



Australia's National
Science Agency



Monitoring human dimensions of the Great Barrier Reef

Key findings from the Social and Economic Long-Term
Monitoring Program (SELTMP)

Survey of residents of the Great Barrier Reef catchment region,
June–July 2021

What is SELTMP?

People are a part of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). The Social and Economic Long Term Monitoring Program (SELTMP) gathers data about Reef users, communities and industries, and their changing relationship with the GBR over time. This information assists Reef managers and decision makers, to help improve planning and management for the Reef's future.

Funding acknowledgement: SELTMP is funded by the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, and is being delivered in partnership with CSIRO, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program.



SELTMP objectives

The key science objectives of SELTMP are to:

- Monitor changes in community attitudes towards the GBR, its values and management, and the perceived threats to those values.
- Predict attitudinal and behavioural responses to future management interventions in the Reef, and changes in Reef health.
- Monitor changes in social and economic well-being of Reef-dependent communities and the benefits they derive from the GBR.
- Assess and monitor social and economic vulnerability, and adaptive capacity of GBR communities to changes in Reef condition and the wider system.

SELTMP contributes to the evaluation of five human dimension objectives of the Reef 2050 Plan, which correspond to indicators under the following headings:

1. Uses of the Reef and benefits
2. Attachment to the Reef
3. People protecting the Reef
4. Reef heritage and values
5. Public perceptions of Reef governance

Methods

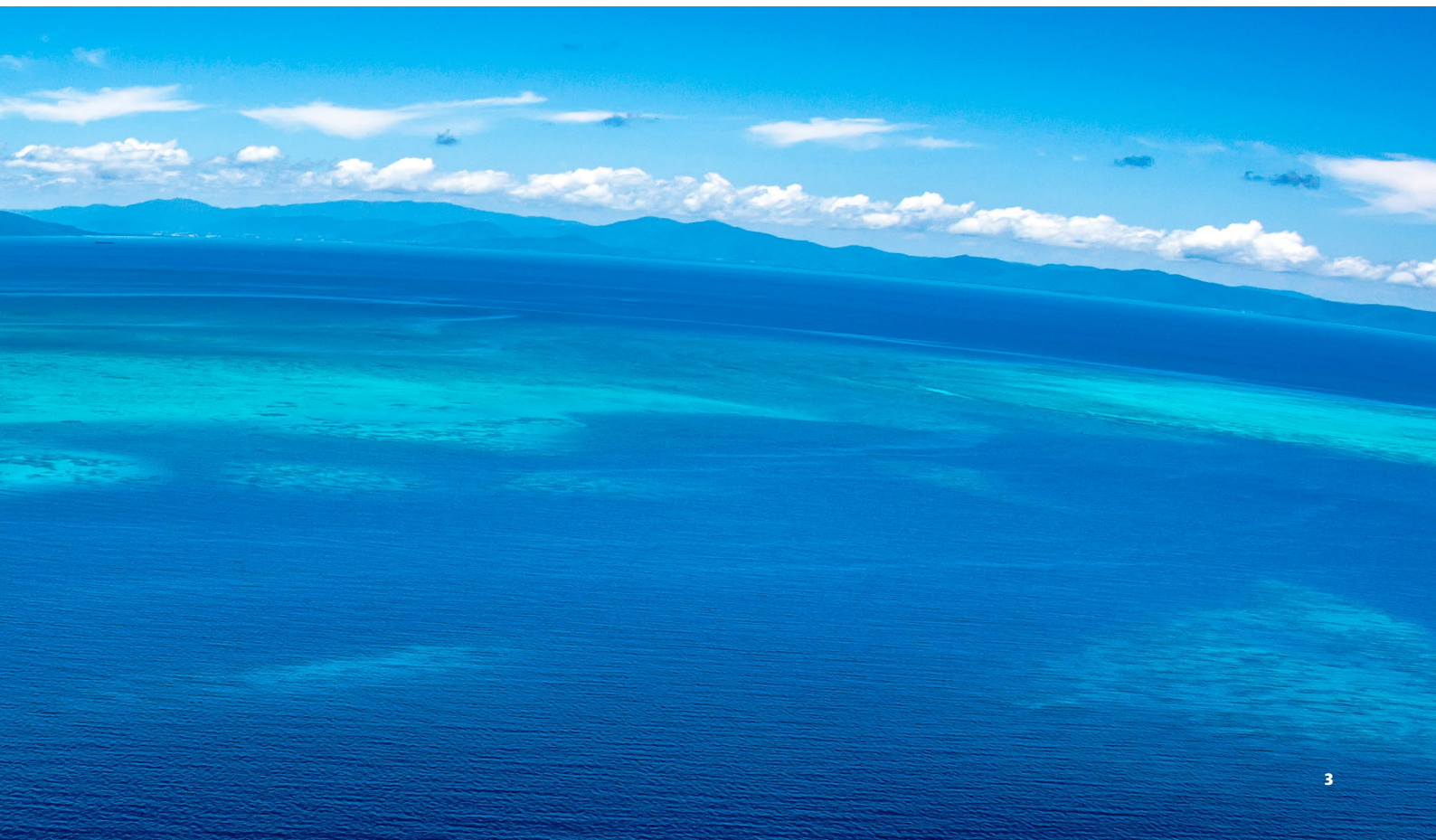
The 2021 SELTMP survey was administered across the Great Barrier Reef region, primarily online, supplemented with telephone surveys for more remote areas. This approach was successful in achieving a large and geographically representative sample of residents across the GBR catchment region (see map on page 5).

In June 2021, 2,488 GBR residents completed the SELTMP survey. Among these:

- 1,535 were recruited through an online panel.
- 653 were recruited via social media.
- 300 respondents participated via a telephone survey.

Participation in the survey was voluntary and all respondents remain anonymous, in accordance with CSIRO Human Research Ethics (069/21) and Privacy requirements.

SELTMP has surveyed GBR catchment residents in 2013, 2017 and 2021. The results in this brochure are mostly from the 2021 survey. Some items from 2013 and 2017 are included for comparison.



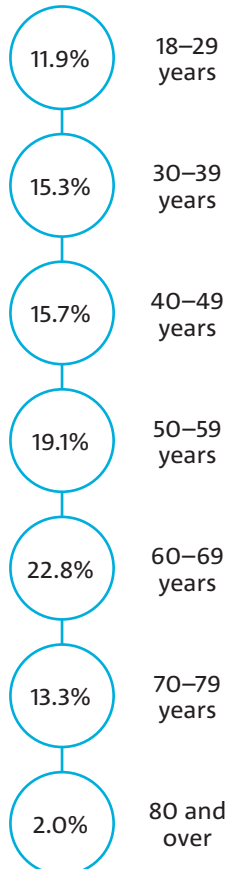
Who we surveyed

2,488

residents participated



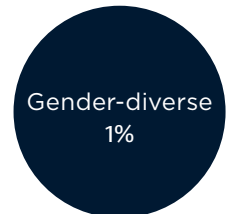
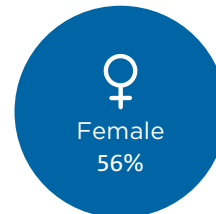
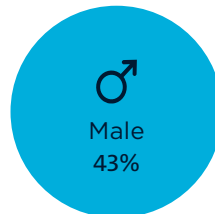
Age



3.8%
of the total
sample identified
as Aboriginal and/
or Torres Strait
Islander

Sample description:

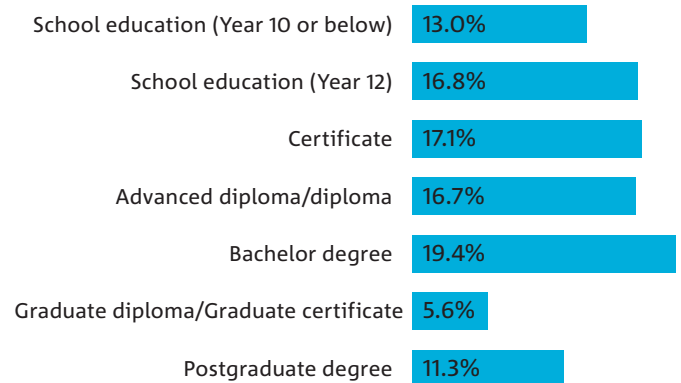
Gender



Education



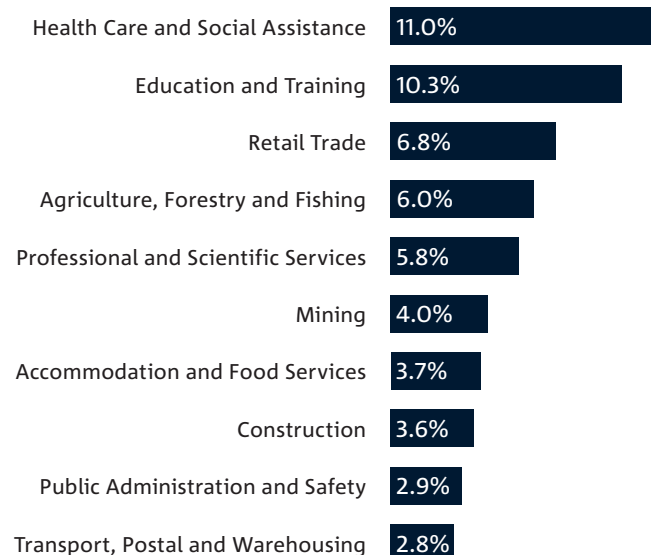
19.4%
have a Bachelor
degree



Employment sector*

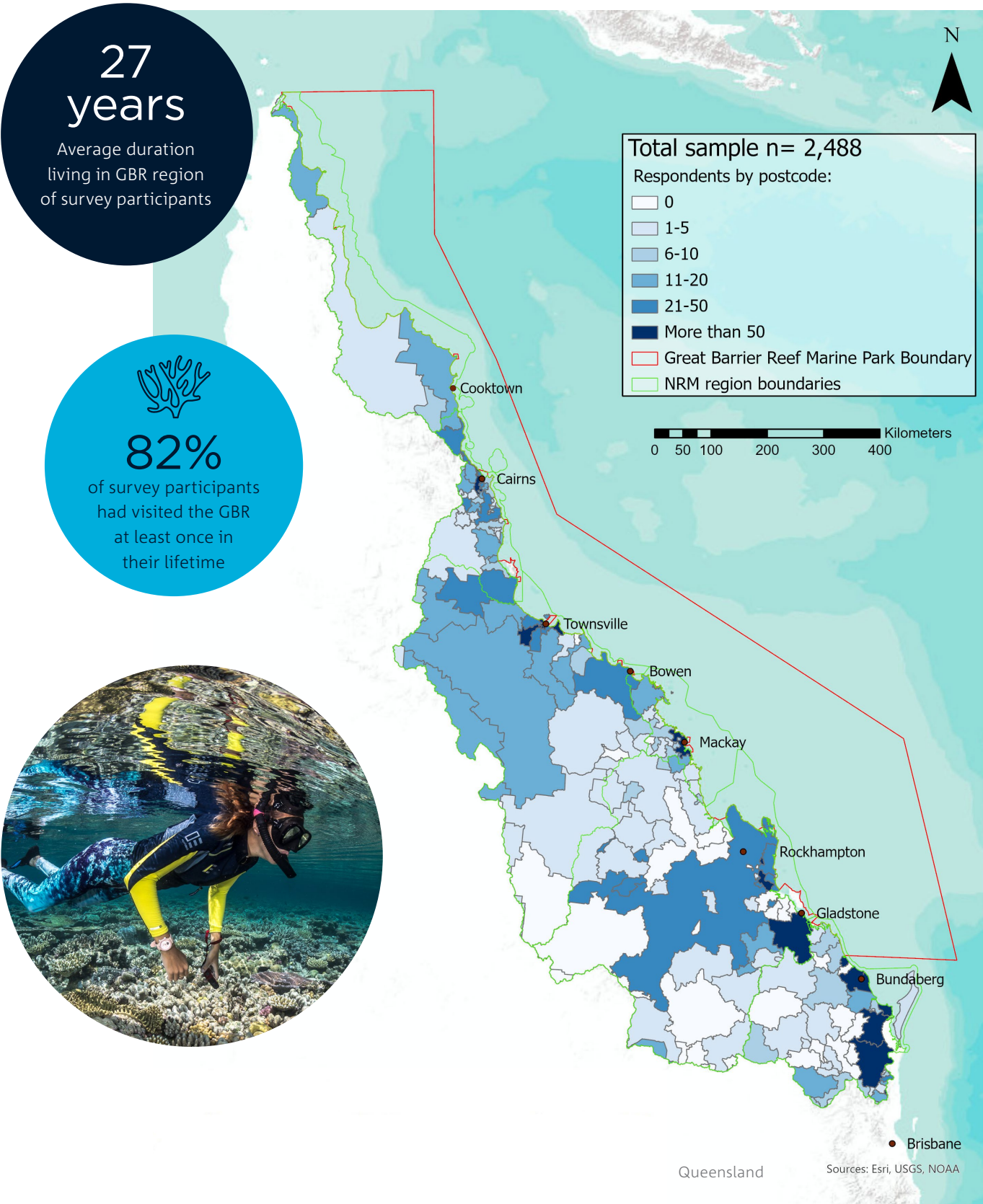


11%
were employed
in the Health
Care and Social
Assistance sector



*Top ten ANZSIC categories, ranked by number of survey respondents.

Location of respondents



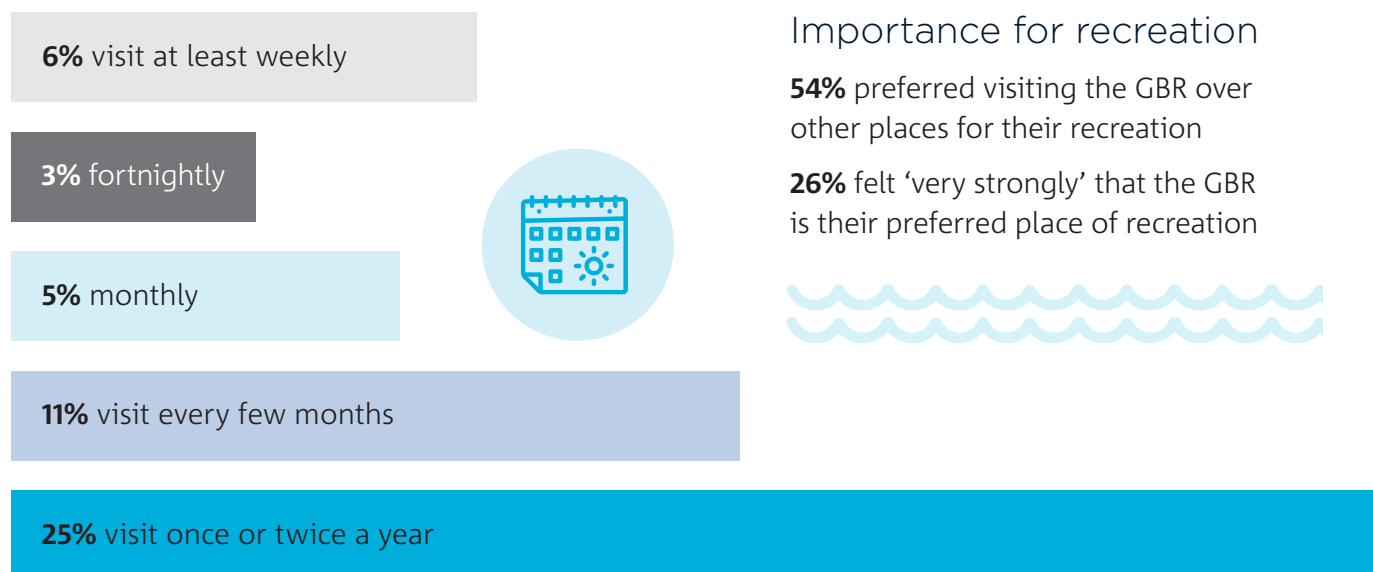
Where would you rather be?



How often do local residents visit the Reef?

50% of catchment residents visited the GBR for recreation in the previous 12 months. This was lower than visitation rates in 2013 (82%) and 2017 (85%).

This decrease was potentially influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Approximate frequency of visitation of the GBR in the previous 12 months for recreation (2021) (n=2,488)

Livelihoods and the Reef

20% of catchment residents depend on the GBR for some of their household income:



44% of these people are associated with tourism



11% are associated with fishing



16% are associated with government



11% are associated with science and education

9% are 'strongly dependent' (i.e. GBR contributes 50% or more of their household income)

The Reef provides many other benefits to people

84%

agreed that they feel **restored and relaxed** after visiting the GBR



84%

agreed that visiting the GBR helps them **unwind and de-stress**



81%

agreed that visiting the GBR makes them **feel better physically**



What does the Reef mean to you?



“What are the first words that come to mind when you think of the GBR?”



90% feel proud that the GBR is a World Heritage Area

82% agreed that living in the GBR region contributes positively to their overall wellbeing

63% agreed that living close to the GBR is important to them because of their lifestyle

53% agreed that the Great Barrier Reef is part of their identity

● = positive words, ● = negative words, and ● = neutral words

Larger words were mentioned more often (2021, n=2,488).

Reef heritage and values

The Reef has rich and diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural heritage that is highly valued by residents of the catchment region.



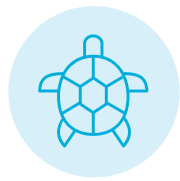
92% valued the Reef's **biodiversity** highly



78% value the Reef's contribution to the **local economy**



82% value the Reef as an **international icon**



56% value the Reef's **Traditional Owner heritage**



79% value the Reef for **science and education**



94% of residents agreed that 'the **aesthetic beauty** of the GBR is outstanding'



Perceptions of the Reef

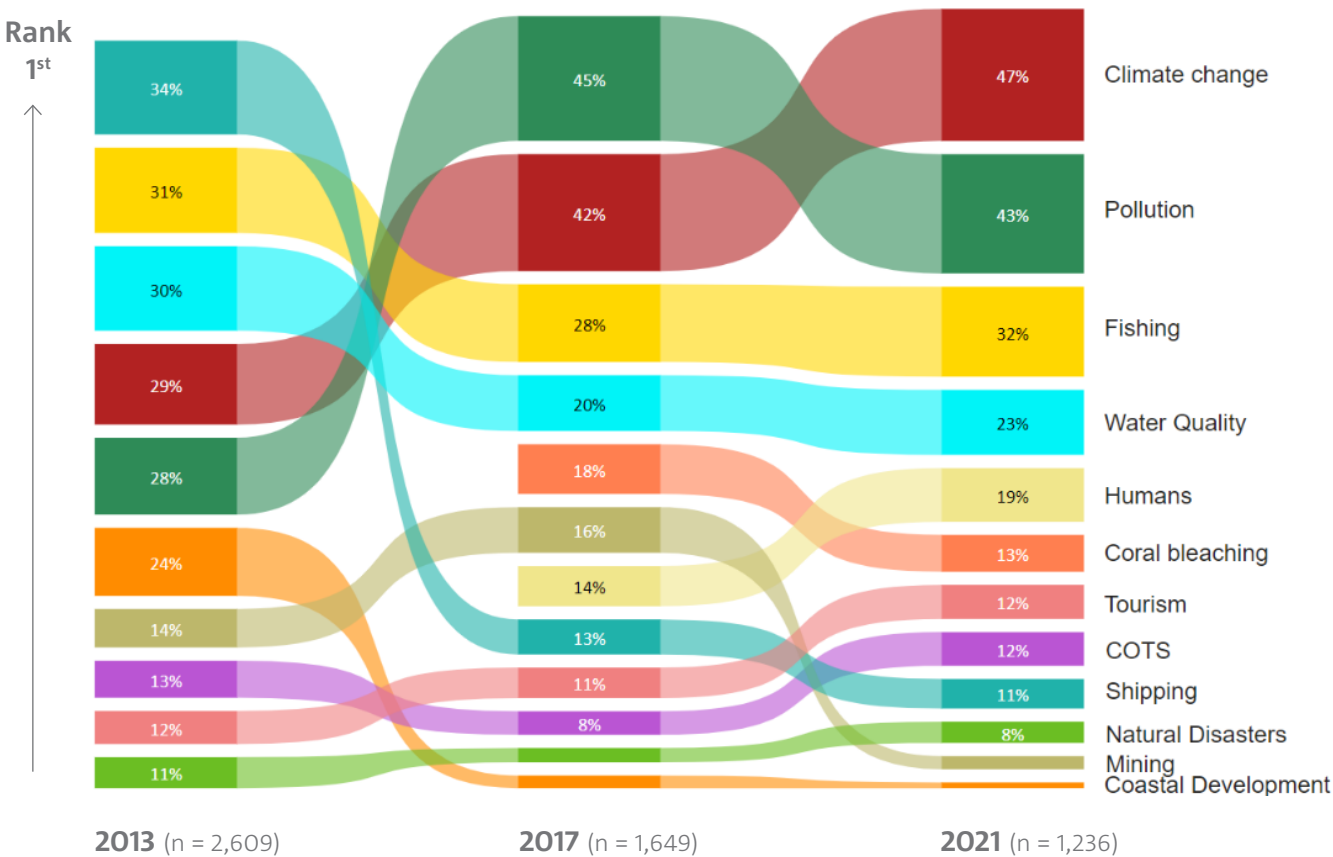
Health



Threats

Community perceptions of threats to the Reef have changed significantly over the last decade. Most people now recognise climate change as one of the most serious threats to the GBR.

“What do you think are the three most serious threats to the GBR?”



Reef stewardship

What are people doing to help protect the Reef?



86%

of residents (who had visited the GBR at least once in their lifetime) indicated that they **dispose of food scraps and rubbish** appropriately all the time



71%

reported that they **avoid touching corals and marine life** all the time



70%

indicated that they **practice responsible anchoring** all the time

Participation in some stewardship behaviours was relatively low – like reporting suspicious activities to the authorities, participating in GBR-related community activities (e.g., clean-ups, habitat restoration), and reporting interesting marine life sightings via the ‘Eye on the Reef’ app. There was also a proportion of residents who indicated that these actions were ‘not applicable’ to them.

Factors influencing Reef stewardship

Among people who had visited the Reef in the previous 12 months:



83%

felt **morally obligated** to reduce any impacts they might personally have on the GBR



63%

agreed that **most people in their local area were trying** to reduce their impacts on the GBR



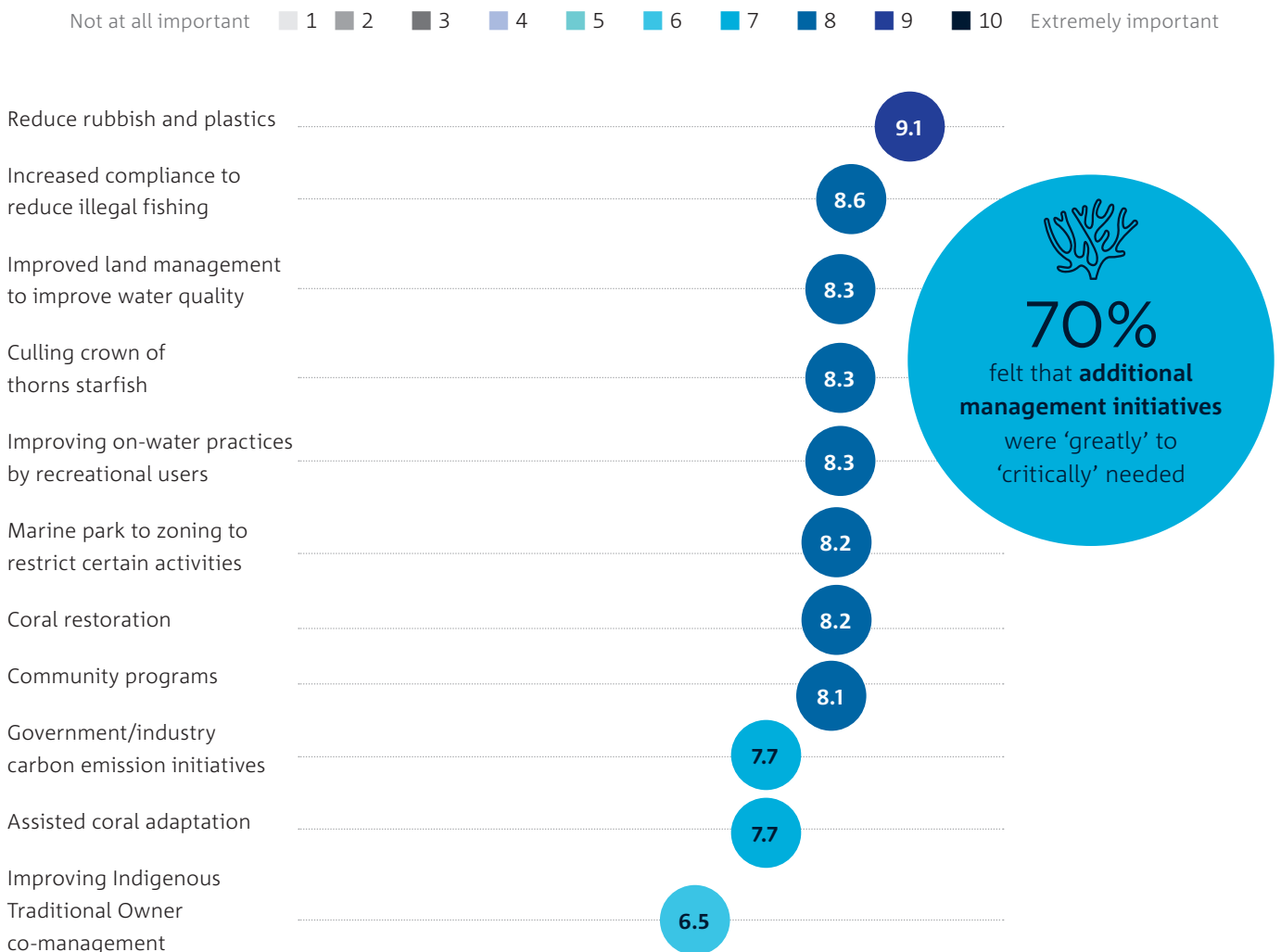
45%

felt they could not **make a personal difference** in improving the health of the GBR

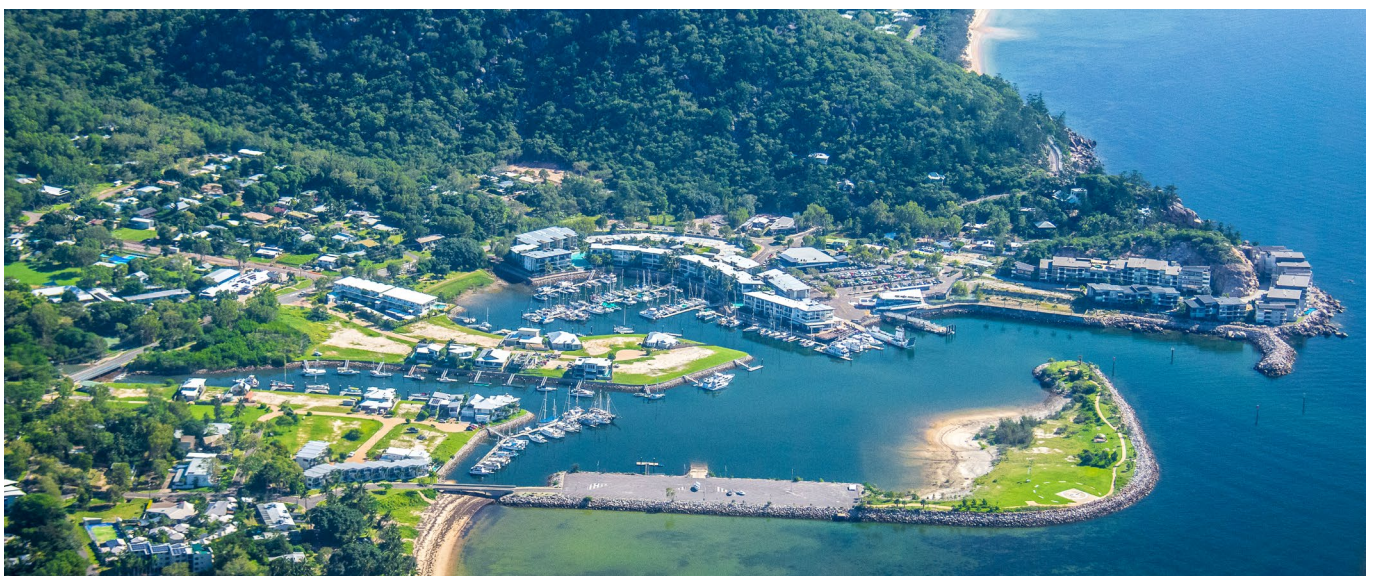


Public perceptions of Reef management

Perceived importance of management initiatives



Average ratings of the importance of various GBR management initiatives (n=2,488)





A large proportion of the catchment community do not feel they are well connected to management processes and decision making.

41% of respondents said they were **satisfied** with how the GBR was being managed

36% of the community felt that **decisions** about managing the GBR were **made in a fair way**

31% perceived **opportunities** for themselves to **have a say** in how the GBR is managed

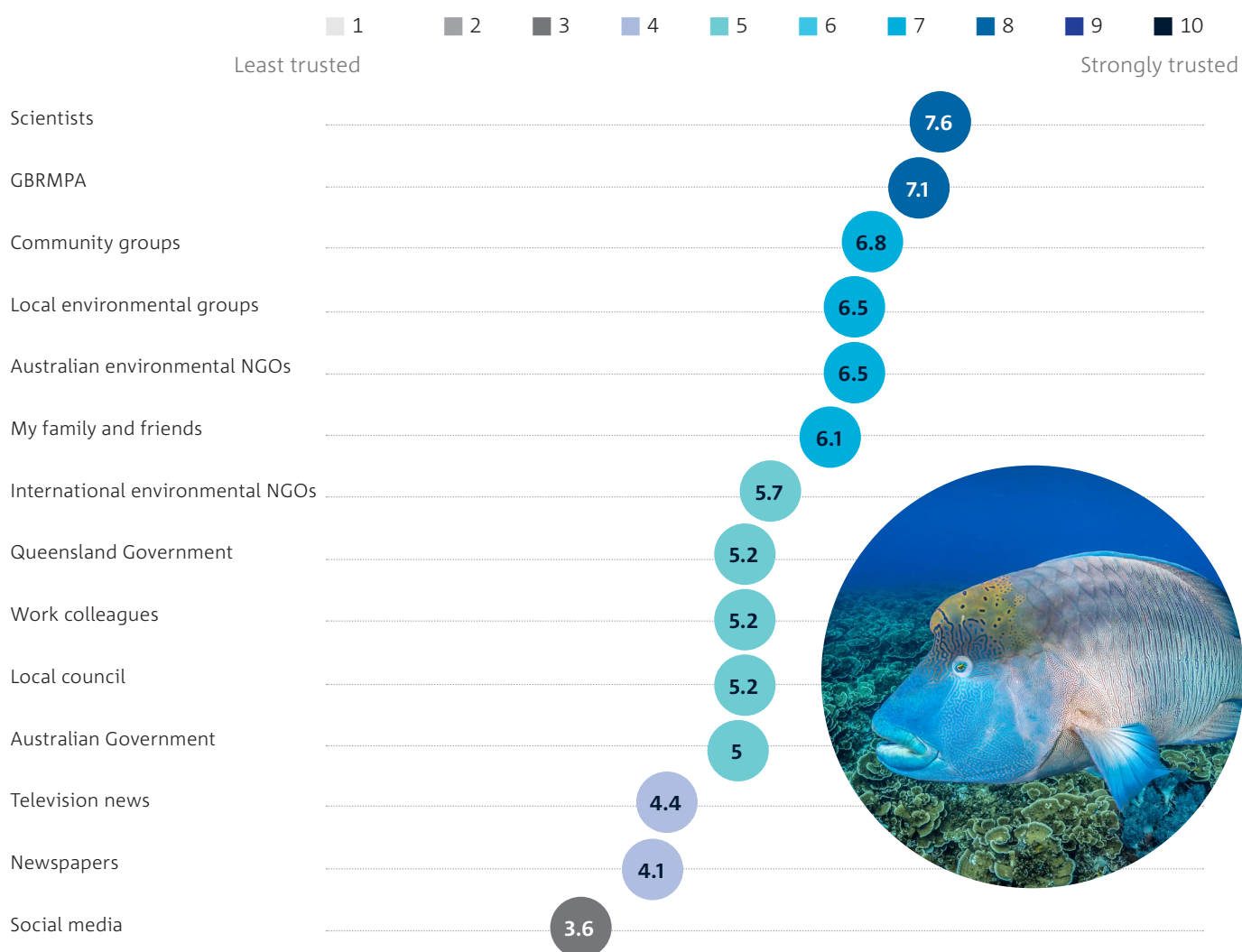
24% of people felt that they have some **personal influence** over how the GBR is managed





Most trusted sources of information about the GBR

Our scientists, and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), are the most trusted sources of information about the GBR, followed by community groups, local environmental groups, and Australian-based environmental non-government organisations. However, ratings of trust in these and other sources have changed over time.



Average ratings of trust in information about the GBR from various sources (n=2,488)

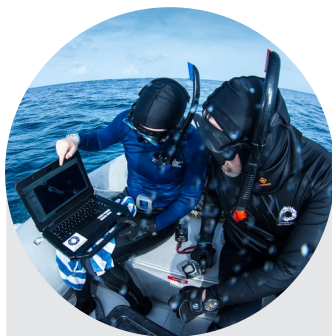


Among people who had visited the Reef in the previous 12 months:



Trust

Trust in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority increased significantly from 2013 to 2017, with no significant change from 2017 to 2021



Trust in scientists from research institutions decreased slightly from 2017 to 2021



Trust in family, friends, and work colleagues decreased slightly from 2017 to 2021



Social media and newspapers were the least trusted sources of info about the GBR



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SELTMP is guided by an End-User Reference Group, with representatives from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Queensland Government's Office of the Great Barrier Reef, the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, the GBR Regional Report Card network, and the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

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