



The affect heuristic: the role of the affective states in risk perception

Early studies within the psychometric paradigm of Fischhoff, Slovic, and colleagues (Fischhoff et al., 1978) demonstrated that the perception of dread is the most important variable in predicting risk across various hazards. Similarly, Sandman (1989) argued, based on his research, that the reliance on outrage is what differs public from experts when it comes to risk assessment. These and similar findings suggest that affective processes play a great role in risk perception and that they have little to do with possible risky outcomes and their probabilities. This extensive work on the role of affect in risk perception led to the introduction of the term “the affect heuristic” (Slovic, Finucane, Peters, & MacGregor, 2002). The affect heuristic describes the role of the affective states that are less specific and intense than specific emotions (for example, fear and anger) in risk perception. These subtle feelings are called affect, and they refer to both: (i) experienced positive or negative feelings, and (ii) positive or negative quality of stimulus.

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" \(page 50\)](#)

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