

GLOBAL DATA – Chapter 1

Table 1. Regional distribution of the 2026 survey responses, showing the number and proportion of countries represented within each SDG region.

SDG region	Countries in survey	Countries in region	% of countries in region
Central and South Asia (CSA)	7	14	50
Europe and North America (ENA)	22	47	47
East and Southeast Asia (ESEA)	9	16	56
Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)	18	33	55
North Africa and West Asia (NAWA)	12	24	50
Oceania (OCE)	10	14	71
Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)	24	48	50
Totals	102	196	52

Table 2. Distribution of the 2026 survey responses by national income category, showing the number and proportion of countries represented within each global income group.

National income categories	# responses	Total in world	% of category
Low income	11	26	42
Lower-middle Income	29	51	57
Upper-middle Income	28	53	53
High income	31	65	48

Table 3. Distribution of the 2026 survey responses by water stress category, showing the number and proportion of countries represented within lower and higher water stress groups.

Water stress categories	# responses	Total in world	% of category
No and low water stress	72	140	51
Medium, High and Critical water stress	19	37	51

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by leadership category.

Category	N
Minister (current + recent)	7+7=14
Agency head (current + recent)	35+13= 48
Senior official	27
Other national water leader	13
Total	102

Table 5. Total number and distribution of countries represented across the three survey years (2021, 2023 and 2026), with breakdowns by SDG region, water stress category and income level.

¹Figures and tables presented in this report and may be updated as data analysis progresses.

Number and distribution of countries represented across the three survey years (2021/2023/2026)		
Total	151	
Breakdown by region		
SDG region	N	%
Central and South Asia (CSA)	10	7
Europe and North America (ENA)	34	23
East and Southeast Asia (ESEA)	13	9
Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)	22	15
North Africa and West Asia (NAWA)	22	15
Oceania (OCE)	13	9
Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)	37	25
Global total	151	100
Water stress		
Category	N	%
No	87	64
Low	20	15
Medium	10	7
High	6	4
Critical	14	10
Total	137	100
Income level		
Category	N	%
Low	21	14
Lower middle	38	26
Upper middle	43	29
High	46	31
Total	148	100

Table 6. Countries represented in all three survey years (2021, 2023 and 2026), with breakdowns by SDG region, water stress category and income level.

Countries represented in all three survey years (2021, 2023 and 2026)		
Total of countries that answered the 3 years of survey	34	
Breakdown by region		
SDG region	N	%
Central and South Asia (CSA)	4	12
Europe and North America (ENA)	5	15
East and Southeast Asia (ESEA)	3	9
Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)	5	15

North Africa and West Asia (NAWA)	6	18
Oceania (OCE)	4	12
Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)	7	21
Global total	34	100
Water stress		
Category	N	%
No	16	52
Low	7	23
Medium	3	10
High	3	10
Critical	2	6
Total	31	100
Income Level		
Category	N	%
Low	4	12
Lower middle	11	33
Upper middle	8	24
High	10	30
Total	33	100

ABOUT RISKS AND CHALLENGES – Chapter 2

Survey question: In your opinion, what are the three greatest risks to maintaining or achieving good water management in your country?

Figure 1. Greatest risks to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders in the 2026 survey. Percentage of respondents ranking each risk as first, second or third.

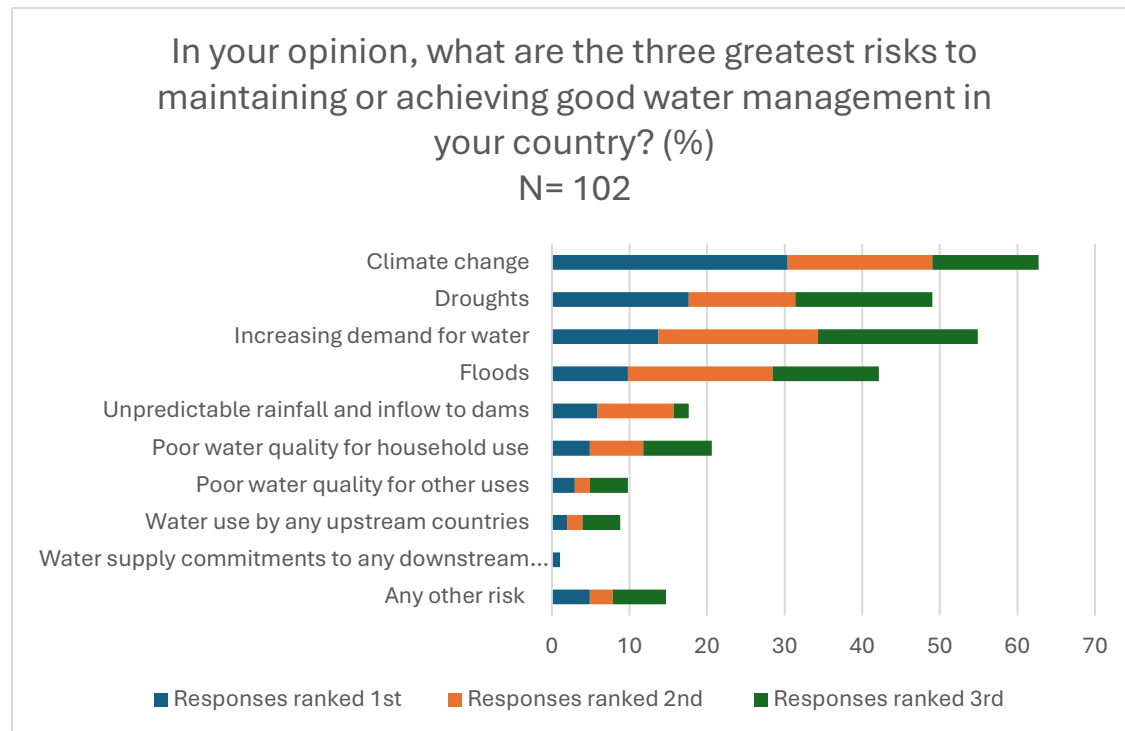


Figure 2. Greatest risks to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from low-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each risk as first, second or third.

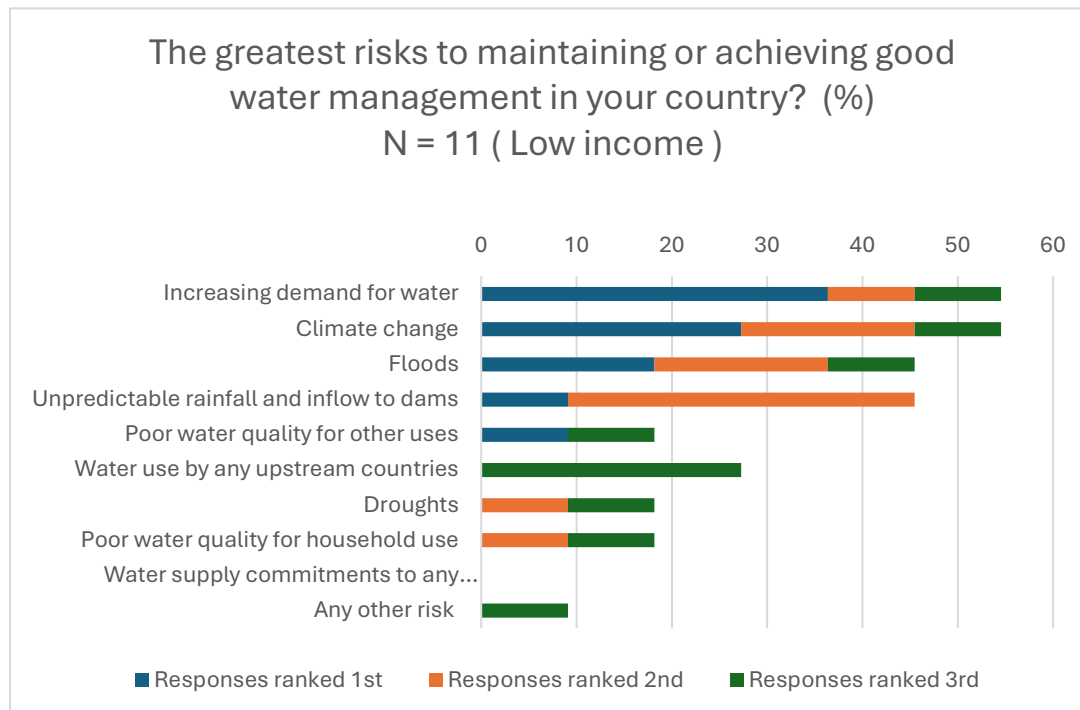


Figure 3. Greatest risks to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from lower-middle-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each risk as first, second or third.

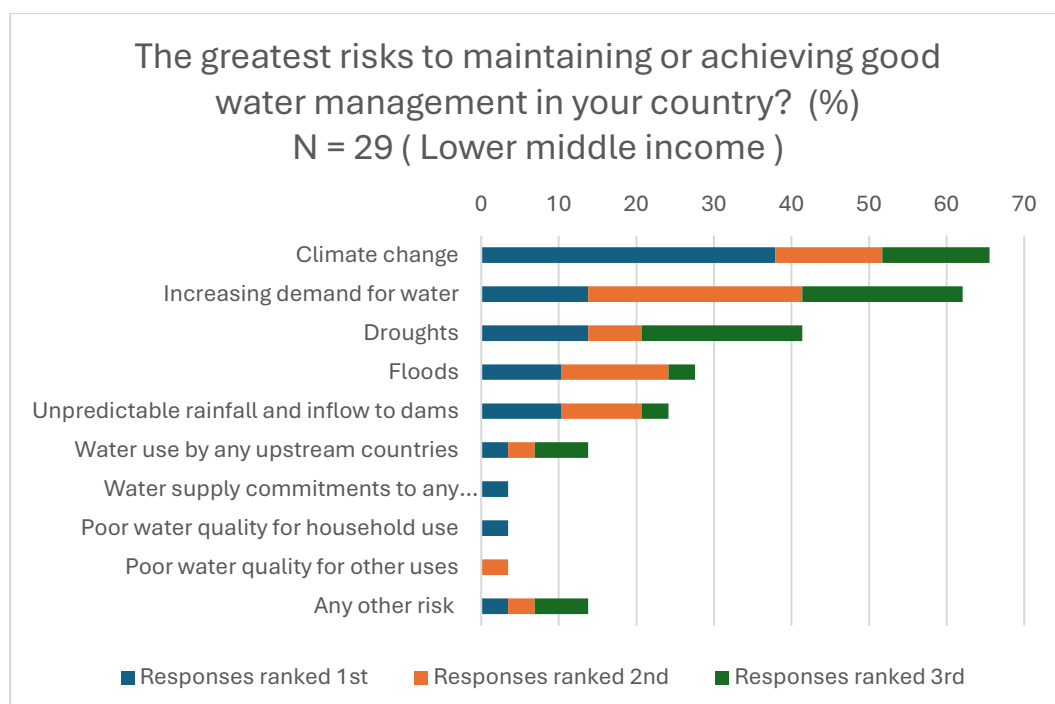


Figure 4. Greatest risks to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from upper-middle-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each risk as first, second or third.

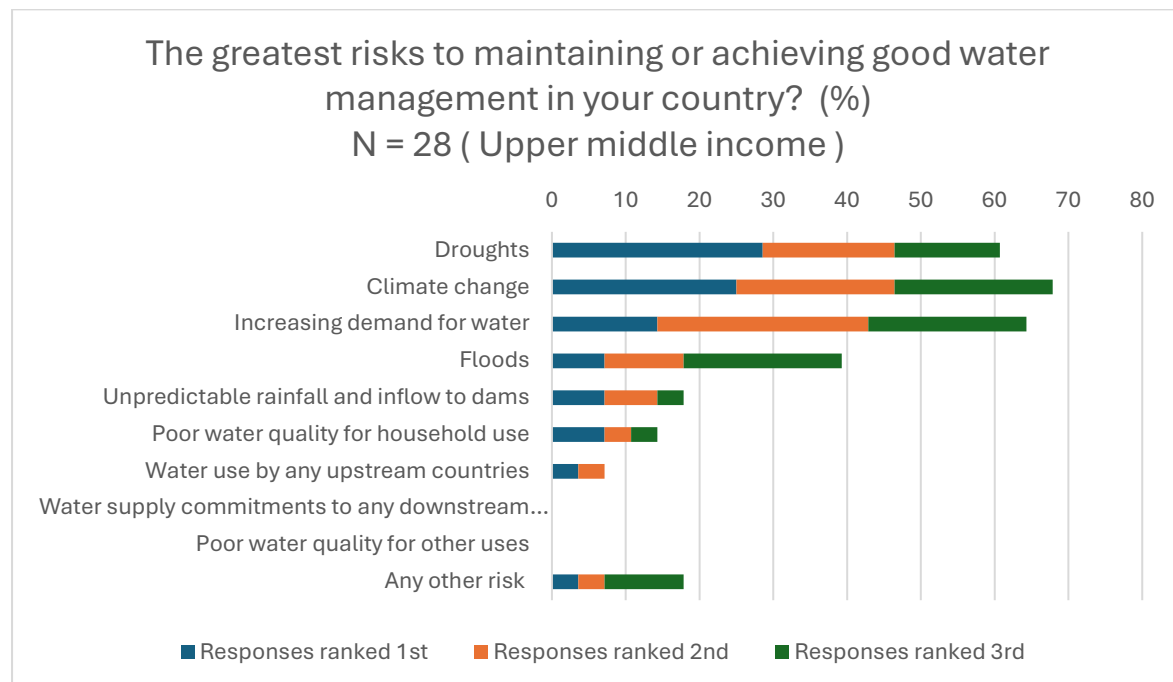


Figure 5. Greatest risks to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from high-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each risk as first, second or third.

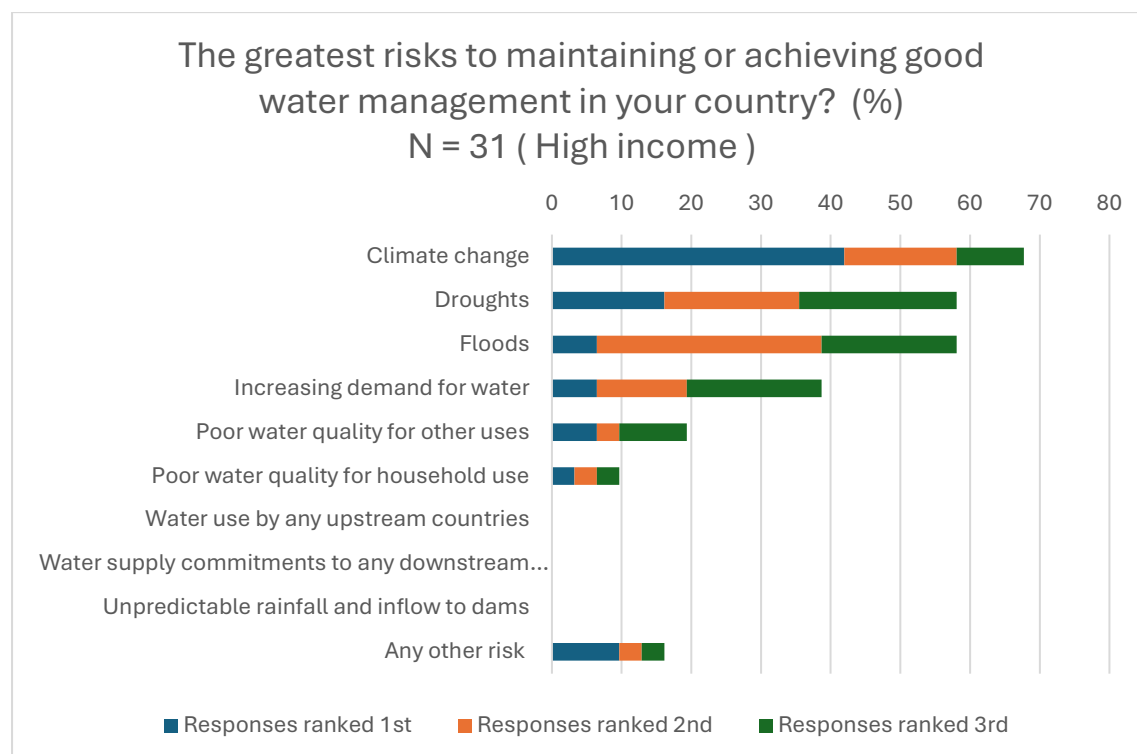


Figure 6. Greatest risks to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from countries with lower water stress. Lower water stress includes countries classified as having no or low water stress. Percentages show respondents ranking each risk as first, second or third.

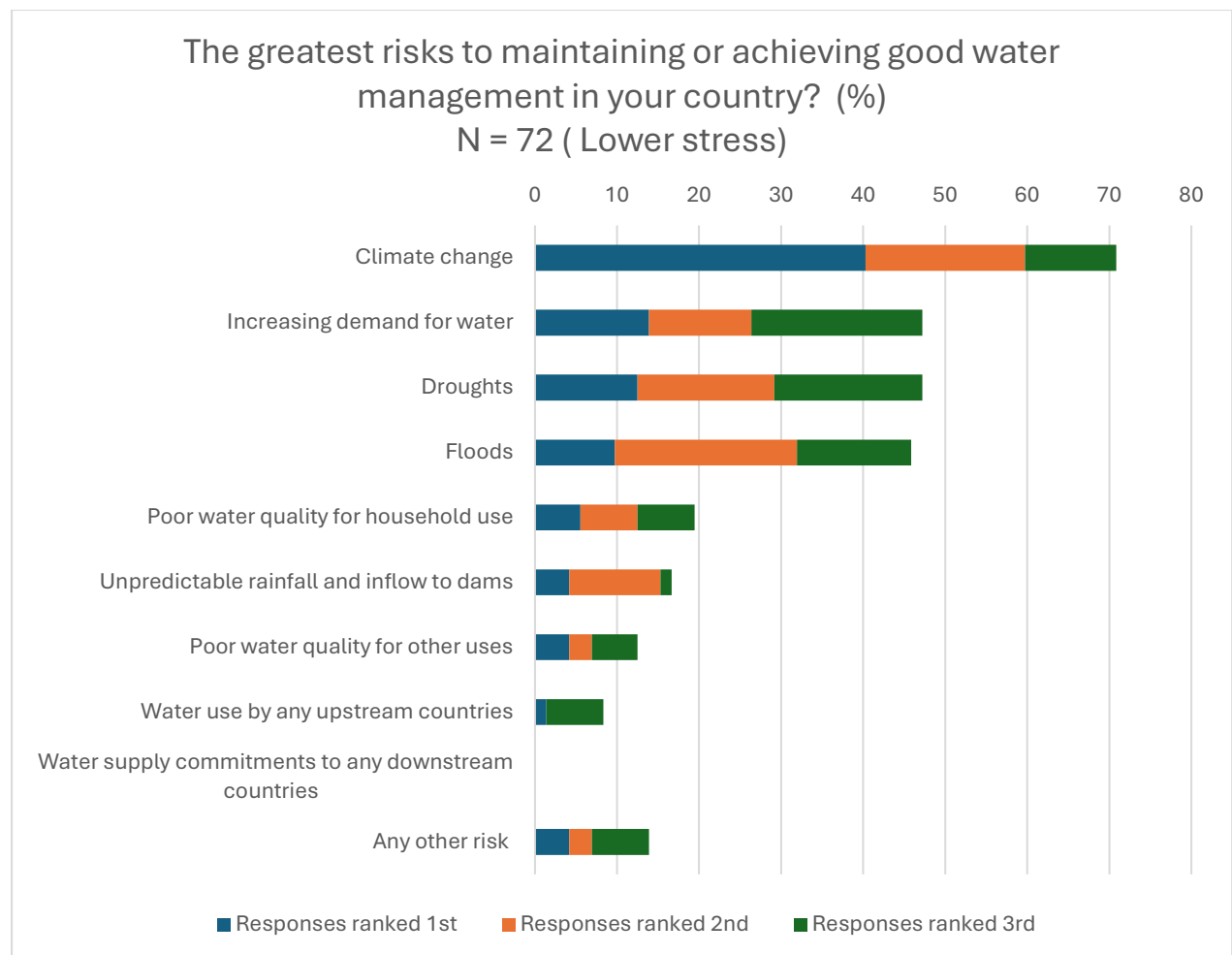
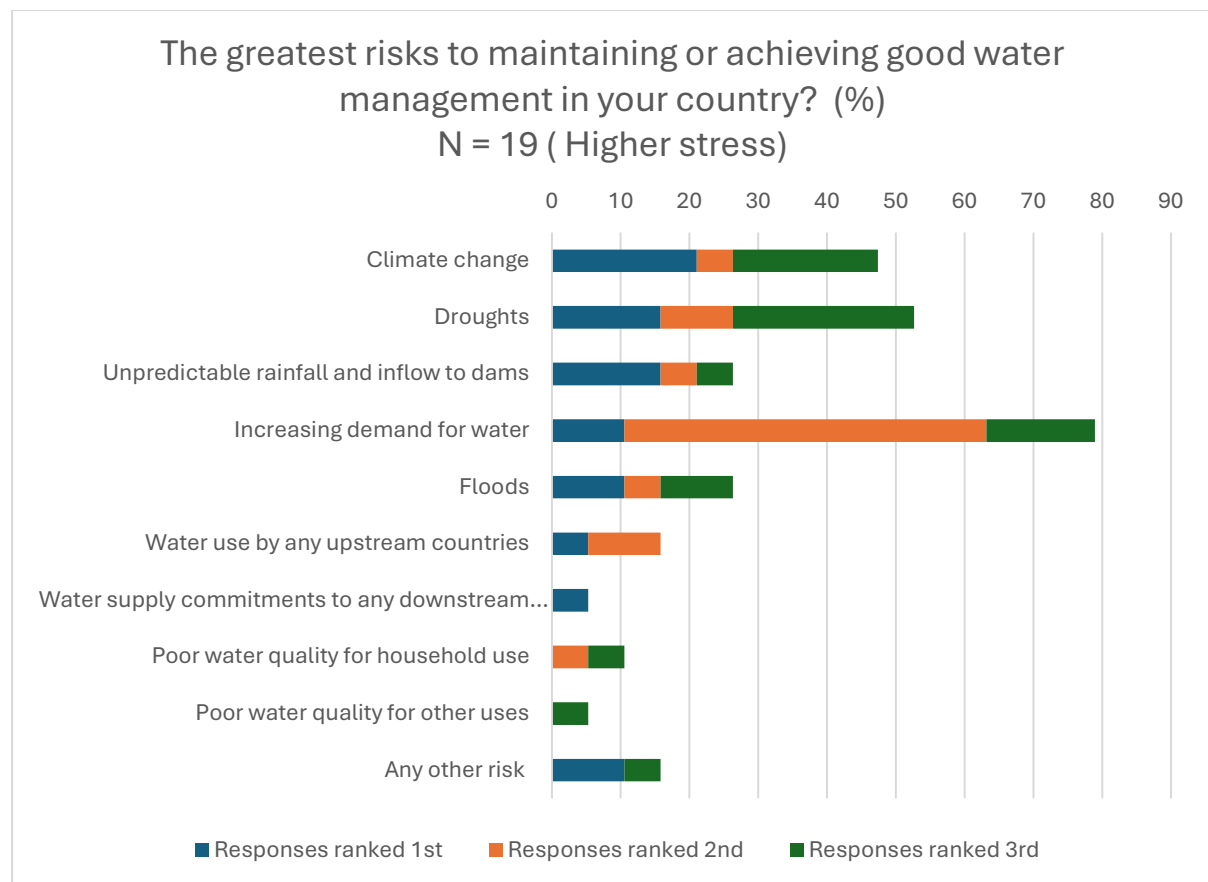


Figure 7. Greatest risks to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from countries with higher water stress. Higher water stress includes countries classified as having medium, high or critical water stress. Percentages show respondents ranking each risk as first, second or third.



Survey question: In your opinion, what are the three greatest challenges to maintaining or achieving good water management in your country?

Figure 8. Greatest challenges to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders in the 2026 survey. Percentage of respondents ranking each challenge as first, second or third.

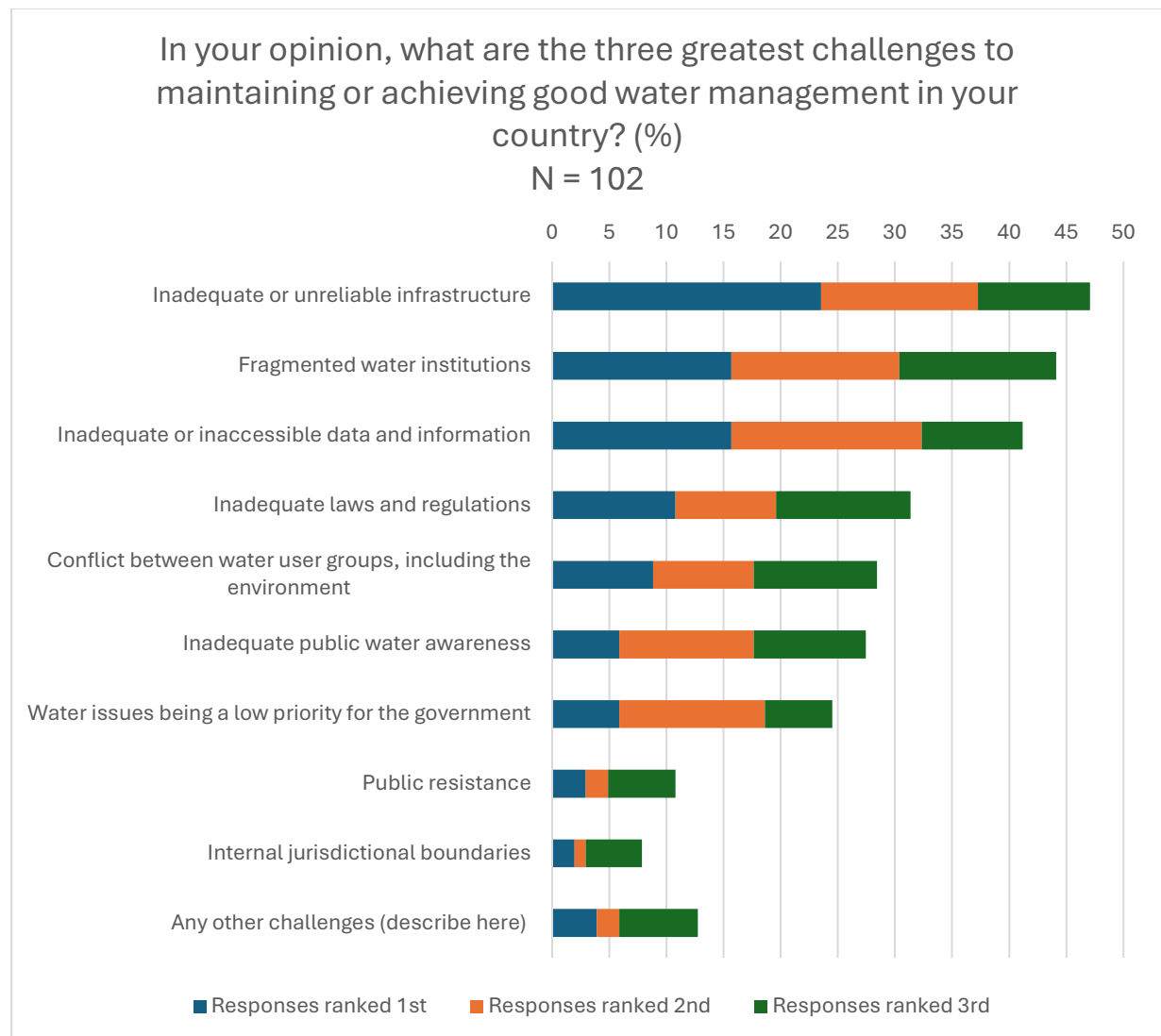


Figure 9. Greatest challenges to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from low-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each challenge as first, second or third.

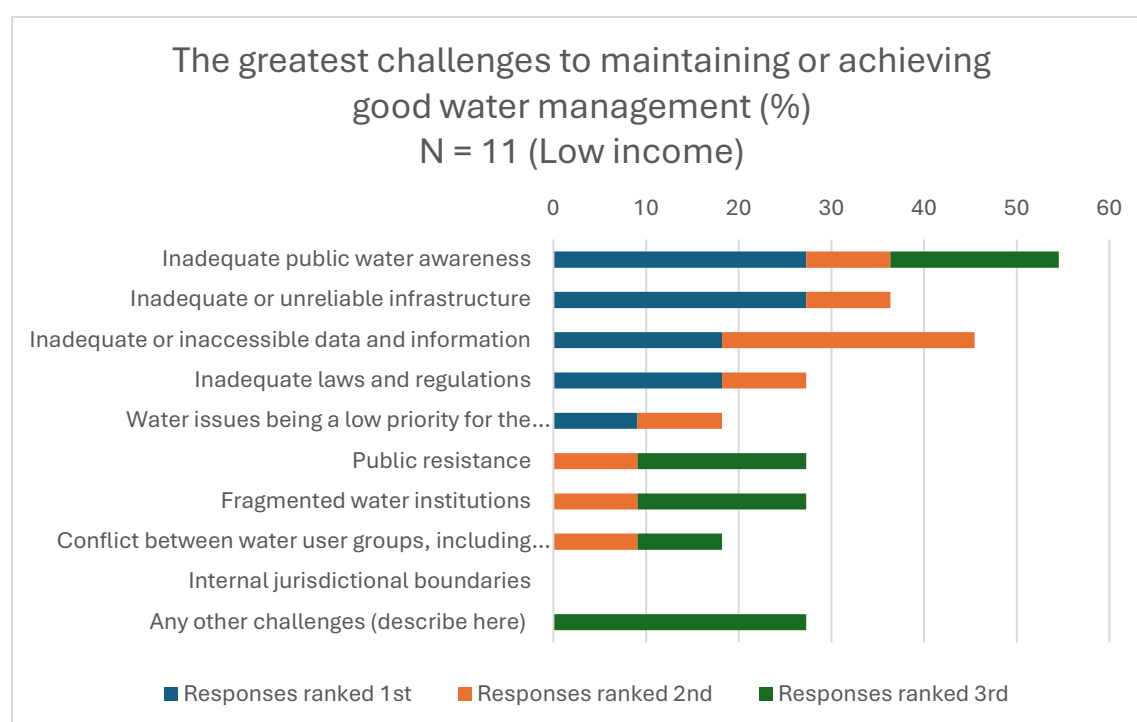


Figure 10. Greatest challenges to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from lower-middle-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each challenge as first, second or third.

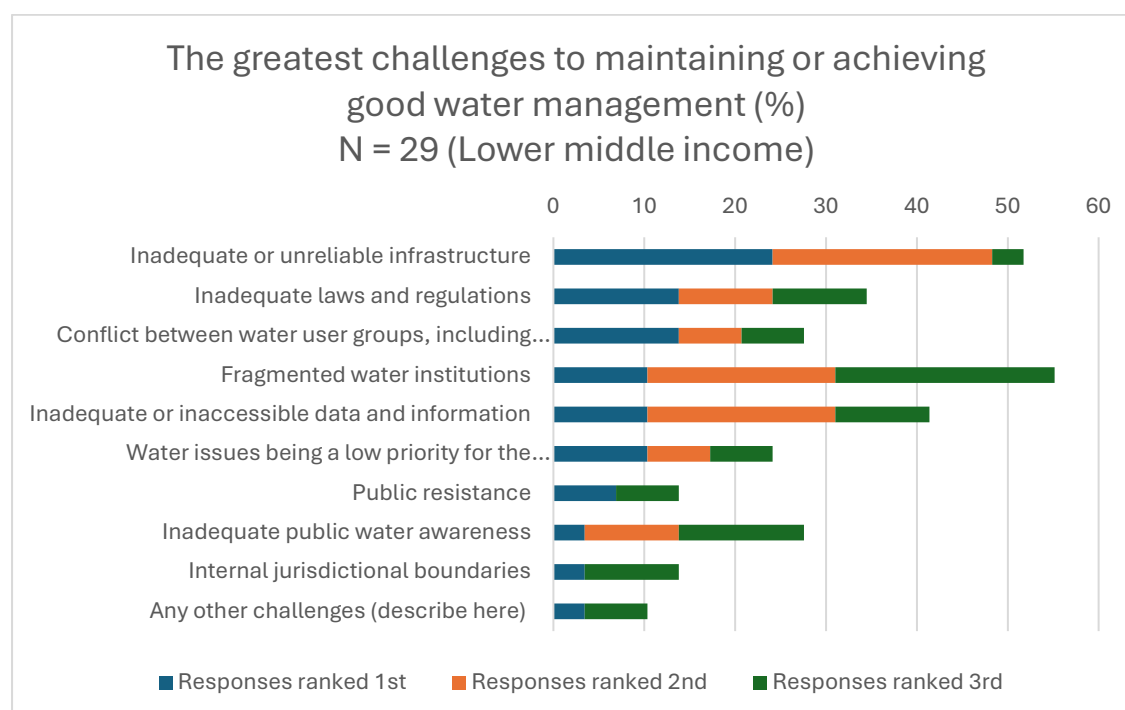


Figure 11. Greatest challenges to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from upper-middle-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each challenge as first, second or third.

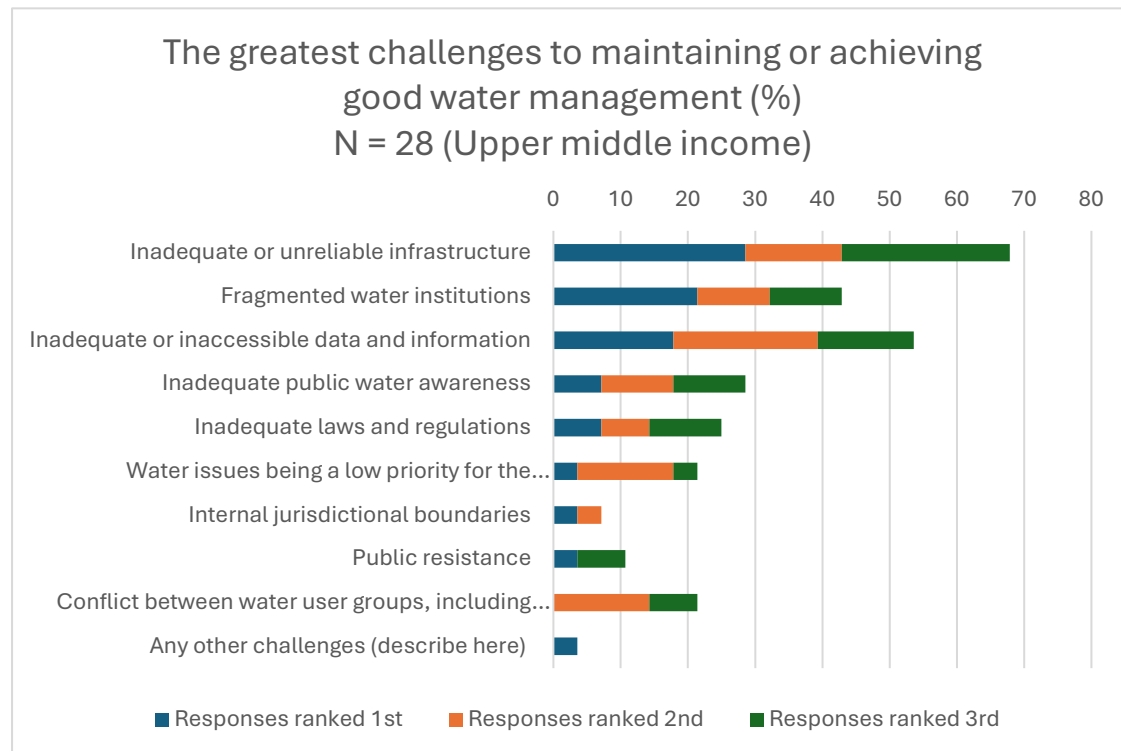


Figure 12. Greatest challenges to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from high-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each challenge as first, second or third.

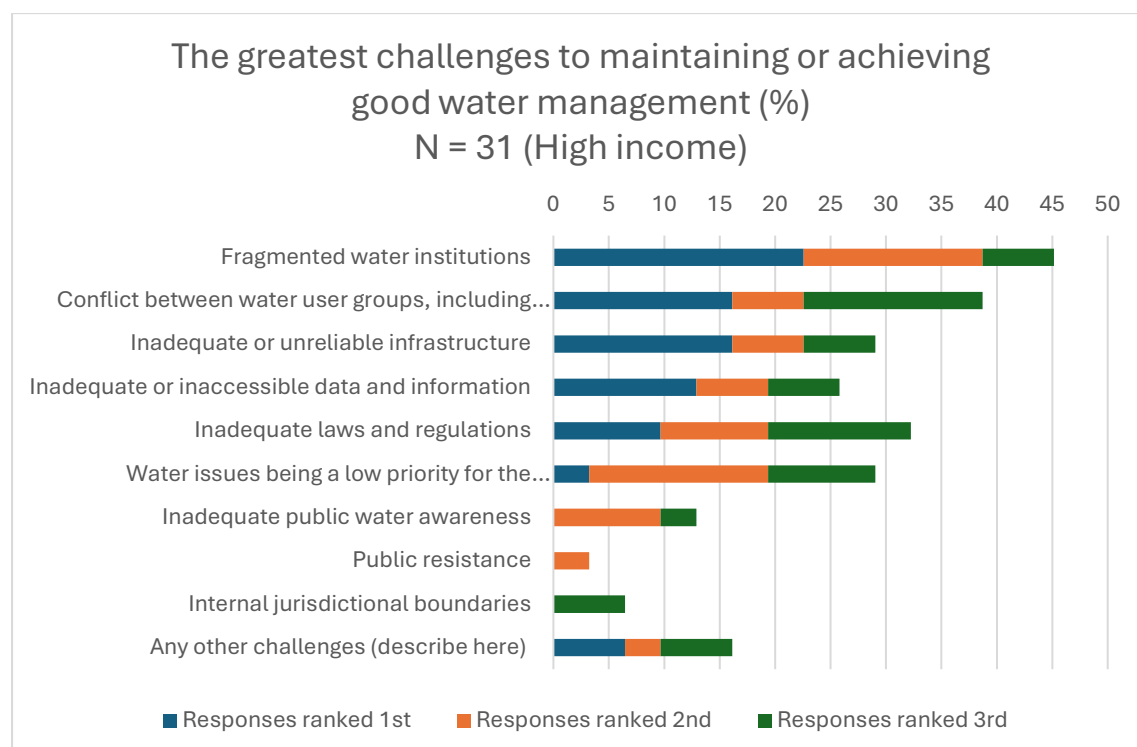
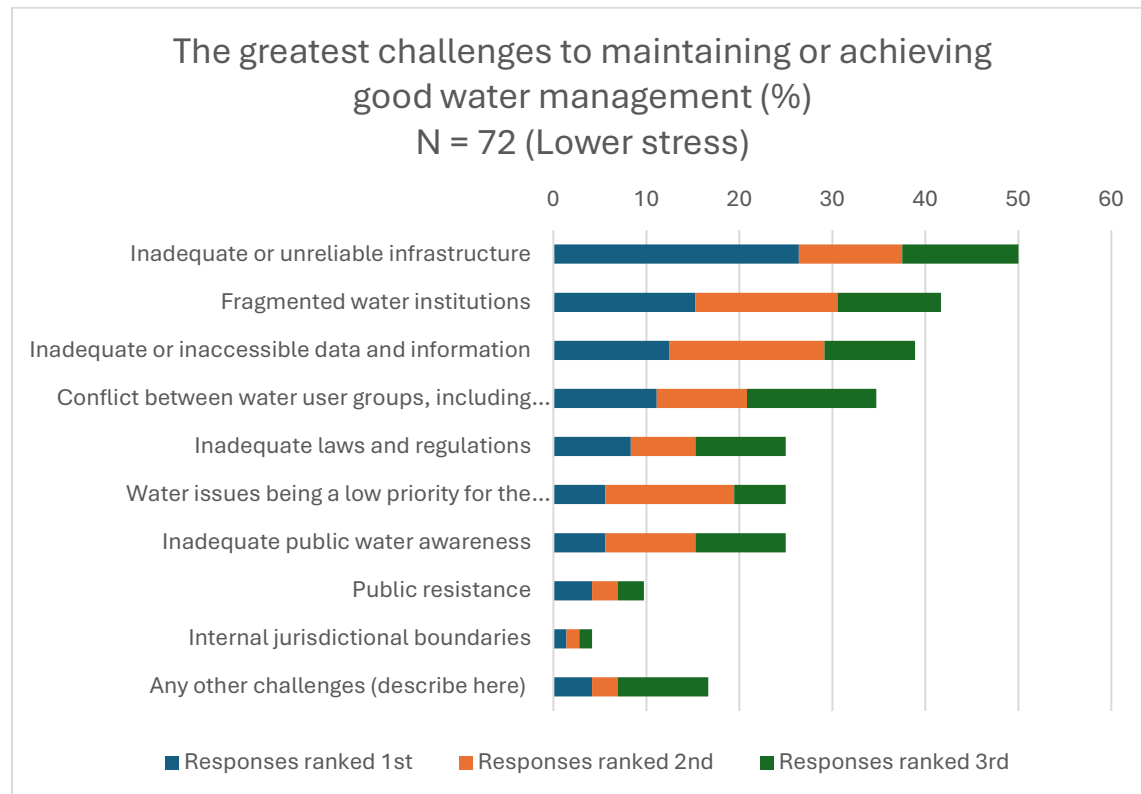


Figure 13. Greatest challenges to maintaining or achieving good water management identified by national water leaders from countries with lower water stress. Lower water stress includes countries classified as having no or low water stress. Percentages show respondents ranking each challenge as first, second or third.



ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 6 – Chapter 3

Survey question: In your opinion, how useful has SDG6 been for the achievement of better water outcomes in your country?

Figure 14. Perceived usefulness of SDG 6 for achieving better water outcomes in respondents' countries. Percentage of national water leaders rating SDG 6 as very useful, somewhat useful or not useful.

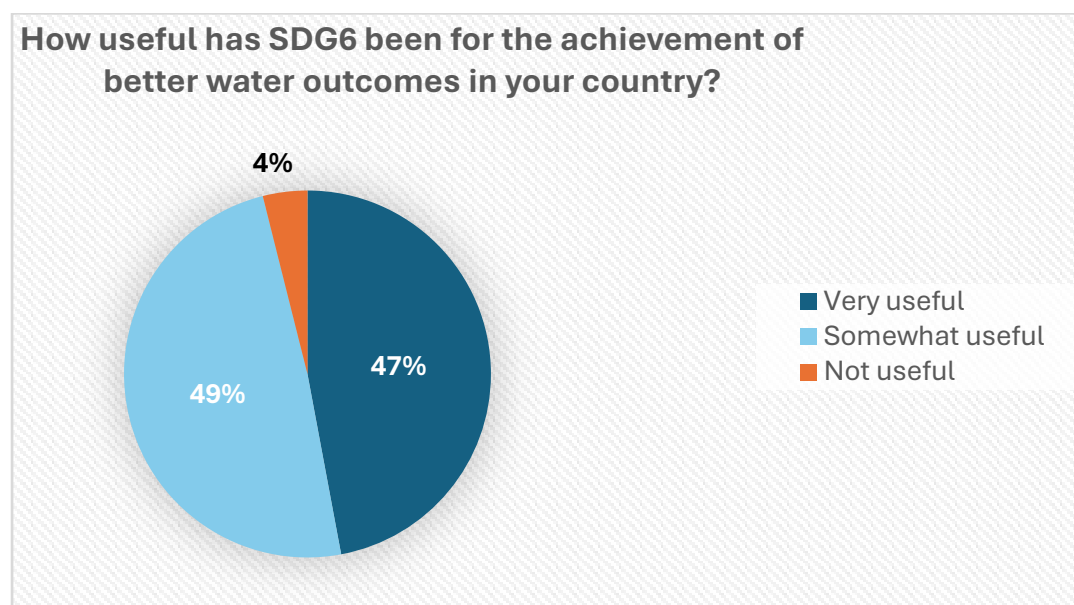
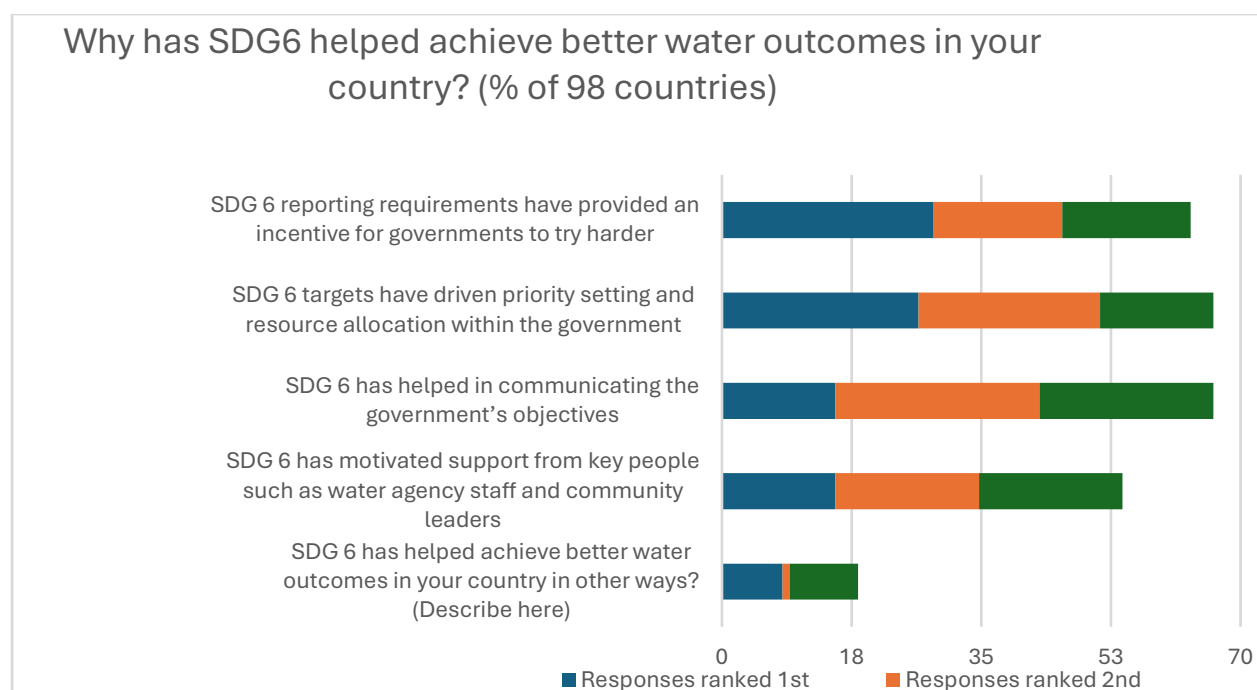


Table 7: Perceived usefulness of SDG 6 for achieving better water outcomes, by national income category and water stress level.

	National income				Water stress level	
SDG 6 is...	Low %	Lower-middle %	Upper-middle %	High (%)	Lower (%)	Higher (%)
Very useful	64	48	68	19	43	58
Somewhat useful	36	52	32	71	53	42
Not useful	0	0	0	10	4	0

Survey question: In your opinion, why has SDG6 helped achieve better water outcomes in your country?

Figure 15. Main reasons why SDG 6 has helped achieve better water outcomes in respondents' countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.



Survey question: In your opinion, what is the possibility of achieving, in your country, the SDG 6 targets?

Table 8: National water leaders' views on the possibility of achieving each SDG 6 target, by national income category and water stress level.

SDG 6.1 (drinking water)	Global (N / %)	Income category				Stress category	
		Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Possible	57/ 56%	45%	48%	39%	81%	49%	79%
Not sure	21/ 21%	9%	24%	36%	10%	24%	11%
Not possible	24/ 23%	45%	28%	25%	10%	28%	11%
Total responses per category (100%)	102	11	29	28	31	72	19
SDG 6.2 (sanitation and hygiene)	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher

Possible	53/ 54%	40%	38%	36%	83%	48%	68%
Not sure	21/ 21%	10%	23%	39%	10%	22%	26%
Not possible	25/ 25%	50%	38%	25%	7%	30%	5%
Total responses per category (100%)	99	10	26	28	29	69	19
SDG 6.3 (water quality)	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Possible	39/ 40%	29%	38%	41%	36%	32%	53%
Not sure	35/ 36%	43%	52%	26%	32%	35%	47%
Not possible	24/ 24%	29%	10%	33%	32%	32%	0%
Total responses per category (100%)	98	7	29	27	28	68	19
SDG 6.4 (use efficiency)	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Possible	56/ 57%	64%	55%	56%	61%	53%	68%
Not sure	20/ 20%	9%	14%	22%	29%	22%	21%
Not possible	22/ 23%	27%	31%	22%	11%	25%	11%
Total responses per category (100%)	98	11	29	27	28	68	19
SDG 6.5 (integrated water)	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Possible	56/ 58%	64%	55%	50%	68%	64%	47%
Not sure	21/ 22%	18%	21%	31%	14%	16%	37%
Not possible	20/ 20%	18%	24%	19%	18%	19%	16%
Total responses per category (100%)	97	11	29	26	28	67	19
SDG 6.6 (water-related ecosystems)	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Achieved	11/ 11%	36%	7%	4%	14%	13%	0%
Not sure	39/ 40%	27%	62%	33%	29%	37%	58%
Not achieved	48/ 49%	36%	31%	63%	57%	50%	42%
Total responses per category (100%)	98	11	29	27	28	68	19

SDG 6.a (international cooperation)	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Possible	66/ 67%	73%	52%	78%	75%	71%	68%
Not sure	24/ 25%	18%	34%	15%	21%	21%	26%
Not possible	8/ 8%	9%	14%	7%	4%	9%	5%
Total responses per category (100%)	98	11	29	27	28	68	19
SDG 6.b (participation of local communities)	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Possible	84/ 85%	91%	83%	89%	82%	83%	89%
Not sure	13/ 13%	0%	17%	11%	14%	14%	11%
Not possible	2/ 2%	9%	0%	0%	4%	3%	0%
Total responses per category (100%)	99	11	29	28	28	69	19

Survey question: In your opinion, why do you consider it is ‘not possible’ to achieve this target?

Table 9. Main reasons why SDG 6 targets were considered “not possible” to achieve, by target, national income category and water stress level.

	Global		Income category								Stress category			
			Low		Lower Middle		Upper Middle		High		Lower		Higher	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
6.1 Drinking water	Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Lack of financing Governance problems	
N = 24	11	46%	5	80%	8	50%	7	71%	3	100%	20	70%	2	50%
6.2 Sanitation and hygiene	Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Lack of financing	
N = 25	18	72%	5	80%	11	64%	8	63%	3	67%	22	68%	2	50%
6.3 Water quality	Lack of financing		Lack of financing		Governance problems		Lack of financing		Governance problems		Governance problems			
N = 24	11	46 %	2	100%	3	67%	9	44%	9	44%	22	45%	0	0

6.4 Efficiency and scarcity	Lack of financing	Lack of financing	Lack of financing	Governance problems	Governance problems	Lack of financing	Governance problems
N = 22	11 50%	3 100%	9 44%	6 33%	3 67%	17 47%	2 100
6.5 IWRM and transboundary	Governance problems and Lack of financing	Lack of financing and Lack of Information	Governance problems	Lack of financing	Governance problems	Governance problems	Lack of financing
N = 20	8 40%	2 50%	7 71%	4 75%	5 60%	13 54%	3 33%
6.6 Ecosystems (by 2020)	Governance problems	Lack of financing	Governance problems	Lack of financing	Governance problems	Governance problems	Lack of financing
N = 48	23 48%	2 50%	7 71%	4 75%	5 60%	13 54%	3 33%
6.a International cooperation	Lack of financing	Lack of financing	Lack of financing	Lack of financing	Governance problems	Lack of financing	Lack of financing
N = 8	5 63%	1 100%	4 75%	2 50%	1 100%	6 67%	1 100%
6.b local participation	Lack of financing						
N = 2	2 100%						

Survey question: In your opinion, why is ‘lack of financing’ one of the main reasons for any of these targets being “not possible”?

Figure 16. Main reasons why “lack of financing” was identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” in the 2026 survey. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

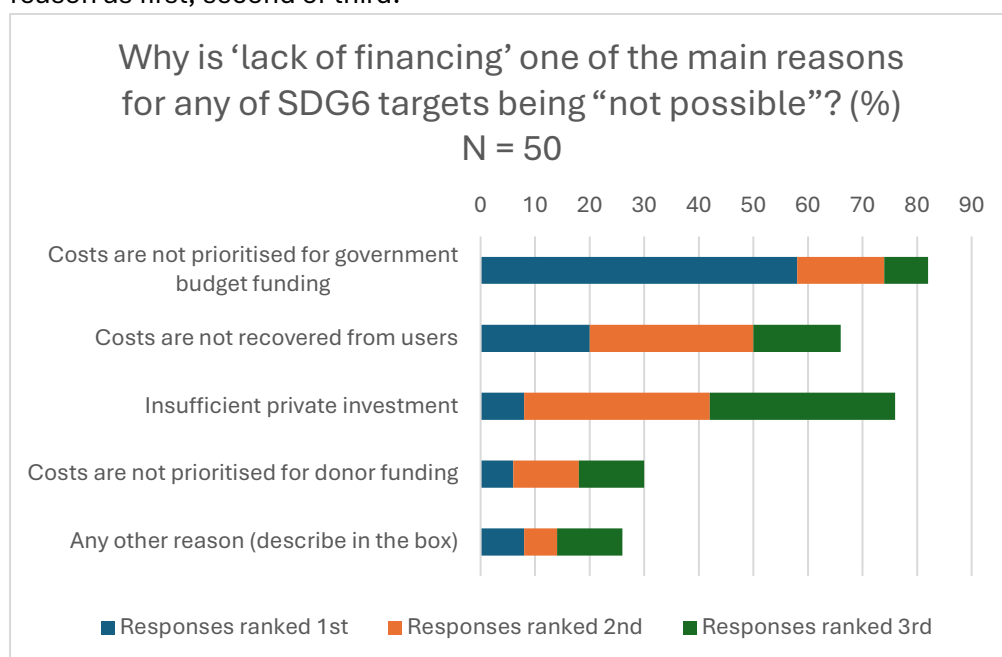


Figure 17. Main reasons why “lack of financing” was identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from low-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third².

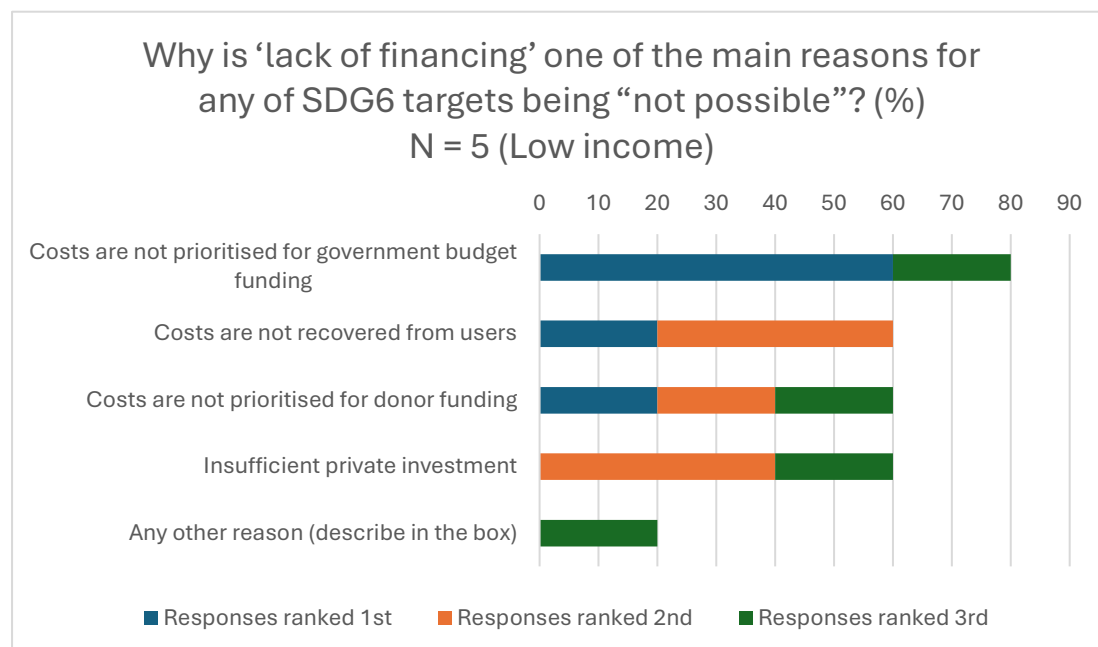
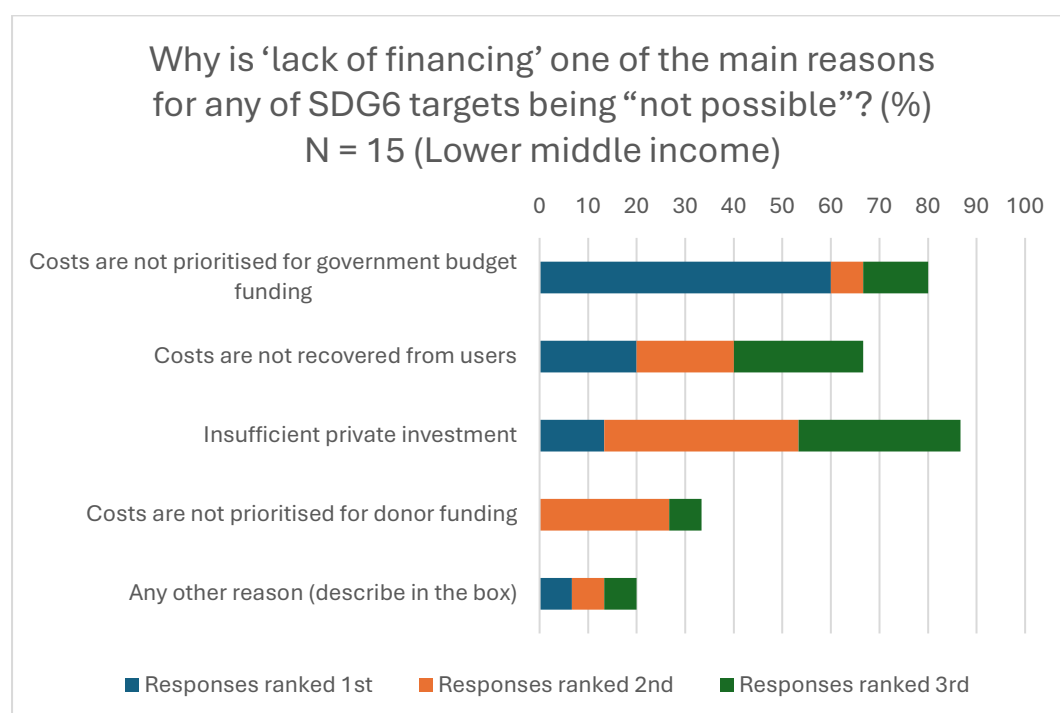


Figure 18. Main reasons why “lack of financing” was identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from lower-middle-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.



²We recognise the low sample size for this group. The results are included for information only and should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 19. Main reasons why “lack of financing” was identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from upper-middle-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

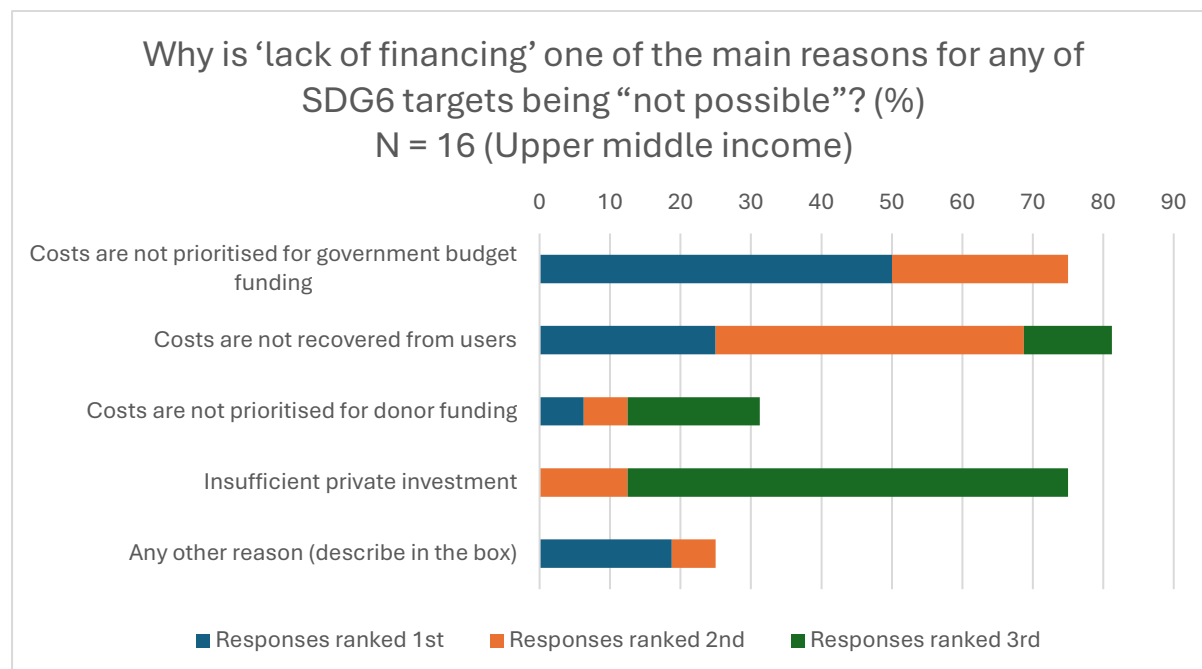


Figure 20. Main reasons why “lack of financing” was identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from high-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

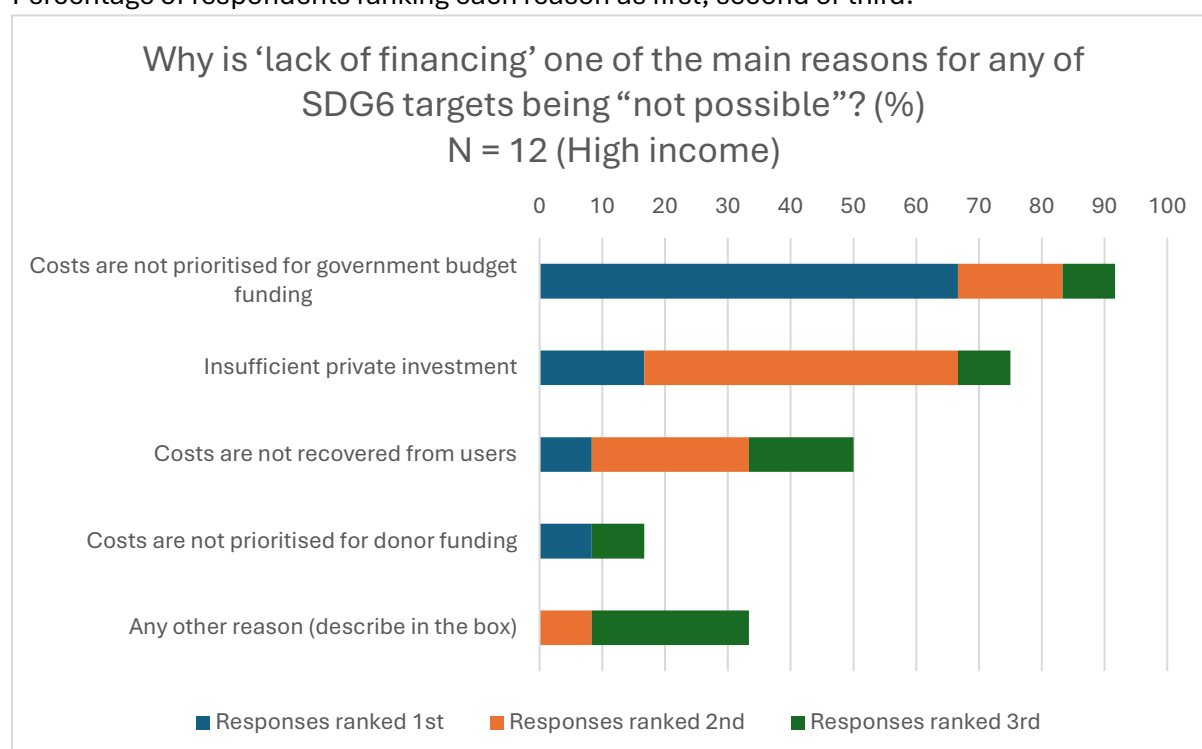


Figure 21. Main reasons why “lack of financing” was identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from countries with lower water stress. Lower water stress includes countries classified as having no or low water stress. Percentages show respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

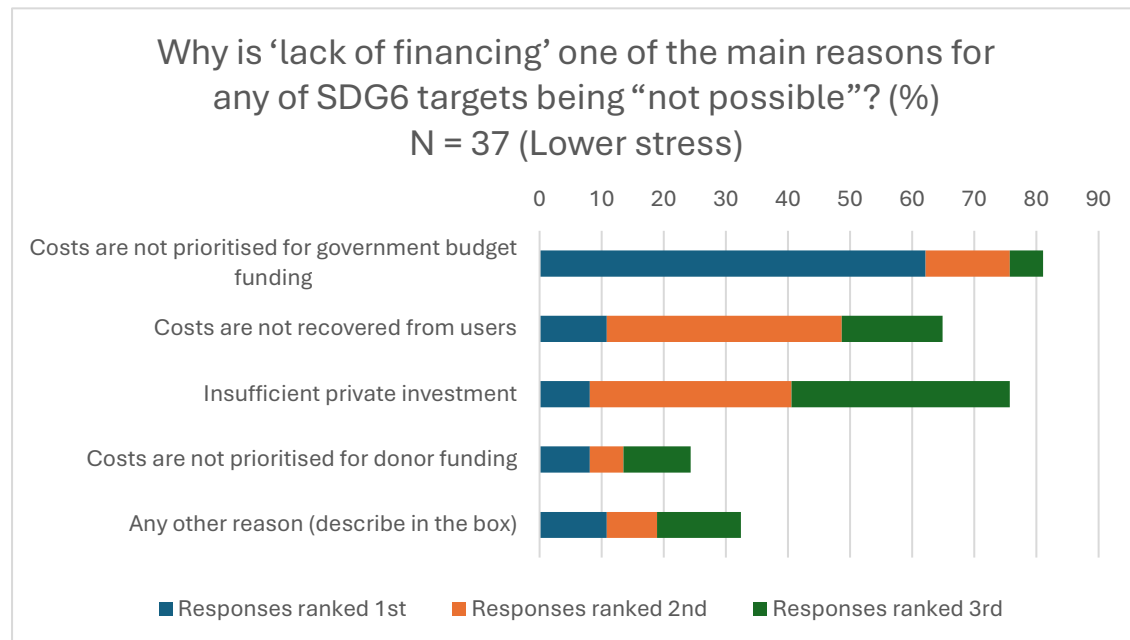
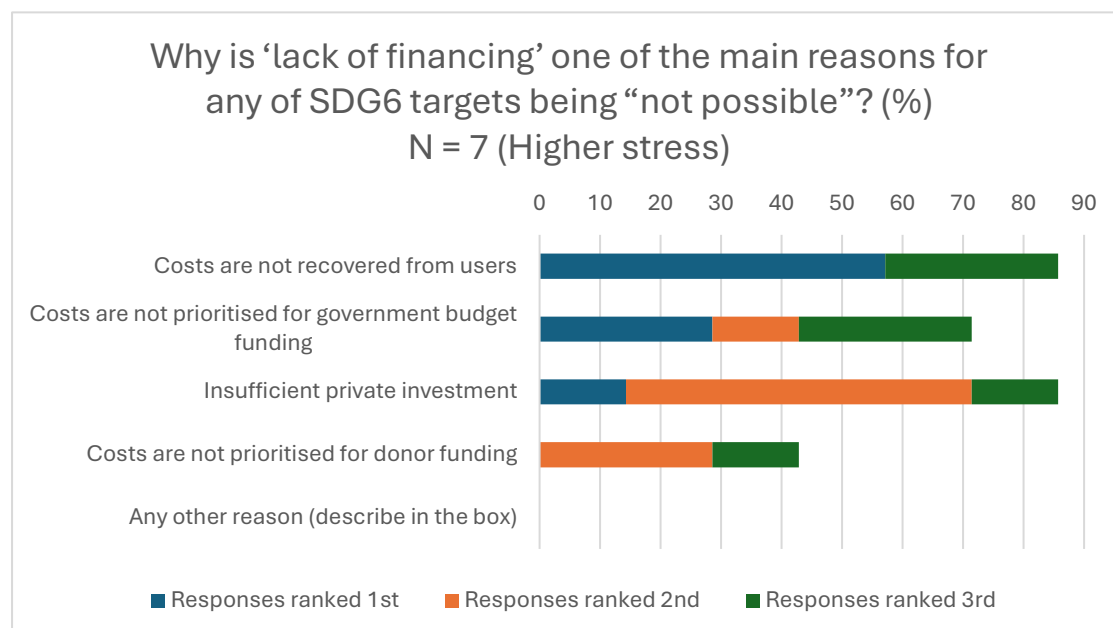


Figure 22. Main reasons why “lack of financing” was identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from countries with higher water stress. Higher water stress includes countries classified as having medium, high or critical water stress. Percentages show respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.



Survey question: In your opinion, why is ‘governance problems’ a main reason for any of these targets being “not possible”?

Figure 23. Main reasons why “governance problems” were identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” in the 2026 survey. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

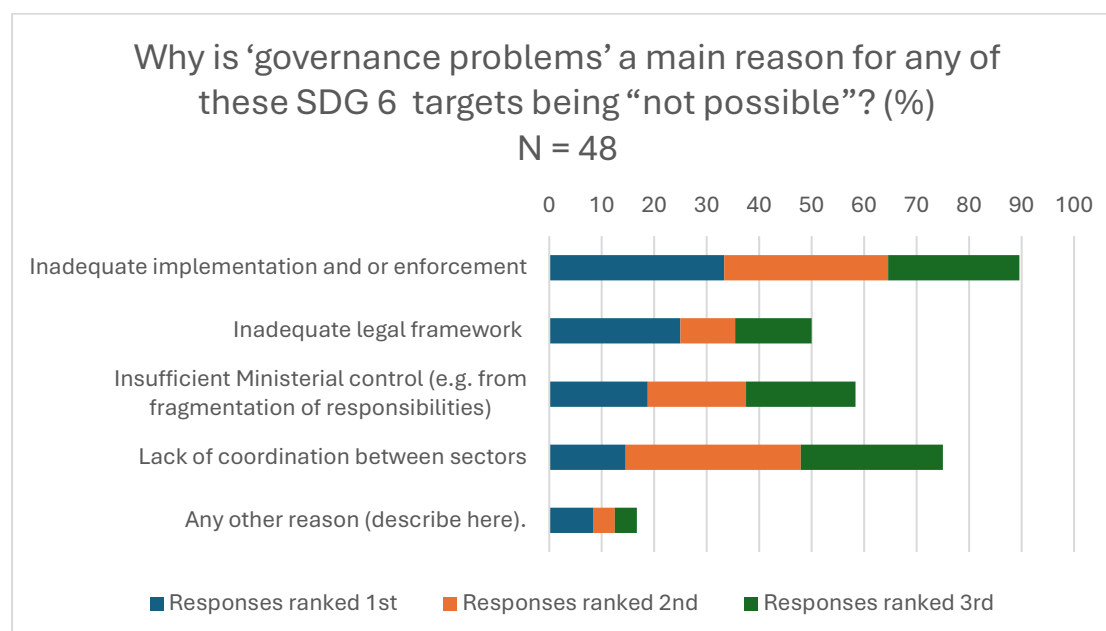


Figure 24. Main reasons why “governance problems” were identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from low-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

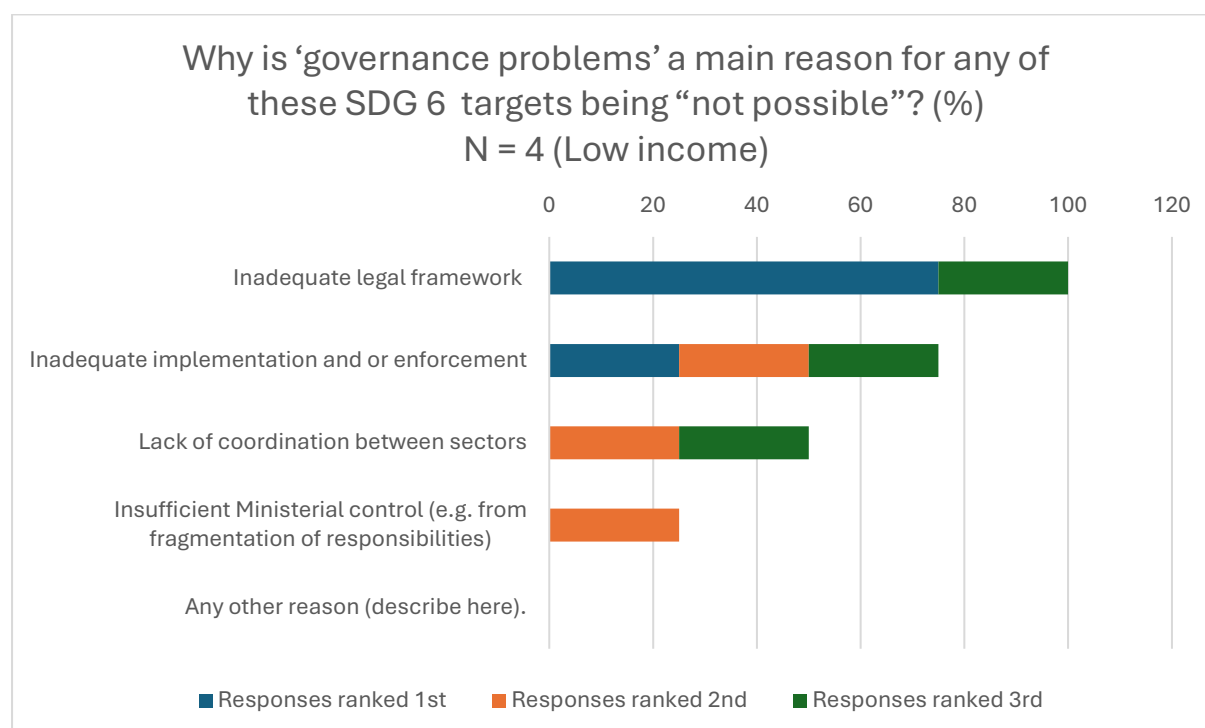


Figure 25. Main reasons why “governance problems” were identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from lower-middle-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

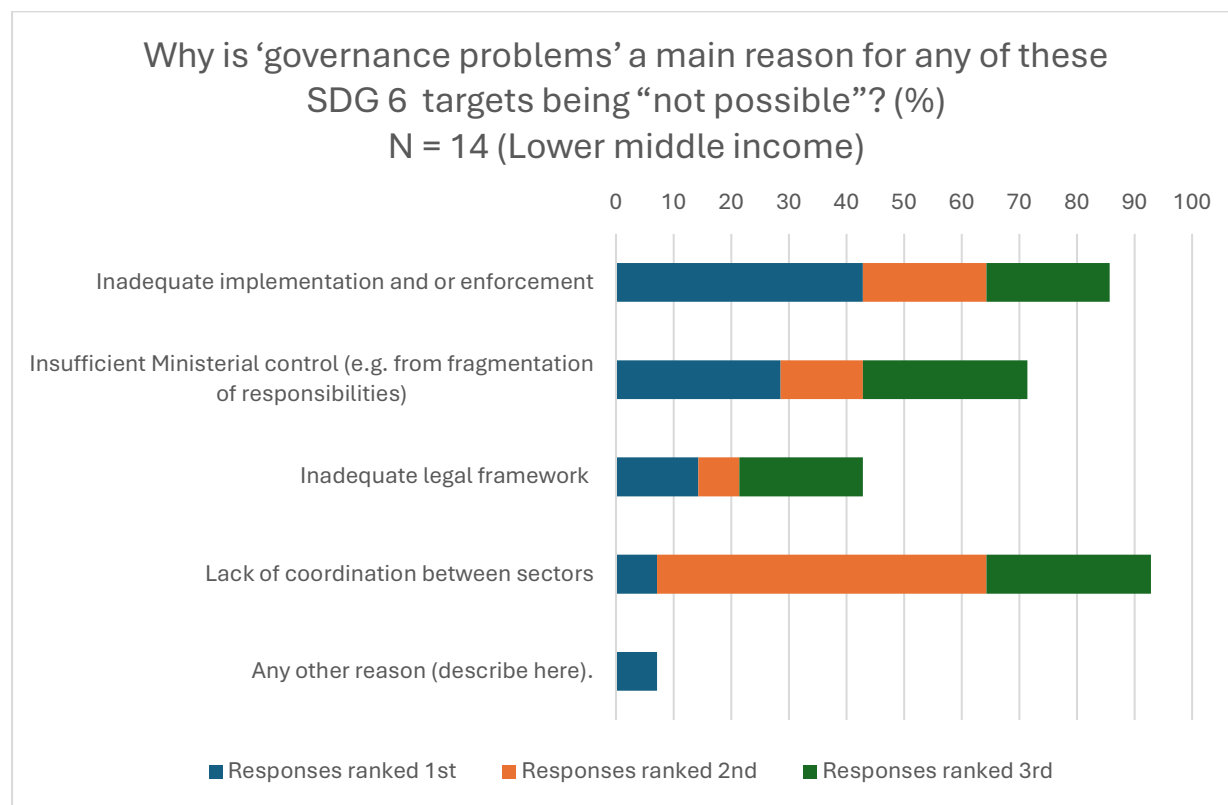


Figure 26. Main reasons why “governance problems” were identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from upper-middle-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

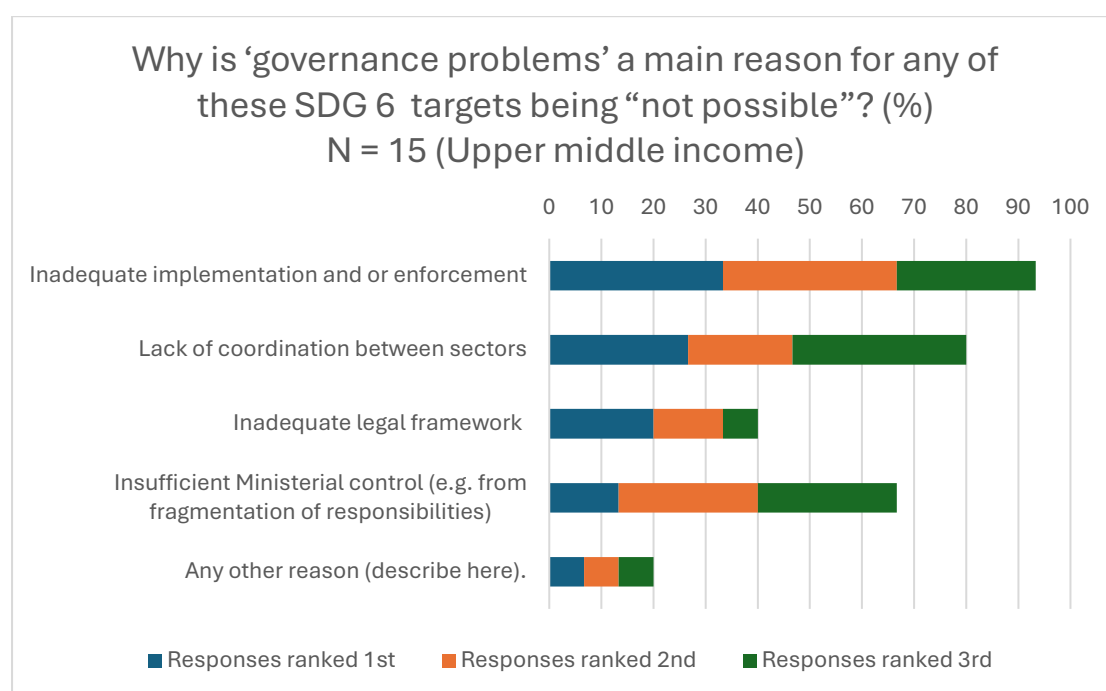


Figure 27. Main reasons why “governance problems” were identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from high-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

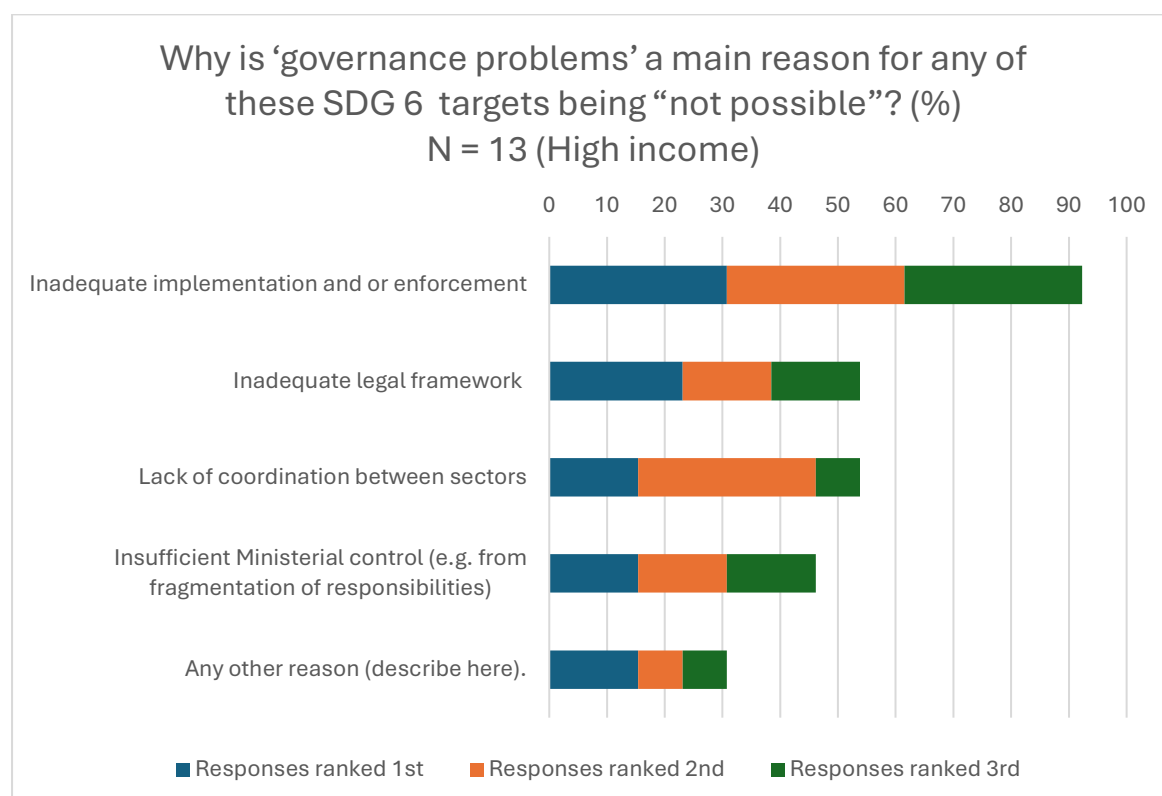


Figure 28. Main reasons why “governance problems” were identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from countries with lower water stress. Lower water stress includes countries classified as having no or low water stress. Percentages show respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

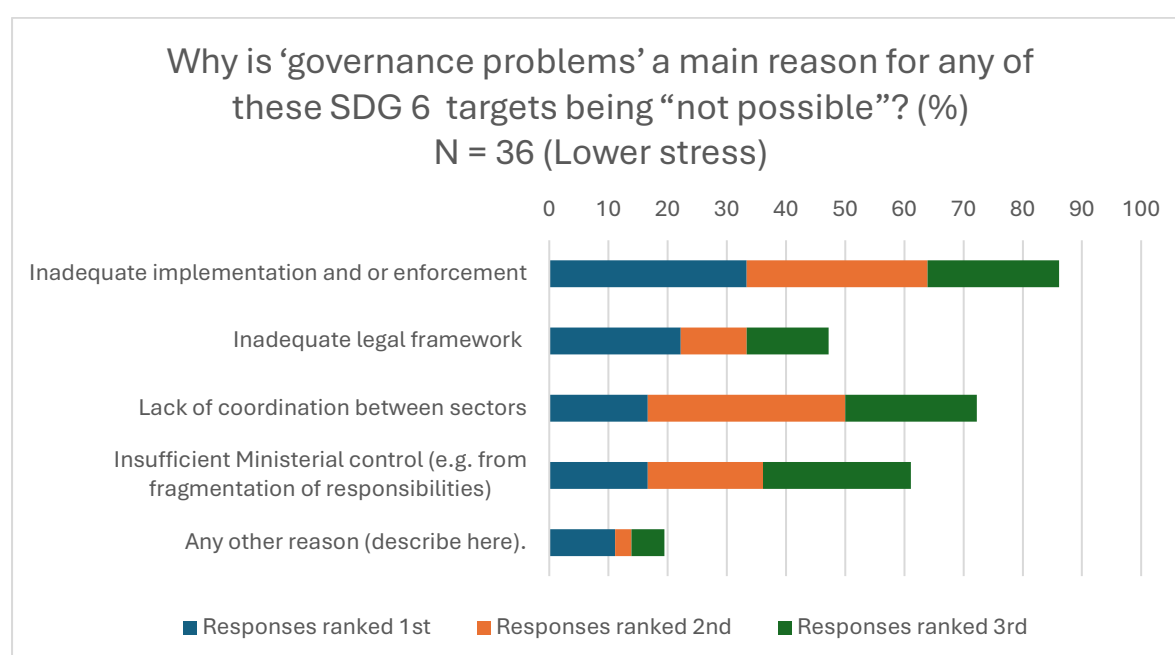
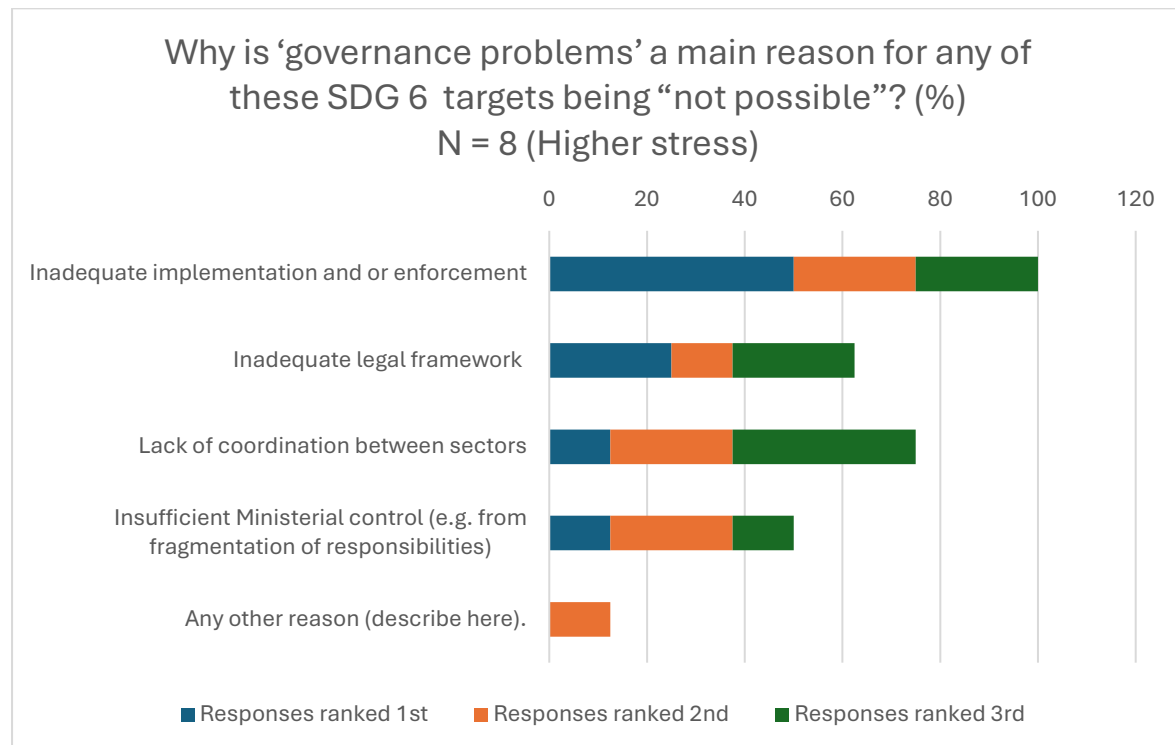


Figure 29. Main reasons why “governance problems” were identified as a reason for SDG 6 targets being considered “not possible” by national water leaders from countries with higher water stress. Higher water stress includes countries classified as having medium, high or critical water stress. Percentages show respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.



D. HOW INTERNATIONAL PROCESSES IMPROVE WATER OUTCOMES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL - Chapter 4

Survey question: In your opinion, what are the three most useful ways that international processes (such as of the United Nations) can help you to achieve good water outcomes in your country?

Figure 30. Most useful ways that international processes can help national water leaders achieve good water outcomes in their countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each function as first, second or third.

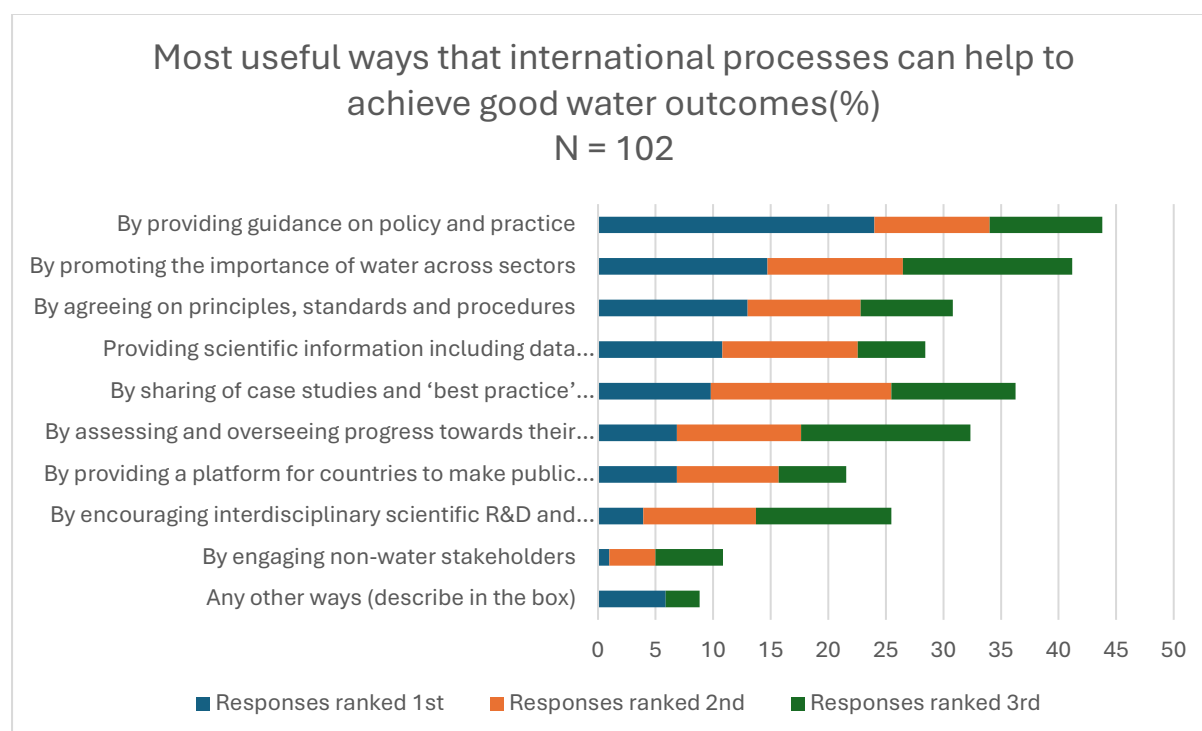


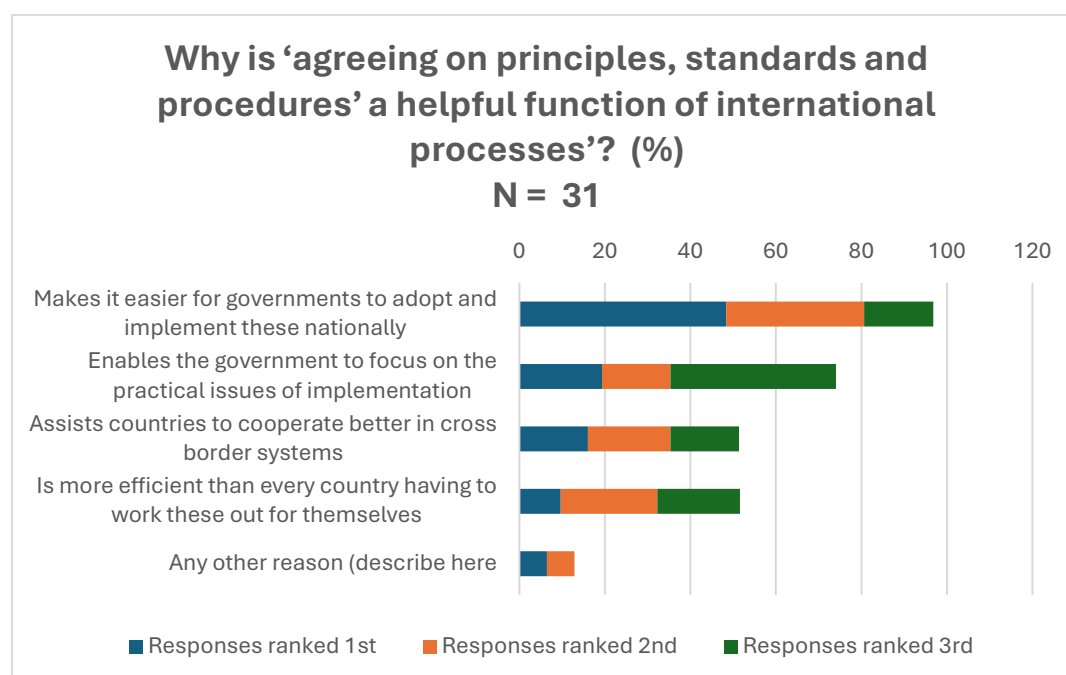
Table 9. Most frequently identified primary benefit of international processes for achieving good water outcomes, by national income category and water stress level.

	Category	Most often ranked as the most important benefit
Income	Low	Providing guidance on policy and practice
	Lower-middle	Providing guidance on policy and practice
	Upper-middle	Promoting the importance of water across sectors
	High	Providing guidance on policy and practice
	Lower	Providing guidance on policy and practice

Water stress	Higher	Providing guidance on policy and practice
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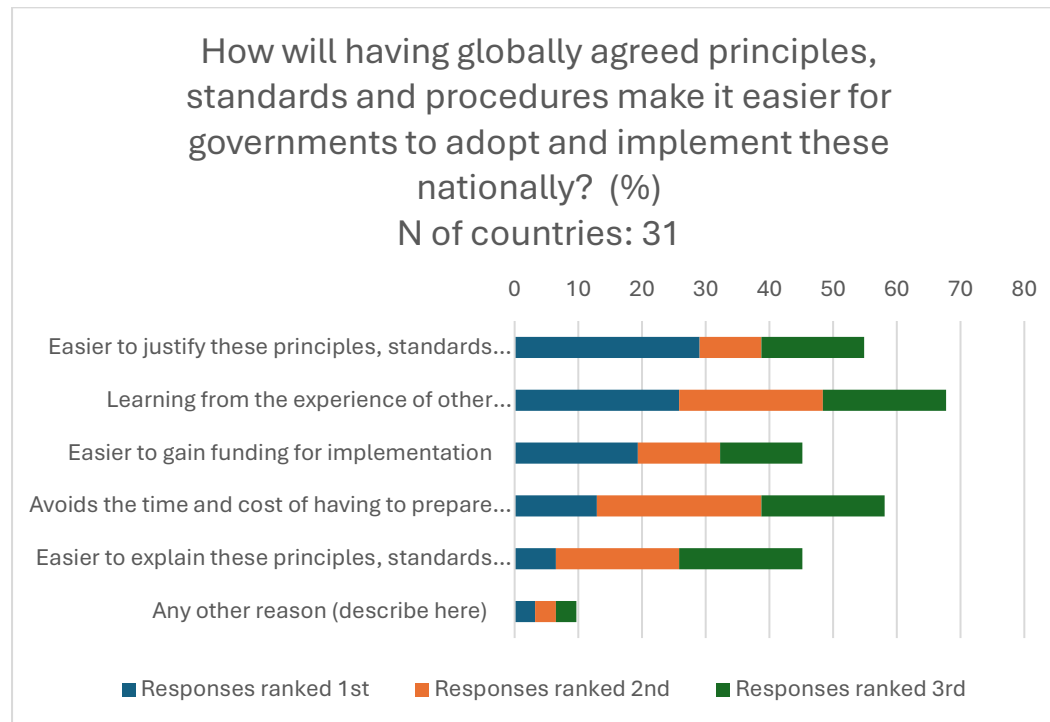
Survey question: In your opinion, why is ‘agreeing on principles, standards and procedures’ a helpful function of international processes’?

Figure 31. Main reasons why “agreeing on principles, standards and procedures” was identified as a helpful function of international processes. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.



Survey question: In your opinion, how will having globally agreed principles, standards and procedures make it easier for governments to adopt and implement these nationally?

Figure 32. Main reasons why globally agreed principles, standards and procedures would make it easier for governments to adopt and implement these nationally. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.



Survey question: In your opinion, will enhanced coordination of water-related work of the United Nations system, such as through the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation, help you get better water outcomes in your country?

Figure 33. National water leaders' views on whether enhanced coordination of United Nations water-related work would help achieve better water outcomes in their countries. Percentage of respondents answering yes, no, or indicating that they did not know enough about United Nations water-related work to answer.

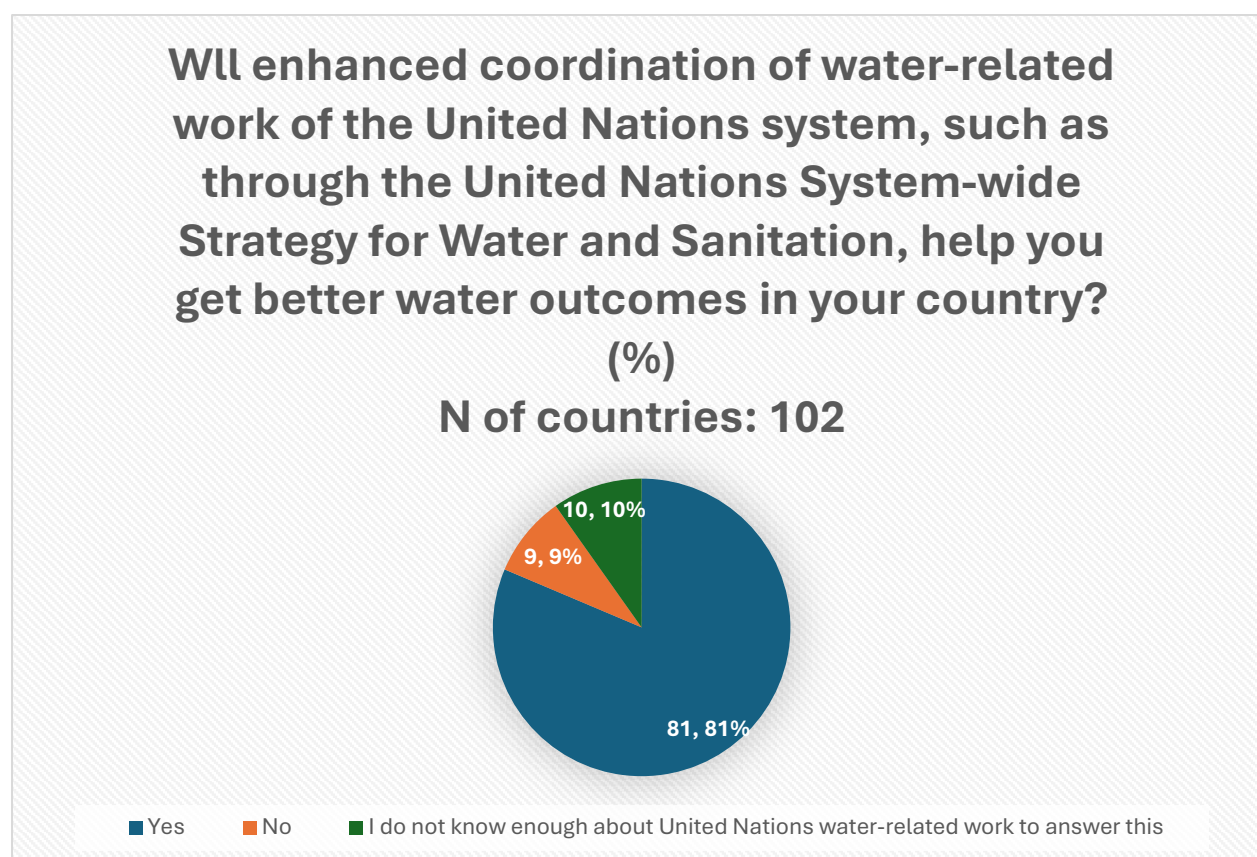


Table 10. National water leaders' views on whether enhanced coordination of United Nations water-related work would help achieve better water outcomes, by national income category and water stress level.

		Yes		No		I don't know enough		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Income	L	11	100	0	0	0	0	11	100
	LM	27	93	0	0	2	7	29	100
	UM	25	89	0	0	3	11	28	100
	H	18	50	8	22	10	28	36	100
Water stress	L	57	79	8	11	7	10	72	100
	H	18	95	0	0	1	5	19	100

Survey question: In your opinion, what are the main reasons better coordination of water-related work of the United Nations system will help you get better outcomes in your country?

Figure 34. Main reasons why better coordination of United Nations water-related work would help achieve better water outcomes, according to national water leaders from low-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

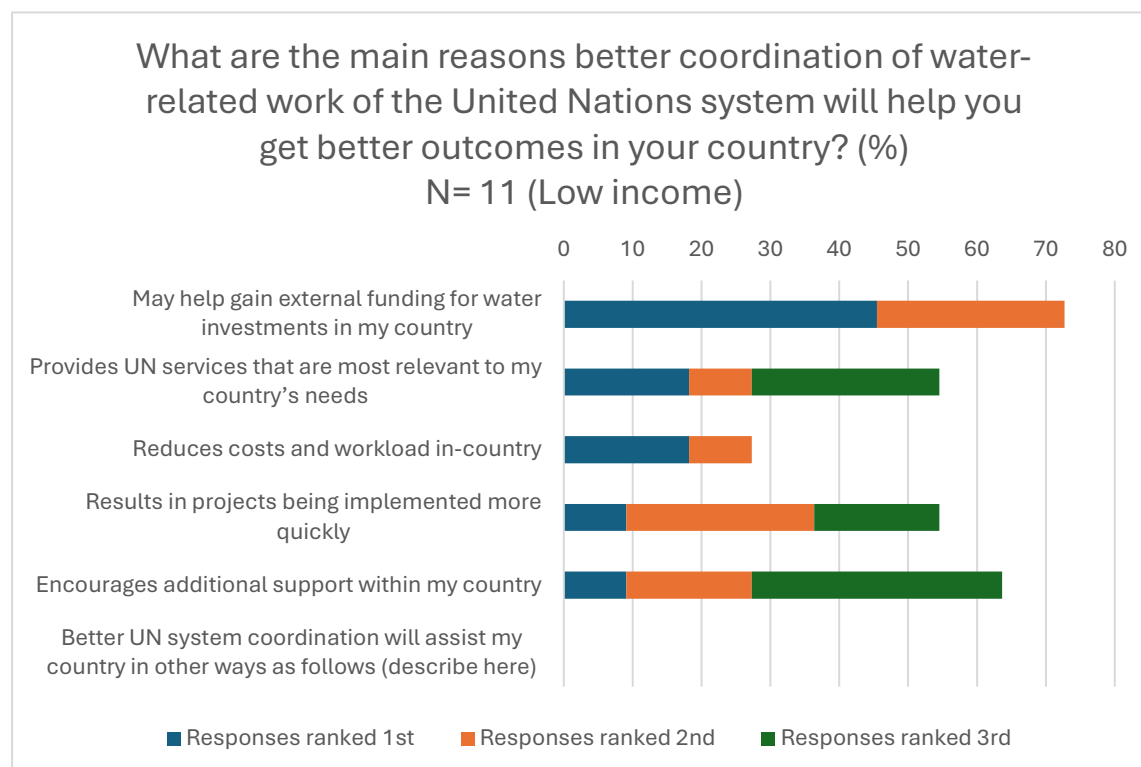


Figure 35. Main reasons why better coordination of United Nations water-related work would help achieve better water outcomes, according to national water leaders from lower-middle-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

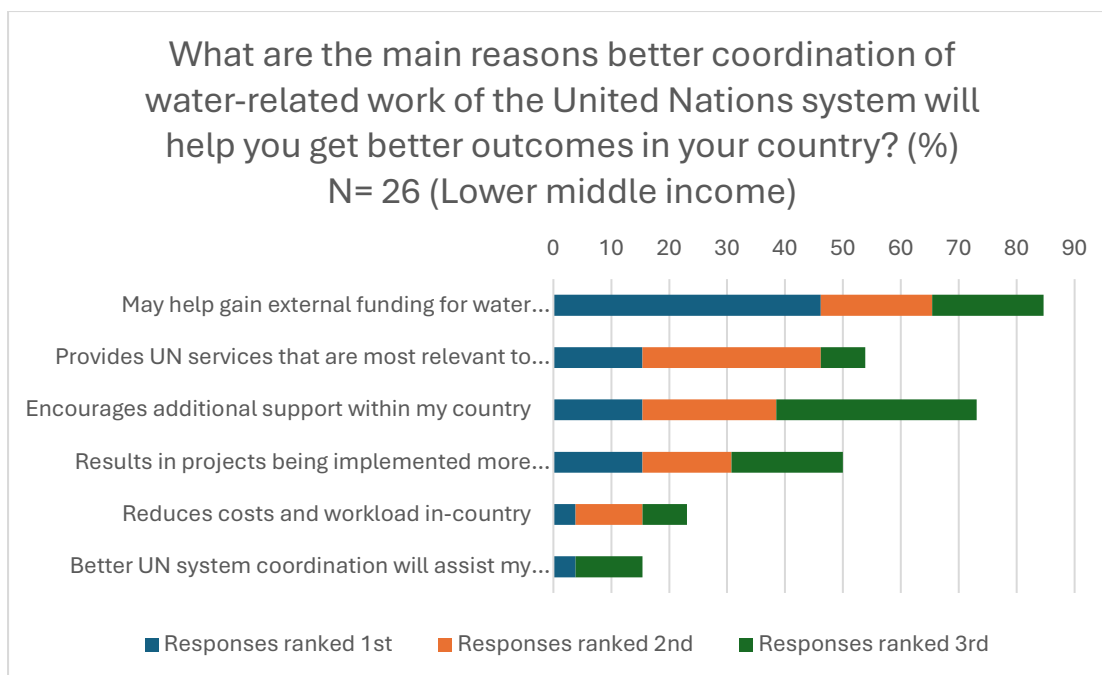


Figure 36. Main reasons why better coordination of United Nations water-related work would help achieve better water outcomes, according to national water leaders from upper-middle-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

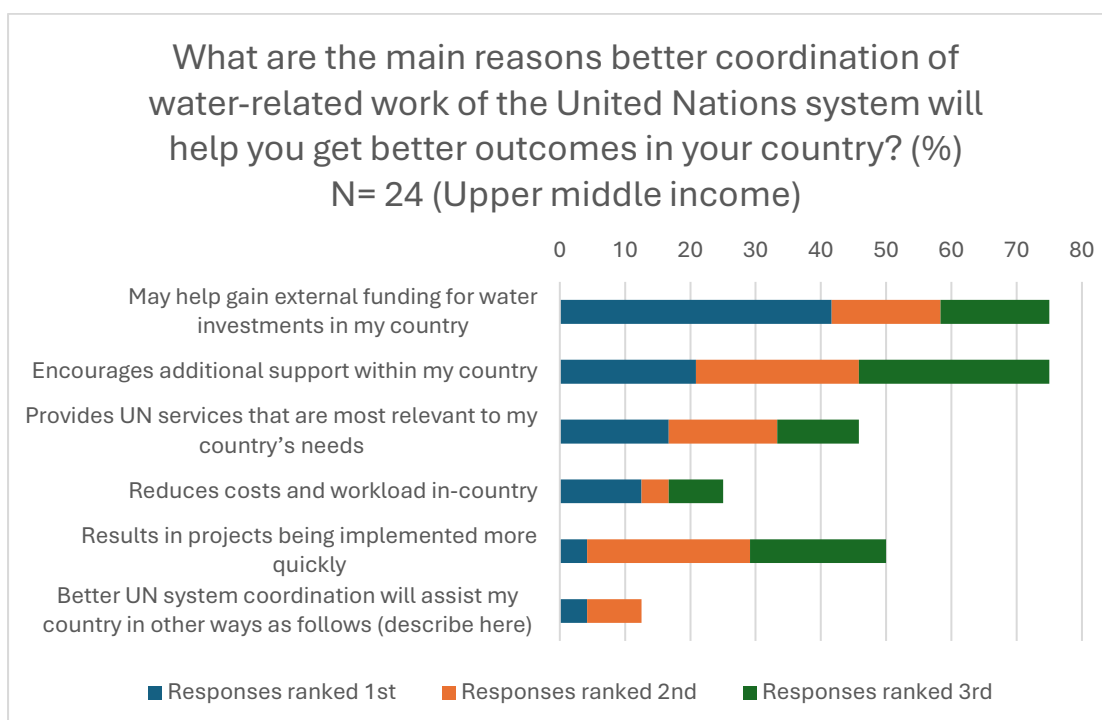


Figure 37. Main reasons why better coordination of United Nations water-related work would help achieve better water outcomes, according to national water leaders from high-income countries. Percentage of respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

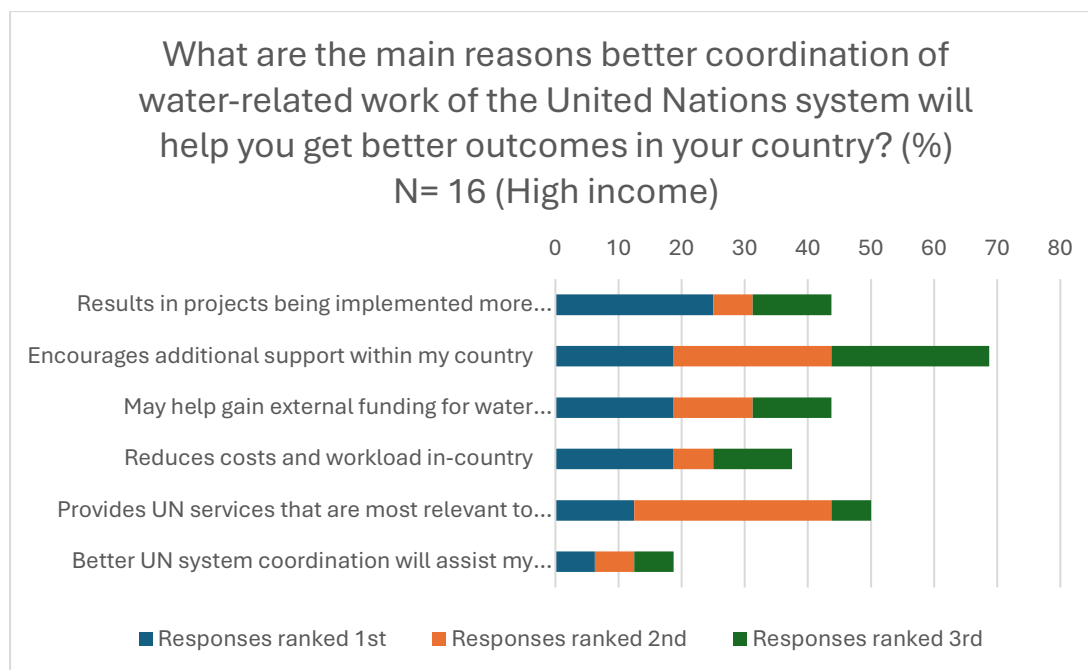


Figure 38. Main reasons why better coordination of United Nations water-related work would help achieve better water outcomes, according to national water leaders from countries with lower water stress. Lower water stress includes countries classified as having no or low water stress. Percentages show respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.

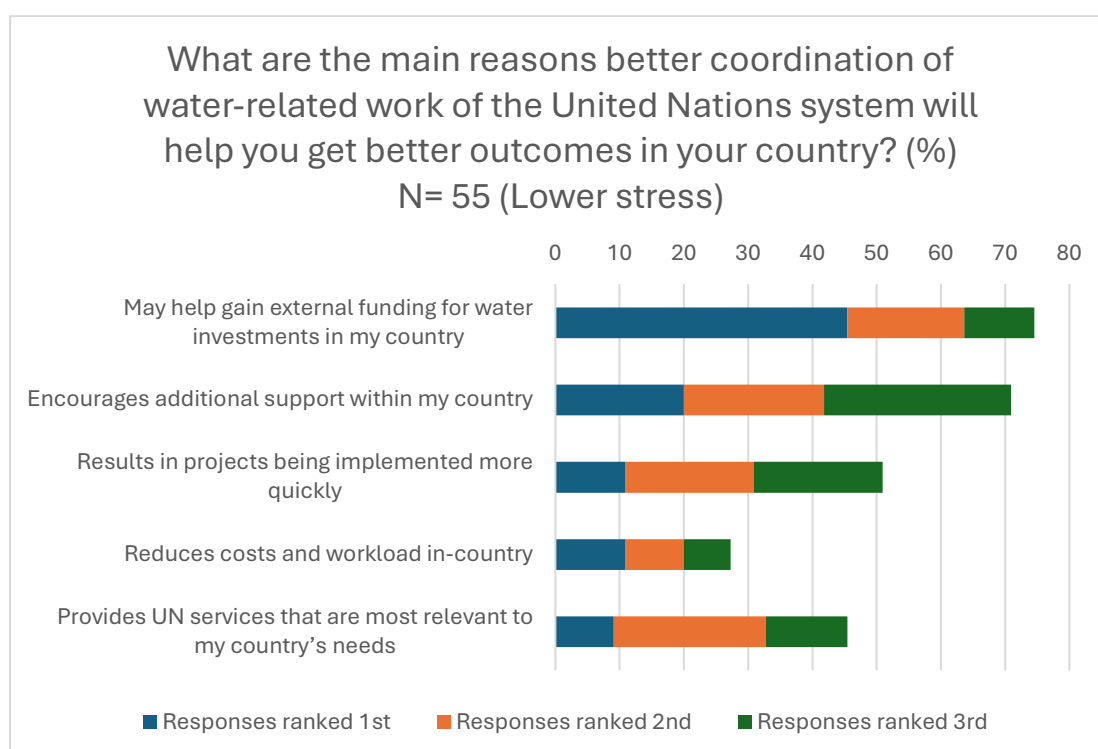
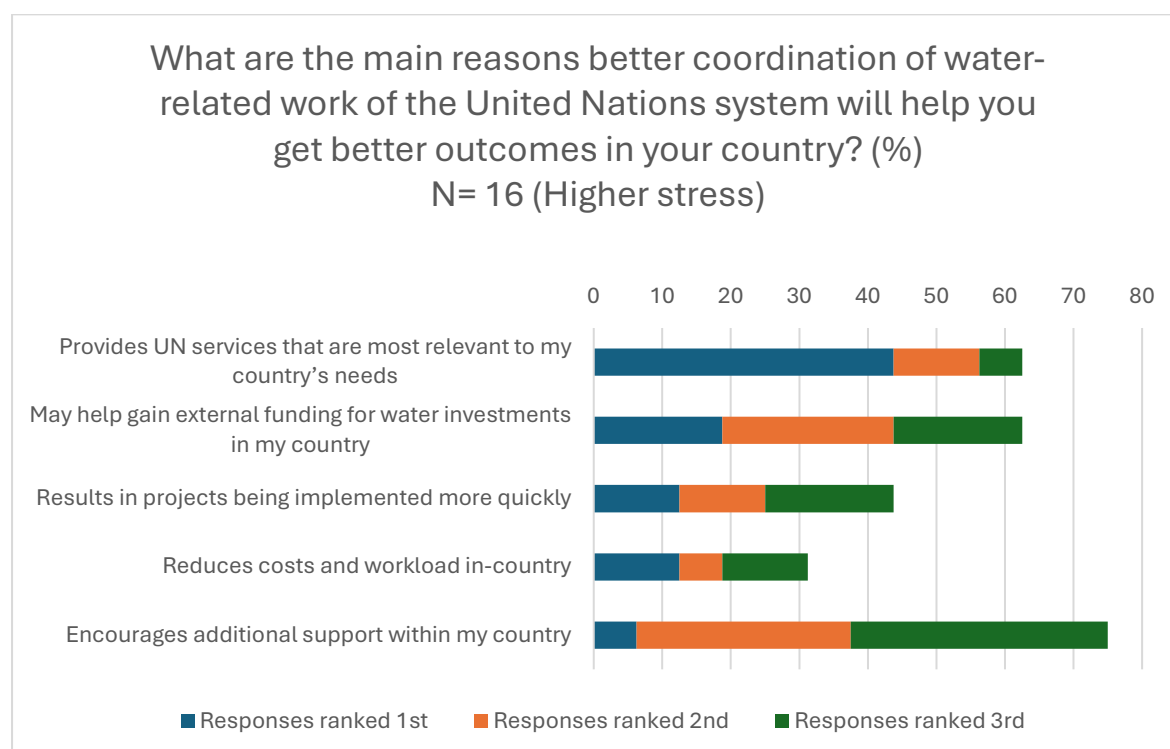


Figure 39. Main reasons why better coordination of United Nations water-related work would help achieve better water outcomes, according to national water leaders from countries with higher water stress. Higher water stress includes countries classified as having medium, high or critical water stress. Percentages show respondents ranking each reason as first, second or third.



E. CHAPTER 5 - INTEGRATION OF GOOD WATER OUTCOMES FOR OTHER GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES

Table 11. National water leaders' views on whether water is adequately considered in decisions and policies related to public health, by national income category and water stress level. Percentages are calculated within each national income or water stress category. The table also presents the two most common reasons given by respondents who answered "no". For readability, shortened wording codes are used in the final row. These refer to the following full response options: **Communication** = lack of established communication or coordination channels; **Priorities** = differing priorities and conflicting objectives; **Awareness** = insufficient awareness of the importance of water for their objectives; **Management** = lack of clear roles and responsibilities for water management across sectors; **Barriers** = political or institutional barriers; **Relations** = poor relations between relevant Ministers and officials; and **Other** = any other reason described by respondents. Category totals may differ where country income or water stress classifications were not available.

In your opinion, is water adequately considered in decisions and policies on ...							
... public health	Global (N / %)	Income category (% of N)				Stress category (% of N)	
		Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Yes	73/72%	91%	76%	68%	65%	68%	74%
No	29/28%	9%	24%	32%	35%	32%	26%
Total responses per category (100%)	102	11	29	28	31	72	19
Most common top two reasons for saying 'no'	Awareness and management	Awareness and priorities	Awareness and management	Management and awareness	Awareness and priorities	Awareness and management	Management and barriers
... climate change	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Yes	76/75%	91%	72%	71%	74%	75%	79%
No	26/25%	9%	28%	29%	26%	25%	21%
Total responses per category (100%)	102	11	29	28	31	72	19
Most common top two reasons for saying 'no'	Awareness and priorities	Awareness and management	Awareness and priorities	Management and awareness	Awareness and priorities	Awareness and management	Awareness and relations
... food security	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Yes	75/74%	91%	72%	75%	68%	72%	79%
No	27/26%	9%	28%	25%	32%	28%	21%
Total responses per category (100%)	102	11	29	28	31	71	19
Most common top two	Priorities and management	Management and barriers	Management and priorities	Priorities and management	Priorities and awareness	Priorities and management	Priorities and barriers

reasons for saying ‘no’							
... disaster risk reduction	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Yes	76/75%	82%	90%	71%	65%	72%	84%
No	26/25%	18%	10%	29%	35%	28%	16%
Total responses per category (100%)	102	11	29	28	31	72	19
Most common top two reasons for saying ‘no’	Awareness and priorities	Communication and priorities	Awareness and communication	Awareness and management	Priorities and awareness	Awareness and priorities	Awareness and management
... environment	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Yes	73/72%	91%	79%	64%	68%	68%	89%
No	72/28%	9%	21%	36%	32%	32%	11%
Total responses per category (100%)	102	11	29	28	31	72	19
Most common top two reasons for saying ‘no’	Awareness and priorities	Management	Priorities and awareness	Priorities and awareness	Awareness and priorities	Priorities and awareness	Barriers and relations
... energy security	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Yes	78/76%	91%	76%	71%	77%	72%	89%
No	24/24%	9%	24%	29%	23%	28%	11%
Total responses per category (100%)	102	11	29	28	31	72	19
Most common	Awareness and priorities	Awareness and management	Priorities and management	Awareness and management	Awareness and priorities	Awareness and management	Priorities and awareness

top two reasons for saying ‘no’							
... national security and international relations	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Yes	68/67%	82%	86%	52%	55%	61%	74%
No	34/33%	18%	14%	48%	45%	39%	26%
Total responses per category (100%)	102	11	29	27	31	72	19
Most common top two reasons for saying ‘no’	Priorities and awareness	Priorities and management	Priorities and awareness	Priorities and awareness	Awareness and priorities	Priorities and awareness	Barriers and awareness
... economic development	Global	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Lower	Higher
Yes	72/71%	82%	66%	61%	77%	67%	84%
No	30/29%	18%	34%	39%	23%	33%	16%
Total responses per category (100%)	102	11	29	28	31	72	19
Most common top two reasons for saying ‘no’	Awareness and management	Management and barriers	Awareness and barriers	Awareness and management	Awareness and priorities	Awareness and priorities	Awareness and communication