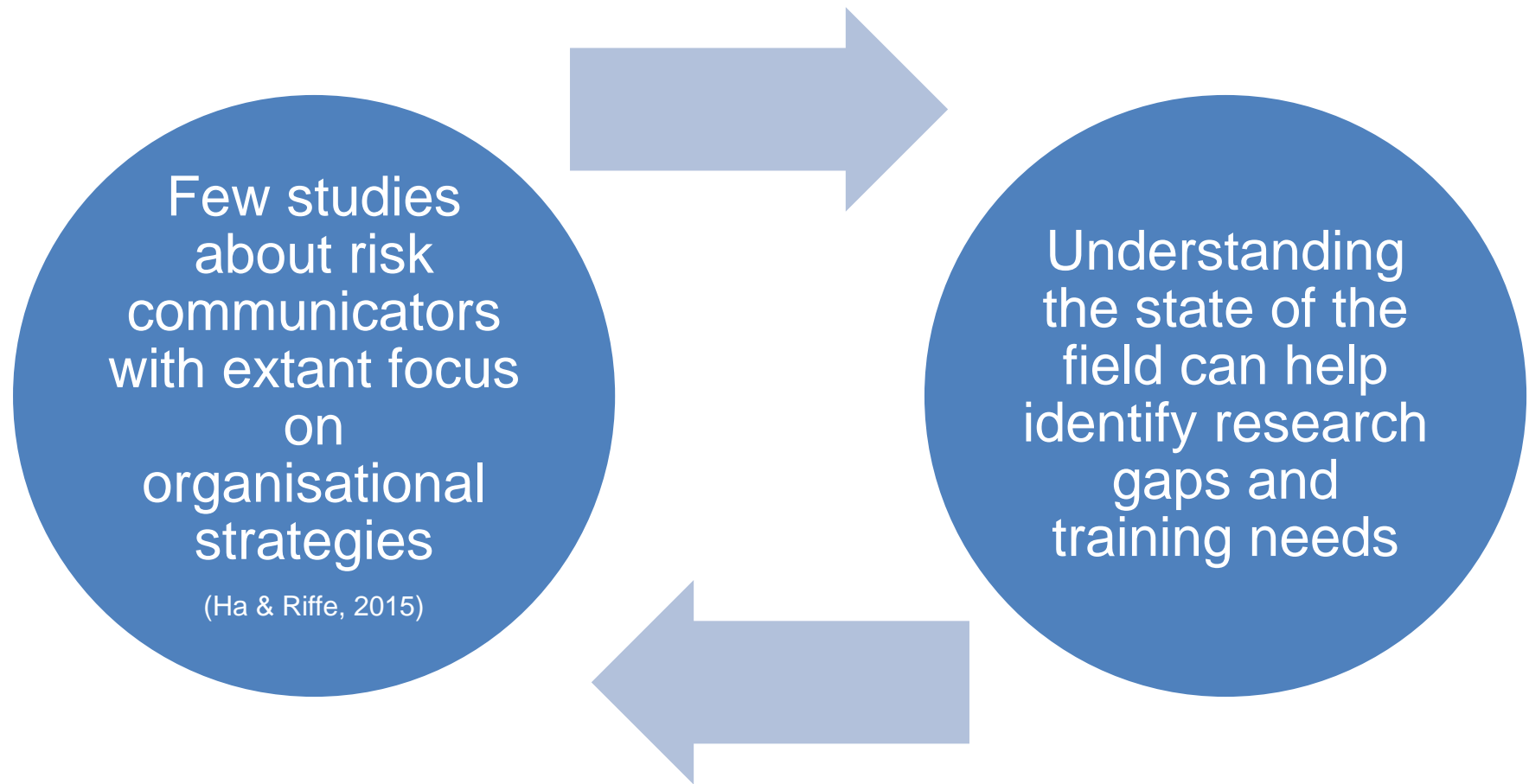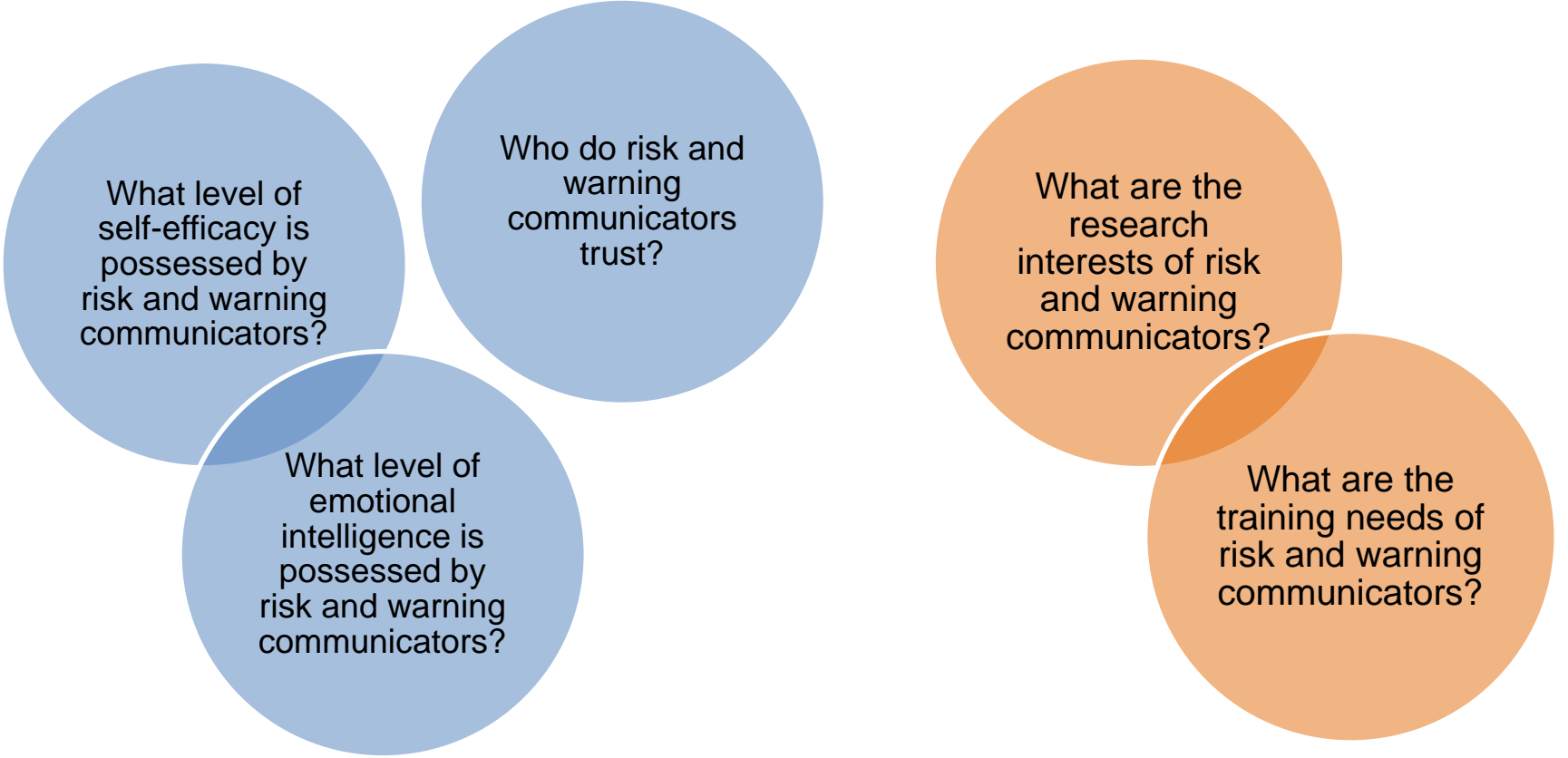# Perspectives from the trenches: How Australian risk communicators see themselves, who they trust, and what they need from research

Amisha Mehta, Brooke Liu and Lisa Tam

Project motivation

Few studies about risk communicators with extant focus on organisational strategies

(Ha & Riffe, 2015)

Understanding the state of the field can help identify research gaps and training needs

Research questions

What level of self-efficacy is possessed by risk and warning communicators?

Who do risk and warning communicators trust?

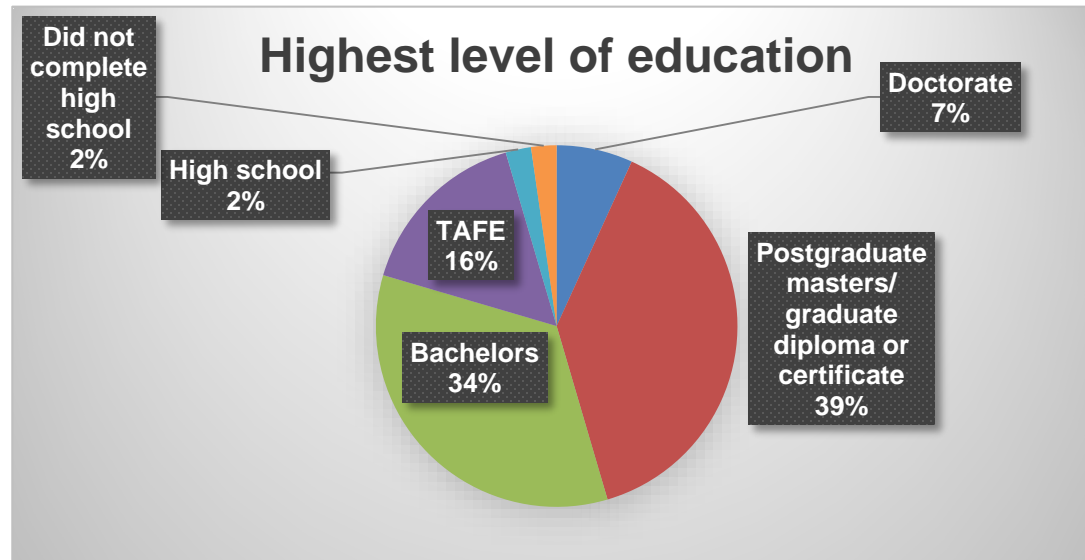What level of emotional intelligence is possessed by risk and warning communicators?

What are the research interests of risk and warning communicators?

What are the training needs of risk and warning communicators?

Methods

- Online survey
- Distributed to participants of risk and warning communication workshops in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne and to contacts

- Invited 128 participants and 44 completed the survey

- Sample comprised people with communication and operational backgrounds
- Even split between male and female genders

Sample characteristics

Age

- 18-24 years 2%
- 25-34 years 30%
- 35-44 years 34%
- 45-54 years 18%
- 55-64 years 11%
- 65 years or older 5%

Years of Experiences in Role

Category	Value
1-5 years	26
6-10 years	10
11-15 years	4
16-20 years	3
21 years or above	1

Highest level of education

- Did not complete high school 2%
- High school 2%
- TAFE 16%
- Bachelors 34%
- Postgraduate masters/ graduate diploma or certificate 39%
- Doctorate 7%
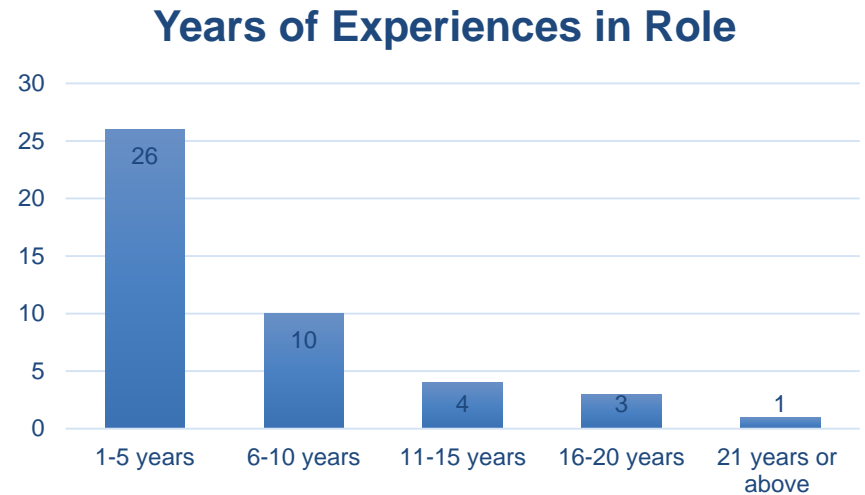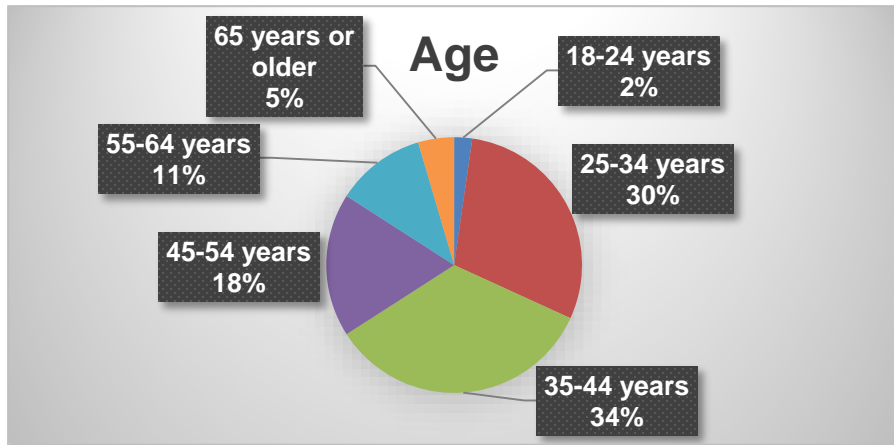
Primary organisations

Organisational type	% of sample
State or Territory Government	68%
Federal Government	12%
Local Government	7%
Government owned corporation	3%
Business	2%
Media	2%
Emergency service	2%
Statutory authority	2%

Findings

Trust

Emotional intelligence

Self-efficacy

Trust

|	Expertise in competent judgement	Useful source	Doing what is right	Telling the truth
POLITICIANS	2.67	2.9	3.14	2.9
CORPORATIONS OR BUSINESES	2.89	2.79	3.04	3
MEDIA	2.86	3.84	2.76	2.86
INSURERS	3.33	3.25	2.75	3.33
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS	3.17	3.31	3.97	3.71
COMMUNITY	2.92	4.03	3.97	3.63
GOVERNMENT CORPORATE	3.6	3.75	3.8	3.85
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT	4.24	4.12	4.24	4.29
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	4.05	4.32	4.46	4.27
STATE GOVERNMENT	4.34	4.45	4.53	4.37

Emotional intelligence

- EI is a set of interrelated abilities "to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10)
  - Operationalised as appraisal of own emotions, appraisal of others' emotions, regulation of emotion, use of emotion (Wong & Law, 2002)

- Central to leader effectiveness

- Studied in relation to work outcomes like satisfaction, commitment, and intention

Findings—Emotional Intelligence
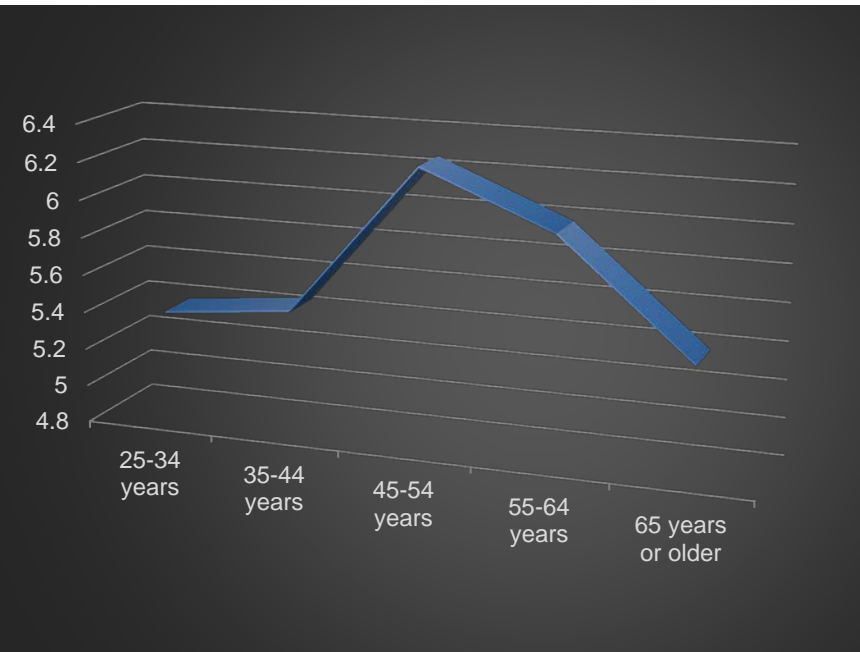
- Women had greater EI than men ($F_{(1,42)}=4.52$, $p=.039$) (mean for male= 5.4261 vs. mean for female= 5.8835)

- Positive association between age and EI ($F_{(4,38)}=2.75$, $p=.042$).

Self-efficacy + findings

- Defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands" (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 408)
  - Studied using Chen et al.'s (2001) general self efficacy scale

- Women have higher self-efficacy than men ($F_{(1,42)}=7.308$, p=.010) (mean for male = 5.585 vs. mean for female = 6.074)

- Linear regression found positive association between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy ($F_{(1,42)}=30.924$, p=.000) with an R square of .424.

Research interests

- Message
  - Effectiveness, timing, tailoring, visuals
  - Evaluation
  - Communicating for behaviour change
- Community
  - Expectations, education needs, engagement, differences
- Social media
  - Validating, tailoring

Training needs

- Message
  - Effectiveness, message construction and targeting
  - Case studies of good and bad practice
  - To achieve certain outcomes: evacuation, preparedness
- Social media
  - Role of and emerging trends
  - How to maximise via targeting
- Community
  - Understanding audiences and decision-making and human factors (e.g. stress)
  - Understanding motivations for community
  - How to engage vulnerable and CALD communities
- Strategic development
  - Systems to avoid crisis
  - Managing and/or working with stakeholders (e.g. volunteers, media, government)