

# Answer to a question on notice - Lifeline Australia

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## Public hearing in Canberra on 15 September 2020

### Question:

**CHAIR:** I've got a couple of questions. One is to Lifeline. The statistics you've provided in evidence on the numbers of calls are really interesting. I'm wondering if you've got a breakdown of the issues in a general sense. What are the top issues in those calls? You say it's lack of certainty, but I'm wondering if there is a breakdown anywhere. I had a look on your website to see if you've released any data along those lines. Is it something you can provide the committee either today or on notice?

**Mr Brogden:** We will look to provide you with something on notice.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Something like the top 10 reasons that people are contacting you would be useful.

**Mr Brogden:** I will get you some more detailed numbers, but I can tell you that between 45 and 50 per cent of people calling us at the moment are talking about COVID.

**CHAIR:** In a general sense?

**Mr Brogden:** Across a whole range of things—how it affects them and what it means for them. But it is interesting that 12 months ago COVID didn't exist and now half of our callers are talking about it.

**CHAIR:** I'm interested in understanding in the breakdown what's health related and health concerns as opposed to economic concerns.

**Mr Brogden:** Okay. What we have found is that—and I'm sure the other witnesses would support this—a lot of people who already had mental health concerns have had them exacerbated by COVID. So we may have had that same person calling last year about general anxiety; now they're calling very focused on the anxiety that COVID has brought them.

**CHAIR:** If you could provide that on notice that would be interesting and useful information for us.

### Answer:

Please find attached data that speak to the question Lifeline took on notice from the recent Senate Committee hearing.

The data are presented per aggregated number of topic mentions per month.

In the accompanying graph, they are laid out such that reasons for calling appear on the vertical axis, with month of contact represented along the horizontal axis.

With regards to interpreting those data, I note that typically, more than one reason for calling is cited during a contact with Lifeline. As such, the reasons for calling exceed the total volume of calls we receive per month.

Of the top three reasons for calling Lifeline please note that **family and relationships** is historically the highest and remains so during Covid19.

**Mental health concerns** are the second most commonly cited reason, with **self** (defined as concerns about self esteem/direction of life) the third most frequently discussed topic.

**Community issue** data include situational issues including drought, bushfire, COVID19.

As is clear from the data, those situational factors that drive up our contact volumes are not usually the specific topic about which people report being concerned: Rather, situational factors typically create 'load' on other issues such as **family and relationships**.

Topic Name	2019-09	2019-10	2019-11	2019-12	2020-01	2020-02	2020-03	2020-04	2020-05	2020-06	2020-07	2020-08	Grand Total
1 Family and Relationships	25,047	24,959	25,482	28,685	27,940	27,392	27,638	28,639	30,756	30,260	31,240	32,189	340,227
2 Mental Health	22,791	22,964	22,769	24,226	25,604	25,104	26,438	28,288	29,705	28,216	30,031	30,559	316,695
3 Self	20,945	21,081	21,506	23,944	23,758	23,248	25,603	27,178	29,098	29,516	30,623	31,466	307,966
4 Health and Disability	11,409	11,729	11,617	12,889	13,119	13,361	15,613	14,356	15,047	15,394	15,218	15,323	165,075
5 Abuse and Trauma	7,468	7,389	7,486	8,063	8,498	9,035	8,568	8,863	9,881	9,784	9,721	9,596	104,352
6 Bereavement and Loss	6,218	5,947	6,143	6,552	6,760	6,719	6,516	6,440	7,430	7,218	7,255	7,478	80,676
7 Addictions / Problem behavi	5,604	5,690	5,383	6,126	6,322	6,277	6,112	6,275	6,932	6,936	6,861	7,216	75,734
8 Community Issue	208	216	415	418	932	738	5,579	12,833	9,644	6,556	9,174	11,109	57,822
9 Employment	3,894	3,947	4,062	3,829	4,305	4,467	4,798	4,769	5,327	5,353	5,512	5,304	55,567
10 Practical Help	3,421	3,528	3,480	3,988	4,037	4,161	4,396	4,149	4,378	4,438	4,375	4,558	48,909

