

# Recognition of the Gendered Impacts of Disasters: A Missing Dimension in Canadian Emergency Management and Pandemic Plans

## Terms

Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT); Gender-Based Violence (GBV); Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA); Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), Emergency Management Organization (EMO)

## What is this research about?

The purpose of this case study, funded by the Canadian Women’s Foundation and Women and Gender Equality Canada, was to examine how the concepts of social vulnerability and gender were addressed in Canadian emergency management and pandemic plans.

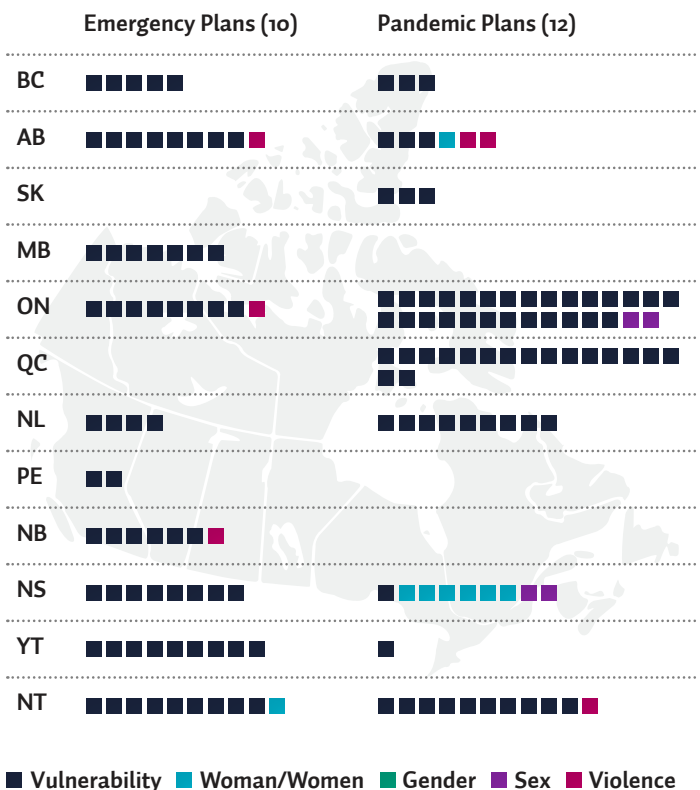
## What did the researchers do?

FPT and local government emergency management and pandemic plans were reviewed to assess the level of attention given to socially vulnerable populations, with a specific analysis of how gender and GBV were addressed. Researchers reviewed the number of times the words *vulnerability* (and variations of this term), *gender*, *sex*, and *violence* were used. Local planning documents were also reviewed to examine descriptions of stakeholders consulted and local capacities identified.

## Federal Level Documents Reviewed (6)



## Provincial and Territorial Emergency Management and Pandemic Plans Reviewed



## What did the researchers find?

While attention was given to social vulnerability in most of the plans reviewed, the plans were gender blind.

## Summary of Use of Terms from FPT and Local Government Emergency Management and Pandemic Plans

<b>Vulnerability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Included in all but 3 of the 28 FPT documents reviewed</li> <li>Used in 3 different ways:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitions of words (8 references)</li> <li>Reference to vulnerable populations (49 general references to vulnerable groups, 22 references to specific vulnerable groups, 16 references to place-based vulnerabilities)</li> <li>Reference to preparedness and response actions; term used in descriptions of actions to be taken prior to hazard impact (52 references) and during the response to an event (31 references)</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Woman/Women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used in discussions about vulnerable populations in 5 plans</li> <li>Pre-pandemic plans referenced pregnant women as being a specific vulnerable population; however, no reference was made to pregnant women in the FPT COVID-19 response plan; women were listed in the plan as being a population impacted by public health measures, and no other references were made to women as being a vulnerable population</li> </ul>
<b>Gender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only used in 2 federal documents; no use of the term in reference to gender diversity or minorities</li> <li>Term was one of several factors identified as contributing to vulnerability</li> </ul>
<b>Sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used in 3 documents; only reference was in guidance for tracking age and sex as part of pandemic surveillance activities</li> </ul>
<b>Violence and GBV</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used with reference to domestic violence in 2 plans; specific term <i>gender-based violence</i> was not used in any documents</li> <li>Other uses of the word violence were related to violence as a work-related hazard in health care, violent hurricanes, and violence in relation to international conflict</li> <li>More recent FPT COVID-19 response plan had instances where impacts of public health measures on domestic and intra-family violence were mentioned</li> </ul>

## Vulnerability Considerations in Local Government Planning

Because Canadian local governments have been given responsibility for preparing for and responding to disasters that occur within their jurisdiction, an additional review of a sample of local government planning documents was undertaken to explore whether more attention was given to gender in local emergency management planning activities. The review included publicly available documents from large, medium, small, and First Nations communities in different regions of Canada (YT, BC, AB, ON, NS), with community size being relative to the province/territory.

## Reference to Social Vulnerability and Gender in Local Emergency Management Planning Documents

	Level of Reference to Socially Vulnerable Populations	Level of Reference to Women or Gender
<b>HRVA Reports (12)</b>	(8) General reference to social vulnerability, but no listing or limited listing of socially vulnerable populations (4) Listing of some specific social vulnerabilities	(11) No reference to women or gender in relation to vulnerability (1) Reference to age and gender as being related to risk for fire deaths
<b>Emergency Management Plans (22)</b>	(12) No reference to socially vulnerable populations (8) General reference to social vulnerability, but no listing of socially vulnerable populations (2) Listing of common social vulnerabilities	(21) No reference to women or gender in relation to vulnerability (1) Reference to pregnant women as a vulnerable group

- All HRVA reports had some type of general reference to vulnerability; more references were given to vulnerability in HRVA reports compared to emergency management plans
- There was no reference to any consultation with stakeholders or rightsholders in 7 of the 12 HRVA reports analyzed; 4 noted there had been consultations with stakeholders, but there was no mention of engagement with organizations working with high-risk populations
- Only 1 HRVA report (BC) noted engagement with groups working with vulnerable populations
- There was no reference to any stakeholder consultation in 15 of the 22 emergency management plans; 4 plans noted the involvement of the members of a planning committee in the development of a plan, and 2 of these listed the membership of the committee
- 3 plans noted there was some external consultation in the development of the plan, but there was no reference to engagement with organizations working with socially vulnerable populations

**Note:** While the information in the plans may not fully reflect the level of stakeholder engagement that was undertaken as part of the planning processes, the documentation suggests that attention to engagement with organizations working with socially vulnerable populations was a gap in the planning process.

## How can you use this research?

The following are recommendations for increasing attention to the gendered impacts of events in emergency management and pandemic planning processes:

- Emergency management and public health officials should give specific attention to the gendered impacts of disasters and pandemics, including the increase in GBV, in their preparedness and response activities by:
  - including gender analysis methods (e.g., GBA+) in local government and First Nations' community HRVA and emergency management and pandemic planning processes
  - reaching out to include organizations working with socially vulnerable populations in HRVA and other emergency management and pandemic planning activities; outreach should give specific attention to organizations working in the women's and LGBTQI sectors
- Educational offerings should be created to increase emergency management practitioners' knowledge of the gendered impacts of disasters, including GBV, and how to use GBA+ methods in their work

## Conclusion

There is a need to address gender equity more generally within emergency management as a profession, as well as to address the gendered impacts of disasters, including an increase in GBV, within emergency management and pandemic planning. There is not a gap in guidance for practice, rather, there is a lack of awareness and use of this material to advance emergency management and pandemic preparedness planning in the Canadian context.

## Acknowledgments



Women and Gender Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada

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