WATER POLICY GROUP

2023

GLOBAL WATER POLICY REPORT

LISTENING TO NATIONAL WATER LEADERS

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UNSW SYDNEY | Global Water Institute

ABOUT
WATER POLICY GROUP

The Water Policy Group is comprised of people who have been decision-makers and trusted advisers within governments and international bodies handling complex water policy and strategy. Water Policy Group members have the common goal that their knowledge, networks and practical experience can help achieve the sustainable development of water resources.
For more, see **waterpolicygroup.com**

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Cover photo: Inside the assembly hall, during the UN 2023 Water Conference at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA. Credit: James Morschel, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

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Taro field in the Hanalei valley of Kauai Hawaii

Satellite view of Nile River, Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea.

FOREWORD

This year is seeing many advances in how the world engages in water issues.

In particular, this year the world is focussed on how improved outcomes on water can contribute to the many other outcomes that are necessary for sustainable development, such as food security, energy security, public health, economic development, and climate adaptation and mitigation.

Science is being rightly placed at the centre of water policy making. Governments want to know the consequences of the water policy choices they face, and are rightly asking for more and better information.

There is now a clear understanding of the interlocking risks of climate change, floods, droughts, and unmet demand for water.

There is now acknowledgement of the many ways international processes can support national efforts to improve water outcomes.

We now know that a global platform for countries to make public their water commitments, now formalised as the 'Water Action Agenda' will help raise the priority of water in governments by facilitating better cross-sectoral alignment and attracting additional funding.

We also know that national efforts to improve water outcomes will benefit from partnerships and international guidance on policy and practice, agreed principles and common standards, approaches or procedures, and by sharing of case studies and experiences.

We now know that the most useful international scientific processes are those that can provide water data and information, forecasts, projections and assessments that can be used at a country scale.

And we are now reassured that integration of water and other outcomes may not be as much of a problem at the national level as we had previously assumed based on our experience within the United Nations.

We know all this because national water leaders of 92 countries, with three quarters of world's population in all regions and all income categories, have contributed their experience and wisdom to this landmark report of the Water Policy Group. Through this ambitious project, their collective advice has been shared with everyone at the recent United Nations 2023 Water Conference. The Conference greatly benefited from the availability of this information and its echoes can be seen in the Conference outcomes.

H E CSABA KŐRÖSI
PRESIDENT OF THE 77TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PREFACE

Water Policy Group is committed to supporting efforts to improve water outcomes everywhere.

Given the basic responsibility of governments for the well-being of the people under their jurisdiction, we are deeply interested in the experience and opinions of the Ministers and the senior officials who have this responsibility within governments.

Policy makers and water practitioners in all countries and in all international organisations committed to improved water outcomes will also be interested in the particular and shared experience of these national water leaders.

This is the second report in our Global Water Policy Report: Listening to National Water Leaders series.

Our 2021 Global Water Policy report, involving national water leaders of 88 countries, was focused on the most topical issues of that time – the risks and challenges they then faced, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, the usefulness of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, and national experience with groundwater issues.

This second report has been prepared to inform global dialogue at the key water-related events of 2023, particularly the United Nations 2023 Water Conference and any follow-up processes. It therefore focusses on current risks and challenges, how international processes can best support improved water outcomes at the national level, and issues of integration with other sectors. It is the result of a collaboration with national water leaders of 92 countries of all regions and income categories.

Water Policy Group hopes the information in this report can be helpful to everyone working to improve water outcomes.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful for the time and effort of Water Ministers and senior governmental officials who contributed to this global survey for the benefit of all. We acknowledge the assistance of several individuals and organisations who assisted in realising the project globally survey, including the President of the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi and his office for forwarding invitations to participate in the project to all United Nations (UN) member States; and the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), the Asia Pacific Water Forum (APWF), International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), and League of Arab States (LAS) for assisting in disseminating invitations to their members. We also acknowledge the many national government officials who ensured the invitations were received by Ministers and agency heads.

OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The report has been prepared as a partnership between Water Policy Group and the University of New South Wales Sydney (UNSW). The Director of the UNSW Global Water Institute, Professor Greg Leslie has been a member of the Steering Committee for this project and a co-author of this report. UNSW has provided professional expertise to ensure that the survey and analysis stages of this project complied with the highest professional and ethical standards. In particular, we are grateful to Dr Elena Cama, Research Associate, Centre for Social Research in Health for expert advice on survey methods and design and for data compilation; Dr Genevieve Poblete, Project Officer, UNSW Global Water Institute for overall project support services; and Ms Patricia Dalby for communications and report preparation..

AT A GLANCE

In the opinion of national water leaders of 92 countries across all regions and national income categories, and with a combined population of 5.7 billion, who participated in this project...

Climate change, the climate-related disasters of **droughts** and **floods** and **increasing demand for water** are the greatest risks their countries face.

Inadequate infrastructure and data along with **fragmented institutions** are their greatest challenges.

There are many ways that **international processes** can help to address these risks and challenges.

The most useful international scientific processes are those that can provide **water data and information, forecasts, projections and scenarios,** as well as **monitoring, evaluations, and assessments** that can be used at a **within-country scale**.

Platforms like the Water Action Agenda, for countries to make **public commitments in relation to water,** can help **raise the priority of water** in their government.

There is generally **good alignment within governments** about the **importance of good water outcomes** for achieving other **government objectives**.

For most issues discussed in this report, there is **little difference** in results from countries of **different national income levels.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE PROJECT

In 2021, Water Policy Group released the first Global Water Policy Report reflecting the opinions and perspectives of national water leaders of 88 countries on risks and challenges they faced, how the COVID-19 pandemic was affecting their priorities, their experiences with implementing the water-related Sustainable Development Goals, their opinions on providing or receiving development assistance, and their experiences with the management of groundwater--as groundwater was the United Nations (UN) water theme for 2022. This project resulted in a Global Report and separate reports for Africa and for the Asia-Pacific region.

In 2022, Water Policy Group offered a second edition of the Global Water Policy Report, to collect the opinions and perspectives of national water leaders on issues to be considered at the United Nations 2023 Water Conference (22-24 March 2023). The offer was extended to UN member States at the Preparatory Meeting for the UN Water Conference in October 2022.

Following that meeting, invitations were sent by the President of the UN General Assembly (PGA) to all UN member States, through their UN New York-based Permanent Representatives, for Ministers responsible for water matters (or their top officials) to respond to the Water Policy Group survey. The invitations and the survey itself were provided in six languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

The project collected the opinions and perspectives of national water leaders drawn from their personal experience and aggregated these results at the global level, with potential to break this down by region and by income group whilst maintaining the confidentiality of individual responses.

Outcomes were provided to member States in presentations at the UN 2023 Water Conference and in a brochure of key findings. This second edition of the Water Policy Report sets out the findings in full.

PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR COUNTRIES

Ministers, top official and other persons with national water responsibilities and qualifying as ‘national water leaders’ were eligible to complete the survey questionnaire.

Participants were asked to describe their role as either a Minister responsible for water in a national government, head of a national water department or agency, senior official or advisor responsible for water in a national government, or an ‘other national water leader role’ to be self-described in writing.

Participants with 'other roles' were considered to be eligible if their self-description indicated they (1) are in a national government ministry with responsibilities for water policy, strategy, planning, or coordination; (2) are highly likely to have a high degree of influence over water policy, planning, or coordination at the national level; or (3) were the responsible Minister or water agency head within the past two years.

Only one response was analysed for each country. This was the response of the most senior ranked participant. In this report of the key findings, the term 'response' means the response of this person.

Eligible responses were received from 92 countries across all regions, representing 48% of UN member States. The responding countries have a combined population of 5.7 billion--73% of the world's population.

Responses were well spread through income classifications (Fig 1.1) and regionally (Table 1.1)

FIG 1.1: SURVEY PARTICIPANTS' INCOME CLASSIFICATIONS

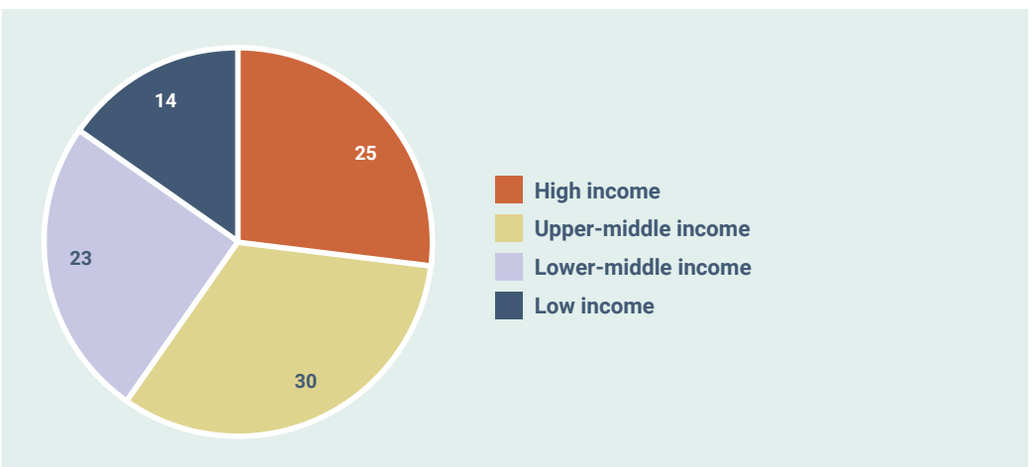

TABLE 1.1: SURVEY PARTICIPATION BY REGION

UN Region*	No. of countries with eligible responses / Total no. of countries	Regional percentage	Share in the total number of eligible responses
Sub-Saharan Africa	25 / 48	52%	27.20%
Northern Africa and Western Asia	16 / 23	70%	17.40%
Central and Southern Asia	5 / 14	36%	5.40%
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	6 / 16	38%	6.50%
Latin America and the Caribbean	12 / 33	36%	13%
Oceania	12 / 14	86%	13%
Europe and North America	16 / 45	36%	17.40%
GLOBAL	92 / 193	48%	100%

This Report contains a selection of graphs and tables illustrating some of the data that is discussed. Graphs and /or tables of all the data upon which this report is based are available online (www.waterpolicygroup.com).

Varanasi, India
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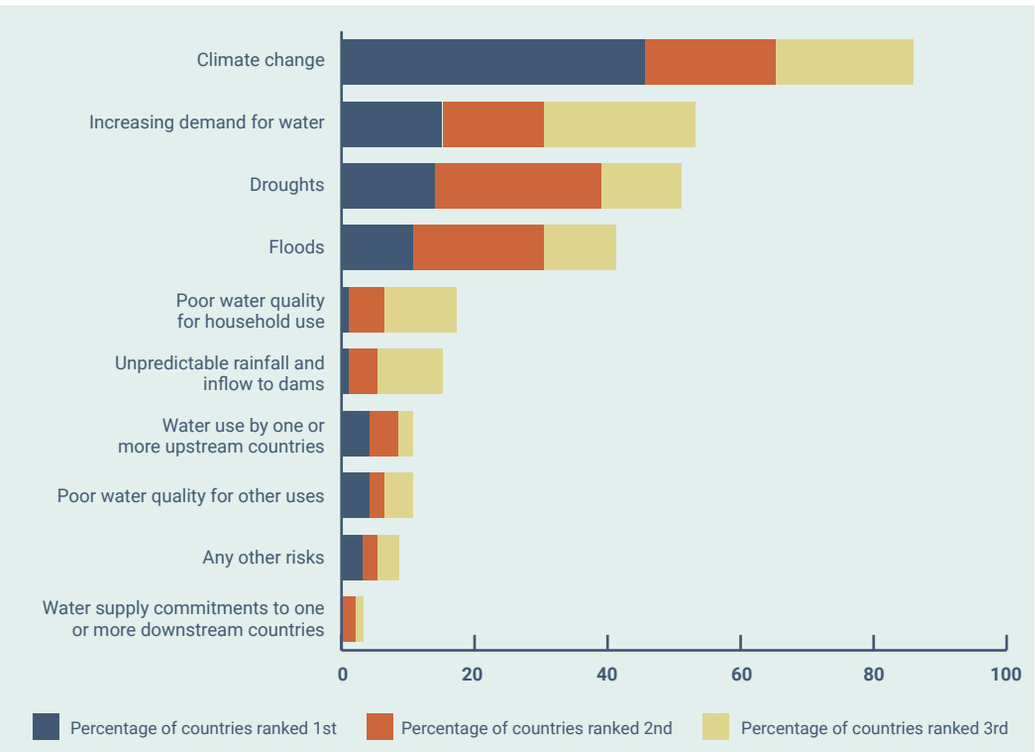
CHAPTER 2
RISKS AND CHALLENGES

WATER MANAGEMENT RISKS

From a set of ten risks, national water leaders were asked to identify the top three which they think are the greatest risks to maintaining or achieving good water management in their country—ranked in order of importance. These 'risks' are matters that are generally outside the immediate control of governments and are risks that water management policies need to address.

Findings indicate that 'climate change' is perceived as the greatest risk, with climate-related risks of droughts and floods, and increased demand for water, also highly ranked (Fig. 2.1).

FIG 2.1: RISKS TO ACHIEVING GOOD WATER MANAGEMENT FOR ALL SURVEYED COUNTRIES



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This result is highly aligned with the 2021 Global Water Policy Report, where the same four factors (climate, demand, droughts, and floods) dominated the responses.

Both then and now, these four risks rate much more strongly than any of the others, including transboundary and water quality issues.

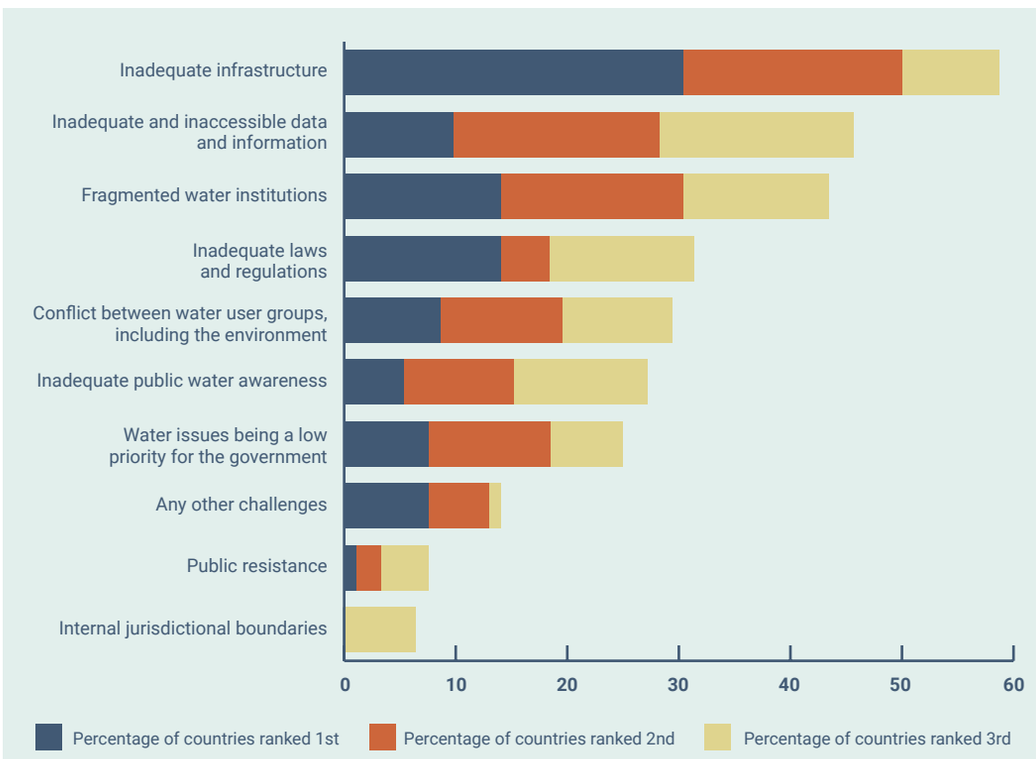
Climate change is perceived as the highest risk across all income classifications, most prominently for low income countries. For high income countries, 'Increasing demand for water' is ranked as a lower risk than 'droughts' and 'floods,' possibly due to more developed infrastructure and lower population and economic pressure in these countries. Water quality is a ranked as a higher risk by respondents of low income countries than by other income categories.

WATER MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

From a list of ten challenges, national water leaders were also asked to identify the top three which they think are the greatest challenges to maintaining or achieving good water management in their country, ranked in order of importance. These 'challenges' are issues largely of a policy and administrative nature which are within the control of governments. If respondents believed another challenge outside of the nine listed should be ranked in the top three, they were provided space to define and rank this challenge.

The greatest challenge (i.e., most often ranked in the 'top three') is 'inadequate infrastructure,' while issues with data and fragmentation of institutions are also highly ranked (Fig 2.2).

FIG 2.2: CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING OR MAINTAINING GOOD WATER MANAGAMENT NATIONALLY



Fragmentation of water related institutions and responsibilities, while highly ranked, is of relatively less concern than in the previous survey, though it still ranks as the second greatest challenge, above infrastructure, for high income countries.

The political challenge of 'public resistance' is seen as a 'top three' challenge by very few national water leaders.

These results largely hold across all income classifications, except that in high income countries, the greatest challenge is seen as 'conflict between water user groups, including the environment'.

Flood in Emilia Romagna Italy

CHAPTER 3
MULTILATERAL PROCESSES

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Due to the primary purpose of this report being to inform discussions at the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, national water leaders were asked about the role of the United Nations and the utility of international processes in carrying out their responsibilities within their countries.

National water leaders were asked to rank up to three types of international processes, including of the United Nations, for their helpfulness in achieving good water outcomes in their country. Nine processes were listed, with space provided for the respondents to describe any other processes if they wished. The expression 'good water outcomes' was defined, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 6, as 'availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.'

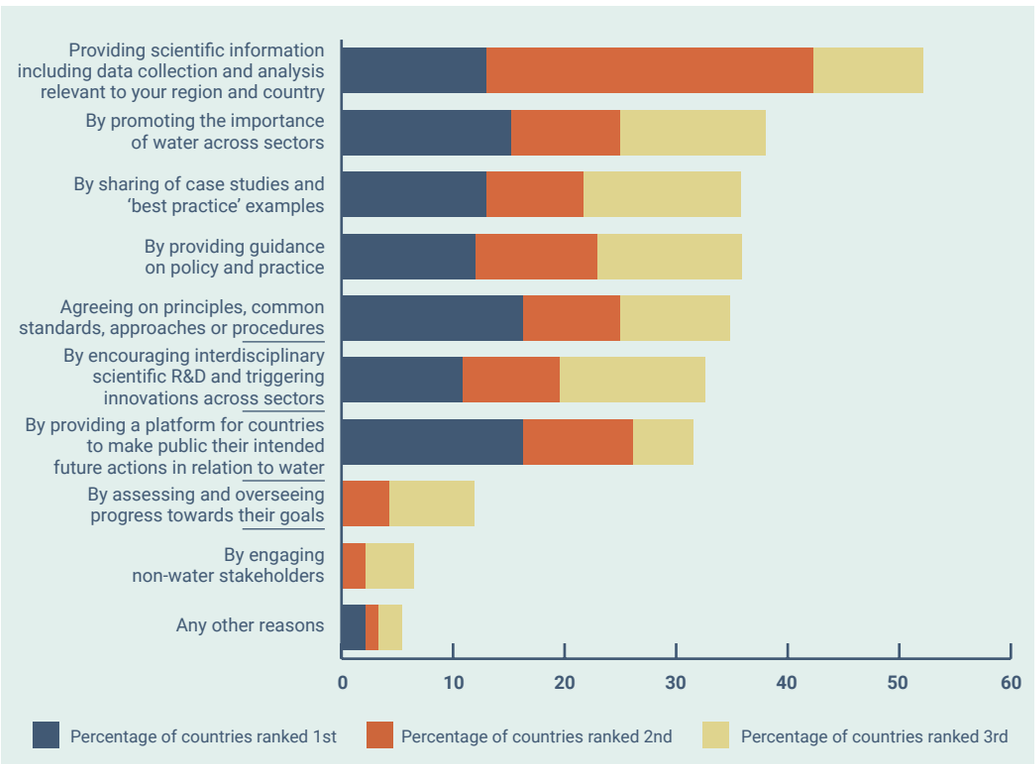
Processes that deliver scientific information relevant at the country and regional scale were the most often ranked in the 'top three' choices. The result strongly affirms the importance of international processes that can deliver this kind of information and is the subject of further findings under 'science processes' on page 20.

Many other choices also rank highly, validating efforts to broaden the range of international processes that can be mobilised to support national efforts. These include:

- providing a platform for countries to make public their intended future actions in relation to water – with further findings on this under 'commitment processes' below;
- providing guidance on policy and practice;
- agreeing on principles, common standards, approaches or procedures;
- sharing of case studies and 'best practice' examples;
- providing scientific information including data collection and analysis relevant to your region and country (see more on this below);
- encouraging interdisciplinary scientific research and development and triggering innovations across sectors; and
- promoting the importance of water across governmental sectors.

These results apply to all income classifications except that high income countries place greatest value on sharing of case studies and best practices. Very few national water leaders considered international processes for engagement with non-water stakeholders and monitoring progress towards goals to be more helpful to them than the other choices.

FIG 3.1: UTILITY OF INTERNATIONAL PROCESSES IN ASSISTING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GOOD WATER OUTCOMES NATIONALLY



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These results relate to some of the proposals discussed at the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, as reported in the conference summary released by the President of the General Assembly. For example, "a platform for countries to make public their intended future actions" describes the 'Water Action Agenda'; "scientific information relevant to your region and country" describes the purpose of the science outcomes; and "guidance on policy and practice" describes the 'scaffolding for integrated policy frameworks to support water management'. The water action agenda and science topics are further explored in the folowing section.

MINISTER PERSPECTIVES

A serving Minister of a country in the Northern Africa and Western Asia region says it would be helpful for achieving good water outcomes in their country if international processes would "... (assist the) transition from emergency to developmental interventions."

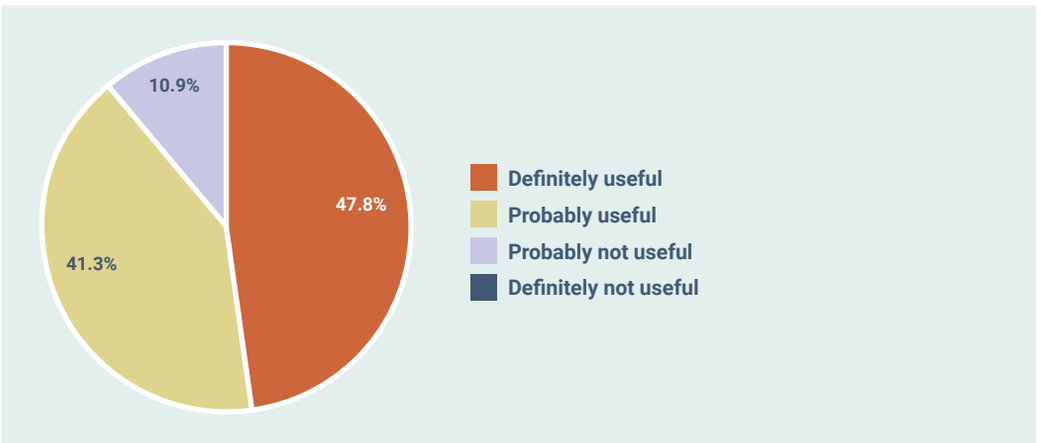
A serving Minister of a country in the Latin America and Caribbean Eastern says it would be helpful for achieving good water outcomes in their country if international processes would also "... (encourage and provide) funding for scientific research and innovations."

INTERNATIONAL 'COMMITMENT' PROCESSES

National water leaders were asked whether, in their opinion, a United Nations platform for countries to make public their intended future actions in relation to water would help raise the priority of water for their government. This question was asked to determine attitudes to the proposed 'Water Action Agenda' as a centrepiece of the United Nations 2023 Water Conference.

The great majority of responses (89%) consider that an international platform for countries to make their intended water actions public would definitely or probably be useful in raising the priority of water for their government (Fig 3.2).

FIG 3.2: UTILITY OF PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT PROCESSES IN RAISING THE PRIORITY OF WATER WITHIN GOVERNMENT

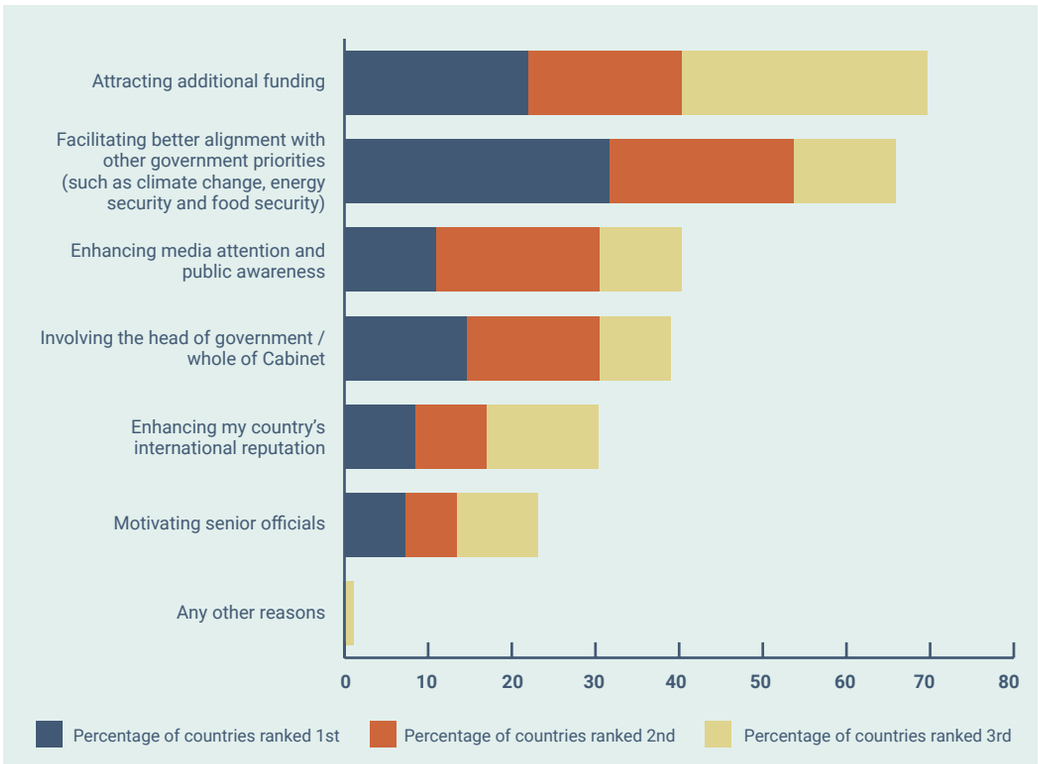


This result is observed across all income classifications – with 93% of upper middle income countries, 95% of lower middle income countries, and 93% of low income countries considering that an international platform for countries to make their intended water actions public would definitely or probably help raise the priority of water for their government. In high income countries, the figure was slightly lower – 76%. Overall, this indicates strong support for mechanisms such as The Partnership Platform of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework and the proposed Water Action Agenda.

Respondents who answered 'definitely or probably' to this question (from 82 countries) were then asked to identify the most useful outcomes (at the country level) from the global exposure of planned national water actions*. The most frequently cited outcomes were facilitating better cross-sectoral alignment and attracting additional funding (Fig 3.3).

**Not all respondents that answered 'definitely or probably' provided an answer to the subsequent question*

FIG 3.3 REASONS WHY A UNITED NATIONS PLATFORM FOR COUNTRIES TO MAKE PUBLIC THEIR INTENDED FUTURE ACTIONS IN RELATION TO WATER WOULD BE USEFUL IN ACHIEVING GOOD WATER OUTCOMES NATIONALLY



MINISTER PERSPECTIVES

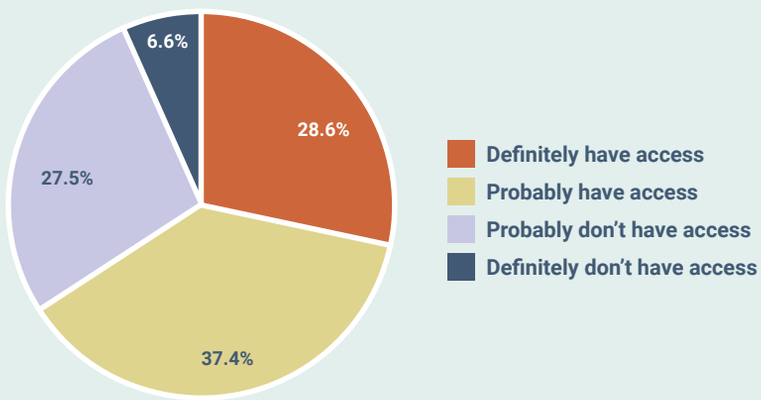
A serving Minister of a country in the Eastern and South-Eastern Asia region says "The platform may also provide opportunity for financing for developing country. This will help to facilitate the infrastructure development and investment opportunities/portfolio of the economy".

Landscape of Torres del Paine National Park, Chile

INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE PROCESSES

National water leaders were asked whether they thought they had access to sufficient scientific services to help achieve good water outcomes in their country. Interestingly, two-thirds (66%) of responses considered they definitely or probably have this access (Fig 3.4).

FIG 3.4: ACCESSIBILITY OF SUFFICIENT SCIENTIFIC SERVICES TO ASSIST IN ACHIEVING GOOD WATER OUTCOMES NATIONALLY

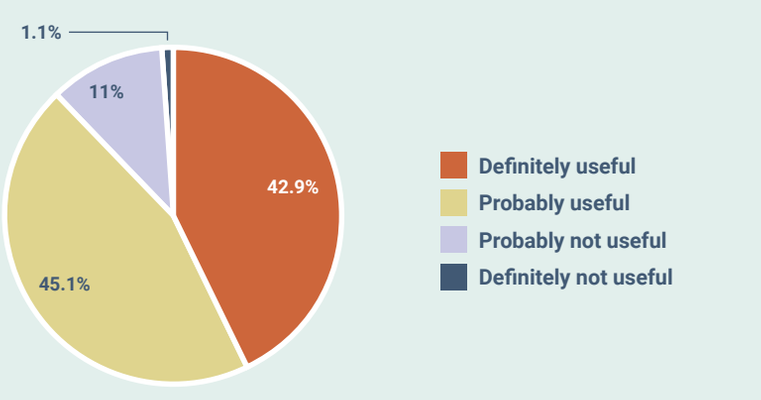


This result was seen across most income classifications with 80% of the high income countries, 68% of the lower middle income countries and 71% of low income countries considering they definitely or probably had access to sufficient scientific services to help achieve good water outcomes in their country. However, the upper middle income countries showed a different result with only 50% considering they had access to sufficient scientific services.

National water leaders were then asked whether information about water at a global and regional scale, prepared through an international science effort (of all relevant sciences, including economics, social sciences, and natural sciences) would help achieve improved water outcomes within their country.

Despite the result reported in Fig 3.4, that national water leaders of most countries (66%) felt they had access to sufficient scientific services, the overwhelming majority (88%) still considered that further information generated through an international effort would either definitely or probably help them achieve improved water outcomes (Fig 3.5).

FIG 3.5: UTILITY OF INFORMATION ABOUT WATER AT A GLOBAL AND REGIONAL SCALE, PREPARED THROUGH AN INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE EFFORT, IN ASSISTING TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED WATER OUTCOMES

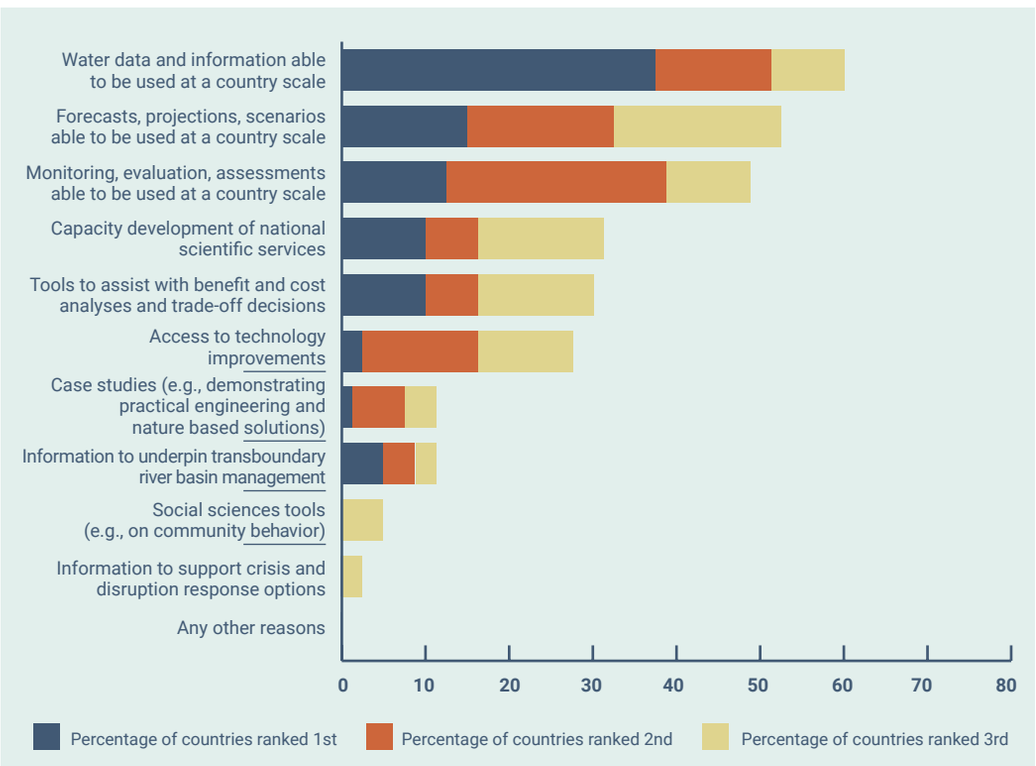


This result holds for all income classifications. 88% of the responses of high income countries consider this would definitely or probably help them, rising to 90% in upper middle income countries, 91% in lower middle income countries and 100% for low income countries.

Respondents who answered 'definitely or probably' to this question (from 80 countries) were then asked to identify the kinds of scientific services from an international science effort that would be most useful for their work*. The highest ranked services were 'water data and information that can be used at a country scale' (52%), 'forecasts, projections and scenarios that can be used as a country scale' (45%), and 'monitoring, evaluations and assessments' that can be used as a country scale (42%), depicted in Fig 3.6.

**Not all respondents from 80 countries that answered 'definitely or probably' provided an answer to the subsequent question.*

FIG 3.6: TYPES OF SCIENTIFIC SERVICES FROM AN INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE EFFORT CONSIDERED TO BE MOST USEFUL



These results generally apply across all income classifications with country-relevant water data and information being particularly useful for low income countries, and forecasts, projections and scenarios being more important for high income countries.

Akkopru Dam on Dalaman River in Turkey
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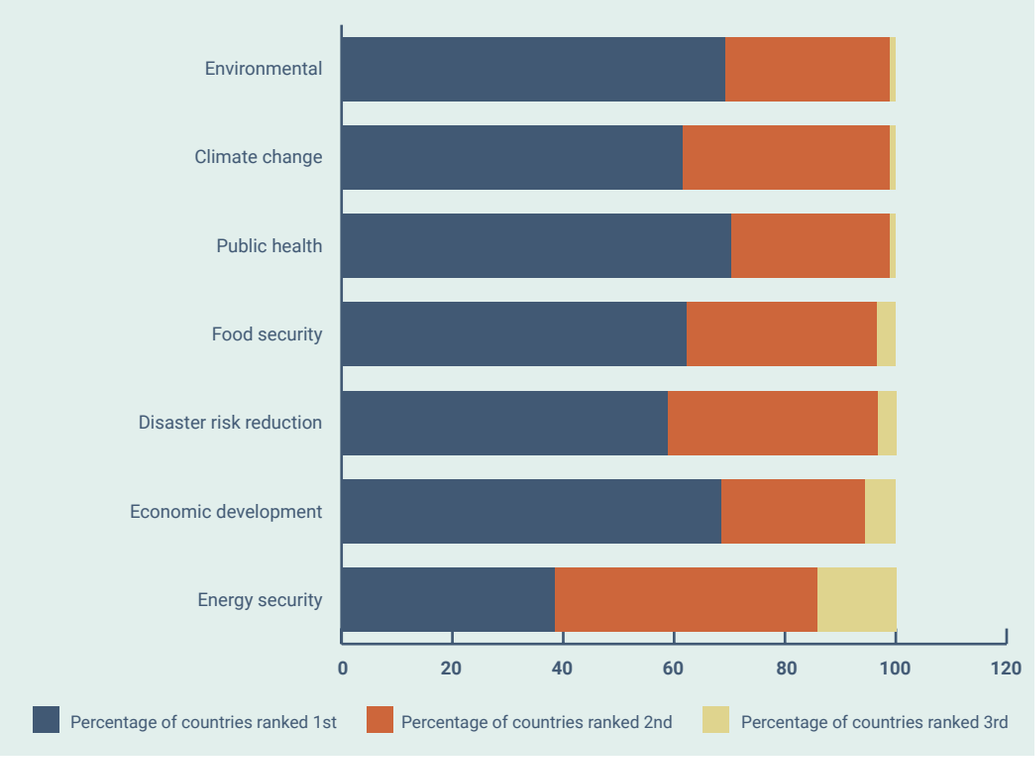
CHAPTER 4
CROSS-SECTORAL INTEGRATION

A key issue for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference was the role of water in contributing to other government priorities, with Interactive Dialogues held on how water could contribute to public health, food security, energy security, economic development, climate change (mitigation and adaptation), environment, and disaster risk reduction objectives. The section explores issues of how well understood these interlinkages are at the national level.

National water leaders were asked a series of questions to assess whether there are different perceptions between different Ministers within a national government of the importance of water to achieving broader government objectives. They were first asked for their own opinion, then for their view as to the opinions of the leaders of these other sectors, and finally for their opinion on the reasons for any major differences.

The overwhelming majority of responses (ranging from 88% for energy security up to 99% for climate change and environment), consider good water outcomes to be essential or very important for achieving these objectives (Fig 4.1).

FIG 4.1: IMPORTANCE OF GOOD WATER OUTCOMES FOR ACHIEVING OTHER NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES

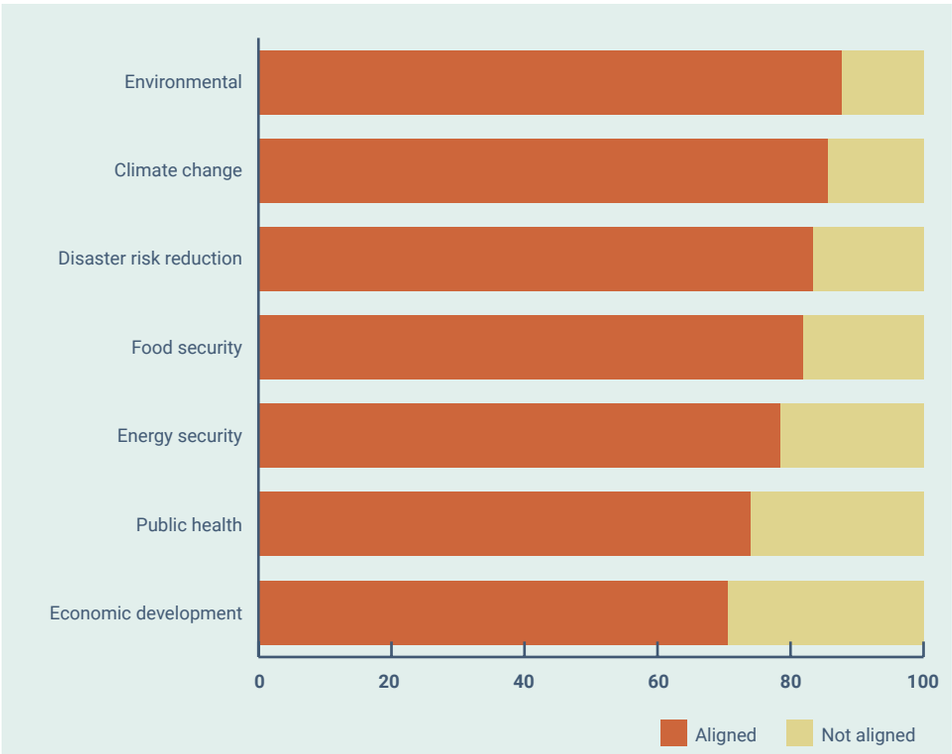


This result largely applies across all income classifications, with the most differentiation in the area of energy security, where a lower proportion of respondents of high income (80%) and upper middle income (76%) countries considered good water outcomes to be essential or very important to energy security objectives.

National water leaders were asked whether, in their opinion, the Minister/s responsible for each of the other objectives thinks good water outcomes are less important for achieving their objectives than they do.

A considerable majority of responses say there are not different perceptions within the government about the importance of water to achieving each of the 'other' SDG objectives. This majority ranged from 70% (economic development) to 88% (environment) and was reasonably consistent across income classifications.

FIG 4.2: NATIONAL WATER LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS OF OTHER MINISTERS' VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD WATER OUTCOMES FOR OTHER GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES

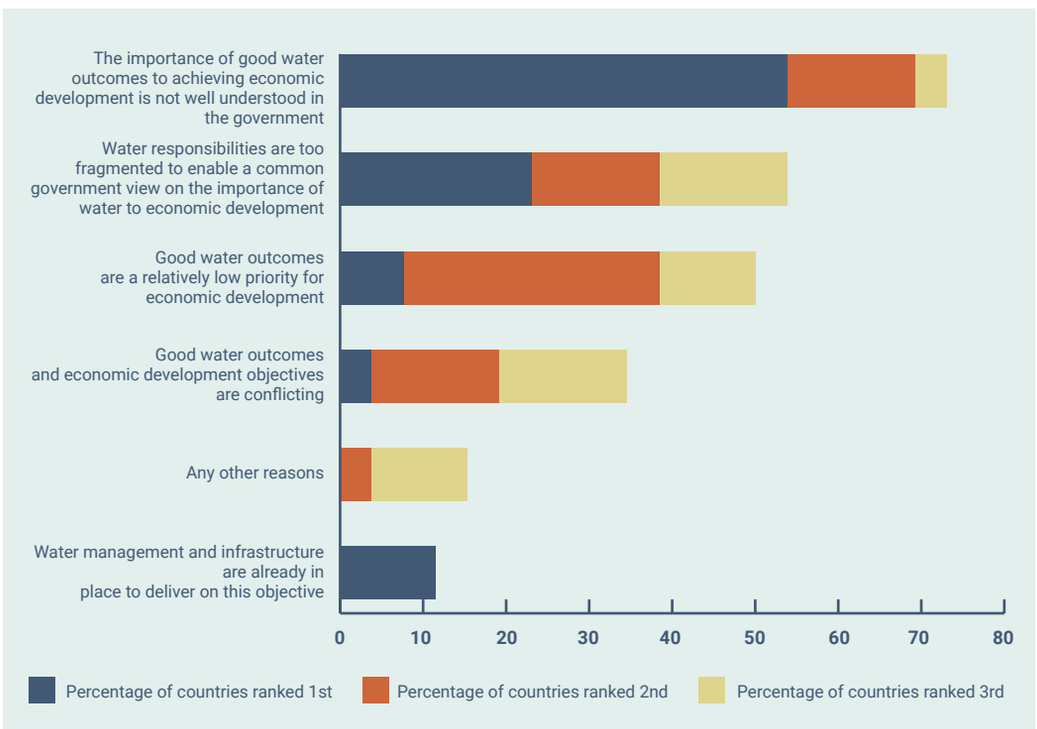


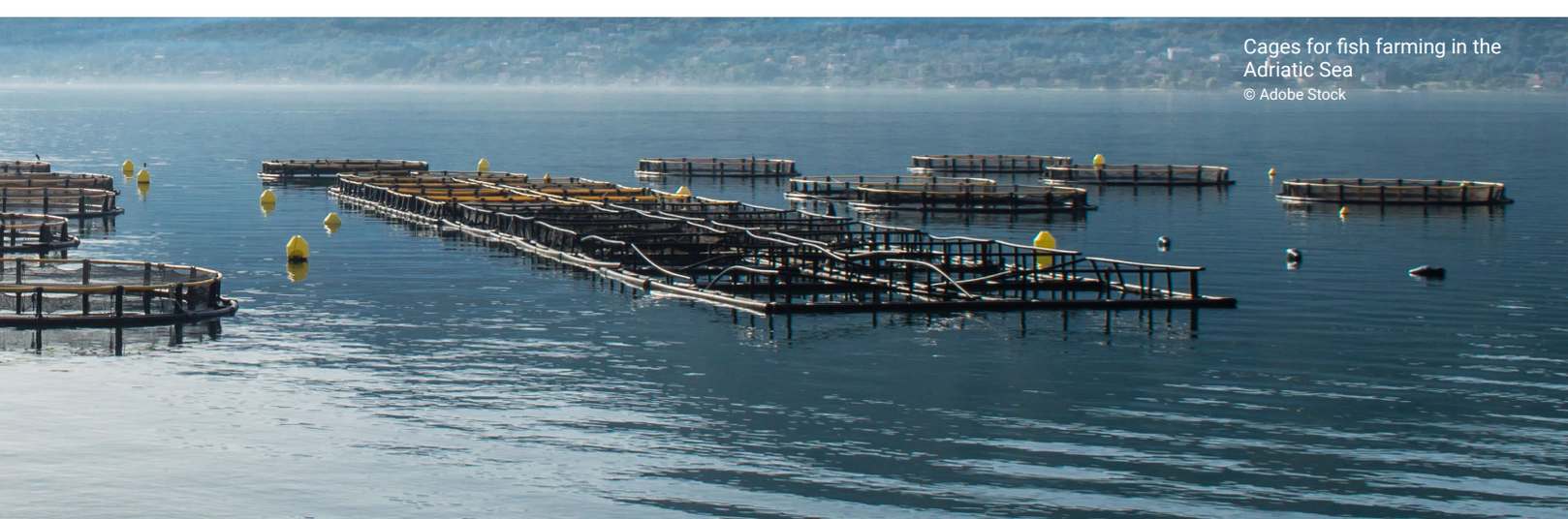
This unexpected result suggests while cross-sectoral integration may continue to be a valid concern at the global level, this is of less concern at the national level—at least at the ministerial level.

For the relatively few countries in which there were thought to be to be different perceptions within the government, respondents were then asked why they thought this was the case by ranking up to three reasons.

The results of this question are provided only for the objective of 'economic development' given that this was where we found the highest proportion (30%) of different perceptions about the importance of water (Fig 4.2). For this relatively small sample (26 countries) the most frequently ranked reason is that 'importance of good water outcomes to economic development objectives is not well understood in the government'. The next most frequently ranked reason is that 'water responsibilities are too fragmented to enable a common government view on the importance of water to economic development objectives' (Fig 4.3).

FIG 4.3: REASONS WHY THERE IS A PERCEPTION THAT THE MINISTER/S RESPONSIBLE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HAS A DIFFERENT VIEW FROM THE WATER MINISTER ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD WATER OUTCOMES TO ACHIEVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES





Cages for fish farming in the Adriatic Sea
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CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

This project set out to contribute information and data about key questions to be considered at the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, particularly on the views of national water leaders on the risks and challenges to achieving good water outcomes, how international processes can best support national efforts to achieve better water outcomes, and how well integrated water objectives are with other public policy objectives at the national level.

National water leaders from 92 countries generously shared their experience and perspectives on these matters. In their opinion:

- Climate change, climate-related disasters of droughts and floods, and increased demand for water are the greatest 'risks' (as described in chapter 2) to maintaining or achieving good water outcomes;

- Infrastructure, data and institutions are the greatest 'challenges' (as described in chapter 2) to maintaining or achieving good water outcomes;

- International processes can make the most useful contributions to national progress with water goals by providing a platform for countries to make public water commitments, providing guidance on policy and practice, agreeing on principles and common standards, approaches, or procedures, sharing of case studies and best practices, providing scientific information (broadly defined), encouraging interdisciplinary scientific research and development for innovations across sectors, and promoting the importance of water across sectors;

- The most useful international scientific processes are those that can provide water data and information, forecasts, projections and scenarios and monitoring, evaluations, and assessments that can be used at a country scale;

- A United Nations platform for countries to make their intended water actions public will help raise the priority of water in their government by facilitating better cross-sectoral alignment and attracting additional funding;

- There are surprisingly similar perceptions within governments about the importance of good water outcomes for achieving other government objectives, specifically public health, food security, energy security, economic development, climate change, environment, and disaster risk reduction;

- There are surprisingly similar perceptions within governments about the importance of good water outcomes for achieving other government objectives, specifically public health, food security, energy security, economic development, climate change, environment, and disaster risk reduction;

- Where there are the most different perceptions about the importance of water, this is mainly due to poor understanding of the role of water, and water responsibilities being too fragmented to enable a common government view on the importance of water to economic development objectives; and

- The considerable similarity across income classifications in most of the responses suggest that despite economic disparities, national water leaders share similar experiences of risks, challenges, interaction with international processes, and integration within government, and thus may have much to learn from each other.

From this project, Water Policy Group concludes that the multilateral efforts on climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, science and information, governance, and to operate commitment platforms like the Water Action Agenda, will be particularly useful in supporting national efforts to achieve better water outcomes. We also conclude that while cross-sectoral integration may continue to be valid concern at the global level, this is of less concern at the national level.

Finally, from the high level of interest in these results at the UN 2023 Water Conference and since, Water Policy Group concludes that this kind of aggregated feedback from national water leaders can help connect global scale agendas to the practical world of water decision-making. We are most grateful to the participants for generously sharing their experiences.

A child holding green vegetables in the dry season

APPENDIX
EXPLANATORY INFORMATION

Yapola river in Ladakh, near Wanla village, Himalayas

OVERVIEW

Information presented in the Global Water Policy report was generated using qualitative and quantitative analysis of alphanumeric and text responses to the 2022 Water Leaders Survey.

Invitations to participate in the survey were distributed by the President of the United Nations General Assembly (PGA) to all UN member States through UN New York Permanent Representatives, for Ministers responsible for water matters or their top officials. The survey was translated from English into five additional languages by the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) Australia, and made available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. The survey opened on 22nd November 2022 and was accessed via an online format through the QualtricsXM platform. It contained 15 primary questions, some with additional sub-questions covering; meta-data on the nationality and role of the respondent; water risk and challenges; multilateral processes and cross-sectoral integration. The survey closed on the 24th February 2023. Survey responses were exported into IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 for the purpose of data analysis.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

To ensure the project complied with the highest standards in ethical research a Negligible Risk Application was filed with the UNSW Sydney Human Research Advisory Panel (HC220554) which operates in accordance with, and applies the criteria specified in, the Commonwealth of Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research . Approval to proceed with the research was received from the executive on 21st September 2022.

In November 2022, invitations to participate in the survey were distributed by the President of the United Nations General Assembly (PGA) to all UN member States through UN New York Permanent Representatives, for Ministers responsible for water matters or their top officials. The online survey was available in six languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

ENSURING THE ANONYMITY OF RESPONDENTS

Participation in the survey was voluntary and respondents were not asked to supply any identifying information, such as their name or gender. To maintain confidentiality and encourage candid responses, meta-data on the professional status of an individual national water leader and their country of affiliation cannot be identified from the data presented in this report. While respondent classifications were used to determine the most senior response from each country, the leadership status of any respondent cannot be identified from data presented in this report. Respondents were asked to identify and select one of the 194 countries on the register of the United Nations Member States, however, the national affiliation of any respondent cannot be identified from data presented in this report.

DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEYED COUNTRIES

The responses were grouped according to the geographic regions defined under the Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use (known as M49) of the United Nations Statistics Division (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/#geo-regions) as shown in the map and country lists at nstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/regional-groups, which combines some of the M49 regions.

In addition, responses were grouped according to income classification (GNI per capita) in accordance with the World Bank country classifications by income-level . The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this survey do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Water Policy Group or UNSW Sydney concerning the legal status of any place or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.
All the results, aggregated by income classification, are available on www.waterpolicygroup.com. Results for some country groupings will be published separately.

DEFINING NATIONAL WATER LEADERS AND QUALIFYING RESPONSES

To ensure the integrity of the survey as a true reflection of the opinions of National Water Leaders, the seniority of each respondent was determined according to their self-description. Respondents advising they were 'National Government Ministers with responsibility for the water portfolio'; 'heads of national water departments or agencies' or 'senior officials or Advisors responsible for water in a national government' were accepted as qualifying as 'national water leaders' without further assessment.

Respondents advising they had other credentials were asked to describe these in text. These 'other roles' were considered to qualify if their self-description indicated they: (1) have responsibility for water policy, strategy, planning, or coordination in the national government; (2) have a high degree of influence over water policy, planning, or coordination at the national level (e.g., due to the small size of the country); or (3) were the responsible Minister or water agency head within the past two years.

NORMALISING TO COUNTRIES

This report gives results by country. All countries have the same weight in the report, regardless of their population or any other factor. Where was more than one qualifying response from a country, to avoid the complexity of weighting responses according to the status of respondents, only the response of the most senior category of respondent from each participating country was included in the analysis.

Where there were multiple responses from participants classified in the same category, the response included was the first received or the response that had the most complete data.

Where there were no qualifying respondents from a country, that country was not included in the analysis or counted in the report.

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