



Our Coast, Our Waterways

Survey results

SEPTEMBER 2021

Central Coast Council

Our Coast, Our Waterways – Survey results

Author: Rose Brown-Mason, Vanessa McCann, Warren Brown and Toan Dam

Date: 13 September 2021

Version 1

Introduction

Coastal Management Programs (CMPs) set the long-term strategy for the management of our coastal environments including our lakes, lagoons, estuaries, beaches and their associated catchments. Central Coast Council, in accordance with the NSW Government Coastal Management Framework is responsible for developing CMP's for Tuggerah Lakes, the Open Coast and Coastal Lagoons and Brisbane Water. Council also assists in the management of southern Lake Macquarie, Broken Bay and the Lower Hawkesbury River and tributaries including Kahibah, Middle, Green Point, Mullet, Mooney and Mangrove Creeks.

Here on the Central Coast it is difficult to go more than 2km without coming into very close proximity of a waterway. This means that the majority of the Central Coast's population play a role in the ongoing maintenance and health of waterways. It is for this reason we decided to take a regionwide approach to phase one consultation.

Between 30 March and 15 June 2021 Central Coast Council hosted the first phase of community consultation to inform the development of the Coastal Management Programs.

Key touchpoints in the first phase of engagement included:

- Key interest focus groups
- A dedicated project webpage
- An online waterways survey
- Community pop-up information stalls

This report provides an overview of the engagement approach and provides a summary of the survey results.

Communications reach

Communications activity during the phase one consultation achieved:

- **3,918** visits to the Your Voice Our Coast project page
- **1,168** survey responses received
- **14** ads across Facebook and Instagram, reaching **62,011** unique users and achieving **263,341** impressions and **2,074** link clicks
- Snap chat ads, generating **128,212** paid impressions
- 8 Google display ads, generating **815,340** impressions and **819** clicks
- 2 e-news articles distributed, reaching more than **12,000** subscribers – generating **97** click throughs
- Over **350** respondents have entered the focus group candidate pool
- Over **220** stakeholder emails sent
- **3** focus groups hosted with over **20** participants
- Over **400** community members reached at pop up events
- Over **500** postcards distributed

Key findings from survey

The phase one – Our Coast, Our Waterways – survey delivered us some really important and encouraging results including:

- **94.5%** of participants agree that waterways are a significant reason they live on the Central Coast
- **98%** of participants agree that waterways contribute to their personal health and wellbeing (e.g. fitness, relaxation, happiness, lifestyle, sense of place, cultural heritage)
- **88.7%** of respondents agree that if waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly they would reduce the frequency they visit and use waterways.
- **65.6%** of respondents agree that if waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly they would consider moving away from the Central Coast to another location
- **96.5%** of respondents agree that more should be done to protect and enhance the natural aspects of waterways such as the cleanliness of water, health of coastal vegetation, and the protection of wildlife
- **69.2%** of respondents would support more resources being used for the management of our waterways and coast, even if it meant a very small increase in their property rates or rent a further **13.6%** neither agreed or disagreed
- When asked what participants value about our waterways, the top three topics covered in these comments were:
 - Recreational opportunities and access to waterways **28.1%**
 - Beauty and aesthetic **15.8%**
 - Environment and natural amenity **11.2%**
- When asked what the top three focus areas for Coastal Management Programs should be, respondents advised:
 - Reducing pollutant loads (sediment, nutrients and microbes) entering waterways **16.6%**
 - Improving and maintain water quality **15%**
 - Restoring and maintaining key habitats **12.5%**
- **423** comments were received when additional comments on waterways were requested, the top three topics covered in these comments were:
 - Wamberal Seawall **13.3%**
 - Quality of life **3.5%**
 - Love waterways **2.6%**

Sample participant commentary

The survey offered multiple opportunities for the community to share their thoughts. Below is an example of the comments received when asked what participants value about waterways (comments provided *verbatim*):

- We value the way that they all link together to form valuable natural landscapes. The value to the community of the Central Coast is that along with natural vegetation the waterways form the largest economic asset to the Central Coast i.e. people want to live near them, tourists want to visit them and they provide health and welfare benefits to all.
- It is the main feature of the entire area and must be preserved in a pristine condition.
- The natural beauty and environmental diversity. The seasonal changes and ecosystem services they provide for me and my family.

- They are abundant and natural. They are both for human and wildlife in a complimentary way and each is important for its protection.
- Serenity, beauty and wildlife.
- Clean and beautiful water ways which have a history of connecting our community
- recreational value, relaxing way to spend the day and FREE!
- There are so many accessible waterways, generally clean and available for all the different uses that anyone wants to use them for.
- Their beauty, amenity & that they are a largely untouched part of our environment They should stay that way too.
- Waterways define the Central Coast. It's the areas biggest asset for local residents and the biggest tourism drawcard. Our family values being able to use the waterways for sports, we have been swimming, water skiing and fishing on the lakes for three generations.

Below is an example of the responses received when asked what other comments participants had about our waterways:

- Residents of the central coast love our natural environment, that is why we moved here. We are sick of overdevelopment and sick of our government ripping apart our environment to make this happen. No more development. If you get rid of Airbnb accommodation, you would have enough available housing for everyone without ruining our environment. A house with a family uses less resources and puts less strain on our infrastructure they an Airbnb that has 20 guests every weekend who don't care and don't give anything back to the local community.
- Prevent rezoning of environmentally sensitive land for housing and industrial development. Rangers to actively patrol neighbourhoods and industrial estates to identify and address pollution of stormwater drains.
Audit businesses to ensure they are not polluting stormwater and sewer systems.
- If you don't have a healthy waterway environment then you will not have people wanting to visit the coast which will lead to economic issues. Keep the waterways in good condition and ensure the future of the environment.
- They are important ecologically and more value should be ascribed to them. A dollar value should be given to them and all the species they maintain and support.
- The Central Coast IS the waterways. Our tourism relies very heavily on our water bodies and the activities available.

Next steps

Council will use the results and feedback provided to identify priorities and actions and we will be looking back at this information regularly as we develop our Coastal Management Programs.

Phase two consultation – a series of focus groups with participants derived from survey respondents who indicated a desire to be further involved in the CMP process – will see the further analysis and exploration of the survey results.

Our journey to develop the Coastal Management Plans is far from over and we look forward to working with our community throughout this process.

Regionwide survey results

This survey was undertaken to understand the value our community places on waterways, their uses, opinions on the current state and management practices and their opinions on future management. We also obtained a demographic profile of each of the participants to better understand who we are hearing from to facilitate further analysis of the information collected.

The results of this survey will not only be used to inform the development of future management actions but will also be a vital tool to guide the education and implementation of the Coastal Management Programs.

The survey was broken up into stages –

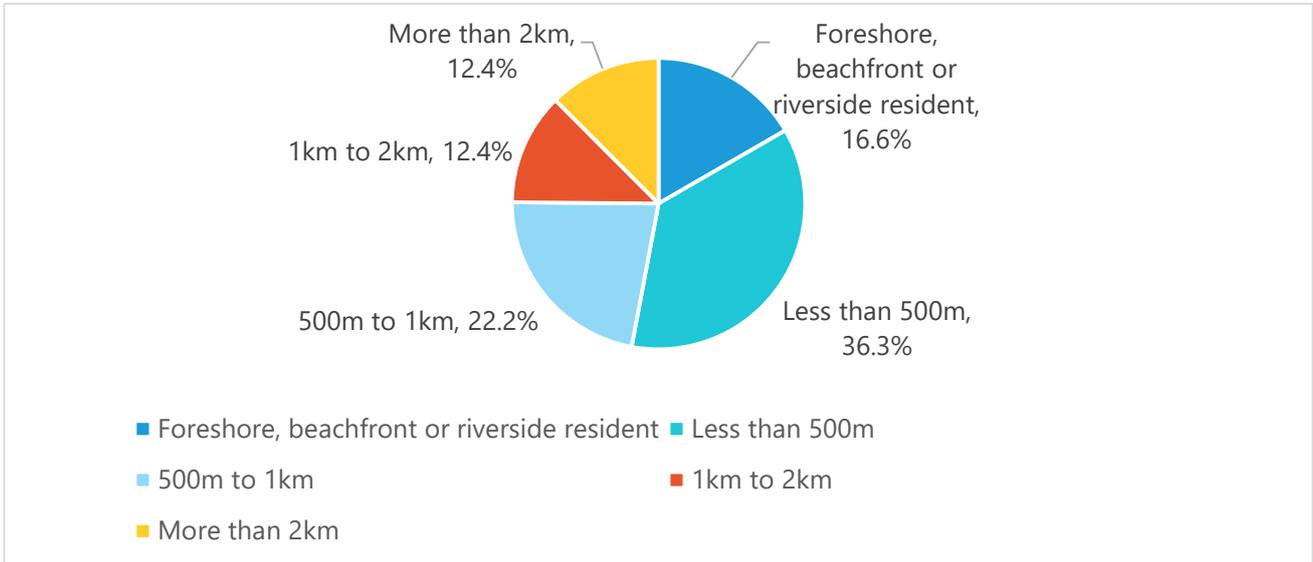
- *Use of Central Coast Waterways*
- *Importance of Central Coast waterways to you*
- *Values and threats to Central Coast waterways*
- *About you and your household.*

We have provided results for this survey using these same headings.

Use of Central Coast waterways

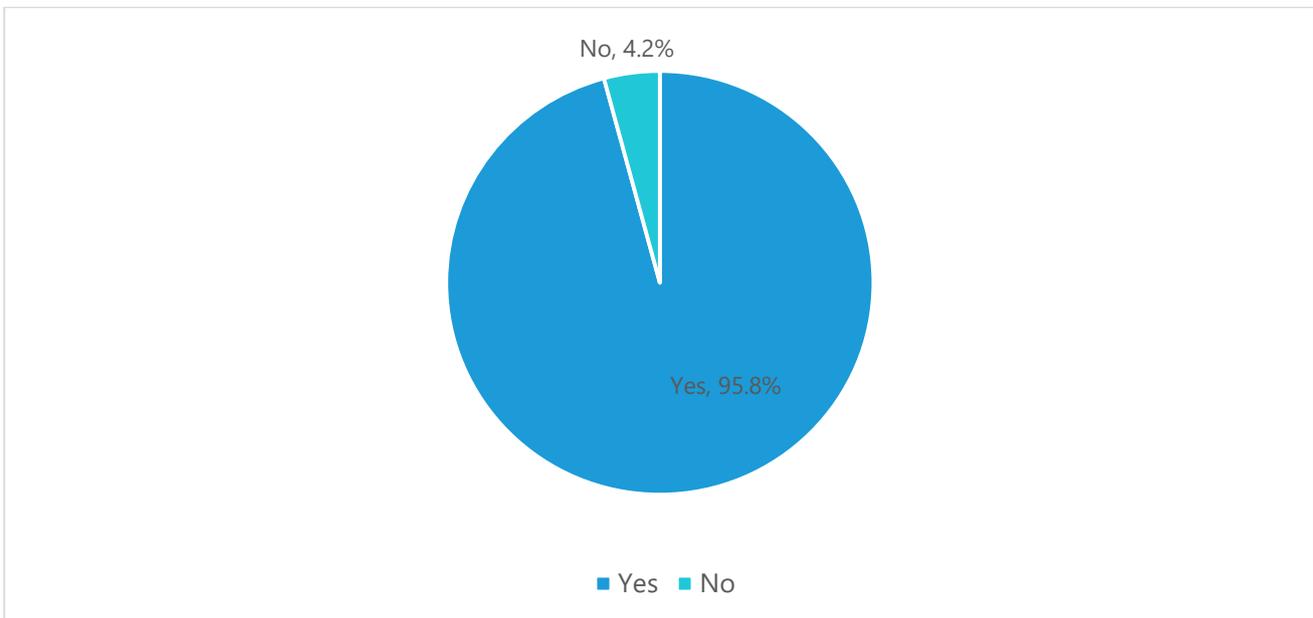
The following questions were designed to assist in understanding how the community uses Central Coast Waterways.

Figure 1: How close do you live to a Central Coast Waterway?



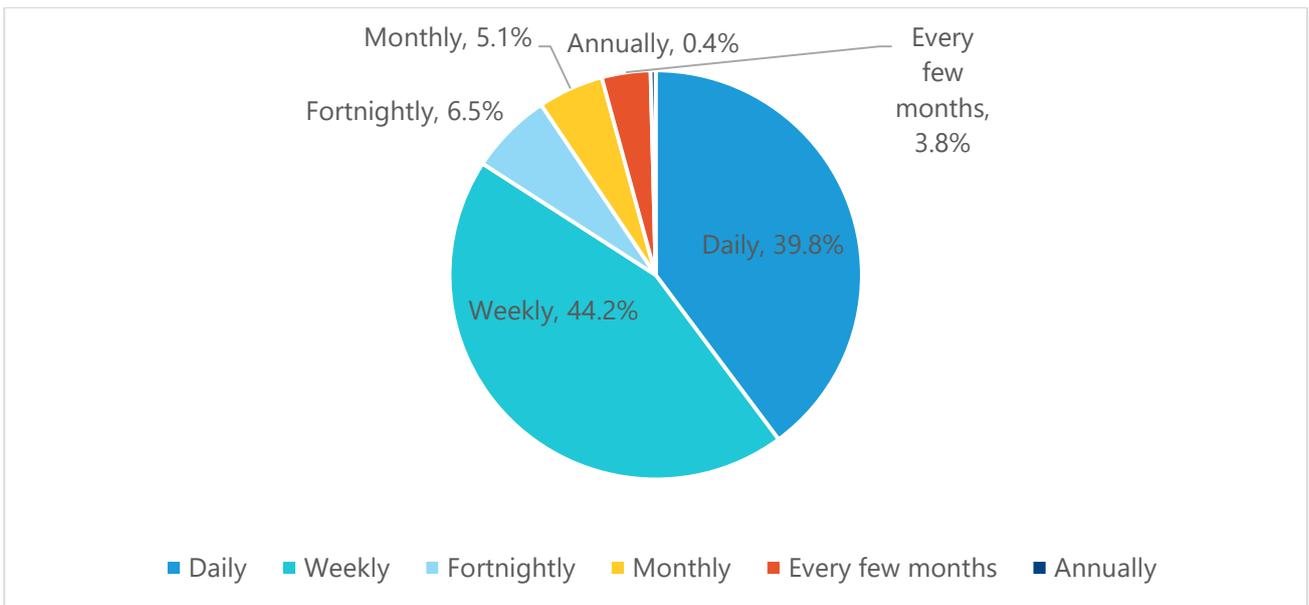
Total respondents=1022

Figure 2: Do you currently use any of our Central Coast Waterways, including recreating in or around them?



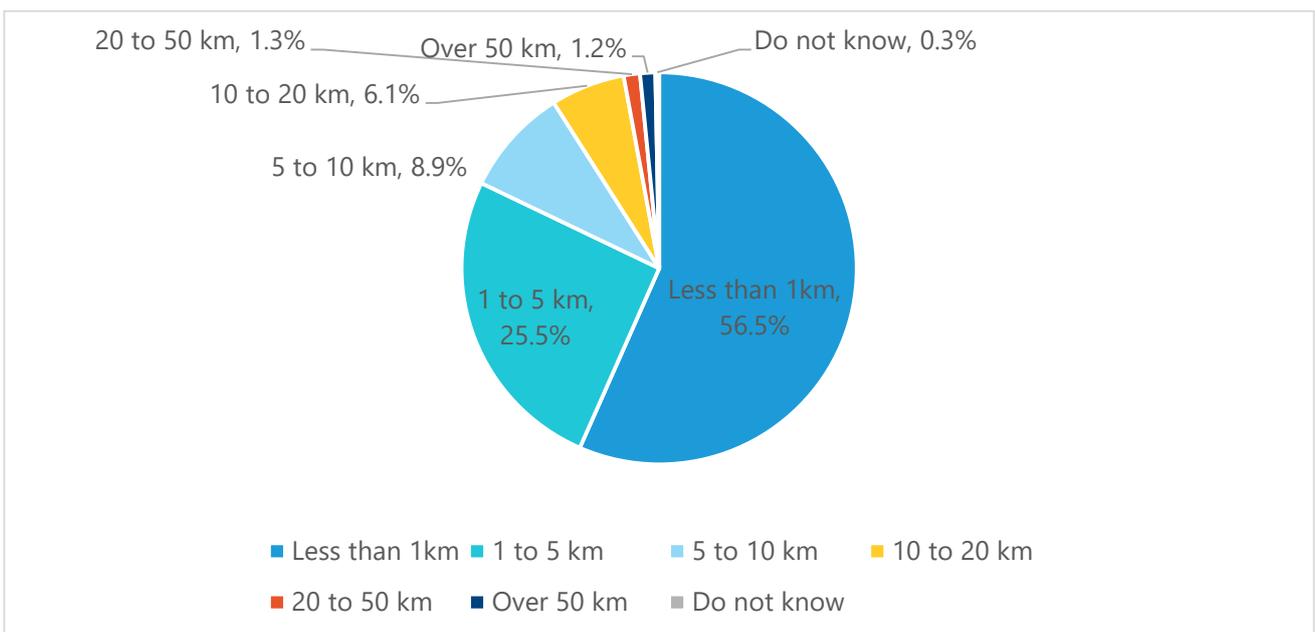
Total respondents=1022

Figure 3: How often do you use them?



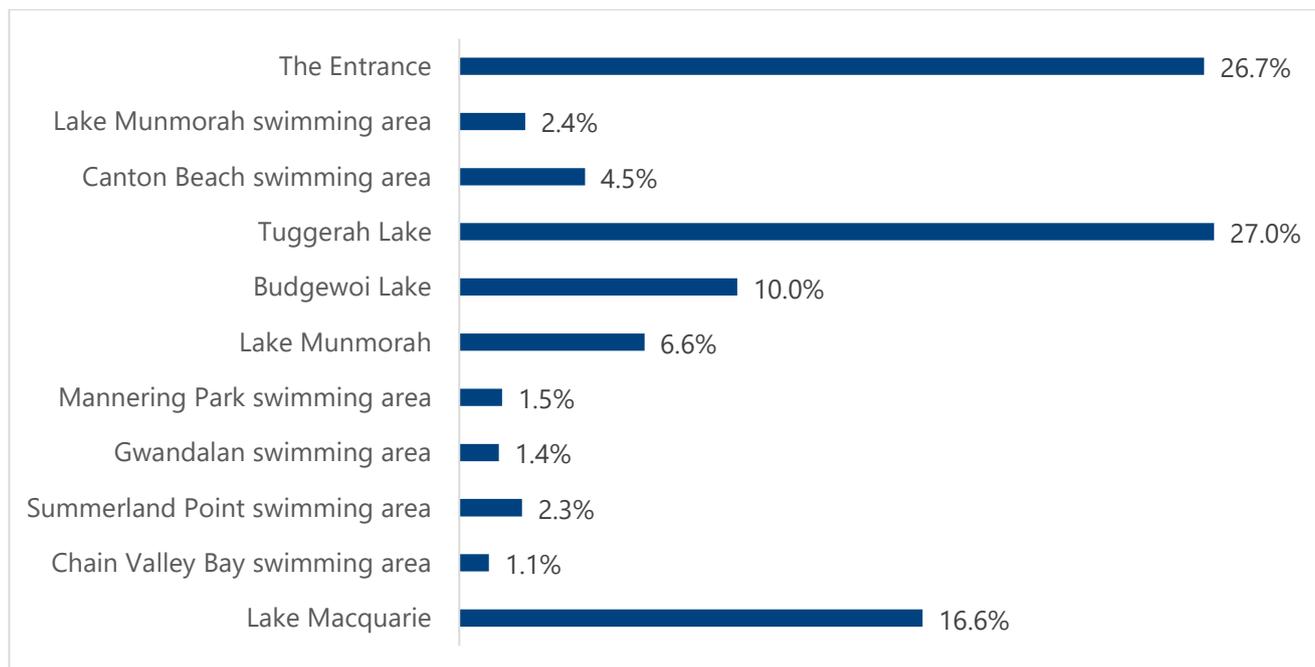
Total respondents=972

Figure 4: How far away from your home is the waterway that you visit most?



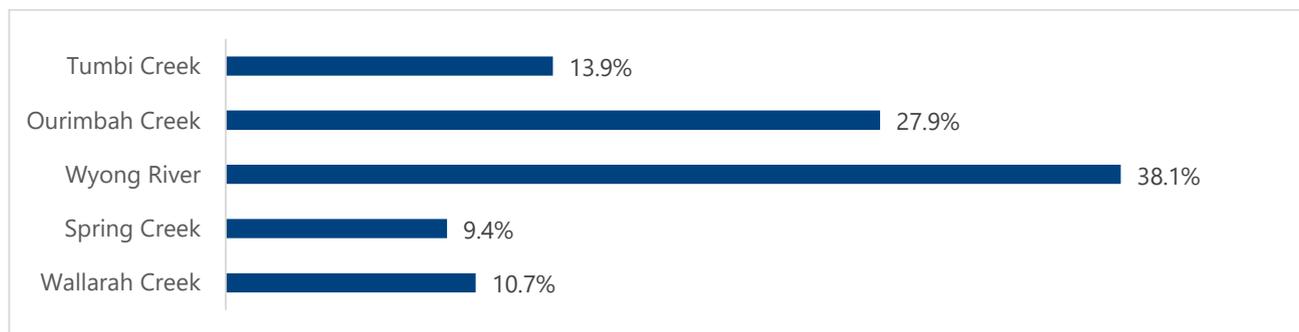
Total respondents=971

Figure 5: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Lakes)



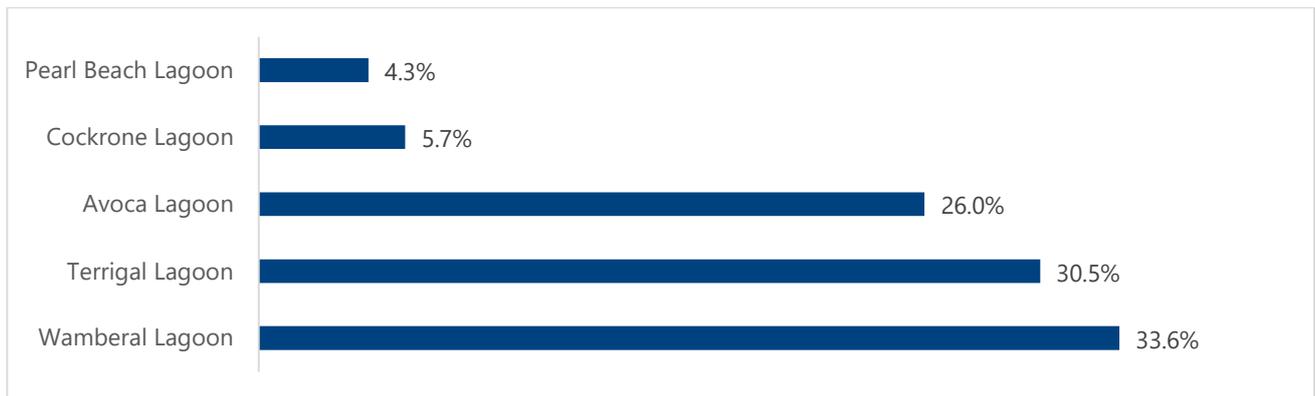
Total responses=844

Figure 6: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Creeks)



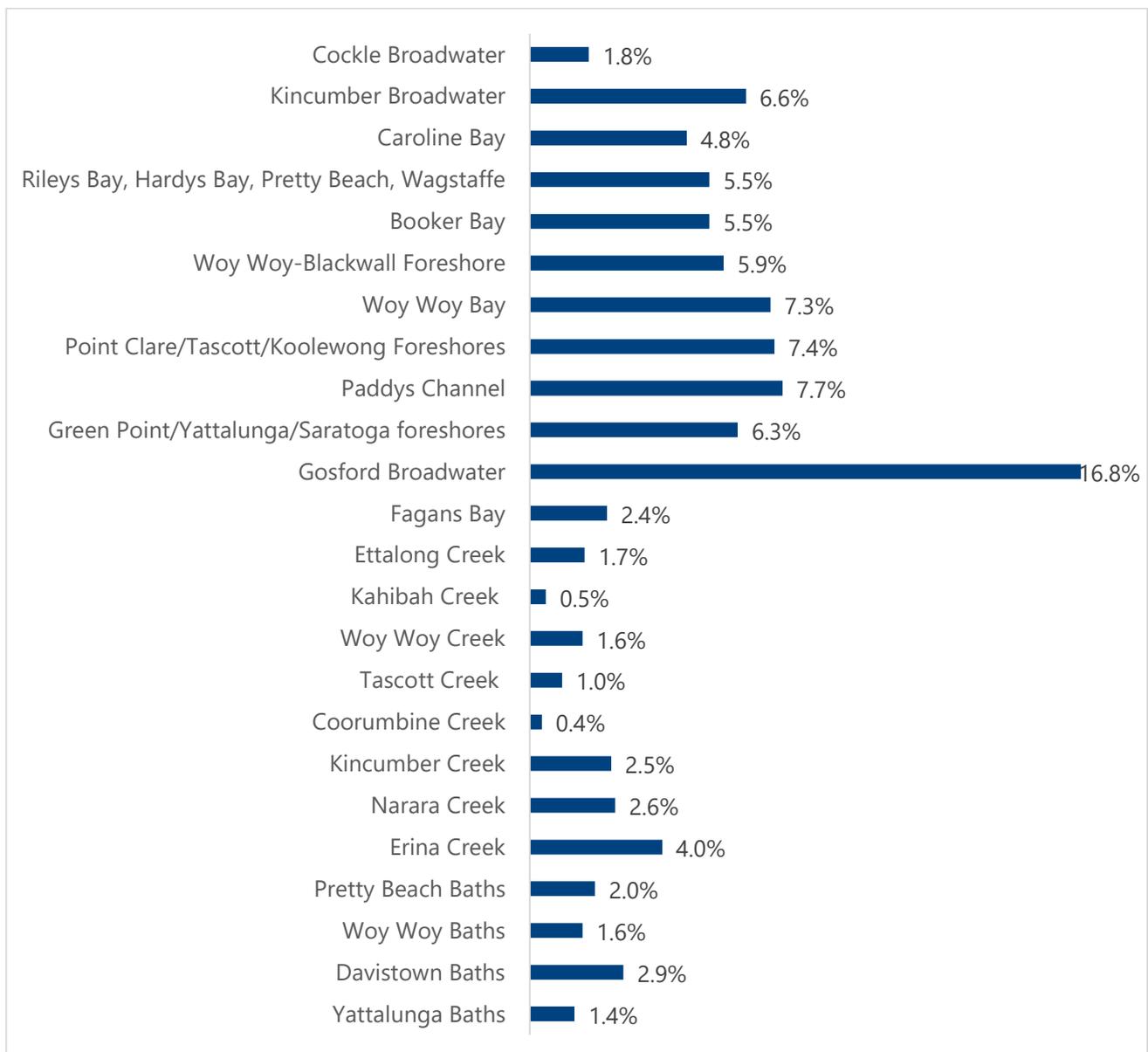
Total responses=244

Figure 7: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Lagoons)



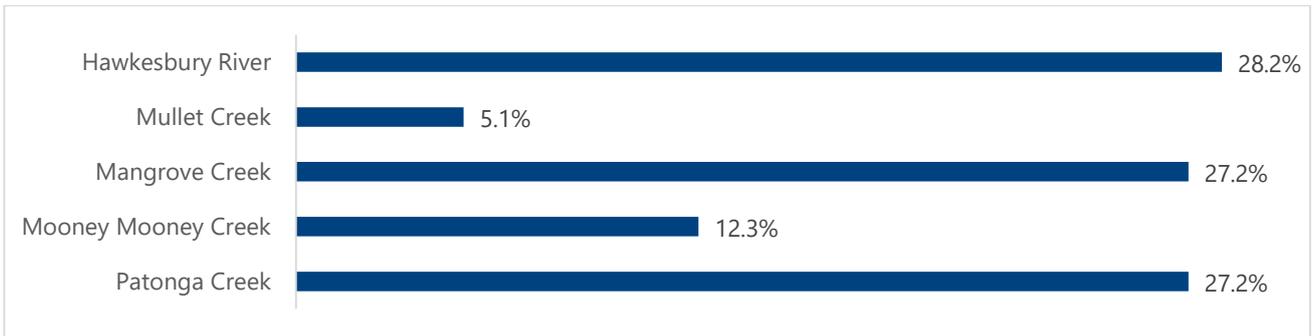
Total responses=909

Figure 8: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Brisbane Water & Broken Bay)



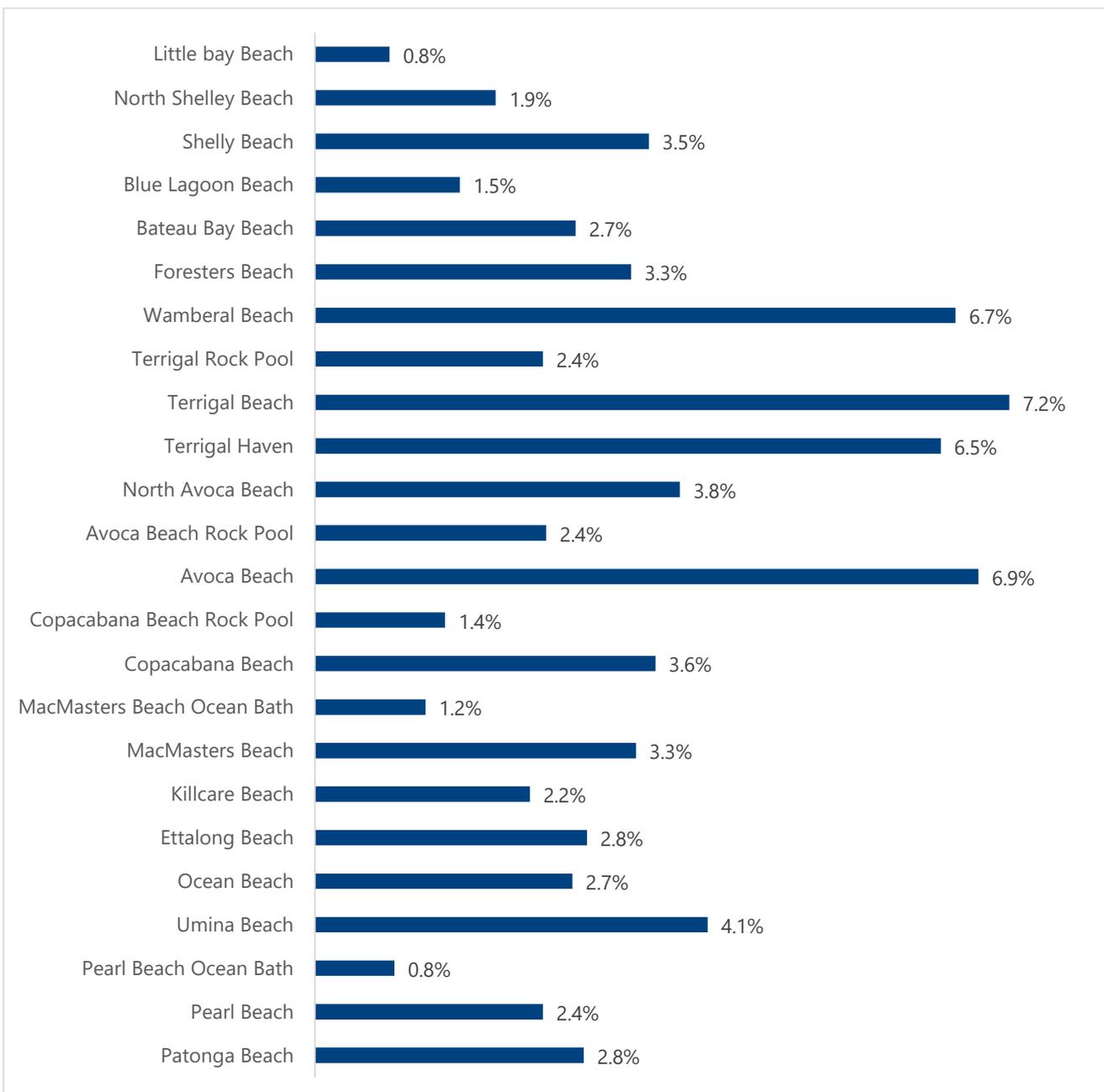
Total responses=1611

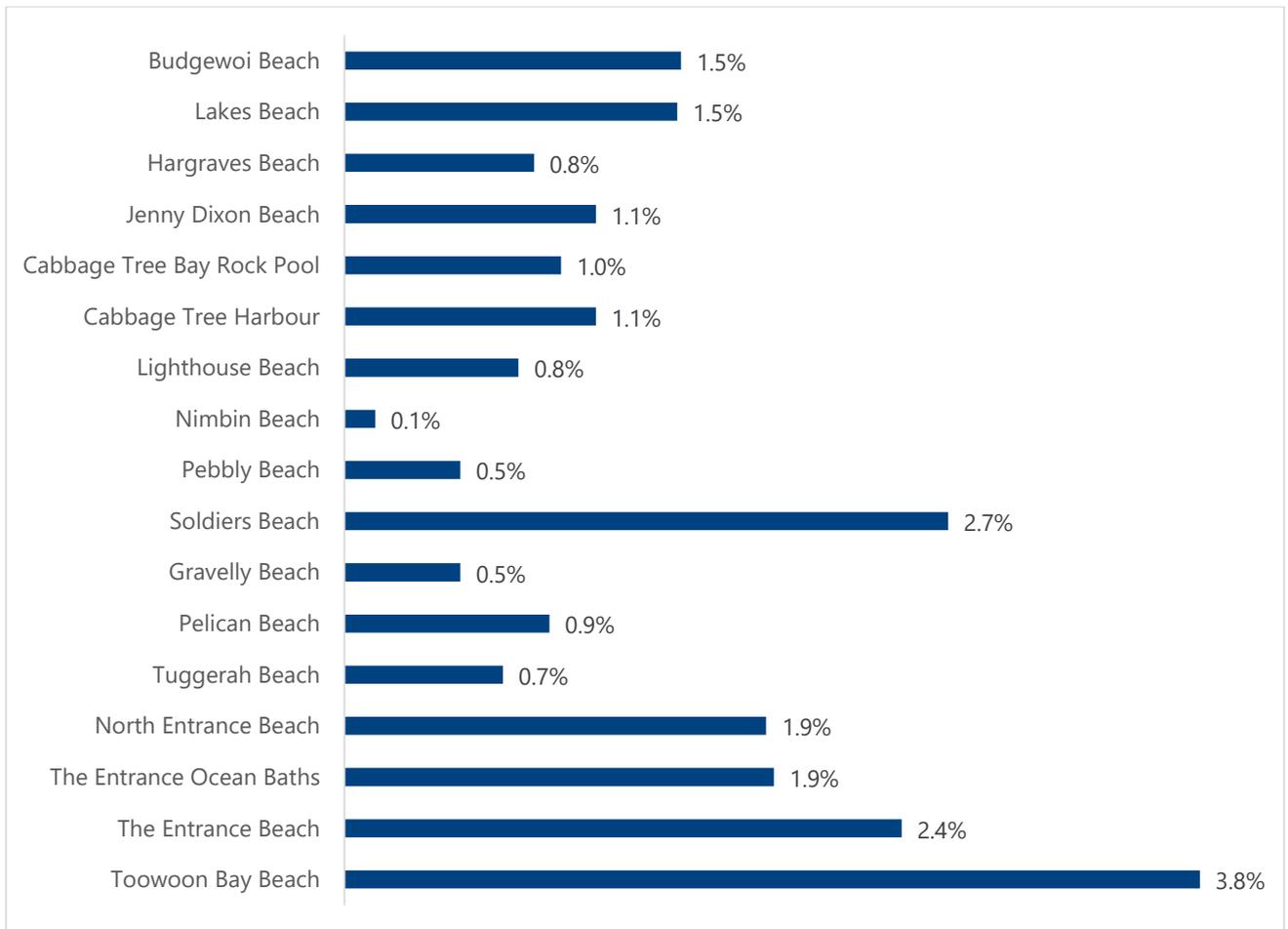
Figure 9: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Lower Hawkesbury River)



Total responses= 489

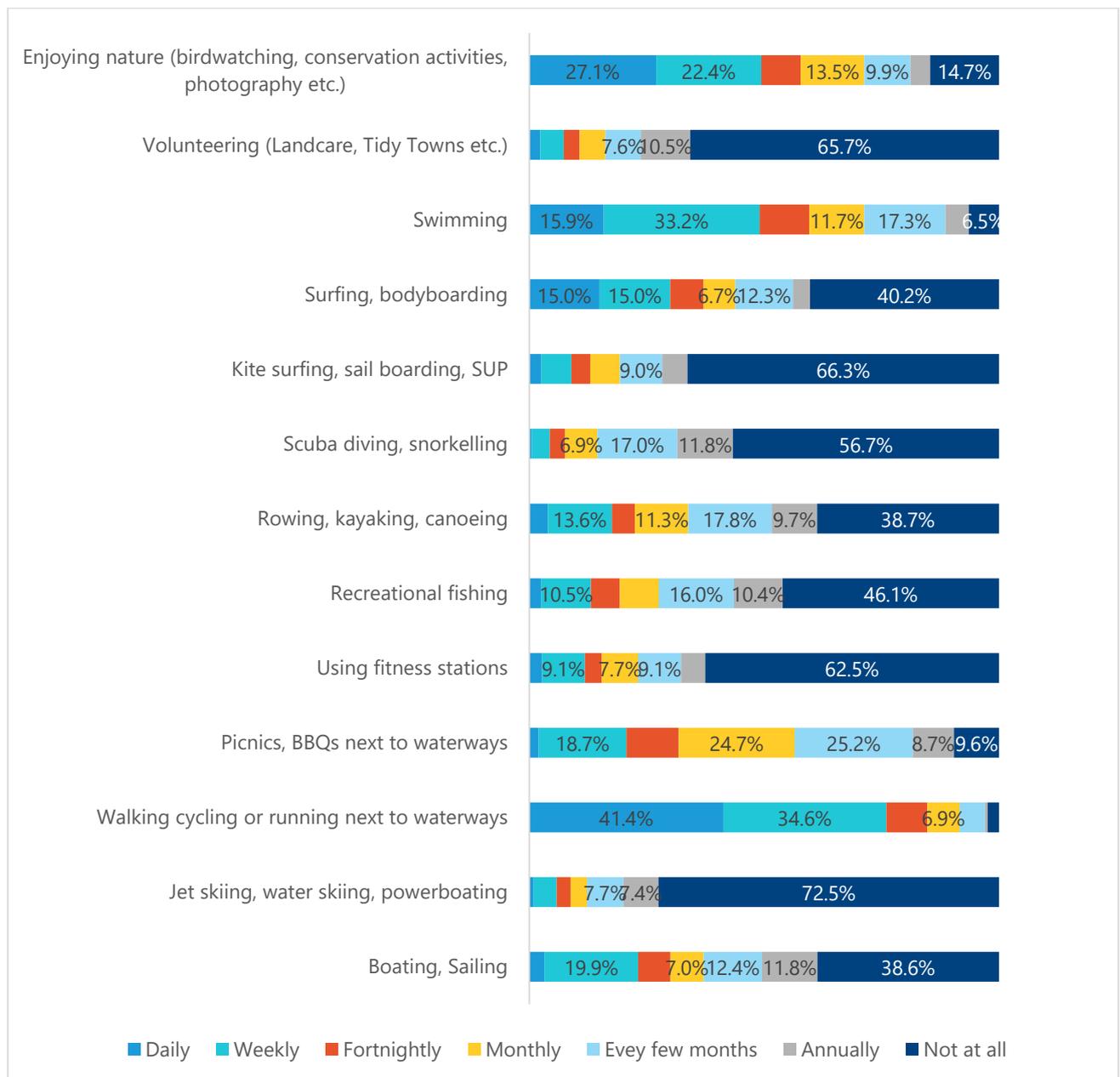
Figure 10: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Beaches)





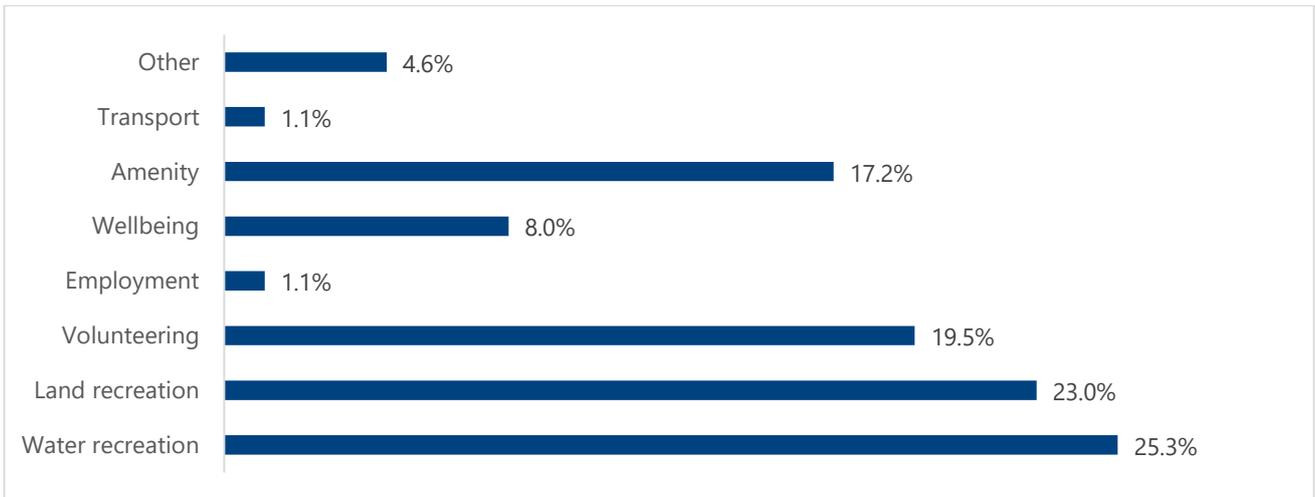
Total responses= 5883

Figure 11: There are many different recreational uses of waterways on the Central Coast, and different frequencies that these activities are undertaken. Please let us know how often you undertake the following activities:



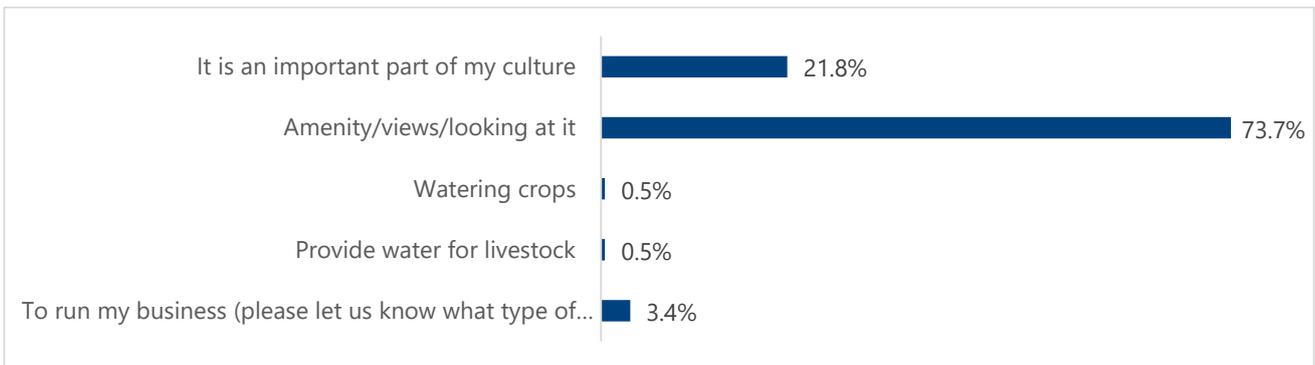
Total respondents = 858

Figure 11.1: Other waterways uses – coded information



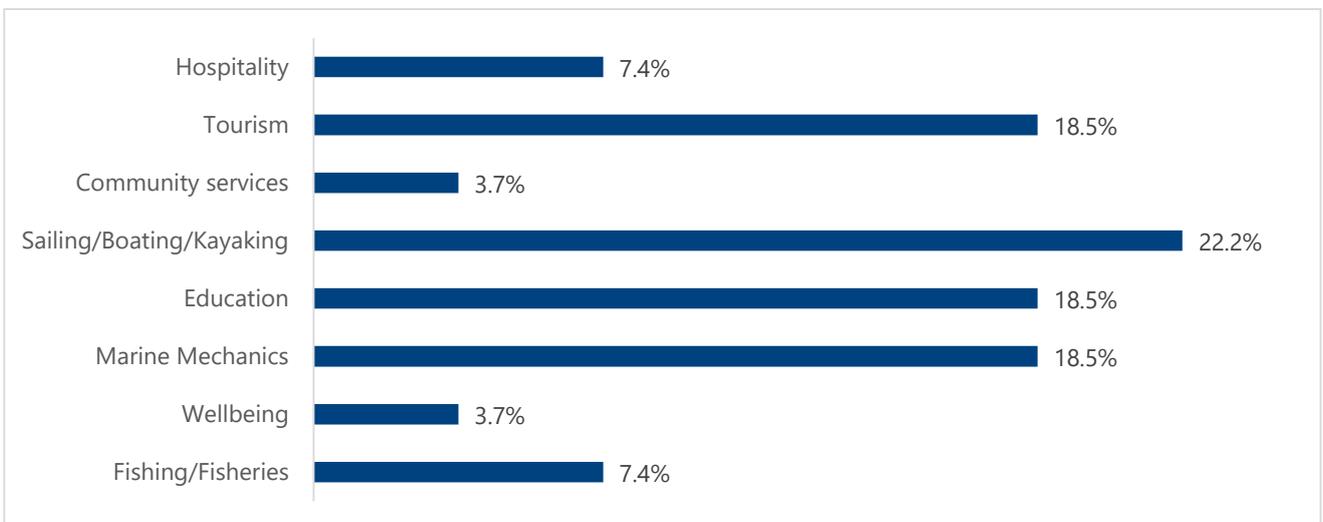
Total responses=87

Figure 12: Other than recreational uses, how else do you use waterways:



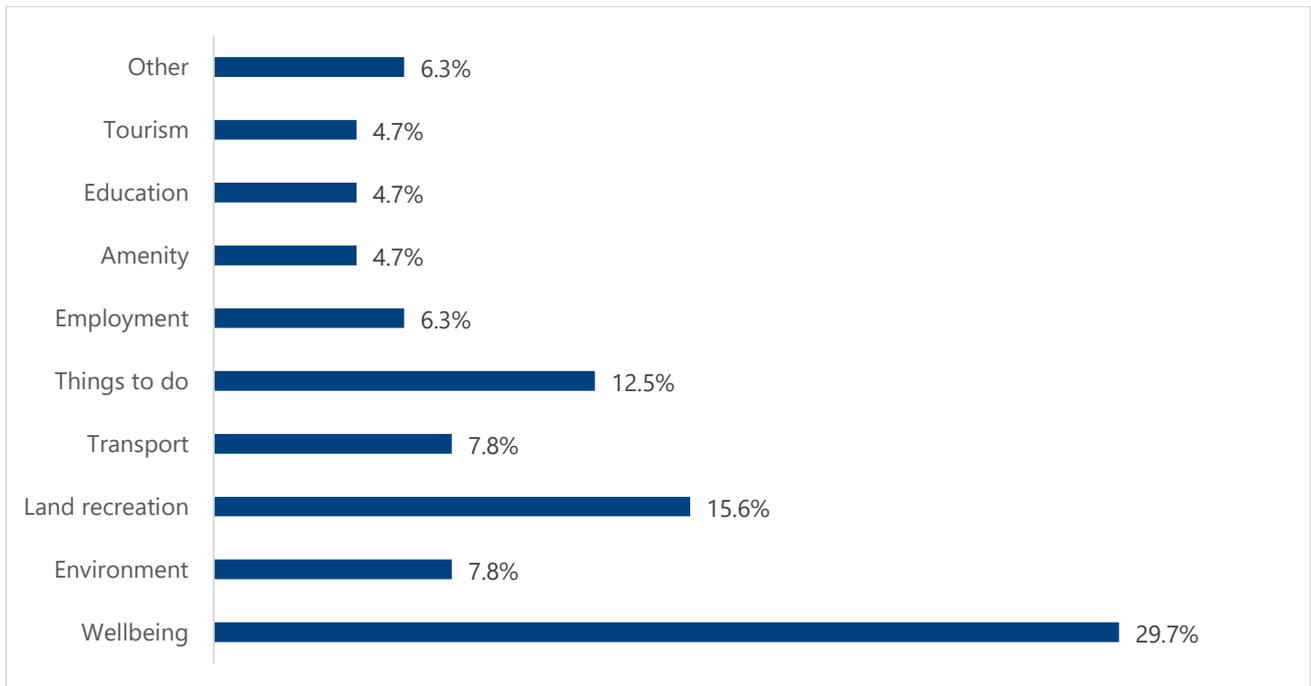
Total responses=815

Figure 12.1: Other than recreational uses, how else to you use waterways (to run my business – please let us know what type of business you operate) – coded information



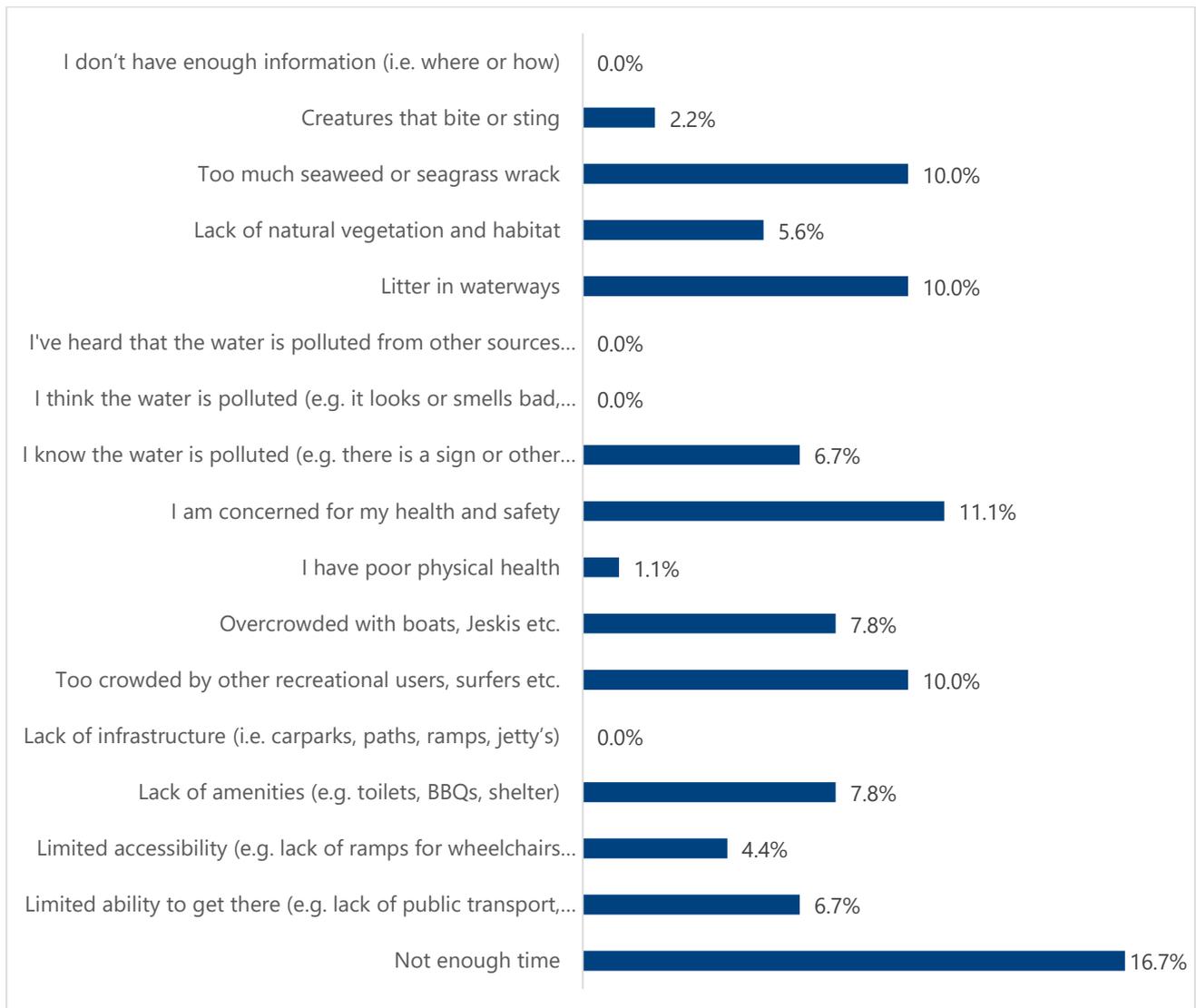
Total responses=27

Figure 12.2: Other than recreational uses, how else to you use waterways (other – please specify) – coded information



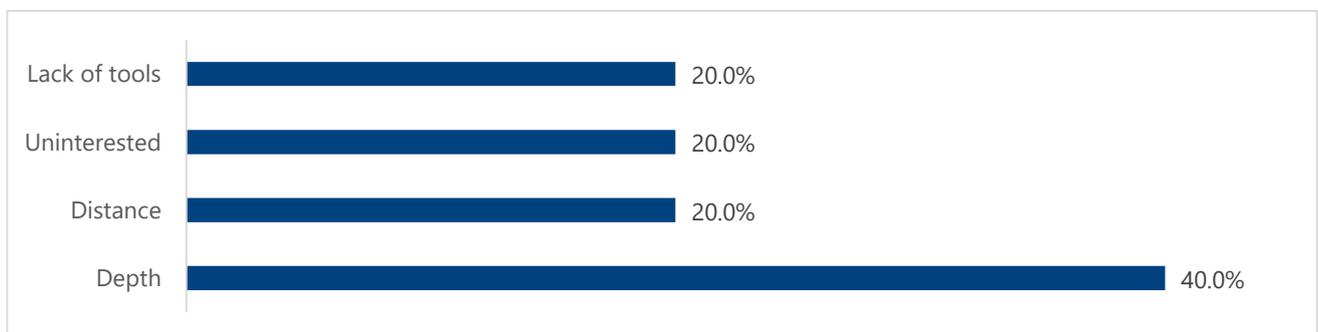
Total responses=64

Figure 13: Why don't you use Central Coast Waterways? Participants could select up to three reasons.



Total respondents=43

Figure 13.1: Why don't you use Central Coast Waterways? Other (please specify) – coded information

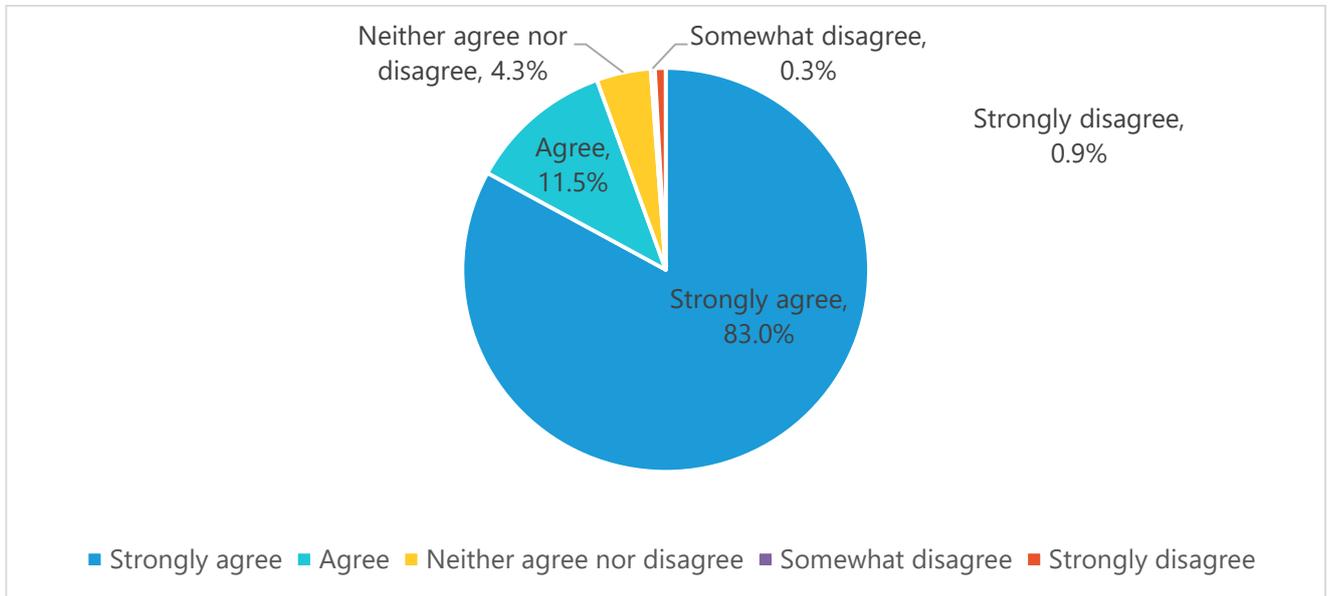


Total responses=5

Importance of Central Coast Waterways to you

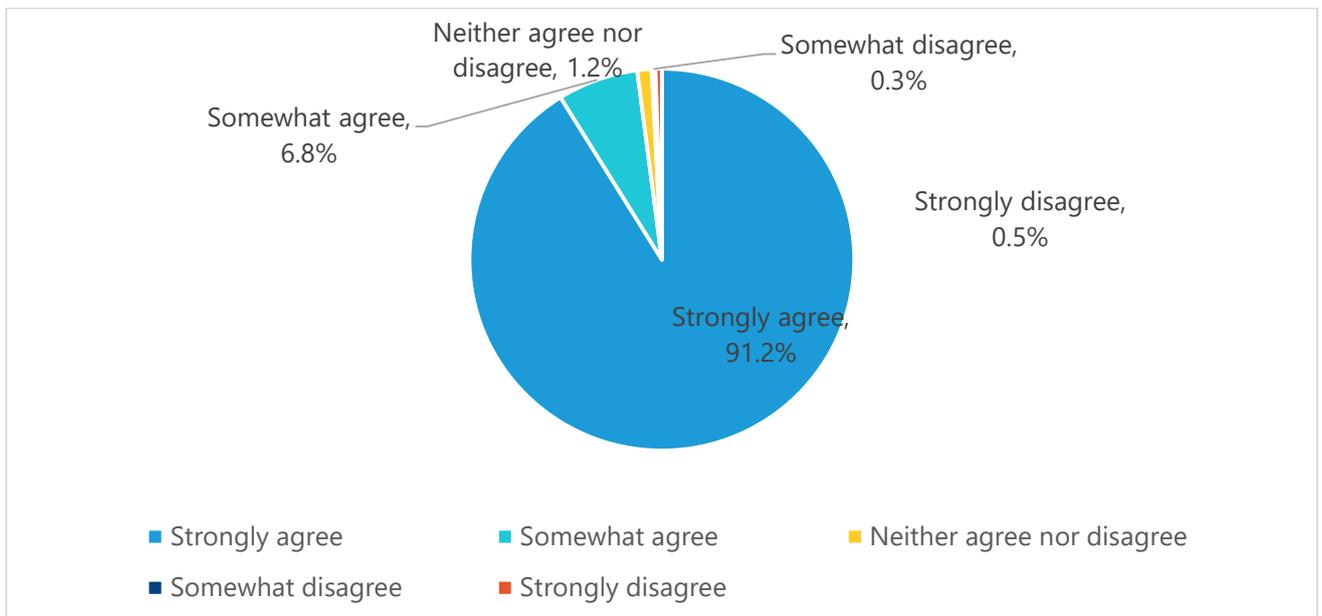
The statements presented in this section of the survey were designed to explore the community's views on the importance of Central Coast waterways both now and into the future.

Figure 14: Waterways are a significant reason I choose to live on the Central Coast.



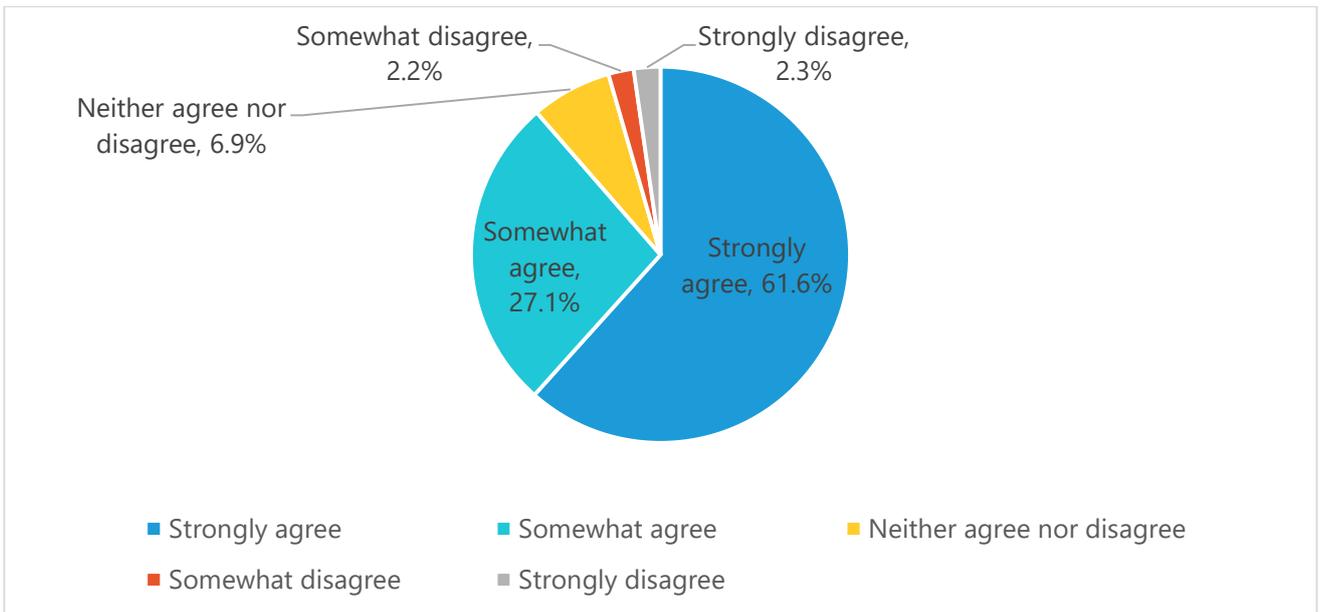
Total respondents=928

Figure 15: Waterways contribute to my personal health and wellbeing (e.g. fitness, relaxation, happiness, lifestyle, sense of place, cultural heritage).



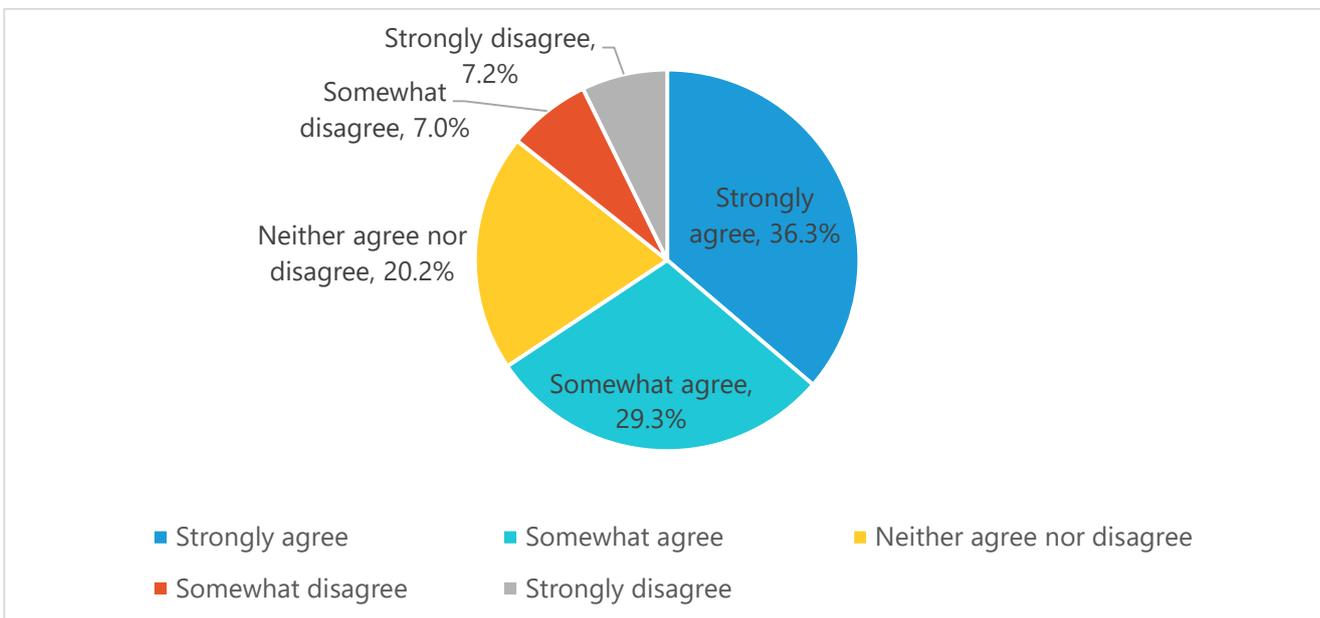
Total respondents=928

Figure 16: If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would reduce the frequency I visit and use waterways.



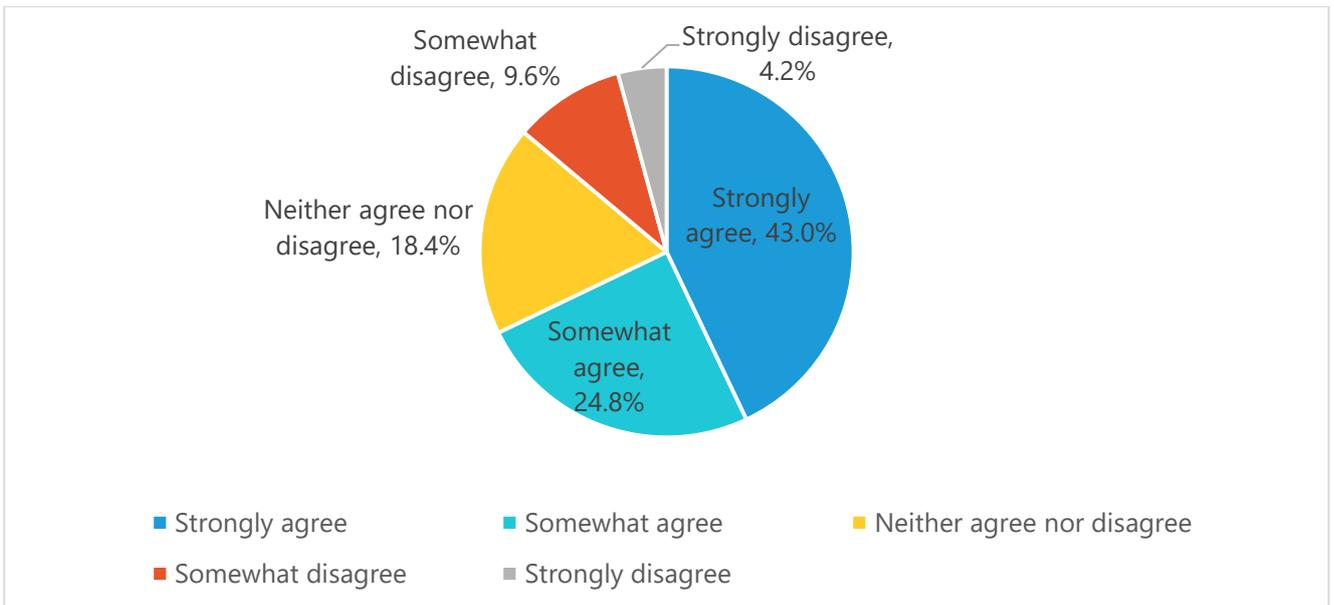
Total respondents=927

Figure 17: If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would consider moving from the Central Coast to another location.



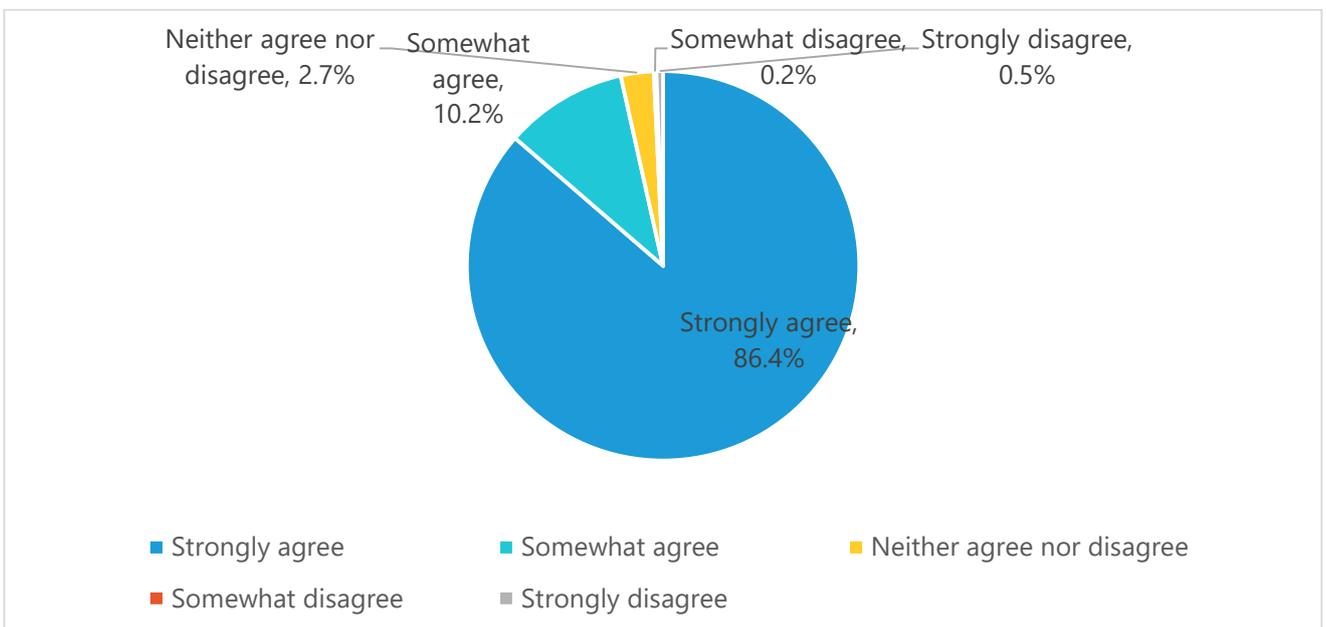
Total respondents=928

Figure 18: More should be done to enhance access to waterways (e.g. shared pathways, jetties, boat ramps etc).



Total respondents=926

Figure 19: More should be done to protect and enhance the natural aspects of waterways such as the cleanliness of water, health of coastal vegetation, and the protection of wildlife.



Total respondents=926

Figure 20: Many people on the Central Coast volunteer time to help care for waterways or assist with events at waterways. What best describes the number of hours people from your household would undertake voluntary waterways work per month (this includes volunteer work done within the catchment e.g tidy towns, Landcare).

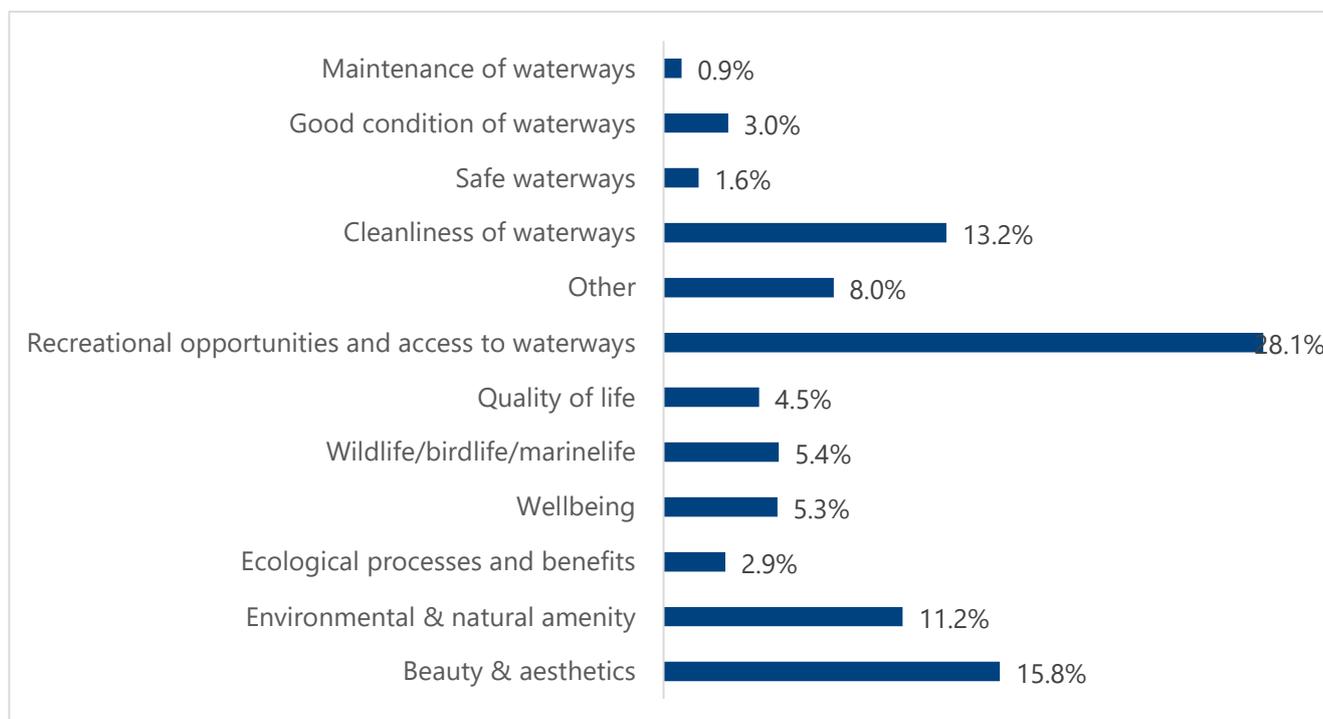


Total respondents=923

Values and threats to Central Coast waterways

These questions were designed to understand what the community value about waterways, which threats they are aware of and what they think the most important focus areas for the Coastal Management Programs are.

Figure 21: What do you value most about Central Coast waterways? – coded information



Codes applied=1516

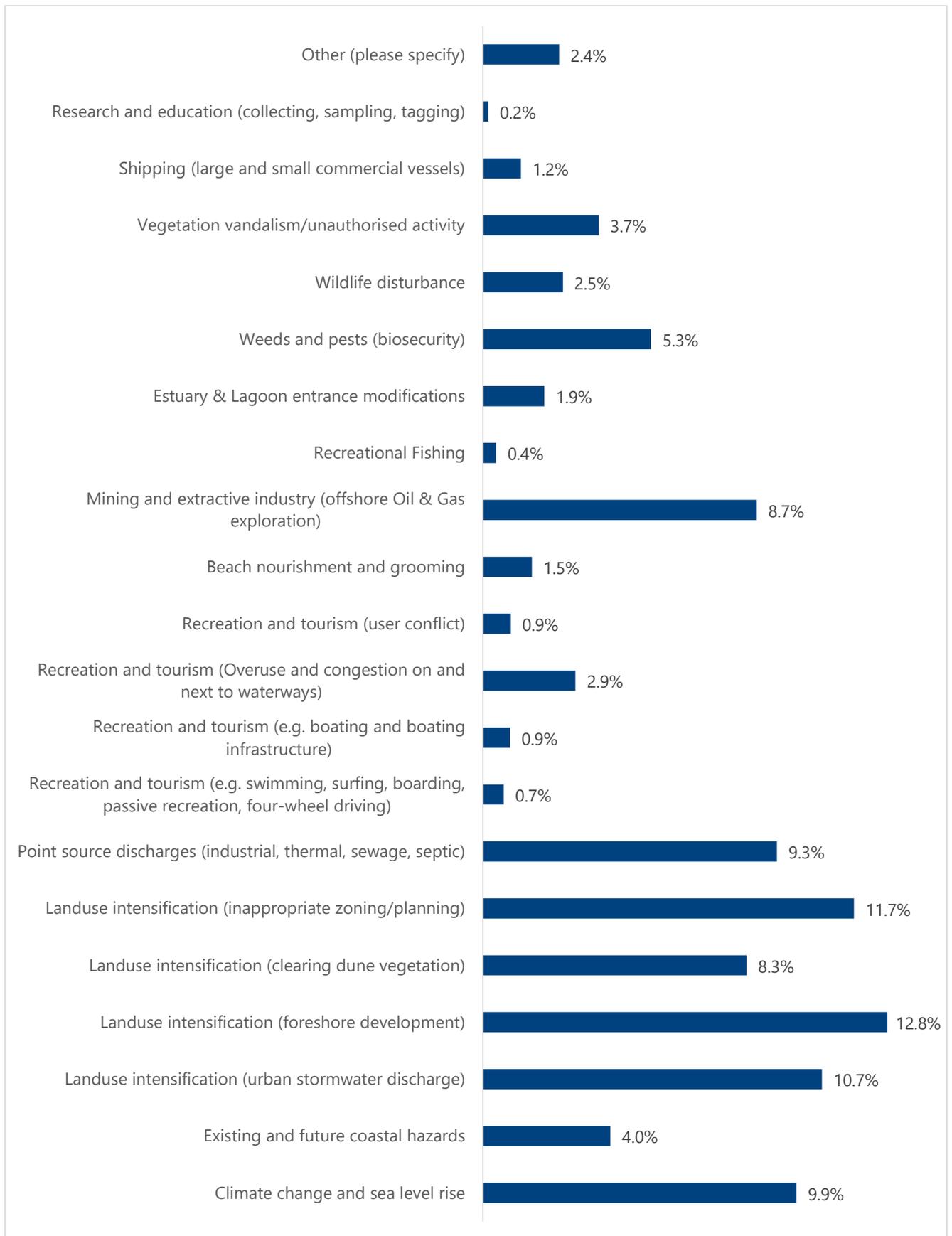
This question provided participants with the option to share their thoughts, below is an example of some of the comments received (comments are provided as *verbatim*):

- Water condition and clarity, interface between waterways and natural environment. Free access and well maintained.
- Cleanliness, well maintained public infrastructure to enjoy the natural beauty.
- They are in relatively good condition.
- Their beauty and significance to a healthy, sustainable environment. I very much value the fish and birdlife our lagoons support. But the most important thing I value is that THEY ARE HEALTHY - something which is becoming less apparent as time marches on.
- We love the natural beauty and diversity of our whole region. We spend time walking and weeding along the way and also much time in our boat and kayak. There is so much to do here and the choices are boundless. The seasons, the flora and fauna the Hawkesbury and all the waterways are so interesting and exciting. We have travelled extensively but home is best.
- Their beauty, environmentally excellent quality of the waterway. Easy to access. Free to enjoy and appreciate.
- The central coast waterways are incredibly important not only for myself and the people around me but for the eco-system. Animals and plants depend on these waterways to survive. Without healthy waterways there could be see huge threats on these animals food resources, water quality and could

lead to mass extinction. Other values for us humans are both physical and mental. These waterways allow us to have daily exercise such as surfing, swimming, running etc. which increases our physical health as well as our mental health. These activities also increase the time we spend with our friends and family allowing a happier and healthier lifestyle. For many people these waterways allow a connection to country and culture. Through these many values we must protect them at all costs.

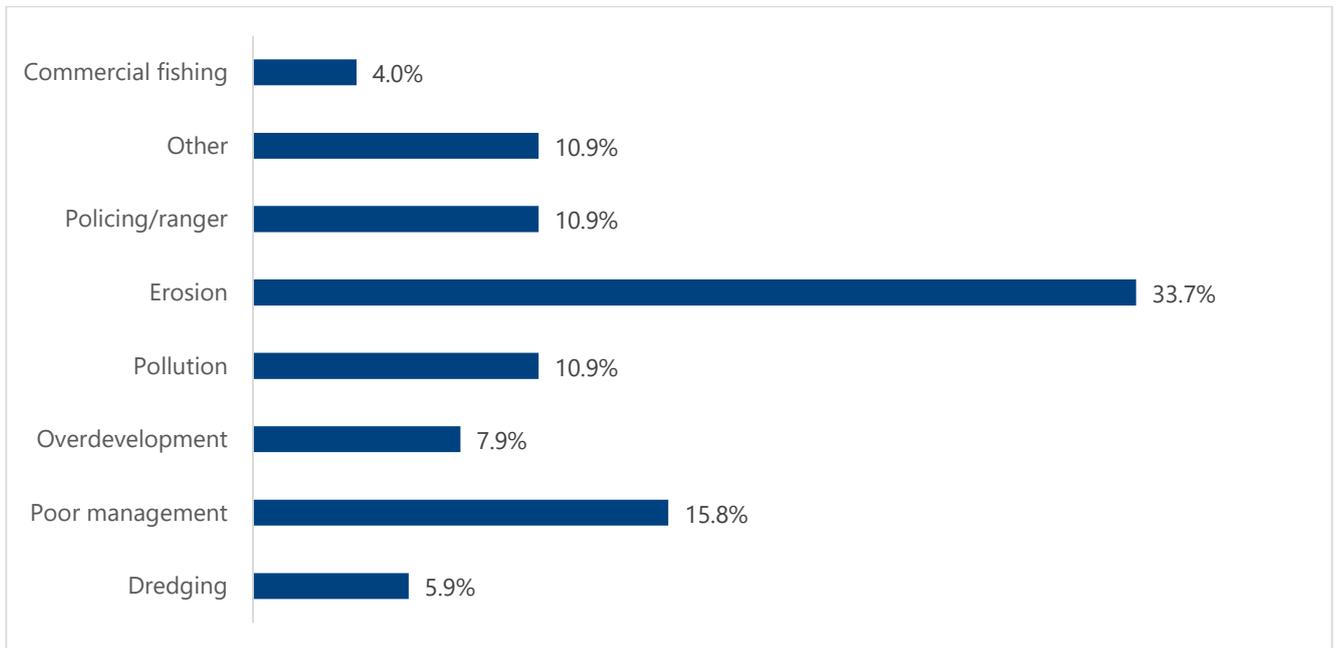
- Enjoying clean safe swims in the ocean.
- Freedom to use the waterways at any time in a clean and safe manner.
- Direct access to beaches i.e. walking along the sand, swimming in the ocean safely and surfing in the ocean safely.
- Cleanliness of the waterway. It is essential to the operation of my business.
- The sheer variety of different types of waterways available and their relatively clean conditions
- The uniqueness of the Central Coast waterways.
- The relatively good environmental quality and the history & heritage.
- The small army of volunteers who try their best with limited funds to maintain a balanced and sustainable ecosystem that supports a healthy catchment
- I feel that the main thing the Central Coast has to offer its residents and visitors that other destinations cannot is its water ways. They are diverse and present with many different ways to enjoy them. To date we have missed the opportunity to capitalise on what they have to offer. I think, whilst keeping in mind our duty to maintain a healthy water way, sufficient safe and practical infrastructure has not been maintained for its recreational users compared to other water ways offer.
- Availability, community access, not blocked off by private residences, value council monitoring flooding of waterways and installing methods to manage water flood levels. I also value the natural spaces which are aesthetically pleasing but also offer stress relief/ relaxation. I value the bird life and other animals attracted by these waterways ecosystems which are changing seasonally.
- The relative cleanliness, the variety from lakes, creeks, rivers and beaches; the range of activities available for different locations and waterways.
- Above all, the sense of peace and wonder that moving water provides.
- The peace & quiet, being able to use the water for sport & meditation
- Waterways define the Central Coast. It's the areas biggest asset for local residents and the biggest tourism drawcard. Our family values being able to use the waterways for sports, we have been swimming, water skiing and fishing on the lakes for three generations.
- The fact that they exist. Are places for relaxation and just absorbing the peace that surrounds them. Great place for photography
- They are abundant and natural. They are both for human and wildlife in a complimentary way and each is important for its protection.
- Habitat, filtration of storm water by wetlands, scenic value, mental and physical importance, the lungs of the region.
- The waterways are a great way for enjoying downtime and connecting with other members of the community, whether it be for a quick swim, surf or afternoon spent fishing with friends and family.
- These waterways are Important in so many levels!!
- They are Habitats and ecosystems for plants and animals. We need the waterways to be healthy so we can all be healthy.

Figure 22: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast beaches.



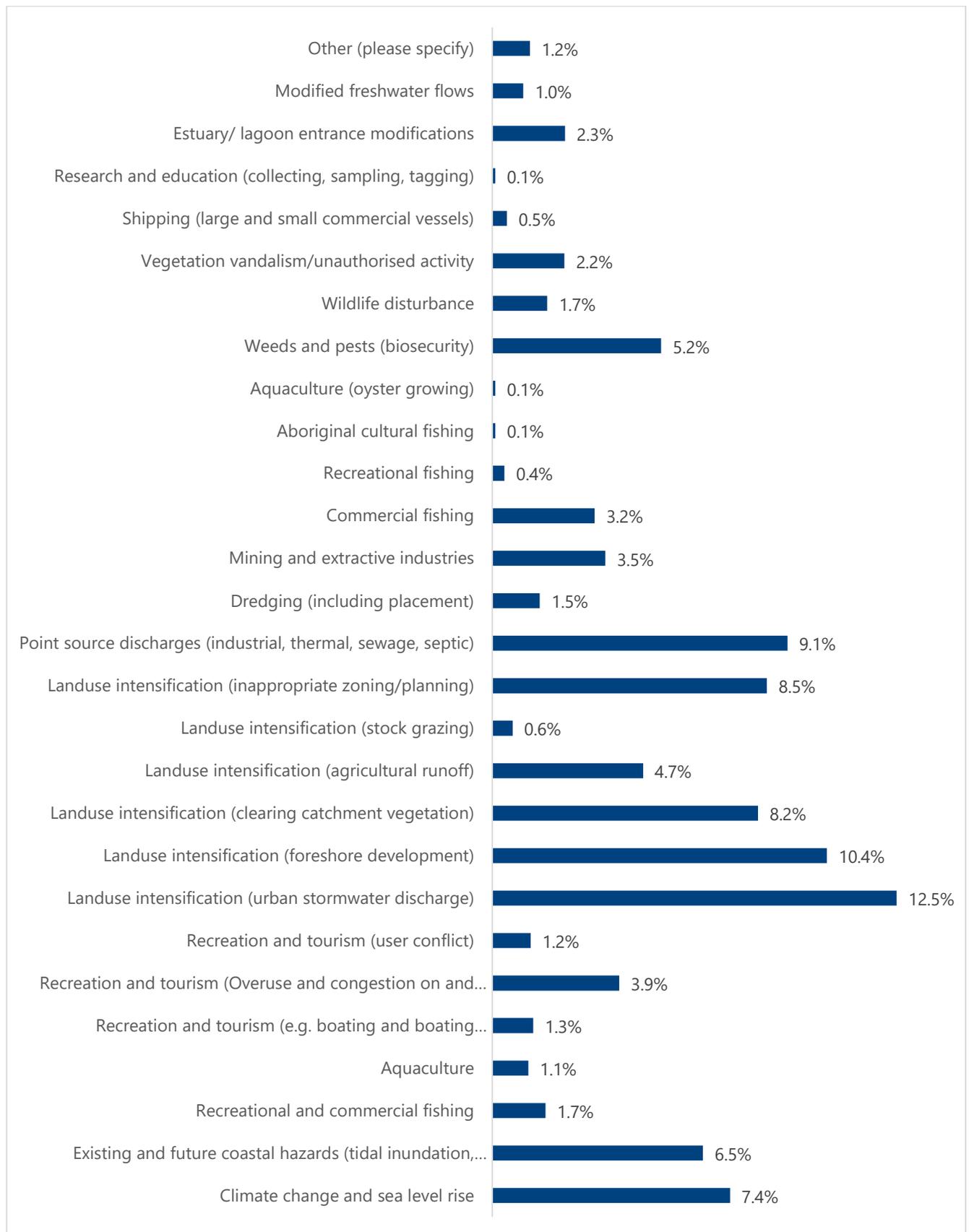
Total selections=4067

Figure 22.1: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast beaches.
Other (please specify) – coded information



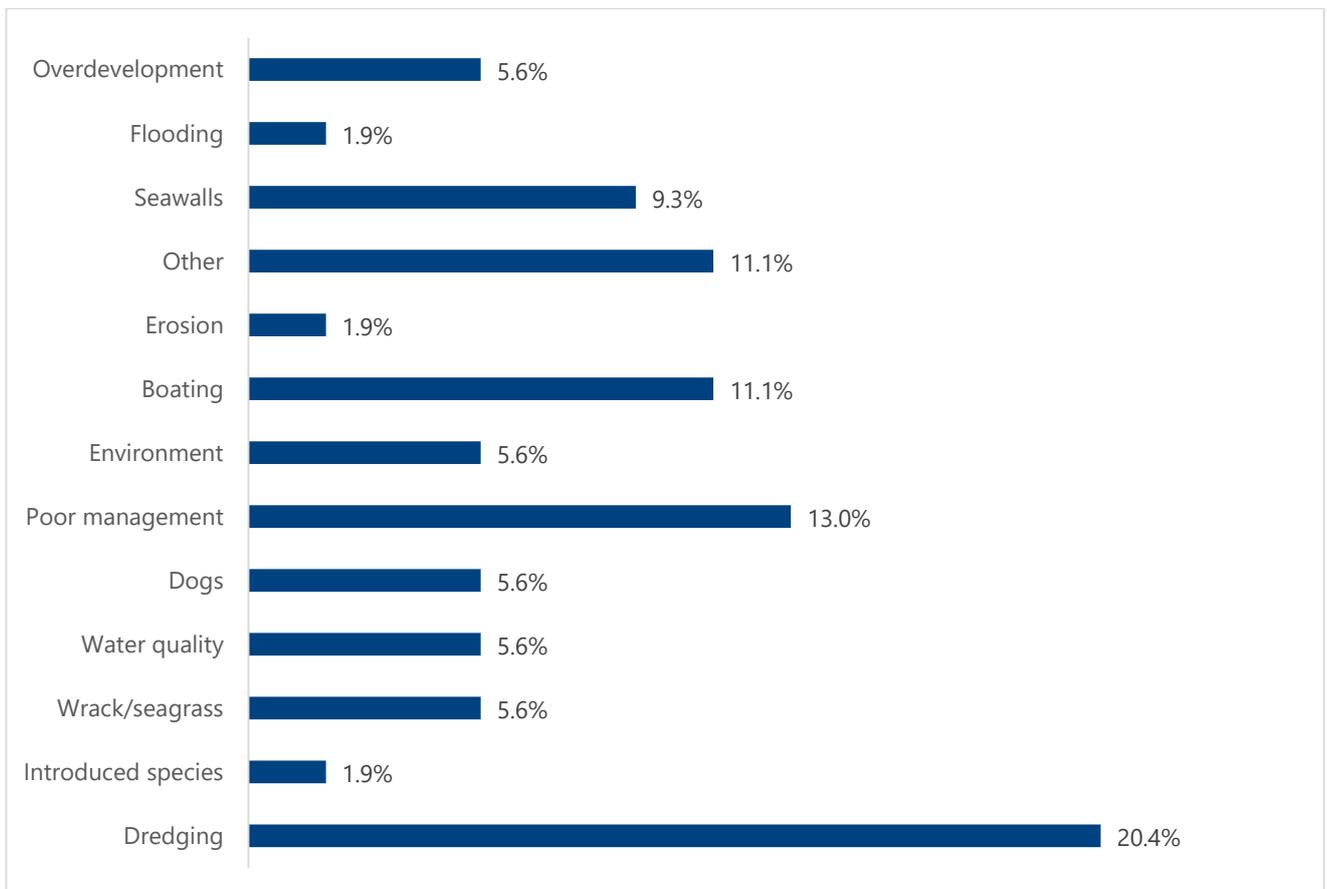
Codes applied=101

Figure 23: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast lakes & estuaries.



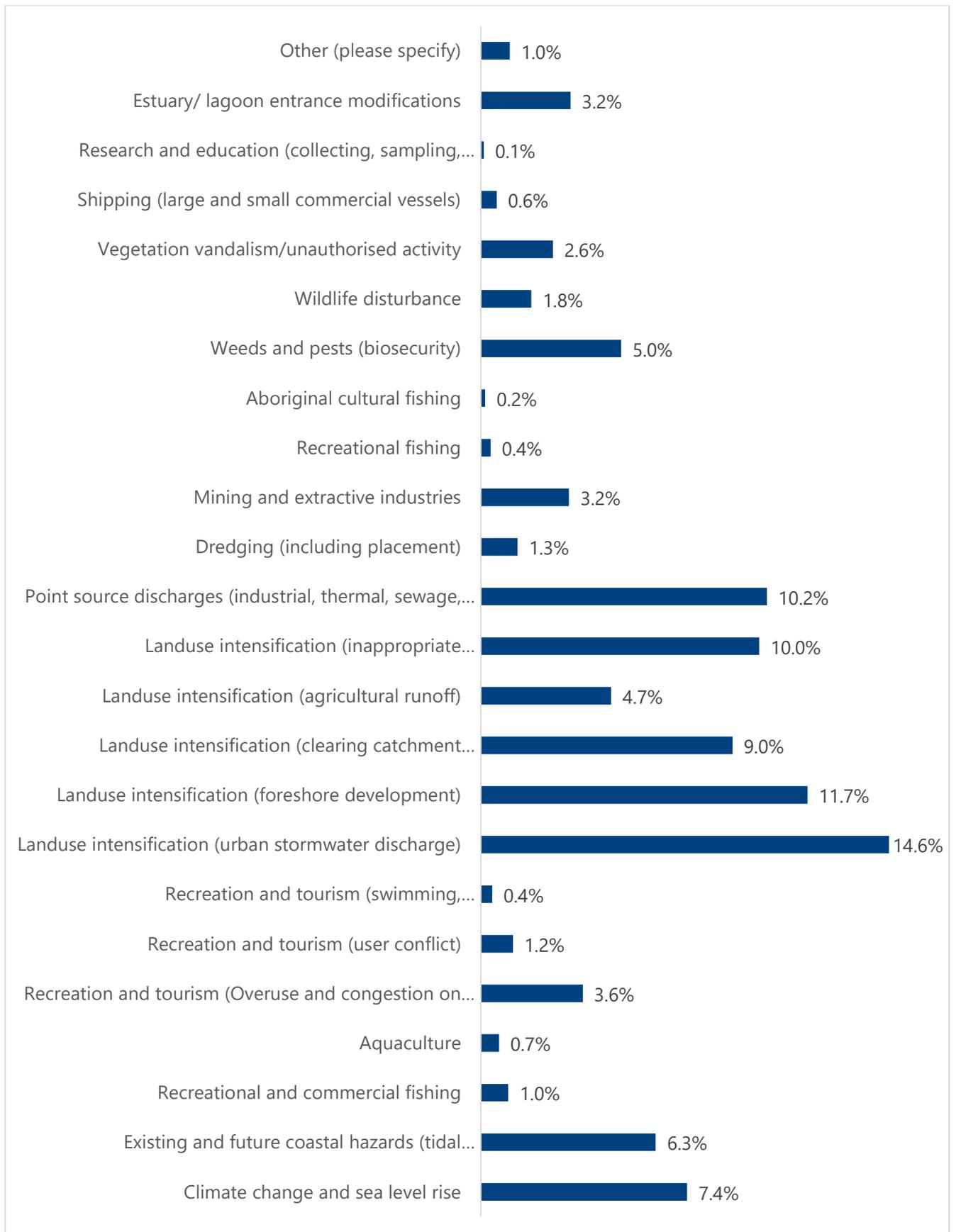
Total selections=3937

Figure 23.1: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast lakes & estuaries. Other (please specify) – coded information



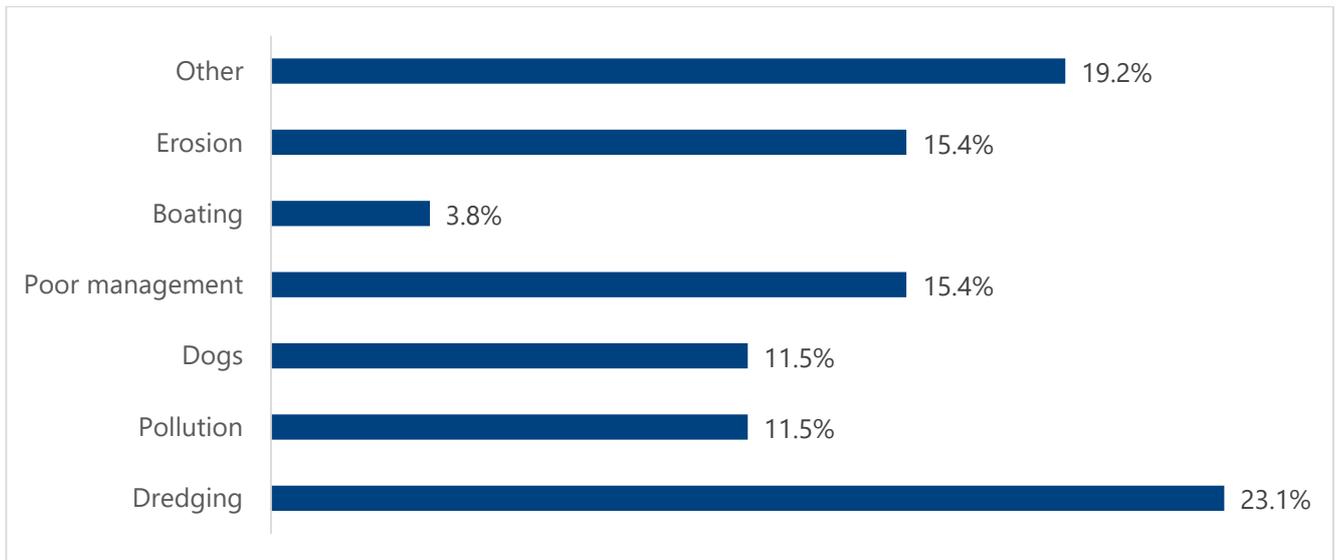
Codes applied=54

Figure 24: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast lagoons.



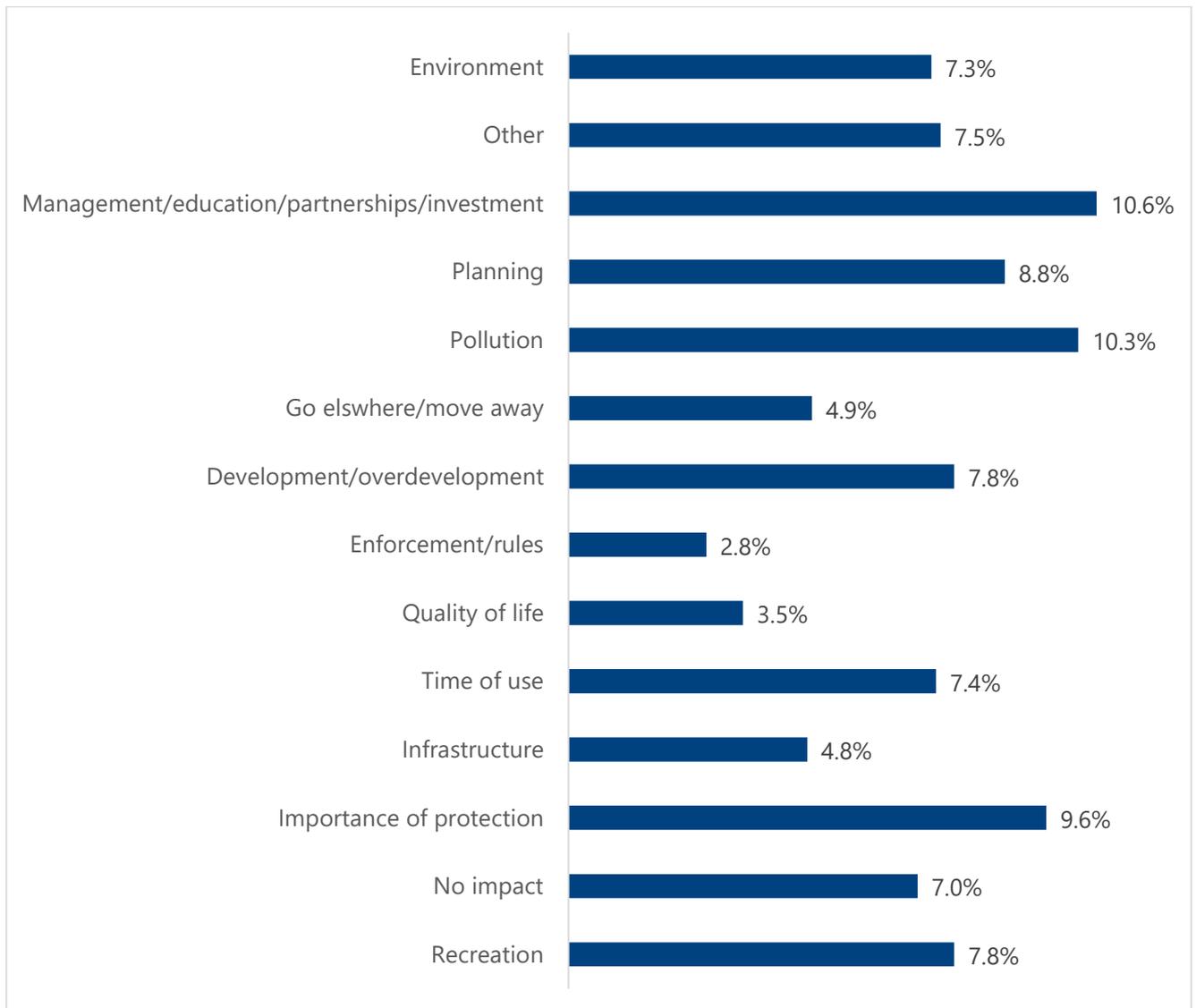
Total selections=3644

Figure 24.1: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast lagoons.
Other (please specify) – coded information



Codes applied=26

Figure 25: Given the projected population growth on the Central Coast (additional 75,500 residents by 2036) and greater risks associated with the threats listed above, how might this change your use of waterways and views on waterways? – coded information

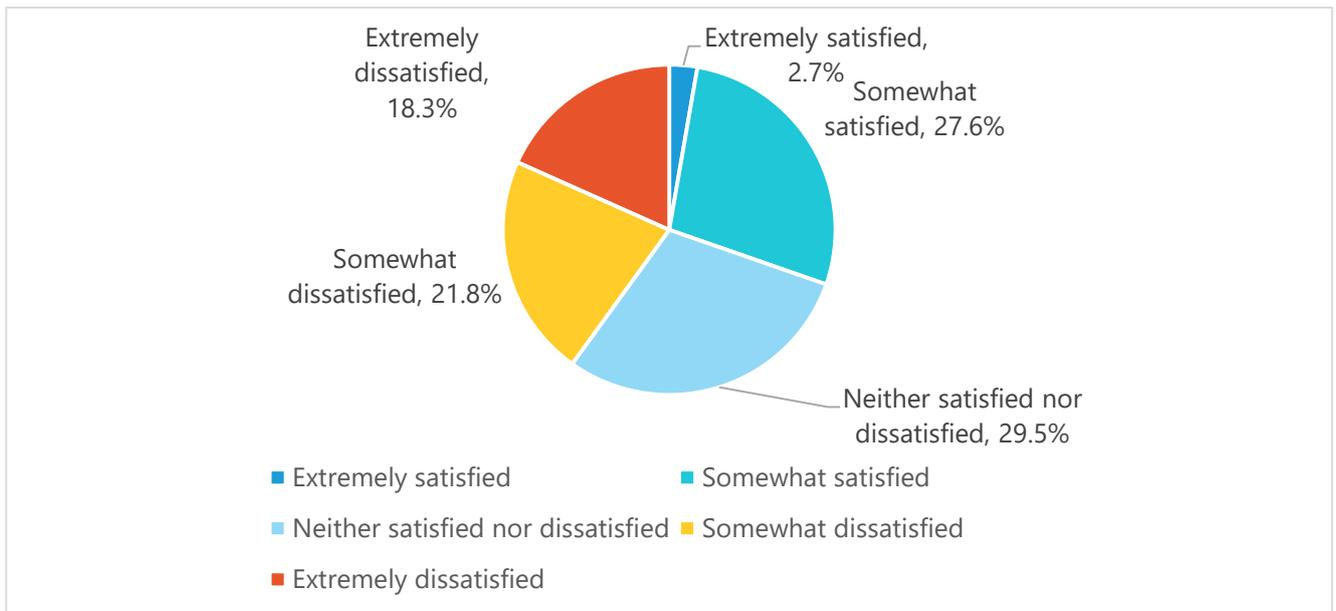


Codes applied=1082

Management of Central Coast waterways

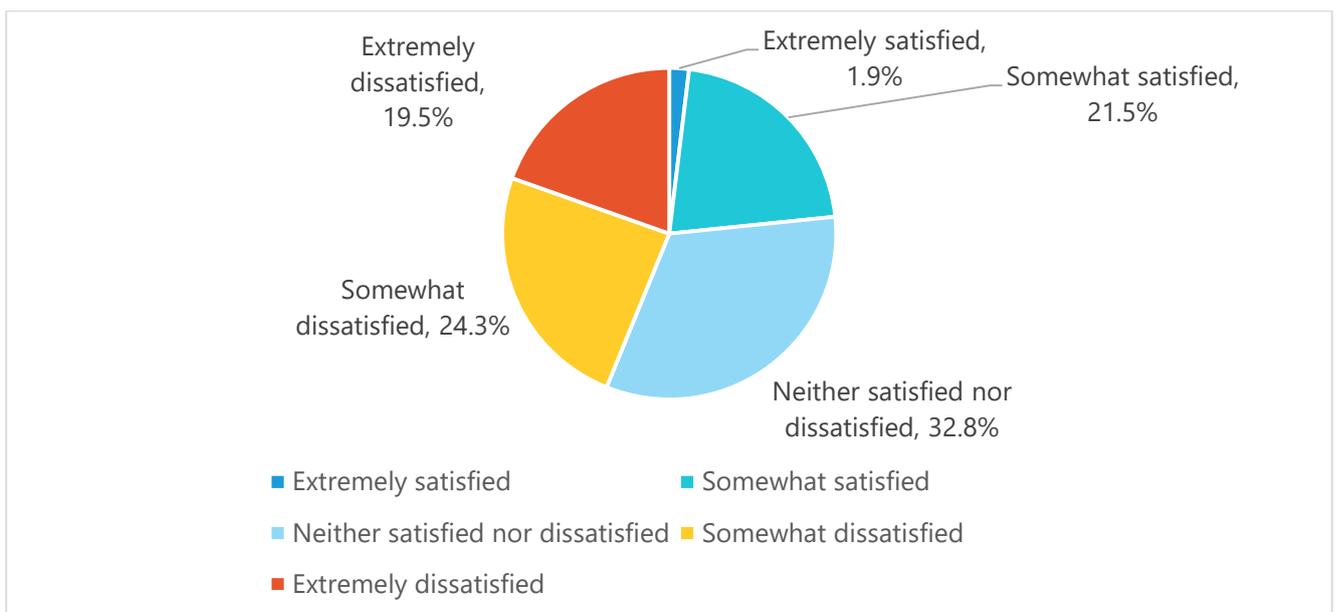
The statements presented in this section of the survey were designed to explore the level of satisfaction in relation to the management of Central Coast waterways. These questions can be revisited over time to track changes in level of satisfaction amongst the community.

Figure 26: Over the last 3 years, how satisfied are you with the improvement of beaches (including the dunes, rocky shores and lagoons)?



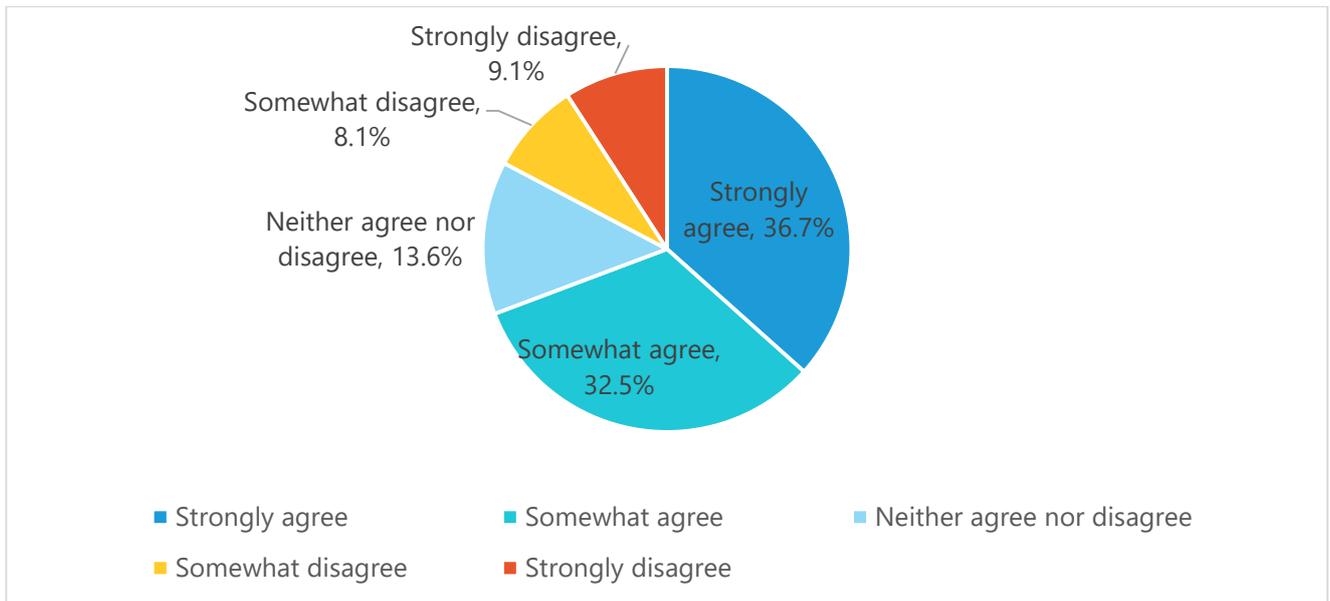
Total respondents=843

Figure 27: Over the last 3 years, how satisfied are you with the improvement of lakes, estuaries and lagoons (including foreshores, rivers, creeks and catchments)?



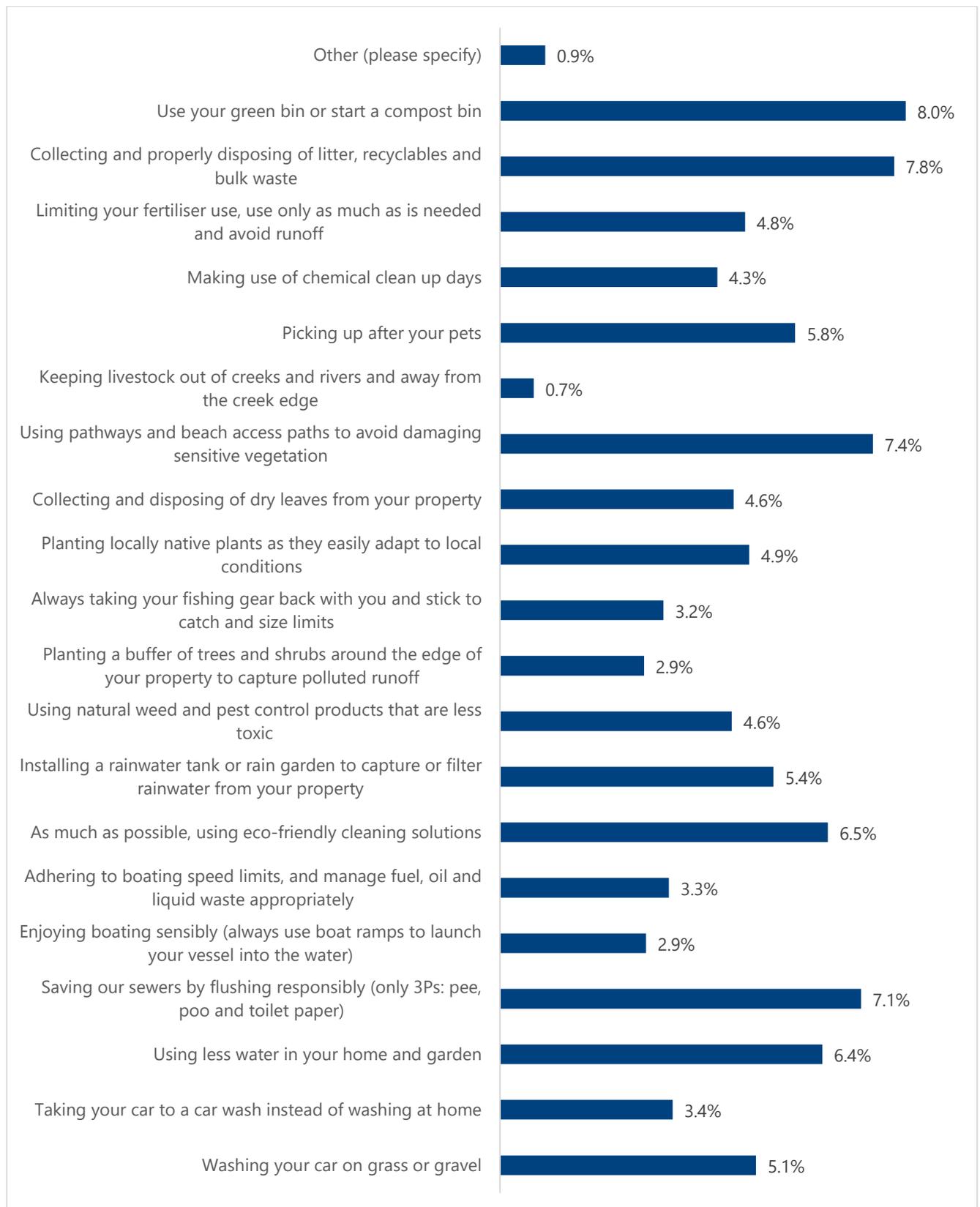
Total respondents=839

Figure 28: I would support more resources being used for the management of our waterways and coast, even if it meant a very small increase in my property rates or rent.



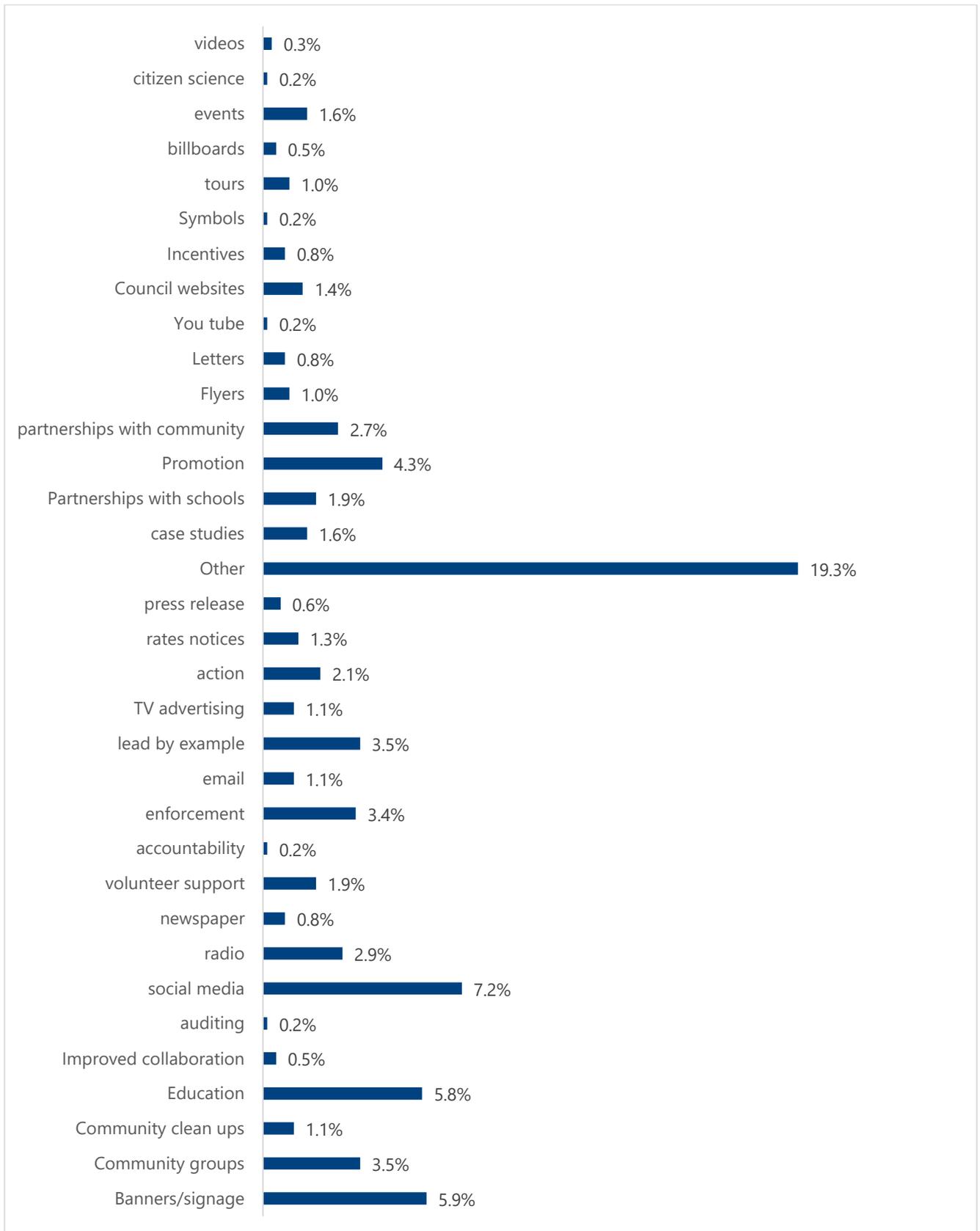
Total respondents=848

Figure 29: Many of the impacts to our waterways come from the areas surrounding them. Please select the actions you take at home or work to help protect our waterways:



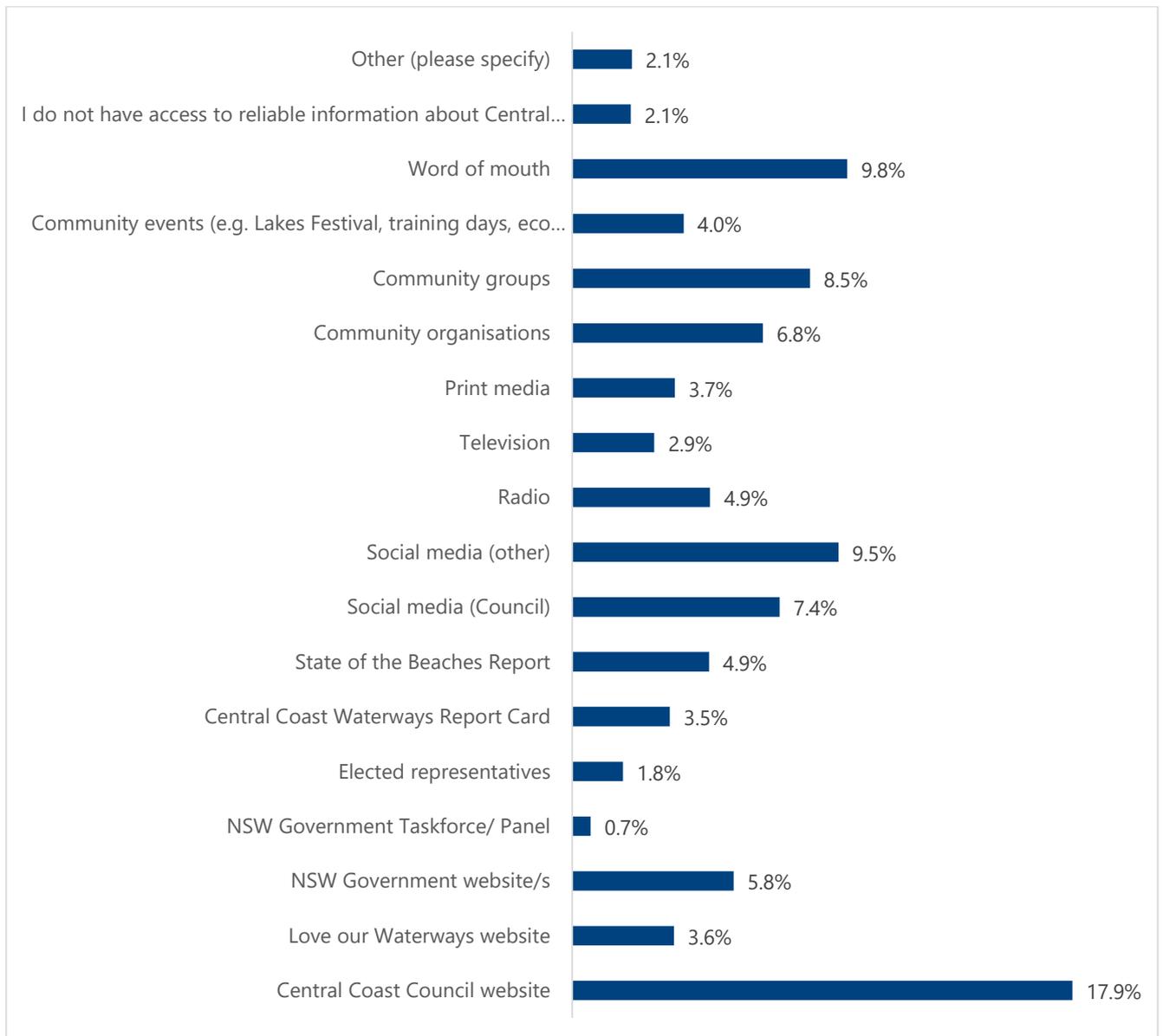
Total selections=8383

Figure 30: Tell us how you think Council can spread the word about the value of Central Coast Waterways and how we can all help to improve and protect them into the future: - coded information



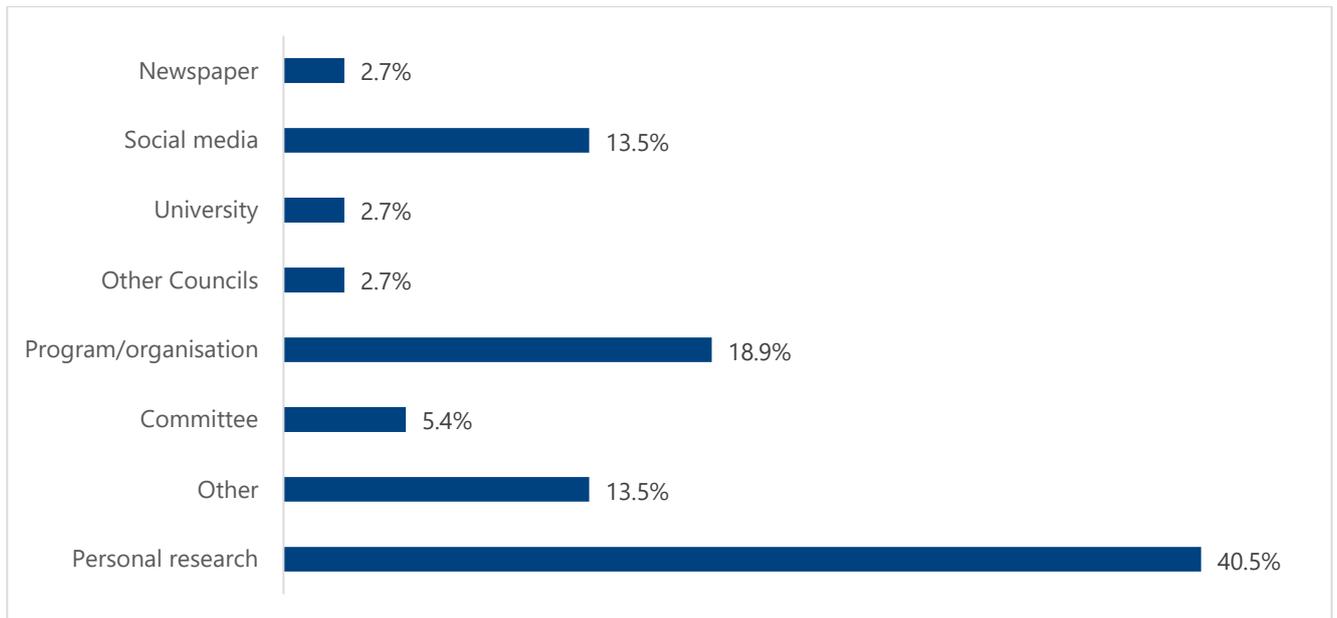
Codes applied=626

Figure 31: When looking for information about Central Coast Waterways, where do you look?



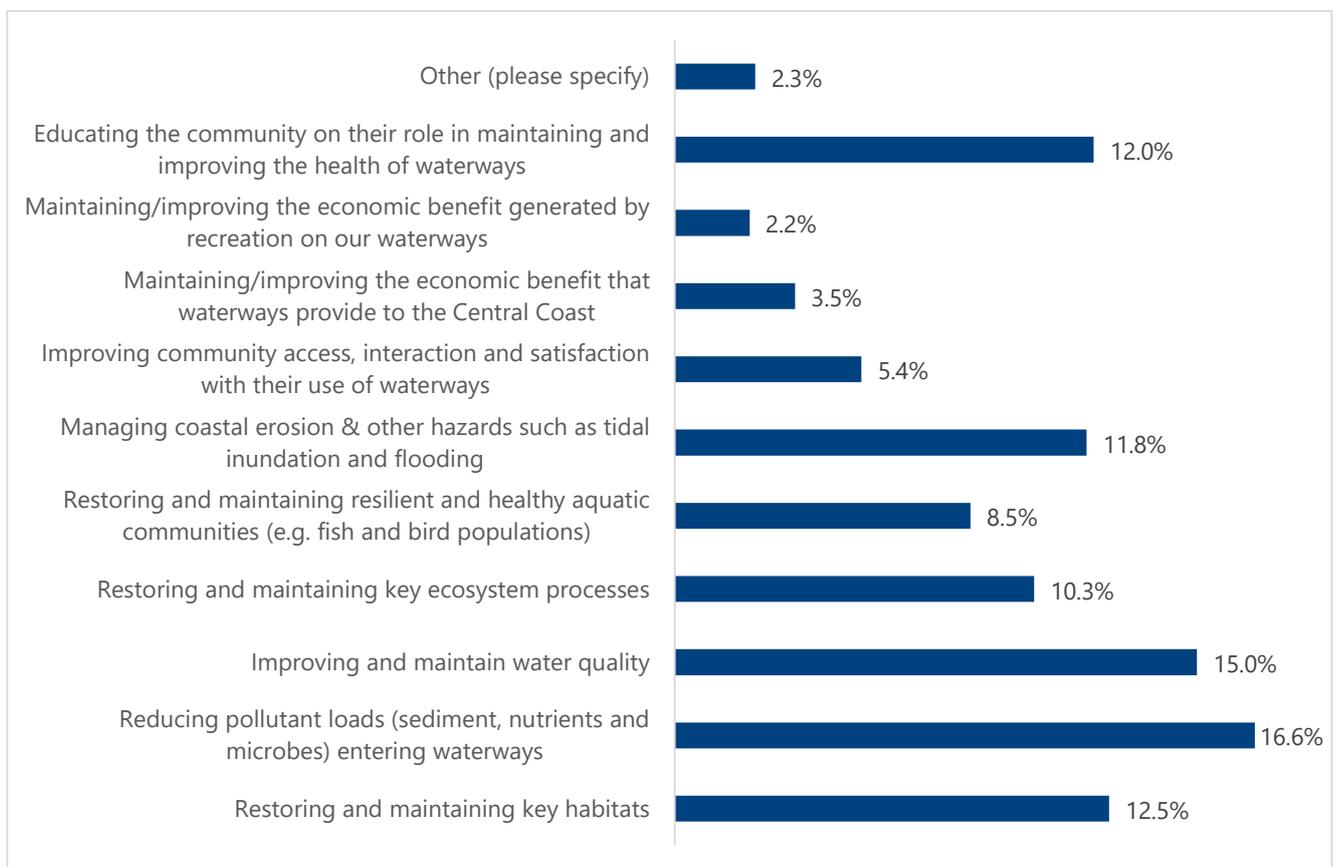
Total selections=2859

Figure 31.1: When looking for information about Central Coast Waterways, where do you look? (Other, please specify) – coded information



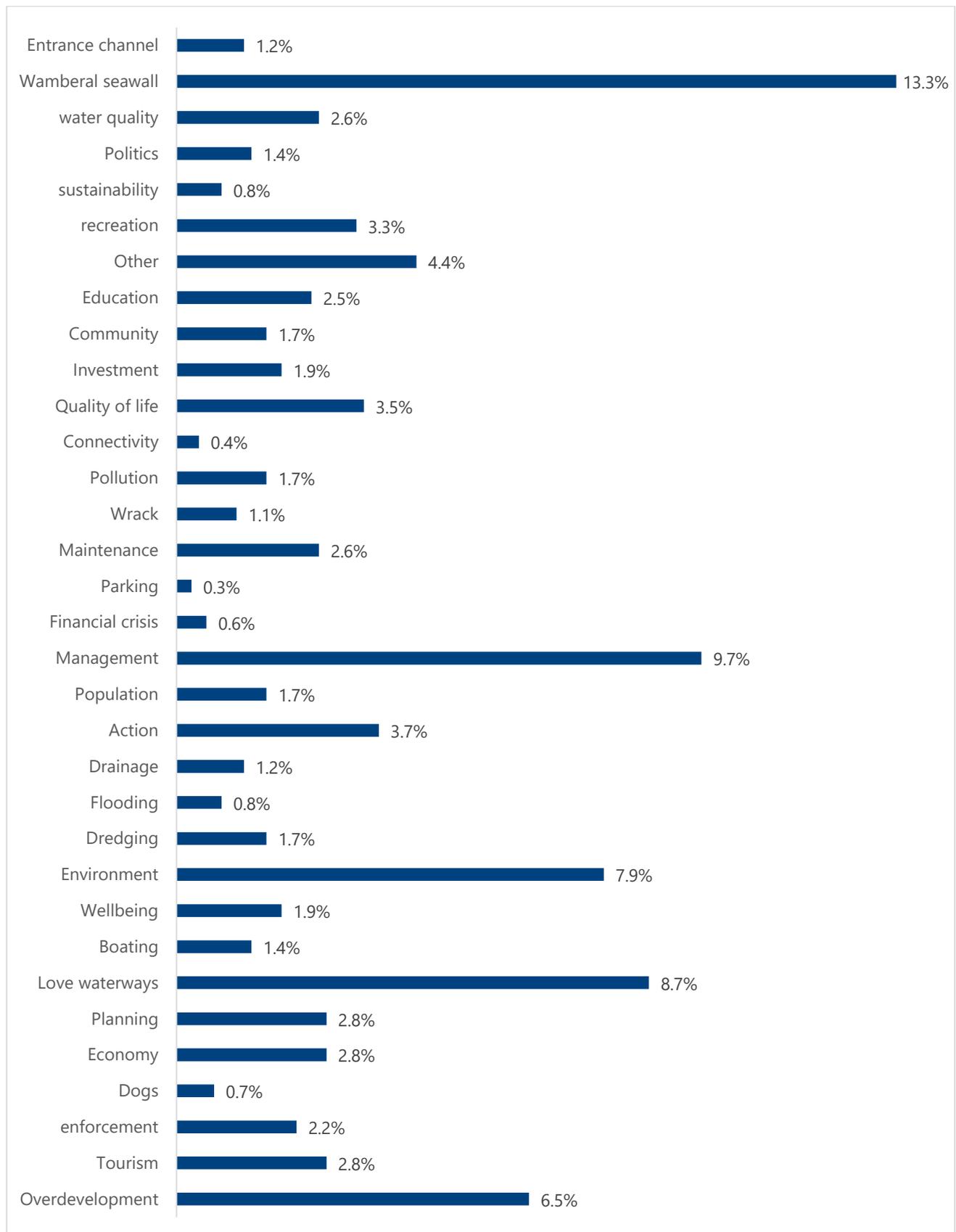
Codes applied=37

Figure 32: What should the focus areas for the Coastal Management Programs (CMP) be? Participants could select up to 3.



Total selections=2463

Figure 33: Do you have any further comments about the importance of waterways on the Central Coast? – coded information

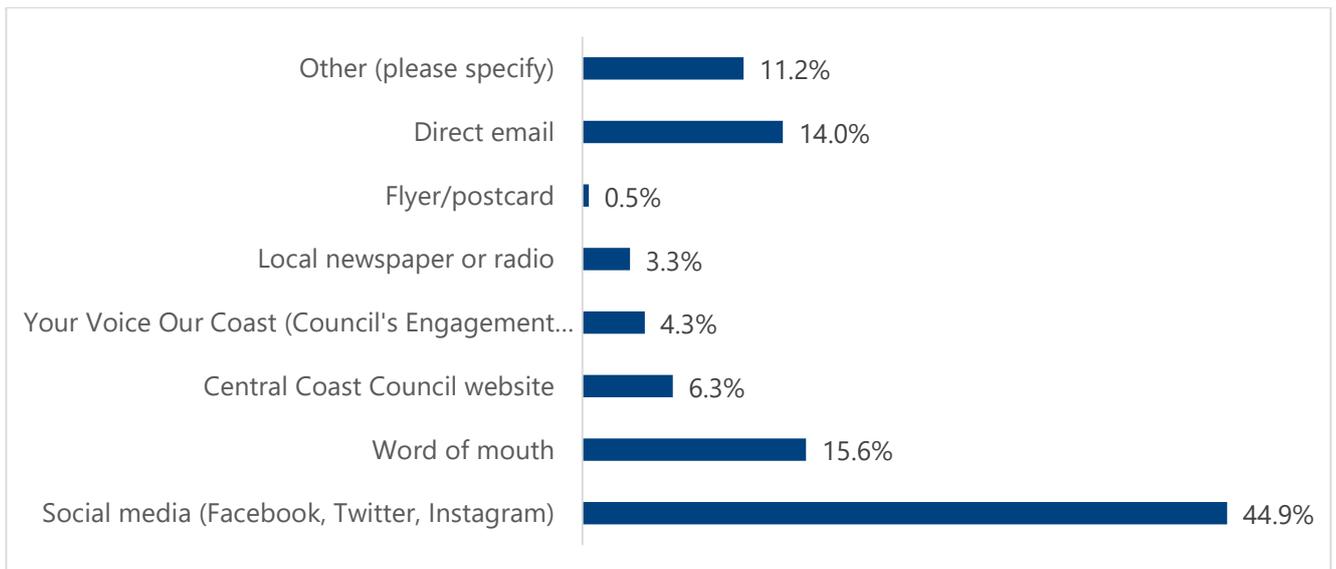


Codes applied=721

This question provided participants with the option to share their thoughts, below is an example of some of the comments received:

- Love living on the coast & am always appreciate the work done to keep our waterways the way they are. The ecosystems are important as are the bird life
- The way our waterways link with the surrounding native vegetation is important. The history is important as well e.g. the dams that feed steam trains, sailing ships going right up Narara Creek. Historic sites around waterways should be protected and converted into attractions/reserves/parks to emphasise the importance of the Central Coast waterways.
- Without them we have nothing. The top three answers to why we live on the Central Coast from Council surveys are "Our way of life, Our Bushland and our Beaches (Lakes)".
- We have beautiful waterways. They are and can be enjoyed by all. Maintain and improve them and set up guidelines to protect them.
- Keep up the great work CCC waterways, environmental education and Landcare teams, you know your stuff. Hope that better planning controls and compliance can fill the gap. Thanks for the opportunity to contribute.
- People come here because it is somewhat "off the beaten track". While accept that more people are "discovering" the Central Coast, moves need to be made in terms of paid for parking (to raise money for council), rubbish collection (to maintain pristine environment of beaches) and maintenance of green spaces around waterways to ensure that, despite a rising population, a day out on the water can be enjoyable for visitors, and profitable for council.
- I believe we should be placing critical importance on the cleanliness of our waterways and prioritising the preservation of our waterways as close as possible with their natural state.
- We have a real treasure with our waterways and surrounding bush. It's part of our identity and we need to plan and care for this. Thanks for this survey.
- The waterways are an extremely important part of the Central Coast and the lifestyle they offer has many benefits, therefore, must be given top priority to preserve and protect them.
- The waterways are crucial to the Central Coast. The lagoons and lakes are only separated from the sea by fragile dunes and are surrounded by tens of thousands of residents. The risk of contamination and pollution of the waterways is very real.
- Please continue to ask the public for thoughts.
- We have a beautiful place to live. PLEASE keep as many areas that are off leash for dogs to use on beaches. They help mental health and they love to play and swim and run. They need as many areas as possible, so the areas aren't too crowded and cause issues.
- Building a sea wall is not a sustainable option - we need to stop building on sand and to remove those houses most at risk if falling into the sea. Climate change is real.

Figure 34: How did you hear about this survey?



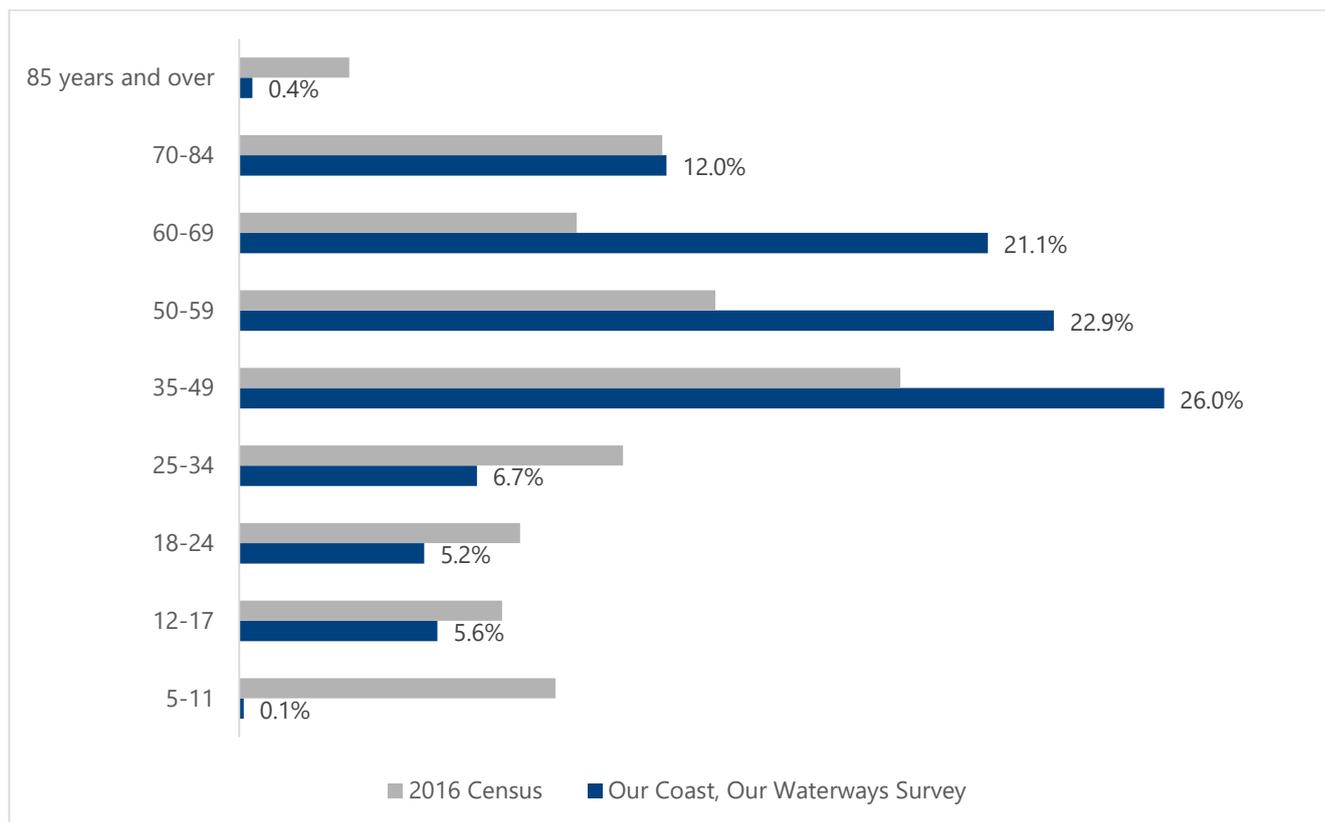
Total selections=874

About you and your household!

The questions asked in this section of the survey were not mandatory however responses to these questions allow us to further analyse the responses supplied by participants.

Within some of the graphs supplied, an overlay of the 2016 Census information has been provided. This is to assist in demonstrating the representativeness of participants.

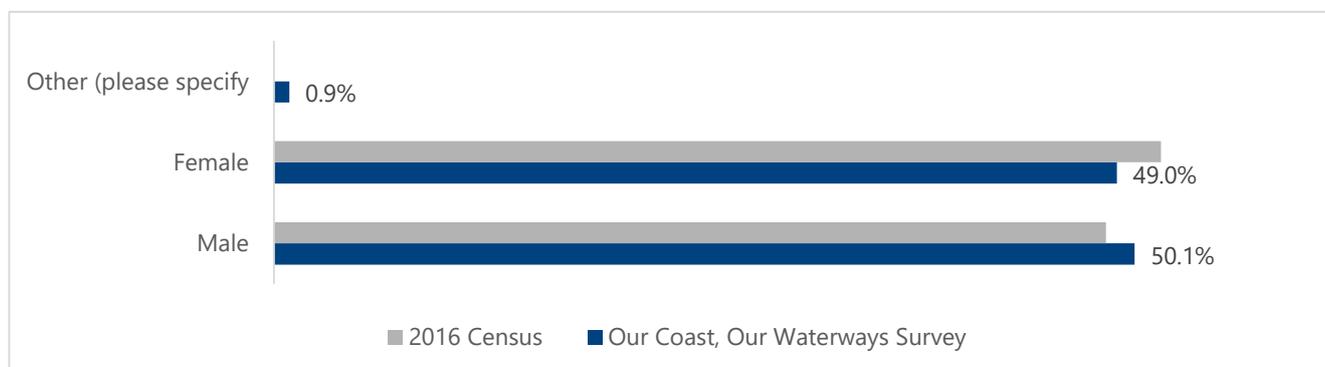
Figure 35: What is your age?



Total respondents = 807

Central Coast Council area information sourced from 2016 Census.

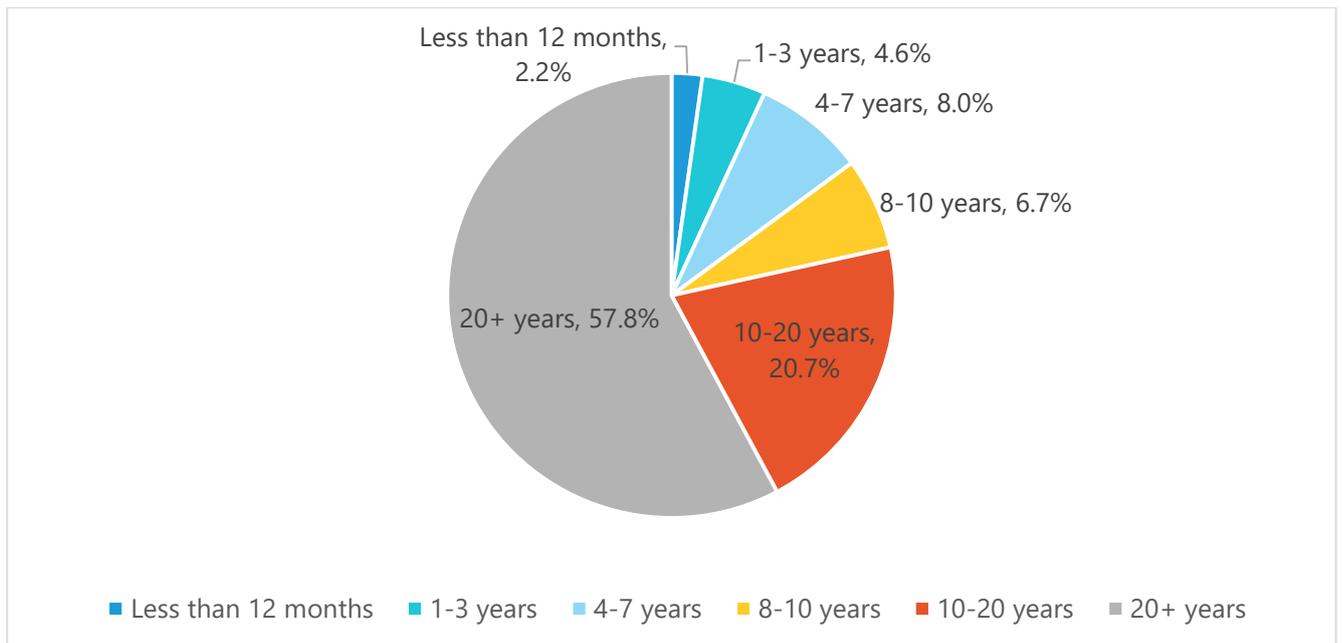
Figure 36: What is your gender?



Total respondents = 779

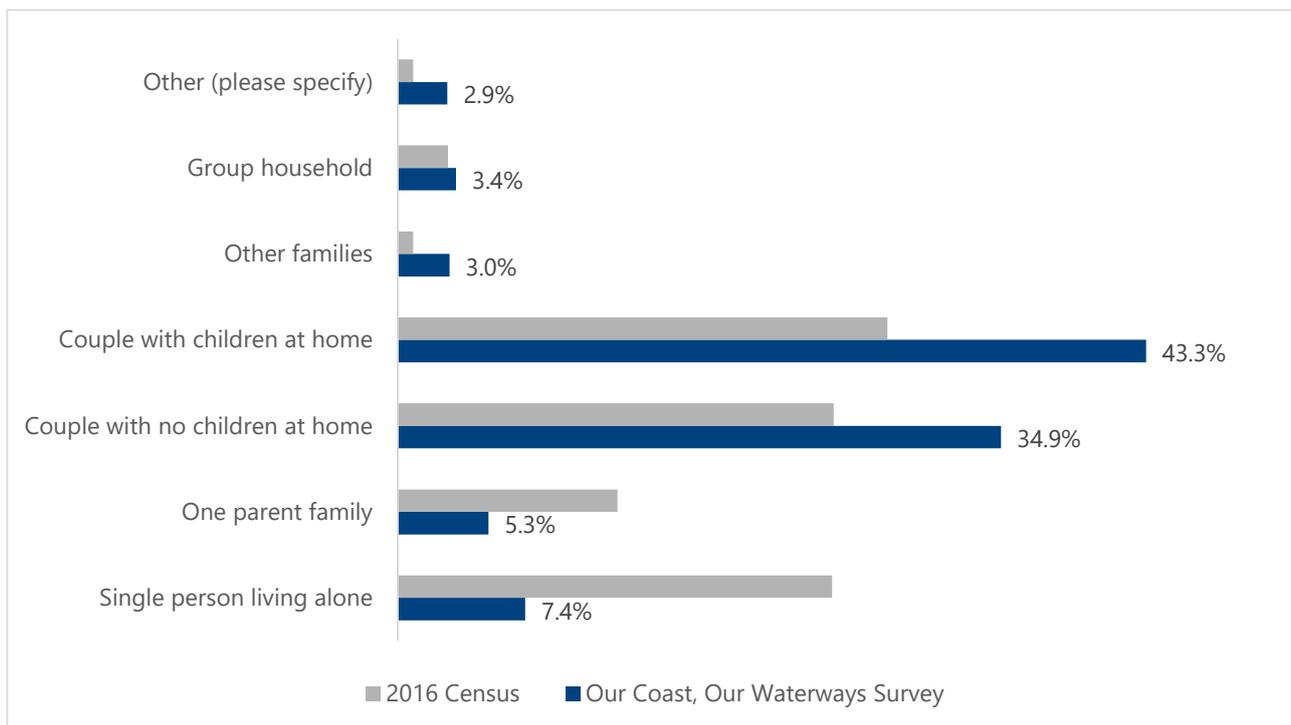
Central Coast Council area information sourced from 2016 Census.

Figure 37: How long have you lived on the Central Coast?



Total respondents=808

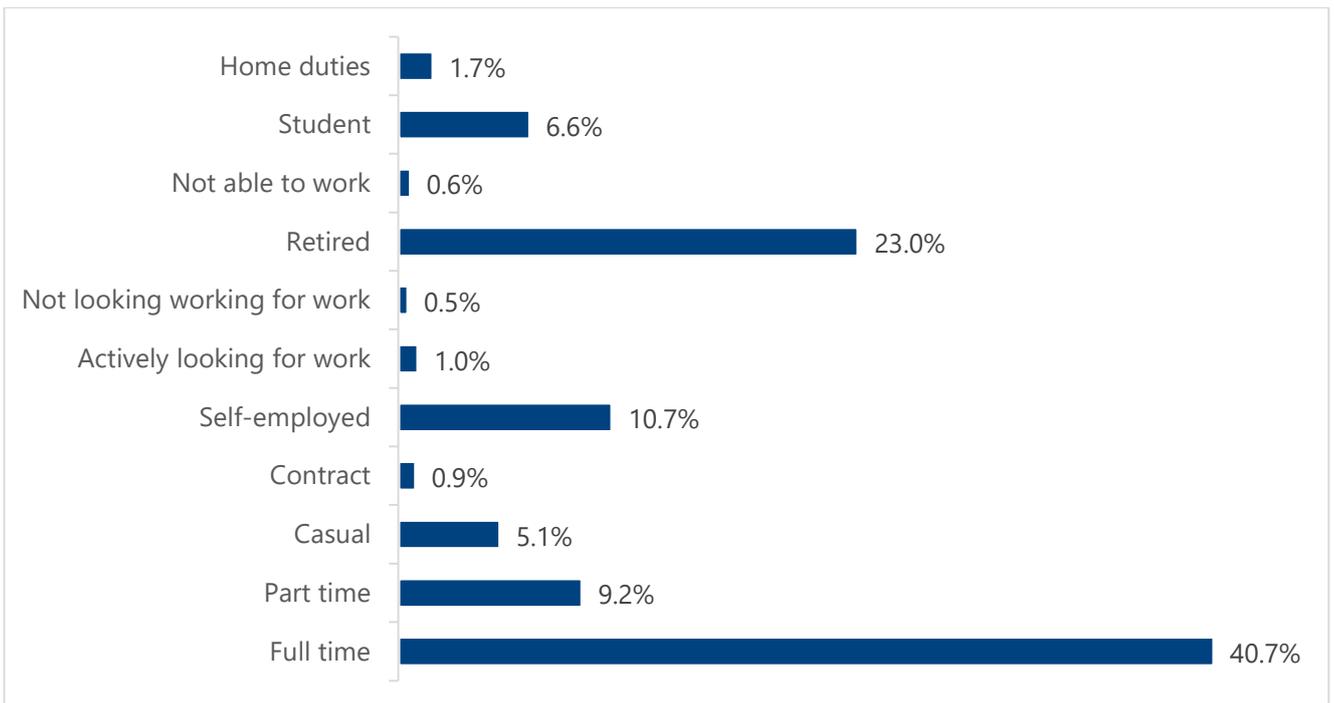
Figure 38: What is your household type?



Total respondents=800

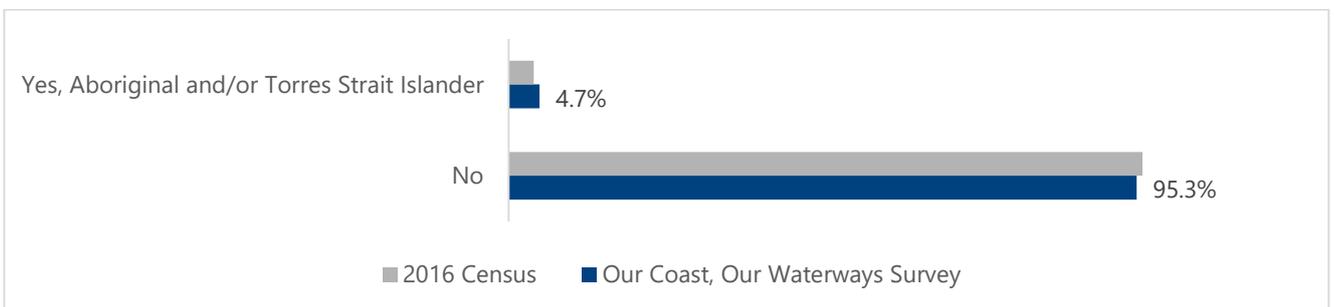
Central Coast Council area information sourced from 2016 Census.

Figure 39: What is your employment type?



Total respondents=805

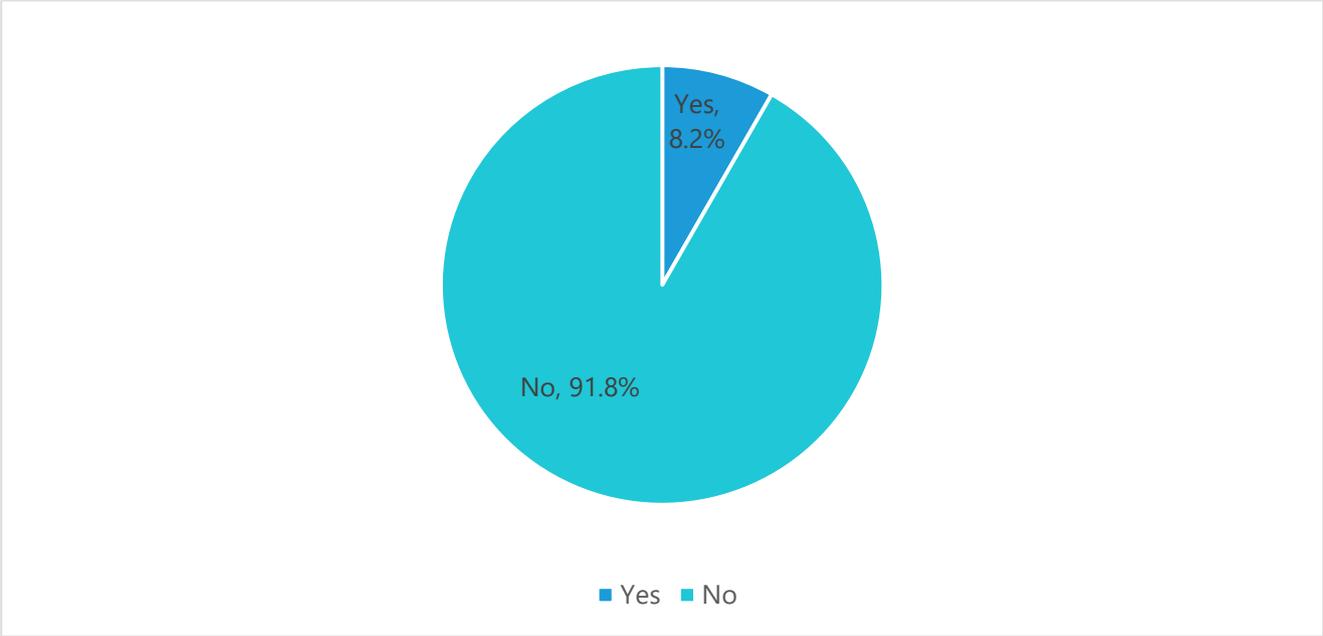
Figure 40: Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?



Total respondents=793

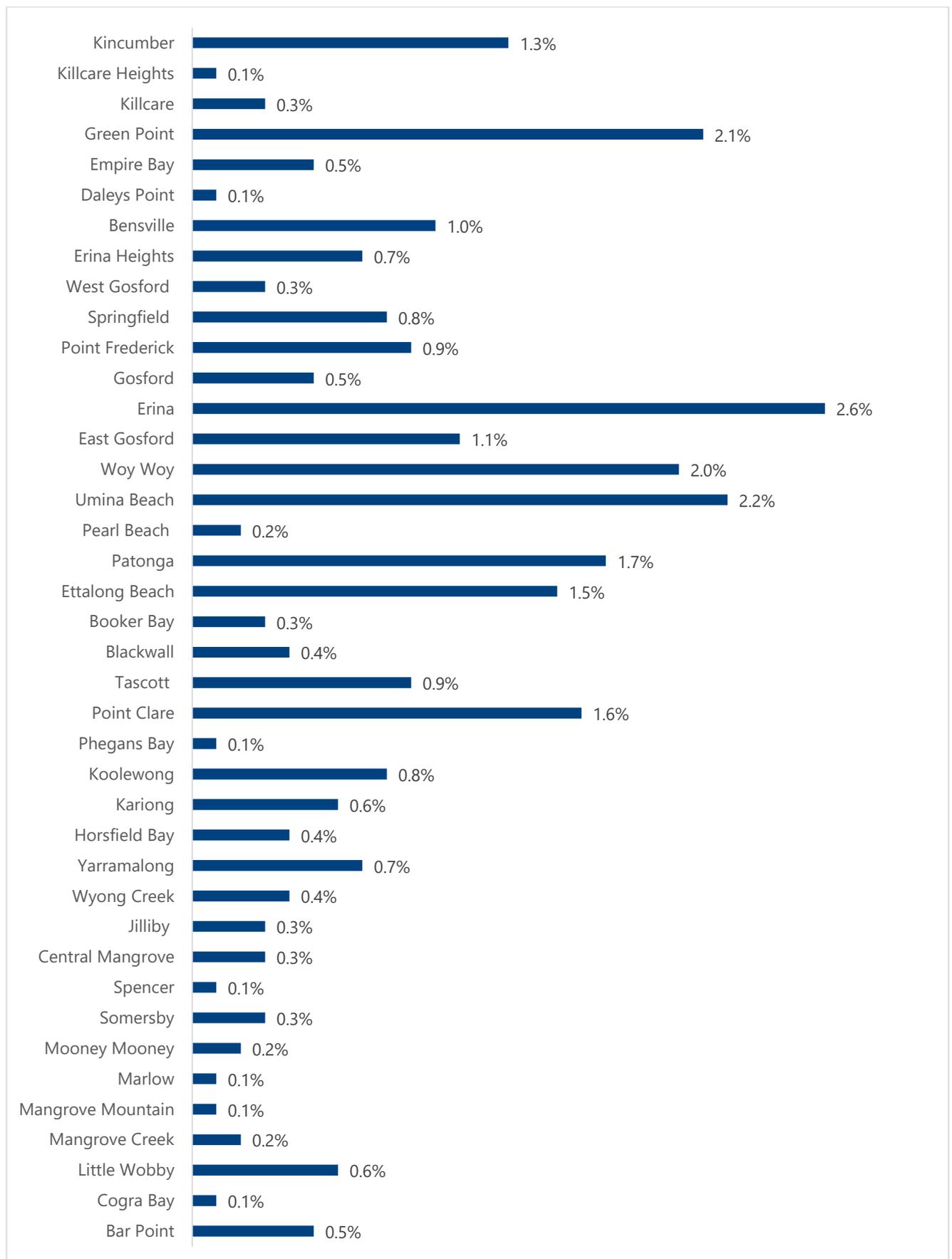
Central Coast Council area information sourced from 2016 Census.

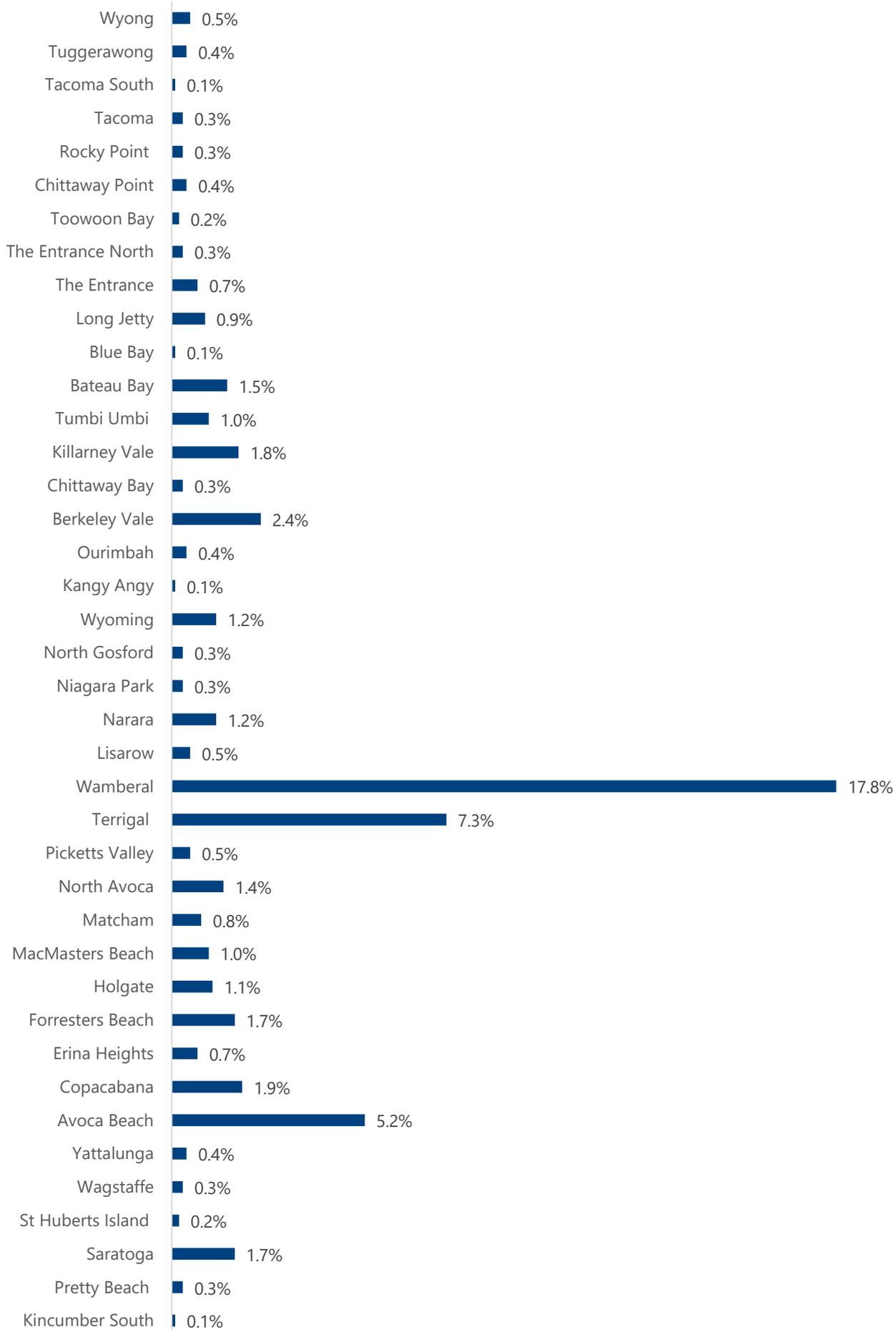
Figure 41: Do you speak a language other than English at home?

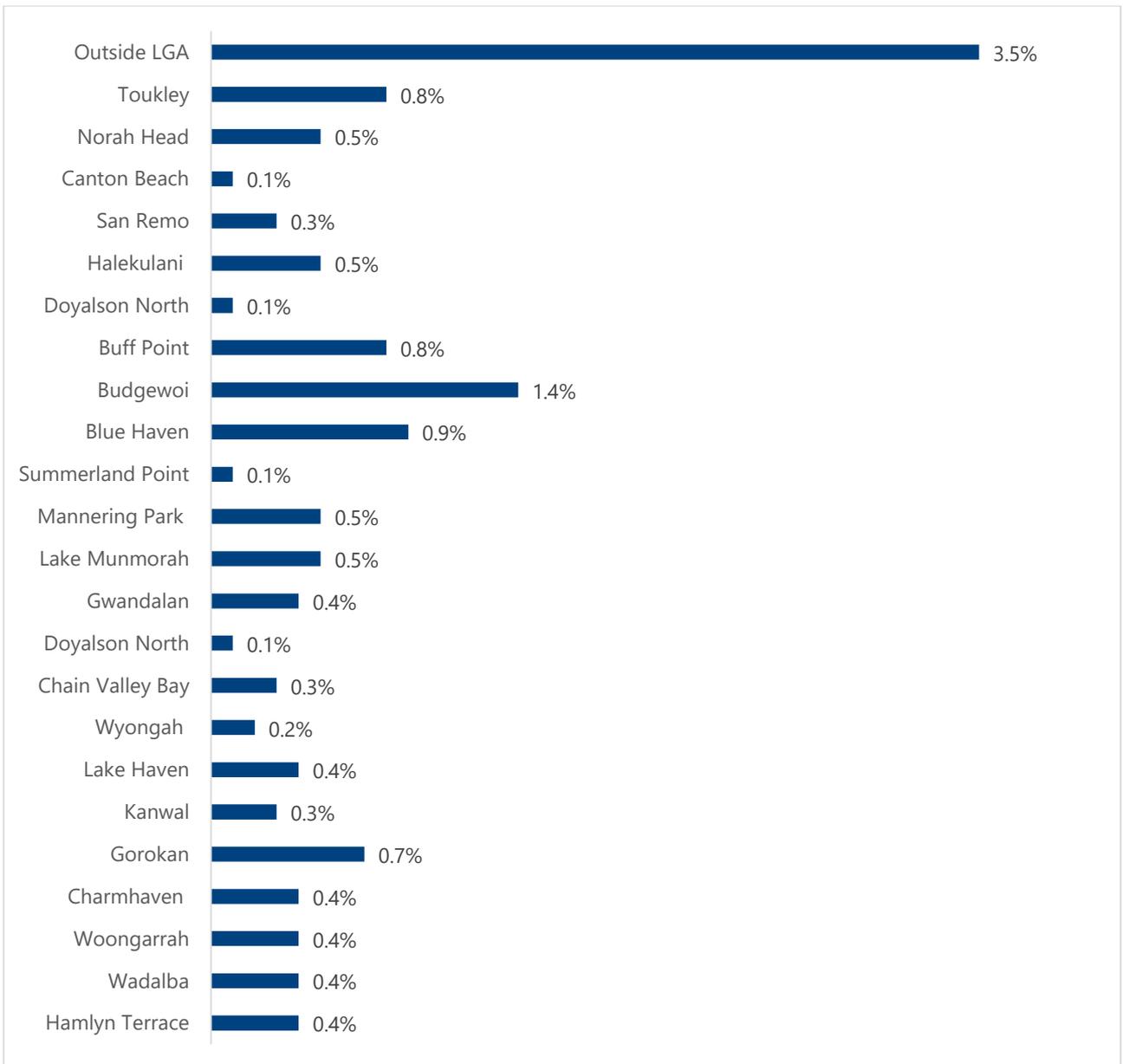


Total respondents=801

Figure 42: What suburb do you live in:

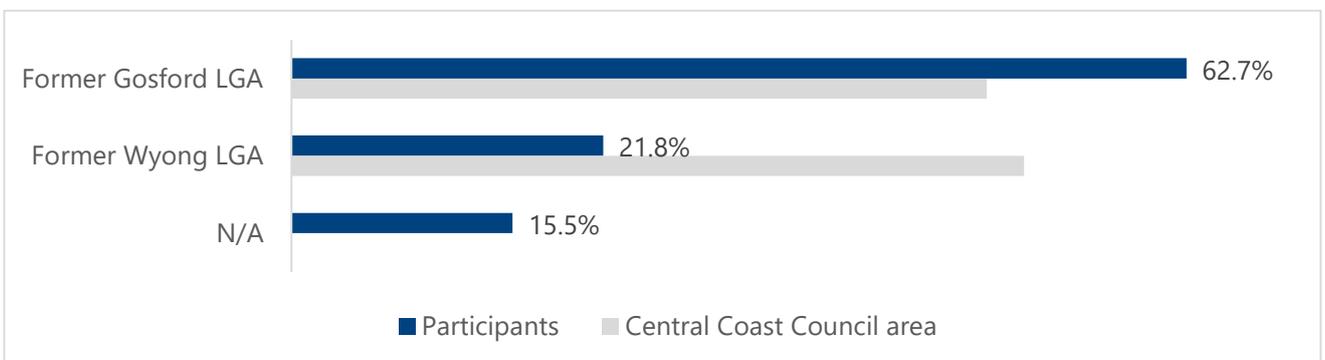






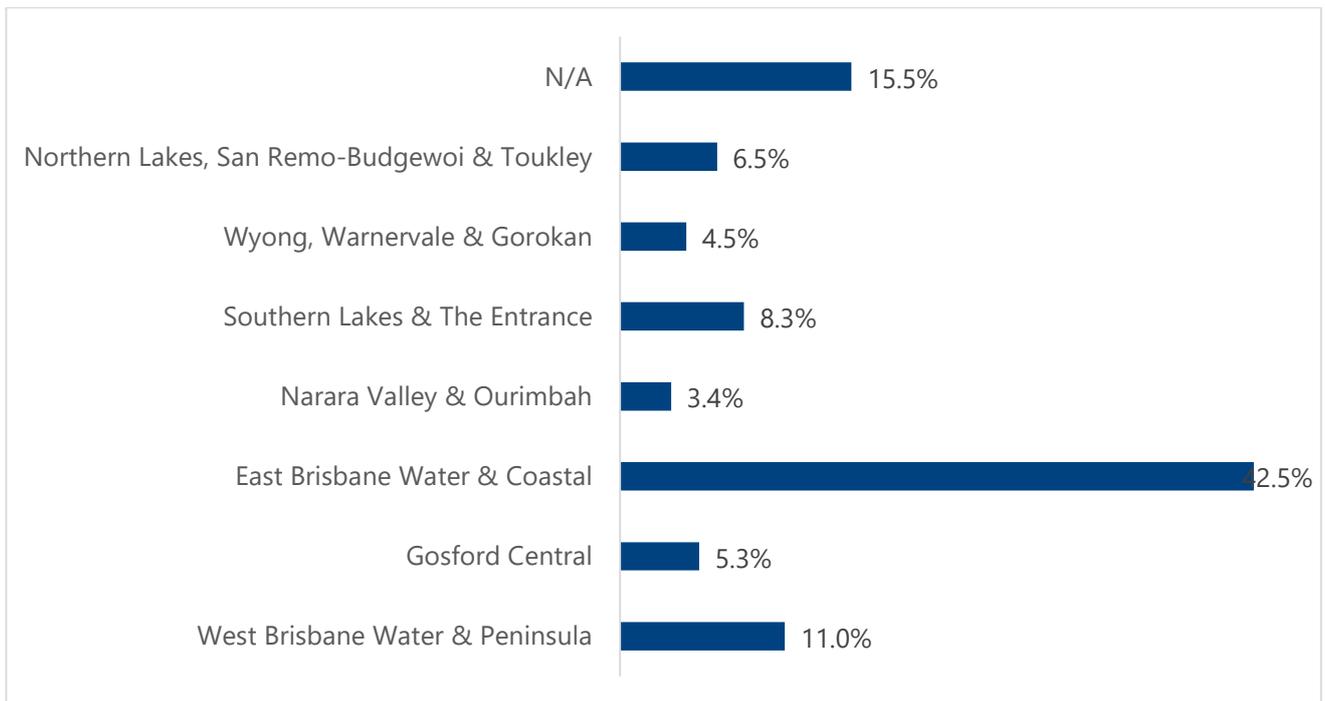
Total respondents=1007

Figure 43: Former LGA (curated by suburb)



Central Coast Council area information sourced from 2016 Census.

Figure 44: Planning area (curated by suburb)



Comparisons table

Throughout the phase one consultation we collected demographic information which allows us to further analyse the feedback we are receiving and from who. The table below explores these differences:

	Foreshore, beachfront or riverside resident	Residents living between 500m and 2km from a waterway	34 years of age and under	35 years of age and over	Lived on the Central Coast less than 7 years	Lived on the Central Coast more than 10 years	Former Wyong Shire Council area	Former Gosford City area
Waterways are a significant reason I choose to live on the Central Coast	97.4% <i>Total respondents = 155</i>	91.4% <i>Total respondents = 429</i>	90.6% <i>Total respondents = 96</i>	96.8% <i>Total respondents = 665</i>	94.2% <i>Total respondents = 120</i>	95.3% <i>Total respondents = 688</i>	93.6% <i>Total respondents = 235</i>	95.9% <i>Total respondents = 666</i>
If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would reduce the frequency I visit and use waterways.	85.8% <i>Total respondents = 155</i>	87.9% <i>Total respondents = 429</i>	88.5% <i>Total respondents = 96</i>	89.6% <i>Total respondents = 664</i>	92.5% <i>Total respondents = 120</i>	88.6% <i>Total respondents = 687</i>	89.4% <i>Total respondents = 235</i>	88.6% <i>Total respondents = 666</i>

	Foreshore, beachfront or riverside resident	Residents living between 500m and 2km from a waterway	34 years of age and under	35 years of age and over	Lived on the Central Coast less than 7 years	Lived on the Central Coast more than 10 years	Former Wyong Shire Council area	Former Gosford City area
If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would consider moving from the Central Coast to another location.	69% <i>Total respondents = 155</i>	63.2% <i>Total respondents = 429</i>	72.9% <i>Total respondents = 96</i>	67.5% <i>Total respondents = 665</i>	71.7% <i>Total respondents = 120</i>	65.7% <i>Total respondents = 688</i>	65.5% <i>Total respondents = 235</i>	65.9% <i>Total respondents = 666</i>
More should be done to enhance access to waterways (e.g. shared pathways, jetties, boat ramps etc).	72.9% <i>Total respondents = 155</i>	65.4% <i>Total respondents = 428</i>	56.3% <i>Total respondents = 96</i>	70% <i>Total respondents = 663</i>	64.2% <i>Total respondents = 120</i>	67.9% <i>Total respondents = 686</i>	77.9% <i>Total respondents = 235</i>	64.5% <i>Total respondents = 664</i>

	Foreshore, beachfront or riverside resident	Residents living between 500m and 2km from a waterway	34 years of age and under	35 years of age and over	Lived on the Central Coast less than 7 years	Lived on the Central Coast more than 10 years	Former Wyong Shire Council area	Former Gosford City area
More should be done to protect and enhance the natural aspects of waterways such as the cleanliness of water, health of coastal vegetation, and the protection of wildlife.	92.9% <i>Total respondents = 154</i>	97.2% <i>Total respondents = 429</i>	100% <i>Total respondents = 96</i>	96.5% <i>Total respondents = 663</i>	97.5% <i>Total respondents = 120</i>	97.1% <i>Total respondents = 686</i>	96.2 <i>Total respondents = 235</i>	96.5% <i>Total respondents = 664</i>
I would support more resources being used for the management of our waterways and coast, even if it meant a very small increase in my property rates or rent.	71.9% <i>Total respondents = 139</i>	66.8% <i>Total respondents = 391</i>	75% <i>Total respondents = 96</i>	69.6% <i>Total respondents = 664</i>	85.8% <i>Total respondents = 120</i>	67.4% <i>Total respondents = 687</i>	71.4% <i>Total respondents = 210</i>	68.6% <i>Total respondents = 615</i>

Statistics provided are based on participants selecting "strongly agree" and "agree". Total respondents is based on responses within the demographic category selected.