

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

# The case for citizen science in public health policy and practice

A mixed methods study of policy maker and practitioner perspectives and experiences

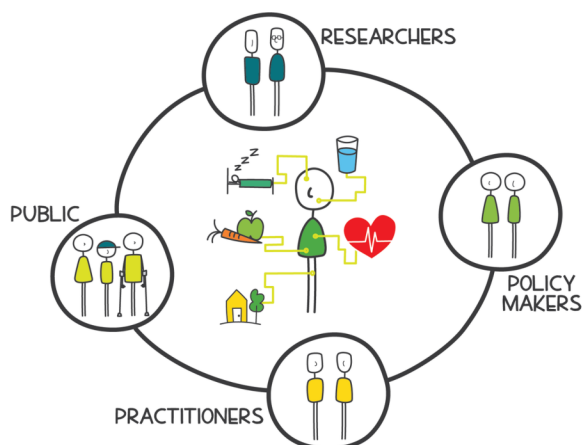
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### PURPOSE

Citizen science is increasingly being used to involve the public in public health research, but little is known about whether and how citizen science address the needs of public health organisations.

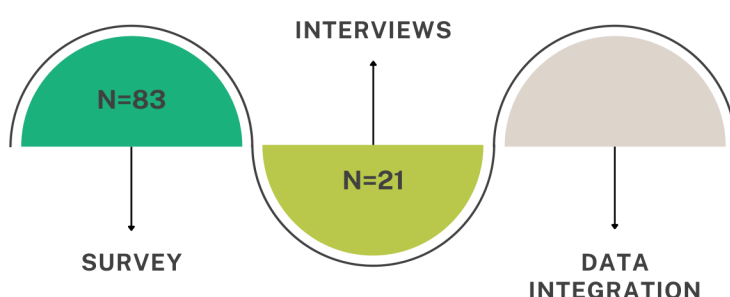
This study aimed to explore:

- policy and practice stakeholders' familiarity and experiences with citizen science
- how citizen science aligns with existing approaches to community engagement
- how the uptake of citizen science can be supported within policy and practice settings.



### METHODS

We conducted an online survey (n=83) and semi-structured interviews (n=21) with policy and practice stakeholders across Australia.



### FAMILIARITY



Three quarters were at least slightly familiar with citizen science.

### EXPERIENCE



Over a third said they had been involved with a citizen science project as part of their work.

### ALIGNMENT OF CITIZEN SCIENCE WITH CURRENT PRACTICE

For many, citizen science resonated with their philosophy and approach to engagement but was considered as an extension of their existing practice due to several features, including that it:

- operates under a research framework
- actively involves community throughout projects (e.g. from outset or through multiple phases)
- is a bottom-up and empowering approach
- values the public as a genuine stakeholder which promotes equal collaboration.

### ADVANTAGES OF CITIZEN SCIENCE

Participants expressed strong support for citizen science approaches, with many seeing them as complementary to other community engagement approaches used in their work. Interview participants felt citizen science offered four key benefits, including providing:



a robust framework for engagement



access to rich data



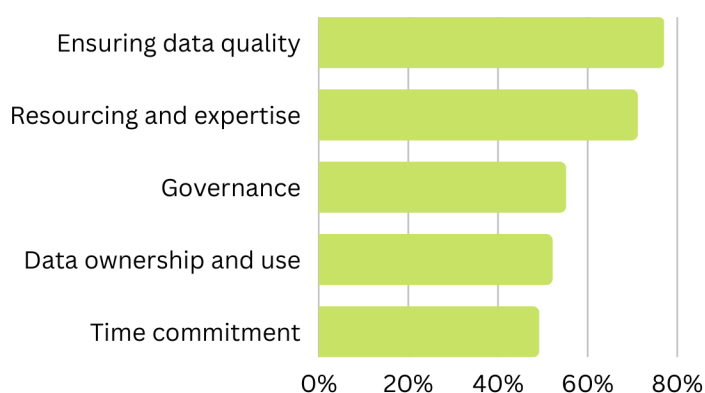
opportunities for more meaningful engagement



mutual benefit for community members and organisations

### CHALLENGES

Over half of participants felt data quality and rigour, governance of projects and the time, funding and skillset required to conduct citizen science projects were key challenges.



### SUPPORTING CITIZEN SCIENCE

To support and expand the use of citizen science, participants identified the need for:

- raising awareness and acceptance of citizen science approaches
- evidence on processes, feasibility and impacts of citizen science
- professional capacity building to support stakeholders to use citizen science
- greater access to supporting tools and technology.

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