

asbestoswise

Information and Support

Home Show Research Report

for the

Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency



Learning to Limit the Third Wave

Asbestoswise at the Herald Home Show: August 13-16 2015

Background

The Herald Sun Home Renovation show is an annual event held in the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. Over four days up to 40,000 people visit the Show each year. Figures from previous years have indicated that 85% of people who attended the Show planned a building or renovation project. This year Asbestoswise invested in a stand at the Show aimed at raising awareness of asbestos in homes and the dangers of contracting an asbestos related disease.

One of the problems associated with raising awareness amongst home renovators is in reaching those people and their families who may be at risk, because they plan to renovate. Attendance at the Home Shows is one way of doing this.

The Asbestoswise stand

The Asbestoswise stand was in a prominent position and at least two volunteers or staff were in attendance throughout the opening hours of the show. Volunteers came from Asbestoswise staff, unions, supporting legal firms and industrial hygienist and asbestos removalists. Involving asbestos industry representatives was aimed at improving the usefulness of the advice offered to people visiting the stand. The value of some volunteer being from the affected community was expressed by one of our bereaved activists who indicated that people took much more notice once they realised her personal story.



Holding conversations with home renovators



Over the course of the four days and two evenings, it is estimated that between 1000 and 1200 people visited the stand, examined what was on display and held conversations with stand volunteers. An analysis of a sub-sample of the records of visitors to the stand indicated 54% of conversations were with men, 46% with women; that 11% of visitors were under the age of thirty, with an even split between thirty and fifty (44%) and over fifty (45%). Around one in five visitors was from country Victoria.

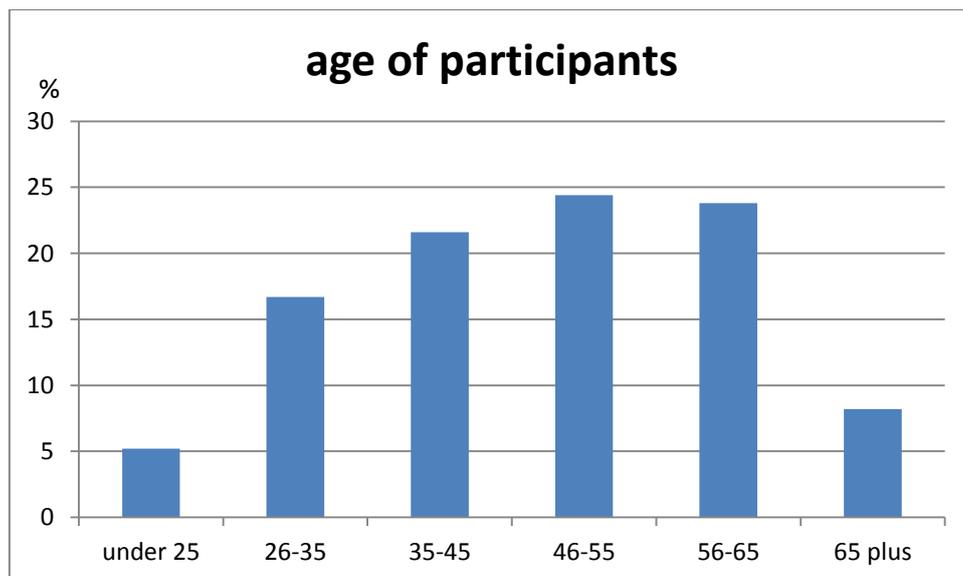
The majority were actually planning a renovation in the near future. The advice given to people was to identify where asbestos might be found and if they were renovating to seek professional advice. If asbestos had to be removed then we advised they use a qualified removalist. The most common conversations concerned renovation, asbestos removal and testing of asbestos in the home. These conversations were reinforced with a number of handouts which included:

- An Asbestoswise handout showing where asbestos was commonly found in houses built before 1990.
- A handout giving details of industrial hygienist companies that would be able to test a sample of material or carry out a household survey to identify whether asbestos products were present.

- A handout giving contact details of asbestos removalist companies recognised by Worksafe Victoria and the Victorian Trades Hall Council.
- A handout giving details of the tips in Victoria registered to deal with asbestos waste.
- The ASEA pamphlet giving details of the Agency’s register of exposure to asbestos.

The Asbestoswise home renovation survey

A survey was developed and discussed with Asbestoswise committee members and stakeholders. Survey recruiters were employed throughout the four days of the Home Show with the sole task of inviting people to complete the survey. 380 people completed the survey and if any wanted information and advice they were referred to the Asbestoswise stand volunteers. Men comprised 57% of the sample and women 43%. The age distribution is shown in the bar chart below. 5% were under the age of 25 and 8% were over the age of 65. There was an even distribution of ages between these two extremes.

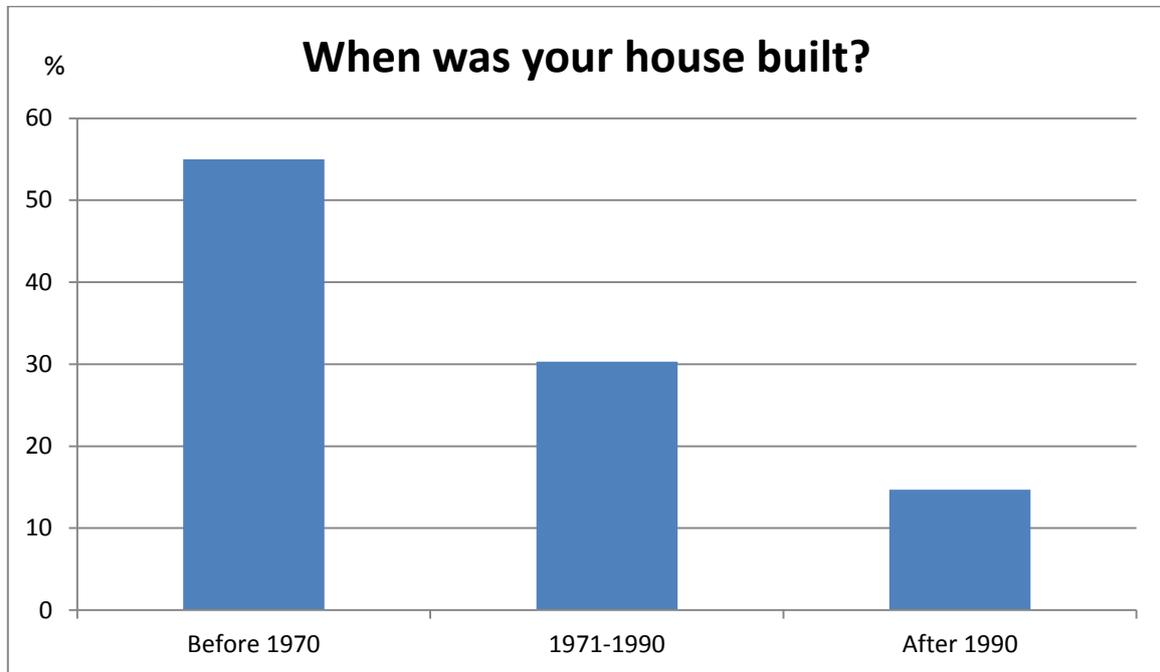


An analysis of postal codes indicates that those surveyed were widely distributed throughout Victoria with people from 285 different postcodes included in the survey. Those post codes with more than five participants were: 3015 (Newport, inner Melbourne); 3030 (Werribee, North West Melbourne); 3056 (Brunswick, inner Melbourne); 3130 (Blackburn, East Melbourne); and 3930 (Mount Eliza, Eastern Victoria). Large numbers of participants lived in regional Victoria.

Experience of home renovation

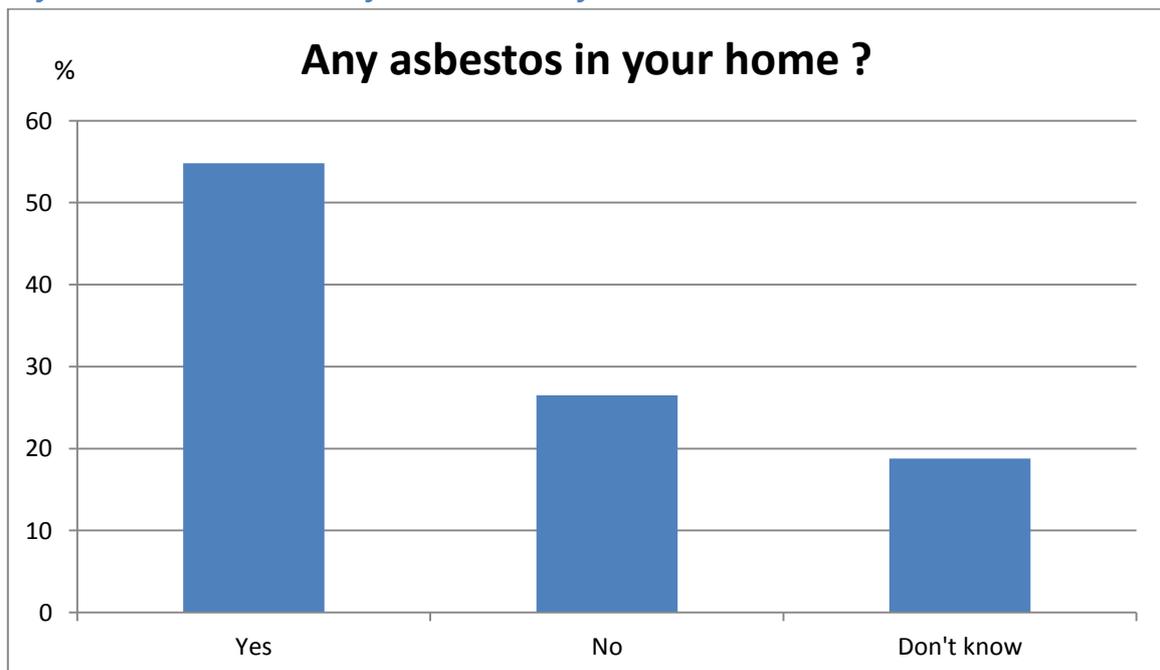
Several questions concerned past experiences of renovations and intentions to renovate in the future.

When was your house built?



Asked when their house was built, 85% indicated that it was built before 1990. In other words slightly more than four out of five of those lived in houses where the likelihood of finding asbestos products was reasonably high.

Do you think there is any asbestos in your home?

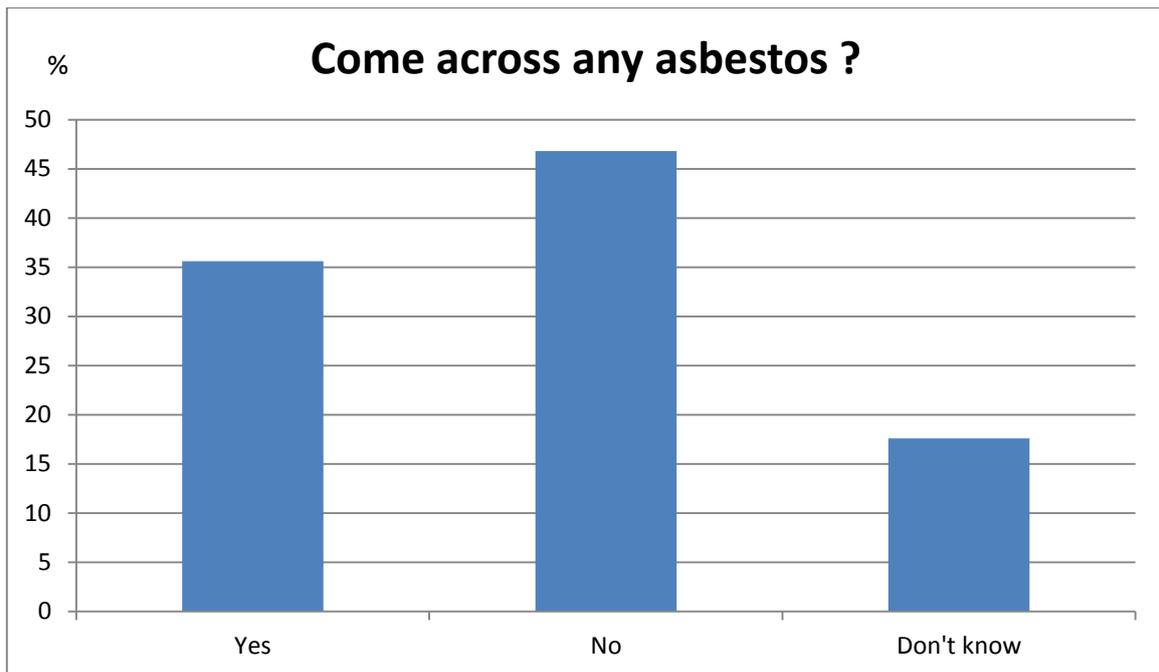


Asked if they thought there would be asbestos in their home 55% thought there would be asbestos and a further 18% didn't know.

Have you carried out any renovations in the past?

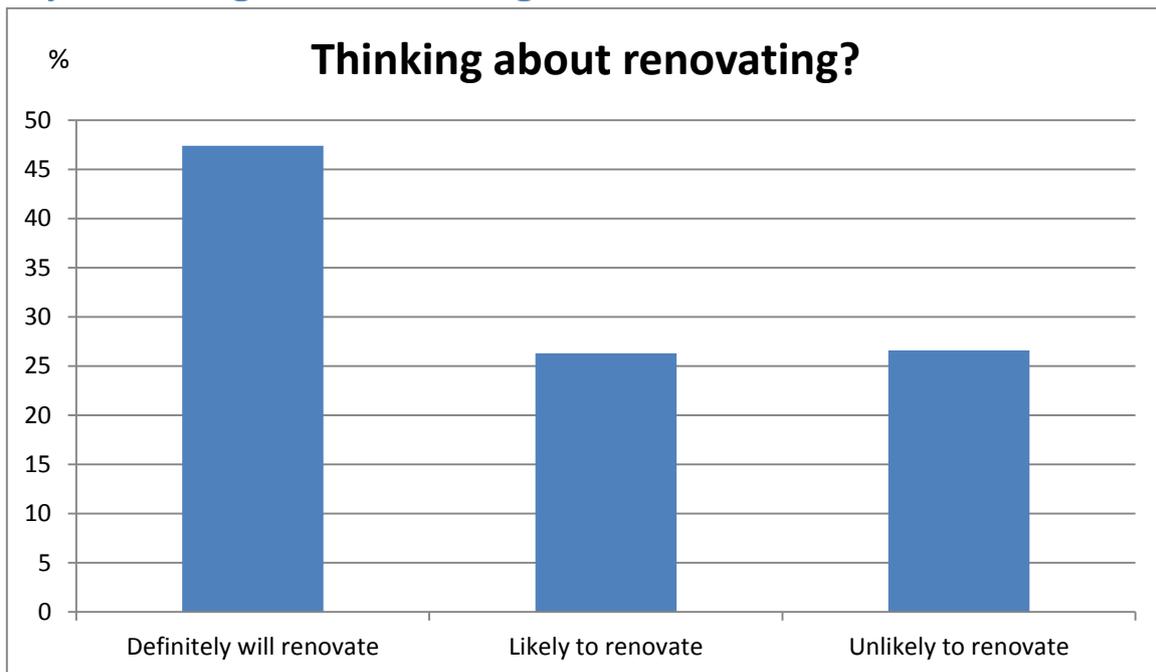
Just under half (48%) of those surveyed had carried out renovations in the past.

If yes, did you come across any asbestos?



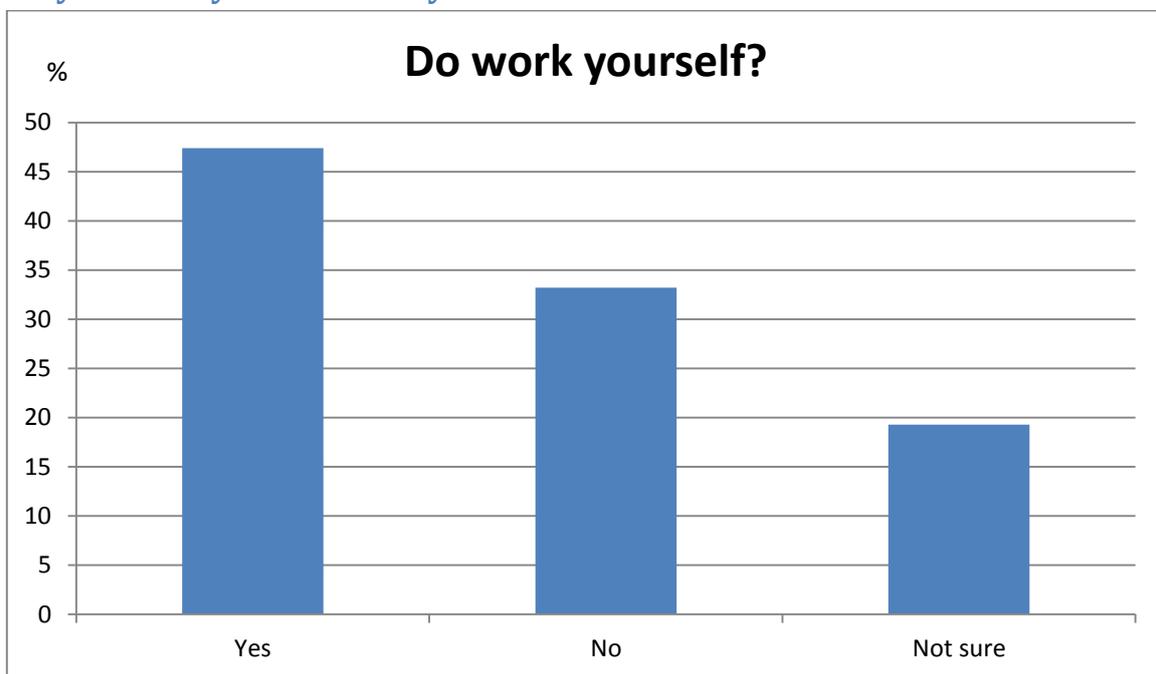
A third of these had come across asbestos and an additional 18% didn't know whether they had or not.

Are you thinking about renovating in the future ?



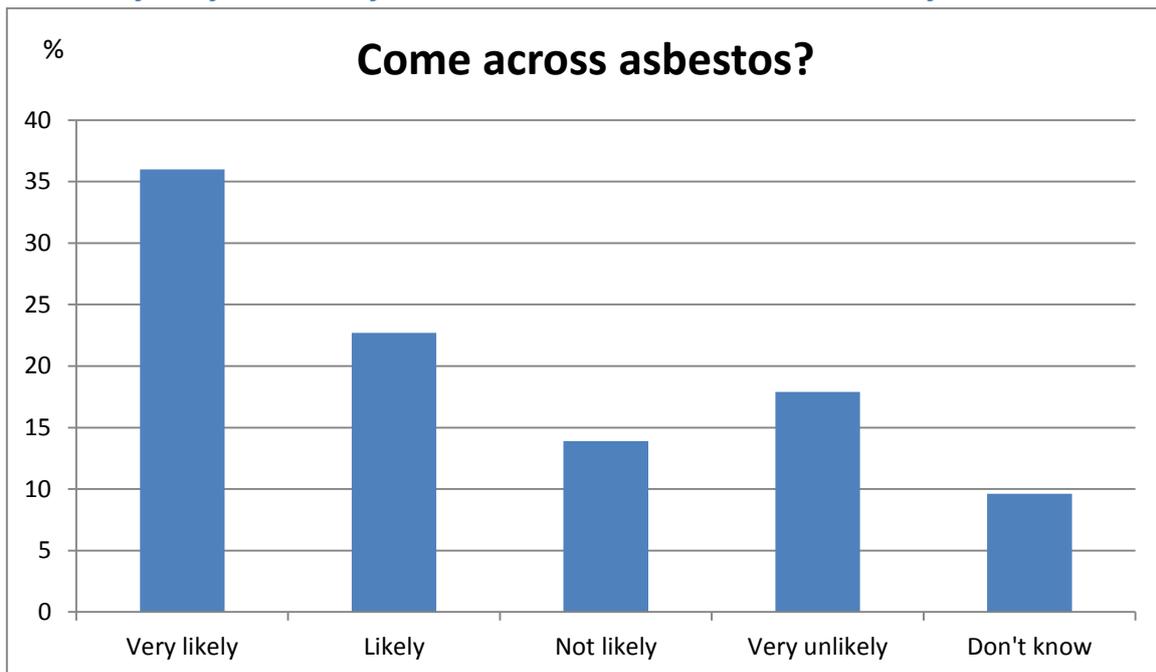
Three out of every four people completing the survey were definitely going to renovate or likely to renovate in the near future.

Will you do any of the work yourself ?



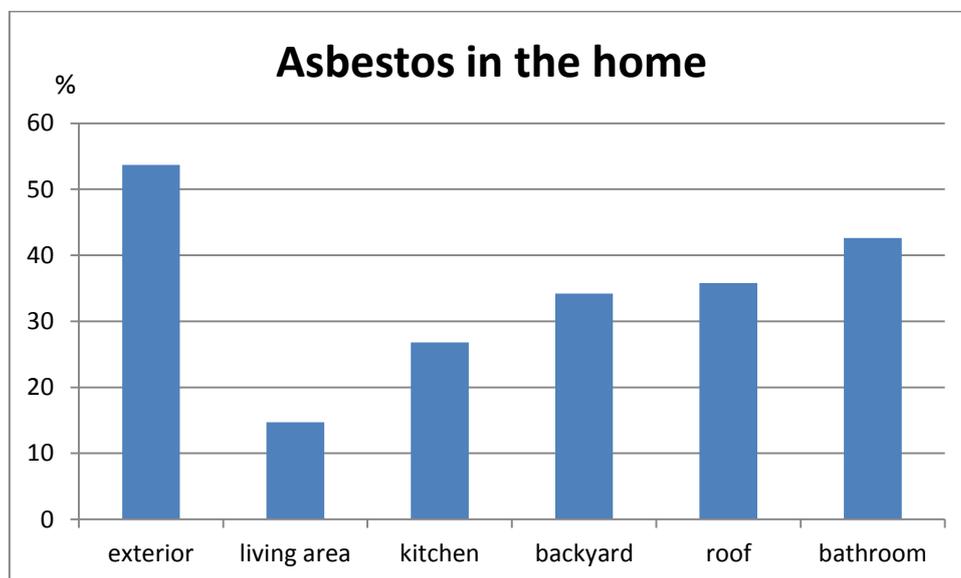
About half of those intending to renovate would do some of the work themselves and 19% were not sure at this stage.

How likely do you think you are to come across asbestos in your home ?



Around 60% thought it *very likely* or *likely* that they would come across asbestos in their home.

Where do you think you are likely to find asbestos in your home? (Tick as many as apply)



Asked where they might find asbestos in the home people indicated the following: 54% indicated they would expect to find asbestos on the exterior of their house, 15% in the living areas, 27% in the kitchen, 34% in the backyard, 36% in the roof, 43% in the bathroom and 10% in other areas.

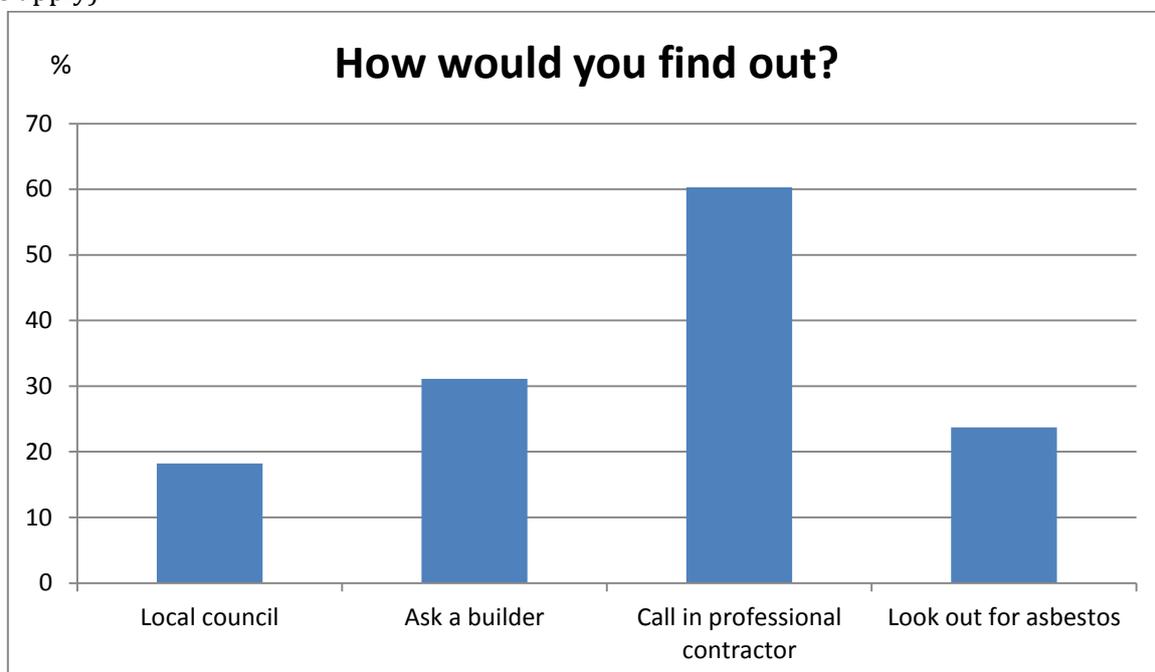
How dangerous is the asbestos you might find in your home?

Asked about how dangerous asbestos was in the home, 50% indicated it was very dangerous, 35% somewhat dangerous and 16% not dangerous.

Dealing with asbestos in the home

Questions concerned how respondents would identify and deal with any asbestos products they might find in their home. They were asked about their intended use of external services and were invited to write in precautionary measures they thought necessary should they do the work themselves.

How would you find out if your house contains asbestos products ? (Tick as many as apply)



In seeking advice on whether there was asbestos in their home, 31% would ask a builder, 60% would call in a professional contractor, 24% would look out for asbestos themselves and only 18% would approach their local council.

When asked what they would do if they came across asbestos, nine out of ten indicated that they would call in a professional contractor and only one in ten indicated they would remove it themselves.

If you decided to remove it yourself what precautions would you take ?

For this open ended question, 55 of the whole sample wrote in a response. These were coded and of these responses, 69% said they would wear some protective gear, most commonly a mask; only 19% of the responses mentioned treatment of the asbestos such as

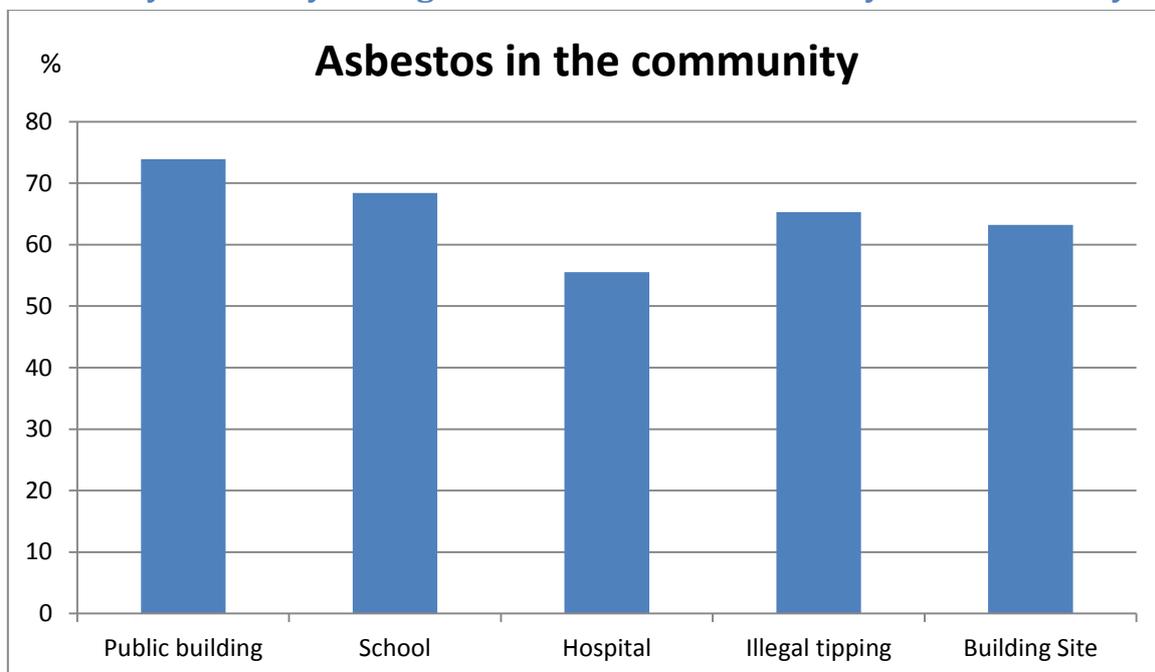
watering it down; while around a quarter (24%) of responses concerned disposal of the asbestos, most commonly mentioned was wrapping it in black plastic. Only seven people mentioned all three elements – protective clothing, treatment of product and safe disposal.

Since almost half of those surveyed had already indicated that they would do some of the renovation work themselves being able to identify asbestos during renovation is of critical importance. Experience obtained from the Asbestoswise help line indicates that the intention to use a contractor may founder on price and availability of contractors who will take on domestic work.

Awareness and knowledge of asbestos risk

Those surveyed were also asked some general questions concerning asbestos in the community and where they heard about asbestos and obtained information about it.

Where do you think you might come across asbestos in your community?



In general, knowledge of where asbestos might be found in the community was high: 74% were aware of its existence in public buildings, 68% in schools, 55% in hospitals, 65% in illegal tips and 63% on building sites.

Have you heard about asbestos in the news recently?

Half of those surveyed had heard about asbestos in the news recently.

If yes, what was the story about ?

They were then asked to write in details of the news item; 125 people gave specific details. A content analysis of these answers indicated nine respondents named James Hardie as the subject of the news item they recalled; with a further two respondents naming Bernie

Banton. Nine respondents recalled health related issues. Ten respondents recalled issues with asbestos in Sunshine; linking it with a factory site. Thirteen respondents recalled an item about illegal dumping. Five respondents recalled an item about Mr. Fluffy, with a further four recalling problems in Canberra homes.

Sites of exposure in the recalled news items included nine mentions of schools, two mentions of hospitals, one specifically referring to Westmead Hospital; two respondents referred to the fire fighter training site and two recalled an item about illegal imports into Australia, with China referred to and car ports being specifically mentioned. Four respondents recalled a report on *A Current Affair* and two recalled a report on *60 Minutes*.

Apart from news and current affairs stories participants were also asked where they might go for information about asbestos.

Are you aware there is a new Federal Government Agency for asbestos ?

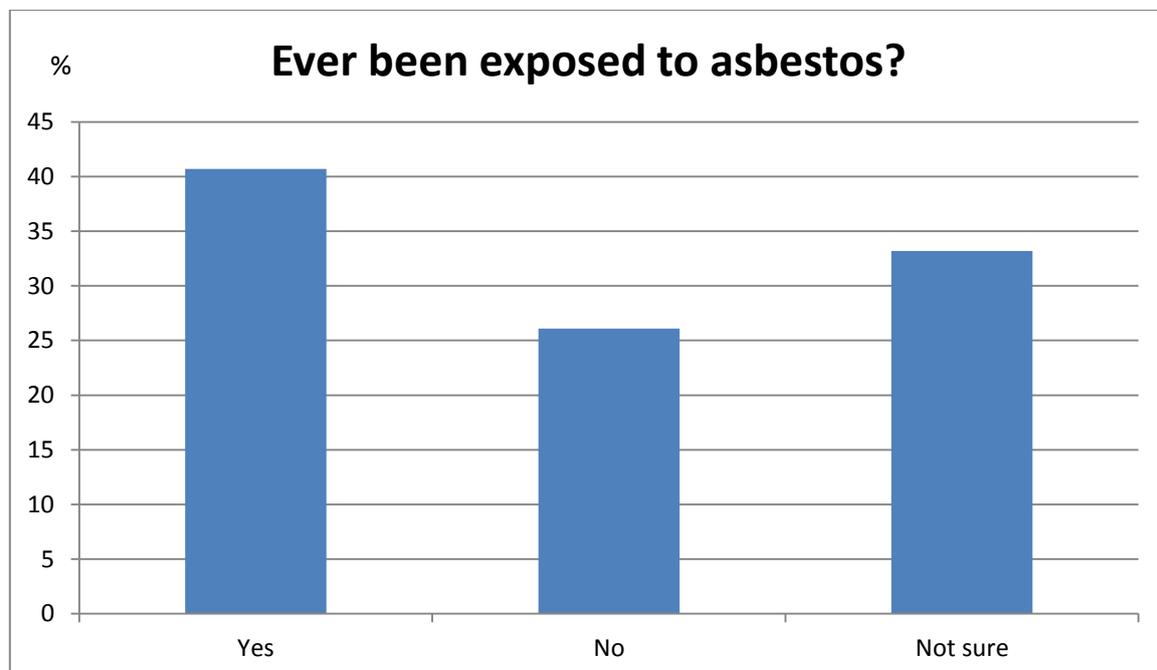
One in four (23.5%) was aware of a new Federal Government Agency.

Have you ever visited a website for information about asbestos ?

One in three (33.5%) had visited a website for further information about asbestos.

Do you think you have ever been exposed to asbestos ?

Finally participants were asked whether they thought they have ever been exposed to asbestos and 41% indicated they had, 33% were not sure and 26% said they hadn't.





Survey Results and Observations

Gender differences

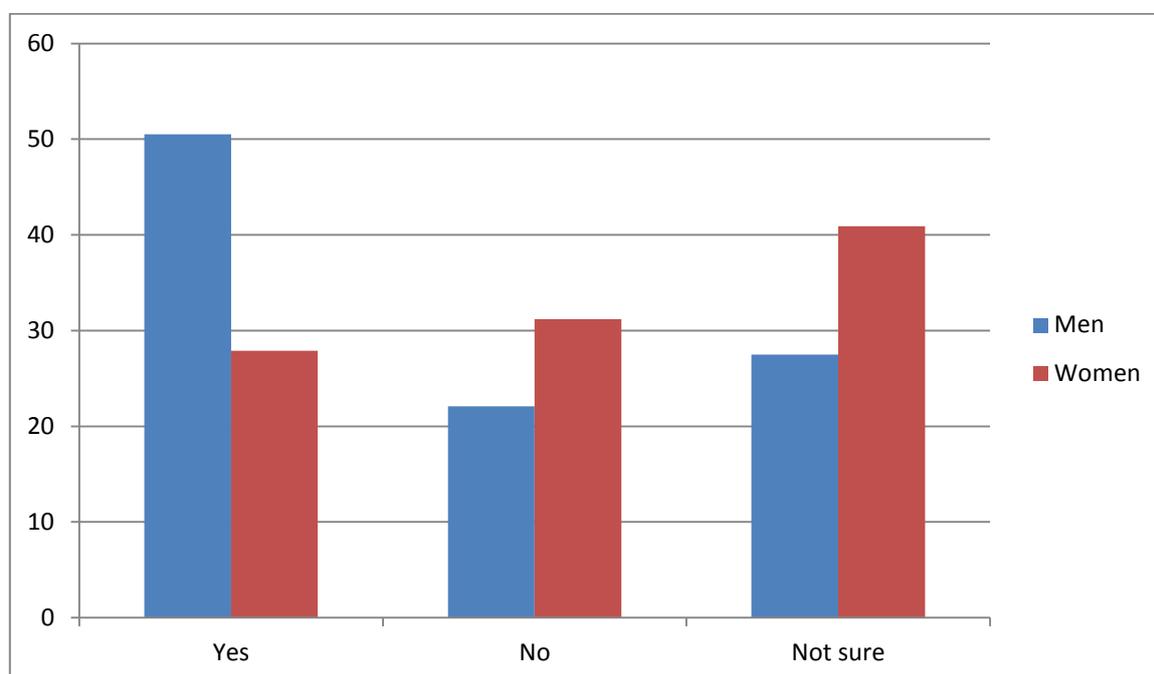
All answers to the survey were analysed for potential gender differences. There was no difference in the age profile by gender. Overall there were few significant differences in awareness and experience between men and women. For example, there were no gender differences in when their houses were built, whether they thought there was any asbestos in their house and how likely they were to renovate in the future (although women were more likely to indicate they would *definitely* renovate in the future, while men were less certain). Equal percentages of men and women indicated they were unlikely to renovate.

Men were significantly more likely to indicate that they would do the renovations themselves (65% of self- renovators were men and 36% were women).

There were no gender differences in estimates of how likely they were to come across asbestos, nor in how dangerous it might be (although men were somewhat more likely to indicate it would not be dangerous with 17% of men and 10% of women choosing the *not dangerous* option).

No gender differences were found concerning knowledge of the agency, website or recall of news stories.

Do you think you have ever been exposed to asbestos by gender

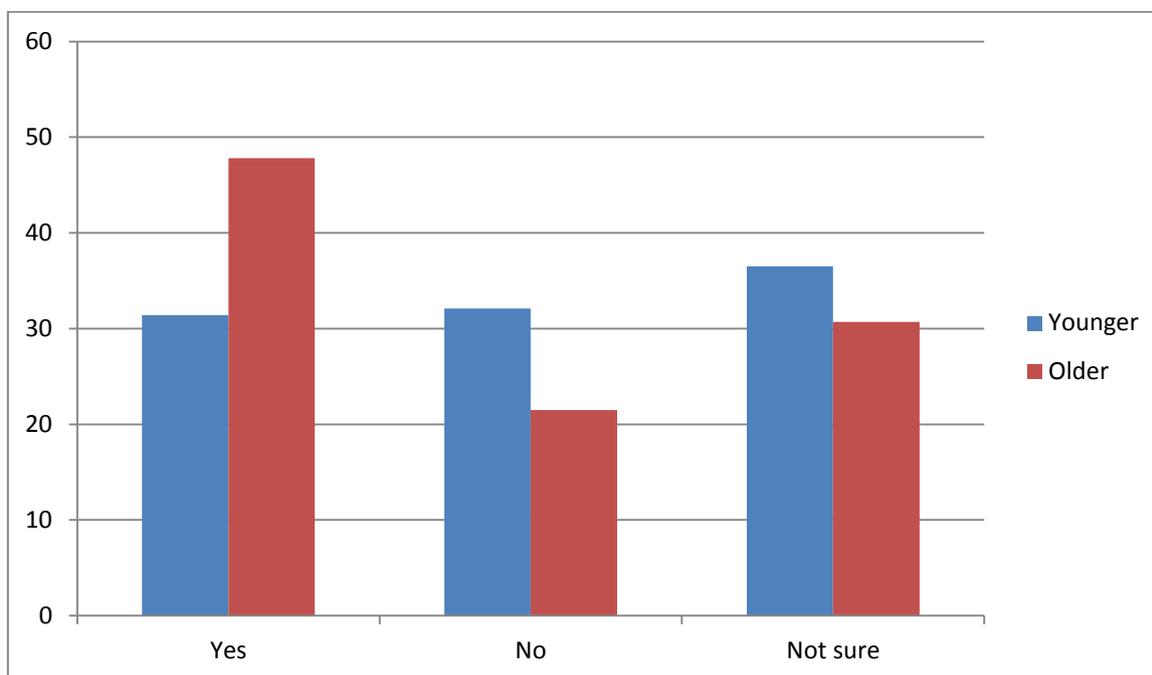


In sharp contrast, there were highly significant differences in estimates of exposure to asbestos. 51% of men responded *yes* to the *ever exposed* question compared with 28% of women; 22% of men responded *no*, compared with 31% of women. A further 41% of women were unsure compared with 28% of men.

Age differences

The data were re-coded into two age groups: 45 years and under (younger) and 46 years and above (older). 44% of the participants were in the younger group and 56% were in the older group. There were few age differences of significance. The older group was significantly more likely to think there was asbestos in their house (54% of the older group compared with 45% of the younger group); this is despite there being no differences in the age of their houses. The older group were significantly more likely to have carried out renovations in the past (40% of the younger group had renovated compared with 55% of the older group). However, only 40% of the younger group indicated they were *unlikely* to renovate in the future, compared with 60% of the older group, a highly significant difference. Overall the older group was significantly more likely to expect to come across asbestos in their house. While there were no age related differences in knowledge of the agency, or website use; the older group were more likely to recall a news story.

Do you think you have ever been exposed to asbestos by age



Finally, there was a highly significant difference between the age groups on their perceived likelihood of having been exposed to asbestos. With almost half of the older group indicating they thought they had been exposed, compared with less than one third of the younger group.

Limitations of the survey

Overall the completion of the survey was good, with a very small minority (under 5%) providing incomplete answers.

A copy of the survey instrument is at the end of this report. The survey was very limited in the number of questions that could be asked to be completed in this context. More detailed surveys and one to one interviews could elaborate on these findings. Asking open ended, write in questions had limited success, with a minority completing these questions, again as a consequence of the context in which the survey was undertaken.

Care was taken not to encourage unsafe practices through the framing of the questions; hence some answers could have been influenced towards reporting intentions of safe removal practices.

Commentary

Participation in events such as this Home Show provides an excellent and cost effective way of targeting large numbers of those people likely to be at risk of asbestos through the third wave, and to raise general public awareness of asbestos and risks.

High quality and interactive information can be made available to large numbers of people who are unlikely to actively seek it out from agencies and from websites.

This is an extremely useful forum to promote products and services relevant to asbestos risk. It is of note that materials available on stands hosted by other agencies, and concerning safety and home renovations, made no mention of asbestos risk.

Survey results indicate that a large percentage of those attending such a show have been, or potentially will be, likely to encounter asbestos through home renovations.

Whilst there are high intentions to use professional services should asbestos be encountered during renovations, there are likely to be significant barriers to this action in practice, including awareness of relevant services, price of such services, and provision of such services throughout Victoria.

Knowledge of appropriate exposure prevention strategies is patchy; there is some awareness of the role of protective clothing, but in some cases this offers minimal protection; there is less awareness of appropriate treatment strategies, such as damping down, and there is very patchy awareness of the risks, including to others, of inadequate precaution around disposal.

There is some awareness of exposure risks in the community – but this is largely driven by individual news items or high profile cases; hence risks of asbestos exposure from home renovations are not well covered in these general sources.

Young people (here defined as under the age of forty) are less likely to feel personally susceptible to asbestos exposure, but are more likely to intend to renovate in the future. They form an important group for targeted information.

Recommendations

1. That Asbestos support groups continue to be encouraged to have a presence at Home Shows; and a strategic response is developed and implemented to ensure the major events are covered throughout Australia.
2. That a public health education program targeted at home renovators is piloted and implemented.
3. That relevant departments and agencies are encouraged to include advice on the safe removal of asbestos in home renovation in their information and guidance materials.
4. That education programs aimed at small builders are developed to ensure they are aware of asbestos regulations and apply them in the renovation work they carry out.
5. That measures are introduced to reduce barriers to the use of professional contractors to remove asbestos in the home through incentive schemes, tax allowances and other means.
6. That the number of registered landfill sites that handle asbestos waste is increased and their performance monitored.
7. That further in depth research is undertaken into decision making by home renovators where there is risk of contracting an ARD through home renovation.

This survey is designed to tell us about home renovations and asbestos. The survey will take a few minutes to complete. When you have completed the survey please return it to the Asbestoswise Stand.

When was your house built?

Before 1970 1971-1990 After 1990

Do you think there is any asbestos in your home?

Yes No Don't know

Have you carried out any renovations in the past?

Yes No

If Yes - did you come across any asbestos?

Yes No Don't know

Are you thinking about renovation in the future?

Definitely will renovate Likely to renovate Unlikely to renovate

Will you do any of the work yourself?

Yes No Not sure

How likely do you think you are to come across asbestos in your home?

Very likely Likely Not likely Very unlikely Don't know

How dangerous is the asbestos you might find in your home?

Very dangerous Quite dangerous Not dangerous

Where do you think you are likely to find asbestos in your home? Tick as many as apply

Exterior of the house Living areas Kitchen
Backyard, shed, garage Roof cavity Bathroom, toilet, laundry
Other Please write in

How would you find out if your house contains asbestos products? Tick as many as apply

Approach your local council Ask a builder
Call in a professional contractor Look out for asbestos when renovations start

If you came across asbestos would you:

Get it removed by professionals Do it yourself?

If you decided to remove it yourself what precautions would you take? Please write in

.....
.....

Where do you think you might find asbestos in your community?

Public building School Hospital Illegal tipping Building site

Are you aware there is a new Federal Government agency for asbestos ?

Yes No

Have you ever visited a website for information about asbestos ?

Yes No

Have you heard about asbestos in the news recently?

Yes No

If Yes – what was the story about? Please write in

.....

Do you think you have ever been exposed to asbestos ?

Yes No Not sure

About you

Are you: Under 25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 65 plus

Are you: Male Female

What is your Postcode?

This survey is supported by the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency. The findings will be used to inform the Agency about knowledge and attitudes about asbestos in the home and community.