

Abstract of Meeting Paper

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The German Risk Survey: Empirical Results and Their Interpretation.

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The German risk survey consists of two parts: first, a standardized questionnaire was used for personal interviews with 1,500 representative citizens of Baden-Württemberg, a southern state in Germany; second, a guidance document with risk-related issues was used for qualitative interviews with more than 60 individuals from various social backgrounds. The paper will first introduce the descriptive results of the two investigations. Seven risks were included in the survey: nuclear energy, mass meat production (BSE), radiation from mobile phones, criminal acts, smoking, genetically modified food, and global climate change. Among the dependent variables were perceived seriousness of risk, acceptability, risk-benefit ratio and others. Among the independent variables were: psychometric factors, different scales for measuring value commitments, perceived performance and credibility of risk management organizations, manifestations of stigma effects, socio-demographic variables and others.

The second part of the talk will deal with a multivariate analysis of the data. The main question is to investigate the relative importance of different independent variable classes for explaining the declared variance of risk valuation and risk acceptability. The analysis was done on the basis of a multiple regression method. The results demonstrate that psychometric variables are still the most influential predictors for acceptability; these variables are partly shaped, however, by value commitments and assignment of credibility to various risk management institutions.

Go to . . .

[2001 SRA Annual Meeting Table of Contents](#)

[2001 SRA Annual Meeting Author Index](#)

[Main Abstracts Menu Page](#)

[RiskWorld Home Page](#)
