



For natural hazards linked to geographical location, risk perception tends to decrease as distance from the risk source increases

Several studies showed that risk perception of natural disasters is affected by place of residence. Not surprisingly, people tend to be sensitive to the spatial distribution of flood risks, in a sense that those who are closer to the river are more fearful of the flood (e.g., Brilly & Polic, 2005; Kaiser & Witzki, 2004). However, He and Zhai (2015) showed that there are cross-country differences in the effect of geographical location on risk perception of natural disasters. The authors surveyed the participants from three East Asian countries - China, Japan, and South Korea. The study varied the distance from the coastline by including participants from different towns within these countries and assessed the perceived risk of a tsunami, flooding, and global warming. The idea was to test whether there are differences in the accuracy of risk assessments across countries by including natural disasters that are differently important for participants living in different areas within these countries. The data revealed that Japanese participants accurately assessed the objective risk of all three natural disasters, while the estimates of South Koreans and Chinese people were less in accordance with actual risks (He & Zhai, 2015). As predicted, in the case of global warming, which affects people living in different areas equally, the Japanese participants' risk perception was not related to geographical location. On the other hand, for flooding and tsunami, the perceived risk of Japanese participants decreased as the distance from the risk source increased. This pattern of results could not be observed in the other two groups of participants (He & Zhai, 2015). The authors argued that the observed differences most likely reflect the differences in economic development, the socio-political system, and historical and cultural backgrounds (He & Zhai, 2015). For example, it may be that people coming from a country with developed economy, advanced risk management systems and legislation such as Japan will be more sensitive to safety issues (e.g., the potential risks of natural disasters) than people living in developing or newly industrialized countries such as China and South Korea (He & Zhai, 2015). Additionally, the authors suggest that the fact that Japan has suffered from many disasters in the past could have made Japanese people more interested in assessing risk information accurately (He & Zhai, 2015).

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Individual/collective memory](#), [Local knowledge](#), [Socio-economic status](#), [Ethnicity](#)

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 D4.2 "Report on 'risk cultures' in the context of disasters" \(page 35\)](#)

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