

New decadal survey for the social and behavioral sciences presents guidance to the intelligence community

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The social and behavioral sciences (SBS) offer an essential contribution

to the mission of the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC), a mission that requires an understanding of what human beings do, how, and why, says a new report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. The report—[A Decadal Survey of the Social and Behavioral Sciences: A Research Agenda for Advancing Intelligence Analysis](#)—recommends that the IC make sustained collaboration with researchers in the social and behavioral sciences a key priority as it develops research objectives for the coming decade.

The report provides guidance for the development of a 10-year research agenda and identifies key opportunities for SBS research to strengthen [intelligence analysis](#). The integration of SBS research will help the IC in taking advantage of technological advances that support [intelligence analysis](#) and in preparing for new risks from technologically based activities and communications around the world. Targeted, interdisciplinary research offers the potential for stronger intelligence assessments, tools and technologies optimally designed for human use and human-machine interaction, and optimal readiness to confront evolving security threats.

To capitalize on the benefits of SBS research, the IC may need to alter procedures and ways of doing business that have been in place for a long time so it can develop a systematic approach to fostering SBS research and integrating the conduct of such research and the application of its findings into intelligence analysis. Additionally, [ethical issues](#) may arise at all stages of the research process, and standards with respect to some issues – particularly those concerning the use of large-scale digital datasets—are developing and are also context-sensitive. Effective collaboration between the IC and the [research community](#) will require [careful attention](#) to ethical issues and professional standards and customs within both the research community and the IC throughout the processes of research, design, and implementation of new tools and methods.

Researchers from many SBS disciplines have benefitted from opportunities to work with the IC and conduct research on myriad topics related to intelligence collection. The decadal survey—the first conducted in this context—highlights ways to promote interdisciplinary collaboration so that the insights and ideas of SBS researchers are fully integrated with the needs and objectives of the IC.

Provided by National Academy of Sciences

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