



Our Coast, Our Waterways

Hawkesbury-Nepean River System including
Brisbane Water (mini report)

Survey results

SEPTEMBER 2021

Central Coast Council

Our Coast, Our Waterways: Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water mini report

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Version 1

Introduction

Central Coast Council, in accordance with the NSW Government Coastal Management Framework are responsible for developing Coastal Management Programs (CMPs) for its waterways.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean River system (HNRS) Coastal Management Program will cover the entire tidal and estuarine reach of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River and associated estuaries including Brisbane Water, Broken Bay and Pittwater. This covers the Local Government Areas of the Central Coast, Northern Beaches, Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby, The Hills and Hawkesbury.

The development of CMPs require a systems approach to coastal management looking at coastal zone management in the broader catchment scale context which is why we are working with 5 other Councils to develop this CMP.

The lower Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment is around 21,400km² and the Coastal Management Program will set the long-term strategy for the holistic management of this area.

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 which is why 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 from users of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water.**

A region-wide report is also available at: yourvoiceourcoast.com/waterways.

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 some really important and encouraging results from users of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water:

- **85.8%** of respondents that use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water strongly agree that Waterways are a significant reason they live on the Central Coast
- **93.7%** of respondents that use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water strongly agree that Waterways contribute to their personal health and wellbeing (e.g. fitness, relaxation, happiness, lifestyle, sense of place, cultural heritage)
- **56.9%** of respondents that use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water strongly agree that if waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly they would reduce the frequency they visit and use waterways
- **34.2%** of respondents that use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water strongly agree that if waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly they would consider moving away from the Central Coast to another location
- **83.5%** of respondents that use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water strongly 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
- **35.5%** of respondents that use Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water strongly agree that they 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 **33.2%** somewhat agree and **14.8%** neither agreed or disagreed
- When asked what participants value about our waterways, the top three topics covered in these comments from users of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water were:
 - Recreational opportunities **31.5%**
 - Beauty and aesthetics **14.8%**
 - Cleanliness of waterways **13.8%**

- When asked what the top three focus areas for Coastal Management Programs should be, respondents who use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water advised:
 - Reducing pollutant loads (sediment, nutrients and microbes) entering waterways **17.1%**
 - Improving and maintain water quality **13.9%**
 - Educating the community on their role in maintaining and improving the health of waterways **12.2%**
- **173** comments were received when additional comments from users of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water were requested, the top three topics covered in these comments were:
 - Recreation **4.7%**
 - Quality of life **4.1%**
 - Love waterways **3.2%**

Sample participant commentary

The survey offered multiple opportunities for the community to share their thoughts. Below is an example of the comments received from users of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water when asked what they value about waterways (comments are presented verbatim):

- The peace and tranquillity it offers is good for the mind and body.
- Recreation, health benefits; supporting locals fishery business; supporting local marinas & boating business and supporting local clubs & events.
- Healthy waterways, vegetation and fauna all working together to support unique biodiversity in our local area. Also our recreational enjoyment.
- The impact on well-being and opportunity for young people's growth and beach sport skills and social well-being.
- The beauty, the accessibility, the inherent health benefits, being part of a volunteer organisation (surf life saving), boating, swimming etc.
- That they are fresh, clean and soul replenishing.
- The beauty, cleanliness, ease of access (eg., no paid parking), the variety of places to go, having the luxury of being able to enjoy the natural environment but still having amenities nearby and conveniences such as cafes, restaurants, showers, bathrooms, etc. There is something magical about being near the water. It's good for one's soul.

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

- We have beautiful waterways. They are and can be enjoyed by all. Maintain and improve them and set up guidelines to protect them.
- Be more proactive with local businesspeople to improve & promote our waterways. Especially for the next generation & growing population. More employment, local business growth & recreational health benefits. Council- give private sectors a go to turn Gosford waterway into a Sanctuary Cove Qld Education is very important but so is enforcement of rules which never seems to happen. Far too few public toilets & litter bins along walkways & in picnic areas.

- 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.
- Stop development of all foreshore areas. Stop interfering with nature.
The waterfronts should be open, green, healthy clean, places of peace. Somewhere we can escape to and feel the sand or grass beneath our toes.
Somewhere we can swim without plastic drifting past us.

Next steps

Council will use the results and feedback provided to identify the community priorities for the management of our waterways. This information will be valuable for informing future consultation and collaboration through the development of the Coastal Management Programs and ultimately the development of management actions.

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

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

Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water user survey results

The Our Coast, Our Waterways survey was undertaken to understand the value our community places on waterways, their uses of them, opinions on them 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 feedback collected.

We have prepared a regionwide report as well as *mini reports* for the four CMPs; this report – *Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water mini report* – explores the results garnered for participants that indicated they use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water.

The survey was broken up into stages –

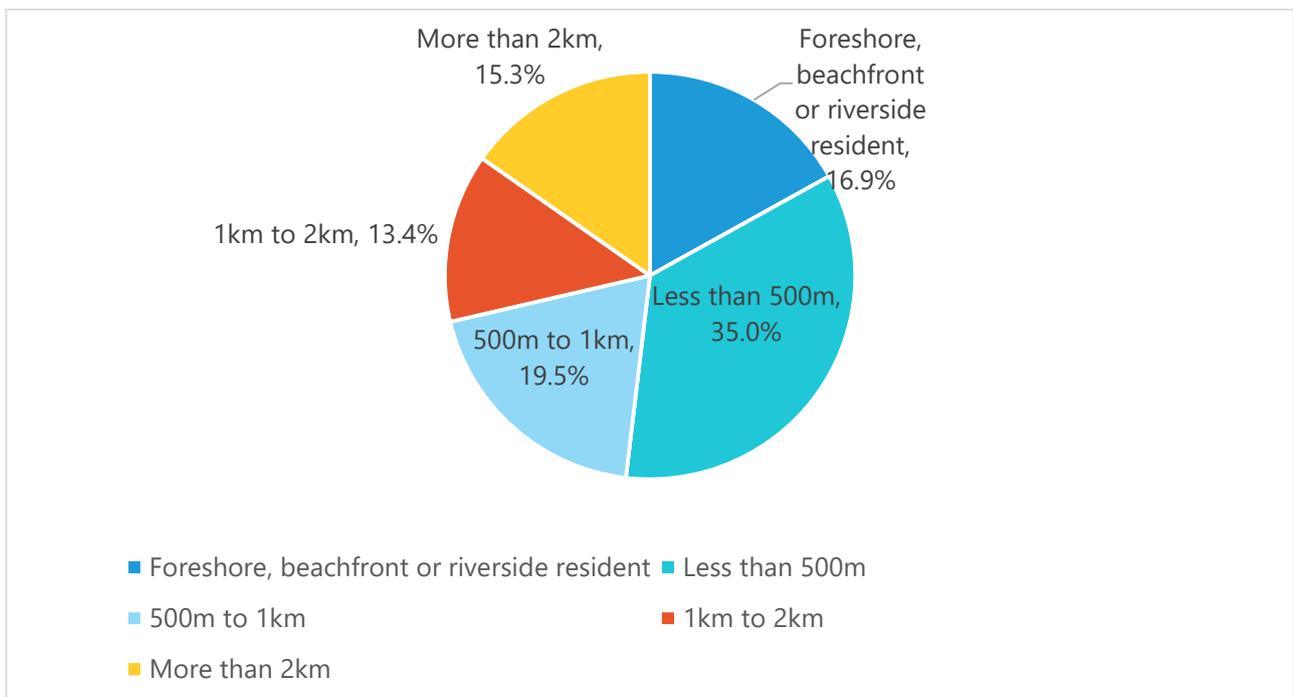
- *Use of Central Coast Waterways*
- *Importance of Central Coast waterways to you*
- *Values and threats to Central Coast waterways*
- *About you and your household.*

We have provided the results garnered from Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water users in this survey using these same headings.

Use of Central Coast waterways

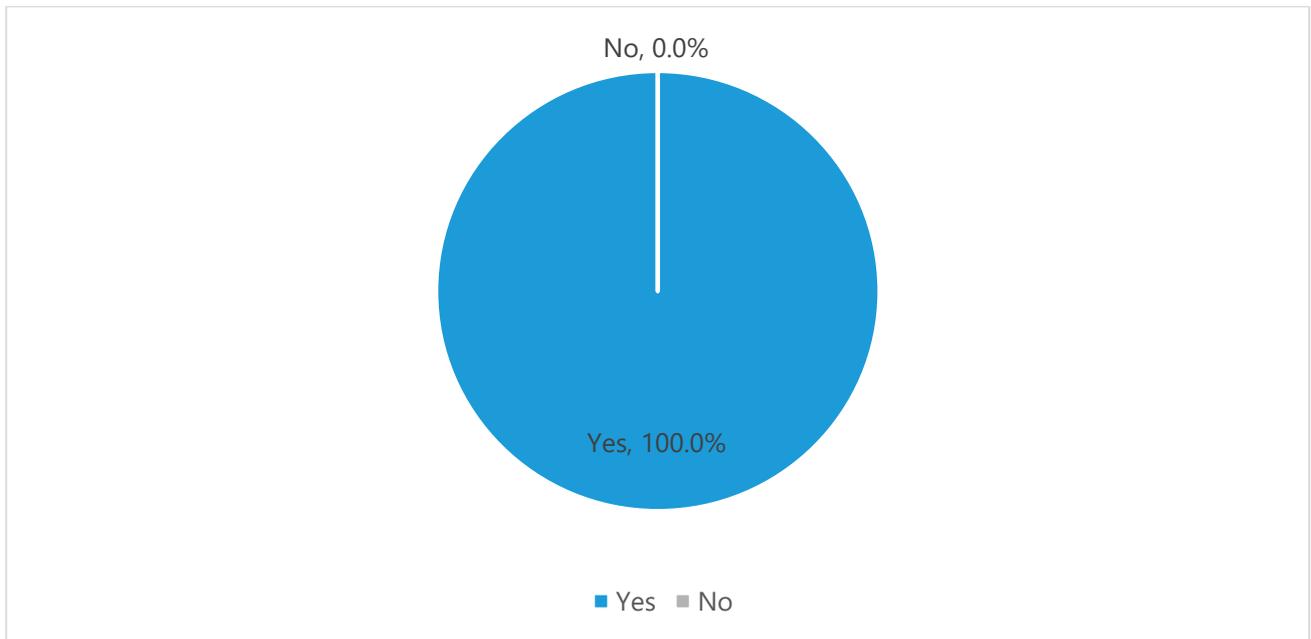
The following questions were designed to assist in understanding how the community uses Central Coast Waterways.

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



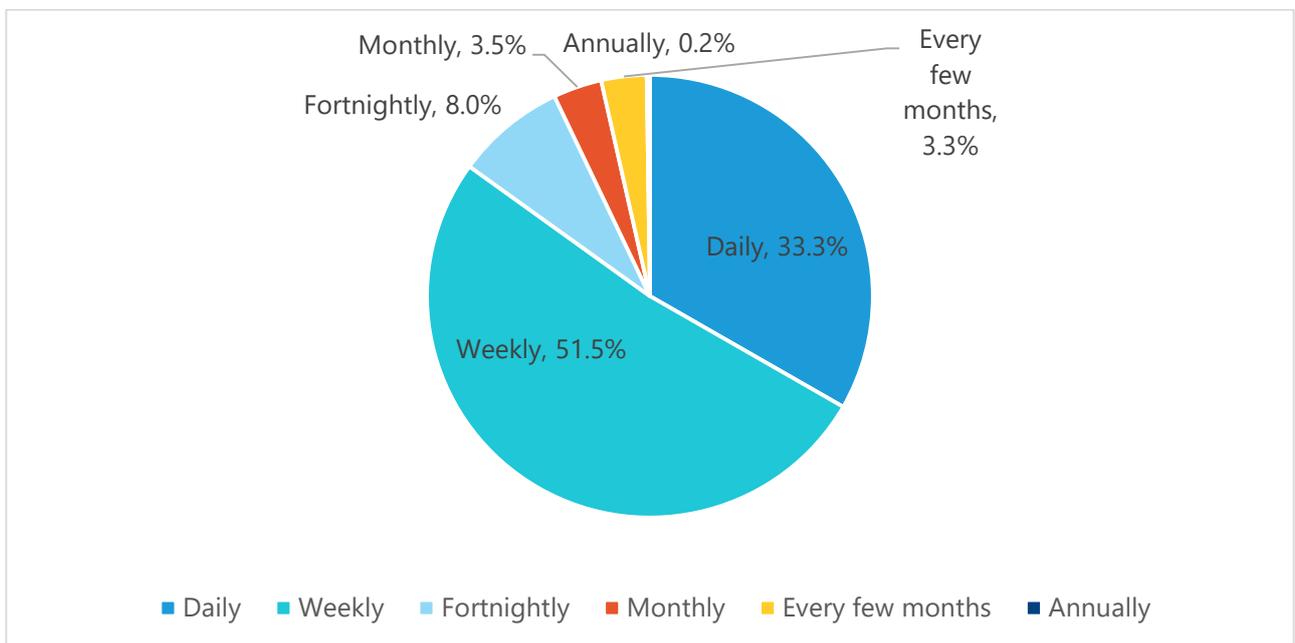
Total respondents=426

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



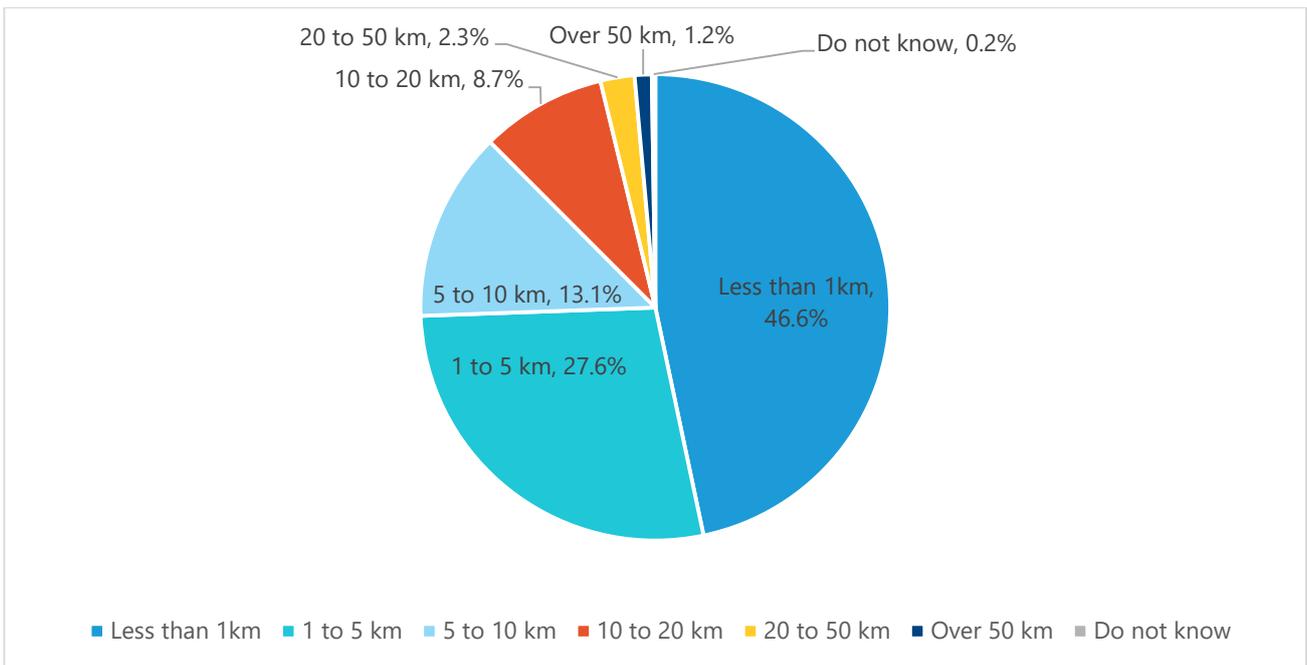
Total respondents=426

Figure 3: How often do you use them?



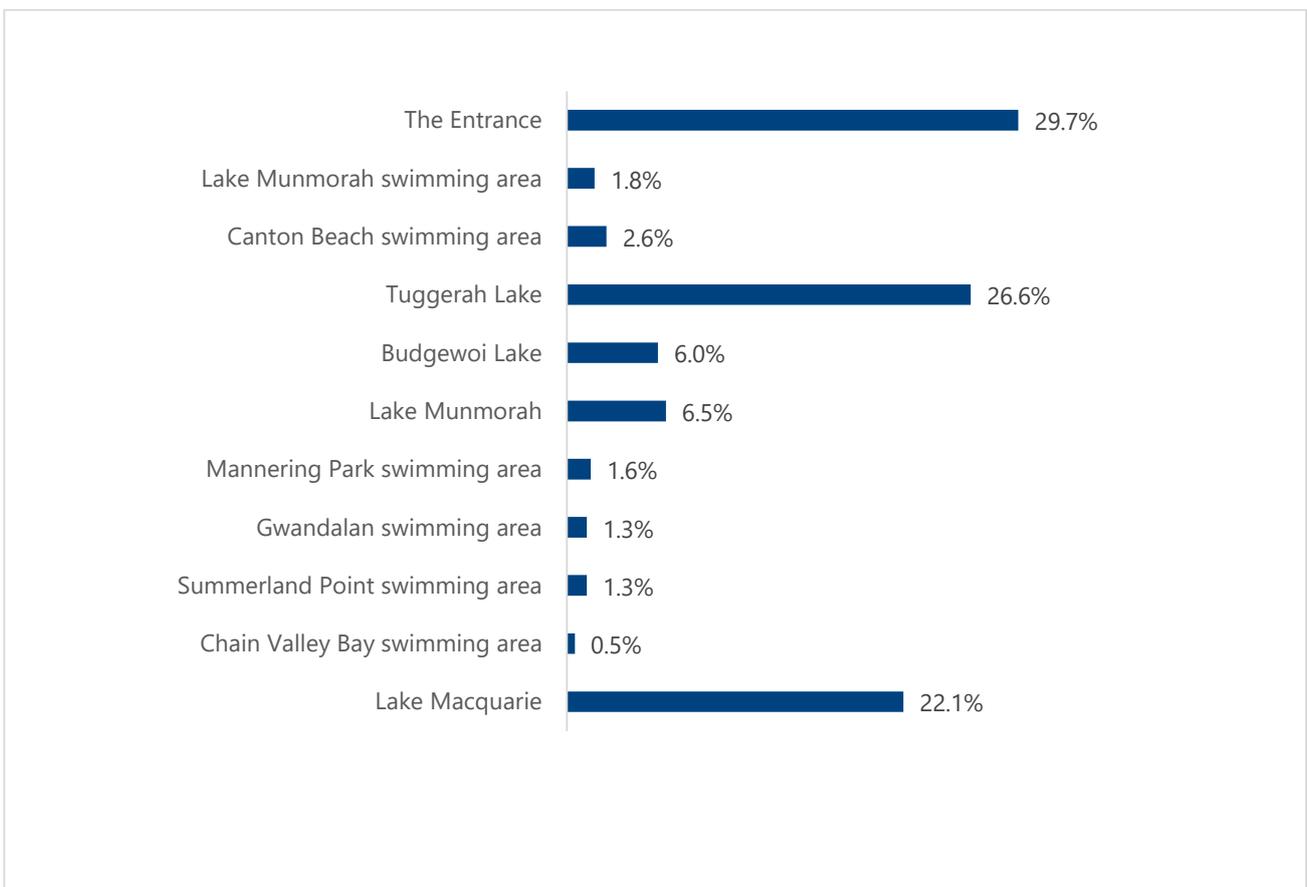
Total respondents=427

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



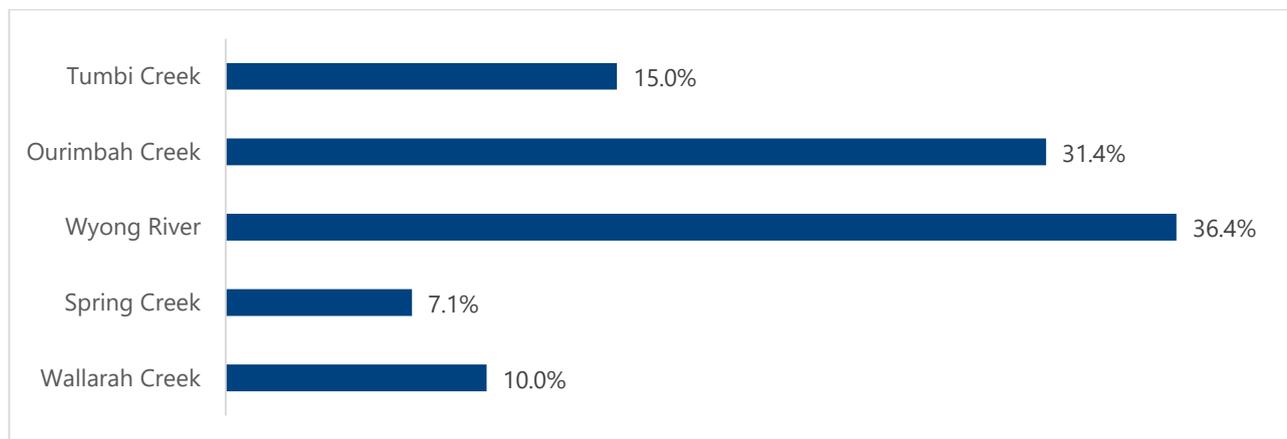
Total respondents=427

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



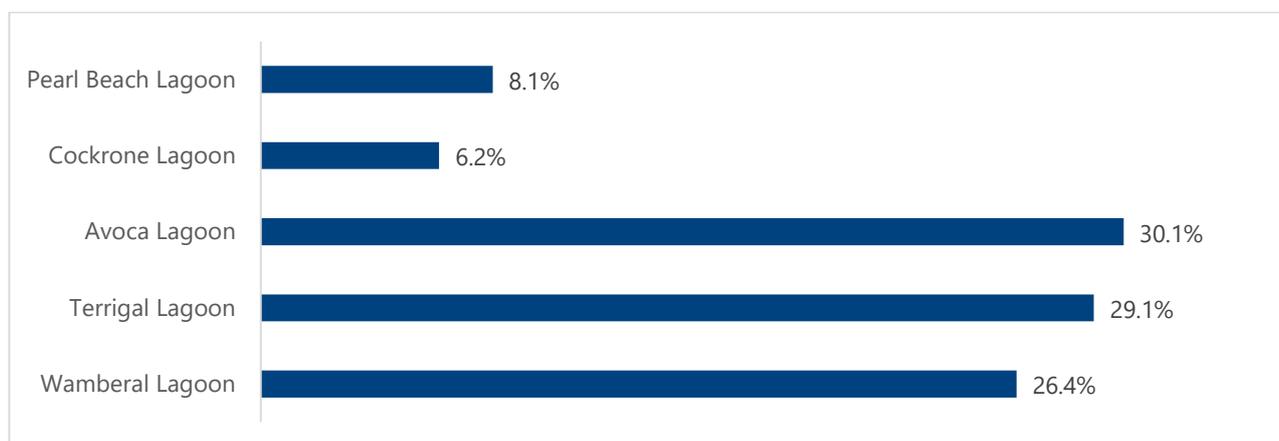
Total selections=384

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



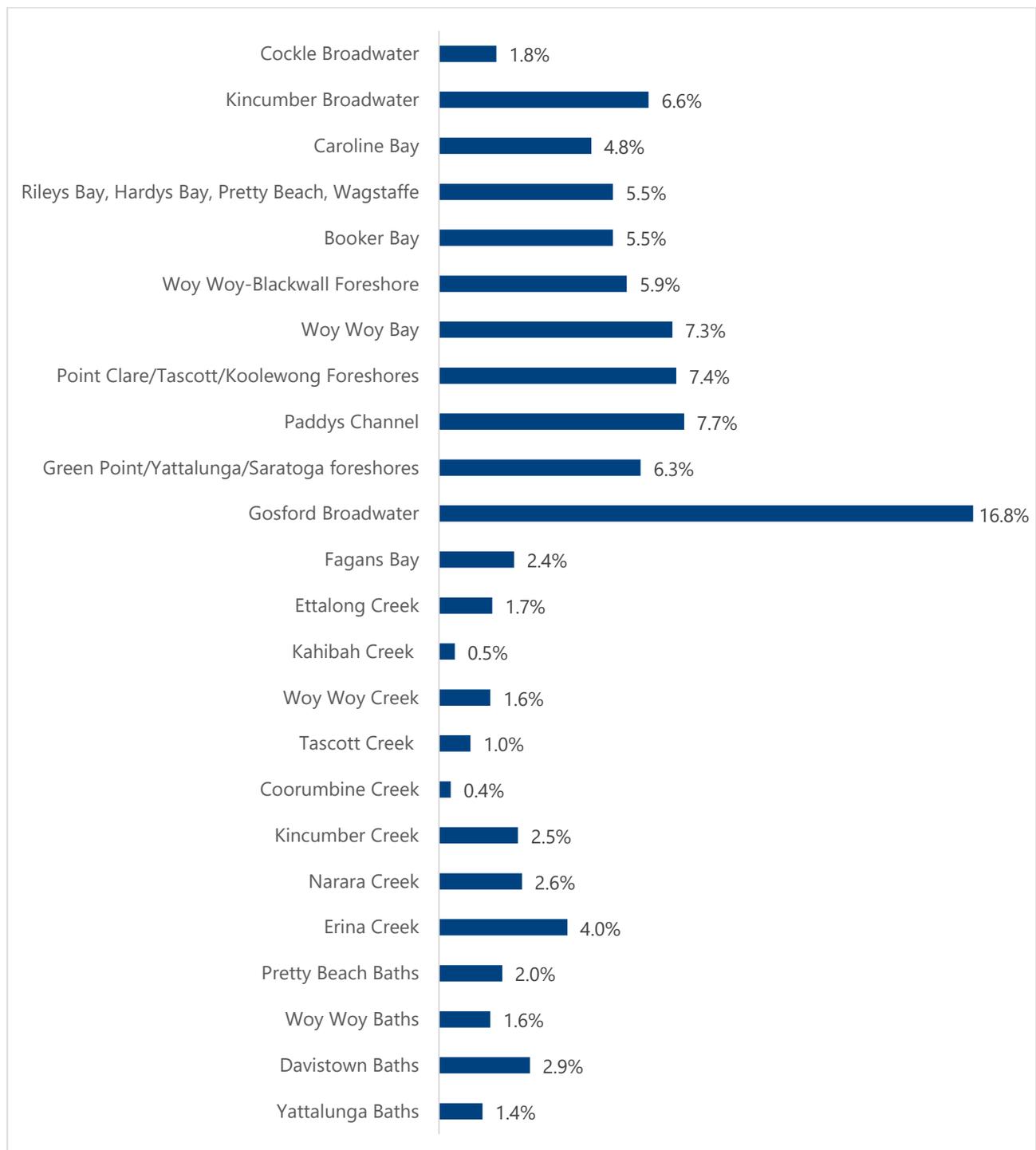
Total selections=140

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



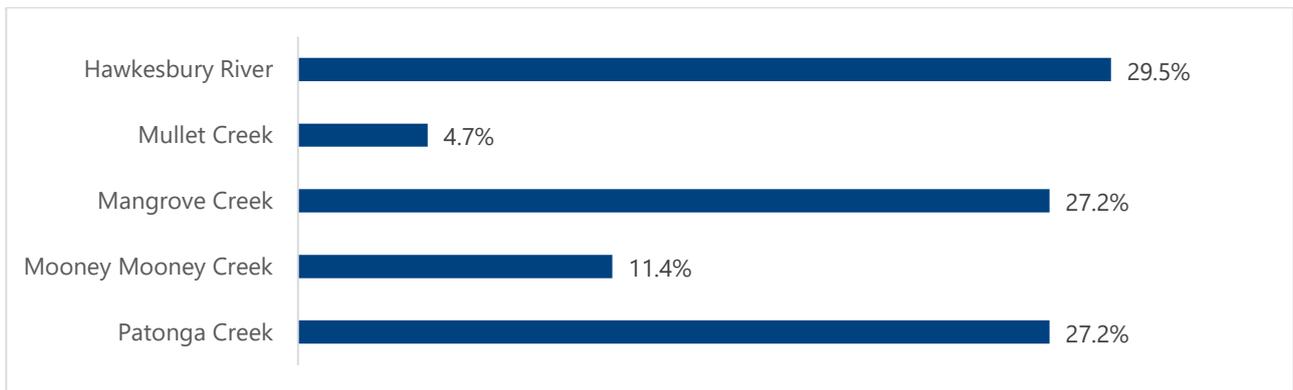
Total selections=481

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



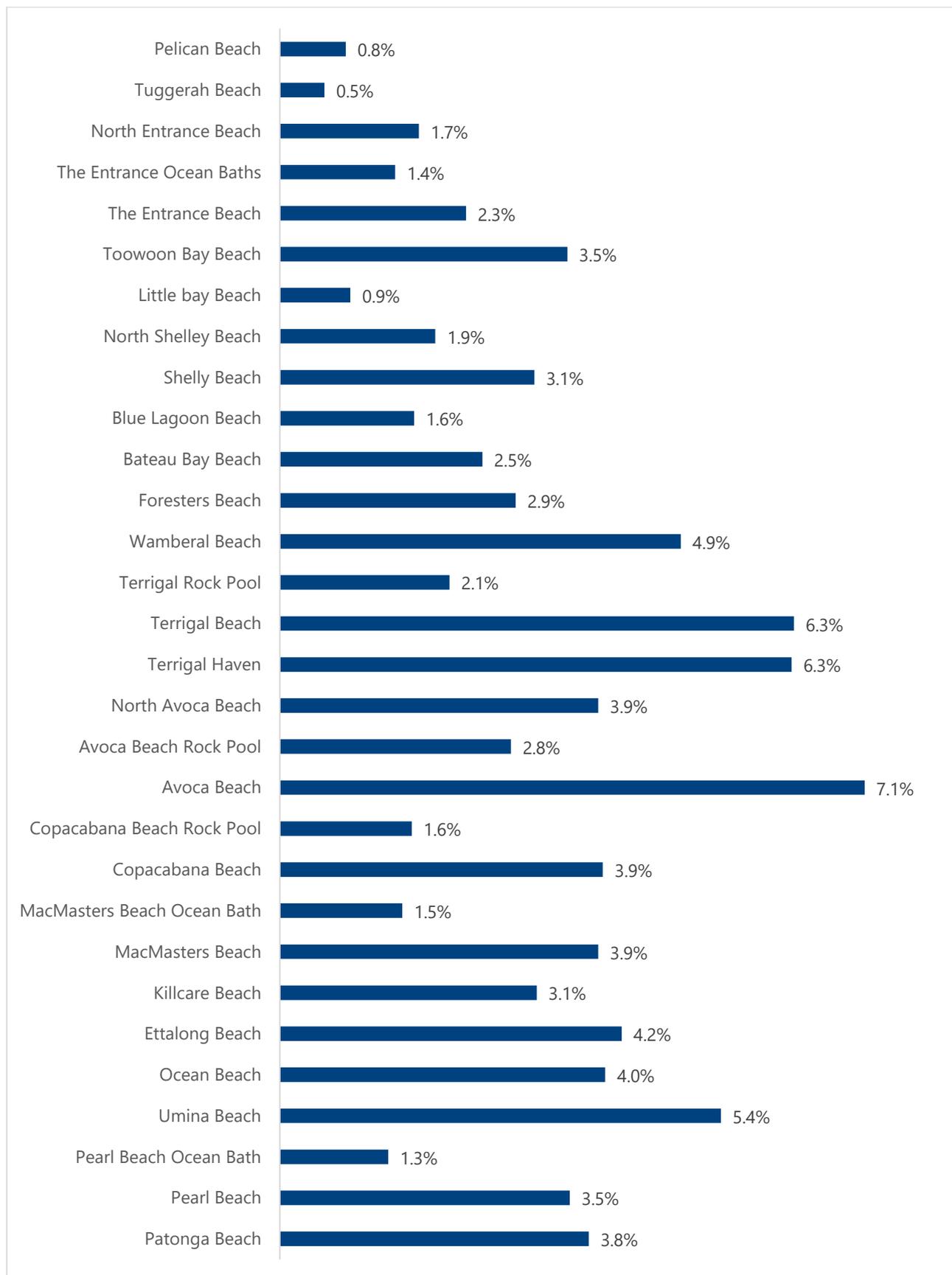
Total selections=1611

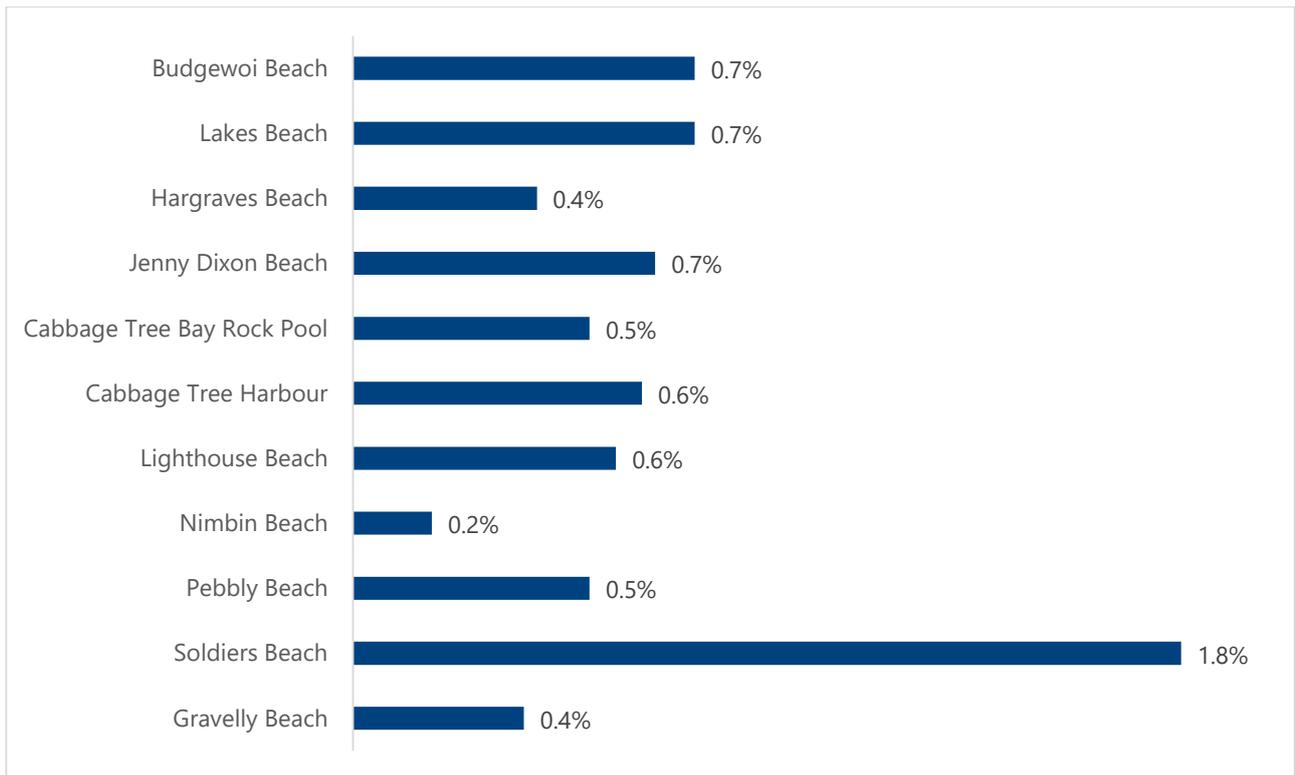
Figure 9: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Lower Hawkesbury River)



Total selections= 404

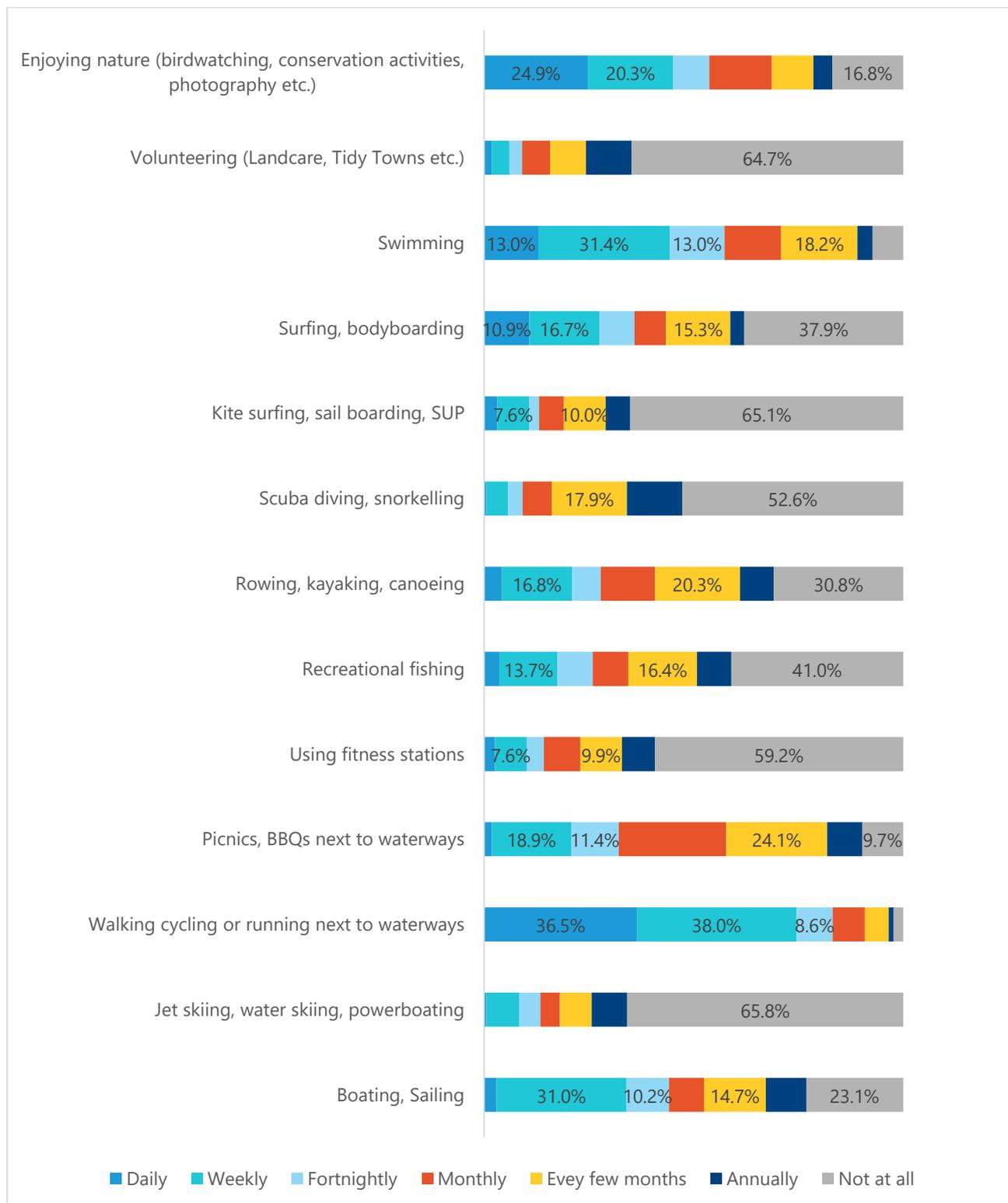
Figure 10: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Beaches)





Total selections= 3469

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:

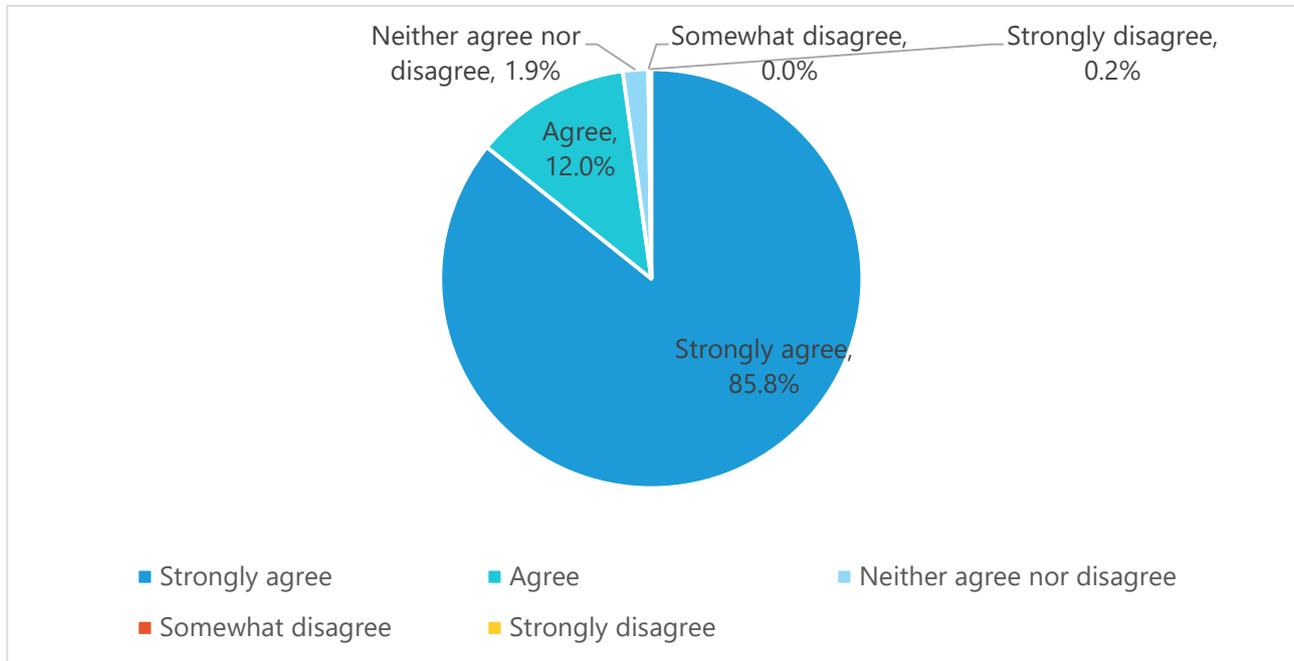


Maximum respondents= 97

Importance of Central Coast Waterways to you

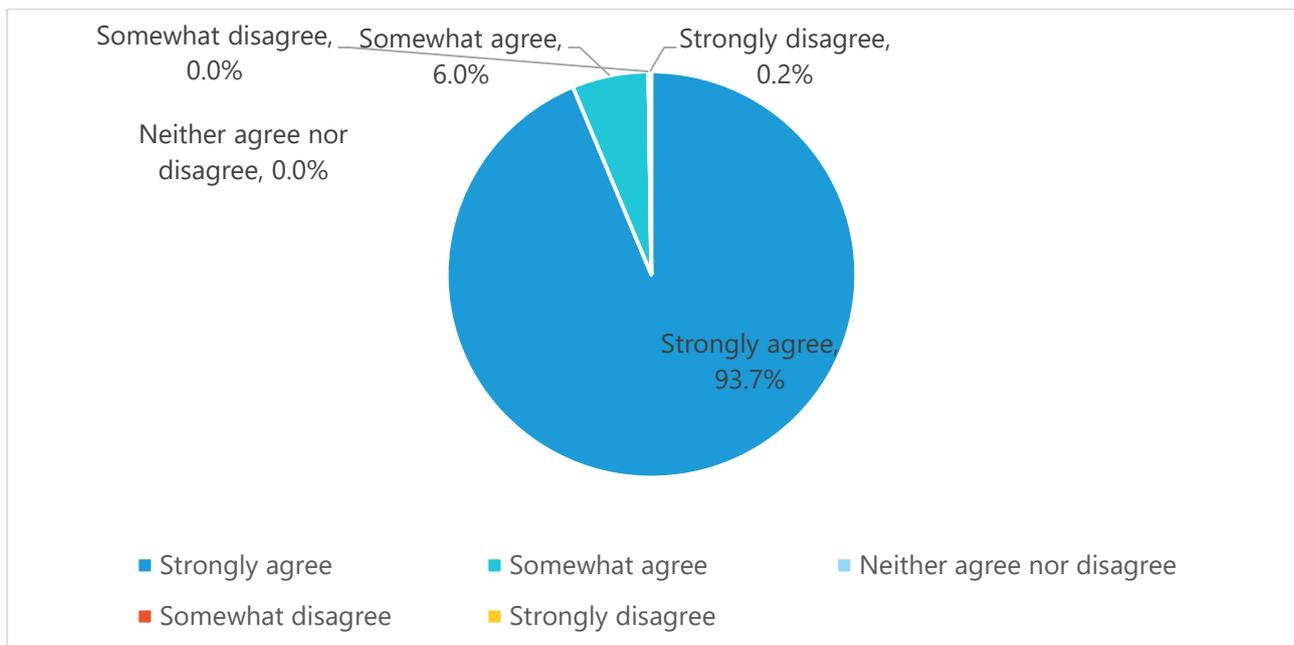
The statements presented in this section of the survey were designed to explore the views around the importance of Central Coast waterways both now and into the future.

Figure 12: Waterways are a significant reason I choose to live on the Central Coast.



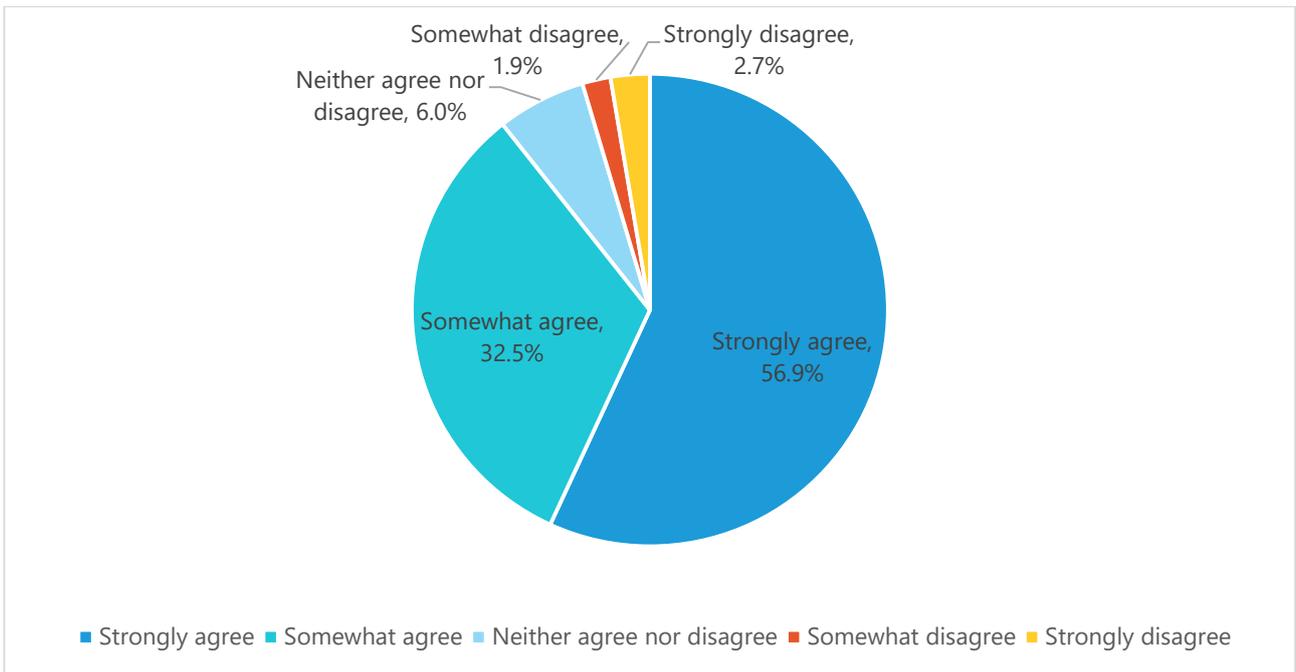
Total respondents=415

Figure 13: Waterways contribute to my personal health and wellbeing (e.g. fitness, relaxation, happiness, lifestyle, sense of place, cultural heritage).



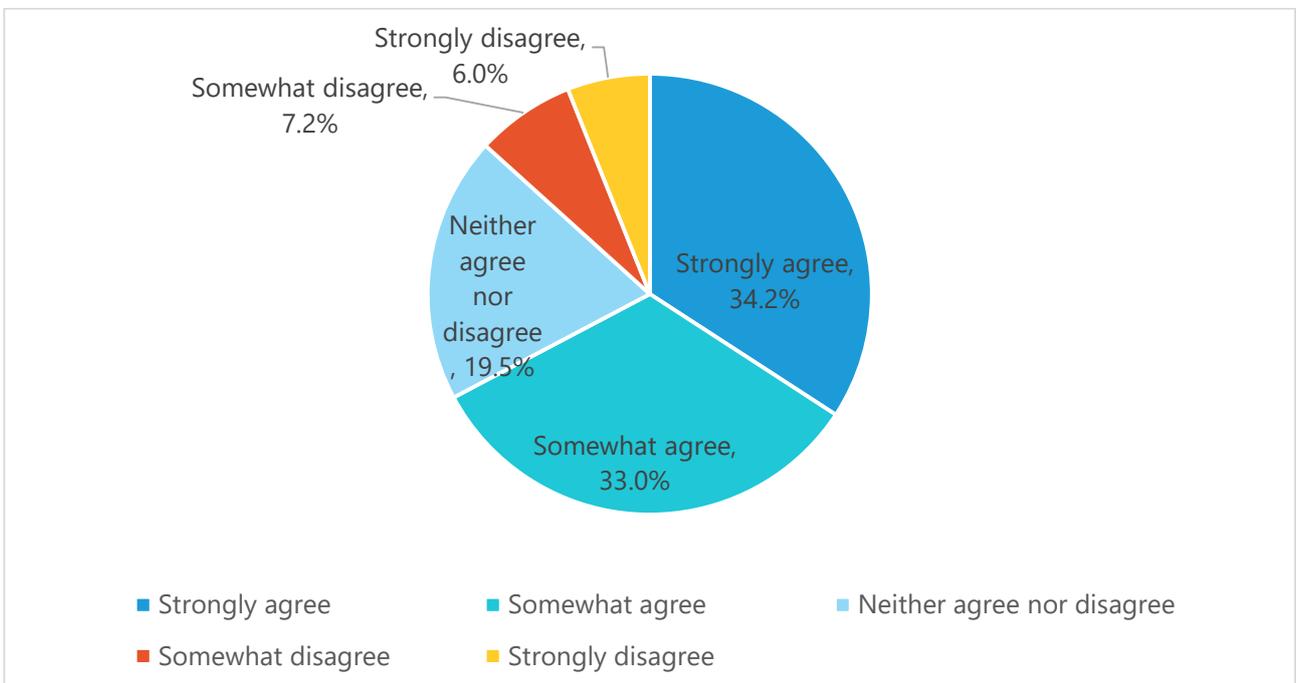
Total respondents=415

Figure 14: If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would reduce the frequency I visit and use waterways.



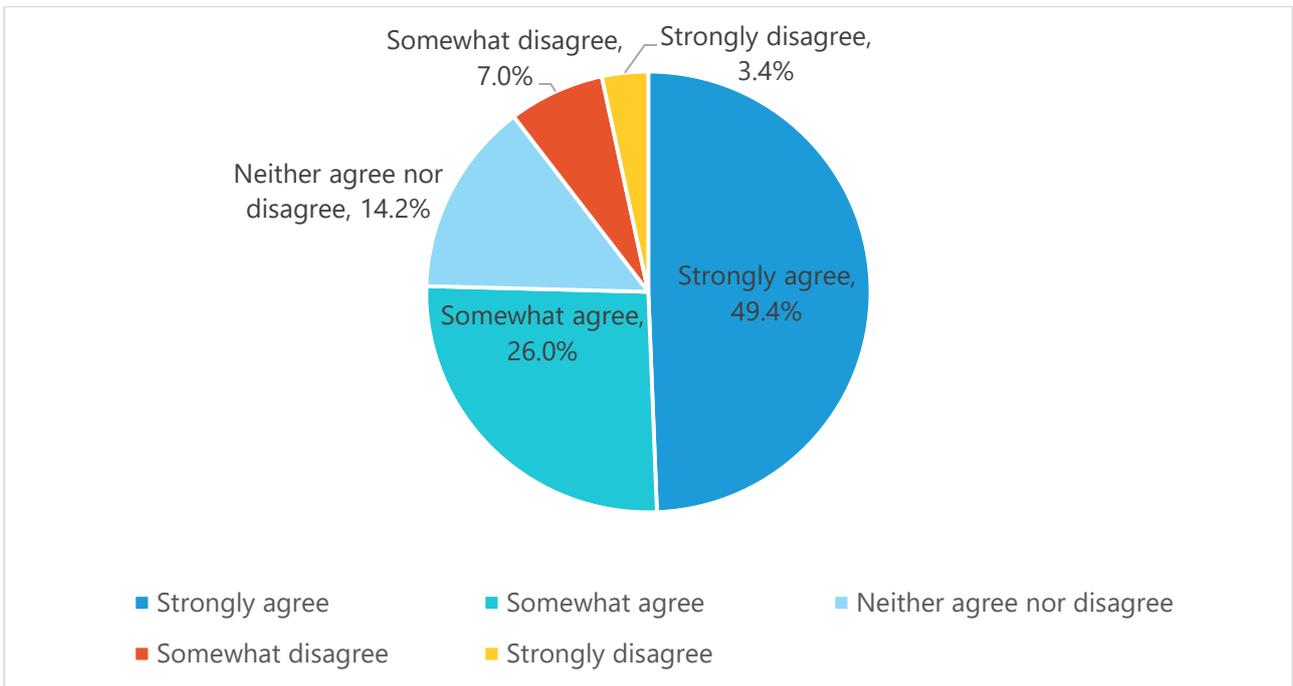
Total respondents=415

Figure 15: If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would consider moving from the Central Coast to another location.



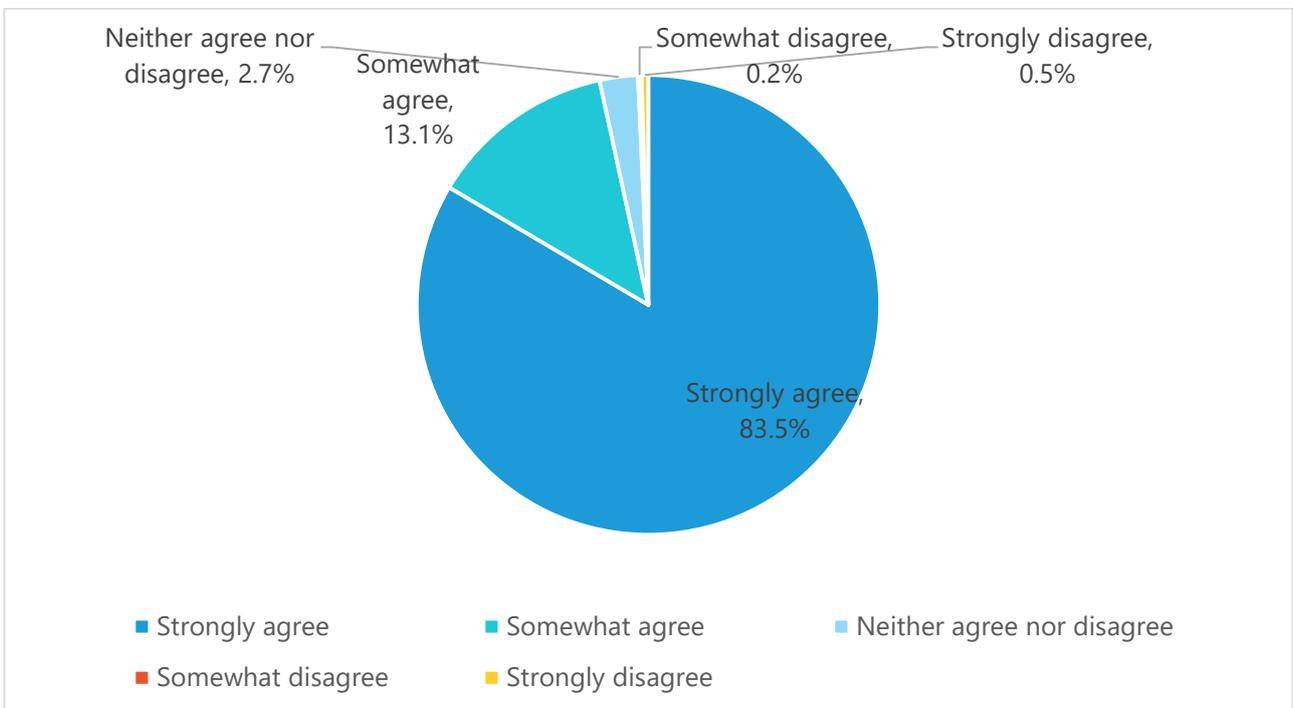
Total respondents=415

Figure 16: More should be done to enhance access to waterways (e.g. shared pathways, jetties, boat ramps etc).



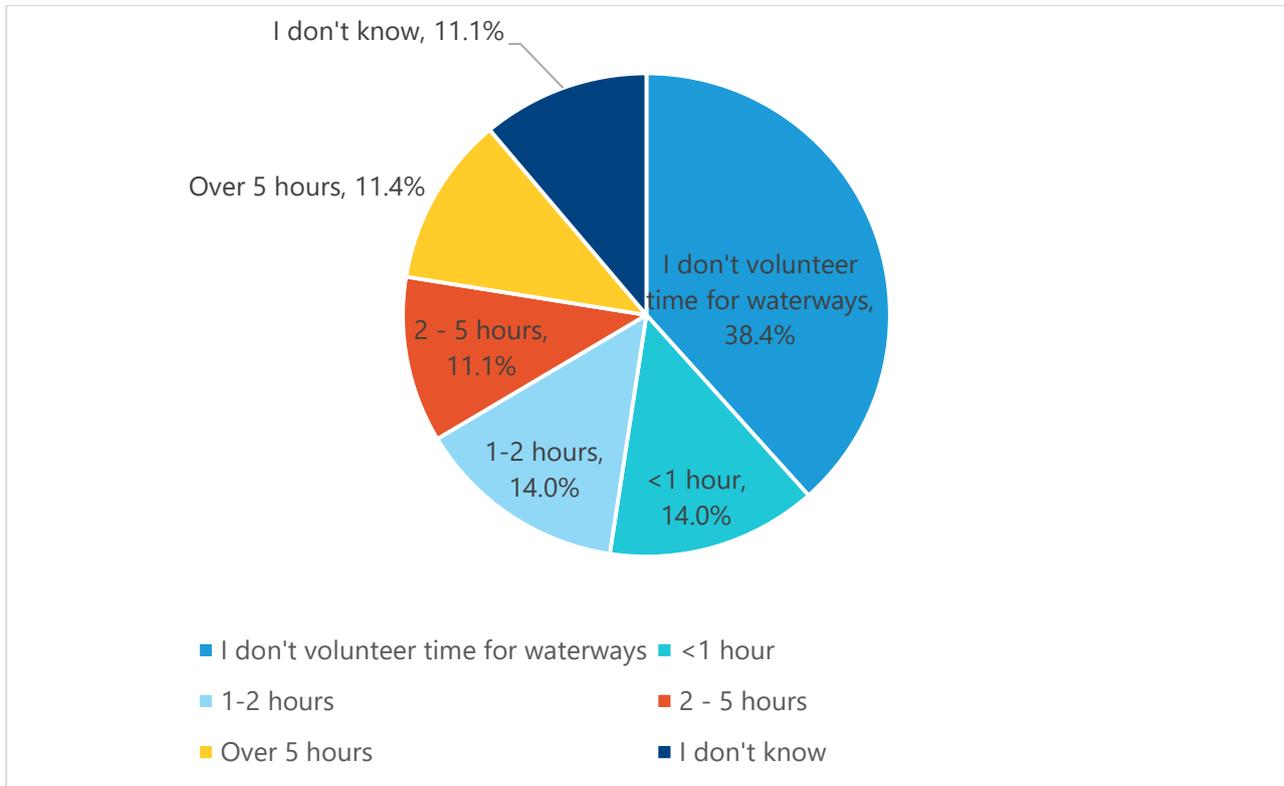
Total respondents=415

Figure 17: 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=413

Figure 18: 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).

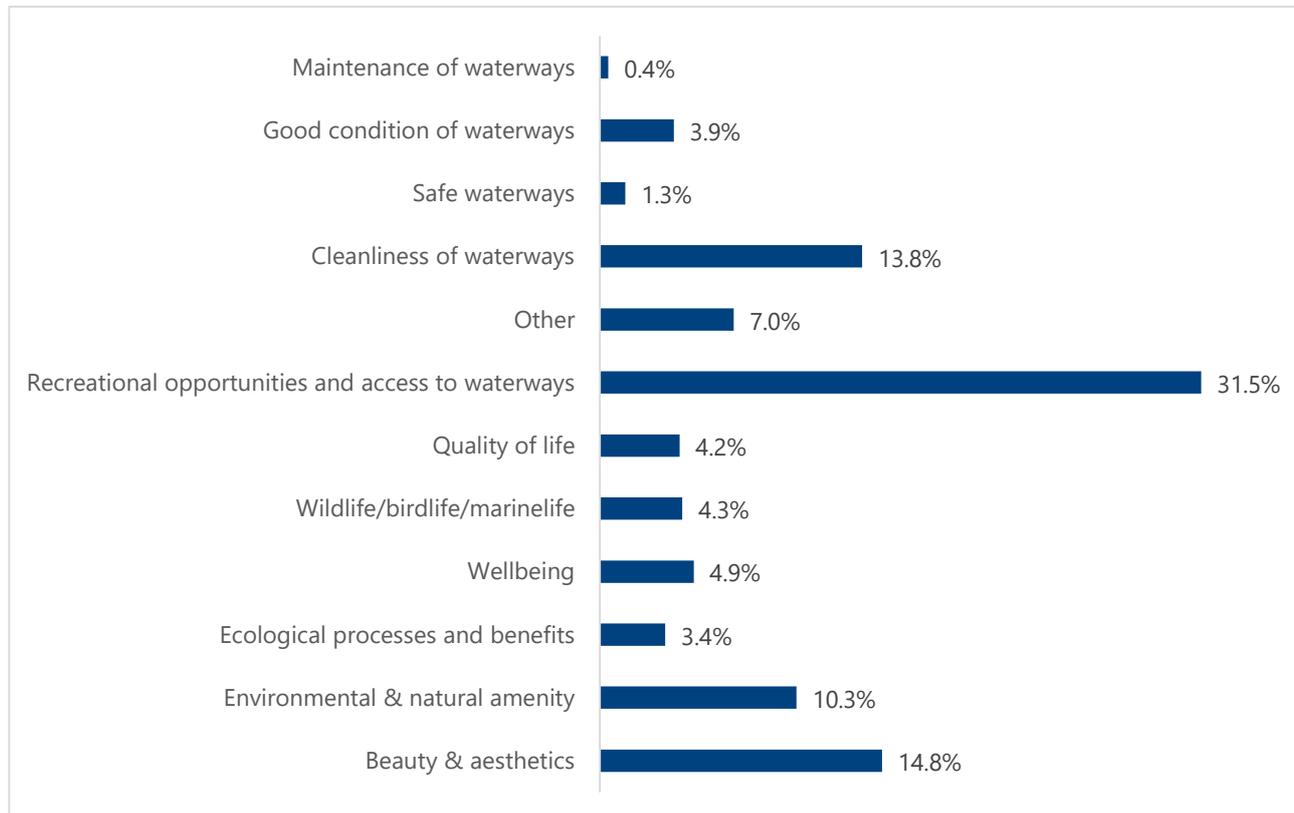


Total respondents=414

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

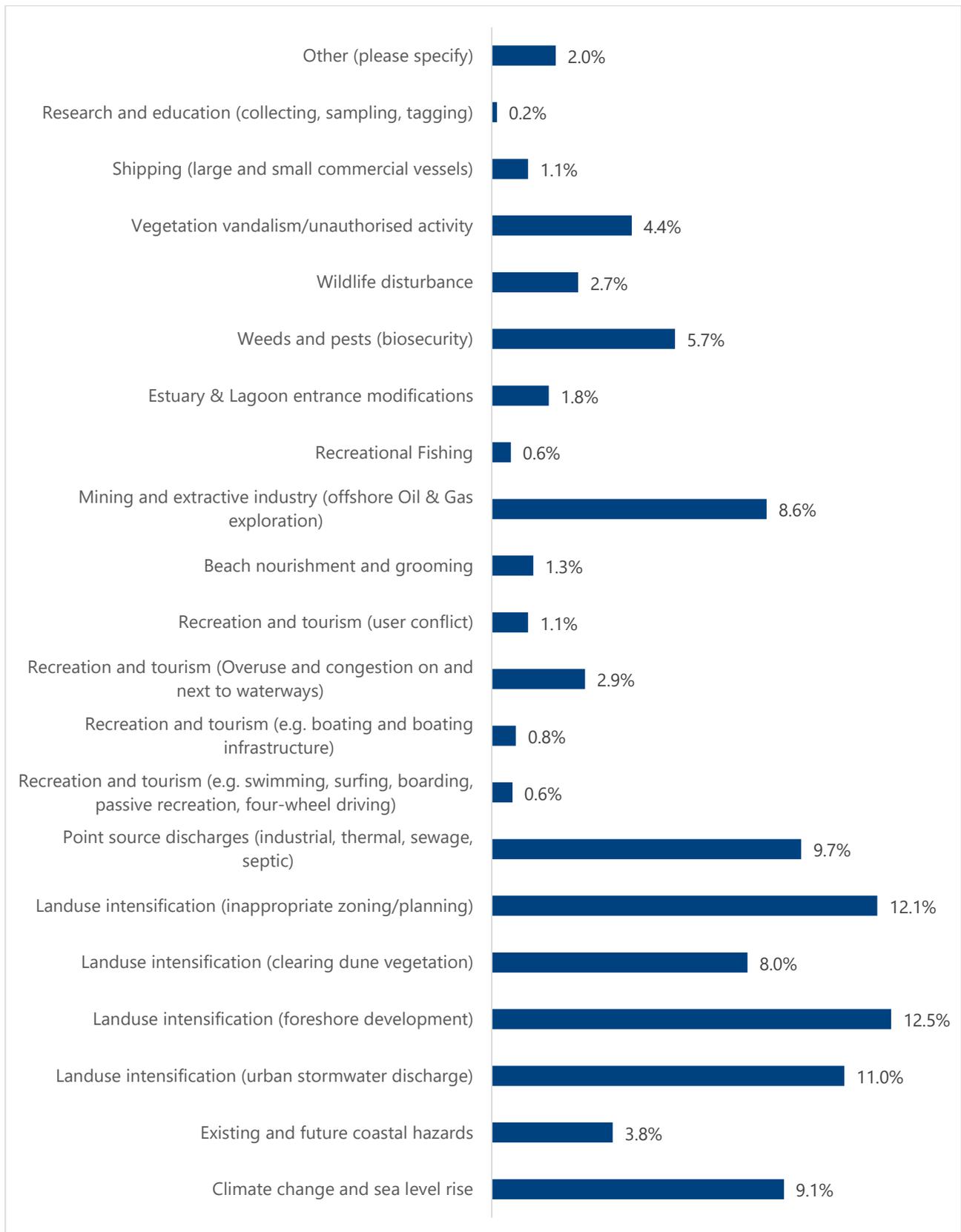


Codes applied=669

This question provided participants with the option to provide further comments. Below is an example of some of the comments received from those who indicated that they use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water (comments are presented *verbatim*):

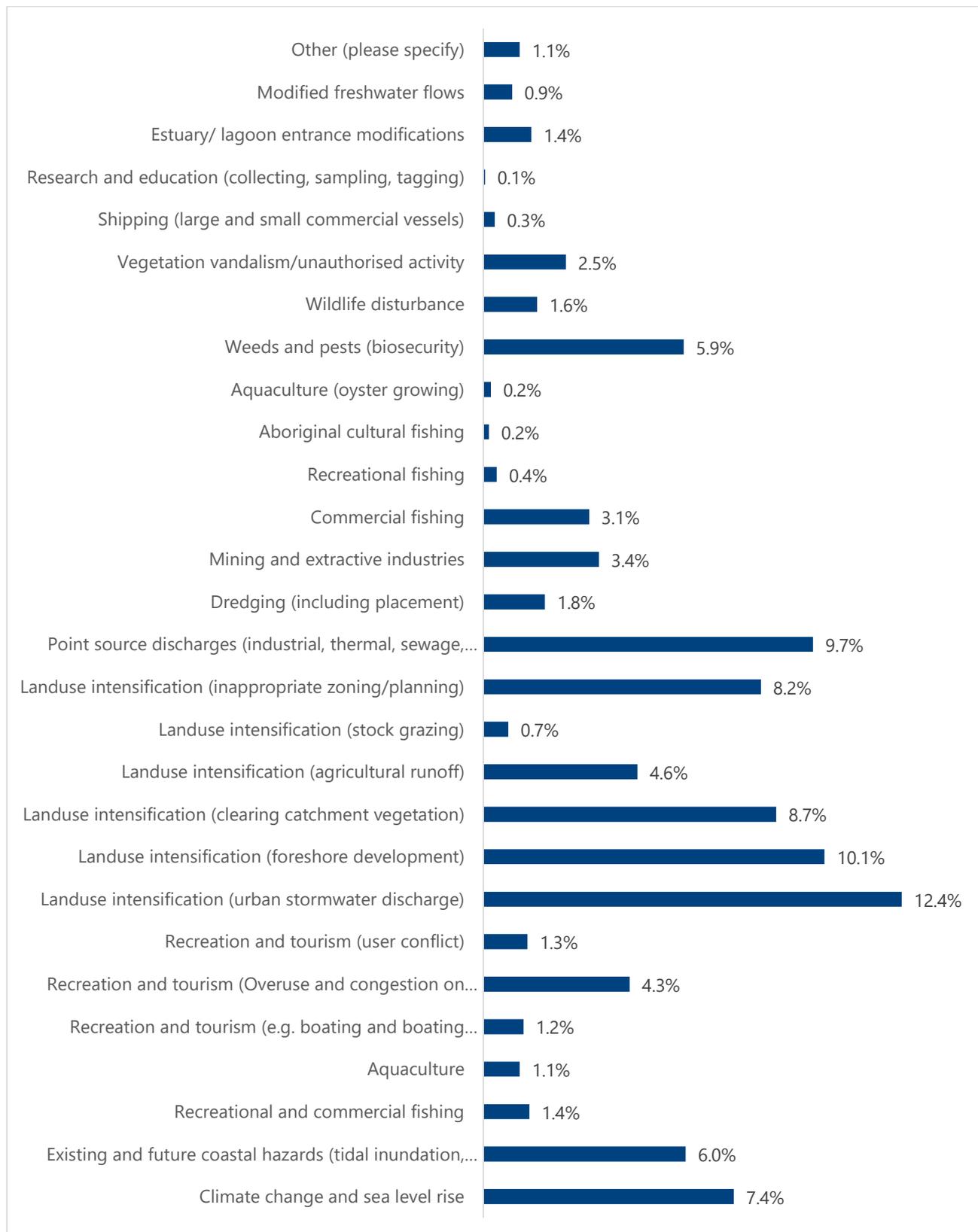
- Habitat, filtration of storm water by wetlands, scenic value, mental and physical importance, the lungs of the region.
- The beauty, the accessibility, the inherent health benefits, being part of a volunteer organisation (surf life saving), boating, swimming etc.
- Physical and mental well-being through exercise and relaxation activity using waterways.
- That they are fresh, clean and soul replenishing.
- The beauty, cleanliness, ease of access (eg., no paid parking), the variety of places to go, having the luxury of being able to enjoy the natural environment but still having amenities nearby and conveniences such as cafes, restaurants, showers, bathroom.
- The different places to swim and relax.
- Interacting with nature.

Figure 20: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast beaches.



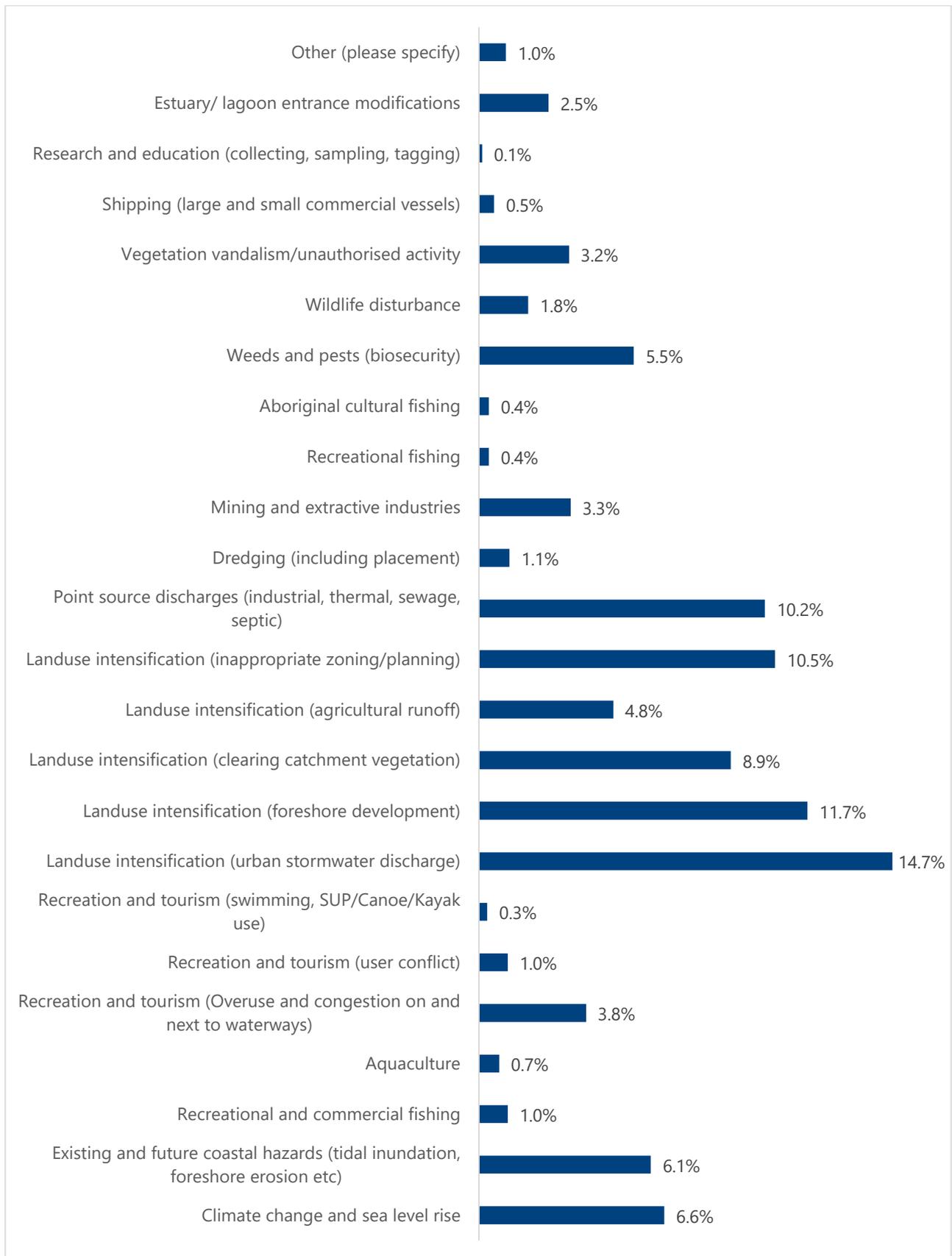
Total selections=1850

Figure 21: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast lakes & estuaries.



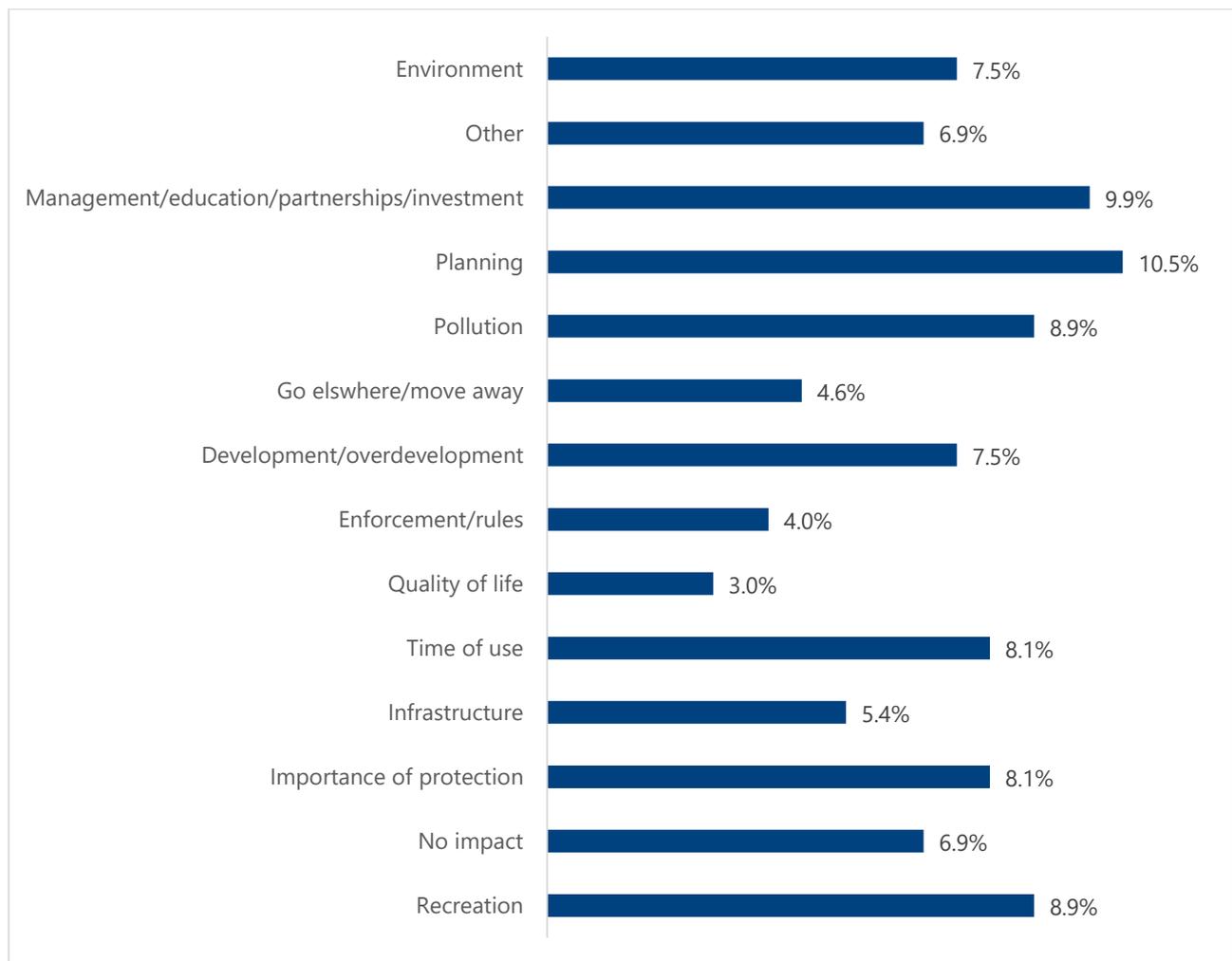
Total selections=1754

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



Total selections=1654

Figure 23: 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=496

This question provided participants with the option to provide further comments. Below is an example of some of the comments received from those who indicated that they use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water (comments are presented *verbatim*):

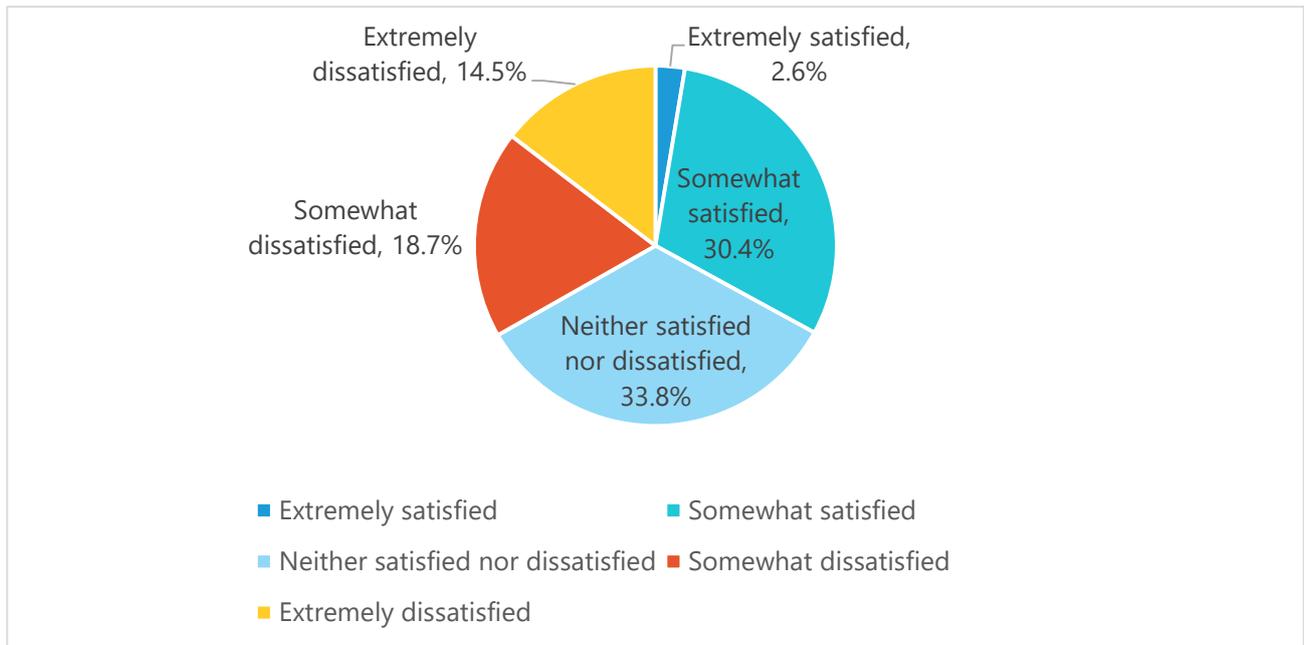
- Unsure how these extra people will be able to move/live/work around the Central coast especially on the peninsula given the lack of infrastructure and the physical restrictions of the geography of the area. Population growth is not a sustainable form of economic development. It will physically restrict peoples' use of waterways as there simply will not be enough room for everyone.
- All the more reason to protect the waterways now.
Set out rules for use of our waterways and implement them.
Be scrupulously careful when approving any DA's near or around waterways and trace pollutants back to their source.
Impose hefty fines which will act as a deterrent (although publicity of the heavy fine is a greater deterrent for others).
Encourage "dobbing" of commercial and domestic dumping by protecting your sources.

- I can't see how we can prevent population growth so we have to implement systems which retain urban run off and implement better systems of sewage treatment. But we must also protect all our natural areas.
- Use less as competing with more user groups, change time of day/week when using, go away from coast during school holidays to avoid peak use times.
- We need to have many cleaned up swimming areas so the population can diversify and not all congregate at a few beaches. The population need to be made aware of what they can and cannot do to help maintain these waterways, and a helpline to go to if they notice anything that needs to be brought to your attention (this is when they are clear on what they cannot do).
- There may be a significant decrease in water quality and catchment and foreshore management needs. Less people will want to live near and use the waterways due to the decline.
- As the population rises and anthropogenic impacts increase, I will probably use or enjoy the waterways less. As wetland and riparian habitats degrade so will the value I place on them.

Management of Central Coast waterways

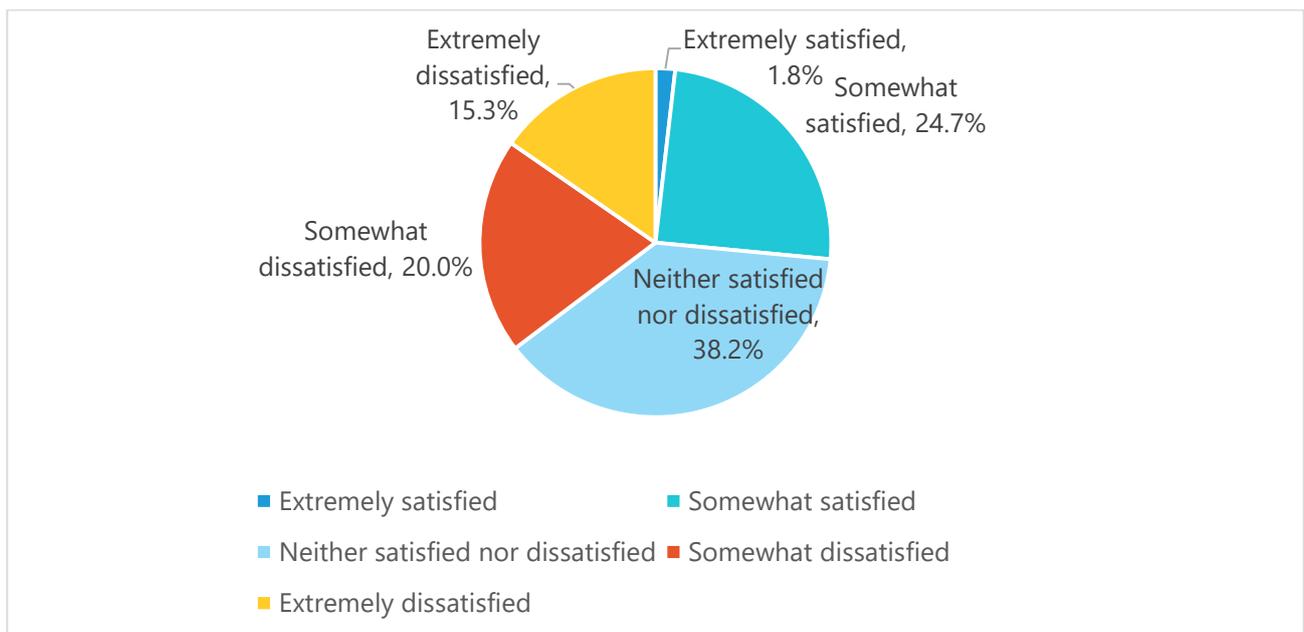
The statements presented in this section of the survey were designed to explore the level of satisfaction relating to the management of Central Coast waterways.

Figure 24: Over the last 3 years, how satisfied are you with the improvement of beaches (including the dunes, rocky shores and lagoons)?



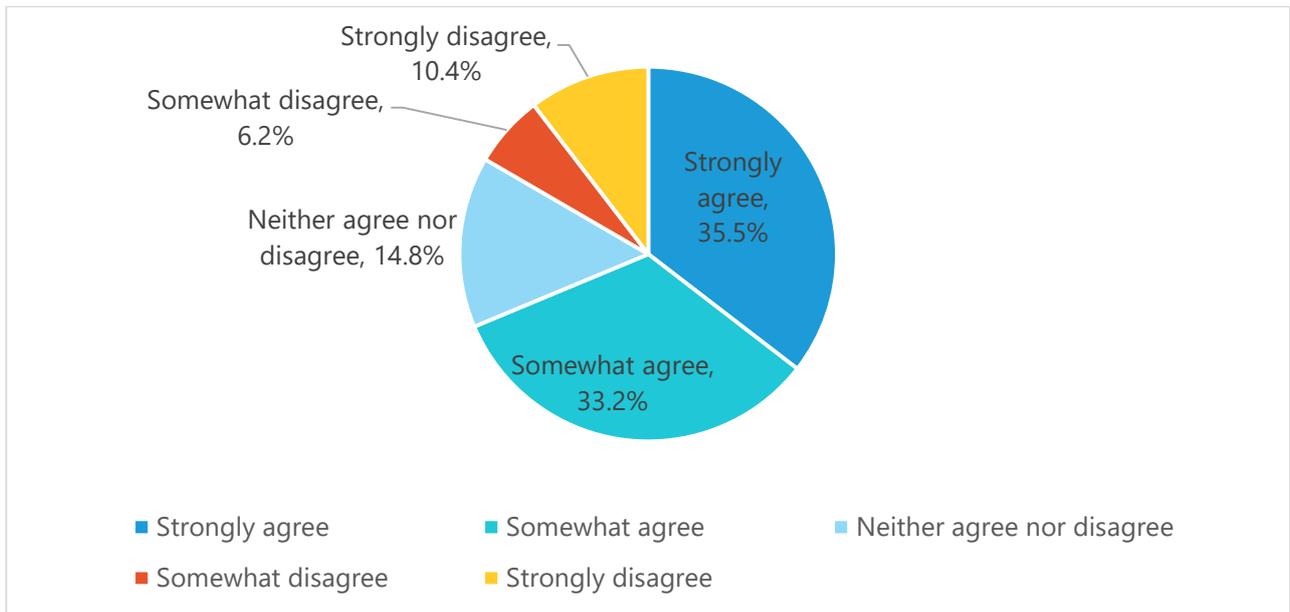
Total respondents=385

Figure 25: Over the last 3 years, how satisfied are you with the improvement of lakes, estuaries and lagoons (including foreshores, rivers, creeks and catchments)?



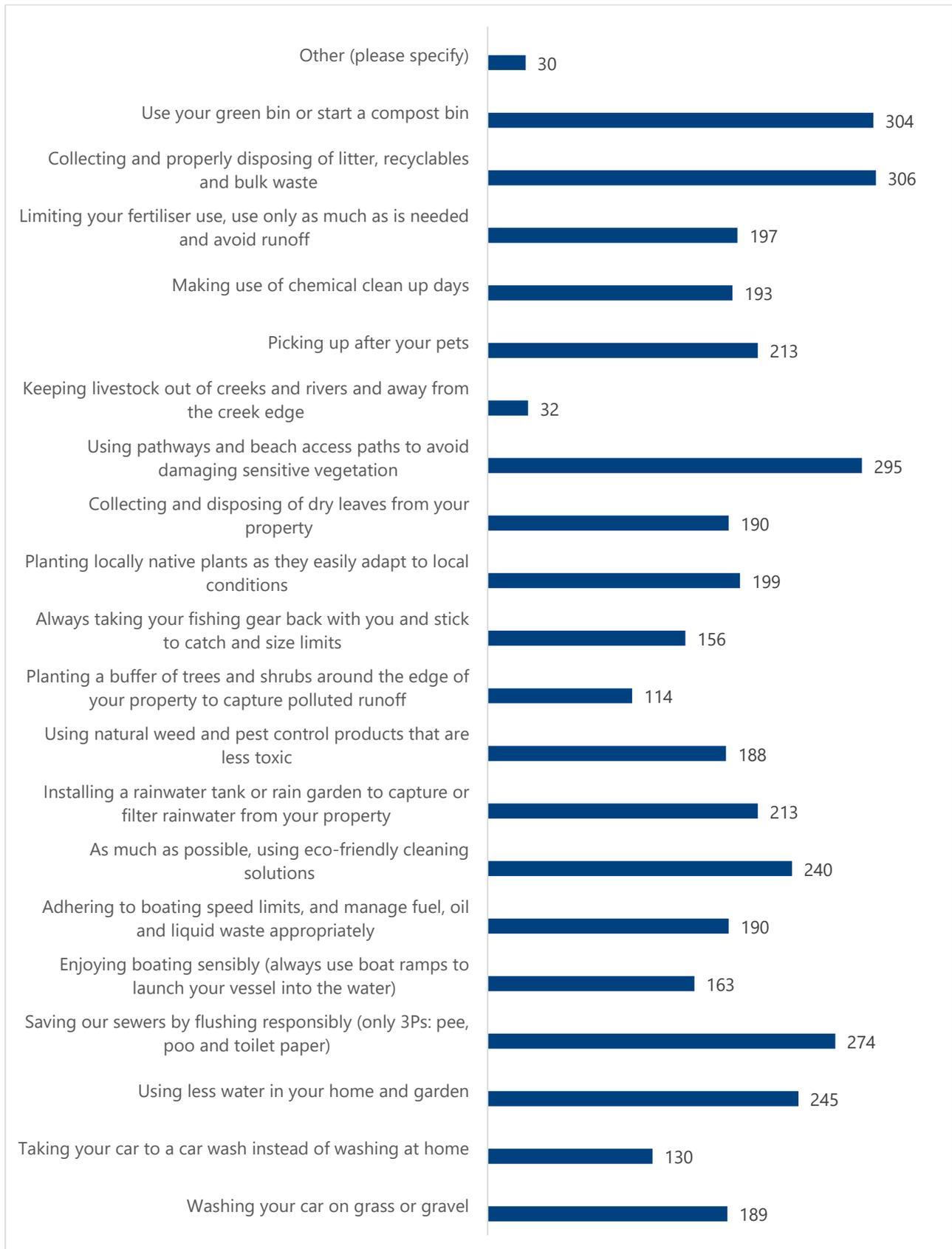
Total respondents=385

Figure 26: 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.



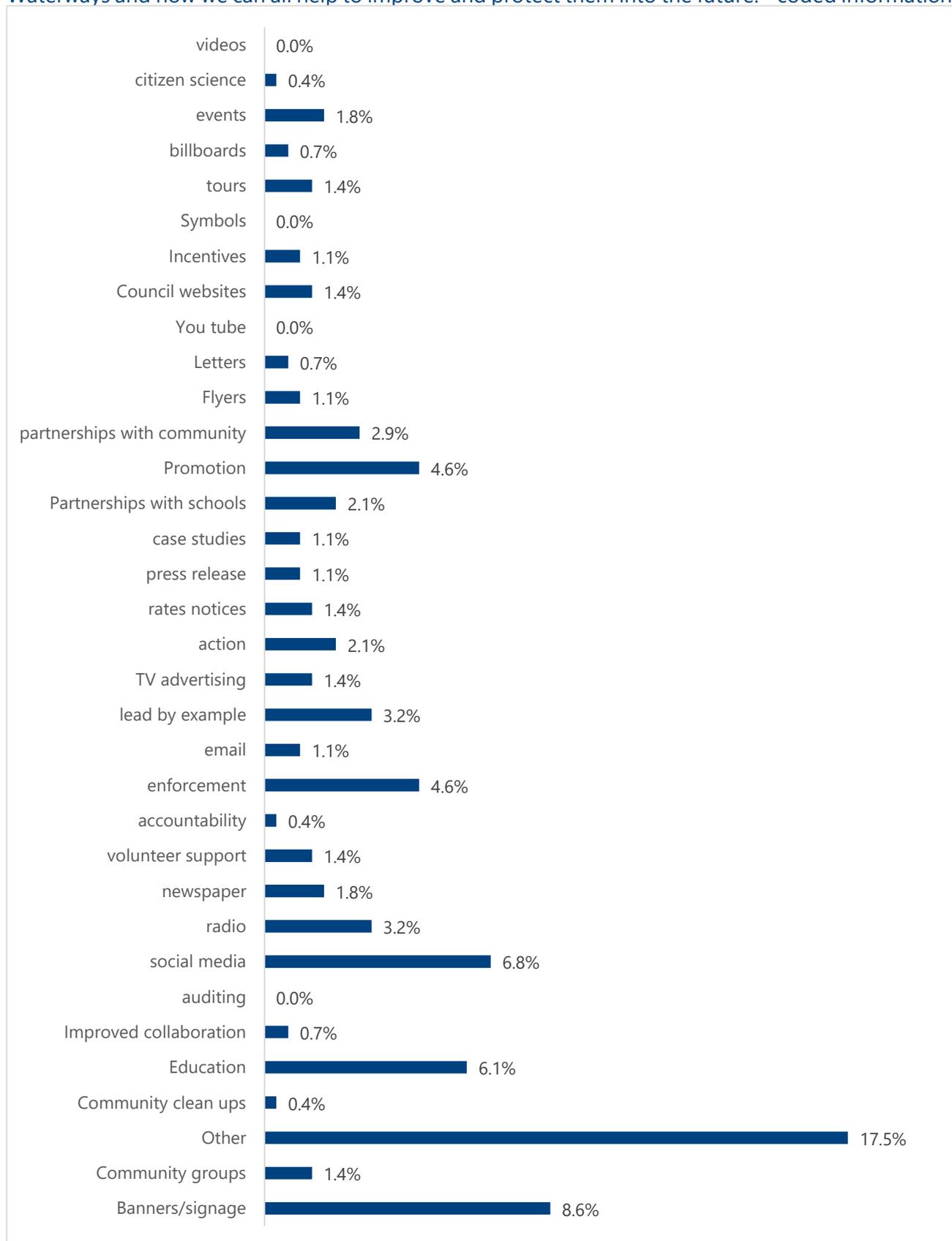
Total respondents=386

Figure 27: 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=4061

Figure 28: 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

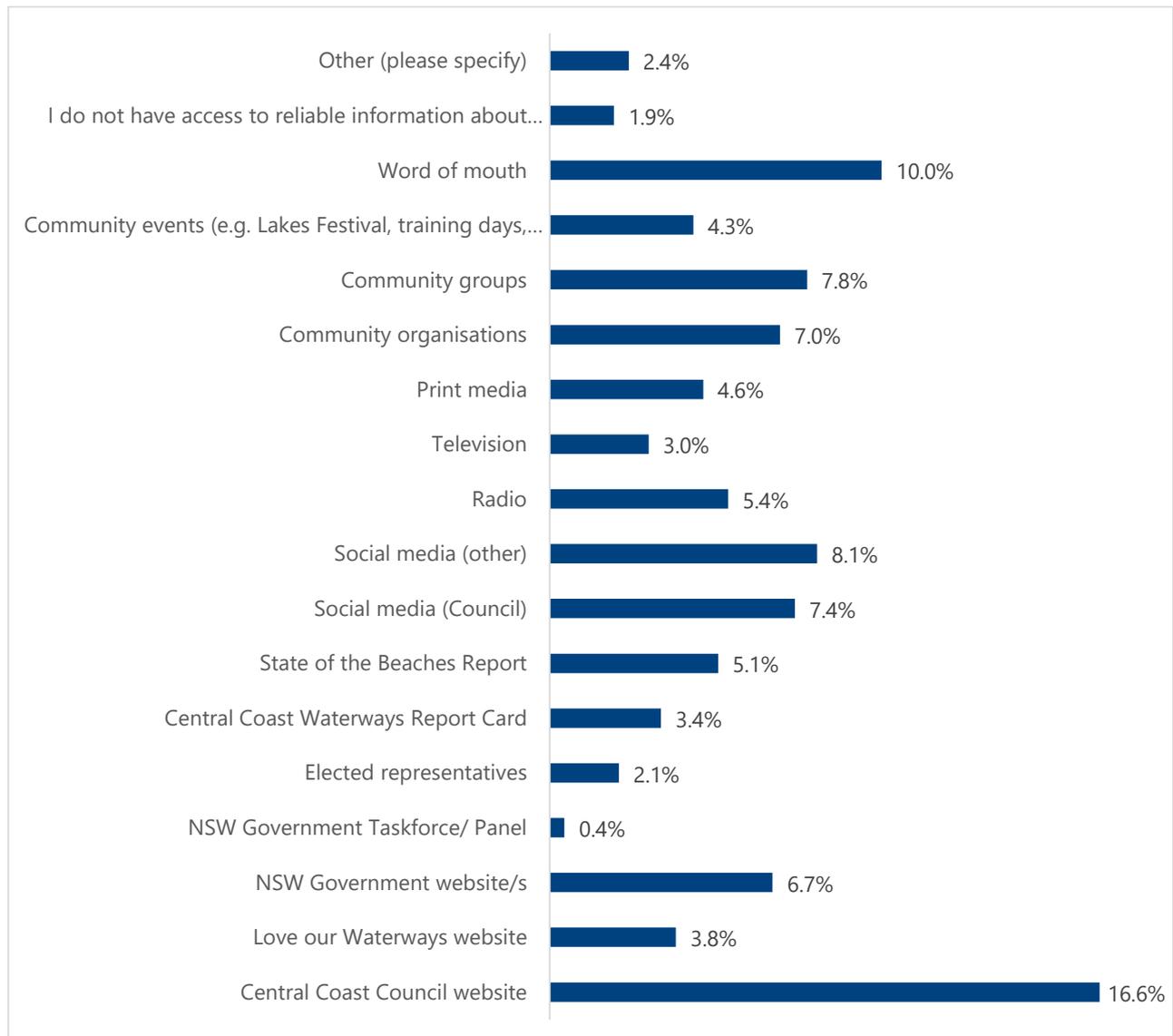


Codes applied=280

This question provided participants with the option to provide further comments. Below is an example of some of the comments received from those who indicated that they use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water (comments are presented *verbatim*):

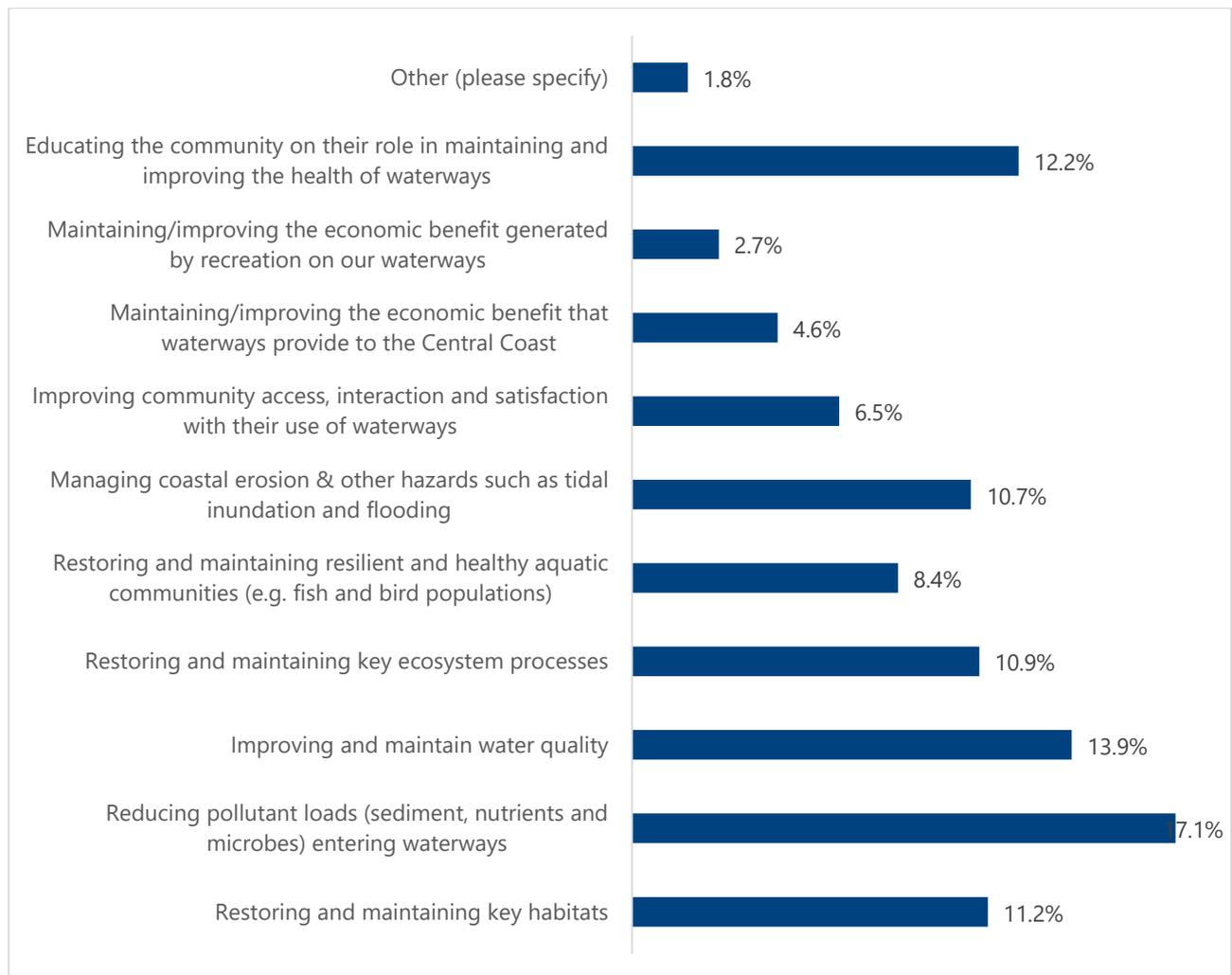
- Signs that can be changed along foreshore areas. QR codes with information about the area and the restrictions there.
- Radio, Channel 417 Newcastle and central Coast news Channel, the local papers, Administrator's weekly message, activities for the waterways and guest speakers.
- Teach children about pollution & biodiversity. Community participation programs and encourage volunteering.
- I'm a fan of email - because I don't have to remember to visit a website or FB page. Present material is too glossy.
- TV advertising, local signage at beaches, lagoons etc and use of surf clubs and other council facilities as billboards promoting care of waterways.

Figure 29: When looking for information about Central Coast Waterways, where do you look?



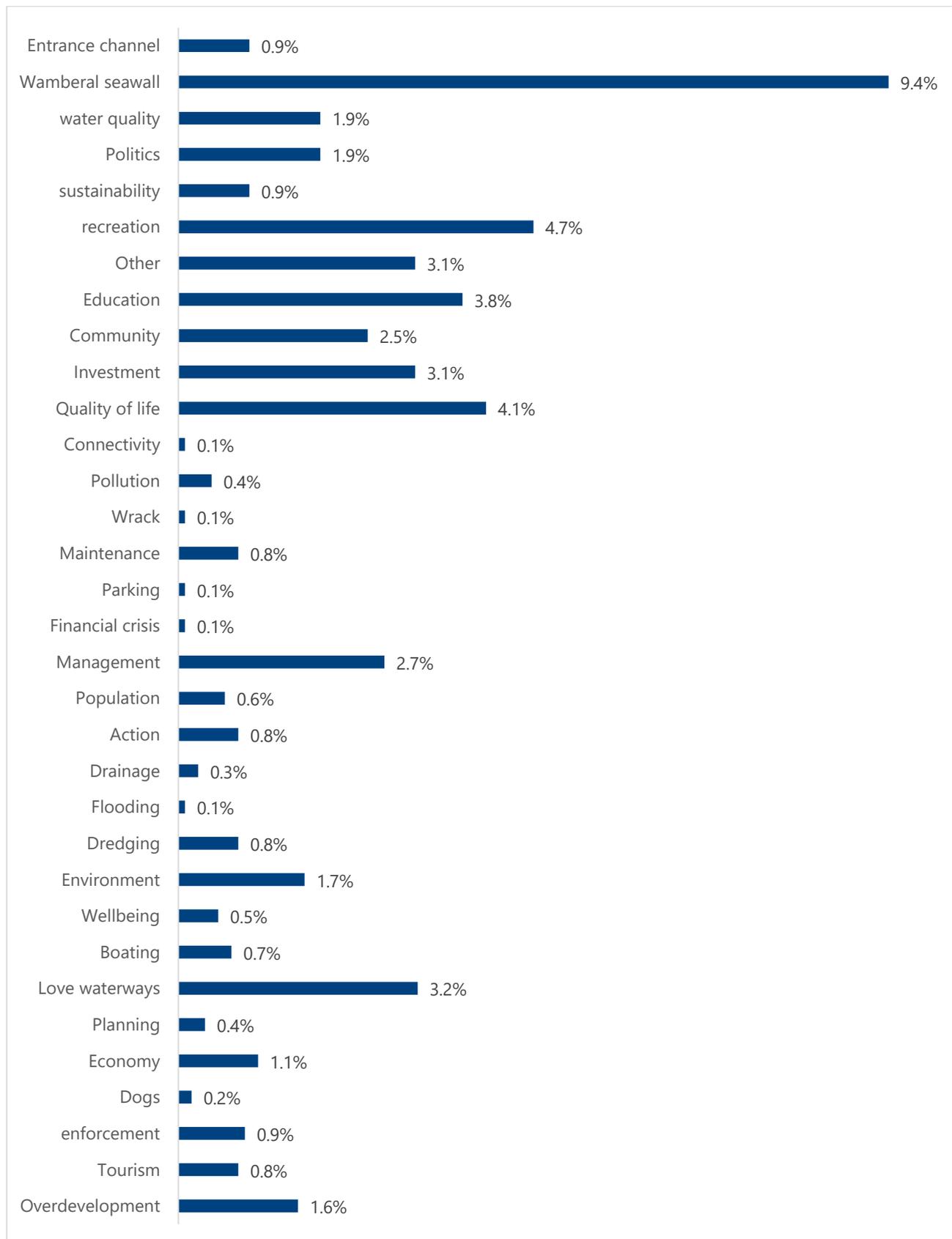
Total selections=1338

Figure 30: What should the focus areas for the Coastal Management Programs (CMP) be? *Participants could select up to 3.*



Total selections=1133

Figure 31: Do you have any further comments about the importance of waterways on the Central Coast? – coded information

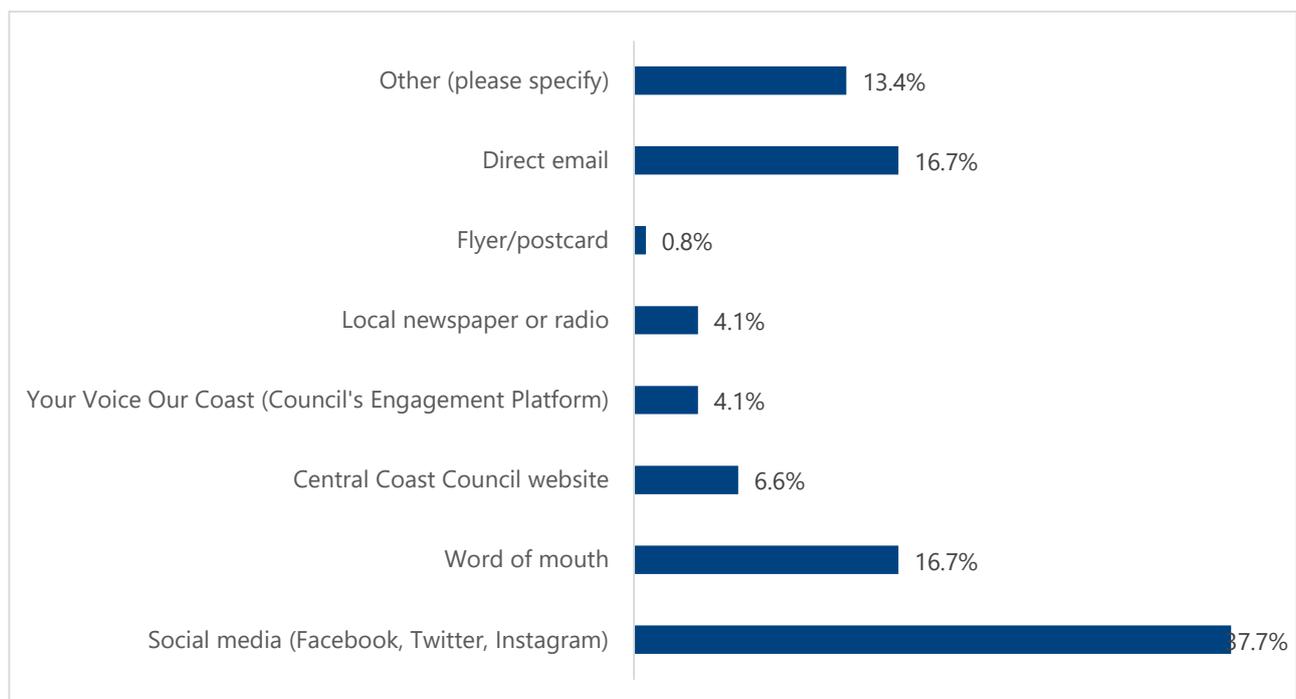


Codes applied=318

This question provided participants with the option to provide further comments. Below is an example of some of the comments received from those who indicated that they use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water (comments are presented *verbatim*):

- If you don't have a healthy water way 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.
- If the water is maintained to a high quality, bird and fish life will thrive, the ecosystem will thrive, and tourism will follow suit. Planning is the key - no unrealistic DA approval especially when considering climate change, tracing of pollutants back to the source and prevention of future contaminants by forward thinking.
Transparency in the decision making process is also a biggie.....justice and fairness must not only be done; it must be seen to be done.
- Just do what is necessary....no excuses.
- It's absolutely vital to keep them healthy but it's going to be difficult with the projected population explosion. Can't we cap it?
- The way our waterways links 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 emphasis the importance of the Central Coast waterways.

Figure 32: How did you hear about this survey?

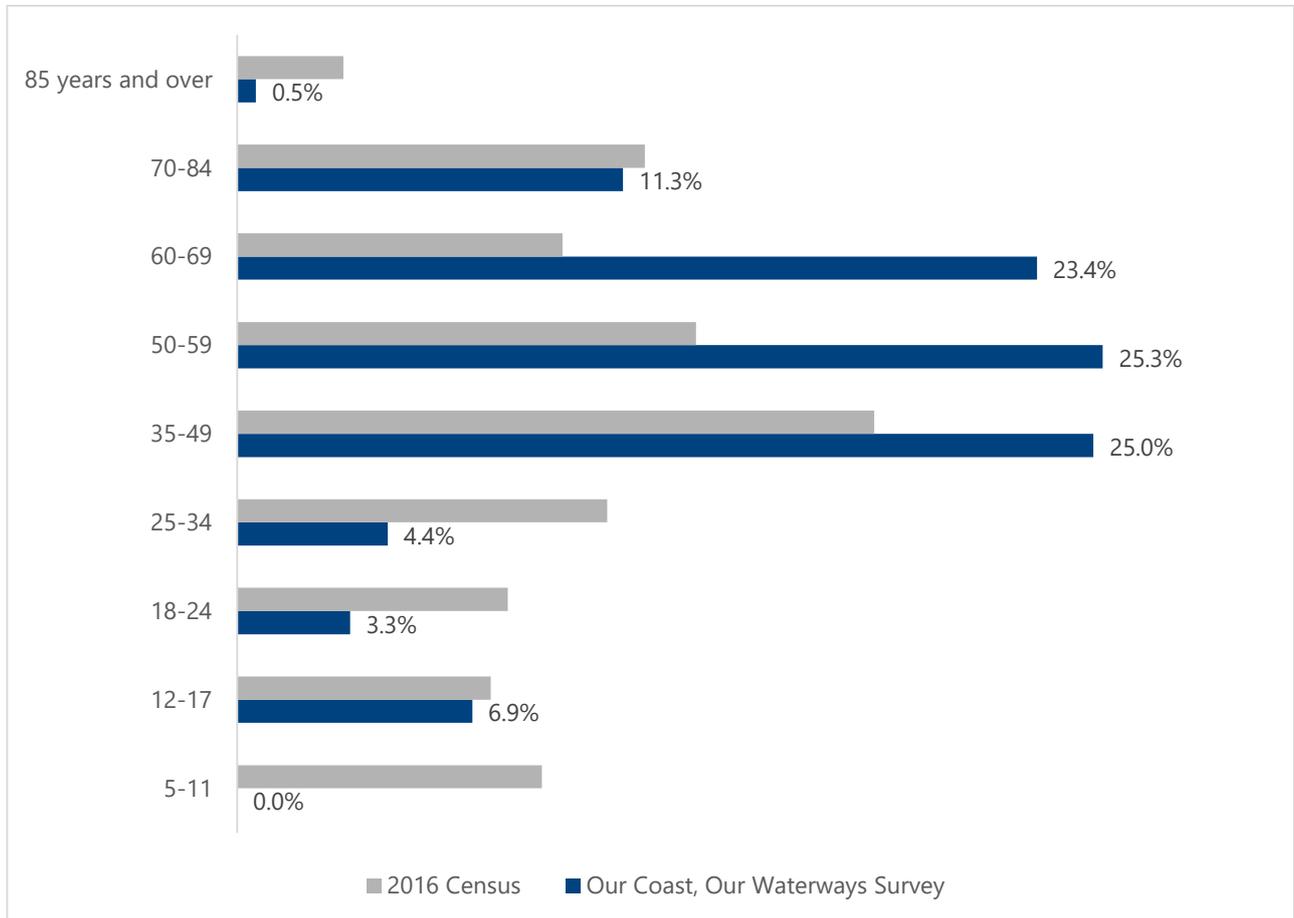


Total selections=395

About you and your household!

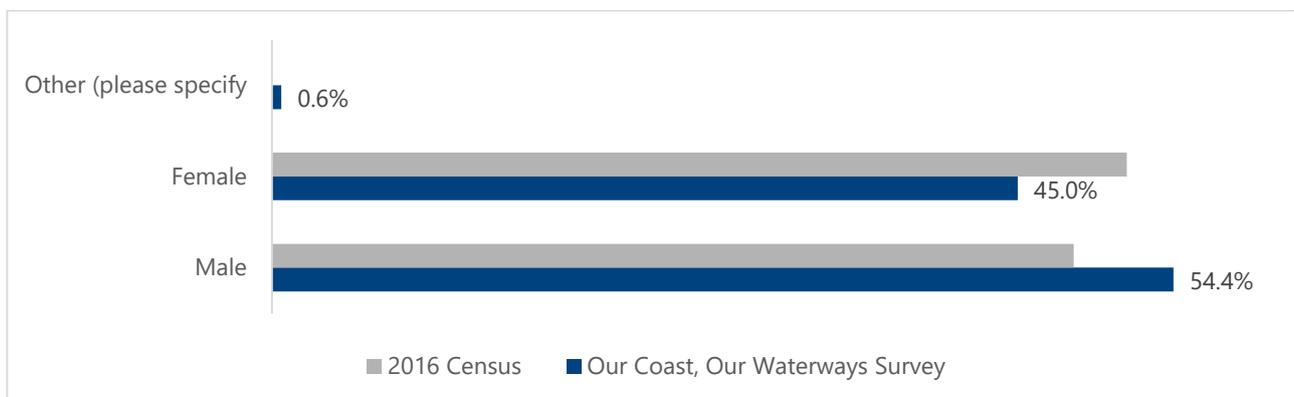
The questions asked in this section of the survey were not mandatory however responses to these questions allow us to further analyse the responses supplied by participants.

Figure 33: What is your age?



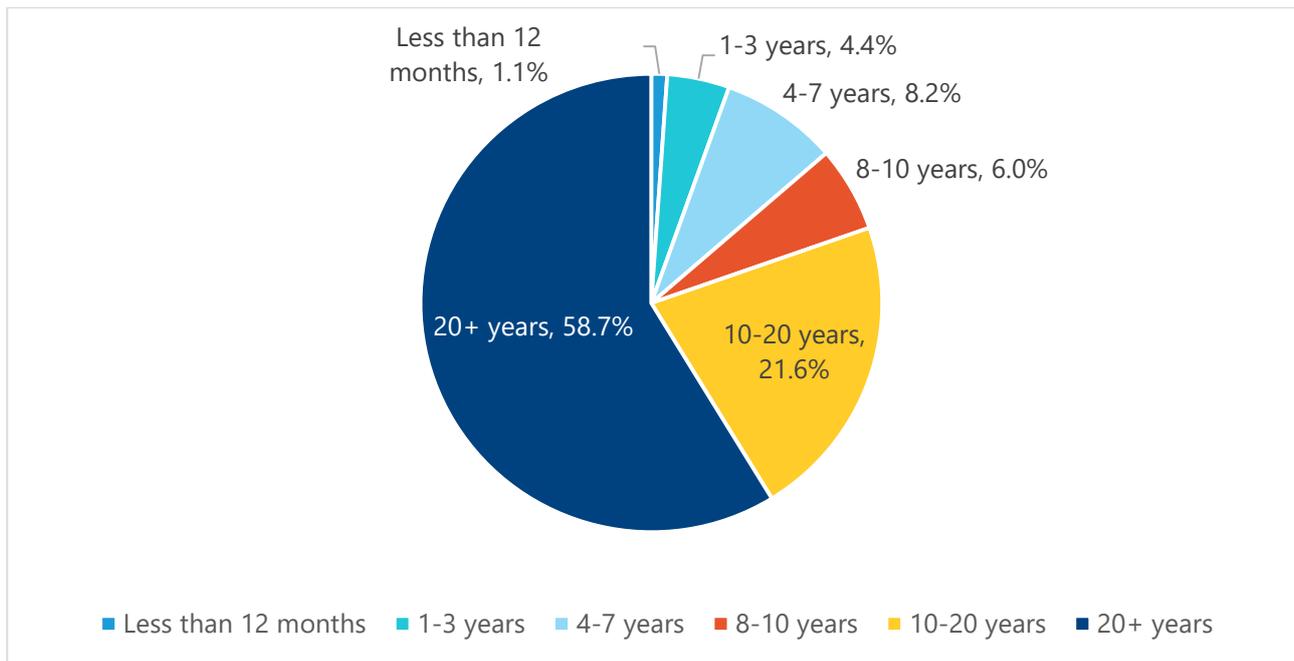
Total respondents=364

Figure 34: What is your gender?



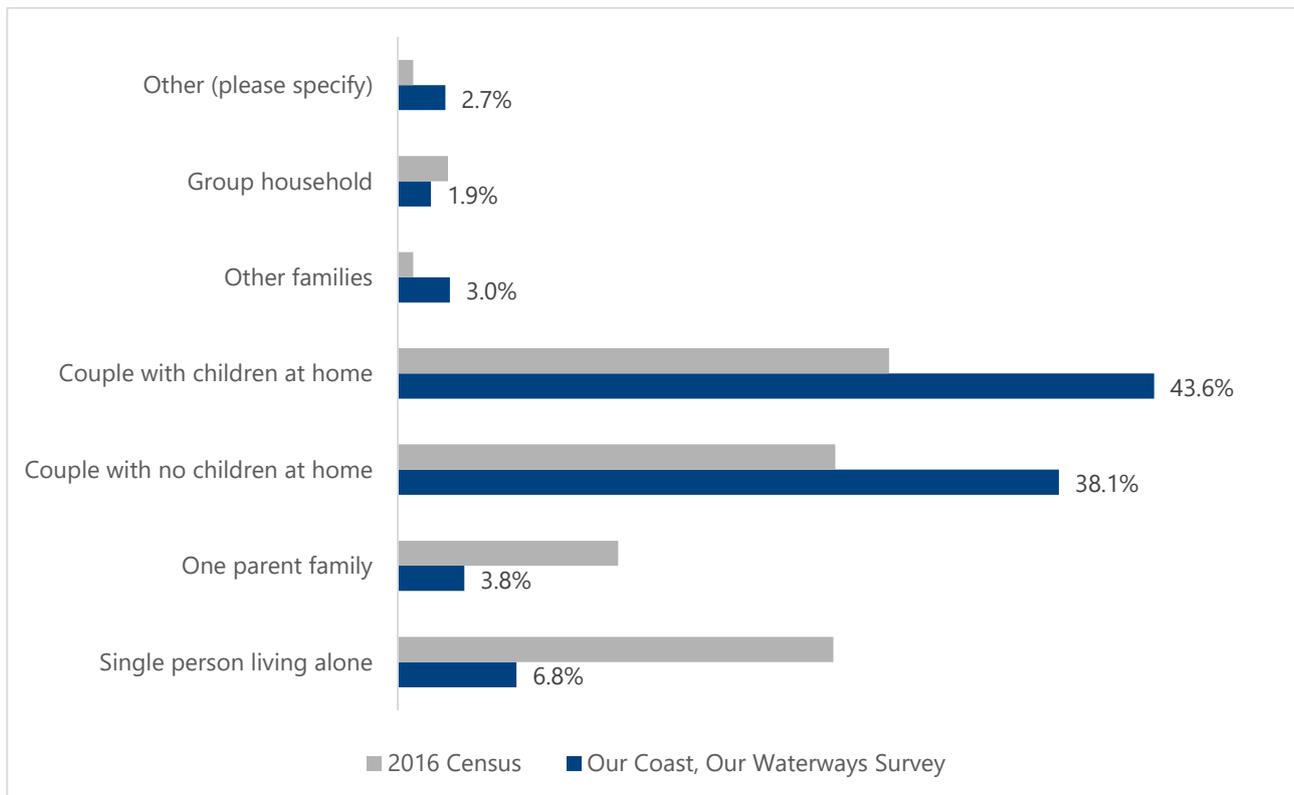
Total respondents=351

Figure 35: How long have you lived on the Central Coast?



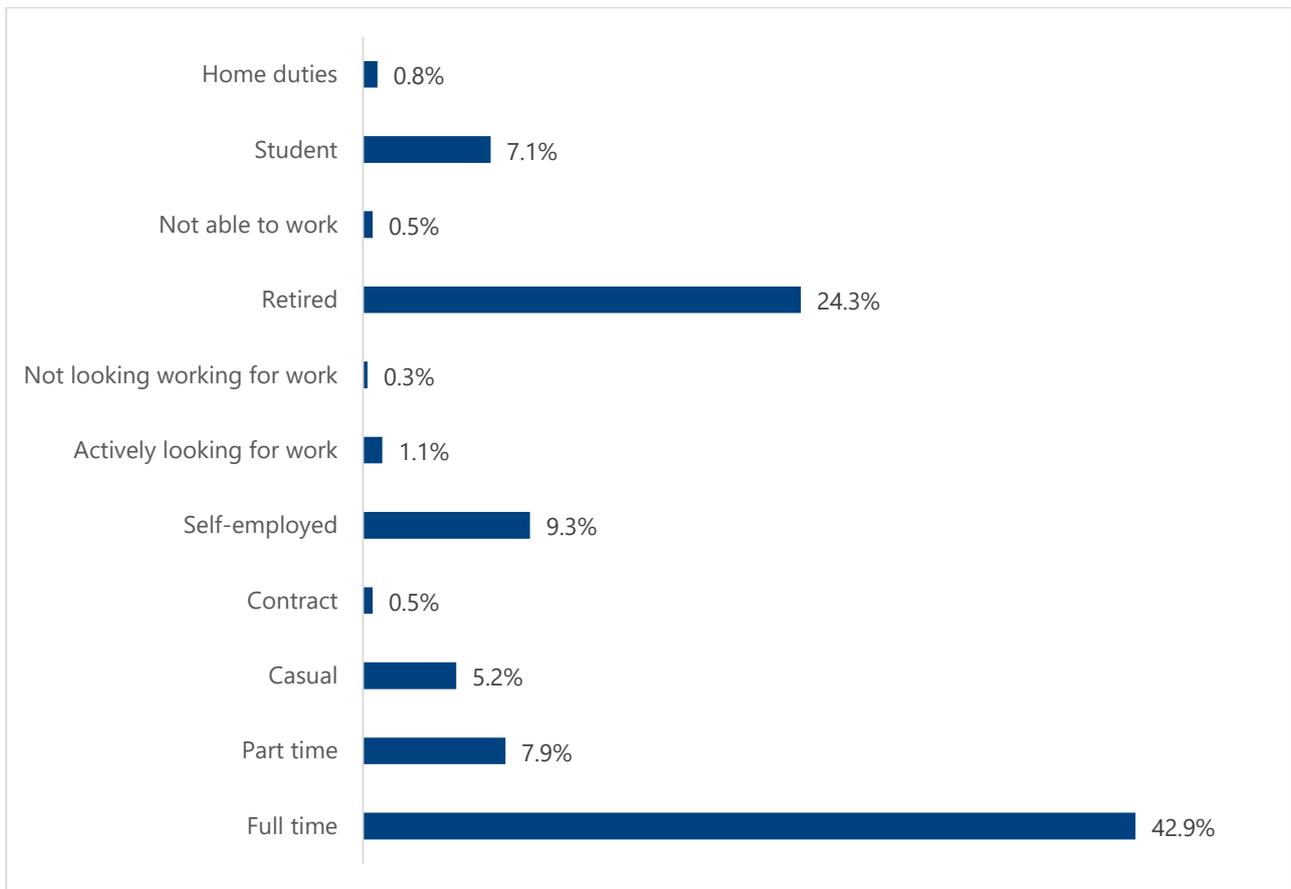
Total respondents=366

Figure 36: What is your household type?



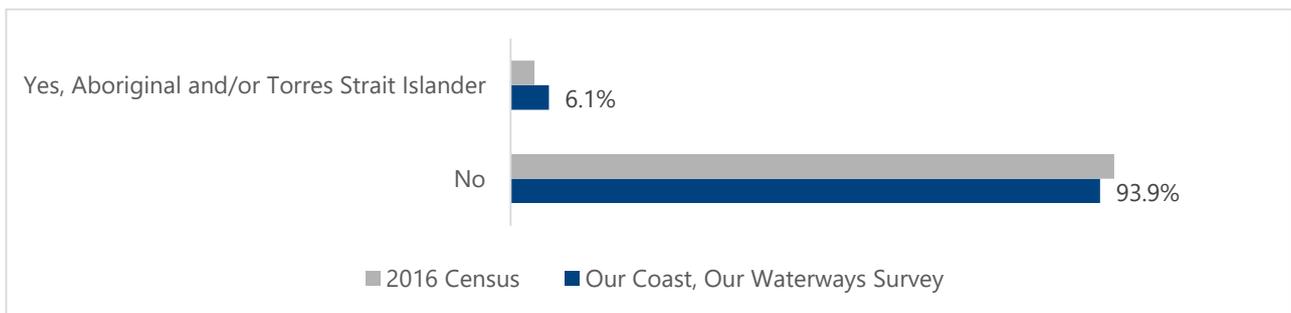
Total respondents=365

Figure 37: What is your employment type?



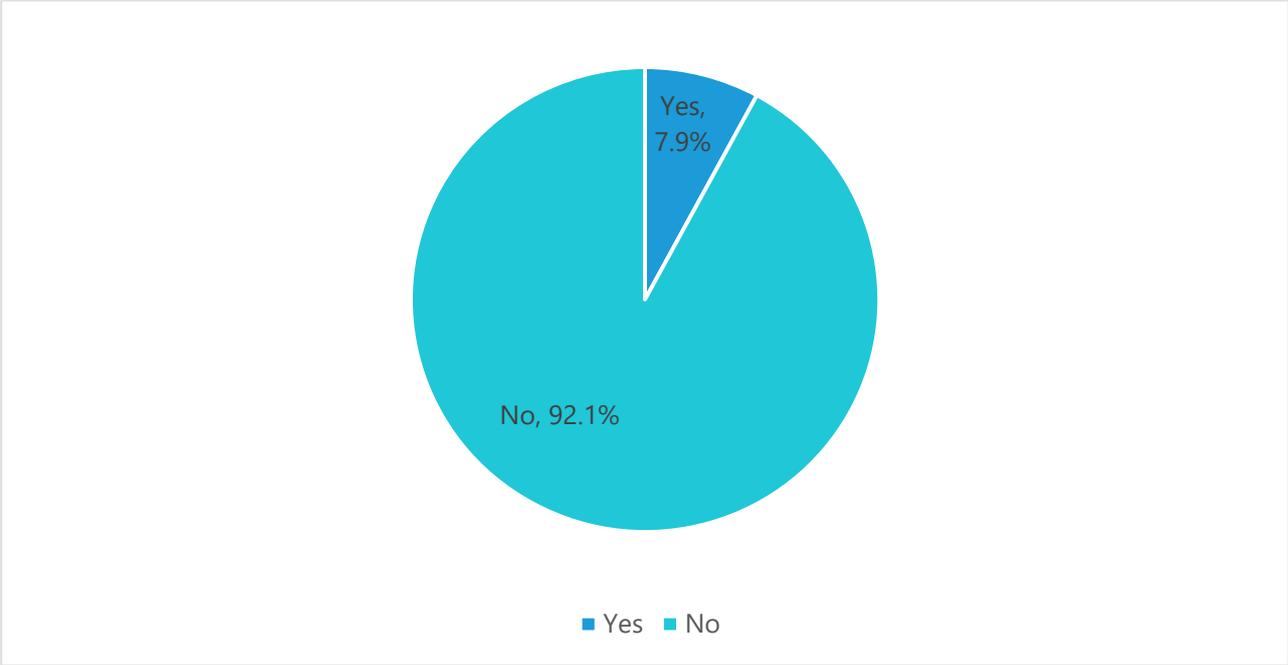
Total respondents=366

Figure 38: Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?



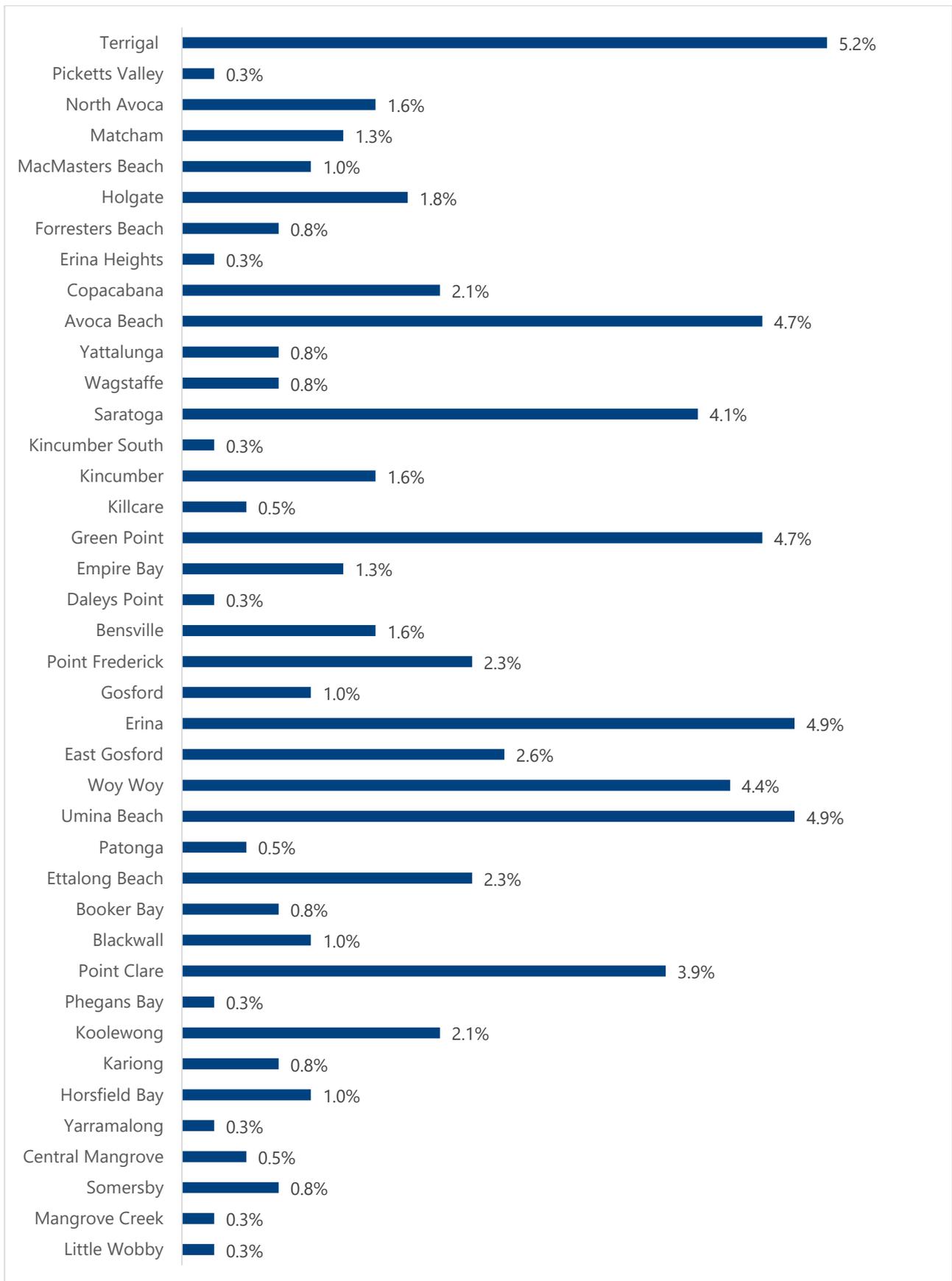
Total respondents=362

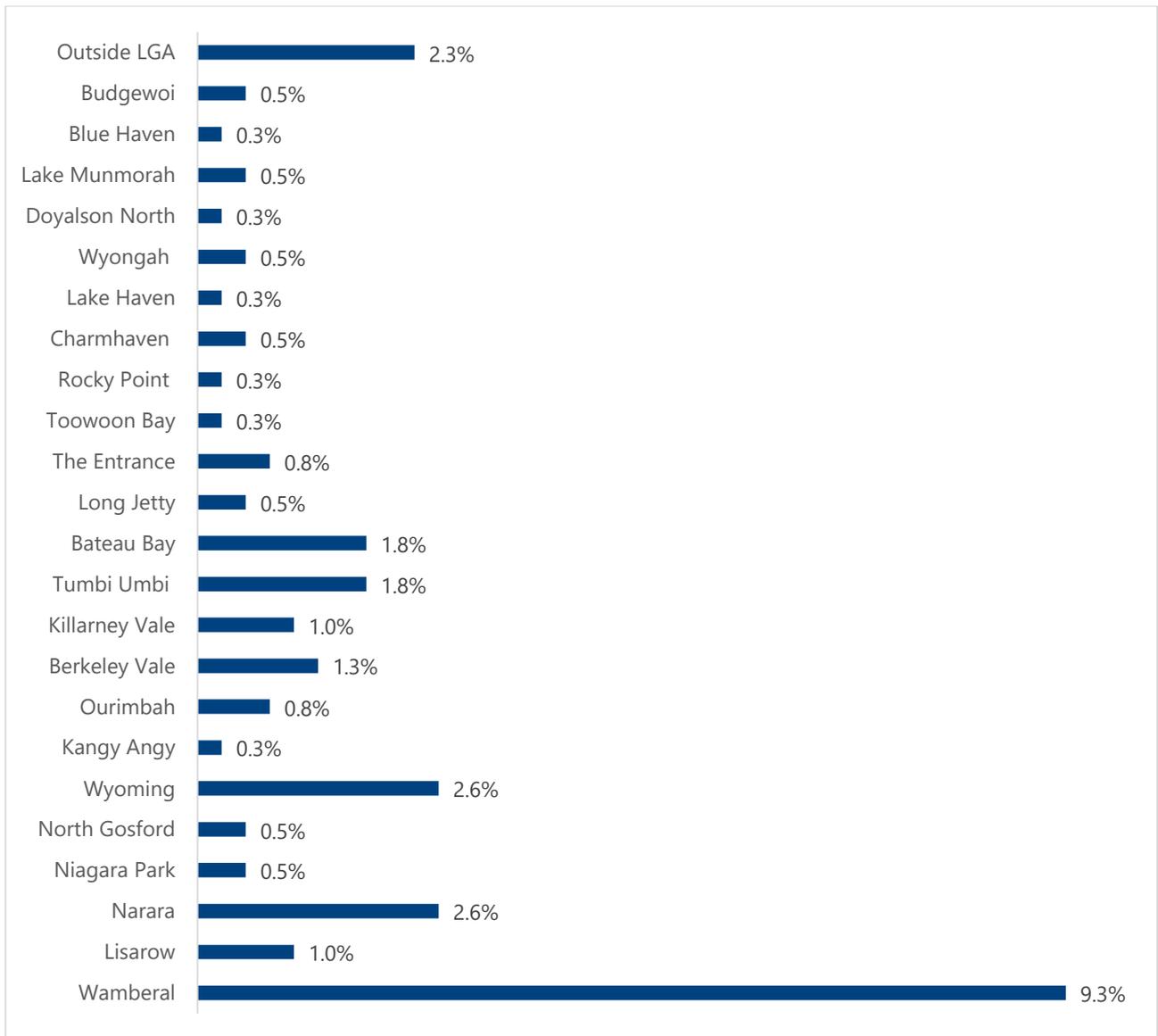
Figure 39: Do you speak a language other than English at home?



Total respondents=366

Figure 40: Suburb:





Total respondents=386

Figure 41: Former LGA (curated by suburb)

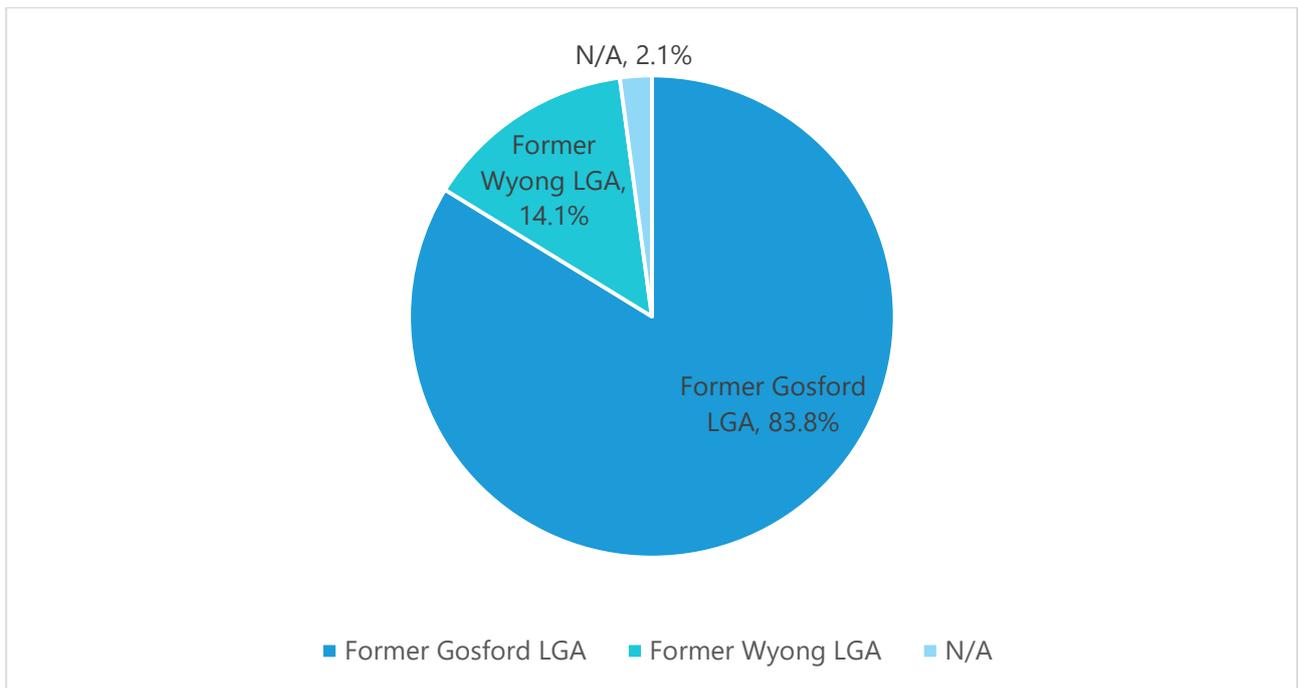
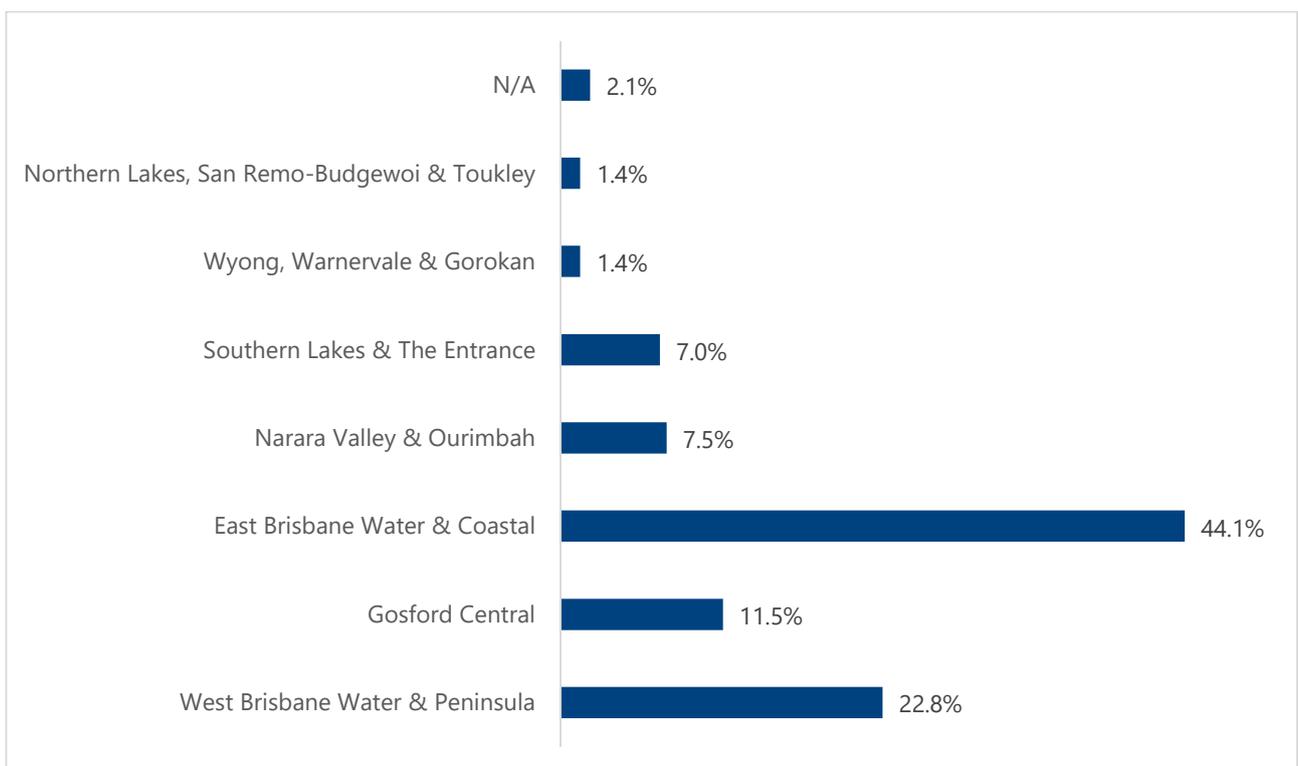


Figure 42: Planning area (curated by suburb)



Comparisons table

Throughout the phase one consultation we collected demographic information, this information allows us to further analyse the feedback we are receiving and from who. The table below explores these differences (participants who use the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system including Brisbane Water are displayed):

	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	95.7% <i>Total respondents = 69</i>	98% <i>Total respondents = 199</i>	100% <i>Total respondents = 28</i>	98.7% <i>Total respondents = 311</i>	98% <i>Total respondents = 50</i>	98.1% <i>Total respondents = 316</i>	98.3% <i>Total respondents = 60</i>	98% <i>Total respondents = 347</i>
If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would reduce the frequency I visit and use waterways.	84.1% <i>Total respondents = 69</i>	89.4% <i>Total respondents = 199</i>	78.6% <i>Total respondents = 28</i>	89.7% <i>Total respondents = 311</i>	98% <i>Total respondents = 50</i>	87.3% <i>Total respondents = 316</i>	95% <i>Total respondents = 60</i>	88.2% <i>Total respondents = 347</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.	68.1% <i>Total respondents = 69</i>	65.3% <i>Total respondents = 199</i>	67.9% <i>Total respondents = 28</i>	67.5% <i>Total respondents = 311</i>	78% <i>Total respondents = 50</i>	64.6% <i>Total respondents = 316</i>	71.7% <i>Total respondents = 60</i>	66.3% <i>Total respondents = 347</i>
More should be done to enhance access to waterways (e.g. shared pathways, jetties, boat ramps etc).	72.5% <i>Total respondents = 69</i>	73.9% <i>Total respondents = 199</i>	82.1% <i>Total respondents = 28</i>	75.9% <i>Total respondents = 311</i>	68% <i>Total respondents = 50</i>	76.6% <i>Total respondents = 316</i>	81.7% <i>Total respondents = 60</i>	74.6% <i>Total respondents = 346</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.	89.7% <i>Total respondents = 68</i>	97.5% <i>Total respondents = 199</i>	100% <i>Total respondents = 28</i>	96.8% <i>Total respondents = 311</i>	100% <i>Total respondents = 50</i>	97.1% <i>Total respondents = 314</i>	96.7% <i>Total respondents = 19</i>	96.5% <i>Total respondents = 345</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.	65.6% <i>Total respondents = 64</i>	64.7% <i>Total respondents = 184</i>	50% <i>Total respondents = 28</i>	71.1% <i>Total respondents = 3116</i>	84% <i>Total respondents = 50</i>	66.5% <i>Total respondents = 315</i>	73.7% <i>Total respondents = 57</i>	68% <i>Total respondents = 322</i>

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