

# Adaptation to climate risks: Political affiliation matters

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A new study reveals that those who affiliate with the Democratic Party have different views than those who vote Republican on the following issues: the likelihood of floods occurring, adopting protection measures, and expectations of disaster relief from the government. The study was jointly conducted by VU University in Amsterdam, Utrecht University School of Economics in The Netherlands, and the Center for Risk Management and Decision Processes at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, USA.

The study, published today in Springer's journal *Climatic Change*, focused on the [flood risk](#) in New York City. Data was collected through a telephonic survey conducted six months after Superstorm Sandy. It included a random sample of 1,035 homeowners with ground level property in flood-prone areas of New York City. Respondents' political affiliation was determined by what political party they voted for in the November 2012 presidential election.

## Key findings:

- Democrats' perception of their probability of experiencing flood damage is significantly higher than Republicans'. They are also more likely to expect climate change to increase the flood risk they face in the future.
- Democrats are also more likely to invest in individual flood protection measures.
- Less than half of Democrats and a third of Republicans trust the

government to address the flood risk posed in their area of residence.

- 50% more Democrats than Republicans in the study expect to receive federal disaster relief after a major flood.
- Interestingly, given the above, the researchers find no difference in flood insurance adoption.

"We knew Republicans and Democrats in the United States often perceive the risk of climate change differently. We now know they prepare for climate disasters differently, too. This finding has important implications," report Wouter Botzen and Erwann Michel-Kerjan, who co-  
led the study.

The authors suggest that flood risk awareness campaigns and policies be aimed at encouraging people to adopt preparedness and risk reduction measures and to purchase adequate insurance coverage, irrespective of their political ideology. The strengthening of building codes in NYC after Superstorm Sandy is a good example of how cities can limit damage from future floods, become more resilient, and limit the need for government [disaster relief](#).

**More information:** W. J. Wouter Botzen et al, Political affiliation affects adaptation to climate risks: Evidence from New York City, *Climatic Change* (2016). [DOI: 10.1007/s10584-016-1735-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-016-1735-9)

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