

Sandy's impact lingers, particularly for children

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Nearly three years after Hurricane Sandy, a new survey of New Jersey residents finds lingering effects on the mental health of residents, particularly children, in the path of the superstorm.

The storm caused significant damage to the homes of more than 100,000 residents in the state, and unfinished repairs, disputed claims and recurrent mold continue to affect tens of thousands of residents, the survey report notes. Along with those problems come increased chances of [mental health](#) distress, [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) and depression, the researchers found.

The Sandy Child and Family Health Study was conducted by a coalition of university centers including the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia. It was funded by the New Jersey Department of Health as a way to better understand the storm's effects and help guide ongoing recovery programs.

"The similarities between Hurricanes Karina and Sandy are quite disturbing," said Dr. David Abramson of New York University, the principal investigator. "Many adults and children are still experiencing emotional and psychological effects, so long after the storm passed. In a significant number of cases, housing damage is at the heart of the problem, and it's very concerning to hear that so many of the federally financed programs have ended even though the needs clearly persist."

Among [the study's findings](#) made public July 29:

- Children in hurricane-damaged homes are at higher risk for [mental health problems](#) than children whose homes suffered no damage.
- The health effects associated with catastrophic damage to one's home are similar to those felt by people living in deep poverty.
- Mold was significantly associated with both asthma and with mental health distress.
- Only one-third of the people living in mandatory evacuation zones heeded the calls to evacuate their homes.



The findings were based on surveys of 1,000 randomly sampled New Jersey [residents](#) living in the most affected counties, from Cape May to north of the George Washington Bridge, and from the shoreline to 20

miles inland. Researchers from New York University, Rutgers and Colorado State University participated.

More information: The study reports are available online:
[ncdp.columbia.edu/microsite-pa ... ublications-reports/](https://ncdp.columbia.edu/microsite-pa...ublications-reports/)

Provided by Columbia University

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