

Assessing and Monitoring the Health of Federal Statistics

Scope, Reports, & Other Activities
Where should we go from here?

COPAFS - March 13, 2026

ASA FedStat Health Project

Goals

- Launched in 2023 to take pulse of nation's statistical system —*backbone of America's public data infrastructure* –three key goals:
 - (1) *create metrics* to track capabilities, achievements, and challenges over time
 - (2) *proactively monitor* agencies' health to enable timely responses to emerging crises
 - (3) *inform discussions* on statistical system priorities
- Focus: 13 agencies with primary mission to produce official statistics + Chief Stat (!)

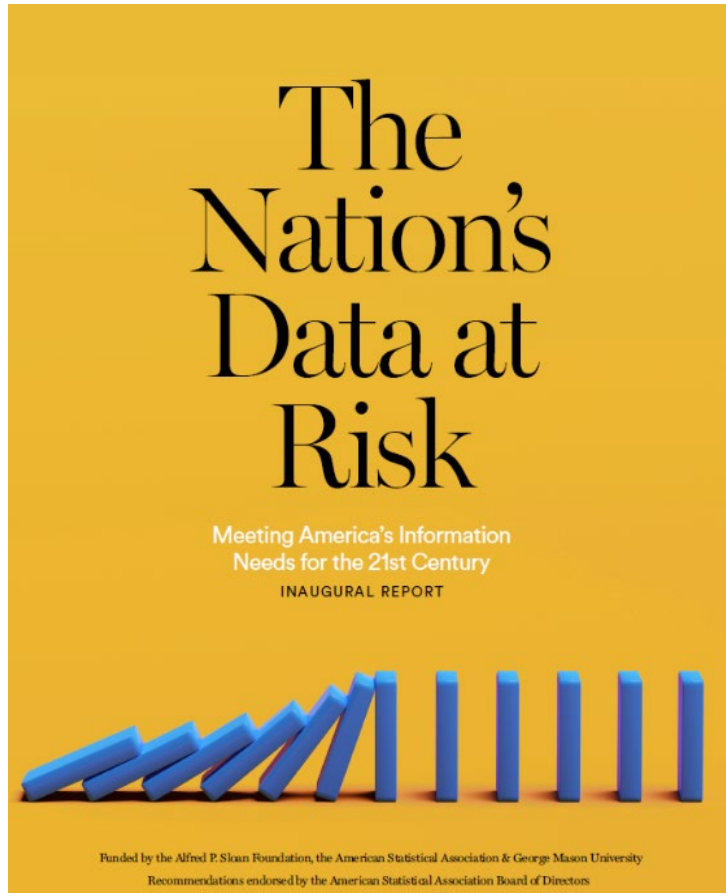
Project Team

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[With thanks to Jonathan Auerbach, May Aydin, Scientific Advisory Board, Reviewers]

Funded by

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (2023-25), ASA (2023-26)
Annie E. Casey Foundation (2025-26), California Community Foundation (2025)
(Views in reports are not necessarily those of any organization)

Activities to Date –Reports

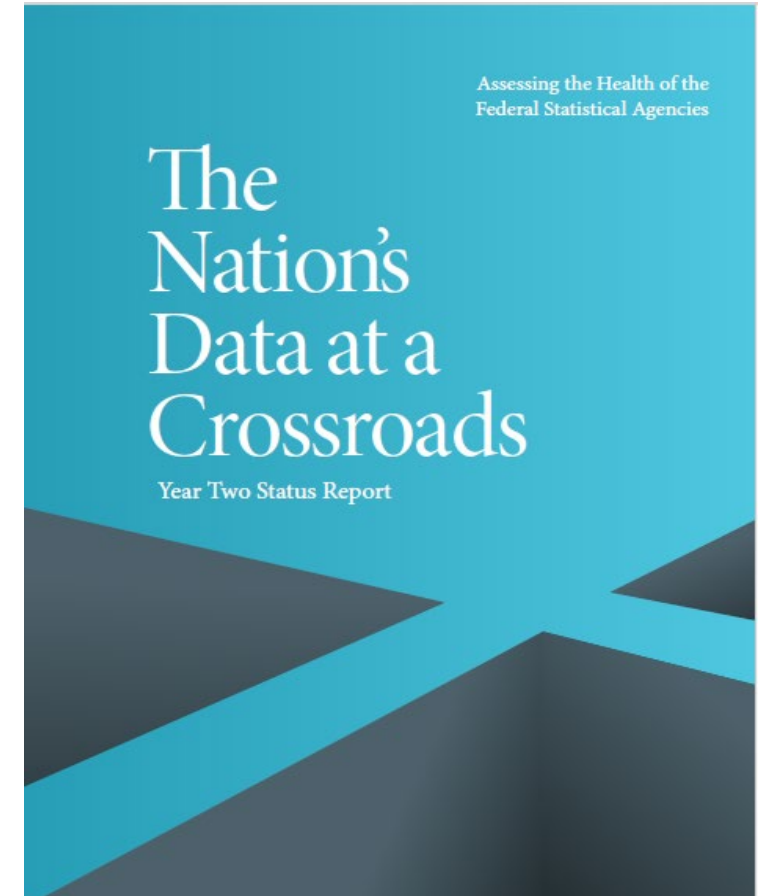


July 2024 Report



December 2025 Report

<https://bit.ly/NationsDataAtRisk2025>



July 2025 Status Report

Activities to Date –Monitoring, Surveying, et al.

- **February 2025 –ongoing: Near Real-Time Monitoring of Actions Affecting Fed Stats**
 - 6 categories:**
 - Cuts in statistical programs
 - Delays/reduced detail/cancellations of statistical products
 - Budget/staffing decreases
 - Undermining leadership/staff security
 - Accessing/using statistical data for nonstatistical purposes
 - Other situations (e.g., USDA South Bldg. [home of NASS/ERS] to be sold, staff moved)
- **June 2025 –ongoing: NORC AmeriSpeak Panel on Public Views of Fed Stats** (Zach)
- **January 2018 –ongoing: Monthly Updates (“Count on Stats”)** (revamped fall 2025)
- **February 2026 –ongoing: Citizen Science Reports on Fed Stat Releases**
- **February 2026 –ongoing: Resources for Policymakers, Media, U**



July 2024 Report found:

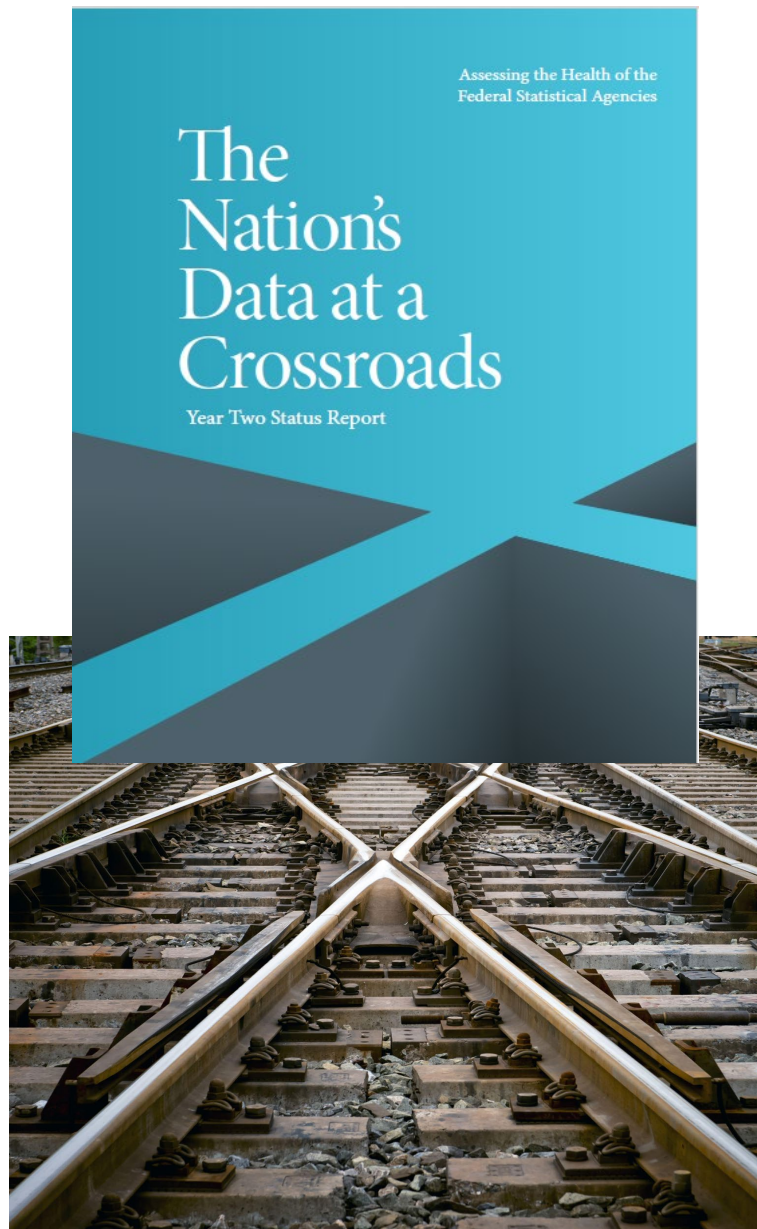
“Increasing challenges to the...agencies’ ability to produce trusted, quality statistics and to innovate to the extent necessary...**at least one out of three critical supports — professional autonomy, parent agency support, and adequate budget and skilled staff — exhibits significant weaknesses for most agencies...**”

2025 REPORT:



Plans

Reality



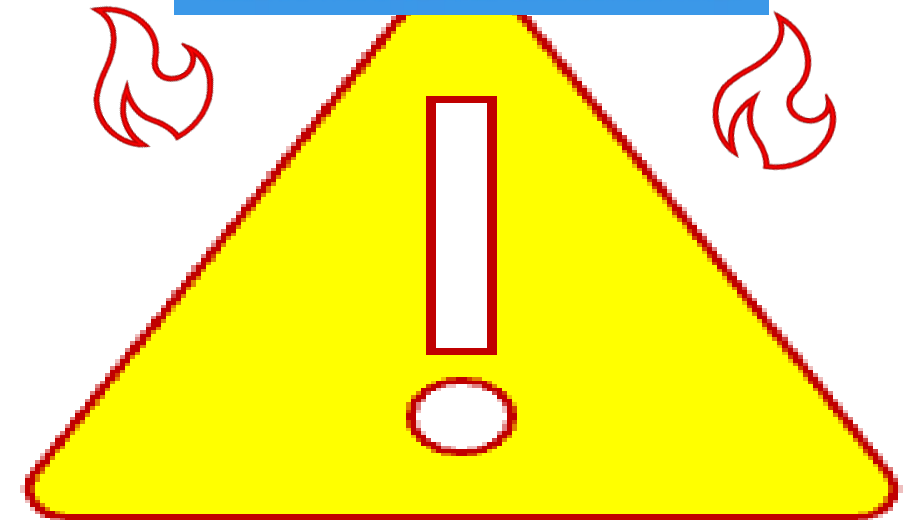
July 2025 Status Report found:

“...reductions in the amount and availability of federal statistical data, as well as delayed and less detailed statistical reports and a likely instance of improper political influence

We are at an inflection point: To meet current and future challenges requires thoughtful, well -planned investment in research and infrastructure, informed by input from the public and users... what we have observed is uncoordinated and unplanned reductions with no visible plan for the future.”

December 2025 Report concludes:

“Immediate action must be taken to halt the severe decline in the federal statistical agencies’ ability to meet their basic mission and be positioned to keep up with increasing information needs Top leadership in both the Congress and Executive Branch must prioritize investment in modernization ... required for a robust, relevant, and efficient statistical system for the nation and [must] affirm the importance of credible and objective statistics.”



Findings: Three Key Support Areas (Section 2.1)



Resources



Parent Agency and Administration



Statistical Integrity Safeguards



Resources – Staffing 10% to 95% loss (Table 2.1)

Agency	FY24	FY25*	FY26	
	Actual #	Approximate* % change from FY24	Proposed #	% change from FY24
BEA	451	-20%	380	-16%
BJS		-14%		
BLS	2058	-20%	1851	-8%
BTS	75	-31%		
Census	8,414	-15%	7,657	-9%
EIA	371	-35%	246	-34%
ERS	329	-26%	244	-26%
NASS	839	-40%	495	-41%
NCES	100	-95%		
NCHS	470	-10%	428	-9%
NCSES				
ORES		-50%		
SOI		-10%		

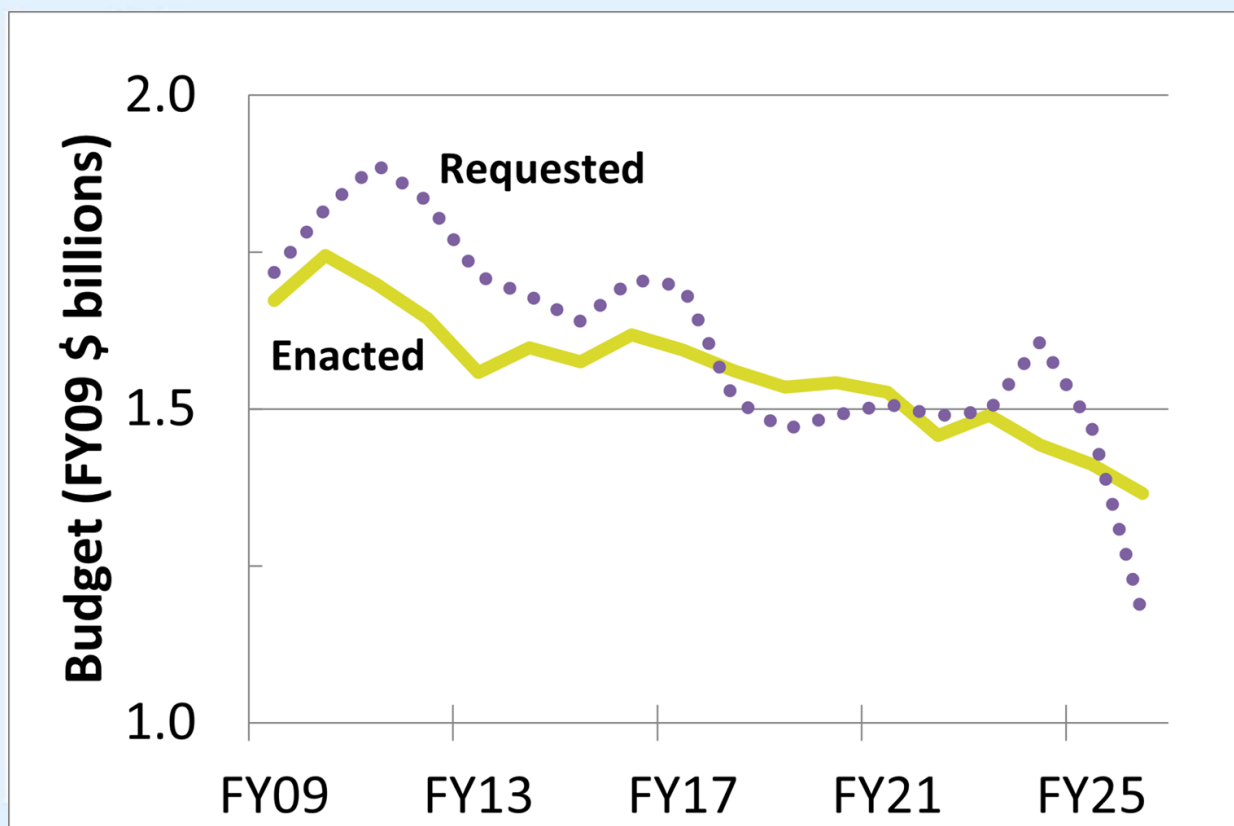


Staffing Considerations

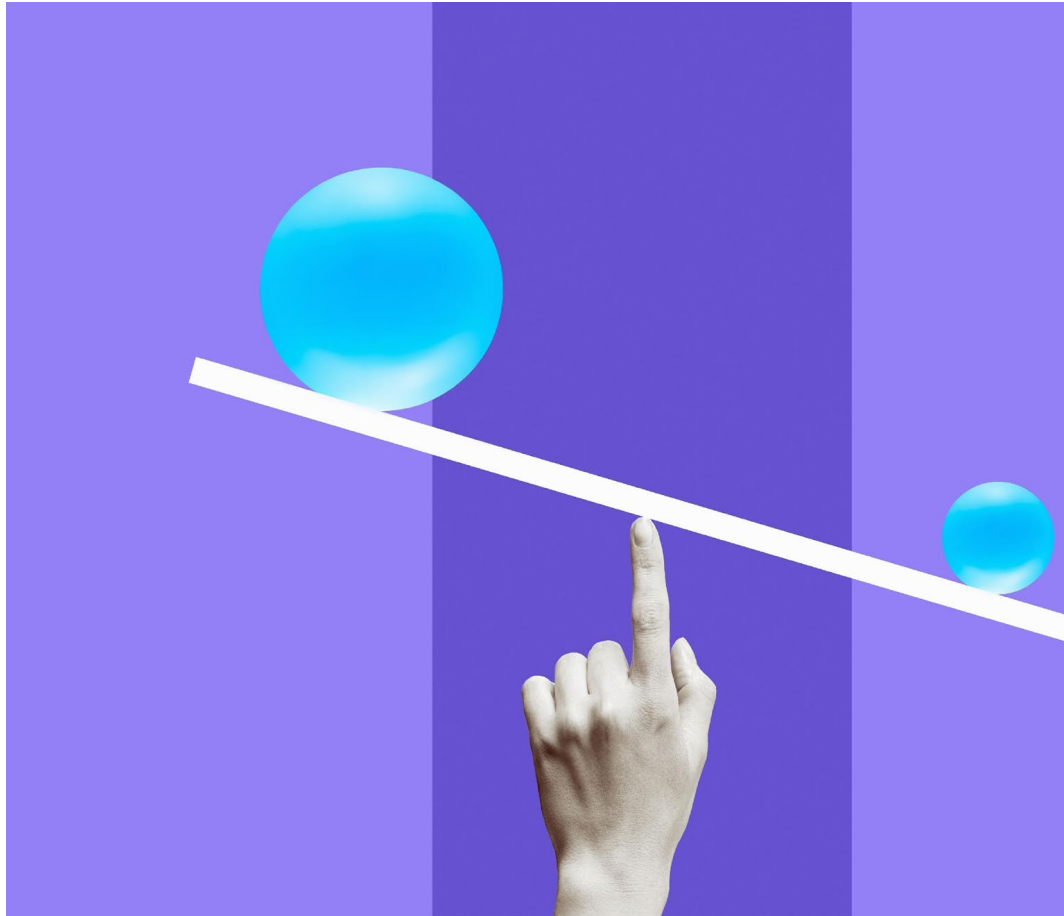
- Hard to find accurate, comparable staffing numbers to compare across agencies and time
- Overall impact of administration's staffing actions are clear: loss of knowledgeable staff due to probationary cuts, RIFs, buyouts, et al.
- Leadership gaps
- Relocation of some agencies (e.g., NASS, ERS) could lead to further staff losses
- Civil service schedule P/C (policy/career) has been enacted through the regulatory process; could imperil higher level stat agency staff
- Some hiring is happening

Resources – Budgets (Figure 2.1 and Agency Updates)

FIGURE 2.1. The President's Requested Budget and Enacted Level in Real (inflation-adjusted) FY09 Dollars for the Combined Budget or Non-cyclical Budget Lines, 9 Federal Statistical Agencies, FY09-FY26



Parent Agency and Administration Support



FINDING 2.2: The current administration's actions in support of federal statistical agencies have been heavily outweighed thus far by those weakening them.

- reduced staff
- weakened civil service protections
- hiring freezes
- deep budget cuts proposed
- frozen or canceled contracts
- key leadership positions unfilled
- disruptive agency relocations proposed
- statistical products eliminated without consultation

Statistical Integrity Safeguards

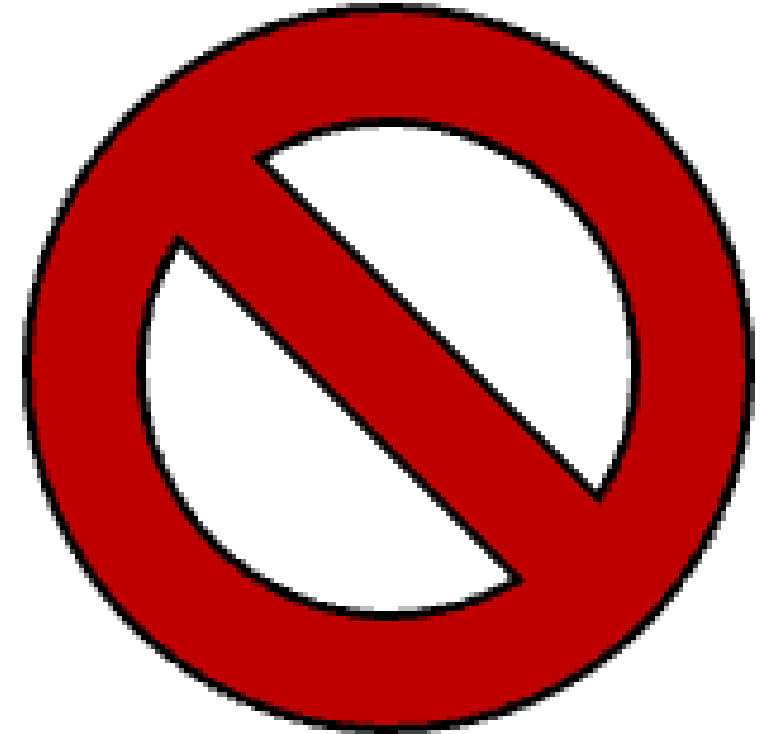
Statistical integrity safeguards:
Enabling an agency to act independently from political or other undue external influence for such operations as data collection and analysis, staffing, and publications to ensure products are objective and trusted

FINDING 2.3: The statistical agencies face several areas of risk for maintaining statistical integrity.

- In particular, the August 1, 2025, firing of the Commissioner of Labor Statistics based on unfounded accusations highlights the risk that new administrations and parent-agency leadership may disregard existing guardrails that protect the objectivity and integrity of federal statistics.

Implications – Impacts on Data (Table 2.4)

- Program cancellations/significant scope reduction
- Product delays/cancellations
- Data quality degradation (e.g., sample cuts in surveys, lower response)
- Across the board cuts in subject -matter content
- Cuts in reports/tools that would help many users



*For Agency specific impacts, see Sections 2.2.1, 2.3.1, and Supporting Materials: Agency Updates.

Implications – System Interdependencies & Challenges

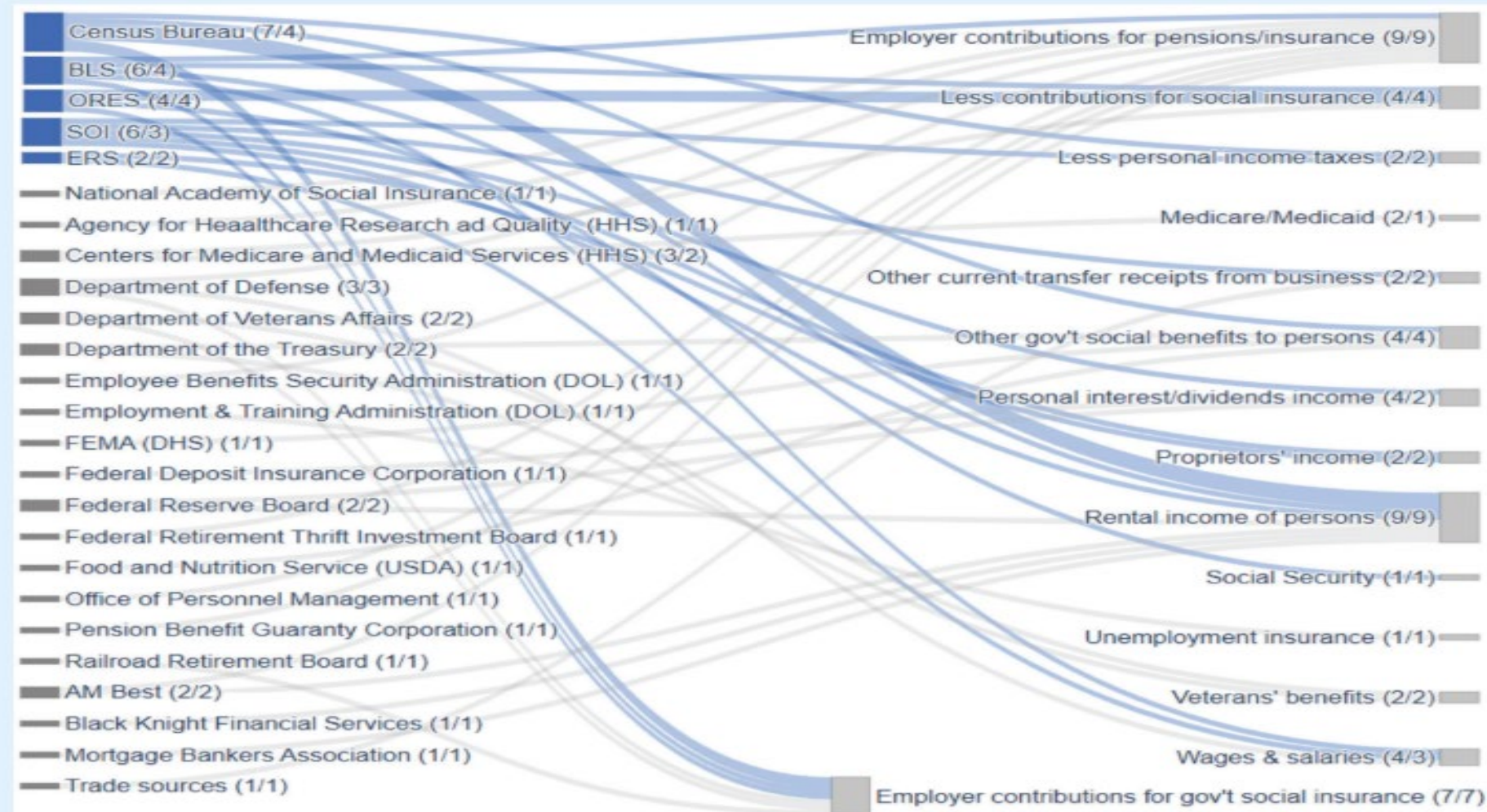
FINDING 2.4: Resource reductions and cuts in data programs and products that fail to consider the **interdependencies among components of the federal statistical system (and the dependence of federal statistical agencies on outside data sources)** impair agencies' ability to fulfill their Evidence Act responsibilities, meet their missions, and meet growing information needs.

FINDING 2.5: The federal statistical system is not funded as a system.

- Lacks the resources needed to implement shared initiatives and services that could make it more responsive, efficient, and cost-effective, while improving the timeliness and relevance of federal statistics.

Implications – Interdependencies

FIGURE 2.3. Data Providers for Aggregate Components of Annual Personal Income Estimates (number of uses/unique products)



Implications – Impaired Capacity for Innovation*



***Shoutout to Agencies:
Impressive FCSM
Conference Agenda**

Findings 4.1 - 4.3 Innovation

Resources [particularly knowledgeable staff], **capacity, and culture** [e.g., interaction with outside experts and users] to sustain innovation have significantly eroded, particularly for the smaller agencies.

Agencies lag in adopting **state-of-the-art standards and tools system-wide** to **facilitate data access and use** within and across agencies' websites and data products to increase ROI.

Partnerships with academic, commercial, state/local sectors on new methods for economic statistics (foundation-funded) are promising.

Monitoring Federal Data Use & Trust in Federal Statistics (Section 3)

- The project is analyzing nationally representative survey data to monitor:
 - who uses federal data,
 - how federal data are used, and
 - the public's level of trust in federal statistics.
- NORC at the University of Chicago AmeriSpeak data collected on a monthly basis since June.
- We report on June 2025 - February 2026 data on these topics collected from 10,032 respondents.



THE NATION'S DATA AT RISK: 2025 REPORT

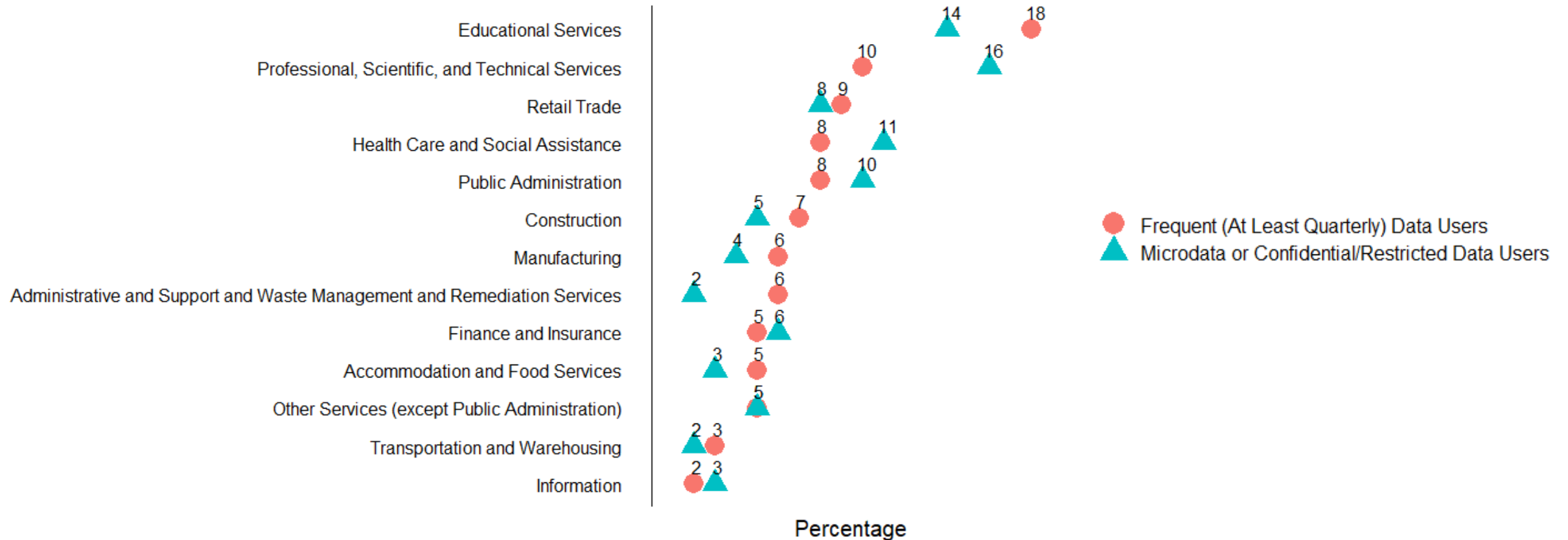
A report of the American Statistical Association project team to assess and monitor the health of the federal statistical agencies

Open-ended responses indicate a wide variety of kinds of data use

- Research: Academic papers, medical research, graduate school projects, college coursework
- Tracking crime rates for different neighborhoods
- Monitoring inflation and unemployment
- Business planning and marketing
- Planning crop rotation
- Informing public health programs
- COVID-related lookups
- Grant writing
- Curriculum development
- Genealogy
- Fact checking, curiosity

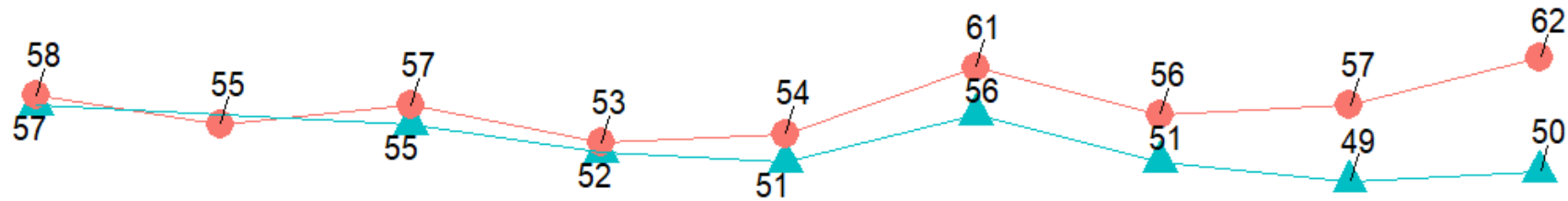
Data users come from a wide variety of professional backgrounds

Estimated % in Different Industries Among U.S. Adults Who Report More Experience Using Federal Statistics, NORC AmeriSpeak Panel, June -September 2025



We continue monthly monitoring of trends in perspectives on federal statistics, including regarding trust and relevance

Estimated % of U.S. Adults Tending to Trust Federal Statistics and Agreeing that Policymakers Need Federal Statistics to Make Good Decisions, NORC AmeriSpeak Panel, June 2025 -February



Percentage

- Agree or strongly agree: Policymakers need federal statistics to make good decisions
- ▲ Tend to trust federal statistics

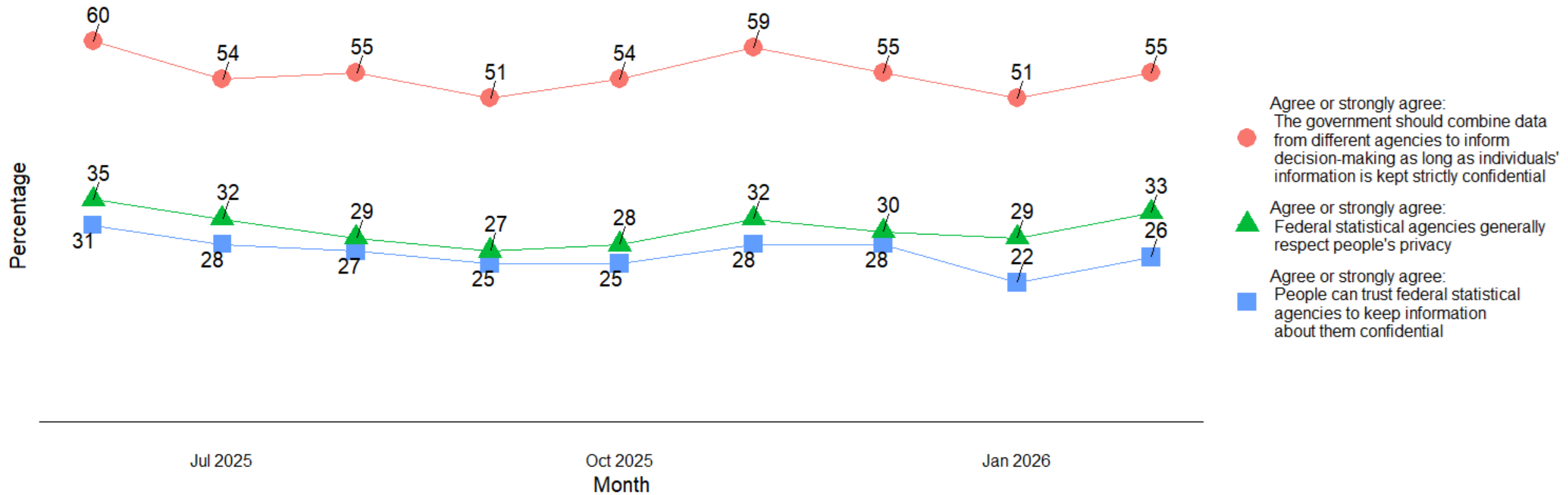
Jul 2025

Oct 2025
Month

Jan 2026

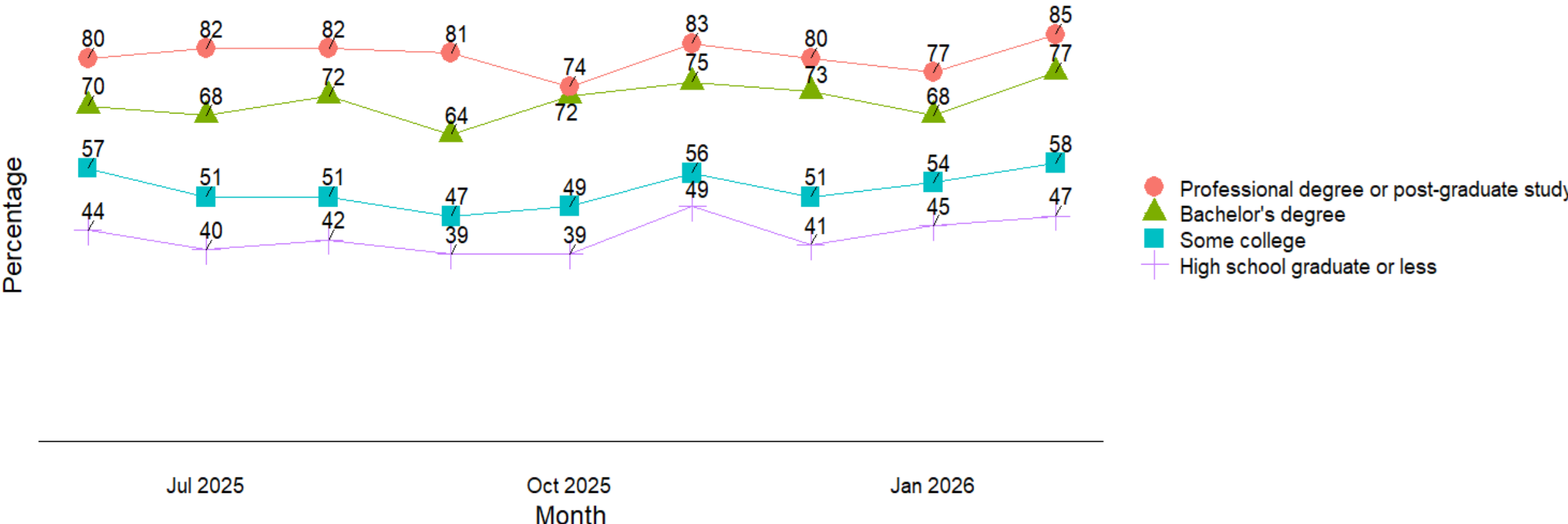
We are additionally monitoring perspectives regarding privacy, confidentiality, and combining data from different source

Estimated % of U.S. Adults Agreeing w. Different Positive Statements About Federal Statistics, NORC AmeriSpeak Panel, June -February 2026



Educational background is associated with more positive views about federal statistics, including agreement that policymakers need federal statistics for decision-making

Estimated % of U.S. Adults Agreeing that Policymakers Need Federal Statistics to Make Good Decisions by Education Level, NORC AmeriSpeak Panel, June 2025 - February 2026



Additional and Forthcoming Analysis

- More detailed estimates available from the ASA website. We plan to make updates every two months: <https://www.amstat.org/policy-and-advocacy/assessing-the-health-of-the-principal-federal-statistical-agencies>
- See **Nation's Data at Risk: 2025 Report Appendix** for additional detailed analyses: <https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/the-nations-data-at-risk-2025/Federal-Data-Use-Analysis-Census-NORC.pdf>

Congressional and Stakeholder Considerations

(Section 5)

- Why are federal statistical agencies losing purchasing power when that of discretionary, non - defense is increasing?
- Why do federal statistical agencies lack resources to innovate, improve access and usability, communicate more with data users, etc.?



Congressional and Stakeholder Considerations (Section 5)

FINDING 5.1: The annual appropriations process for the federal government disadvantages the budgets of the statistical agencies.

FINDING 5.2: Stakeholder communication and engagement with Congress on statistical agencies is fragmented and inconsistent.

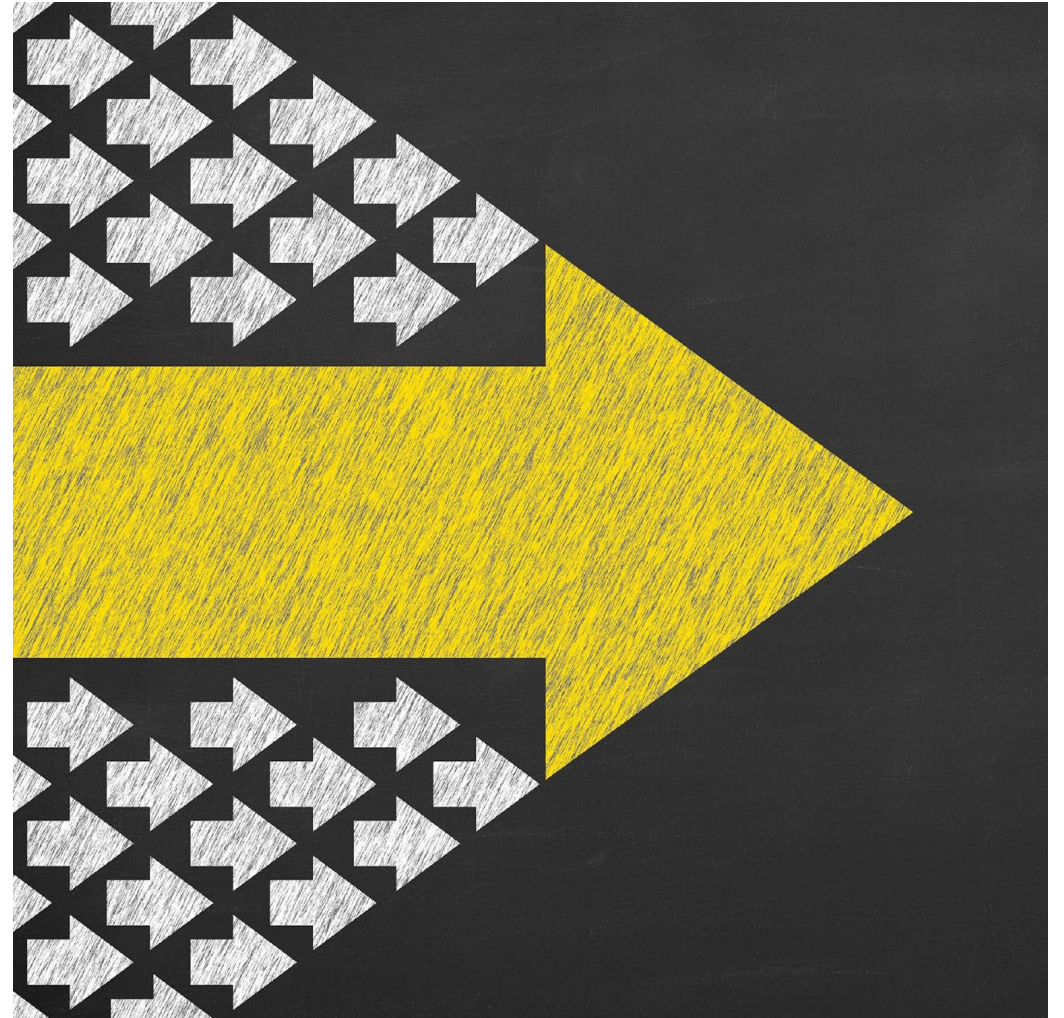
FINDING 5.3: Agencies prone to unfunded mandates.



Recommendations – 2025 Report (Section 6.2)

Congress, Administration, or Both:

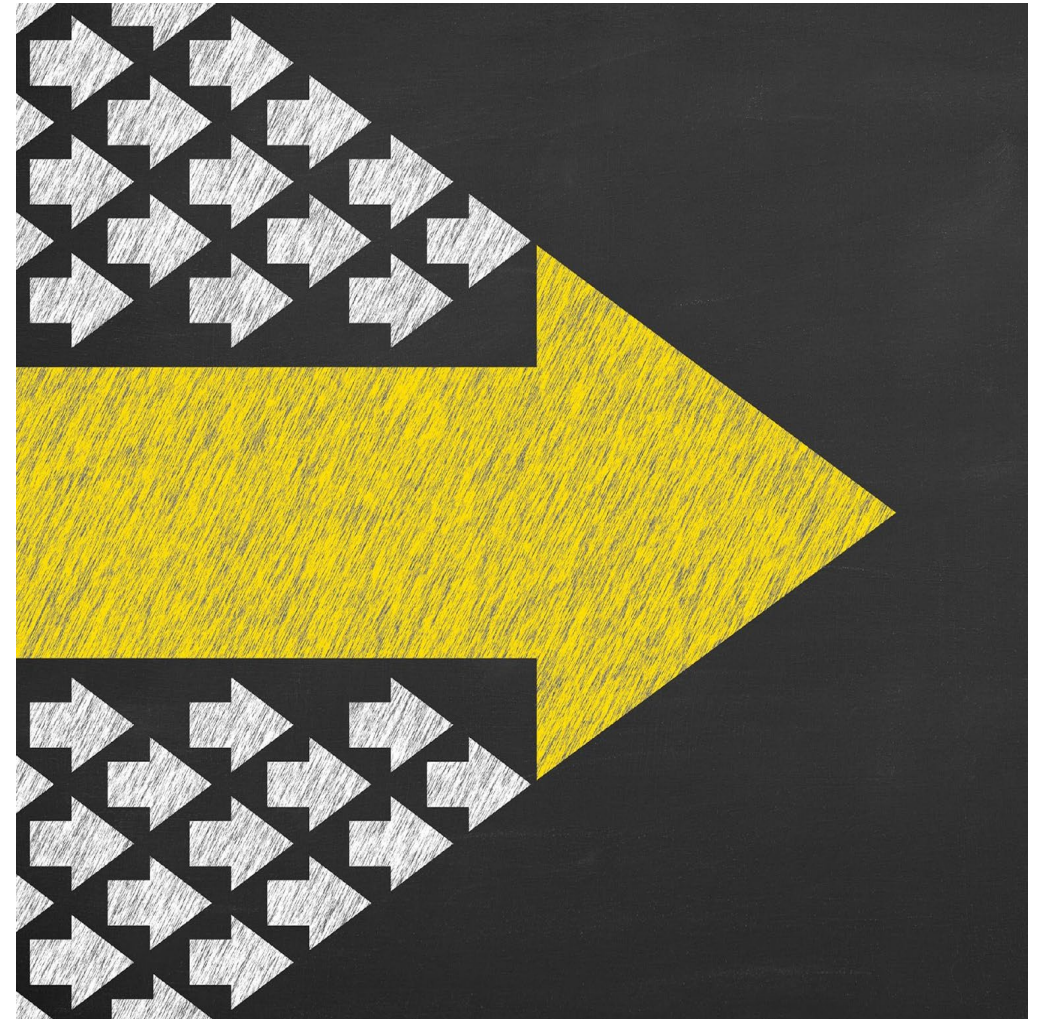
- Provide agencies with hiring freeze exemption.
- Take steps to strengthen trust in federal statistics.
- Take account in appropriations of statistical agencies' role to inform federal governance and provide public good.
- Fund modernization, innovation for quality and efficiency gains.



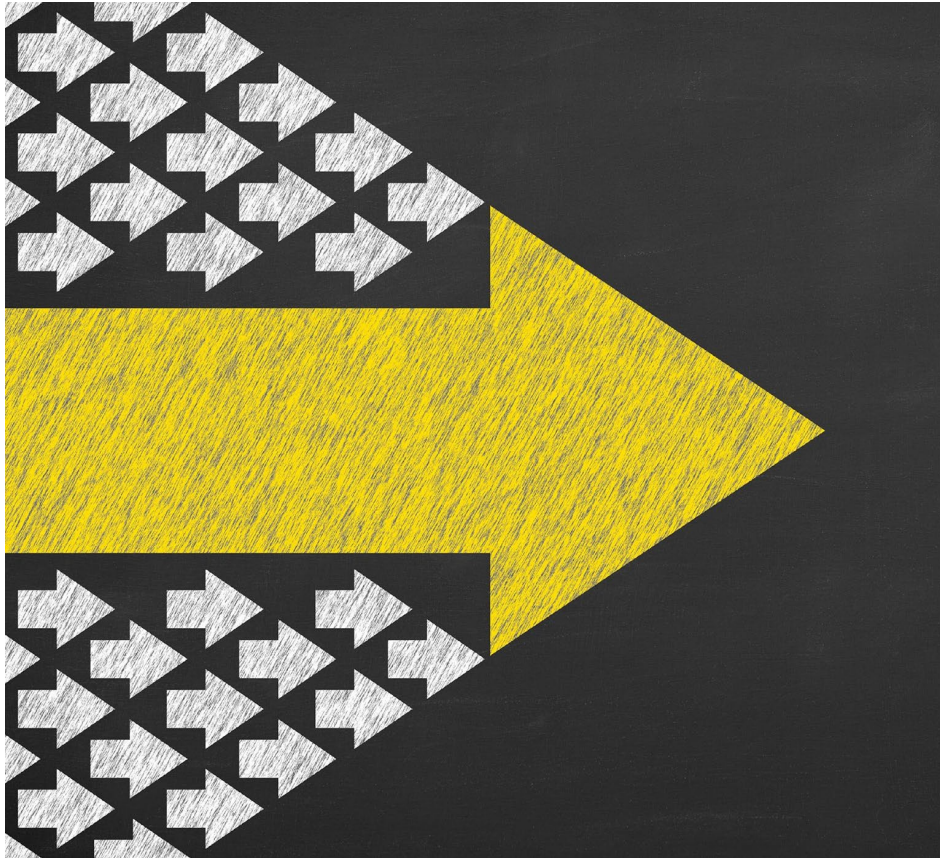
Recommendations – 2025 Report (Section 6.2)

Congress, Administration, or Both
(cont.):

- (As budget and staffing allow), encourage/support more active portfolio management and cross -agency leadership development and coordination.
- (As budget and staffing allow), enhance data accessibility, functionality, and preservation.



Recommendations – 2025 Report (Section 6.2)



Professional Associations/ Stakeholders

- Facilitate data user engagement, especially for smaller agencies.
- Collaborate and coordinate to more actively and systematically educate policymakers.
- Pair requests for new/expanded products with explicit calls for additional funding
- Stakeholders opposing the proposed elimination of a data program or product should focus on the importance of the data to allow the statistical agency ...flexibility

2025 Report - Supporting Materials

- A. Federal Statistics User Feedback
- B. Federal Data Use and Perspectives on Federal Statistics:
Analyses of NORC AmeriSpeak Panel
- C. Citizen Science Project: Monitoring Federal Statistical
Product Releases
- D. Press Coverage of Firing of BLS Commissioner
McEntarfer**
- E. Statements Supporting Objective Official Statistics,
August –November 2025**
- F. List of Supporting Materials: The Nation’s Data at Risk:
2024 Report
- G. Data Sources and Methods
- H. Innovation at Federal Statistical Agencies
- I. Agency Updates
- J. Names and Affiliations: Project Team; Scientific Advisory
Board; Report Reviewers



Activities to Date –Additional Resources

February 2026 –ongoing: Resources to help policymakers/ media/users learn about/support federal statistical system and federal statistics

- **Ongoing monitoring resources:** AmeriSpeak updates; budget/staff/leadership updates
- **Updated document resources:** Adapting/updating supporting materials attached to reports to make them broadly available (first such is value/uses of fed stats; others to follow soon on origins/organization of fedstat agencies, excerpts from foundational documents [Evidence Act, CNSTAT's P&P, et al.]
- **Podcast/interviews/webinars** with project team members
- **Other project -related publications** by project team members (e.g., Citro et al., 2023, on fedstat autonomy)
- **Other resources** (e.g., CRS overview of the chief statistician's office, January 2026)

2026 Plans ??? What Are Your Thoughts???

- Continue monitoring and assessment.
- Continue NORC AmeriSpeak time series on public trust, confidence.
- Further develop citizen scientist monitoring of statistical product quality —granularity, frequency, timeliness.
- Outreach and engagement with community on this project's work, direction.
- Deepen coordination with aligned organizations and projects (e.g., ASA FSS Modernization project).



2026 Plans – How You Can Help

- Feedback on 2025 report: what did we miss, get wrong, get right? <https://bit.ly/FedStatInput2025>
- What should our 2026 priorities be?
- Join citizen science statistical product monitoring effort <https://bit.ly/FedStatCitizenScience>
- Share information: Go to <https://bit.ly/FedStatHealth>.
- Contact: spierson@amstat.org with questions, feedback



Discussion

We request discussion on two topics:

1. Project and report concerns and critiques

1. Future directions, topics, foci

Discussion

Project and report feedback, concerns, and critiques

- General feedback
- What does the report miss or get wrong?
- Too much emphasis on one topic or another?
- Did our congressional and stakeholder considerations resonate or miss?
- ...

Discussion

Future directions: 2026 and beyond

- Key elements to be measuring and monitoring?
- Are recommendations being implemented?
- What do COPAFS members think are the key issues for 2026?
- What are they most worried about, think are the highest priorities, and how has their work been affected to date (i.e., reaction to SSRS report)?
- How do we better coordinate with other projects?