

Environmental issues, awareness and action

MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

TRA

The job to do

Obtaining clarity on how the Ministry for the Environment can ensure its work can reach and resonate with New Zealanders

Looking specifically at Public awareness of key environmental issues. Focused on five specific areas: waste, climate, freshwater, biodiversity, urban planning*.

To inform how MfE should promote key policy initiatives to the public including insight to inform audience, channel, message, and partnerships.

Methodology

A 15 minute online survey of 1,215 New Zealanders

The survey was live in field from Friday 17th June to Wednesday 6th July.

The data was then post-weighted to be a nationally representative sample of the New Zealand population.

KEY SAMPLE GROUPS

GENDER

Female n=581
Male n=629

AGE

18-24 years n=156
25-29 years n=99

ETHNICITY

Māori n=193
Pasifika n=75
Asian n=253

REGION

North Island n=911
South Island n=304

Agenda

1

Environmental
issues

2

Channels and sources



Environmental Issues

TRA

Immediate concerns like the cost of living are top of mind, deprioritising environmental issues

TOP OF MIND ISSUES FOR NEW ZEALANDERS - UNPROMPTED



Q: Thinking about different issues in New Zealand's society, what issues come to mind as most important for you?

Base: total sample, n=1215

These top of mind issues dominate the media too

Housing crisis: Many homeowners couldn't afford their own properties if they were buying now

7 Sep, 2021 04:01 PM

⌚ 4 minutes to read



Editorial: Ram-raiders need stopping in their tracks

27 Apr, 2022 05:00 AM

⌚ 3 minutes to read



Multiple stores were rammed during a raid on the Ormiston Town Centre. Photo / Hayden Woodward

Cost of living: Benefit and Working for Families changes could soften blow of inflation rise, advocates say

22 Apr, 2022 05:00 AM

⌚ 3 minutes to read



Cheree Kinnear takes to the streets of Auckland city to find out how Kiwis are being affected by the latest increases to inflation. Video / NZ Herald

Increased cost of living inching towards 'crisis' as Kiwis pay hundreds more for basic items this year

How the cost of living has ballooned during the Covid-19 pandemic

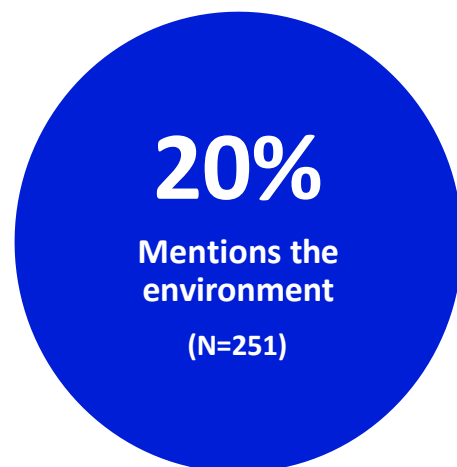
Esther Taunton • 05:00, Mar 18 2022



Climate dominates for the few who have environmental concerns top of mind

Issues around waste, freshwater and biodiversity barely register in the face of other concerns

TOP OF MIND ISSUES FOR NEW ZEALANDERS - UNPROMPTED



Mentions of:

- Climate n=141
- Urban planning n=73
- Waste n=21
- Freshwater n=12
- Biodiversity n=4
- Other n=41

“

Climate change effects, flooding etc.

Homelessness with the increasing property market.

Tackling excessive rubbish and plastics pollution.

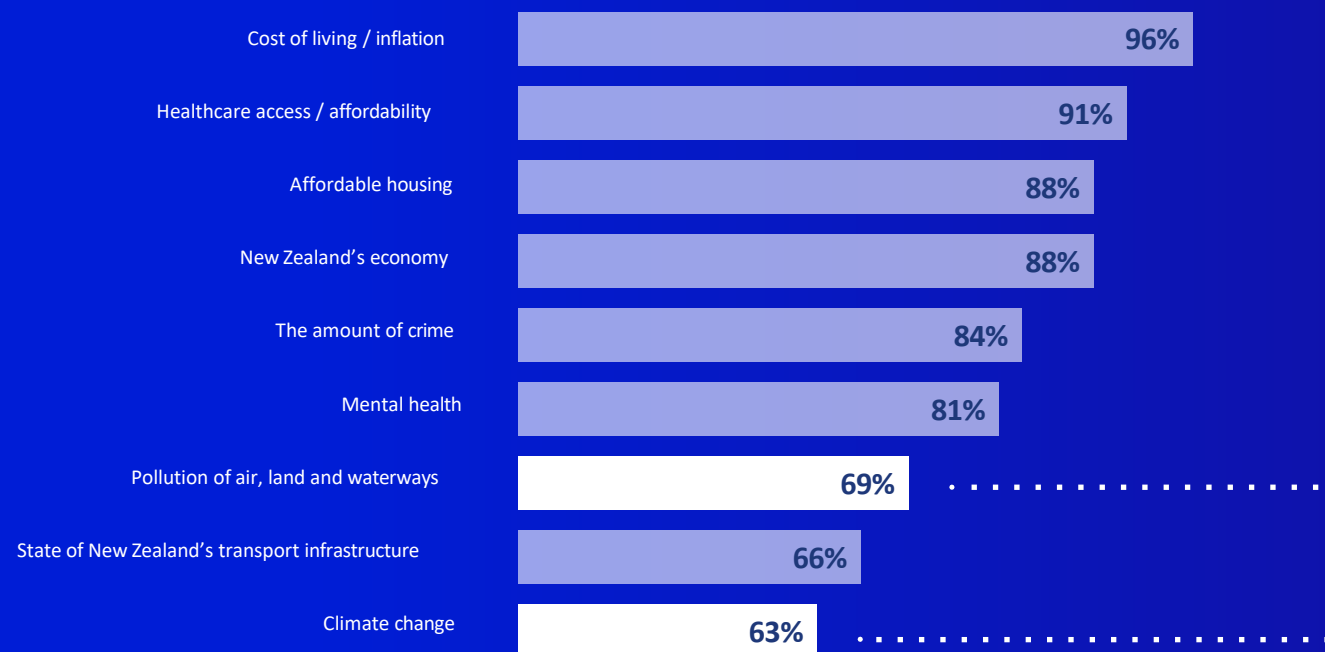
Freshwater pollution.

Depletion of fish stocks.

Environmental issues, sustainability.

But when prompted, 3 in 4 New Zealanders agree environmental issues are important – just not as important as other issues

TOP OF MIND ISSUES FOR NEW ZEALANDERS - PROMPTED

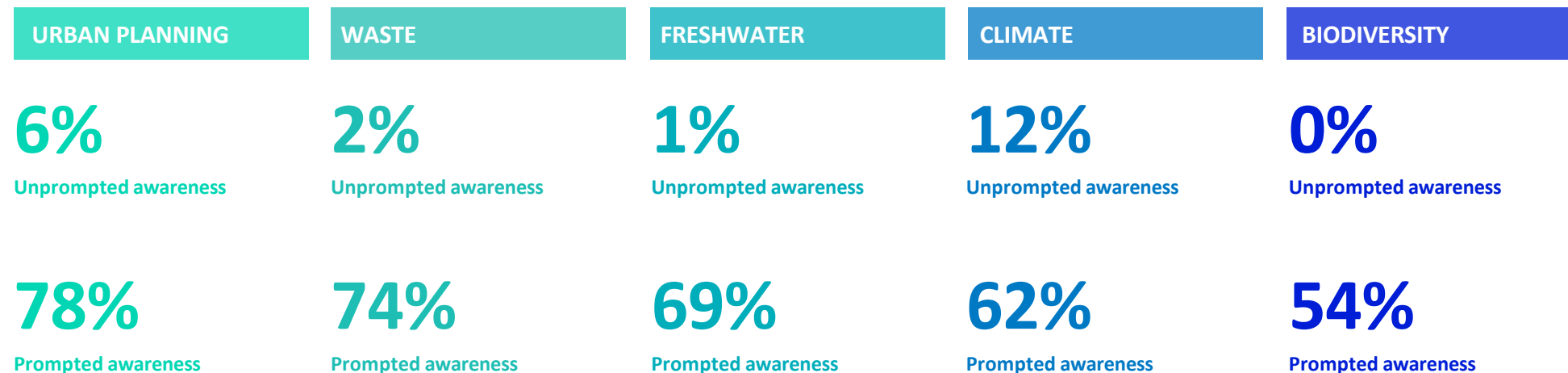


77%

**NET: ENVIRONMENT
STATEMENTS**

Specific issues MfE is trying to address, while acknowledged, do not compete with other pressing concerns

AWARENESS OF SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES



And when we drill further into specific on issues, awareness is even lower

NET: Urban Planning 78%

1. There is a significant housing problem in New Zealand's main cities (73%)
2. The Resource Management Act is not working (32%)

NET: Waste 74%

1. The majority of waste generated in New Zealand goes to landfill rather than being composted or recycled (55%)
2. Rubbish ending up in landfills contributes to our carbon emissions (50%)
3. Large amounts of valuable resources are lost to landfill (35%)

NET: Freshwater 69%

1. Poor water quality is affecting where we can swim and recreate in our rivers and lakes (55%)
2. Freshwater quality is declining in urban and farmed areas (44%)
3. There is a lack of understanding of what needs to be done to ensure healthy freshwater in both urban and rural areas (34%)

NET: Climate 62%

1. The need to make big changes to the way we live to tackle climate change (transport, energy, construction, food) (48%)
2. How Aotearoa New Zealand might reduce emissions using the Emissions Reduction Plan (ERP) (32%)
3. A national plan is being put together to help New Zealand minimize damage from a changing climate (27%)

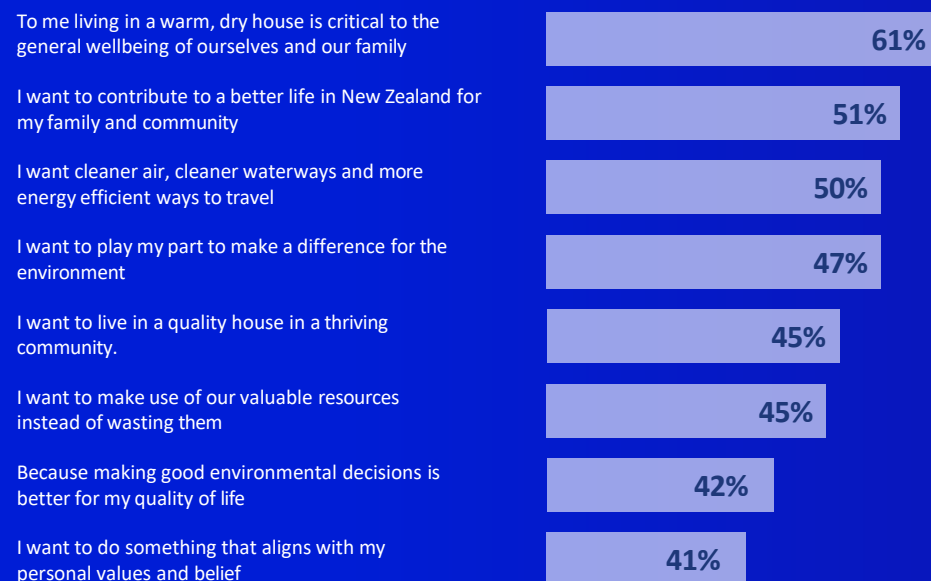
NET: Biodiversity 54%

1. Habitat destruction means many of our unique birds, reptiles and plants are close to extinction (40%)
2. A majority of our non or low flying birds are threatened with extinction or at risk of becoming threatened (32%)
3. There has been significant losses in indigenous land cover area (e.g. indigenous forest, tussock grassland) (29%)

The urban planning statements splits suggest New Zealanders care about only the impact (supply and prices) of urban planning decisions

People are motivated to reduce their environmental impact, but the strongest motivators are linked to personal benefit

MOTIVATORS FOR ACTION – TOP 8



MOTIVATORS FOR ACTION – BOTTOM 8

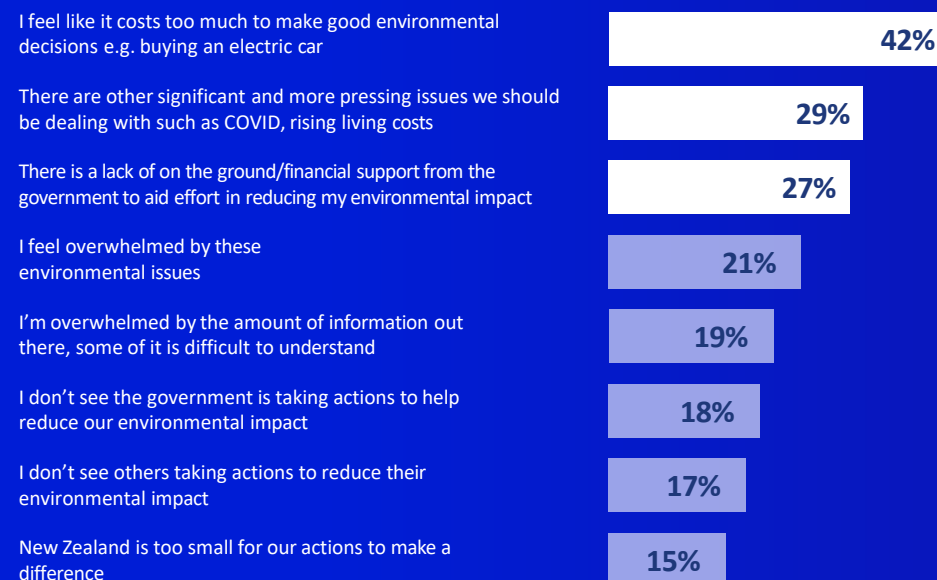


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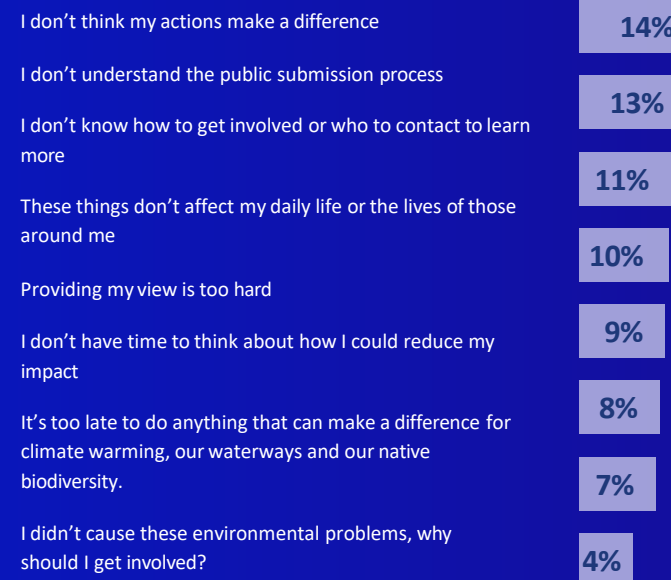
AVERAGE
NUMBER OF
MOTIVATORS

The primary barrier to action is cost, but otherwise there are no significant other barriers to action

BARRIERS TO ACTION – TOP 8



BARRIERS TO ACTION – BOTTOM 8



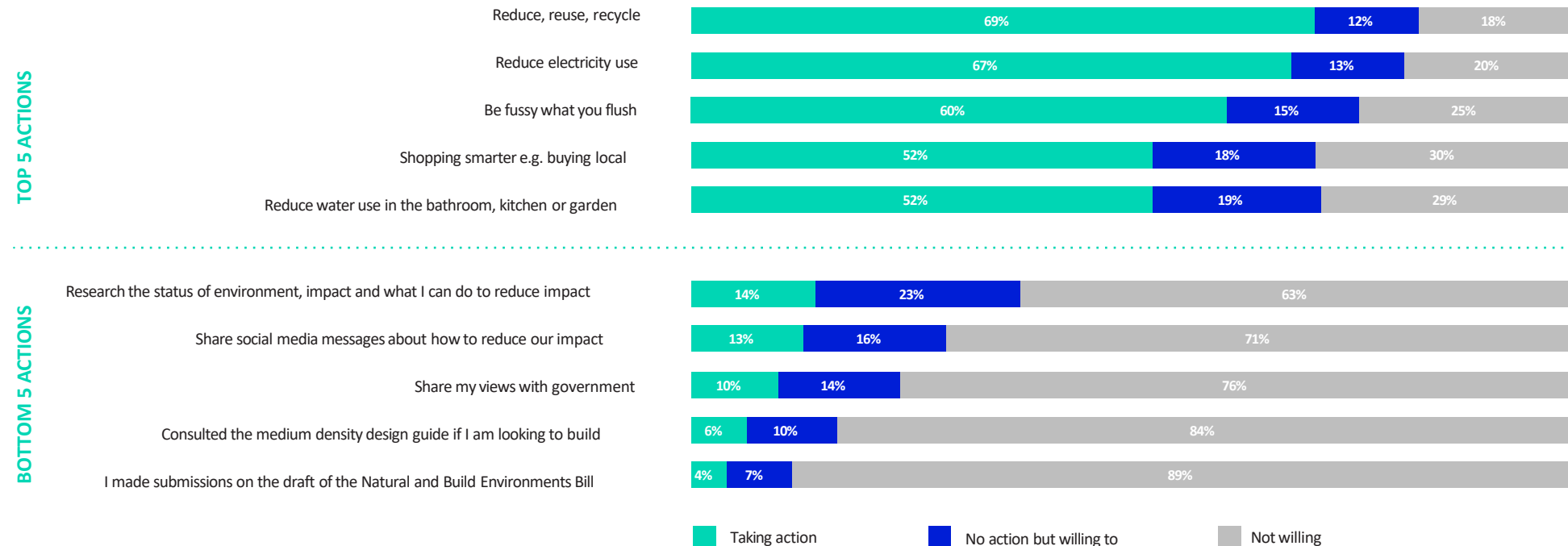
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AVERAGE
NUMBER OF
BARRIERS

The top actions taken to reduce environmental impact provide secondary benefits e.g. saving money

While the actions done least require time and effort, but provide no immediate additional benefit

ACTIONS TAKEN AND WILLINGNESS TO TAKE ACTION



IMPLICATION

Linking the environment to other top of mind concerns will help elevate awareness and encourage action

Environmental concerns are not top of mind. This is unlikely to change in the future if there are always more immediate concerns (e.g. cost of living, health).

People do care, but what is missing is the trigger to act.

There is an opportunity to leverage these other concerns and link specific environmental issues and actions to a dual benefit, in order to give people a greater incentive to take action.

There are tailwinds to improve how people view these environmental issues:



Minimal barriers

Multiple motivations

Small, daily, doable actions (most common actions have immediate and/or dual benefits)

Channels and sources

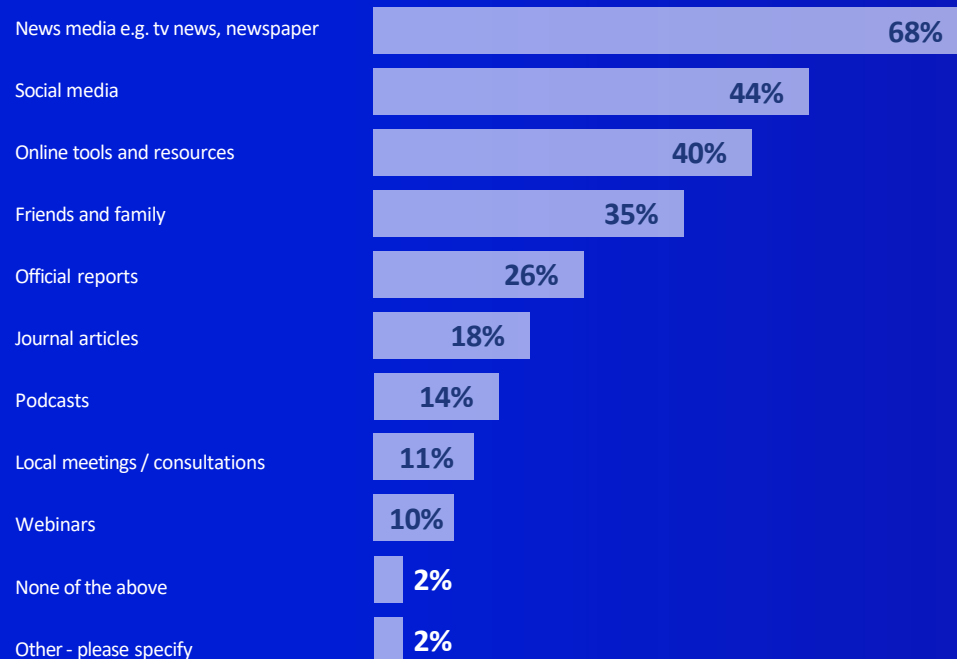
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News and social media dominate as information sources

But for a third of New Zealanders trusting a source or understanding information is a barrier to engage further

PREFERRED INFORMATION SOURCES



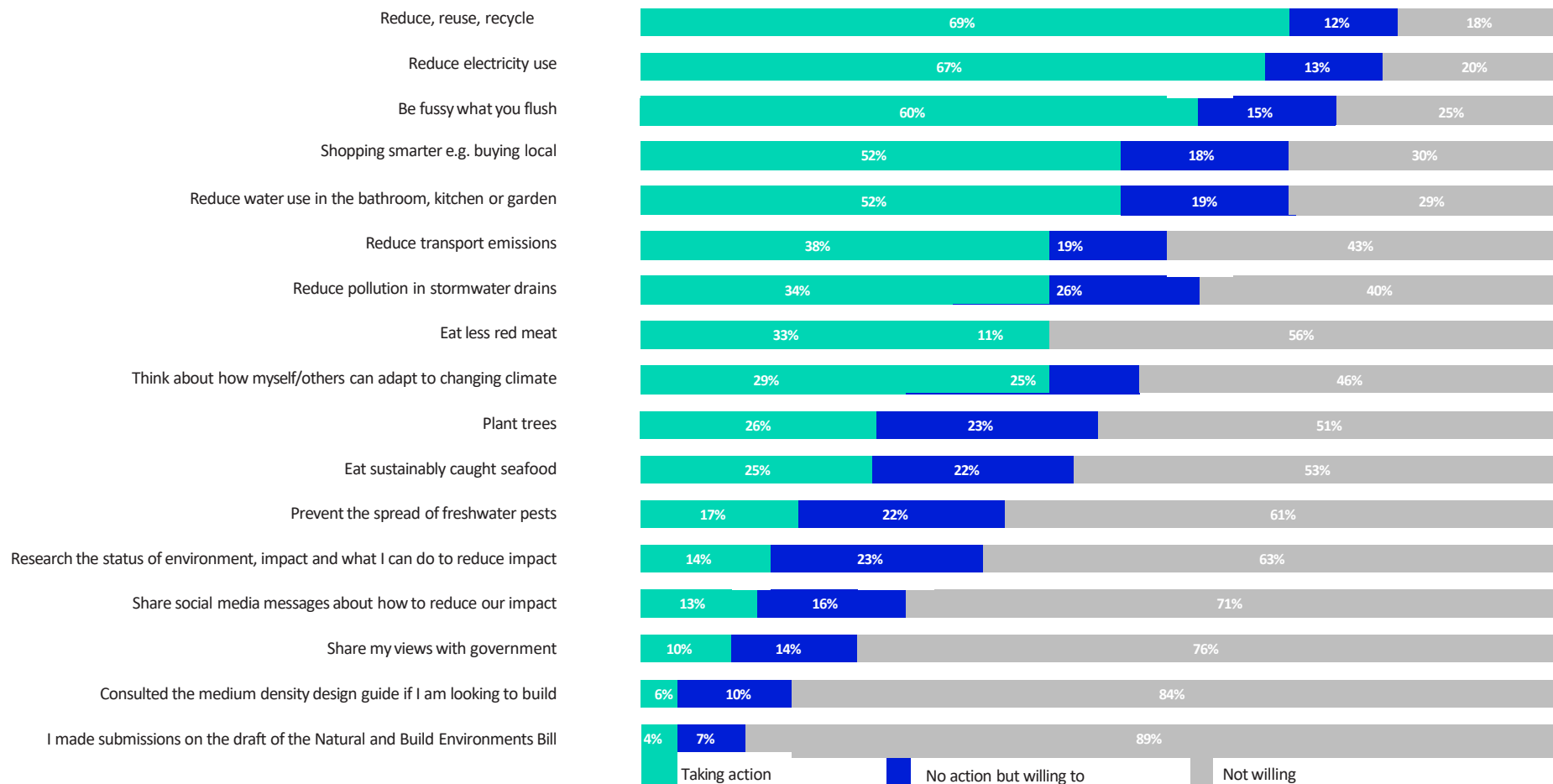
BARRIERS TO ENGAGING WITH INFORMATION



Appendix

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Actions taken and willingness to take action – full list



Actions taken – expanded list

ABBREVIATED VERSION FOR CHARTING	ORIGINAL ANSWER OPTION
I made submissions to the select committee on the draft of the Natural and Built Environments Bill	I made submissions to the select committee on the draft of the Natural and Built Environments Bill
I am aware of and consulted the medium density design guide if I am looking to build more housing on my land	I am aware of and consulted the medium density design guide if I am looking to build more housing on my land
Share my views with government	Share my views with government (directly or via other groups) on how to reduce my environmental impact
Share social media messages about how to reduce our impact	Share social media messages about how to reduce our impact such as cleaning our waterways
Research the status of our environment	Research the status of our environment, how it is impacting me and my family and what I can do to reduce our impact
Prevent the spread of freshwater pests	Prevent the spread of freshwater pests e.g. clean your gear (kayaks, wetsuits) before using them in another waterway
Eat sustainably caught seafood	Eat sustainably caught seafood e.g. buy seafood locally
Plant trees	Plant trees e.g. on your property, in a community planting programme, donating
Think about how myself or others can adapt to the changing climate	Think about how myself or others can adapt to the changing climate
Eat less red meat	Eat less red meat
Reduce pollution in stormwater drains	Reduce pollution in stormwater drains e.g. washing your car on the lawn (avoiding drains), disposing of chemicals like paint responsibly
Reduce transport emissions	Reduce transport emissions e.g. walk, cycle or take public transport where possible, use an electric car, reduce number of flights
Reduce water use in the bathroom, kitchen or garden	Reduce water use in the bathroom, kitchen or garden e.g. taking shorter showers
Shopping smarter	Shopping smarter e.g. buying local, buy only what you need, buying reusable or recycled items