



## Emergency Preparedness

Each year, we are seeing more devastating and costly events hit communities across the country.<sup>1</sup> The last year alone has seen intense wildfires that were felt in all areas of the country, extreme heat, massive flooding, and severe hurricanes and tornados. All of this was occurring as we were attempting to rebuild from previous extreme weather events and a global pandemic .

While these events are having an impact on all areas of society, for non-profit organizations they are contributing to rising costs and increasing demand for services and supports.<sup>2</sup> Disasters and emergencies often lead to increasing rates and severity of violence, which we have seen through the pandemic at shelters/transition houses (THs) throughout the country.<sup>3</sup> With extreme events potentially becoming more frequent due to the climate crisis, it is important for shelters to plan for these events.

With the onset of the pandemic, many non-profit organizations began looking at the need for emergency preparedness policies and continuity plans. While Statistics Canada found that 50% of Canadians are somewhat or extremely concerned about weather-related emergencies, a survey by Carleton University found that only 2% of charities/non-profits had emergency preparedness and crisis management as a top concern.<sup>4</sup>

To understand if shelters are preparing for emergencies, we asked: **Do you have policies or an emergency plan in place in preparation for extreme weather and climate change events for summer 2024?**

The responses were divided among shelters/THs with 45% indicating they have plans in place, and 55% noting that they do not.<sup>5</sup> It was positive to see that nearly half do have plans in place, as it was identified in the Carleton survey that this was not a high priority area. With extreme events becoming more likely, it will become increasingly important to develop these plans. While it often feels like little can be done in the face of extreme weather, disasters, and pandemics, a plan can provide a process and answers to difficult questions.

### Some keys resources to help build a plan or create policies include:

- BC Society of Transition Houses – Emergency Management and Service Continuity Programming Planning for Women’s Transition House and Support Programs – [Details](#); [Online Platform](#)
- Canadian Women’s Foundation – [Service Continuity Guidelines for the Gender-Based Violence Sector](#)
- City of Calgary – [Emergency Preparedness for Business: Ready Business](#)

*Shelter Trends is a way for Women’s Shelters Canada to monitor trends across the VAW shelter/transition house (TH) sector. These simple surveys are emailed to shelters/THs approximately six times a year.*

Photo from [Canva](#).

[1] Canadian Institute for Climate Choices. (2020) Tip of the Iceberg: Navigating the Known and Unknown Costs of Climate Change for Canada. [https://climatechoices.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Tip-of-the-Iceberg\\_-\\_CoCC\\_-Institute\\_-Full.pdf](https://climatechoices.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Tip-of-the-Iceberg_-_CoCC_-Institute_-Full.pdf)

[2] Statistics Canada. (2024) National Insights into Non-profit Organizations. Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, 2023. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240320/dq240320a-eng.htm>

[3] UN Women. (2023) Disasters, Crises and Violence Against Women: Evidence from big data analysis. <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/disasters-crises-and-violence-against-women-evidence-big-data-analysis>

[4] Barr, C. & Jensen, E. (2024) What Trends will Impact Charities and Nonprofits in the Second Quarter of 2024? Imagine Canada. <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/en/360/what-trends-will-impact-charities-and-nonprofits-in-the-second-quarter-of-2024>

[5] The survey was sent to 442 shelters/THs, with a response rate of 33%.

