

Super Freakonomics: Global Cooling, Patriotic Prostitutes, and Why Suicide Bombers Should Buy Life Insurance

By Steven D. Levitt, Stephen J. Dubner

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The *New York Times* best-selling *Freakonomics* was a worldwide sensation, selling over four million copies in thirty-five languages and changing the way we look at the world. Now, Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner return with *SuperFreakonomics*, and fans and newcomers alike will find that the freakquel is even bolder, funnier, and more surprising than the first.

Four years in the making, *SuperFreakonomics* asks not only the tough questions, but the unexpected ones: What's more dangerous, driving drunk or walking drunk? Why is chemotherapy prescribed so often if it's so ineffective? Can a sex change boost your salary?


SuperFreakonomics challenges the way we think all over again, exploring the hidden side of everything with such questions as:

- How is a street prostitute like a department-store Santa?
- Why are doctors so bad at washing their hands?
- How much good do car seats do?
- What's the best way to catch a terrorist?
- Did TV cause a rise in crime?
- What do hurricanes, heart attacks, and highway deaths have in common?
- Are people hard-wired for altruism or selfishness?
- Can eating kangaroo save the planet?
- Which adds more value: a pimp or a Realtor?

Levitt and Dubner mix smart thinking and great storytelling like no one else, whether investigating a solution to global warming or explaining why the price of oral sex has fallen so drastically. By examining how people respond to incentives, they show the world for what it really is – good, bad, ugly, and, in the final analysis, super freaky.

Freakonomics has been imitated many times over – but only now, with *SuperFreakonomics*, has it met its match.

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- Sales Rank: #311693 in Books
- Brand: Levitt, Steven D./ Dubner, Stephen J.

- Published on: 2009-10-20
- Released on: 2009-10-20
- Format: Deckle Edge
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .97" w x 6.00" l, .96 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Book Description

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From *Superfreakonomics*: Where do you stand on the freak-o-meter?



Four years ago, you were cool. You read *Freakonomics* when it first came out. You impressed family and friends and dazzled dates with the insights you gleaned. Now Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner return with *Superfreakonomics*, a *freakquel* even bolder, funnier, and more surprising than the first.

Have you been keeping up? Can you call yourself a SuperFreak? Test your *Superfreakonomics* know-how now:

Question 1: 5 points

According to *Superfreakonomics*, what has been most helpful in improving the lives of women in rural India?

- A. The government ban on dowries and sex-selective abortions
- B. The spread of cable and satellite television
- C. Projects that pay women to not abort female babies
- D. Condoms made specially for the Indian market

Question 2: 3 points

Among Chicago street prostitutes, which night of the week is the most profitable?

- A. Saturday
- B. Monday
- C. Wednesday
- D. Friday

Question 3: 5 points

You land in an emergency room with a serious condition and your fate lies in the hands of the doctor you draw. Which characteristic doesn't seem to matter in terms of doctor skill?

- A. Attended a top-ranked medical school and served a residency at a prestigious hospital
- B. Is female
- C. Gets high ratings from peers
- D. Spends more money on treatment

Question 4: 3 points

Which cancer is chemotherapy more likely to be effective for?

- A. Lung cancer
- B. Melanoma
- C. Leukemia
- D. Pancreatic cancer

Question 5: 5 points

Half of the decline in deaths from heart disease is mainly attributable to:

- A. Inexpensive drugs
- B. Angioplasty
- C. Grafts
- D. Stents

Question 6: 3 points

True or False: Child car seats do a better job of protecting children over the age of 2 from auto fatalities than regular seat belts.

Question 7: 5 points

What's the best thing a person can do personally to cut greenhouse gas emissions?

- A. Drive a hybrid car
- B. Eat one less hamburger a week
- C. Buy all your food from local sources

Question 8: 3 points

Which is most effective at stopping the greenhouse effect?

- A. Public-awareness campaigns to discourage consumption
- B. Cap-and-trade agreements on carbon emissions
- C. Volcanic explosions
- D. Planting lots of trees

Question 9: 5 points

In the 19th century, one of the gravest threats of childbearing was puerperal fever, which was often fatal to mother and child. Its cause was finally determined to be:

- A. Tight bindings of petticoats early in the pregnancy
- B. Foul air in the delivery wards
- C. Doctors not taking sanitary precautions
- D. The mother rising too soon in the delivery room

Question 10: 3 points

Which of the following were not aftereffects of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks on September 11, 2001:

- A. The decrease in airline traffic slowed the spread of influenza.
- B. Thanks to extra police in Washington, D.C., crime fell in that city.
- C. The psychological effects of the attacks caused people to cut back on their consumption of alcohol, which led to a decrease in traffic accidents.
- D. The increase in border security was a boon to some California farmers, who, as Mexican and Canadian imports declined, sold so much marijuana that it became one of the states most valuable crops.

Answers and Scoring

Question 1

B, Cable and satellite TV. Women with television were less willing to tolerate wife beating, less likely to admit to having a “son preference,” and more likely to exercise personal autonomy. Plus, the men were perhaps too busy watching cricket.

Question 2

A, Saturday nights are the most profitable. While Friday nights are the busiest, the single greatest determinant of a prostitute’s price is the specific trick she is hired to perform. And for whatever reason, Saturday customers purchase more expensive services.

Question 3

C, One factor that doesn’t seem to matter is whether a doctor is highly rated by his or her colleagues. Those named as best by their colleagues turned out to be no better than average at lowering death rates--although they did spend less money on treatments.

Question 4

C, Leukemia. Chemotherapy has proven effective on some cancers, including leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin’s disease, and testicular cancer, especially if these cancers are detected early. But in most cases, chemotherapy is remarkably ineffective, often showing zero discernible effect. That said, cancer drugs make up the second-largest category of pharmaceutical sales, with chemotherapy comprising the bulk.

Question 5

A, Inexpensive drugs. Expensive medical procedures, while technologically dazzling, are responsible for a remarkably small share of the improvement in heart disease. Roughly half of the decline has come from reductions in risk factors like high cholesterol and high blood pressure, both of which are treated with relatively inexpensive drugs. And much of the remaining decline is thanks to ridiculously inexpensive treatments like aspirin, heparin, ACE inhibitors, and beta-blockers.

Question 6

False. Based on extensive data analysis as well as crash tests paid for by the authors, old-fashioned seat belts do just as well as car seats.

Question 7

B, Shifting less than one day per week’s worth of calories from red meat and dairy products to chicken, fish, eggs, or a vegetable-based diet achieves more greenhouse-gas reduction than buying all locally sourced food, according to a recent study by Christopher Weber and H. Scott Matthews, two Carnegie Mellon researchers. Every time a Prius or other hybrid owner drives to the grocery store, she may be cancelling out its emissions-reducing benefit, at least if she shops in the meat section. Emission from cows, as well as sheep and other ruminants, are 25 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than the carbon dioxide released by cars and humans.

Question 8

C, the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines discharged more than 20 million tons of sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere, which acted like a layer of sunscreen, reducing the amount of solar radiation and cooling off the earth by an average of one degree F.

Question 9

C, doctors not taking sanitary precautions. This was the dawning age of the autopsy, and doctors did not yet know the importance of washing their hands after leaving the autopsy room and entering the delivery room.

Question 10

C, the psychological effect of the attacks caused people to increase their alcohol consumption, and traffic accidents increased as a result.

Scoring

32-40: Certified SuperFreak

25-31: Freak--surprises lay in wait for you

16-24: Wannabe freak--you’ve got some reading to do

1-15: Conventional wisdomer--you're still thinking in old ways

From Publishers Weekly

Economist Levitt and journalist Dubner capitalize on their megaselling *Freakonomics* with another effort to make the dismal science go gonzo. Freaky topics include the oldest profession (hookers charge less nowadays because the sexual revolution has produced so much free competition), money-hungry monkeys (yep, that involves prostitution, too) and the dunderheadedness of Al Gore. There's not much substance to the authors' project of applying economics to all of life. Their method is to notice some contrarian statistic (adult seat belts are as effective as child-safety seats in preventing car-crash fatalities in children older than two), turn it into economics by tacking on a perfunctory cost-benefit analysis (seat belts are cheaper and more convenient) and append a libertarian sermonette (governments tend to prefer the costly-and-cumbersome route). The point of these lessons is to bolster the economist's view of people as rational actors, altruism as an illusion and government regulation as a folly of unintended consequences. The intellectual content is pretty thin, but it's spiked with the crowd-pleasing provocations—'A pimp's services are considerably more valuable than a realtor's'—that spell bestseller. (Nov.)

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As in *Freakonomics*, Dubner and Levitt consider how individual incentives influence strategic behavior and how, in turn, market behavior and changes in policy and culture help us to better understand incentives. Critics, however, diverged on the success of this follow-up while admitting the authors' wisdom, wit, and insight. Although the more diverse set of examples certainly fascinates, they can feel "like more of a rag-bag of conclusions" than a cohesive argument (*Times*). But what perplexed reviewers most was the last section, an analysis of externalities that examines the use of geoengineering to prevent climate change and provides fodder for climate-change deniers. Right or wrong, the use of geoengineering to prevent climate change seems a real stretch far beyond Levitt's economic expertise. Yet despite its flaws, *SuperFreakonomics* is as fun as, if even more controversial than, its predecessor.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rachel Robertson:

Within other case, little men and women like to read book Super Freakonomics: Global Cooling, Patriotic Prostitutes, and Why Suicide Bombers Should Buy Life Insurance. You can choose the best book if you'd prefer reading a book. As long as we know about how is important a new book Super Freakonomics: Global Cooling, Patriotic Prostitutes, and Why Suicide Bombers Should Buy Life Insurance. You can add understanding and of course you can around the world by just a book. Absolutely right, because from book you can learn everything! From your country until eventually foreign or abroad you may be known. About simple issue until wonderful thing you are able to know that. In this era, we can easily open a book or perhaps searching by internet gadget. It is called e-book. You need to use it when you feel bored to go to the library. Let's examine.

Keith Smith:

Hey guys, do you desires to finds a new book to see? May be the book with the subject Super Freakonomics: Global Cooling, Patriotic Prostitutes, and Why Suicide Bombers Should Buy Life Insurance suitable to you? The book was written by popular writer in this era. The book untitled Super Freakonomics: Global Cooling,

Patriotic Prostitutes, and Why Suicide Bombers Should Buy Life Insurance is the one of several books which everyone read now. This particular book was inspired many people in the world. When you read this reserve you will enter the new way of measuring that you ever know ahead of. The author explained their strategy in the simple way, consequently all of people can easily to be aware of the core of this guide. This book will give you a large amount of information about this world now. So you can see the represented of the world on this book.

Herbert White:

Precisely why? Because this Super Freakonomics: Global Cooling, Patriotic Prostitutes, and Why Suicide Bombers Should Buy Life Insurance is an unordinary book that the inside of the e-book waiting for you to snap it but latter it will zap you with the secret this inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who have write the book in such wonderful way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book get such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking technique. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I were you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

Marjorie Cook:

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