

Emergency Preparedness of Informal Carers¹: A Mixed-Methods Study



Key Messages

- Carers need support to manage their own needs and the support needs of the people they care for in emergencies.
- Carers identified support needs in the areas of physical and practical assistance, transportation options, and emotional support. They prefer to receive this support from family, friends, and neighbours in emergencies.
- Carers should be included in education to help them learn about their risks, make tailored emergency preparedness plans, and contingencies. This is particularly important because friends and neighbours may be impacted by the same disaster and not able to provide support.
- Include the lived experience and perspectives of carers in emergency preparedness education for other carers, support networks, and emergency services personnel.
- Carer involvement in Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction planning and practice is vital for government and emergency services to understand their needs and respond to their preferences for support during emergencies.

Overview

61 Surveys
(October 2020 - March 2021).

7 In-depth interviews
(July 2021 - May 2022).

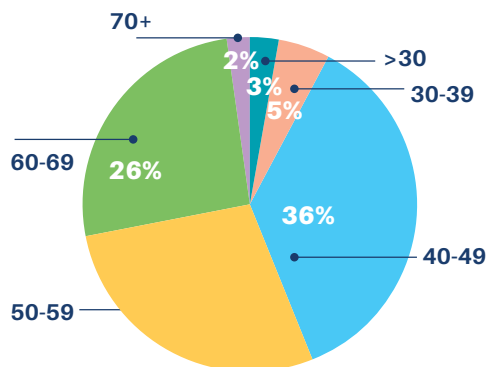
15% male

84% female

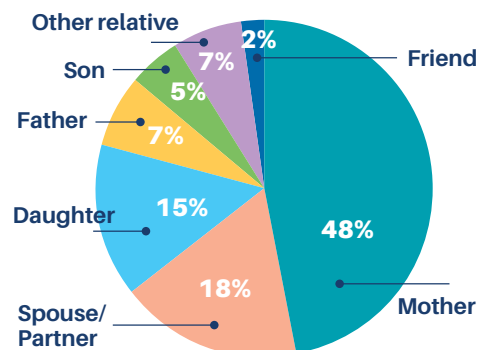
2% other

Respondent Characteristics

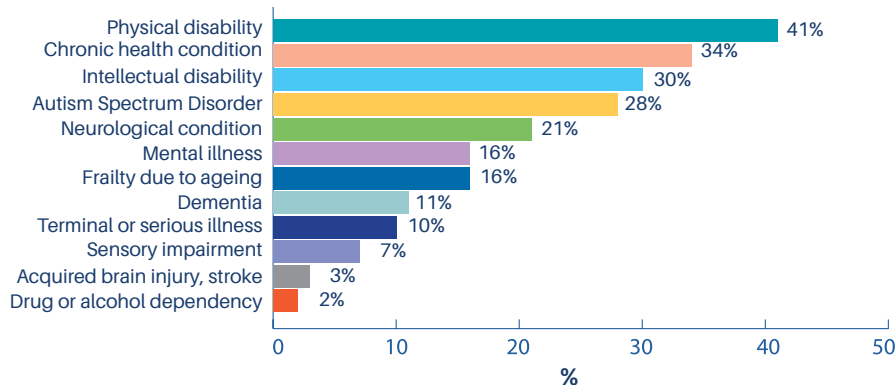
Age



Relationship to Care Recipient

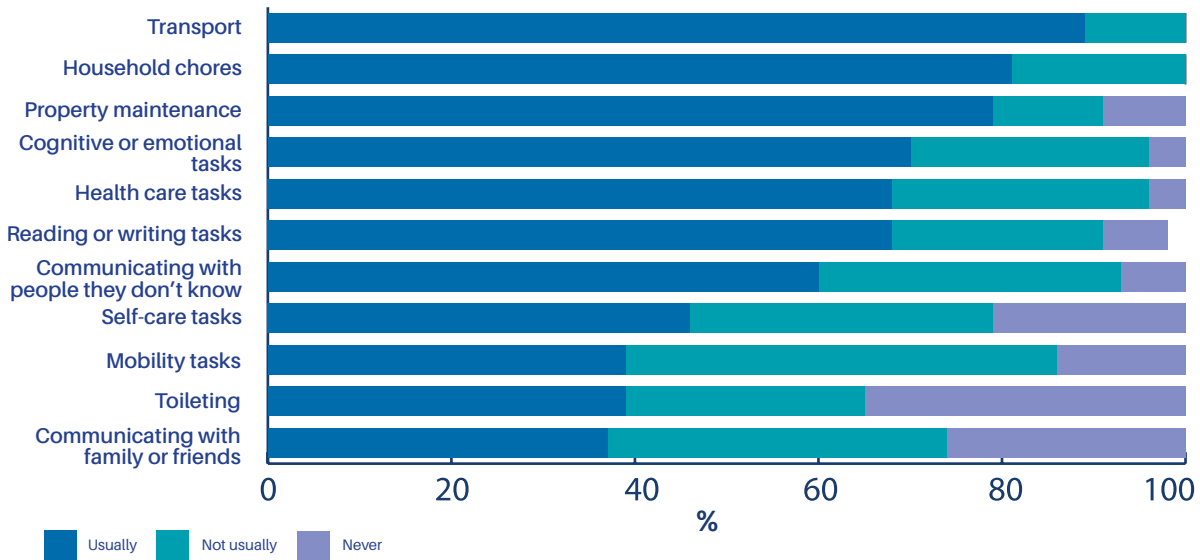


Conditions/Disabilities/Illnesses requiring Caring:



¹ Informal carers are persons who provide assistance, or supervision, to people with disability or older people on an ongoing, unpaid basis.

Assistance provided to care recipients:



Emergency Planning



51% reported having an emergency plan².



Motives for emergency planning

44%

Improving chances of survival

31%

Confidence in taking action to help oneself



Reasons for not planning

21%

Never thought about it

18%

Not sure how to prepare



3 most common preparedness actions:

82%

Preparing home/property to reduce damage caused by natural disasters

78%

Stocking house with emergency supplies

78%

Getting and reviewing insurance policies



3 least common preparedness actions:

18%

Making arrangements for emergency replacement care

21%

Participating in an evacuation drill in the past 12 months

27%

Knowing manual operations for recipient's medical equipment or assistive technology

² An emergency plan is "a documented set of tasks and steps to follow during an emergency, including assigned responsibilities."

Support Needs



Physical and Practical Assistance:

- Provision of essentials (food, water, utilities).
- Assistance with personal care tasks and specialised requirements.
- Support in evacuating rural areas and caring for animals.



Transportation Assistance:

- Help with transport for evacuation and accessing community facilities.
- Various types of transport needed, including specialized transport for wheelchairs.
- Assistance to walk to a safe destination or evacuation centre.



Psychosocial and Emotional Support:

- Reassurance, mental health support, and connection with others.
- Relying on family and friends for psychosocial support.
- Limited reliance on formal and community supports for emotional assistance.



Advice to Other Carers



Be Prepared and Maintain Independence:

- Develop and communicate an emergency plan.
- Create a 'grab bag' with essentials and medications.
- Ensure important paperwork is sorted and copies are available.



Stay Informed and Ready:

- Keep devices charged, and have emergency service numbers handy.
- Know the locations of evacuation centres.



Plan Ahead to Avoid Panic:

- Take proactive steps before a disaster occurs.
- Act on the emergency plan to minimize panic during critical situations.

"You know your child or person you care for best and how they react to stress. Think about how to prepare them for emergencies. Have a social story if that helps, know what their favourite comforting item is to bring, know what clothes or foods will be comforting under duress. Practice breathing exercises.. The Red Cross and Fires Near Me apps are helpful."

"We can't go without the hoist, and we can't go without the chargers... the incontinence pads... and taking an air mattress that you're able to get the hoist around because you can't necessarily get into somebody else's bed."



Advice to Emergency Services



Recognise and include carers in emergency planning:

- Acknowledge informal carers and recognise their right to safety during emergencies.

"I would just like [emergency personnel] to realise we exist and we have a right to be safe both from the emergency and when we're seeking refuge."



Communicate so people can understand and take action.

"... and anyone official was saying, "just look on the BOM website". So that's all well and good. We had no power. We very quickly ran out of batteries to do anything at all. So, obviously no wifi ...they say things like the flood heights will be 3.98 m... what does that actually mean?"



Improve accessibility:

- Prioritise accessibility for people with disability at evacuation centres, including facilities for toileting, quiet spaces, and wheelchair recharging.
- Train staff and volunteers to understand the diverse needs of people with disability and ensure family members and equipment are kept together.

"Have some quiet spaces with comfortable items like beanbags. People like my child, when distressed, will need to be out of the view of other people. She will be dysregulated, but she feels intense shame for other people to see."

"...the evacuation centre is just so confusing for someone who's got a disability ... you've got to know where you're going to find the toilets."

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