

June 2022 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.

Beginning in June 2021, the department has conducted a biannual 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.

This fact sheet summarises the results of the third survey, providing insights into how the perceptions have shifted since the inaugural survey in June 2021.

This 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 continue tracking our progress.

Who responded to the survey?

We had 36 responses to our June 2022 survey. This is less than our December 2021 survey (43 responses) and our inaugural June 2021 survey (63 responses).

In June 2022, responses were from the following stakeholder groups, who considered the department's performance over the previous 6 months:

- council/local water utilities – 29 (down from 42 in June 2021)
- joint organisations – 1 (down from 2 in June 2021)
- industry associations – 1 (up from 0 in June 2021)
- government agencies – 4 (down from 12 in June 2021)
- private sector – 0 (down from 3 in June 2021)
- other – 1 (down from 4 in June 2021).

Key results

- 56% (20) of respondents agreed that the department is focused on outcomes, up from 43% (27) in June 2021.
- 14% (5) disagreed that the department considers the needs and capabilities of local water utilities, down from 38% (24) in June 2021.
- 56% (20) of respondents agreed that the department is transparent and open about expectations and processes, up from 32% (20) in June 2021.
- 64% (23) of respondents agreed that the department communicates effectively, up from 35% (22) in June 2021.

Commentary

There was general positivity across all survey responses collected in June 2022, and a marked improvement when compared to June 2021. However, the number of responses were substantially lower than the total collected in June 2021. It is difficult to draw definitive conclusions due to this variability, but there are encouraging signs that the department is building goodwill and trust in the sector.

A standout positive trend is that the department is communicating much more effectively with the sector now than 12 months ago. The department is also perceived as more transparent and open about expectations and processes now than 12 months ago, it is likely our work in partnership with the local water utility sector to design a new [Regulatory and assurance framework for local water utilities](#) has contributed to this improvement.

There are lessons to be taken from this, and previous, survey results. The department is perceived to not be coordinating well with other regulators of local water utilities. We continue to work with other regulators to improve our coordination and collaboration, we have set out our approach to co-operation with other local water utility regulators in section 10 of the new [Regulatory and assurance framework for local water utilities](#).

In each of the 3 surveys to date, while perceptions are improving less than 50% of respondents have agreed that the department considers the needs and capabilities of individual local water utilities or that local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues. This indicates there is more work to be done in these key areas.

We thank all respondents for participating in the survey. Their engagement and honesty assist us in seeking continual improvement. We look forward to seeing how the response is affected over time as we implement the new regulatory and assurance framework.

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

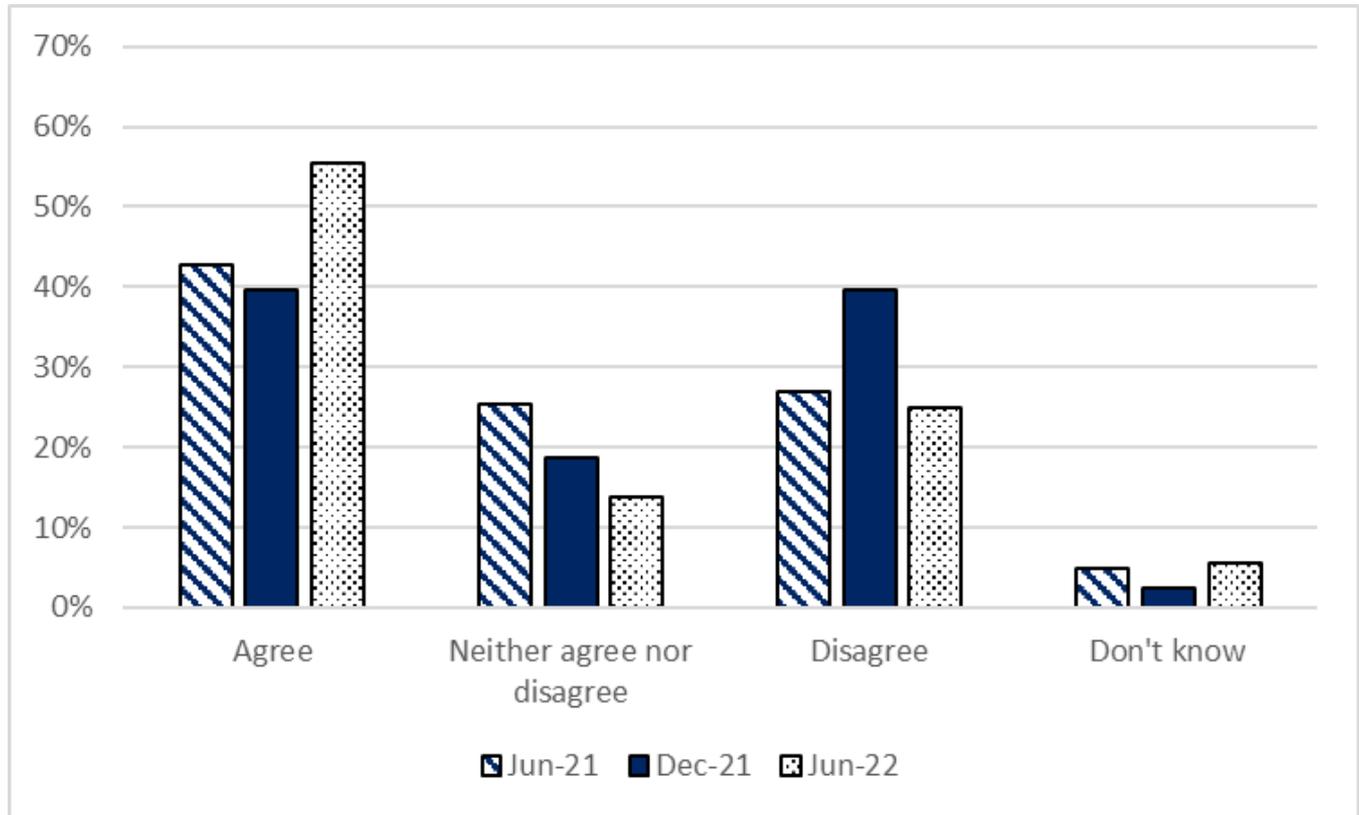


Figure 1. Response to statement 1: The department is focused on outcomes

- The perception of the department’s focus on outcomes has improved over the last year.
- 56% (20) of respondents agreed that the department is focused on outcomes, up from 43% (27) in June 2021, and following a decrease to 40% (17) in December 2021.
- 25% (9) of respondents disagreed that the department is focused on outcomes, down from 27% (17) in June 2021, following an increase to 40% (17) in December 2021.
- 14% (5) of respondents neither agree nor disagree that the department is focused on outcomes, trending down from 25% (16) in June 2021 and 19% (8) in December 2021.
- 6% (2) of respondents said they don’t know if the department is focused on outcomes, stable from June 2021, following a decrease to 2% (1) in December 2021.

2. Considers the needs and capabilities of individual local water utilities

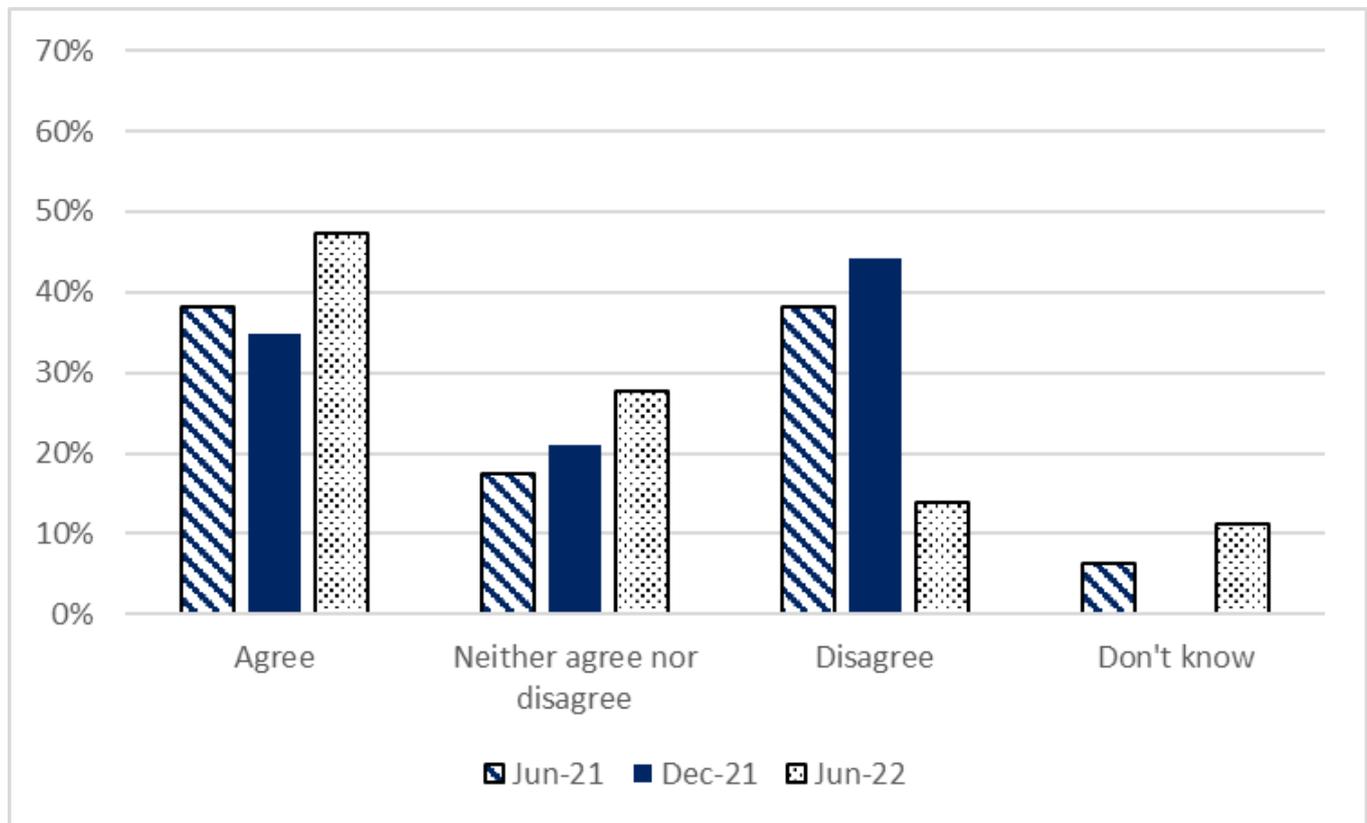


Figure 2. Response to statement 2: Considers the needs and capabilities of local water utilities

- The perception of the department considering the needs and capabilities of local water utilities has improved over the last year, however less than half of respondents agree with the statement.
- 47% (17) of respondents agreed that the department considers the needs and capabilities of local water utilities, up from 38% (24) in June 2021, and following a slight decrease to 35% (15) in December 2021.
- 14% (5) disagreed that the department considers the needs and capabilities of local water utilities, down from 38% (24) in June 2021, following an increase to 44% (19) in December 2021.
- 28% (10) said that they neither agree nor disagree that department is focused on outcomes, trending up from 17% (11) in June 2021 and 21% (9) in December 2021.
- 11% (4) respondents said they don't know, up from 6% (4) in June 2021 and 0% in December 2021.

3. Transparent and open about expectations and processes

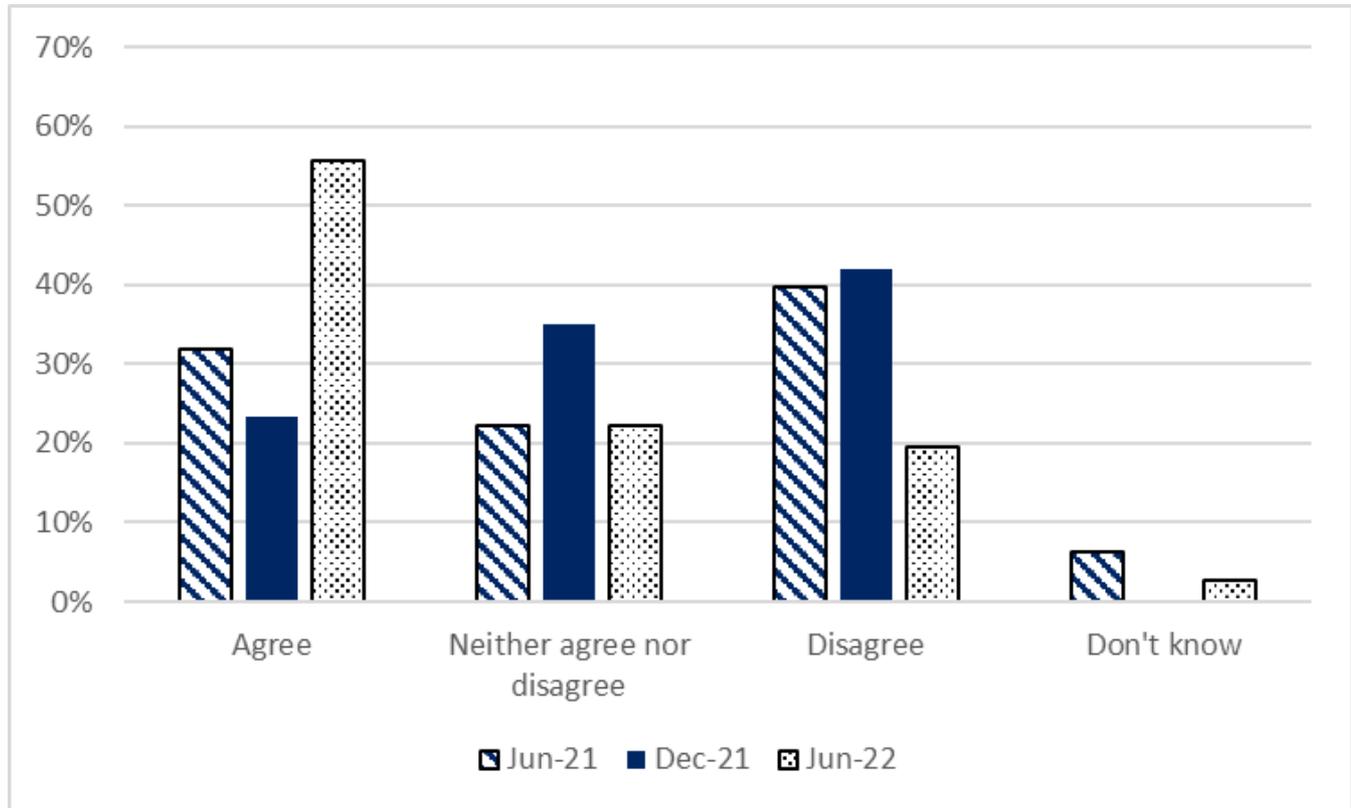


Figure 3. Response to statement 3: Transparent and open about expectations and processes

- The perception of the department being transparent and open about expectations and processes has improved over the last year.
- 56% (20) of respondents agreed that the department is transparent and open about expectations and processes, up from 32% (20) in June 2021 and 23% (10) in December 2021.
- 19% (7) disagreed that the department is transparent and open about expectations and processes, down from 40% (25) in June 2021 and 42% (18) in December 2021.
- 22% (8) said that they neither agree nor disagree that the department is transparent and open about expectations and processes, steady from 22% (14) in June 2021 and following a rise to 35% (15) in December 2021.
- 3% (1) respondents said they don't know, down from 6% (4) in June 2021 and up from 0% in December 2021.

4. Provides support, information and education to local water utilities

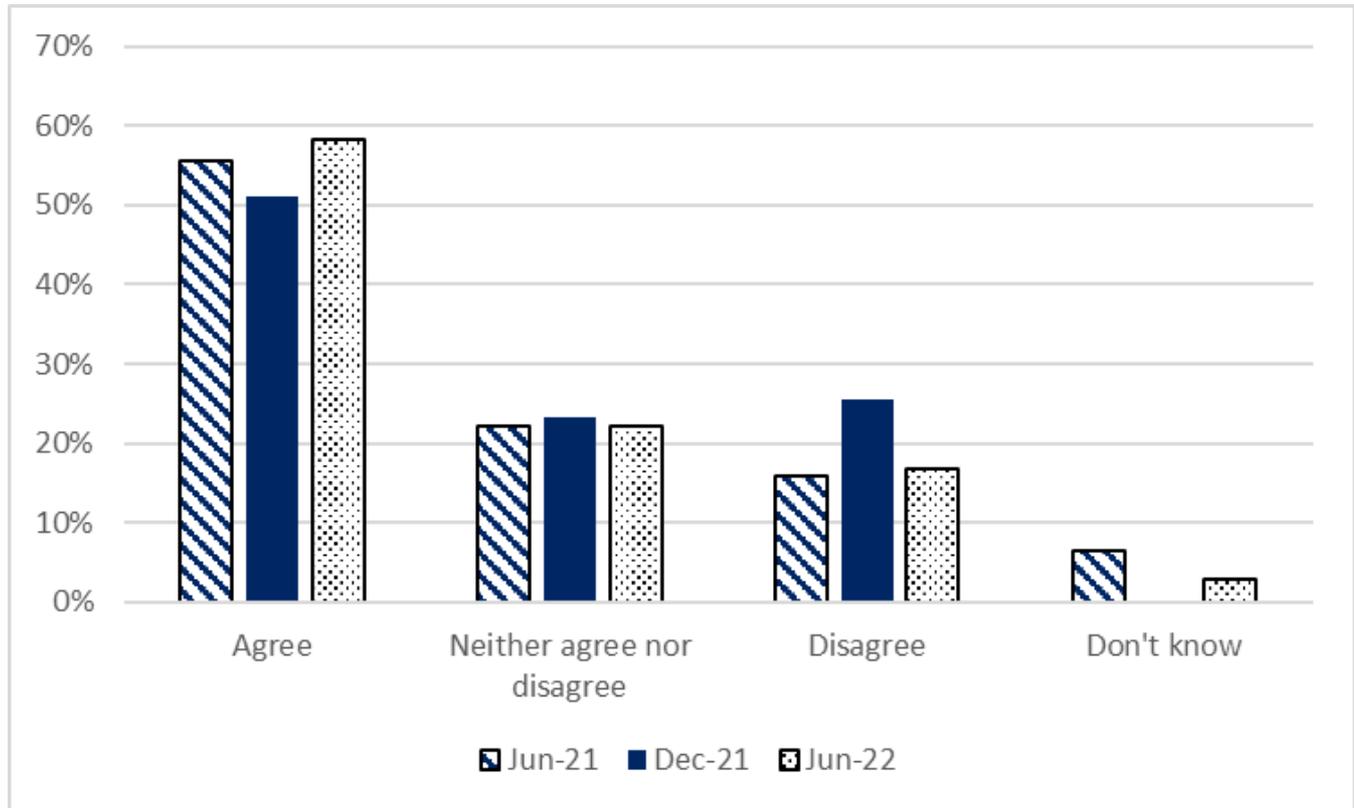


Figure 4. Response to statement 4: Provides support, information and education to local water utilities

- The perception of the department providing support, information and education has remained relatively stable over the last year.
- 58% (21) of respondents agreed that the department provides support, information, and education to local water utilities, up from 56% (35) in June 2021 and 51% (22) in December 2021.
- 17% (6) disagree that the department provides support, information, and education to local water utilities, up from 16% (10) in June 2021 following an increase to 26% (11) in December 2021.
- 22% (8) neither agree nor disagree that the department provides support, information, and education to local water utilities, remaining steady from 22% (14) in June 2021 and 23% (10) in December 2021.
- 3% (1) respondents said they don't know, down from 6% (4) in June 2021 and up from 0% in December 2021.

5. Communicates effectively

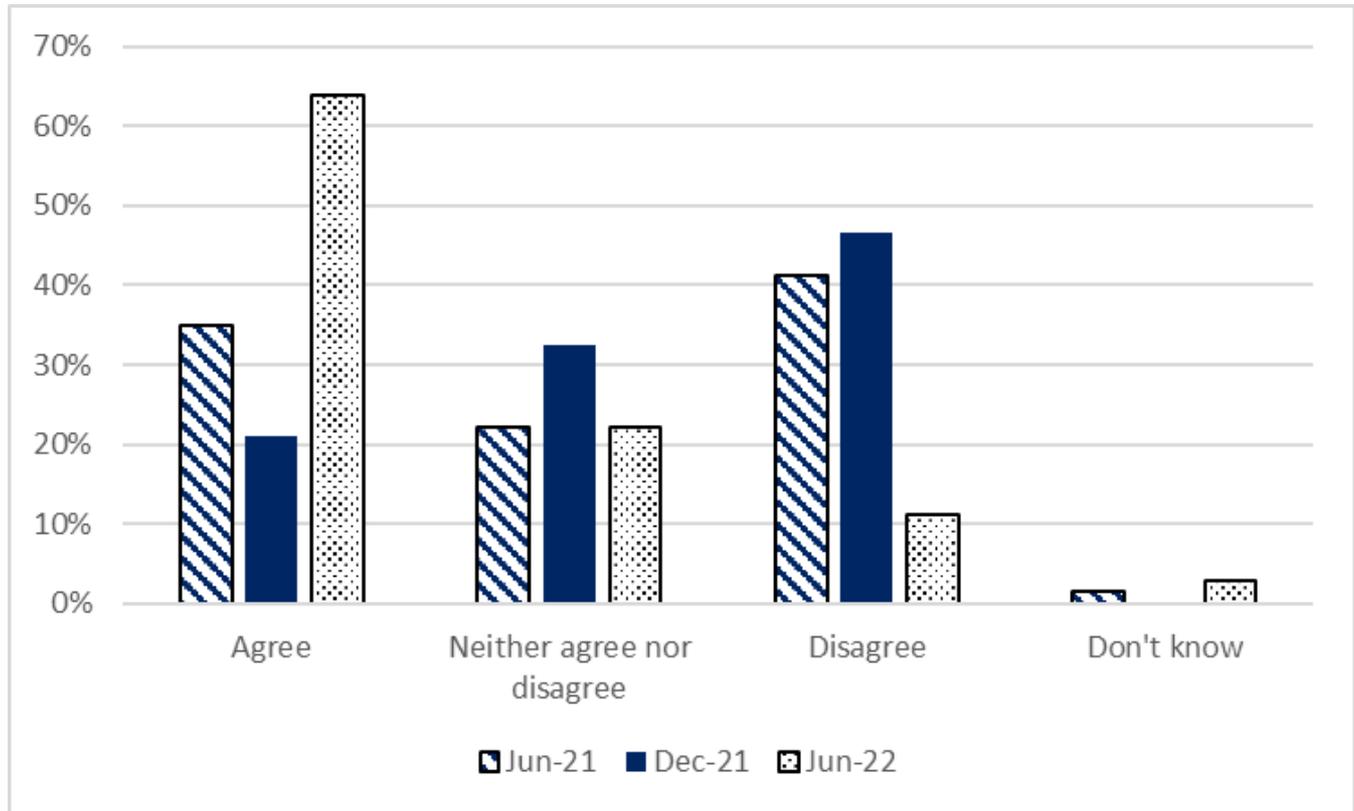


Figure 5. Response to statement 5: Communicates effectively

- The perception of the department communicating effectively has significantly improved over the last year.
- 64% (23) of respondents agreed that the department communicates effectively, up from 35% (22) in June 2021 and 21% (9) in December 2021.
- 11% (4) disagreed that the department communicates effectively, down from 41% (26) in June 2021 and 47% (20) in December 2021.
- 22% (8) neither agree nor disagree that the department communicates effectively, steady from 22% (14) in June 2021 and down from 33% (14) in December 2021.
- 3% (1) respondents said they don't know, up from 2% (1) in June 2021 and 0% (0) in December 2021.

6. Local water utilities empowered to raise issues with DPE Water

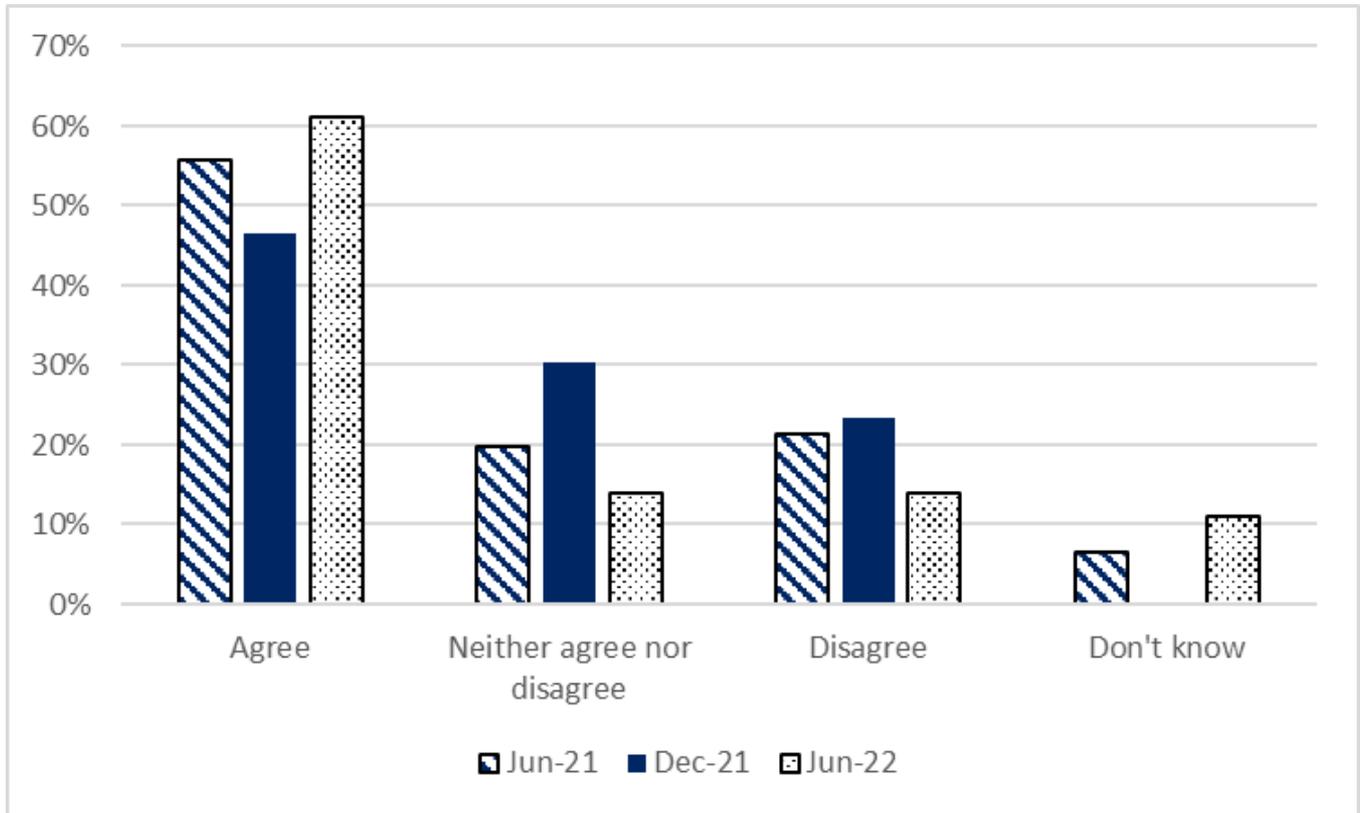


Figure 6. Response to statement 6: Local water utilities empowered to raise issues with DPE Water

- The perception of local water utilities being empowered to raise issues with the department has slightly improved over the last year.
- 61% (22) of respondents agreed that the department empowers local water utilities to raise issues, up from 56% (34) in June 2021 and 47% (20) in December 2021.
- 14% (5) disagreed that the department empowers local water utilities to raise issues, down from 21% (13) in June 2021 and 23% (10) in December 2021.
- 14% (5) neither agree nor disagree that the department empowers local water utilities to raise issues, down from 20% (12) in June 2021 following an increase to 30% (13) in December 2021.
- 11% (4) respondents said they don't know, up from 7% (4) in June 2021 following a decline to 0% in December 2021.

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

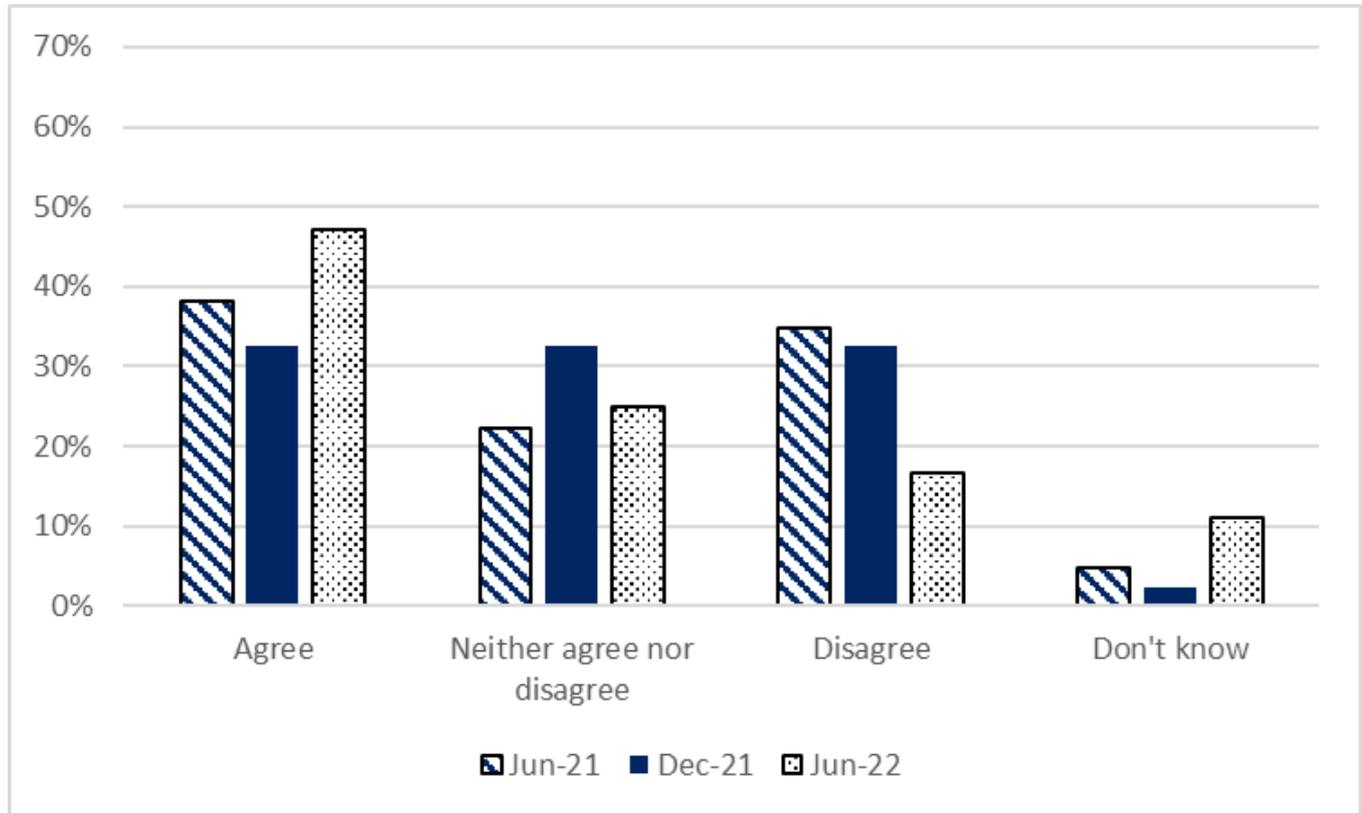


Figure 7. Response to statement 7: Local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues

- The perception of local water utilities and the department collaborating well to resolve issues has improved over the last year.
- 47% (17) of respondents agreed that local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues, up from 38% (24) in June 2021 and 33% (14) in December 2021.
- 17% (6) disagreed that local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues, down from 35% (22) in June 2021 and 33% (14) in December 2021.
- 25% (9) neither agreed nor disagreed that local water utilities and the department collaborate well to resolve issues, up from 22% (14) in June 2021 and down from 33% (14) in December 2021.
- 11% (4) of respondents said they don't know, up from 5% (3) in June 2021 and 2% (1) in December 2021.

8. Coordinates well with other regulators of local water utilities

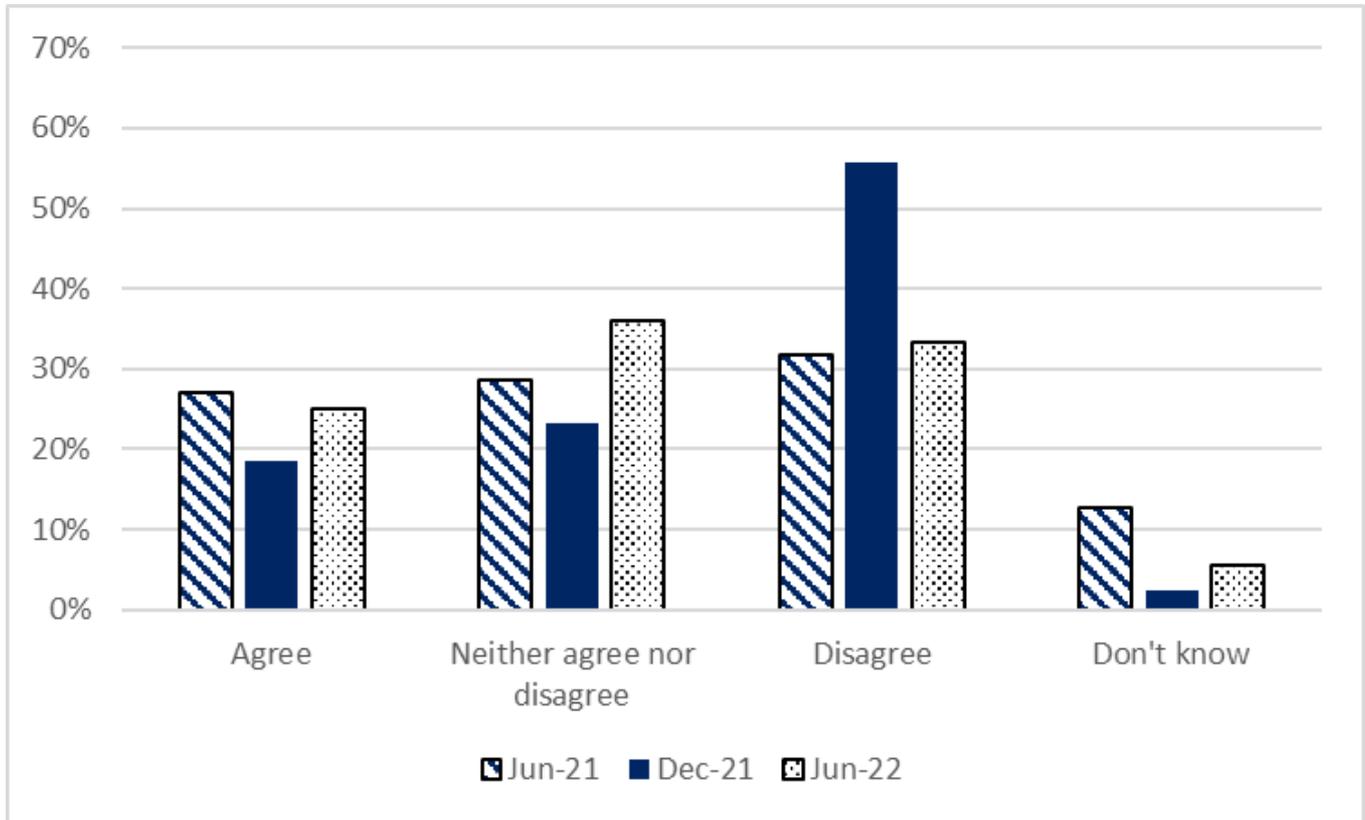


Figure 8. Response to statement 8: Coordinates well with other regulators of local water utilities

- The perception of the department coordinating well with other regulators of local water utilities has declined slightly over the last year, following a more significant negative result in the December 2021 survey.
- 25% (9) of respondents agreed that the department coordinates well with other regulators of local water utilities, down from 27% (17) in June 2021, following a decline to 19% (8) in December 2021.
- 33% (12) disagreed that the department coordinates well with other regulators of local water utilities, up from 32% (20) in June 2021, followed by a rise to 56% (24) in December 2021.
- 36% (13) neither agreed nor disagreed that the department coordinates well with other regulators of local water utilities, up from 29% (18) in June 2021 following a decline to 23% (10) in December 2021.
- 6% (2) of respondents said they don't know, down from 12% (8) in June 2021 following a decline to 2% (1) in December 2021.

Note: the June 2021 and December 2021 referred to 'co-regulators' instead of 'other regulators'.