

# BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) is the principal federal statistical agency providing data about the nation's economy. Part of the Department of Commerce, the BEA publishes the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) from the national to county level, as well as for industry sectors; foreign trade and investment statistics; and an array of industry data, among other economic indicators. The BEA has a robust culture of innovation to respond to data user requests, such as for more timely release and more geographic and sector detail. In addition to being a leader in expanding its use of private and administrative data sources, the agency has taken steps to publish statistics on income distribution and links between the economy and the environment. BEA's influence is evident: its leading economic statistics are used as input for fiscal policy, monetary policy, allocation of federal and state and local funds, and private sector investment. BEA's data are widely cited in the media and used extensively for research on the economy.

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information and selected information from our questionnaire.

## STRENGTH OF BEA'S SUPPORT†

**Autonomy: Challenging.** No current threats but lacks professional autonomy protections and agency authorization in statute. BEA lacks full decision authority to recruit/fill senior executive or senior technical positions.

**Budget/staffing: Mixed.** While BEA enjoys strong support for its budget from Congress and the administration, its appropriations have not been sufficient to maintain its staffing level, resulting in a 10% reduction in full-time employees at the same time that workload and number of products have increased. Should this trend continue, because of the significant technical expertise required for its work, BEA will not be able to sustain its many products at current levels or continue to make its products more timely, relevant, and frequent.

**Parent agency: Good.** The Department of Commerce is strongly supportive of BEA to fulfill its requirements as a federal statistical agency, as exemplified by the department's use of BEA's new products, including space economy statistics, Puerto Rico GDP, and marine economy, outdoor recreation, and other satellite accounts. The parent agency and White House also use BEA statistics in communication with the public about the state of the economy.

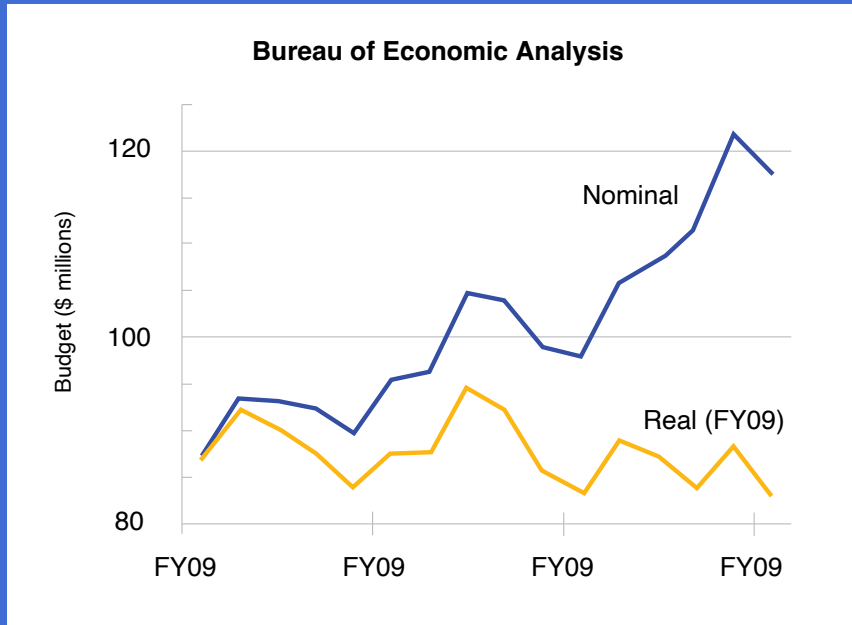
† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

## AGENCY FAST FACTS

### Budget inputs and FY24 level

1. Appropriations line item: \$117 million
2. BEA produces some satellite accounts with outside funding.

### Funding history, inflation adjusted



### Appointment of head & layers down in the Department of Commerce org chart

BEA is one of eight principal federal statistical agencies for which the head is a career senior executive service appointee.

**Two:** The BEA director reports to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs, who reports to the Secretary

### Other

- ➔ BEA director serves as the Commerce Statistical Official (on a two-year rotation with the Census director).
- ➔ BEA regularly administers 17 surveys and uses a constantly growing number of administrative and private datasets that numbered, respectively, 52 and 153 in FY23.
- ➔ Approximately 60% of BEA's employees are economists.
- ➔ The number of downloads from its website is 5 million to 6 million annually; website views exceeded 22 million in FY22; citations of BEA data in academic journals, news media, and the Congressional Record were nearly 20,000 in FY22.
- ➔ Five of BEA's products are official Principal Federal Economic Indicators (some joint with the U.S. Census Bureau).

<p><b>Recent successes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ To keep up with America's growing economy (which reached a real GDP of \$21.8 trillion in FY22), BEA's productivity and innovation in delivering relevant, timely, and frequent data is exceptional. For example, the agency has initiated 26 new products since 2011, including such products as quarterly GDP by industry and GDP by county; accounts on healthcare, the space economy, marine economy, digital economy, and outdoor recreation; and near-real-time spending.</li> <li>➔ BEA is active in engaging with its stakeholders and data users for their data needs and incorporates their input into its innovation work.</li> <li>➔ BEA is a leader in diversifying its data sources both to provide more timely, relevant, and frequent data and also to reduce survey respondent burden.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ BEA's budget is generally supported by both the administration and Congress, and BEA has done better than other federal statistical agencies over the last two decades. Nevertheless, as described in the "Challenges" section, BEA's budget is not adequate for its mission.</li> <li>➔ Despite its current budget challenges, BEA is highly productive, consistently delivering new products and introducing innovations in operations and timeliness.</li> <li>➔ BEA has firm support from the Department of Commerce in terms of recognition, professional autonomy, use of its data, and more.</li> <li>➔ BEA has enjoyed continuous and effective leadership for more than two decades.</li> <li>➔ BEA's products are highly cited and consulted from local governments to the White House, throughout the private sector, and by researchers and the media.</li> <li>➔ BEA has a supportive culture for its staff and high rankings in employee satisfaction surveys (i.e., #32 out of 432 in <a href="#">2022 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government, agency subcomponents</a>), and is attuned to data user needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ BEA is funded in the same appropriations line as the Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs (OUSEA) to which it reports. Separating the two budgets would provide additional professional autonomy for BEA—reducing the opportunity for even the appearance of undue influence—and clarity for appropriators on the use of funds across the two organizations.</li> <li>➔ BEA lacks enabling legislation and statutory autonomy protections.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Because of its budget losing purchasing power and its staffing consequently being down 13% in the last several years, BEA is challenged to keep up with the demand for its growing number of products and the interest in them—with 26 new products since 2011 and website views reaching 22 million in 2022 and website downloads at 5.6 million that year.<sup>1</sup> If trends continue, or are not reversed, BEA will struggle to continue its productive and innovative work to track our nation's economy that is ever growing and more complicated.</li> <li>• In May 2024, we learned that, due to budget constraints, BEA suspended its “<a href="#">Near Real-Time Spending</a>” reports, which were based on card transaction data.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ BEA could be more effective and economic statistics more accurate if it had the same access to federal tax data as the U.S. Census Bureau.</li> <li>➔ With additional funding, BEA could build on its program to better understand economic well-being—the GDP and Beyond initiative—through better tracking and highlighting of economic activity as well as capturing nonmarket goods and services. In addition, BEA could expand its economic research capacity, which would better position the agency to address emerging measurement issues, including expanded use of private business data, the integration of data science and economics, the use of artificial intelligence (AI), and the retail trade's shift to the internet. BEA could develop a critically needed comprehensive system of environmental-economic accounts and modernize its Travel and Tourism Satellite Account. See the Department of Commerce <a href="#">FY 2024</a> and <a href="#">FY 2025</a> budget request documents for details on these and other opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency-specific recommendations</b></p>	<p>In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Congressional appropriators should separate the budget of the Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs from that of BEA.</li> <li>➔ Congressional authorizers should provide BEA the same access to federal tax data as that of the U.S. Census Bureau.</li> <li>➔ The Department of Commerce and Congress should give BEA full decision authority to recruit/fill senior executive and senior technical positions.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Because roughly half of BEA's budget is for salaries, the use of GDP deflator likely underestimates inflationary costs for BEA. The GDP deflator for federal non-defense government compensation has compounded a rate eight percentage points more than the GDP since FY09 and 25 percentage points since FY03.

# BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in the Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs (OJP) provides objective, reliable, and trustworthy statistics on a variety of justice-related issues, including, according to its website, “crime, criminal offenders, victims of crime, and the operation of justice systems at all levels of government.” These data are critical to federal, state, and local policymakers in combating crime and ensuring that justice is both efficient and evenhanded. Established in 1979, BJS’s principal products cover the following nine topics: corrections, courts, crime type, criminal justice data improvement program, employment and expenditure, federal processing of criminal cases, Indian country justice statistics, law enforcement, and victimization.

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information, information from former agency leadership, and select information from our questionnaire.

STRENGTH OF BJS’S SUPPORT†	
<b>Autonomy: Mixed.</b> No current threats but lacks agency-specific professional autonomy protections in statute.	<b>Parent agency: Mixed.</b> Positive aspects include recent championing in the President’s budget request and additional staff authorized and regularly requesting budgets that would allow BJS to maintain productivity and meet data user needs for relevant and timely data. A challenging aspect is lags in hiring and BJS website updates due to reliance on OJP for shared services.
<b>Budget: Weak.</b> BJS’s appropriated budget has declined by nearly 30% in purchasing power since 2018. Understanding its total budget is also difficult—as explained in challenges below.	<b>Staffing level: Challenging.</b> Compared with other principal federal statistical agencies, BJS staffing level is not commensurate with its budget. Including estimated set-aside and staffing amounts, its budget-to-staff ratio is roughly four times the median of the other federal statistical agencies.

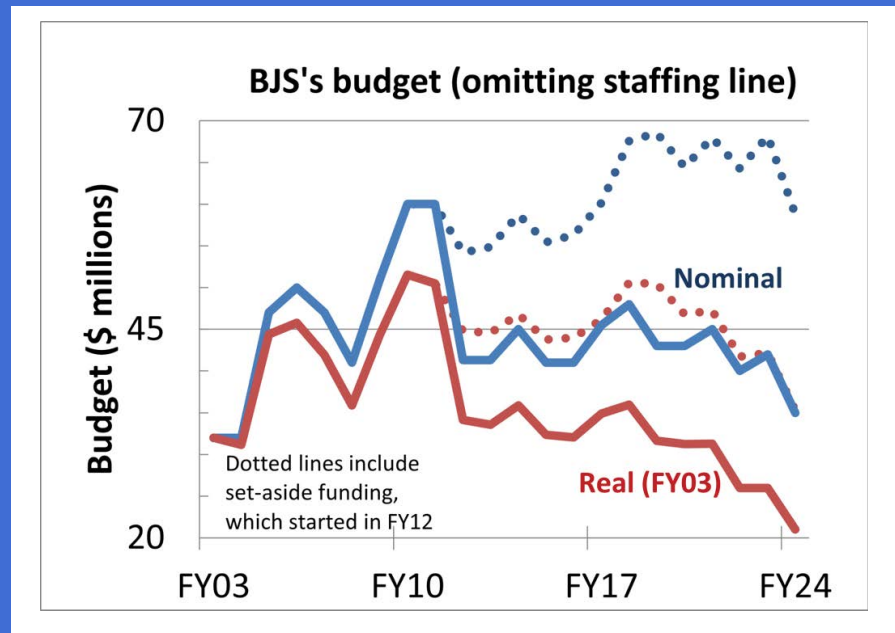
† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

## AGENCY FAST FACTS

### Budget inputs and FY24 level

1. Appropriations line item: \$35 million
2. Half of congressional set-aside that is a percent of OJP total research, evaluation, and statistics: 1%, or \$24 million
3. Undisclosed amount determined from OJP-wide account: supported 59 full-time employees in FY 2023 and subsequently authorized to increase to 82
4. BJS receives funding from other agencies to collect information through BJS's core platforms in order to meet those agencies' information needs

### Funding history, inflation adjusted



### Appointment of head & layers down in the Department of Commerce org chart

The BJS director is presidentially appointed. Senate confirmation of the presidential nomination was removed in 2012. BJS is one of two federal statistical agencies with such an appointment.

**Four:** Between the Attorney General (AG) and the BJS director are the:

- ➔ Deputy AG
- ➔ Associate AG
- ➔ Assistant AG for OJP

### Other

- ➔ BJS has roughly 50 active surveys covering the range of the criminal justice system, from victimization and arrests, to trial and sentencing, to imprisonment and recidivism. It contracts with private entities and the U.S. Census Bureau for the administration of most of its data collections.
- ➔ Three out of five BJS employees are survey statisticians.

<p><b>Recent successes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ New products, data sources, other innovations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Just the Stats</a>, a web-published series featuring short reports on specific topics of interest</li> <li>• Redesign and modernization of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) survey instrument and development of subnational estimates with input from stakeholders and a technical review panel</li> <li>• Development of a campus climate survey in coordination with Department of Education</li> </ul> </li> <li>→ BJS partners with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) through the Uniform Crime Reporting program, which includes the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). BJS has implemented new methods for addressing nonresponse in NIBRS and producing reliable state and Metropolitan statistical areas (MSA)-level estimates of NIBRS crimes.</li> <li>→ BJS was <a href="#">engaged by the White House</a> in support of President Biden's Executive Order (EO) on Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety to produce a report to the President on police statistics and to co-lead the inter-agency Criminal Justice Statistics Interagency Working Group.</li> <li>→ BJS leadership, resources, and staff for initiatives, research, and data collection are frequently tapped by the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) and Congress.</li> <li>→ BJS has been authorized by USDOJ to increase its staffing level by approximately 30%.</li> <li>→ BJS has recovered from the publication delays that plagued the agency in the late 2010s.</li> <li>→ BJS conducted the first-ever census and survey of victim-serving agencies. Prior to this, the only information on victim service organizations came from the list of organizations already receiving federal funding. Questions were added to the NCVS to understand the decision to use or not use victim services, including questions on psychological harms.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ BJS's products are relevant to societal issues as seen, for example, by website visits spiking in 2020 after George Floyd's murder.</li> <li>→ Since the late 2000s, BJS has a strong tradition of independence in the release of its reports.</li> <li>→ BJS has a strong relationship with the Office for Victims of Crime, including collaborations and support for the NCVS, Census of Victim Service Providers, and Survey of Victim Service Providers.</li> <li>→ BJS has a strong program for recognizing staff innovation.</li> <li>→ BJS has a long-standing practice to consult with data users and providers and with federal partners and outside experts with knowledge and experience in criminal justice research and survey methodology for all of its major collections. For examples of the latter, see the <a href="#">Additional guidance</a> callout below.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Removal in 2012 of Senate confirmation of the President's nominee for director took away an important check for the individual's qualifications, opening the door to unqualified or overly partisan leadership.</li> <li>➔ Large gaps between directors are due to the director serving at the pleasure of the President and appointment often not happening in the first year of an administration.</li> <li>➔ While having enabling legislation, BJS has few professional autonomy protections in statute.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Budget opaqueness: Only one of BJS's three budget inputs is known publicly: the amount appropriated by Congress. BJS also receives a portion of a congressional set-aside that is shared with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and its staffing allotment is done by USDOJ out of a department-wide account.</li> <li>➔ Congressional appropriations support has declined approximately 30% in purchasing power since 2018. With this decline and data collection costs that have risen in real terms, BJS's capacity to field its full phalanx of collections in a timely manner is diminished. Consider, for example, that the FY 2024 cost of fielding the NCVS is \$62 million, more than the \$59 million provided through congressional appropriations to BJS. Likely, as a result: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The last reported data collection or data available period for four of its <u>annual surveys</u> is 2019 (<u>Justice Expenditure and Employment Extracts Series</u>), 2020 (<u>Firearm Inquiry Statistics; National Corrections Reporting Program</u>), or 2021 (<u>Annual Probation Survey and Annual Parole Survey</u>).</li> <li>• Even its most well-known survey—the National Crime Victimization Survey—is affected by budget pressures that impede improvements to sample design, reduce capacity to address increasing nonresponse rates, and slow implementation of new design features such as those related to crime victims' use of victim services.</li> <li>• Reports are sometimes delayed. For example, from August 2023 to January 2024, BJS published six reports based on data from 2020 and five on data from 2019.</li> <li>• BJS has not been able to act on selected recommendations of National Academies' and other reports listed in the <u>Additional guidance box</u>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➔ Former BJS directors point out the agency budget has been constrained for a couple of decades. Besides not being able to fund survey redesigns to account for technological and methodological advances, consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <u>Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies</u> was administered every four years from 1992 to 2008 and has only been successfully administered twice since then, in 2014 and 2022.</li> <li>• The <u>National Inmate Survey</u> was administered in 2007, 2008–09, and 2011–12—and then not again until 2023.</li> <li>• The <u>Recidivism of State Prisoners</u> study hasn't been carried out in 12 years: previous surveys were in 1983, 1994, 2005, 2008, and 2012.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## Agency challenges

- The [Survey of Prison Inmates](#) was administered every five to seven years from 1974 to 2004 but has only been carried out once since then: previous surveys were in 1974, 1979, 1986, 1991, 1997, 2004, and 2016.
  - The [National Survey of Youth in Custody](#) has been administered only three times: 2008–09, 2012, and 2018.
  - The frequency of the [Census of State and Federal Adult Correctional Facilities](#) seems to have decreased from five years to seven years: previous surveys were in 1974, 1979, 1984, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2012 (limited variables), and 2019.
  - The frequency of the [Census of Federal Law Enforcement Officers](#) has slowed from every two years to at least every four years: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2016, and 2020.
- ➔ Data collection and reports for prosecution, adjudication, and sentencing are particularly sparse and cover only federal and tribal courts. Besides omitting state and local courts, BJS surveys do not cover the many decisions made during the prosecutorial process (e.g., declining to prosecute). Consider the BJS surveys that cover this part of the criminal justice process:
- The [National Survey of Indigent Defense Systems](#) was conducted in 1999–2000 and 2013.
  - The [Census/Survey of Public Defender Offices](#), which alternates with the National Survey of Indigent Defense Systems, was last conducted as a census in 2007.
  - The [National Survey/Census of Prosecutors' Offices](#) has not been conducted since 2015: Census in 2001, 2007, and 2015; Surveys in 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, and 2005.
  - The [Census of Tribal Court Systems](#) has been conducted once, in 2014.
  - The [Survey of State Attorneys General Offices](#) was conducted once in 2014 on white-collar crime and once in 2018 on human-trafficking offenses.
  - The [State Court Processing Statistics](#) data collection was collected from 1988 to 2006 and in 2009.
  - The National Judicial Reporting Program was collected biannually from 1986 until 2006, the last year of its collection.
  - The [Federal Justice Statistics Program](#) and [National Pretrial Reporting Program](#), which cover other parts of the process, are active, though the latter last collected data in 2012 (with a data collection currently underway).
- ➔ For a federal statistical agency, BJS has limited staff to carry out the labor-intensive work of a federal statistical agency (e.g., manage ongoing data collection efforts, engage in redesign of collections, and respond to Congressional mandates). Indeed, including estimated set-aside and staffing amounts, its budget-to-staff ratio is roughly four times the median of the other federal statistical agencies. Additional staff are needed to balance workload and improve timeliness of data releases.

<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ BJS's dependence on its parent agency for some shared services results in delays in hiring and webpage updates.</li> <li>➔ Mandates from Congress and special requests from the White House and USDOJ generally come without additional funding, further straining BJS limited resources. For example, the FY 2023 House Commerce Justice Science (CJS) committee directed BJS to produce measures “showing how representative is the existing workforce of the average police and sheriff department, compared to the community served” and “of average officer pay in police and sheriff departments compared to cost of living in the jurisdiction in which they are currently employed; and legislative and administrative recommendations for increasing the percentage of officers that live in the jurisdiction in which they are employed and how representative the law enforcement agency is of the community it serves.” In FY 2022, the same committee directed BJS to “collect data on solitary confinement practices, including frequency, conditions of solitary confinement, duration of solitary confinement, the impact of solitary confinement on an individual’s physical and social-emotional health, and the recidivism rate of individuals who have experienced solitary confinement.” There are seven mandates for BJS in the House FY21 report language.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ With additional staffing, BJS could expand its partnership and advantageous engagement with the FBI and Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) to further extend the coverage of the criminal justice system and therefore the relevance of all its data products.</li> <li>➔ With additional funding, BJS could more fully implement the recommendations of the reports in the <u>Additional guidance</u> callout below.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency-specific recommendations</b></p>	<p>In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend the following for the President and Congress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Change the appointment of the BJS director to either civil servant or presidential appointment with Senate confirmation for a fixed term not beginning in the first year of an administration.</li> <li>➔ Make BJS's three budget components (i.e., set-aside input, staffing amount, and congressional appropriation) transparent.</li> <li>➔ Give BJS more staffing-level flexibility in order to address its staffing challenges (e.g., by providing it with its portion of DOJ-wide staffing account and giving it authority to use all of its budget for salaries and expenses).</li> <li>➔ Provide more funding so BJS can more regularly field its non-annual surveys and thereby provide more timely and frequent statistics on the entire criminal justice system.</li> <li>➔ Provide BJS with capacity to directly update its website.</li> <li>➔ Always accompany new mandates with an adequate budget.</li> </ul>

## Additional guidance

- [Surveying Victims: Options for Conducting the National Crime Victimization Survey](https://doi.org/10.17226/12090). 2008. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/12090>
- [Ensuring the Quality, Credibility, and Relevance of U.S. Justice Statistics](https://doi.org/10.17226/12671). 2009. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/12671>
- [Estimating the Incidence of Rape and Sexual Assault](https://doi.org/10.17226/18605). 2014. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/18605>
- [Modernizing Crime Statistics](#). Reports 1 and 2 from the National Academies: 2016 and 2018.
- [The Limits of Recidivism: Measuring Success After Prison](https://doi.org/10.17226/26459). 2022. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26459>
- [Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice: Science, Practice, and Policy](https://doi.org/10.17226/26705). 2023. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26705>
- [The United States Needs to Fill the Gaps in Its Crime Statistics](#). 2023. Janet Lauritsen in Amstat News.
- [State of the Criminal Justice Data Infrastructure](#). May 2021. Three former leaders of BJS in Amstat News.
- [Priorities for 2021 Congress and Administration](#). Bureau of Justice Statistics memo.
- [Campaign for Criminal Justice Data Modernization](#). April 2021. Arnold Ventures.

# BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is the principal federal statistical agency delivering economic data on employment, price change, working conditions, and productivity in the U.S. economy. BLS employs over 2,000 staff, including economists, statisticians, data scientists, information technology specialists, researchers, administrative specialists, and other professionals. BLS maintains partnerships with state and territorial governments, coordinates with other federal statistical agencies, and contracts with private vendors for parts of its data collection, information technology, and related services. BLS provides statistical guidance to the Department of Labor (DOL)—as designated by the Evidence Act, the BLS commissioner is the DOL statistical official—and its agencies to support their data needs and DOL’s mission to “foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.”

A variety of data products produced by BLS provide statistical information on:

## PRICES

- Consumer Price Index (CPI)
- Producer Price Index (PPI)
- U.S. Import and Export Price Indexes
- Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CE)

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

- Current Population Survey (CPS)
- Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS)
- Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)
- Current Employment Statistics (CES)
- Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)
- Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS)
- Employment Projections (EP)
- National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS)
- American Time Use Survey (ATUS)

## COMPENSATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS

- National Compensation Survey (NCS)
- Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS)
- Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII)
- Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI)
- Work Stoppage Statistics

## PRODUCTIVITY

- Labor productivity
- Total factor productivity

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information and selected information from our questionnaire.

## STRENGTH OF BLS'S SUPPORT†

**Autonomy: Mixed.** No current threats but lacks professional autonomy protections in statute.

**Parent agency: Good.** The Department of Labor is strongly supportive of BLS, meaningfully engaging BLS in DOL initiatives, consulting it to provide publicly available data to inform policy initiatives, often recognizing its work through the annual Secretary's Honor Awards, supporting stakeholder outreach, and providing such shared services as human resources (HR), procurement, and personnel security. For key BLS appropriation issues, DOL should consider including BLS leadership in meetings with Congressional appropriations staff.

**Budget/staffing: Challenging.** BLS has lost 18% in purchasing power since FY 2009. Its budget has allowed it to continue to innovate but has prevented it from carrying out in a timely manner the much-needed redesign of at least two of its major products, thereby threatening their long-term viability at the same quality level. The agency's staffing level is commensurate with its budget, which along with budget flexibility, enables it to make the most of its resources.

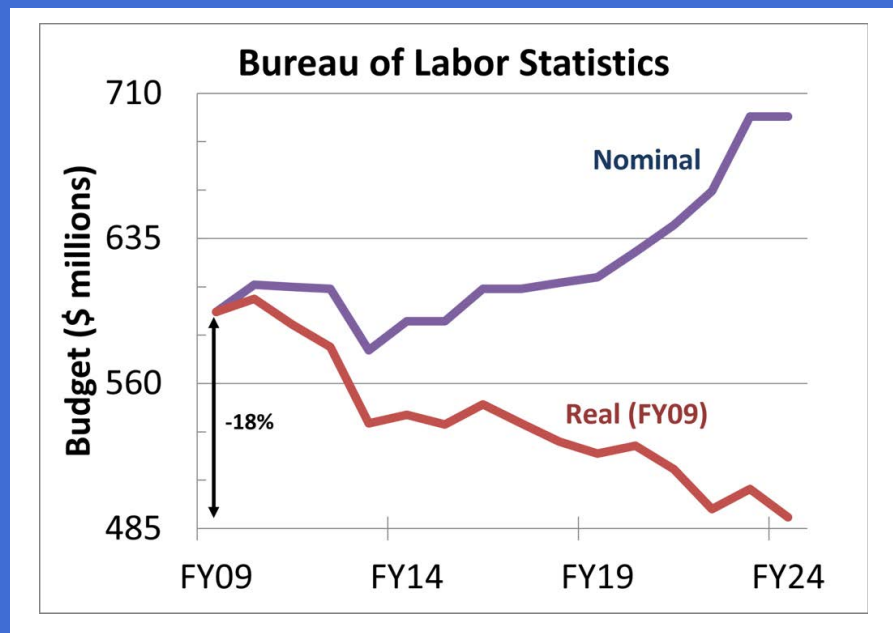
† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

## AGENCY FAST FACTS

**Budget inputs and FY24 level**

1. Appropriations line: \$698 million

**Funding history, inflation adjusted**



<p><b>Appointment of head &amp; layers down in the Department of Commerce org chart</b></p>	<p>The BLS commissioner is presidentially appointed and Senate confirmed, one of three federal statistical agencies with such an appointment. The commissioner has a fixed four-year term set in statute, which also establishes professional qualification requirements for the position.</p> <p><b>One:</b> The BLS commissioner reports to the Secretary of Labor and interacts on operational issues with the deputy secretary.</p>
<p><b>Other</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ BLS administers 9 surveys on its own and 12 in collaboration with federal and state agencies. It also draws from 14 administrative data sets, 10 private data sets, and 45+ other data sources from federal agencies and other organizations for input to its products.</li> <li>➔ Among the data sets added in the last several years are foreign direct investment administrative data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA); wage records from states' administrative data; a private source for gas prices; and car prices from JD Power and Associates for the consumer price index.</li> <li>➔ Seven of BLS's products are official <a href="#">Principal Federal Economic Indicators</a>.</li> <li>➔ Thirty-two percent of BLS employees are national office economists, and 37% are field staff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recent successes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ BLS innovated (see <a href="#">BLS Innovations</a>) in such areas as data granularity and timeliness, data quality, analytic tools, and collaboration. As one example, BLS published the first-ever measure of consumption based on the Consumer Expenditure Surveys data and administrative data. This measure is important because many economists consider consumption to be a better estimate of economic well-being than, for example, measures of income or expenditures.</li> <li>➔ BLS showed agility in the production of <a href="#">reports</a> analyzing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on employment and prices, including in its <a href="#">Monthly Labor Review for 2020</a>.</li> <li>➔ BLS built a new data center with supporting infrastructure to replace its main data center that was in the basement of its headquarters building. The new data center is in a Sigma 5 site.</li> <li>➔ BLS data are widely used. Annual output includes 2.5 million downloads; Application Programming Interface (API) usage at 20 million; website page views at 170 million; hundreds of citations of Monthly Labor Review articles and research based on the NLS; and 1 million media mentions.</li> <li>➔ BLS has maintained strong support and engagement from DOL and the administration from both parties.</li> <li>➔ While down significantly in purchasing power since 2009, BLS has received stronger budget support recently.</li> <li>➔ BLS maintains an active program of employee recognition and training, including program-specific training in Python, R, and other advanced statistical and data science tools.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ A large fraction (a quarter to a third) of hires come from other parts of the federal government (perhaps indicating BLS is viewed by government employees as a desirable place to work); low number of labor disputes relative to size of workforce; high ranking in employee satisfaction survey (i.e., #57 out of 432 in <u>2022 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government, agency subcomponents</u>).</li> <li>➔ BLS actively engages its three advisory committees and regional data users' meetings and incorporates their feedback into its work to maintain relevant and timely products.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ BLS has no professional autonomy protection in statute.</li> <li>➔ For information technology (IT), BLS has control over IT operations for collecting, processing, and disseminating statistical information, although the DOL has repeatedly expressed interest in incorporating BLS IT into the department.</li> <li>➔ A possible threat is that 27% of BLS employees in FY 2023 are eligible for retirement by FY 2026, substantially more than what other agencies reported, which could impair institutional knowledge, quality management, and analytic capabilities. The upcoming national office headquarters move to Suitland, MD, could exacerbate this threat but also presents an opportunity to increase collaboration with the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the Census Bureau.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ <u>BLS survey response rates</u> are falling, resulting in higher data collection costs and, if the surveys cannot be redesigned, potential erosion of the precision and utility of BLS statistics.</li> <li>➔ Preserving respondent privacy and ensuring cybersecurity of data are important to maintain trust but are increasingly costly and difficult, often requiring major system or product redesign. Without additional support for such efforts, funding would have to be offset from programs for data, data products, and innovation.</li> <li>➔ User focus on evidence-based decision-making has raised public and private sector demand for more timely, relevant, and granular (e.g., by demographics and geography) official statistics.</li> <li>➔ An increasing share of the BLS budget is being absorbed by the Department of Labor in charges for shared services, including HR, procurement, and personnel security services.</li> <li>➔ BLS has lost 18% in purchasing power since FY09. As a result, two major surveys, the Current Population Survey (CPS—source of unemployment rates) and the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE—a key input to inflation measures), are past due for major redesign, endangering their viability to produce high-impact products with the same quality over the next decade. Indeed, in June 2024, BLS announced a 6% cut in the CPS sample size, threatening overall data quality and the availability of employment statistics at the subnational level.”</li> <li>➔ BLS is rarely included in relevant meetings with appropriations staff.</li> <li>➔ While Congress and the administration have been working to address BLS’s loss in purchasing power (as wages and contract prices rise), many of the agency’s proposed initiatives are not funded.</li> </ul>

## Agency challenges

- BLS's proposed initiatives in the FY 2024 President's Budgets illustrate what BLS could do with additional resources:
  - Funding to modernize the CPS to improve accuracy of unemployment and workforce estimates, reduce respondent burden, and ensure the long-term viability of the unemployment and workforce estimates in light of declining survey response rates.
  - Funding to modernize the CE to improve inflation measures and produce production-quality thresholds to support the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure.
  - Funding to support production of the American Indian Population and Labor Force Report.
  - Funding to improve the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey in order to enhance the understanding of openings, hires, and separations by producing earlier preliminary estimates, expanding the sample size; and adding depth through focused questions on labor market issues.
  - Funding to restore agricultural industries to the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics program.
  - Funding to improve the timeliness of the final chained Consumer Price Index.
- With more resources, BLS could also:
  - Publish Consumer Price Index estimates for many to all of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia.
  - Make BLS's research measure of household consumption into an official U.S. economic statistic.
  - Reverse the recent decline from 77.3% to 72.5% in coverage of price changes received by businesses in the domestic economy, as measured by the Producer Price Index.
  - Expand to all states partnerships whereby states' enhanced administrative data are used to produce more timely and granular local labor market information and augment BLS survey programs.
  - Modernize the BLS data repository and its toolkit for accessing the publicly available data.
  - Test use of more private and public administrative data sources to augment or replace aspects of its survey programs.



**Agency-specific recommendations**

In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend that the Department of Labor should:

- Continue its support of BLS along with its respect for its professional autonomy.
- Regularly include BLS in discussions with appropriators to explain the motivation behind BLS budget requests, including challenges faced by the agency and benefits of initiatives.

**See also**

[State of the Workforce Data Infrastructure](#); what three experts have to say about the state of BLS.

## BLS INNOVATIONS

### Innovations

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has undertaken significant initiatives and improvements across various fronts over the past several years. For example, in **data granularity and timeliness**, BLS initiated the following:

- ➔ productivity data at the state level;
- ➔ productivity measures for Urban Transit;
- ➔ inclusion of American Indians and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, as well as Asian ethnic groups, including Asian Indians, Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Other Asians in monthly labor force data;
- ➔ estimates on respiratory infections and work-related Covid infections in the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illness;
- ➔ official monthly state job openings and labor turnover survey data;
- ➔ measures of within-industry productivity dispersion, in collaboration with the Census Bureau;
- ➔ experimental industry-level measures of Total Factor Productivity in collaboration with the Bureau for Economic Analysis;
- ➔ expansion of Total Factor Productivity to include non-manufacturing industries and 10 new major industry groups; and
- ➔ annual employment projections (formerly biennial).

The BLS also works continually to improve **data quality** and develop **tools** to facilitate the use of their data. Data quality improvements included developing a methodology at the onset of the pandemic to improve estimates of quarterly labor productivity to account for the March 2020 Covid-19-related job losses.

They have also made improvements to the quarterly productivity measures, the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, and developed experimental measures of productivity for several retail trade industries, including grocery stores. BLS new **tools** include a pay measures comparison tool, a mapping application for Local Area Unemployment Statistics, a Local Area app for Android and iPhones, a CareerInfo (Occupational Outlook Handbook) app for Android and iPhones, a Covid-19 data dashboard showing key economic variables, an industry productivity viewer tool, and a demographic data sources tool.

### Ongoing Collaborations and Planning

BLS has many ongoing efforts and collaborations to support continued innovation. Reflecting the recognition of BLS's work and the expertise of its staff, BLS staff members also participate in various **national and international committees**:

- ➔ UN Task Teams on the revision of the Central Product Classification and Standard International Energy Product Classification;
- ➔ the Economic Classification and Policy Committee establishing the North American NAICS and NAPCS classification;
- ➔ the UN Voorburg Group on Service Statistics;
- ➔ the multi-agency Policy Working Group on Natural Capital and Environmental-Economic Statistics;
- ➔ the UN Statistical Mission Ottawa Group on price indexes; and
- ➔ the UN Economic Commission for Europe Geneva Group of Experts on Consumer Price Indexes.

BLS is also engaged in several **interagency initiatives**, including:

- ➔ foreign direct investment research into employment, occupation, and wages with BEA;
- ➔ CPS modernization with the Census Bureau;
- ➔ the Interagency Working Group on Data Equity;
- ➔ productivity dispersion with the Census Bureau;
- ➔ Integrated Production Accounts with BEA;
- ➔ the Interagency Working Group on Supplemental Poverty Measure); (vii) collaboration with the Social Security Administration to ensure that estimates produced by the Bureau's Occupational Requirements Survey meet their data needs; and
- ➔ collaboration with BEA to produce distributional personal consumption expenditure accounts based on the Consumer Expenditure Surveys.

To tap outside expertise, in addition to its advisory committees, BLS regularly engages with **outside organizations and academics**, including the following: the National Institute of Statistical Sciences (NISS); the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT), the American Statistical Association (ASA) for an annual Fellowship Program mediated through the National Science Foundation (NSF), Columbia University, and Pennsylvania State University.

BLS also engages in multiple **Joint Ventures and Cooperative Agreements**, including to expand the [Wage Records Program](#) to all states, initiate a new cohort of the [National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth](#), and extend use of private payroll provider data among BLS.

# BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION STATISTICS

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) is the principal federal statistical agency that compiles data and statistics on how transportation infrastructure withstands hazards, and how reliably, sustainably, and safely people and commodities move within the United States and across our borders. BTS also provides statistics on how transportation contributes and enables the nation's economy. Its key products include statistics on freight and supply chains, economic trends, accessibility and availability of transportation services, transportation equity and climate impacts, commercial aviation travel and performance, transportation vulnerability and resilience, and precursor safety data.

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information and select information from our questionnaire.

## STRENGTH OF BTS'S SUPPORT†

**Autonomy: Weak.** BTS has more autonomy protection in statute than most statistical agencies. However, its budget and contracting authority is weak, if not counterproductive, leaving the agency's professional autonomy vulnerable.

**Budget/staffing: Challenging.** BTS has lost 46% in purchasing power since FY 2003 through its main funding source, the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). A positive aspect of the HTF funding is that it provides stability and some flexibility for longer-term planning as well as support through government shutdowns. BTS also receives funding through other sources, as described below. DOT recently lifted BTS's FTE employee cap. As a result, for FY 2024, BTS has 83 FTE, including 21 vacancies.

**Parent agency: Mixed.** The administration has consistently requested budget increases for BTS through authorization and appropriation and, except for BTS budget independence, generally respects BTS professional autonomy. The Department of Transportation (DOT) has also recently allowed BTS increased flexibility on its total FTE. On the other hand, DOT let BTS slide from reporting directly to the Secretary to four levels down in the Department's bureaucratic layering. Further, limitations in HR and other shared services provided by the department sometimes impede BTS's ability to be nimble and fully effective as a statistical agency.

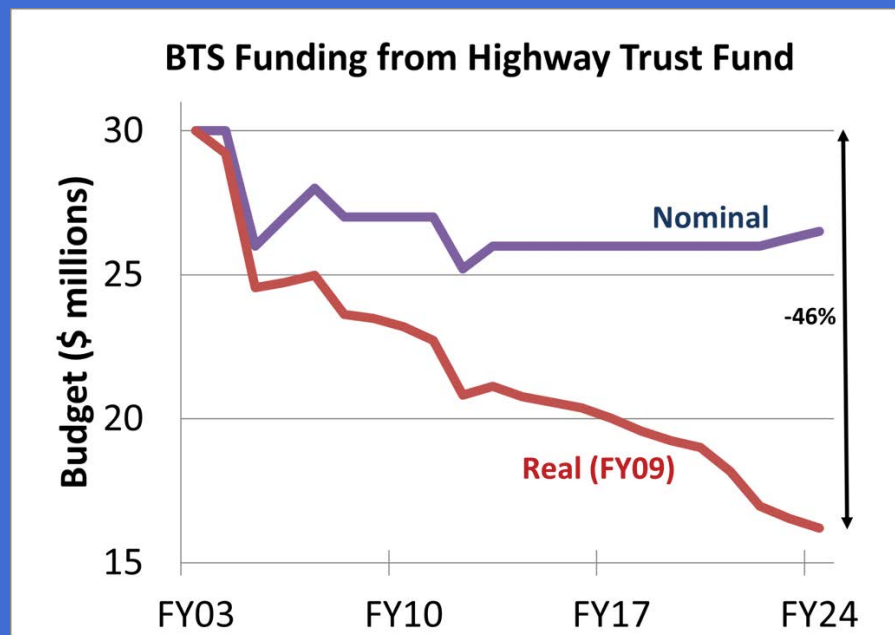
† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

## AGENCY FAST FACTS

### Budget inputs and FY24 level

1. BTS is funded through the Highway Trust Fund via authorization. Its FY 2024 authorization level is \$26.5 million, to increase by a quarter million each year to \$27 million in FY 2026.
2. BTS is also funded through the Airport and Airway Trust Fund at the discretion of the Federal Aviation Administration, averaging \$4.5 million annually.
3. BTS is eligible for funding through appropriations, which provided \$3 million in FY 2023.
4. Funding through interagency agreements with DOT agencies and other federal agencies totaled about \$9.5 million in FY 2024.

### Funding history, inflation adjusted



### Appointment of head & layers down in DOT org chart

BTS is one of eight principal federal statistical agencies for which the head is a career senior executive service appointee.

**Four:** The following layers are between the BTS Director and Secretary of Transportation:

- ➔ Deputy Secretary
- ➔ Undersecretary
- ➔ Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology

<p><b>Other</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ BTS staff includes statisticians, data scientists, transportation specialists, economists, and geographers, with the latter two together making up half of BTS's full-time employees.</li> <li>➔ BTS products include, but are not limited to, three congressionally mandated reports; 13 freight programs; airline usage, financial, and performance data; monthly economic indicator; transportation contribution to economy; near misses reporting systems covering three transportation modes; and 120 unique geospatial data layers. Many products leverage administrative records, real-time GPS or operational data, and private data sources.</li> <li>➔ <u>BTS's authorizing legislation</u> establishes that the director shall "serve as the senior advisor to the Secretary on data and statistics" and lists such department-wide duties as "improve the coordination of information collection efforts with other Federal agencies"; "continually improve surveys and data collection methods of the Department to improve the accuracy and utility of transportation statistics"; "encourage the standardization of data, data collection methods, and data management and storage technologies for data collected by" such entities as "the operating administrations of the Department, State and local governments, metropolitan planning organizations; and private sector entities."</li> <li>➔ Also somewhat unique, the BTS director is "appointed in the competitive service by the Secretary."</li> <li>➔ BTS houses the National Transportation Library—a digital library—which maintains and facilitates access to statistical and other information needed for transportation decision-making. BTS is the only statistical agency to host such a library and benefits from the perspectives of its librarians and information scientists.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recent successes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ In the first months of the pandemic, BTS developed and posted transportation and economic indicators to track the impacts of the pandemic on transportation.</li> <li>➔ To advise the National Economic Council on 2021 supply chain disruption, BTS collaborated with five other departments to develop weekly indicators monitoring the direct and indirect impacts on freight industry and supply chains, the production of which is ongoing.</li> <li>➔ The White House Supply Chain Envoy, DOT Office of the Chief Information Officer, and BTS initiated the Freight Logistics Optimization Works (FLOW) program to further aid supply chain challenges and resilience. FLOW is made possible by BTS guaranteeing—through the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA)—the protection of proprietary data provided by the freight industry.</li> <li>➔ BTS collaborated with its partners to reinstate the Vehicle Inventory and Use Survey (VIUS) in 2021 for the first time since 2002.</li> <li>➔ BTS's near-miss reporting program has expanded to transit and maritime industries. Near-miss data are more effective safe and way to identify risk factors without the occurrence of an actual accident.</li> <li>➔ BTS provides relevant information on nationally significant disruptions of transportation. For example, BTS delivered information about the Port of Baltimore on the day of the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ BTS has strong statutory professional autonomy protections for publications as well as data collection and analysis.</li> <li>→ Funding as an allocation account from the Highway Trust Fund provides multiyear funding of large-scale products such as the Commodity Flow Survey and is not subject to disruptions from lapses in appropriations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ BTS is the smallest of the principal federal statistical agencies and has more products than staff.</li> <li>→ BTS's descent down the department's bureaucratic layering threatens the agency's ability to effectively execute its legislative mandates. For example, despite the statutory role of the director as senior advisor to the Secretary on data and statistics, BTS leadership is rarely included in department executive-level meetings where major decisions on data and evidence-building are made.</li> <li>→ Further complicating DOT's engagement of BTS, <u>DOT has seven other units that maintain statistical programs</u>: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Federal Highway Administration (FHA), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). The combined FY 2020 funding level of the seven units, \$124.6 million, nearly five times that of BTS—and the distributed nature of DOT statistical programs dilutes BTS's role in DOT's statistical program, in part to keep BTS programs from overlapping with the other seven DOT units.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ BTS's main funding, from the Highway Trust Fund, has been flat in nominal dollars for 20 years, resulting in 46% loss in purchasing power, hindering BTS's ability to be innovative and fully provide relevant and timely statistics on the dynamic transportation system.</li> <li>→ BTS is sometimes mandated to carry out work for which no funding is provided. For example, in the 2015 Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, BTS was required to establish a "port performance statistics program to provide nationally consistent measures of performance." The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act required BTS to study federal support for local decision-making. The 2022 Ocean Shipping Reform Act requires BTS to "publish statistics relating to the dwell time of equipment used in intermodal transportation at the top 25 ports, including inland ports."</li> </ul>

<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<p>→ With more support, BTS could do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop foundational data programs to enable the transformation of our current transportation system to a highly automated one. For example, BTS could build and maintain a high-definition digital geospatial data infrastructure to support further expansion of autonomous driving.</li> <li>• Develop a transportation insecurity index, similar to USDA's Food Insecurity and HUD's Housing Insecurity indexes.</li> <li>• Develop the national supply chain modeling system to project transportation, economic, and environment impacts on the United States of alternative freight policies and investments, and different assumptions about the changing patterns of global trade, future consumer demand, supply chain outlook, etc. The proposed system will be analogous to the <a href="#">National Energy Modeling System</a>, the Energy Information Administration's popular and influential program that projects the production, imports, exports, conversion, consumption, and prices of energy, subject to a number of assumptions and is used for policy analyses requested by decision-makers in the White House; the U.S. Congress; and other DOE offices.</li> <li>• Identify and rank barriers to electric vehicle adoption.</li> <li>• Lead DOT in assuring the integrity of data and algorithms used in the department's AI applications.</li> <li>• More fully support Congressional and Executive Branch initiatives regarding the economy, equity, and access to healthcare, education, work, and groceries.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency-specific recommendations</b></p>	<p>In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend that:</p> <p>→ DOT should revisit BTS's role—as the department's sole federal statistical agency and its director as department's Statistical Official—and that of evidence-based policymaking and could consider an <a href="#">Office-of-Homeland-Security-Statistics-inspired</a> move to confirm DOT's emphasis on evidence-based policymaking and the role of BTS.</p>

# U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

The Census Bureau is the federal government's largest statistical agency, producing data that inform our democracy and economy. It is best known for conducting the decennial census of population and housing beginning in 1790 as mandated in Article 1 of the Constitution. Census data are used to apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and redraw congressional, state, and local districts to reflect changes in the population. Census data also serve many other functions, including input to federal, state, and local government planning and redrawing of boundaries of metropolitan, urban, and rural areas. The Census Bureau's statutorily mandated population estimates program produces annual estimates for states, counties, and other geographic units, using census data updated with birth and death records and information on migration to and within the country. These estimates support the distribution of approximately [\\$1.5 trillion in federal funding annually](#) to state, local, and tribal governments and are used to calibrate other surveys to represent the population. The American Community Survey, which replaced the decennial census "long-form" sample beginning in 2005, provides annually a wide range of social, demographic, and economic data for states and small geographic areas, which serve a multitude of purposes. The Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement produces annual estimates of household income, poverty, and health insurance coverage and is widely used in research. The Census Bureau also conducts the statutorily mandated Economic Census of all businesses in the nation every five years and annual, quarterly, and monthly surveys of business sectors, such as construction and retail trade. Data from its business censuses and surveys are input to the National Income and Product Accounts produced by Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and are widely followed by financial markets and business economists. In addition, the Census Bureau conducts many surveys under contract to other federal agencies that do not have their own infrastructure for conducting large national surveys, such as the Current Population Survey, National Crime Victimization Survey, Annual Business Survey (data on research and development investments and characteristics of business owners), and National Health Interview Survey. Census data affect every facet of American society. The full breadth and depth of the Census Bureau's work is challenging to convey in a short document.

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information and select information from our questionnaire.



## STRENGTH OF CENSUS'S SUPPORT†

**Autonomy: Weak.** The Census Bureau lacks protections in statute for most of its professional autonomy, leaving it susceptible to the political meddling that occurred with the 2020 Census. Its professional autonomy is also undermined due to a 1950 law that transferred the duties of the director of the Census Bureau to the Secretary of Commerce.

**Budget/staffing: Mixed.** The Census Bureau is the largest of the federal statistical agencies by budget but is often challenged to maintain and redesign programs, launch new products to fulfill its mandate to produce relevant and timely data, and make cost-saving upgrades to legacy systems. In particular, funding for the decennial census tends to be inadequate for early R&D and testing, which can lead to missed opportunities to identify improvements in processes that could boost population coverage.

**Parent agency: Good.** The Department of Commerce (DOC) is generally strongly supportive of the U.S. Census Bureau through recognition of its work, requesting budget increases that allow the agency to continue to produce relevant and timely data, and generally supporting the many demands of the decennial census. The DOC also regularly calls on the census director (currently serving as the DOC statistical official), includes Census officials in some congressional meetings, and provides such shared services as HR, counsel, and security. DOC has also been collaborative in recognizing the need for the Census Bureau to have a measure of autonomy in IT operations, providing more of an oversight function rather than production and operational functions. The Census Bureau's agility could be improved by more timely support of Census hiring.

Despite strong parent-agency support currently, the Census Bureau has gone through periods of little support as well as periods when the DOC leadership has tried to interfere in the methodological and scientific integrity of the Census Bureau's data collection and dissemination.

† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

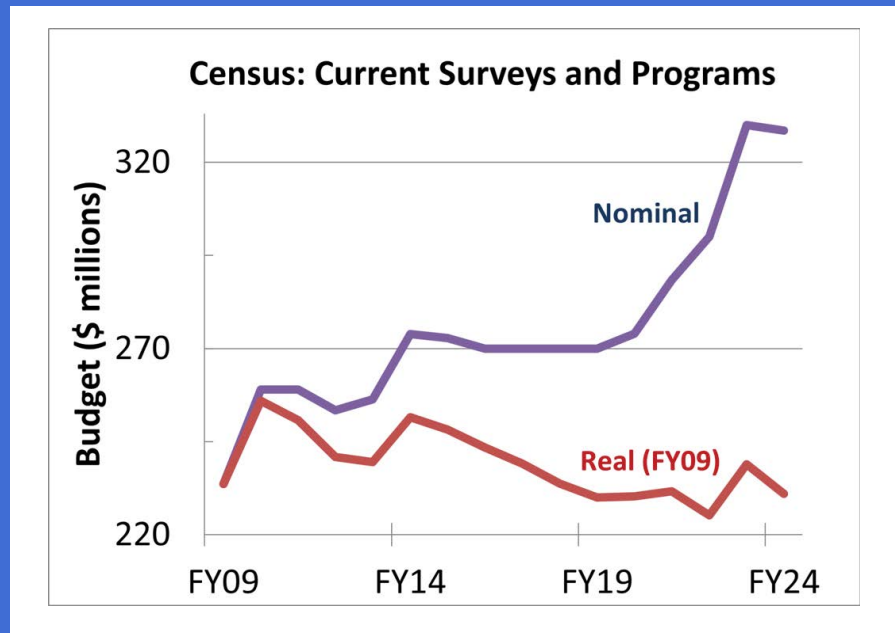
## AGENCY FAST FACTS

### Budget inputs and FY24 level

Appropriations line items: \$1,383 million

1. Current Surveys and Programs: \$329 million
2. Periodic Censuses and Programs \$1,054 million

### Funding history, inflation adjusted (figures shown exclude the decennial and economic censuses)



### Appointment of head & layers down in DOC org chart

The Census Bureau director is presidentially appointed and Senate confirmed, one of three federal statistical agencies with such an appointment. The director has a fixed five-year term set in statute, with the opportunity for reappointment to a second term. The statute also establishes professional qualification requirements for the position. The director may serve an additional year after the end of the director's term until reappointed or until a successor is appointed.

**Two:** The Census Bureau director reports to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs, who reports to the Secretary.

## Other

- The director serves as the Commerce Statistical Official (on a two-year rotation with the BEA director).
- The Census Bureau regularly administers more than 125 surveys, about 75 of which are economic surveys and 50 are demographic surveys. It conducts many of these surveys for other agencies or jointly with others. It also uses a long list of [administrative data sources](#).
- Thirteen of Census's data products are official [Principal Federal Economic Indicators](#) (some joint with BEA).
- Census Bureau staff include mathematical statisticians, survey methodologists, economists, demographers, data scientists, communications and other specialists, and a large field staff.

## Recent successes

- The Census Bureau has a strong innovation culture. Some recent examples include:
  - April 2020: In just the second month of the pandemic, the Census Bureau developed and launched the [Small Business Pulse Survey](#) (SBPS), reaching more than 1 million small businesses, to provide high-frequency data to policy-makers and the public about the challenges small businesses are facing. The program's relevance and timeliness led to the Census Bureau institutionalizing the program as the [Business Trends and Outlook Survey](#).
  - April 2020: The Census Bureau created and launched the [Household Pulse Survey](#) in collaboration with numerous other agencies. Its quarterly reports on topics ranging from baby formula access to living through natural disasters were of such value that the program continues to be funded as part of the "High Frequency Data Program."
  - The Census Bureau released new products from existing surveys to measure the [adoption of new technologies](#) (e.g., [machine learning](#), [robotics](#), [automation](#), and [artificial intelligence](#)) and indirectly measure their impact on employment and productivity.
  - The Census Bureau illustrated the potential of data linkage with its experimental release showing [earnings and employment outcomes for U.S. Army veterans](#), [Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes](#), and Business Dynamics Statistics (BDS) on [U.S. High Tech Industries](#) and [Single Unit Firms](#).
  - The Census Bureau's [BDS-Goods Traders data tables](#), an experimental data product, provides insights on job creation and destruction; job expansions and contractions; number of establishments and firms; establishment openings and closings; and number of startups and firm shutdowns for importers, exporters, and non-traders.
  - In February 2023, the Census Bureau launched the [Index of Economic Activity](#) (IDEA)—an aggregation of 15 of the Census Bureau's primary economic data series that provides a single time series constructed as a weighted combination. The IDEA is a monthly index that is calculated daily.
- For more, see the [Innovations](#) box.

## Agency strengths

- The Census Bureau is a high-profile agency and produces products with far-reaching relevance. Its web page views number well over 100 million annually and several times that in a decennial year. By another measure, census scholar Andrew Reamer found that in FY 2017, “316 federal spending programs relied on 2010 Census-derived data to distribute [\\$1.5 trillion to state and local governments, nonprofits, businesses, and households across the nation](#).”
- The Census Bureau engages with its data user communities, including through advisory committees, data-user conferences, and other conference attendance. In 2023, its data-user conferences included one on the [Survey of Income and Program Participation](#) and the annual data products training conference for [State Data Centers, Census Information Centers, Data Dissemination Specialists, and Training Specialists and Data Dissemination Assistants](#). From 2021 to 2023, Census experts attended more than 110 conferences, as captured [here](#). The [Census Project](#) supports the decennial census and American Community Survey (ACS) with Congress, the administration, and the public, and an ACS data users group provides a channel of communication with the Census Bureau and among users ([American Community Survey Data Users Group](#)).
- The Census Bureau has strong parent agency support through meaningful inclusion in department leadership meetings, in department- or administration-wide policy initiatives and recognition of Census Bureau employees with Department Gold and Silver medals in each of the last three years, and through regular consultation with the director as the department’s current Statistical Official. The department promoted the 2020 decennial census and supported federal funding for the census. The department also promoted census public awareness activities, which included extensive efforts by state and local governments. It also provides ongoing legal and policy support for Census Bureau engagements with legislators, appropriators, and regulatory bodies, including at least annual meetings with appropriators.
- While the current parent-agency support is strong, it depends on the leadership at the Department of Commerce. Census has gone through periods in which the leadership has tried to interfere in the methodological and scientific integrity of the Census Bureau’s data collection and dissemination. This is still a threat.
- The Census Bureau does engage in proactive Congressional outreach in addition to providing requested demographic and economic information to congressional offices. The Census Bureau regularly engages Congress on a range of issues (e.g., the 2020 Census Congressional Partnership Initiative and promoting the American Community Survey, the Economic Census, and data tools such as MyCongressional District, MyTribalArea, and MyCommunityExplorer).
- The Census Bureau makes [extensive use of administrative datasets](#), which helps it provide more relevant and timely data and reduce respondent burden.
- As exemplified in recent successes above, the Census Bureau has a strong record of innovation, which we further discuss [here](#). The [Census Longitudinal Infrastructure Pilot Projects](#), which make use of the Census Bureau’s data linkage infrastructure, have shed light on such topics as migration patterns after a natural disaster, intergenerational mobility, and the impact of universal preschool on later-life outcomes. [The Opportunity Project](#) “helps companies, non-profits, and universities turn federal open data into new technologies that solve real-

<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<p>world problems for people across the country.” Beyond its many federal partnerships, the Census Bureau also partners <u>internationally</u> and at the <u>state level</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ The Census Bureau has additional valuable website resources, including a <u>catalog of publicly available data</u>, an <u>experimental data product webpage</u>, and a <u>modernizing federal statistics webpage</u>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ The Census Bureau has little professional autonomy in statute, leaving it still susceptible to meddling like that which occurred during the 2020 Census. Most of the critical decisions around the Census are statutorily given to the Secretary of Commerce, rather than the director of the Census Bureau. However, as a modest counterpoint, the Census Bureau director is confirmed by Congress and has a fixed five-year term that bridges over presidential elections.</li> <li>➔ The environment for collecting comprehensive data or information from surveys is dramatically changing, with survey response rates continuing to fall. Like the rest of the federal statistical agencies, the Census Bureau is working to diversify its data sources to include such modes as administrative records and third-party data. However, an efficient and effective transition to multimodal data sources will require prioritizing research and investment to ensure data quality and improve timeliness.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ The Census Bureau often faces funding challenges in the build-up to a decennial census and for its Current Surveys and Programs. In addition, the 2017 Economic Census was hampered by funding issues and delayed by several months as a result of the partial government shutdown in January 2019. Similarly, two of the 2020 Census field test sites, Pierce County, Washington, and the Bluefield-Beckley-Oak Hill area of West Virginia, had to be dropped from the end-to-end operations testing. The Current Surveys program has, for example, struggled to co-fund with the Bureau of Labor Statistics the much-needed redesign of the Current Population Survey. (See Supporting Materials: H.)</li> <li>➔ Because the Census Bureau is the largest of the statistical agencies and has the most expansive research and field capabilities, it could serve as a leader and provide multiple shared services for the whole federal statistical system. However, its attention and resources are focused primarily on its own mission, reducing its effectiveness as a shared service provider across the system. In addition, its confidentiality protections embedded in Title 13 reduce its ability to share valuable data with other statistical agencies, thus limiting their ability to innovate using linked data. The Census Bureau has also interpreted Title 13 to limit the geographic detail and the accuracy for small areas of the data it provides to users from the decennial census.</li> <li>➔ The Census Bureau faces unique challenges due to its structure of maintaining six regional field offices to conduct large national surveys and then also building up a massive temporary field infrastructure to conduct the decennial census, including hiring, training, and conducting technology-supported operations with significant contractual support.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Agency Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Census data products are in high demand. Its outreach to users of published tables and public use files tends to be one-way through webinars and similar means; it is challenged to identify and dialogue with its broad base of users. Access to highly protected microdata is restricted to a small number of researchers who are adept at navigating the unwieldy process for using census data through a Federal Statistical Research Data Center. Because the Census Bureau has limited resources to devote to providing access to restricted data to researchers, the wait time to initiate projects can be long and cumbersome, and the process is less inclusive of diverse groups of researchers than it could be.</li> <li>➔ For the decennial census, the Census Bureau is challenged to minimize the inaccurate counts of various populations, inaccuracies which affect virtually all demographic surveys—both public and private—because such surveys use estimates from the census-based Population Estimates Program as controls. Significant investment is needed to address these challenges effectively.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ With additional funding, the Census Bureau could implement such <a href="#">FY 2024</a> and <a href="#">FY 2025</a> proposals as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• initiate measurements of key inputs, challenges, and constraints faced by U.S. businesses producing advanced and emerging technologies in order to provide insights into U.S. competitiveness in the global market;</li> <li>• modernize measures of the construction sector of the economy;</li> <li>• expand the High Frequency Data Program to provide more timely and granular information on current economic conditions and trends;</li> <li>• improve the Census Bureau’s ability to measure the impact of natural disasters on people and economy;</li> <li>• develop the operational plan for the 2030 Census, and</li> <li>• continue to transform its data systems to support secure, efficient, and economical collection, storage, and dissemination of data.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➔ While the Census Bureau tracks visits to its websites to assess data usage, it is lacking comprehensive information on how census data are used in research, planning, and other applications. Tools such as the Search and Discovery Platform piloted by other statistical agencies could help the Census Bureau identify the researchers who are using census data, their institutions, and the topics they are researching. In turn, this would help the Census Bureau reach out to institutions that are less well represented to encourage use of census data and obtain feedback to improve the utility of the data and help build broader collaborative communities of users.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Agency-specific recommendations</b></p>	<p>In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ we urge continued strong parent-agency support of the U.S. Census Bureau along with respect for its professional autonomy.</li> </ul>
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See also

[State of the Data Infrastructure Series: Census Bureau](#). February 2022. Two former leaders of Census and an outside expert in Amstat News.

## INNOVATIONS

In this box, we highlight the Census Bureau's innovation culture beyond those listed in Successes. For **business and economic statistics**, Census started a new [series](#) that tracks the creation of new U.S. businesses, reporting on both applications for an Employer Identification Number and actual business formation on a weekly basis and at the national, regional, and state levels. To improve the quality and completeness of statistics on household and family income and poverty, the Census Bureau released its first estimates from its the [National Experimental WellBeing Statistics](#), which links survey, decennial census, administrative, and commercial data to capture income not reported by survey respondents. To better understand **earnings and employment outcomes for college and university graduates**, Census initiated [Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes](#), which breaks out data by degree level, degree major, post-secondary institution, and state of institution. To provide more timely and granular information on **retail sales**, Census launched a [new program that reports retail sales](#) in 11 categories at the state level based on information from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey data, administrative data, and third-party data. To help track **government aid to companies** at the pandemic's onset, Census released a [breakdown](#) by program and one of three sectors through its Annual Business Survey (ABS). Finally the agency's new [Community Resilience Estimates](#) and its interactive tool explore a connection between income inequality and higher social vulnerability to the impact of disasters.

For additional innovation work, see, for example, <https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products.html>.

# ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

The Economic Research Service (ERS) is a principal federal statistical and social science research agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Its mission is to anticipate trends and emerging issues in agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America and to conduct high-quality, objective research to inform and enhance public and private decision making. ERS is ranked [#3 in the world](#) for institutions conducting economic research in the field of agricultural economics (out of 2,512 institutions), a position maintained for most of the past 15 years. The origins of ERS date back to 1905; in 1961, USDA created ERS with responsibility to conduct economic research and policy analysis that informs program and policy decisions throughout the USDA. The ERS intramural research program consistently provides USDA program agencies and the public with timely, high-quality, respected, and objective analytical findings that allow them to evaluate, assess, and improve their service to the American public.

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information and select information from our questionnaire.

## STRENGTH OF ERS'S SUPPORT†

**Autonomy: Mixed.** No current threats but lacks enabling legislation and agency-specific professional autonomy protections in statute. Generally has good professional autonomy within USDA. The agency has broad contract, grant, and cooperative agreement authorities, helping with spending flexibility.

**Budget/Staffing: Challenging.** ERS has lost 27% in purchasing power since FY 2009, which—together with no multiyear funding—makes it challenging for ERS to continue [its impressive innovation record](#) in order to produce relevant and timely data. Staffing is commensurate with the agency's budget and current programs.

**Parent agency: Good.** USDA generally provides satisfactory shared services that ERS needs and, with the exception of the 2018–2021 period, has requested budget increases that would help the agency maintain purchasing power and ability to produce relevant and timely data. The USDA Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) supports much of ERS's IT operations. The arrangement generally works well, with occasional delays or hurdles.

† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

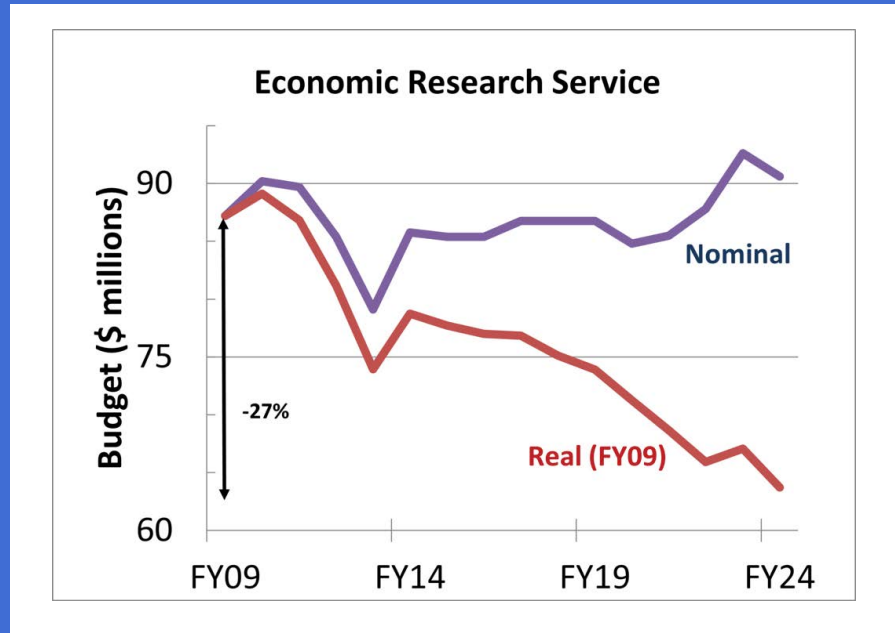


## AGENCY FAST FACTS

**Budget inputs and FY24 level**

1. Appropriations line item: \$90.6M.

**Funding history, inflation adjusted**



**Appointment of head & layers down in USDA org chart**

ERS is one of eight principal federal statistical agencies for which the head is a career senior executive service appointee.

**Two:** The ERS administrator reports to the Under Secretary of Research, Education, and Economics, who reports to the Secretary of Agriculture.

**Other**

- ➔ Approximately two-thirds of ERS staff are economists and other social sciences (e.g., demography, sociology), almost all with advanced degrees (i.e., Masters and PhDs).
- ➔ ERS occasionally administers its own surveys. The agency co-funds the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) annually with USDA's National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS). ERS routinely obtains administrative data from other USDA and federal agencies, acquires access to record-level data when needed, and procures proprietary data from various sources.
- ➔ Media inquiries to ERS have risen dramatically over the last two fiscal years and continue to grow.

<p><b>Recent successes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ ERS has largely rebuilt its economic staffing levels to pre-relocation levels. (See Box 4a in the report for a brief summary of the relocation.)</li> <li>➔ ERS has returned to and exceeded its pre-relocation annual number of reports. Its FY23 reports, which numbered 78, included two new products in FY23: the <u>Poverty Area Measures</u> and the <u>Area and Road Ruggedness Scales</u>.</li> <li>➔ ERS has also restored the daily release of its popular Charts of Note, which highlights current and past research, accompanied by the development and release of Charts of Note apps for iOS and Android phones.</li> <li>➔ ERS maintained its <u>#3 ranking in the world for institutions in the field of agricultural economic research</u> (out of 2,500+ institutions).</li> <li>➔ ERS has a large number of annual website views with steady growth from 6.3 million views in FY 2019 to 10.2 million views in FY 2023.</li> <li>➔ ERS partnered with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to fund projects that look at improving equitable access to healthy food.</li> <li>➔ ERS consistently delivered improvements to its coverage, data quality, and timeliness. This delivery culture and agility allowed the agency, for example, <u>at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic to produce new weekly retail food statistics and to deliver unique analyses and data to policymakers regarding infant formula shortages. ERS also delivered timely data on food inflation for both food at home and food away from home.</u></li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ ERS currently has strong parent agency support and engagement, as demonstrated through inclusion in department leadership meetings and in department- or administration-wide policy initiatives and regular praise of ERS for its work. Other than FY 2018–FY 2021, USDA has also requested budget increases for ERS that would allow it to maintain programs and to innovate.</li> <li>➔ ERS regularly engages data users through hosting of conferences—five in the last three years—and webinars—16 in FY 2023. ERS also participates in the NASS Public Data Users Meeting twice a year. The agency uses feedback from data users to improve its programs and inform its research agenda.</li> <li>➔ ERS collaborates extensively within USDA and across the federal system and maintains approximately 200 cooperative agreements with universities and other partners at any given time. The cooperative agreements allow the agency to augment its in-house expertise, often when there are special requests for studies in appropriations or Farm Bill requirements. For example, following a study collaboration with the University of Missouri, ERS recently released a report on increasing the value of animal manure with emerging technologies. Another example involved collaboration with the University of Tennessee and the University of Montana on a study highlighting the impact of climate change on the livestock forage disaster program.</li> <li>➔ ERS actively meets with officials throughout USDA to demonstrate transparency and relevance and to build trust and maintain professional autonomy.</li> <li>➔ ERS annually documents its <u>plans and accomplishments</u>.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ ERS lacks enabling legislation and statutory protection for professional autonomy.</li> <li>➔ The former administration attempted to eliminate and weaken the agency through hasty relocation, resulting in 70% staff loss, which has largely been made up.</li> <li>➔ ERS uses data from other agencies in its work. When those data are discontinued, it affects ERS’s ability to continue some of its research and data products that rely on those data. For example, ERS’s <a href="#">Eating and Health Module</a> to the BLS Time Use Survey has been suspended. As described on its program page, “Knowing more about eating patterns, grocery shopping, and meal preparation ... can inform the design of food and nutrition assistance policies and programs.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ ERS has lost 27% in purchasing power since FY 2009, leaving the agency challenged to continue longer-term products that are widely relied upon address emerging issues as part of its charge to produce relevant and timely statistics.</li> <li>➔ One-year budget cycle restrictions hinder ERS’s ability to innovate and its long-term survey planning. Survey redesign or ramp-up can take years. This situation is aggravated by continuing resolutions and government shutdowns.</li> <li>➔ ERS continues to have only some authority on decisions regarding IT infrastructure and server access, in coordination with the USDA CIO.</li> <li>➔ Limited resources impede ERS’s ability to maintain its culture of innovation and systematically address the rapidly changing environment for data sources and meeting the requirements in laws such as the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act and the Evidence Act. At 20% of ERS’s annual budget, purchasing data will continue to be a challenge to meet growing data acquisition costs. This dynamic landscape requires new resources and staff with an ERS-led effort because of the subject matter expertise necessary to be effective and efficient.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ With additional funding, ERS could pursue such initiatives as those proposed in the <a href="#">FY 2024</a> and <a href="#">FY 2025</a> President’s budget requests, including a “survey of local irrigation decisions and their impact on drought resistance”; a new annual conservation data series related to greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture; the soils component of the Natural Capital and Environmental-Economic Statistics; and “white papers and ad hoc analyses requests from congress.”</li> <li>➔ Additional resources would allow ERS to navigate the dynamic data environment to build on its successful culture of innovation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency-specific recommendations</b></p>	<p>In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Congress authorize a portion of ERS’s budget to be used across fiscal years in order to provide much-needed flexibility to adequately plan for multiyear projects, including survey redesigns and ramp-ups.</li> <li>➔ USDA strengthen its commitment to ERS through increased agility and support for IT and hiring services.</li> </ul>

# ENERGY INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION

EIA was created by Congress in 1977 as part of the newly established Department of Energy. Its mission is to collect, analyze, and disseminate independent and impartial energy information to promote sound policymaking, efficient markets, and public understanding of energy and its interaction with the economy and the environment. To assure EIA's independence, the Department of Energy Organization Act specifies that EIA's data releases are not subject to approval by any U.S. government officer or employee.

Many EIA data products, such as weekly, monthly, and annual data on petroleum and natural gas supply, deal with specific industries; others contain data on all fuel types. EIA's mandatory energy supply surveys are designed and approved by EIA and collect data from energy producers, users, transporters, and certain other businesses. Data on energy consumption are collected for households, commercial buildings, manufacturing, and transportation. Analyses prepared by EIA staff cover energy economics, technology, production, prices, distribution, storage, consumption, and environmental effects. EIA also delivers near-real-time data on electric grid operations through its Hourly Electric Grid Monitor, hourly CO<sub>2</sub> emissions estimate, and the recently launched Wholesale Electricity Market Portal.

Data collection, validation, and dissemination constitute EIA's largest operational area and require its most significant resource investments; additional resources are used to support long-term modeled energy projections, forecasts, and analyses.

EIA's forecasts and projections cover all energy types and include supply, consumption, prices, and other factors. Short-term forecasts cover one to two years; 20- to 30-year projections often serve as the basis for independent analyses prepared by EIA. EIA's data, reports, and forecasts are often used by Congress and the administration to inform their policymaking.

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information and select information from our questionnaire.

## STRENGTH OF EIA'S SUPPORT†

**Autonomy: Good.** EIA has the strongest professional autonomy of the federal statistical agencies and a long tradition of independence. By law, EIA's data, analyses, and forecasts are independent of approval by any other officer or employee of the U.S. government.

**Parent agency: Strong.** EIA receives strong support from the Department of Energy (DOE) built upon respect for its professional autonomy. DOE has also consistently supported budget requests for EIA that would help it keep up with inflationary increases.

**Budget/Staffing: Challenging.** EIA has lost 14% in purchasing power since FY 2009, constraining its ability to keep pace with a rapidly changing energy system. While EIA staff regularly make productivity/efficiency adjustments, EIA's mission requires high expertise personnel with commensurate salary levels that have necessarily increased over time despite relatively flat nominal budgets. Tight budgets have led to difficult decisions regarding some survey programs, such as the suspension of the [Prime Supplier Report](#) and a portion of data collection for the [Petroleum Marketing Monthly](#), and a delay in starting the next Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey (CBECS).

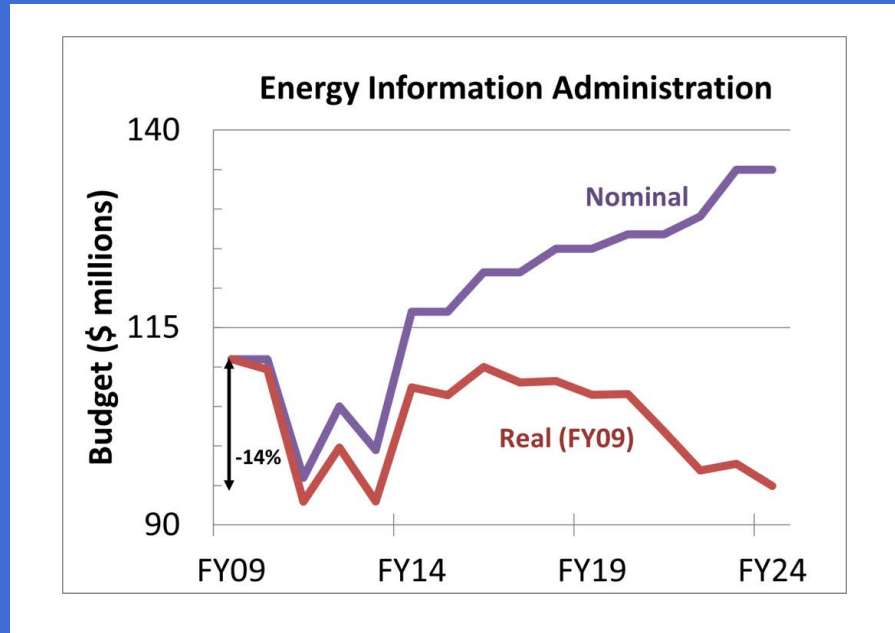
† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

## AGENCY FAST FACTS

**Budget inputs and FY24 level**

1. Appropriations line: \$135 million

**Funding history, inflation adjusted**



**Appointment of head & layers down in DOE org chart**

The EIA administrator is presidentially appointed and Senate confirmed, one of three federal statistical agencies with such an appointment.

**One:** The EIA administrator reports to the Secretary of Energy.

**Other**

- ➔ EIA conducts approximately 60 active surveys and publishes more than 400 reports each year across weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual product lines.
- ➔ EIA's Weekly Natural Gas Storage Report is the nation's only official Principal Federal Economic Indicator concerning energy.
- ➔ In addition to its statistical outputs, EIA is one of only several federal statistical agencies that also conducts operations research and modeling activities to produce publicly released energy system projections and forecasts.

<p><b>Recent successes</b></p>	<p>EIA has a strong culture of innovation as detailed in the box <a href="#">EIA Innovations</a>. Notable recent examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Published household energy consumption data for all 50 states for the first time, along with a user-friendly dashboard to display select state-level data.</li> <li>➔ Launched a new dashboard that provides timely data on electricity markets from the nation's Regional Transmission Organizations and Independent System Operators.</li> <li>➔ Implemented <a href="#">Project BlueSky</a>, a new initiative to develop a next-generation energy system model to better represent key aspects of the energy transition in EIA's outlooks.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Of the 13 principal federal statistical agencies, EIA has the strongest professional autonomy protections in statute.</li> <li>➔ EIA receives strong support from the DOE that includes respect for its professional autonomy.</li> <li>➔ EIA serves a broad stakeholder community; its website averages approximately 2 million visits each month.</li> <li>➔ EIA also has a highly developed system for distributing information and data on specific topics, with 41 email subscription lists, 11 RSS feeds, and more than 1 million data series in EIA's API.</li> <li>➔ EIA consistently exceeds program performance targets for the timeliness of its product releases and customer satisfaction rating targets (based on responses from its annual web customer survey).</li> <li>➔ EIA supports staff development through training and career growth opportunities.</li> <li>➔ EIA's commitment to transparency, data sharing, timeliness, and web resources is exemplary. As a testament, the agency maintains such webpages as <a href="#">Products, Services, and Tools</a>, <a href="#">Reports and Products</a>, <a href="#">Guide for Stakeholders</a>, <a href="#">Data Tools, Apps, and Maps</a>, <a href="#">What's New</a>, and <a href="#">Open Data</a>. According to its <a href="#">Customer and Stakeholder Engagement at EIA</a> page, EIA:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• works with external stakeholders such as Congress, federal and state government, industry, associations and nonprofits, and the media.</li> <li>• regularly schedules meetings with outside organizations.</li> <li>• uses its Independent Expert Review Program to seek technical reviews of its data and analytical work from outside subject matter experts as a way to guarantee high-quality products for customers and data users.</li> <li>• responds to an average of 5,000 customer inquiries per year through its Information Center.</li> <li>• created "user" or "audience" personas to guide the development of its web products.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• administers at least one agency-wide customer survey each year for the past 18 years.</li> <li>• does one-on-one user testing to give EIA web product developers a chance to see real users moving through content and applications while articulating the choices they are making.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<p>➔ No threats or vulnerabilities were identified.</p>
<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<p>➔ The dynamic nature of the energy system transition presents multiple challenges to EIA's program. While the agency strives to deliver its core information program and expand coverage where feasible, relatively flat budgets with decreased purchasing power have led EIA to make difficult choices, such as suspending or delaying key surveys, and scaling-down development efforts related to a next-generation energy modeling system.</p> <p>➔ EIA is sometimes legislated by Congress to provide reports or data products that do not come with funding to do so, further taxing its abilities to fulfill its Evidence Act requirements. For example, in the 2021 <a href="#">Bipartisan Infrastructure Law</a> (also referred to as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act—IIJA), EIA is required to add and enhance data products on the bulk power system, electricity grids, energy use, and energy modeling, as well as to submit various reports to Congress.</p>
<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<p>With additional resources, EIA could pursue such initiatives as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Expand near-real-time electric grid operations data, including new information on regional emissions and EV integration.</li> <li>➔ Improve tracking for energy-related greenhouse gas emissions.</li> <li>➔ Expand energy consumption data to track and report on short-term shifts in energy consumption patterns.</li> <li>➔ Leverage the Standard Application Process infrastructure to improve data accessibility for researchers.</li> <li>➔ Retool long-term modeling capabilities to more fully address the transitional nature of the energy sector, including potential decarbonization pathways.</li> <li>➔ Improve analysis of international energy issues, trends, and events.</li> <li>➔ Enhance EIA's short-term forecasts.</li> <li>➔ Maintain and enhance cybersecurity capabilities.</li> <li>➔ Modernize EIA's IT infrastructure to support new data accessibility initiatives.</li> <li>➔ Begin work on the 2026 Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey (CBECS) to provide current information on energy consumption, expenditures, and end uses.</li> <li>➔ Incorporate U.S. energy reserves into the Natural Capital and Environmental-Economic Statistics project.</li> </ul>



## Agency-specific recommendations

In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend that:

- The Department of Energy continues its strong support of EIA's mission.

## EIA INNOVATIONS

EIA has implemented many innovations and improvements to its data products over the past several years.

EIA has provided **new data products** and reports including:

- the Wholesale Electricity Market Portal and Hourly Electric Grid Monitor data tool;
  - the State Energy Portal;
  - the U.S. Biodiesel Plant Production Capacity Report;
  - the liquids pipeline projects database;
  - [play production data in shale gas and tight oil reports](#);
  - monthly and yearly plant-level oil stocks at electric power plants;
  - Battery Storage in the United States: An Update on Market Trends report;
  - the U.S. Energy Atlas;
  - supplemental reports to the Short-Term Energy Outlook (STEO) discussing effects of Covid-19 pandemic on global oil consumption in 2020;
  - Monthly Biofuels Capacity and Feedstocks Update report;
  - a dataset estimating hourly carbon dioxide emissions from electricity generation in the contiguous United States; and
  - an expanded report on direct federal financial interventions and subsidies in energy markets
- added forecasts for biodiesel, renewable diesel, and other biofuels to the STEO;
  - added detailed geographical information to the U.S. Energy Mapping System;
  - added weekly estimates of U.S. crude oil storage capacity utilization to the Weekly Petroleum Status Report (WPSR);
  - added state-level biodiesel production and consumption estimates to the State Energy Data System (SEDS);
  - expanded information on usage factors for utility-scale storage generators in the Electric Power Monthly;
  - analyzed the effects of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine for multiple data products;
  - added data on crude oil and natural gas resource development and electric-generating capacity changes to the Monthly Energy Review (MER);
  - added inventories of hydrocarbon gas liquids (HGLs) to the Petroleum Supply Monthly and Monthly Bulk Terminal Report;
  - annual crude oil surplus capacity estimates for non-OPEC countries while extending estimates for current OPEC members back to 1970;
  - developed a new imputation methodology to deliver updates to the International Energy Statistics (IES) database a full year sooner than the previous approach;
  - added electric vehicle (EV) data to the Monthly Energy Review;
  - implemented a new methodology for converting electric power generation data from noncombustible renewable sources in key EIA publications; and
  - released new household energy consumption and expenditure data, including data for all 50 states for the first time.

Additionally, EIA has made **improvements to the data quality** of existing products and reports including providing more **granular and timely** information.

Examples include:

- forecasts to the STEO for wholesale electricity prices at hubs in eleven electricity supply regions in the contiguous U.S. and average peak-period wholesale electricity prices for each STEO electricity supply region;

# NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the Department of Education's (ED's) Institute of Education Sciences (IES) is required by Congress to provide objective, reliable, and trustworthy statistics about the condition of education through administrative data collections, statistical surveys, longitudinal studies, and assessments. Founded in 1867, NCES is the second oldest and third largest in budget among the 13 principal federal statistical agencies. The NCES's combined statistics and assessment budget lines account for about \$300 million annually. The NCES is authorized through the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA), which has been due for reauthorization for many years. Its work covers a wide spectrum of topics, including the following:

- The Nation's Report Card (National Assessment of Educational Progress) (congressionally mandated)
- The Condition of Education Report (congressionally mandated)
- Digest of Education Statistics
- Grants, services, resources to states for development of statewide longitudinal data systems
- Longitudinal studies tracing experiences of early childhood students, secondary students and transition to post high school, and college and beyond experiences
- International school practices, education trends, assessment outcomes, governmental policies
- Higher education finances, students, faculty, degrees, transcripts
- Elementary and secondary finances, school universe, enrollments, graduates, staffing, private schools
- International school practices, education trends, assessment outcomes, governmental policies
- Breakouts by subpopulations for most of the above information

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information, information from former agency leadership, and select information from our questionnaire.

## STRENGTH OF NCES'S SUPPORT†

**Autonomy: Weak.** NCES's professional autonomy is among the weakest for the 13 principal federal statistical agencies. Besides not having protections in statute, its authorizing legislation gives or cedes such authorities as data collection and hiring to IES.

**Budget: Challenging.** NCES has lost roughly 20% in purchasing power to its statistics line since FY 2010, challenging its ability to be innovative and nimble in providing relevant and timely data. The assessment line has kept pace with inflation.

**Staffing level: Weak.** Compared with other federal statistical agencies, NCES staffing level is not commensurate with its budget. Including estimated staffing amounts, its budget-to-staff ratio is roughly 10 times the median of the other federal statistical agencies. Instead NCES overly relies on contract staff, which greatly restricts NCES's flexibility in assigning both staff and contractors where needed.

**Parent agency: Weak.** Challenging aspects are lack of budget request support and lags in hiring and IT due to reliance on the Department of Education (ED) or its contractors for shared services. IES's actions (whether benign or not) have had a tendency to slow NCES products and meddle with NCES statistical operations in ways inconsistent with the Evidence Act but authorized in the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) of 2002. The hiring challenges have extended to IES rescinding hires not completed by the fiscal year's end and using the funds for other purposes. IES has also required NCES to fund IES initiatives without meaningful input (e.g., two 2022 National Academies' reports, Digital Modernization.) Further, there is little public evidence of ED engaging NCES to inform the department's policies and initiatives or tap the Commissioner as the department's Statistical Official. Nor does ED involve NCES leadership in meetings with appropriators or allow direct contact of Hill staff with NCES.

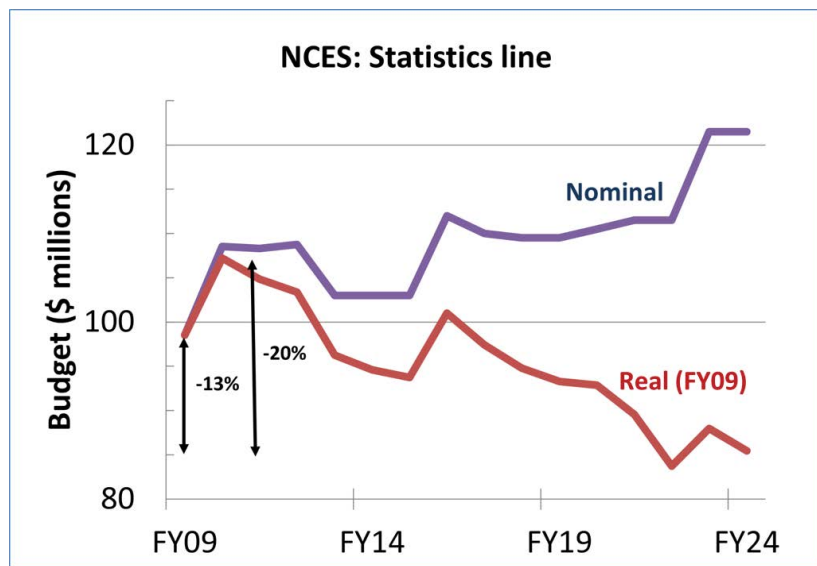
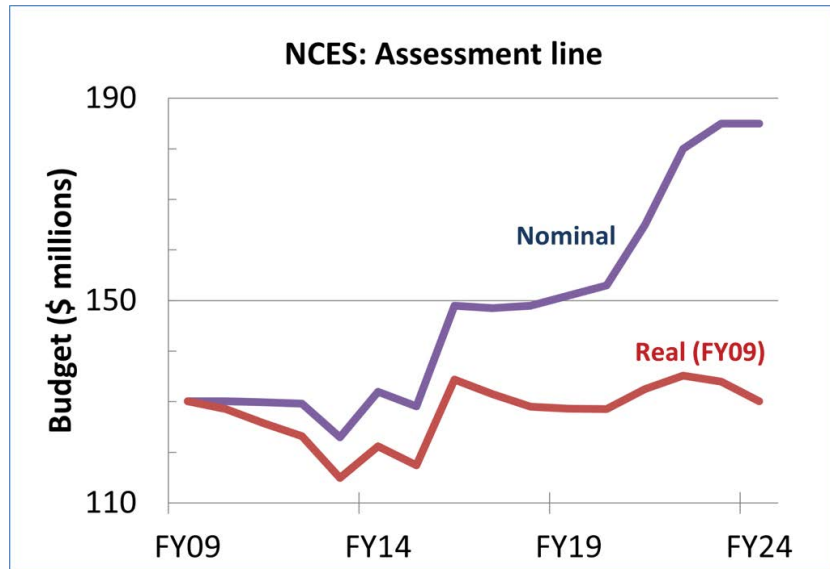
† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

## AGENCY FAST FACTS

### Budget inputs and FY24 level

- ➔ NCES has two appropriations lines that totaled \$306 million in FY 2024
- ➔ NCES is responsible for the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems, funding for which was \$38.5 million in FY 2023.
- ➔ NCES staffing is included in the support NCES receives from the IES program administration line, which was expected to be \$43 million for FY 2024.

Funding history,  
inflation adjusted



Appointment of  
head & layers down  
in ED org chart

The NCES Commissioner is presidentially appointed. Senate confirmation of the presidential nomination was removed in 2012. NCES is one of two federal statistical agencies with such an appointment.

**Two:** The NCES commissioner reports to the IES director, who reports to the Secretary of Education.

<p><b>Other</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ NCES administers approximately 30 surveys on its own and four in collaboration with state and federal agencies. It also draws from 21 private datasets.</li> <li>→ Thirty-two percent of NCES employees are statisticians, 19% survey statisticians, 15% educational researchers, and 15% management and program analysts.</li> <li>→ NCES being in IES somewhat insulates NCES from ED-engagement because of IES's status as a semi-independent research funding agency.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recent successes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ NCES deployed the <a href="#">School Pulse Survey</a> in fall 2021 to provide “real-time” data on the impact of pandemic on schools.</li> <li>→ NCES produced visualizations of estimates of literacy and numeracy proficiency for all U.S. states and counties using linked data from its Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) with the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey: <a href="#">PIAAC Skills Map</a>.</li> <li>→ NCES made numerous improvements to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to reduce costs and burden through platform administration and management advances. NCES is also developing automated scoring using AI engines that will be tested in 2024 with a target implementation date of 2026 and studying the use of administrative data to limit need for personal interviews of postsecondary students.</li> <li>→ NCES implemented remote online secure access to restricted-use data sets to ease access for researchers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ NCES's products regularly receive wide attention, e.g., the Nation's Report Card, Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the School Pulse Survey, and the Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE) program. EDGE is a library of geospatial data and geo-enabled web services and APIs for which the number of requests increased from 12 million in 2022 to over 22 million in 2023.</li> <li>→ NCES is tackling recommendations in the 2022 National Academies report, <a href="#">A Vision and Roadmap for Education Statistics</a>, in order to meet the 21st century needs for education statistics. More broadly, see <a href="#">Status report on NCES's progress to advance its strategic goals and objectives</a>, last updated in January 2024.</li> <li>→ NCES has received significant attention to its challenges: see Additional Resources box.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NCES has no professional autonomy protection in statute and in fact is undermined in ESRA as documented in <a href="#">Elliott et al.</a> For example, where the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Act had stated, “No NCES data collection shall be subject to any review, coordination or approval except by OMB,” ESRA has no such protection and, instead, provides the director of IES the authority to publish “without the approval of the Secretary or any other office of the Department.” The IES director has also made demands on NCES for use of its budget, and NCES has little if any authority on decisions regarding its IT infrastructure and access to servers. This has resulted in much NCES data being held on servers of contractors.</li> <li>➔ The ESRA reauthorization legislation passed by the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions renews decade-long efforts to further diminish NCES professional autonomy and stature by removing exceptions in current ESRA legislation for NCES.</li> <li>➔ Removal in 2012 of Senate confirmation of the president’s nominee for the commissioner took away an important check for the individual’s qualifications, opening the door to unqualified or overly partisan leadership.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NCES’s staffing level is not commensurate with its budget. Including estimated staffing amounts, its budget-to-staff ratio is roughly 10 times the median of the other federal statistical agencies (<a href="#">Pierson 2024</a>). Further, NCES’s portion of the IES staffing budget has declined steadily from 61% in FY 2018 to 52% in FY 2024. To fulfill its many product mandates, NCES is overly dependent on contractors—magnitudes more so than other statistical agencies. Indeed, 93% of NCES budget is used for contracting, and the FTE staff-to-contractor ratio was 1:11 in FY 2023. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCES’s limited staffing and reliance on contractors severely impairs NCES’s ability to be nimble, as contracts are signed for multiyear periods, and changes can take more than six months and are costly. NCES’s lack of agility was particularly evident at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.</li> <li>• Lack of staff have caused programs to be cut, delayed, or suspended.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➔ NCES is not able to easily track data usage and product downloads/website visits because of IES restrictions. This inhibits its ability to understand the use of its products by data users, which is a key input to staying relevant.</li> <li>➔ The four requested budgets for NCES from this administration, FY 2022–FY 2025, have been a median change over the prior year of 1.5%, which—along with NCHS—are the lowest, by a factor of two, for the nine non-cyclical statistical agency budgets determined by Congress. (See this <a href="#">Google Sheet</a>, sixth tab, <a href="#">Pierson et al. 2024</a>.) The median requested increase for this period for the statistics line is 0%. For FY 2001–FY 2025, the median requested increase for the assessment line is 1.3% and, for statistics, 6.5%.</li> <li>➔ NCES is not meaningfully included in department leadership meetings or in department- or administration-wide policy initiatives. Further, ED does not include NCES in meetings with congressional appropriations staff or other congressional meetings in support of the president’s budget request.</li> <li>➔ The parent agency does not recognize NCES when deserved for excellence in federal statistical accomplishments and leadership.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ ED does not allow direct contact of congressional staff with NCES leadership or employees, limiting important interaction with a major stakeholder to ensure the stakeholder understands NCES data and NCES is receiving input on its products from a key stakeholder.</li> <li>➔ Budget opaqueness: it is not publicly known how much NCES receives for its staff and other overhead from the IES program administration line.</li> <li>➔ NCES has lost 20% in purchasing power to its statistics line since FY 2010, which has resulted in the delay, suspension, and cancellation of many products and other work. See the box, <u>Impacts from Lack of Funding or Staff</u>.</li> <li>➔ NCES lacks a center-wide data system and, in some cases, cannot directly access the data collected for its surveys and programs. Instead, some data reside in the IT systems of the contracting firms carrying out the work, which increases costs because of the inefficiencies of maintaining separate systems.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ With the ability to spend its funding lines on federal staff, NCES could ensure continuous and regular administration of its many surveys and initiatives to provide more timely and relevant data, including those in the box, <u>Impacts From Lack of Funding or Staff on NCES Products and Work</u>. NCES could also consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue such initiatives as those <u>proposed in FY 2024</u>, including expansion of its highly successful School Pulse Survey, development of its geospatial data capabilities to create new value and new policy-relevant data products using existing data investments, and NAEP updates that would reduce costs of administering it.</li> <li>• Implement select recommendations of the National Academies report, <u>A Vision and Roadmap for Education Statistics</u>.</li> <li>• Build a federal school shooting data system and support the development of a standardized online survey tool regarding postsecondary student experiences with domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking, as required of ED in the Violence Against Women Act of 2022.</li> <li>• Expand data access programs for parents, students, and educators to help them with their education decisions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency-specific recommendations</b></p>	<p>In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ If NCES being in IES requires IES having a say over “how” NCES does its work, NCES should be moved out of IES. Further, as the ED Statistical Official and the head of a federal statistical agency, the commissioner should report directly to the Secretary.</li> </ul>

## Additional Resources

1. [An Interview with Former NCES Commissioner Lynn Woodworth](#), Lips D. and Bellafore, R., February 2024, Foundation for American Innovation.
2. [A Vision and Roadmap for Education Statistics](#), National Academies, 2022
3. [Bolstering Education Statistics to Serve the Nation](#), Elliot et al., 2023
4. [State of the Education Data Infrastructure: What Three Experts Have to Say About the National Center for Education Statistics](#), Amstat News, 2021.

## IMPACTS FROM LACK OF STAFF AND FUNDING ON NCES PRODUCTS AND WORK

PRODUCT DELAYS	PRODUCT CANCELLATIONS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The National Household Education Survey planned for 2023 is delayed one year. The survey had been conducted every two years since 1991.</li> <li>2. The National Teacher and Principal Survey planned for 2023–2024 is delayed one year. Until this point, the survey had been conducted every two years.</li> <li>3. The Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study planned for 2023–2024 is suspended indefinitely. A new cohort had been formed roughly every eight years since 1993.</li> <li>4. The School Survey on Crime and Safety: 2022 (SSOCS:2022), conducted in two-year cycles 1999–2000 to 2021–2022, is suspended indefinitely.</li> <li>5. The School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), administered every two years 1989–present is continuing only due to outside funding from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Supportive Schools (OSSS).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participation in the 2026 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is canceled, including the 2025 Field Test. PIRLS is the only internationally comparable data on student achievement in reading at grade 4.</li> <li>2. Participation in the 2028 International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) is canceled. ICILS is the only national or international study that assesses U.S. students' knowledge and skills in the key area of computer and information science.</li> <li>3. Participation in one or both grades (4th and 8th grades) in the 2027 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is canceled. TIMSS is the only international assessment of mathematics and science at grades 4 and 8.</li> <li>4. An expanded sample for PIAAC's second round of data collection, sufficient to update the PIAAC Skills Map data for every state and county, is canceled. (Note: due to Covid-19 and flat funding, PIAAC was unable to collect data from a sample of sufficient size in 2023 to fully update the Skills Map. The next opportunity to release a full update to the 2017 estimates is most likely 2030.)</li> <li>5. In March 2024, NCES <a href="#">announced the planned elimination</a> of the Academic Libraries survey, beginning with the 2025–2026 cycle.</li> </ol>



## WORK POSTPONEMENTS

1. The development of a data collection and reporting system for use by postsecondary institutions for reporting to the U.S. Department of Education, which is required by the 2022 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), is postponed.
2. The development of new, optional components for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (e.g., noncredit data collection) or improvements to its existing components (additional disaggregations, such as students with disabilities and a streamlined outcomes survey) is postponed.
3. EDGE program work is postponed, including specifically:
  - Fulfillment of statutory requirements under the Geospatial Data Act of 2018 and to oversee geospatial data activities required to support statistical and statutory grant programs,
  - The implementation of the new 2020 urban area criteria across all needed data to support grant program use of those data, and
  - Research and development of the neighborhood poverty estimates.
4. Developing updates to the National Postsecondary Study Aid Study is postponed.
5. The periodicity of the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) is changed from a two-year cycle to a three-year cycle, reducing the ability to understand supply and demand for teachers and principals. The frequency of Teacher and Principal Follow-ups surveys has also changed from two to three years.
6. Redesign of the Annual Reports and Information Staff's (ARIS's) current reporting systems is postponed.

## WORK UNABLE TO CONDUCT

1. NCES is unable to support development and maintenance of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) data collection and reporting tool.
2. NCES would like to shift the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) from a three-year cycle to a two-year cycle to support current demand for more regular data on teacher supply, demand, and distribution, but is unable to do so.
3. NCES is unable to reinstate the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS).
4. NCES is unable to reinstate a study of postsecondary faculty (NSOPF) that would parallel the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS).
5. NCES is unable to support NAEP research and development activities included in the president's FY 2024 budget. Among the activities the R&D funding would have supported are further incorporation of AI methods to improve cost efficiencies and quality; ongoing efforts to improve measurement and skills among the growing number of lower-achieving students; and improved measurement of student socioeconomic status using advanced geospatial techniques.

# NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency. Located in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), NCHS's mission is to provide statistical information that informs the public and guides program and policy decisions to improve the nation's health. Created in 1960 through the joining of existing health and vital records collection systems, NCHS's current annual appropriation is approximately \$187 million, making it the fifth largest of the 13 principal federal statistical agencies by budget. NCHS's activities and topics are wide ranging, but in brief, the center:

- Conducts and disseminates data needed to answer questions about health and healthcare in the United States;
- Documents multiple aspects of the health status of the population and important subgroups;
- Describes interactions with inpatient, outpatient, and long-term care components of the healthcare system;
- Monitors trends in health status and healthcare delivery;
- Provides data to monitor emerging health threats;
- Identifies disparities in health by race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, region, and other population characteristics;
- Compiles and assesses the most thorough and reliable data regarding life expectancy and cause of death for the nation;
- Provides nutrition monitoring information;
- Monitors trends in maternal and infant health outcomes and family formation;
- Provides data sources to support biomedical and health services research; and
- Informs the development of public policies and programs and evaluates the impact of these policies and programs.

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information, information from former agency leadership, and select information from our questionnaire.

## STRENGTH OF NCHS'S SUPPORT†

**Autonomy: Mixed.** No acute current threats, but NCHS lacks professional autonomy protections in statute. A chronic autonomy issue is NCHS's lack of brand autonomy.

**Budget/staffing: Challenging.** The NCHS budget has declined 15% in purchasing power since FY 2009, undermining the agency's ability to be innovative, maintain sustainable survey coverage and quality of data, and otherwise produce the most relevant and timely data. Its staffing is commensurate with its budget, but current staffing levels are insufficient to meet the growing need for data and the need to develop innovative data collection and analysis methods.

**Parent agency: Mixed.** CDC has provided NCHS with funds from the congressionally approved Data Modernization Initiative (DMI). CDC also supports NCHS IT needs. On the other hand, there is little public evidence of engagement of NCHS in department or CDC initiatives. Further, the median requested increase for NCHS's in the president's annual budget proposal is 0.4%, the lowest among the 13 principal federal statistical agencies and below inflation. CDC's respect for NCHS's professional autonomy has varied under different CDC leaders and is not protected in agency policy.

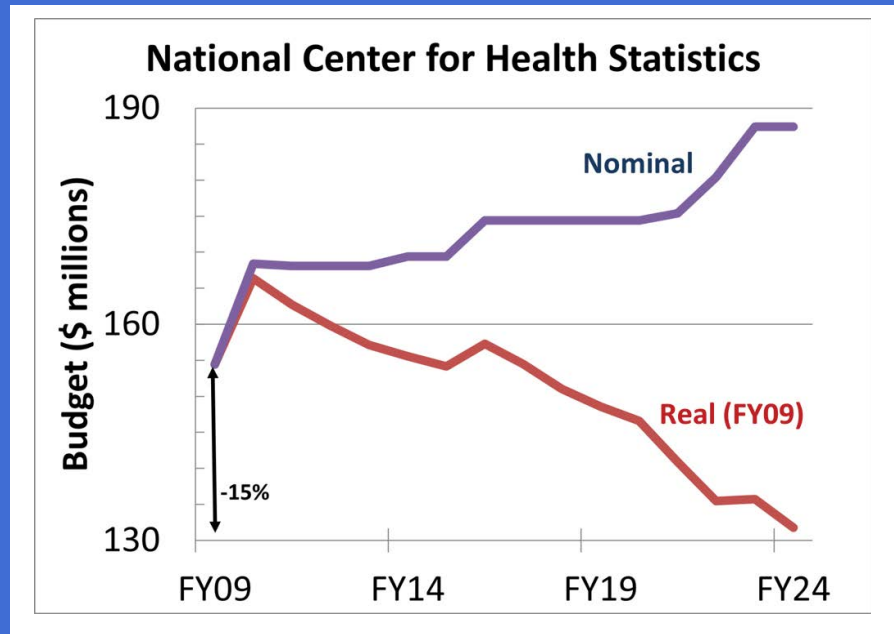
† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

## AGENCY FAST FACTS

### Budget inputs and FY24 level

1. Appropriations line item: \$187 million
2. NCHS receives funding from other agencies to augment critically needed information collected in NCHS's core platforms.
3. CDC has provided significant one-time funding to NCHS through the congressionally funded DMI, much of which was passed directly to states to modernize their vital records and statistics system.

### Funding history, inflation adjusted



### Appointment of head & layers down in the Department of Commerce org chart

NCHS is one of eight principal federal statistical agencies for which the head is a career senior executive service appointee.

**Three:** The NCHS director reports to the assistant director of the Office of Public Health Data, Surveillance, and Technology, who reports to the CDC director, who reports to the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

### Other

- ➔ NCHS is authorized through the Public Health Service Act (Section 306).
- ➔ The NCHS director is the statistical official for HHS.
- ➔ NCHS collaborates with other members of the U.S. federal statistical system and with other countries and international organizations such as the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on data collection standards and quality improvement.
- ➔ NCHS has a [history of contributions to American health and healthcare](#), as highlighted in the callout below.

## Recent successes

- NCHS modernized the process for reporting mortality data, which has reduced the gap in time from the event to data release to 10 days and facilitates such products as the following:
  - Weekly Pneumonia and Influenza (P&I) Mortality Surveillance reports
  - Monthly Provisional Drug Overdose Deaths
  - Quarterly Provisional Estimates for Selected Causes of Death
  - Annual final mortality data for all states released in under a year
- NCHS enhanced coordination and cooperation of the 57 jurisdictions and local offices (who provide vital records data through disparate IT systems) and the use of machine learning to accurately code almost 90% of all mortality records and provide coded data back to states overnight.
- NCHS documented the decline in life expectancy and comparisons with countries and accurately monitored the extent of Covid-19 deaths throughout the epidemic using excess mortality measures. NCHS also documented the decline in U.S. fertility rates and has produced the first nationwide data sets and studies regarding the impact and prevalence of Long Covid.
- NCHS initiated the Rapid Survey System to collect data on emerging public health topics, attitudes, and behaviors to meet decision-makers' needs for time-sensitive data while maintaining data quality.
- NCHS established the Coordinating Office for Medical Examiners and Coroners to improve tracking of mortality trends, such as opioid overdoses and maternal infant mortality, through more engagement and support of medical examiners and coroners.
- NCHS continued to expand the NCHS Data Linkage Program to link NCHS survey data to administrative files from Medicaid, Medicare, [Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD), and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide data resources to researchers and programs that can be used to evaluate the impact of their programs on those they serve. NCHS's long-standing linkage of survey data to mortality files allows the investigation of the longer-term impacts of health and health-related characteristics.
- From 2020 to 2022, NCHS doubled its document downloads and website visits to 1.7 million and 41 million, respectively, through such new topic-specific web resources as [COVID-19 Death Data and Resources](#), [NVSS—Maternal Mortality](#), and [Mortality Data](#).
- HHS-wide activities:
  - Published Health US using data from NCHS and across HHS both as the annual report of the HHS Secretary to Congress and an online report where data are updated as available. Information is provided on trends in four areas: health status and determinants, healthcare utilization, healthcare resources, and health expenditures and payers.
  - Healthy People 2030: NCHS continues to be responsible for monitoring the nation's progress toward [Healthy People](#) targets using data from more than 80 different data sources to continually update national progress for HHS programs and activities.

<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NCHS has designed its data systems to provide the core data collection infrastructure platforms used throughout HHS. NCHS partners with a wide range of federal agencies who make broad use of its data, and its partners can efficiently obtain targeted information by providing funding to add questions or modules or expand sample size to the infrastructure collections.</li> <li>➔ CDC directs DMI funds to NCHS, which it has used to address critical needs, especially in the vital statistics program.</li> <li>➔ NCHS has an active outside group of stakeholders advocating for NCHS's budget to Congress, HHS, CDC, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).</li> <li>➔ Peer-reviewed manuscripts authored by NCHS staff are routinely cited in the academic work on public health and related fields. As of summer 2023, there were more than 2,300 citations of NCHS work from 2020.</li> <li>➔ NCHS recognizes its staff annually through the NCHS Director's Awards Ceremony and includes the Excellence in Innovation Award to "recognize an NCHS Employee or Group Who Develops a New, Innovative Approach to Survey Design, Methods, Products, or Services."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NCHS's relatively low profile in CDC/HHS does not reflect the importance of its data as critical measures of U.S. health status and, more broadly, puts it at risk of further losing purchasing power and thereby becoming unable to meet the Evidence Act requirement to produce relevant and timely data.</li> <li>➔ NCHS's reliance on other agencies for funding to implement its data collection programs puts those surveys at risk of major cuts should other agencies withdraw or pare back support. The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), and National Health Care Surveys are particularly reliant on funding from other agencies for core operations and therefore for NCHS's unique products.</li> <li>➔ Response rates for NHANES and the NHIS have both declined, as has been the case for surveys throughout the federal statistical system. NCHS needs funding to develop methods to assess the impact of lower response rates and to develop ways to increase response or mitigate the effects.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NCHS gets little support in the annual presidential budget request process. CDC's median requested increase since 2001 for NCHS is 0.4%, the lowest by a factor of 10 for the 9 non-cyclical agency budgets determined in the appropriations process. (See this <a href="#">Google sheet, sixth tab</a>, Pierson et al. 2024.)</li> </ul>

## Agency challenges

- Similarly, while CDC uses and references NCHS data often, we find little public evidence of NCHS being engaged in department- or CDC-wide initiatives. This administration has requested only a net \$3.5 million increase for the agency over its [four budget requests](#). However, if enacted, would fail to sustain the agency's purchasing power. In its FY 2023 request specifically, released two years into the pandemic and [supporting a "Data-Driven Response to COVID-19"](#), the administration only requested a \$1.4 million (0.8%) increase for NCHS. The next year, after the White House released its report, U.S. Playbook to Address Social Determinants of Health, which called on Congress to provide NCHS additional funding to "collect, analyze, integrate, link, and disseminate data related to social determinants of health," the president's FY 2024 request was only \$2.1 million (1.1%) over FY 2023. Further, the [Department of Health & Human Services' FY 2023-2026 Evidence-Building Plan](#) does not engage NCHS expertise despite the stated requirement to include "potential data, tools, methods and analytic approaches to be used to answer priority questions."
- NCHS's low profile is also reflected in the CDC's creation of its [Center for Forecasting and Outbreak Analytics](#), the name for which includes two functions squarely in the expertise of a federal statistical agency. While NCHS's scope may have had to be expanded somewhat to include all of the desired capabilities, CDC opted for a new center rather than engaging NCHS and its expertise. More broadly, Senator Mitt Romney's 2022 proposal for a [Center for Public Health Data](#), with a stated mission to "improve access to impartial and objective public health data in real time and bolster our infectious disease intelligence and preparedness" also has a similar [mission as that of NCHS](#)—illustrating that NCHS is not being recognized for its expertise and contributions or being supported to meet critical policy needs: "NCHS collects, analyzes, and disseminates timely, relevant, and accurate health data and statistics. Our products and services inform the public and guide program and policy decisions to improve our nation's health."
- NCHS has lost 21% in purchasing power since FY 2010, inhibiting its ability to provide relevant and timely data, including more granular data.
  - Funding mechanisms that were designed to provide funding to augment collections beyond the core components to provide targeted data for partners have had to be used for core support to maintain the integrity of the collections.
  - NCHS's limited budget has prevented the agency from addressing the coverage, timeliness, and granularity of its National Health Care Surveys, thereby limiting the utility of these surveys for monitoring healthcare and health outcomes, particularly for emerging problems such as mortality due to drug overdose, Covid-19, and pneumonia. For example, the latest available emergency department visit data are for 2021. The lack of granularity prevents NCHS from measuring differentials in treatment and outcomes for high-risk groups or by geographic location or characteristics such as level of urbanization. The surveys have also not been sufficiently supported in utilizing electronic records and being able to match records across sectors to better understand use of services and the quality and effectiveness of those services.
  - NCHS's loss of purchasing power also means NHANES may only be able to produce biannual reports at the national level. Data are likely not to be granular enough to identify many high-risk groups. Compounding the impact of the lack of funding is the inability to explore new ways to collect the data to allow for larger sample size and quicker reporting.

<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DMI funds have helped NCHS address critical needs, especially in the vital statistics system, but NCHS still lacks sufficient support for producing new, innovative data products, in addition to needed expansion of its three major survey programs.</li> </ul> <p>→ NCHS data are frequently not attributed to NCHS, only to CDC, undermining name recognition of NCHS, which is critical to it being a trusted statistical agency and beneficial in the Congressional appropriations process.</p>
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<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<p>→ With the pandemic helping to raise attention to the demand for and importance of more granular, timely, and frequent health statistics, NCHS together with HHS, CDC, and its stakeholders have a unique opportunity to draw attention to its budget needs.</p> <p>→ With its statutory privacy protections to ensure an individual's personal information is not disclosed and its deep expertise in such areas as measurement, data collection methods, record linkage, electronic health records (EHRs), and incorporating diversified data sources, NCHS is poised to play a leading role in HHS initiatives to understand social determinants of health and inform policy and initiatives.</p> <p>→ The Friends of NCHS have identified <u>how additional funds could be invested for immediate effect</u>.</p>
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<p><b>Agency-specific recommendations</b></p>	<p>In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ CDC should allow NCHS to use its name and logo prominently on its website, products, and outreach to facilitate greater public awareness and trust of NCHS.</li> <li>→ HHS and CDC should engage NCHS in department- and CDC-wide initiatives.</li> <li>→ CDC should engage with Congress along with NCHS to provide NCHS the resources to better fulfill its requirement to provide relevant and timely data.</li> </ul>
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**Further reading**

1. State of the Nation's Health Data Infrastructure: Experts Weigh in Two Years into Pandemic. (2020). Amstat News.
2. A Framework for Assessing Mortality and Morbidity After Large-Scale Disasters. (2020). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25863>.



## A HISTORY OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICAN HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE

NCHS's data collections cover the full range of topics related to health and healthcare. Below are some examples of how NCHS has contributed to knowledge on health and healthcare in America.

- **Health disparities:** NCHS data have long documented disparities in a wide range of health indicators based on race, gender, region and urbanization level, and income, including life expectancy, infant mortality, a variety of risk factors, health status, health insurance coverage, access to care, and use of healthcare services.
- **Nutrition, growth charts, and environmental effects:** NCHS data are used to recommend and evaluate food fortification decisions, develop and revise the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and help set recommended intake levels for vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. The pediatric growth charts used by pediatricians and parents to monitor children's growth are based on NCHS data. NCHS data were used to document the impact of removing lead from gasoline, in addition to ongoing childhood lead poisoning prevention efforts throughout the country.
- **Physical activity and tobacco:** NCHS data are used to examine physical activity levels and compliance with national guidelines. NCHS has chronicled cigarette smoking levels for adults since 1964, the year the first Surgeon General's report on smoking was released. In 1964, more than 40% of U.S. adults smoked cigarettes; currently fewer than 14% smoke.
- **Health insurance:** NCHS data are used to document the impact and coverage of Medicaid, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act.
- **Significant changes in causes of death:** NCHS documented increases in opioid deaths, Covid-19 deaths, deaths due to firearms and motor vehicles, and changes in leading causes of death.

The extensive topics included in the NCHS portfolio enable comparison of the health of the U.S. population to populations in other countries.

# NATIONAL CENTER FOR SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING STATISTICS

The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) is the principal federal statistical agency providing data, analysis, and expertise on the state of science and engineering, often within a global context. NCSES's six core areas of interest include the science and engineering workforce; research and development; higher education research and development; government funding for science and engineering; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education; and innovation and global competitiveness. Among its many products is the congressionally mandated Science and Engineering Indicators (S&E Indicators) report, produced in collaboration with the National Science Board (NSB). S&E Indicators is a high-profile report delivered to the President and Congress biennially, which provides high-quality data and analysis on the conditions of the nation's science and engineering enterprise. S&E Indicators is highly anticipated and regularly used by policymakers at all levels, industry leaders, university administrators, current and potential students, parents, finance companies, and economic development entities, among others. It also enjoys visibility internationally as an accessible and reliable source of data on U.S. science and engineering in an international context. NCSES also produces the biennial, congressionally mandated STEM and Diversity: Women, Minorities and Persons with Disability report, which provides statistical information about the representation of these three groups in STEM employment and S&E education. The statistics and analyses generated from NCSES's 17 nationally representative surveys, alongside these highly cited congressional reports, are critical inputs to measuring the nation's progress on science, technology, and innovation.

NCSES's robust and objective data and analysis support the National Science Foundation's (NSF's) ability to inform its work, including ensuring a strong and diverse U.S. STEM workforce and the promotion of the progress of science in order to advance national health, prosperity, and welfare. Many of NCSES's targeted populations of study, such as the S&E workforce, academia, and doctoral recipients, overlap with NSF's key interest groups. Understanding the critical experiences and outcomes of these populations could provide further support for NSF's informed decision-making for research investments and outreach relevant to its core mission. The leadership role that NCSES plays within the federal statistical system, including implementation of the legislatively mandated requirements of the Standard Application Process (SAP) and the National Secure Data Service (NSDS) Demonstration Project, also provides increased visibility for NSF's leadership role within the entire federal data ecosystem.

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information, information from former agency leadership, and selected information from our questionnaire.

## STRENGTH OF NCSES'S SUPPORT†

**Autonomy: Mixed.** NCSES lacks full decision authority for hiring and for IT systems required for its computational and data dissemination activities, inhibiting its agility. NCSES also lacks professional autonomy protections in statute.

**Parent agency: Mixed.** NSF has provided consistent budget support for NCSES over the last dozen years and generally respects the professional autonomy necessary for a federal statistical agency. The services that NSF provides (e.g., HR, contracting, IT, security clearance, physical space) can sometimes impede NCSES's ability to be a nimble statistical agency.

**Budget: Mixed.** NSF has provided consistent increases to NCSES over the last dozen years, but NCSES still struggles to fulfill its expanding mandates, responsibilities, and publications.

**Staffing level: Challenging.** Compared with other federal statistical agencies, NCSES's staffing level is not commensurate with its budget. Its budget-to-staff ratio is roughly three times the median of the other federal statistical agencies.

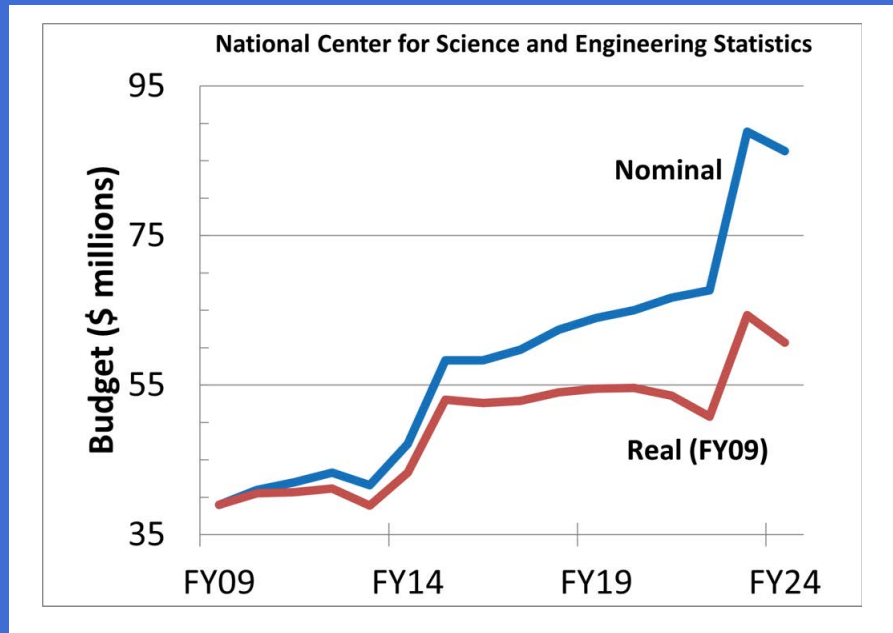
† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

## AGENCY FAST FACTS

### Budget inputs and FY23 levels

1. NCSES's budget is determined by NSF through a program line (\$78.0M) and a staffing line (\$10.8M). NCSES is one of three principal statistical agencies for which the budget is determined by the parent agency, as opposed to a Congressional appropriations line.
2. NCSES receives funding and in-kind support from multiple agencies for its surveys.

### Funding history, inflation adjusted



\*NCSES's increase from FY 2022 and FY 2023 is in support of its increased workload for Evidence Act implementation and the CHIPS and Science Act, as detailed below.

\*\*Most if not all of NCSES's increase from FY13 to FY15 was to enhance the Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR). (Pierson, 2020)

### Appointment of head & layers down in NSF org chart

NCSES is one of eight principal federal statistical agencies for which the head is a career senior executive service appointee.

**Two:** The NCSES director reports to the assistant director for Social, Behavioral, and Economic (SBE) Sciences, who reports to the NSF director.

<p><b>Other</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NCSSES uses distinct data sources on which it builds each year. Seventeen of these are surveys it conducts.</li> <li>➔ NCSSES tracks citations of its products through a limited sample of sources and found 3,240 citations for FY 2020–FY 2022. Most cited are the following (in order): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey of Earned Doctorates</li> <li>• Diversity and STEM: Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities</li> <li>• Science and Engineering Indicators</li> <li>• National Survey of College Graduates</li> <li>• Higher Education Research and Development Survey</li> <li>• Survey of Doctorate Recipients</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Recent successes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Government-wide leadership in governance and implementation activities associated with the Evidence Act, CHIPS and Science Act, and other legislation or directives through chairing of the Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building (ACDEB), leading the implementation of the National Secure Data Service Demonstration Project (NSDS), serving as the Project Management Office for the Standard Application Process (SAP), and establishing the America’s Data Hub Consortium (ADC), a national initiative for collaborative research and decision-making.</li> <li>➔ Strong innovation culture, including collaboration, support, and professional engagement with other agencies and entities. In addition to the extensive and impactful work in the previous item, NCSSES has added 80 data sources from broad categories since July 2018 and realigned its expanding set of responsibilities and priorities by implementing a strategic reorganization, thus proactively organizing itself to remain flexible and nimble to stakeholder needs.</li> <li>➔ Engagement of Congress through several CHIPS and Science Act provisions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>NCSSES strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Produces high-profile biennial Science and Engineering Indicators report, for which it receives strong support from NSF and the NSB.</li> <li>➔ Has long-standing collaborative partnerships with other agencies spanning intellectual, technical, and financial support, which helps NCSSES to fulfill its mandate to produce relevant and timely information.</li> <li>➔ Staff collaboration with the National Science Board supports a deep understanding of the relevant data and analyses needed to inform current and emerging policy areas.</li> <li>➔ NSF, on whom NCSSES is solely reliant for its budget and staffing allocations, has provided NCSSES strong budgetary support over the years. As described below under Agency Challenges, however, NCSSES is very low in staffing for a statistical agency of its size, and its budget does not cover its expanded mandates, responsibilities, and products.</li> </ul>

<p><b>NCSSES strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NSF support for NCSSES's production and rollout of the congressionally mandated biennial STEM and Diversity: Women, Minorities and Persons with Disabilities report.</li> <li>➔ Parent agency has expressed appreciation for the agency's work and rewarded it for excellence in federal statistical accomplishments through, for example, employees receiving NSF Director's awards.</li> <li>➔ Very strong data user engagement: 27 conferences of users or other types of user engagements organized in the last three years; 10 sessions at relevant conferences; showed responsiveness to feedback by making changes.</li> <li>➔ Numerous and diverse data sources used in its analytical products: ~50 and growing.</li> <li>➔ Strong support of staff through training and recognition.</li> <li>➔ History of senior-level engagement across the federal statistical system in response to emerging opportunities and challenges.</li> <li>➔ Staff have direct access to, and often collaborate with, leading researchers across all mission-relevant areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>NCSSES threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NCSSES's enabling legislation does not include autonomy protections.</li> <li>➔ While a strength and sign of NCSSES's broader engagement, financial support of some surveys from other agencies also puts the survey at risk of cuts/cutbacks if the external agency withdraws support.</li> <li>➔ Annual budgeting occasionally is a challenge with biennial data collection, especially in years of contract renewal. Greater latitude in year-to-year funding carry-over would be very helpful in such cases.</li> <li>➔ Staffing mix is heavily weighted toward senior-level experts in survey methods, statistical analysis, and data management. There are few junior-level staff, introducing knowledge management risks stemming from attrition or retirement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Serious staffing limitations, owing to staffing being determined through an NSF-wide account. NCSSES's budget-to-staff ratio is roughly three times the median of the other federal statistical agencies and is compounded by its expanded responsibilities under the CHIPS and Science Act and the Evidence Act.</li> <li>➔ The staffing limitations makes NCSSES overly reliant on contractors, which inhibits the ability of NCSSES to be agile and innovative and risks the transfer of technical and subject matter expertise and leadership from NCSSES to contract staff and potential role reversal.</li> <li>➔ Due to lack of budget and staffing, for example, the 2020 National Training, Education, and Workforce Survey was delayed to 2022.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Agency opportunities and challenges are rarely addressed or included as topics in department leadership meetings.</li> <li>→ NCSES’s role and responsibilities in the broader federal statistical community are rarely acknowledged by NSF.</li> <li>→ Budget opaqueness in that NCSES’s budget is not publicly available until the President’s Budget Release (PBR) a year or two later (the latter if Congress hasn’t finalized the current year’s government in time to be included in PBR).</li> <li>→ NCSES has limited opportunity to engage in relevant internal budget development discussions within NSF, particularly at the later stages.</li> <li>→ Parent agency retains a role in the administrative review of statistical products.</li> <li>→ NCSES must obtain approval and/or coordinate closely with NSF for outreach activities with select stakeholders and other audiences, particularly within the Executive Branch and social media outlets.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Continued leadership with Evidence Act initiatives, including serving as the Project Management Office for the Standard Application Process (SAP) to build consensus for shared services for the federal data ecosystem, as well as the expanded role of the Statistical Official to inform NSF efforts.</li> <li>→ Continued leadership, coordination, and support of the National Secure Data Service (NSDS) Demonstration project and coordination with NCSES’s America’s Data Hub Consortium Initiative.</li> <li>→ Strengthen public trust in NCSES’s data by continuing to improve survey workflow and business processes for transparency and reproducibility in accord with recommendations in the 2022 consensus study report of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in Statistical Information for the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics and All Federal Statistical Agencies.</li> <li>→ Continue engagement with the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP) and work closely with research communities (academic, government, and for profit) and other sectors to promote the vision of a National Secure Data Service, to identify and evaluate specific use cases, and to cultivate ongoing partnerships.</li> <li>→ Continue development of a robust research portfolio to explore privacy and data protection, statistical and methodological innovations to improve surveys, and uses of auxiliary data.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency-specific recommendations</b></p>	<p>In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ NSF should explore with OMB and Congress ways to give NCSES more staff, thereby contributing to its agility and professional autonomy. A potential option would be to align with the practices of most other federal statistical agencies by consolidating NCSES’s two budget lines, programs and staffing, and giving NCSES authority to optimize the combined budget across salaries and expenses.</li> </ul>

### Agency-specific recommendations

- Some portion of the NCSES budget should be allowed to be multiyear funding. This is essential for supporting and fostering innovation as well as survey development and administration. This would be particularly beneficial to surveys and other programmatic activities that do not operate on an annual cycle.
- NSF should take steps to ensure NCSES professional autonomy is aligned with the 10 components of professional autonomy discussed here, including publication of statistical products.
- NSF should continue to explore how to leverage its Statistical Official to support NSF-wide data and analytical initiatives in line with the requirements set forth in the Evidence Act.
- For the shared services it provides to NCSES, NSF should work to ensure they are provided to NCSES in a manner as timely and efficient as possible so as not to impede NCSES's agility and ability to meet its mission.
- To the extent possible, within the myriad demands with its limited budget, NSF could discuss with NCSES and the Office of the Chief Statistician of the United States what could be achieved with additional funding and staffing and the overall benefit to both NCSES and NSF.

### See also

- [State of the Science and Engineering Data Infrastructure: National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics—what three experts have to say about the state of NCSES.](#)



# NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) federal statistical agency providing wide-ranging data on U.S. agriculture. Founded in 1862, NASS produces several hundred national reports and several thousand regional reports annually that are routinely used by producers, policymakers, the food and agriculture industry, and consumers. The Census of Agriculture, one of NASS's most important data products, is conducted every five years and provides a comprehensive picture of agricultural activities across the United States. The Census provides county-level data and shows trends in agriculture and land utilization.

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information and select information from our questionnaire.

STRENGTH OF NASS'S SUPPORT†	
<p><b>Autonomy: Challenging.</b> There are no current threats, but NASS lacks professional autonomy protections in statute. NASS generally has good professional autonomy within USDA, with minor concerns around IT systems.</p>	<p><b>Parent agency: Good.</b> USDA effectively provides the shared services NASS requires. USDA and the administration have requested budget increases that would help the agency maintain purchasing power and its ability to produce relevant and timely data. The USDA Office of the Chief Information Officer supports much of NASS's IT operations, and this arrangement generally works well.</p>
<p><b>Budget/Staffing: Challenging.</b> NASS has experienced an 18% decrease in purchasing power for its non-Census programs since FY09. This has made it difficult for NASS to efficiently operate, modernize processes and procedures, and otherwise innovate in order to sustain the delivery of its broad estimates program. Staffing is commensurate with the agency's budget.</p>	

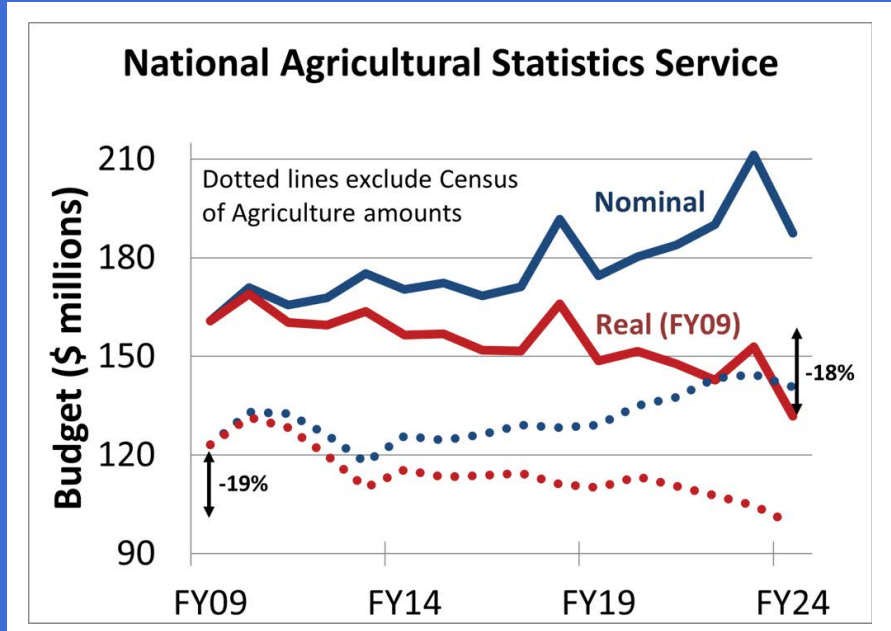
† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

## AGENCY FAST FACTS

### Budget inputs and FY24 level

1. Appropriations line items: \$187.6 million
  - Census of Agriculture: \$46.9 million
  - Non-Census: \$140.7 million

### Funding history, inflation adjusted



### Appointment of head & layers down in USDA org chart

NASS is one of eight principal federal statistical agencies for which the head is a career senior executive service appointee.

**Two:** The NASS administrator reports to the Under Secretary of Research, Education, and Economics, who reports to the Secretary of Agriculture

### Other

- ➔ NASS administers 68 survey programs on its own and 19 in collaboration with state and federal agencies. It also draws from 100+ administrative data sets.
- ➔ Sixty-three percent of NASS employees are survey statisticians.
- ➔ Six of NASS's products are official Principal Federal Economic Indicators.
- ➔ NASS maintains four call centers that are open six days a week to speak with survey respondents and collect agricultural data.
- ➔ NASS also maintains a customer service hotline that is staffed five days a week. It also provides contact information online for commodity-specific questions. NASS holds regular commodity-specific data users meetings to discuss reports and potential useful program changes.

<p><b>Misc.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NASS provides access to all of its reports free and online. The user interface allows searches by subject, release date, etc. NASS also publishes a yearly <a href="#">Guide to Products and Services</a>, which provides a description and timing of each report.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recent successes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NASS maintains a near-perfect on-time release schedule for several hundred reports produced annually: 99.8% in FY 2023.</li> <li>➔ NASS has developed an online dashboard of data visualizations that focus on specific topics (such as value of agriculture by congressional district, or apple prices by state) by using both data and graphics to tell a story. Besides the innovative approach per se, the dashboard demonstrates NASS's commitment to understanding who its data users are, how its products are being used, and the impact of its products, all of which helps NASS to remain an agile agency producing data that are relevant and timely for its current and potential data users.</li> <li>➔ NASS maintains a strong culture of innovation, as documented in the section at the end of the entry, <a href="#">Innovations recently completed or underway</a>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NASS has strong interest in its products, as evidenced by the approximately 200 million PDF and database downloads annually as well as the market impact of some of their releases.</li> <li>➔ NASS maintains active data user engagement through two user conferences annually, one in Washington, DC. It also regularly engages data users through user sessions at the annual conferences of such groups as the American Farm Bureau, USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, and Agricultural &amp; Applied Economics Association.</li> <li>➔ NASS has good parent agency support and engagement, as seen through meaningful inclusion in department leadership meetings, department- or administration-wide policy initiatives, and congressional appropriations meetings; recognition through Secretary's Honor Awards in FY 2021, FY 2022, and FY 2023; and annual presidential proposals requesting increases above that of inflation.</li> <li>➔ NASS has strong stakeholder support for several hundred products, made visible by the outcries to the agency, Congress, and USDA when delays or suspensions occur.</li> <li>➔ NASS recognizes its employees for their accomplishments and successes through the NASS Innovation Award.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NASS has no enabling legislation or statutory protections for professional autonomy, including on IT systems and decisions.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ NASS is challenged to update its 52 largely outdated IT systems, which include 3 legacy systems (2005, 2012, 2013); 1 other system that has been updated; 12 in the process of being updated; 10 being planned for updates; and 29 others from around the year 2000. These are inefficient and restrictive in many ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legacy systems are more susceptible to cyberattacks, which are an especially major concern with the NASS products that are principal principal federal economic indicators indicators.</li> <li>• Making NASS products more accessible to data users is more challenging on legacy systems.</li> <li>• Legacy systems make it challenging to recruit employees trained on cutting-edge systems.</li> <li>• Relying on legacy systems is often more expensive considering the efficiencies and speed of modern systems (and the need to train new staff to use legacy systems).</li> <li>• While recent successes include moving IT applications to the cloud and updating NASS's data collection portal, further updates are needed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➔ NASS has lost 18% in purchasing power for its non-Census programs since FY 2009, keeping NASS from achieving substantial productivity gains that would come with much-needed IT system updates (as discussed above) and further adapting and expanding its products to meet the demands of data users and key stakeholders. The constrained budget also inhibits the training of staff on the latest technological and methodological advances (e.g., data science and artificial intelligence) that would allow them to be more efficient and productive. Further, because of budget levels, <a href="#">NASS announced in April 2024</a> that it is “canceling the July Cattle report and discontinuing the Cotton Objective Yield Survey, as well as all County Estimates for Crops and Livestock beginning with the 2024 production year.”</li> <li>➔ With each new administration, NASS is challenged to communicate to new USDA leadership the unique, demanding, and person-intensive work of NASS to produce several hundred reports on time annually, maintain four call centers that are open six days a week, and otherwise meet the requirements of a federal statistical agency.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<p>To remain innovative, NASS has five general needs: 1) making more efficient use of existing data, 2) exploring and using additional data, 3) training staff on new methodology, 4) improving communication with data users, and 5) transitioning to updated IT processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ With additional resources, NASS could pursue such initiatives as those in the <a href="#">President's FY 2024 request</a>, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leveraging and automating the use of “data from a wide variety of sources, including administrative, geospatial, and economic data to improve the timeliness and quality of planted acreage estimates” to better support USDA's response to extreme weather events.</li> <li>• Improvements to the Census of Agriculture to reduce costs and burden on respondents while improving customer service and access to data.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Agency opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ In addition, NASS could assess the needs of a changing agricultural system and tailor new reports, or create more frequent intervals on existing reports, to areas where additional information is needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Agency-specific recommendations</b>	<p>In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ In order to meet demands of an agile, accountable agency producing relevant, timely data with minimal budget increases, USDA could help maintain products, productivity, and efficiency through support for updating NASS IT systems.</li> </ul>

## INNOVATIONS RECENTLY COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY

NASS's innovative work can be grouped into four categories: 1) making more efficient use of existing data; 2) exploring and using additional data; 3) training staff on new methodologies; and 4) improving communication with data users.

### Making more efficient use of existing data:

- Using automated imputation with the Predictive Cropland Data Layer in the June Area Survey
- Using statistical techniques to establish more accurate official estimates for smaller geographic areas
- Improved integration of administrative and remotely sensed data with survey data (USDA Secretary's Award, REE Mission Area Under Secretary Award)

### Exploring and using additional sources of data:

- Using administrative and other data to reduce respondent burden in Census of Agriculture and surveys (USDA Secretary's Award, REE Mission Area Under Secretary Award)
- Working cooperatively with universities on topics ranging from use of differential privacy to enhancing survey estimation with statistical modeling
- Working cooperatively with data aggregator MyAgData to investigate the future use of precision agriculture in NASS surveys

- Using web scraping to identify hemp producers for National Hemp Survey
- Linkage of CoreLogic commercial data with survey data to reduce sampling frame undercoverage
- Collaborative effort with George Mason University and NASA to develop web-based geospatial application: Condition and Soil Moisture Analytics (Crop-CASMA)

### Staff training on new methodologies:

- Staff training on new developments in data science: artificial intelligence, data visualization
- Developing active internal user group on machine learning and use of R programming language
- Creating an internal Kaggle competition "Naggle" to inspire innovation

NASS also **improved communication with data users by introducing** hybrid briefings for major commodity reports, digital data dissemination products, a Statistics Application Process portal, and full virtualization for secure data access.

# STATISTICS OF INCOME

The Statistics of Income (SOI) Division of the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS's) Office of Research, Applied Analytics, and Statistics in the U.S. Department of the Treasury provides vital information on the federal tax system. Founded in 1917, SOI annually conducts more than 100 different projects providing income, financial, and tax information largely based on individual and business tax returns and information returns filed by tax-exempt entities. SOI data are used by government officials, policymakers, researchers, and the general public to analyze the U.S. economy, examine tax policy, and project tax revenues. SOI is a unique statistical agency in that all of its data come from administrative records.

\*\*The following is based on publicly available information and select information from our questionnaire.

STRENGTH OF SOI'S SUPPORT†	
<b>Autonomy: Challenging.</b> No current threats but lacks enabling legislation and professional autonomy protections in statute.	<b>Parent agency: Mixed.</b> IRS meaningfully includes SOI in department leadership meetings and in policy initiatives and regularly recognizes SOI for its work in internal meetings. IRS communications function assists with preparation of news releases while respecting SOI's autonomy over the statistical content. IRS also supports SOI with such activities as maintaining SOI's web pages. On the other hand, IRS CIO must provide prior approval for any hires or promotions of computer specialists, which has limited the agency's ability to be agile in the past. IRS also provided SOI with limited funding for IT and webpage modernization.
<b>Budget/Staffing: Challenging.</b> SOI has lost 11% in purchasing power since 2012, resulting in delayed, less frequent, or eliminated products. Its budget also limits the amount of interactions with data users.	

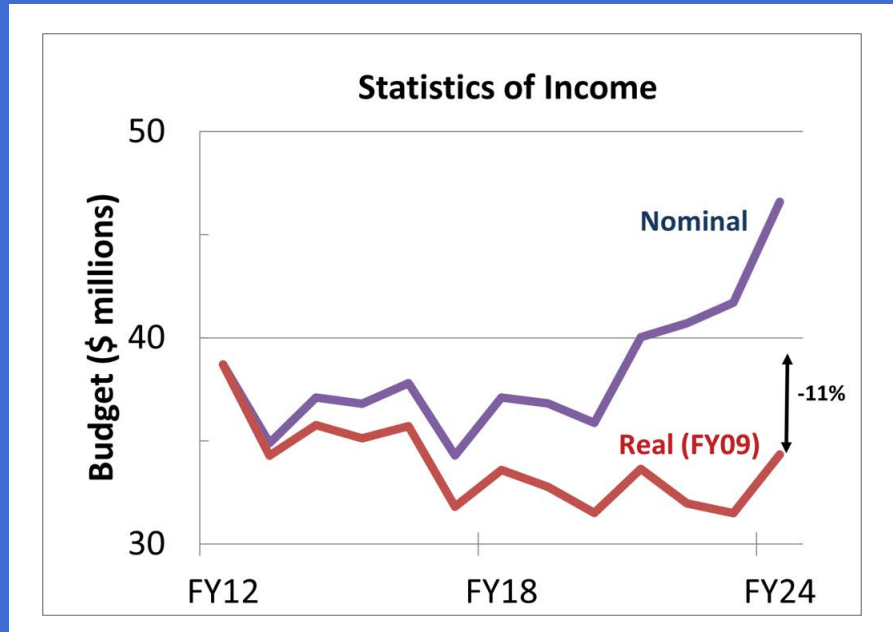
† See Supporting Materials F for an explanation of the support ratings.

## AGENCY FAST FACTS

### Budget inputs and FY24 level

1. SOI's budget is determined by the IRS. Its FY 2024 budget is \$46.6 million. SOI is one of three principal statistical agencies for which the budget is determined by the parent agency, as opposed to a Congressional appropriations line.
2. SOI receives some reimbursable funding for work performed on behalf of a number of partners with whom it has cultivated relationships in support of its work. SOI has also benefited from partnering with nonprofits and academic researchers to advance specific program objectives.

### Funding history, inflation adjusted



### Appointment of head & layers down in Treasury org chart

SOI is one of eight principal federal statistical agencies for which the head is a career senior executive service appointee.

**Five:** The SOI director reports to the Chief Data and Analytics Officer who reports to the IRS Chief Operating Officer who reports to the IRS Deputy Commissioner, who reports to the IRS Commissioner, who reports to the Deputy Secretary who reports to the Secretary of Treasury.

### Other

- ➔ All SOI data come from administrative records.
- ➔ Approximately 33% of SOI employees are IT professionals, 38% are social scientists or data scientists, and 7% are mathematical statisticians.

## Recent successes

- SOI experienced substantial interest in its work and products with 213 million downloads from its website in FY 2023, up from 25–30 million in FY 2020–FY2021. There were also a million-plus webpage views in FY 2023.
- SOI's budget grew in FY 2024 associated with the Inflation Reduction Act, which allows SOI to hire staff and take on new work, including building a data services team to support new tiers of data access as required under the Evidence Act.
- SOI has a strong innovation culture as illustrated by the following:
  - SOI is a leader in the push to yield more information from existing government data. For example, its work with the Department of Education to add earnings data to the [College Scorecard](#), which families can use to research colleges and, in particular, their fields of study, costs, admissions, and results, was recently featured in the National Academies 2024 report, [Toward a 21st Century National Data Infrastructure: Managing Privacy and Confidentiality Risks with Blended Data](#).
  - SOI initiated a new monthly data series to report on the Covid-19-related Economic Impact Payments, with such categories as adjusted gross income, state, race, and marital status.
  - SOI provided Congress a report on changes in repatriated income reported by international businesses resulting from new requirements in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.
  - SOI expanded **data granularity** with individual income tax data by census tract.
  - SOI expanded **data coverage** through new tables on international tax provisions: foreign-derived intangible income, base erosion and anti-abuse tax, global intangible low-taxed income, and country by country reporting; payroll tax withholding; limited liability partners by partner type; and partnerships invested in real estate investment trusts. Data coverage was also expanded through additional content in near real-time filing season statistics tables; new estate tax data on bequests by type of beneficiary and net worth and net estate by gender and occupation; new tax forms being included in annual SOI publications that report the number of filers claiming each line item on a form and the aggregate amounts claimed; and consolidated time series data on all IRS form filings covering 2005–2019, along with projections 5+ years in the future.
  - SOI improved **data quality** through new weight adjustments to increase the accuracy of advanced 1040 filing data.
  - SOI's ongoing innovation research includes improving NAICs codes using AI; developing a beta version of a synthetic public-use file for individuals whose income is below the income tax filing threshold; developing an alpha version of a synthetic public-use file for individual income tax filers; exploring the use of natural language processing to classify user feedback on web products and the potential of other AI methods for anomaly detection and data cleaning. Staff are also training on open-source statistical software like R and Python and on differential/formal privacy methods to add these tools to SOI's legacy data protection methods.
- SOI received the Roger Herriot Award in 2021 for Innovation in Federal Statistics.
- SOI also has an initiative in the [Internal Revenue Service Inflation Reduction Act Strategic Operating Plan for FY 2023–2031](#) “to develop new insights that generate value for taxpayers and policymakers.”



<p><b>Agency strengths</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ SOI's many partnerships and agreements across the federal government, which sometimes come with financial reimbursement, demonstrate SOI to be a relevant agency working to build the relevance of its products widely</li> <li>➔ SOI has parent agency support in the following respects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOI is meaningfully included in department leadership meetings and in department- or administration-wide policy initiatives.</li> <li>• IRS leadership regularly recognizes SOI for its work in internal meetings.</li> <li>• IRS's communications function assists with preparation of news releases, and the IRS Office of Online Services provides support for SOI's Web pages</li> </ul> </li> <li>➔ SOI can meet with members of the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation or professional staff in the Department of Treasury and holds at least one working session with each annually.</li> <li>➔ SOI is a member of both the IRS and Treasury Data and AI governance structures. As Statistical Official for the Department of Treasury, the SOI director interacts monthly with IRS data officials, ensuring a statistical perspective for IRS data decisions and raising SOI's profile.</li> <li>➔ SOI engages data users and incorporates their feedback through strategic planning, setting priorities, and new public releases.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency threats/ vulnerabilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ SOI has only partial decision authority to recruit or fill IT staffing and key management positions. The CIO must approve any computer specialist hires or promotions in advance, usually annually. There are no issues currently, but this arrangement has been a challenge in the past.</li> <li>➔ SOI has only partial control of its IT resources and is particularly constrained in funding to replace end-of-life equipment and hire GS-2210 series.</li> <li>➔ SOI has interagency agreements with several other federal agencies that come with financial support, which is a strength but is included here because of the general precariousness of such funding.</li> <li>➔ Twenty percent of staff are eligible for retirement, which is both an opportunity and vulnerability that will require planning and parent agency support.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ General underinvestment in the IRS until FY 2023 means that SOI's budget has lost 11% in purchasing power since FY 2012. As a result,<sup>1</sup> SOI has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminated several data series primarily related to trust income and reduced curation of others;</li> <li>• Reduced frequency of updates to several data series, mainly related to international business;</li> <li>• Delayed data collection on new tax provisions;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The impact of the FY 2024 budget increase for SOI on the cuts made through FY 2023 was not known as of press time.

<p><b>Agency Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delayed replacement of end-of-life hardware; and had limited ability to timely install new software or make important upgrades;</li> <li>• Delayed promotion of high-performing staff and being unable to permanently fill manager and other key staff vacancies; and</li> <li>• Delayed modernizing its website.</li> </ul> <p>→ IRS communications function controls the release of press releases, web design, and publication standards (but not the actual statistical products), an arrangement that is not optimal because of the importance of SOI being an agile statistical agency whose products are objective and trustworthy, and perceived as such.</p> <p>→ SOI is three layers down in the IRS organizational chart and five in Treasury, which can limit its ability to provide statistics to inform the parent agency's evidence-based policymaking.</p> <p>→ SOI's budget is not publicly posted for a fiscal year until the release of the president's budget for the next fiscal year. If Congress has not concluded its appropriations in time, as has been the case often in recent years, the SOI budget may not be publicly posted until the release of the president's budget for two fiscal years hence. Such budget opaqueness makes it difficult for outside entities to monitor SOI's budget.</p> <p>→ SOI has experienced hiring challenges due to parent agency onboarding delays. One such area is in IRS field operations, where administrative data are edited to meet SOI's statistical standards. Such delays delay key product releases and otherwise impede SOI's ability to produce relevant and timely data.</p> <p>→ IRS has reduced the number of submission processing centers, significantly impacting SOI's data collection process and creating work backlogs that have delayed release of some data series.</p> <p>→ While SOI staff meet with customers through formal meetings, an annual open meeting, and through conference attendance and presentation of their work, tight budgets have limited SOI's ability to take on new work in response to user needs.</p>
<p><b>Agency opportunities</b></p>	<p>→ With additional sustained budgets, SOI could resume the programs delayed in prior years and continue its work to expand data coverage and granularity and improve data quality.</p>
<p><b>Agency-specific recommendations</b></p>	<p>In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we recommend that:</p> <p>→ IRS sustain the budget increases provided to SOI in FY 2024 to address the challenges noted above.</p> <p>→ IRS give SOI more control over its hiring, IT, and publication process.</p> <p>→ IRS and Treasury consider avenues to further "enable, support, and facilitate" SOI in carrying out its responsibilities as required in the Evidence Act.</p>