

wheatbelt
natural resource
management



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY

2010 Survey of the Avon River Basin Farming Community



Red-leaved Sundew
(*Drosera bulbosa*)



Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management 2010 Survey of the Avon River Basin Farming Community

In August 2010 the Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management (NRM) conducted a survey of the Avon River Basin farming community on behalf of Wheatbelt NRM (formerly the Avon Catchment Council). The aim of the survey was to determine landholders' levels of knowledge and skills in natural resource management and their engagement with Wheatbelt NRM. The survey was funded by the Australian Government under its Caring for Our Country program.

112 people participated in the survey, across the following shires:

- Wongan-Ballidu 5.4%
- Koorda 3.6%
- Mt Marshall 5.4%
- Mukinbudin 5.4%
- Westonia 1.8%
- Yilgarn 2.7%
- Goomalling 7.1%
- Dowerin 5.4%
- Wyalkatchem 3.6%
- Trayning 1.8%
- Nungarin 1.8%
- Toodyay 2.7%
- Northam 6.3%
- Cunderdin 4.5%
- Tammin 1.8%
- Kellerberrin 4.5%
- Merredin 6.3%
- York 4.5%
- Quairading 4.5%
- Bruce Rock 3.6%
- Narembeen 11.6%
- Beverley . 9%
- Wickepin . 9%
- Kulin 1.8%
- Lake Grace . 9%
- Kent 1.8%



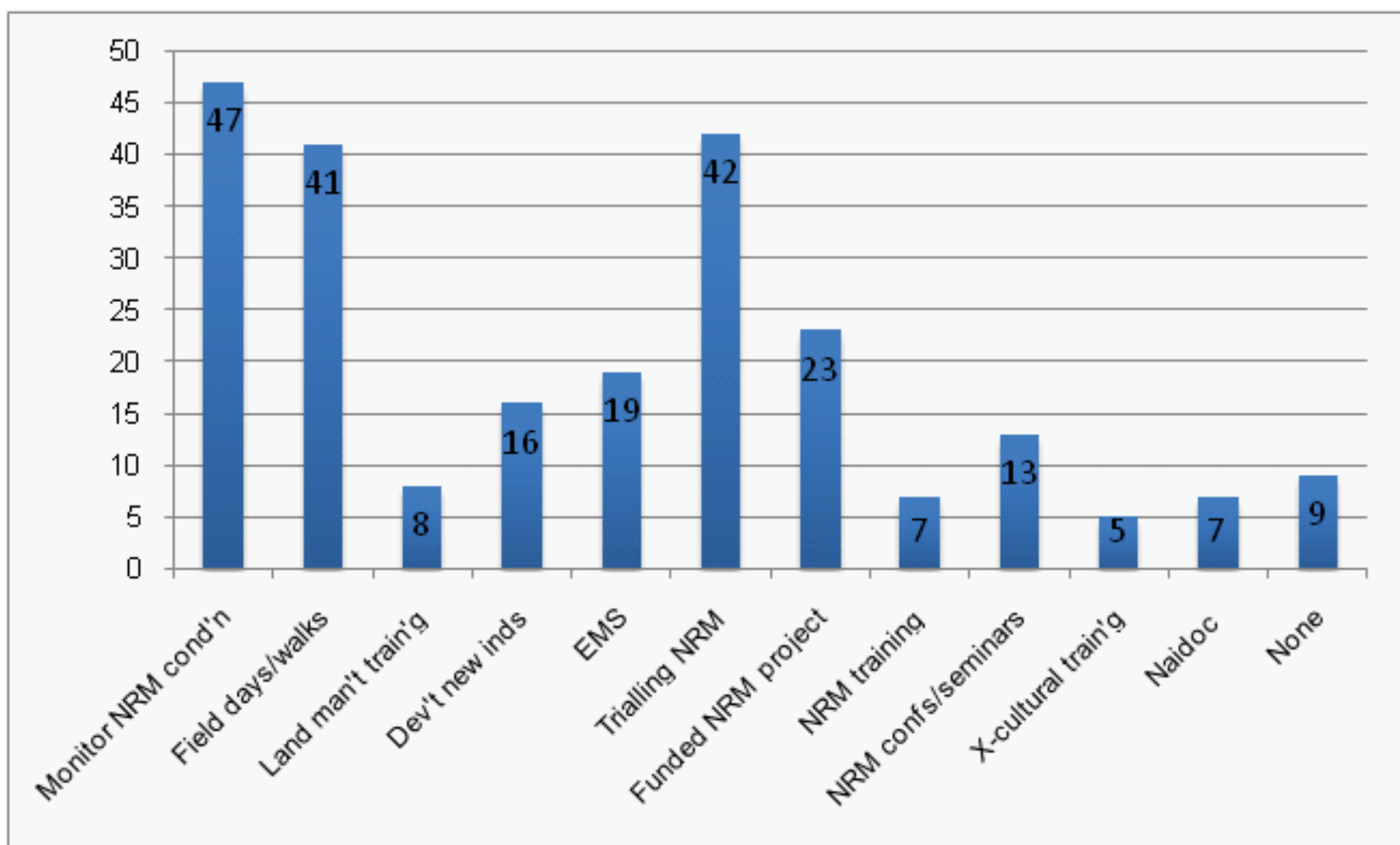
Survey Participants

The majority of respondents were male (76.8%), and less than 10% were under 40 years old (66.1% were over the age of 50). Most respondents had lived in the Avon region for periods longer than 40 years (75.9%). 96.1% of properties were 'large' landholdings (>100ha) using the Department of Agriculture and Food WA's classification, and 90% said their primary income was derived from their properties.

Involvement in NRM

It was found that 61.6% of the survey participants were involved in NRM activities. Involvement in NRM across the sub-regions (Avon, Yilgarn, Lockhart) varied marginally. Lockhart had the lowest involvement (55.5%) and the Avon the highest (69.7%). Figure 1 shows participants involvement in NRM related activities over the past two years.

Figure 1: Participants involvement in NRM related activities



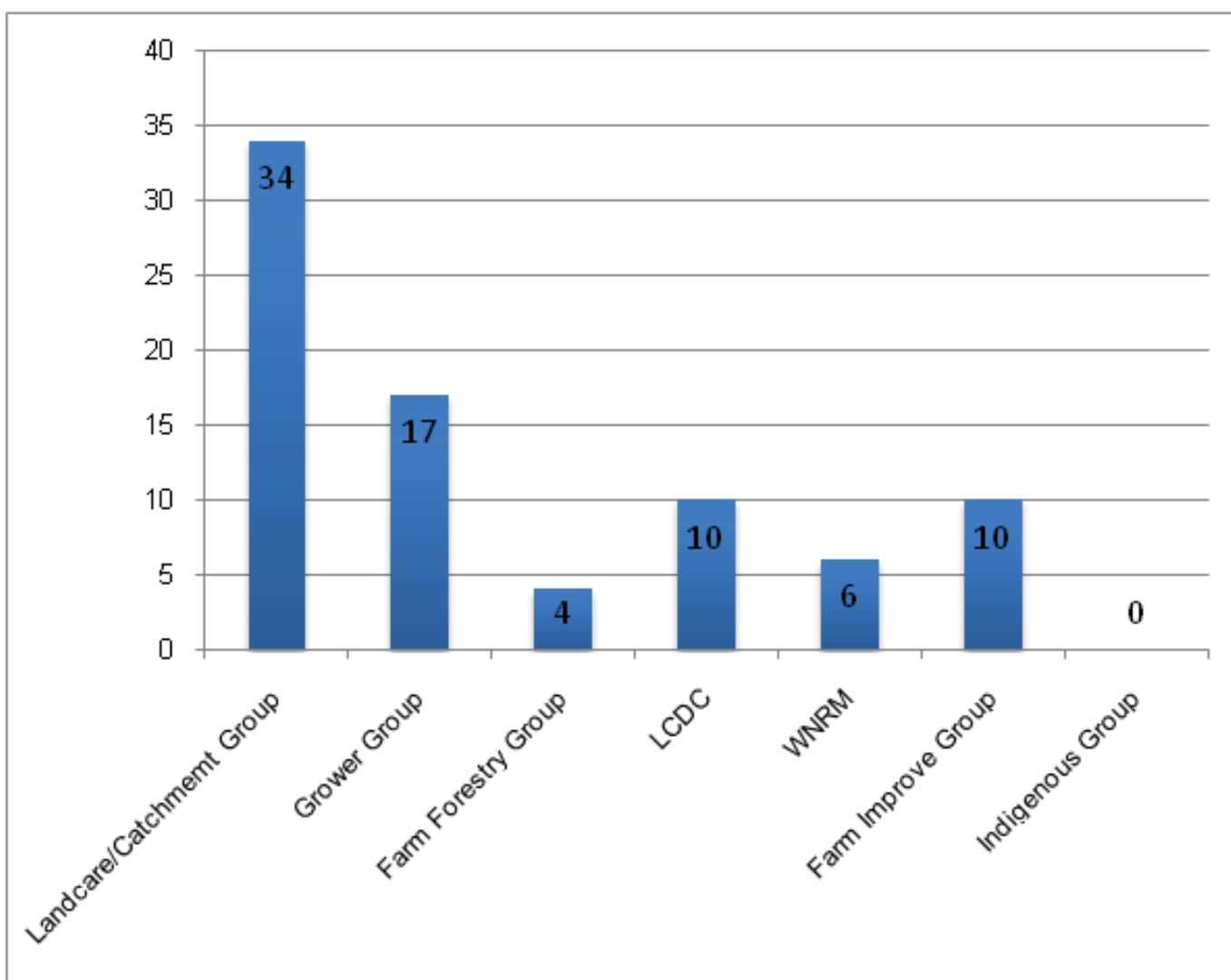
Volunteering

Nearly half the survey participants indicated they volunteer for environmental work (42%) and there may be a statistically significant difference between the Yilgarn (where 51.5% volunteer) and Lockhart where 33.3% volunteer.

Of the 81 positive responses 24 were members of more than one group, 18 were members of two, five were members of three and one was a member of four groups.

More than 72% of respondents said they were involved with community groups, with 39.3% involved with landcare (incl. LCDCs)/catchment groups. Figure 2 shows the level of involvement in various NRM groups.

Figure 2: Participants involvement in groups



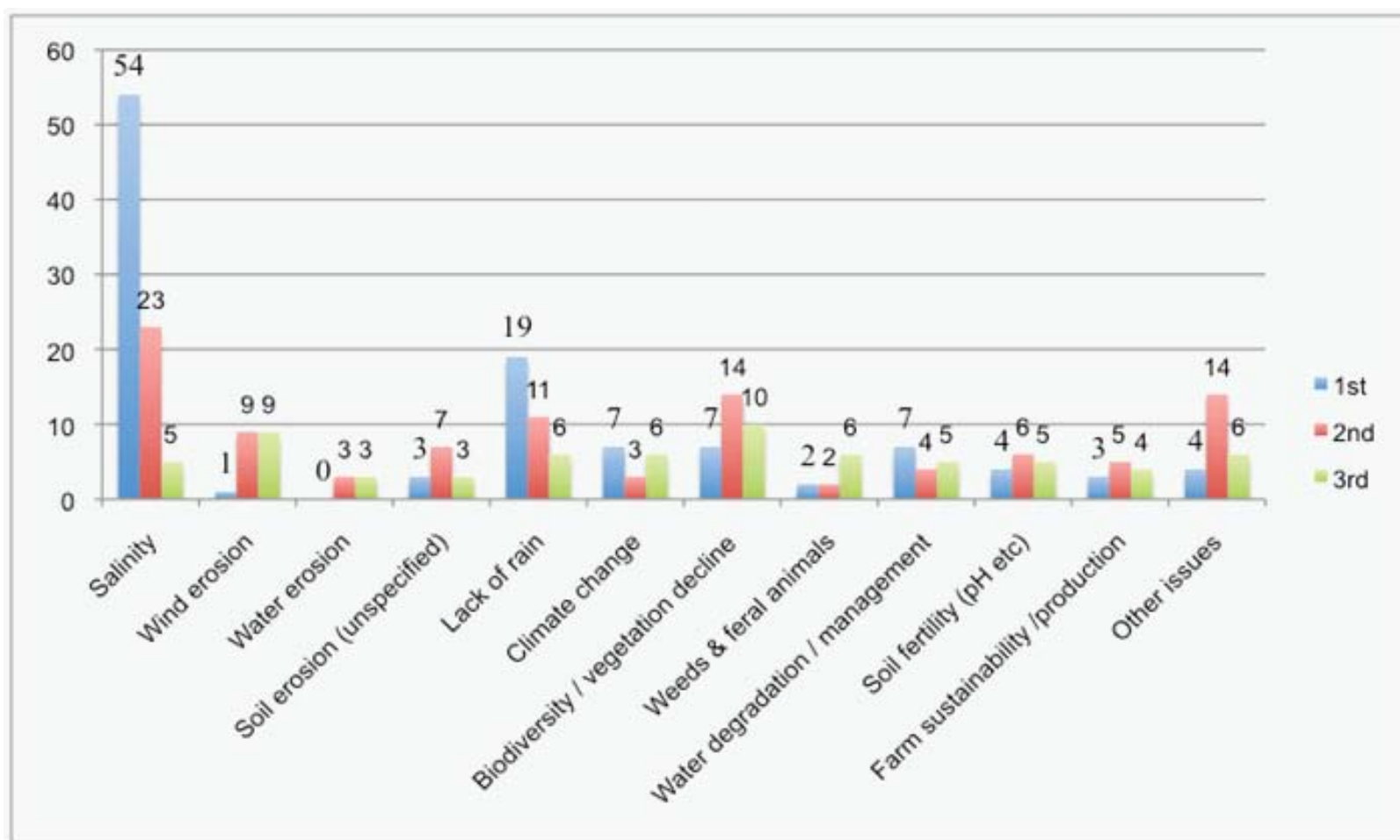
Environmental Concerns

Salinity is the most important environmental concern (73.2% of 2010 respondents). Lack of rain was regarded as the second most important issue (32.1%). Other issues identified include wind erosion, soil erosion, climate change, biodiversity/vegetation decline, water degradation/management, soil fertility and farm sustainability/production, as shown in Figure 3.



Environmental concerns across the three sub-regions (Avon, Yilgarn and Lockhart) varied only marginally. Again, salinity was highlighted more in the Lockhart sub-region (55.6%) compared with the Avon (47.1%) and Yilgarn (45.5%). Lack of rain is significantly more of a concern in Yilgarn (33.3%) compared with Lockhart (14.8%) and Avon (7.8%).

Figure 3: Respondents top 3 environmental concerns



NRM practices

Notable NRM practices currently in use by survey participants are:

- Pest/weed management (85.7%)
- No/reduced tillage (83%)
- Surface water harvesting (82.1%)
- Use of rainwater tanks (75.9%)
- Liming (66%)
- Recycling (67.8%)
- Grazing to maintain 40% cover (63.4%)
- Surface water management (54.5%)
- Use of saltland pastures and protecting remnant vegetation with fencing (50%).
- Tree planting to help control salinity (44.6%)

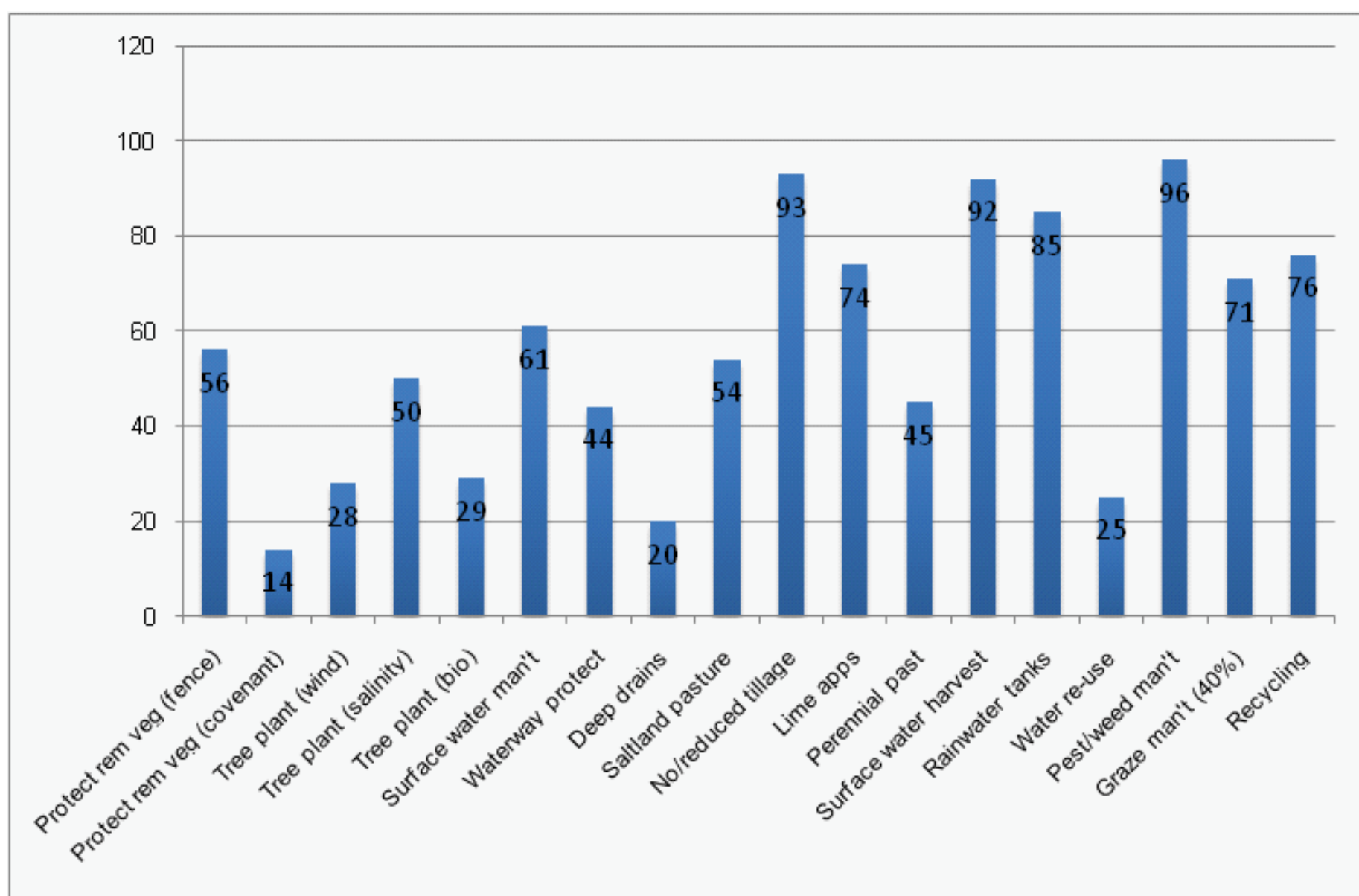


NRM activities not so widely adopted are:

- Perennial pastures (40.2%)
- Waterway protection activities (39.3%)
- Tree planting for biodiversity purposes (25.9%)
- Tree planting for wind protection (25%)
- Use of deep drains to help control salinity (17.8%)
- Protection of remnant vegetation through use of covenants (12.5%)

Figure 4 shows the frequency count of all practices identified by participants in the 2010 survey.

Figure 4: NRM practices currently used by survey participants

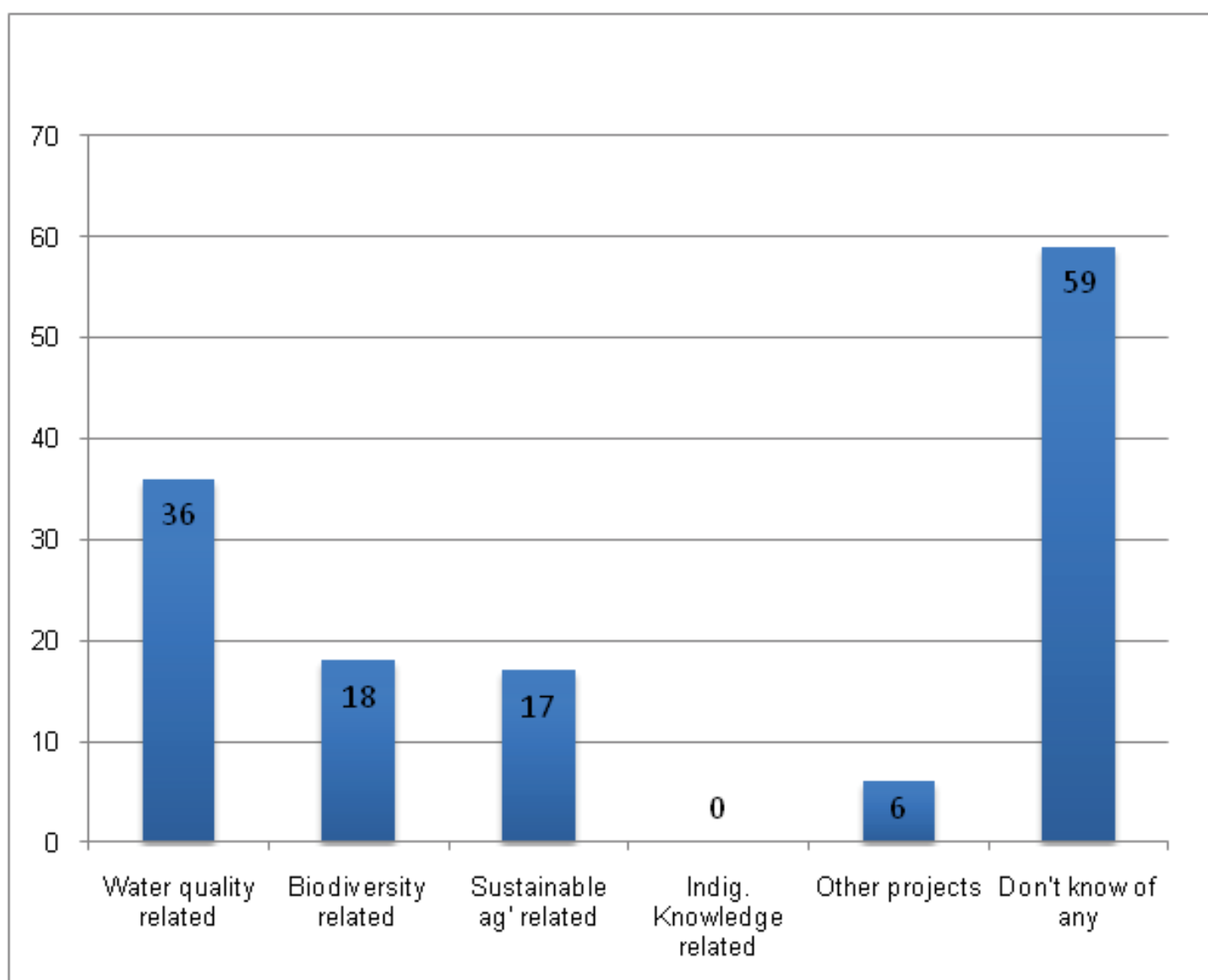




Views about Wheatbelt NRM

Over 90% of survey participants had heard of Wheatbelt NRM, which was the case for all sub-regions. However, approximately 53% of survey participants were unfamiliar with specific Wheatbelt NRM projects. Water quality related projects appear to be the most widely known, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Knowledge of Wheatbelt NRM managed projects



Participants were asked what they thought the main purpose/s of Wheatbelt NRM is. The following list of options were provided and multiple responses were accepted:

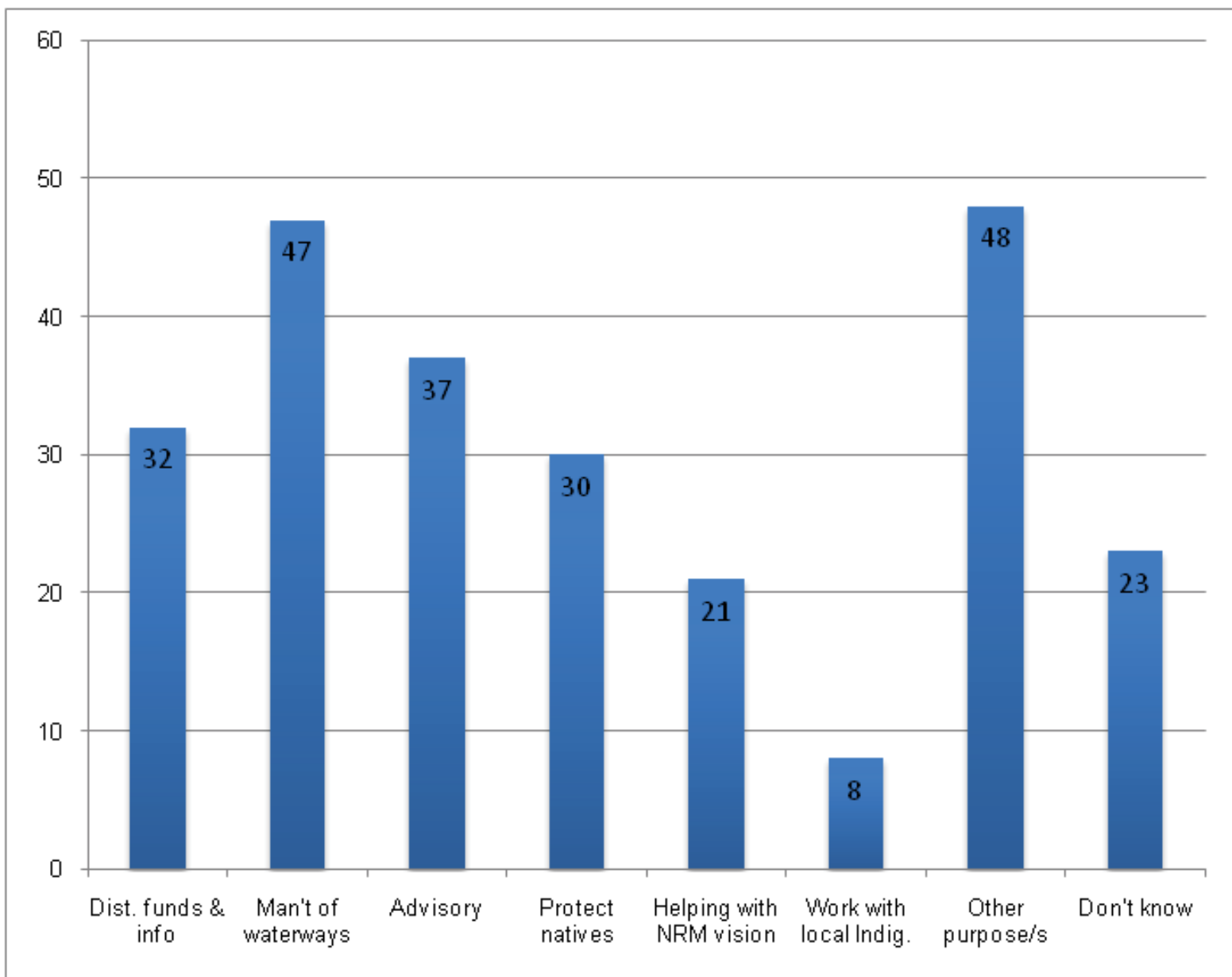
- Helping to distribute government funds and information to farmers.
- Managing catchment waterways and water quality.
- Working with people and communities to advise and assist them to manage the environment better.
- Conserving and protecting native plants and animals.
- Helping the community to achieve their vision for natural resources in the region.
- Working with Local Indigenous communities to record and integrate traditional bush knowledge into natural resource management.



- Other.
- Don't know

Most respondents (80%) identified at least one of Wheatbelt NRM's main purposes, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Understanding of the purpose of Wheatbelt NRM

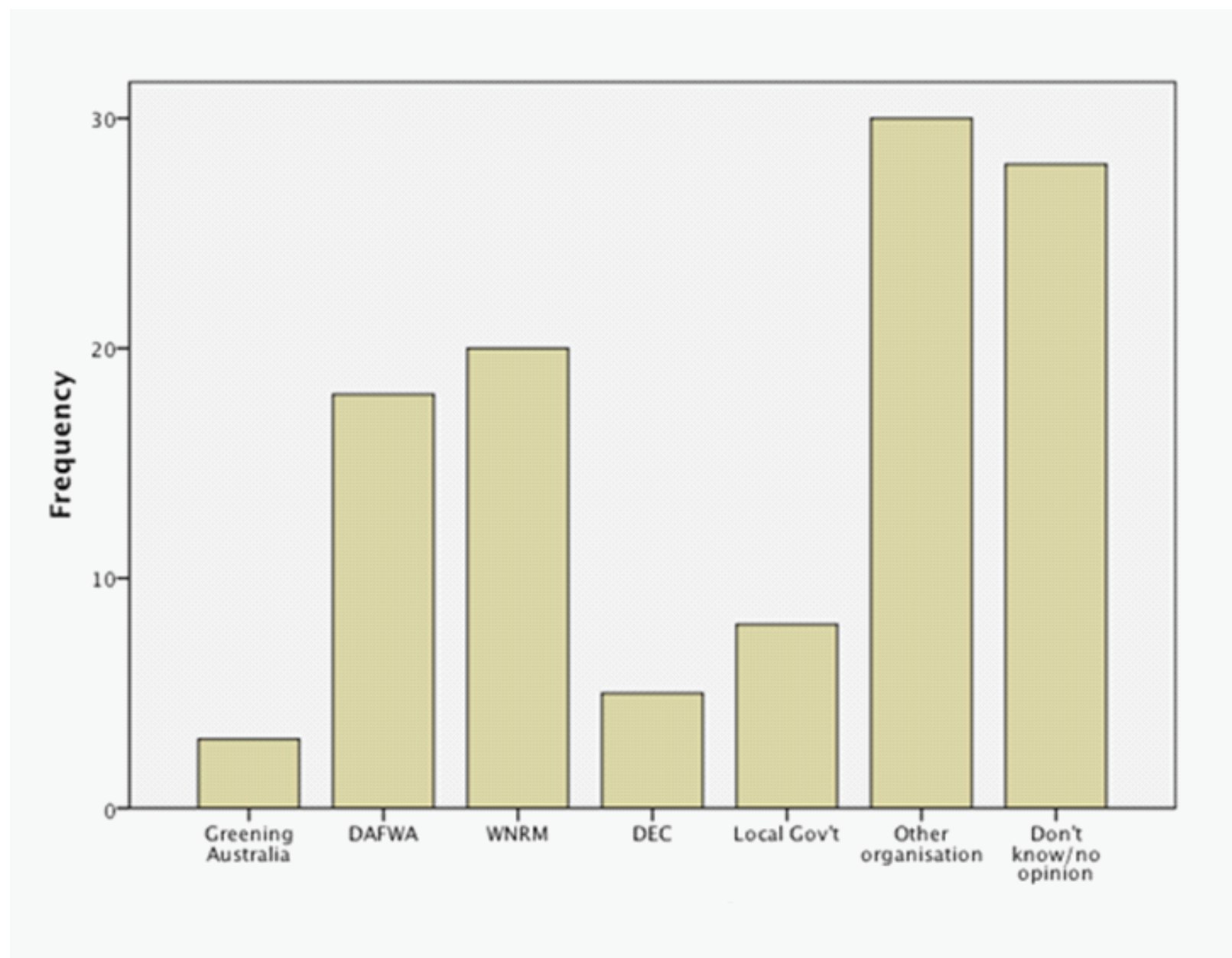




Custodianship of a Regional NRM Strategy

In 2005 Wheatbelt NRM developed the Avon Natural Resource Management Strategy which outlined the goals and activities for natural resource management in the Avon River Basin. This strategy is currently under review. Participants were asked if they had heard of the document, and whether they thought Wheatbelt NRM should be the custodian of any new region wide strategy. Over 65% of participants had not heard of the strategy. When asked who they believed the custodian of a region wide strategy should be, over half the participants identified another organisation, or had no opinion or did not know who the custodian should be. It should be noted that of those responses, some people indicated that there should not be a strategy at all. Figure 7 displays participant's views of which organisation they believe should be the custodian of a region wide NRM strategy.

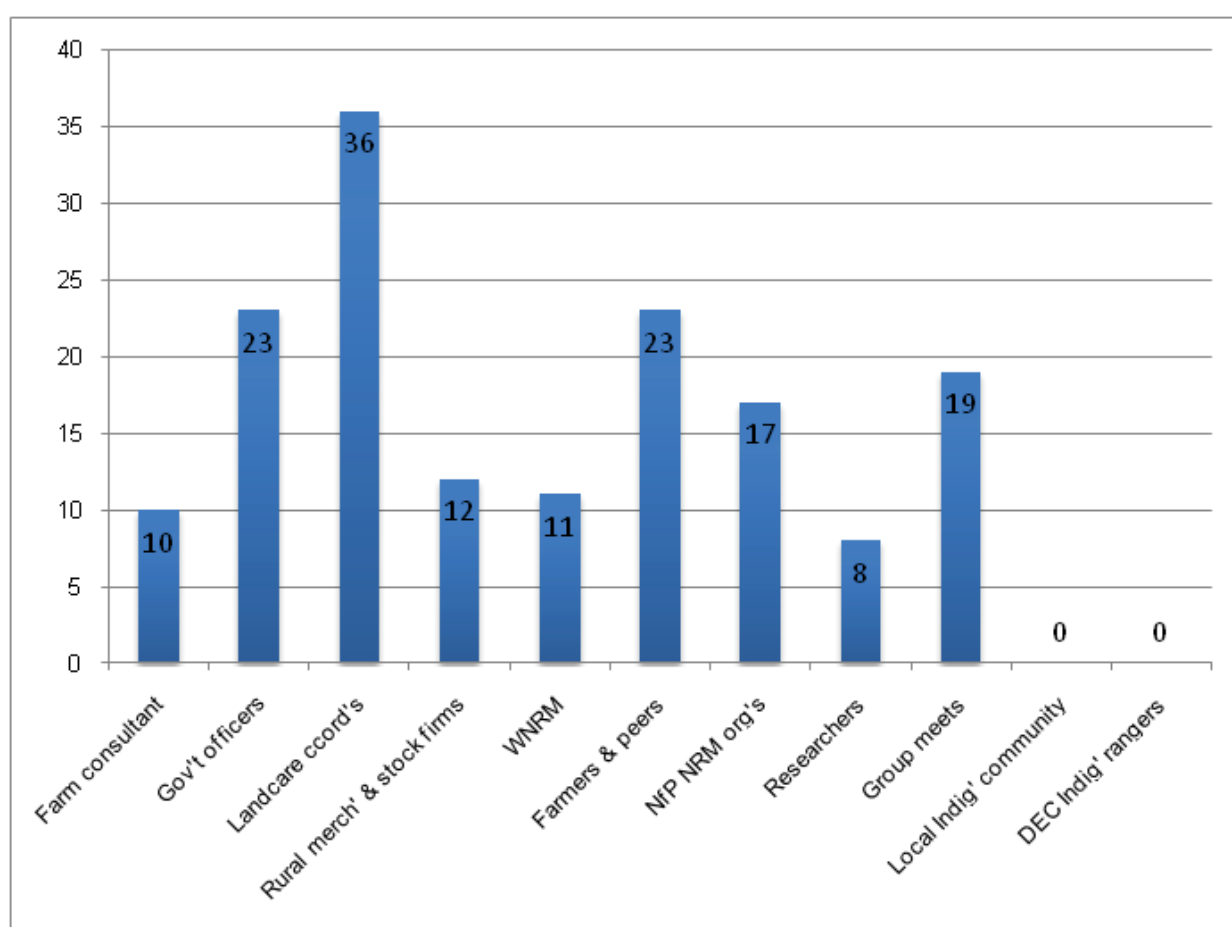
Figure 7: Participants views of who should be the custodian of a regional strategy



Getting information about NRM

Participants were asked where and who they sourced information about NRM. There were two components to this question (a) the people that provided the information and (b) the media and published sources used. Figure 8 displays the results for the people that survey participants go to for information about natural resource management.

Figure 8: People that participants go to for information about NRM



Landcare Coordinators are regarded as the most useful source for providing NRM information with 32.1% of respondents saying they use them. State Government Officers and fellow farmers/peers come equal second with 20.5% saying they use them. It is perhaps notable that Indigenous people are never been consulted on NRM matters.

Figure 9 shows the sources of media and publications that participants use as sources of information. The Countryman and Farm Weekly newspapers were the most popular sources for information. The internet, ABC radio and Landcare magazines were also frequently sourced for information.

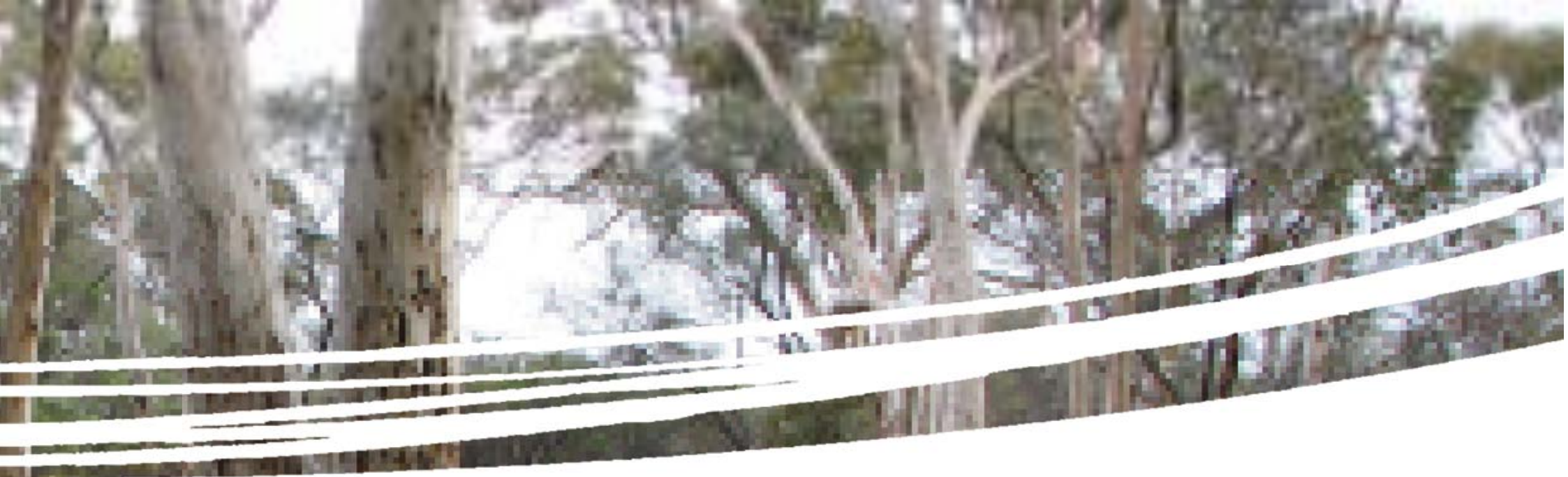
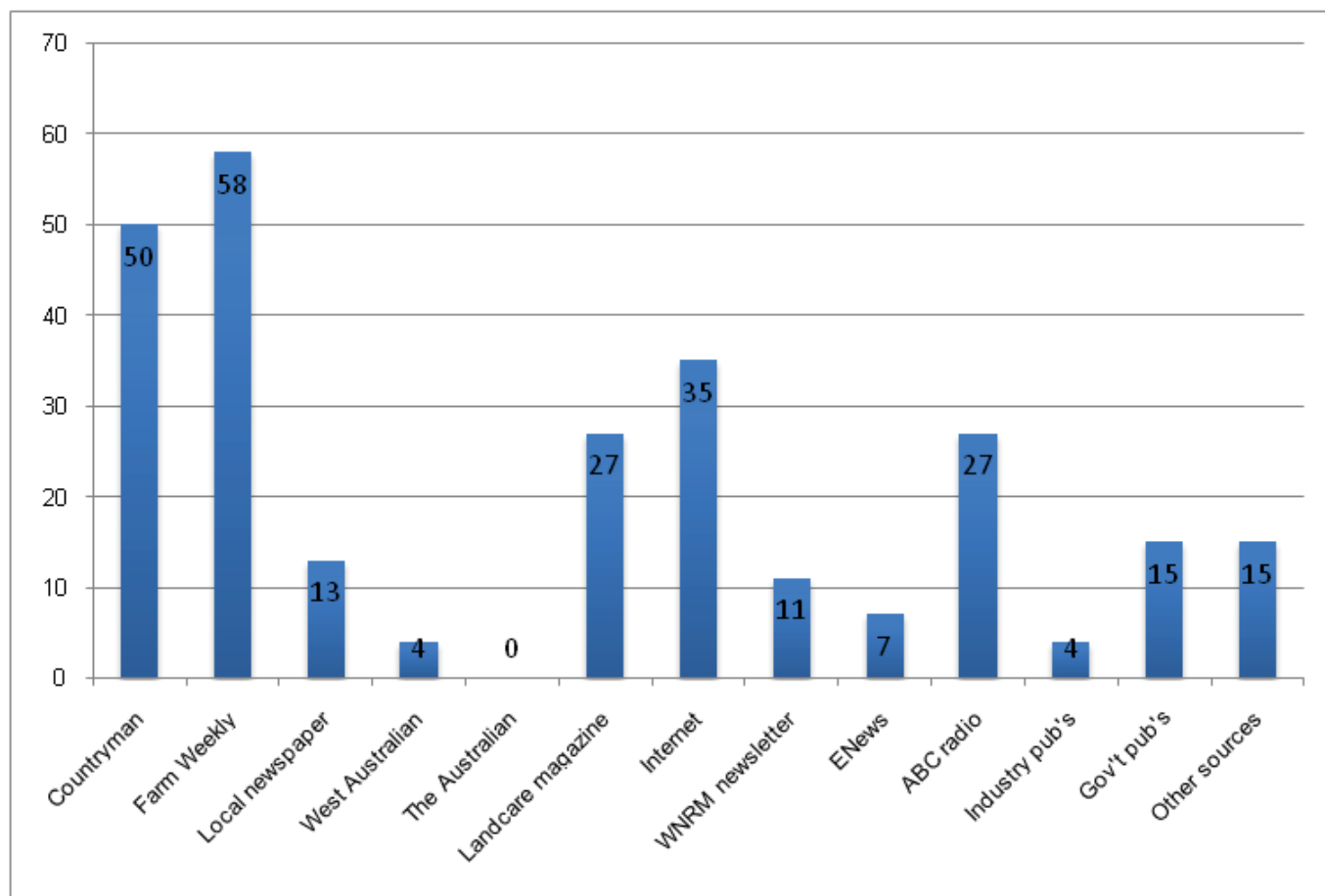


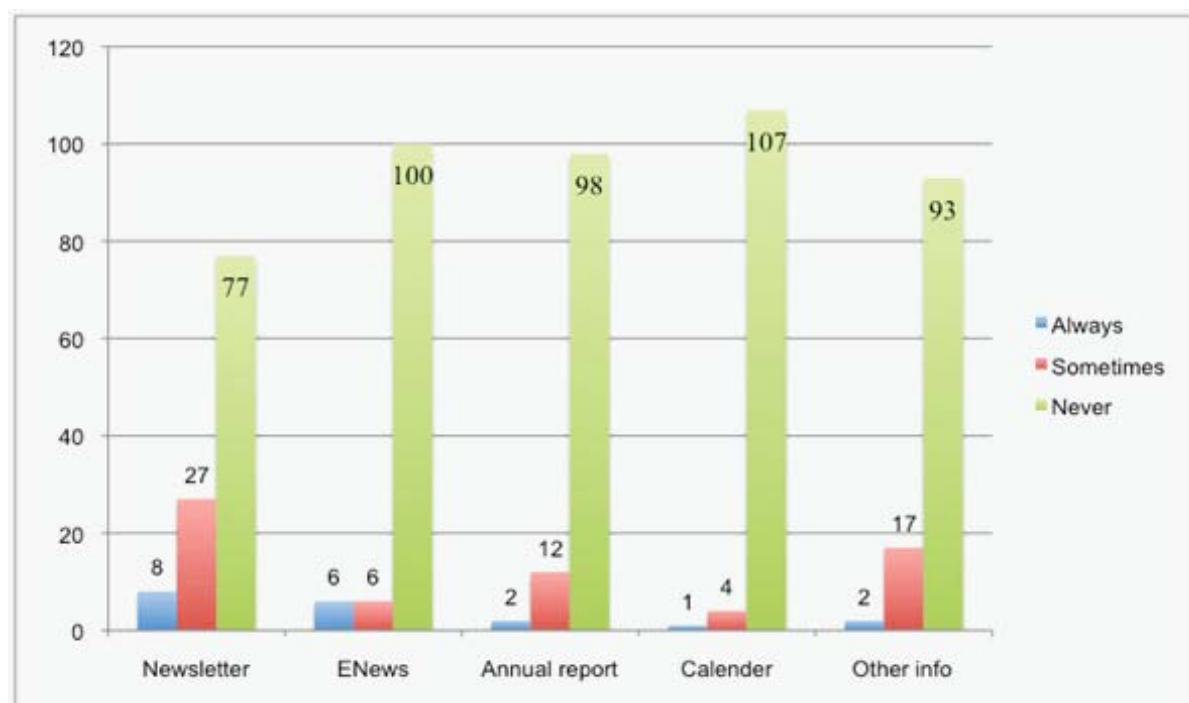
Figure 9: Media and publications used for sourcing information



Information from Wheatbelt NRM

Participants were asked which Wheatbelt NRM publications they received. For those people that did receive information, they were asked how frequently they read the material they were provided with (never, sometimes or always). Almost 43% of participants surveyed said they received one of the types of information offered by Wheatbelt NRM (Newsletter, ENews, Annual report, Calendar or other information), as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 10: Information participants received from Wheatbelt NRM





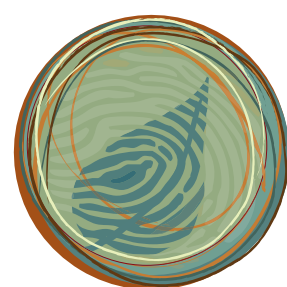
Nyungar Naming of places, plants and animals

Wheatbelt NRM is working closely with the Aboriginal community to manage culturally significant sites, such as Burlong Pool and Kokerbin Rock to assist them to record their traditional ecological knowledge. Part of these projects has included developing a Nyungar NRM dictionary and using Nyungar language to describe places, plants and animals on signage and in publications. Participants were asked whether they felt this was an important thing to do, and over 55% of participants indicated that they did think using Nyungar names was important.

Using the results

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the time you took to participate in this survey. We understand how busy many members of our community are, and we appreciate the answers you have provided. We will use the information to improve our services and to plan future projects, and to report to the Australian Government on the progress of our projects so far.

Please feel free at any time to provide your feedback by contacting us on 9690 2250 or via our website at www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au.



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