

Information Access Study

WA

June 2023



**Office of the
Information Commissioner**

Freedom of information for Western Australia



WOOLCOTT
RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT



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



Western Australia (WA) commissioned Woolcott Research & Engagement to investigate awareness and experience of information access rights amongst the general public.

A mixed mode survey amongst n=350 WA residents aged 18+ years was conducted between May 10 and May 31 2023 utilising an online panel and Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

Quotas were set by location (Perth/Regional WA), 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).

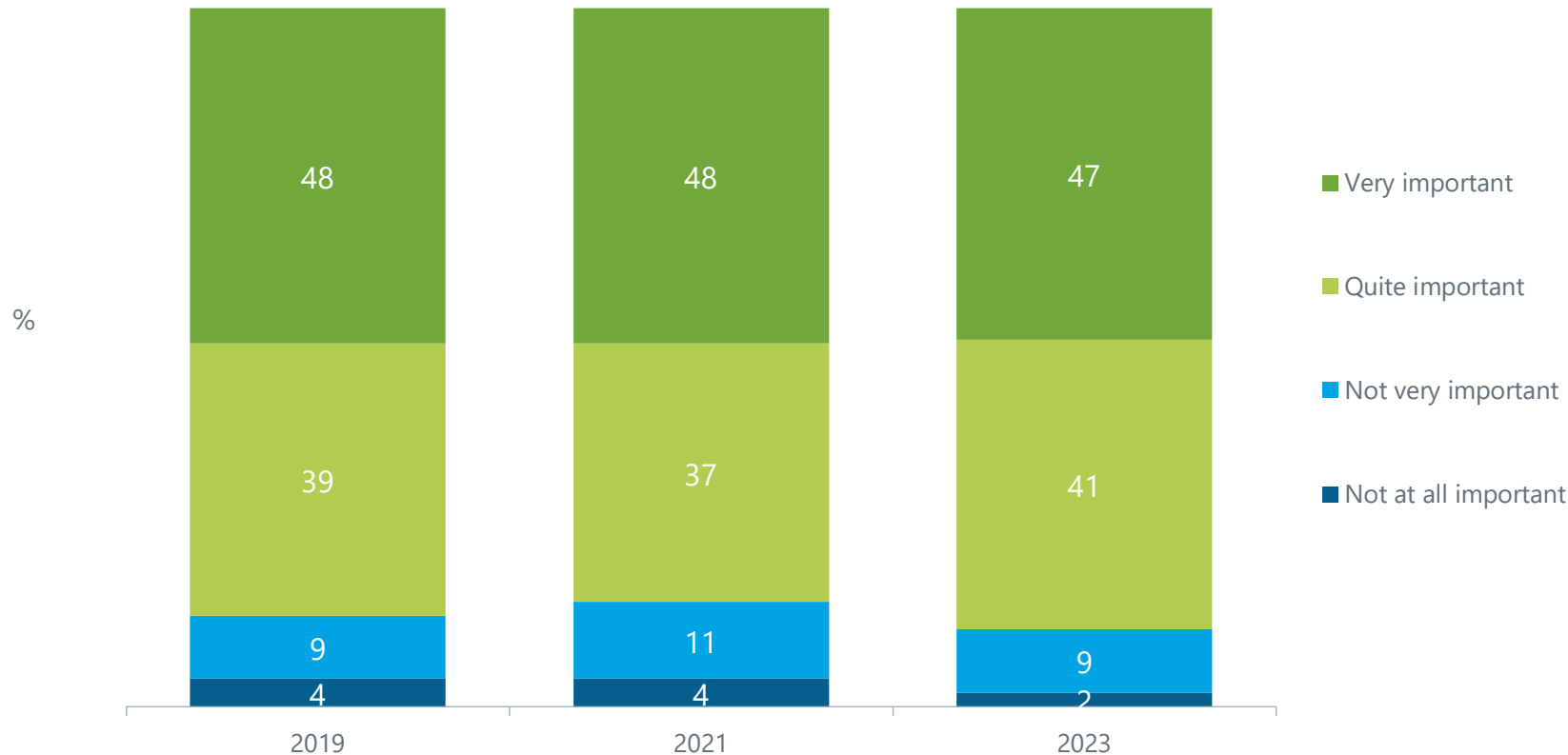
Due to rounding, percentages may not always add to 100.



Information Access



Importance of Having the Right to Access Government Information

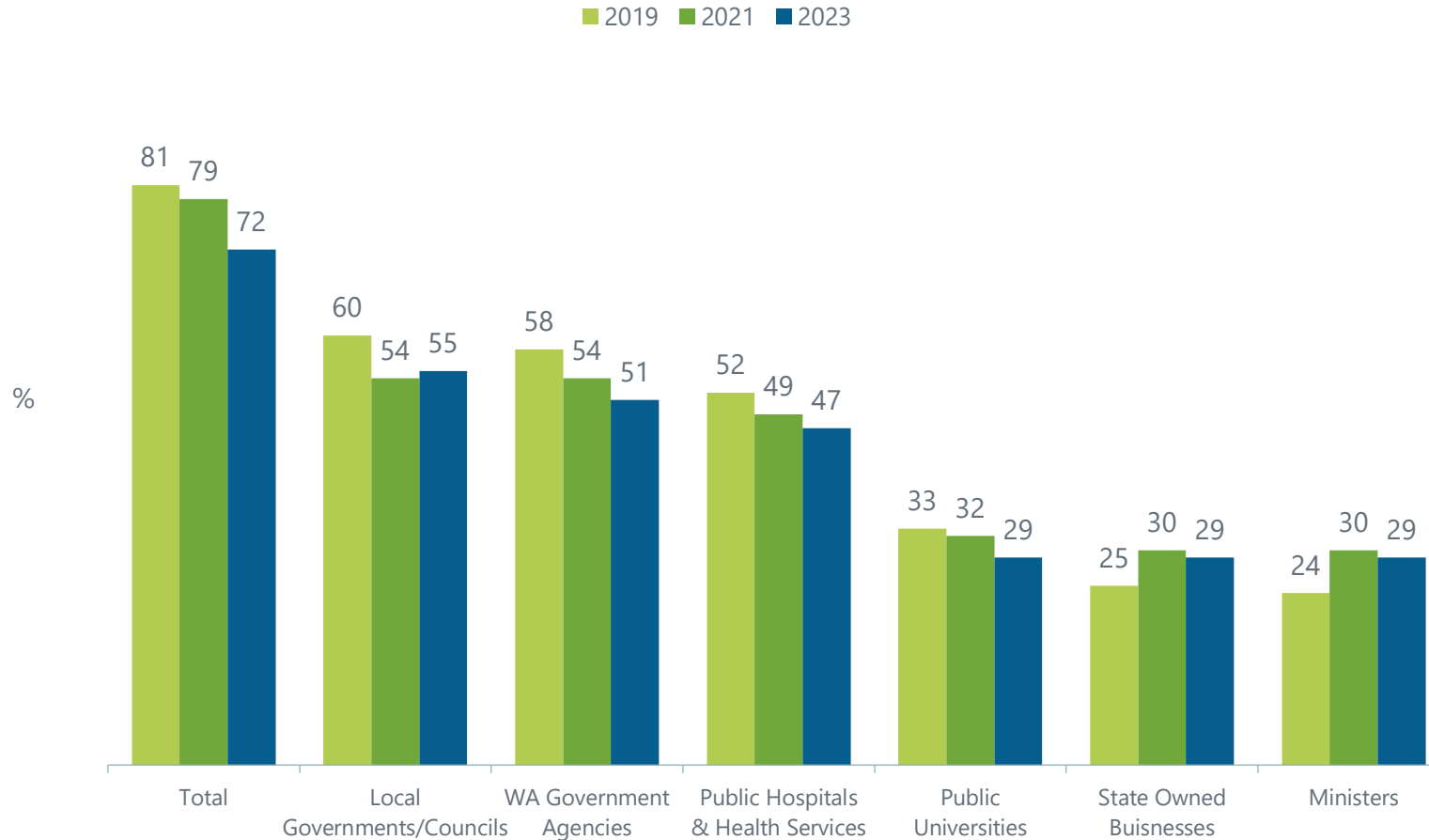


Similar to 2019 and 2021 results, most respondents (88%) indicated that having a right to access government information was either very important or quite important.

Respondents who had tried to access information held by a government agency in the last three years were much more likely to feel it was very important (58%).



Awareness of Right to Access Information

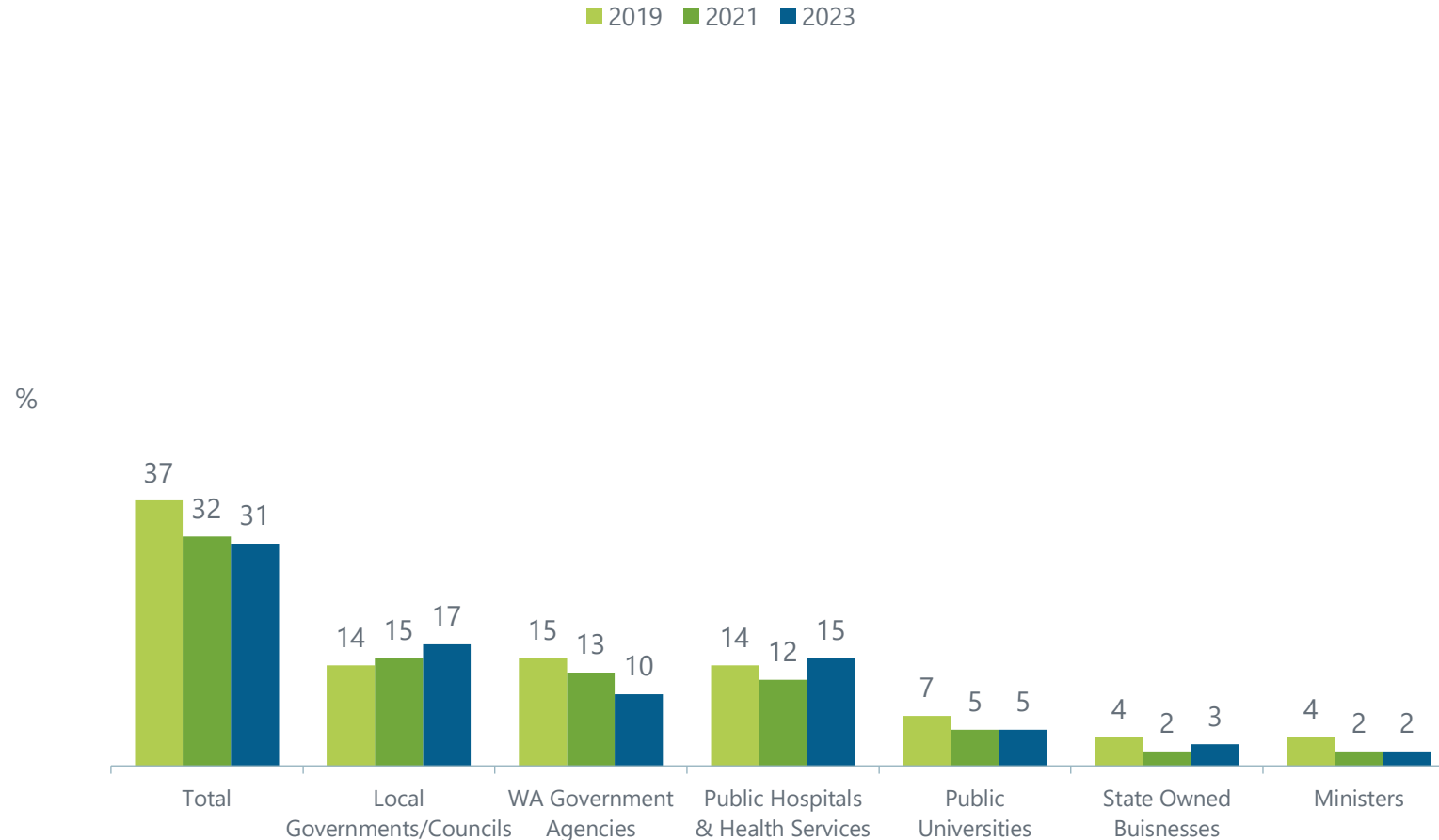


In 2023, slightly less people knew they had the right to access information held by the listed agencies (72% compared to 79% in 2021).

Respondents were more likely to be aware of their right to access information from Local Governments/Councils (55%), and least likely to be aware of the right to access information from Public Universities, State Owned Buisnesses and Ministers (29% respectively).



Attempts to Access Information in the Last 3 Years

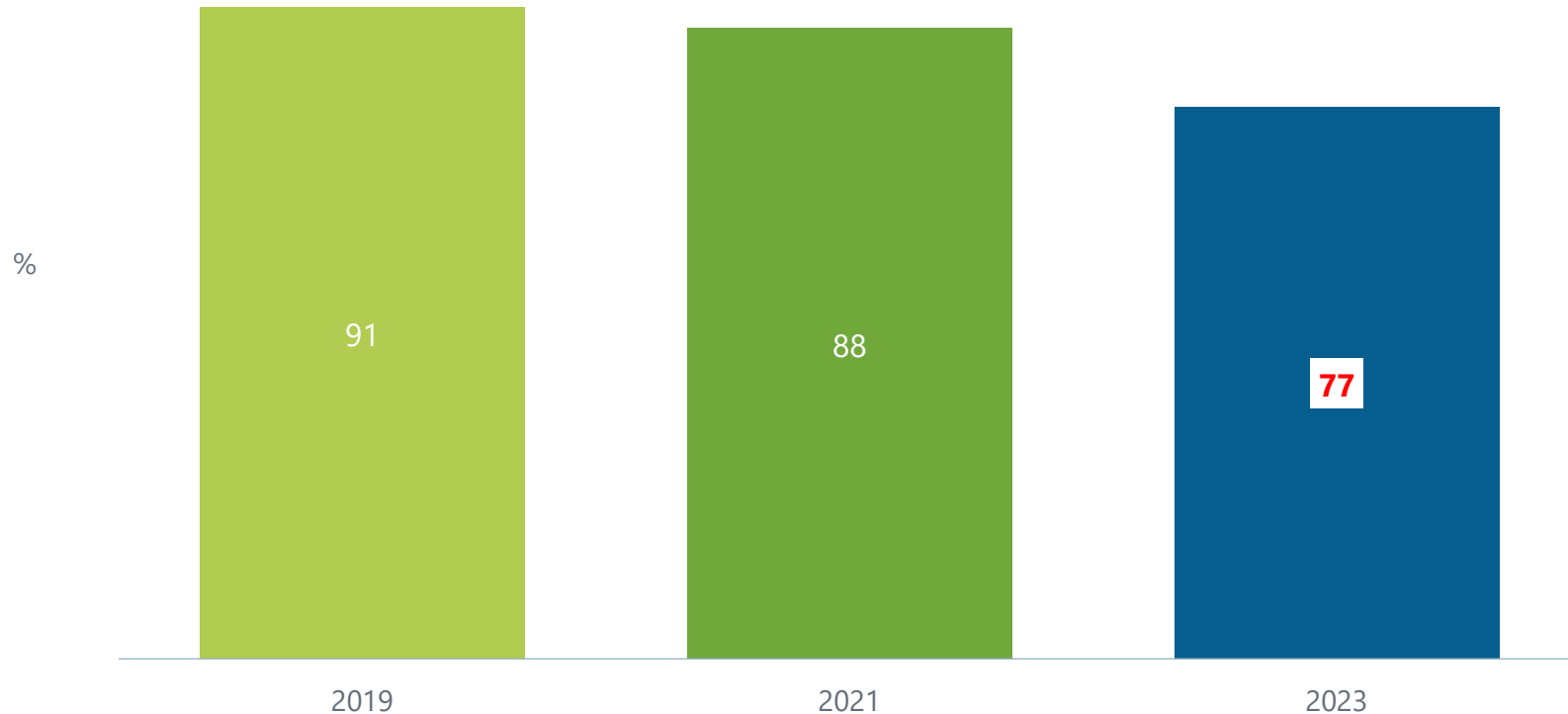


Similar to previous years, close to a third of respondents (31%) had tried to access information held by government agencies in the last three years.

As with previous years, respondents were more likely to access information held by Local Government (17%) and public hospitals and health services (15%).



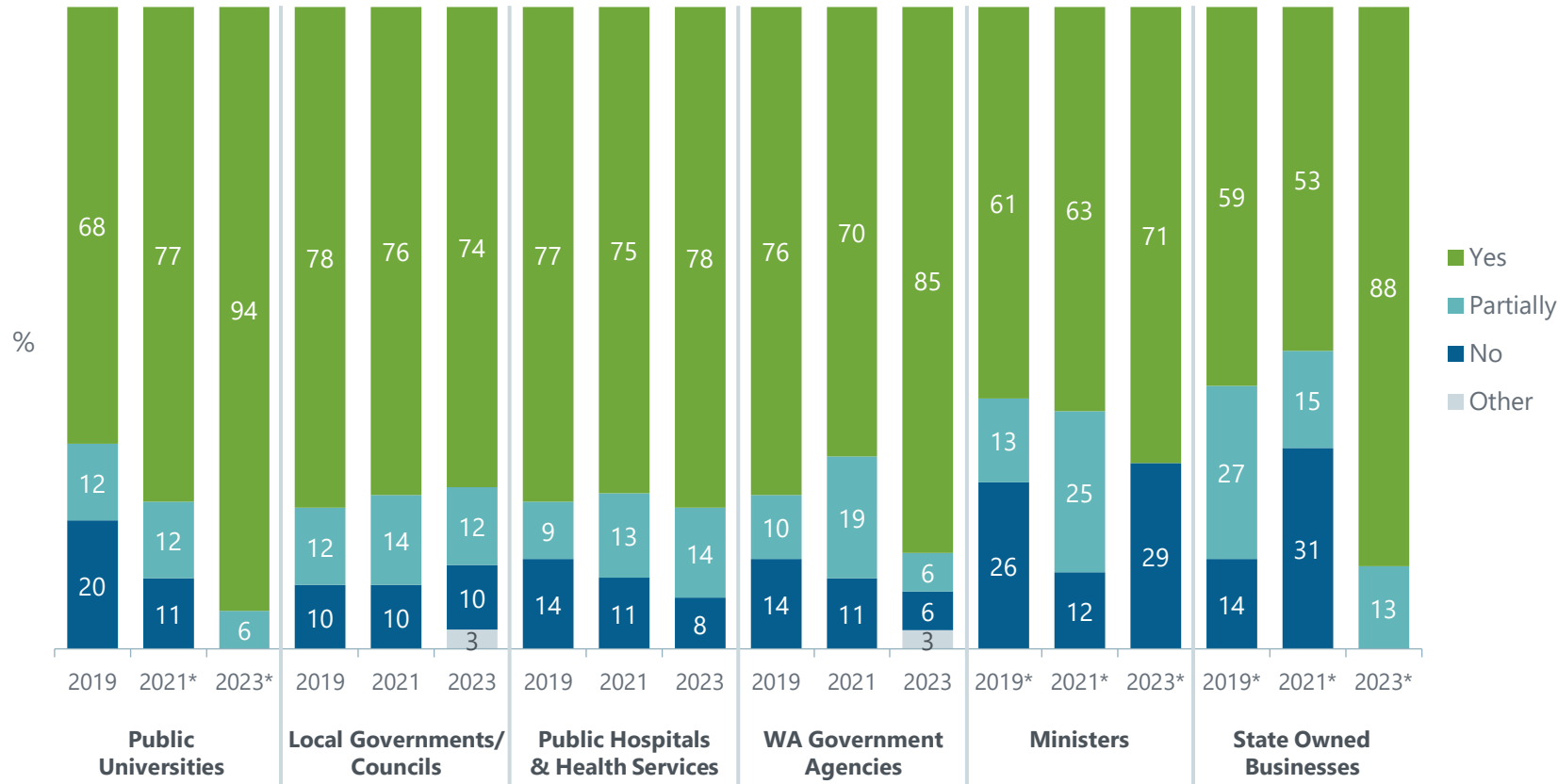
Success in Attempting to Access Information



In 2023, significantly fewer respondents who tried to access information from these agencies were successful (77%).



Success in Attempting to Access Information by Agency



Respondents who attempted to access information from public universities, WA government agencies and State-owned businesses were more successful compared to prior years and other entities.

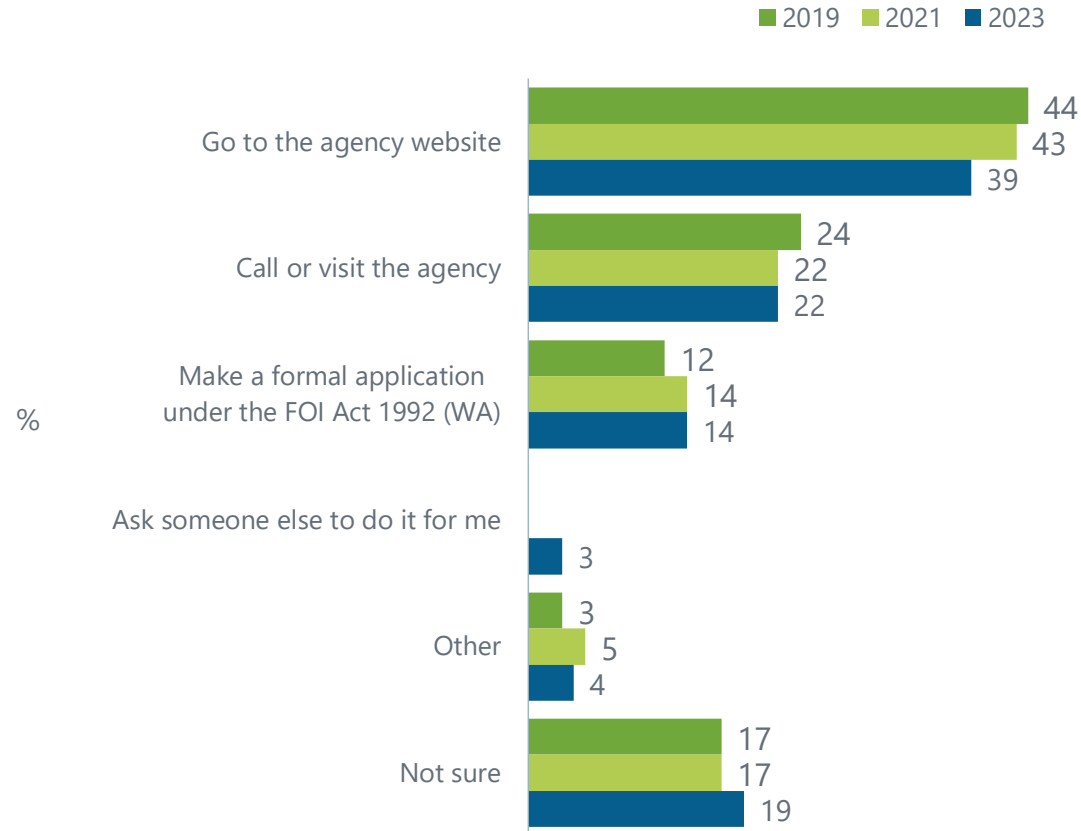
Q6. Were you successful in accessing information from ...? SR

Base: Respondents who had attempted to access information; Public Universities (2019 n=26, 2021 n=16*, 2023 n=17*), Local Governments/Councils (2019 n=50, 2021 n=51, 2023 n=58), Public Hospitals & Health Services (2019 n=55, 2021 n=44, 2023 n=51), WA Government Agencies (2019 n=51, 2021 n=44, 2023 n=35), Ministers (2019 n=15*, 2021 n=8*, 2023 n=8*), State Owned Businesses (2019 n=15*, 2021 n=6*, 2023 n=9*)

*Caution: small base size, indicative only



Methods of Accessing Information



The main method of accessing information remained via agency websites.

A further one fifth indicated they would call or visit the agency.

Almost 20% of WA residents indicated they were unsure of how to access information.



Desired Types of Online Information & Assistance



Online Information & Assistance	2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=354)	2023 % (n=350)
Policies and procedures	60	60	54
Information about decision making processes affecting the community	50	62	49
Statistics and datasets	36	54	41
Being directed to online action, for example, obtaining a service or conducting a transaction online	54	51	39
Financial information, for example, expenditure, procurement and contracts	39	49	39

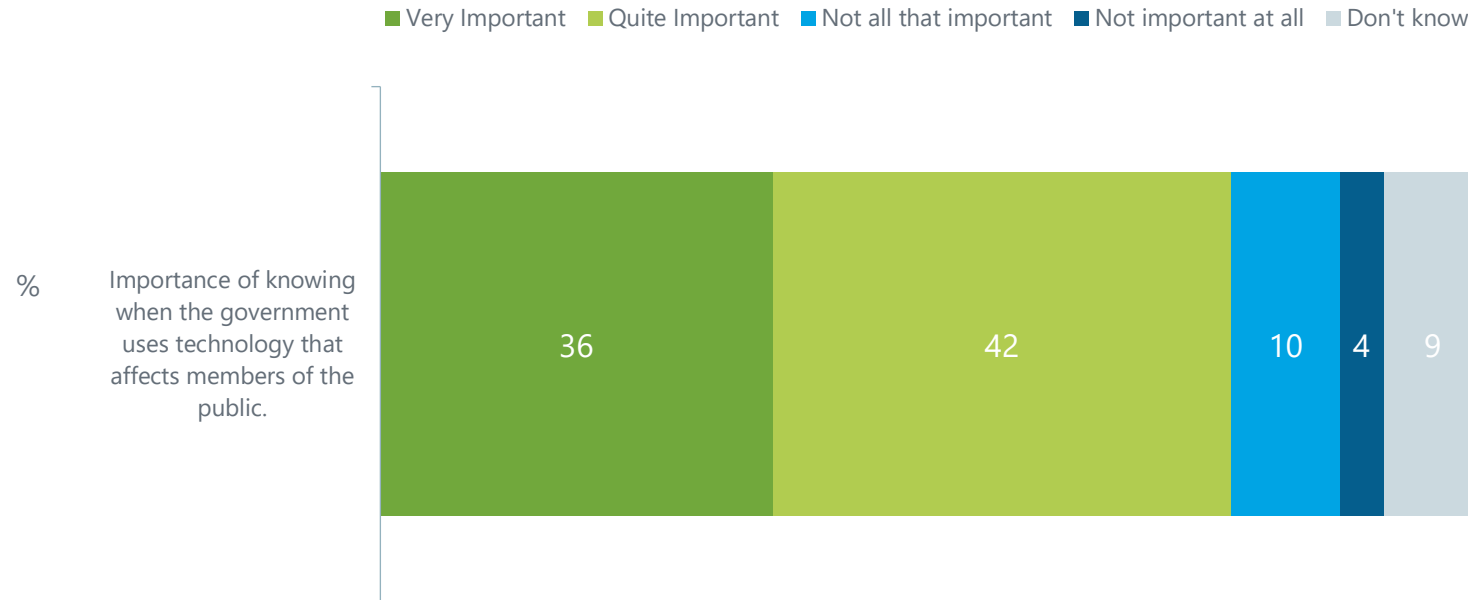
Interest in government agency information was similar to previous years, with access to policy and procedures being the most sought after (54%), followed by information about decision making processes affecting the community (49%).



Community Attitudes



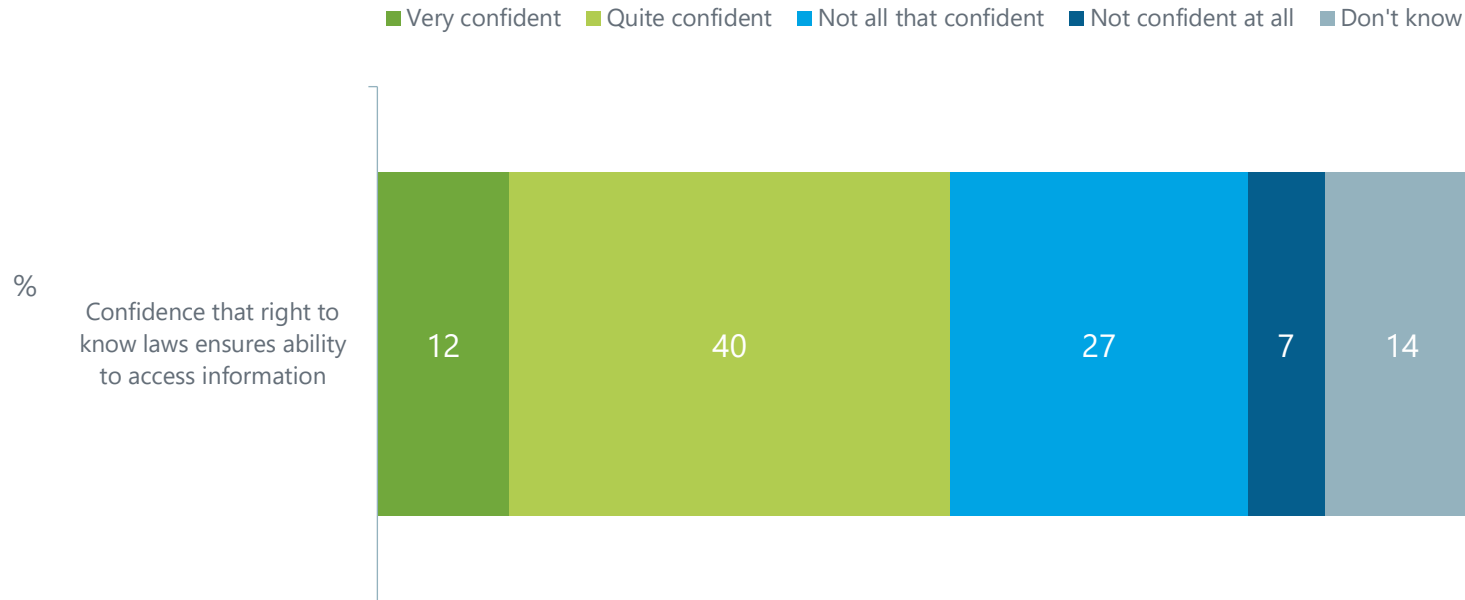
Importance of Knowing Government's use of Technology in Decision Making



Over three quarters (78%) of respondents indicated that knowing when the government uses technology that affects members of the public was important.



Confidence in Freedom of Information Laws



More than half (52%) of respondents were either very or quite confident that Freedom of Information Laws ensured the public could access information about how decisions are made by the government.

However, approximately a third of people (34%) indicated a lack of confidence in these laws.





Demographics



Gender & Age



		2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=354)	2023 % (n=350)
Gender 	Female	50	53	50
	Male	50	47	50
	Gender Neutral †	Not an option	-	-
	Prefer not to indicate †		<1	-
Age 	18-24	9	8	7
	25-34	24	20	23
	35-44	17	19	20
	45-54	18	17	15
	55-64	8	5	5
	65-74	10	12	9
	75+	13	18	21



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

Q2. Do you identify as being...?

† Options added in 2021

Base: All respondents; 2019 n=350, 2021 n=354, 2023 n=350

Working Status & Main Language Spoken



		2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=354)	2023 % (n=350)
Working Status 	Working full time	36	41	44
	Retired	24	32	28
	Working part time	17	14	17
	Student	8	6	2
	Unemployed	7	4	2
	Engaged in home duties	8	4	6
Main Language Spoken 	English	93	94	93
	Cantonese/Mandarin	2	<1	1
	Other	5	6	6
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander 	Yes	Question not asked		3
	No			97



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; 2019 n=350, 2021 n=354, 2023 n=350

Summary



Summary



Consistent with previous reads, the vast majority felt that their right to access government information was very (47%) or quite (41%) important.

In 2023, slightly fewer people knew they had the right to access information held by the listed agencies (72% compared to 79% in 2021).

Respondents were more likely to be aware of their right to access information from Local Governments/Councils (55%), and least likely to be aware of the right to access information from Public Universities, State Owned Businesses and Ministers (29% respectively).

Approximately a third (31%) had tried to access information held by at least one WA entity, most commonly local government/councils and public hospitals and health services (17% and 15% respectively).

Over three quarters (77%) of those who had tried to access information were successful at doing so. Respondents who attempted to access information from public universities, WA government agencies and State-owned businesses were most successful and more successful compared to prior years.

The main method of accessing information remained via agency websites (39%). A further one fifth indicated they would call or visit the agency (22%).

- Almost 20% of WA residents indicated they were unsure of how to access information

Interest in government agency information was similar to previous years, with access to policy and procedures being the most sought after (54%), followed by information about decision making processes affecting the community (49%).

Over three quarters (78%) believed that it was important to know when the government uses technology to assist in decision making that affects members of the public.

Slightly over half (52%) were confident that the Freedom of Information laws in WA 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

