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PRESS RELEASE

IN FY 2021 NUMBER OF FEDERAL ARRESTS REACHED THE LOWEST POINT IN TWO DECADES

WASHINGTON – The Bureau of Justice Statistics releases its report [Federal Justice Statistics, 2021](#). The study found that 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% and cases charged in federal court declined 77%, from March to April 2020, with an additional decline of 25% in arrests and 20% in cases charged, from October 2020 to February 2021.

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. Arrests for property offenses increased 11% during this time.

While federal arrests declined substantially from FY 2020 to FY 2021, 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%.

The median days from case filing in U.S. district court to case termination was 300 days in FY 2021, up from 212 days in FY 2020. The median time from receipt of an investigation to the decision by a U.S. attorney to prosecute or decline a matter was 70 days in FY 2021, up from 27 days in FY 2020.

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.

The type of sentence imposed in FY 2021 varied by sex, race or Hispanic origin and age of defendants. Convicted males (77%) were sentenced to prison more commonly than convicted females (59%). Those sentenced to prison had a median age of 35 years, while those sentenced to probation had a median age of 38 years. 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%).

For the 10-year period from fiscal year-end 2011 to 2021, the number of persons under federal correctional control declined 15%, from 410,887 to 350,543. The proportion in confinement or community supervision did not change during that period. Approximately 3 in 5 of these persons were in secure confinement and 2 in 5 were on community supervision in each year.

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).

[*Federal Justice Statistics, 2021*](#) (NCJ 305127) was written by BJS statistician Mark Motivans, PhD. The report, related documents and additional information about BJS's statistical publications and programs are available on the BJS website at bjs.ojp.gov.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice is the principal federal agency responsible for collecting, analyzing and disseminating reliable statistics on crime and criminal justice in the United States. Alexis R. Piquero, PhD, is the director.

About the Office of Justice Programs

The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, advance racial equity in the administration of justice, assist victims and enhance the rule of law.

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