

Addressing Disaster Preparedness-Disparity in Connecticut: Cultivating trust and increasing resilience through effective and equitable risk communication:

Project Description

The research juxtaposes the results of ethnographic interviews with Emergency Managers with survey data collected among CT residents to examine issues of trust, preparedness, and information sufficiency in regard to local emergency services. This research provides guidance on the form of hazard-related information most desired and sought after by residents, particularly minoritized and impoverished residents, for policy-makers and disaster management personnel; and underline the needs of emergency management directors across the state.

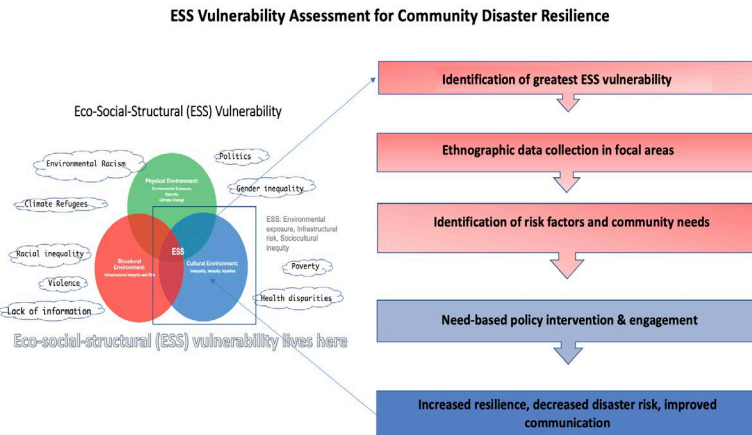


Figure: Methodology of the Project

Project Findings

This research to date indicates that longtime state and regional preparedness practices have yet to update to reflect current climate forecasts, effectively equip local emergency volunteers, or improve communication services to the extent necessary to properly equip first responders or community members in times of threat or crisis.

The results further highlight the ways in which state-level systems of disaster management may be exacerbating preparedness disparity and leaving Connecticut towns ill-equipped to manage the growing threats of climate change induced disasters facing southern New England.

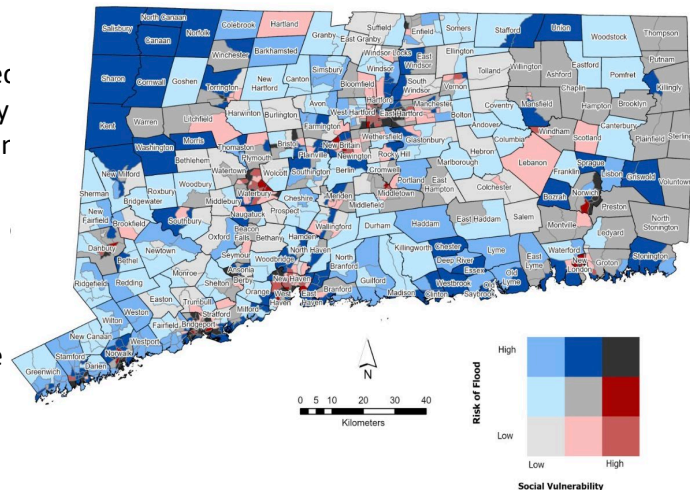


Figure: Spatial distribution of flood risk and social vulnerability at the census tract level

Research Gaps and Recommendations

- Disaster management policies and planning should focus on recognizing the influence of extended families and social networks.
- Crisis communication, policies, and risk awareness and preparedness education should initiate at the community level and be dispersed through trusted community institutions (libraries, schools, community centers, senior centers, churches), be provided in multimedia forms (radio, mailings, emails, bulletins) and available for ESL and non-English speaking residents.
- Crisis responders would be wise to build relationships with community leaders at trusted community institutions to more effectively inform those who may be in harm's way.
- The diversity of EMD and emergency response personnel should be increased through inclusion of women and racially minoritized groups, increasing the scope of position advertising to schools, community colleges, public health facilities, churches.
- Solicitation of state funding for part-time positions, updated emergency communications systems, emergency plan development, and resident risk and preparedness education programming.