

A decade of perceptions of the New Zealand environment: A focus on water and its management

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Research aims, framework and methods

Aims:

- Monitor NZers' perceptions of resource and environmental issues – something increasingly common in other countries;
- Contribute to improved state of environment reporting – matching perceptions to science can identify gaps/issues;
- Inform policy development – understanding perceptions can help with policy initiatives.

Framework:

- PSR model used by OECD and in MfE environmental reporting programme

Methods:

- Postal Questionnaire, biennially since 2000
- Random sample of 2000 from Electoral Roll
- Maintained a c.40-47% effective response rate

11 natural resources

- Natural environment in towns and cities;
- Air;
- Native land and freshwater plants and animals;
- Native bush and forests;
- Soils;
- Coastal waters and beaches;
- Marine fisheries;
- Rivers and lakes;
- Groundwater;
- Wetlands; and
- Natural environment compared to other developed countries.

Focused topics

2000 natural hazards and preparedness

2002 coastal management, marine recreational fishing

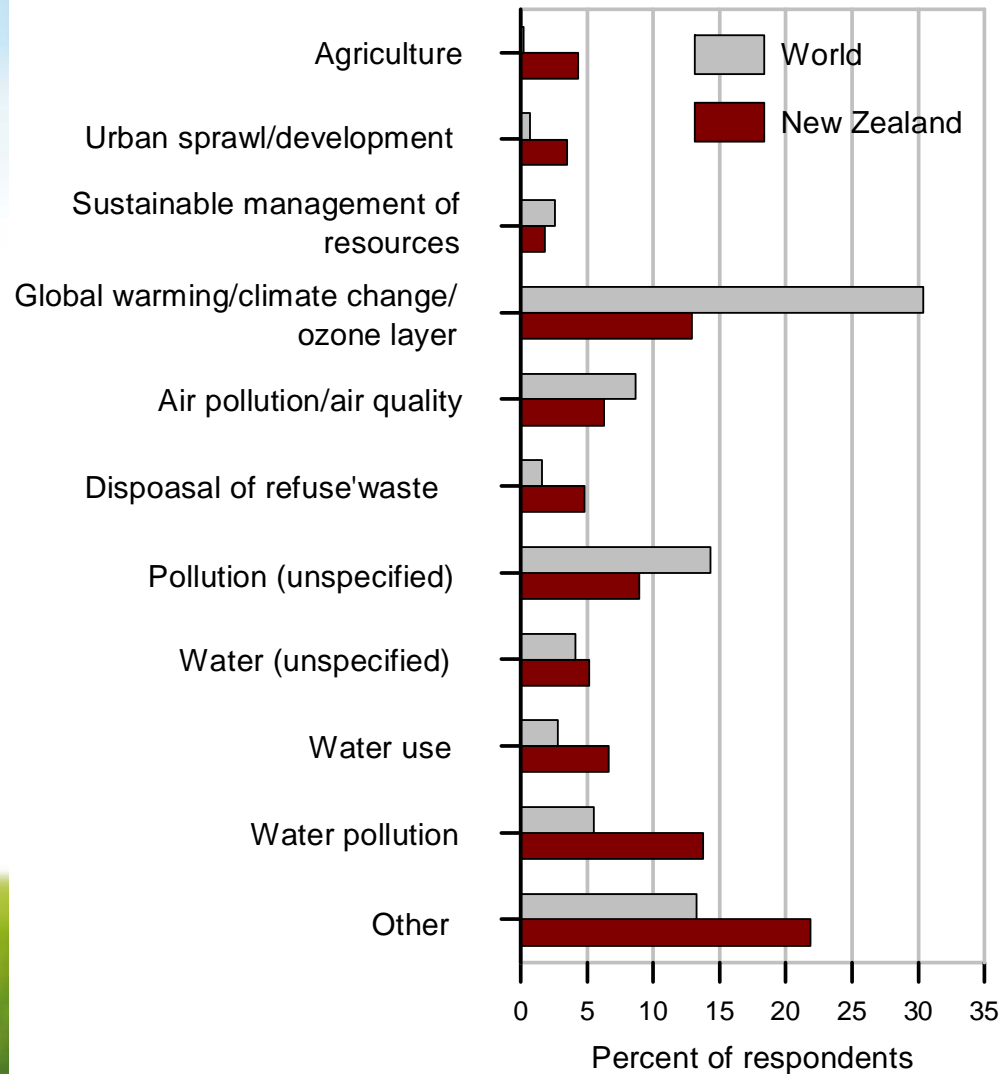
2004 freshwater management, recreational fishing

2006 land transport and their externalities

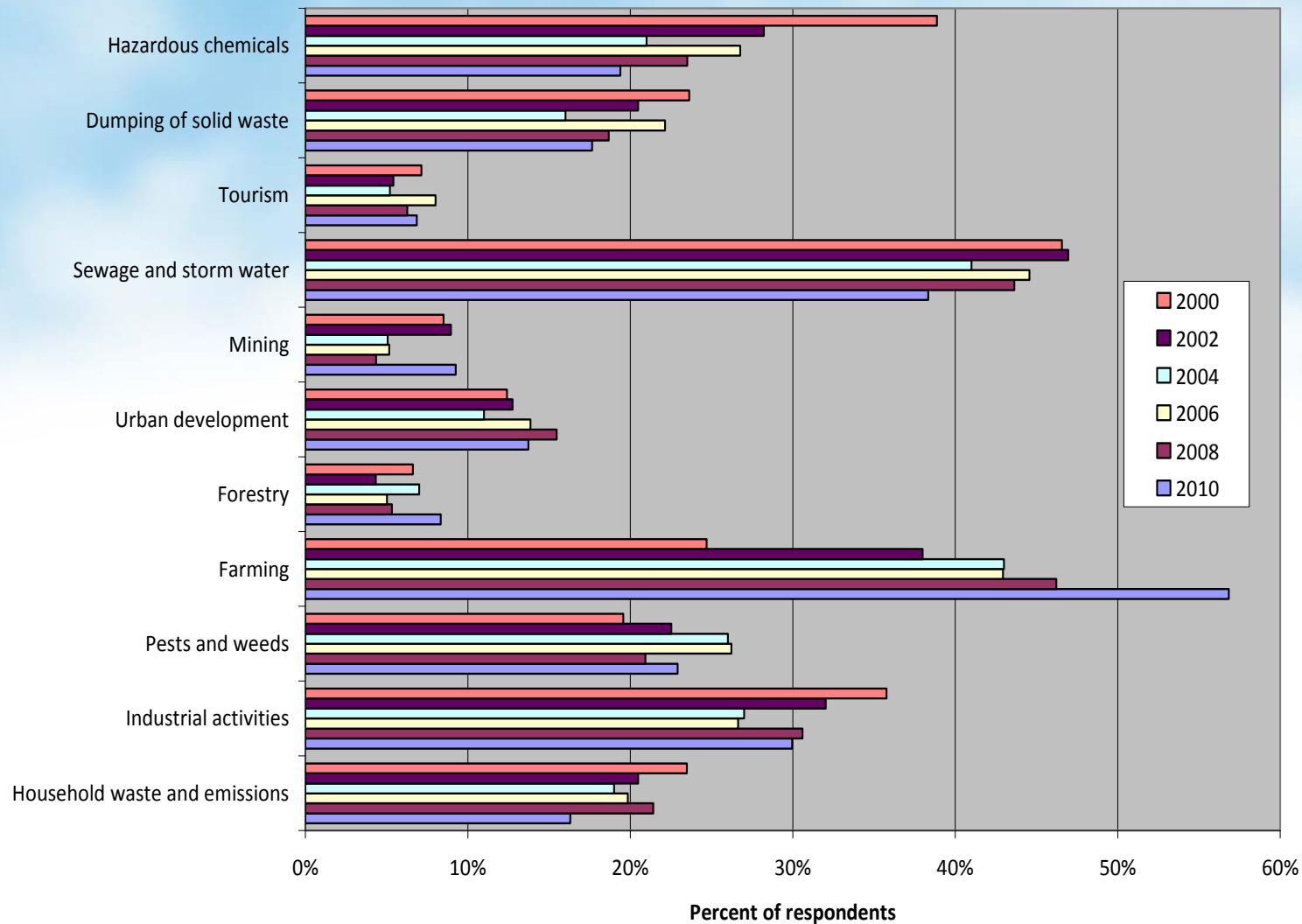
2008 conservation, recreation, freshwater

2010 climate & tourism, freshwater.

Pressures: Most important environmental issue, NZ and world

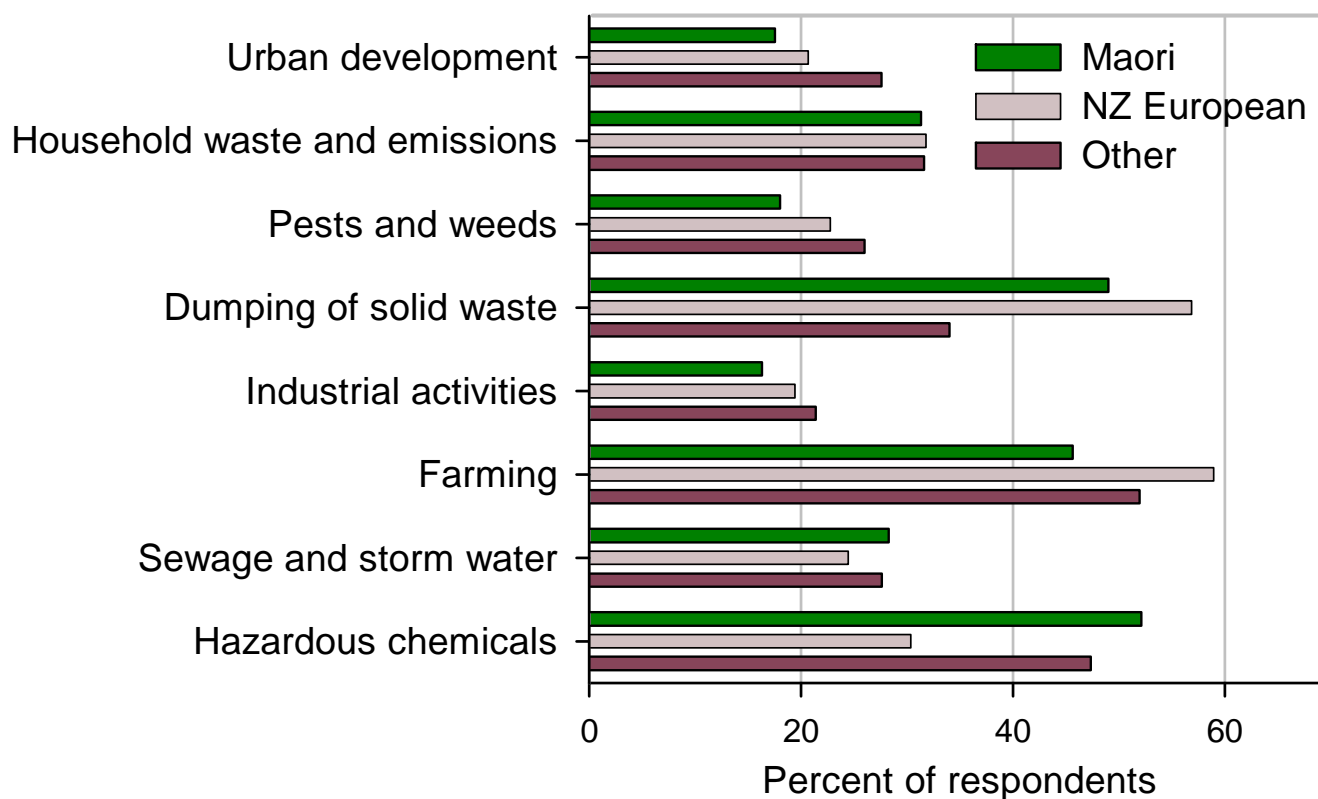


Causes of damage to freshwater

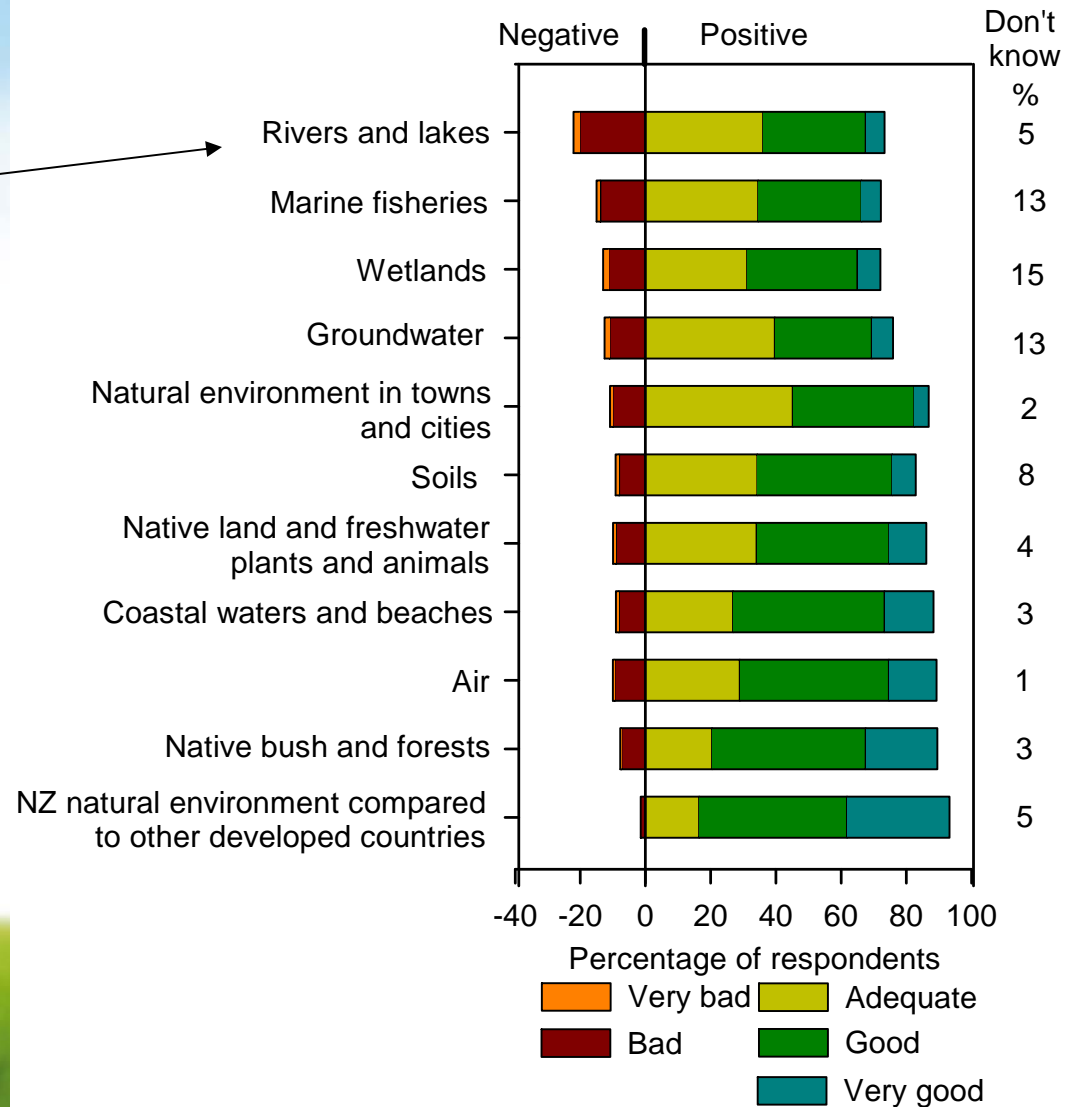


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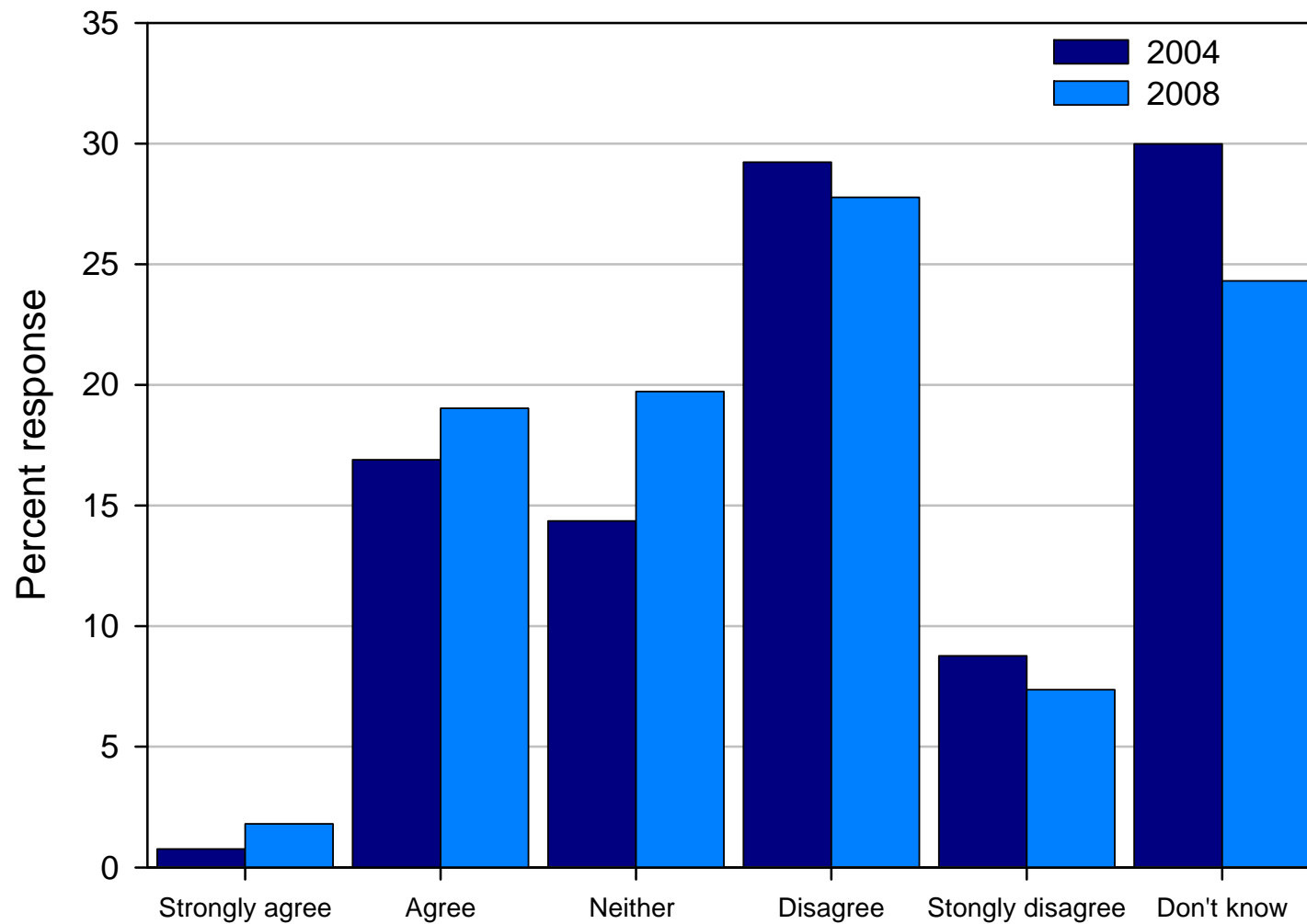
Causes of damage to freshwater, by ethnic group



State of the NZ environment



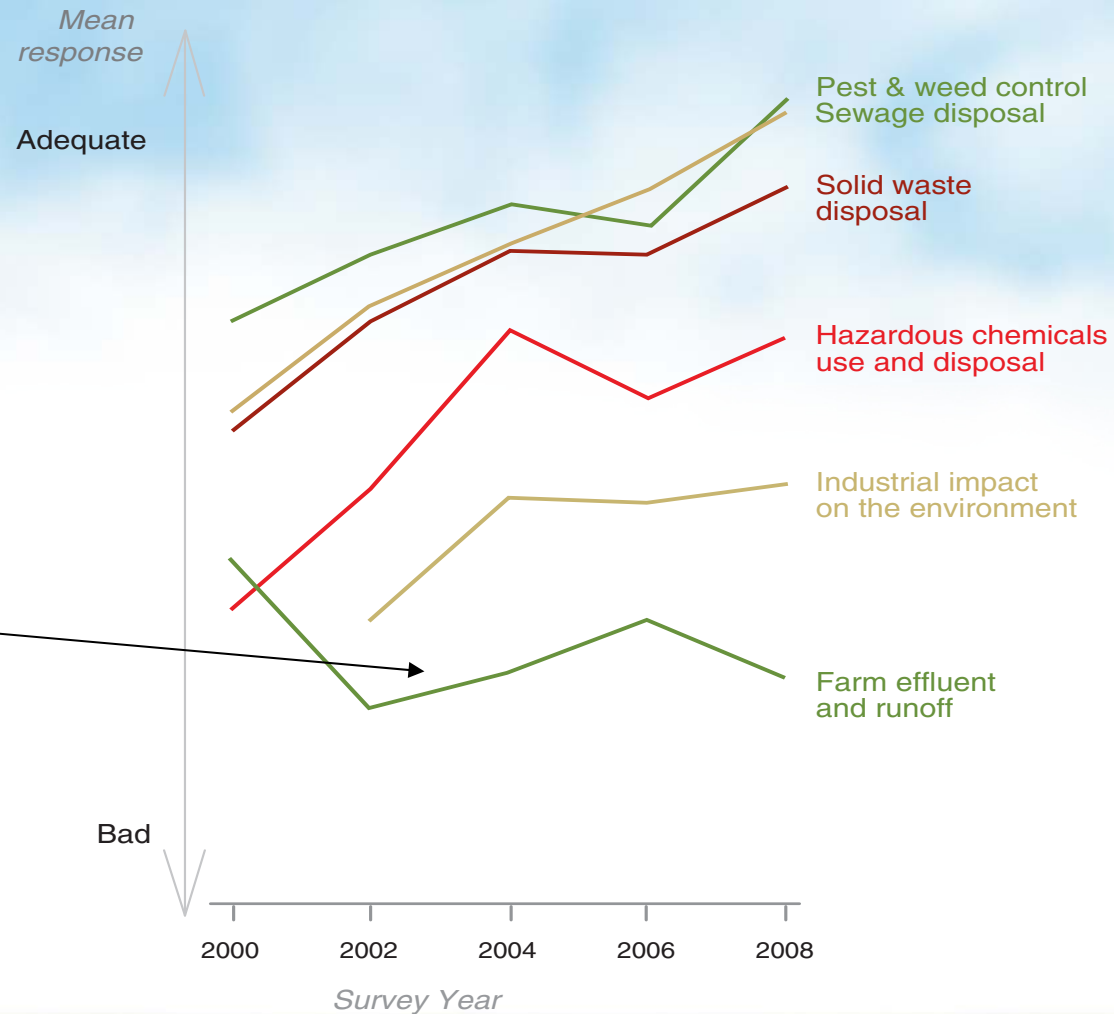
‘Small lowland streams in my region have high water quality’



Response – management of the environment

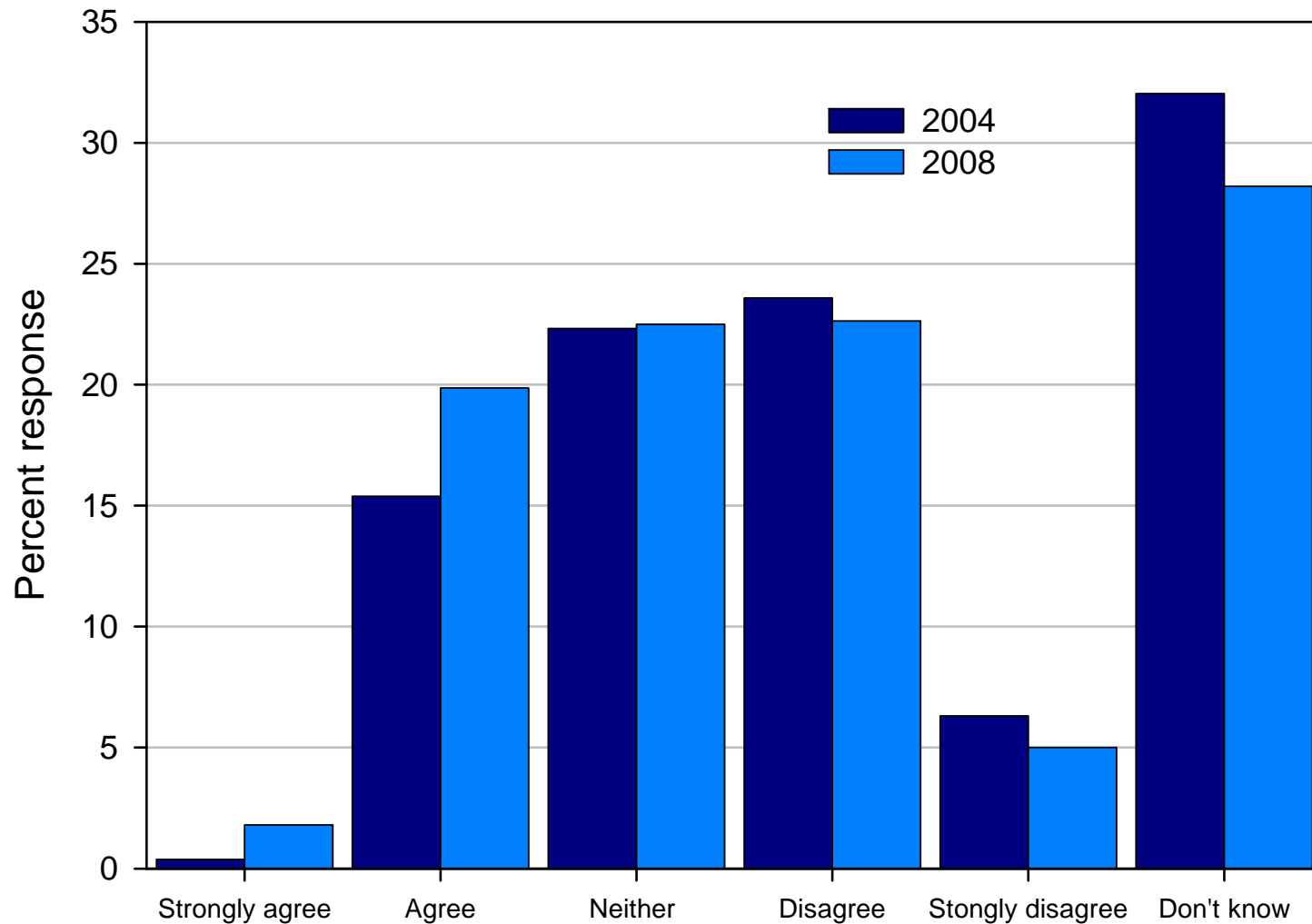
A range of questions probe this issue.

One standout result

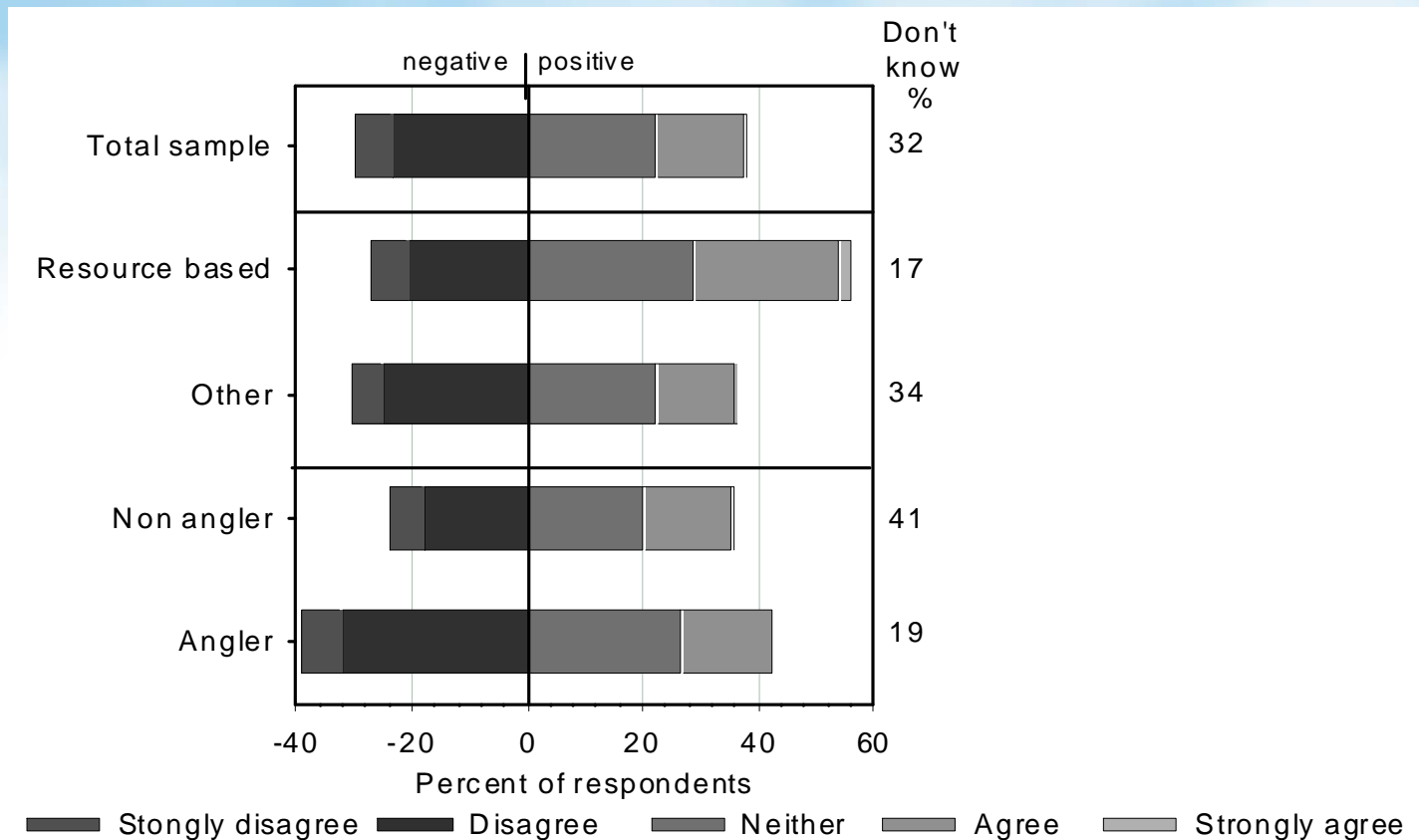


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Response: 'Small lowland streams in my region are well managed'



Response. 'Small lowland streams in my region are well managed' 2004



Rating water management agencies, 2010

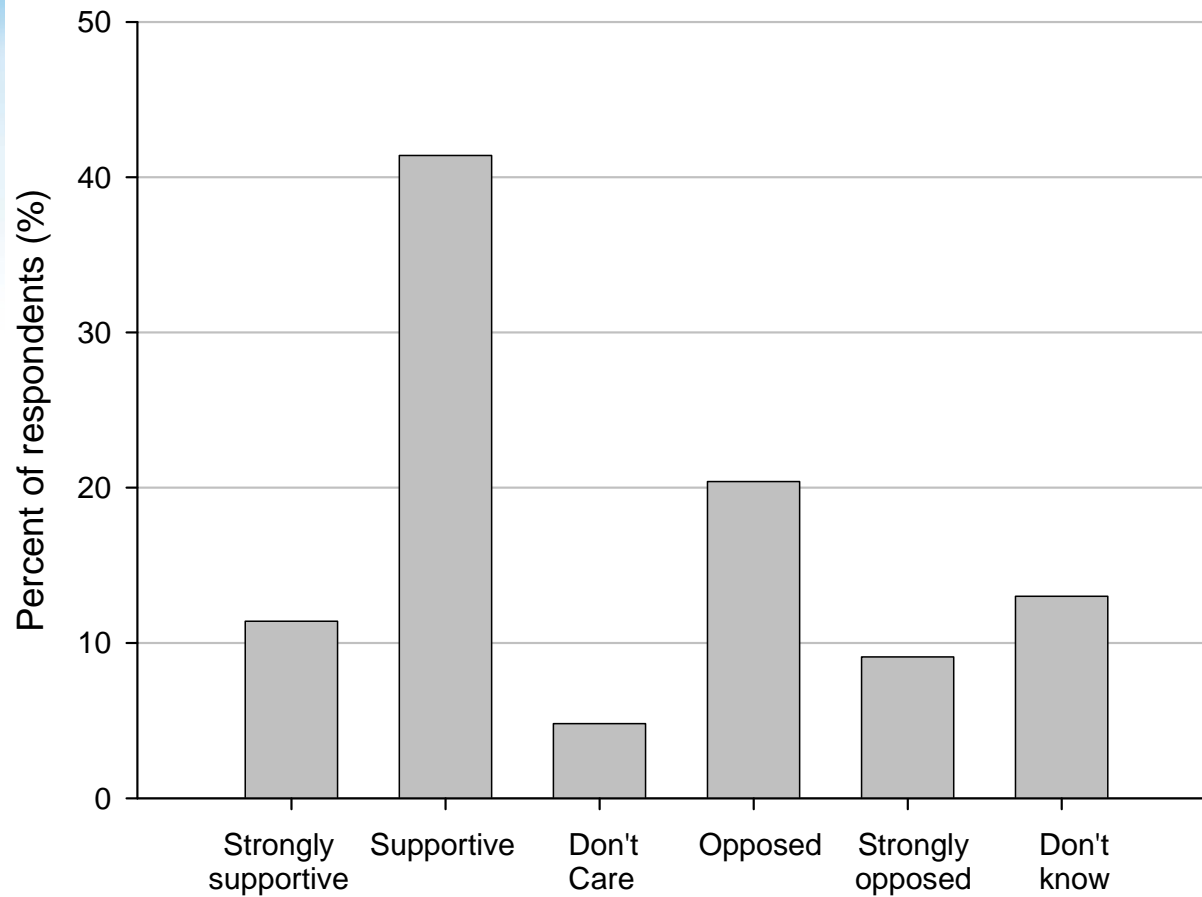
Average Likert ratings

1 = extremely poor, 5 = extremely good

Fish and Game NZ	3.5
Dept Conservation	3.4
Ministry of Health	3.3
MfE	3.1
Regional Councils	3.1
District/City Councils	3.1

None are highly rated

Willingness to pay \$20 per year in additional rates for 10 years to pay for lowland stream enhancement work. 2004



Pressure, State, Response - summary

- The overall state of the New Zealand environment is perceived as very good, although freshwater, rates the lowest. At local level there is considerable concern about lowland streams.
- The key pressures on these resources are human-induced.
- Farming is increasingly blamed for damaging freshwater.
- Freshwater related issues are the single biggest environmental concern for New Zealanders.

Pressure, State, Response – Freshwater summary

- Big demographic differences. Those employed in resource based industries are much more positive about the state of specific water resources than are others – anglers, a very large user group, are more pessimistic.
- Management by a range of organisations of water management activities is not ranked highly, and of lowland streams is considered inadequate.
- People are willing to pay for on-the-ground actions to improve lowland streams.

What do people want? Rivers and streams

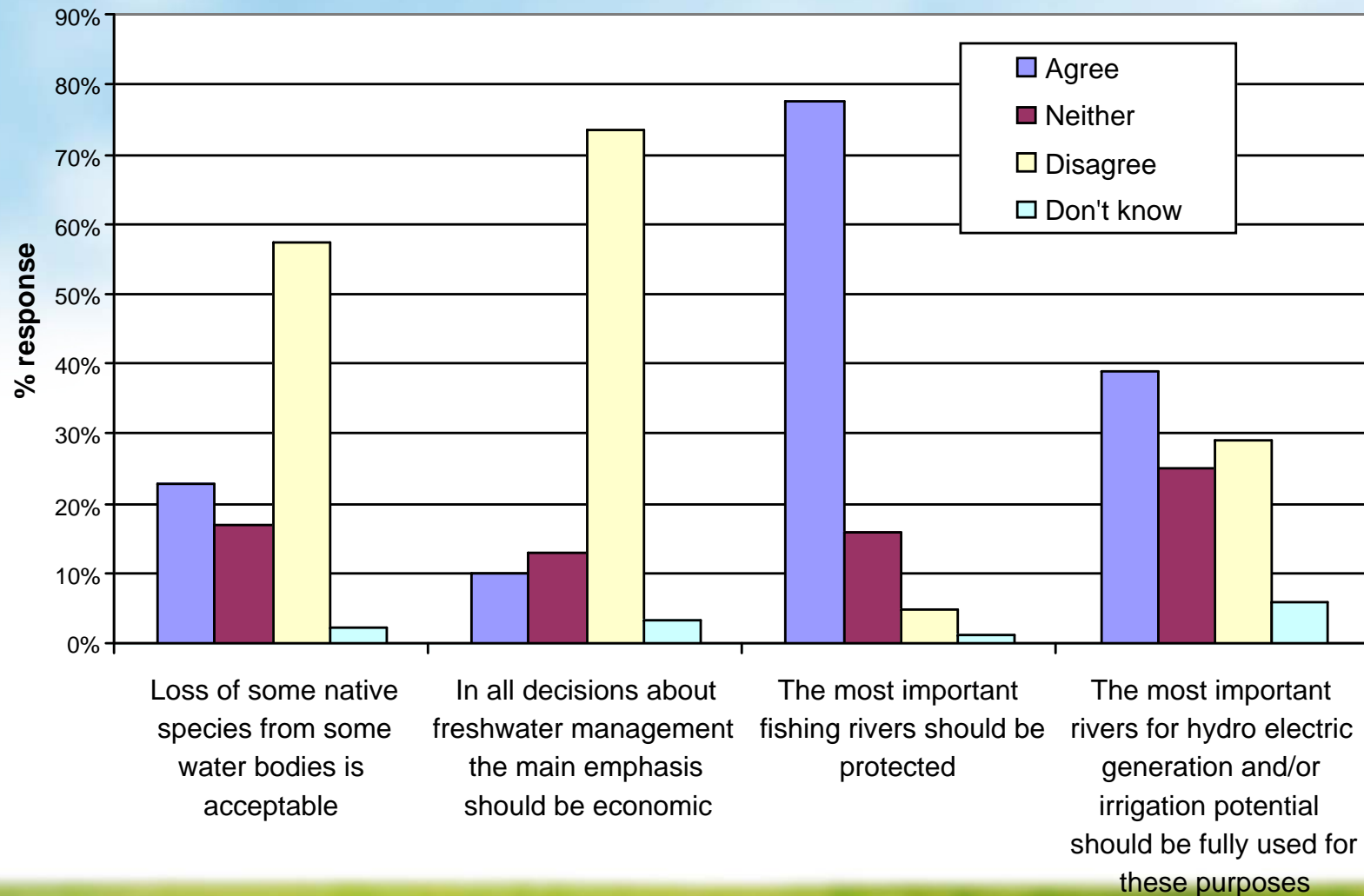
Mean Likert scores (1 lowest, 5 highest) ordered:

Nature	4.3	Highest
Scenic/visual	3.8	
Community, household & other uses	3.7	
Recreation	3.6	
Commercial use	3.3	
Customary Maori	2.6	Lowest



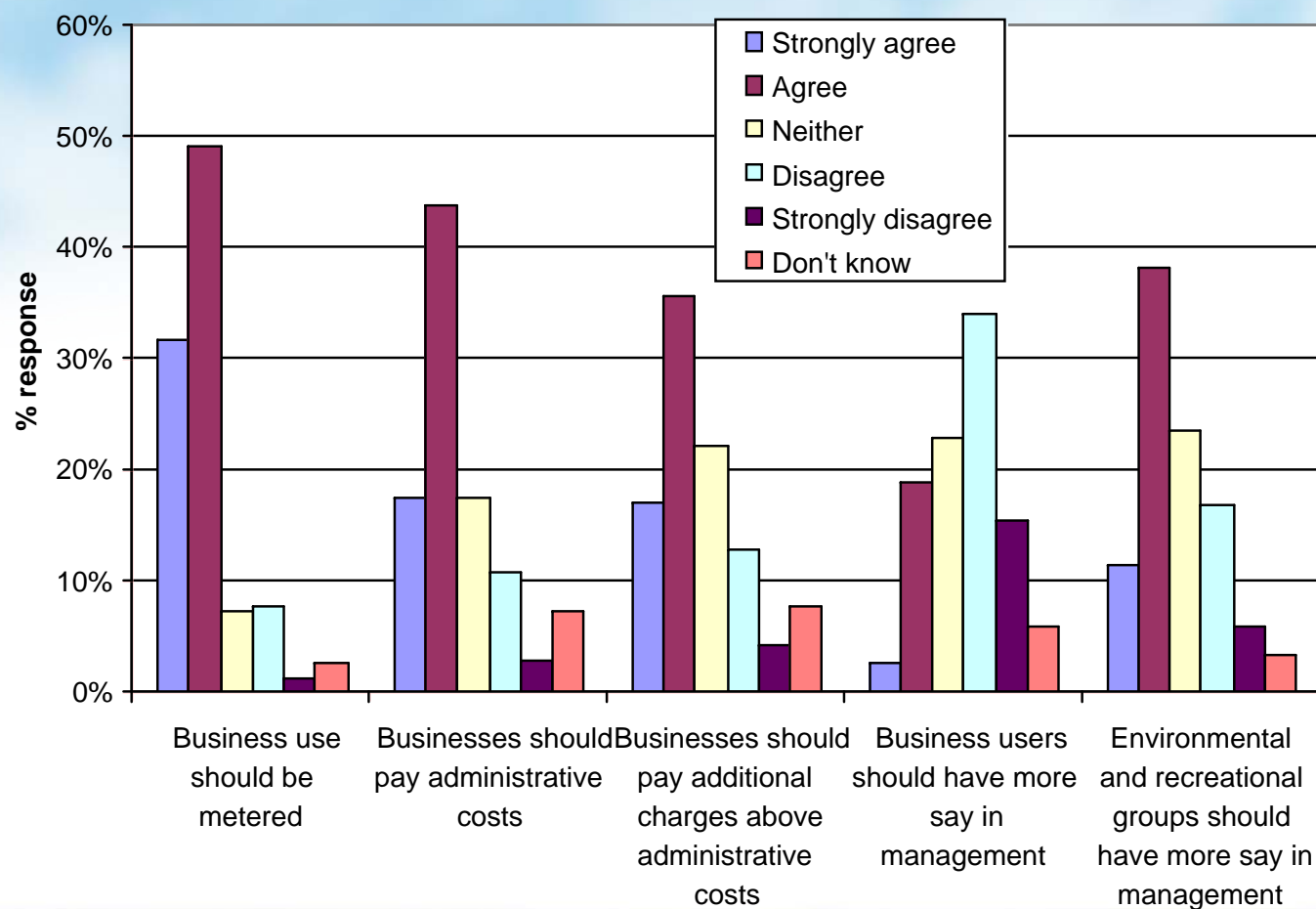
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What do people want? Freshwater



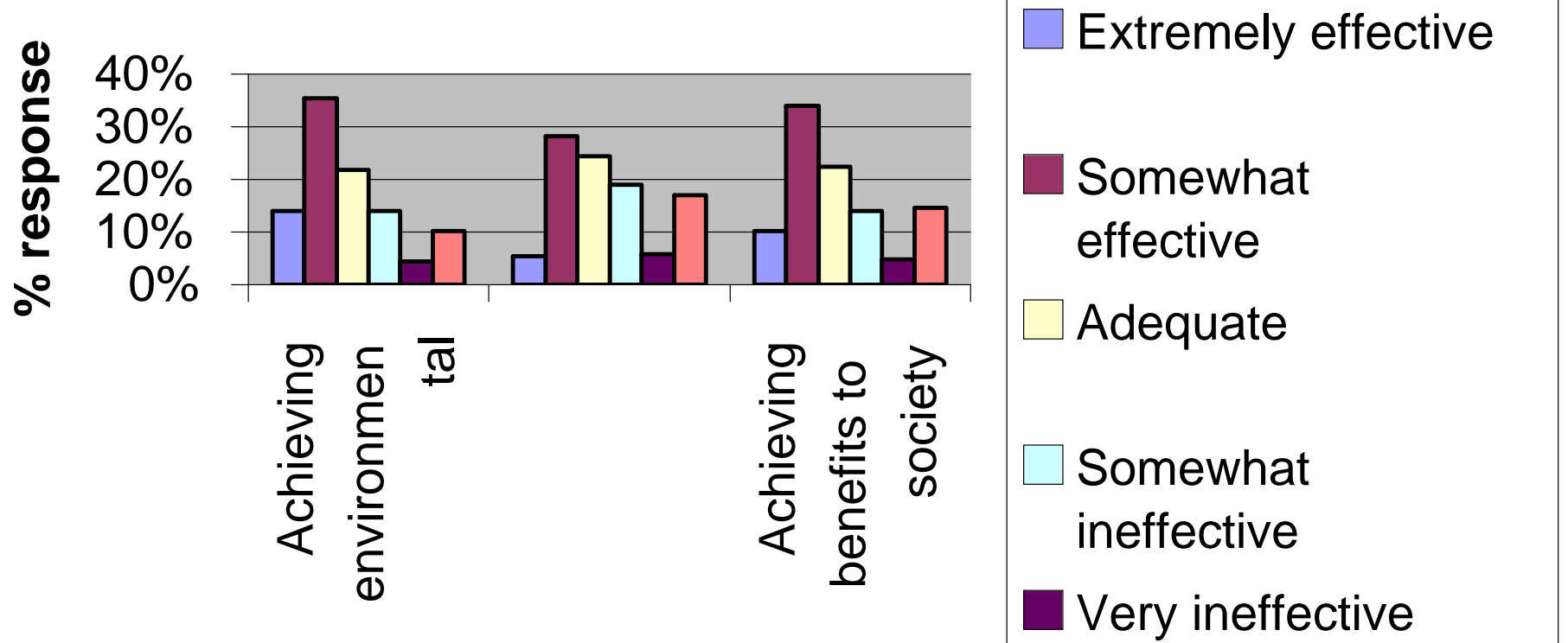
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Views on various aspects of freshwater use and management. 2010

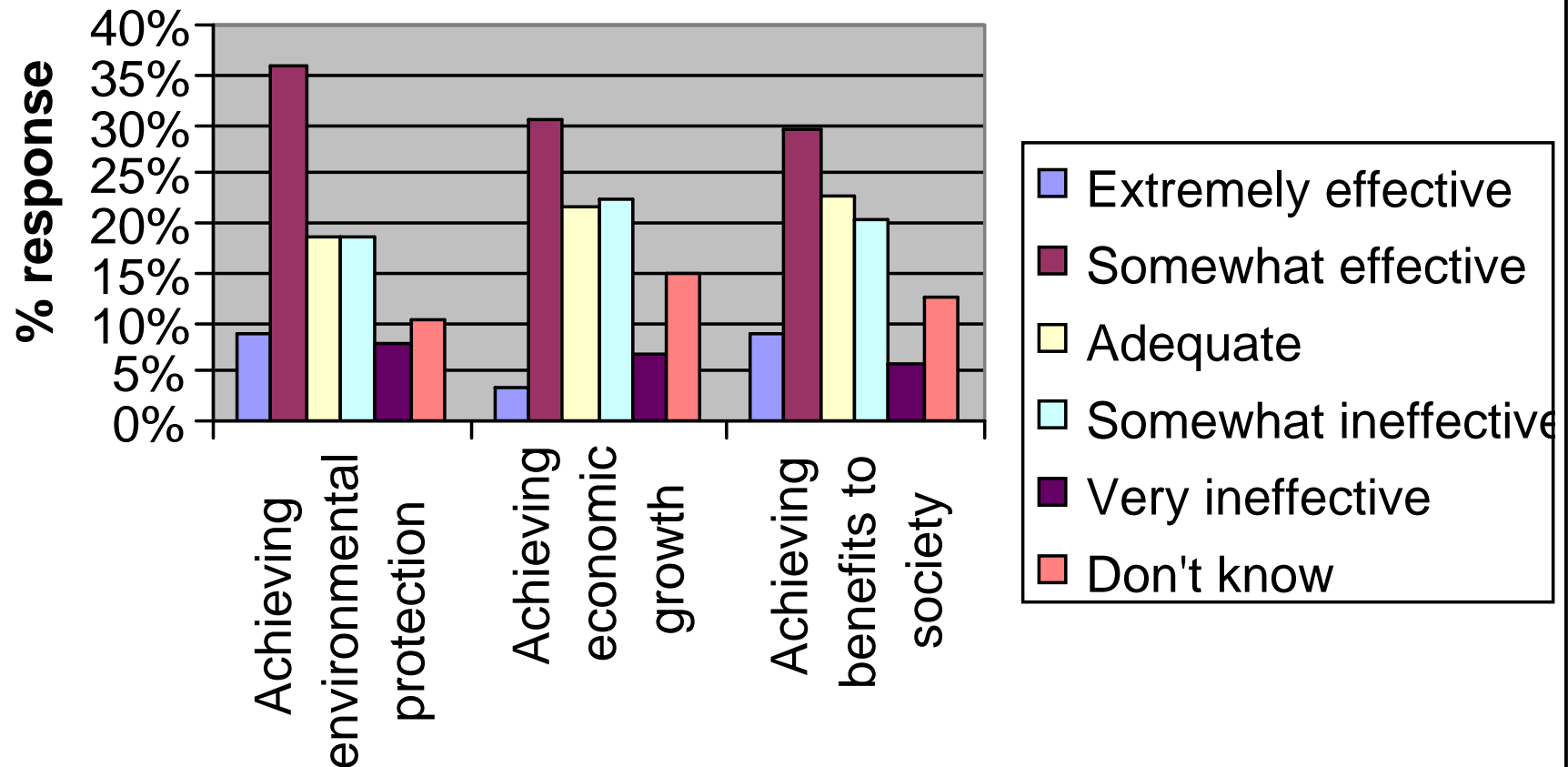


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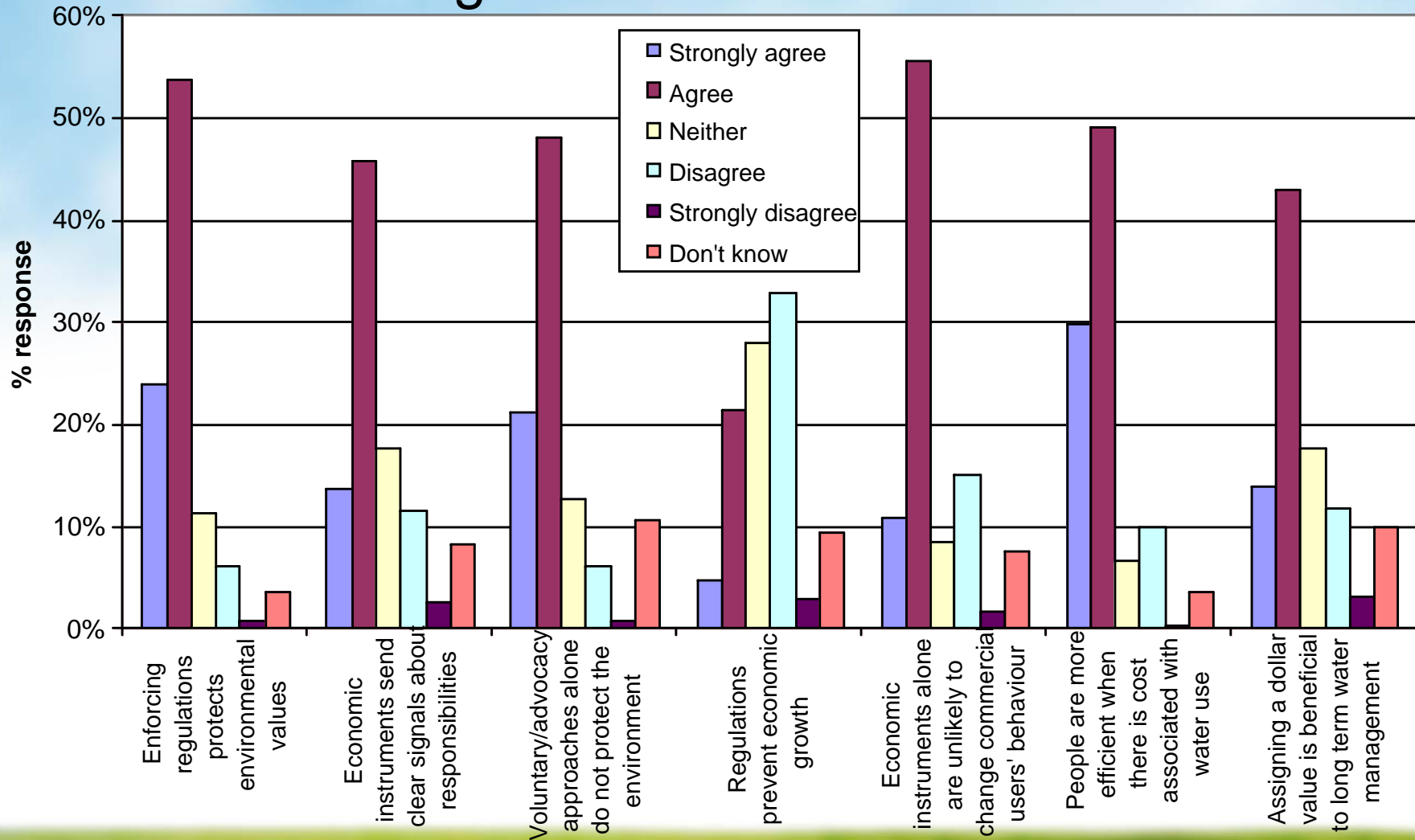
Effectiveness of approaches to management of freshwater – regulation alone: 2010



Effectiveness of approaches to management of freshwater – economic instruments alone: 2010



Effectiveness of various approaches to management of freshwater: 2010



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Effectiveness of various approaches to management of freshwater: 2010

Most people believe enforced regulation will protect the environment;

While economic instruments send clear signals about environmental responsibility, they are unlikely by themselves to change commercial use behaviour;

Reliance on voluntary and related mechanisms will not protect the environment;

Price and related economic signals can improve water use efficiency and improve prospects for management in the longer term.

Our research shows

- People are worried about freshwater, its management and pollution; and
- People 'don't want' development to wreck fresh water environments they recreate in, they value the ecology and nature of these resources highly;
- Farming is increasingly understood to cause damage to the environment – it should not be permitted to do this;
- A range of tools, including sending clear economic signals, are supported by a majority of respondents;

We conclude...

Given that individual and government priorities place a high emphasis on the environment (and individuals are WTP for improvements and/or mitigation), rural land use intensification that impacts fresh water needs to meet sustainability requirements, and not as a retrospective (partial) fix.

Government leadership is needed to address rural water management issues. New policies, tools and more resources are needed to tackle them.