

## AGENCY OVERVIEW

# BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS (BJS)

## SUMMARY OF KEY CRITICAL SUPPORT AREAS AND LEADERSHIP

### Leadership

No changes. Kevin Scott remains the Acting Director; BJS has not had a director since August 2023.

### Budget

(see figure below, Table 2.2 in body of report, and our [online resource](#)):

- BJS's FY25 budget is \$59.1 million, compared to the FY24 level of \$58.8 million, which amounts to:
  - an estimated 1.9% loss of purchasing power from FY24.
  - a 20.1% loss of purchasing power from FY09 and an 11.6% loss of purchasing power from FY21.
- The FY26 President's Budget Request amount is for \$55.7 million, which would be an 8% loss of purchasing power from FY25. For the appropriations line item, the request is for \$33 million, a decrease from the FY25 level of \$35 million. The set-aside amount that is typically 1 percent of Office of Justice Programs (OJP) total research, evaluation, and statistics grant funds is requested for \$22.7 million, a decrease from the FY25 estimated level of \$24.1 million.

### Staffing

(see Table 2.1 in body of report):

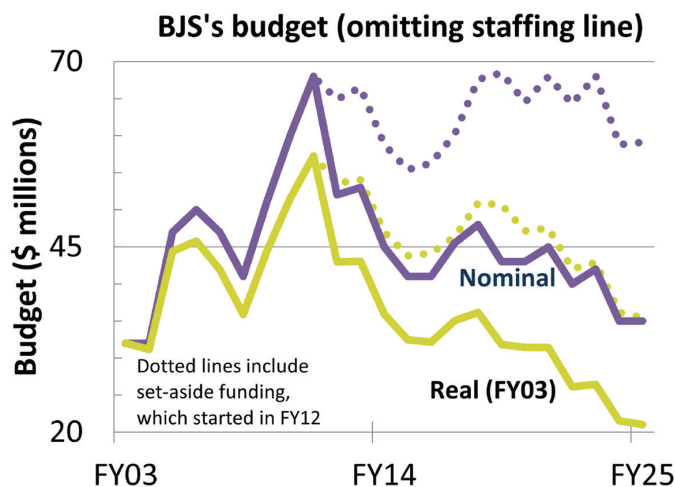
- BJS has lost an estimated 14% in staffing since FY24; however, this is a 15% gain since FY22.
- Information about the staffing level from the FY26 President's Budget Request is not available.

### Parent Agency

Because statistical agencies are hesitant or not allowed to communicate with outside entities, and the parent agencies are communicating little information specific to statistical agencies, we have no agency-specific updates in this category. The fact that the staffing cuts and the proposed budget cut occurred indicates lack of support for the statistical agency, support that is required by the Evidence Act.

### Statistical Integrity Safeguards

Because statistical agencies are hesitant or not allowed to communicate with outside entities and the parent agencies are communicating little information specific to statistical agencies, we have no agency-specific updates in this category. A degree of open communication with outside stakeholders is an important component of statistical integrity safeguards and government transparency.



## Appropriations for BJS in Nominal and Inflation-Adjusted (“Real”) Dollars, Fiscal Years 2009–2025

NOTE: The GDP deflator is used to adjust nominal appropriations for inflation.

SOURCE: [ASA online resources](#)

## IMPACTS

We have recorded two BJS-specific developments so far in 2025. In January, because of a January 20 Executive Order, the [National Law Enforcement Accountability Database and the accompanying BJS report were canceled](#). In May, it was reported that, to conform with Executive Orders, BJS removed gender identity references and items from the questionnaires for the National Crime Victimization Survey, the School Crime Supplement, the Survey on Sexual Victimization, and the Survey of Inmates in Local Jails.

## SUMMARY

BJS has lost a significant amount of its purchasing power and has lost substantial staffing since 2024.

While we are not updating our ratings for Parent Agency Support and Statistical Integrity Safeguards—primarily for lack of information—we rate the BJS resources as WEAK owing to the drop in staffing and budget. According to our 2024 report rubric, this rating means, “The agency’s efforts to meet its Evidence Act responsibilities are severely challenged.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the all-agency recommendations in the body of the report, we reiterate the recommendations from last year, namely:

- Change the appointment of the BJS director to either civil servant or presidential appointment with Senate confirmation for a fixed term not beginning in the first year of an administration.
- Make BJS’s three budget components (i.e., set-aside input, staffing amount, and congressional appropriation) transparent.
- Give BJS more staffing-level flexibility in order to address its staffing challenges (e.g., by providing it with its portion of DOJ-wide staffing account and giving it authority to use all of its budget for salaries and expenses).
- Provide more funding so BJS can more regularly field its non-annual surveys and thereby provide more timely and frequent statistics on the entire criminal justice system.
- Provide BJS with capacity to directly update its website.
- Always accompany new mandates for BJS with an adequate budget.

## BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS: 2024 HEALTH ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

For full text, see: <https://bit.ly/NationsDataAtRiskBJS>.

The July 2024 assessment found that BJS plays a vital role in providing objective and reliable data on crime, criminal offenders, victims, and the justice system. Despite its critical mission, BJS faces significant structural and resource-related challenges that threaten its ability to meet growing data demands.

### KEY SUCCESSSES AND STRENGTHS

BJS has demonstrated resilience and innovation in recent years. It launched valuable new products such as *Just the Stats* and developed a campus climate survey in collaboration with the Department of Education. BJS also modernized the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and enhanced the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) in partnership with the FBI to improve nonresponse handling and generate more granular estimates. BJS efforts toward collaboration and innovation included supporting the White House's Executive Order on policing by co-leading an interagency working group, producing a report on police statistics, and cultivating robust partnerships with the Office for Victims of Crime and other federal entities.

### CRITICAL CHALLENGES AND VULNERABILITIES

Despite these successes, BJS faces several persistent and emerging challenges. Since 2018, BJS's purchasing power has declined by nearly 30%, with its FY24 appropriation (\$59 million) falling short of the \$62 million needed to field the NCVS alone. Budget opacity further complicates planning, as only one of BJS's three funding streams is publicly disclosed. Additionally, BJS's staffing level is disproportionately low relative to its budget, with a budget-to-staff ratio four times higher than the median for federal statistical agencies. Many key BJS surveys have become irregular or infrequent due to funding limitations. For example, the National Inmate Survey was not conducted between 2012 and 2023, and the Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies has only been administered twice since 2008. BJS's dependence on shared services delays hiring and website updates.

### 2024 SUPPORT RATINGS SUMMARY

The assessment assigned:

- Autonomy: **Mixed**, due to lacking statutory protections for professional autonomy;
- Parent agency support: **Mixed**, due to that BJS benefits from budgetary advocacy and staffing authorizations but suffers from operational delays due to shared services; and
- Budget: **Weak**, reflecting nearly 30% purchasing power decline since 2018 and opacity in total budget understanding; and
- Staffing level: **Challenging**, acknowledging that BJS's budget-to-staff ratio is roughly four times the median of other federal statistical agencies.