



# Department of Justice

## Office of Justice Programs



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### **THE NATION'S FEDERAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE CASELOAD GREW SUBSTANTIALLY DURING TEN-YEAR PERIOD**

WASHINGTON — The number of suspects and defendants processed in the federal criminal justice system grew substantially during the 10-year period of 1994 to 2003, the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. U.S. federal prosecutors investigated more than 130,000 suspects during 2003 (a new record), up from 99,000 men and women in 1994.

Immigration offenses drove the growing case load, BJS noted, increasing by an average annual 14 percent in immigration arrests and 25 percent in prison sentences for immigration convictions.

Drug offenses were the felonies most frequently disposed of in federal district courts during the decade. There were 20,219 such cases during 1994 (with a 86 percent conviction rate) and 28,597 cases in 2003 (with a 92 percent conviction rate). There were 3,673 felony weapons cases disposed of in 1994 (85 percent conviction rate) and 8,147 cases concluded during 2003 (90 percent conviction rate).

The number of weapons offenders in federal prison grew by an average annual 10 percent during the 1994-2003 period, and the number of federal drug law offenders in prison grew by an average annual 6 percent.

The number of non-citizens in the federal criminal justice system increased steadily from 1994 through 2003. The U.S. Marshals Service arrested and booked 131,064 suspects during 2003, of which 38 percent were non-citizens, compared to 27 percent in 1994.

A substantial share of the case load was born by federal officials in the southwest's five federal judicial districts (Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico and Southern and Western Texas.) The

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region processed 31 percent of all federal suspects arrested and booked during the 1994-2003 period, 19 percent of all investigated suspects, 23 percent of the cases filed in U.S. District Courts and 28 percent of offenders sentenced to federal prison.

During 2003 federal prisons released 40,780 inmates, who had served an average 33 months for all crimes, compared to an average of 25 months for those released during 1994.

The report, "Federal Criminal Justice Trends, 2003" (NCJ- 205331), is the first in a new series to track changes in the federal criminal justice system. It employed data from eight federal agencies to describe the enforcement of several thousand statutes in the U.S. Criminal Code. The report was written by BJS statistician Mark Motivans. Following publication, the report can be found at: [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/fcjt03.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/fcjt03.htm)

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics statistical reports programs, please visit the BJS website at: [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs).

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP is headed by an Assistant Attorney General and comprises five component bureaus and an office: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office for Victims of Crime, as well as the Community Capacity Development Office, which incorporates the Weed and Seed strategy and OJP's American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Desk. More information can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>.

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