



Highlights of [GAO-04-676T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Energy Policy, Natural Resources and Regulatory Affairs, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

### Why GAO Did This Study

The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) requires federal agencies to minimize the paperwork burden they impose on the public. The act also requires agencies to obtain approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) before collecting covered information. At the Subcommittee's request, GAO examined changes during the past fiscal year in federal agencies' paperwork burden estimates and their causes, focusing on the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). GAO also examined changes in the number of violations of the PRA.

### What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making any recommendations. However, because IRS accounts for most of the federal paperwork and therefore has a determining impact on the governmentwide burden-hour estimate, OMB could focus more of its burden reduction efforts on that agency. Also, OMB and the agencies could do more to reduce violations. For example, OMB could promote the use of "best practices" used in agencies with good compliance records.

## PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT

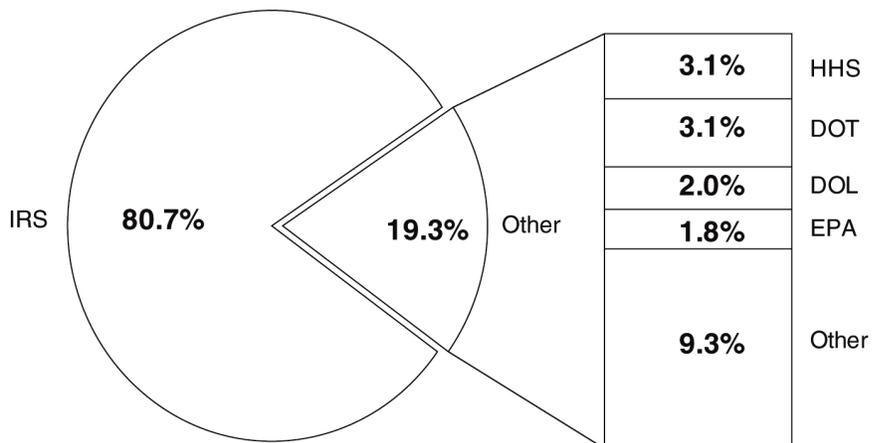
# Agencies' Paperwork Burden Estimates Due to Federal Actions Continue to Increase

### What GAO Found

As of September 30, 2003, federal agencies estimated that there was about 8.1 billion "burden hours" of paperwork governmentwide. While it may appear that the paperwork burden decreased by about 116 million burden hours from last year, it is important to note that most of the reduction was achieved through adjustments—actions occurring outside of the agencies' control or as a result of reestimates of current paperwork requirements—and not through agency-initiated actions. In fact, the total paperwork burden, exclusive of adjustments, actually increased by about 72 million burden hours. IRS alone accounted for about 6.5 billion burden hours (81 percent) of the governmentwide burden-hour estimate as well as for most of the burden-hour reduction attributable to adjustments.

OMB and the federal agencies identified 223 violations of the PRA that occurred during fiscal year 2003—a slight reduction in the number of violations that were reported last year, but still progress from fiscal year 1998, when there were over 850 violations. OMB continues to take several actions to address PRA violations since last year's hearing. Still, 223 violations of the law during a single year continue to be troubling and should not be tolerated. OMB and the agencies can do more to ensure that the PRA is not violated.

**IRS Accounted for Most of the Federal Paperwork Burden-Hour Estimate as of September 30, 2003**



Sources: OMB and the Department of the Treasury.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-676T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-676T).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Patricia A. Dalton at (202) 512-6806 or [daltonp@gao.gov](mailto:daltonp@gao.gov).