

The Chief Statistician of the United States: Overview and Analysis

January 13, 2026

The chief statistician has the broad responsibility of providing coordination, guidance, and oversight for the [federal statistical system \(FSS\)](#). The FSS is a decentralized institution comprising more than 100 agencies, organizational units, and programs across the U.S. government that engage in statistical activities. The FSS includes [16 recognized statistical agencies and units \(RSAUs\)](#), which have the primary purpose of engaging in federal [statistical activities](#). On July 10, 2025, the [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\)](#) announced the [appointment of Mark Calabria to be the chief statistician of the United States](#), replacing the former chief statistician, Karin Orvis.

Authorizing Authorities

The chief statistician role was originally established in statute by the [1986 reauthorization of the Paperwork Reduction Act \(PRA\)](#). The role was expanded with the passage of the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 \(FEBPA\)](#).

Through [Section 3504\(e\)\(7\) of Title 44](#) of the *U.S. Code*, the [Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs \(OIRA\)](#) Administrator appoints a chief statistician via authority delegated by the director of OMB. According to the *U.S. Code*, the chief statistician is to be “a trained and experienced professional statistician” that would carry out their role in coordinating the FSS.

The chief statistician has typically headed the Statistical and Science Policy Branch within OIRA.

Role of the Chief Statistician

Within the general responsibility of coordinating the FSS, the chief statistician has responsibilities generally established in statute, such as heading the [Interagency Council on Statistical Policy \(ICSP\)](#), involvement in the [Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology \(FCSM\)](#), and the development of [statistical policy directives \(SPDs\)](#).

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IN12639

Interagency Council on Statistical Policy

The chief statistician heads the ICSP, which advises and assists the director of OMB in [carrying out their responsibilities over the FSS](#). The ICSP was [originally created with the goal](#) of improving communication among RSAU heads, but later became the primary body intended to support the implementation of operating the FSS as a seamless system. The ICSP [charters several subcommittees](#) focused on select federal statistical topics, such as the [American Community Survey \(ACS\)](#), [Federal Research Statistical Data Centers \(FSRDCs\)](#), and the [Standard Application Process \(SAP\)](#) Governance Board to access restricted-use federal statistics.

Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology

The FCSM was originally founded in 1975 by OIRA's Statistical and Science Policy branch. The FCSM supports OMB by informing decisionmaking on statistical policy matters as well as providing technical assistance and guidance on statistical and methodological issues.

The chief statistician is responsible for appointing the chair of FCSM. The priorities of FCSM are set in consultation with the chief statistician and ICSP. FCSM consists of members that are career federal employees selected by OMB on the basis of their expertise and interest in statistical methodology.

Statistical Policy Directives

As part of its oversight role, the chief statistician, under the direction of the OMB director, develops statistical policy directives (SPDs), which RSAUs are expected to follow. SPDs are to be developed and established in accordance with [Section 3504\(e\)\(3\) of Title 44](#) of the *U.S. Code*. Current SPDs include, for example, [SPD No. 7: Metropolitan Statistical Areas](#); [SPD No. 3: Compilation and Release of Principal Federal Economic Indicators](#); and [SPD No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity](#).

The Trust Regulation

OMB's SPD No. 1: [Fundamental Responsibilities of Recognized Statistical Agencies and Units](#)—commonly referred to in the statistical community as the “[Trust Regulation](#)”—was renewed in December 2024, aiming to promote public trust in federal statistics. The chief statistician is responsible for providing consultation and oversight to RSAUs as they implement the Trust Regulation.

Issues for Congress

Federal statistics are historically widely trusted, widely used, and often considered the most authoritative source of information available on a variety of topics. The public can use federal statistics to understand factors on crime, education, commuting, health, and other topics; businesses utilize federal statistics for serving customer bases, understanding the labor force, and identifying growth strategies; and lawmakers use federal statistics to make better-informed decisions and administer programs. For these reasons, Congress may have an interest in the chief statistician's role overseeing the FSS.

A long-standing professional organization on statistics, the American Statistical Association, released a [2024 report](#) on the risks the FSS faces, some of which are included in the discussion below. Congress may choose to consider these or other perspectives.

Implementation of FEBPA and Trust Regulation

Congress may consider conducting oversight on the activities of the chief statistician and the Statistical and Science Policy Branch of OIRA as it pertains to the implementation of FEBPA and bolstering public trust in federal statistics. Among other things, FEBPA called for the establishment of the Trust Regulation, and oversight could be conducted over the implementation of the Trust Regulation to monitor how the four fundamental responsibilities for each statistical agency established in Title 44 of the *U.S. Code* and other provisions of the Trust Regulation are being carried out.

Perennial Federal Statistical System Issues

Many ongoing matters impact the federal statistical system, including data confidentiality concerns, declining response rates, overall data quality, and coordination of the federal statistical system. Members of Congress may conduct oversight to better understand how the chief statistician and the federal statistical system are engaging with these issues.

Resources

As the head of the FSS, the chief statistician conducts coordination across several federal agencies, particularly among the RSAUs. Congress may conduct oversight to ensure the chief statistician is able to conduct their role as the coordinator of the FSS. Oversight priorities may include ensuring the chief statistician has sufficient resources to coordinate the FSS, such as personnel, data and technology infrastructure, and data-sharing capacities across the RSAUs.

Committee and Policy Activities

The chief statistician has a statutory responsibility to support the FSS through their role in relevant committees (ICSP, FCSM) and developing relevant policy. Members of Congress may use their oversight role to better understand how the chief statistician is carrying out these responsibilities and what support may be needed for the chief statistician to effectively fulfill this purpose.

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