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2014 Life in Hampton Roads Survey, Part 5: Sea Level Rise and Environmental Risks

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2014 Life in Hampton Roads Survey, Part 5: Sea Level Rise and Environmental Risks

Life in Hampton Roads Survey, Part 5: Under Water? Sea Level Rise and Environmental Risks

The 2014 Life in Hampton Roads survey, conducted by the Old Dominion University Social Science Research Center (SSRC), contained an extensive battery of questions to determine how people in Hampton Roads felt about several environmental issues, with a major focus on sea level rise and flooding.

In all, 853 residents of Hampton Roads were interviewed over landline and cellular telephones for the fifth annual Life in Hampton Roads survey that was released this week in five parts.

The survey is designed to peer into social and economic indicators of quality of life in the region, with particular focus placed on transportation and traffic, local and state government, education, health, emergency preparedness, the economy and crime.

LIHR survey reports include:

[Regional, Neighborhood and City Quality of Life \(/news/2014/8/life_in_hampton_road\)](/news/2014/8/life_in_hampton_road) (Aug. 18, 2014)

[A Tale of Many Cities: Economy, Crime, and Politics \(/news/2014/8/lihr_part_2\)](/news/2014/8/lihr_part_2) (Aug. 19, 2014)

[Declining Health and Diminishing Education? \(/news/2014/8/lihr_3\)](/news/2014/8/lihr_3) (Aug. 20, 2014)

[The Changing Transportation Picture: Tolls and Traffic \(/news/2014/8/lihr_part_4\)](/news/2014/8/lihr_part_4) (Aug. 21, 2014)

[Under Water? Sea Level Rise and Environmental Risks](#) (Aug. 22, 2014)

Today's edition, "Under Water? Sea Level Rise and Environmental Risks," suggests that solid regional majorities are concerned about the local impact of flooding and sea level rise, including both economic and environmental effects.

A substantial (67.5 percent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that increased flooding due to sea level rise is likely to negatively impact the economic well-being of Hampton Roads, and 68.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed that increased flooding due to sea level rise is likely to negatively impact the environmental well-being of Hampton Roads.

Is climate change affecting Hampton Roads? To that question, 62.7 percent said yes and 26.1 percent said no.

Jesse Richman, director of the Social Science Research Center at ODU, noted that this appears to reflect "more perceived risk from climate change than we have seen in previous surveys."

However, perceptions about increased flooding in Hampton Roads were down from last year's survey. In 2014, 45.8 percent indicated flooding has increased in Hampton Roads over the last 30 years, while 6.2 percent said flooding has decreased. In 2013, 54.5 percent indicated a belief that flooding has increased.

"This may reflect the impact of a relatively quiet year (for storms, so far) in shaping perceptions of the trend," Richman said.

Still, respondents perceived significant risks from catastrophic storms. Overall, 69.1 percent believe that there is a 50 percent or higher chance that Hampton Roads will be struck by a catastrophic hurricane in the next 10 years, while 27.5 percent perceive a 50 percent or more chance that their house would flood in such a hurricane, and 52.1 percent believe there is a 50 percent or higher chance their house would be damaged by wind or falling debris in such a storm.

Many people appear to mistakenly believe they are protected against damage from flooding when they are not. Roughly one-third (34.8%) of respondents reported having flood insurance, but almost half (43.4%) of these were under the impression that their homeowner's policy covers flooding. Since no homeowner's

insurance policies cover flooding in the U.S., it is likely that many people who think they have flood insurance are actually without coverage in that area.

"It is amazing that so many have this misperception," said Michael McShane, an associate professor of finance at ODU and an expert on risk management and flood insurance.

Respondents were also asked how they would prefer to receive information about potential threats to safety with regard to flooding. The most popular answers were local news programming (60.6 percent), text messages (48.3 percent), Internet/social media (40.4 percent), and telephone alerts (39.6 percent).

All Life in Hampton Roads data analyses will be placed on the [Social Science Research Center website](http://www.odu.edu/ssrc) (<http://www.odu.edu/ssrc>) as they are released.

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