

June 22, 2021
Emergency Preparedness Survey

Summary: Researchers at the University of South Florida conducted a statewide survey of 600 Floridians to better understand the preparedness of Floridians for disasters and the impact of COVID-19 on their household readiness. The survey included a representative sample of Floridians, fielded between June 3rd and 14th, 2021. Topline results are reported below with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error +/- 4.

Most Floridians are concerned about this year's hurricane season and consider themselves prepared to face a storm. Among Floridians, a large majority (81%) are very or somewhat concerned about this year's hurricane season with 81.2% stating that their household would be severely or somewhat affected by a category 3 or higher storm. More than 3/4 consider their household very (18.3%) or somewhat (59.8%) prepared for this hurricane season.

Despite concerns about the hurricane season, more than half of Floridians do not have an evacuation plan or hurricane specific preparedness items. Although most survey respondents (72.6%) said they would be very or somewhat likely to leave if an evacuation order was issued, more than half (58%) do not have an evacuation plan. Over half do not have hurricane specific preparedness items like a NOAA weather radio (56.8%) or a stocked emergency kit (51%).

Fears over the safety of property left behind and the inability to return home after a storm top the list of reasons that Floridians would choose not to evacuate. In the event of a category 3 or higher hurricane, Floridians listed safety of property (76.2%) and concerns over being able to return quickly after the storm (78%) as reasons why they would not evacuate or go to a shelter. Other reasons include owning pets (50.5%) and concerns over personal comfort (72%) as factors impacting their evacuation decisions.

A majority of Floridians do not trust the safety of public shelters. In the event of a hurricane, 67.7% of Floridians do not trust the safety of public shelters, citing this concern as a factor for deciding not to evacuate if threatened by a category 3 or higher storm.

Half of Floridians report a lack of financial resources as a reason for not evacuating. Over half of Floridians said that finances would impact their decision to evacuate a lot (20%) or a little (30.5%) if a category 3 or higher storm threatened their community. 42.8% reported having less than \$1000 to cover unexpected emergency expenses.

Nearly a third of Floridians would not evacuate or go to a shelter due to caring for children or other dependents. Nearly a third (29.3%) of respondents said that caring for children or other dependents, such as elderly family members or those with special needs, would impact their decision to not evacuate or go to a shelter if threatened by a category 3 or higher storm.

Floridians are split on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic response on their confidence in government. The government response to the COVID-19 had mixed impacts on Floridians' trust and confidence in the government. 22.3% of respondents said that they had more confidence, while 29% had less confidence and 48.7% reported that their confidence was unchanged.

For many Floridians, COVID-19 remains a main factor in deciding whether or not to go to a shelter. Despite a decrease in COVID-19 rates statewide, over half of Floridians (52.3%) cite concerns about contracting the illness at a public shelter, listing these fears as a reason for not evacuating if their community was threatened by a hurricane.

In an emergency, the majority of Floridians prefer text message alerts over social media and other traditional means of communication. Despite a rise in social media usage by government officials, most Floridians (61.2%) prefer text message alerts, listing it as the preferred method for receiving emergency updates. The second most preferred method was television (23.5%), followed by radio (8.5%) and social media (3.8%).

Summary of Responses

How concerned are you about this year's hurricane season?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Concerned	179	29.8
Somewhat Concerned	308	51.3
Not Very Concerned	97	16.2
Not at All Concerned	16	2.7
Total	600	100.0

How prepared is your household for this year's hurricane season?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Prepared	110	18.3
Somewhat Prepared	359	59.8
Not Very Prepared	106	17.7
Not at All Prepared	18	3.0
Unsure	7	1.2
Total	600	100.0

Which of the following statements is most accurate for your household?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
We are LESS prepared for an emergency because of the Covid-19 pandemic	83	13.8
We are MORE prepared for an emergency because of the Covid-19 pandemic	156	26.0
The Covid-19 pandemic has NOT affected how prepared we are for an emergency	361	60.2
Total	600	100.0

How many natural disasters (e.g., hurricane, flood, wildfire, etc.) have you been directly impacted by while living in Florida?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
None	72	12.0
1-2	218	36.3
3-4	157	26.2
4	153	25.5
Total	600	100.0

How severely could your household be affected by a Category 3 or higher hurricane?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Severely Affected	168	28.0
Somewhat Affected	319	53.2
Not Very Affected	101	16.8
Not at All Affected	12	2.0
Total	600	100.0

If your community were threatened by a Category 3 or higher hurricane this season and an evacuation order was issued for your area, how likely would you be to evacuate?

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	242	40.3
Somewhat Likely	194	32.3
Not Very Likely	135	22.5
Not at All Likely	29	4.8
Total	600	100.0

In deciding whether or not to evacuate for a Category 3 or higher hurricane this season, how likely would you be to rely on each of the following for support?

Family

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	242	40.3
Somewhat Likely	194	32.3
Not Very Likely	135	22.5
Not at All Likely	29	4.8
Total	600	100.0

Friends

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	161	26.8
Somewhat Likely	230	38.3
Not Very Likely	140	23.3
Not at All Likely	69	11.5
Total	600	100.0

Neighbors

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	104	17.3
Somewhat Likely	193	32.2
Not Very Likely	199	33.2
Not at All Likely	104	17.3
Total	600	100.0

Coworkers

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	51	8.5
Somewhat Likely	104	17.3
Not Very Likely	170	28.3
Not at All Likely	275	45.8
Total	600	100.0

If you decided to evacuate for a hurricane this season, but did NOT go to a shelter, how likely would you be to rely on each of the following for a place to stay?

Family		
	Frequency	Percent
Very Likely	332	55.3
Somewhat Likely	125	20.8
Not Very Likely	70	11.7
Not at All Likely	73	12.2
Total	600	100.0

Friends		
	Frequency	Percent
Very Likely	139	23.2
Somewhat Likely	206	34.3
Not Very Likely	138	23.0
Not at All Likely	117	19.5
Total	600	100.0

Coworkers		
	Frequency	Percent
Very Likely	36	6.0
Somewhat Likely	73	12.2
Not Very Likely	166	27.7
Not at All Likely	325	54.2
Total	600	100.0

In the Case of a Category 3 or higher hurricane, how much would each of the following impact your decision NOT to evacuate or go to a shelter?

I am a business owner		
	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	41	6.8
A Little	58	9.7
Not at All	501	83.5
Total	600	100.0

I have severe health issues

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	94	15.7
A Little	147	24.5
Not at All	359	59.8
Total	600	100.0

I worry about the safety of my property while I'm gone

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	189	31.5
A Little	268	44.7
Not at All	143	23.8
Total	600	100.0

I worry about not being able to return quickly after the storm

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	198	33.0
A Little	270	45.0
Not at All	132	22.0
Total	600	100.0

I worry about getting Covid-19

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	117	19.5
A Little	197	32.8
Not at All	286	47.7
Total	600	100.0

I cannot afford to evacuate

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	120	20.0
A Little	183	30.5
Not at All	297	49.5
Total	600	100.0

I have pets

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	237	39.5
A Little	78	13.0
Not at All	285	47.5
Total	600	100.0

I do not have transportation

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	53	8.8
A Little	56	9.3
Not at All	491	81.8
Total	600	100.0

I do not trust the safety of shelters

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	144	24.0
A Little	262	43.7
Not at All	194	32.3
Total	600	100.0

I am an agricultural worker/farm owner

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	14	2.3
A Little	24	4.0
Not at All	562	93.7
Total	600	100.0

I have children or other dependents (e.g., elderly, special needs)

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	114	19.0
A Little	62	10.3
Not at All	424	70.7
Total	600	100.0

I do not want to be uncomfortable

	Frequency	Percent
A Lot	177	29.5
A Little	255	42.5
Not at All	168	28.0
Total	600	100.0

Have you or a member of your household created an evacuation plan that you would follow if a severe hurricane or other natural disaster threatened your community?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	206	34.3
No	348	58.0
Unsure	46	7.7
Total	600	100.0

Could your household manage for three (3) days without assistance if a hurricane left your community without electricity and running water?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	456	76.0
No	56	9.3
Unsure	88	14.7
Total	600	100.0

Do you keep a stocked emergency kit (or "go-bag") on hand in case you are forced to evacuate your home on short notice?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	267	44.5
No	306	51.0
Unsure	27	4.5
Total	600	100.0

Please indicate whether you currently have the following items in your home

Three Days of Non-Perishable Food (per member of your household)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	477	79.5
No	96	16.0
Unsure	27	4.5
Total	600	100.0

Three Day Supply of Bottled Water (per member of your household)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	454	75.7
No	132	22.0
Unsure	14	2.3
Total	600	100.0

Three Day Supply of Required Medicines (for each member of your household)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	520	86.7
No	59	9.8
Unsure	21	3.5
Total	600	100.0

NOAA Weather Radio

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	199	33.2
No	341	56.8
Unsure	60	10.0
Total	600	100.0

Flashlight (with Batteries)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	533	88.8
No	52	8.7
Unsure	15	2.5
Total	600	100.0

First Aid Kit		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	478	79.7
No	106	17.7
Unsure	16	2.7
Total	600	100.0

Backup Cell Phone Battery		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	247	41.2
No	320	53.3
Unsure	33	5.5
Total	600	100.0

How much money does your household currently have available to cover unexpected emergency expenses?

	Frequency	Percent
None	53	8.8
Less than \$500	110	18.3
\$501 to \$1,000	94	15.7
\$1,001 - \$2,000	73	12.2
More than \$2,000	223	37.2
Unsure	47	7.8
Total	600	100.0

Which of the following is most accurate for your household?

	Frequency	Percent
We have LESS money available for an emergency because of the Covid-19 pandemic	166	27.7
We have MORE money available for an emergency because of the Covid-19 pandemic	64	10.7
The Covid-19 pandemic has not affected how much money we have available for an emergency	370	61.7
Total	600	100.0

As we near the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, do you have more or less confidence in government's ability to manage a public emergency?

	Frequency	Percent
More Confidence	134	22.3
Less Confidence	174	29.0
About the Same as Before	292	48.7
Total	600	100.0

What is your preferred method for receiving alerts and updates during an emergency situation, such as a hurricane?

	Frequency	Percent
Text Message Alerts	367	61.2
Home Phone	14	2.3
Social Media	23	3.8
Television	141	23.5
Radio	51	8.5
Others	4	.7
Total	600	100.0

To what extent do you trust each of the following to provide you with accurate and up-to-date information during an emergency situation?

The National Government in Washington D.C.

	Frequency	Percent
A Great Deal	123	20.5
Somewhat	249	41.5
A Little	137	22.8
Not At All	91	15.2
Total	600	100.0

The State Government in Tallahassee

	Frequency	Percent
A Great Deal	172	28.7
Somewhat	238	39.7
A Little	113	18.8
Not At All	77	12.8
Total	600	100.0

Your Local City and County Government(s)

	Frequency	Percent
A Great Deal	273	45.5
Somewhat	221	36.8
A Little	75	12.5
Not At All	31	5.2
Total	600	100.0

How much do you rely on social media for information during public emergencies (such as hurricanes or other natural disasters)?

	Frequency	Percent
A Great Deal	93	15.5
Somewhat	179	29.8
A Little	119	19.8
Not At All	134	22.3
Missing Responses	75	12.5
Total	600	100.0

Survey Information

600 adult Floridians were surveyed via an online web-panel using Prodege MR, an industry leading market research provider. The survey was fielded from June 3rd through 14th, and the results are reported with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of +/- 4.

Survey respondents were selected via a stratified, quota sampling approach in order to ensure a representative sample of Floridians. Quotas for gender, age, race, and ethnicity were determined based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Florida's Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR). The quotas were stratified by region of the state in order to ensure the geographical representativeness of the sample. Table A1 below provides a breakdown of the respondents by key demographics.

**Table A1
Sample Comparison**

	USF Survey Sample	Florida Demographics*
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	52.0%	51.1%
Male	48.0%	48.9%
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	7.8%	10.8%
25-44	30.2%	31.2%
45-64	33.8%	32.4%
65+	28.2%	25.6%
<i>Race</i>		
Black/African American	17.7%	16.9%
White/Caucasian	73.5%	77.3%
Asian	3.3%	3.0%
Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.5%	0.5%
Other	4.5%	2.2%
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Hispanic	25.0%	26.4%
Non-Hispanic	75.0%	73.6%
<i>Region</i>		
Panhandle	6.7%	7.2%
Northeast Florida	12.7%	12.4%
Central Florida	25.3%	25.5%
West Coast	27.2%	21.9%
Southeast Florida	28.2%	32.9%

*Gender, race, ethnicity, and region quotas based on U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program (PEP): <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/FL> Age quotas based on Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR): <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/population-demographics/data/index-floridaproducts.cfm>

About our Research Team

Robin Ersing (PhD, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2000) is Director and Associate Professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of South Florida. She specializes in social policy with an emphasis on vulnerable populations, disaster resilience, community impact and asset assessment, and community action research. She is co-author of the book, *Surviving Disaster: The Role of Social Networks*. For more information please visit her faculty webpage at <https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/departments/public-affairs/about-us/faculty/rersing.aspx> Dr. Ersing can be contacted by email at rersing@usf.edu

Stephen Neely (PhD, North Carolina State University, 2013) is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of South Florida. He is coordinator of the School's undergraduate program in Leadership and Public Service. His areas of specialization include survey research, quantitative data analysis, and public policy. He is a faculty researcher on the Sunshine State Survey project and has conducted survey research on behalf of local governments in the Tampa Bay region. For more information please visit <https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/departments/public-affairs/about-us/faculty/sneely.aspx> Dr. Neely can be contacted by email at srneely@usf.edu

Christa L. Remington (PhD, Florida International University, 2017) is an Assistant Professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of South Florida. She specializes in nonprofit management and emergency management. Her research focuses on cultural competence, post-disaster response and recovery, and policies impacting first responders. Dr. Remington is also a nonprofit consultant and the Emergency Management Research Coordinator at the Center for Leadership Research and Action. For more information please visit her faculty webpage at <https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/departments/public-affairs/about-us/faculty/cremington.aspx> Dr. Remington can be contacted by email at clremington@usf.edu

About the School of Public Affairs

The School of Public Affairs (SPA) at the University of South Florida is part of USF's College of Arts and Sciences and serves as a premier community-centered hub for public affairs education and research, providing quality education, research, and public service to meet community, national, and global needs.

SPA offers graduate degree programs in Public Administration and Urban & Regional Planning, as well as graduate certificates in Public Management, Nonprofit Management, Data Science, Community Development, and Coastal Resiliency Planning. SPA also offers undergraduate minors in Public Service & Leadership as well as Urban Studies. To learn more about the School of Public Affairs, please visit us at <https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/departments/public-affairs/index.aspx>

***For media inquiries, please contact Dr. Christa Remington at clremington@usf.edu.**