

# Impact of Extreme Heat on Homeless & Precariously Housed Individuals

## About

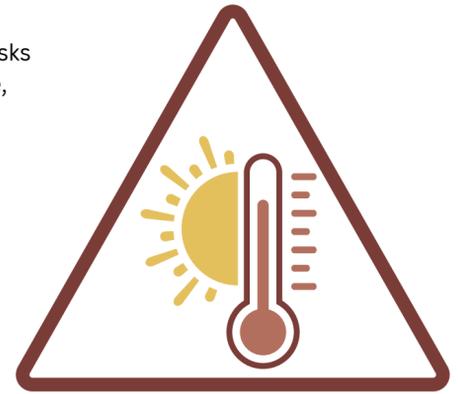
This initiative has established networks of experts, policymakers and community organizations. The group provides research, policy, education, and service direction based on the best available evidence.

### Defining terms:

Homeless and precariously housed populations include people who have no shelter or live in places that are temporary, unstable, and unsafe.

## Major Themes

- Without adequate shelter, extended exposure to extreme heat increases the risks of serious health issues, such as dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke, potentially leading to fatal outcomes.
- Homeless and precariously housed individuals face barriers to accessing essential services, like healthcare and cooling centres, due to stigma, restrictive rules and lack of information.
- Pre-existing physical and mental health conditions can worsen during periods of extreme heat, complicating illness management and worsening substance abuse issues, as well as increasing stress, anxiety, and suicide risk.



## Responses

### Short Term (1-2 years)

#### Quick Facts:

In Canada, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness is rising, with an estimated 235,000 people affected annually.

**Cooling Centres:** Increase accessibility by allowing pets, including storage for personal belongings, extending hours of operation.

**Drinking Water:** Maintain and increase the number of public water fountains, distribute bottled water, and ensure that cooling centres provide ample hydration resources.

**Self-care Resources:** Provide hats, sunscreen, ice packs, and cooling towels.

**Access to Shade:** Ensure there are sufficient shaded areas available for homeless populations.

**Free Transportation:** Provide free public transport during extreme heat events to facilitate access to cooler locations.

**Educate on Unique Risks and Strategies:** Train health and social service providers to address the unique needs of homeless populations during heat events, including outreach and education.

**Assess Social Vulnerabilities:** Invest in understanding the specific needs and barriers faced by high-risk populations through thorough assessments of social vulnerabilities.

### Medium Term (3-5 years)

**Inclusive Response Plans:** Create or update heat response plans to include homeless and precariously housed populations.

**Community Engagement:** Collaborate with homeless populations to develop tailored heat-preparedness plans, fostering trust and effective outreach.

**Enhance Climate Resilience in Housing:** Implement strategies to improve the resilience of substandard housing in impoverished areas to better withstand extreme heat.

**Establish Chief Heat Officer Roles:** Establish dedicated roles to manage heat response strategies, ensuring that the needs of homeless and precariously housed populations are prioritized.

**Tailored Health Services:** Provide physical and mental health care focused on heat-related illnesses, utilizing mobile clinics and outreach programs.

**Enhance Social Services:** Equip providers with additional staff, training, and resources.

#### Quick Facts:

Substandard housing considerations include congregate environments that do not provide air conditioning, have windows that cannot be opened, or force residents to be outside during the day.

### Long Term (5+ years)

**Improve Housing Stability:** Increase affordable housing availability, provide supportive housing options, and implement homelessness prevention programs.

**Equitable Healthcare Access:** Remove barriers such as lack of ID, transportation challenges, and stigma. Ensure healthcare services are inclusive and responsive.

**Sustainable Urban Planning:** Implement urban planning strategies that increase green spaces, improve building designs for better heat management, and ensure climate resilience in community infrastructures.

**Ongoing Research and Monitoring:** Invest in research to continuously monitor and understand the impacts of extreme heat on homeless populations, and adapt strategies accordingly.

