



Greater Wellington Wetlands awareness and perceptions survey

May 2025

verian 

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An aerial photograph of a wind farm situated on a rolling, forested landscape. Three large white wind turbines are visible, each standing on a cleared circular patch of land. A winding road or path cuts through the terrain. In the background, a vibrant rainbow arches across a valley under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of sustainable energy integrated with nature.

Research overview

Research methodology

1.



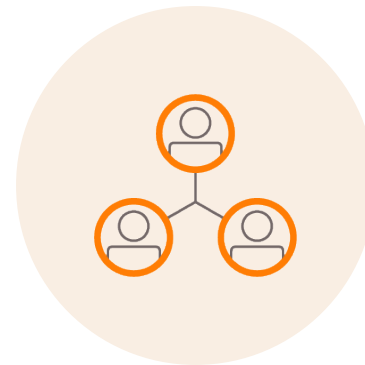
Online panel
survey

2.



Fieldwork took place
between 28 March and
28 April 2025

3.



The sample was
comprised of 1,008
Wellington Region
residents.

4.



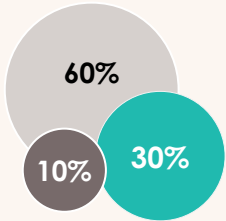
Results are post-weighted
to be representative of the
regional population by
district, age, gender and
ethnicity.



Summary of findings

1.

Awareness and knowledge of wetlands



Most residents know little (60%) or nothing (10%) about wetlands.

30% know a lot or a fair amount.



Two thirds of residents are aware of wetlands in the region.



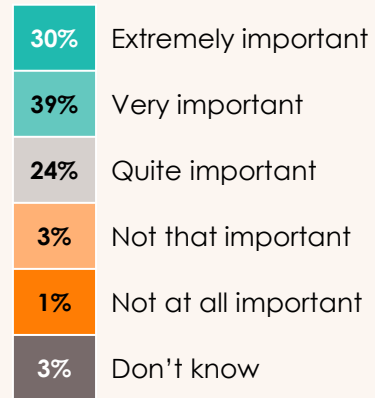
A quarter are aware of wetland restoration and management projects in the region.

2.

Importance perceptions

69%

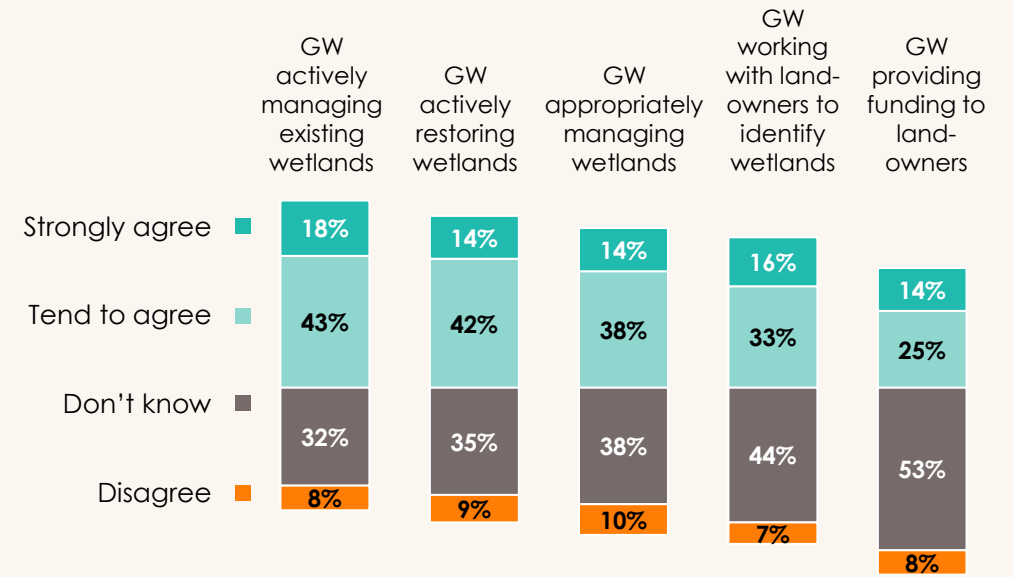
of residents believe wetland restoration and management is extremely or very important.



3.

Perceptions of Greater Wellington's role

Residents are far more positive than they are negative about Greater Wellington's wetland restoration and management activities, although many feel they don't know enough to be able to provide an opinion.



Take outs

- **Wetland knowledge is relatively low but residents are curious to know more.**
- **Residents see the value of wetlands and support management and restoration efforts.**

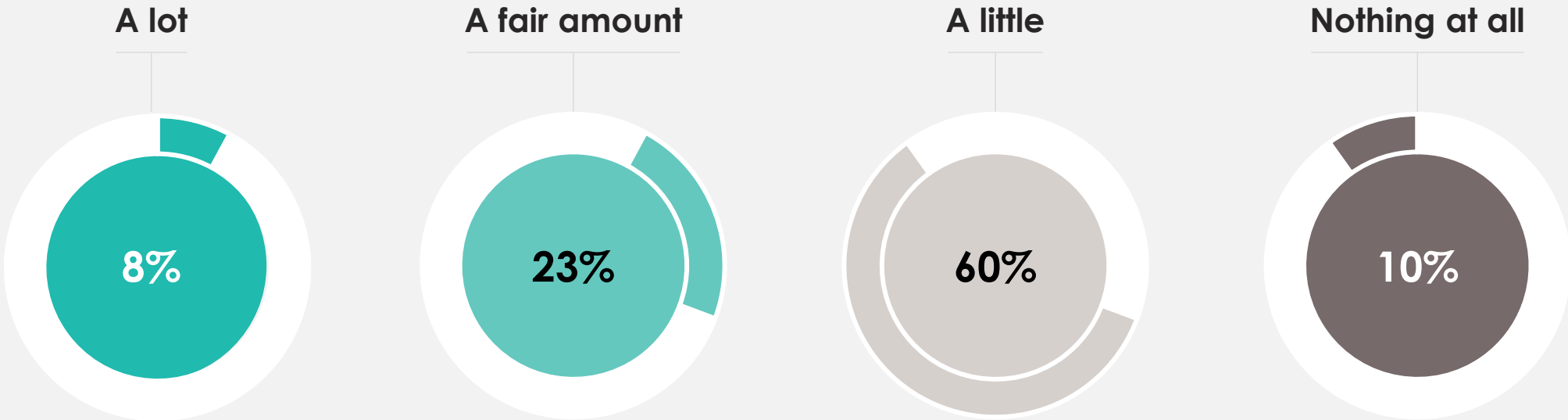
"I am confident you must be doing a lot for wetland restoration and management - it's too important to ignore. I have just realised how ignorant I am about your work."

An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape. On the left, a dark asphalt road with white lane markings runs vertically. To the right of the road is a sandy beach with some sparse vegetation. Further right is the ocean, with a vibrant turquoise color and white foam from breaking waves visible along the shoreline.

Awareness and knowledge

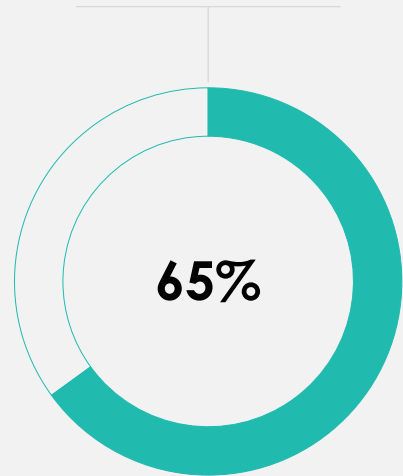
Most residents in the Wellington region feel they know just ‘a little’ about wetlands.

A third have higher knowledge and say they know either ‘a fair amount’ or ‘a lot’.

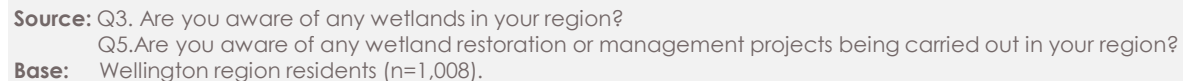


Source: Q1. This survey is about areas of the natural environment known as wetlands. How much, if anything, do you know about wetlands?
Base: Wellington region residents (n=1,008).

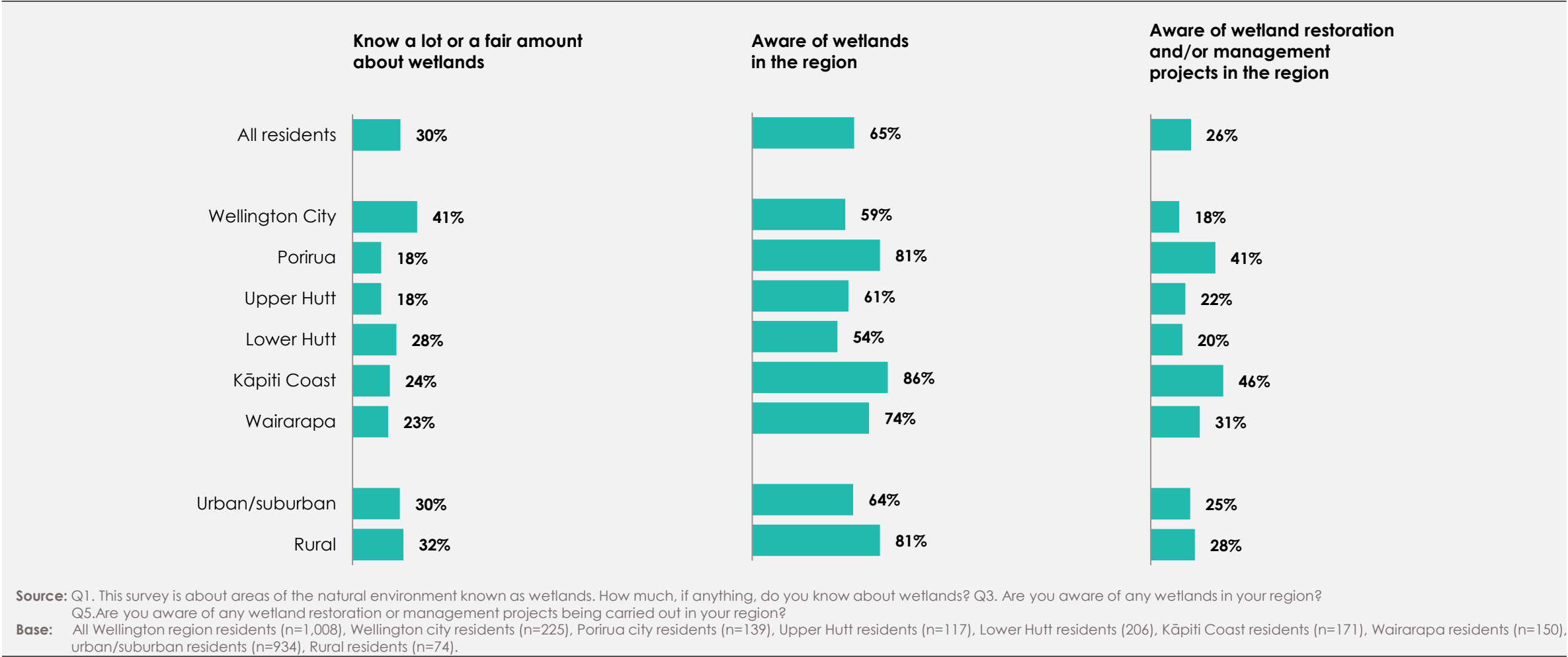
Projects that most come to mind for residents include the Pāuatahanui inlet, Taupō swamp, and the Waikanae Estuary.



A donut chart with a teal-colored segment representing 26% of the total. The number '26%' is displayed in the center of the chart.



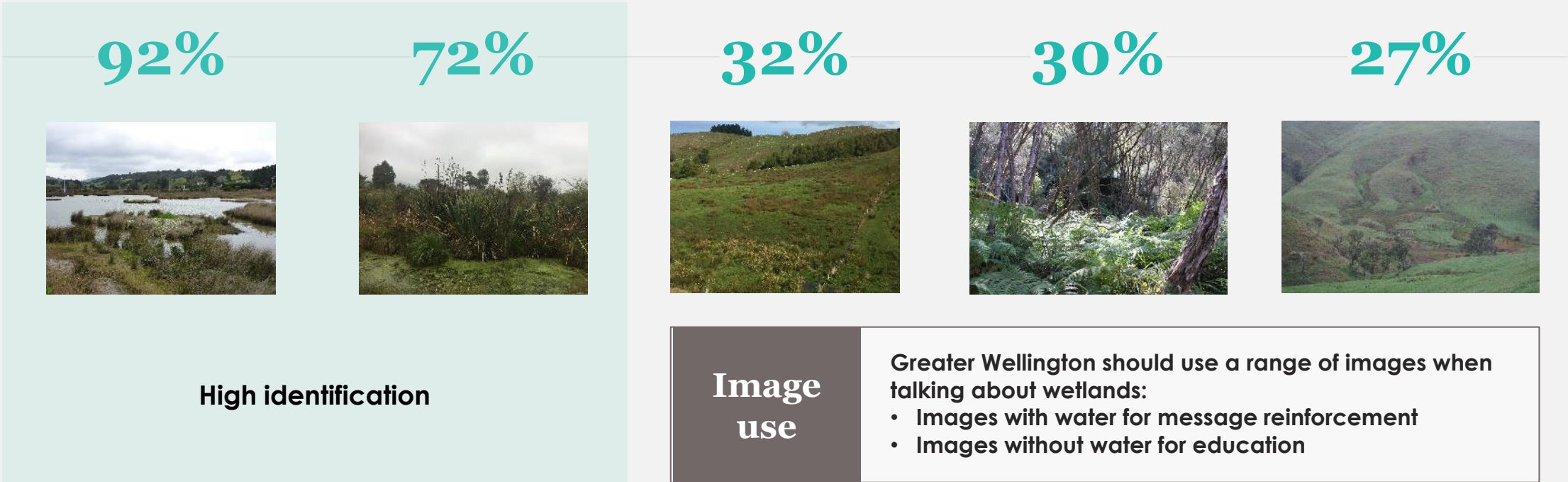
The following residents are more likely than average to be aware of wetlands in our region: Porirua residents, Kāpiti Coast residents, Wairarapa residents, and residents living rurally. Wellington City residents are the most likely to feel they have good wetland knowledge.



We put residents knowledge to the test by asking them to identify images they thought were of, or might include, wetlands. Correct identification was relatively high for the images in which water was visible.

However, the three images on the right hand side are also of wetlands and correct identification of these was much lower.

% able to correctly identify image as being of, or including, a wetland:



Source: Q4. Which of the following pictures do you think are of, or might include, a wetland?
Base: Wellington region residents (n=1,008).

Confusion is also evident looking at the results from the images which didn't show wetlands.

Nearly two thirds believed the first image was of a wetland and a few also though the second image was.

% incorrectly identified image as being of, or including, a wetland:

61%



20%



Source: Q4. Which of the following pictures do you think are of, or might include, a wetland?
Base: Wellington region residents (n=1,008).

Residents were also asked to share what they thought wetlands are and/or do. Responses most commonly centred around how wetlands provide vital habitats for fauna and flora.



Below are some examples that offer a glimpse into the knowledge of some residents...

“

“Wetlands are very important for the environment because they filter all the sediment that comes down from the hills plus they protect a lot of our wildlife.”

“An area of land which is a habitat to plants, insects, and wildlife. They are of natural beauty and historical significance... we need to repair, restore and look after all of these areas before they are all destroyed or gone.”

“Wetlands are a diverse, wet, unique environment which includes swamps and low-lying land. It has unique plants and wildlife.”

“An area where the ground remains damp, or swampy, and it drains slowly. It has low vegetation - flaxes etc. and acts as a carbon sink. Insects love it, so do birds. There used to be more wetlands, but they've been drained. That is bad.”

”

Source: Q2. What do you think a wetland is and/or does?

A third of residents think the responsibility of wetland management falls, at least in part, to Greater Wellington (35% mentioned a variation of either Greater Wellington or Regional Council).
A quarter believe the Department of Conservation have some responsibility.

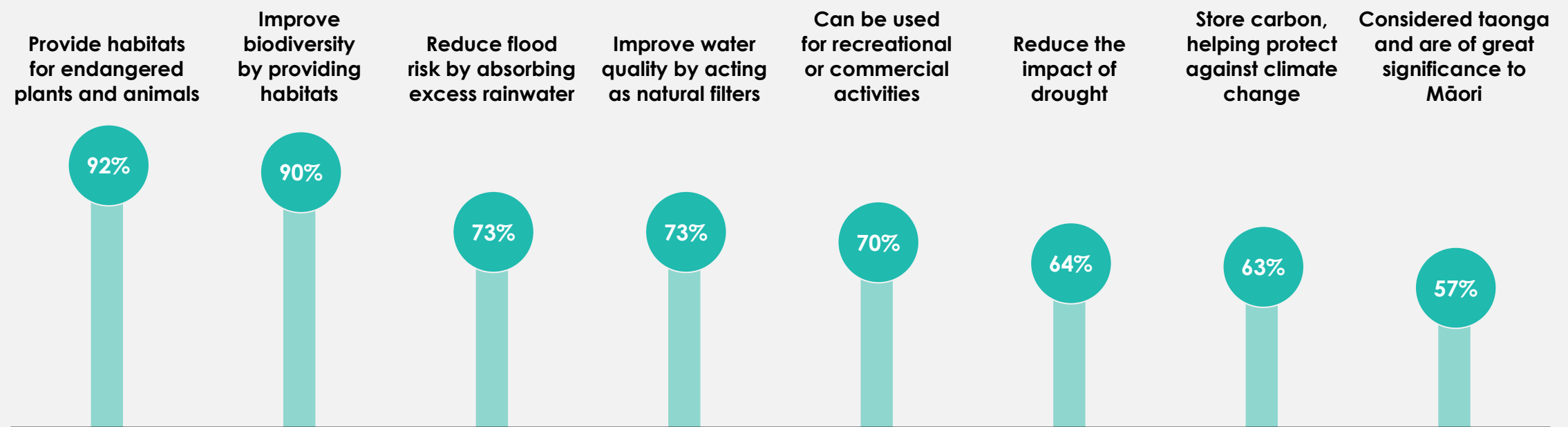


Source: Q6. Who do you think is responsible for managing wetlands in your region?
Base: Wellington region residents (n=1,008).

Most residents know that well-established wetlands can provide habitats and improve biodiversity. Many also know wetlands can reduce flood risk and improve water quality.

Knowledge is lower when it comes to the ability of wetlands to reduce drought impact and store carbon. Just over half of residents are aware that wetlands are considered taonga.

Detailed knowledge



Source: Q7. Before today, did you know that well established wetlands...

Base: Wellington region residents (n=1,008).

Residents living in the Hutt Valley tend to have lower levels of wetland specific knowledge compared to those living elsewhere in the region.

Residents who live rurally have slightly higher knowledge than their urban/suburban counterparts.

Detailed knowledge		Total (n=1,008)	Wellington city (n=225)	Porirua city (n=139)	Upper Hutt (n=117)	Lower Hutt (n=206)	Kāpiti Coast (n=171)	Wairarapa (n=150)	Urban/ suburban (n=934)	Rural (n=74)
	Provide habitats	92%	91%	90%	92%	90%	96%	95%	92%	95%
	Improve biodiversity	90%	90%	88%	92%	87%	96%	93%	90%	94%
	Reduce flood risk	73%	76%	76%	64%	63%	80%	74%	72%	79%
	Improve water quality	73%	73%	72%	74%	65%	81%	80%	72%	82%
	Can be used for recreational or commercial activities	70%	70%	72%	66%	67%	68%	78%	70%	65%
	Reduce the impact of drought	64%	67%	61%	57%	58%	71%	63%	64%	63%
	Store carbon	63%	67%	56%	58%	56%	71%	64%	62%	74%
	Considered taonga	57%	56%	61%	55%	50%	69%	60%	58%	52%

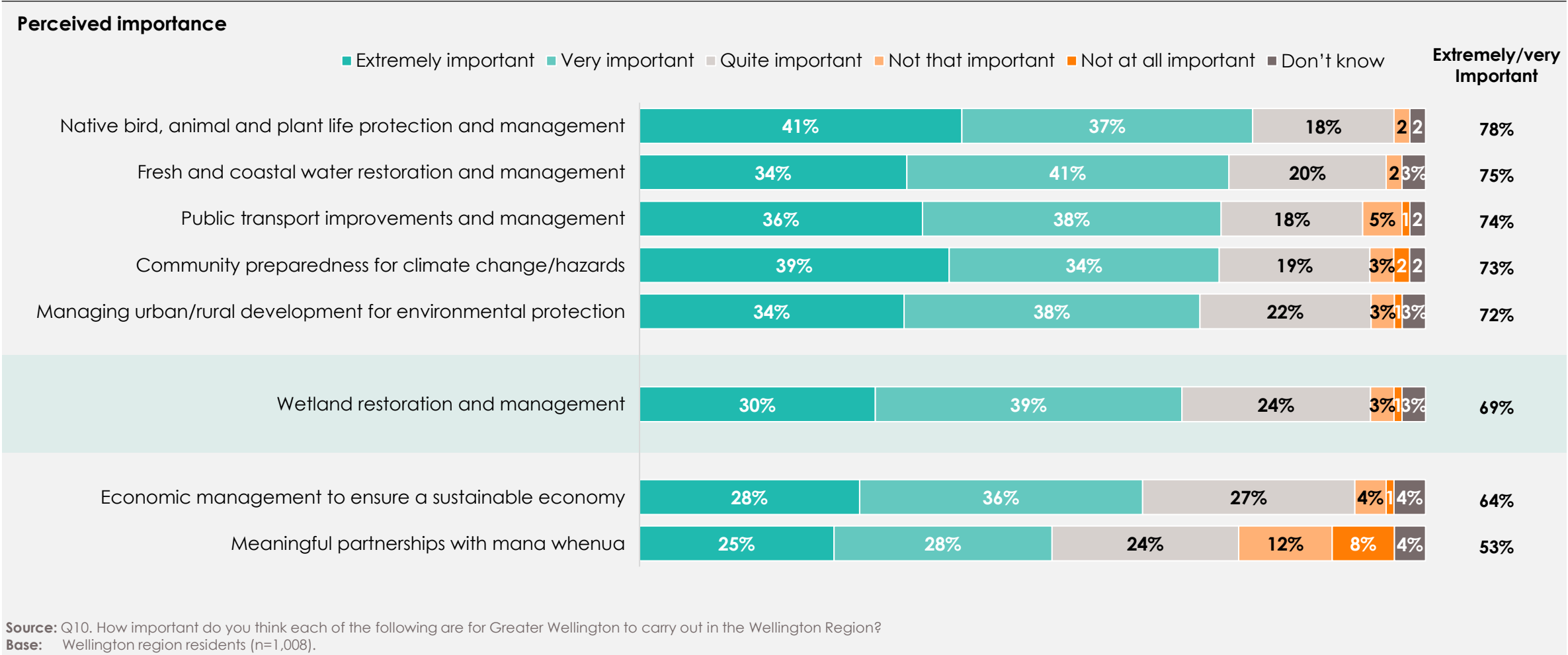
Source: Q7. Before today, did you know that well established wetlands...

Base: See chart for base sizes.

An aerial night photograph of a city, likely Wellington, New Zealand, showing a dense urban area with numerous buildings and streets illuminated by warm yellow and orange lights. The city is situated on a hillside, with a body of water visible in the upper right corner. The lights create a strong contrast with the dark sky and the silhouettes of trees and buildings.

Perceived importance of wetlands

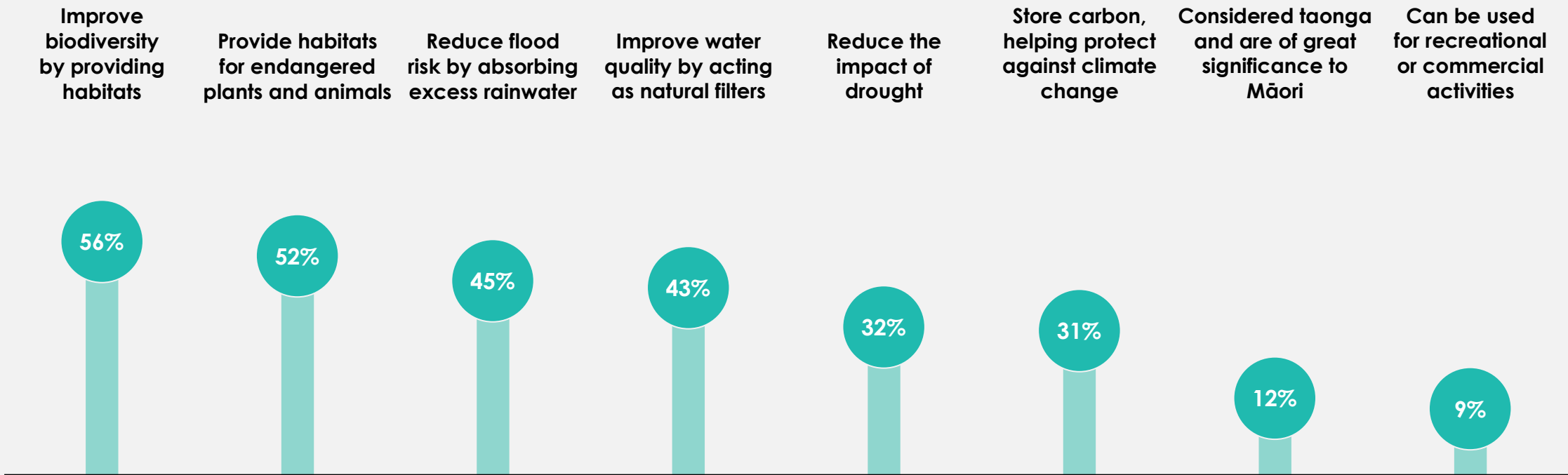
Looking at perceived importance across Greater Wellington’s Community Outcomes; residents see wetland restoration and management as relatively important in the context of the other Outcomes. Just 4% of residents believe wetland restoration and management to be unimportant.



Looking at perceptions of the specific benefits of wetlands, residents feel the most important are their ability to improve biodiversity and provide habitats.

Secondary to this is their ability to reduce flood risk and improve water quality.

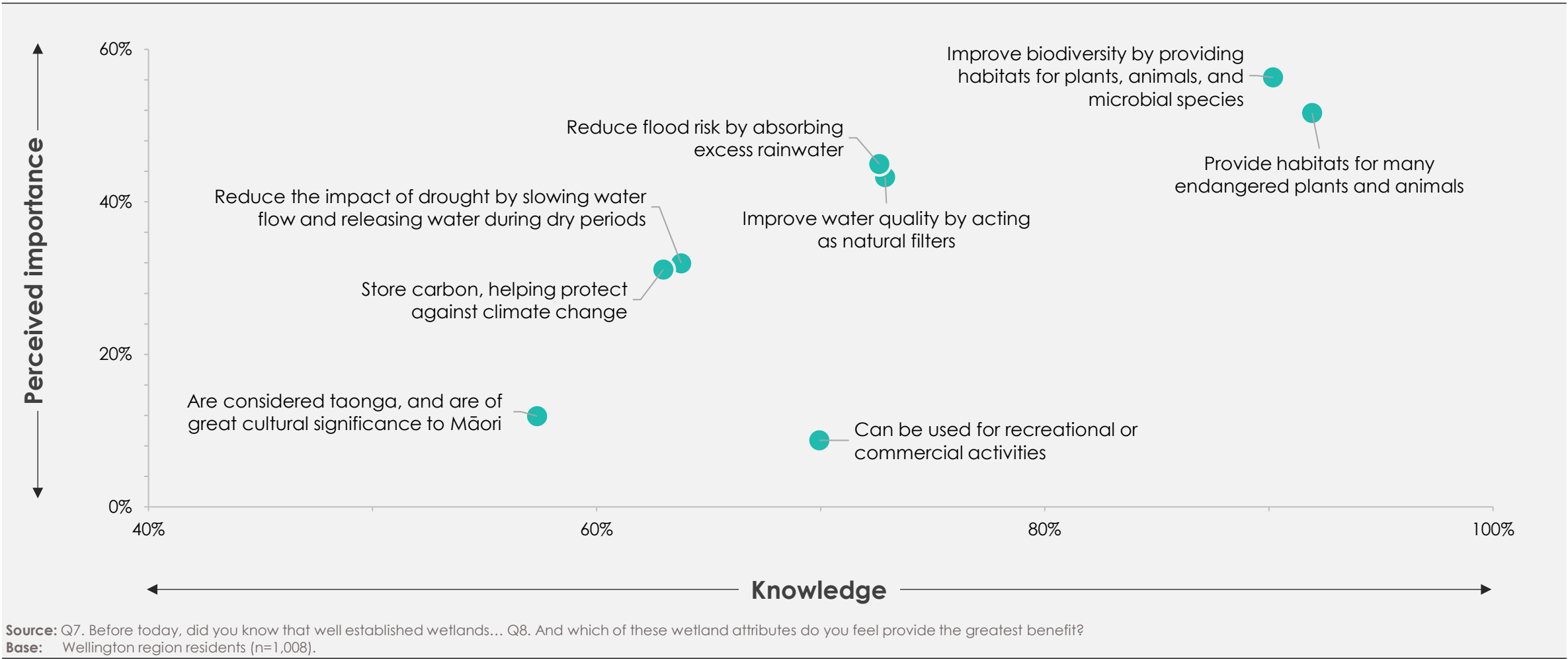
Perceived benefits of wetlands




Source: Q8. And which of these wetland attributes do you feel provide the greatest benefit?
Base: Wellington region residents (n=1,008).
Note: Residents were asked to select up to three attributes they felt were most important.

Perceived importance is highly correlated with knowledge. Suggesting that increasing knowledge will also raise perceptions of importance.

The exception to this is 'can be used for recreational and commercial activities'.

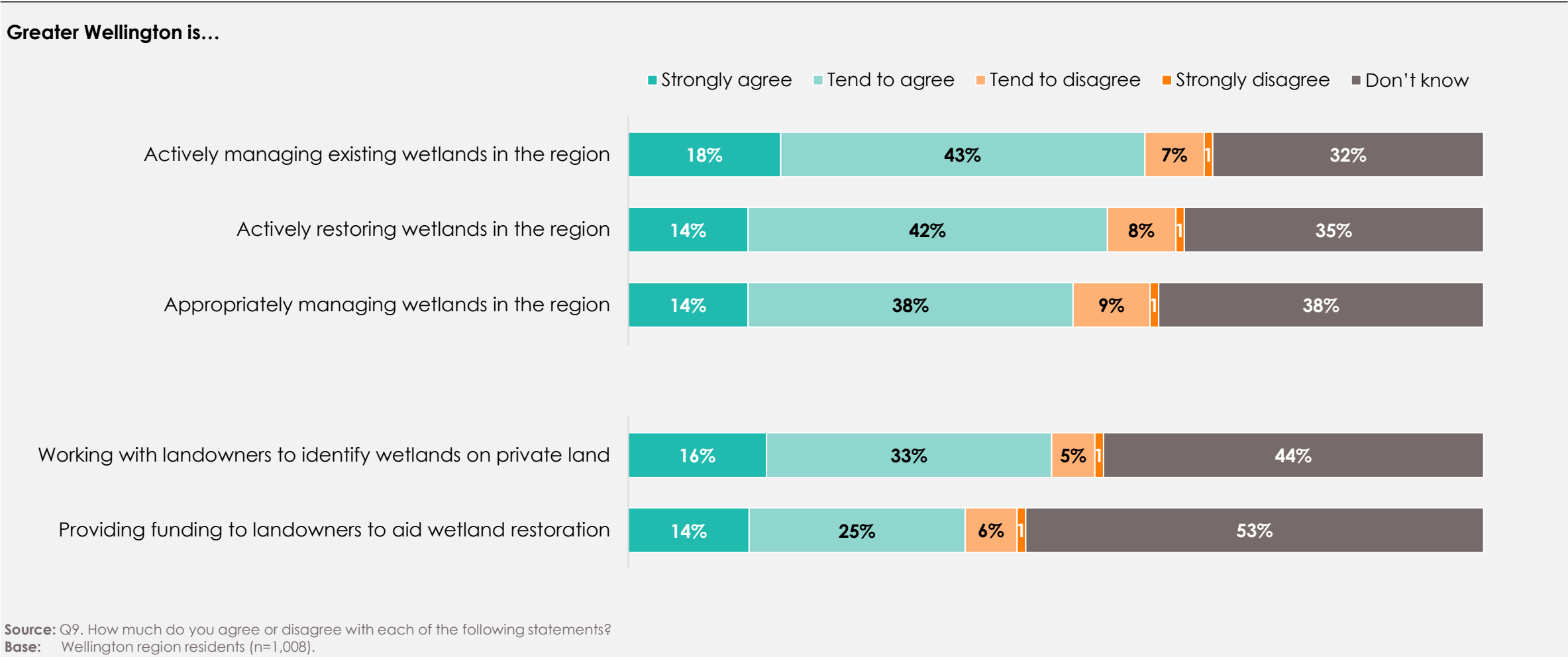




Perceptions of Greater Wellington's role

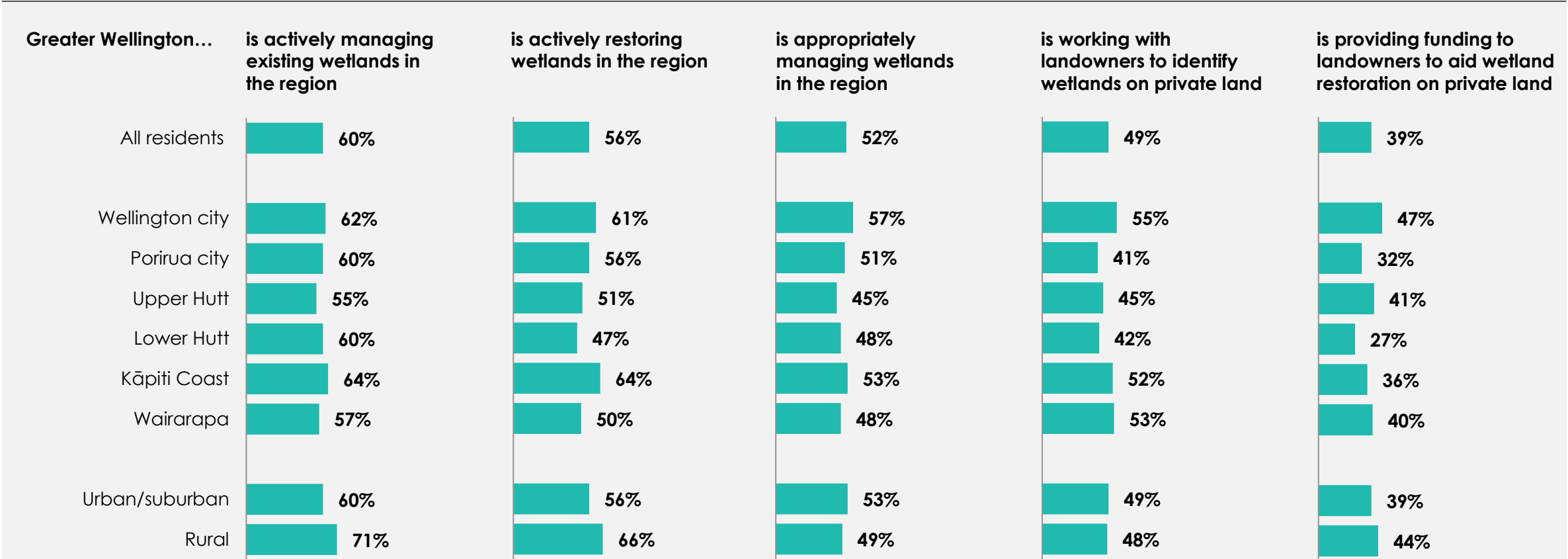
Residents perceptions of Greater Wellington’s wetland restoration and management activities are far more positive than they are negative.

But many simply feel they don't know enough to be able to provide an opinion.



Perceptions of Greater Wellington’s wetland restoration and management activities are broadly consistent across the region.

So too are perceptions across urban/suburban and rural residents.

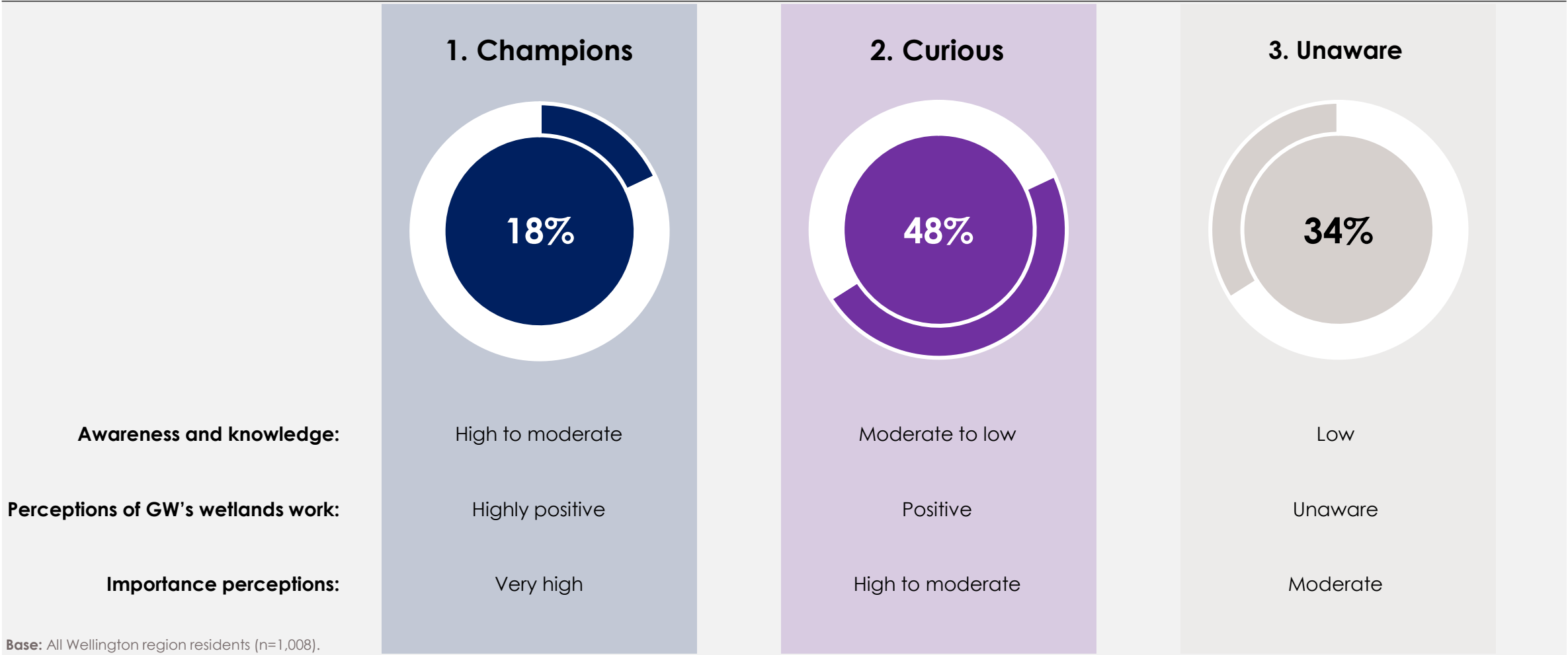


Source: Q9. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
Base: All Wellington region residents (n=1,008), Wellington city residents (n=225), Porirua city residents (n=139), Upper Hutt residents (n=117), Lower Hutt residents (206), Kāpiti Coast residents (n=171), Wairarapa residents (n=150), urban/suburban residents (n=934), Rural residents (n=74).

An aerial night photograph of a city, likely Wellington, New Zealand, showing a dense urban area with numerous buildings, streets, and green spaces. The city is illuminated by warm yellow and orange lights, contrasting with the dark blue night sky. A coastline is visible on the right side of the image, with the city built into a hillside overlooking the water. The text "Community champions" is overlaid on the left side of the image in a white, serif font.

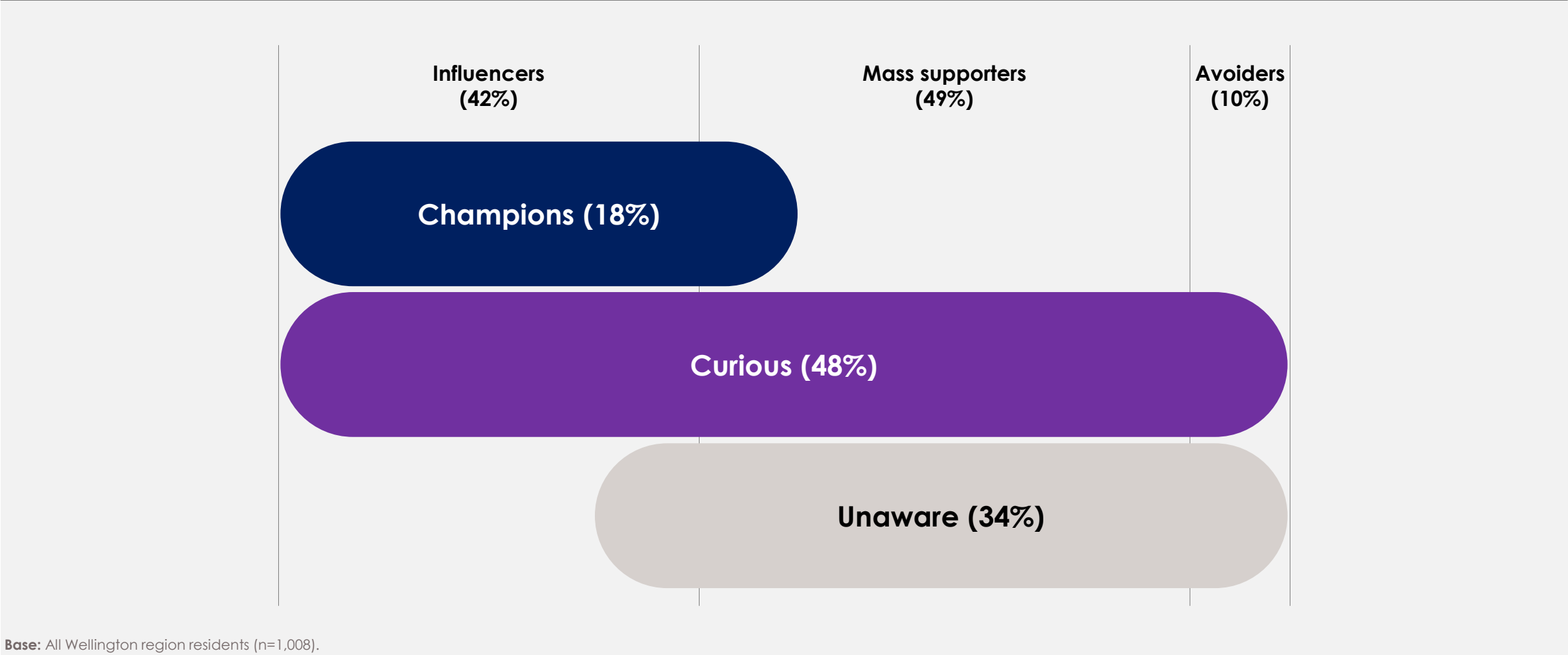
Community champions

Segmentation analysis shows there are three distinct groups within our region when it comes to knowledge and perceptions of wetlands....



Overlaying these segments with Greater Wellington’s Community Segment Framework we can see that our wetlands Champions are also Greater Wellington’s Influencers.

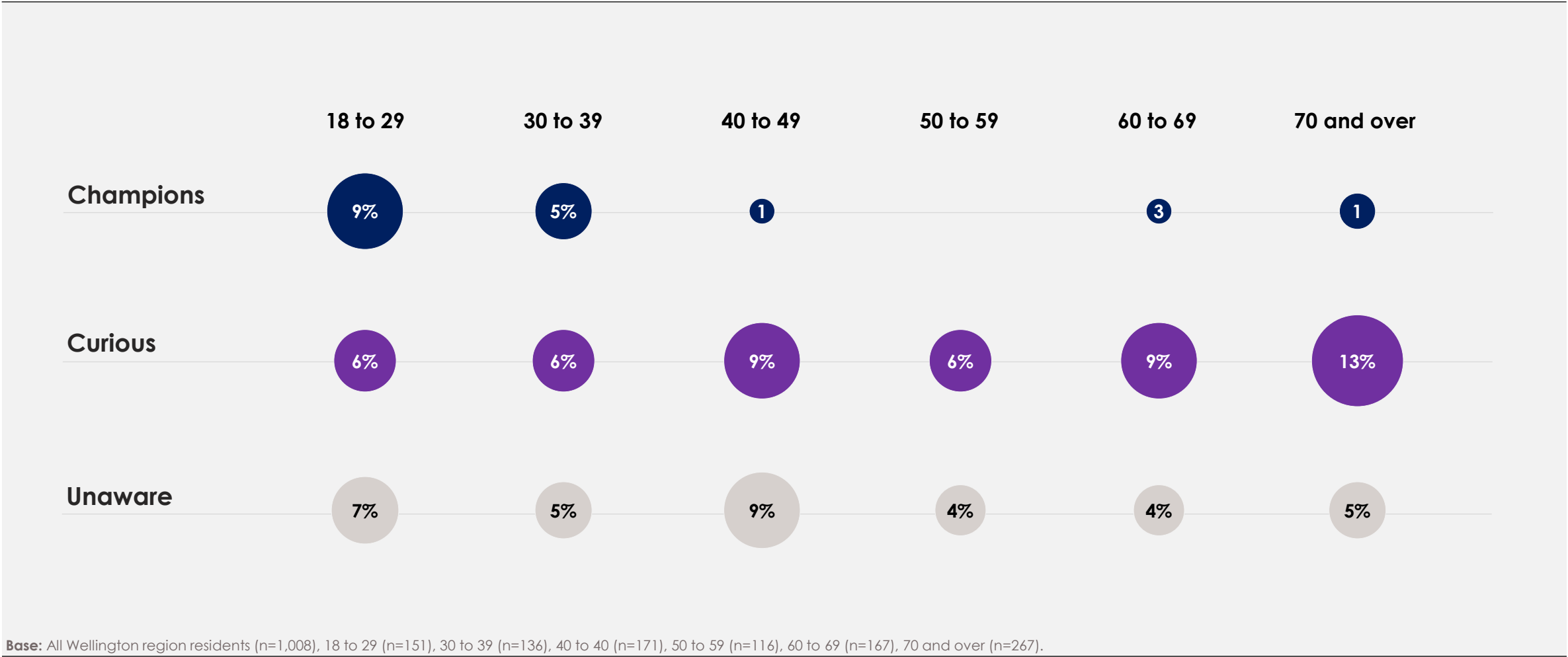
However, there is a noticeable difference between the two segmentations: the wetlands segments sit across multiple Greater Wellington Community Framework segments. This is largely because the Wetlands research showed there are very few residents who hold negative perceptions and/or sentiment towards wetlands and Greater Wellington's work in this area.



Base: All Wellington region residents (n=1,008).

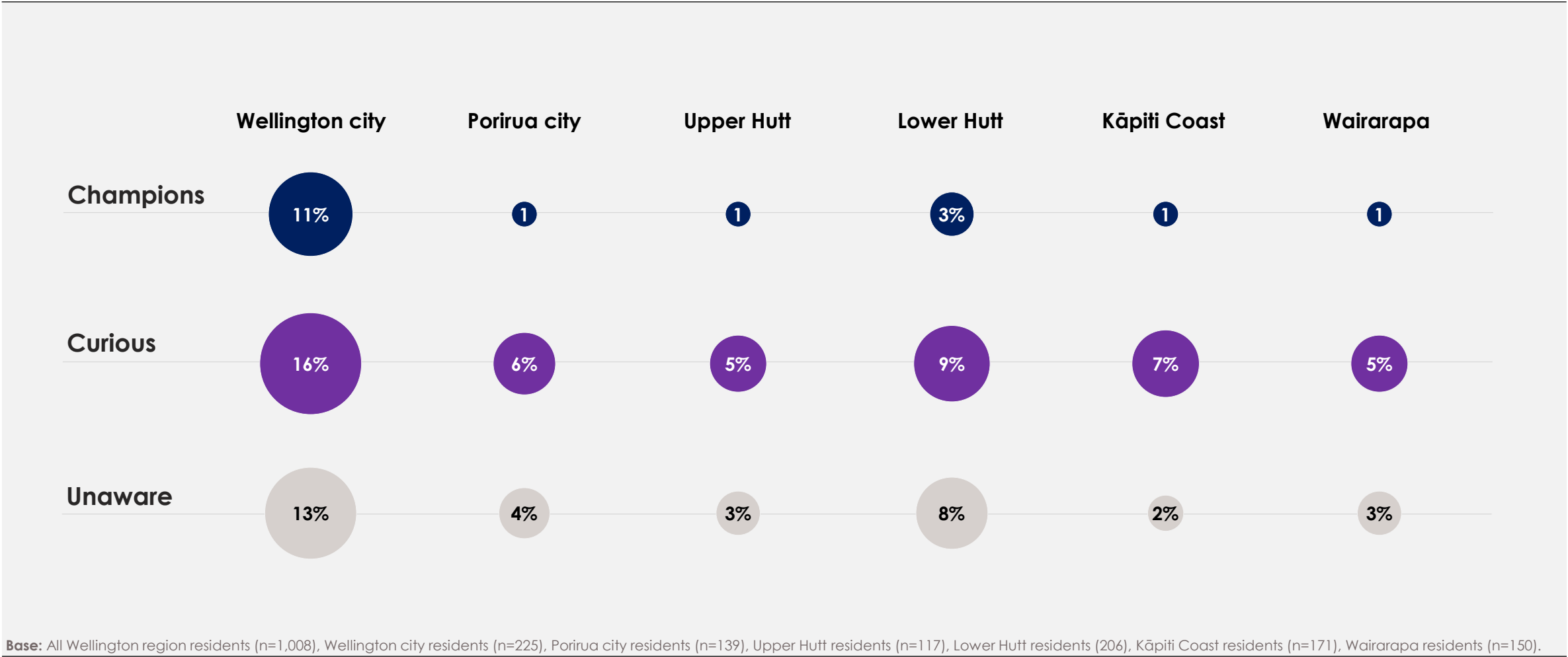
Which residents make up the three wetlands segments?

Our Champions are largely under 40 while the Curious are skewed towards those 40 and over.



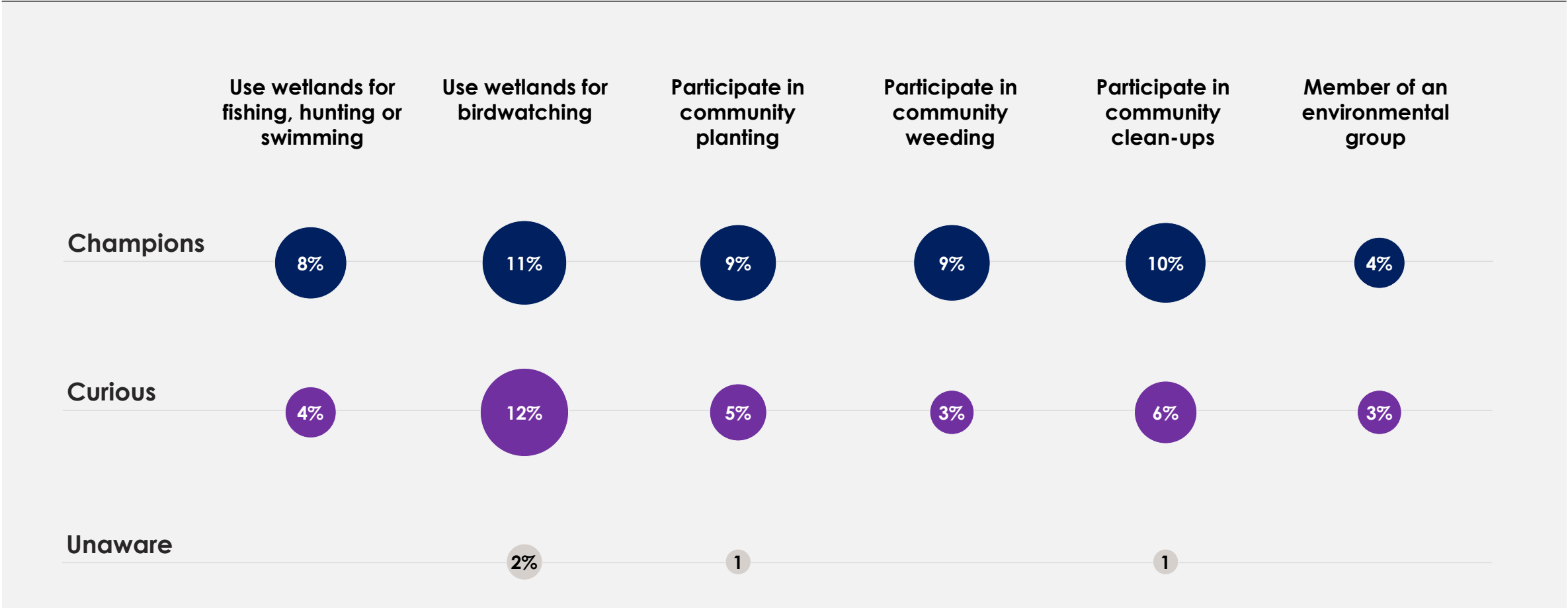
Which residents make up the three wetlands segments?

The three segments are relatively well dispersed across the region. However, proportionally there are more Champions in Wellington city.




Which residents make up the three wetlands segments?

Those who participate in recreational activities (in wetlands), those who participate in community planting, weeding or clean-ups, and those who are members of environmental groups largely all sit within the Champions and Curious segments.



Base: All Wellington region residents (n=1,008), Wetland fishers/hunters/swimmers (n=99), Wetland birdwatchers (n=247), Community planters (n=129), Community weeders (n=100), Community cleaners (n=143), Environmental group members (n=70).

A person stands on a grassy ridge in the foreground, looking out over a vast body of water. In the background, there are dark, silhouetted mountains under a sky with a warm sunset glow. The water is calm, reflecting the light from the sky. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Further thoughts from residents

At the end of the survey respondents were asked if they had any comments they would like to add about Greater Wellington's wetland restoration or management activities.

More than 200 people responded and below are the top themes that emerged.

1.

Public awareness and communication: Many residents talked about how they themselves are unaware of the importance of wetlands and of Greater Wellington's role. They are keen for increased communication and education.

2.

Increased restoration and management: Many people spoke about their support for wetland management and restoration and a desire to see more done, faster.

3.

Positive comments about work done so far: Many people simply acknowledged the good work being done and encourage Greater Wellington to keep-it-up.

Source: Q11. Do you have any comments you would like to add about Greater Wellington's wetland restoration or management activities in the region?

Base: All those who left a response (n=232).

1. Public awareness and communication

Many residents talked about how they themselves are unaware of the importance of wetlands and of Greater Wellington’s role. They are keen for increased communication and education. Below are verbatim comments to help illustrate this theme.

“I am confident you must be doing a lot for wetland restoration and management - it's too important to ignore. I have just realised how ignorant I am about your work.” [Upper Hutt, 60 - 69 years, a little knowledge]

“I learnt quite a bit about wetlands today so thank you, maybe some more information put around the place, so more people have an understanding about it all.” [Upper Hutt, 30 - 39 years, no knowledge]

“I think more public engagement activities could be organised. For example, hosting guided tours of restored wetlands to educate the public, especially children, about the importance of wetlands.” [Wellington, 20 - 29 years, a fair amount of knowledge]

“I would like them to advertise what they are doing locally through the local newspaper.” [Masterton, 60 - 69 years, a little knowledge]

“I’d like to know more about this, should the council be posting more about this on social media?” [Lower Hutt, 40 - 49 years, a little knowledge]

“Advertise it! Educate the public on the important work being done and why wetlands are so crucial.” [Upper Hutt, 30 - 39 years, a little knowledge]

“Expand educational outreach to schools. We need to cultivate environmental awareness in youth.” [Lower Hutt, 30 - 39 years, a lot of knowledge]

“The occasional leaflet drop would be helpful to our understanding, now that we have lost our local newspapers. Radio and Facebook are a bit hit or miss, and sometimes the old-fashioned ways work best. Inform the public to carry them with you.” [Kāpiti Coast, 70 - 79 years, a little knowledge]

“Would like to know where in Wellington our wetlands are.” [Lower Hutt, 40 - 49 years, a little knowledge]

“Would love to see some signage in areas they are restoring to learn more about it.” [Porirua, 30 - 39 years, a little knowledge]

“Although there has been some progress in public education, it can still be strengthened. Some members of the public are not sufficiently aware of the importance of wetlands.” [South Wairarapa, 30 - 39 years, a little knowledge]

Source: Q11. Do you have any comments you would like to add about Greater Wellington’s wetland restoration or management activities in the region?
Base: All those who left a response (n=232).

2. Increased restoration and management

Many people spoke about their support for wetland management and restoration and a desire to see more done, faster. Below are verbatim comments to help illustrate this theme.

“Although some restoration efforts have been undertaken, the high rate of wetland loss in the Wellington region indicates that the scale and speed of restoration efforts need to be further increased.” [Wellington, 20 - 29 years, know a fair amount]

“I’m disappointed with the management of the wetland by Plimmerton which is getting damaged by the new subdivision.” [Porirua, 40 - 49 years, know a little]

“Make it a high priority to protect especially when it comes to development for housing and industry. There are many areas to build that are less important than wetlands.” [Upper Hutt, 70 - 79 years, know a fair amount]

“Provide policy support, supervise whether wetland restoration projects meet national environmental protection standards, and be responsible for long-term monitoring of wetland ecosystems.” [Wellington, 20 - 29 years, know a little]

“There is significant development happening in surrounding suburbs and the management of the negative impacts of this doesn’t appear to be occurring both from council and the developers.” [Porirua, 40 - 49 years, know a little]

“There’s room for improvement in wetland restoration and management. The current efforts seem to focus mainly on large scale wetlands, while some smaller, fragmented wetlands are being overlooked. These smaller areas also play a crucial role in the local ecosystem. It would be great if resources could be allocated more evenly to ensure comprehensive protection.” [Wellington, 20 - 29 years, know a lot]

“They need to carry out repairs to erosion in the wetland areas before it gets too bad and ends up costing excessive money or impact the ability of residents to enjoy these natural treasures. Need to fix earlier and respect the access of rate paying wellingtonians as their mandate to serve the community entails.” [Porirua, 20 - 29 years, know a little]

“To keep taking an active survey of them to remove any rubbish etc. so they aren’t clogged up.” [Porirua, 60 - 69 years, know a little]

“Wetlands provide a variety of ecosystem services, including water filtration, flood control, biodiversity habitats and cultural values. Rehabilitation and management activities should value these services and strive to protect and enhance them.” [Wellington, 30 - 39 years, know a little]

Source: Q11. Do you have any comments you would like to add about Greater Wellington’s wetland restoration or management activities in the region?

Base: All those who left a response (n=232).

3. Positive comments about work done so far

Many people simply acknowledged the good work being done and encourage Greater Wellington to keep-it-up. Below are verbatim comments to help illustrate this theme.

"It's great that over the last 20 years or so action is being taken to manage and supervise restoration in the area. The public and residents have also been encouraged to do what they can to help in the cause." [Kāpiti Coast, 80 years and over, know a fair amount]

"I think they have been proactive in wetland restoration in our area, and I like that they involve community groups, including schools." [Kāpiti Coast, 70 - 79 years, know a little]

"Keep up the good work! From an ex-farming background." [Masterton, 80 years and over, know a fair amount]

"Great job on involving the community in wetland restoration. It boosts local awareness and pride. The scientific monitoring of restored wetlands is impressive. It ensures long - term success." [Lower Hutt, 30 - 39 years, know a lot]

"Appreciate the efforts in native plant restoration. It's a great step for biodiversity. Community involvement initiatives are wonderful. They enhance local awareness." [Lower Hutt, 20 - 29 years, know a fair amount]

"Really glad they are doing it and supporting landowners to do it too."
[Wellington, 20 - 29 years, know a lot]

"The wetland restoration and management activities in Greater Wellington have been quite remarkable. The efforts to replant native species have visibly transformed some of the wetlands. I've noticed an increase in the number of native birds and other wildlife returning to these areas, which is a great sign of a healthy ecosystem being restored. It's heartening to see the positive impact on biodiversity." [Wellington, 20 - 29 years, know a fair amount]

"GWR responded to my community's initiative and provided my community with rat traps and advice on management of surrounding streams. Very helpful but low profile due to limited funds." [Kāpiti Coast, 80 years and over, know a little]

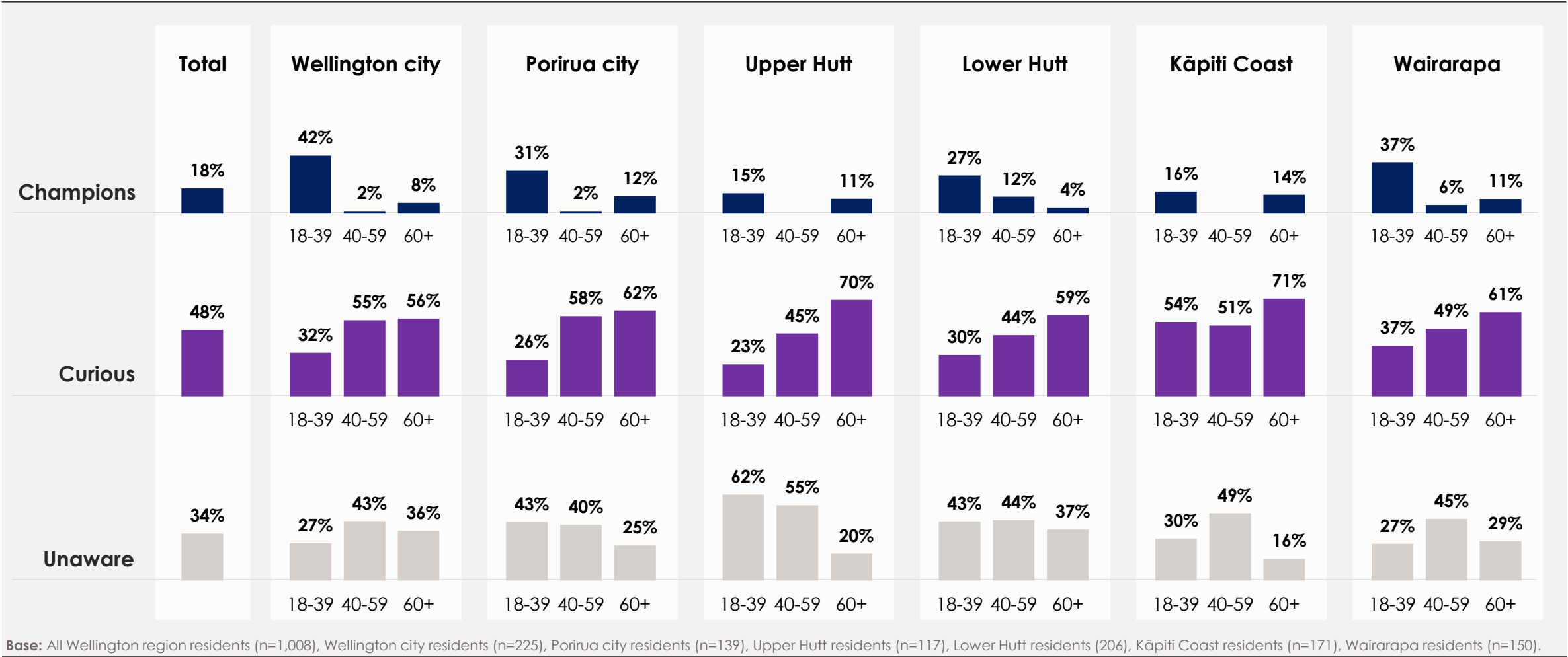
"They are doing a good job with coordinating resources with local iwi and local community groups to help replant and restore wetlands." [Wellington, 20 - 29 years, know a fair amount]

Source: Q11. Do you have any comments you would like to add about Greater Wellington's wetland restoration or management activities in the region?
Base: All those who left a response (n=232).

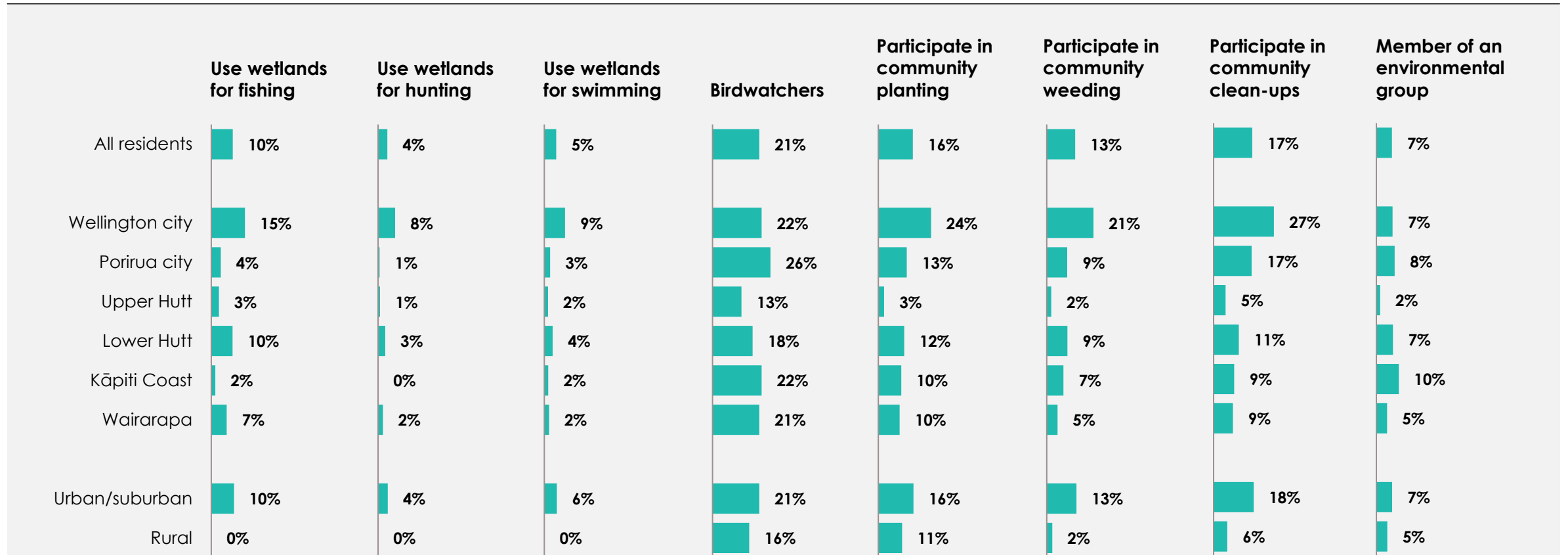
An aerial photograph of a winding river or stream flowing through a dense, green forest. The river's path is dark and contrasts sharply with the vibrant green of the surrounding trees. The forest appears thick and healthy, with varying shades of green indicating different types of vegetation or perhaps the play of light and shadow. The river meanders from the upper left towards the lower right, with several loops and turns.

Appendix

Wetland segments – detailed demographic analysis



Environmental engagement



Source: D1. In the past year have you used wetlands to do any of the following activities? D2. In the past year have you participated in any of the following? D3. Are you a member of an environmental community group?
Base: All Wellington region residents (n=1,008), Wetland fishers (n=75), Wetland hunters (n=28), Wetland swimmers (n=39), Birdwatchers (n=207), Community planters (n=129), Community weeders (n=100), Community cleaners (n=143), Environmental group members (n=70).

Greater Wellington's Community Segments

Greater Wellington Community Segments		Wellington city (n=225)	Porirua city (n=139)	Upper Hutt (n=117)	Lower Hutt (n=206)	Kāpiti Coast (n=171)	Wairarapa (n=150)	Urban/ suburban (n=934)	Rural (n=74)
	Total (n=1,008)								
NETT: INFLUENCERS	42%	46%	35%	40%	36%	46%	39%	42%	44%
Green Politicals	14%	19%	8%	12%	10%	15%	9%	14%	11%
Green Socials	11%	11%	8%	5%	9%	17%	10%	11%	10%
Spiritually Connected	4%	2%	6%	4%	7%	3%	2%	4%	2%
Outdoors	14%	14%	12%	18%	10%	11%	18%	13%	22%
NETT: MASS SUPPORT	49%	44%	60%	52%	51%	45%	51%	49%	46%
Willing & Able	16%	19%	15%	10%	16%	14%	14%	17%	13%
Reluctants	18%	15%	24%	16%	23%	18%	18%	18%	16%
Out of my control	14%	10%	21%	26%	12%	14%	19%	14%	17%
NETT: AVOIDERS	10%	10%	6%	8%	13%	9%	10%	10%	10%
Denialists	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%	7%	5%	5%	6%
Not for me	2%	3%	1%	2%	4%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Over It	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	1%	4%	2%	2%

Source: D5. Here are some descriptions of how different people feel about the environment. Please select the description that best matches how you relate to the environment personally.

Base: See chart for base sizes.

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