



OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
1436 Duke Street • Alexandria, VA 22314
www.populationassociation.org • www.popcenters.org • 301-565-6710 x 1006



POPULATION ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

President

Dr. Lisa Berkman
Harvard University

Vice President

Dr. James Raymo
Princeton University

President-Elect

Dr. Jennifer Glass
University of Texas at Austin

Vice President-Elect

Dr. Susan L. Brown
Bowling Green State University

Secretary-Treasurer

Dr. Michelle Frisco
Pennsylvania State University

Past President

Dr. Sonalde Desai
University of Maryland

Board of Directors

Dr. Jennifer Barber
Indiana University

Dr. Jennie Brand

University of California, Los Angeles

Dr. Tyson Brown

Duke University

Dr. Elizabeth Cooksey

American Population Panel

Dr. Karen Benjamin Guzzo

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Dr. Sarah Hayford

The Ohio State University

Dr. Jennifer Karas Montez

Syracuse University

Dr. Emilio Parrado

University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Rogelio Saenz

University of Texas at San Antonio

Dr. Christine Schwartz

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Dr. Florencia Torche

Stanford University

Dr. Robert Warren

University of Minnesota

ASSOCIATION OF POPULATION CENTERS

President

Dr. Jennie Brand

University of California, Los Angeles

Vice President

Dr. William Dow

University of California, Berkeley

Treasurer

Dr. Jennifer Karas Montez

Syracuse University

Secretary

Dr. Elizabeth Gershoff

University of Texas at Austin

November 13, 2023

Submitted electronically to: [RFI \(nih.gov\)](https://nih.gov)

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the members of the Population Association of America (PAA) and Association of Population Centers (APC), we are pleased to respond to a request from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for public comments on the agency's revised mission statement.

As you may know, PAA and APC are two affiliated organizations that together represent over 3,000 social and behavioral scientists and the over 40 population research centers that receive federal funding and conduct research on the implications of population change. Our members, which include demographers, economists, sociologists, and epidemiologists, conduct scientific and applied research, analyze changing health, demographic, and socio-economic trends, develop policy and planning recommendations, and train undergraduate and graduate students. Their research expertise covers a wide range of issues, including adolescent health and development, aging, health disparities, immigration and migration, marriage and divorce, education, social networks, housing, retirement, and labor. NIH is the primary source of competitive, discretionary grant funding supporting the population sciences. As a result, PAA and APC monitor and often respond to proposed changes governing NIH extramural policy and research activities.

The NIH mission statement is used to inform and guide the NIH Institutes and Centers' (ICs) governing policies and operations. As stakeholder organizations, PAA and APC reference the NIH mission statement in communications with scientists, policymakers, and the general public. The current statement helps reinforce how NIH recognizes the behavioral and social sciences as part of the agency's overarching mission.

That being said, we do **not** believe the revised mission statement undermines NIH support for behavioral and social science research (BSR). In fact, we believe the term "optimize health" clarifies and reinforces NIH commitment to supporting research regarding the impact of developmental, life course events on outcomes, including functioning and longevity. Despite our understanding, PAA and APC urge NIH to clarify its understanding of the language's intent and to reassure the community that the proposed statement does not signal diminished NIH support for BSR.

Thank you for considering our views as you finalize the revised NIH mission statement.
Please do not hesitate to contact us if our organizations can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Dr. Lisa Berkman
2023 PAA President



Dr. Jennie Brand
2023-2024 APC President