

# Using participatory mapping to increase community engagement in bushfire preparation



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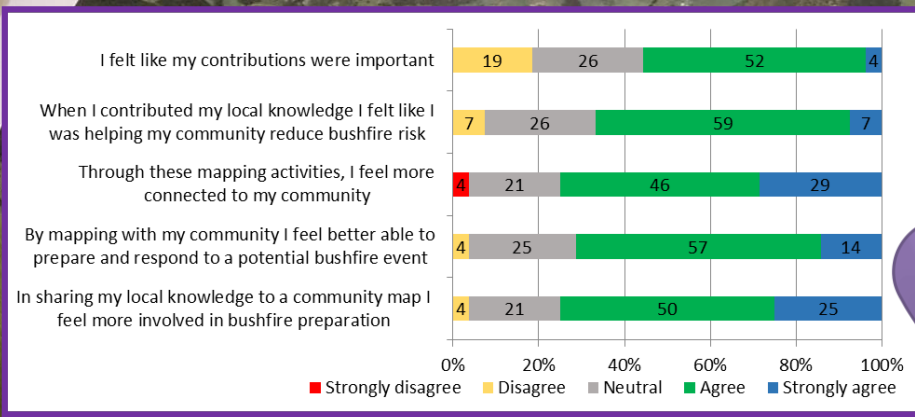
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Involving communities is a prerequisite to sustainable disaster risk reduction. Participatory mapping is the creation of maps by local communities, often in collaboration with end users, organisations or universities. With the growth of locational and web-based technologies, community members can increasingly create maps to represent their local spatial knowledge, which can facilitate participatory decision making, community advocacy, and community empowerment.

With support of the Tasmania Fire Service, we held workshops in 4 bushfire-risk communities in Tasmania – Kettering, St Marys, St Helens, Tolmans Hill - to explore the potential application and value of participatory mapping in bushfire preparation engagement.

Participants mapped information they felt relevant to bushfire preparation in their community, first in groups on paper maps, then on a combined online map. Participants preferred digital mapping over paper, and the social aspect of the activities was more valuable for participants and their bushfire preparation than the specific information mapped.

Survey results from 31 participants confirm the process of mapping and contributing local information for bushfire preparation with other community members can contribute to increased social connectedness, understanding of local bushfire risk, and engagement in disaster risk reduction.



Further work is needed to address issues of online privacy and data quality, applications in other contexts, and biases in the study sample (e.g. involve people absent from our study sample, such as youth and more socio-economically disadvantaged groups).

