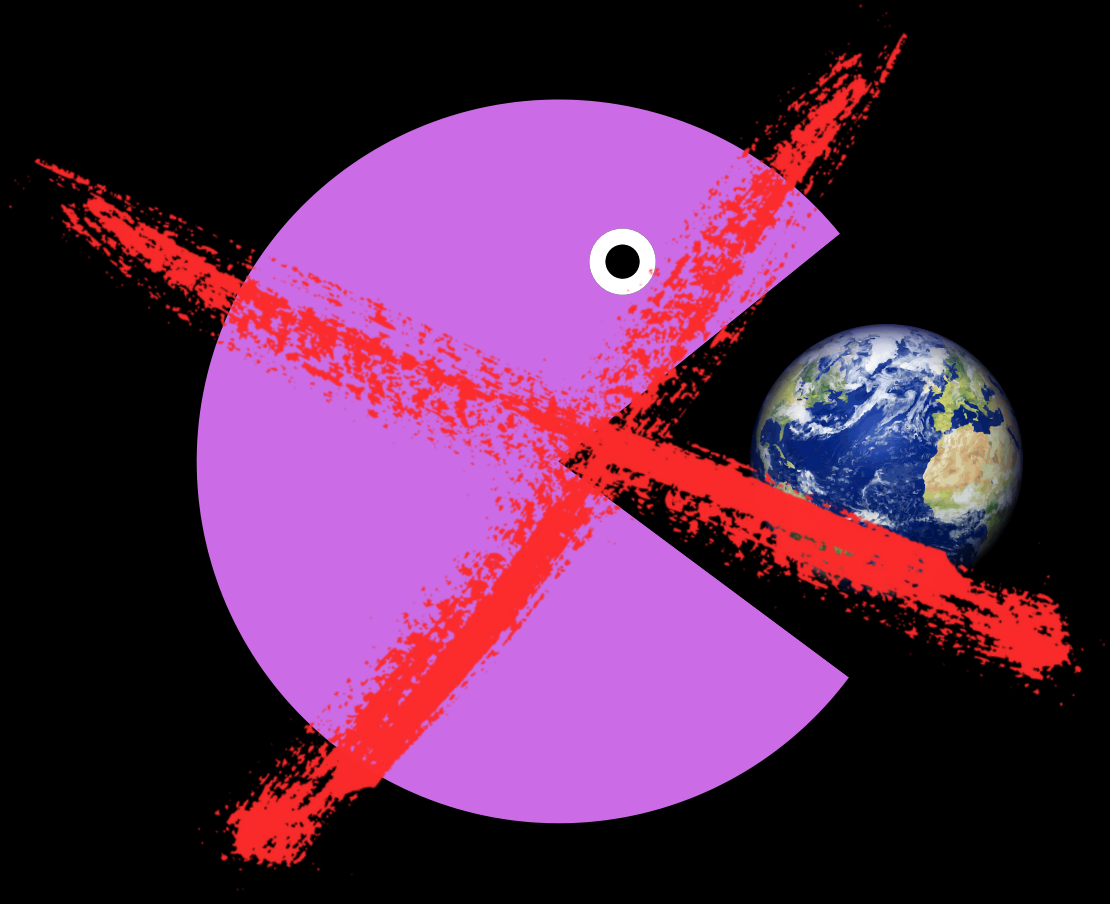
SUMMARY OF DATA CENTRE POLLING IN EUROPE, OCTOBER 2025.

MAJORITY OF EUROPEANS POLLED WANT RULES TO LIMIT NEW DATA CENTRE IMPACTS ON ENERGY, WATER AND ECONOMY.



A POLL CONDUCTED BY SAVANTA IN GERMANY, IRELAND, SPAIN, SWITZERLAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM. Savanta:

THIS POLL WAS COMMISSIONED BY :

BEYOND FOSSIL FUELS · ALGORITHM WATCH · ALGORITHM WATCH / CH · Friends of the Earth · global action plan · GREEN WEB FOUNDATION

MAJORITY OF EUROPEANS POLLED WANT RULES TO LIMIT NEW DATA CENTRE IMPACTS ON ENERGY, WATER AND ECONOMY

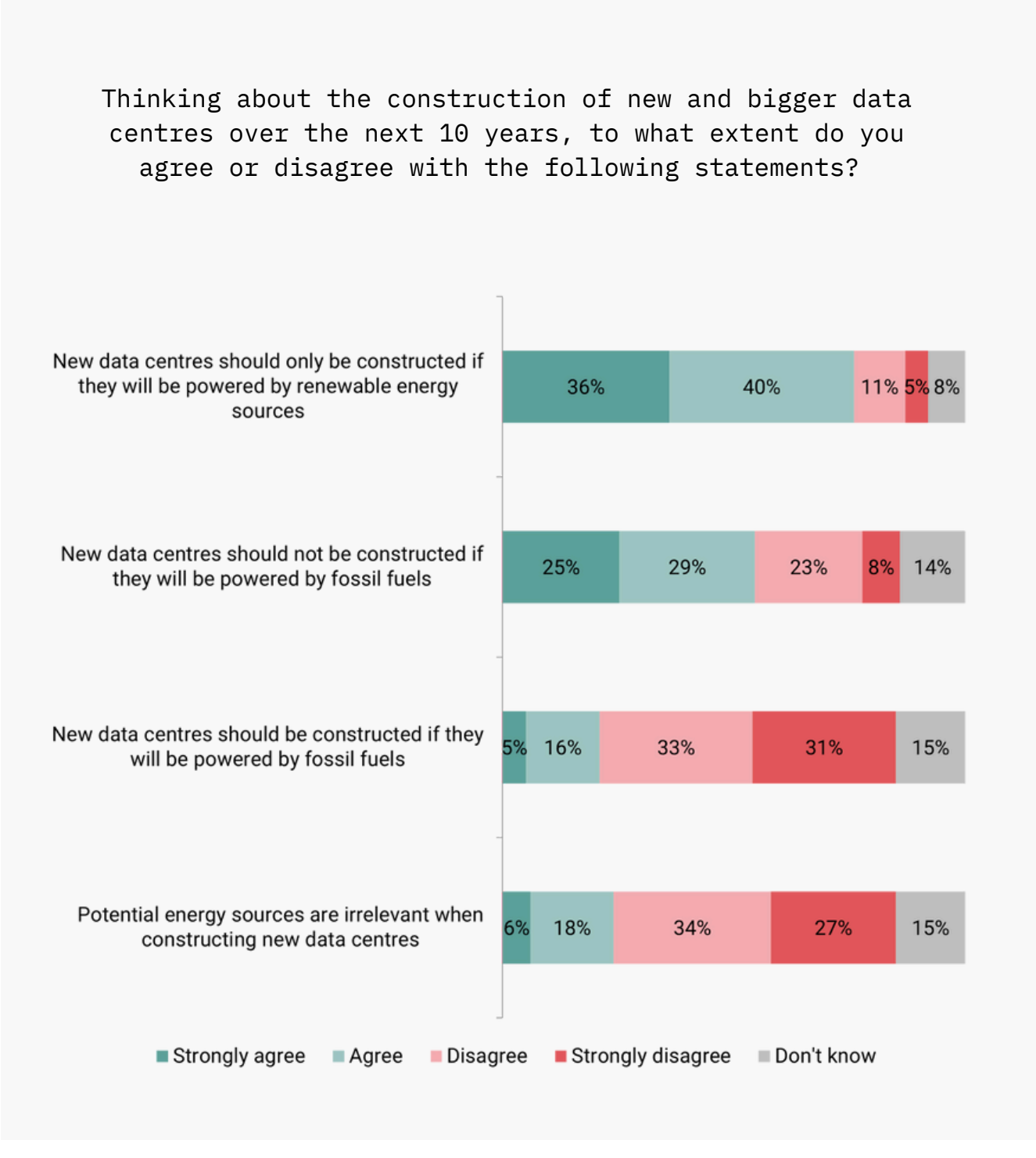
Note: Figures presented in this publication may not always add up precisely to totals shown, due to rounding. While all numbers are calculated from raw data, minor discrepancies can occur as results are rounded to the nearest whole value. This standard practice ensures clarity and readability but may cause subtotals and percentages to differ slightly from aggregate figures.

Beyond Fossil Fuels in cooperation with Algorithm Watch, Algorithm Watch CH (Switzerland), Friends of the Earth Ireland, TuNubeSecaMiRio, Global Action Plan and the Green Web Foundation, commissioned a polling about citizen views on data centre impacts on energy, water and economy. The polling was conducted by Savanta in Germany, Ireland, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.
The respondents were formed of nationally representative samples in five European countries: Ireland (1001), the United Kingdom (1001), Spain (1022), Germany (1002) and Switzerland (1006). A total of 5032 individuals participated in the survey, all aged +18, 51% women, 49% men.

A staggering majority of those surveyed in this polling conducted in five European countries does not want new data centres (DCs) to slow down the energy transition, drain water resources and raise costs for electricity consumers, and is very concerned about rising energy consumption from DCs.

The outcome of the polling is a wake up call for policymakers in Europe, with 72% (slide n.37) of respondents supporting a measure that would only allow new data centres to be constructed if new renewable energy generation is established in order to power them. In addition, 73% (slide n.45) think governments should put specific criteria in place to decide on energy distribution, in other words how priority access to electricity for different sectors and uses is determined.

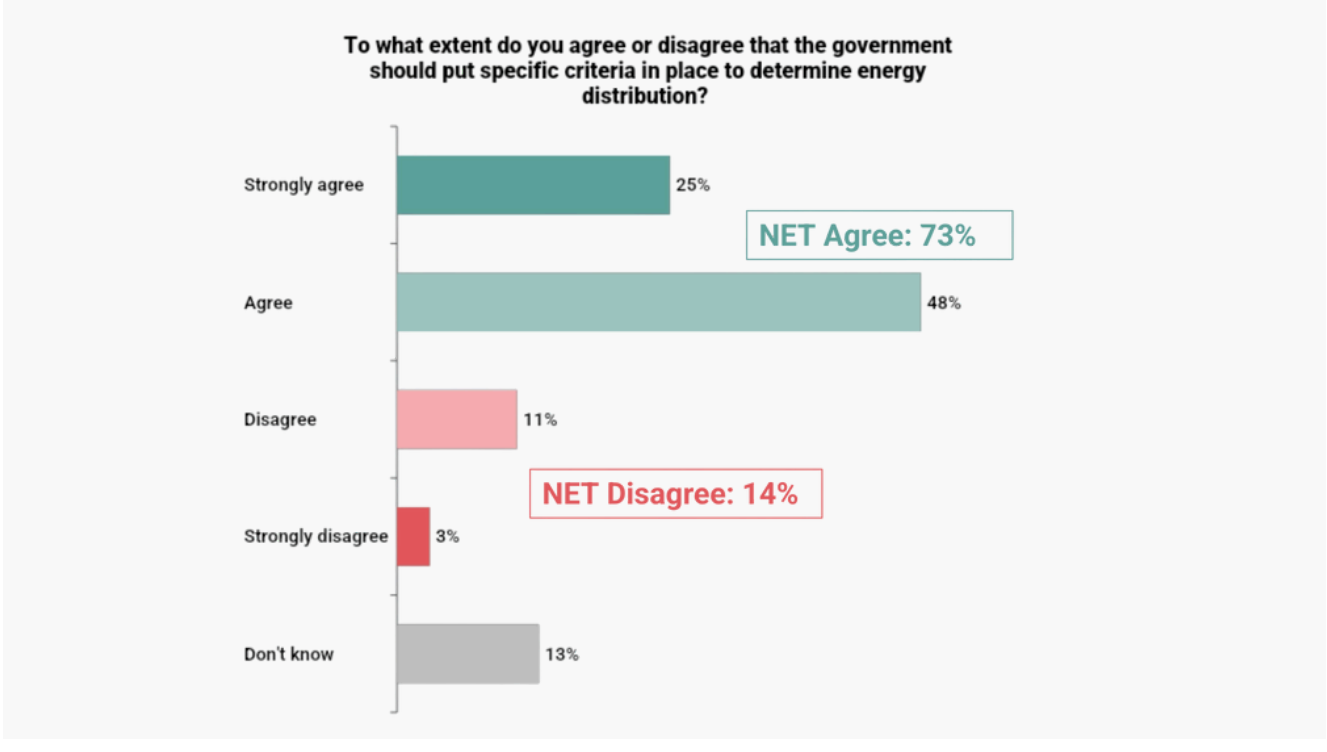
Slide n.37



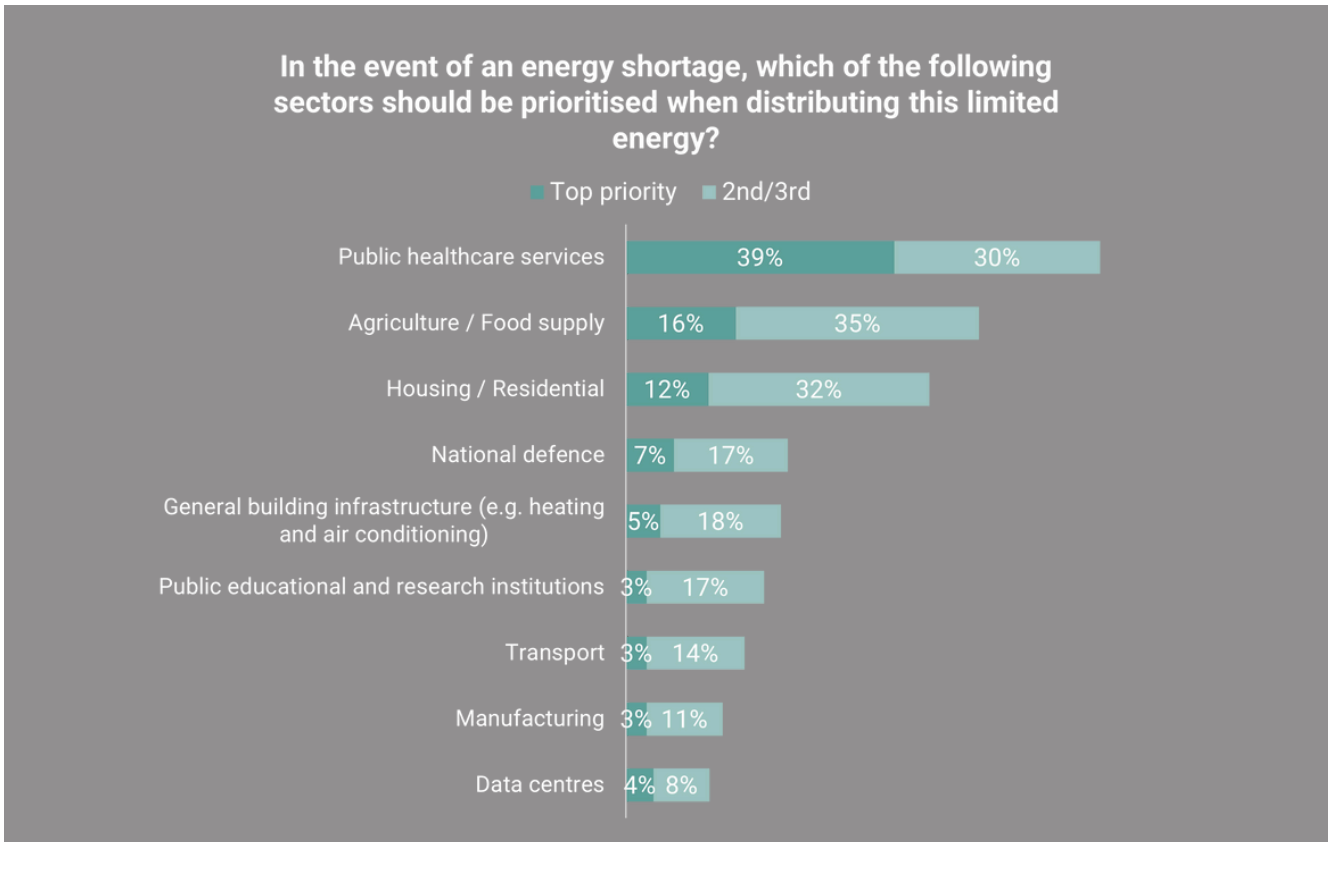
When asked to prioritise energy access across nine sectors in the event of energy or water shortages, respondents consistently ranked data centres at the bottom. Public services including healthcare, housing, and food were seen as far more important.

Only 4% of people listed data centres as a first priority in the event of energy shortages (slide n.47), and only 3% listed them as first priority in the event of water shortages.

Slide n.45

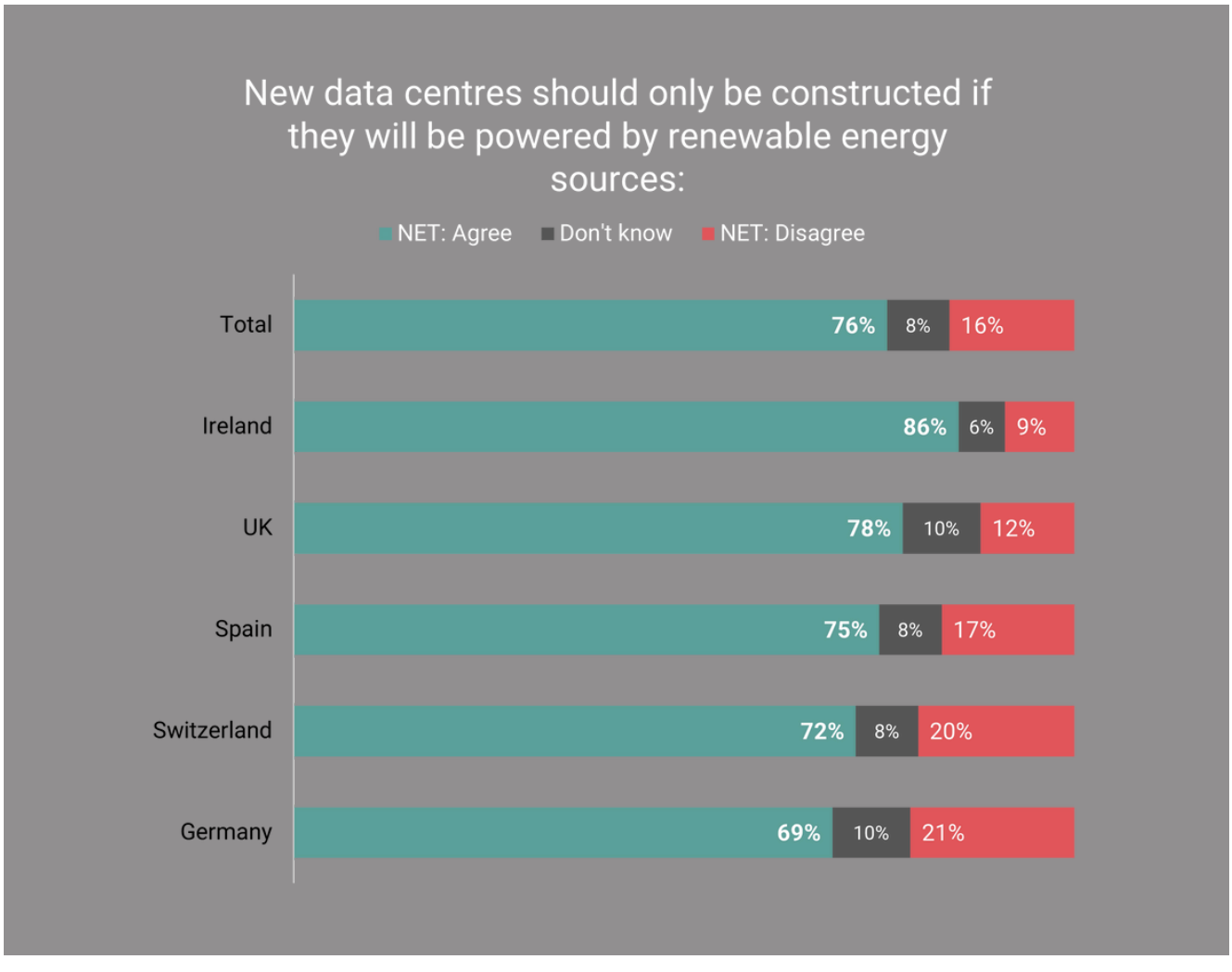


Slide n.47



Respondents are worried about data centres having a detrimental impact on water access covering personal water supply (69%) to local ecosystems (75%). Respondents want new data centres to be powered with renewable energy (76%) (slide n.38), they also feel that sectors which need increased access to renewable energy to electrify and reduce their emissions (such as transport and buildings), should have priority access over industries that are not using the energy directly for decarbonisation (54%).

Slide n.38

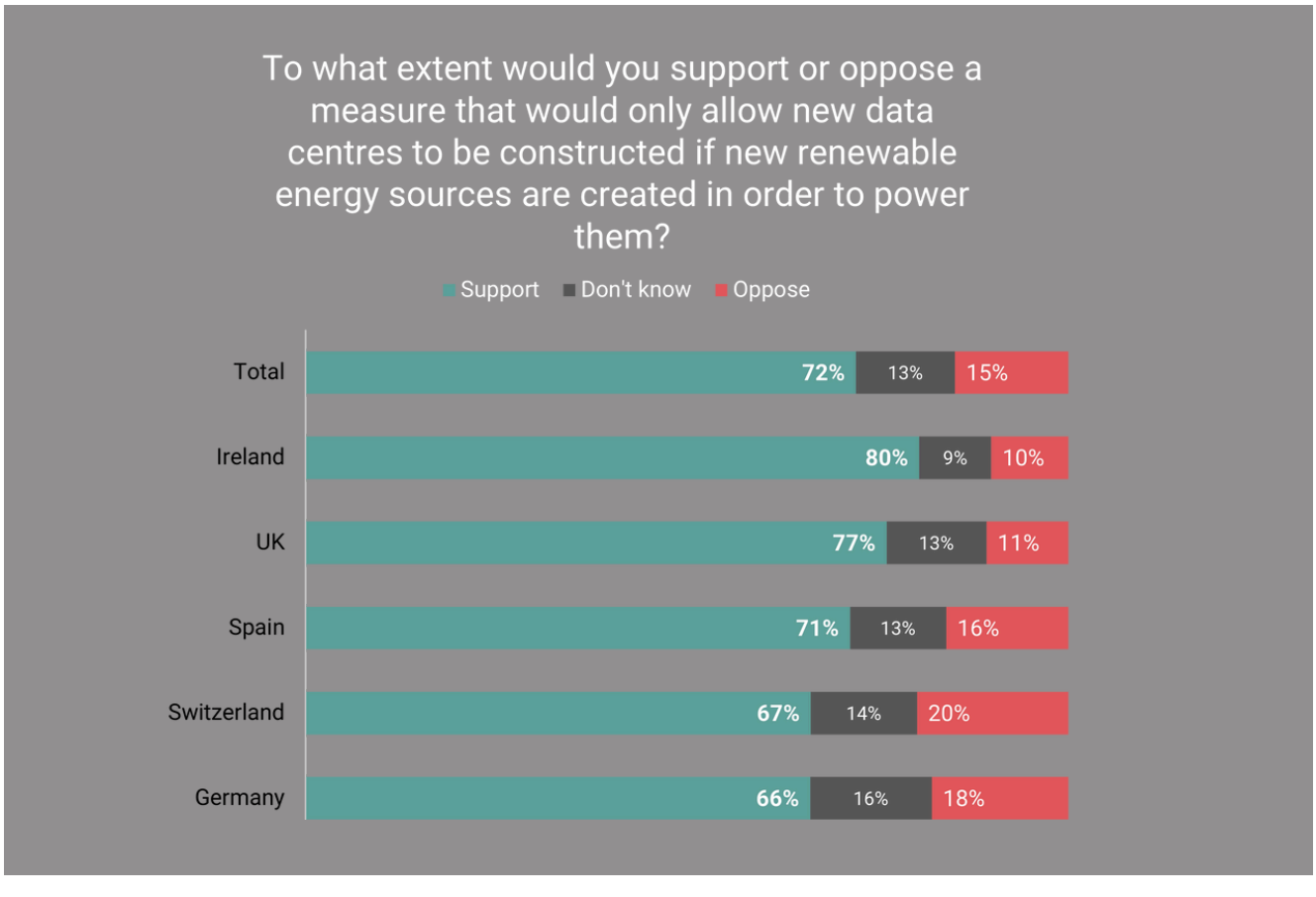


KEY FINDINGS:

Energy

Respondents do not want data centres to lead to more fossil fuels and express strong support for renewable energy powering new DCs: the majority across all markets and demographics support ensuring new data centres use renewable energy sources; 64% disagree with allowing fossil-fuel-powered centres; 72% back policies requiring new renewables in new data centres.

Slide n.39



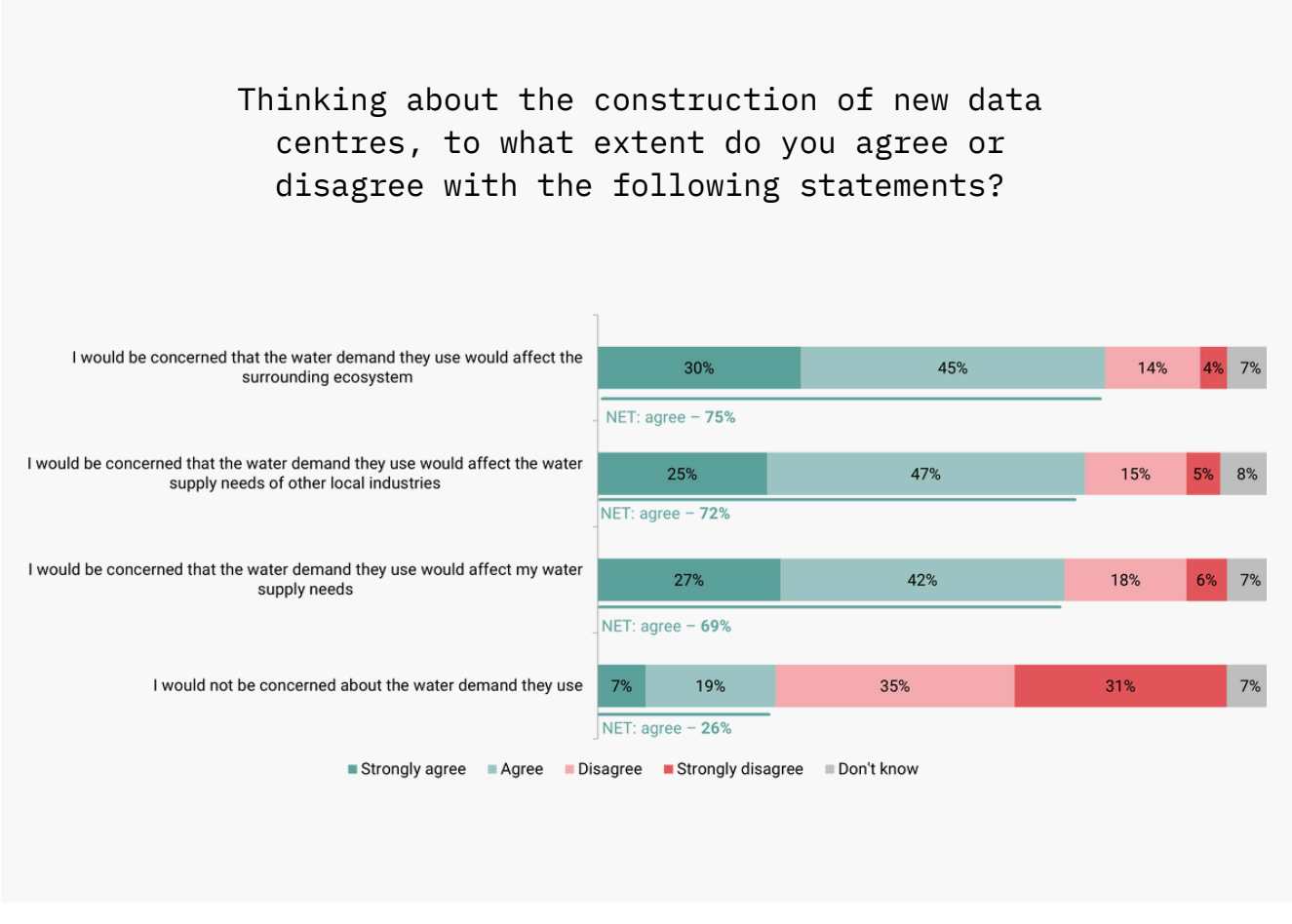
Priority for other industries: 54% agree that industries that are electrifying and therefore have increased demand for power to help them decarbonise should receive priority access compared to those that are not using electricity to decarbonise (like data centres). Opposition is minimal, with only 8% disagreeing, a consistently small minority across countries.

Call for government action: 73% want governments to set clear criteria for how energy is distributed, indicating strong appetite for policy-led solutions to achieve fair energy access.

Water

Strong concerns about data centre water demand. Most people (69%) are concerned about data centres impacting their own water supply. Even more people (75%) are concerned about data centres impacting water supply of their surrounding ecosystem, and the majority (72%) are concerned that data centres' water demand could affect the supply of water for local industries.

Slide n.31



Prioritisation

Data centres deprioritised: Data centres are consistently ranked lowest for priority access to power during periods of energy shortage (Slide n.47).
Public services take clear priority over data centres during energy and water shortages: Public health is the clear top priority for energy supply in the event of a shortage, ahead of all other sectors. Agriculture and housing follow: agriculture and residential energy needs are frequently ranked in respondents' top three priorities, further underscoring socially-focused attitudes.

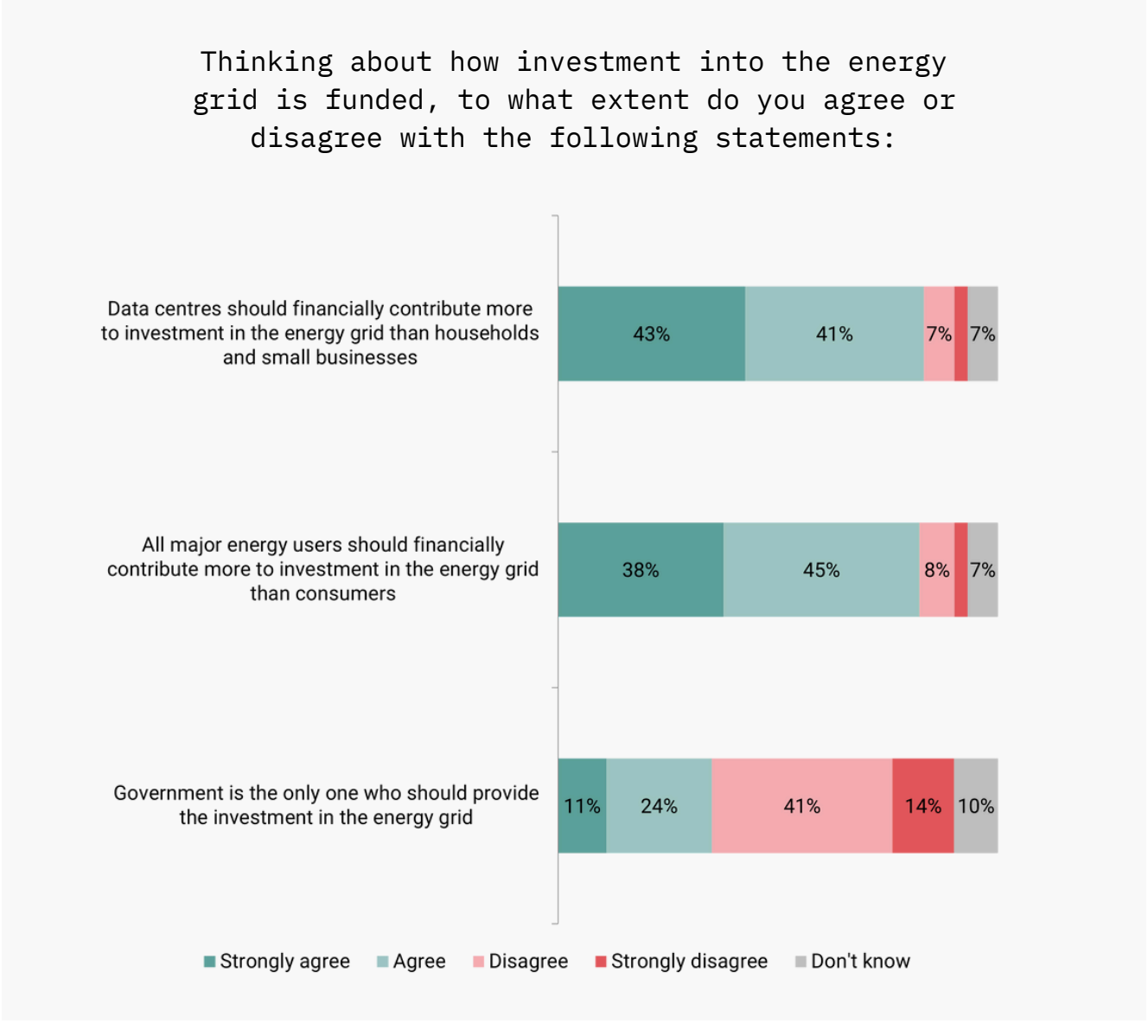
Overall, public services are ranked highest for energy distribution, showing strong support for protecting essential services over commercial interests.

Lowest priority for 'highest bidder': Paying more is seen as least relevant for determining priority access to energy, respondents do not want energy access awarded on purely financial grounds.

Costs

Data centres must contribute more than households to energy grid costs. The majority of people (83%) agreed that data centres should pay more than households towards the investments needed in the energy grid.

Slide n.52



Data centres must contribute through taxes or higher tariffs. The vast majority of respondents (83%) favoured some kind of financial contribution from data centres, of which 64% thought it should be through taxes on energy use or on profits, or higher tariffs. Very few (7%) thought that data centre contributions should be voluntary.

Transparency

Transparency demanded: The vast majority of respondents demand higher transparency standards from data centres – 85% want them to disclose their environmental impacts, 83% their energy usage, and 83% their energy sourcing. Additionally, 56% want transparency over data centres' clients.

Corporate disclosure backed: Nearly four in five agree that tech companies should reveal which data centres they are leasing (77%), and for which services they use (78%), with scant opposition or uncertainty.

Slide n.59

The polling shows strong appetite for policy-led solutions to ensure fairer energy access, and for leadership from governments on this topic.

New energy demand from data centres should not be allowed to harm the climate by relying on fossil fuels, nor raise electricity costs and compete with broader electrification efforts. Beyond Fossil Fuels therefore asks policy makers to ensure:

Energy sourcing

- No new data centres should be approved unless they run on new and additional renewable energy.
- Data centres are prohibited from building on-site gas infrastructure and connecting directly to gas networks.
- Policy support to move from an annual to hourly renewable energy accounting system, alongside investment in energy storage technologies.

Sustainable limits

- Caps on energy demand from data centres in areas where they are placing a higher burden on the grid.
- Social and environmental criteria for grid access that prioritise households, public services, and the electrification of European industries over new data centres.
- Sustainable limits on data centres' access to water especially in areas at risk of water shortage.
- Enforced and strengthened transparency rules at EU and national level around energy and water consumption.

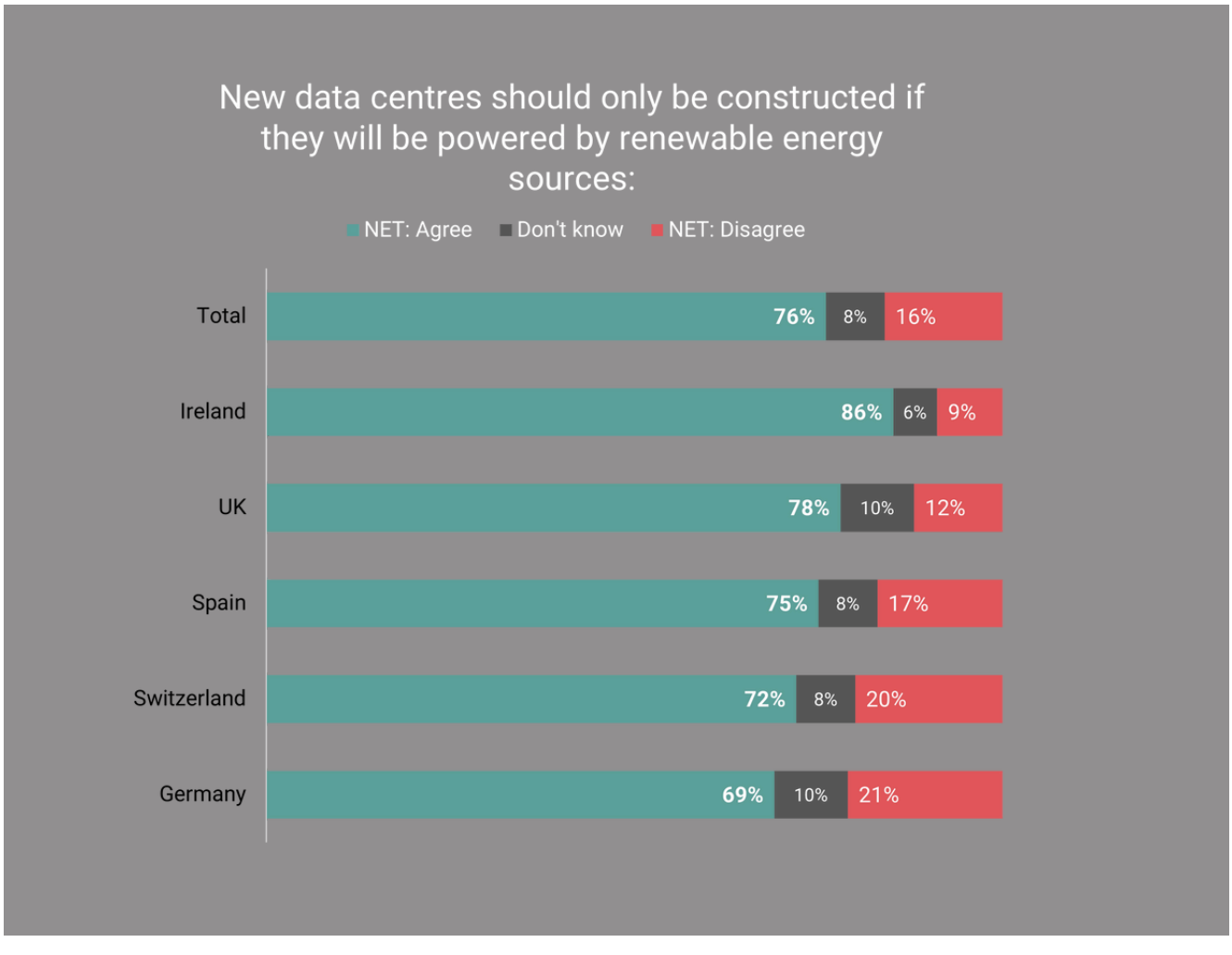
Costs

- Data centres and tech companies financially contribute to the energy transition through taxes on data centre energy use or profits, and through investment in energy storage technologies.

Country highlights

Poll respondents want new data centres to be powered with renewable energy (76%), broken down by country:

Slide n.38



Germany

- 70% of respondents think that data centres will contribute to overall national energy consumption in the future.
- 66% support a measure requiring new DCs to be built only if powered by new renewables.
- More than ¾ are in favour of data center operators being required to disclose their energy consumption (76%) and energy sources (77%).

Ireland

- More than 1 in 3 people view housing as the priority sector in an energy shortage, out of 9 sectors, with public service close behind.
- 86% think new DCs should only be built if powered by renewables.
- 3 in 4 people are concerned about DCs impacts on individual water use (76%) and on the surrounding ecosystem (78%).

Spain

- 3 in 5 respondents agree that the expansion of data centres could have a detrimental impact on ecological goals aimed at preventing climate change (60%).
- 87% of people were concerned about DCs impacts on individual water use and on the surrounding ecosystem, the highest among polled countries.
- 75% think new DCs should only be built if powered by renewables.

Switzerland

- 72% think new DCs should only be built if powered by renewables.
- 79% think data centres should have to disclose information about their energy usage.
- Majority are concerned about DCs future energy consumption (61%) and the impacts of their water usage on the surrounding water ecosystem (71%).

United Kingdom

- 78% think new DCs should only be built if powered by renewables.
- 65% of respondents feel that data centres will contribute to national energy consumption in the future.
- Majority are concerned about DCs impacts on the surrounding ecosystem (73%) and on individual water use (70%).

Methodology

The poll — commissioned by Beyond Fossil Fuels in cooperation with Algorithm Watch Germany, Algorithm Watch CH (Switzerland), Friends of the Earth Ireland, TuNubeSecaMiRio, Global Action Plan and the Green Web Foundation, was conducted by Savanta in Germany, Ireland, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The objectives of the 'Data Centre Energy polling' were to gather baseline information surrounding public knowledge of data centres, and to understand concerns surrounding data centre energy use and resource allocation.

The sample for this research consisted of nationally representative samples in five European countries: Ireland (1001), the United Kingdom (1001), Spain (1022), Germany (1002) and Switzerland (1006). A total of 5032 individuals participated in the survey, all aged +18, 51% women, 49% men. The participants provide a representative view of adults across all countries included in the research.

All bar those in the UK were asked about energy issues specific to their country at a certain point in the survey.

The fieldwork was executed through an online survey conducted by Savanta. The survey lasted between 10 and 15 minutes long and was deployed in the local language for each individual market. This approach ensured comprehensive coverage and ease of participation across different geographical regions. Fieldwork was conducted between 11 and 30 September 2025.

To ensure data quality and integrity, Savanta employed a robust and consistent data collection process. Savanta is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Savanta's adherence to the guidelines set forth by the British Polling Council guarantees that the research methodology adheres to the highest standards. This compliance underpins the credibility of the sample and the subsequent findings.

Savanta:

Background

Europe is in the middle of a data centre boom. The EU and European governments intend to drastically increase data centre capacity. The **EU's AI Continent Strategy** in particular includes plans to triple the EU's data centre capacity within the next five to seven years to support cloud and especially AI services.

This exponential data centre growth is leading to a surge in power demand, potentially posing a serious risk of escalating greenhouse gas emissions—either through expanded fossil gas infrastructure or by pushing other sectors onto fossil fuels as new data centres capture the available new renewable energy, as Beyond Fossil Fuels highlighted in **SYSTEM OVERLOAD: How New Data Centres Could Throw Europe's Energy Transition Off Course,** February 2025. Meanwhile, grassroots public opposition to new data centres is **mounting** in Europe and beyond.

Recent moves from Big Tech and data centre expansion globally have been particularly alarming when it comes to fossil fuels. Big tech companies have drastically **increased** their emissions in the context of the AI boom with extremely worrying **developments** in the US. However, in Europe too data centres in countries like **Ireland**, **Germany**, the **UK**, **Greece** and **Italy** are now trying to power their energy needs with on-site fossil **gas** generation or directly from the gas grid. In the US, recent **analysis** shows a link between high concentrations of DCs and increased energy bills for local residents.

Policymakers must regulate data centre energy demand, and Big Tech must be held accountable to ensure their data centres are powered by new, additional renewables, without jumping the queue ahead of public services and decarbonising sectors. Otherwise, the data centre boom risks pushing energy use and costs to unsustainable levels.

Jill McArdle, International Corporate Campaigner, Beyond Fossil Fuels, jill.mcardle@bff.earth,

Pierre Terras, Corporate Programme Lead, Beyond Fossil Fuels, pierre.terras@bff.earth