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Introduction

On 4 August 2020 a large explosion in the dockside area of Beirut, Lebanon killed more than 180 people and injured thousands. As many as 300,000 people have been made homeless by the blast. The explosion occurred at a time when Lebanon was experiencing an economic crisis, political unrest and the impact of COVID-19.

Australia has long had close ties with Lebanon and many Lebanese Australians will be affected by these events. This fact sheet provides information for mental health professionals and other service providers working with Lebanese Australians in NSW.


Lebanese community in NSW

Demographics

- In 2016 there were 57,375 people in New South Wales born in Lebanon.
- The majority of Lebanon-born people speak Arabic at home (88.4%) followed by English (8%). 20.6% of people born in Lebanon report speaking English not well or not at all.
- 3.2% of the population born in Lebanon were children (under 19 years of age), 30.4% were young adults (aged 20 to 44 years), and 66.4% were older adults (aged 45 years and over).
- The majority religion amongst Lebanon-born is Islam (43.3%), followed by Maronite Catholic (18.5%) and Western (Roman) Catholic (18.2%).
- The majority of the Lebanon-born population in NSW lived in Sydney, in City of Canterbury Bankstown (19,817), Cumberland Council (10,586), Liverpool City (4,175), Bayside Council (2,896) and Strathfield Council (650).
- In 2016 there were 166,594 people in New South Wales with Lebanese ancestry.

Lebanese Community in NSW and Mental Health

Lebanese Migration to Australia

There have been three main waves of immigration from Lebanon to Australia. From 1880 to the 1920s, mainly Maronite, Melkite and Orthodox Christians arrived on a small scale. Significant numbers of their families served in Australian forces during World War I. Between 1947 and 1975, about 43,000 Lebanese settlers and their families arrived in Australia, establishing many small and large businesses. From 1975 onwards, Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees and others arrived after fleeing the Lebanese Civil War. Many came under the Australian Government’s Special Humanitarian Program.


Lebanese Culture


Mental Health

As a result of the explosion Lebanese Australians may be experiencing a sense of grief and loss. Many will be concerned about family and friends in Lebanon. Some may feel angry and fearful. With the proliferation of social media many Lebanese Australians will be exposed to distressing images and reports about the tragedy. These feelings of distress are normal and for most people they will pass however for those who are directly impacted, have family directly involved or have past experience of trauma the impact may be long lasting. It is also important to recognise that the explosion occurred against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as other social, political and economic issues that Lebanon has been experiencing for a considerable period of time.

The Lebanese community in NSW is diverse and there are a range of factors that influence mental well-being and mental health service utilisation for Lebanese Australians. These include:

- Experience of war, family loss and other traumatic events
- Acculturative stress such as language barriers, adjusting to an unfamiliar culture, employment challenges and financial disadvantage
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Discrimination and racism
- Lack of mental health literacy
- Stigma about mental illness
- Concerns about confidentiality and lack of trust in service providers
- Religion, family and community are sources of strength and resilience.

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Mental Health Literature

The following articles discuss some of the issues that may impact on the mental health of Lebanese Australians.

Where available we have provided links to the full-text of articles, for the full text of other articles please contact your hospital or local library.


Kenny, S. et al; (2005) Arabic Communities and Well Being: Supports and Barriers to Social Connectedness: A Research Monograph Funded by a Grant from VicHealth. CCHR (Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights), Deakin University In partnership with Victorian Arabic Social Services https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b0fd5e6710699c630b269b1/t/5b41fc77f950b7059f903ab2/153105135874/Arabic+Communities+and+Wellbeing.pdf


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Lebanese Muslim Association (2019) ‘Mental Health Needs of Muslim Adolescents in NSW - Executive Summary’


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Resources in Arabic

- **Advice on managing distress: Information for communities, parents and caregivers after a distressing event** Australian Red Cross
- **Coping with war, tsunamis and other disaster** Transcultural Mental Health Centre
- **Family Help Kit, Grief and Loss and Post-traumatic stress** NSW Health
- **Mindfulness in Challenging Times** Videos, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District
- **Mindfulness audio resources** South Eastern Sydney Local Health District
- **Trauma – reaction and recovery** Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

Mental health screening tools in Arabic

- **Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS)**
- **General Perceived Self Efficacy Scale (GSE)**
- **Kessler 10 Assessment Form and Whose recovery and outcome are they anyway?**
- **Refugee Health Screener -15**

Further mental health resources in Arabic

- **In Your Language – Arabic** Transcultural Mental Health Centre
- **Multilingual Information** Embrace Multicultural Mental Health
- **Resource Search** Select Arabic from drop down list of languages. NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service
- **Arabic resources** Victorian Health Translations Directory

Lebanese Community Organisations

- Lebanese Community Council of NSW; Phone: (02) 9790 7555, Email: info@lccnsw.org.au, Website: www.lccnsw.org.au
- Lebanese Muslim Association: Phone: (02) 9750 6833, Email: info@lma.org.au, Website: https://lma.org.au
- Maronite Care: Phone 1300 627 227, Email: admin@maronitecare.org.au, Website: http://maronitecare.org.au
- Mission of Hope: Hayat Telephone Crisis Service: 1300 993 398, Email: info@missionofhope.org.au, Website: www.missionofhope.org.au

Disclaimer: This profile aims to provide general information about the Lebanese Australian community. It is not exhaustive or prescriptive. The Lebanese community is diverse and this profile does not represent every individual from Lebanon or with Lebanese heritage. The profile will be continuously updated as new information comes to light.

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