
G W I R E A D E R S U R V E Y • M A Y 2 0 2 6

Engaging with the UN Water agenda

Findings of relevance to private finance in water

306

respondents

28

questions

~7%

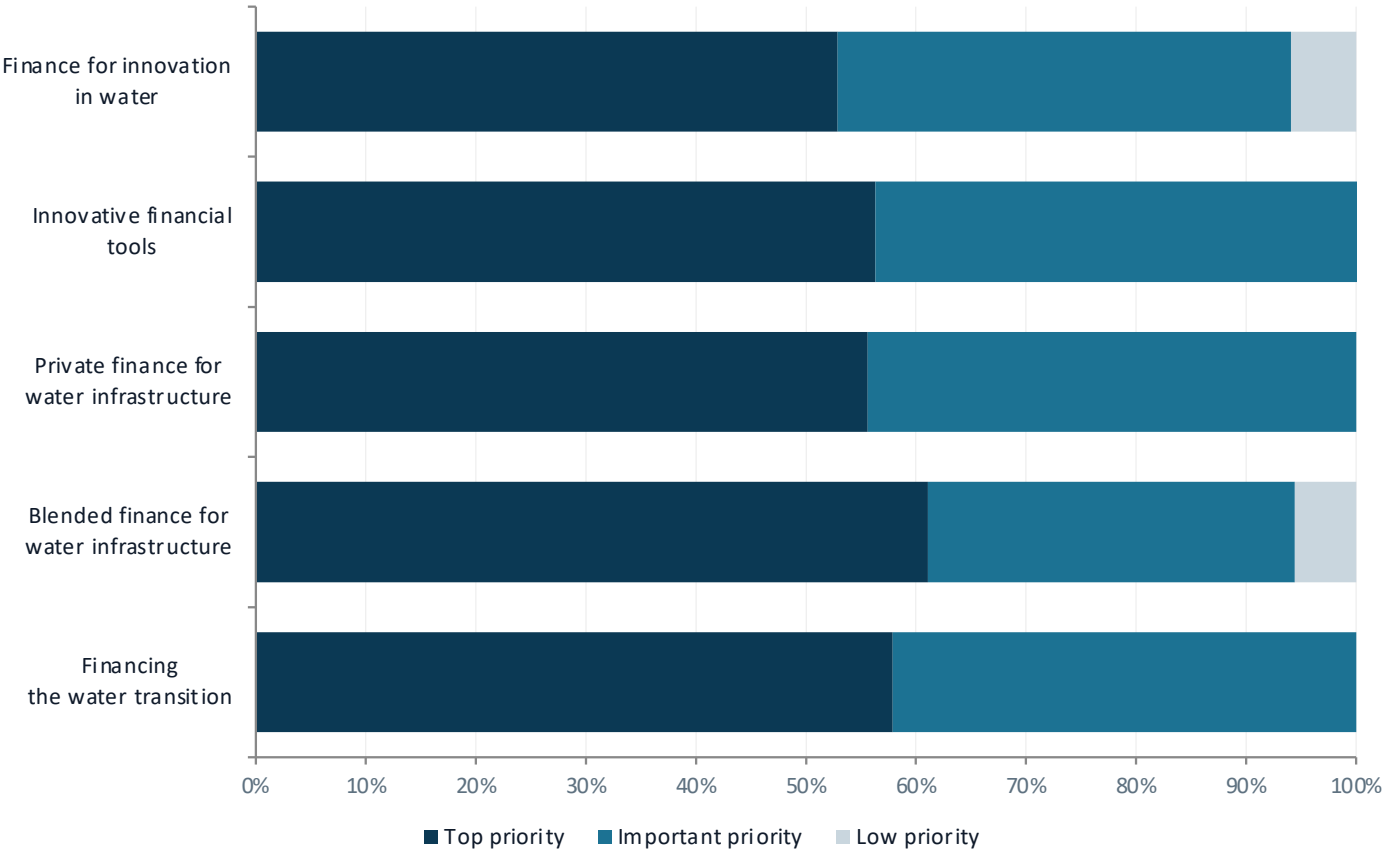
from financial sector

60%+

see UN role in water finance

Where finance respondents see urgency

Investment themes ranked most urgent by financial respondents (Q11, n≈18)



The signal

All five themes

are rated top or important by 94%+ of finance respondents.

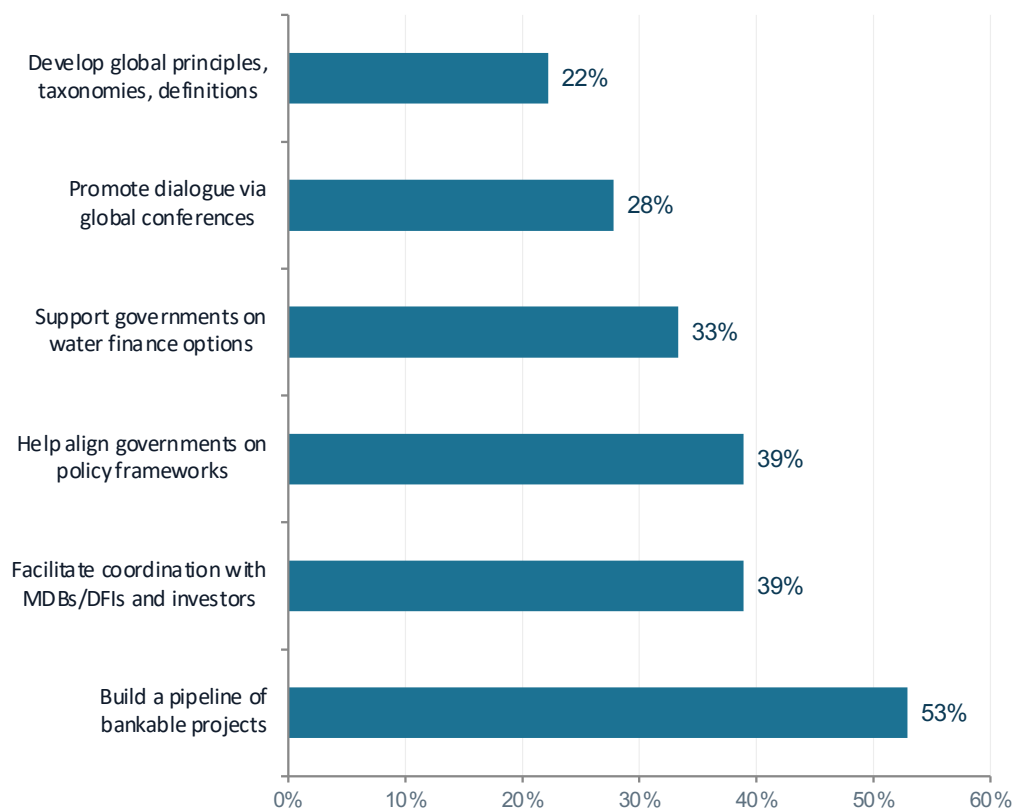
No single theme dominates — the constituency is calling for a portfolio response.

Blended finance and transition finance edge ahead on "top priority" share.

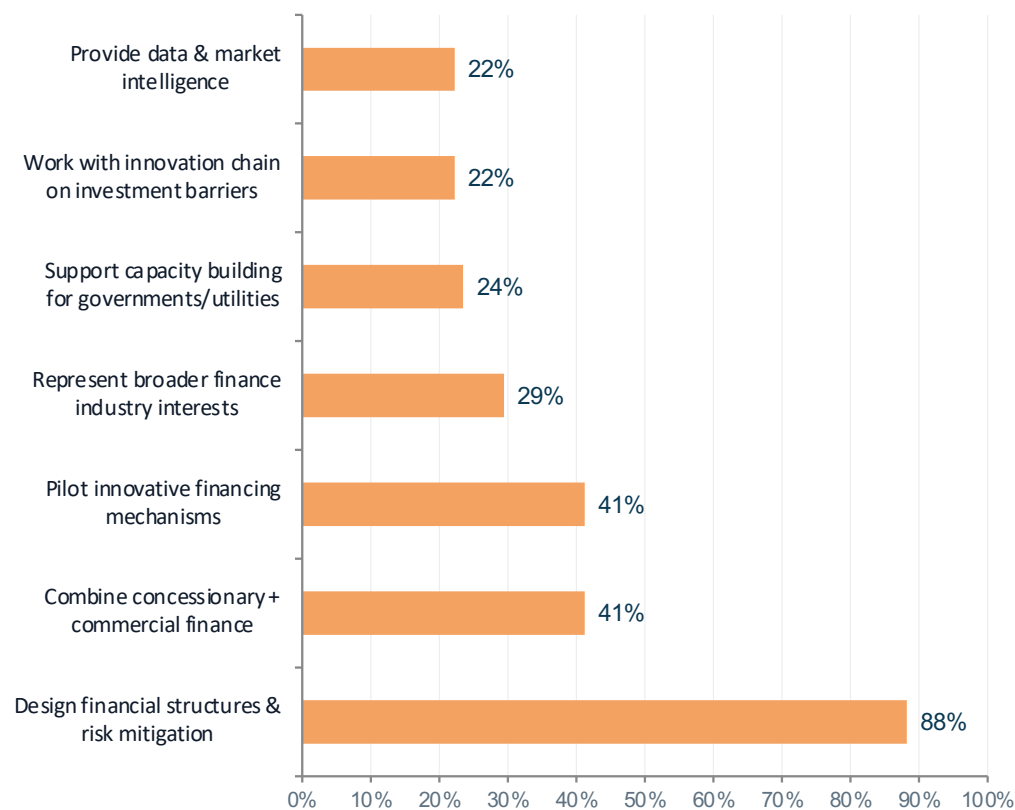
What finance respondents want UN entities to deliver

Weighted scores from finance respondents (Q12 left, n≈18; Q13 right, n≈17)

Q12 Where the UN can make a difference to water finance



Q13 What finance respondents say they can contribute



The wider market is asking for finance too

Where finance-relevant themes appear in the full sample (n≈275–289)

Q4 — BIGGEST CHALLENGE

58%

rank accelerating investment as the most important challenge UN entities could help with

Of seven listed challenges, accelerating investment is the second most-cited "most important" pick — behind only water, hygiene and sanitation for all (60%), and ahead of reducing pollution (55%).

n=283

Q6 — WHAT BUSINESS CAN CONTRIBUTE

54%

say their organisation can definitely help develop new public/private partnerships for water security

Second only to providing business insight on water security (57%), and ahead of demonstrating scalable case studies (51%). PPP development is something business is ready to do.

n=287

Q8 — CONDITIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT

53%

say access to a credible pipeline of opportunities is the most important condition for sustained engagement

This is the single highest-rated condition in the survey — ahead of peer networks (46%), policy-shaping evidence (44%) and governance structure (42%).

n=289

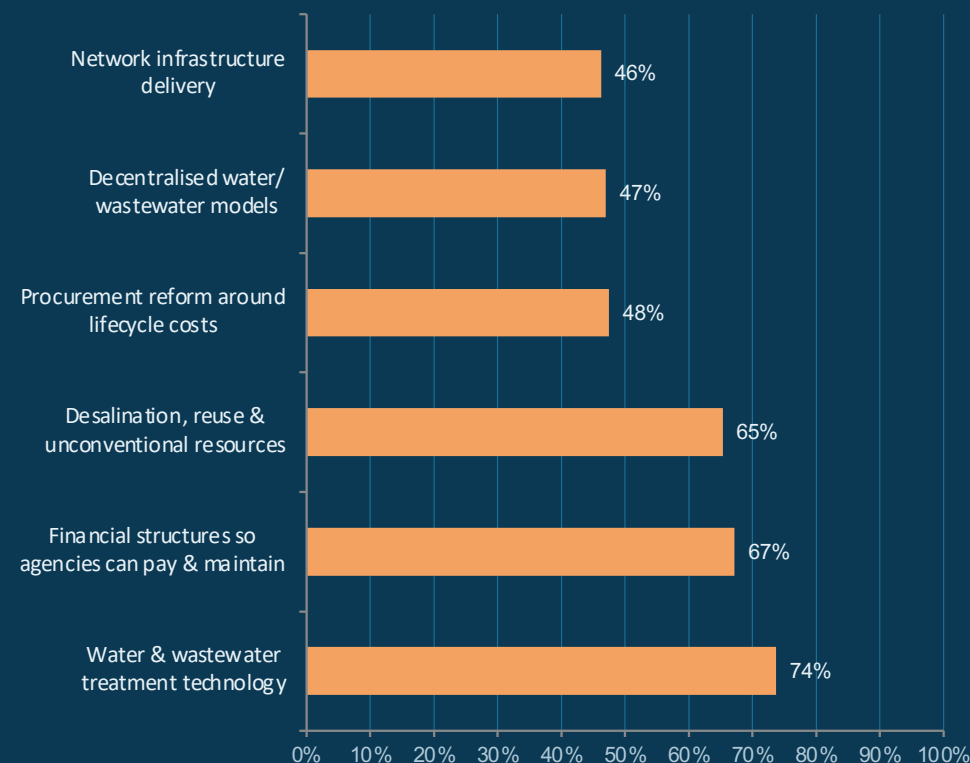
The barriers finance is best placed to address

From the full sample — obstacles to SDG6 contribution (Q15, n≈116–121) and high-impact innovation levers (Q16, n≈114–120)

Top obstacles cited as "most important"



Where "significant impact" is seen from UN engagement



Read together: the dominant obstacles — procurement, budgets, regulatory risk — are the same problems finance instruments are designed to solve. The market is naming the gap that blended and innovative finance is built to fill.

In their own words — the diagnosis

How market participants frame the structural problem finance is being asked to solve

On water risk as a financial-risk driver

“Raising investor awareness of the dependence of many sectors of the economy on freshwater — and that water as a driver of financial risk is an immediate, not future, problem.”

— Fairlight Partners LLP, on the biggest challenge UN entities could help address (Q4)

On valuation methodology

“Development of methodology to account for the financial value of water — capturing location specificity and opportunity cost of water usage.”

— Fairlight Partners LLP (Q9)

On a reality check

“Let's be realistic — other than holding big conferences, the UN has very limited knowledge or influence over national water policy.”

— Self-employed respondent (Q4)

On the UN's unique reach

“Only the UN has the ability to raise awareness of water issues among governments and corporates, and possible solutions, on a global scale.”

— Neobium Enviro Solutions (Q4)

In their own words — the call to action

Less patient voices on what private finance should actually be doing

On the impatience of capital

“The only way we are going to solve the global water scarcity crisis is for private capital to lead public capital out of the darkness.”

The same respondent, on Q9: “Finding solutions and then implementing them is the key. I found Davos a poor use of my time because all the pundits did was sit around and talk about the problems with no idea how they were going to solve for the permanent inelasticity of water pricing.”

Private finance respondent, on prior UN engagement (Q3) and collaborative action models (Q9)

On the UN's most useful role

“The UN should define the regulatory and investment environment around water, and let private organisations compete under the same rules — with the right incentives and penalties to create a thriving ecosystem.”

— Grundfos (Q4)

On rigid bidding

“We should reform the rigid and inefficient bidding process and instead promote a transparent, streamlined, and dialogue-based private implementation.”

— Aqualia Japan (Q4)

On a concrete asset class

“UN entities are uniquely positioned to help shift water infrastructure from massive centralised plants to decentralised, renewable-powered small-to-mid-scale purification — where extending the grid is uneconomic.”

— Solar Water Solutions Ltd. (Q4)