



Risk Communication, Behaviour Change and Tick-Borne Disease in the UK

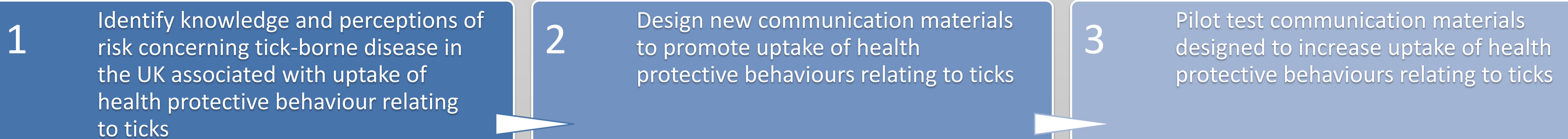
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Background and Introduction

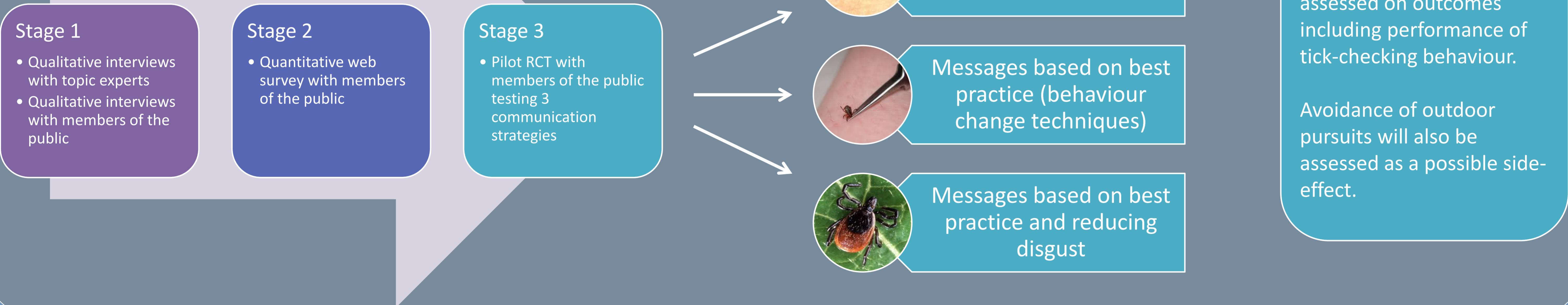
Improved knowledge of the basic protective behaviours that can be taken to reduce tick bites decreases the risk of tick-borne disease¹. In the case of Lyme disease, our understanding of the tick vector life cycle and the effectiveness of prevention strategies should make it a largely preventable illness, yet the incidence of the disease continues to increase². Low uptake of protective behaviours among the general public lies at the heart of this problem. Observational studies conducted in areas with endemic tick-borne disease repeatedly find that a large proportion of people fail to take even the most basic of precautions such as wearing long trousers, using repellent or avoiding locations of highest risk^{3,4}. This finding is echoed in national surveys⁵. Meanwhile, self reported checking for ticks after potential exposure is also low⁶.

One factor that has not yet been explored in relation to encouraging uptake of tick-related behaviours is the role of disgust. Recent research suggests that promoting a sense of disgust can play a key role in improving uptake of several health-related behaviours⁷. Incorporating messages about ticks that portray them as 'disgusting' may be effective in encouraging the uptake of protective behaviours. This project will explain and understand the uptake of tick protective behaviours and investigate the role that psychological theories of behaviour change can play in increasing uptake.

Objectives



Methods



Preliminary Results and Conclusions

Expert recommended behaviour

- Wear long trousers
- Tuck trousers into socks
- Use tick repellent
- Stick to clear pathways
- Perform tick checks
- Early and correct tick removal
- Awareness of symptoms

Behaviour predictors

- Social norms / acceptability
- Personal comfort
- Health concerns
- Awareness / knowledge
- Time and cost
- Disgust

Figure 1. After walking or rambling I check to see if I have any ticks on my body (%):

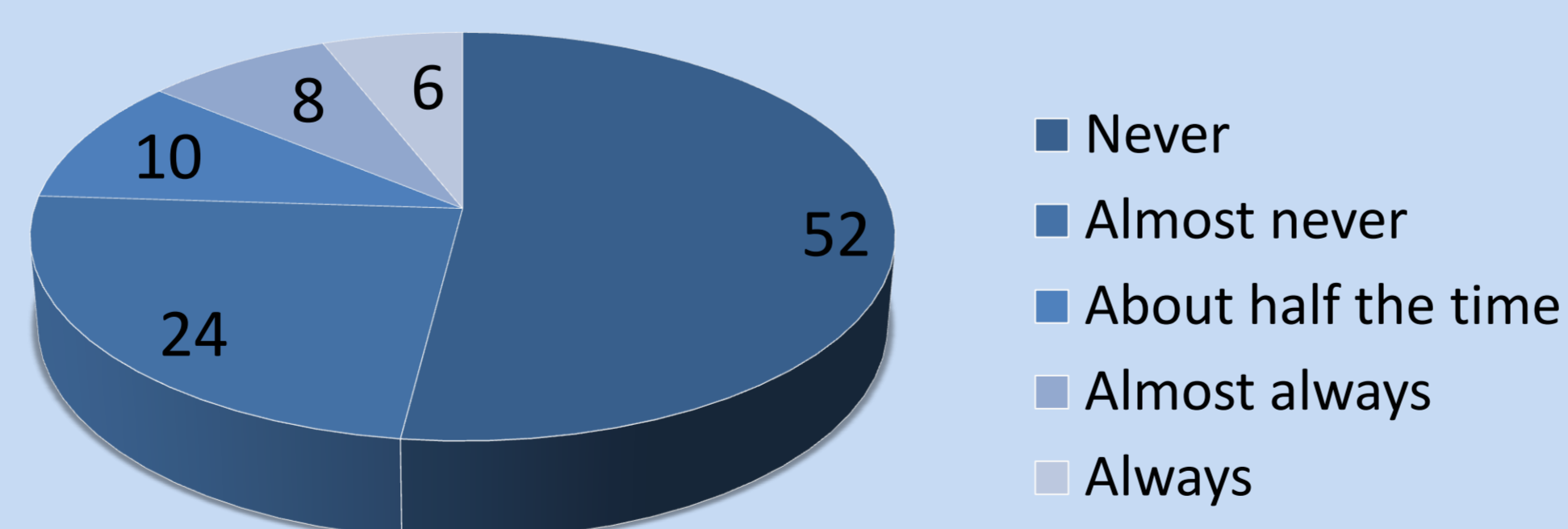
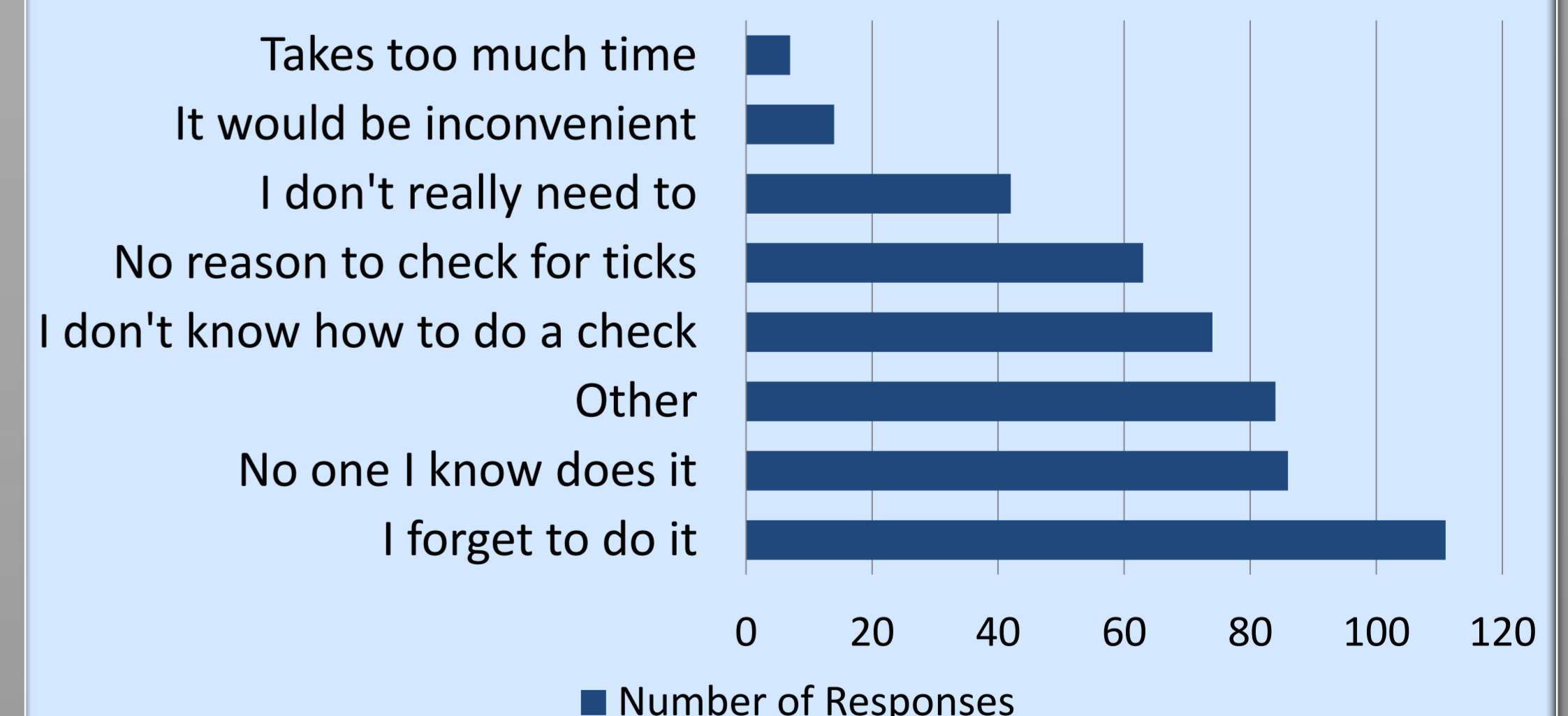


Figure 2. I do not check for ticks after walking or rambling because:



Coming Up:

Is there a role for disgust in tick protective behaviour promotion?



References

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- (4) Herrington, JE, Campbell, GL, Bailey, RE, Cartter, ML, et al. Predisposing Factors for Individuals' Lyme Disease Prevention Practices: Connecticut, Maine, and Montana. *Am J Public Health* 1997; 87(12):2035-2038.
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- (6) Mawby, TV, Lovett, AA. The Public Health Risks of Lyme Disease in Breckland, UK: An Investigation of Environmental and Social Factors. *Soc Sci Med* 1998; 46(6):719-727.
- (7) Curtis, V, Aunger, R, Rabie, T. Evidence that Disgust Evolved to Protect From Risk of Disease. *Proc R Soc Lond B Biol Sci* 2004; 271(4):S131-S133.