



information
and privacy
commission
new south wales

Cross Jurisdictional Information Access Study

NSW

JULY 2021



RESEARCH DESIGN

Five jurisdictions from across Australia including New South Wales (NSW), commissioned Woolcott Research and Engagement to investigate awareness and experience of information access rights amongst the general public.

A mixed mode survey amongst n=350 NSW residents aged 18+ years was conducted between 29th June to 8th July 2021 utilising an online panel and Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

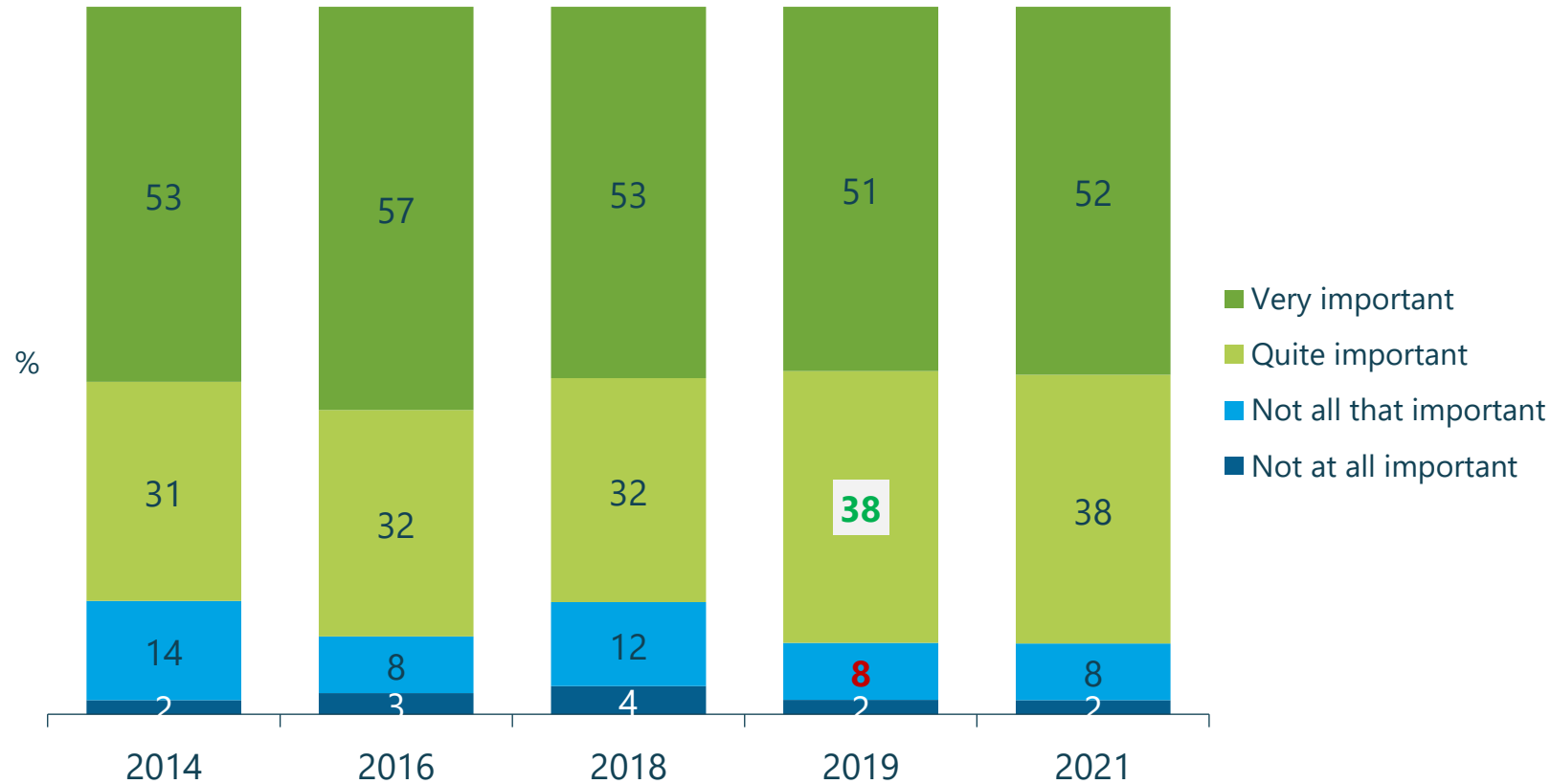
Quotas were set by location (Sydney/Regional NSW), gender and age, and data was post-weighted to reflect the latest ABS population estimates.

Significant differences between years at the 95% confidence level are shown in **GREEN** (significant increase) or **RED** (significant decrease).

Due to rounding, percentages may not always add to 100.



IMPORTANCE OF HAVING THE RIGHT TO ACCESS GOVERNMENT INFORMATION



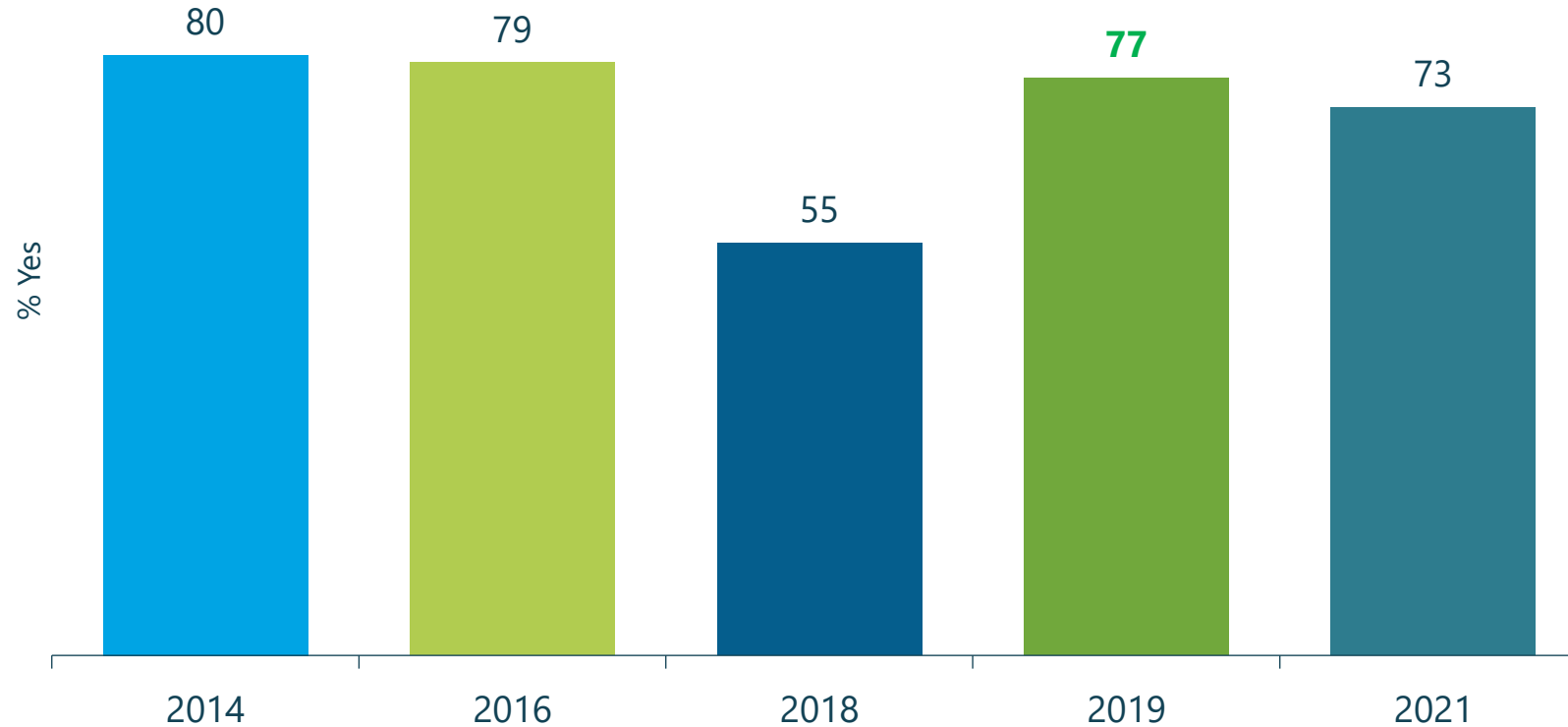
- As with previous years, over half felt that their right to access government information was very important, and almost two fifths felt it was quite important

Q3. How important is it to you that you have a right to access government information? *This applies to all publicly available information, not just your own personal data.*

Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2019 n=350, 2021 n=350)



TOTAL AWARENESS OF RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION



- Over seven in ten were aware of their right to access information held by at least one of the entities listed, which was similar to 2019

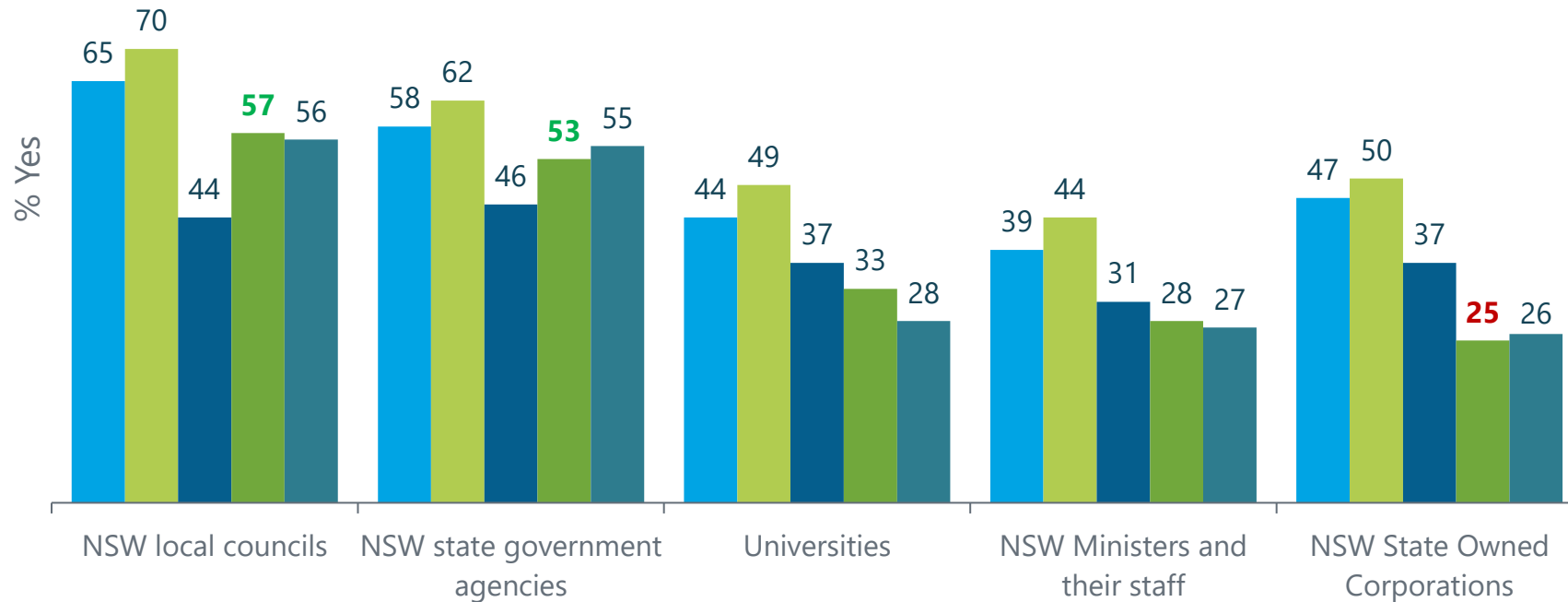
Q4. Did you know, under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) you have a right to access information held by the following agencies?

Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2019 n=350, 2021 n=350)



AWARENESS OF RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION

■ 2014 ■ 2016 ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2021



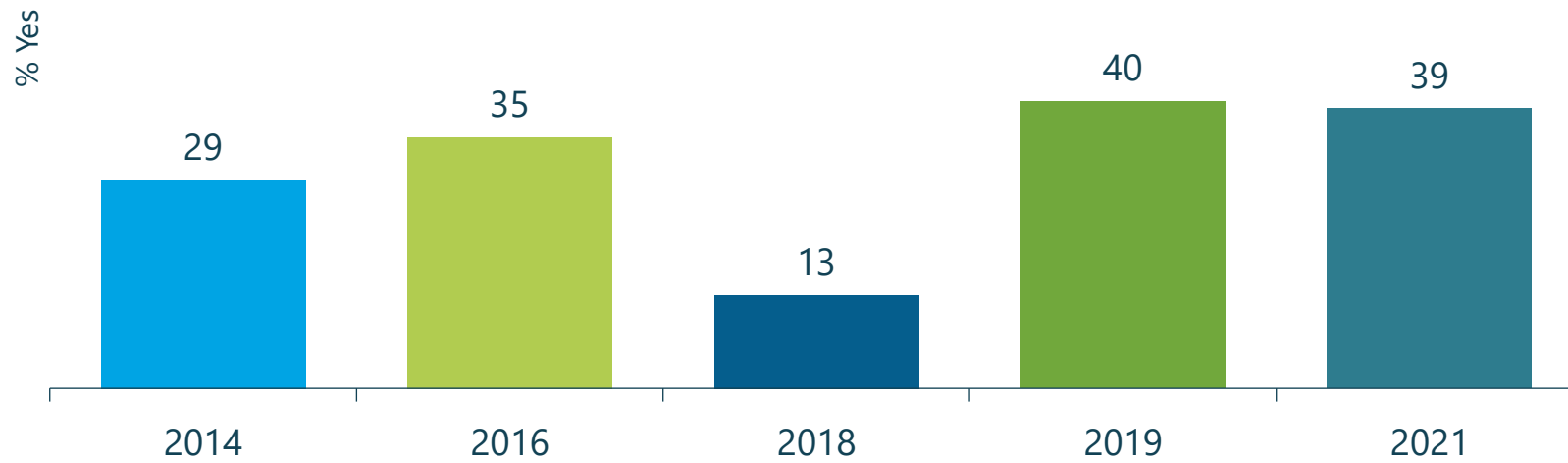
- Awareness of the right to access information from specific agencies was similar to 2019, with most being aware of their right to access information from NSW local and state governments agencies

Q4. Did you know, under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) you have a right to access information held by the following agencies?

Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2019 n=350, 2021 n=350)



TOTAL ATTEMPTS TO ACCESS INFORMATION

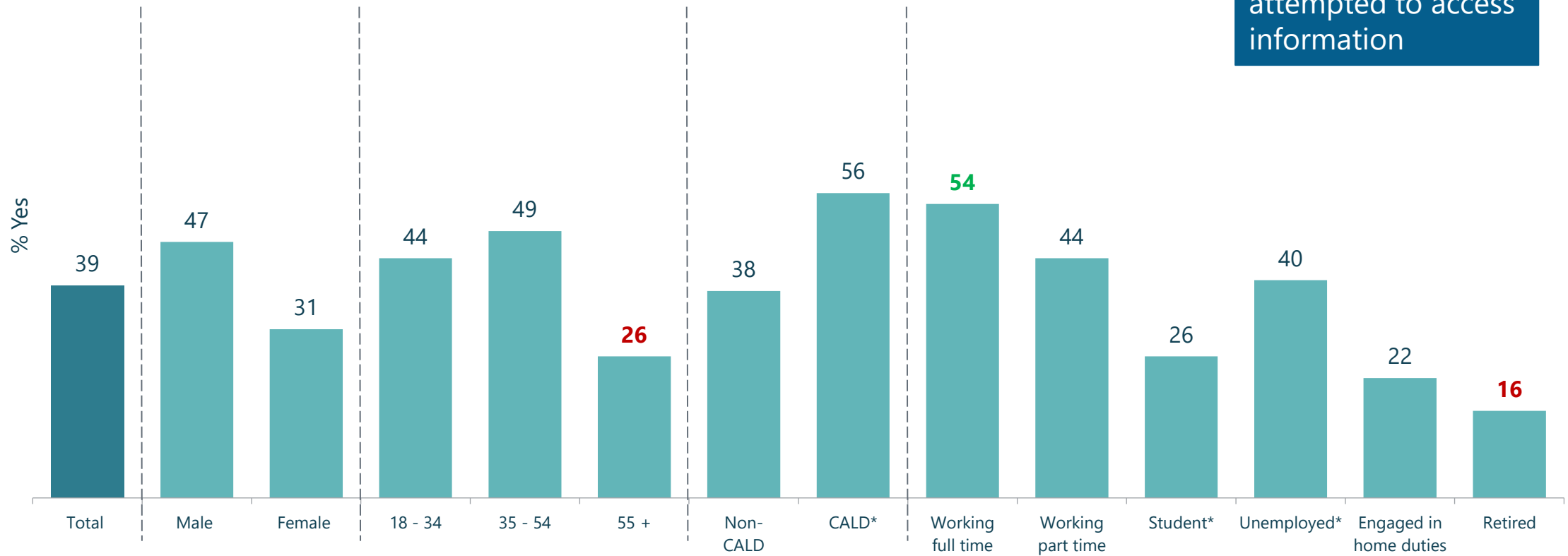


- Two in five had attempted to access information from at least one of the entities listed, which was similar to 2019

[2018] Q13. Have you ever considered accessing information held by...? **IF YES:** And have you tried to access information held by... in the last year?
[2014,2016,2019] Q5. In the last 3 years have you tried to access information held by: MR
Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2019 n=350, 2021 n=350)

TOTAL ATTEMPTS TO ACCESS INFORMATION BY DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN 2021

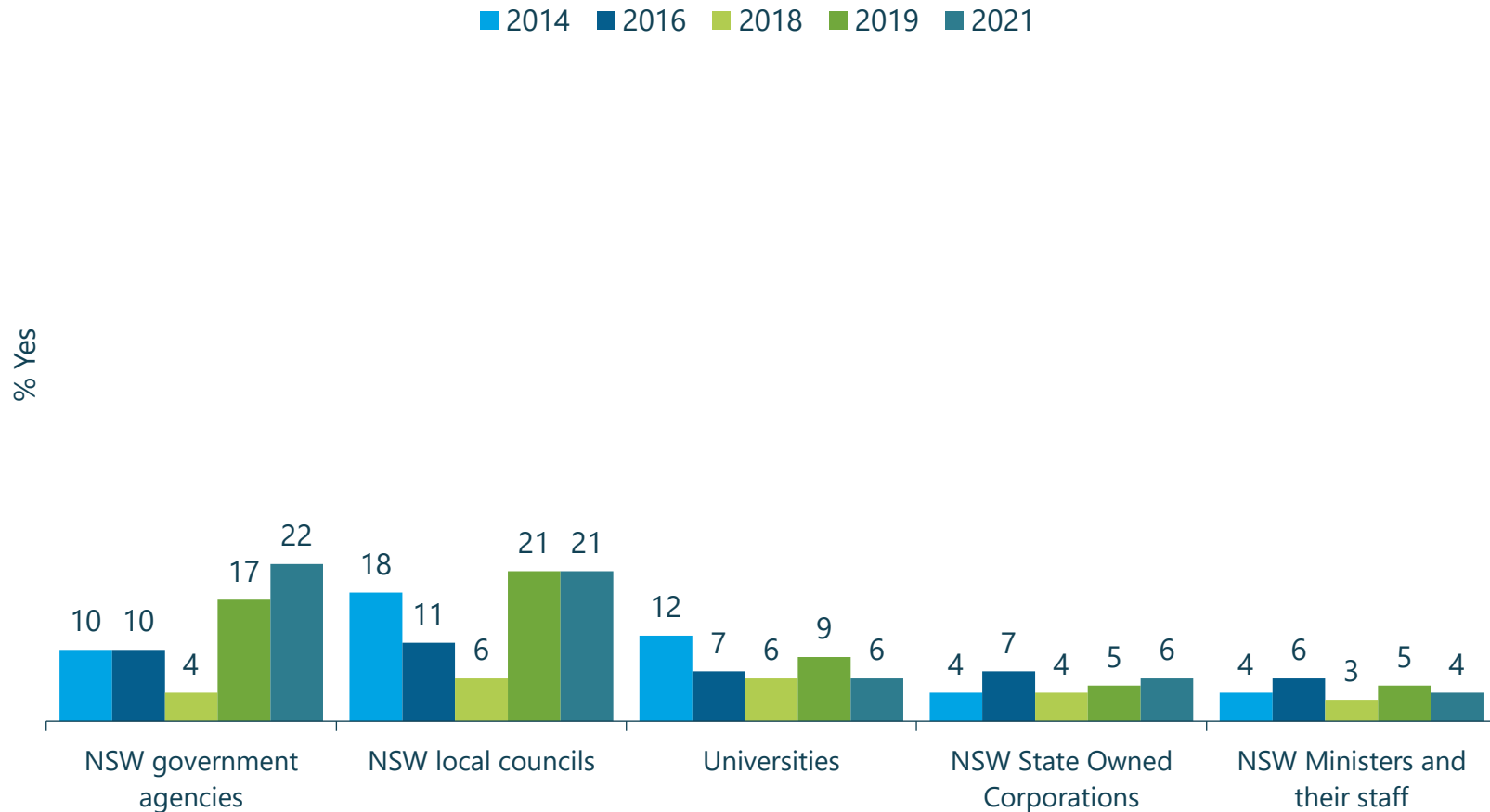
Those aged 55+ and retired were less likely to have attempted to access information



Q5. In the last 3 years have you tried to access information held by: MR
 Base: All respondents 2021 (n=350), Male (n=174), Female (n=175), 18-34 (n=98), 35-54 (n=121), 55+ (n=131), Non-CALD (n=332), CALD (n=18*), Working FT (n=144), Working PT (n=63), Student (n=23*), Unemployed (n=10*), Engaged in home duties (n=27), Retired (n=80)
 *Caution: Small base size



ATTEMPTS TO ACCESS INFORMATION BY AGENCY

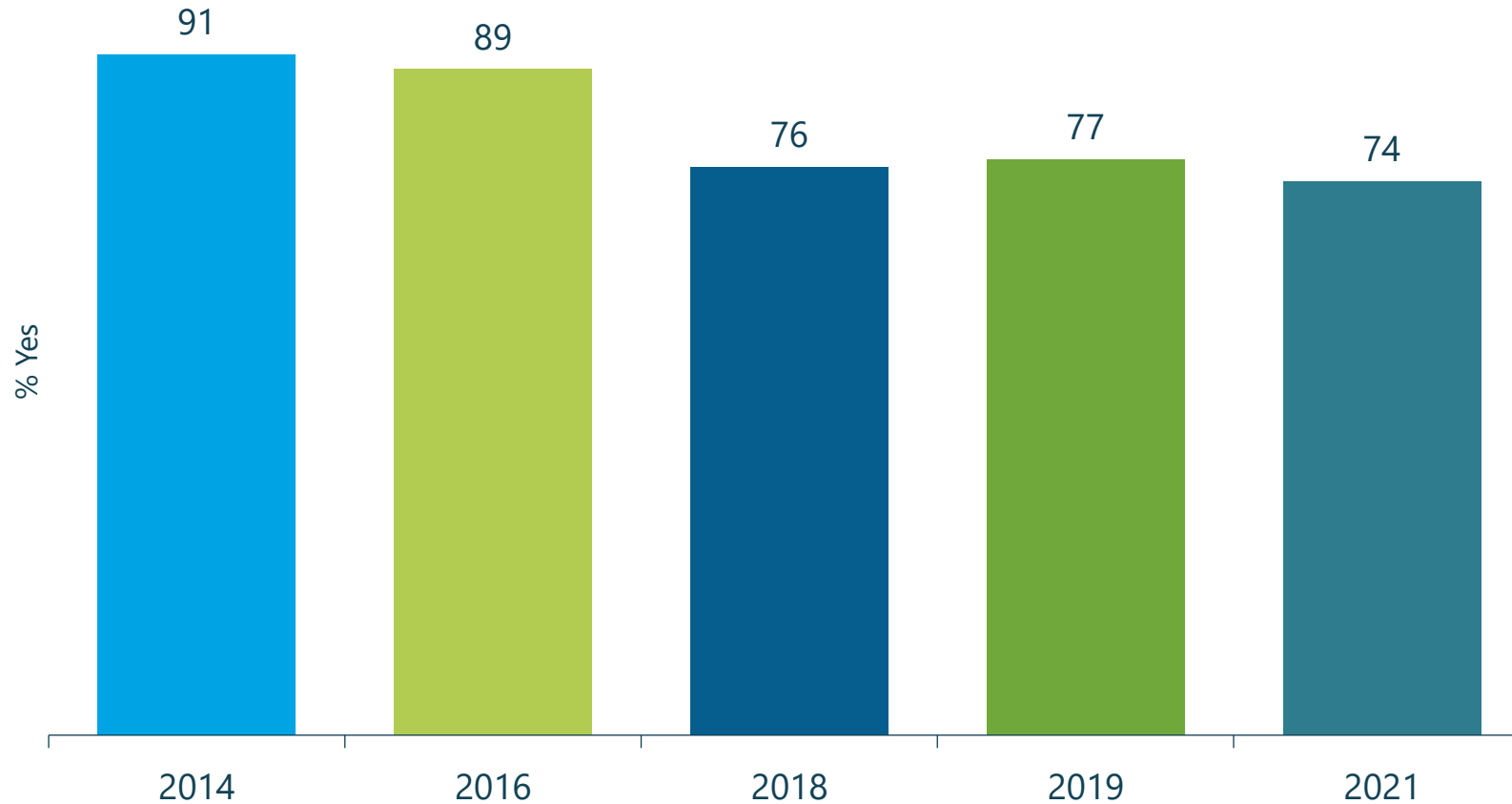


- As with previous years, respondents most commonly attempted to access information from NSW government agencies and local councils

[2018] Q13. Have you ever considered accessing information held by...? **IF YES:** And have you tried to access information held by... in the last year? *N.B. It must be noted that the question timeframe was different in 2018 compared to the other years (in 2018 it was 'in the last year' compared to 'in the last three years' for the other surveys)*

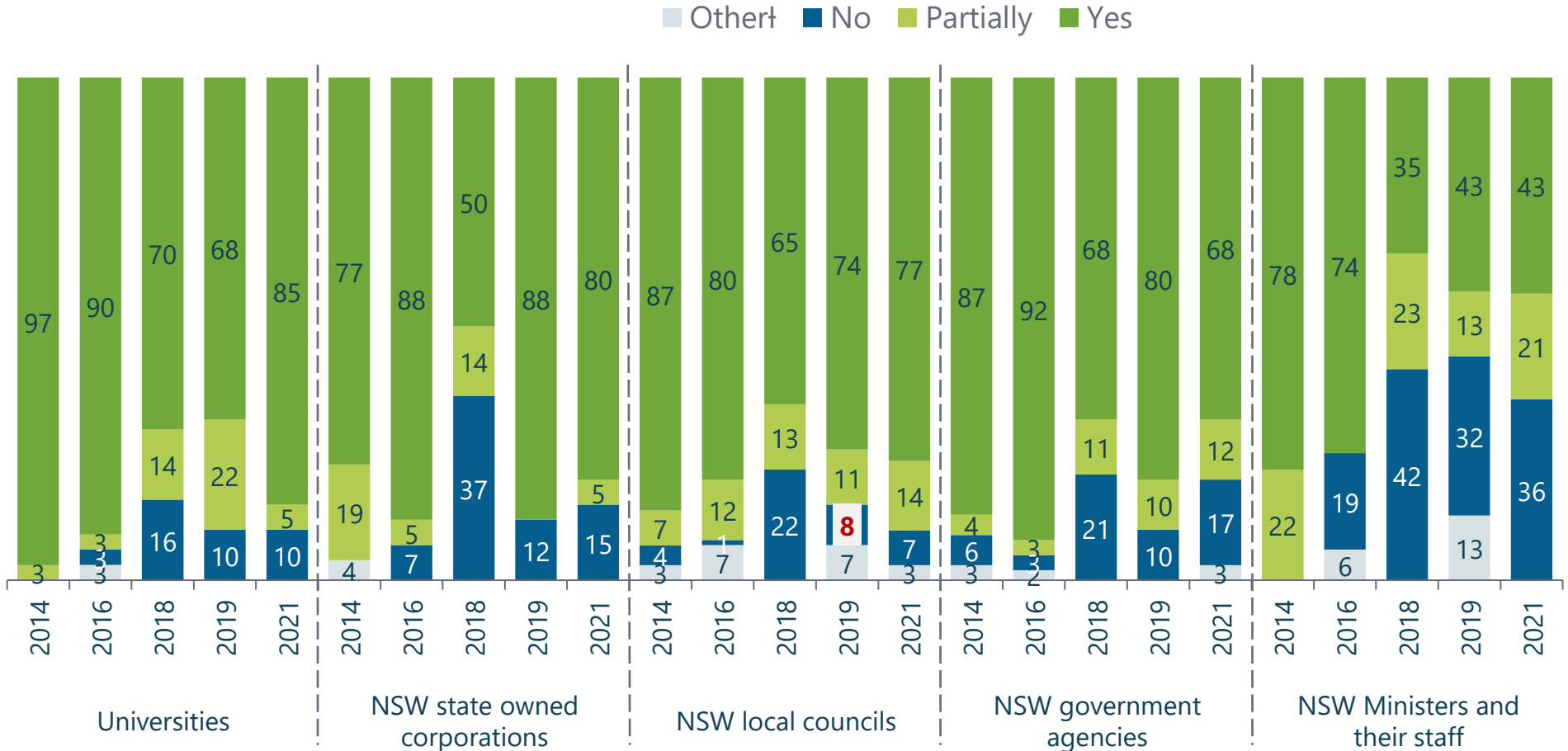
[2014,2016,2019] Q5. In the last 3 years have you tried to access information held by: MR
Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2019 n=350, 2021 n=350)

TOTAL SUCCESS IN ACCESSING INFORMATION



- As with the previous two years, approximately three quarters were successful in accessing information from at least one entity

SUCCESS IN ATTEMPTING TO ACCESS INFORMATION BY AGENCY



Respondents were again fairly successful in accessing information from the various agencies – 85% gained full access from universities, 80% from state owned corps, 77% from local Councils and 68% from state government.

Q6. Were you successful in accessing information from...?

Base: Respondents who tried to access information in the last year: NSW local councils (2014 n=63, 2016 n=77, 2018 n=46, 2019 n=75, 2021 n=73); NSW state government agencies (2014 n=32, 2016 n=59, 2018 n=34, 2019 n=61, 2021 n=76); Universities (2014 n=29, 2016 n=59, 2018 n=50, 2019 n=32, 2021 n=20)

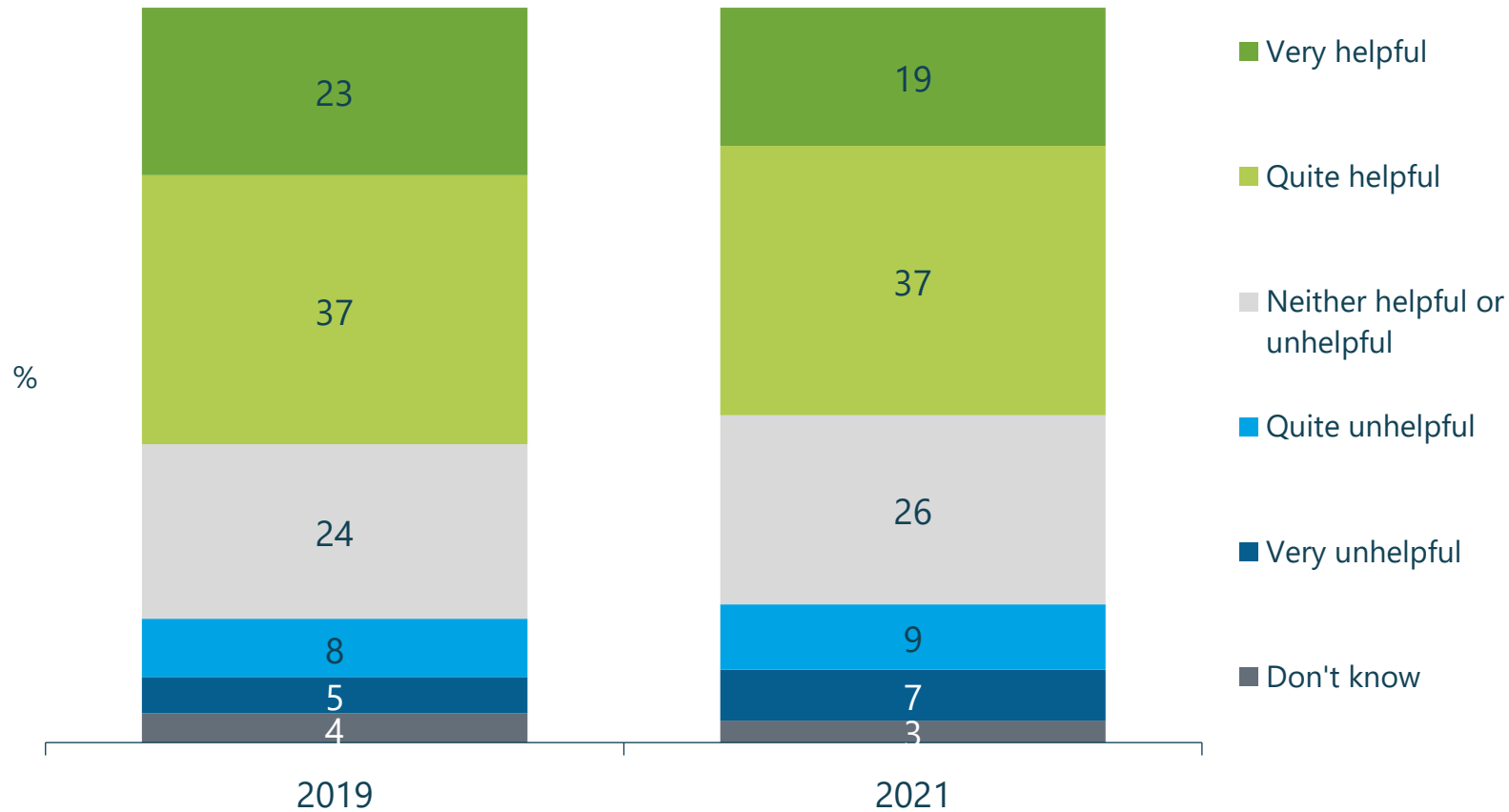
NSW Ministries and their staff (2014 n=15, 2016 n=31, 2018 n=26, 2019 n=16, 2021 n=14); NSW State Owned Corporations (2014 n= 14, 2016 n=38, 2018 n=28, 2019 n=17, 2021 n=20)

†Not a code in 2018



- Similar to 2019, just over half of those who tried to access information felt that the agencies were helpful in providing advice and assistance (56%), however over a quarter felt they were neither helpful or unhelpful (26%) and one in six felt they were unhelpful.

HELPFULNESS OF AGENCIES

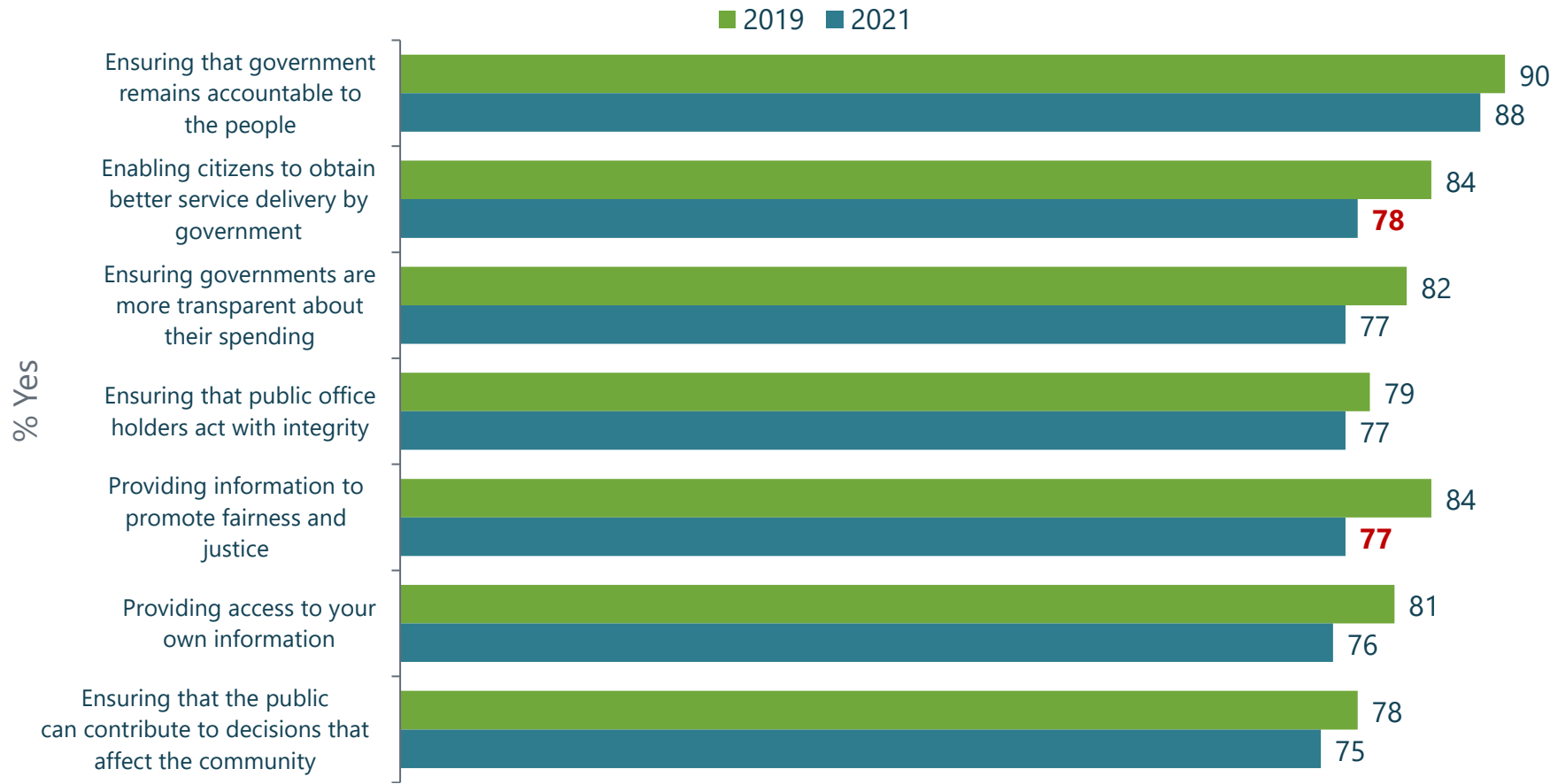


Q7. When you tried to access information how helpful were agencies in providing advice and assistance to you?
Base: Those who tried to access information from any agency (2019 n=139, 2021 n=136)

New question in 2019



PUBLIC INTEREST FACTORS



- Most respondents continued to feel that all public interest factors were important to consider

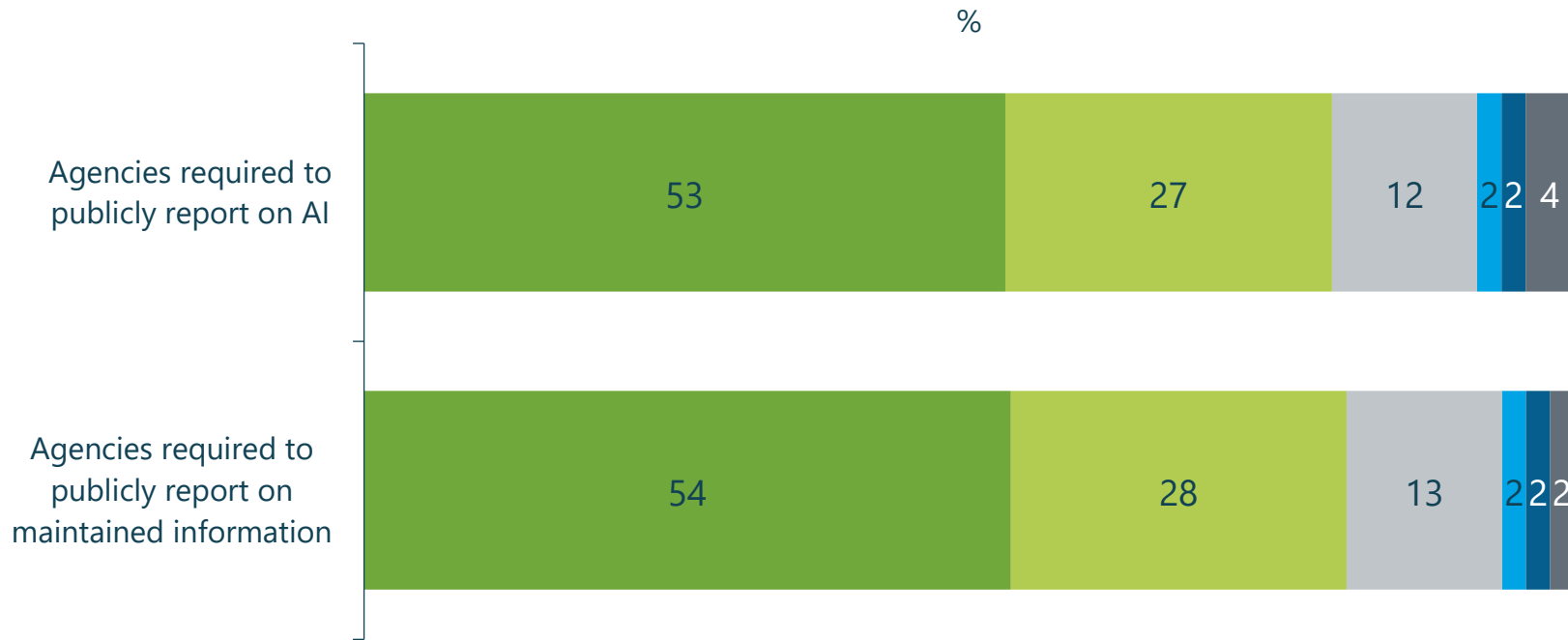
Q8. In making a decision about releasing information agencies must consider the public interest. Which of these public interest factors do you think are important to consider?
Base: All respondents (2019 n=350, 2021 n=350)

New question in 2019



AGREEMENT REGARDING PUBLIC REPORTING

■ Strongly agree ■ Slightly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Slightly disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know



- Most agreed that government agencies should be required to publicly report on their use of AI and the information they maintain

Q9. Governments are increasingly using data, algorithms and other forms of artificial intelligence to inform decisions, for example subsidy and or payment calculations. To what extent do you agree that government agencies should be required to publicly report on any systems used to inform agency decisions that impact individuals?

Q10. To what extent do you agree that government agencies should publicly report on the information they maintain?

Base: All respondents (2021 n=350)

Question added in 2021



DEMOGRAPHICS





GENDER AND AGE

	2014 % (n=340)	2016 % (n=340)	2018 % (n=803)	2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=350)
Gender					
Female	56	51	52	51	50
Male	44	49	48	49	50
Gender neutral†	Not an option in 2019			-	-
Prefer not to indicate†				<1	<1
Age					
18-24	12	15	15	8	7
25-34	12	20	21	20	21
35-44	8	16	17	12	17
45-54	17	18	16	24	17
55-64	12	12	12	10	15
65-74	38	20	10	15	14
75+			8	11	8

Q1. Which of the following age brackets do you belong to?

Q2. Are you...?

Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n= 340, 2018 n=803, 2019 n=350, 2021 n=350)

†Options added in 2021



WORKING STATUS AND MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN

	2016 % (n=340)	2018 % (n=803)	2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=350)
Working status				
Working full time	89	39	39	41
Working part time		17	15	18
Retired	4	23	28	23
Engaged in home duties	1	7	8	8
Student	4	9	8	7
Unemployed	3	5	5	3
Refused	-	1	1	1
Main language spoken				
English	Not asked in 2016	90	90	95
Cantonese/Mandarin		1	2	1
Other		9	8	5

Q9. Which of these categories best describes you?

Base: All respondents (2014 n=340, 2016 n= 340, 2018 n=803, 2019 n=350, 2021 n=350)

New Questions in 2016

Q10. What is the main language spoken at home?

SUMMARY

Consistent with previous years, the vast majority felt that their right to access government information was very (52%) or quite (38%) important.

In 2021, over seven in ten (73%) respondents were aware of their right to access information held by at least one of the government agencies listed, which was similar to 2019.

Most (56% and 55% respectively) were aware of their right to access information from NSW local councils and state governments, but fewer for universities (28%), ministers (27%) and state owned corporations (26%).

Almost two fifths (39%) had tried to access information held by at least one NSW entity, most commonly NSW government agencies and local councils (22% and 21% respectively). This has risen during the tracking period.

As with 2019, approximately three quarters (74%) of those who had tried to access information were successful at doing so.

Respondents tended to be successful at accessing information from most agencies, however less than half (43%) were able to fully access information from NSW Ministers and their staff (caution – small base).

There was a high level of importance placed on the public interest factors agencies should consider when releasing information.

Most respondents agreed that agencies should be required to publicly report on their use of AI and the systems they maintain (80% and 82% respectively) .



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