



Highlights of [GAO-04-411](#), a report to congressional requesters

FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

Information on Use of Investigation and Arrest Statistics

Why GAO Did This Study

The 21st Century Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act (P.L. 107-273) requires GAO to report on how investigation and arrest statistics are reported and used by federal law enforcement agencies. This report provides information on (1) the guidance and procedures followed by federal law enforcement agencies regarding counting investigations and arrests, (2) how investigation and arrest statistics are used, and (3) whether multiple agencies are counting and reporting the same investigations and arrests. GAO selected six agencies for review: the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the U.S. Marshals Service, the former U.S. Customs Service, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS).

What GAO Found

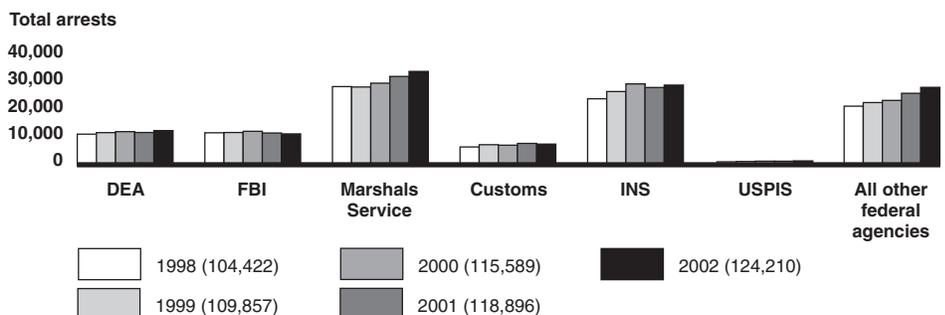
Guidance and procedures for counting investigations, or cases, are generally consistent among the six agencies GAO reviewed. Agencies pursue investigations into crimes that have a nexus to their missions, such as drug trafficking for the DEA, mail theft for USPIS, and illegal aliens for the former INS. Once agents have made the decision to open a case, the cases are to be reviewed and approved by a supervisor, and details of the case are then entered into the agencies' case management tracking systems. GAO also found agency guidance and procedures for counting arrests to be generally consistent among all six agencies. In addition, the agencies required supervisory review of the justifications for the arrests before they were entered into the agencies' data tracking systems and officially counted.

In general, agencies use investigation and arrest statistics as indicators of agency work and as output measures in performance plans, budget justifications, and testimonies. In some cases, these data are considered in making promotion, bonus, and award determinations. However, investigation and arrest statistics are not emphasized in any of these activities, but are one of many factors that are considered.

All of the agencies GAO reviewed counted the same investigations and arrests when more than one of them participated in the investigative and arresting activities. This practice seems appropriate because many investigations and arrests would not have occurred without the involvement and cooperation of all the agencies that participated. If agencies were not allowed to count investigations and arrests in which they participated, agencies would be less likely to work together, cases would be much smaller, and the desired disruption of high-level criminal organizations would be hampered.

The Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, and USPIS reviewed a draft of this report and generally agreed with GAO's findings. Technical comments were incorporated as appropriate.

Arrests for Federal Offenses, by Arresting Federal Law Enforcement Agency



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics Compendium of Federal Justice Statistics for Fiscal Years 1998 - 2001; Marshals Service Prisoner Tracking System for Fiscal Year 2002.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-411.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Paul Jones at (202) 512-8777 or jonesp@gao.gov.