

Assessing the Health of the
Federal Statistical Agencies

The Nation's Data at a Crossroads

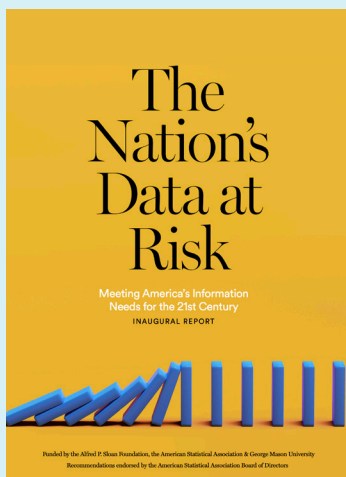
Year Two Status Report

Federal statistics are at a crossroads. Investing in a modern federal statistical data infrastructure to meet the nation's current and future information needs is essential for our democracy to flourish. However, using a set of objective criteria developed during the first year of this American Statistical Association (ASA) monitoring project, the July 2024 Year One report found the future of the federal statistical system increasingly uncertain. Despite notable accomplishments, agencies were facing serious challenges, not only to maintaining the relevance, accuracy, timeliness, and granularity of their data but also to their ability to evolve with changing needs. Since then, we have witnessed reductions in the amount and availability of federal statistical data, as well as delayed and less detailed statistical reports and a likely instance of improper political influence. In addition, we are concerned that other factors detailed in this status report could undermine the objectivity or perception of objectivity of federal statistics. At the same time, the necessity to cut back programs presents an opportunity for agencies to evaluate their portfolios and priorities and to speed up the adoption of innovative approaches. Such assessments need to include consultation with data users, technology providers, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Congress to identify essential data to maintain and new areas for investment.

Despite our grave concerns about what we have witnessed through July 2025—including data that are no longer collected and products that are no longer being published—at present we are confident that data users can trust the federal statistics that are still being released. We have not seen any meddling by the Executive Branch in the underlying data or published estimates. Moreover, the federal statistical agencies are focused on continuing to meet their missions. Yet continued staffing and budget reductions for the statistical agencies could affect quality in the future. We are at an inflection point: To meet current and future challenges requires thoughtful, well-planned investment in research and infrastructure, informed by input from the public and users. In contrast, what we have observed is uncoordinated and unplanned reductions with no visible plan for the future.

Assessing the Health of the Principal Federal Statistical Agencies

(ASA FedStat Health Project) is an initiative of the American Statistical Association begun in 2023 (jointly pursued with George Mason University through April 2025). The project's goal is to proactively monitor the nation's statistical infrastructure, in the spirit of how civil engineers regularly assess America's transportation infrastructure (roads, bridges, airports, railroads). In reports and other activities, pending the availability of funding, the project will continue to identify capabilities, threats, and opportunities and recommend needed action. The project issued an inaugural report in July 2024, [The Nation's Data at Risk: Meeting America's Information Needs for the 21st Century](#), and will issue a final Year Two report during fall of 2025. The project team has been actively monitoring changes to federal statistical agencies, programs, and data products at [The Nation's Data at Risk: Ongoing Monitoring](#).



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Executive Summary

Federal statistics are at a crossroads. These statistics are essential U.S. infrastructure, providing vital information on employment, crime, health, income, population, agriculture, education, and more, informing key decisions across government, business, and daily life, and supporting our democracy. High-quality, objective, and trustworthy federal statistics are critical to free and fair elections, economic growth and stability, fair and impartial courts, an informed civil discourse, and other vital functions that the private sector cannot replicate. At their best, U.S. federal statistics set a global standard for accuracy and transparency. For the federal statistical agencies, their ability to continue to meet their respective missions remains their top priority.

July 2024 to July 2025: Federal Statistics at Heightened Risk

[The Nation's Data at Risk: Meeting America's Information Needs for the 21st Century](#), a report issued by the American Statistical Association (ASA) and George Mason University in July 2024, revealed serious risks to federal statistics. That report established a set of criteria for a healthy functioning statistical agency: namely, the extent to which an agency had the resources and support to produce relevant, timely, credible, accurate, and objective statistics and the agency's agility, accountability, and trustworthiness.

In the inaugural report, we found many concerns regarding these aspects of a statistical agency. We also established areas that needed further in-depth evaluation during Year Two, such as the perspectives of data users. Although the federal statistical system (FSS)¹ has many strengths, it has faced growing challenges. Declining budgets, staffing constraints, and inadequate statistical integrity protections identified in the 2024 report have intensified in recent months and have further set back efforts to

¹ Along with approximately 100 statistical offices and units and the chief statistician's office in OMB, the 13 principal federal statistical agencies making up the federal statistical system (FSS) are the Bureau of Economic Analysis (Commerce), Bureau of Justice Statistics (Justice/OJP), Bureau of Labor Statistics (Labor), Bureau of Transportation Statistics (Transportation), Census Bureau (Commerce), Economic Research Service (USDA), Energy Information Administration (Energy), National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA), National Center for Education Statistics (Education/IES), National Center for Health Statistics (HHS/CDC), National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NSF/SBE), Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (SSA), and Statistics of Income (Treasury/IRS).

modernize the nation's statistical infrastructure. (See Box 1 in the below status report about our monitoring efforts.) Modernization is essential, given declining public willingness to respond to surveys and the need to use multiple data sources to maintain quality. The U.S. decentralized approach makes it harder for agencies to establish collaborative partnerships, innovate, and protect their work from budget pressure—cuts to one agency can affect the entire system. As just one example, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) relies on multiple sources of data from federal statistical and programmatic agencies and the private sector to produce estimates of Gross Domestic Product, Personal Income, and other components of the National Income and Product Accounts.² (See Box 2 in the below status report for another example.)

Since January 2025, Executive Branch initiatives have resulted in cut or frozen contracts for statistical services and significant decreases in statistical staff through layoffs and aggressively incentivizing employees to leave federal service. Loss of staff means the loss of priceless institutional knowledge and hinders statistical agencies' ability to fulfill their legal obligations. Some agencies—such as the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), reduced to only three staff in March—have been hit especially hard, while other agencies have suffered varying degrees of damage from broader budget cuts and hiring freezes. As a result, agencies have cut data products and programs and are weakened in their ability to collect and maintain reliable data going forward. A possible instance of likely improper political influence according to [Politico](#) occurred when the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) held up the release of a report from the Economic Research Service (ERS) based on concerns it forecasted an increase in the agricultural trade deficit. Additionally, it is not clear what the future implications are of replacing the career civil service Chief Statistician of the United States on July 11 with a political appointee. Many have advocated for higher visibility of the chief statistician position within the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), but this change was done without any consultation with the user community, which has raised questions.

² See Methodologies, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA): <https://www.bea.gov/resources/methodologies>.

Unless FSS agencies are allowed to reverse staff losses and execute contracts, more data cuts are likely because of the specialized labor and expertise needed for federal statistics production. Many other threats abound in the current environment of rapid changes across the Executive Branch. The proposed adoption of a new Schedule Policy/Career for formerly all-career civil service positions and non-standard political appointments at federal agencies, if applied to statistical agencies, could undermine the objectivity of federal statistics and public trust in them. Departmental reorganizations that fail to take into account the needs of a federal statistical agency could also be detrimental.

What's Being Done

The ASA is working collaboratively with other organizations that are documenting the ongoing challenges for federal statistical and other data-generating agencies, gathering feedback from data users, and working to preserve important datasets. Groups representing federal statistics users are engaging with Congress and the administration to protect the integrity of the FSS and, in some cases, considering longer-term improvements, like consolidating key agencies within the Department of Commerce. A partial list of current efforts underway is in Box 3 in the below status report. The ASA FedStat Health Project is the only research team that is conducting ongoing monitoring of the health of the federal statistical agencies based on a set of criteria established in 2024.

Immediate Action Needed

The ASA FedStat Health Project will continue to conduct nonpartisan, objective assessments of the health of the FSS against specified criteria through 2025. This effort and the efforts of other stakeholders to document and raise awareness about the risks to federal statistics are more critical than ever, given the rapid changes taking place. Data users and stakeholders need to know how these changes may affect the quality and accessibility of federal statistics and the credibility of statistical agencies and their ability to meet their responsibilities. Support from private funders is vital for sustaining assessment, monitoring, and awareness-building efforts.

Long-Term Planning Needed

A fundamental rethinking of the U.S. federal statistical system seems overdue, given the strains on the existing structure. Continuing cuts to budgets and staffing will hinder statistical agencies' ability to function effectively and to modernize to respond to the nation's evolving information needs. Any reforms, such as consolidation of one or more agencies, must ensure that federal statistics remain accurate, timely, and credible and will require the input of the statistical community both inside and outside of the federal government. Nongovernmental organizations, both for-profit and nonprofit, should play an important role in supporting efforts to rethink, rebuild, and strengthen the system. In addition, this report and future reports will be shared with key policymakers in the Administration and Congress, to continue to shine a spotlight on evolving issues.

The current decentralized system has strengths but is strained by staffing cuts, an inability to move rapidly to state-of-the-art methods, and a lack of coordination. The ASA FedStat Health Project study team will continue to coordinate with other groups looking at various aspects of federal statistics, including ASA's Modernization Group exploring a range of structural options—from better coordination within the current system to full consolidation. ASA does not endorse one model but recognizes that meaningful reform will require strong leadership and a clear, shared vision.

Key goals for any reform include:

- Statutory statistical integrity protections and confidentiality safeguards
- Improved data usability and coordination across agencies
- Multiyear investment in R&D and modernization
- Effective relationships with state, local, and private data providers
- Broad access to careers for experts from diverse backgrounds

Status Report

This, the ASA FedStat Health Project's Year Two Status Report, provides an update through July 2025 on the health of the federal statistical system (FSS) after a turbulent period marked by staff reductions, terminated or stalled contracts, leadership loss, and growing threats to agency integrity. The full Year Two report is due later in 2025. If funding permits, ASA plans to continue monitoring the FSS beyond 2025.

This status report includes four sections:

- **Section 1** supports the value of federal statistics in terms of investment returns, public-private roles, and user/public perceptions.
- **Section 2** discusses the FSS status as of July 2024 as reviewed in the Year One report, highlighting both strengths and risks.
- **Section 3** details the FSS's worsening condition by July 2025, based on ongoing monitoring.
- **Section 4** looks ahead, outlining ASA's plans for the final Year Two report, relevant work by other organizations, and what is needed to support assessment and awareness-building efforts.

Box 1 highlights the ASA's monitoring framework during Year Two. The framework includes six critical risk areas that could impair the quality and availability of federal statistics or the integrity of federal statistical agency operations.³

BOX 1: ASA's Monitoring Framework: Six Critical Risk Areas for Federal Statistics

- 1. Cuts to Statistical Programs**
Programs may become outdated, but sudden cancellations—without consultation or review—undermine transparency, waste taxpayer investment, and disrupt interconnected federal data systems.
- 2. Delays or Reductions in Data Products**
Statistical agencies must follow strict release schedules to maintain objectivity and public trust. Cancellations or scaling back of data products—especially without stakeholder input—risk weakening federal accountability.
- 3. Budget and Staffing Reductions**
Decreased resources hamper modernization and threaten long-standing data series that require overlap during transitions to improved methods.
- 4. Undermining Leadership and Staff**
Delays in appointments or unfilled leadership roles weaken agencies' operational capacity and morale.
- 5. Misuse of Data for Nonstatistical Purposes**
Using statistical data for enforcement or surveillance purposes violates public trust and could deter participation in federal surveys.
- 6. Other Emerging Threats**
ASA also monitors emerging legal, technical, and administrative threats that may further undermine the FSS.

³ For more detail on any of the six areas, see Section 3 below and this article: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/five-situations-watch-ensure-trusted-quality-federal-steve-pierson-xoabe/>.

Section 1. Why Federal Statistics Matter

Federal statistics underpin countless decisions but often go unnoticed. Their value can be viewed in three ways: return on investment, public vs. private sector roles, and user/public trust.

Return on Investment

Collectively, federal statistics cost about \$7 billion in a non-census year—just 0.1% of total federal spending and less than 0.03% of GDP. Roughly half of this amount is for the 13 principal federal statistical agencies.⁴ Despite their relatively low cost in the overall nation's budget, federal statistics guide massive amounts of funding and economic activity:

- Social Security benefits, over \$1 trillion annually, depend on Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) inflation data.⁵
- Economic indicators from agencies like BEA and the Census Bureau shape more than \$50 trillion in stock market value.⁶
- The Federal Medical Assistance Percentage funding for Medicaid—over \$600 billion—uses BEA and Census data on state per capita income.⁷
- More than 300 federal programs depend on Census data to allocate hundreds of billions to states and localities.⁸
- States and regional and local governments use federal data for transportation planning, economic development, projecting future needs for schools and services, and many other functions.
- From 2012–2022, service industries that relied heavily on federal statistics (e.g., internet publishing, market research, management consulting) outpaced other service industries in revenue growth.⁹

⁴ Office of Management and Budget. Statistical Programs of the United States Government: Fiscal Year 2023, Appendix Table 1. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/FY23-Blue-Book-Statistical-Programs.pdf>.

⁵ Social Security Administration. Social Security benefit payments, retirement & survivors insurance. <https://www.ssa.gov/OACT/STATS/table4a5.html>.

⁶ Sibilis Research. U.S. Stock Market Total Market Value 2025. <https://sibilisresearch.com/data/us-stock-market-value/#:~:text=As%20of%20April%204th%2C%202025%20%28end-of-day%29%2C%20the%20total,been%20wiped%20out%20from%20the%20U.S.%20stock%20market.>

⁷ Commonwealth Fund. How Is Medicaid Funded? <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/explainer/2025/mar/how-do-we-pay-for-medicaid#:~:text=The%20federal%20share%20of%20Medicaid%20funding%20%E2%80%94%20typically,of%20state%20spending%20matched%20by%20the%20federal%20government.>

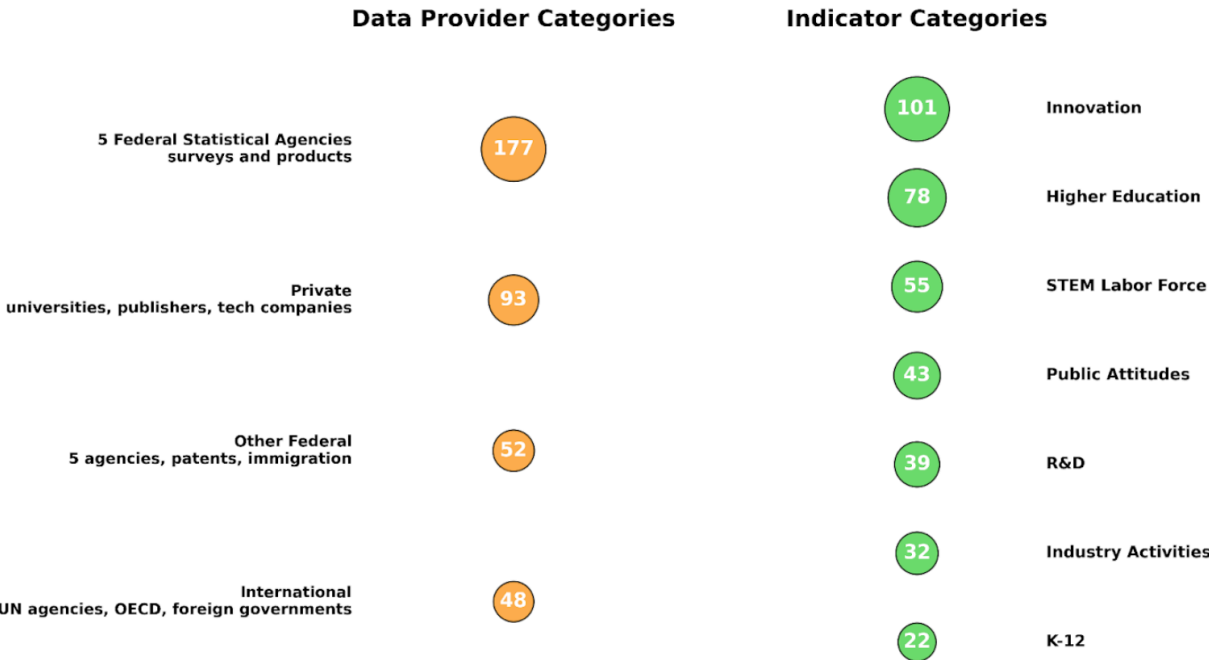
⁸ United States Census Bureau. Census Bureau Data Guide More Than \$2.8 Trillion in Federal Funding in Fiscal Year 2021. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/decennial-census-federal-funds-distribution.html>.

⁹ U.S. Department of Commerce. Revenue of Industries Heavily Reliant on U.S. Government Data. <https://www.commerce.gov/news/blog/2024/12/revenue-industries-heavily-reliant-us-government-data>.

Federal statistics add value not only in their direct uses (e.g., publication by BLS of monthly unemployment rates from the Current Population Survey) but also indirectly through their broad and deep interdependencies throughout the FSS. A sample visualization of the U.S. science & technology (S&T) indicators system in Box 2 exemplifies the deep dependency on federal statistics for measuring the competitiveness of the U.S. scientific enterprise.

BOX 2: U.S. S&T Indicators, Frequency of Data Sources by Provider Category and Indicator Category

U.S. S&T Indicators: Data Source Usage Frequency by Provider Category and Indicator
(Bubble size proportional to total frequency of data source usage)



NOTE: Numbers reflect frequencies, not unique counts of data sources. Counts and categories in the above figure are subject to errors, mistakes, and revisions. Some sources may be missing, mislabeled, or misattributed to a data provider.

SOURCE: National Science Foundation (NSF); precategorized and generated by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES): <https://nces.nsf.gov/indicators>.

Public vs. Private Sector Roles

While private firms engage in data collection and analysis, only the federal government can deliver comprehensive, reliable statistics as a public good. Unlike commercial efforts, which often shift or disappear, federal data series offer consistent coverage across time, geography, and population groups—crucial for informed decision-making. Increasingly, federal statistical agencies are making good use of private sector sources to augment surveys and administrative records to meet data user needs (see Box 2 for an example).

Public and Data User Trust

Data collected from NORC at the University of Chicago’s AmeriSpeak panel in June 2025 found a variety of public needs for federal statistics:¹⁰ 24% of adult respondents reported having ever used federal statistics, whether consulting specific tables or reports or conducting more detailed research. Of these data users, 47% reported using federal statistics at least quarterly. The survey found that data users come from a variety of employment sectors, industries, and types of occupations.

Additionally, data from the Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, AmeriSpeak, and the SSRS Omnibus Opinion Panel show that the public values federal statistics despite low trust in government overall. The October 2024, December 2024, and February 2025 Household Pulse Surveys showed the following:¹¹

- 82% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that policymakers need federal statistics to make good decisions.
- 68–69% trusted federal statistics such as the unemployment rate.
- 68–70% and 59–60% expressed either a great deal of or quite a lot of confidence in the Census Bureau and statistical agencies, respectively—far higher than the 17–19% who said the same of Congress.

¹⁰ NORC at the University of Chicago. Supporting Materials: B—Federal Data Use and Perspectives on Federal Statistics, Tables 6–10. <https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/pol-2025statusreportsupportingmaterial-b.pdf>.

¹¹ Supporting Materials: B—Federal Data Use and Perspectives on Federal Statistics, Table 1 (NORC analysis of Census Bureau data). <https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/pol-2025statusreportsupportingmaterial-b.pdf>.

Additional data from the June AmeriSpeak panel data collection found that 57% of all adults tended to trust federal statistics, including 75% of adults who reported ever using federal statistics.¹² A survey from SSRS conducted in June 2025 had a similar result for all adults—53% tended to trust federal statistics.¹³ The June 2025 AmeriSpeak study also found that 58% of adults agreed or strongly agreed that policymakers need federal statistics to make good decisions, while 51% agreed or strongly agreed that businesses need federal statistics to make good decisions.¹⁴ Regarding bringing together data from different agencies for evidence-building, 60% of adults agreed or strongly agreed that the government should combine data from different agencies as long as individuals' information is kept strictly confidential.

Responses to a February 2025 ASA call for feedback from a nonrepresentative group of professional data users echoed these surveys' findings regarding trust in federal data. The feedback group tended to find federal statistics timely, relevant, and essential to their work and to say their efforts would suffer if data were less detailed or less current.

¹² NORC at the University of Chicago. Supporting Materials: B—Federal Data Use and Perspectives on Federal Statistics, Table 11. <https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/pol-2025statusreportsupportingmaterial-b.pdf>.

¹³ SSRS. *The Public's Views on the Value of Federal Statistics*. <https://ssrs.com/insights/the-publics-views-on-the-value-of-federal-statistics/>

¹⁴ NORC at the University of Chicago. Supporting Materials: B—Federal Data Use and Perspectives on Federal Statistics, Table 12. <https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/pol-2025statusreportsupportingmaterial-b.pdf>.

¹⁵ Supporting Materials: A—Federal Statistics User Feedback. <https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/pol-2025statusreportsupportingmaterial-a-combined.pdf>.

Section 2. Risks to Federal Statistics, As Reported in 2024

Using a set of objective criteria¹⁶ developed during the first year of the ASA FedStat Health Project, the July 2024 Year One report found the future of the federal statistical system increasingly uncertain. Despite notable accomplishments, agencies were facing serious challenges to maintaining the quality, timeliness, and credibility of their data—and to their ability to evolve with changing needs.

External Challenges

The Year One report found the most urgent threat was the decline of the traditional probability survey model, which the FSS pioneered and which has underpinned federal statistics for nearly 90 years. Response rates from both individuals and organizations, including businesses, have dropped sharply in recent years, making data collection more costly and less effective—despite increased efforts and resources.

Meanwhile, the rise of private data sources—often of inconsistent quality—increasingly blurred the line between rigorous federal statistics and unverified alternatives. This confusion could falsely suggest that official data were no longer necessary.

Widespread access to digital tools and social media, along with advances in data-linking, increased the risk of reidentifying individuals from public datasets. To manage this development, agencies restricted access to some data or added confidentiality protection methods to public data that sometimes compromised usability. Current law (e.g., Title III of the 2018 Foundations of Evidence-Based Policymaking Act) penalizes only statistical agencies and their agents for breaches—and does not address potential malicious actors who might find ways to breach confidentiality.

¹⁶ The criteria addressed the extent to which an agency had the resources and support to produce relevant, timely, credible, accurate, and objective statistics and the agency's agility, accountability, and trustworthiness.

Internal Pressures Within Government

The Year One report found that federal statistical agencies also face internal pressures that threatened their effectiveness. These included funding constraints, inappropriate political interference, outdated policies, and barriers to innovation and hiring.

Historically, rules governing hiring and procurement activities often slowed agencies down or prevented them from competing with the private sector for talent. These constraints made it difficult to build a modern, agile workforce or adopt innovative methods for data collection and analysis.

Statistical agencies remained vulnerable to inappropriate political influence, especially when they lacked clear legal protections or sat low within agency hierarchies.¹⁷ In some cases, key leadership roles remained vacant or were filled by political appointees with limited expertise, which could weaken public trust in agency independence and objectivity.

Chronic Underfunding

Budgets for statistical agencies often failed to keep up with the pace of inflation, undermining their ability to meet the Evidence Act requirement that their statistical products be relevant and timely, let alone account for new responsibilities. This long-term underinvestment limited agencies' ability to maintain data quality, modernize systems, and meet growing demands. The Year One report documented that, from 2009 to 2024, inflation-adjusted budgets for most principal statistical agencies fell by 14%, while other nondefense discretionary spending rose 16%. Some agencies (e.g., Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], NCES, NCSES) could not increase in-house staff due to restrictions by their parent departments, which prioritized research grants over statistical activities. These constraints left agencies understaffed and unable to plan for the future, even when additional funding was available.

¹⁷ Citro, C. F., Auerbach, J., Evans, K. S., Groshen, E. L., Landefeld, J. S., Mulrow, J., ... Wu, E. (2023). What Protects the Autonomy of the Federal Statistical Agencies? An Assessment of the Procedures in Place to Protect the Independence and Objectivity of Official U.S. Statistics. *Statistics and Public Policy* 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2330443X.2023.2188062>.

Fragmented Oversight and Coordination

The decentralized structure of the federal statistical system—with over a dozen principal agencies and many more statistical programs—limited strategic planning and coordinated action. The Office of the Chief Statistician (OCS) in OMB, which is tasked with oversight, lacked the authority and resources to lead systemwide improvements effectively.

Missed Efficiencies

The Year One report commented on how the decentralized nature of the FSS prevented agencies from achieving economies of scale in technical expertise, IT infrastructure, and training. Shared services and strategic coordination remained limited, despite clear potential for cost savings and performance gains. Agencies encountered roadblocks to blending survey data with alternative sources, such as state administrative records, which are essential for improving data accuracy and relevance. Despite the 2002 Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA—now Title III of the Evidence Act), key agencies like BLS, BEA, Census, the Energy Information Administration (EIA), and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) still could not coordinate to share a business list, missing opportunities to reduce burden and increase accuracy. Legal, bureaucratic, and technical hurdles continued to hamper efficient data integration—despite its proven value in past federal efforts.

Section 3. 2025: Ongoing Monitoring of Key Threats and Actions

ASA Monitoring Summary | February–June 2025

Given the rapid changes to the federal government currently underway, the ASA FedStat Health Project shifted in February 2025 to monitoring and recording developments that could affect the capacity, independence, and integrity of the FSS through a new website: [The Nation's Data at Risk—Ongoing Monitoring](#). Nearly all of the items reported thus far are likely collateral damage and not necessarily and specifically targeted at undermining federal statistical agencies. The notable exception is the delay of an Economic Research Service report that [Politico](#) reported was held up by USDA officials out of reported concern for the forecast of an increased agricultural trade deficit due to tariffs. The virtual destruction of NCES that occurred within the first eight weeks of the new administration as part of the larger effort to dismantle the Department of Education is also deeply troubling.¹⁸ For collateral-damage impacts, the primary cause for statistical program cuts, reductions, and delays has been the loss of staff, with facility lease terminations and contract terminations and freezes also playing a role.

This section highlights justifications for monitoring six critical risk areas and summarizes significant developments in each from February to June 2025. For detailed information on these and other developments, see our [monitoring page](#), especially the updates by category and by statistical agency.

¹⁸ Barshay, Jill. (2025, March 14). “Chaos and Confusion as the Statistics Arm of the Education Department Is Reduced to a Skeletal Staff of 3: Acting Stats Chief Booted After Only 15 Days in the Job; Fate of the Nation’s Report Card Unclear.” The Hechinger Report. <https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-chaos-confusion-statistics-education/>.

3.1. Cuts in Surveys and Other Statistical Programs

Why It Matters:

Abrupt termination of taxpayer-funded surveys and other statistical programs—without public comment or OMB/Congressional consultation—undermines transparency, trust, and interagency coordination. Cuts not only mean the loss of data to inform public decisions but also often the disruption of other statistical programs that depend on the affected data. Furthermore, reductions in force (RIFs) and retirements reduce staff with the requisite skills and understanding to produce the expected breadth and quality of statistics—as well as to maintain trust in them and the FSS.

Select 2025 Actions:

- NCES's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Age 17 assessment was dropped. NAEP's scope was narrowed through 2033.
- Many other NCES statistical programs are at risk of being cut; virtually all of NCES's contracts were canceled and its staff terminated, as noted in the next two categories. While some contracts have been renewed, the fate of most NCES programs has not been announced.
- Local special censuses were halted due to hiring freezes for Census interviewers, though some hiring resumed via waivers.
- BLS halted the Consumer Price Index (CPI) data collection in several metro areas, which could reduce geographic detail.
- Census Bureau surveys, including those for other agencies, were under a review ("Survey of Surveys") led by the General Services Administration. The survey asked for detailed information on the more than 100 surveys conducted by the Census Bureau, presumably to inform decisions on a case-by-case basis about continuing them.
- The Social Security Administration terminated its Retirement and Disability Research Consortium (RDRC) cooperative agreements led by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (ORES), thereby reducing the FY25 ORES budget by \$17 million, to \$29 million.

3.2. Delays, Reduced Detail, or Cancellations of Statistical Outputs (Reports, Tables, etc.)

Why It Matters:

Federal data must be released on time and at a useful level of detail.¹⁹ Delays—due to budget shortfalls or political interference—undermine public trust and hamper use of the data. Reductions in detail or elimination of indicators, reports, tables, and other outputs, especially without transparency, further degrade statistical value.

Select 2025 Actions:

- BEA and BLS cut back on detail in multiple data releases due to budget constraints. For example, BLS is ending ~350 Producer Price Index (PPI) indexes as of August 2025.
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS) monthly statistical reports have been paused since January.
- NCES pulled its school crime report and reduced content in the Condition of Education. The release of the 2024 NAEP Science scores is also delayed. Most if not all NCES 2025 releases are suspended and indefinitely delayed, if not canceled. As noted previously, virtually all NCES contracts were canceled and its staff terminated. While some contracts have been renewed, they are reduced in scope and not being managed by those with the experience and expertise to ensure quality, timeliness, and continuity of results. The release of 2026 NCES products is in question.
- NASS ceased publishing state and regional agriculture reports.
- BJS removed gender identity items from multiple surveys.
- EIA canceled its 2025 International Energy Outlook.
- ERS's agricultural trade report was delayed amid political scrutiny.

¹⁹ See Statistical Policy Directives Nos. 3 and 4 on meeting time schedules for release of the principal federal economic indicators and all other statistical products, respectively. [Statistical Programs & Standards | OMB | The White House: https://www.bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/omb/information-regulatory-affairs/statistical-programs-standards/](https://www.bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/omb/information-regulatory-affairs/statistical-programs-standards/)

3.3. Budget and Staffing Reductions

Why It Matters:

Most statistical agencies lost over 16% in real funding from 2009–2025. Further, tight staffing—which has been significantly exacerbated this year, often imposed without internal replacements—limits agencies’ abilities to maintain operations and modernize data systems. Programs are typically reduced only after other cost-saving options have been exhausted.

Select 2025 Actions:

- A government-wide hiring freeze, the Deferred Resignation Program, and early retirement programs triggered major workforce losses.
- Almost all of NCES’s staff were terminated; NASS, ERS, and EIA face 30–40% attrition.
- SSA’s ORES staff was halved from 80 to 40.
- The President’s FY26 budget proposes steep budget cuts for NCES (58%) and NCSES (40%).

3.4. Undermining Leadership and Staff Integrity

Why It Matters:

Professional, independent leadership is essential for maintaining public trust. Political appointments or arbitrary personnel actions signal attempts to politicize or weaken agency missions.

Select 2025 Actions:

- The OMB director replaced the chief statistician of the United States.
- The NCES Commissioner was placed on leave and subsequently retired; 6 of 13 principal statistical agencies now lack permanent heads.
- ORES was moved under political Chief Information Officer (CIO) oversight and proposed to be replaced by an Office of Analytics and Improvements.
- Two actions, if applied to federal statistical agencies, could undermine an agency's statistical integrity. (We are not aware of instances where this has happened to a statistical agency.)
 - Office of Personnel Management (OPM) guidance reclassified more Senior Executive Service (SES) positions as "general" (vs. career-reserved).
 - A proposed rule seeks to create a new federal employee classification, Schedule Policy/Career, which could potentially make as many as ~50,000 federal staff at-will employees.

3.5. Data Misuse for Nonstatistical Purposes

Why It Matters:

Federal statistical data are legally protected for exclusive statistical purposes. Misuse undermines public confidence and could reduce participation, jeopardizing the accuracy and availability of future data.

We have not identified any actions from 2025 in this category.

Concerns:

- Agencies operate under strict confidentiality laws (1974 Privacy Act, 2002 CIPSEA, and Title III of the 2018 Evidence Act).
- Unauthorized data access, even indirect, could chill survey responses and damage long-term public trust and data quality.

3.6. Other Concerns

Why It Matters:

Transparency, innovation, and advisory engagement are foundational to a credible statistical system. Disruptions in these areas signal broader deterioration. In addition, politicizing federal statistics through withholding unfavorable information or dictating changes in statistical methodology to advance political purposes will undermine both the objectivity and public trust in federal data.

Select 2025 Actions:

- Multiple advisory committees across Census, BEA, BLS, and other agencies were terminated.
- A National Academies' study to recommend improvements to enhance the Office of Homeland Security Statistics's (OHHS's) ability to align with standards and best practices for a federal statistical agency was canceled.
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) 17-person statistical team was laid off, despite statutory recognition.
- The Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) 2025 conference was canceled (and later restored, with reduced scope and attendance).
- The Department of Education proposed removing CIPSEA protections from future NAEP and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) data collections, substituting them with less strong protections.

Section 4. Looking Ahead

A Path Forward for Federal Statistics

The federal statistical system must be strengthened—not only to recover from recent disruptions but also to become more efficient, responsive, and resilient. Recent actions by the Executive Branch have not followed a coherent strategy nor had input from Congress or stakeholders. Particular concerns include:

- **Loss of institutional knowledge at many statistical agencies**
- **Insufficient transparency** about changes in data quality, program scope, and agency staffing
- **Limited stakeholder engagement** in identifying priorities and responding to disruptions

The ASA FedStat Health Project urges immediate and continuing efforts to document ongoing damage, preserve data, and prepare for future rebuilding. Looking to the future, it calls on stakeholders to envision a stronger system that safeguards statistical integrity, supports adequate funding, and fosters cross-agency innovation and harmonization.

Ongoing Monitoring and Preserving the Statistical Infrastructure

The ASA FedStat Health Project will continue to track changes and risks to federal statistics and also expand efforts to hear from data users and the public about their trust in and views on federal statistics. Specific Year Two engagement activities include:

- **Targeted outreach** to users in presentations to associations, LinkedIn blog posts, and other means to supplement the reports and monitoring website.
- **Tracking uses of and trust** in federal statistics through repeated inquiries on NORC AmeriSpeak panels.
- **Enlisting knowledgeable users** to provide regular updates on possible **degradation of accuracy, relevance, and timeliness** of statistical datasets and of **accessibility** to data.

We acknowledge and applaud the efforts of other groups engaged in such activities as cataloging program terminations, tracking user concerns, and archiving threatened datasets (see Box 3). The ASA FedStat Health Project is unique in its systematic focus on the health of the principal federal statistical agencies and their stakeholders.

BOX 3. Activities to Support Federal Statistics & Agencies*

Documenting changes in agencies, programs, and products, and informing stakeholders

- ASA Assessing the Health of the Federal Statistical Agencies: [The Nation's Data at Risk, Year Two—Ongoing Monitoring](#): near real-time (documented) monitoring of changes
- [America's Data Index](#): initiative to track federal datasets and requests for OMB clearance for changes in federal data programs
- [Association of Public Data Users—A Voice for Public Data](#): hosting relevant discussions
- [Center for Open Data Enterprise \(CODE\)](#): roundtables, research, and development of resources to strategize on the promotion of open data
- [Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics](#): member reports; quarterly meetings
- Data Foundation's [SAFE-TRACK](#): for reporting bad (and good) news about federal evidence and statistical capabilities; collates into monthly Evidence Capacity Pulse Report (e.g., as of 4/30, many vacancies among chief data officers and similar positions)
- [Federal Data Forum](#), by Population Reference Bureau (PRB): open to anyone; includes several hundred members who share information

Documenting use cases and obtaining user input

- [America's Essential Data](#): collaborative effort to document the value that data produced by the federal government provides for American lives and livelihoods
- [ASA Assessing the Health of the Principal Federal Statistical Agencies](#): solicited user feedback on uses of and views about federal statistics; is fielding user and general public surveys
- Data Foundation's [MyDataStory](#): for reporting uses of public data

Letter-writing campaigns to Congress

- ASA, [Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics](#), [Population Association of America](#), [The Census Project](#), et al. (see, e.g., [ASA Letters Organized, Signed, and Sent](#))

Preserving data

- [Data Rescue Project](#): coordinated effort among data organizations—including International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology ([IASSIST](#)), [Research Data Access & Preservation \(RDAP\)](#), and members of the [Data Curation Network](#)—to serve as a clearinghouse for data rescue-related efforts and data access points for public data that are currently at risk
- [Making the case for NCES surveys at risk](#): informal effort by former staff to document systematically the use cases for NCES surveys
- *Reenvisioning our decentralized system*: [Modernizing the Federal Statistical System](#): informal effort under ASA to evaluate options from fine-tuning to a consolidated National Statistical Office

* Our list is not comprehensive. We welcome any additions to be sent to sperson@amstat.org.

To maximize impact, all of these efforts require:

1. Transparency from the administration: Agencies should be allowed to publish monthly updates on program and staffing status. OMB should resume timely updates of key annual reports such as the Statistical Programs of the U.S. Government (Blue Book) and Analytical Perspectives.
2. Transparency from statistical agencies: Agencies should report on data quality metrics (e.g., response rates, coverage) in a consistent, accessible format. Historical data and metadata must be preserved. The Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP) should coordinate standards and designate archive custodians where necessary.
3. Support from funders: Sustained funding is needed for long-term monitoring, preservation, and other activities to understand what is happening to the FSS and develop action plans. In particular, funders should support ongoing, representative surveys of both data users and the public to monitor trust and identify unmet needs. These tools are critical to enable the federal statistical system to maintain relevance and credibility during a period of rapid change.

Envisioning a Modern, Integrated Statistical System

The current decentralized system has strengths but is strained by staffing cuts, lack of dedicated funding lines to move rapidly to state-of-the-art methods, and an under-resourced Office of the Chief Statistician for coordination. To address these kinds of issues, a separate effort by ASA's Modernization Group is exploring a range of structural options for the FSS—from better coordination within the current system to full consolidation. The ASA FedStat Health Project does not endorse one model but recognizes the need for meaningful reform, which will require strong leadership and a clear, shared vision.

Key goals for any reform include:

- **Statutory statistical integrity protections and confidentiality safeguards**
- **Improved data usability and coordination across agencies**
- **Multiyear investment in R&D and modernization**
- **Effective relationships with state, local, and private data providers**
- **Broad access to careers for experts from diverse backgrounds**

Conclusion

The risks to the federal statistical system are now a reality: reduced resources, questions about data quality, and fragmented leadership. We are at an inflection point regarding federal statistics. There are major challenges looming—lower response rates, less trust in government entities, tighter budgets, the rise of private datasets of unknown quality, and erosion in the public’s trust of expertise. These challenges can and should be met. That will require a serious investment in the federal statistics infrastructure, research and innovation to improve overall data quality and performance, and reassurances that the administration will honor statistical integrity safeguards and not undermine the objectivity of federal statistics. Without urgent action, the United States may lose not only core statistical programs but also its global standing as a producer of trusted, high-quality data.

To avert this dire outcome, we call on stakeholders—data users, funders, advocates, and policymakers—to support:

- Ongoing, transparent monitoring of changes to federal statistical agencies and data;
- Continued and expanded active engagement with data users and the public; and
- Strategic planning for a modern, coordinated system.

Our final Year Two report to be released in late fall will update this Year Two Status Report on the health of the federal statistical system and provide recommendations looking to the future. Federal statistics are essential infrastructure. They must be protected and strengthened for the nation to make informed, evidence-based decisions.

Supporting Materials: A—Federal Statistics

User Feedback, available [here](#).

Supporting Materials: B—Federal Data Use

and Perspectives on Federal Statistics, available [here](#).