



Key Federal Agencies Supporting Population Research



The Population Association of America (PAA) and the Association of Population Centers (APC) are two affiliated organizations comprising over 3,000 behavioral and social scientists, including demographers, sociologists, and economists, who conduct research on the causes and consequences of population change and more than 40 federally funded population research centers nationwide. Their diverse research interests include aging, adolescent health, fertility, immigration and migration, health disparities, labor force dynamics, mortality, and population forecasting.

Federal Scientific Agencies Funding Population Research

National Institutes of Health

[NIH](#), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the federal government's lead scientific medical research agency. Its mission is "science in pursuit of fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to extend healthy life and reduce the burdens of illness and disability." NIH awards over 80% of its funding annually to support biomedical, behavioral, and social science research and research training at universities and other research facilities both in the U.S. and abroad. The NIH is the major source of discretionary, competitive federal funding for demographic research. Two institutes in particular, the [Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development \(NICHD\)](#) and the [National Institute on Aging \(NIA\)](#) are the primary funding source for demographic research within the NIH.

National Science Foundation/NSF

[NSF](#) is an independent federal agency that works to: "promote the progress of science; advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and secure the national defense." The agency funds roughly 27% of all federally supported basic research, and almost 70% of basic, university-based social and behavioral sciences research conducted at American universities. NSF comprises seven separate directorates, including the Social, Behavioral and Economic (SBE) Directorate. This division funds not only competitively awarded individual research projects but also funds or co-funds several large data infrastructure projects important to the demographic research community, including the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, the General Social Survey, and the Census Bureau Research Data Centers.

Federal Agencies Supporting the Data Used in Population Research

Census Bureau

[The Census Bureau](#) is the largest federal statistical research agency, providing data about the nation's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The Census Bureau is best known for conducting decennial censuses; however, it also conducts numerous surveys, including the American Community Survey, which measures annual changes in individual and household demographics and economic conditions of the nation. Population scientists use census data, regardless of their unique expertise, to conduct research and research training activities.

National Center for Health Statistics/NCHS

[NCHS](#), a division of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is the nation’s principal health statistics agency, providing data on the health of the U.S. population. Population scientists rely on large NCHS-supported health surveys, especially the National Health Interview Survey and National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, to study demographic, socioeconomic, and behavioral differences in health and mortality outcomes. They also rely on the vital statistics data that NCHS releases to track trends in fertility, mortality, and disability.

Bureau of Labor Statistics/BLS

[BLS](#), an agency located within the U.S. Department of Labor is the principal federal agency responsible for measuring labor market activity, working conditions and price changes in the economy. Population scientists use BLS data extensively both to study work and related economic policies and to investigate the intersection of work-related outcomes with other life domains such as family, health, and education. The field relies on unique BLS-supported surveys, such as the American Time Use Survey and National Longitudinal Surveys, to understand how work, education, family, and health interact to inform behaviors, outcomes, and well-being across the lifespan.

Institute of Education Sciences/IES

[IES](#) is the independent and nonpartisan statistics, research and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Education charged with providing and disseminating rigorous scientific evidence to inform education policy and practice. Population scientists use data produced by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), an agency within IES, which collects and disseminates data on a wide range of demographic, economic, and geographic factors within education. IES is also a source of research grant funding that supports research topics such as how variations in educational attainment affect health and the lifespan.

PAA’s flagship journal, *Demography*, publishes compelling, relevant population research.

The Association of Population Centers’ annual [Resource Guide](#) contains concise profiles of population research centers from across the country—summarizing both scholarship and impact.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality/AHRQ

[AHRQ](#) funds research that focuses on the delivery of effective and efficient medical care, including prevention of dangerous and deadly medical errors. AHRQ is attracting attention as an increasingly important scholarly setting and potential source of grant support for population scientists. In addition, population scientists use data from the agency’s health services research surveys and electronic health records to inform their own studies and research training activities.

Demography is the statistical study of human populations. It examines the size, structure and movements of populations over space and time, using methods from sociology, economics, anthropology, history and other fields.

United States Agency for International Development/USAID

[USAID](#) supports long term and equitable economic growth, agriculture and trade, global health, democracy, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance within four regions of the world. PAA/APC members study trends and effects in international population dynamics. The Office of Population and Reproductive Health funds most USAID-supported demographic research—most notably the Demographic and Health Survey.