Why middle-class residents want to stay put after floodwaters recede
9 August 2021, by Amy McCaig

Rhodes, the study's lead author, said flood victims who stayed put did so because of plans they made before the storm. Most of the people who were interviewed stayed in their homes, even though they not only had the financial means to move, they also faced pressure from friends and family to relocate to less vulnerable places with similar amenities.

"What we found is that massive damage, social pressure and the revealed risk of living near a creek that severely overran its banks during Harvey were not enough to get most residents to consider leaving Friendswood," Besbris said. "Instead, most people thought they would stay in their homes for many years to come and these plans were very durable."

On the other hand, most of the households who decided to move after the storm indicated they left because they had already made well-defined plans to a move before the hurricane hit.

"In the face of an unexpected residential decision after Hurricane Harvey, it was residents who were already thinking about moving that were most likely to decide not to return to their flood-damaged homes," Rhodes said.

She also noted that none of the families who chose to stay or leave were offered buyouts. In order to help people living in vulnerable areas consider moving, Rhodes said it's important to understand how they ultimately make the decision to stay or leave.

"Future work dealing with post-disaster policies should be designed with mobility in mind," Rhodes said.
