



INFORMATION ACCESS - COMMUNITY STUDY REPORT

OFFICE OF THE AUSTRALIAN INFORMATION COMMISSIONER › AUG 2025

fiftyfive5

Part of **Accenture** Song



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SECTION 1

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY



The **main objective** of the study is to explore public awareness and experiences of information access rights among the general public, and to inform strategic decisions that promote positive engagement with the relevant jurisdictions and agencies.

2025 marks the first wave of the survey managed by Fiftyfive5, following many years under Woolcott Research.

With this transition, the study has undergone some changes, meaning that results are not always directly comparable with previous years.

Key changes include:

- **Methodology:** transition from CATI to online surveys
- **Sample sizes:** significantly increased to improve robustness
- **Questionnaire alignment:** consistent wording and answer options across jurisdictions, where relevant and possible
- **Question and code frames:** revised to ensure clarity, ease of response, and suitability for online completion

Six individual surveys were conducted — one for each jurisdiction. While each survey was run separately, the alignment of questionnaires allows for comparisons across most questions between jurisdictions.

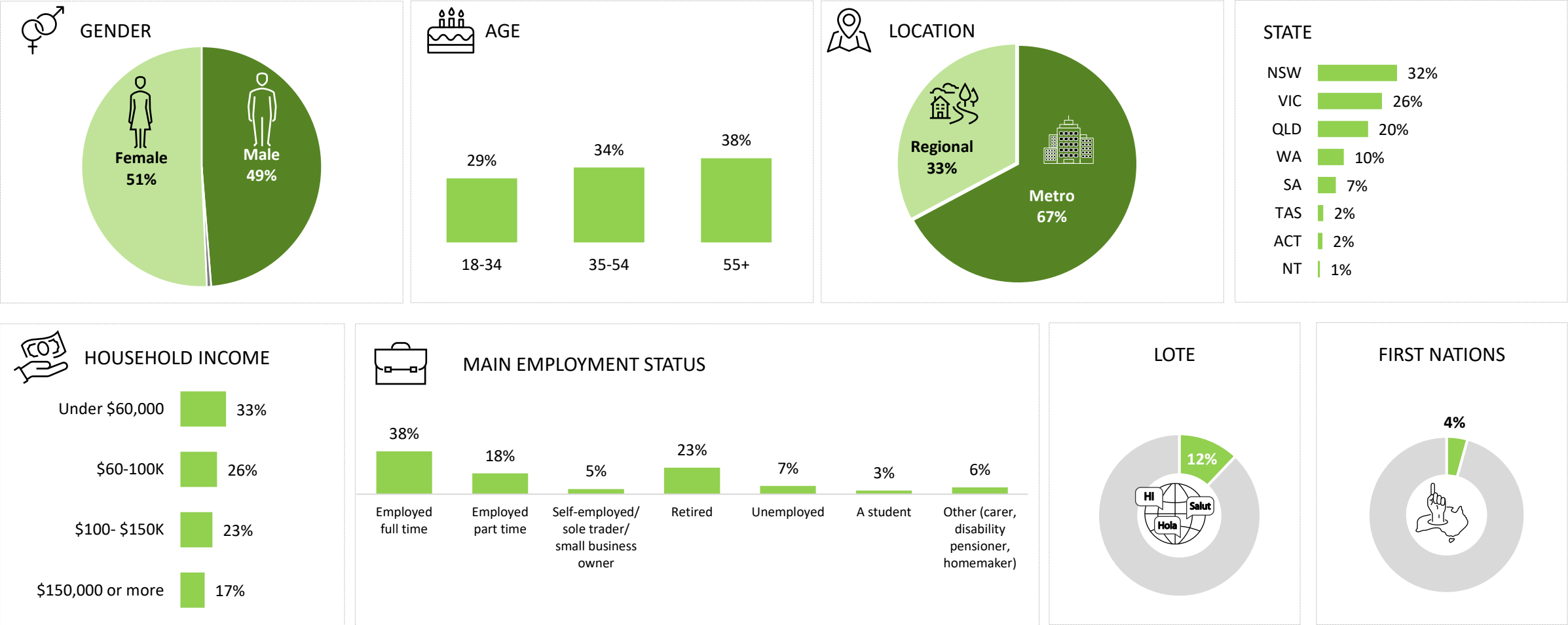
Each survey was conducted online and took **approx. 5-10 minutes**, depending on awareness and previous experiences.

For each jurisdiction, we **targeted a representative sample** by age, gender, and metro vs regional proportions. For the Federal survey state/ territory proportions were also considered.

Following fieldwork, each jurisdiction’s **results were weighted** proportionately to their own population data to ensure representativeness of the findings within each jurisdiction.

Jurisdictions	Final sample, n=
Federal	1,098
NSW	916
VIC	903
QLD	919
WA	929
ACT	910

TO ENSURE A SAMPLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION, WE USED ABS DATA TO GUIDE SAMPLING AND APPLIED POST-FIELDWORK WEIGHTING TO CORRECT FOR ANY IMBALANCES

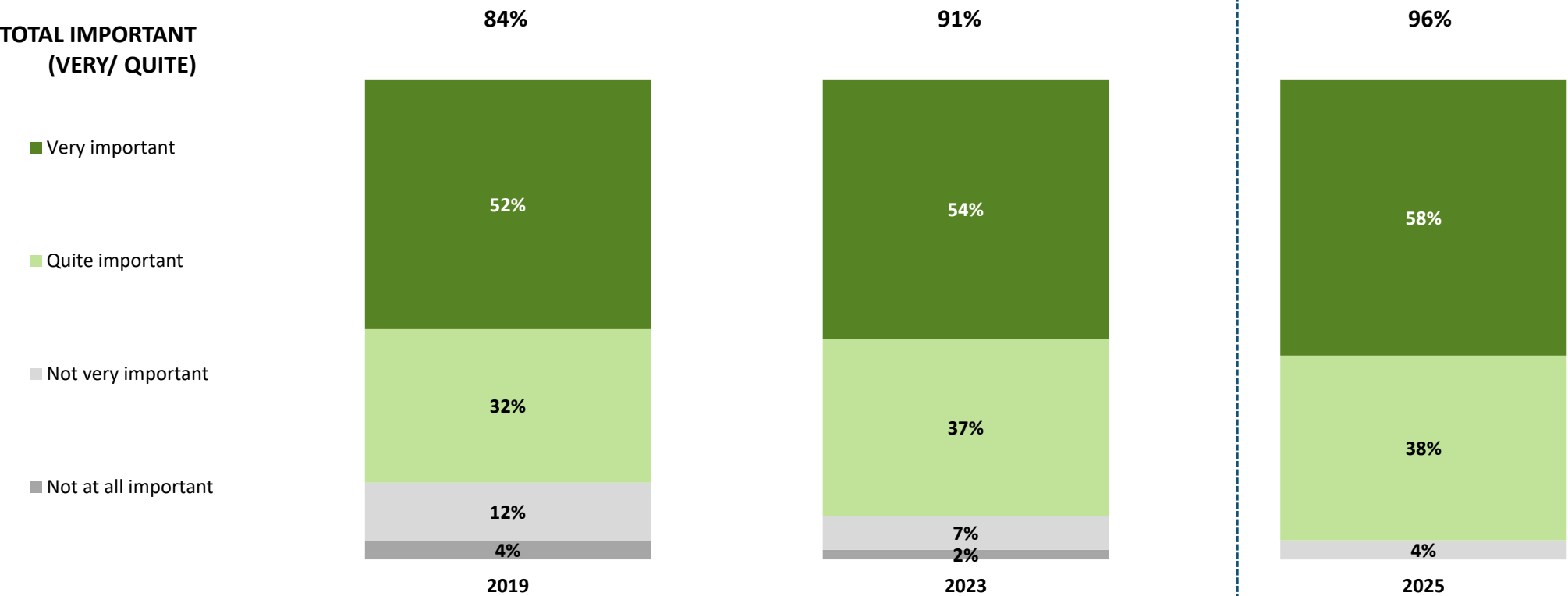


SECTION 2

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES TO ACCESSING GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

AN INCREASE SINCE 2019, ALMOST ALL BELIEVE THE RIGHT TO ACCESS ANY GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION AS IMPORTANT, INCLUDING OVER HALF (58%) WHO FIND IT VERY IMPORTANT

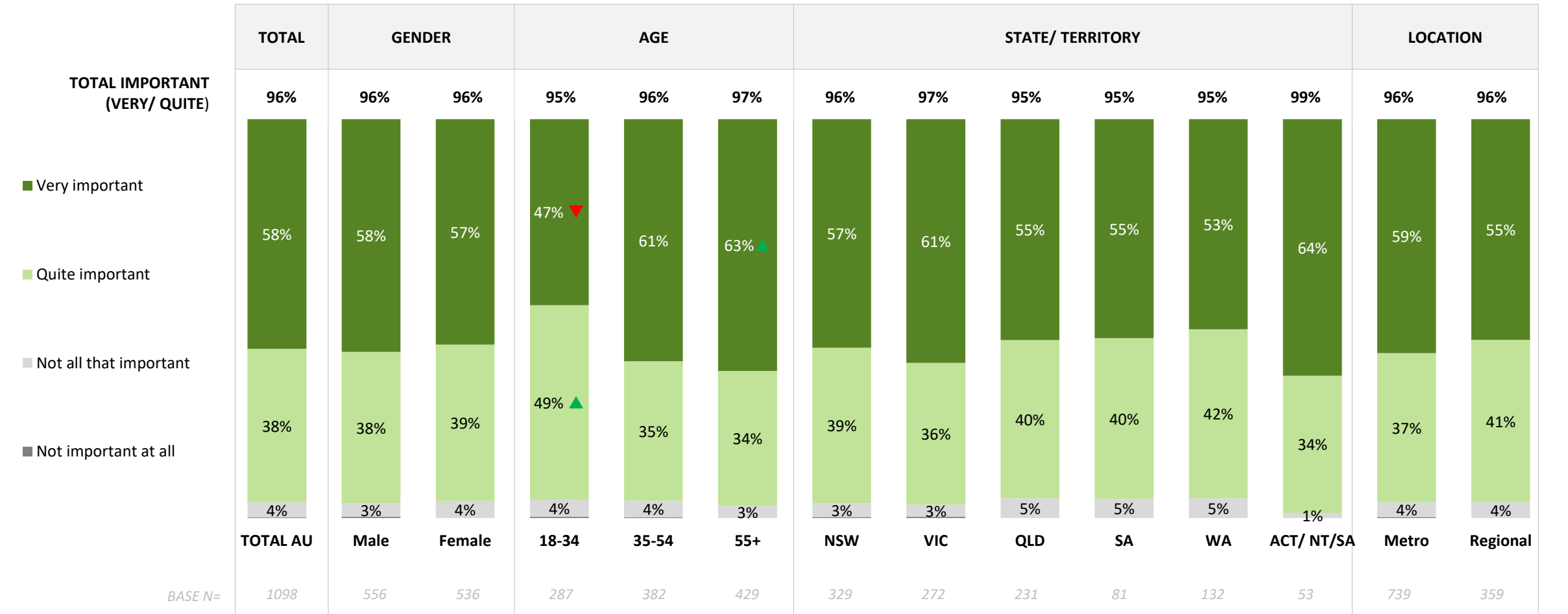
How important do you believe it is to have the right to access any government-held information?



Results should be interpreted with caution, as changes to the methodology in 2025 might have influenced results

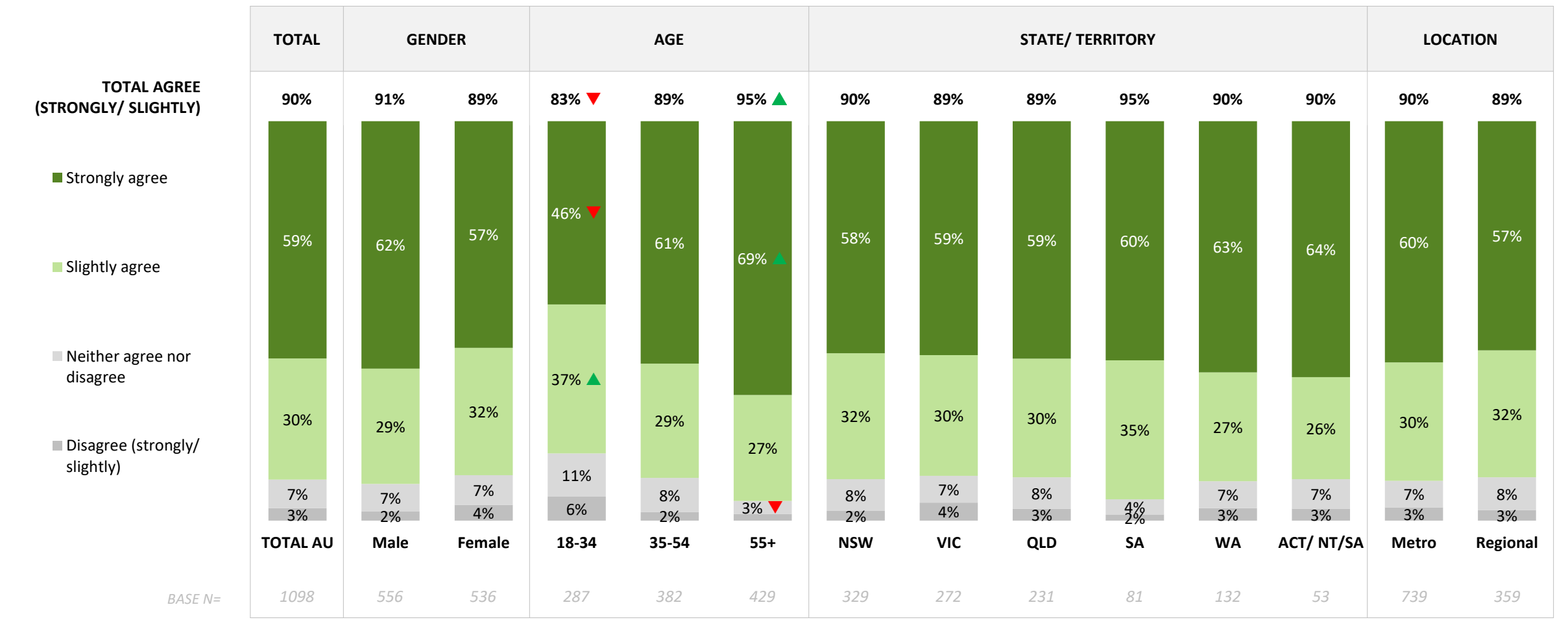
ALL GROUPS, REGARDLESS OF AGE, GENDER, OR LOCATION, BELIEVE THAT THE RIGHT TO ACCESS GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT, ALTHOUGH THE PROPORTION OF RATING IT ‘VERY IMPORTANT’ DROPS TO 47% AMONGST THOSE AGED 18-34 YEARS

How important do you believe it is to have the right to access any government-held information?



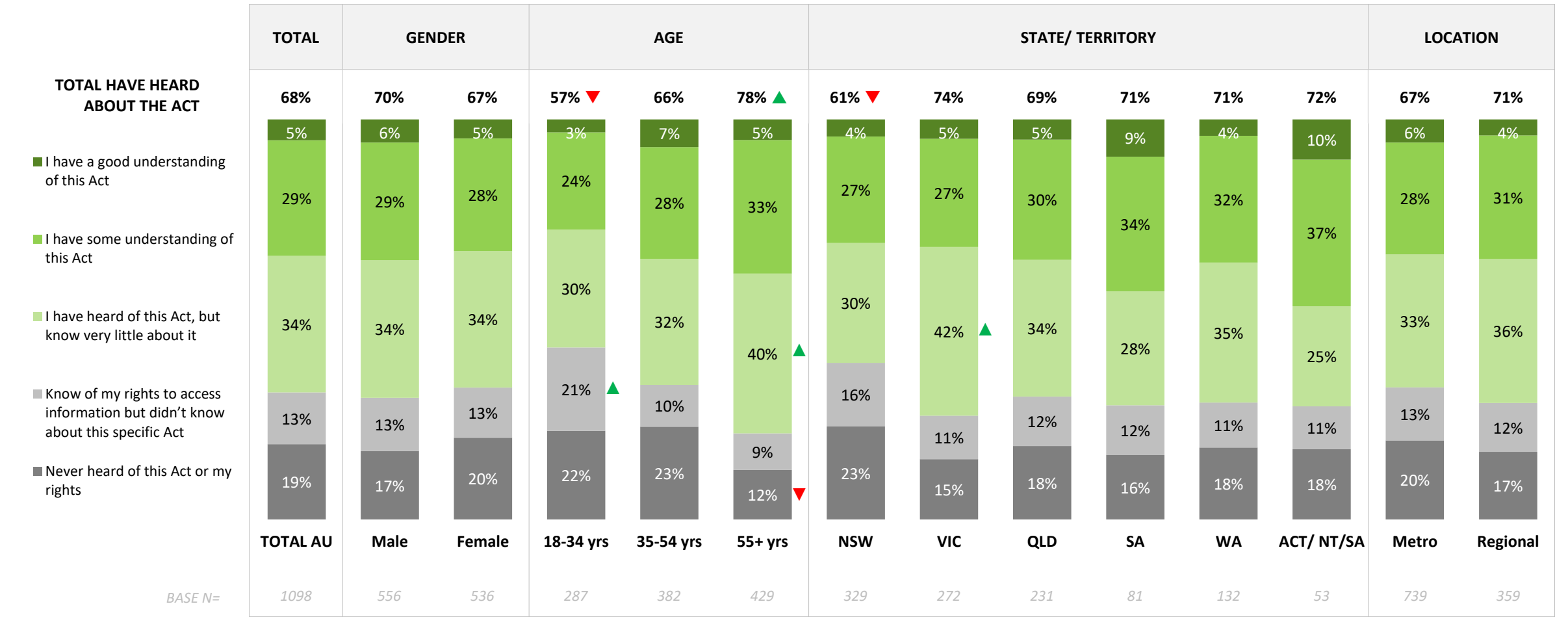
THE LARGE MAJORITY (90%) AGREE THAT ALLOWING PUBLIC ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION IS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY – WITH OLDER GENERATIONS SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO AGREE

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



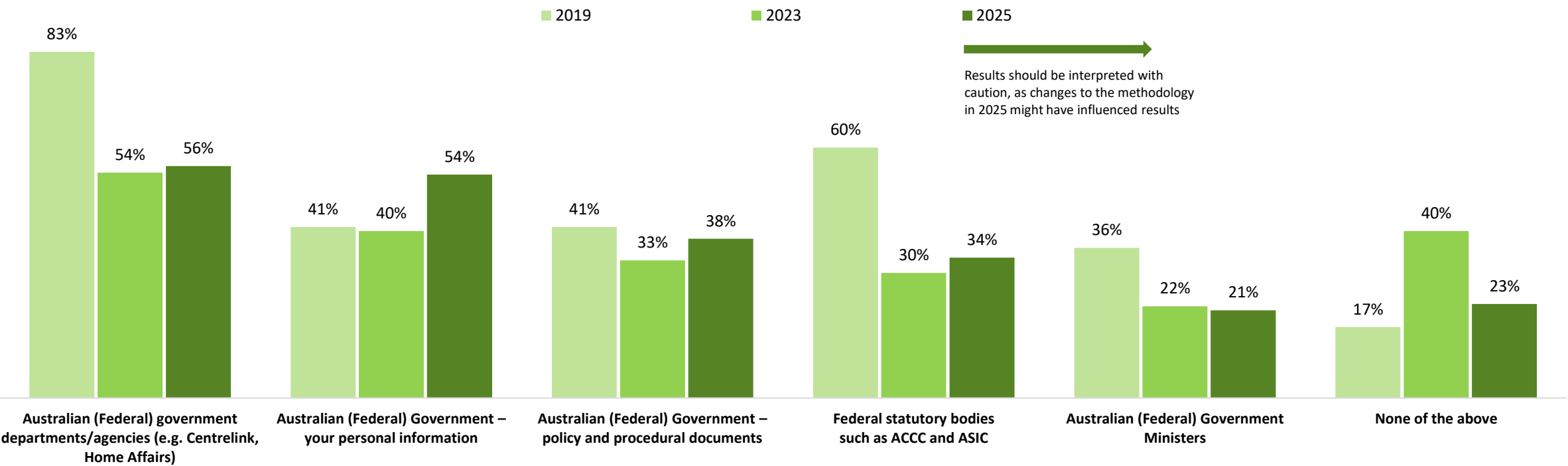
ALTHOUGH OVER 2 IN 3 HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982 (CTH), UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT COVERS IS LIMITED, AS 2 IN 3 EITHER KNOW VERY LITTLE OR NEVER HEARD ABOUT IT

Are you aware that the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) gives the public the right to access information held by the Federal Government and Federal Government agencies?



NEARLY 1 IN 4 WERE UNAWARE OF THEIR RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM SPECIFIC GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS. AWARENESS OF THE RIGHT TO ACCESS PERSONAL INFORMATION FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS INCREASED, BUT RECOGNITION FOR OTHER ORGANISATIONS REMAINED UNCHANGED

From which of the following organisations are you aware that you have the right to access information under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)?



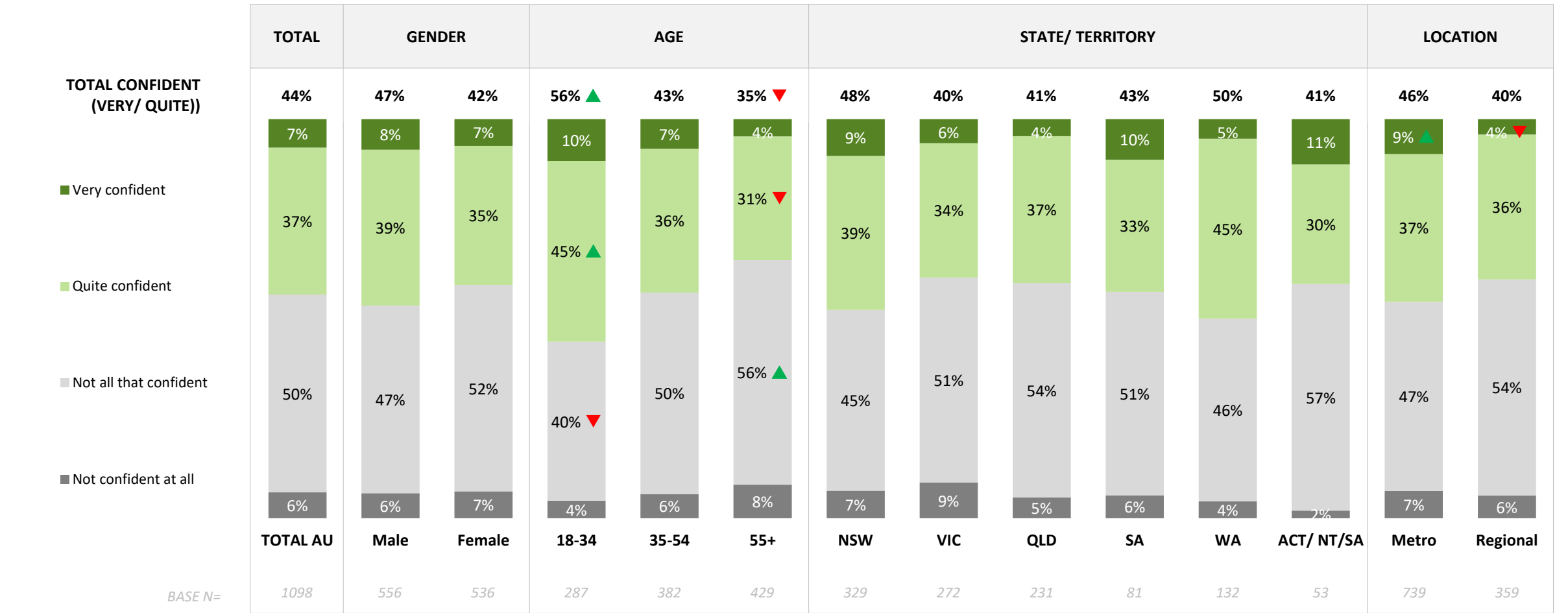
WHILE OVERALL 23% WERE UNAWARE THAT THEY COULD ACCESS INFORMATION FROM THESE ENTITIES, THE LOWEST LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE RELATED TO ACCESSING INFORMATION FROM MINISTERS AND FEDERAL STATUTORY BODIES

From which of the following organisations are you aware that you have the right to access information under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)?

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	ACT/NT/SA	Metro	Regional
Australian (Federal) government departments/agencies (e.g. Centrelink, Home Affairs)	<div></div> 56%	55%	57%	45%▼	54%	65%▲	56%	56%	54%	60%	53%	57%	55%	57%
Australian (Federal) Government – your personal information	<div></div> 54%	55%	52%	45%▼	53%	61%▲	51%	53%	57%	54%	53%	62%	54%	53%
Australian (Federal) Government – policy and procedural documents	<div></div> 38%	42%	35%	33%	36%	43%▲	36%	38%	41%	44%	35%	43%	38%	39%
Federal statutory bodies such as ACCC and ASIC	<div></div> 34%	37%	30%	27%▼	34%	38%	32%	31%	37%	38%	34%	38%	35%	32%
Australian (Federal) Government Ministers	<div></div> 21%	25%▲	17%▼	18%	20%	24%	19%	19%	24%	31%	21%	18%	21%	22%
None of the above	<div></div> 23%	21%	24%	28%	21%	20%	22%	22%	26%	21%	23%	14%	21%	26%
	BASE N=	556	536	287	382	429	329	272	231	81	132	53	739	359

LESS THAN HALF (44%) ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982 (CTH) WILL ALLOW THEM ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND AGENCIES. CONFIDENCE IS PARTICULARLY LOW AMONG THOSE AGED 55+ YEARS (35%)

How confident are you that the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) will allow you access to information about how decisions are made by the Federal Government and Federal Government agencies?



ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND HAVING ACCESS TO OWN INFORMATION ARE KEY PUBLIC INTEREST FACTORS TO CONSIDER. HOWEVER, SIGNIFICANT GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES EXIST, WITH 55+ MORE LIKELY TO PRIORITISE FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE

What main public interest factors do you think the Federal Government and Federal Government agencies should take into account when deciding whether to release information?

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	ACT/NT/SA	Metro	Regional
Ensuring that government remains accountable to the people	<div></div> 66%	68%	64%	55% ▼	64%	76% ▲	69%	60%	62%	71%	68%	82%	65%	68%
Providing access to your own information	<div></div> 43%	42%	44%	33% ▼	45%	49% ▲	47%	45%	44%	30%	36%	34%	40% ▼	49% ▲
Ensuring governments are more transparent about their spending	<div></div> 43%	43%	42%	41%	40%	46%	37%	47%	46%	53%	38%	42%	44%	39%
Providing information to promote fairness and justice	<div></div> 33%	34%	33%	37%	33%	30%	34%	31%	33%	29%	39%	28%	33%	33%
Ensuring that public office holders act with integrity	<div></div> 31%	34%	28%	22% ▼	29%	40% ▲	28%	34%	32%	37%	29%	32%	31%	32%
Enabling citizens to obtain better service delivery by government	<div></div> 25%	26%	24%	28%	28%	21%	26%	27%	23%	20%	24%	27%	27%	22%
Ensuring that the public can contribute to significant decisions that affect the community as a whole	<div></div> 21%	17% ▼	24%	26%	20%	18%	20%	18%	24%	20%	24%	22%	21%	19%
Ensuring access to environmental information and decision making	<div></div> 10%	10%	10%	16% ▲	9%	6% ▼	10%	9%	12%	10%	11%	11%	10%	10%
	BASE N=	556	536	287	382	429	329	272	231	81	132	53	739	359

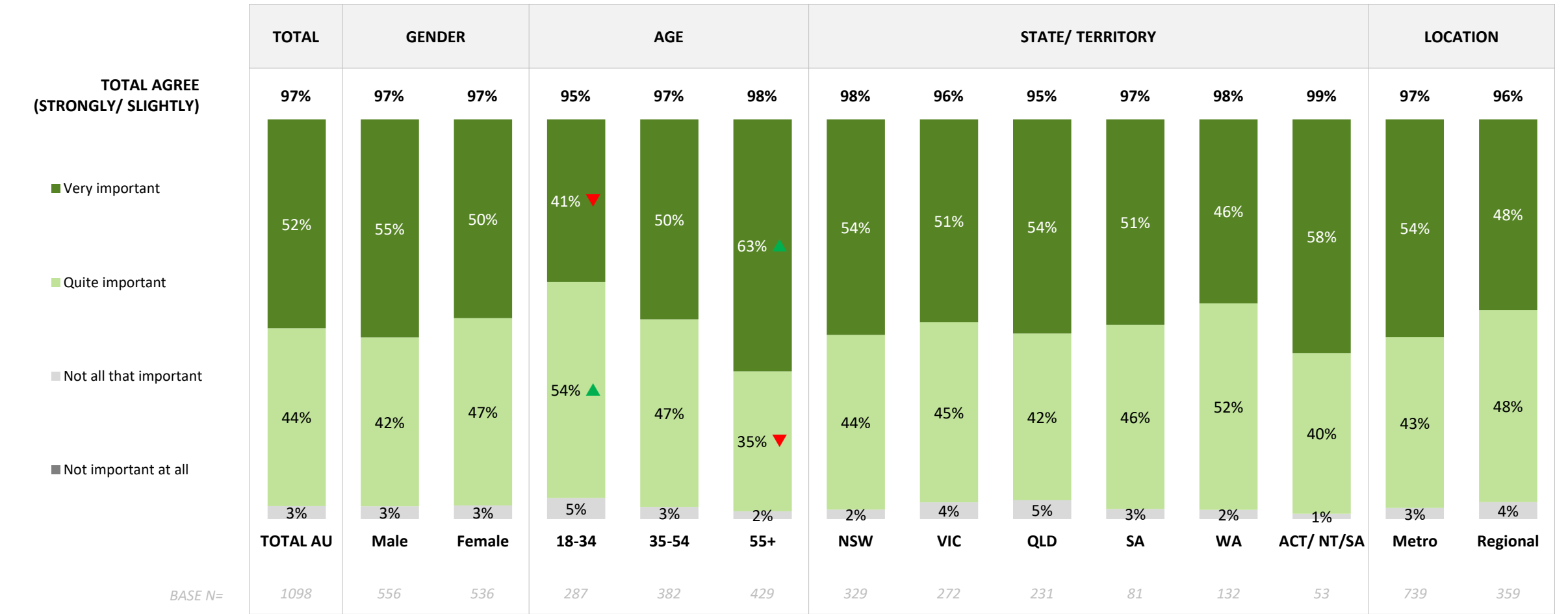
BOTH CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION ARE SEEN AS IMPORTANT TO HAVE AVAILABLE TO THE COMMUNITY WITHOUT NEEDING TO MAKE AN APPLICATION UNDER THE FOI ACT – PARTICULARLY AMONGST THOSE AGED 55+

The Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) states that government information is a national resource. What categories of information should be available to the community without needing to make an application under the FOI Act?

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	ACT/NT/SA	Metro	Regional
Information to promote accountability and integrity in government such as government grants, government contracts and conflicts of interest	<div><div></div></div> 28%	31%	25%	33%	27%	25%	26%	32%	28%	27%	25%	33%	29%	26%
Information to enable the public to participate in government policy and decision, such as environmental information and health data	<div><div></div></div> 16%	15%	16%	24%▲	16%	9%▼	15%	16%	16%	14%	16%	21%	17%	12%
Both of the above	<div><div></div></div> 56%	54%	59%	43%▼	57%	67%▲	59%	53%	57%	59%	58%	46%	54%	62%
	BASE N=	556	536	287	382	429	329	272	231	81	132	53	739	359

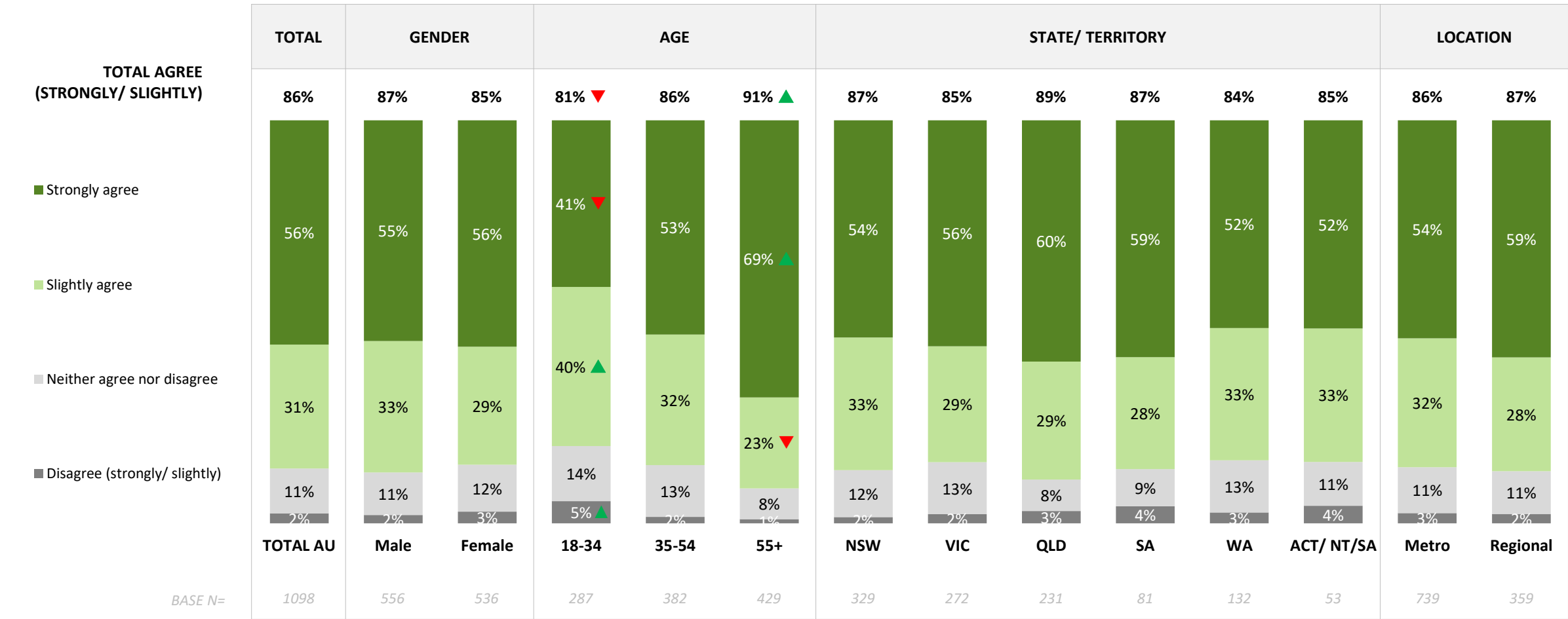
ALMOST ALL CONSIDER HAVING AN INDEPENDENT REGULATOR REPORT ON AN AGENCY PERFORMANCE'S IN MEETING THE COMMUNITY'S RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION AS IMPORTANT, WITH RATINGS OF VERY IMPORTANT SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER AMONGST THOSE AGED 55+

How important is it to have an independent regulator report on an agency performance's in meeting the community's right to access information?



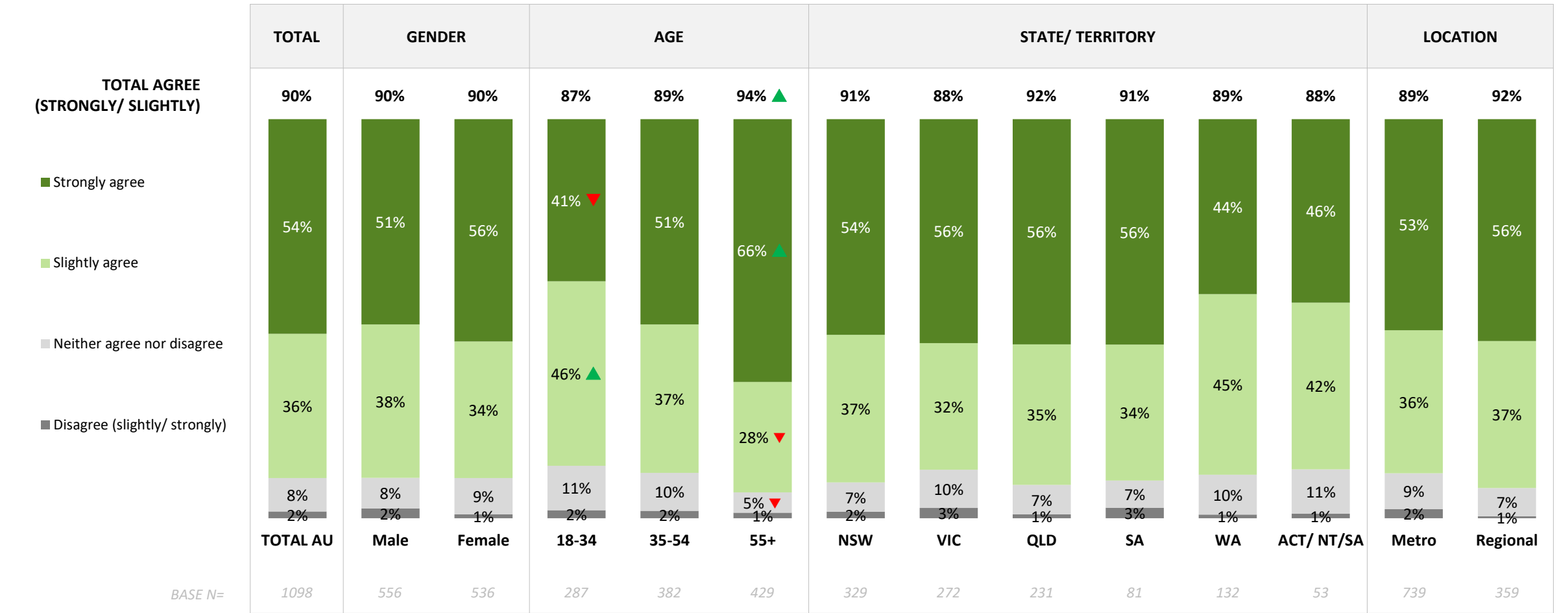
THE MAJORITY (86%) AGREE THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST PUBLICLY REPORT ON ANY TECHNOLOGY USED TO INFORM DECISION MAKING, WITH 56% STRONGLY AGREEING. NOTABLY, THE LEVEL OF AGREEMENT INCREASES SIGNIFICANTLY WITH AGE

To what extent do you agree that the Federal Government and Federal Government agencies must publicly report on any technology used (including AI and automated decision-making) to inform agency decisions that impact individuals?



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS EXPECTED TO PUBLICLY REPORT ON THE INFORMATION THEY MAINTAIN, WITH AGREEMENT ON THIS REQUIREMENT INCREASING SIGNIFICANTLY WITH AGE

To what extent do you agree that the Federal Government and Federal Government agencies should publicly report on the information they maintain (such as data and datasets, policy documents and decision-making records, spending and budgeting documents etc.)?

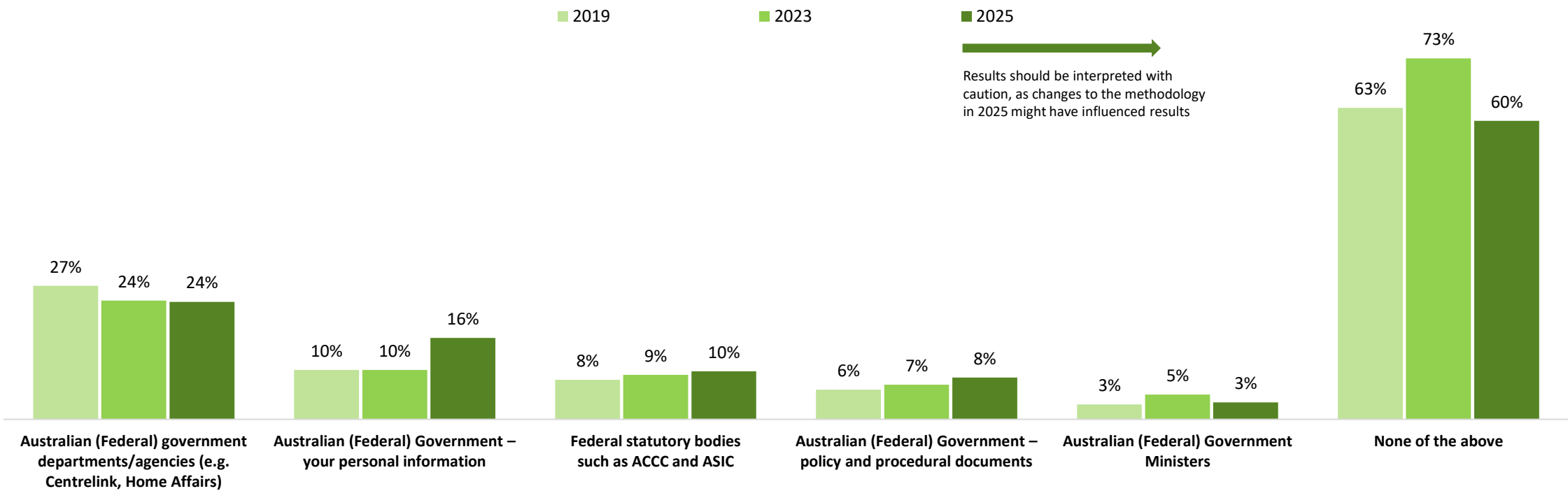


SECTION 3

EXPERIENCES OF ACCESSING GOVERNMENT-HELD INFORMATION

40% TRIED TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS IN THE PAST 3 YEARS, WITH THE BIGGEST INCREASE IN REQUESTING PERSONAL INFORMATION FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Over the past three years, which of the following Federal Government agencies (if any) have you tried to access information from?



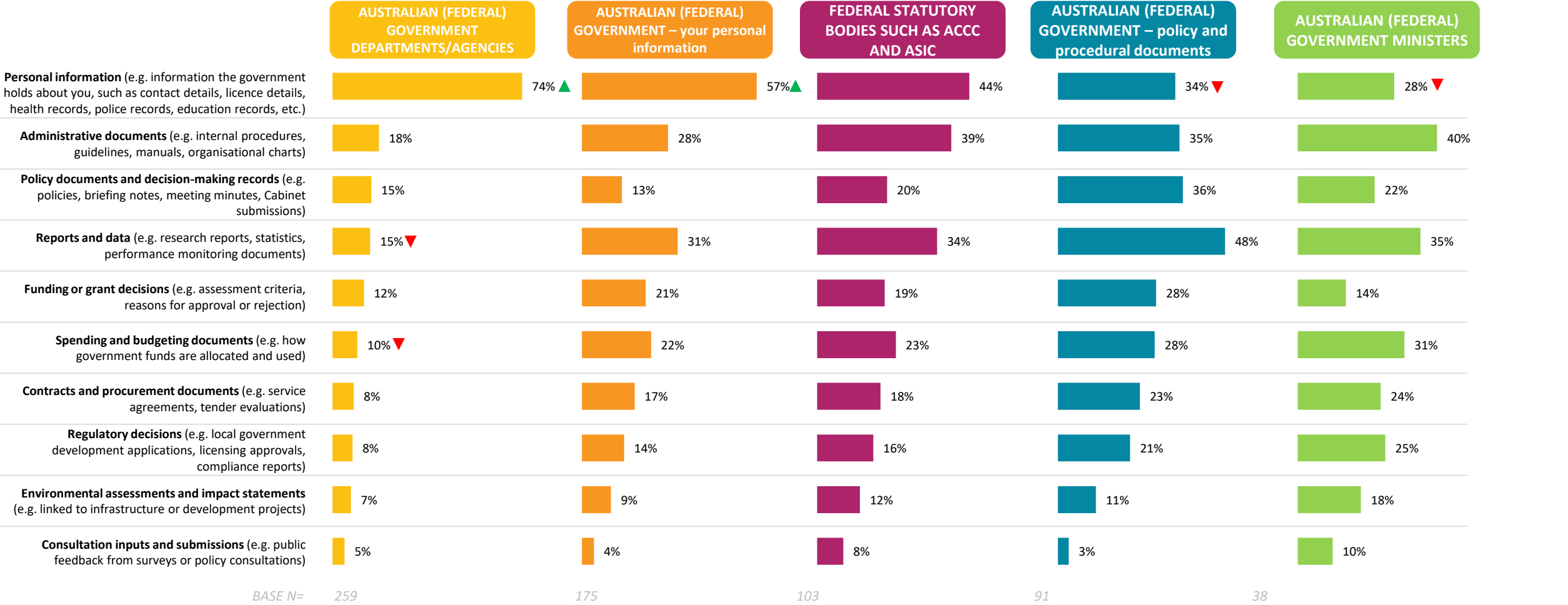
40% TRIED TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, MOSTLY FROM DEPARTMENT AGENCIES OR FOR PERSONAL INFORMATION. DESPITE LOWER AGREEMENT ON THE NEED FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION SHARING, ACCESS REQUESTS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER AMONG 18–34-YEAR-OLDS

Over the past three years, which of the following Federal Government agencies (if any) have you tried to access information from?

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	ACT/NT/SA	Metro	Regional
Australian (Federal) government departments/agencies (e.g. Centrelink, Home Affairs)	<div></div> 24%	25%	22%	25%	24%	23%	28%	23%	20%	23%	21%	22%	24%	24%
Australian (Federal) Government – your personal information	<div></div> 16%	18%	15%	30% ▲	16%	7% ▼	17%	13%	20%	16%	16%	23%	18%	14%
Federal statutory bodies such as ACCC and ASIC	<div></div> 10%	12%	7%	18% ▲	9%	4% ▼	8%	11%	9%	10%	7%	19%	11%	7%
Australian (Federal) Government – policy and procedural documents	<div></div> 8%	10%	7%	18% ▲	7%	2% ▼	9%	7%	10%	9%	6%	10%	10%	6%
Australian (Federal) Government Ministers	<div></div> 3%	5%	2%	6% ▲	3%	2%	3%	6%	3%	2%	3%	2%	4%	3%
None of the above	<div></div> 60%	57%	64%	46% ▼	59%	73% ▲	57%	62%	61%	63%	65%	57%	58%	65%
BASE N=		556	536	287	382	429	329	272	231	81	132	53	739	359

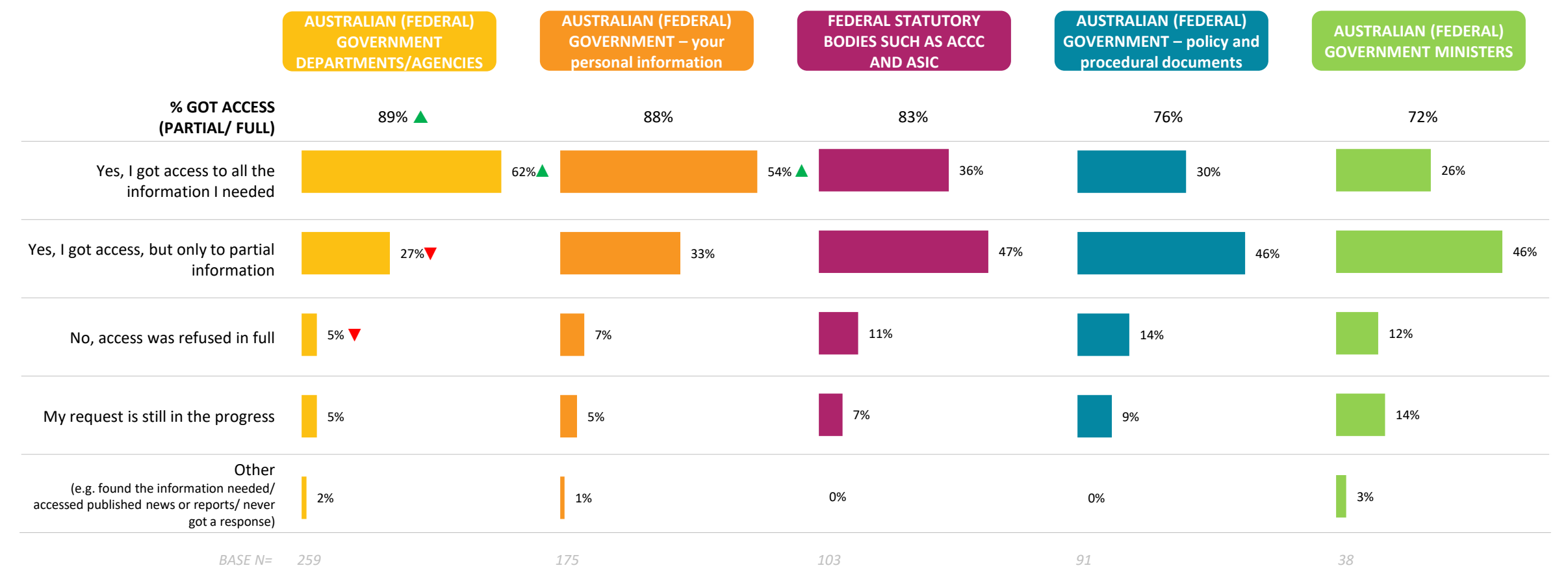
PERSONAL INFORMATION, REPORTS AND DATA, AND ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS ARE AMONG THE MOST ACCESSED DOCUMENTS. ADDITIONALLY, POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING DOCUMENTS ARE ALSO KEY

What types of information were you trying to access from the following Federal Government agency?



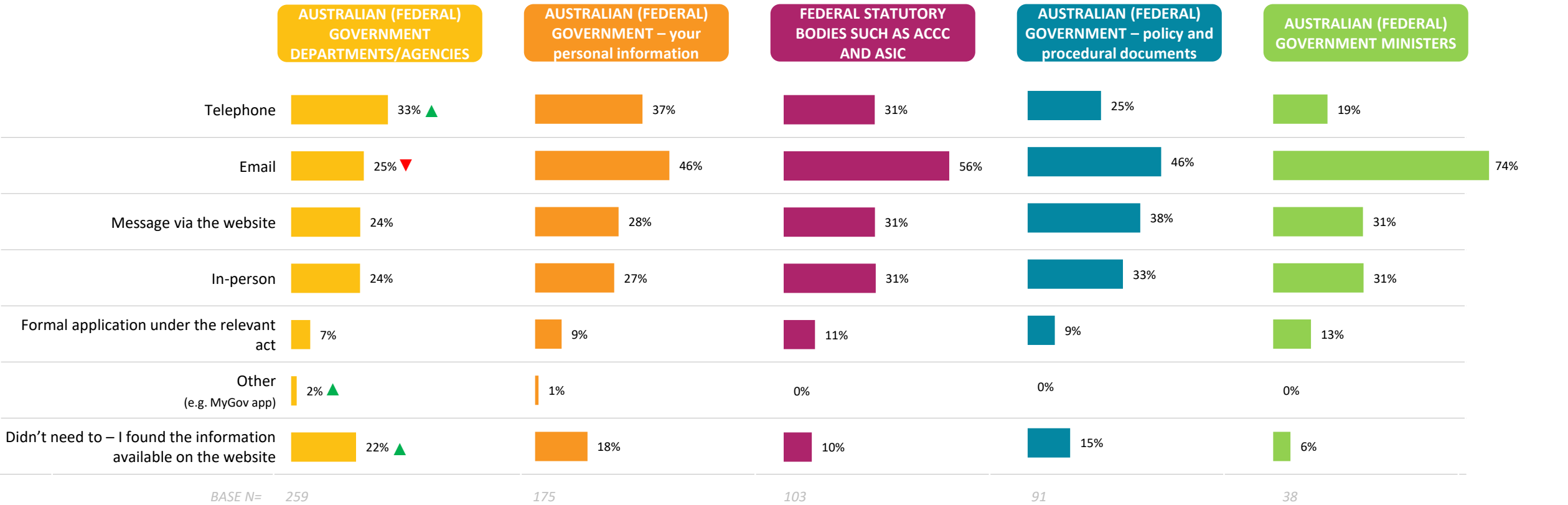
MOST RECEIVED EITHER FULL OR PARTIAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION WHEN REQUESTED. HOWEVER, MANY ONLY GOT PARTIAL ACCESS, PARTICULARLY FROM STATUTORY BODIES, POLICY AND PROCEDURAL DOCUMENTS, AND MINISTERS

Did you access the information successfully from the following Federal Government agency?



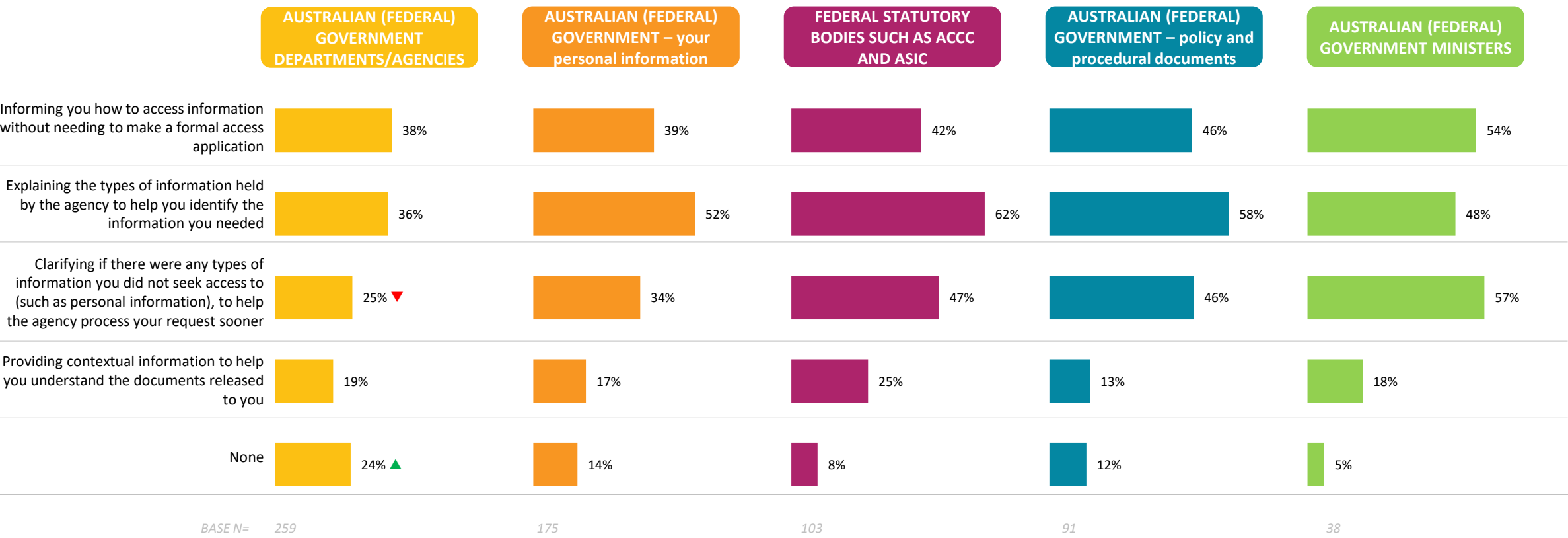
EMAIL WAS THE MOST COMMON CHANNEL USED TO COMMUNICATE WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, ALTHOUGH TELEPHONE, WEBSITE MESSAGING AND IN-PERSON INTERACTIONS WERE ALSO COMMON

What channels did you use when communicating with the following Federal Government agency?



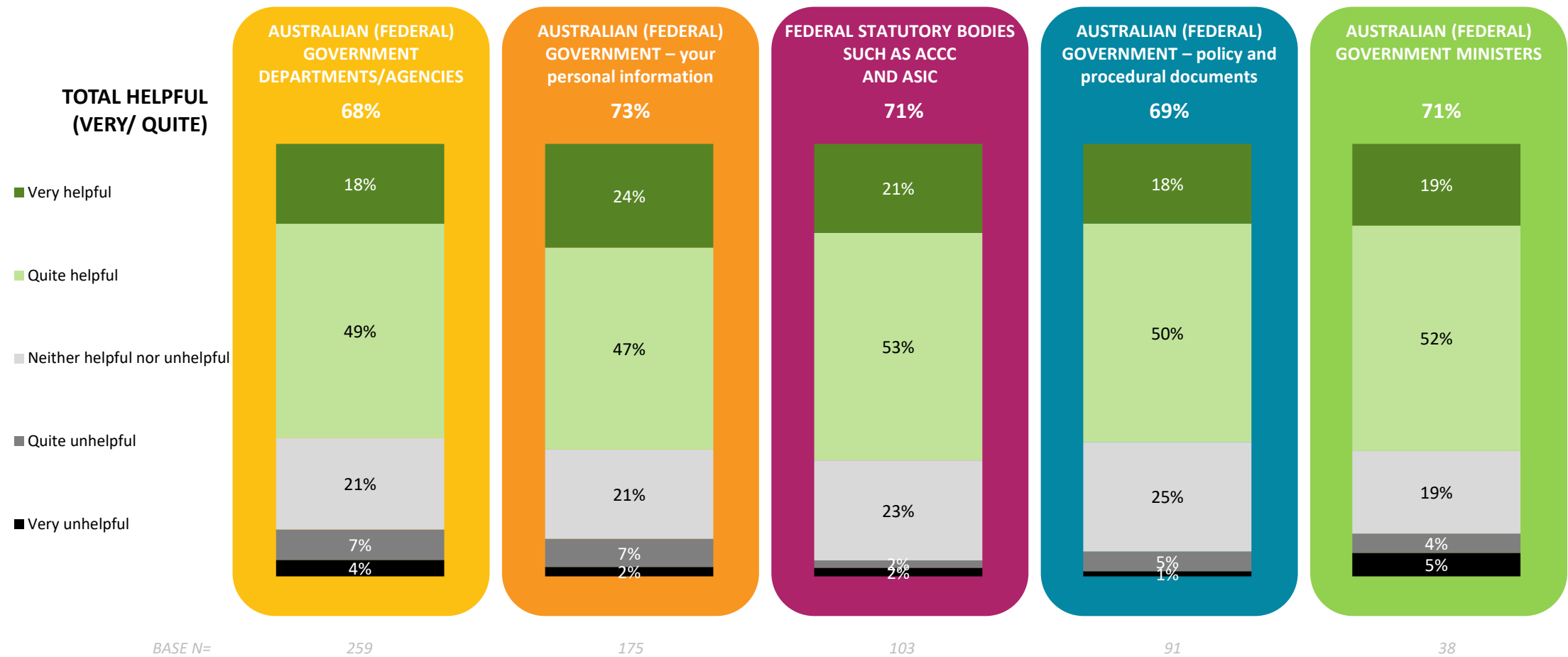
THE MAJORITY RECEIVED ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE FROM THE AGENCIES THEY APPROACHED. THE SUPPORT PROVIDED INCLUDED EXPLANATIONS ABOUT THE TYPE OF INFORMATION HELD, WAYS TO ACCESS THE INFORMATION WITHOUT A FORMAL APPLICATION, AND CLARIFYING OTHER INFORMATION NEEDED

What types of advice and assistance did you receive from the following Federal Government agency?



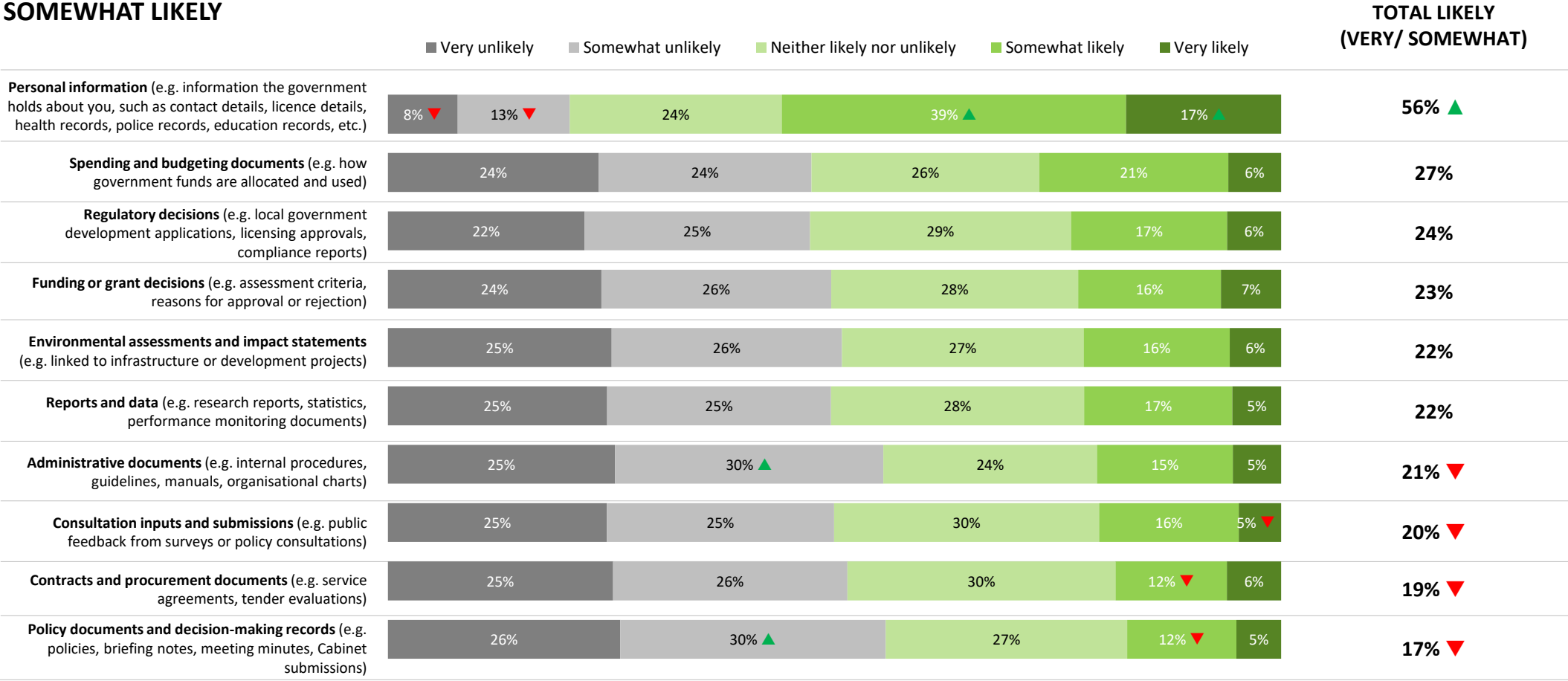
THE MAJORITY PERCEIVED THESE GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS HELPFUL

How helpful were they in providing advice and assistance to you when you tried to access information from the following Federal Government? If you requested information from them multiple times, please answer about the most recent occasion.



OVER HALF ANTICIPATE ACCESSING PERSONAL INFORMATION FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OVER THE NEXT 2 YEARS, WITH OTHER TOPICS SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER ON PEOPLE'S AGENDA











How likely are you to request the following types of Federal Government information over the next 2 years?
 % VERY/ SOMEWHAT LIKELY



THE LIKELIHOOD OF REQUESTING PERSONAL INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IS CONSISTENT THE HIGHEST ACROSS ALL COHORTS. HOWEVER, YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO SEEK INFORMATION ACROSS ALL TOPICS

How likely are you to request the following types of Federal Government information over the next 2 years?

% VERY/ SOMEWHAT LIKELY

		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	ACT/NT/ SA	Metro	Regional
Personal information (e.g. information the government holds about you, such as contact details, licence details, health records, police records, education records, etc.)	 56%	54%	57%	67% ▲	56%	48% ▼	57%	56%	56%	55%	55%	58%	57%	53%
Spending and budgeting documents (e.g. how government funds are allocated and used)	 27%	30%	24%	41% ▲	25%	18% ▼	28%	26%	26%	29%	27%	30%	28%	24%
Regulatory decisions (e.g. local government development applications, licensing approvals, compliance reports)	 24%	27% ▲	20% ▼	33% ▲	24%	16% ▼	24%	21%	22%	23%	26%	32%	26%	19%
Funding or grant decisions (e.g. assessment criteria, reasons for approval or rejection)	 23%	26% ▲	19% ▼	33% ▲	22%	15% ▼	23%	21%	19%	22%	30%	30%	25%	19%
Environmental assessments and impact statements (e.g. linked to infrastructure or development projects)	 22%	26% ▲	18% ▼	35% ▲	20%	14% ▼	24%	18%	18%	23%	26%	37%	24%	18%
Reports and data (e.g. research reports, statistics, performance monitoring documents)	 22%	27% ▲	17% ▼	35% ▲	21%	13% ▼	23%	24%	19%	22%	17%	34%	23%	20%
Administrative documents (e.g. internal procedures, guidelines, manuals, organisational charts)	 21%	24% ▲	17% ▼	32% ▲	23%	10% ▼	22%	17%	21%	26%	16%	31%	23% ▲	15% ▼
Consultation inputs and submissions (e.g. public feedback from surveys or policy consultations)	 20%	23%	18%	31% ▲	21%	12% ▼	22%	17%	20%	18%	22%	27%	22%	18%
Contracts and procurement documents (e.g. service agreements, tender evaluations)	 19%	21%	16%	29% ▲	19%	10% ▼	21%	17%	15%	19%	17%	28%	21%	14%
Policy documents and decision-making records (e.g. policies, briefing notes, meeting minutes, Cabinet submissions)	 17%	19%	16%	27% ▲	20%	7% ▼	17%	17%	17%	18%	14%	27%	20% ▲	12% ▼
BASE N=		556	536	287	382	429	329	272	231	81	132	53	739	359

PEOPLE WOULD PREFER USING AN ONLINE PORTAL/ FORM OR EMAIL IN FUTURE WHEN REQUESTING INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

What would be your preferred way to request access to the information from the relevant Federal Government agency?

			Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	ACT/ NT/ SA	Metro	Regional
Online portal/ form	<div></div>	31%	28%	33%	32%	37%	24% ▼	29%	32%	33%	27%	33%	28%	32%	28%
Email	<div></div>	30%	31%	28%	29%	31%	30%	31%	30%	27%	29%	36%	21%	30%	29%
Message via the website	<div></div>	11%	10%	12%	12%	11%	9%	12%	12%	12%	6%	6%	6%	10%	11%
Formal application under the relevant act	<div></div>	9%	10%	8%	4% ▼	7%	16% ▲	9%	7%	7%	8%	13%	25% ▲	8%	11%
Telephone	<div></div>	9%	9%	9%	10%	7%	10%	9%	10%	7%	17%	5%	5%	9%	9%
In-person	<div></div>	8%	10%	7%	11%	6%	9%	9%	6%	10%	9%	7%	11%	8%	10%
Mail	<div></div>	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	3%	3%	3%	1%	4%	2%	1%
BASE =			556	536	287	382	429	329	272	231	81	132	53	739	359

SECTION 4

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

**AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES:**

The **importance of the right to access government-held information is widely recognised**, with 96% of respondents believing it is important, and 58% considering it very important. This sentiment is consistent across all demographics and jurisdictions, although older age groups (55+ years) are significantly more likely to rate it as very important.

Just over **2 in 3 (68%) have heard about the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)**; however, **understanding of what it covers is limited**, particularly among younger generations.

The **vast majority (86%) agree that the Australian (Federal) Government must publicly report on any technology used** to inform decision-making, and 90% expect the Australian (Federal) Government to publicly report on the **information they maintain**, with agreement on both increasing significantly with age.

EXPERIENCE:

Over the past three years, **40% have attempted to access information** from Federal Government organisations, primarily from **Departments such as Centrelink, Home Affairs, etc.** The most accessed documents included personal information, reports and data, and administrative documents, with most getting at least partial access to information.

Email was the most common method used for most, except for Australian (Federal) Government Departments/ Agencies where telephone contacts were higher. Most received advice and assistance from the agencies they approached, with **around 7 in 10 stating that these organisations were helpful**. However, there was a higher level of unhelpfulness noted for the Australian (Federal) Government Ministers and Departments compared to other organisations.

Looking ahead, **56% anticipate wanting to access personal information** over the next two years – with younger respondents being most likely to request access. Almost equally, **online portal/ form and email are the most preferred methods** for requesting access to information from the Australian (Federal) Government agencies.

These findings suggest a **need for increased efforts to raise awareness about the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)** and to enhance confidence that this legislation allows the public to access information about how decisions are made by the Federal Government and its agencies.

This could involve **education campaigns targeted at the general public** about the act, what it involves – including the types of information available, which organisations hold these and the ways of accessing these sources.

It needs to be considered, however, that with increased awareness, there is a likelihood of increased data and information requests. Therefore, **preparing the different agencies to efficiently deal with these requests** is indispensable.

This can be achieved through **internal communication campaigns**, focusing on the following areas across all agencies to align efficiencies, responsiveness, and helpfulness:

- Enhancing responsiveness to incoming enquiries via efficient processes and channel management
- Enhancing the helpfulness of staff
- Expanding and promoting online communication – including email and online portals (if available) rather than in-person visits and requests

These initiatives could better meet the public's preferences and increase engagement and ease of communication, especially among younger generations.



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