



FEMA



2012 Public Survey Findings on Flood Risk

In 2012, FEMA conducted its third annual nationwide survey of U.S. households to track progress toward achieving Goal 2 of the Risk MAP Multi-Year Plan, which is to “Ensure that a measurable increase of the public’s awareness and understanding of risk management results in a measurable reduction of current and future vulnerability to flooding.” The results from the public survey are valid at the national and regional levels. The following are the key findings from the survey.

Flooding Isn’t a Major Concern, But People Search for Information about It When They Move

- **Flooding isn’t their biggest problem.** A large majority of respondents (90%) did not believe flooding was the primary hazard their community faced.
- **The number of people aware that their community is at risk of flooding decreased significantly this year.** Those who said they believed their community was at risk from flooding decreased from 41% in 2011 to 31% in 2012.
- **A steady 12% think their home or apartment is at risk.** As also seen in the 2011 results, only 12% of those who believed their community was at risk believed their home was at risk.
- **About 26% of people search for information about their flood risk.** One-quarter of respondents looked for information about their home or apartment’s flood risk, with the majority, 78.3%, stating that the information was very or somewhat easy find. However, those who believed their homes were at risk were significantly more like to say it was difficult to find the information (41.5%).
- **Moving into a new place prompts flood research.** The top two reasons that motivated people to search for information about their property’s flood risk were moving into a new home or apartment (35%) and a recent flooding event (13%).

Survey authorized by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget: Control No. 1090-0007.

Research Objectives

To determine the general public’s:

- General awareness of flood risk
- Knowledge of specific ways to mitigate flood risk
- Perception of barriers to mitigation activities
- Steps taken to reduce risks

Research findings will inform and refine Risk MAP’s National Outreach and Community Engagement Strategies and will be shared across FEMA and Federal Agencies that address common issues (e.g., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

Research Methodology

- A total of 1,000 telephone interviews were conducted from July 31- August 14, 2012.
- Administered by random digit dial to households in the U.S. for FEMA’s 10 regions.
- For the first time with this survey, cell phone users were included in the sample. The sample was comprised of 25% cell phone users and 75% landline users.
- One hundred interviews were conducted per region.
- The response rate was 11.7%, the cooperation rate of those successfully contacted was 64%.
- Respondents were mostly homeowners (77%).
- The sample collected appears to be representative of the U.S. population across demographic areas.
- Chi-Square testing was performed between all categorical variables to determine correlations between observed and expected results.

RiskMAP
Increasing Resilience Together

People Want Flood Risk Information Delivered To Them

- **People want to hear flood risk on the news and through mailings.** Local news (76%) was by far the preferred information source regarding general flood risk (as opposed to specific flood-related news), with mailings a distant second at almost 30%.
- **People expect to hear about flood risk from their mayor or local media.** Thirty-six percent felt that their mayor or local elected official should keep them posted about flood risk, with the local media just slightly below 36%. Twenty-four percent of respondents stated that they heard about their community's risk of flooding from their local officials at least annually, while 54.6% don't hear about flooding from them at all.

People Are Confused About Flood Insurance, but Aren't Talking to Agents

- **More believe their homeowner's or renter's insurance covers flood damages.** Almost 31% of households believed that flood damage was covered by their homeowner's or renter's policy, up from 19% last year.
- **About half of those without flood insurance know that it's available.** Fifty-five percent of those who did not have flood insurance knew that it was available, but only 23% of those respondents said that their insurance agent had talked to them about it.
- **People primarily take the same steps to reduce flood risk, whether or not they believe they are at risk.** Other than purchasing flood insurance, there was not a significant difference in taking steps to prevent homes from flooding when comparing those who believed their community was at flood risk to those who do not believe it is at risk.

Proactive Searching is a Better Indicator of Mitigation Action than Proximity to Hazards

- **People who search for flood information are more likely to take mitigation action.** The belief that one's community or home is at flood risk does not appear to be linked strongly with taking activities to protect one's home from flooding. However, searching for information about flood risk of one's home does appear to be linked with greater activity in protecting one's home from flooding.
- **Proximity to hazards is not an indicator of mitigation activities.** Being located near a flood hazard did not make individuals feel that their community was at greater flood risk, but it did make individuals feel that their home was at greater risk. Despite that, they did not act significantly differently than those who were not located near flood hazards in terms of their behaviors to protect their homes against flooding.