

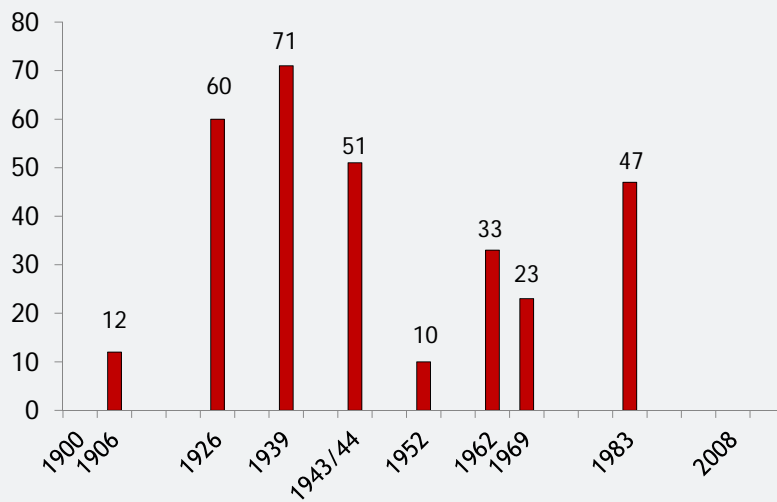
WHEN RESIDENTS COME UNDER IMMINENT WILDFIRE THREAT:

WHAT ASPECTS OF DECISION MAKING DISTINGUISH THOSE WHO STAY AND DEFEND FROM THOSE WHO LEAVE?

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RECORDED CIVILIAN DEATHS IN MAJOR VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES/FIRE SEASONS 1900-2008



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REVIEWS OF POST-BUSHFIRE ANALYSES - 2005

'POSITION' OF THE AUSTRALASIAN FIRE AUTHORITIES COUNCIL (AFAC)



FINDINGS:

1. MOST DEATHS OCCURRED WHILE RESIDENTS WERE FLEEING AT THE LAST MOMENT, IN VEHICLES OR ON FOOT.
2. MANY OF THOSE WHO DIED IN HOMES WERE ELDERLY.

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. HOUSES CAN PROVIDE PROTECTION.
- B. SUITABLY PREPARED HOUSES CAN BE DEFENDED BY FIT HOUSEHOLDERS.
- C. RATHER THAN LEAVE AT THE LAST MINUTE IT IS SAFER TO REMAIN AT A HOUSE.

→AFAC 'POSITION' → AGENCY 'POLICY':

"PREPARE, STAY AND DEFEND OR LEAVE EARLY"

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THE VICTORIAN 'BLACK SATURDAY' BUSHFIRES OF 7 FEBRUARY, 2009



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AFTERMATH

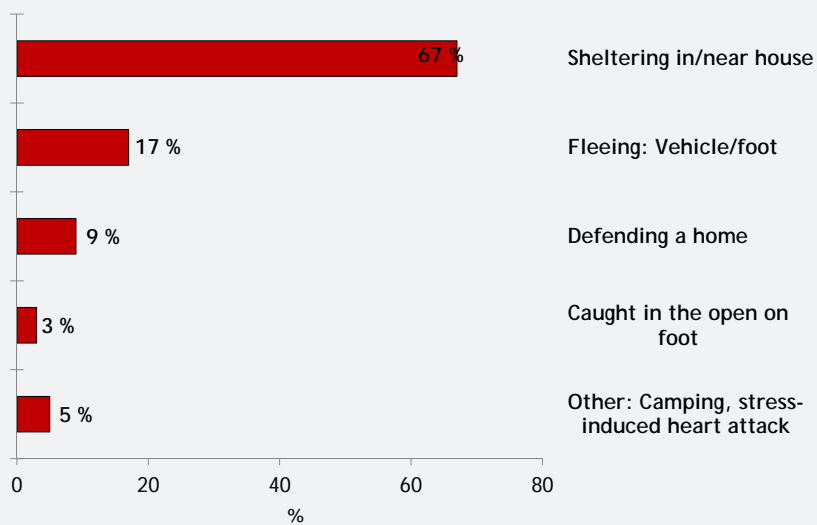


- 172 deaths
- 2000+ homes destroyed
- 5,000+ homeless



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CIRCUMSTANCES ASSOCIATED WITH THE 172 DEATHS RESULTING DIRECTLY FROM THE FIRE



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FIELD RESEARCH TASK FORCE

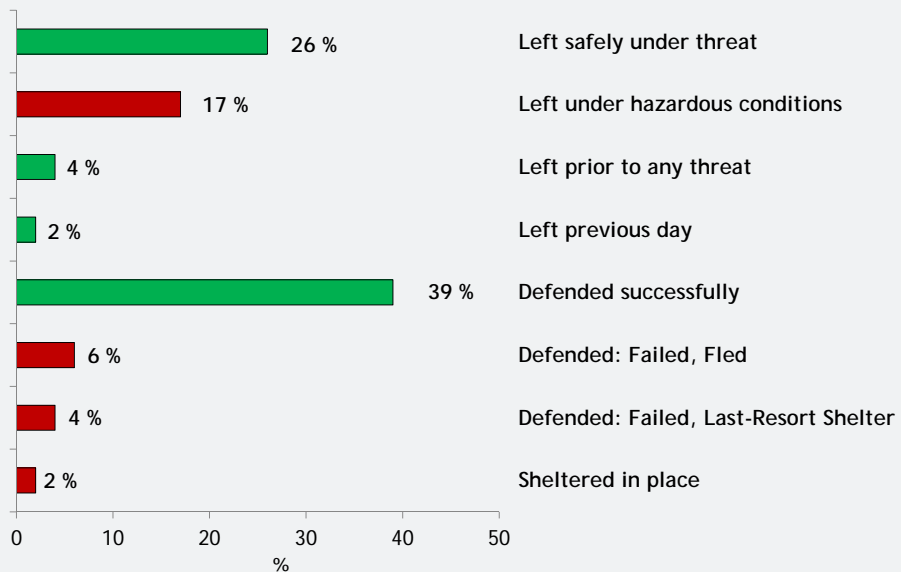


- 496 interviews with affected households
- 457 involved survival-related decision making
- Interviews transcribed, content coded/rated, analysed




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ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES (% , N = 457)

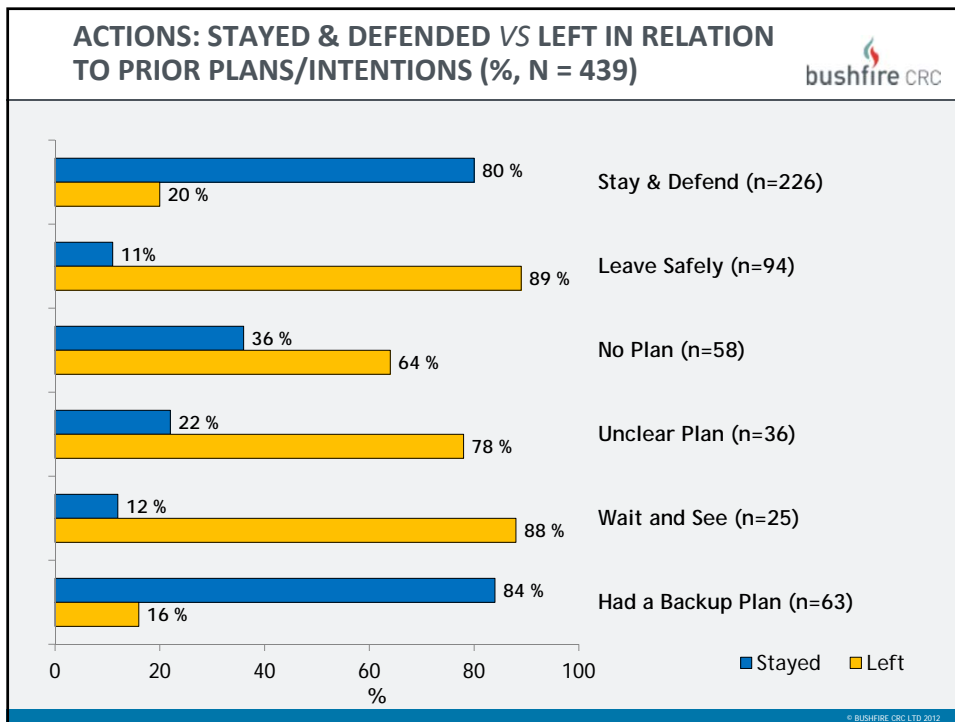


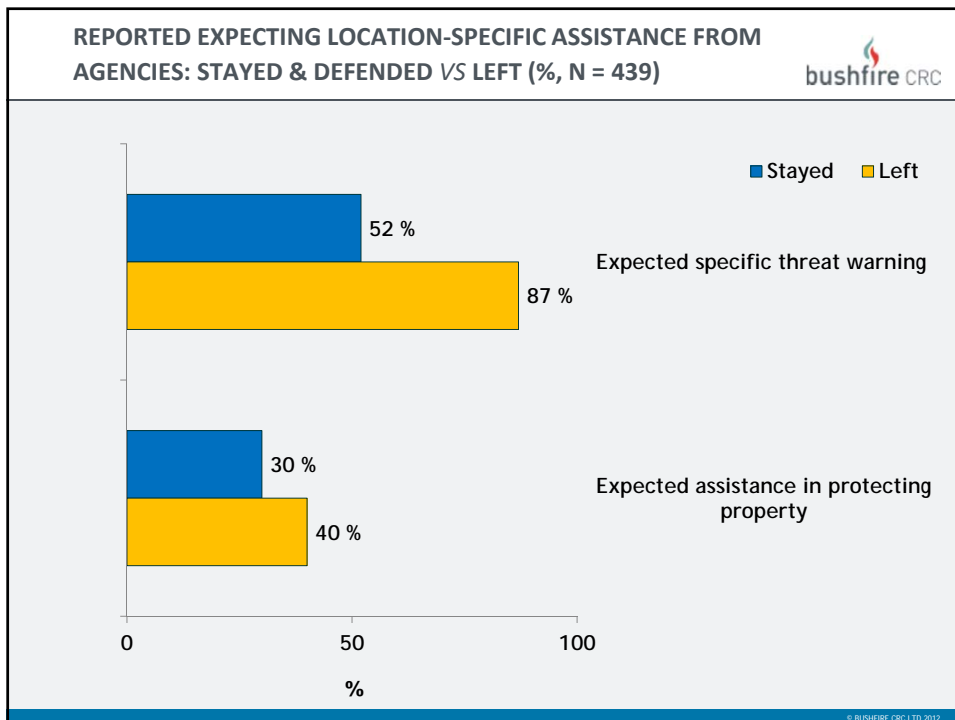
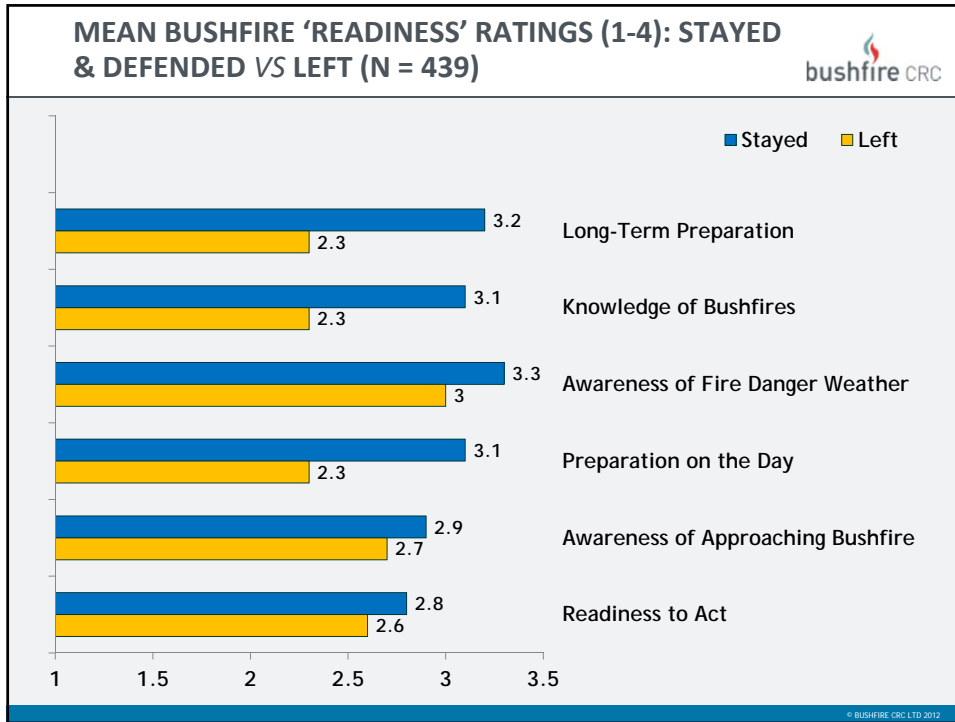
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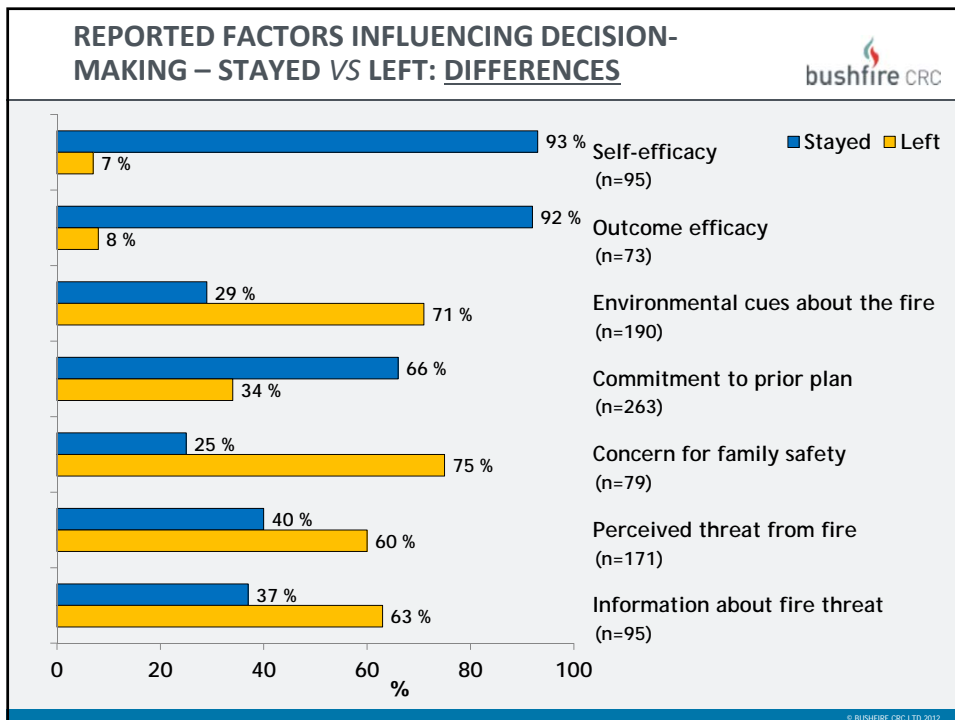
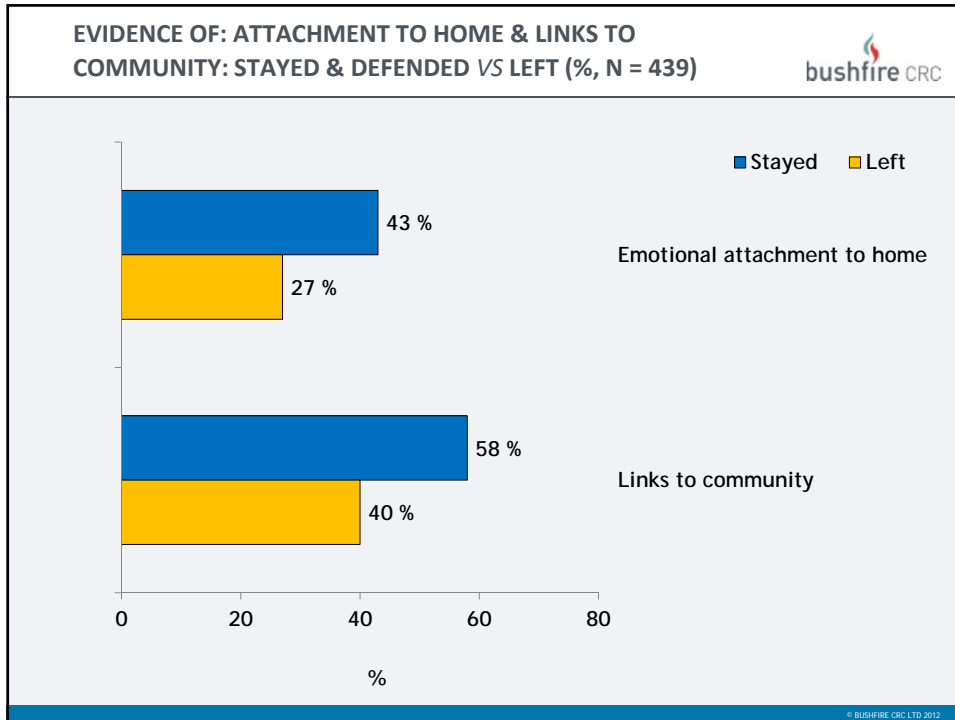
THOSE INTERVIEWED: STAYED & DEFENDED VS LEFT (N = 439) 

	Stayed & Defended (n = 223)	Left (n = 216)
Men	57%	43%
Women	36%	64%
Mean age	51	48
Households with children	24%	34%

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REPORTED FACTORS INFLUENCING DECISION-MAKING (%) – STAYED VS LEFT: NO DIFFERENCES



1. LACK OF TIME, LACK OF WARNINGS
2. CONCERNS ABOUT THE SAFETY OF PETS/LIVESTOCK
3. FIRE MORE SEVERE THAN EXPECTED
4. INSURANCE COVERAGE
5. OFFICIAL RADIO WARNINGS ABOUT THE FIRE
6. INFORMATION ON AGENCY WEB SITES ABOUT THE FIRE

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'STAY-AND-DEFENDERS' *VERSUS* 'LEAVERS'?



Stayed and defended:

Engaged with bushfire risk

- Prized home/property
- Planned and prepared to defend
- Believed their endeavours would succeed.

Left:

Few engaged with bushfire risk

Low level of planning and preparation (protect **or** leave)

- Reacted to emerging threat
- Perceived fire danger
- Concerned for family safety

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COMMUNITY SAFETY 'TAKE-AWAYS'?



1. Many of those who left had not personalised bushfire risk—neither long term, nor that predicted for 7 February 2009.
2. Many who intended to leave before being threatened had neither planned nor prepared so as to do so safely.
3. Many who intended to leave took a 'wait and see' approach when fire threatened (*researchers: WHY?*).
4. Many who stayed and defended were not prepared for the severity of bushfire attack under the predicted conditions.
5. **For the future: devote attention to: educating at-risk householders about planning and preparing to leave safely; and emphasising the risks involved in staying and defending.**

QUESTION: WILL THE NEXT DISASTROUS 'BLACK X __ DAY' INTERVIEW TASK FORCE REPORT CONTAIN FINDINGS DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN THE 'BLACK SATURDAY' 2009 INTERVIEW TASK FORCE REPORT?

Report: <http://www.bushfirecrc.com/publications/citation/bf-3160>