

## About the research

### Survey

4,000+ postal surveys of an anonymous, 46 question survey deployed nationally, along with an online version.

Response rate: >20%

Other technical survey info.

### Contact Us

Project PI: Dr Tanya King (PhD Anthropology)

Phone: 0427889917

Email: [tanya.king@deakin.edu.au](mailto:tanya.king@deakin.edu.au)

Web:

<https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/anthropology/sustainable-fishing-families-project-progress-page/>

**39%** of fishers were dissuaded from going to the doctor because they felt their GP didn't understand the pressures of the fishing industry.

## What can you do?

### Medical specialists:

- Recognise that those in the fishing industry face a specific set of mental health challenges, primarily stress from **perpetual livelihood insecurity** and/or **loss**, which is institutionalised within the current industry management arrangements.

### Fishing industry members:

- Book a **double** appointment with your GP
- Take this brochure with you
- Ask for a list of options
- Make a follow-up appointment

### CONTACT DETAILS

For more information see: Sustainable Fishing Families  
Project Report number 123ABC.



## MENTAL HEALTH IN THE AUSTRALIAN COMMERCIAL SEAFOOD INDUSTRY

*Information for GPs, Primary Health Networks and Seafood Industry Members*

In 2017 a national survey revealed significantly higher rates of poor mental health in the fishing industry than the general population.

### K10:

Almost **DOUBLE** the rate of high or very high levels of **psychological distress** than general population (including farmers).

### Depression diagnoses:

19%

### Self-reported stressors :

• Red tape	81%	Modern Uncertainties	Statistically Correlated
• Livelihood insecurity	80%		
• Regulation changes	79%		
• Poor public perception	54%		
• Recreational lobbyists	45%		
• Fluctuating markets	52%	Traditional Risks	
• Severe weather	37%		
• Physical dangers of fishing	22%		
• Isolation	15%		

### Self-reported self-harm:

Qualitative responses indicate that a key method of self-harm involves **prescription medication overdose**.

### Self-reported in past year:

- Fatigue **61%**
- Stress **58%**
- Trouble sleeping **51%**
- Trouble with memory **27%**
- Trouble concentrating **22%**
- Panic attacks **8%**

*Fishing communities exhibit strong **social capital** and the skills to negotiate **traditional risks**: fluctuating catches and markets, physical danger, isolation.*

*Fishing communities are less equipped to negotiate **modern uncertainties**: fluctuating quotas, political lobbying by opposition groups (both within and particularly outside industry), poor public perception, area closures, particularly those making way for amateur-only fishing havens.*

### Why are those in the seafood industry exhibiting such poor mental health?

#### Known risk factors:

- Most fishers are **men**
- Many live or work in **rural or regional** Australia

#### Additional risk factors:

##### Permanent livelihood insecurity:

- Fishers harvest **public resources** so **can not own** assets securely (e.g. as freehold land); ongoing 'social licence' is required.

##### Culturally devalued:

- Australians do not **culturally value fishers**, as do other nations (e.g. Canada, Japan), and as we venerate farmers.

##### Environmental misperceptions:

- Public assumes industry is unsustainable, despite being **world-leaders in sustainability**, and primarily **small-scale**.

##### Threat of workplace violence:

- Fishers experience **verbal** and sometimes **physical abuse** and **property vandalism** from members of the public **while at work**.