

December 2021 local water utilities regulation perception survey results summary

We surveyed local water utilities to understand how we can better regulate, support and work in partnership with them.

In June 2021, the department conducted an initial local water utility sector survey to understand stakeholders' views about how we regulate, support and work in partnership with local water utilities and to identify where we can improve.

We surveyed stakeholders again in December 2021. This fact sheet summarises the results of the December survey against a baseline of the inaugural survey results.

The survey is designed to help track views about the department and will inform key aspects of our work, including that of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program and the Water Utilities team. We will repeat the survey again in 6 months to track our progress.

Who responded to the survey?

We had 43 responses to our December 2021 survey (down by almost one-third from 63 responses in June 2021).

In December 2021, responses were from the following stakeholder groups, who considered the department's performance over the previous 6 months:

- council/local water utilities – 36 (down from 42 in July 2021)
- joint organisations – 0 (down from 2)
- industry associations – 1 (up from 0)
- government agencies – 5 (down from 12)
- private sector – 1 (down from 3)
- other – 0 (down from 4).

Key results

- 56% (24) respondents disagreed that the department coordinates well with co-regulators of local water utilities, up from 32% (20) of respondents in June 2021.
- 51% (22) of respondents agreed the department provides support, information and education to local water utilities, down from 56% (35) in June 2021.
- 47% (20) of respondents agreed that the department empowers local water utilities to raise issues, down from 54% (34) in June 2021.
- 47% (20) disagreed that the department communicates effectively, up from 42% (26) in June 2021.

- 33% (14) of respondents agreed that local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues, down from 38% (24) in June 2021 (a further 33% of respondents disagreed that the department collaborates well and 33% neither agreed or disagreed).

Commentary

Across the board, the survey results for December 2021 showed more negativity in the perceptions of respondents towards our communication with, support for, collaboration with, and empowerment of local water utilities.

These results align with what we have heard from the local water utility sector in our [engagement with the sector throughout 2021 \(PDF 446 KB\)](#), including the regulatory reform consultation undertaken by the Town Water Risk Reduction Program team.

The results indicate that we have heightened awareness of issues through our consultation but we need to do more work to meet the expectations of the sector. The department will continue to allocate resources to addressing these concerns.

We expect the nature of these perceptions will continue to be similar in the short to medium term, as many of the issues raised by the sector are longer-term matters needing interventions and cultural shifts that will take some time to implement and successfully embed.

The Town Water Risk Reduction Program's [Roadmap to an improved regulatory framework for local water utilities \(PDF, 350.78KB\)](#) sets out the key changes that the department is making improve the way we engage with the sector. We expect regulator perception to improve over time as the improved regulatory framework is implemented.

We thank all respondents for participating in the survey and for their candour. We look forward to continuing to work with the sector to address the issues raised.

Detailed results

Stakeholders were asked to consider their interaction with the department’s regulation and support of local water utilities in delivering essential water supply and sewerage services over the previous 6 months and rate our performance against the following statements.

1. The department is focused on outcomes

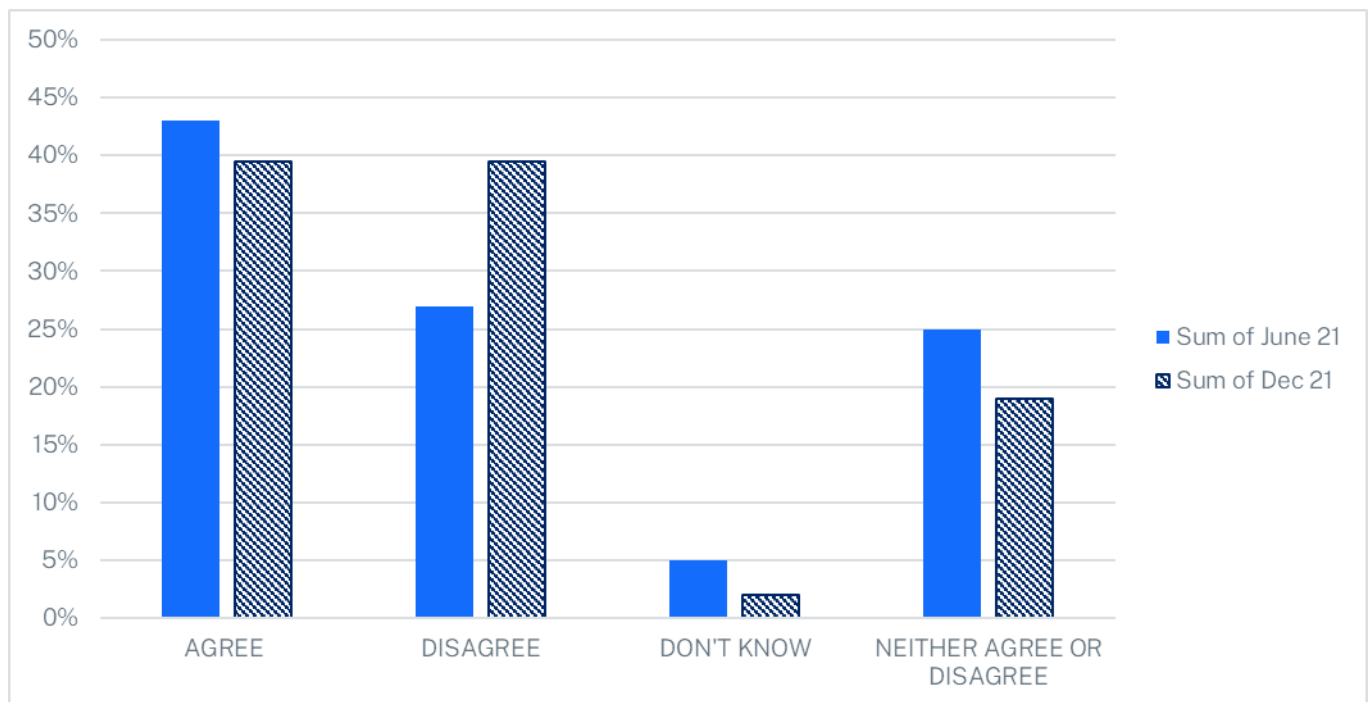


Figure 1. Responses to statement 1: The department is focused on outcomes

- 39.5% (17) of respondents agreed that the department is focused on outcomes, down from 43% (27) in June 2021.
- 39.5 % (17) disagreed that the department is focused on outcomes, up from 27% (17) in June 2021.
- 19% (8) neither agree nor disagree that department is focused on outcomes, down from 25% (16) in June 2021.
- 2% (1) said that they don’t know, down from 5% (3) in June 2021.

2. The department considers the needs and capabilities of individual local water utilities

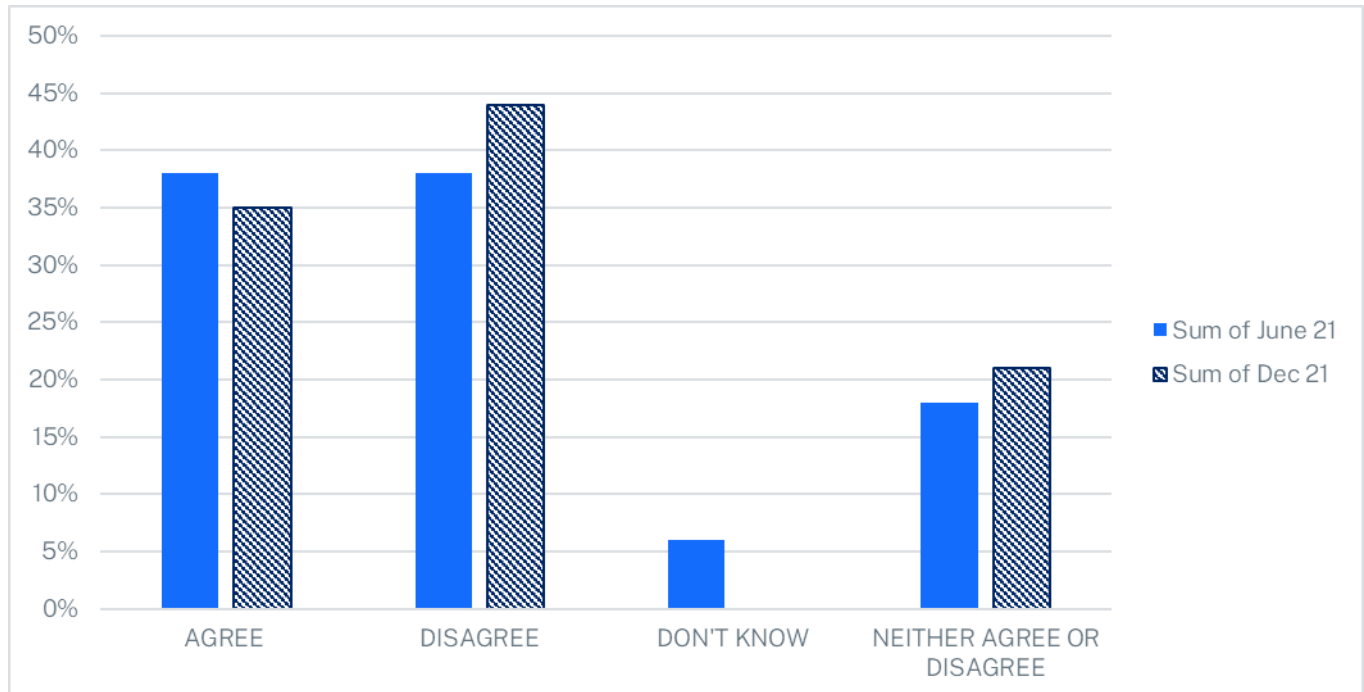


Figure 2. Responses to statement 2: The department considers the needs and capabilities of individual local water utilities

- 35% (15) of respondents agreed that the department considers the needs and capabilities of local water utilities, down from 38% (24) in June 2021.
- 44% (19) disagreed that the department considers the needs and capabilities of local water utilities, up from 38% (24) in June 2021.
- 21% (9) neither agreed nor disagreed that department is focused on outcomes, up from 17% (11) in June 2021.
- 0 respondents said they don't know, down from 6% (4) in June 2021.

3. The department is transparent and open about expectations and processes

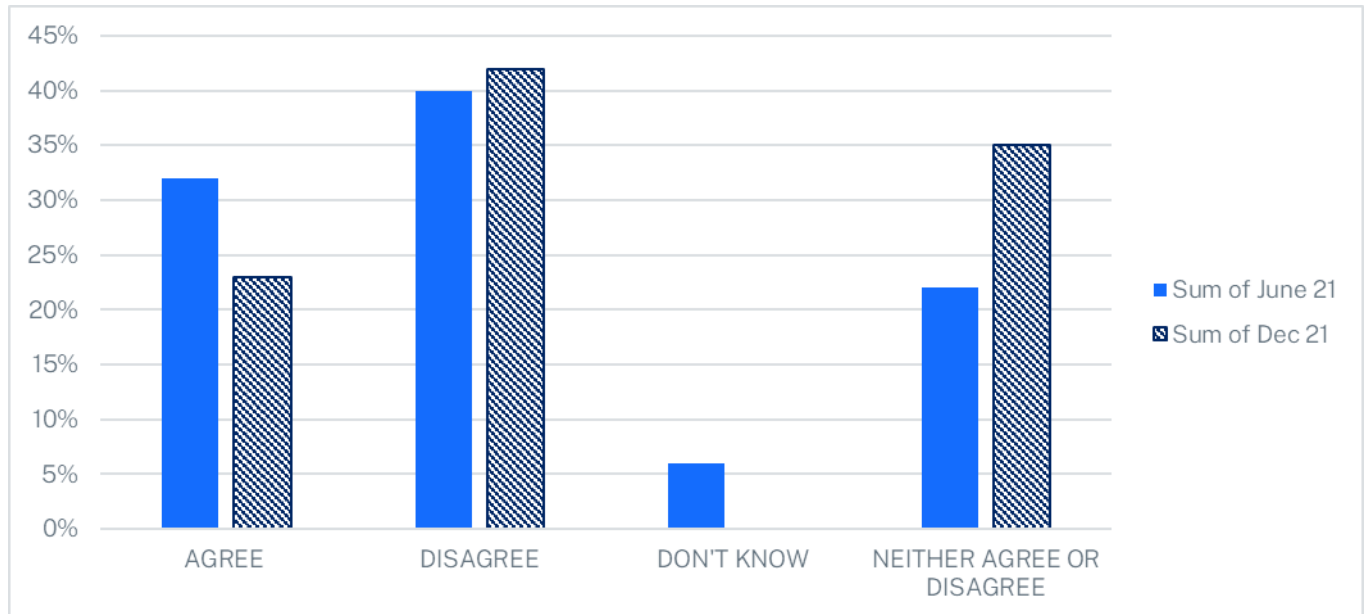


Figure 3. Responses to statement 3: The department is transparent and open about expectations and processes

- 23% (10) of respondents agreed that the department is transparent and open about expectations and processes, down from 32% (20) in June 2021.
- 42% (18) disagreed that the department is transparent and open about expectations and processes, up from 40% (25) in June 2021.
- 35% (15) neither agreed nor disagreed that the department is transparent and open about expectations and processes, up from 22% (14) in June 2021.
- 0 respondents said they don't know, down from 6% (4) in June 2021.

4. The department provides support, information, and education to local water utilities

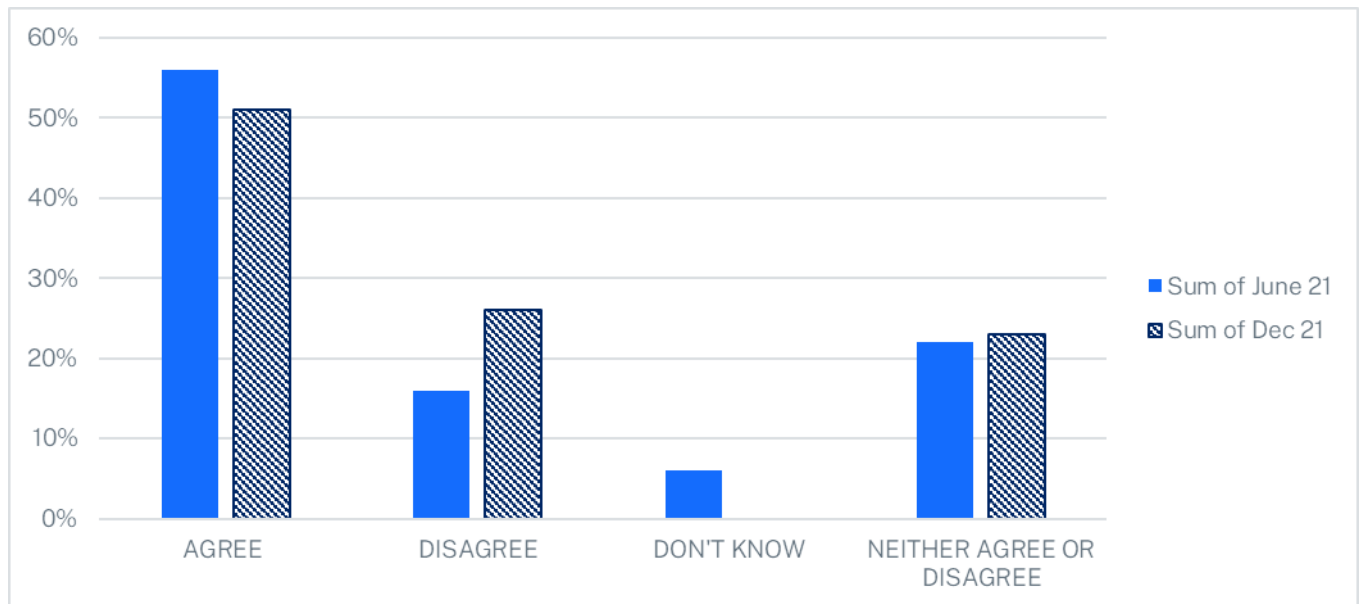


Figure 4. Responses to statement 4: The department provides support, information, and education to local water utilities

- 51% (22) of respondents agreed that the department provides support, information, and education to local water utilities, down from 56% (35) in June 2021.
- 26% (11) disagreed that the department provides support, information, and education to local water utilities, up from 16% (10) in June 2021.
- 23% (10) neither agreed nor disagreed that the department provides support, information, and education to local water utilities, up from 22% (14) in June 2021.
- 0 respondents said they don't know, down from 6% (4) in June 2021.

5. The department communicates effectively

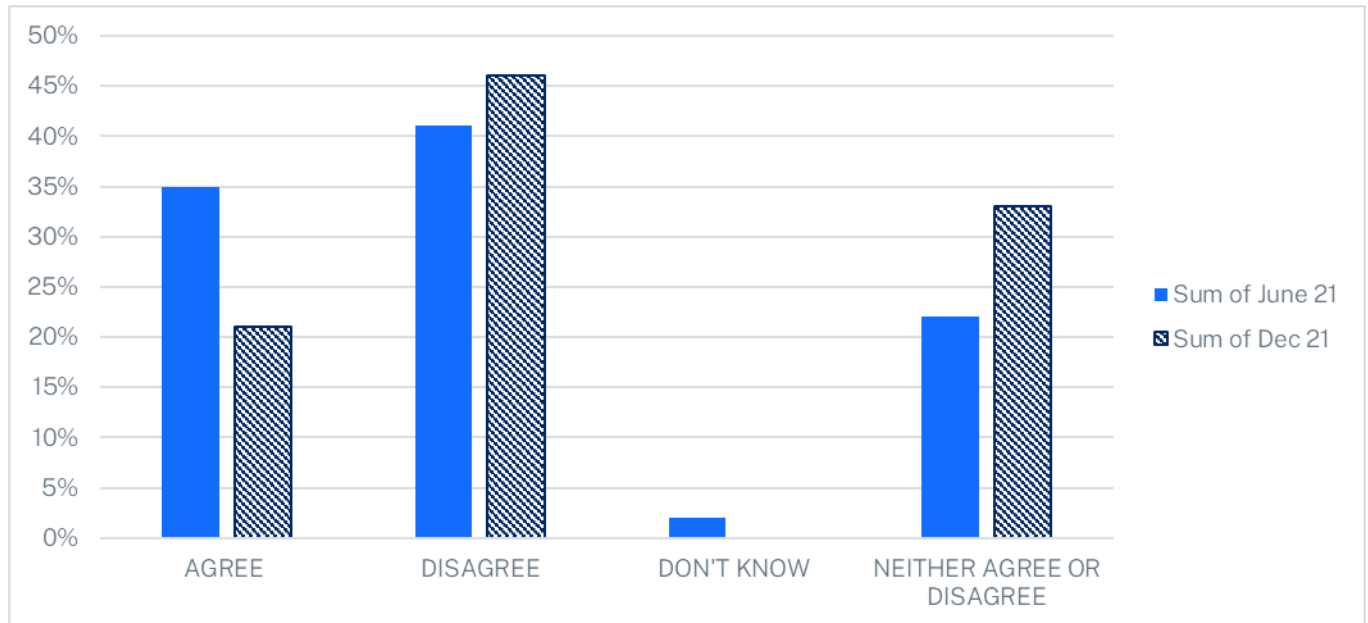


Figure 5. Responses to statement 5: The department communicates effectively

- 21% (9) of respondents agreed that the department communicates effectively, down from 35% (22) in June 2021.
- 46% (20) disagreed that the department communicates effectively, up from 41% (26) in June 2021.
- 33% (14) neither agreed nor disagreed that the department communicates effectively, up from 22% (14) in June 2021.
- 0 respondents said they don't know, down from 2% (1) in June 2021.

6. Local water utilities are empowered to raise issues with the department

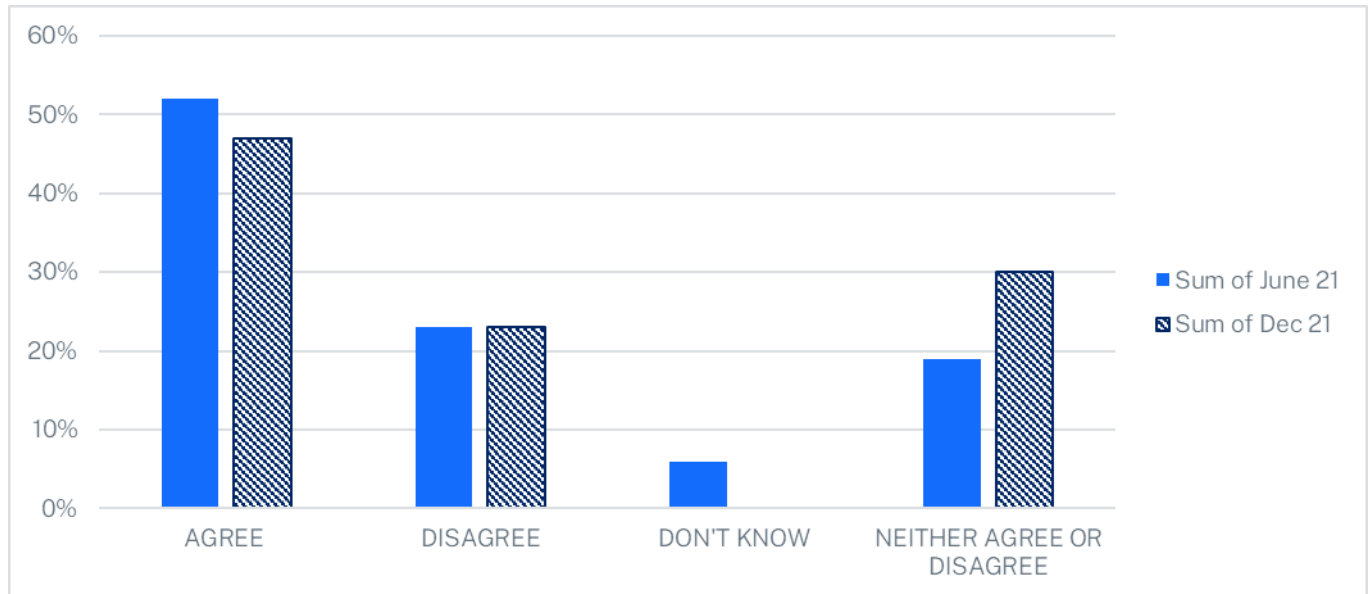


Figure 6. Responses to statement 6: Local water utilities are empowered to raise issues with the department

- 47% (20) of respondents agreed that the department empowers local water utilities to raise issues, down from 54% (34) in June 2021.
- 23% (10) disagreed that the department empowers local water utilities to raise issues, up from 21% (13) in June 2021.
- 30% (13) neither agreed nor disagreed that the department empowers local water utilities to raise issues, up from 19% (12) in June 2021.
- 0 respondents said they don't know, down from 6% (4) in June 2021.

7. Local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues

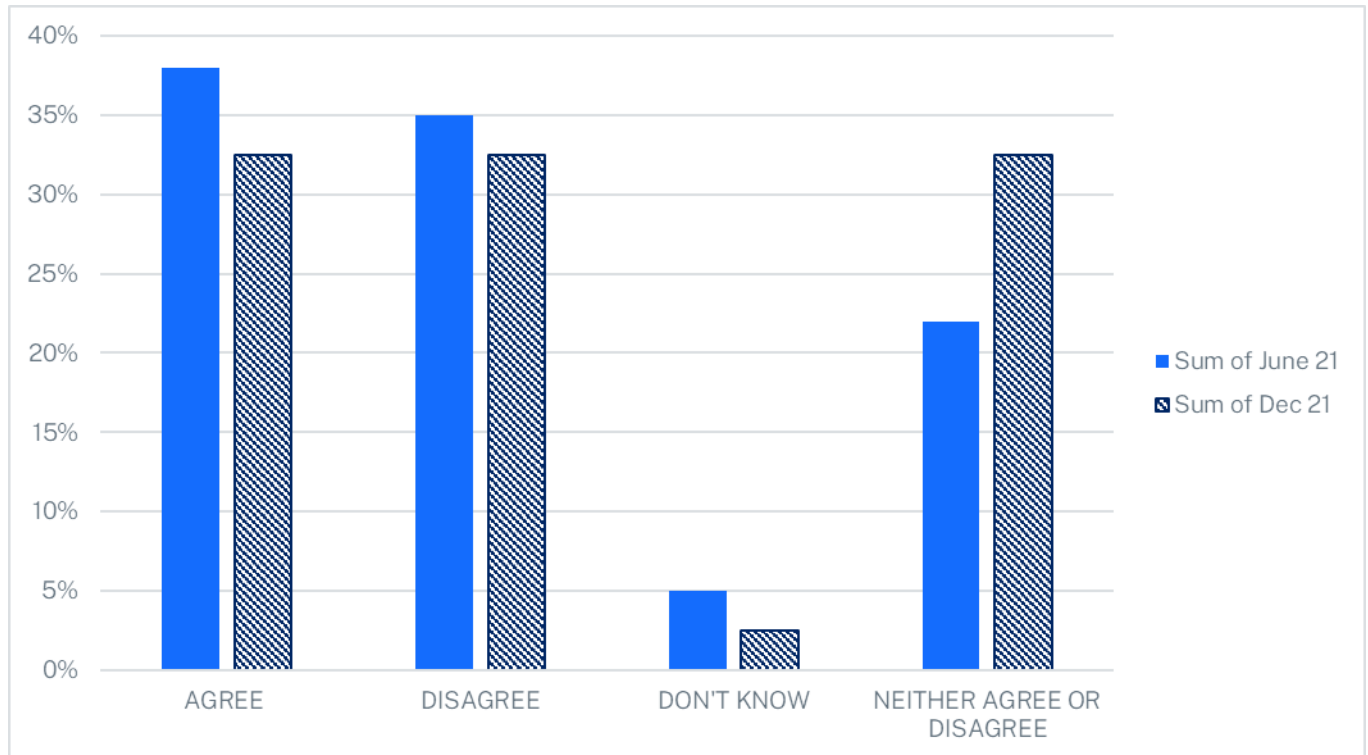


Figure 7. Responses to statement 7: Local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues

- 32.5% (14) of respondents agreed that local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues, down from 38% (24) in June 2021.
- 32.5% (14) disagreed that local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues, down from 35% (22) in June 2021.
- 32.5% (14) neither agreed nor disagreed that local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues, up from 22% (14) in June 2021.
- 2.5% (1) of respondents said they don't know, down from 5% (3) in June 2021.

8. The department coordinates well with co-regulators of local water utilities

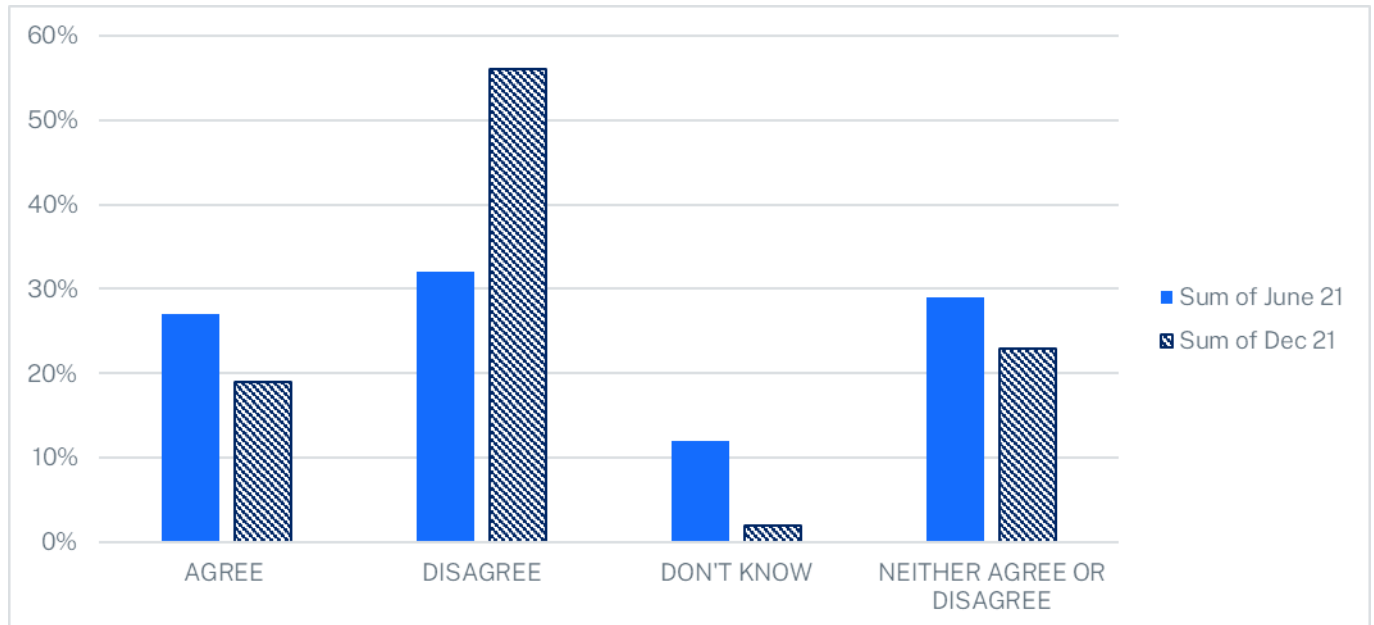


Figure 8. Responses to statement 8: The department coordinates well with co-regulators of local water utilities

- 19% (8) of respondents agreed that the department coordinates well with co-regulators of local water utilities, down from 27% (17) in June 2021.
- 56% (24) disagreed that the department coordinates well with co-regulators of local water utilities, up from 32% (20) in June 2021.
- 23% (10) neither agreed nor disagreed that the department coordinates well with co-regulators of local water utilities, down from 29% (18) in June 2021.
- 2% (1) of respondents said they don't know, down from 12% (8) in June 2021.