

# Restoration of Resilience: Religious Congregations' Role in Disaster-Recovery Efforts

## Role in Disaster-Recovery Efforts

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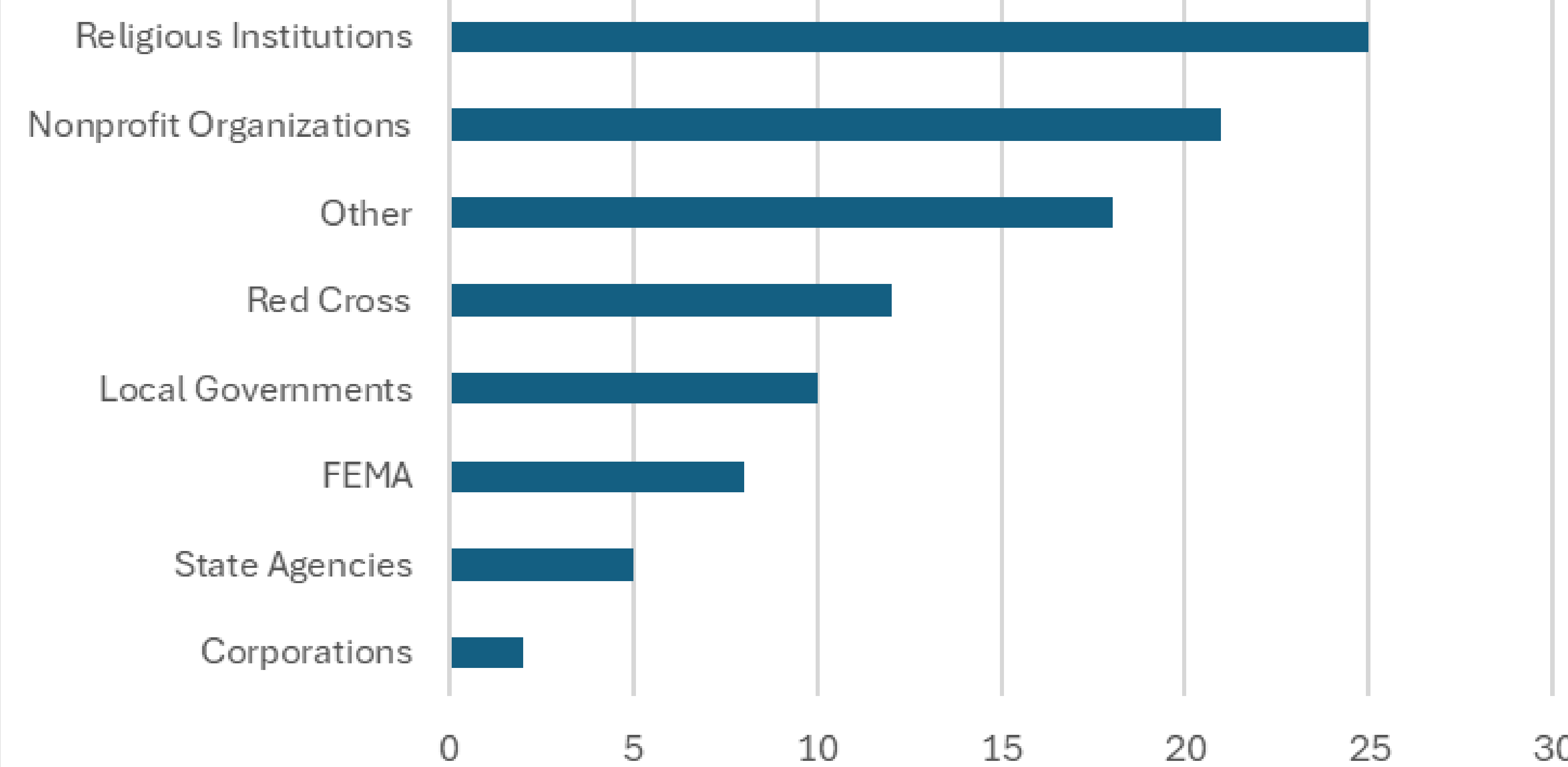
### Introduction

- Severe weather events in the Florida panhandle have caused an unprecedented level of damage across the region. These events include: **tornado outbreaks, Hurricane Debby, and Hurricane Helene** (National Weather Service, n.d.)
- Informal civil society networks between **nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** and **faith-based organizations (FBOs)** have worked to close the gap created by crises or resource constraints within formal government efforts, but their contributions are often fractured and unevaluated (Sapat et al., 2020).
- In defining these networks, there is a **lack of distinction** between FBOs and religious congregations. FBOs are classified as nonprofit entities that specialize in a public service with an aspect of their organization being tied to religious personnel or inspirations (ex: Salvation Army) (McGinnis, 2011). In contrast, **religious congregations** are understood to be formalized churches, mosques, synagogues, etc. that share the same creed.
- Literature suggests that a **combination** of religious congregations and FBOs acts as essential key community leaders. They utilize their **social capital** to coordinate aid and mobilize actors to overcome the free-rider problem by **forging mutual trust** (Storr et al., 2025). Previous case studies on specific religious congregations in post-disaster settings have found that these communities have given members the space to address what they find "untrustworthy" about the local, state, and federal government (Rivera & Nickels, 2014).

### Methodology

- This project is an analysis based on a larger study examining organizational-level disaster philanthropy in Florida to explore the extent, form, targeting, coordination, and motivations for disaster aid.
- Literature synthesis** was utilized to create the designated survey questions and targeted categories for the survey.
- Surveys** are disseminated through **targeted recruitment** and snowball sampling through membership in networks of organizations.
  - Snowball sampling**: a chain referral approach to sampling that considers the social context of population representatives (Pasikowski, 2024).
- Respondents may include any form of organization, including for-profit, governmental, nonprofit, or religious.

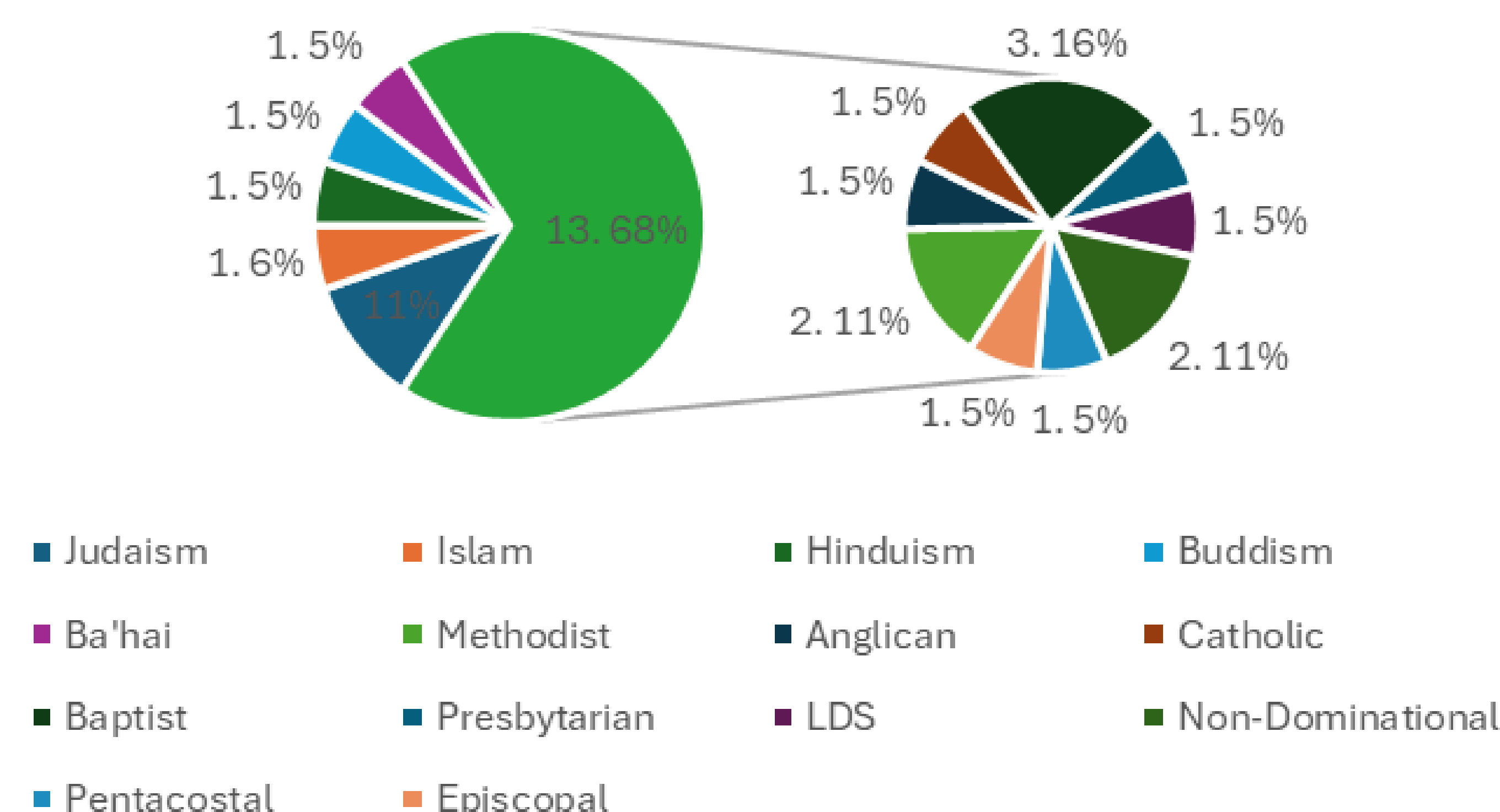
### Assisting Organizations for Survey Respondents



### Past & Preliminary Results

- The results for the 2024-2025 wave of this study are still **preliminary**. The following results are from a previous wave pre-2020, but they are a strong indicator of how the current survey results will develop.
- The total of the four donation categories (cash, labor, services, and supplies) was worth **\$145,926,219**.
- Of the 163 organizations surveyed, **41 (25%) were 'religious'**. 68 (42%) were general nonprofits, and 26 (16%) were education-based organizations.
- However, there is a displayed **tendency of respondent organizations to coordinate with religious organizations** more than any other type of organization.

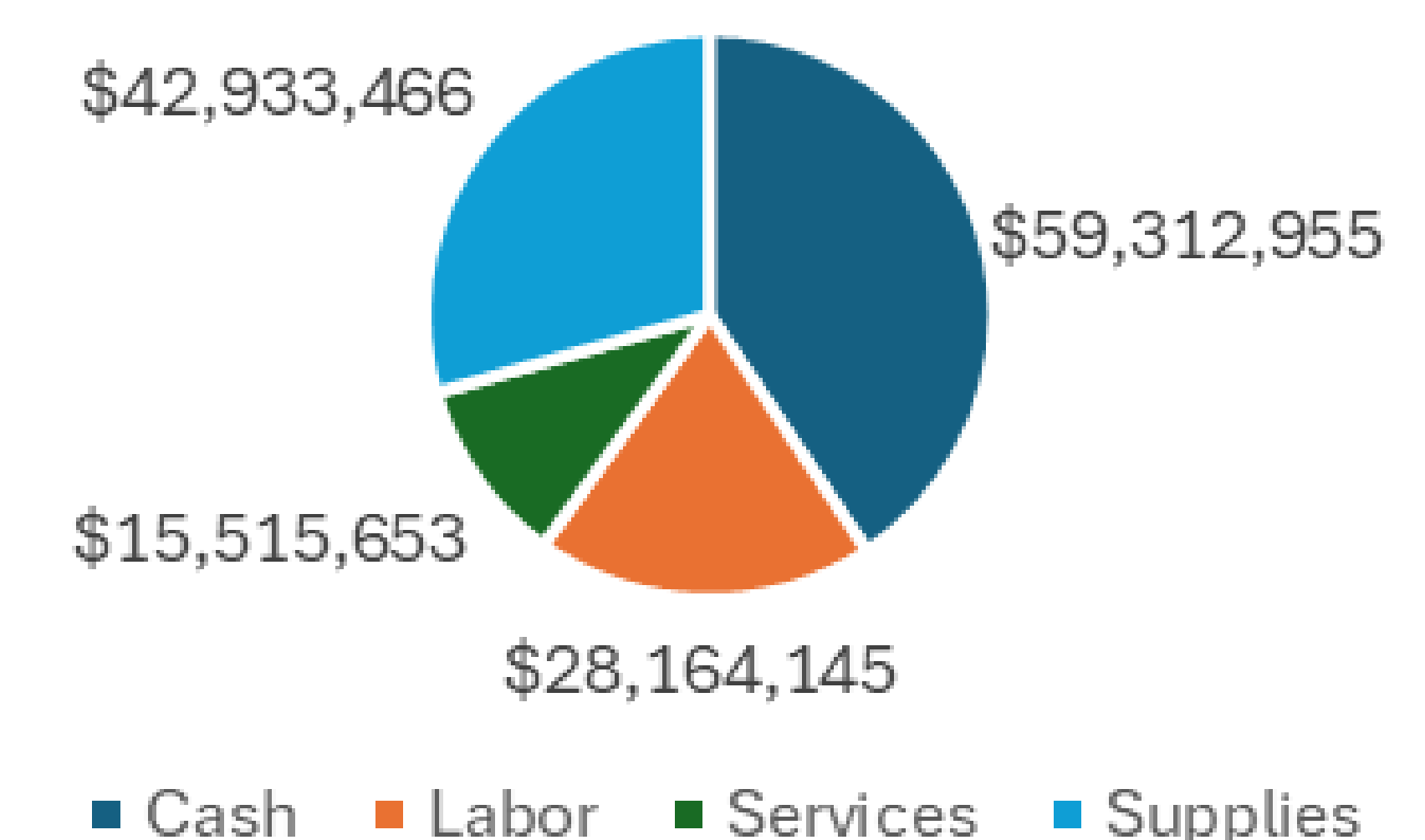
### Congregational Survey Outreach



### Implications

- The findings show that disaster response frameworks need to move **beyond state-centric assumptions**. Current literature assumes that government disaster relief is the default, but there is a concerted, multi-hundred-million-dollar effort from civil society networks that goes unevaluated.
- Further, literature must account for the conditions that both enable and force NGOs and FBOs to perform as primary actors in disaster response. The interrelationship between socioeconomic status and the distribution of disaster relief through government networks revealed a lack of accessibility for those living below the poverty level, as priority is shifted to higher-income individuals throughout Leon County (Horner & Lee, 2008; Alem et al., 2022). Especially as communities become more rural throughout Leon County and the Big Bend region, people **depend upon religious congregations to coordinate aid efforts**.
- The distinction between FBOs and religious congregations has significant implications for disaster management and policy. FBOs often act as a conduit between congregations and government actors, and they can receive **partnerships, grants, or different tax statuses**, so it is essential to differentiate the two categories when conducting disaster-aid philanthropy (McGinnis, 2011).
- Further research can develop the boundaries between the two categories. Additionally, future studies should pursue **qualitative methods** to analyze religion's capacity for resilience building. Past literature shows that religious congregations provide **hope** and a shared worldview that creates a **sense of obligation to communities** (Hirono & Blake, 2017).

### Total Forms of Donation



### References

