Public Support for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the Americas: a 17-country study

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The Puzzle:

Appropriate DRR policies (bldg. codes, construction regs.) can save lives & protect property, when enforced.

The “politics of policy”: policies & enforcement are shaped by politics; public opinion, i.e. preferences of voters & residents, matters

What factors shape public support for DRR policies & their enforcement?

- Individual & collective; subjective & objective
- Change over time, esp if experiencing disaster
The Puzzle:

Results from existing research on public support for DRR are uneven, point in different directions.

Our focus: the effects of 3 sets of factors on support for DRR.

1. Governance (trust in government; perceptions of effectiveness / integrity in DRR; personal experience with corruption; national levels of corruption)

2. Disaster risk (perception of the likelihood, severity, and type of hazard events; perception of risk as individual or general; national and local hazard risk profiles)

3. “Experience” with disasters (as an individual/family, community, or nation)
“Public Perceptions of Code Enforcement and Safer Buildings in Latin America and the Caribbean”
(Natural Hazards Review, 2019)

Findings:
• Higher expectations of regulatory integrity (less corruption; more consistent code enforcement) increase the value that people place on safer construction.
• Living in a higher-risk country does not.

(Data: 2014 AmericasBarometer survey; 12 countries)
Prior Research by Project Team

“The Political Culture(s) of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Mexico, Before and After the Sept. 2017 Earthquake”

Findings:
• Support for enforcement of DRR policies (e.g. building codes) increased after the 2017 earthquake, then declined.
• Perception of future disaster risk was positively associated with support for DRR policies.
• Suffering individual harm from the earthquake had no significant effect on support for DRR policies.

(Data: Multiple waves of AB surveys in Mexico; 2 post-event surveys in Greater Mexico City)
“Support for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Policies in the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian”

Findings:

• Support for DRR increased after 2019 hurricane, then declined—then increased again in 2020 (during COVID-19 pandemic)
• Perception of future disaster risk was positively associated with support for DRR policies.
• Perceived risk from one kind of disaster (storms/floods) was positively associated with perceived risk from another (pandemic).
• Individual harm from 2019 Hurricane Dorian did not shape risk perceptions or support for DRR in 2020.
• Individual harm from pandemic in 2020 increased perceptions of storm/flood risk—but not risk from future pandemics.

(Data: AB survey, 4 post-event surveys in the Bahamas; supported by NSF RAPID grant.)
The Current Project:

• A 3-yr Collab project (funded by NSF HDBE)
  • FIU: Extreme Events Institute (EEI)
  • VU: Latin American Public Opinion (LAPOP) Lab, biennial AmericasBarometer survey

• Phase 1 survey data collection: baseline
  • Module on 2021 AB survey (experiences of disaster; perceptions of disaster risk; support for DRR policies)
  • 17 countries (16 Lat Am & Carib, + US); n= ~25,500
  • Open-access dataset (incl. previous waves)

• Phase 2 survey data collection: post-event
The Data (Phase 1) : 2021 AmericasBarometer

- National phone surveys using random-digit dial.
  (Previous waves conducted faced-to-face.)

- Eligible respondents are voting age adults.

- Sample size is ~3,000 per country.
  Disaster module assigned to a random split, n= ~1,500.

- Data weighted to calculate estimates for the population.
  (Previous waves representative at district/region.)
The Data (Phase 1): 2021 AmericasBarometer

- Data collection in progress or complete in 16 LAC countries (Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Dominican Republic and Haiti.)

- Data collection in the U.S. will take place in July-Aug. 2021.
Early Look at Phase 1 Project Data

Chile: Feb.- May, 2021
El Salvador: April - June, 2021
Have you or someone in your immediate family ever been affected by a natural disaster such as floods, earthquakes, or hurricanes/landslides/tornados/storms resulting in injury, death, or damage to the home or other property here in [country]?
(1) Yes
(2) No
El Salvador

Experience: Self/family been affected by a natural disaster

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2021; El Salvador 20210701 (variable drr1)
Experience: Self/family been affected by a natural disaster

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2021; Chile 20210701 (variable drr1)
How likely do you think it is that [country] could experience a natural disaster (such as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, landslides, tornados / storms) in which people may be injured or killed, in the next 10 years? Do you think it is…?

(1) Not likely
(2) A little likely
(3) Somewhat likely
(4) Very likely
El Salvador

Risk assessment: Likelihood [country] experiences natural disaster in next 10 yrs

Very unlikely: 3.3%
Somewhat unlikely: 9.7%
Somewhat likely: 23.2%
Very likely: 63.8%

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2021; El Salvador 20210701 (variable drk1c)
Risk assessment: Likelihood [country] experiences natural disaster in next 10 yrs

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2021; Chile 20210701 (variable drk1c)
How likely do you think it is that you or someone in your immediate family here in [country] could experience a natural disaster (such as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, landslides, tornados / storms) in which people may be injured or killed, in the next 10 years?

Do you think it is…?

(1) Not likely
(2) A little likely
(3) Somewhat likely
(4) Very likely
El Salvador

Risk assessment: Likelihood self/family is harmed/killed by disaster in next 10 yrs

- Very unlikely: 7.3%
- Somewhat unlikely: 21.1%
- Somewhat likely: 32.0%
- Very likely: 39.6%

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2021; El Salvador 20210701 (variable drk1n)
Risk assessment: Likelihood self/family is harmed/killed by disaster in next 10 yrs

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2021; Chile 20210701 (variable drk1n)
“The government should spend more money to enforce building codes/norms/regulations to make homes safer from natural disasters, even if it means spending less on other programs.”

How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

(1) Strongly agree
(2) Somewhat agree
(3) Neither agree nor disagree
(4) Somewhat disagree
(5) Strongly disagree
Gov't should spend more to enforce codes/norms/regs, even if less on other programs

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2021; El Salvador 20210701 (variable dst1bn)
Gov't should spend more to enforce codes/norms/regs, even if less on other programs

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2021; Chile 20210701 (variable dst1bn)
Avg. Support for Govt. Spending on Codes/Regs (2018-21)

- Chile: 82.21 (2018), 75.80 (2021)
- El Salvador: 75.59 (2018), 77.90 (2021)
Please Spread the Word:

- Dataset available by end of 2021 (previous waves already available)

  - https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/raw-data.php
  - https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/interactive-data.php
The government should spend more money to enforce building codes to make homes safer from natural disasters, even if it means spending less on other programs... How much do you agree or disagree?

Statistical Summary

- Count: 63,613
- Min: 0
- Max: 100.0
- Median: 83.33
- Average: 72.19
- Standard Deviation: 28.66

Note: All responses have a numeric code. Ordinal variables are rescaled from 0 to 100. Hover cursor over bars in figure below to see correspondence between response ("Variable Label") and numeric value ("Variable Order").

Strongly Disagree: 2,993
2: 2,263
3: 4,194
4: 8,846
5: 11,310
6: 10,895
Strongly Agree: 23,106

Source: AmericasBarometer Version: v0.13.5
Please Spread the Word:

- RA opp. for incoming PhD student(s)
The Extreme Events Institute (EEI) and the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Florida International University offer a doctoral research assistantship (RA) in the general area of disaster risk reduction, public opinion, policy, and politics. This research assistantship will be awarded to an incoming PhD student in Political Science, International Relations, Public Affairs (Public Policy), or other doctoral program within SIPA.

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Thank You!