



THREAT AND RISK ASSESSMENTS

The science behind threat assessment and risk assessment has grown rapidly in recent years. Tools and approaches to making decisions around potential threats have evolved, indicating a shifting landscape. Considering how frequently these tools are used, it is vital to evaluate and measure how valid and reliable they are. To address this gap, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) is leading an evaluation of threat assessments and threat management programs to better understand the need, utilization, and efficacy of threat assessment tools and models. This research will:

- Analyze what methods work, for whom, and in what circumstances.
- Provide lessons learned on the state of threat assessment tools and their use, moving forward, to practitioners who use these tools.

EVALUATION APPROACHES

This study uses a multidisciplinary mixed methods approach to conduct an outcome and impact evaluation utilizing systematic reviews, case analysis, survey-embedded experiments, and interviews. Through multiple pillars of research, this study will review:

1. Lessons learned from allies in the United Kingdom (UK).
2. **Lessons learned from local and state law enforcement (LE) personnel:** Local LE may use different approaches to threat assessments. At the same time, approaches and lessons from the federal level may not be employed at the local level.
3. **Insider threats:** Examines the challenge of identifying insider threats within an organization, as well as the severity of the potential risk these insiders could pose.
4. **Malevolent creativity and novel threats:** Evaluates current approaches to threat assessments and analyzes whether these approaches provide adequate insight around novel threats.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

A systematic review of published peer-reviewed process evaluations of threat and risk assessment procedures along

with data collected from interviews with practitioners arrived at the following conclusions:

- Risk assessment instruments can help predictions, appear applicable to many, and their performance can be moderated by several design features.
- Different instruments have different areas of focus—using multiple instruments to assess the same case may provide the most predictive accuracy.
- Structured professional judgement approaches are widely seen as best practice among those who have responsibility for risk assessment in a variety of settings.
- Human nature can steer people away from new things—and that can blind them to novel threats.

IMPACT

These evaluations enhance the knowledgebase on threat/risk assessment instruments, while helping DHS measure how valid and reliable these tools are, for whom, and in what circumstances. These resources will assist practitioners who use these instruments by enhancing their capabilities to identify, manage, and minimize threats through use of traditional threat assessment tools.

MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES

- **FY23 Q3:** Lessons learned from allies in the UK that outline tools and models
- **FY23 Q3:** Lessons learned from state and local security forces
- **FY23 Q4:** Lessons learned from insider threats
- **FY24 Q1:** Lessons learned from malevolent creativity and novel threats

PERFORMERS AND PARTNERS

- National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center, Omaha, NE
- The Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3)
- S&T Office of Intelligence and Analysis
- Five Country Research and Development Network

