Using Data from the Federal Justice Statistics Program (FJSP)

I. The Federal Justice Statistics Program

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) created the Federal Justice Statistics Program (FJSP) in 1982 as a repository for data used to describe the case processing of defendants in the Federal criminal justice system. The goals of the FJSP are to provide uniform case processing statistics across stages of the federal criminal justice system and to track individuals from arrest and prosecution through adjudication, sentencing, appeals, and corrections. The FJSP provides policymakers, researchers, and the general public with an important resource to answer questions on the criminal case processing of federal defendants. The FJSP database may be used to obtain a wide range of information, such as the number of suspects in matters investigated by U.S. Attorneys and whether the matter was prosecuted in U.S. district court, the number of defendants on pretrial release, the disposition of criminal cases terminating in U.S. district court, the average prison sentence imposed, the average time served in prison, and the number of offenders released from prison to supervised release in the community.

The FJSP obtains data from multiple federal criminal justice agencies to compile comprehensive information about suspects and defendants processed in the federal criminal justice system. These data are provided by the following agencies: the Executive Office for the U.S. Attorneys (EOUSA), the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AOUSC), the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS), the U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC), and more recently, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). These agencies cover the case processing stages from arrest and prosecution through pretrial release, adjudication, sentencing, appeals, and corrections. Below are brief descriptions of the agencies’ data systems and files that are used to build the FJSP database, organized by the stages of case processing.

Arrest and Prosecution. The U.S. Marshals Service (USMS), through its Prisoner Tracking System, provides data to the FJSP on suspects arrested for violations of federal law and booked by the U.S. Marshals Service. The data includes information on characteristics of Federal arrestees and records the name of the Federal agency initiating the arrest. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) provides data on suspects arrested by DEA agents, both within and outside the continental United States and contains arrestee characteristics, type of drug, and the type and number of weapons at time of arrest. The Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys (EOUSA) provides data on the investigation and prosecution of suspects in criminal matters received and concluded and criminal cases filed and terminated. Information includes referring enforcement agency, charges filed and declined, and most serious charge investigated.

Pretrial Release. The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AOUSC) provides data from the Pretrial Services Agency (PSA) on defendants interviewed, investigated, or supervised by pretrial services. The information covers defendants’ pretrial hearings, detentions, and releases and includes demographic characteristics of pretrial defendants processed by federal pretrial service agencies.

Adjudication and Sentencing. The AOUSC provides data on the criminal proceedings against defendants from cases filed through disposition and sentencing, for felony and misdemeanor cases adjudicated by U.S. district court judges and Class A misdemeanants adjudicated by U.S. magistrates. The U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC) provides data on criminal defendants sentenced pursuant to the provisions of the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 with detail on offense conduct, criminal history, defendant characteristics, and sentencing outcome.

Appeals. The AOUSC provides data on criminal appeals filed and terminated in the U.S. Court of Appeals. The data include information on the nature of the criminal appeal, the underlying offense, and the disposition of the appeal.

Corrections. The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) provides data on all offenders admitted to and released from federal prison during the fiscal year, as well as the
end of fiscal-year stock population. The data contain information such as sentence imposed, type of commitment, term in effect, projected release date, sentence adjustments, and demographic characteristics of prisoners. The AOUSC provides data from the Federal Probation Supervision Information System (FPSIS), which describes persons placed on post-conviction community supervision (probation, parole, and supervised release). The FPSIS data includes information on length of the supervision term, special conditions imposed, risk assessment, offender characteristics, and violations of supervision.

Figure 1 displays these stages in the form of a case-flow diagram, along with a listing of the agencies that contribute data to the FJSR for each stage.

While the federal criminal justice agencies often collect similar information on criminal case processing events, most of the agencies maintain data systems that are unique to their needs and functions. As a result, official statistics published by these agencies are not directly comparable to one another. The U.S. Marshals data system, for example, tracks movement of federal suspects booked by the U.S. Marshals Service whereas the Drug Enforcement Administration tracks suspects arrested by DEA agents (to include partnerships with state and local law enforcement). Table 1 shows the extent of the discrepancy when comparing the number of suspects arrested and booked by the U.S. Marshals Services attributed to the DEA and the number of arrests that the DEA reports using their data (which includes non-federal arrests at the state and local level.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Comparison Between the U.S. Marshals Service and the Drug Enforcement Administration in Number of Arrests reported, Fiscal Year 2000*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As Reported By</td>
<td>Number of Arrests Reported for the DEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Marshals Service</td>
<td>12,072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEA</td>
<td>38,418</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2 shows a comparison of the number of defendants in cases filed and terminated in U.S. district court during 2001, as reported in each respective agency’s published annual report. Although a criminal defendant is defined similarly between the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts and the Executive Office for the U.S. Attorney, each agency reports different counts of defendants in criminal cases filed (83,252 and 73,674, respectively) and terminated (77,704 and 68,418, respectively) during 2001. The EOUSA’s exclusion of defendants in misdemeanor cases handled by U.S. magistrates in reporting case filing statistics helps explain this discrepancy. In addition to agencies differing in the scope of their reporting coverage, distinctions also exist in how agencies define key case processing concepts—such as the definition of a defendant or a case and the methods used to determine the most serious offense charged or convicted. Differences in the time frame included in an agency’s counts also impact reported numbers: the U.S. attorneys report on events that were posted to their data system during the fiscal year, whereas the federal judiciary reports on events that actually occurred during the fiscal year.

For defendants convicted and sentenced, the U.S. Sentencing Commission reports several thousand fewer defendants sentenced (53,910) than the AOUSC (67,731) and the EOUSA (62,245). The number of defendants reported by the USSC are lower than those reported by the AOUSC and EOUSA primarily because the USSC defines a defendant as an individual for whom a sentencing event has occurred, and unlike the U.S. Attorneys or the federal judiciary, counts individual defendants more than once only if the defendant was sentenced on more than one occasion. The number of defendants sentenced to prison also varies by agency, with the U.S. courts reporting more individuals receiving an imprisonment sentence (53,910) compared to the USSC (50,189) and the EOUSA (49,916). These differences can be due to several factors. In 2001, the USSC were missing the Judgement and Commitment order on 726 cases sentenced (information on 1 percent of the 59,897 cases sentenced in 2001 not furnished to the USSC by U.S. district courts and U.S. magistrates). At the same time, the USSC has a higher agency priority on reporting sentence imposed than the EOUSA, which is primarily concerned with prosecutor workload and activities. In addition, the AOUSC counts an individual more than once if the defendant is sentenced to prison in more than one case, whereas the USSC counts the individual only once.

The FJSR reconciles these differences by standardizing case processing statistics across all stages of case processing. Each of the agencies participating in the FJSR provides regular data extracts (from ongoing case management systems) of fiscal year activity of offenders for a given stage of criminal case processing. Once received by the Federal Justice Statistics Resource Center (FJSRC), these data are sanitized of all identifiers to protect the confidentiality of individual records and checked for new values and variables. The FJSRC then creates “standard analysis files” (SAFs) by applying a set of uniform standards to the data, including standardized units of analysis (defendant-case), standardized reporting of events based on the date of occurrence, common offense classifications, and common disposition categories (where applicable). These SAF data files represent annual cohorts of suspects/defendants processed at each stage of the federal criminal justice system; in general, three cohorts (SAFs) are produced for each stage: an incoming cohort, an outgoing cohort, and a cohort pending at the end of...
Figure 1
Overview of the Stages of Federal Criminal Case Processing and Agencies Contributing Source Data for the FJS Database

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Agency/Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Arrest and Prosecution | U.S. Marshals Service: Prisoner Tracking System  
Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys: Central System and Central Charge Files |
| | Drug Enforcement Administration: Defendant Statistical System  
Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys: Act Information System |
| | Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AOUSC): Pretrial Services Agency |
| | AOUSC: Criminal Termination Files  
USSC: Monitoring Database Organizations Data File  
AOUSC: Court of Appeals  
USSC: Appeals Data File  
AOUSC: Federal Probation Supervision Information System  
Federal Bureau of Prisons: SENTRY System |

- **No violations of conditions**
  - Arrest
  - First appearance
  - Detention hearing
  - Preliminary hearing
  - Sentencing

- **Violations of conditions**
  - Revocation hearing
  - Continued release

- **Detention**
  - Detention
  - Detention
  - Detained

- **Release**
  - Release

- **Guilty pleas**
  - Guilty verdicts
  - Acquitted

- **Federal prisons**
  - Reincarnation
  - Discharge
  - Violation of supervision

- **Appeals**
  - Appeals

- **Corrections**
  - Referred to state or local jurisdiction
  - Prosecution declined
  - Prosecution

- **Suspect arrested at time of offense**

the fiscal year. Since the FJSP definitions are consistent with the definitions used by other BJS programs, federal and state case processing statistics can be readily compared. Of course, since FJSP standard definitions are used, the data provided in FJSRC reports will not match statistics reported by federal criminal justice agencies in their respective published annual reports. However, as agreed upon by the interagency working group convened by the Attorney General, the FJSP statistics serve as the official "reconciled" statistics when reporting commonly used case processing statistics.

Figure 2 shows the reconciled federal case processing statistics for fiscal year 2001. There were 121,818 suspects investigated for a violation of federal law and referred as matters to U.S. attorneys and 118,896 persons arrested and booked by the U.S. Marshals Service. About 83,000 defendants were prosecuted in U.S. district court in 2001. Of the 77,145 defendants in cases terminated in U.S. district court, 68,533 were convicted, and 51,057 were sentenced to serve time in prison. In addition, there were 11,281 criminal appeals filed in 2001. It is important to note that suspects or defendants reported by the FJSP are a "snapshot" of the number of suspects or defendants at a particular case processing stage during the time period of interest (fiscal year).

II. Federal Sentencing Data Available through the FJSRC

There are two main sources of Federal sentencing data provided in standard analysis (SAF) format in the FJSP: the United States Sentencing Commission (USSC) ‘defendants sentenced’ and the AOUSC ‘defendants in criminal cases terminated’ files. Limited sentencing information is also available in the Bureau of Prisons’ standard analysis files. The ‘defendants sentenced’ SAF is created annually from the United States Sentencing Commission’s Office of Policy Analysis’ (OPA) Standardized Research Data File—which consists of information from the Monitoring Department’s database (limited to those defendants whose records have been furnished to the United States Sentencing Commission by U.S. district courts and U.S. magistrates) as well as variables created by the OPA specifically for research purposes. The USSC SAF provides a rich source of information on individual defendants sentenced pursuant to the Sentencing Reform Act. Data includes information from the Judgement and Commitment (J & C) order submitted by the court, background and guideline information collected from the Presentencing Report (PSR), and the report on the sentencing hearing in the Statement of Reasons (SOR). The ‘defendants sentenced’ SAF contains detailed information about sentencing, such as the guideline base offense level, offense level adjustments, adjustments for role in the offense, victim-related adjustments, obstruction of justice adjustments, criminal history, departure status, statement of reasons given for departure, and statutory information. The file also contains basic demographic information about the defendant.
A second source of federal sentencing data in the FJSP is the AOUSC ‘defendants in criminal cases terminated’ SAF. The amount of sentencing information available in this file is not as extensive as the information contained in the USSC data files. The file contains information about criminal proceedings against defendants whose cases were filed in U.S. district courts and includes data on case disposition, mode of disposition, prison term ordered, probation term ordered, fines imposed, and supervised release terms ordered by the court. This information is provided for up to five counts of conviction for all defendants in cases terminating in U.S. district court. The data file includes individual and organizational defendants sentenced pursuant to the guidelines and defendants sentenced pursuant to pre-guidelines practice (‘old law’ sentences).

A third source of sentencing data in the FJSP database is the Bureau of Prisons standard analysis files. These files contain sentencing information for federal prisoners, such as sentence imposed, term in effect, sentencing date, projected and actual release dates, length of supervised release term imposed (to follow imprisonment), time served, release method, and information on changes to originally imposed sentences due to resentencing adjustments.

III. The FJSP Web Site
The Federal Justice Statistics Resource Center (FJSRC) Internet Web Site, located at http://fjsrc.urban.org/, was developed to enhance the accessibility, usage, and efficiency of the information disseminated from the FJSP. It provides public access to the various federal criminal case processing data files, free of charge. The site includes several important features—an interactive query system, a district statistics page, and a data-downloading page—that provide different options for accessing the FJSP data in a variety of formats.

The query system permits users to interactively query the FJSP database, thus allowing for quick retrieval of reconciled case processing data at the national level. Users may produce frequency distributions, cross-tabulations, or arithmetic means, for up to three variables at a time, chosen from a list of selected variables. The query system allows users to access information about offenders for each fiscal year from 1994 through 2001. For example, a user can go to the FJSRC website and by performing a simple query, find that in 2001, there were 37,944 suspects investigated for a drug offense as the most serious offense. Also, there were 31,539 defendants in criminal cases filed in U.S. district court with a drug offense as the primary filing offense and 78,501 offenders in prison at fiscal year-end 2001 with a drug offense as the most serious commitment offense. To assist new users, the query system includes an “easy query” feature which provides a list of questions most frequently asked by users of the FJSRC web site. By simply clicking on a question of interest, the appropriate query will automatically be submitted to the database, which will process the data and present the results. In addition to the results of the query, which may be exported for further analysis, the system also presents the steps that were used to construct the query.

Users who are interested in obtaining statistics at the district level can utilize another important component of the website: the district statistics page. This function allows users to examine selected district-level criminal case processing statistics for each of the 94 judicial districts in the United States. There are two different ways of viewing the district information: users may either choose a particular district and examine all of the statistics relating to each stage of criminal case processing for that district in one table, or they may choose a particular statistic of interest (e.g., defendants convicted) and view a table that shows the count on that statistic for each district in the United States. As an added feature, users are given the option of viewing a two-dimensional graph which plots a given district’s value on a statistic in relation to the values of all other judicial districts in the United States; the national mean and median values for the variable chosen also appear on the graph, for comparative purposes.

An Example Web-query Using the FJSRC Database
2. Select “Query/Search the Database.”
3. Select the year “2001.”
4. Select the dataset “AOUSC in” (Defendants in criminal cases filed in U.S. district court, fiscal year).
5. Select the variable “TIGRON” (Primary level of BJS filing offense classification).
6. Check the value box “All categories” and select “Go.”
7. Select “Frequency.”

Number of Defendants in Criminal Cases Filed in U.S. District Court by Major Offense Category, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BJS offense classification</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown Offenses</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Offenses</td>
<td>3,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Offenses</td>
<td>17,331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Offenses</td>
<td>31,539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public-order Offenses</td>
<td>11,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapon Offenses</td>
<td>6,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Offenses</td>
<td>12,002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Users who would like to perform more detailed analyses have the option of downloading FJSP data from the data-downloading page. The standard analysis files (SAFs), representing annual cohorts of suspects and defendants processed in each of the various stages of
the federal criminal justice system, are available for downloading in fixed ASCII format for years 1994 through 2001. In addition, a file of unique sequential number identifiers that may be used to link records from different SAFs across stages of criminal case processing is available (link index file). Documentation is included for use with the SAS statistical software package, but as the data are in fixed ASCII format, other statistical software packages may also be used to read in the data.

Importantly, the web site also includes a searchable data dictionary, which provides variable definitions as well as other detailed information about each of the SAF datasets available for download. The data dictionary requires that the user select the year and desired processing stage in order to retrieve the accurate data definitions and variable and value labels (as agency document is subject to modification from year to year).

The FJSP web site provides links to other federal justice agencies’ web pages for further resources. For example, on the district statistics page, there is a link to the Federal Government’s “MapStats” website (http://www.fedstats.gov/mapstats/) which contains arrest, population, and economic data aggregated at the judicial district level.

In addition to providing data sets for downloading and further analysis, links to BJS publications and reports which used the FJSP data are referenced on the FJSP web site. Most publications are provided in electronic format on the web site.

IV. Publications and Other Resources

There are two annual BJS reports produced using the FJSP database. The first is the Compendium of Federal Justice Statistics, which describes suspects and defendants processed at each of the stages of the Federal criminal justice system during a given year. This report includes chapters dedicated to the various stages of case processing, including arrest, prosecution, pretrial release, adjudication, sentencing, appeals, and corrections. The publication reports on cross-sections or “snap-shots” of the number of defendants processed at each stage during a particular year, as opposed to following a single cohort of offenders through all of these stages; therefore defendants represented at a particular stage (e.g., arrest) do not represent the same cohort as those represented at subsequent stages of the process (e.g., prosecution) for that time period. The Compendium of Federal Justice Statistics is available for the years 1984–2000 (with the exceptions of 1987 and 1991).

The second BJS report is Federal Criminal Case Processing, with trends, which has been published annually since 1998. This report employs data from the FJSP database to provide reconciled statistics for a 12-month period that describe defendants processed at various stages of case processing, including: suspects arrested for federal offenses and booked by the U.S. Marshals Service, suspects in matters investigated and concluded, defendants prosecuted in U.S. district court, the outcome of criminal cases (convicted or not convicted), sanctions imposed on convicted defendants, the number and type of criminal appeals filed, the number of offenders under correctional supervision—prison, probation, parole, and supervised release, and the number of prisoners admitted to and released from federal prison.

In addition to reporting statistics on important case processing events for the most recent 12-month period, Federal Criminal Case Processing, with trends presents figures describing trends in federal criminal case processing (from 1982 onward). Trend figures include the number of suspects investigated by U.S. attorneys, the number of defendants in criminal cases terminated in U.S. district court, the percentage of convicted defendants sentenced to prison, and the average time served by offenders released from prison. For example, Figure 3 shows the number of offenders under federal supervision, by the type of supervision, highlighting the transition from the use of parole to the use of supervised release subsequent to the passage of the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984. Both of these publications are available from the BJS Clearinghouse and the Federal Justice Statistics Resource Center web site.

BJS also produces reports on special topics concerning federal case processing. These reports focus on a timely special issue, and, using the FJSP database go into greater detail than the more general reports. Recent special reports published by BJS include a variety of topics, such as trends in the federal processing of money laundering, drug, and immigration offenders.
These reports may be downloaded from the FJSRC web site or obtained through the BJS Clearinghouse (call 800-732-3277 toll-free, to order these reports).

The FJSRC database is archived on an annual CD-ROM available from the BJS Clearinghouse (as previously mentioned, the annual databases can be downloaded from the project’s web site). The SAF data files (in fixed ASCII format) are accompanied on the CD by source code which allows the user to create analyzable files.

V. Conclusion

The Bureau of Justice Statistics plays a vital role in providing comprehensive federal criminal case processing statistics to the public. BJS recognizes the importance of reconciling differences among the statistics reported by the various operational agencies of the federal criminal justice system. Using data collected from these agencies, the Federal Justice Statistics Resource Center builds a reconciled database by reanalyzing the agency data and applying a set of standard definitions to case processing events, units of count, offense classifications, and reporting periods. Using this database, the FJSRC is able to present reconciled federal case processing statistics in its regular and special reports. The FJSRC database also provides the foundation for the FJSRC web site, an accessible and timely source of federal criminal data and statistics. Through the FJSRC web site, users may query the FJSRC database to obtain current and historical national statistics; examine district-level case processing statistics; download standard analysis files to conduct more detailed analyses; and utilize the link index file—a feature which allows the analysis of a single cohort of offenders through all stages of criminal case processing, by tracking them from arrest and prosecution through to adjudication, sentencing, and corrections.

The FJSRC web site is a dynamic tool that provides public access to federal criminal case processing data in new and exciting ways. It is a rich resource which can be used to explore a wide array of federal criminal research topics and analyses. As agency data files are fairly complex, users do need a certain amount of knowledge and expertise regarding federal criminal case processing concepts and how to analyze the data files. The FJSRC web site contains detailed information about the FJSRC data files (e.g., the data dictionary and a “frequently asked questions” section) to assist users in this regard. Users of the FJSRC web site may also direct questions about the data or other aspects of the site to (ASKBJS@ojp.usdoj.gov), which provides a point of contact for substantive questions about the FJSRC and its database.

Notes

1 These differences in definition of commonly reported criminal case processing statistics are described in the BJS report “Reconciling Federal Criminal Case Processing Statistics: A Federal Justice Statistics Program Methodology Report” (NCJ-169274). The report was a product of an interagency working group convened in 1995 at the request of the Attorney General to describe the major differences in the way Federal criminal justice agencies collect, tabulate, and report criminal case processing events. The working group identified differences in official statistics describing the Federal criminal justice system as reported by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, the U.S. Sentencing Commission, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The working group concluded that differences in published statistics were attributable to (1) the differing ways the agencies define defendants in key case processing events, (2) the time periods covering the reported events, (3) the methods used to classify offenses and case types, and (4) the methods used to classify disposition and sentences imposed.

2 The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts defines a defendant as a person against whom a U.S. district court judge or U.S. magistrate has taken a specific action whereas the Executive Office for the U.S. Attorney defines a defendant as a person for whom a significant paper has been filed before either a U.S. district court judge or a U.S. magistrate. For both agencies, a person can be counted more than once if they appear in more than one case.


4 The Federal Justice Statistics Resource Center (FJSRC), sponsored by BJS and housed at the Urban Institute, builds and maintains the Federal Justice Statistics Program (FJSP) database as well as a web site dedicated to providing easy public access to FJSRC data files and disseminating information about suspects and defendants processed in the Federal criminal justice system.

5 The definitions of SAF cohorts vary with the stage of case processing and source agency; as a result, the rules for selecting records vary slightly. For example, for federal prisoners, the key dates for defining SAFs are commitment and release dates. Entering cohorts of federal prisoners are defined by the fiscal year of commitment to BOP, while exiting cohorts are selected according to the fiscal year of release from BOP. By comparison, at the prosecution stage, the matter opening and conclusion dates are used to select records into SAFs; the entering cohort is based upon the fiscal year during which a U.S. attorney opened an investigation, while the exiting cohort is based on the fiscal year that the U.S. attorney concluded a matter.

6 See note 1.

7 These commonly used case processing statistics appear in reconciled form in the annual FJSRC publication Federal Criminal Case Processing, with trends, and include: suspects arrested and book by the U.S. Marshals Service, suspects in matters investigated by U.S. attorneys, suspects in matters concluded by U.S. attorneys, defendants in cases proceeded against in U.S. district court, disposition of defendants in cases terminated in U.S. district court, sanctions imposed on offenders convicted and sentenced in U.S. district court, criminal appeals filed, offenders under federal supervision, and federal prison admissions and releases. The reported statistics are “reconciled” through the application of a standardizing methodology which includes a common unit of count (defendant-case), a standardized reporting period (fiscal year), common offense classifications, and standard case disposition categories.

8 During FY2001, the FJSRC Web Site was accessed in more than 53,000 user-sessions, during which users conducted
nearly 19,000 interactive queries of the FJSP database and performed 2,200 downloads of FJSP datasets.

9 The query system does not currently allow users to query across years to make cross-year comparisons. For information about trends across years, users may consult the annual BJS Federal Criminal Case Processing Report.


13 With these unique sequential number identifiers, it is possible to link to any SAF to obtain the variables and information from that stage (represented by that SAF) desired for analysis. Thus, the link index file permits users to follow/track a cohort of offenders through the various stages of Federal criminal case processing, gathering information about these offenders from each stage (via the standard analysis files). For example, one might want to track a cohort of suspects in matters investigated during a particular year through to other stages, such as prosecution, adjudication, sentencing, and corrections. This linking system is available for use with all SAF data files, from 1994 through 2001. Note that the unique sequential number identifiers mentioned above are not the same as the court docket numbers, case numbers, or prisoner register numbers used by the respective source agencies. Rather, the FJSP sequential number identifiers are generated and applied to the data by FJSRC staff. These unique sequential numbers indicate a unique person-case but contain no identifying information about the individual; thus the confidentiality of offenders’ identities is not compromised.

14 Tracking a single cohort of offenders through all stages of case processing would actually require several years of data and elapsed time, due to factors such as regular case processing times and intervals between key case processing events, normal delays in posting data to agency data entry systems, and time elapsed between the reporting period of interest and the receipt of data extracts by BJS from the agencies (for data verification purposes, most agencies deliver data extracts to BJS about 3 to 6 months after the end of the reporting period, i.e., the fiscal year).

15 The interagency working group convened by the Attorney General to reconcile Federal case processing statistics reached a consensus about the definition of the reconciled statistics included in this report, as well as the set of tables that should be included and that these statistics would be published by BJS each year.