

Windale Sustainable Neighbourhood Community Research Survey

May-July 2011

A report on the attitudes of the Windale community, prepared by Lake Macquarie City Council as part of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods program, September 2011.

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 2011, Council and the Department of Housing joined forces to support the growth of a Windale Sustainable Neighbourhood Group and subsequently develop a local Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan. This process involves embarking in a range of activities to engage neighbours, deepen understanding of Windale, and discover what residents in the area are most passionate about.

This report presents the results of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Survey, undertaken in Windale in May through to July 2011. The survey aims to gauge community attitudes to the natural environment, sustainable living, and issues such as climate change in order to inform the development of a Windale Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan.

The survey forms part of a program of community development and engagement activities to collect input from the broadest possible range of local residents. The survey results capture some of the values, attitudes, and concerns of residents who may not have participated in other Sustainable Neighbourhood engagement activities, and gives a broader community perspective for the development of a local Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan.

METHODOLOGY

In May 2011, the survey was posted to approximately 1019 households in Windale utilising 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 can be found in Appendix 1.

The survey asked respondents to:

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

In total, 52 surveys were returned – a return rate of 5%.

Key Findings

1. Local sustainability issues in Windale

Respondents were most concerned about:

- Stormwater management and water drainage
- Litter
- Bushland regeneration and enhancement and tree planting
- Anti-social behaviour

The issues rated of most importance were:

- Protecting and improving the natural environment
- Making the neighbourhood bike and pedestrian friendly
- Reducing waste

2. Climate change over the next 20 years

Only 31% of residents agreed that climate change will directly impact their life over the next 20 years, with the main impacts being:

- Changes in weather / extreme weather events
- Increased cost of living
- Increased temperatures / warmer weather and their health impacts.

The majority (67%) agreed that the actions of the average person have a large impact on slowing climate change.

3. Your sustainability choices

Most respondents (>55%) have one or more of these items on their property:

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

Native gardens (49%), vegetable gardens (45%), and composts (42%) are also relatively widespread.

Food scraps and organic waste

The majority (65%) of respondents dispose of their food / organic scraps in a compost, worm farm, or chooks. The most common reasons for not having a compost or worm farm include:

- My living circumstances are not appropriate
- I need more information before I decide

GreenPower

Almost 10% of respondents purchased GreenPower, with comments indicating some confusion about what it is. The main reasons for not purchasing GreenPower are:

- I cannot afford GreenPower
- I do not know much about GreenPower

Public transport

The majority of respondents (over 64%) reported that they never or seldom use public transport. The most common reasons included:

- The route and timetables for public transport in my area is not convenient
- I prefer to use my car

Motivation

Respondents ranked 'A personal responsibility to do the right thing for the environment' as their primary motivation for improving their environmental behaviour, closely followed by, 'Saving money' and 'Rebates and incentives'.

4. Sustainability actions in your neighbourhood

Participation

Respondents indicated they are most likely to participate in activities such as:

- Information workshops (eg native plants, green cleaning, energy and water saving)
- Growing native gardens
- Education events specific to the region's flora, fauna and natural environment

The Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program

The majority of residents indicated that they would like to be kept informed about sustainable neighbourhood projects in Windale.

- 17% of respondents have heard of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program
- 4% of respondents have participated in the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program

5. About Windale

Respondents had a high level of agreement that:

- Natural features in my neighbourhood should be protected and improved by residents
- I take measures to reduce my ecological footprint
- I can call on a neighbour if I need help
- I would like to improve my skills, knowledge and behaviour in order to be more sustainable.

The top three things people like about living in Windale include:

- Open space and proximity to natural environments (lake, local bushland and beaches)
- Proximity to facilities and shopping centres
- Neighbours (friendly, trustworthy neighbours, supportive)
- Affordable property prices.

6. Your Ideas

Respondents contributed over 100 ideas and suggestions about how Windale residents and/or businesses could improve the environment or community of Windale. These were grouped into a number of categories including:

- Facilities and safety
- Youth
- Community gardens
- Littering
- Community
- Reduce resource consumption
- Natural environment
- Communication and governance

Implications for the Windale Sustainable Neighbourhood Project

The results of this survey highlight some important points relevant to the development of a Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan for Windale, and will be used to supplement similar information to be gathered from a range of other activities such as information displays and community workshops, and targeted community engagement activities.

Values and Assets

Windale is in a distinct location mostly surrounded by bushland and major roads. Residents have expressed they value the central location close to the lake, beaches and being relatively close to the town centres at Charlestown and Mount Hutton.

Many long term residents Windale residents have identified they have good neighbourhoods and they value the housing affordability and availability of services and facilities. This connectedness amongst residents and this desire to build community pride is a significant asset to integrate into the development of a more sustainable and resilient neighbourhood.

Issues

Respondents identified a very broad range of issues in their neighbourhood, with a significant proportion indicating the importance of protecting and improving the natural environment, making the neighbourhood bike and pedestrian friendly and reducing waste.

Additional issues that residents identified in the Windale neighbourhood were stormwater management and water drainage, littering, bushland regeneration and enhancement and tree planting and anti-social behaviour.

Identification of issues from a broad cross section of the Windale community is essential as a basis for developing sustainability actions that will address those actions of highest priority for the majority of Windale residents particularly as the survey only had a return rate of 5%.

Actions

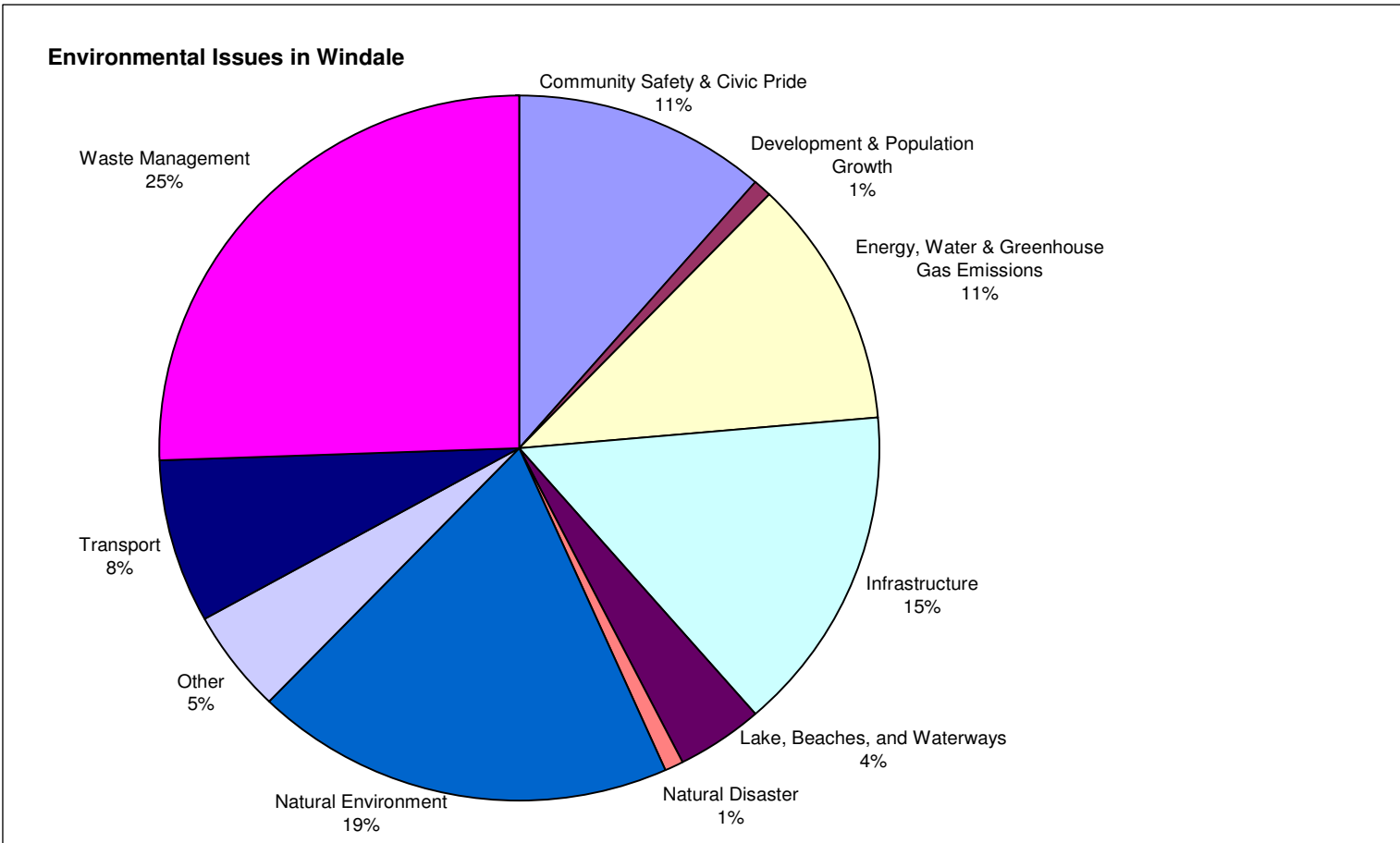
The survey results highlight some potential neighbourhood actions and give an indication of activities that are likely to gain popular support from the Windale community. Actions that address the issues mentioned above are likely to have community support. Other popular suggestions included:

- Youth activities and projects for intergenerational interaction
- Community social events and gatherings such as picnics and BBQs
- Community gardening
- Improving communication in the community
- Litter reduction
- Information workshops, in particular on worm farming, composting and native gardening.

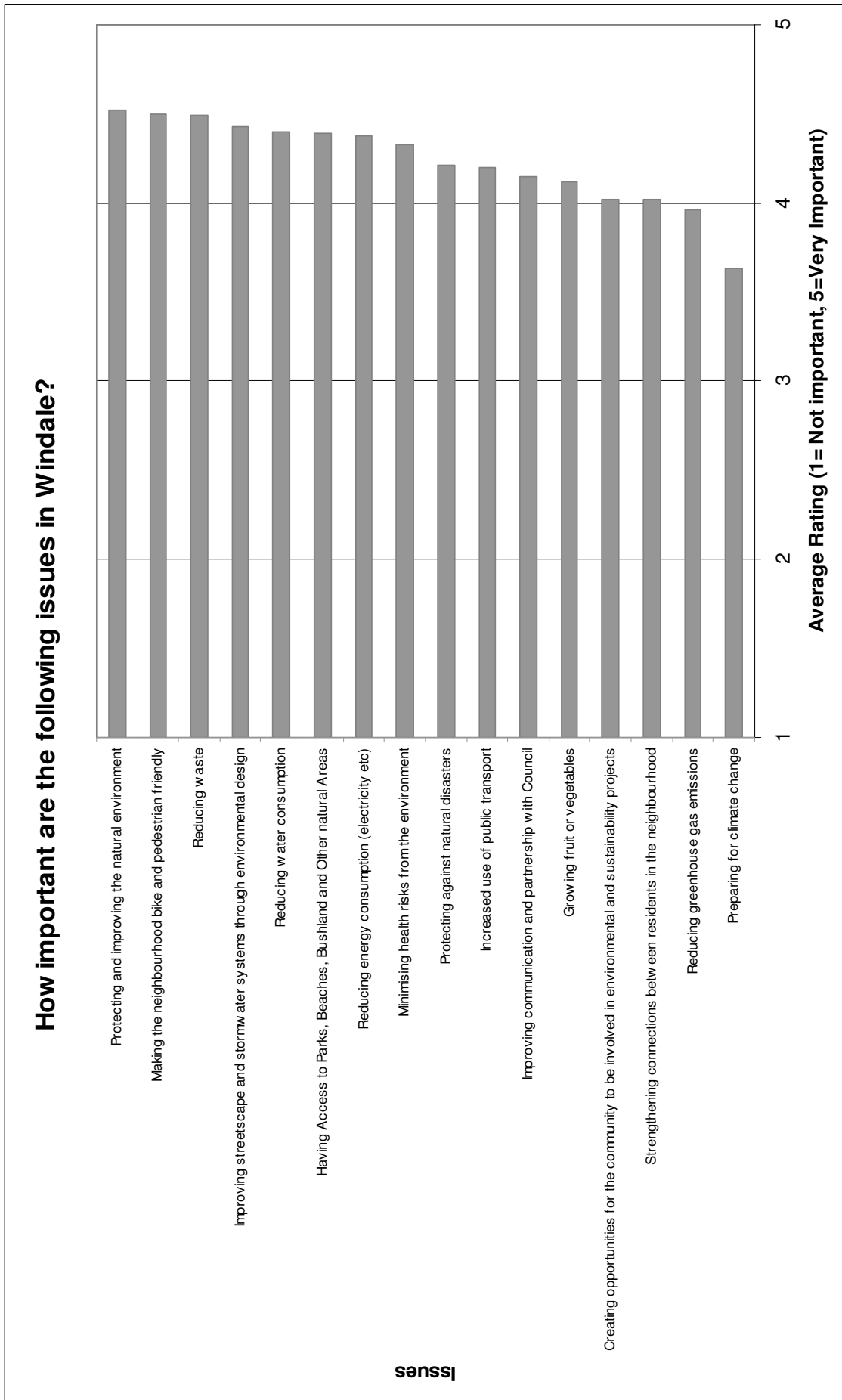
Detailed Results

1. LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN WINDALE

Q1a. What are the three most important environmental issues in your neighbourhood today? (list no more than 3)



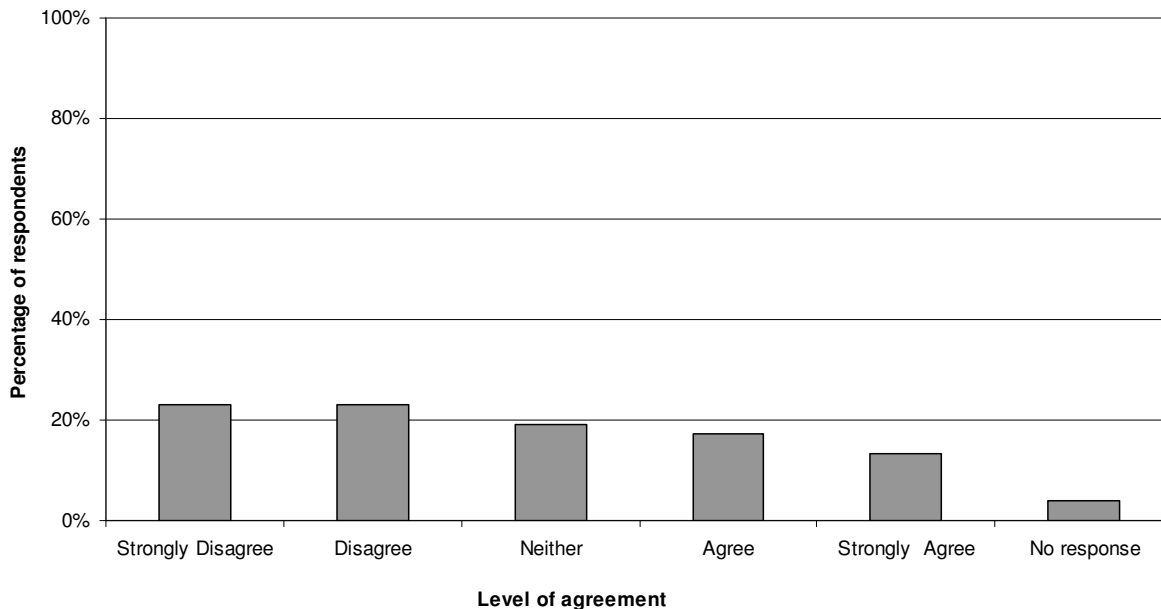
Q1b. Please rate how important you think the following are to your neighbourhood



2. CLIMATE CHANGE OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS

Q2a. How strongly do you agree, or disagree, that climate change will have a direct impact on your life over the next 20 years?

Climate change will have a direct impact on your life over the next 20 years



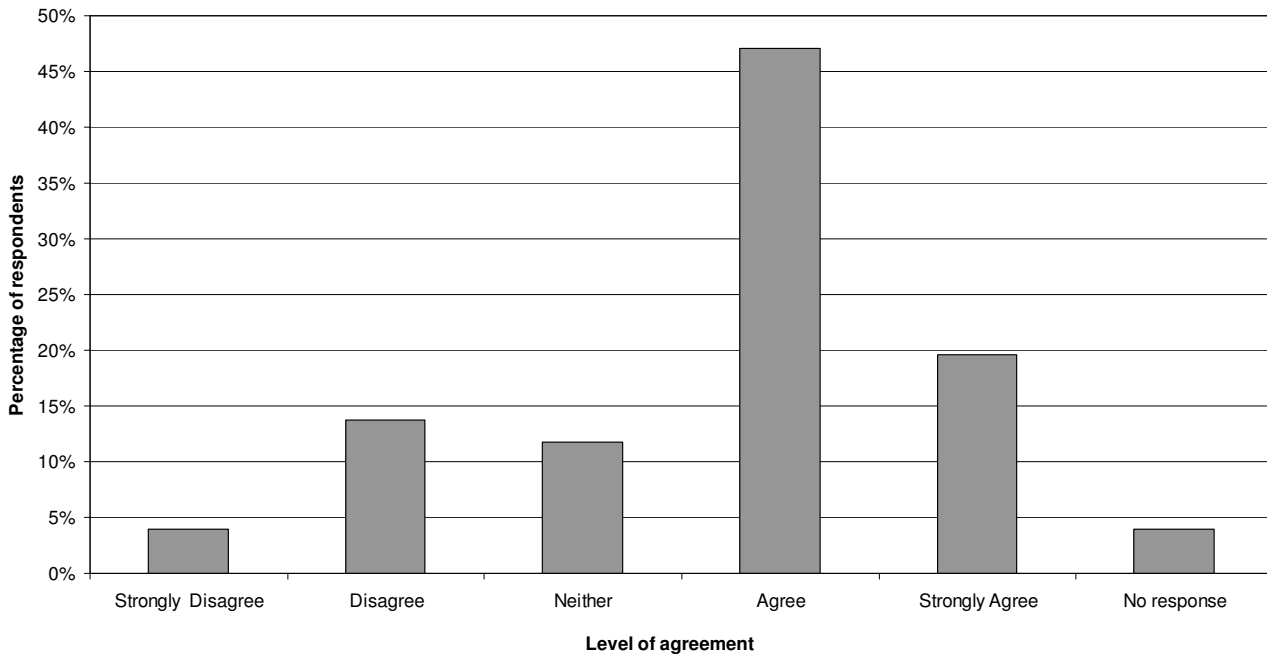
Q2b. If you agree or strongly agree with the statement in Q2a, what do you think will be the MAIN impact of climate change in the next 20 years?

The main impacts identified as of concern were:

- Changes in weather / extreme weather events
- Increased cost of living
- Increased temperatures / warmer weather and their health impacts.

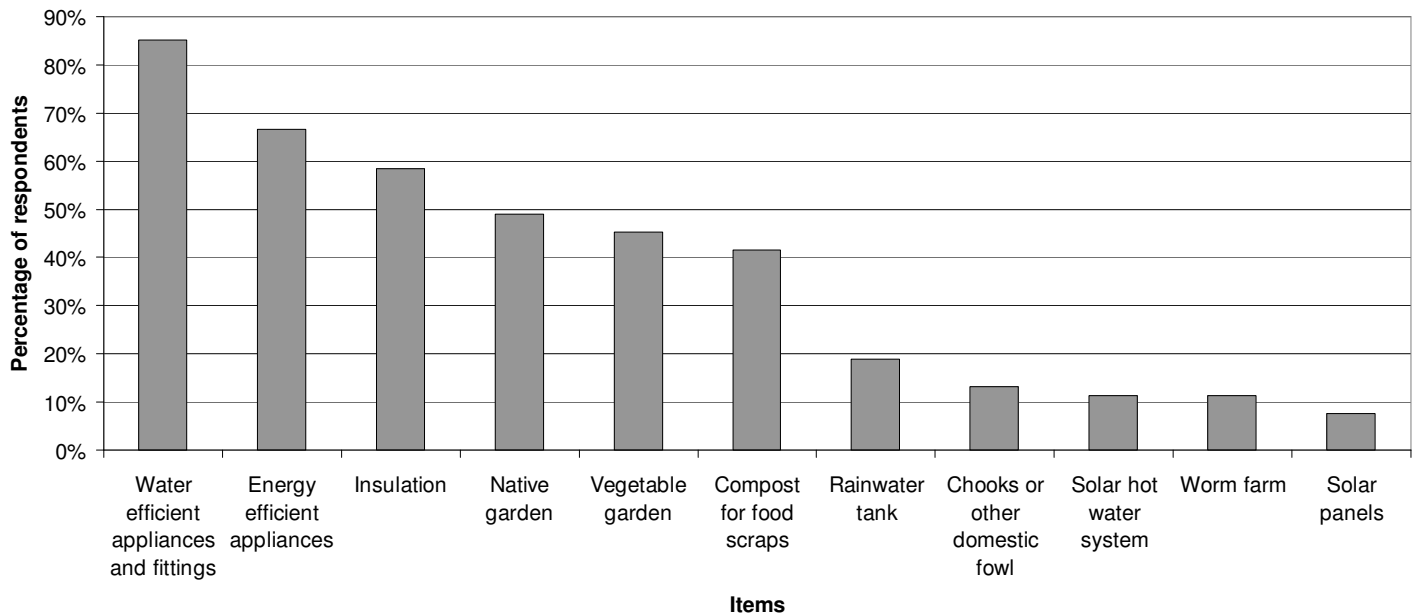
Q2c. How strongly do you agree, or disagree, that the actions of the average person have a large impact on slowing climate change?

The actions of the average person have a large impact on slowing climate change

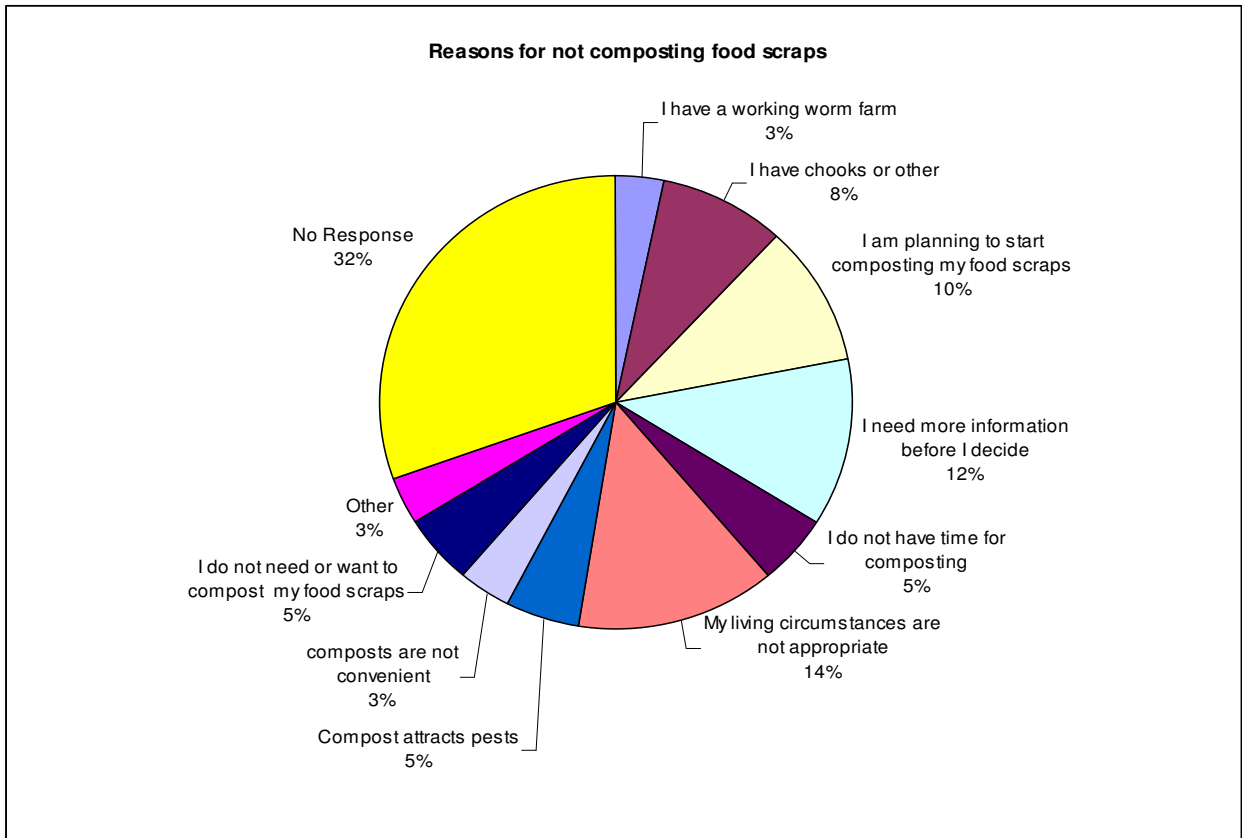


3. YOUR SUSTAINABILITY CHOICES

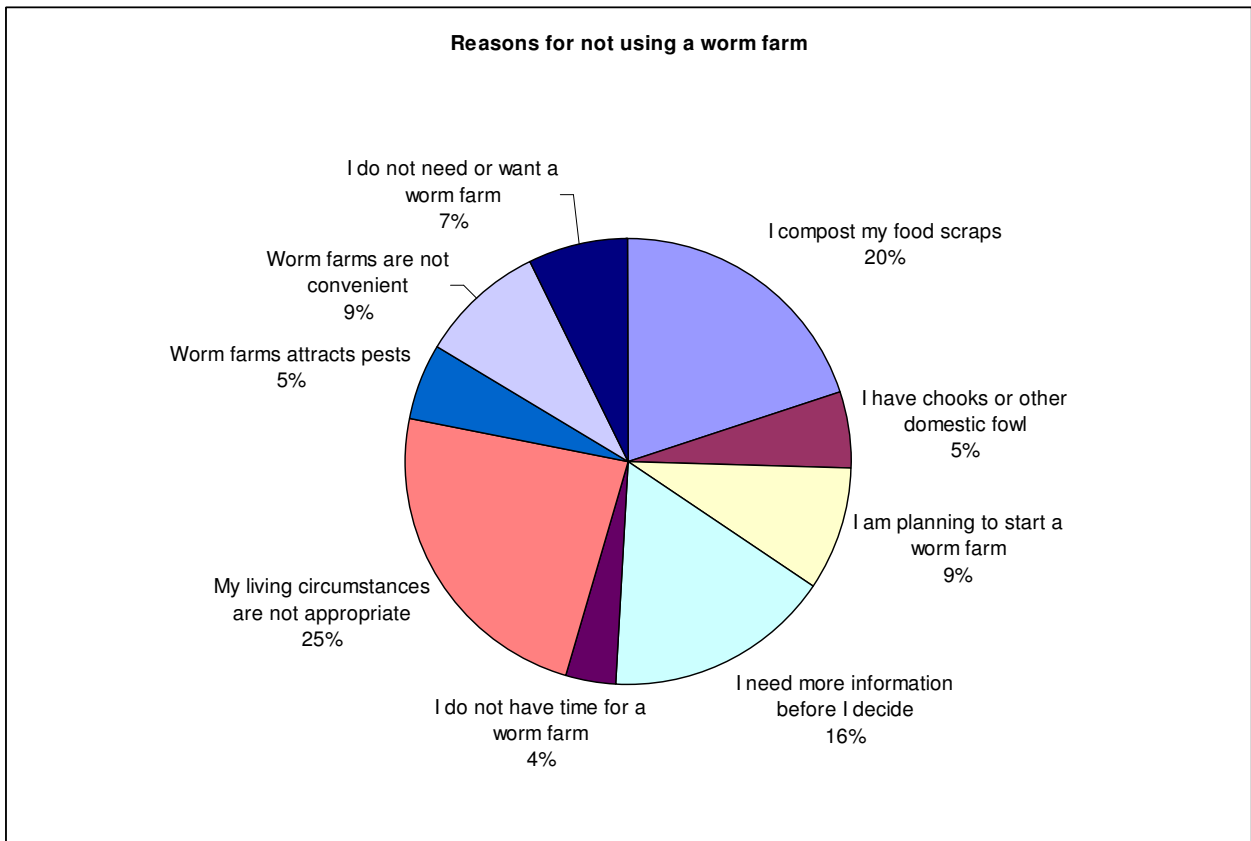
Q3a. Do you have any of the following items on your property?



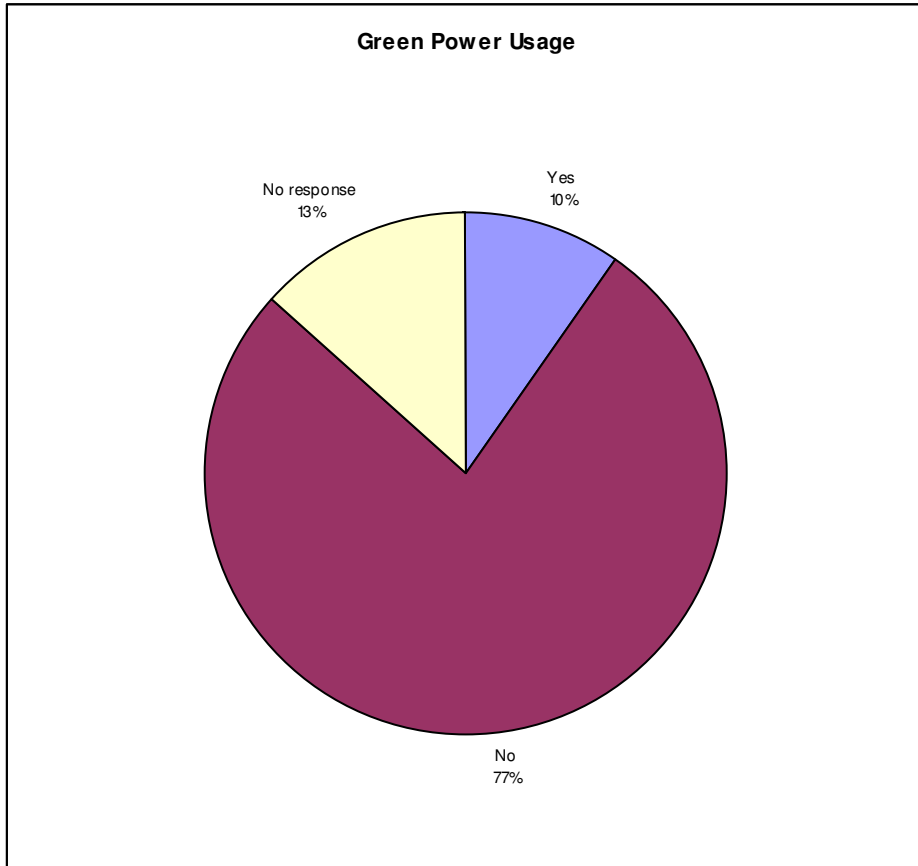
Q3b. If you do not compost food scraps, please indicate why. List all reasons that apply.



Q3c. If you do not have a working worm farm, please indicate why. List all reasons that apply.

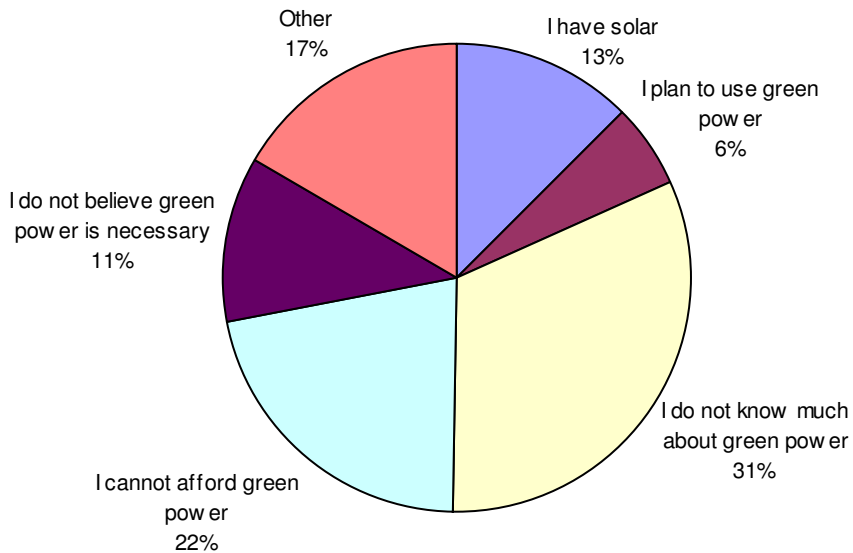


Q3d. Do you use GreenPower (renewable energy accredited by the Federal Government)?

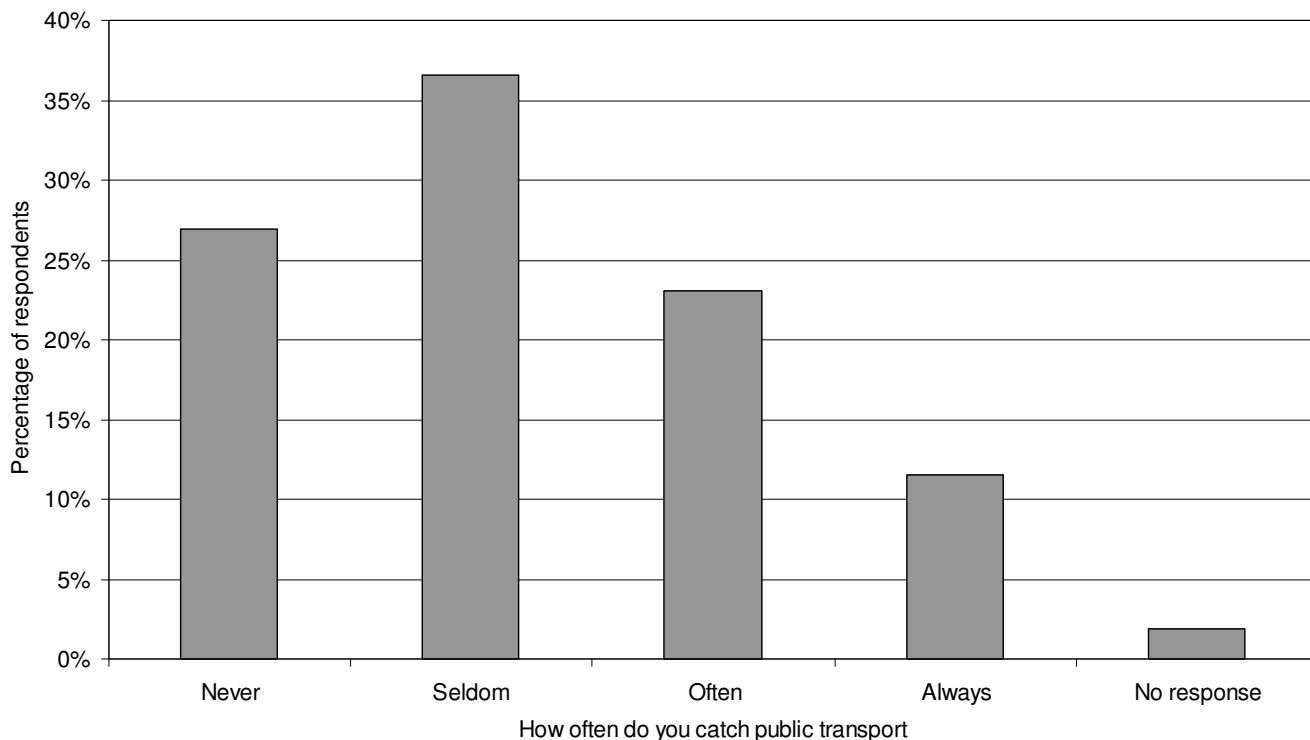


Q3e. If you do not use GreenPower, please indicate why. List all reasons that apply.

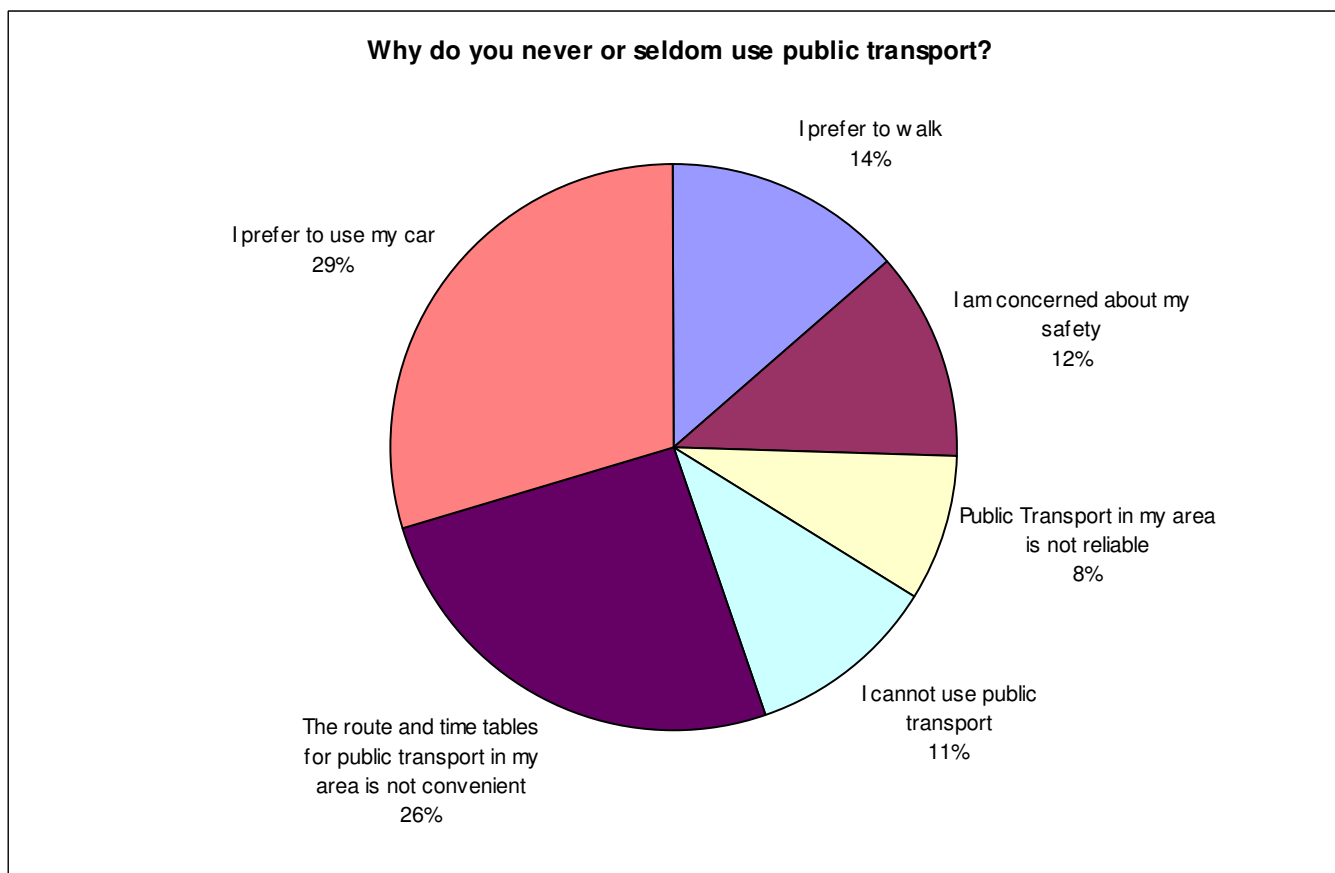
Reasons for not using GreenPower



Q3f. How often do people in your household use public transport?



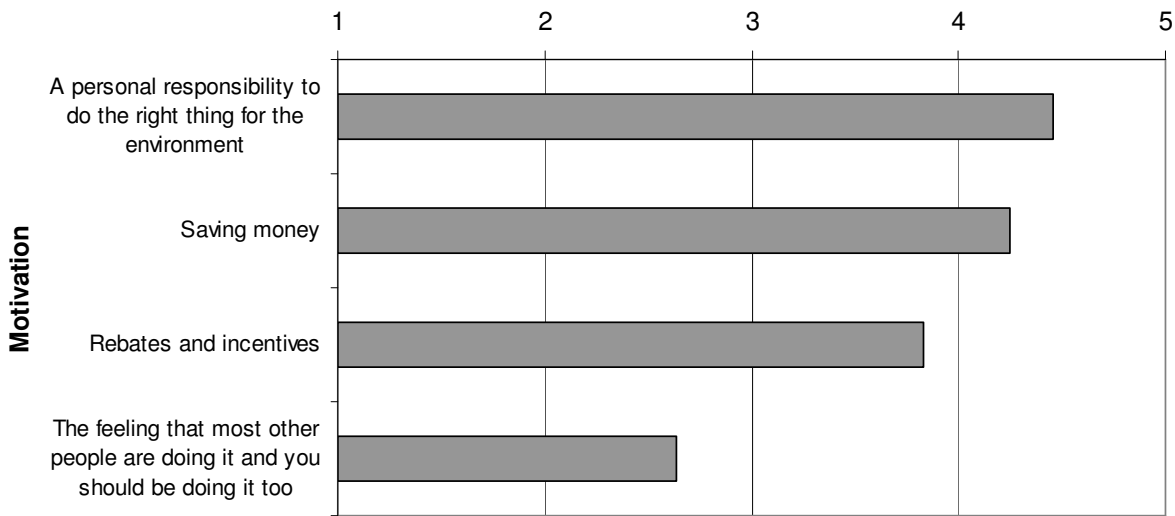
Q3g. If your household never or seldom uses public transport, please indicate why. List all that apply.



Q3h. What motivates you to improve your environmental behaviour?

Environmental Behaviour Motivation

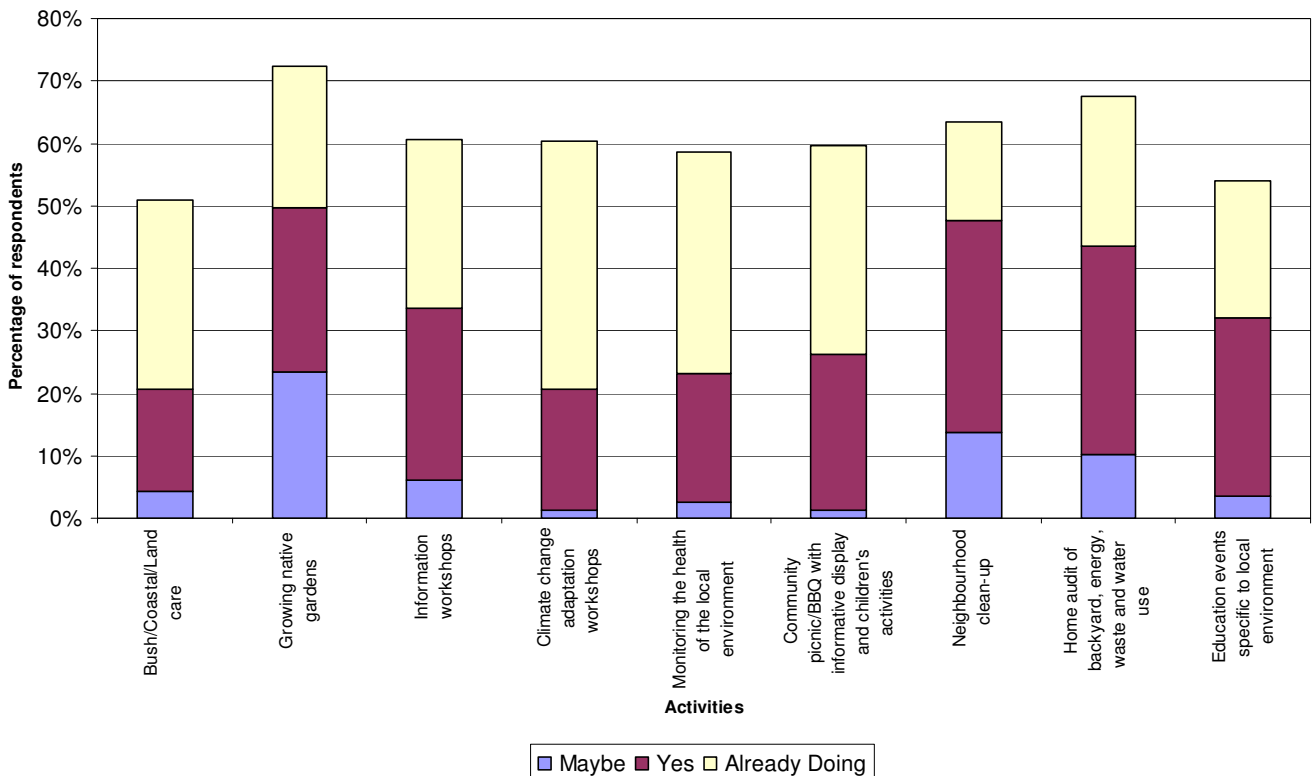
Importance rating (1=Not at all important, 5=Very important)



4. SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

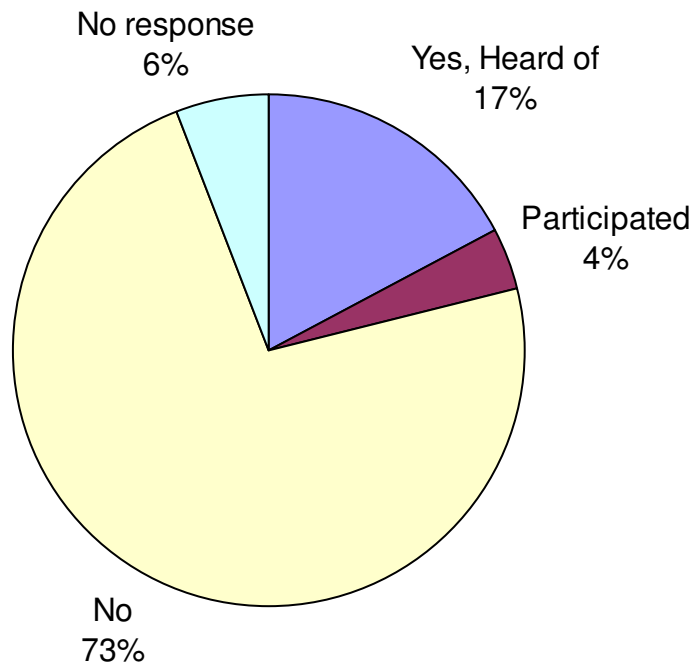
Q4a. Which of the following activities / events would you consider participating in?

Which activities/events would you consider participating in?



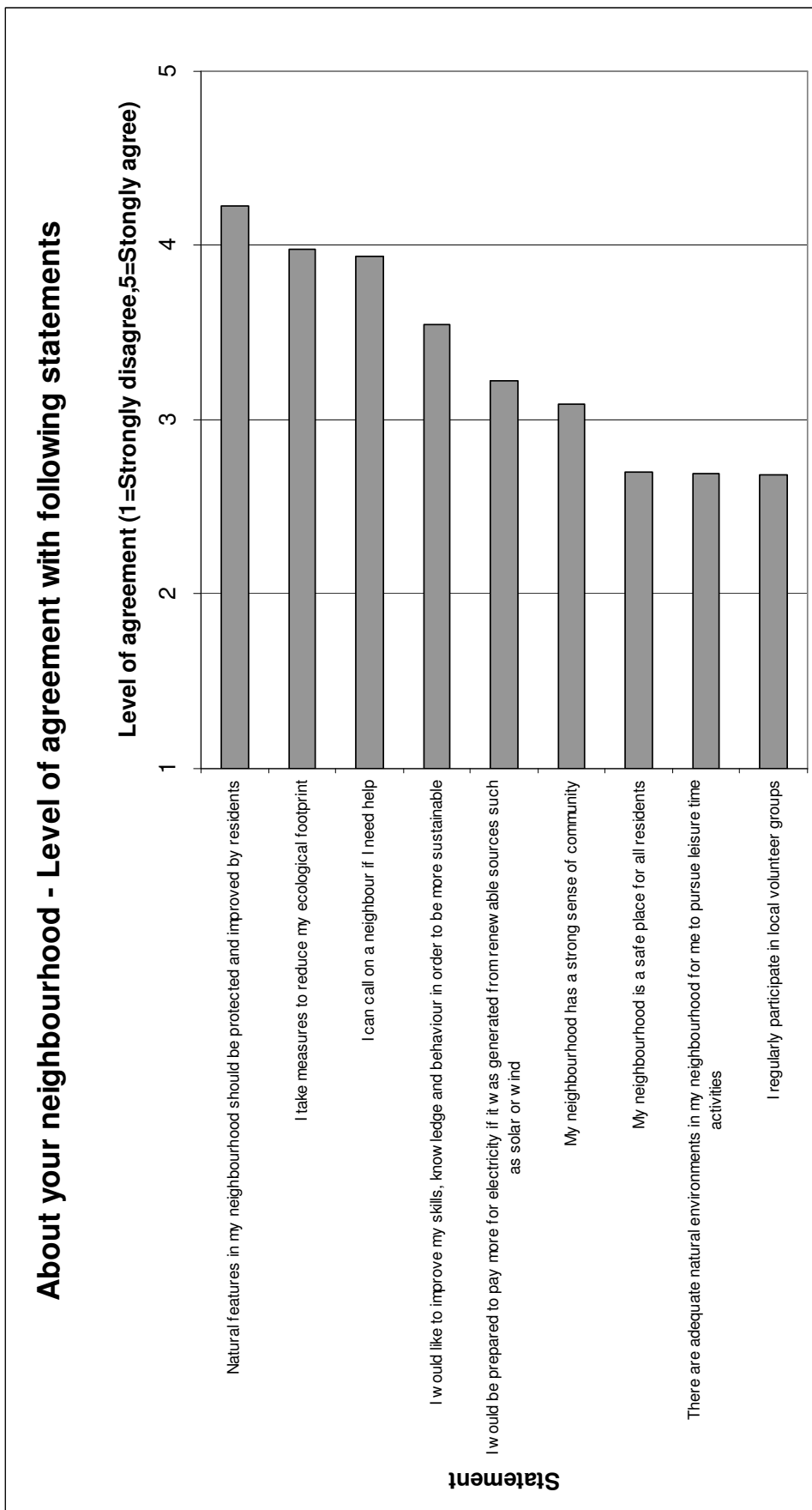
Q4b. Have you heard of or participated in the Sustainable Neighbourhoods program?

Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program



5. ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

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



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

Access to Facilities

- Very central
- You are ten minutes anything you need - lake, ocean shopping centres and bush walks.
- Proximity to a variety of activities and essential services
- Convenient most areas - Charlestown, Newcastle, Lake and beaches, libraries etc. Different shopping centres
- Close and handy to beaches, shopping centres, transport,
- Close to shops and transport
- It's close to work and family.
- Central to most shopping centres,
- Close to shopping, beaches, lake, and wonderful neighbours
- Close to public transport schools, lake, ocean and shopping centres.
- Fairly reliable bus service
- Quiet, generally close to everything.
- Close to everything e.g. - shops, lake, beach
- Close to schools, shops etc
- Close to transport
- Close to shops, ocean and lake
- Position, position, position
- Close to public transport, shops, medical attention etc beaches, lake
- Locality - very central
- Convenience to local shops and main shopping centres

Open Space

- Space between houses
- Open spaces
- Lots of open space
- Big house blocks
- Good big block sizes
- I live opposite a park which gives me a nice outlook.

Affordability

- As a private owner, I find it affordable.
- Affordable housing for home owners.
- Property prices
- Inexpensive

Sense of Community

- Safe, neighbours
- Good neighbours
- Excellent neighbours
- We can rely on each other if needed
- Level area, good retail shopping centre and sports fields, very central location.
- I like the area, I have lived here all my life and, and, generally it is quiet.
- Quiet, good neighbours.
- Friendly neighbours
- Quiet - people are friendly when I walk.
- People are friendly and helpful, we keep an eye on one another.
- Great council and neighbours but decisions from government and council has changed nature of estate from low income to emergency housing.
- A quiet area most of the houses self owned, and take pride in their property.
- It's very quiet
- My neighbours
- Our neighbours are quite friendly
- Just a good place to live also good neighbours
- I like the friendships, the kindness of people, the locals, the way the suburb has grown over the years (I have lived here since 1966).
- On the whole it is a friendly place
- In our short time here, we have found people to be friendly and supportive.
- I have a very good caring neighbours
- It is quiet and people keep pretty much to themselves but are there if needed.
- The neighbours are just great and we all care about one another
- Immediate neighbours very good
- Variety of people, quiet days (daytime)

Safety

- I have lived here for almost 50 years and I am very happy and feel safe in my street.
- Quiet street, (except for hoons driving at speed).
- A very safe place. No floods.

Natural Environment

- Lots of grass and trees for community.
- You are ten minutes from bush.
- The air is clean.
- The open space and creek in front of our property which we keep clean.
- I care for the area opposite my house (plants, trees - pick up rubbish)
- No industrial noises.
- Nice environment.
- My neighbourhood is close to beach and the lake with lots of surrounding bushland and walks.

6. YOUR IDEAS

Q6. Do you have any suggestions about how you, the people in your neighbourhood and/or business could improve the environment or community of your neighbourhood? *Responses have been categorised into six major categories.*

Community

- I think people need to care about their area and be considerate of others. We would like help from others.
- Events - like local market stalls and larger community events
- The school runs lots of courses for parents and carers as well as grandparents group.
- Work to include pensioners who have time etc to provide those areas of support required to make a sustained community.
- The local public school is a great place for new comers to meet others and they do great things for the children.
- Be more community friendly.
- Get residents more involved in their surroundings.
- Projects where the old and young can work together.
- Extra Mens sheds in the district and some repair and trade jobs given to the retired tradesmen who have many varied skills
- Need to change attitudes- some people sit back and watch us clean up mow and then they litter.
- Work with businesses to clean up litter around the shops - raised garden beds were built but little care. Need pride in area

Youth

- More things for young people e.g. local pool, basketball courts
- More activities for the youth to participate, encourage youth to know what they may be interested
- Activities - for local young people possibly tying these into community events or activities
- More programs involving teenagers in the community
- Develop a BMX track for the youth as this would support youth activity whilst not using non-renewable resources
- Have more activities for children.

Reduce Resource Consumption

- Save power, water etc
- Shopping centres to reduce air-conditioning
- Community Gardens
- The community garden is a great idea.
- Use green waste for compost/ Grow your own vegetables and fruits and much your garden use less water.
- Gardens - vegies and natives with community participation
- Communal gardens
- Develop a community garden

Natural Environment

- People need to teach their children and themselves to be more caring about every aspect regarding the environment
- Improve the streetscape. Plant more trees - Natives.
- Planting Trees,
- Plant more trees on foot paths and in yards (some are totally bare)

Communication and Governance

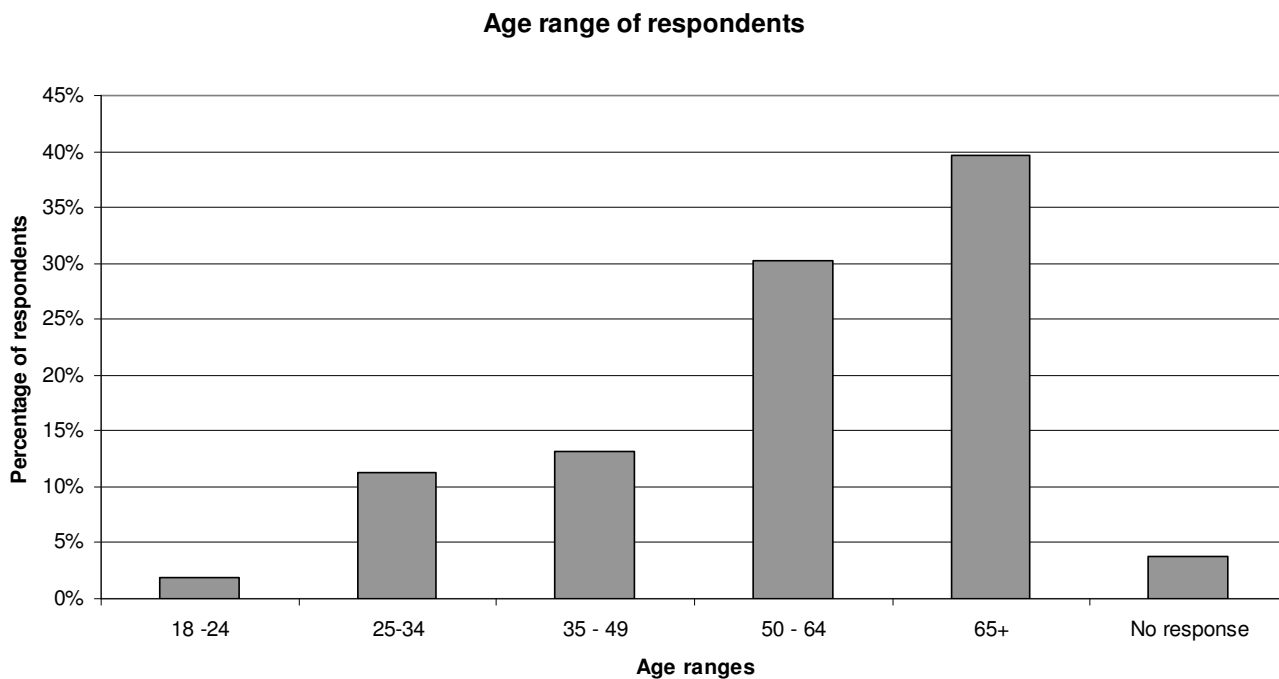
- Stop playing secret service, telling only the selected few about meetings etc, then making grand statements about "what everybody wants".
- The people of Windale, for the most part need help from all levels of government
- Create better links with Department of Housing to stop causing unrest
- Do something about empty houses- too many people go homeless.
- The work that WICA is undertaking is fantastic.
- Changes from single housing to medium housing and inappropriate size lots and influx of pensioners requesting emergency housing/support we both
- Need to change the idea that we all know this is a socially disturbed area and the whole idea of improving things is just out of anybody's thinking
- Integrate more private housing (not investment rentals) to support ownership of this great suburb
- Work to making sure houses, land and public areas are treated with respect
- Dept of Housing to place more family public and private housing in area rather than single people
- Facilities and Safety
- Library can be active, story telling. Mothers roster day involvement reading to kids.
- More police presence,
- Introduce new footpaths,
- Introduce recreational areas for motorcyclists, particularly unregistered ones.
- "NO" to graffiti, vandalism, pollution etc.
- Perhaps more street lights on every street.
- Another bus service/more frequent service through the suburb
- More street scaping
- General spruce up of the area - it's a bit of a suburban desert, and maybe this would give the impression that the area was a little cooler in the summer
- Stop illegal motorbikes on the streets and in the bush
- More walking paths, and footpaths mowing more regularly.
- Stop motorbikes riding in bushland between Windale and Tingara Heights.
- Bus Services extended
- Overnight refuges if there is violence at home
- Motor bike riders tear around and rip up the ground.

Littering

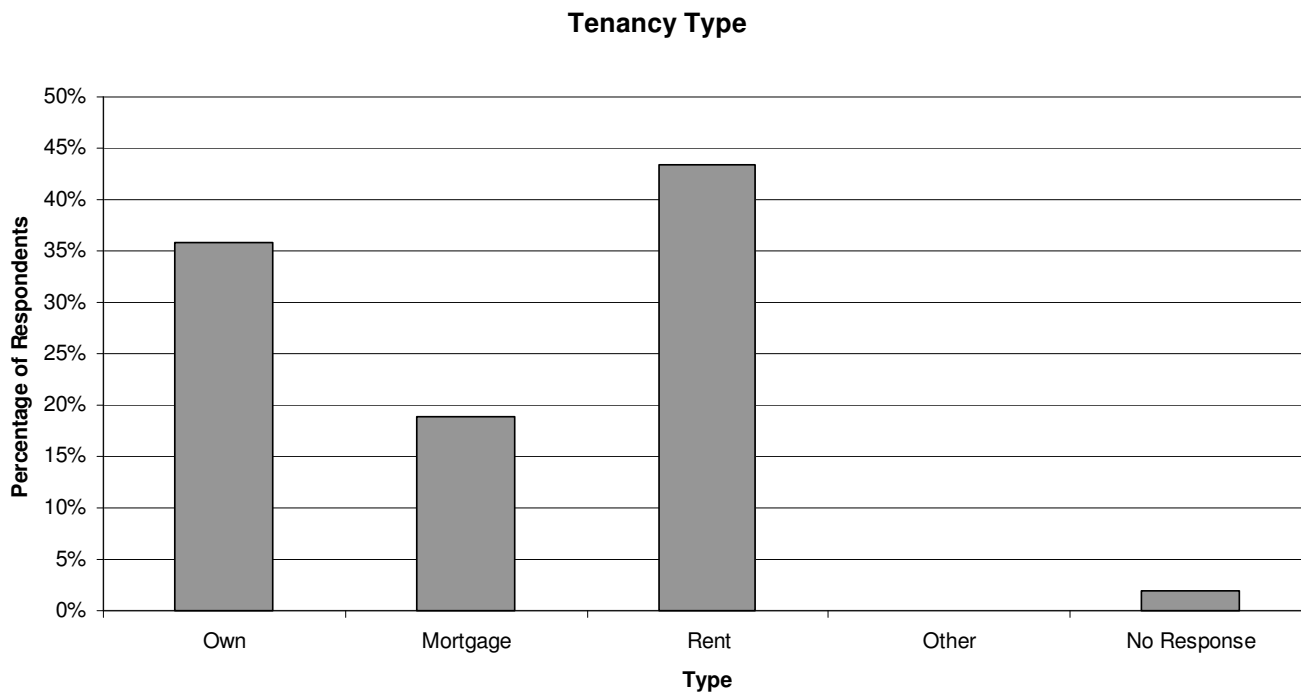
- I think there could be a garbage bin (for example) in the park opposite me: that may encourage people who do occasionally sit there, to use it
- more control over littering 'council rangers' etc
- Get rid of the excess garbage off footpaths,
- Stop littering in the streets

7. DEMOGRAPHICS

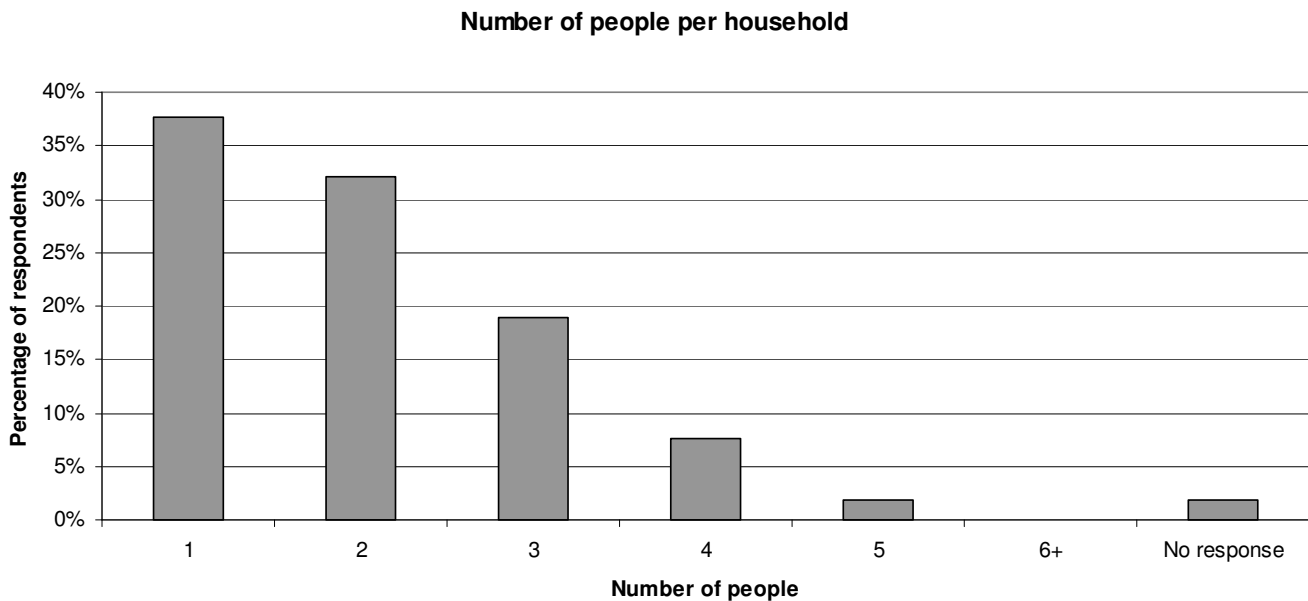
Q7a. Please indicate your age bracket



Q7b. Thinking about the home you live in, do you?



Q7c. How many people currently reside in your home?



Q7d. How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?

