

# **Cooranbong Sustainable Neighbourhood Community Attitudes Survey**

**August - September 2010**

A report on the attitudes of the Cooranbong community, prepared by Lake Macquarie City Council as part of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program, October 2010.

## **BACKGROUND**

Council's Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program provides support to communities to plan and make changes that will reduce their ecological footprint at a neighbourhood scale.

In early 2010, the Cooranbong Chamber of Commerce, Avondale College, Cooranbong Community Services Centre and Council joined forces to support the growth of a Cooranbong Sustainable Neighbourhood Group and develop a Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan for Cooranbong. The members of the Sustainable Neighbourhood Group have embarked on a range of activities to engage our neighbours, deepen our understanding of Cooranbong, and discover what Cooranbong residents are most passionate about.

This report presents the results of the Community Attitudes Survey, undertaken in Cooranbong in August - September 2010. The survey aims to gauge community attitudes to the natural environment, sustainable living, and climate change issues.

The survey forms part of a program of community development and engagement activities to collect input from the broadest possible range of Cooranbong residents, including public workshops, information stalls, and hands on activities. The survey results captured some of the values, attitudes, and concerns of residents who may not have participated in other engagement activities, providing a broader perspective for the development of a Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan for Cooranbong.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In August 2010, the survey was mailed to approximately 950 households in Cooranbong according to mailing addresses in Council's ratepayer database. The survey was a self-return format, with a prize draw promoted on the front cover as an incentive for residents to complete it. The survey form is shown in Appendix 1.

Instructions on the front of the survey asked for respondents who:

- have lived in Lake Macquarie City for more than six months
- are over 18 years old; and
- are key decision makers in the household.

In total, 98 surveys were returned to Council providing a return rate of 10%.

## KEY FINDINGS

### 1. Local Sustainability Issues in Cooranbong

Survey respondents said they were most concerned about:

- Urban development and urban expansion
- Air pollution (greenhouse gas, power stations, wood fires, car fumes and dust)
- Infrastructure (coal mining, services, roads and cycleways/footpaths)
- Waste (Recycling, reduction, disposal and litter)

The issues they rated as most important included:

- Protecting and improving the natural environment
- Reducing energy consumption
- Reducing waste

### 2. Climate Change over the Next 20 Years

The majority of respondents (73%) either agree or strongly agree that climate change will directly impact their life over the next 20 years, with the main impacts being:

- Changes in weather/ extreme weather events
- Increase in temperature/ warmer weather
- Increased cost of living

### 3. Your Sustainability Choices

Seventy per cent (70%) of respondents stated that they have the following items on their property:

- Water efficient appliances and fittings
- Insulation
- Energy efficient appliances

Sixty five per cent (65%) of respondents said they have native gardens and sixty two (62%) per cent said they have vegetable gardens on their property.

Ninety nine per cent of respondents said that they use their recycling bin 'always' (93%) or 'often' (6%).

#### *Food scraps/organic waste*

Just over forty per cent (40%) of respondents said they disposed of their food/organic scraps in a compost, worm farm, chooks, or by digging into the gardens. A further fifteen per cent (15%) stated they would consider a compost bin or worm farm, if they had more resources and/or information. The remaining eight per cent (8%) said either they can't have one, don't think they need one, or don't want one.

#### *GreenPower*

Fifteen per cent (15%) of respondents said they purchased GreenPower, with comments indicating some confusion about what it is. The main reason respondents gave for not purchasing GreenPower was the cost and lack of understanding.

### *Public Transport*

Eighteen per cent (18%) of Cooranbong respondents said they 'often' or 'always' catch public transport. The LMCC Consumption and Transport Benchmarking 2010 survey indicates that only eight per cent (8%) of Lake Macquarie residents use public transport on a regular basis.

The reasons that Cooranbong respondents gave for not using public transport were compatible with the findings from other surveys, including that either that the timetable/route is inadequate, or that they prefer to use the car.

### *Motivation*

When asked to consider the factors that motivate them to improve their environmental behaviour, respondents ranked 'saving money' as the most important motivator, closely followed by 'a personal responsibility to do the right thing for the environment'.

### *Participation in environmental activities*

Respondents indicated that they would most likely participate in activities such as:

- Neighbourhood clean-ups
- Community picnics/ BBQ's with informative displays and children's activities
- Home audit of backyards, energy, waste, and water use
- Sustainable living workshops

Activities that respondents indicated they were least likely to participate in include:

- Climate change adaptation workshops
- Assisting in preparing a sustainability action plan for my neighbourhood

### *The Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program*

Thirty eight per cent (38%) of survey respondents said they have either heard of, or participated in the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program, whilst sixty three per cent (63%) indicated they might be interested in participating in the program. Respondents stated that the way they heard about the program was through the media (newspaper), flyers, and their existing community networks.

### **About Cooranbong**

Respondents have a high level of agreement that:

- Natural features in my neighbourhood should be protected and improved by residents
- I can call on a neighbour if I need help
- I take measures to reduce my ecological footprint

The four most popular things people like about living in Cooranbong are:

- Peaceful & quiet
- Rural/ village character
- Friendly neighbours/community
- Natural environment

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COORANBONG SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD PROJECT

The results of this survey highlight some important points relevant to the development of a Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan for Cooranbong.

### Values

The things that people value about Cooranbong are consistent amongst survey respondents, and participants from other activities:

- Balance of natural environment and rural/ village character (peaceful and quiet surrounds, country feeling away from city)
- Natural beauty including bushland, wildlife, creeks, proximity to the lake and beaches, open space
- Close location to services and facilities including; shops, Freeway, and churches.
- Safe and friendly community.

### Issues

In general, the range of issues are consistent with input from the community so far. The survey results confirm the importance of a number of sustainability issues in the community:

- Urban development and urban expansion
- Air pollution (greenhouse gas, power stations, wood fires, car fumes and dust)
- Infrastructure (coal mining, services, roads and cycleways/footpaths)
- Waste (Recycling, reduction, disposal and litter)

Two additional issues that have not been previously raised, but rate highly in the survey include:

- Air pollution
- Waste issues

### Actions

The survey results highlight some potential neighbourhood actions and give an indication of activities that are likely to gain popular support from the Cooranbong community. Some of these are reflected in the issues highlighted above.

Actions highlighted by the survey include:

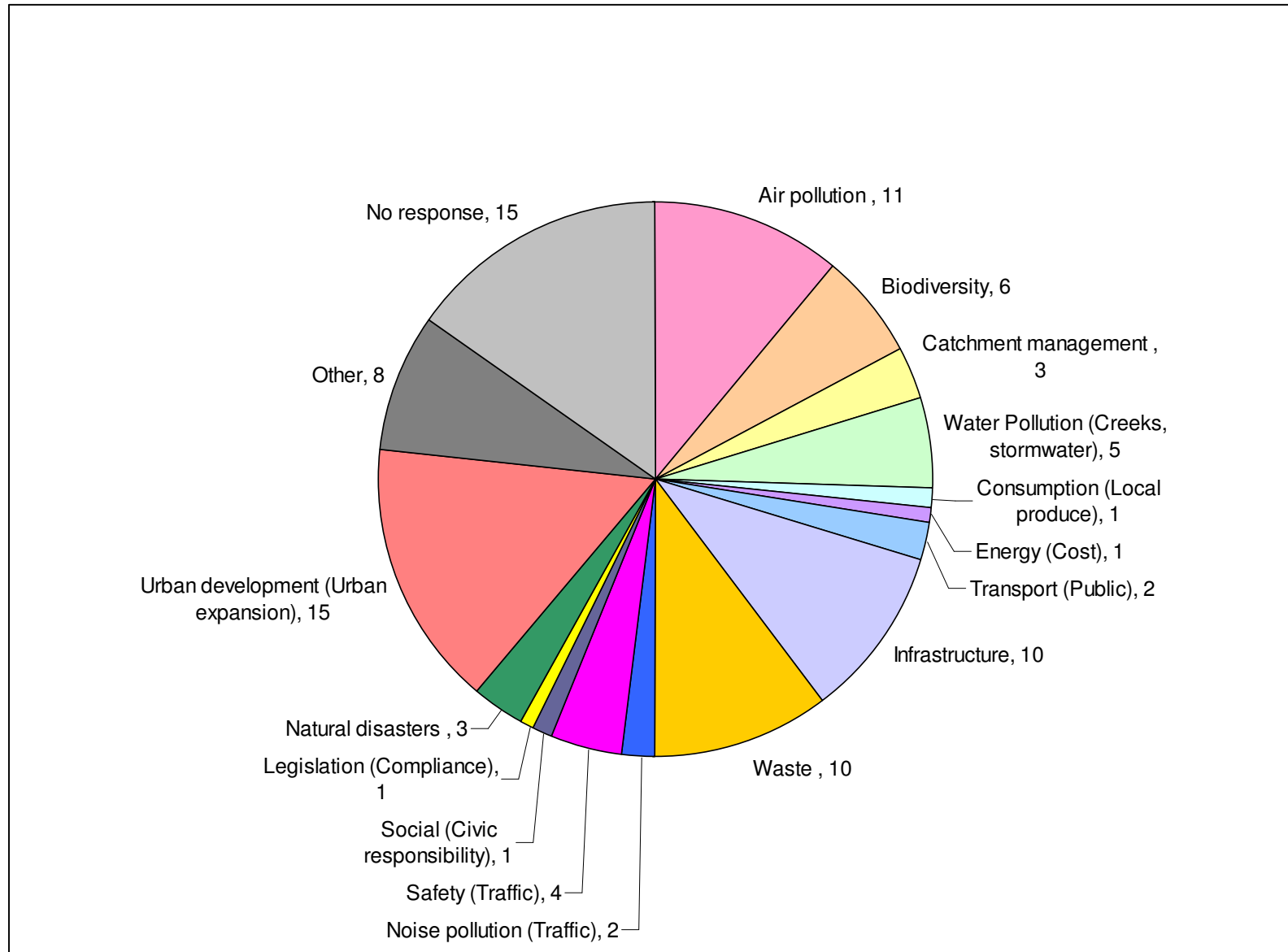
- **Encouraging worm farm or compost uptake by providing information, support, and resources** (15% of survey respondents indicated that they didn't have a worm farm or compost because they either need more information, are in the process of starting one, or don't have a compost bin/worm farm).
- **Widespread information and education about GreenPower** – what it is, how it works, local providers, and that you can 'purchase' 10% for free (almost 60% of survey respondents indicated that they either don't understand GreenPower, or that it costs too much).
- Activities which would be most likely to attract broad public participation include:
  - **Neighbourhood clean-up**
  - **Community picnics/ BBQ**

- **Sustainable living workshops**
- **Landcare**
- **Monitoring the health of the natural environment**

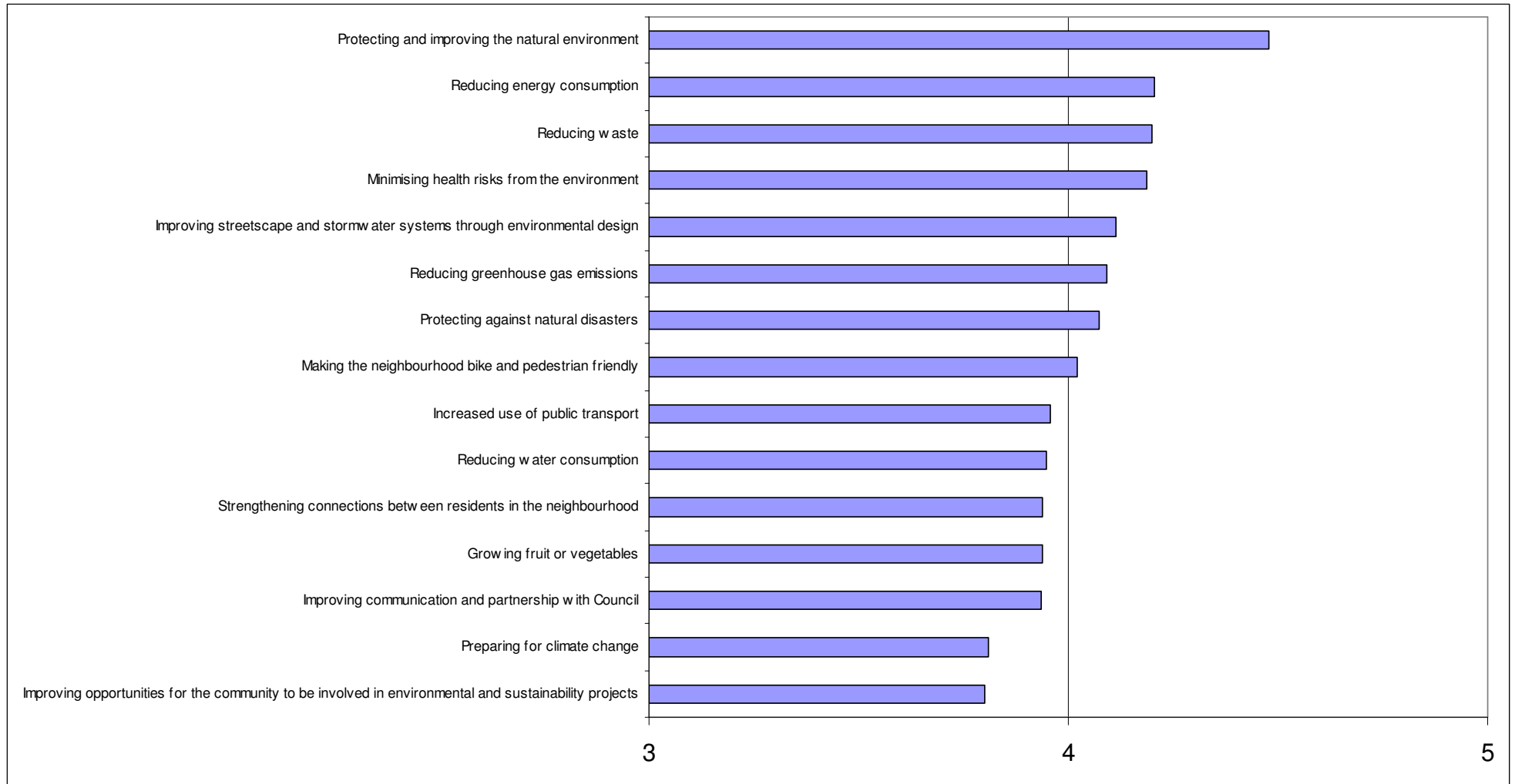
# DETAILED RESULTS

## 1. LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN Cooranbong

Q1a. What is the single most important environmental issue in your neighbourhood today?

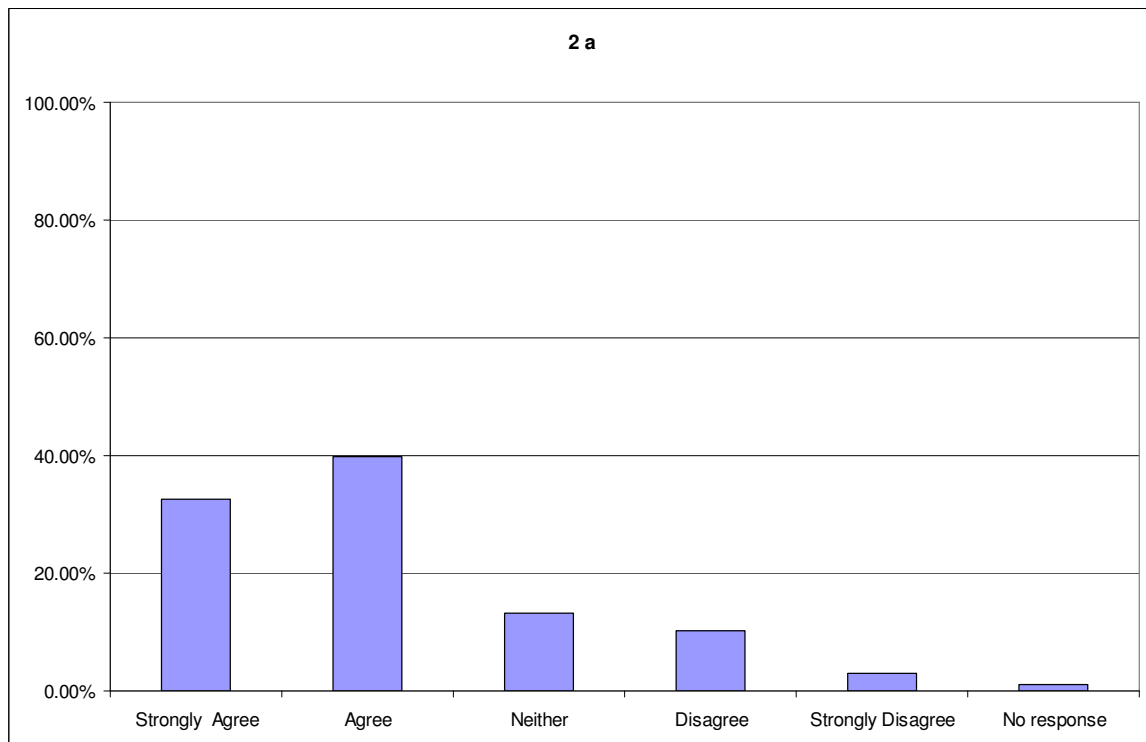


**Q1b Please rate how important the following are to your neighbourhood**

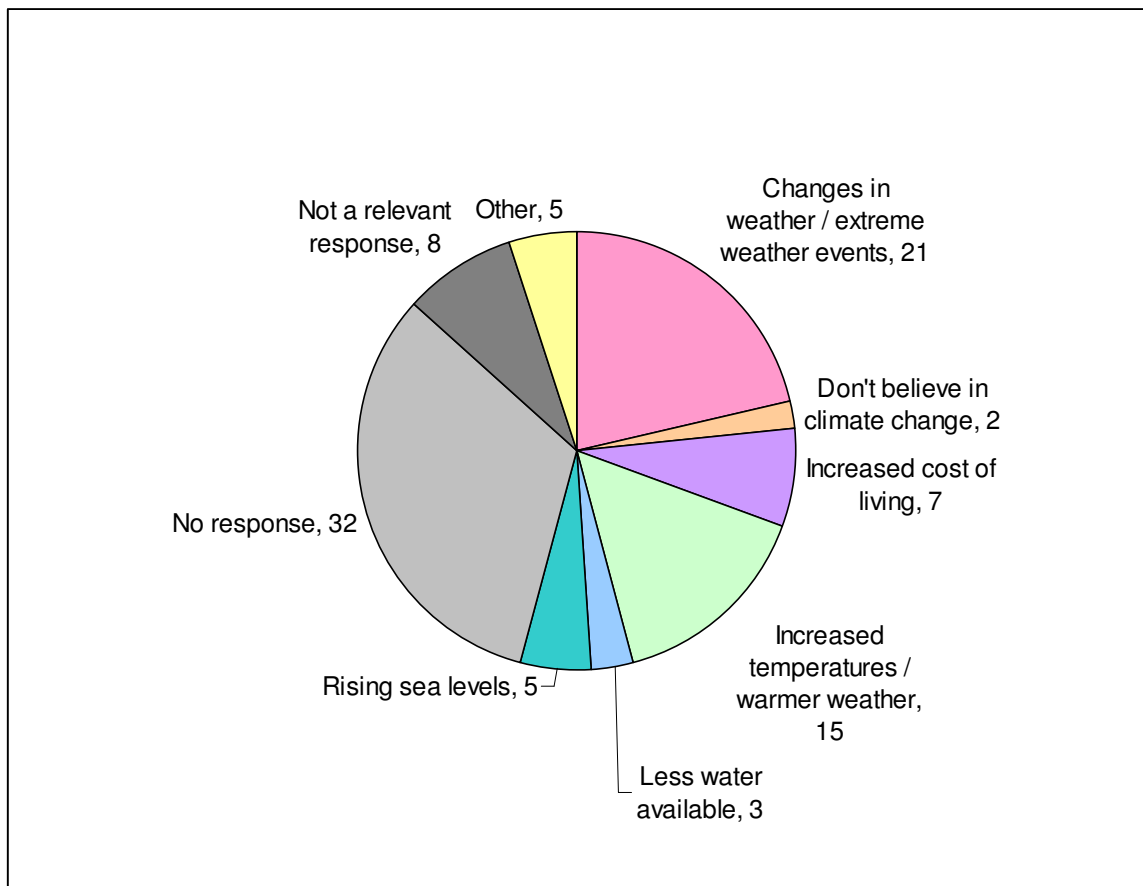


## 2. CLIMATE CHANGE OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS

**Q2a. Do you agree or disagree that climate change will have a direct impact on your life over the next 20 years?**



**Q2b. If you agree or strongly agree, what do you think will be the MAIN impact?**

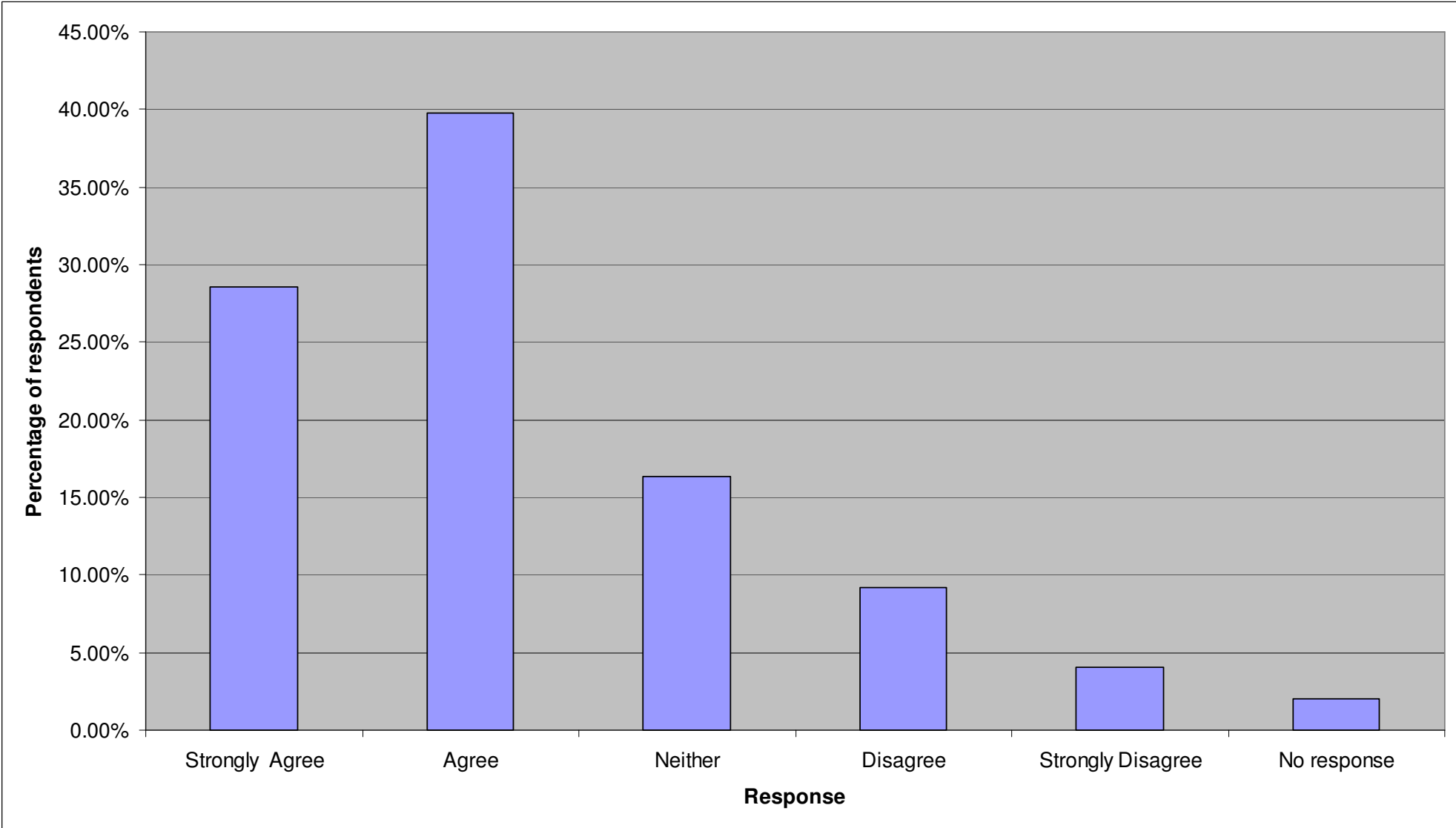




'Other' responses included:

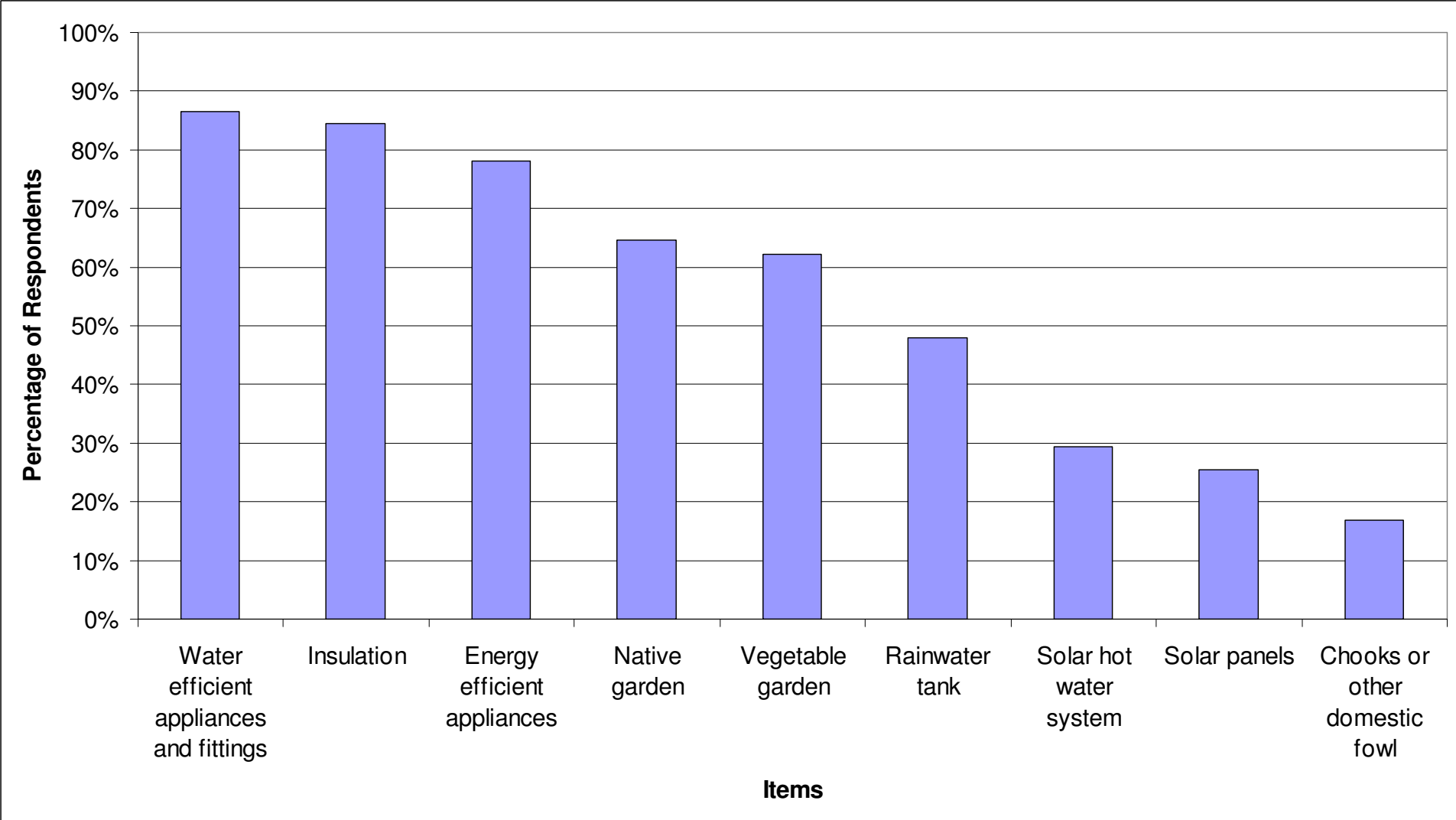
- Affects will be more severe on third world countries
- More emphasis on local produce and resources
- A combination of things
- Extinction of natural assets e.g. Great Barrier Reef
- Increase in electricity use

**Q2c. How strongly do you agree, or disagree, that the actions of the average person have a large impact on slowing climate change?**

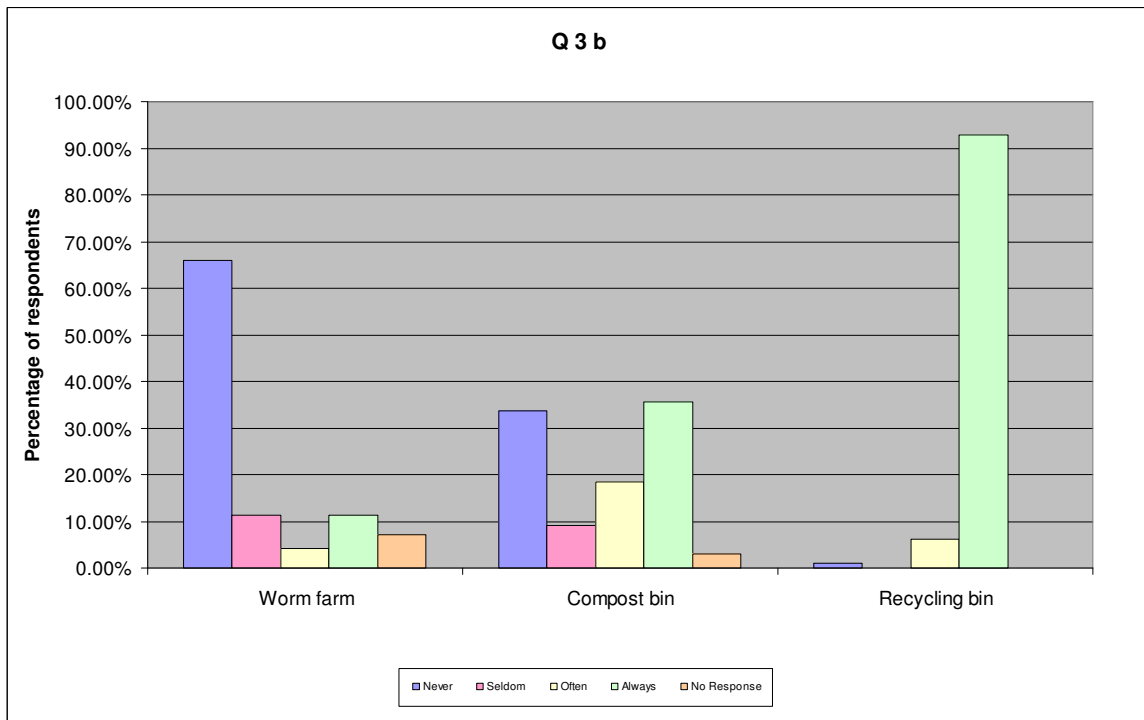


**3. YOUR SUSTAINABILITY CHOICES**

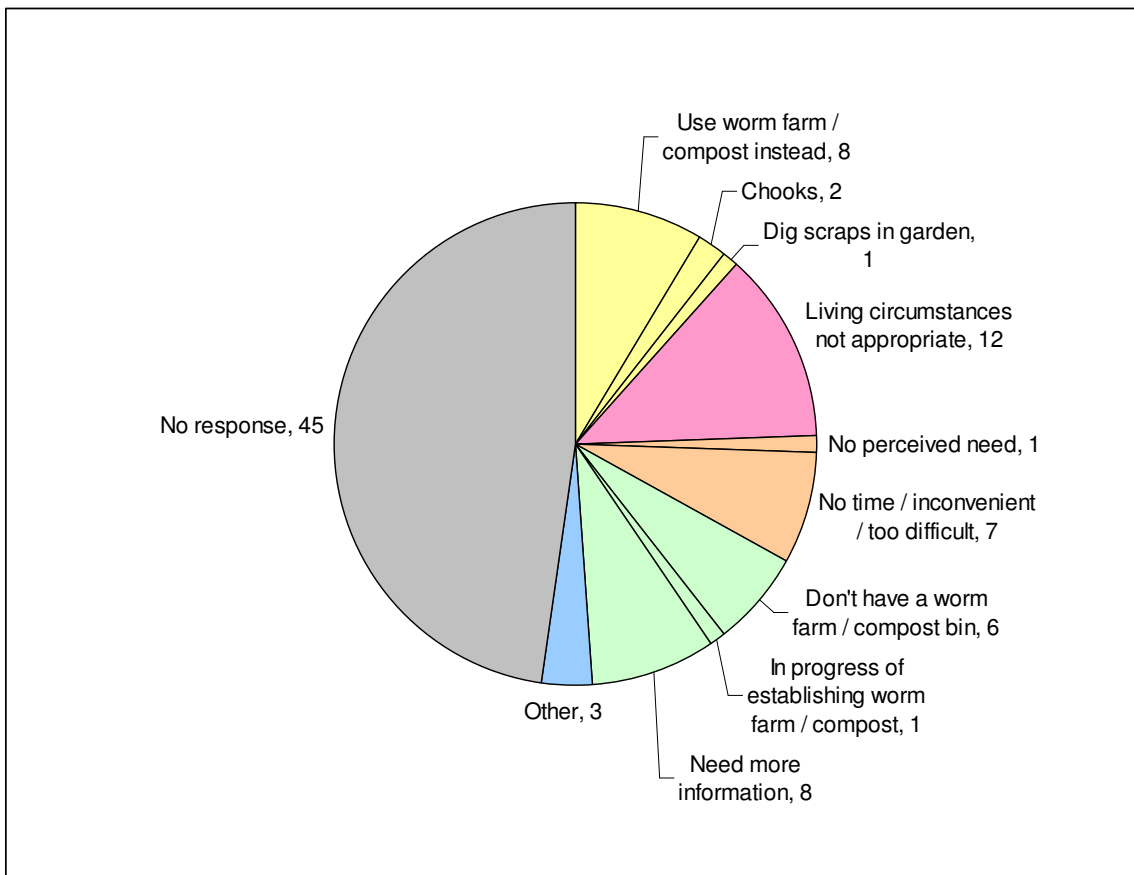
**Q3a. Do you have any of the following items on your property?**



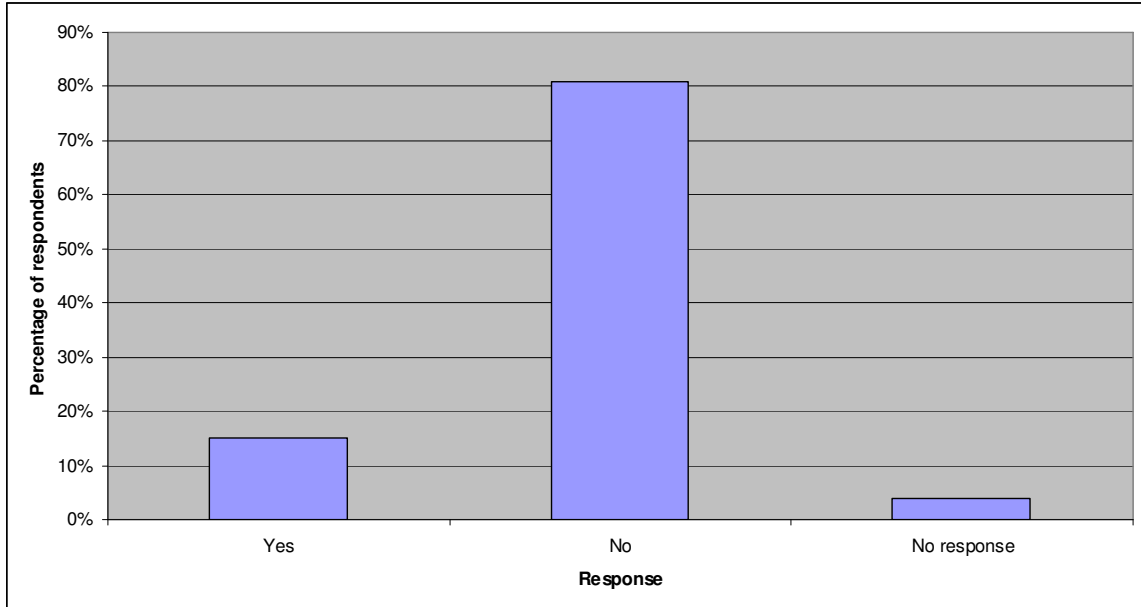
**Q3b. How often does your household make use of a worm farm, compost bin, and recycling bin?**



**Q3c. If you never or seldom use a worm farm or compost bin, could you please indicate why?**



**Q3d. Do you use GreenPower (renewable energy accredited by the Federal Government)?**

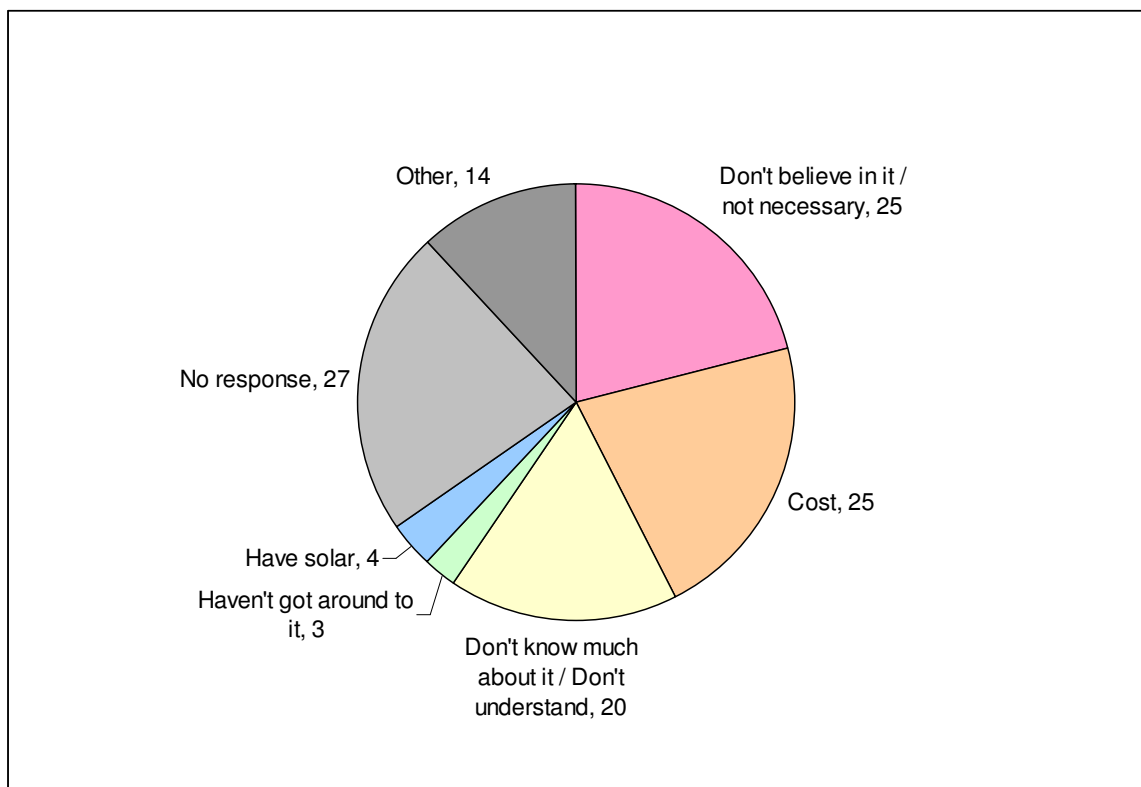


**Q3e. If yes, could you please indicate what percentage of GreenPower you purchase?**

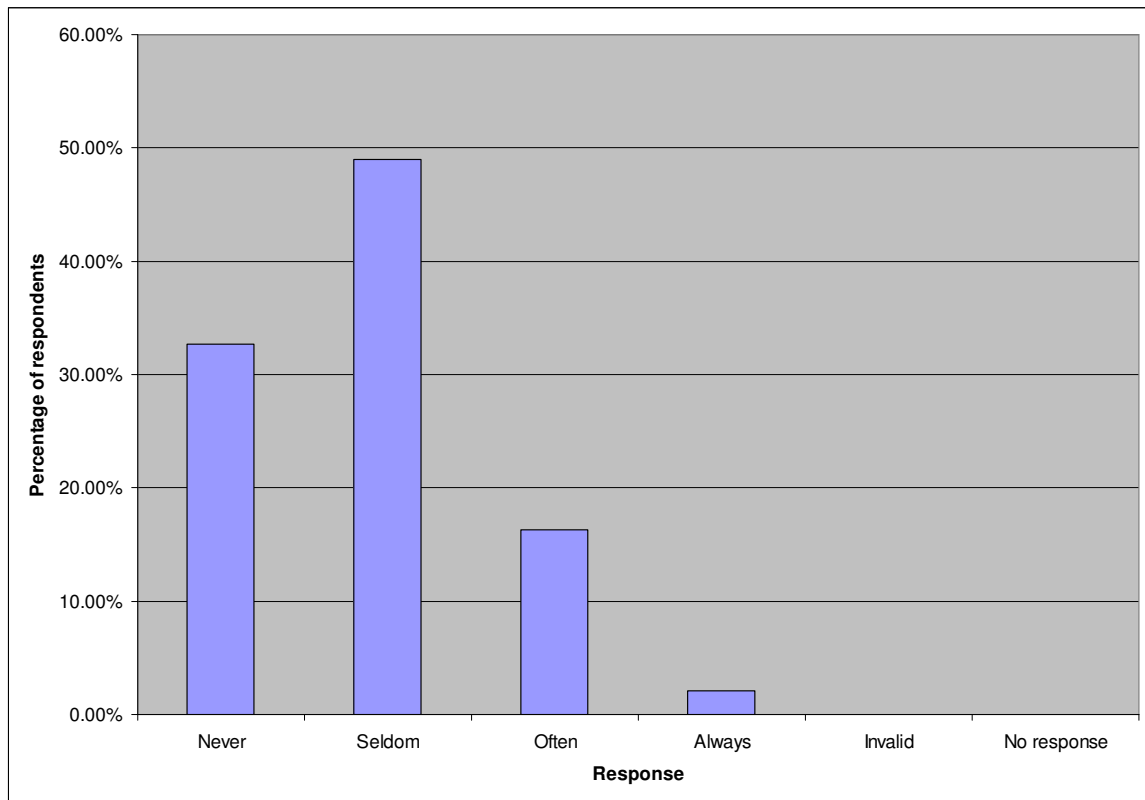
Response	Count
10%	5
25%	2
50%	1
*90%	1
100%	2
Unsure	4

\*Note – It is not possible to buy 90% GreenPower

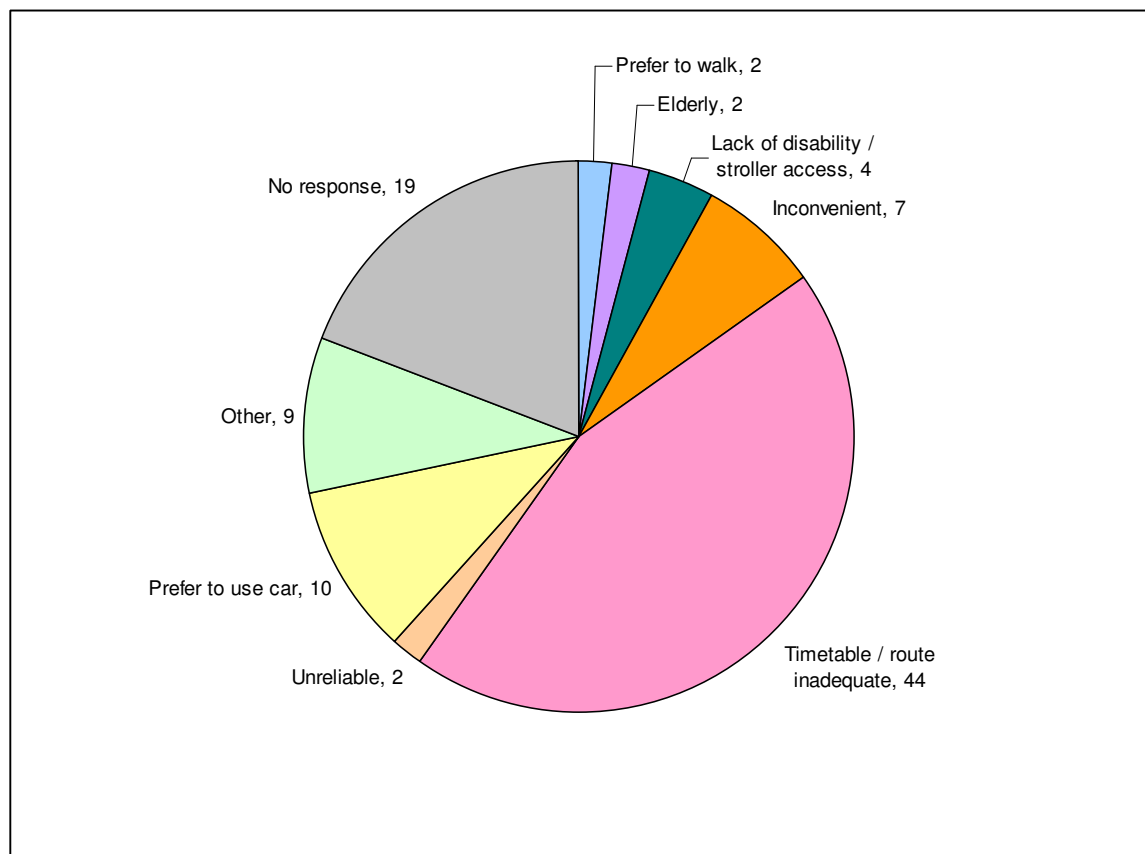
**Q3f. If never or seldom, could you please indicate why?**



**Q3g. How often do people in your household catch public transport?**



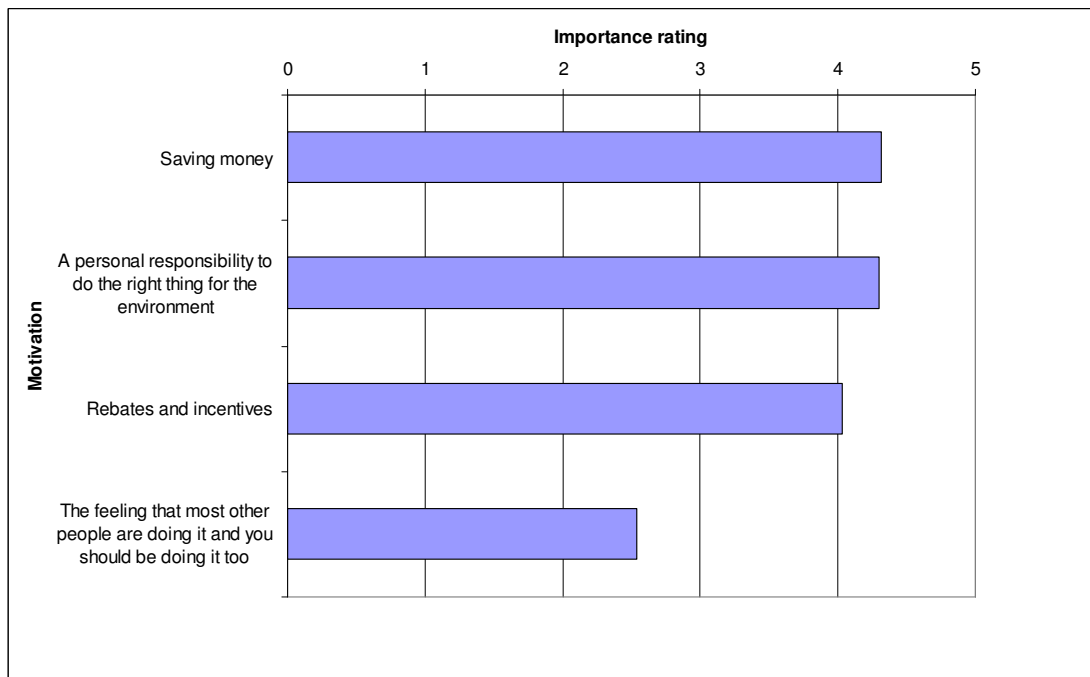
**Q3h. If never or seldom, could you please indicate why?**



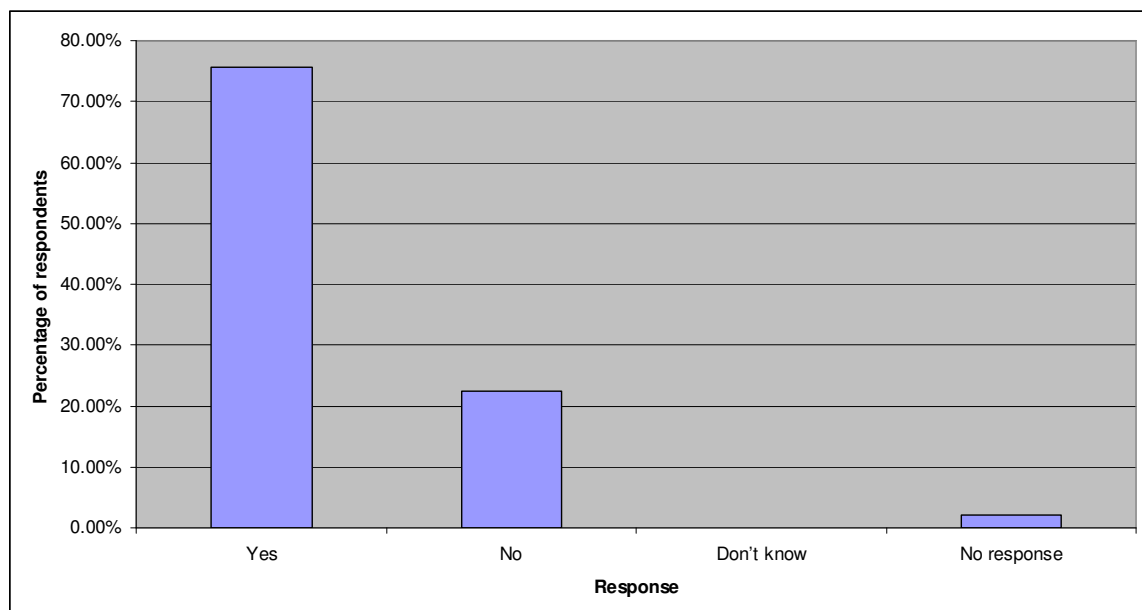
Other:

- No close public transport stops
- Cooranbong is not geared for public transport and at this stage never will be
- Use car pool
- Public transport takes longer than driving a car
- Not suitable for small children
- Releases Greenhouse emissions
- poor health

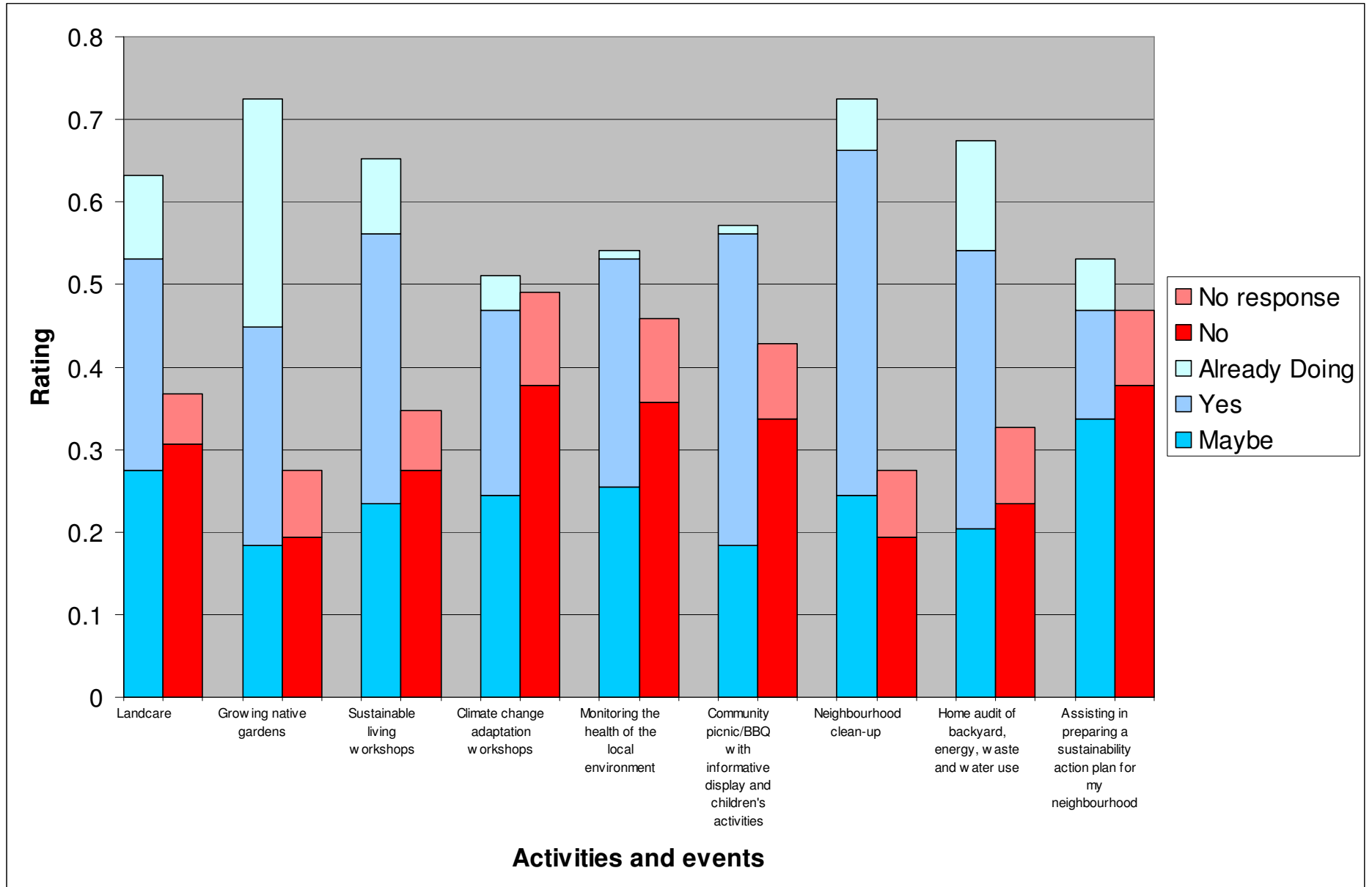
**Q3i. What motivates you to improve your environmental behaviour?**



**Q3j. In the past 4 weeks, during your leisure and recreation time, have you visited any natural environments, such as a beach, lake, river, creek, bushland or park?**

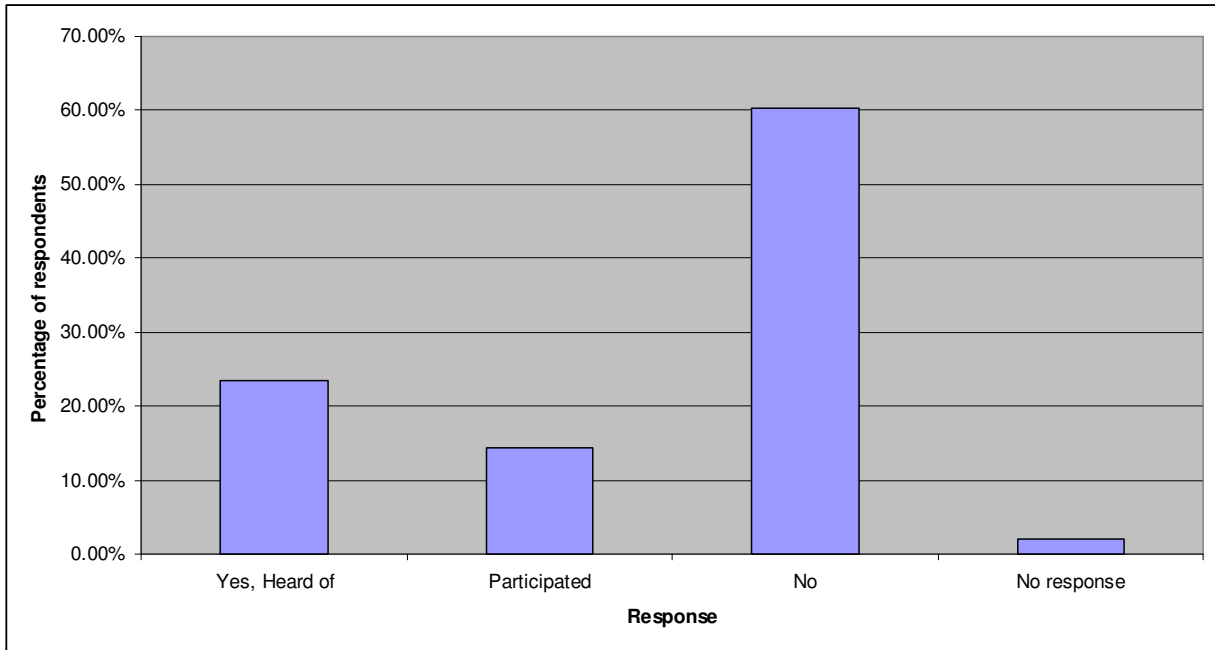


**Q4a. Which of the following activities/events would you consider participating in?**

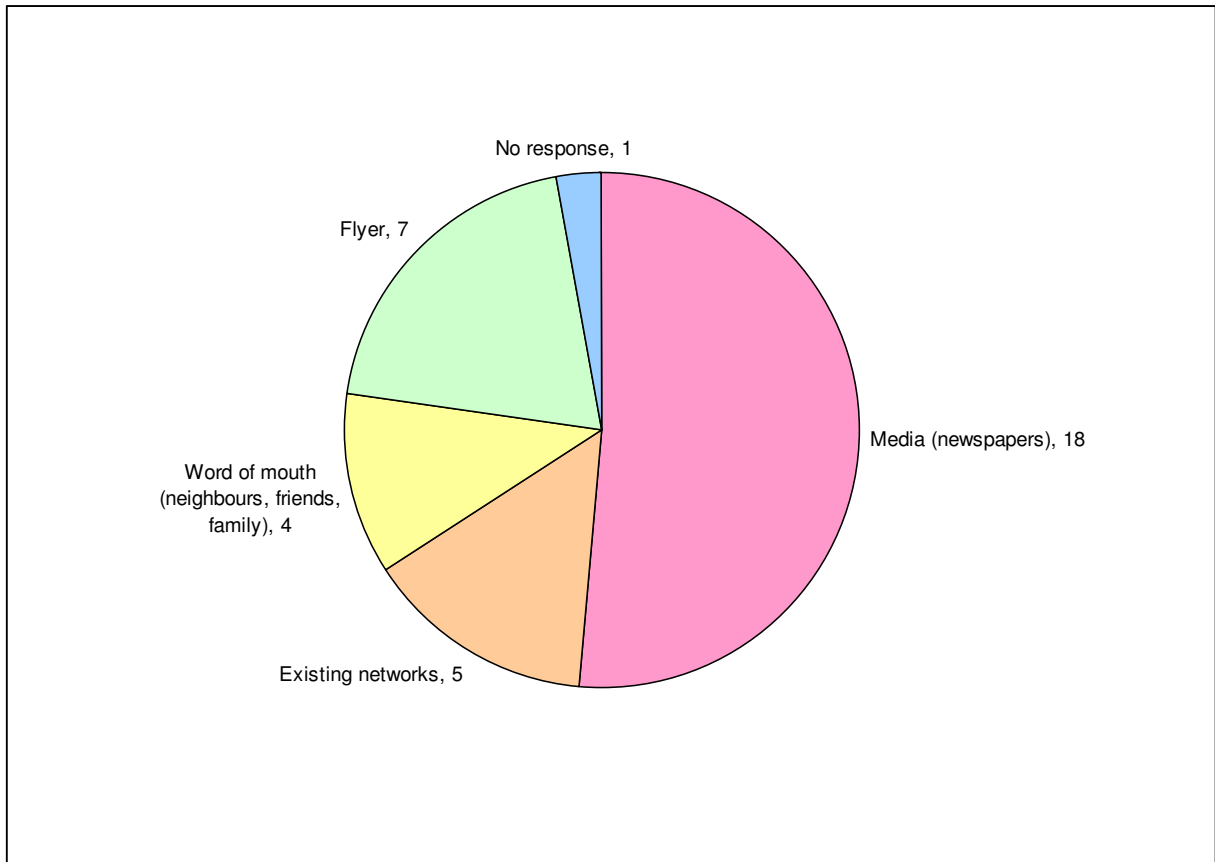




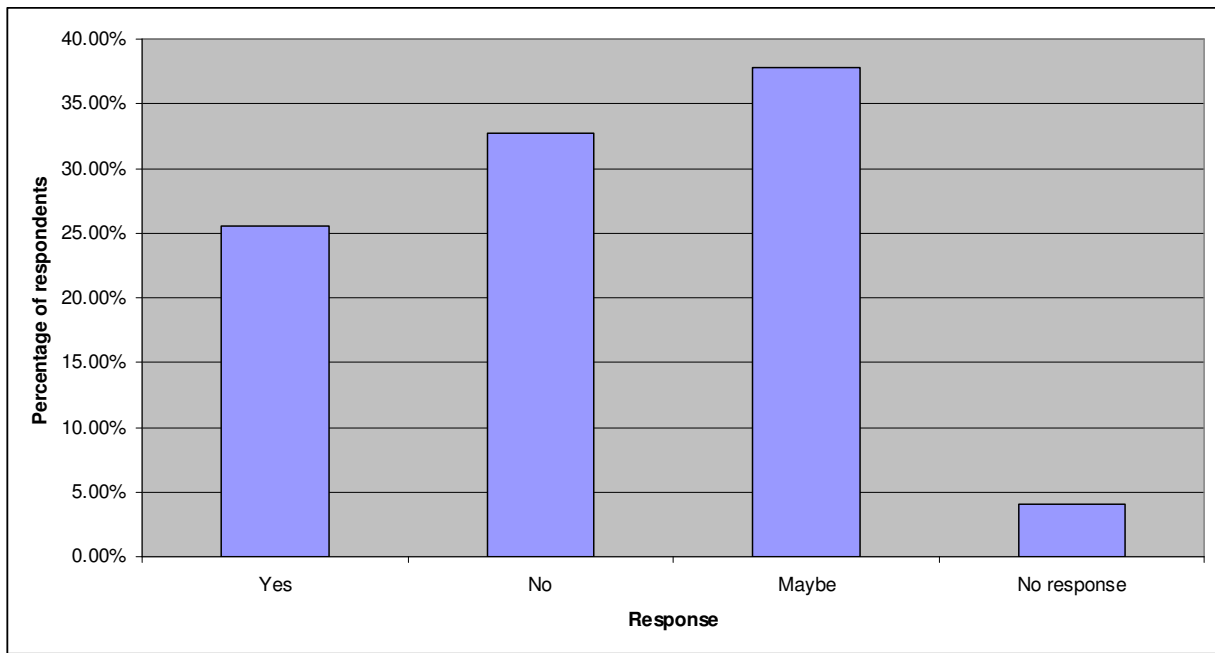
**Q4b. Have you heard of or participated in the Sustainable Neighbourhoods program?**



**Q4c. If yes, how did you hear about this program?**

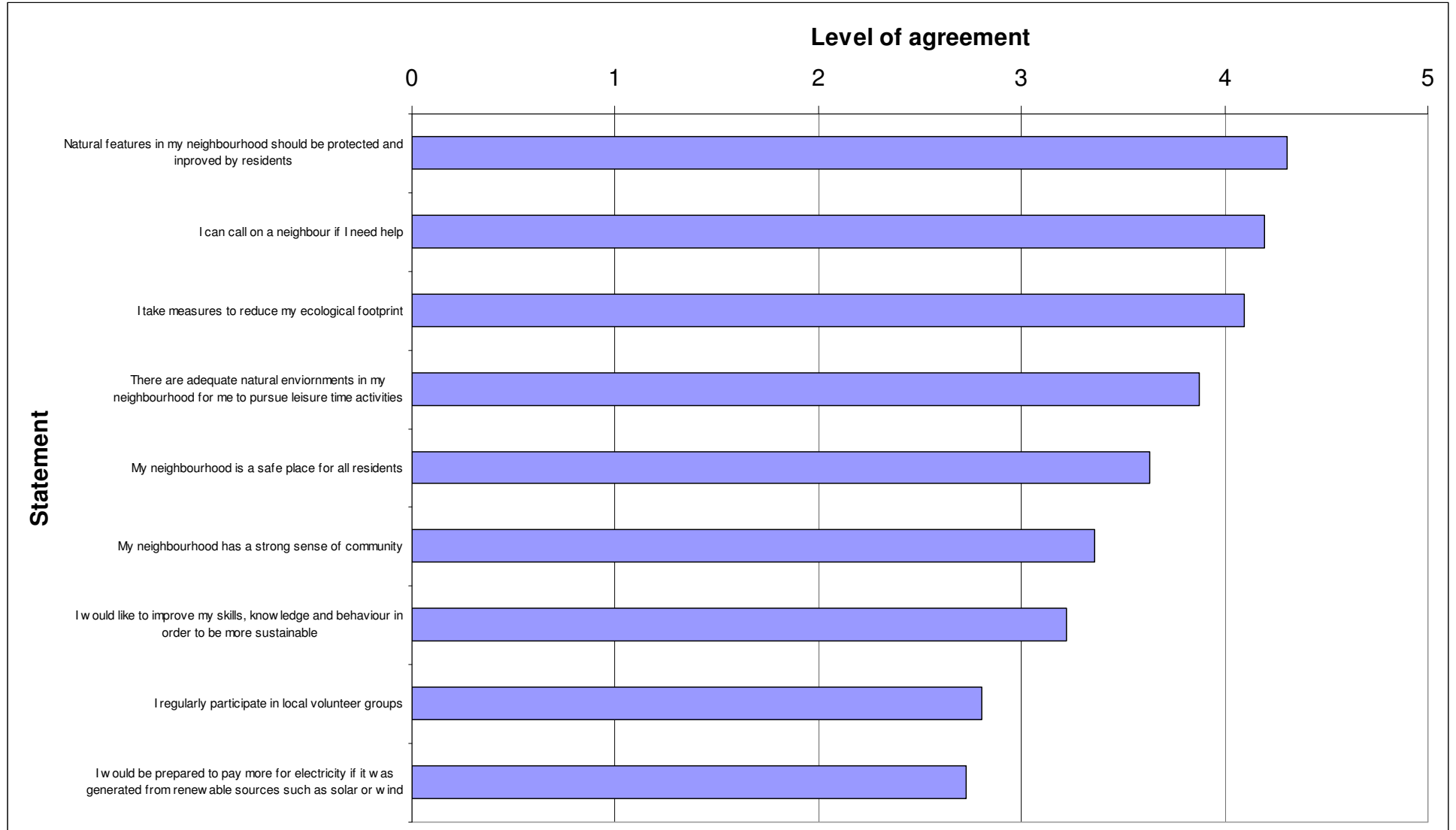


**Q4d. Would you be interested in participating in the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program?**

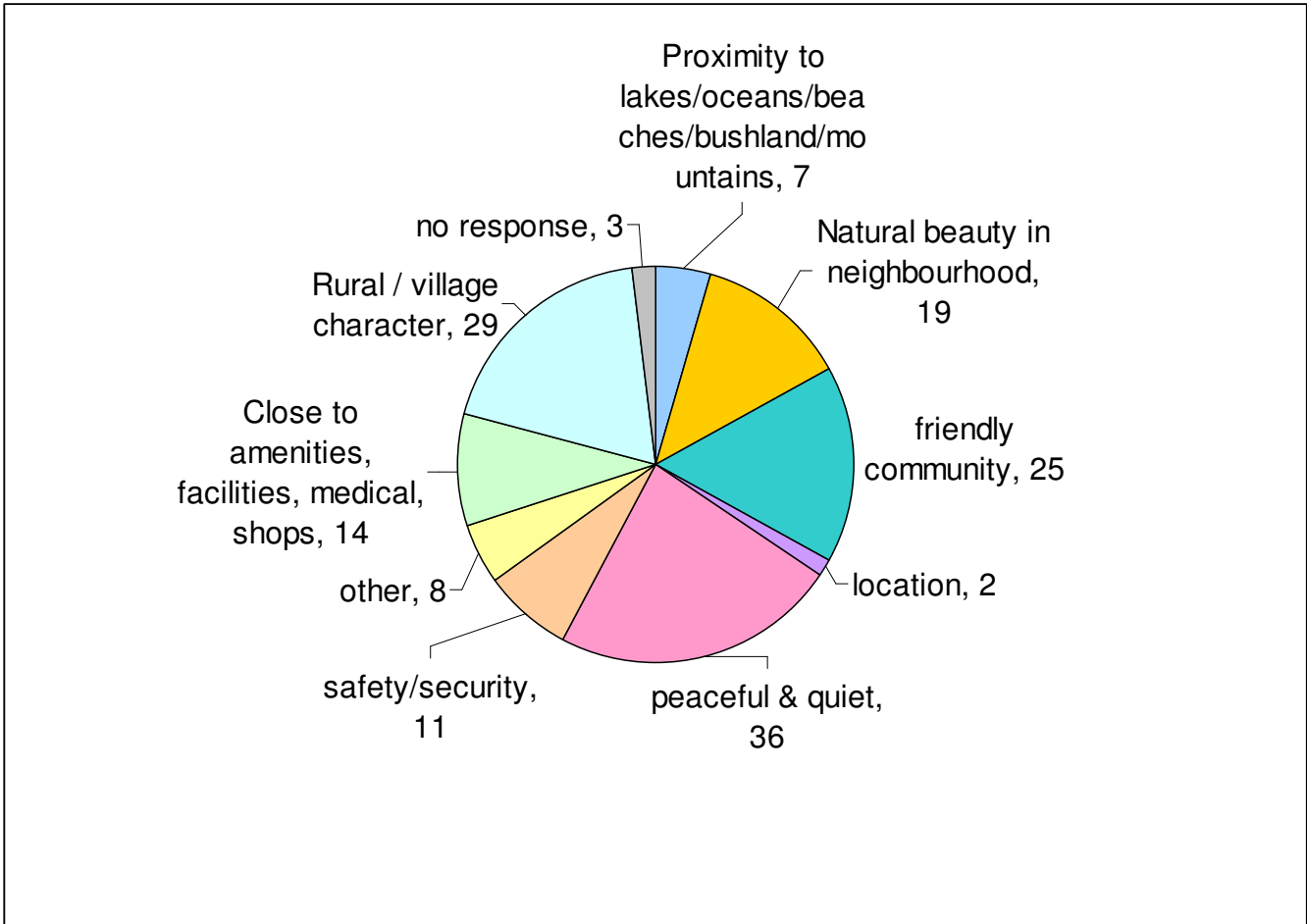


## ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Q5a. Please rate your level of involvement with each of the following statements



**Q5b. What do you like most about living in your neighbourhood?**



**Other:**

- Sense of belonging
- Great place to bring up children
- Close to family
- Inadequate response, did not answer question

## YOUR IDEAS

### Q6. Do you have any suggestions about how yourself, local business, and the people in your neighbourhood could improve the environment or community of your neighbourhood?

#### *Waste and rubbish reduction*

- Encourage residents to dispose of rubbish packaging appropriately and not from cars
- Local recycling especially for businesses
- Better recycling services
- keeping rubbish picked up
- Include green waste bin in garbage collection
- Tidy town competition
- Smaller rubbish bins
- 

#### *Connected and active community*

- Community garden
- More community days and events, programs ie neighbourhood day, community garden, farmers market, stalls, music in the park; greater use of park; more access to council owned land for those that are not in the 7 day church
- Become more sustainably aware
- Community mingle at the park
- Create a local growers market
- Regular communication and meetings between neighbours and business people of the town
- Local co-operatives for compost/worm farming
- Shops opening on a Saturday, cater to all living here
- Take responsibility for our environment and community
- More pride in your own backyard
- More pride in gardens and surrounds would be appreciated
- 

#### *Public spaces and facilities*

- Better transport
- More footpaths/ cycle paths
- Increase in services (Police)
- More efficient street lighting

#### *Services and urban planning*

- Increase infrastructure to support pedestrian access and safety
- More road safety
- Council to carry out road repairs
- Better stormwater for roads
- Limit urban development
- Do something about street scapes

#### *Protecting and improving our natural environment*

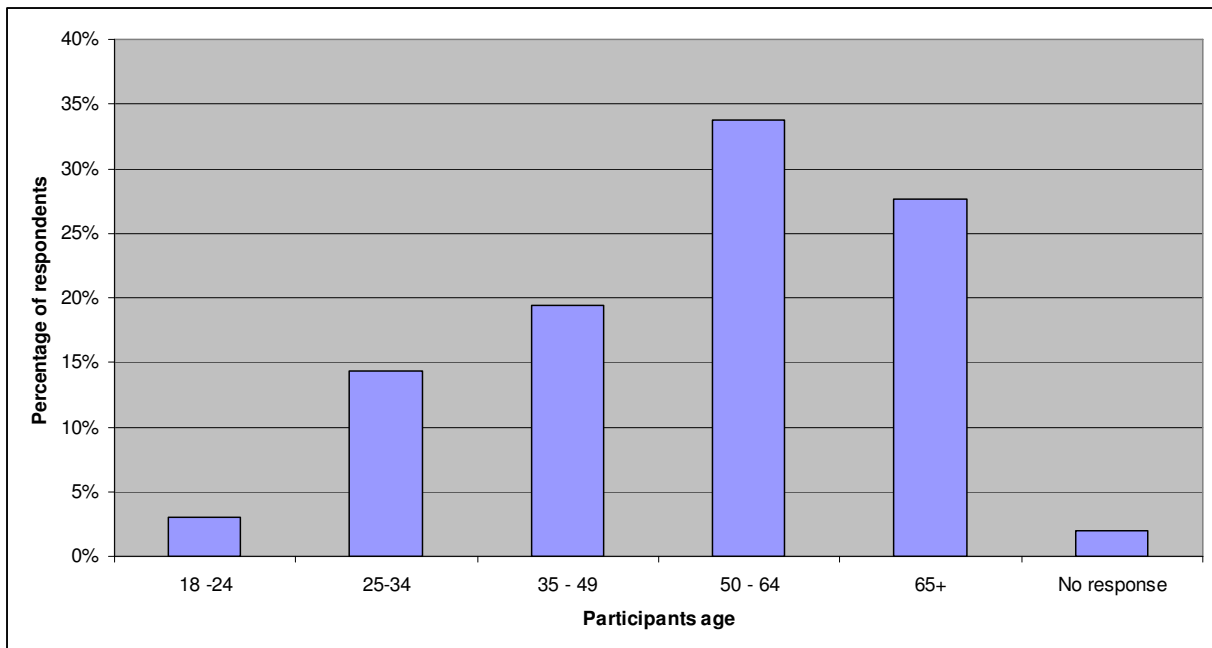
- More awareness and environmental education
- foreshore protection and protection of fish stocks in Lake Macquarie by fish patrols
- Reduce weeds
- Encourage Native Low water gardens
- Eradicate animal pests
- A survey of Cooranbong wetlands to evaluate how well they are functioning and what steps can be taken to improve them
- Greater involvement in landcare type activities
- A workshop on establishing a native garden
- More native planting
- Continue to update neighbourhood on incentives to sustain this beautiful area and to live harmoniously with the environment
- Protect wildlife more by discouraging roaming dogs and cats

*Other*

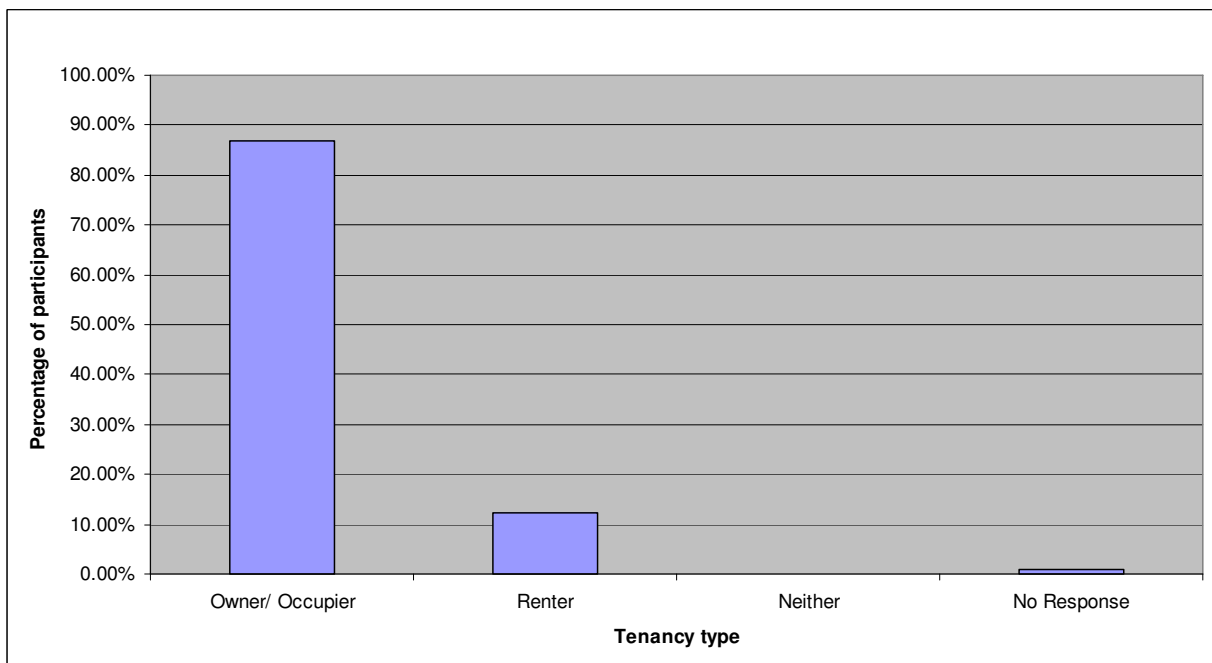
- Take SEVERE measures against vandals
- Stop horse riders going in bushland etc where they are not allowed
- My neighbourhood is perfect
- 
- 
- 
- compulsory use of solar energy
- More education about energy saving strategies
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## DEMOGRAPHICS

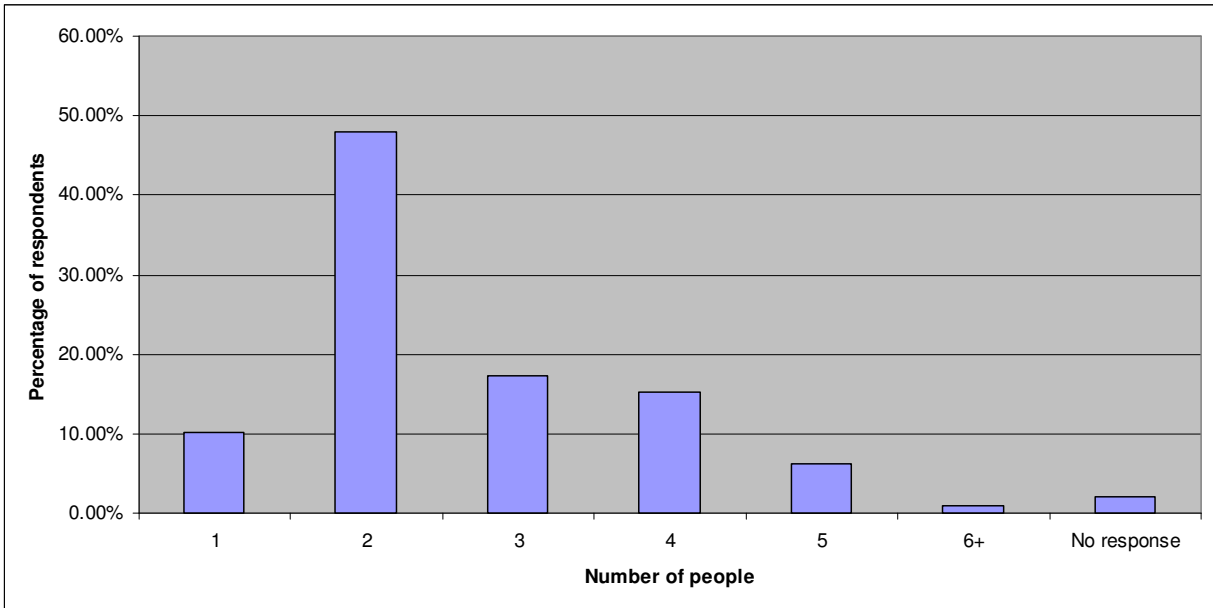
### Q7a. Age bracket



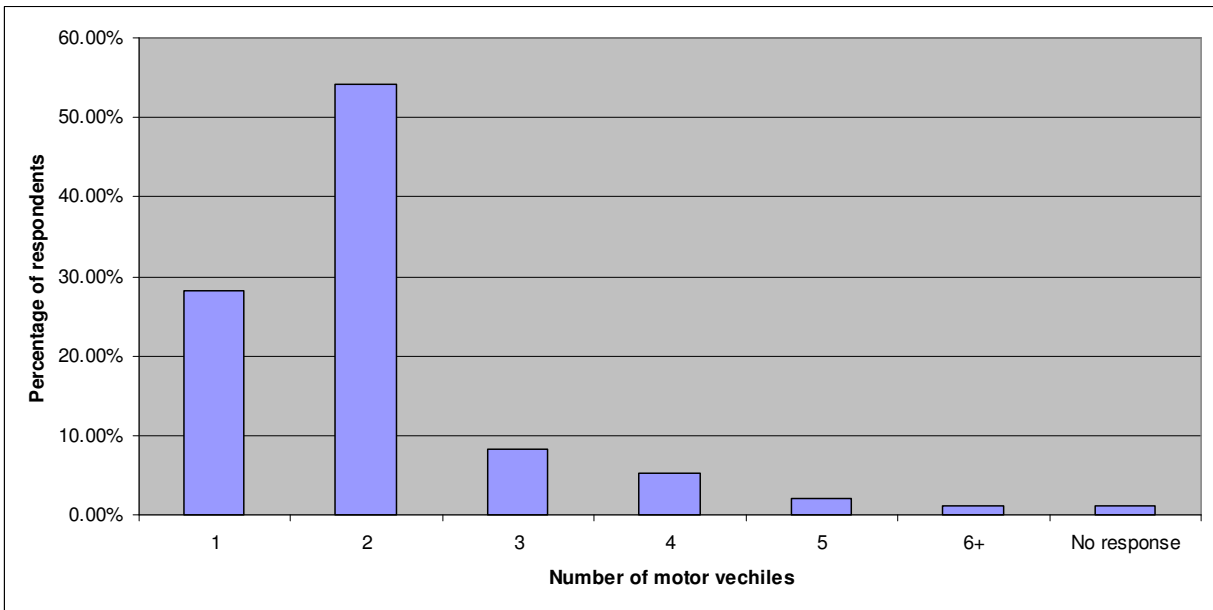
### Q7b. Tenancy Type



**Q7c. How many people currently reside in your home?**



**Q7d. How many motor vehicles does your household have?**





**Q7e. How long have you lived in you neighbourhood?**

