

Insight for Informed Decisions





SOCIAL SCIENCE
RESEARCH

Dedicated to the public interest for 70 years, NORC has helped a wide range of clients identify and address society's most urgent challenges.

Understanding our society—and taking action on the issues that confront it—requires insight gained through objective, high-quality social science research. That’s why decision makers and policy leaders turn to NORC at the University of Chicago, an independent research organization known for excellence, innovation, and effective collaboration. Working with NORC experts, clients obtain the data and analysis needed to drive evidence-based decisions and address society’s most urgent challenges.

A Tradition of Excellence

As one of the oldest not-for-profit, academic research organizations in the United States, and through its affiliation with the University of Chicago, NORC maintains the highest standards of professional excellence and scientific rigor, and is committed to broad dissemination of its findings.

A Passion for Innovation

NORC’s subject matter experts, researchers, and survey professionals develop and employ innovative study designs, research methods, and technical applications to derive meaningful and accurate results.

A Commitment to Collegiality

NORC cultivates an interdisciplinary culture of achievement in which senior investigators from diverse fields and professional backgrounds collaborate with the next generation of researchers in an open, collegial environment.

A Long and Rich History, an Exciting Future

Founded in 1941, NORC has helped establish and continues to strengthen the rapidly evolving field of social science research. Numerous data collection and analytical tools that now set the industry standard were pioneered at NORC. Since its early years—when wartime opinion polling first brought the organization to prominence—NORC has enriched public policy debate and decision making by gathering and distilling critical information and contributing to the creation of entirely new bodies of knowledge. Committed to serving the public good, NORC’s work continues to inform decision makers and provides the foundation for effective solutions.

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NORC Research Departments and Centers

Advanced Expertise

NORC's research expertise grows out of its long history of working with government agencies, academic institutions, foundations, and a wide range of other organizations throughout the world. Its staff includes rigorously trained and widely published leaders from a diverse array of fields such as health, education, economics, security, mental health, criminal justice, the environment, international development, and more. These experts are organized into substantive research departments and centers that collaborate with NORC's statistics, technology, and operations groups to deliver core capabilities to clients. NORC's work is further enhanced by its strong collaborative relationships with prominent experts, senior government officials, leading scholars, and media organizations. Of note, the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research contributes to data-driven journalism. NORC also maintains a large and flexible field staff and call center to support a variety of long-term and quick-response national and international projects.

Core Capabilities

Survey Research

Study Design and Survey Methodology

Critical activities take place at the earliest stages of a research project, including identifying issues of interest, formulating research questions, investigating prior research, and selecting methods and approaches. To undertake these activities, NORC relies on the knowledge and experience of its highly skilled staff members and of faculty scholars at the University of Chicago.

Statistical Design and Analysis

NORC statisticians and methodologists have pioneered innovations in all aspects of survey research, from understanding cognitive processes underlying respondents' reaction to surveys to advanced techniques for analyzing and interpreting survey data. NORC's Statistics and Methodology department builds the methodological infrastructure that underlies all major NORC studies.

Institutional Review Board

NORC operates its own Institutional Review Board (IRB), which follows a formal process for examining all U.S. and international research projects to assure human subjects are protected and to minimize respondent burden. In addition, NORC's IRB has obtained a Federalwide Assurance (FWA), demonstrating its compliance with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations, and is registered with the Federal Office for Human Research Protections.

Survey Data Collection

NORC is an innovator in survey design and operations, adept at data collection across multiple modes—landline, cell phone, paper, the web, and in-person interviews, as well as from secondary data sources. NORC is particularly skilled at helping

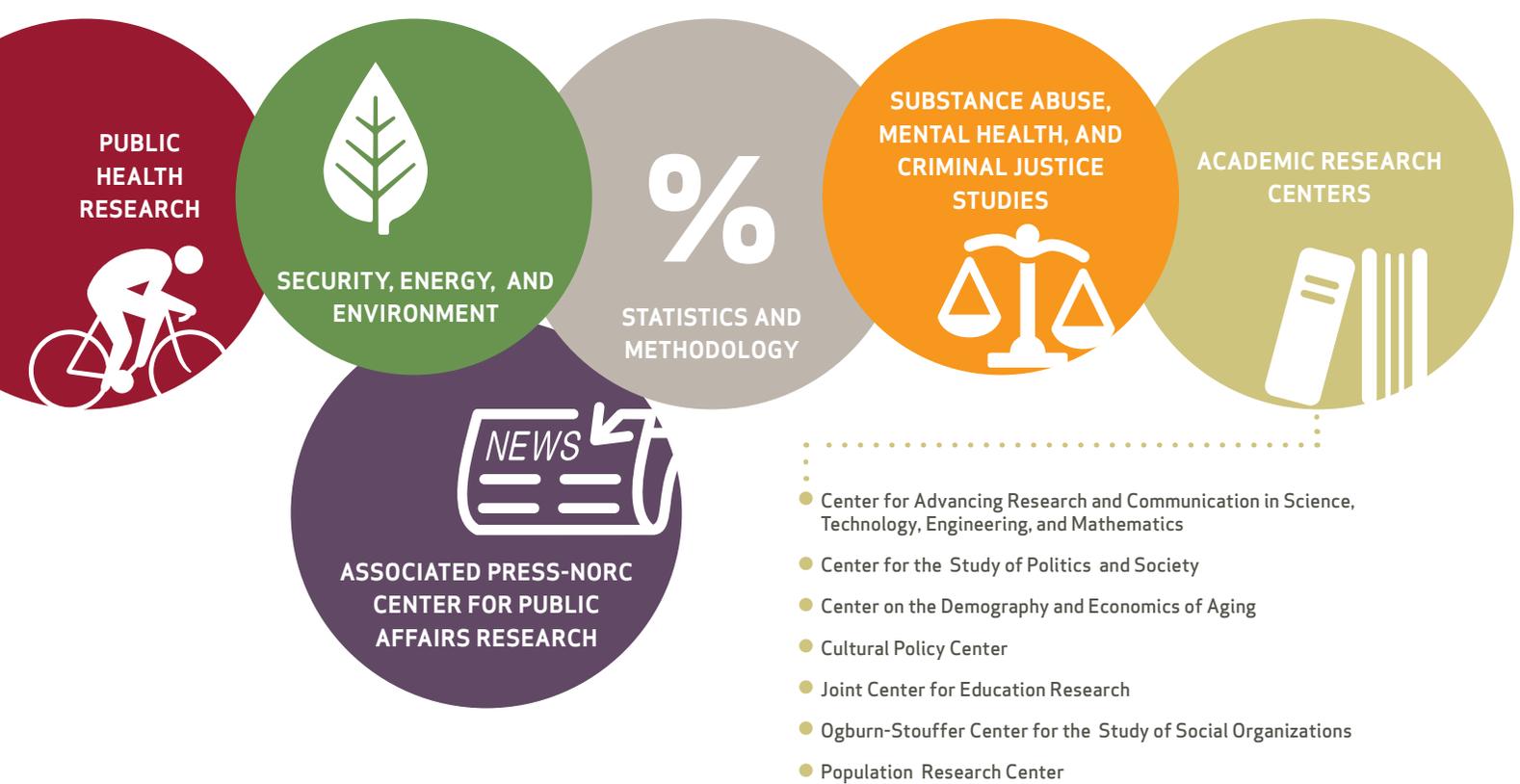
clients evaluate the trade-offs among various survey modes and at identifying the optimal approach to data collection. NORC excels at obtaining high-quality data and high response rates from hard-to-reach populations as well as at collecting longitudinal data. Our respectful approach to respondents of longitudinal surveys has yielded high retention rates for projects of more than 30 years in duration.

Biomeasure and Environmental Data Collection

NORC has broad capacity in collecting non-interview data, including medical records and academic transcripts, creating observational protocols, and gathering biological samples, or biomesures, and environmental samples. Biomeasure collection experience includes anthropometrics, sensory function, biological samples, and measures of physical function. In addition to using field workers to collect biomesures, NORC also works with lab examiners and medical centers.

Information Technology

NORC offers a full range of information technology, data collection, and analytic capabilities delivered in an integrated manner. A dedicated Project Management Office, including many Project Management Institute certified project managers, coordinates all the tasks required to deliver IT support. NORC's robust IT infrastructure includes a private high-speed WAN, secure remote access systems, secure Internet, a fully automated and distributed high-capacity telephone survey center, and data centers equipped with high-performance servers and large-capacity storage units.



Program and Policy Analysis

Evaluation and Performance Management

Evaluating programs requires knowledge of both analytic techniques and the complex policy and regulatory framework in which federal programs operate. Our team is experienced in both areas. NORC statisticians and researchers regularly undertake evaluations of social and economic programs and policies using a wide range of methods, including randomized experiments and quasi-experimental designs.

Program Monitoring

NORC collaborates with federal agencies and nonprofit organizations to develop performance metrics and measurement collection systems to monitor funded program activities. Many of these systems involve ongoing collection and analysis of program- and project-level data. The high-quality, unbiased information gathered from these activities helps determine whether and to what degree programs contribute to the grant's overall goals.

Policy Analysis and Recommendations

NORC researchers and analysts engage in all aspects of public policy research and analysis. This work frequently is complemented by quantitative analysis, cost-benefit analysis, market assessments, and other techniques. NORC is skilled at translating the results of these analyses into meaningful information for a full spectrum of stakeholders.

Qualitative Methods

NORC collects qualitative data using techniques that include structured interviews, focus groups, case studies, site visits, and convening expert panels and stakeholders. In all cases, NORC works closely with clients to ensure the collected information meets their needs.

Dissemination and Knowledge Management

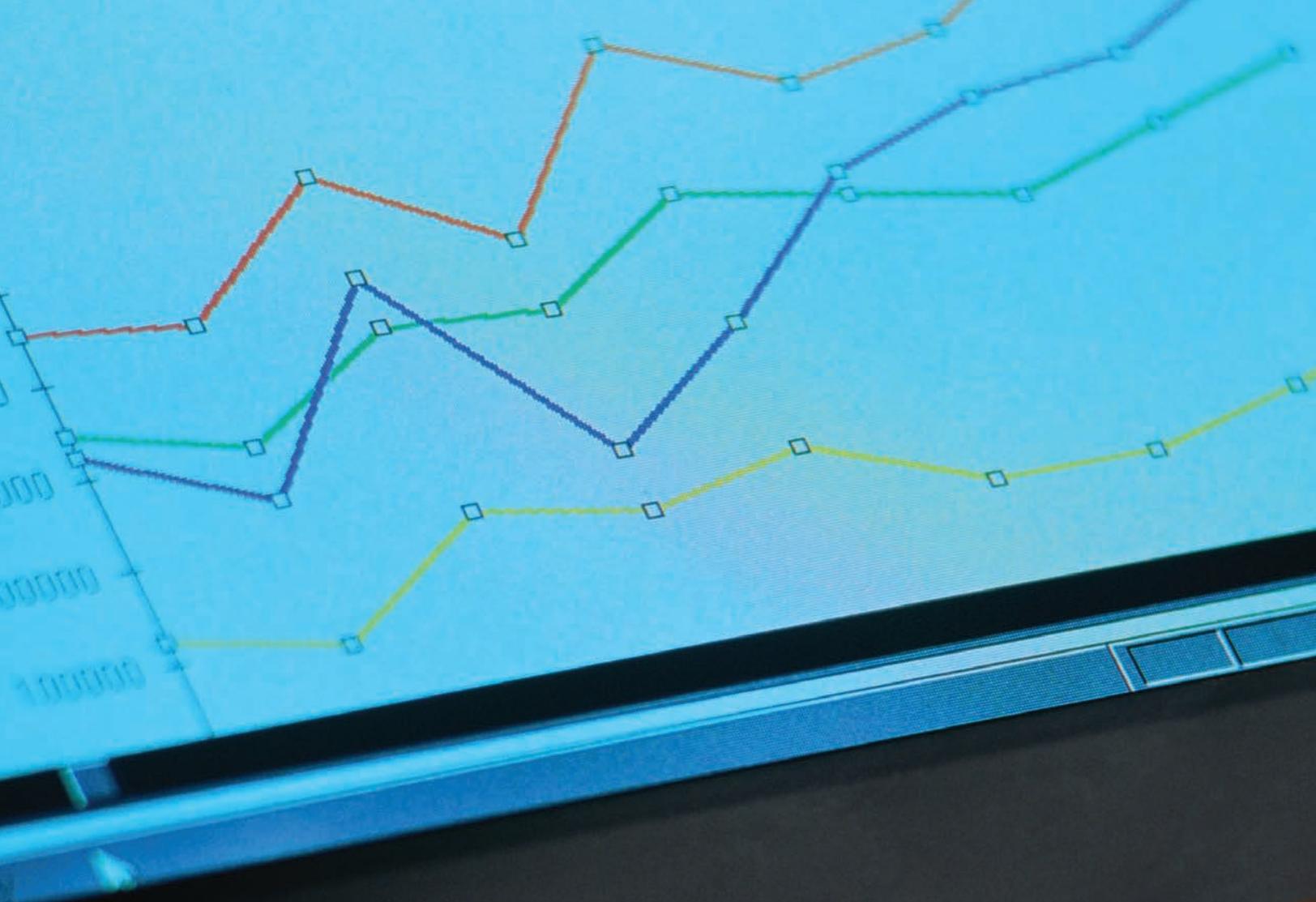
Preparing and delivering data both for research and to inform policy is central to NORC's identity. NORC staff has developed cutting-edge methods to ensure the confidentiality of survey participants, the first step in releasing data for public use. NORC also has been engaged in making data available to new constituencies through web technologies and applications.

Technical Assistance

NORC is frequently asked to provide technical assistance (TA), often to grantees of government- or foundation-sponsored programs. NORC staff includes experts on program administration, social science and evaluative research, IT implementation, and data management, and routinely contracts with consultants and stakeholders with expertise in a wide range of areas. NORC delivers TA over the telephone and through major conferences for grantees of government programs.

NORC Data Enclave

NORC is a leader in the development and management of data in a protected environment. The NORC Data Enclave is a tool that allows the sharing, among a closed community of researchers, of datasets that are too sensitive to share broadly. The NORC Data Enclave archives, curates, and indexes the data; provides researchers remote and onsite secure access to the data; and statistically protects confidential information.



With its innovative methods and tools, flexible and collaborative approach, and tradition of excellence, NORC provides clients of all types and sizes with highly accurate, objective results and actionable insights.

Benefits for a Broad Range of Clients

Drawing on its portfolio of capabilities, NORC has helped a broad range of clients gain vital perspectives on the issues and problems they face, and make real progress on their agendas. Some representative clients include the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Education, the Energy Information Administration, the Federal Reserve Board, the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission, the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the Office of the National Coordinator, and TRICARE Management Activity.

Groundbreaking work includes the National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth, one of the most successful large-data resources in the social sciences; the National Immunization Survey, one of the largest telephone surveys in the U.S.; The Survey of Consumer Finances, which provides detailed information on the finances of U.S. families; and the General Social Survey, the most frequently analyzed source of social science data outside of the U.S. Census, which NORC has conducted since 1972.

NORC also provides research support to organizations such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Horatio Alger Association, Child Trends, the Commonwealth Fund, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the McCormick Foundation, the City of New York, the states of California and Illinois, the Urban Institute, the World Bank—and national governments in Ghana, Namibia, Honduras, Morocco, Spain, and the United Kingdom. At any given time, NORC is also conducting research studies led by academic investigators from more than a dozen universities and colleges.

Partner with NORC—and Unlock Vital Data

In addition to working with large and well-known organizations, NORC has created research models that help many small and mid-size businesses and organizations gain access to the data and insights that they need to make informed decisions and craft effective solutions. NORC employs an interdisciplinary, team-based approach and offers many ways for clients to collaborate with its experts on projects of varying degrees of complexity, scope, and budget. NORC can also lead, coordinate, or participate in collaborative research efforts.

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