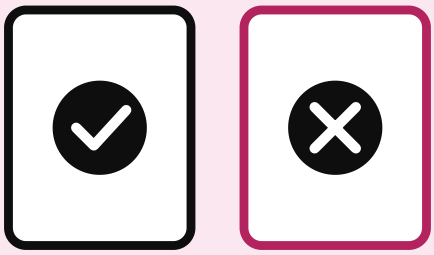
Concept

Framing effect

The same information, told in a different way, for example as a gain or as a loss, leads us to decide differently.



In Spanish
Encuadre

Origin
Tversky and Kahneman (1981)

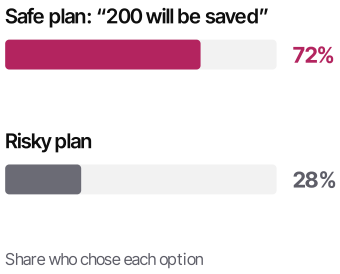
What problem it addresses

It explains why saying “90% success” or “10% failure” can change a decision even though both figures say the same thing.

An example

A disease threatens 600 people, and you must choose between a safe plan and a risky one. The outcomes are the same; only the way they are told changes.

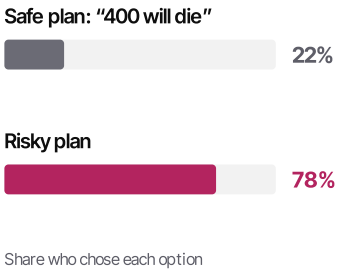
Told as lives saved



Share who chose each option

72% choose **the safe plan.**

Told as deaths



Share who chose each option

78% choose **the risky plan.**

Saving 200 out of 600 is the same as 400 out of 600 dying. Changing the words reversed the preference.

Why it happens

1

We don't evaluate data in the abstract, but as they are presented to us.

2

Talking about gains makes us cautious; talking about losses, risk-seeking.

3

We rarely translate one frame into the other to check that they say the same thing.

Applications in design

Use it like this

Present data in the frame that aids understanding and, if the decision is important, in both.

Avoid

Choosing the frightening or reassuring frame to push a decision.

Don't fall for it

Before deciding, flip the figure: from success to failure, from gaining to losing.

72% → 22%



What the research says

People who chose the safe plan when the problem spoke of lives saved and when it spoke of deaths (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981).

●●● **Solid evidence.** It is one of the effects replicated in the Many Labs project (Klein et al., 2014).

Connections

Used in

- Behavioral design

Related to

- Anchoring
- Loss aversion
- Lie factor
- Deceptive patterns (dark patterns)
- Prospect theory

Authors and works

1981	**Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman**	Demonstrated it with the disease problem and other dilemmas.

Sources

Original sources

- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1981). The framing of decisions and the psychology of choice. Science, 211(4481), 453–458. View source (https://doi.org/10.1126/science.7455683)

Academic reviews

- Klein, R. A., Ratliff, K. A., Vianello, M. et al. (2014). Investigating variation in replicability: A “Many Labs” replication project. Social Psychology, 45(3), 142–152. View source (https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000178)

Last reviewed: October 25, 2026

Atlas público de diseño, de Adriana Ojeda. Texto e ilustraciones bajo licencia CC BY 4.0.