SUPPORTING MATERIALS: A

FEDERAL STATISTICS USER FEEDBACK*

**Previously published in supporting materials for The Nation's Data at a Crossroads, July 2025.*

A.1 SUMMARY

Purpose: Obtain baseline information (February 2025) from data users on their uses of and views about federal statistics.

Methods: Obtained responses from a non-probability, self-selected set of respondents to quantitative and qualitative questions coded in Qualtrics. Sought respondents by asking professional associations to send a link to the Qualtrics form to their members. (Lacked funding for a probability survey.)

Results: Obtained over 350 usable responses. Respondents tended to be highly educated, frequent users of federal statistics and also tended to be highly supportive of their quality and fitness for use. Respondents reported a wide variety of uses and a variety of specific datasets used (the American Community Survey was the single most commonly cited dataset).

A.2 INTRODUCTION

As part of its efforts to obtain input from users of federal statistics, the American Statistical Association Project to Assess the Health of the Federal Statistical Agencies (ASA FedStat Health Project) developed a form for user feedback. We sent the form to contacts in professional associations in late January to early February 2025, asking them in turn to send the form to their members to fill out and return to us. We called the effort a "Data User Solicitation" because it did not involve a probability sample and hence should not be called a survey. We received over 350 responses of varying completeness. Appendix A-1 (below) includes the recruitment email we sent to associations, the associations receiving our invitation, and the associations from which we obtained member responses. Appendix A-2 (below) includes the form, which was coded into Qualtrics.

A.3 CONTENT

The form asked for responses to the following questions (edited for length; see Appendix A-2):

Q1a. How often do you use data products from federal statistical agencies and programs?

Q1b. How long have you been using data products from federal statistical agencies and programs?

Q2a. How do you use data products from federal statistical agencies and programs? Please select all that apply (e.g., I cite facts and figures from a federal statistics report; I download individual tables).

Q2b. Please list up to 5 data products that you have used in the past year from federal statistical agencies and programs. List them in order of frequency, from most to least used.

Q3a. (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

1. The quality of the data products I use is sufficient for my needs, i.e., I am satisfied with their accuracy, relevance, timeliness, granularity, completeness, and comparability.
2. The data products I use are sufficiently easy to access and analyze, i.e., I am satisfied with their format, clarity, and accessibility.

3. I am sufficiently informed when changes are made to the data products that I use.
4. I receive sufficiently prompt and complete responses to questions I send to a federal statistical agency.
5. I am satisfied with the method and degree of confidentiality protection.

Q3b. Hypotheticals about whether a change would be a hindrance for the user

1. Suppose the data products you use were released less frequently.
2. Suppose the data products you use were released with less detail or at less granularity.
3. Suppose there was a break in the series of the data products you use such that future releases of the data products are no longer comparable with past releases.

Q4. Write-in questions

1. Examples of vitally important data products from federal statistical agencies and programs that you use and how you use them.
2. Examples of data products that are of excellent quality for your use and how you use them.
3. Examples of data products that you would like to use but are of insufficient quality as to limit or prevent your use. Explain what improvements are needed and how you would use them.
4. Examples of data products that would be markedly less useful for your work if they were released less frequently and how you use them.
5. Examples of data products that would be markedly less useful for your work if they were released at less detail or granularity.
6. Examples of data products you would like federal statistical agencies and programs to provide that they do not currently provide and how you would use them.
7. Examples of data products available on a topic that you wish were easier to compare and how you would use them.
8. If you work with restricted microdata, your assessment of how well the process works for getting access to such data and what improvements you would like to see.
9. Your suggestions for what statistical agencies can do to better serve users in terms of data, products, modes of access, documentation, communication, and other features.
10. Any additional comments about your data usage and suggestions for improvements.

Q5a. Current or most recent employment (e.g., academia, government, business)

Q5b. Occupation (write-in)

Q6a. & 6b. Educational attainment and field of degrees

A.4 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

A.4.1 Search for Clusters

We endeavored to find clusters of respondents to see if they differed materially in their uses of and views about federal statistics. We had 286 respondents with sufficiently complete responses for the variables we intended to use in the cluster analysis. We imputed a small number of missing responses to produce an analyzable dataset. We hypothesized that years of experience in working with federal statistics (Q1b, less than 6 years, 6–10 years, 10 or more years) might be a discriminating attribute, as might frequency of use (Q1a, annual or less frequently, quarterly, monthly, more often than monthly).

We looked first to see if these attributes related to the number of ways in which respondents used federal statistics (Q2a, citing reports, analyzing PUMS files, etc.). We were able to identify four clusters on this basis (see Table A-1, A-2), differentiated by the average number of types of uses out of 9 possibilities from a 3.1 average (cluster 1) to a 6.7 average (cluster 4). Clusters 1 and 2 included people who accessed federal statistics annually or less often or followed particular quarterly or monthly series and did not engage in that many types of uses. Clusters 3 and 4 included people who accessed federal statistics frequently, distinguished by whether they accessed data via an FTP site.

Further analysis determined, however, that these clusters did NOT differ appreciably on such variables as their assessment of the quality of federal statistics or the other attributes in Q3a and Q3b. The exception was that "power users" (clusters 3 and 4) agreed that federal statistical staff responded promptly and fully to their questions (Q3a–4) more often than less frequent users (clusters 1 and 2), and the reverse was true for those who neither agreed nor disagreed (few users in any cluster disagreed that staff responded promptly and fully).

TABLE A-1. Average Number of Use Types by Years Using Federal Statistics and Frequency of Use

Years using federal statistics and frequency of use	Years Using Federal Statistics (Cell entries are average number of use types, max = 9)		
	< 6 years	6–10 years	11+ years
< Annual	3.2	2.6	3.5
Quarterly	3.3	4.1	3.8
Monthly	3.1	3.4	4.1
> Monthly, no FTP	4.2	4.5	4.6
> Monthly, use FTP	6.2	6.8	6.4

TABLE A-2. Clusters Formed from Table A-1

Cluster		
Identification: # and Color	Number Cases	Average Use Types
1, Red	25	3.1
2, Brown	63	3.9
3, Green	98	4.6
4, Purple	101	6.7

SOURCE: ASA FedStat Health Project Data User Solicitation, February 2025, Questions 1a, 1b, 2a.

A.4.2 Results: One-Way Frequencies

Given the null results of the cluster analysis described above and other cluster analyses we attempted, we decided to present top-line, one-way quantitative results only. Table A-3 provides frequencies for questions 1a, 1b, 3a, 3b, 5a, and 6a. Figure A-1 illustrates that most users who responded to the solicitation believe federal statistics to be highly relevant, timely, and accurate (from Q3a). Figure 2 shows that many users would be hindered in their work if federal statistics provided less detail on population groups or geographic areas or were less timely (from Q3b). Almost all (94%) of respondents had a graduate or professional degree. Almost two-thirds (64%) worked for academia or nonprofit organizations, another 14% worked for federal, state, or local governments, and 10% worked in the private sector.

TABLE A-3. ASA FedStat Health Project Data User Solicitation: Frequencies

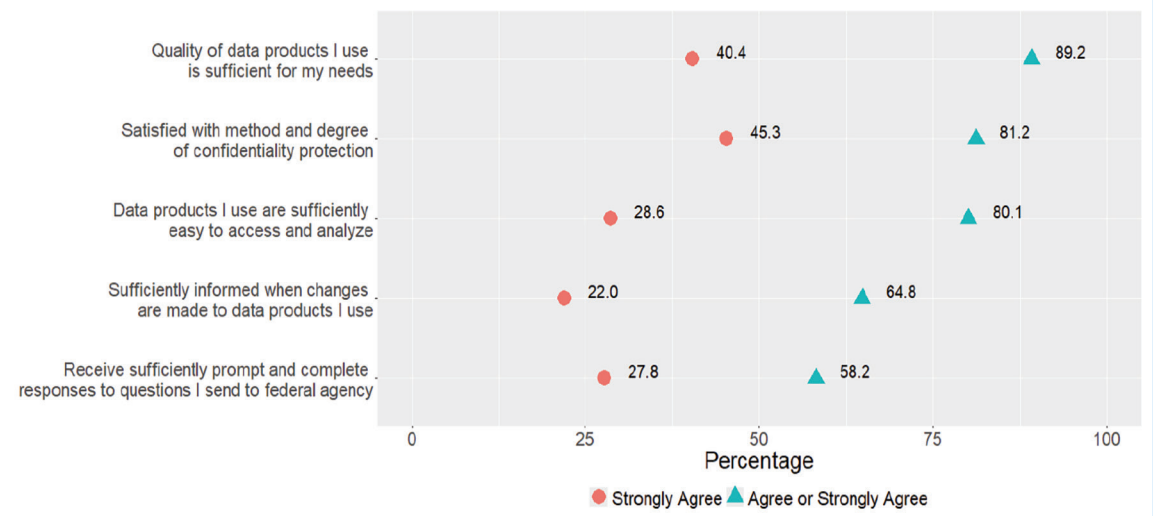
Variable	N	Percentage
Q1a - How often use federal statistics	354	99%
... Less than once a year	4	1%
... Annually	19	5%
... Quarterly	44	12%
... Monthly	60	17%
... More than once a month	227	64%
Q1b - How long used federal statistics	348	100%
... Less than 5 years	52	15%
... 6-10 years	74	21%
... 11 or more years	222	64%
Q3a_1 Quality of data products is sufficient	286	100%
... Strongly Agree	115	40%
... Agree	140	49%
... Neither Agree or Disagree	17	6%
... Disagree or Strongly Disagree	14	5%
Q3a_2 Ease/accessibility of products is sufficient	286	100%
... Strongly Agree	82	29%
... Agree	147	51%
... Neither Agree or Disagree	41	14%
... Disagree or Strongly Disagree	16	6%
Q3a_3 Sufficiently informed of major changes	283	101%
... Strongly Agree	62	22%
... Agree	121	43%
... Neither Agree or Disagree	54	19%
... Disagree	36	13%
... Strongly Disagree	10	4%
Q3a_4 Agency staff respond promptly/completely	263	100%
... Strongly Agree	73	28%
... Agree	80	30%
... Neither Agree or Disagree	94	36%
... Disagree or Strongly Disagree	16	6%
Q3a_5 Confidentiality protection is satisfactory	278	99%
... Strongly Agree	122	44%
... Agree	93	33%
... Neither Agree or Disagree	44	16%
... Disagree	19	6%
Q3b_1 Hindrance if data are less frequent?	283	100%
... Major Hindrance	193	68%
... Slight Hindrance	80	28%
... No Hindrance	10	4%

Variable	N	Percentage
Q3b_2 Hindrance if data are reduced in detail?	283	100%
... Major Hindrance	262	93%
... Slight Hindrance or No Hindrance	21	7%
Q3b_3 Hindrance if data are less comparable?	283	101%
... Major Hindrance	242	86%
... Slight Hindrance or No Hindrance	41	15%
Q5a_Industry	245	100%
... College or university employee	94	38%
... Federal government civilian employee	12	5%
... For-profit company or organization (excluding colleges and universities (C/Us))	25	10%
... Local government (e.g., city or county school district, excluding C/Us)	12	5%
... Non-profit organization (including tax-exempt and charitable organizations but excluding C/Us)	64	26%
... State government (excluding C/Us)	9	4%
... Student (college or university)	13	5%
... Other or Prefer not to answer	16	7%
Q6a - Education	244	100%
... Bachelor's or Associate's degree or Some college, but no degree	15	6%
... Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS etc.)	229	94%

NOTE: Categories with fewer than 10 respondents have been combined with another category.

SOURCE: ASA FedStat Health Project Data User Solicitation, February 2025.

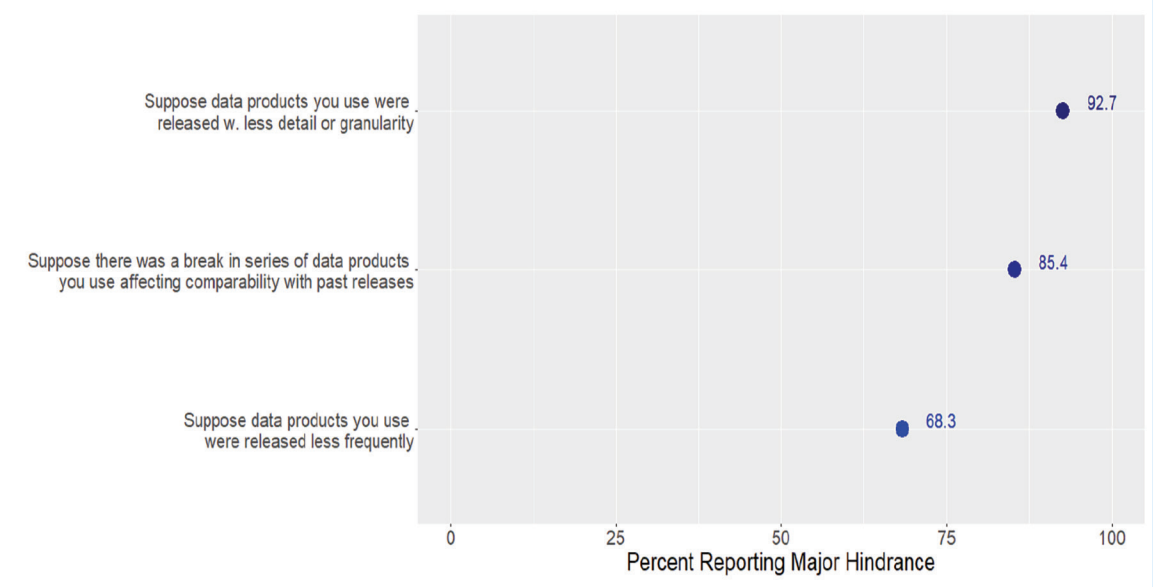
FIGURE A-1. Percentage of Respondents Who Strongly Agree and Those Who Agree or Strongly Agree with Statements about Federal StatisticalData Products and Services, February 2025



NOTE: We imputed a small amount of missing data, so percentages may not agree with Table A-1.

SOURCE: Tabulations of Question 3a, ASA FedStat Health Project Data User Solicitation.

FIGURE A-2. Percentage of Respondents Who Report that Their Work Would Experience Major Hindrance if Federal Statistics Were Altered in Various Ways, February 2025



NOTE: We imputed a small amount of missing data, so percentages may not agree with Table 1.
SOURCE: Tabulations of Question 3b, ASA FedStat Health Project Data User Solicitation.

A.4.3 Datasets Used by Respondents

Question 2b asked respondents to list up to five data products from federal statistical agencies and programs that they used in the past year, from most to least important. The level of detail of responses varied widely—for example, "lots from the Economic Research Service/USDA" to "ERS Food Access Research Atlas." Respondents also cited such sites as CDC WONDER[1], FRED[2], and IPUMS[3], which provide access to many datasets in their areas. Because of the variability in responses, it was difficult to adopt a coding scheme that would be useful for identifying more or less popular or useful datasets, access tools, and products (e.g., public use microdata samples, tables, maps, reports, visualizations) for this self-selected set of respondents. The American Community Survey does stand out, however, as a widely used dataset (see Quantitative Analysis below).

Table A-4 lists the data products mentioned one or more times by respondents for each of the 13 principal statistical agencies, without imposing a coding scheme or tallying numbers of mentions. The size of the list indicates the breadth of federal statistics that users know and care about.

Respondents cited many datasets from agencies other than the principal federal statistical agencies. Agencies that appeared in more than one response to Question 2b included the Administration for Children and Families, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Agricultural Marketing Service, Agricultural Research Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Drug Enforcement Administration, Employment and Training Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Farm Service Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Reserve Board, Food and Nutrition Service, Health Resources and Services Administration, Institute of Education Sciences, National Cancer Institute, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administra-

[1]Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Wide-ranging ONline Data for Epidemiologic Research: CDC WONDER
[2]Federal Reserve Economic Data: Federal Reserve Economic Data | FRED | St. Louis Fed
[3]Homepage | IPUMS

tion, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Office of Civil Rights (Dept. of Education), Office of Homeland Security Statistics, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Office of Policy Development & Research (HUD), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and U.S. Geological Survey.

Note that, as of July 2025, some agencies and some datasets cited no longer exist or have been significantly altered. Also note that some datasets cited are only available in restricted access environments, such as one of the Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (FSRDCs).

TABLE A-4. Principal Federal Statistical Agency Data Products Cited by Respondents in Response to Question 2a (list up to five data products used in the past year)

Statistical Agency/Data Products Cited (in alphabetical order)
Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) (Commerce)
County Profiles
County Transfer Payments
Employment statistics (by industry)
Metro/Local Area Personal Income
National Income and Product Accounts (NIPAs) (Gross Domestic Product [GDP], Personal Consumption Expenditures [PCE])
Regional Economic Information System (REIS) (GDP, income, employment)
Tourism
Truck Sales
Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)
Annual Survey of Jails
Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories (CPFFCL)
National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP)
National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)
Survey of Prison Inmates
Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
American Time Use Survey (ATUS)
Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI)
Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE)
Consumer Price Index (CPI)
Current Employment Statistics (CES)
Current Population Survey (CPS) (monthly employment)
Employment (construction, disability, population groups by state, projections)
Employment Cost Index (ECI)
Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS)
Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)
Monthly Labor Review
National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY)
Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS)
Occupational projections
Producer Price Index (PPI)
Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)
Union Trends
Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS)
Airline statistics (origin-destination, flights, passengers)
County transportation profiles

Statistical Agency/Data Products Cited (in alphabetical order)
Census Bureau (Commerce)
American Community Survey (ACS)
Annual Business Survey (ABS)
Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances (ALFIN)
Building Permits Survey (BPS)
Business Dynamics
Business Trends
Census of Governments
Construction (new residential, spending)
County Business Patterns (CPB)
CPS Annual Social and Demographic Supplement (CPS ASEC)
CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Decennial Census (Demographic and Housing Characteristics File, Post-Enumeration Survey results, Redistricting File, tract-level tables)
Economic Censuses
Geographic datasets/tools (TIGER line, shape files)
Household Pulse Survey
Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD, LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics [LODES], LEHD Quarterly Workforce Indicators [QWI])
Longitudinal Business Database (LBD)
Population Estimates Program (PEP)
Small-Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)
Standard Statistical Establishment List (SSEL)
Survey of Business Owners (SBO)
Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)
Economic Research Service (ERS, USDA)
Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS)
CPS Food Security Supplement (CPS FSS)
Food Access Research Atlas (FARA)
Food Expenditure Series (FES)
National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey (FoodAPS)
Purchase-to-Plate Suite (PP-SUITE)
Rural definitions
Trade statistics
Energy Information Administration (EIA)
Energy prices
Residential Energy Consumption Survey (RECS)
National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)
Agricultural prices (monthly)
Census of Agriculture
Cropland Data Layer (CDL)
June Agriculture Survey
Organic Survey
Production statistics
Quick Stats

Statistical Agency/Data Products Cited (in alphabetical order)
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
College Navigator
Common Core of Data (CCD)
Condition of Education
Digest of Education Statistics
Education Demographic and Geographics (EDGE)
First Look
Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)
Longitudinal surveys (Baccalaureate and Beyond, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009)
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
National Household Education Survey (NHES)
National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)
School Pulse Survey
School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS)
National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)
Ambulatory Health Care Program (AHCP)
Household Pulse Survey Long COVID
National Health and Examination Survey (NHANES)
National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)
National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)
Vital Statistics (births, deaths)
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES, NSF)
Higher Education Research & Development Survey (HERD)
National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG)
National Training, Education & Workforce Survey (NTEWS)
Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR)
Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)
Survey of Federal Funds for Research and Development (SFFRD)
Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering (GSS)
Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (ORES, SSA)
Numident File
Statistics of Income, IRS (SOI/IRS)
Tax statistics

SOURCE: Responses to Question 2a, ASA FedStat Health Project Data User Solicitation.

4.5 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

We know that the ecosystem of users and uses of federal statistics is extensive and interconnected in many ways but, at the same time, often not readily apparent to federal statistical agencies or the Congress or the administration. A prime reason is that many users who search for and obtain data from one or more federal websites serve as intermediaries to other users. For example, researchers who analyze data from the National Center for Education Statistics may use those analyses to advise local school districts that do not themselves access the NCES data. Or businesses may purchase data from companies that obtain federal statistics, relate them to other data (e.g., scanner data on retail sales), and market the enhanced products to the business community for help in locating outlets and other purposes.

To obtain a fuller picture of the depth and breadth of federal statistics users and uses, we included 10 open-ended questions in addition to fill-in-a-circle responses in our user feedback solicitation (see list under "CONTENT" section, above). As we noted earlier, the responses are from recipients of emails or newsletter announcements from professional associations who chose to respond and not a representative sample. Yet they are illuminating about users' views of the strengths and weaknesses of federal statistics.

We highlight seven themes and overarching findings from the qualitative results.

1. Respondents are interested and involved in federal statistics and supportive of them. Slightly more than one-half of respondents took the trouble to answer one or more of the open-ended questions, which are more burdensome than clicking a circle. For example,166 respondents provided examples of vitally important data products from federal statistical agencies that they use and for what purposes (Q4a), and 136 respondents provided examples of high-quality data that they use (Q4b). Many people also filled in the other open-ended questions. Here are five comments demonstrating the importance of federal statistics to users:
    a. I monitor regional economic conditions on behalf of partners in local business and government. My work entirely relies on high-quality federal data . . . .
    b. [Federal statistical] data are essential when evaluating the state of the economy to make decisions as [a] small business.
    c. No single survey or federal data product has all of the information we need to know to assess the well-being of the US population. Our federal datasets serve different and important purposes.
    d. Federal datasets are crucial for bettering our communities. They provide regular, comparable, and smaller geography data to help us understand the effects of policies, successes, and emerging needs. We would be flying in the dark without them.
    e. Federal data that are accessible by all researchers are a major benefit to the scientific community. Frequent data collections are a true advantage of US federal data.

2. Respondents' uses (from Question 4a) cover a wide range of subjects and applications
    a. **Topics** reported by respondents include (in random order):
        i. agriculture,
        ii. the economy,
        iii. criminal justice,
        iv. education,
        v. health,
        vi. income and poverty,
        vii. race and ethnicity,
        viii. environment,
        ix. gender,
        x. housing,
        xi. population growth,

xii. immigration,
xiii. substance abuse,
xiv. time use, and
xv. transportation.

b. **Applications** include (in random order):
   i. state, local, community, and regional planning;
   ii. business planning (e.g., site/branch location, market research, business plans for entrepreneurs and franchisers);
   iii. redistricting, electoral campaigning;
   iv. fund allocation;
   v. teaching;
   vi. research, policy analysis;
   vii. grant applications;
   viii. library assistance; and
   ix. survey design and weighting.

3. **The single most widely cited example of a "vitally important data product" is the American Community Survey (ACS)**, which replaced the long-form-sample attached to the decennial census, becoming operational in 2005. The ACS has been criticized as intrusive and costly, but it is the linchpin for a vast array of uses of federal statistics. Of the 166 responses to Question 4a about vitally important data products, 53 specified the ACS (33 of the 53 mentioned the ACS and other datasets). Of the 136 responses to Question 4b about quality data, 27 responses singled out the ACS. Of the 115 responses to Question 4e about data products that would be less useful with less demographic and/or geographic granularity, 34 respondents identified the granularity in the ACS as essential for their work. Here are 5 comments on the value of the ACS:
   a. I use ACS and decennial census microdata to track long-run changes in marriage, divorce, multigenerational families, and other indicators of family composition.
   b. I write statistical reports on the rural economy. Having geographic variation in data series is important.... I use the ACS frequently, and find api.census.gov a vital tool.... I use much of the ACS content: population characteristics (e.g., age, education), employment, earnings, industry detail, occupations data, housing data.
   c. I work in state government and we use county data from the American Community Survey every year to distribute [$millions] in state funding to community organizations across the state.
   d. The American Community Survey is an essential annual survey … which provides the only nationally representative up-to-date data we have on population size and characteristics between the decennial census. I have seen it used by businesses to determine marketing strategies and the location of branches and by political candidates assessing their chances of election and their messages. ACS is also used regularly by local and state governments to determine likely health care and educational needs now and in the future.
   e. I use [ACS] data when assisting entrepreneurs putting together business plans.

4. **In response to Question 4d, users unanimously affirm the importance of timely data released at least annually.** Some users need certain datasets more frequently than annually, such as monthly economic data.

5. **Users, in response to Question 4e, say that demographic and geographic granularity of federal statistics are essential for their applications** and that cutting back on granularity would seriously harm their work. Almost every response indicated that substate data are essential. While many users would be happy with county-level data, others require finer geographic breakdowns (e.g., census tracts, block groups, blocks). Users stressed the importance of detail on gender and race/ethnicity.

6. **When asked to specify data products that are potentially useful but of insufficient quality in response to Question 4c, few respondents mentioned quality issues in terms of accuracy or reliability.** About three-fourths of total respondents did not fill in a response to question 4c (indicating, one might assume, they did not question the quality of federal statistics), and one-third of the filled-in responses identified problems in locating, accessing, or using a dataset, not that it was unreliable. Another third of filled-in responses identified datasets that were not granular enough, either in demographic or geographic detail or both, or they worried that declining survey response rates would undercut the reliability of granular data. A smaller group of users identified datasets that had been eliminated or data that were not collected as a quality problem—in other words, relevant data for these users were not available. Some users singled out lack of timeliness or frequency in a dataset.

   Finally, a handful of responses specified reliability and consistency problems with particular datasets, such as underreporting of families receiving assistance in the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC); variable reporting by police departments in the FBI's crime reports; lack of "accurate, complete, and geographically-specific" housing construction data; "immigration, ICE apprehensions, and deportations" data that are not "great" and also are not released "on a complete or timely basis"; crop acreage reports that are not consistent with crop insurance data; and unreliable data on staffing levels for counselors, social workers, and the like in the Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). Several of the cited datasets, it should be noted, are collected by agencies other than the principal federal statistical agencies.

7. **When asked to specify useful improvements in federal statistics, the responses to Question 4i include compliments as well as suggestions to improve data access, documentation, training, websites, the availability of FTP sites and APIs, engagement with users, cross-agency data finding guides, data granularity, and availability of historical data.** Including responses to this question and also Question 4h from people who use confidential data in restricted sites, such as the network of Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (FSRDCs), there is uniform agreement that the available data are great. Indeed, empirical research supports the value of the network in terms of policy-relevant, path-breaking research[4]. There is also uniform agreement that the administrative burden and cost are excessive and that the FSRDC system needs more staff support and to be used by more agencies to facilitate one-stop shopping.

[4]See Abhishek Nagaraj & Manteo Tranchero. (Issued June 2023; revised September 2024). How Does Data Access Shape Science? The Impact of Federal Statistical Research Data Centers on Economics Research. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 31372. DOI: 10.3386/w31372

APPENDIX A-1: INVITATION AND INVITED ASSOCIATIONS

DRAFT EMAIL (1/28/25) TO ORGANIZATIONS TO SEND OUT REQUEST FOR USER FEEDBACK

Dear organization x (send to head of government statistics committee/section/et al., or personal contact, or, if no such exists, to president with cc to executive director):

I'm writing as a member of the project team for the American Statistical Association Project on the Health of the Federal Statistical System. Federal statistics are vital national infrastructure whose existence we should never take for granted. The goal of our project is to independently document the value of federal statistics and proactively identify challenges and opportunities facing statistical agencies in an annual report and outreach effort to Congress, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and other stakeholders. Since federal statistics are intended to be used, input from data users is critical for achieving our goal. We are funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and California Community Foundation.

We have developed a data user feedback form (provide link) that we would very much appreciate your help in distributing to your members or those portions of your membership whom you judge would be most likely to use federal statistics in their work. Providing input is totally voluntary and can take as little or as much time as the respondent wants to devote to it, but we hope federal statistics users in your association will decide to participate.

If you could send the link for the feedback form (provide link) as soon as convenient to your members in an email or through an announcement in whatever vehicle you use for member communication, we would be most appreciative. Our project needs to hear from users on the record about the strengths and weaknesses of federal statistics. If your announcement could stress the importance for members to respond, we would be most appreciative.

All best,

LIST OF ASSOCIATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS CONTACTED

(Member responses received from those in bold.)

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA)
American Association of Geographers
American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)
American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
American Economic Association (AEA)
American Educational Research Association (AERA)
American Political Science Association (APSA)
American Psychological Association (APA)
American Sociological Association (AmSocA)
American Statistical Association (ASA)
American Evaluation Association (AEA)
Association of Public Data Users (APDU)
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM)
Association of Research Libraries
Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)
Council on Criminal Justice
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS)
Count on Stats Newsletter
Data Foundation
Federal-State Cooperative for Population Estimates (FSCPE)
Friends of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
Friends of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
Friends of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)
Justice Information Resource Network (JIRN)
National Association for Business Economics (NABE)
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)
National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA)
National Criminal Justice Association
Population Association of America (PAA)
Signers of Letter on Behalf of the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)
Signers of Letter on Behalf of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS)
Social Science History Association (SSHA)

NOTE: Associations were sent links with a specific identifier; we know, however, that some respondents sent their association's link to others, so that our knowledge of where responses came from is not complete and likely contains errors.

APPENDIX A-2: DATA USER FEEDBACK FORM [next page]

Intro

Federal Statistics User Feedback Form

Dear federal statistics user,

We seek your feedback as part of an ongoing American Statistical Association–George Mason University project to independently examine the health of the federal statistical system.

We want to hear from you, regardless of whether you are a federal statistics novice or a seasoned power user. The feedback we seek includes examples of how you use federal statistics and your suggestions to improve both the data and the user experience.

Your feedback will be most helpful if we receive it by **Friday, February 28, 2025**.

Thank you for your time,

ASA–GMU project team

Please click the links below to learn more.

+ Why is your participation critical?

+ What does your participation entail?

+ How will your input be used?

First, we would like to learn about how you use data products from federal statistical agencies and programs.

Data products from federal statistical agencies and programs include datasets (e.g., American Community Survey), indicators (e.g., unemployment rate), and reports (e.g., Condition of Education).

Please click the links below if you are unsure whether you use data products from federal statistical agencies and programs.

+ What is a federal statistical agency or program?

+ What counts as using a data product from a federal statistical agency or program?

+ What are some other examples of data products from federal statistical agencies and programs?

How often do you use data products from federal statistical agencies and programs?

Less than once a year	Anually	Quarterly	Monthly	More than once a month
○	○	○	○	○

How long have you been using data products from federal statistical agencies and programs?

Less than 1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11 or more years
○	○	○	○

How do you use data products from federal statistical agencies and programs? *Please select all that apply.*

- ☐ I cite facts or figures from a federal statistics report (e.g., *Income in the United States*; *Crop Production*)
- ☐ I download individual tables or maps from a government website
- ☐ I download public use microdata sample (PUMS) files
- ☐ I download federal data via FTP (e.g., https://www2.census.gov/)
- ☐ I download federal data using a government API (e.g., api.census.gov)
- ☐ I download federal data from a non-government website or using third-party software
- ☐ I use federal data to weight a sample (e.g., using demographics)
- ☐ I combine multiple federal data products
- ☐ I use federal data that is confidential and restricted access
- ☐ Other ☐

Please list up to 5 data products that you have used in the past year from federal statistical agencies and programs. *List the data products in order of frequency, from most to least used.*

Data Product 1

Data Product 2

Data Product 3

Data Product 4

Data Product 5

Next we would like you to evaluate your experience using data products from federal statistical agencies and programs.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about the data products that you use from federal statistical agencies and programs. *Please leave blank if unable to judge.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The quality of the data products I use is sufficient for my needs. *i.e., I am satisfied with their accuracy, relevance, timeliness, granularity, completeness, and comparability.*	○	○	○	○	○
2. The data products I use are sufficiently easy to access and analyze. *i.e., I am satisfied with their format, clarity, and accessibility.*	○	○	○	○	○
3. I am sufficiently informed when changes are made to the data products that I use.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I receive sufficiently prompt and complete responses to questions I send to a federal statistical agency.	○	○	○	○	○
5. I am satisfied with the method and degree of confidentiality protection. *i.e., I am satisfied with the modifications made to the data products I use that are designed to preserve the confidentiality of respondents such as aggregation, top coding, and substitution with synthetic data.*	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate the extent to which the following hypothetical changes to data products from federal statistical agencies and programs would negatively impact your use. *Please leave blank if you are unable to judge.*

	No Hindrance	Slight Hindrance	Major Hindrance
1. Suppose the data products you use were released less frequently. *e.g., Suppose the data products you use were released annually instead of monthly.*	○	○	○
2. Suppose the data products you use were released with less detail or at less granularity. *e.g., Suppose the data products you use were aggregated at the state level instead of the county level.* *e.g., Suppose the data products you use no longer provide separate estimates by sex.*	○	○	○

	No Hindrance	Slight Hindrance	Major Hindrance
3. Suppose there was a break in the series of the data products you use such that future releases of the data products are no longer comparable with past releases. *e.g., Suppose the data products you use are released annually, and the data products released this year cannot be compared to previous years.*	○	○	○

Next we would like you to provide some free-form comments about your experience using data products from federal statistical agencies. Please feel free to provide as many or as few comments as you wish.

Following the free-form section, we have some final questions about your background in order to help us contextualize your answers.

We greatly appreciate your time helping us understand your perspective as a data user.

Please answer any or all of the following questions in any form that you wish. *Specificity is appreciated.*

Recall that data products from federal statistical agencies and programs include datasets (e.g., American Community Survey), indicators (e.g., unemployment rate), and reports (e.g., Condition of Education).

1. Please provide one or more examples of vitally important data products from federal statistical agencies and programs that you use. *Describe how you use the product(s) (e.g., to locate facilities or to evaluate a program).*

2. Please provide one or more examples of data products from federal statistical agencies and programs that are of excellent quality for your use. *Describe how you use the product(s) (e.g., to locate facilities or to evaluate a program).*

3. Please provide one or more examples of data products from federal statistical agencies and programs that you would like to use but are of insufficient quality as to limit or prevent your use. *Explain what improvements are needed and how you would use the product(s) if they were improved.*

4. Please provide one or more examples of data products from federal statistical agencies and programs that would be markedly less useful for your work if they were released less frequently. *Describe how you use the product(s), and explain how a less frequent release would impact your use.*

5. Please provide one or more examples of data products from federal statistical agencies and programs that would be markedly less useful for your work if they were released at less detail or granularity. *Describe how you use the product(s), and explain how a less detailed release would impact your use (e.g., if data were aggregated at the state level instead of the county level; if data were no longer available by sex).*

6. Please provide one or more examples of data products you would like federal statistical agencies and programs to provide that they do not currently provide. *Describe how you would use the product(s) (e.g., to locate facilities or to evaluate a program).*

7. Please provide one or more examples of data products available from more than one federal statistical agency or program on a topic (e.g., income, education, labor force participation, disability, family wellbeing) that you wish were easier to compare. *Describe how you would use the product(s) if they were easier to compare.*

8. If you work with restricted microdata, please provide your assessment of how well the process works for getting access to such data and what improvements you would like to see.

9. Please provide your suggestions for what statistical agencies can do to better serve users in terms of data, products, modes of access, documentation, communication, and other features.

10. Please provide any additional comments about your data usage and suggestions for improvements.

Finally, we have a few questions about your background, which will help us contextualize your responses.

What best describes your current or most recent employment?

COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

- ○ Employee
- ○ Student

PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEE

- ○ For-profit company or organization (excluding colleges and universities)
- ○ Non-profit organization (including tax-exempt and charitable organizations but excluding colleges and universities)

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE

- ○ Local government (e.g., city or county school district, excluding colleges and universities)
- ○ State government (excluding colleges and universities)
- ○ Active duty U.S. Armed Forces or Commissioned Corps
- ○ Federal government civilian employee
- ○ [ ] Other
- ○ Prefer not to answer

What is your occupation?

For example: survey statistician, market researcher, consultant, retired

[ ]

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ○ Some high school or less
- ○ High school diploma or GED
- ○ Some college, but no degree
- ○ Associates or technical degree
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS etc.)
- ○ Prefer not to answer

For any BACHELOR'S, GRADUATE, or PROFESSIONAL DEGREES you received, what did you major in? (e.g., elementary teacher education, organizational psychology, demography, data science)

Please feel free to provide your name and contact information if you would like to discuss your use of federal statistics and data products with our team.

We will not use your name or contact information for any other purpose than to get in touch with you.