

Decision-making on critical physical systems using risk measures

ETICS 2025 (Évian-les-Bains)

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Introduction and context

Main concern: To guarantee the reliability of critical physical systems.

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Example: Flood model.

There is a flood if:

- the *altitude of the surface* (Z_c) is higher than the *altitude of the top of the dyke* (Z_d).
- ▶ Physical variable of interest
 $Y := Z_c - Z_d$.

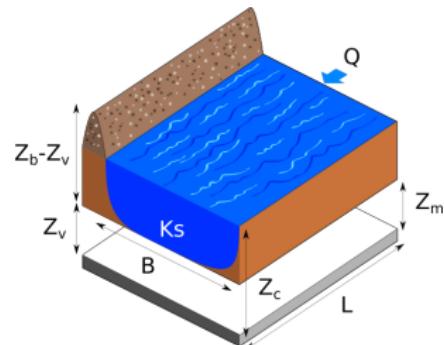


Figure 1: Flood model from [OpenTURNS, 2024]

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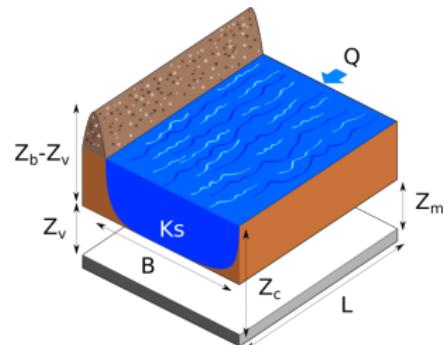


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Mathematical setting: Variable of interest $Y \in \mathbb{R}$.

- The greater Y , the less reliable the system.
- $Y = g(X)$, where input X is random to account for uncertainties.

Risk measures for engineering reliability

- $(\Omega, \mathcal{F}, \mathbb{P})$ probability space.
- V a subspace of the real valued random variables on $(\Omega, \mathcal{F}, \mathbb{P})$.

Definition 1 (Risk measure)

A *risk measure* on V is an application

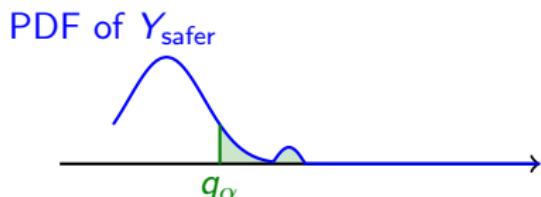
$$\mathcal{R} : \begin{cases} V & \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \\ Y & \mapsto \mathcal{R}(Y) \end{cases}.$$

Goals of the presentation

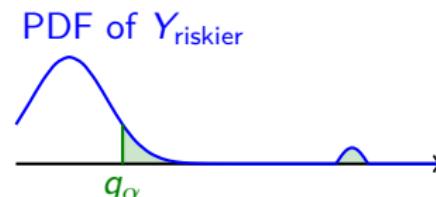
1. Categorization of risk measures:
 - \mathcal{Y} -homogeneous risk measures,
 - $[0, 1]$ -homogeneous risk measures.
2. Decision-making framework using risk measures.

Y -homogeneous risk measures

- **Quantile** $q_\alpha(Y) := \inf \{y \in \mathbb{R} \mid F_Y(y) \geq \alpha\}$ (F_Y CDF of Y).



(a) Safer random variable.

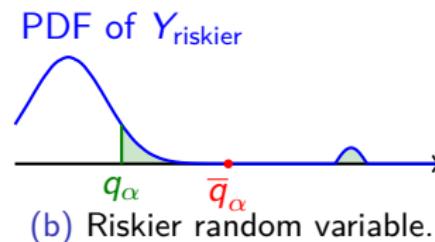
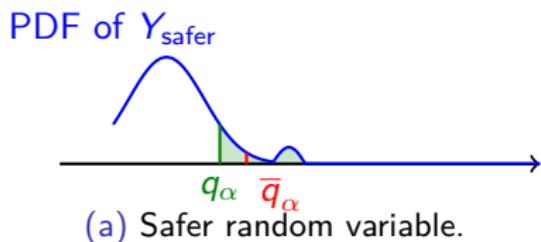


(b) Riskier random variable.

$$q_\alpha(Y_{\text{safer}}) = q_\alpha(Y_{\text{riskier}})$$

Y-homogeneous risk measures

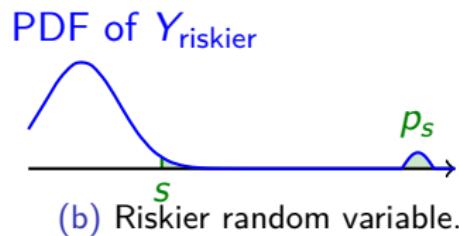
- **Quantile** $q_\alpha(Y) := \inf \{y \in \mathbb{R} \mid F_Y(y) \geq \alpha\}$ (F_Y CDF of Y).
- **Superquantile** $\bar{q}_\alpha := \mathbb{E}(Y \mid Y \geq q_\alpha(Y))$
[Rockafellar and Uryasev, 2002].



$$\begin{aligned}q_\alpha(Y_{\text{safer}}) &= q_\alpha(Y_{\text{riskier}}) \\ \bar{q}_\alpha(Y_{\text{safer}}) &< \bar{q}_\alpha(Y_{\text{riskier}})\end{aligned}$$

[0, 1]-homogeneous risk measures

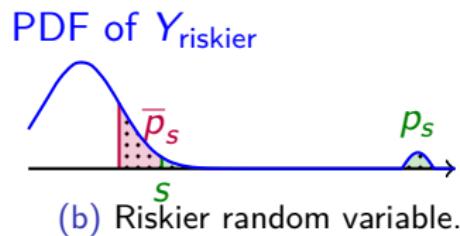
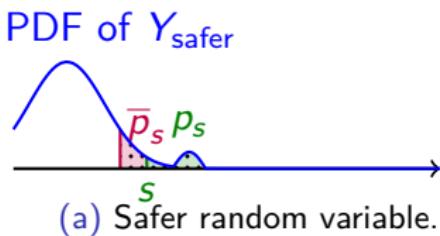
- **Failure probability** $p_s(Y) := \mathbb{P}(Y > s)$.



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[0, 1]-homogeneous risk measures

- **Failure probability** $p_s(Y) := \mathbb{P}(Y > s)$.
- **Buffered failure probability** $\bar{p}_s(Y) := 1 - \alpha$ where $\alpha \in [0, 1)$ is such that $\bar{q}_\alpha(Y) = s$
[Mafusalov and Uryasev, 2018].



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Duality

- $(\mathcal{R}_\alpha)_{0 < \alpha < 1}$ family of Y -homogeneous risk measures. ($\mathcal{R}_\alpha = q_\alpha$)
- $(\mathcal{P}_s)_{s \in \mathbb{R}}$ family of $[0, 1]$ -homogeneous risk measures. ($\mathcal{P}_s = p_s$)

Definition 2 ([Temple-Boyer et al., 2025])

The family of risk measures $(\mathcal{R}_\alpha)_{0 < \alpha < 1}$ and $(\mathcal{P}_s)_{s \in \mathbb{R}}$ are *dual* if, for any $Y \in V$, we have:

$$\forall (\alpha, s) \in (0, 1) \times \mathbb{R}, \mathcal{R}_\alpha(Y) \leq s \iff \mathcal{P}_s(Y) \leq 1 - \alpha.$$

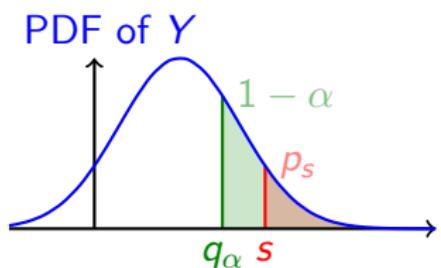
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Quantile and failure probability:

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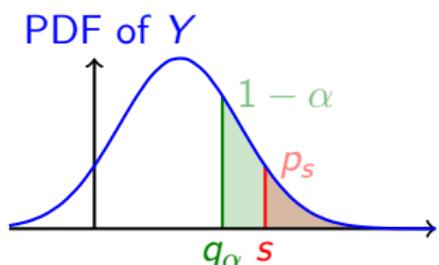
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Superquantile and buffered failure probability:

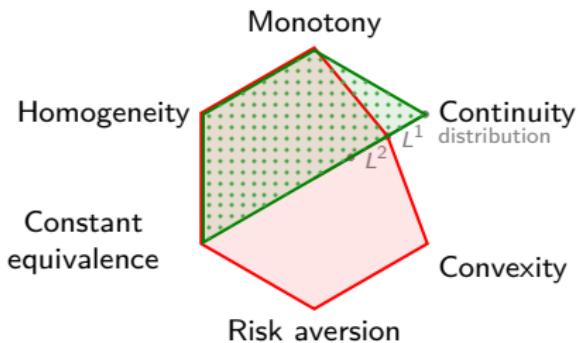
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Desired properties for risk measures

Y-homogeneous risk measures	[0,1]-homogeneous risk measures
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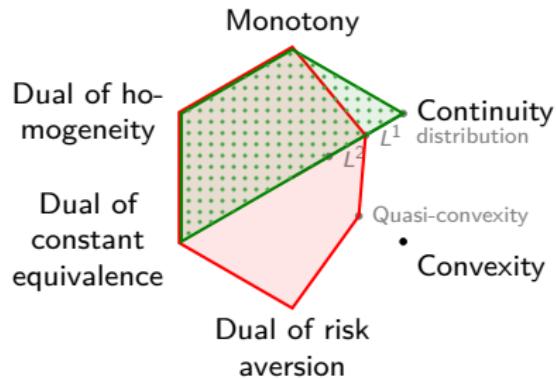
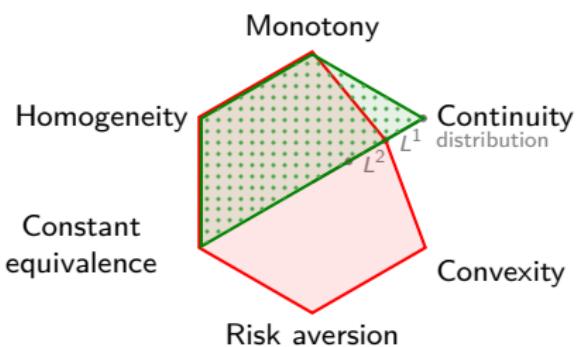


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- [Artzner et al., 1999, Rockafellar and Royset, 2015].

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Properties for risk measures:

- [Artzner et al., 1999, Rockafellar and Royset, 2015].
- Dual properties for [0,1]-homogeneous case:
[Temple-Boyer et al., 2025].

Decision-making using risk measures

- $(\mathcal{R}_\alpha)_{0 < \alpha < 1}$ and $(\mathcal{P}_s)_{s \in \mathbb{R}}$ dual families of risk measures.
- $1 - \alpha \in (0, 1)$ an acceptable risk and $s \in \mathbb{R}$ a security threshold.

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The system is safe if $\mathcal{R}_\alpha(Y) \leq s$ (or equivalently if $\mathcal{P}_s(Y) \leq 1 - \alpha$).

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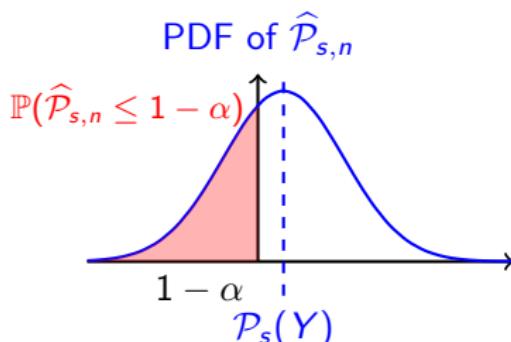
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Practical decision criterion: $\widehat{\mathcal{P}}_{s,n} \leq 1 - \alpha$,



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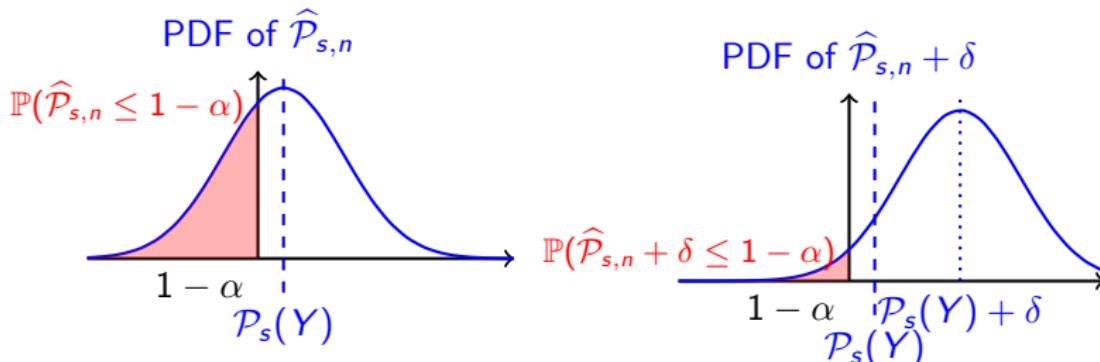
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Practical decision criterion: $\widehat{\mathcal{P}}_{s,n} \leq 1 - \alpha$, or rather $\boxed{\widehat{\mathcal{P}}_{s,n} + \delta \leq 1 - \alpha}$.



Main reliability result

- $1 - \beta \in (0, 1)$ a confidence level.

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Security factor $\delta_*(\alpha, s, \beta, n) \in [0, 1 - \alpha]$ defined by:

$$\delta_*(\alpha, s, \beta, n) := \inf \left\{ \delta > 0 \mid \sup_{Z \in V_{\text{unsafe}}} \mathbb{P}(\widehat{\mathcal{P}}_{s,n}(Z) + \delta \leq 1 - \alpha) < \beta \right\}.$$

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Decision Criterion 2 (Practical)

The system is labeled as safe at confidence level $1 - \beta$ if

$$\widehat{\mathcal{P}}_{s,n} + \delta_*(\alpha, s, \beta, n) < 1 - \alpha.$$

Proposition 1 ([Temple-Boyer et al., 2025])

If Y is unsafe (i.e. $\mathcal{R}_\alpha(Y) > s$) then the probability that Criterion 2 labels the system as safe is below β .

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Limits:

- $\delta_*(\alpha, s, \beta, n)$ not easy to compute in general.
- When $\delta_*(\alpha, s, \beta, n) = 1 - \alpha$, Criterion 2 is non informative.

Summary of the constants

Constants to be chosen:

- $s \in \mathbb{R}$ threshold: homogeneous to variable of interest Y .
- $\alpha \in (0, 1)$: $1 - \alpha$ is an acceptable risk. ($\mathcal{P}_s(Y) \leq 1 - \alpha$ is an acceptable situation.)
- $\beta \in (0, 1)$ maximum error for safe labeling: $1 - \beta$ is a confidence level.
- $n \in \mathbb{N}$ sample size.

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Optimal security factor $\delta_*(\alpha, s, \beta, n) \in [0, 1 - \alpha]$:

security factor for Criterion 2 ($\widehat{\mathcal{P}}_{s,n} + \delta_*(\alpha, s, \beta, n) < 1 - \alpha$)

- ▶ Probability of wrongly labeling as safe is below β .

Application to the case quantile/failure probability (1/2)

- Crude Monte Carlo estimator: $\hat{p}_{s,n} := \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \mathbb{1}_{\{Y_i > s\}}.$
- ▶ $\delta_*(\alpha, s, \beta, n) = 1 - \alpha - \frac{1}{n} q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha))$ ($\mathcal{B}(\cdot, \cdot)$ binomial distribution).

Decision Criterion 3 (Practical)

The system is labeled as safe at confidence level $1 - \beta$ if

$$\left[\hat{p}_{s,n} < \frac{1}{n} q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha)) \right].$$

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$$\boxed{\hat{p}_{s,n} < \frac{1}{n} q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha))}.$$

1. Choose α, s, β, n .
2. Simulate a sample (Y_1, \dots, Y_n)
3. Compute $\hat{p}_{s,n} := \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \mathbb{1}_{\{Y_i > s\}}$.
4. Use Criterion 3.

Application to the case quantile/failure probability (2/2)

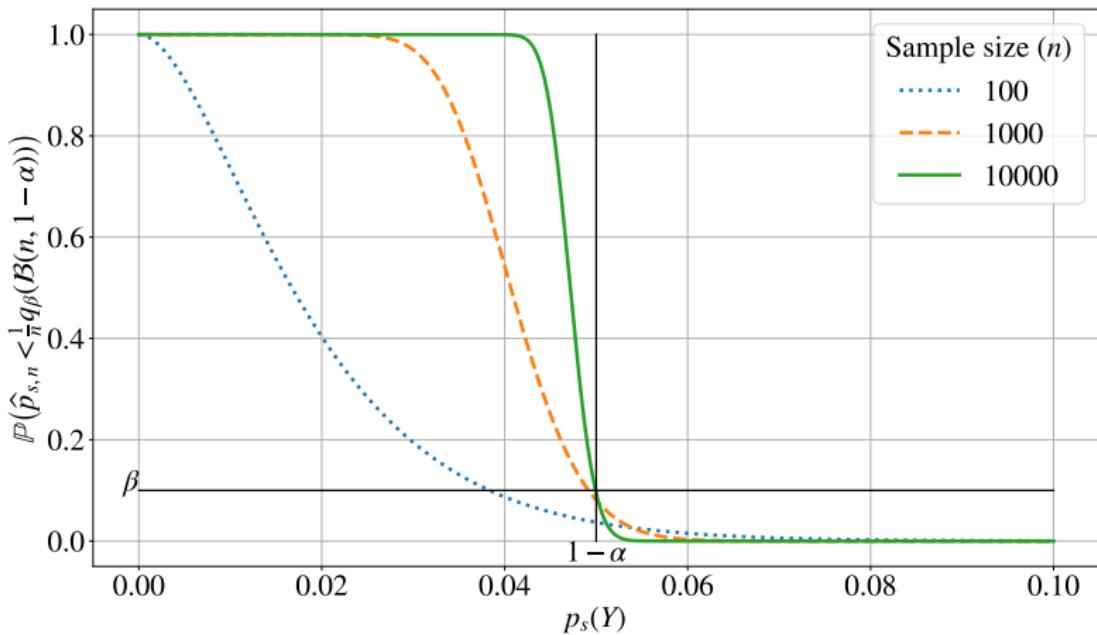


Figure 4: Probability that the system is labeled as safe using Criterion 3.

Link with Wilks' method

- $Y_{(1,n)} \leq \dots \leq Y_{(n,n)}$ order statistics of the sample (Y_1, \dots, Y_n) .
- $k_*(\alpha, \beta, n) := n - q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha)) + 1$.

Proposition 2 ([Temple-Boyer et al., 2025])

Criterion 3 is equivalent to $Y_{(k_(\alpha, \beta, n), n)} \leq s$.*

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- ▶ **For reliability-oriented decision making , it is equivalent to work with a quantile or a failure probability.**

Application to the flood model

Question: Is the flood probability below the acceptable risk $1 - \alpha$?

Threshold	Acceptable risk	Confidence level	Sample size
s	$1 - \alpha$	$1 - \beta$	n
0m	$5 \cdot 10^{-4}$	$1 - 10^{-5}$	$3 \cdot 10^4$

Table 1: Table of parameters used in the flood model test case.

Application to the flood model

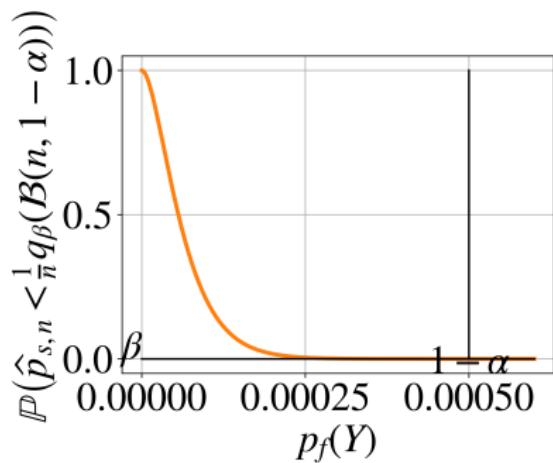
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- $Y_{(29\ 999, 30\ 000)} \leq 0\text{m}.$



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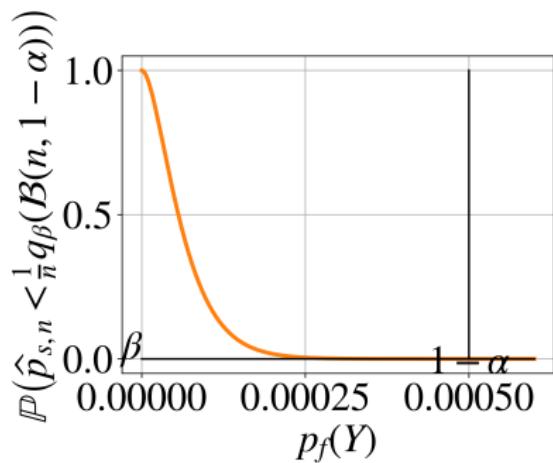
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Scenario	\hat{p}_n	$Y_{(k_*(\alpha, \beta, n), n)}$	Criterion 3
Dyke is high	6.10^{-5}	-2.41m	yes
Dyke is low	5.67×10^{-4}	7.06m	no

Table 2: Numerical results on the flood case.

Conclusion and perspectives

On risk measures:

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- The couple *superquantile/buffered failure probability*: better theoretical properties than *quantile/failure probability*.

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 - ▶ Limit: Not straightforward to a generic risk measure.
- Operational when the risk measures are quantile/failure probability.
 - ▶ Limit: Crude MC estimator not applicable in the rare event context.

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Perspectives:

- Working on the decision-making framework using the superquantile.
- Including more efficient failure probability estimators (e.g., importance splitting), to this decision-making framework.

Thank you for your listening.

Article submitted and available in HAL: [Temple-Boyer et al., 2025]
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Risk measures in engineering reliability: comparison, duality and decision-making.

Superquantile

- $Y \in L^1(\Omega)$ a real-valued random variable.
- $0 < \alpha < 1$ a conservatism level.

Definition 3 (Superquantile)

$$\bar{q}_\alpha(Y) := \min_{c \in \mathbb{R}} \left(c + \frac{1}{1-\alpha} \mathbb{E}([Y - c]_+) \right).$$

Proposition 3

$$q_\alpha(Y) = \frac{1}{1-\alpha} \int_\alpha^1 q_\beta(Y) d\beta.$$

Proposition 4

Assume that Y admits a PDF. Then $\bar{q}_\alpha(Y) = \mathbb{E}(Y | Y > q_\alpha(Y))$.

Buffered failure probability (1/2)

- $Y \in L^1(\Omega)$ a real-valued random variable.
- $s \in \mathbb{R}$ a threshold.

Definition 4 (Buffered failure probability)

The buffered failure probability $\bar{p}_s(Y)$ is defined as follow.

- If $s < \mathbb{E}(Y)$ then $\bar{p}_s(Y) := 1$.
- If $s \geq \sup(Y)$ then $\bar{p}_s(Y) = 0$.
- Else, there exists a unique $\alpha \in [0, 1]$ such that $\bar{q}_\alpha(Y) = s$ and we define $\bar{p}_s(Y) := 1 - \alpha$.

Proposition 5

Assume that $s < \sup(Y)$, then $\bar{p}_s(Y) = \inf_{c \geq 0} \mathbb{E}([c(Y - s] + 1)_+)$.

Buffered failure probability (2/2)

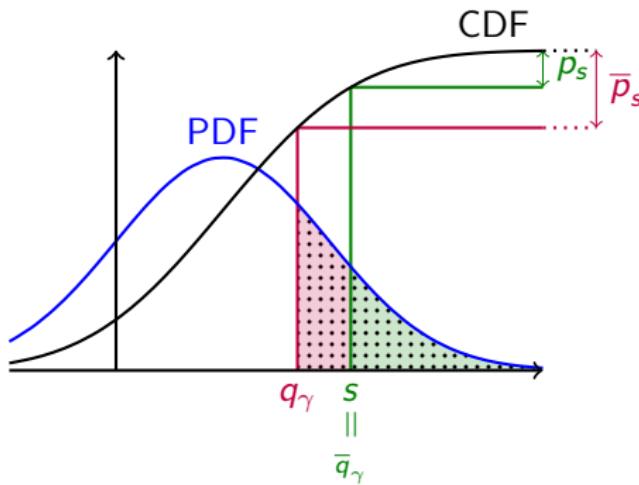


Figure 5: Illustration of the buffered failure probability definition.

Desired properties for Y -homogeneous risk measures

Definition 5

([Artzner et al., 1999, Rockafellar and Royset, 2015])

Let \mathcal{R} be a risk measure. Let define the following properties :

1. **(Monotony).** If $Y_1 \leq Y_2$ a.s. then $\mathcal{R}(Y_1) \leq \mathcal{R}(Y_2)$.
2. **(Continuity).** If $(Y_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ converges to Y then $(\mathcal{R}_{Y_n})_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ converges to $\mathcal{R}(Y)$.
3. **(Homogeneity).** Pour $\lambda > 0$ et $c \in \mathbb{R}$, $\mathcal{R}(\lambda Y + c) = \lambda \mathcal{R}(Y) + c$.
4. **(Constant equivalence).** If $Y = c$ a.s. then $\mathcal{R}(Y) = c$.
5. **(Risk aversion).** If Y is non-constant then $\mathcal{R}(Y) > \mathbb{E}(Y)$.
6. **(Subadditivity).** $\mathcal{R}(Y_1 + Y_2) \leq \mathcal{R}(Y_1) + \mathcal{R}(Y_2)$.
7. **(Convexity).** For $0 \leq \lambda \leq 1$,
$$\mathcal{R}(\lambda Y_1 + (1 - \lambda) Y_2) \leq \lambda \mathcal{R}(Y_1) + (1 - \lambda) \mathcal{R}(Y_2)$$

Dual properties for $[0, 1]$ -homogeneous risk measures

Definition 6 ([Temple-Boyer et al., 2025])

Let $(\mathcal{P}_s)_{s \in \mathbb{R}}$ be a family of $[0, 1]$ -homogeneous risk measures. We define the following dual properties:

1. **(Dual of monotony).** For all $s \in \mathbb{R}$ and $(Y_1, Y_2) \in V^2$ such that $Y_1 \leq Y_2$ a.s., then $\mathcal{P}_s(Y_1) \leq \mathcal{P}_s(Y_2)$.
3. **(Dual of homogeneity).** For all $Y \in V$, $s \in \mathbb{R}$, $\lambda > 0$ and $c \in \mathbb{R}$, we have $\mathcal{P}_{\lambda s + c}(\lambda Y + c) = \mathcal{P}_s(Y)$.
4. **(Dual of constant equivalence).** If $Y \in V$ and $c \in \mathbb{R}$ are such that $Y = c$ a.s., then for all $s \in \mathbb{R}$, we have $\mathcal{P}_s(Y) = \mathbb{1}_{\{s < c\}}$.
5. **(Dual of risk aversion).** For all Y that is not constant a.s., then for any $s \leq \mathbb{E}(Y)$, we have $\mathcal{P}_s(Y) = 1$.

Proposition 6

$(\mathcal{R}_\alpha)_{0 < \alpha < 1}$ respects a properties if and only if its dual risk measure $(\mathcal{P}_s)_{s \in \mathbb{R}}$ respects the corresponding dual properties.

Probability of labeling as safe

Criterion 3: $\hat{p}_{s,n} < \frac{1}{n}q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha))$

Since $n\hat{p}_{s,n} = \sum_{i=1}^n \mathbb{1}_{\{Y_i > s\}} \sim \mathcal{B}(n, p_s(Y))$, we have

$$\boxed{\mathbb{P}\left(\hat{p}_{s,n} < \frac{1}{n}q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha))\right) = F_{\mathcal{B}(n, p_s(Y))}(q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha)) - 1)}.$$

(F . CDF of the corresponding distribution)

Study of the security bound bound $\frac{1}{n}q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha))$ (1/3)

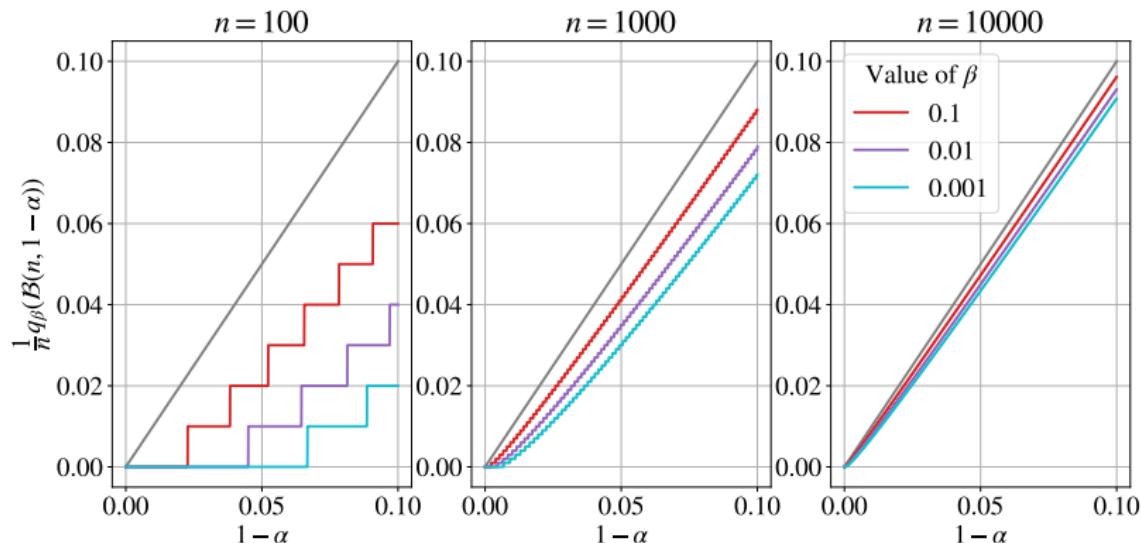


Figure 6: Security bound with respect to risk acceptable $1 - \alpha$.

Criterion 3: $\hat{p}_{s,n} < \frac{1}{n}q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha))$

Study of the security bound bound $\frac{1}{n}q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha))$ (2/3)

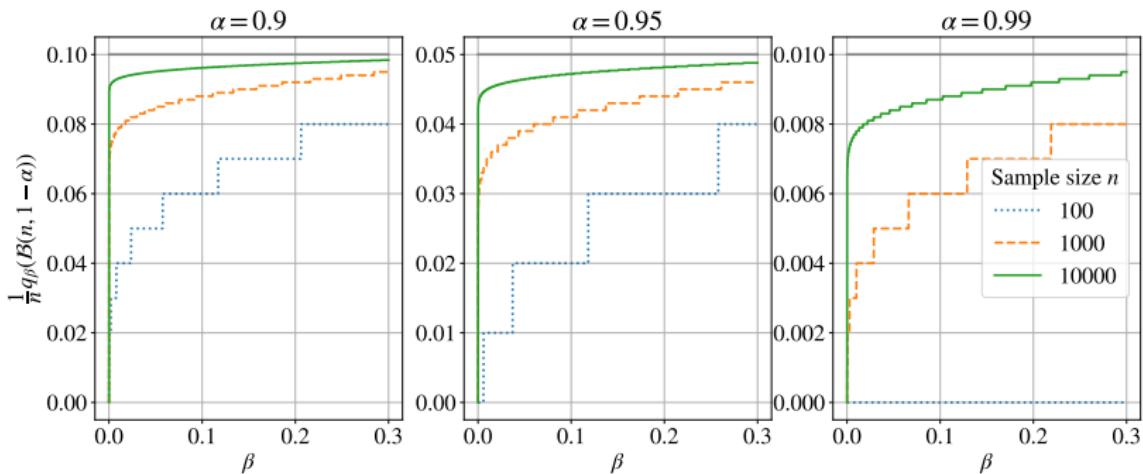


Figure 7: Security bound with respect to β .

Criterion 3: $\hat{p}_{s,n} < \frac{1}{n}q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha))$

Study of the security bound bound $\frac{1}{n}q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha))$ (3/3)

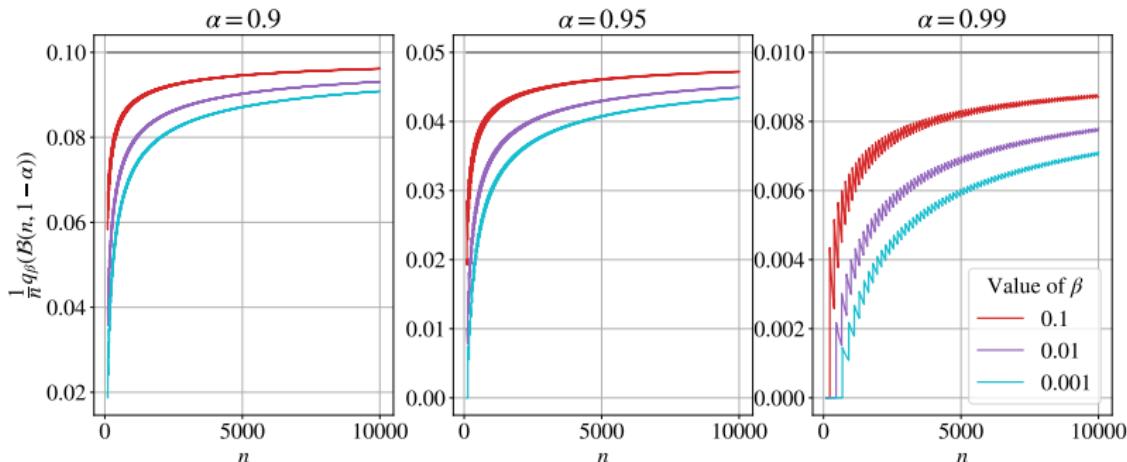


Figure 8: Security bound with respect to sample size n .

Criterion 3: $\hat{p}_{s,n} < \frac{1}{n}q_\beta(\mathcal{B}(n, 1 - \alpha))$