
APPENDIX C – COMMUNITY SURVEY



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Community Engagement Research for the Mount Emerald Wind Farm Site

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Introduction

Background, Objectives and Methodology

Background

RATCH-Australia

- ▶ RATCH-Australia is an Australian-run company that is a committed developer and owner of long-term power assets in Australia and New Zealand.
- ▶ They invest in and develop both greenfield and brownfield projects and are determined to be a positive contributor to the communities in which they work.

Mount Emerald Project

- ▶ RATCH-Australia are currently assessing the potential to develop a wind farm in the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland between the towns of Atherton and Mareeba.
- ▶ The farm would contain 70-80 turbines that could produce enough power per year for 75,000 homes.
- ▶ It would also provide investment of approx \$500m to the area bringing jobs and economic benefits to the area.
- ▶ The project is currently in the community and stakeholder consultation stage of development.
- ▶ As part of this stage RATCH-Australia wish to understand more clearly the views of the local community about the potential support and opposition to the proposed development.
- ▶ This report covers the results and analysis of a community engagement survey carried out to meet these aims.

Research Purpose and Objectives

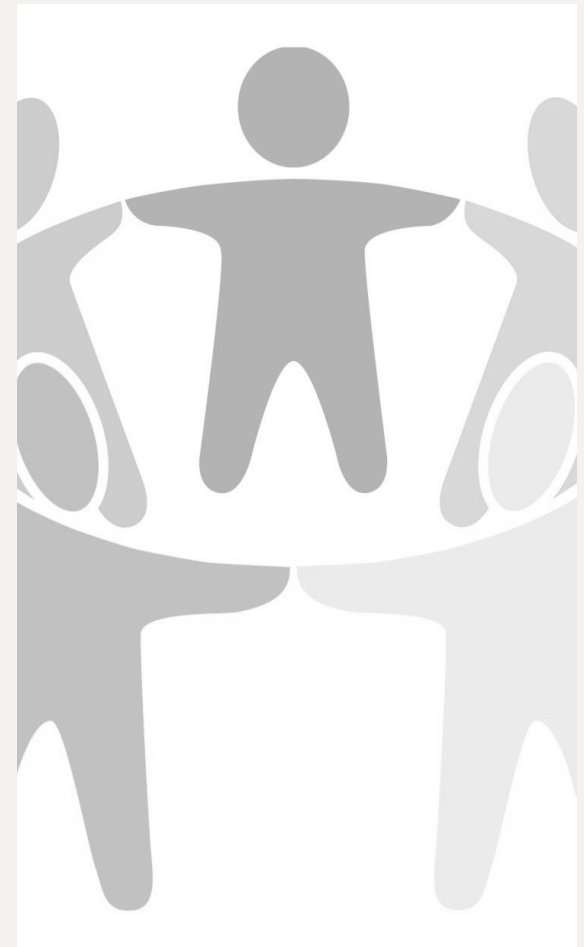
Research Purpose

- ▶ The purpose of the research is to understand and measure community attitudes to the proposed development of the Mount Emerald Wind Farm Site.
- ▶ This evidence base will form part of the development application for the project, will provide a baseline measure of project KPI's and will uncover potential issues or concerns that may need to be managed.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this research were to understand:

- ▶ Awareness and support of the Mount Emerald farm project;
- ▶ Attitudes to wind farms and alternative energy in general and to the local project;
- ▶ Community sentiment on the impacts of the project on a range of local factors;
- ▶ Expectation regarding community engagement; and
- ▶ Preferred information channels for the project.



Methodology



Survey method

- ▶ The results presented herein are based upon a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) survey conducted between 27th February and the 1st March 2012.

Sample

- ▶ The sample consisted of n=400 residents randomly drawn from a radius of approx. 20km around the Mount Emerald Wind Farm location. This included the towns of Mareeba, Atherton, Tolga, Walkamin, and Dimbulah.
- ▶ The sample was weighted to be representative of the local population by age and gender using latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Accuracy

- ▶ With a sample size of n=400, the accuracy of the results overall is +/- 5% at the 95% confidence interval. This means, for example, that if the survey returns a result of 50%, there is 95% probability that the actual result will be between 45% and 55%.
- ▶ The margin error for sub-groups is larger than for the overall results. As a guide, the margin of error for various sub-group sizes within this study are listed below:

| Sub-group size | Standard error |
|----------------|----------------|
| 300 | ±5.8% |
| 200 | ±7.1% |
| 100 | ±10.0% |
| 50 | ±14.1% |

- ▶ Note: All percentage figures in this report are rounded. Accordingly, totals may not add up to 100%.

Key findings and strategic considerations

Key findings – Awareness and Support of the Project

Overall, there is both high awareness and strong support for the Mount Emerald Wind Farm development.

- ▶ Over 80% of respondents are aware of the proposed development.
- ▶ Around three quarters of respondents (76%) support the project, with only 13% opposed to it.

There is a strong recognition of the environmental benefits of wind farms in general and this is the main reason people support the development.

- ▶ Around 90% of respondents agree that wind farms are a good option for Australia's energy needs and a good option for the environment.
- ▶ 56% of supporters say they support the Mount Emerald project because it is environmentally friendly.
- ▶ In contrast only 10% of supporters identify the local jobs and benefits it could bring to the community as a reason for their support.

There is also considerable synergy between the importance of various local factors and the positive impact that the wind farm will have on these factors.

- ▶ The local economy and local employment opportunities are the factors that are considered most important by respondents and they are also the factors that are most likely to be seen as being positively impacted on by the wind farm.

Being an eyesore and being too close to homes are the main unprompted reasons for opposition.

- ▶ 32% of opponents say it will be an eyesore or unattractive
- ▶ 29% of opponents say it is too close to residences
- ▶ 23% of opponents mention noise levels as a reason for their opposition.

Key findings – Impacts on local landscape, information provision, and attitudes to project management

The vast majority of respondents believe that the wind farm will not have a negative impact on their favourite aspect of the local landscape or on the most important local historical or culturally significant sites.

- ▶ Less than 30% of respondents think the wind farm will have a negative impact on their favourite aspect of the local landscape.
- ▶ Most respondents are not aware of any local historical or culturally significant sites, but of those that are, less than 30% think the wind farm will have a negative impact on these sites.

People generally don't know very much about the project but most would like to know more.

- ▶ 79% of respondents say they only know a little about the wind farm, while 61% say that they would like to know more.
- ▶ People would like information about a whole range of issues, from basic location and size details to information on who benefits, impacts on wildlife, and employment opportunities.
- ▶ Three quarters of respondents identify local newspapers as their preferred information channel for the project.

The project is also seen as being managed in a responsible way that takes care of the environment and needs of local community.

- ▶ 58% of people agree that the project is taking care to consider the needs of the local community while only 12% disagree.
- ▶ Similarly, 56% of people agree that the project is taking care to protect the environment while only 7% disagree.

Strategic considerations for further increasing support and minimising opposition to the project

- ▶ **There is a strong potential to increase support for the wind farm project by promoting the local benefits that it will bring through wide information channels**
 - ▶ Local factors such as the local economy, jobs, tourism, and the reputation of the area are most important to people and are also seen as being positively impacted upon by the wind farm.
 - ▶ However, supporters of the project typically mention broad factors, such as the benefits of wind energy, rather than these local factors, as reasons for their support of the project.
 - ▶ As such communications promoting the project should reinforce the importance of these local benefits rather than the broad benefits of wind energy, which are already well understood by most.

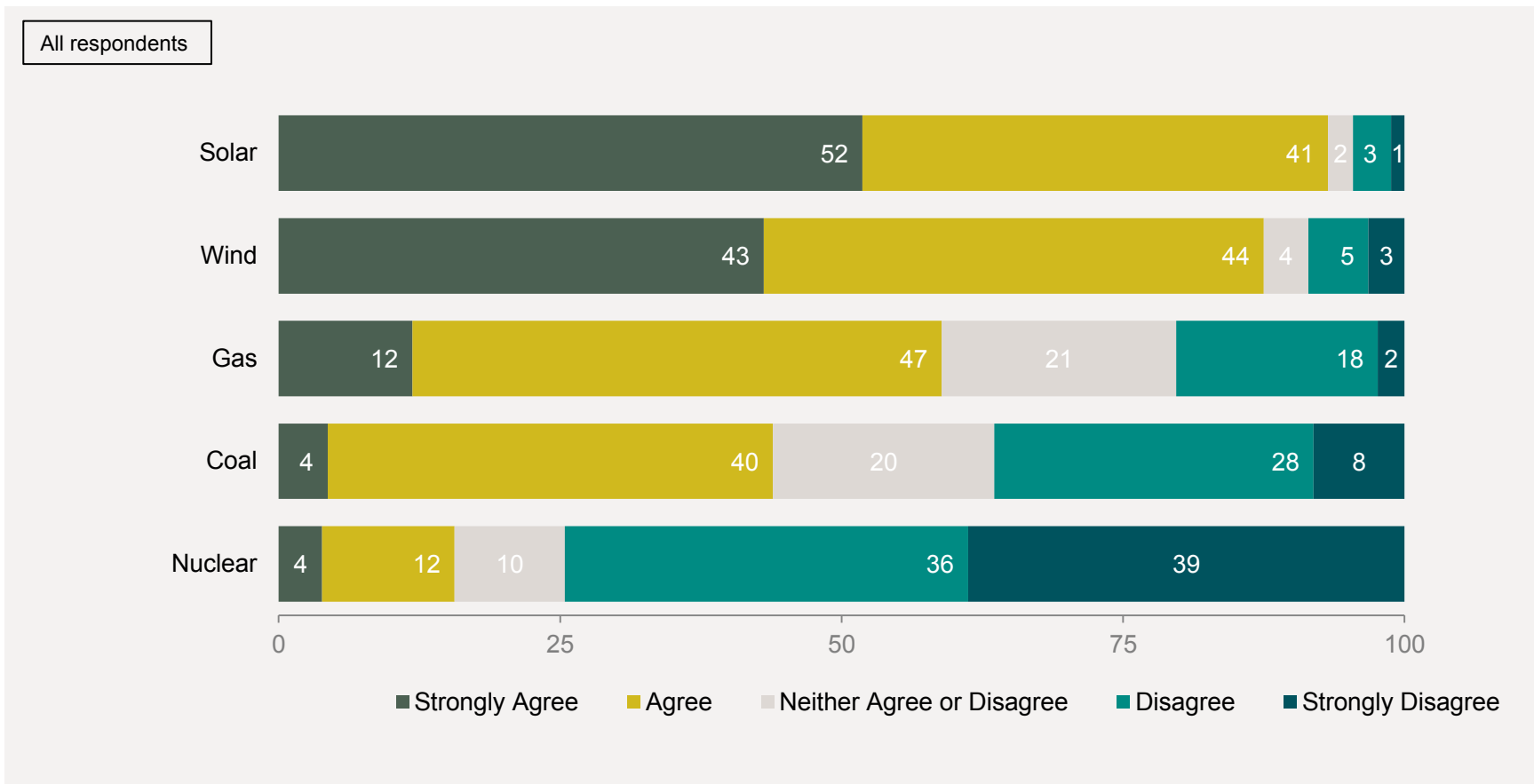
- ▶ **The project should engage broadly on the impact that the project will have on the appearance of landscape, the local wildlife and the local farming industry**
 - ▶ These factors are considered most important in relation to the project and are also seen as being negatively impacted upon amongst opposers of the project. As such they should be addressed by countering misconceptions or taking direct action to minimise impacts on these factors.
 - ▶ Consideration could also be given to weaving the local farm industry into a narrative around the benefits that the project will bring to the local economy.

- ▶ **Very local issues including operating noise levels, construction disruption, and impacts on property values, could be addressed through targeted engagement of people living nearby to the site**
 - ▶ These factors are more important, and more likely to be seen as being negatively impacted upon, by those living closest to the project site and those who are already opposed to the project.
 - ▶ The broader community is less likely to see them as being important and as a result it may be more appropriate to address these factors through more targeted engagement of people living nearby to the site.

Detailed findings

Attitudes to alternative energy

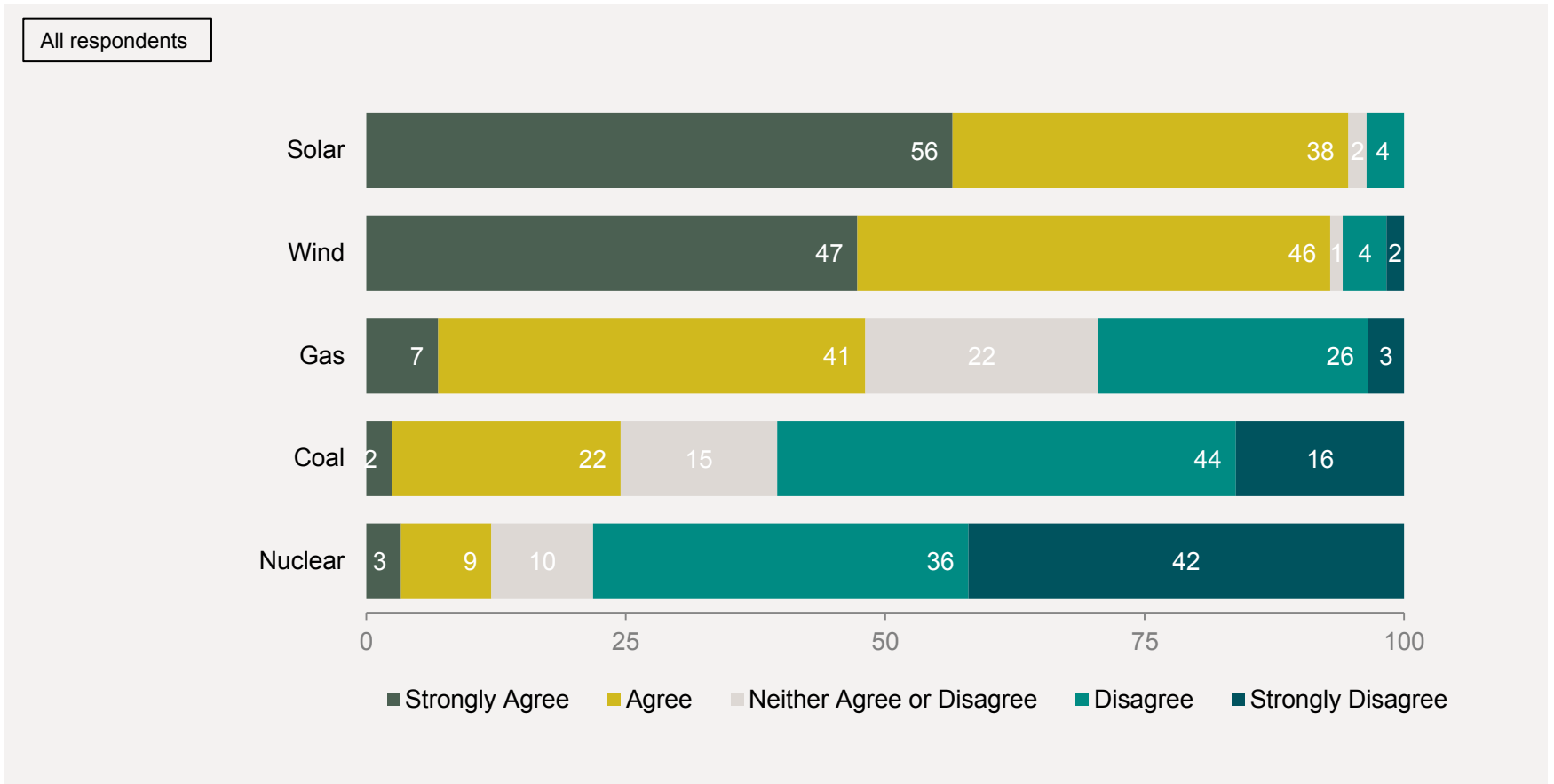
There is strong support for the development of wind energy to meet Australia's energy needs



Nearly 90% of respondents agree that wind energy should be developed to meet Australia's energy needs. Only solar power garnered more support.

By comparison only 16% support Nuclear power.

Virtually all respondents also agree that wind energy is a good option for the environment



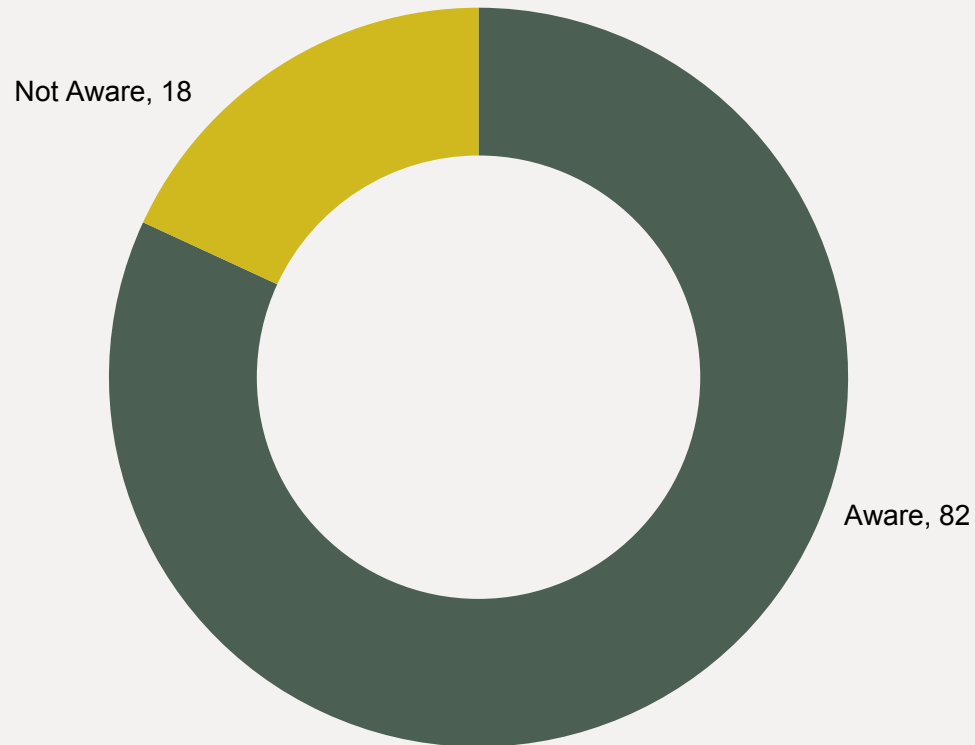
93% of respondents agree that wind power is a good option for the environment, only solar energy had more support.

By comparison only 12% feel Nuclear energy is a good option for the environment, and 24% for coal.

Overall awareness and support for the Mount Emerald wind farm

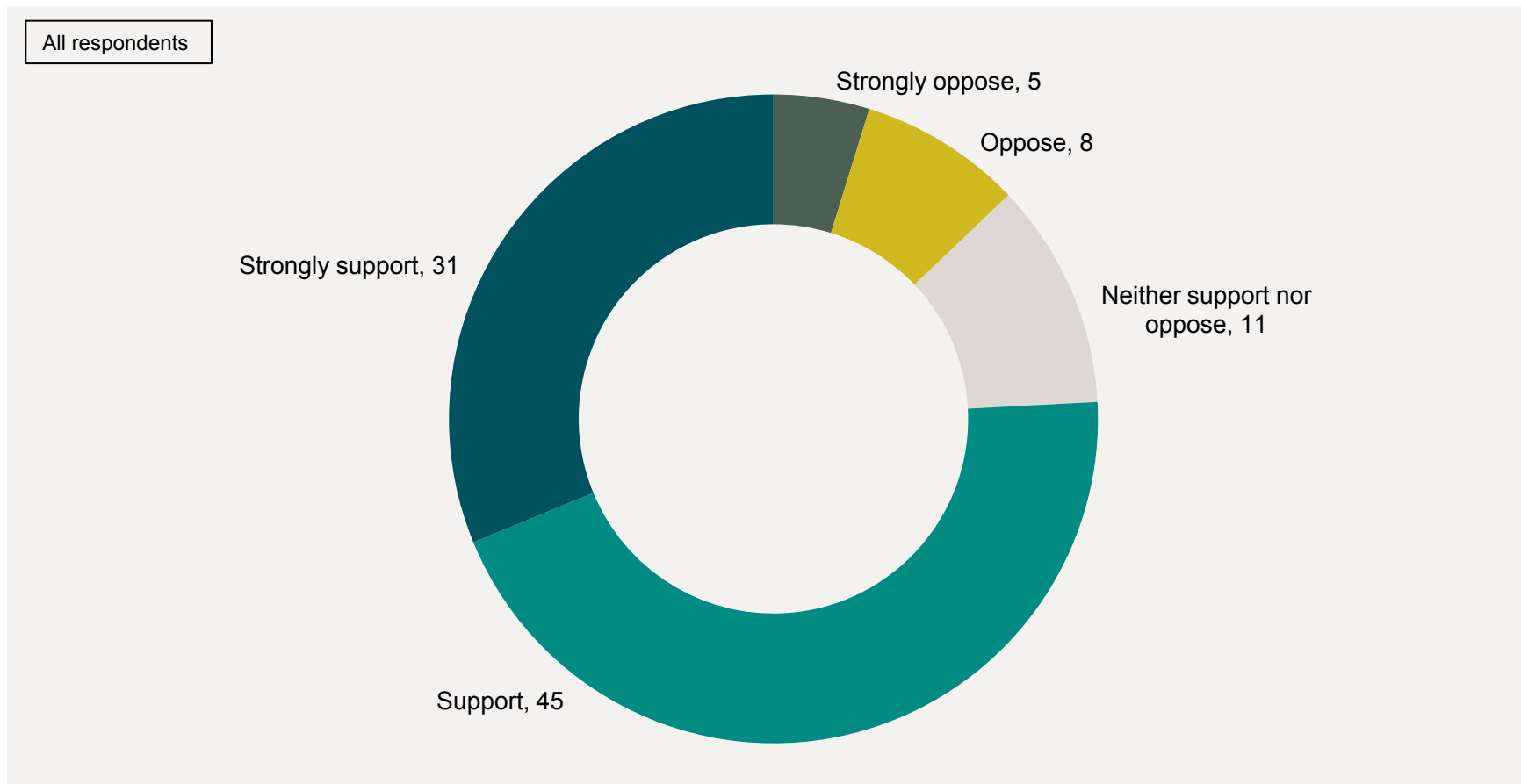
Over 80% of local residents are currently aware of the Mount Emerald Wind Farm Project

All respondents



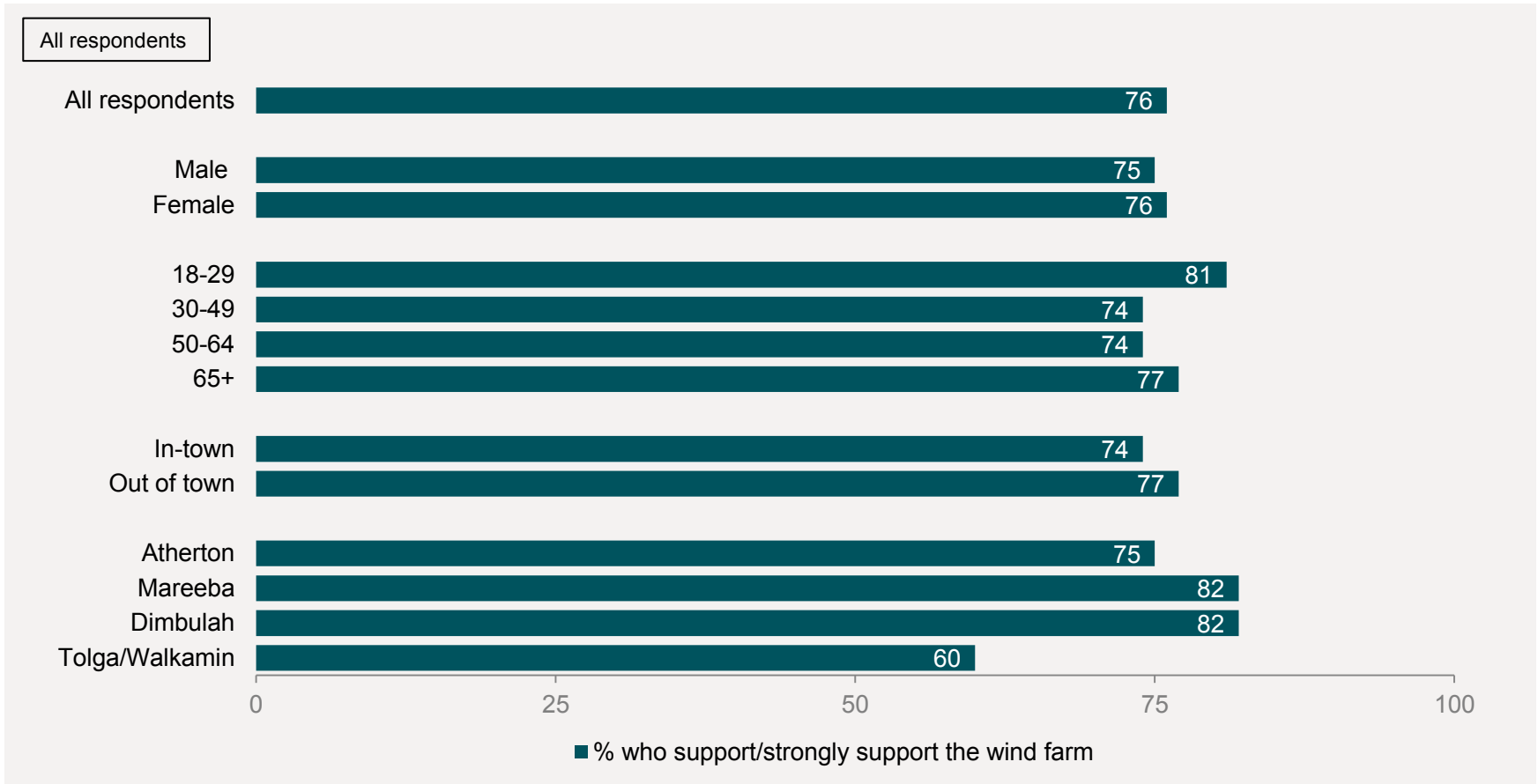
There is lower awareness amongst younger groups with only two thirds of people aged 18-29 aware of the project.

Over three quarters of the local population currently support the Mount Emerald Project



Only 13% of residents oppose or strongly oppose the development.

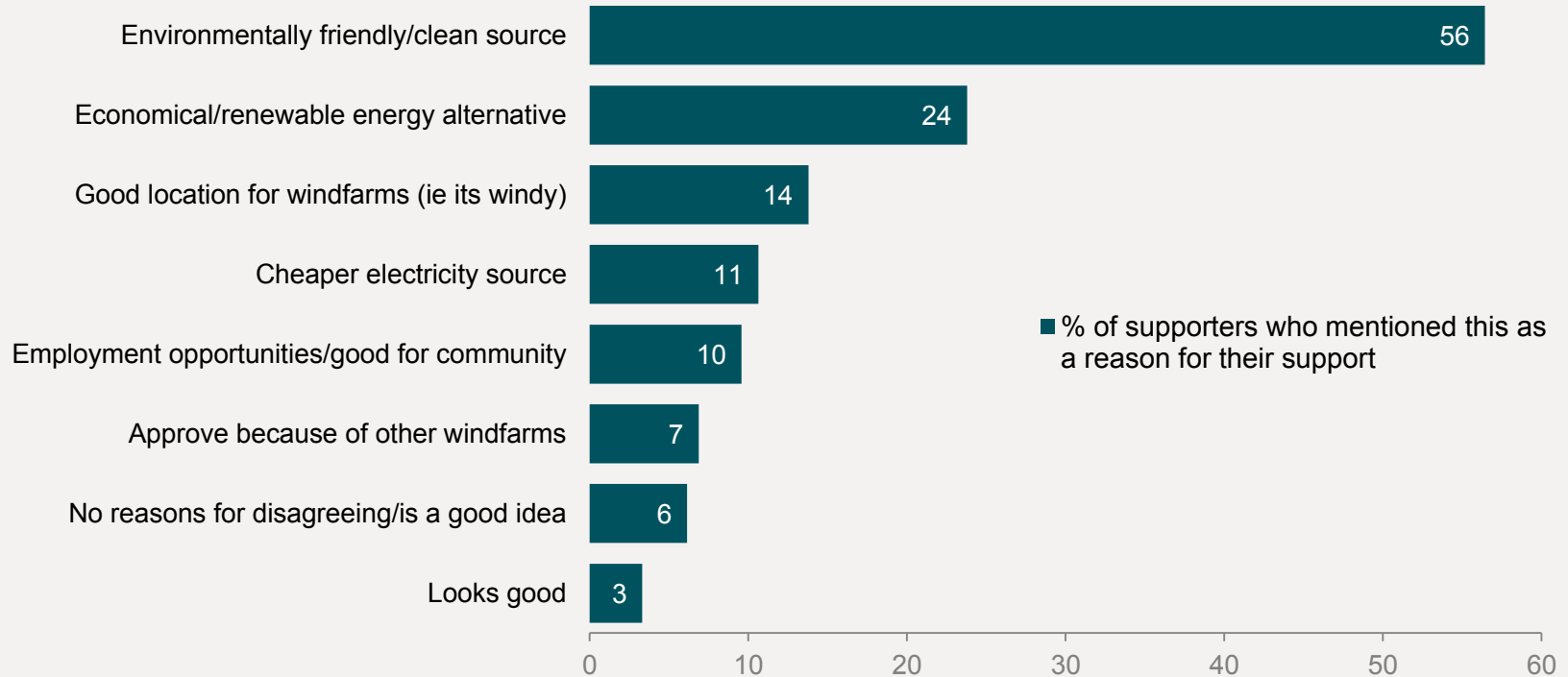
There is strong support for the project across all segments of the local population.



Only those living closest to the wind farm in the towns of Tolga and Walkamin show lower levels of support although support here is still at 60%.

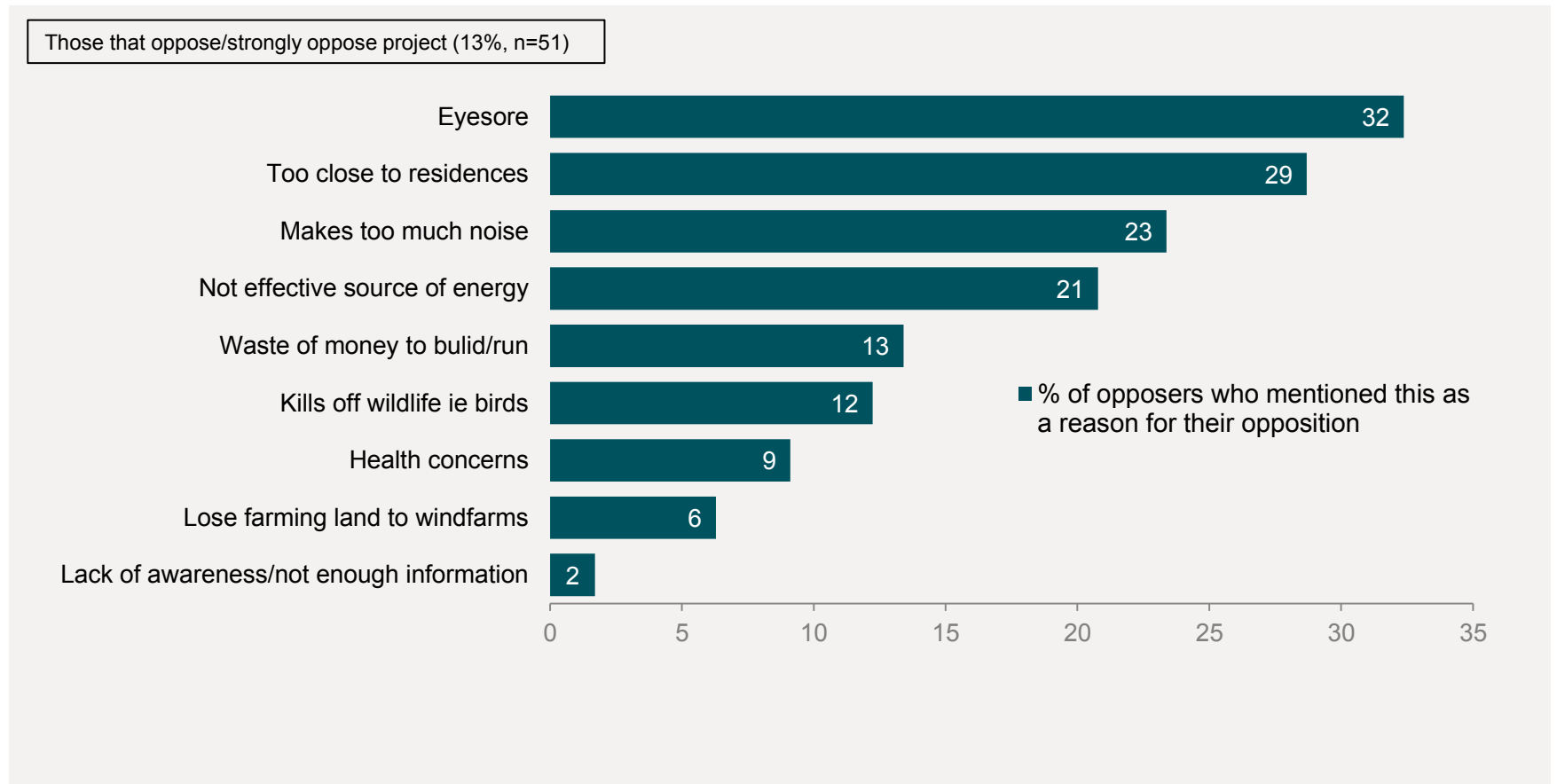
The environmental benefits of clean energy is the main reason why people support the project

Those that support/strongly support project (76%, n=302)



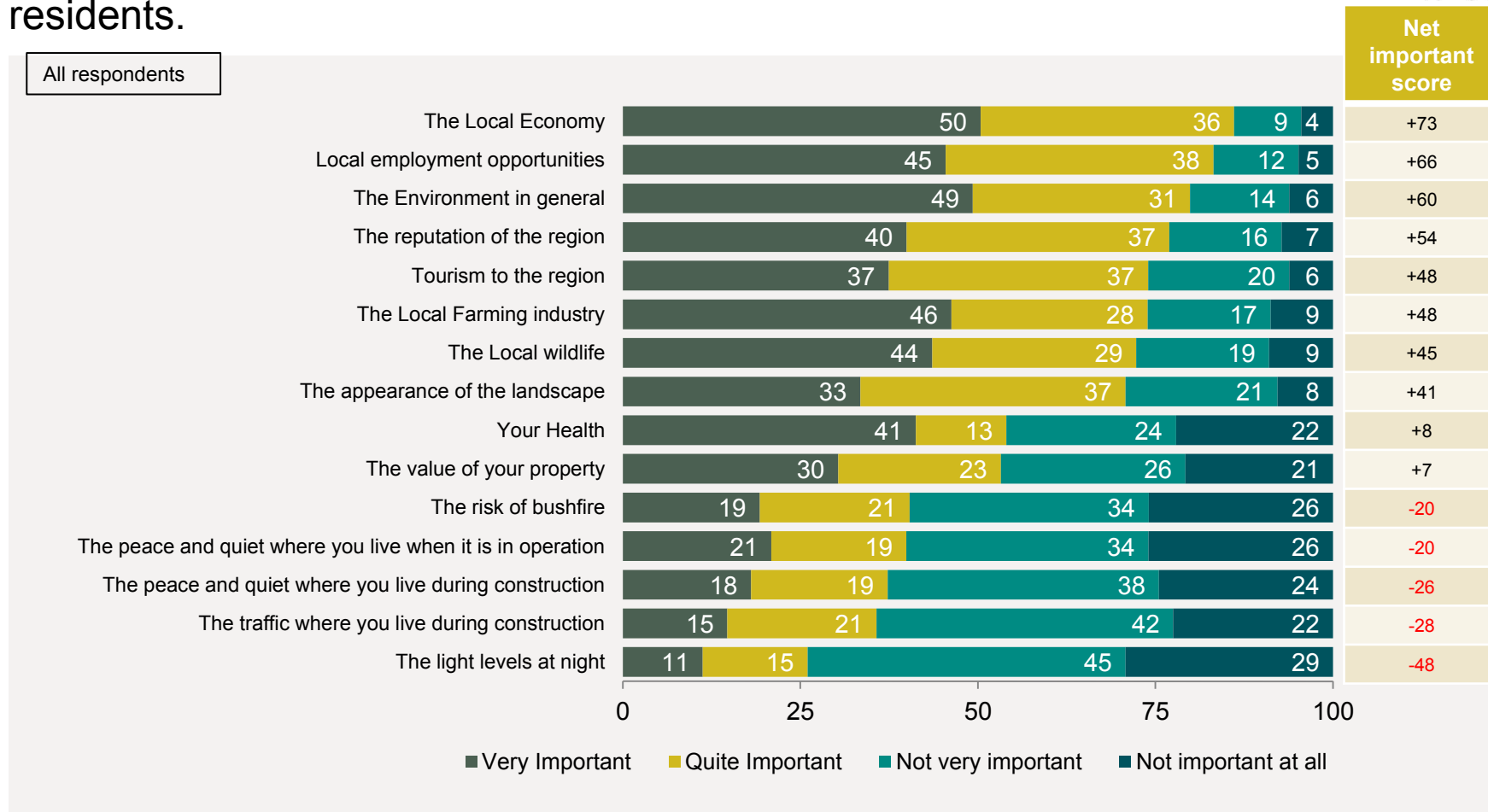
▶ 56% of supporters identify that the project is environmentally friendly as the main reason for support. Almost a quarter mention it as an economical/renewable alternative.
Only 10% say because it will provide employment opportunities and be good for the community.

Being an eyesore and the proximity to homes are the biggest reason why people oppose the project



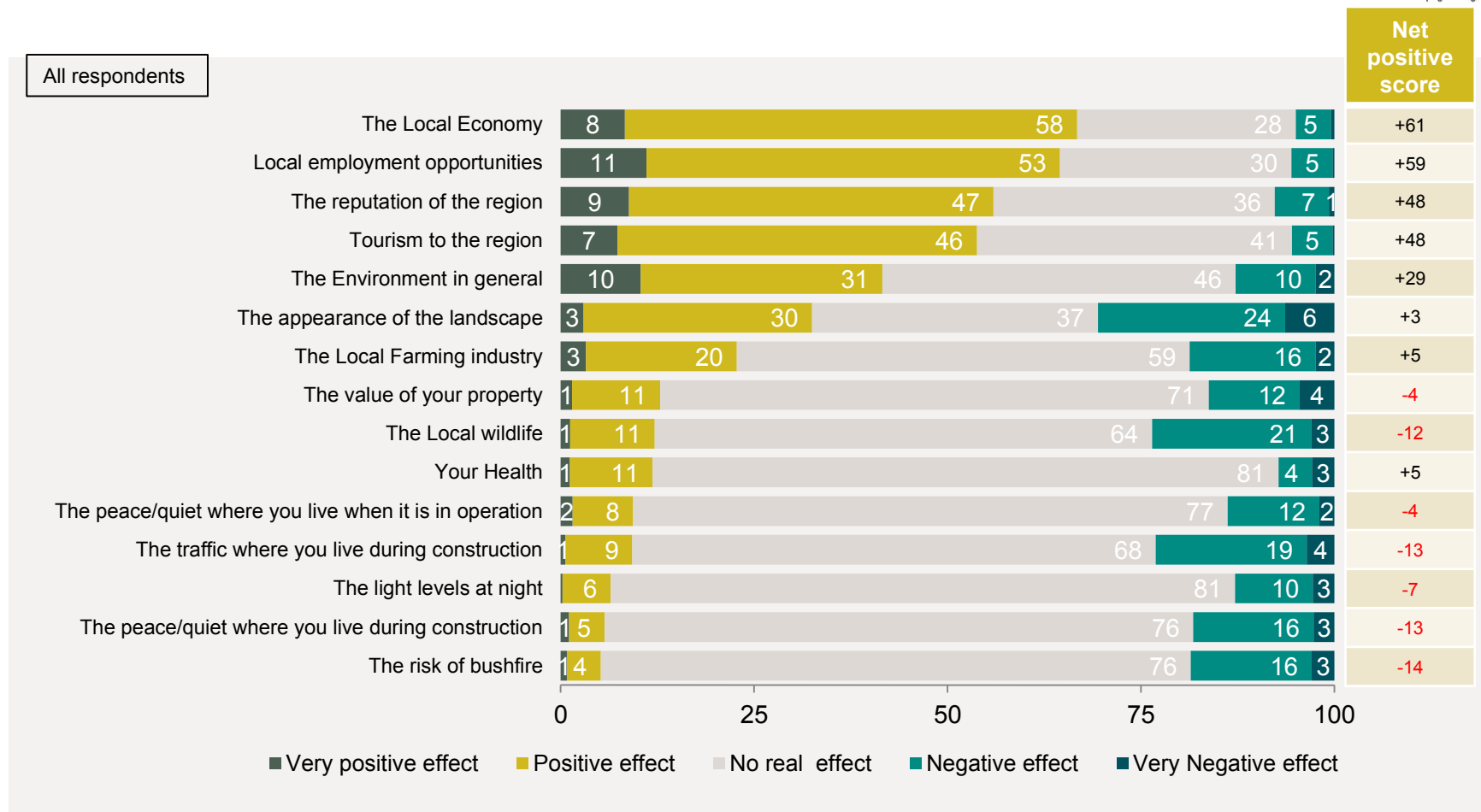
32% of those that oppose the project say it will be an eyesore
Almost 30% mention the proximity to homes.

The local economy and local employment opportunities are the factors the project could affect that are considered the most important to residents.



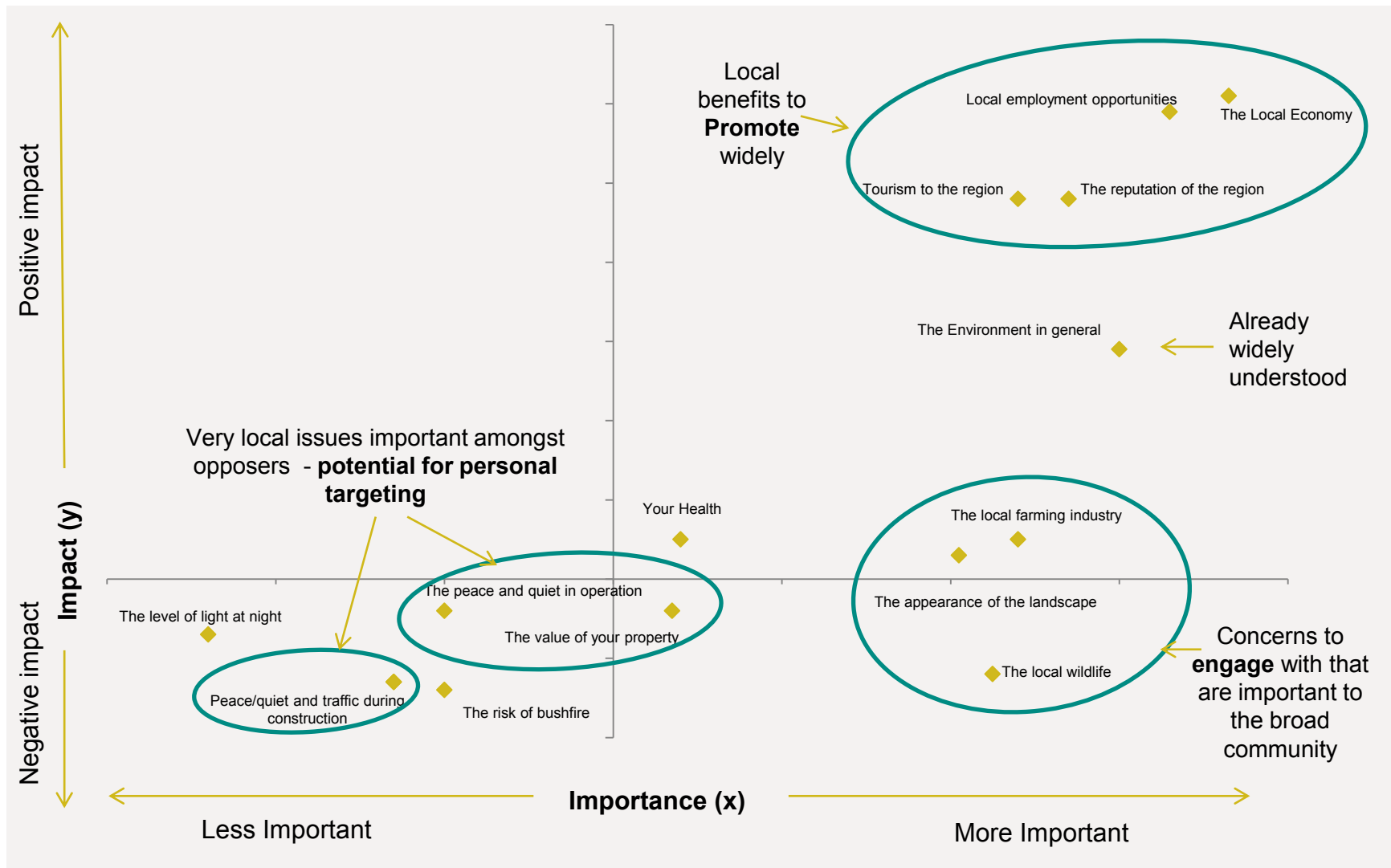
Over 80% feel the effect of the project on the local economy and jobs is important.
 The light levels from the farm, the traffic and the peace and quiet are the factors considered least important.

The project is expected to have positive effects on the local economy, local job opportunities and the reputation of the region

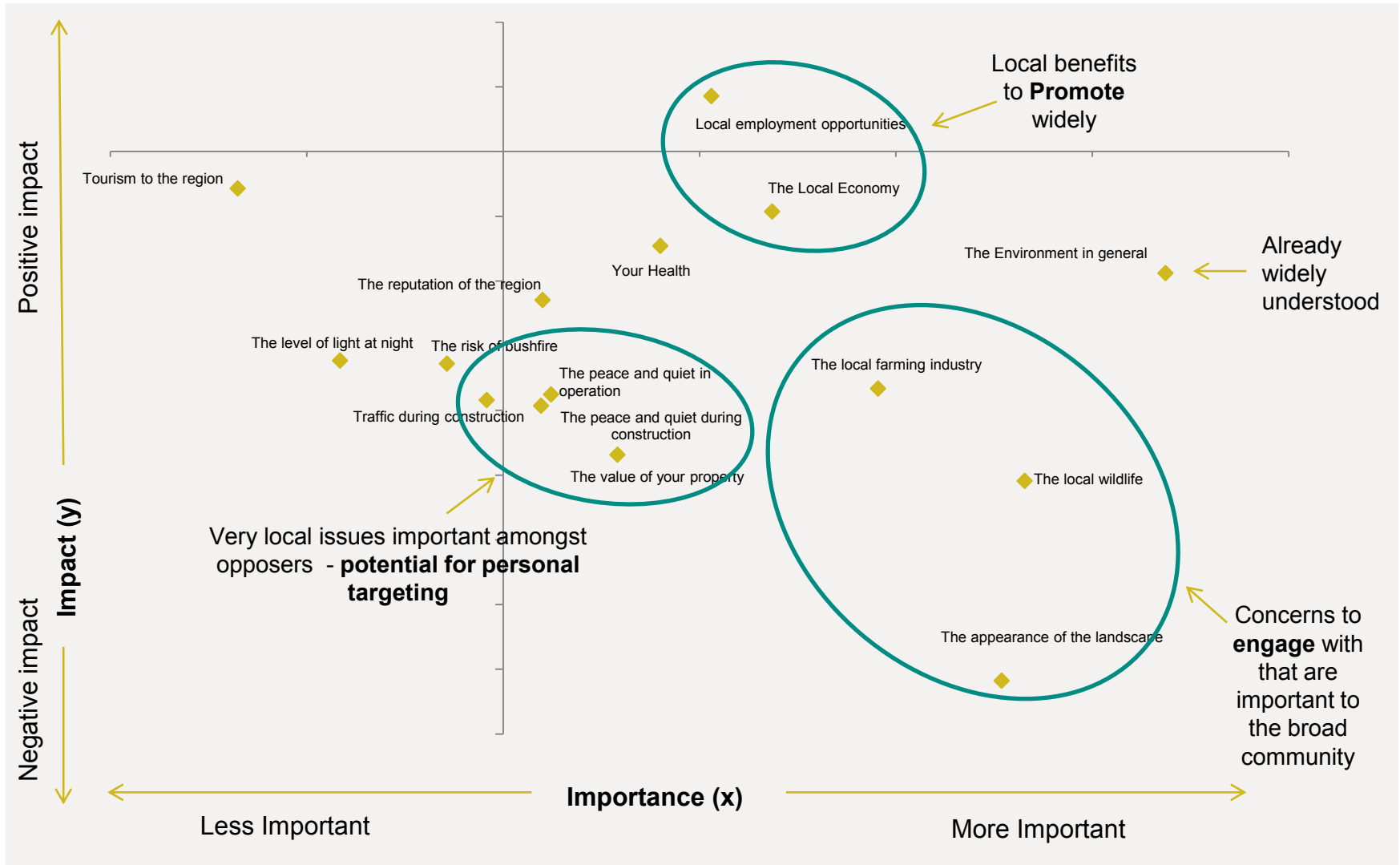


▶ The factors which are most likely to be seen as being negatively impacted on were the appearance of the landscape, the local wildlife and the traffic during construction. Amongst those that oppose the wind farm over 80% feel it will have a negative effect on the appearance of the landscape.

Relating the importance of various factors with the expected impact of the Mount Emerald Wind Farm – All respondents

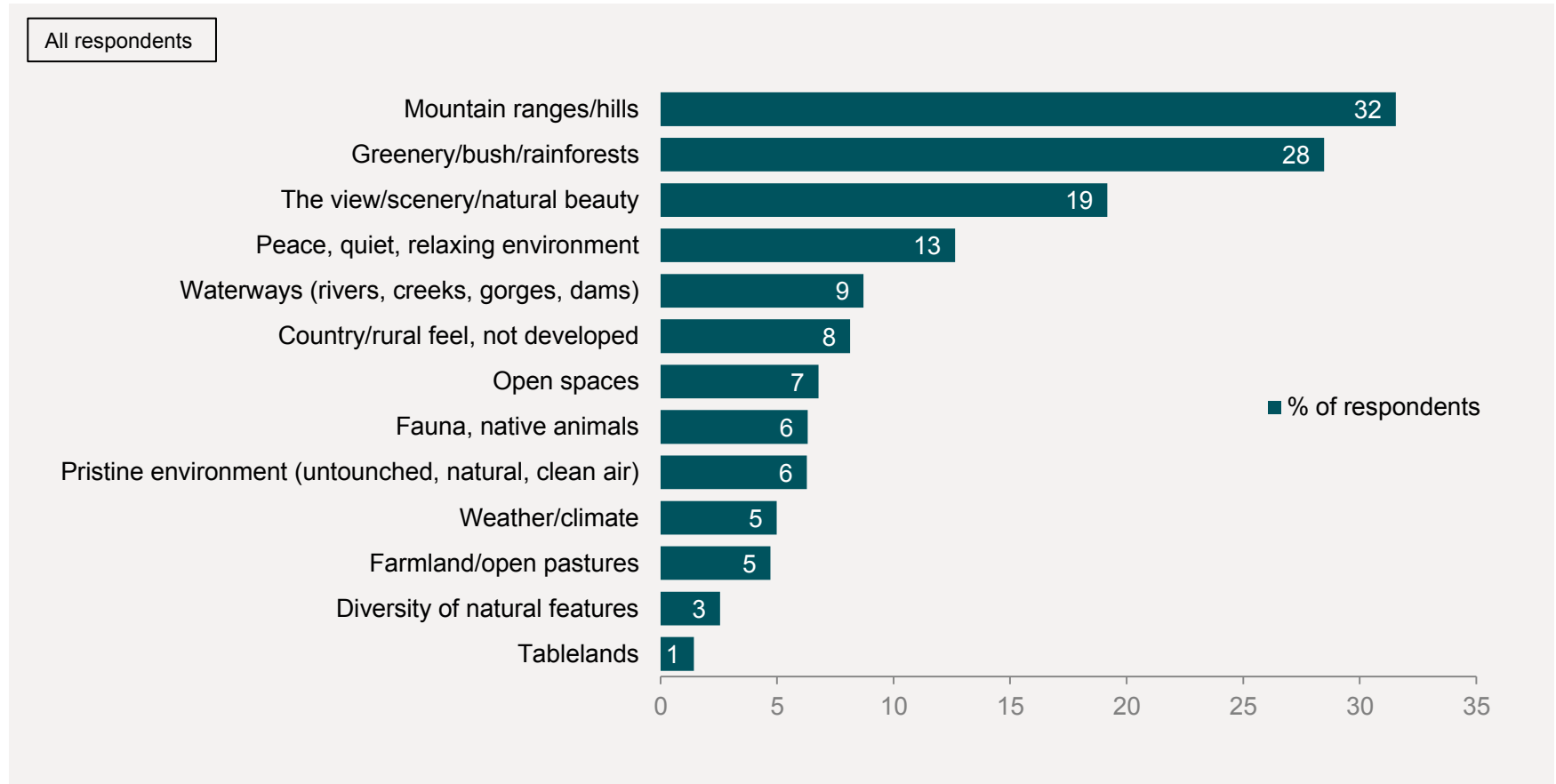


Relating the importance of various factors with the expected impact of the Mount Emerald Wind Farm amongst opponents of the project



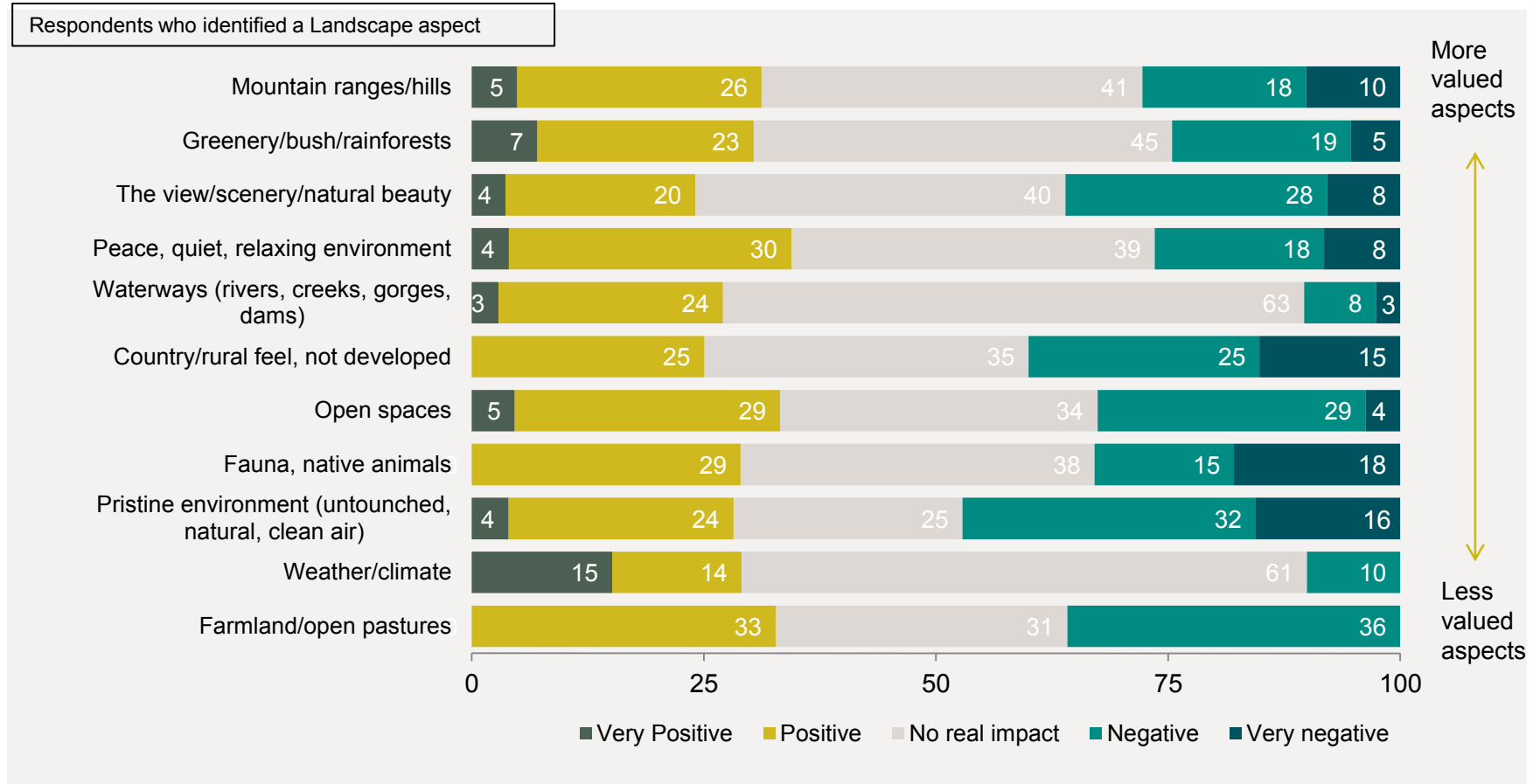
Landscape values – Impacts on landscape and landmarks

The Mountain ranges/hills are the aspect of the landscape that residents most value



The rainforest and the views also rank highly.

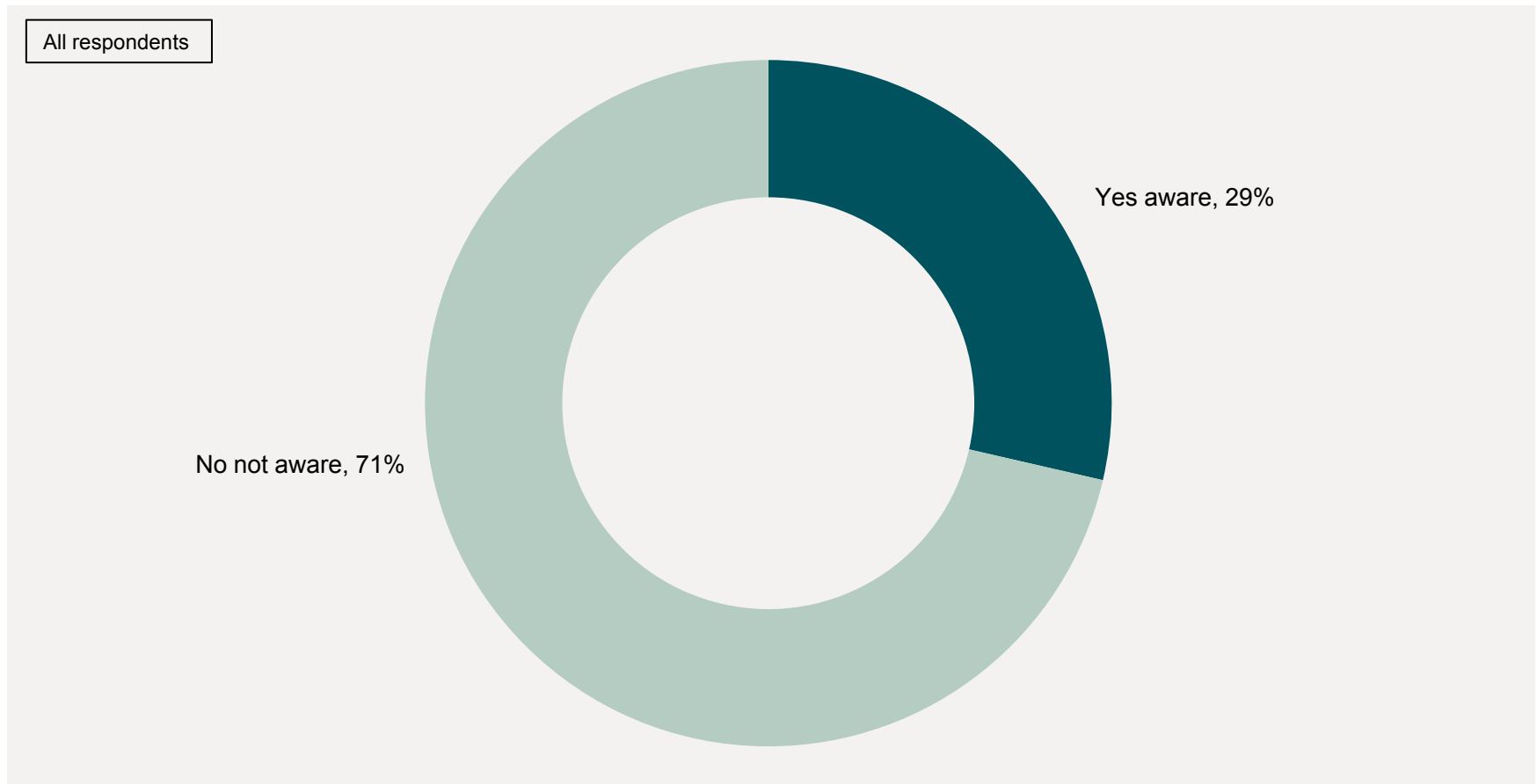
Respondents generally feel the wind farm will have a positive or no impact on the landscape aspects



▶ Across all landscape aspects 71% of respondents think the wind farm will have either a positive or no impact.

Only the pristine environment and the country/rural feel have more than 40% saying it will have a negative or very negative impact.

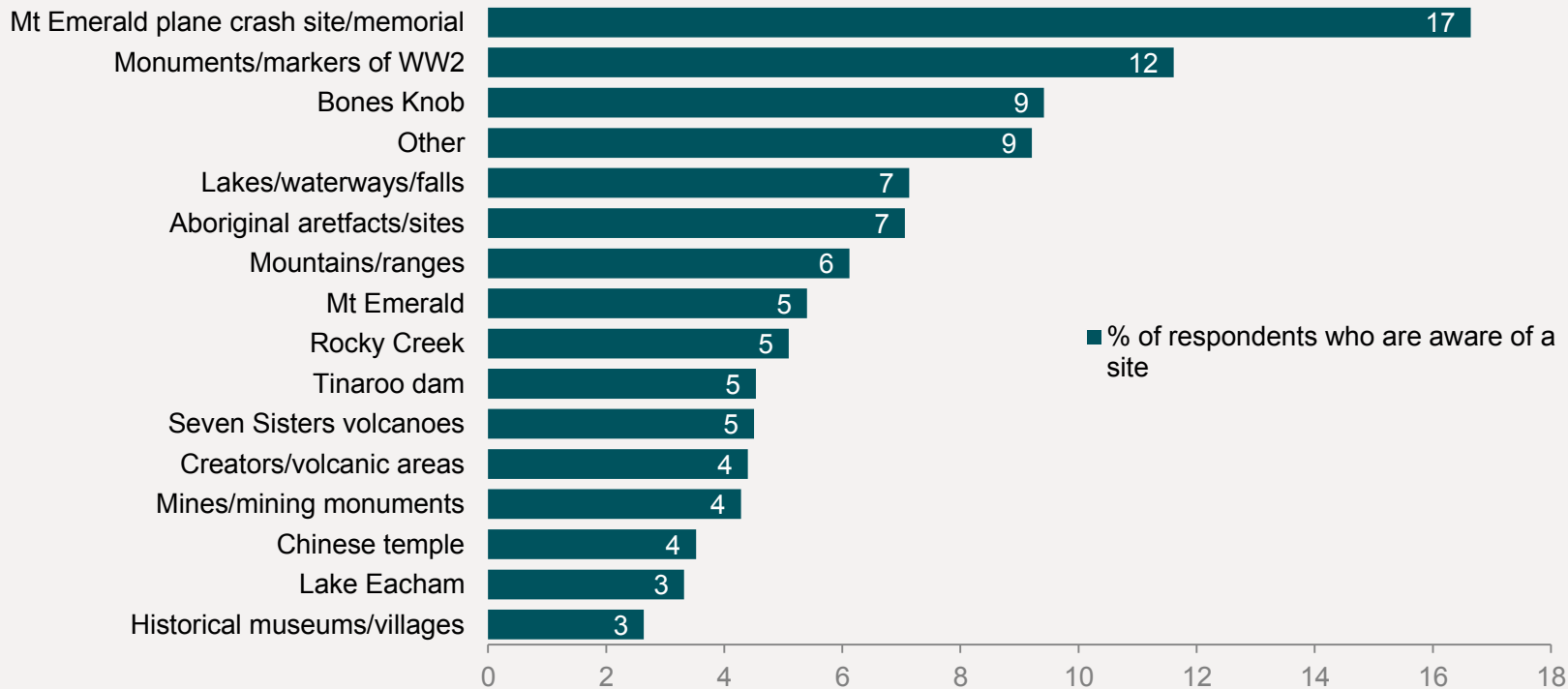
The majority of respondents are unaware of any historically or culturally significant local landmarks



More than two thirds of respondents (71%) say they are unaware of any historically or culturally significant local landmarks.

The Mount Emerald plane crash site and WW2 monuments are the most well known historical sites

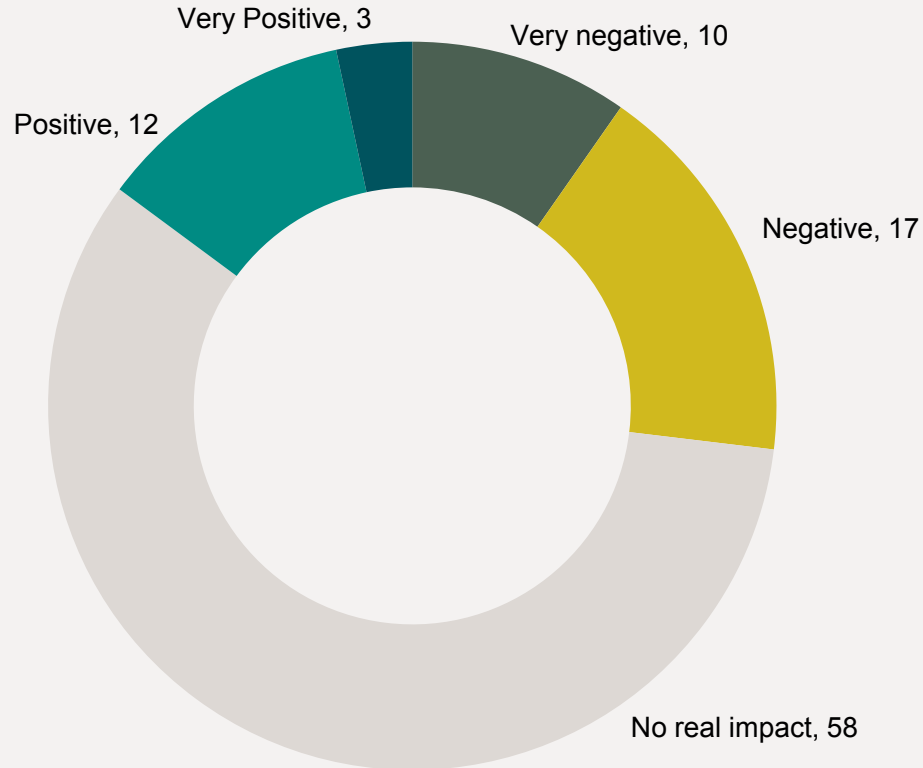
Respondents aware of historical/culturally significant site (29%, n=114)



▶ 17% of those aware of any sites identified the plane crash site/memorial.

Overall, respondents are most likely to rate the impact of the wind farm on cultural and historical landmarks as neither positive nor negative.

Respondents aware of a historical or culturally significant site (29%, n=114)



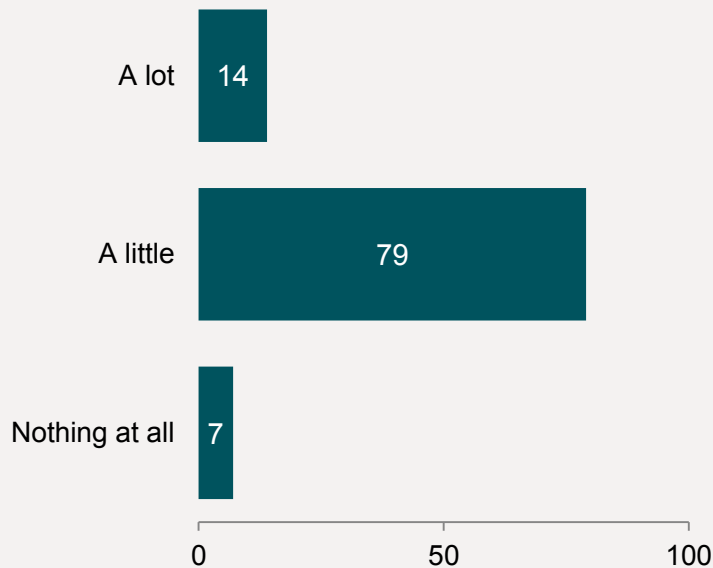
There were though 27% of respondents who felt the impact of the wind farm could be negative or very negative on the historical or culturally significant site.

Information and communication about the Mount Emerald wind farm

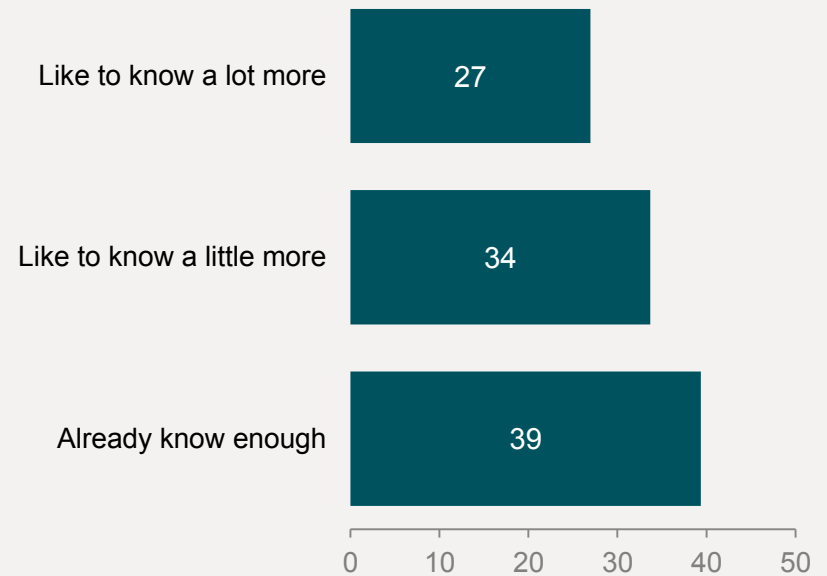
Most people do not know very much about the wind farm, and the majority would like to know more.

Respondents aware of the Mount Emerald project

How much do you know about Mount Emerald Wind Farm?



How much more would you like to know about the Mount Emerald Wind Farm?



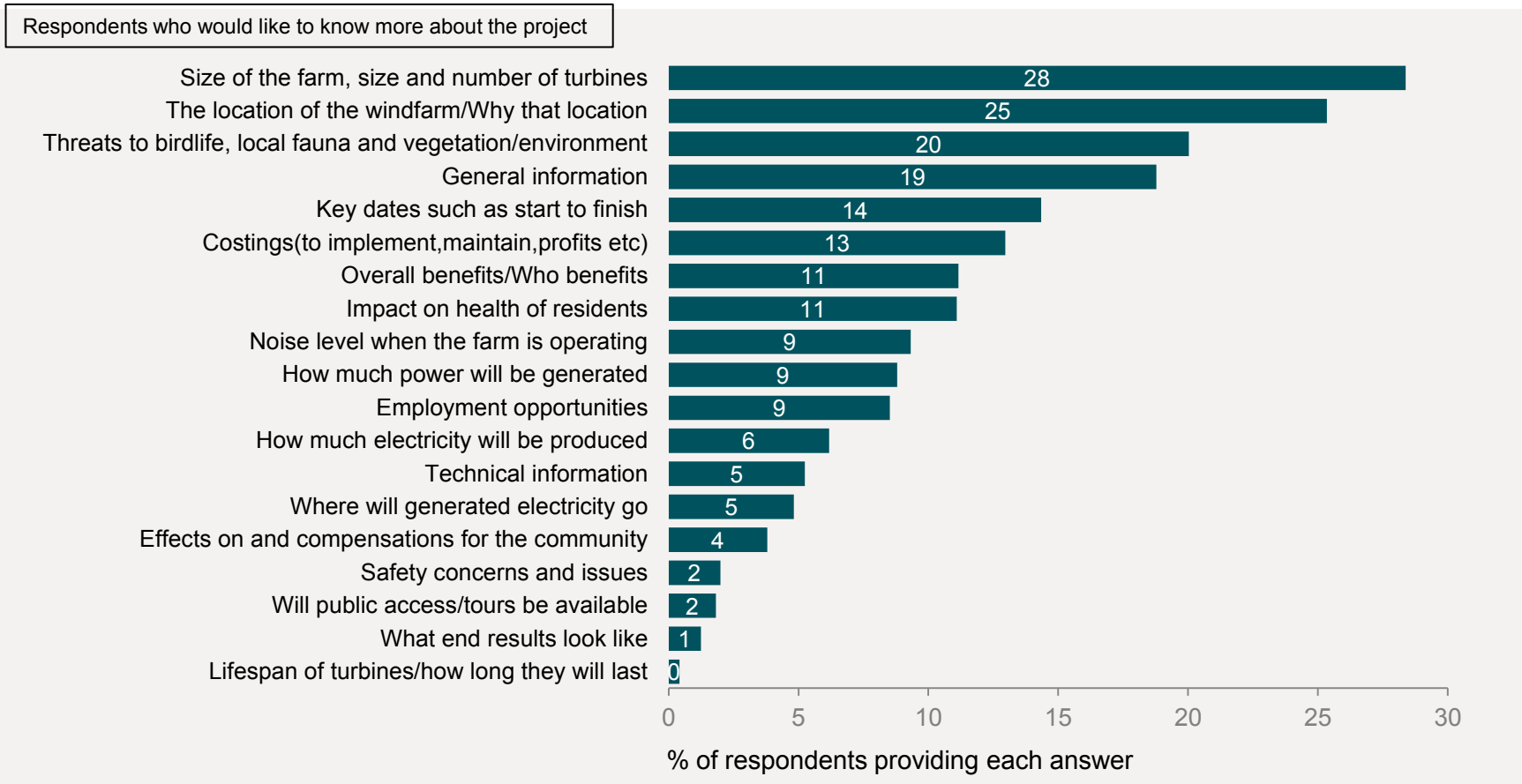
■ % of respondents



79% of those that are aware of the project said they only knew a little about the project, 14% suggested they knew a lot.

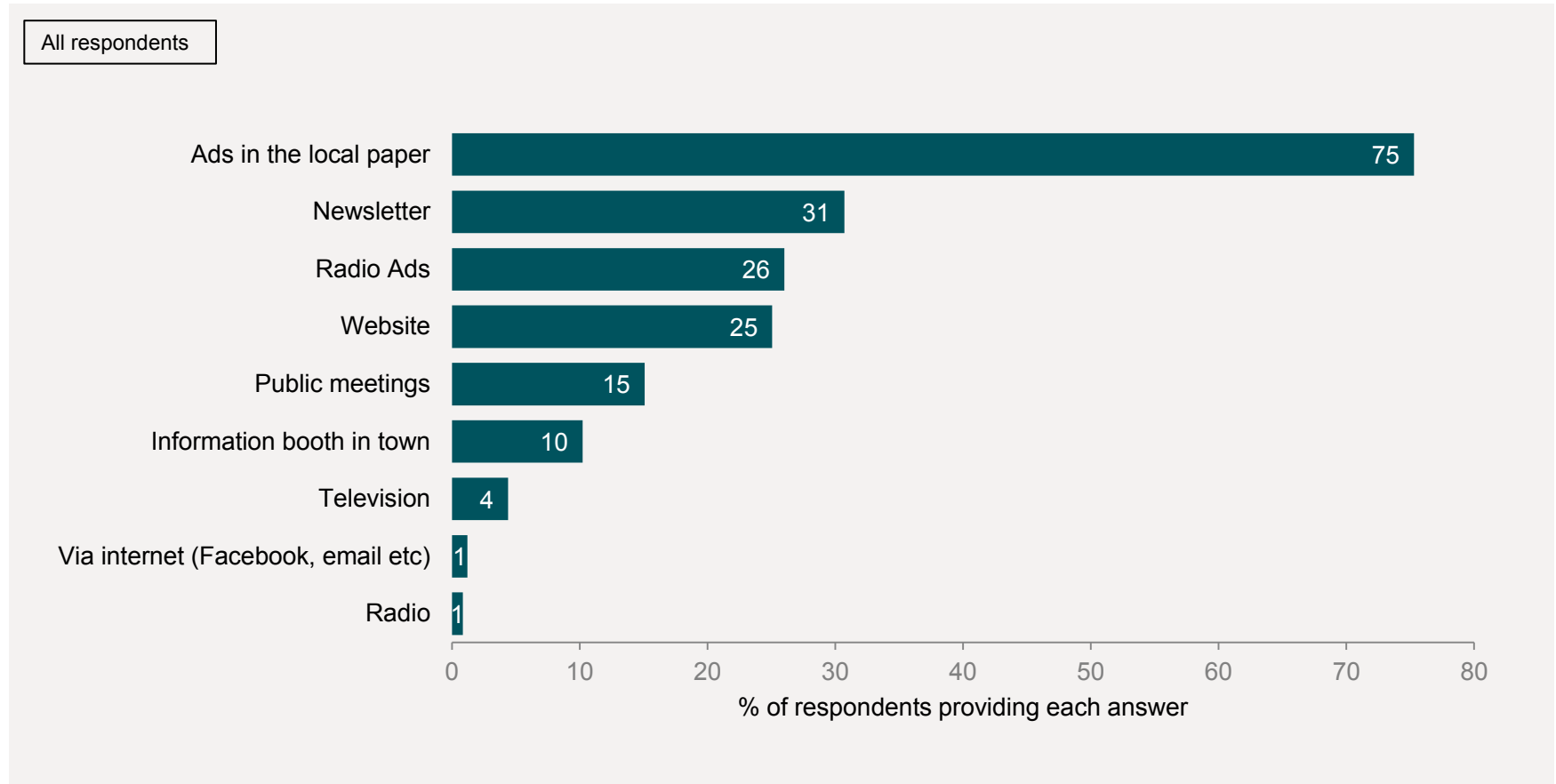
61% said they would like to know more.

Most people want basic information such as the location and the size of the proposed wind farm



There is also a desire to know about wider issues such as who will benefit, risks to wildlife, and impacts on health of residents.

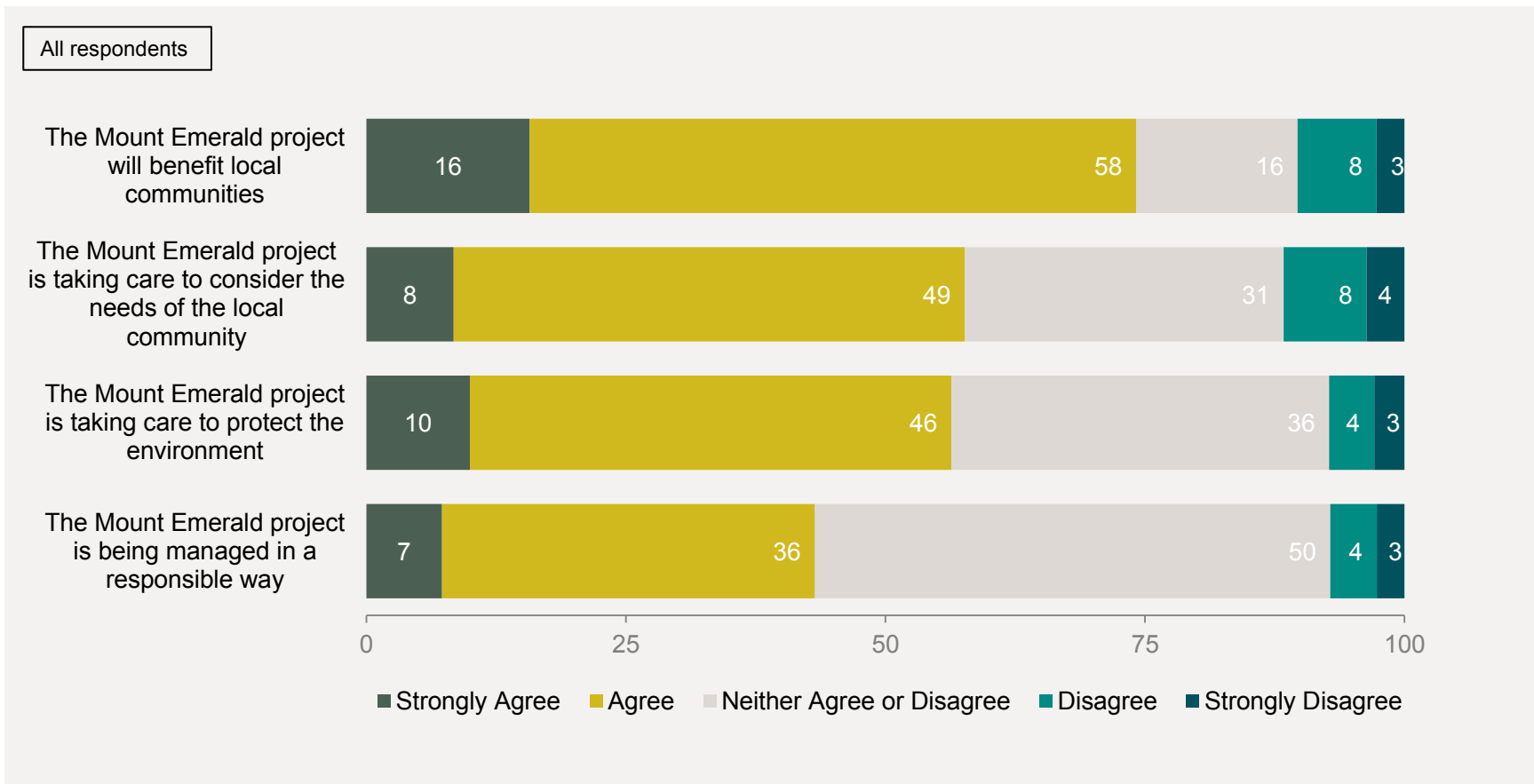
Most think that local newspaper ads are the best way to keep them informed about the progress of the wind farm



Three quarters of respondents identify local papers as their preferred information route.
31% say they would like to see a newsletter.

Attitudes to Project Management

Respondents feel that the project will benefit local communities and is taking care to meet the needs of the environment and the local community.



Only a small proportion of respondents disagree that the project will benefit the community or the environment. However, 50% of respondents are unsure if the project is being managed in a responsible way – a potential area for improvement.

Demographics

Sample Characteristics

Gender, Age and Nearest Town



| Sample sub-segment | % of sample (unweighted) | # in sample |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Male | 51 | 206 |
| Female | 49 | 194 |
| Age Group | | |
| 18 to 29 | 13 | 53 |
| 30 to 49 | 41 | 165 |
| 50 to 64 | 30 | 121 |
| 65 + | 15 | 61 |
| Nearest Town | | |
| Atherton | 36 | 143 |
| Mareeba | 46 | 183 |
| Tolga | 9 | 36 |
| Dimbulah | 4 | 15 |
| Walkamin | 3 | 10 |
| Other | 3 | 11 |

Total sample = 400 Please note that percentages have been rounded, and may not equal 100%.

Where they live



| Sample sub-segment | % of sample (unweighted) | # in sample |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| In-town | 61 | 246 |
| Out of Town | 39 | 154 |
| Live in area | | |
| Live in area full-time | 96 | 385 |
| Live in area part-time | 4 | 15 |
| Distance from farm site | | |
| Less than 1km from farm site | 1 | 2 |
| 1km to 5km from farm site | 4 | 17 |
| 5km to 10km from farm site | 14 | 56 |
| 10 to 15km from farm site | 23 | 91 |
| 15 to 20km from farm site | 28 | 110 |
| More than 20km from farm site | 31 | 124 |

Total sample = 400 Please note that percentages have been rounded, and may not equal 100%.

Employment and Living Arrangements



| Sample sub-segment | % of sample (unweighted) | # in sample |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Working full-time | 53 | 210 |
| Working part-time | 17 | 69 |
| Unemployed/not working | 4 | 14 |
| Student | 1 | 2 |
| Retired | 18 | 73 |
| Manage household/ family | 8 | 32 |

| Sample sub-segment | % of sample (unweighted) | # in sample |
|---|--------------------------|-------------|
| Single with dependent children living at home | 5 | 21 |
| Married/defacto with dependent children living at home | 37 | 146 |
| Single without dependent children living at home | 19 | 77 |
| Married/defacto without dependent children living at home | 36 | 143 |
| Other | 4 | 13 |

Total sample = 400 Please note that percentages have been rounded, and may not equal 100%.

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