Institutional preparedness raises levels of citizen concern

Contrary to the expectations, results revealed that perceived institutional preparedness corresponds with a higher level of perceived risk (Lee & Lemyre, 2009). Authors suggested that it is possible that citizens perceived institutional preparedness as a sign that terrorist attack is somewhat likely to happen, which increased their worries. Additionally, people who perceived institutions as more prepared for terrorist attacks showed a greater tendency to avoidance behaviour. Again, this result might reflect their impression that an attack is more likely to happen. Hence they choose to avoid places that could be targeted. These results are particularly interesting since previous studies showed that higher trust in authority's ability to react to a disastrous event (natural or nuclear) is followed by lower levels of perceived risk (Terpstra, 2010; Whitfield et al., 2009). It is possible that high perceived uncontrollability and unpredictability of terrorist attacks may modify the relationship between the risk perception and the trust in authorities, but further studies are needed for us to draw a definitive conclusion. A higher perception of institutional preparedness was also associated with citizens' tendencies to engage in individual preparedness behaviours. According to the authors of this study, institutional preparedness might be playing the role of a "social norm", which encourages people to additionally involve in individual protective behaviours (Lee & Lemyre, 2009).

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: Local knowledge, Power relations, Norms/values, Attitudes toward authorities
Disaster Phases: Prevention, Preparedness
Types of Actors Concerned: Non-active citizens, National civil protection body, Local authorities, Government, Red Cross, Military, Healthcare and emergency services
Hazards: Man-made intentional hazards

Recommendations:

- Engage in activities and develop strategies aiming to improve trust between citizens and authorities
- Develop risk assessments methodologies, which consider cultural factors, the manner in which people cognitively process information and which employ a gender perspective

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Source

Deliverable D4.2 "Report on 'risk cultures' in the context of disasters" (page 54)