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VOICES FROM THE DATA COMMUNITY

HOW 2025 HAS IMPACTED PUBLIC DATA USERS

FINDINGS FROM A 2026 SURVEY OF USERS OF FEDERAL STATISTICAL DATA CONDUCTED BY SSRS

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With support from

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INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary

The integrity and accessibility of robust, unbiased federal statistical data are foundational to informed governmental and private sector decision making. Yet, from the start of 2025, the U.S. federal statistical agencies have experienced significant challenges in their mission to produce high-quality and timely data – including staff reductions, program cuts, and government shutdowns – creating confusion and uncertainty on the part of the data user community. This report highlights the experiences of end users of federal statistical data one year into this period of turmoil.

First, we must acknowledge the invaluable work done by the remaining federal statistical agency staff and a large community of civil society organizations in maintaining data collection activity and archiving pre-2025 datasets for researcher use. This community continues to work to preserve and strengthen public statistical data assets including the development of replacement data tools and advocacy for data programs.

This report is intended to support advocates for a robust federal data system by presenting the findings of a survey of users of federal statistical data. This research was designed to investigate how users of public data are being impacted by the changes of 2025 and how they are navigating the aftermath.

This survey was conducted by SSRS in early 2026 with more than 500 data public users across academia, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and businesses; and reflects a cross-section of specialty areas including demographics, health, education, economics, and others. It was funded by a grant by the Knight Foundation and the research team is indebted to guidance from many champions in the space.

This survey of users of federal statistical data reveals four primary themes:

- **Changes have disrupted nearly all of these federal data users in some way.** Nearly all respondents said that changes to federal statistical data have had a major (54%) or minor (39%) impact on their ability to do their job and only 6% reported experiencing no impacts at all. Significant impacts include delays and bottlenecks related to data release, reduction in data collections and staffing capacity for technical assistance, and threats to data quality and integrity that make data more complicated to use for analysis.

- **A range of coping strategies are being used, often as imperfect substitutes.** Data users are responding to these impacts in a number of ways including relying on older data, using alternative data sources, leveraging new analytical techniques, and exploring new partnerships. That said, many respondents conveyed that there is no substitute for high-quality federal data, and disruptions have led many to delay, scale back, or cancel projects entirely.

- **These public data users have been significantly impacted by changes to the federal statistical workforce.** Survey respondents report that their current challenges often stem from disruptions to data tools and the inability to get assistance with federal datasets - both of which are further compounded by federal staff reductions. However, they do frequently commend the remaining staff for continuing to produce high-quality data.

- **These changes have all led to considerable concerns about the future of federal statistics.** Respondents also expressed significant concerns about the future of federal data with nearly 80% citing concerns about the potential that federal statistical data collections will be stopped, and more than 70% worrying that they will lose their ability to access federal data or data products or expressing concern about the overall impacts of recent actions on public trust in federal data. The long-term impacts of disruptions to federal data are hard to predict, but respondents express concerns about economic damage, less effective policies, and real-world harms on marginalized communities.

Taken together these findings reflect a public data user community shaken by events of the last year, struggling to adapt, and still looking for paths forward with their own work. The examples and experiences shared by respondents convey perseverance alongside significant anxiety and concerns about the future.

Reflecting on the stories of public data users, a series of specific and concrete needs emerge that civil society organizations could undertake to help users of public data navigate this turbulent time period. They include identifying and curating the many organizations already engaging in development of supplemental data tools, developing a robust communications program to push information about data alternatives to the dispersed data user community, helping build an archive of expertise in addition to data, and working with key stakeholder groups to identify true data gaps for future efforts to supplement.

Background

The U.S. federal statistical system was born in the U.S. Constitution, Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3:

> *"The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct."*

For 240 years the United States has endeavored to accurately measure its people, with the system expanding as the country grew and became more complex. The work of enumerating the country is currently overseen by 13 principal statistical agencies across the federal government with a total annual budget of approximately $3.5 billion (or about 0.05% of the total federal spending).

A recent survey of the American public by SSRS[1] found Americans recognize and support the value of rigorous federal statistical data. The study found a large majority of Americans (70%) believe that public officials need federal statistics to make good policy decisions. Likewise, a supermajority (72%) believe that federal statistical collections should continue regardless of political decisions.

However, for the past two decades, the federal statistical system has faced stagnant budgets and declining relative purchasing power while being tasked with increasing demands. This has occurred as the larger opinion research space has confronted rapidly changing communications technologies and declining response rates - or the willingness of people to be interviewed. Despite these challenges, the

[1] https://ssrs.com/insights/the-publics-views-on-the-value-of-federal-statistics-2026/

federal statistical agencies have continued to produce rigorous and accurate information on the American population.

Over the past year, the federal statistical system – already under strain – has been subjected to major new challenges including data purges, budget cuts, staff reductions, and the longest government shutdown in American history. The American Statistical Association (ASA) has been actively monitoring the health of federal statistical agencies, producing a series of reports starting in 2023. In their most recent report on the topic – The Nation's Data at Risk 2025[2] - the ASA found real declines in proposed and enacted funding for statistical agencies between 2009 and 2025. The report highlighted systemic challenges to the federal statistical system including obstacles to innovation and efficiency, a lack of cross-agency support, and a "disconnect between the value of federal statistics and Congressional support."

The federal statistical system and its user community have also been shaken by a series of interruptions over the past year. Early in 2025, multiple data sets were temporarily taken offline to remove specific variables, like questions on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), from the data sets. Later in the year, the government shutdown took multiple sites offline and caused the interruption to numerous data collections, including October 2025 economic publications.

The ASA report found that many federal statistical agencies lost between 30 and 40% of their staff in 2025, leading to product delays and cancellations as well as reductions in the scope and detail of data collections. These staffing cuts ripple across the federal statistical system, making it harder for all statistical agencies to fulfill their missions and sustain innovation.

In reaction to these – and other – challenges, a *data rescue movement* has emerged, with organizations and individuals working to download and archive data sets, monitor changes to federal data, recreate discontinued federal data tools, articulate the value of federal data, and more.

As part of their broader efforts, the Data Rescue Project[3] is tracking the various "individuals, organizations, and community-based efforts to capture and preserve data…" These range from newly established efforts like the Public Environmental Data Partners[4] (PEDP) and America's Essential Data[5] - focused on a specific sector and articulating the value of statistical data respectively – to longstanding efforts by organizations like the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR[6]) and the End of Term Archive[7].

The status of federal statistical data remains fluid and the future uncertain. To help ground the efforts of the *data rescue movement*, federal agencies, policymakers, and other stakeholders, the Association of Public Data Users[8] has articulated six Guiding Principles for Public Data centered on ensuring data remains public and accessible while also servicing public goods.

The last year has also negatively impacted public confidence in the statistical system. The recent SSRS survey of the American public found that trust in federal statistics dropped from a bare majority (53%) in June of 2025 to a minority (47%) as of March 2026.

[2] https://www.amstat.org/policy-and-advocacy/the-nations-data-at-risk--2025-report
[3] https://www.datarescueproject.org/current-efforts/
[4] https://screening-tools.com/
[5] https://essentialdata.us/
[6] https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/pages/
[7] https://eotarchive.org/
[8] https://apdu.org/apdu-guiding-principles-for-public-data/

Beginning in June 2025, SSRS launched the EMERGE initiative to support the potential development of private-sector stop-gap solutions for users of public data as the larger statistical system navigates this tumultuous period. This program entailed significant coalition building efforts, and connecting to and networking with organizations and advocates across the federal data space. As the federal data community shifted from data archiving towards navigating the next several years, SSRS proposed and launched a program to ensure that the end users of federal statistical data's voices were included in the discussion.

This report presents the results of a survey of federal statistical data users that was conducted by SSRS in early 2026. The survey was designed to better understand how recent changes to federal statistical data - including those described above - have impacted those who use these data in their work. The survey and this report were conducted through a grant from the Knight Foundation and with advisory support from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), the MN State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC), the Association of Public Data Users (APDU), DataIndex.us[9], and the Center for Open Data Enterprise (CODE).

Survey Methodology

The SSRS EMERGE survey of federal statistical data users was conducted online from February 6 through March 9, 2026. The survey employed a snowball sampling approach, initially distributed via open links through the listservs of statistical professional associations and data archives, and then expanding outward as recipients shared it further. This distribution strategy was designed to reach a broad cross-section of federal data users, including researchers, analysts, and practitioners across academic, government, non-profit and private-sector settings.

A total of 521 interviews were completed over the course of the field period. Because the survey was distributed through open links rather than a probability-based sampling frame, the sample is best characterized as a nonprobability convenience sample. Findings should be interpreted with this in mind, as results are not statistically representative of the full population of federal statistical data users.

To ensure data quality, responses were reviewed and cleaned prior to analysis. Entries were removed if they contained duplicate IP addresses - indicating potential multiple submissions from a single respondent – or if open-ended responses consisted of gibberish or otherwise incoherent text. Responses were also evaluated for straight lining and speeding behavior. These procedures were applied to reduce the influence of low-quality or duplicative responses on the findings. In total, only three interviews were removed as a result of data quality checks.

About the Participants

The 521 federal statistical data users presented in this report represent a cross section of the community of public data users. This sample is largely drawn from personnel in academia and non-profit organizations with a smaller sample from government agencies or commercial businesses.

[9] http://DataIndex.us

- 38% report working at an educational institution
- 31% report working for a nonprofit or advocacy organization
- 12% report working for federal, state or local governments
- 11% report working at a for-profit company
- 8% report working at another type of organization

In terms of subject matter areas, respondents represent a wide range of disciplines with core demographic data being the most frequently mentioned – used by over four-fifths of the survey respondents. Many participants reported working across multiple areas.

- 83% report working with population or demographic data
- 68% report working with income, poverty, or social program data
- 62% report working with employment or economic data
- 50% report working with health data
- 47% report working with education data

End users of federal data report using data across multiple topic domains. On average these public data users report using five different types of data in their work. When asked which specific federal statistical data sets, tools, or products are important to their work, respondents also gave an average of five responses, with a few individuals reporting use of over two dozen discrete data sets.

For more on the profile of respondents, please see Appendix II.

Limitations

As with all referral-based or convenience samples, this design carries inherent limitations that bear on the interpretation of results. Because recruitment relied on professional association listservs and data archive mailing lists, the sample is likely skewed toward individuals who are already engaged with the federal statistical community, potentially underrepresenting more occasional or informal users of federal data.

Additionally, without a known sampling frame or response rate, it is not possible to assess the degree to which the achieved sample reflects the broader population of federal statistical data users. While non-probability samples still yield interesting descriptive insights, they cannot support population-level inferences. This means that margin of error calculations and conventional tests of statistical significance are not applicable to nonprobability samples of this kind, and any subgroup comparisons should be interpreted with particular caution given these constraints.

FINDINGS: IMPACTS, DISRUPTIONS, AND COPING STRATEGIES

One of our key questions before embarking on this research program was, "have the changes to the federal statistical data system since the beginning of 2025 affected users of public data's ability to carry out their jobs?" The results from this sample of public data users says resoundingly, yes. Virtually all of our study participants – most of whom represent academic, non-profit, or local organizations – report that the changes to the system have impacted their ability to do their jobs, with more than half reporting major impacts on their day to day work.

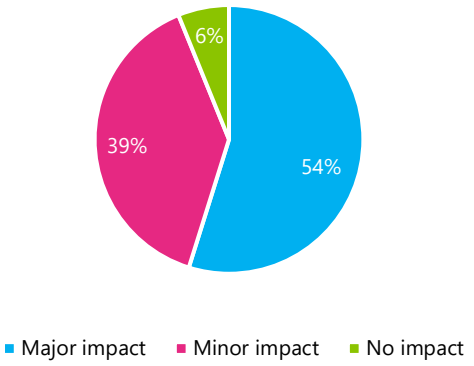
🔎 Data Impacts in Focus: Slowed, Stopped, or Altered Research

Disruptions to data, reductions in staff and funding, and other issues are impacting research that relies on government data. The upshot includes delayed publications, lower quality outputs, canceled projects, slowed careers, and job losses in sectors outside of government.

One respondent from academia articulated how uncertainty around remote licenses for restricted data along with staff and resource cuts is impacting their research and, ultimately, their career:

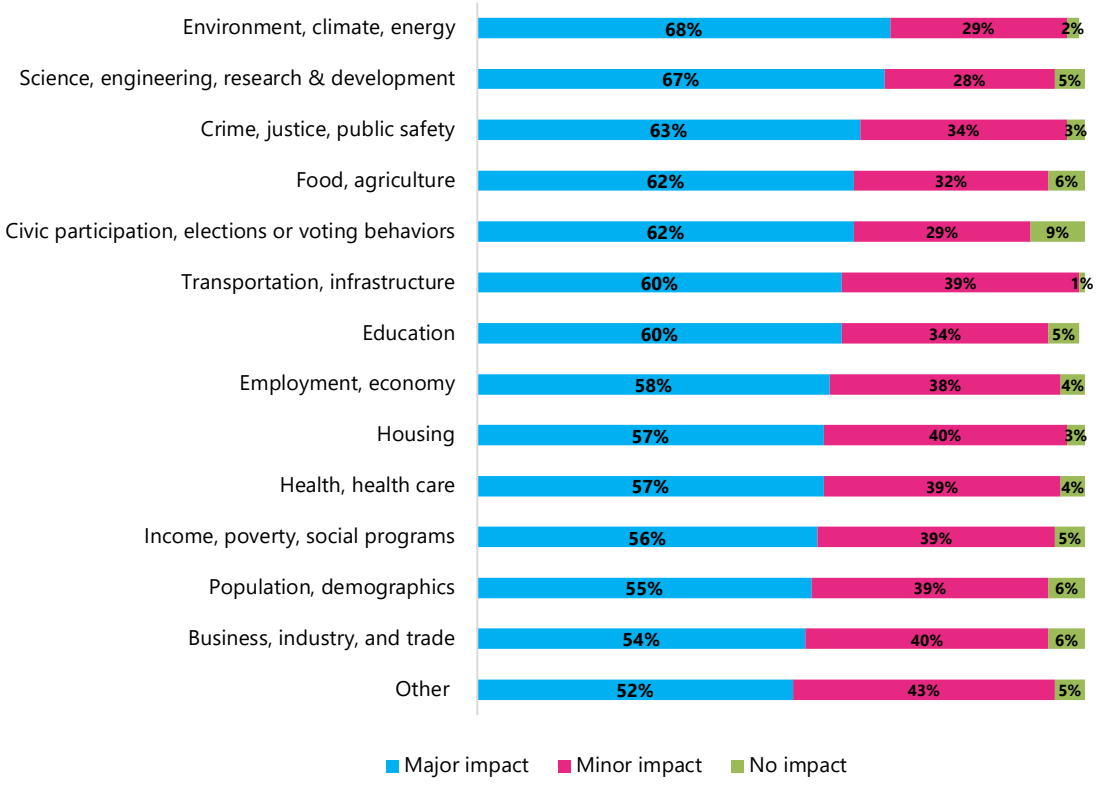
"*I have a remote restricted license. The status of the remote licenses has been unclear since February 2025. I had 4 projects on the license.* ***I had to give up on one project.*** *I decided to shift 2 others to the public-use version, and we're redoing analyses for those. While I can probably replicate one substantively, another is much less clear and will surely go to a much lower-tier journal, if anywhere at all. For the fourth project,* ***it took 7 months to approve the paper; normally this should take 5 days****... [Agency] is slowly killing the restricted-use program by adding hurdles and not really approving papers... I'm a tenure-track professor and this has affected my research.* ***My university has added 1 year to my tenure clock because of this.****" (Educational Institution)*

Impact of Changes to Federal Statistical Data in Ability to Carry Out One's Job



While an average of 54% of respondents report major impacts, users focused on environmental, science, and crime data were more likely to report experiencing major impacts on their work, with over two-thirds of respondents from those sectors reporting major impacts. Additionally, at least 60% of users of education, transportation and infrastructure, civic participation and elections, and food and agriculture data reported major impacts as well.

Impact of changes by types of federal data that are most important for respondents' work



While relatively few federal employees responded to the survey, 80% of that group reported major impacts on their work and only 10% reported no impacts at all. Others reporting major impacts at high rates include those working in educational institutions (61%), nonprofit organizations (52%), and local government (50% of respondents).

In an open-ended question, respondents were asked to share specific examples of how changes at federal statistical agencies have impacted their ability to carry out their work. Responses reveal widespread and systemic disruption to their work. For example, respondents reported that websites being taken down have impacted their ability to access needed data; that delays in issuing federal data publications have led to reporting delays; that lack of access to federal data has led to scope changes; that federal staffing cuts have led to unanswered questions and reductions in publications; and that many of these changes have led to layoffs and staffing reductions in organizations that support federal research.

A few illustrative examples of these impacts are presented below, with deeper findings presented in the next section.

Impact of website instability: *"The Census Bureau used to have a stable presence on the web and data was once easily collected. Now if a question comes up about population growth, the Census Bureau is often the least reliable source for examining those data. The website is often not functioning, and data is not updated.* ***I am unable to effectively answer questions about population growth because the data*** *I rely on for those analyses are increasingly inaccessible." (Nonprofit or advocacy organization)*

Impact of publication delays: *"The delay in publication of the Civil Rights Data Collection* ***has delayed timely reporting*** *of information around school safety and school arrests to the public and education professionals." (For-profit company)*

Impact of data being removed from websites: *"When the Social Vulnerability Index data was pulled from the CDC-ATSDR website,* ***it was a major disruption at the time*** *as I had not downloaded a local copy of the updated data. I trusted it would be there and then it was just gone. I downloaded copies of what we use once it was restored because I don't completely trust that it won't be taken down again without any notice." (Local government)*

Impact of reduced access to data: *"****We've delayed releases and scoped back our ambitions****. We have made projects less granular, and therefore less informative, even if the results are still illuminating as far as they go." (Nonprofit or advocacy organization)*

Impact of federal staffing cuts: *"[At my agency], the* ***staff in the [statistical center] has plummeted from 50 to less than 30****. Remaining staff have little time for research, and the Agency director rarely or slowly approves manuscripts sent for review" (Federal employee)*

Impact on non-federal employment: *"I was laid off from a private sector job, and* ***the market for survey professionals is COMPLETELY dried up****. 15 years experience and a doctorate and I can't get a job. It's been 7 months." (Unemployed)*

Types of Disruption

> *"Many education datasets have been paused, delayed, or possibly cancelled - in many ways,* ***it's the lack of knowledge of what is happening with them that is the biggest challenge - we literally have no idea if some datasets will ever be released****."*
> *(Nonprofit or advocacy organization)*

Respondents were asked to describe the different ways in which changes to federal data have impacted their work. These disruptions break down into several large categories – though with significant variation in the individual experiences. These categories include delays and administrative bottlenecks; reductions in data collections, access, and assistance; and threats to data quality and integrity.

🔎 Data Impacts in Focus: Climate and Environmental Risk, Mitigation, and Adaptation

A wide range of environmental data, statistics, and tools have been impacted by recent disruptions to federal data. Respondents flagged changes to climate, environmental, and critical infrastructure data as particularly disruptive, "severely impacting efforts to assess, mitigate, and adapt to climate and environmental risks…"

These disruptions, alterations, and removals include[10]:

- EPA's Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program
- NOAA's Research and Development Database
- The Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters
- The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)
- The Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJScreen)
- FEMA's Future Risk Index
- Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data (HIFLD) Open

Data preservationists and archivists have stepped in to download these datasets, recreate the tools, and explore alternative data collection techniques. But these efforts will not be able to recreate the timeliness, quality, interoperability, and sustainability of federal data and tools:

- Snapshots and tools made available by groups like the Data Rescue Project[11], Source Cooperative[12], and Public Environmental Data Partners[13] will eventually go out of date
- Groups like Climate TRACE[14] and Carbon Mapper[15] could "provide alternative data in cases where it can be validated or calibrated with historical data from…now-discontinued reference sources." However, those efforts may be expensive, technically difficult, or not feasible for other reasons.
- States could collect and release their own data - as New York is doing[16] with greenhouse gas data - but spreading efforts out across states and organizations will result in varied methodologies, reporting

[10] https://essentialdata.us/in-memoriam.html
[11] https://www.datarescueproject.org/
[12] https://source.coop/
[13] https://screening-tools.com/
[14] https://climatetrace.org/
[15] https://carbonmapper.org/
[16] https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/air-quality/mandatory-greenhouse-gas-reporting

requirements, and data quality. Ultimately, data produced in this way will struggle to be as useful as federal data.

Replacing the role of federal statistics is not just about the end data: Funding, scientific, technical, and organizational expertise, community partnerships and support, infrastructure, and governance will need to be rebuilt and rethought. No small task, particularly when spread across jurisdictions and organizations.

Delays and Bottlenecks

A significant type of disruption reported by these public data users are delays and administrative bottlenecks in being able to access or use data. The causes of delays range from datasets being taken offline when they were needed, to cancellations of expected data publications, to difficulty getting staff assistance to use data products, to administrative barriers or bottlenecks in accessing restricted data files. These delays have wide ranging impacts on data users ranging from interrupted program schedules to program terminations altogether.

> *"I wanted to use restricted datasets but as of now, they're not being reviewed and access is extremely limited.* ***We had to switch to public use data after waiting 8 months for approval*** *for our manuscript using restricted data." (Educational institution)*

> *"Delay in release of specific datasets (e.g., CDC PLACES)* ***has impacted our ability to update the publicly accessible resource*** *we maintain that disseminates these data to cities across the country." (Educational institution)*

Reduction in Collection, Access and Assistance

A second, and related, category of impacts involves resource reductions in the federal statistical agencies and the impacts of those reductions on end users. These include staff cuts – ranging from a few percent at the Census to almost the entire staff at NCES – which have made understanding data sets or data interruptions more difficult for end users. The staff cuts have also contributed to cutbacks in data tools or aggregate data reporting, making using the statistical data more difficult for users accustomed to interacting with data through an intermediary product. Specific issues cited by respondents include:

- Intermittent offlining of federal data and datasets has made it difficult to monitor trends.
- Discontinuation of variables (e.g. SOGI), datasets (e.g. Food Security Supplement), or data tools has crippled lines of research. The loss of SOGI variables was particularly highlighted by some of these respondents (about 8% mentioned sexual orientation or gender identity data gaps) as a space where there was no clear path forward over the near and medium term.
- Reductions in federal staffing have led to loss of institutional knowledge, unanswered questions and cascaded into job losses in the broader research ecosystem.

> *"One example is problematic removals of gender identity data in prison populations, where transgender and non-binary people are at higher risk of violence.* ***These removals prevent us from [understanding] the scope of the problem and targeted solutions****." (Nonprofit or advocacy organization)*

> *"I focus on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). These data--especially gender identity data--have been systematically removed from federal datasets that have been critical to shed light on the experiences of LGBT people in the realms of health, economic security, housing, and more.* ***That hinders not only evidence-based policymaking, intersectional research, service delivery, and equitable resource allocation for LGBT communities, but also the ability to use data to tell stories about the experiences of these communities****." (Nonprofit or advocacy organization)*

Threats to Data Quality and Integrity

Respondents also reference threats and damages to data quality and integrity. However, few respondents report concerns about the accuracy of specific published data, instead the focus is on how the interruptions and under-resourcing of the system lead to potential risks and have negative quality impacts on their own work. Respondents specifically cited:

- Broken time series, changes in definitions, and methodology shifts have undermined longitudinal, small-area, and trend analyses.
- Heavy reliance on "second-best" substitutes such as older datasets, state or local data, private sources, or imputation are often resulting in inferior or non-comparable data.

> *"The shutdown last fall led to* ***the first instance in 70+ years of a Current Population Survey not being fielded****." (Nonprofit or advocacy organization)*

> *"The politicization and reduction of the federal civil service has made it difficult to trust the validity of the information available on government sites.* ***Never in my career have I not trusted data coming from a .gov site, but I am wary now****." (Nonprofit or advocacy organization)*

When stacked up next to each other, these stories depict a federal statistical data user community struggling with challenges to a system they have relied upon - or even took for granted – for years. These disruptions to the federal statistical community have spilled into their work. As a consequence, some of these public data users report declining confidence in the system and heightened concerns about politically motivated actions overriding sound statistics.

Coping Strategies

These public data users report coping with these disruptions in various ways, though very few say that their coping strategies are producing optimal outcomes for them. When asked to share specific strategies they have used to fill in the gaps left by the changes at federal statistical agencies, their responses broke down broadly into several categories including: using alternate data sources – including older data – and developing different approaches to their programs that did not rely on the lost data.

Using Alternate Data Sources

Many respondents report using alternate data sources to support their programs. These sources include things like turning to state and local level data, commercial data, or alternate federal data sets that have not been impacted. However, almost every one of these public data users who told us about using alternate data highlighted their belief that these alternates were less ideal than the original, disrupted, federal data that they hoped to rely on.

Another alternate data source frequently mentioned by these public data users is relying on older – typically pre-2025 – datasets that have been archived externally from government sites. Respondents report that using older data is the "easiest" to apply but carries a risk, particularly as the data gets older, of not accurately reflecting current trends and as a consequence, biasing their work.

> *"**Trying to secure state and local data**. These systems are not as easy to get data from, as well documented, nor as comprehensive AND they are very difficult to sync across jurisdictions to national or regional level analyses." (Local government)*

> *"**We've turned to other, nongovernmental sources**. Usually these are private companies like ADP, which are OK for some purposes but don't fill the void completely." (Nonprofit or advocacy organization)*

Leveraging Alternate Infrastructure or Approaches

Many respondents are actively compensating for gaps in federal statistical data by turning to a wide range of non-federal sources. Common strategies include relying on state and local administrative data, academic and nonprofit repositories such as IPUMS and ICPSR, private-sector or philanthropic surveys, subscription-based databases, and historical or archived versions of federal datasets preserved through data-rescue efforts. Respondents also report developing in-house data repositories, pooling older data across years, applying statistical modeling or imputation, and benchmarking analyses to "last known good" federal releases when current data are unavailable. While these alternatives allow work to continue, respondents emphasize that they are imperfect substitutes – often lacking the scale, consistency, granularity, or longitudinal comparability of federal data – and frequently require additional resources, caveats, and methodological compromises.

> *"Have looked **to large private sector data for potential benchmarks**, such as Pew Research Center data." (For-profit company or organization)*

> *"We've tried to find next-best options from private sources, but nothing is as reliable, comprehensive, or has the longevity of federal sources. **We've also turned to pooling larger data periods to try to offset the growing survey nonresponse**." (Nonprofit or advocacy organization)*

Despite the different approaches mentioned above, many respondents ultimately felt that **there are no comprehensive substitutes** for federal data that has been lost or degraded. Almost uniformly, respondents voiced a preference to see federal data systems and products brought back to their pre-2025 composition and accessibility.

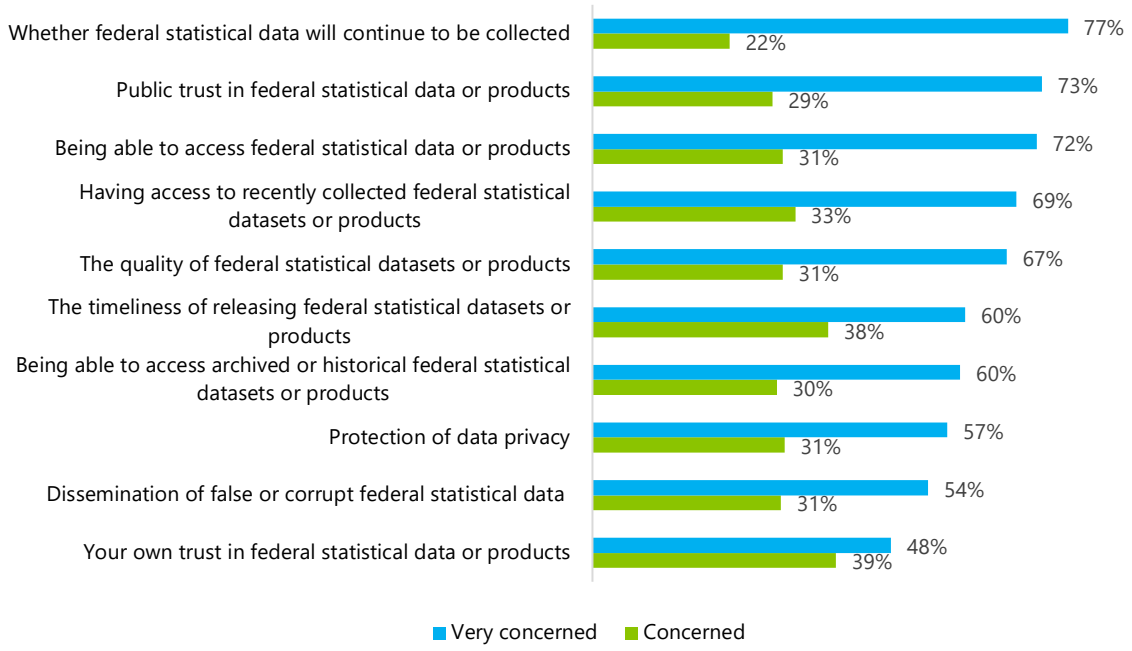
> *"**None**. For my work, the existence of gold-standard federal statistics is essential. Private data are helpful, but only in the context of benchmarks from official statistics." (Educational institution)*

Overall Concern for the Future

Respondents expressed significant concerns about the future of federal data across a number of different topic areas. Over three quarters said they were very concerned about whether federal statistical data will continue to be collected (77%). More than seven in ten were very concerned about the public's trust in federal statistical data or products (73%) or being able to access federal statistical data or products (72%). Nearly as many expressed they were very concerned specifically about being able to access recently collected federal data (69%) and the quality of that data (67%). Additionally, six in ten were very concerned about timeliness of data releases (60%) and being able to access archived data (60%). More than half expressed strong concerns over data privacy protection (57%) and dissemination of false or corrupt data (54%). And finally, nearly half (48%) expressed they were very concerned about their own trust in federal statistical data or products.

Notably, more than 8 in 10 respondents expressed they were "concerned" or "very concerned" about all of the potential concerns mentioned in the survey.

Future Concerns About Federal Statistical Data



Concerns of Different Stakeholder Groups

Given the significant impacts felt by those surveyed, it is unsurprising that the survey uncovered a wide range of concerns about the future of federal statistical data, with close to eight in ten who are very concerned about the continuity of federal statistical data collection. Certain areas of concern rose to the top, regardless of work setting, the types of data they rely most upon, or how they use the data.

For example, more than 70% of respondents who process, disseminate, analyze, or have oversight over federal statistical data as well as more than 70% of respondents from the federal government, local governments, educational institutions, media organizations, nonprofit organizations, and private sector organizations expressed concern about the continuity of federal statistical data collection. The concern over continuity was even more stark when broken down by data types used, with more than 75% of respondents using 8 out of 14 categories of data expressing concern.

There was a similar consistency of concern around public trust in federal statistical data. With at least 64% of users of all 14 data types and 7 out of 10 work settings expressing concern. 68% or more of respondents in each category of data use also expressed concerns around public trust in federal statistical data.

While this consistency was notable, the survey also showed specific concerns based on how respondents interact with data, their work setting, and the types of data they interact with.

Respondents Working in Data Design and Collection

Respondents involved in the design and collection of federal data reported the highest levels of impact, with a full 66% saying that changes had a major impact on their work. 71% of respondents in this category said that they were very concerned about public trust in statistical data or products. On the other hand, only 36% expressed significant concern about their own ability to trust statistical data and products – perhaps highlighting confidence in their own ability to continue fulfilling their mission.

> *"Several of our federal contracts had tasks and timelines delayed due to staff departures and/or the need to obtain approval for tasks that had already been approved with funds obligated.* ***All of these changes have made the projects longer and more expensive****." (For-profit company or organization)*

State and Local Government Public Data Users

Respondents from local governments expressed particularly high levels of concern about their ability to continue accessing federal statistical data products or tools as well as the continuity of data collection. 79% of local government respondents said that they were very concerned about both possibilities moving forward.

> *"The changes in data collection and storage have* ***decreased data accuracy and reliability****. Tax dollars are wasted when additional time is spent trying to access data and verifying its accuracy. It impacts local planning, which often looks upwards of 20-25 years. The long range planning that is taking place now relies on data that is less accurate and harder to come by.* ***The changes taking place federally will impact local communities for 20-25 years****." (Local government)*

> *"Cancellation of USDA food insecurity survey has **impacted our ability to measure and track food insecurity around the state**. The BEA discontinuation of metropolitan area data **impacts ability to look at sub-state differences**." (State government)*

Users of Civic and Community Data

Users of data on civic participation, elections, or voting behaviors expressed among the highest levels of concern across the widest number of possibilities including:

- Continuity of federal statistical data collection (79%)
- Quality of federal statistical data and products (71%)
- Dissemination of false/corrupt federal statistical data (67%)
- Timeliness of releasing federal statistical datasets/products (68%)
- Access to federal statistical data or products (71%)
- Own trust in federal statistical data/products (57%)

> *"If the undocumented [are excluded] from the 2030 Census, there will be major distortions in the data used for redistricting, for equitable distribution of funds, and in population statistics." (Retired federal employee)*

Other Specific Concerns

When asked in an open-ended question to share more details about their biggest concerns about federal data as they look ahead to the next two to three years, respondents described several key areas of concern.

Existential Threats to Data

> *"The Federal government stepping back from its traditional role in collecting, archiving, and making data accessible to researchers and the public at the same time Federal funding to researchers is being slashed is really troubling. Under the best circumstances **I am skeptical that non-governmental entities can fill the gap left behind as Federal agencies retreat from their traditional roles**. The circumstances we find ourselves in, however, are far from the best meaning that it will be impossible to fully address the gaps that will emerge. Without substantial investment we can only hope to limit the damage." (Educational institution)*

Many respondents shared a significant level of concern that the federal data system will fundamentally change for the worse moving forward. This includes a feeling that federal data – a foundational public good – is under existential threat and at risk of being systematically weakened or dismantled moving forward.

If the federal government steps back from this traditional role, respondents worried that there are no institutions capable of providing adequate substitutes for federal data. For example, respondents noted that data from state and local governments do not easily roll up to provide national level estimates, and that data from the private sector can be fragmented, biased, incomplete or too costly. Ultimately, respondents express concern that a diminished federal data system could result in weakened democratic oversight due to disappearing datasets, unreleased data, broken tools, and more.

Diminished Trust

🔍 Data Impacts in Focus: The BLS Firing - Politicization and Diminished Trust in Data

A number of respondents cited the recent firing of the commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) as a sign of increasing politicization leading to diminished trust in data.

BLS Commissioner Erika McIntarfer was fired at the beginning of August 2025, hours after the Bureau released data showing that hiring had slowed more than expected and revised hiring estimates down for the previous three months. Many saw her dismissal as politically motivated, and a blow to trust in federal statistical data more broadly.

Respondents to the survey agreed, with one federal employee describing how "termination - without cause - of the BLS Commissioner raises obvious questions about credibility of data from both BLS and from other statistical agencies." Nonprofit and advocacy organization employees went even further, expressing worries "about administration personal falsifying data," and concerns "that BLS data will not be collected accurately to obfuscate economic challenges in the current political climate." Although the ASA and other observers have not found any evidence that the data has been politically manipulated since the firing, there is persistent concern that political manipulation is now possible.

A major concern related to data quality in the short term and the overall health of federal data in the long term is the erosion of trust in the independence, objectivity and credibility of federal statistics. Declining trust was tied to an increasing perception of political interference - by both parties - in the integrity of statistical data, removal or alteration of certain data collections, funding and staffing cuts, and reduced data transparency.

> *"As a researcher, **I am very concerned that I can no longer trust the federal statistical data**...It is now at the point that I cannot trust that the government statistics will be accurately reported, as there appear to be few guardrails to political interference. Moreover, **lack of trust in government is likely to lead to low response rates in all survey related data, making that also less trustworthy**." (Educational institution)*

One potential effect of diminished trust among the general public could be declining survey response rates and other challenges. If trust in federal data continues to decline among data users, respondents expressed concern that the results could be devastating for academic research, evidence-based policymaking, and more. Ultimately, the loss of trust in federal data is another blow to public agreement on "truth" and a step towards uncontrolled misinformation.

> *"Not being able to trust federal data (or at least that there'd be accountability when malfeasance was discovered) isn't a possibility I'd ever even considered. That data source has always just been something I've relied on as being produced by people largely trying to do good work while making it as accurate as possible.* ***Being unable to trust the federal data means the loss of understanding what the truth is****; it's like living in the novel 1984." (Educational institution)*

Real-World Harms

Many respondents expressed concern about the real-world harms that could stem from removal of federal data or diminished government data capacity. These include, but are not limited to, harms to marginalized populations due to removal of demographic detail, risking equity analysis, and civil rights enforcement. For example, removal of gender ID data in prison populations makes it harder to protect transgender and non-binary people, who are at higher risk of violence.

Economically vulnerable communities may also be impacted by disruptions to data about employment, education, health infrastructure, food and agriculture, and more. These changes could make it more difficult to provide benefits, support communities in need, and help Americans improve their social and economic situations. Respondents also highlighted ways that the removal of environmental data and tools as well as public health data could make it harder to understand the impacts of climate change and pandemics, and limit communities' ability to prepare for and recover from disease outbreaks and natural disasters.

> *"The decision to halt data collection on food insecurity in US federal surveys is an affront and* ***strips US agencies, elected officials, and affected communities of having the data needed to understand people's needs****, especially in a time of growing economic security for those with the least economic resources." (Educational institution)*

As economic conditions grow more turbulent, especially with the advent of emerging technologies like AI, some participants noted that it will become harder for elected officials to understand these economic consequences for the most vulnerable populations.

> *"****Survey response rates will plummet*** *as no one trusts privacy laws and no one sees that government collects these data to help communities, families, and persons in need. With further reduced sample sizes,* ***how will we ever be able to assess and address the genuine needs of American communities****? And a spin on that worth noting:* ***how will we be able to measure economic successes as well?****" (For-profit company or organization)*

Long-Term Impacts

> *"These longitudinal data collections can't be turned on and off-- **COVID showed us that even a short disruption in trend or in data collection can negatively impact analyses** that depend on these data sources for years." (For-profit company)*

All of the concerns described above can have impacts in the short term as well as the long term. Respondents worried about the potential for long-term damage from staffing losses and institutional knowledge drain, suggesting that recovery could take decades, if it is possible at all. In addition to job losses, respondents cited lower training budgets and a lack of succession planning as especially dangerous. Combined with less and lower quality data, human capital loss could undermine evidence-based decision making for policy evaluation, resource allocation, and long-term planning, leading to some of the real-world harms described above.

> *"The number of early separations throughout the FSS has been devastating and **the expertise that has left these agencies will be hard if not impossible to replace**. Quick exits allow no time for succession planning and **some institutional knowledge has been forever lost**. Also concerned about training funds for current federal employees and hope these get reinstated quickly. **The data will suffer as a result in ways which may not be fully known or even detectable**, especially during the processing phase." (Nonprofit or advocacy organization)*

There may also be long-term economic and market consequences if economic forecasting is impaired, and data that economists and business rely on for planning is removed, restricted, or diminished in quality.

> "***The quality and continuity of principal economic indicators will be limited or curtailed**, e.g., inflation and unemployment." (Educational institution)*

Conclusions of the 2026 Voices from the Data Community Report

The findings of this survey paint a clear and urgent picture, the disruptions to the federal statistical system since the start of 2025 have reached virtually all of this public data user community, with the vast majority of them reporting significant impacts on their ability to carry out their work. Data users are doing their best to adapt - turning to older datasets, alternate sources, and methodological workarounds - but respondents were emphatic that no combination of substitutes can replace the scale, consistency, and authority of high-quality federal data. Behind these disruptions lies a workforce experiencing a crisis, with staffing levels at many agencies so severe that public data users are experiencing real challenges getting support to access and leverage long-used data products.

Looking ahead, respondents expressed deep and broad concerns about the future – not only about whether key data collections will survive, but about whether public trust in federal statistics, once eroded, can be rebuilt. Taken together, these findings make a compelling case that the stakes of the current moment extend well beyond the research community: a diminished federal statistical system means less effective policy, less equitable resource allocation, and a diminished shared understanding of the challenges facing American society.

NEXT STEPS FOR ACTION

These sentiments and data points from federal statistical data users put the ongoing conversations of organizations and advocates across the federal data landscape into better context, pointing towards a handful of clear needs of the public data user community. The following recommendations from the SSRS EMERGE program are by no means exhaustive but are concrete actions that could provide real assistance to the people and organizations delivering services in communities or trying to make sense of the societal changes of our time.

Action 1: Collect and Curate Existing Alternative Data Tools

One of the most common challenges public data users referenced was loss of access to tools or analytical support to understand federal data. For many users – particularly local governments, nonprofit organizations, journalists, advocates, and smaller research organizations – the practical value of federal data has long depended on access to interfaces, crosswalks, estimation tools, codebooks, tutorials, and expert support that reduce the burden of working with complex public-use data.

In response, civil society organizations, academic centers, and independent organizations have begun to recreate some of these lost functions. In many cases, these efforts are highly credible and technically sophisticated, including projects built or advised by the same experts who developed the original federal tools and workflows. However, these replacement efforts are dispersed across many organizations, vary significantly in scope and maturity, and are often difficult for ordinary users to discover or assess. As a result, the burden has shifted from using federal tools to determining which non-federal alternatives are trustworthy, current, and fit for purpose.

A coordinated program to identify, validate, and maintain an easily searchable index of replacement tools, documentation, and technical support resources would significantly reduce this burden. Rather than requiring individual users to independently navigate a fragmented landscape of alternatives, such a program could provide a centralized "navigation layer" for the federal data user community – helping users quickly find viable substitutes for discontinued federal assets and understand the strengths, limitations, and appropriate uses of each.

This effort would be most effective if housed within an existing federal data advocacy or rescue initiative – such as the Data Rescue Project or a similar coalition-based intermediary - with the credibility, convening

power, and mission alignment to serve a broad data user audience. The program would require a small coordinating team responsible for continuously scanning the ecosystem, soliciting submissions, evaluating resources against shared criteria, and updating a public-facing index. Over time, it could evolve from a simple catalog into a trusted public utility for the data user community: part repository, part referral service, and part quality assurance mechanism.

Such a program would not replace lost federal capacity. But it could help stabilize the data user ecosystem by making replacement resources easier to find, easier to trust, and easier to use – especially for organizations that lack the staff time or technical expertise to do that evaluation on their own.

Action 2: Build a Public Data User Communications Program

Many of the public data users interviewed in this study did not know where to go to learn about how to access federal data when the 2025 disruptions happened. In many cases, substitute tools, archived assets, methodological workarounds, or discipline-specific best practices do exist. But they are often developed in parallel across organizations and fields, and users are left to discover them by chance.

This suggests the need for a proactive communications function designed specifically to serve the public data user community. Rather than expecting users to search across a fractured ecosystem for updates, alternatives, and guidance, this program would identify relevant developments and push them through the channels that data users already trust and use. Its purpose would be to make emerging federal data solutions visible, intelligible, and actionable for a broad and diverse audience of data producers, users, and stewards.

This communications program should be built alongside the Action 1 effort to identify and validate stopgap tools and support resources, and ideally should be housed within the same organization or coalition. Together, the two functions would create a complementary system: one side focused on curating and assessing replacement assets, the other focused on ensuring that the right people learn about them in the right format and at the right time.

This would require active engagement with professional associations, advocacy groups, research intermediaries, local government associations, journalism networks, nonprofit coalitions, and technical communities in order to secure access to their newsletters, listservs, websites, webinars, and message boards. Additionally, significant consideration would need to go into designing communications that provide necessary information without overwhelming data users with information.

Done well, this program could become a critical form of connective tissue across the federal data user community to help users stay informed, adapt more quickly, and make better use of the stopgap resources available to them.

Action 3: Archive Expertise, Not Just Data

These interviews highlighted the importance and value of the federal statistical workforce, with many respondents discussing the loss of key staff as the main barrier to their ability to continue using public data. Many of these former federal employees – each representing decades of applied experience – are near retirement and even if the federal data systems were reconstituted tomorrow, would be unlikely to return to their former roles.

In anticipation of future reinvestment in public data infrastructure, the data user community should begin treating federal statistical expertise itself as an asset worthy of preservation. A structured effort to document and archive the experiences, methods, and lessons of former federal employees would create a valuable knowledge base for the next generation of public data workers, as well as for researchers, advocates, and institutions trying to sustain continuity during the current period of disruption.

A well-designed archive would capture both narrative and practical knowledge: not only stories about service and institutional change, but also explanations of how data collections and statistical systems worked, where recurring challenges arose, what data users most often misunderstood, and what the future federal workforce would need to know to responsibly maintain or rebuild those capacities. In this sense, the effort would function less as a memorial project and more as an applied knowledge repository – a form of continuity planning for the federal data ecosystem.

The specific format of this effort could be open-ended, but an archive - a la StoryCorp[17] – would be an invaluable resource for the next generation of public data workers. Between 2016 and 2020, the Environmental Data and Governance Initiative (EDGI) ran an oral history program[18] to document from the experiences of federal employees departing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OHSA) that could serve as a model.

Action 4: Identify and Launch Data Collections on Data Gaps

Few respondents reported issues with full cancellation of previously relied-upon federal datasets. However, there are several topic areas where there are clear gaps that will not be filled by federal data collections in the next few years.

These gaps matter because once a population or issue is no longer measured, it becomes significantly harder for researchers, advocates, journalists, service providers, and policymakers to document conditions, identify disparities, track trends, or evaluate interventions. Over time, this can produce a form of statistical invisibility, in which the absence of data is misread as the absence of need, relevance, or public consequence.

A specific example is SOGI data that has been removed from federal data. Philanthropic or other sources should examine if there are ways private actors can collect relevant information in this space over the next several years to ensure that society is at least somewhat informed on the topic.

This recommendation should not be understood as an attempt to replicate the federal statistical system wholesale through private means. In most cases, non-federal actors will not be able to match the scale, continuity, representativeness, or authority of federal data collection. Instead, the goal should be more selective and strategic to identify the most consequential emerging gaps and support fit-for-purpose data collection efforts that can preserve baseline visibility, produce usable evidence, and prevent high-priority populations or issues from dropping out of public understanding altogether.

[17] https://storycorps.org/
[18] https://www.apeoplesepa.org/home/edgi-oral-history-interviews#

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Acknowledgments

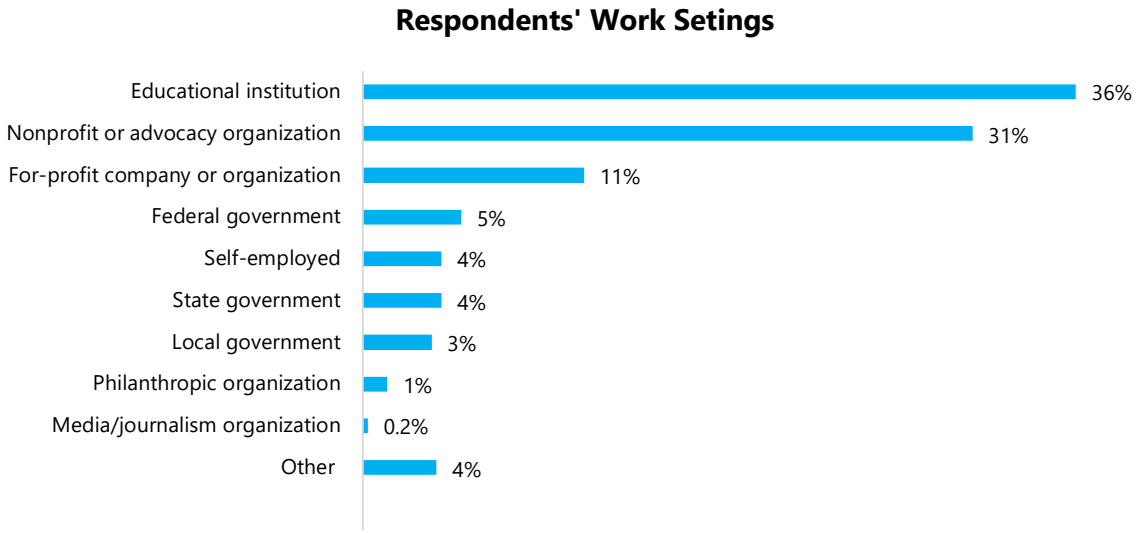
This report was produced thanks to a grant from the Knight Foundation. It was written by SSRS and CODE based on data collected by SSRS as part of the EMERGE Initiative. We would like to thank our advisory team and the many advocates and experts who contributed to this report.

We would also like to recognize the many employees of federal statistical agencies, current and former, whose work forms an unsung bedrock of American society.

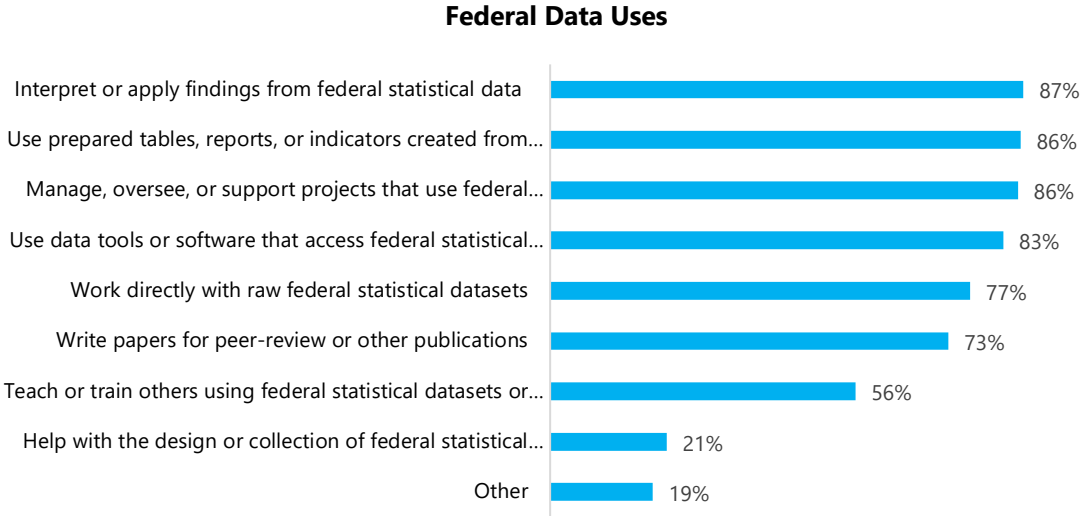
Advisory Board: *Beth Jarosz, Christopher Dick, Elizabeth Lukanen, David Wilson, Maggie Levenstein, Kristen Olson, Paul Schroeder, and Gary Bass*
SSRS EMERGE Team: *Darby Steiger, Paula Armendariz, Hannah Ritz, and Chris Jackson*
CODE Team: *Joel Gurin, Paul Kuhne, Matt Rumsey*
Design: *Vandana Yadav*

Appendix II: Analysis of Respondents and Data Types Used

A total of 521 individuals responded to the survey. More than one-third of respondents report working for educational institutions with an additional 31% working for nonprofit organizations. Only 12% of respondents reported working for a government agency and most respondents identified as users of federal data, rather than producers.

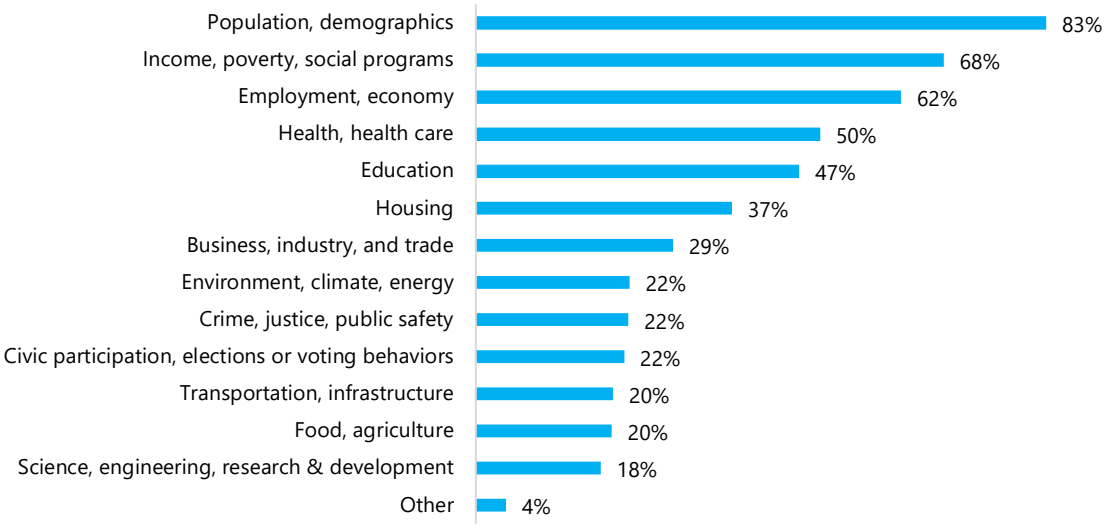


A vast majority of respondents consider access to federal data important for their work with more than 8 in 10 relying on federal data for interpretation and prepared products. Respondents typically reported using federal data in 5 different ways and more than half have been using federal data for at least 15 years. More than 80% of respondents use federal data for work on the national and state levels, with smaller proportions using it for regional, and sub-state analysis.



Respondents use a wide variety of federal data in their work. The most commonly cited were population and demographic data (more than 80%). More than half of respondents reported relying on data on income, poverty, and social programs (68%), employment and the economy (62%), and health and healthcare (50%). On average, respondents reported using five different types of federal statistical data.

Most Important Types of Federal Statistical Data



Respondents also specifically mentioned a wide range of federal data sets and data products across 7 of the categories shown above that are important for them to be able to do their work. These include:

- Demographic: Decennial Census, American Community Survey (ACS), Current Population Survey (CPS), and more.
- Labor: Consumer Price Index (CPI), Current Employment Statistics (CES), Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), and more.
- Economic: Economic Census, IRS data, data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), and more.
- Public Health: Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), and more.
- Education: Common Core, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED), and more.
- Criminal Justice: National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR), and more.
- Environment: EPA Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO), National Land Cover Database (NLCD), FEMA Risk Indices, and more.

Appendix III: Survey Questions

INTRO. Thank you for agreeing to share your experiences with how recent changes to federal statistical data have impacted your work. The survey is being conducted by SSRS through a grant from the Knight Foundation and with advisory support from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) and the Association of Public Data Users (APDU). Your responses will remain confidential but will be combined with others to help inform the development of potential solutions. This survey should take less than 5 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, please reach out to info@ssrs-emerge.com. Thank you!

By federal statistical data, we mean data collected by any of the 13 federal statistical agencies shown below, as well as products such as tables, reports, charts, tools, dashboards, visualizations, etc. derived from those data.

Federal Statistical Agencies:

- Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)
- Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
- Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS)
- Census Bureau
- Economic Research Service (ERS)
- Energy Information Administration (EIA)
- National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
- National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)
- National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES)
- Office of Research, Evaluation and Statistics (ORES)
- Statistics of Income (SOI) Division

[ASK ALL]
1. How important, if at all, is having access to federal statistical data in carrying out your work?

1. Very important
2. Important
3. Somewhat important
4. Not too important
5. Not important at all – SKIP TO #9

999 [DO NOT SHOW] Refused

[ASK ALL]
[PN: RANDOMIZE ITEMS 1-13, LEAVE ITEM 14 LAST]
[PN: ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES]
2. Which of the following types of federal statistical data are most important to your work? (You may select one or more responses)

1. Population, demographics
2. Health, health care
3. Education
4. Employment, economy
5. Income, poverty, social programs
6. Environment, climate, energy
7. Transportation, infrastructure
8. Crime, justice, public safety
9. Food, agriculture
10. Civic participation, elections or voting behaviors
11. Housing
12. Business, industry, and trade
13. Science, engineering, research & development
14. Other (specify) [PN: INSERT TEXT BOX]

999 [DO NOT SHOW] Refused

[ASK ALL]
[PN: INSERT TEXT BOX]
3. Which specific federal statistical data sets, tools, or products are important for you to be able to carry out your work?

OPEN END

[ASK ALL]
[PN: ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES]
4. Are these federal statistical data sets, tools, or products being used to understand national, regional, state, or sub-state geographies? Select all that apply.

1. National
2. Regional
3. State
4. Sub-state
5. Other (specify) [PN: INSERT TEXT BOX]

999 [DO NOT SHOW] Refused

[ASK ALL]
5. There have been a number of changes made at federal statistical agencies since the beginning of 2025, such as cancellation of programs; changes to questionnaires, datasets, and data products; removal of archived data; and firings/layoffs/departure of professional staff. How have any of these changes impacted your ability to do your job, if at all?

1. Major impact
2. Minor impact

3. No impact
999 [DO NOT SHOW] Refused

[ASK IF Q5=1 MAJOR OR Q5=2 MINOR]
[PN: INSERT TEXT BOX]
6. Please provide one or more specific examples of how changes at federal statistical agencies have impacted your ability to carry out your work.

OPEN END

[ASK IF Q5=1 MAJOR OR Q5=2 MINOR]
[PN: INSERT TEXT BOX]
7. What specific strategies, if any, have you used to fill in the gaps left by the changes at federal statistical agencies?

OPEN END

[ASK ALL]
[PN: ROTATE ITEMS 1-5/5-1; LEAVE ITEM 6 LAST]
[PN: RANDOMIZE ITEMS A-J]
8. Looking ahead to the next two to three years, how concerned are you, if at all, about each of the following?

[INSERT ITEM]

1. Very concerned
2. Concerned
3. Somewhat concerned
4. Not very concerned
5. Not at all concerned
6. Does not apply to my work
999 [DO NOT SHOW] Refused

a. Being able to access archived or historical federal statistical datasets or products
b. Having access to recently collected federal statistical datasets or products
c. Whether federal statistical data will continue to be collected
d. The quality of federal statistical datasets or products
e. Dissemination of false or corrupt federal statistical data
f. The timeliness of releasing federal statistical datasets or products
g. Being able to access federal statistical data or products
h. Protection of data privacy
i. Your own trust in federal statistical data or products
j. Public trust in federal statistical data or products

[ASK IF CODES 1-2 TO AT LEAST ONE IN Q8]
[PN: INSERT TEXTBOX]
9. Which specific federal data sets or programs are you most concerned about as you look ahead to the next few years, and what are your specific concerns?

OPEN END

[DEMOGRAPHICS SECTION]

[ASK ALL]
10. Which of the following best describes your work setting?

1. Federal government
2. State government
3. Local government
4. Educational institution, including K-12, colleges and universities
5. Media/journalism organization
6. For-profit company or organization
7. Nonprofit or advocacy organization
8. Philanthropic organization
9. Self-employed
10. Other (specify)

999 [DO NOT SHOW] Refused

[ASK ALL]
[RANDOMIZE ITEMS A-I, KEEP J LAST]
11. Do each of the following describe how you use federal statistical data?

1. Yes
2. No

999 [DO NOT SHOW] Refused

a. I work directly with raw federal statistical datasets (e.g., downloading files, cleaning data, running analyses)
b. I use data tools or software (e.g., dashboards, APIs, statistical packages) that access federal statistical data
c. I use prepared tables, reports, or indicators created from federal statistical data by others
d. I help with the design or collection of federal statistical data
e. I interpret or apply findings from federal statistical data (e.g., for policy, planning, reporting)
f. I manage, oversee, or support projects that use federal statistical data
g. I teach or train others using federal statistical datasets or data products
h. I use federal statistical data to write papers for peer-review or other publications
i. I do not personally use federal statistical data in my work

j. Another way

[ASK IF Q11J=1 Selected Other]

11a. You said you use federal statistical data in another way. Please describe how you use it.

OPEN-ENDED [PN: INSERT TEXT BOX]

[ASK ALL]
12. For how long have you been using federal statistical data in any capacity?

1. Less than 1 year
2. 1-4 years
3. 5-9 years
4. 10-14 years
5. 15-19 years
6. 20 years or more

999 [DO NOT SHOW] Refused

[ASK ALL]
[PN INSERT TEXT BOX]
13. Please provide any additional comments or concerns you would like to share about the future of federal statistical data.

OPEN END

[SHOW ALL]
END. Thank you for your responses! We appreciate your thoughtfulness and encourage you to forward the survey invitation to others in your network who may be interested in responding.

Appendix IV: Acronym List

APDU	Association of Public Data Users
ASA	American Statistical Association
BLS	Bureau of Labor Statistics
CEJST	Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool
CODE	Center for Open Data Enterprise
EJScreen	Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Too
HIFLD	Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data
ICPSR	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research
PEDP	Public Environmental Data Partners
SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity

VOICES FROM THE DATA COMMUNITY
HOW 2025 HAS IMPACTED PUBLIC DATA USERS

FINDINGS FROM A 2026 SURVEY OF USERS OF FEDERAL STATISTICAL DATA

MAY 2026

BY SSRS - THE EMERGE PROGRAM

With assistance from

KNIGHT FOUNDATION
CODE
apdu ASSOCIATION of PUBLIC DATA USERS
shadac