

Wood heater survey

FINAL REPORT
1 September 2022





Background

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) sought views of YourSay Panel members regarding the ownership and usage of wood heaters. The survey explored behaviours, motivators and barriers to removal and replacement, as well as awareness and interest in current ACT Government initiatives aimed at improving Canberra's air quality.

The results from the survey will help inform actions outlined in the ACT Government's Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy 2021-25.

Methodological notes:

- All Panel members were invited to participate (n=6,009)
- The results have been weighted to reflect relative population proportions based on the ABS Census, including tenure and dwelling type
- The methodology is biased towards those with internet and computer literacy
- In single choice questions, results may not add up to 100% due to rounding



How many?

1,955

Who?

Canberrans 16+

When?

11 – 18 Aug 2022

How long?

Avg. 6 mins



Key take outs

1. There is considerable attachment and fondness towards wood heating amongst respondents, even among those who do not own one. Affinity for wood heaters is spread evenly across all areas of the ACT
2. Financial incentives to remove wood heaters may resonate with some owners but these have not been widely taken up. Younger respondents (aged 54 years and under) are most likely to be attracted to incentives to remove or replace a wood heater
3. Support for, or opposition to, a phasing out of wood heaters in the ACT is dependent upon direct experience and attachment
 - Support is widespread among those impacted by smoke and / or who believe air quality in their area to be poor or fair
 - Opposition is significantly higher among current wood heater owners

72% Feel they produce a unique source of heat

59% Find wood heaters enjoyable

57% Of owners would never replace their heater

33% Considering replacement are motivated by incentives

34% May be influenced by Wood Heater Replacement Prog

13% Who replaced accessed an ACT Gov incentive scheme

PHASING OUT IN ACT

	SUPPORT	NEUTRAL	OPPOSE
All respondents	52%	19%	27%
Wood heater owners	25%	14%	59%
Air quality is fair or poor	89%	5%	5%
Impacted by wood smoke	73%	14%	12%

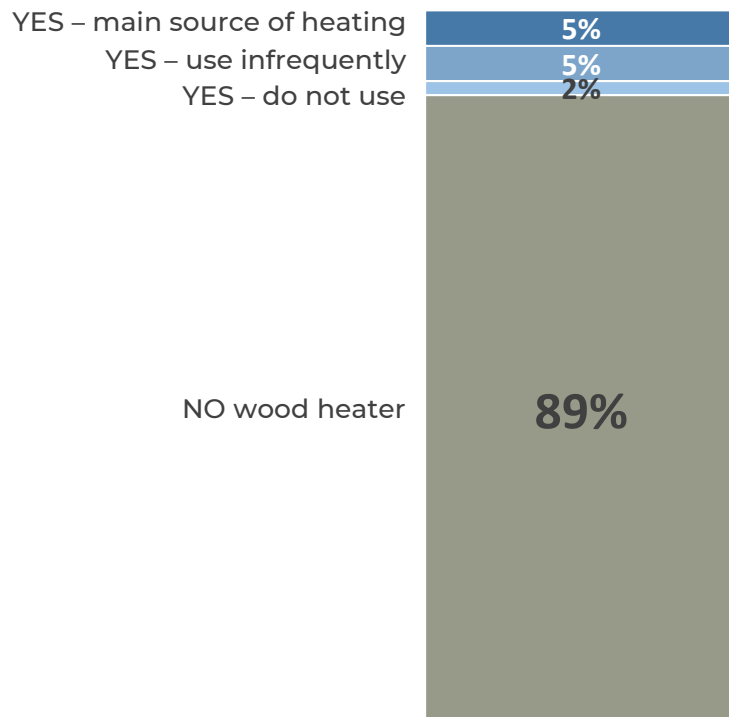
Wood heater ownership and use

In summary:

- ▶ Approximately one in ten respondents (11%) have a wood heater in the home
- ▶ One in twenty respondents (5%) use their wood heater as the main source of heating in the home
- ▶ Wood heater ownership is primarily concentrated in suburban areas of the ACT and within detached homes – respondents in Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley (16%), Tuggeranong (14%), Inner South (13%) and Wooden Valley (12%) have the highest rates of ownership
- ▶ A majority of respondents feel that wood heaters provide a unique source of warmth (72%) and are enjoyable to use (59%)
- ▶ This sentiment increases for wood heater owners (88% and 83% respectively), many of whom consider wood heaters to be a cheap / low-cost energy source (52%)

Approximately one in ten respondents currently have a wood heater in their home

Q. Do you have a wood heater in the home you are currently living in?



In total, 11% have a wood heater in the home

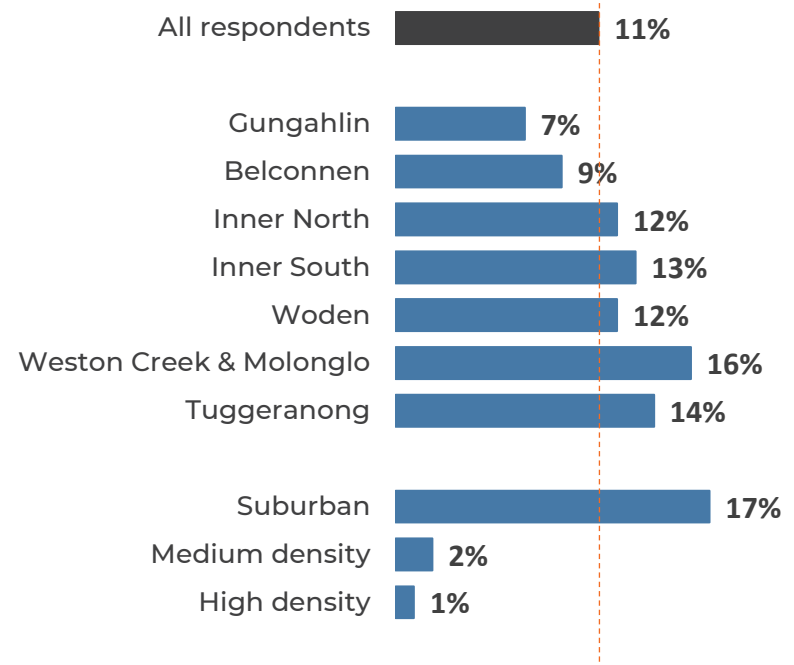
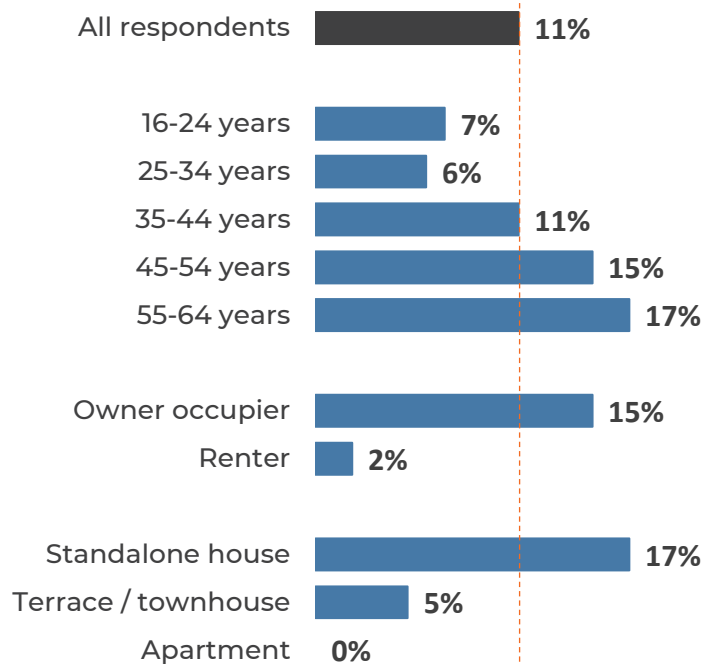
This tends to be concentrated in **suburban areas** and primarily within **detached homes**

Highest penetration is in **Weston Creek** and the **Molonglo Valley** (16%) followed by **Tuggeranong** (14%)

Presence of a wood heater is related to **home ownership** and tends to **increase with householder age**

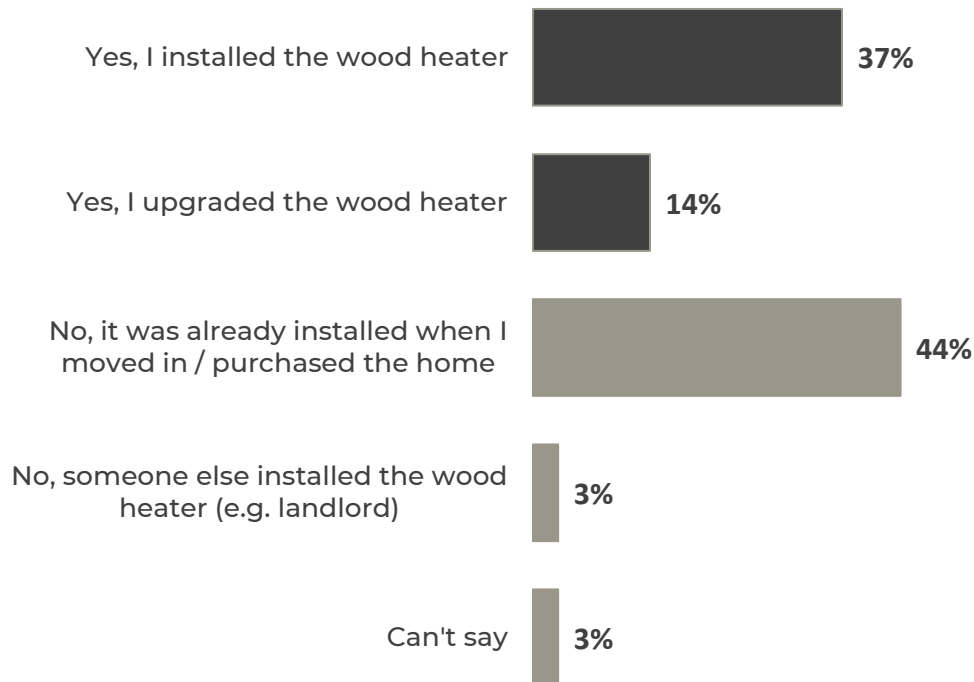
Higher wood heater ownership is reported among older Canberrans and more commonly south of the lake

Q. Do you have a wood heater in the home you are currently living in?



Just over half of those with wood heaters in their current home had it installed or upgraded themselves

Q. Did you install or upgrade the wood heater in your current home?



Among those who installed or upgraded their wood heater:

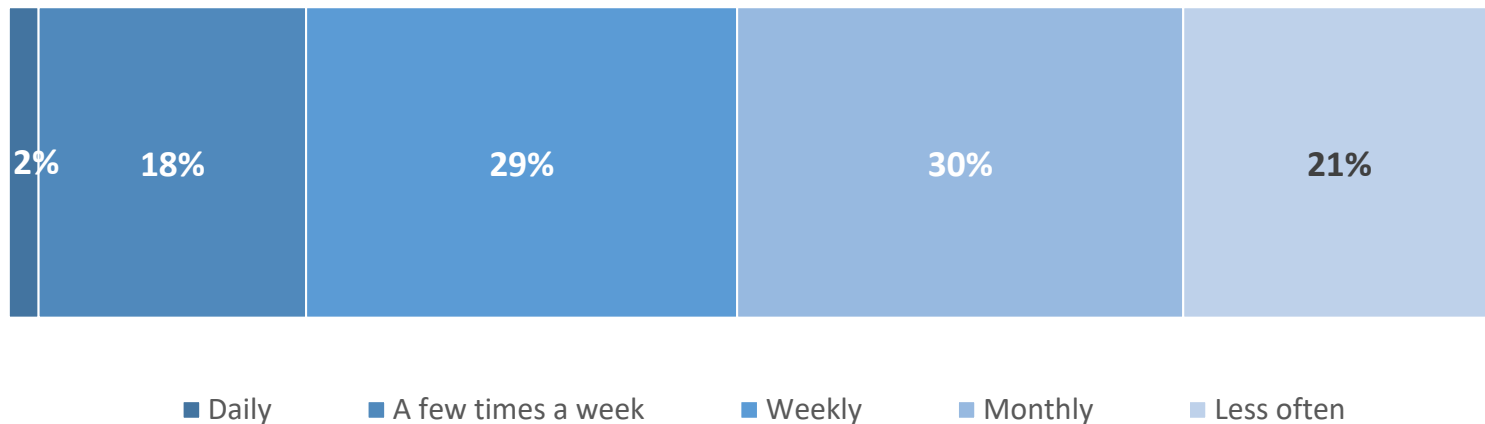
- 26% had done so in the past 2 years
- 37% had done so between 2-10 years ago
- 35% had done so more than 10 years ago

Those who have a wood heater in the home but don't use it largely cite issues with efficiency of heating, presence of other heating in the home, environmental reasons and the hassle associated with using the fire as reasons for non-use



Among infrequent wood heater users, around half still use it weekly or a few times a week in the cooler months

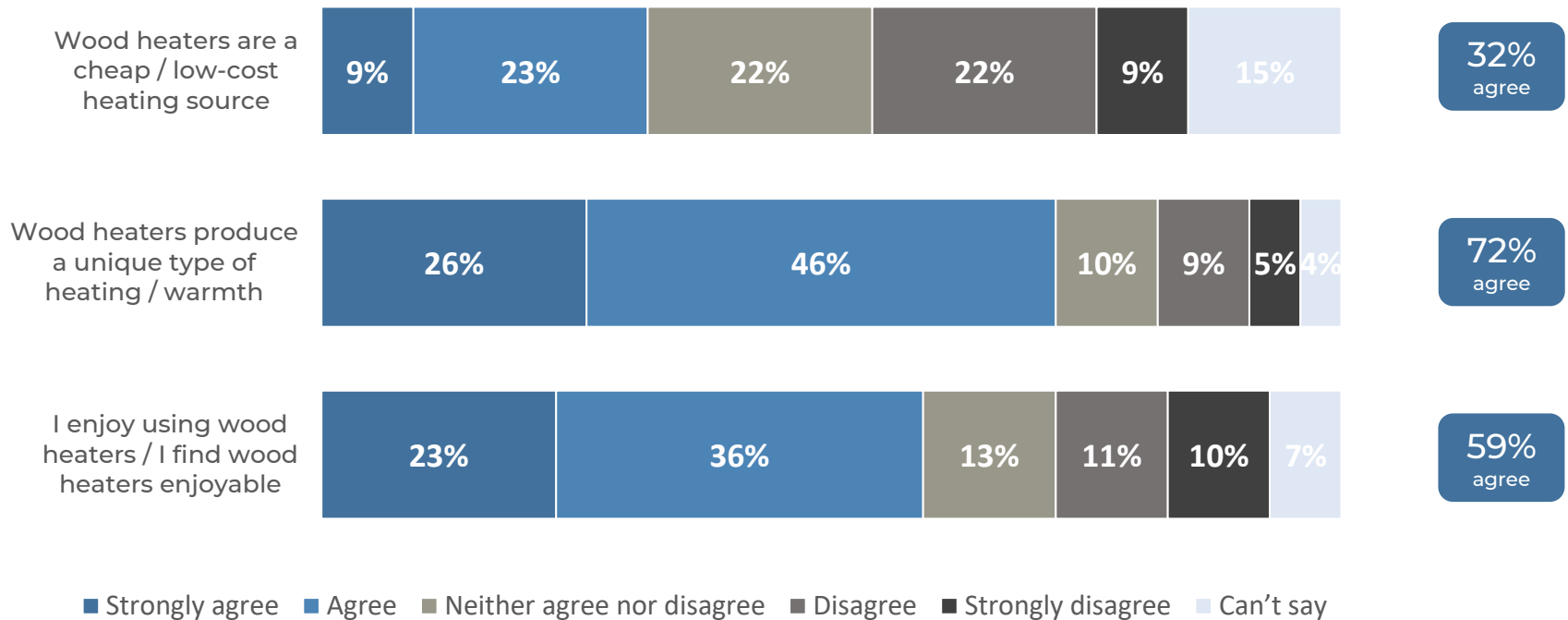
Q. And how frequently do you use your wood heater in the winter / cooler months?





Most respondents feel wood heaters produce a unique type of warmth which is also enjoyable

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



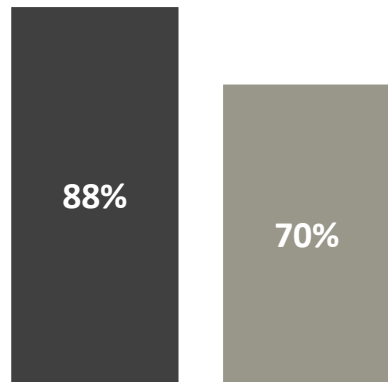


Wood heater owners are even more likely to be of the view they are unique and enjoyable, as well as low-cost

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

% agree

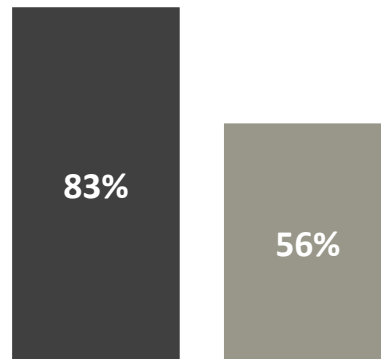
Provides unique type of warmth



Wood heater owners

Non owners

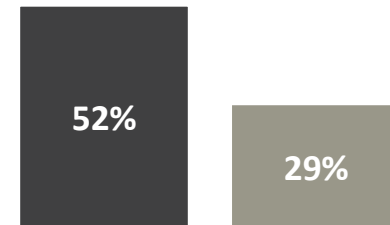
Enjoy using / are enjoyable



Wood heater owners

Non owners

A cheap / low-cost energy source



Wood heater owners

Non owners

Consideration of and motivations for wood fire removal

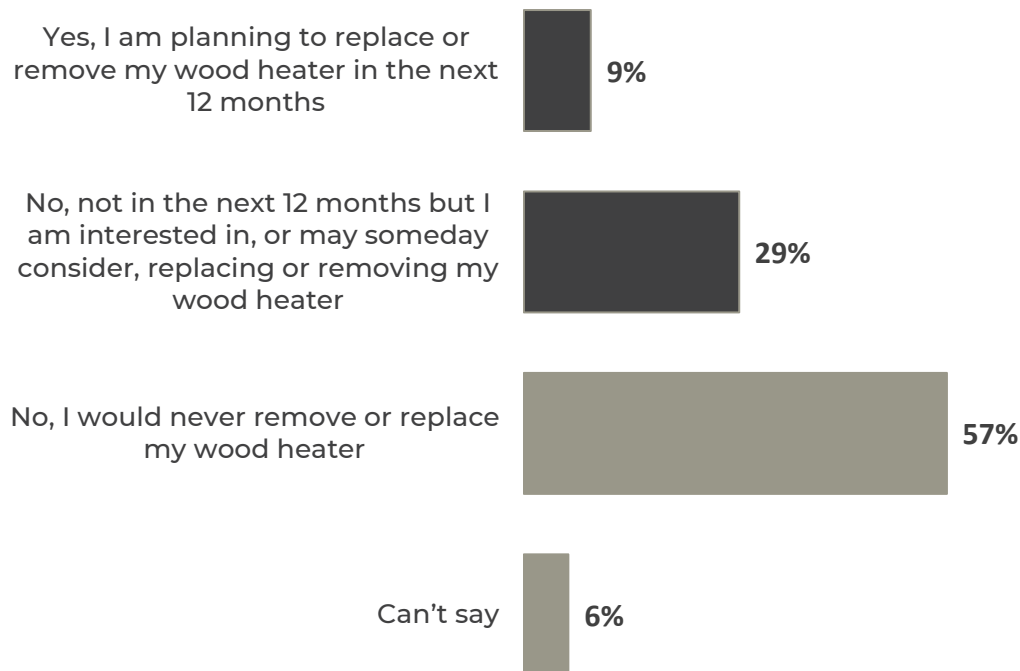
In summary:

- ▶ Nearly four in ten wood heater owners (38%) indicate they are planning to, or are considering, replacing or removing one from their home. However, almost six in ten (57%) say they would never consider it
- ▶ The main drivers shaping consideration of replacement are environmental reasons, (in)efficiency of wood heating, mess and hassle associated with a fire, and likelihood of home renovations acting as a point of transition
- ▶ The main reasons shaping resistance to remove a wood heater is fondness for the warmth and ambience associated with a wood fire (71%), followed by infrequent use and several cost considerations concerning use and replacement
- ▶ Financial incentives may resonate among those looking to remove their wood heater sometime in the future, with one third of owners indicating that the Wood Heater Replacement Program would make them more likely to replace their heater



Nearly four in ten owners are considering removing or replacing their wood heater

Q. Are you planning to replace or remove your wood heater in the next 12 months?



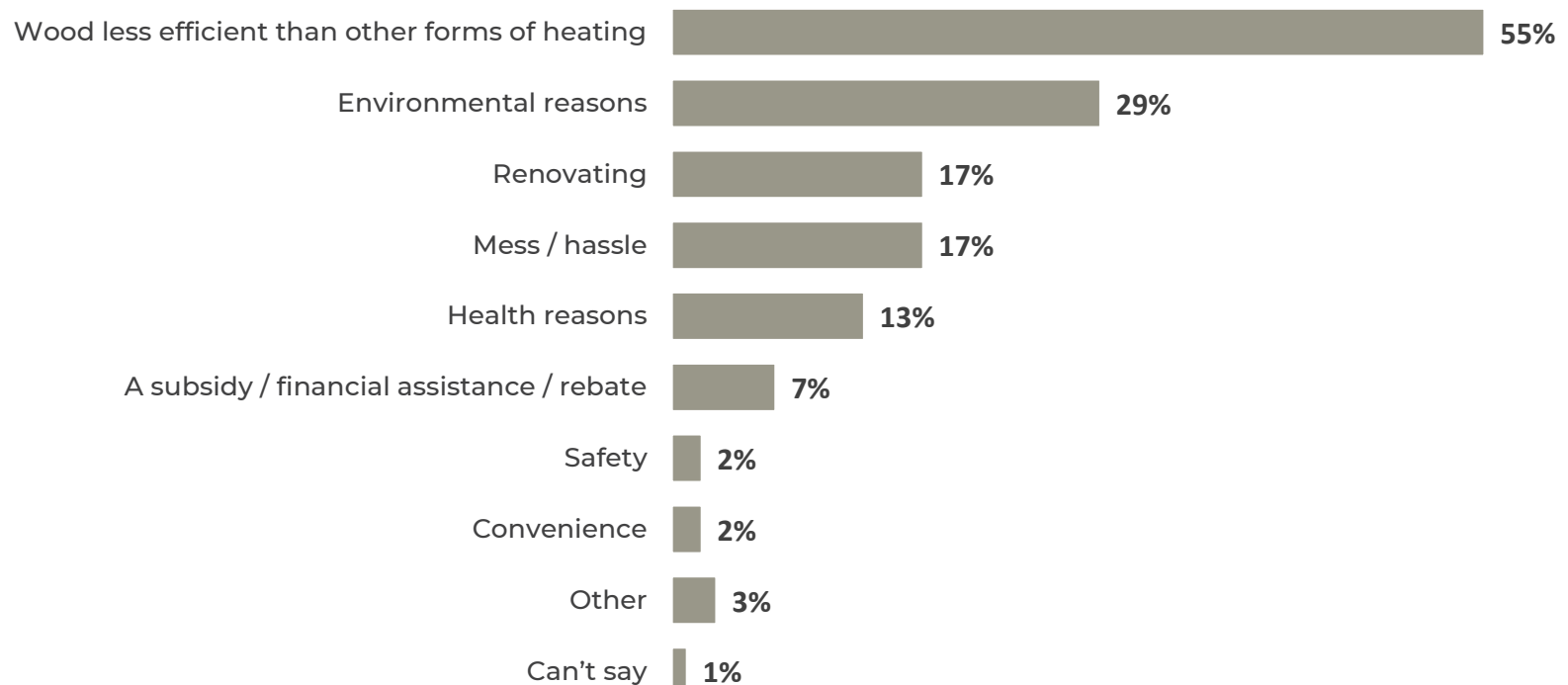
Among those who are considered replacing or removing:

- 15% are thinking about doing this in the next 2 years
- 36% are looking at doing this within a 3-5 year timeframe
- 20% are considering in 6-10 years
- 24% are unsure about when

Respondents who consider air quality to be excellent or very good are less likely to consider replacing their wood heater

For those planning to replace, inefficiency of wood is a prominent driver, followed by environmental reasons *

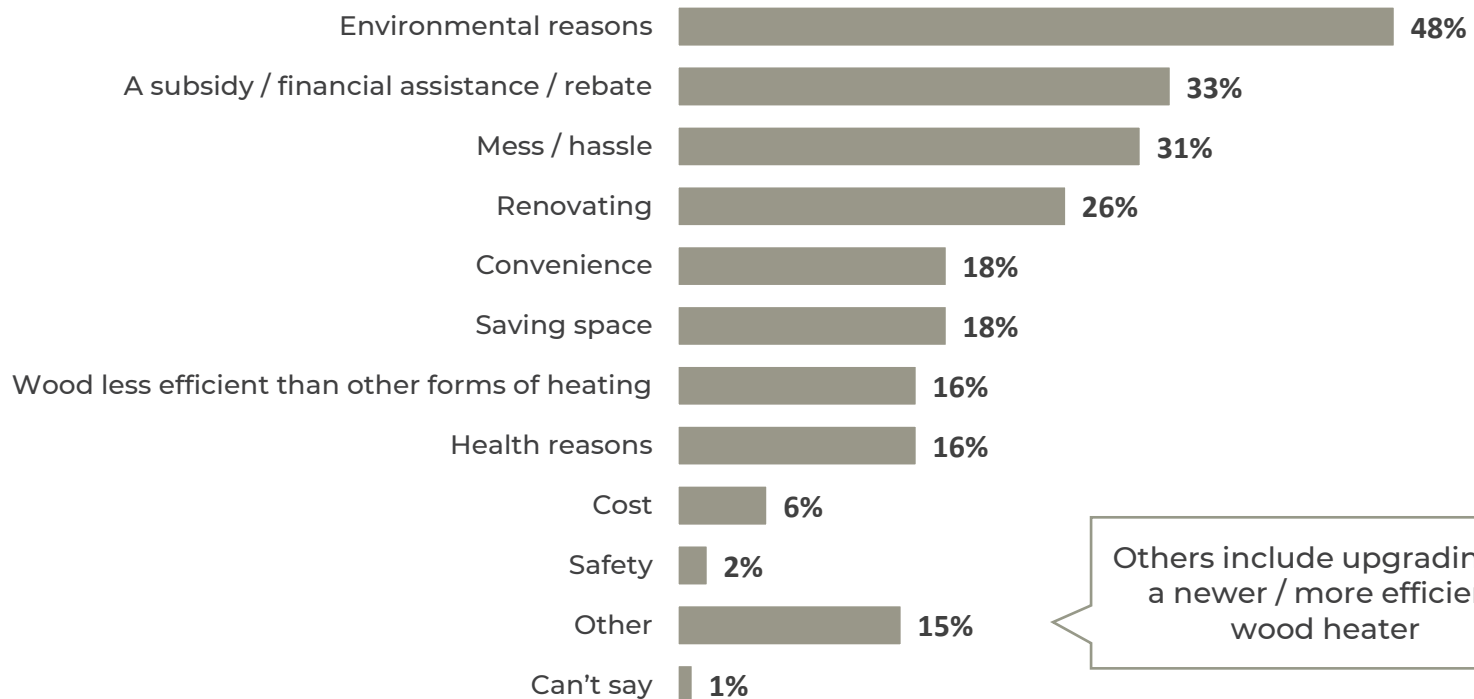
Q. Why are you planning to replace or remove your wood heater?





For those considering replacement, environmental reasons are most important, followed by financial reasons

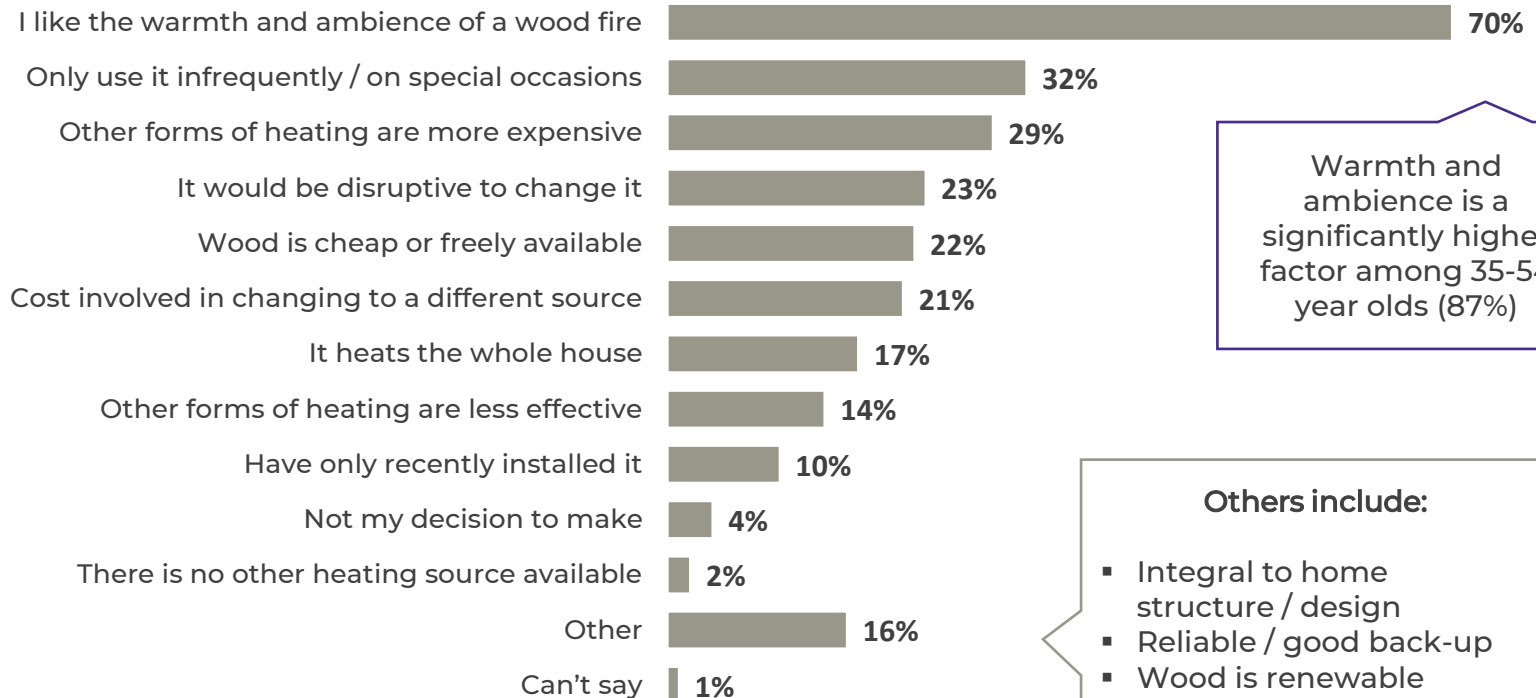
Q. Why are you interested in, or may someday consider, replacing or removing your wood heater?





Those not intending to replace are motivated by the ambience of a wood fire and perceived cost implications

Q. Why would you never replace or remove your wood heater?



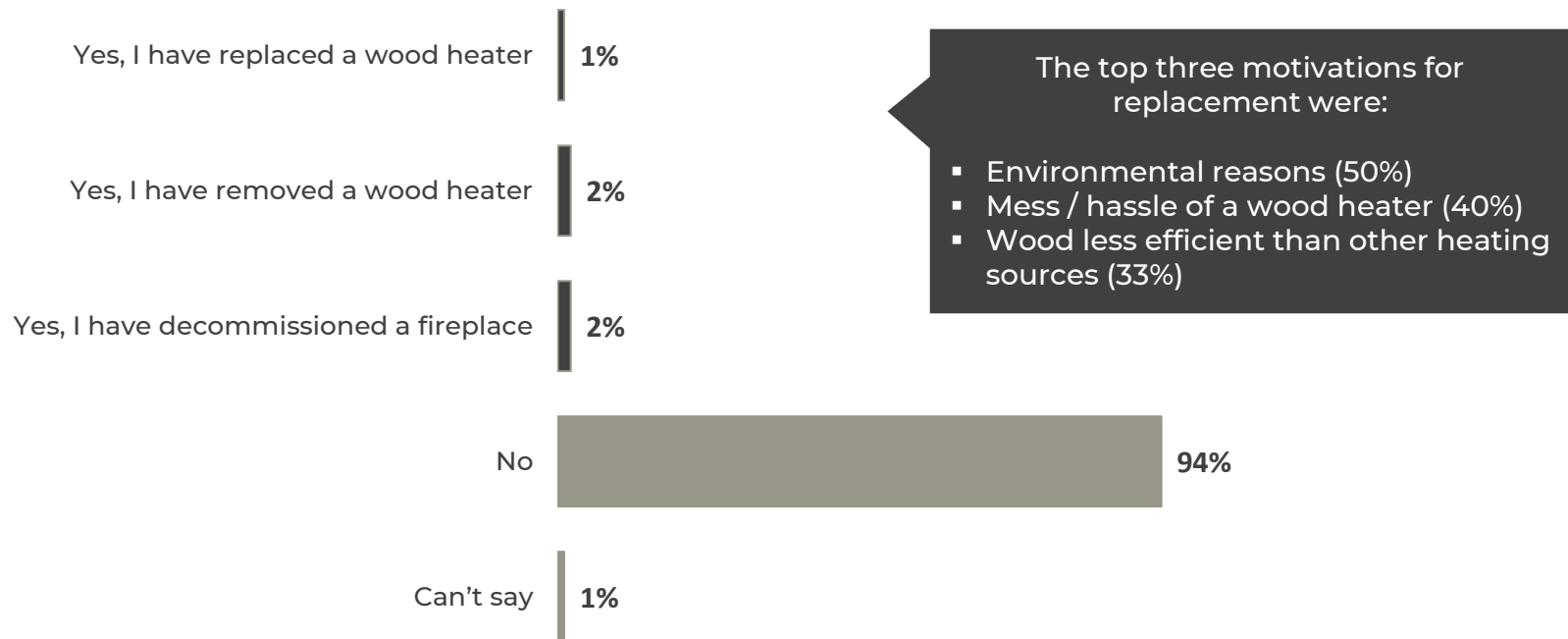
Warmth and ambience is a significantly higher factor among 35-54 year olds (87%)

- Others include:**
- Integral to home structure / design
 - Reliable / good back-up
 - Wood is renewable



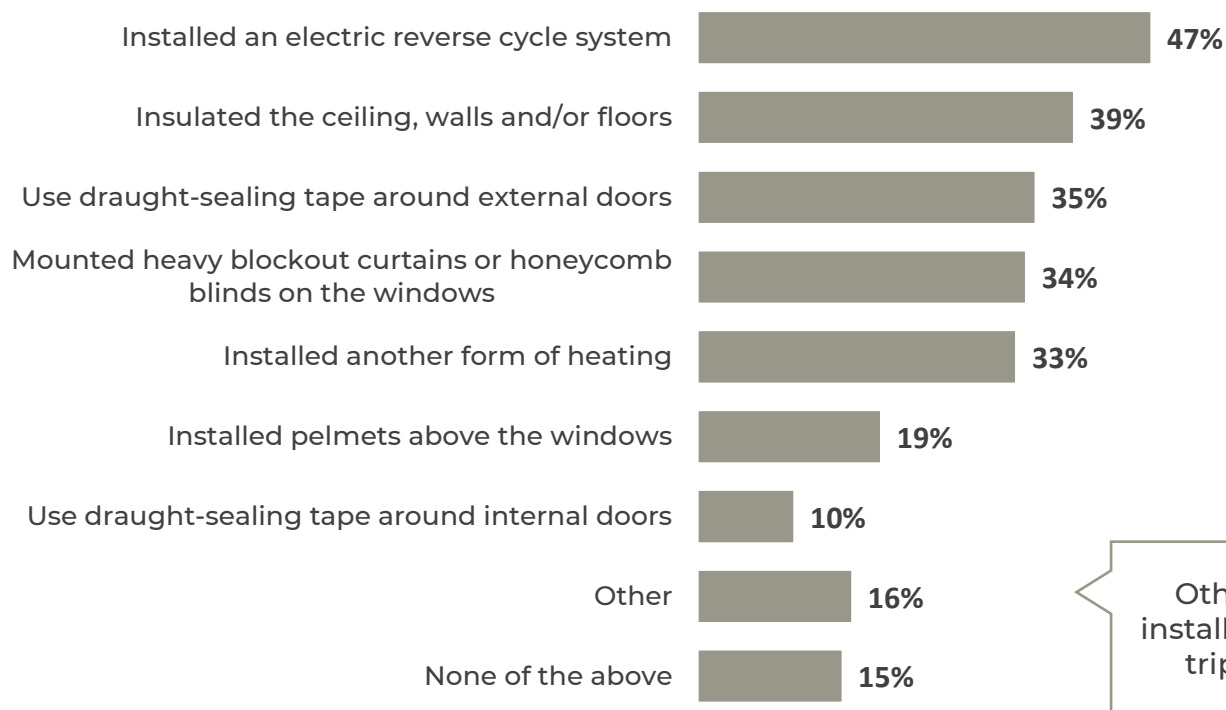
A small proportion of respondents have previously replaced or removed a wood heater in their home

Q. Have you replaced or removed a wood heater, or decommissioned a fireplace in the home you are currently living in?



Installation of other forms of heating and / or heat-saving measures are common after removal of a wood heater

Q. What actions, if any, have you taken to keep your home warm since you replaced or removed your wood heater, or decommissioned your fireplace?



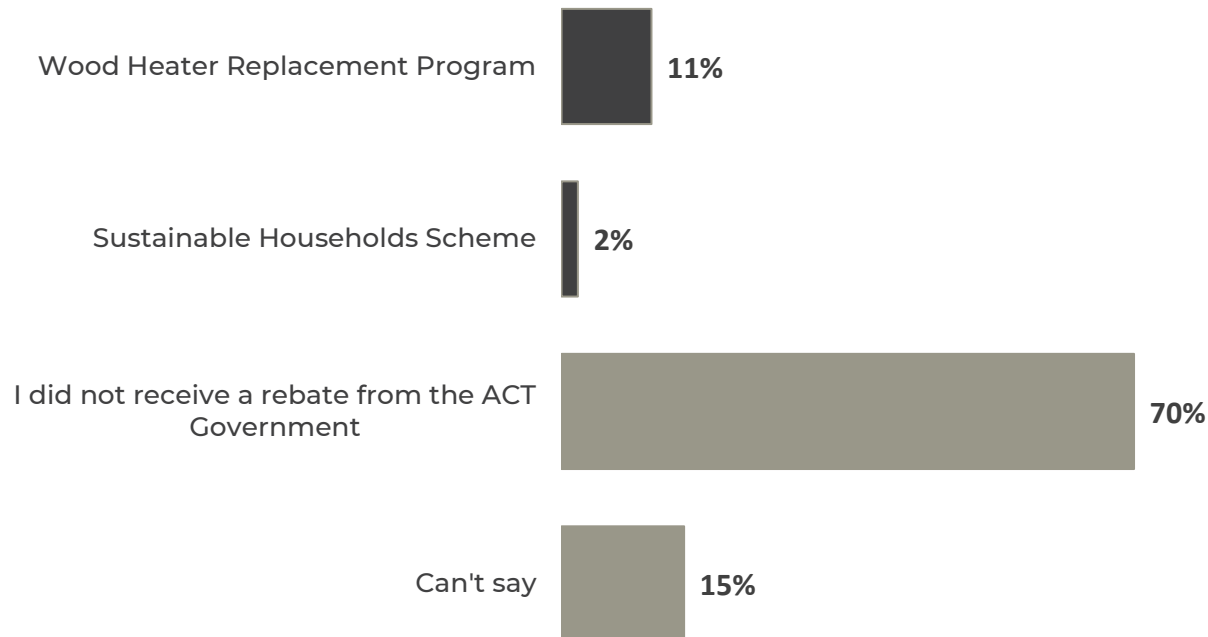


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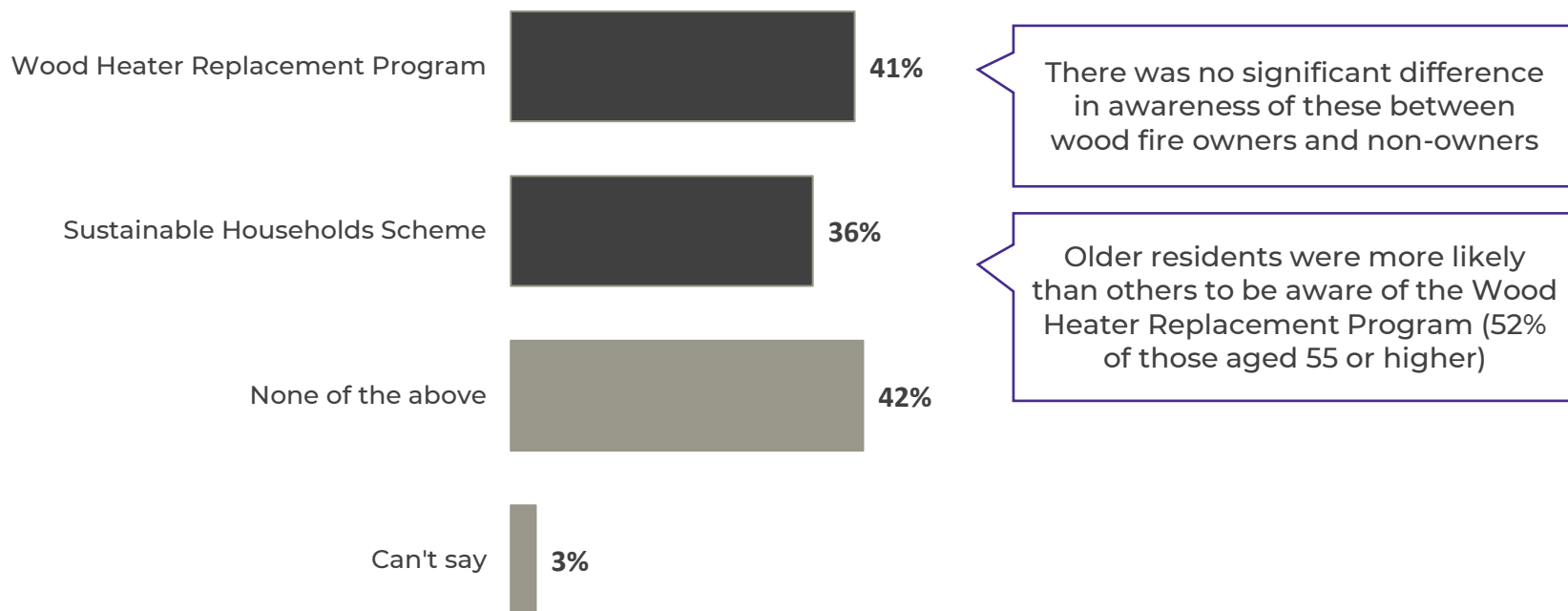
Few who have previously removed or replaced a wood heater received ACT Government financial support

Q. And did you receive a rebate or financial support through one of the following ACT Government programs?



Around four in ten respondents are aware of each of the ACT Government financial support programs

Q. And before today, had you seen or heard of the following ACT Government programs?





A third of owners say they are more likely to replace their heater considering the Wood Heater Replacement Program

Q. Would the Wood Heater Replacement Program make you any more likely to replace your wood heater or would it make no difference?



■ A lot more likely ■ Somewhat more likely ■ A little more likely ■ It would make no difference ■ Can't say

Air quality and smoke in the ACT



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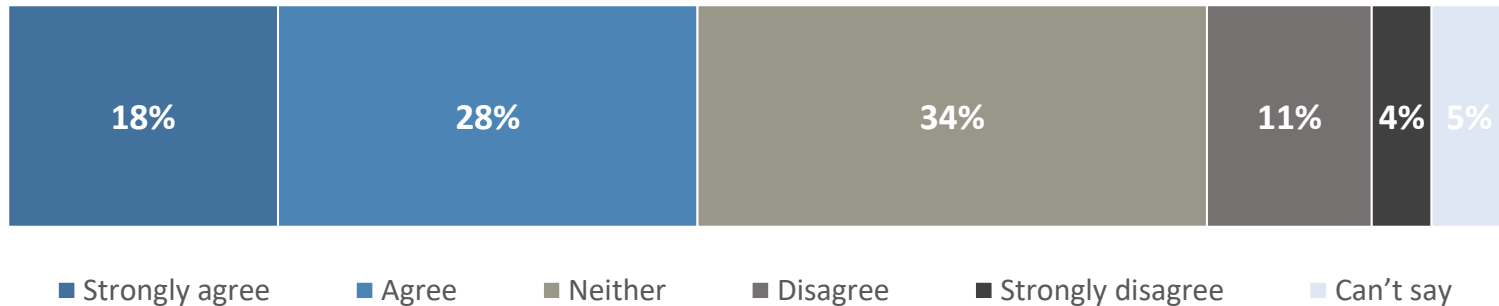
In summary:

- ▶ Just over half of all respondents consider the air quality in their suburb (56%) and / or across the ACT as a whole (50%) to be very good or excellent during winter months
- ▶ Air quality concerns are highest amongst those living in Tuggeranong (30% fair / poor) and lowest amongst those living in Gungahlin (11% fair / poor)
- ▶ Those who do not have wood heating are more likely to consider air quality to be fair or poor, whereas respondents with wood heaters are more likely to consider air quality as excellent, very good or good
- ▶ Almost three in ten respondents (28%) indicate being impacted frequently or sometimes by smoke from a neighbour's wood heater – this is most common amongst residents in Tuggeranong (38%), Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley (34%), and Woden Valley (31%)
- ▶ Only a small proportion of these (6%) have complained about the wood smoke, most doing so directly with their neighbour; often these complaints appear unresolved



Almost half of respondents feel the ACT Government should do more to monitor air quality

Q. And how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The ACT Government should do more to monitor air quality (e.g. additional air monitoring stations)



Strongly agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly disagree Can't say

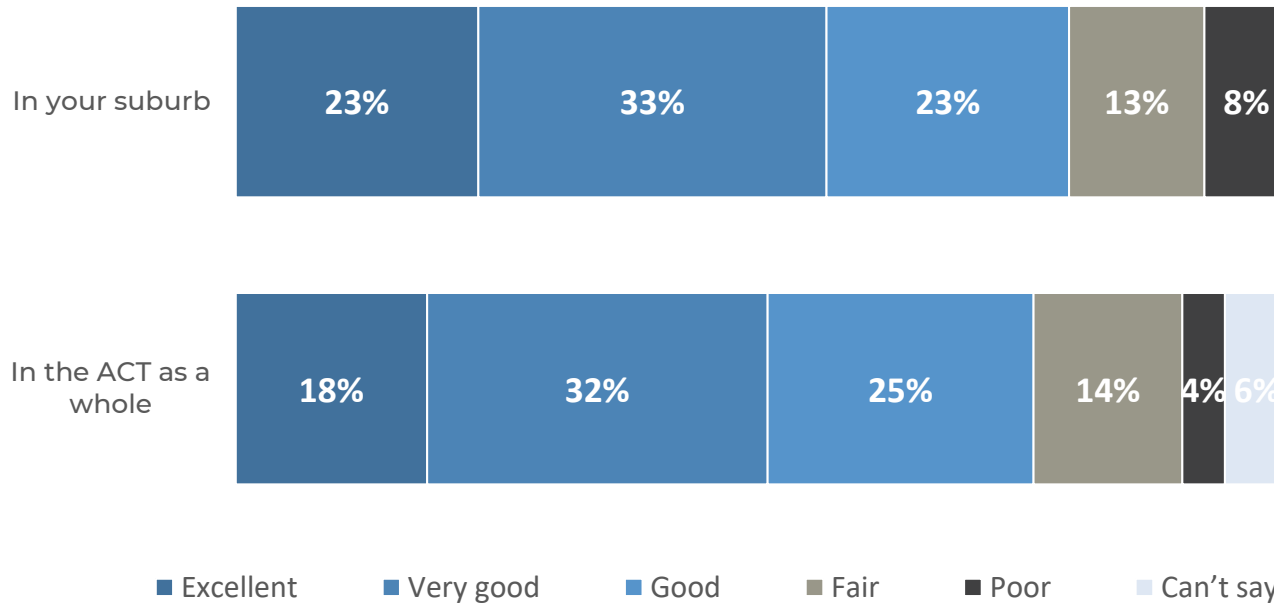
46% agree

Agreement with this is higher for those impacted by smoke from a neighbour (59%) and who perceive air quality in their suburb as fair or poor (71%)

Wood heater owners are less likely to agree that the ACT Government should do more to monitor air quality (29%)

Just over half of respondents consider air quality to be very good or excellent in the winter / cooler months

Q. How would you rate air quality during the winter / cooler months?

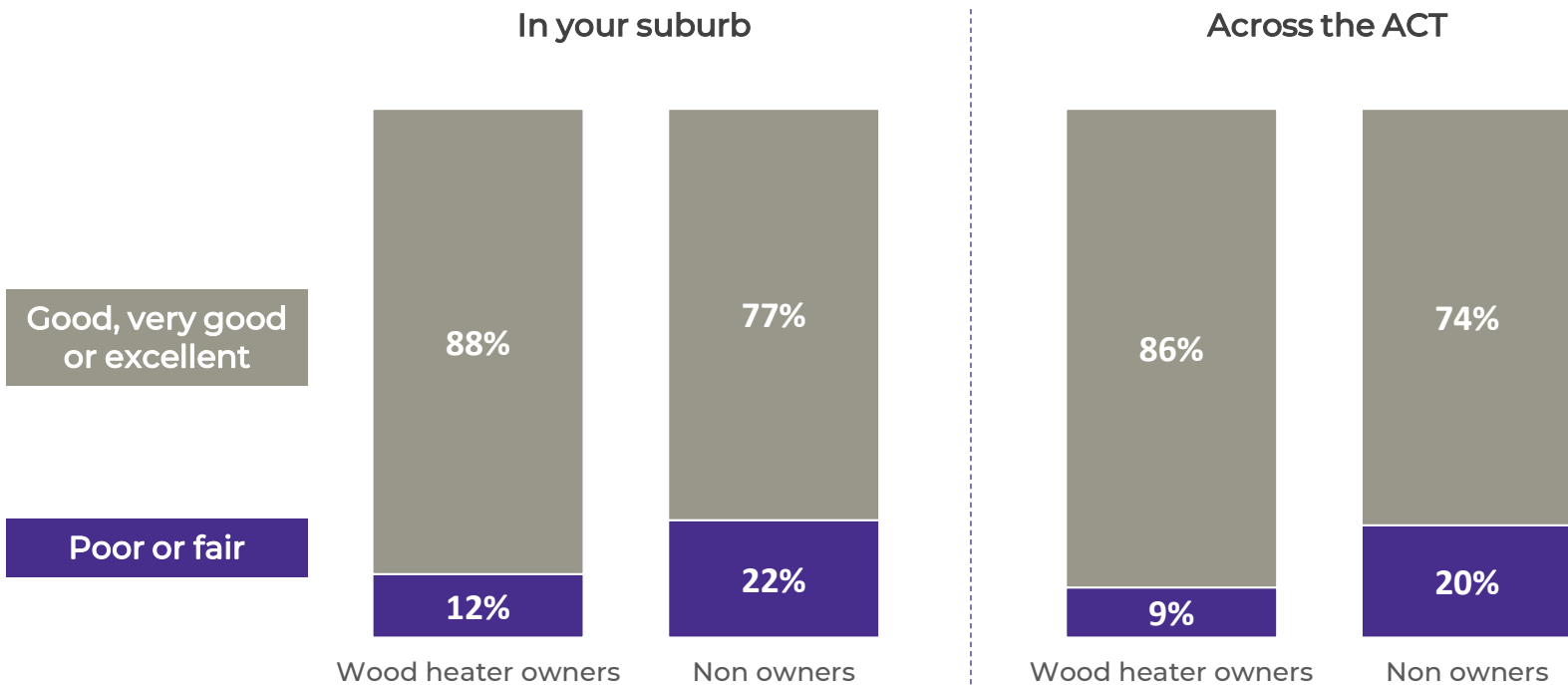


Tuggeranong residents are significantly more likely to rate air quality in their suburb as fair or poor (30%)



Respondents with wood heaters are significantly less likely to consider air quality as a problem

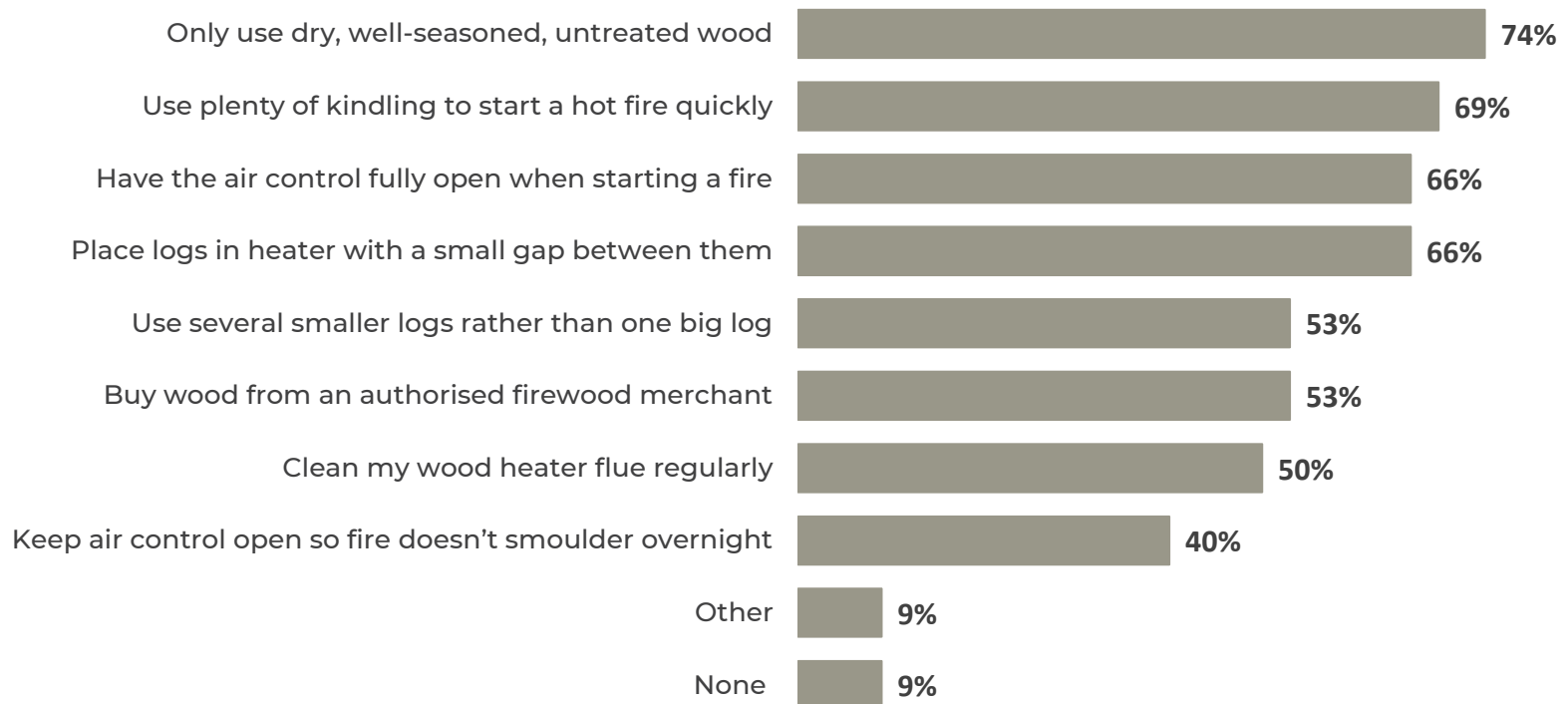
Q. How would you rate air quality during the winter / cooler months?





The majority of wood heater owners report taking steps to manage fire and smoke and optimise air flow

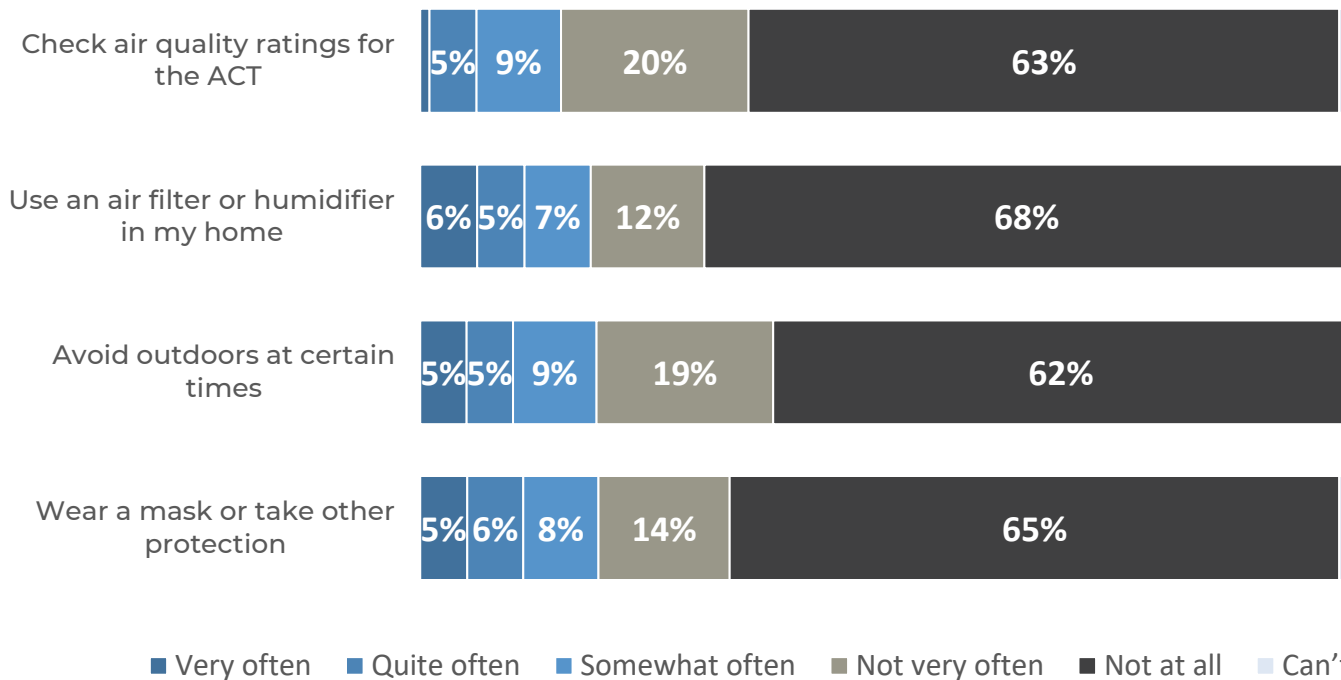
Q. Which of the following steps do you take in relation to your wood heater use, if any at all?





Up to two in ten respondents take different steps on a regular basis to deal with smoke from wood heaters

Q. How often do you take the following steps due to smoke from wood heaters, if at all?



Enactment of all of these steps is strongly related to perceptions of air quality



Almost three in ten respondents say they are frequently or sometimes impacted by smoke from a neighbour's heater

Q. Have you ever been impacted by smoke from a neighbour's wood heater?



■ Yes, frequently ■ Yes, sometimes ■ Yes, rarely ■ No, I have never been impacted

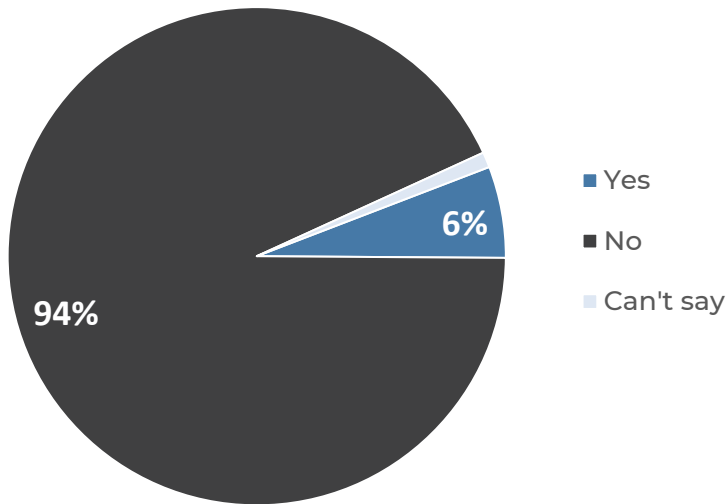
The likelihood to be impacted tends to increase with age

Woden, Weston and Molonglo residents (53%) and those in Tuggeranong (56%) are more likely to be impacted frequently, sometimes or rarely

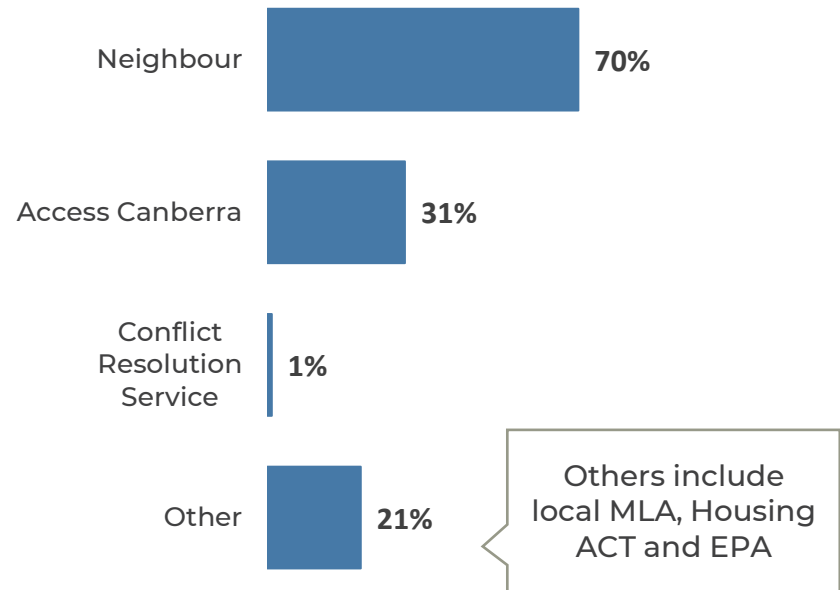


Only a small proportion affected by a neighbour's smoke have complained about it – usually directly to the neighbour

Q. Have you ever made a complaint about smoke from a neighbour's wood heater?



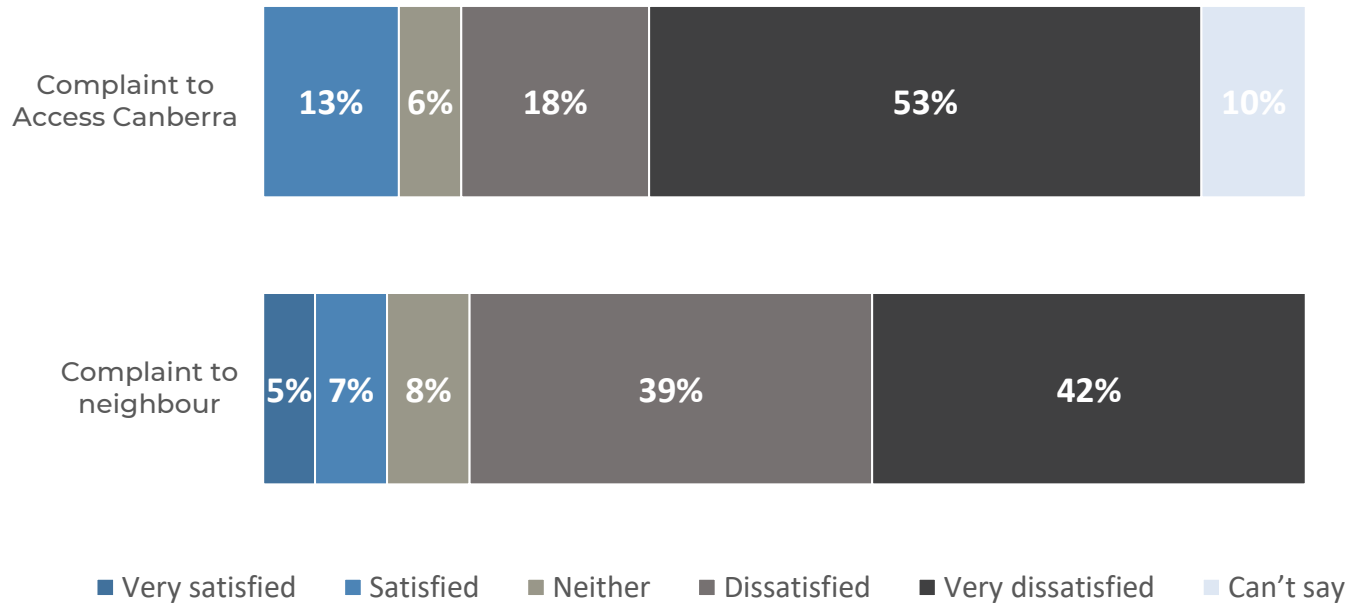
*Those who have made complaint:
Q. Who did you make your complaint to?*





Most respondents have been dissatisfied with the response to their complaint *

Q. And how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with their response to your complaint?



Dissatisfaction largely arises because in the complainants view no action was taken or nothing changed

Regulation of wood heaters in the ACT



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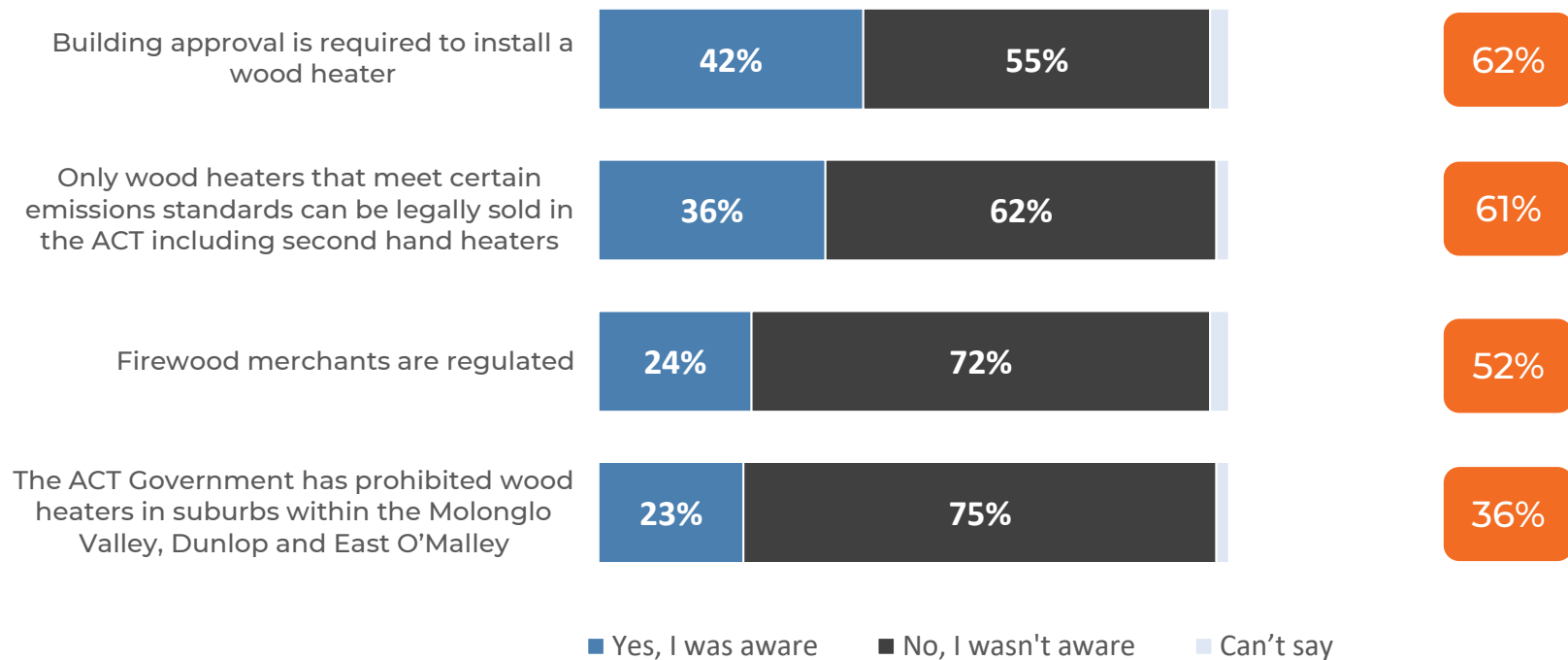
In summary:

- ▶ Most respondents are unaware of current regulations in relation to wood heaters in the ACT, though awareness does increase among wood heater owners
- ▶ Just over a half of respondents (52%) support a phasing out of wood heaters in the ACT with a further two in ten (19%) neutral in this regard
- ▶ Just over a quarter (27%) oppose a phasing out; however – of these – four in ten are supportive of removing heaters that do not meet current emissions standards
- ▶ Support or opposition towards a phase out is strongly related to wood heater ownership, perceptions of air quality and direct impact from wood heater smoke
- ▶ Based on respondent comments, support for a phase out often stems from concerns with smoke in their vicinity and broader environmental impacts
- ▶ Opposition to a phase out often appears to be shaped by a belief that wood heaters do little harm (if used correctly), provide cheap and reliable heating, and are something people should be able to choose to enjoy for ambience and atmosphere

Most respondents are unaware of current wood heater regulations and standards in the ACT

Q. Before today, were you aware of any of the following?

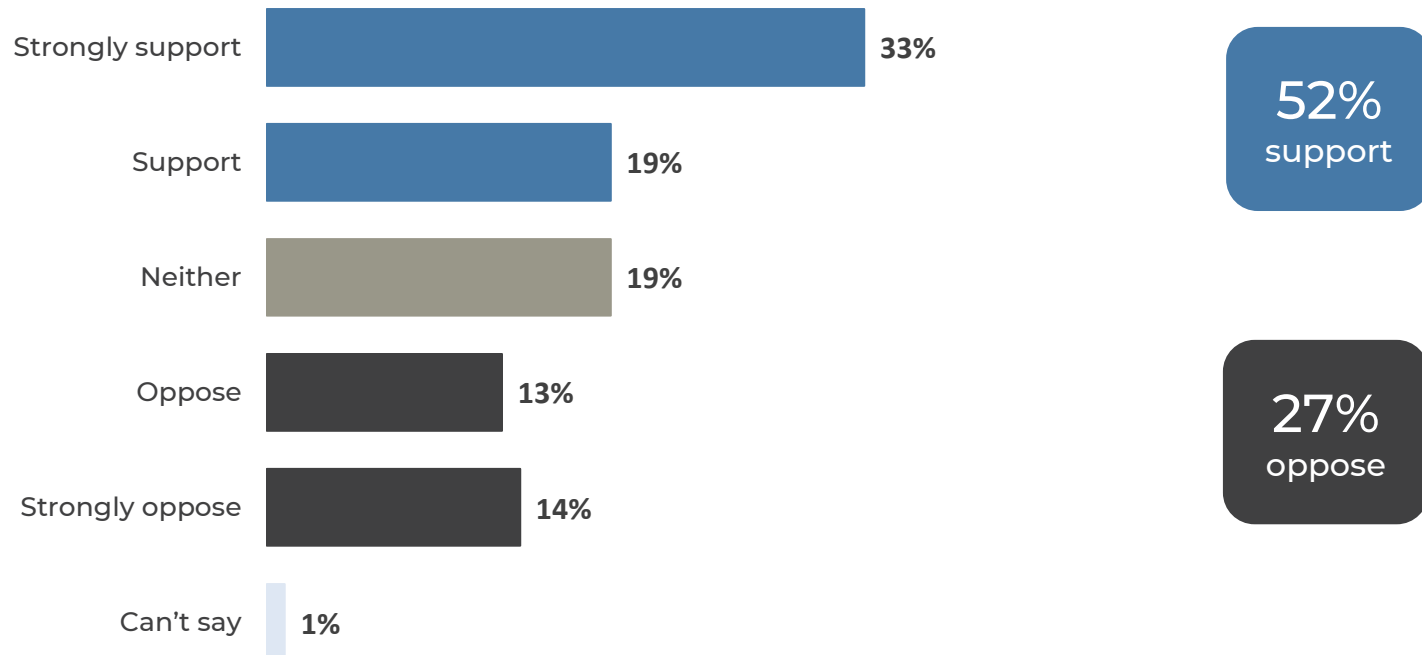
% of wood heater owners aware





Just over half of respondents support a gradual phase out of wood heaters across all ACT suburbs

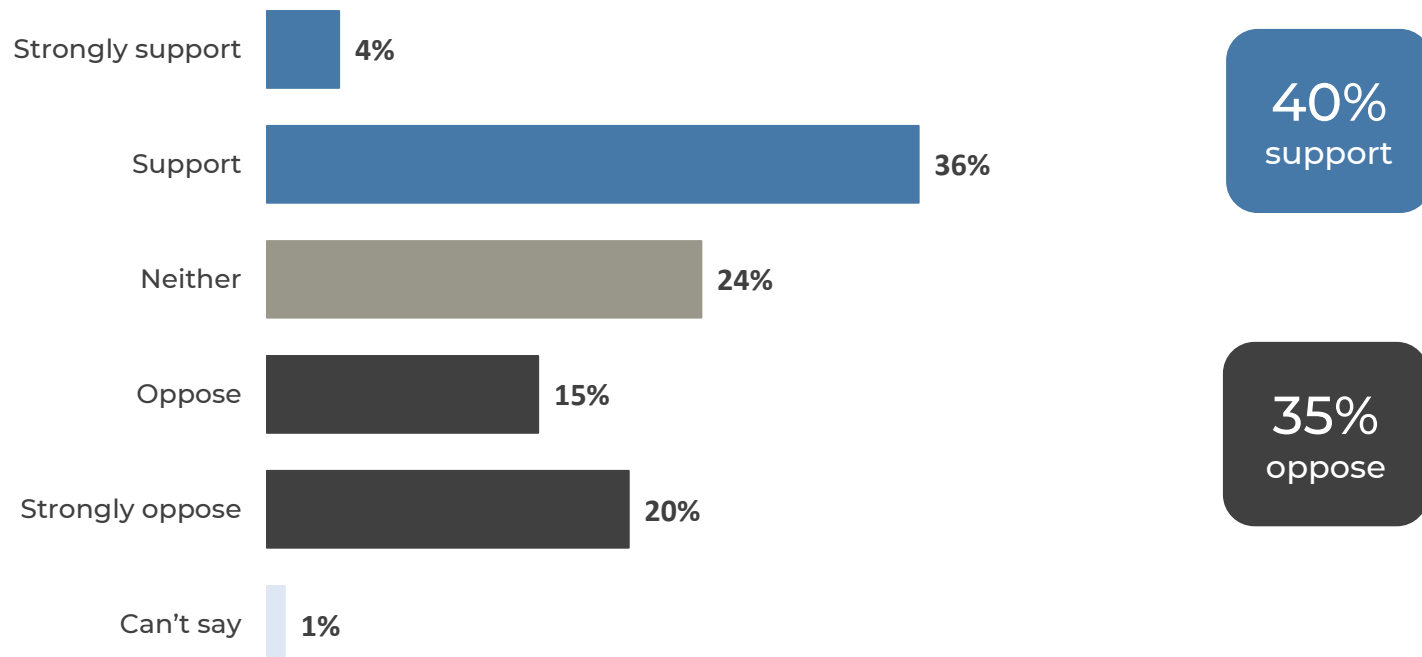
Q. Would you support or oppose a gradual phase out of wood heaters across all suburbs in the ACT?





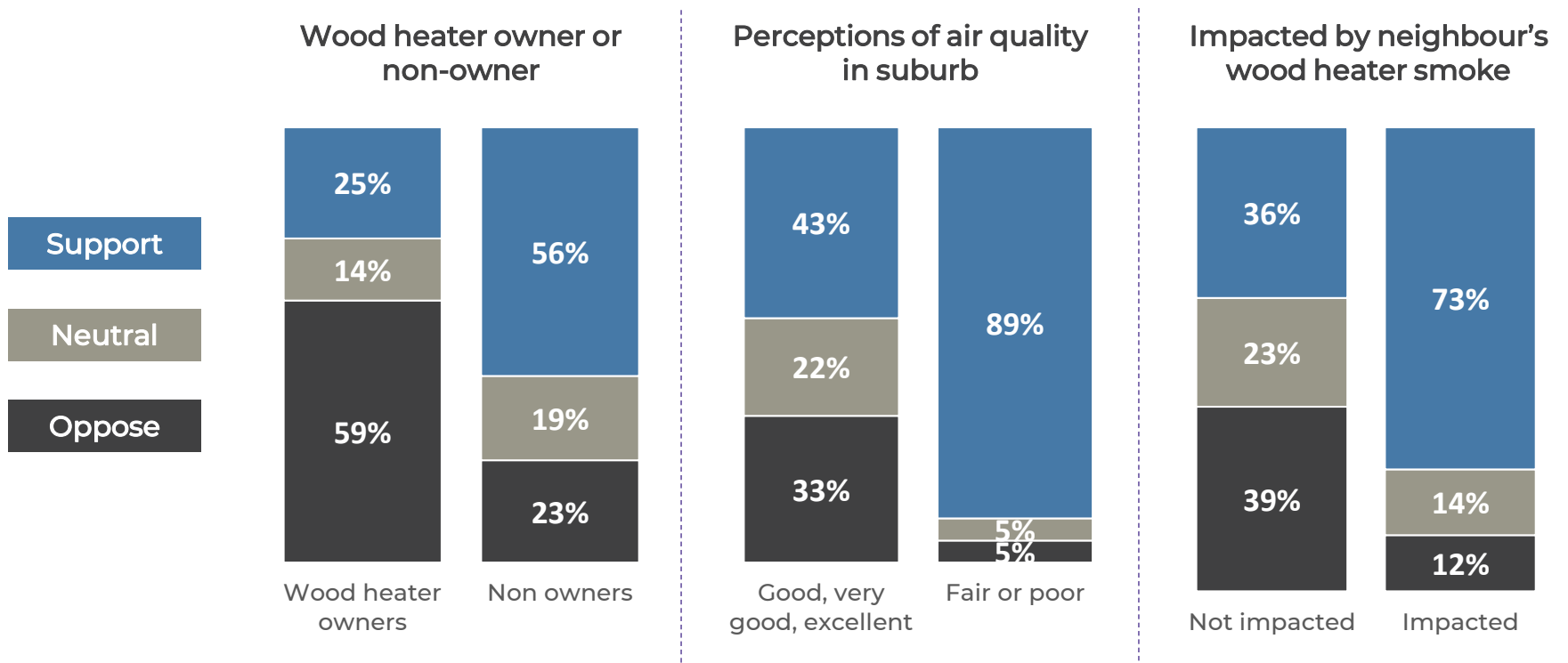
Among those who oppose a phase out, four in ten are open to removing heaters that don't meet emission standards

Q. Would you support or oppose a requirement to remove older wood heaters that don't meet current emission standards?



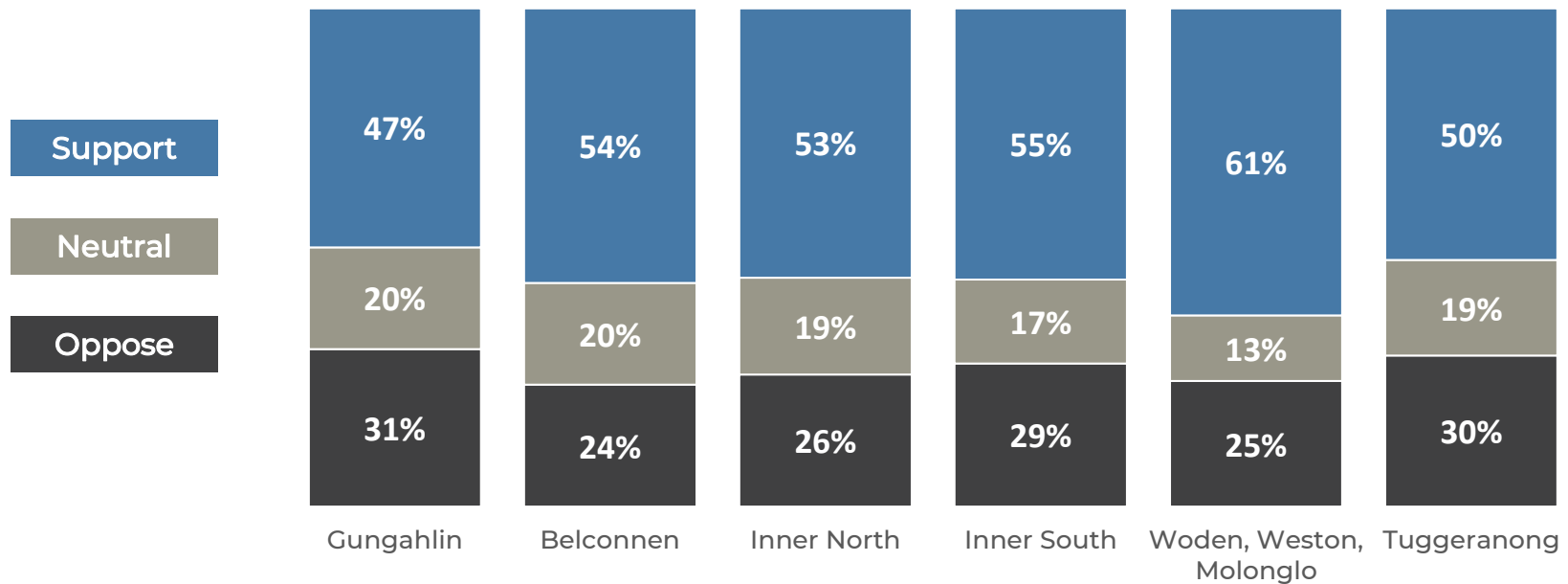
Owners are more likely to be opposed to a phase out, while those who have air quality and smoke concerns are widely supportive

Q. Would you support or oppose a gradual phase out of wood heaters across all suburbs in the ACT?



There are only minor variations in support for a phase out across different areas of the ACT

Q. Would you support or oppose a gradual phase out of wood heaters across all suburbs in the ACT?





Support for phasing out – a selection of themes identified from respondent comments

Q. Why would you support a gradual phase out of wood heaters across all suburbs in the ACT?

Negative impacts of smoke on health / health conditions

Harmful to the environment – air pollution

Impact of logging / wood collection on habitats

Support phasing out if doesn't cost those on low income

Smell of smoke in the air, on clothes, laundry etc

Hassle / cost dealing with smoke from neighbours entering home

People with wood fires not following rules (e.g. types of wood)

Not appropriate in urban areas



Opposition for phasing out – a selection of themes identified from respondent comments

Q. Why would you oppose a gradual phase out of wood heaters across all suburbs in the ACT?

Believe wood heating is cheaper than electric / other sources

Not having a big impact – small number in the ACT

Not polluting, okay if use correctly

Other sources of pollution are more pressing (e.g. transport)

Difficult for low income households to transition / afford other sources

Reliable, back up if other sources fail – shouldn't rely on one source

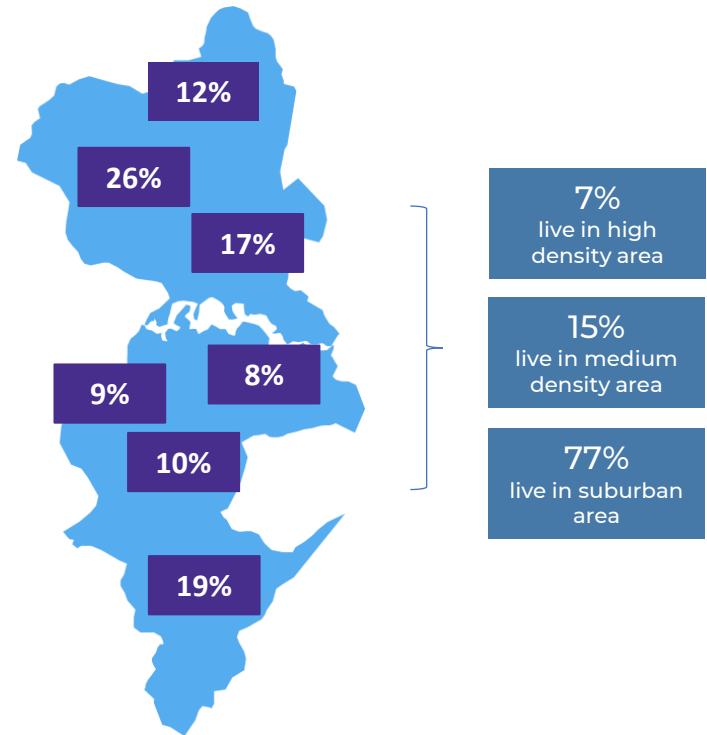
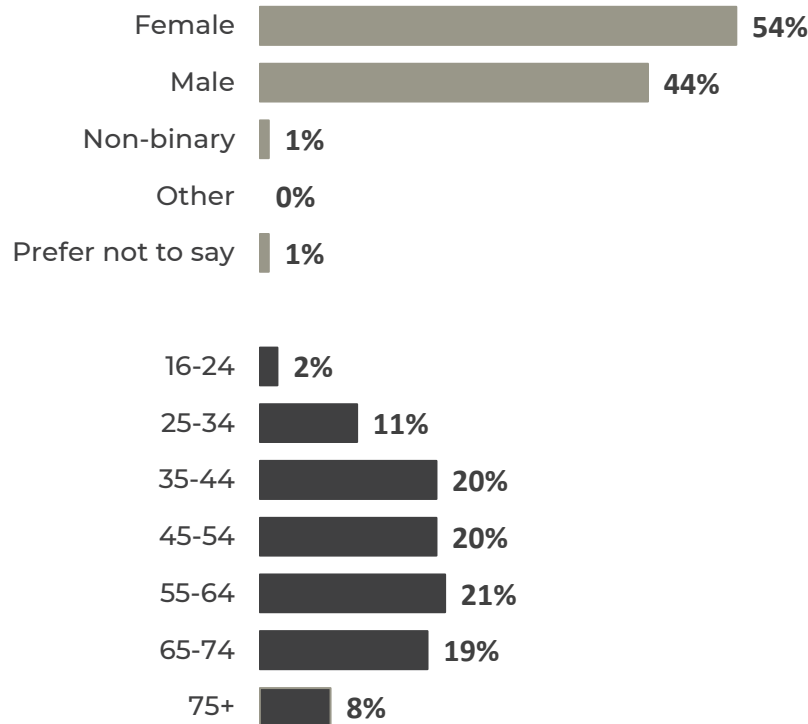
Attachment towards wood heater ambience, atmosphere etc

Like to have the choice, not being told what to do by government

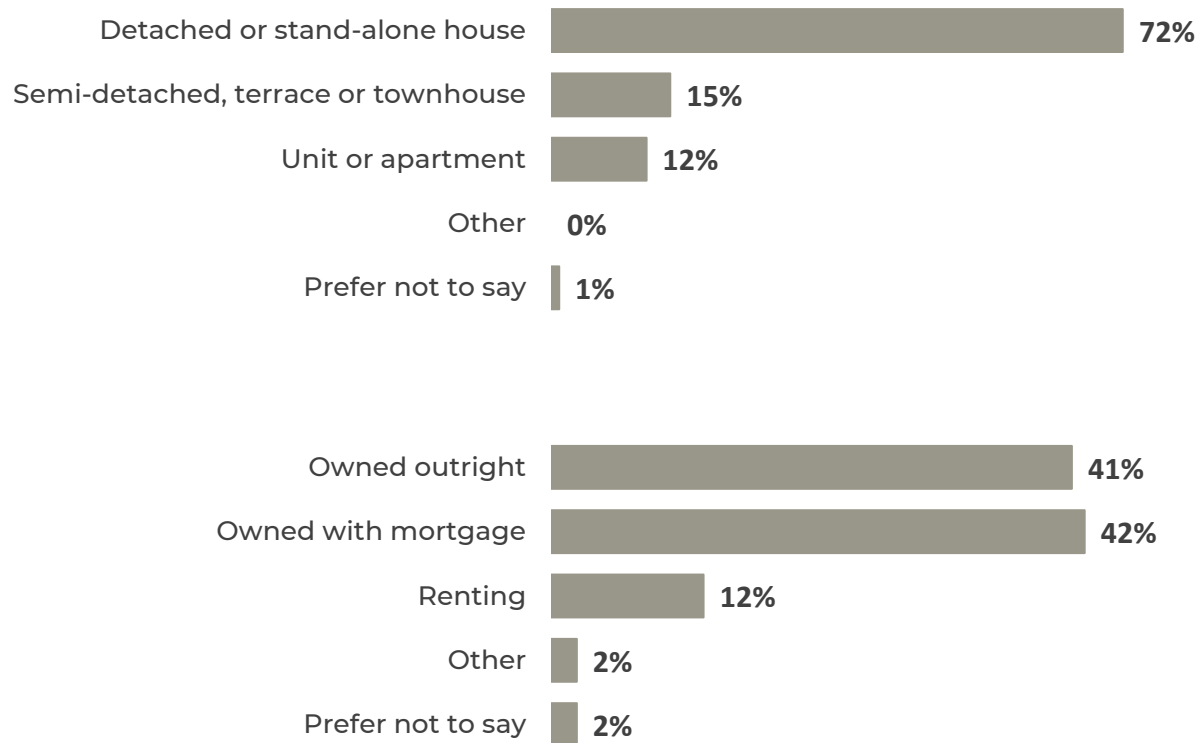
Appendix



Survey sample profile – gender, age and location



Dwelling characteristics – unweighted





About the YourSay Panel

- Around **6,000** Canberrans have signed up to have their say through the YourSay Community Panel
- The Panel captures the pulse of the community at a given point in time through regular online surveys about a range of topics
- Panellists are recruited through a mix of online and offline channels but must have internet access and an email account to take part
- The Panel closely resembles the overall ACT population by age, gender, region as well as a range of other demographic characteristics
- Members are invited to take part in approximately two activities per month and participation is completely voluntary
- The membership base is highly active with around 4 in 10 members completing each survey on average
- Regular checks are made to ensure results are accurate by comparing them to other independent survey research

6,004

Current members

27%

Survey response rate

50+

Major surveys
completed



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