Aquatic Strategy Survey

FINAL REPORT

October 2026

ACT Government

YOUR SAY PANEL



Background

About the survey

The ACT Government is currently developing a new Aquatic Strategy which will guide future planning, development and management of aquatic facilities across the territory. As part of the evidence-base to inform strategy development, community feedback was gathered through a YourSay Panel survey, gauging current and future use, needs and preferences for aquatic facilities among a representative sample of the adult population.

YourSay Panel Survey

About the YourSay Panel

With over 6,500 members, the YourSay Panel offers Canberrans a convenient way to contribute their views through online surveys that help guide ACT Government programs and policies.

Survey at a glance

- 1,550 respondents
- Fieldwork 26 August – 13 September 2026
- Data weighted to be representative of ACT adult population by gender, age, region and place of birth.

Acknowledgement of Country

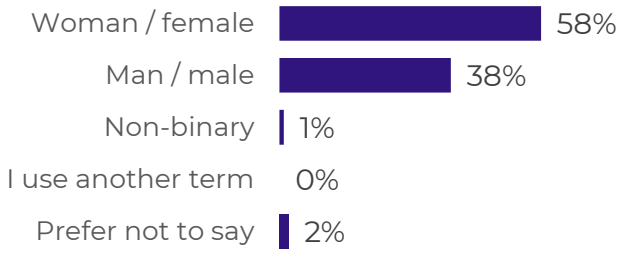
We wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the land on which this research was conducted and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

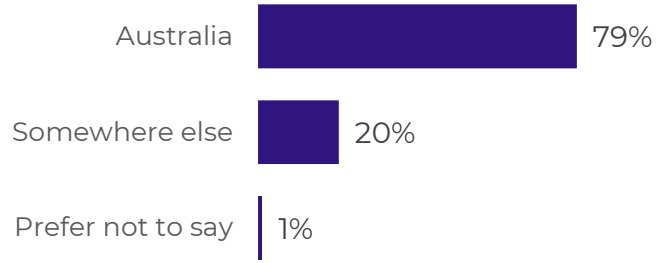
ACT Government

Sample profile (n = 1,550, unweighted)

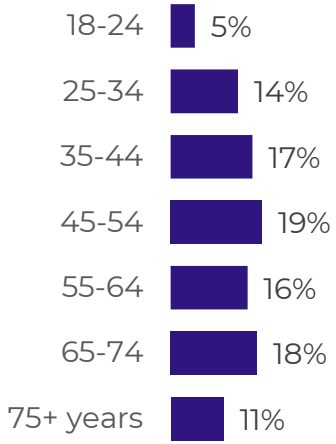
Gender



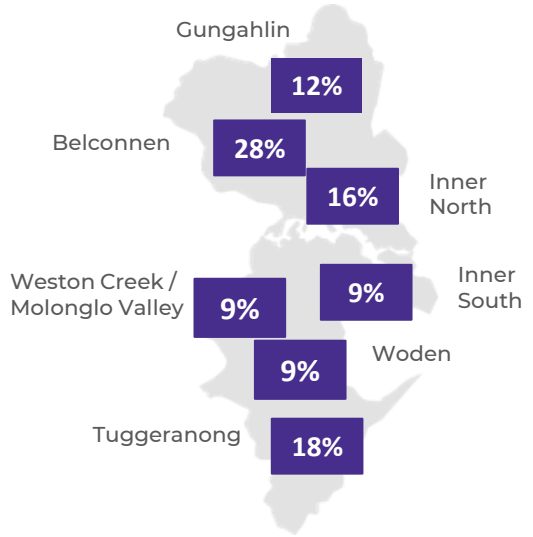
Birthplace



Age group



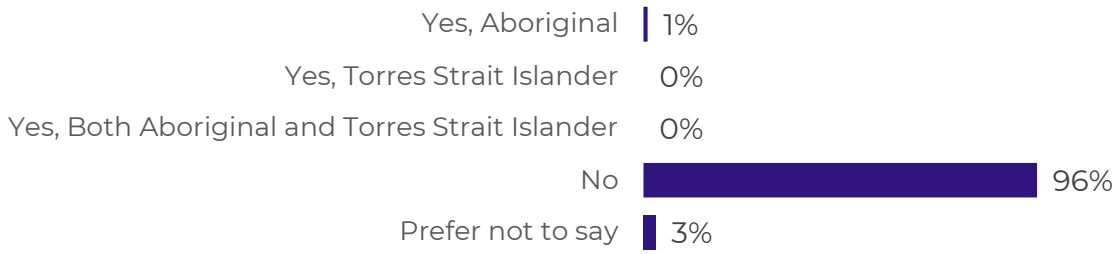
Region



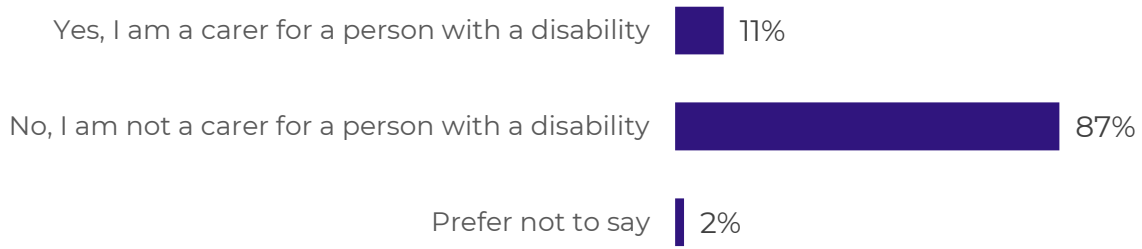
ACT Government

Sample profile (n = 1,550, unweighted)

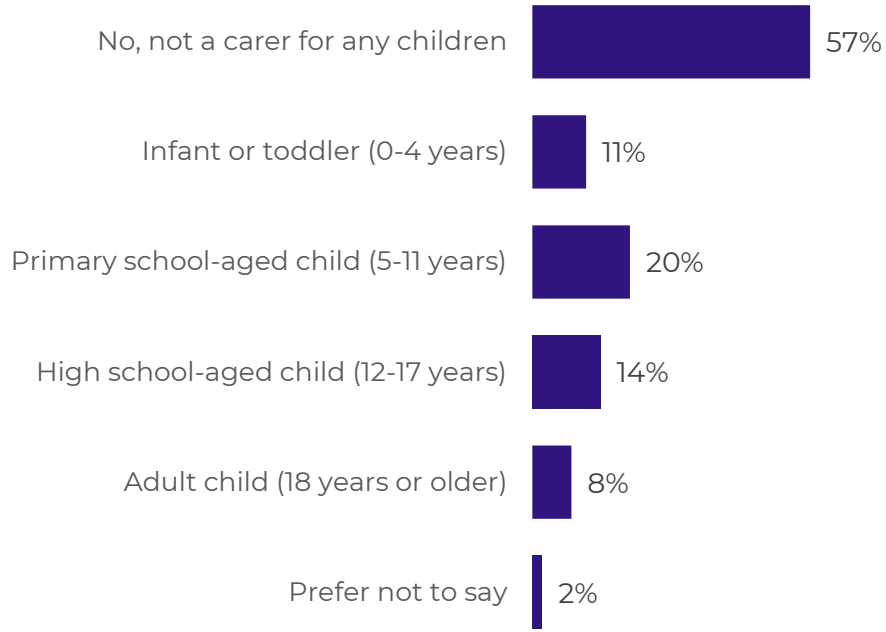
Indigenous identity



Caregiver status



Children in household



ACT Government

Capturing the present

Current use and behaviours

ACT Government

Use of aquatic facilities in the ACT

Q. Have you done any of the following in the last 12 months? (Base: all respondents, n= 1,550)



59%
used an
Indoor facility



23%
used an
outdoor facility



29%
used a
natural swimming location



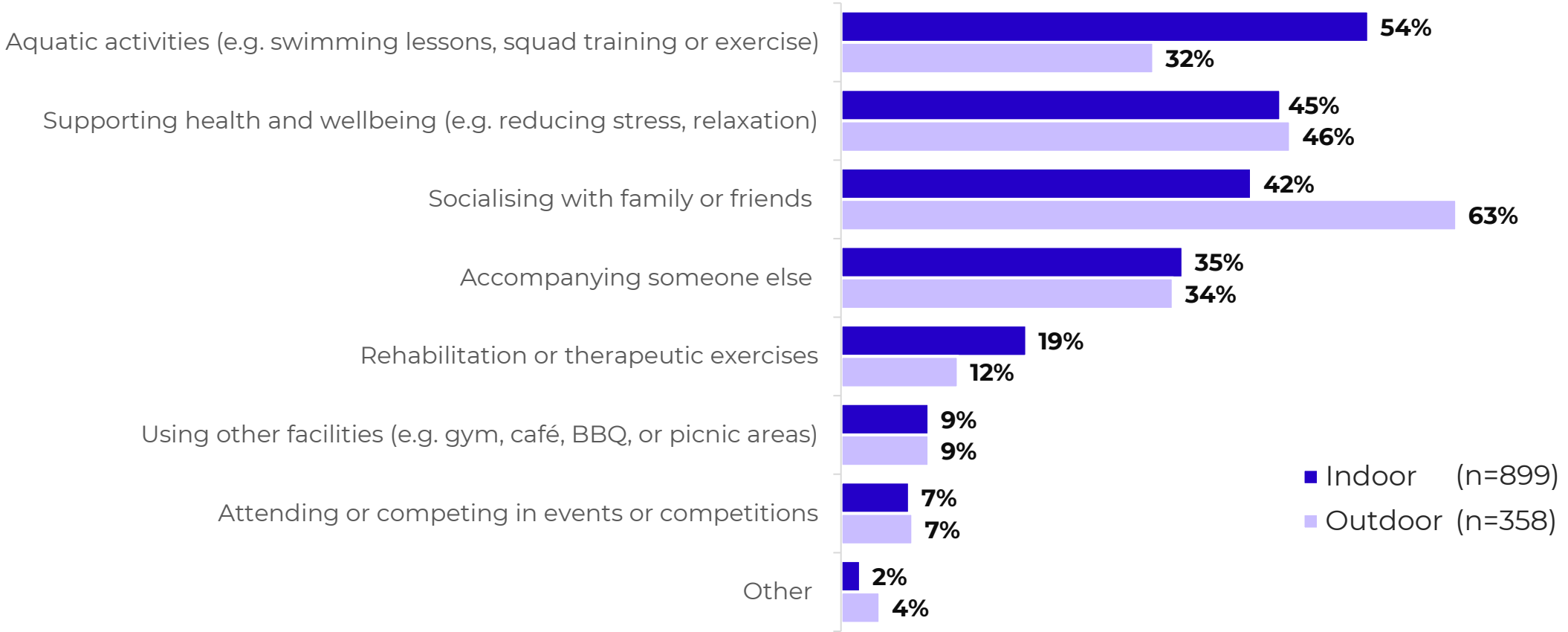
22%
used a
home swimming pool

23%
None of the above

ACT Government

Reasons for using aquatic facilities

Q. What were your main reasons for using an indoor/outdoor aquatic facility in the ACT in the last 12 months?



ACT Government

Main reasons for not using aquatic facilities

Q. What is the main reason you have not used any aquatic facilities in the ACT in the last 12 months?

(Base: respondents who did not use any aquatic facilities, n= 466)

Main themes

Time, weather & life circumstances

- Cold weather, seasonal conditions
- Travel required to access
- Work, caring duties and other priorities left little time.
- Private-pool access and changing family life reduced facility visits.

Facility experience & environment

- Crowding, noise and competition for pool space reduce appeal.
- Cleanliness, illness risks and chlorine-related reactions cause concern.
- Poorly maintained facilities, cold water and limited hydrotherapy options deter use.

Interest & activity preference

- Little interest in swimming or aquatic recreation.
- No established swimming habit, perceived need or facility awareness.
- Preference for gyms, walking, cycling, beaches, rivers or the ocean.

Access & availability

- Local closures, limited supply or no suitable option nearby.
- Restricted hours, short seasons, closures for events or booked lanes.
- Distance, poor public transport, driving or parking barriers.

Health & ability

- Physical accessibility, mobility and age-related barriers limit participation.
- Illness, injury and sensitivity to infection, chemicals or sun create health concerns.
- Limited swimming ability, fear or low confidence discourage use.

Affordability

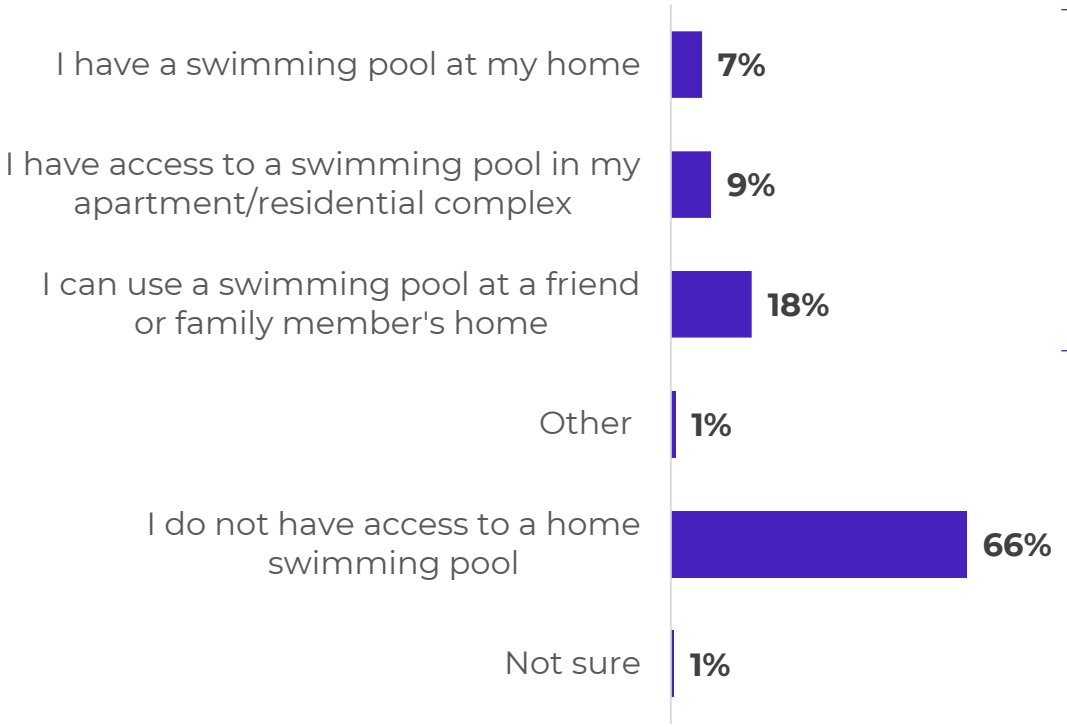
- Entry, membership and parking costs limit regular use.
- Cost-of-living pressures favour cheaper activities.

Personal comfort & inclusion

- Body image, privacy, changing-room or inclusion concerns.
- Bright, loud or crowded environments create sensory barriers.
- Lack of a companion or social motivation to attend.

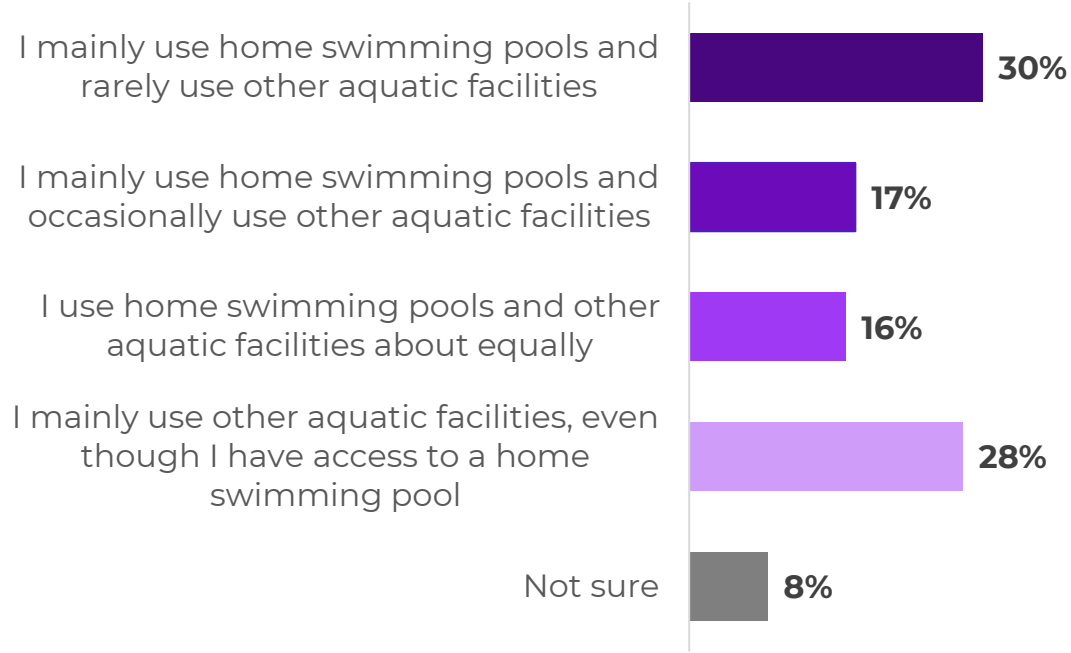
Use of home swimming pools

Q. Which of the following best describes your access to a home swimming pool? (Base: all respondents, n = 1,550)



Q. And which of the following best applies?

(Base: Respondents having access to a home swimming pool, n = 467)



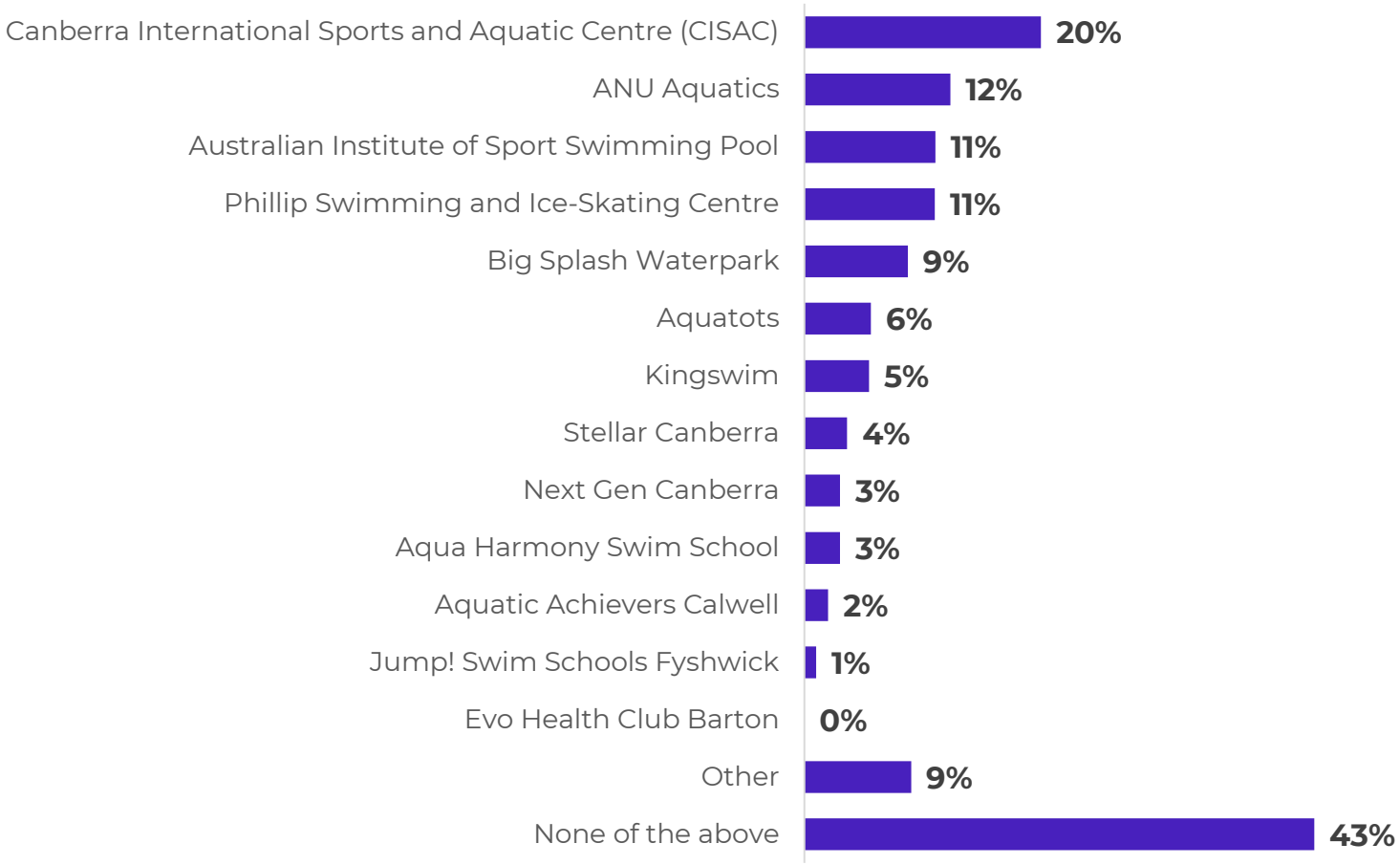
Note: A home swimming pool includes a shared pool in an apartment building, townhouse complex or residential community

ACT Government

Use of privately operated facilities

Q. Which of the following privately operated aquatic facilities in the ACT do you use?

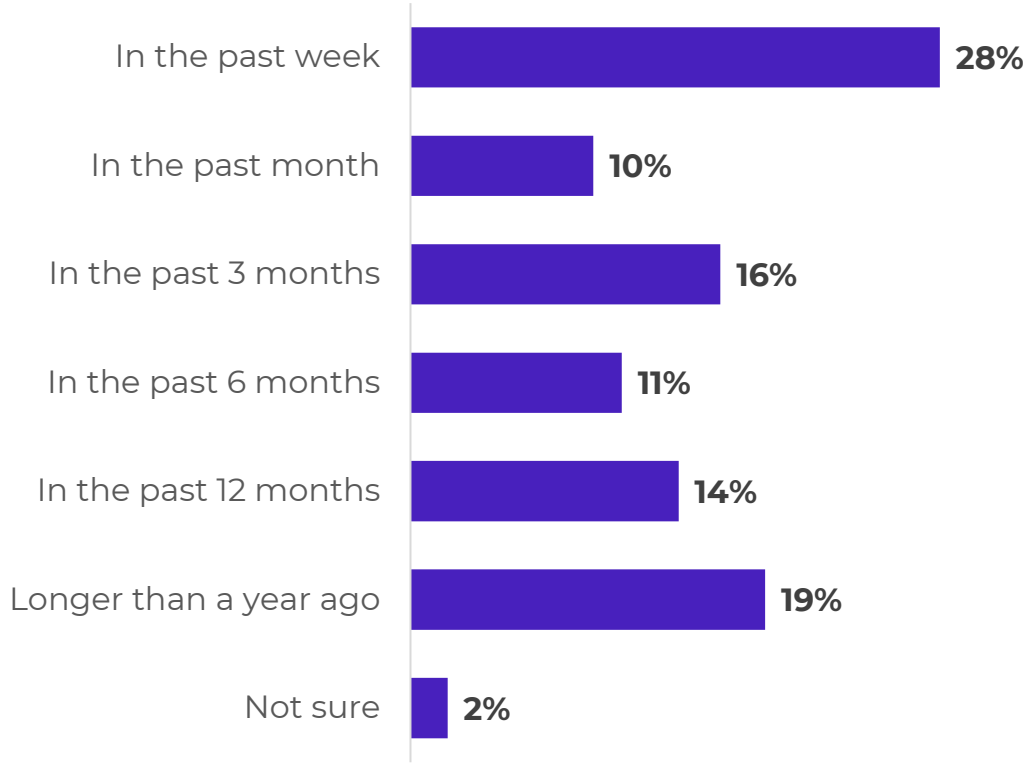
(Base: all respondents, n = 1,550)



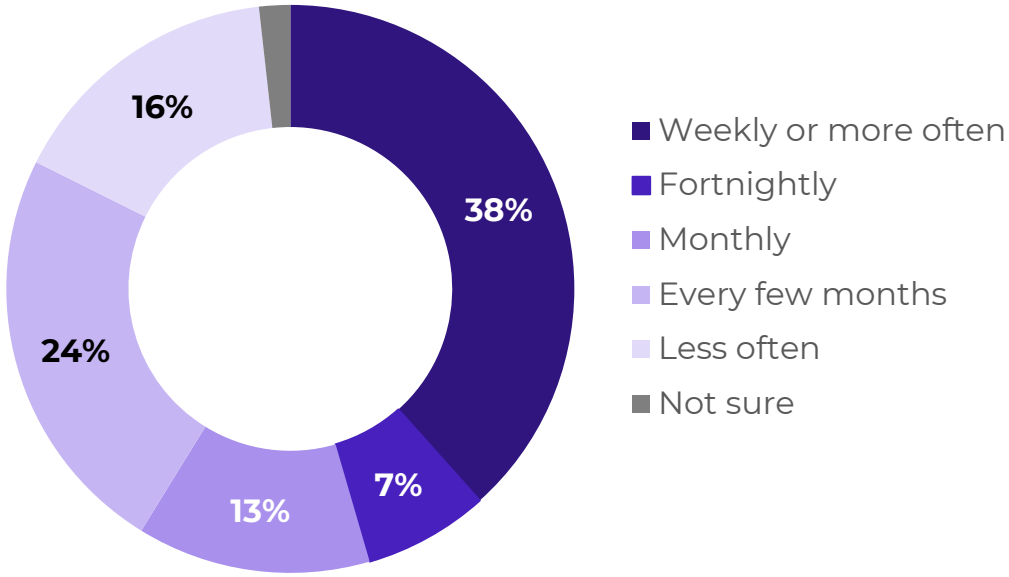


Extent of use of privately operated facilities

Q. When did you last visit any privately operated aquatic facility in the ACT? (Base: respondents who use privately operated facilities, n = 852)



Q. How often do you usually visit privately operated aquatic facilities in the ACT? (Base: respondents who use privately operated facilities within past 12 months, n = 657)

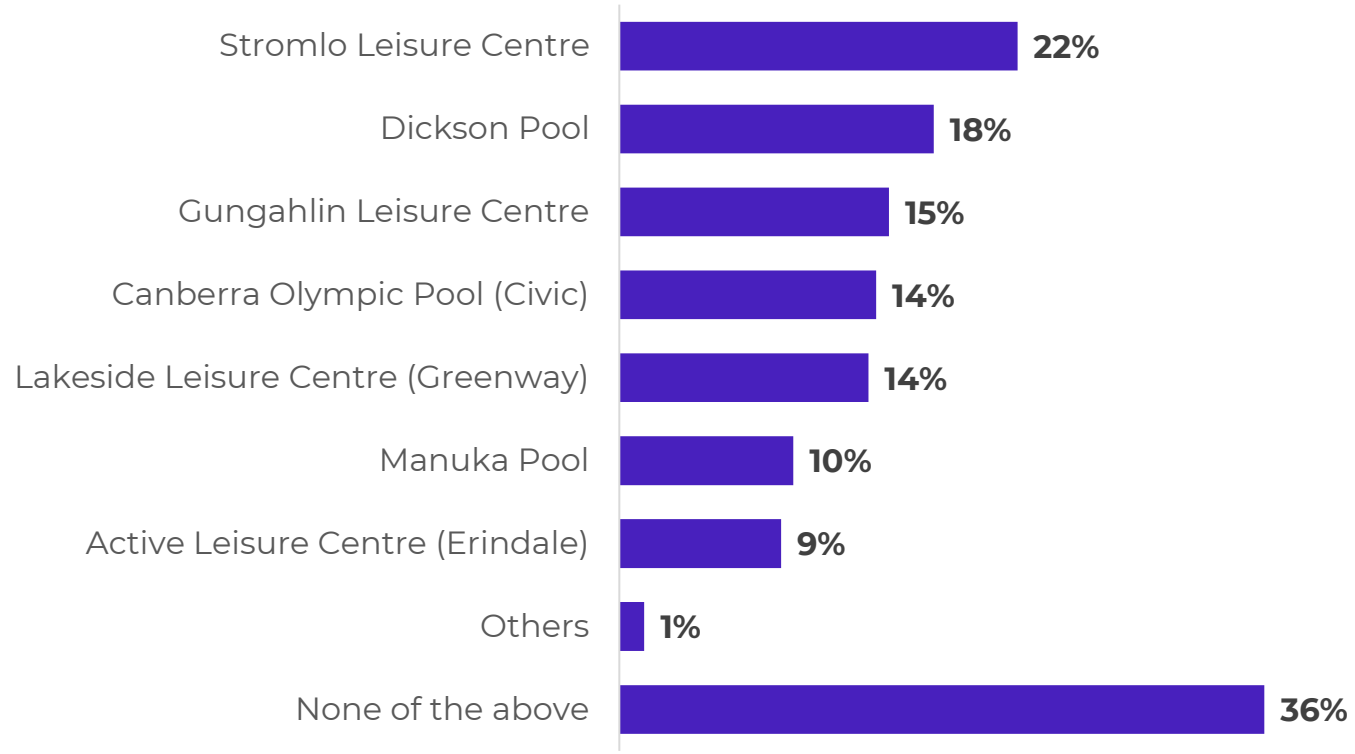


ACT Government

Use of public facilities

Q. Which of the following public aquatic facilities in the ACT do you use?

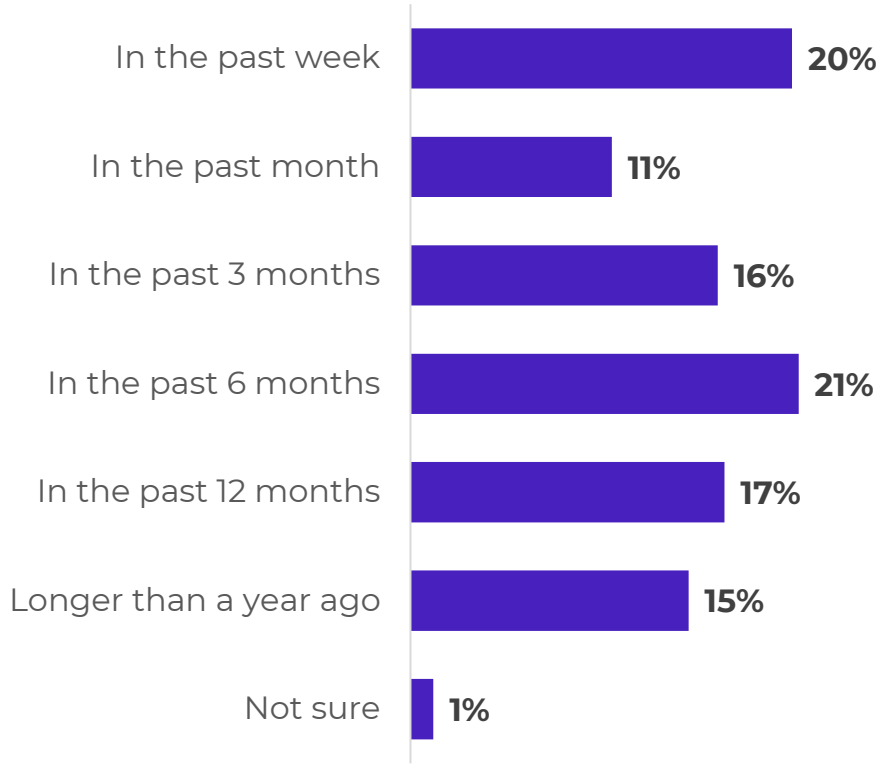
(Base: all respondents, n = 1,550)



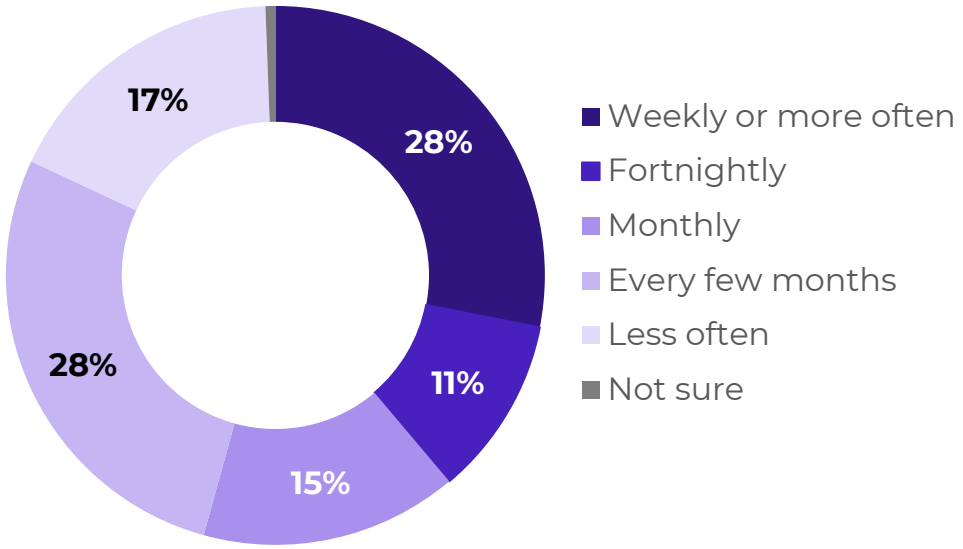


Extent of use of public facilities

Q. When did you last visit any public aquatic facility in the ACT? (Base: respondents who use public facilities, n = 967)



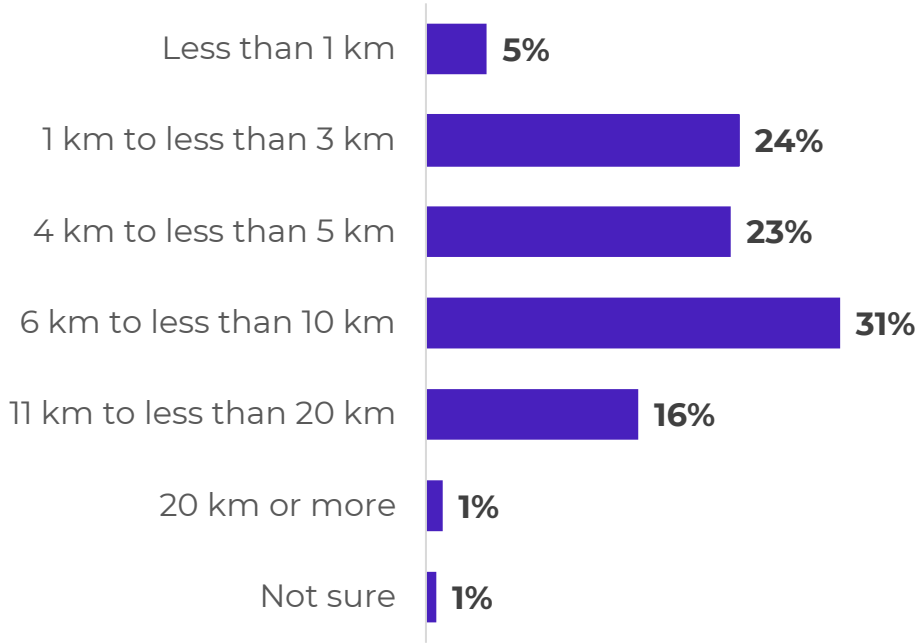
Q. How often do you usually visit public aquatic facilities in the ACT? (Base: respondents who use public facilities within past 12 months, n = 805)



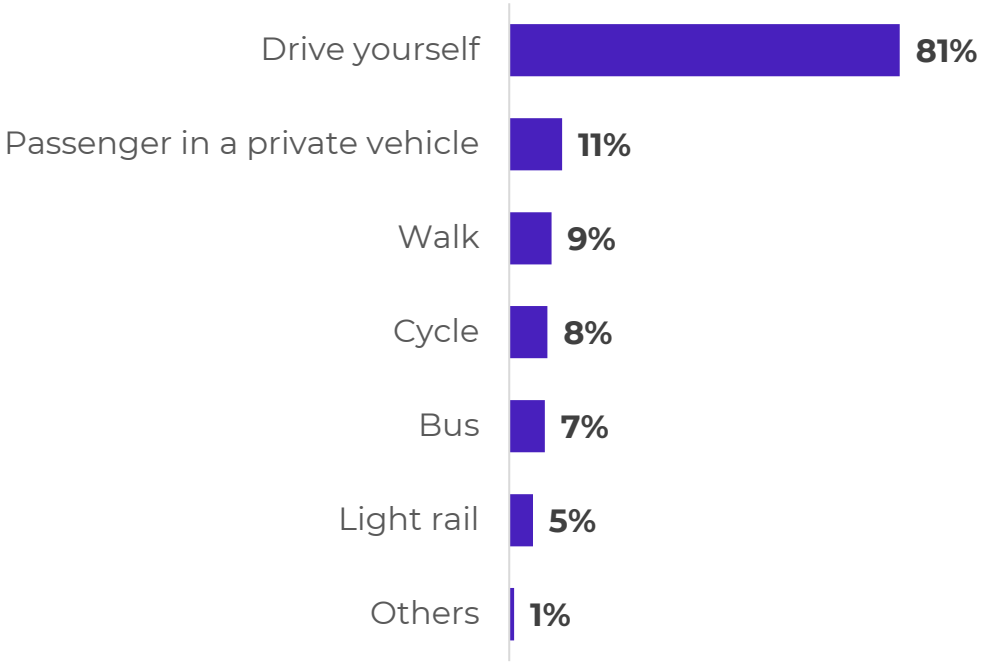
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Travel distance and mode to public facilities

Q. Thinking about the public aquatic facility you visit most often, approximately how far is it from your home?
(Base: respondents who use public facilities within the past 12 months, n = 805)



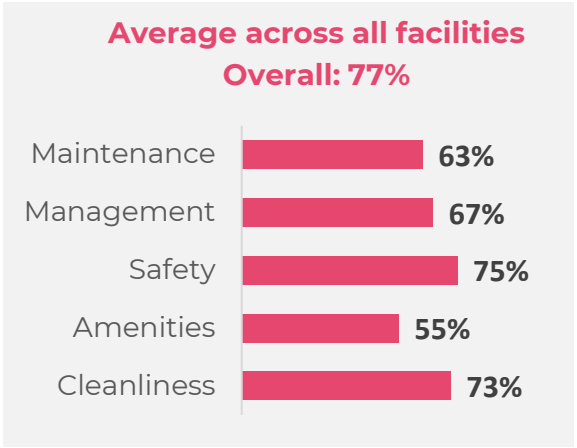
Q. Still thinking about the public aquatic facility you visit most often, how do you usually travel there from your home?
(Base: respondents who use public facilities within the past 12 months, n = 805)

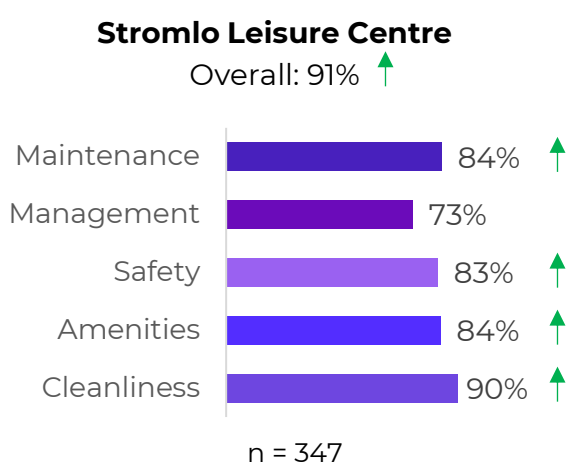


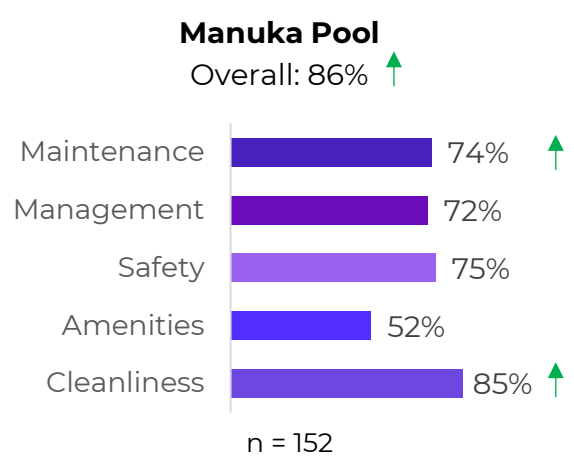
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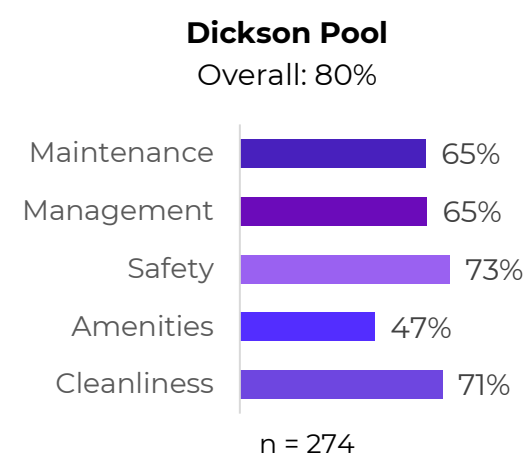
Ratings of public aquatic facilities

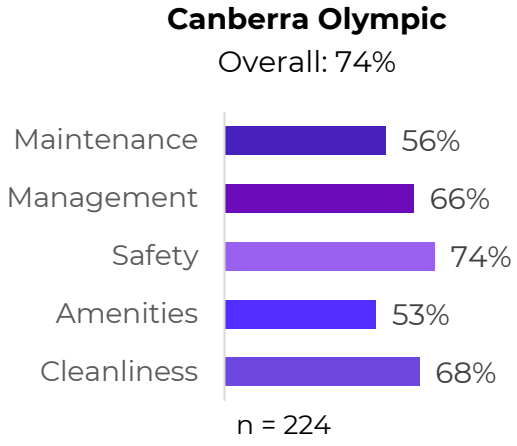
Q. From your experience, how would you rate <Selected public facility> on the following? (%Very good + good)

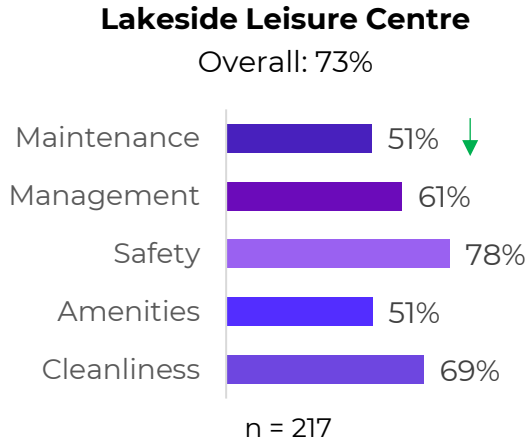


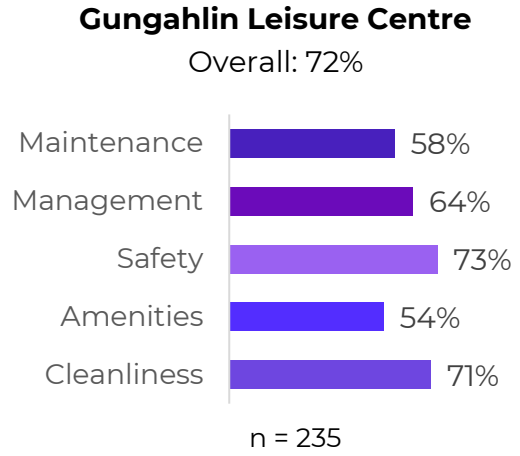


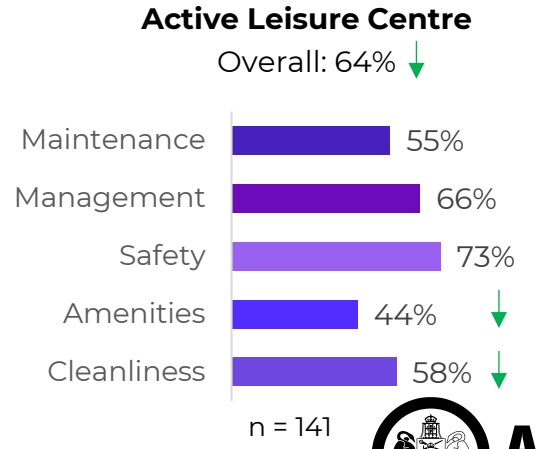












↑ ↓ Denotes significantly higher or lower than the average

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Exploring the future

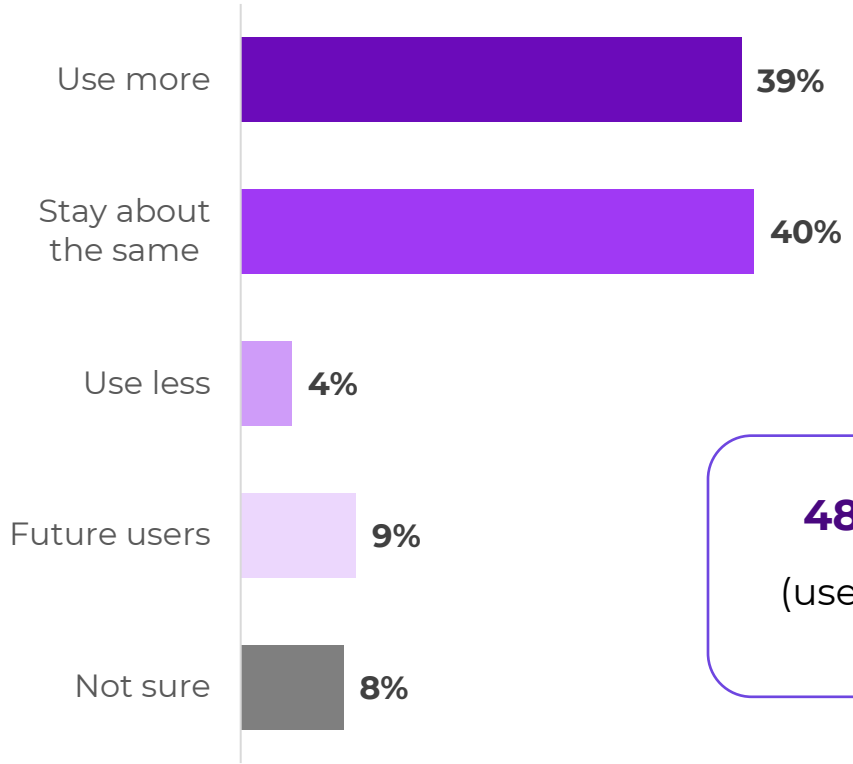
Needs, expectations and priorities

ACT Government

Expected use of public facilities

Q. Thinking about the next five years, do you expect your use of aquatic facilities to change?

(Base: all respondents, n = 1,550)



79% expect to use aquatic facilities the same amount or more

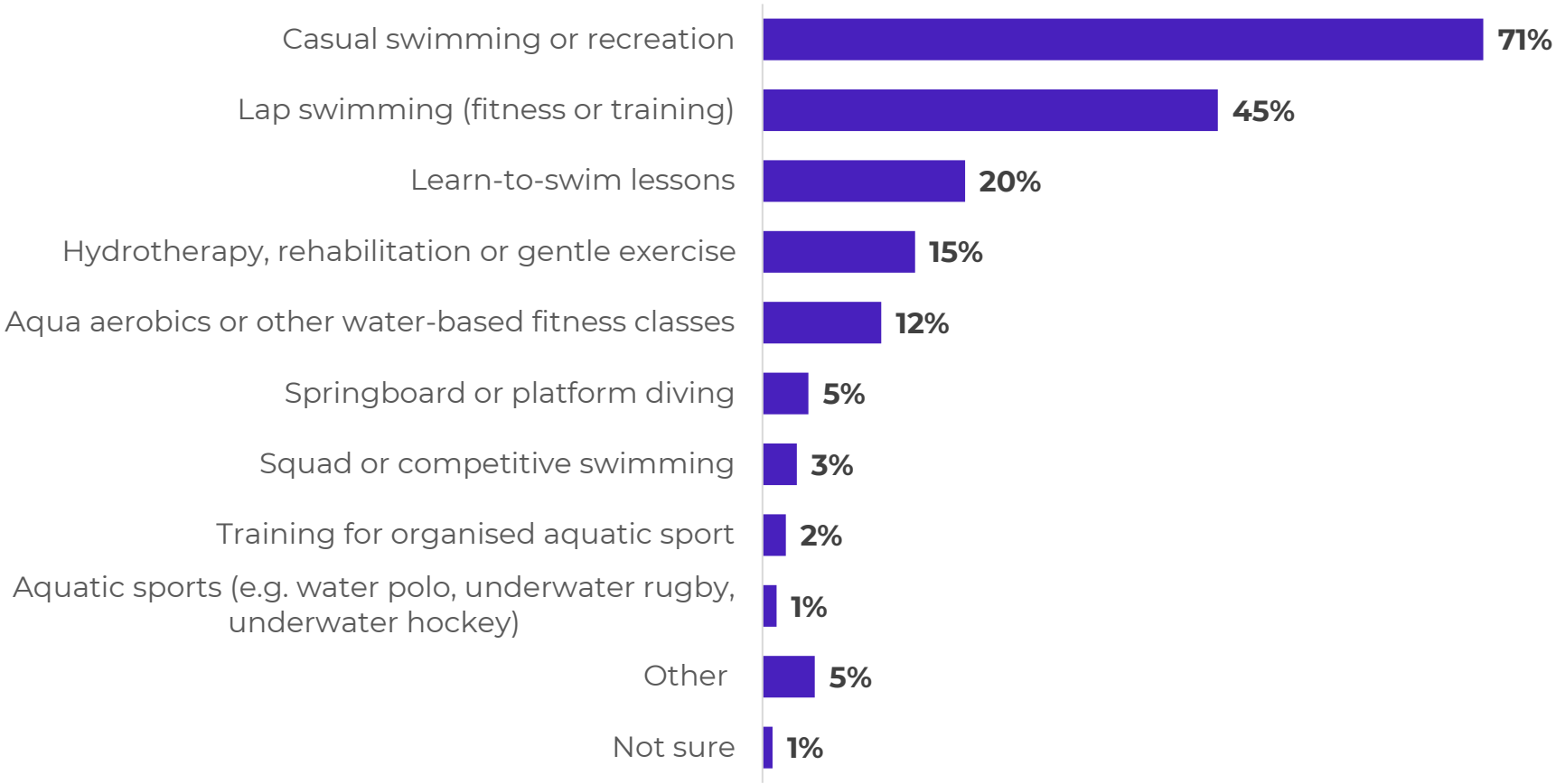
48% potential growth

(use more + future users)



Why people use public aquatic facilities

Q. Which activities do you usually participate in at public aquatic facilities? (Base: respondents who use public facilities, n = 967)

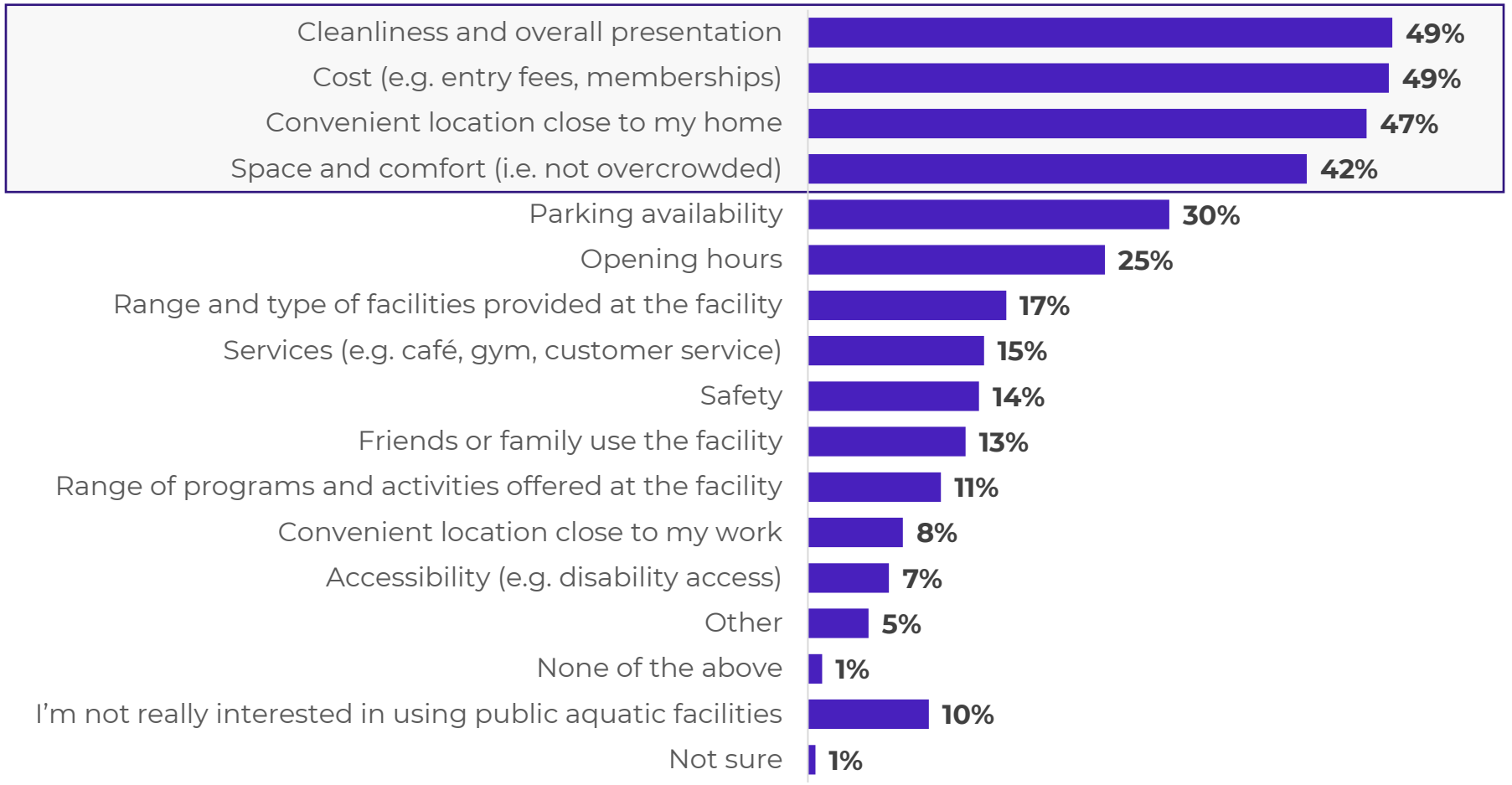


ACT Government

Decision-making factors influencing use

Q. Which of the following are most important to you when deciding whether to use a public aquatic facility?

(Base: all respondents, n= 1,550)

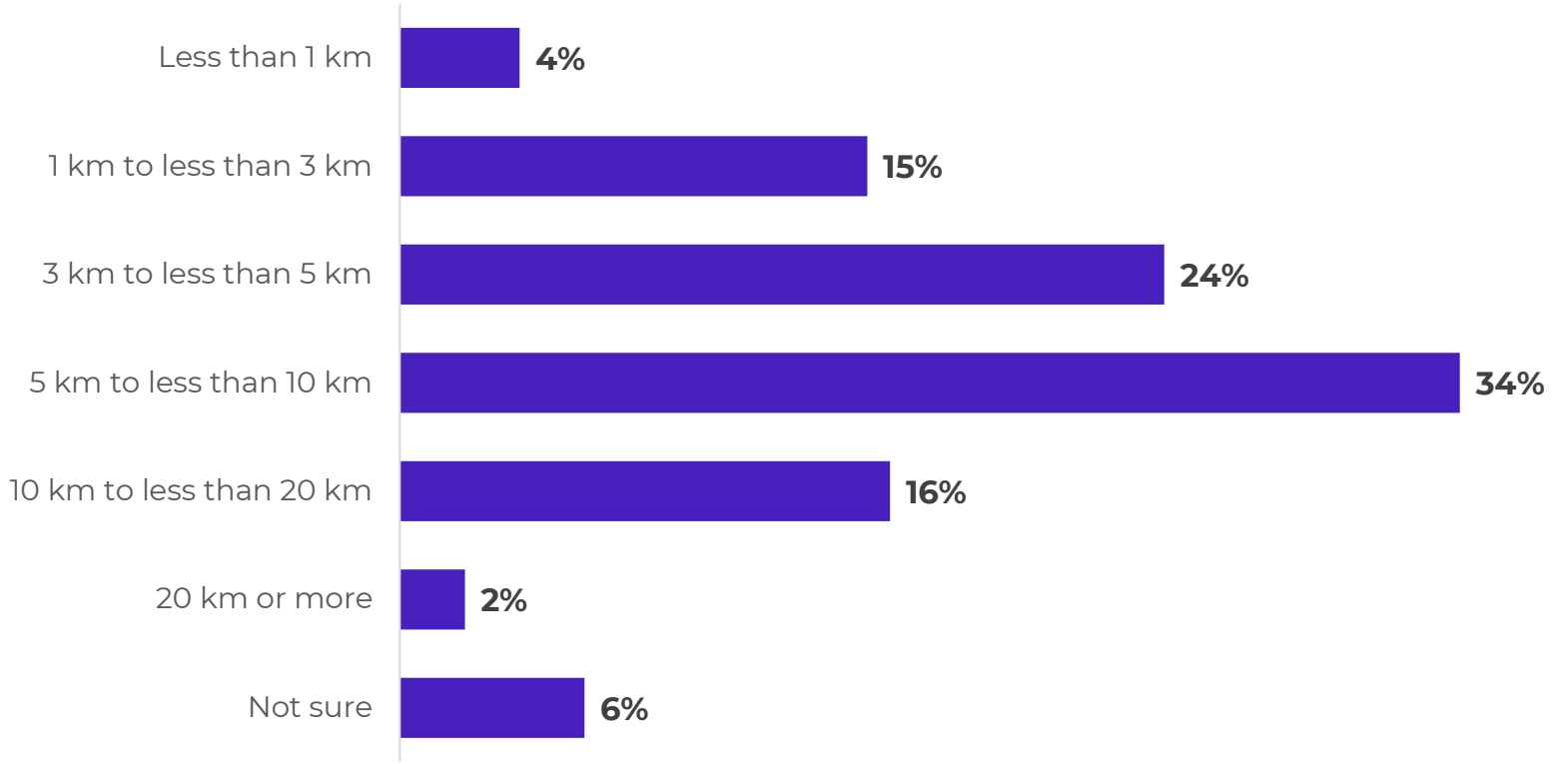


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Willingness to travel to an aquatic facility

Q. Thinking about your future needs, how far would you be willing to travel from your home to use an aquatic facility?

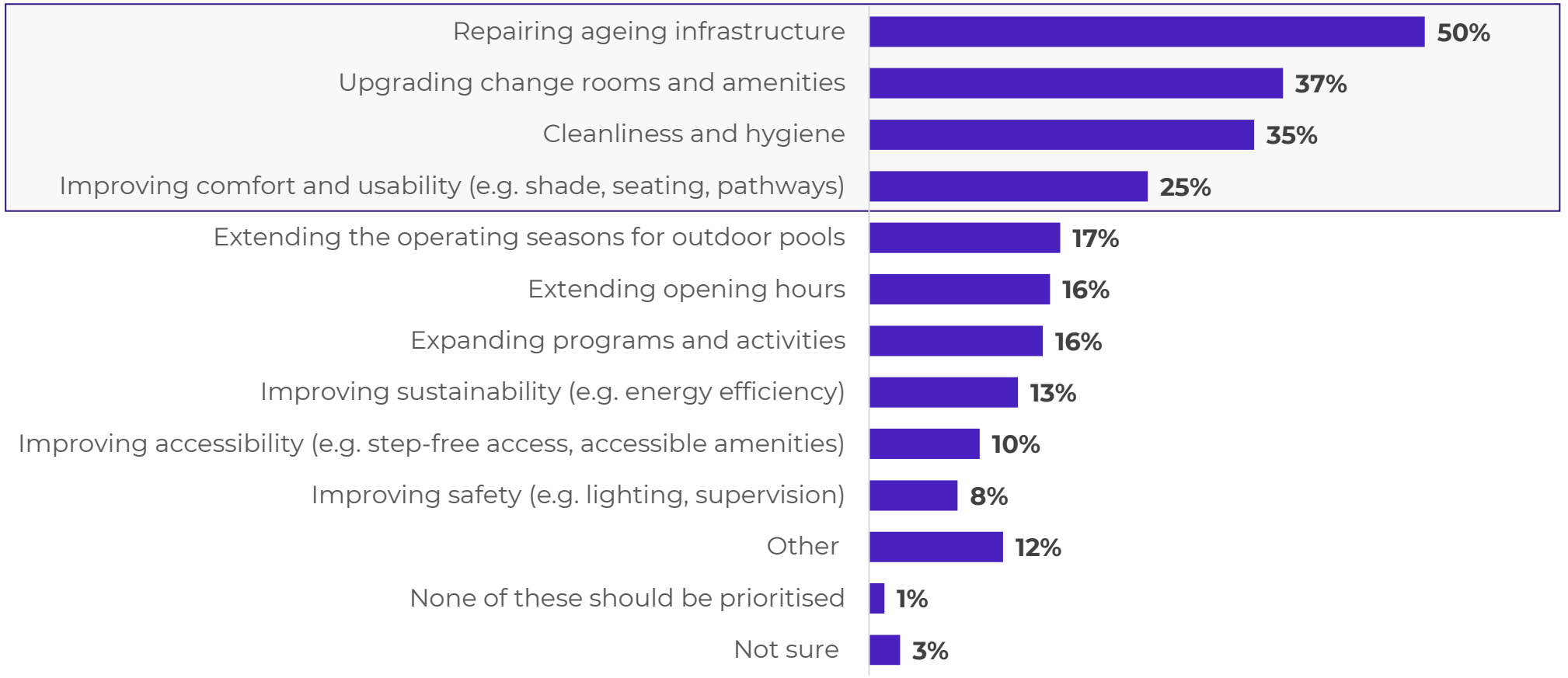
(Base: all respondents, n = 1,550)



ACT Government

Investment priorities for current public facilities

Q. If additional government funding were invested in maintaining and upgrading existing public aquatic facilities, which areas should be the highest priorities? (Base: respondents who use public facilities, n = 967)



ACT Government

One thing to encourage uptake

Q. Thinking about public aquatic facilities in the ACT, what is the one thing that would make you use them more often?

(Base: all respondents, n= 1,352)

Main themes

Facility quality & amenities
- Cleaner, better-maintained facilities
- Warmer pools with more lanes and capacity
- More amenities and family-friendly features
- Better water quality and reduced chlorine impacts

Facility access & availability
- More conveniently located facilities
- Longer, year-round opening hours
- Better parking, public transport and active-travel access
- Restore closed pools or replace them with new public facilities

Programs & service availability
- More varied classes, lessons and activities
- More hydrotherapy and accessible programs
- Better scheduling and protected lane times
- More social and age-specific sessions

Affordability
- Lower admission and user fees
- Better-value passes, family discounts and concessions

Experience, safety & inclusion
- Less crowding and noise
- Better supervision, staffing and safety
- More private, inclusive and sensory-friendly spaces
- A more welcoming and enjoyable environment

Information & management
- More reliable operations and management
- Clearer information on facilities, programs, hours and lane availability
- More sustainable, energy-efficient facilities

Natural & outdoor swimming
- More appealing, well-maintained outdoor pools
- Safe natural-swimming options are requested

Personal barriers & no suggested improvement
- Health, age or physical limitations
- Preference for warmer weather or seasons
- Limited time, motivation or confidence

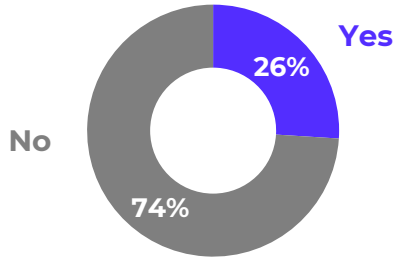
Needs and priorities by age and caregiver status

Under 35 years	A recreation-oriented segment with relatively high natural swimming and social pool use. Cost matters, while facility variety, program range and parking are comparatively less influential. Natural swimming are stronger priorities than therapy. Although the two younger groups are similar overall, ages 25–34 show particularly strong future-use potential.
35 – 44 years	The strongest family-demand segment and the most likely to use indoor pools. Their distinctive needs are accompanying children, casual recreation, adequate space and safety. They prioritise indoor family leisure pools and children's water-play facilities.
45 – 55 years	A high-engagement segment using both indoor and outdoor pools more than average. They combine aquatic exercises and casual recreation with family or supervision needs. They place added emphasis on the range and type of facilities and convenient location near work.
55 – 64 years	A transition toward health-led and regular use. Wellbeing, rehabilitation and weekly attendance are much more prominent. They prioritise maintaining existing facilities and warm-water pools, with year-round low-impact programs becoming central.
65+ years	A smaller but committed user group with high visit frequency among current users. Compared with younger groups, 65+ residents are less recreation- and cost-led and more focused on parking, accessibility, maintenance, warm water and therapeutic use.
Caregiver	A care and health-oriented segment whose distinctive needs are accessibility, hydrotherapy, warm water and facilities that support accompanying another person.

Awareness of and interest in the Aquatic Strategy

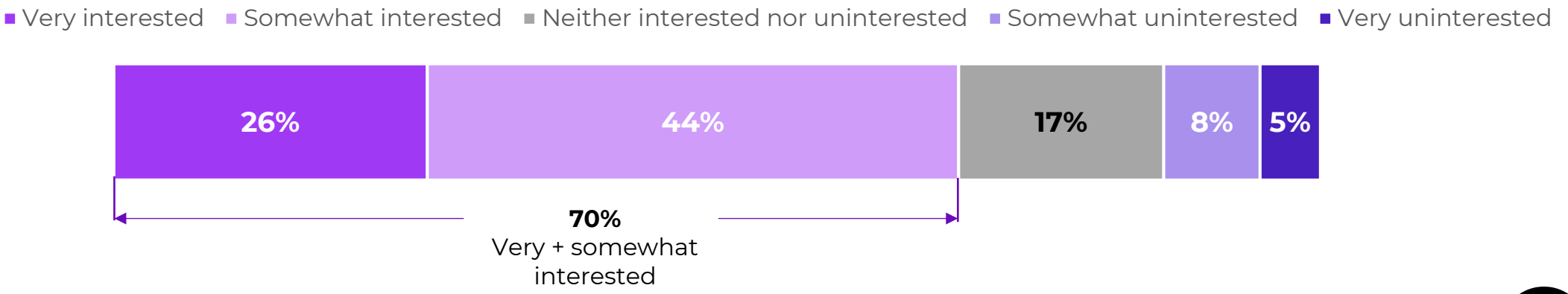
Q. Before today's survey, were you aware that the ACT Government is developing a new Aquatic Strategy?

(Base: all respondents, n = 1,550)



Q. And how interested would you be in learning more about the ACT Government's Aquatic Strategy as it is developed?

(Base: all respondents, n = 1,550)

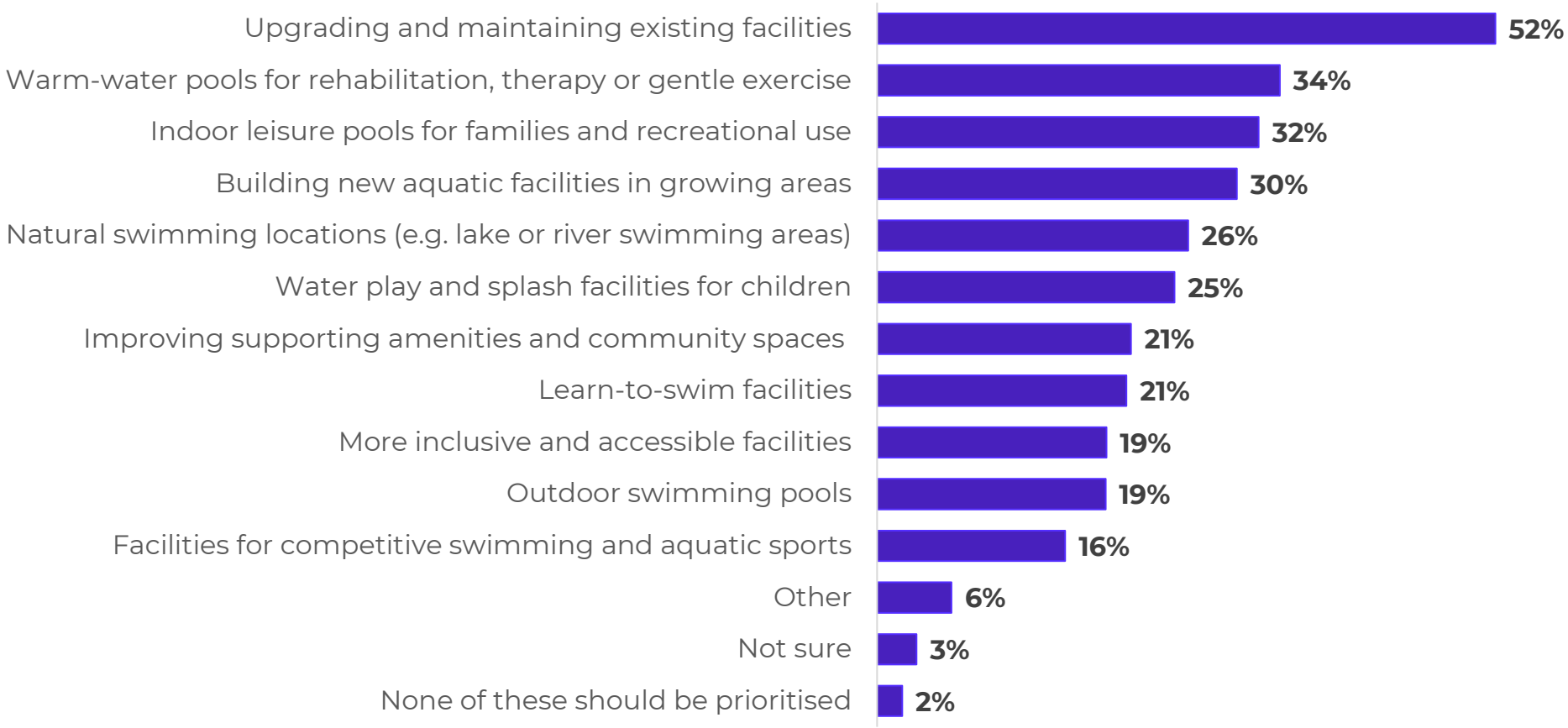


ACT Government

Future priorities for the Strategy to consider

Q. Looking ahead, which aquatic facility and investment priorities should the ACT Government focus on?

(Base: all respondents, n = 1,550)



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