

Are we ready? Needs assessment of a provincial mass casualty response plan

Kenzie MacLean¹, Izabella Opra¹, Mete Erdogan¹, John Armstrong¹, Dan Cashen¹, Robert S. Green^{1,2}

¹Trauma Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Health; ²Departments of Critical Care, Emergency Medicine, Surgery and Anesthesia, Dalhousie University

INTRODUCTION

- **Mass casualty incidents (MCIs)** can rapidly overwhelm the health care system, making it difficult to provide comprehensive and definitive care due to the number of patients and/or the severity of their injuries.
- The **unpredictability** of MCIs requires trauma systems to develop and practice interdisciplinary emergency preparedness exercises to be as prepared as possible to respond to any future MCI threats.
- **Research Objective:** To assess the state of mass casualty preparedness in Nova Scotia.

METHODS

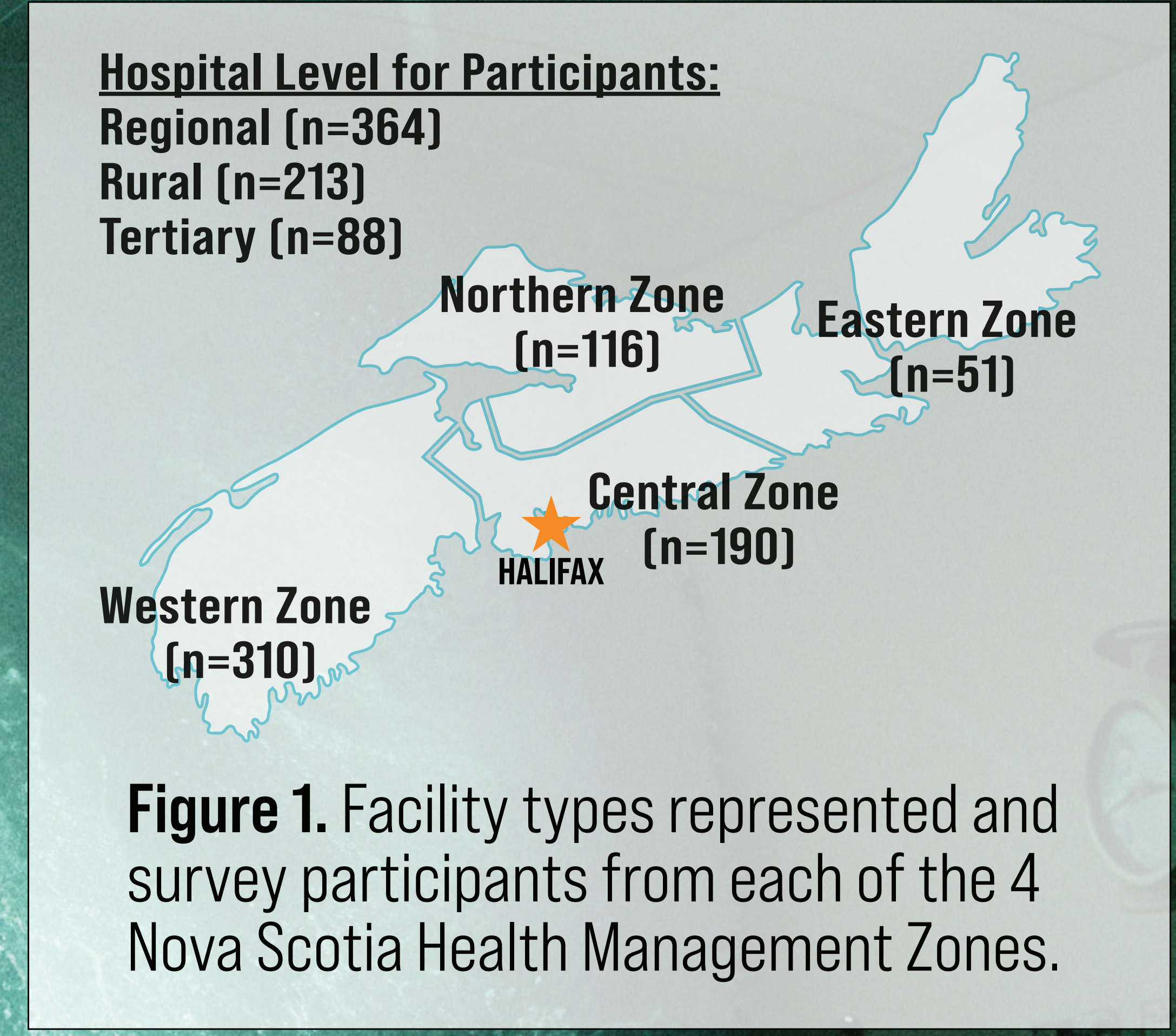
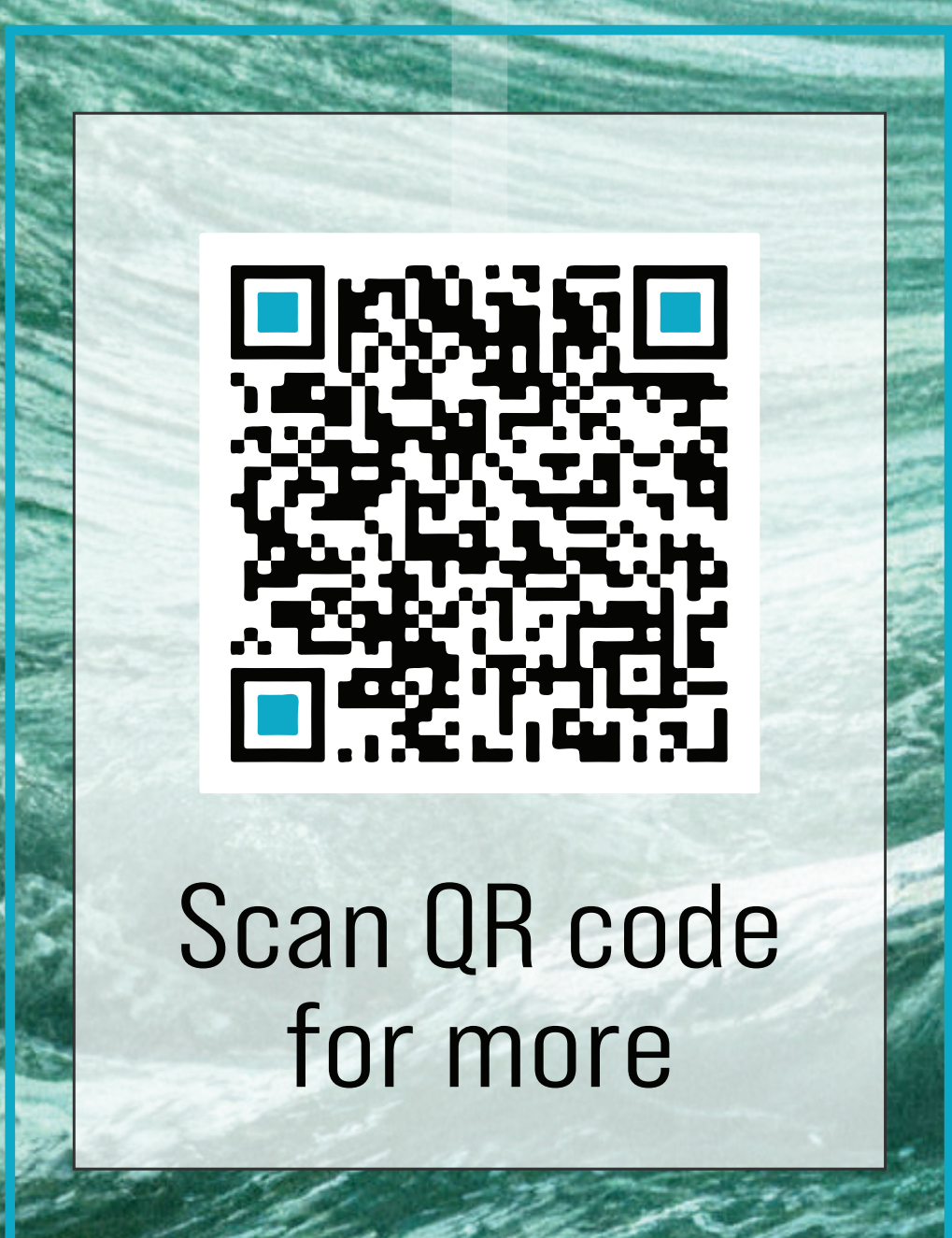
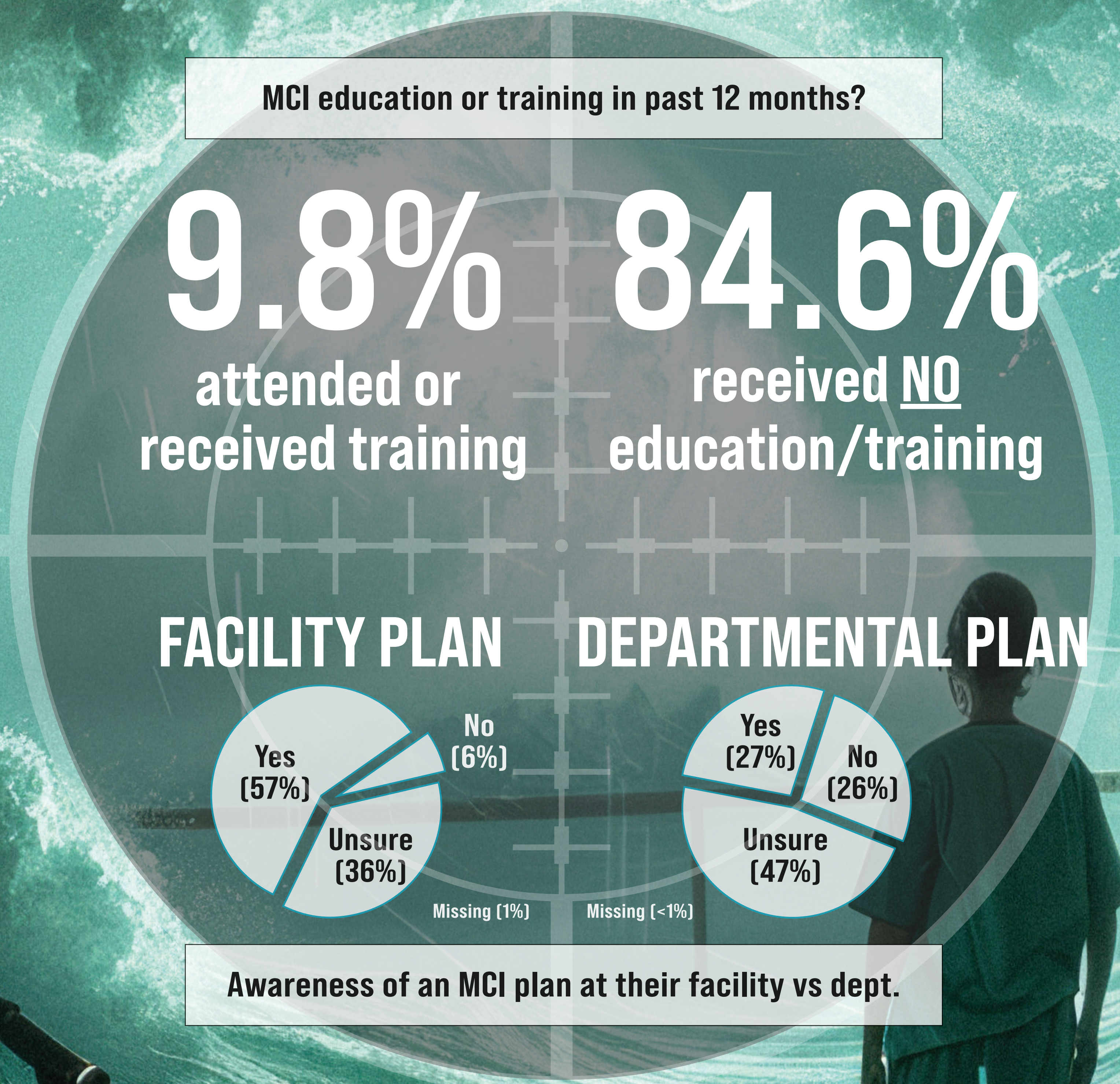
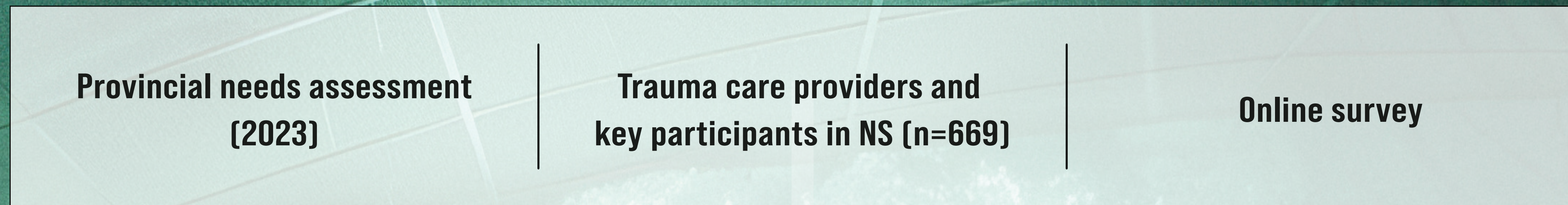
- A formal **needs assessment** was conducted to evaluate the current state, desired state and resulting gaps in preparedness using a framework developed with the Implementation Science team at NS Health.
- **Data collection** involved semi-structured interviews of trauma care providers and other key partners in NS, along with an online survey created with Microsoft Forms and administered via email and QR codes.

RESULTS

- A total of **669 survey responses** were received from rural, regional and tertiary care staff across NS.
- When asked if their facility had a **Mass Casualty Plan** 56.9% of participants responded "yes"; however, this fell to 26.8% when asked about departmental plans.
- Most (84.9%) had not received any **MCI education or training** in the past year, and few felt their department was "very prepared" for an MCI (5.5%).

DISCUSSION

- Survey results indicated opportunities for advancing an organization-wide culture of MCI preparedness, and indicate a need to develop departmental plans that include specialized roles and responsibilities.
- These findings underscore the need for enhanced and standardized MCI education/training in NS with routine exercises to validate plans and increase confidence.



Role	n	%
Clinical Staff	358	53.5
Administrative Staff	103	15.4
Managers	77	11.5
Support Services	70	10.5
Leads*	11	1.6
Site Leaders	10	1.5
Directors	8	1.2
Other	16	2.4
Unknown	16	2.4

Table 1. Roles of survey respondents (n=669).
*Included Team Leads (n=7), Clinical Practice Leads (n=3) and a Health Service Lead (n=1).

