Unravelling perceptions of Eurasian beaver reintroduction in Great Britain

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Funding: *University of Exeter, Devon Wildlife Trust, Plymouth City Council, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Natural Environment Research Council*

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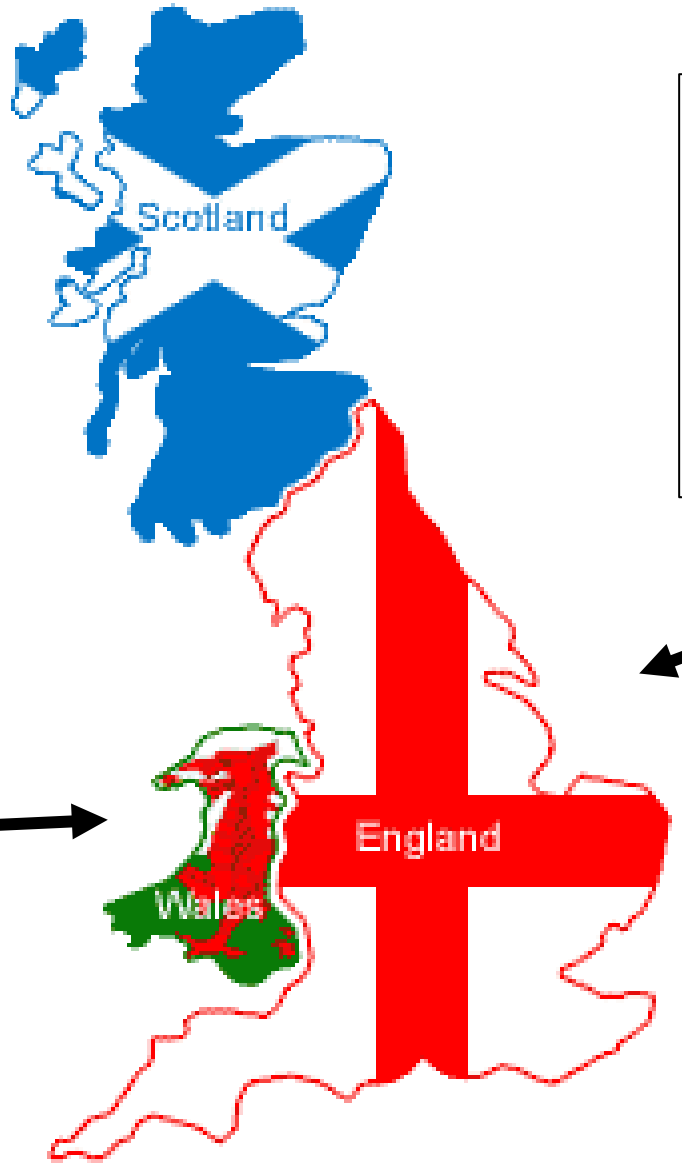
Beavers formally reintroduced and legally recognised since May 2019.



Decisions on future of beavers due from UK Government later in 2020, following five years monitoring in a trial reintroduction

No formal beavers yet, but the 'Welsh Beaver Project' has submitted proposals for a monitored trial reintroduction

Northern Ireland – no historical evidence of beaver presence and no introduction proposals

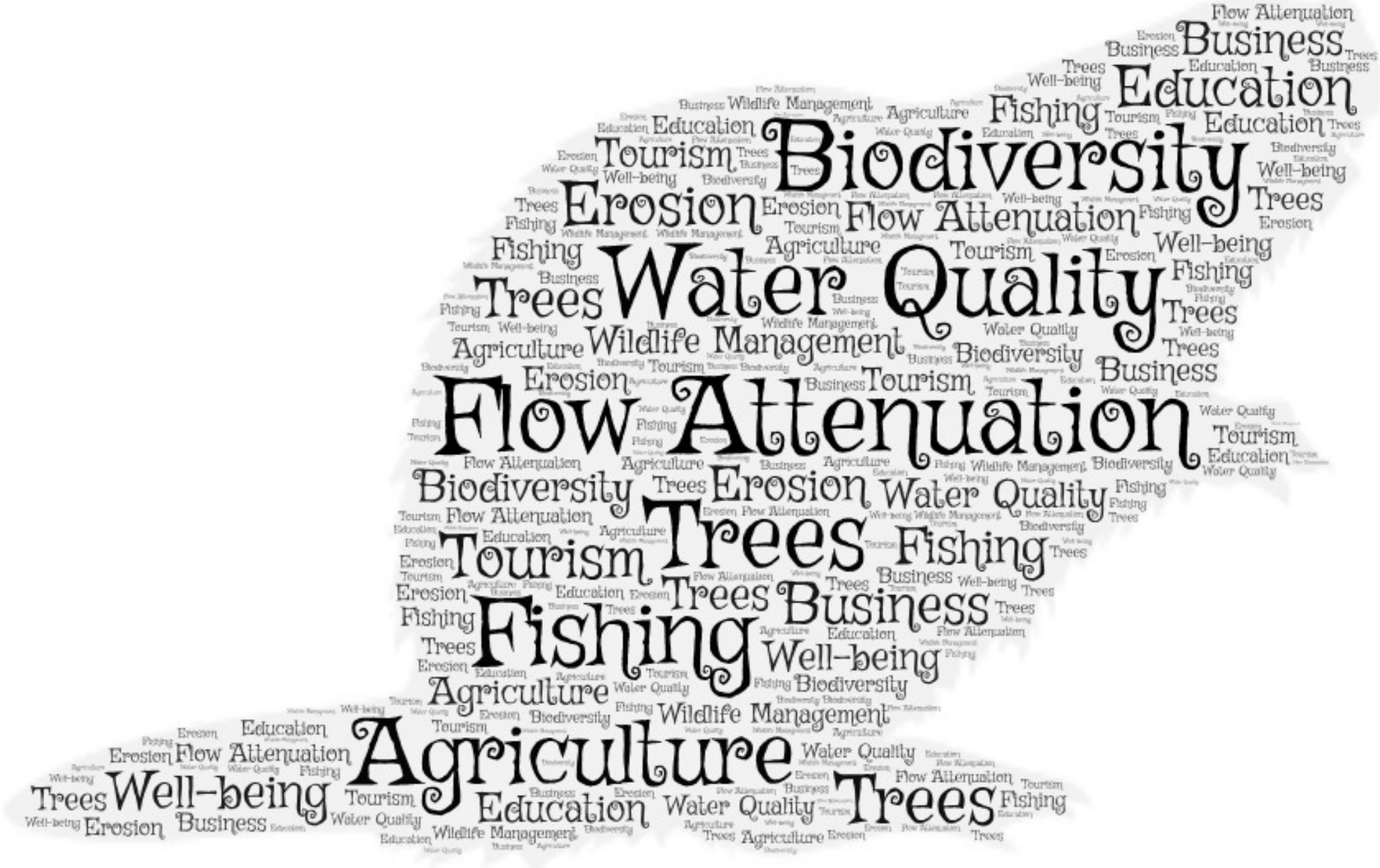
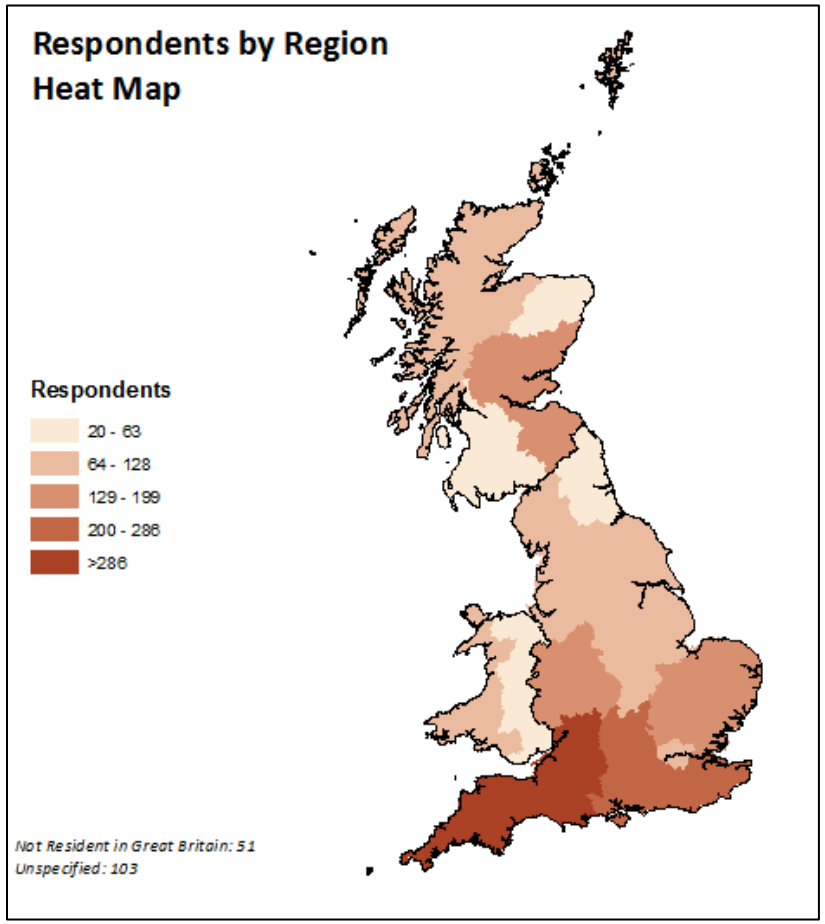
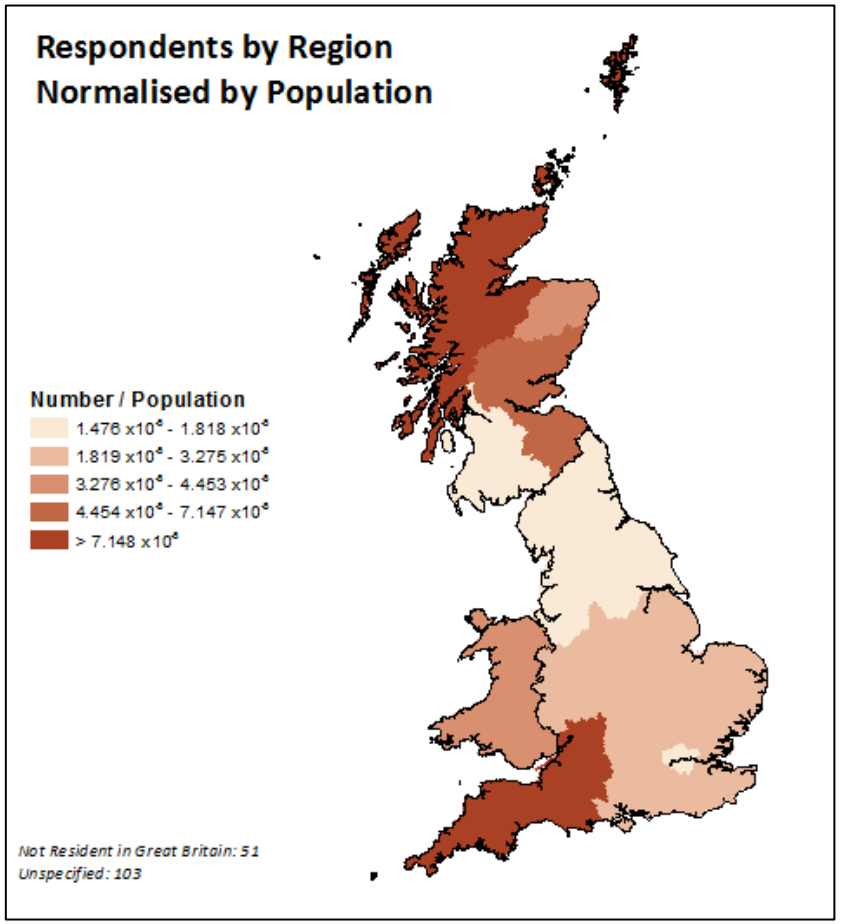


Image for illustrative purposes only. Word size/frequency is holds no meaning

Nationwide Online Survey: n=2759





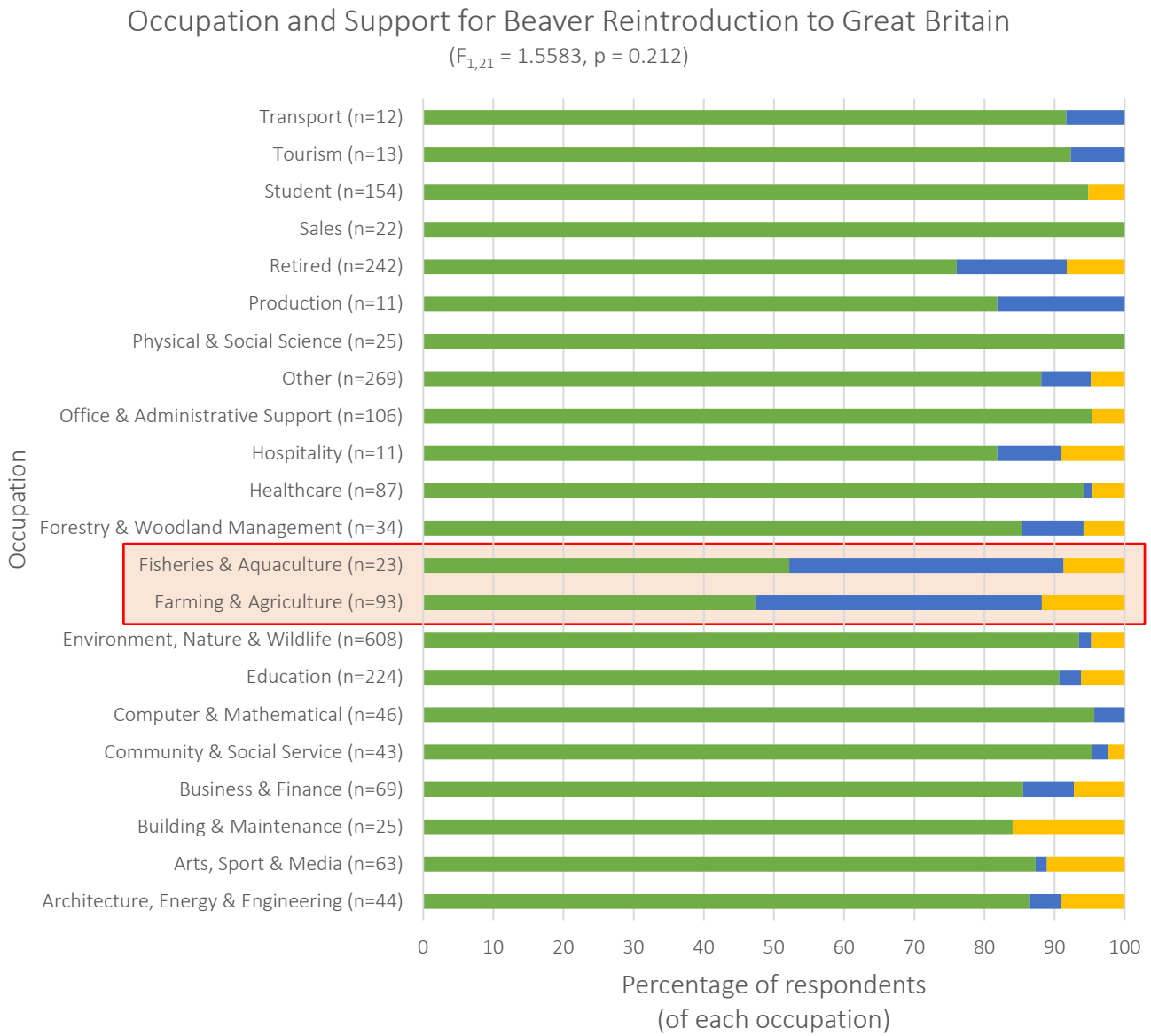
Countries of residence identified by non-GB respondents:
Northern Ireland, USA, Isle of Man, Iran, Mexico, Switzerland, Uruguay, Spain, Australia, Slovakia, Canada, Botswana, France, The Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland, Germany, UAE, Channel Islands, Indonesia, Czech Republic

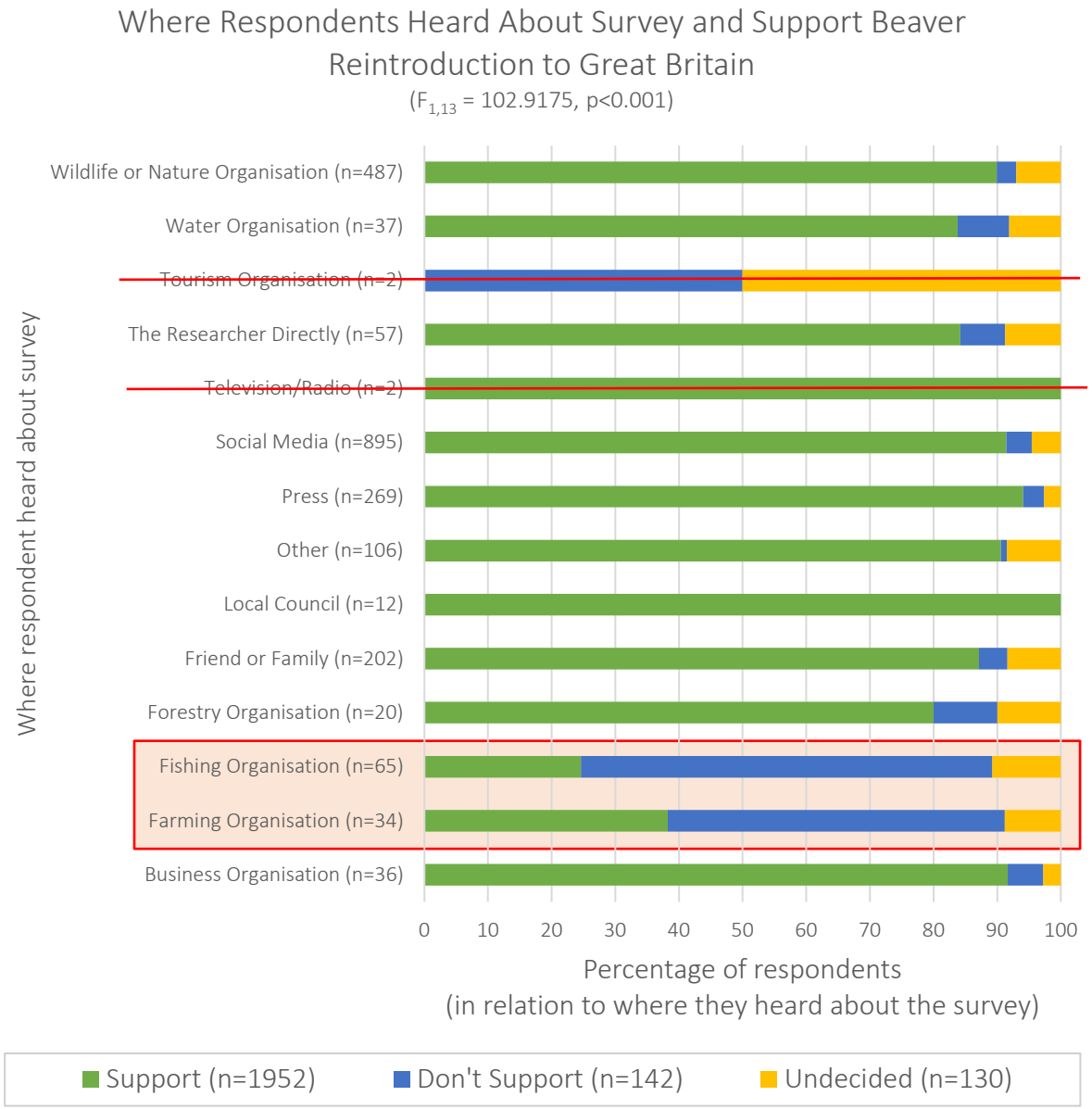
Reference

Auster, R.E., Puttock, A.K. & Brazier, R.E. 2019. Unravelling perceptions of Eurasian beaver reintroduction in Great Britain. *AREA. Doi: 10.1111/area.12576*

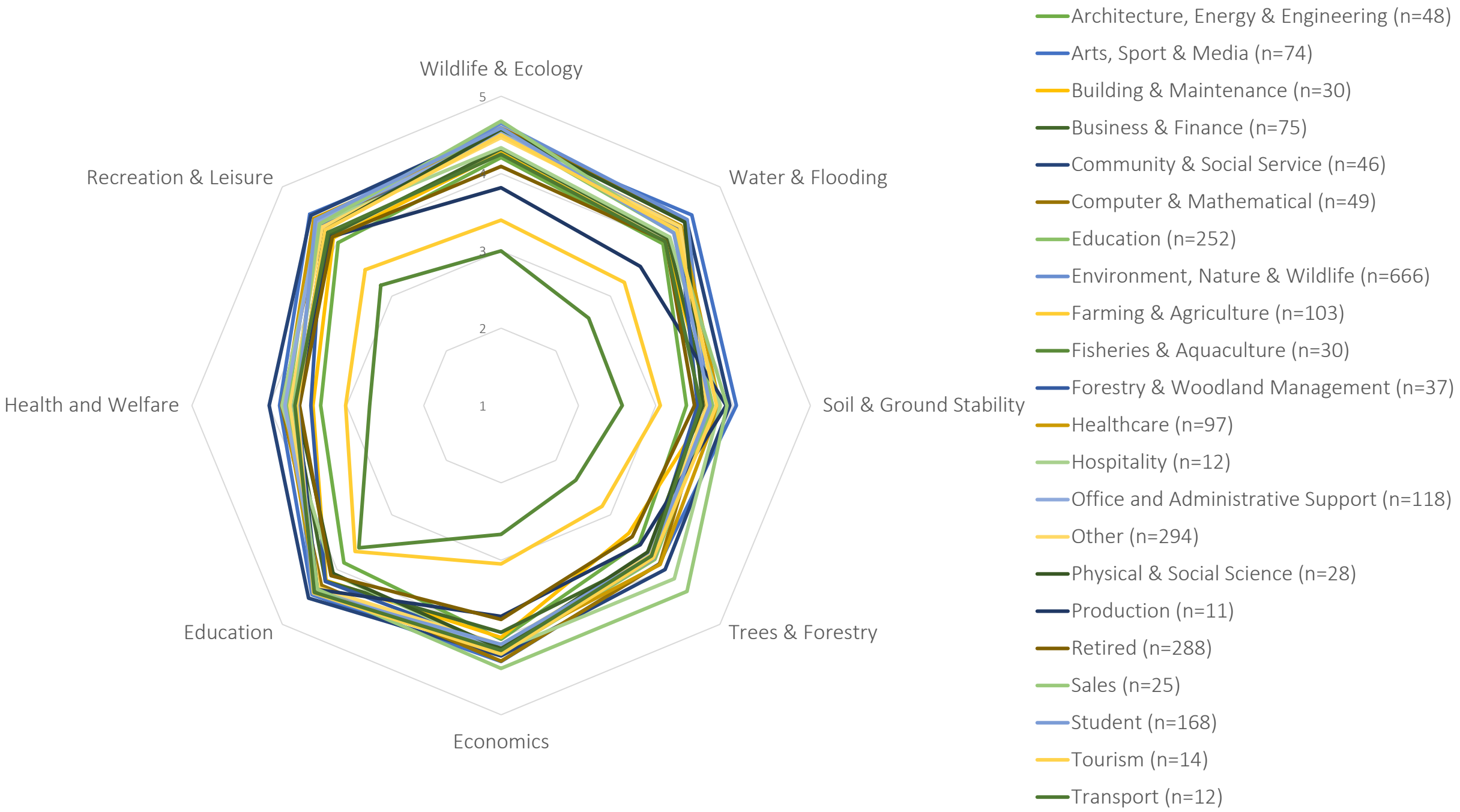
- England and Wales Population Data Source: Office for National Statistics 2015 mid-year population estimates
- Scotland Population Data Source: National Records of Scotland 2016 mid-year population estimates
- Wales respondent data was combined for 'normalise by population' due to availability of population estimates

Subset of results from a 2017 nationwide online perceptions survey (n=2759)





*Note: **n=2** for both 'Tourism Organisation' and 'Television/Radio'*


Wildlife & Ecology
Water & Flooding
Soil & Ground Stability
Trees & Forestry
Economics
Education
Health and Welfare
Recreation & Leisure
5
4
3
2
1
Architecture, Energy & Engineering (n=48)
Arts, Sport & Media (n=74)
Building & Maintenance (n=30)
Business & Finance (n=75)
Community & Social Service (n=46)
Computer & Mathematical (n=49)
Education (n=252)
Environment, Nature & Wildlife (n=666)
Farming & Agriculture (n=103)
Fisheries & Aquaculture (n=30)
Forestry & Woodland Management (n=37)
Healthcare (n=97)
Hospitality (n=12)
Office and Administrative Support (n=118)
Other (n=294)
Physical & Social Science (n=28)
Production (n=11)
Retired (n=288)
Sales (n=25)
Student (n=168)
Tourism (n=14)
Transport (n=12)

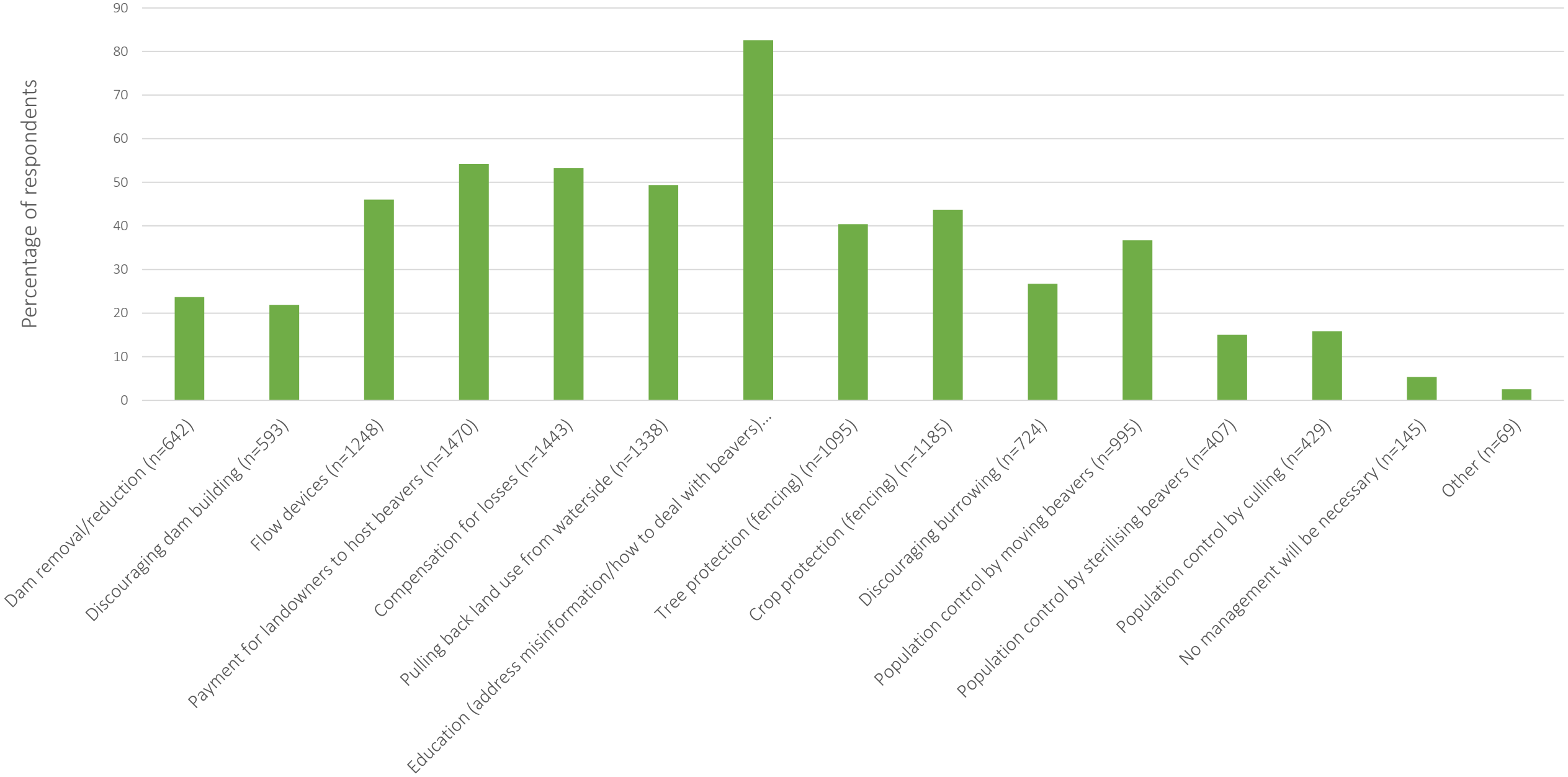
In (re)introduction decisions, consider more than just perceptions of impacts.

Proactively take into account the **perceptions legal protection and management** if potential conflict escalation is to be avoided.

General Views On Level Of Legal Protection Required In Relation To Whether Respondents Support The Process of Beaver Reintroduction to Great Britain

(X^2 = 1555.1, df=4, p<0.001)

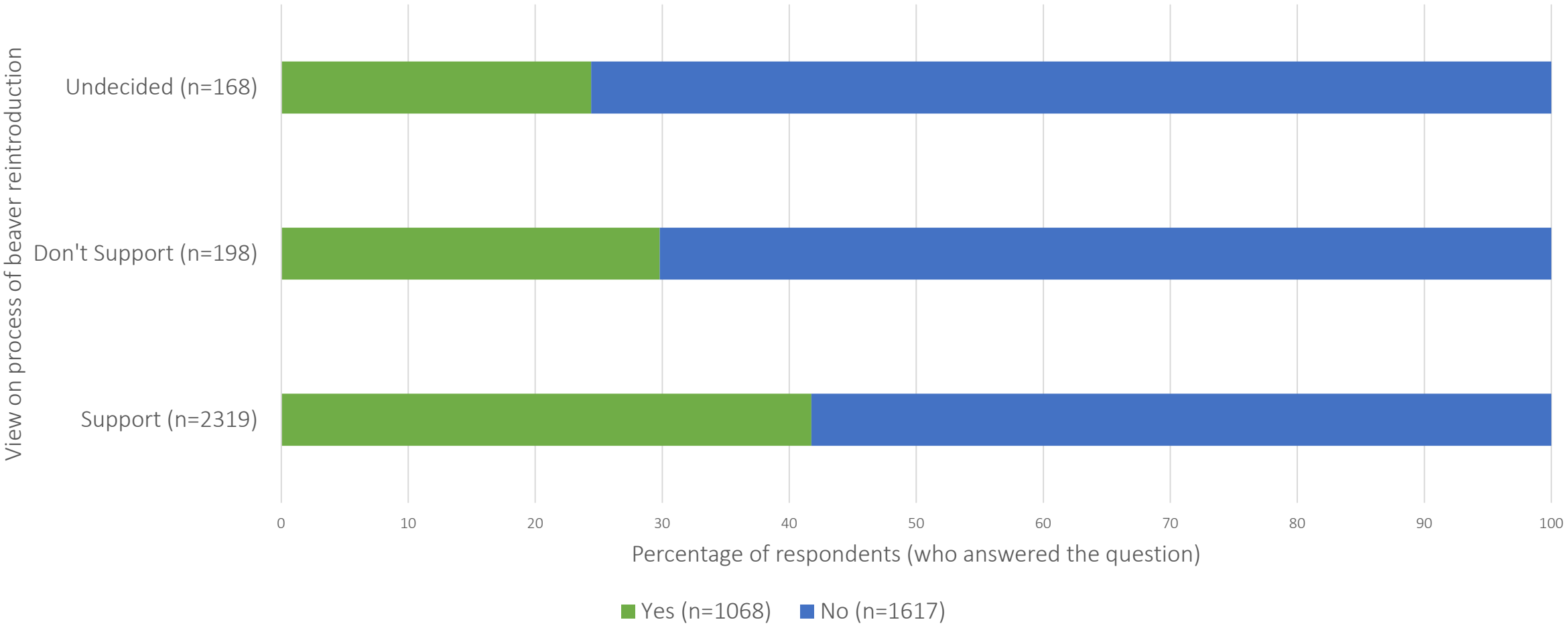
Support for Management Techniques



Occupation	Dam removal	Discouraging dam building	Flow devices	Pay landowners to host beavers	Compensation for losses	Pull back land use from waterside	Education	Tree protection	Crop protection	Discouraging burrowing	Pop. control by moving beavers	Pop. control by sterilisation	Pop. control by culling	No management	Other
Architecture, Energy & Engineering *(n=51)*	31.37	33.33	47.06	52.94	62.75	45.10	76.47	33.33	49.02	27.45	37.25	19.61	15.69	3.92	9.80
Arts, Sport & Media *(n=84)*	8.33	10.71	36.90	55.95	53.57	40.48	83.33	33.33	42.86	11.90	32.14	7.14	4.76	5.95	2.38
Building & Maintenance *(n=33)*	15.15	12.12	39.39	57.58	45.45	45.45	75.76	39.39	42.42	24.24	48.48	15.15	27.27	12.12	3.03
Business & Finance *(n=78)*	17.95	20.51	52.56	52.56	53.85	38.46	80.77	37.18	34.62	20.51	37.18	8.97	12.82	5.13	1.28
Community & Social Service *(n=46)*	13.04	13.04	50.00	56.52	60.87	43.48	80.43	32.61	45.65	19.57	39.13	10.87	2.17	6.52	2.17
Computer & Mathematical *(n=52)*	13.46	9.62	36.54	44.23	53.85	36.54	78.85	34.62	40.38	19.23	32.69	9.62	9.62	9.62	5.77
Education *(n=263)*	15.97	14.83	47.53	57.79	53.99	45.63	87.45	39.92	46.39	24.33	36.88	11.79	9.13	5.70	1.52
Environment, Nature & Wildlife *(n=702)*	32.62	30.06	50.43	59.54	51.14	64.25	90.03	44.30	47.44	35.33	40.60	15.53	18.66	5.56	2.56
Farming & Agriculture *(n=117)*	40.17	33.33	38.46	60.68	73.50	33.33	59.83	45.30	46.15	29.91	33.33	29.06	47.86	2.56	3.42
Fisheries & Aquaculture *(n=34)*	61.76	41.18	44.12	38.24	58.82	38.24	64.71	47.06	35.29	35.29	26.47	23.53	55.88	0.00	2.94
Forestry & Woodland Management *(n=39)*	38.46	33.33	53.85	61.54	43.59	66.67	92.31	43.59	53.85	30.77	46.15	15.38	33.33	0.00	2.56
Healthcare *(n=102)*	10.78	17.65	48.04	50.98	46.08	43.14	87.25	44.12	41.18	23.53	34.31	10.78	0.98	8.82	0.98
Hospitality *(n=12)*	25.00	25.00	33.33	58.33	75.00	41.67	75.00	41.67	33.33	16.67	16.67	8.33	16.67	0.00	0.00
Office & Administrative Support *(n=125)*	15.20	9.60	42.40	52.00	44.80	38.40	88.00	37.60	43.20	23.20	37.60	12.80	3.20	4.00	2.40
Other *(n=325)*	20.00	16.31	46.15	52.62	51.69	48.31	82.15	40.00	41.54	22.77	39.38	15.38	11.69	5.54	3.08
Physical & Social Science *(n=29)*	17.24	20.69	34.48	51.72	44.83	48.28	93.10	44.83	55.17	27.59	27.59	13.79	20.69	6.90	6.90
Production *(n=12)*	33.33	25.00	41.67	25.00	50.00	50.00	75.00	50.00	41.67	16.67	16.67	8.33	16.67	8.33	0.00
Retired *(n=314)*	21.34	22.29	43.31	44.59	55.73	44.59	70.06	34.39	31.21	24.84	28.03	19.11	18.79	3.82	2.87
Sales *(n=27)*	11.11	14.81	33.33	66.67	62.96	55.56	85.19	22.22	37.04	18.52	33.33	3.70	7.41	3.70	3.70
Student *(n=173)*	19.08	20.23	47.40	56.07	58.38	48.55	89.02	45.66	57.80	23.70	42.20	12.72	10.98	3.47	1.16
Tourism *(n=14)*	7.14	0.00	42.86	35.71	42.86	42.86	85.71	28.57	42.86	14.29	35.71	7.14	14.29	0.00	7.14
Transport *(n=13)*	15.38	7.69	38.46	53.85	53.85	53.85	92.31	30.77	46.15	15.38	15.38	15.38	0.00	7.69	0.00

Engagement

Did respondents feel able to express their views where it influences decision-makers?



Top 10 Reasons

VIEW	REASON	% of n
YES N=877 n=944	There are platforms to share views	24.79
	Have knowledge or experience in a relevant field or feel able to easily research topic	20.87
	Respondent has strong views or is passionate of their view	15.68
	Public opinion is influential	9.64
	Have expressed views, or are involved in/supported a trial/campaign group	9.43
	Personal confidence in ability to express a view	7.73
	Decision makers [try to] take comments on board	4.13
	Sense of hope	2.12
	Respondent directly affected by reintroduction	1.69
	Freedom of speech	1.69
NO N=1340 n=1385	Don’t know enough about the topic	31.84
	Disillusioned with decision makers/process	18.99
	Don’t know how or who to contact	9.53
	Opportunity has not been/is not being provided	8.16
	Personal views mean little	7.94
	Government and decision makers listen to limited groups	6.06
	Not good at or difficulty communicating, lack of confidence in doing so or unwilling to impose personal views	4.12
	Decision makers have already made up their minds	3.75
	Campaigning groups are noisy and override other voices	2.31

River Otter Beaver Trial

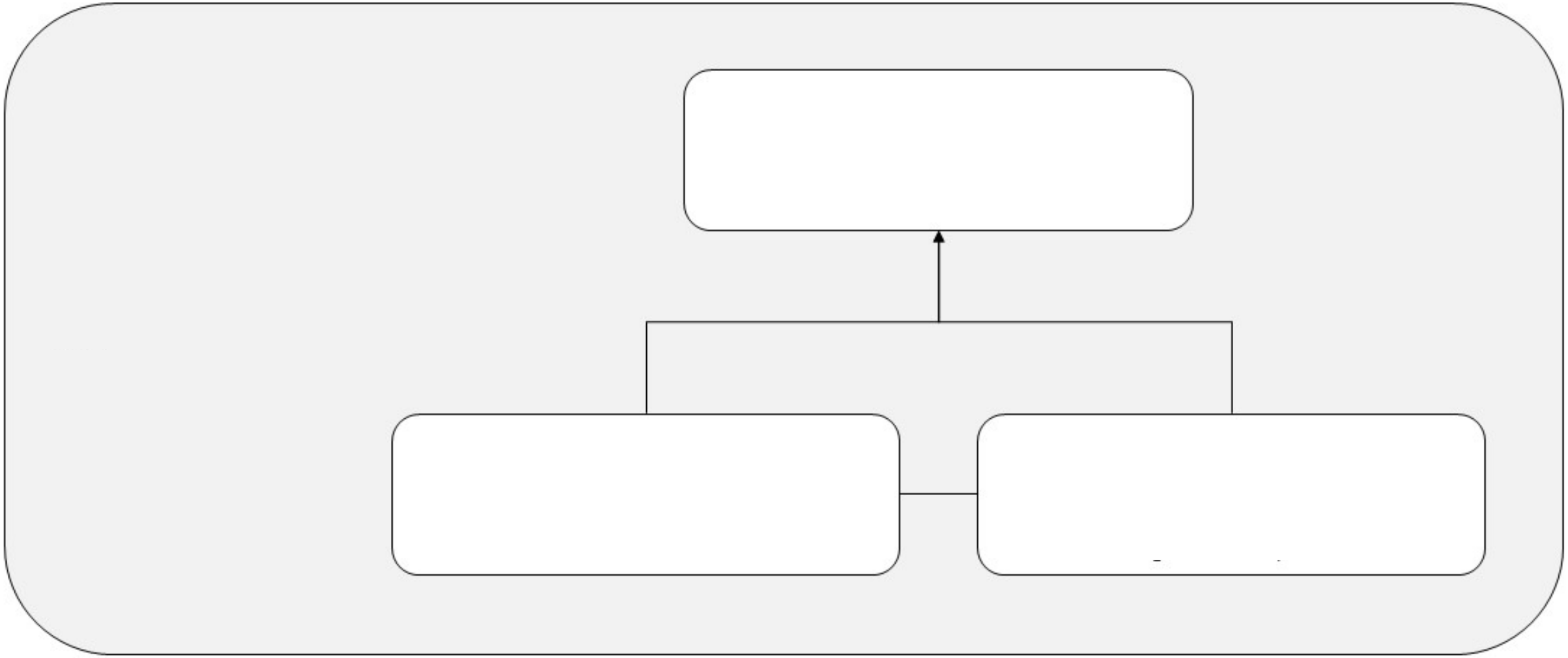
5 Year Monitored Project in South West England, led by Devon Wildlife Trust

Decision on beavers in England due by September

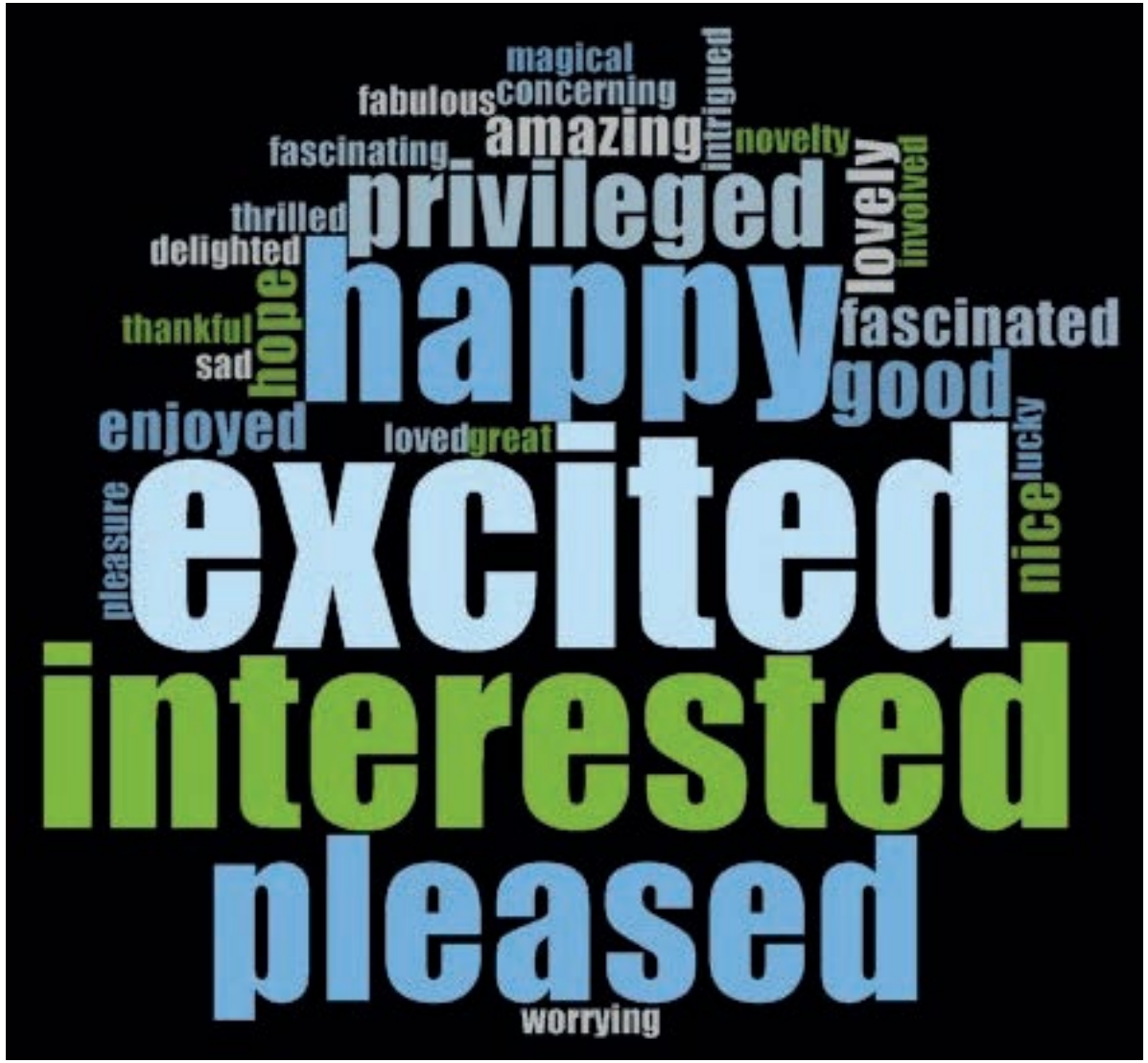
Auster, R.E., Barr, S.W. & Brazier, R.E. *In Review.*

Improving engagement in wildlife conflict management: Lessons from the River Otter Beaver Trial.

Interview study with individuals who reported beaver impacts of concern.



Beaver
Bitter


magical
fabulous
concerning
intrigued
amazing
novelty
fascinating
lovely
involved
thrilled
privileged
delighted
happy
thankful
hope
fascinated
sad
good
enjoyed
loved
great
lucky
pleasure
excited
nice
interested
pleased
worrying

References

Auster, R.E., Puttock, A.K. & Brazier, R.E. 2019. Unravelling perceptions of Eurasian beaver reintroduction in Great Britain. *AREA*. Doi: 10.1111/area.12576

Auster, R.E., Barr, S.W. & Brazier, R.E. *In Review*. Improving engagement in wildlife conflict management: Lessons from the River Otter Beaver Trial.

Brazier, R.E., *et al*. 2020. River Otter Beaver Trial: Science & Evidence Report. Available at: https://www.exeter.ac.uk/creww/research/beavertrial/

With thanks to

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THE wildlife TRUSTS Devon Wildlife Trust

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

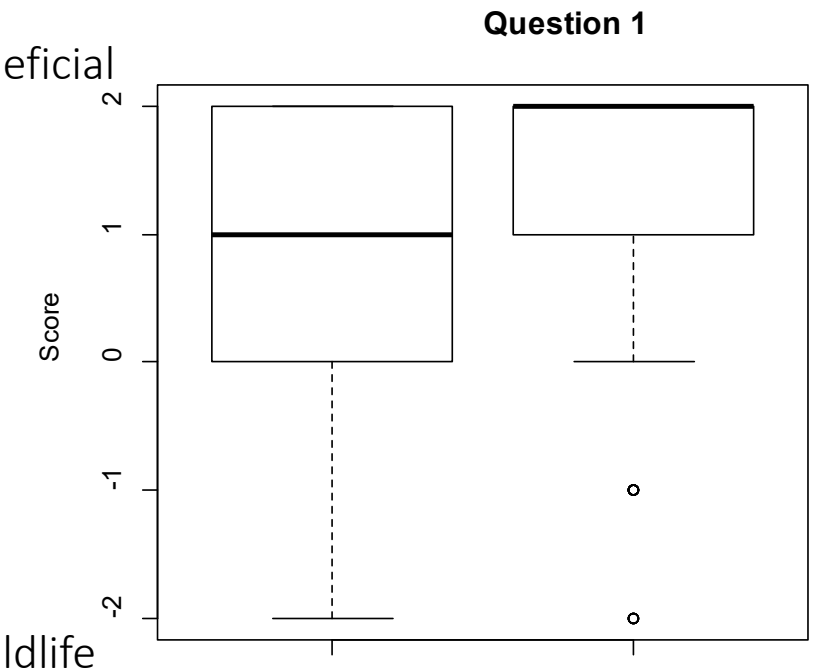
THE wildlife TRUSTS Cornwall

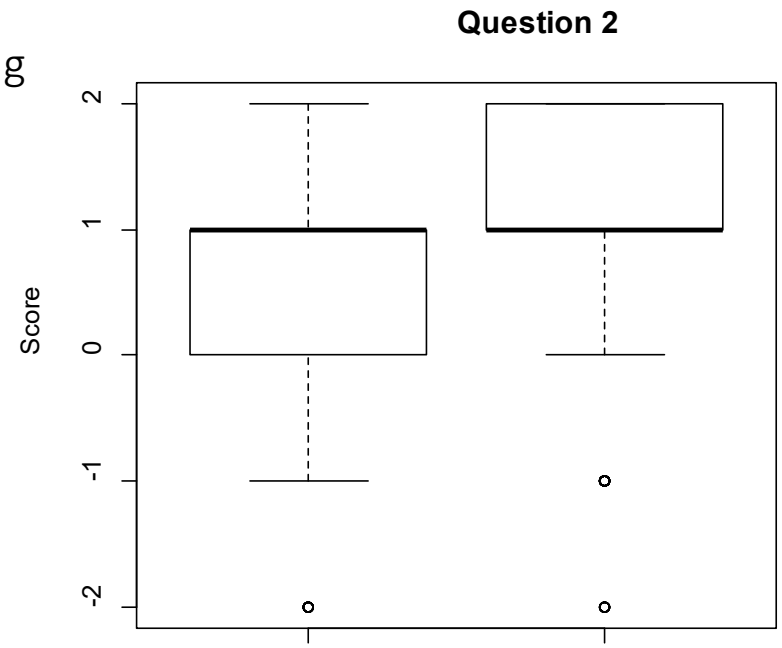
NERC SCIENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Engagement and Attitudes

Beavers are beneficial for wildlife

Beavers are not beneficial for wildlife



Beavers and farming can easily co-exist

Beavers cause irreconcilable problems with farming