

Information Access Study

NSW

June 2023



Contents

Research Design

Information Access

Community Attitudes

Demographics

Summary



^ Please click on section icons to transport you to each section

^^ Please click on the home icon to return to the contents page

Research Design



Research Design



Six jurisdictions from across Australia including New South Wales (NSW), commissioned Woolcott Research & 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 May 14 and May 29 2023 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 in results at the 95% confidence level between years are shown in **GREEN** (increased significantly) or **RED** (decreased significantly).

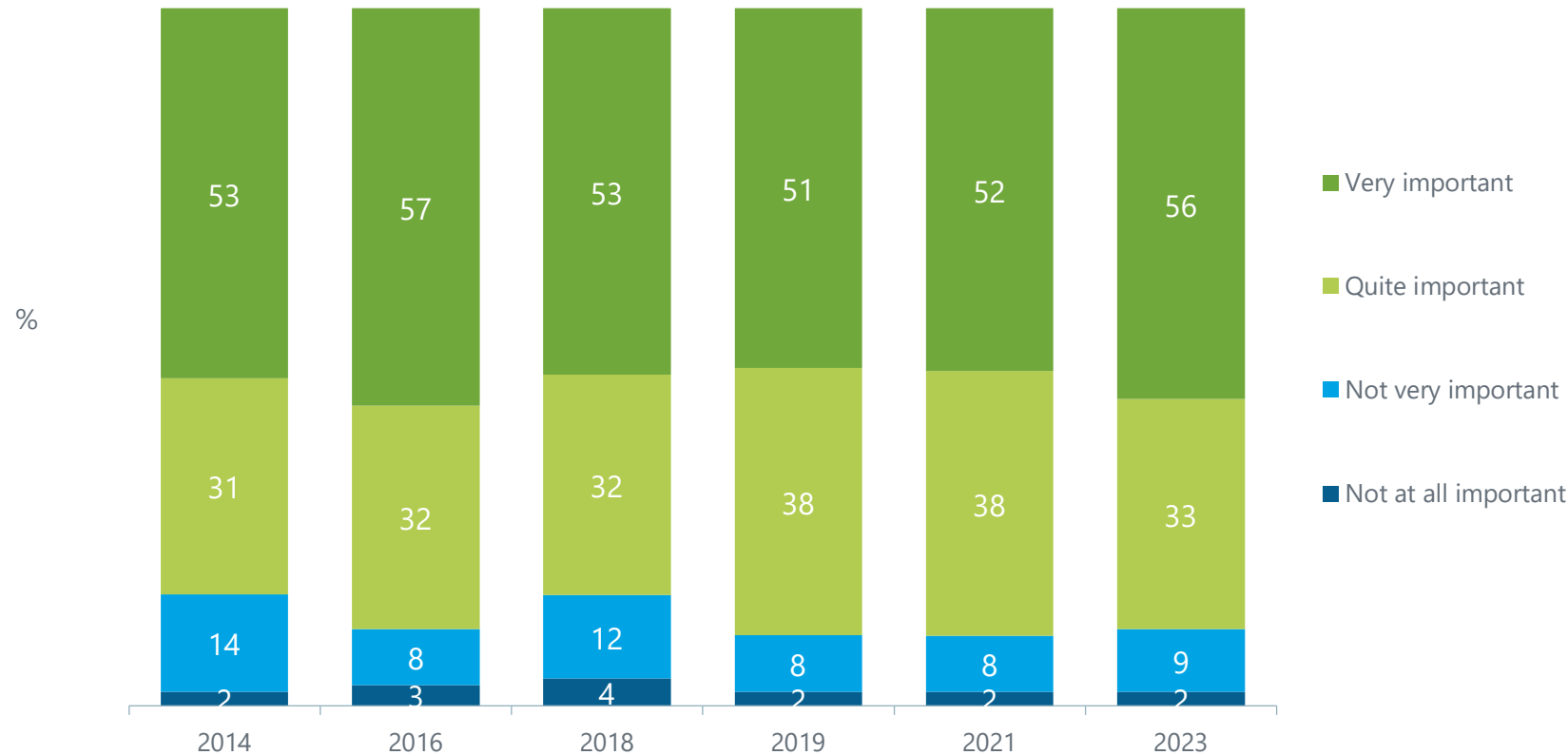
Due to rounding, percentages may not always add to 100.



Information Access



Importance of Having the Right to Access Government Information

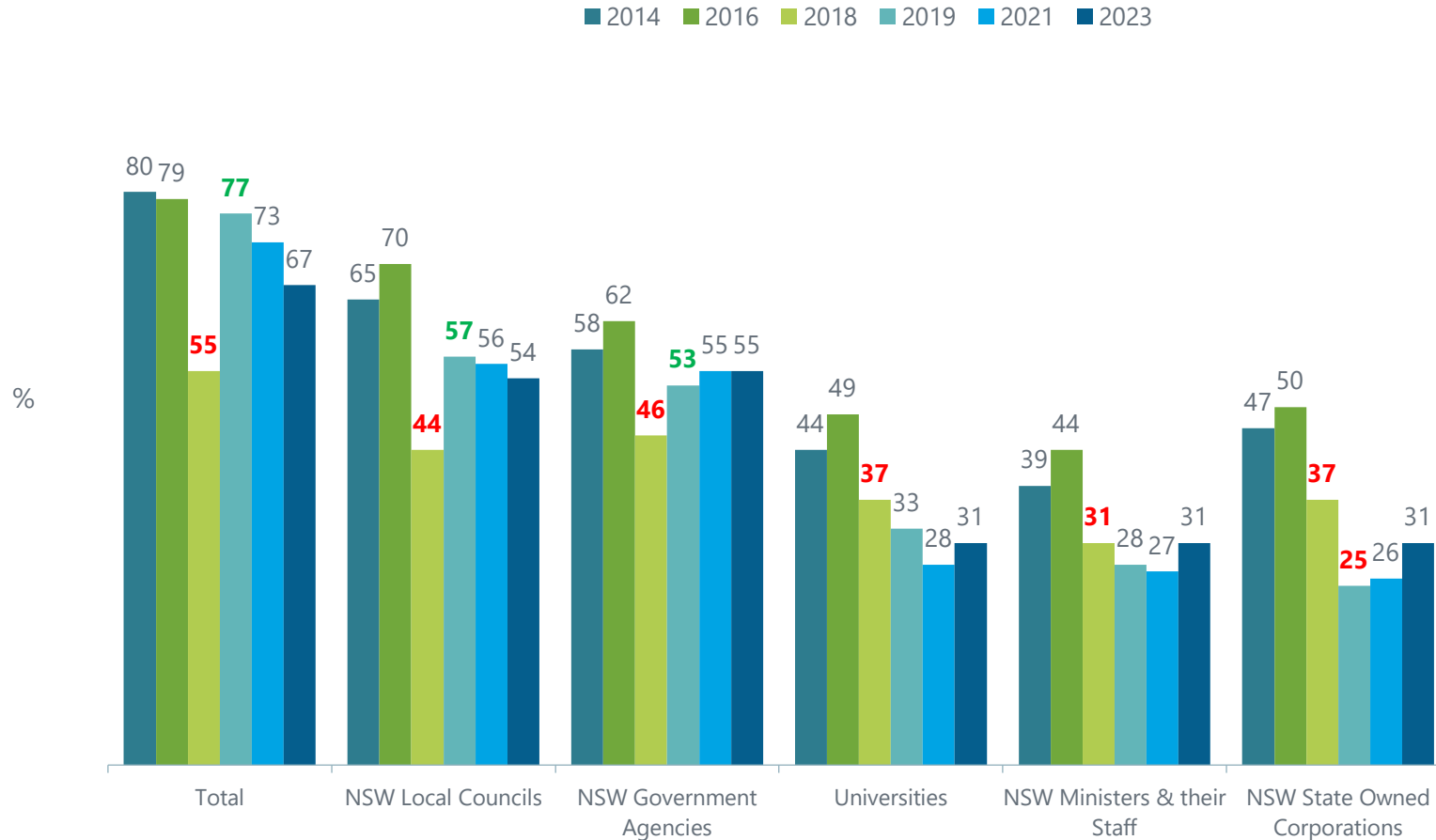


In line with prior years, over half of respondents indicated that their right to access government information was very important, a further third felt that this right was quite important.

Few respondents felt that having the right to access information was not important.



Awareness of Right to Access Information



Roughly two thirds (67%) of respondents in 2023 were aware of their right to access information from government agencies, representing a slight decrease in awareness from previous years.

Respondents were most likely to be aware that they could access information from NSW Government agencies and NSW Local Councils, with over half indicating as such (55% and 54% respectively).

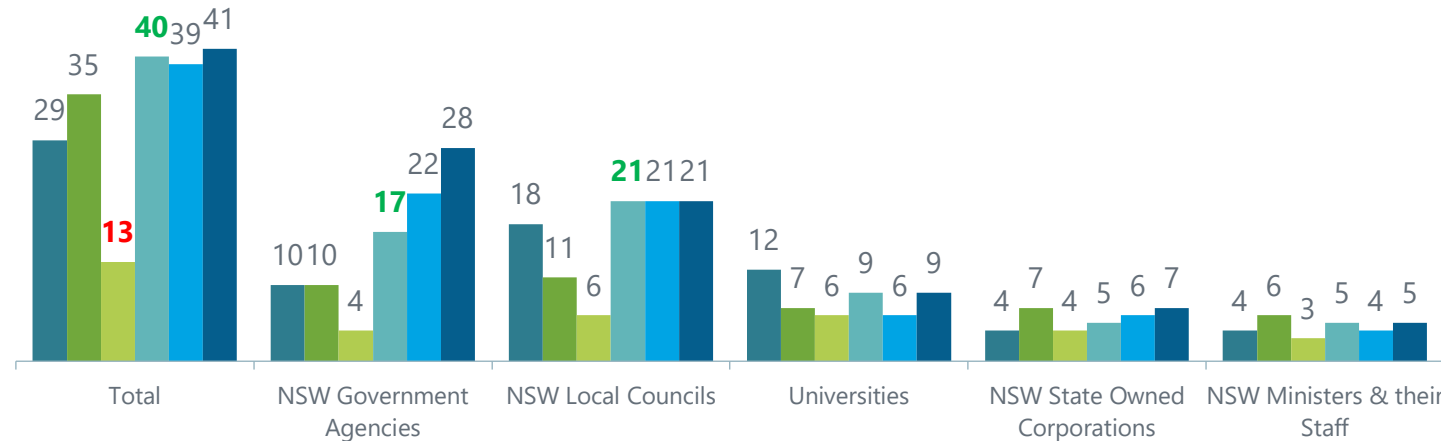


Attempts to Access Information in the Last 3 Years



■ 2014 ■ 2016 ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2021 ■ 2023

%



At least 40% of respondents had attempted to access information from at least one of the entities listed in the last three years.

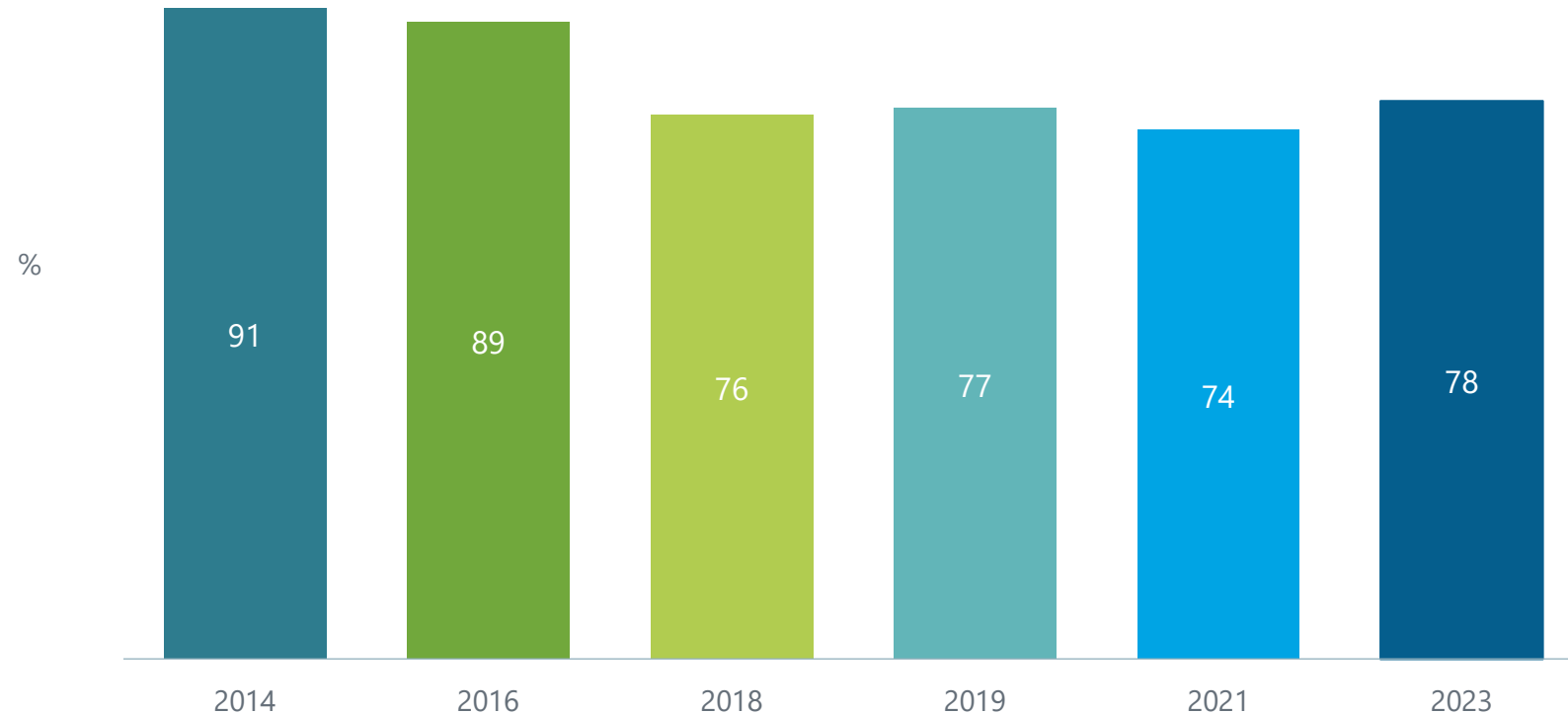
Respondents were most likely to have tried to access information held by NSW Government agencies and NSW Local Councils, and were least likely to have attempted to access information from NSW ministers and their staff.

[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? MR
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, 2021, 2023] 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, 2023 n=350



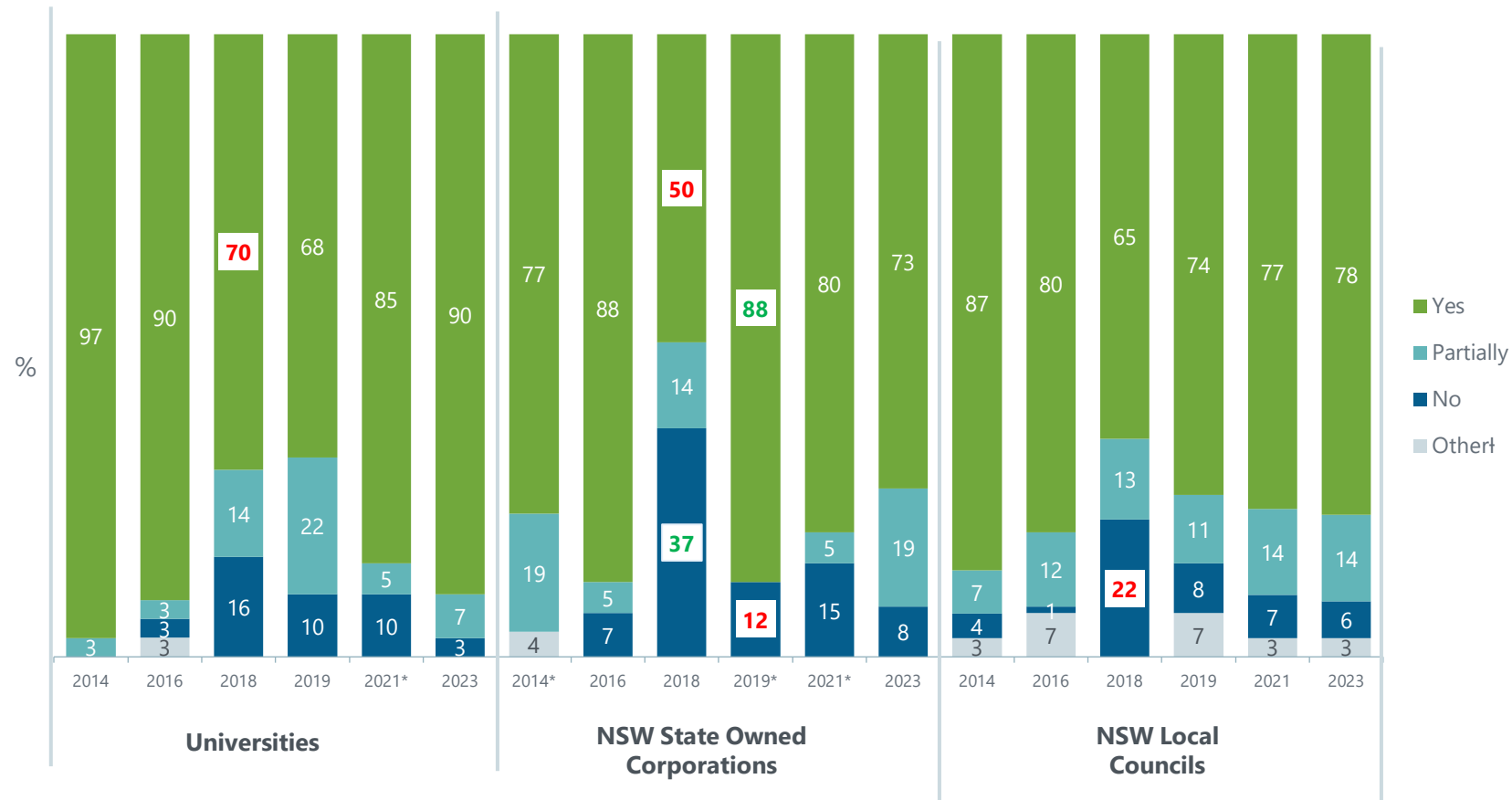
Success in Attempting to Access Information



Consistent with previous years, approximately three quarters of respondents were successful in accessing information from at least one Government entity when they tried to do so.



Success in Attempting to Access Information by Agency



Respondents in 2023 were mostly successful in accessing information held by Government entities.

In comparison to last read, success in attempting to access information increased for universities yet decreased for NSW state owned corporations and NSW local councils.

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

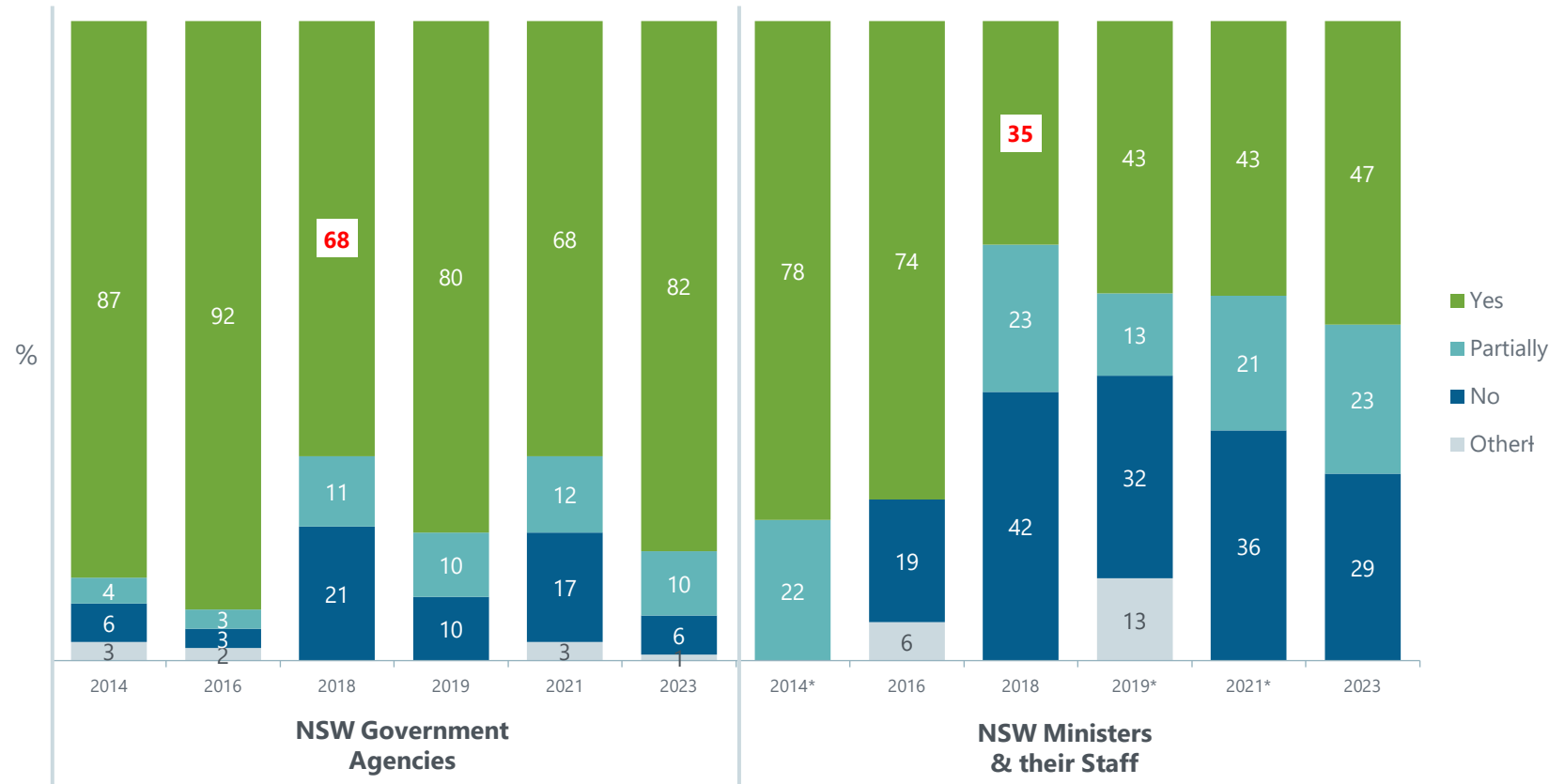
Base: Respondents who had attempted to access information; NSW Local Councils (2014 n=63, 2016 n=77, 2018 n=46, 2019 n=75, 2021 n=73, 2023 n=72, Universities (2014 n=29, 2016 n=59, 2018 n=50, 2019 n=32, 2021 n=20*, 2023 n=30), NSW State Owned Corporations (2014 n=14*, 2016 n=38, 2018 n=28, 2019 n=17*, 2021 n=20*, 2023 n=26)

†Not a code in 2018

*Caution: small base size, indicative only



Success in Attempting to Access Information by Agency



Respondents in 2023 were mostly successful in obtaining information from NSW government agencies with over eight in ten respondents indicating their success.

Conversely, respondents were least successful in accessing information from NSW Ministers and their staff, with slightly under half of respondents indicating success.

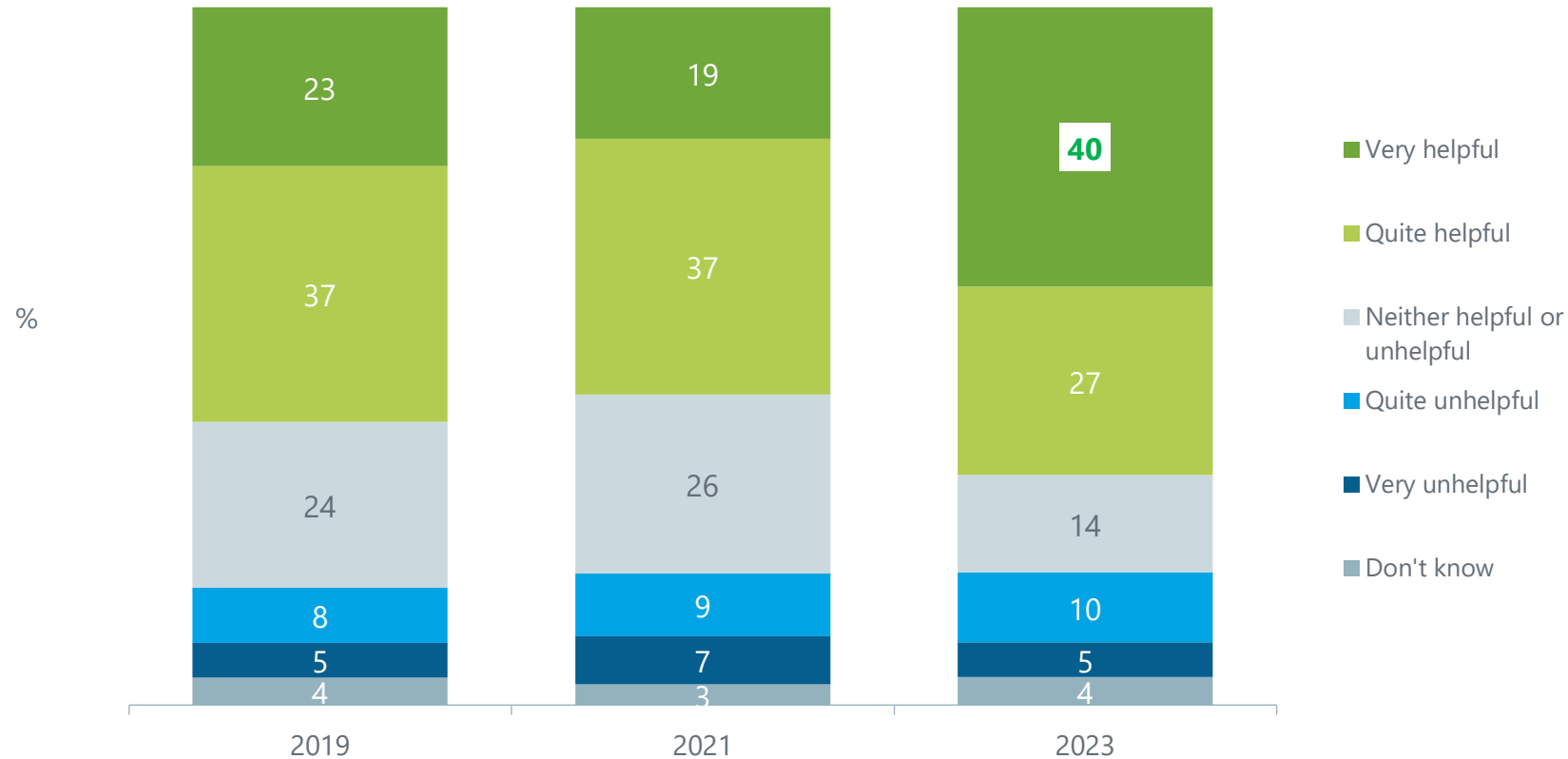
Q6. Were you successful in accessing information from ...? SR
 Base: Respondents who had attempted to access information; NSW Government Agencies (2014 n=32, 2016 n=59, 2018 n=34, 2019 n=61, 2021 n=76, 2023 n=96. NSW Ministries & their Staff (2014 n=15*, 2016 n=31, 2018 n=26, 2019 n=16*, 2021 n=14*, 2023 n=17).

†Not a code in 2018

*Caution: small base size, indicative only



Helpfulness of Agencies



Slightly over two thirds of respondents (67%) indicated that the agencies were either very or quite helpful in aiding access to information.

The proportion of those who indicated that the agencies were very helpful doubled from 2021 to 2023 (40% in 2023; up from 19% in 2021).

Q7. When you tried to access information how helpful were agencies in providing advice and assistance to you? SR

Question added in 2019

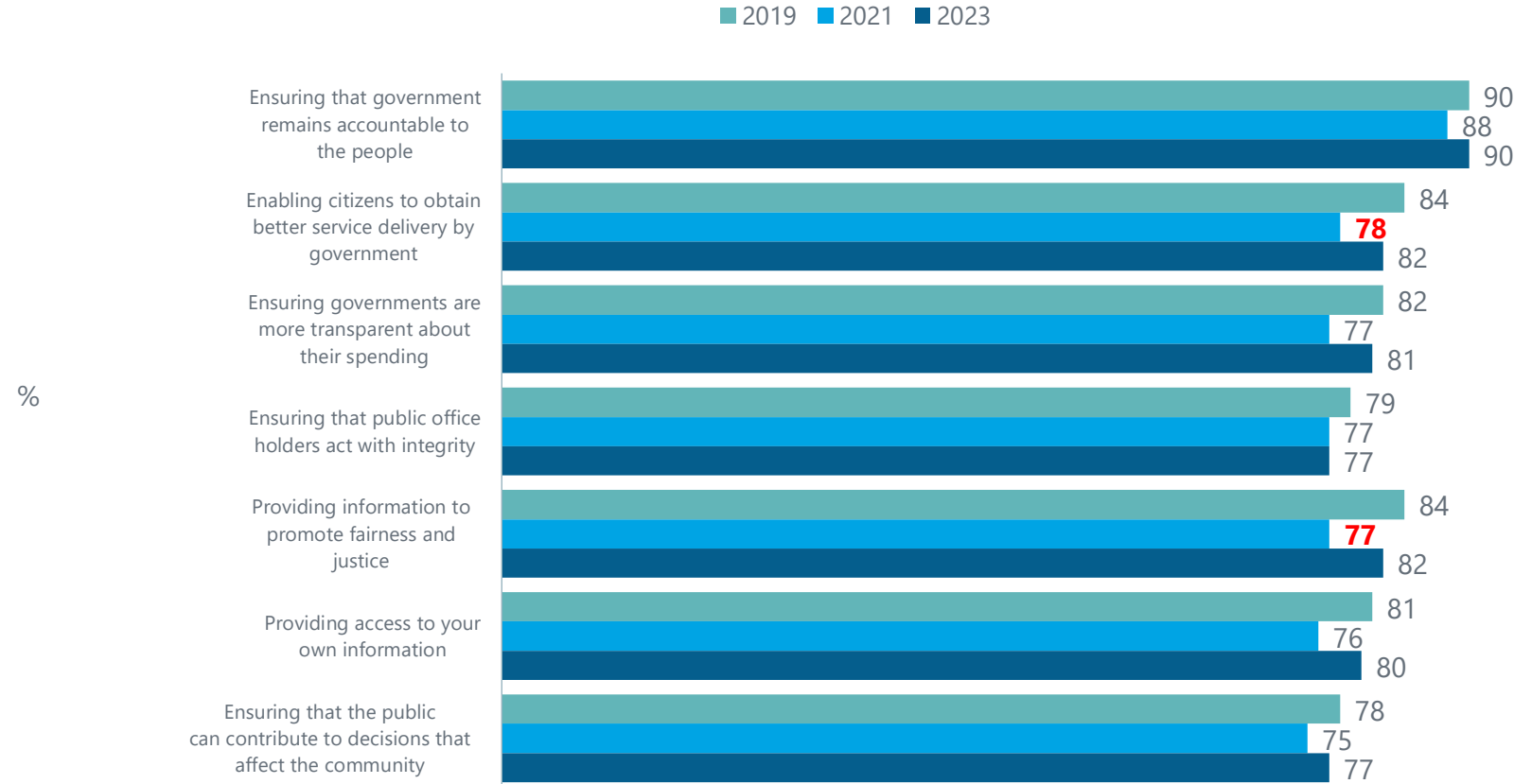
Base: Respondents who had attempted to access information; 2019 n=137, 2021 n=136, 2023 n=145



Community Attitudes



Public Interest Factors



Most respondents continue to feel that all public interest factors were important to consider.

Respondents aged 55+ were significantly more likely to indicate that “ensuring the government remains accountable” was important than their 35-55 counterparts (99% and 82% respectively.)

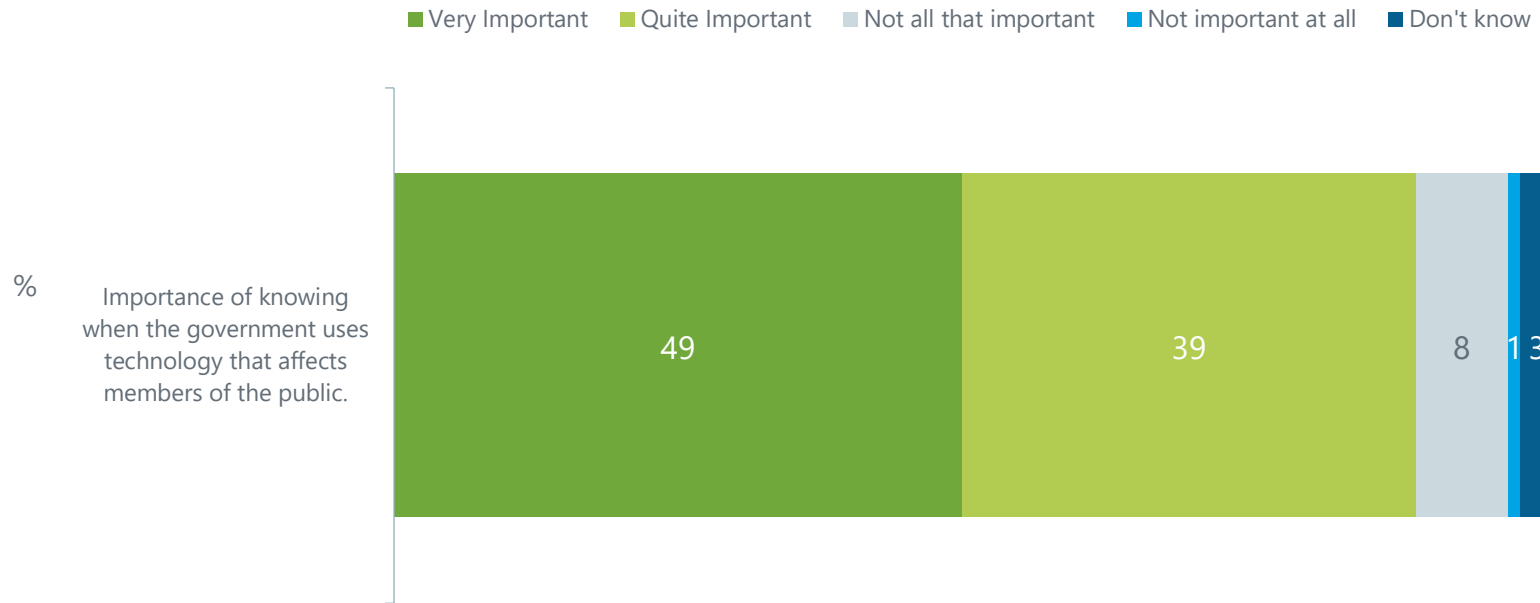


Q8. In making a decision about releasing information agencies must consider the public interest. Which of these public interest factors do you think are important to consider? MR

Question added in 2019

Base: All respondents; 2019 n=350, 2021 n=350, 2023 n=350

Importance of Awareness of Government Technology use



Approximately nine in ten (88%) respondents indicated that knowing when the government uses technology that affects members of the public was important.

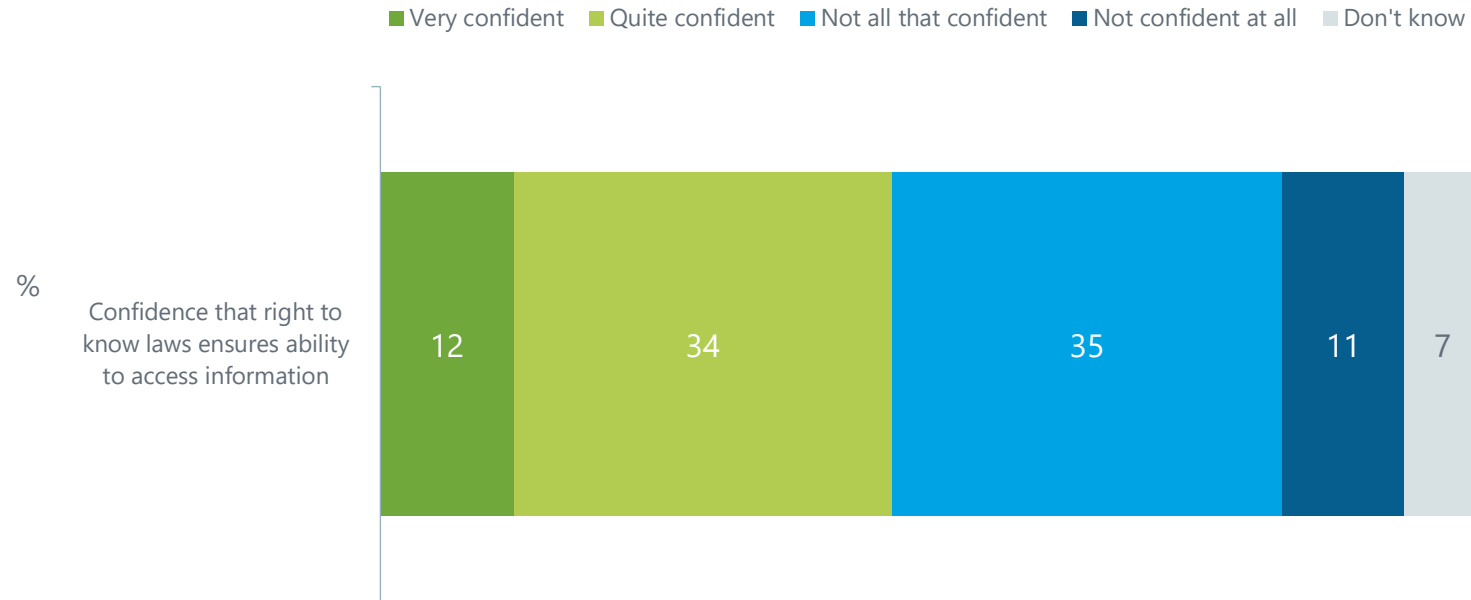
New question 2023

Q9. How important is it to know when government uses technology to assist in decision making that affects members of the public?

Base: All respondents; 2023 n=350



Confidence in Right to Know Laws



Slightly under half of respondents (46%) were confident that the right to know laws ensured the ability to access government agencies about how decisions are made by the government.

An equal proportion however, indicated a lack of confidence in these laws.



New question 2023

Q10. How confident are you that right to know laws in NSW will ensure you obtain access to information about how decisions are made by government agencies?

Base: All respondents; 2023 n=350

Demographics



Gender & Age



		2014 % (n=340)	2016 % (n=340)	2018 % (n=803)	2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=350)	2023 % (n=350)
Gender 	Female	56	51	52	51	50	50
	Male	44	49	48	49	50	50
	Gender Neutral †	Not an option				-	-
	Prefer not to indicate †	Not an option				<1	-
Age 	18-24	12	15	15	8	7	11
	25-34	12	20	21	20	21	17
	35-44	8	16	17	12	17	21
	45-54	17	18	16	24	17	13
	55-64	12	12	12	10	15	15
	65-74	38	20	10	15	14	14
	75+			8	11	8	8



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

Q2. Do you identify as being...?

† Options added in 2021

Base: All respondents; 2014 n=340, 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2019 n=350, 2021 n=350, 2023 n=350

Working Status & Main Language Spoken



		2016 % (n=340)	2018 % (n=803)	2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=350)	2023 % (n=350)
Working Status 	Working full time	89	39	39	41	50
	Working part time		17	15	18	15
	Retired	4	23	28	23	21
	Engaged in home duties	1	7	8	8	5
	Student	4	9	8	7	5
	Unemployed	3	5	5	3	3
	Refused	-	1	1	1	1
Main Language Spoken 	English	Question not asked	90	90	95	88
	Cantonese/Mandarin		1	2	1	2
	Other		9	8	5	10
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander 	Yes	Question not asked				2
	No					98



Q11. Which of these categories best describes you?

Q12. What is the main language spoken at home?

Q13. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin? **Question added in 2023**

Base: All respondents; 2016 n=340, 2018 n=803, 2019 n=350, 2021 n=350, 2023 n=350

Summary



Summary



Consistent with previous reads, the vast majority felt that their right to access government information was very (56%) or quite (33%) important.

In 2023, over two thirds (67%) of respondents were aware of their right to access information held by at least one of the government agencies listed, which was similar to 2021.

Most (55% and 54% respectively) were aware of their right to access information from NSW local councils and state governments, but fewer were aware of access from universities (31%), ministers (31%) and state-owned corporations (31%).

Two fifths (41%) had tried to access information held by at least one NSW entity, most commonly NSW government agencies and local councils (28% and 21% respectively). This has risen during the tracking period.

Over three quarters (78%) 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 (47%) were able to fully access information from NSW Ministers and their staff (caution – small base).

Slightly over two thirds (67%) of respondents found that agencies were helpful in providing assistance when attempting to access information.

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

Most respondents (88%) believed that it was important to know when the government uses technology to assist in decision making that affects members of the public.

Under half (46%) were confident that the right to know laws in NSW ensured the ability to access information about decision making.





Woolcott Research & Engagement
Level 6, 104 Mount Street, North Sydney NSW 2060
+61 2 9261 5221
www.woolcott.com.au
Contact: Karyn Wong, KWong@woolcott.com.au

