



# Perceptions of environmental watering in the Murray-Darling Basin

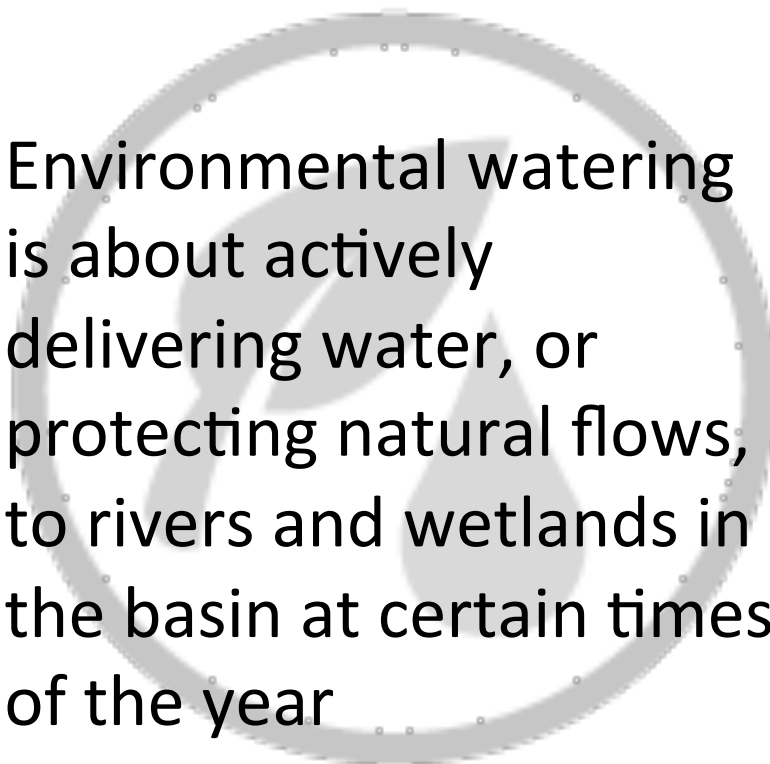
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# Basin-scale environmental watering



Guides the management of environmental water (e-water) across the Basin

Reports on how the Basin Plan is tracking against a range of social, economic and environmental outcomes, including environmental watering

A large, faint watermark of a water cycle diagram is visible in the background of the right-hand text. It shows a circular path with a sun at the top, clouds, rain falling into a body of water, and water evaporating back into the air.

Environmental watering is about actively delivering water, or protecting natural flows, to rivers and wetlands in the basin at certain times of the year

# Why examine community perceptions?

Many claims and counter claims about 'community views'

Need to understand perceptions (and misperceptions) to help inform community dialogue about environmental watering



# Regional Wellbeing Survey 2014

## In-depth data

- 12,125 participants in 2014 (9,135 in 2013)
- 3,700 farmers (2,500 in 2013)
- Annual – track change
- Many topics
- Local to national scalability



## Collaborative, accessible

- Many partner organisations
- Results made publicly available

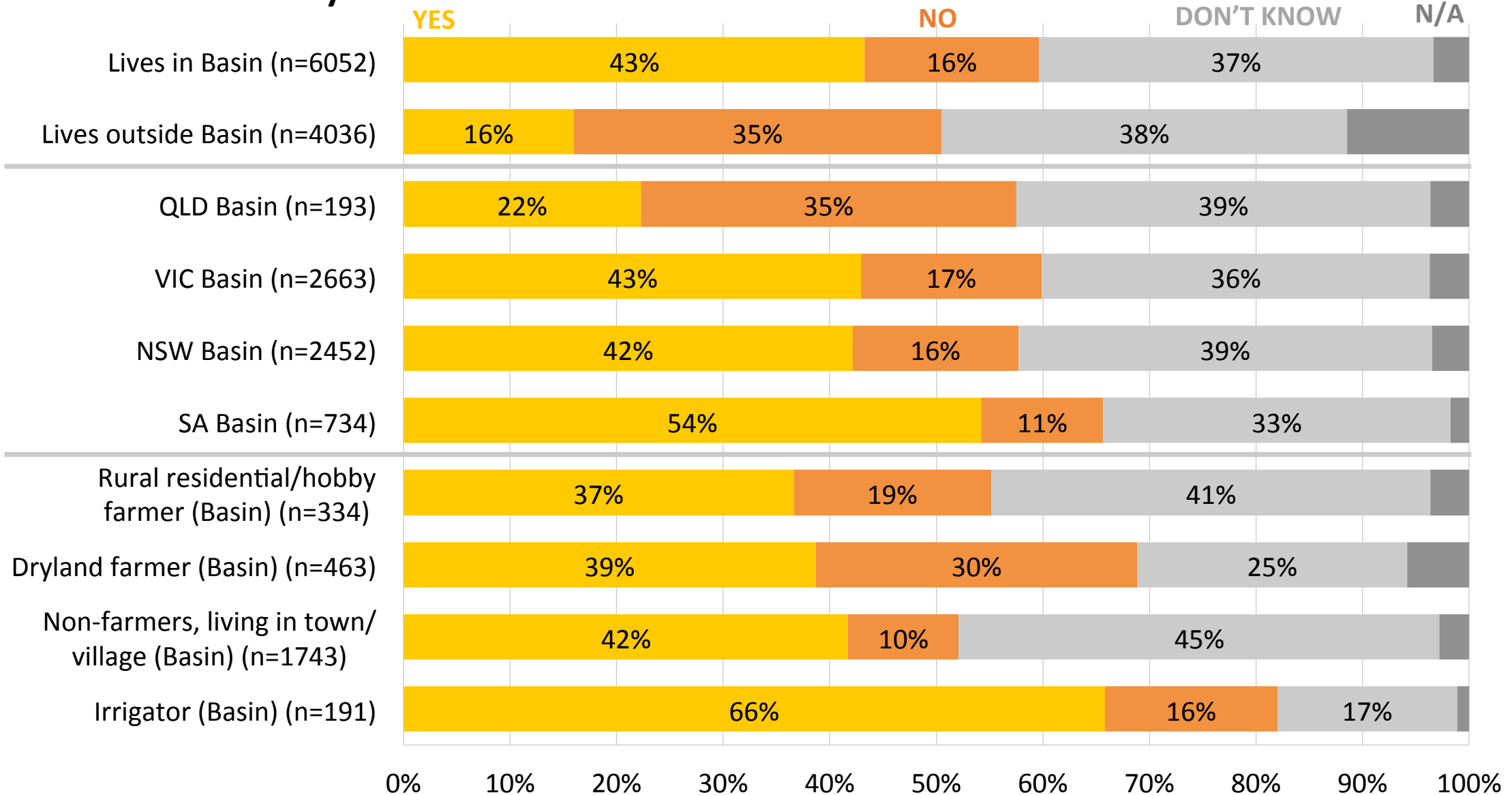
[www.regionalwellbeing.org.au](http://www.regionalwellbeing.org.au)

## Focus on rural & regional Australia

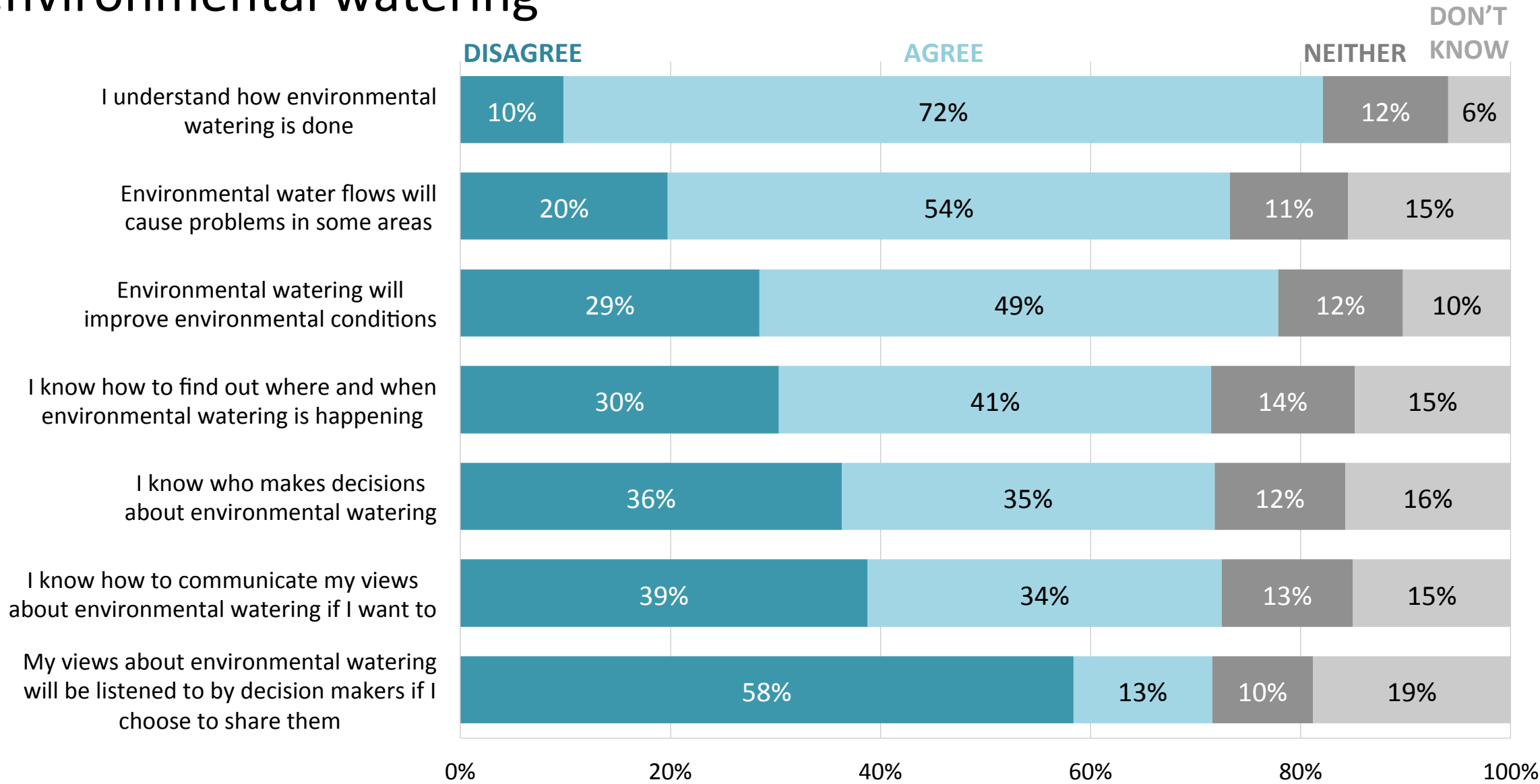
- Participants live outside or on fringes of major cities
- Greater insight into rural and regional issues

Data on environmental watering was collected via the University of Canberra's *Regional Wellbeing Survey*

# Has environmental water been used to water sites in your region in the last 5 years?



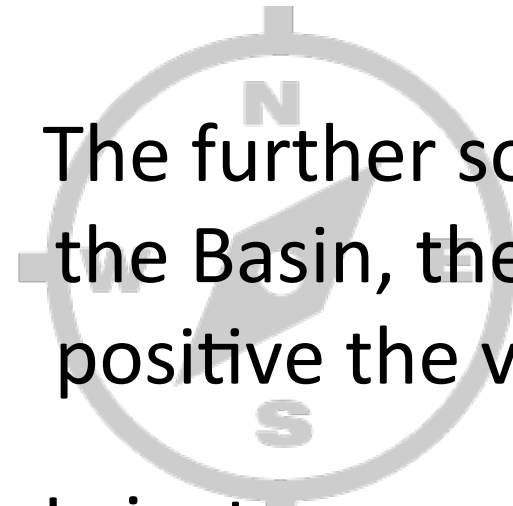
# Basin residents have both positive and negative views about environmental watering



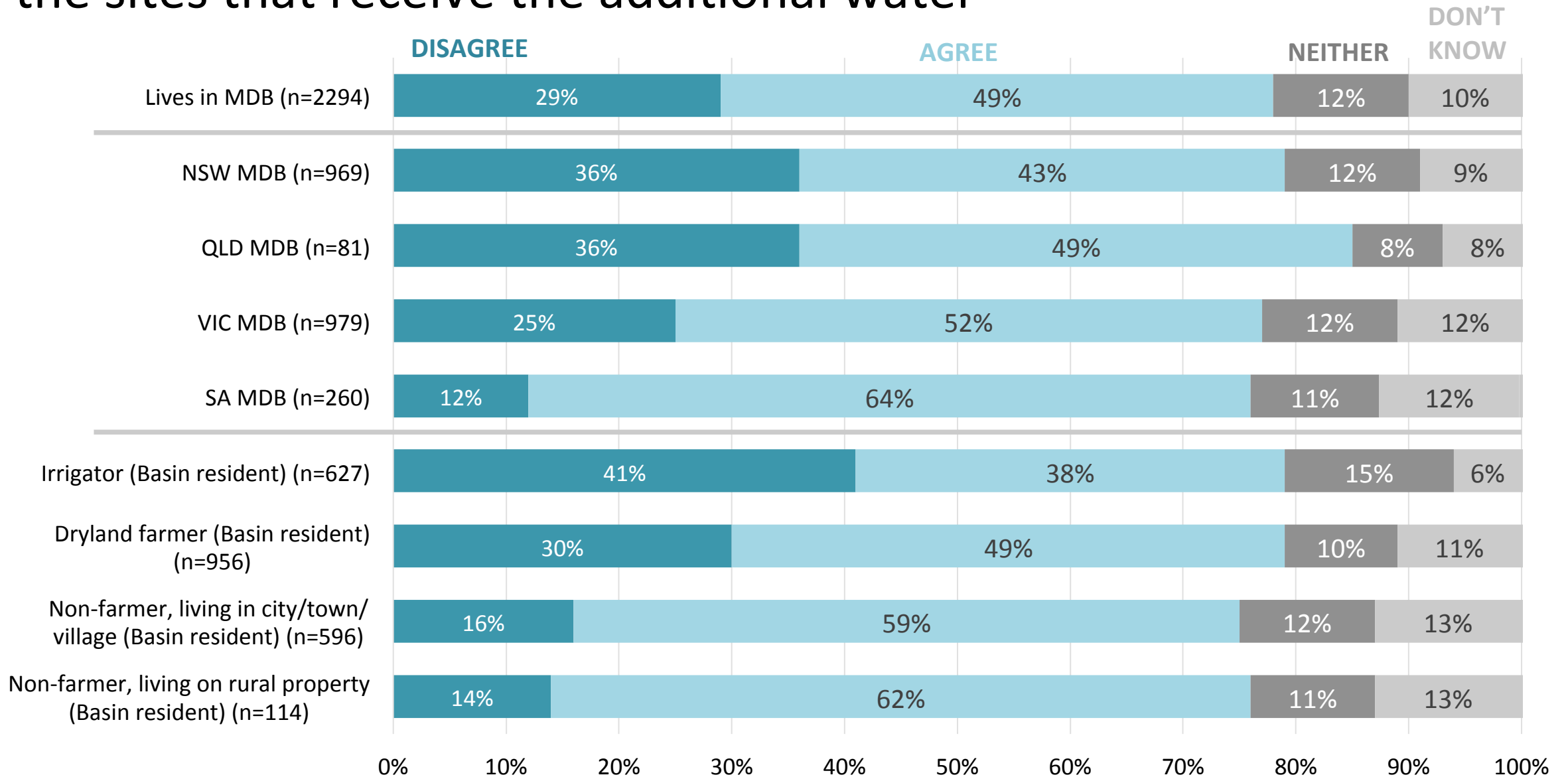
# Who thinks e-water has positive vs negative effects?

- 50% feel e-water is good for the environment (but 30% don't, and 20% are unsure).
- Around 50% of people believe e-water results in **both** environmental benefits **and** problems for some living in e-water areas

- The further south you go in the Basin, the more positive the views
- Irrigators are more concerned about negative impacts than others

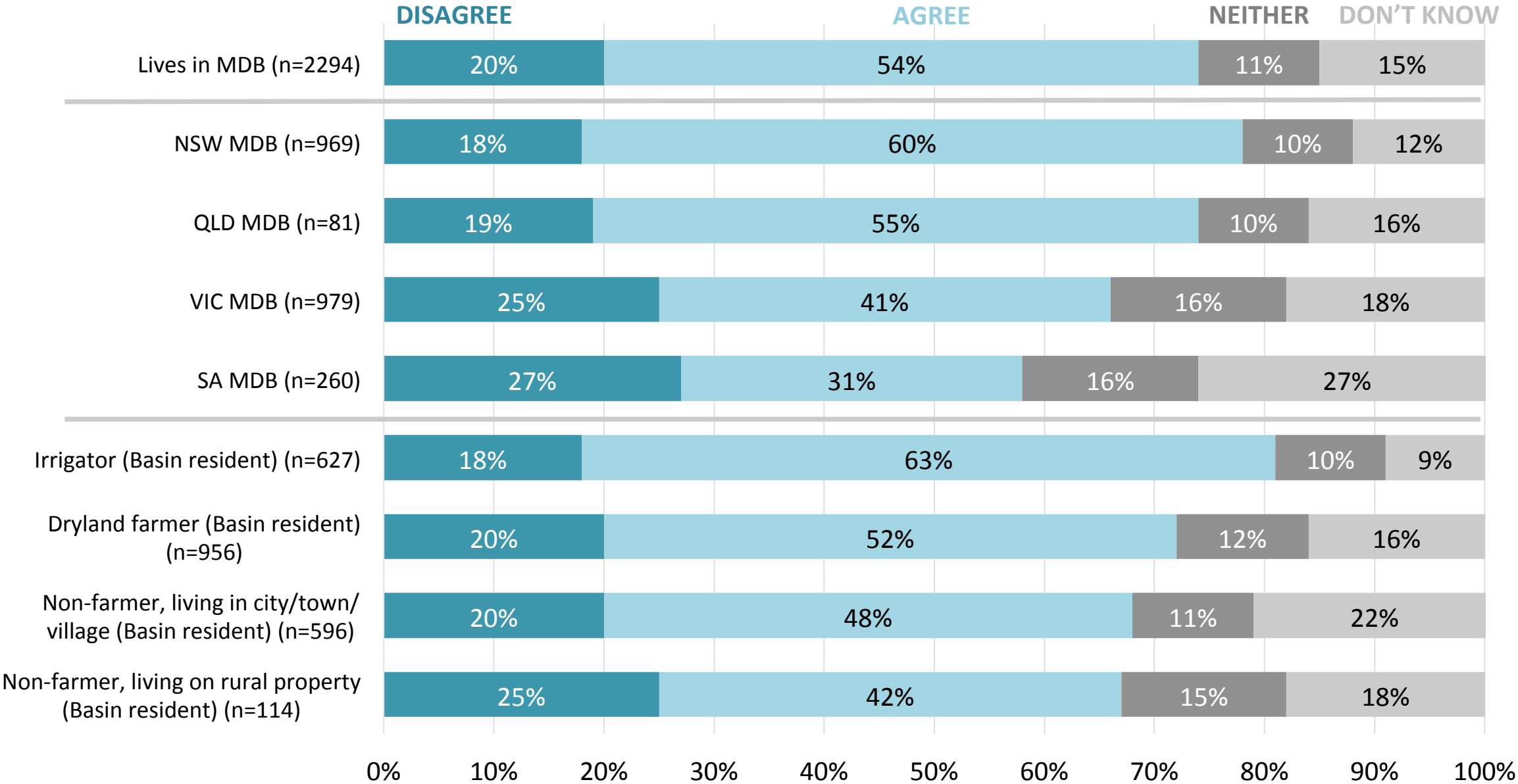


# Environmental watering will improve environmental conditions in the sites that receive the additional water





# Environmental water flows will cause problems in some areas



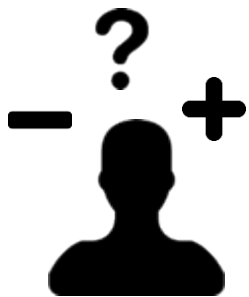
# People have concerns – do they match up to what is observed?



1249 Basin residents believed they had seen e-water (not all of these will be correct in their belief)



Those who reported having directly observed an e-water event were asked what effects they observed

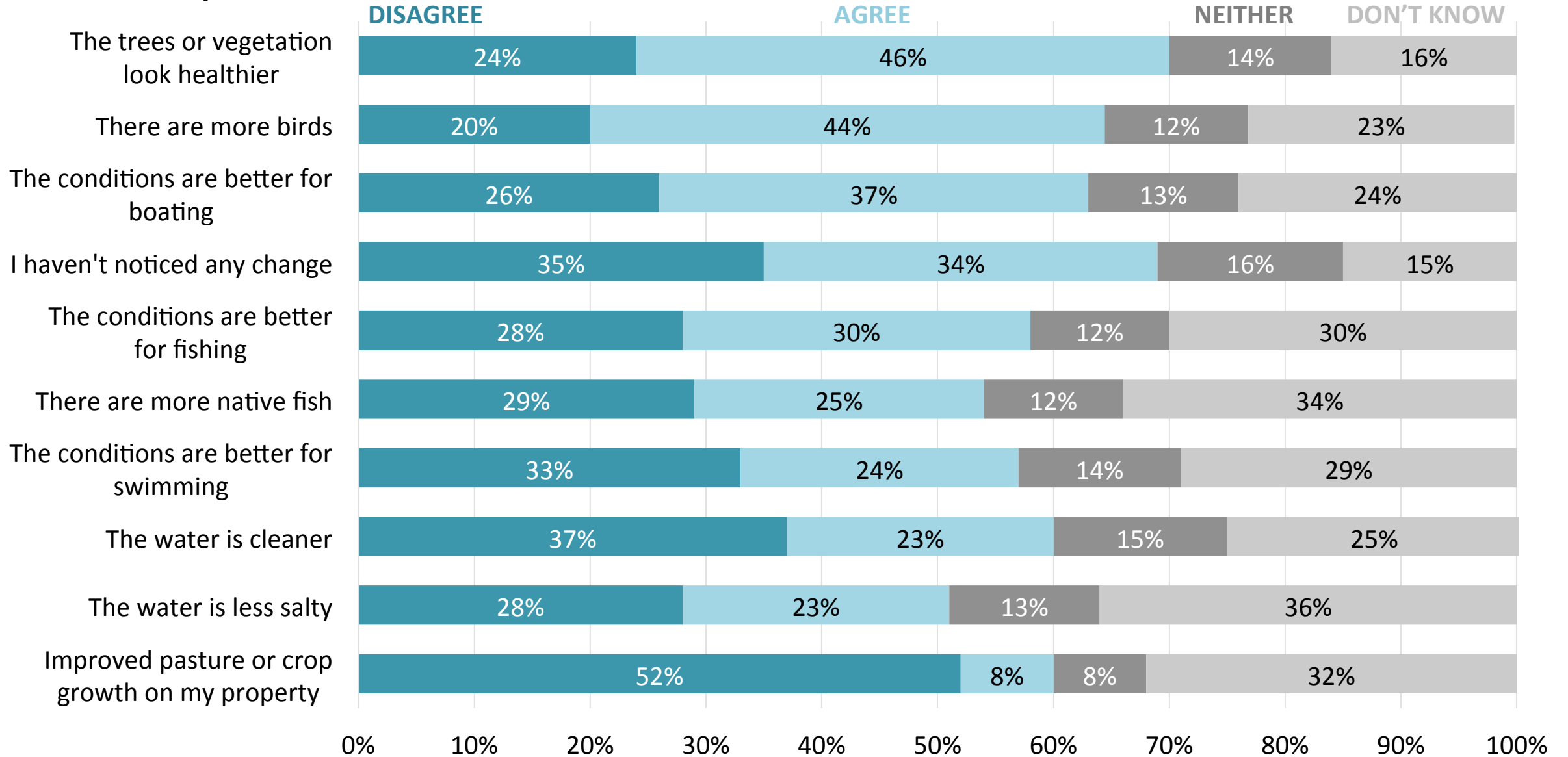


A large proportion were unsure if e-water had positive or negative effects.

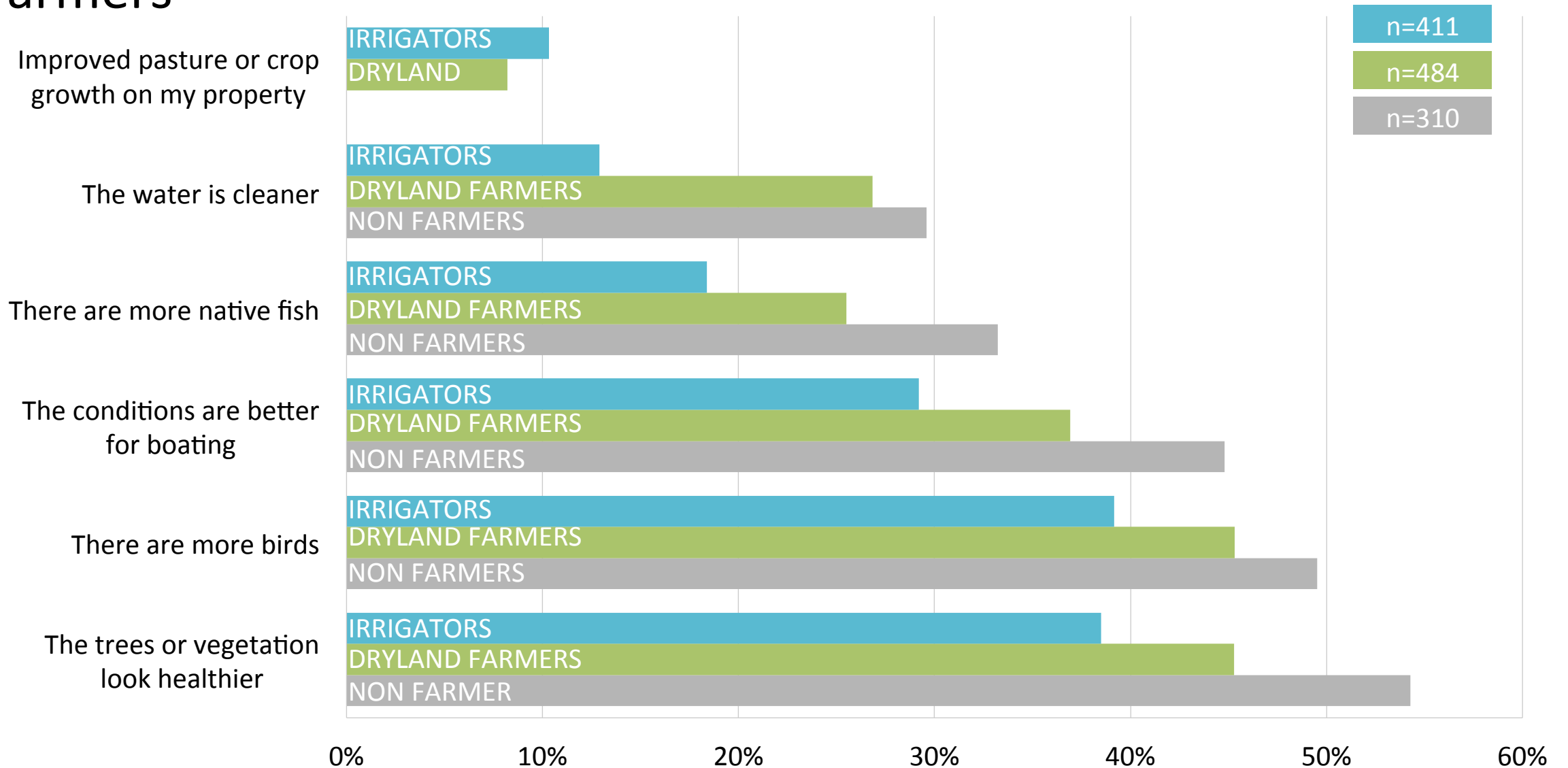


Those who had views were more likely to report positive rather than negative outcomes.

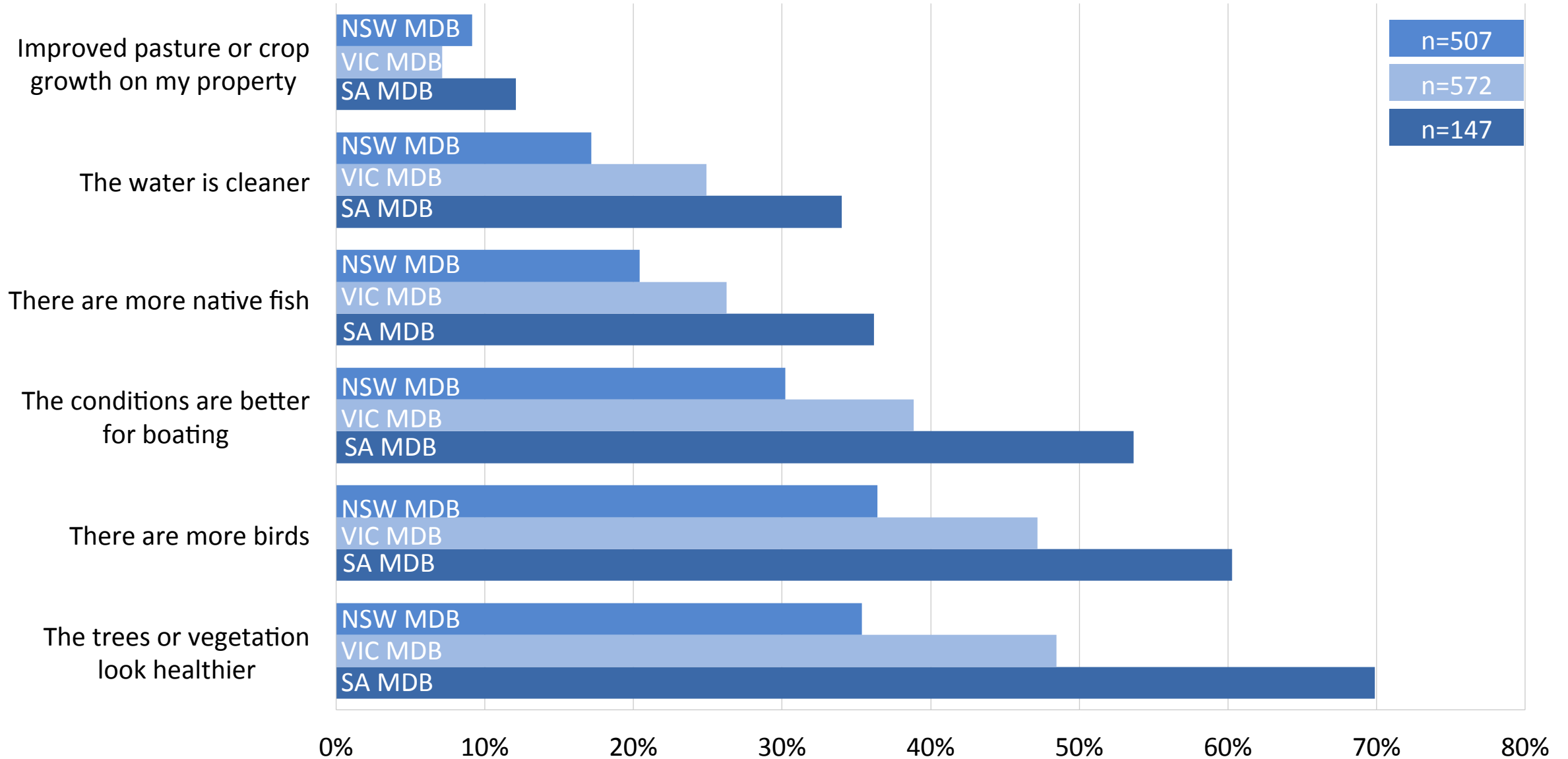
# Observed **positive** outcomes of e-watering (Basin residents, n=1249)



# Observed **positive** outcomes of e-watering: farmers and non-farmers



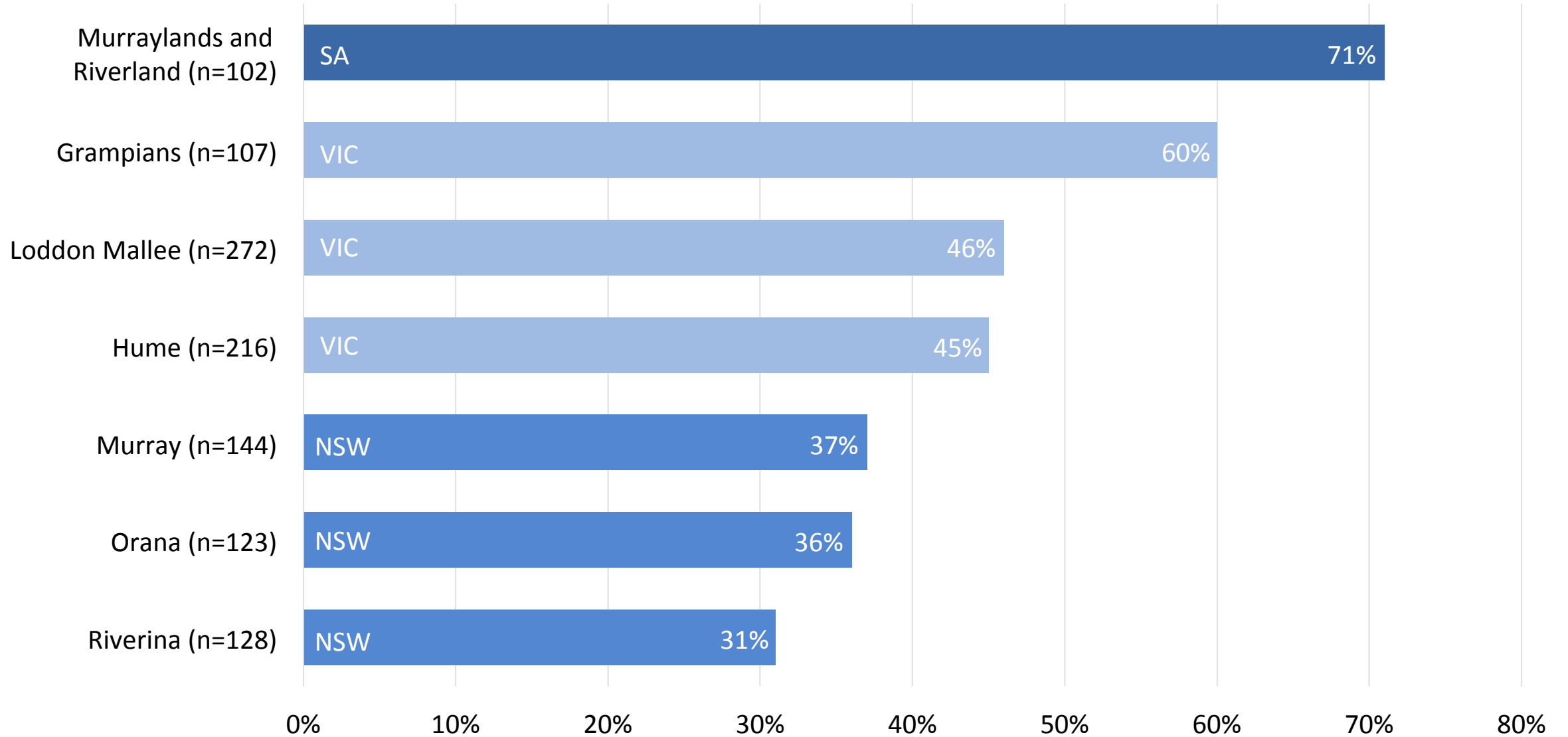
# Observed **positive** outcomes of e-watering: regions



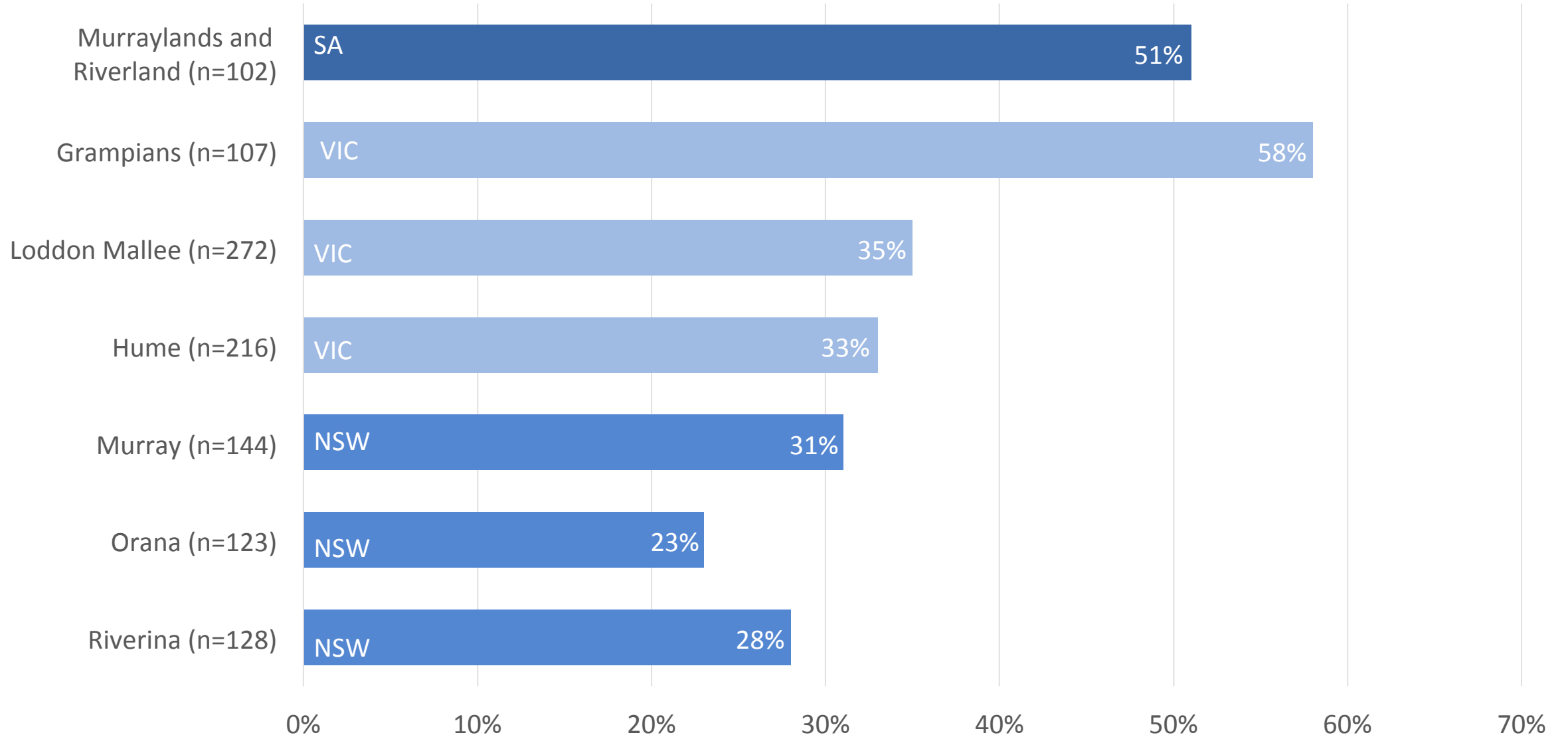
“ Well, to me it’s **given me a lot of confidence** that the whole of the Basin will be looked after in an **equal way**. That environmental flows to the bottom of the river have been agreed upon. **It’s just being able to attain where we’ll get that all from.** ”

[INTERVIEW #30, SOUTH AUSTRALIA]

# The trees and vegetation look healthier

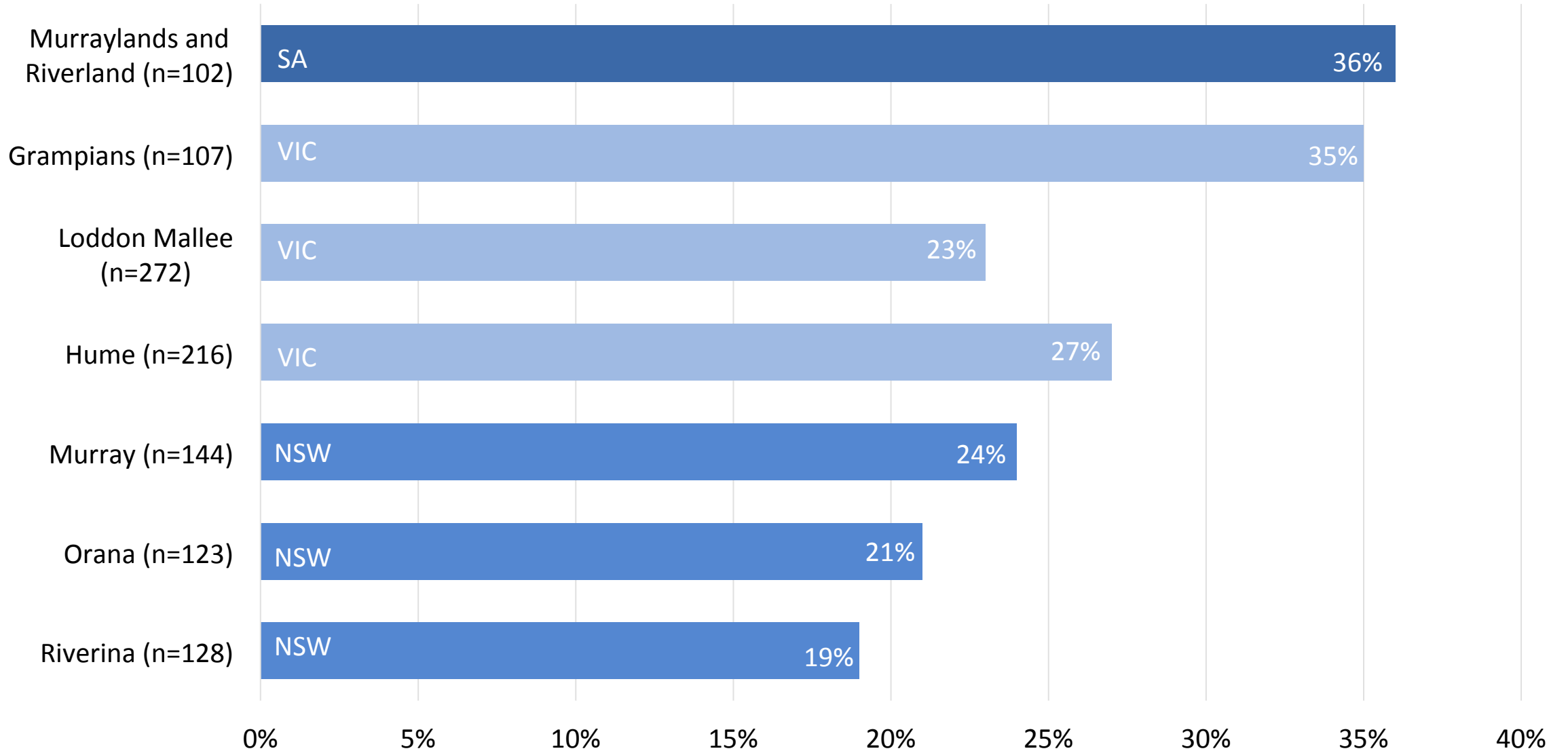


# The conditions are better for boating

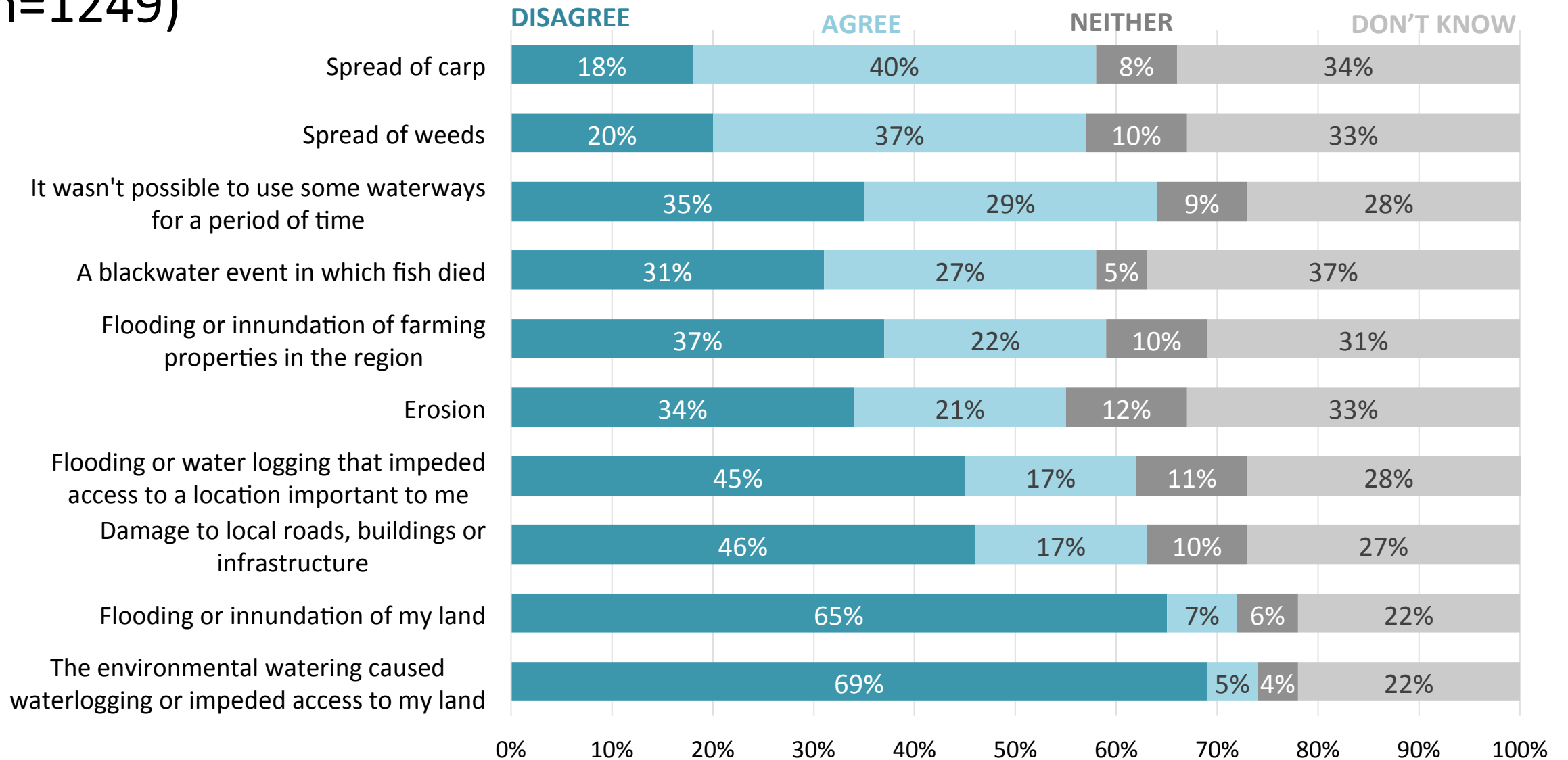




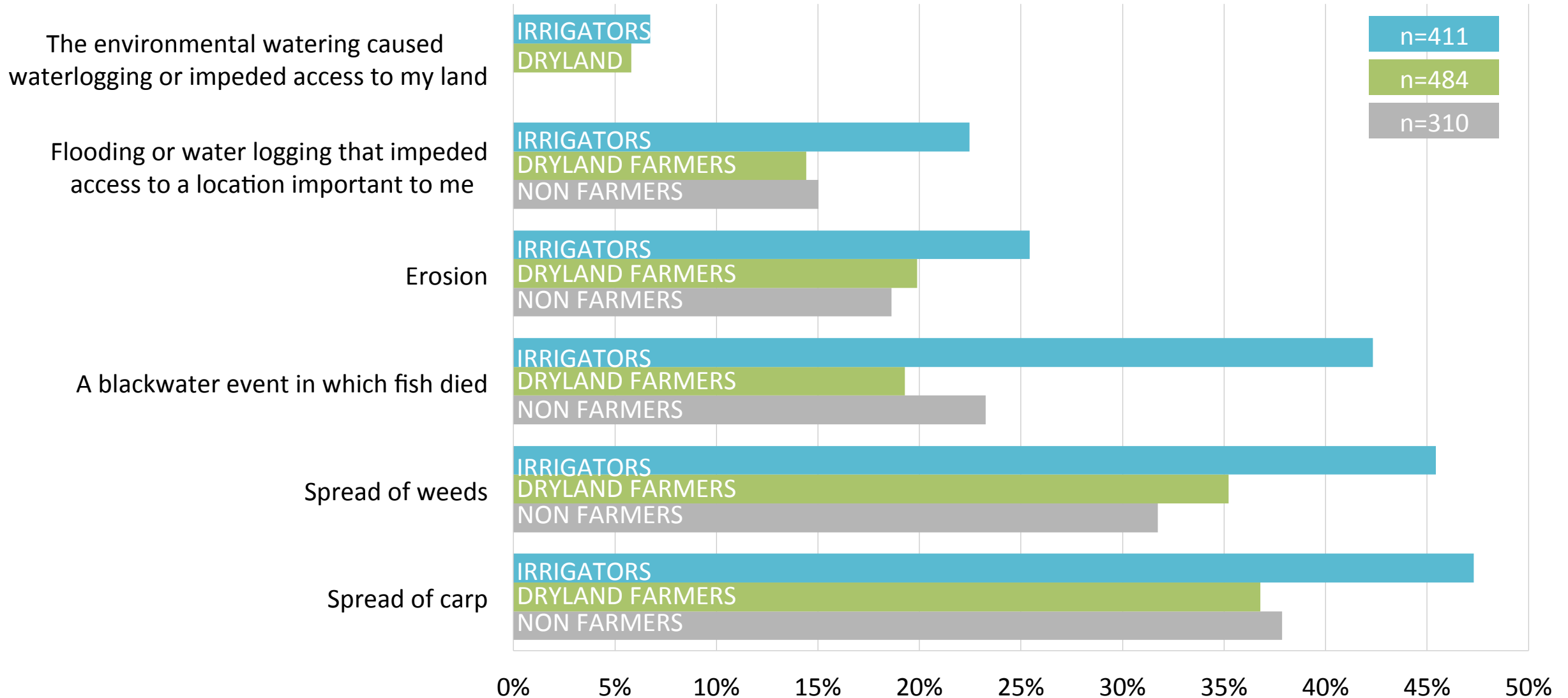
# There are more native fish



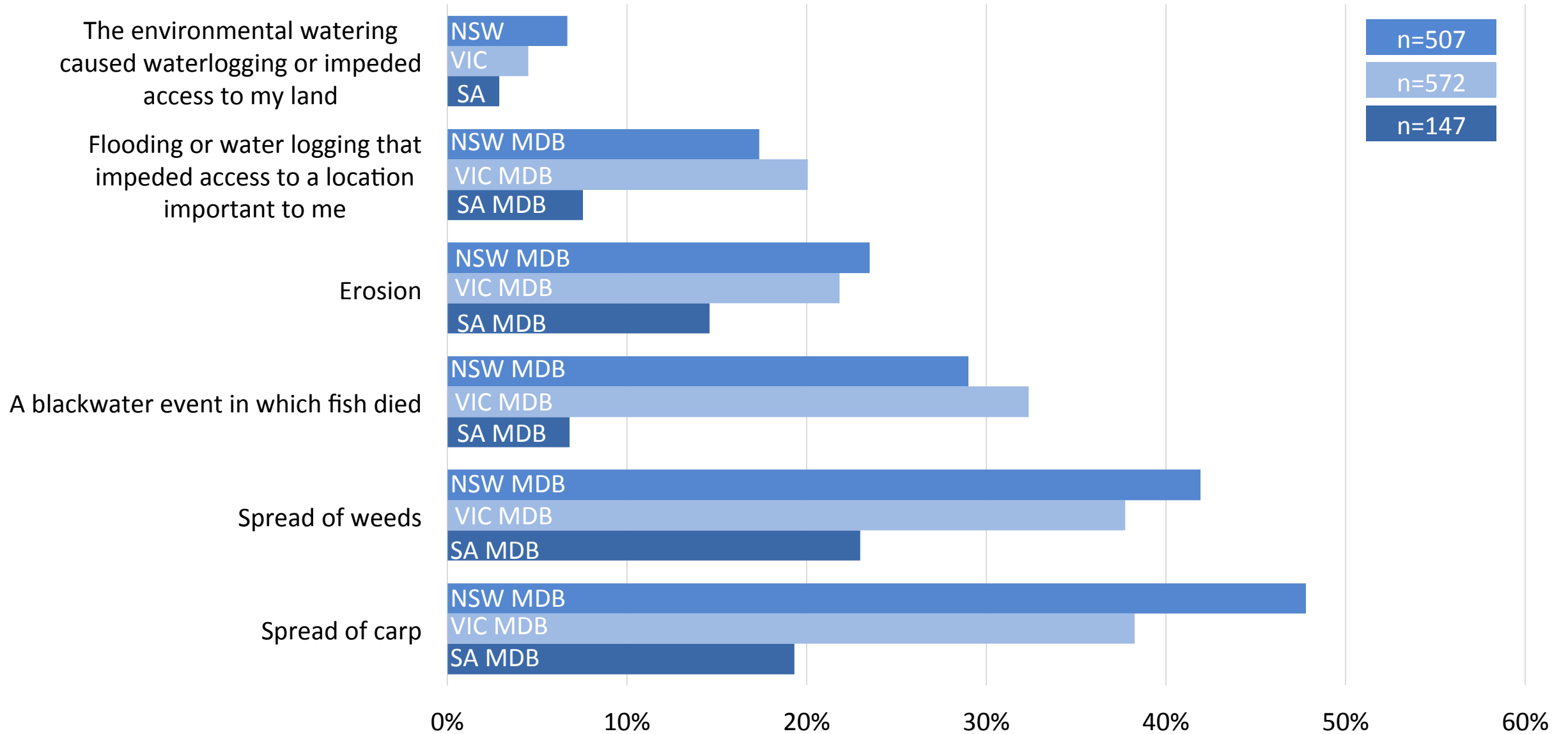
# Observed **negative** outcomes of e-watering (Basin residents, n=1249)



# Observed **negative** outcomes of e-watering: farmers and non-farmers



# Observed negative outcomes of e-watering: by region



“**River red gums** (on the local swamps along the Murrumbidgee River) that have been **flooded too often** that they are **actually dying** because of the amount of water they are getting.”

[INTERVIEW #7, NEW SOUTH WALES]

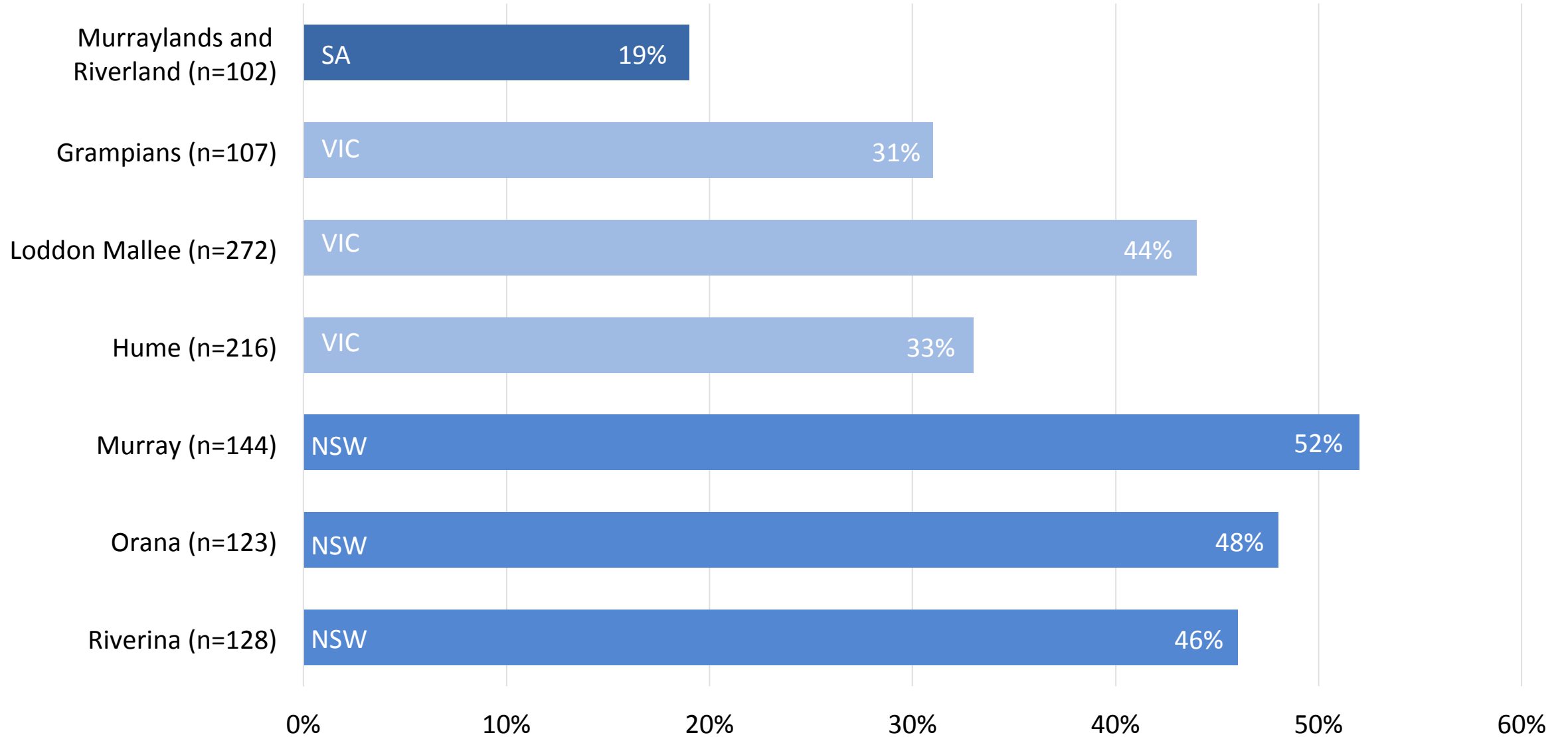
“

I think the environment's very important, but I **question at times if there's not an overkill as to what's actually needed** and what's required.

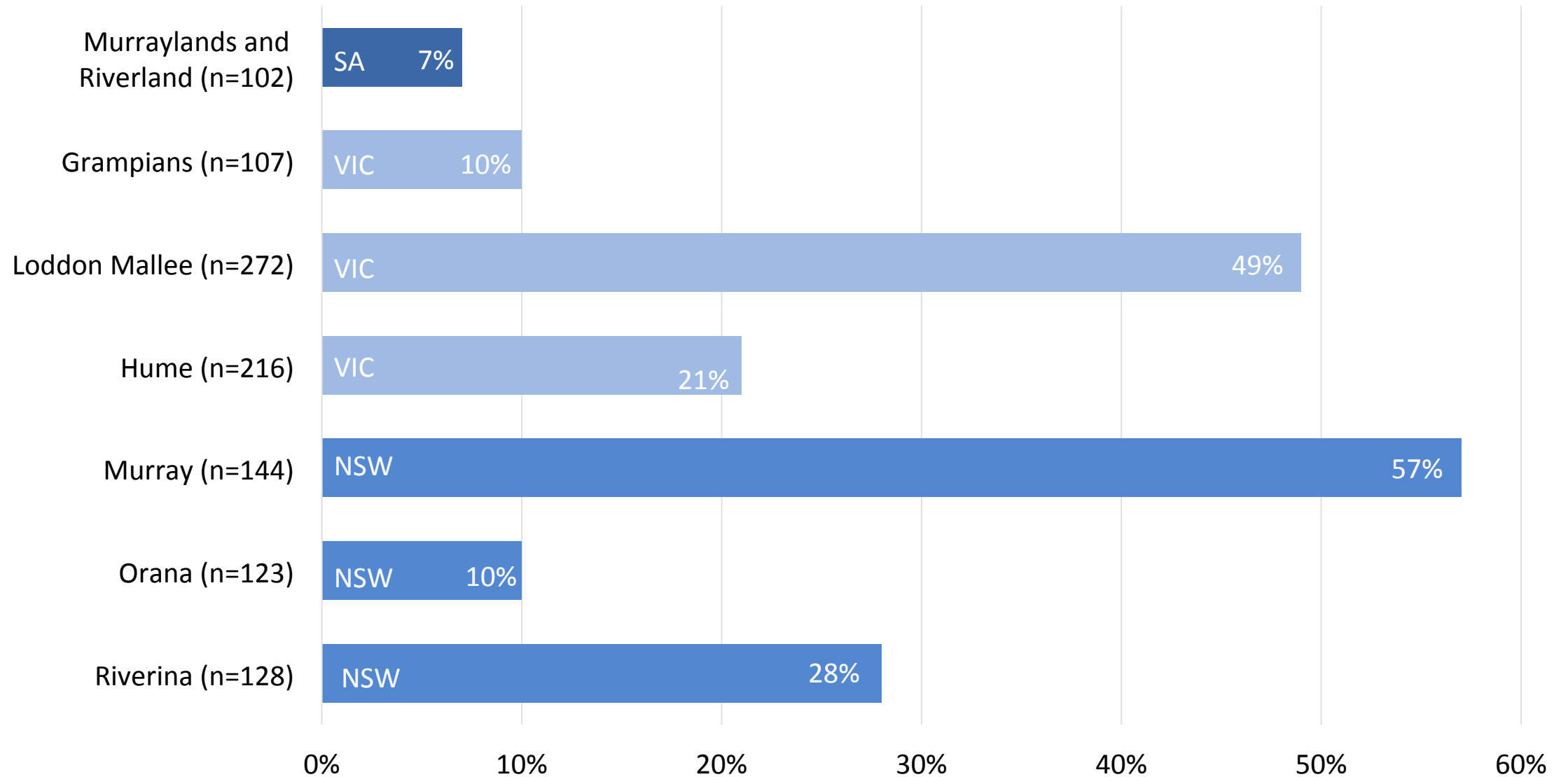
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[INTERVIEW #2, VICTORIA]

# Spread of carp

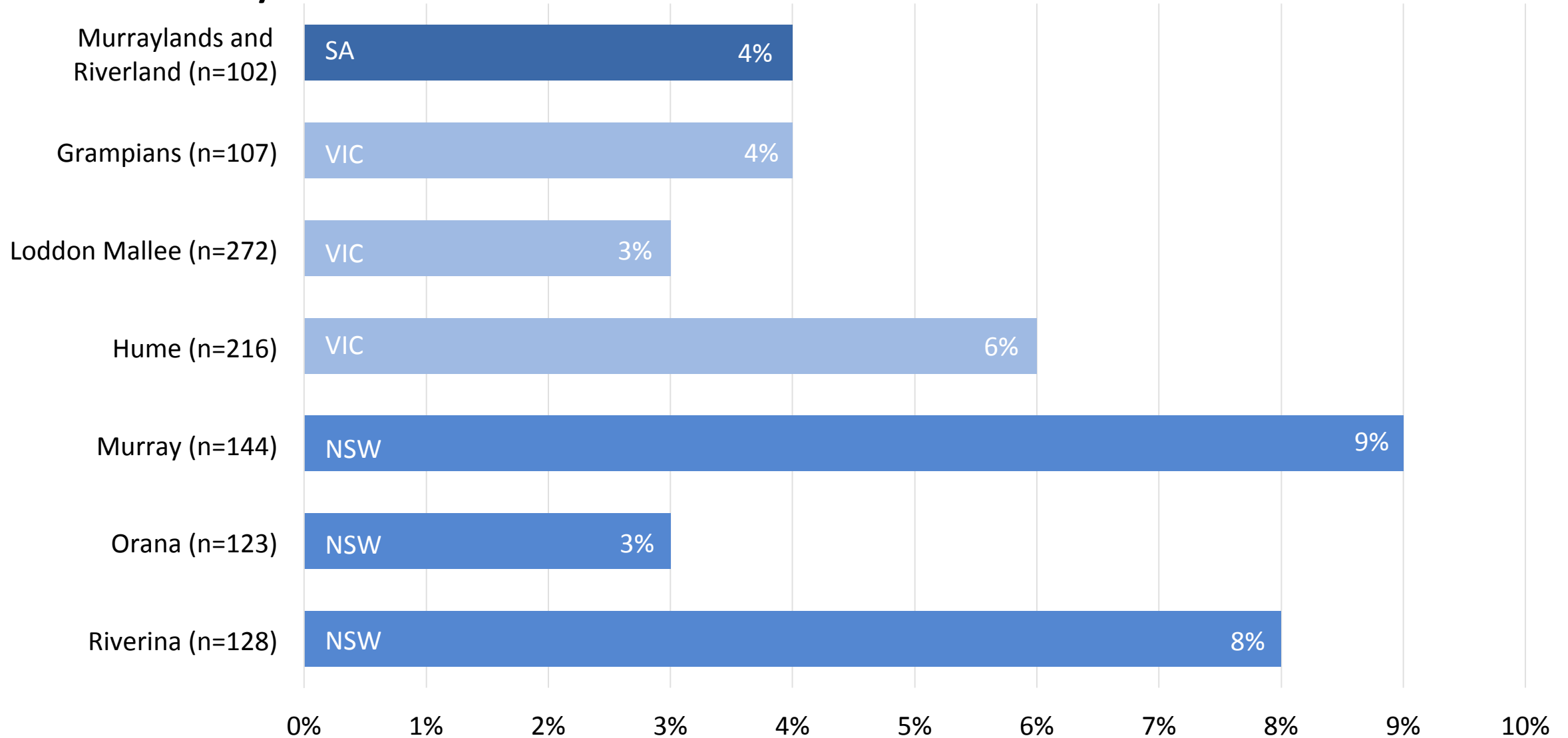


# A blackwater event in which fish died



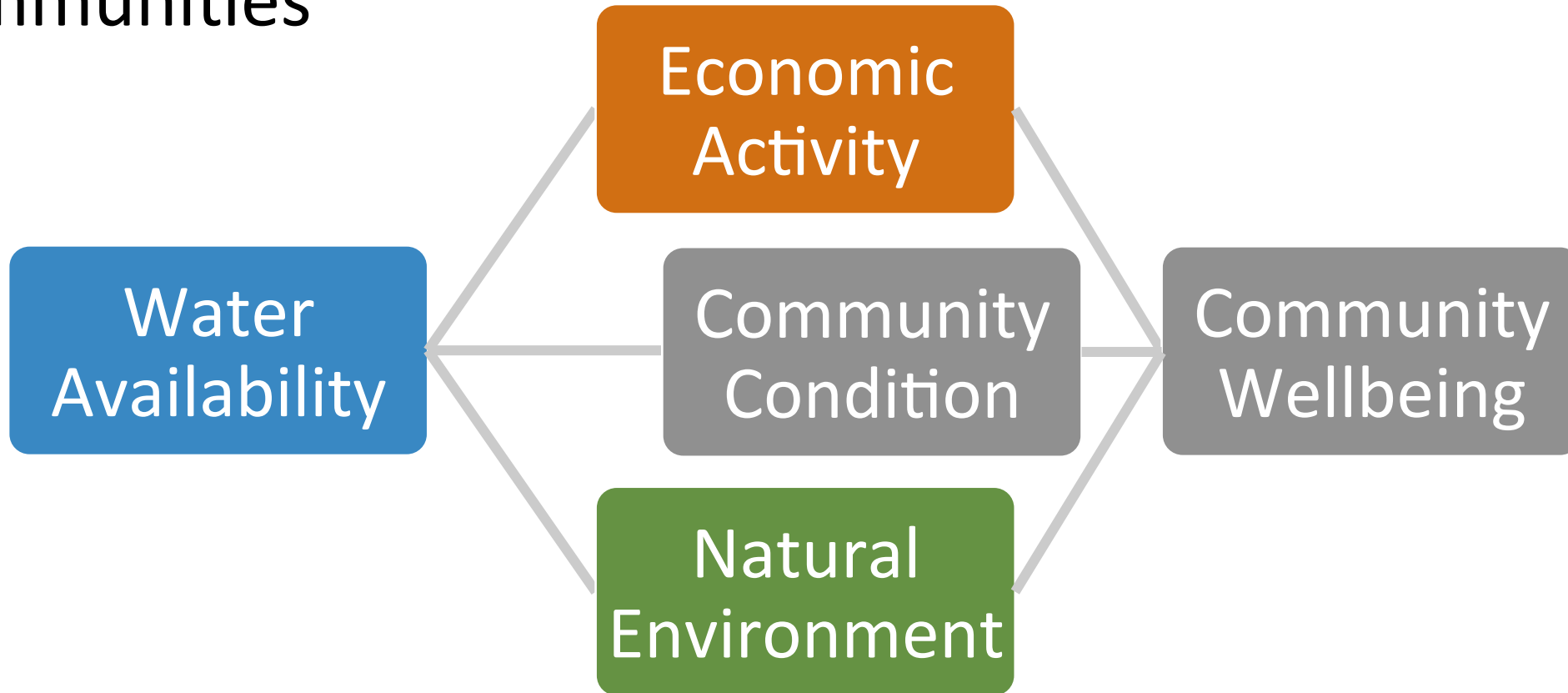


# The environmental watering caused water logging or impeded access to my land



# How will this information be used?

- Understanding the effects of water reforms on Basin communities



# Conclusions

- There is not community consensus about environmental watering, although views are more likely to be positive than negative
- Many people express complex views about cost and benefits
- Experiences of outcomes are different to some media reports – few report economic damage, ongoing waterlogging of land
- Every watering event differs, and we will analyse further by region and time of watering to better understand views