

Preparing for natural disasters: What policies protect the vulnerable consumer?

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Despite catastrophic earthquakes, the most vulnerable residents do not take steps to prepare themselves against future disaster, according to a new study in the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*. The authors provide an example from southern Spain.

"Spain's persistent economic crisis and unemployment rate suggest that many residents of southern Spain belong to this vulnerable segment," write authors Shintaro Okazaki (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), Amadeo Benavent-Climent (University of Madrid), Angeles Navarro (Universidad de Murcia), and Jörg Henseler (University of Twente). "Yet earthquakes do not seem to be a pressing issue for Spaniards, due to indifference and lack of awareness regarding the potential for future disasters."

Authors explored the region's attitudes about earthquakes, learning that, in general, residents did not have realistic disaster preparations in place due to lack of information or financial resources. Interviewers approached people along public streets, at park entrances, and on public transportation, handing out a questionnaire asking people to envision a hypothetical earthquake scenario, based on a detailed description of the 2011 Lorca quake. The scenario offered citizens a theoretical chance at public funding for modifications to protect their homes against this future [earthquake](#).

Results showed that citizens had a fear of future earthquakes, but lack of information and distrust in the construction industry prevented many

from acting to protect themselves. When the government was firmly involved in awareness campaigns and housing subsidies however, participants finally took steps toward disaster preparedness.

"The study highlights the critical need for policy makers and social marketers to work together on policies for the most vulnerable citizens. Programs must take poverty, education, and experience into consideration, providing easy-to-implement programs along with financial aid. Finally, these campaigns absolutely must raise awareness in these communities of the very real threat future earthquakes pose," conclude the authors.

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