

Survey of Emergency Preparedness and Resilience in Canada, 2014

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Almost three-quarters of Canadians say they are confident about their ability to manage in an emergency.

The new 2014 Survey of Emergency Preparedness and Resilience (SEPR) in Canada asked Canadians living in the provinces to report on the various precautionary and emergency preparedness measures they have taken in anticipation of natural and human-induced emergencies or disasters.

Vast majority of Canadians live in homes with working smoke detectors

Fire safety measures, such as having a working smoke detector, carbon monoxide detector or fire extinguisher, were among the most commonly reported precautions taken by Canadians. According to the 2014 SEPR, 98% of Canadians lived in homes with a working smoke detector, while 66% had a working fire extinguisher and 60% had a working carbon monoxide detector. About 4 in 10 Canadians lived in households that had all three of these fire safety devices.

More than half of Canadians have wind-up or battery-operated radios for their homes

Beyond fire safety measures, many Canadians employed a number of other precautionary measures to prepare for emergencies. Nearly 6 in 10 (58%) reported having a wind-up or battery-operated radio in their home, while about half (48%) had an alternate source of heat. Just over 4 in 10 (43%) had an alternate source of water on hand (for example, a well or litres of stored water), while less than one-quarter (23%) had a back-up generator. However, while about 8 in 10 (82%) Canadians had at least one of these precautionary items, 16% reported having none.

Less than half of Canadians have a home emergency supply kit

In 2014, 98% of Canadians lived in a household that had participated in at least one emergency planning activity. This includes preparing an emergency contact list (69%), creating a home emergency escape plan (60%), establishing a contact plan for getting in touch with household members if they were ever separated as a result of an emergency (55%), or keeping copies of important documents (53%).

However, Canadians were less likely to have set aside items such as water, food, medicine, flashlights or cash in an emergency supply kit for their homes (47%), and one-third had a designated place for meeting up with household members if they cannot return home in the event of an emergency. Overall, fewer than half (47%) of Canadians indicated that their household engaged in what could be described as a moderately high or high number of emergency planning activities.

Winter storms and extended power outages are the risks most frequently identified by Canadians

Canadians believe that there are a variety of weather-related emergencies, natural disasters and human-induced hazards that are likely to affect their community. Winter storms (86%) and extended power outages (76%) were the two most frequently named emergencies or disasters, followed by outbreaks of serious or life-threatening disease (51%) and industrial or transportation accidents (50%). About half of respondents mentioned heat waves (49%), while contamination or shortage of food or water, and floods were cited by over 4 in 10.



News broadcasts identified as the first source of assistance and information during weather-related emergencies and natural disasters

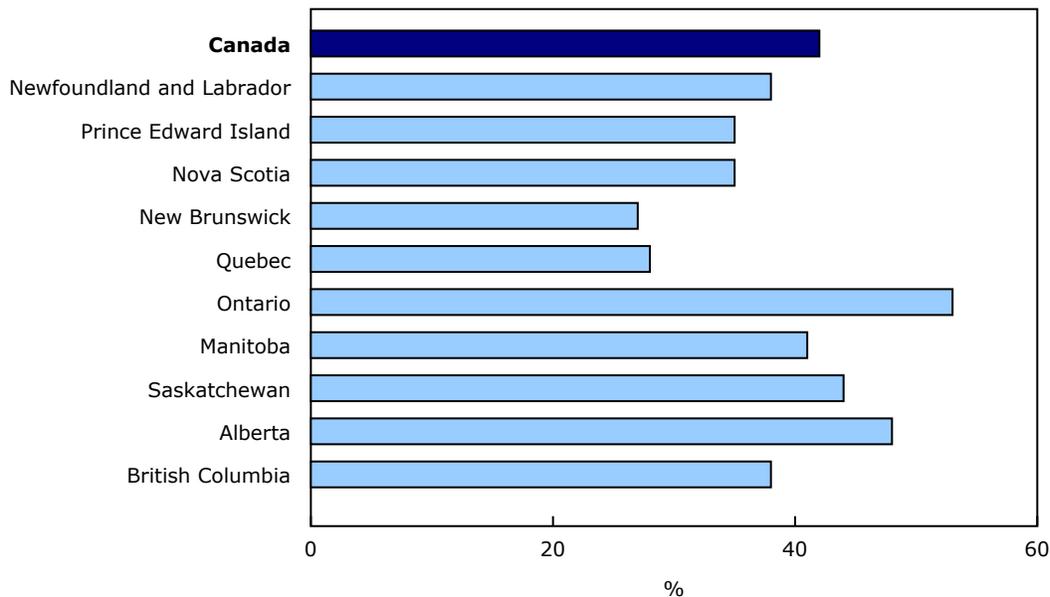
According to the SEPR, in the event of a natural or weather-related disaster, more than one-quarter (26%) of Canadians in the provinces would first listen to the radio news for information or help. About 20% would watch the news on television and a similar proportion would seek out online news sources. However, the source of information Canadians would first turn to varied depending on the type of emergency, the province where the individual lived and other socio-demographic characteristics, as well as previous experience with emergencies.

Levels of emergency preparedness differ across the provinces

Provincially, individuals from Ontario (53%) and Alberta (48%) were most likely to live in households that were equipped with all three fire safety measures (a working smoke detector, carbon monoxide detector and fire extinguisher). Conversely, those in New Brunswick (27%) and Quebec (28%) were least likely to have all three of these devices in their homes.

Individuals in the Atlantic provinces were generally more likely to report having alternative heat and water sources, wind-up or battery-operated radios and back-up generators than those in other provinces. Emergency planning was more prevalent in British Columbia, where 53% of individuals resided in households that had engaged in a moderately high or high number of emergency planning activities, and less common in Quebec (40%).

Chart 1
Canadians living in households with three fire safety devices,¹ by province, 2014



1. Smoke detector, carbon monoxide detector and fire extinguisher.

Note(s): Responses of 'don't know / not stated' are included in the percentage calculation. These categories represent 5% or less of responses. Percentages represent individuals living in households that had implemented all three of the fire safety measures.

Source(s): Survey of Emergency Preparedness and Resilience in Canada (5208).

Large majority have at least one person to rely on during or following an emergency

Overall, more than 9 in 10 Canadians had at least one person they could rely on in an emergency, whether it was for emotional support (95%), assistance in the case of a physical injury (94%), a place to stay (94%) or financial help (83%). About 6 in 10 Canadians across the provinces reported more than five people in their social network that they could lean on for assistance during an emergency involving a physical injury. Almost 60% indicated that there were more than five people they could turn to for emotional support and 54% for shelter.

For financial support in an emergency, however, 24% reported that there were more than five people they could turn to for help. Large social support networks were less common among seniors, immigrants, individuals with an activity-limiting health condition and those from lower-income households.

Note to readers

The Survey of Emergency Preparedness and Resilience (SEPR) in Canada, carried out for the first time in 2014, was developed in partnership with Defence Research and Development Canada's Centre for Security Science and Public Safety Canada. The purpose of the SEPR is to improve the understanding of community resilience across Canada's provinces by collecting data on factors that affect how well individuals and communities are able to prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from major emergencies or disasters. The main objective of the survey is to provide estimates of emergency preparedness and resilience at the community, provincial and national levels.

The target population for the SEPR included all people 15 years of age or older, residing in Canada's provinces, excluding full-time residents of institutions. Since data for the SEPR were collected only from people living in the provinces, information for the territories is not available. The SEPR also does not cover people who do not have a working telephone. Together, people who do not have a working telephone and those residing full-time in institutions represent approximately 2% of the provincial population.

In addition, the SEPR does not include certain populations that may be considered vulnerable or in greater need of support in emergency or disaster situations. Such populations include the homeless and residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

Moderately high or high number of emergency planning activities

There were eight types of emergency planning activities that individuals could potentially be asked about on the SEPR. The set of emergency planning questions asked varied depending on whether respondents lived in a single-person versus multiple-person household, had a vehicle, or whether they or someone in their home had special health needs.

However, all respondents were asked about a minimum of four activities: having an exit plan, an emergency supply kit, extra copies of important documents and an emergency contact list. Households participating in three or four of these activities are described as engaging in a moderately high or high number of emergency planning activities, and those participating in one or two as engaging in a low or moderately low number of planning activities.

Table 1
Fire safety devices, by province, 2014

	Canadians whose household has a working smoke detector	Canadians whose household has a working carbon monoxide detector	Canadians whose household has a working fire extinguisher
	%		
Canada	98	60	66
Newfoundland and Labrador	99	42	84
Prince Edward Island	98	42	75
Nova Scotia	97	43	71
New Brunswick	98	35	72
Quebec	98	34	67
Ontario	99	80	64
Manitoba	97	60	63
Saskatchewan	98	66	63
Alberta	96	65	65
British Columbia	95	52	69

Note(s): Responses of 'don't know / not stated' are included in the percentage calculation. These categories represent 5% or less of responses.

Source(s): Survey of Emergency Preparedness and Resilience in Canada (5208).

Table 2
Precautionary measures taken in case of emergency, by province, 2014

	Canadians whose household has a battery-operated or wind-up radio	Canadians whose household has an alternative heat source	Canadians whose household has a back-up generator	Canadians whose household has an alternative water source	Canadians whose household has other emergency precautions employed in the home ¹
	%				
Canada	58	48	23	43	21
Newfoundland and Labrador	75	57	44	48	25
Prince Edward Island	78	53	29	53	24
Nova Scotia	77	57	36	55	28
New Brunswick	66	51	30	56	25
Quebec	58	48	22	38	20
Ontario	59	46	20	44	22
Manitoba	51	41	21	44	19
Saskatchewan	58	44	30	48	20
Alberta	49	45	22	41	17
British Columbia	59	55	22	48	21

1. 'Other emergency precautions' include measures such as checking and replenishing emergency supplies, having an extra supply of fuel on hand, keeping exits clear and ensuring arrangements have been made for pets.

Note(s): Responses of 'don't know / not stated' are included in the percentage calculation. These categories represent 5% or less of responses.

Source(s): Survey of Emergency Preparedness and Resilience in Canada (5208).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5208.

The *Juristat* article "[Emergency preparedness in Canada, 2014](#)" (85-002-X), is now available. From the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*, choose *All subjects*, then *Crime and justice* and *Juristat*.

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