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WATER INSECURITY EXPERIENCES (WISE) IN UGANDA, 2024/25

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Venue

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Presentation Outline

1. Introduction
2. The WISE Scales
3. Why water insecurity matters
4. Methodology
5. Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

Background

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The aim

Show the value of data on people's experiences with water access, use and reliability in Africa.

The milestone

An African Union / AMCOW-supported high-level session at COP-30 in Brazil, November 2025.

The goal

Move the WISE Scales toward becoming a global standard for measuring water security.

The WISE Scales

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12

questions

Globally applicable items on whether and how people were affected by problems with water

~3 min

to administer

Quick to implement and simple to analyse

2

levels

Household (HWISE) or individual (IWISE)

- Analogous to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale used to track SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)
- WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme recommends experiential measures of water insecurity for monitoring SDG 6

Source: Water Insecurity Experiences (WISE) in Africa concept note, Northwestern University, November 2024

Global uptake of the WISE Scales

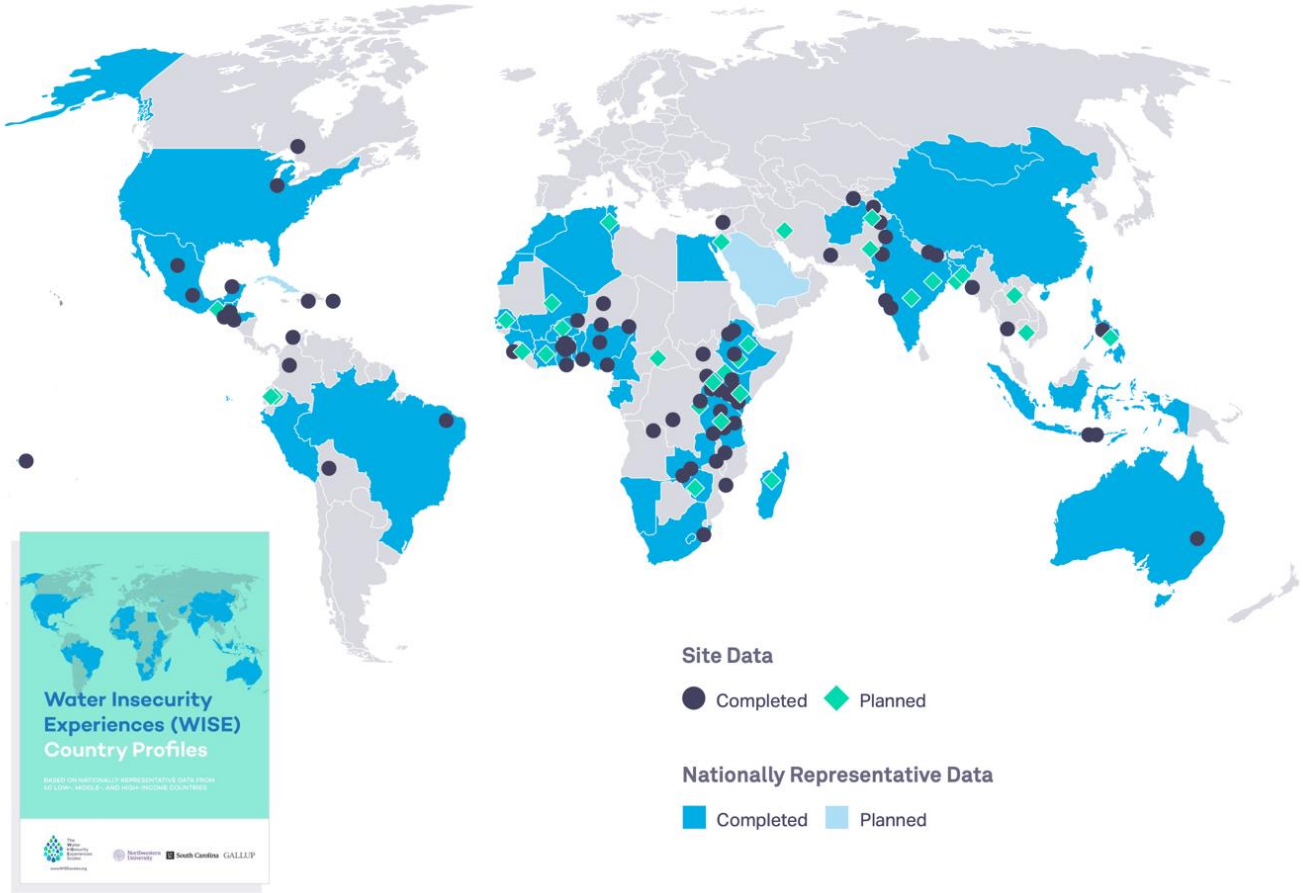
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50+ countries

have taken up the WISE Scales, including UNICEF, the World Bank, USAID, the World Food Programme and charity: water.

41 countries

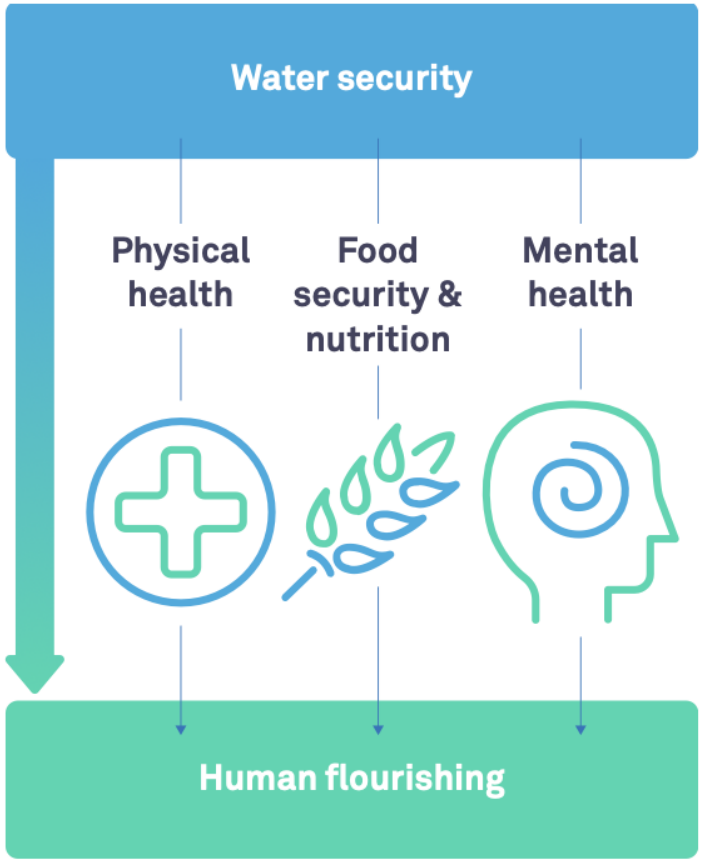
have nationally representative WISE data. WISE data have guided investment in Mexico, Australia, Fiji and Papua New Guinea.



Source: Water Insecurity Experiences (WISE) in Africa concept note, Northwestern University, November 2024

Why water insecurity matters

- Strongly predicts food insecurity and lower dietary diversity
- Linked to diarrhoea, injuries from fetching water and poorer HIV outcomes
- Associated with gender-based violence
- Associated with stress and depression, including in studies from rural Uganda
- Featured in recent World Bank reports on nutrition and shared prosperity



Source: Water Insecurity Experiences (WISE) in Africa concept note, Northwestern University, November 2024

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METHODOLOGY

Survey design

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Item	Detail
Scale	Household Water Insecurity Experiences (HWISE)
Recall period	Previous 4 weeks
Collection timing	November 2024 – December 2025 (third round of the UHIS annual panel)
Sample	5,310 households; two-stage stratified sampling by subregion (EAs, then households)

Probability sampling weights adjust for non-response so estimates represent non-institutionalized households.

The 12 HWISE questions (1–6)

#	Label	Question
1	**Worry**	In the last 4 weeks, how often did you or anyone in your household worry you would not have enough water for all of your household needs?
2	**Interrupt**	How often has your main water source been interrupted or limited in any way?
3	**Clothes**	How often have problems with water meant that clothes could not be washed?
4	**Plans**	How often have you or anyone in your household had to change schedules or plans due to problems with water?
5	**Food**	How often have you or anyone in your household had to change what was being eaten because of problems with water?
6	**Hands**	How often have you or anyone in your household had to go without washing hands after dirty activities because of problems with water?

Source: WISE Manual, Appendix 1, Worksheet C: The HWISE Scale

The 12 HWISE questions (7–12)

#	Label	Question
7	**Body**	How often have you or anyone in your household had to go without washing their body because of problems with water?
8	**Drink**	How often has there not been as much water to drink as you or anyone in your household would have liked?
9	**Anger**	How often did you or anyone in your household feel angry because of problems you were experiencing with water?
10	**Sleep**	How often have you or anyone in your household gone to sleep thirsty because there wasn't any water to drink?
11	**None**	How often has there been no usable or drinkable water whatsoever in your household?
12	**Shame**	How often did you or anyone in your household feel shame because of problems you were experiencing with water?

Source: WISE Manual, Appendix 1, Worksheet C: The HWISE Scale

Administering the HWISE Scale

To be read aloud (4-week recall):

"I will now ask you about your and your household members' experiences with water. For each experience, we want to know how frequently this happened to you in the previous 4 weeks."

Response	Past 4 weeks	Score
Never	0 days	0
Rarely	1–2 days	1
Sometimes	3–10 days	2
Often	11–20 days	3
Always	More than 20 days	3

Total score: add the 12 item scores (range 0–36), then classify the household:

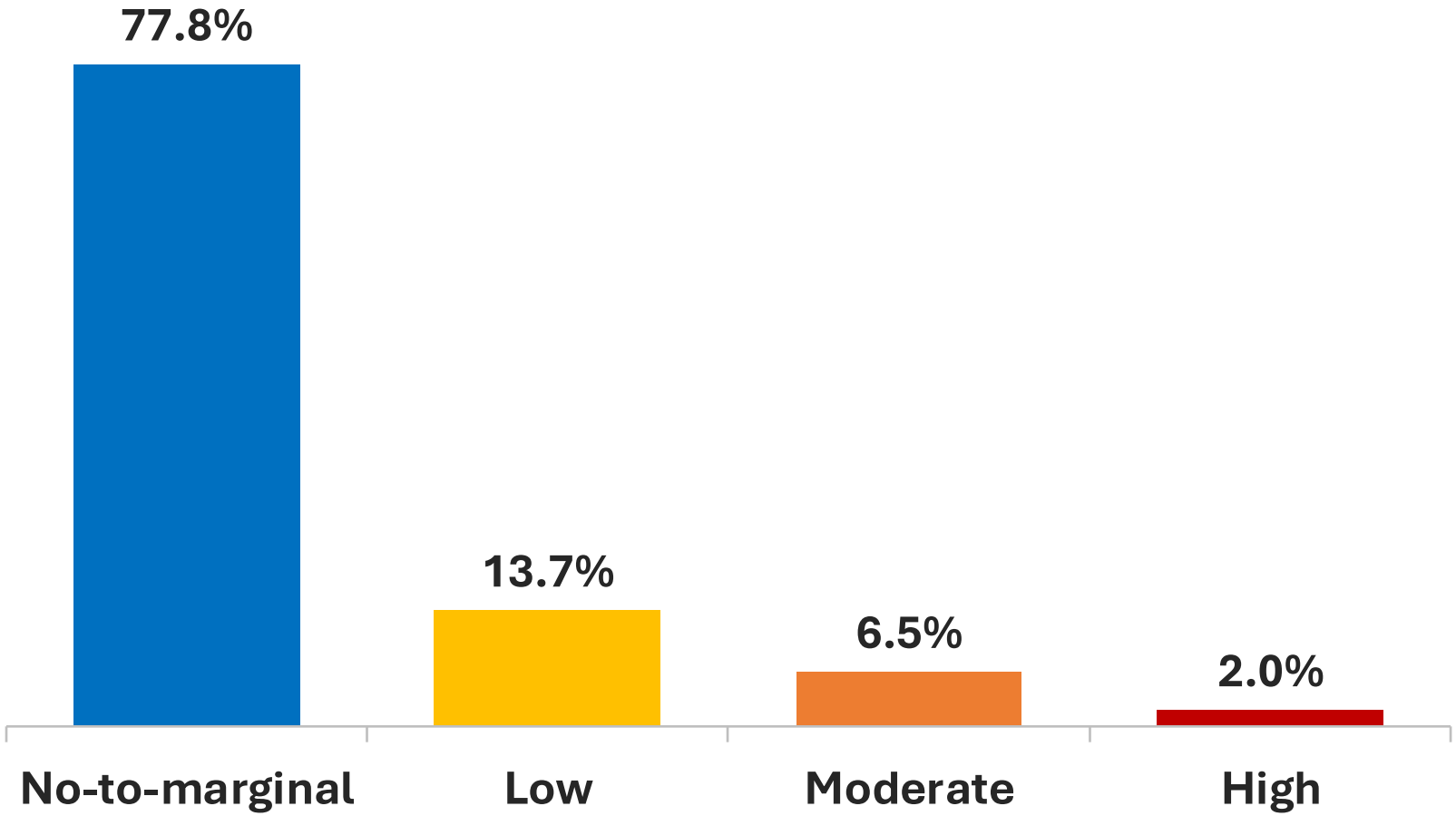
0–2	3–11	12–23	24–36
No-to-marginal	Low	Moderate	High

Source: WISE Manual,

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FINDINGS

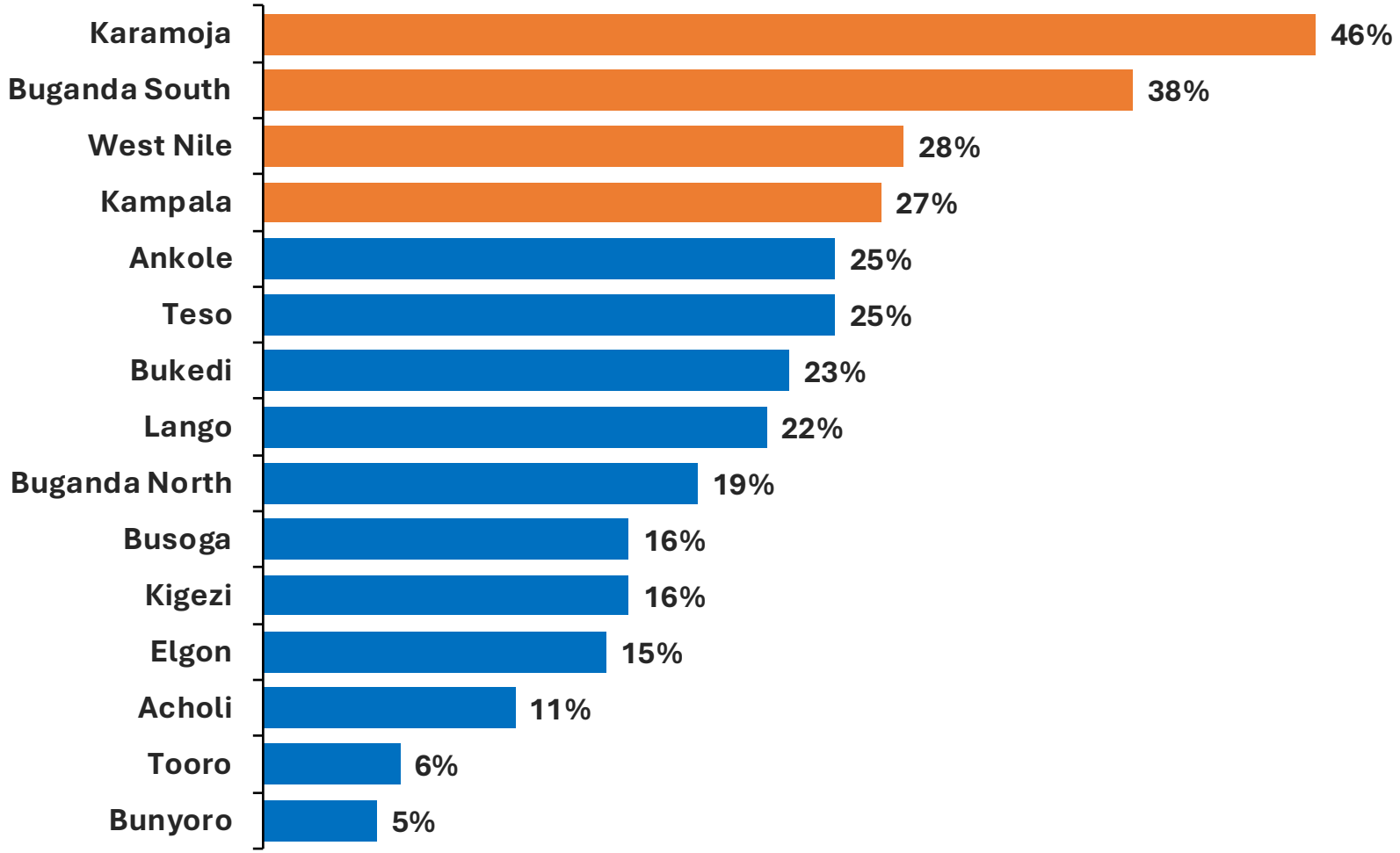
Prevalence of water insecurity (%)



Source: UBOS & Northwestern University, Uganda Harmonized Integrated Survey (UHIS) 2024/25, HWISE module

8.5 percent of households experienced moderate-to-high water insecurity in 2024/25

Water insecurity by subregion (%)



Source: UBOS & Northwestern University, Uganda Harmonized Integrated Survey (UHIS) 2024/25, HWISE module

Karamoja (46%) and Buganda South (38%) have the highest shares; Bunyoro (5%) and Tooro (6%) the lowest

Water insecurity hotspots

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54%

Karamoja

No-to-marginal, the lowest of any subregion. 27% low and 17% moderate water insecurity.

62%

Buganda South

No-to-marginal. 25% low and 10% moderate water insecurity.

72%

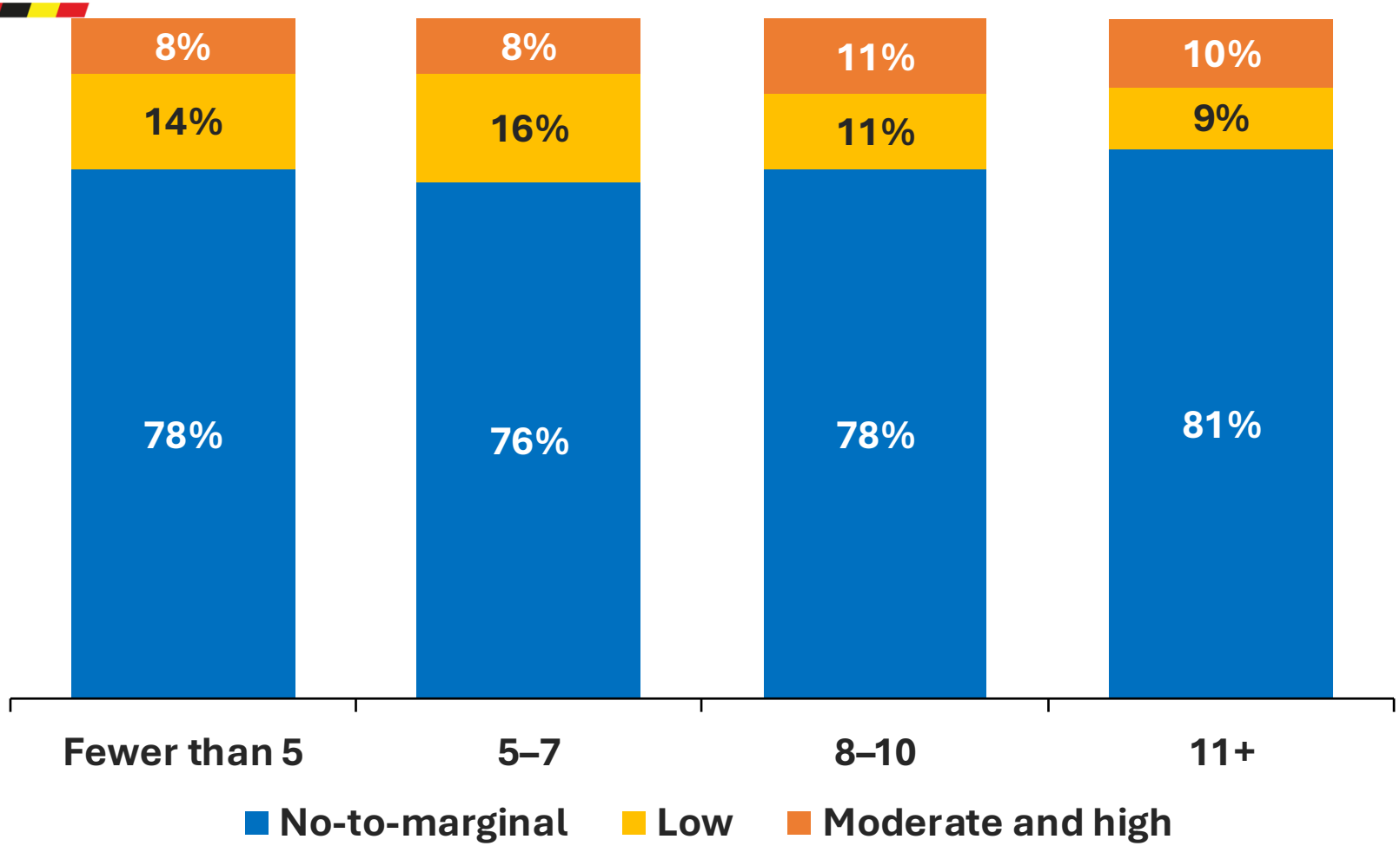
West Nile

No-to-marginal. 9% moderate and 9% high, the largest high share recorded.

Kampala (17% low, 9% moderate) and Teso (13% low, 12% moderate) also show notable moderate water insecurity.

Source: UBOS & Northwestern University, Uganda Harmonized Integrated Survey (UHIS) 2024/25, HWISE module

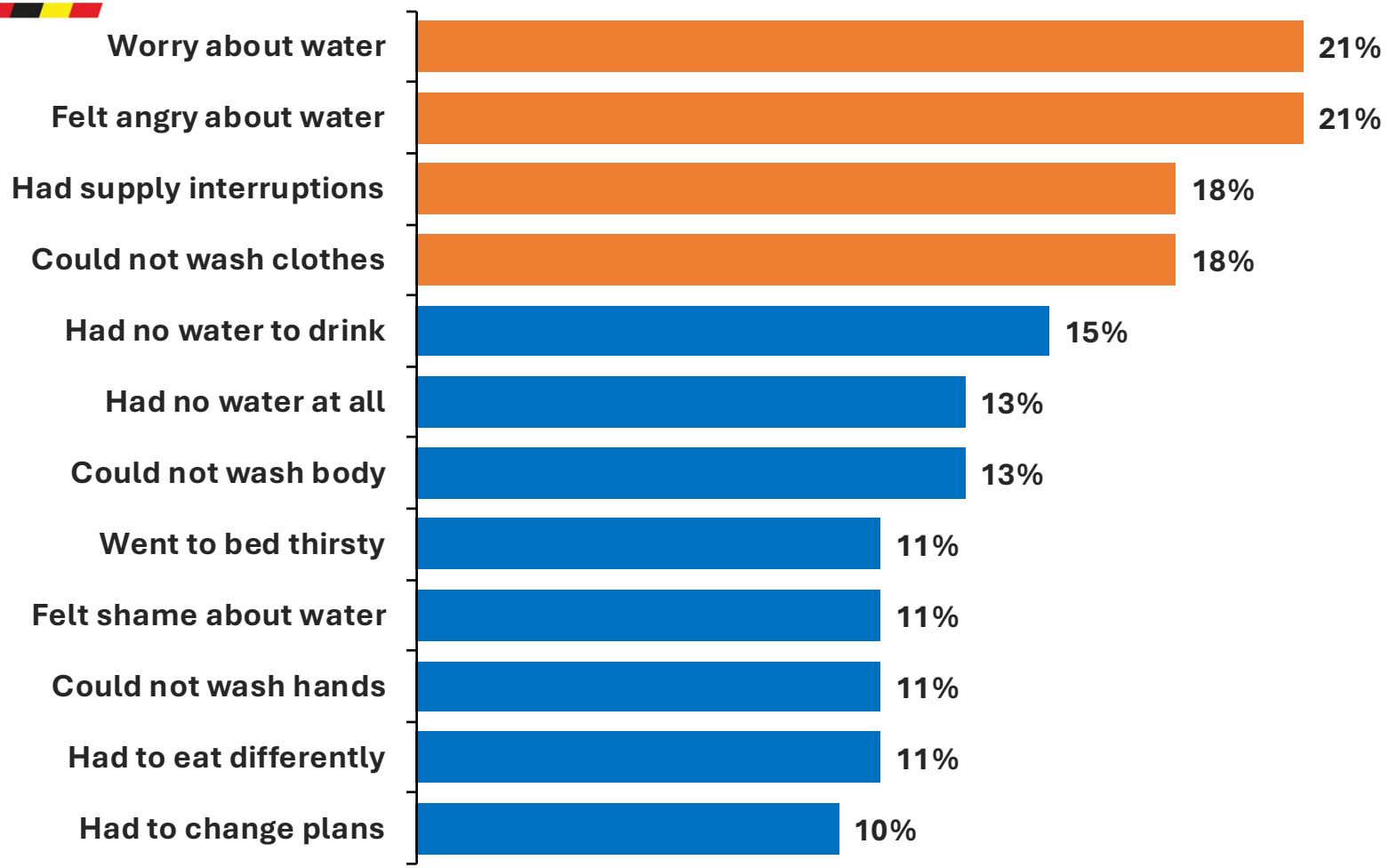
Water insecurity by household size (%)



Source: UBOS & Northwestern University, Uganda Harmonized Integrated Survey (UHIS) 2024/25, HWISE module

Water insecurity is similar across household sizes; the largest households have the most moderate water insecurity

Water insecurity experiences (%)



Source: UBOS & Northwestern University, Uganda Harmonized Integrated Survey (UHIS) 2024/25, HWISE module

Worry and anger about water (21%) and supply interruptions (18%) were the most common experiences

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CONCLUSION

Uses of the WISE data

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Guide policy

Show the prevalence and severity of water insecurity to inform policymaking.

Target resources

Direct investment to the subregions and households most affected.

Measure impact

Evaluate whether water interventions work.

Track progress

Monitor change over time, including SDG 6, and support accountability.

As an early adopter, UBOS is positioned as a leader on a new standard for water, sanitation and hygiene monitoring in Africa.

Source: UBOS & Northwestern University, Uganda Harmonized Integrated Survey (UHIS) 2024/25, HWISE module

Key takeaways

- 1 in 12 households (8.5%) experienced moderate-to-high water insecurity in 2024/25; about 1 in 5 had some water insecurity.
- Karamoja, Buganda South and West Nile are the clearest hotspots.
- Worry, anger and supply interruptions are the most common experiences.



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