

PERCEPTIONS VERSUS BEHAVIOUR: AN EARLY EXPLORATION OF TYPES OF PREPAREDNESS MEASURES RELATED TO DISASTER AND EXTREME EVENTS



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Preparedness plays a key role in the capacity of individuals, households and businesses to respond effectively to a disaster or extreme event. To understand and effectively utilise knowledge related to preparedness in order to maximise impact, it is important to appreciate that preparedness can be gauged in different ways, each offering a related, yet distinct, perspective.

We explored two different preparedness measures, a perceptions perspective (i.e. self-rating how prepared you feel) and a more formal preparedness index of behaviours, and compared responses on these across two key groups: those who had experienced a disaster/extreme event within the previous 12 months, and those who had not.

Method

Preparedness measures were sourced from the 2020 *Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) Community Insights Survey*.

N = 2,100 Queensland adults.

Perceived preparedness was gauged from “Overall, how prepared do you feel to reduce or prevent the impact on your home or family from the following emergency or disaster events?”

Preparedness behaviours were measured via a ‘Preparedness Index’ which was the number of activities an individual had completed to prepare their household for an emergency or disaster event (e.g. developed a fire plan for their property) divided by the total number of activity options available.

Results

Overall scores for perceived preparedness and the preparedness index were significantly correlated ($r_s = .28, p < .001$), indicating that the two measures are related.

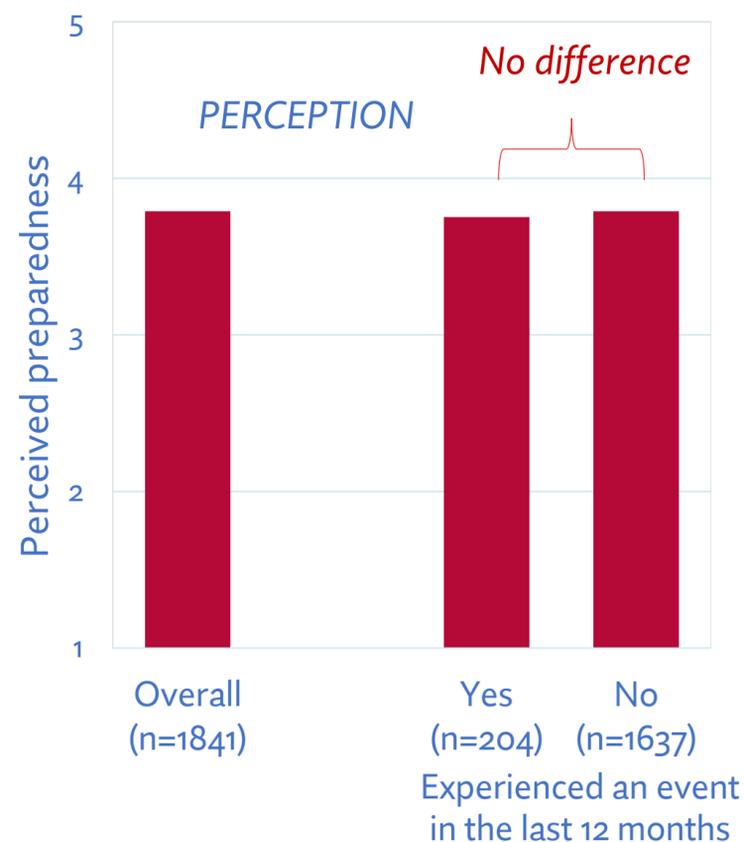


Figure 1. Perceived preparedness

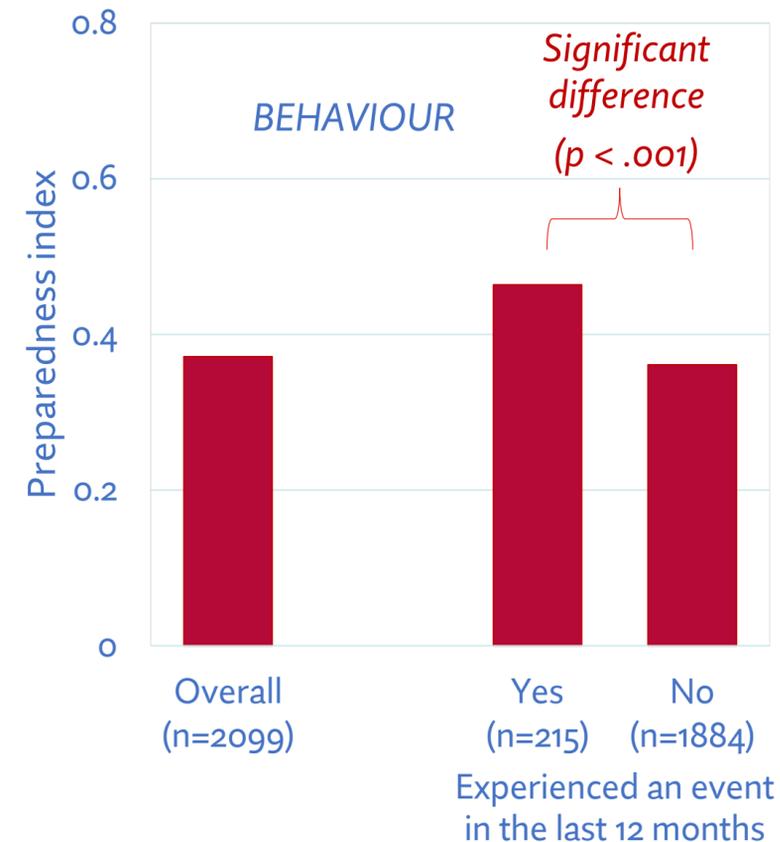


Figure 2. Preparedness behaviours

Implications

We found that those who had experienced an actual disaster/extreme event in the preceding 12 months scored significantly higher than those who had no such experience on the more formal preparedness index measure. This disparity was not apparent, however, on perceived preparedness ratings which did not differ between the same groups.

The findings suggest a dissociation between perception measures versus more formal indices capturing behaviours, and the need to appreciate this separation when considering the formulation of evidence-based preparedness strategy and policy for individuals and communities.

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