

Extreme weather and suicidality

In 2025, Lifeline Australia, in partnership with NRMA Insurance, commissioned 89 Degrees East to examine the impacts of extreme weather on mental health and suicidality. Building on the 2023 baseline, the research tracks changes over time and explores emerging areas of concern.



The findings show that anxiety about extreme weather is increasingly shaping how Australians live, work, and connect. While concern is widespread, it is more pronounced among certain groups, including women, parents of children under 18, Generation Z, people experiencing financial stress, and those who have lived through multiple extreme weather events.

Overall, extreme weather is emerging as a cumulative and systemic pressure on mental health - deepening existing inequalities, influencing major life decisions, and gradually weakening the social connections people rely on for support.

The research poses a challenge - how can organisations, government and communities work together to ensure Australian's mental wellbeing is better supported and safeguarded in the face of intensifying weather events?



Key findings

1. Extreme weather is a constant threat



Extreme weather is now a long-term mental health issue, not just a property or infrastructure concern.



Most Australians (91%) are concerned that extreme weather events will become more frequent or severe.



Around six in ten Australians (61%) report feeling stressed or anxious when thinking about extreme weather, with higher levels among those who have experienced multiple events in the past five years.








More than four in ten Australians (42%) say this stress and anxiety has, at least at times, affected their daily lives.



Nearly 40% of Australians report that extreme weather has harmed their own mental health or that of someone they know, rising to 44% in the hardest hit communities.

2. Disproportionate burden, compounding stressors



-  Women report higher levels of stress and greater concern for children and communities than men.
-  Parents of children under 18 are among the most anxious and action-oriented groups.
-  Generation Z are more likely to feel anxious about their community being affected by extreme weather and report impacts on their daily lives: with one in five altering their career paths or job choices due to concerns about extreme weather.
-  Health and emergency service workers are also significantly affected, with higher rates of job or career changes and notable personal mental health strain.
-  People experiencing financial stress face a double burden: high concern about extreme weather and pronounced effects on daily life, particularly if they have already experienced multiple events.




3. Life changes driven by anxiety

-  More than half of Australians (53%) have made at least one significant life change in response to extreme weather-related stress.
-  These include major decisions about where people live, work, and plan for the future.
-  At least one in ten Australians have changed travel plans (15%), decided not to move to or buy a home in an extreme weather affected area (13%), or relocated to a region less impacted by extreme weather (10%).
-  Many people report withdrawing from sport, social gatherings, and joy sustaining activities such as gardening.

4. The awareness gap

-  Fewer than one in four Australians (23%) are aware of information or resources to help them mentally prepare for an extreme weather event.
-  Less than half of Australians (43%) feel informed by traditional media coverage of extreme weather, dropping to 27% among those who rely primarily on social media

5. A cumulative and systemic challenge

-  Australians expect governments to treat mental health as core disaster infrastructure and want practical tools to support mental preparedness, not just physical readiness.

Natural disaster resources

13 HELP (13 43 57) is Lifeline's dedicated 24/7 support line for people living through bushfire recovery or struggling to cope with an extreme weather-related event. People can also call Lifeline on 13 11 14 at any time.

Lifeline and NRMA Insurance have developed dedicated natural disaster content within **Lifeline's Support Toolkit** to help at-risk communities understand mental health impacts of extreme weather and build resilience before, during and after disasters.

