



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, AUG. 22, 2019, 9 A.M. ET
WWW.BJS.GOV

BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS
CONTACT: TANNYR WATKINS
(202) 532-3923; Tannyr.M.Watkins@ojp.usdoj.gov

64% OF ALL FEDERAL ARRESTS IN 2018 WERE OF NON-U.S. CITIZENS

WASHINGTON — In 2018, 64% of all federal arrests were of non-U.S. citizens, the Bureau of Justice Statistics announced today. 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%.

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.

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%. Federal arrests of Central Americans rose more than 30-fold over two decades, from 1,171 in 1998 to 39,858 in 2018. The number of federal arrests of Mexican citizens (78,062) exceeded the number of federal arrests of U.S. citizens (70,542) in 2018.

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 94 judicial districts nationwide) almost doubled, increasing from 33% to 65%. These five judicial districts are the Southern District of California, the District of Arizona, the District of New Mexico, the Western District of Texas, and the Southern District of Texas. In 2018, a quarter of all federal drug arrests took place in these five districts. The number of Central Americans arrested in these five districts almost tripled in one year, rising from 13,549 in 2017 to 37,590 in 2018.

Across 20 years, 95% of the increase in federal arrests was due to immigration crimes. From 1998 to 2018, federal immigration arrests increased 5-fold (from 20,942 to 108,667), rising more than 50,000 in one year from 2017 to 2018. In 2018, 90% of suspects arrested for federal immigration crimes

were male, while 10% were female. Eighty-five percent of federal arrests of non-U.S. citizens in 2018 were for immigration offenses, and another 5% of arrests were immigration-related.

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-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 five crime types for which U.S. citizens were most likely to be prosecuted in U.S. district court were drugs (38% of prosecutions), weapons (21%), fraud (12%), public order (12%), and alien smuggling (6%).

The report *[Immigration, Citizenship, and the Federal Justice System, 1998-2018](#)* (NCJ 253116), was written by BJS statistician Mark Motivans. The report, related documents and additional information about BJS's statistical publications and programs are available on the BJS website at www.bjs.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. Jeffrey H. Anderson is the director.

The Office of Justice Programs, directed by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Katharine Sullivan, provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance, and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal justice system. More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

###