

United States Federal Statistical System: Coordination, Cooperation, and Collaboration

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Overview of U.S. Federal Statistical System

The United States is a “decentralized” statistical system

- “Decentralized” refers to horizontal sharing of responsibilities across agencies at the Federal level.
- Some vertical sharing of data production with state and local governments, in areas such as agriculture, labor, and education.



Overview of U.S. Federal Statistical System

The US decentralized system includes 80 agencies.

A substantial portion of official statistics are produced by ten agencies.



Top 10 Agencies

- Some headed by presidential appointees, others by career civil servants.
- Operate under separate laws.
- Expend approximately 40 percent of resources dedicated to Federal statistical work (or about \$2 billion annually).



The Other 70 Agencies

Conduct statistical activities in support of program missions, such as:

- Providing services.
- Enforcing regulations.



Chief Statistician

Located in the Executive Office of the President for 70 years.

Authorities are set forth in the **Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995**, which include:

- Budget reviews.
- Information collection approvals.
- Standard setting.
- Other statistical policy and coordination activities.



Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995

Assigns to the Director of OMB nine statistical policy and coordination functions.

- Coordinate the activities of the Federal statistical system.
- Ensure that agencies' budget proposals are consistent with system priorities.
- Develop and implement government-wide policies, principles, standards, and guidelines.



Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995

- Evaluate statistical program performance and agency compliance with policies, principles, standards, and guidelines.
- Promote the sharing of statistical information consistent with privacy rights and confidentiality pledges.
- Coordinate participation in international statistical activities, including the development of comparable statistics.



Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995

- Appoint a chief statistician who is a trained and experienced professional statistician to carry out these functions.
- Establish an Interagency Council on Statistical Policy to help in carrying out these functions.
- Provide opportunities for training in statistical policy functions to employees of the Federal Government.



Culture of Collaboration

Chief Statistician's Office provides oversight, coordination, and guidance for Federal statistical activities.

- Identify priorities for improving programs.
- Establish statistical policies and standards.
- Evaluate statistical programs for compliance with OMB guidance.



Culture of Collaboration

Interagency Council on Statistical Policy advises Chief Statistician and fosters cooperation.

- Priorities are set in collaboration with agencies.
- Agencies recognize that benefits accrue to the system.



Culture of Collaboration

The Chief Statistician's tools that foster collaboration:

- Budget development.
- Standard setting.
- Information collection review processes.



Development of Budgets for Statistical Programs

The Chief Statistician is located in the Executive Office of the President/OMB, where the President's budget proposal to Congress is formulated.

Budgets are initiated within the various agencies, but ultimate decisions about the allocation of resources within and across agencies are made in OMB and are subject to the legislative process.



Development of Budgets for Statistical Programs

Opportunity to assess allocation of resources;
provide resources for high priority
improvements.

Overall budget around \$5 billion/year for
statistical activities - exclusive of decennial
census.



Establishment and Enforcement of Standards

- Core standards for statistical surveys.
- Guidelines on protecting confidential information.
- Classification standards.
- Data release standards.



Approval of All National Data Collections

A key tool for monitoring and enforcing government-wide use of the standards and classification is the information review process.

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act:

- All information collected from 10 or more members of the public must be approved by OMB.
- **All** agencies must submit **all** proposed information collections to OMB.
- All collections are subject to public comment.
- Collections are approved for a maximum of three years.



Approval of All National Data Collections

The OMB approval process provides mechanisms to:

- Ensure that statistical methods are appropriate to intended uses.
- Monitor agencies' use of classification standards.
- Coordinate collections carried out by various agencies.
- Prevent duplicative requests.
- Reduce respondent burden.



Approval of All National Data Collections

The Paperwork Reduction Act provides OMB with the authority to:

- Designate a central collection agency to obtain information needed by two or more agencies.
- Direct an agency to make the information it collects available to another agency.



Advisory Mechanisms

- Various councils assist the Chief Statistician.
- Expert advisory committees provide assistance to statistical agencies.



Broad Scope Advisory Committees

- Committee on National Statistics, National Academies of Science
 - Interdisciplinary – 15 experts guide work
 - Panels of volunteer experts for specific studies
- Federal Economic Statistics Advisory Committee
 - Advises BEA, BLS, Census Bureau



Agency Specific Advisory Committees

- Census
 - Advisory Committee of Professional Associations
- Bureau of Transportation Statistics
 - Transportation Research Board, and Council of Experts
- National Agricultural Statistics Service
- Bureau of Economic Analysis
- National Center for Health Statistics
- Energy Information Administration



Collaboration with Individuals in Academia

- Bureau of Labor Statistics
 - International prices
- Bureau of Transportation Statistics
 - Freight, passenger, transportation for-hire services
- Bureau of Justice Statistics
 - National Archive of Criminal Justice Data
- Bureau of Economic Analysis
 - Integration of National Accounts
- Statistics of Income, Internal Revenue Service



New and Innovative Collaborations with Researchers

- National Center for Health Statistics
 - Partnership with schools
- Economic Research Service and National Agricultural Statistics Service
 - Data enclave with NORC and NIST
- Census Bureau
 - Research Data Centers

