Business Continuity Institute

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT 2015

Business Continuity Institute

everbridge

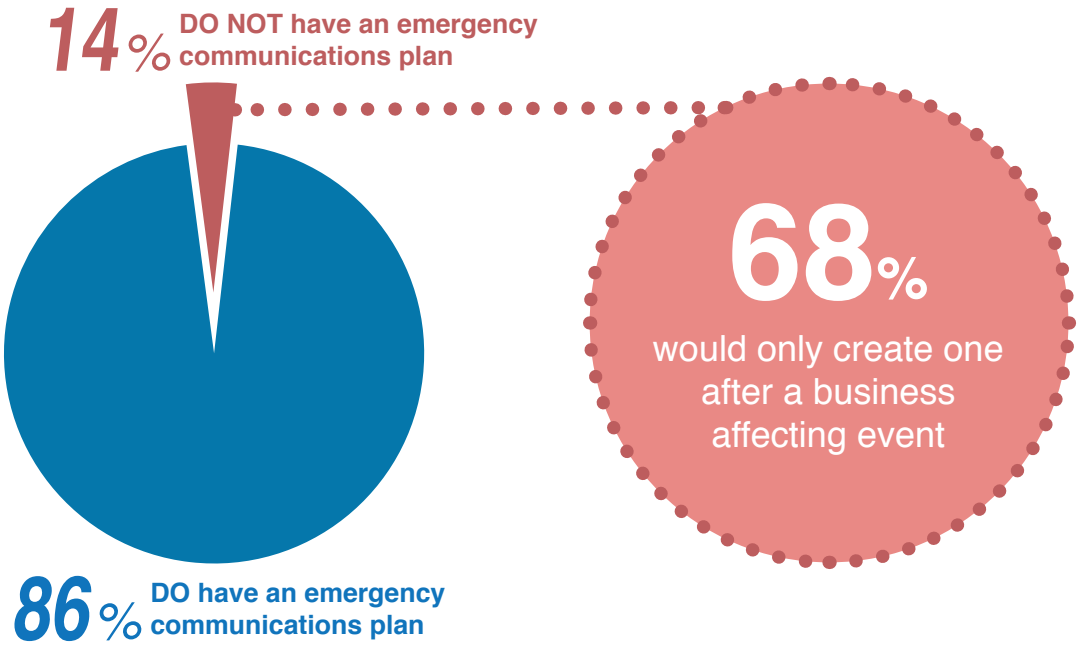
Contents

1 | Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

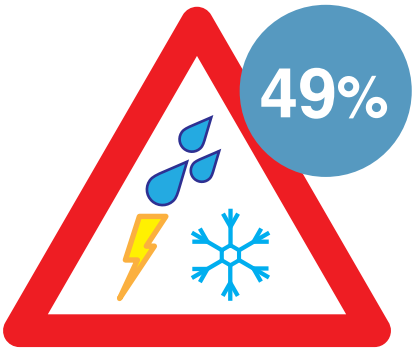
In association with Everbridge, the BCI Emergency Communications Report describes the results of a global survey which considers emergency communications planning and arrangements deployed by organizations in different industry sectors. This also tracks results from last year's data. This report features 467 responses from 67 countries.

Emergency Communications Planning

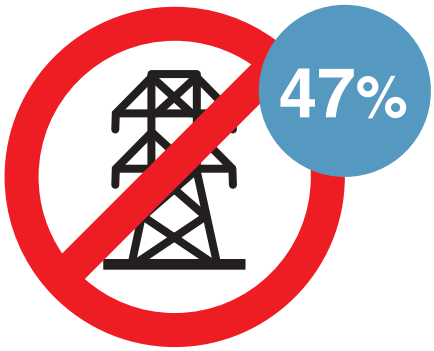


Common Triggers of Emergency Communications Plans

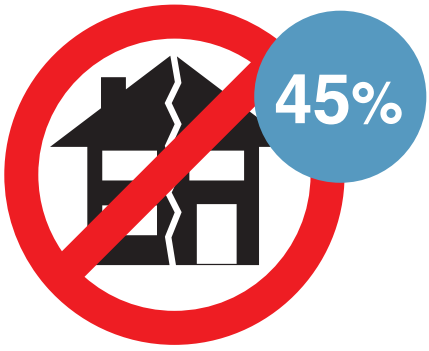
Unplanned IT Outages



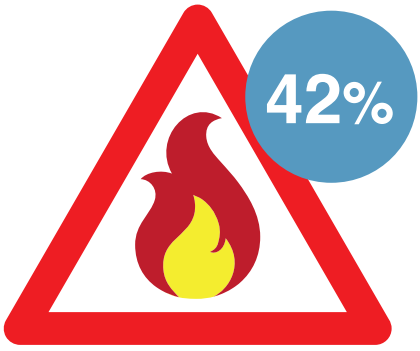
Weather Related Incidents



Power Outages



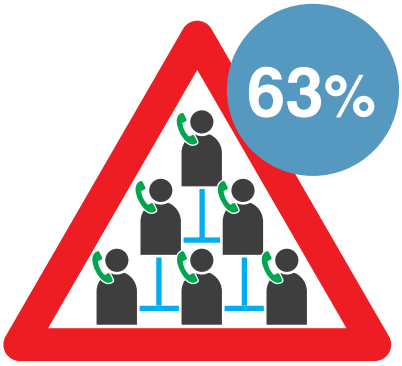
Natural Disasters



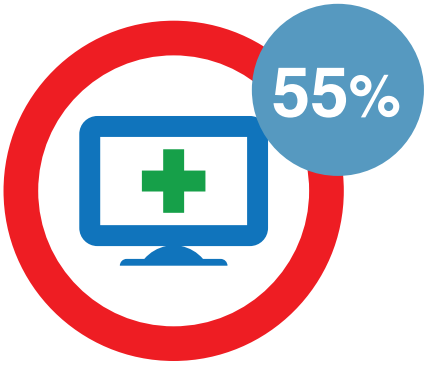
Fire

Emergency Communications Processes

Internal Emails

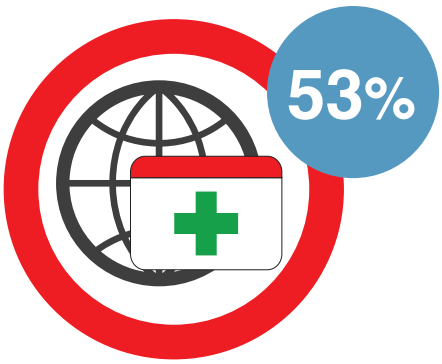


Manual Call Trees



Emergency Communication Software

Crisis Telephone Lines



Website Announcements

Emergency Communications Arrangements

69% of organizations have emergency communications training and education

25% have regularly scheduled exercises

62% activated their emergency communications plan at least once in the last year

77% activate their plans in 30 minutes or less

27% DO NOT request responses to emergency communications

70% use mobile communications in private messaging to staff

2 | Emergency Communications Report 2015

Case Study:
AirAsia crash response

In December 2014, a tragedy shook Indonesia as AirAsia flight QZ8501 went missing shortly after taking off from Surabaya. The plane 'disappeared' following a request of deviation from its route to avoid bad weather, only to be found two days later at its crash location in the middle of the Java Sea[1]. Although the air company was unable to prevent this incident, it did manage to mitigate its consequences in terms of public image while also providing support for the victims' families.

In doing this, AirAsia CEO Tony Fernandes made use of social media in communicating with the public during the crisis, releasing statements while events were still unfolding. One hour after the flight disappeared, he tweeted that he was flying to Surabaya, regularly posting updates to keep the public informed. In his messages he sent his condolences to the families who he met personally, praised his staff for the hard work, and expressed a heartfelt sadness for the tragedy. The AirAsia team took to the social media as well, posting news on the company's official Facebook page, in order to avoid misinformation and false reports[2]. Moreover, bulletins were translated in several languages and a hotline was quickly activated. This modern and dynamic emergency communication system had a positive impact on the way media reported on the issue, citing Fernandes' behaviour as exemplary[3]. However, the CEO's strategy partly backfired, as it was later discovered that flight QZ8501 did not have the permission to cover that particular route that day. This reveals how social media may complement existing emergency communications. However, organizations must take care in using social media as it may significantly increase public mistrust when statements are found to be false or misleading[4].

Resilience is premised on dealing with disruption with clear intent, coherence and appropriate resourcing[5]. Emergency communications contributes to resilience when combined with robust business continuity (BC) capability as it allows organizations to effectively reach out to their stakeholders during times of disruption. Emergency communications also helps response and recovery, as well as increase an organization's adaptive capacity which is also essential to resilience.

1. IBS Centre for Management Research. Icmrindia.org. Communication in a Crisis: Indonesia AirAsialMarketinglCase StudylCase Studies [Internet]. 2015 [cited 7 October 2015].
Available from: http://www.icmrindia.org/casestudies/catalogue/Marketing/Communication%20in%20a%20Crisis%20Indonesia%20AirAsia-Excerpts.htm#COMMUNICATION DURING THE CRISIS
2. Khoo J. Crisis management: Lessons from the infamous AirAsia flight QZ8501. The news Hub. 2015 [cited 7 October 2015].Available from: https://www.the-newshub.com/international/crisis-management-lessons-from-the-infamous-airasia-qz8501
3. Phua D. Lessons in crisis communication from Air Asia [Internet]. Behind the Spin. 2015 [cited 7 October 2015]. Available from: http://www.behindthespin.com/features/lessons-in-crisis-communication-from-air-asia
4. DiPietro B. Crisis of the Week: AirAsia's Plane Crash Response [Internet]. WSJ. 2015 [cited 7 October 2015]. Available from: http://blogs.wsj.com/riskandcompliance/2015/01/12/crisis-of-the-week-airasias-plane-crash-response/
5. British Standards Institution, 2015. BS 65000: Guidance on organizational resilience. Milton Keynes, UK: BSI.

Emergency Communications Planning

For the second year in a row, findings reveal the high uptake of emergency communications plans among organizations sampled worldwide. 86% of respondents report having an emergency communications plan in place to deal with various incidents (Figure 1).

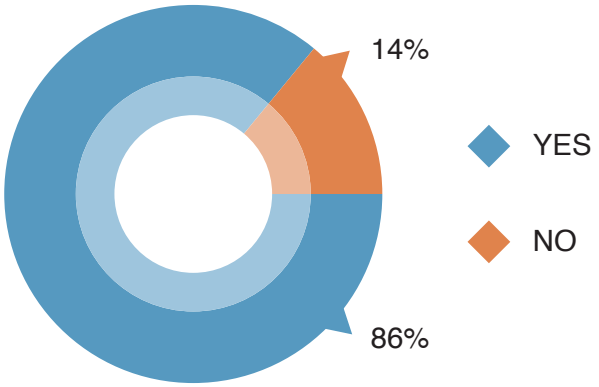


Figure 1. Question 11: Does your organization have an Emergency Communications Plan? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=399)

Among organizations without an emergency communications plan, 40% report having a BC plan without a provision on emergency communications (Figure 2). 68% would only consider creating an emergency communications plan after a business affecting event (Figure 3). Given that resilience requires the integration of operational activities and its alignment to strategic goals, these results show that some organizations still fall short. In order to contribute to an organization's adaptive capacity, emergency communications must be fully integrated with BC and other 'protective disciplines' (e.g. risk management, health & safety, etc.). More importantly, practitioners in these fields must be able to refer and activate these plans given that they are considered 'front liners' during times of disruption.

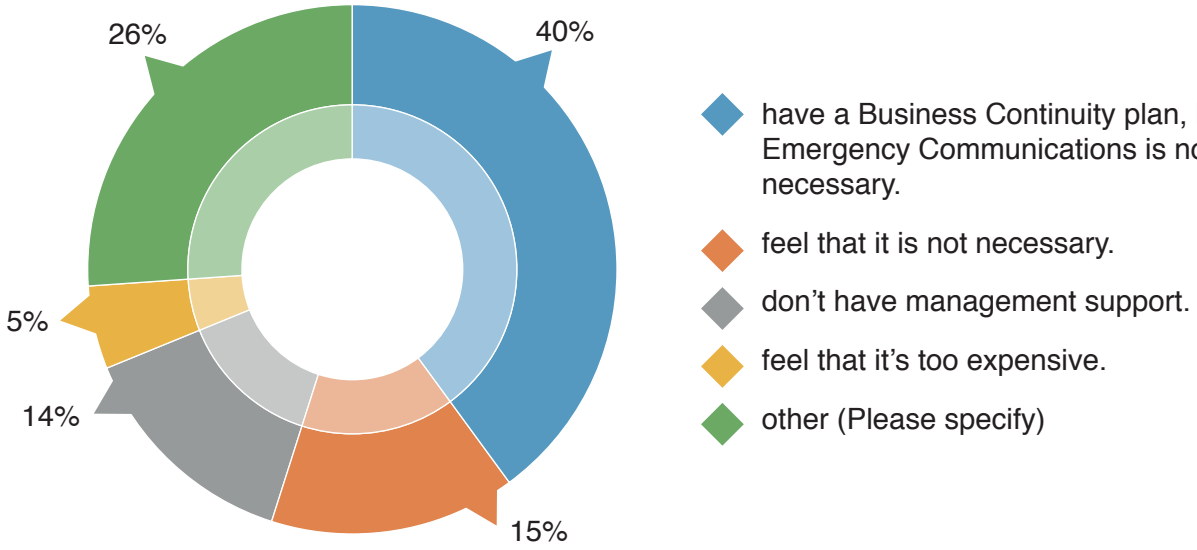


Figure 2. Question 27: If your organization does not have a plan, why not? We... (Answers expressed as percentage, N=58)

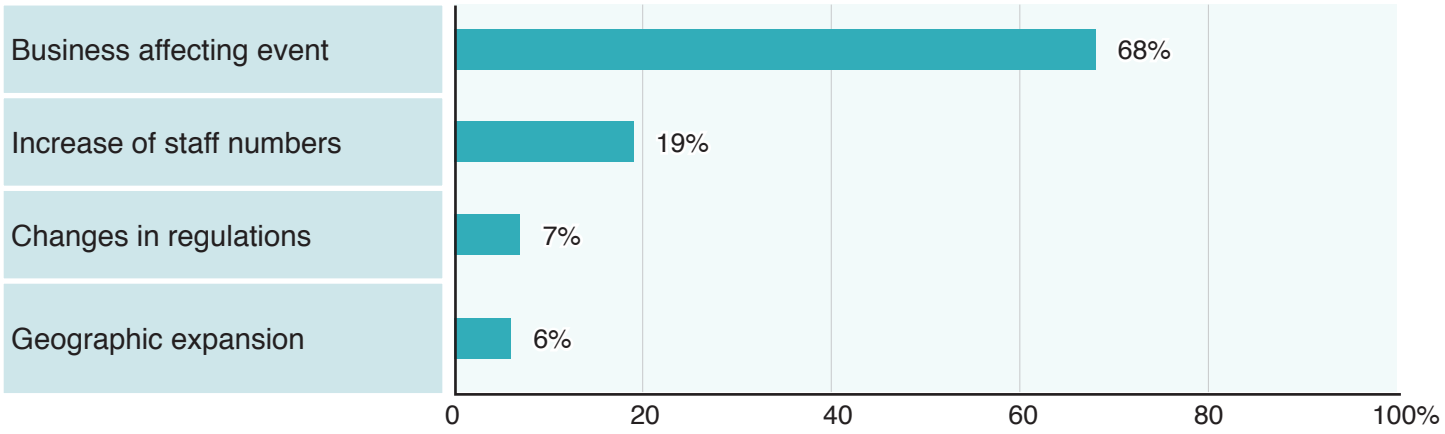


Figure 3. Question 28: What would make you create an Emergency Communications Plan? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=54)

Case Study:The New York Stock Exchange

On 08 July 2015, the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) experienced an IT outage that hindered communications and forced its entire system to shut down for almost four hours, from 11.32 in the morning to 3.10 in the afternoon. The outage became particularly worrisome as news came that United Airlines (UA) and The Wall Street Journal (TWSJ) were undergoing similar troubles. This incident spread fears of a combined cyber attack to take down U.S. industry giants which alerted law enforcement agencies.

Much to brokers' relief however, it was soon confirmed that the timings of the different outages were a coincidence and that the NYSE shut down was due to technical problems[6]. In particular, a software update caused slow-downs that later escalated to paralyse the stock exchange servers[7]. Despite a tense climate and millions of dollars at stake, NYSE still managed to maintain stable communications with traders, avoiding general panic. They used Twitter to explain what was happening, what the roots of the problem were, and what type of action would be taken to fix the system. Furthermore, once operations were back to "business as usual", they apologised about the incident and provided details on its origins[8]. In addition to an efficient use of social media, the Stock Exchange emergency team established different "war rooms", which included a team whose sole purpose was to deal with customers' questions and complaints[9]. In this case, social media complemented existing emergency communications capability during crises. However, it should always work in coordination with other measures based on best practices and well-rehearsed plans.

6. Yuhas A. Stock trading closed on NYSE after glitch caused major outage – as it happened [Internet]. the Guardian. 2015 [cited 8 October 2015].
Available from: http://www.theguardian.com/business/live/2015/jul/08/new-york-stock-exchange-wall-street
7. Tsidulko J. How NYSE Could Have Avoided Embarrassing Outage [Internet]. CRN. 2015 [cited 8 October 2015].
Available from: http://www.crn.com/news/data-center/300077399/nyse-software-update-caused-outage.htm
8. Lorenzen R. The NYSE Outage: Lessons in Crisis Management [Internet]. The Huffington Post. 2015 [cited 8 October 2015].
Available from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-lorenzen/the-nyse-outage-lessons-i_b_7801672.html
9. 4. Nash S. NYSE Provides Glimpse into Glitch Timeline [Internet]. WSJ. 2015 [cited 8 October 2015].
Available from: http://blogs.wsj.com/cio/2015/07/09/nyse-provides-glimpse-into-glitch-timeline/

Emergency Communications Plans and Incident Response

Findings reveal the common causes of disruption which coincide with threats identified by practitioners in other research such as the BCI Horizon Scan Report. The top three drivers of disruption which are IT outages (49%), power outages (43%) and weather related incidents (40%) (Figure 4) are in also in the top ten threats practitioners are most concerned about in a horizon scanning exercise.

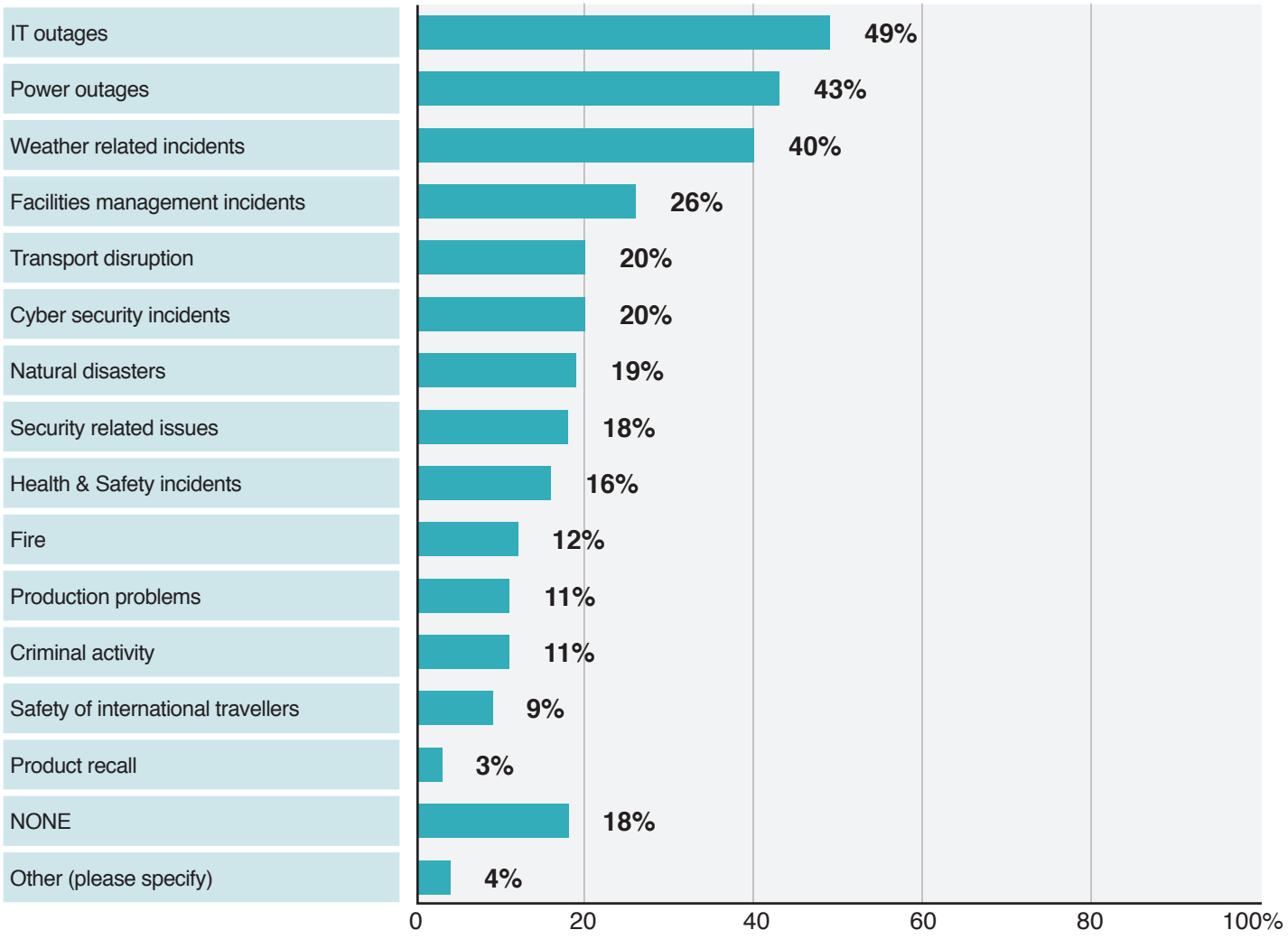


Figure 4. Question 9: Has there been any events in the past 12 months that have caused any disruption to your organization? (Multiple responses allowed, answers expressed as percentage, N=403)

These same drivers of disruption are seen as triggers for activating an emergency communications plan (Figure 5). It is interesting to note that natural disasters and fires – sixth and tenth most common causes of disruption respectively – make it to the top five triggers for activating an emergency communications plan. Cyber security incidents and travel disruption bring up the rear of the top 10 triggers. This data may imply the widespread uptake of emergency communications for incidents which affect physical campuses and may cause denial of access such as adverse weather, fire and natural disasters.

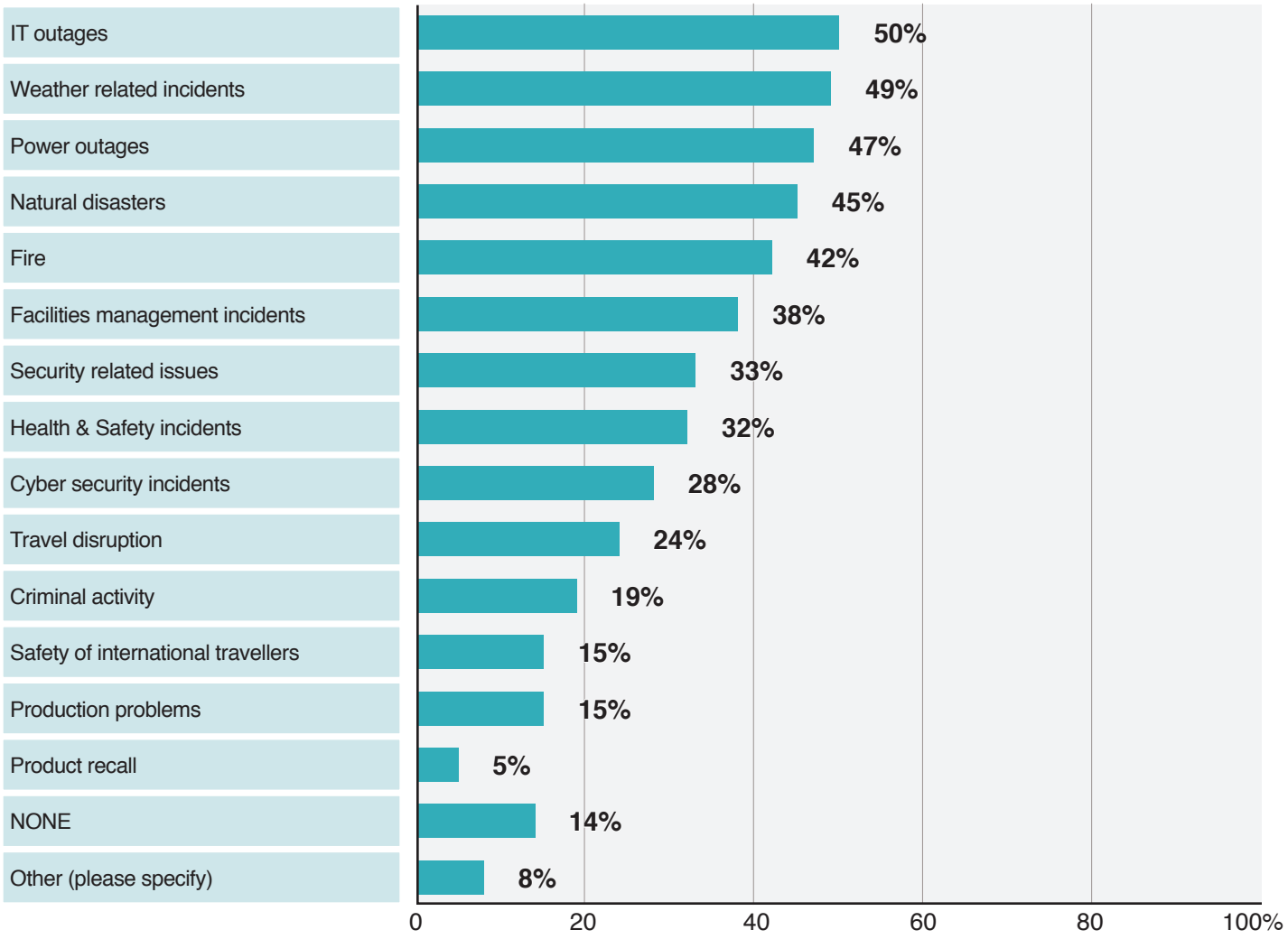


Figure 5. Question 12: Which incidents triggered the activation of your Emergency Communications Plan? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=330)

The survey also reveals the most common methods of emergency communications (Figure 6). Internal emails (83%) and manual call trees (63%) remain the methods of choice for many organizations in communicating to their stakeholders during incidents, unchanged from last year. However, it is interesting to note the growing uptake of emergency communications software (55%) which is now in joint third with crisis telephone lines (55%). Among the other methods mentioned by respondents include short messaging service (SMS) or mobile phone texts (4%) and radios (2%).

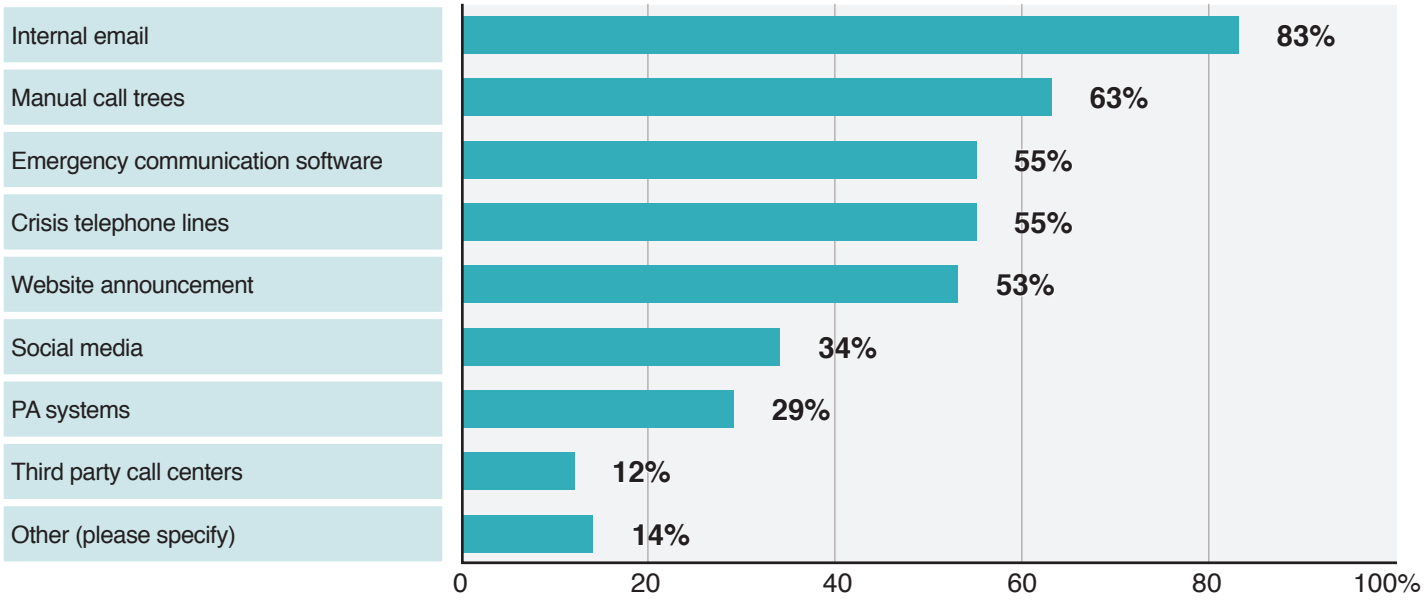


Figure 6. Question 13: What processes do you use to communicate? (Multiple responses allowed, answers expressed in percentage, N=331)

Given the increasing reliance on mobile technologies by many organizations, the survey also asked for the first time how these technologies are linked to their emergency communications capability. Findings reveal that a clear majority of organizations use mobile technologies for private messaging to staff (70%) and outbound messaging to stakeholders (58%) (Figure 7). Only 31% use it to monitor their staff during incidents.

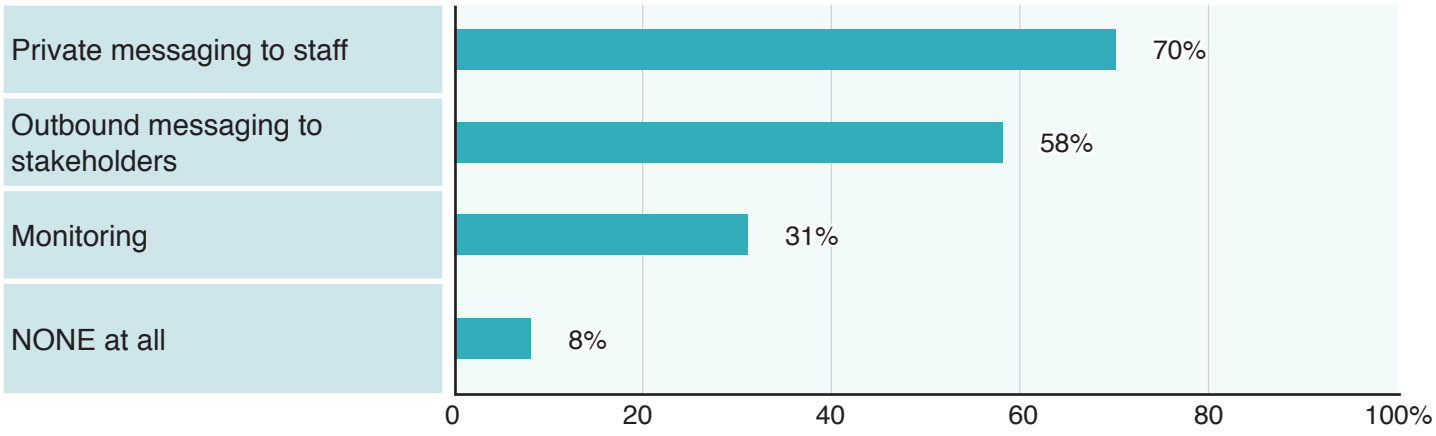


Figure 7. Question 26: What role does mobile communication play in your Emergency Communications Plan? (Multiple responses allowed, answers expressed as percentage, N=306)

From the sample, it appears that business continuity management (BCM) teams are more likely to handle or manage emergency communications (52%) for the second year running (Figure 8). A fall was observed in the percentage of organizations utilising their corporate communications (16%, down from 20%) or risk management teams (6%, down from 10%) for this purpose. Meanwhile, more organizations report that their security management teams (9%, up from 4%) handle emergency communications. These results continue to suggest the leading role of BCM in incident response with emergency communications forming part of its broad remit within organizations.

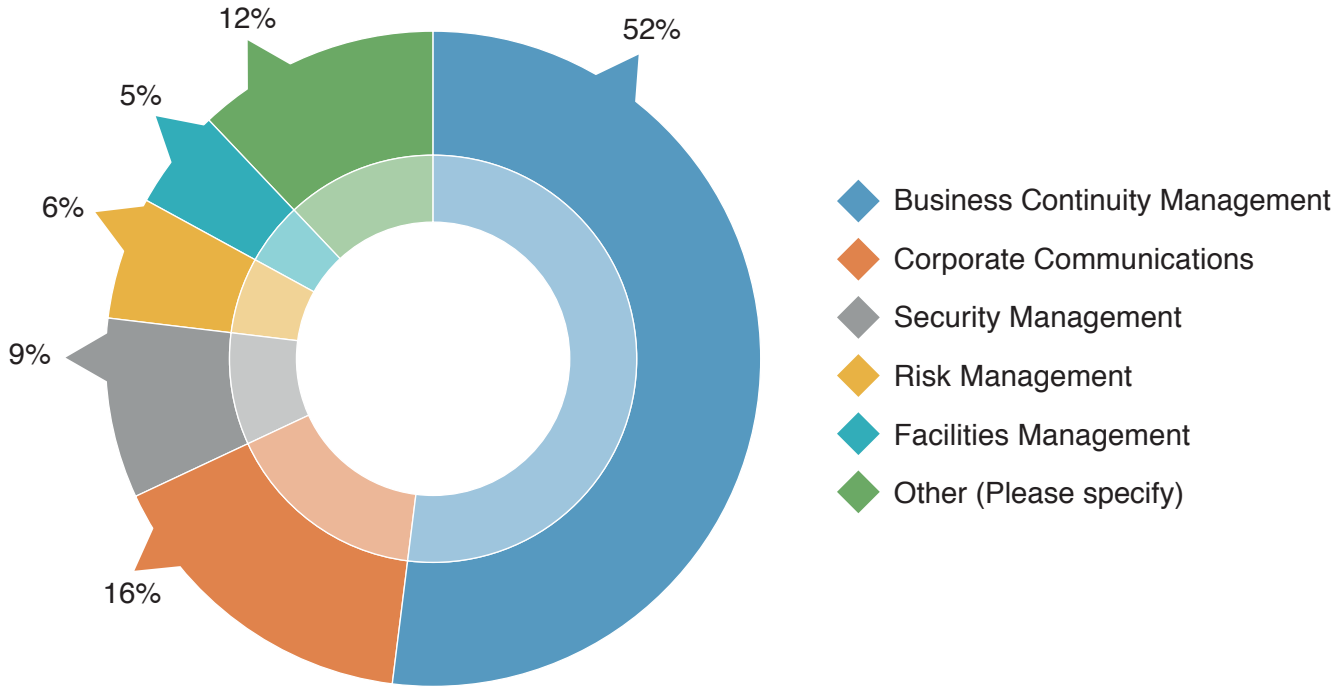


Figure 8. Question 14: Who manages the plan? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=326)

For the second year running, the findings also suggest the broad uptake of emergency communications plans within organizations (Figure 9). At least half of organizations report that their IT (68%), security (55%), human resources/HR (55%) and facilities management (50%) teams also use emergency communications plans. Corporate communications and emergency planning departments also figure as other business areas utilising emergency communications. From a resilience standpoint, this is an encouraging sign as organizations are expected to create plans that are integrated within the operations of other business areas.

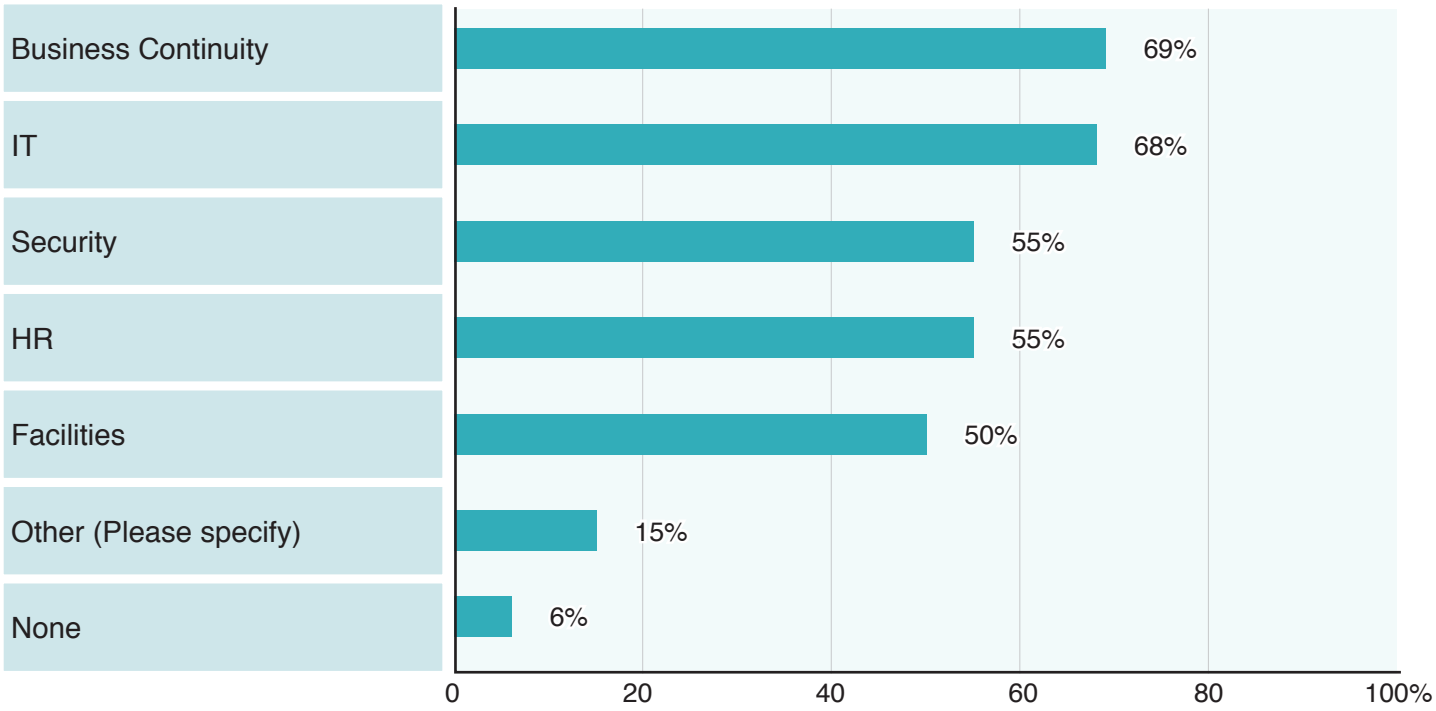


Figure 9. Question 15: What other departments utilise these processes? (Multiple responses allowed, answers expressed as percentage, N=318)

Emergency communications and staff travel

The survey also aims to explore the relationship between emergency communications uptake and staff travel. It is commonly observed that emergency communications is more likely limited to staff present in physical campuses which may have consequences in accounting for all staff during an incident. The findings suggest that almost a third (31%) of organizations have at least more than 100 staff travelling internationally (Figure 10). More than a quarter (29%) report travelling to 'high risk' countries (Figure 11). These suggest a possible point of failure in emergency communications assuming that organizations do not account for staff travel and should be reviewed in creating more robust incident response.

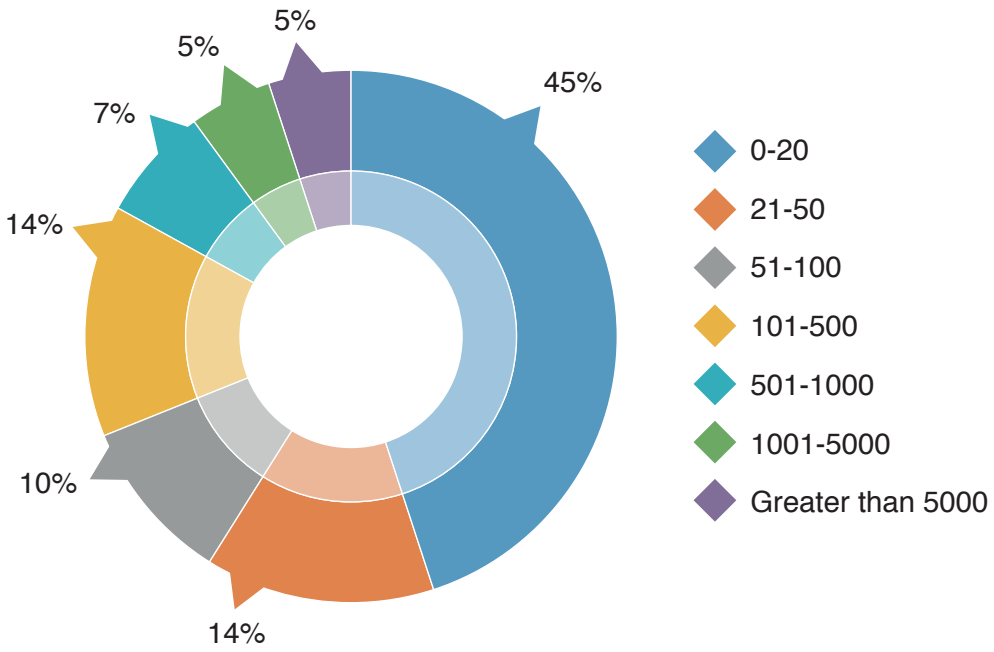


Figure 10. Question 6: How many of your staff travel internationally? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=398)

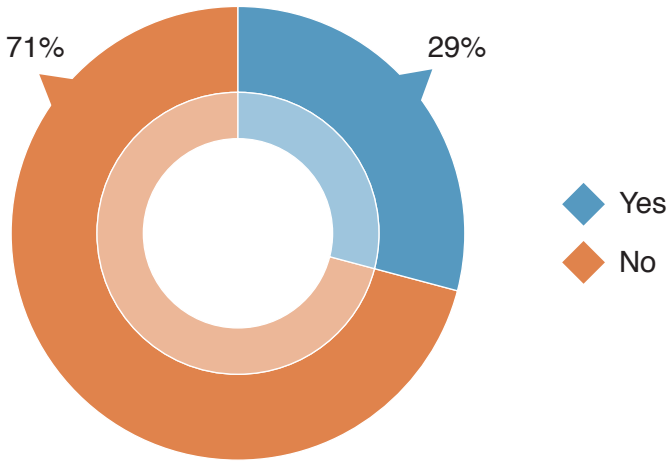


Figure 11. Question 7: Does your organization consider the countries they travel to high risk? (Answers are expressed as percentage, N=392)

Emergency communications training and education programmes

It is observed for the second year running that while the uptake of emergency communications planning is quite high, its integration in corporate training and education programmes is lower. Only 69% of organizations have training and education programmes related to emergency communications (Figure 12). More than a quarter (29%) report conducting training and education on an ad hoc basis (Figure 13). These findings reveal that emergency communications is less embedded in organizations as it seems. This is a gap that may be addressed by BC and resilience teams among organizations in future planning.

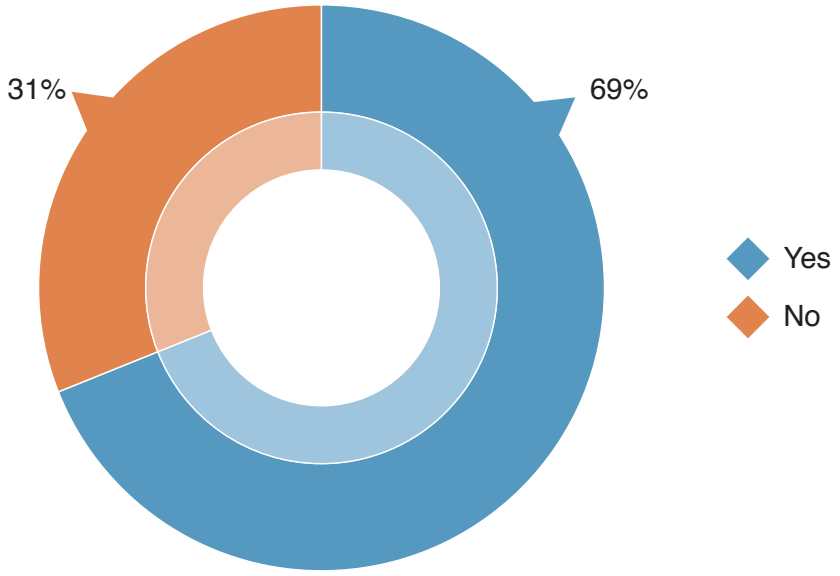


Figure 12. Question 16: Do you have any training and education programmes in place relating to Emergency Communications? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=325)

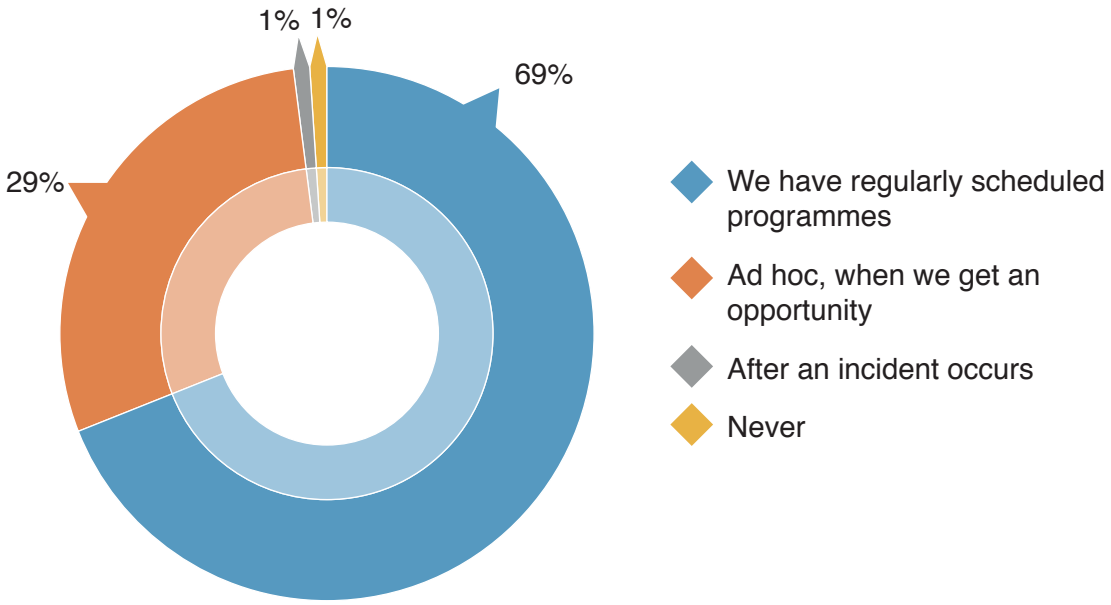


Figure 13. Question 17: If YES, how often? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=225)

Exercising emergency communications plans

The percentage of respondents reporting regular exercises of their emergency communications plans have increased from 16% to 25% this year (Figure 14). Almost half of organizations exercise their plans at least once a year (47%). It is interesting to note however that 8% DO NOT exercise their plans at all. This is a serious gap that must be addressed in industry awareness efforts.

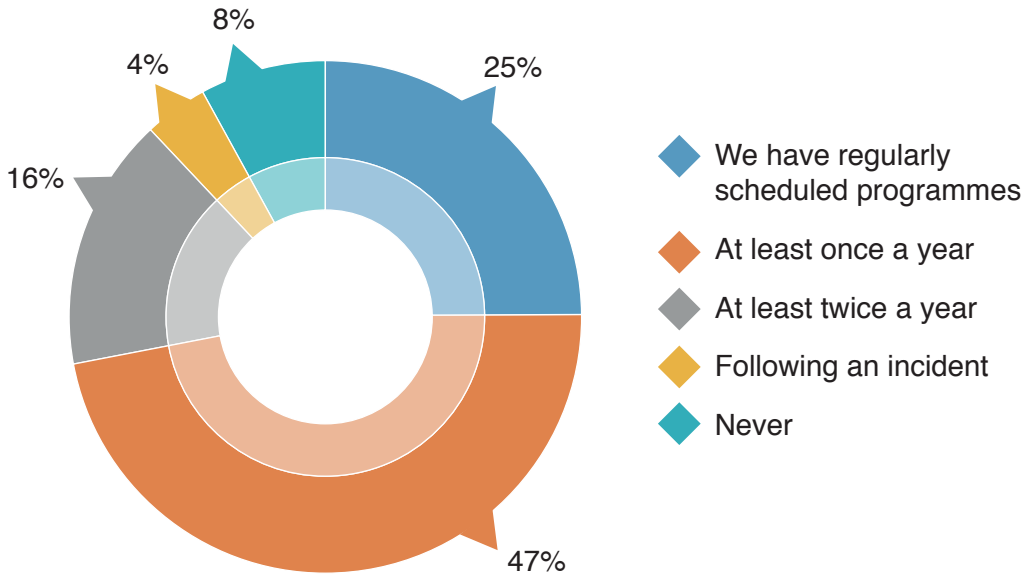


Figure 14. Question 18: How often is your Emergency Communications plan exercised? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=323)

Findings also reveal that half of organizations have activated their emergency communications plans 1-5 times in the last 12 months (Figure 15). 38% have NOT activated their plans at all while 5% utilised theirs more than 21 times.

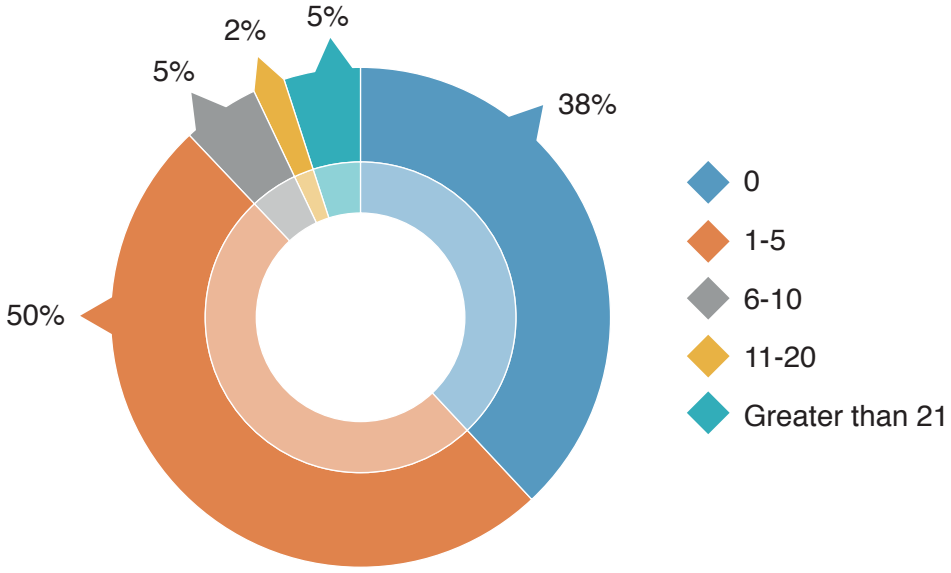


Figure 15. Question 19: Other than during an exercise, how many times in the last year have you initiated your Emergency Communications plan? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=323)

Given an incident, more than three-quarters (77%) of organizations claim activating their emergency communications plans in 30 minutes or less (Figure 16). Furthermore, 91% of organizations would have activated their plans within an hour, up from 87% last year. These are good figures but further studies may need to focus on the drivers behind the slow activation of emergency communications plans for some companies.

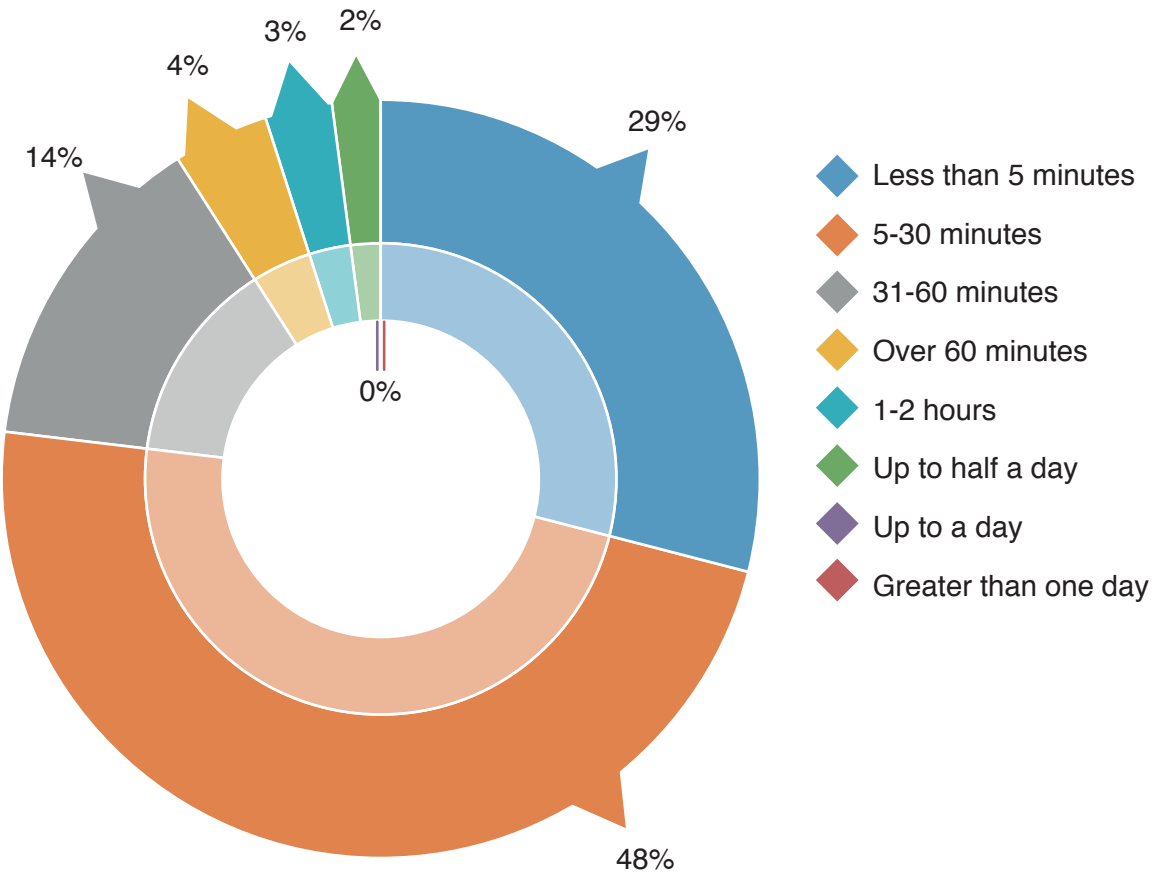


Figure 16. Question 20: On average how long does it take to activate your Emergency Communications plan? (Answers expressed as percentage, N= 313)

Almost half of organizations (44%) set accepted response rates of at least 80% once emergency communications have been activated (Figure 17). 37% of organizations report an actual response rate of at least 80% during an incident (Figure 18).

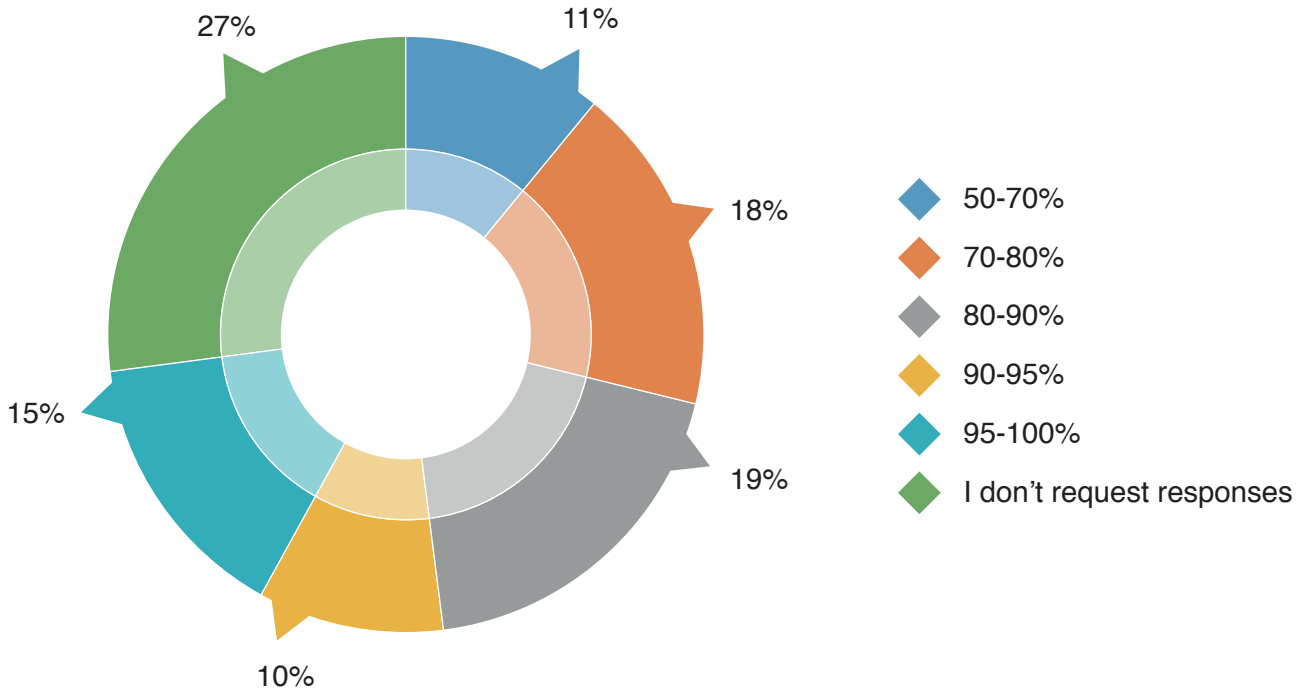


Figure 17. Question 21: What are your ACCEPTED response levels when initiating your emergency communications plan? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=307)

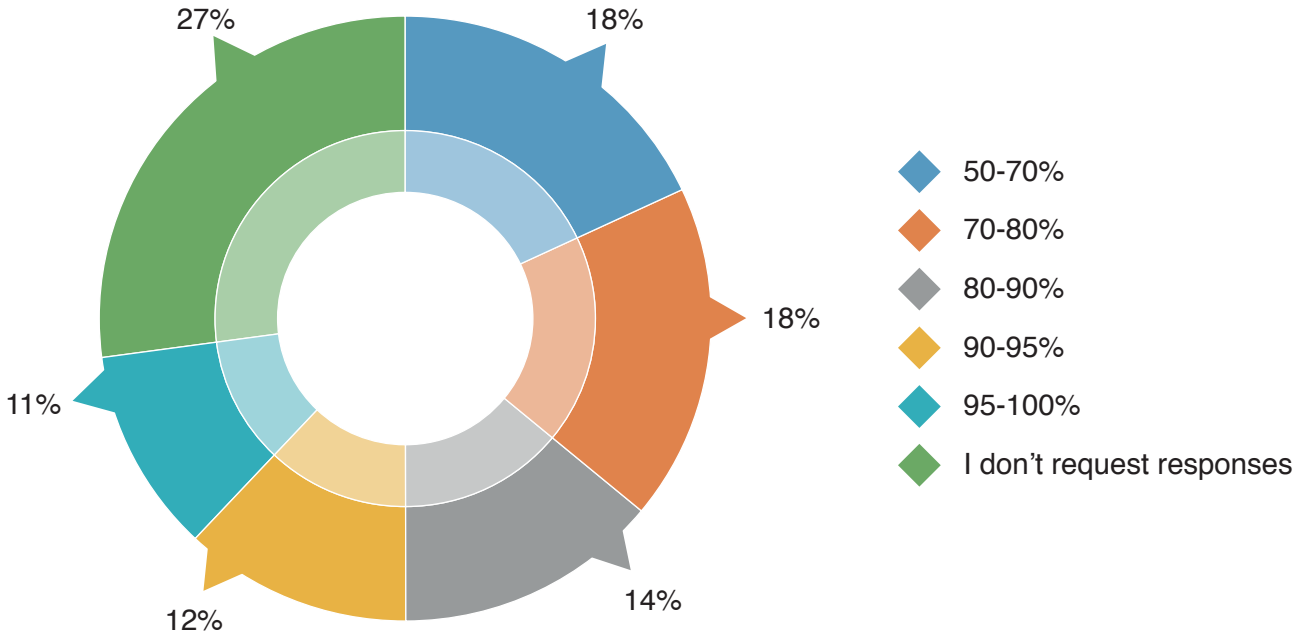


Figure 18. Question 22: What are your ACTUAL response levels when initiating your Emergency Communications plan? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=302)

118 organizations who supplied an exact value for their response rate had a median rate of about 80% with the distribution skewed towards higher values (Figure 19). This is an interesting finding as organizations with high response rates are more likely to report their figures than others. What is more concerning however is that 27% of organizations DO NOT set acceptable response levels during an incident, a figure that is unchanged from last year's. This is a serious gap in implementing emergency communications plans and must be addressed in future awareness efforts.

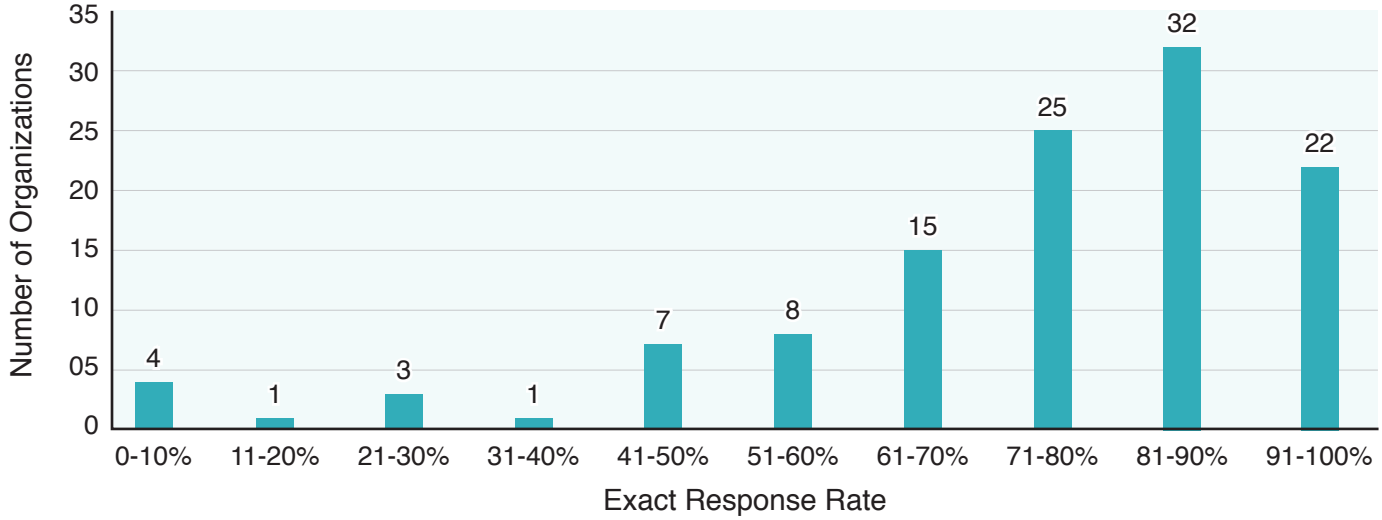


Figure 19. Question 22: What are your ACTUAL response levels when initiating your Emergency Communications plan? (Respondents supplying exact values, N=118)

Organizations report a variety of ways to encourage a response to emergency communications (Figure 20). A decline is noted in the percentage of respondents conducting internal awareness programmes from 82% to 75%. Similar declines are observed across the board except for improving message content which increased from 36% to 40%. Further studies may focus on the drivers of such decline and the barriers to encouraging response to emergency communications.

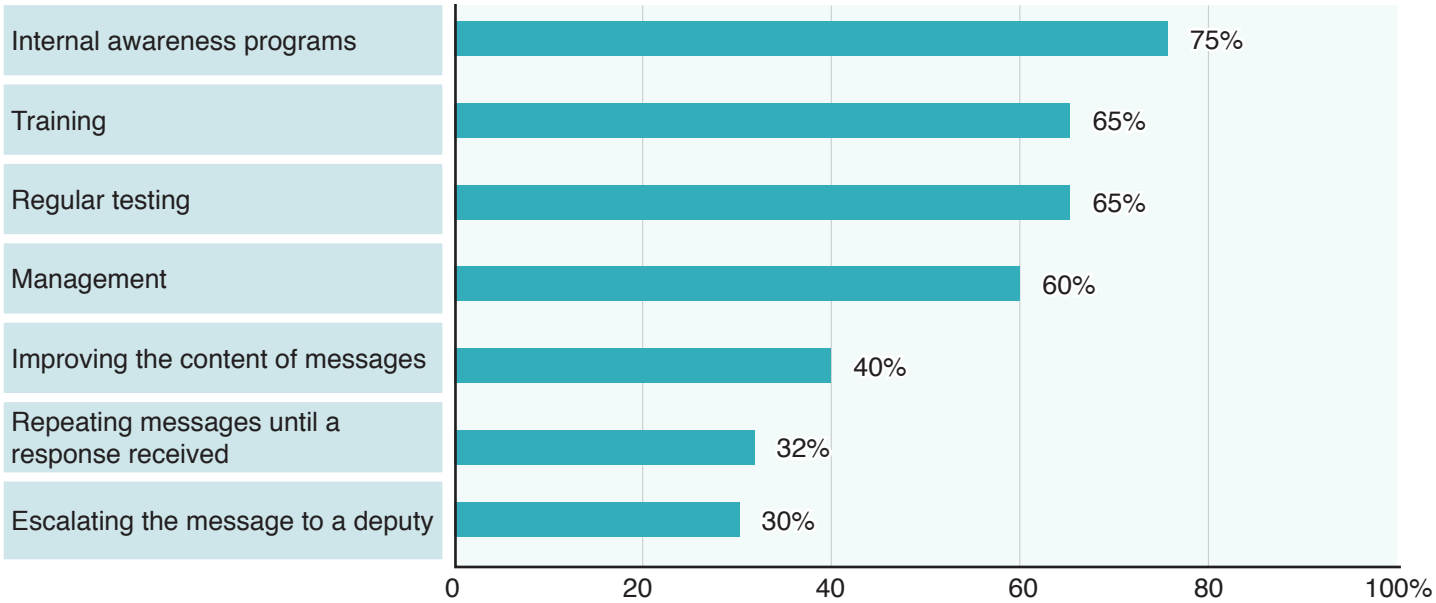


Figure 20. Question 23: How does your organization encourage responses to Emergency Communications? (Multiple responses allowed, answers expressed as percentage, N=294)

Emergency communications failure

An increase in the percentage of organizations reporting success in achieving their response rates is observed from 47% to 52% in 2015 (Figure 21). It coincides with a slight fall in organizations NOT achieving target response rates from 13% to 10%. Nonetheless, it is noted that 26% have NOT defined acceptable response rates which reveals a continuing gap in the capacity of organizations to conduct effective emergency communications. This is a key area of improvement which should be the focus of future planning efforts

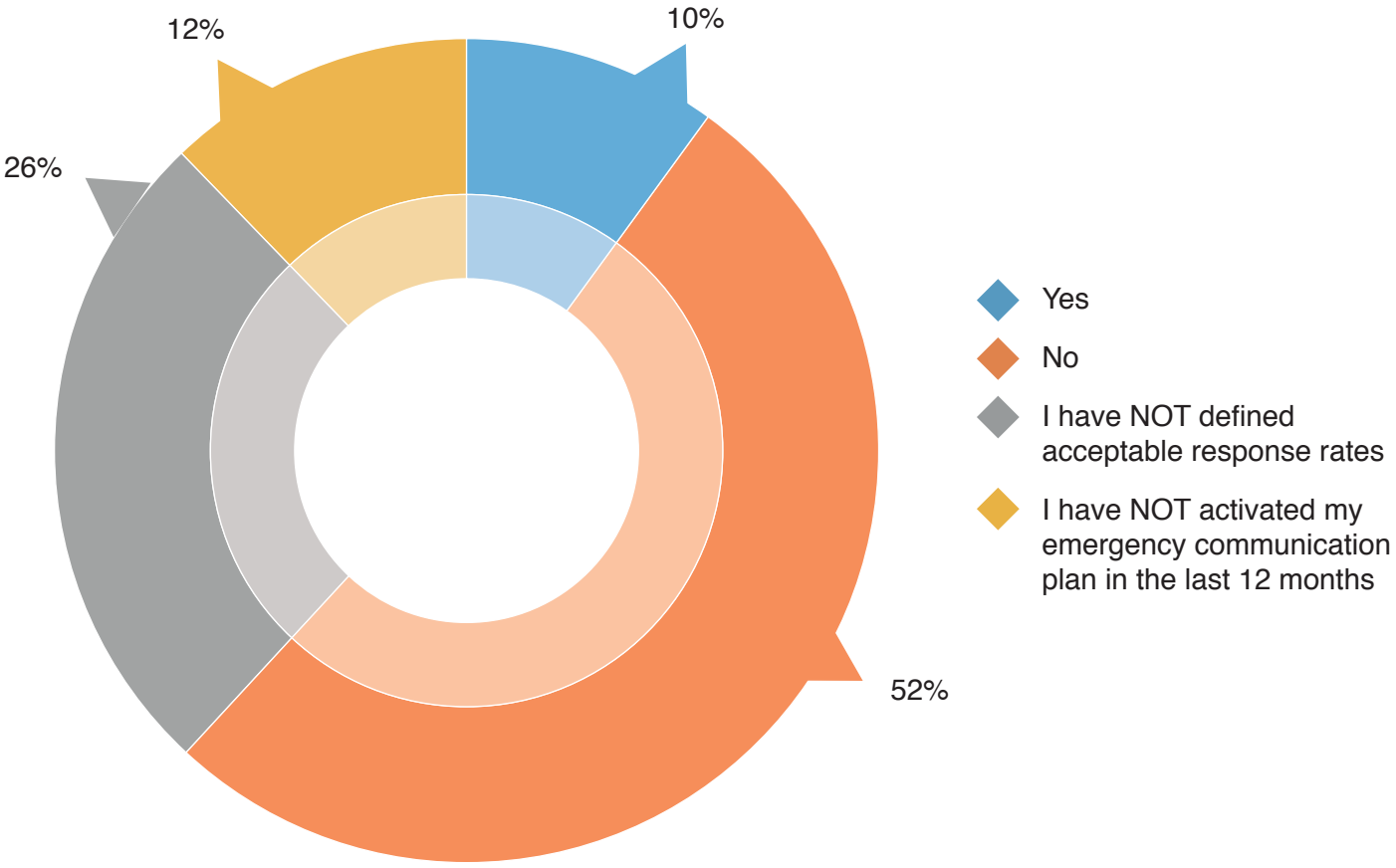


Figure 21. Question 24: Has your organization failed to achieve accepted response rates during a communications activation in the last 12 months? (Answers expressed as percentage, N=302)

From organizations who failed to achieve their response rates, almost half of them (47%) cite the lack of understanding from recipients as the primary cause of emergency communications failure (Figure 22). Lack of accurate staff information (40%), failure of manual processes and poor implementation (both at 27%) round out the top three causes of failure. Given that almost a third of respondents DO NOT have existing training and education programmes related to emergency communications, these causes of failure might be remedied by implementing such in organizations moving forward.

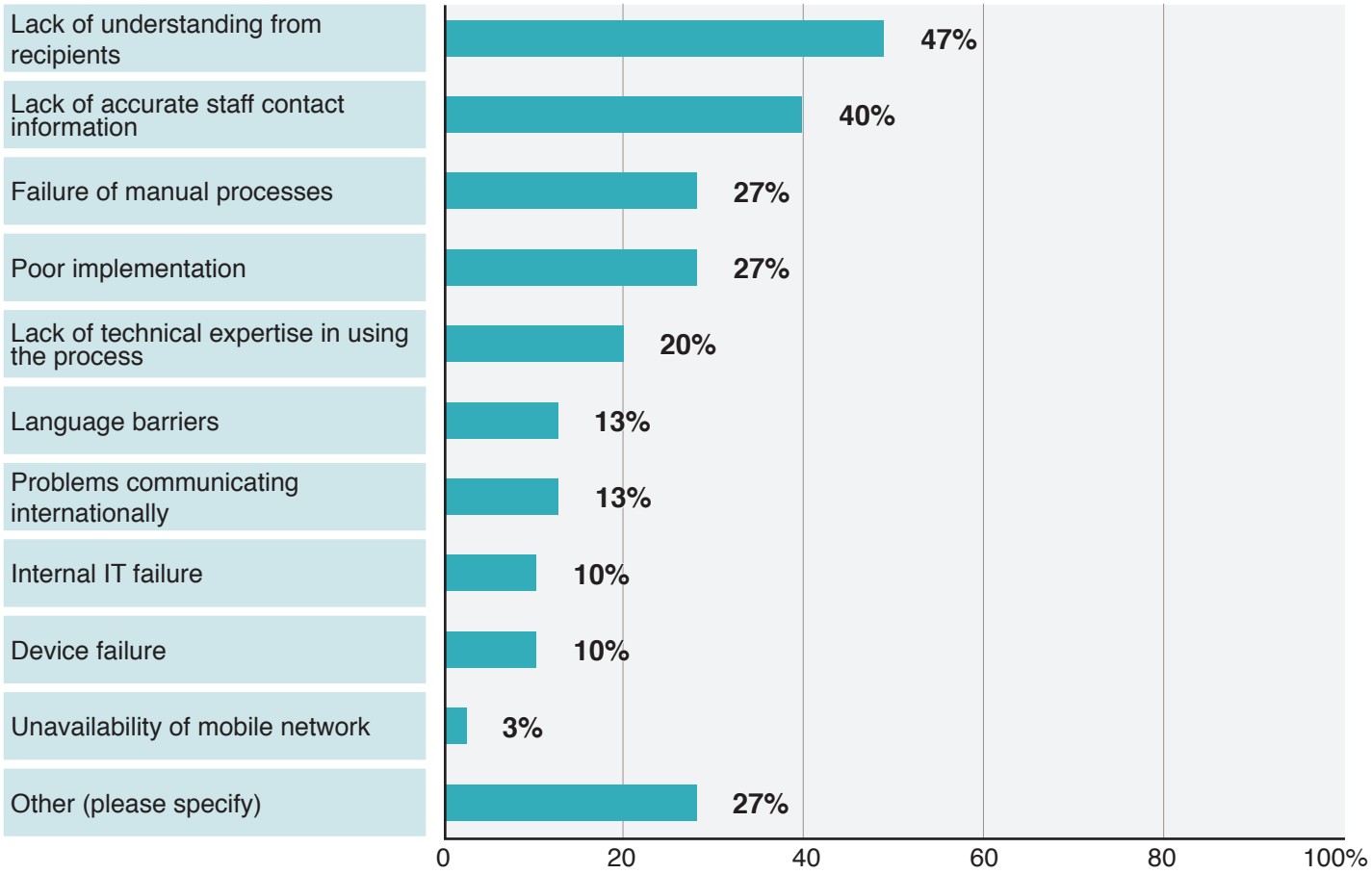


Figure 22. Question 25: If YES, what caused the failure? (Multiple responses allowed, answers expressed as percentage, N=30)

3 | Conclusion

Conclusion

On its second year, the BCI Emergency Communications Report in association with Everbridge has examined the emergency communications arrangements deployed by organizations around the world. It has also looked at the drivers behind the activation of emergency communications and the barriers to its uptake. Benchmarking studies such as this report is an excellent starting point towards assessing the overall response capacity of organizations during incidents. The following are some of the key insights uncovered in this year's research.

1 Top management buy in and integration among different functional roles contribute to the successful embedding of emergency communications capability.

To this end, BC and resilience practitioners can articulate the strategic importance of emergency communications in safeguarding the life and wellbeing of staff and stakeholders during incidents. Emergency communications, like other protective operational functions, must be integrated to an overall resilience strategy which is driven by leadership.

2 Mobile communications are increasingly used by organizations as part of their emergency communications arrangements.

As with any other technology, mobile communications should complement existing good practice and validation. It is essential to see mobile communications as part of a 'tool box' that BC and resilience practitioners can deploy as relevant during incidents.

3 Organizations must focus on encouraging responses to emergency communications.

An Everbridge study reveals that individuals are more likely to respond when organizations use multiple message paths during an incident[10]. This is especially important during incidents which may affect the life and wellbeing of staff and stakeholders.

4 Defining acceptable response rates to emergency communications is crucial in monitoring its activation.

From a practical perspective, it provides a crucial baseline which helps in accounting for staff and stakeholders during an incident. This is an easy first step towards improving an organization's emergency communications capability.

5 Education and training programmes in emergency communications must be implemented as part of an overall holistic approach to continuity and resilience.

Focus on good practice, embedding continuity and resilience across business functions, and validating plans and chosen methodology are essential towards this end. As such, emergency communications requires the input of various 'protective disciplines' such as BC, risk

10. Everbridge, 2014. Measuring Critical Communications Effectiveness: An Analysis of Private Sector Broadcast Confirmation Data. Retrieved from: http://go.everbridge.com/rs/everbridge/images/MeasuringCriticalCommunicationEffectivenessWP.docx.pdf [Accessed 19 October 2015]. Glendale, CA: Everbridge.

management, emergency planning, health and safety, physical security, among others, in order to ensure the broadest uptake and relevance across the organization.

Resilience is built from cross-functional, interdisciplinary collaboration during times of crises. Effective emergency communication demonstrates such and increases an organization's continuity and adaptive capacity. More importantly, emergency communications saves lives and is an extension of an organization's duty of care towards their staff and stakeholders. It is therefore essential for decision makers to engage with benchmarking studies like these and aspire for a robust emergency communications capability moving forward.

Acknowledgements

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About the BCI

Founded in 1994 with the aim of promoting a more resilient world, the Business Continuity Institute (BCI) has established itself as the world's leading Institute for business continuity and resilience. The BCI has become the membership and certifying organization of choice for business continuity and resilience professionals globally with over 8,000 members in more than 100 countries, working in an estimated 3,000 organizations in the private, public and third sectors.

The vast experience of the Institute's broad membership and partner network is built into its world class education, continuing professional development and networking activities. Every year, more than 1,500 people choose BCI training, with options ranging from short awareness raising tools to a full academic qualification, available online and in a classroom. The Institute stands for excellence in the resilience profession and it's globally recognised Certified grades provide assurance of technical and professional competency. The BCI offers a wide range of resources for professionals seeking to raise their organization's level of resilience, and its extensive thought leadership and research programme helps drive the industry forward. With approximately 120 Partners worldwide, the BCI Partnership offers organizations the opportunity to work with the BCI in promoting best practice in business continuity and resilience.

The BCI welcomes everyone with an interest in building resilient organizations from newcomers, experienced professionals and organizations. Further information about the BCI is available at www.thebci.org.

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About Everbridge

Everbridge is the leading global provider of SaaS-based unified critical communications solutions. During mission-critical business events or manmade or natural disasters, customers rely on Everbridge to quickly and reliably deliver the right message and reach the right people, on the right device, at the right time to more than 100 different communication devices, in over 200 countries and territories, in multiple languages – all simultaneously.

Our SaaS-based unified critical communications platform is built on a secure, scalable and reliable infrastructure that was originally designed to support emergency notifications, primarily focused on delivering communications to very large groups (100,000+) of people at the same time to keep them informed before, during and after emergencies. The expertise that we garnered developing this solution for emergencies led us to leverage our Unified Critical Communications Platform to offer a full suite of enterprise-scale applications that enable our customers to deliver contextually relevant communications during a wide range of critical situations, whether to a broad audience or to a targeted subset of individuals, globally or locally, and accounting for cultural, linguistic, regulatory and technological differences.

Since 2002, Everbridge has been there for over 2,500 corporations and communities as a trusted partner to assure and simplify the exchange critical information. We provide an intelligent and globally scalable communication platform that empowers individuals and organizations to take timely action to prioritize safety, safeguard resources and optimize business operations.

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