

16. STRENGTHENING FEDERAL STATISTICS

The ability of governments, businesses, and the general public to make informed choices about budgets, employment, investments, taxes, and a host of other important matters depends critically on the ready and equitable availability of relevant, accurate, timely, and objective Federal statistics. Taken together, the data produced by the decentralized Federal statistical system form a robust evidence base to support both public and private decision-making.

Federal statistical programs have been a cornerstone of this evidence base for many decades, producing fundamental information to illuminate public and private decisions on a range of topics, including the economy, the population, the environment, agriculture, crime, education, energy, health, science, and transportation. These statistics are used in part to describe and increase understanding of the basic condition and performance of our economy and society, as discussed in Chapter 5, “Social Indicators.”

The share of budget resources devoted to supporting Federal statistics is relatively modest—about 0.04 percent of GDP in non-decennial census years and roughly double that in decennial census years. This funding is leveraged to inform crucial decisions in a wide variety of spheres. The Administration is committed to continuing cost-effective investment in Federal statistical programs in order to build and support agencies’ capacity to incorporate evidence and evaluation analyses into budget, management, and policy decisions. For example, the Administration has supported Federal statistical agencies in strengthening the utility and reliability of their products by expanding the use of administrative data for research and statistical purposes, as described in Chapter 7, “Building Evidence with Administrative Data.”

The Federal statistical community has leveraged a number of other opportunities to improve these measures of our Nation’s performance. For example, during 2014 and 2015, Federal statistical agencies:

- restructured the International Transactions Accounts in their first major update since 1976 by adding detail and bringing the accounts into closer alignment with international accounting standards (*Bureau of Economic Analysis*);
- continued the redesign and modernization of the National Crime Victimization Survey to produce more reliable, valid, and relevant national and sub-national estimates of the Nation’s crime victimization incidents (*Bureau of Justice Statistics*);
- released more than six years of research data that were produced by merging publicly available administrative data from the Internal Revenue Service with data from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages business universe providing multiple insights into the scope, structure, wage trends, and employment dynamics of the nonprofit sector (*Bureau of Labor Statistics*);
- completed the fifth quinquennial Commodity Flow Survey, which measures approximately three-fourths of the tonnage of freight movement to, from, and within the U.S., and supports analyses of the need for freight transportation facilities and the relationships between freight movement and the economy (*Bureau of Transportation Statistics*);
- conducted analyses of the 2013 Census Test to examine the operational feasibility of using administrative records to reduce nonresponse follow-up workload and adaptive contact strategies to increase data collection productivity, which will be critical in informing the major design decision for the 2020 Census (*Census Bureau*);
- began the regular release of quarterly Gross Domestic Product by Industry data, providing businesses and policy-makers with a more precise and timely view of economic activity at the industry level (*Bureau of Economic Analysis*);
- analyzed data from the National Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey, which collects detailed information about foods purchased for consumption at home and away from home as well as foods acquired through both public and private food and nutrition assistance programs, to provide a unique and comprehensive view of household food choice behavioral patterns (*Economic Research Service*);
- expanded the State Heating Oil and Propane Program to collect weekly residential heating oil and propane price data, adding 14 States to the 24 already participating and developed a Winter Heating Fuels webpage that displays weekly price data on heating oil and propane along with natural gas and electricity prices (*Energy Information Administration*);
- redesigned the Chemical Use program of surveys estimating chemical use by producers of fruits, vegetables, field crops, livestock, and other animals and crops to improve USDA’s agricultural chemical use database about on-farm and post-harvest fertilizer and pesticide use and pest management practices to enable more informed, science-based decisions (*National Agricultural Statistics Service*);
- adopted technology to make test administration, collection, scoring, and processing of educational data in large-scale assessments significantly more

efficient and developed an electronic system of accommodations to support the inclusion of a broader range of students in educational progress assessments (*National Center for Education Statistics*);

- released preliminary 2013 birth data in the record time of five months after the end of the calendar year and, similarly, published final 2013 death data only 12 months after the end of the calendar year to enable prompt public health monitoring, and fostered the development of a vital statistics infrastructure capable of supporting near real-time surveillance, starting with Pneumonia and Influenza mortality surveillance in 2014-2015 (*National Center for Health Statistics*);
- addressed data gaps in estimates for research and development by initiating a national R&D survey of nonprofit organizations and launched a survey to produce national statistics on the early careers of doctorate recipients to better understand their labor markets and work experiences (*National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics*);
- released, for the first time, datasets in XML format to meet the growing demand for information in open data formats (*Statistics of Income Division, Internal Revenue Service*);
- sponsored multidisciplinary Retirement and Disability Research Consortia responsible for research, evaluation, and dissemination of information on Social Security retirement and disability issues relevant to policymakers, researchers, and the general public that also provide a training ground for scholars and practitioners in research areas relevant to Social Security retirement and disability issues (*Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (ORES), Social Security Administration*); and
- released new estimates of consumer spending by State for 1997-2012 to provide insight into household spending patterns across the country and inform understanding of regional economies (*Bureau of Economic Analysis*).

In order for Federal statistical products to be beneficial to their wide range of users, the underlying data systems that produce them must be credible. To foster this credibility, Federal statistical programs seek to adhere to high quality standards and to maintain integrity, transparency, and efficiency in the production of data. To reinforce the fundamental responsibilities that Federal statistical agencies have related to the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has recently affirmed and codified them by issuing OMB Statistical Policy Directive No. 1, *Fundamental Responsibilities of Federal Statistical Agencies and Recognized Statistical Units*.¹ As the collectors and providers of these basic statistics, the responsible Federal

statistical agencies act as data stewards—balancing public information demands and decision-makers' needs for information with legal and ethical obligations to minimize reporting burden, respect respondents' privacy, and protect the confidentiality of the data provided to the Government. The Administration remains committed to unlocking the power of Government data to improve the quality of information available to the American people and to foster long-term global competitiveness while maximizing the cost-effective use of resources for the collection of Federal statistics within a constrained fiscal environment. This chapter presents highlights of principal statistical agencies' 2016 budget proposals.

Highlights of 2016 Program Budget Proposals

The programs that provide essential statistical information for use by governments, businesses, researchers, and the public are carried out by agencies spread across every department and several independent agencies. Excluding cyclical funding for the decennial census, approximately 40 percent of the total budget for these programs provides resources for 13 agencies or units that have statistical activities as their principal mission (see Table 16-1). The remaining funding supports work in approximately 115 agencies or units that carry out statistical activities in conjunction with other missions such as providing services, conducting research, or implementing regulations. More comprehensive budget and program information about the Federal statistical system, including its core programs, will be available in OMB's annual report, *Statistical Programs of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2016*, when it is published later this year. The following highlights the Administration's proposals for the programs of the principal Federal statistical agencies, giving particular attention to new initiatives and to other program changes.

Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), Department of Commerce: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing BEA programs and to: (1) create an Energy Satellite account that will provide insight into the changing structure of energy supply and consumption and the related impact on economic growth and inflation in the United States; and (2) expand measurement of growth in trade in high-value services – such as intellectual property and information and communication technology – that will help policymakers identify target areas for future growth in service exports and related high-value employment.

Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), Department of Justice: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing BJS programs and to: (1) continue to improve BJS' criminal victimization statistics derived from the National Crime Victimization Survey with special emphasis on generating sub-national estimates and enhancing data on the crimes of rape and sexual assault; (2) increase the use of administrative records data in police and correctional agencies to provide new statistics in these areas, including recidivism information, arrests, and offenses known to the police; (3) expand

¹ OMB Statistical Policy Directive No. 1: *Fundamental Responsibilities of Federal Statistical Agencies and Recognized Statistical Units*. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-02/pdf/2014-28326.pdf>.

the surveys of inmates of prisons and jails to inform the process of re-entry; (4) improve the availability of justice statistics for Indian country; and (5) continue to support the enhancement of criminal justice statistics available through State statistical analysis centers.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Department of Labor: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing BLS programs and to: (1) add an annual supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) to capture data on contingent work and alternative work arrangements in odd years, and on other topics in even years; (2) expand the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) sample and enhance the relevance, timeliness, and depth of JOLTS data; (3) support the development of a supplemental statistical poverty measure using Consumer Expenditure (CE) Survey data; and (4) maintain funding for the International Price Program (IPP) export price indexes.

Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), Department of Transportation: Funding is requested to support ongoing BTS programs and to: (1) initiate a travel data program to measure long distance travel by all modes of transportation; (2) estimate the inventory and use of motor vehicles; and (3) improve methods and data for calculating the value of transportation infrastructure and services.

Census Bureau, Department of Commerce: Funding is requested to support ongoing Census Bureau programs and to: (1) complete all research and testing and begin operational design, development, and system testing for the 2020 Decennial Census; (2) complete data releases for the 2012 Economic Census and begin planning for the 2017 Economic Census; (3) enhance Geographic Systems to take full advantage of technology and partner-supplied data in support of a reengineered address-canvassing operation; (4) support a Census Enterprise Data Collection and Processing Initiative to create an integrated and standardized “system of systems” to replace unique, survey-specific systems with an enterprise solution; and (5) expand access to administrative records for research and program evaluation through the creation of an Administrative Records Clearinghouse.

Economic Research Service (ERS), Department of Agriculture: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing ERS programs, and to: (1) conduct research to build a strong evidence base on public and private drivers of farm-level water use and responses to drought risk through analysis of shifting water supplies, farming practices, and food production using enhanced agricultural-environmental models and integrated data from survey and administrative sources; (2) analyze barriers to entry for new farmers and ranchers, and the extent to which U.S. Department of Agriculture programs and other government policies may help address them; (3) apply behavioral economics methodologies to support the development of new strategies to encourage low-income consumers to buy healthier foods in grocery stores; and (4) separate the effects of various Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) policy changes on program participation by linking survey and administrative data.

Energy Information Administration (EIA), Department of Energy: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing EIA programs and to: (1) expand mid-term energy analysis capabilities, including infrastructure and logistical issues such as changing product trade flows, growing oil exports, and changes to refining infrastructure; and (2) address critical energy data gaps, including information to better understand the determinants of personal vehicle miles of travel, movements of crude oil by rail, monthly estimates of electricity generation by distributed renewable energy sources (such as solar photovoltaics), and the use of energy to treat and pump water for agricultural uses, move potable water, and transport water to and from treatment facilities.

National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Department of Agriculture: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing NASS programs and to: (1) augment the established honey survey by collecting additional information regarding honeybee management and loss in support of the President’s initiative to gain more knowledge related to Colony Collapse Disorder; (2) enhance the Cattle on Feed, and Hogs & Pigs surveys and conduct a new Poultry survey to increase data on the Antimicrobial Resistance initiative; (3) expand geospatial research to augment current satellite-based agriculture statistics monitoring, extend current monitoring capabilities of CropScape and VegScape, and enrich the evaluation of climate change effects at the local level on crop production; (4) continue preparations for the 2017 Census of Agriculture; (5) maintain the annual Census of Agriculture Current Agriculture Industrial Reports; and (6) conduct the Local Foods Special Study in response to the new USDA policy, Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative (KYF2).

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Department of Education: Funding is requested to provide support for NCES ongoing activities and to: (1) initiate a new round of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort to provide high-quality data in the area of early childhood development; (2) collect selected National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey data every two years instead of every four years to provide more timely data on educational costs, financial aid, enrollment, and student progress and much-needed information on student loan borrower behavior and choices through a new study on college loan performance; (3) begin transitioning the National Assessment of Educational Progress from paper-and-pencil tests to technology-based assessments and expand the Trial Urban District Assessment to include 10 more districts; and (4) support new awards to States under the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems program to advance their use of data to improve education and inform policy, and enhance data coordination, quality, and use at the national, State, and local levels.

National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Department of Health and Human Services: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing NCHS programs and to: (1) expand electronic death reporting to provide faster access to data on prescription drug overdose deaths and other deaths significant for public health;

(2) further reduce the turn-around time associated with researcher access to NCHS compiled birth and death data, including for tracking priority health initiatives in prevention, cancer control, and teenage pregnancy; (3) enhance the quality and usability of health data through improved access and presentation methods; (4) test and implement modules to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey to address the growing need for information on infectious diseases and chronic health conditions; (5) investigate innovative ways to incorporate administrative data and electronic health record information into the family of health care provider surveys; and (6) launch a new, more efficient sample for the National Health Interview Survey that incorporates information on changing population demographics from the Decennial Census, and provides a more nimble platform for responding to changes in funding.

National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES), National Science Foundation: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing NCSES programs and to: (1) develop enhanced data access tools, techniques, and visualizations including a new, integrated interface to the Scientists and Engineers Statistical Data System (SESTAT) and the Integrated Science and Engineering Resource Data System (WebCASPAR, Computer-Aided Science Policy and Research) databases, (2) expand the scope of administrative data sources and standardized tagging efforts to measure Research & Development, and (3) conduct redesign and survey improvement efforts to address data gaps related to educational and career pathways of scientists and engineers and to the understanding of the relationship between Federal support for graduate education and student outcomes, such as employment, and to improve measures of innovation.

Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (ORES), Social Security Administration: Funding

is requested to provide support for ongoing ORES programs and to continue to: (1) support outside surveys through linkage with, and incorporation of, SSA administrative data; (2) complete data collection, produce data files and provide SSA with data from the redesigned Survey of Income and Program Participation to address Social Security's data needs for microsimulation models, program evaluation, and analysis; (3) provide enhanced statistical and analytical support for initiatives to place special emphasis on program integrity, addressing improper payments, and safeguarding the solvency of the Social Security retirement program and other government agency programs; and (4) expand use of administrative data for policy research through the Retirement Research Consortium and Disability Research Consortium.

Statistics of Income Division (SOI), Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing SOI programs and to: (1) provide opportunities to study tax administration and economic issues across sectors resulting from changes in tax laws by further integrating existing administrative data with edited data to allow for improved data linkages, while lessening the costs associated with data processing by reducing the number of fields to be transcribed; (2) develop richer datasets on complex corporations and collect new data provided in compliance with the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act and the Affordable Care Act; (3) support innovative research with the potential to improve tax administration by working with experts within and outside Government; (4) upgrade SOI's information technology infrastructure and deploy virtualization throughout the agency to improve security and reduce costs; and (5) continue to modernize data dissemination practices, developing more web-based products designed for wider audiences to increase the public's understanding of the tax system.

Table 16–1. 2014–2016 BUDGET AUTHORITY FOR PRINCIPAL STATISTICAL AGENCIES ¹
(In millions of dollars)

	Actual 2014	Estimate	
		2015	2016
Bureau of Economic Analysis	99	100	114
Bureau of Justice Statistics ²	57	53	81
Bureau of Labor Statistics	592	592	633
Bureau of Transportation Statistics	26	26	29
Census Bureau ³	974	1116	1529
Salaries and Expenses/Current Surveys and Programs ³	282	278	308
Periodic Censuses and Programs	692	838	1221
Economic Research Service	78	85	86
Energy Information Administration	117	117	131
National Agricultural Statistics Service ⁴	161	172	180
National Center for Education Statistics ⁵	258	257	300
Statistics ⁵	118	120	142
Assessment	132	129	150
National Assessment Governing Board	8	8	8
National Center for Health Statistics	155 ⁶	155 ⁷	160 ⁷
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, NSF ⁸	47	58	62
Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, SSA	27	30	27
Statistics of Income Division, IRS	35	36	38

¹ Reflects any rescissions and sequestration.

² Includes directly appropriated funds as well as funds transferred to BJS for research and statistical services, and funds for management and administrative (M&A) costs of \$3.5 in 2014, and estimated M&A costs of \$3.2 million in FY 2015 and \$4.8 million in FY 2016.

³ Salaries and Expenses/Current Surveys and Programs funds include discretionary and mandatory funds.

⁴ Includes funds for the periodic Census of Agriculture of \$45, \$47, and \$46 million in 2014, 2015, and 2016, respectively.

⁵ Includes funds for salaries and expenses of \$15, \$17, and \$17 million in 2014, 2015, and 2016, respectively, that are displayed in the Budget Appendix under the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). In addition, NCES manages the IES grant program for the State Longitudinal Data System which is funded at \$35 million, \$35 million, and \$70 million in 2014, 2015, and 2016, respectively, and the EDFacts Initiative which is funded at \$11 million in 2014, 2015, and 2016.

⁶ Funds from the Public Health Service Evaluation Fund and Budget Authority. Amount includes approximately \$15.4 million to implement the CDC Working Capital Fund.

⁷ All funds from Budget Authority. Amounts include funds to implement the CDC Working Capital Fund.

⁸ Includes funds for salaries and expenses of \$7.4, \$7.6, and \$7.7 million in 2014, 2015, and 2016, respectively.