



# Federal Justice Statistics, 2021

SUMMARY | NCJ 305127

DECEMBER 2022

Arrests by federal law enforcement agencies declined 35% from fiscal year (FY) 2020 to FY 2021, reaching the lowest level over the past two decades. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, federal arrests declined 81% from March to April 2020, with an additional decline of 25% in arrests from October 2020 to February 2021.

## Crime types

About 6 in 10 federal arrests in 2021 were for immigration, drug, or supervision violations (48,257). The largest percentage decrease in arrests from FY 2020 to FY 2021 was for immigration offenses (down 72%), from 51,723 to 14,446 arrests.

## U.S. district court cases

The number of persons charged with a federal offense in U.S. district court decreased less than 1%, from 66,059 to 65,880. During that period, the number of persons charged with violent offenses increased 18% and the number charged with public order offenses increased 13%, while the number of persons charged with immigration offenses decreased 18%.

## Convictions and sentencing

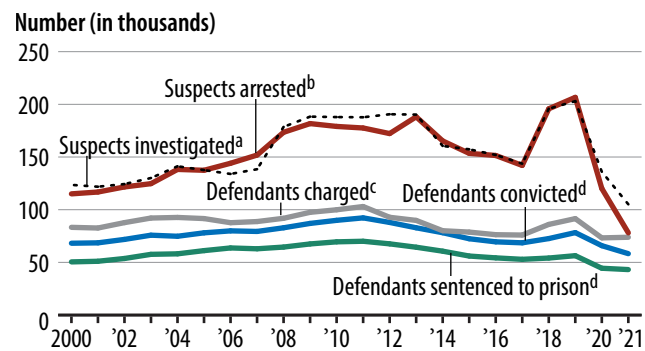
Of the 63,380 defendants adjudicated in federal district courts in FY 2021, about 9 in 10 were convicted. Among those convicted, nearly three-quarters (74%) were sentenced to prison. The median prison sentence for persons convicted was 37 months. Among persons sentenced to prison, both white and black defendants were sentenced to a median of 60 months.

A greater percentage of blacks (85%) and American Indians or Alaska Natives (82%) who were convicted were sentenced to prison compared to convicted persons who were white (77%), Hispanic (71%) or Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (69%).

## Federal correctional control

From fiscal year-end 2011 to 2021, the number of persons under federal correctional control declined

## Suspects and defendants processed in the federal criminal justice system, FY 2000–2021



Note: Suspects or defendants who had more than one arrest, charge, or case are counted separately.

<sup>a</sup>Suspects in matters investigated by U.S. attorneys.

<sup>b</sup>Suspects arrested by federal law enforcement. Excludes District of Columbia Superior Court arrests. For 2020 and 2021 arrests, the custody start date is used instead of the arrest date.

<sup>c</sup>Defendants charged with a felony or a misdemeanor offense in U.S. district court.

<sup>d</sup>Defendants in cases adjudicated with a felony or a misdemeanor offense in U.S. district court.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, based on data from the U.S. Marshals Service, Prisoner Tracking, Justice Detainee, and CAPTURE information systems; Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, National Legal Information Office Network System database; and Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Criminal Master File, fiscal years 2000–2021.

15%, from 410,887 to 350,543. Approximately 3 in 5 of these persons were in secure confinement and 2 in 5 were on community supervision in each year.

## Releases

A total of 47,226 persons were released from federal prison in FY 2021. Most (36,958) were being released for the first time since their U.S. district court commitment. Black persons exiting federal prison in FY 2021 had served more time (a median of 51 months) for their commitment offense than persons of any other racial or ethnic group (a median of 28 to 43 months).

The full report (*Federal Justice Statistics, 2021*, NCJ 305127), 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).