

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910973557903321
Titolo	Protecting participants and facilitating social and behavioral sciences research // Panel on Institutional Review Boards, Surveys, and Social Science Research, Constance F. Citro, Daniel R. Ilgen, and Cora B. Marrett, editors ; Committee on National Statistics and Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences, Division on Behavioral Sciences and Education, National Research Council of the National Academies
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Washington, D.C., : National Academies Press, c2003
ISBN	9780309511360 0309511364
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (258 p.)
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Disciplina	300/.72
Soggetti	Social sciences - Research - Moral and ethical aspects Human experimentation in psychology - Moral and ethical aspects Confidential communications - Social surveys Ethics committees
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references.
Nota di contenuto	""Front Matter""; ""Acknowledgments""; ""Contents""; ""Executive Summary""; ""1 Introduction""; ""2 Basic Concepts""; ""3 Regulatory History""; ""4 Enhancing Informed Consent""; ""5 Enhancing Confidentiality Protection""; ""6 Enhancing the Effectiveness of Review: Minimal-Risk Research""; ""7 System Issues""; ""References""; ""Appendices""; ""A Tracing Changes in Regulatory Language""; ""B Selected Organizations and Resources for Human Research Participant Protection""; ""C Agenda for Panela€™s First Meeting""; ""D Selected Studies of IRB Operations: Summary Descriptions"" ""E Confidentiality and Data Access Issues for Institutional Review Boards George T. Duncan"" ""Biographical Sketches of Panel Members and Staff""

Institutional review boards (IRBs) are the linchpins of the protection systems that govern human participation in research. In recent years, high-profile cases have focused attention on the weaknesses of the procedures for protecting participants in medical research. The issues surrounding participants protection in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences may be less visible to the public eye, but they are no less important in ensuring ethical and responsible research. This report examines three key issues related to human participation in social, behavioral, and economic sciences research: (1) obtaining informed, voluntary consent from prospective participants; (2) guaranteeing the confidentiality of information collected from participants, which is a particularly challenging problem in social sciences research; and (3) using appropriate review procedures for "minimal-risk" research. Protecting Participants and Facilitating Social and Behavioral Sciences Research will be important to policy makers, research administrators, research sponsors, IRB members, and investigators. More generally, it contains important information for all who want to ensure the best protection-for participants and researchers alike-in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences.
