

## Bushfire Smoke Symptoms Survey December 30 to January 12, 2020

(Data downloaded 29 Jan 2020)



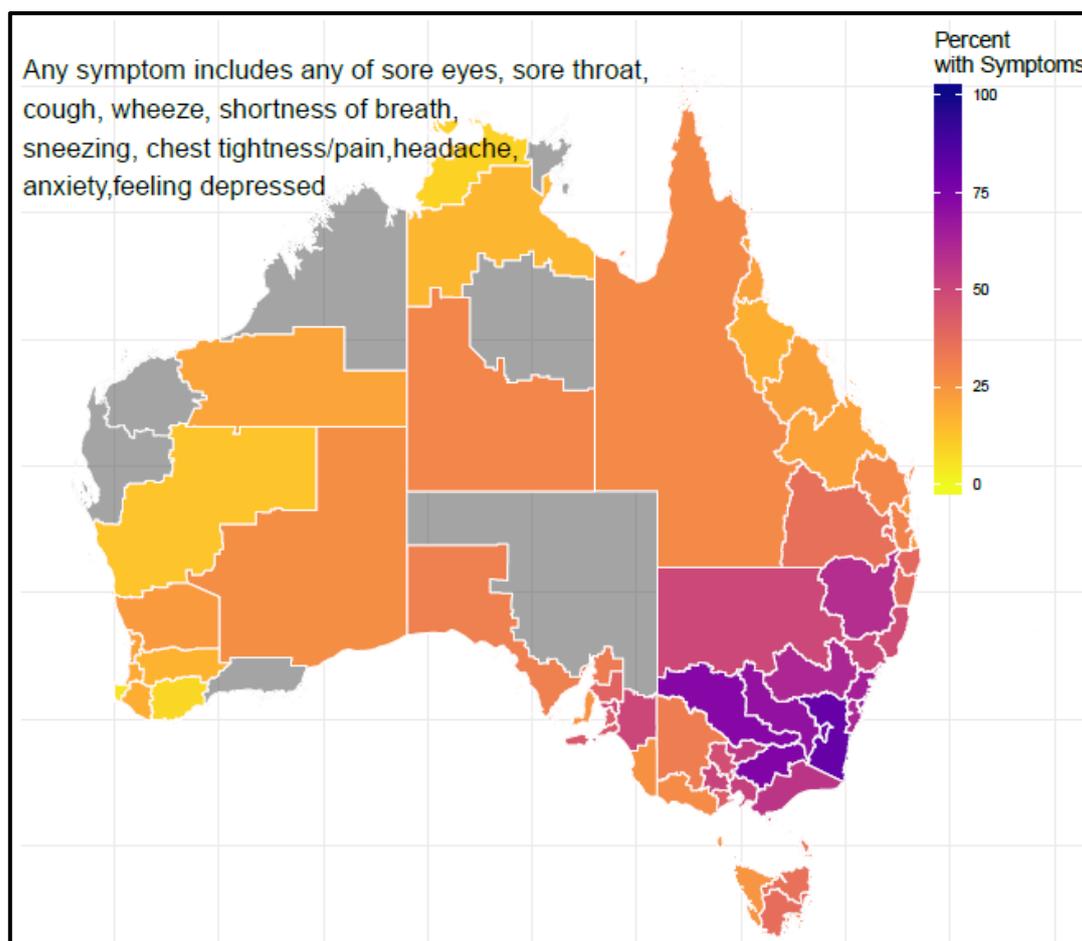
FluTracking

### Key Findings:

- Over 38,000 FluTrackers have responded
- The most common symptoms were eye and throat irritation, cough and headache.
- Between December 30<sup>th</sup> to January 12<sup>th</sup> – ACT, NSW & VIC reported the most symptoms.

In response to the ongoing bushfire crisis, FluTracking performed a preliminary survey in December with a small group of participants and found very high levels of symptoms in the smoke affected group (results can be found [here](#)). We received a very positive response to this survey so we extended the survey to all participants in Australia early in the new year. In total, over 38,000 FluTrackers have helped us understand the health impacts of the bushfire situation.

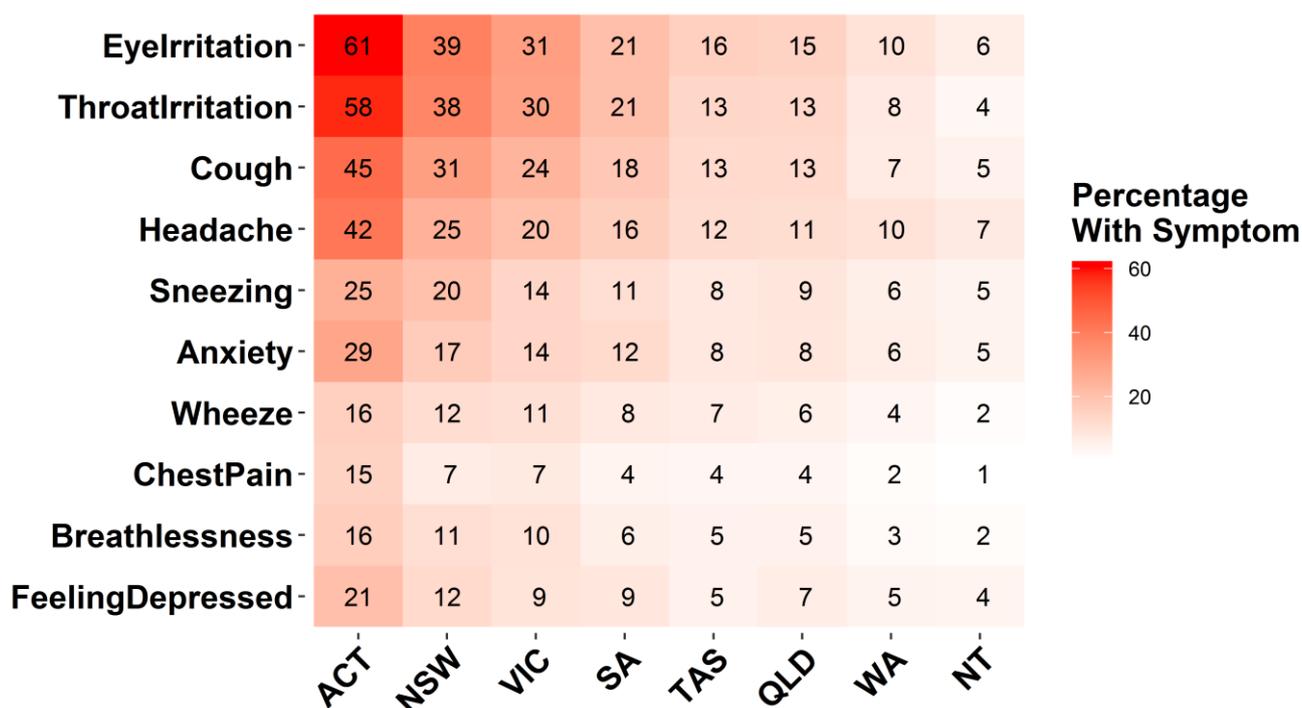
The map below shows any symptom from all survey participants (regardless of whether attributed to smoke or not). Between December 30<sup>th</sup> and January 12<sup>th</sup> the highest percentage of people with symptoms were in ACT, NSW, and Vic. However all areas of Australia showed some level of smoke-related symptoms.



\*Grey regions contain <20 participants and are not analysed in this figure

The graphic below shows the percentage of individuals experiencing each symptom from our survey by state/territory. The intense red colour shows where a higher percentage of participants experienced a symptom. Eye and throat irritation, cough and headache were the most common symptoms. Participants with a history of respiratory illness (including asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and other illnesses) had 5-8 times higher rates of wheeze, cough and chest pain.

The information we have learned has been helpful for health departments across the country to help them plan their response to the ongoing situation.



\*Symptoms regardless of whether attributed to smoke or not

The table below shows that relatively few participants who experienced symptoms in the main smoke-affected areas sought medical advice regarding those symptoms. This is important information – it tells us that most of the illness in the community would not be seen in hospitals or other healthcare settings. This highlights the importance of community surveillance programs like FluTracking.

	0-4 years	5-7 years	18-64 years	65+ years
<i>Pharmacist</i>	6 (4.4%)	32 (5.2%)	474 (7.8%)	193 (8.5%)
<i>GP</i>	12 (8.9%)	39 (6.3%)	475 (7.8%)	204 (9.0%)
<i>ED</i>	1 (0.7%)	3 (0.5%)	21 (0.3%)	19 (0.8%)
<i>Hospital Inpatient</i>	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.3%)	11 (0.2%)	8 (0.4%)

\* Data in this table only include participants from NSW, VIC, SA and ACT. These jurisdictions were the only areas with self-reported symptom association to smoke >50%.

**This survey response shows that the FluTracking community have become an important asset in Australian public health emergencies. We value the community spirited generosity of FluTrackers and will only send you special surveys like this in the event of emergency public health events.**