

Representations of Risk and Uncertainty

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Abstract

From gambling to statins, from swine flu to climate change, risks are analysed and uncertainties need to be communicated. Even if we are confident about the science and the risk assessments, the choice of framing, language and image can strongly influence the message. If there are deeper uncertainties then the problem is magnified and the balance of confidence and caution is delicate. In this talk I shall look at a range of attempts made to communicate different 'levels' of uncertainty in health and environmental risks, including some of our own work on animated visualisations.



Displaying the risks of eating bacon sandwiches

Speaker bio

David Spiegelhalter FRS OBE is Winton Professor of the Public Understanding of Risk at the University of Cambridge, which he combines with being a Senior Scientist in the MRC Biostatistics Unit. His background is in medical statistics, particularly the use of Bayesian methods in clinical trials, health technology assessment and drug safety. He led the statistical team in the Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry and also gave evidence to the Shipman Inquiry. In his new post he leads a small team which is attempting to improve the way in which the quantitative aspects of risk and uncertainty are discussed in society.