

Emergency Preparedness of People with Disability: A Cross-Sectional Survey



Key Messages

- People with disability want to enhance their personal emergency preparedness. When offering preparedness support:
 - Provide person-centred tools for self-assessment and tailored planning.
 - Address health, well-being, and emotions during planning conversations.
 - Include support networks in emergency planning conversations.
 - Offer practical assistance (e.g., heavy lifting, household preparedness).
- People with high support needs depend on specialised care from people and equipment daily. Their needs must be considered in emergency planning.
- Promote collaborative actions of different stakeholders including (e.g., service providers, disability organisations, and local authorities) for effective coordination of emergency management and disaster recovery supports.
- There is potential for peer advocates and individuals with lived experience of disability and mental illness to support emergency preparedness. Research is needed to develop this role.

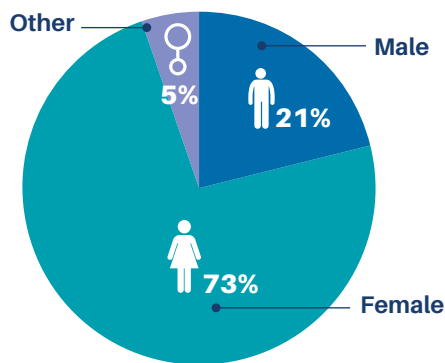
Survey Overview

138
people with disability

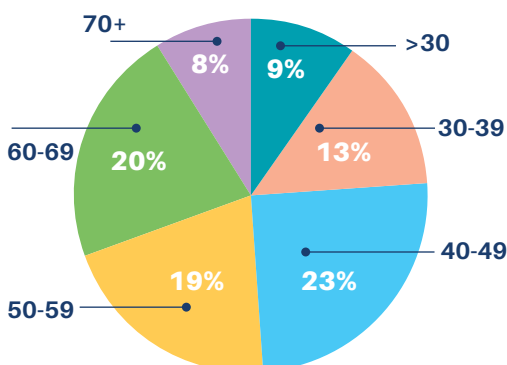
To explore preparedness, capabilities, and support needs in emergencies and hear their advice.

Respondent Characteristics

Gender

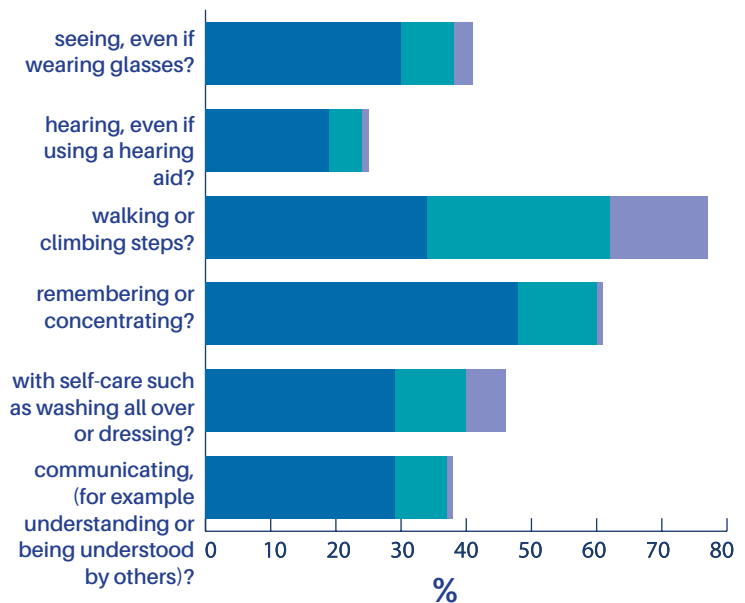


Age



Self-reported difficulties because of a health problem

Do you have difficulty...



Some difficulty A lot of difficulty Cannot do at all



73%

rely on an aid, assistive device, or equipment every day.



51%

have a friend or family member assisting on a regular, informal basis.



39%

are NDIS participants.



37%

are on disability support pension.



35%

have a paid support worker.



10%

have an assistance animal.

Emergency Planning



52%

reported having an emergency plan¹.

People living alone were less likely to create an emergency plan, but those more worried about bushfires were more likely to have one.



Motives for emergency planning

37%

Improve chance of survival

23%

Past disaster experience



Reasons for not planning

22%

Unsure how to prepare

11%

Difficulty obtaining emergency information



Most common actions

58%

Safely storing important documents

55%

Seeking timely emergency information



Least common actions

10%

Having a backup power source like a home generator or solar panel

9%

Making a backup plan for support workers and essential suppliers

People with self-reported mental illness did less emergency preparation, while those more worried about bushfires did more to prepare.



Confidence in managing different disaster risks was attributed to

44%

The ability to deal with the emotions that arise during the event

41%

Previous experience in handling the event

36%

The presence of supportive family or carers during the event



Lack of confidence in managing different disaster risks was attributed to

49%

Perceived inability to keep oneself safe during the event

45%

Lack of personal experience in dealing with the event

38%

Having nowhere accessible to go during such an event

¹ An emergency plan is "a documented set of tasks and steps to follow during an emergency, including assigned responsibilities."



Advice to People with Disability



Make a tailored emergency plan:

- Plan ahead for emergencies using a step-by-step approach.
- Match your plan to your support needs.
- Use credible sources for risk and preparedness information, including evacuation routes.
- Recognise the uniqueness of disability and seek advice from peers.
- Consider, for example, how you will:
 - Manage your health needs (e.g., temperature regulation, pressure sore management, fatigue, anaphylaxis risks, breathing).
 - Access services and equipment (e.g., medical, life support, communication, assistive technology).
 - Manage your emotions (e.g., stay connected, keep occupied or distracted with activities).

“If you need advice about how to address disability-specific needs, ask other people with the same disability.”



Build a support team:

- Reach out to family, friends, or support workers.
- Engage with emergency services to discuss your needs and options.
- Practice emergency plans with your support team

“The plan will depend on your specific needs and your local area’s environmental factors.”

“Make contact with local emergency services to talk about your needs and options.”

“Be honest about limitations and ask for help if needed.”



Advice to Government and Emergency Services

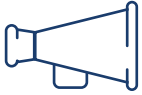


Access is more than physical:

- Implement universal design principles for more inclusive emergency planning and evacuation.
- Ask people who have a disability - gather our insights about the full range and diversity of support needs.

“Listen to the person with a disability, they know their disability and what their needs are.”

“Make sure refuge areas are fully accessible, not just a ramp.”



Improve how emergency information is communicated:

- People with disability want accurate and timely emergency information from trusted sources. It is crucial that these resources are accessible, easy to comprehend and actionable.
- Actively engage with the disability community to build trust, learn about support needs, and communicate options.
- Conduct pre-disaster safety visits to create emergency plans in partnership with people with disability so they know what actions to take.
- Collaborate with other service providers, disability organisations and local authorities to provide welfare checks, services, and supports for people with disability during emergencies.

“Communicate information and updates of any assistance available.”

“Set up a support network for people in this situation to help us better help ourselves.”

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