#HRRC30for30

"Hurricane Risk Perceptions among Florida's Single Family Homeowners."

Peacock, Brody & Highfield. 2005.

There is a growing recognition that natural disasters signal a serious breakdown in sustainability. Hurricane risk perception is an important way of predicting storm preparation, evacuation and hazard adjustment undertaken by households. Researchers and practitioners admit that natural disasters occur because of a failure to encourage community development that recognizes the nature of hazard risk in a way that agrees with sustainable development. Because the public is more involved in planning and policy decision-making, how much risk they think is present can influence the content of hazard reduction programs and related strategies.

Findings

This article examines several factors adding to hurricane risk perceptions of single-family homeowners in Florida, using data from a statewide survey to map and spatially analyze risk perceptions. The research finds that people tend to seek information mainly from radio and television to determine their personal risk, rather than following the directions of public officials and technical experts. There's consistency between wind hazard zones and perceived risk, but inconsistency between the application of Florida's building code and risk perceptions. The study finds that residents of the Panhandle, an area with high wind risks, have similar risk perceptions as other throughout Florida. The average levels of risk perception were consistent with wind hazard zones and an important influence on individual risk perception was location relative to wind zone.

Implications

Public perception can have important consequences for the perceived reliability of and compliance with land-use planning policy. The article notes that mass media seems to be an influential source for information that potentially shapes the public perception of hazard risk. Public policy can have an impact on the relative influences of factors on risk perception and change future research results. Many of these respondents live in homes that don't have proper wind protection and since new building code requirements won't impact existing housing. Because of this, there's more need to increase public education about the potential results of hurricane winds for existing homes.