



The representativeness bias: the tendency to judge events as more likely to happen because they look representative for the group they belong to

Related to the availability heuristic is the representativeness heuristic which manifests as the tendency for people to judge events as more likely because they look representative for the group they belong to and the process by which they were generated (Kahneman & Tversky, 1972). For example, people perceive a coin-toss run of HTHTHTHT to be more likely than HHHHTTTT because the former looks more random than the latter. The representativeness bias comes as a consequence of a range of laypeople's errors in interpreting statistical information - people ignore base rates and sample sizes, and do not estimate correct conjunctive probabilities amongst others (Tversky & Kahneman, 1983). For example, because of the stereotype regarding the strong association between smoking and lung cancer, both smokers and non-smokers overestimate smokers' chances of getting lung cancer (Viscusi, 1992). Similarly, instead of using base rates people rely on stereotypes and thus estimate that smokers are more likely to die from lung cancer than from heart disease (Strecher, Kreuter, & Kobrin, 1995).

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Worldviews](#)

Disaster Phases: [Prevention](#)

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" \(page 48\)](#)

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