



Office of the
Information Commissioner

Freedom of information for Western Australia

Cross Jurisdictional Information Access Study

WA

August 2021



WOOLCOTT
RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT



RESEARCH DESIGN

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

A mixed mode survey amongst n=354 WA residents aged 18+ years was conducted between 22nd June and 28th July 2021 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 the 2019 and 2021 results are shown in **GREEN** (increased significantly) or **RED** (decreased significantly).

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

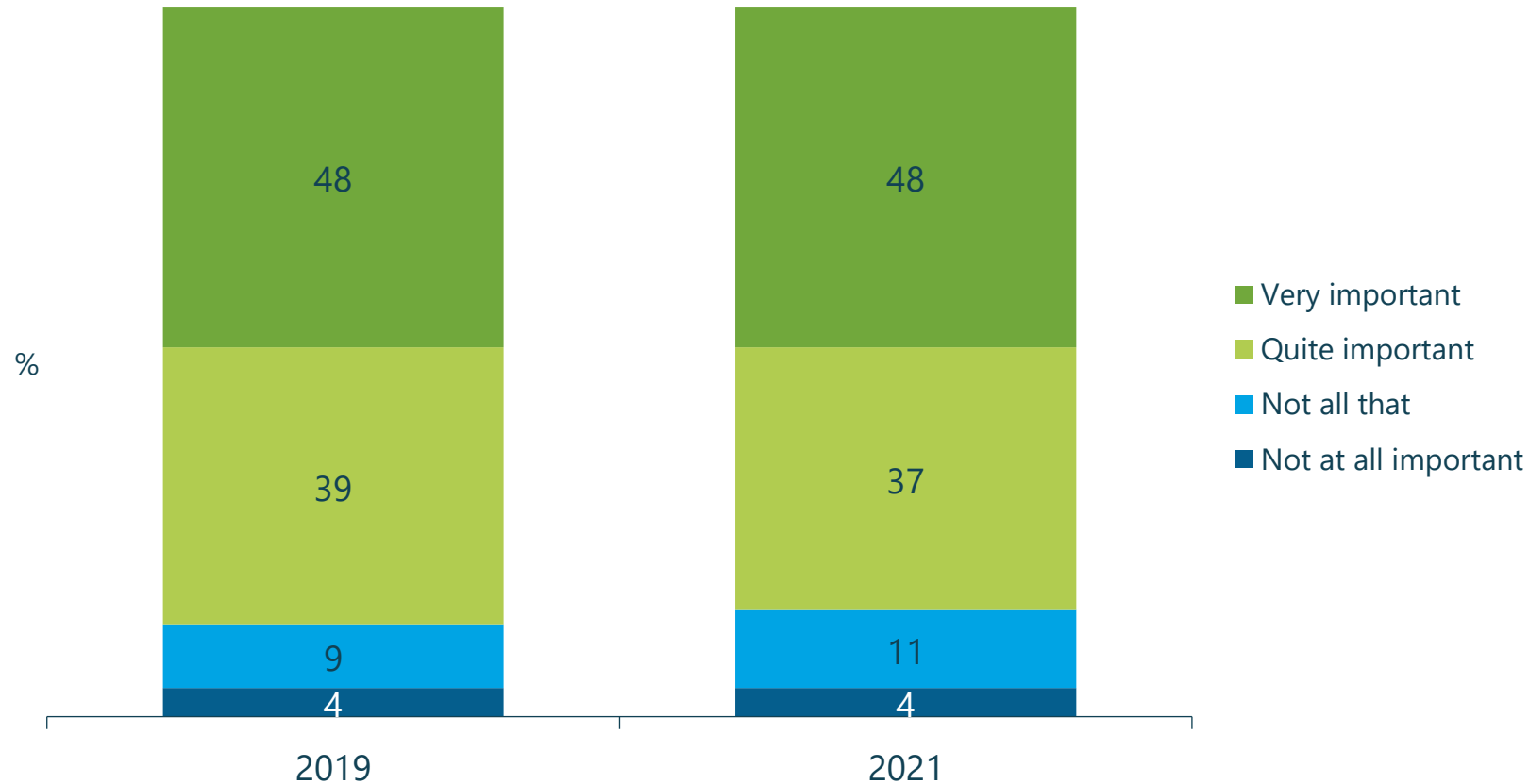


INFORMATION ACCESS





IMPORTANCE OF HAVING THE RIGHT TO ACCESS GOVERNMENT INFORMATION



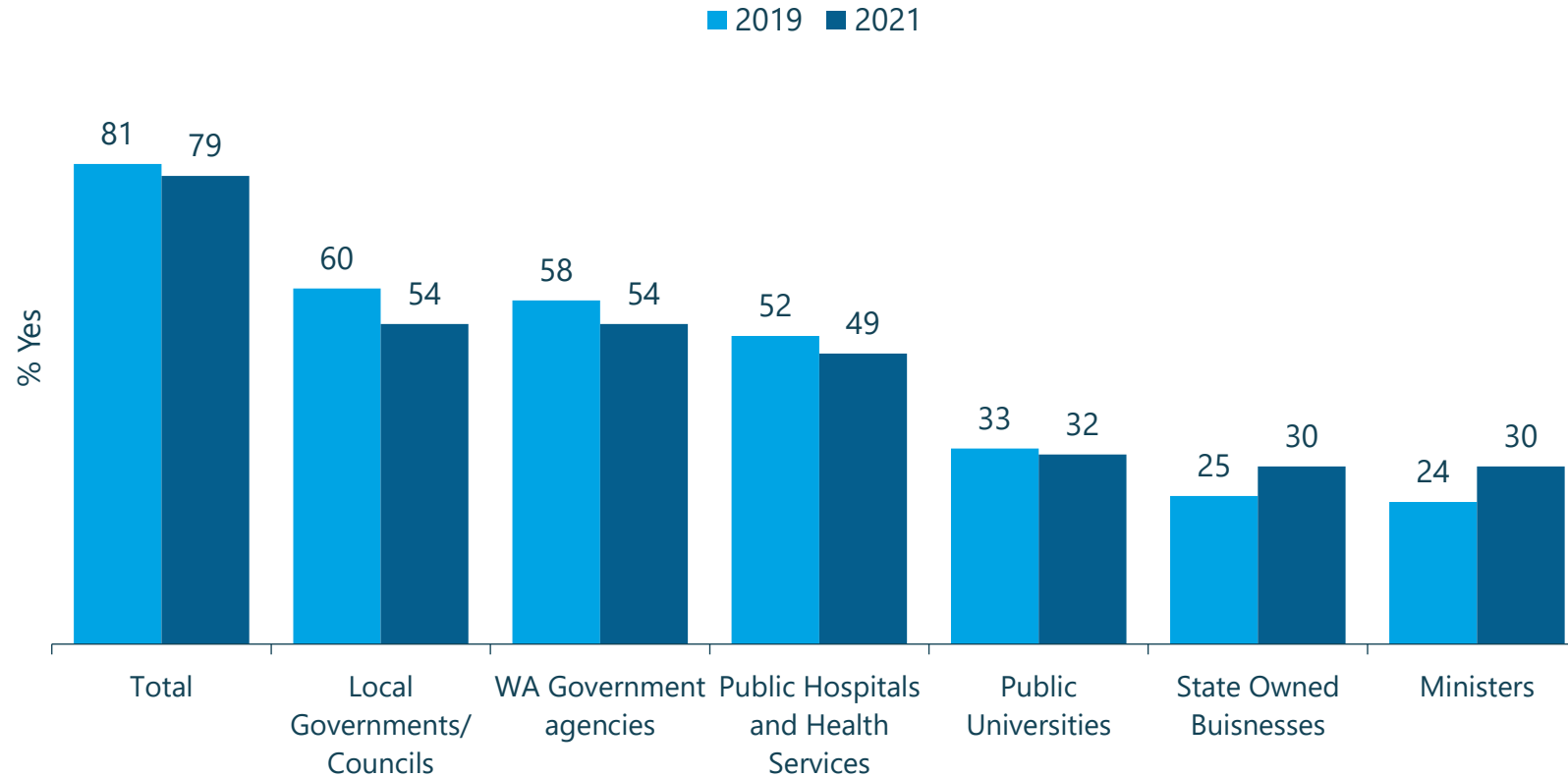
- Approximately half of all respondents felt that their right to access government information was very important and more than one third felt it was quite important, which was similar to 2019

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 (2019: n=350, 2021: n=354)



AWARENESS OF RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION

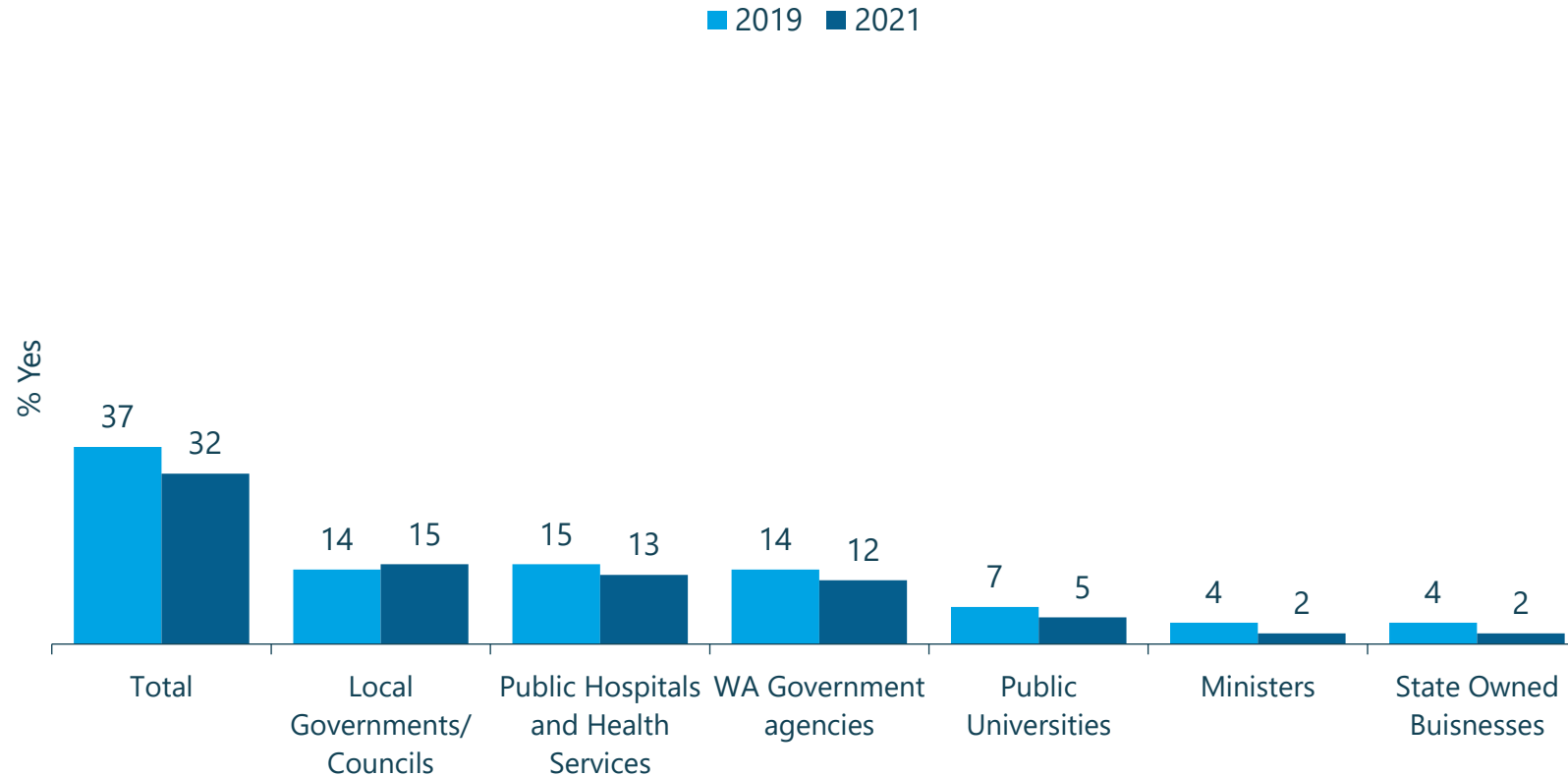


- Awareness of the right to access government information was consistent with the previous read, with approximately four in five being aware of their right for at least one of the agencies listed

Q4. Did you know, under the Western Australia's freedom of information law that you have a right to access information held by the following agencies? MR
Base: All respondents (2019: n=350, 2021: n=354)



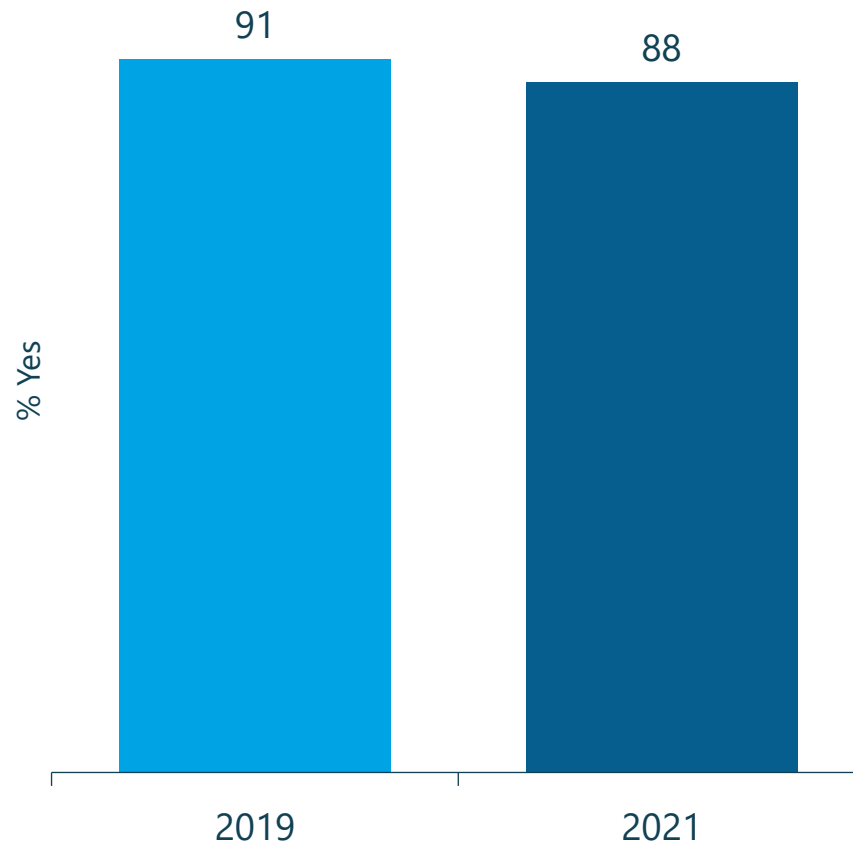
ATTEMPTS TO ACCESS INFORMATION



- Over three in ten had attempted to access government held information, which was similar to the previous read

Q5. In the last 3 years have you tried to access information held by?
Base: All respondents (2019: n=350, 2021: n=354)

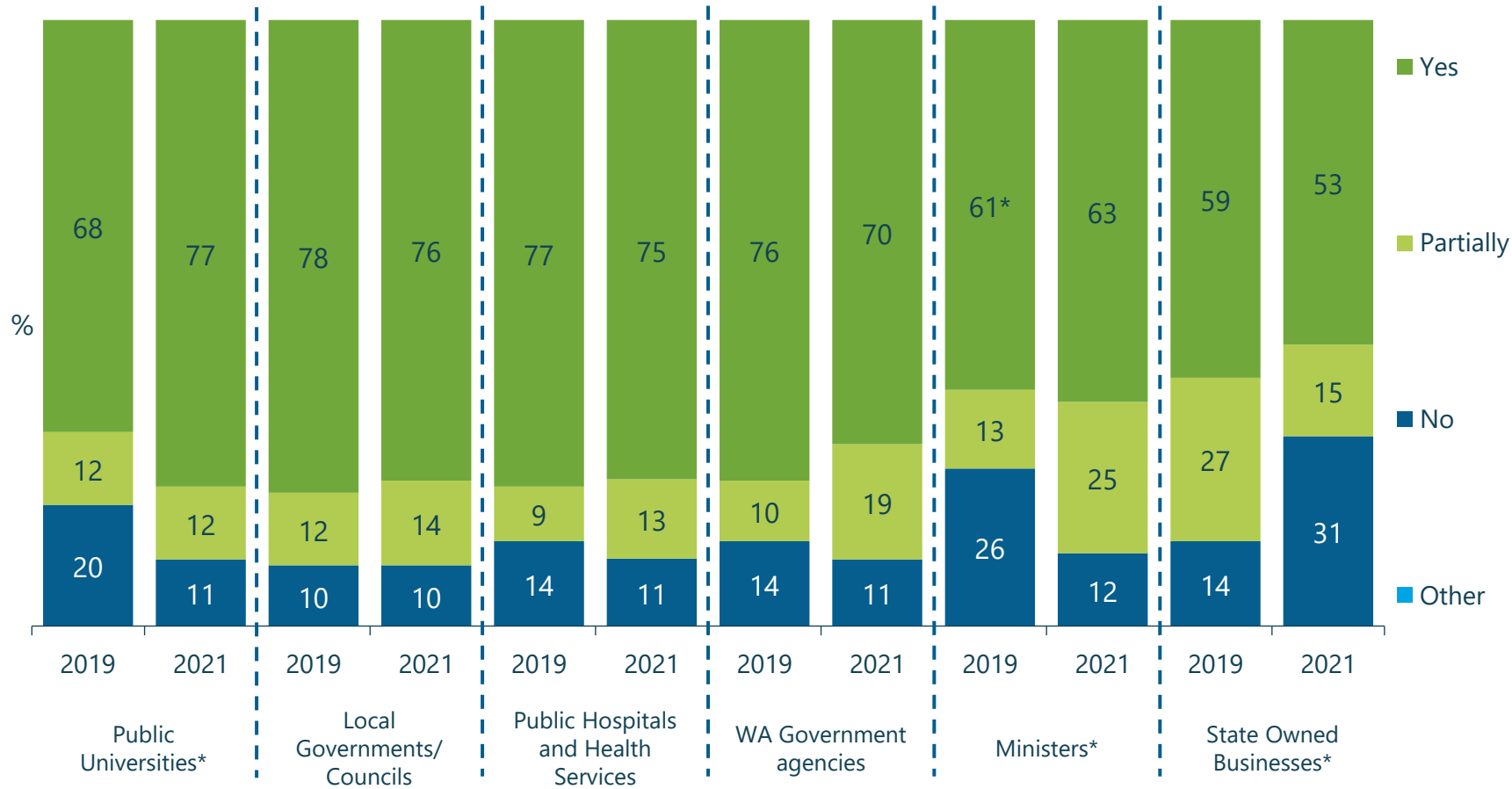
SUCCESS IN ATTEMPTING TO ACCESS INFORMATION



- As with 2019, approximately nine in ten of those who attempted it, were at least partially successful in accessing information held by state government entities



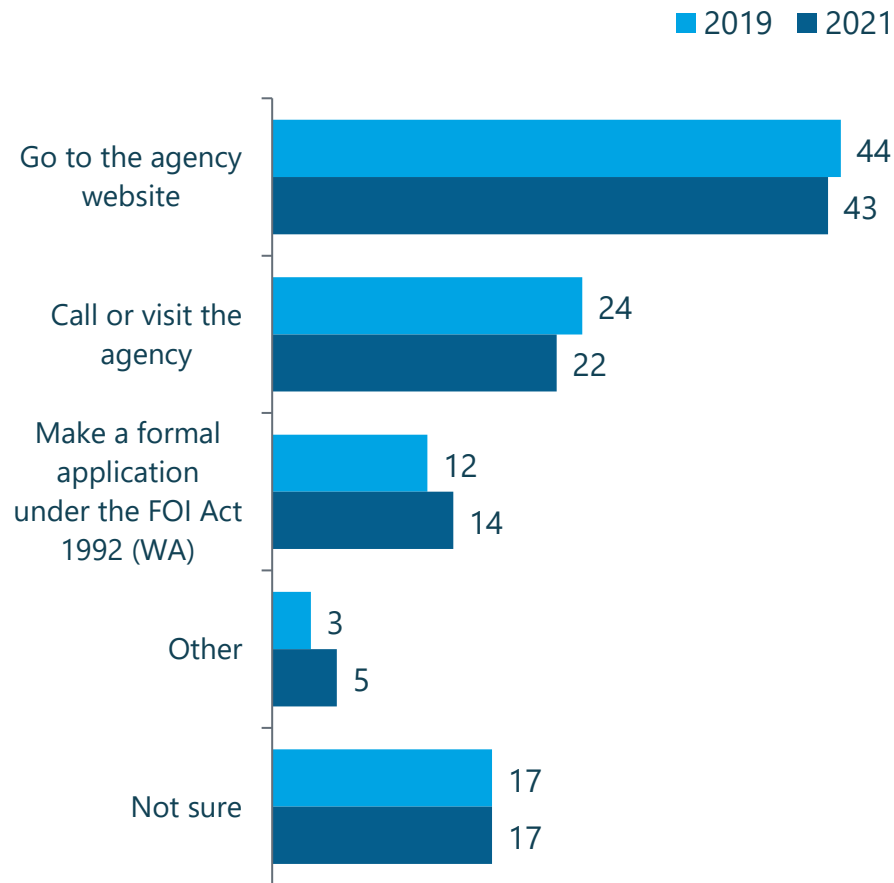
SUCCESS IN ATTEMPTING TO ACCESS INFORMATION BY AGENCY



- In 2021 success was highest for public universities, local governments and hospitals.

Q6. Were you successful in accessing information from ...?
 Base: Respondents who tried to access information from: Public Universities (2019 n=26, 2021 n=16*); Local Governments/Councils (2019 n=50, 2021 n=51); Public Hospitals and Health Services (2019 n=55, 2021 n=44); WA Government agencies (2019 n=51, 2021 n=44); Ministers (2019 n=15*, 2021 n=8*); State Owned Businesses (2019 n=15*, 2021 n=6*)
 * CAUTION SMALL BASE SIZES

METHODS OF ACCESSING INFORMATION



- Going to the agency website continued to be the most commonly identified method of accessing state held information

DESIRED TYPES OF ONLINE INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

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

- There was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who wanted to access online information regarding decision making, statistics and finance



DEMOGRAPHICS





GENDER AND AGE

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

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

Q2. Do you identify as being...?

Base: All respondents (2019: n=350, 2021: n=354)

†Options added in 2021



WORKING STATUS AND MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN

	2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=354)
Working status		
Working full time	36	41
Retired	24	32
Working part time	17	14
Student	8	6
Unemployed	7	4
Engaged in home duties	8	4
Main language spoken at home		
English	93	94
Cantonese/Mandarin	2	<1
Other	5	6

Q11. Which of these categories best describes you?

Q12. What is the main language spoken at home?

Base: All respondents (2019: n=350, 2021: n=354)

SUMMARY

The vast majority of respondents felt that their right to access government held information was very or quite important (48% and 37% respectively), which was similar to 2019.

As with 2019, most (79%) were aware of their right to access government held information from at least one of the entities listed, and approximately one in three (32%) had attempted to do so.

Most (88%) were at least partially successful at accessing the requested information.

Respondents continued to favour visiting the agency website as a method of accessing information.

Interest in accessing information online about decision making processes, data and finance increased.



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