



MEDIA RELEASE
Thursday, 30th May, 2024

NEW RESEARCH REVEALS YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS MOST AFFECTED BY NATURAL DISASTERS

- Research reveals relationship between extreme weather events, mental health and suicidality
- 94% of people surveyed concerned these events are becoming more frequent and more severe
- Half experienced mental health impacts on themselves (48%) or loved ones (45%)
- Full report available on request

According to a newly released report commissioned by Lifeline, the majority of Australians are concerned about the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather, with young people aged 18-24 and parents of under 18's experiencing the most significant impacts on their mental health.

The *2024 Extreme Weather, Mental Health & Suicidality Report* reveals that 90% of 18- to 24-year-olds believe natural disasters have taken a toll on their mental health, as well as that of their friends, family and the community. Meanwhile, 81% of parents feel the same, compared to 48% of the general population.

More than half of young people (56%) and parents with children under 18 (55%), say climate related stress and anxiety are impeding their daily functioning compared to 43% of the general population.

When asked about their biggest concerns, people surveyed reported extreme weather events and climate change as the highest stressors after cost of living – ahead of affordable housing, healthcare and the economy.

Lifeline Australia Chief Research Officer Dr Anna Brooks said the significant levels of distress being experienced across the community are understandable responses to a threat.

“As we experience climate change, with many directly and indirectly impacted, taking action can help reduce that anxiety. It could be as simple as becoming more informed about weather events or joining a local emergency or environmental action group,” said Dr Brooks.

“Given young people are particularly impacted, parents and caregivers have an especially important role to play. Effective ways to support young people include making time and space for honest, age-appropriate conversations, as well as promoting an action-oriented approach.

“You might role-model behaviours like taking cooler, shorter showers, turning off lights in unoccupied rooms and buying pre-loved fashion.”

“People living in disaster zones are some of the most affected. If you are feeling overwhelmed, regardless of where you live, please reach out to Lifeline in the way you feel most comfortable.

MEDIA CONTACT: 0408 407 376 (calls, no texts) | media@lifeline.org.au

NB: Lifeline's 24-hour telephone crisis line 13 11 14 is pronounced 'thirteen eleven fourteen'.



You can phone, text or chat to a Crisis Supporter 24/7 and also jump online for support resources.”

“If you find yourself feeling more worried than usual, prioritise your self-care and engage in behaviours that support your wellbeing: prioritise your sleep, move your body, spend time in nature, and connect with others who can support you.”

You can phone Lifeline to speak to a Crisis Supporter on 13 11 14, text 0477 131 114, chat to Lifeline online or access the Support Toolkit to self-manage what you’re going through at www.lifeline.org.au (all services are available 24/7).

ABOUT THE SURVEY (available on request)

In August 2023, Lifeline commissioned 89 Degrees East Research to generate new knowledge about the relationship between extreme weather events, mental health and suicidality.

There were 1,010 participants, representative of the national general population of Australian adults by age, gender and location

Survey questions explored level of concern about extreme weather events, lived experiences of mental health impacts as a result of extreme weather, and beliefs about responsibility to prepare for mental health impacts as a result of extreme weather.

Survey results have been weighted.

ABOUT LIFELINE

For over 60 years, Lifeline has been connecting with Australians in need through crisis support and suicide prevention services, operating the 13 11 14 telephone line within 43 centres around the nation as well as a 24/7 crisis text, webchat service and Support Toolkit.

The organisation expects to respond to over one million requests for support this year, creating an average of 120 safety plans to keep a person experiencing suicidal ideation safe every day.

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