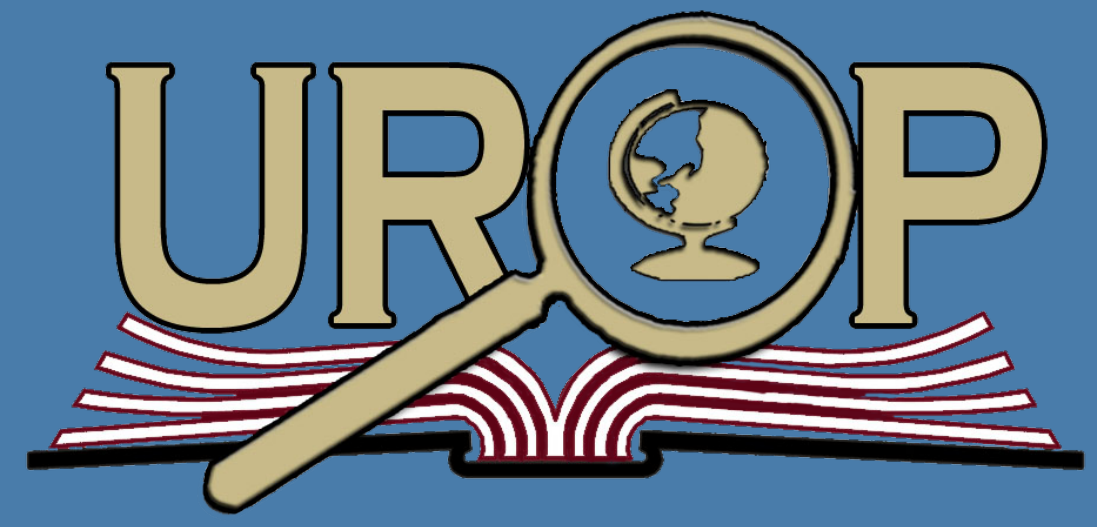




# Resilience in Dual Disasters: Florida's Hurricane Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Amid COVID-19



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## INTRODUCTION

This research presents a qualitative analysis to understand the challenges of dual disasters and the resulting coping strategies in Florida's coastal communities.

Coastal communities in Florida faced the challenge of mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic in the face of an active hurricane season in 2021 and 2020.

Existing dual-disaster studies explore catastrophes such as earthquakes, droughts, and tsunamis but neglect the combination of hurricanes and COVID-19.

Public health practices for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 often conflicted with critical functions of disaster response and preparedness, creating extra obstacles.

The pandemic presents a unique opportunity for emergency management personnel to reformulate and develop existing planning capabilities establish clear communication, and emphasize adaptability in response to evolving situations.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

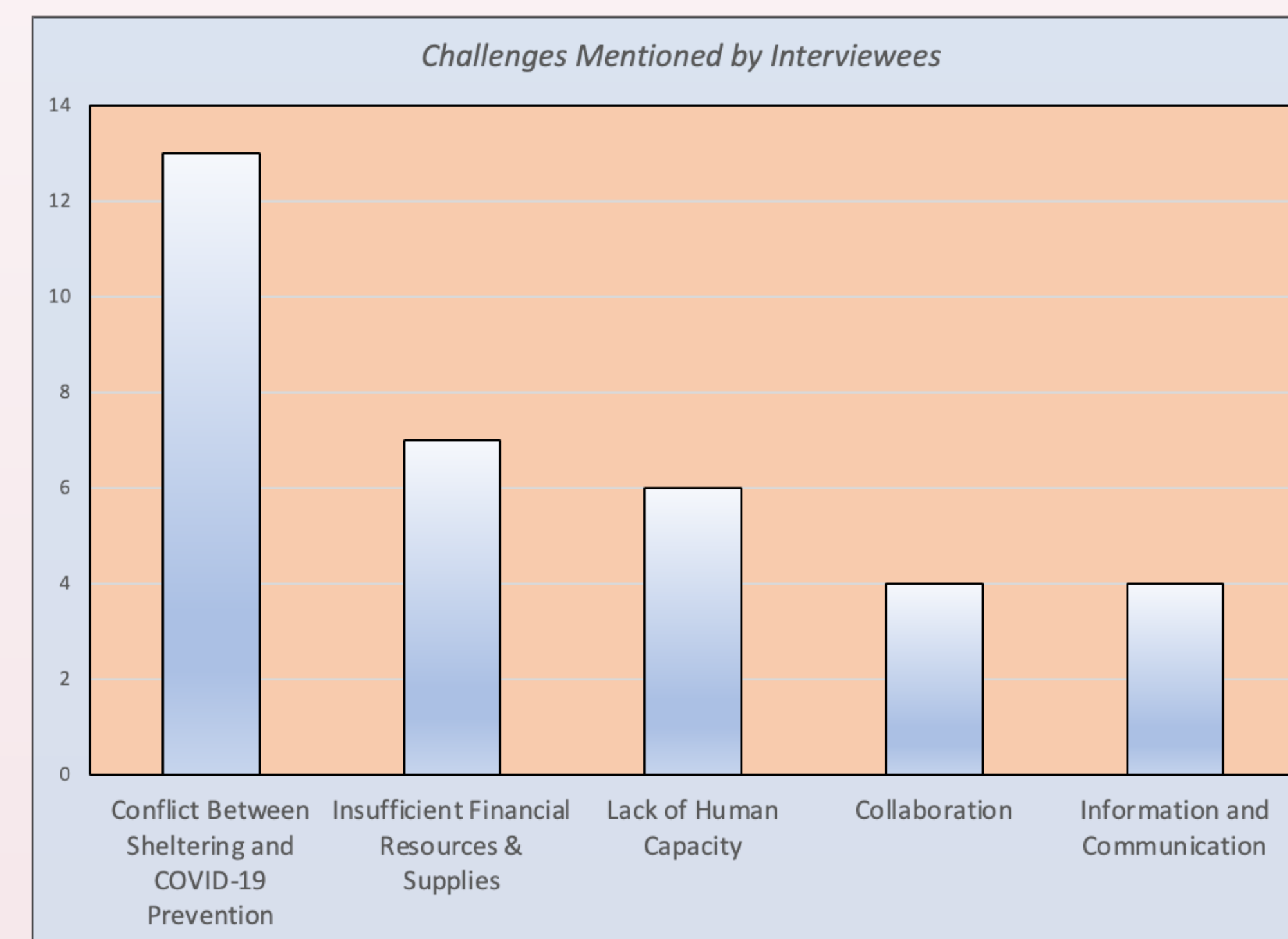
- What challenges did government agencies and nonprofits involved in hurricane response and recovery operations in Florida experience while facing the possibility of dual-disaster scenario?
- How did government agencies and nonprofits balance priorities of hurricane evacuation and sheltering operations with the priorities of mitigating the spread of COVID-19?

## QUOTES

*"How are we going to space people in shelters? Which shelters or even have to open? What resources are we going to need for openness? And trust all those and Beta plans would have fallen back on active duty personnel meaning either fire rescue personnel, or military" (L4)*

*"COVID definitely has made it more difficult to reach people because you were really kinda limited to social media and those kinds of outreach we have begun using kind of old method of just mailing people information and different organizations through the regular US mail." (N2)*

## FREQUENCY



## METHODS

Data collection occurred through semistructured interviews with 15 emergency management professionals at the federal, state, and local levels over the course of 13 months. The interview questions focused on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted hurricane planning, response, and recovery. Additionally, the role of the evolution of communication, during these disasters. The participants' responses were transcribed and immigrated into NVivo. Content analysis was used to identify and code recurring themes using a nonlinear approach.

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- How did COVID-19 affect the interviewee's agency's preparedness and planning for the hurricane season?
- What strategies or actions did the agency take to address these issues?

## KEY AGENCIES

FDEM, FEMA, NOAA, Bay County, Jacksonville EM, Leon County, Tallahassee Mayor, FL Lottery, FSU, Pinellas County, FL, Institute of Government, North FL Economic, Development Partnership

## RECURRING THEMES

- Conflict Between Sheltering and COVID-19 Prevention
- Insufficient Financial Resources & Supplies
- Lack of Human Capacity
- Information and Communication Challenges
- Collaboration Challenges

## RESULTS

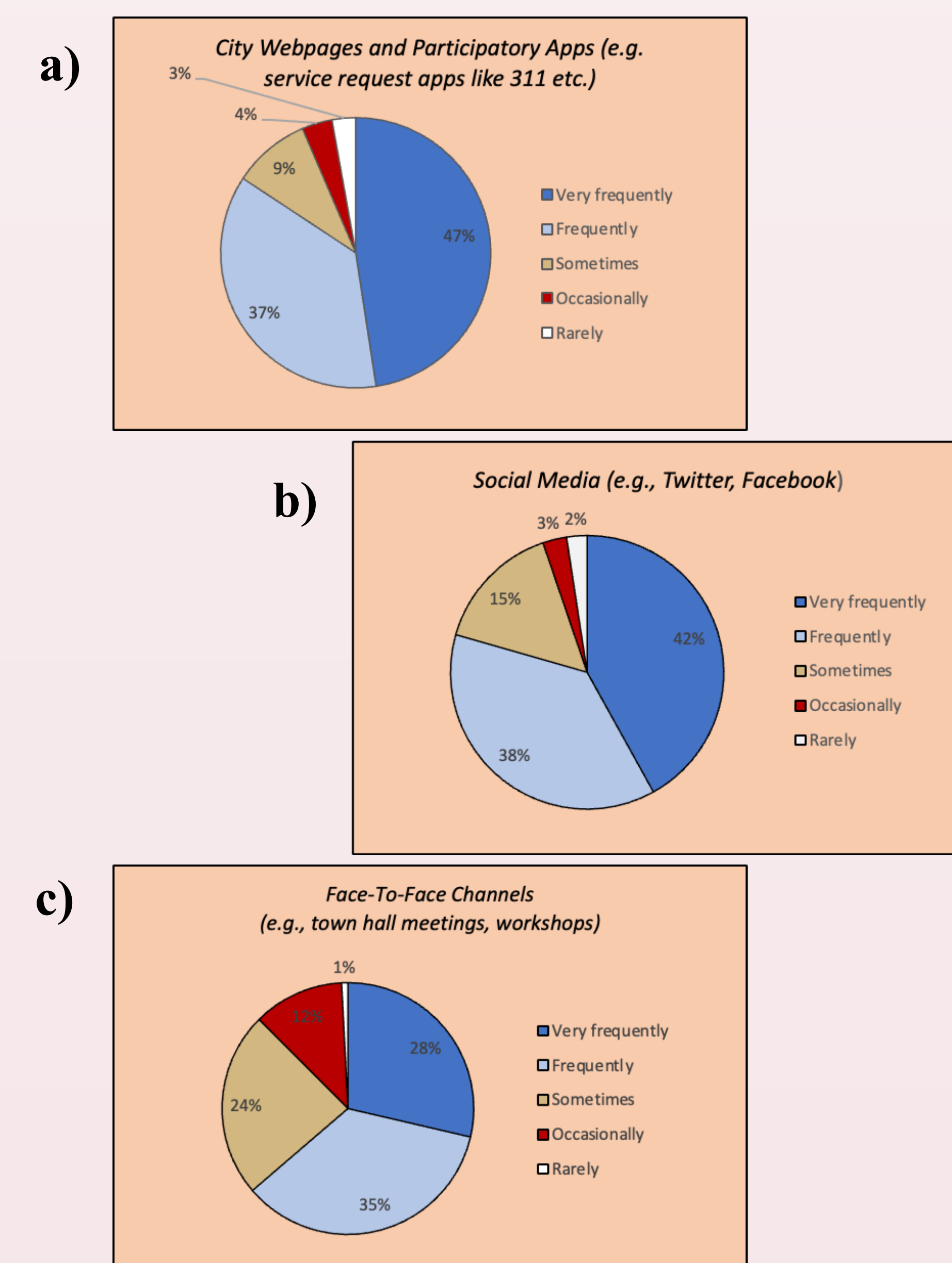
Our findings indicate that to combat information and communication challenges, such as the lack of ICT equipment, emergency managers need to seek ways to connect with surrounding offices to ensure backup service plans are established.

To mitigate conflicts regarding sheltering and COVID-19, non-congregate sheltering can be introduced. The collaboration challenges most often detailed are unclear responsibility in collaboration and lack of ICT equipment for remote collaboration.

To overcome confusion over responsibility, better resilience can be established through connecting with other organizations to ensure long and short-term needs are met.

Financial resources and supply challenges can be lessened through two strategies. First, finding access to funding. Second, allocating that funding appropriately. Lastly, to cope with human capacity issues, emergency managers can place more emphasis on community training and telework operations.

## To what extent does your government use the following channels to promote citizen participation in the decision-making process?



## CONCLUSION

This research is centered on a real-world issue that impacts individuals all across Florida. Hurricanes pose a significant risk, and in combination with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is an entirely new experience. One that we must adequately plan for to ensure the safety of all Floridians.

## SIGNIFICANCE

- This study takes an exploratory approach to research in order to gain first-hand accounts of nonprofit managers and government stakeholders.
- This research may provide a framework for future dual-disaster research in the field.
- Qualitative results can further collaboration through the provision of successful strategies used to combat challenges created by the dual-disaster framework

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