



NSW COMMUNITY ATTITUDES SURVEY INTO INFORMATION ACCESS

INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSION NSW › APR 2026

fiftyfive5

Part of **Accenture** Song



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PROJECT BACKGROUND

Objectives and methodology



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The study aims to capture community understanding of, and experiences with, legislation governing NSW Government-held information. It is conducted every two years on behalf of the Information and Privacy Commission NSW (IPC).

This wave is the first to be conducted by Fiftyfive5, following a transition from the previous market research agency.



METHODOLOGY

- n=1,003 NSW representative sample, by age, gender, and location (metro vs regional)
- 10-minute online survey
- All surveys were completed between 26th March and 7th April 2026



WHAT'S CHANGED THIS YEAR?

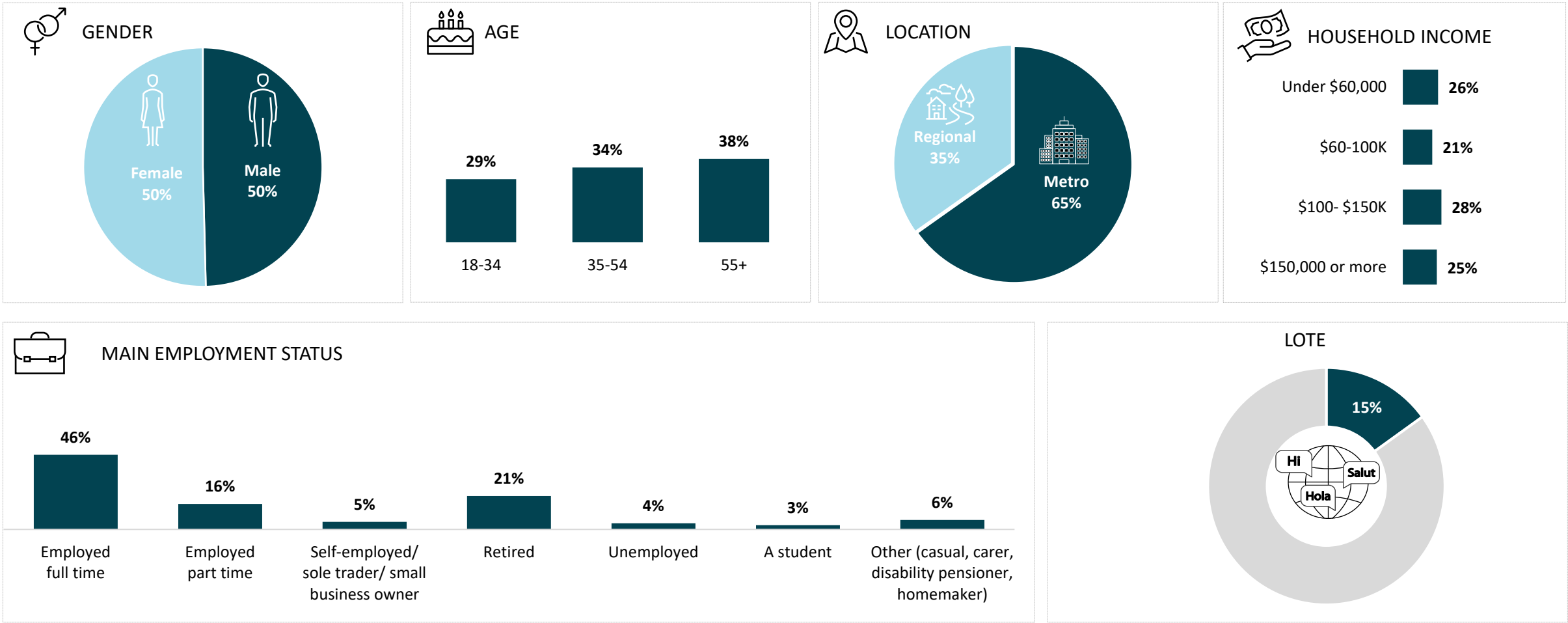
In 2026, the methodology transitioned from telephone interviews to an online survey approach.

This shift enables a more robust sample (n=1,000, up from n=800), representative sampling, and more efficient data collection. Selected questions have also been updated to better suit the online questionnaire format and enhance clarity for respondents.

Due to this change in methodology, along with updates to question wording and structure, certain results are not directly comparable with previous waves.

OUR SAMPLE IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NSW POPULATION BY AGE, GENDER, AND LOCATION (METRO VS REGIONAL).

Sample by key demographic



INFORMATION ACCESS IN NSW

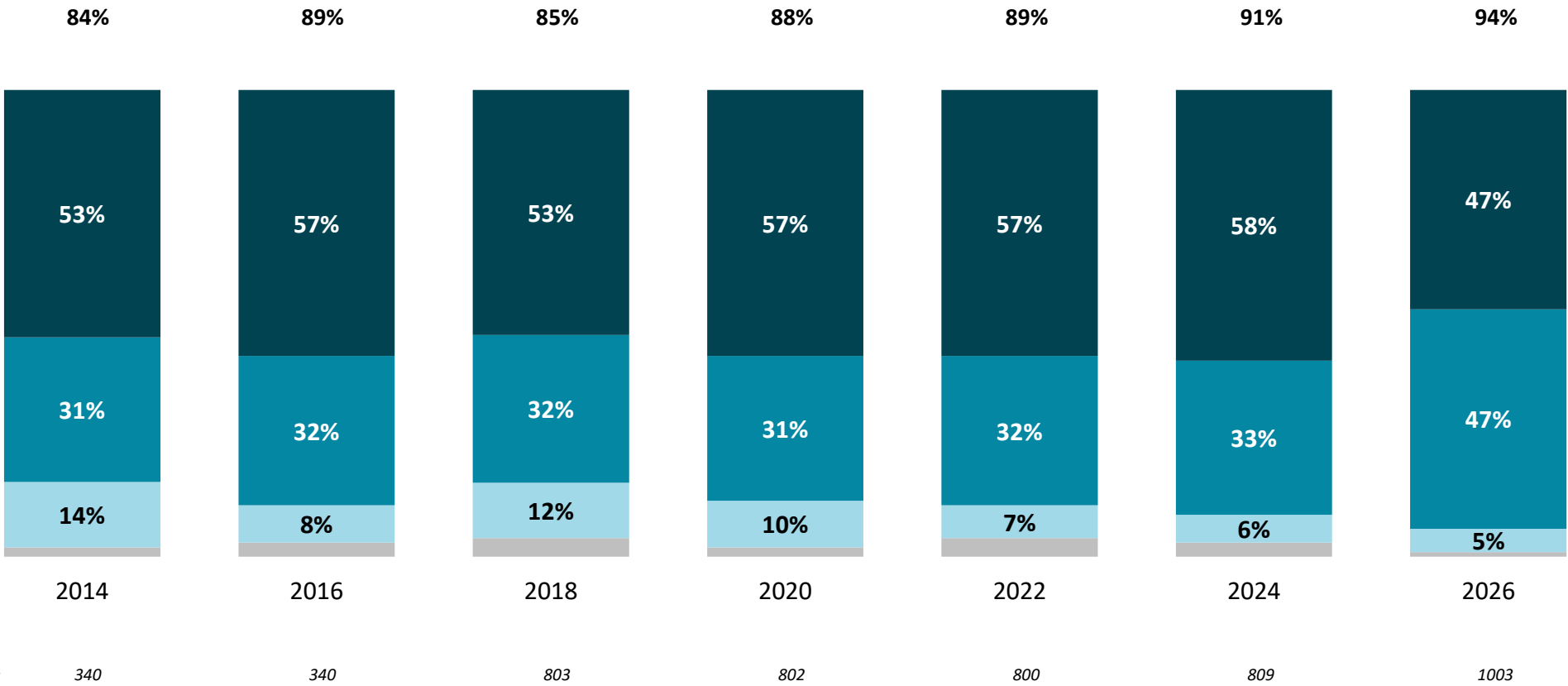
Awareness and understanding

THE RIGHT TO ACCESS NSW GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION CONTINUES TO BE SEEN AS IMPORTANT.

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

NET: IMPORTANT

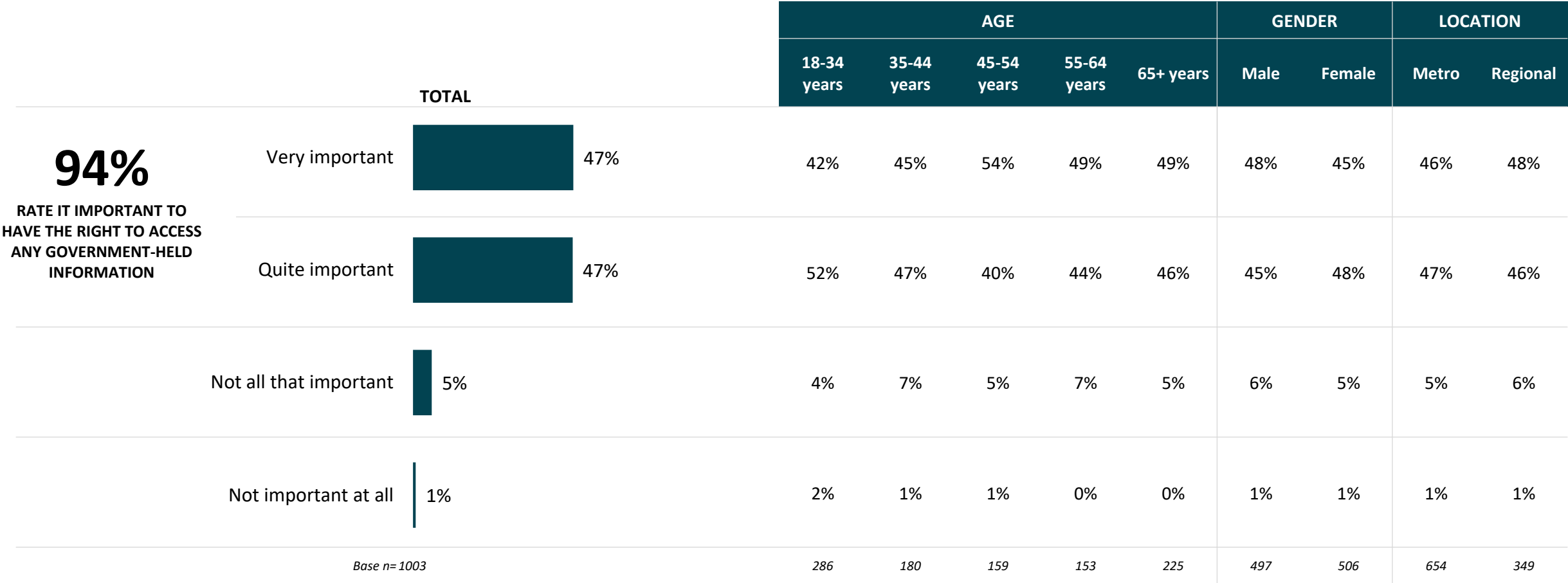
- Very important
- Quite important
- Not all that important
- Not important at all



A1. How important do you believe it is to have the right to access any government-held information (e.g. policies, decision-making documents, or how public money is spent)?
Base: as shown in table

THE RIGHT TO ACCESS NSW GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION IS BROADLY SEEN AS IMPORTANT ACROSS ALL KEY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS.

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



TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, FAIRNESS, AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING ARE WIDELY SEEN AS IMPORTANT REASONS FOR ACCESS TO NSW GOVERNMENT INFORMATION, WITH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ALSO VALUED BY MOST.

How important is allowing public access to information held by the NSW Government for the following reasons?

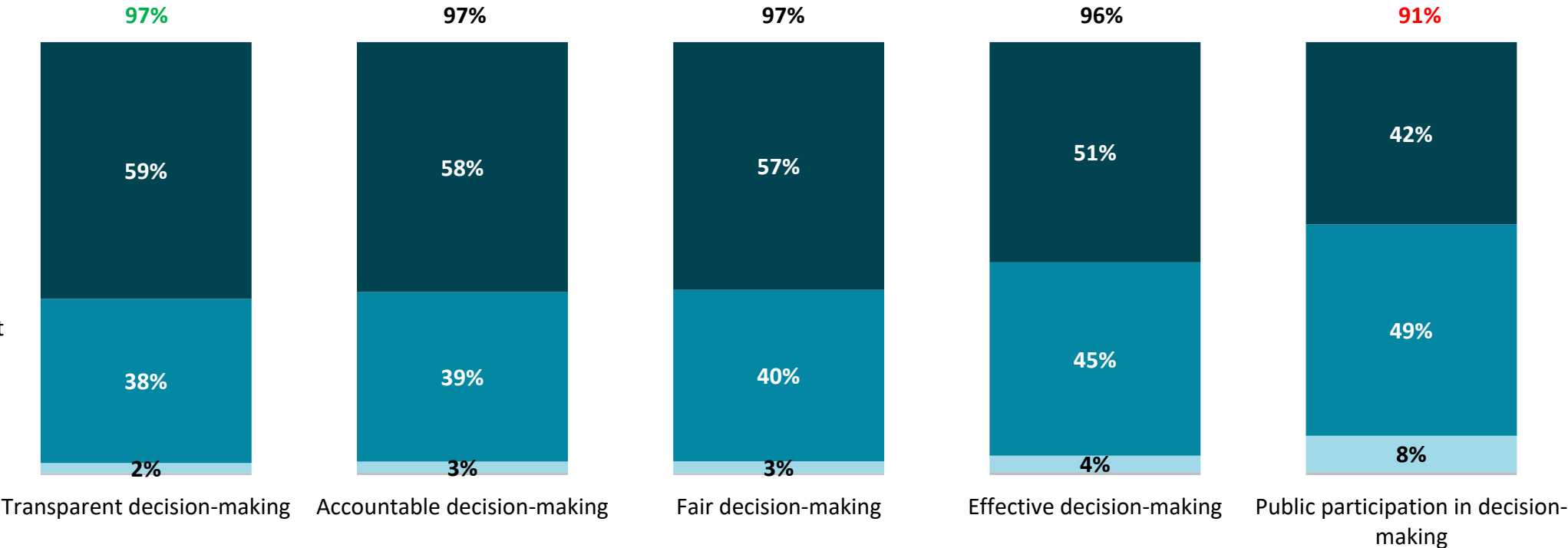
NET: IMPORTANT

Very important

Quite important

Not all that important

Not important at all



3 IN 4 AGREE THAT THE NSW GOVERNMENT SHOULD PUBLICLY REPORT THE TYPES OF INFORMATION IT HOLDS, WITH NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ACROSS KEY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the NSW Government should publicly report on the types of information it holds?

			AGE					GENDER		LOCATION	
			18-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65+ years	Male	Female	Metro	Regional
75% AGREE	TOTAL										
	Strongly agree	32%	26%	32%	33%	37%	37%	32%	32%	31%	35%
	Somewhat agree	43%	46%	44%	47%	39%	37%	44%	42%	45%	39%
7% DISAGREE	Neither agree nor disagree	18%	19%	18%	18%	21%	16%	17%	19%	18%	19%
	Somewhat disagree	4%	6%	3%	1%	1%	6%	3%	5%	4%	3%
	Strongly disagree	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	4%	4%	2%	3%	3%
Base n= 1003			286	180	159	153	225	497	506	654	349

DESPITE STRONG SUPPORT FOR ACCESS RIGHTS, ONLY 2 IN 5 REPORT AT LEAST SOME UNDERSTANDING OF INFORMATION LAWS AND THE RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION HELD BY THE NSW GOVERNMENT, WITH HIGHER AWARENESS AMONG YOUNGER RESIDENTS, MALES, AND THOSE IN METROPOLITAN AREAS.

Are you aware of access to information laws and your right to access information held by the NSW Government?

	TOTAL	AGE					GENDER		LOCATION	
		18-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65+ years	Male	Female	Metro	Regional
NET: Good/some understanding	39%	52%	42%	41%	25%	31%	44%	35%	43%	34%
Have a good understanding of this right	5%	7%	8%	5%	1%	4%	7%	3%	6%	3%
Have some understanding of this right	34%	45%	33%	36%	24%	27%	36%	32%	36%	31%
Have heard of this right but know very little about it	37%	33%	38%	35%	45%	40%	38%	37%	36%	40%
Not aware	23%	15%	21%	25%	29%	29%	19%	27%	21%	27%
Base n= 1003		286	180	159	153	225	497	506	654	349

MOST CORRECTLY IDENTIFY NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AS COVERED BY ACCESS RIGHTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE AGED 65+, BUT AWARENESS IS LOWER FOR MINISTERS AND PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES.

To your knowledge, which of the following NSW Government departments and agencies are covered by these rights?

	TOTAL	AGE					GENDER		LOCATION	
		18-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65+ years	Male	Female	Metro	Regional
NSW Government agencies (including public hospitals)	78%	73%	76%	74%	78%	88%	80%	76%	78%	77%
Local councils	60%	57%	57%	63%	59%	66%	63%	57%	60%	61%
NSW state-owned corporations	60%	58%	57%	58%	59%	67%	67%	54%	62%	56%
Ministers of the NSW Government	57%	56%	52%	64%	52%	63%	59%	56%	58%	56%
Public universities	47%	45%	43%	53%	46%	48%	47%	47%	47%	46%
None of the above	13%	13%	12%	15%	14%	11%	10%	15%	11%	16%
Base n= 1003		286	180	159	153	225	497	506	654	349

LESS THAN HALF HAVE AT LEAST SOME UNDERSTANDING OF THE NSW INFORMATION COMMISSIONER’S ROLE, WITH AWARENESS PARTICULARLY LOW AMONG WOMEN.

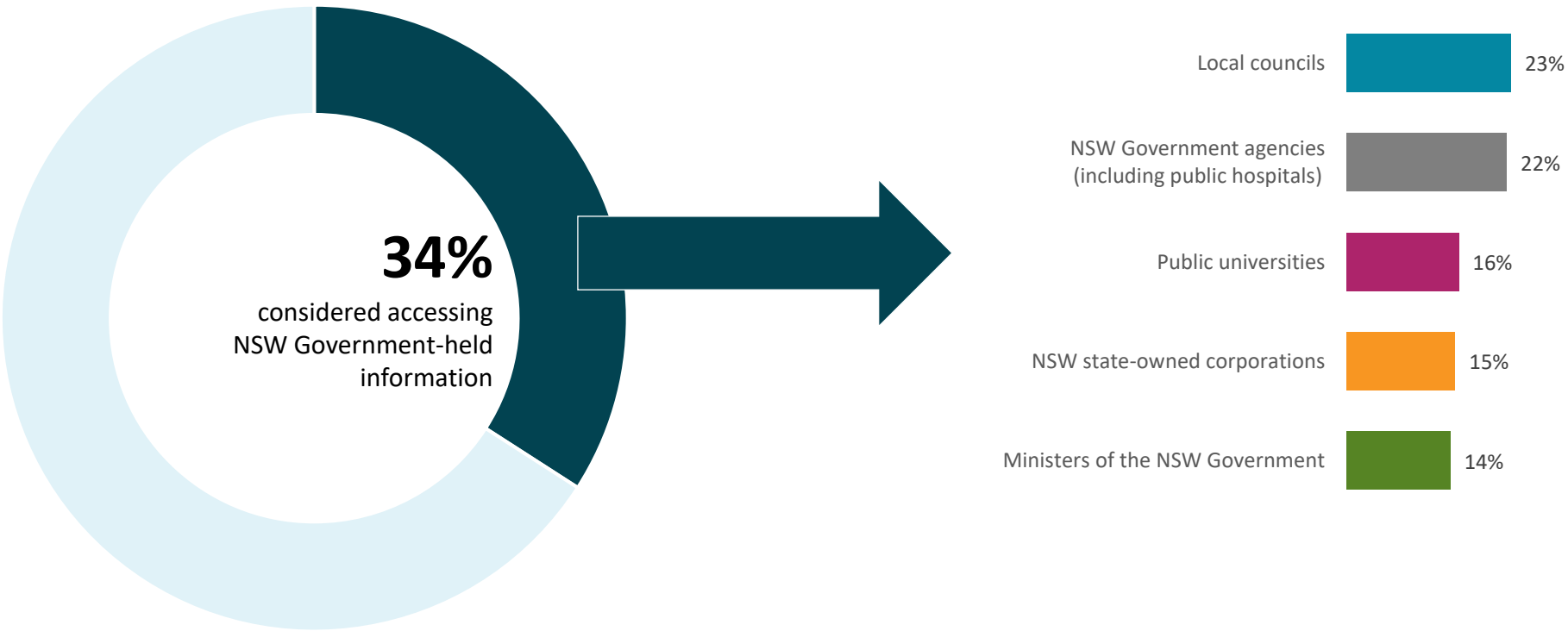
Are you aware that the NSW Information Commissioner exists to uphold the right to access information from NSW Government agencies?

		AGE					GENDER		LOCATION	
		18-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65+ years	Male	Female	Metro	Regional
TOTAL										
NET: Good understanding/heard of the role	47%	51%	48%	43%	42%	47%	53%	42%	49%	43%
Have a good understanding of what this role covers	6%	11%	10%	6%	1%	2%	9%	4%	8%	4%
Have heard of this role, but don't know much about it	41%	41%	38%	36%	41%	45%	44%	37%	41%	40%
Not aware of this role	53%	49%	52%	57%	58%	53%	47%	58%	51%	57%
Base n= 1003		286	180	159	153	225	497	506	654	349

EXPERIENCES ACCESSING GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

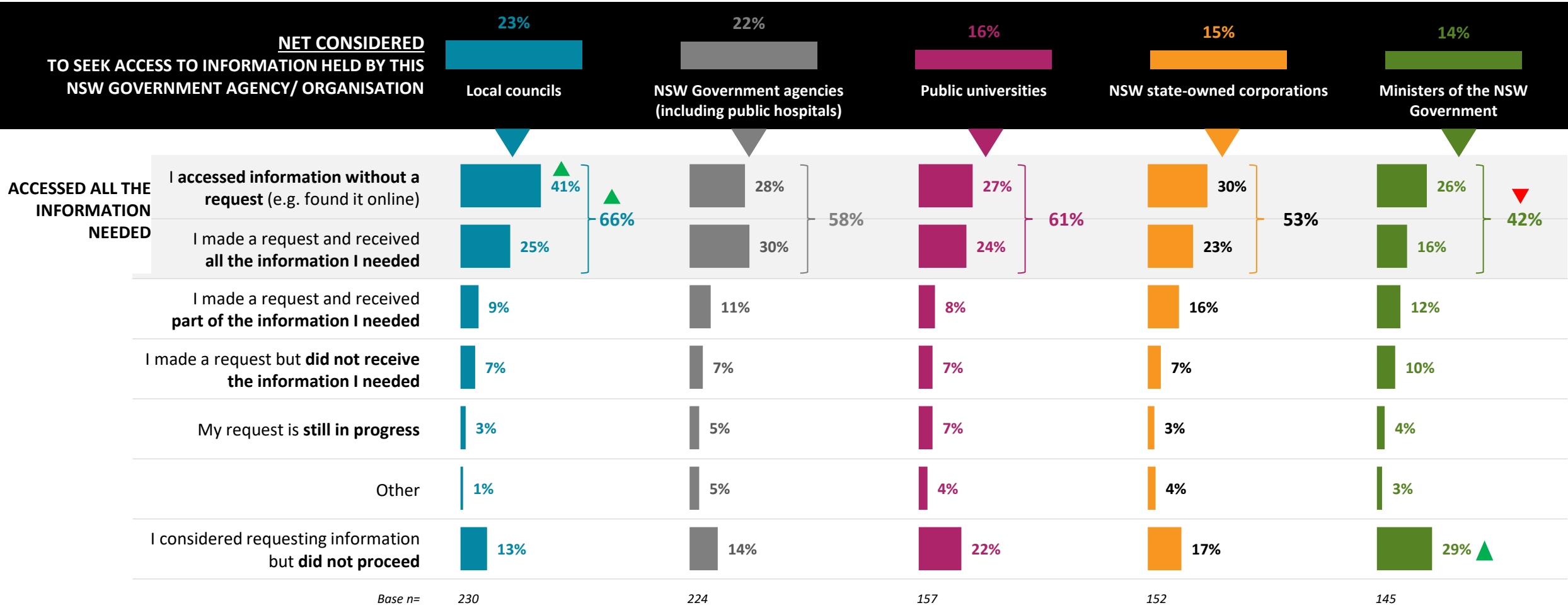
OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, JUST OVER 1 IN 3 CONSIDERED ACCESSING NSW GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION, INCLUDING JUST UNDER 1 IN 4 FROM LOCAL COUNCILS AND A SIMILAR PROPORTION FROM NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, WITH FEWER THAN 1 IN 5 FROM EACH OF THE OTHER ENTITIES.

Over the past two years, what has been your experience, if any, in trying to access information from the following NSW Government organisations?



A NOTABLE SHARE DID NOT PROCEED AFTER CONSIDERING ACCESS, PARTICULARLY FOR INFORMATION HELD BY MINISTERS OF THE NSW GOVERNMENT (29%). MOST WHO DID PROCEED OBTAINED ALL THE INFORMATION THEY WERE SEEKING, OFTEN WITHOUT NEEDING TO MAKE A REQUEST.

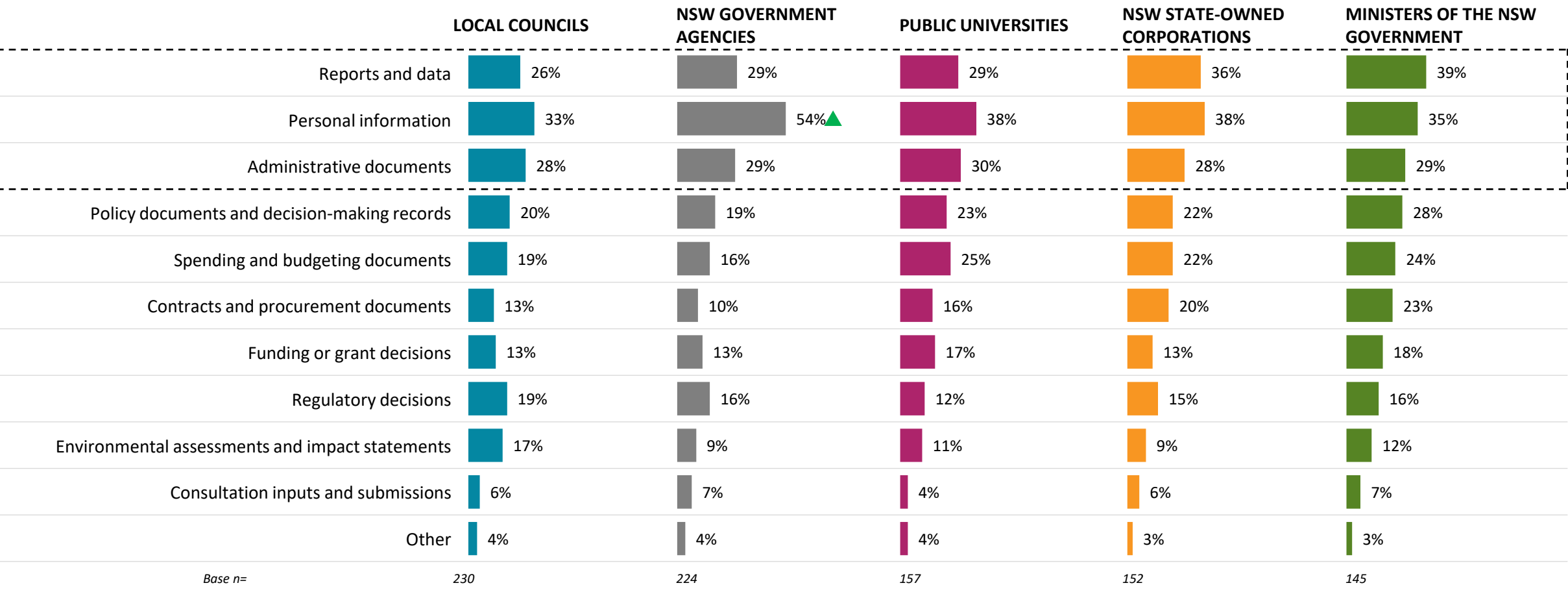
Over the past two years, what has been your experience, if any, in trying to access information from the following NSW Government organisations?



REPORTS, DATA, PERSONAL INFORMATION, AND ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS ARE THE TYPES OF INFORMATION MOST COMMONLY SOUGHT ACROSS NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND DEPARTMENTS COVERED IN THE SURVEY.

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

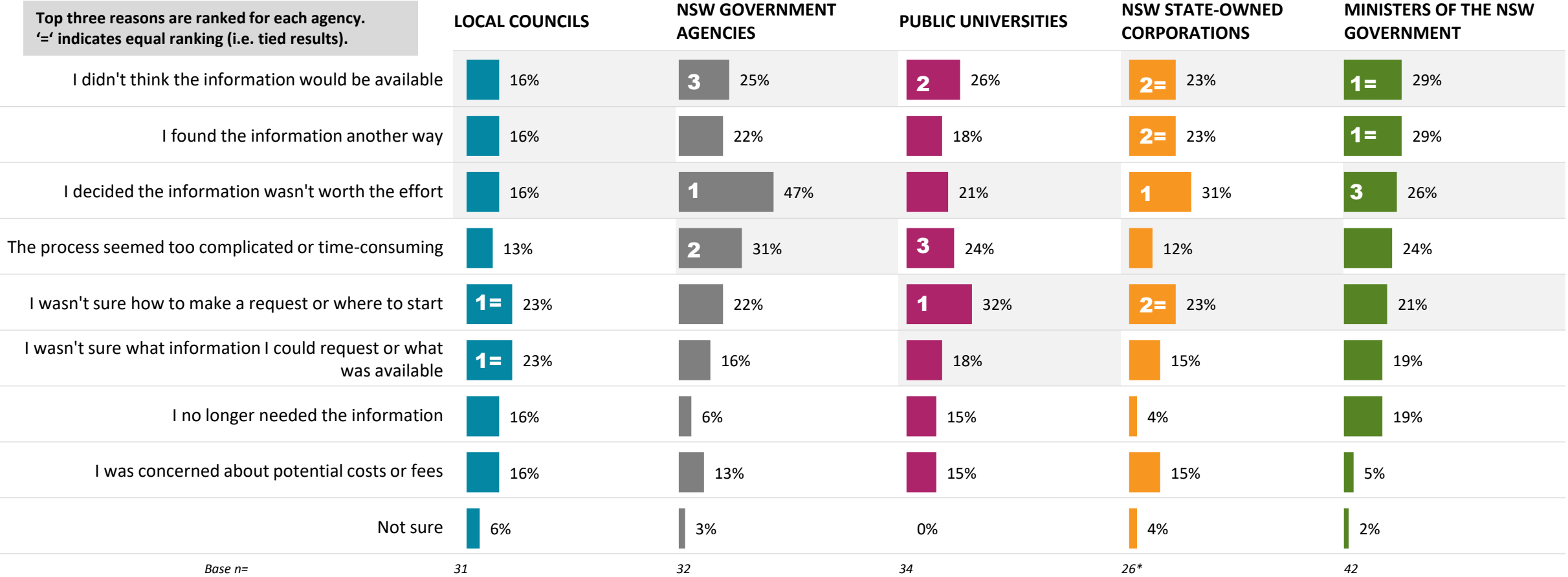
Among those who considered accessing information



A NUMBER OF FACTORS EXPLAIN WHY SOME CHOSE NOT TO PROCEED WITH ACCESSING INFORMATION, INCLUDING LIMITED AWARENESS OF HOW TO INITIATE THE PROCESS, WHAT INFORMATION EXISTS, WHERE TO ACCESS IT, AND THE PERCEIVED EFFORT REQUIRED.

Why did you not end up requesting the information you were considering?

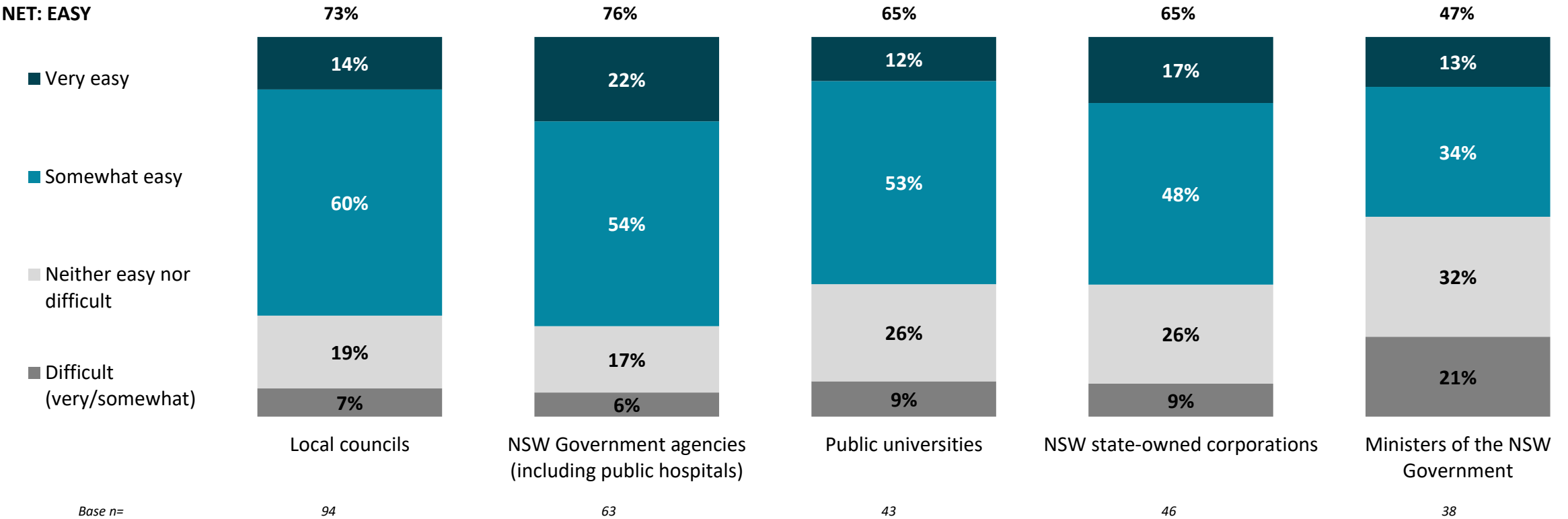
Among those who did not proceed with accessing/ requesting access to information



AROUND 3 IN 4 WHO ACCESSED INFORMATION WITHOUT A REQUEST FOUND IT EASY TO OBTAIN ACROSS ALL AGENCIES AND DEPARTMENTS COVERED IN THE SURVEY. INFORMATION FROM MINISTERS OF THE NSW GOVERNMENT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT TO SOURCE, WITH 1 IN 5 REPORTING DIFFICULTY.

How easy or difficult was it to find the information you were looking for?

Among those who accessed information without a request



B6. How easy or difficult was it to find the information you were looking for?
Base: as shown in table

Significantly higher/lower than other cohorts combined at 95% confidence interval

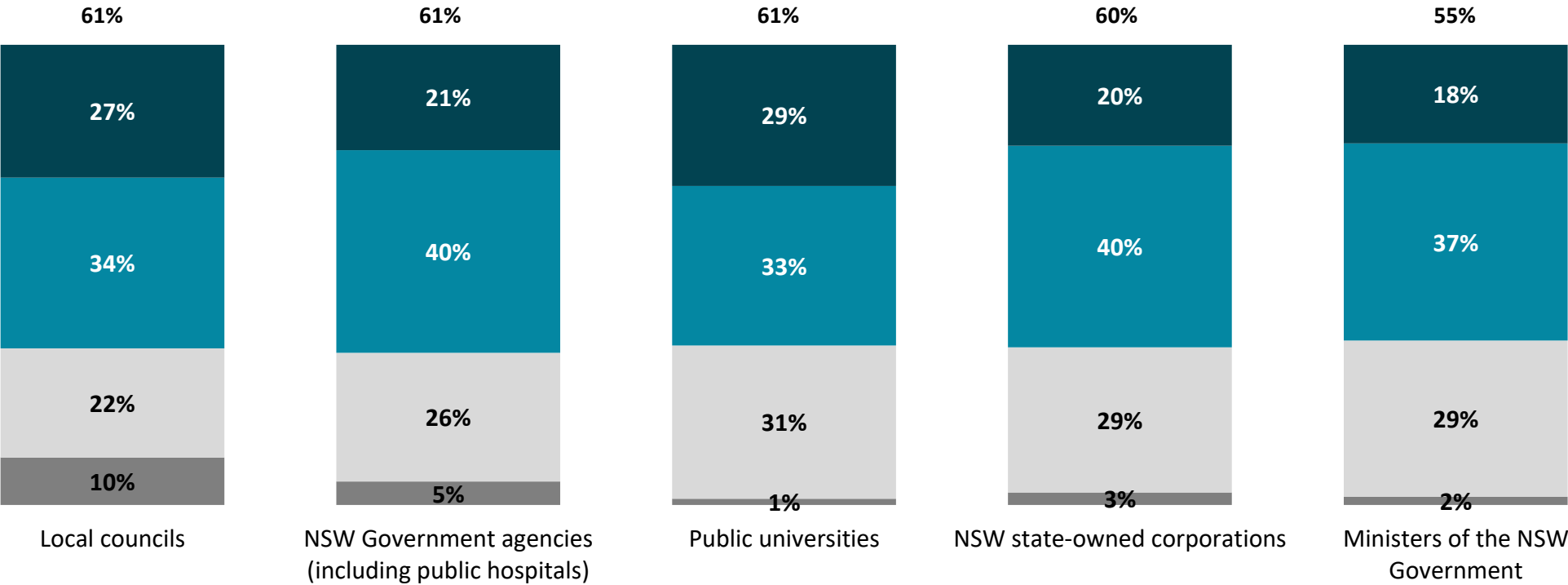
THE MAJORITY OF THOSE WHO PROCEEDED WITH AN INFORMATION ACCESS REQUEST WERE SATISFIED. DISSATISFACTION WAS HIGHEST FOR LOCAL COUNCILS (10%), WITH LOWER LEVELS ACROSS OTHER ENTITIES.

How satisfied were you overall with the process and outcome of your request/so far?

Among those who requested information

NET: SATISFIED

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied (very/somewhat)



Base n=

105

129

80

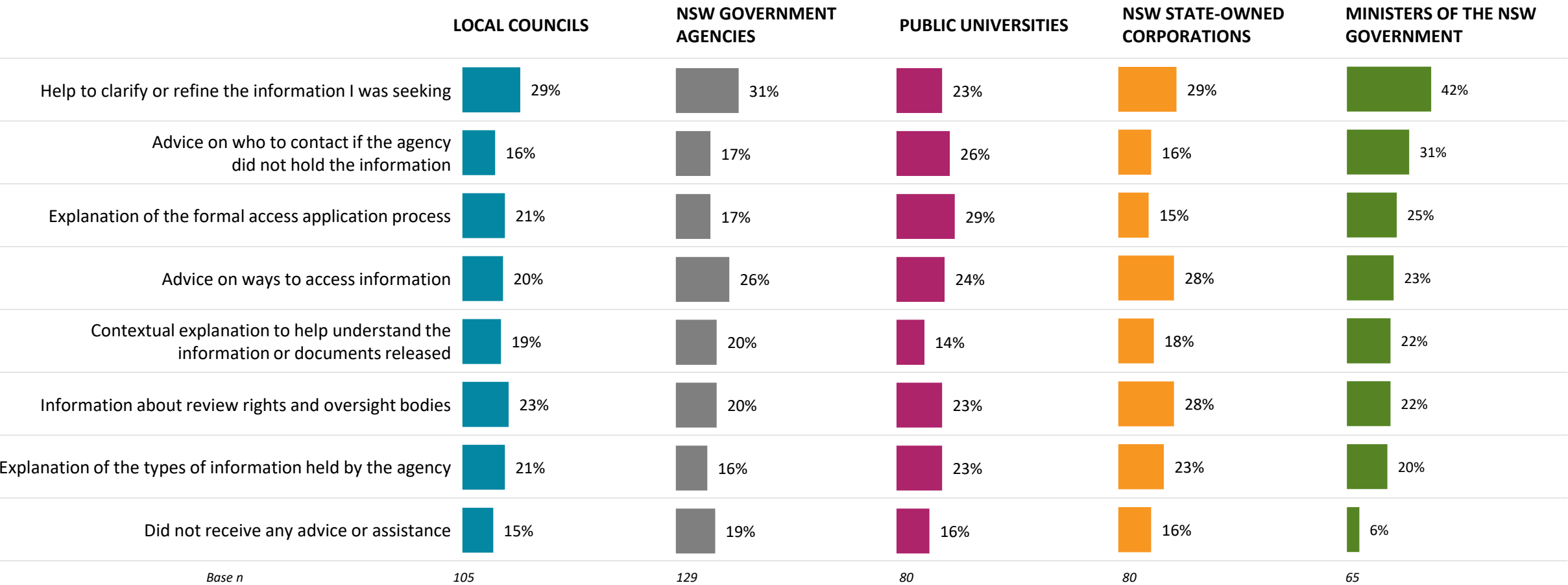
80

65

THE MAJORITY OF THOSE WHO PROCEEDED WITH AN INFORMATION ACCESS REQUEST RECEIVED ADVICE OR ASSISTANCE, WHICH PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON EXPLAINING AVAILABLE INFORMATION, CLARIFYING REQUIREMENTS, AND IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE CONTACTS TO ACCESS WHAT WAS NEEDED.

What types of advice and assistance, if any, did you receive from the following?

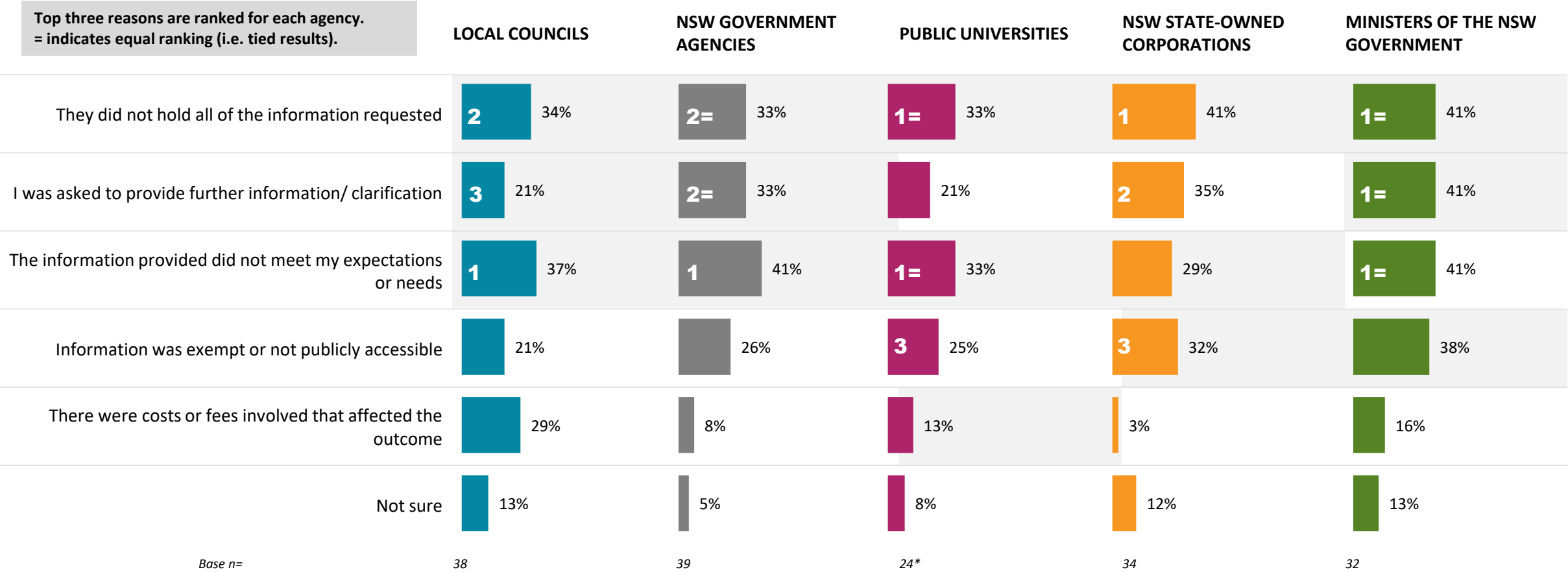
Among those who requested information



THOSE WHO DID NOT RECEIVE ALL THE INFORMATION REQUESTED CITED SEVERAL REASONS, INCLUDING AGENCIES NOT HOLDING THE DATA, THE INFORMATION PROVIDED NOT MEETING THEIR NEEDS, OR BEING ASKED TO PROVIDE FURTHER CLARIFICATION. COST WAS ALSO A BARRIER, PARTICULARLY AT LOCAL COUNCIL LEVEL.

Why did you not receive all the information you requested?

Among those who did not receive the requested information or received only part of it



ACROSS NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND DEPARTMENTS, PROCESSES ARE SEEN AS INEFFICIENT, COMPLEX, AND DIFFICULT TO NAVIGATE, WITH ISSUES INCLUDING UNCLEAR GUIDANCE, SLOW RESPONSE TIMES, AND POOR USER EXPERIENCE.

THERE IS A NEED FOR SIMPLER, MORE CONSISTENT PROCESSES, IMPROVED INFORMATION, AND GREATER TRANSPARENCY.

LOCAL COUNCILS	“ Better IT infrastructure, requests all streamlined to either online requests or via phone	By simplifying their websites, keeping information up to date and using clear, easy to understand language	Better customer service for starters the operators are not friendly at all and always rushing you off the phone. Better empathy and more clarification	Terrible. Long wait times, person didn't seem to care about me or my questions and gave me roundabout answers to any questions I had
NSW GOVERNMENT AGENCIES	Making request processes much simpler and more consistent across all agencies with a single easy-to-use online form	Make the online request forms much simpler and mobile-friendly.	It would help if information was presented more clearly and in plain language, as some content can be difficult to understand	Better customer service to speak to an actual human being
PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES	A reduction in the number of protocols to be observed will be of great help	Having a simple, consistent online request form on every university website specifically for personal information	Sometimes the websites are littered with policies and irrelevant details	Have faster reply times by having more staff
NSW STATE-OWNED CORPORATIONS	If red tape were reduced so we can more efficiently access our information requests	Better support could include more streamlined processes and clearer instructions when requesting information	Be honest and transparent in their dealings	By providing clearer instructions, simpler request processes, and faster responses
MINISTERS OF THE NSW GOVERNMENT	Simpler online forms, faster response times, clearer instructions or help guides	Better communication/updates during the process, more staff training, and centralised portals instead of contacting multiple places	Often it becomes too complicated for me to wade through all the paperwork that is not user friendly for many parts of the public.	Being more honest and upfront ”

OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS, PERSONAL INFORMATION IS THE MOST LIKELY TYPE OF NSW GOVERNMENT INFORMATION RESIDENTS ANTICIPATE REQUESTING, WITH HIGHER INTENT AMONG YOUNGER, MALE, AND METROPOLITAN RESIDENTS.

How likely are you to request the following types of NSW Government information over the next 2 years?											
NET LIKELY (very/somewhat)			AGE					GENDER		LOCATION	
			18-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65+ years	Male	Female	Metro	Regional
Personal information		33%	43%	43%	25%	29%	22%	37%	30%	36%	28%
Regulatory decisions		21%	29%	31%	16%	14%	12%	24%	18%	25%	14%
Reports and data		20%	31%	29%	17%	10%	7%	24%	16%	24%	12%
Funding or grant decisions		20%	28%	29%	15%	10%	10%	24%	16%	23%	14%
Environmental assessments and impact statements		20%	30%	24%	18%	8%	12%	23%	16%	23%	13%
Consultation inputs and submissions		19%	29%	26%	13%	8%	11%	22%	15%	22%	13%
Spending and budgeting documents		19%	28%	28%	15%	10%	7%	21%	16%	22%	13%
Administrative documents		18%	27%	29%	16%	7%	8%	19%	17%	22%	11%
Policy documents and decision-making records		17%	26%	26%	16%	7%	5%	20%	14%	20%	11%
Contracts and procurement documents		17%	25%	28%	13%	8%	5%	19%	14%	20%	10%
Base n= 1003			286	180	159	153	225	497	506	654	349

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS



PEOPLE VALUE ACCESS BUT DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND HOW IT WORKS

Access to NSW Government-held information is seen as highly important, but understanding of how the system works is limited

- 94% say access to government information is important
- Less than half have a good or some understanding of access rights
- 53% are unaware of, or have limited understanding of, the Information Commissioner's role

Focus on **practical awareness**, including clear communication of what people can access, how to do it, and what to expect.



THOSE WHO ENGAGE CAN USUALLY FIND WHAT THEY NEED

34% considered accessing NSW Government-held information in the past 2 years, most commonly personal information, reports, data, and administrative documents.

- Most proceeded and obtained what they were seeking.
- Many were able to find information without making a request (e.g. online) and generally found this process easy – although a notable proportion, 1 in 5 reported difficulty when accessing information from Ministers of the NSW Government.

Continue to support **proactive disclosure and digital access**, while improving access to more complex or less transparent areas.



SOME NEVER START DUE TO PERCEIVED COMPLEXITY

A small but notable proportion considered accessing information but did not proceed. Key reasons include:

- Process perceived as too complex or time-consuming
- Uncertainty about how or where to start
- Lack of clarity on what information is available
- Perceived effort not worth it

Reduce friction by increasing practical awareness, simplifying entry points, improving guidance, and **making the process feel easy and accessible.**



OTHERS ENCOUNTER CHALLENGES ALONG THE WAY

A small but notable proportion of requesters received only part (or none) of the information requested. Key reasons include:

- Agencies not holding the requested information
- Information provided not meeting needs
- Requests requiring further clarification
- Information being exempt or restricted
- Costs or fees (particularly at the local council level)

Improve **clarity, expectation-setting, and support throughout the process**, including clearer communication on availability, scope, and costs.

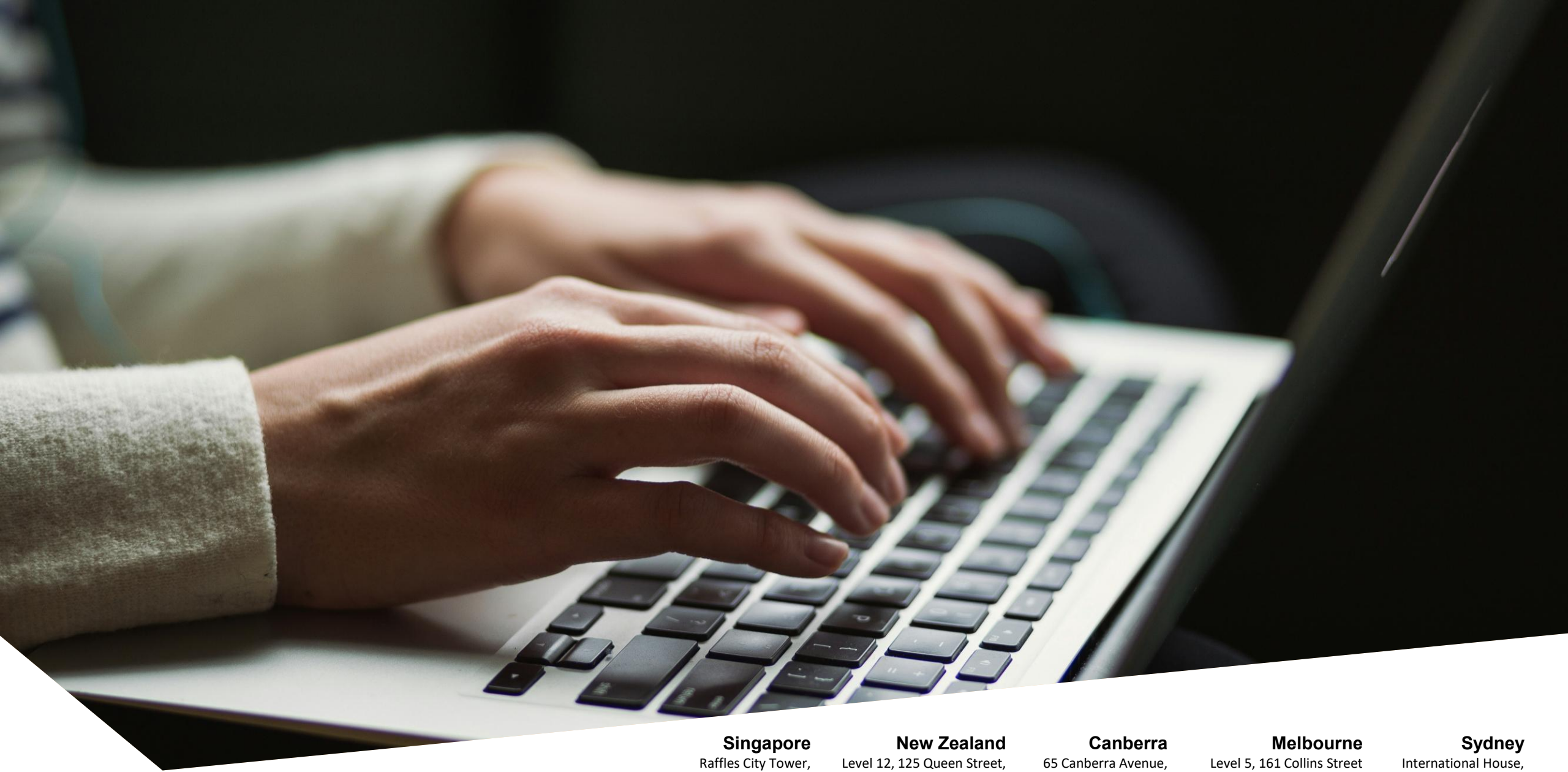


OVERALL EXPERIENCES ARE POSITIVE, BUT NOT YET SEAMLESS

The majority of those who requested information were satisfied. However, opportunities remain to:

- Simplify and streamline processes
- Reduce complexity and effort
- Provide clearer guidance and support
- Improve consistency across agencies
- Increase transparency and accessibility

Focus on **experience improvement**, delivering a consistent, user-friendly, and transparent service across all agencies.



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Part of **Accenture** Song

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