



InfoBrief

R&D Performance within Department of Defense Facilities Increased 16% while R&D within Civilian Federal Facilities Decreased 14% in FY 2025

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In FY 2025, federal agencies' expenditures for research and experimental development (R&D) performed within federally owned and federally operated facilities totaled \$52.9 billion, an increase of 7% in current dollars from \$49.4 billion in FY 2024 (table 1).¹ These data include annual expenditures for R&D performed within federal facilities, which includes work performed by federal employees, military personnel, and onsite contractors.² Note that this survey does not include the 41 designated federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs), which are surveyed separately.³

Table 1. Federal facility expenditures for R&D performed, by department or agency: FY 2024–25

(Millions of dollars)

Department or agency	FY 2024	FY 2025	Percent change
All departments and agencies	49,373	52,868	7.1
Department of Defense agencies	35,041	40,580	15.8
Department of the Air Force	18,204	23,855	31.0
Space Force	2,371	2,546	7.4
Department of the Army	5,107	5,167	1.2
Department of the Navy	7,513	7,381	-1.8
All other defense agencies	4,217	4,176	-1.0
Civilian agencies	14,332	12,288	-14.3
Department of Agriculture	1,249	1,188	-4.8
Department of Commerce	1,679	1,605	-4.4
Department of Energy	49 i	63 i	28.9
Department of Health and Human Services	4,819	3,816	-20.8
Department of Homeland Security	22	10	-52.9
Department of the Interior	396	389	-1.7
Department of Transportation	134	89	-33.5
Department of Veterans Affairs	1,764	2,188	24.1
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	3,719	2,493	-33.0
All other	503	446	-11.3

i = more than 50% of the estimate is imputed.

Note(s):

For a list of all departments, agencies, and underlying facilities included in the survey, see technical table A-1. Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Source(s):

National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Federal Facilities Research and Development Survey.

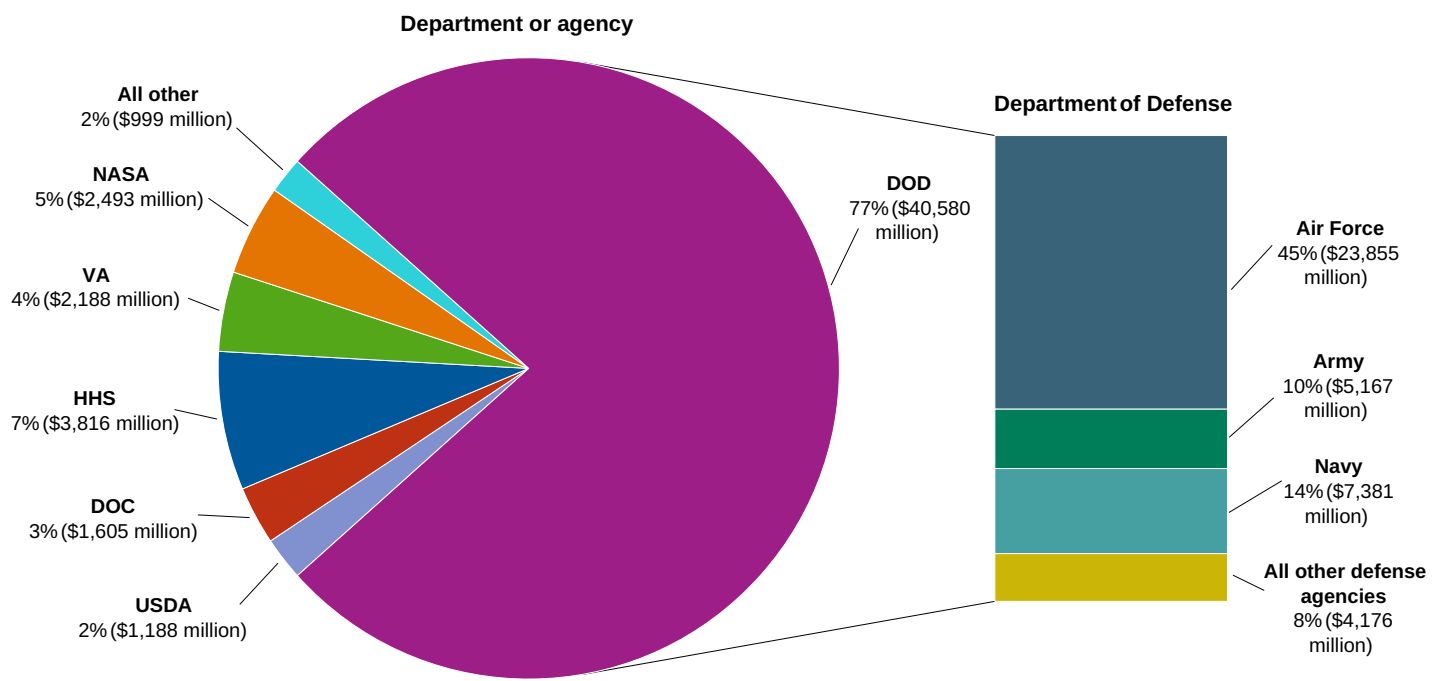
The year-to-year increase in federal R&D performance is buoyed by a substantial increase in the Department of Defense (DOD) R&D compared to the non-DOD, or civilian, agencies’ R&D. For example, DOD expenditures for R&D performance within its own facilities increased 16%; from \$35.0 billion in FY 2024 to \$40.6 billion in FY 2025. During the same period, the sum of all civilian agencies’ R&D performance declined 14% from \$14.3 billion to \$12.3 billion, driven primarily by a \$1 billion decline in R&D expenditures at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and a \$1.2 billion decline at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). This InfoBrief provides additional details and context regarding the federal government’s R&D performance for FY 2025.

Data are from the latest cycle of the Federal Facilities Research and Development Survey (Federal Facilities Survey), sponsored by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the U.S. National Science Foundation.

Federal Facility Expenditures for R&D Performance

The federal government sector’s performance of R&D is highly concentrated among a handful of departments and agencies. DOD alone accounted for 77% of all federal R&D performance in FY 2025 (figure 1).⁴ Within DOD, the Air Force accounted for 45% of all federal R&D performance, and Army and Navy contributed 10% and 14%, respectively, all of which are larger shares of federal R&D performance than any single civilian department. HHS and NASA, the leading civilian agencies with federal facility R&D performance, accounted for 7% and 5%, respectively, of the federal total.

Figure 1. Total federal facility expenditures for R&D performed by the facility, by department or agency: FY 2025



DOC = Department of Commerce; DOD = Department of Defense; HHS = Department of Health and Human Services; NASA = National Aeronautics and Space Administration; USDA = Department of Agriculture; VA = Department of Veterans Affairs.

Note(s):
Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

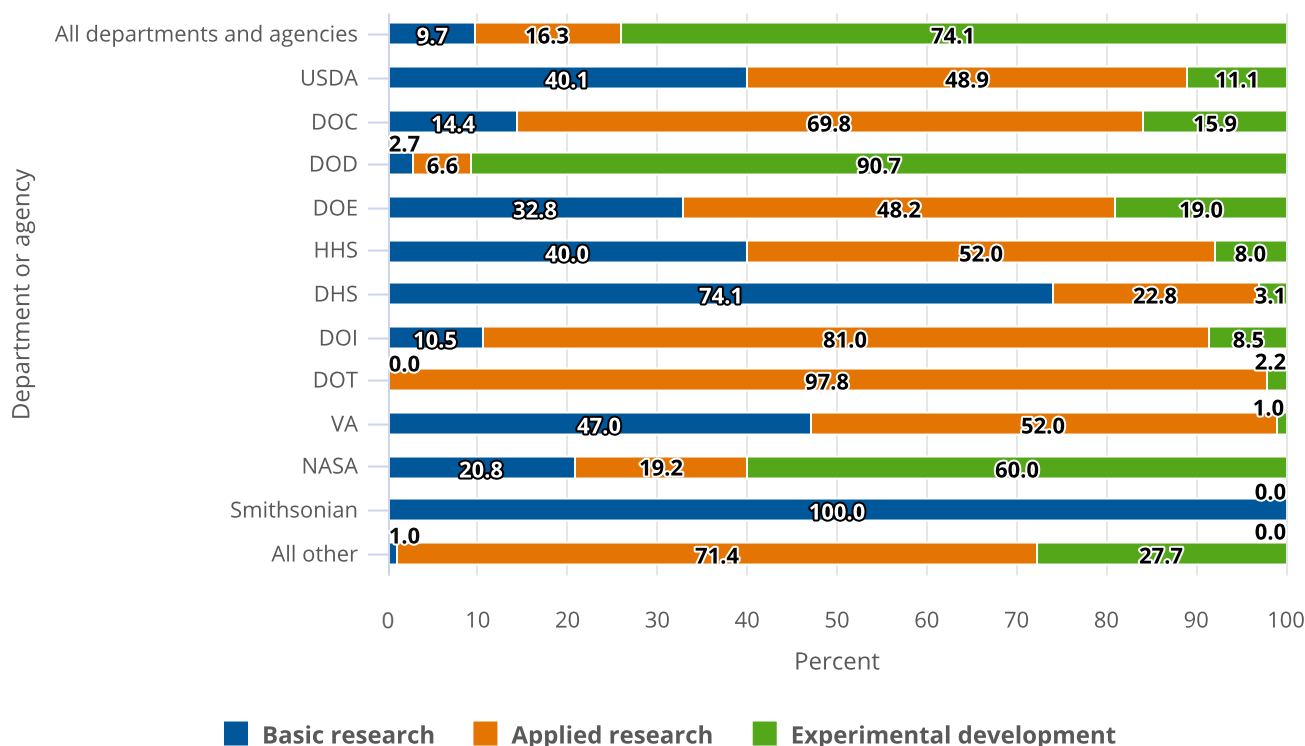
Source(s):
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Federal Facilities Research and Development Survey, FY 2025.

Since DOD expenditures for R&D performance are a substantial component of the federal portfolio, its increase of 16% has a significant effect on total federal R&D expenditures from FY 2024 to FY 2025. DOD's increase is consistent with changes in DOD's budget authority for research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) programs from FY 2022 to FY 2023, which can take 1 to 3 years, or more, to make it from appropriation to expenditure.⁵ Although R&D is a subset of DOD's total RDT&E funding, there are similarities in the trends between the budget authority for RDT&E and expenditures for R&D. For example, DOD's budget authority for RDT&E funding increased 18% from FY 2022 to FY 2023.⁶ DOD also had a 17% increase in RDT&E expenditures from \$73.4 billion in FY 2024 to \$85.9 billion in FY 2025.⁷ The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has also noted the purposes of the increases in DOD's RDT&E account are to shift funding toward weapons systems for more conventional warfare.⁸

Type of R&D

Across all federal facilities, most of the expenditures for R&D performed within the facilities was for experimental development (74%, or \$39.2 billion) (figure 2).^{9,10} Another 16% (\$8.6 billion) was categorized as applied research, and nearly 10% (\$5.1 billion) was for basic research.

Figure 2. Federal facility expenditures for R&D performed by the facility, by agency and type of R&D: FY 2025



DHS = Department of Homeland Security; DOC = Department of Commerce; DOD = Department of Defense; DOE = Department of Energy; DOI = Department of the Interior; DOT = Department of Transportation; HHS = Department of Health and Human Services; NASA = National Aeronautics and Space Administration; USDA = Department of Agriculture; VA = Department of Veterans Affairs.

Note(s):

Detail may not add to total due to rounding. DOE totals are imputed due to nonresponse.

Source(s):

National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Federal Facilities Research and Development Survey, FY 2025.

This distribution of type of R&D activities varies considerably by agency. Just as DOD accounts for a large portion of the federal total for R&D performance, in FY 2025 DOD accounted for 94% (\$36.8 billion of \$39.2 billion) of all experimental development.¹¹ The majority of the remaining civilian agencies reported most of their expenditures as applied research. Only two agencies reported basic research as their largest category: the Department of Homeland Security (74%, or \$7.6 million of their \$10.3 million total) and the Smithsonian with 100% of its \$169 million as basic research.

Fields of R&D

The R&D performed within federal facilities spans all of the major fields of R&D. In FY 2025, engineering alone accounted for nearly 52% (\$27.3 billion) of all federal R&D performance (table 2).¹² Biological, biomedical, and health sciences accounted for 13% (\$6.9 billion). Within DOD facilities, most of the R&D was for engineering (63%, or \$25.6 billion), and all other fields, meaning not classified in one of the listed fields, accounted for 26%, or \$10.7 billion. Within civilian agency facilities, biological, biomedical, and health sciences R&D accounted for the largest share at 49% or \$6.0 billion. Engineering was the second largest field of R&D performed by civilian agency facilities, accounting for 14% or \$1.7 billion of their total R&D expenditures.

Table 2. Federal facility expenditures for R&D performed by the facility, by R&D field and type of facility: FY 2025

(Millions of dollars)

R&D field	All facilities	DOD facilities	Civilian agency facilities
All R&D expenditures	52,868	40,580	12,288
Agricultural sciences and natural resources and conservation	1,371	63	1,308
Biological, biomedical, and health sciences	6,866	862	6,004
Computer and information sciences	1,837	1,469	368
Geosciences, atmospheric sciences, and ocean sciences	1,334	95	1,239
Mathematics and statistics	152	113	39
Physical sciences	2,523	1,522	1,001
Psychology	38	36	2
Social sciences	470	49	421
Engineering	27,316	25,623	1,693
All other fields	10,960	i 10,748	i 212

i = more than 50% of the estimate is imputed.

DOD = Department of Defense.

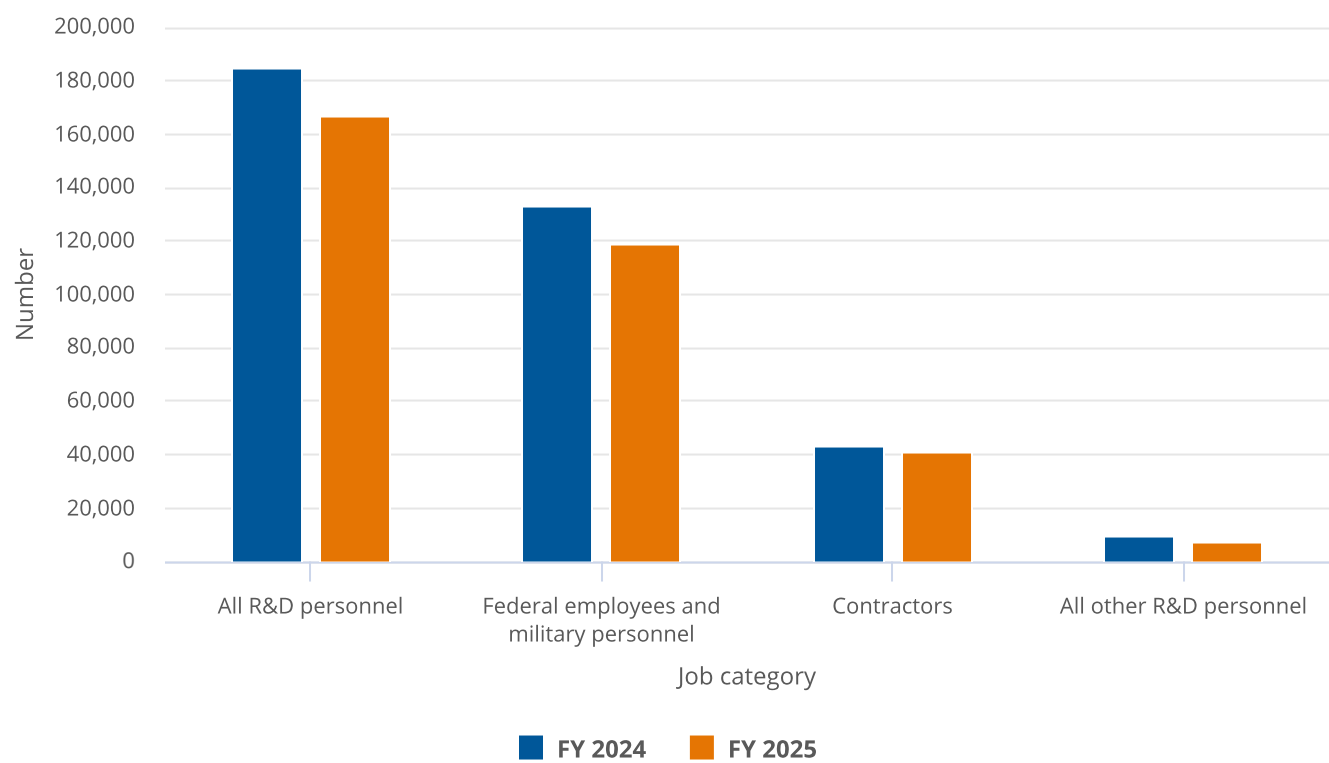
Note(s):
Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Source(s):
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Federal Facilities Research and Development Survey, FY 2025.

FY 2025 R&D Personnel

A total of 166,539 personnel were reported or estimated as working on R&D within federal facilities in FY 2025, a decline of 10% from the 184,899 personnel reported or estimated in FY 2024 (figure 3). Of the 166,539 R&D personnel in FY 2025, 71% or 119,034 were federal employees or military personnel.

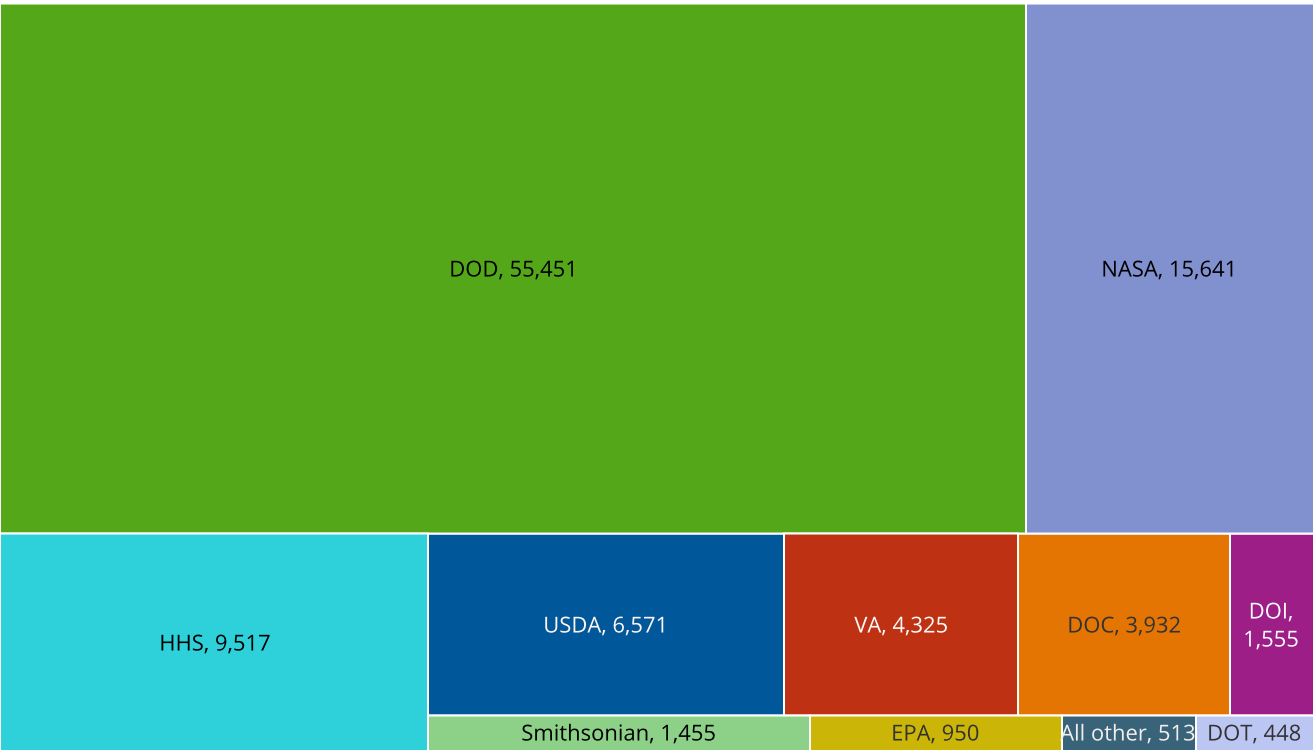
Figure 3. Federal facility R&D personnel headcount, by job category: FYs 2024–25



Source(s):
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Federal Facilities Research and Development Survey.

When total R&D personnel headcounts of federal employees are converted to full-time equivalents (FTEs), the total FTE of federal employees and military personnel working on R&D was 100,358 in FY 2025.¹³ DOD still leads all federal R&D facility FTEs, accounting for 55% of the federal FTE total (figure 4). NASA is the second leading agency, accounting for 16%. HHS and the Department of Agriculture accounted for 9% and 7%, respectively, of total R&D facility FTEs in FY 2025.

Figure 4. Federal facility R&D federal personnel FTEs, by department or agency: FY 2025



DOC = Department of Commerce; DOD = Department of Defense; DOI = Department of the Interior; DOT = Department of Transportation; EPA = Environmental Protection Agency; FTE = full-time equivalent; HHS = Department of Health and Human Services; NASA = National Aeronautics and Space Administration; USDA = Department of Agriculture; VA = Department of Veterans Affairs.

Note(s):
Detail may not add to total due to rounding. More than 50% of the estimate is imputed for NASA, Smithsonian, and all other.

Source(s):
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Federal Facilities Research and Development Survey, FY 2025.

Data Sources, Limitations, and Availability

Detailed tables showing these data by reporting facility are available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/surveys/federal-facilities-research-development/2025>.

The survey was conducted from January 2026 through April 2026 as a census of the population of federally owned and operated facilities in the United States that performed R&D in FY 2025. The overall response rate was 96%. Imputation was performed to account for nonresponding facilities. The survey collected information on R&D expenditures by type of cost, type of R&D, source of funding, and field, as well as information on counts of R&D personnel.

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. Because each agency has a different organizational structure, this unit of measurement may be a division, branch, center, laboratory, or other entity and may span multiple locations. Because of this, the total number of reporting units for the FY 2025 Federal Facilities Survey is 289, which represents the 443 research-performing federal facilities.

The fiscal year referred to throughout this report is the federal fiscal year (1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025). Data tables and detailed technical information are available at the [FY 2025 Federal Facilities Survey](#) page. For more information, please contact NCSES.

NCSES has reviewed this product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and approved its release (NCSES-DRN26-037).

Notes

1 All amounts in this report are shown in current dollars.

2 While the Federal Facilities Survey data are collected as outlays, which are defined as the actual disbursement of cash, checks, and electronic transfers to execute previous obligations, the terms *outlays* and *expenditures* are used interchangeably in this report. A related measure, federal obligations for federally performed research, is reported in *Federal Funds for Research and Development: Fiscal Years 2024–25*: table 8. While similar, there are key differences between outlays and obligations. First, the funding obligated to federally performed research in a fiscal year is not necessarily the same as the expenditures in that fiscal year within all agencies. Obligations reflect the amount committed to R&D projects in that year, which could be spent over several subsequent years; outlays reflect only the funds spent on R&D conducted that year. Second, the Survey of Federal Funds for R&D collects obligations by type of recipient (federal, business, nonprofit, higher education, etc.). Any obligations for work under contract at a federal facility would be reported under federal obligations to businesses in the Survey of Federal Funds for R&D, but on the Federal Facilities Survey, they are considered part of the total of the R&D performed at federal facilities. Finally, the federally performed total by agency in the Survey of Federal Funds for R&D includes transfers to other agencies as well as administration costs for external R&D contracts. On the Federal Facilities Survey, transfers would be reported by the receiving agency for the year in which the funds were expended, and only costs related to R&D performance within the federal facility are reported.

3 University-administered FFRDCs were included in the R&D data collection of higher education institutions since FY 1953, and the full population of FFRDCs was added to the standalone FFRDC R&D Survey in FY 2001. FFRDC R&D data can be found at: <https://nces.nsf.gov/surveys/ffrdc-research-development/>.

4 Although year-to-year trend data are presented in this report to the tenth place, data presented as a percentage share are rounded to whole-percents.

5 Budget authority is the primary source of legal authorization to enter into obligations that will result in future outlays. Outlays, also referred to as expenditures, are disbursement of cash, checks, and electronic transfers to execute previous obligations.

6 For more data on DOD RDT&E budget authority, see *Federal R&D Funding, by Budget Function: Fiscal Years 2022–24*: table 6.

7 For more data on DOD RDT&E expenditures, see the [full set of data tables](#): table 2.

8 Congressional Budget Office. 2023. *Long-Term Implications of the 2024 Future Years Defense Program*, p. 19. Available at <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2023-10/59511-FYDP.pdf>.

9 See the [Technical Notes to the FY 2025 data tables](#) for the definitions of basic research, applied research, and experimental development that were provided to survey respondents.

10 For more details on federal R&D performance by type of R&D, see the [full set of data tables](#): table 8.

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12 Engineering encompasses a wide array of work in subfields such as aerospace, biomedical, chemical, civil, environmental, electrical, computer, industrial, systems, mechanical, materials, and geological engineering.

13 For more details on federal R&D personnel by full-time equivalents, see the [full set of data tables](#): table 13 and table 15.

Suggested Citation

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