



## ISI Academy Webinar on Ensuring the Professional Independence of Official Statistics

### The Effectiveness of the US Approach to Statistical Agency Professional Autonomy

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# U.S. FEDERAL DATA ECOSYSTEM

Foundations of Evidence Based Policy Act

CHIPS and Science Act

Federal Data Strategy

Office of Management & Budget Guidance

Government Accountability Office

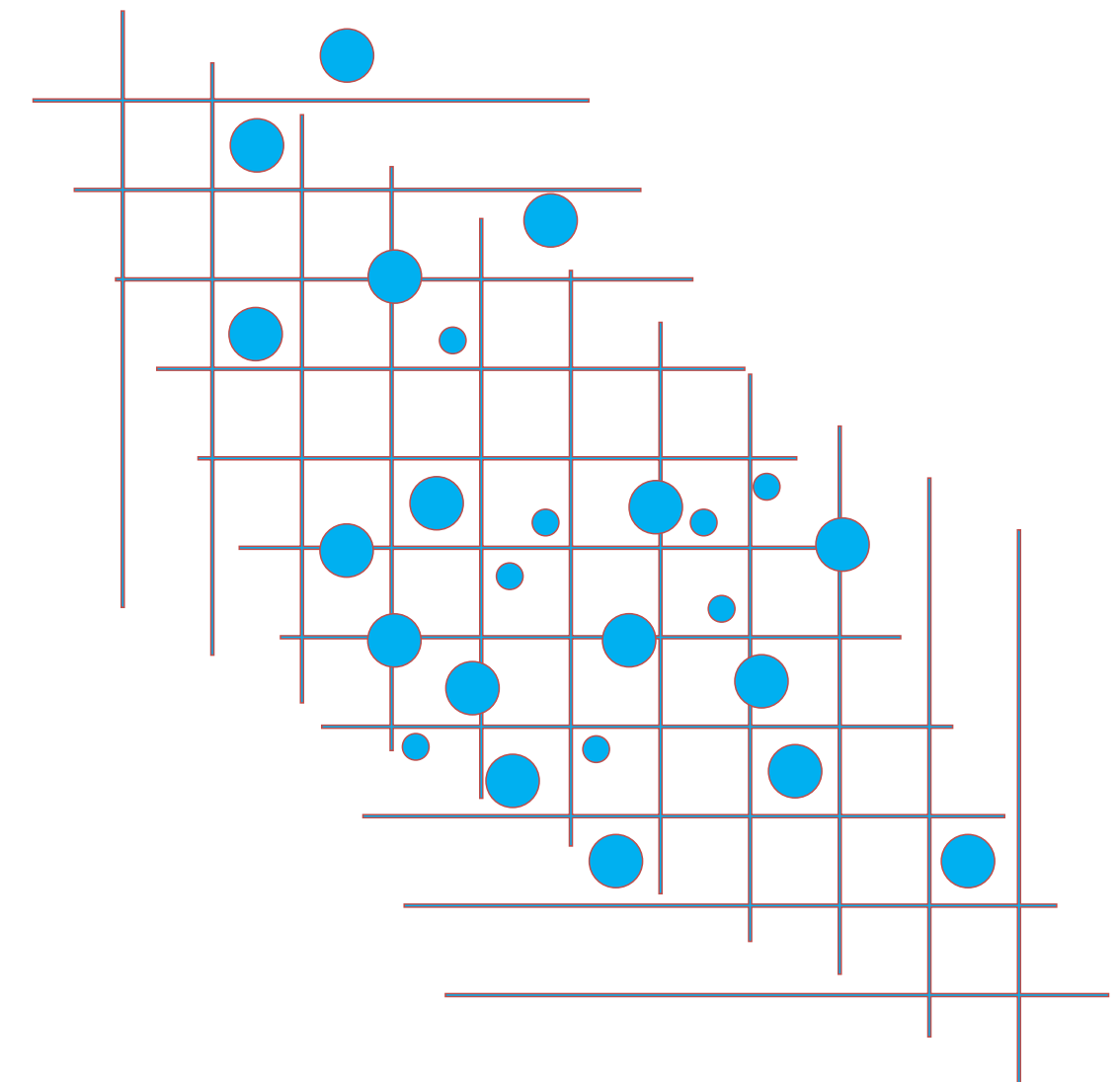
National Institute of Standards & Tech Frameworks

Executive Orders

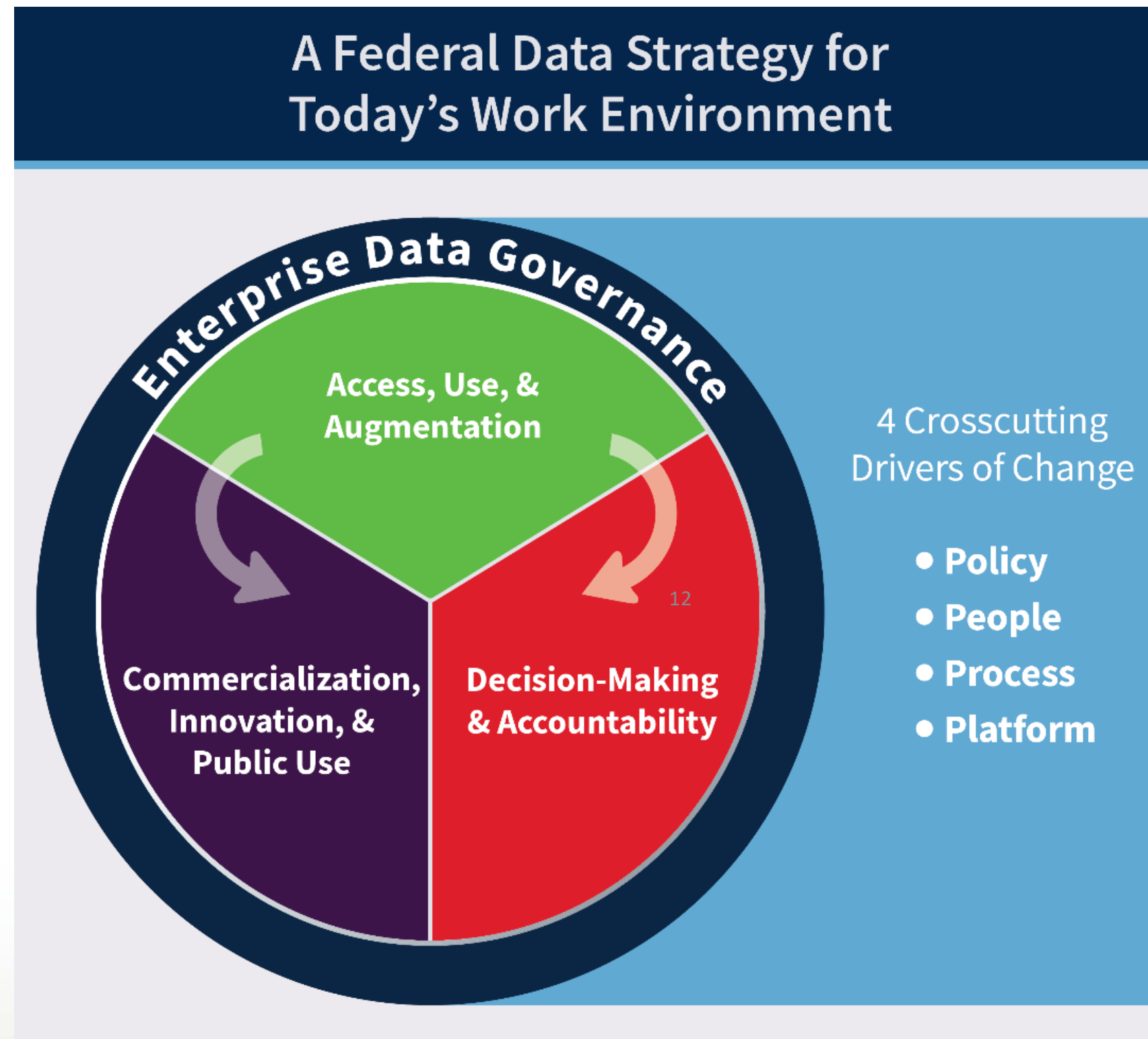
Agency Data Governance

National Academies of Sciences and Medicine (CNSTAT)

Users



# US FEDERAL DATA STRATEGY



**Goal:**  
**Leverage Data**  
**as a Strategic**  
**Asset**

# 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES: ETHICAL GOVERNANCE

Uphold



1. Uphold Ethics: Monitor and assess the implications of federal data practices for the public. Design checks and balances to protect and serve the public good.

Exercise



2. Exercise Responsibility: Practice effective data stewardship and governance. Employ sound data security practices, protect individual privacy, maintain promised confidentiality, and ensure appropriate access and use.

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Promote

3. Promote Transparency: Articulate the purposes and uses of federal data to engender public trust. Comprehensively document processes and products to inform data providers and users.

# Foundations of Evidence Based Policy Making Act of 2018

**P.L. 115-435**

PUBLIC LAW 115–435—JAN. 14, 2019

132 STAT. 5529

Public Law 115–435 115th Congress

An Act

To amend titles 5 and 44, United States Code, to require Federal evaluation activities, improve Federal data management, and for other purposes.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018”.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—FEDERAL EVIDENCE–BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Sec. 101. Federal evidence-building activities.

TITLE II—OPEN GOVERNMENT DATA ACT

Sec. 201. Short title.

Sec. 202. OPEN Government data.

TITLE III—CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION PROTECTION AND STATISTICAL EFFICIENCY

Sec. 301. Short title.

Sec. 302. Confidential information protection and statistical efficiency. Sec. 303. Increasing access to data for evidence.

TITLE IV—GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 401. Rule of construction.

Sec. 402. Use of existing resources. Sec. 403. Effective date.

**TITLE I—FEDERAL EVIDENCE– BUILDING ACTIVITIES**

**SEC. 101. FEDERAL EVIDENCE-BUILDING ACTIVITIES.**

IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of part I of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

by inserting before section 301 the following:

“SUBCHAPTER I—GENERAL PROVISIONS”; AND

by adding at the end the following:

5 USC 301 prec.

Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018.

5 USC 101 note.

Jan. 14, 2019

[H.R. 4174]

# TITLE 3 – CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION PROTECTION AND STATISTICAL EFFICIENCY (CIPSEA)

- Statistical Agency Designation Guidance
- Presumption of Accessibility for Statistical Agencies
- Expanding Secure Access to CIPSEA Data Assets
- Application to Access Data Assets for Developing Evidence
- Three Government Regulations Required



# Safeguarding Trust in Federal Statistics (Trust Regulation)

## Issued under:

- Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018
- Implements provisions of Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2018, Effective December 2024

## What it does

Establishes **government-wide responsibilities** for recognized statistical agencies to ensure:

- ◆ Trust
- ◆ Professional integrity
- ◆ Protection of respondent data
- ◆ Credible, objective statistics

## Applies to:

The 16 federal statistical agencies and units recognized by Office of Management and Budget

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# FOUR FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

## **Objectivity**

Free from political or policy interference

## **Confidentiality**

Respondent data used only for statistical purposes

## **Relevance & Timeliness**

Statistics meet policy and public needs

## **Credibility & Accuracy**

Sound statistical methods and transparent quality

# WHAT AUTONOMY THE REGULATION REQUIRES

## Professional Independence

- Statistical agencies must control:
- Statistical methods and standards
    - Timing and content of releases
  - Data collection and estimation methods
    - Technical and scientific staffing

## Organizational Safeguards

- Parent departments must ensure:
- Separation from policy and regulatory functions
    - No political influence on statistical releases
    - Transparency about methods and quality
    - Public access to statistics on equal terms

# ASA FedStat Health Project

## Goals

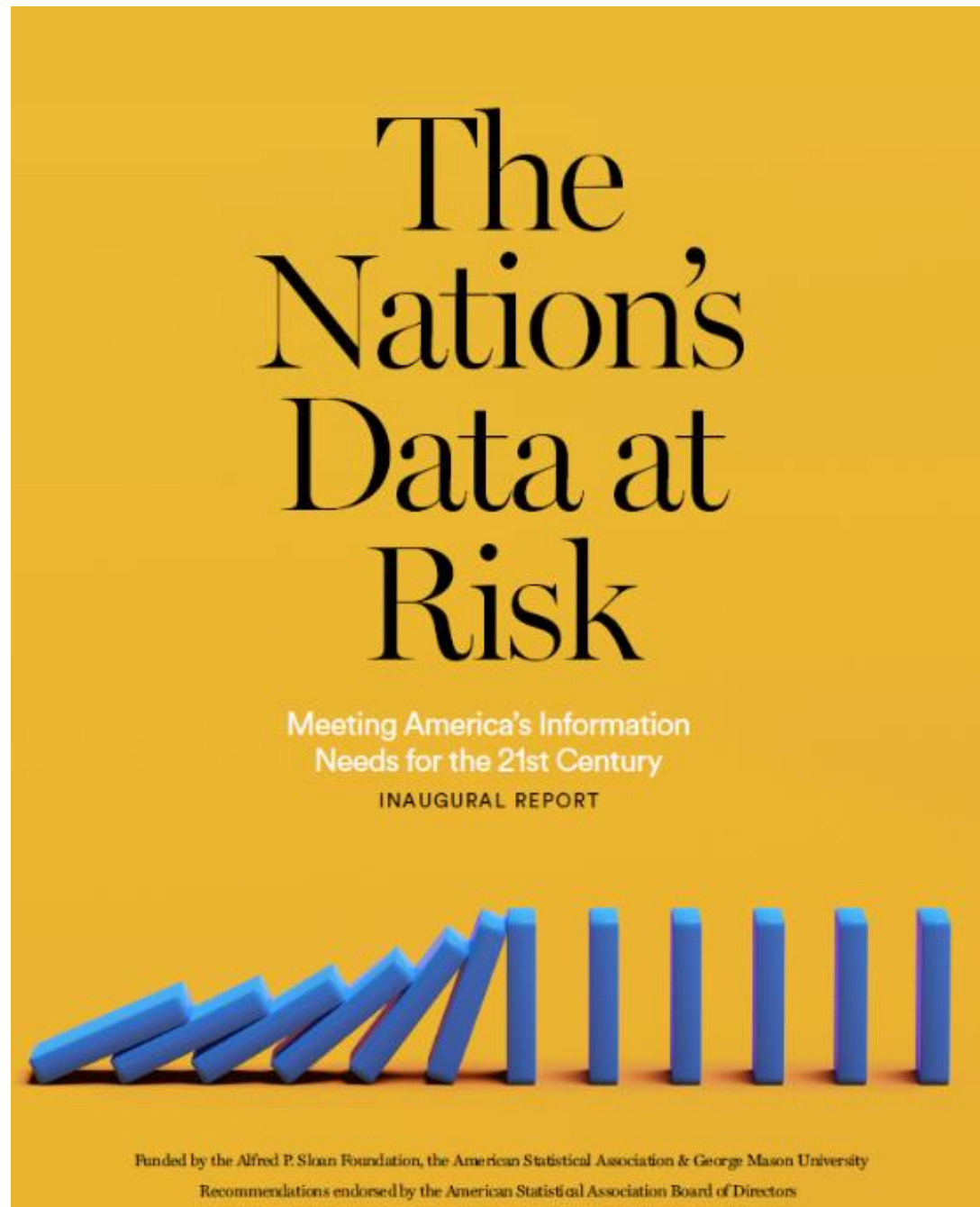
- Launched in 2023 to take pulse of the U.S. statistical system—*backbone of America's public data infrastructure*—three key goals:
  - (1) *create metrics* to track capabilities, achievements, and challenges over time
  - (2) *proactively monitor* agencies' health to enable timely responses to emerging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

# Activities to Date

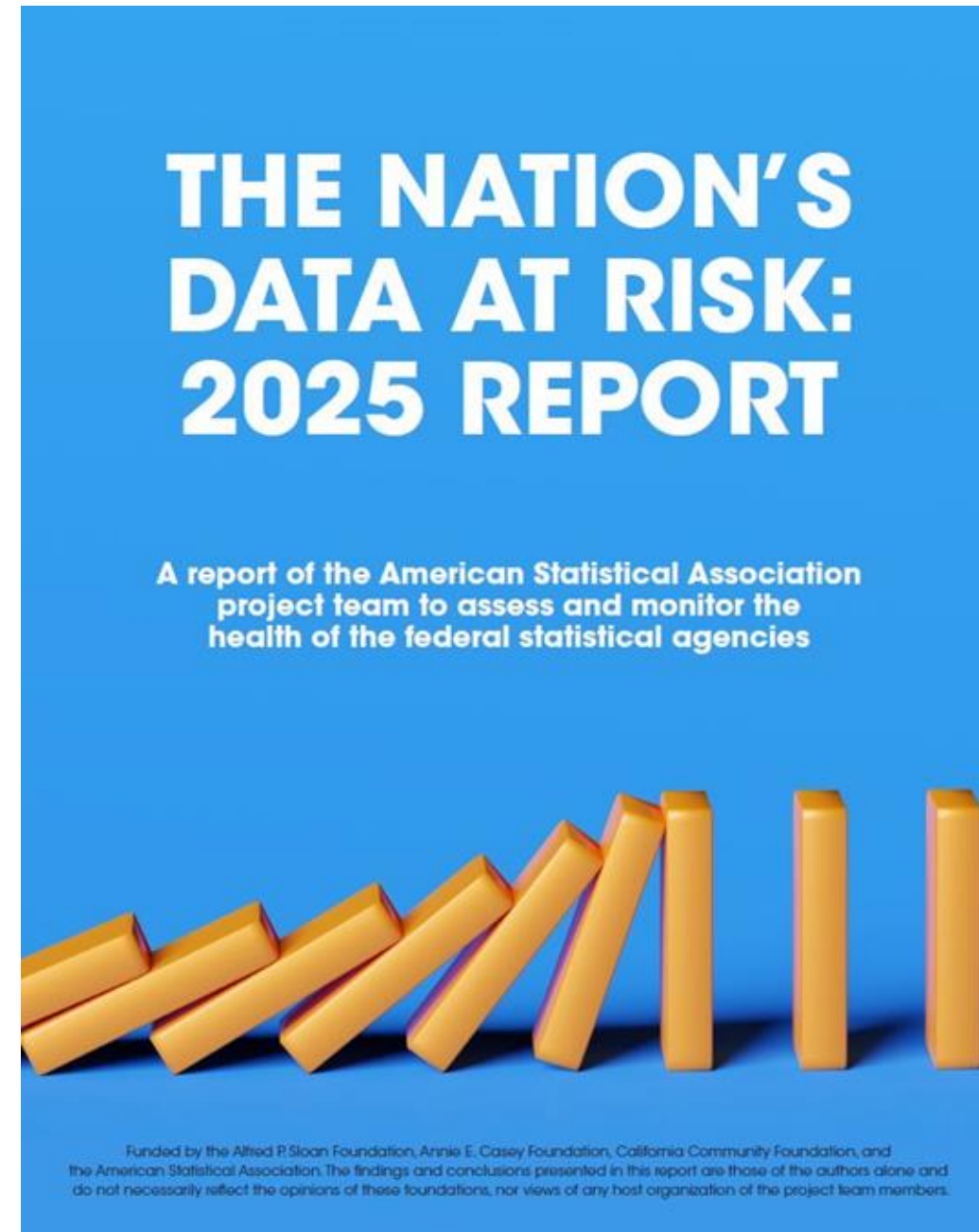
2023-2024 – create metrics and analyze agencies against several dimensions such as staff levels and skills, innovation, budget resources, etc.

February 2025–ongoing: Near Real-Time Monitoring of Actions Affecting Fed Stats  
Six categories:

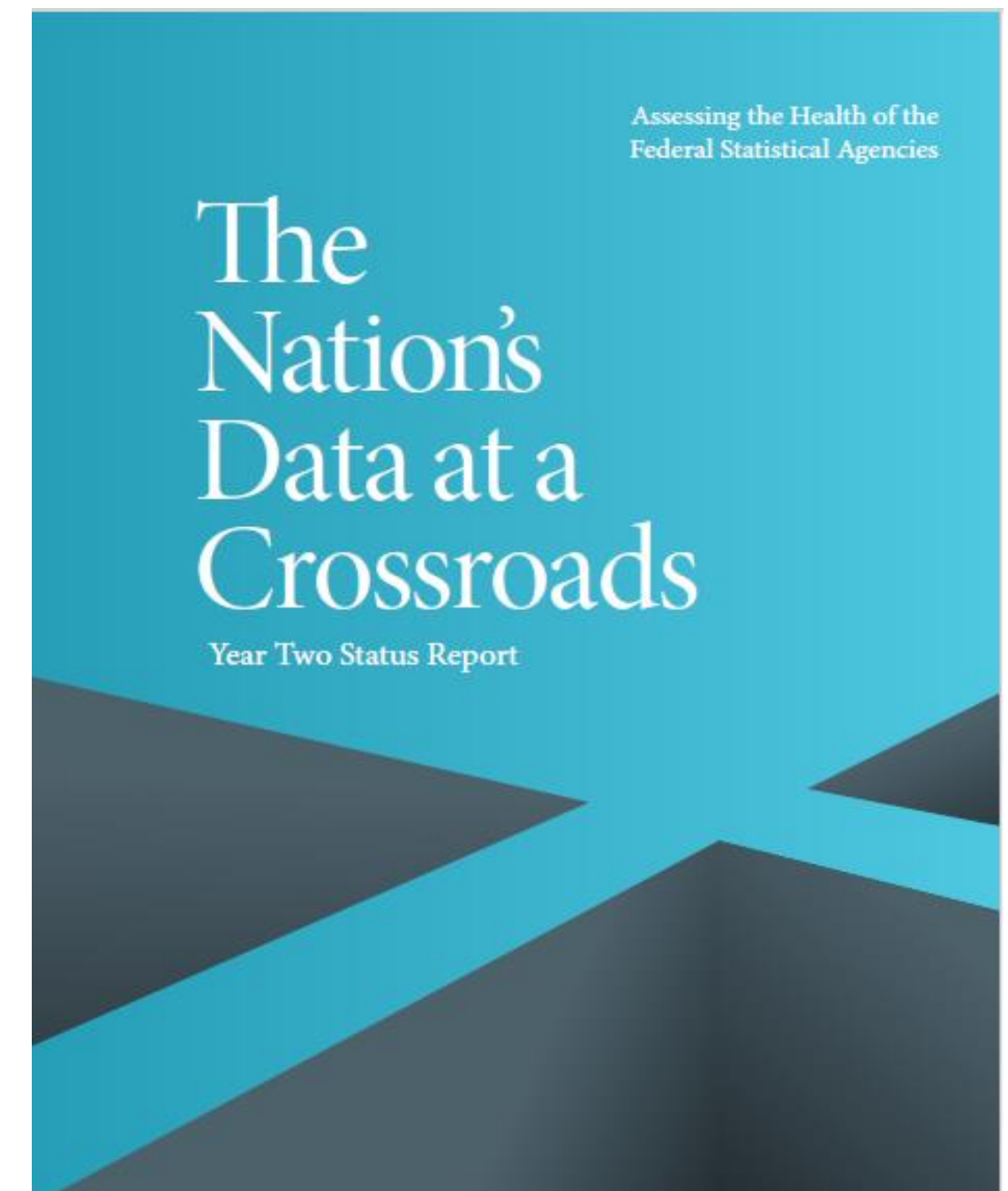
- 1) Cuts in statistical programs
- 2) Delays/reduced detail/cancellations of statistical products
- 3) Budget/staffing decreases
- 4) Undermining leadership/staff security
- 5) Accessing/using statistical data for nonstatistical purposes
- 6) Other situations (agency relocations out of Washington, DC, firing agency heads)



July 2024 Report

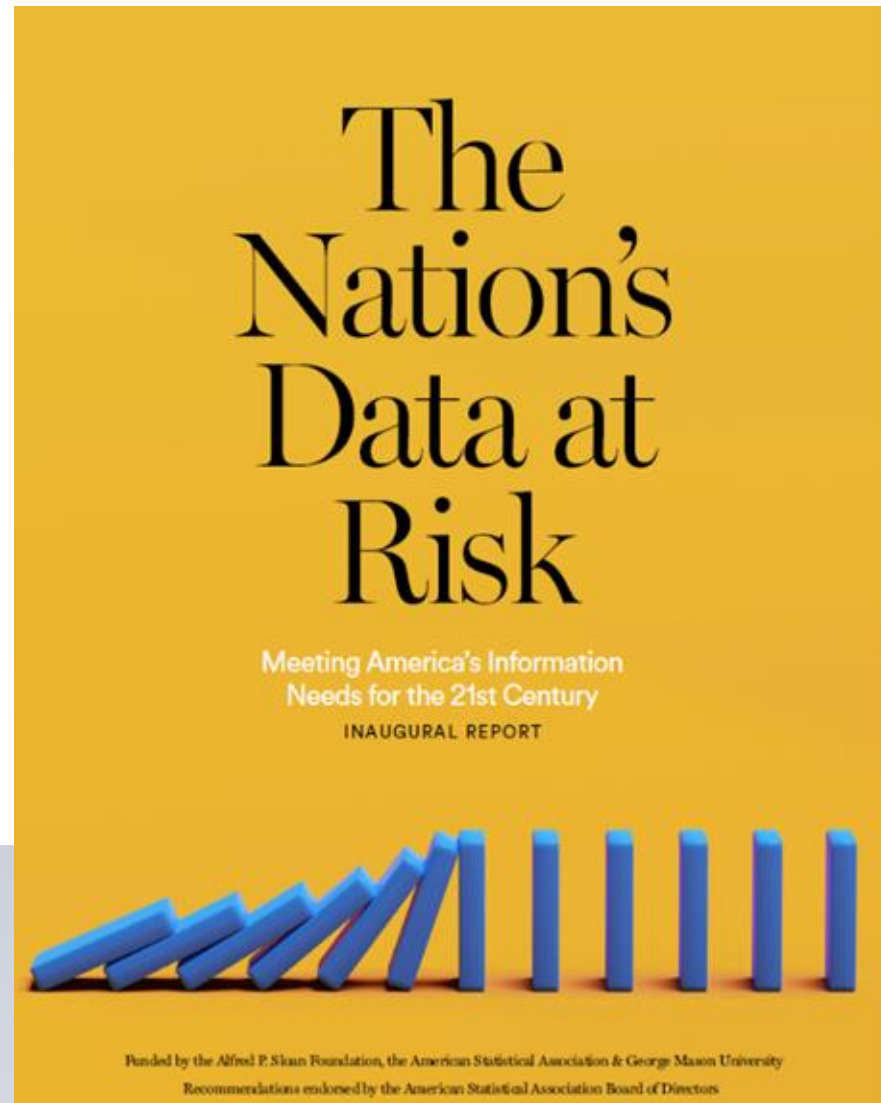


December 2025 Report



July 2025 Status Report

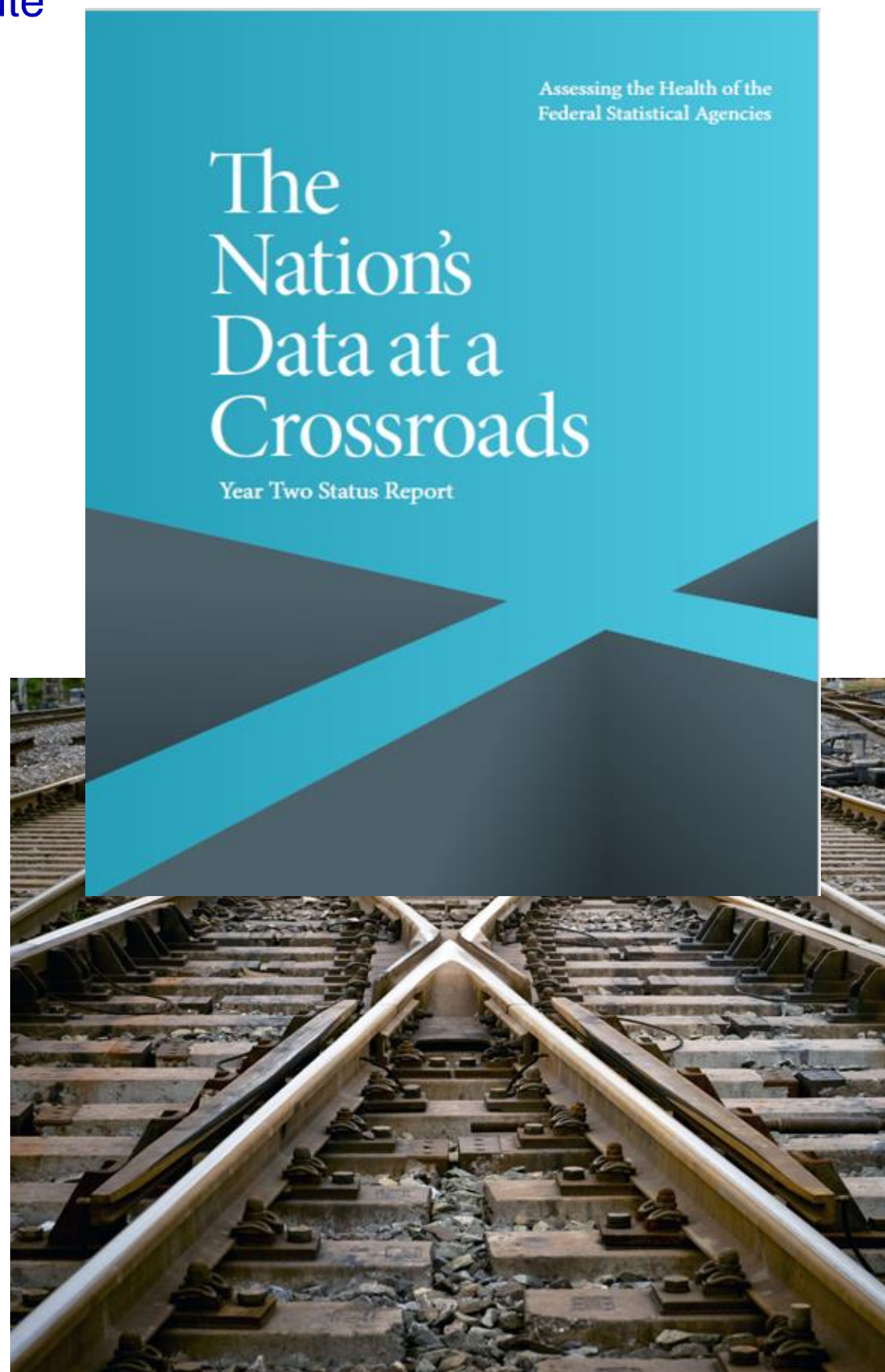
<https://bit.ly/NationsDataAtRisk2025>



## July 2024 Report found:

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





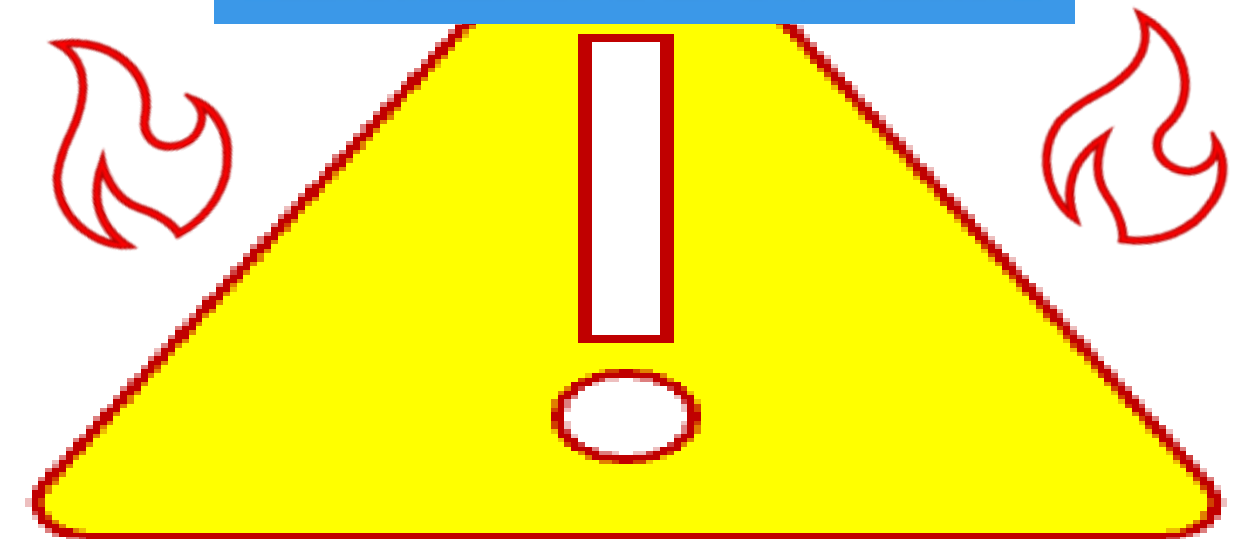
## July 2025 Status Report found:

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

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

# December 2025 Report concludes:

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



# Three Key Support Areas



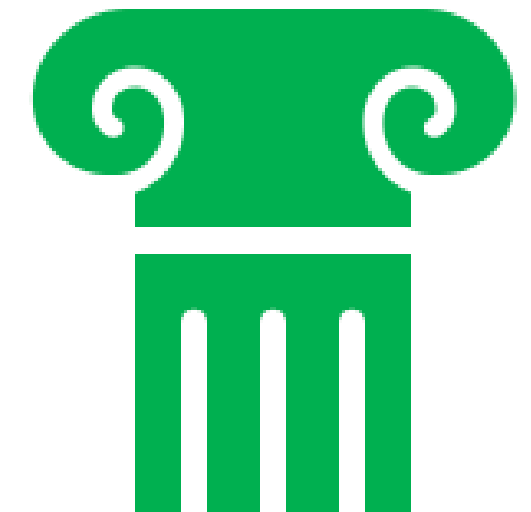
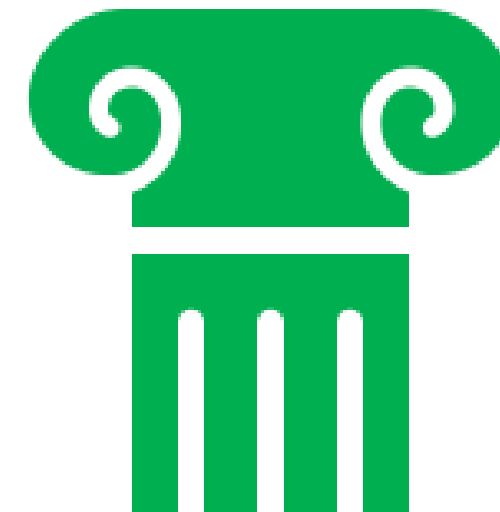
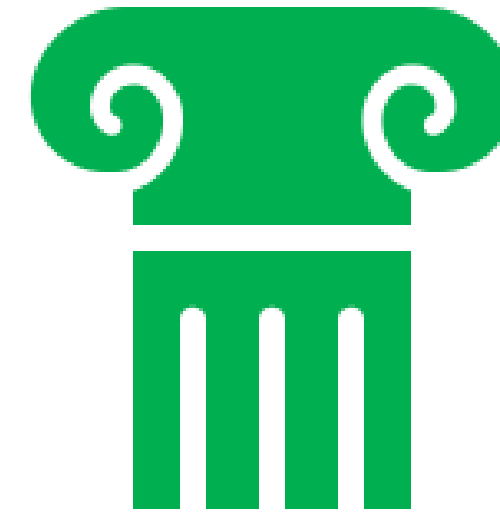
Resources



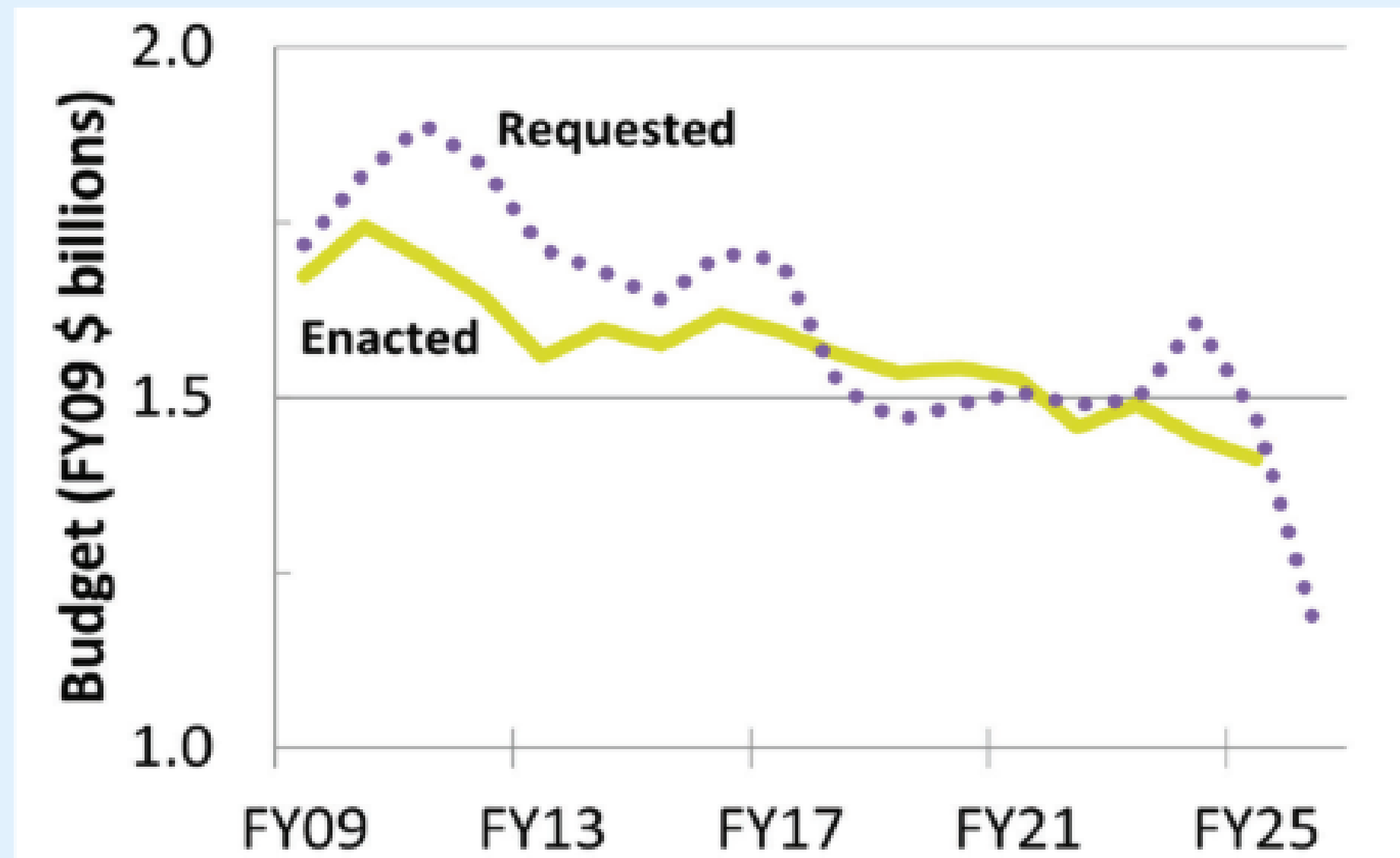
Parent Agency and  
Administration



Statistical Integrity Safeguards



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

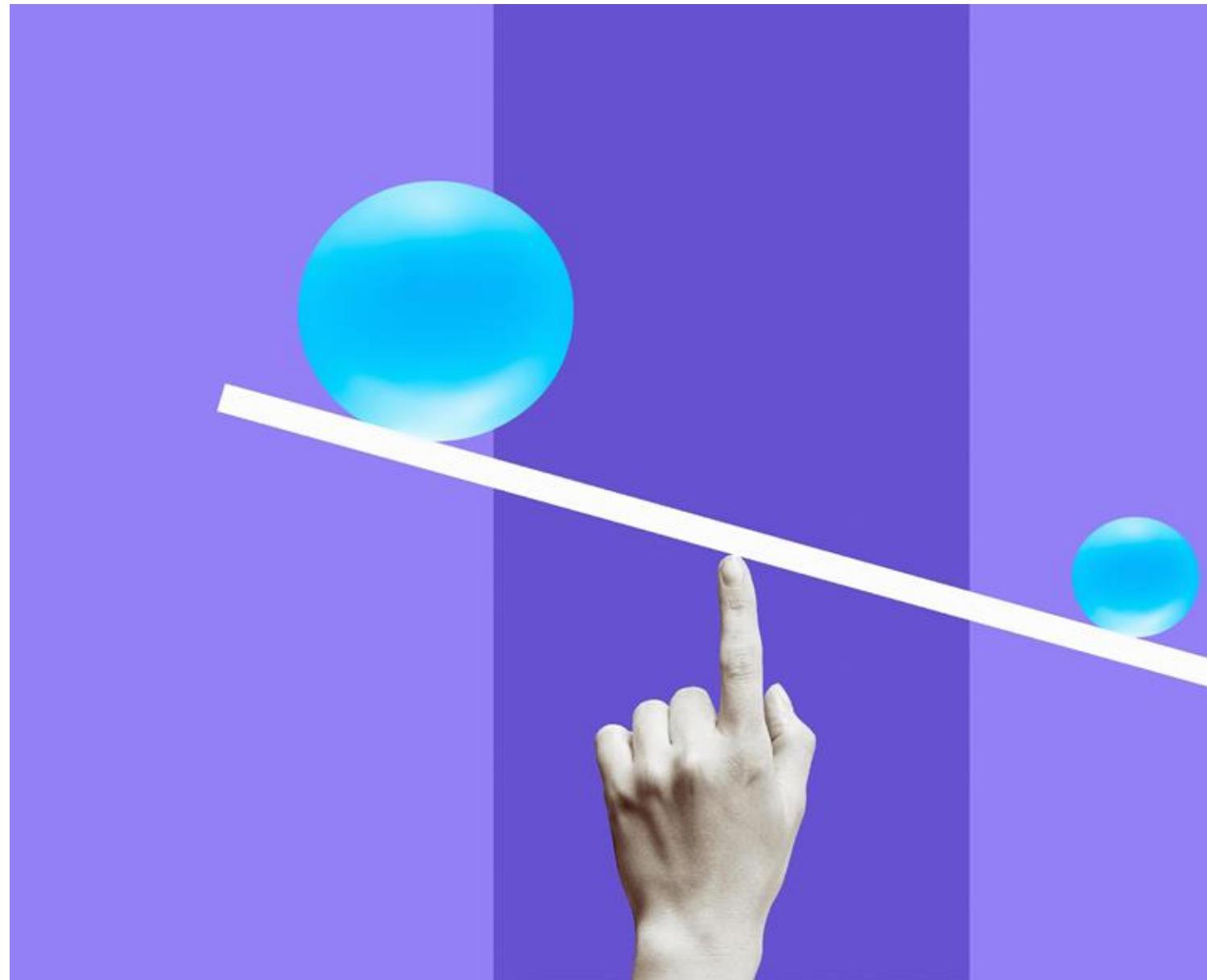


# Parent Agency and Administration Support

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

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

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# Statistical Integrity Safeguards

## **Statistical integrity safeguards:**

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

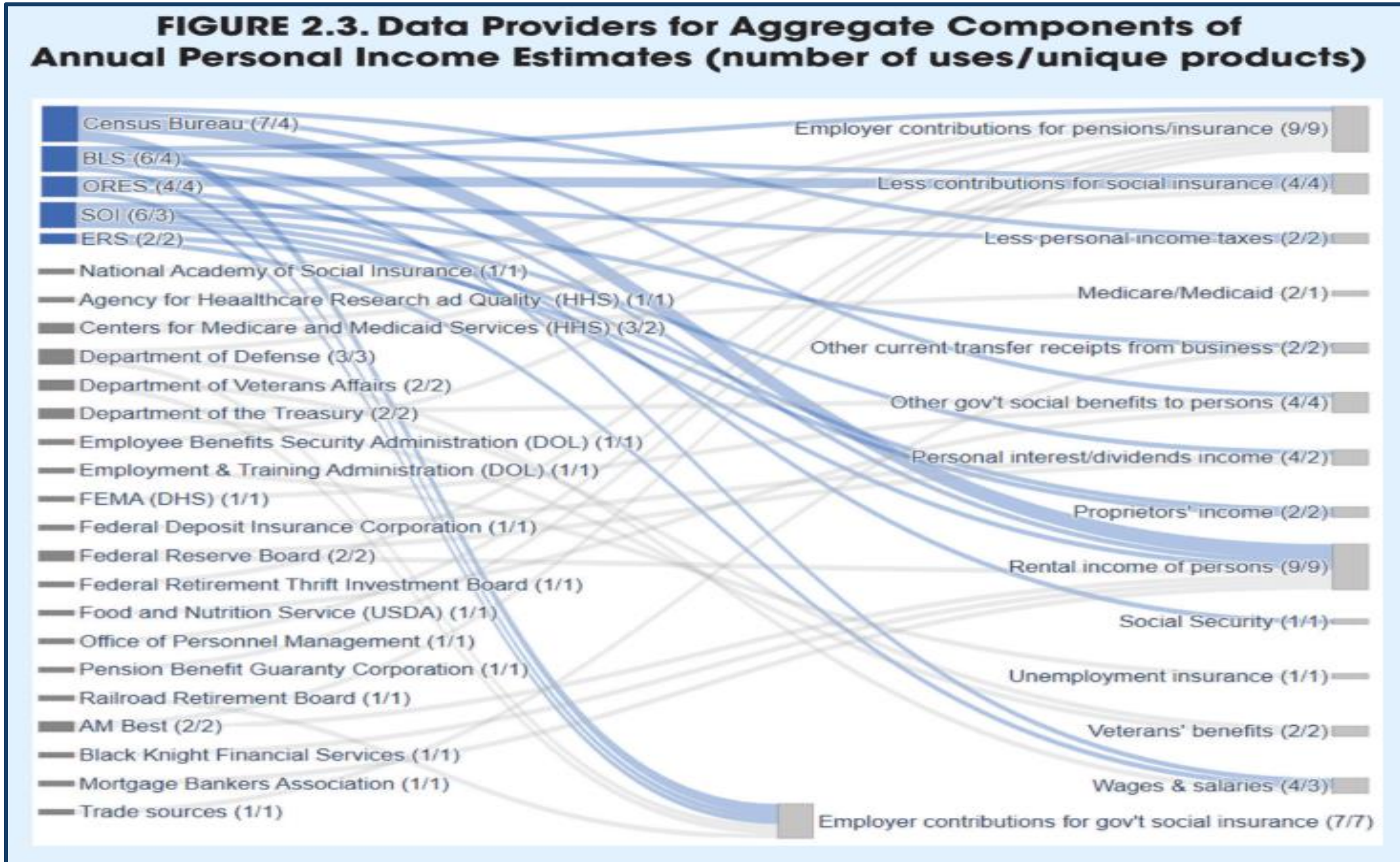
## **FINDING 2.3: The statistical agencies face several areas of risk for maintaining statistical integrity.**

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

# Implications – Impacts on Data

- Program Cancellations/Significant Scope Reduction
- Product Delays/Cancellations
- Data Quality Degradation
- Across the Board Cuts in Subject-Matter Content





# Implications – Impaired Capacity for Innovation



## Findings 2.3 - 2.4: Innovation

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

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

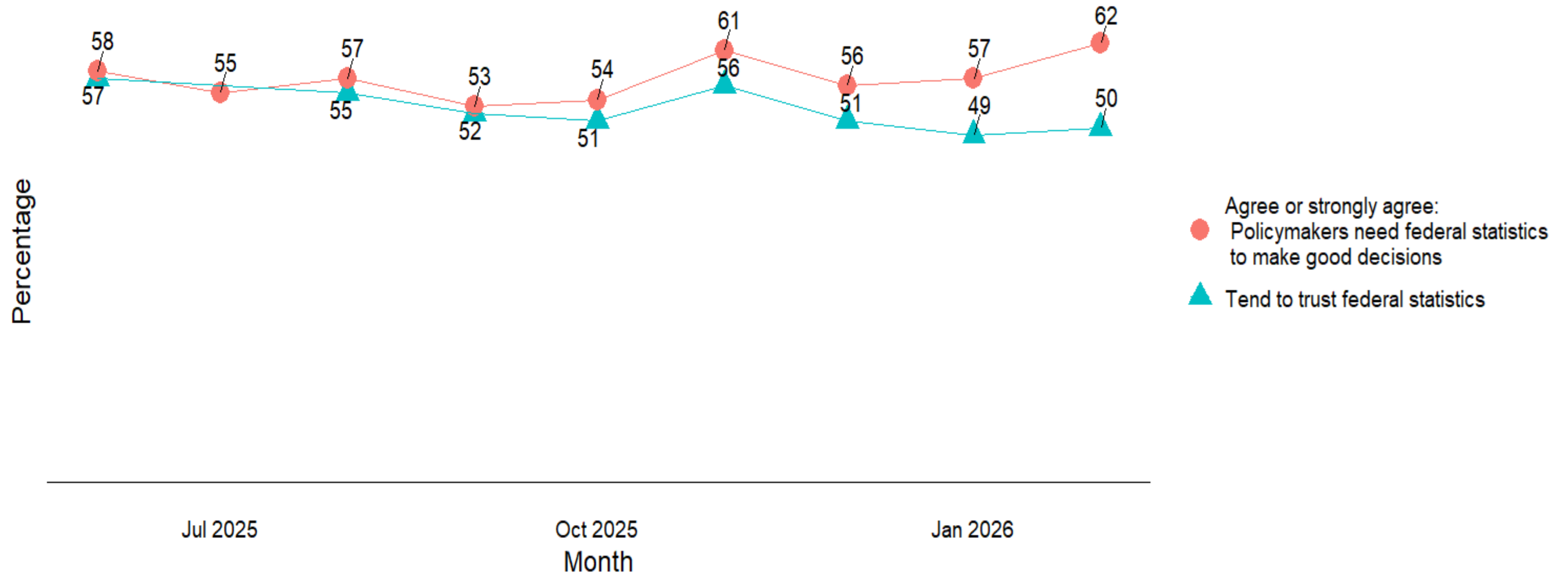
**Partnerships** with academic, commercial, state/local sectors on new methods for economic statistics (foundation-funded) are promising.

# MONITORING DATA USE AND TRUST IN FEDERAL STATISTICS

- The project is analyzing nationally representative survey data
- NORC at the University of Chicago AmeriSpeak data collected on a monthly basis since June 2025.
- June 2025 - February 2026 data collected from 10,032 respondents.

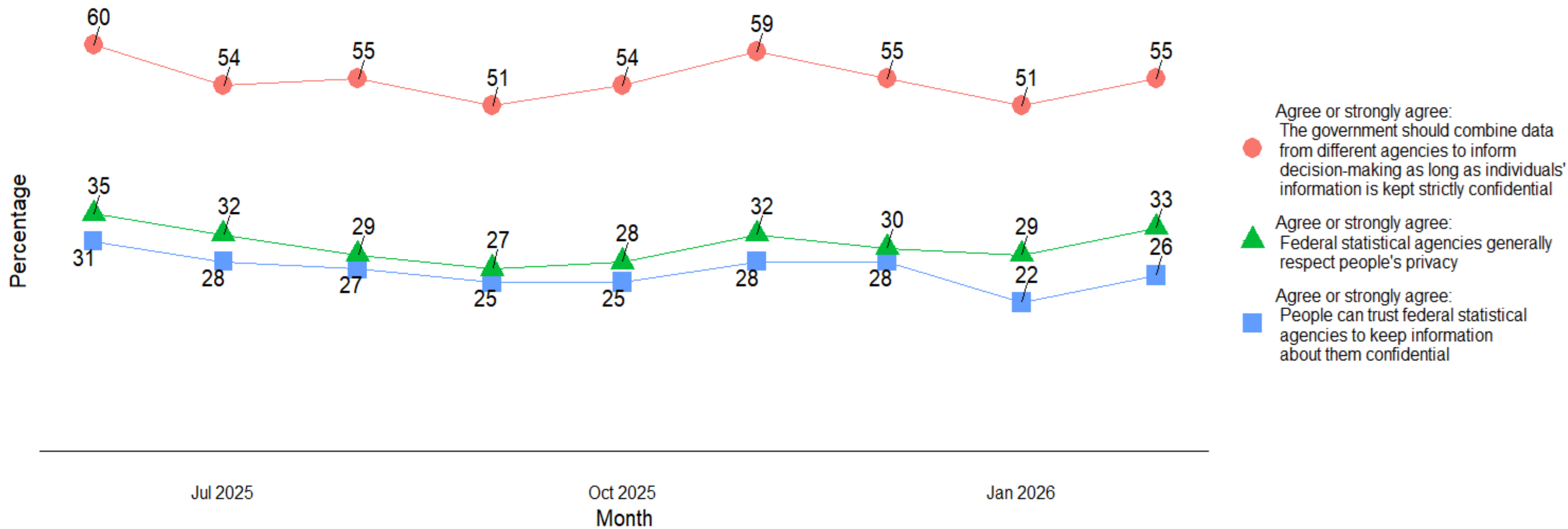


## % of U.S. Adults Tending to Trust Federal Statistics and Agreeing that Policymakers Need Federal Statistics to Make Good Decisions, NORC AmeriSpeak Panel, June 2025-February 2026



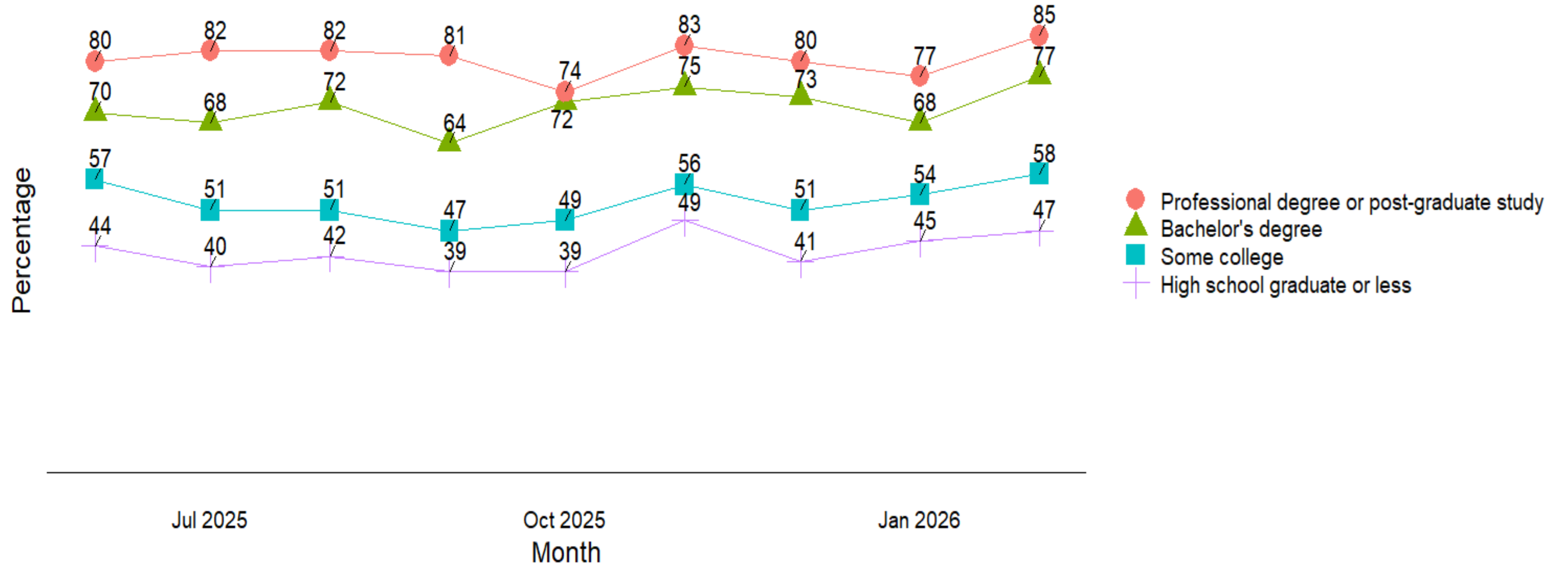
# PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY, AND COMBINING DATA

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



# EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IS ASSOCIATED WITH MORE POSITIVE VIEWS

**% of U.S. Adults Agreeing that Policymakers Need Federal Statistics to Make Good Decisions by Education Level**



# SUMMARY

Professional autonomy for production of U.S. official statistics may be helped considerably by laws, principles, practices, and regulations. However, effective implementation resulting in high quality, relevant, timely, and objective data and public trust requires committed leadership.



**THANK YOU**

