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*A Risky Experiment: Does Your Grandpa Know More Than You Do About Risk?*

Modern life is full of danger! Every time we go to work or school, or even on vacation, we expose ourselves to dangers of all kinds. Whether it's drinking coffee, riding in a car, getting married, or choosing a career, each involves risk. But how well do we understand risk? To find out, I conducted a study to see whether adults over 50 are better than my peers at assessing risks encountered in everyday life. I researched several categories of risk and selected five categories: occupational mortality, occupational causes of death, lifestyle choices, causes of death, transportation. Using the best available data, I created a questionnaire that asked subjects to rank the risks in each category. I hypothesized that the older group would be better than the younger group. I analyzed the responses and averaged the rankings and errors for both groups. I graphed the average ranking data using a novel "radar" graph that showed which risks were over-estimated and which were under-estimated. People over 50 were better at evaluating risk. The over-50s beat the under-20s in all categories. However, both age groups had a similar ranking pattern. This research is important on two levels. On the personal level, people need to understand relative risks to make better choices. On the collective level, the better the public understands the true risks associated with energy (nuclear power vs. coal?), health care, transportation, and the environment, the better the policies and laws we'll adopt to ensure a bright future for the world.