National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics

Survey Description

Federal Facilities Research and Development Survey

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Contents

Survey Overview (FY 2025 Survey Cycle)

Purpose

The Federal Facilities Research and Development (FFRD) Survey collects information on research and experimental development (R&D) expenditures and personnel for all federally owned and operated facilities in the United States. This survey is the unique source of federal performer-reported data on R&D expenditures and R&D personnel. In conjunction with performer-reported data for the remaining sectors of the economy, FFRD Survey data can be used to estimate total national R&D performance and other critical statistics that are increasingly important in the analysis of global R&D competitiveness.

Data collection authority

The information is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended, and the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010. The survey is sponsored by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the U.S. National Science Foundation. The disclosure review number is NCSES-DRN26-037.

Major changes to recent survey cycle

Changes to the FY 2025 cycle are listed below.

- Question 3 (types of costs) was adjusted to a new format and expanded to ask what types of expenses each reporting unit has and whether the expense was included in the Question 2 response.
- A new question (Question 4a) was created to determine if any FY 2025 R&D expenditures came from nonfederal sources (e.g., state or local governments, businesses, higher education institutions, nonprofit organizations, or foreign sources).
- FY 2024 Question 5 (source of funds) was reordered so that it became FY 2025 Question 4b. FY 2024 Question 4 (type of R&D) became FY 2025 Question 5.
- Instructions and definitions were clarified on questions 1, 2, 4b, 9, and 10. Reminders to cross check totals were added to questions 2, 4b, 5, 6, 8, and 10.

Key Survey Information

Frequency	Annual.
Initial survey year	FY 2022.
Reference period	The federal fiscal year ending in 2025. FY 2023 data were not collected in order to improve the timing of the data collection. Moving forward, there are no plans to skip future fiscal years.
Response unit	Establishment.
Sample or census	Census.
Population size	The population consists of 443 research-performing federal facilities within 36 federal agencies.
Sample size	Not applicable; the survey is a census of all known eligible federal facilities that conduct R&D.
Key variables	Key variables of interest are listed below. • Total R&D expenditures (for DOD facilities: Budget Activities 1–6, Budget Activities 7–8, and total research, development, testing, and evaluation [RDT&E]) • R&D expenditures by type of costs (onsite contractors, all other internal expenditures, total internal expenditures, external expenditures, and total expenditures) • R&D expenditures by type of R&D (basic research, applied research, and experimental development) • R&D expenditures by source of funds (federal government, state and local government, business, nonprofits, and other) • Federally funded R&D expenditures by funding agency • Funding provided through public-private partnerships (yes or no) • R&D expenditures by field of R&D • Total headcounts of facility R&D personnel by job category (federal employees and military personnel, contract employees, and all other personnel) and function (researchers, technicians, and support staff) • Full-time equivalent counts of federal R&D personnel by function

Survey Design

Target population

The population for the FY 2025 FFRD Survey consisted of federally owned and operated facilities in the United States that performed R&D in FY 2025, excluding facilities of the Central Intelligence Agency (due to the classified nature of their work). Federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs) are surveyed separately in the FFRDC R&D Survey, and University Affiliated Research Centers (federally funded but not federally owned or operated) are surveyed as part of the Higher Education Research and Development Survey.

Sampling frame

The facilities for the FFRD Survey were originally identified from the list of federal agencies with R&D obligations based on the Survey of Federal Funds for R&D and the Federal Laboratory Consortium list of laboratories. A facility is defined as a unit within the agency that is responsible for performing R&D, generally with its own distinct budget and leadership. Since each agency has a different organizational structure, the reporting unit may be a division, branch, center, laboratory, or other entity and may span multiple locations or facilities. For FY 2025, the frame was updated by (1) reviewing records ineligible during the FY 2024 survey and determining which should remain ineligible and which should be included in the FY 2025 survey, (2) adding records having federal R&D obligations as reported in the Survey of Federal Funds for R&D, and (3) adding, removing, and adjusting reporting units based on communications with agency contacts. The total number of reporting units for the FY 2025 FFRD Survey is 289, which represents the 443 research-performing federal facilities.

Sample design

Not applicable.

Data Collection and Processing

Data collection

The FY 2025 survey was conducted by ICF under contract to NCSES. Surveys were distributed to designated reporting units. The data collection period was from January 2026 through April 2026. Respondents submitted their data using a questionnaire downloaded from the Web or sent via email (i.e., PDF or Excel format) or via a Web-based data collection system. Telephone and email were used for follow-up contacts with respondents.

Data processing

Completed questionnaires were carefully examined by survey staff upon receipt. Reviews focused on unexplained missing data, expenditures that significantly differed from the FY 2024 FFRD Survey, expenditures that significantly differed from the Survey of Federal Funds for R&D intramural obligations, and other data anomalies. If additional explanations or data revisions were needed, respondents were sent personalized email messages asking them to provide any necessary revisions before the final processing and tabulation of data.

Estimation techniques

The FY 2025 FFRD Survey imputation process used a combination of multiple imputation models and deterministic proportional allocation for item totals and item details, respectively. Auxiliary information from the FY 2024 FFRD Survey was used in modeling and calculation of proportions where appropriate.

Survey Quality Measures

Sampling error

Because the FY 2025 survey was distributed to all eligible agencies performing R&D, there was no sampling error.

Coverage error

Under the total survey error framework, coverage error describes the difference between reporting units and units in the target population that the frame was developed to reach. The agencies included in the sampling frame are those reporting nonzero intramural R&D obligations on the Survey of Federal Funds for R&D. It is highly unlikely that an agency would be performing R&D but not receiving any R&D obligations; therefore, coverage error should be close to zero.

Nonresponse error

Of the 289 eligible reporting units, 277 responded for a response rate of 95.8%. For unit nonresponse, multiple follow-ups were conducted with nonresponding facilities, and multiple contact and data collection modes were used (i.e., phone and email) to mitigate nonresponse error. Missing data for nonresponding reporting units were imputed using prediction models to reduce potential nonresponse bias.

Measurement error

The largest risk of measurement error is likely respondents' interpretation of the definition of R&D activities and variations in record-keeping procedures used by respondents to answer the survey questions. In order to reduce measurement error, the FFRD Survey contained various ways for respondents to explain their survey responses.

Data Availability and Comparability

Data availability

Data are available at https://ncses.nsf.gov/surveys/federal-facilities-research-development/.

Data comparability

Annual data are available for FY 2022 and FY 2024. FY 2023 data were not collected in an effort to improve the timing of the data collection. Moving forward, there are no plans to skip fiscal years.

In some cases, the review for consistency between the FY 2025 submission and the submission for FY 2024 revealed significant differences due to facilities' reappraisal of their classification of various aspects of R&D programs. In those instances, NCSES requested that facilities revise prior year data to maintain consistency and comparability.

For trend comparisons, use the historical data from only the most recent publication, which incorporates changes facilities have made in prior year data to reflect corrections. Do not use data published earlier.

Data Products

Publications

Data from the FFRD Survey is published in analytic reports and data tables available at https://ncses.nsf.gov/surveys/federal-facilities-research-development/. Data from the FFRD Survey are used in the annual *National Patterns of R&D Resources* report and the congressionally mandated *Science and Engineering Indicators* report series.

Electronic access

Public use files beginning with FY 2024 are forthcoming at the NCSES Microdata page.