



Office of the Victorian  
Information Commissioner

# IPC Information Access Study

VIC

July 2021



# RESEARCH DESIGN

**The Information and Privacy Commission (IPC) NSW commissioned Woolcott Research and Engagement to investigate awareness and experience of information access rights amongst the general public across five jurisdictions including Victoria (VIC).**

A mixed mode survey amongst n=368 VIC residents aged 18+ years was conducted between 21 June to 10 July 2021 utilising an online panel and Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

Quotas were set by location (Melbourne/ Regional VIC), 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.

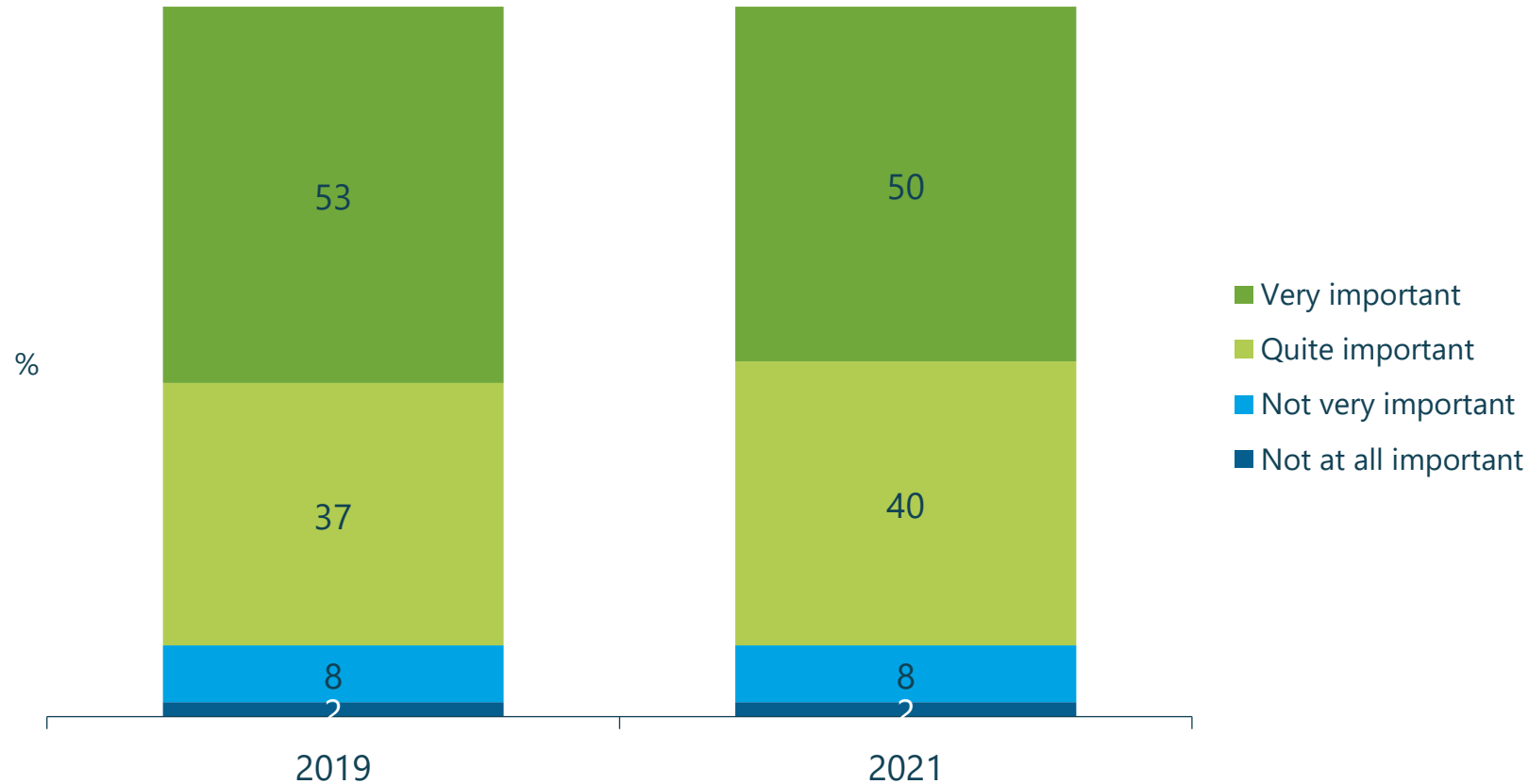


# INFORMATION ACCESS





# IMPORTANCE OF HAVING THE RIGHT TO ACCESS GOVERNMENT INFORMATION



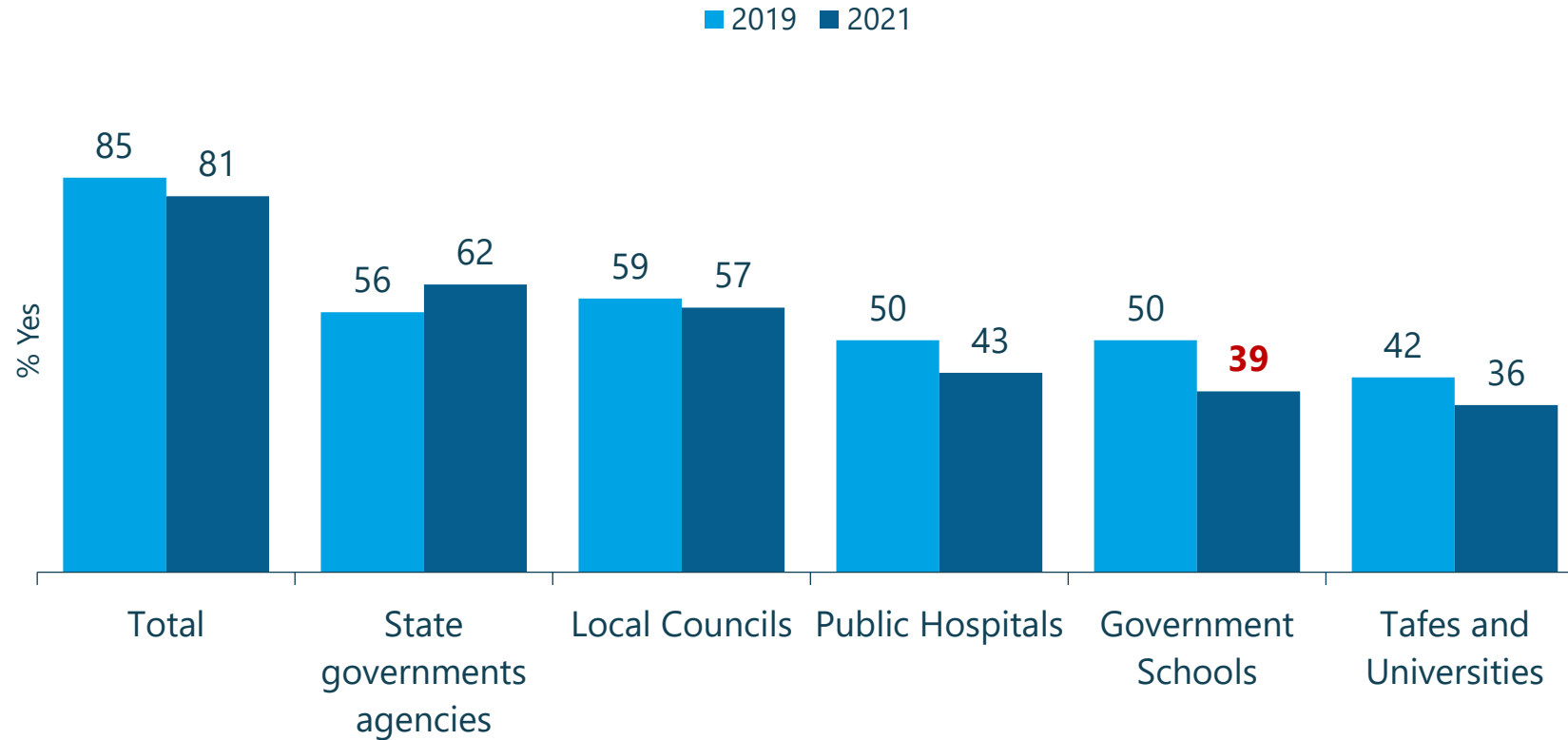
- The vast majority of respondents felt that it was important for them to have the right to access government information, which was similar to 2019

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=368)



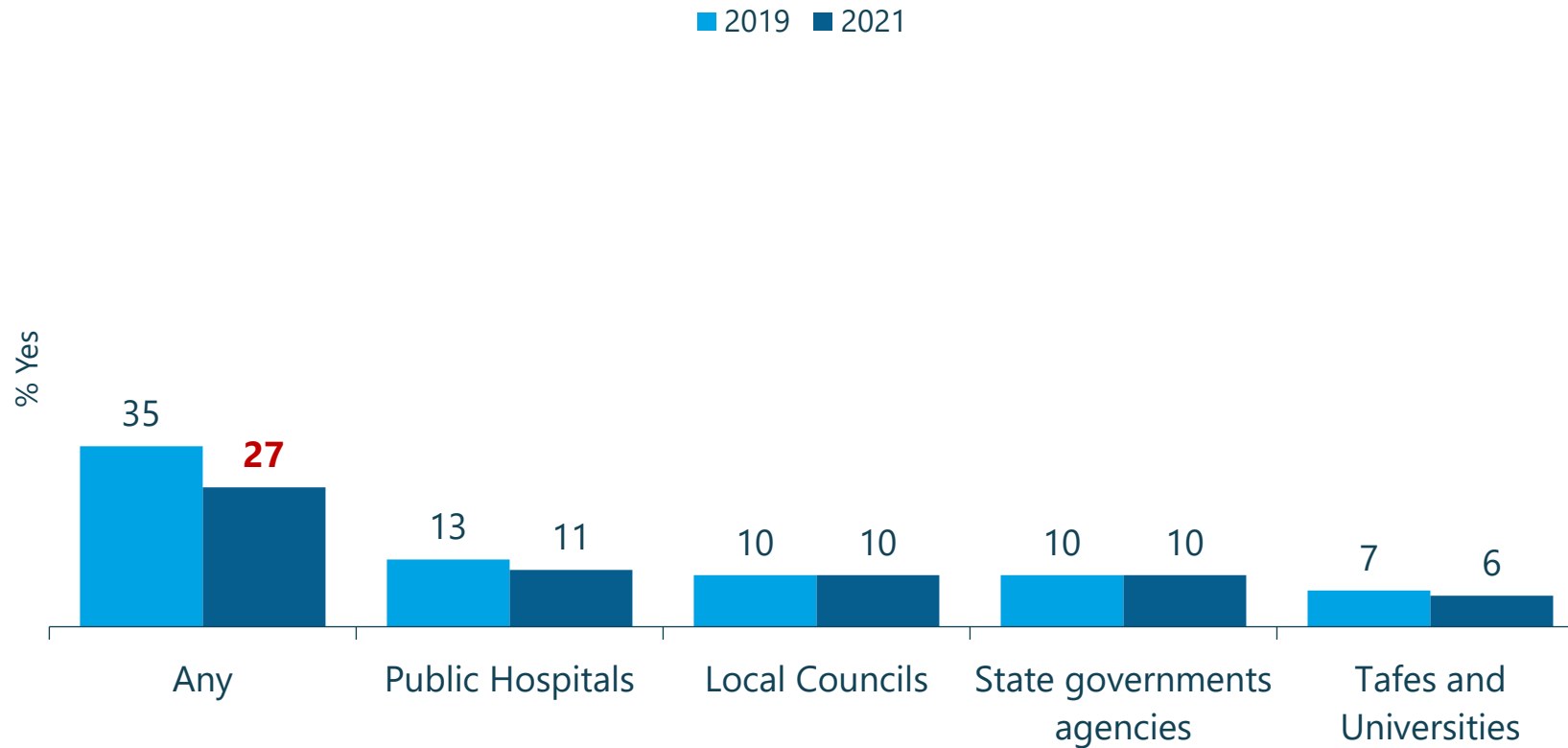
# AWARENESS OF RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION



- Similar to 2019, approximately four in five knew they had the right to access information held by at least one of the agencies listed

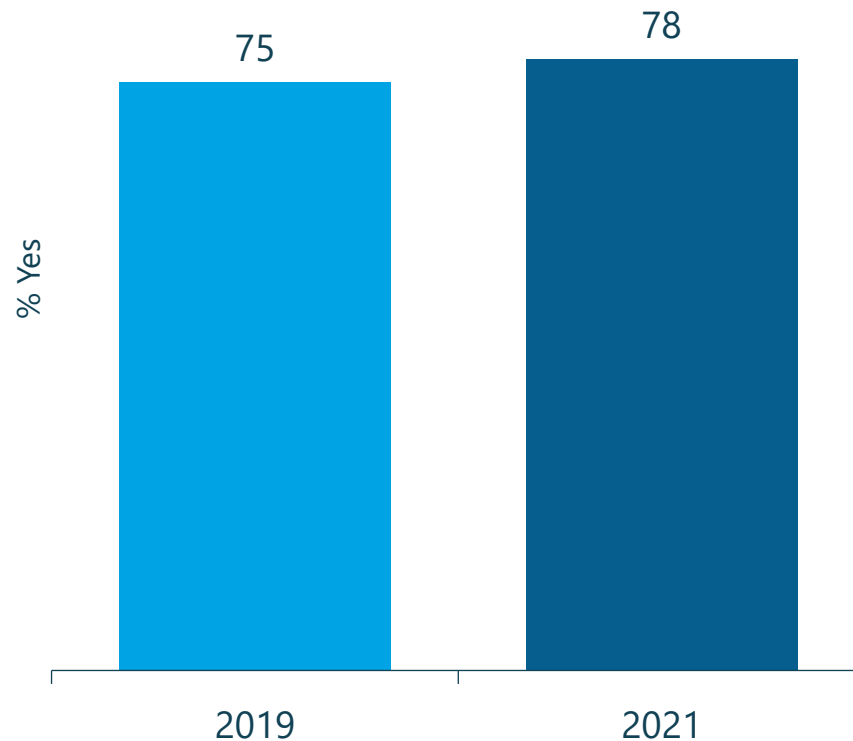
Q4. Did you know, under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic) you have a right to access information held by the following agencies? Base: All respondents (2019: n=350, 2021: n=368)

# ATTEMPTS TO ACCESS INFORMATION



- Decreasing from 2019, less than three in ten respondents had tried to access information from at least one of the agencies listed

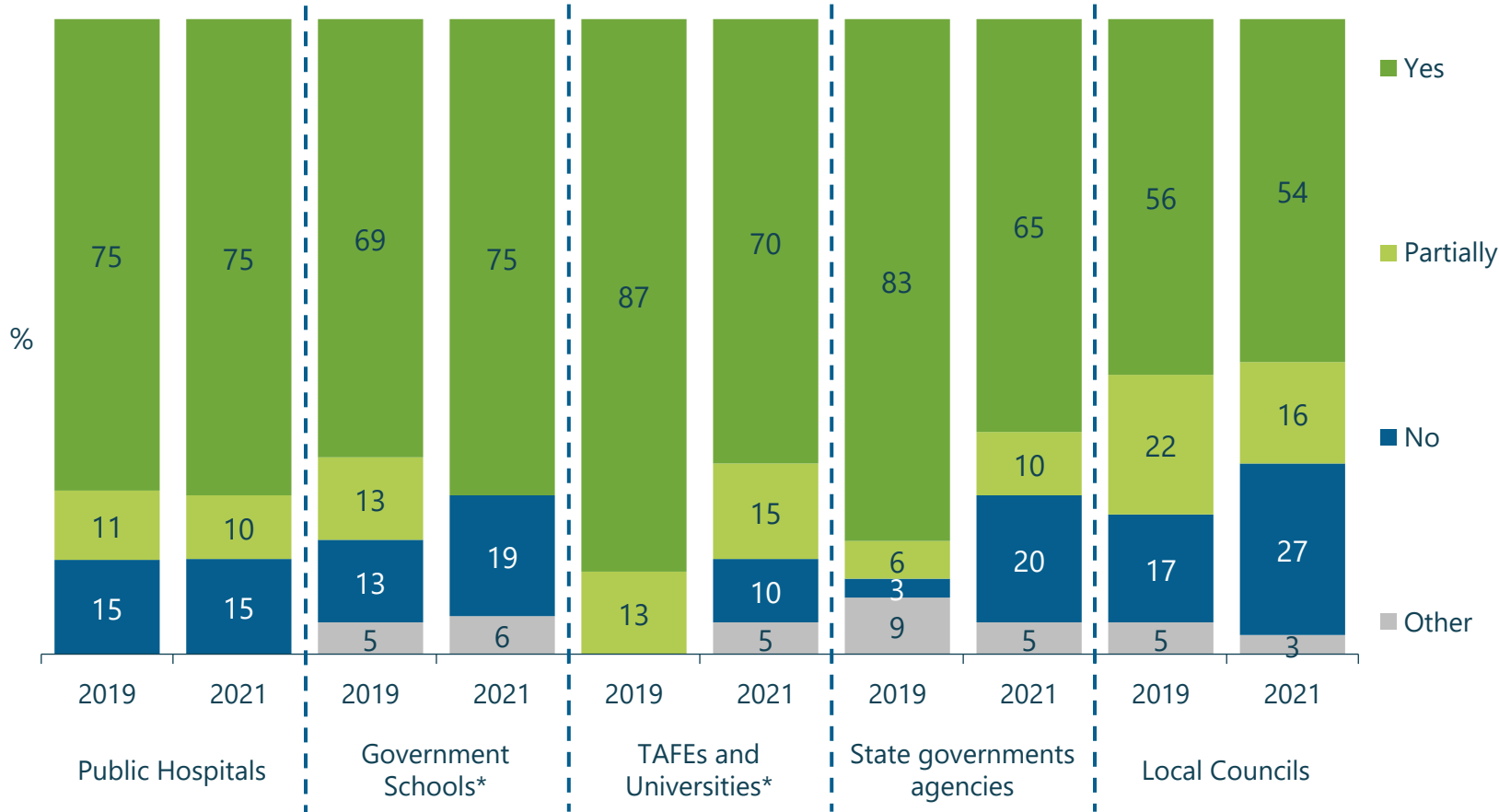
# SUCCESS IN ATTEMPTING TO ACCESS INFORMATION



- Approximately three quarters continued to be at least partially successful in accessing the information they requested



# SUCCESS IN ATTEMPTING TO ACCESS INFORMATION BY AGENCY



- Respondents tended to be successful at accessing information from state agencies, however they were less successful when obtaining information from Local Councils

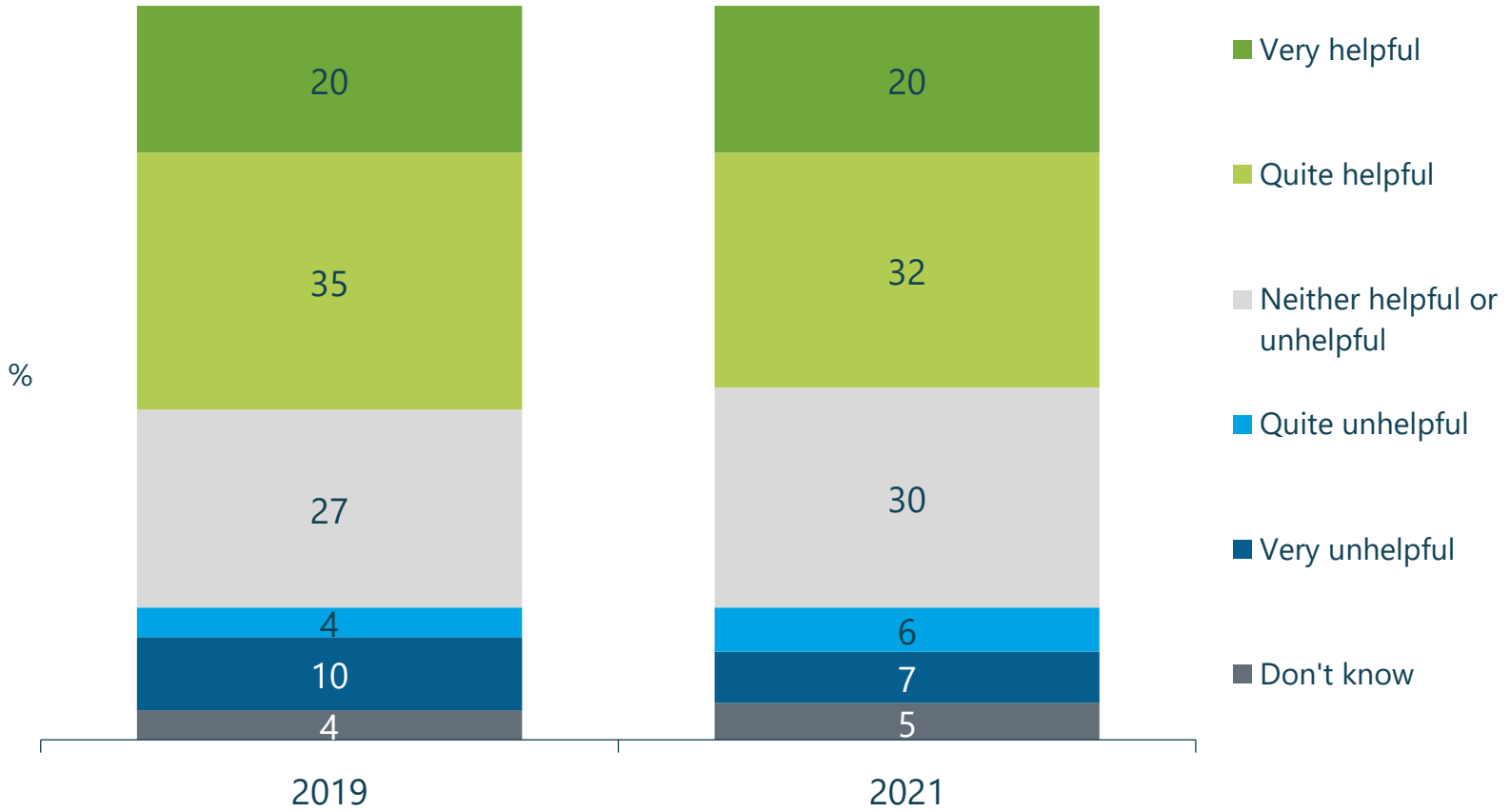
Q6. Were you successful in accessing information from ...?  
Base: Respondents who tried to contact: Public Hospitals (2019: n=47, 2021: n=40); Government Schools (2019: n=37, 2021: n=16\*); TAFEs and Universities (2019: n=23\*, 2021: n=20\*); State government agencies (2019: n=33, 2021: n=36); Local Councils (2019: n=36, 2021: n=37)  
\* CAUTION SMALL BASE SIZES





- Helpfulness continues to be an area that could be improved with only just over half of respondents stating that agencies were helpful (52%)

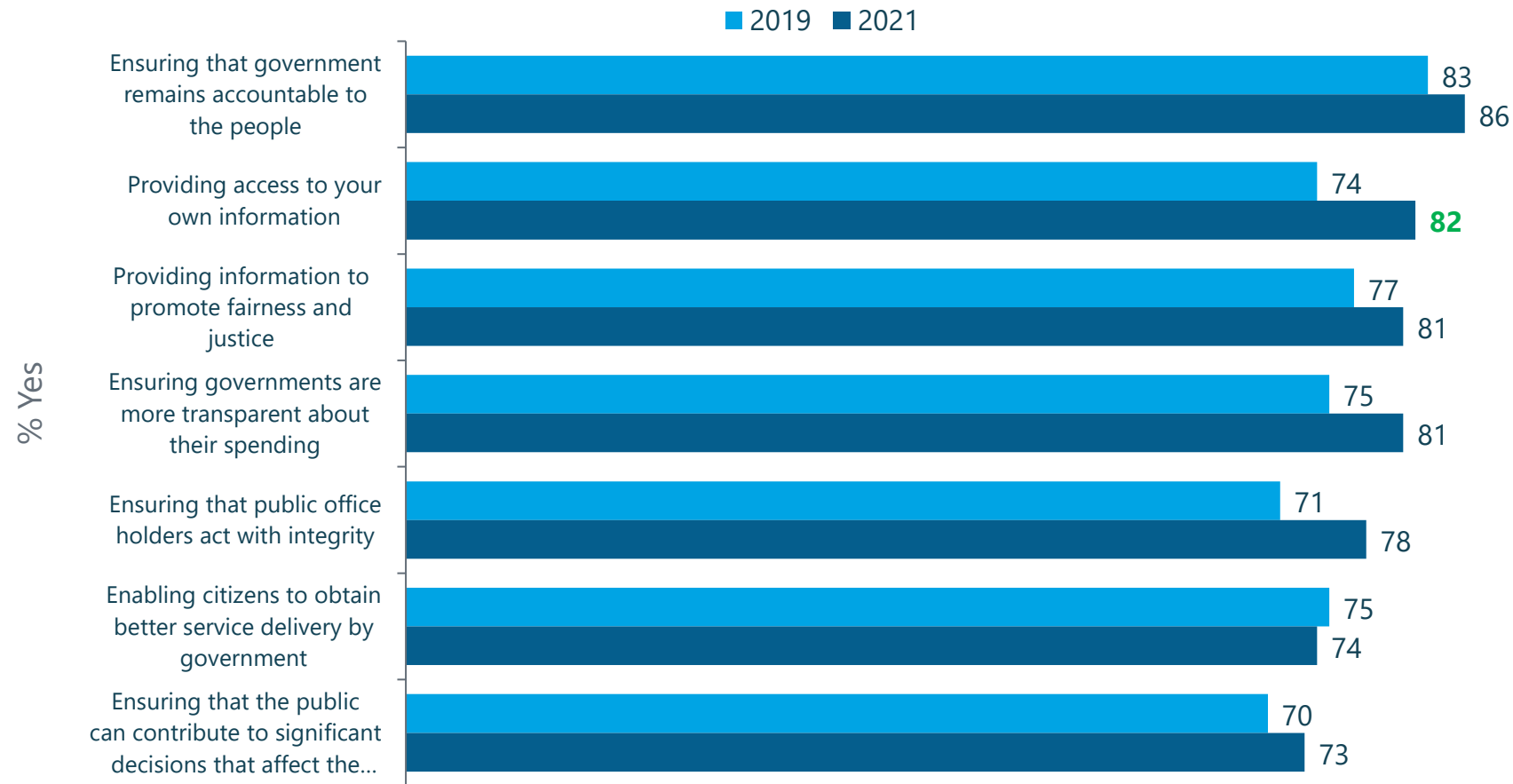
# HELPFULNESS OF AGENCIES



Q7. When you tried to access information how helpful were agencies in providing advice and assistance to you?  
Base: Those who tried to access information from any agency (2019 n=121, 2021 n=100)

New question in 2019

# PUBLIC INTEREST FACTORS



- Respondents continued to place importance on many public interest factors
- Compared to 2019, a larger proportion of respondents felt that considering an individual's access to their own information was important

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?

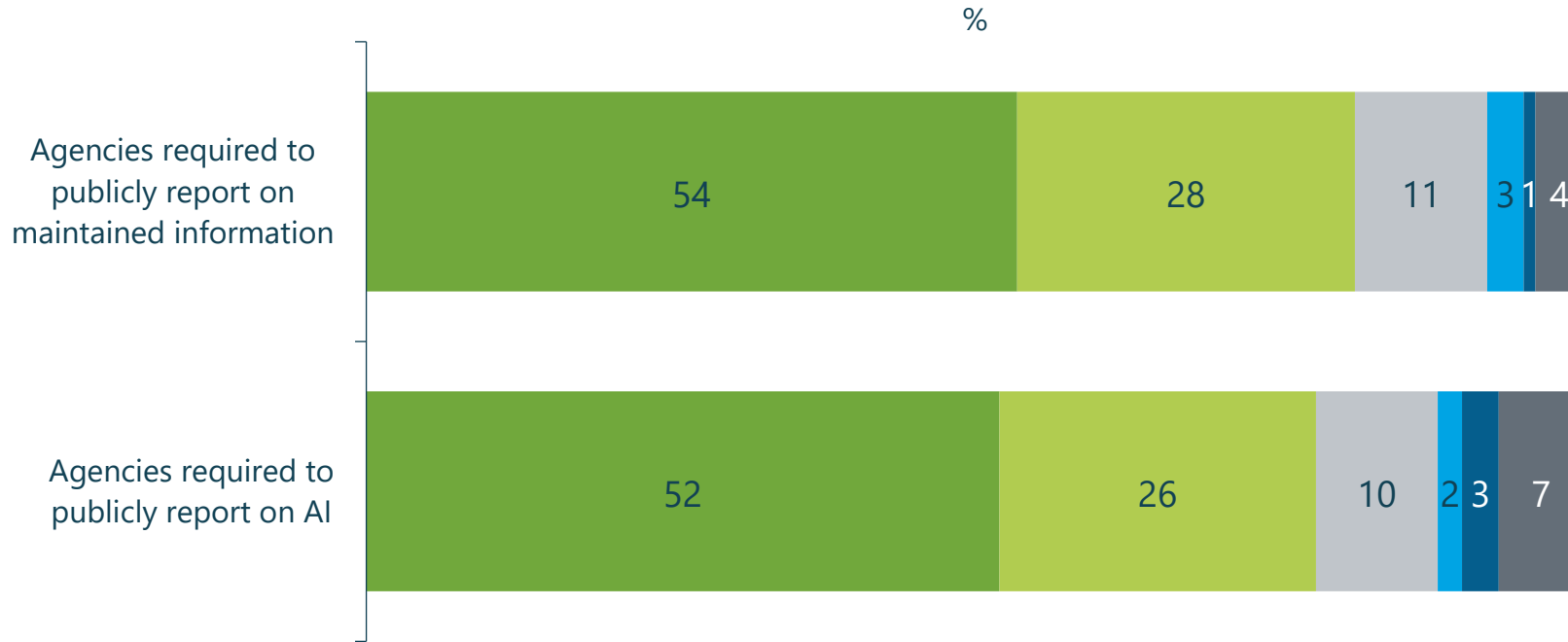
Base: All respondents (2019 n=350, 2021 n=368)

**New question in 2019**



# AGREEMENT REGARDING PUBLIC REPORTING

Strongly agree Slightly agree Neither agree nor disagree Slightly disagree Strongly disagree Don't know



- Most agreed that agencies should be required to publicly report on the information they maintain and the systems they use to inform decision making

Q9. Governments are increasingly using data, algorithms and other forms of artificial intelligence to inform decisions, for example subsidy and or payment calculations. To what extent do you agree that government agencies should be required to publicly report on any systems used to inform agency decisions that impact individuals?

Q10. To what extent do you agree that government agencies should publicly report on the information they maintain?

Base: All respondents (2021 n=368)

Question added in 2021



# DEMOGRAPHICS





# GENDER AND AGE

	2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=368)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	52	50
Male	48	50
Gender neutral†	Not an option in 2019	-
Prefer not to indicate†		-
<b>Age</b>		
18-24	5	4
25-34	23	24
35-44	18	24
45-54	19	11
55-64	10	10
65-74	14	12
75+	12	16

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=368)

†Options added in 2021



# WORKING STATUS AND MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN

	2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=368)
<b>Working status</b>		
Working full time	40	46
Retired	26	28
Working part time	17	15
Unemployed	6	4
Engaged in home duties	9	<b>3</b>
Student	3	3
Prefer not to answer	-	1
<b>Main language spoken at home</b>		
English	88	91
Hindi	2	2
Other	10	8

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=368)

# SUMMARY

Similar to 2019, most respondents felt that the right to access government held information was very or quite important (50% and 40% respectively).

Most (81%) were also aware of their right to access information held by at least one of the agencies listed, and almost three in ten (27%) had attempted to access information.

Approximately three out of four (78%) were at least partially successful at accessing information held by government agencies, which was similar to 2019.

However, helpfulness of the agencies that respondents contacted continues to be an area warranting improvement, with only half indicating that the agency was quite or very helpful (20% and 32% respectively).

Respondents continued to place importance on many of the public interest factors listed.

Most respondents agreed that agencies should be required to publicly report on the information they maintain and the artificial systems they use to inform decisions (82% and 78% respectively).



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