

Do Ohioans Care Enough? Tracking Climate Change Issues Through the Issue-Attention Cycle

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INTRODUCTION

- People seek information to understand issues and form perceptions (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).
- Issues often involve ethics, values, and conflicts, shaping public attitudes (Nisbet & Huges, 2006).
- Issues tend to start positive but become more contentious over time (Cacciatore et al., 2012).
- Why some issues gain more attention than others is worth exploring (Engström et al., 2008).
- This study positions climate change (CC) issues in the issue-attention cycle framework based on the attention reported by Ohio residents.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Meng's (1992) issue-attention cycle (Figure 1) was applied to position twelve CC-related issues based on the perceptions of Ohio residents. Each issue was placed in a stage to reflect the public's level of attention and concern, from initial awareness to the point where solutions are in place and attention wanes.

Figure 1
Meng's Issue-Attention Cycle

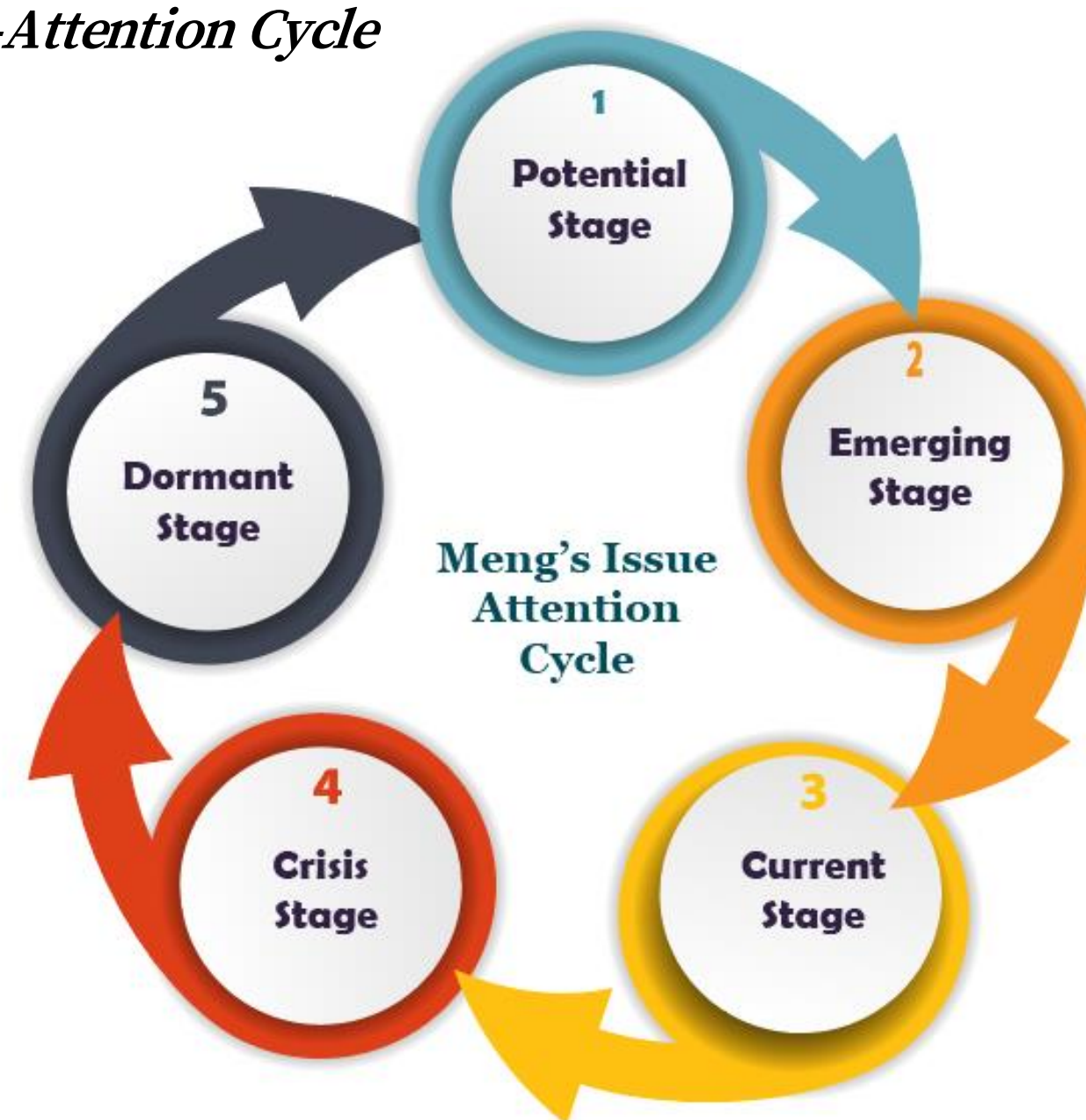
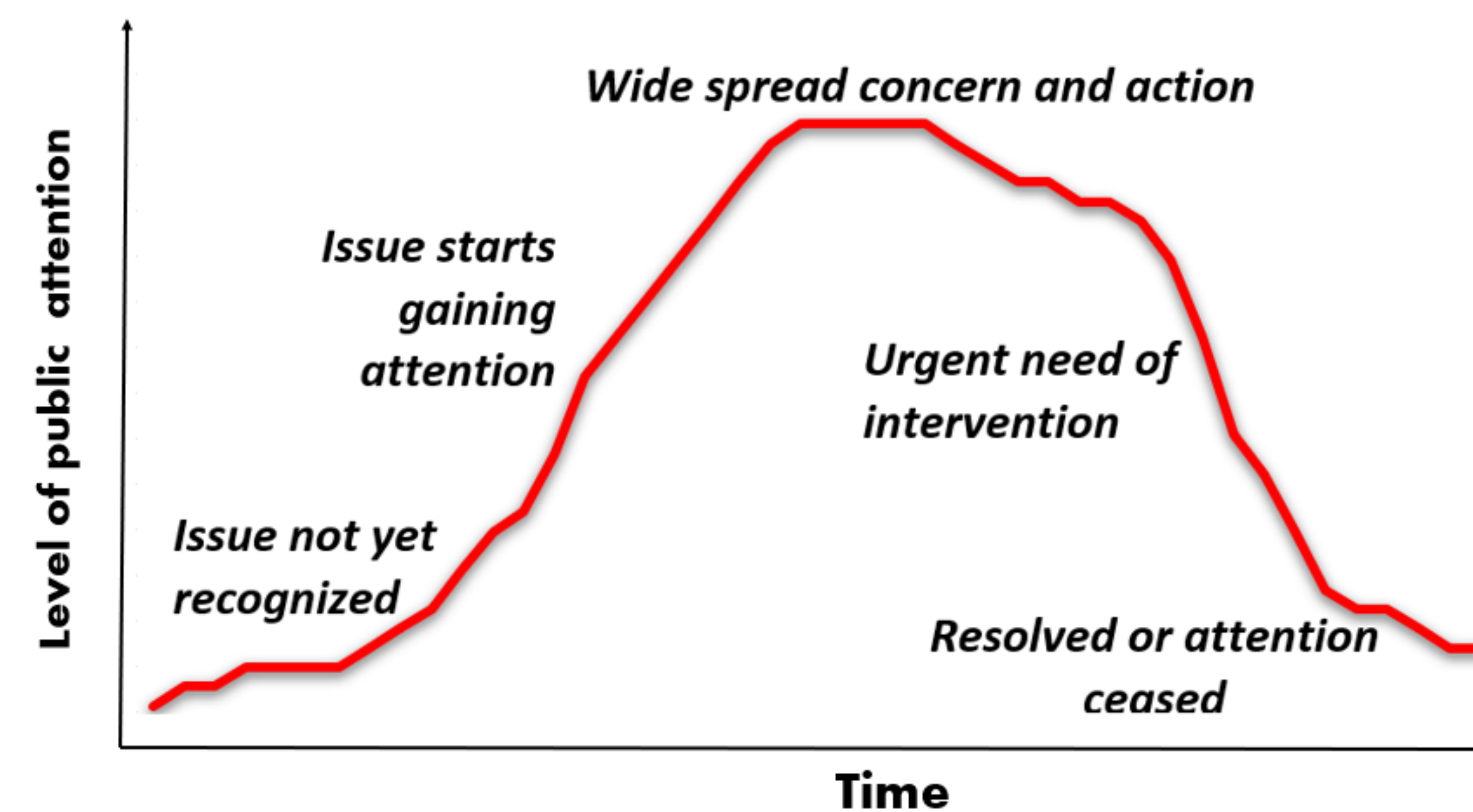


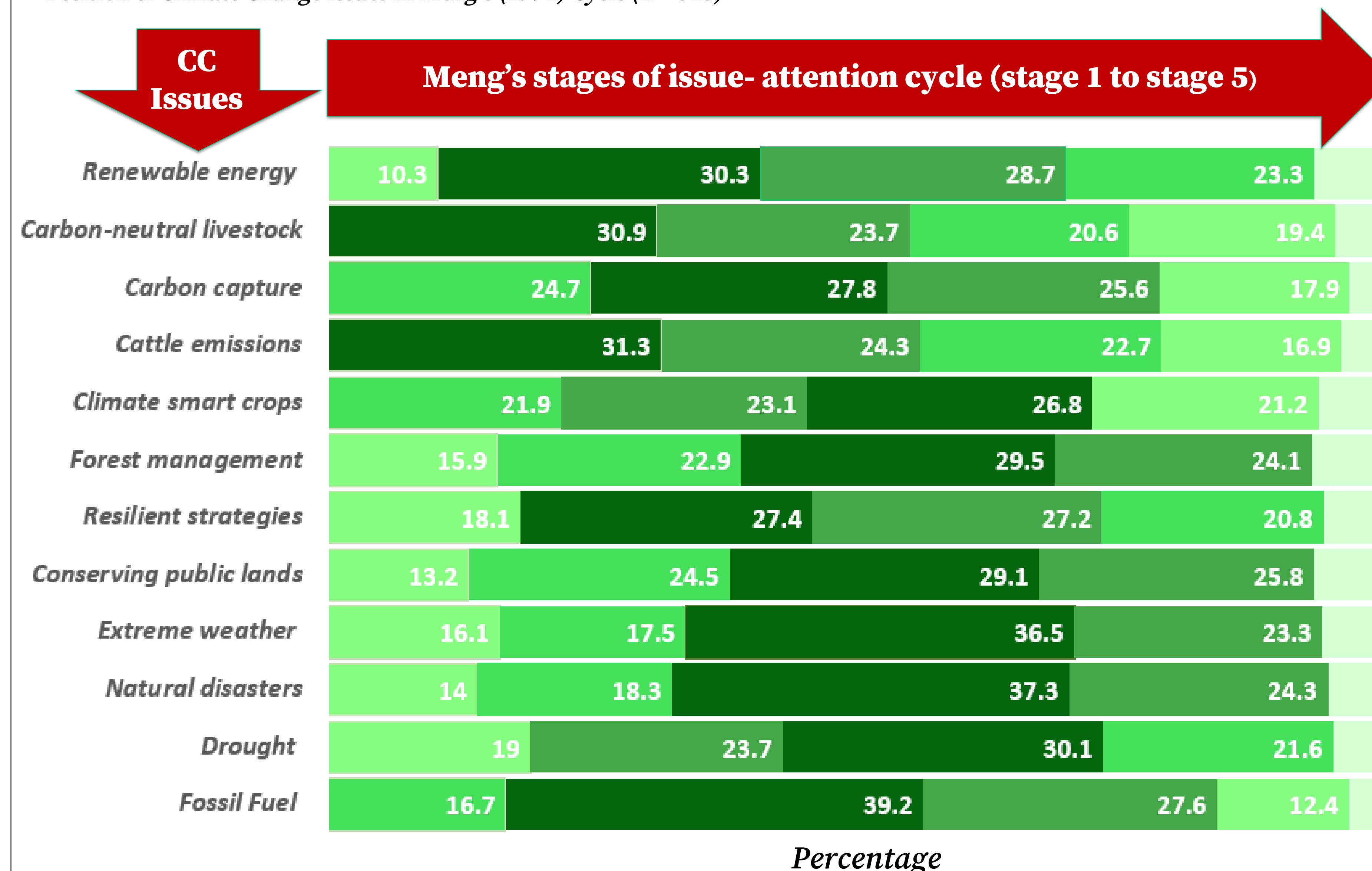
Figure 2
Public Attention and Issue Path

- Issues progress from low recognition to public debate, sustained concern, and peak urgency, eventually diminishing as solutions are implemented and attention fades.

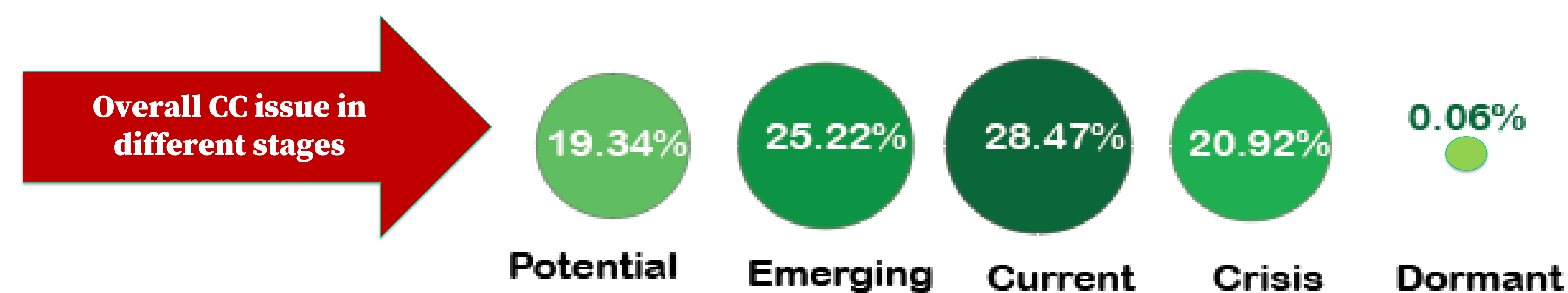


RESULTS

Figure 3
Position of Climate Change Issues in Meng's (1992) Cycle (n = 515)



Note. Highest percentage to lowest from dark green to light green



- Overall, CC issue was positioned at current stage (28.47%) followed by emerging (25.22%) and crisis stage (20.92%).
- Natural disasters, extreme weather, drought resistant crops, and conserving public lands show widespread concern.
- Elimination of fossil fuels, renewable energy, carbon capture, and forest management are emerging issues.
- Cattle emissions and carbon-neutral livestock are perceived as potential issues by over 30% of respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

- Participants are highly concerned about CC related issues.
- Based on Meng's (1992) work, public attention to these issues may decline over time unless there are events that renew interest and demand for action.
- Agricultural communicators and policymakers should acknowledge the high level of concern regarding CC issues, particularly natural disaster, extreme weather and conservation of public lands.
- Agencies and policymakers should coordinate their actions to develop strategies that align with public preferences.
- Researcher should continuously monitor the public's attention to CC issues over time to enable communicators and policymakers to adapt their strategies accordingly.

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METHODS

