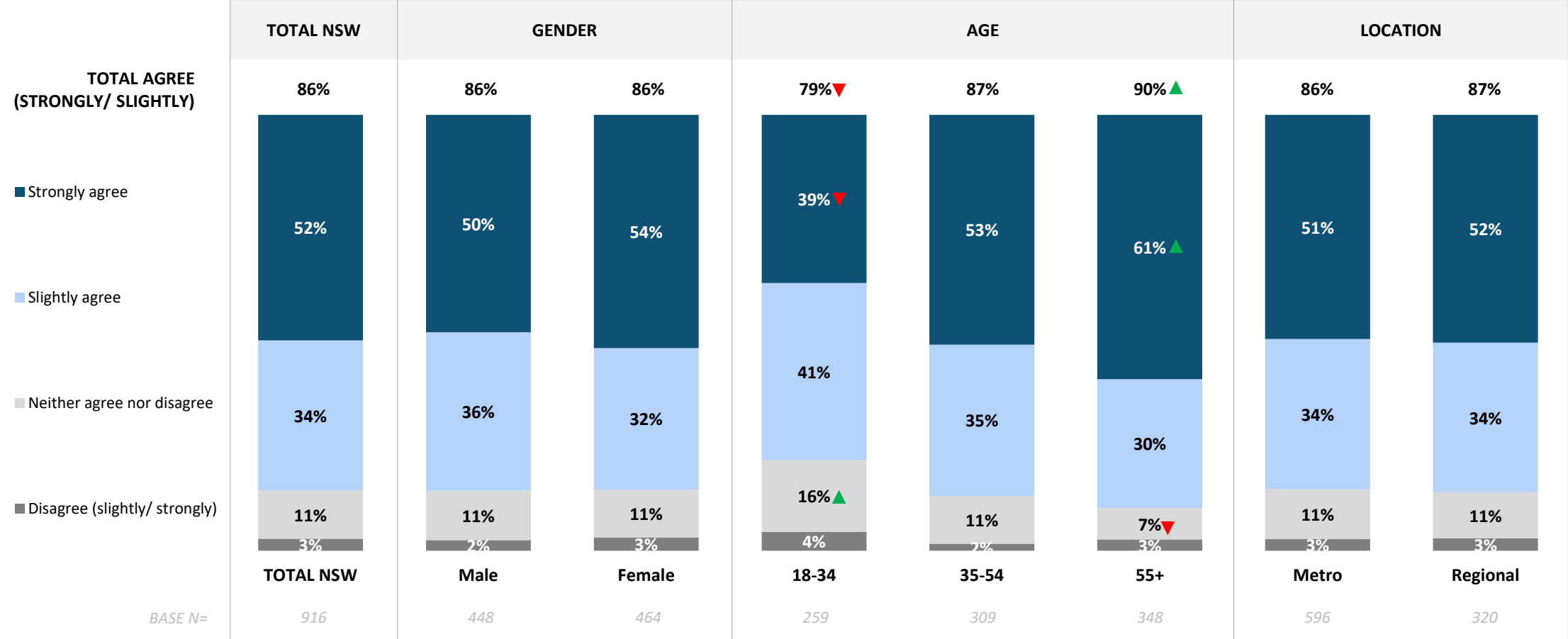
THE MAJORITY (81%) AGREE THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST PUBLICLY REPORT ON ANY TECHNOLOGY USED TO INFORM DECISION MAKING, WITH 52% STRONGLY AGREEING. NOTABLY, THE LEVEL OF AGREEMENT INCREASES SIGNIFICANTLY WITH AGE

To what extent do you agree that the NSW Government and NSW Government agencies must publicly report on any technology used (including AI and automated decision-making) to inform agency decisions that impact individuals?



THE NSW GOVERNMENT IS EXPECTED TO PUBLICLY REPORT ON THE INFORMATION THEY MAINTAIN, WITH AGREEMENT ON THIS REQUIREMENT INCREASING SIGNIFICANTLY WITH AGE

To what extent do you agree that the NSW Government and NSW Government agencies should publicly report on the information they maintain (such as data and datasets, policy documents and decision-making records, spending and budgeting)?

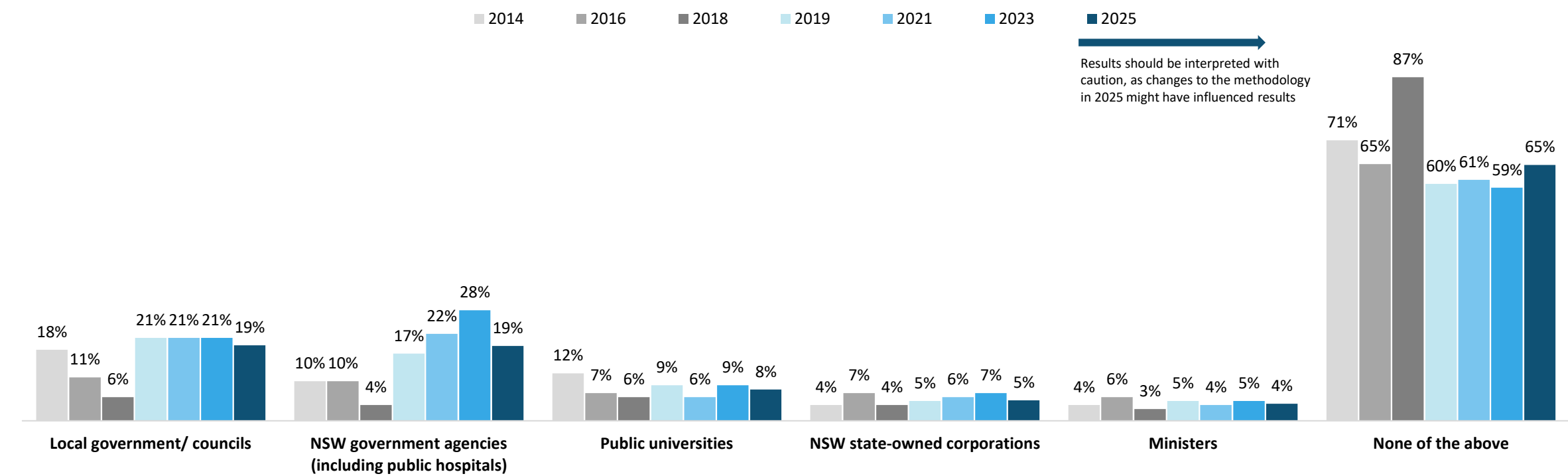


SECTION 3

EXPERIENCES OF ACCESSING GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION

JUST OVER 1 IN 3 (35%) TRIED TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM NSW GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS IN THE PAST 3 YEARS, SLIGHTLY BELOW PREVIOUS YEARS

Over the past three years, which of the following NSW Government agencies (if any) have you tried to access information from?



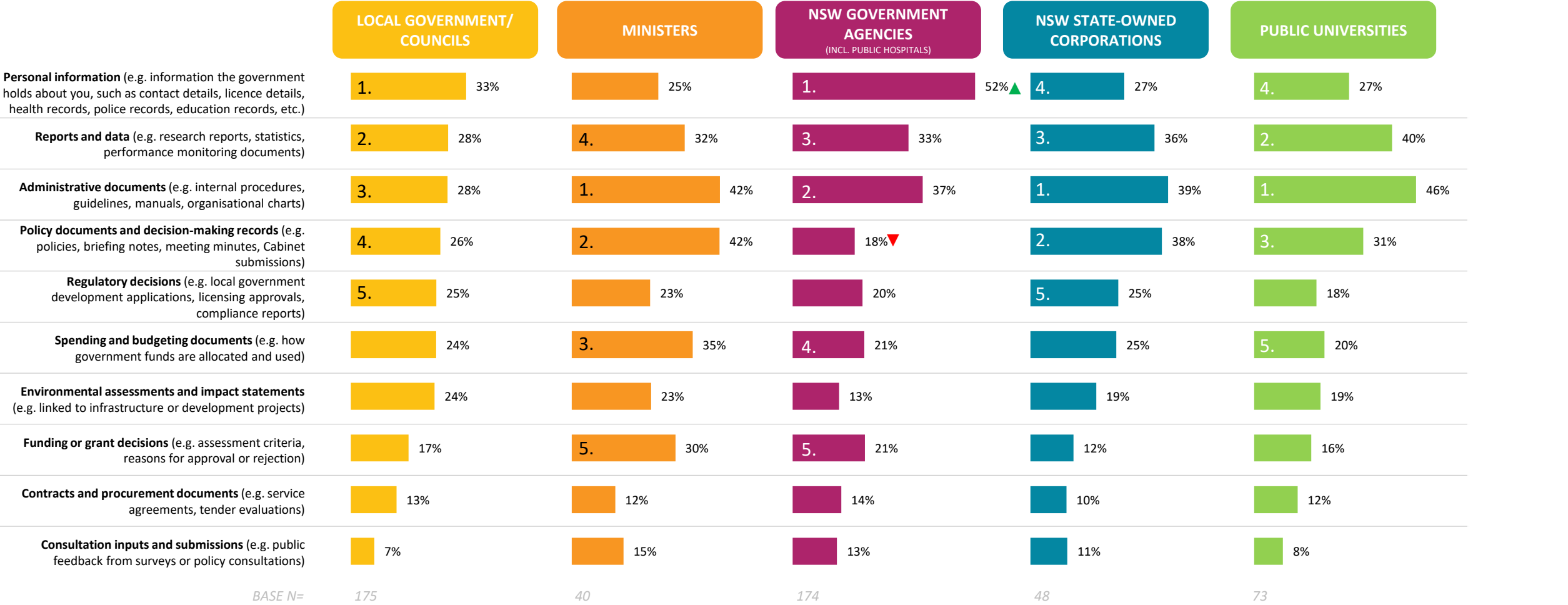
JUST OVER 1 IN 3 (35%) TRIED TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM NSW GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS, MAINLY FROM LOCAL COUNCILS OR NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. DESPITE LOWER AGREEMENT ON THE NEED FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION SHARING, ACCESS REQUESTS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER AMONG 18–34-YEAR-OLDS

Over the past three years, which of the following NSW Government agencies (if any) have you tried to access information from?

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Metro	Regional
Local government/ councils	19%	19%	20%	25% ▲	21%	13% ▼	20%	17%
NSW government agencies (including public hospitals)	19%	19%	19%	26% ▲	22%	11% ▼	21%	15%
Public universities	8%	9%	7%	20% ▲	6%	1% ▼	9%	6%
NSW state-owned corporations	5%	7%	4%	8%	6%	3%	6%	5%
Ministers	4%	5%	4%	5%	5%	3%	5%	4%
None of the above	65%	63%	66%	49% ▼	63%	78% ▲	63%	67%
		BASE N= 448	464	259	309	348	596	320

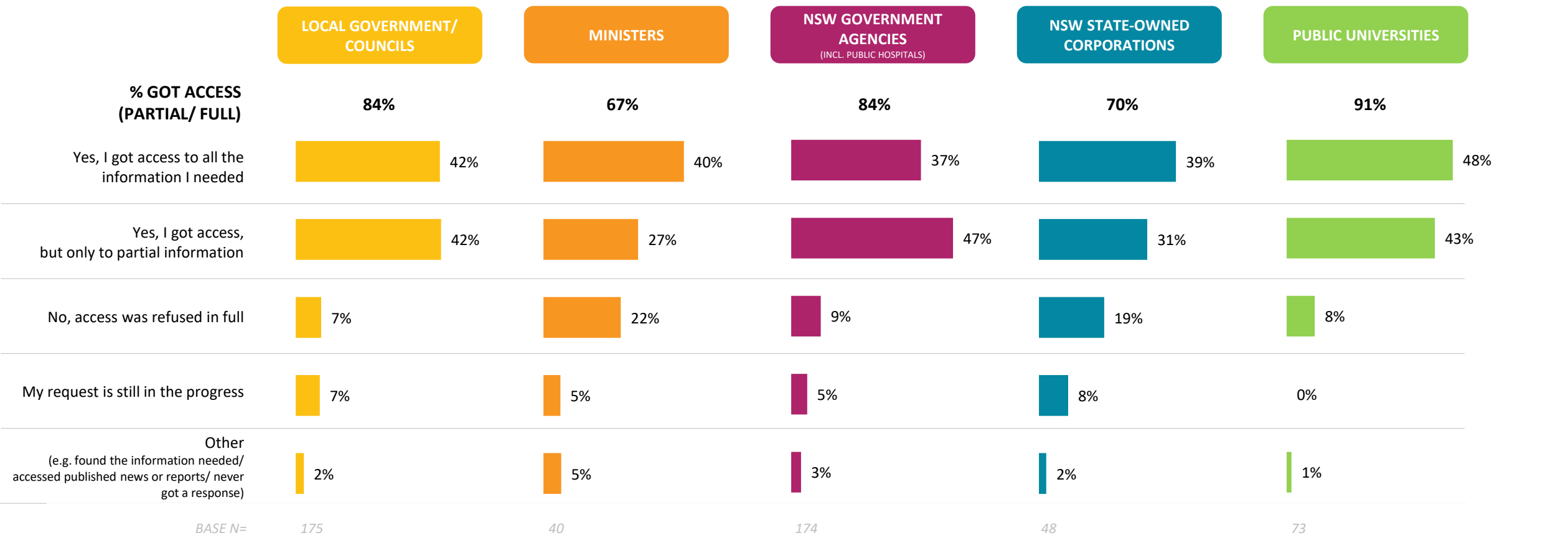
PERSONAL INFORMATION, REPORTS AND DATA, AND ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS ARE AMONG THE MOST ACCESSED DOCUMENTS. ADDITIONALLY, POLICY-MAKING AND FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS ARE ALSO KEY

What types of information were you trying to access from the following NSW Government agencies?



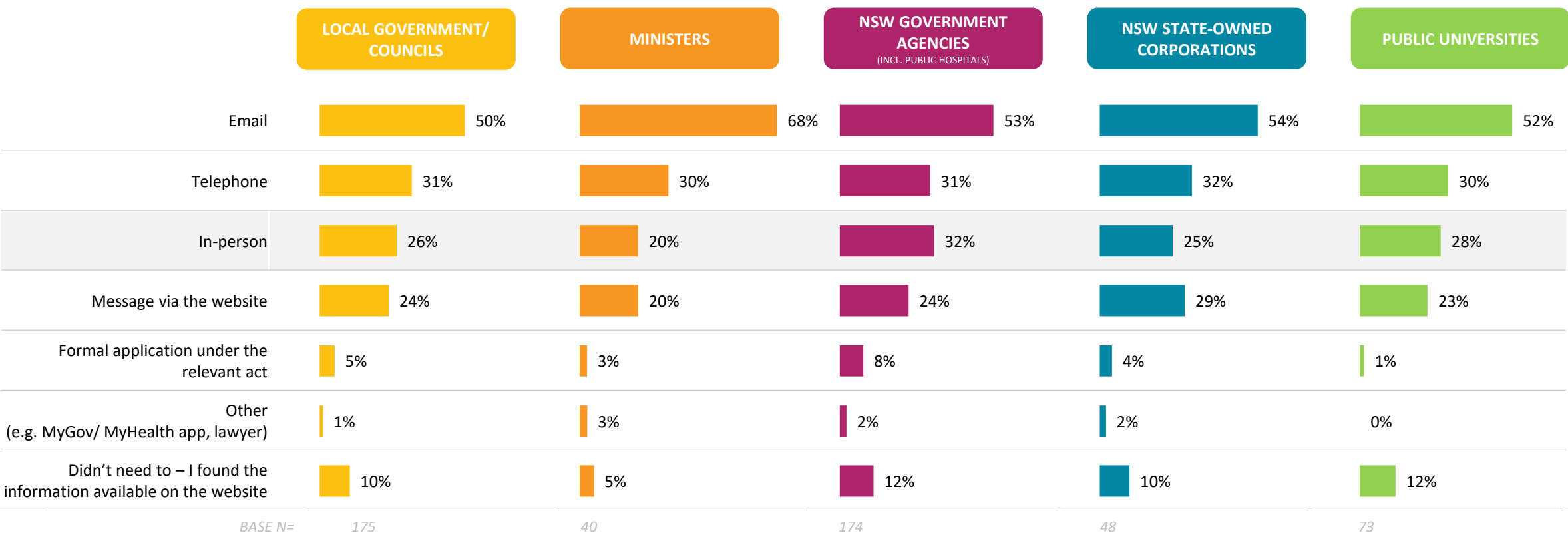
MOST RECEIVED EITHER FULL OR PARTIAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION FROM NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES WHEN REQUESTED. HOWEVER, MANY ONLY GOT PARTIAL ACCESS, AND APPROXIMATELY 1 IN 5 WERE DENIED ACCESS BY MINISTERS AND NSW STATE-OWNED CORPORATION

Did you access the information successfully from the following NSW Government agencies?



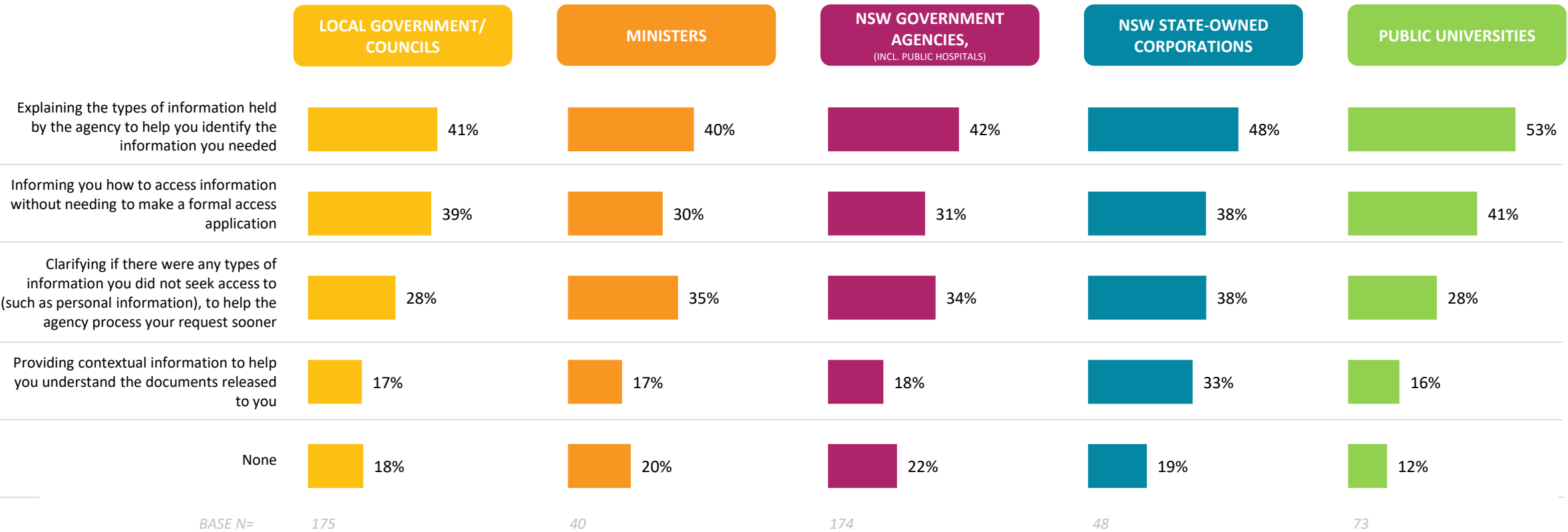
EMAIL WAS BY FAR THE MOST COMMON CHANNEL USED TO COMMUNICATE WITH NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. NOTABLE THAT ACROSS ALL AGENCIES, IN-PERSON INTERACTIONS REMAIN SIGNIFICANT

What channels did you use when communicating with the following NSW Government agency?



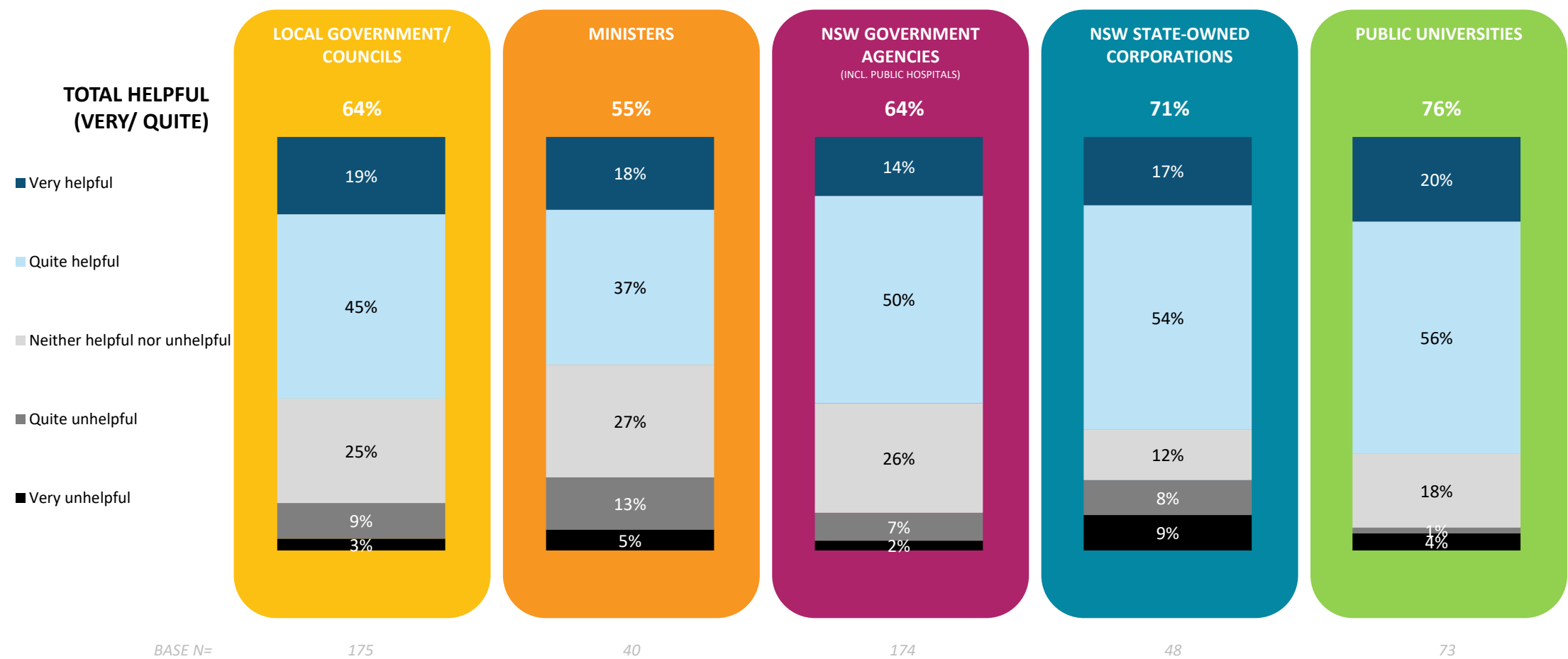
AROUND 4 IN 5 RECEIVED ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE FROM THE AGENCIES THEY APPROACHED, WITH PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES BEING THE MOST RESPONSIVE. THE SUPPORT PROVIDED INCLUDED EXPLANATIONS ABOUT THE TYPE OF INFORMATION HELD AND WAYS TO ACCESS THE INFORMATION WITHOUT A FORMAL APPLICATION

What types of advice and assistance did you receive from the following NSW Government agency?



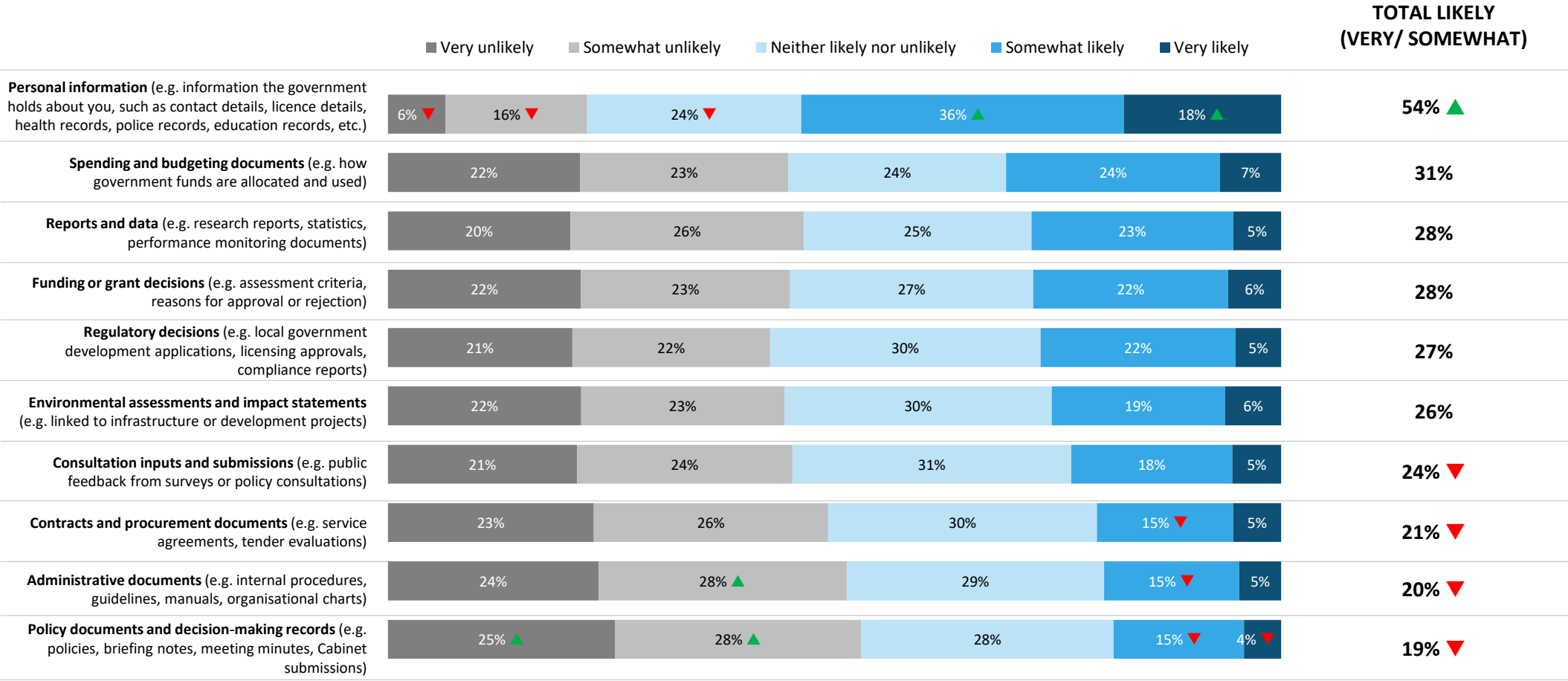
ALTHOUGH THE MAJORITY PERCEIVED THESE GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS HELPFUL WHEN SEEKING INFORMATION – PARTICULARLY PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES – NOTABLE THAT OVER 1 IN 10 REPORT UNHELPFUL STAFF IN OTHER AGENCIES

How helpful were they in providing advice and assistance to you when you tried to access information from the following NSW Government agency?



OVER HALF ANTICIPATE ACCESSING PERSONAL INFORMATION FROM THE NSW GOVERNMENT OVER THE NEXT 2 YEARS, WITH OTHER TOPICS SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER ON PEOPLE'S AGENDA

How likely are you to request the following types of NSW Government information over the next 2 years?



THE LIKELIHOOD OF REQUESTING *PERSONAL INFORMATION* FROM GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IS CONSISTENT ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC COHORTS. HOWEVER, YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO SEEK INFORMATION ON MOST OTHER TOPICS

How likely are you to request the following types of NSW Government information over the next 2 years?
 % VERY/ SOMEWHAT LIKELY

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Metro	Regional
Personal information (e.g. information the government holds about you, such as contact details, licence details, health records, police records, education records, etc.)	54%	53%	55%	59%	53%	50%	56%	49%
Spending and budgeting documents (e.g. how government funds are allocated and used)	31%	32%	30%	43% ▲	33%	20% ▼	32%	29%
Reports and data (e.g. research reports, statistics, performance monitoring documents)	28%	30%	26%	40% ▲	33%	15% ▼	30%	24%
Funding or grant decisions (e.g. assessment criteria, reasons for approval or rejection)	28%	29%	27%	39% ▲	28%	19% ▼	29%	26%
Regulatory decisions (e.g. local government development applications, licensing approvals, compliance reports)	27%	28%	26%	34% ▲	27%	22% ▼	28%	25%
Environmental assessments and impact statements (e.g. linked to infrastructure or development projects)	26%	25%	26%	31%	29%	18% ▼	27%	24%
Consultation inputs and submissions (e.g. public feedback from surveys or policy consultations)	23%	24%	23%	30% ▲	24%	19% ▼	23%	24%
Contracts and procurement documents (e.g. service agreements, tender evaluations)	21%	22%	20%	33% ▲	23%	9% ▼	22%	19%
Administrative documents (e.g. internal procedures, guidelines, manuals, organisational charts)	20%	19%	21%	30% ▲	22%	11% ▼	21%	17%
Policy documents and decision-making records (e.g. policies, briefing notes, meeting minutes, Cabinet submissions)	19%	20%	18%	29% ▲	21%	9% ▼	20%	16%
	BASE N=	448	464	259	309	348	596	320

WHILE EMAIL IS THE MOST PREFERRED CHANNEL FOR FUTURE COMMUNICATION, THERE IS ALSO STRONG DEMAND FOR AN ONLINE PORTAL, WEB FORM, OR MESSAGING OPTIONS VIA THE WEBSITE

What would be your preferred way to request access to the information from the relevant NSW Government agency?
(excluding those who are very unlikely to request information over the next 2 years)

		Male	Female	18-34	45-54	55+	Metro	Regional
Email	40%	39%	40%	36%	42%	40%	41%	37%
Online portal/ form	26%	25%	27%	31%	29%	20%	29%	22%
Message via the website	10%	11%	9%	13%	11%	8%	10%	11%
In-person	8%	8%	8%	8%	4%	11%	7%	10%
Formal application under the relevant act	7%	8%	6%	3%	6%	11%▲	6%	9%
Telephone	7%	6%	7%	7%	7%	6%	6%	8%
Mail	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	4%	2%	3%
BASE N=		428	452	255	297	332	576	308

SECTION 4

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

**AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES:**

Data gathered in 2025 highlights the **importance of public access to government-held information**. The overwhelming majority (96%) consider this right important, with 53% rating it very important, and there is significant support across all demographics.

However, **awareness of the relevant act remain low**, particularly among older generations and females. Public awareness has generally declined since 2014, and understanding of the right to access information varies widely across different government organisations.

In addition to the expectations of having public access to government-held data, the majority (81%) agree that the NSW Government **must publicly report on any technology used to inform decision-making**, with 52% strongly agreeing. There is also a significant expectation for the NSW Government to **publicly report on the information they maintain**, with agreement on this requirement increasing significantly with age.

EXPERIENCE:

Just **over one-third (35%) of people tried to access information from NSW Government organisations** in the past three years, with **younger generations** making more requests. The most accessed types of information include **personal information, reports, data, and administrative documents**. Most requests resulted in either full or partial access, but about one in five were denied access by ministers and state-owned corporations.

Email is the most common communication channel, though in-person interactions remain significant. Around 80% received advice and assistance, with public universities being the most responsive. While most found government organisations helpful, over 10% reported unhelpful staff.

Over half (54%) anticipate requesting personal information in the next two years, with younger generations more likely to seek information on other topics. **Email is the preferred communication channel**, but there is also strong demand for **online portals, web forms, and messaging options**.

These findings suggest a **need for increased efforts to raise awareness about the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)** and to enhance confidence that this legislation allows the public to access information about how decisions are made by the NSW Government and its agencies.

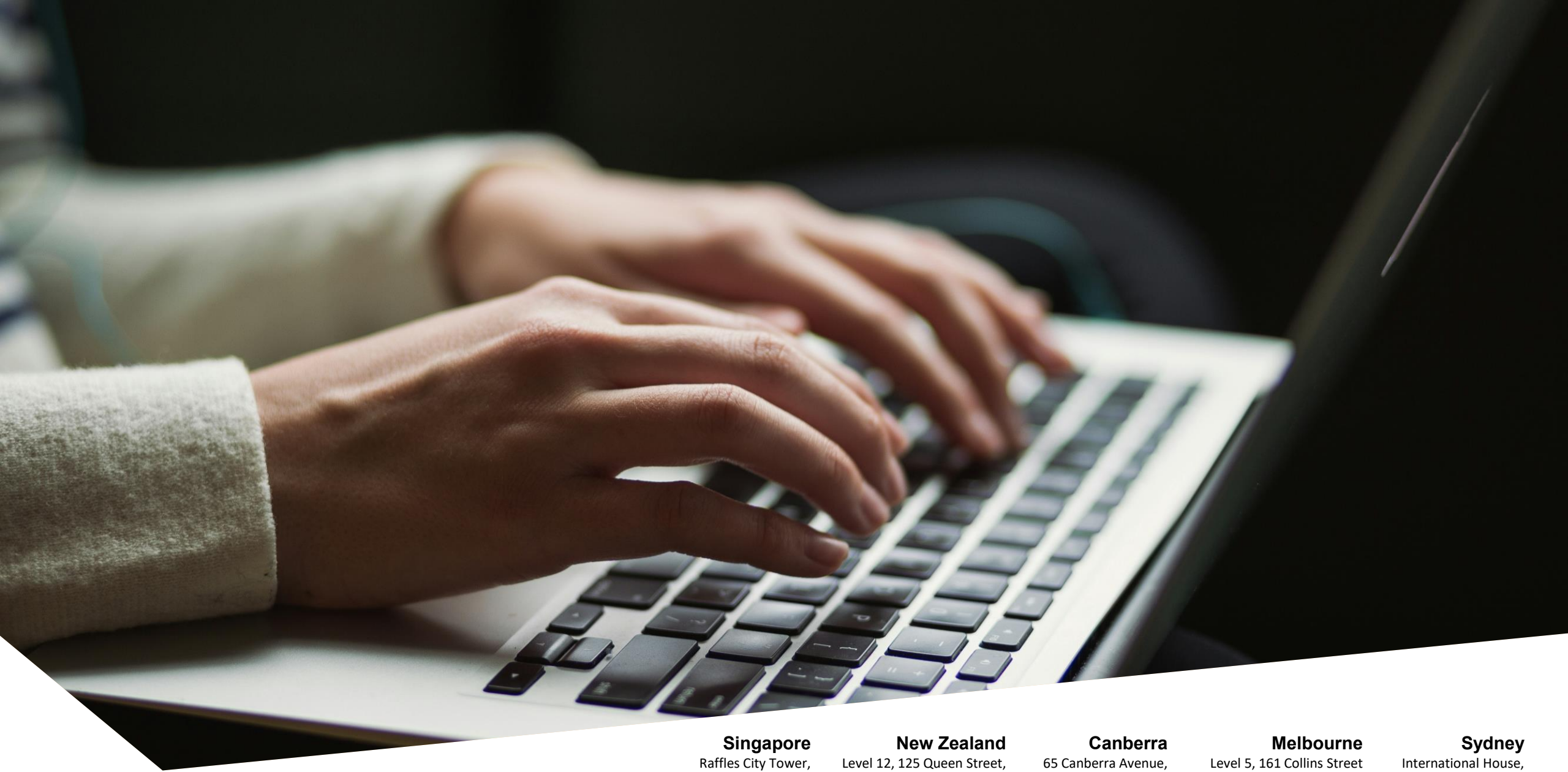
This could involve **education campaigns targeted at the general public** about the act, what it involves – including the types of information available, which organisations hold these and the ways of accessing these sources.

It needs to be considered, however, that with increased awareness, there is a likelihood of increased data and information requests. Therefore, **preparing the different agencies to efficiently deal with these requests** is indispensable.

This can be achieved through **internal communication campaigns**, focusing on the following areas across all agencies to align efficiencies, responsiveness, and helpfulness:

- Enhancing responsiveness to incoming enquiries via efficient processes and channel management
- Enhancing the helpfulness of staff
- Expanding and promoting online communication channels rather than in-person visits and requests

These initiatives could better meet the public's preferences and increase engagement and ease of communication, especially among younger generations.



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