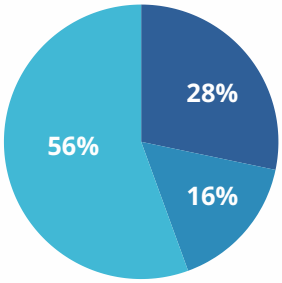
Strengthening the experiences of people who are deaf, Deaf or hard of hearing during natural hazards emergencies

SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS - AUGUST 2025

Our research aims to understand how the strategies and capabilities used every day by people who are deaf, Deaf or hard-of-hearing (DHH)* can be supported to ensure people are better prepared for the impacts of bushfires, floods, cyclones, and other emergencies. We conducted an online survey (November 2023 - April 2024) with 124 Australian adults who self-identified as DHH. Here's what we learned:

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Emergency preparedness actions



114 respondents used at least one hearing aid or cochlear implant

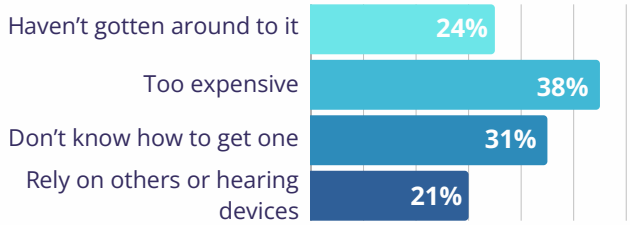
- **42%** had a spare hearing device
- **37%** had made a plan to charge their hearing device/s in a prolonged power outage
- **33%** had made a plan to access information about an emergency if not able to use their device/s

ACCESSIBLE SMOKE ALARMS

65% of respondents would not be able to hear a standard smoke alarm without hearing devices

Two-thirds of these had a visual/vibrating smoke alarm at home

Reasons for not having an accessible smoke alarm (n=29)

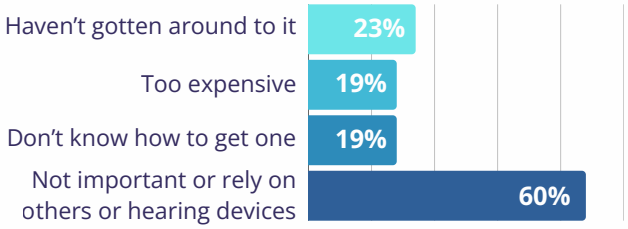


ACCESSIBLE DOORBELLS

Emergency services often alert people of an emergency requiring evacuation by knocking on doors. DHH people may not hear door knocking, especially at night when not wearing hearing devices.

One-third of respondents had a visual/vibrating doorbell at home

Reasons for not having an accessible doorbell (n=74)



The findings below are specific to people who use hearing devices, and cannot be attributed to respondents who do not use hearing devices

COMMUNICATION WITH AND WITHOUT HEARING DEVICES

74% of respondents could understand and communicate face-to-face with nearly everybody when using their hearing devices.

Without their devices, **36%** of this group said they would not be able to communicate with anybody.

RELIANCE ON POWER FOR HEARING DEVICES

40% used only rechargeable batteries

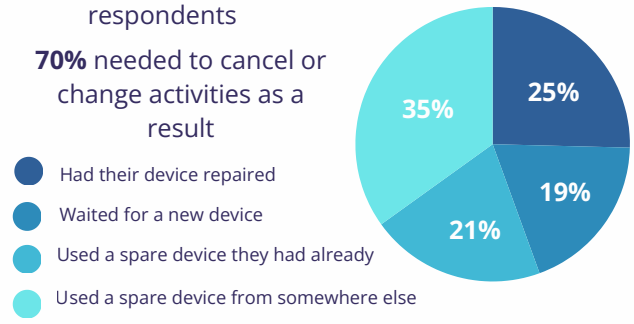
60% used a smartphone every day for management of their hearing device

IMPACT OF LOSING OR DAMAGING A HEARING DEVICE

Losing or damaging a hearing device was stressful for **80%** of respondents

70% needed to cancel or change activities as a result

How respondents managed losing or damaging a device (n=63)



JOIN US IN THE NEXT PHASE!

We're co-designing a hearing device-specific emergency preparedness tool to help DHH individuals better navigate emergencies. If you would like to contribute, contact the lead researcher: **Brigit.Maguire@sydney.edu.au**.

Collaborating 4 Inclusion

* We recognise the diverse experience of deafness and hearing difficulties. While we use terms like "deaf, Deaf and hard of hearing" and "hearing loss" in this summary, we acknowledge that some have other preferred terms, including different preferences for identify-first and person-first language.

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