

Howard Kunreuther, Wharton OID

AUGUST 15, 2023 | **VOL 70 ISSUE 2 ([HTTPS://ALMANAC.UPENN.EDU/VOLUME-70-NUMBER-2](https://almanac.upenn.edu/volume-70-number-2))** | **DEATHS** | **PRINT**



Howard Kunreuther

Howard Kunreuther, the James G. Dinan Professor Emeritus of operations, information and decisions in the Wharton School and co-director emeritus of the Risk Management and Decision Processes Center, died on August 1 after a 16-month battle with glioblastoma. He was 84.

Dr. Kunreuther was born in Forest Hills, New York. His mother was born in Harlem to Russian immigrants; his father immigrated to New York from Germany in the 1920s. He received a bachelor's degree in economics from Bates College and a PhD in the same subject from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Following a destructive 1964 earthquake in Alaska, he joined the Institute for Defense Analysis. There, he began his lifelong research centered on how society can make better decisions in the face of "low probability, high consequence events" like natural disasters, terrorism, and climate change. Referring to himself as an "irrational economist," he sought to understand why people did not take measures to protect themselves from disasters and what society could do to help.

Dr. Kunreuther first taught at the University of Chicago and, in 1972, moved to the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where he became the James G. Dinan Professor of Decision Sciences. He founded the Wharton Risk Management and Decision Processes Center in 1985. Among his other professional achievements are numerous awards and recognition for his contributions to the literature on economics of natural and technological hazards, including two Elizur Wright Award, given to publications that made "the most significant contribution to the literature of insurance." He was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Academies of Science and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He co-authored nineteen books and hundreds of articles, working across disciplines with scholars, law makers, and the private sector. Throughout his career, he cherished enduring collaborations with colleagues around the world and mentored generations of students.

He was predeceased by his first wife, Sylvia Clifford Kunreuther. He is survived by his wife, Gail Loeb; his daughter, Laura (Daniel); his son, Joel (Amy); his stepsons, David (Tricee) and Michael (Julia); and four grandchildren, Madelyn, Rafael, Sascha, Asher.

A funeral service was held Sunday, August 6 in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania. Please consider contributions to the Environmental Defense Fund (<https://www.edf.org/>) in honor of Dr. Kunreuther's life-long engagement with environmental issues.