



# Immigration, Citizenship, and the Federal Justice System, 1998-2018

SUMMARY | NCJ 253116

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In 2018, 64% of all federal arrests were of non-U.S. citizens. In comparison, 37% of all federal arrests in 1998 were of non-U.S. citizens. Federal arrests of non-U.S. citizens more than tripled from 1998 to 2018 (rising 234%), while federal arrests of U.S. citizens rose 10%.

## Citizenship

While non-U.S. citizens make up 7% of the U.S. population (per the U.S. Census Bureau for 2017), they accounted for 15% of all federal arrests and 15% of prosecutions in U.S. district court for non-immigration crimes in 2018. Non-U.S. citizens accounted for 24% of all federal drug arrests and 25% of all federal property arrests, including 28% of all federal fraud arrests.

## Citizenship by country

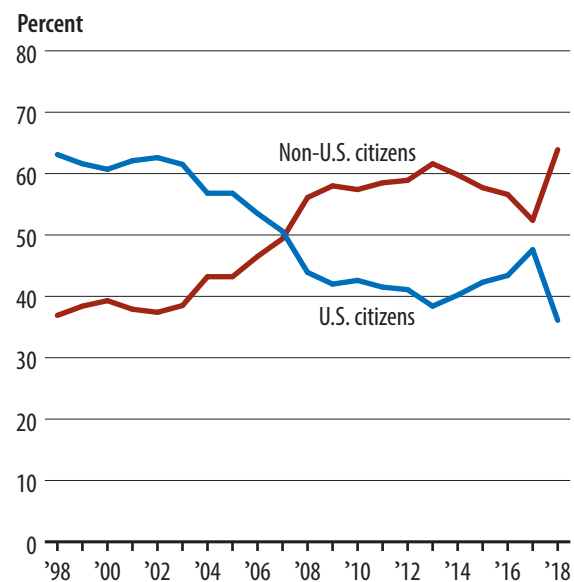
The country of citizenship of persons arrested by federal law enforcement changed notably over time. From 1998 to 2018, Mexican citizens' share of federal arrests rose from 28% to 40%. Citizens of Central American countries' share of federal arrests rose from 1% to 20% during the same period, while U.S. citizens' share of federal arrests fell from 63% to 36%.

## The border and immigration

From 1998 to 2018, the portion of all federal arrests that took place in the five federal judicial districts along the U.S.-Mexico border (out of a total of 94 judicial districts nationwide) almost doubled, increasing from 33% to 65%. In 2018, a quarter of all federal drug arrests took place in these five districts.

Across 20 years, 95% of the increase in federal arrests was due to immigration crimes. Federal immigration arrests from 1998 to 2018 increased 5-fold (from 20,942 to 108,667).

Percent of all federal arrests, by citizenship status, FY 1998-2018



Note: Percentages based on available data.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, based on data from the U.S. Marshals Service, Justice Detainee Information System, fiscal years 1998-2018.

## Prosecutions

Of suspects prosecuted in U.S. district court in 2018, 57% were U.S. citizens and 43% were non-U.S. citizens. Almost all (99.7%) of the non-U.S. citizens prosecuted in U.S. district court were prosecuted for something other than first-time illegal entry. The five crime types for which non-U.S. citizens were most likely to be prosecuted in U.S. district court were illegal reentry (72% of prosecutions), drugs (13%), fraud (4.5%), alien smuggling (4%), and misuse of visas (2%).

The full report (*Immigration, Citizenship, and the Federal Justice System, 1998-2018*, NCJ 253116), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available on the BJS website at [www.bjs.gov](http://www.bjs.gov).