A profile of Australia’s disaster resilience


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Australian communities face increasing losses and disruption from natural disasters. Disaster resilience is a protective system that arises from the capacities of social, economic and institutional systems to absorb the shocks of natural hazard events, and to learn, adapt and transform in anticipation of an uncertain future. The Australian Natural Disaster Resilience Index was used to profile the distribution of disaster resilience at a national level.

Disaster resilience is not uniformly distributed in Australia.

32% of the population (7.6 million people*) live in areas assessed as having high capacity for disaster resilience. These areas comprise <0.5% of the land surface area.

52% of the population (12.3 million people*) live in areas assessed as having moderate capacity for disaster resilience. These areas comprise 6% of the land surface area.

16% of the population (3.8 million people*) live in areas assessed as having low capacity for disaster resilience. These areas comprise 94% of the land surface area.

There is a distinct association between capacity for disaster resilience and remoteness.

Remote and very remote areas are almost always associated with low capacity for disaster resilience.

The highest index values (0.9-1.0) – and hence the highest capacities for disaster resilience – are always found in metropolitan areas.

Most areas of high capacity for disaster resilience are located in metropolitan Australia. However, areas of low capacity for disaster resilience also occur in metropolitan Australia.

38% of Australia’s metropolitan areas* have high capacity for disaster resilience, 9% of Australia’s metropolitan areas* have low capacity for disaster resilience. These areas of low and high capacity often sit side by side within cities.

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