Community-level resources may affect residents' mental health following a natural disaster

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In a study on the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, residents of communities with high unemployment were at elevated risk of disaster-related post-traumatic stress, but only when individuals were assessed 25–28 months post-disaster and not when they were assessed 13–16 months post-disaster.

The results suggest the need for ongoing support to economically disadvantaged communities in which residents have endured disaster-related stressors.

"Our study demonstrates that we need to remember disaster-affected communities, particularly those with pre-existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities. These communities might continue to need assistance years after the disaster took place," said Dr. Sarah Lowe, lead author of the Journal of Traumatic Stress study.

More information: Community Unemployment and Disaster-Related Stressors Shape Risk for Posttraumatic Stress in the Longer-Term Aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Journal of Traumatic Stress. DOI: 10.1002/jts.22126

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