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Know before you act. Effective risk education (should) starts from knowing gaps and preconceptions. A case study on sea level rise.

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Nowadays everybody agrees that increasing preparedness for natural and not-natural hazards and fostering best practices is of paramount importance for a resilient society. Therefore, in the last years many scientific projects included a task, a work package - or were themselves - fully devoted to transferring the results of the studies carried on within the project to the society. This included intensive education activities to train people about a specific hazard.

However, educative and dissemination packages are often too generic or too specific, especially in cases where the natural hazard is not well known by the public or affects a limited area or population. In these cases, it may be helpful to carry out preparatory research to finely tune the educational aims/objectives.

We present the results of an online survey carried out in 2020–2021 to understand citizens' level of knowledge about the phenomenon of sea level rise, including causes, effects and exacerbation, in order to finalize educational tools.

Since the last century, global warming has triggered sea level rise at an unprecedented rate. In the worst-case climate scenario, sea level could rise by up to 1.1 m above the current level, causing coastal flooding and cascading effects, thus affecting around one billion people worldwide and potentially becoming one of the most important climate issues in the future.

Our survey revealed that, although widespread and threatening, the phenomenon is not well known to citizens as it is often overshadowed by other effects of global warming. The results of our study were peculiar to prepare an educational campaign and set up initiatives for students and the public.