

How can autonomy and accountability be achieved in a rapidly changing society?

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Strengthening the Autonomy of the Federal Statistical Agencies
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Data users want autonomous statistical agencies

- ▶ Interference undermines analyses based on the data.
 - ▷ Citro: Agencies have remarkably little legislative protection against undue external influence.
 - ▷ Potok: No consequences if a cabinet secretary or agency head ignores directives when supported by the White House.
 - ▷ Jarmin: The threats to the autonomy of the 2020 Census are well documented.
- ▶ But data users also want agencies to be responsive to their needs.
 - ▷ i.e. they want a say in how data are collected and prepared.
- ▶ How can statistical agencies be both autonomous and accountable to stakeholders?

Historically agencies were short-term autonomous and long-term accountable

- ▶ Short-term autonomy reduced the incentive to interfere with statistical agencies for political gain.
- ▶ Long-term accountability aligned decisions with the interests of stakeholders.
- ▶ But in our rapidly changing society, once long-term decisions are increasingly made or adjusted in the short term—increasing the risk of politicization.

How can autonomy and accountability be achieved in a rapidly changing society?

- ▶ Select Panel Recommendations
 - ▷ Jarmin: protect professionalism of career staff
 - ▷ Potok: strengthen the role of the Chief Statistician
 - ▷ Citro: codify autonomy based on the findings of a blue-ribbon panel
 - ▷ Citro + Potok: collect and report regularly on agreed upon metrics

- ▶ Panel Questions
 - ▷ Can depoliticization be legislated?
 - ▶ Behavior can be regulated—but can you mandate dispassionate decision-making?

 - ▷ Can autonomy and accountability be measured and communicated in real time?
 - ▶ If so, how and by whom?