

A changing landscape: Report on a survey of local government

'Even people who understand climate change still think sea-level rise is a slow, gradual thing and they can build a seawall that will be fine for x number of years and this is a remedy for the problem.' Jeff Goodell

We did a survey of local government organisations to understand their views on adaption responses to sea level rise. This poster presents the key results.

Our survey

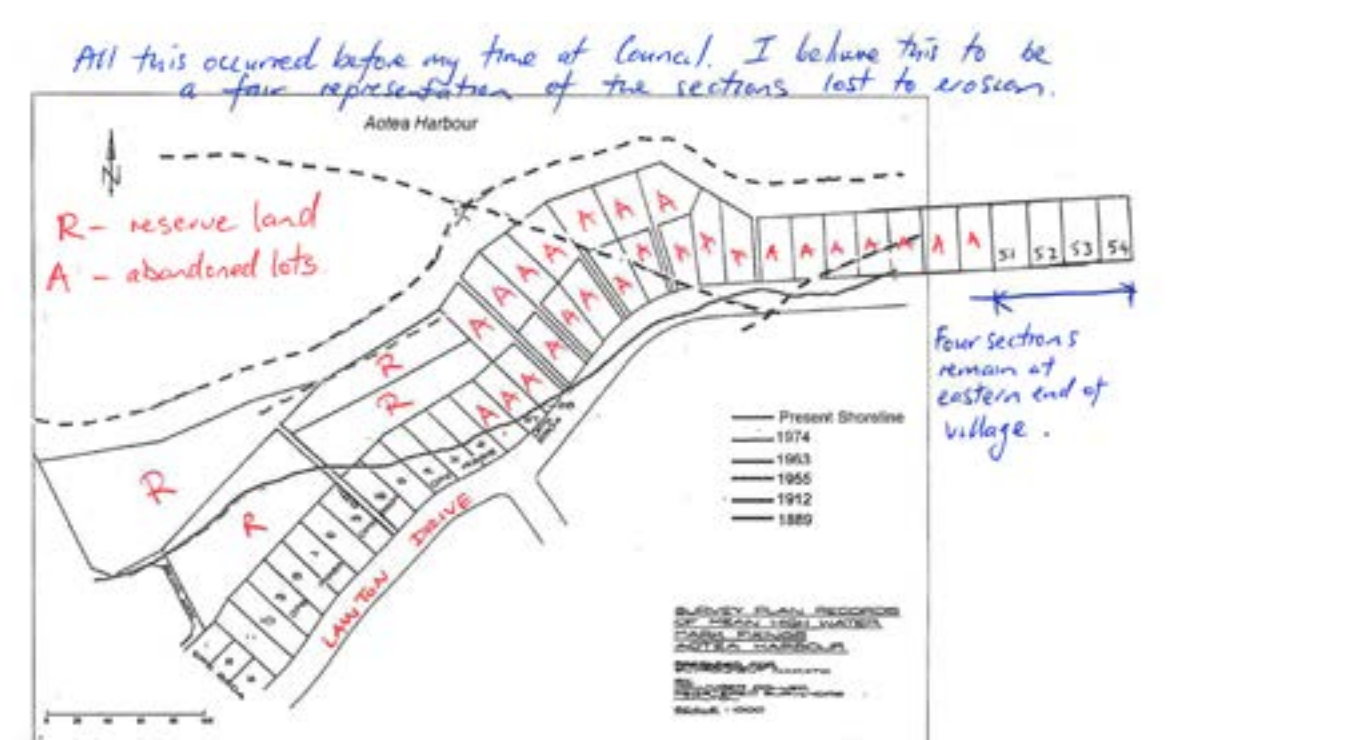
- 27 questions on community engagement, planning and resources, demands and responses, liability, adaptation barriers and the role of central government
- 63 local authorities identified with coastal interface
- 52 agreed to participate
- 33 responses (63%)
- 7 regional, 3 unitary and 23 district / city councils.



Shoreline retreat at Fortrose, Southland. Image Environment Southland Beacon Maps. <http://gis.es.govt.nz/>



Shoreline retreat at Pourewa Point, Aotea Harbour. Image Otorohanga District Council. <http://gis.es.govt.nz/>



Abandoned properties at Pourewa Point, diagram provided by Andrew Loe, Otorohanga District Council.

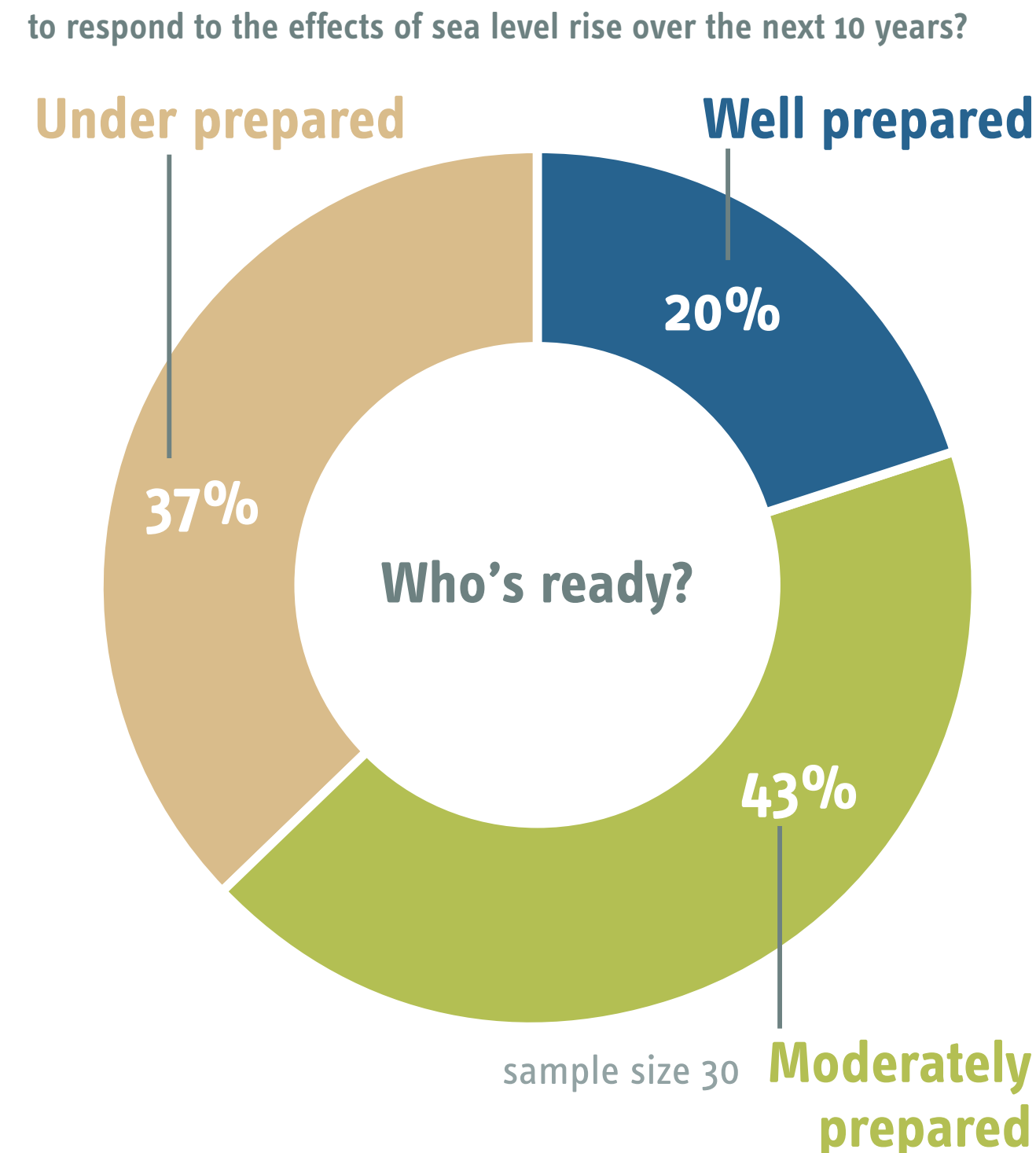


Photographs (1-2) Te Kouma, Coromandel courtesy of Kate James.



Photographs (3-5) Whakatete Bay, Thames Coast Road, Coromandel courtesy of Michael Shepherd-Finch.

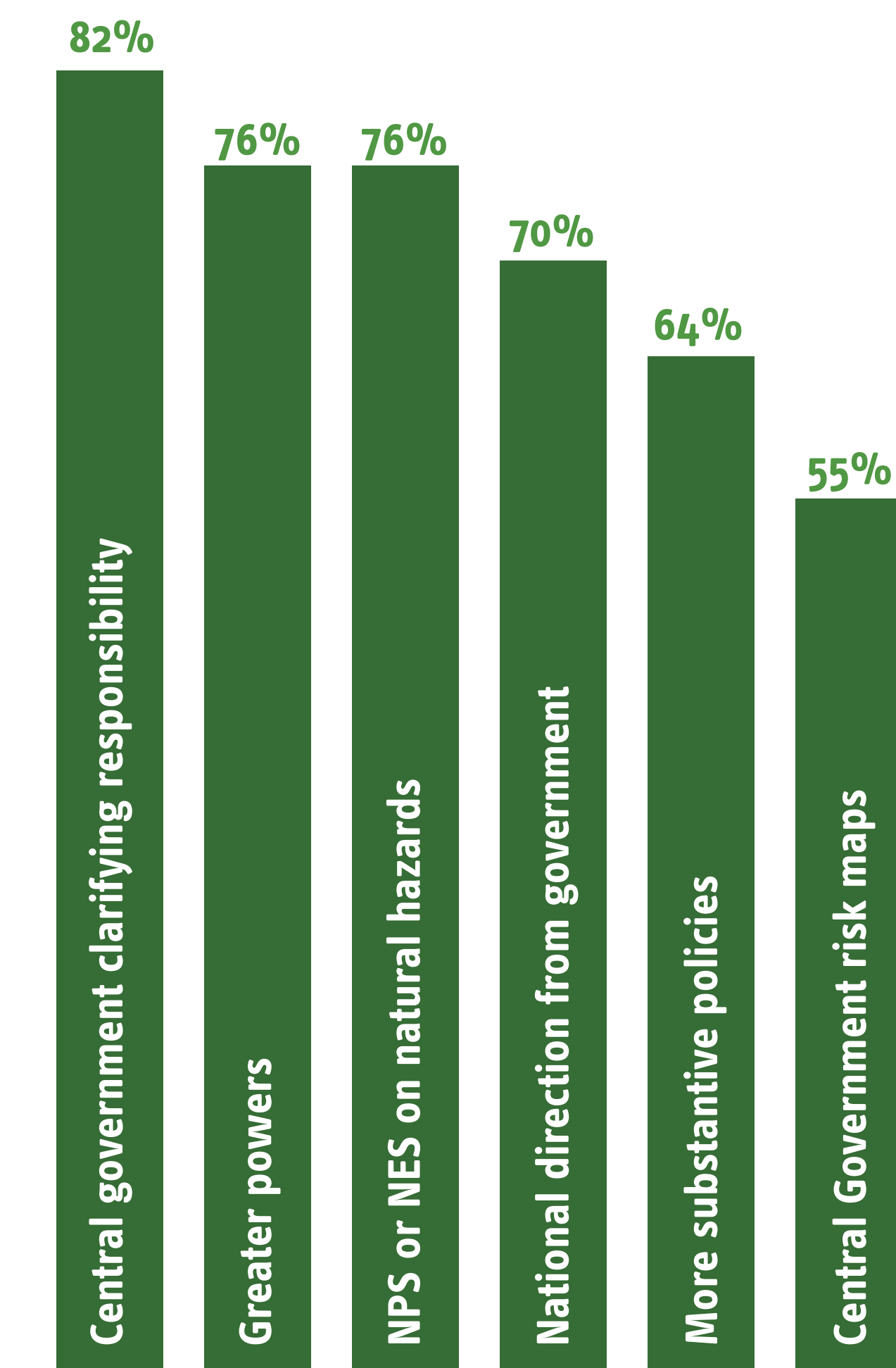
How prepared are local authorities to respond to the effects of sea level rise over the next 10 years?



What are the barriers to adaptation responses?

- NZCPS is too **idealistic** and ignores benefits of protection
- **No ministerial oversight** on how NZCPS policies are incorporated into district plans
- RMA does **not provide adequate managed retreat** mechanisms
- **Overly litigious** RMA processes
- **Rigidity** of RMA plans; appeal rights mean they are vulnerable to challenge
- **Existing use rights difficult to extinguish** and reliance on Regional Councils to do this
- Building Act allows people to **build in hazardous areas**
- **Conflict between Building Act and RMA:** double standards, different timeframes
- Service withdrawal made difficult by LGA
- Potential **council liability** for upholding plan rules
- **Uncertainty** about liability for policy actions or inactions
- Rendering land incapable of reasonable use is **open to legal challenge**
- Lack of **red-zone style legislation** for councils
- **Lack of clarity** about institutional roles and response mechanisms
- **Difficulty determining** acceptable / unacceptable degree of risk, **when to vacate**
- **No clear direction** on who pays
- Policies to support difficult decisions are **not strong enough**
- **Conflict** in balancing **development** against **hazards directives**
- **Uncertainty** in **sea level rise** estimates
- **Measures** available to acquire land are **draconian, outdated and not suitable for climate change purposes**
- **Purchasing hazardous properties** is **unaffordable** due to the high value of coastal land.

What does local government need from central government?



Who's doing climate change adaptation work for councils?

- 21 respondents rely on external advice, including consultants
- 12 respondents have some in-house staff with roles relating to natural hazards, engineering, and coastal science

What solutions do councils have?

- Central Government to take **bold legal position**
- A **National Environmental Standard** on coastal hazard management
- A **national hazards framework**
- **Amendment of the NZCPS** to reflect MfE guidance
- A **national position** for council plans to deliver on
- **Clearer central government policy**, more directive policies
- **Political consensus** at a national level
- Reduction of the **influence of politics** on decision making
- A **contingency / adaptation fund**
- **Consistency** between relevant Acts
- The **Building Act** to include conditions to **mitigate risk**
- An **easier plan development** process
- **Amendment of the RMA**
- Amendment of legislation to apportion **specific responsibility**
- District council performance profiles in respect of the NZCPS

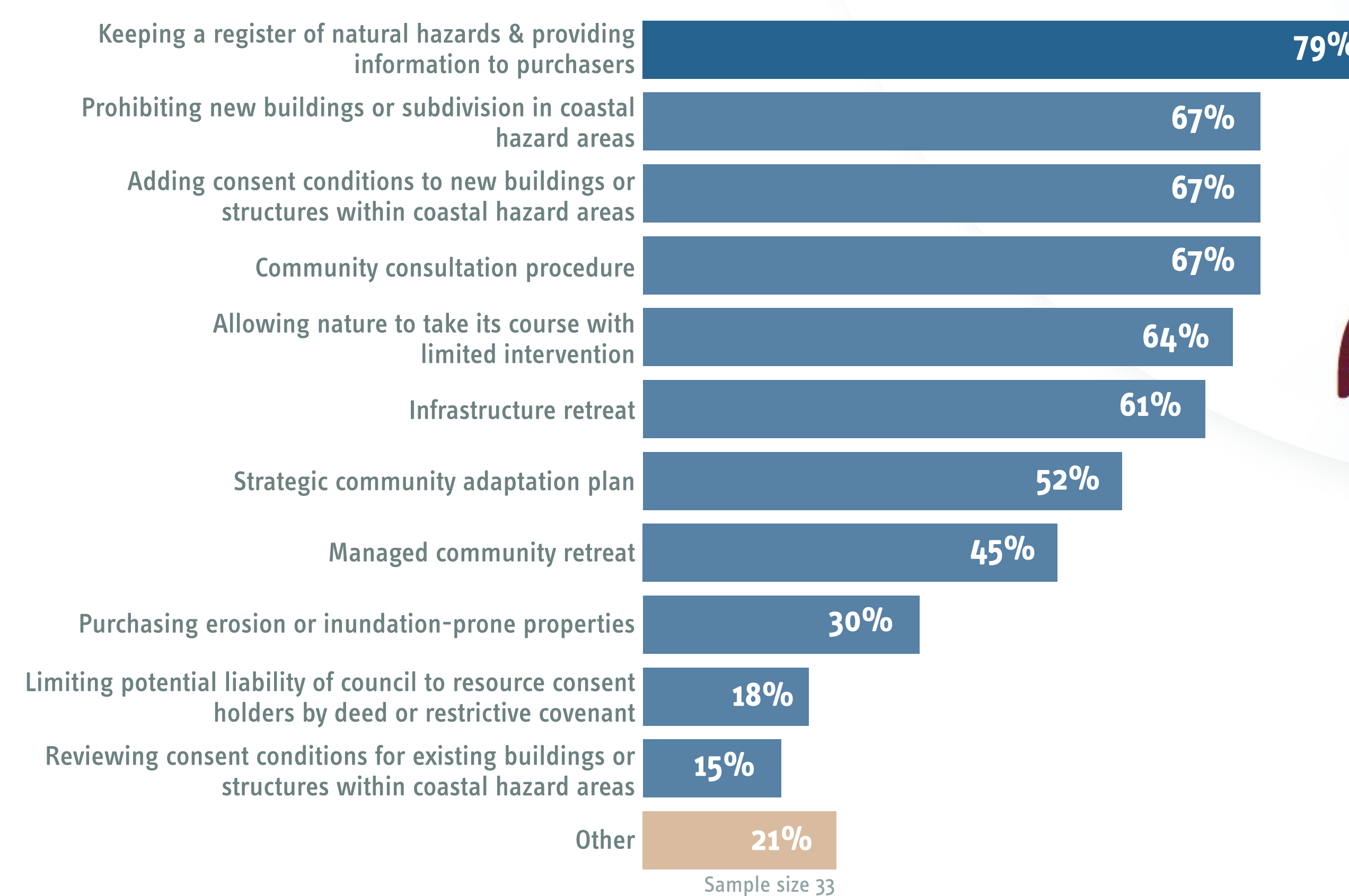
73%

say they are facing increased infrastructure costs.

How they will meet these costs fell into four broad categories



Adaptive responses considered or used by councils



What do communities expect?



Wider context

- Our project looks at sea-level rise risk from a legal perspective and in particular:
- Where costs and risks have actually fallen, in a range of case studies
 - EQC's obligations
 - Local and central government's obligations
 - Liability under the Treaty of Waitangi
 - Policy options available to local and regional government under the current legal framework.

Programme: Impacts and implications

- Project title: **Sea level rise, housing and insurance: Liability and compensation**
- Project duration: **July 2017 to June 2019**
- Project contact: **Catherine Iorns, Victoria University of Wellington.**
- Authors: **Catherine Iorns, Vanessa James, Patrick Gerard**

So what?

Our research and survey work helps us to understand what's needed to support climate adaptation decision-making for councils, including changes in legislation, policy, and funding.

Thank you to the Deep South, our research partners, our survey participants, and all those who have contributed to our work