

Why did we undertake this study?

Coastal zones are at the forefront of the impacts of climate change and households play an important role in reducing vulnerability through individual and collective action. Governments provide information to households to facilitate their adaptation. However, there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of this strategy. This study examined the types of information guiding household response to climate risks.

How was it done?

Households in two peri-urban Australian coastal communities (Mandurah, Western Australia and Moreton Bay, Queensland) were surveyed (n=400) to gain their perspectives on the usefulness of climate information; and interviewed (n=17) to explore their response to climate hazards (severe storm, sea-level rise and heatwave). The information sources that informed household response were coded into one of three types: (i) passive information (hazard and preparedness education material); (ii) interactive information (derived through interactions with other people); or (iii) experiential information (from personal life experiences).

What did we find?

The key strategy adopted by governments to engage civil society in adaptation (ie. the provision of passive information) is not working.

- <50% of households used passive information, and when adopted, it mostly informed coping strategies.
- Experiential information or 'common sense' informed action in most households, but similarly mainly informed coping strategies.
- Further research is needed on the link between information and more than coping responses (i.e. adaptation and collective action).



Figure 1: Goldcoast Hwy, Mainbeach, QLD. Photo by Patrick Ryan on Unsplash

What are the implications?

The importance of civil society's engagement in adaptation will intensify as the impacts of climate change continue to be felt. Current emphasis by authorities on passive information provision is unlikely to facilitate adaptation. Decision makers need to consider novel and diverse information channels if households are to transition from coping to adaptation.

Want more information?

The full paper is available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/5/2904/pdf>

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Coastal Governance: Embracing Vulnerability and Change

