

# Sheltering During the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Findings from Recent Online Surveys

### Background

Planning and preparing communities for hurricanes and other natural disasters can be stressful and complex, more so during the current COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted two online surveys to assess people's attitudes and behaviors related to going to a disaster shelter during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key highlights from the survey results are presented below.

### Key Findings

#### Porter Novelli Survey

The survey was conducted in June 2020, with 500 respondents aged 18 years and older from across the country.



#### Factors that Could Prevent Someone from Going to a Shelter



The answers below were the most frequently stated reasons that could prevent someone from going to a shelter during an extreme weather incident:

- Worried about becoming infected with COVID-19 (52%)
- Concerned about leaving pets or valuables in the house (43%)
- No information about location and hours of operation (31%)

#### Methods of Communication

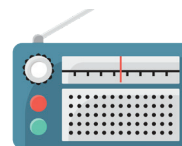
The most frequently stated methods for obtaining information about where to shelter during an extreme weather incident were the following:



TV (56%)



Internet (e.g., news source) (47%)



Radio (36%)

#### YouGov Survey

In October 2020, CDC surveyed 3,000 adults living in coastal counties in eight states along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts that have recently experienced multiple hurricanes: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

#### Changes in Emergency Response Plans

Only 28% of respondents indicated that they had made changes to their emergency response plans because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those who made changes to their plans, 88% said they would not go to a shelter.



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Health and Human Services**  
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## Factors that Would Make People More Likely to Go to a Hurricane Shelter

Respondents indicated the following factors would make them more likely to go to a hurricane shelter during the COVID-19 pandemic:



- Requiring masks be worn inside the shelter (42%)
- Using hotels as shelters (40%)
- Keeping distance between different households (38%)
- Having adequate soap and hand sanitizer (36%)
- Providing masks (36%)
- Availability of medical care in the shelter (36%)
- Availability of COVID-19 tests (35%)

## Reasons Why People Would Go to a Shelter Instead of Staying Home

The top reasons why people would go to a shelter instead of staying home were the following:



- Concerned about personal safety at home (85%)
- Concerned about losing electricity at home (74%)
- Concerned about flooding at home (73%)

(Percentages indicate the percent of respondents who said they were “very” or “somewhat” concerned about a particular issue.)

## Methods of Communication

These were the top sources of communication:



Local TV news stations (76%)



Internet (53%)



Mobile phones (41%)

Additionally, 85% of those who reported receiving emergency alerts reported receiving text alerts.

## Related Resources

CDC Interim Guidance for General Population Disaster Shelters During the COVID-19 Pandemic:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Guidance-for-Gen-Pop-Disaster-Shelters-COVID19.pdf>

Natural Disasters & COVID-19: Resources for Professionals & Emergency Workers:

[https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/covid-19/covid-19\\_resources\\_for\\_professionals.html](https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/covid-19/covid-19_resources_for_professionals.html)

Hurricanes and COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/covid-19/prepare-for-hurricane.html>

Hurricanes and Other Tropical Storms: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes>