

# Local Government Decision-Making About Community Resilience

## Summary of Survey Results

Spring 2024

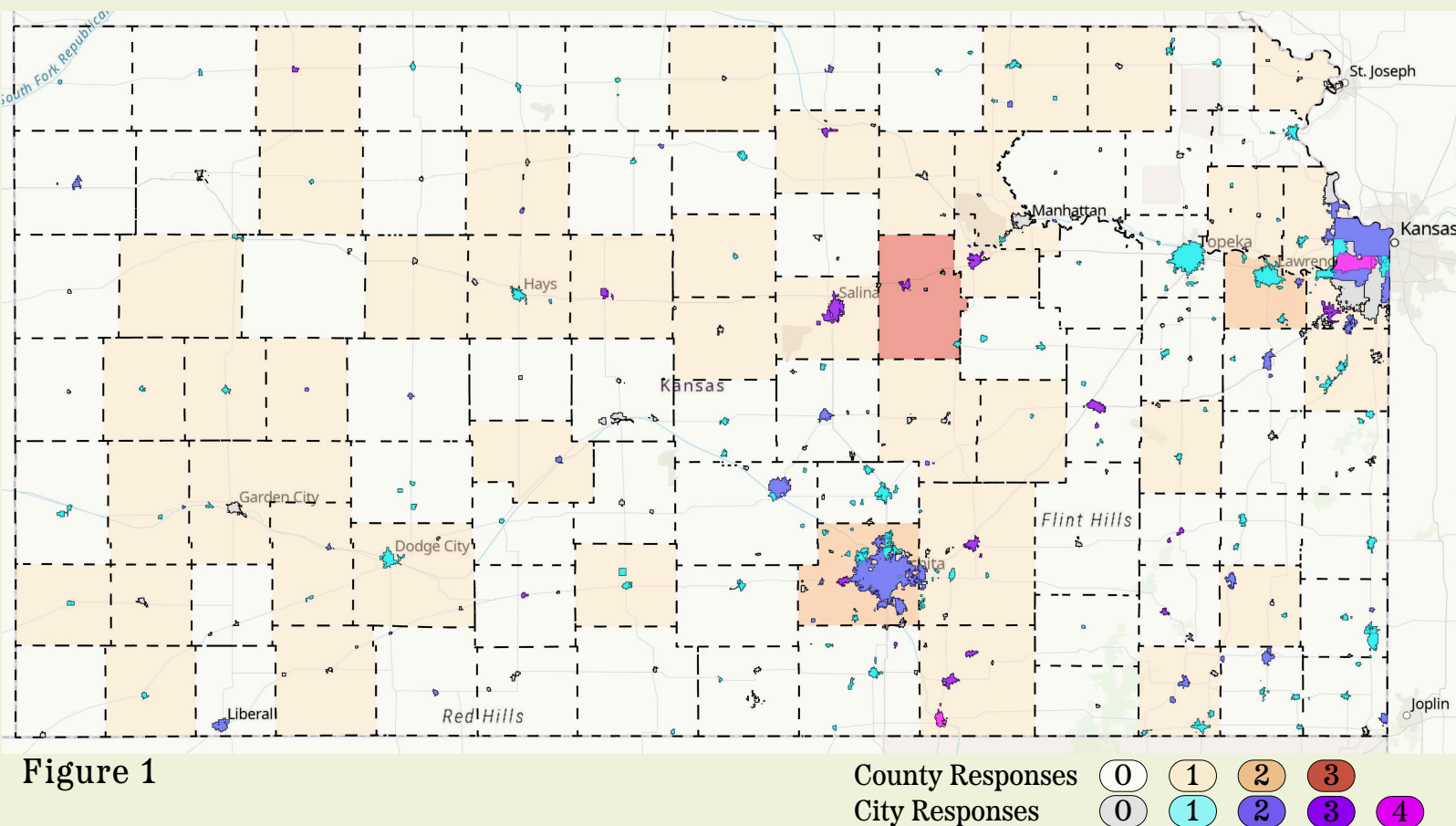
Page 1

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Local officials report **(1) severe storms/high winds, (2) droughts, and (3) ice/winter storms or hail** as the hazard types that had the greatest impact on their communities over the past 5 years.
- Overall, local officials express **moderate** concern that the existing clean water, waste water, and electricity infrastructure in their communities may not withstand a potential future hazard. They expressed the least concern about transportation infrastructure.
- Over 50% of survey respondents indicate that **sustaining a sufficient workforce** for their local government is challenging.
- Respondents report that **(1) deferring capital projects and (2) increasing existing user fees** are the most common ways their government addresses fiscal shortfalls. **Reducing or eliminating public services** is the least frequently used alternative.
- Installing early warning emergency systems** (83%) is the most common hazard preparation action local government respondents report implementing, followed by having a backup electric supply for critical infrastructure (61.5%).
- Having insufficient internal resources** is noted as the largest obstacle to inter-local collaboration around hazard resiliency.

### SURVEY SAMPLE AND RESPONSE

The Adaptive & Resilient Infrastructures driven by Social Equity (ARISE) Team administered an online survey to local officials based in the State of Kansas from September 2023 to January 2024. Up to 940 city and county officials were contacted through email and/or mail invitations to complete the survey. As of January 2024, 288 valid responses have been received and are used to structure this summary (about 31% response rate). Geographically, the county responses represent 45 out of the 105 Kansas counties, and the city responses represent 162 out of the 273 Kansas cities with a population of more than 500. More than one response was received from some counties and cities. The numbers of county/city responses are presented in the map below.



# Local Government Decision-Making About Community Resilience

## RECENT HAZARDS EXPERIENCED

Figure 2 indicates the hazard types that local government officials indicated had the greatest impact on their community over the past five years. Of the 288 county/city officials that responded, 183 noted severe storms/high winds as one of the three most impactful recent hazards, followed by droughts (140) and then ice/winter storms or hail (112).

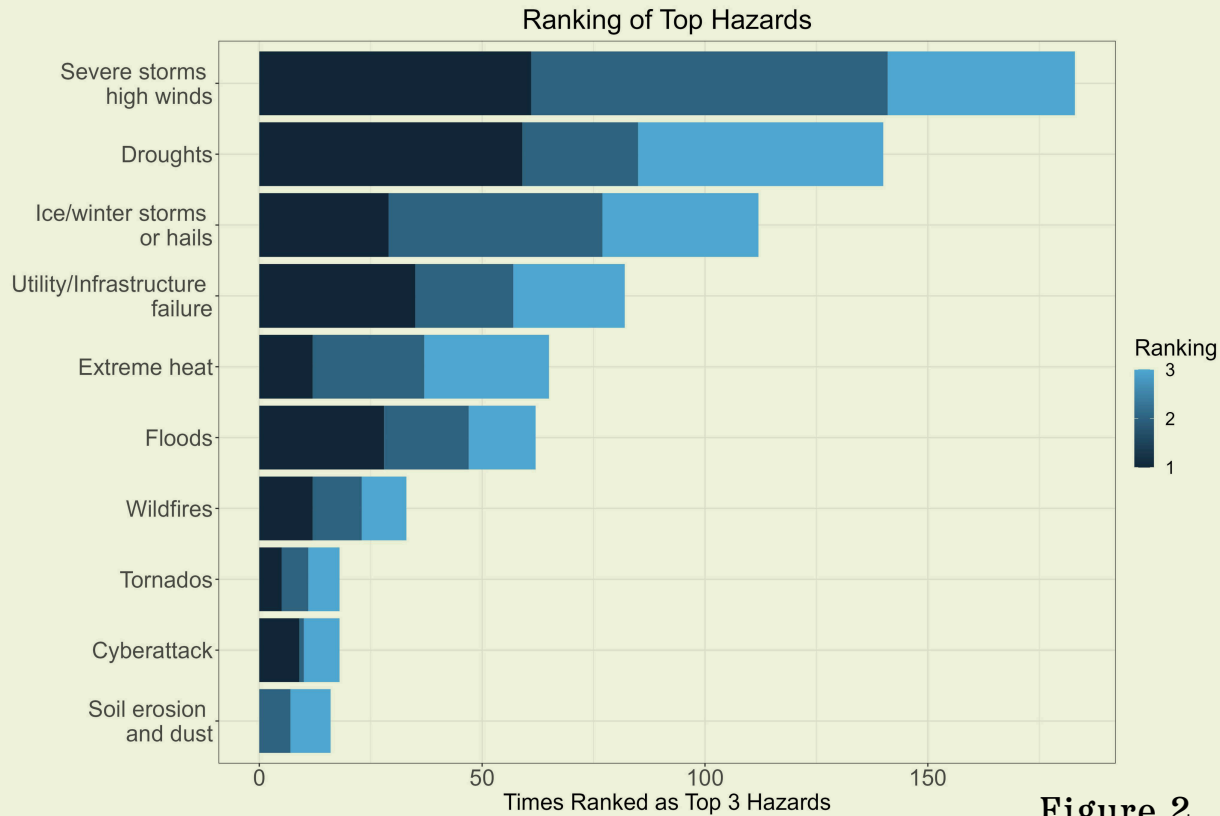
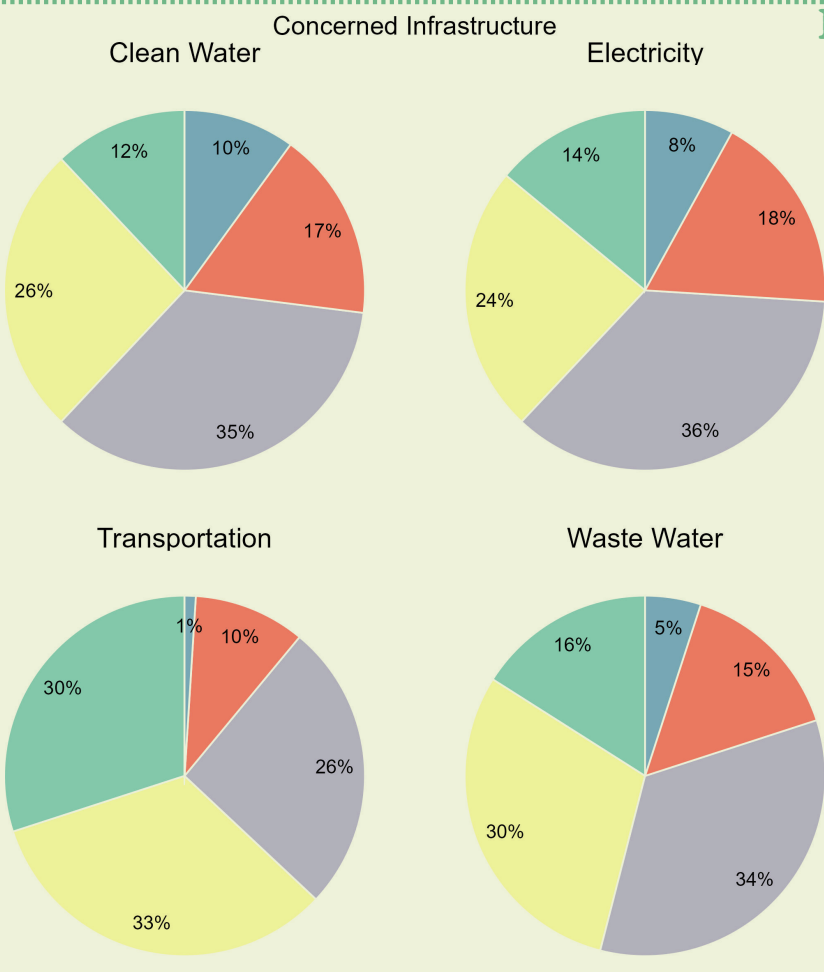


Figure 2

## INFRASTRUCTURE CONCERNS



As shown in Figure 3, across all infrastructure types, most responses (over 60%) express that they are “slightly” to “somewhat” concerned that the infrastructures serving their jurisdictions may not withstand potential future hazards without experiencing life-threatening damage or loss. The greatest levels of concern are seen around clean water and electricity infrastructure, with 27% and 26% of respondents, respectively, expressing that they are “very” or “extremely” concerned about the possibility of life-threatening failure. The lowest levels of concern are expressed around transportation infrastructure.

Figure 3

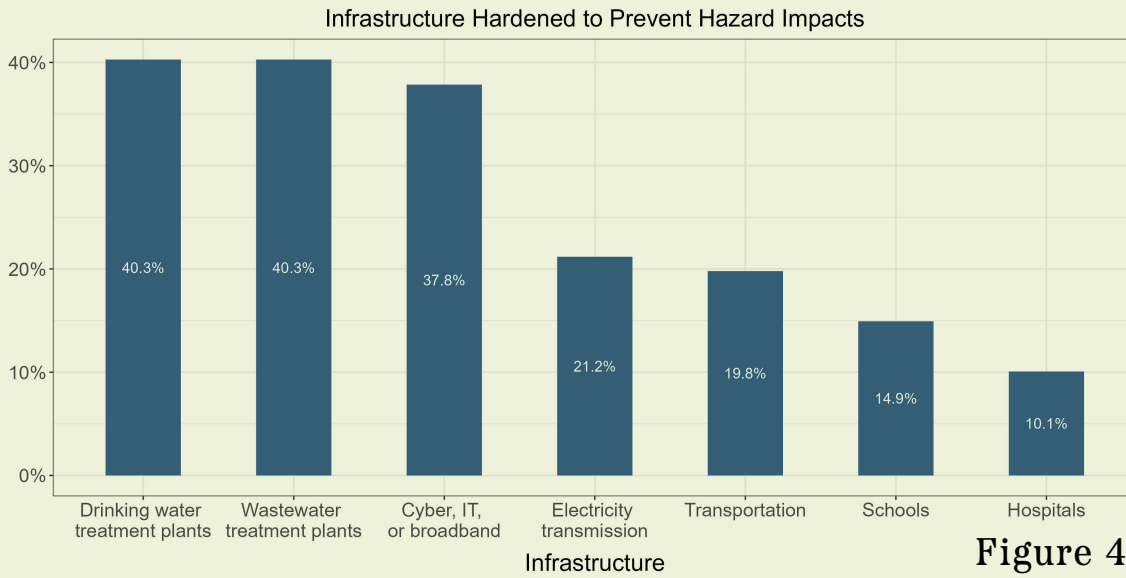


Figure 4

Approximately 40% of respondents indicated that their local government has taken action to harden drinking water and/or wastewater treatment plants to protect them from the impact of hazards. Slightly fewer, 37.8%, have noted that their local government has hardened its cyber, IT, or broadband infrastructures.

Two survey questions were designed to understand the fiscal health and economy of Kansas local governments. Overall, over 60% of responding officials assessed their local government’s overall fiscal conditions as “good” or “excellent”. Less than 10% assessed them as “poor” or “very poor.” On the other hand, sustaining a sufficient workforce to maintain desired levels of service provision is a challenge for most of the Kansas communities represented by survey respondents. 54% of the officials see this task as “very” or “extremely” challenging. Only 2% of the respondents do not consider this to be a challenge.

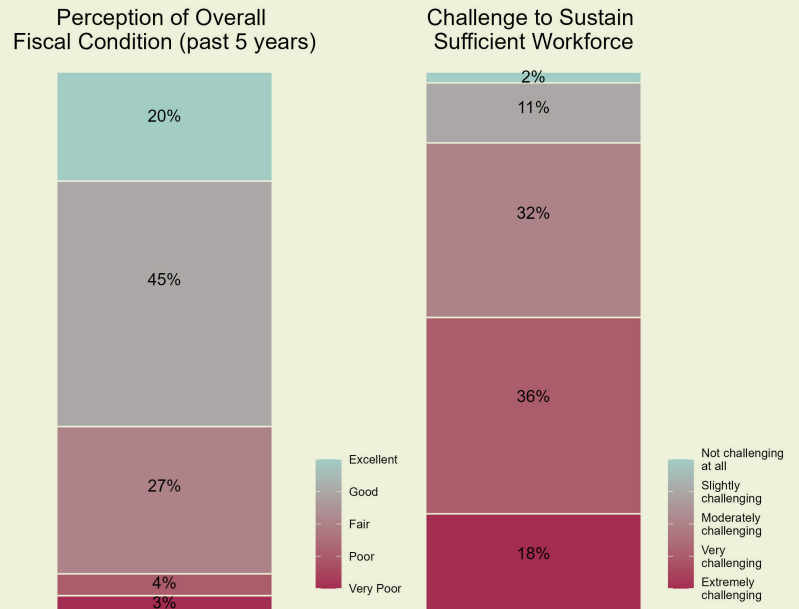
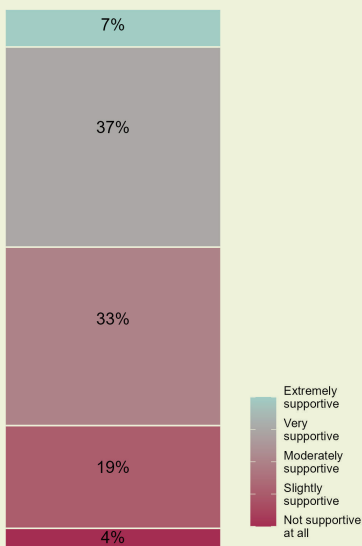
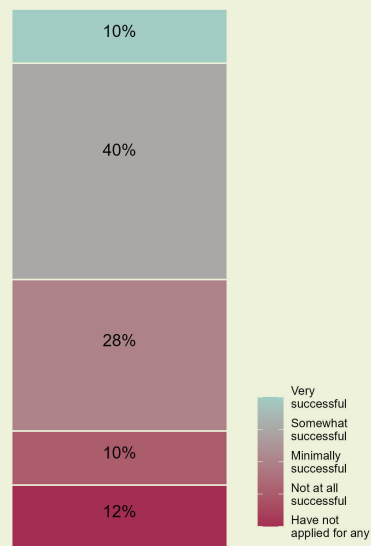


Figure 5

Local Elected Officials' Support on Hazard Mitigation



Successfulness of External Grant Application



Respondents perceive local elected officials as supportive of investing local general funds to improve hazard mitigation. Specifically, 37% see their elected officials as very supportive, while only 4% are not supportive. 88% of responding officials indicate that their local government has applied for external grants to help fund projects that would reduce the local impact of hazards. Of those that have applied, 10% of respondents evaluate their city as “very successful” at securing grants, and another 40% evaluate their government as “somewhat successful.”

Figure 6

Challenges Affecting Hazard Reduction Grant Application

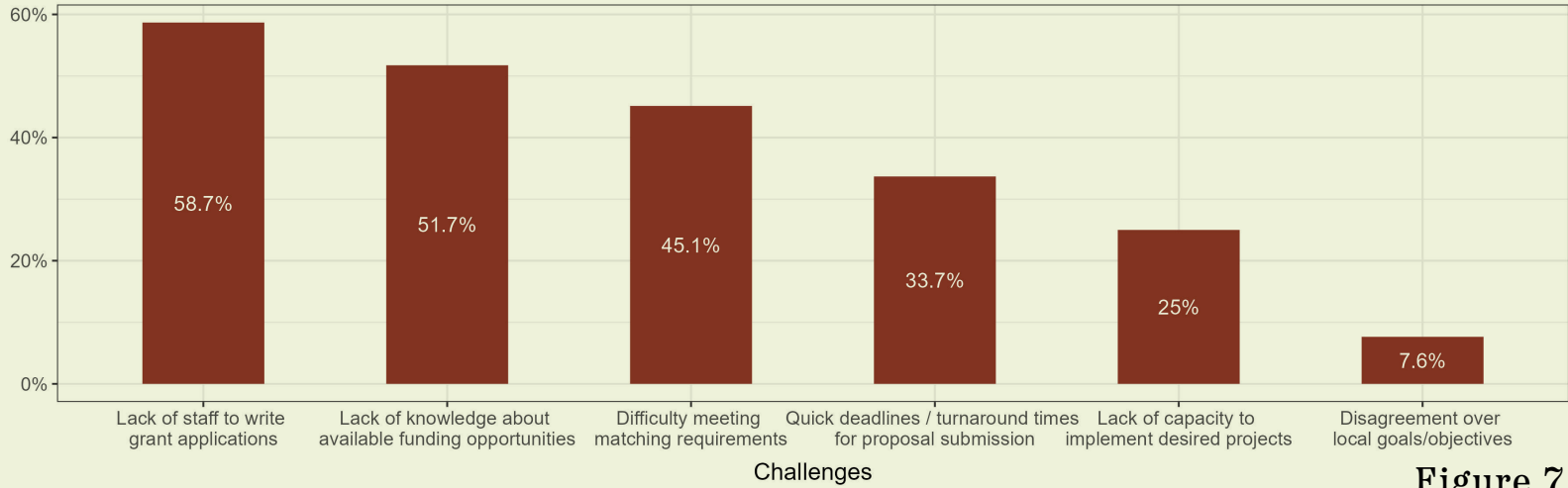


Figure 7

Figure 7 depicts the factors identified as hindering local governments’ grant application success. Almost 60% of respondents note that their organization lacks staff to draft competitive proposals, while 51.7% lack knowledge of potential funding opportunities. 45% of respondents worry about their ability to meet matching requirements.

## FISCAL CONSIDERATION ADDRESSING FISCAL NEED

When fiscal condition is a local concern, responses to the survey indicate that the most common measures taken are (1) deferring capital projects (42.7%) and (2) increasing existing user fees (42.7%). Reducing personnel benefits (9.4%) and reducing or eliminating public services (10.8%) are the least frequently mentioned measures by local officials.

Measures Taken to Address Fiscal Needs (past 5 years)

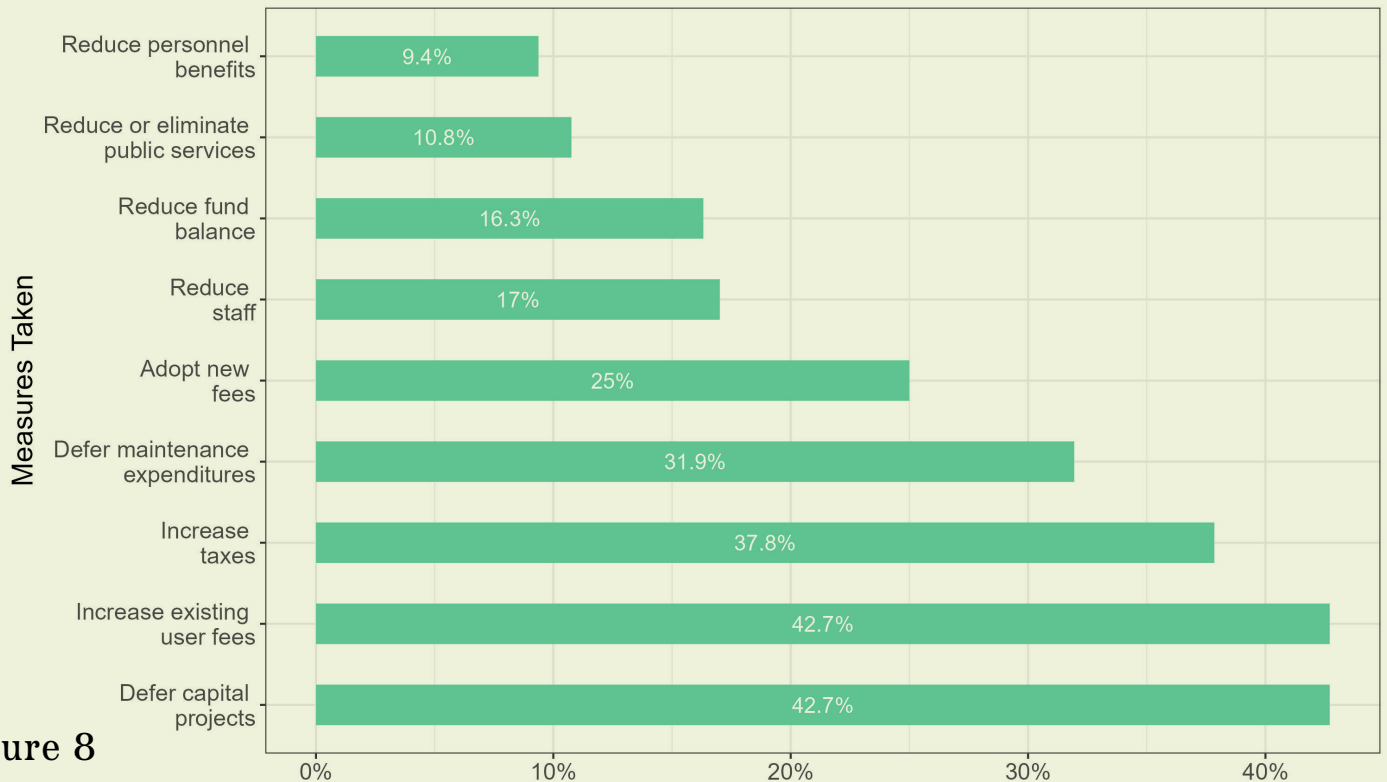


Figure 8

# Local Government Decision-Making About Community Resilience

## ACTIONS MITIGATING IMPACTS

Figure 9 shows the relative frequency with which survey respondents indicate that their jurisdictions have undertaken different measures to reduce the local impact of hazards. The results suggest that most local governments in Kansas have installed early warning emergency systems (83%). Many have also secured backup electric supply for critical infrastructure (61.5%) and have adopted zoning that limits growth in floodplains (51.7%).

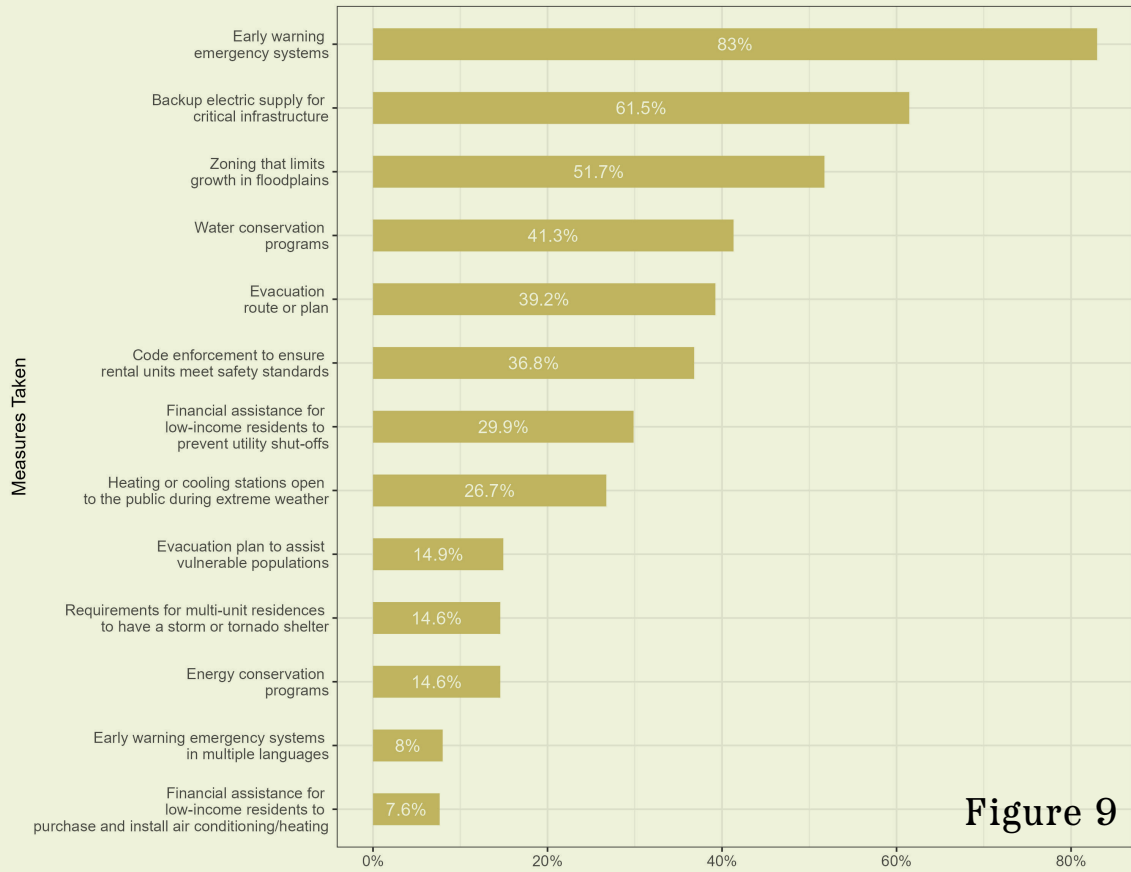


Figure 9

Because hazards cross jurisdictional boundaries, collaboration matters to the effectiveness of hazard impact prevention. However, creating and sustaining collaborations can be difficult. The survey results suggest that not having insufficient internal resources is the largest obstacle to collaboration (22.6% indicate it is either “large” or “very large”).

On the other end of the spectrum, not having internal support for work on hazard resiliency was mentioned as a large or very large obstacle by only 5.9% of respondents.

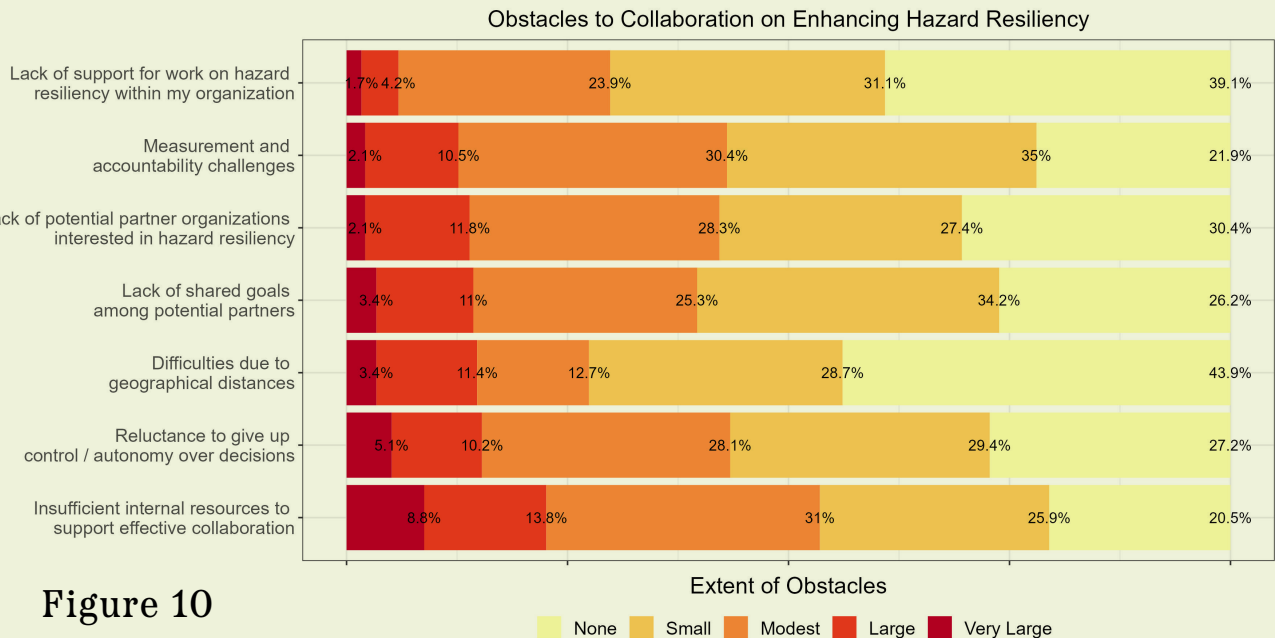


Figure 10

## FUNDING INFO

This material is based primarily on work funded by the National Science Foundation grant OIA-2148878. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed here are those of the author(s) for this project, & do not necessarily reflect the views of NSF.

