



# EmerGent

Attitudes towards the use of social media by emergency services and citizens: initial findings from the FP7 EmerGent project

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# The EmerGent project

- Emergency Management in Social Media Generation (EmerGent) is a FP7 project funded by the EU
- It aims to understand the positive and the negative impacts of social media in emergencies in order to:
  - (1) enhance objective and perceived safety and security of citizens in emergencies
  - (2) strengthen the role of European companies supplying relevant services and products
- It will develop:
  - guidelines for the use of social media by emergency services and citizens
  - tools to synthesise social media data for emergency services
  - an App for citizens to share information with emergency services during an emergency

# Surveys of Emergency Staff and citizens

- Online survey of 696 emergency service staff across 27 countries (in Sept/Oct 2014)
- Online survey of citizens – 849 responses by mid-March 2015 (**ongoing**)
- Use of mainly closed questions to maximise response and generate statistical data
- Opportunity samples (not representative) – provide indicative findings

# Characteristics of ES survey participants

- Largest number from Germany (223), Slovenia (130), Poland (109) and Denmark (65)
- Majority male (92%)
- Mixture of age groups – largest group aged 30-39 years old (29%)
- Majority working for Fire Departments (44%), Volunteer Fire Brigades (25%) or German ‘Technisches Hilfswerk’ (21%)
- Mixture of junior and more senior/supervisory level staff

# Attitude towards SM factor

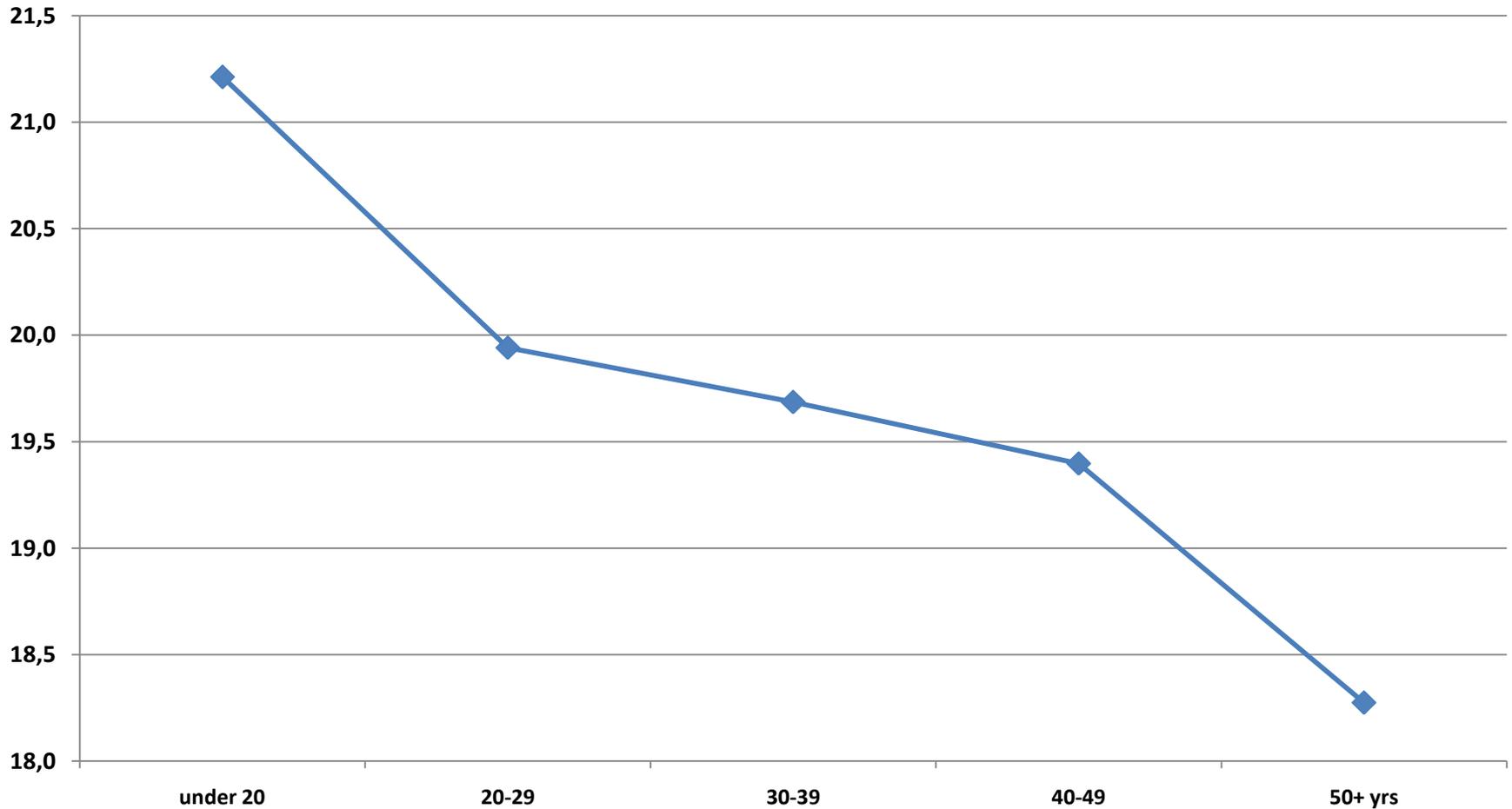
- Based on 8 questionnaire items (Likert scale); for example:
  - In my private life I use SM very often
  - Information provided on social media during an emergency is often not reliable
  - Most of my friends use SM to keep in touch
  - Emergency services are too busy to use social media
- Max=40 (Positive attitude) – Min=5 (Negative attitude)

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# Attitudes towards Social Media

- Young ES staff were more positive towards using social media than older staff members

# Attitude towards SM depending on age



# Attitudes towards Social Media

- Young ES staff were more positive towards using social media than older staff members
- Female ES staff displayed more positive attitudes towards social media than their male counterparts
- ES staff in countries with high levels of social media use were, on average, more positive towards using social media

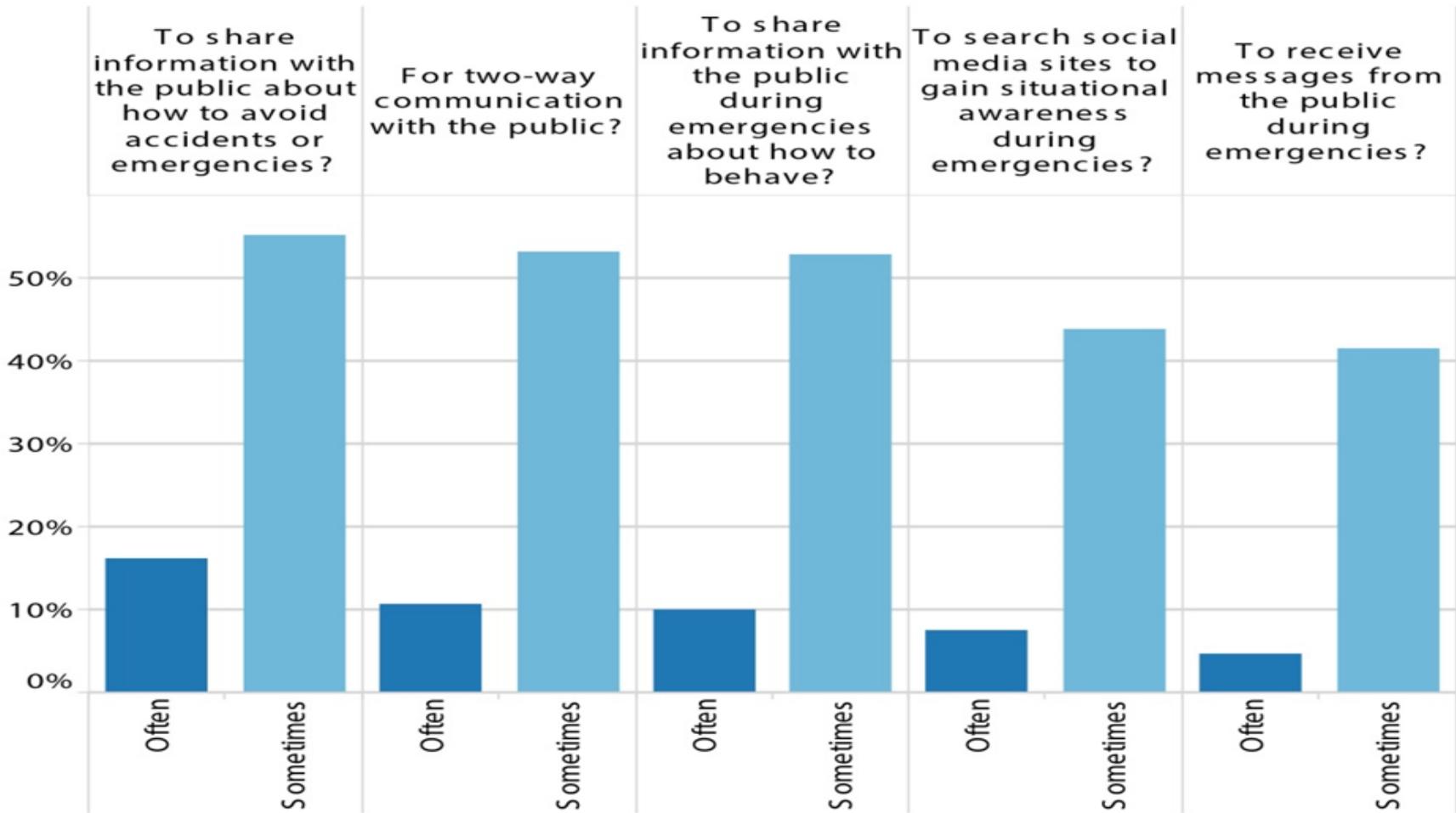
# Positive attitude toward SM

*“Social media are a valuable part in emergency organization [...] because they are quite useful to deliver information to the population as well as providing a wider scope of the situation. It should be a must to count on this channel because it helps to save lives and it is a very valuable tool in civil protection ... “*

# More negative attitude toward SM

*“Emergency Services must be very careful about using information received on social media during emergencies” Because: “Information may be inaccurate and may not be providing a sufficient overview of what is actually happening”.*

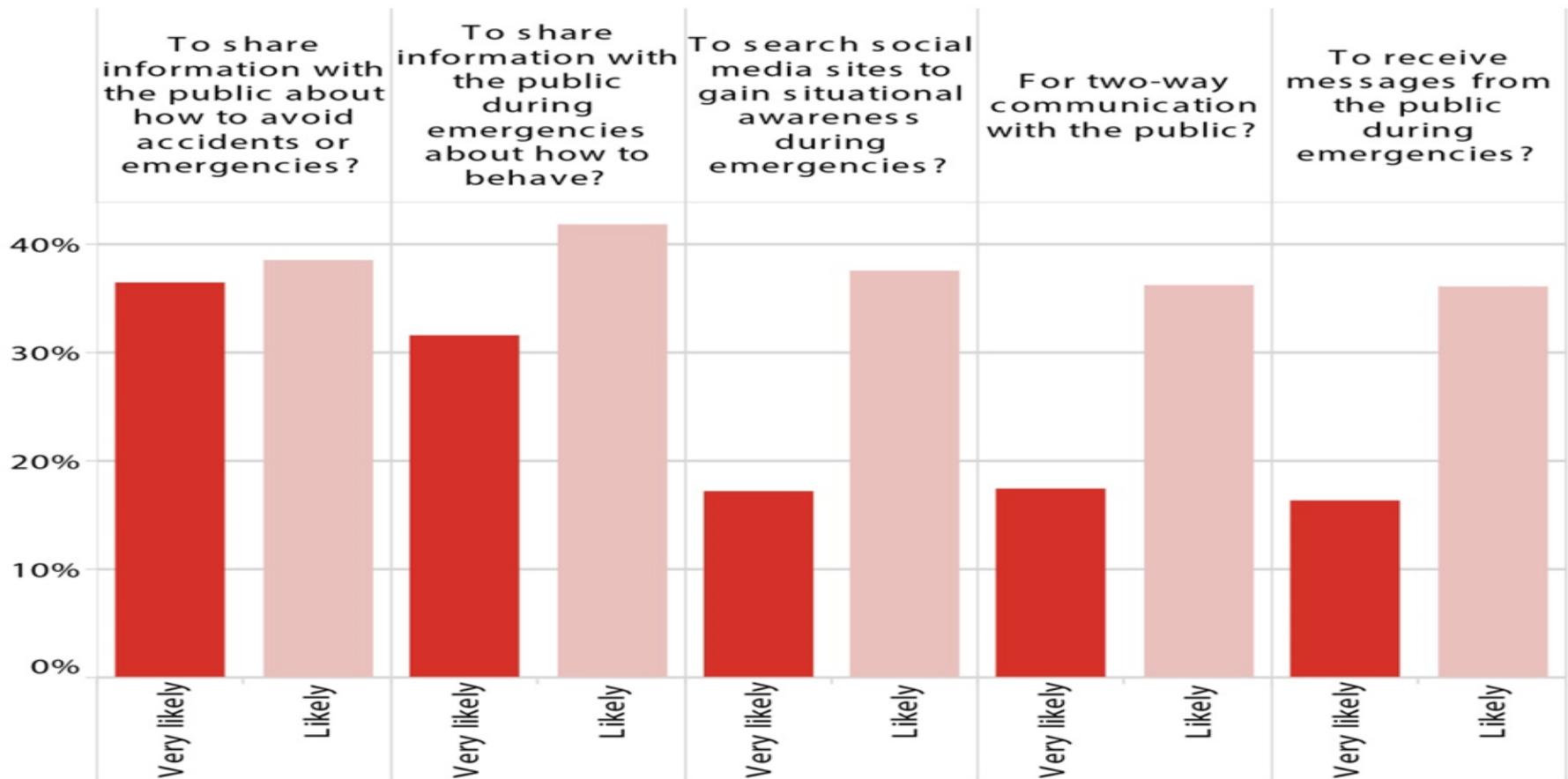
# How frequently does your organisation currently use social media?



# Main factors associated with use

- The main factors seen as enabling the use of social media by Emergency Services are seen to be staff skills (77% saw this as important or very important) and having an organizational culture open to the use of such information (79%).
- The factors which were deemed to be less important were 'funding for staff time' (18% thought this was 'very important'), the availability of equipment (24%) or software (23%) to access the data.
- Older staff (aged 30 to 49) were significantly more likely to see staff skills as important than younger staff (aged 29 or below)

# Do you expect your organisation to increase its use of SM in future?



# Characteristics of citizen survey participants

- About two-thirds (64%) aged 21-39
- About half male (51%) and female (48%)
- Most responses from Poland (244), Slovenia (169), UK (126), Germany (125), and Italy (50)
- 21% work or volunteer for an emergency service
- 13% do not use a mobile/smartphone – 30% of 50+s

# Use of, and attitudes towards using, social media (SM) in emergencies

- Young people use SM significantly more
- But there is no difference by age with regard to attitudes towards using SM in emergencies
- Women use SM significantly more than men and also have a slightly more positive attitudes towards using SM in emergencies
- Those working for an ES use SM significantly more often – but there is no difference in attitude towards using SM in emergencies

# Using SM to find out info

- 47% of participants have used SM **to find out information** during an emergency (n=397) and 50% thought they would do so again in future
- **Most** found out about: weather warnings (78%), road or traffic conditions (68%), damage caused by the event (65%), or to see eyewitness photos or videos (64%)
- **Least** used it to look for: information about how others are coping (37%), the location/status of friends/family (35%) and what to do to keep safe (34%)

# Using SM to share info

- 34% have used SM **to share information** re. an emergency (=285 participants) – 52% thought they would do so in future
- **Most likely** to share: weather warnings (65%), road or traffic conditions (63%) or a photo (54%)
- **Least likely** to share: a video (24%), their location (22%), that they were safe (18%), what actions they were taking to stay safe (14%)
- **Otherwise** they shared: their feeling or emotions about what happened (38%), an eyewitness description (28%), advice about what others should do to stay safe (27%)

# Conclusions

- There is a significant difference in attitudes towards SM among different groups of citizens and ES staff
- Most ES already use SM in some way – but it is not yet embedded in practice
- Currently, it is most of often used **by ES** to share information and **by citizens** to find out information
- There is an apparent gap though still in ES using citizen-generated SM data for situational awareness purposes
- However – the survey evidence suggests that this and other uses of SM are likely to increase in future.

# Further information

- To get further information on the surveys, please contact: Thomas Spielhofer ([t.spielhofer@tavinstitute.org](mailto:t.spielhofer@tavinstitute.org)) or Christian Reuter ([Christian.Reuter@uni-siegen.de](mailto:Christian.Reuter@uni-siegen.de)).
- For further details on the EmerGent project, please contact Therese Friberg, ([friberg@cik.uni-paderborn.de](mailto:friberg@cik.uni-paderborn.de))
- Or see: [www.fp7-emergent.eu](http://www.fp7-emergent.eu)

# Links to citizen survey

- [ow.ly/KcED6](https://ow.ly/KcED6) (English survey)
- [bit.ly/1GnUUS2](https://bit.ly/1GnUUS2) (Link to surveys in other languages: Slovenian, Polish, German and Italian)