



# Crime Data Brief

*Federal Offenses and Offenders*

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# Federal Firearms-Related Offenses

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From 1982 to 1992 the number of Federal defendants sentenced to prison with a weapons offense as their most serious crime increased 175%, from 1,000 to 2,755. However, even larger numbers of Federal offenders were involved with firearms. Considering all Federal sentences, firearms were involved in the crimes of 6,987 offenders, a sixth of those sentenced under guidelines in the 12 months ending September 30, 1993.

*Firearms involvement* of offenders convicted in a U.S. district court includes —

— defendants sentenced for a weapons offense, either as the most serious charge or as an offense accompanying a more serious crime, such as homicide or robbery

— defendants who received a more severe sentence for carrying or possessing a firearm at the time of their crime.

| Most serious conviction offense (excluding firearms offenses) | Percent of Federal offenders sentenced between October 1, 1992, and September 31, 1993, who had committed an offense involving weapons |                                 |  |
|---|--|---------------------------------|--|
|   | Total  | Convicted of a firearms offense | Sentence reflected presence of a firearm during conviction offense |
| Violent   | 47.6%  | 21.3%                           | 26.3%  |
| Property  | .8   | .4                              | .4   |
| Drug  | 13.5   | 7.9                             | 5.6  |
| Public-order  | 2.5  | 1.3                             | 1.2  |

Note: Percentages are based on 4,440 Federal offenders.

Among Federal offenders whose only offense was a firearms offense —

- 47% were persons prohibited from having firearms
- 23% violated Federal laws that govern dealing in firearms.

Among Federal offenders convicted of firearms offenses and other, more serious offenses —

- 82% used or carried a firearm during another crime
- 10% were persons prohibited from having firearms.

## Highlights

**In 1993 Federal convicted offenders whose cases involved firearms were more often —**

### Persons with previous time in prison or jail

36% of Federal offenders involved with firearms, compared to 16% of those not involved, had been incarcerated in the past for at least 13 months.

### Male

95% of Federal offenders involved with firearms were men, versus 83% without such involvement.

### Black

46% of Federal offenders involved with firearms were black, compared to 30% of those uninvolved.

### Citizens

88% of Federal offenders involved with firearms were U.S. citizens; 73% of offenders not involved were citizens.

### Relatively young

51% of offenders involved with firearms, but 39% of those with no involvement, were age 30 or under.

Among Federal offenders whose sentence was increased because of firearms involvement in a nonfirearms crime — 79% possessed a firearm but did not use it, and 21% fired or brandished a gun or threatened to shoot.

### Firearm involvement in Federal offenses increased the severity of sentences

- 93% of Federal offenders involved with a firearm were sentenced to prison, compared to 72% of those without firearms involvement.

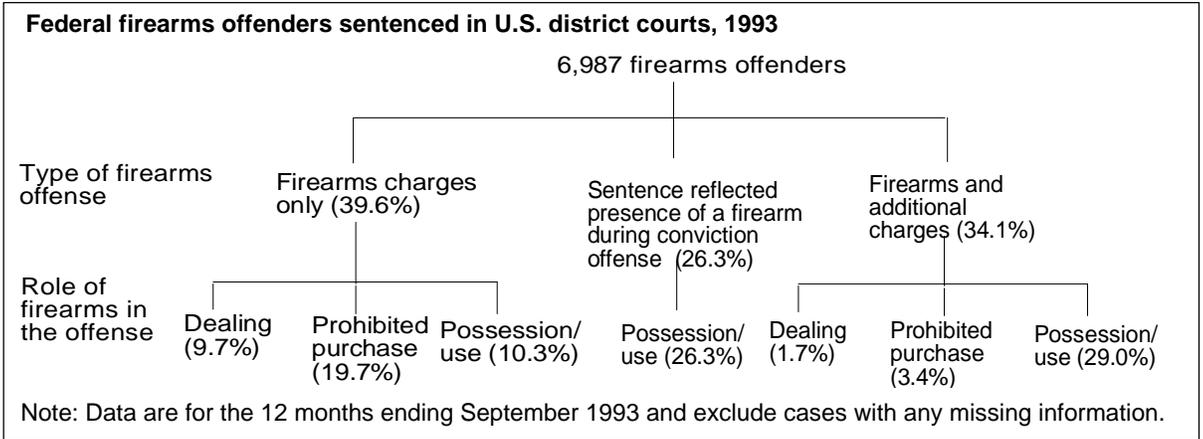
- 99% of offenders who used or carried a firearm while committing another crime were sentenced to prison.

- The average prison sentence for violent crimes in which the offender used or carried a firearm was more than 12 years. For violent crimes without firearm involvement, the average prison sentence was 6½ years.

Federal sentencing guidelines were used to estimate the effects of firearms involvement. Among the prison sentences imposed during the 12 months before September 30, 1993, the following percentages of sentence length were attributable to firearms: 19% of the sentences that had firearms enhancements and 38% of the sentences for multiple offenses that included a firearms offense.

**Among nonviolent Federal offenders, those involved with firearms had more extensive criminal histories**

- More than 70% of violent Federal offenders had been sentenced in the past, regardless of firearms involvement.
- Excluding minor infractions, 76% of property offenders and 61% of drug offenders with firearms involvement—compared to 38% and 48%, respectively, without such involvement—had been previously sentenced as an adult.
- 70% of offenders whose current case involved firearms and 45% of offenders whose offense involved no firearm had been sentenced in the past for at least one offense.



**The role of firearms in Federal sentences imposed during the 12 months ending September 30, 1993**

| Role of firearms in offenses              | Convicted Federal offenders |              |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------|
|   | Number                      | Percent      |
| All offenses                              | 42,107                      | 100 %        |
| <b>Firearms involvement</b>               | <b>6,987</b>                | <b>16.6%</b> |
| Unlawful dealing                          | 773                         | 1.8%         |
| Firearms charges exclusively              | 657                         |              |
| Other charges with firearms charges       | 116                         |              |
| Used/carried firearm during other offense | 2,596                       | 6.2%         |
| Firearms charges exclusively              | 302                         |              |
| Other charges with firearms charges       | 1,918                       |              |
| Other charges (sentence enhancement)      | 376                         |              |
| Unlawful possession of firearms           | 1,858                       | 4.4%         |
| Firearms charges exclusively              | 395                         |              |
| Other charges with firearms charges       | 53                          |              |
| Other charges (sentence enhancement)      | 1,410                       |              |
| Firearms transaction by prohibited person | 1,569                       | 3.7%         |
| Firearms charges exclusively              | 1,337                       |              |
| Other charges with firearms charges       | 232                         |              |
| Unspecified (unknown) firearms charges    | 191                         | .5%          |
| Firearms charges exclusively              | 158                         |              |
| Other charges with firearms charges       | 33                          |              |
| <b>No firearms involvement</b>            | <b>35,120</b>               | <b>83.4%</b> |