



Disaster events lower levels of optimism but after a period of time, perceptions of risk decrease

The perception of future risks is also affected by the time that has passed from the previous hazardous event - as time passes, the level of perceived risk is argued to become lower (Raška, 2015). This trend has been confirmed for different natural disasters. For example, it has been shown that the perceived level of flood risk is not stable within a community, but it changes over time decreasing between flood events (Raška, 2015). In another study, Baker and colleagues investigated evacuees after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2006 (Baker, Shaw, Riddel, & Woodward, 2009). They evaluated people's risk perception shortly after the accident and after one year. Even though all participants were personally affected by the hurricane and suffered great material losses, after one year they showed a lower level of perceived risk compared to the first evaluation (Baker et al., 2009). Similar results were obtained in relation to earthquake disasters. Burger and Palmer (1992) investigated the optimism bias in students that have experienced the earthquake in California in 1989. Their study showed that immediately after the accident, participants did not show any optimism bias regarding future natural disasters. But, three months after the earthquake, optimism bias regarding future earthquake accidents was noticeable in almost all participants (Burger & Palmer, 1992). It has been proposed that disaster events decrease the level of optimism bias for a short period after which it returns to the baseline level (Trumbo, Meyer, Marlatt, Peek, & Morrissey, 2014). These results are in line with the classical reinforcement learning models (Weber et al., 2004), which states that recent events have greater influence on cognitive judgements and behaviour compared to distant ones.

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Individual/collective memory](#), [Attitudes toward environmental issues](#)

Disaster Phases: [Prevention](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Non-active citizens](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#)

Recommendations:

- [Use local knowledge, collective memory and shared cultural values to improve disaster preparedness, response and recovery](#)
- [Develop risk assessments methodologies, which consider cultural factors, the manner in which people cognitively process information and which employ a gender perspective](#)

Source

[Deliverable D4.1 "Mapping risk perception concepts in the context of disasters" \(page 66\)](#)

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