

WHY SOCIAL SCIENCE ?

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Did you know...

- ◇ **Anthropologists** were central to halting the spread of Ebola in West Africa at the height of the epidemic. ([More](#))
- ◇ Rigorous studies in **child development** show that the economic benefits of quality early childhood education largely outweigh the costs, finding a savings of three to seven dollars for every dollar invested. ([More](#))
- ◇ Thanks to **economics** research into matching markets, those suffering from kidney disease now have a better chance of finding a compatible donor and prolonging their lives. ([More](#))
- ◇ Advances in computer science, such as machine translation and artificial intelligence, would not be possible without research in **linguistics**. ([More](#))
- ◇ Research in **political science** can help leaders understand the causes of international conflicts and the growth of violent extremism. ([More](#))
- ◇ U.S. families are now saving more for retirement thanks to insights from **psychology** and **economics**. ([More](#))
- ◇ **Education research** has elucidated best practices for preventing school violence and bullying among U.S. children and youth. ([More](#))

These are just a few of the contributions that research in the social sciences have made to improving human health, security, and prosperity. Chances are you have never stopped to fully consider all of the ways social science is impacting your life at this very moment, from the device you are using to read this (and the cybersecurity keeping it secure), to the food choices you make when heading out for lunch, to the decisions investors are making for your retirement accounts.

Though often misunderstood and underappreciated, the social sciences make meaningful contributions to nearly every aspect of American life. In fact, many of the immediate challenges facing our country will require solutions based on sound, reliable scientific evidence. Social science research, which receives essential financial support from the federal government, provides an evidence base for addressing issues of national importance, such as crime prevention, health care for the underserved, the safety of our troops, early childhood education, and improved efficiency of American businesses, to name a few.

It is with this in mind that I am pleased to launch this new blog series we are calling **Why Social Science?** Through it, we will tell stories showcasing the impact the social sciences have on our lives. We will feature diverse voices, all with

important perspectives on why social science is important. You will hear from researchers, government officials, industry, and a variety of stakeholders who depend on reliable social science research findings.

What makes *Why Social Science?* different from other social science blogs and websites, though, is that it is written for the public. Scientists are great at talking to one another, but explaining the value of our science to the masses is often more difficult. Therefore, we hope this will become a resource that clearly articulates the role these sciences play in our everyday lives and shows what we stand to lose without adequate investments in research.

In this series, we define “social science” as the collection of STEM—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—disciplines engaged in *the study of why and how humans behave as they do* as individuals, groups and within institutions, organizations, and society. It often refers to the disciplines of and fields within anthropology, communication, demography, economics, geography, history, law, linguistics, political science, psychology, sociology, and statistics, as well as countless multidisciplinary subfields. It is a diverse set of fields, but each sets out to answer the most fundamental questions about human behavior, interaction, and decision-making.

I hope I have piqued your interest and that you will [subscribe](#) to *Why Social Science?* to learn more. Our first guest blog will appear on January 31 featuring an official from the [National Institutes of Health](#). Additional pieces will appear twice monthly thereafter.

While on the website (www.whysocialscience.com), I hope you will also peruse the other resources that tell important stories of social science success. And to learn even more, head over to COSSA’s website at www.cossa.org.

Why Social Science? is a project of the Consortium of Social Science Associations.



Wendy A. Naus became COSSA’s fourth Executive Director in 2014 following a decade of advocacy and lobbying for the federal research and policy interests of scientific societies and U.S. universities. Over her career, she has worked to shape legislation, programs, and regulations important to the research community and has advocated for increased research funding across federal agencies. In her role at COSSA, Wendy serves as the lead advocate for federal funding and policy that positively impact social science research across the federal government, representing the breadth of the social science research enterprise. She is also responsible for the day to day operations of COSSA and member engagement. She is a native of Buffalo, New York, and holds a B.A. in political science and urban studies from Canisius College, graduating magna cum laude from the All-College Honors Program.



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