



# Prosecutors in State Courts, 2020

SUMMARY NCJ 309440

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In 2020, the 2,347 prosecutor offices in the United States employed a total of 35,120 attorneys. These offices handled felony cases in state courts of general jurisdiction. Nearly 12,000 attorneys were employed by offices in the largest jurisdictions, those serving populations of 1 million or more residents. Offices that served populations of fewer than 100,000 residents (6,175) had nearly 1,600 more prosecutors than those that served populations of 250,000 to 499,999 residents (4,585). Across all offices, 33,500 (95%) prosecutors were employed full time and 1,620 (5%) were employed part time.

## Staff and operating expenditures

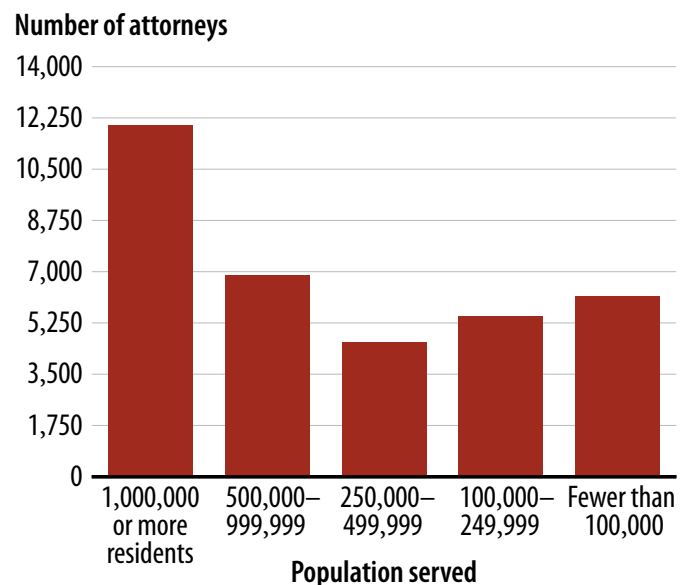
About 80% of full-time attorneys employed at state prosecutor offices were white, and half were female. In addition to attorneys, state prosecutor offices employed non-attorney staff, including investigators, victim and witness staff, support staff, review and redaction staff, and other staff. In 2020, there were 44,150 full-time non-attorney staff employed in state prosecutor offices. The number of staff employed by state prosecutor offices increased by 44% from 1992 to 2020.

State prosecutor offices reported more than \$6 billion in operating expenditures in 2020. The average operating expenditures per prosecutor office was more than \$2.7 million.

## Prosecutorial activities

The state court prosecutor represents the state in criminal cases and is accountable to the public as an elected or appointed public official. State court prosecutors are afforded broad discretion in determining who is charged with an offense and if a case goes to trial. In 2020, more than 2.7 million felony matters were reviewed by state prosecutor offices. Prosecutor offices filed 78% of those cases in court and declined 22%. Prosecutors concluded about 1.9 million felony cases. Of these, 67% were closed

## Number of attorneys employed in state prosecutor offices, by population served, 2020



Note: Population served based on 2018 population estimates. Includes both part- and full-time attorneys. Information on number of attorneys was missing for 212 offices (unweighted).

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Survey of Prosecutors, 2020; and U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018.

by plea bargain, 17% were dismissed, 12% were closed by other dispositions (e.g., deferred prosecution, diversion, or referral to problem-solving courts), and 5% went to court or jury trial.

When working with crime victims, prosecutor offices can provide them with services either directly or through referral to outside resources, or provide no assistance. In 2020, about 70% of prosecutor offices provided direct assistance to victims of domestic violence or other dating violence, and 75% provided referrals to outside services.

The full report (*Prosecutors in State Courts, 2020*, NCJ 309440, BJS, November 2024), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available on the BJS website at [www.bjs.ojp.gov](http://www.bjs.ojp.gov).