



Optimism bias: the tendency to overestimate the probability of positive events and underestimate that of negative ones

Optimism bias refers to the tendency for people to overestimate the probability of positive events while underestimating the probability of negative ones (Weinstein, 1984). In other words, people tend to perceive that they are less likely than other people to experience negative events. Optimism that is unrealistic corresponds to the underestimated risk in a range of situations such as job risk (Cooper, 2003), the risk of car accidents (DeJoy, 1989), and the risk from air pollution (Hatfield & Job, 2000). What is important to note here is that the optimism bias is greater for risks that are perceived as beneficial for individuals (for example, mobile phone radiation) than for those that affect society or the environment (e.g. GM food or climate change) (Costa-Font, Mossialos, & Rudisill, 2009). Also, optimism bias is larger for risks that infrequently occur than for those that are perceived as being more common (Harris, Griffin, & Murray, 2008).

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Worldviews](#)

Disaster Phases: [Prevention](#), [Preparedness](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Non-active citizens](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

Recommendations:

- [Develop risk assessments methodologies, which consider cultural factors, the manner in which people cognitively process information and which employ a gender perspective](#)

Source

[Deliverable D4.1 "Mapping risk perception concepts in the context of disasters" \(page 47\)](#)

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