2026 MIDYEAR UPDATE: Resources and Leadership Supporting Federal Statistics

A Report of The American Statistical Association Project Team to Assess and Monitor the Health of the Federal Statistics

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*Addendum, September 10 2026: Posting of 'Noncitizen Voting in the 2020 Election, A Beginning Analysis' on the US Census Bureau's website

The American Statistical Association's *2026 Midyear Update: Resources and Leadership Supporting Federal Statistics,* published on July 28, 2026, provides updates on staffing, budgets, and leadership for the federal statistical agencies. It also includes recent policy developments of concern for federal statistics.

On August 18, the US Census Bureau posted to its website the report, *Noncitizen Voting in the 2020 Election, A Beginning Analysis.* The report's posting and its promotion by President Donald Trump presents risks to the Census Bureau as a trusted provider of economic and demographic information that are of such gravity, we are amending the Midyear update with the statement below.

The ASA project to assess and monitor the health of federal statistics began in early 2023. Among the main questions we consider for evaluating each statistical agency are: (1) is the agency trusted, agile, and accountable and (2) is the agency able to produce relevant, timely, credible, accurate, and objective statistics? Trust in a statistical agency is especially critical for the second question when statistical agencies rely on information provided by individuals and business to produce their products. An individual or business that does not trust the agency to protect the confidentiality of what they provide and to use it for its intended purpose is less inclined to participate in the information request. Without broad and representative participation, the data collection may become more expensive and the quality of a statistical product may be affected. Moreover, the products of a statistical agency that loses trust may not be perceived as objective or credible, thereby impairing the agency's mission to serve the public good.

The report estimating non-citizen voting in the 2020 election being posted to the Census website undermines that trust, because the topic falls outside the agency's wide-ranging mandate. Further, the fact that the unconventional report was promoted by the president and addressed a controversial topic on which the president has focused gives the appearance of the agency being used for advancing a political agenda rather than the agency's mission "to serve as the nation's leading provider of quality data about its people and economy."

ASA Executive Director Ron Wasserstein posted his concern on the matter in a LinkedIn post on August 25. We echo and affirm his comments, specifically that the report's posting is "contrary to [the Census Bureau's] mission, legal statutes, standards, and practices." We also affirm the following part of Wasserstein's comments (to which we add links):

> To earn and maintain the trust paramount to its work, the Census Bureau has rigorous practices and standards to ensure quality, transparency, and scientific objectivity. Beyond being common sense and time-tested, these practices and standards are required by law. Most recently, a 2019 bill signed into law by President Trump requires all statistical agencies to "conduct credible and accurate statistical activities" and "objective statistical activities" and "protect the trust of information providers by ensuring the confidentiality and exclusive statistical use of their responses." The same law requires the statistical agency's administrative home—the Department of Commerce in this case—to "enable, support, and facilitate statistical agencies" to carry out these requirements. A 1954 law states, "Neither the Secretary, nor any other officer or employee of the Department of Commerce or bureau or agency thereof, or local government census

> liaison, may … use the information furnished under the provisions of this title for any purpose other than the statistical purposes for which it is supplied ..." The Census Bureau's Statistical Quality Standards, developed in accordance with a 2002 law, include requirements that "Any conclusions derived from sample data must be supported by appropriate measures of statistical uncertainty" and the sharing of "Documentation needed to replicate and evaluate" 14 aspects of the work, including the analysis.

We also commend the concerns and questions raised by Amy O'Hara of Georgetown University in her article, "Dissecting the "Beginning Analysis" of Noncitizen Voting."

The breaching of these practices, standards, laws, and mission by the noncitizen voting report's posting is a grave threat to public trust in the US Census Bureau and poses a serious risk to its ability to produce relevant, timely, credible, accurate, and objective statistics.

About This Update and Why It Matters

Federal statistical agencies produce many of the official numbers that Americans rely on every day. They measure inflation and employment; track the nation's economy; and monitor public health, agriculture, education, energy, transportation, crime, and many other aspects of American life. Their statistics guide decisions by Congress, federal agencies, state and local governments, businesses, researchers, financial markets, and households. They also help determine how hundreds of billions of federal dollars are allocated each year.

Producing these statistics requires more than data systems and technology. The process depends on highly skilled professional staff, experienced scientific leadership, adequate and stable funding, and organizational environments that support objective, independent statistical work. These resources determine whether agencies can maintain existing programs, modernize long-running surveys and information systems, respond to emerging national priorities, and preserve the quality and credibility of the nation's official statistics.

This report introduces a new series of topical updates that will supplement the annual reports for our project to assess and monitor the health of federal statistics. Rather than reassessing every aspect of the federal statistical system, these shorter reports provide midyear updates on selected issues where developments have been especially significant. This first update focuses on staffing, budgets, and leadership—the core resources that enable statistical agencies to fulfill their missions.[1] While these indicators do not by themselves measure the quality of federal statistics, they provide important evidence about agencies' capacity to sustain current programs and meet future demands. An appendix provides detailed budget graphics.

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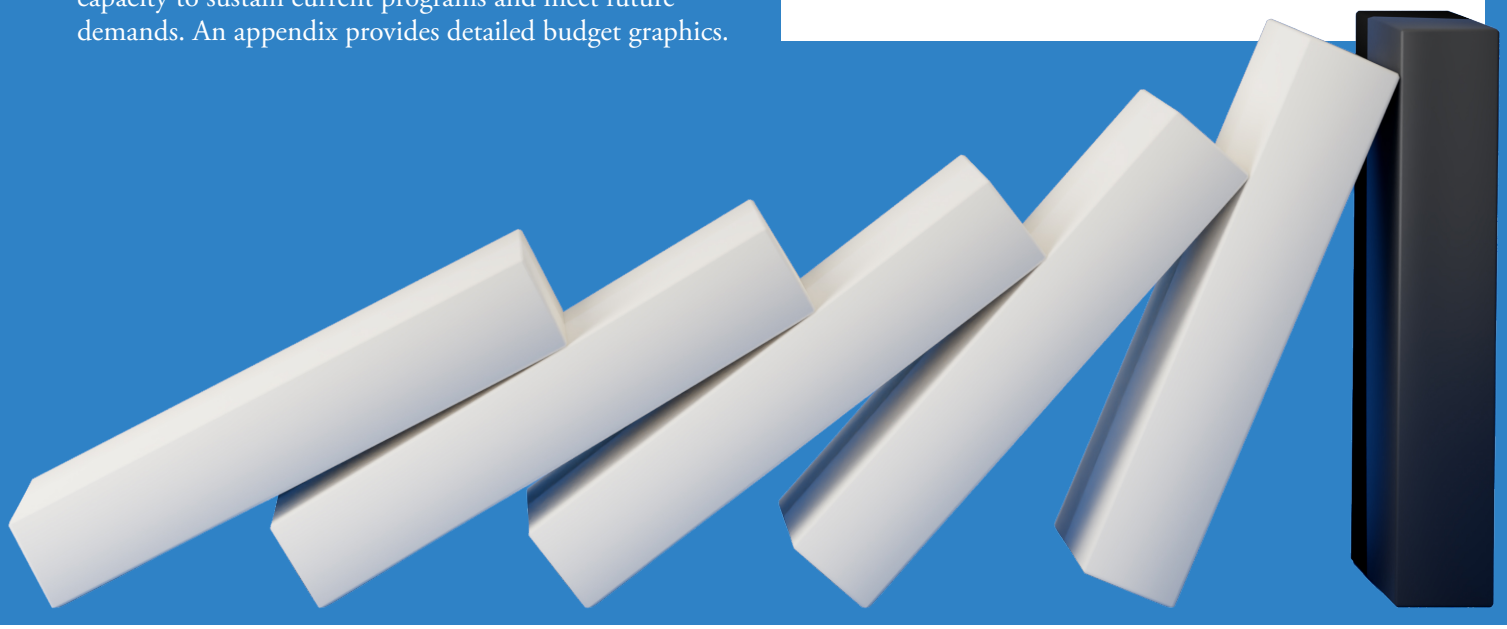


[1]See our inaugural 2024 Report, The Nation's Data at Risk.

Key Findings

The changes in the federal government since early 2025 have resulted in the statistical agencies having substantially fewer staff, reduced purchasing power, and significant leadership gaps. Although some signs are positive in recent months—the pace of change has slowed, several agencies have resumed hiring, and, except for the National Center for Education Statistics, most continue to regularly release their products—the cumulative loss of resources raises serious concerns and questions about long-term capacity. In particular, the loss of staff, both in number and in role—from long-time employees with deep expertise and institutional knowledge as well as leadership and mentorship roles to early-career staff with the latest methodological and technical training—and the leadership gaps, coupled with recent policy changes, put the agencies in a weakened and vulnerable position to meet rigorous production scheduwsustain the necessary, challenging work to keep up with the demands of producing relevant, timely, and accurate statistics for decisionmakers and the public; and ensure their products are credible and objective.

Our principal findings are:

Historic staffing losses continue to define the statistical system. Every one of the 13 principal federal statistical agencies has experienced staffing reductions since January 2025. Six agencies have lost at least one-third of their workforce, and two have lost more than two-thirds. While hiring has resumed at seven agencies, current recruitment has barely begun to offset earlier losses and does not immediately address the loss of expertise and experience that occurred in last year's downsizing.

Leadership vacancies remain widespread. As of July 1, 2026, only 6 of the 13 agencies are headed by permanent, non-acting leaders. Several agencies also continue to have numerous vacant senior management and technical positions or have filled them on a temporary or "acting" basis.

Budget pressures continue despite mostly stable nominal appropriations. Most agencies received FY26 appropriations that were close to FY25 levels. After accounting for inflation, however, purchasing power continued to decline. Eight agencies have lost at least 18% of their purchasing power since FY09, limiting their ability to modernize surveys, invest in new statistical methods, and respond to growing demands for data.

The administration has proposed another year of significant budget reductions. The FY27 budget request proposes substantial reductions for most statistical agencies, with funding for preparations for the 2030 Census being the principal exception. The administration has also proposed organizational changes affecting several agencies, including transferring the Bureau of Labor Statistics to the Department of Commerce and relocating the National Center for Health Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to a new Office of Strategy within the Department of Health and Human Services.

Some agencies face particularly significant transitions. The National Agricultural Statistics Service has lost nearly 40% of its staff and is in the midst of relocating many positions from Washington, DC, to St. Louis, Missouri. The former Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics at the Social Security Administration has lost nearly 70% of its staff while undergoing an organizational restructuring that leaves its future role as a federal statistical agency uncertain.

Recent policy changes will likely have lasting implications. During the first half of 2026, new policies affected statistical agencies' operating environments, including changes to civil service protections that could affect statistical positions and new restrictions on privacy protection/disclosure avoidance methods that have been utilized for some time by the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Looking Ahead

Box 1. LIST OF FEDERAL STATISTICAL AGENCIES

BEA	Bureau of Economic Analysis, Department of Commerce
BJS	Bureau of Justice Statistics, Department of Justice
BLS	Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor
BTS	Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Department of Transportation
Census	U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Commerce
EIA	Energy Information Administration, Department of Energy
ERS	Economic Research Service, Department of Agriculture
NASS	National Agricultural Statistics Service, Department of Agriculture
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics, Department of Education
NCHS	National Center for Health Statistics, Department of Health and Human Services
NCSES	National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, U.S. National Science Foundation
ORES	Formerly Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, Social Security Administration
SOI	Statistics of Income, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury

The agencies have demonstrated remarkable resilience over the past 18 months. Most continue to produce the core economic and social statistics that policymakers, businesses, and the public depend upon (though sometimes with less detail for subcategories or local areas). At the same time, staffing reductions, constrained budgets, leadership vacancies, and organizational changes are beginning to affect some statistical programs, modernization efforts, and agency operations.

Whether these developments prove temporary or mark a longer-term reduction in the nation's statistical capacity will depend largely on future staffing, funding, leadership appointments, and policy decisions, requiring close attention and strong actions from Congress and the administration. This report documents where those critical resources stand today. Our annual report will continue to examine what these changes mean for the quality, availability, and integrity of the federal statistics on which the nation depends.

Detailed Assessment

In 2025, the new administration took actions to reduce the size of government and implement their visions and policies, including for the statistical agencies. The pace of change has slowed in 2026 for the statistical agencies, but we continue to see new policies affecting them (e.g., the application of Schedule Policy/Career to statisticians in the Office of Management and Budget[2] and the Commerce Department order restricting what disclosure avoidance techniques its two agencies can use). Nonetheless, at the 18-month mark of this administration, we can take stock of what might be the steady state of the statistical agencies from a staffing perspective and the administration's vision of their budget levels. In addition to those topics, we report on significant gaps in the leadership of many of the agencies. The topics of this update amplify the question of how the statistical agencies and their products might be affected in the longer run by the staffing cuts, constrained budgets, leadership gaps, and this administration's policies. We further discuss this in our conclusion and ask readers' help in answering the question.

As our 2024 report (p. 40) notes, "While sufficient budget and staffing are not a unique requirement in the federal government, it is important to note that a federal statistical agency's work to produce data that meet scientific standards is person- and expertise-intensive." While productivity gains can reduce the needs for some kinds of staff, and contractors provide many valuable services to statistical agencies, it is critical that agencies have sufficient in-house staff with relevant expertise to effectively oversee current programs and innovate for the future. Further, as our 2025 status report (p. 20) indicated, "Professional, independent leadership is essential for maintaining public trust. Political appointments or arbitrary personnel actions signal attempts to politicize or weaken agency missions."

See Box 1 for the abbreviations used in this update for the 13 federal statistical agencies.

[2]As stated in the April 18, 2025, White House Fact Sheet, civil service regulations have been amended to include Schedule Policy/Career for career employees with "important policy-determining, policy-making, policy-advocating, or confidential duties" to serve as at-will employees, effectively making them easier to fire.

Staffing Levels

Determining the current staffing levels for federal statistical agencies was challenging for our 2025 monitoring effort. Indeed, for the Nation's Data at Risk December 2025 report, we largely had to rely on media reports, numbers provided by people who recently departed an agency, and isolated public comments of agency officials to provide estimated staffing losses as a percentage from 2024 levels, which were also not publicly available. Staffing levels covering fiscal years 2021–2027 (FY21–FY27) for seven of the agencies became available in 2026 with the April release of the president's budget request (PBR) for FY27 and for five of those seven agencies covering FY15–FY26 with the January launch of a federal workforce site from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). We drew on other sources for another four agencies and have no data for two agencies. (See ASA Online Resources and Box 2 for explanations of the different staffing level series available.)

Box 2. AVAILABLE DATA ON FEDERAL STATISTICAL AGENCY STAFFING LEVELS AND OUR USE OF THEM

Data Sources:

We relied on two main sources of federal employment data in this update: (1) data updated monthly by OPM on a website that launched in January 2026; and (2) the president's budget request (PBR) documents for the administration's proposed FY27 budget, released in April 2026. The OPM data are available for five agencies: BEA, BLS, Census, ERS, and NASS; while the PBR data are available for seven agencies: BEA, BLS, BTS, Census, EIA, ERS, and NASS. NCHS and ORES staff levels are from agency personnel, and the NCES number is from its staff directory. The BJS estimated staff loss is based on publicly shared information at the June 2026 quarterly meeting of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics. We are not aware of publicly available staffing levels for NCSES and SOI.

The OPM numbers of federal employees on the payroll by agency come from https://data.opm.gov/—specifically, Workforce Size & Composition under "Explore Data/Analytics." The numbers are a snapshot of the federal workforce on the last day of each month or fiscal year and include all active employees (in either a pay or non-pay status). See Data Downloads. Part-time and full-time employees count equally as one employee each.

The PBR numbers of federal employees are FTEs, as the goal of the PBR documents is to link the appropriate or requested budget amount for employees for an agency to what that buys in terms of FTE positions. Links to the PBR documents are in the "Data Source" tab of this ASA online resource.

Technical Notes:

The staffing levels from PBR documents in Table 1 for BEA, BLS, and BTS are the sum of two or three lines, one of which is for reimbursable work. The PBR categories for BEA in FY23 are: FTE/Obligated (OBL) and Reimbursable FTE/OBL; for BLS in FY23 and FY24: FTE/OBL, Other than full-time permanent, and FTE Reimbursable; and for BTS in FY23 and FY24: Direct FTE and Reimbursable FTE; see the ASA Online Resources. The FY26 and FY27 budget requests for BEA, BLS, and BTS do not include a reimbursable category. It appears those positions were combined with the overall FTE line for FY26 and FY27. For the Census levels for FY23–FY27, the PBR level is a sum of the FTEs for Current Surveys, Periodic Censuses and Programs, and Working Capital, the last corresponding to reimbursable work. For NASS for FY23–FY27, the PBR level is a sum of FTEs from budget lines for appropriated funds and a mix of non-USDA federal, state, and other funds, the latter of which remains stable at around 100 FTEs.

We chose FY26 and FY24 as the comparison years for Figure 1 because many of the resignations and retirements taken in FY25 were not realized until the end of that year. This situation explains the sharp staffing drops from FY25 to FY26 in Table 1 for most agencies. The staffing level for NCES is an exception owing to the fact that all but three of its approximately 100 staff were terminated in March 2025. In July 2025, NCES added an acting commissioner to bring its staff level up to four people for FY25. As of July 1, 2026, NCES had 12 people.

All the agencies for which we have data experienced a net loss of staff from FY24 to FY26 (see Table 1). The losses came from government-wide actions by the administration to terminate new employees who had not yet completed the required probationary period; to implement reductions in force in some agencies; to require staff to return to office to work in person; and to offer buyouts in which employees were put on administrative leave and paid through the end of FY25 or calendar 2025.

TABLE 1. Staffing Levels for the Federal Statistical Agencies for FY23-FY 26: Levels (where available) from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) federal workforce site (total employees); President's budget request (PBR) documents (full-time equivalents); and other sources.

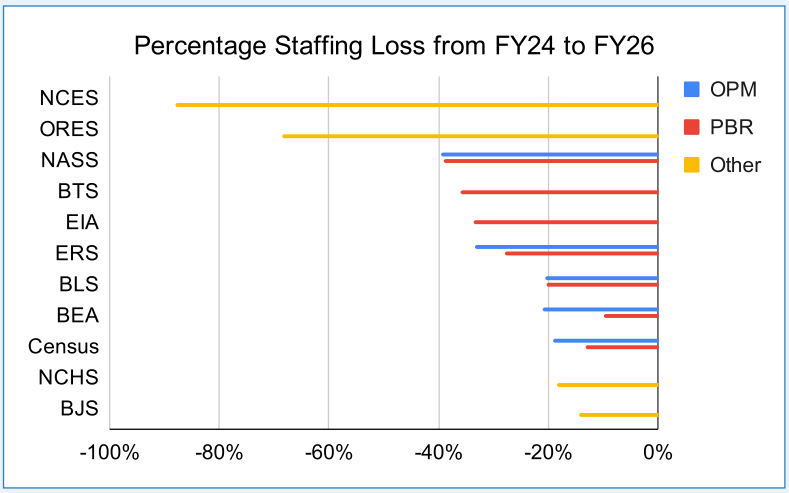
Agency	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	Change FY26 vs. FY24	Change FY26 vs. FY25
BEA						
OPM	471	473	409	374	-20.9%	-8.6%
PBR documents	509	435	435	392	-9.9%	-9.9%
BJS						
Other					-14.3%	0.0%
BLS						
OPM	2,330	2,321	2,165	1,846	-20.5%	-14.7%
PBR documents	2,192	2,227	2,019	1,773	-20.4%	-12.2%
BTS						
PBR documents	58	75	51	48	-36.0%	-5.9%
Census Bureau						
OPM	15,348	13,232	11,288	10,683	-19.3%	-5.4%
PBR documents	8,565	8,282	7,685	7,183	-13.3%	-6.5%
EIA						
PBR documents	366	371	353	246	-33.7%	-30.3%
ERS						
OPM	289	290	282	193	-33.4%	-31.6%
PBR documents	310	312	299	225	-27.9%	-24.7%
NASS						
OPM	806	800	739	484	-39.5%	-34.5%
PBR documents	839	813	752	495	-39.1%	-34.2%
NCES						
Other		~100	4	12	-88.0%	200.0%
NCHS						
Other	434	451	389	368	-18.4%	-5.4%
NCSES						
No publicly available information from the three sources used here*						
ORES						
Other	66	70	20	22	-68.6%	10.0%
SOI						
No publicly available information from the three sources used here*						

NOTE: The FY26 OPM numbers are based on July 1, 2026, data. *The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has staffing numbers for all agencies through FY23 as documented in ASA Online Resources.

SOURCES: See Box 2; see also ASA Online Resources for further staffing information.

FIGURE 1.
Staff Loss as a Percentage from FY24 to FY26 for 11 of the 13 Statistical Agencies According to OPM, PBR Documents, and Agency Documents.*

SOURCES: See Table 1.
*Staffing levels for NCSES and SOI were not available.



The staffing levels from OPM and the PBR documents differ in absolute number but generally show the same trends. The differences in levels are not surprising given that the OPM figures include all those employed, including part-time workers, whereas the PBR documents focus on full-time-equivalent (FTE) workers. The staffing levels for BEA are a notable exception, with the OPM data showing a 20% decrease from FY24 to FY26, while the PBR documents show only a 10% decrease. Our understanding is that the PBR level is the staffing cap for BEA in FY26 rather than the actual number of FTEs. The OPM and PBR percentage losses from FY24 to FY26 for Census differ by 6 percentage points, for which part of the explanation may be differences in losses in field staff, who often work part-time, and other staff.

Summarizing the figures in Table 1, the 11 statistical agencies for which we have data lost approximately 14% to 88% of their end-of-FY24 staff levels by the middle of FY26 (see Table 1). As seen in Figure 1, we arrayed agencies by their staff losses into those in the 14–20% range (BEA, BJS, BLS, Census, and NCHS); those in the 30–50% range (BTS, EIA, ERS, and NASS); and those above 60% (ORES and NCES).[3]

NCES is one of seven agencies hiring in FY26, along with BEA, BJS, BLS, Census, ERS, and NASS. BLS and Census posted dozens of positions through most of March–May 2026. ERS advertised in April for two agricultural economists—one for its Washington, DC, location and one for its Kansas City, Missouri, location—and in July for two research social scientists at its Kansas City location. BEA advertised for two positions in June and BJS for three positions in July. NASS advertised in June for dozens of positions at its St. Louis, Missouri, location.

The effects of Census hiring were apparent in the July 1 OPM numbers, as the agency had 82 more positions than in the June numbers. It is otherwise too early to see the effects of hiring in the OPM monthly data, given that resignations and other attrition are also occurring. (The OPM data permit looking at hires and separations separately by fiscal year but not by month.) We also understand that the hiring process is very slow.

For ERS and NASS, we expect greater loss of staff over the next year because of the move of their personnel out of the USDA South Building in Washington, DC. Indeed, according to reporting from the Federal News Network citing court documents, USDA as of Spring 2025 was "anticipating that a significant number of employees will decline geographic reassignments out of the [national capital region] or existing regional or state offices to the five target hub locations." The affected staff apparently have been notified that their positions have been moved but numbers moved out of the Washington, DC, area are not publicly available. We are also monitoring the effects of the relocation of NCSES undertaken in 2025 and noted in our December 2025 report.

[3] The underlying data are available in an expanded form in these ASA online resources, which also include statistical agency staffing levels from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) annual Statistical Programs of the United States Government through FY23, the most recent year available. See also Box 2.

FY26 Budget Levels

The FY26 budgets for many federal statistical agencies were generally held at their FY25 levels, thereby losing purchasing power due to mandatory salary increases and inflation (see Table 2). The budgets for BEA and BJS were both cut 6% in nominal terms (8% in real terms), and the BLS budget was slightly increased by 0.6%, amounting to a 2% loss in purchasing power. The overall budget of the Census Bureau was increased 8% in nominal terms (5% in real terms), with its Periodic Censuses and Programs account increased 11% (9% in real terms) as preparation for the 2030 decennial census ramps up. The Current Surveys account was cut 3% in nominal terms (5% loss in real terms). The NASS budget was cut 1.5% in nominal terms (4% in real terms). As of the writing of this report, the FY26 budget levels for NCSES, ORES, and SOI are not publicly available nor is the FY25 budget level for SOI or the FY27 budget requests for ORES and SOI. The NCSES budget is in two parts: one for program levels and one for staffing. The staffing line is determined out of an NSF-wide account but has not been made publicly available for FY25 or FY26. We therefore report only the program line. The BJS and NCES budgets also have their staffing line separate from programs and have not provided their staffing budgets for our tracking period, which goes back to FY01.

The ORES situation is discussed in a section below, but here we note that the cuts to the agency's research component make it the smallest statistical agency by budget, as seen in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Enacted Budgets for FY09–FY26 for the 13 Statistical Agencies in Real (Inflation-Adjusted) 2009 Dollars.

Agencies (budgets in FY09 $ Millions)	FY09	//	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	% Change FY26 from FY25	% Change FY26 from FY09
BEA	86.9		83.8	88.2	82.8	80.5	73.8	-8.3%	-15.0%
BJS program line	51.0		48.2	49.3	41.5	40.6	37.4	-7.9%	-26.7%
BLS	597.2		494.8	505.0	492.8	483.3	474.6	-1.8%	-20.5%
BTS	27.0		19.5	19.0	18.7	18.4	18.1	-1.5%	-33.0%
Census Current Surveys	233.6		225.1	238.8	231.9	225.5	213.3	-5.4%	-8.7%
EIA	111.0		96.9	97.7	95.3	92.7	90.4	-2.4%	-18.5%
ERS	87.2		65.9	67.0	64.0	62.2	60.7	-2.4%	-30.4%
NASS surveys (non-census) line	123.1		107.6	104.6	99.6	96.8	93.1	-3.8%	-24.4%
NCES (programs)	228.6		218.7	221.8	216.4	210.4	205.3	-2.4%	-10.2%
-Assessment line	130.1		135.1	133.9	130.6	127.0	123.9	-2.4%	-4.8%
-Statistics line	98.5		83.7	87.9	85.8	83.4	81.4	-2.4%	-17.4%
NCHS	154.4		135.4	135.6	132.3	128.7	125.5	-2.4%	-18.7%
NCSES program line			42.4	56.5	52.3	50.9			
ORES	29.3		29.8	29.0	31.5	16.7	17.9	7.4%	-38.7%
SOI			30.5	30.2	32.9				

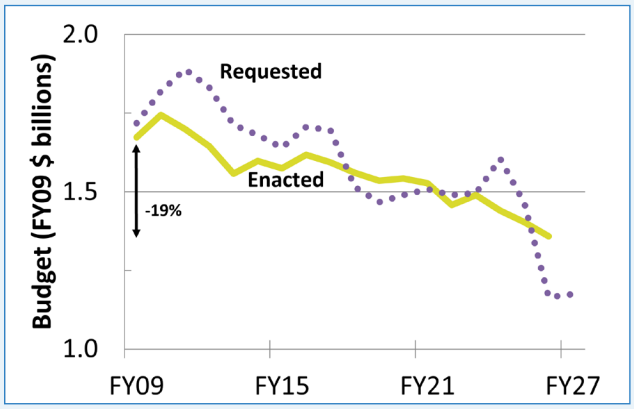
NOTES: The GDP deflator is used to adjust for inflation. For the Census Bureau and NASS, their cyclical (census) budget lines are excluded. Empty cells for the last columns of NCSES and SOI indicate lack of information. The FY09 SOI cell is empty because of a budget restructuring making a comparable value infeasible.

SOURCE: See ASA online resources for this table and underlying documentation.

Budget Trends Since the Great Recession

As we noted in our December 2025 report, the overall trend in real-dollar budget levels (appropriations) for the federal statistical system, after a boost following the Great Recession to fill data gaps that had hampered policy-making (e.g., more frequent data on the service sector), has been down. Specifically, nine agencies for which we can construct comparable time series (and excluding periodic censuses) have experienced averaged real-dollar losses of 19% over the period FY09 through FY26 (see the "enacted" line in Figure 2). Note that the current administration requested a much bigger decrease for FY26 than what Congress ultimately enacted. The administration's FY27 request is similar to its FY26 request—it remains to be seen whether Congress will generally hold steady statistical agency budgets for FY27 as it did for FY26 (although the FY26 appropriations continued the downward trend).

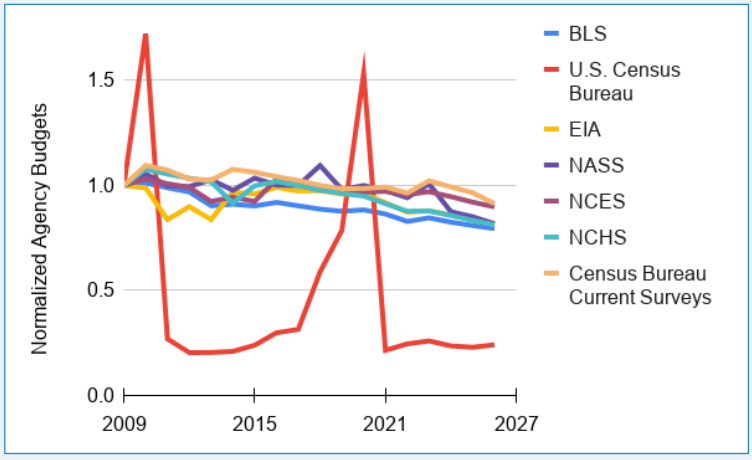
FIGURE 2. The President's Requested Budget and Enacted Level for the Combined Budget or Non-cyclical Budget Lines, 9 Federal Statistical Agencies, FY09–FY27.



NOTE: The double-headed arrow illustrates the 19% loss of purchasing power for the enacted budget lines from FY09 to FY26.

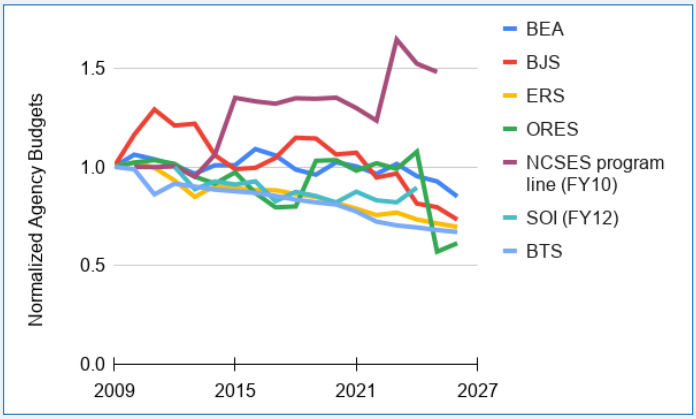
SOURCE: See Table 2. Applies to Figures 3, 4, and 5.

FIGURE 3. The Budgets of the Six Largest Statistical Agencies, FY09–FY26, Normalized to Their FY09 Levels in Inflation-adjusted Terms (Using the GDP Deflator). The Census Bureau Current Surveys line is also included.



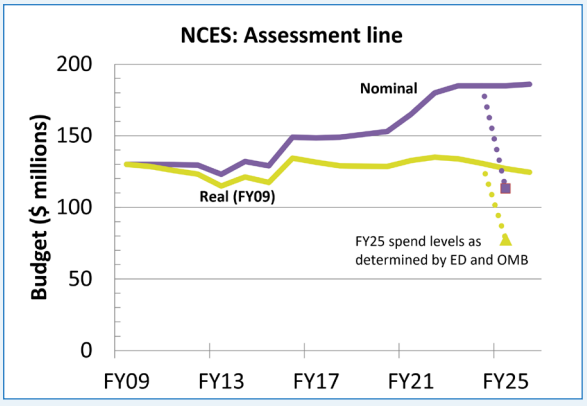
Figures 3 and 4 show individual statistical agencies' budgets normalized to their FY09 level and carried forward through FY26 in real terms (due to lack of data, the NCSES program budget is normalized to FY10 and the SOI budget is normalized to FY12). Figure 3 shows budget levels for the six largest statistical agencies, plus a separate line for the Census Bureau's Current Surveys (i.e., excluding censuses, which produce funding spikes), and Figure 4 shows budget levels for the seven smaller agencies. (Budget graphs for individual agencies in nominal and real dollars are provided in the appendix.) The larger agencies, on balance, have experienced smaller losses in purchasing power than the smaller agencies, but the larger agencies' losses are nonetheless significant. For example, BLS has not had the funding increases necessary to modernize its core surveys that measure critical indicators on jobs, unemployment, prices, and expenditures. Overall, only the NCSES program line (i.e., non-salary funds that largely go to survey contractors) gained in purchasing power, most recently for the National Secure Data Service (NSDS) demonstration pilot from the 2022 CHIPS and Science Act.

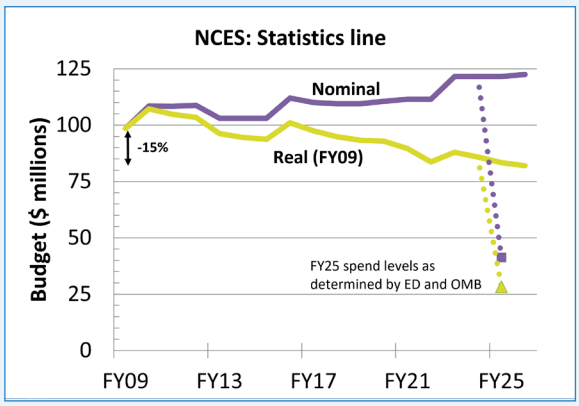
FIGURE 4. The Budgets of the Seven Smaller Statistical Agencies, FY09–FY26, Normalized to Their FY09 Levels Adjusted for Inflation Using the GDP Deflator. The NCSES program budget and the SOI budget are normalized to the oldest year for which data are available, FY10 and FY12, respectively.



In what we believe to be an unprecedented move, the NCES expended amount for FY25 does not come close to its FY25 appropriated amount, at least as of Spring 2026.[4] According to a FY27 PBR document, the Department of Education and OMB agreed to a $154 million spending level for NCES in FY25: $41 million for the statistics line and $113 million for the assessment line. The appropriated amounts are $122 million and $193 million, respectively (see Figure 5). If the agreement is reversed, NCES can expend FY25 funds through September 2026.

FIGURE 5. The NCES Statistics and Assessment Budget Lines for FY09 to FY26 in Both Nominal and Real (i.e., inflation adjusted dollars) as Appropriated by Congress. Also shown are the FY25 levels that ED and OMB agreed to expend in Spring 2026.





[4]According to private sources, recently updated OMB documents show further FY25 spending in May 2026 by the Institute of Education Sciences, NCES's umbrella organization. No further details were available at the time this report went to press.

FY27 Budget Request

The President's FY27 budget request for the statistical agencies was released in April 2026. The percentage change relative to the prior-year enacted amount follows the same pattern as the FY26 request, as shown in Table 3 for nine agencies. In the cases where the FY26 and FY27 percentage changes substantially differ (e.g., BEA and BJS), it is because Congress largely went along with the FY26 cuts proposed for these agencies, as reflected in Table 2, and the president's FY27 requests represented flat funding or a modest increase from the reduced budget level.

The median percentage changes in budget requests compared to enacted levels from one year to the next across the nine agencies are also shown (penultimate row). The median percentage changes depict a pattern whereby the first Trump administration proposed cuts to the agencies for FY18–FY20 before proposing increases for FY21. The second Trump administration has similarly proposed cuts for most agencies for both FY26 and FY27. Finally, note the row of GDP deflators for each year from FY18 to FY27 in Table 3. There are only three years for which the median percentage change in agency budget requests compared to prior-year enacted levels exceeded the GDP deflator—FY23, FY24, and FY25. In the other years shown, the agencies would have lost ground in purchasing power if the president's requests were enacted.

TABLE 3. President's Requested Budget for Nine Statistical Agencies or Agency Accounts as a Percentage Change Relative to Prior-Year Enacted Level, FY18–FY27*

Agencies	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
BEA	-6.6	-1.0	7.1	2.5	4.0	14.5	14.4	11.1	-5.6	3.6
BJS appropriations line	-16.5	-14.6	11.6	0.0	0.0	12.5	85.7	20.0	-5.7	0.0
BLS	-0.2	-0.4	0.0	2.8	4.7	12.5	8.7	2.1	-8.0	-5.7
Census Current Surveys	-8.9	-7.7	-2.2	1.9	7.4	12.1	13.8	11.8	-12.2	-9.4
EIA	-3.3	-8.0	-5.6	1.5	0.0	2.7	15.9	4.9	0.0	0.3
ERS	-11.6	-48.2	-30.3	-26.8	6.0	5.9	6.4	8.2	-11.7	-17.2
NASS surveys (non-Census) line	-5.5	-6.5	-8.7	-2.6	6.7	5.4	10.7	4.1	-1.4	0.0
NCES	0.9	1.3	0.4	11.8	5.4	-11.7	3.1	0.0	-57.6	-43.8
-Assessment line	0.3	0.0	-1.3	18.3	9.1	-18.9	2.2	0.0	-29.7	-29.8
-Statistics line	1.6	3.0	2.7	2.7	0.0	0.0	4.5	0.0	-100	-65.3
NCHS	-3.1	-3.1	-3.1	-3.1	-7.4	0.8	1.1	0.0	-6.6	-6.5
MEDIAN	-3.3	-3.1	-1.3	1.9	4.7	5.4	8.7	4.1	-8.0	-6.5
GDP Deflator	2.3	1.7	1.3	4.6	7.1	3.7	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.5

*SOURCE: See ASA online resources for FY01–FY27 data.

Leadership

In the Nation's Data at Risk December 2025 report, we reported that 7 of the 13 statistical agencies have acting heads. As of July 1, 2026,[5] there are still seven acting heads, plus one agency for which no agency head, acting or otherwise, is named: ORES.[6]

We also reported that 13 of the 36 leadership positions (including the commissioner) at BLS are vacant, according to its website. As of July 1, 12 were vacant. For the US Census Bureau, the director position, which has been vacant since early 2025 and for which the president has yet to nominate a director, is being filled by an individual "performing the duties of the director." In June, the creation of two deputy director positions was announced, and the positions filled: one for Data, Policy, and Science and one for Administration and Operations. One of the six associate director positions, the associate director for research and methodology (who also serves as chief scientist), is vacant and another is acting. According to a May 18, 2026, document posted to its website (and accessed July 1), 1 of 6 assistant director positions is vacant and, of 43 division/office heads, 1 is vacant and 18 are acting or "performing the duties of." At NASS, three of the five office director positions are vacant and two are acting, and five of the seven division directors are acting.

At BTS, the deputy director position is vacant, as is the director of the agency's Statistical Policy Team. Of its eight offices, three have acting directors. Prior to 2025, NCES had a deputy commissioner, three associate commissioners, a chief statistician, a chief psychometrician, and a director of annual reports and information staff. Except for chief psychometrician, those positions are either vacant or no longer exist. ORES does not have a leadership page, and we are not aware of any leadership positions in place beyond the statistical official. At NCHS, 4 of its 5 associate director positions are filled, 1 being acting; all 6 division directors are filled, with 1 being acting; and the 19 branch chief positions are filled, with 9 being acting. We believe NCSES's and SOI's leaderships are generally filled, but we did not find a senior leadership page for either agency. BJS has had an acting director since August 2023, and while we did not find a senior leadership page for the agency, we believe its other leadership positions are generally filled.

BEA's leadership positions are filled, as are those of EIA after a restructuring announced in June and of ERS (though one of four divisions has an acting director.)

[5] This number could soon change with NCHS advertising for its director position on July 16 and a Senate panel advancing on July 15 the nomination of the President's nominee for BLS Commissioner.

[6] While no head of ORES is named, the SSA Evidence Act website does name a Statistical Official.

2026 Developments to Date

Although the pace of change has slowed recently since the major disruptions of 2025, important developments continue across the federal statistical system. Below we highlight several of the most significant. A more comprehensive list is available on our monitoring page.

New Policy Developments

In early June, the Department of Commerce issued an order on disclosure avoidance restricting the techniques that the U.S. Census Bureau and BEA may use to protect respondent confidentiality. The order permits coarsening and suppression while prohibiting other techniques such as noise infusion. Data users have expressed concern about the future use of modern privacy-protection methods—including differential privacy, synthetic data, and data swapping—as well as the potential for far-reaching effects on small-area statistics, public-use microdata, and opportunities for public input into future disclosure limitation policies. The order also seems to directly undermine the authority of the statistical agencies set forth in the Evidence Act of 2018 and the Trust Regulation that stipulate: (i) "The Recognized Statistical Agency or Unit must determine whether the tools, practices, and procedures employed to ensure the effective security of the confidential statistical data it holds comply with this part and with statistical laws;" and (ii) that a parent agency must "Ensure the Recognized Statistical Agency or Unit has sufficient autonomy to maintain its own standards for the quality of the data used and the statistical information it produces and to determine whether its statistical products are of sufficient quality for dissemination." For more information, see for example this DataIndex.US post: A New Commerce Policy Could Mean Less Public Data, Not Better Public Data.

Also in June, the White House issued the executive order Implementing Schedule Policy/Career in the Excepted Service, extending at-will employment status to approximately 8,000 federal employees. The order applies directly to an unspecified number of statisticians in the Office of Management and Budget and to the chief of staff of the Economic Research Service. Although no other statistical agencies are specifically identified, agencies may be affected through the application of Schedule Policy/Career to personnel in parent-agency offices that provide essential support functions, such as human resources, contracting, legal counsel, and security. As discussed earlier, expanding Schedule Policy/Career and reclassifying certain Senior Executive Service positions have the potential to weaken protections that help ensure the professional autonomy of the federal statistical workforce under the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018.

We are also monitoring the implementation of Statistical Policy Directive (SPD) No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. In March, OMB further extended the timeline by a year to March 2027 for agencies to provide their action plan on race and ethnicity data. The OMB website acknowledges that "large societal, political, economic, and demographic shifts in the United States" have occurred since SPD15 was last issued in 1997—specifically citing as examples, "increasing racial and ethnic diversity; a growing number of people who identify as more than one race or ethnicity; and changing immigration and migration patterns." As a result of the timeline extension, the U.S. Census Bureau noted in documentation to OMB that it "will use the 1997 standards in the American Community Survey and the Puerto Rico Community Survey, and will use the delayed deadline to continue to develop implementation plans for the 2024 standards."

Agency Developments

Several developments during 2026 could affect future statistical programs.

News reports indicate that the 2030 Census field test is using the American Community Survey questionnaire for self-respondents, which includes a citizenship question. At the same time, the Census Bureau has scaled back the scope of the 2026 field test from five sites to two.

Survey participation continued to decline. BLS reported that the Current Population Survey reached a record-low response rate of 64% in November 2025, below the previous series low of 65% recorded during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also BLS announced that the State Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey will transition from a monthly to an annual publication schedule.

Agricultural statistics have drawn particular attention this year. As Reuters reported on February 10, the NASS's final estimate of harvested corn acreage for the 2025 growing season differed substantially from earlier estimates, prompting widespread media coverage and a USDA review. Commentators have suggested several possible contributing factors, including declining producer participation in surveys, staffing reductions within USDA's statistical agencies, changes in planting decisions, and weather conditions.

The response rate for NASS's March 2026 Prospective Plantings survey fell to a historic low of 38%, down from 44% the previous year. According to a media interview with the Chair of the Agricultural Statistics Board, the decline reflects a growing trust gap between producers and the agency. In response, according to NASS Administrator Joseph Parsons, as reported by Reuters and AgWeb—pending OMB approval—NASS intends to substantially increase sample sizes for major acreage surveys, beginning with an approximately 35% expansion for the June acreage report and smaller increases for subsequent reports. USDA also plans to include plain-language discussions of statistical uncertainty and to institute annual reviews comparing early forecasts with final crop estimates. Further plans were reported July 15, specifically that "the department will release a [NASS] modernization plan later this summer focused on improving transparency, streamlining reporting systems and restoring confidence in USDA data."

The American Statistical Association (ASA) has launched a new ASA resource tracking the status of 74 NCES studies/data collections, projects, and data tools. As of this writing, 13 are active, 9 remain active with reduced scope, 25 are inactive, 22 are complete (meaning that, as of early 2025, there were no plans to continue them), 3 are inactive at NCES but still being conducted by another agency, and 2 have an unknown status. This tracking shows that NCES has continued some core and highly visible studies and projects, such as the Common Core of Data, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and the production of geographic data associated with schools and school districts. It also continues to maintain some well-used data tools, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress Data Explorer and DataLab, which allows the public to produce statistics from many NCES datasets without accessing the underlying data. Among the inactive studies and projects are those that: provide information about school crime and safety, the nation's teachers and principals, homeschooling and virtual education, and adults' skills and competencies. Other inactive projects are ones that follow cohorts of students over time to track their development, educational experiences, and outcomes, and that provide funding and technical assistance to states to build, enhance, and use their longitudinal data systems.

This ASA resource is also tracking the status of NCES's foremost annual reports, including the congressionally mandated Condition of Education and the Digest of Education Statistics. After the Report on the Condition of Education 2025 was released in substantially reduced form relative to prior years a few days past the mandated deadline of June 1, 2025, the 2026 report was released on time in late May 2026. At about the same time, NCES released an updated version of the 2025 report with more data than the original release in 2025. However, both the 2026 and updated 2025 reports include a smaller number of indicators compared to prior years, particularly for indicators related to K-12 education. Data tables with updated statistics supporting the 2025 and 2026 Condition of Education indicators were published in the Digest of Education Statistics. Aside from a handful of Digest tables that were released with the reduced version of the 2025 Condition, this was the first update to the Digest tables since 2024. Nevertheless, as with the Condition, the number of updated Digest tables is substantially lower than in past Digests of Education Statistics.

Budget and staffing constraints continue to affect agency products, though a couple of agencies have also announced new initiatives and tools. In February 2026, BEA discontinued the regular production of four satellite accounts—Marine Economy, Travel and Tourism, Arts and Culture, and Small Business—and eliminated a number of statistical tables, continuing reductions that began in 2024. Earlier, BEA had announced delays to the Health Care Satellite Account and the discontinuation of the Digital Economy Satellite Account because of budget constraints. More recently, however, it has introduced several new and expanded statistical products and tools. In May and June, the Trade in Value Added Table Builder and Income Distribution Analysis Tool were launched. The expanded products include an income-stratified Personal Consumption Expenditures price index, statistics on the role of global value chains in the U.S. economy, estimates of the value of household production, and experimental nowcast data on the distribution of personal income.

EIA, under a new presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed administrator since September 2025, announced the cancellation of several reports while undertaking many new initiatives. Specifically, EIA has launched a new Weekly Natural Gas Storage Report Supplemental with enhanced data visualizations; announced the acceleration of the quadrennial Manufacturing Energy Consumption Survey to an annual basis; promoted into full production the State Energy Portal, which had been in beta status; and successfully completed an emergency survey (EIA-860S) of 56 U.S. states and territories in the aftermath of Winter Storm Fern. EIA also rescinded its proposal to terminate the Solar Photovoltaic Module Shipments Report and instead is rescoping its focus onto energy minerals used in the production of such modules. EIA is on track to complete 25 pilot studies by the end of the fiscal year, including a series of data center surveys covering 10 different states in the Rocky Mountain, Midwest, and coastal regions. In May 2026, EIA launched new quarterly global energy security tables, including estimates for shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and strategic storage inventories in China, as part of the Short-Term Energy Outlook.

Select Agency Snapshots

To close out this update, we spotlight two agencies for which we did not develop specific profiles for our December 2025 report for lack of updates: ORES and SOI. ORES appears to be going through a transformation both as a statistical agency and within its parent agency. Its status remains uncertain and, for that reason, is deserving of our attention. We also cover SOI because a major report on it was released in April 2026.

Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, Social Security Administration (SSA)

The staffing reduction of 70% at ORES is notable and likely a sign of greater change underway. As we reported in our December 2025 report, funding for the ORES Retirement and Disability Research Consortium was eliminated in March 2025 and its staff already reduced by 50% at that point. In addition, ORES was moved organizationally to be under the oversight of the political Chief Information Officer and was proposed in the FY26 PBR to be replaced by or transitioned to an Office of Analytics and Improvements as part of a larger reorganization.

While there is no mention of a statistical office nor of an Office of Analytics and Improvements in the FY27 PBR, we know from former staff that the reorganization that includes ORES is still being determined.

There is also reason to believe ORES may no longer be considered a statistical agency. While ORES is named on the official OMB website for federal statistics policy, www.statspolicy.gov, it is not marked as a recognized statistical agency or unit head. It was even temporarily removed last fall from that website altogether. That website does name a Statistical Official for SSA.

On the SSA Research, Statistics & Policy Analysis website (https://www.ssa.gov/policy/about.html), there is no mention of an "Office of Research, Statistics & Policy Analysis," but there is this reference: "Our Reporting Branch is the agency's source for statistics on the OASDI and SSI programs and the earnings of the working and beneficiary populations." There is also this reference to being a statistical agency: "As a federal statistical agency, it is our policy to correct factual errors that impair data interpretation in our research or statistical material."

The agency does maintain a release schedule, and many publications seem up to date, as reflected in Box 3 detailing its list of products with current editions.

Box 3. SSA STATISTICS PRODUCTS WITH CURRENT EDITIONS:

- Annual Statistical Report on the Social Security Disability Insurance Program
- Annual Statistical Supplement
- Congressional Statistics
- DI & SSI Program Participants: Characteristics & Employment
- Earnings & Employment Data..., by State & County
- Expenditures of the Aged Chartbook
- Fast Facts & Figures about Social Security
- Income of the Aged Chartbook
- Income of the Population 55 or Older
- National Beneficiary Survey: Disability Statistics
- OASDI Beneficiaries by State & County
- OASDI Beneficiaries by State & ZIP Code
- SSI Annual Statistical Report
- SSI Monthly Statistics
- SSI Recipients by State & County
- Statistics at a Glance

Statistics of Income, Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

The April 2026 comprehensive report from USAFacts on SOI and its products brought helpful attention to this oft-overlooked agency: Improving the Timeliness, Accessibility, and Usefulness of Tax Data. The report stresses the importance of SOI products, explains challenges the agency faces, and makes recommendations "for SOI to produce timelier tax statistics, publish more data, make its data products easier to access and use, prepare tax data for AI, and continue to preserve the privacy of individual tax returns." The executive summary asserts that "SOI's data products lag multiple years, are not easy to find or use, and are developed using outdated technology."

In alignment with the USAFacts mission to "make government data easier to access and understand," the report explains the challenges of doing so with SOI data. The report covers the resource and operational constraints also covered in this project's 2024 report, namely SOI's loss of purchasing power and SOI being several administrative layers below the head of the parent agency, which is the Secretary of Treasury.

The report's 13 recommendations are in three categories: (1) Limiting delays and publishing more data while preserving privacy and quality; (2) Making SOI data easier to access and more useful; and (3) Addressing SOI's resource and institutional constraints. For the latter category, the USAFacts recommendations go further than those of our 2024 report by recommending that the SOI budget be determined by Congress and not by the current practice, which is for the SOI budget to be determined by the IRS. The report also recommends that the SOI director be part of the IRS leadership team.

Ramifications for Federal Statistics

The long-term implications of developments over the past 18 months remain the central question. An early indication of how these developments are affecting the broader data community comes from an SSRS-conducted survey in early 2026 of more than 500 federal data users across government, academia, nonprofits, and the private sector. The survey paints a consistent picture of growing concern.

Among its principal findings:

- Of respondents, 93% reported that changes in federal statistical programs have affected their work, with 54% describing the impacts as major.
- Respondents reported delays in data releases, canceled programs, reduced technical assistance, and concerns about data quality that have disrupted research, policy analysis, and business activities.
- Although many users have attempted to substitute older federal data, state and local statistics, private-sector sources, or statistical modeling, respondents overwhelmingly described these alternatives as inadequate.
- Respondents consistently identified workforce reductions and the loss of institutional expertise as major contributors to current disruptions.
- Nearly 80% expressed serious concern that additional federal statistical data collections could be discontinued.
- More than 70% expressed concern about maintaining public trust in federal statistics and continued access to federal statistical products.

To summarize this update, the statistical agencies have demonstrated remarkable resilience to date. Despite substantial staffing reductions, leadership vacancies, budget pressures, and organizational changes, they have largely maintained their regular release schedules. At the same time, this report documents downside impacts in several agencies, including reductions in survey programs, changes in publication schedules, discontinued products, and slower modernization efforts that put the agencies in a weakened, vulnerable position.

The changes underway also present an opportunity for the statistical agencies to undertake organizational change to be more efficient and better serve data users, but such change will likely be constrained by loss of staff and their expertise and experience, constricted budgets, and lack of parent agency support. It will take years for some of the agencies to adapt to the changes impacting them while meeting the rigorous demands of producing trusted, quality statistics. We note in particular the challenges the U.S. Census Bureau faces as it prepares for the 2030 decennial census, which, as is often noted, is the largest peacetime mobilization and civil effort in the United States, requiring years of extensive research, planning, and preparation.

The federal statistical community must stay vigilant, supportive, and active to help ensure the statistical agencies come through this period in a strong, healthy position and able to perform their vital function in our governance, democracy, economy, and society. We will continue to monitor these developments and ask that data users and others in the federal statistics ecosystem help by participating in our Citizen Science project to help track changes across the hundreds of federal statistical products. (See Box 4, below.) Our current priority is to increase the number of volunteers and the breadth of statistical agency products covered.

Box 4. JOIN THE EFFORT TO MONITOR STATISTICAL AGENCY PRODUCTS – CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT

Our Citizen Science project aims to help track changes in federal statistical data releases (e.g., granularity, frequency, timeliness, and other characteristics), which could be improvements or deteriorations.

It is the data user community who are the most knowledgeable and invested and therefore best positioned to help us track such changes, given the number, breadth, and detail of the federal statistical agency products.

Sign up here to join the effort. We send an email query every four to five months asking if any changes have been observed in the statistical agency products the volunteer follows most closely. If so, we ask for the details and the documentation. We will review all form inputs and report on our website changes that we are able to corroborate, whether they be positive, negative, or neutral. By participating, volunteers will help us build a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the evolving federal statistical data landscape.

We sent out queries to our volunteers in January 2026 and June 2026. The status of the NCES Condition of Education and Digest of Education Statistics report noted in this update are the main items reported back.

Box 5. STAY ENGAGED AND INFORMED ON FEDERAL STATISTICS

Because vigilance and support are critical to ensuring the health of federal statistics, we urge readers to stay informed and engaged. Please sign up for our monthly newsletter, connect with project team members on LinkedIn, bookmark our project webpage and monitoring webpage, and note our additional resources page that includes the following:

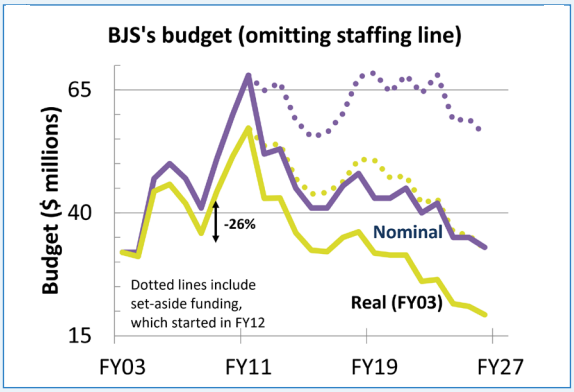
- Statistical agency budgets and budget requests back to FY00,
- Agency staffing,
- Budget-to-staff ratio table,
- Monitoring the public's perspectives on federal statistics with data collected monthly from NORC at the University of Chicago's AmeriSpeak panel: time series estimates from June 2025 to most recent, and
- Leadership of the federal statistical agencies.

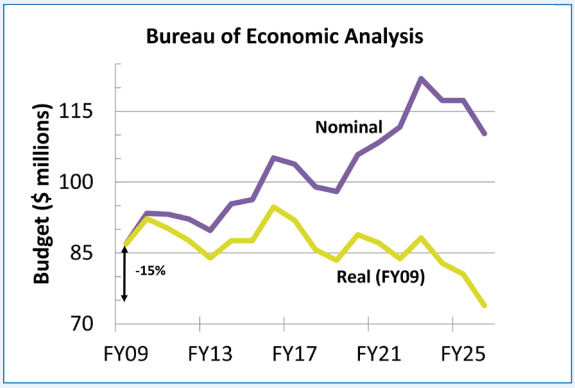
We also urge you to tap other excellent resources on federal statistics and data, including the DataIndex.us, EssentialData.us, Data Rescue Project, Federal Data Forum, and USAFacts, as well as organizations like the Association for Public Data Users, Caucus of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics, The Census Project, Consortium of Social Science Associations, Friends of BLS, and Friends of NCHS.

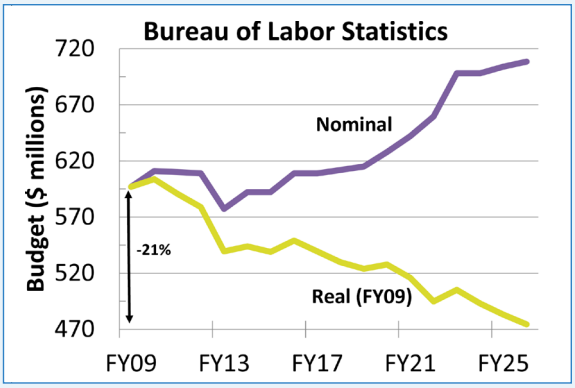
Finally, we welcome your support of the project through donations and membership in the American Statistical Association.

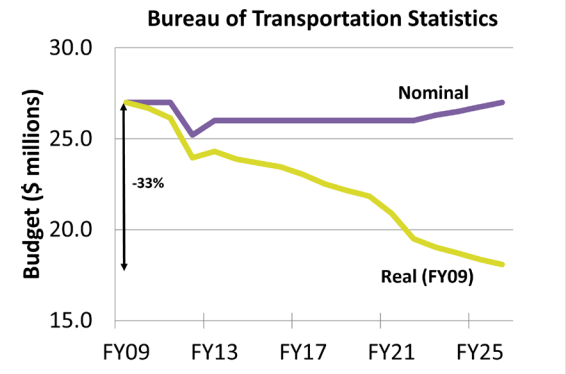
Appendix: Budget Figures for Individual Agencies

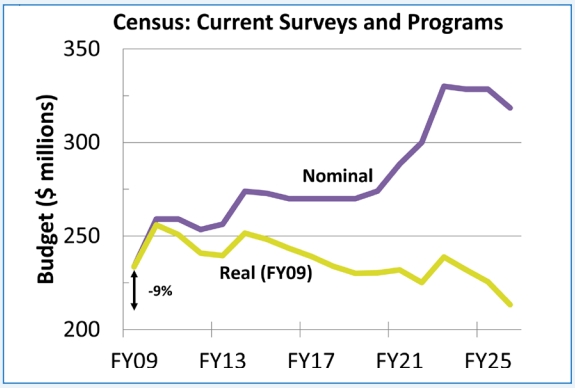
The following graphs show the budgets for all the federal statistical agencies except NCES, NCSES, and SOI in both nominal and real (i.e., inflation-adjusted) levels. See Figure 5 for NCES. The BJS graph was started at FY03 to show that the agency had received large budget increases for FY09 and FY10. The GDP deflator was used to account for inflation. The y-axis is started near the minimum value of the real budget line to show more detail. A double-headed arrow on the right-hand side shows the percentage loss of purchasing power from FY09.

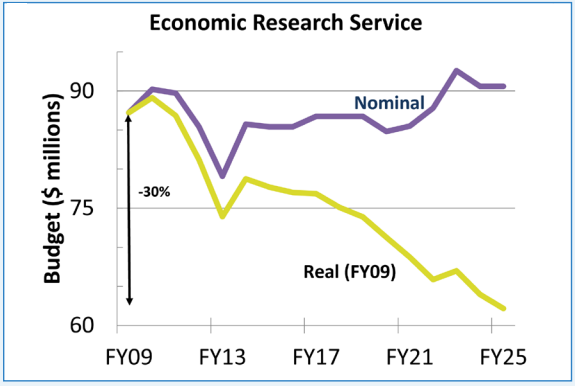


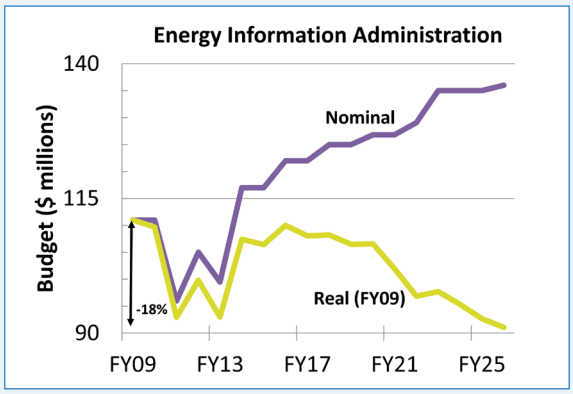


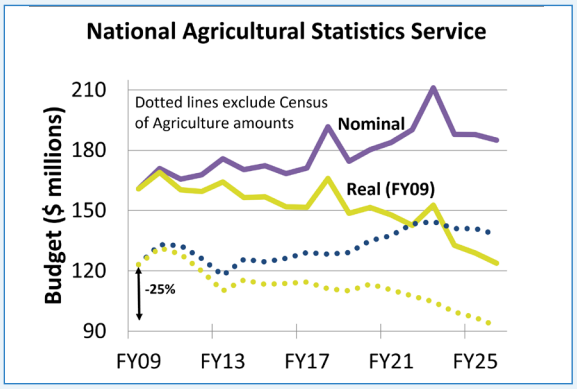


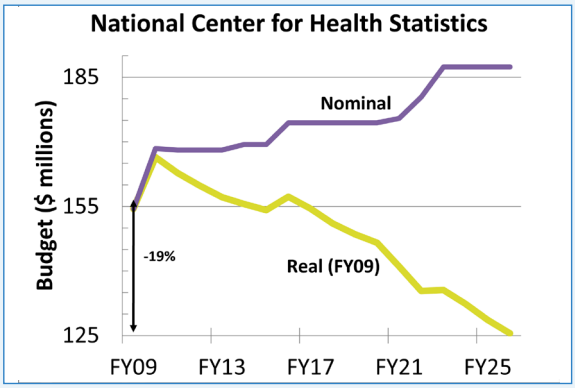


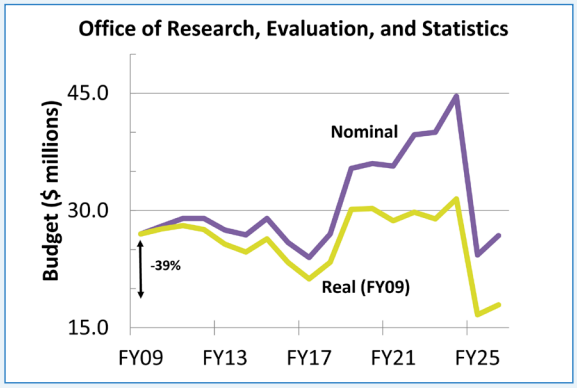





Energy Information Administration
Budget ($ millions)
140
115
90
Nominal
Real (FY09)
-18%
FY09
FY13
FY17
FY21
FY25


National Agricultural Statistics Service
Budget ($ millions)
210
180
150
120
90
Dotted lines exclude Census of Agriculture amounts
Nominal
Real (FY09)
-25%
FY09
FY13
FY17
FY21
FY25


National Center for Health Statistics
Budget ($ millions)
185
155
125
Nominal
Real (FY09)
-19%
FY09
FY13
FY17
FY21
FY25


Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics
Budget ($ millions)
45.0
30.0
15.0
Nominal
Real (FY09)
-39%
FY09
FY13
FY17
FY21
FY25