

IPC Community Attitudes Study

Information Access

April 2024



information
and privacy
commission
new south wales





RESEARCH DESIGN

Woolcott Research was commissioned by the IPC to investigate awareness of privacy, information access and data sharing rights amongst the general public of NSW.

A phone and online survey amongst n=809 NSW residents aged 18+ years was conducted in February 2024.

Quotas were set by location (Sydney/ Regional NSW), gender and age; data was post-weighted by location, gender and age to reflect the latest ABS population estimates.

Where possible, this report compares results from the 2014 and 2016 omnibus studies, as well as the 2018, 2020 and 2022 mixed mode survey.

Significant differences in results at the 95% confidence level are shown as follows:

- Results from 2024 that are significantly higher or lower than the total are shown in **GREEN** or **RED** respectively
- Differences between reporting periods and their most recent comparative year (e.g. comparing 2024 data to 2022 data) are denoted by asterisks (*)





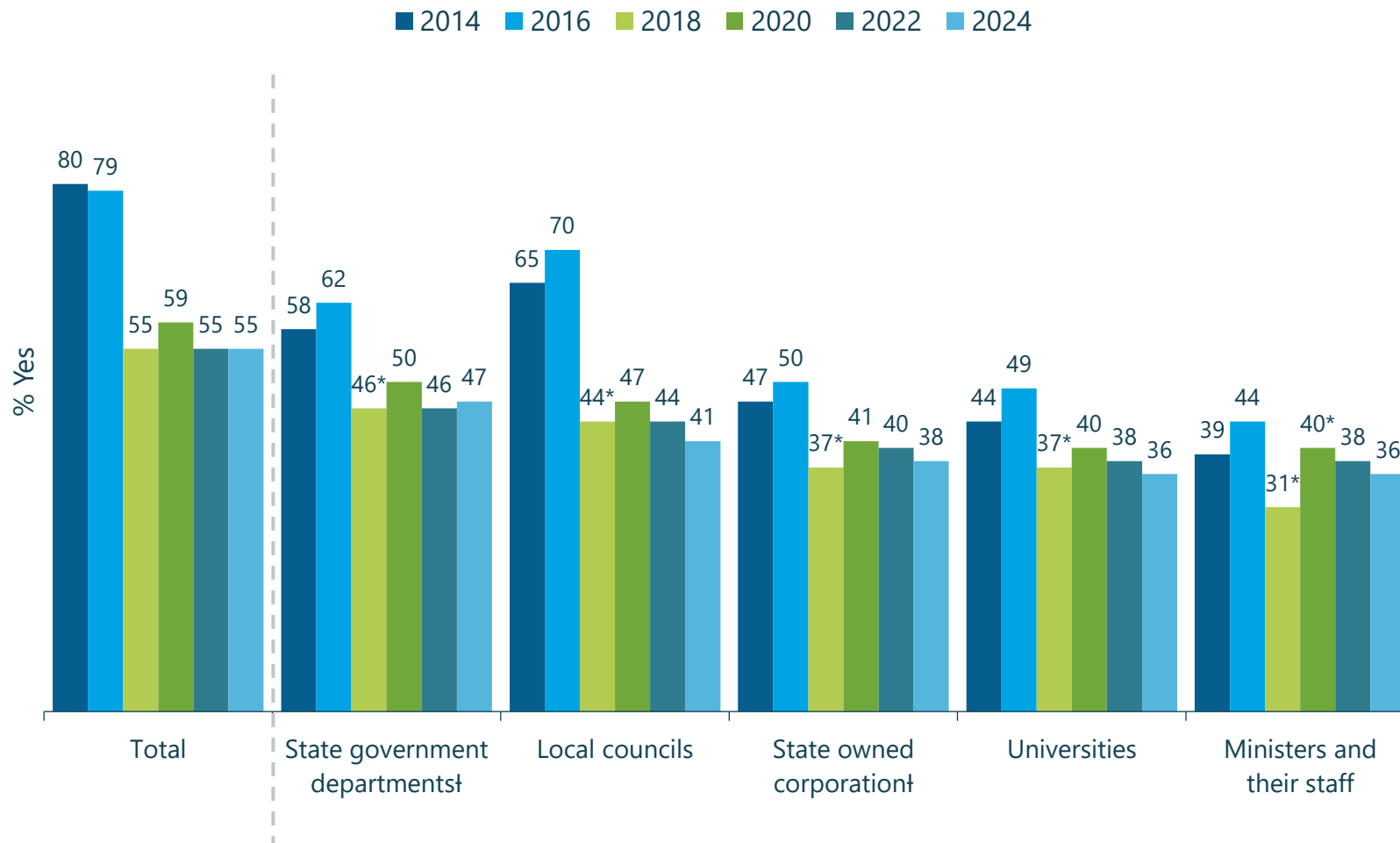
INFORMATION ACCESS





AWARENESS OF RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION UNDER NSW ACCESS TO INFORMATION LAW

- Over half of all respondents were aware of their right to access information from at least one of the listed agencies under the NSW access to information law.
- Awareness across the different agencies remained consistent with 2022 results.



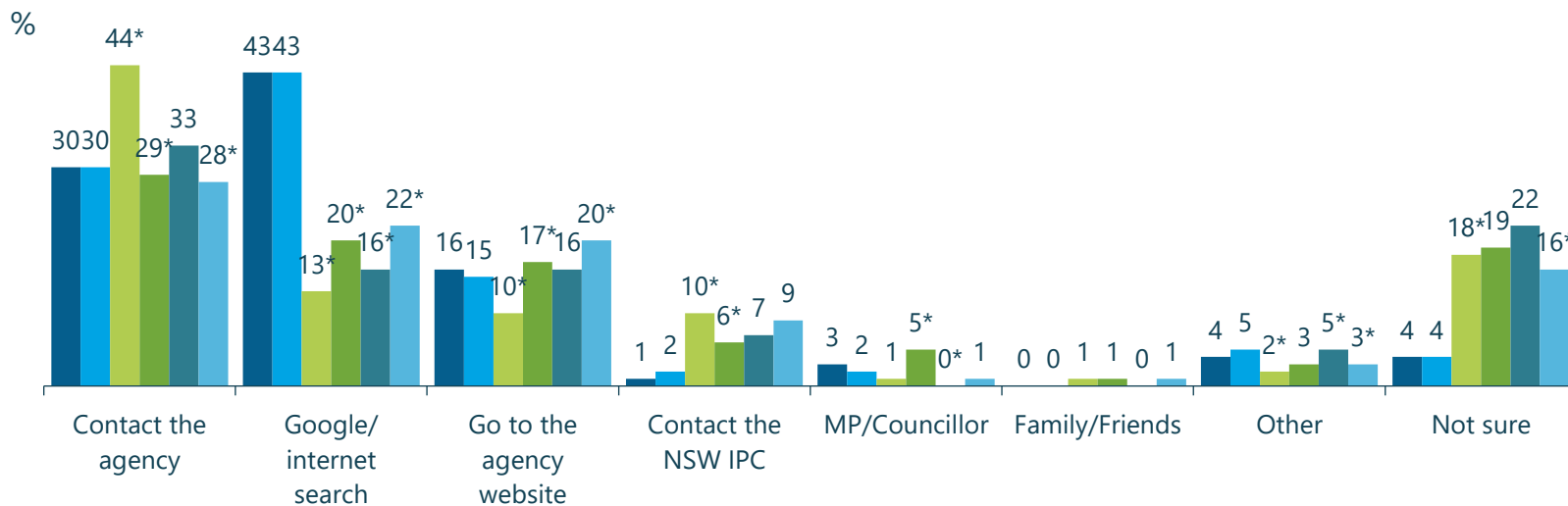
Q15. Did you know, under NSW access to information law, you have a right to access information held by the following agencies?†
Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2020 n=802, 2022 n=800, 2024 n=809)
† Slight wording change in 2020



FIRST OPTION TO ACCESS PERSONAL INFORMATION HELD BY AGENCIES

- The most common first option for accessing information remained via contacting the agency (despite a decrease from 2022).
- Other popular methods were searching the internet or going to the agency website.

■ 2014 ■ 2016 ■ 2018 ■ 2020 ■ 2022 ■ 2024

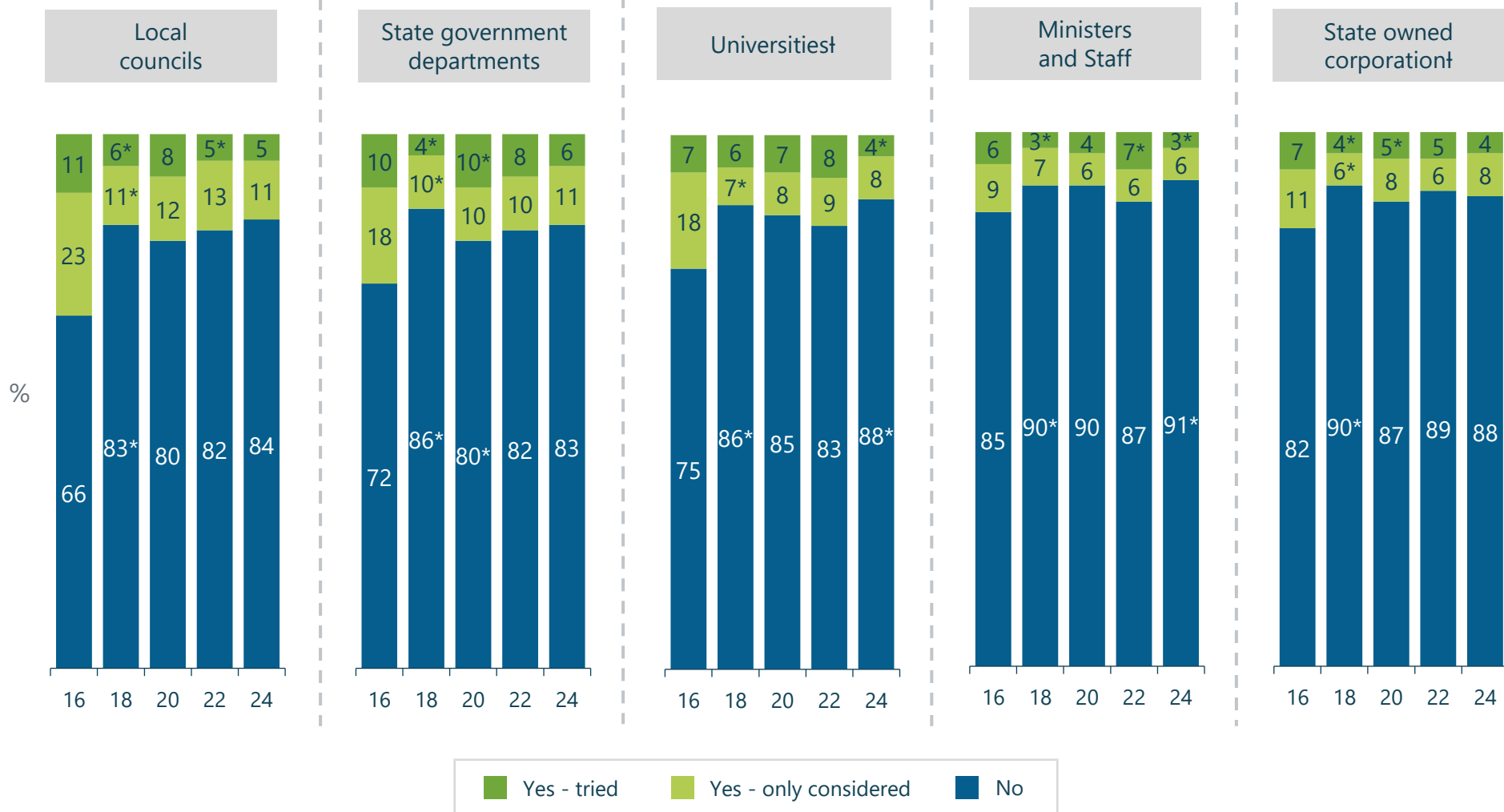


Q16. If you wanted to access information held by agencies, what would you do to get it? (SR - Unprompted)
Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2020 n=802, 2022 n=800, 2024 n=809)



CONSIDERATION AND ATTEMPTS TO ACCESS INFORMATION

- The majority (over 80%) of respondents had not attempted to access information from any of the agencies and organisations listed.



Q17. Have you ever considered accessing information held by...?

IF YES: And have you tried to access information held by... in the last year?

Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2020 n=802, 2022 n=800, 2024 n=809)

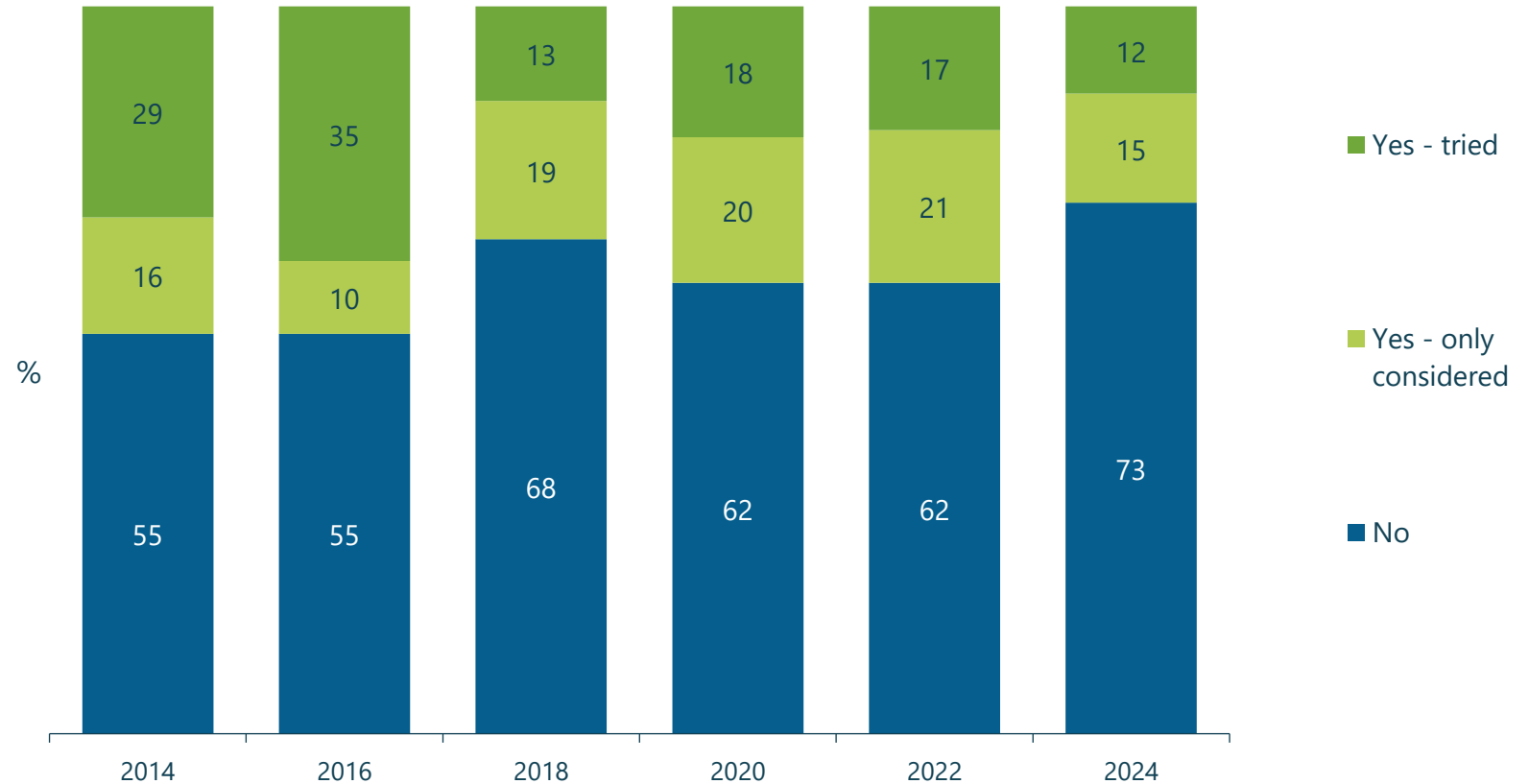
† Slight wording change in 2020

Please note: Percentages have been amended so they add to 100%



TOTAL CONSIDERATION AND ATTEMPTS TO ACCESS INFORMATION

- Roughly three quarters of respondents in 2024 did not consider or try to access information, which is a noticeable increase from 2022.

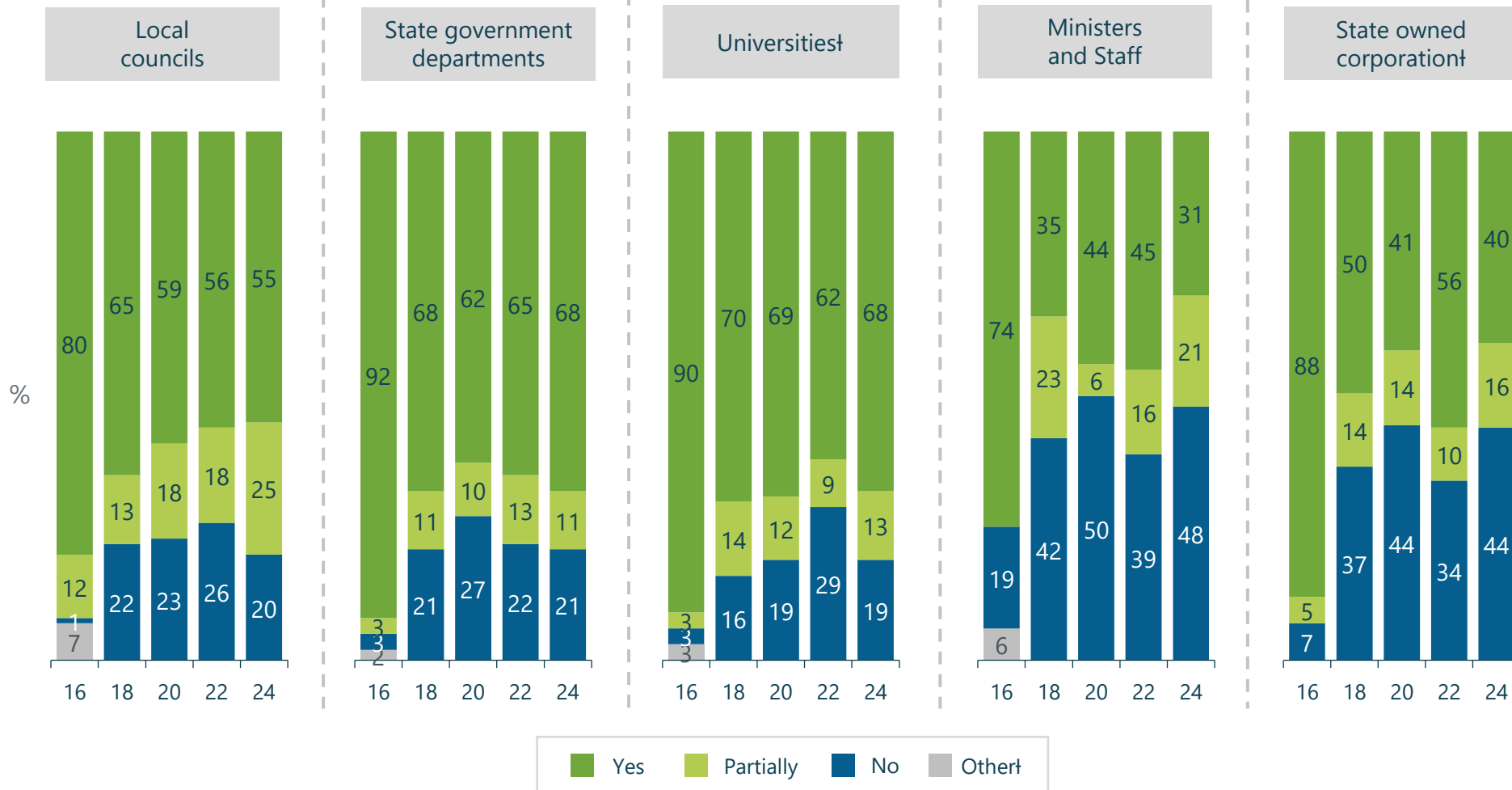


Q17. Have you ever considered accessing information held by...?
IF YES: And have you tried to access information held by... in the last year?
Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2020 n=802, 2022 n=800, 2024 n=809)
Please note: Percentages have been amended so they add to 100%



SUCCESS IN ATTEMPTING TO ACCESS INFORMATION

- In 2024, around 8 in 10 respondents were partially or fully successful in attempting to access information from local councils, state government departments and universities.
- Respondents had relatively less success when attempting to access information from ministers & staff and state-owned corporations.



Q18. Were you successful in accessing information from...?

Base: Respondents who tried to access information in the last year

Local councils: (2016 n=77, 2018 n=46, 2020 n=62, 2022 n=42, 2024 n=43), State government departments: (2016 n=62, 2018 n=34, 2020 n=77, 2022 n=68, 2024 n=48), Universities: (2016 n= 59, 2018 n=50, 2020 n=59, 2022 n=67, 2024 n=41), Ministers and their staff: (2016 n=31, 2018 n=26, 2020 n=32, 2022 n=53, 2024 n=26), State owned businesses (2016 n=38, 2018 n=28) / State owned corporations (2020 n=41, 2022 n=38, 2024 n=33)

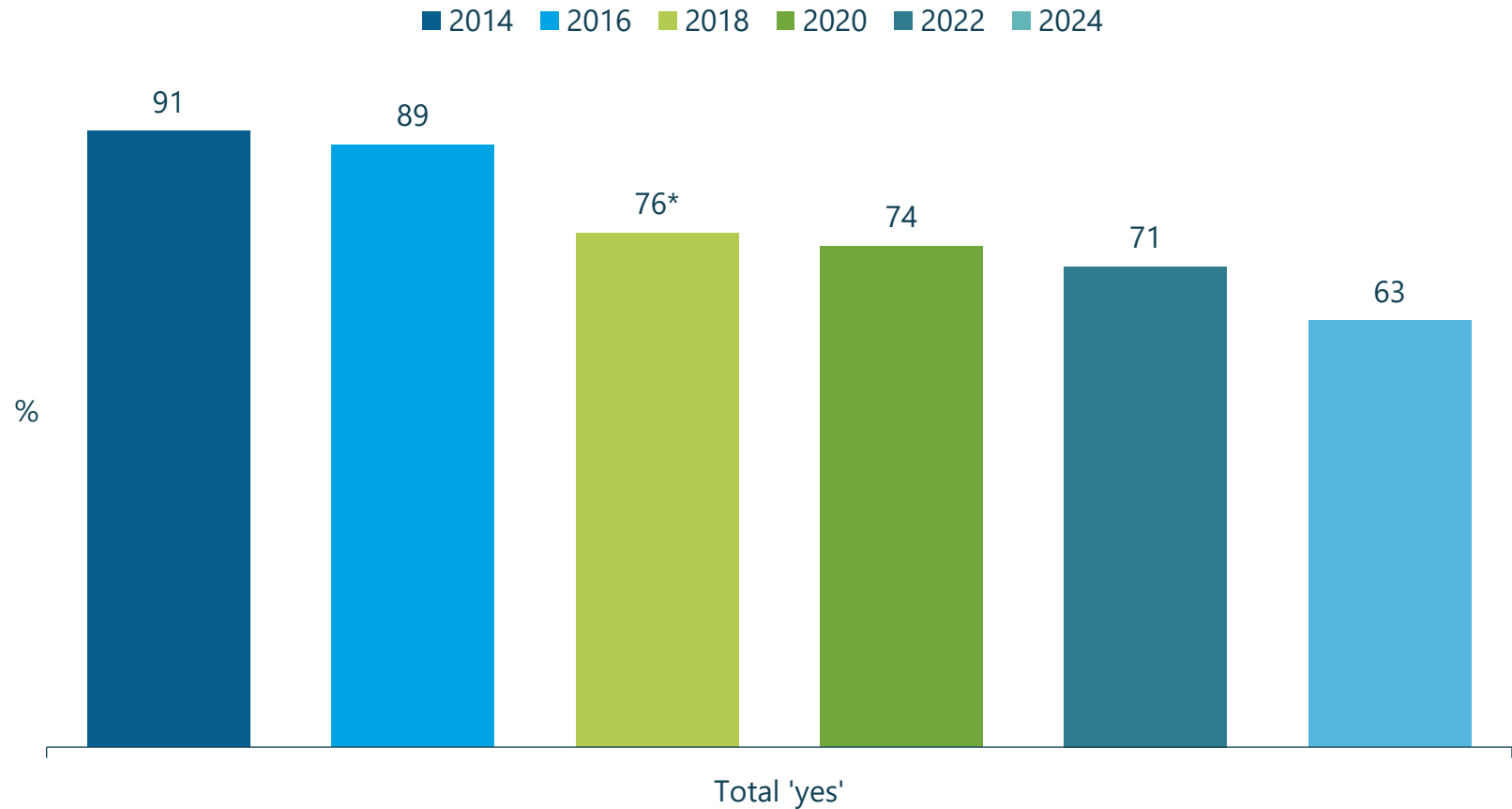
† Only a code in 2016

Please note: Significance testing was not performed on this data due to significant differences in base sizes

Please note: Percentages have been amended so they add to 100%



TOTAL SUCCESS IN ATTEMPTING TO ACCESS INFORMATION



- Of those who tried to access information from the different agencies and organisations in the last year, around 6 in 10 respondents were successful.
- This is a noticeable decrease from prior reporting periods.

Q18. Were you successful in accessing information from...?
Base: Respondents who tried to access information in the last year (2014 n=51, 2016 n=119, 2018 n=83, 2020 n=144, 2022 n=133, 2024 n=111)



HOW AGENCIES ASSISTED INFORMATION REQUESTS

- Respondents who had tried to access information were commonly assisted by being told of the different ways to access information and having information clarified.
- There was a significant increase in respondents told of the IPC and NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal this reporting period.

%	2020 (n=144)	2022 (n=133)	2024 (n=111)
The agency told me the different ways I could access information	36	39	43
The agency helped me to clarify the information I was seeking	32	39	39
If they did not hold the information the agency told me who or what other agency to contact, including how to transfer my application	25	19	34*
The agency followed up in writing	28	23	28
The agency explained the process to obtain information by formal access application	28	15*	23
The agency explained what makes the application valid	17	17	15
The agency told me about the Information and Privacy Commission and the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal and my rights of review	8	3	11*
None of the above	19	19	15

Q19. Which of the following did the agencies do to assist with your request to access information?
Base: Respondents who tried to access information in the last year (2020 n=144, 2022 n=133, 2024 n=111)



HOW AGENCIES DID NOT ASSIST INFORMATION REQUESTS

- Around one third of respondents who had tried to access information felt that the agency didn't discuss with them the type of information they were seeking.
- A significantly lower proportion of respondents in 2024 felt that the agency didn't explain the process compared to 2022.

%	2020 (n=144)	2022 (n=133)	2024 (n=111)
The agency didn't discuss with me the type of information I was seeking	30	21	29
The agency didn't explain the process to obtain information	33	30	17*
The agency failed to answer my questions or did not respond by the required time	24	26	17
The agency didn't follow up my outstanding questions	17	8*	16
None of the above	35	37	45

Q20. Which of the following did the agencies do that did not assist with your request to access information?
Base: Respondents who tried to access information in the last year (2020 n=144, 2022 n=133, 2024 n=111)



HOW AGENCIES COULD HAVE IMPROVED ASSISTANCE

- Around half of respondents indicated that the agency could have improved their assistance by explaining the processes available.
- Other common suggestions were to provide advice about how to access information and to tell people what agency to go to obtain the information.

%	2020 (n=144)	2022 (n=133)	2024 (n=111)
Explained the processes available to me to obtain information	41	37	47
Provided advice about how to access or seek access to information	40	23*	41*
Told me what agency to go to obtain the information or helped me transfer my application	27	17*	37*
Talked to me about my request to access information	25	23	36*
Referred me to the agency's website to obtain information	29	25	27
Provided me with an application form to seek access to information	18	9*	25*
Told me how to get information about my information access rights	22	11*	23*
None of the above	21	24	20



SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Of those who offered suggestions, respondents most commonly recommended an increased awareness of their ability to access information.

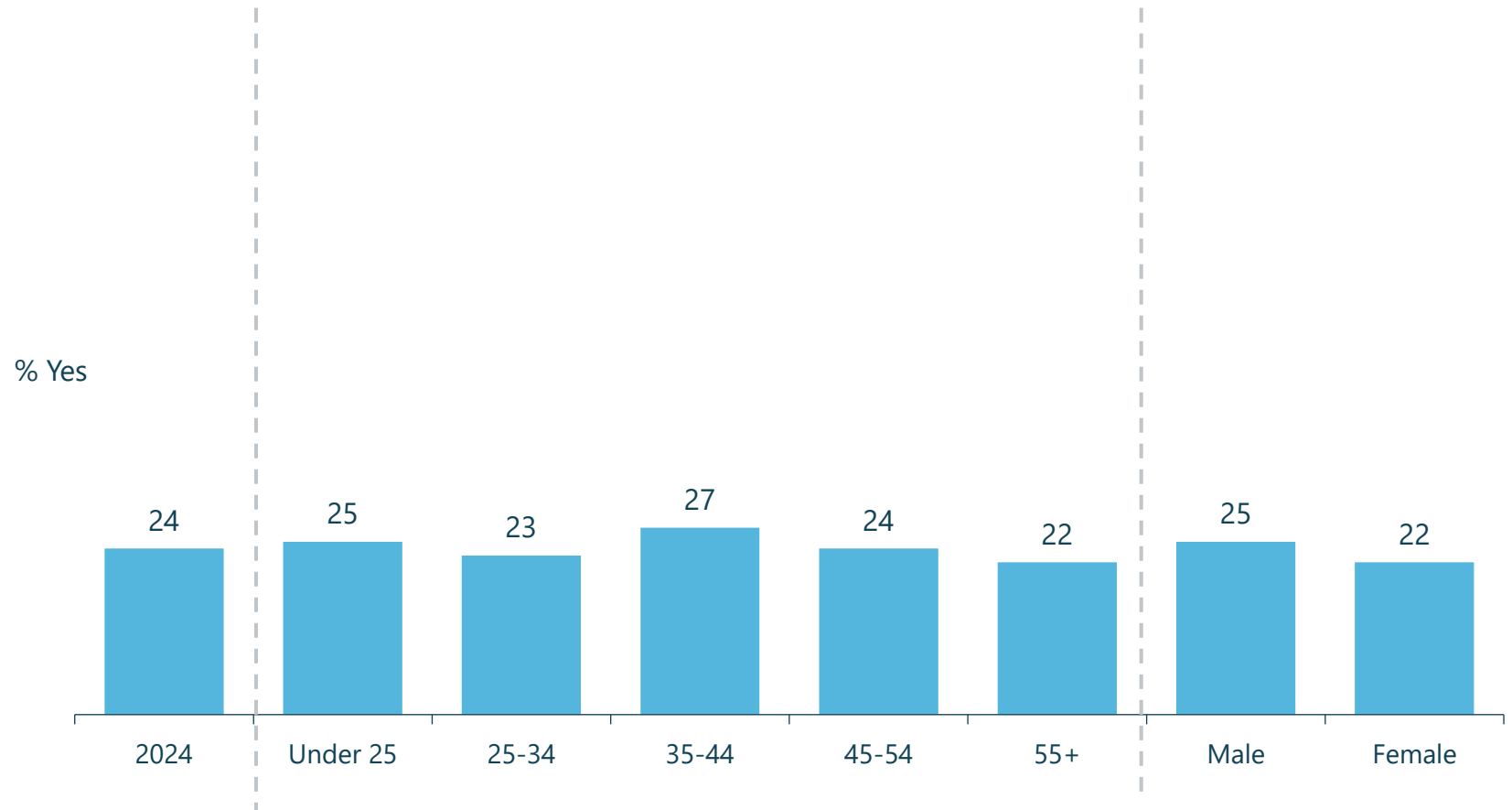
%	2020 (n=802)	2022 (n=800)	2024 (n=809)
Increase awareness of ability to access information (e.g. on television, media)	14	7*	13*
Improve websites/information online	3	2	7*
Make it easier/faster to access information (e.g. put it on agency website)	4	6	5
Be more transparent and/or open/about what happens to my information	4	6	5
Connect through internet/social media/texts/emails/letters NFI	2	1	4*
Provide more/better instructions on how to access information NFI	5	3*	3
Create specific platforms to access information (e.g. app, new website, hotline)	2	3	3
Provide more/better information NFI	3	1*	3*
Improve standard of staff involved (e.g. knowledgeable, customer service)	4	3	1*
Provide more/better instructions on who to contact about accessing	2	2	<1*
Other	13	6*	17*
Don't know	6	4	6
No response	40	51*	45*
No improvements needed/All good	7	4*	2*

Q22. Do you have any suggestions about how NSW agencies could better provide citizens with advice and assistance to obtain information?
Base: All respondents (2020 n=802, 2022 n=800, 2024 n=809)



AWARENESS OF NSW INFORMATION COMMISSIONER FOR COMPLAINTS

- In 2024, around one quarter of respondents were aware of the NSW Information Commissioner.
- There were no significant differences in awareness by age or gender.



Q23. Are you aware that there is a NSW Information Commissioner to uphold the right to access information from NSW government agencies? †

Base: All respondents (2024 n=809)

† New question in 2024



DEMOGRAPHICS



GENDER AND AGE



%	2014 (n=340)	2016 (n=340)	2018 (n=803)	2020 (n=802)	2022 (n=800)	2024 (n=809)
Gender						
Male	44	49	48	50	50	50
Female	56	51	52	50	50	50
Gender neutral†	Not an option in 2014, 2016 or 2018			-	-	<1
Prefer not to indicate‡	Not an option in 2014, 2016 or 2018			-	-	<1
Age						
18-24	12	15	15	18	18	10
25-34	12	20	21	11	12	19
35-44	8	16	17	13	18	20
45-54	17	18	16	19	12	14
55-64	12	12	12	11	7	15
65-74	38	20	10	14	13	15
75+			8	14	20	8

D1. Which of the following age brackets do you belong to?

D2. Do you identify as being...?

Base: All respondents (2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2020 n=802, 2022 n=800, 2024 n=809)

†Options added in 2020

Please note: Percentages have been amended so they add to 100%

WORK STATUS



%	2014 (n=340)	2016 (n=340)	2018 (n=803)	2020 (n=802)	2022 (n=800)	2024 (n=809)
Working status						
Working full time	Not asked in 2014	89	39	34	34	47
Working part time			17	14	12	18
Retired		4	23	29	32	19
Student		4	9	12	11	6
Unemployed		3	5	6	5	3
Engaged in home duties		1	7	4	5	5
Refused		-	1	1	1	1

D3. Which of these categories best describes you?
 Base: All respondents (2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2020 n=802, 2022 n=800, 2024 n=809)
 Please note: Percentages have been amended so they add to 100%

MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN



%	2014 (n=340)	2016 (n=340)	2018 (n=803)	2020 (n=802)	2022 (n=800)	2024 (n=809)
Main Language Spoken						
English	Not asked in 2014 or 2016		90	86	88	85
Cantonese/Mandarin			1	6	4	4
Korean			-	1	<1	<1
Hindi			1	1	1	2
Arabic (incl. Lebanese)			1	1	<1	1
Indonesian			<1	1	<1	<1
Other			6	5	6	8



SUMMARY



Awareness of Right to Access Information



- Similar to previous reporting periods, almost half of the respondents were aware of their right to access information from at least one of the listed agencies under the NSW access to information law.

Approach to Accessing Information



- The most common option for accessing information was via contacting the agency, followed by searching the internet and going to the agency website.

Attempts to Access Information



- Significantly fewer this year (around three quarters of respondents in 2024) did not consider or try to access information.
- Respondents were more likely to consider or attempt to access information from local councils and state government departments than universities, ministers and staff, and state-owned corporations.

Agency Responses to Requests



- The assistance offered agencies was most often by telling respondents of the different ways they can access information, and then by clarifying the information being sought or advising of other agencies to contact.
- This year there was a significant increase in respondents being told of the IPC and NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.
- There was a notable increase in respondents suggesting the agency didn't discuss with them the type of information they were seeking.

Suggestions to Improve Assistance



- The most common suggestions offered to improve assistance amongst those who had tried to access information was by explaining the processes available to obtain information, providing advice about how to access information and telling people what agency to go to obtain the information.

Further Suggestions for NSW Agencies



- Further suggestions offered, was to increase people's awareness of their ability to access information (through television, social media etc).

Awareness of NSW Privacy Commissioner



- Close to a quarter of respondents were aware of the NSW Information Commissioner.



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