

Information Access Study

Victoria

June 2023



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Research Design



Research Design



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

A mixed mode survey amongst n=350 VIC residents aged 18+ years was conducted between May 22 and June 5 2023 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 years are shown in **GREEN** (increased significantly) or **RED** (decreased significantly).

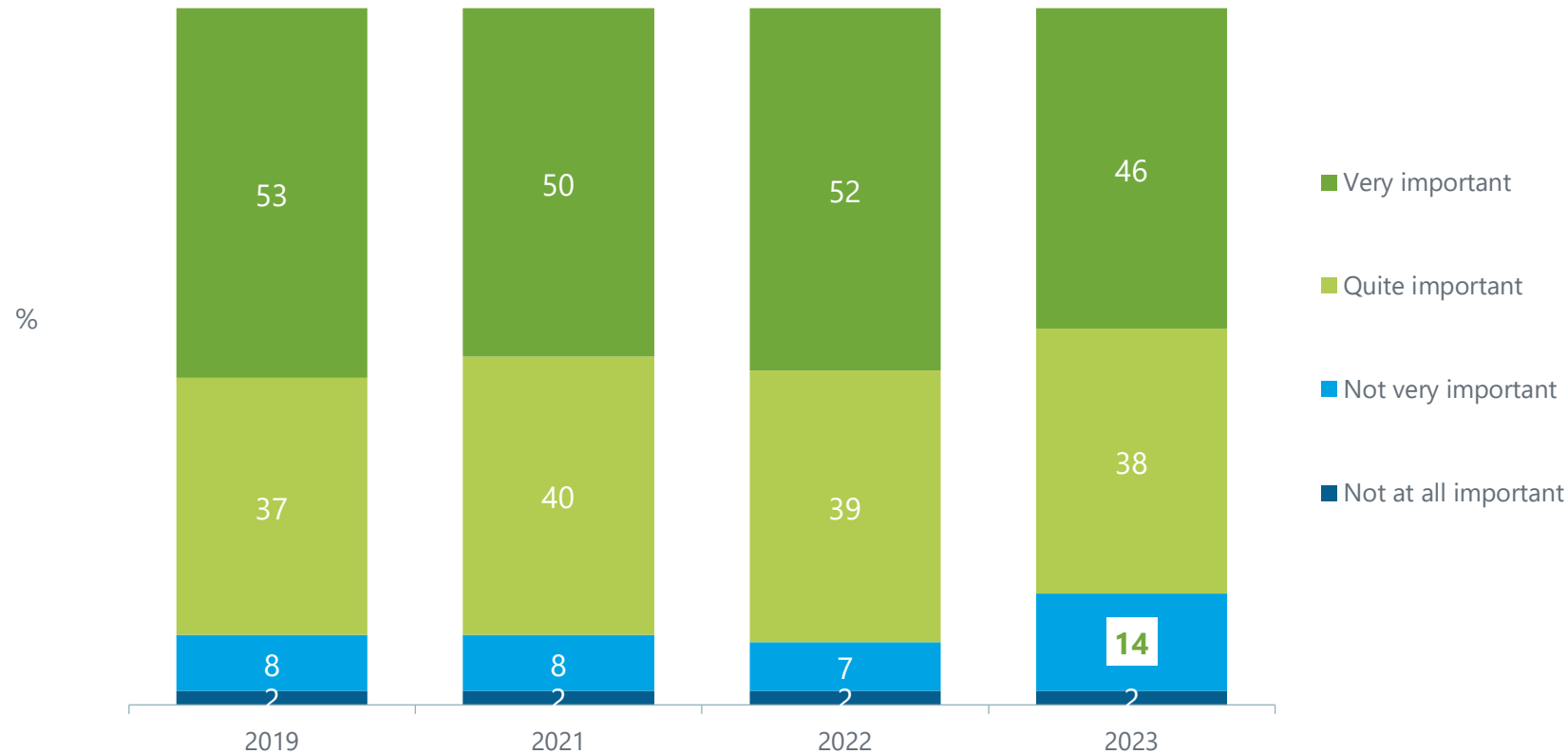
Due to rounding, percentages may not always add to 100.



Information Access



Importance of Having the Right to Access Government Information

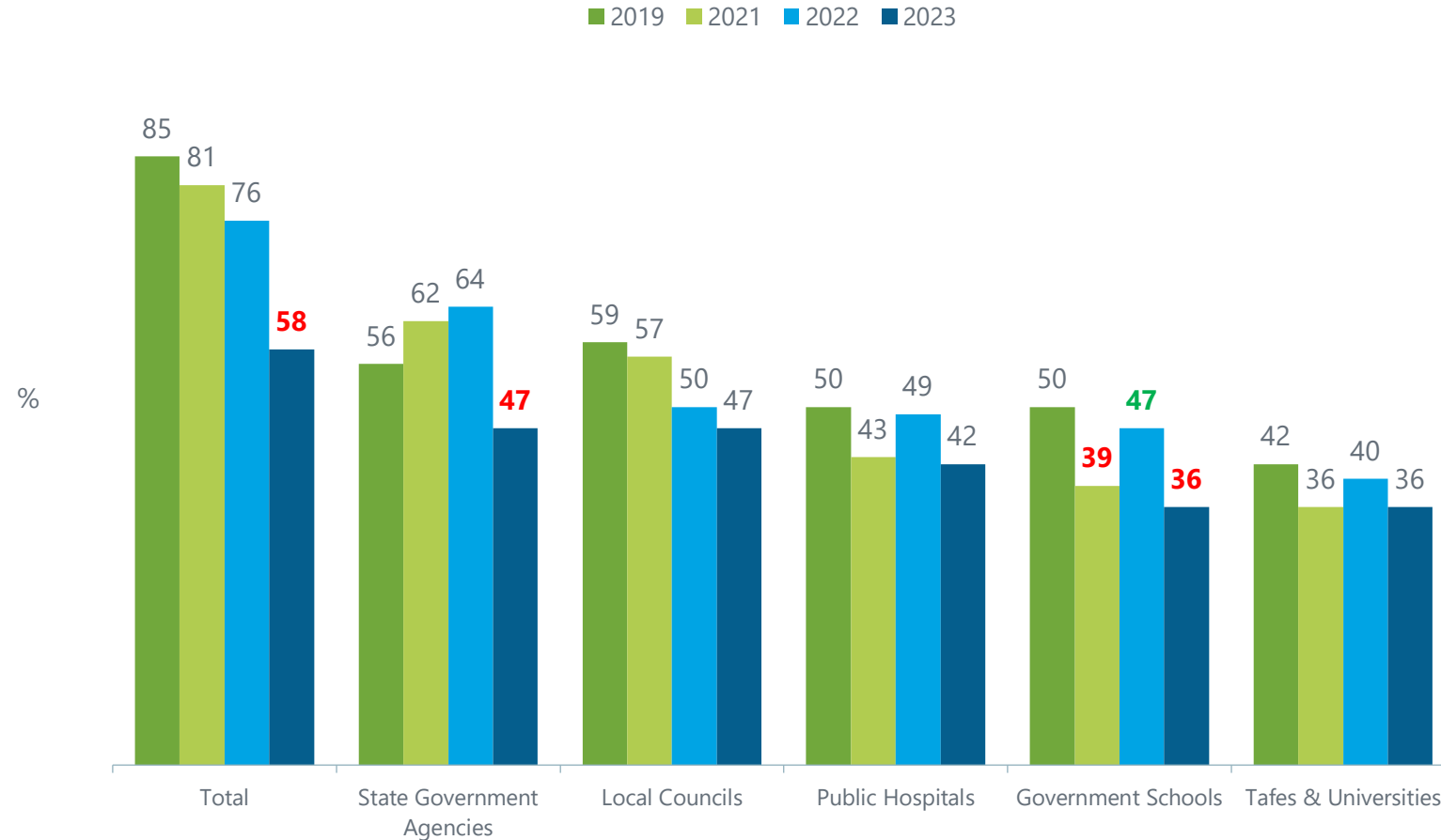


Similar to previous years, most respondents indicated that having the right to access information was important to them (84%).

Despite this, the proportion of respondents who indicated that the right to access government information was not very important doubled significantly (14%, up from 7% in 2022).



Awareness of Right to Access Information



2023 saw significantly fewer respondents indicate they were aware of the right to access information from government agencies than respondents in 2022.

In particular, 2023 respondents were significantly less aware of the right to access information from State government agencies (47%) and from Government schools (36%) than respondents in 2022.

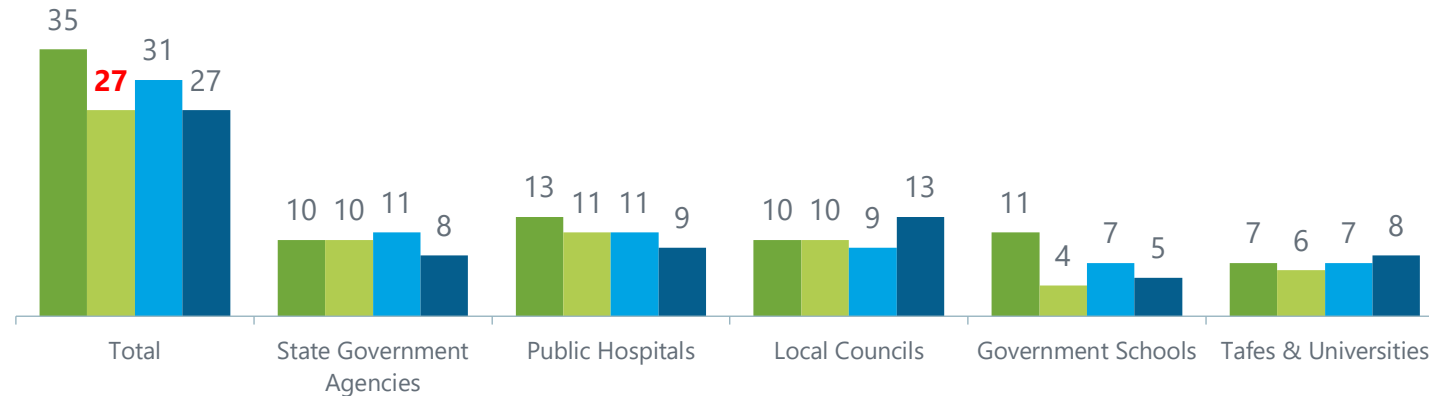


Attempts to Access Information in the Last 3 Years



■ 2019 ■ 2021 ■ 2022 ■ 2023

%



As with previous years, less than a third of respondents attempted to access information held by any government agencies.

Respondents who attempted to access information were most likely to seek information from Local Councils (13%) and least likely to attempt to access information from Government schools (5%).



Source Of Awareness



Source of awareness regarding right to access information	TAFES & Universities % (n=27*)	Public Hospitals % (n=32)	Government Schools % (n=18*)	State govt. agencies % (n=29)	Local Councils % (n=46)
Friend/family member	30	41	28	39	54
The agency	15	19	-	21	15
OVIC	-	3	22	14	11
A different government agency	-	3	6	4	11
Previous experience	7	6	11	14	7
A website (no further information)	30	16	-	-	13
Other	11	16	22	11	4
Don't remember	7	16	22	7	9

Friends or family members were the most common source of awareness regarding the right to access information.

OVIC was the main source of awareness for access to information from Government Schools.

New Question 2023

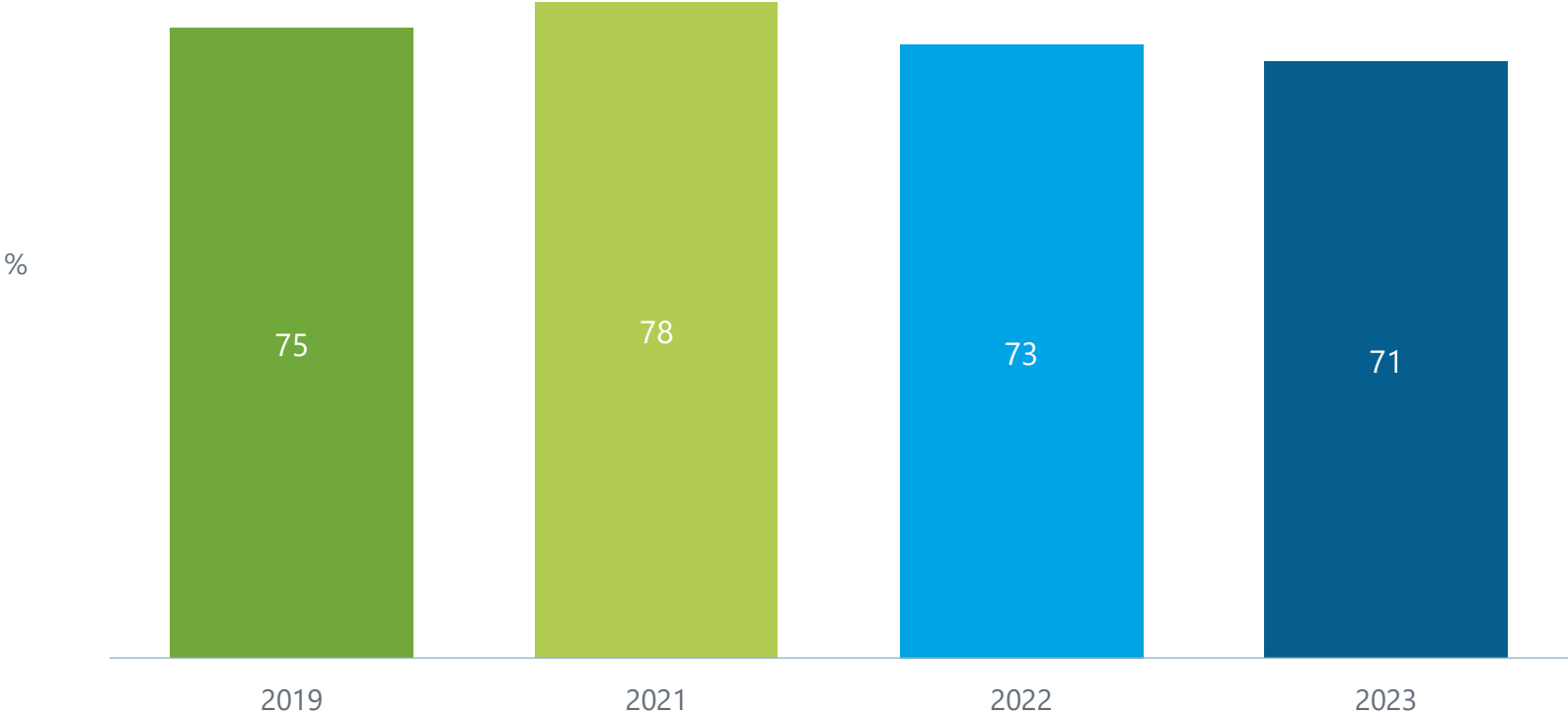
Q6. Where did you find out that you could access information from the agency? MR

Base: Respondents who tried to contact; TAFES and Universities (2023 n=27*), Public Hospitals (2023 n=32), Government Schools (2023 n=18*), State government agencies (2023 n=29), Local Councils (2023 n=46)

*Caution: small base size, indicative only



Success in Attempting to Access Information from at Least one Agency

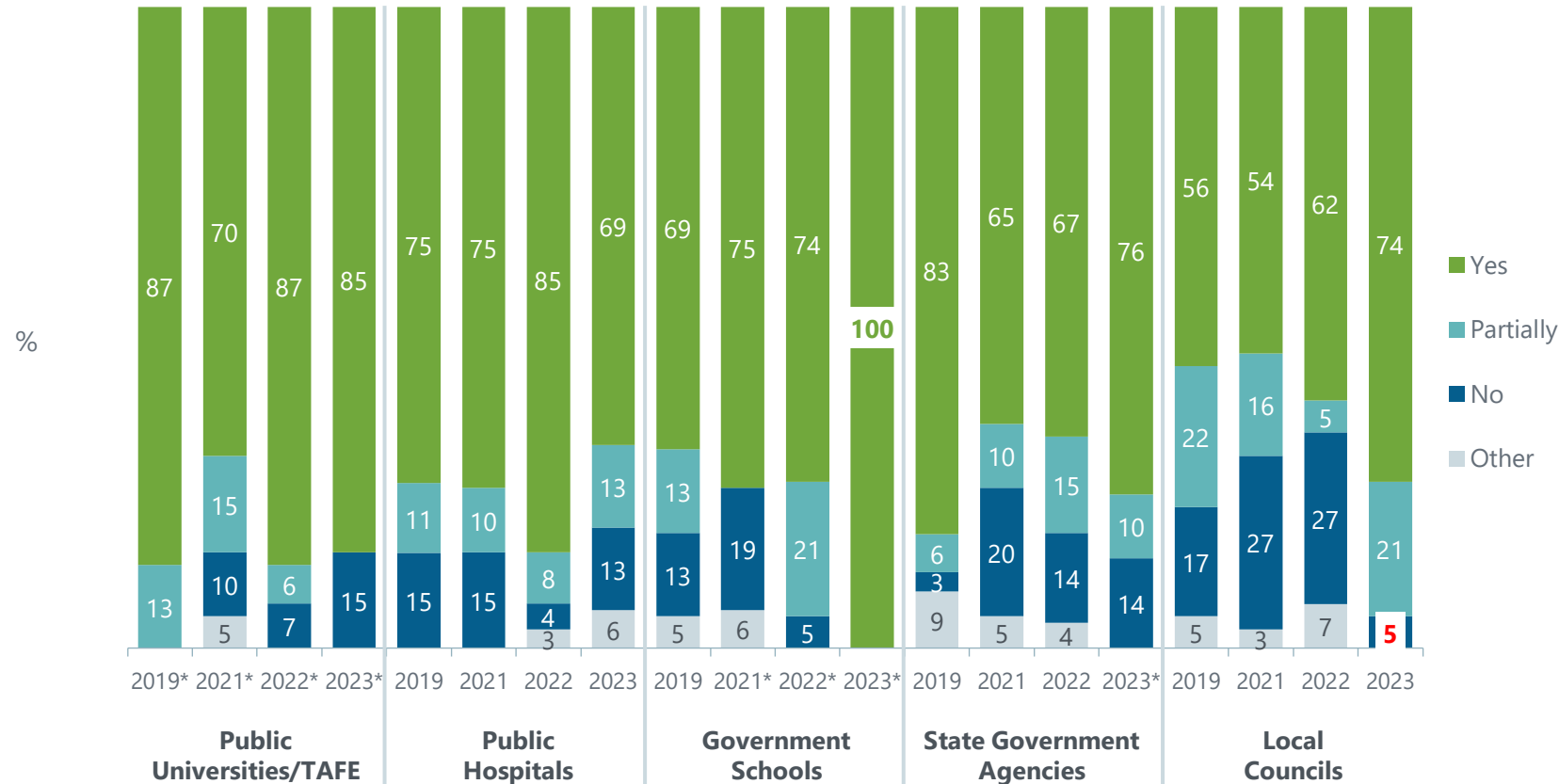


Success in accessing information was like previous years, with close to three quarters of respondents (71%) who attempted to access information having success in doing so.



Q7. Were you successful in accessing information from ...? SR
Base: Respondents who had attempted to access information; 2019 n=121, 2021 n=100, 2022 n=109, 2023 n=95

Success in Attempting to Access Information by Agency



Respondents were most successful in accessing information held by Government Schools and Public Universities and least successful in accessing information from Public Hospitals.

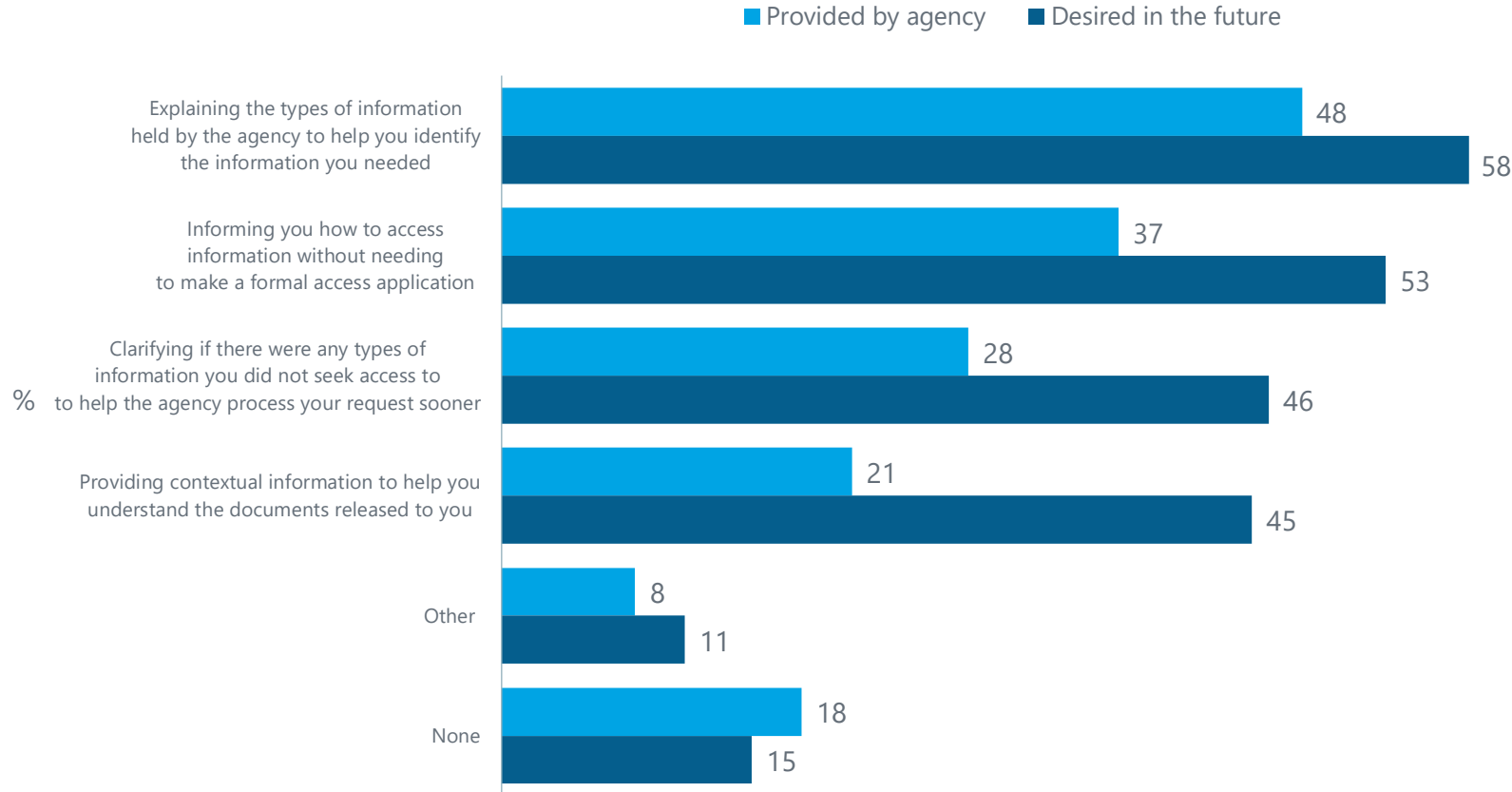
Q7. Were you successful in accessing information from ...? SR

Base: Respondents who had attempted to access information; Public Universities/TAFE (2019 n=23*, 2021 n=20*, 2022 n=24*, 2023 n=27*), Public Hospitals (2019 n=47, 2021 n=40, 2022 n=37, 2023 n=32), Government Schools (2019 n=37, 2021 n=16*, 2022 n=24*, 2023 n=18*), State Government Agencies (2019 n=33, 2021 n=36, 2022 n=40, 2023 n=29*), Local Councils (2019 n=36, 2021 n=37, 2022 n=30, 2023 n=46)

*Caution: small base size, indicative only



Advice & Assistance



The most common form of advice or assistance reportedly provided by agencies were 'explaining the types of information held', 'informing how to access information without needing a formal application' and 'clarifying if there were any types of information you did not need to process your request'.

All of which were considered important to provide in the future.

The largest gap in terms of advice appeared to be in agencies providing contextual information to help understand documents.

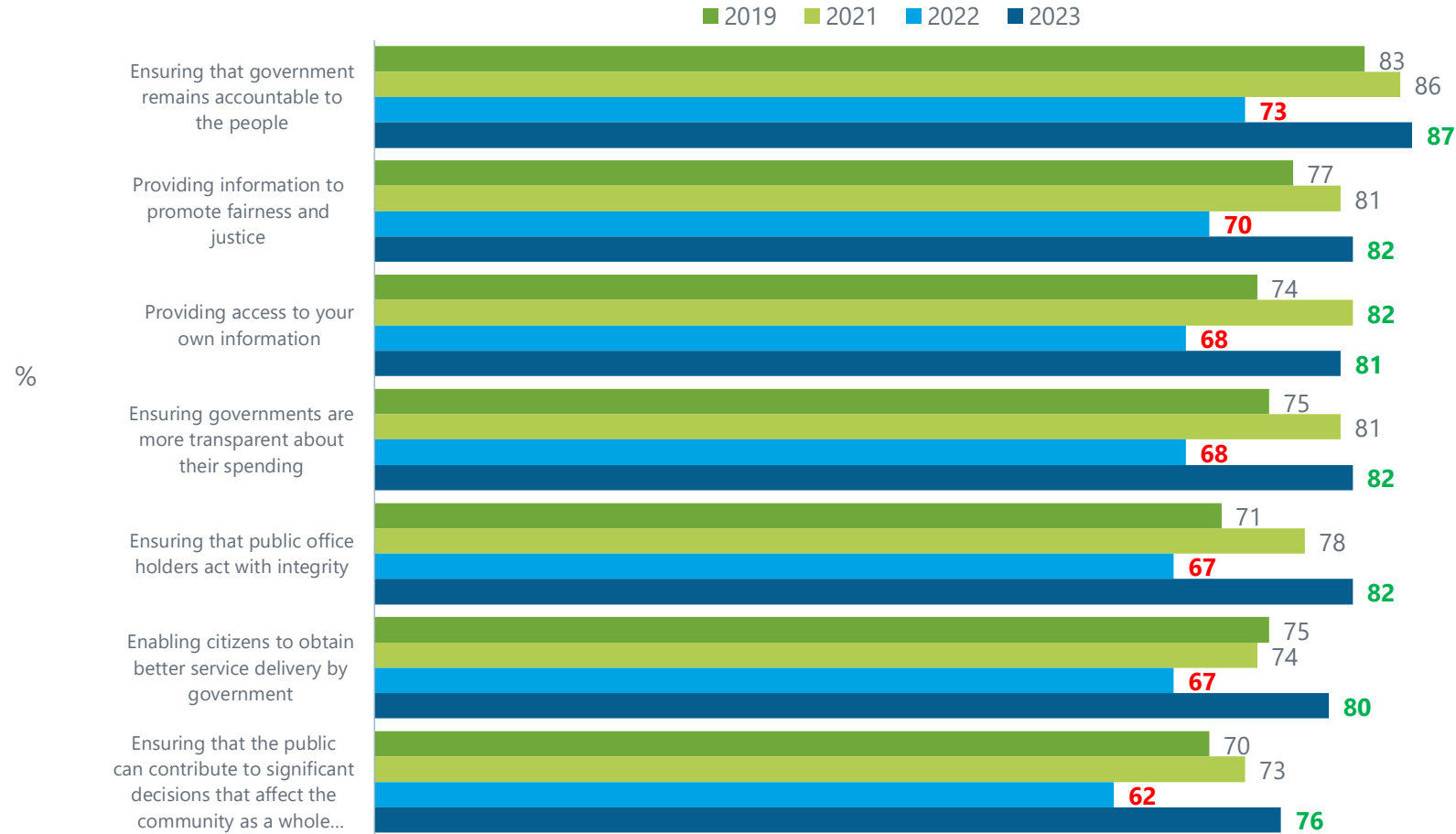


Q8. What types of advice and assistance did agencies provide to you? MR
 Q9. What types of advice and assistance would you like agencies to provide to you in future? MR
 Base: Those who tried to access information from any agency; 2022 n=109, 2023 n=95

Community Attitudes



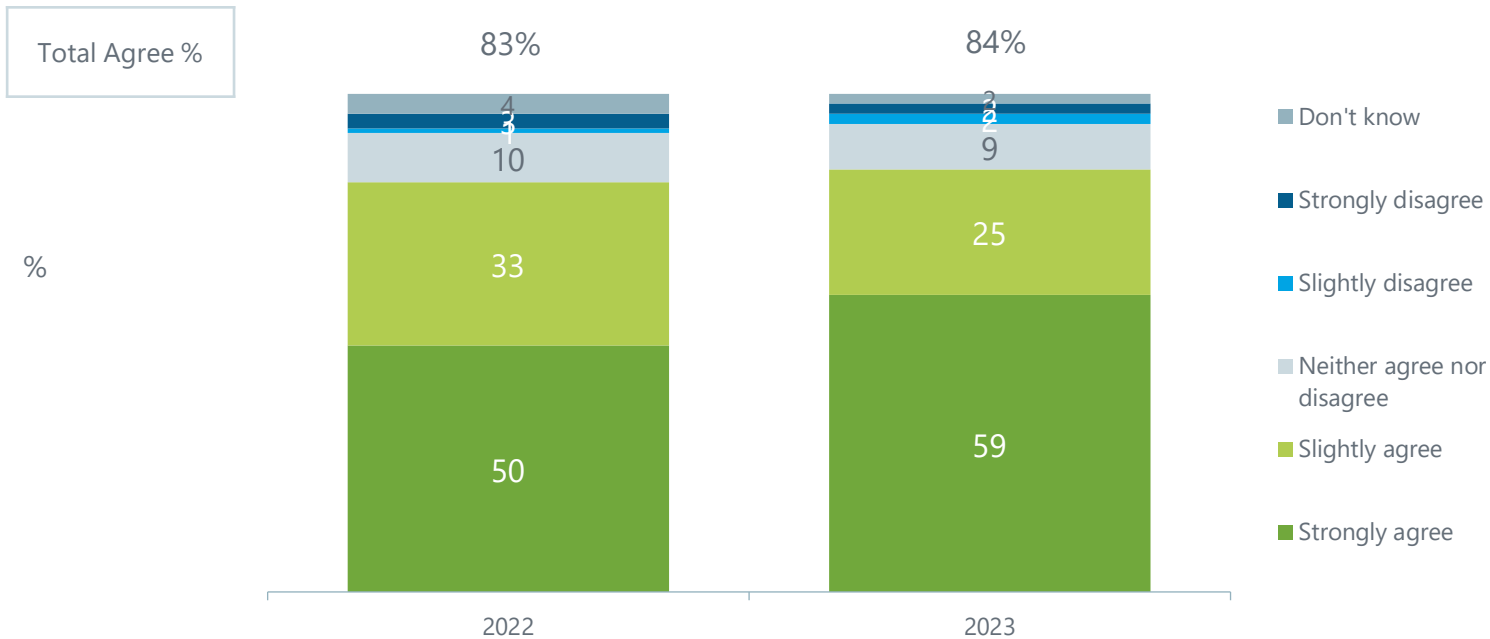
Importance of Public Interest Factors



In 2023, respondents were significantly more likely to indicate that public interest factors were important to consider when agencies decide to release information.



Agreement that Public Access Improves Transparency & Accountability



Most respondents (84%) agreed that public access to government information improves government transparency and accountability – which was similar to last year.

A small proportion indicated otherwise (4%) while 9% responded neutrally.

New Questions in 2022

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that public access to government information improves government transparency and accountability?

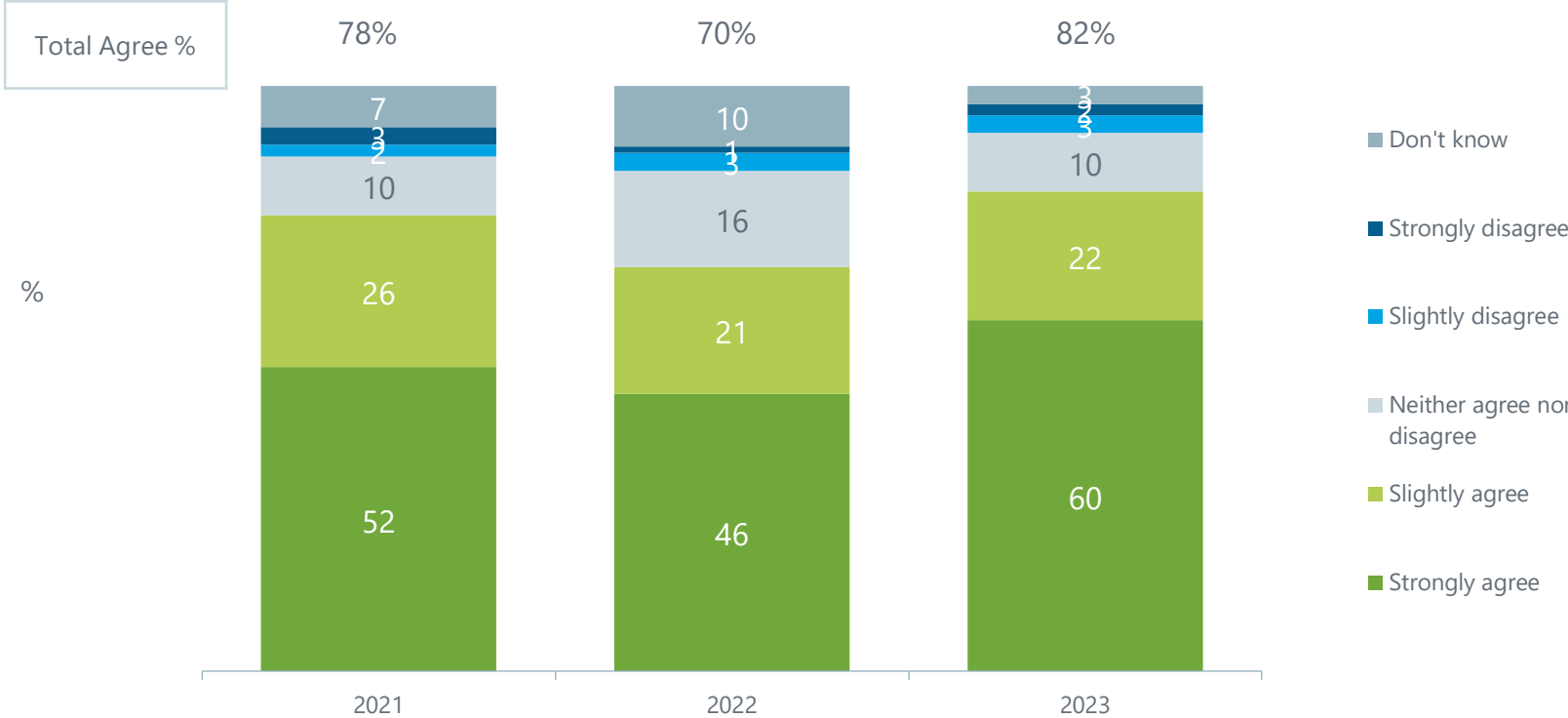
Transparency is about the government making people aware of what it does, how it does it and why.

Accountability is about the government being honest and taking responsibility for its actions, both when things are going well, and after mistakes happen or things do not go to plan.

Base: All respondents; 2022 n=351, 2023 n=350



Agreement That Agencies Should Be Required To Publicly Report On Systems Used

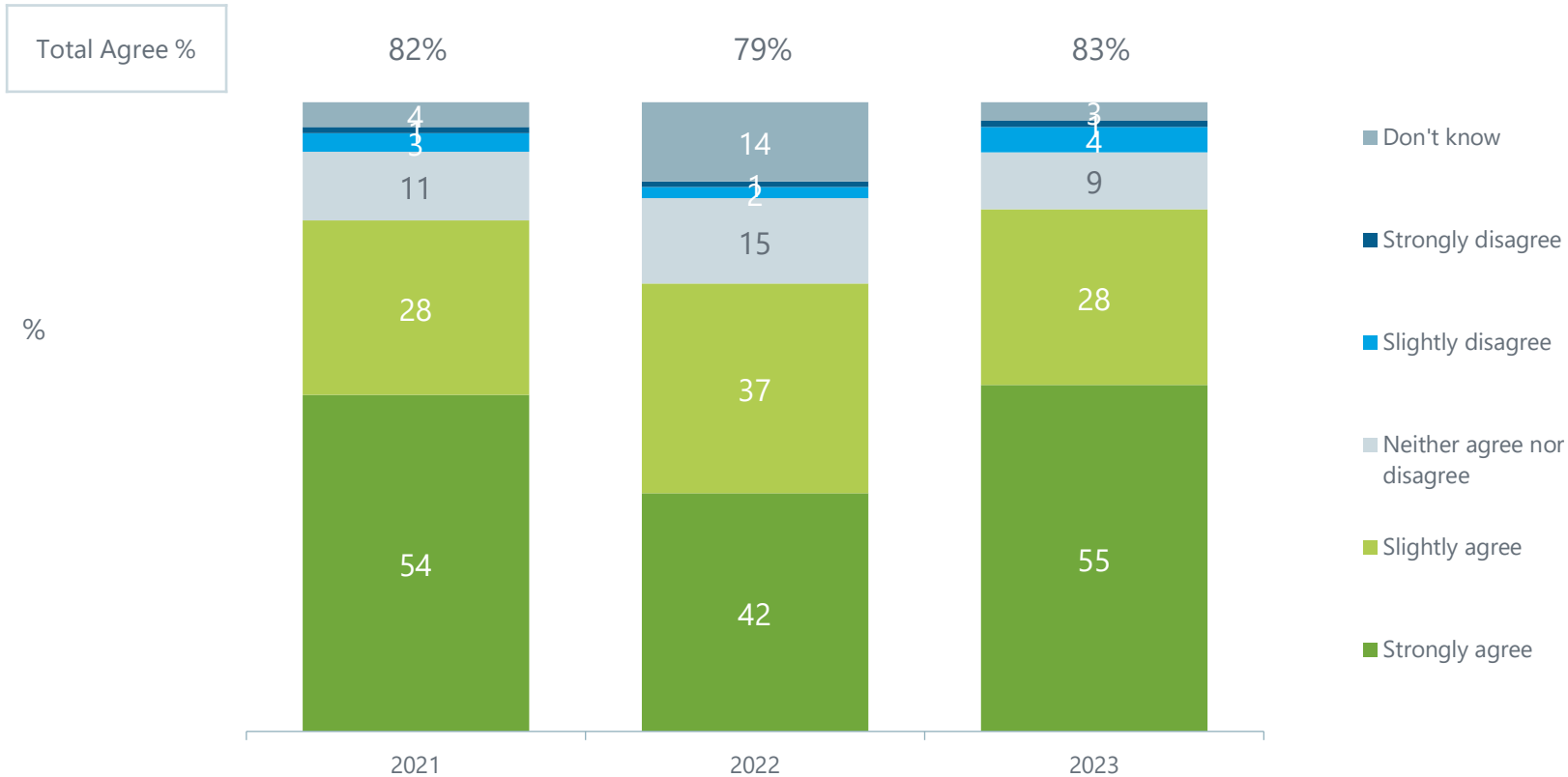


Over four fifths (82%) of respondents in 2023 agreed that government agencies should be required to publicly report on systems used to inform agency decisions that impact individuals which was a significant increase from 2022.

Q12. 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?
 Base: All respondents; 2021 n=368, 2022 n=351, 2023 n=350



Agreement that Agencies should Report on Information they Maintain



Over four fifths of respondents in 2023 agreed that agencies should publicly report on information they maintain, representing a slight increase from 2022.

Q13. To what extent do you agree that government agencies should publicly report on the information they maintain?
 Base: All respondents; 2021 n=368, 2022 n=351, 2023 n=350



Demographics



Gender & Age



		2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=368)	2022 % (n=351)	2023 % (n=350)
Gender 	Female	52	50	48	50
	Male	48	50	52	50
	Gender Neutral †	Not an option	-	-	-
	Prefer not to indicate †		-	-	-
Age 	18-24	5	4	8	5
	25-34	23	24	26	23
	35-44	18	24	31	22
	45-54	19	11	19	13
	55-64	10	10	5	12
	65-74	14	12	5	14
	75+	12	16	6	11

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=368, 2022 n=351, 2023 n=350



Working Status & Main Language Spoken



		2019 % (n=350)	2021 % (n=368)	2022 % (n=351)	2023 % (n=350)
Working Status 	Working full time	40	46	37	48
	Retired	26	28	21	22
	Working part time	17	15	21	19
	Unemployed	6	4	7	3
	Engaged in home duties	9	3	11	3
	Student	3	3	2	3
	Prefer not to answer	-	1	1	2
Main Language Spoken 	English	88	91	90	88
	Hindi	2	2	<1	1
	Other	10	8	10	11
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander 	Yes	Question not asked			1
	No				



Q14. Which of these categories best describes you?

Q15. What is the main language spoken at home?

Q16. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin? **Question added in 2023**

Base: All respondents; 2019 n=350, 2021 n=368, 2022 n=351, 2023 n=350

Summary



Summary



Most respondents felt that the right to access government held information was very or quite important (46% and 38% respectively), which was similar to previous years.

Awareness of the right to access government held information was lower than previous years, with over half (58%) being aware of their right in relation to at least one of the agencies listed, as opposed to 76% in 2022.

Twenty-seven per cent had attempted to access information held by at least one of the agencies listed, with most finding out about their right through word of mouth.

The majority (71%) successfully accessed the information they requested, particularly from Government Schools (100%), Universities and Tafes (85%), and local councils (74%).

All of the advice and assistance that were provided by agencies are considered important to provide in the future, however there was a gap between the desire for contextual information to help understand documents and the proportion who actually received that assistance.

All of the public interest factors listed were felt to be important to consider, with each area increasing in importance this year.

There was strong agreement that public access to government information improves government transparency and accountability (84%), that agencies should be required to publicly report on systems used (82%) and report on information they maintain (83%).





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