



**School of Public Affairs, August 17, 2020**  
**Emergency Preparedness Survey**

**Summary:** Researchers at the University of South Florida's School of Public Affairs conducted a statewide survey of 600 Floridians to measure emergency preparedness, as well as general opinions regarding the COVID-19 public health crisis and related policy issues. This brief summarizes responses related to household readiness for hurricanes and other disasters and the impact of COVID-19 on that readiness. The survey included a representative sample of the state's residents, fielded between July 30<sup>th</sup> and August 10<sup>th</sup>. The results are reported below with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error +/- 4.

---

**Most Floridians less likely to go to a hurricane shelter due to COVID-19.**

If threatened by a hurricane, 71% of Floridians said they would be less likely to go to a hurricane shelter because of COVID-19, 5% said they would be more likely to go to a shelter, and 24% said that COVID-19 would not affect their decision.

**Florida residents split on whether or not COVID-19 would impact their decision to evacuate from a hurricane.**

Following a voluntary evacuation order, nearly half of Floridians (47%) said that COVID-19 would not affect their decision to evacuate while 44% said they would be less likely. Only 9% stated that they would be more likely to follow an evacuation order.

**The COVID-19 pandemic has not stunted most Floridians' readiness for an emergency.**

When asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their household's readiness for an emergency, only 15.5% of Floridians reported being less prepared, while 36.5% said they are more prepared and 48% reported that COVID-19 did not affect their household's readiness for an emergency.

**A majority of Floridians could manage initial post-hurricane impacts without assistance. A**

large majority of Floridians (79%) mentioned that they could manage their household for three days without any assistance if a hurricane left their community without electricity and running water while only 21% mentioned stated they could not or were not sure. Most respondents reported having three days of non-perishable food (85%), drinking water (81%), and prescription medication (86%) per member of household.

**One-third of Floridians have less than \$1,000 available to cover an unexpected emergency.**

More than one-third (37%) of Floridians reported having less than \$1,000 to cover unexpected emergency expenses. In that group, 9% reported having no money available. Fifteen percent of residents reported having \$1001 to \$2000 and 38% of households reported having more than \$2000 available.



**Hurricanes and public health crises top the list of concerns for Floridians.** Most Floridians are very and somewhat concerned about their community facing a hurricane related wind event (88%) or hurricane related flooding (73%) in the next year. A majority of Floridians (85%) are very and somewhat concerned about a pandemic/public health emergency while only (15%) are not concerned. Also of concern are tornados (62%), wildfires (58%), civil disorder/rioting (53%), and sinkholes (48%).

**Most Floridians believe that a major hurricane would negatively affect their household.**

A majority of Floridians (87%) mentioned that a category 3 or higher hurricane would severely or somewhat affect their household. Only 11% believe that their household would not be very affected and only 2% mentioned it would not affect it.

**Only half of Floridians have an evacuation plan or emergency kit.** Half of Floridians (50%) mentioned having an evacuation plan if a severe hurricane or other natural disaster threatened their community while 44% reported not having a plan and 6% were unsure. Only 41% reported having a stocked emergency kit (or "go-bag") in case of a forced evacuation while 59% did not have one or were not sure.

**Local government considered the most trusted source for emergency information.** 40% of Floridians say they have a great deal of trust in local government for accurate and up-to-date emergency information. Only 22% had the same level of trust in both State Government and the National Government.

**More than half of Florida residents prefer to receive emergency alerts through text message.** More than half (54%) of Floridians said they prefer to receive text alerts and updates in an emergency such as a hurricane over other methods such as television (29%), social media (9%), home phone (4%), or radio (3%).

**Summary of Responses**

*How concerned are you about each of the following types of emergencies threatening your community in the next year?*

**Flash Flooding (non-hurricane related)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at All Concerned	111	18.5
Not Too Concerned	230	38.3
Somewhat Concerned	166	27.7
Very Concerned	91	15.2

**Hurricane Related Wind Event**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at All Concerned	10	1.7
Not Too Concerned	57	9.5
Somewhat Concerned	276	46.0
Very Concerned	253	42.2

**Hurricane Related Flooding Event**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at All Concerned	30	5.0
Not Too Concerned	129	21.5
Somewhat Concerned	229	38.2
Very Concerned	209	34.8

**Tornado**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at All Concerned	54	9.0
Not Too Concerned	173	28.8
Somewhat Concerned	209	34.8
Very Concerned	161	26.8



**Sink Holes**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at All Concerned	86	14.3
Not Too Concerned	222	37.0
Somewhat Concerned	184	30.7
Very Concerned	104	17.3

**Red Tide/Toxic Algae Bloom**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at All Concerned	111	18.5
Not Too Concerned	207	34.5
Somewhat Concerned	163	27.2
Very Concerned	116	19.3

**Wildfires**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at All Concerned	135	22.5
Not Too Concerned	211	35.2
Somewhat Concerned	160	26.7
Very Concerned	91	15.2

**Civil Disorder/Rioting**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at All Concerned	97	16.2
Not Too Concerned	183	30.5
Somewhat Concerned	187	31.2
Very Concerned	131	21.8

**Pandemic/Public Health Emergency**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at All Concerned	25	4.2
Not Too Concerned	61	10.2
Somewhat Concerned	162	27.0
Very Concerned	349	58.2



***How negatively affected do you feel that your household could be by a category 3 or higher hurricane?***

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not at All Affected	11	1.8
Not Very Affected	65	10.8
Severely Affected	226	37.7
Somewhat Affected	298	49.7

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

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
None	63	10.5
1-2	228	38.0
3-4	156	26.0
5 or More	153	25.5

***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?***

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	299	49.8
No	263	43.8
Unsure	38	6.3



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

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	474	79.0
No	65	10.8
Unsure	61	10.2

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

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
None	50	8.3
Less than \$500	83	13.8
\$501 to \$1,000	91	15.2
\$1,001 - \$2,000	90	15.0
More than \$2,000	226	37.7
Unsure	60	10.0

\* Due to the limitations of web-based sampling, the sample of respondents is slightly under-representative of the most economically vulnerable Floridians.

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

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

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	512	85.3
No	64	10.7
Unsure	23	3.8

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

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	485	80.8
No	99	16.5
Unsure	16	2.7



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

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	516	86.0
No	62	10.3
Unsure	22	3.7

**NOAA Weather Radio**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	204	34.0
No	346	57.7
Unsure	50	8.3

**Flashlight (with Batteries)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	540	90.0
No	44	7.3
Unsure	16	2.7

**First Aid Kit**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	471	78.5
No	112	18.7
Unsure	17	2.8

**Backup Cell Phone Battery**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	295	49.2
No	276	46.0
Unsure	29	4.8

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

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	244	40.7
No	332	55.3
Unsure	24	4.0



**Does your stocked emergency kit (or "go-bag") include the following items?**

**Three Day Supply of Non-Perishable Food (per member of your household)**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	184	30.7
No	48	8.0
Unsure	11	1.8
<hr/>		
*357(59.5%)		

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

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	199	33.2
No	40	6.7
Unsure	4	.7
<hr/>		
*357(59.5%)		

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

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	209	34.8
No	26	4.3
Unsure	7	1.2
<hr/>		
*358(59.7%)		

**NOAA Weather Radio**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	103	17.2
No	119	19.8
Unsure	19	3.2
<hr/>		
*359(59.8%)		

**Flashlight (with Batteries)**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	215	35.8
No	21	3.5
Unsure	6	1.0
<hr/>		
*358(59.7%)		





**First Aid Kit**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	212	35.3
No	26	4.3
Unsure	3	.5
<hr/>		
*359(59.8%)		

**Dust Masks or Face Coverings**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	181	30.2
No	49	8.2
Unsure	9	1.5
<hr/>		
*361(60.2%)		

**Phone Charger or Backup Cell Phone Battery**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	195	32.5
No	40	6.7
Unsure	8	1.3
<hr/>		
*357(59.5%)		

**Cash**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	196	32.7
No	39	6.5
Unsure	7	1.2
<hr/>		
*358(59.7%)		

***If your community were to be threatened by a hurricane this year, how would the COVID-19 pandemic affect your likelihood of following a voluntary evacuation order?***

	<u>Frequen</u>	<u>Percent</u>
	<u>cy</u>	
COVID-19 would not affect my decision whether or not to evacuate	283	47.2
I would be less likely to evacuate because of COVID-19	266	44.3
I would be more likely to evacuate because of COVID-19	51	8.5
<hr/>		

***If your community were to be threatened by a hurricane this year, how would the COVID-19 pandemic affect your likelihood of going to a local shelter?***

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
COVID-19 would not affect my decision whether or not to go to a shelter	145	24.2
I would be less likely to go to a shelter because of COVID-19	425	70.8
I would be more likely to go to a shelter because of COVID-19	30	5.0

***In what way, if any, has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your household's readiness for a future emergency?***

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
COVID-19 has not affected my household's emergency preparedness	288	48.0
My household is less prepared for an emergency because of COVID-19	93	15.5
My household is more prepared for an emergency because of COVID-19	219	36.5

***How likely are you to turn to each of the following sources when seeking emergency and disaster related information?***

**Local Government Websites (i.e. City, County, etc.)**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	227	37.8
Somewhat Likely	212	35.3
Neither Likely nor Unlikely	96	16.0
Somewhat Unlikely	39	6.5
Very Unlikely	26	4.3



**State Government Websites (i.e. FloridaDisaster.org, FloridaGov.com, etc.)**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	200	33.3
Somewhat Likely	222	37.0
Neither Likely nor Unlikely	97	16.2
Somewhat Unlikely	42	7.0
Very Unlikely	37	6.2

**Federal Government Websites (i.e. FEMA, NOAA, etc.)**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	214	35.7
Somewhat Likely	211	35.2
Neither Likely nor Unlikely	104	17.3
Somewhat Unlikely	38	6.3
Very Unlikely	32	5.3

**Social Media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, etc.)**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	133	22.2
Somewhat Likely	146	24.3
Neither Likely nor Unlikely	121	20.2
Somewhat Unlikely	76	12.7
Very Unlikely	123	20.5

**Local Television (Local news or cable)**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	313	52.2
Somewhat Likely	175	29.2
Neither Likely nor Unlikely	65	10.8
Somewhat Unlikely	22	3.7
Very Unlikely	22	3.7

**National Television (i.e. Weather Channel, CNN, Fox News, etc.)**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very Likely	276	46.0
Somewhat Likely	189	31.5
Neither Likely nor Unlikely	76	12.7
Somewhat Unlikely	32	5.3
Very Unlikely	27	4.5



**Radio Broadcasts (i.e. AM, FM, Satellite)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Likely	169	28.2
Somewhat Likely	200	33.3
Neither Likely nor Unlikely	124	20.7
Somewhat Unlikely	53	8.8
Very Unlikely	52	8.7

**Local Newspaper**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Likely	100	16.7
Somewhat Likely	163	27.2
Neither Likely nor Unlikely	125	20.8
Somewhat Unlikely	79	13.2
Very Unlikely	129	21.5

**National Newspaper (i.e. New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Likely	83	13.8
Somewhat Likely	121	20.2
Neither Likely nor Unlikely	133	22.2
Somewhat Unlikely	99	16.5
Very Unlikely	162	27.0

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

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Text Message Alerts	321	53.5
Home Phone	26	4.3
Social Media	52	8.7
Television	171	28.5
Radio	17	2.8
Other	10	1.7



*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.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A Great Deal	132	22.0
Somewhat	214	35.7
A Little	131	21.8
Not At All	123	20.5

**The State Government in Tallahassee**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A Great Deal	135	22.5
Somewhat	244	40.7
A Little	141	23.5
Not At All	79	13.2

**Your Local City and County Government(s)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A Great Deal	239	39.8
Somewhat	250	41.7
A Little	77	12.8
Not At All	34	5.7

*How much do you rely on the following sources for information during emergencies?*

**Family**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A Great Deal	269	44.8
Somewhat	205	34.2
A Little	71	11.8
Not At All	54	9.0



**Close Friends**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A Great Deal	158	26.3
Somewhat	260	43.3
A Little	106	17.7
Not At All	75	12.5

**Neighbors**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A Great Deal	103	17.2
Somewhat	203	33.8
A Little	158	26.3
Not At All	134	22.3

**Co-Workers**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A Great Deal	75	12.5
Somewhat	182	30.3
A Little	125	20.8
Not At All	216	36.0

***How much do you trust the following sources to provide you accurate information during emergencies?***

**Family**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A Great Deal	306	51.0
Somewhat	197	32.8
A Little	72	12.0
Not At All	24	4.0

**Close Friends**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A Great Deal	216	36.0
Somewhat	251	41.8
A Little	96	16.0
Not At All	37	6.2



**Neighbors**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A Great Deal	115	19.2
Somewhat	231	38.5
A Little	162	27.0
Not At All	92	15.3

**Co-Workers**

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A Great Deal	82	13.7
Somewhat	199	33.2
A Little	155	25.8
Not At All	163	27.2



**Survey Information**

For this survey, 600 residents of Florida were surveyed via an online web-panel using Prodege MR, an industry leading market research provider. The survey was fielded from July 30<sup>th</sup> through August 10<sup>th</sup>, 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 Florida’s population. Quotas for gender, age, race, and ethnicity were calculated based on population estimates provided by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR). Table A1 below summarizes the USF survey sample in comparison to BEBR’s 2019 population estimates.

**Table A1  
Sample Comparison**

	USF Survey Sample	2019 BEBR Estimates
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	53%	51%
Male	47%	49%
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	10%	11%
25-54	48%	47%
55-64	18%	17%
65+	24%	25%
<i>Race</i>		
African American	20%	17%
White/Caucasian	71%	77%
Other	9%	6%
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Hispanic	27%	26%
Non- Hispanic	73%	74%

The sample was stratified by region of the state to ensure geographical representativeness. [Northeast Florida-14%; Tampa Bay Metro-17%; Southwest Florida-11%; Orlando/Daytona-18%; Palm Beach/Treasure Coast-10%; Southeast Florida-23%; and Northwest Florida-7%].

**\*For media inquiries, please contact Christa Remington at [clremington@usf.edu](mailto:clremington@usf.edu) or (863)243-1579**





### **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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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>