# University of Hawaii Study Finds High Rate of Respiratory Issues Among Wildfire-Affected Maui Residents



A recent study by the University of Hawaii has revealed that up to 74% of participants of a wildfire-affected survey in Maui are experiencing respiratory issues. Conducted on 679 individuals from January to February 2024, the study aims to investigate the health impacts of the wildfires that occurred last year. Approximately half of the respondents exhibited signs of compromised lung function.

Led by Dr. Alika Maunakea from the university's John A. Burns School of Medicine, the research highlighted a correlation between higher wildfire exposure and increased respiratory symptoms. Many participants had not sought medical attention, citing the destruction of clinics and the need to focus on immediate necessities like housing and employment. Two-thirds of the respondents resided in Lahaina, the area most impacted by the fires.

The wildfires on August 8, 2023, claimed over 101 lives, making them the deadliest in over a century in the U.S., and caused significant displacement and property loss. The study underscores Maui's shortage of pulmonary health specialists, an issue researchers are discussing with Hawaii's congressional delegation to address.

Dr. Gopal Allada from Oregon Health & Science University, although not involved in the study, emphasized the importance of such research in addressing long-term health effects and influencing policy decisions. Researchers plan to continue this study for at least a decade, eventually involving up to 2,000 participants to capture a comprehensive view of the affected population.