



INFORMATION ACCESS - COMMUNITY STUDY REPORT

OFFICE OF THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER WA › OCT 2025

fiftyfive5

Part of **Accenture** Song



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SECTION 1

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY



The main objective of the study is to explore public awareness and experiences of information access rights among the general public, and to inform strategic decisions that promote positive engagement with the relevant jurisdictions and agencies.

2025 marks the first wave of the survey managed by Fiftyfive5, following many years under Woolcott Research.

With this transition, the study has undergone some changes, meaning that results are not always directly comparable with previous years.

Key changes include:

- **Methodology:** transition from CATI to online surveys
- **Sample sizes:** significantly increased to improve robustness
- **Questionnaire alignment:** consistent wording and answer options across jurisdictions, where relevant and possible
- **Question and code frames:** revised to ensure clarity, ease of response, and suitability for online completion

Six individual surveys were conducted — one for each jurisdiction. While each survey was run separately, the alignment of questionnaires allows for comparisons across most questions between jurisdictions.

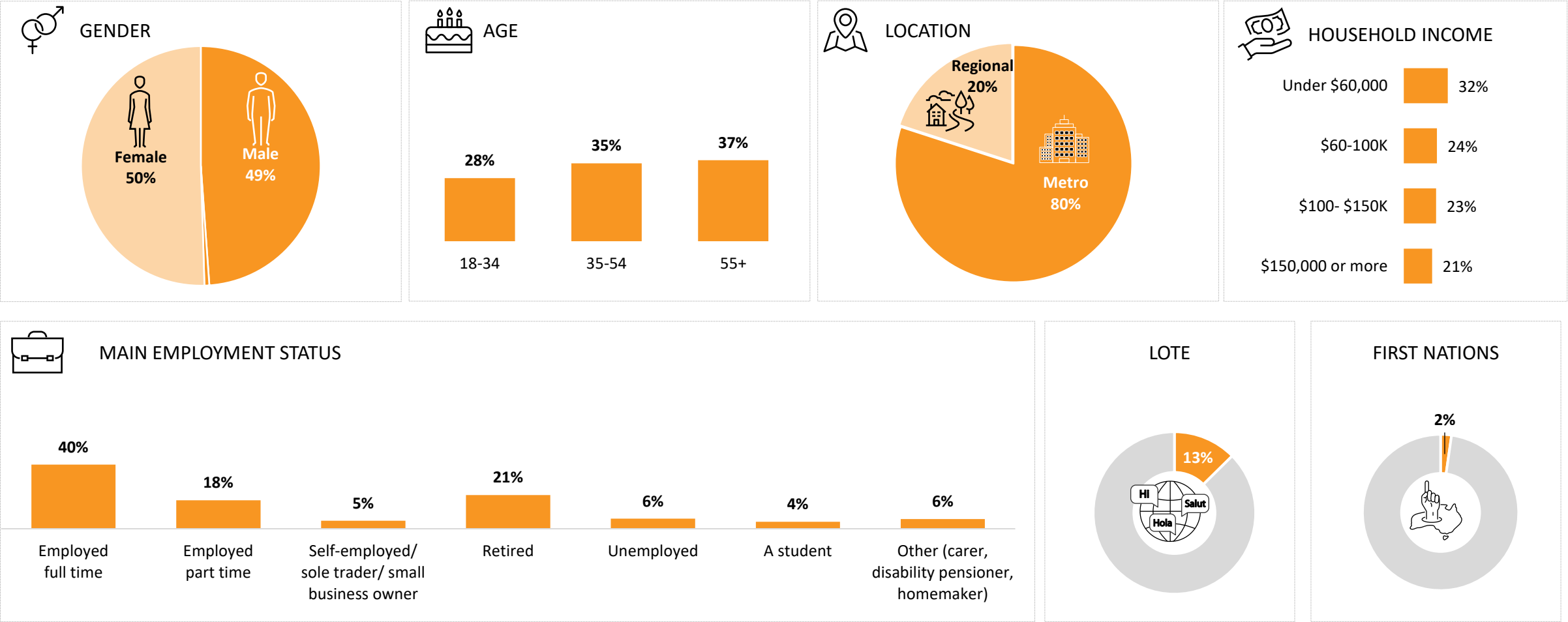
Each survey was conducted online and took **approx. 5-10 minutes**, depending on awareness and previous experiences.

For each jurisdiction, we **targeted a representative sample** by age, gender, and metro vs regional proportions. For the Federal survey state/ territory proportions were also considered.

Following fieldwork, each jurisdiction’s **results were weighted** proportionately to their own population data to ensure representativeness of the findings within each jurisdiction.

Jurisdictions	Final sample, n=
Federal	1,098
NSW	916
VIC	903
QLD	919
WA	929
ACT	910

TO ENSURE A SAMPLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN POPULATION, WE USED ABS DATA TO GUIDE SAMPLING AND APPLIED POST-FIELDWORK WEIGHTING TO CORRECT FOR ANY IMBALANCES

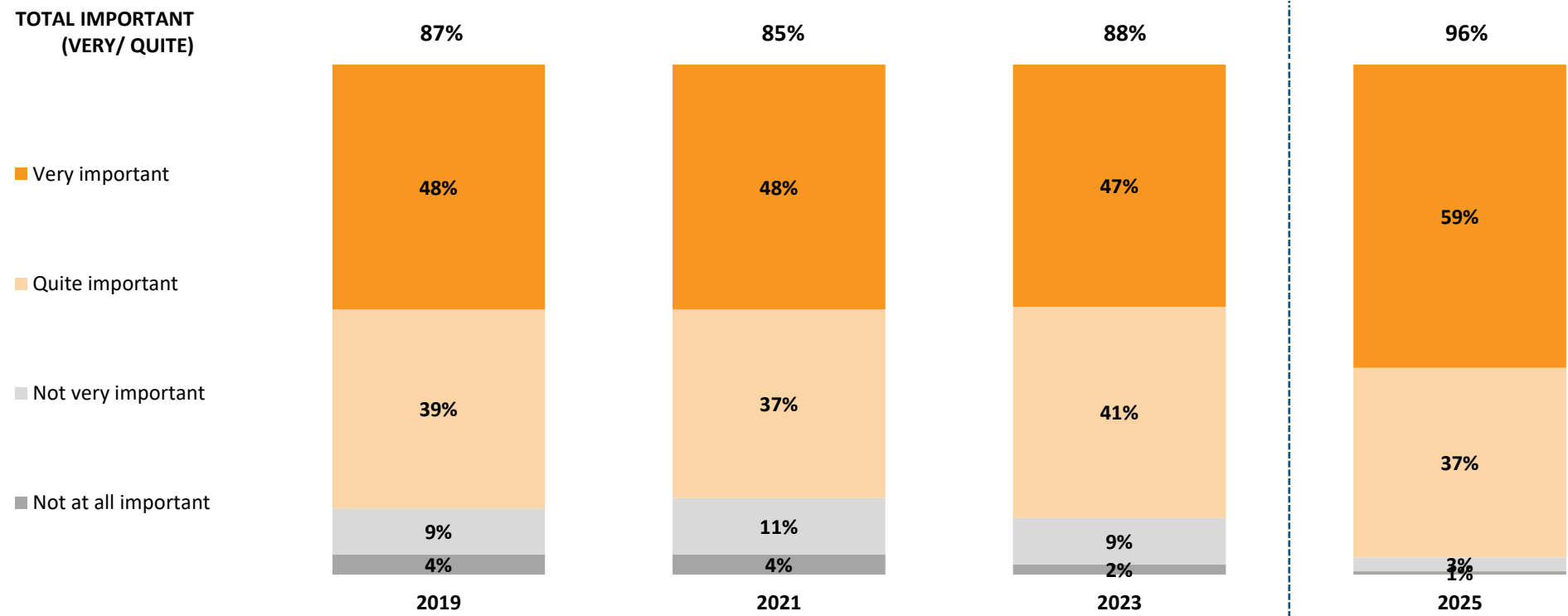


SECTION 2

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES TO ACCESSING GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

WELL ABOVE PREVIOUS YEARS, ALMOST ALL (96%) CLAIM TO BELIEVE THAT THE RIGHT TO ACCESS ANY GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT, INCLUDING 59% SAYING IT IS VERY IMPORTANT

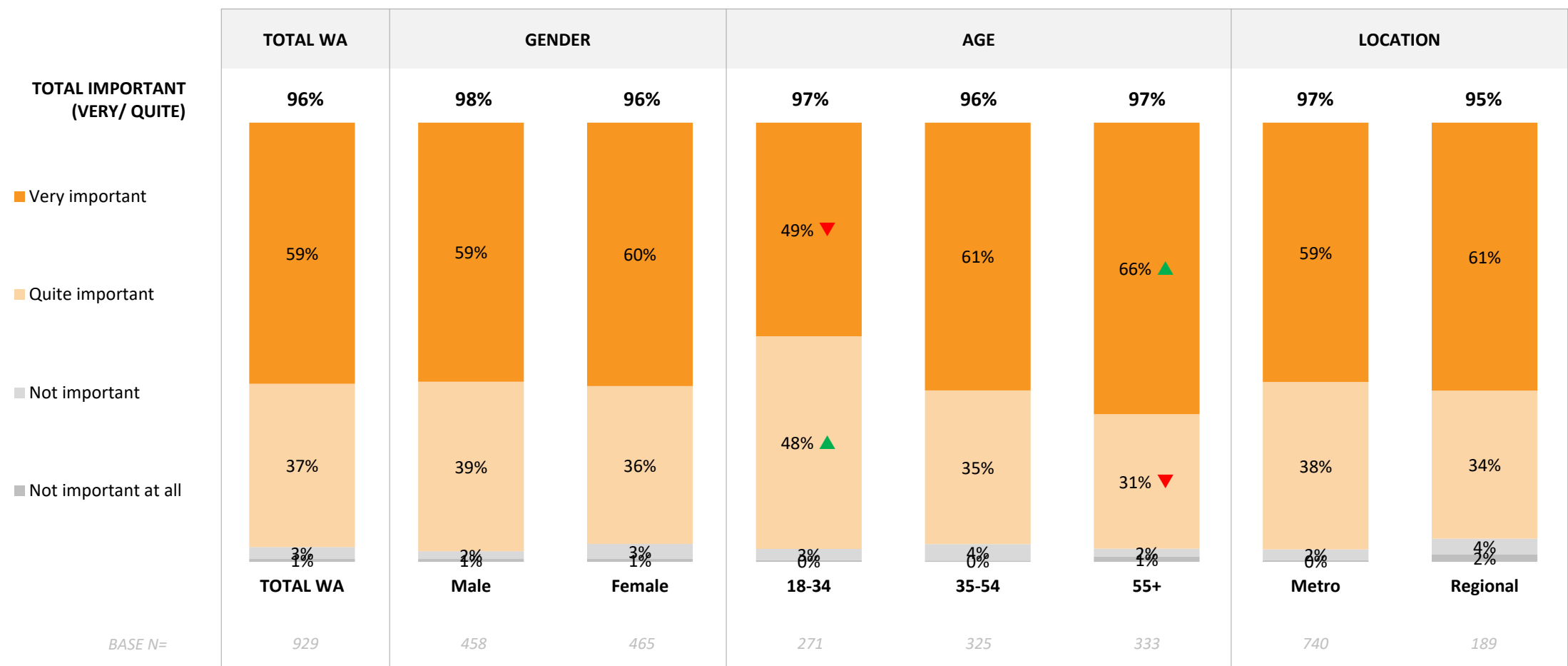
How important do you believe it is to have the right to access any government-held information?



Results should be interpreted with caution, as changes to the methodology in 2025 might have influenced results

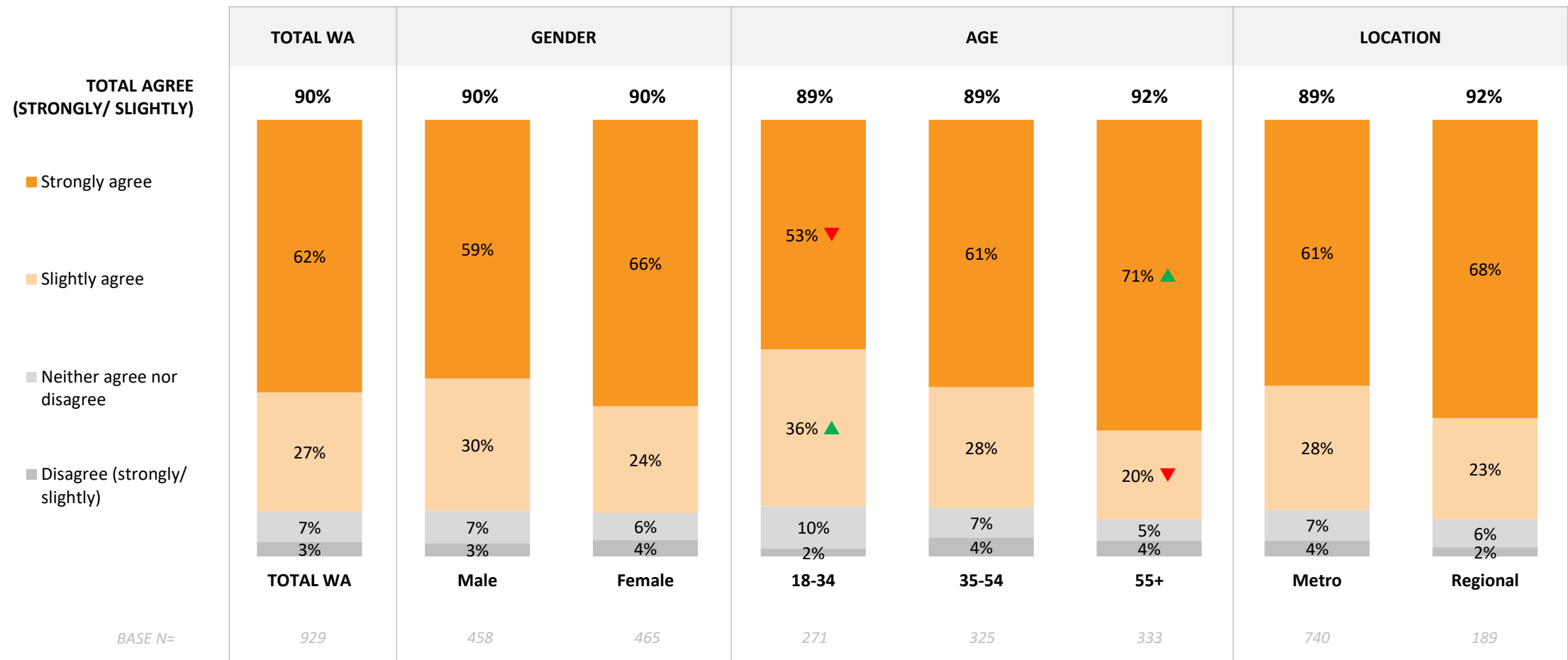
ALL GROUPS, REGARDLESS OF AGE, GENDER, OR LOCATION, BELIEVE THAT THE RIGHT TO ACCESS GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT, ALTHOUGH OLDER AGE GROUPS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO RATE IT AS VERY IMPORTANT

How important do you believe it is to have the right to access any government-held information?



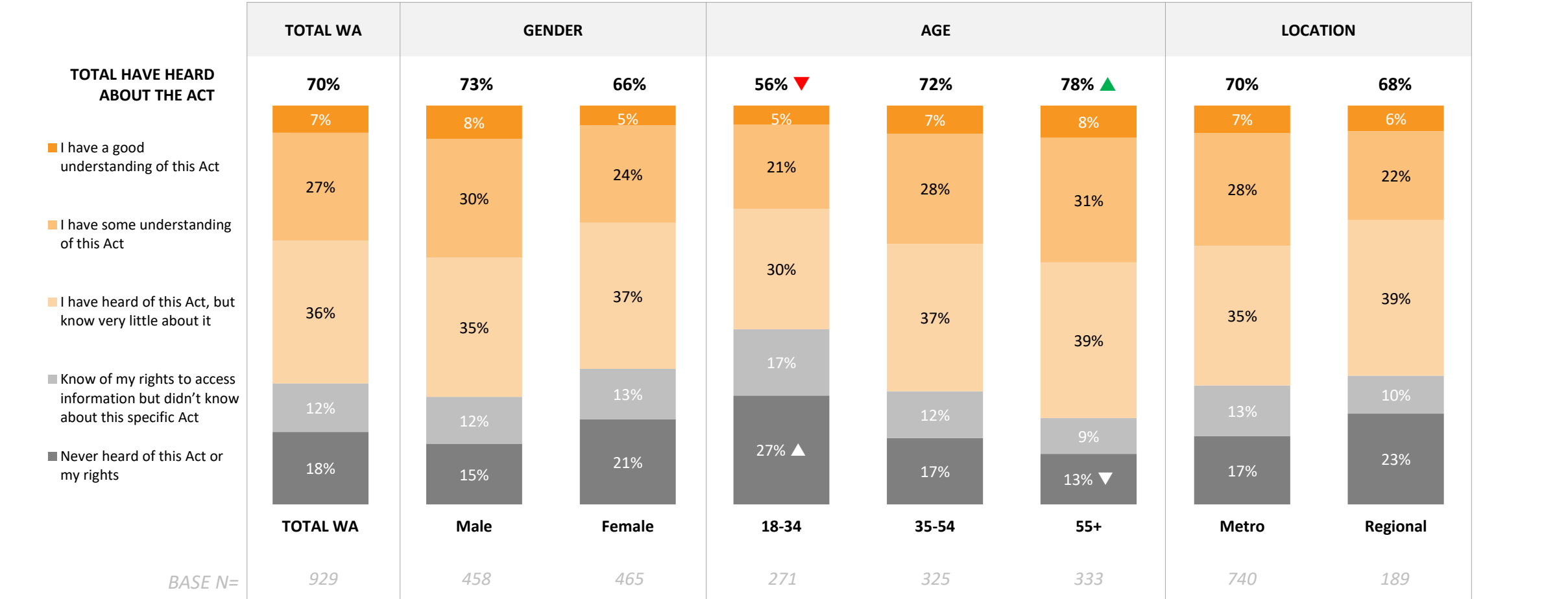
THE MAJORITY (90%) AGREE THAT ALLOWING PUBLIC ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION IS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY – WITH OLDER GENERATIONS SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO STRONGLY AGREE

To what extent do you agree or disagree that public access to government information improves government transparency and accountability?



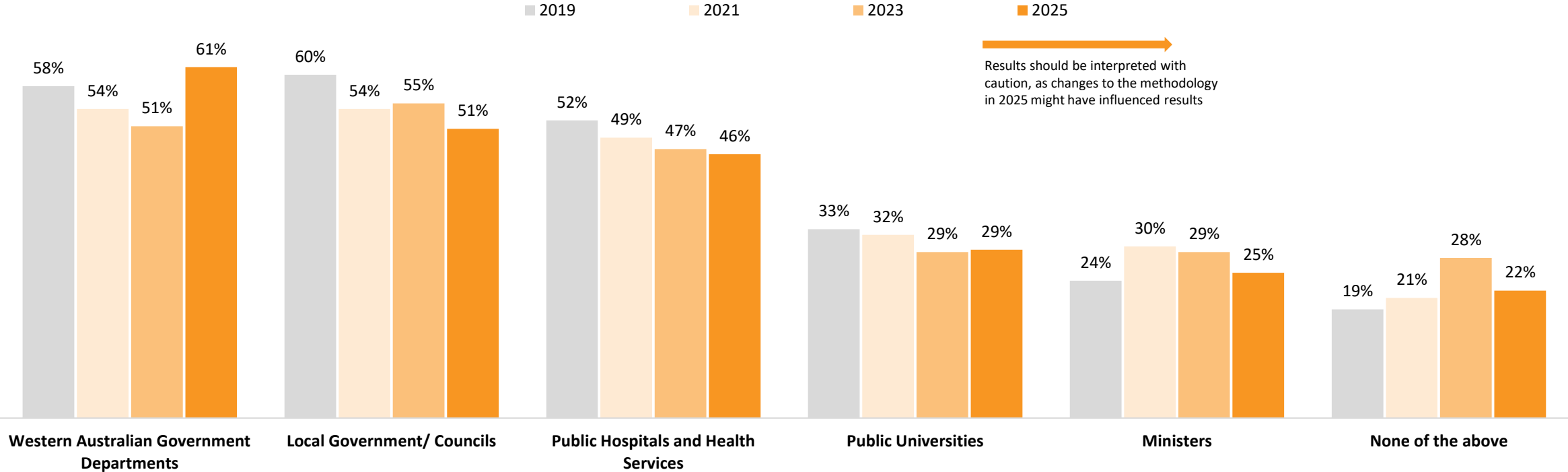
ALTHOUGH NEARLY 3 IN 4 (70%) HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1992 (WA), UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT COVERS IS LIMITED – PARTICULARLY AMONGST YOUNGER GENERATIONS

Are you aware that the Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA) gives the public the right to access information held by the Western Australian Government and Western Australian Government agencies?



OVER 1 IN 5 WERE UNAWARE OF THEIR RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM SPECIFIC GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS – A SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT SINCE 2023. THIS INCREASE WAS DRIVEN BY AWARENESS OF INFORMATION ACCESS FROM WA GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, WHILE OTHER ENTITIES SHOW A DOWNWARD TREND

From which of the following organisations are you aware that you have the right to access information under the Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA)?



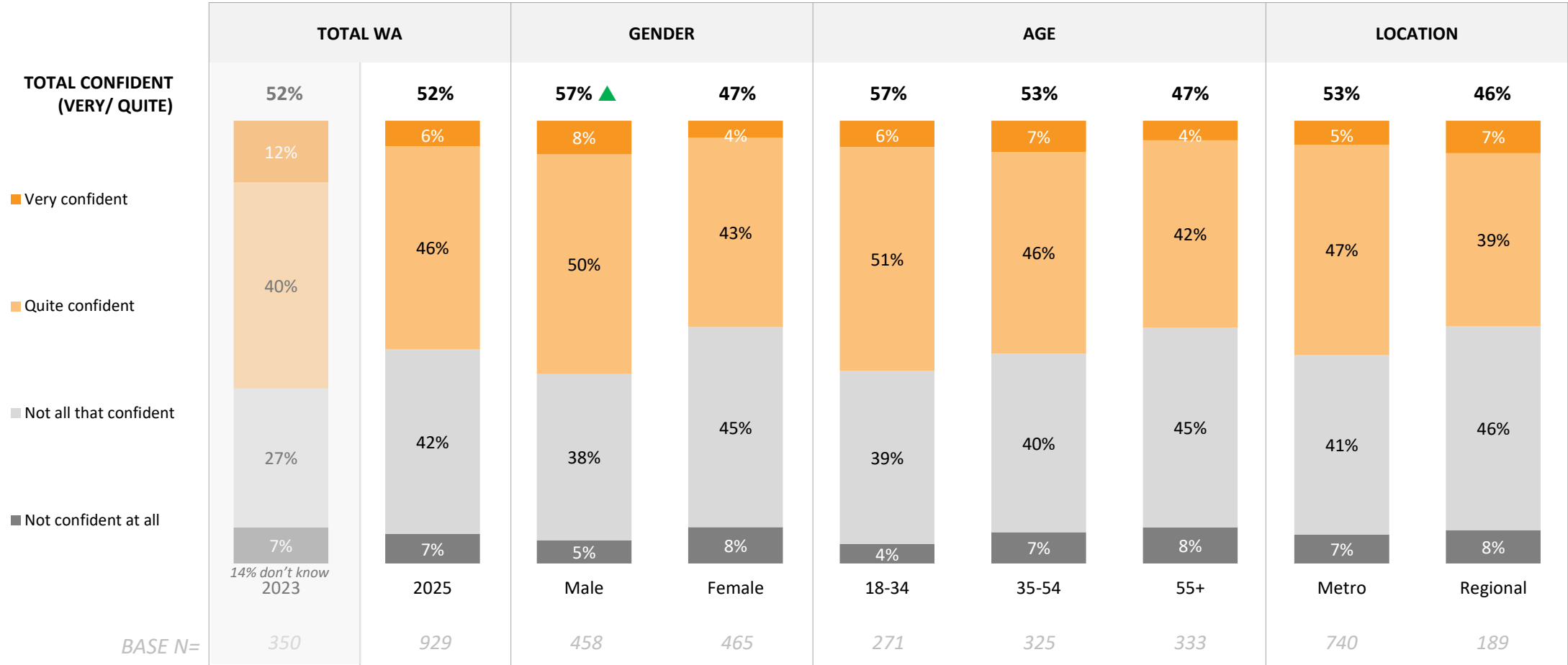
THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM DIFFERENT GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS VARIES WIDELY BETWEEN GENDERS AND AGE GROUPS. AWARENESS IS SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER AMONG THOSE AGED 55+ WHEN IT COMES TO COUNCILS, PUBLIC HOSPITALS, AND MINISTERS

From which of the following organisations are you aware that you have the right to access information under the Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA)?

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Metro	Regional
Western Australian Government Departments	61%	67% ▲	56% ▼	52% ▼	64%	67%	62%	58%
Local Government/ Councils	51%	54%	47%	41% ▼	50%	58% ▲	51%	51%
Public Hospitals and Health Services	46%	46%	46%	40%	45%	52% ▲	46%	46%
Public Universities	29%	31%	27%	27%	29%	32%	30%	28%
Ministers	25%	29% ▲	21% ▼	16% ▼	24%	34% ▲	26%	23%
None of the above	22%	20%	25%	27%	19%	21%	22%	23%
BASE N=		458	465	271	325	333	740	189

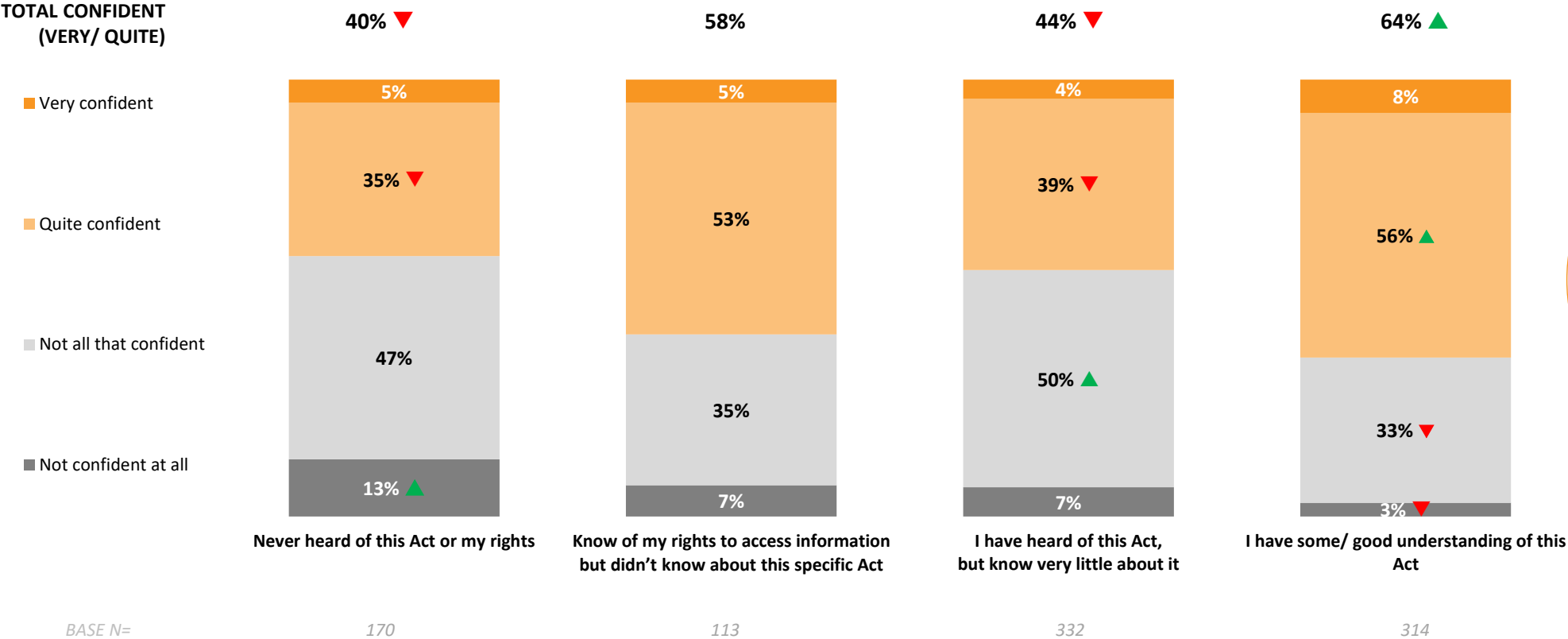
IN LINE WITH 2023, JUST OVER HALF ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1992 (WA) WILL ALLOW THEM ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE BY THE WA GOVERNMENT AND ITS AGENCIES. ALTHOUGH NO SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS, CONFIDENCE GRADUALLY DECLINES WITH AGE

How confident are you that the Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA) will allow you access to information about how decisions are made by the Western Australian Government and its agencies?



CONFIDENCE THAT THE ACT WILL ALLOW ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASES WITH GREATER FAMILIARITY OF THE ACT

Confidence that the Act will allow access to information about how decision are made by familiarity of the Act





Raising awareness of the Act is essential for building trust in the public's ability to access information about government decisions

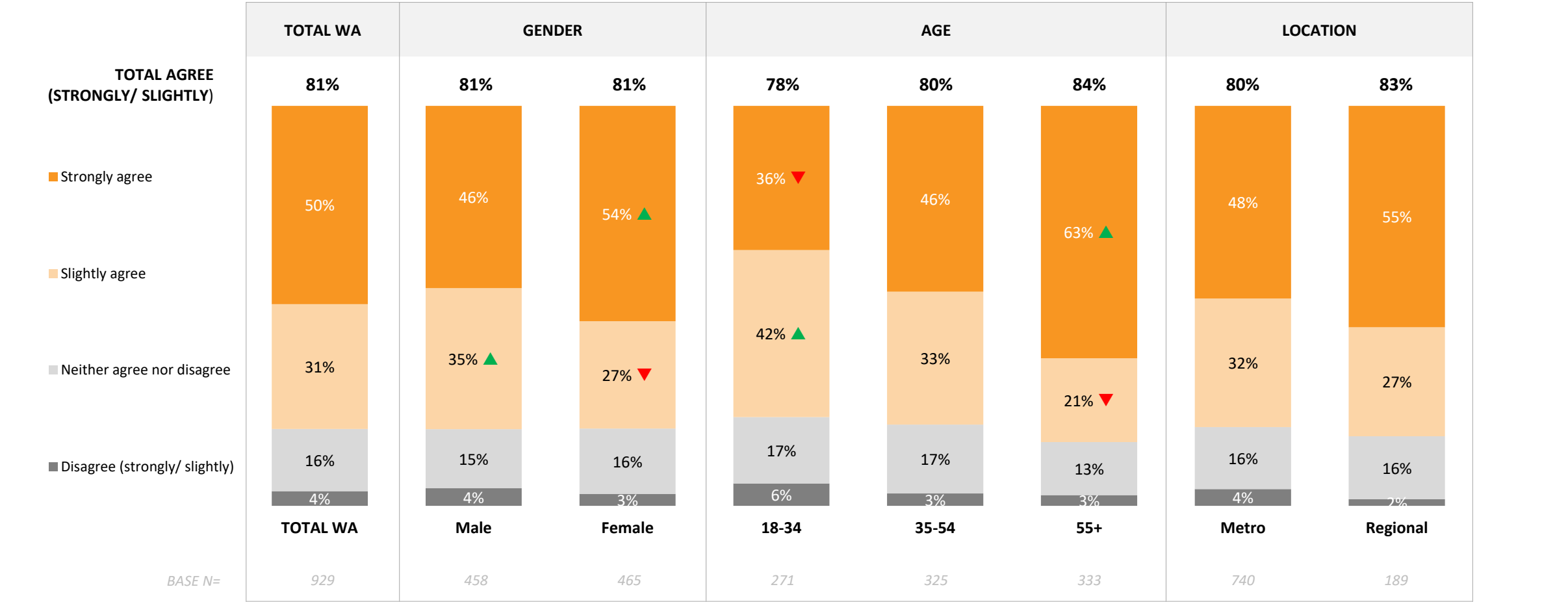
ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ARE KEY PUBLIC INTEREST FACTORS TO CONSIDER. HOWEVER, SIGNIFICANT GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES EXIST, WITH YOUNGER RESIDENTS MORE LIKELY TO WANT TO ENSURE THAT THE PUBLIC CAN CONTRIBUTE TO SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS AFFECTING THE COMMUNITY

What main public interest factors do you think the Western Australian Government and its agencies should take into account when deciding whether to release information?

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Metro	Regional
Ensuring that government remains accountable to the people	<div><div></div></div> 73%	73%	75%	71%	68%	70%	81% ▲	72%
Ensuring governments are more transparent about their spending	<div><div></div></div> 44%	44%	41%	46%	43%	38% ▼	50% ▲	43%
Providing access to your own information	<div><div></div></div> 45%	45%	43%	48%	38% ▼	44%	51% ▲	44%
Ensuring that public office holders act with integrity	<div><div></div></div> 28%	28%	33% ▲	24% ▼	21% ▼	27%	35% ▲	27%
Providing information to promote fairness and justice	<div><div></div></div> 31%	31%	32%	30%	39% ▲	32%	25% ▼	34% ▲
Ensuring that the public can contribute to significant decisions that affect the community as a whole	<div><div></div></div> 26%	26%	21% ▼	30% ▲	28%	29%	20% ▼	26%
Enabling citizens to obtain better service delivery by government	<div><div></div></div> 21%	21%	25% ▲	18%	21%	23%	20%	23% ▲
Ensuring access to environmental information and decision making	<div><div></div></div> 10%	10%	11%	10%	17% ▲	7%	8%	10%
	BASE N=	458	465	271	325	333	740	189

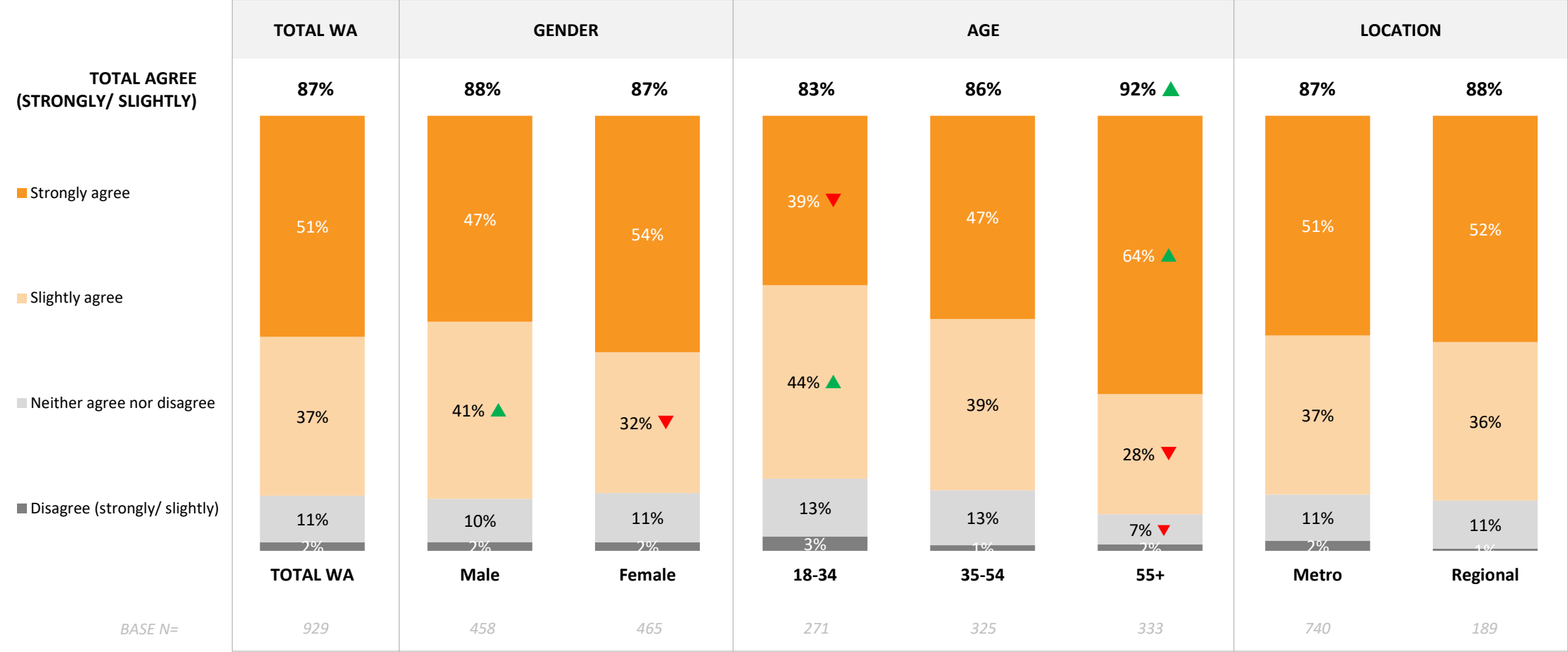
THE MAJORITY (81%) AGREE THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST PUBLICLY REPORT ON ANY TECHNOLOGY USED TO INFORM DECISION MAKING, WITH HALF STRONGLY AGREEING. NOTABLY, THE LEVEL OF AGREEMENT INCREASES SIGNIFICANTLY WITH AGE

To what extent do you agree that the Western Australian Government and its agencies must publicly report on any technology used (including AI and automated decision-making) to inform agency decisions that impact individuals?



THE MAJORITY (87%) EXPECTS THE WA GOVERNMENT TO PUBLICLY REPORT ON THE INFORMATION THEY MAINTAIN, WITH AGREEMENT ON THIS REQUIREMENT INCREASING SIGNIFICANTLY WITH AGE

To what extent do you agree that the Western Australian Government and its agencies should publicly report on the information they maintain (such as data and datasets, policy documents and decision-making records, spending and budgeting documents etc.)?

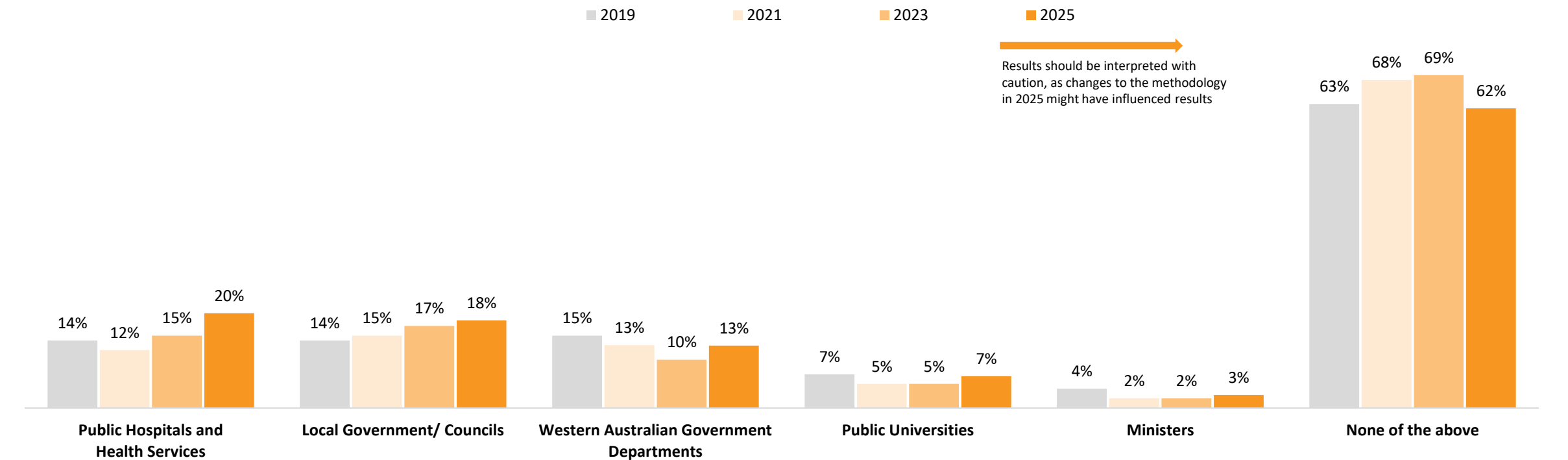


SECTION 3

EXPERIENCES OF ACCESSING GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION

38% TRIED TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM WA GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS IN THE PAST 3 YEARS – SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS. A GRADUAL INCREASE CAN BE NOTED FOR PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND COUNCILS SINCE 2021, WITH A SLIGHT UPTICK WHEN IT COMES TO ACCESSING OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Over the past three years, which of the following Western Australian Government agencies (if any) have you tried to access information from?



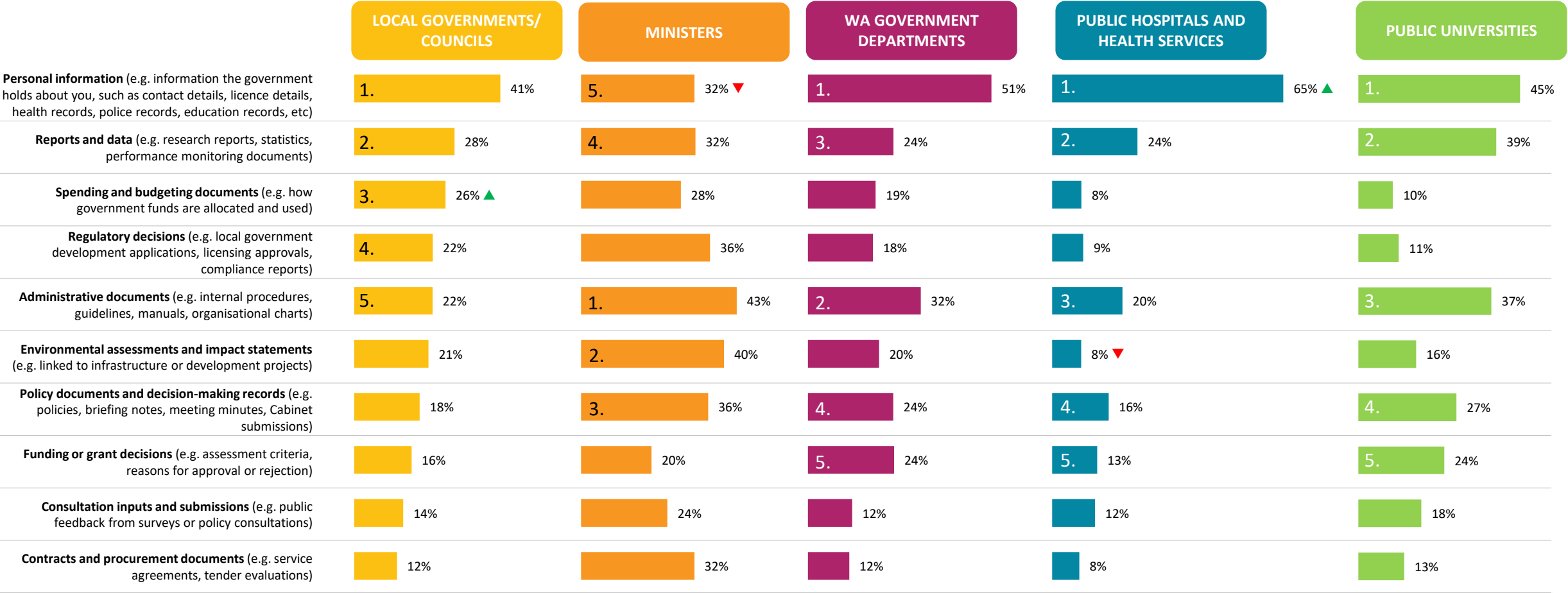
38% TRIED TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM WA GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS, MAINLY FROM PUBLIC HOSPITALS, COUNCILS OR WA GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS. DESPITE LOWER AGREEMENT ON THE NEED FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION SHARING, ACCESS REQUESTS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER AMONG 18–34-YEAR-OLDS

Over the past three years, which of the following Western Australian Government agencies (if any) have you tried to access information from?

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Metro	Regional
Public Hospitals and Health Services	<div><div></div></div> 20%	16% ▼	23% ▲	29% ▲	21%	11% ▼	19%	23%
Local Government/ Councils	<div><div></div></div> 18%	19%	17%	20%	21%	14% ▼	18%	19%
Western Australian Government Departments	<div><div></div></div> 13%	15%	11%	19% ▲	14%	7% ▼	14%	9%
Public Universities	<div><div></div></div> 7%	7%	6%	16% ▲	5%	1% ▼	7%	5%
Ministers	<div><div></div></div> 3%	4% ▲	1% ▼	4%	2%	2%	3%	1%
None of the above	<div><div></div></div> 62%	63%	61%	51% ▼	58%	75% ▲	62%	62%
BASE N=		458	465	271	325	333	740	189

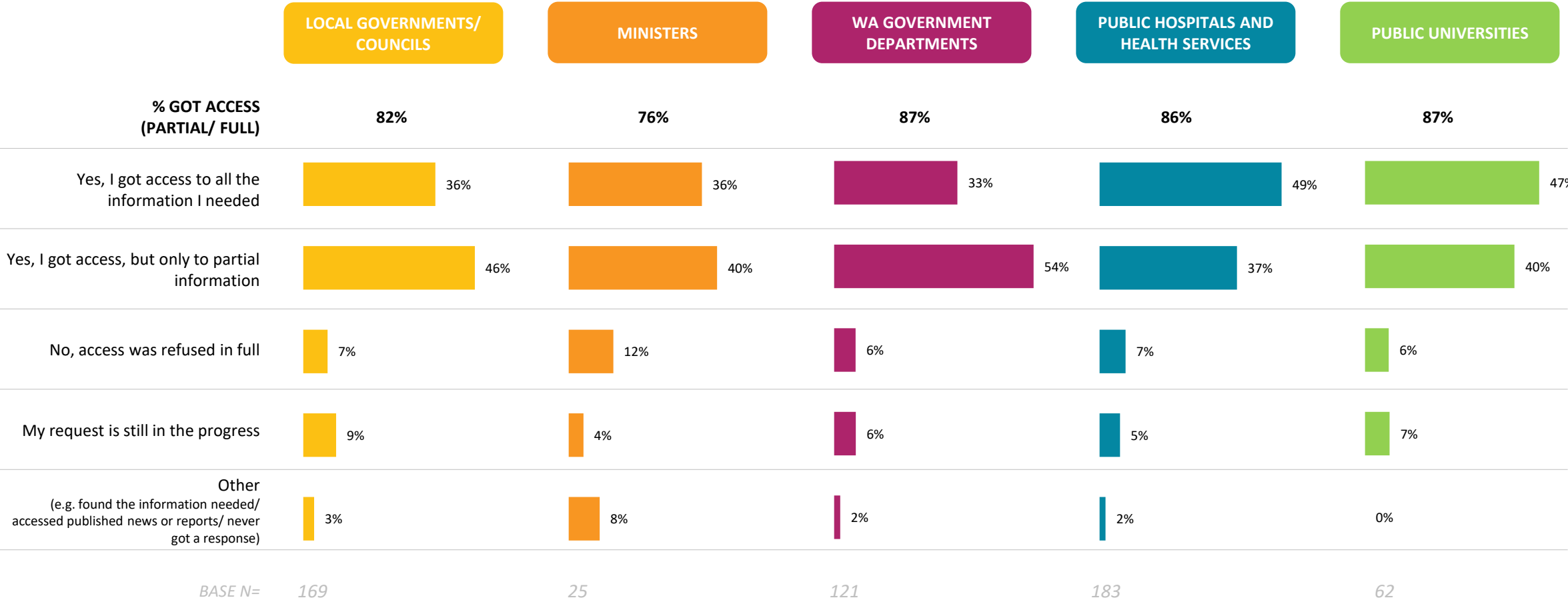
PERSONAL INFORMATION, REPORTS AND DATA, AND ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS ARE AMONG THE MOST ACCESSED DOCUMENTS. ADDITIONALLY, POLICY-MAKING AND FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS ARE ALSO KEY

What types of information were you trying to access from the following Western Australian Government agency?



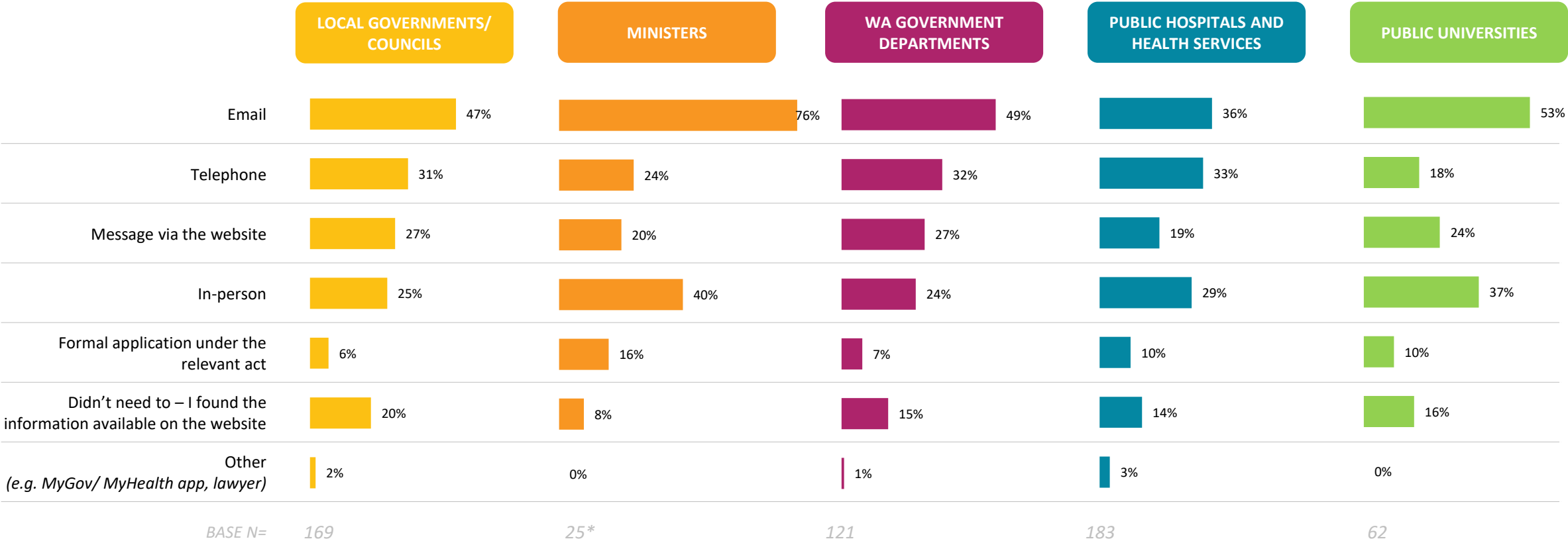
MOST GOT ACCESS TO AT LEAST PARTIAL INFORMATION, WITH AROUND 1 IN 3 WITH ACCESS TO ALL THE INFORMATION NEEDED FROM COUNCILS, MINISTERS AND WA GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, AND ALMOST HALF FROM PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND UNIVERSITIES

Did you access the information successfully from the following Western Australian Government agencies?



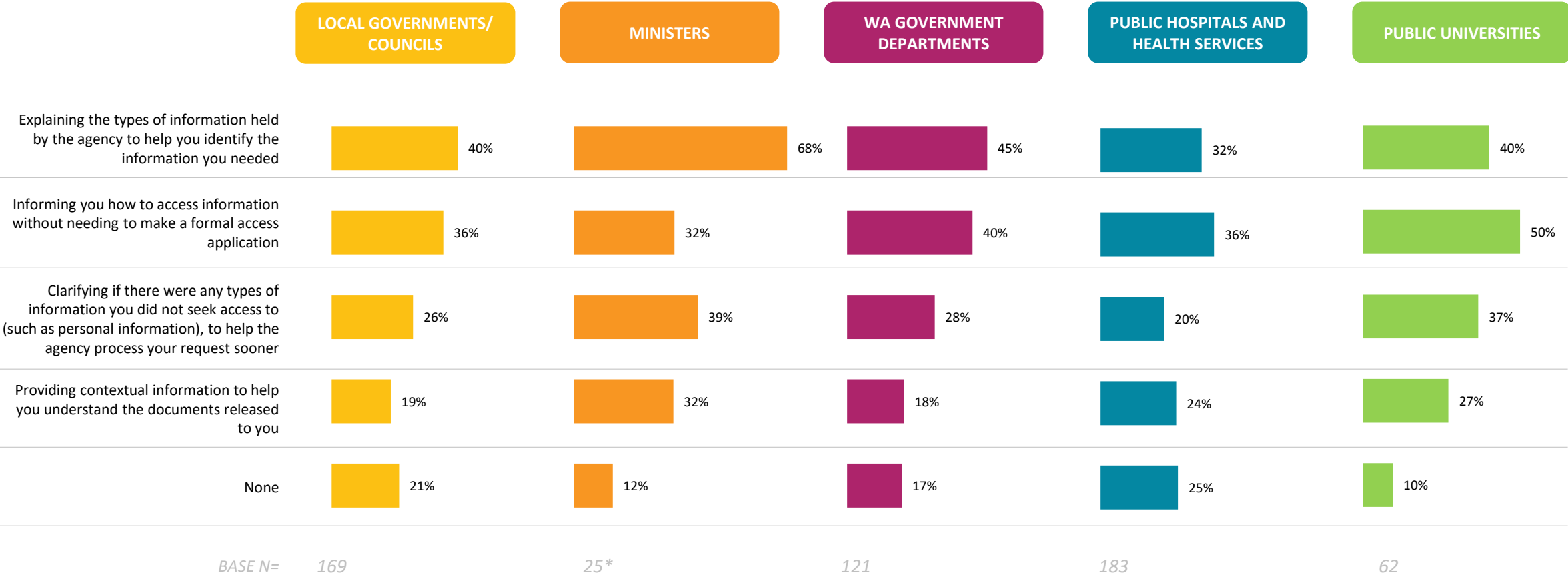
EMAIL WAS THE MOST COMMON CHANNEL USED, PARTICULARLY WITH MINISTERS. WEBSITE MESSAGING, TELEPHONE CALLS, AND IN-PERSON VISITS ALSO REPRESENTED A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

What channels did you use when communicating with the following Western Australian Government agency?



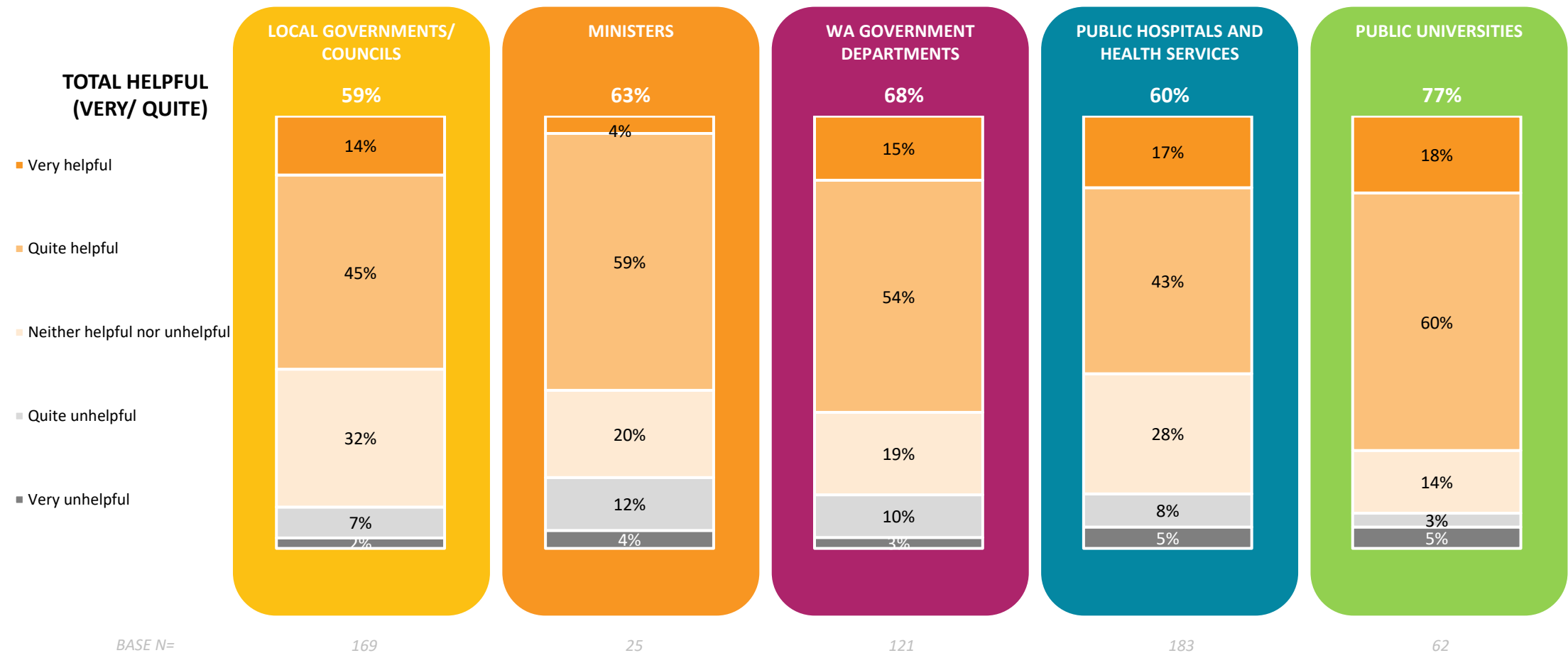
THE MAJORITY RECEIVED ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE FROM THE AGENCIES THEY APPROACHED, WITH PUBLIC HOSPITALS THE LEAST RESPONSIVE. THE SUPPORT PROVIDED INCLUDED EXPLANATIONS ABOUT THE TYPE OF INFORMATION HELD AND WAYS TO ACCESS THE INFORMATION WITHOUT A FORMAL APPLICATION

What types of advice and assistance did you receive from the following Western Australian Government agency?



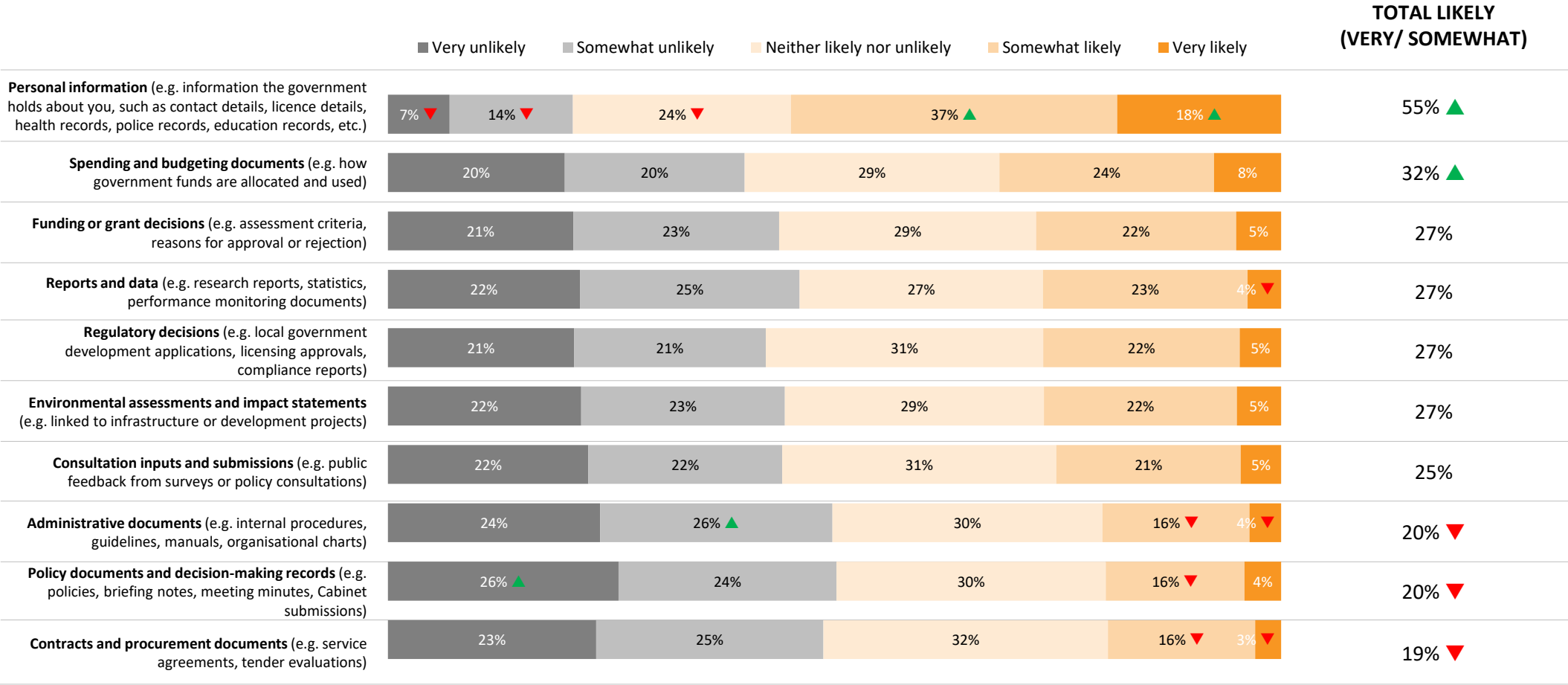
OVER HALF RATED THESE GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS HELPFUL, WITH HELPFULNESS HIGHEST FOR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES. NOTABLE THAT REPORTS OF UNHELPFUL STAFF ARE HIGHEST WHEN TRYING TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM MINISTERS (16%)

How helpful were they in providing advice and assistance to you when you tried to access information from the following Western Australian agency?



OVER HALF ANTICIPATE ACCESSING PERSONAL INFORMATION FROM THE WA GOVERNMENT OVER THE NEXT 2 YEARS, WITH OTHER TOPICS SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER ON PEOPLE'S AGENDA

How likely are you to request the following types of Western Australian Government information over the next 2 years?



THE LIKELIHOOD OF REQUESTING PERSONAL INFORMATION FROM GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IS ON THE TOP OF PEOPLE’S AGENDA ACROSS ALL DEMOGRAPHIC COHORTS. YOUNGER GENERATIONS, HOWEVER, ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO SEEK INFORMATION ACROSS ALL TOPICS

How likely are you to request the following types of wa Government information over the next 2 years?
 % VERY/ SOMEWHAT LIKELY

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Metro	Regional
Personal information (e.g. information the government holds about you, such as contact details, licence details, health records, police records, education records, etc.)	<div></div> 55%	51% ▼	59% ▲	69% ▲	51%	47% ▼	56%	51%
Spending and budgeting documents (e.g. how government funds are allocated and used)	<div></div> 32%	34%	29%	43% ▲	32%	23% ▼	34% ▲	21% ▼
Funding or grant decisions (e.g. assessment criteria, reasons for approval or rejection)	<div></div> 27%	30%	26%	36% ▲	34% ▲	15% ▼	29% ▲	20% ▼
Reports and data (e.g. research reports, statistics, performance monitoring documents)	<div></div> 27%	30% ▲	24% ▼	39% ▲	29%	15% ▼	29% ▲	16% ▼
Regulatory decisions (e.g. local government development applications, licensing approvals, compliance reports)	<div></div> 27%	31% ▲	23% ▼	31%	31% ▲	19% ▼	28% ▲	20% ▼
Environmental assessments and impact statements (e.g. linked to infrastructure or development projects)	<div></div> 27%	32% ▲	22% ▼	34% ▲	29%	18% ▼	29% ▲	17% ▼
Consultation inputs and submissions (e.g. public feedback from surveys or policy consultations)	<div></div> 25%	26%	24%	29%	28%	20% ▼	26%	21%
Administrative documents (e.g. internal procedures, guidelines, manuals, organisational charts)	<div></div> 20%	21%	19%	30% ▲	21%	11% ▼	21%	15%
Policy documents and decision-making records (e.g. policies, briefing notes, meeting minutes, Cabinet submissions)	<div></div> 20%	22%	18%	24% ▲	23%	13% ▼	21% ▲	14% ▼
Contracts and procurement documents (e.g. service agreements, tender evaluations)	<div></div> 19%	24% ▲	15% ▼	27% ▲	22%	11% ▼	21% ▲	12% ▼
	BASE N=	458	465	271	325	333	740	189

PEOPLE WOULD PREFER TO REQUEST ACCESS TO THE INFORMATION VIA EMAIL OR AN ONLINE PORTAL/FORM, WITH THE LATTER BEING MORE FAVORED AMONG YOUNGER AGE GROUPS

What would be your preferred way to request access to the information from the relevant Western Australian Government agency?
(excluding those who are very unlikely to request information over the next 2 years)

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Metro	Regional
Email	<div><div></div></div> 36%	36%	36%	33%	40%	33%	36%	32%
Online portal/ form	<div><div></div></div> 32%	28%	36%	38%	35%	25% ▼	33%	32%
In-person	<div><div></div></div> 11%	13%	9%	10%	7%	15%	10%	15%
Message via the website	<div><div></div></div> 8%	9%	8%	10%	8%	8%	9%	7%
Telephone	<div><div></div></div> 6%	7%	5%	8%	5%	5%	5%	9%
Formal application under the relevant act	<div><div></div></div> 5%	6%	5%	1% ▼	4%	11% ▲	6%	3%
Mail	<div><div></div></div> 1%	0%	2%	0%	1%	2%	1%	2%
BASE N=		458	465	271	325	333	740	189

SECTION 4

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

**AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES:**

Data gathered in 2025 **underscores the significance of public access to government-held information**. An overwhelming majority (96%) believe this right is important, with 59% rating it as very important, and there is strong support across all demographics. However, **awareness of the relevant act remains limited**, particularly among younger generations. While awareness increased around information access from WA Government departments, other entities show a downward trend. Understanding of the right to access information is significantly higher amongst older age groups.

In addition to the expectations of having public access to government-held data, **the majority (81%) agree that the WA Government must publicly report on any technology used** to inform decision-making, with half strongly agreeing. There is also a significant expectation for the WA Government to publicly report on the **information they maintain**, with agreement on this requirement increasing significantly with age.

EXPERIENCE:

Just over one-third (38%) of people tried to access information from the WA Government organisations in the past three years, with younger generations making more requests – despite lower awareness. The most accessed types of information include personal information, reports, data, and administrative documents. Most requests resulted in either full or partial access, with around one in three receiving all the information needed from **councils, ministers, and WA Government departments**, and almost half from public hospitals and universities. **Email is the most common** communication channel, though website messaging, telephone calls, and in-person visits are also notable.

The majority received some advice and assistance, with **over half rating these government organisations helpful** - highest for public universities. Notable that reports of unhelpful staff are highest when trying to access information from ministers (16%).

Over half (55%) anticipate requesting personal information in the next two years, with interest driven by younger cohorts. For requesting information, **emails and online portals are the preferred channels**, with the latter being more favoured by younger age groups.

These findings suggest a **need for increased efforts to raise awareness about the Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA)** and to enhance confidence that this legislation allows the public to access information about how decisions are made by the WA Government and its agencies.

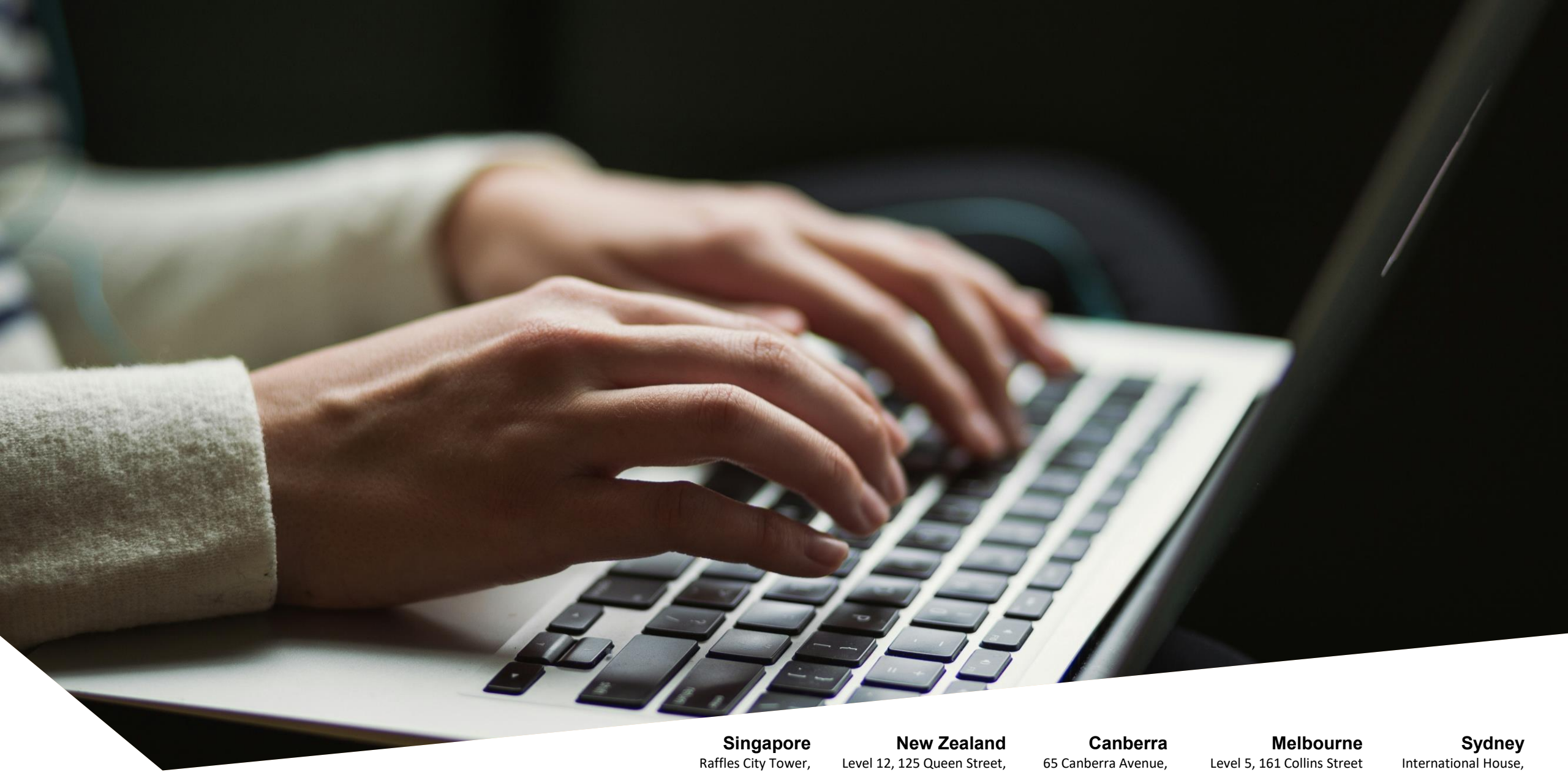
This could involve **education campaigns targeted at the general public** about the act, what it involves – including the types of information available, which organisations hold these and the ways of accessing these sources.

It needs to be considered, however, that with increased awareness, there is a likelihood of increased data and information requests. Therefore, **preparing the different agencies to efficiently deal with these requests** is indispensable.

This can be achieved through **internal communication campaigns**, focusing on the following areas across all agencies to align efficiencies, responsiveness, and helpfulness:

- Enhancing responsiveness to incoming enquiries via efficient processes and channel management
- Enhancing the helpfulness of staff
- Expanding and promoting online communication channels – particularly online portals (if available) rather than in-person visits and requests

These initiatives could better meet the public's preferences and increase engagement and ease of communication, especially among younger generations.



fiftyfive5

Part of **Accenture** Song

Singapore

Raffles City Tower,
250 North Bridge Road
Singapore 179101

New Zealand

Level 12, 125 Queen Street,
Auckland 1010

Canberra

65 Canberra Avenue,
Griffith ACT 2603

Melbourne

Level 5, 161 Collins Street
VIC 3000

Sydney

International House,
Level 5, 3 Sussex St
Barangaroo NSW 2000

www.fiftyfive5.com