

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**  
**Office of Policy**  
**Office of Immigration Statistics**



**Strategic Plan**  
**Fiscal Years 2016-2020**  
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Since the passage of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics has responsibility to carry out two statutory requirements: 1) to collect and disseminate to Congress and the public data and information useful in evaluating the social, economic, environmental, and demographic impact of immigration laws; and 2) to establish standards of reliability and validity for immigration statistics collected by the Department's operational Components.

Located within the Department's Office of Policy and with a mission focused on data collection and analysis, the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) is uniquely positioned to gather information from across the Department and the entire federal government and to perform these centralizing analytic and dissemination functions. In so doing, the Office provides critical support to three of the Department's five core missions: Prevent Terrorism and Enhance Security (Mission 1), Secure and Manage Our Borders (Mission 2), and Enforce and Administer Our Immigration Laws (Mission 3).

### *OIS Support to DHS Core Missions*

- ✓ Prevent terrorism and enhancing security;
- ✓ Secure and manage our borders
- ✓ Enforce and administer our immigration laws;
- Safeguard and secure cyberspace;
- Ensure resilience to disasters

The complexity of the immigration mission space drives further demand for high quality data and analysis from a range of policy stakeholders. The Department's operational Components require cross-cutting data to complete certain enforcement activities and to adjudicate certain claims. Congress seeks regular and comprehensive reporting on immigration benefits, immigration enforcement, border security, and migration inflows. Under the Department's analytic agenda, senior leaders rely on detailed operational data and outcome metrics for strategic planning. Other executive branch actors also depend on empirical analysis to monitor and refine immigration policy. Most importantly, a firm commitment to transparency anchored in the collection and dissemination of clear and credible immigration data is essential to combating widespread confusion and misinformation about immigration trends, and to contribute to a more informed policy debate.

Reduced personnel in 2012-2014, along with inefficient immigration data systems have made it challenging for OIS to fulfill its core mission and meet broader demands for data and analysis. Since 2015, the Department's commitment to empirical analysis and transparency has driven a major rebuilding effort, along with an effort to integrate the Department's diverse and disparate immigration data systems. The newly reinvigorated Office of Immigration Statistics brings a unified and coordinated approach to supporting the homeland security mission. In doing so, OIS will foster cooperation and collaboration among the Department's Components to achieve a high level of quality data; to lead immigration research; to increase communication with partners, stakeholders, and customers; and to inform the Department's overall decision-making process.

## MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

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The Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) mission, vision, and values provide the conceptual framework underlying all its objectives, goals, and projects.

### **Mission**

The Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics leads the collection and dissemination to Congress and the public of statistical information and analysis useful in evaluating the social, economic, environmental, and demographic impact of immigration laws, migration flows, and immigration enforcement; the Office establishes standards of reliability and validity for the Department's immigration statistics; and the Office develops other immigration-related reports and conducts research at the direction of the Secretary.

### **Vision**

- The U.S. government's premier organization for immigration statistics and for analysis of immigration and immigration enforcement; recognized by the public, the federal partners, and the immigration research community for policy-relevant, accurate, timely, and credible immigration data, research, and analysis.
- The U.S. government leader for integration of all immigration-related data, systems and standards.
- The Department's in-house think tank for Department-wide immigration research and analysis to provide cutting edge policy-relevant research, continuously engaging with our partners, stakeholders, and customers to maximize the relevance, quality, and reach of OIS research.

### **Values**

OIS values and respects its data partners, customers, and workforce, who are essential to the development, dissemination, and use of statistical information on immigration. Our organization and its people have three core values: PROFESSIONALISM, TRANSPARENCY, and TEAMWORK.

- **Professionalism:** OIS adheres to the highest professional standards for a statistical agency, always ensuring that our data are valid, reliable, and objective.
- **Transparency:** OIS is transparent about our methodology and data sources, and strives to make research and data readily accessible to Congress and the public.
- **Teamwork:** The OIS team works cooperatively toward common goals, in close collaboration with our data partners, customers, and other stakeholders.

## STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

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1. Lead the DHS effort to integrate immigration-related data across the Federal Government.
2. Improve the quality, timeliness, and utility of DHS immigration statistical data and analysis.
3. Improve the dissemination of OIS products to inform policy-makers, Congress, and the public.
4. Serve as an in-house DHS think-tank on immigration issues.
5. Maintain a high-quality, motivated workforce and provide the environment to support it.

**1. Lead the DHS effort to integrate immigration-related data from across the federal Government.**

*In a fully integrated data system, OIS and each of the immigration Components, independently and in real time, will have access to all of the Department’s immigration data systems for analytic, record-keeping and reporting purposes.*

<p><b>LINES OF ACTION</b></p>	<p><b>Data governance:</b> Develop and implement Departmental policies and practices governing the sharing or transmission of immigration data among the immigration Components and between the Components and Headquarters. These Components include, but are not limited to, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS). These policies should prioritize and facilitate the timely distribution of relevant immigration data among all data stakeholders. All policies and requirements resulting from these lines of action will be developed in accordance with DHS Directive Number 112-01 (concerning the DHS directives system) and DHS Directive Number 047-01 (concerning privacy policy and compliance).</p> <p><b>Data standards:</b> Establish and implement Department and U.S. government-wide standards for the reliability and validity of immigration data.</p> <p><b>Information technology:</b> Develop and implement an information technology plan to improve the collection, analysis, and sharing of immigration data among the immigration Components and between the Components and Headquarters. The ultimate goal of this plan will be to permit Headquarters and each of the immigration Components, independently and in real time, to access all of the Department’s immigration data systems for analytic and record-keeping purposes.</p>
<p><b>RELEVANCE</b></p>	<p>OIS does not own any immigration data. Timely and consistent reporting requires that OIS has fast, reliable access to Component and other United States Government (USG) data.</p> <p>Many immigration policy issues cross-cut multiple DHS Components or multiple USG departments. Reporting and analysis on these issues require access to system-wide data.</p>
<p><b>LINK TO MISSION PRIORITIES</b></p>	<p>Lead the collection and dissemination of statistical information and analysis on immigration</p> <p>Establish standards of reliability and validity for immigration statistics</p>

**2. Improve the quality, timeliness, and utility of DHS immigration statistical data and analysis.**

*OIS should release its core reports on a timely and predictable schedule. In addition to meeting its core reporting and Congressional briefing requirements, OIS should produce analytic reports that contextualize core data. For example, data on immigration stocks and flows should be compared to historical trends, and should be disaggregated and described by U.S. geographic jurisdictions, countries of origin, and migrant demographic characteristics, among other factors.*

<p><b>LINES OF ACTION</b></p>	<p><b>Capacity:</b> With a fully staffed office, rebuild OIS capacity to produce core reports in a timely manner.</p> <p><b>Processes:</b> Develop and deploy internal tracking tools to identify bottlenecks and keep report production on track.</p> <p><b>Engagement:</b> Work with internal and external stakeholders to identify issues of greatest analytic interest.</p> <p><b>Analysis:</b> As capacity permits, expand from reporting on basic immigration stocks and flows to additional analytic reporting, including the following projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead the Department’s effort to develop rigorous <i>metrics of border security</i>, including estimates of illegal migration inflows across the Southwest border.</li> <li>• Link person-centric records across multiple DHS datasets to produce detailed reports on how people progress through the <i>immigration enforcement</i> and <i>immigration benefits lifecycles</i>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>RELEVANCE</b></p>	<p>OIS should provide its customers with current data because the immigration system is highly dynamic; drawing accurate conclusions about policies and trends requires up-to-date data.</p> <p>OIS should publish its core reports on a predictable schedule to the greatest extent possible in order to regularly inform external stakeholders.</p> <p>Many core immigration data vary by geography, demographic characteristics, and other policy-relevant factors. These patterns are often of interest to a broad range of stakeholders. Including this type of analysis in OIS core reports will make them more useful to our customers.</p>
<p><b>LINK TO MISSION PRIORITIES</b></p>	<p>Lead the collection and dissemination of statistical information and analysis on immigration</p>

**3. Improve the dissemination of OIS products to inform policy makers, Congress, and the public.**

*OIS data and research should be made available in a wide range of formats, to include infographics, short-form research products, interactive datasets, and fully downloadable data. The OIS website should be updated in appearance and functionality to drive dissemination.*

<p><b>LINES OF ACTION</b></p>	<p><b>Website:</b> Modernize OIS website and expand its capabilities to accommodate enhanced content, including, for example, interactive datasets.</p> <p><b>Product packaging:</b> Develop new short-form products, including infographics, fact sheets, and interactive web features.</p> <p><b>Communications:</b> Strengthen OIS communications capacity and develop a comprehensive communications strategy.</p> <p><b>Stakeholder engagement:</b> Continuously engage with a wide range of external stakeholders to determine and satisfy customers’ demands.</p>
<p><b>RELEVANCE</b></p>	<p>Existing OIS reports are mainly long-form and data-intensive, and therefore serve a narrow base of moderately sophisticated users.</p> <p>Shorter form infographics and fact sheets will broaden OIS’ impact on casual users and the media.</p> <p>Interactive datasets and downloadable microdata will make OIS more valuable to the immigration research community.</p>
<p><b>LINK TO MISSION PRIORITIES</b></p>	<p>Lead the collection and dissemination of statistical information and analysis</p>

**4. Serve as an in-house DHS think tank on immigration issues.**

*OIS should be the department-wide leader in producing and coordinating cutting-edge immigration research, working with senior leadership to identify key research questions, and working with partners throughout the department and in the broader research community to lead and coordinate research.*

<p><b>LINES OF ACTION</b></p>	<p><b>Links to leadership:</b> Maintain strong links with the Department’s immigration policy leadership.</p> <p><b>Links to components:</b> Establish and convene a DHS-wide immigration research working group. Assist the DHS Centers of Excellence and other DHS research efforts by guiding, vetting, and reviewing Department-wide immigration research.</p> <p><b>Capacity:</b> Continue to strengthen OIS analytic and communications capacity, including the ability to quickly produce short- and long-form research products at senior leadership request.</p>
<p><b>RELEVANCE</b></p>	<p>The Department requires, and already produces and consumes, a large body of immigration research. However, internal research is diffuse, poorly coordinated, and not always high quality.</p> <p>The Department also relies on external work, but external research does not always target the most pressing questions, and limited by incomplete access to data and internal discussions.</p> <p>Senior leaders often have limited awareness of OIS analytic capacity – what questions can and cannot be answered through available data.</p> <p>Based in the Office of Policy, OIS is uniquely positioned to take up certain important system-wide questions.</p>
<p><b>LINK TO MISSION PRIORITIES</b></p>	<p>Develop other immigration-related reports and conduct research.</p>

**5. Maintain a high-quality, motivated workforce and provide the environment to support them.**

*OIS should employ an elite cohort of highly skilled, highly motivated researchers and analysts who are engaged in the Office’s work and capable of fulfilling its mission.*

<p><b>LINES OF ACTION</b></p>	<p><b>Workforce development:</b> Provide ongoing training and development assessment and opportunities, including opportunities for cross-training.</p> <p><b>Equipment:</b> Provide appropriate software, hardware systems, and computing power to ensure workers’ ability to fulfill their responsibilities and to support creativity.</p> <p><b>Engagement:</b> Ensure that all personnel have opportunities to improve OIS products and processes, and that staff are engaged in research of interest to them.</p> <p><b>Personnel:</b> Eventually, as funds permit, rebuild OIS to its full capacity, to include a Communications Division and data integration team.</p>
<p><b>RELEVANCE</b></p>	<p>Engaged and productive employees are critical to OIS’ ability to fulfill its mission and meet the Department’s priorities.</p> <p>Capable, motivated employees produce high quality work and increase customer service and satisfaction.</p> <p>A high quality workplace increases the retention of qualified, talented staff; and engaged employees allow management time to work on strategic issues.</p> <p>Employees who are supported in their work are more likely to put in discretionary effort and ensure strong organizational performance.</p>
<p><b>LINK TO MISSION PRIORITIES</b></p>	<p>Lead the collection and dissemination of statistical information and analysis.</p> <p>Establish standards of reliability and validity for immigration statistics.</p> <p>Develop other immigration-related reports and conduct research.</p>

OIS confirms its commitment to government-wide data stewardship practices and sound statistical principles guidelines. Driving the core of this strategic plan is the adherence to any number of principles and practices. OIS cites two major sources for these: directives and memoranda from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency, Fifth Edition*.

### **Office of Management and Budget Statistical Standards**

Among its many responsibilities, OMB establishes standards for Federal statistical agencies. The initial government-wide requirement for developing data quality guidelines was established by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and focused on statistical information. This Act required OMB to "develop and oversee the implementation of Government wide policy, principle, and guidelines concerning statistical collection procedures and methods; statistical data classification; statistical information presentation and dissemination; timely release of statistical data; and such statistical data sources as may be required for the administration of federal programs." (44 U.S.C. 3504(e)(3))

OMB issued government-wide information quality guidelines under section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act of Fiscal Year 2001. The OMB section 515 guidelines were prepared to ensure and maximize the quality of information disseminated by federal agencies. As defined in the OMB guidance, quality information has the following characteristics:

- Utility, i.e., the usefulness of information to intended users,
- Objectivity in presentation and in substance, and
- Integrity, i.e., the protection of information from unauthorized access or revision.

The OMB guidelines direct each federal agency to issue their own Section 515 guidelines. DHS Management Directive 8200.1 establishes the DHS 515 guidelines. These guidelines apply to all statistical information that is disseminated by DHS agencies to the public on or after October 1, 2002. According to OMB, dissemination refers to any agency initiated or sponsored distribution of information to the public. Disseminated products include books, papers, maps, machine-readable materials, audiovisual productions, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristic that an agency disseminates to the public. Dissemination does not include:

- Information for which distribution is intended to be limited to government employees, agency contractors, or grantees.
- Information intended solely for the intra- or inter-agency use or sharing of government information, unless the receiving agency disseminates the information to the public.
- Responses to requests for agency records under the Freedom of Information Act, the Privacy Act, the Federal Advisory Committee Act or other similar law.
- Distribution intended to be limited to correspondence with individuals or persons, press releases, archival records, public filings, subpoenas, or adjudicative processes.
- Opinion offered by DHS staff in professional journals.

Between 2011 and 2014 OMB issued further memoranda which provided guidelines on openness and transparency of data, protecting privacy, using data to improve government decision making and performance, and using administrative data for statistical purposes. Those memoranda are:

- *M-11-02: Sharing Data While Protecting Privacy* – which in essence promotes identifying high value data and sharing methodologies, developing effective approaches for sharing data with other Federal entities, and ensuring the use of common data standards to promote interoperability across systems, all while being mindful of privacy concerns and being consistent with applicable laws and regulations;
- *M-13-13: Open Data Policy – Managing Information as an Asset* – which states four policy requirements:
  1. Collect or create information in a way that supports downstream information processing and dissemination activities;
  2. Build information systems to support interoperability and information accessibility;
  3. Strengthen data management and release practices; and
  4. Strengthen measures to ensure that privacy and confidentiality are fully protected and that data are properly secured;
- *M-13-17: Next Steps in the Evidence and Innovation Agenda* – which stresses the strategy of linking data across programs and levels of government while fully protecting privacy;
- *M-14-06: Guidance for Providing and Using Administrative Data for Statistical Purposes* – which states four policy requirements:
  1. Collaboration across Program Agencies and Statistical Agencies and Components;
  2. Data Stewardship Practices;
  3. Documentation on Data Quality; and
  4. The use of Interagency Agreements.
- *M-15-03: Department Support for Implementation of Statistical Policy Directive No. I: Fundamental Responsibilities of Federal Statistical Agencies and Recognized Statistical Units* – stressing adherence to four basic responsibilities of statistical reporting:
  1. Responsibility 1: Produce and disseminate relevant and timely information;
  2. Responsibility 2: Conduct credible and accurate statistical activities;
  3. Responsibility 3: Conduct objective statistical activities; and
  4. Responsibility 4: Protect the trust of information providers by ensuring the confidentiality and exclusive statistical use of their responses; and
- *M-15-15: Improving Statistical Activities through Interagency Collaboration* – stressing the viability of economies and sharing.

## **Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency**

The *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency, Fifth Edition* is published by the National Academies Press and represents the work of the committee on National Statistics of the National Research Council of the National Academies. In its introduction, the committee states:

Publicly available statistics from government agencies that are credible, relevant, accurate, and timely are essential for policy makers, individuals, households, businesses, academic institutions, and other organizations to make informed

decisions. Even more, the effective operation of a democratic system of government depends on the unhindered flow of statistical information to its citizens.

OIS strongly subscribes to that belief, and to the principles and practices outline by the committee as described below:

- Principles for a Federal Statistical Agency
  1. Relevance to Policy Issues - A statistical agency must provide information that is relevant to issues of public policy and useful to a broad range of public- and private-sector users as well as the general public.
  2. Credibility Among Data Users - Because few data users are in a position to verify the completeness and accuracy of statistical information, they must rely on an agency's reputation as a source of accurate and useful statistics that are free from political and other undue external influence.
  3. Trust Among Data Providers - Data providers, such as survey respondents and custodians of administrative records, must be able to trust that the information they provide to a statistical agency will be used only for the purposes that the agency has described.
  4. Independence from Political and Other Undue External Influence - To be credible and unhindered in its mission, a statistical agency must maintain a widely acknowledged position of independence from undue external influences.
- Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency
  1. A Clearly Defined and Well-Accepted Mission - An agency's mission should include responsibility for all elements of its programs for providing statistical information—determining sources of data, measurement methods, efficient methods of data collection and processing, and appropriate methods of analysis—and ensuring the public availability not only of the data, but also of documentation and explanation of the methods used to obtain and process the data and their quality.
  2. Necessary Authority to Protect Independence - Protection from political or other undue outside influence requires that a statistical agency have the necessary authority for professional decisions on the scope, content, and frequency of data compiled, analyzed, and disseminated within the limits of budgetary resources, departmental requirements, review by OMB, and congressional mandates.
  3. Continual Development of More Useful Data - Statistical agencies should continually look to improve their data systems to provide information that is accurate, timely, and relevant for changing public policy and data user needs.
  4. Openness about Sources and Limitations of the Data Provided - A statistical agency should be open about the strengths and limitations of its data, taking as much care to understand and explain how its statistics may fall short of accuracy as it does to produce accurate data.
  5. Wide Dissemination of Data – A statistical agency should strive continually for the widest possible dissemination of the data it compiles in formats that are widely accessible.
  6. Cooperation with Data Users - A statistical agency shows cooperation with data users by facilitating their access to and ability to use data through well-designed websites and

other dissemination vehicles, careful and complete documentation, and user training adapted to varying skills and needs.

7. Respect for the Privacy and Autonomy of Data Providers - To maintain a relationship of respect and trust with survey participants and other data providers, a statistical agency should respect their privacy and minimize the burden imposed on them.
8. Protection of the Confidentiality of Data Providers' Information - To earn the respect and trust of data subjects and other data providers, it is essential for a statistical agency to protect the confidentiality of the information it collects for statistical purposes.
9. Commitment to Quality and Professional Standards of Practice - A statistical agency should:
  - a. keep abreast of and use modern statistical theory and sound statistical practice in all technical work;
  - b. document concepts, definitions, data collection methodologies, and measures of uncertainty and discuss possible sources of error in reports and other data releases to the public;
  - c. develop strong staff expertise in the disciplines relevant to its mission, in the theory and practice of statistics, and in data collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination techniques;
  - d. develop an understanding of the validity and accuracy of its data and convey the resulting measures of quality to users in ways that are comprehensible to non-experts;
  - e. maintain quality assurance programs to improve data quality and to improve the processes of compiling, editing, and analyzing data; and
  - f. develop a strong and continuous relationship with appropriate professional organizations in the fields of statistics and relevant subject-matter areas.
10. An Active Research Program - A statistical agency should have a research program that is relevant to its activities. As a small agency may not be able to afford an appropriate research program, agencies should collaborate and share research results and methods.
11. Professional Advancement of Staff - A statistical agency should recruit, develop, and support professional staff committed to the highest standards of quality work, professional practice, and professional ethics.
12. A Strong Internal and External Evaluation Program - Statistical agencies should have regular, ongoing programs of evaluation for major statistical programs, program components and for their overall portfolio of programs.
13. Coordination and Collaboration with Other Statistical Agencies - A statistical agency should actively seek opportunities to collaborate with other statistical agencies to enhance the value of its own information and that of other agencies in the federal statistical system.