

16. STRENGTHENING FEDERAL STATISTICS

Federal statistical programs produce key 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. The share of budget resources spent on 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—but that funding is leveraged to inform crucial decisions in a wide variety of spheres. The ability of governments, businesses, and the general public to make appropriate decisions about budgets, employment, investments, taxes, and a host of other important matters depends critically on the ready and equitable availability of objective, relevant, accurate, and timely Federal statistics.

The Federal statistical community is attentive to opportunities to improve these measures of our Nation's performance, which is critical to fostering long-term global competitiveness. For example, during 2013 and 2014, Federal statistical agencies:

- addressed data gaps exposed by the recent financial crisis and recession in the comprehensive revision of the national income and product accounts (*Bureau of Economic Analysis*);
- redesigned and modernized the National Crime Victimization Survey to produce more reliable, valid, and relevant estimates of the Nation's crime victimization incidents (*Bureau of Justice Statistics*);
- added new variables on self-employed persons to the Current Population Survey's public use files to support analysis of additional characteristics of the self-employed and investigations of how these change over time (*Bureau of Labor Statistics*);
- improved access to geospatial data through the National Transportation Atlas Viewer and to all forms of transportation data through the National Transportation Library (*Bureau of Transportation Statistics*);
- achieved a significant electronic response rate increase for the Economic Census from 29 percent in 2007 to 53 percent in 2012 (*Census Bureau*);
- accelerated the release of an international trade in goods and services economic indicator to foster U.S. global competitiveness and economic growth for American businesses, workers, and consumers (*Bureau of Economic Analysis and Census Bureau*);
- linked Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) administrative records from Texas to American Community Survey data to enable SNAP Administrators to better target outreach within the largest counties of Texas (*Economic Research Service*);
- combined real-time data feeds from the National Hurricane Center with extensive energy infrastructure and resource geospatial data layers to launch a mapping application that visualizes storm threats to energy systems (*Energy Information Administration*);
- provided farmer data to the Conservation Effects Assessment Project whose results indicate that, compared to 2006, producers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed have increased adoption of conservation practices on cultivated cropland which has resulted in a significant decrease in pollution (*National Agricultural Statistics Service*);
- monitored educational progress by providing estimates indicating that the percentages of students at or above proficient levels in mathematics at grade 4, and in reading at grades 4 and 8 increased from 2011 to 2013, and were higher than in the early 1990s in both subjects and grades (*National Center for Education Statistics*);
- produced the most current and complete national and State-specific (for the largest States) data available to track health insurance coverage, affordability of medical care and medications, usual source of medical care, preventive services, and emergency room visits (*National Center for Health Statistics*);
- incorporated Research and Development (R&D) survey data into the U.S. Gross Domestic Product and other national income and product accounts by treating R&D as an investment that generates future income and product thereby facilitating international comparisons of national economic statistics (*Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics*);
- negotiated and implemented 40 data sharing agreements supporting the wide variety of research and statistical activities of our Federal, State, and local agency partners to leverage and enhance the value of already collected administrative data (*Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, SSA*);
- addressed key tax administration issues through the Joint Statistical Research Program by leveraging the skills and resources of academics, non-profit organizations, and other Federal Government agencies (*Statistics of Income Division, IRS*); and
- released, for the first time, real (inflation-adjusted) personal income for States and metropolitan areas based on regional price parities that allow the comparison of real personal income across regions and time periods (*Bureau of Economic Analysis*).

For Federal statistical programs to be useful to their wide range of users, the underlying data systems 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. As the collectors and providers of these basic statistics, the responsible 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 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' 2015 budget proposals.

Highlights of 2015 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 90 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 2015*, 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 a new suite of small business data products, including expanding data on small businesses by developing a Small Business Satellite Account, with a new Small Business GDP to track the overall growth and health of the small-business sector; and (2) continue to implement a critical modernization of BEA's information technology system that will lead to an increase in operational efficiency and security of statistical production and analysis.

Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), Department of Justice: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing BJS programs and to: (1) 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) launch statistical collections which examine public defender agencies, programs and operations; (3) continue exploration of 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; (4) expand the surveys of inmates of prisons and jails to inform the process of re-entry; (5) improve the availability of justice statistics for Indian country; and (6) continue to support the enhancement of criminal justice statistics available through State statistical analysis centers.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Department of Labor: In FY 2015, 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 even years, and on other topics in odd years; and (2) modify the Consumer Expenditure (CE) Survey to support the Census Bureau in its development of a supplemental statistical poverty measure.

Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), Department of Transportation: Funding is requested to support ongoing BTS programs and to: (1) reinstitute a travel data program to measure city-to-city passenger travel by all modes of transportation to inform the Nation's transportation investments, including high-speed rail initiatives, and to illuminate DOT's continued focus on safety; (2) estimate the inventory and use of trucks nationally to capture their physical and operating characteristics, conduct safety analyses, estimate fuel consumption, evaluate their economic productivity, and develop statistics of highway usage and cost allocation; and (3) improve methods and data for calculating the value of transportation infrastructure and services.

Census Bureau, Department of Commerce: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing Census Bureau programs and to: (1) conduct critical research, testing, and development for the 2020 Census program to support key operational decisions about fundamental changes to program, business, operational, and technical processes that must be made by the end of FY 2015; (2) complete data releases for the 2012 Economic Census and begin planning for the 2017 Economic Census; (3) reinstate the Boundary and Annexation Survey in 2015; and (4) support a Census Enterprise Data Collection and Processing Initiative which will create an integrated and standardized "system of systems" that will replace unique, survey-specific systems with an enterprise solution.

Economic Research Service (ERS), Department of Agriculture: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing ERS programs, and to expand internal expertise, support collaboration with USDA program agencies, and form partnerships with extramural researchers to: (1) perform and evaluate experiments that incorporate concepts from behavioral economics to identify high (and low) performing program alternatives before incurring the costs associated with new program implementation; and (2) create and evaluate unique merged administrative data systems by linking multiple data sources, as-

sessing statistical properties, and analyzing the merged data for policy-relevant findings.

Energy Information Administration (EIA), Department of Energy: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing EIA programs and to: (1) improve EIA's capability to track and report on rapidly-changing domestic energy market dynamics, including expanded collection of domestic oil and gas production and collaboration with member States of the Ground Water Protection Council to make EIA a repository for well-level petroleum data from States; (2) illuminate domestic energy market dynamics within the broader context of the world energy system, including the global markets for liquefied natural gas, crude oil, and refined products; and (3) develop an interface that enables groups with common interests to crowd-source, or pool information to determine the actual effectiveness of specific building efficiency technologies, practices, and characteristics in reducing energy use while maintaining energy services.

National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Department of Agriculture: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing NASS programs and to: (1) conduct a survey to provide baseline estimates of the extent of honey bee Colony Collapse Disorder, and quantitative information on potential causes of these significant losses in pollinator populations; (2) expand geospatial research to enable more accurate, detailed, and systematic greenhouse gas modeling, monitoring, and assessment; (3) restore fruit, nut, and vegetable in-season production reports; (4) restore reports on chemical use on major row crops, on vegetable crops, and in post-harvest activities; (5) continue the annual Current Agriculture Industrial Reports to support Federal agencies' agricultural production estimation requirements as well as private industry's efforts to monitor the effect of international trade on domestic production, evaluate the relationship between company and industry performance, and support market analysis and planning; (6) conduct the Quinquennial Census of Horticulture Specialties study to provide estimates of horticultural product production and sales as well as industry expenses, growing area, and hired labor; and (7) conduct the Tenure, Ownership, and Transition of Agricultural Land Census of Agriculture follow-on study to inform policy decisions for USDA programs linked to farm land ownership and rental arrangements, support research on generational transitions in agriculture, and provide updated agricultural parameters for the National Accounts.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Department of Education: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing NCES activities and to: (1) pilot a State-representative sample of the Program of International Student Assessment of 15 year-olds in reading, mathematics, and science for a limited number of participating States; (2) collect student-level institutional administrative data on a two-year cycle to supplement the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study student survey with more frequent information on educational costs, financial aid, enrollment, and progress; (3) collect data on elementary and secondary school teachers and principals every two years, instead of every four years, in order to

provide more timely information about this key workforce; and (4) include in the 2015 National Household Education Surveys an adult education survey that provides information on training that adults seek and receive outside of traditional colleges and universities.

National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Department of Health and Human Services: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing NCHS core programs to: (1) provide relevant, accurate, and timely estimates of high priority health measures; (2) enhance the quality and usability of health data through improved access tools and tutorials; (3) use birth and death data collected by the States for tracking priority health initiatives in prevention, cancer control, births to unmarried women, and teenage pregnancy; (4) monitor health care utilization through the family of provider surveys; (5) provide National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data on diet and nutrition, blood pressure, chronic diseases, and other health indicators; and (6) provide information annually and quarterly on the health status of the U.S. civilian non-institutionalized population through confidential household interviews conducted by the National Health Interview Survey.

National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES), National Science Foundation: Funding is requested to continue NCSES's core mission to measure research and development trends, the science and engineering workforce, U.S. competitiveness, and the condition and progress of the Nation's STEM education and to support targeted improvements in NCSES statistical programs by: (1) enhancing the Survey of Doctorate Recipients to expand the sample to facilitate more finely detailed estimates by subfield, race, and gender, which will greatly augment the knowledge and understanding of these individuals and their contributions to the U.S. workforce; (2) planning and conducting a survey of R&D in the nonprofit sector, filling a data gap on this important segment of the economy; and (3) conducting a new data collection to gather in-depth information about post-doctoral appointees and other doctorate recipients who earned their first doctorate within the past 10 years.

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 survey and linkage of SSA administrative data to surveys; (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 improve Social Security 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), Department of the Treasury: Funding is requested to provide support for ongoing SOI programs and to: (1) further modernize tax data collection systems by utilizing new infor-

mation technology to better support SOI's complex data collection programs; (2) integrate population and information return data with SOI-edited data to provide rich longitudinal and/or cross-sectional data that can be used to better understand the complex interaction between taxes and economic behavior; (3) develop improved statistical techniques for identifying and correcting outliers

and data anomalies in Internal Revenue Service administrative population files; (4) partner with tax policy experts within and outside government to produce top quality research on key tax administration issues; (5) enhance the design, quality, clarity, and number of SOI's products; and (6) stringently protect taxpayer data from inadvertent disclosure.

Table 16–1. 2013–2015 BUDGET AUTHORITY FOR PRINCIPAL STATISTICAL AGENCIES ¹

(In millions of dollars)

	Actual 2013	Estimate	
		2014	2015
Bureau of Economic Analysis	93	99	111
Bureau of Justice Statistics ²	53	53	63
Bureau of Labor Statistics	577	592	610
Bureau of Transportation Statistics	26	26	29
Census Bureau ³	859	944	1210
Salaries and Expenses ³	238	252	248
Periodic Censuses and Programs	621	692	962
Economic Research Service	71	78	83
Energy Information Administration	100	117	123
National Agricultural Statistics Service ⁴	167	161	179
National Center for Education Statistics ⁵	249	259	273
Statistics ⁵	118	119	140
Assessment	123	132	125
National Assessment Governing Board	8	8	8
National Center for Health Statistics ⁶	154	155	155
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, NSF ⁷	42	47	59
Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, SSA	27	29	30
Statistics of Income Division, IRS	35	37	37

¹ Reflects any rescissions and sequestration.

² Includes funds for management and administrative costs of \$7.6, \$7.2, and \$7.2 million in 2013, 2014, 2015, respectively, that were previously displayed separately.

³ Salaries and Expenses funds include discretionary and mandatory funds. 2013 Total does not reflect Working Capital Fund balances.

⁴ Includes funds for the periodic Census of Agriculture of \$59, \$46, and \$45 million in 2013, 2014, and 2015, respectively.

⁵ Includes funds for salaries and expenses of \$15, \$16, and \$17 million in 2013, 2014, and 2015, 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 \$36 million, \$35 million, and \$70 million in 2013, 2014, and 2015, respectively.

⁶ All funds from the Public Health Service Evaluation Fund. The amounts do not include resources from the Prevention and Public Health Fund.

⁷ Includes funds for salaries and expenses of \$7.2, \$7.6, and \$7.8 million in 2013, 2014, and 2015, respectively.