

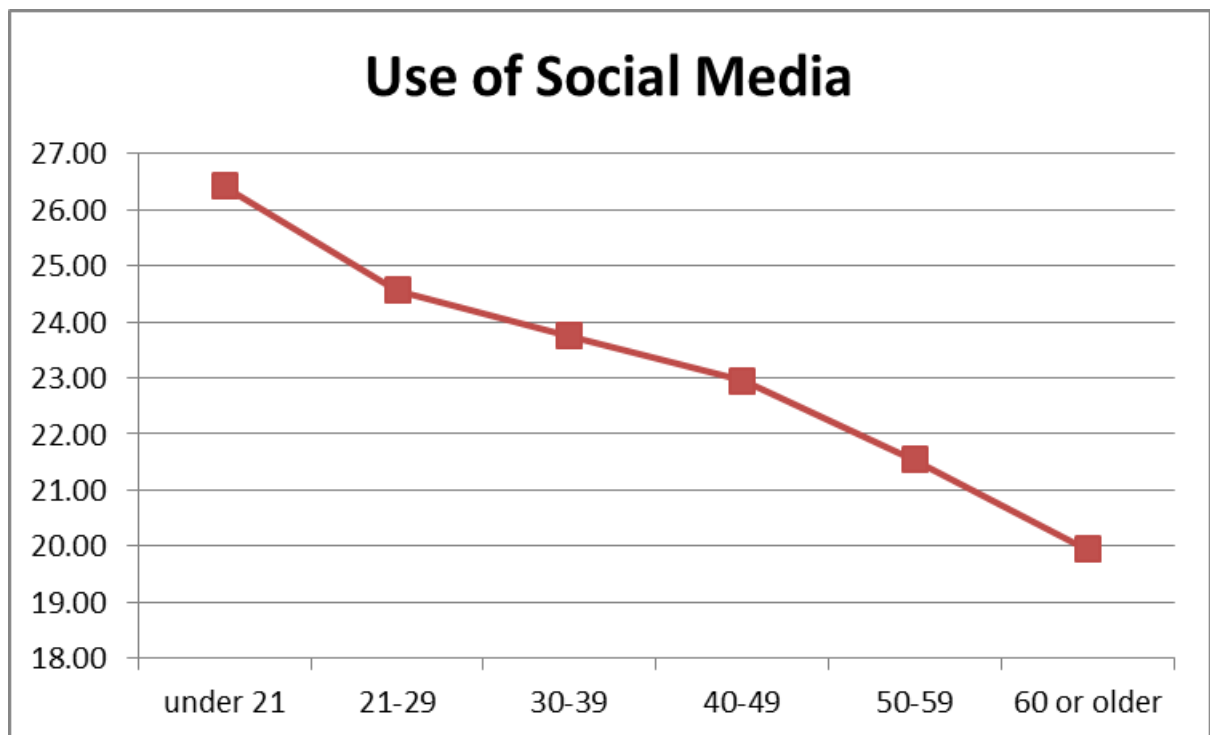
EUROPEAN SURVEY OF CITIZENS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA

Summary Report

This is a summary report of the findings from a survey of 1034 citizens (including 195 working or volunteering for an emergency service – excluded from the main analysis) across Europe conducted between February and June 2015. The main aims of the survey were to explore citizens' attitudes towards the use of social media for private use and in emergency situations. It was conducted as part of the Emergency Management in Social Media Generation (EmerGent) study (<http://www.fp7-emergent.eu/>).

Key findings

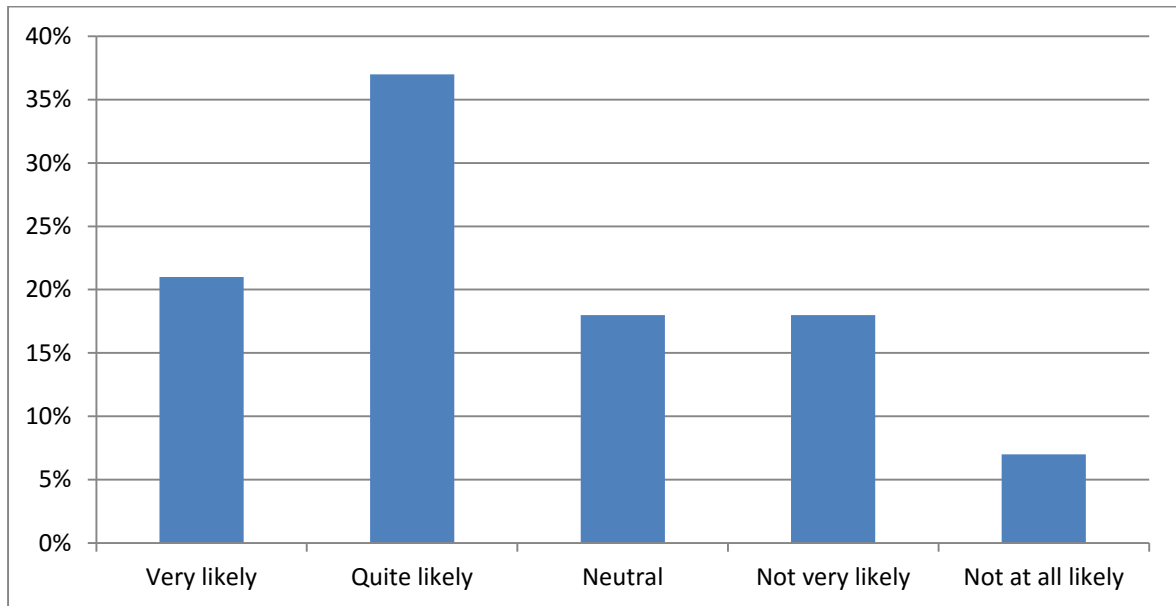
- There are significant differences in the general use of social media among different groups of citizens – young people, women and those working for emergency services are for more likely to use it than other citizens
- Overall, 13% of citizens currently do not use a smartphone – this rises to 29% of those aged 50 or above
- Figure 1 below shows that on a scale of 7-35 (combining 7 related questionnaire items each with a scale of 1 to 5), the level of social media use decreased with the age of participants in an almost linear fashion



- Women displayed a significantly more positive attitude towards the use of social media by emergency services during emergencies – similarly, citizens with children under the age of 18 had a more positive attitude towards this
- Around a quarter (27%) of citizens have used social media in the past **to share** information during an emergency, although women were significantly more likely to have done so (one in three) than men (only one in five had done so)

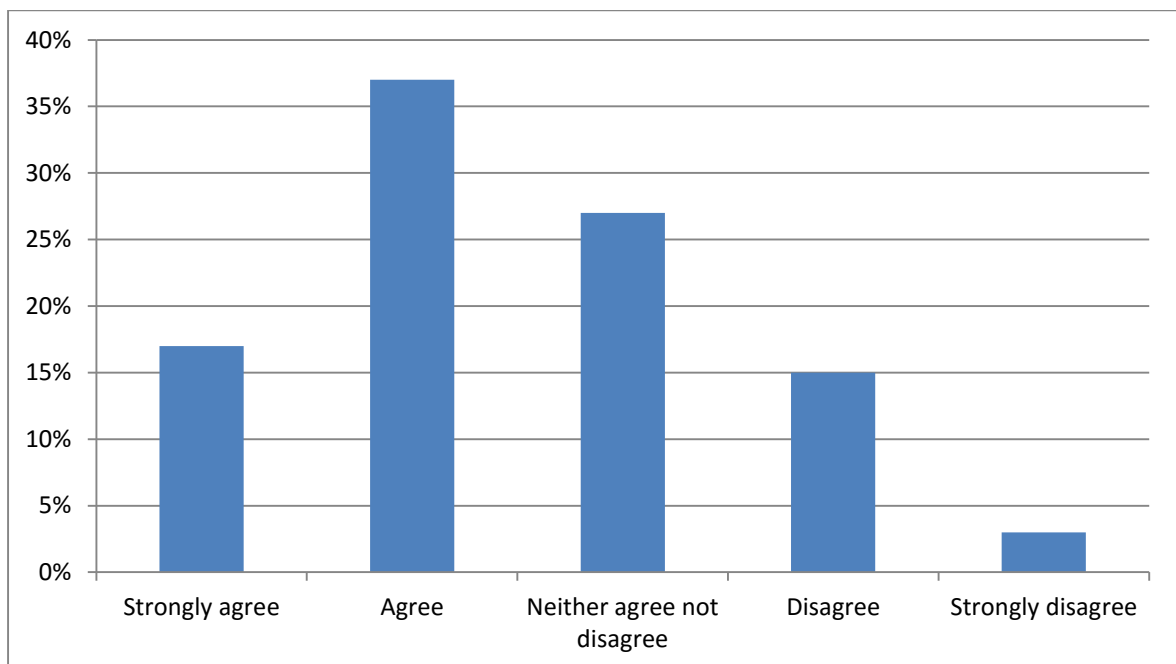
- 43% of citizens have used social media in the past **to look for** information during an emergency – most often it was used to get information about weather warnings, road or traffic conditions, damage caused or an eyewitness photo or video

Figure 2: How likely are you to use social media in future to look for information during an emergency?



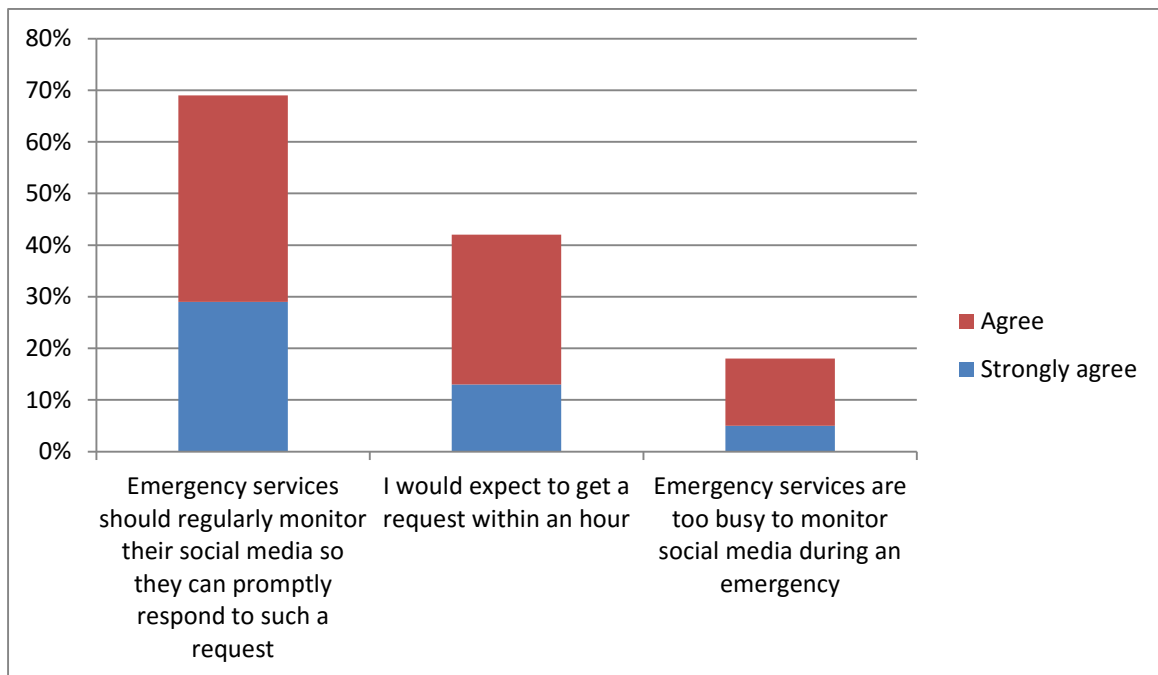
- Figure 2 above shows that 58% of citizens believed that they would use social media in future **to look for** information as a result of an emergency such as an accident, power cut, severe weather, flood or earthquake – only 25% thought it was unlikely
- 16% of citizens have downloaded a smartphone app that could help in a disaster or emergency – most frequently this included general warning apps, weather apps, earthquake warning apps or emergency call apps

Figure 3: The information provided via social media is more accessible



- Figure 3 above shows that 54% of citizens think that information provided on social media sites during emergencies is more accessible than information provided via more traditional media channels such as TV, radio or media websites.
- Similarly, 77% thought that information provided on social media is made available faster during emergencies than via traditional media channels
- However, only 13% thought that information provided on social media is more accurate than information provided via traditional media channels – in contrast, almost half (44%) disagreed with this statement

Figure 4: Imagine that you posted an urgent request for help on a social media site of a local emergency response organisation:



- Figure 4 above shows that 42% of citizens would expect a response within an hour if they posted a request for help on an emergency services social media site
- Figure 4 also shows that 69% of citizen agree that emergency services should regularly monitor their social media sites to be able to respond promptly to such a request – while only 18% thought that emergency services were too busy during an emergency to monitor social media during an emergency
- There is generally low awareness among citizens of existing social media safety services provided on Twitter and Facebook – thus only 6% of citizens said they were ‘very aware’ of Twitter Alerts and, while only 3% were very aware of Facebook Safety Checks
- However, awareness of Twitter Alerts is considerably higher among those using Twitter on a regular basis – 32% of citizen who say they use Twitter ‘often’ are aware of this service
- This contrasts with only 4% of regular Facebook users (that use it ‘often’) who say they are aware of Facebook Safety Checks

Methodology

At the start of February 2015, project partners sent out a link to the online survey in English, Polish, Italian, German and Slovenian to friends, colleagues, professional and social contacts as well as via their own social media channels and websites. This means that the sample of citizens responding to this survey is not fully representative, but is likely to be biased in favour of those with access to social media and also those living in partner countries.

Characteristics of survey participants

Survey responses were received from citizens across 30 countries, with the largest number of respondents coming from Poland (306), Slovenia (169), Germany (164), the United Kingdom (146), Italy (72), Greece (43) and Norway (39). Respondents included roughly equal proportions of women and men, and a broad selection of citizens from different age groups – although the largest proportion (33%) were aged 21-29 years old – only 3% were aged 60 or older.

Around one-in-five (19%) of survey participants were working or volunteering for an emergency service – these were excluded from the main findings reported on in this summary report as they were significantly more likely to use social media more than other citizens and to express positive views about its use during emergencies.

Further information

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For further details on the EmerGent project, please contact Therese Friberg, (friberg@cik.uni-paderborn.de).

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