

# Multi Hazard Warnings Social Research

Research Report:  
Stage 4 Middle Level Name

August 2020



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# Background and Methodology

# Scope of Engagement

This is part of the Social Research Project aimed to provide sound evidence for the development of a consistent three tiered national warnings system to **communicate risk** and **subsequently increase community safety** and **promote desired protective behaviours**.

This involves seeking the knowledge, views and understanding of the public themselves, rather than emergency services personnel. Specifically, the aim of this overall project is to identify the features of communication tools for:

- The warning systems for fire, cyclone, flood, extreme weather and extreme heat that would best facilitate community understanding of hazard risk and appropriate protective action.

The aim of this stage of the research, Stage 4, is to determine the community's definitive preference for the name of the middle level within the warnings system.

**This report presents the key findings from Stage 4 of the research, focusing on the name of the middle level of a Multi Hazard Warning System.**

## The research objectives of this engagement were to understand:

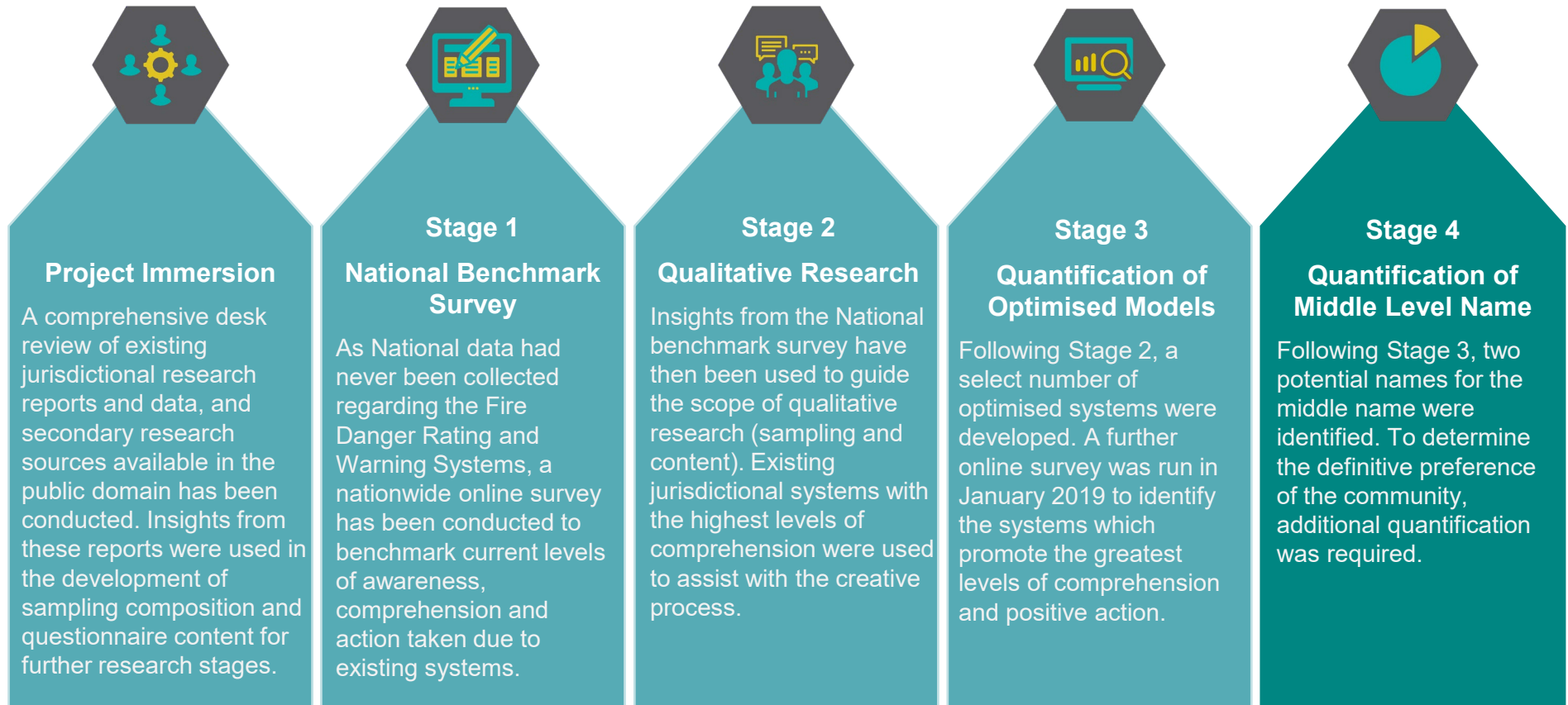
### Objective 1

Understand and determine preference between **Watch and Act** and **Act Now** as the name for the middle level within the frame, where Advice and Emergency Warning are locked as the bottom and top warning names.

### Objective 2

Determine whether the inclusion of a supporting action statement with a warning will drive positive behavioral outcomes.

# A five stage methodology has been developed, with this report summarising Stage 4



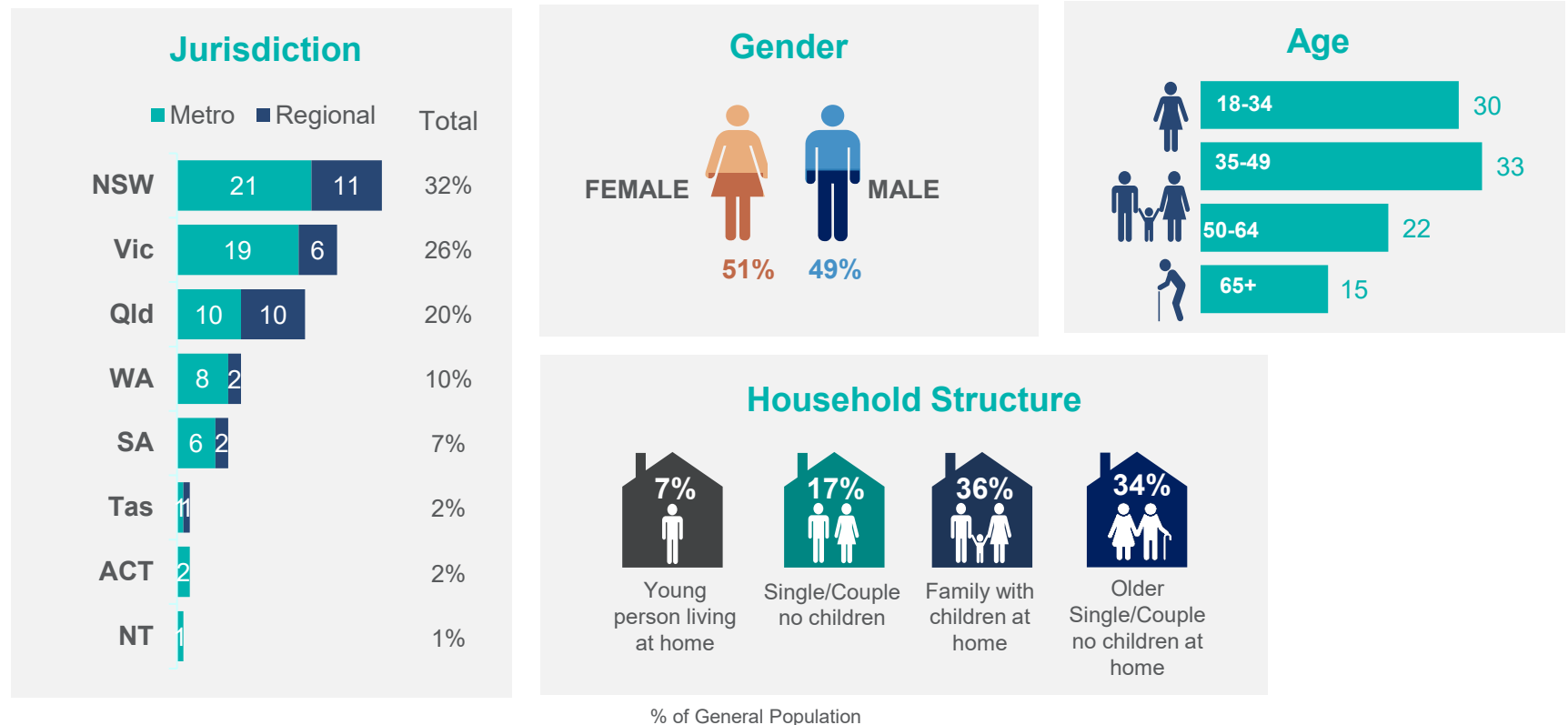
**FOCUS OF THIS  
REPORT**

# The Stage 4 survey was conducted with 5,407 individuals

To provide a consistent and comparable overview, an online survey was conducted nationally. Survey data was collected between the 27 July and 9 August 2020.

A final sample of **n=5,407** was achieved, providing a maximum margin of error of  $\pm 1.33\%$  at 95% confidence. Data was weighted by age and gender to ensure representativeness at a national level, and within each jurisdiction.

The testing scenarios within the survey were restricted to three hazards (bushfire, floods and cyclones), with each respondent asked questions relating to two hazards on a randomised basis.



# Executive Summary



# Key findings

## Awareness and Comprehension

Bushfire Warnings are more commonly recalled compared to Flood and Cyclone Warnings. However, in areas where floods and cyclones occur (more frequently), awareness is greater. In line with awareness, self reported comprehension of the purpose of the warning system is highest for bushfire, followed by floods and cyclone. However, we do know from previous qualitative and quantitative stages, that comprehension can be overstated and not translate to action.

## Action Statements

The inclusion of action statements in the warning is likely to drive action among two thirds of people, regardless of the hazard. The remaining third feel that the inclusion of an action statement will have little impact on their likelihood to act (note: this may include people already taking action). Positively, less than 2% feel that an action statement will make them less likely to take action.

## Middle Name Preference

Overall, **Watch and Act is the definitive preference** for the name of the middle level within a nationally consistent three-tiered warning system. Watch and Act was most preferred for both escalating and de-escalating scenarios across all hazards. Among those who had to choose a definitive preference (due to their preference changing between hazards), preference was split. When examining overall preference, **two thirds (65%) preferred Watch and Act**, compared to Act Now (35%).

## Education and Communication

While community preference lies with Watch and Act, Stage 2 (qualitative research) highlighted the significant confusion associated with this name. To overcome this, an extensive education and communication strategy must be developed and implemented to ensure the community understand what actions they're required to undertake when they receive or hear a Watch and Act warning.



# Watch and Act is the definitive preference for the middle name across all states and territories



	National	WA	NSW	QLD	VIC	SA	TAS	NT	ACT
Watch and Act	65%	67%	64%	66%	66%	63%	63%	61%	69%
Act Now	35%	33%	36%	34%	34%	37%	37%	39%	31%
n=	5407	1000	1009	998	999	1000	201	100	100

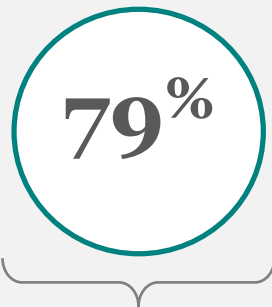
# Research Findings

# Awareness and Comprehension of Warnings

# Four in five recall Bushfire Warnings

Awareness is significantly higher among residents in regional New South Wales (89%), likely due to the recent 'Black Summer' bushfires and residents in metro Tasmania (93%). Awareness increases among those who have previous personal experience with bushfires – consistent with previous stages of research. Half of those aware of Bushfire Warnings have received or seen an Advice Warning in the past, while a third have received or seen an Emergency Warning.

## Bushfire Warnings Prompted Awareness | National %

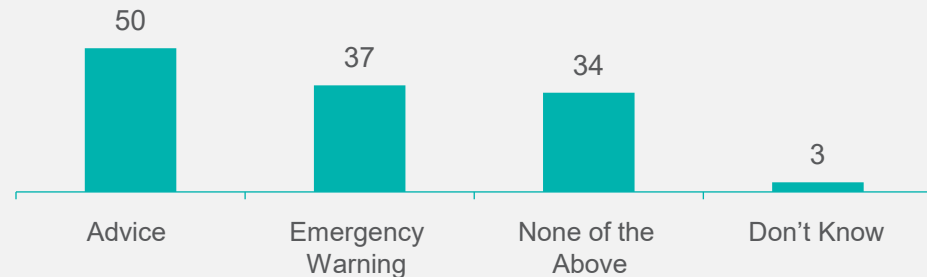


Increases to 91% for those who have had a personal experience with a bushfire.

% of General Population

n=3603

## Bushfire Warning Received or Seen in the Past | National %



% of General Population aware of Bushfire Warnings

n=2864

B1a. Based on this description, have you heard of these Bushfire Warnings in the past?

B1b. Have you ever received or seen one of these warnings before today?

Note : This data is presented without visibility of the number and distribution of warnings issued within each jurisdiction.

# Half are aware of Flood and Cyclone Warnings

Residents in the Northern Territory (87%), Queensland (66%) and Western Australia (59%) are significantly more aware of Cyclone Warnings - aligning with previous stages of research.

## Flood Warnings Prompted Awareness | National %

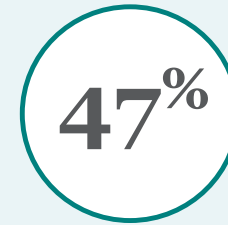


% of General Population

Increases to 76% for those who have had a personal experience with a flood.

n=3605

## Cyclone Warnings Prompted Awareness | National %

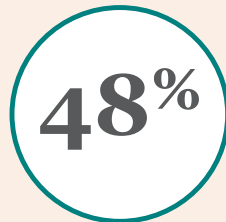


% of General Population

Increases to 83% for those who have had a personal experience with a cyclone.

n=3606

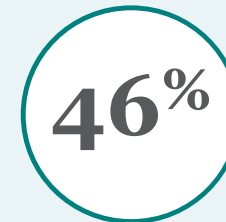
## Flood Warning Received or Seen in the Past | National %



% of General Population aware of  
Flood Warnings

n=1844

## Cyclone Warning Received or Seen in the Past | National %



% of General Population aware of  
Cyclone Warnings

n=1819

F1a - Based on this description, have you heard of these Flood Warnings in the past?

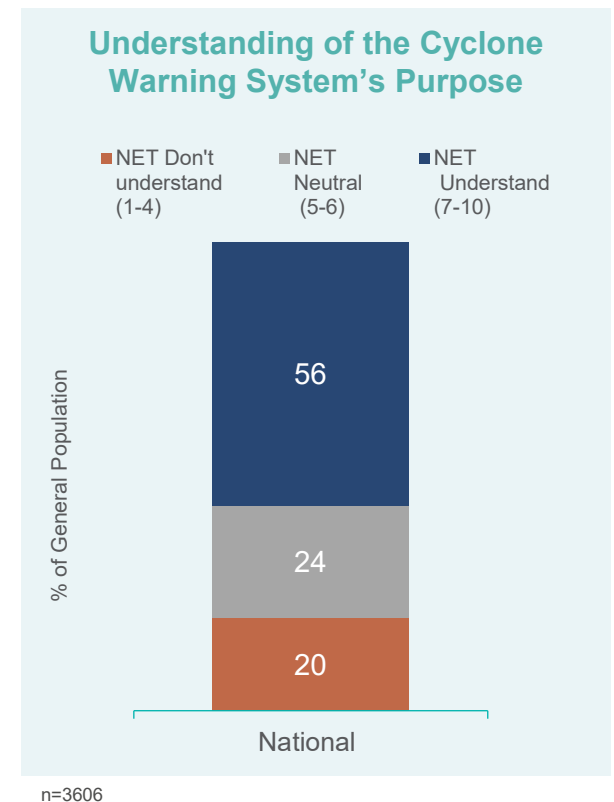
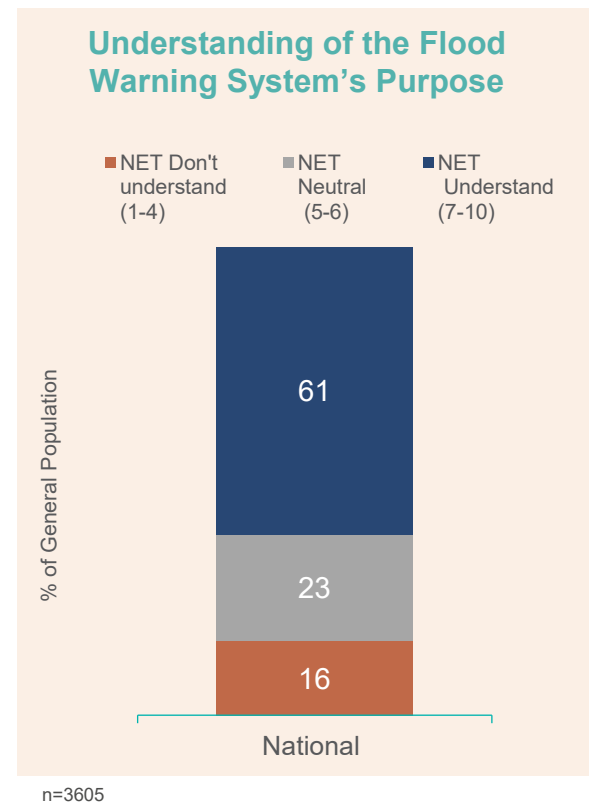
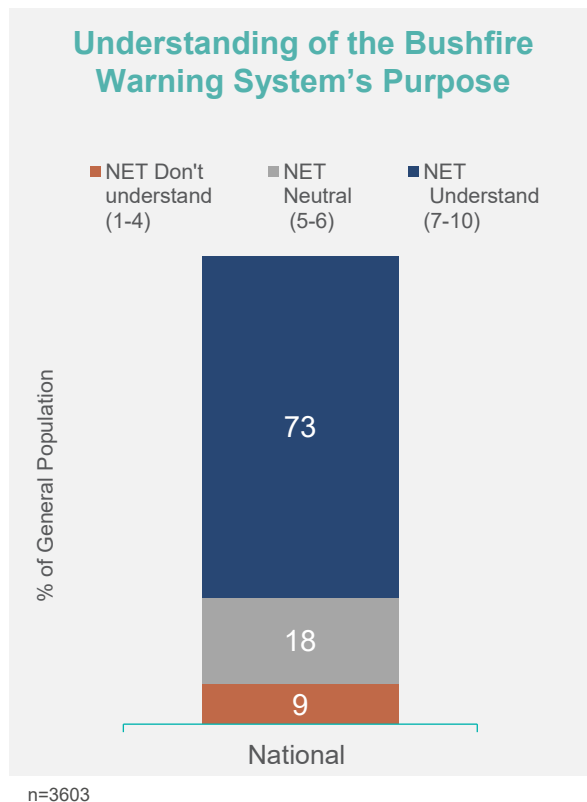
F1b - Have you ever received or seen one of these warnings before today?

C1a - Based on this description, have you heard of these Warnings for a tropical cyclone in the past?

C1b - Have you ever received or seen one of these warnings before today?

# Understanding of the warning systems varies, highest for bushfire

In line with awareness, understanding of the purpose of the **Cyclone Warning System** is higher among residents living in parts of Australia where the incidence of the hazard is higher –Northern Territory (87%), Queensland (70%) and Western Australia (65%). Similarly, understanding of the purpose of **Flood Warning System** is higher in Queensland (71%), while those in **regional New South Wales** have a higher understanding of the **Bushfire Warning System** (82%).



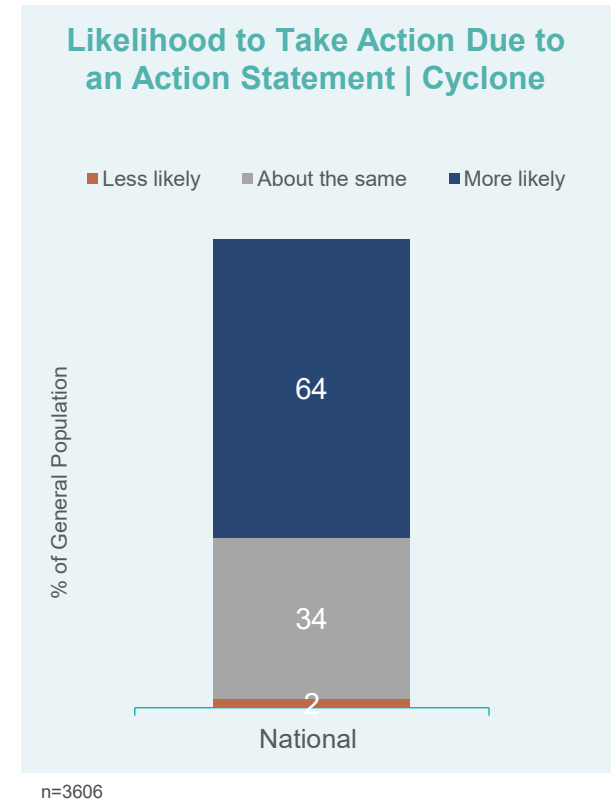
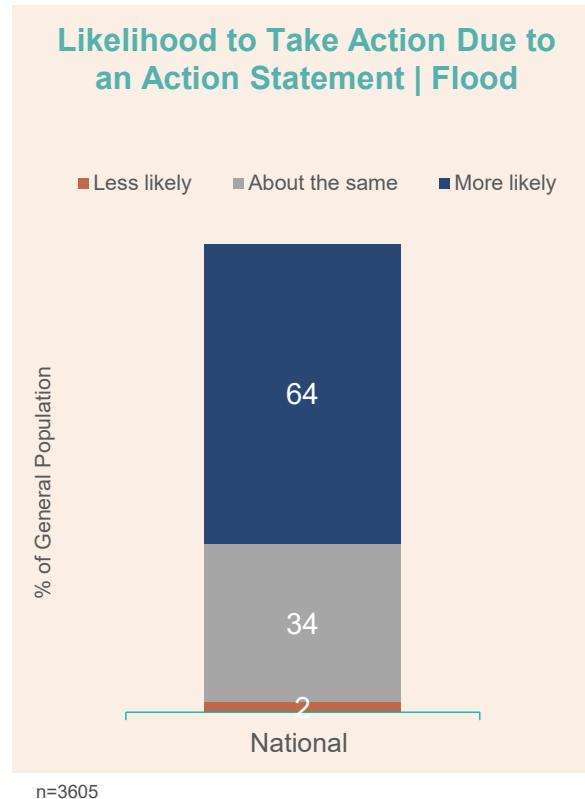
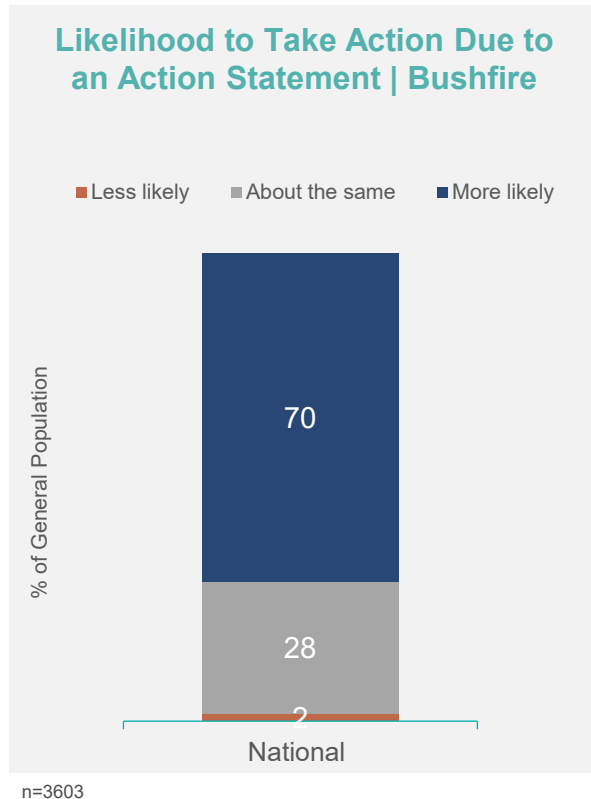
B2 - On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your understanding of the purpose of the Bushfire Warning System?  
F2 - On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your understanding of the purpose of the Flood Warning System?  
C2 - On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your understanding of the purpose of the Cyclone Warning System?

# Middle Warning Level Name Preference



# Action statements are likely to promote action, regardless of hazard

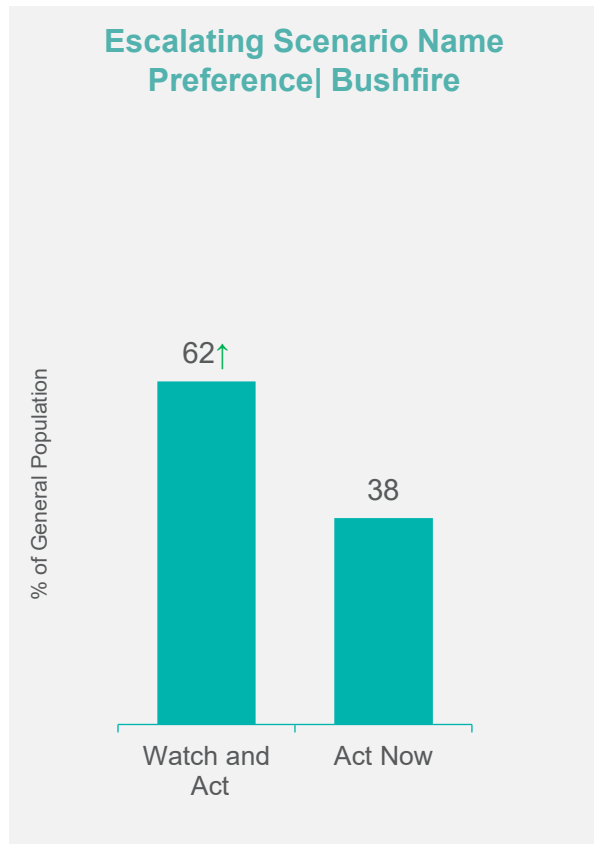
This is consistent across all jurisdictions.



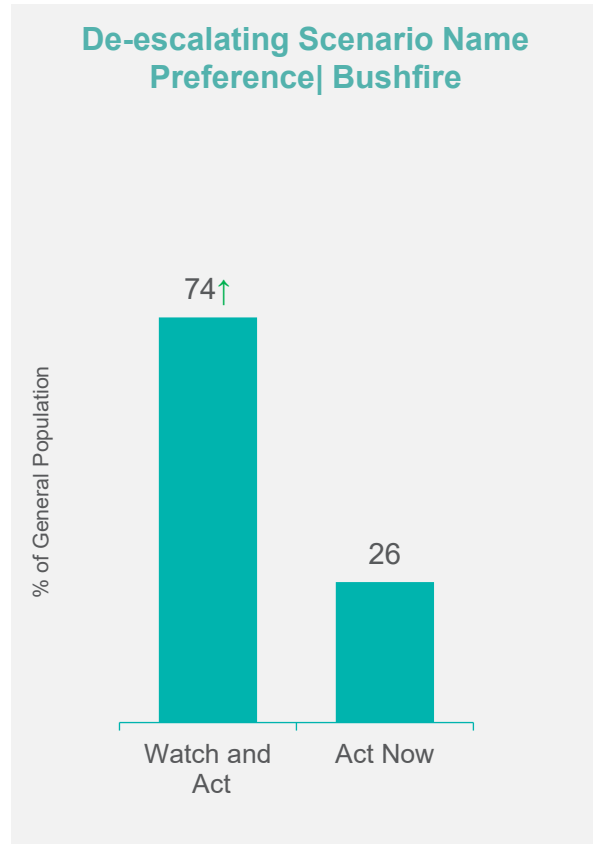
B3/F3/C3 - Are you more or less likely to take action when you receive a message like this, compared to a message that does not contain an action statement?

# Seven in ten choose Watch and Act as their definitive preference when considering bushfires

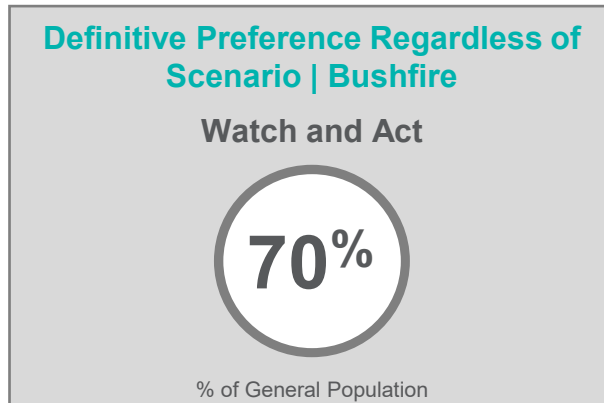
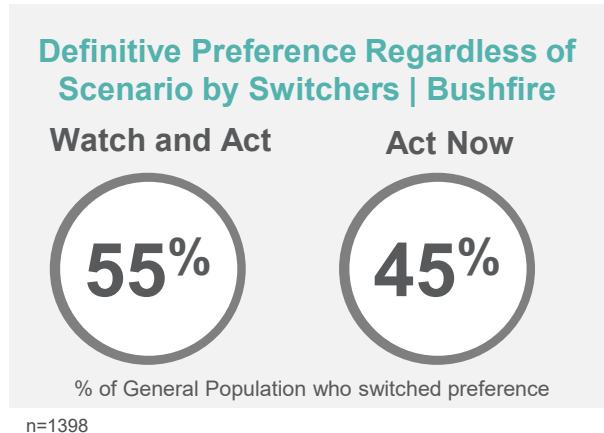
This is consistent across jurisdictions and demographics.



n=3603



n=3603



B4a- If the highest level of risk is named EMERGENCY WARNING, and the lowest is ADVICE, which of the following best communicates the middle level?

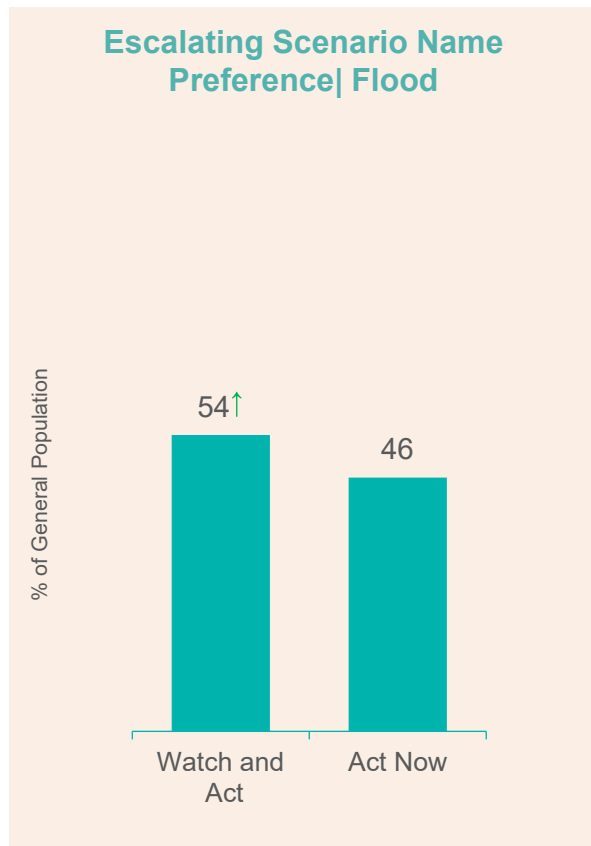
B4b- Now thinking about this scenario, which of the following best communicates the middle level?

B5 - If you had to choose a definitive preference (i.e. one only) for the middle name of the warning framework, which would it be?

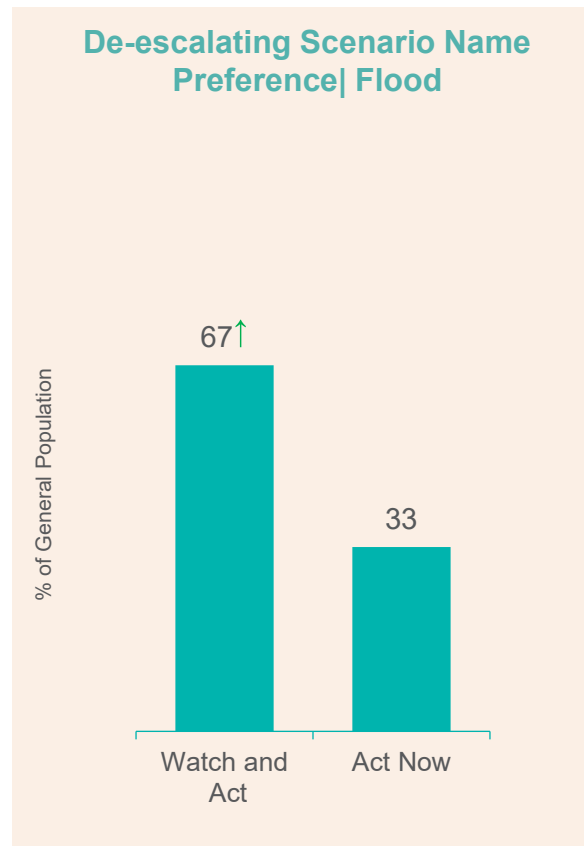
↑↓ Preference is significantly higher than Act Now at 95% confidence.

# For floods, two thirds choose Watch and Act as their definitive preference for the middle level

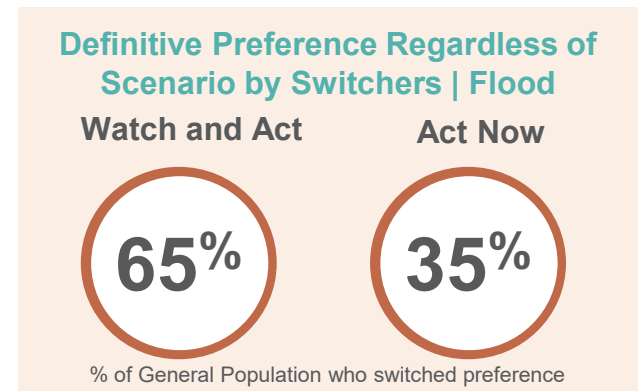
This is consistent across jurisdictions and demographics.



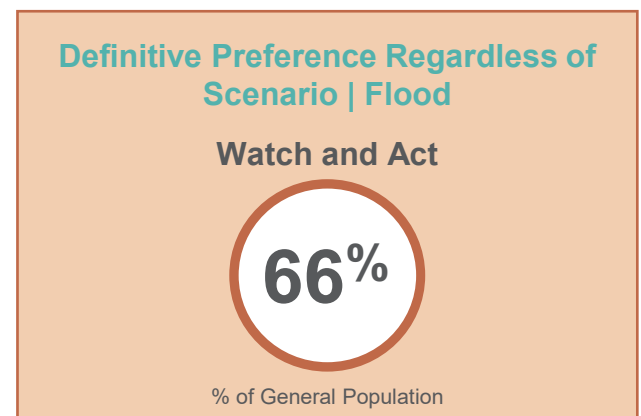
n=3605



n=3605



n=1444



n=3605

F4a- If the highest level of risk is named EMERGENCY WARNING, and the lowest is ADVICE, which of the following best communicates the middle level?

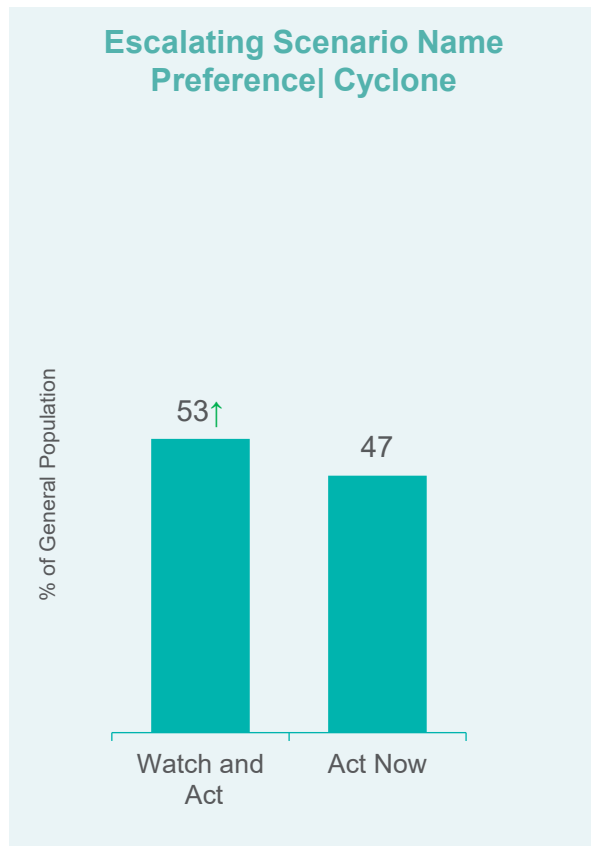
F4b- Now thinking about this scenario, which of the following best communicates the middle level?

F5 - If you had to choose a definitive preference (i.e. one only) for the middle name of the warning framework, which would it be?

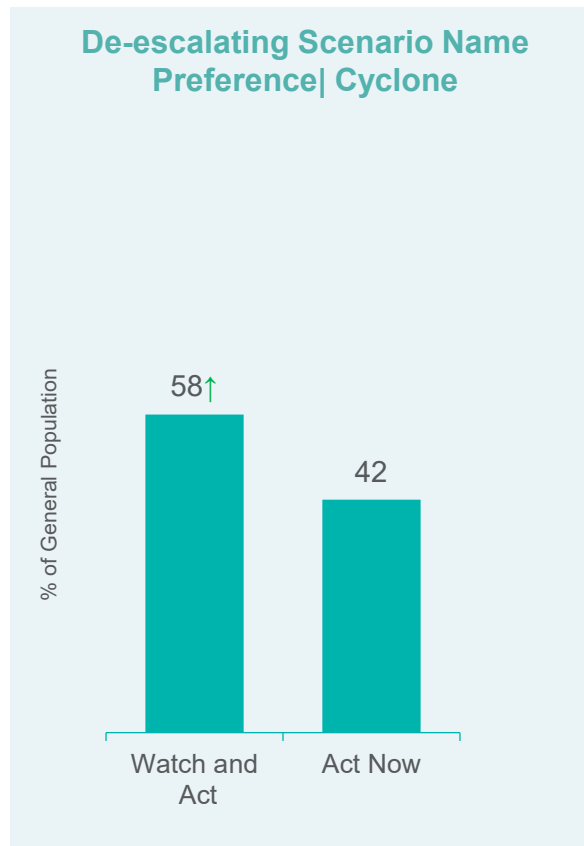
↑↓ Preference is significantly higher than Act Now at 95% confidence.

# Six in ten choose Watch and Act as their definitive preference for Cyclones

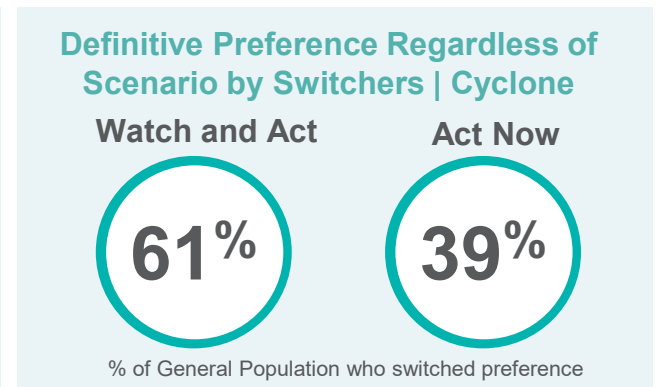
Preference is consistent across all jurisdictions and demographics.



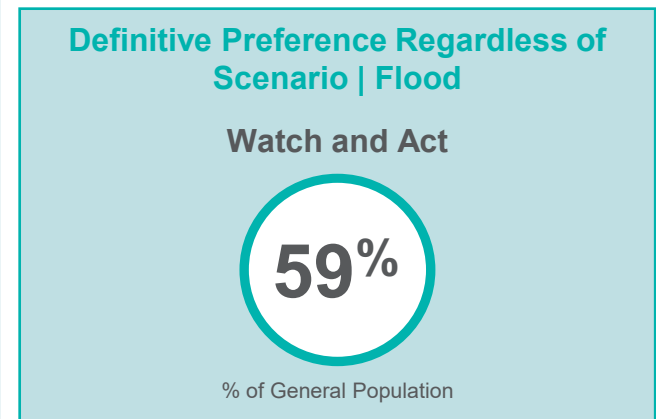
n=3606



n=3606



n=1270



n=3606

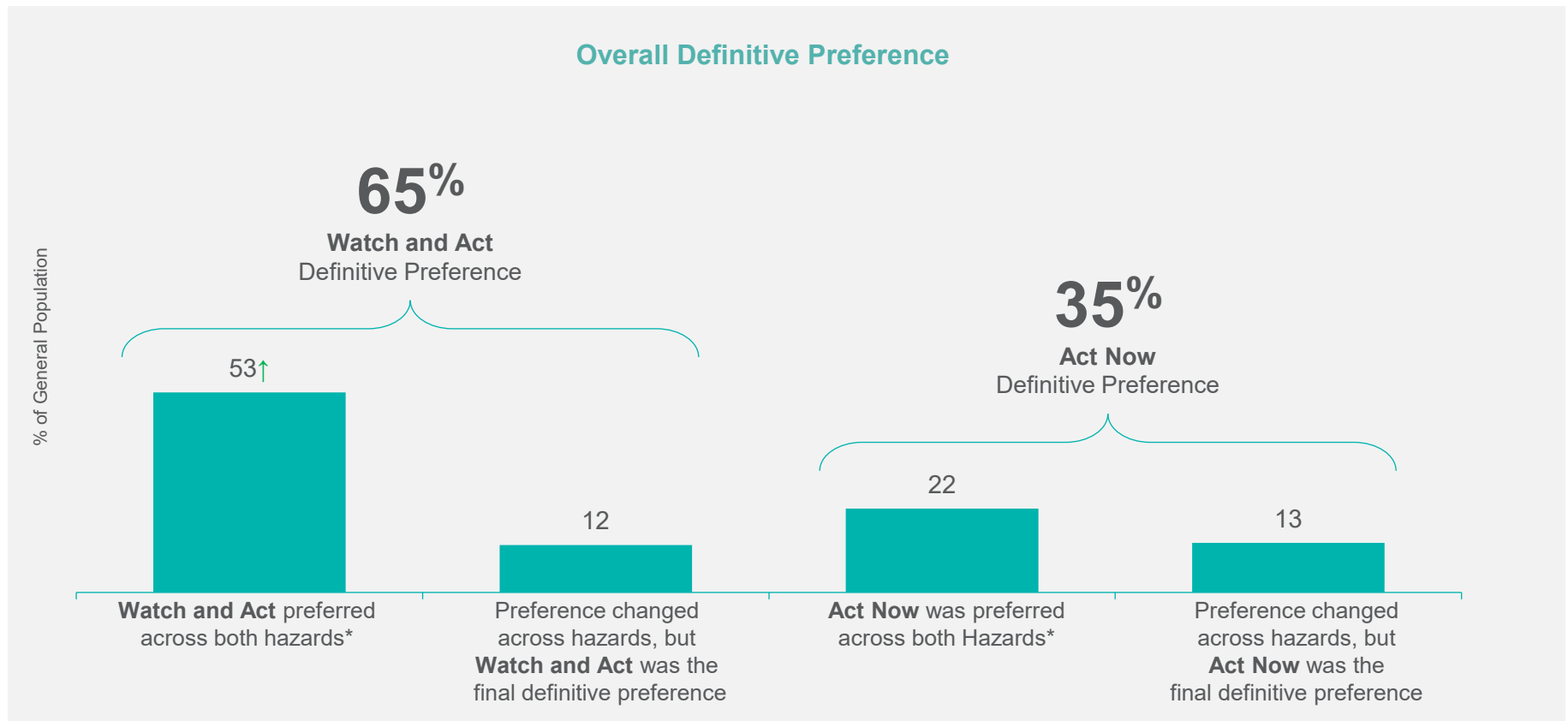
F4a- If the highest level of risk is named EMERGENCY WARNING, and the lowest is ADVICE, which of the following best communicates the middle level?

F4b- Now thinking about this scenario, which of the following best communicates the middle level?

F5 - If you had to choose a definitive preference (i.e. one only) for the middle name of the warning framework, which would it be?

↑↓ Preference is significantly higher than Act Now at 95% confidence.

# On aggregate, **Watch and Act** is the definitive preference for the name of the middle name



n=5407

B4a/F4a/C4a- If the highest level of risk is named EMERGENCY WARNING, and the lowest is ADVICE, which of the following best communicates the middle level?

B4b/F4b/C4b- Now thinking about this scenario, which of the following best communicates the middle level?

Q10 - If you had to choose a definitive preference (i.e. one only) for the middle name of the warning framework, which would it be?

\*Watch and Act / Act Now preferred across both hazards is defined as:

- For the first hazard they saw, their preference was Watch and Act (or Act Now) for all scenarios AND for the other hazard; or
- For the first hazard they saw, their preference changed depending on the scenario, but when asked to make a definitive choice, they chose Watch and Act (or Act Now) and then the same happened for the next hazard (hence there was no need to ask the final definitive preference questions at Q10).

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