



# State of Flood Resilience report

2026

# Introduction

Flood risk in the UK is expanding at a scale that demands strategic attention: in 2025, weather-related claims reached £1.2 billion - a 14% (£142 million) increase on 2024<sup>1</sup>, and current projections indicate that annual flood losses could increase five-fold by 2050<sup>2</sup>. The exposure behind these rising costs is significant: 27% of commercial properties are located in areas at risk of flooding<sup>3</sup>, and a combined 6.3 million homes and businesses face some level of flood threat<sup>4</sup>. Importantly surface water (also called flash floods, or pluvial flooding), is the largest risk, caused by rain overpowering local drainage, oftentimes far away from rivers or the coast. According to the Environment Agency's *National Assessment of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk in England 2024*, 75.5% more properties are at high risk from surface water compared to rivers and the sea<sup>5</sup>. For locations at flood risk, flood is now on average twice as likely as fire<sup>5</sup>, yet the systems, behaviours and protections surrounding it remain far less mature.

Managing flood is no longer a peripheral challenge; it represents a structural shift that will influence future resilience planning, investment decisions and the long-term stability of risk management across the UK economy. And as climate volatility accelerates and losses increase, all stakeholders - from organisations and local authorities, to insurers and infrastructure owners - will need to reassess how they understand and manage this growing exposure.

The 2026 State of Flood Resilience report features insights from over 70 leaders representing a wide range of organisations in the UK, and examines what the widening gap between rising flood risk and current levels of preparedness means for organisations, communities and the insurance sector.

The findings from this year's report tell a similar story to those from 2025: there is an unambiguous gap between awareness and preparedness. While 2026 respondents have greater personal and organisational experience of flooding, approximately 1 in 5 noted that uncertainty about future flood risk was still a barrier to investment in resilience planning. And with less than 1 in 10 reporting that they have a complete flood action plan in place, exposure to avoidable risk is sky-high.

While organisations are increasingly aware of the risk of flooding, they lack the data, skills and confidence to turn awareness into effective, proactive flood management preparedness. Without the right support and accessible, evidence-driven resources, organisations will be unable to shift from passive awareness to purposeful action and start building the kind of resilience that genuinely protects people, assets and operations.



*Advances in modelling, improved surface-water mapping and updated climate projections now classify roughly two-thirds of England as "floodable" under certain conditions - a scale of exposure that far exceeds traditional assumptions. Yet many organisations continue to underestimate their exposure to flood risk, despite increasingly robust data that tells a very different story. One organisation who didn't make this mistake is Thurrock Council: working with them through their insurer Zurich Municipal, we identified 14 high risk sites. These are now proactively monitored, with advance alert warnings prompting teams to be deployed onsite and proactively mitigate flood risk. Their approach demonstrates the kind of informed, data-led behaviour that other organisations need to adopt if they are to stay ahead of a rapidly changing risk landscape.*

Jonathan Jackson  
CEO, Previsico



1. [abi.org.uk/news/news-articles/2026/2/adverse-weather-pushes-property-insurance-payouts-to-6.1-billion-in-2025/](https://abi.org.uk/news/news-articles/2026/2/adverse-weather-pushes-property-insurance-payouts-to-6.1-billion-in-2025/)  
2. [floodlist.com/europe/report-floods-europe-increase-fivefold-2050#:~:text=Annual%20flood%20losses%20can%20be,30%25\)%20to%20climate%20change](https://floodlist.com/europe/report-floods-europe-increase-fivefold-2050#:~:text=Annual%20flood%20losses%20can%20be,30%25)%20to%20climate%20change)  
3. [floodflash.co/2022-commercial-risk-report/](https://floodflash.co/2022-commercial-risk-report/)  
4. [gov.uk/government/publications/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024](https://gov.uk/government/publications/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024)  
5. [Ibid](#)  
6. Environmental Audit Committee's 2024-26 report on Flood Resilience in England, October 2025

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# Executive summary

This year's State of Flood Resilience report, which presents insights from over 70 organisational leaders, confirms that while awareness is rising, the journey from recognition to resilience is still in its early stages, and meaningful progress will depend on better education, clearer data and more accessible pathways to action.



## Awareness is increasing, but preparedness is low

This year's report reveals a shift in awareness: more organisations (47.73%, vs 43% in 2025) now have first-hand experience of the realities of flooding, and there is a strong majority who recognise the future risk. But with **fewer than 1 in 10 organisations reporting that they have a flood response plan** (vs 30% in 2025), and over 81% of respondents reporting feeling overwhelmed on a regular basis, there is an obvious systemic gap in planning, communication and operational readiness.



## Leaders have less confidence in their ability to respond

High confidence levels have dropped from 28% in 2025, to just 16.28% in 2026. **Most respondents this year (nearly 40%) sit in the middle ground of confidence**, feeling only somewhat prepared and lacking the certainty needed to respond decisively to a flood. Those reporting lower levels of confidence have grown this year, and as many as 1 in 10 respondents are unsure how confident they feel at all, signalling opportunities for improvement in planning and understanding of what effective flood readiness truly requires.



## Making the business case for flood resilience is still a challenge

Competition for funding and resources remains high, with over half of respondents citing these as major barriers to investment. And alarmingly, **20.93% of respondents noted that uncertainty around future flood risk made investment a challenge**, suggesting that further education and increased availability of tailored data are necessary to help organisations to understand potential risk.

# Response breakdown

The State of Flood Resilience report is based on in-depth surveys of organisations in the UK, with data from a combination of surveys from Previsico, InsTech and Airmic. Both insurers and the insured are represented in the sample, although the latter have significantly greater representation than in 2025.

InsTech is the UK's leading community focused on insurance intelligence on technology and risk, with over 30,000 members. Airmic is the UK and Ireland's largest risk management and insurance association, with over 450 corporate members, and more than 2,000 individual members.

## Strong strategic influence

Over half of respondents are in senior roles (e.g. Heads, Directors, CEOs), which is important as this group plays a critical role in making high-level decisions around operational risk, investment and long-term strategy. Their ability to influence organisational direction means discussions are likely to be more strategic in nature, focusing on big-picture outcomes rather than purely day-to-day operations.



## Excellent seniority balance

The audience is almost evenly split, with a slight tilt towards senior decision-makers (51%). This balance is particularly valuable, as it ensures representation from both strategic leadership and operational management, enabling well-rounded perspectives across different levels of responsibility.



## Execution layer also well represented

The remaining 49% of respondents are in management roles. This group is typically responsible for implementing strategy and making practical, day-to-day operational decisions. Their presence ensures that there is strong insight into how strategies are executed in practice, as well as the challenges and realities of implementation on the ground.



ROLE BREAKDOWN



# Chapter 1: Understanding the impacts of floods on organisations



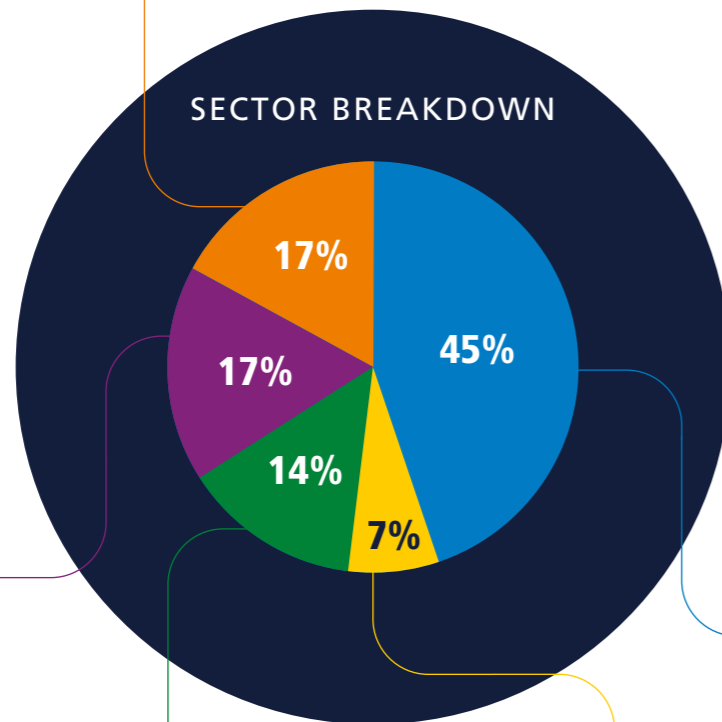
## Insurance sector

A substantial portion of respondents (17%) come from the insurance sector, with representation from roles including Head of Risk, Property Major Loss Claims Lead, Head of Claims and Head of Property & Casualty. Their engagement reflects a growing recognition that they can play a pivotal role in helping their clients see the full picture, from understanding risk, guiding mitigation and shaping long-term resilience. With deeper understanding of their clients' risks, insurers are well-placed to provide tools to strengthen mitigation strategies and reduce the operational and financial impacts of future flood events.



## Corporate sector

An equal proportion of respondents represent corporates, highlighting solid interest from the private sector. This group includes organisations with exposure to physical assets, supply chains and operational risks. Their involvement indicates that resilience and risk preparedness are becoming increasingly important at both an organisational and strategic level beyond traditionally risk-focused industries.



## Other sectors

The largest proportion of respondents falls into the "Other" category, indicating a highly diverse audience that spans multiple additional sectors. This includes industries such as utilities, construction, education, consulting and technology.



## Housing associations and councils

A notable share of respondents come from housing associations and local councils (14%), reflecting engagement from the public and social infrastructure sector. These organisations are critical in managing community-level risk, particularly in relation to housing, urban planning and public safety.



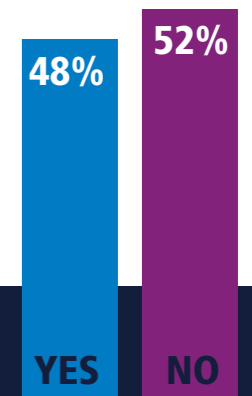
## Flood organisations

A smaller but highly relevant segment comes from flood-focused organisations (7%). While this group represents a lower percentage, their expertise is likely highly specialised and directly aligned with flood prevention, response and recovery.

This section considers the extent to which organisations and the people within them have first-hand experience of flooding, and how this shapes their perception of future risk. While most recognise that flooding is likely to affect them in the years ahead, the data suggests that limited personal or organisational experience may still lead some to underestimate the threat.

A considerable share of organisations (47.73%) report having been directly impacted by flooding, marking an 11% increase from the previous year. This growing proportion of organisations with first-hand experience of flood-related challenges will have a stronger awareness of the operational and financial impacts involved.

Just over half of respondents (52.27%) indicate they have not yet been affected by flooding, a decrease from 57% last year. While this group remains in the majority, the decline points to a gradual shift as more organisations experience flood events. Those without direct experience may still perceive flood risk as less immediate, and potentially underestimate its impact.



## 1.1 EXPOSURE TO THE IMPACTS OF FLOODING



Has your business/organisation been impacted by flooding?

### KEY INSIGHTS

Flooding poses a significant and growing business risk. To put it into context, the average cost of a single commercial flood claim for an SME ranges from £70K - £100K<sup>1</sup>. Direct economic losses are significant: for the first 4 months after a flood event, medium-sized companies report an average loss of 24% of their monthly turnover, while smaller businesses' losses are a whopping 113%<sup>2</sup>.

With a growing number of organisations experiencing the very real impacts of flooding, they may benefit from a deeper understanding of the impacts and challenges that ensue. This, in turn, may result in a more proactive approach to risk management and resilience planning.

However, organisations still fortunate enough to have not experienced flooding may have a false sense of security. This often leads to complacency, which may in turn result in underestimating the likelihood or potential severity of future flood events. And for some, the cost of this complacency will be too high: while some organisations do approximately 40% of small businesses do not reopen after a major flood event<sup>3</sup>.

*Flood-related losses are rising faster than the insurance model can sustain, and the strain is visible. Some insurers are stepping back from high-risk properties, and premiums in exposed areas continue to climb - but this can't continue indefinitely. The insurance industry is nearing a crossroads: either continue withdrawing capacity from the flood market, or take a more proactive role in reducing underlying risk by helping clients understand exposure, invest in mitigation and lower future losses.*

Jonathan Jackson  
CEO, Previsico



1. [aviva.co.uk/business/](https://www.aviva.co.uk/business/)  
 2. [leeds.ac.uk/news-business-economy/news/article/4836/helping-flood-hit-companies-build-for-the-future](https://leeds.ac.uk/news-business-economy/news/article/4836/helping-flood-hit-companies-build-for-the-future)  
 3. [floodmatik.com/how-flooding-impacts-uk-businesses-and-why-preparation-is-critical/](https://floodmatik.com/how-flooding-impacts-uk-businesses-and-why-preparation-is-critical/)

## 1.2 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF FLOODS



### KEY INSIGHTS

With an increase in personal experience of flooding compared to last year, respondents' heightened awareness means they are in a better position to drive and support preparedness. Their insights into the realities of flooding offer significant value that can impact organisations' decisions in a number of areas, including business continuity planning and insurance decisions.

However, with nearly three quarters of respondents lacking personal experience with flooding, many organisations are likely to continue to underestimate the risk. Lacking personal experience may lead to dismissing or deprioritising flood resilience, and demonstrates that education has a critical part to play in bridging the awareness gap.

Experience with floods plays a role in how people perceive their preparedness and confidence. People who have been personally impacted by floods have higher awareness, and may advocate for better flood management and/or preparedness.

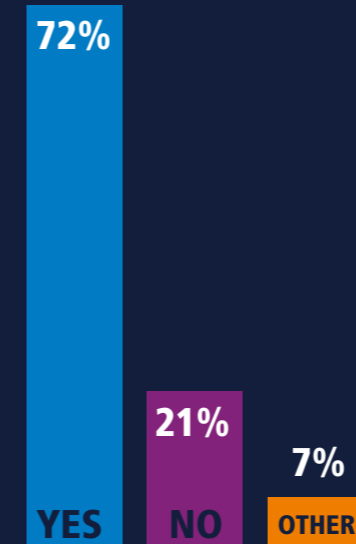
Flooding in the UK is becoming more frequent and more widespread. In 2023, flood-related claims in the UK reached £286 million, representing half of all weather-related claims made. The following year, insurers paid out a record £585 million for weather-related damage – only to see that number rise to £1.2 billion in 2025<sup>1</sup>. So it is unsurprising that **28.57% of respondents report having been personally impacted by flooding, an increase from 24.49% last year.**

With more individuals having gained direct experience of flood events, it is likely that awareness and concern around flood preparedness will be strengthened as a result. Those with firsthand experience are typically better able to recognise the practical, emotional and operational implications of flooding.

The majority of respondents (71.43%) have not yet personally experienced a flood, although this proportion has decreased compared to last year (75.51%). Without personal experience, this group is more likely to vastly underestimate the risk and real-world impacts of flooding, and therefore less likely to prioritise preparedness. While they are fortunate to lack direct personal experience, underestimating flood threats will have a negative impact on decision-making and resilience planning.

1. [abi.org.uk/news/news-articles/2026/2/adverse-weatherpushesproperty-insurance-payouts-to-6.1-billion-in-2025/](https://abi.org.uk/news/news-articles/2026/2/adverse-weatherpushesproperty-insurance-payouts-to-6.1-billion-in-2025/)

## 1.3 LIKELIHOOD OR EXPERIENCING FLOODING IN THE FUTURE



Do you believe you will be impacted by a flood in the future?

The data shows that the majority of respondents believed they would experience flooding in the future. This suggests a **strong awareness of future flood risks**. However, a smaller group remains unconcerned or uncertain.

A strong majority of respondents (72.09%) believe they will be impacted by flooding in the future. While this still reflects a high level of awareness and concern, it represents a slight decrease from 75.51% last year. This shift may suggest a small reduction in perceived risk, despite ongoing factors such as climate change and urban development. And while it is heartening to see that the vast majority of respondents understand the future risk of flood, it contrasts sharply with their preparedness, with fewer than 10% having a flood plan in place.

The proportion of respondents who do not believe they will be impacted has risen to 20.93%, up from 18.37% last year. This growing segment may benefit from further education and awareness, particularly around how flood risk is evolving and affecting areas not traditionally considered vulnerable.

Those selecting "Other" have also increased slightly to 6.98%. This group likely includes individuals who are uncertain about their level of risk, or who see it as dependent on variables such as infrastructure improvements, geographic location or the severity of future climate events.

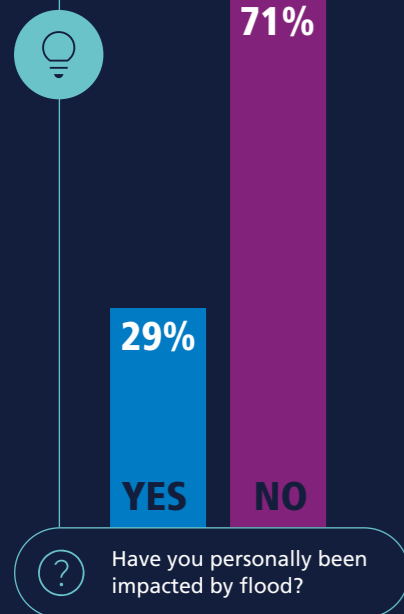
### KEY INSIGHTS

The vast majority of organisations now recognise that flooding is likely. While this majority has dropped by 3% compared to 2025, flood risk remains a strategic concern. Yet while organisations believe they are at risk, few have a plan to tackle flood.

Many people develop a false sense of security because, if they don't live beside a major river or coastal area, they are unaware of the risks posed by surface water flooding, particularly in urbanised areas and where there is low lying ground.

However, with just over 20% of respondents believing they will not be impacted, education is still key. Whether driven by complacency or a lack of tailored information - particularly for areas not traditionally viewed as high-risk - these organisations are likely to underestimate the significant disruption that flooding causes.

There is a real opportunity for both risk advisors and insurers to engage with both this group, as well as with the nearly 7% of respondents who are uncertain. In both cases, moving away from generic awareness and assumptions, towards tailored and data-driven modelling, will provide much-needed clarity to highlight potential risks.



Have you personally been impacted by flood?

# Chapter 2: Flood confidence levels, challenges and key concerns

This section examines how confident people and organisations feel about managing a flood, looking at their confidence, levels of overwhelm and the concerns that shape their priorities. The data reveals a pattern of middling to low confidence, a widening set of business concerns and a persistent sense of overwhelm - all of which point to a preparedness landscape that is still far from where it needs to be.

The survey results on confidence levels show a mixed but concerning picture. Overall confidence remains moderate, but extremes, particularly high confidence, are declining. There is a substantial concentration of responses in the mid-to-lower confidence range, with relatively few respondents expressing strong confidence in dealing with floods.

The dominant response is “somewhat confident” (39.53%), suggesting that most participants feel they have a basic level of preparedness, but not enough certainty to feel fully assured in their ability to respond effectively. This is an important distinction: it reflects awareness and partial capability, rather than strong readiness and a solid plan.

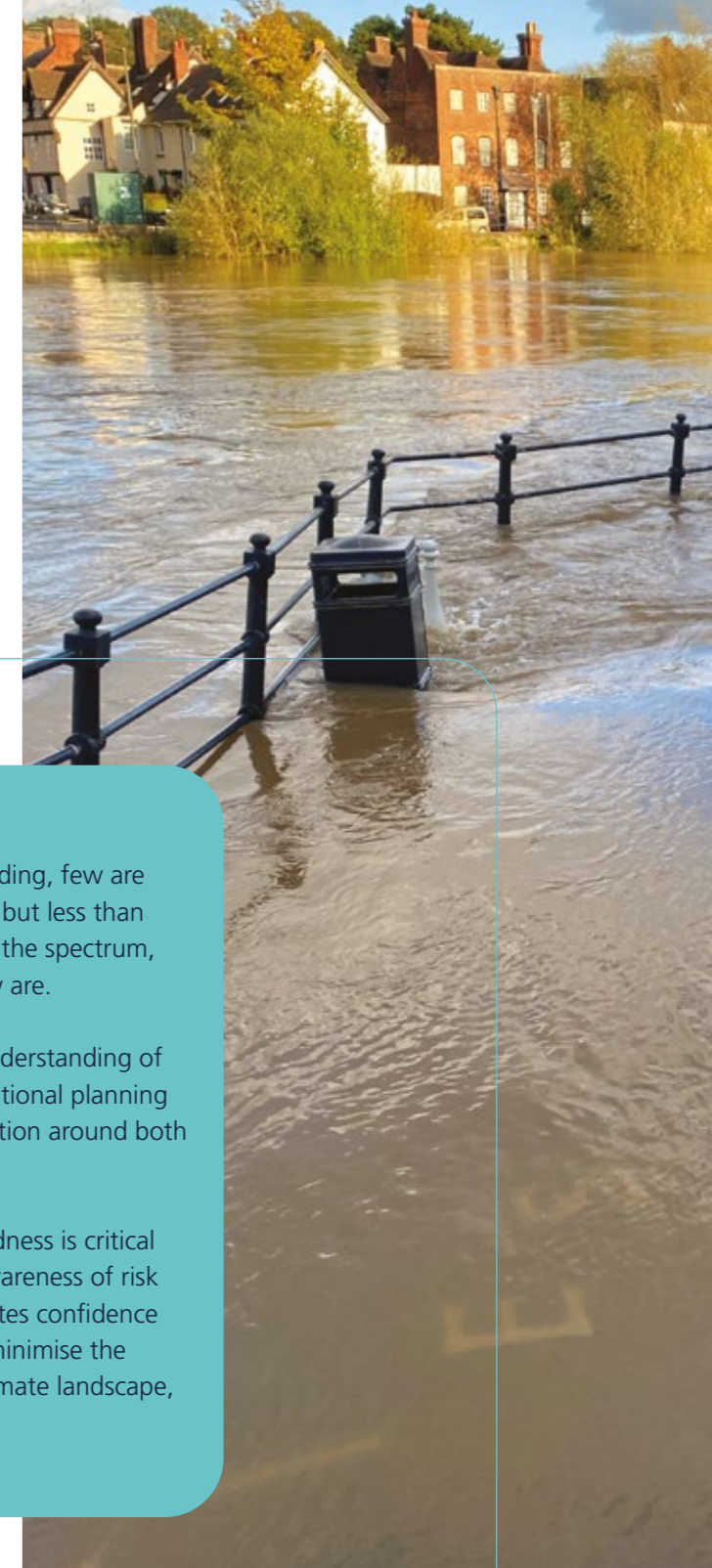
At the higher end of the scale, only 15.12% are “very confident” and just 1.16% are “extremely confident”. This indicates that strong confidence is relatively rare across the responses, and is a meaningful reduction from 20% and 8% respectively in 2025. In practical terms, this suggests limited perceived mastery

of flood response, which may reflect uncertainty around plans, procedures, resources or experience with real flood events.

On the lower end, a combined 33.72% of respondents report low confidence (22.09% not so confident and 11.63% not at all confident). This is a substantial minority and points to a clear vulnerability in preparedness levels. This may reflect greater awareness and concern around flood preparedness, which may contribute towards feeling less capable of responding effectively during a flood event. This could have very real implications for organisational resilience and response consistency.

Additionally, 10.47% of respondents selected “don’t know”, which is notable in itself. This level of uncertainty suggests that a portion of the audience may not have considered their flood readiness in practical terms, or may lack clarity about what effective flood response entails. In preparedness terms, uncertainty can be just as significant as low confidence, as it indicates a gap in awareness and planning.

Overall, the data suggests a confidence gap at both ends of the spectrum: very few respondents feel highly confident, while a sizeable proportion lack confidence altogether or are unsure. Most respondents sit in the middle, indicating partial preparedness but not strong assurance. This pattern highlights an opportunity for targeted training, clearer guidance and scenario-based planning to shift respondents from “somewhat confident” toward higher confidence levels, while also reducing uncertainty and low-confidence responses.



## KEY INSIGHTS

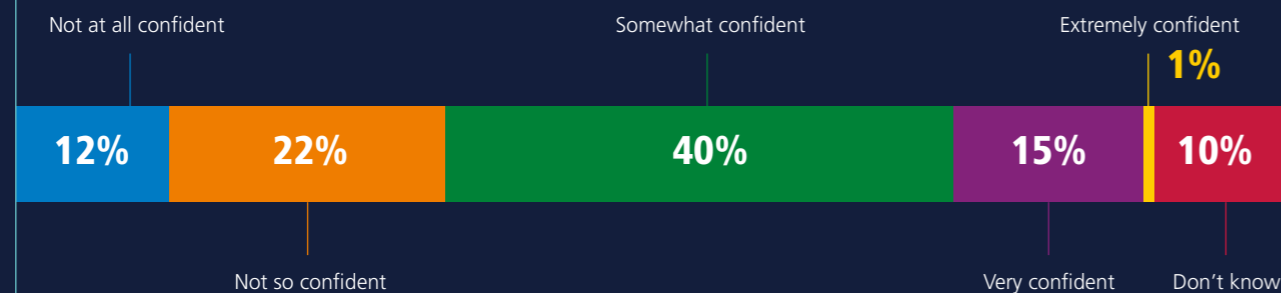
While most organisations recognise the potential threat of flooding, few are truly confident in their preparedness. Flood risk is on the radar, but less than 1 in 5 are very or extremely confident. And at the other end of the spectrum, over 10% of respondents don’t even know how confident they are.

The confidence gap may stem from multiple areas: a lack of understanding of what appropriate flood preparedness looks like, a lack of operational planning to ensure preparedness, and perhaps also a lack of communication around both the risk and response planning.

Moving from awareness to comprehensive, actionable preparedness is critical for organisations to mitigate the impacts of flooding. While awareness of risk is improving, translating this into planning and action that creates confidence is still a work in progress. And for organisations who want to minimise the business impact of flooding in an increasingly unpredictable climate landscape, it is a work in progress that urgently needs attention.

## 2.1 CONFIDENCE LEVELS IN DEALING WITH FLOOD

How confident are you in dealing with a future flooding event?



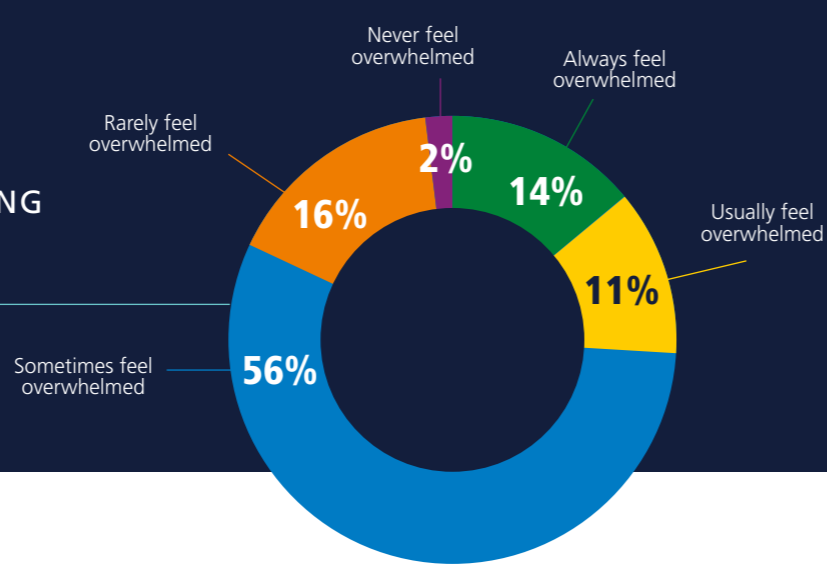
To significantly reduce flood risk, we cannot expect organisations to act alone: we need meaningful, insurance-led risk reduction. Decades ago, households and businesses weren't prepared for fire – and it was insurers who recognised the potential of smoke detectors, and accelerated their adoption through simple incentives like more competitively priced premiums. That shift helped make smoke alarms a near-universal safety feature in England today. The same principle applies to flood risk: we can't expect organisations to prepare alone. But when insurers provide clear insight, practical tools and the right incentives, they can help clients take action and build real resilience.

Jonathan Jackson  
CEO, Previsico



## 2.2 CHALLENGES POSED BY FLOODING

Do you feel overwhelmed by the challenges posed from flooding?



In our 2025 report we asked respondents about perceptions of preparedness; in 2026, we have focused on feelings of overwhelm amongst respondents.

Feeling overwhelmed by the challenges of flooding has become commonplace, with most organisations experiencing some level of pressure or strain when trying to manage flood-related demands.

The most dominant response is “**sometimes feel overwhelmed**” (55.81%), indicating that over half of participants experience intermittent pressure or strain. This suggests that feeling overwhelmed is a normalised, recurring experience rather than an exception, likely influenced by workload fluctuations, uncertainty or the complexity of managing responsibilities such as flood preparedness and risk planning.

A further 25.58% of respondents report frequent overwhelm (11.63% usually and 13.95% always). This is a substantial minority and points to a more persistent level of strain. For these individuals, overwhelm may be a consistent feature of their working experience, potentially affecting decision-making capacity, confidence and their ability to engage proactively with risk management tasks.

At the lower end of the scale, 16.28% rarely feel overwhelmed, suggesting a smaller group that generally feels in control and able to manage demands effectively. Meanwhile, only 2.33% never feel overwhelmed, indicating that a state of complete emotional or operational stability is very uncommon within this sample.

Overall, the data is strongly skewed towards regular or episodic overwhelm, with over 81% of respondents experiencing overwhelm at least sometimes or more often. This suggests that pressure is widespread rather than isolated. From a risk and resilience perspective, this is important because individuals who

frequently feel overwhelmed may have reduced capacity to engage with planning, preparedness and response activities effectively.

In summary, while extreme overwhelm is not universal, the experience of some level of overwhelm is the norm. This highlights a potential need for better workload support, clearer processes and stronger organisational structures to reduce pressure and improve capacity for effective decision-making and preparedness.



### KEY INSIGHTS

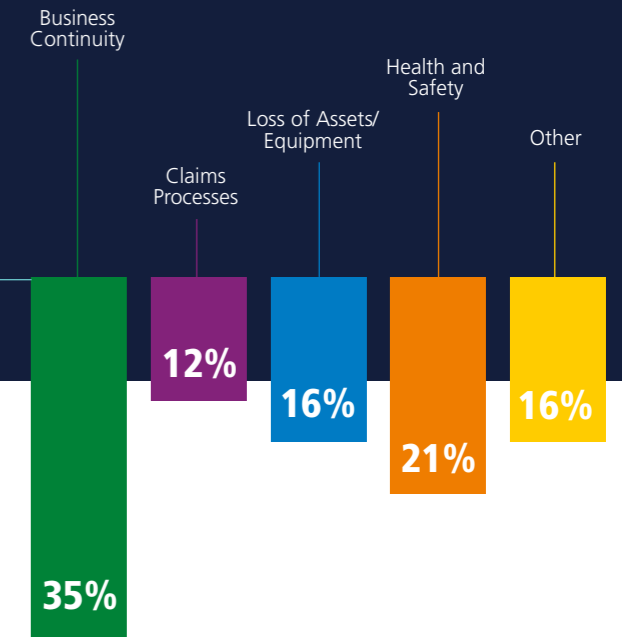
With the vast majority of organisations experiencing overwhelm episodically or regularly, it is likely that baseline planning will be insufficient during flood events.

In day-to-day scenarios, regular overwhelm may reduce individuals’ capacity to think critically and thoughtfully engage with planning, preparedness and response activities. In addition to the general impact on morale, this may also lead to lower preparedness levels. And during an actual flood event, individuals already experiencing significant overwhelm will be less equipped to handle the stresses of actioning response activities, which may in themselves be sub-optimal.

Respondents’ high levels of overwhelm are likely to be heavily influenced by the lack of a flood plan. For risk advisors and insurers, there is a very real opportunity to increase confidence by supporting organisations with data and resilience-building solutions that reduce internal overwhelm and help to minimise the impact of flooding.

## 2.3 PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS AROUND FLOODING

What are your key priorities and concerns around flooding?



The results show that **Business Continuity remains the most significant concern**, accounting for 34.88% of responses, although this represents a noticeable decrease from 51.02% last year. While it is still the dominant issue, the reduction suggests that respondents are focusing on a broader range of concerns rather than focusing primarily on operational disruption.

**Health and Safety concerns have also declined**, falling from 26.53% last year to 20.93% this year. Although still a major consideration, this shift may indicate a slight reduction in perceived immediate human risk, or a broader redistribution of concern across other categories.

In contrast, **Claims Processes have increased substantially**, rising from 6.12% to 11.63%. This suggests growing attention on the administrative and insurance-related aspects of flood recovery, potentially reflecting increased awareness of the complexity and importance of post-flood financial processes.

Similarly, **Loss of Assets/Equipment has risen sharply**, from 4.08% to 16.28%. This is one of the most notable changes in the dataset and may indicate a heightened awareness of the physical and financial consequences of flood damage to infrastructure, equipment and key business assets.

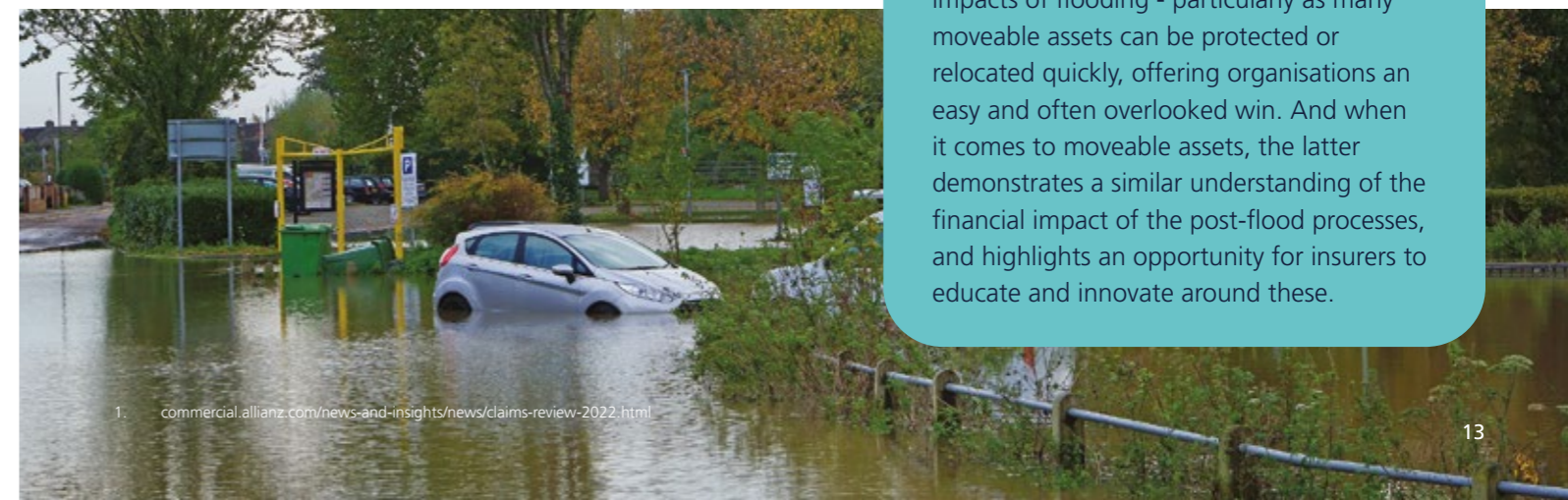
The “**Other**” category has also increased slightly, from 12.25% to 16.28%, suggesting a wider range of concerns not captured in the predefined categories. This could include issues such as reputational damage, supply chain disruption or long-term financial instability.



### KEY INSIGHTS

Organisations have a much broader range of concerns this year than in 2025. While Business Continuity remains the top concern for organisations, it has decreased by more than 16%. This may be due to organisations thinking about more specific concerns like loss of assets/equipment, and not recognising that those losses will also affect Business Continuity. And for large claims (>€5 million) the average property insurance claim that includes a business interruption component is more than double the value of than that of the average claim for property damage<sup>1</sup>.

The most notable changes are the increases in concerns about losses of assets and equipment, and insurance claims processes. The former reflects a growing appreciation of the longer-term financial and operational impacts of flooding - particularly as many moveable assets can be protected or relocated quickly, offering organisations an easy and often overlooked win. And when it comes to moveable assets, the latter demonstrates a similar understanding of the financial impact of the post-flood processes, and highlights an opportunity for insurers to educate and innovate around these.



1. [commercial.allianz.com/news-and-insights/news/claims-review-2022.html](https://commercial.allianz.com/news-and-insights/news/claims-review-2022.html)

# Chapter 3: How organisations are tackling flood

This section explores how organisations are approaching flood management in practice: from whether they have a plan in place, to their use of early warning systems, to the barriers holding back flood resilience. The data paints a striking picture: while planning remains inconsistent and investment is constrained by considerable obstacles, there has been a notable surge in the adoption of early warning systems, signalling a growing shift toward more proactive, technology-led flood preparedness.

The data reveals that flood action planning is in a poor state, with just 7.84% of respondents reporting that they or all of their clients have a flood action plan in place. This is the smallest single group, suggesting that structured planning is still very much in its infancy.

The majority of respondents (54.89%) report inconsistent or incomplete preparedness. Specifically, 45.09% state that some clients have plans while others do not, while 9.8% report no flood action plans at all.

The “some do, some don’t” respondents are likely to include insurers or risk managers overseeing large

and diverse client portfolios, where levels of flood preparedness vary significantly by client size, sector, geography and risk exposure. Within this group, many organisations will not have formal flood action plans in place at all, while others may have only partial or outdated measures. Given this, the true proportion of organisations without any flood action plan is likely to be higher than the 9.8% reported, once those within the ‘some do, some don’t’ category who have no plans at all are taken into account.

37.25% of respondents are unsure, indicating a very notable level of uncertainty or lack of visibility over planning arrangements.

## KEY INSIGHTS

While over 72% of respondents believe they are at risk of flooding, the data reveals an alarming state of flood planning: more than 9 in 10 organisations are likely to be unprepared in the face of one of the most immediate and escalating climate threats.

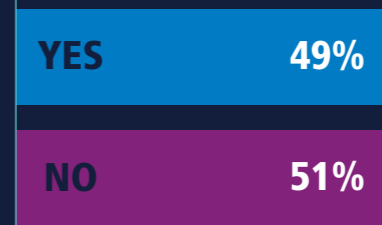
It is notable that the number of organisations without a plan is greater than those who have one. And with over one third of respondents uncertain about the status of their flood planning, it is also evident that organisations also have room to substantially improve the visibility and communication of their preparedness.

## 3.1 FLOOD ACTION PLANS AND BUSINESS ATTITUDES



## 3.2 USE OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

Do you use any kind of early warning system?



The lack of action in regard to flood is further highlighted when it comes to the appetite for early warning systems: more than 51% of organisations do not have one in place, exposing them to greater risks during flood events.

By promoting awareness, improving accessibility and integrating early warning systems into broader risk management strategies, organisations can better protect their assets, employees and operations. More investment in and adoption of early warning systems could greatly improve resilience in the face of increasing flood risks.

However, the data shows a considerable increase in the use of early warning systems for flood preparedness over the past year. The proportion of respondents using such systems has risen from 34.69% to 48.84%, representing a substantial increase of 14.15%. This indicates a meaningful shift toward more proactive flood risk management and improved adoption of monitoring and alert technologies.

At the same time, the proportion of respondents not using early warning systems has fallen from 65.31% to 51.16%. While this group still represents a slight majority, the gap has narrowed considerably, indicating that reliance on non-system-based or reactive approaches is decreasing.

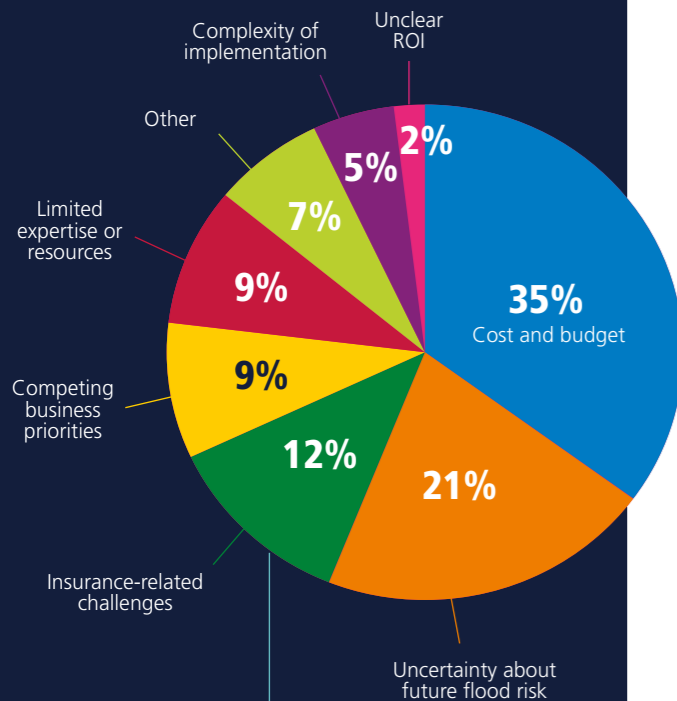
## KEY INSIGHTS

While adoption of early warning systems is not yet standard practice, the 14.15% increase on 2025 suggests that more organisations have recognised their value and are prepared to invest in them.

This shift in mindset – from reactive to proactive – is significant. Timely alerts enable organisations to prepare and react quickly, potentially limiting the impact of flooding on physical assets, personnel and business continuity. Such a meaningful change in deployment of early warning systems suggests a more mature approach to risk management as part of longer-term continuity planning in selected organisations.

However, the data on flood action planning and early warning systems highlights a notable inconsistency: while nearly half of respondents report having access to an early warning system, just 7.84% have a flood action plan in place. While early warning systems provide valuable alerts, their impact will be severely limited if organisations lack the corresponding plans needed to translate those warnings into timely, effective action.

### 3.3 BARRIERS LIMITING ORGANISATIONS IN BEING MORE FLOOD RESILIENT



What barriers have limited your organisation in being more flood resilient?

This is a new question for our 2026 report, and explores the key factors that limit organisations' flood resilience.

Financial constraints are the dominant barrier, with 34.88% of respondents identifying cost and budget as the main challenge. This suggests that even where awareness of flood risk exists, investment in preparedness measures is often limited by funding availability and competing financial pressures.

The second most prevalent barrier is uncertainty about future flood risk (20.93%), indicating that many organisations struggle to justify investment when the timing, likelihood or severity of flooding feels uncertain. This reflects a common challenge in risk planning, where perceived ambiguity can delay proactive action.

A further 11.63% cite insurance-related challenges, suggesting that insurance complexity or a focus on other risks may also be influencing preparedness decisions. This highlights the role of the insurance sector not just as a safety net, but also as an actor in shaping risk management behaviour.

Mid-level barriers include competing business priorities (9.30%) and limited expertise or resources (9.30%), both of which point to internal capacity constraints. These responses suggest that even where flood risk is acknowledged, it may be deprioritised in favour of more immediate operational concerns or constrained by lack of internal capability.

Lower-level barriers include complexity of implementation (4.65%) and unclear ROI (2.33%), suggesting that while these factors exist, they are less influential compared to cost, uncertainty and resource constraints. The "Other" category (6.98%) indicates a smaller range of additional, less common challenges.

#### KEY INSIGHTS

It is ironic that while the financial impacts of flooding are very high, respondents reported that financial constraints are key barriers to flood resilience. This short-sightedness exposes organisations to significant levels of avoidable risk.

And it is notable that over 20% of respondents cited uncertainty about future flood risk as a barrier, suggesting that organisations still underestimate the risk it poses. Combining this with the competition for both financial and human resources, and it becomes evident that making the business case for investing in flood resilience is not always straightforward.

Insurers and risk advisors have a vital role to play in helping organisations to model tailored data to make the business case and remove perceived barriers; the former may also consider their role in making cover both available and more easily navigable in post-flood processes.

## Case study: How fire became manageable, and what flood can learn



### A risk that used to define the country

For most of British history, fire was the catastrophic risk to property and life. The Great Fire of London made 87.5% of its residents homeless. In 1915, the UK fire death rate was 8.4 per 100,000, a figure that would today qualify as a public health emergency. But by 2022, that rate had collapsed to roughly 1 per 100,000. Fire still happens, but it has been engineered from an existential threat into a managed, priced, mitigable risk.

How?

### Insurance-driven change

Regulation didn't drive fire safety – insurance did. In the 1960s, Underwriters Laboratories, an organisation funded and governed by the insurance industry, began certifying smoke detectors. When UL approved the first battery-powered home smoke alarm in 1969, insurers immediately tied premium reductions to installation; within seven years, US household penetration moved from 22% to 75%.

The UK followed a similar pattern a decade later. By the 1980s, insurers had added smoke alarms to proposal forms; having one cut the premium. Meanwhile, government legislation lagged market behaviour by roughly 20 years.

As technology proved itself, insurers priced it into premiums, adoption scaled, and governments eventually codified what the market has already established. Sprinklers and extinguishers followed the same path, driven by commercial underwriting rather than legislation. There were no campaigns or PR pushes. Insurers simply changed how they priced risk. Proposal forms started asking about alarms. Premiums started reflecting the answer. The market did the rest.

### Why this matters for flood

Flood today sits roughly where fire sat in the early 1970s. The metrics that matter to an underwriter tell an uncomfortable story about the industry's current posture.

	Fire	Flood
Share of UK commercial properties exposed	~100%	~30% at flood risk
Annual probability at exposed sites	~0.2%	~0.4%
Share of businesses with an action plan	~99%	~7.8%
Treated as	A manageable, priced risk	An act of God

The shape of the two risks is different, and that difference helps explain why flood has been under-managed for so long. Fire risk is broadly uniform; every commercial building can burn, and the industry has organised itself accordingly. But flood risk is concentrated, with around 30% of UK commercial properties in flood-exposed locations. However, at those locations the annual probability of a flood is approximately 0.4%: roughly double the annual probability of fire at a typical site.

Yet 99% of businesses prepare for fire, and less than 10% plan for flood. The businesses most exposed to flooding are the ones least prepared for it, which is precisely the asymmetry that existed for fire in the 1960s.

### Three lessons that flood can learn from fire

1. **The gap closes when the insurance ecosystem decides it should.** Waiting for legislation to drive flood resilience means waiting for a process that historically follows the market by a generation.
2. **The effective lever is pricing, not persuasion.** Insurers did not reduce fire risk by publishing white papers about how serious fire was. They reduced it by changing what coverage cost depending on whether the customer had taken specific, verifiable mitigation steps. The behavioural change came from the premium, not from the argument. Any flood resilience programme that relies on businesses voluntarily caring more about flood is fighting the wrong battle.
3. **The transition tends to move quickly once it starts.** Smoke detector penetration moved from 22% to 75% in seven years. There is no obvious reason flood mitigation would behave differently, given that the underlying mechanics of the incentive are the same.

The technology to mitigate flood at property level already exists. What has not yet happened at scale is the insurance-led pricing mechanism that turned smoke detectors from a niche product into a 92% household standard. And a pressing question for the industry is who will lead with the technology that will drive the insurance-led pricing change.



#### INSURANCE PERSPECTIVE

AXA CEO Thomas Buberl said that “to avoid climate risks not being insurable anymore” prevention needs to become “a mandatory part” of insurance. He advocated for insurers to shift “our own activities toward helping the customers to better protect their properties”<sup>1</sup>.



1. [insurancejournal.com/news/](https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/)

## What's next for the state of flood resilience?

The 2026 State of Flood Resilience report clearly demonstrates that education and investment in flood preparedness is not yet mature. But there are some positive shifts in awareness and planning.

A significant shift has occurred this year: more organisations are now experiencing the realities of flooding first-hand, awareness of future risk is high, adoption of early warning systems has grown sharply, and organisations are beginning to broaden their focus beyond business continuity.

At an awareness level, over 70% of respondents believe that they will be impacted by flooding in the future, indicating that awareness of the risk is high. When it comes to experience, a greater number of respondents reported having actually experienced the impact of flooding, which is likely to translate to improved resilience planning for the future. As for planning, the substantial increase in the use of early warning systems indicates a promising shift to a proactive mindset, and a mature approach to risk management as part of longer-term continuity planning.

However, most organisations are still vastly under-prepared to manage the risk of flooding. Major barriers - particularly financial pressure and uncertainty about future risk - continue to stall investment. The knock-on effect is stark: just 7.84% of organisations have a flood response plan in place, more than 4 in 5 respondents report regular or episodic overwhelm related to flood resilience, and many leaders still feel uncertain about their organisations' ability to respond effectively to flood.

The State of Flood Resilience report highlights the considerable gap between awareness and investment in preparedness. Organisations still need clear guidance, better data and the right tools to understand and manage the rising threat of flooding. But without targeted support and practical resources, organisations cannot move from awareness to action, and take the meaningful steps required to become genuinely flood resilient.

*The risk and insurance sector needs to treat flood with the same seriousness long applied to fire. For locations at flood risk, flood is now 2x more likely than fire, yet preparedness lags because the industry hasn't driven the same level of education, standards or behavioural change. Closing that gap will require insurers and risk advisors to set clearer expectations and embed stronger resilience practices so that flood becomes a managed risk, not an escalating vulnerability.*

Jonathan Jackson  
CEO, Previsico



## **About Previsico**

Previsico is the world's leading operational flood forecasting company, built on 25 years of established research that forms the foundation of our platform. We are the only technology globally capable of enabling 70% of flood cost mitigation through early alerting and monitoring at property-level detail - giving businesses, insurers and communities the precision they need to act before flood water strikes.

## **A commitment to understanding flood resilience**

This report marks the second year of Previsico's State of Flood Resilience research, and we are committed to continuing this work year on year. Understanding how flood risk awareness, education and attitudes are evolving across the UK is essential - not just to track progress, but to identify where the greatest gaps remain. We believe that informed communities and organisations are more resilient ones, and this annual research is our contribution to building that foundation.