

Murrays Beach, Cams Wharf and Nords Wharf Sustainable Neighbourhoods Survey

August 2011

A report on the attitudes of the Murrays Beach, Cams Wharf and Nords Wharf community, prepared by Lake Macquarie City Council as part of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program, August 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 Citizens joined forces to support the growth of a Murrays Beach, Cams Wharf and Nords Wharf 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 Murrays Beach, Cams Wharf and Nords Wharf, and discover what residents in the area are most passionate about.

This report presents the results of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Survey, undertaken in Murrays Beach, Cams Wharf and Nords Wharf in May 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 Murrays Beach, Cams Wharf and Nords Wharf 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 April 2011, the survey was delivered to approximately 616 households in Murrays Beach, Cams Wharf and Nords Wharf according to mailing addresses in Council's residential 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
- were over 18 years old; and
- are one of the key decision makers in your household.

In total, 76 surveys were returned – a return rate of 12.3%.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Local Sustainability Issues in Murrays Beach, Cams Wharf and Nords Wharf (Fig. 1)

Respondents were most concerned about:

1. Protecting and improving the natural environment
2. Having access to parks, beaches, bushland and other natural areas
3. Reducing waste
4. Reducing energy consumption
5. Improving streetscape and stormwater systems through environmental design

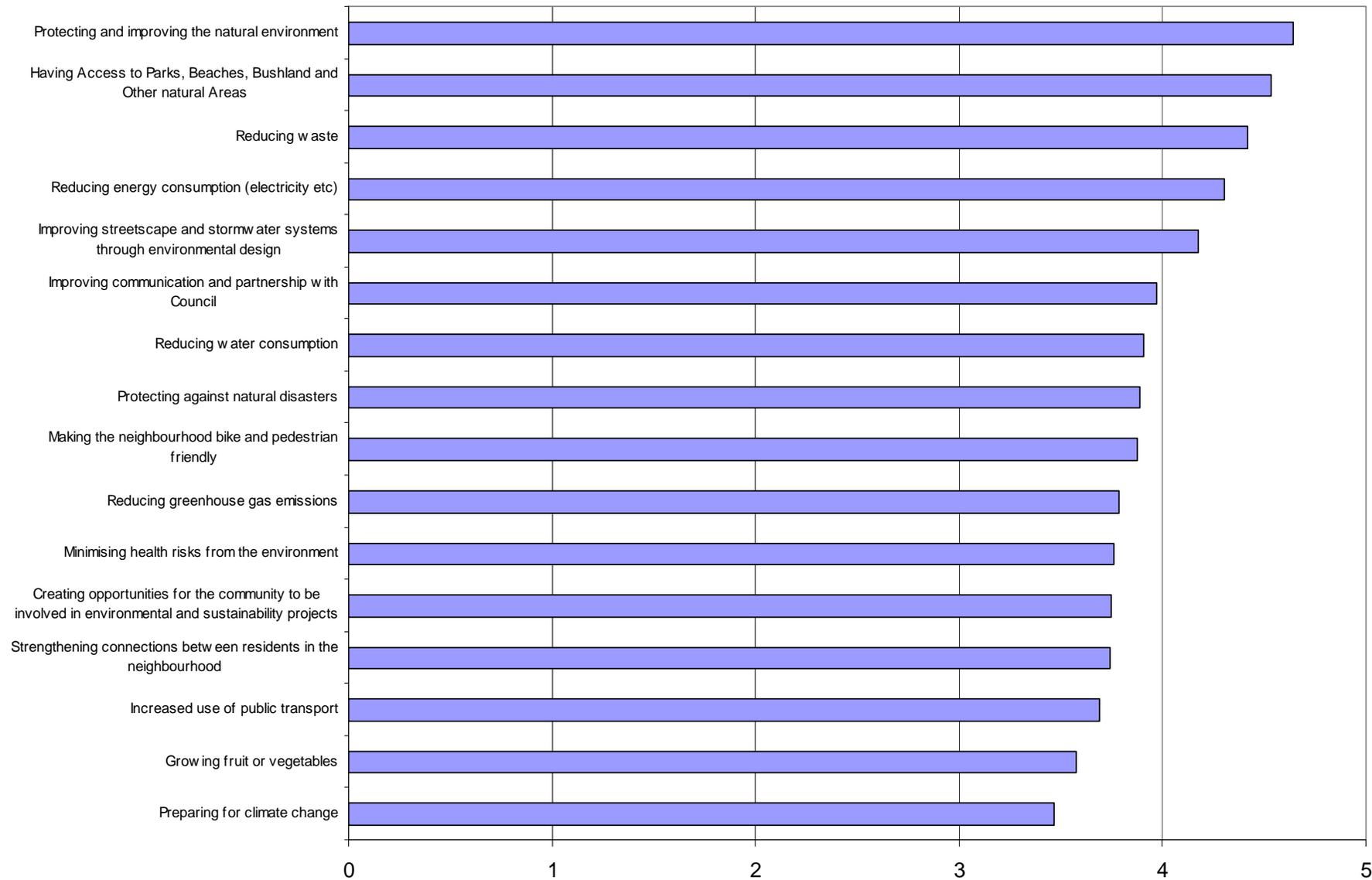


Figure 1. Response to Question 1b 'Please rate how important you think the following are to your neighbourhood on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important.'

2. Climate Change over the Next 20 Years

A majority of respondents (>63%) disagree or strongly disagree that climate change will directly impact their life over the next 20 years: (27.63%) 'Strongly disagree'; and (35.53%) 'Disagree'.

Of those who agreed or strongly agreed, the main impacts identified as of concern were:

1. Increase extreme weather events
2. Temperature changes
3. Sea level rise

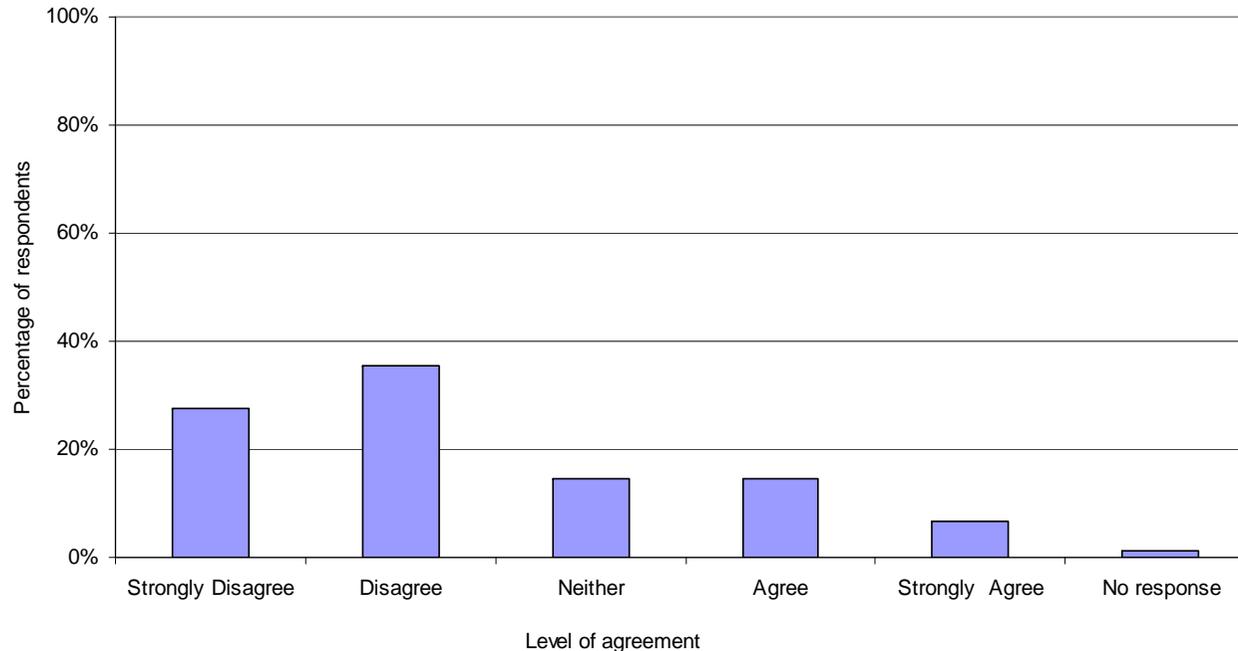


Figure 2. Response to Question 2a 'How strongly do you agree or disagree, that climate change will have a direct impact on your life over the next 20 years?'

3. Your Sustainability Choices

Most respondents (>50%) have the following sustainability items on their property:

1. Water efficient appliances and fittings
2. Native gardens
3. Insulation
4. Energy efficient appliances
5. Working compost for food scraps

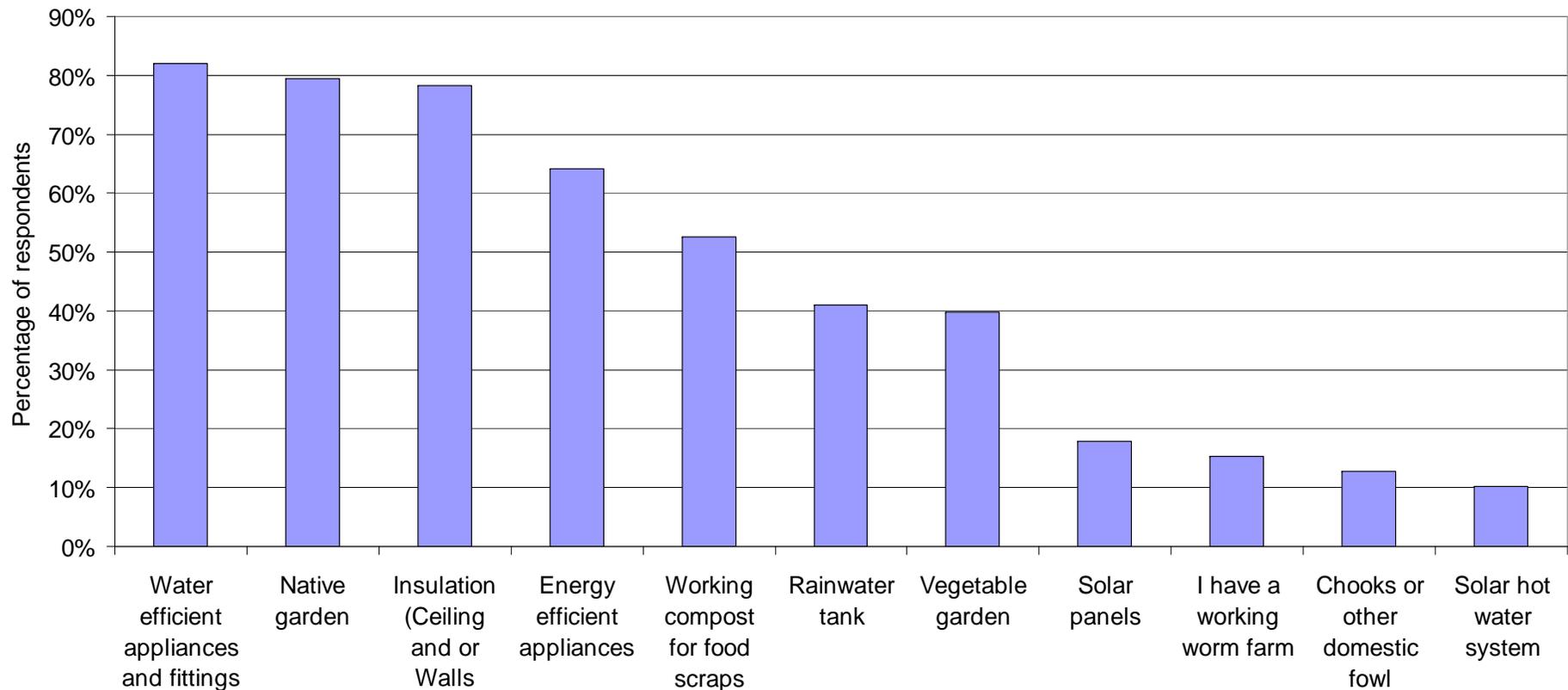


Figure 3. Response to Question 3a 'Do you have any of the following items on your property?'

GreenPower

Only 6.58% of respondents purchase GreenPower, with comments indicating some confusion about what it is. The main reasons for not purchasing GreenPower are the cost, lack of understanding, and that respondents utilise solar power instead.

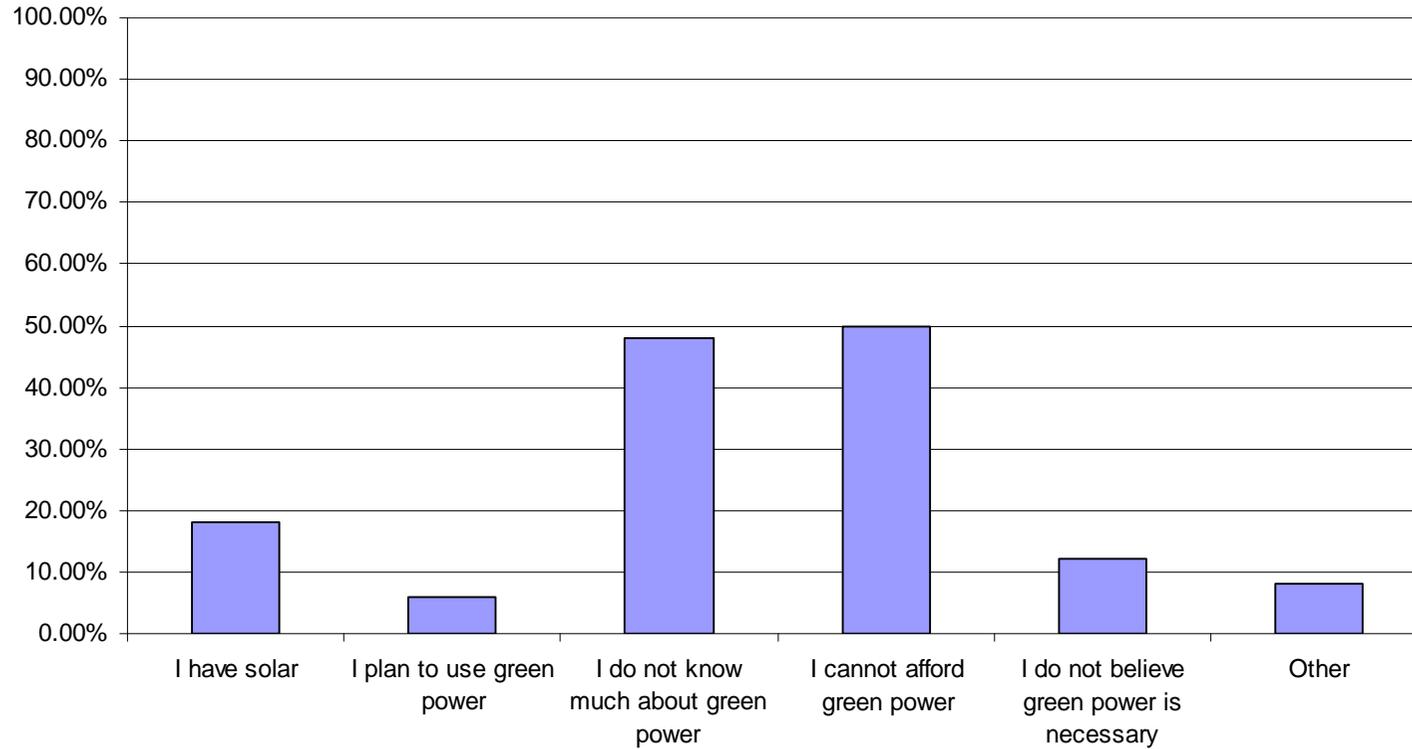


Figure 4. Response to Question 3d 'If you do not use GreenPower, please indicate why.'

Public Transport

A relatively low number (<16%) of respondents often or always use public transport: 'Always' (2.63%); or 'Often' (13.16%) (Fig. 5). From those who don't, the main reasons for not using public transport are that the route and/or timetables are not convenient (Fig. 6).

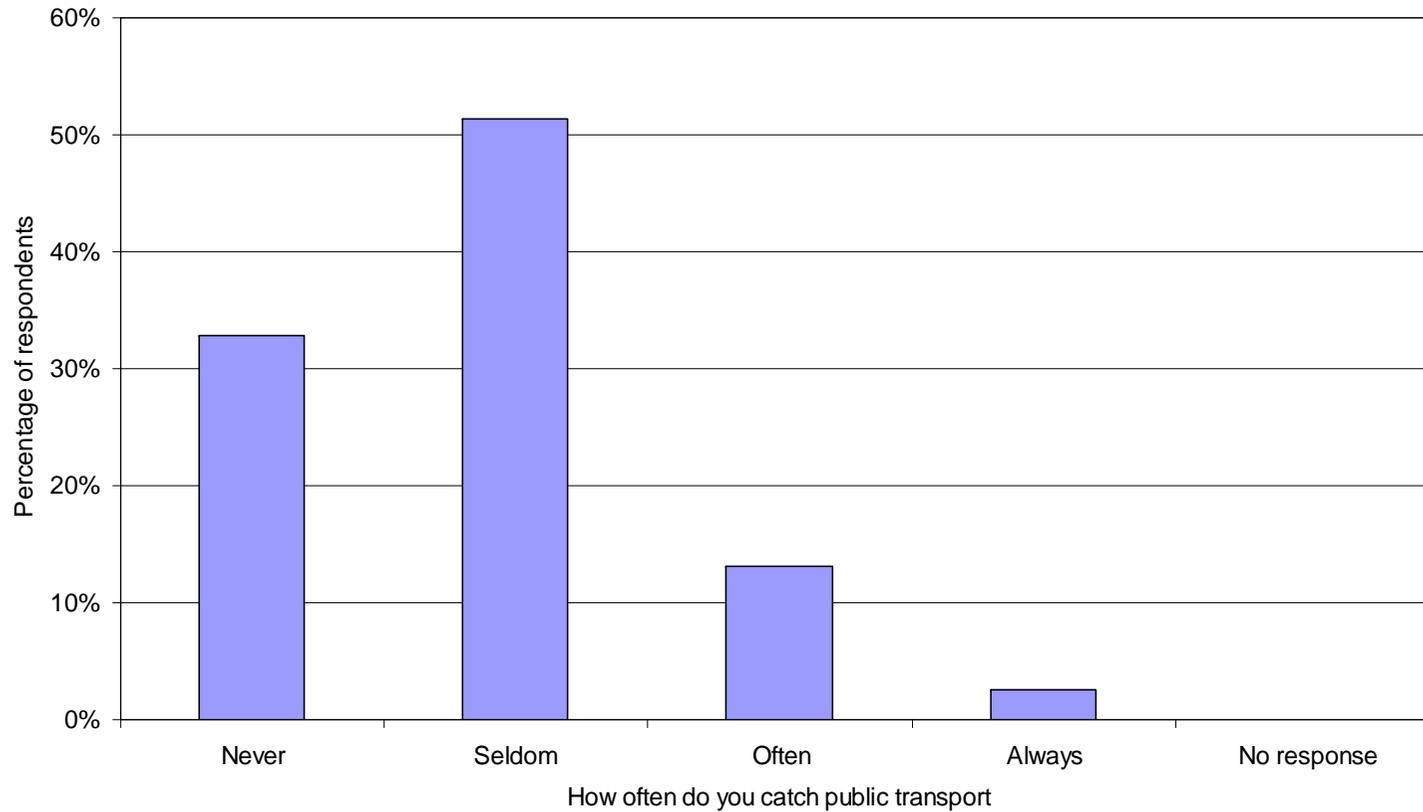


Figure 5. Response to Question 3f 'How often do people in your household catch public transport?'

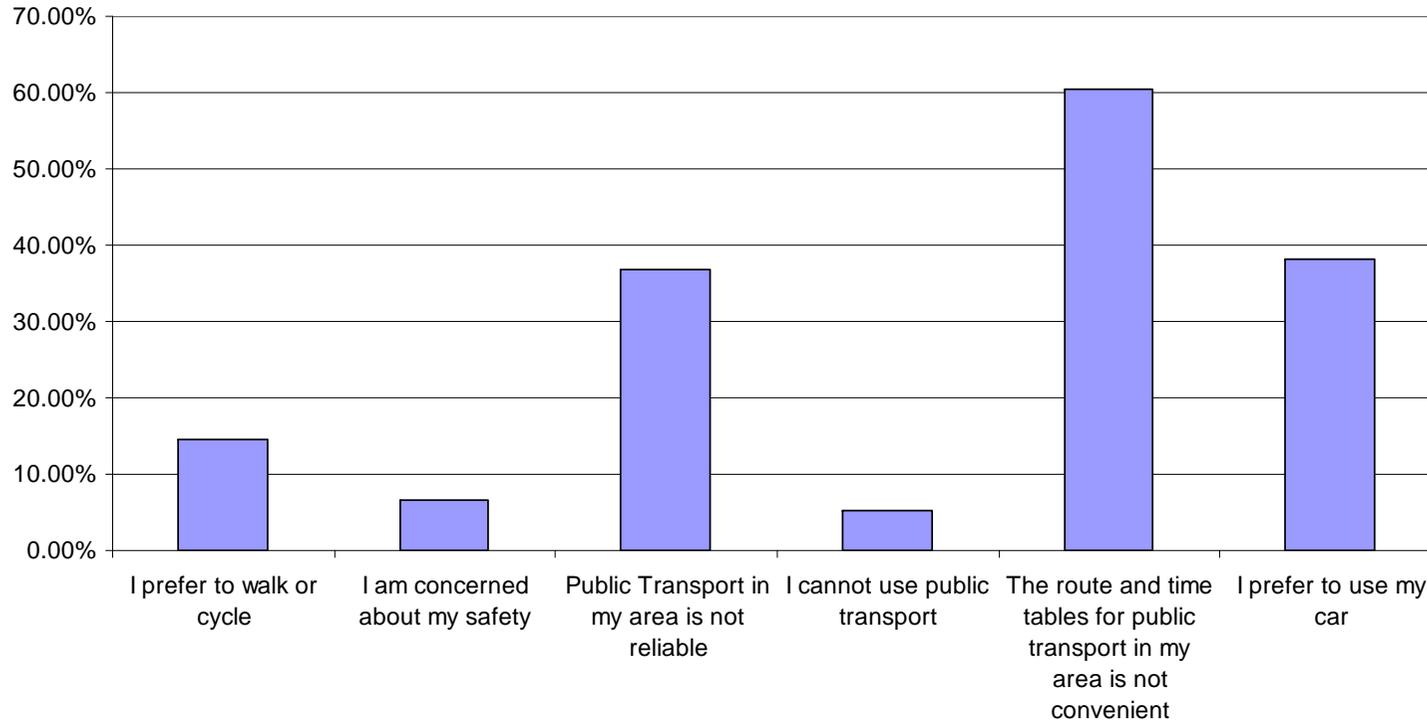


Figure 6. Response to Question 3g 'If your household never or seldom uses public transport, please indicate why.'

Motivation

Respondents ranked 'a personal responsibility to do the right thing for the environment' as the most important motivator to improve their environmental behaviour, closely followed by 'saving money' (Fig. 7).

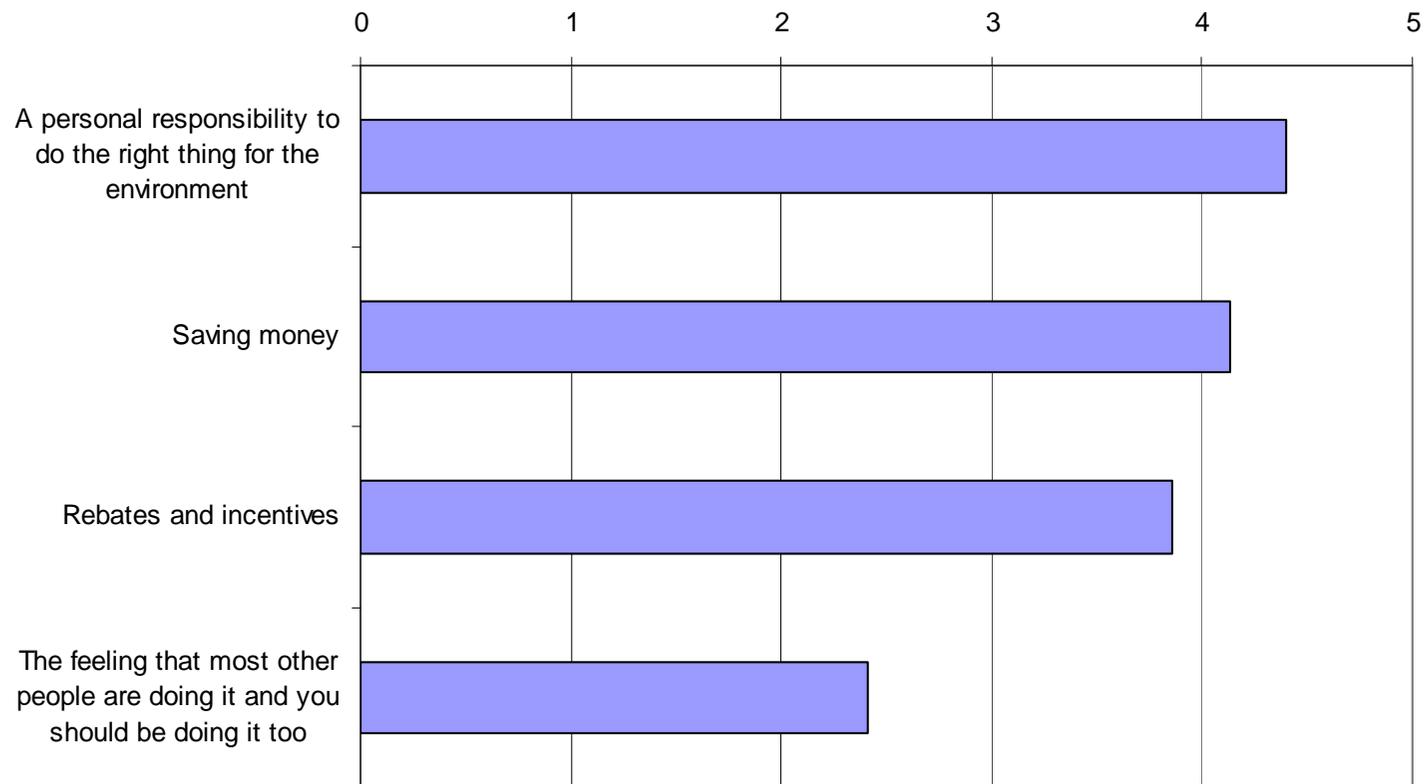


Figure 7. Response to Question 3h 'Please rate what motivates you to improve your environmental behaviour on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important.'

Participation in environmental activities

Activities that respondents indicated they are most likely to participate in include (Fig. 7):

1. Home ecological footprint audit of backyard, energy, waste, and water use
2. Information workshops
3. Environmental events specific to the local environment
4. Monitoring the health of the local environment
5. Climate change adaptation workshops

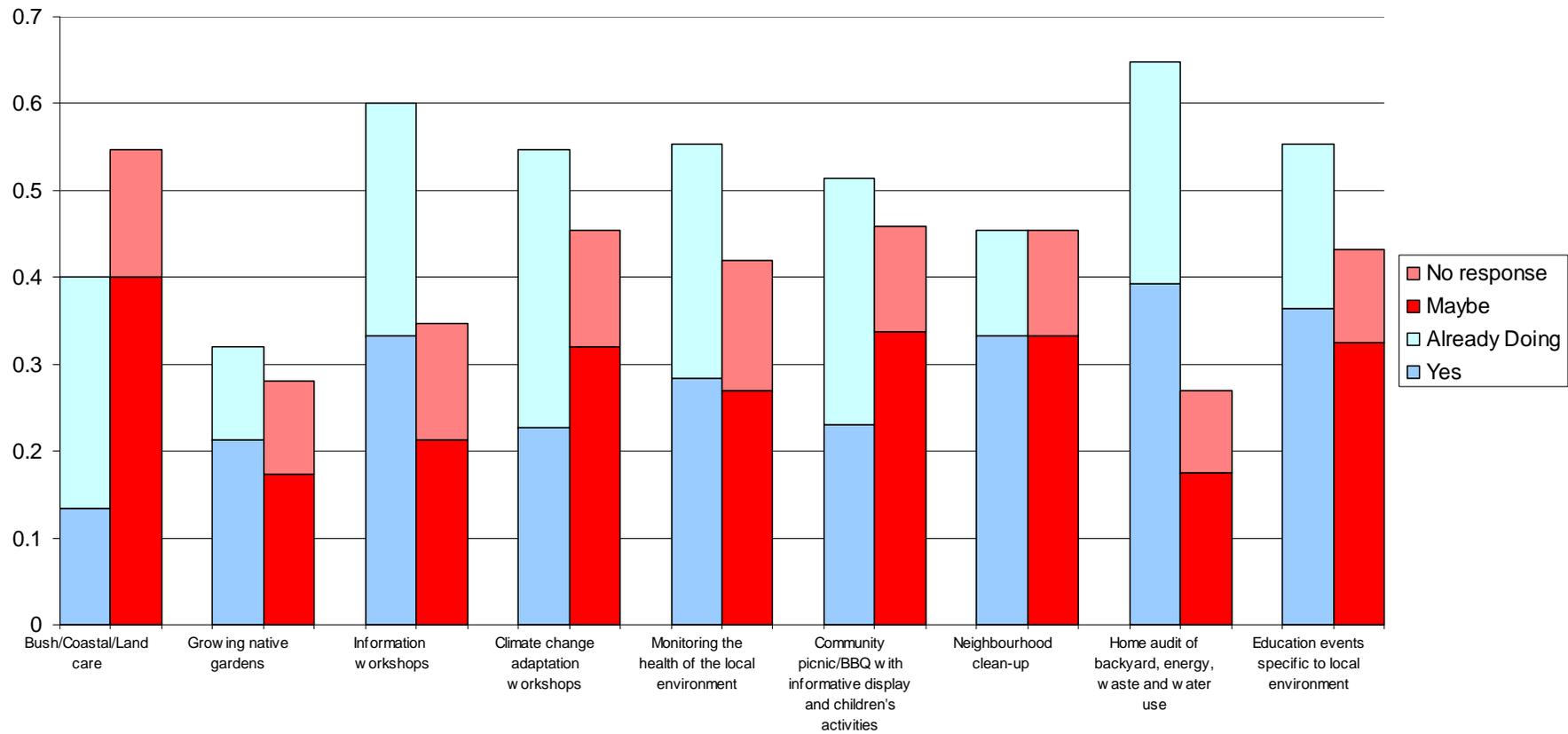


Figure 8. Response to Question 4a 'Which of the following activities/events would you consider being involved in?'

The Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program

- 15.79% of respondents have heard of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program
- 1.32% of respondents have participated in the Sustainable Neighbourhood Program (Fig. 9)

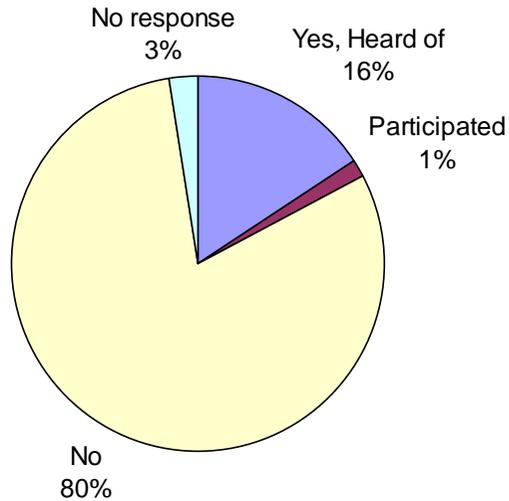


Figure 9. Response to Question 4b 'Have you heard of or participated in the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program?'

About Murrays Beach, Cams Wharf and Nords Wharf

Respondents have a high level of agreement that (Fig. 10):

1. Natural features in my neighbourhood should be protected and improved by residents
2. I can call on a neighbour if I need help
3. I take measures to reduce my ecological footprint
4. There are adequate natural environments in my neighbourhood for me to pursue leisure time activities
5. My neighbourhood has a strong sense of community

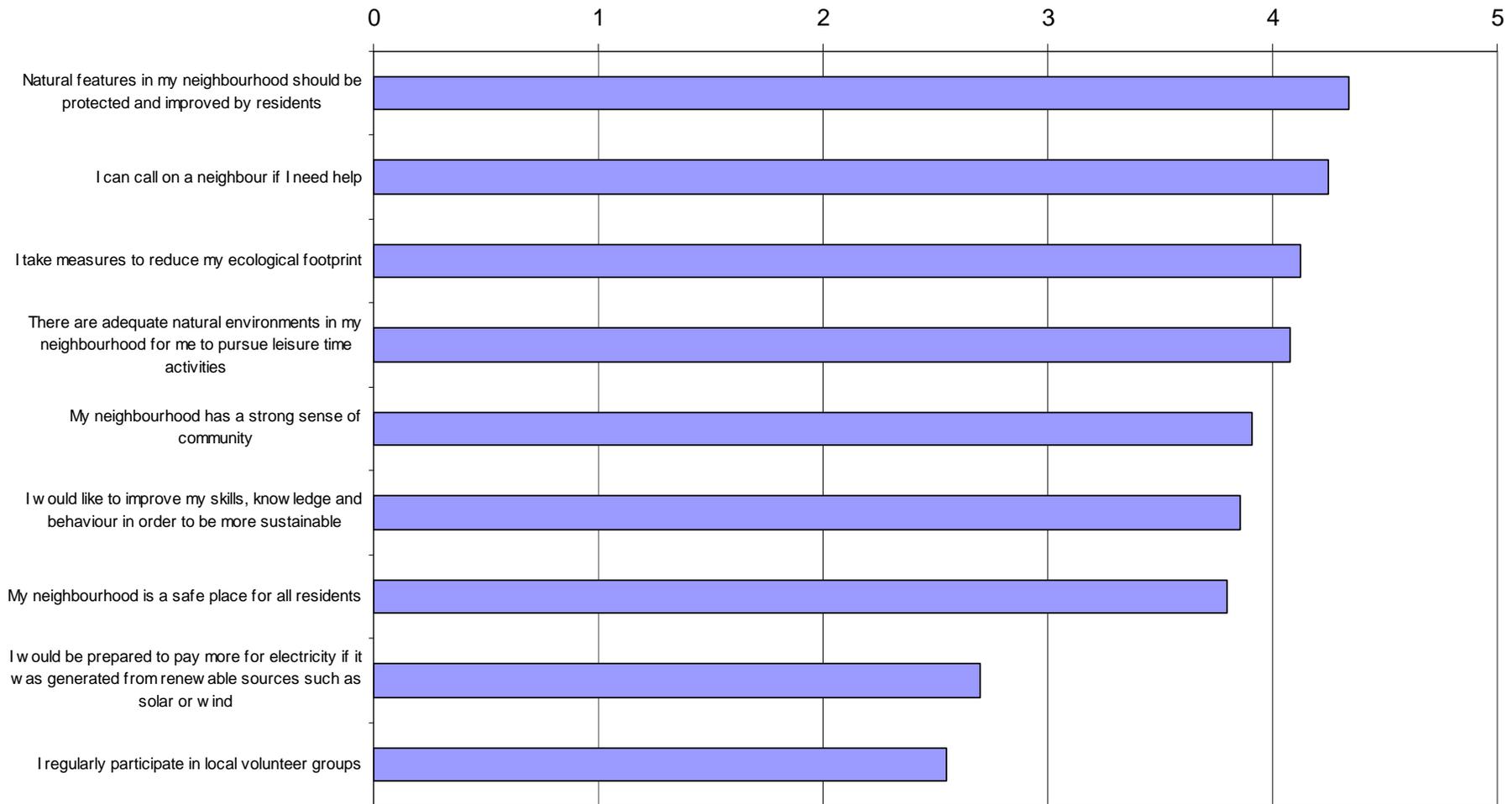


Figure 10. Response to Question 5a 'Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.'

Survey respondent demographics

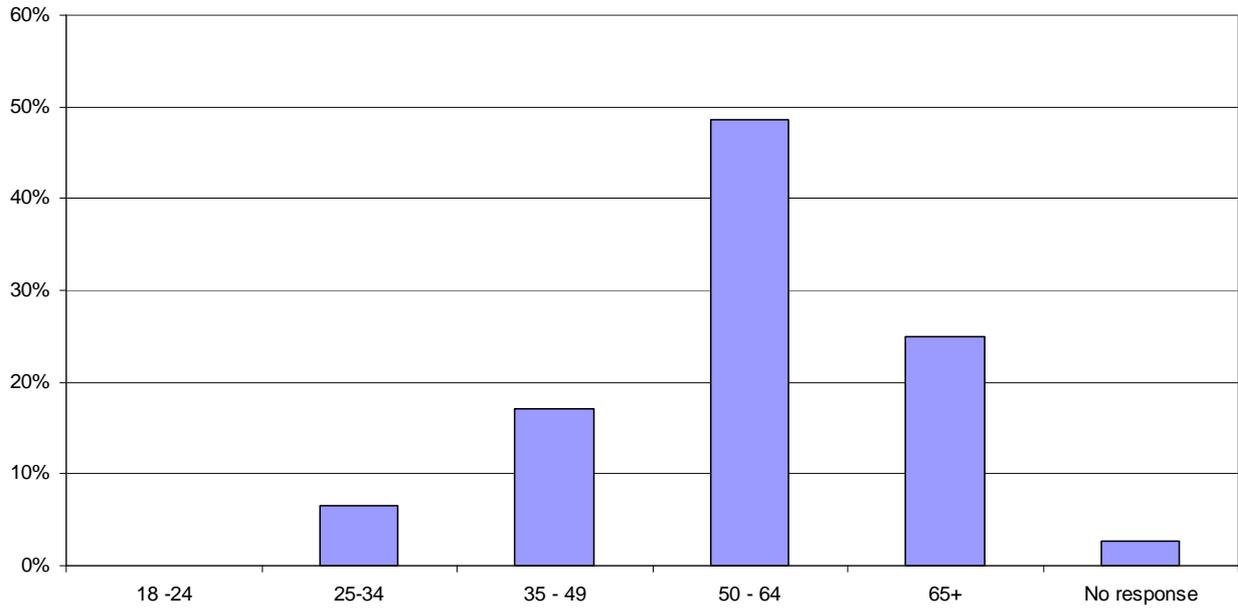


Figure 11. Response to Question 7a 'Please indicate your age bracket.'

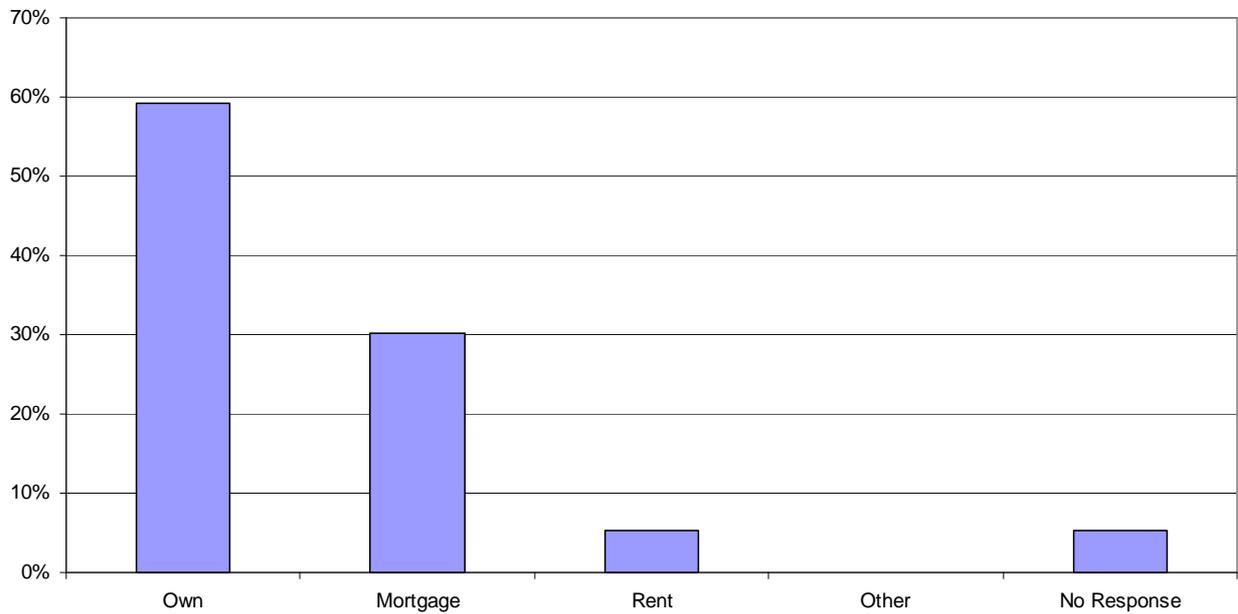


Figure 12. Response to Question 7b 'Thinking about the home you live in, do you?'

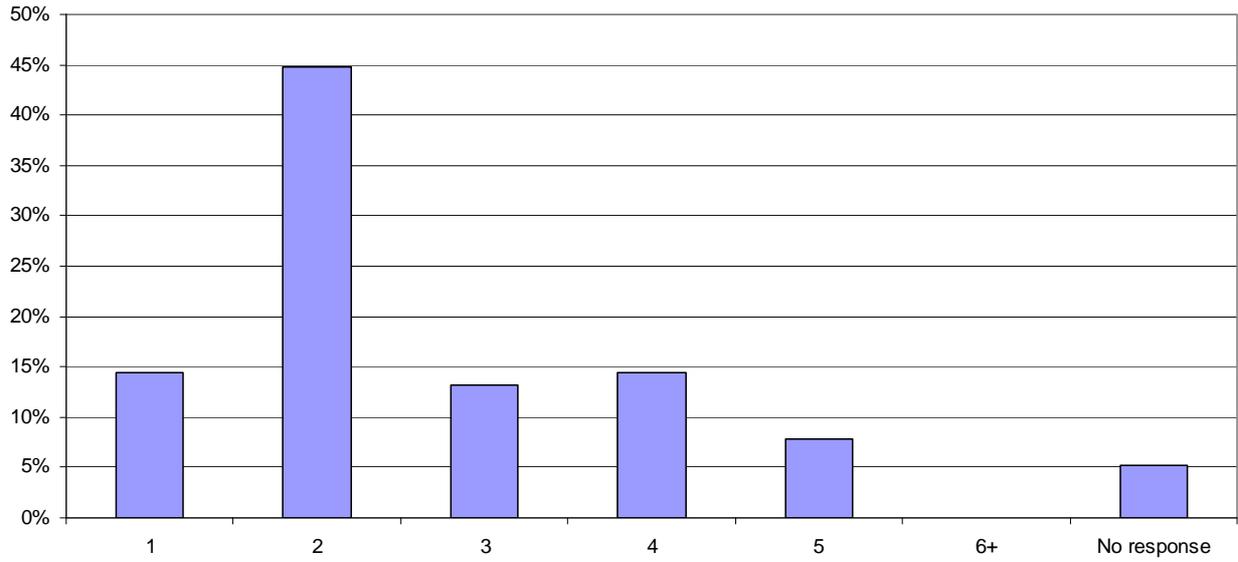


Figure 13. Response to Question 7c 'How many people currently reside in you home?'

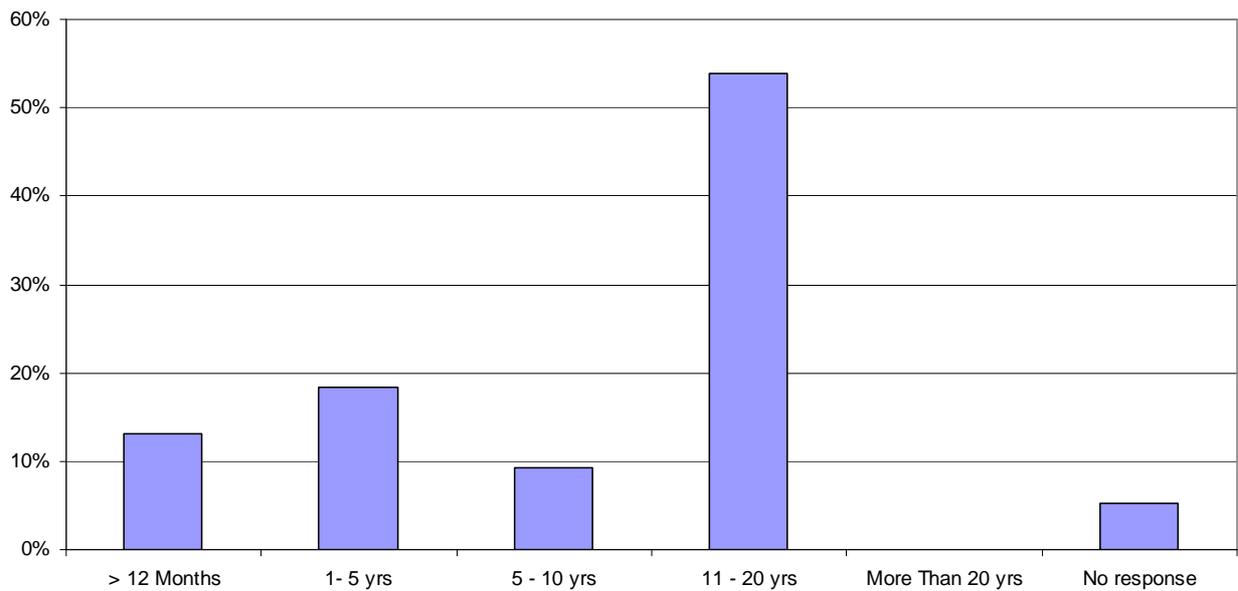


Figure 14. Response to Question 7d 'How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?'

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD PROGRAM IN MURRAYS BEACH, CAMS WHARF AND NORDS WHARF

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

Values

The things that people value about the neighbourhood are consistent amongst survey respondents:

1. Access to the Lake
2. Surrounding bushland
3. Quiet neighbourhood
4. Flora and fauna
5. Friendly Neighbours

Values described by residents through open-ended responses to Question 5b 'What do you like most about living in your neighbourhood?'

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:

1. Clearing of bushland
2. Protecting the Lake
3. Waterways
4. Preserving the environment
5. Development

Issues described by residents through open-ended responses to Question 1a 'What are the three most important environmental issues in your neighbourhood today?'

Actions

The survey results highlight some potential neighbourhood actions and give an indication of activities that are likely to gain popular support from the local community.

1. Sustainable development
2. Responsible pet ownership

3. Preserve natural environment
4. Improved public transport
5. Walking tracks and cycleways

Issues described by residents through open-ended responses to Question 6 '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?'

Activities which survey respondents are already participating in include (Fig. 15 & 16):

1. Climate change adaptation workshops
2. Monitoring the health of the natural environment
3. Community picnic / BBQ with informative display and children's activities
4. Bush / coastal / land care
5. Information workshops

The major activities in addition to the above, which would be likely to attract broad public participation include (Fig. 15 & 16):

- Neighbourhood clean-ups
- Home audit (energy, waste, water usage, backyard)
- Information workshops
- Educational events specific to the region's natural environment

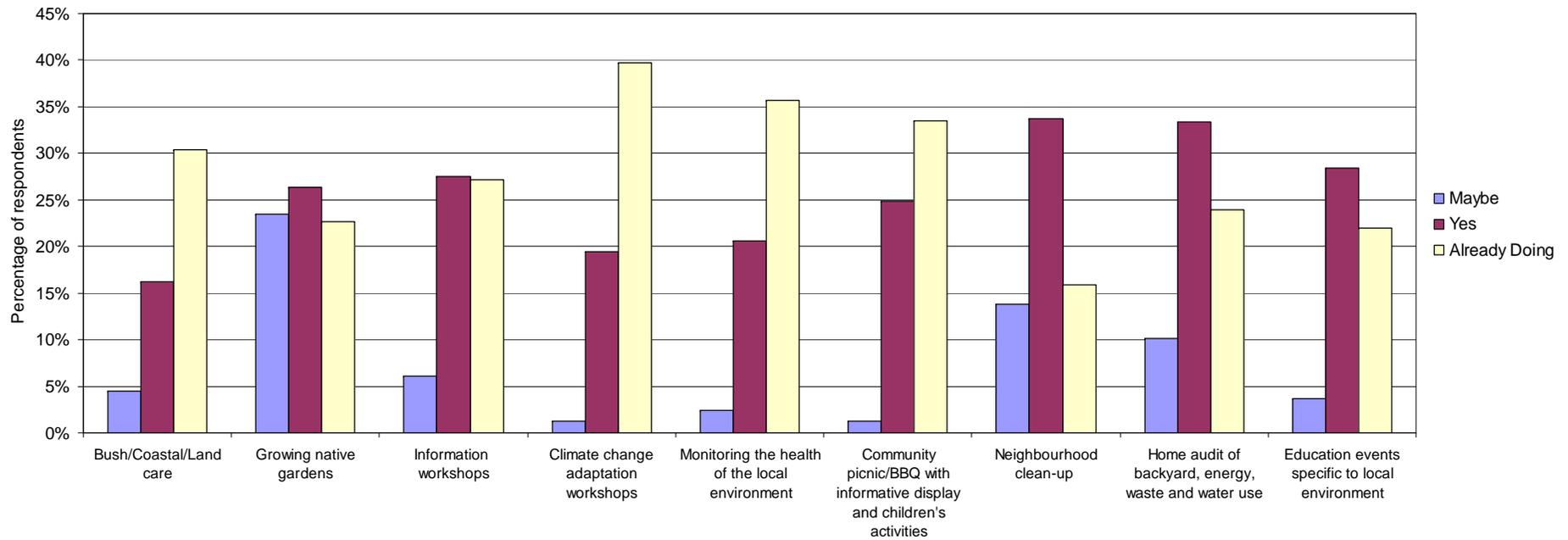


Figure 15. Response to Question 4a 'Which of the following activities/events would you consider being involved in?' Rated from a list of 8 suggestions.

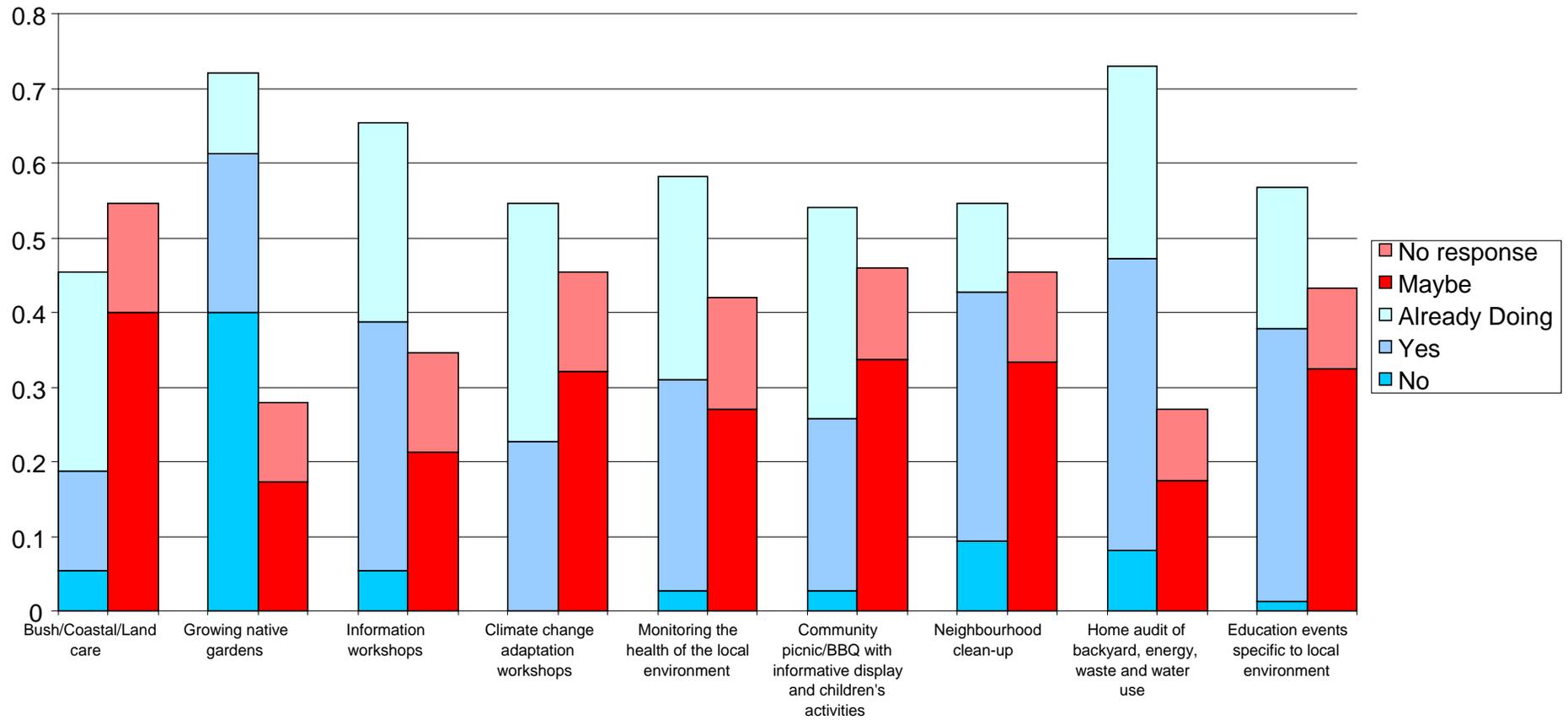


Figure 16. Response to Question 4a 'Which of the following activities/events would you consider being involved in?' Rated from a list of 8 suggestions.