

Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Priorities

Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee

National Institutes of Health (NIH) » Support Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research recommendation, \$51.3 billion. This amount would allow NIH's base budget to keep pace with the biomedical research and development price index and meaningful growth of roughly 6%. Robust and sustained support for the NIH is essential for the U.S. to maintain its competitive edge and position as a global leader in scientific research and medical innovation. NIH, especially the National Institute on Aging and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, is the primary source of discretionary competitive funding for grants, surveys, training awards, centers, and networks essential to the population sciences.

National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) » Support Friends of NCHS recommendation, \$220 million. Since 2010, NCHS has lost 21% of its purchasing power. Providing NCHS with a modest funding increase in FY 2026 will not only maintain the agency's mission as the nation's principal health statistics agency, but also enable NCHS to devise new technologies and methodologies to address declining survey response rates, improve data quality, granularity, timeliness, and access, expand the National Health Interview Survey and National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, and enhance vital statistics, particularly mortality data. Population scientists use NCHS data to analyze trends in fertility, disability, mortality, and health outcomes.

Social Security Administration (SSA) Retirement and Disability Research Consortium (RDRC) » Provide \$15 million to restore terminated SSA RDRC program. On February 21, 2025, SSA unexpectedly terminated the RDRC cooperative agreements, halting critically important research nationwide. Established in 2017, during the first Trump Administration, the RDRC has played an important role in improving SSA's efficiency, fiscal oversight, and decision-making by conducting independent, data-driven research. Its work has helped to streamline SSA programs, reduce improper payments, and ensure benefits reach those who need them most, all of which are essential in today's budget-conscious environment.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) » Support Friends of AHRQ recommendation, \$500 million. AHRQ funds health services 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 surveys and electronic health records to inform their own studies and research training activities.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) » Support Friends of BLS recommendation, \$770 million. PAA and APC urge Congress to provide BLS with funding so it can sustain and modernize surveys, such as the Current Population Survey, and enhance secure public access to BLS datasets. BLS is implementing a new long overdue cohort of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. This new cohort is necessary given the survey can no longer provide information about people under the age of 25 and the original cohort is entering retirement age. Population scientists use BLS data to understand how work, unemployment, and retirement influence health and well-being across the lifespan.

Institute of Education Science (IES) » Support Friends of IES recommendation, \$900 million. PAA and APC urge Congress to restore IES, including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). A component of

the U.S. Department of Education, IES supports seminal research on myriad aspects of education, teaching and learning. NCES, part of IES, collects data and compiles statistics that inform research, instruction, evaluation, and planning decisions made by population scientists working in applied and academic research sectors. The demise of NCES has adversely affected the ability of students and scientists to access taxpayer funded NCES datasets and jeopardized the future of surveys containing decades of invaluable data about the nation's students, schools, and workforce.

Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee

Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and National Institute of Justice (NIJ) » Support Friends of Justice and Research Statistics recommendations, \$75 million and \$60 million, respectively. Both agencies are important sources of data and funding for population scientists conducting research on topics such as prisoner reentry, the social and environmental dynamics of health and crime, and the effects of incarceration across the lifespan.

Census Bureau » Support The Census Project recommendation, \$2 billion. Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 is a crucial year in the ramp up to the 2030 Census in which preparations and costs begin to exponentially increase. In FY 2026, the Census Bureau will conduct the 2026 Census Test in six geographically and demographically different sites nationwide. The test is a critically important component of the decennial census planning cycle in which the Bureau evaluates new enumeration strategies and data collection technologies in the field. Adequate support for decennial census preparations now will reduce the risk of requiring unplanned, additional funding in the peak years at the end of the decade and improve the agency's ability to conduct an accurate count in 2030. Population scientists use census data, including the American Community Survey, to monitor U.S. demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and to inform research and evaluation activities.

National Science Foundation (NSF) » Support Coalition for National Science Funding recommendation, \$9.9 billion, which is equivalent to NSF's FY23 funding level including supplemental funding. PAA and APC are particularly interested in ensuring that the NSF Social, Behavioral and Economic (SBE) Directorate receives sufficient funding to sustain its support of competitively awarded individual research projects and large data infrastructure projects, including the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, General Social Survey, and Census Bureau Research Data Centers. Although the SBE Directorate represents only between 4-5% of NSF's total research budget, its awards are 60% of all federal research dollars for the social sciences.

State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) » Support reinstatement of USAID and its research funding. PAA and APC urge Congress to work with the Administration to restore the agency and its research activities, especially the Demographic and Health Surveys program, which has collected and disseminated accurate and representative data on population, maternal and child health, HIV, preventative care, and nutrition through more than 400 surveys conducted in over 90 countries since 1984.

The [Population Association of America \(PAA\)](#) and the [Association of Population Centers \(APC\)](#) are two organizations representing over 3,000 behavioral and social scientists and over 40 federally funded population research centers nationwide. Population scientists include demographers, economists, sociologists, epidemiologists, and others who study topics such as population aging, health, mortality, fertility, work and workforce, disability, migration, and families. Their research is providing key insights that are saving lives and improving the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities worldwide.