

THEME 5 COASTAL LAND USE ALONG THE WESTERN CAPE COASTLINE

Land use refers to how the landscape is used by people. The arid west coast exists in stark contrast to the wet and lush Garden Route stretching along the southern coast of the Western Cape, shaping different types of land use. In agriculturally suitable areas, dense fruit tree plantations and vineyards are cultivated. In the more arid areas, livestock farming (particularly sheep) is prevalent. Human settlement tends to be concentrated along the coast and transport routes. The large urban areas of Cape Town and Mossel Bay were originally settled due to their suitability as sea ports. Patterns of land use are derived from social and economic drivers.



DRIVERS

The Western Cape coast experiences one of the highest influxes of tourists in the country and this drives the development of towns along the coast. The inland areas of the Western Cape are often arid with sparsely vegetated areas. As a result, the coastal areas offer more suitable agricultural conditions, which drive the establishment of agricultural activities and settlement along the coast.

PRESSURES

Four land use classes were assessed along the Western Cape coastline, namely:

- Natural;
- Natural degraded;
- No Natural Remaining: Agriculture;
- No Natural Remaining: Settlement.

The results show that between 1990 and 2014 Natural areas have increased by 22142ha (+7.6 %); Natural degraded areas have declined by 2 658 ha (-17.7%) and Agricultural land has declined by 5 164 ha (-17.4%). An increase in the percentage of natural areas and a decline in the naturally degraded areas as well as a decline in the amount of agricultural fields illustrates improvement in the land use of the Western Cape Coastal region (Figure 1).

STATE

Currently eleven out of fourteen local municipalities have undertaken coastal access audits. However, some audits are currently being undertaken by municipalities who have not conducted them yet. Bitou Local Municipality has the highest density of access points per kilometre of coastline. Generally, municipalities along the West Coast have higher numbers of access points than municipalities along the south coast. This is probably due to the terrain, which is easier to access along the West Coast (Figure 2). The current number of launch sites in the Western Cape is 485, but only 50 of these are listed and hence registered (Figure 3). Therefore, in terms of launch sites in the Western Cape, it is desired that there be sufficient Public Launch Sites to satisfy public demand, without members of the public resorting to the use of unregistered and illegal sites.

IMPACT

Changes in land use and the provision of coastal access may impact state and integrity of the current land use, particularly if the land is in a natural state.

RESPONSES

A number of responses exist that monitor the use of land in coastal areas. These include the issuing of coastal leases, assessments of land ownership and the issuing of 4x4 permits for vehicles driving in the coastal zone. The current number and type of coastal leases issued in the Western Cape was 296 as of August 2017. Of these, the majority either fall into the category jetty, or jetty and spillway. There were no officially designated coastal access strips in terms of Section 18 of ICMA at the time of writing (February 2018). A draft coastal access by-law has been prepared by DEA&DP, which will assist municipalities in preparing a coastal access by-law within their municipality. The number of 4x4 permits issued in terms of the MLRA was 6 in 2015/16 and 9 in 2016/17. The number of 4x4 permits issued for other reasons were 12 in 2015/16 and 6 in 2016/17 (Figure 4).

OUTLOOK: IMPROVING

In terms of coastal land use, the situation appears to be improving. The spread of urban settlements beyond urban edges appears to be well controlled and agriculture has reduced significantly, with the “natural areas” claiming back this area through re-vegetation. The issuing of coastal leases and permits is ongoing and the provision of coastal access is being addressed by the municipalities through the undertaking of coastal access audits and the development of appropriate by-laws.

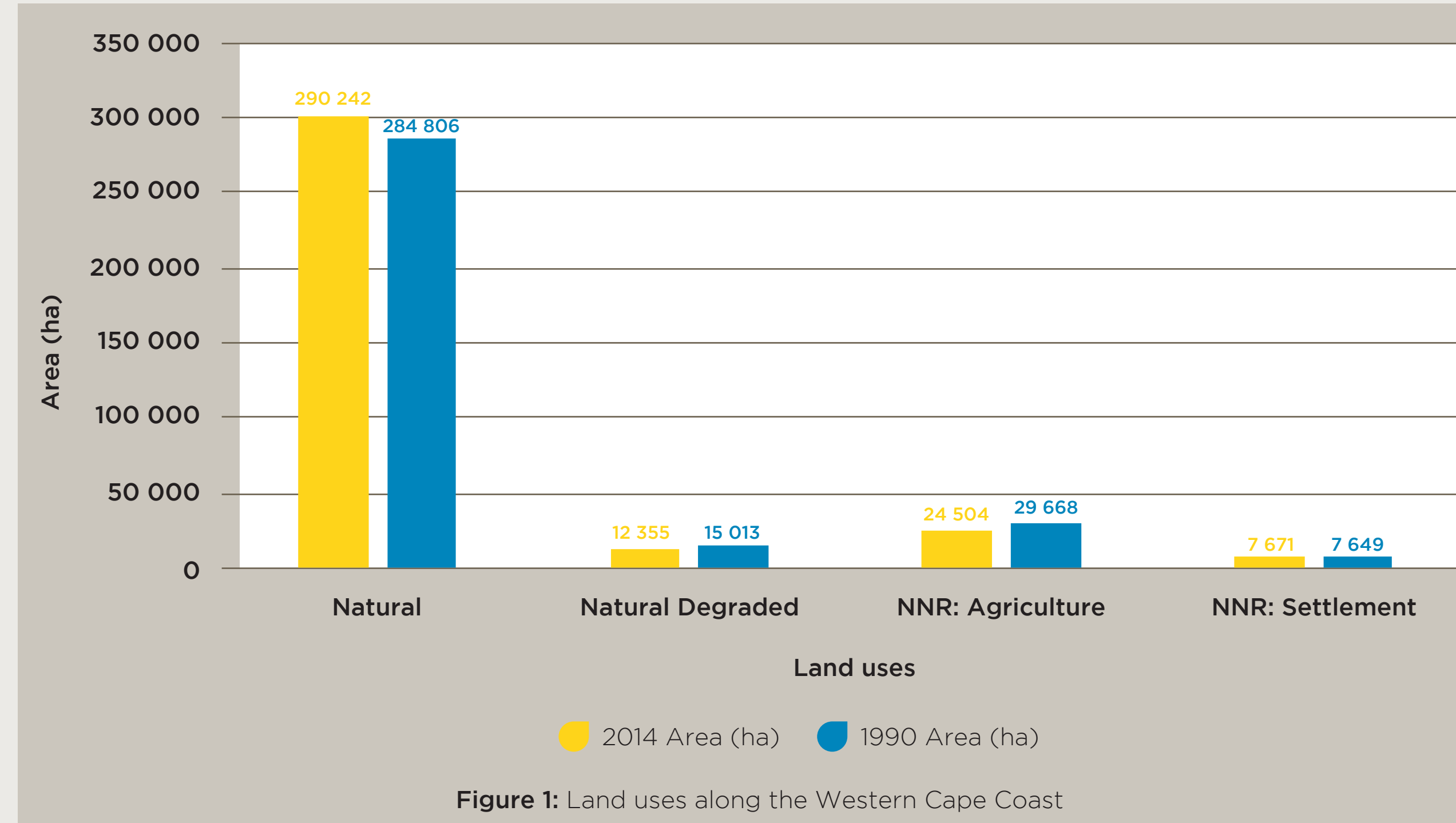


Figure 1: Land uses along the Western Cape Coast

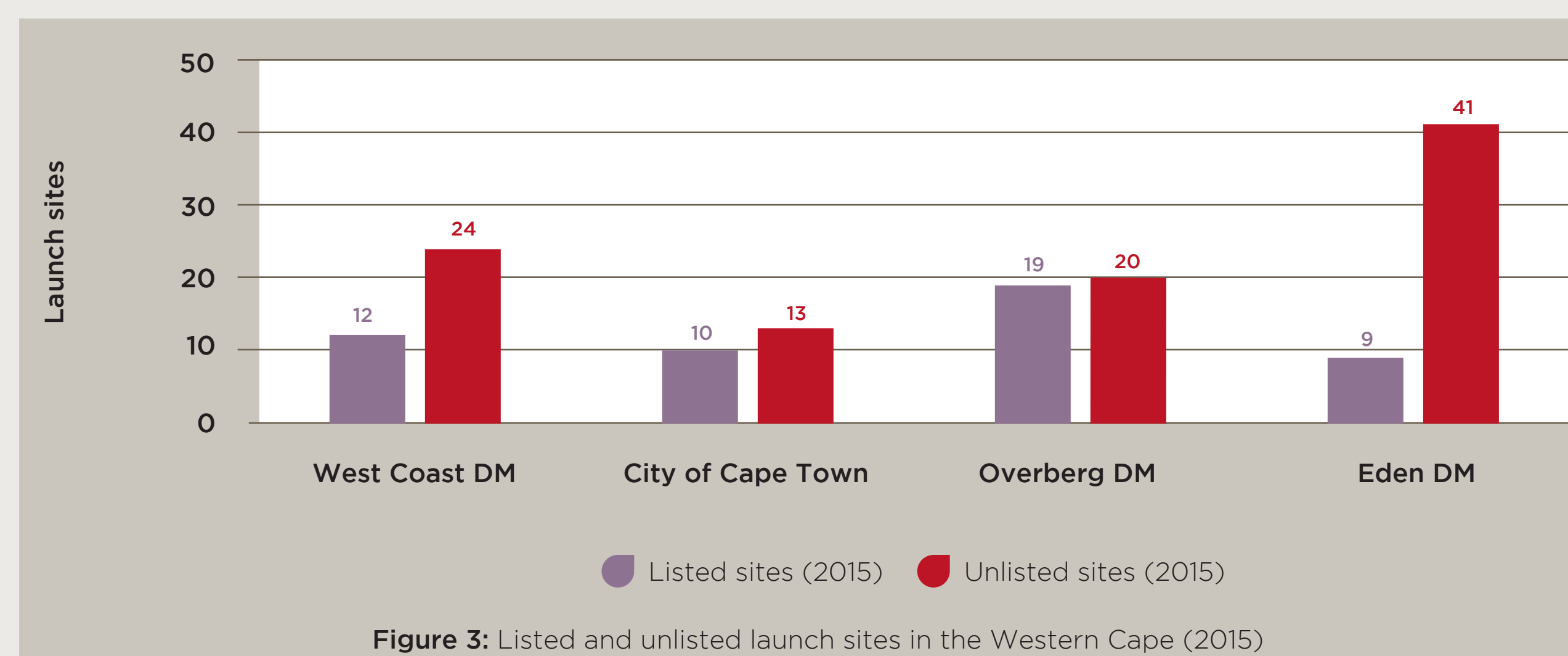


Figure 3: Listed and unlisted launch sites in the Western Cape (2015)

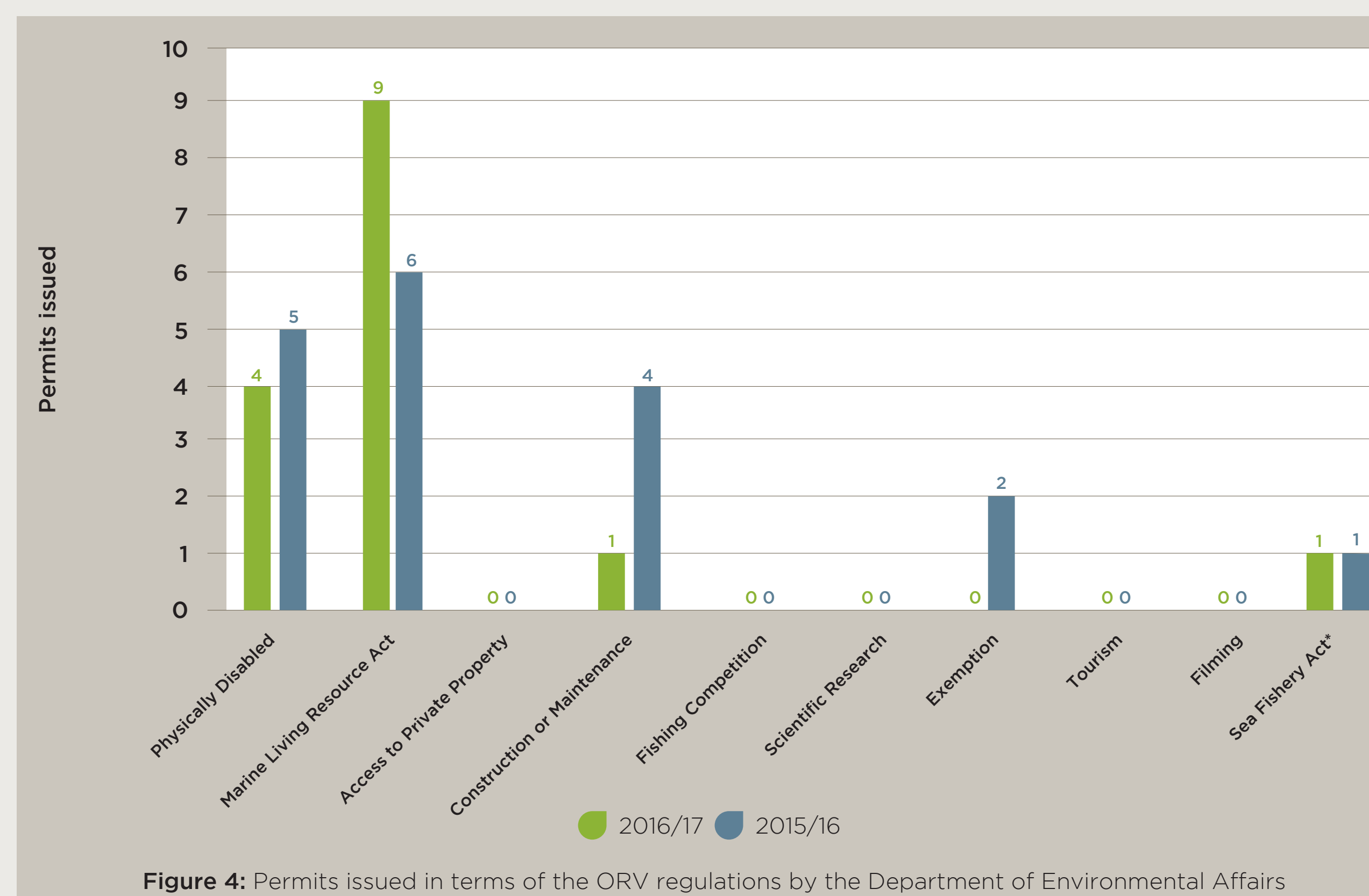


Figure 4: Permits issued in terms of the ORV regulations by the Department of Environmental Affairs

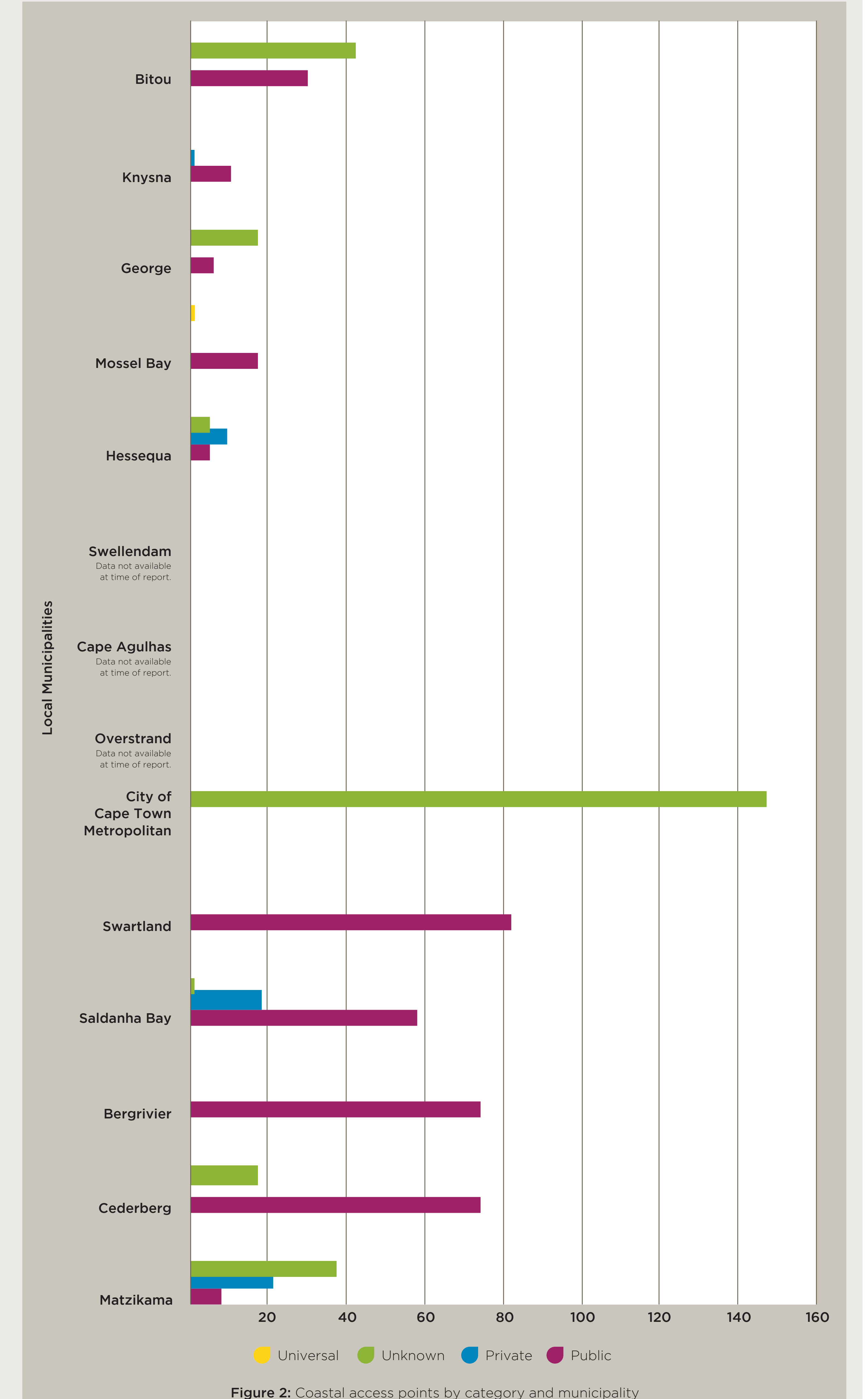


Figure 2: Coastal access points by category and municipality